Overture to "Waverly" (abridged)

Hector Berlioz

Scored for 12 trombones

arranged by

Bob Reifsnyder

Music from the

ROMANTIC BONE COLLECTION

VOLUME TWO

About the Composer

The Overture to "Waverly" of Hector Berlioz (1803-69), composed in 1827, is his first of four concert overtures (the other three are "King Lear", "Rob Roy" and "Le Corsaire"). The failure of Berlioz' opera "Franc-Juges" to be accepted for performance led him to finally enroll in the Paris Conservatory in the fall of 1826 with the express goal of winning the "Prix de Rome". It took him four attempts, but he finally was awarded the Prize in 1830, which led to an eventual muted acceptance by the Parisian musical aristocracy. In this four-year period, his major compositions were "Waverly" and "Symphonie fantastique" (1830). In between them was a total obsession with the English actress Harriet Smithson, which is the only viable explanation for the totally radical differences between these two works.

"Waverly" is based on the historical novel of the same name written by Sir Walter Scott. The most obvious feature of the overture is the extensive use of imitation in both the slow and fast sections, as well as some very original use of dynamics. For a work written at the same time as the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven, it is remarkable how differently the instruments of the orchestra are used, which does indeed foreshadow somewhat what was to come three years later. Berlioz was much more popular in Germany during his lifetime and this work illustrates that quite dramatically. Stylistically, it exhibits almost no characteristics of French early 19th-century music, which must have enraged his Professors at the Conservatory!

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.

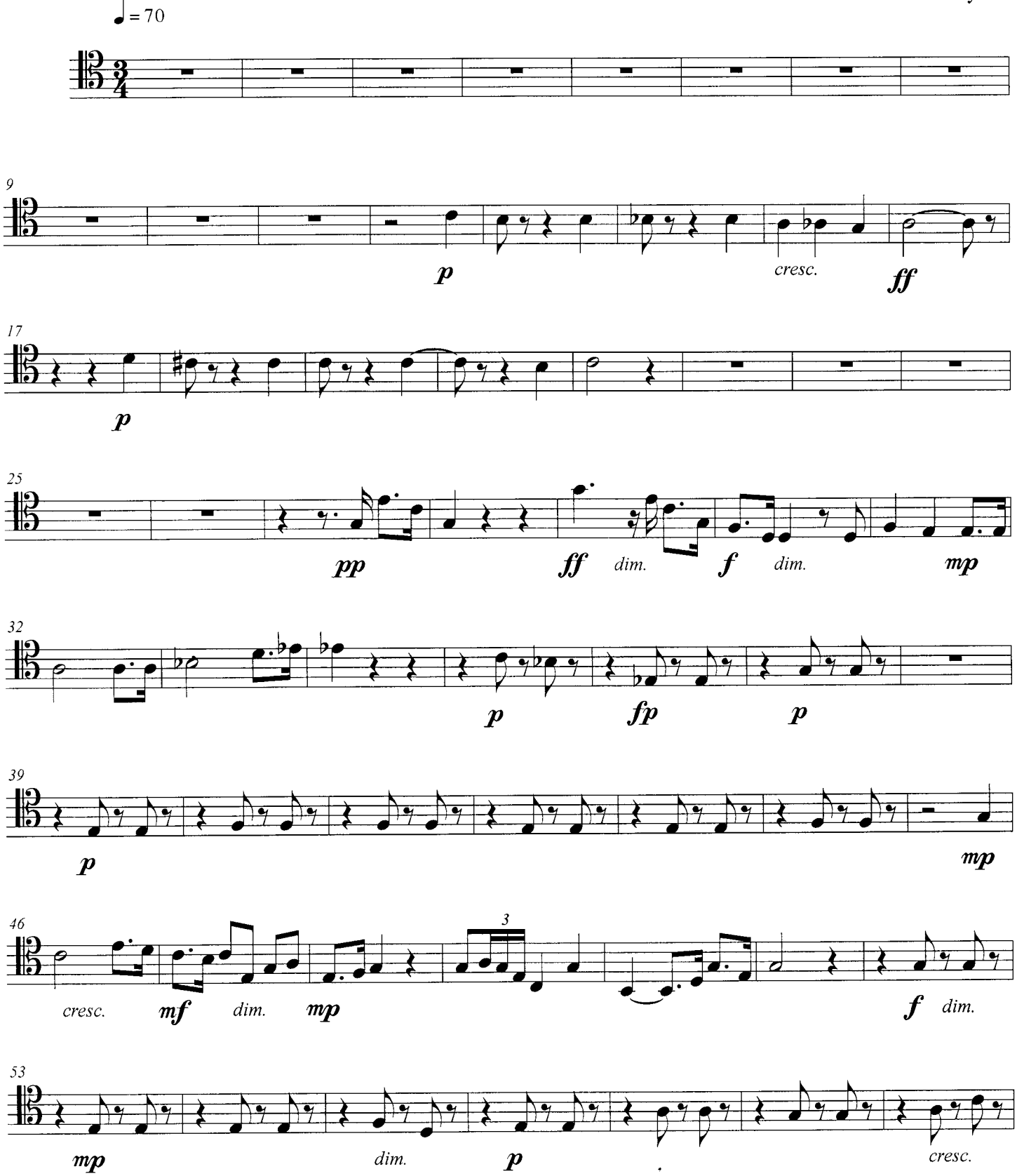
5. Breathing and Articulation- There are no breath marks in these transcriptions; that is perhaps the most personal decision a brass player ever makes. There are, however, notes left out in extended passages that would be otherwise impossible to perform well, hopefully in the most appropriate locations.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

