Overture to "Benvenuto Cellini" (abridged)

Hector Berlioz

Scored for 12 trombones

arranged by

Bob Reifsnyder

Music from the

ROMANTIC BONE COLLECTION

VOLUME FOUR

About the Composer

The Opera "Bellini Cellini" of Hector Berlioz (1803-69) is the second of two major works composed after his "Prix de Rome" years whose subject matter is directly related to his stay in Italy (Harold in Italy was the first). It is also the first of his four surviving operatic works (followed by "Damnation of Faust", "Les Troyens" and "Beatrice et Benedict"). It was staged at the Opera in 1838, but was withdrawn after two performances due to withering criticism from both the audience and the performing musicians. The complaints from singers were mostly about its difficulty, but it probably had more to due with Berlioz' career as a critic. He was often completely obnoxious during performances, not hesitating at all to voice his opinion loudly about the quality of the music and the performers during the presentation.

The overture, however, became a very popular feature on Berlioz' own self-produced concerts, as well as the "Roman Carnival", which he later fashioned out of music from the second act of the opera. Both are still very popular with modern audiences, with the latter standing only behind "Symphonie Fantastique" in the number of contemporary performances. The opera has also had several revivals in the last 50 years, almost always with great success. Sandwiched in between "Harold in Italy" and the "Requiem", it was composed at a time (1834-37) where his music was slowly arriving at full maturity. As with all four of his operatic works, it deserves a permanent place in the repertoire.

About the arranger

Bob Reifsnyder, a graduate of Interlochen Arts Academy, has two degrees from Juilliard and a Doctorate from Indiana University. As a trombone teacher, he has served on the faculties of the Juilliard Pre-College Division, Indiana University, Indiana State University, and Ithaca College. As a professional trombonist, he has been a member of the West Point band, the National Orchestra of New York, the Spoleto Festival orchestra, Goldman Band, Ringling Brothers, the German orchestras of Bielefeld, Kaiserslautern and Solingen, Terre Haute Symphony, Tri-Cities Opera, Cayuga Chamber Orchestra, Manitowoc Symphony and the Wisconsin Philharmonic. As a gig musician, he has appeared with the Metropolitan Opera, the orchestras of Wuppertal and Dusseldorf in Germany, L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Chamber Orchestra of Lausanne, Fort Wayne Philharmonic, Syracuse Symphony, Binghamton Pops, Ithaca Opera, the Wisconsin orchestras of Sheboygan, Oshkosh, Green Bay and the Fox Valley Symphony.

Notes for this arrangement

1. Performance- These works are designed to add to the performance repertoire of the low brass choir.

2. Clef reading- These arrangements will hopefully also serve as advanced clef practice for trombonists playing the top parts. It is unfortunate that clef reading skills don't seem to be a priority for many contemporary trombone teachers, but the ability to transpose at sight remains a prerequisite for becoming an excellent professional musician. Please keep in mind that the first time one has to ask a conductor for a transposed part is likely the last time one will perform with that ensemble!

3. Scoring- There is some octave displacement to keep the individual parts within the comfortable range of the performing instruments and to establish the alto trombone as the highest voice.

4. Range- The basic range of these transcriptions is from high D to low B. For each of the three quartets, the ideal mix would be alto, .525 bore tenor, .547 bore tenor and bass trombone.

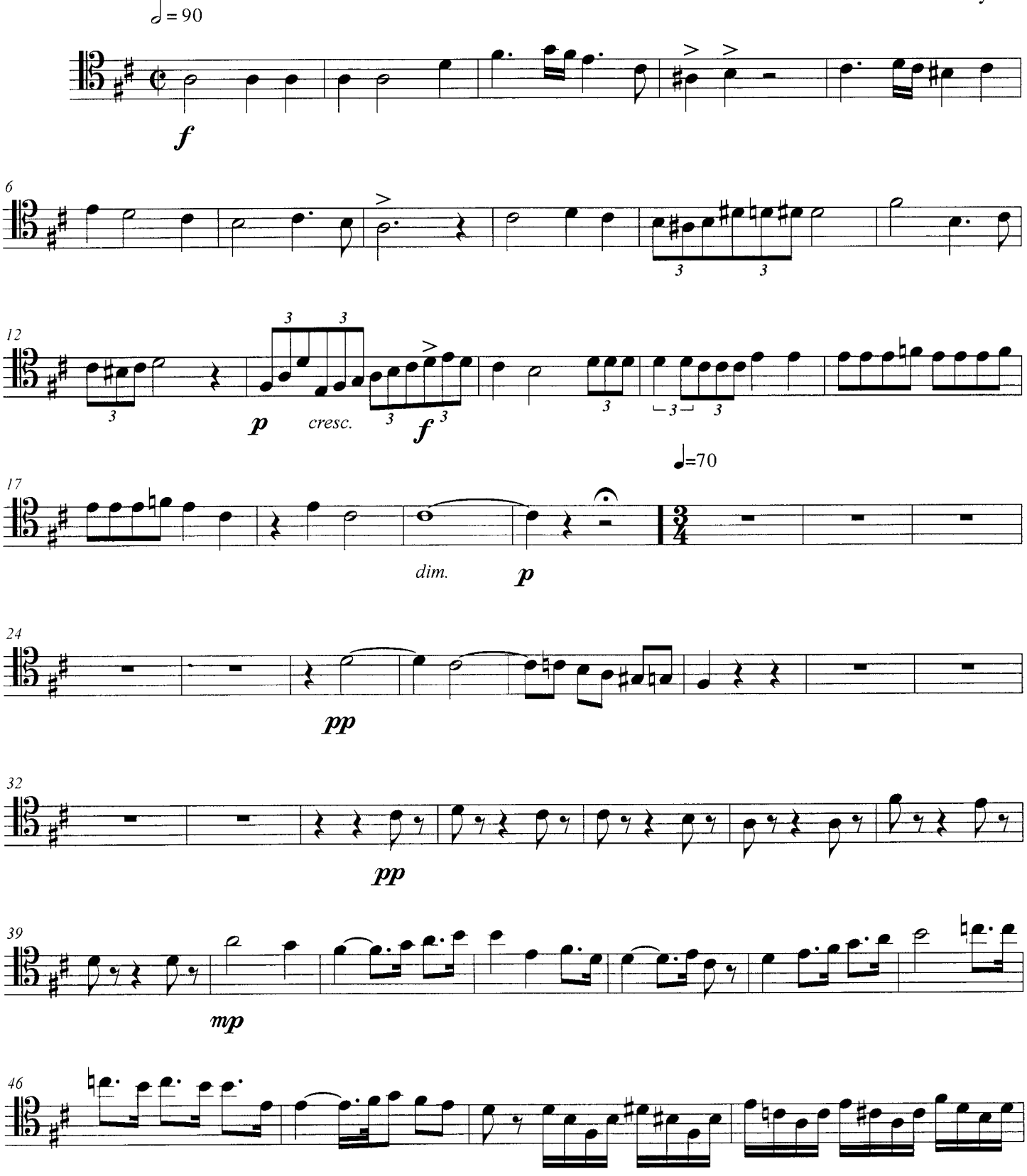
5. Breathing and Articulation- There are no breath marks in these transcriptions; that is perhaps the most personal decision a brass player ever makes. There are, however, notes left out in extended passages that would be otherwise impossible to perform well, hopefully in the most appropriate locations. Performers are also encouraged to add slurs whenever it is deemed appropriate.