Trombone 6

Overture to "Waverly"

Berlioz

Bob Reifsnyder



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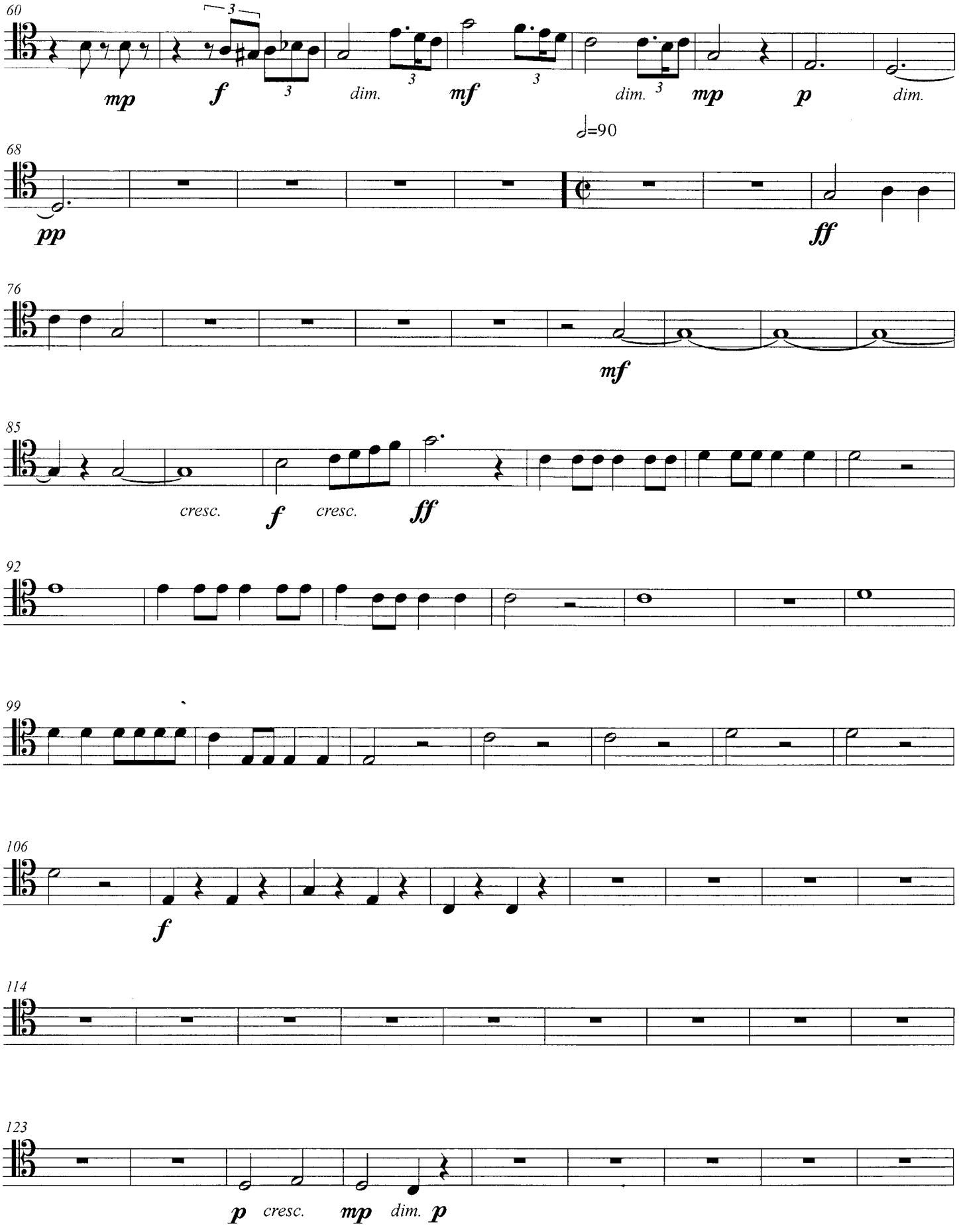