Trombone 8

Overture to "Benvenuto Cellini"

Berlioz

Bob Reifsnyder



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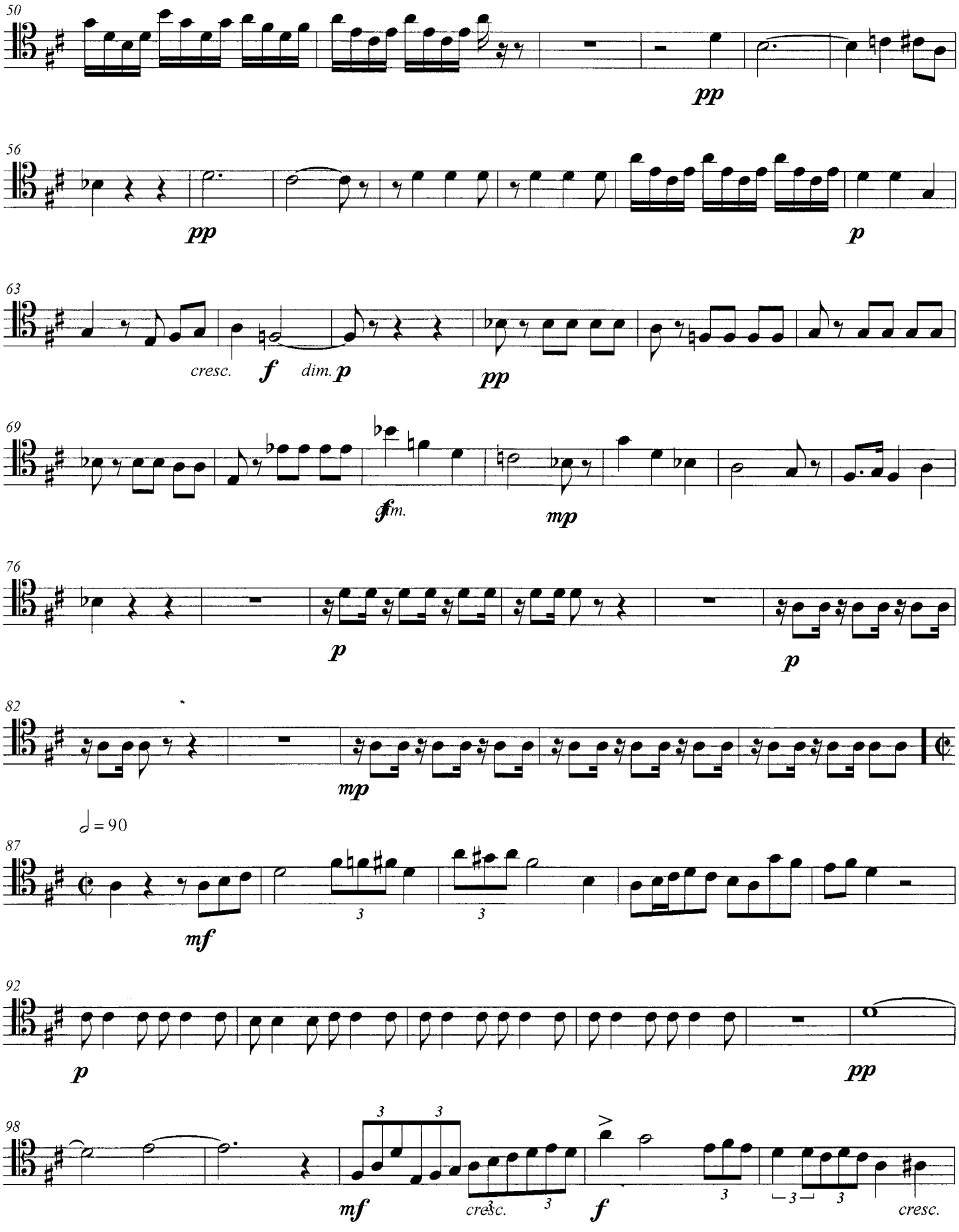
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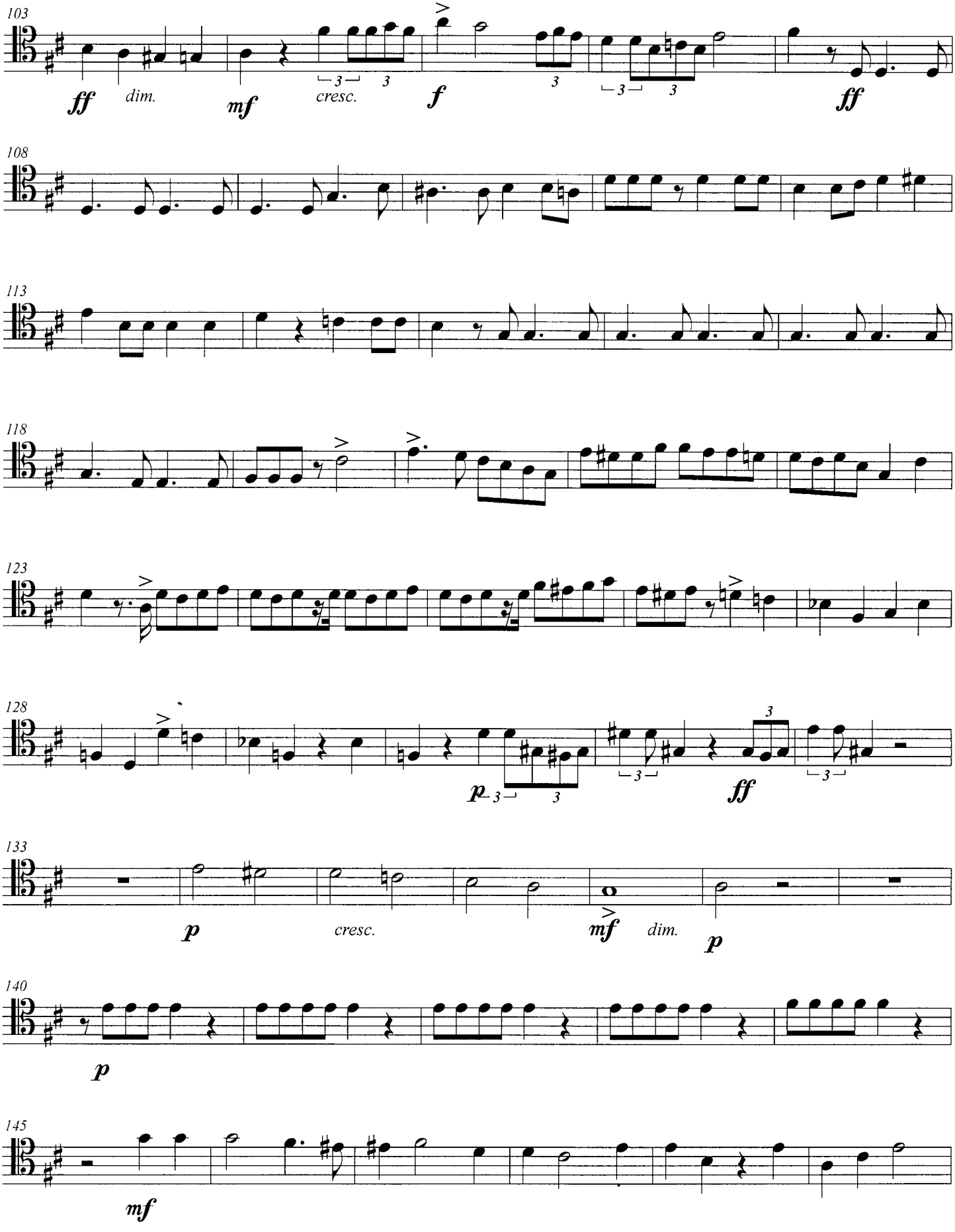
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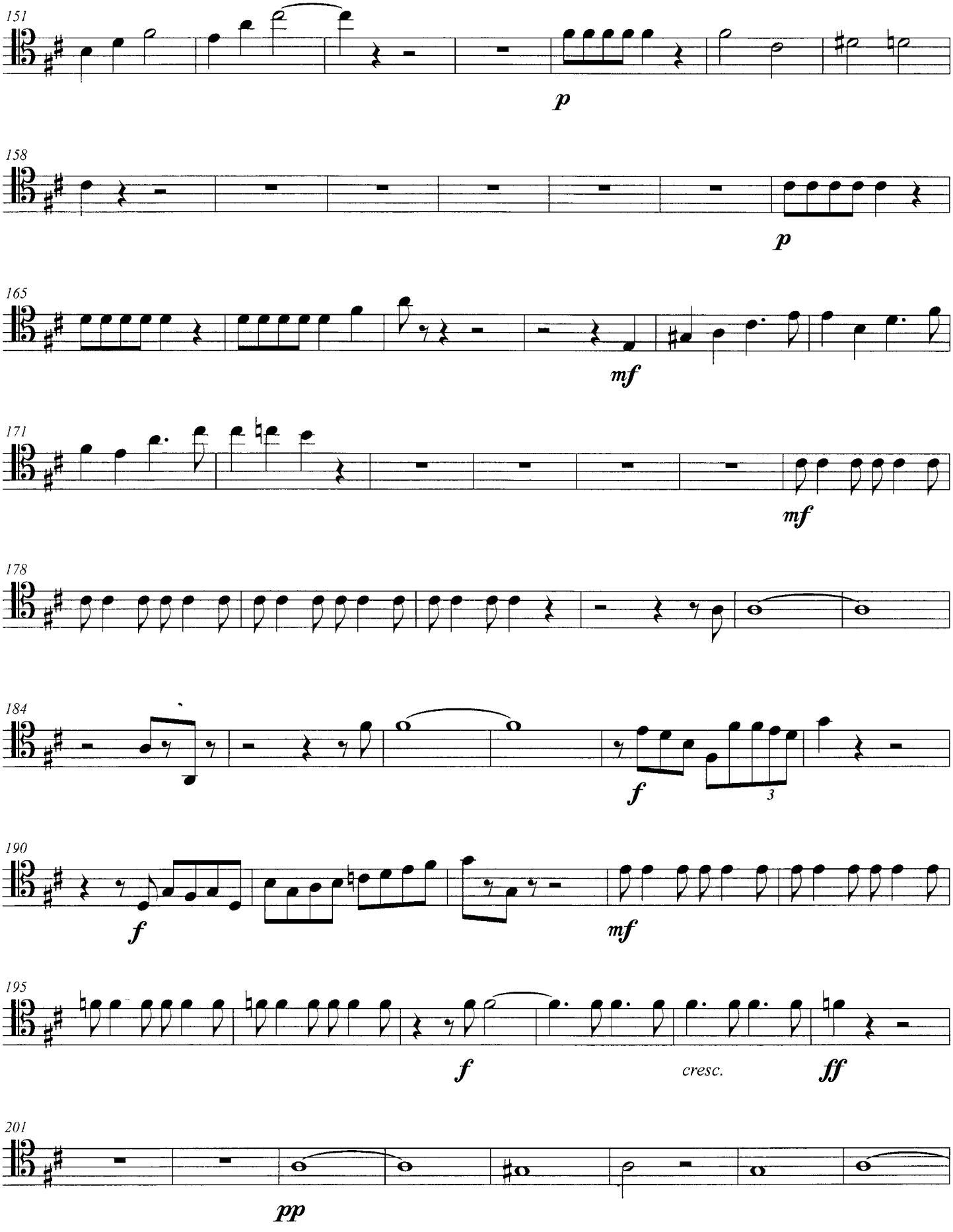
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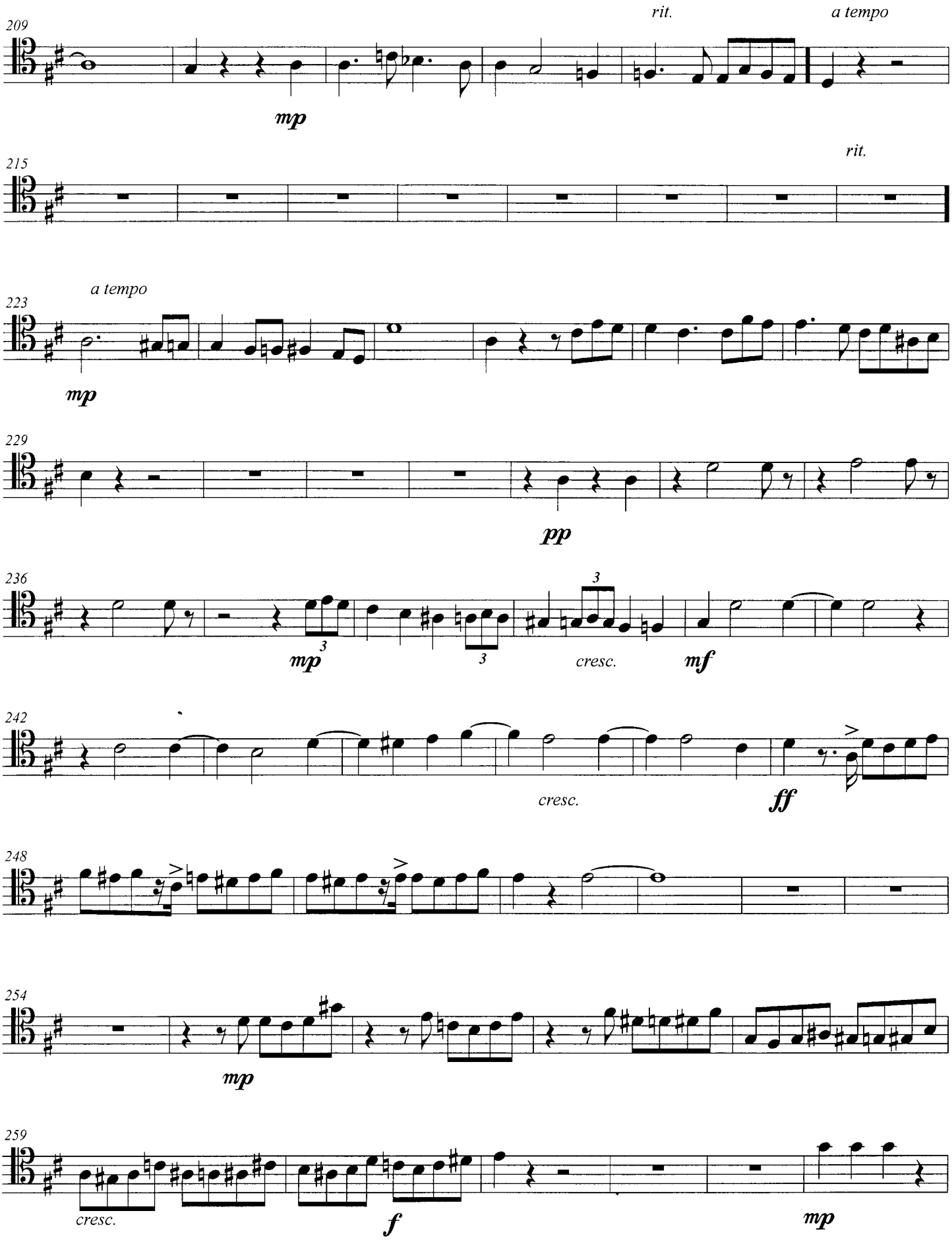
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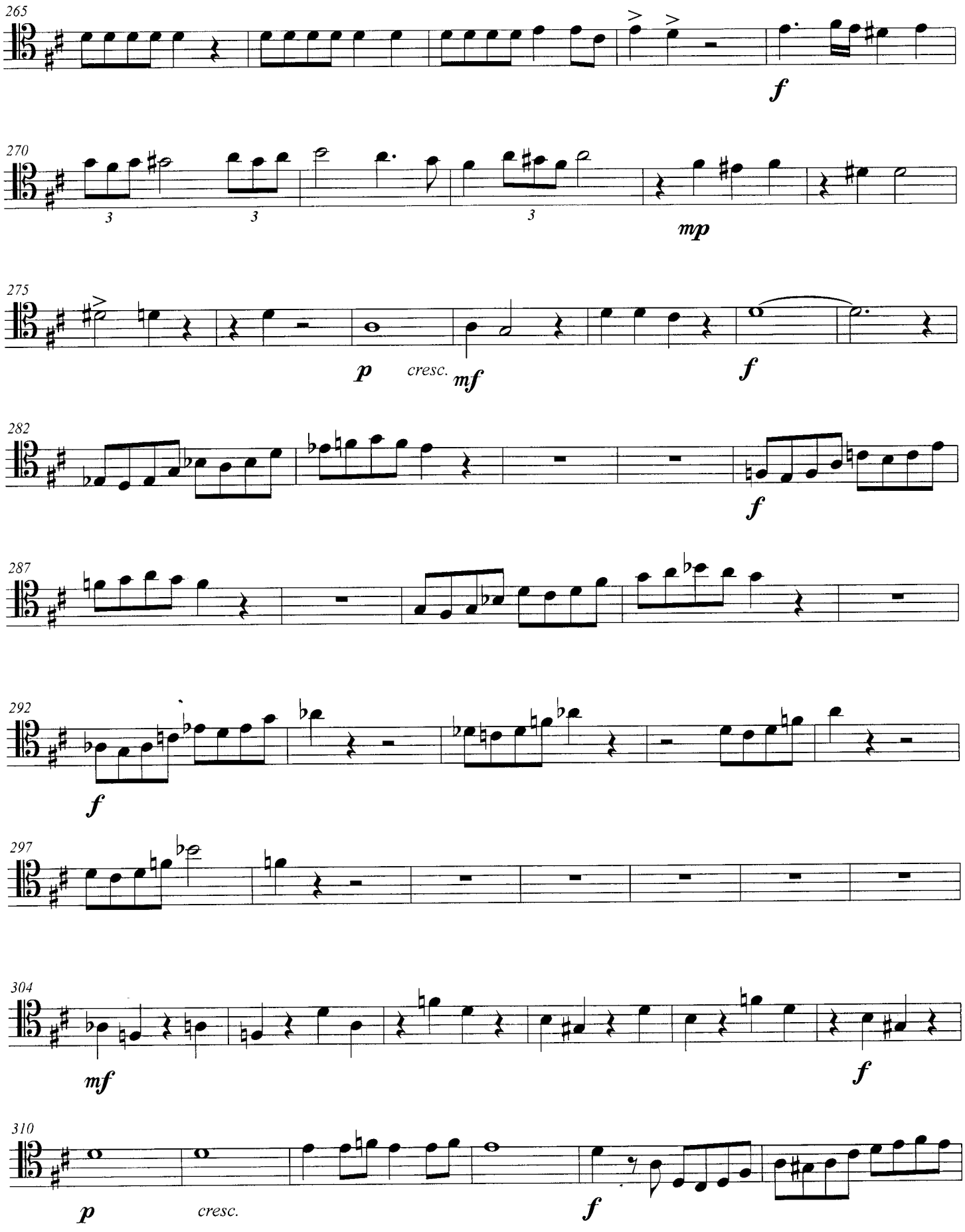
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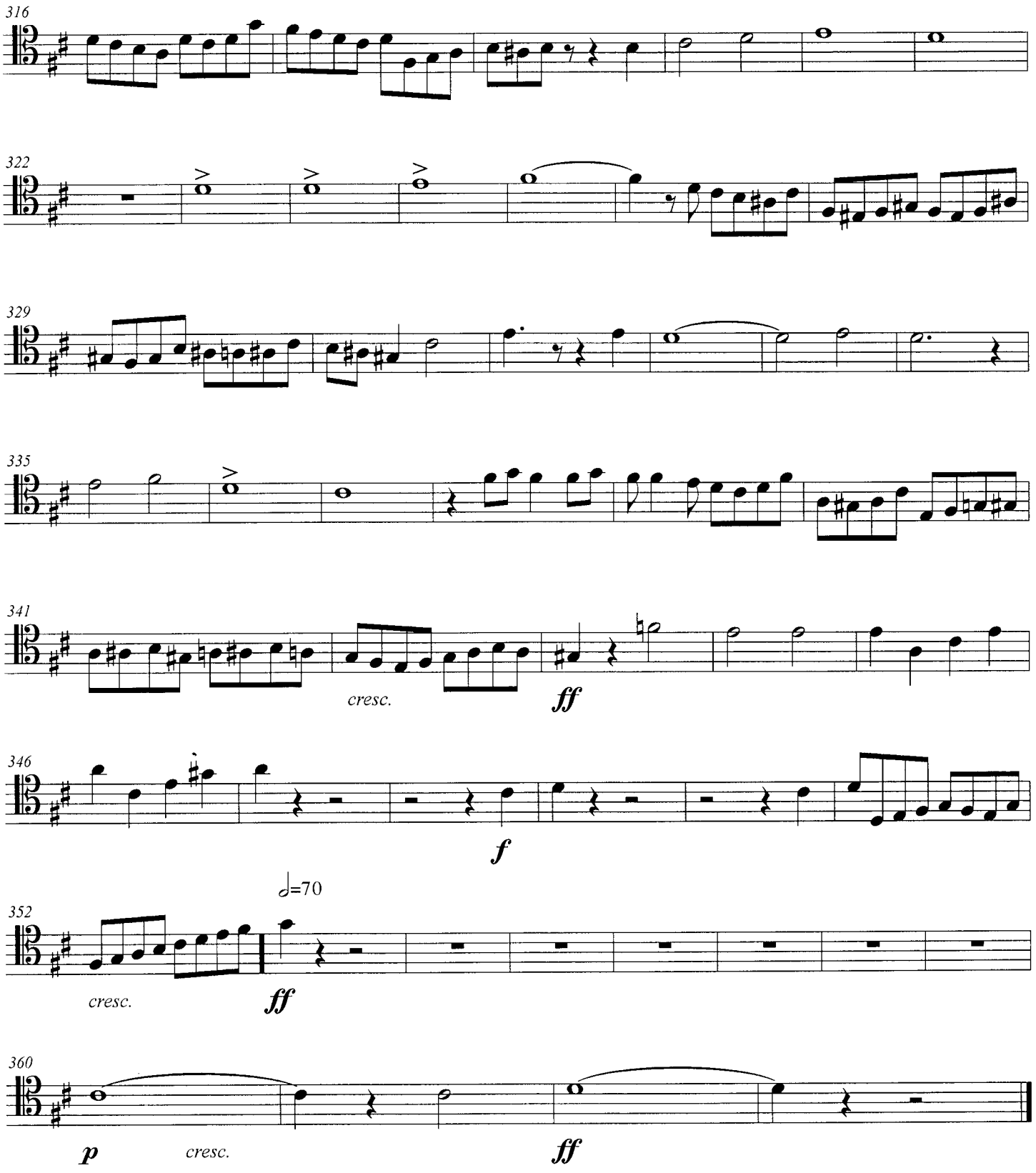
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