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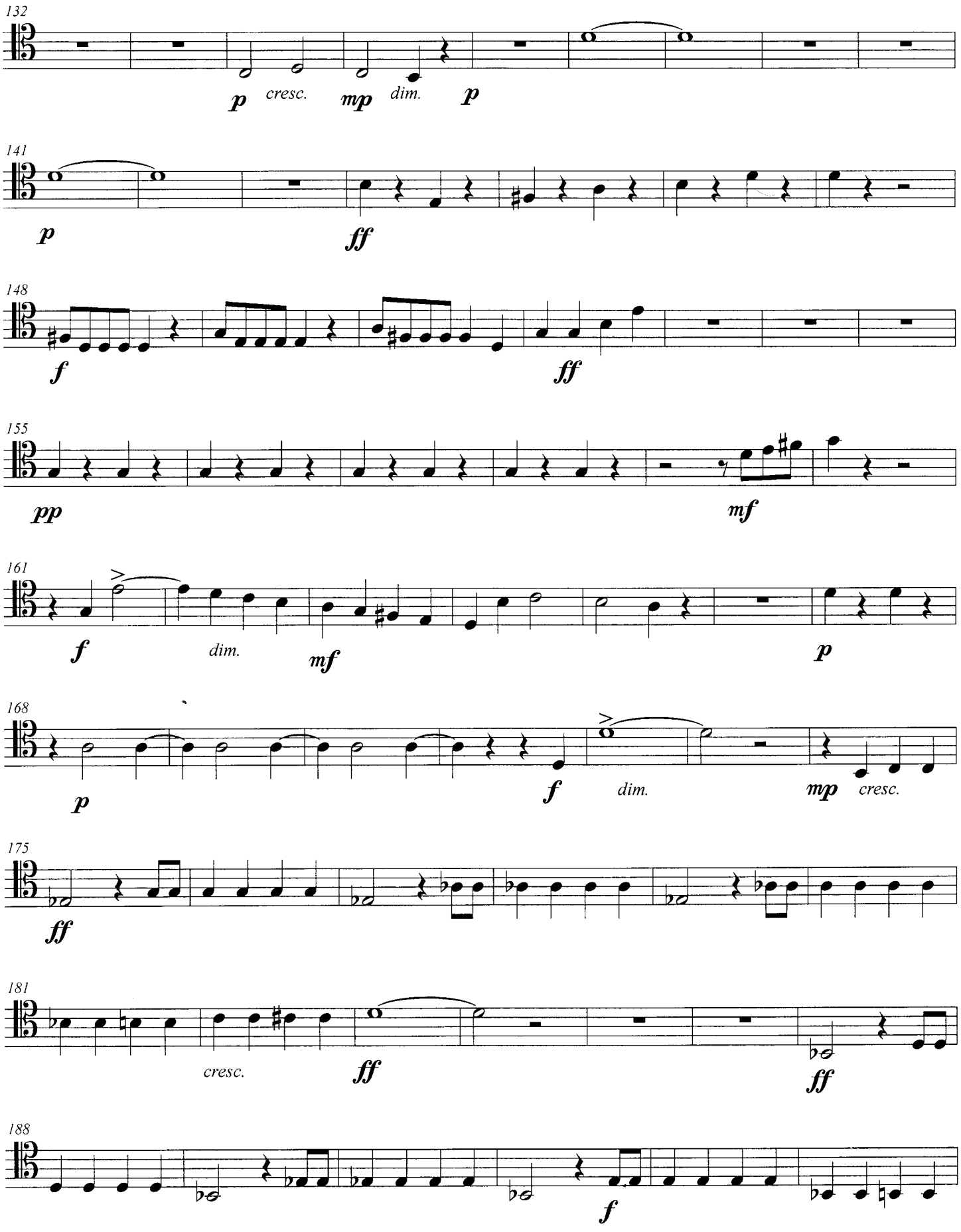
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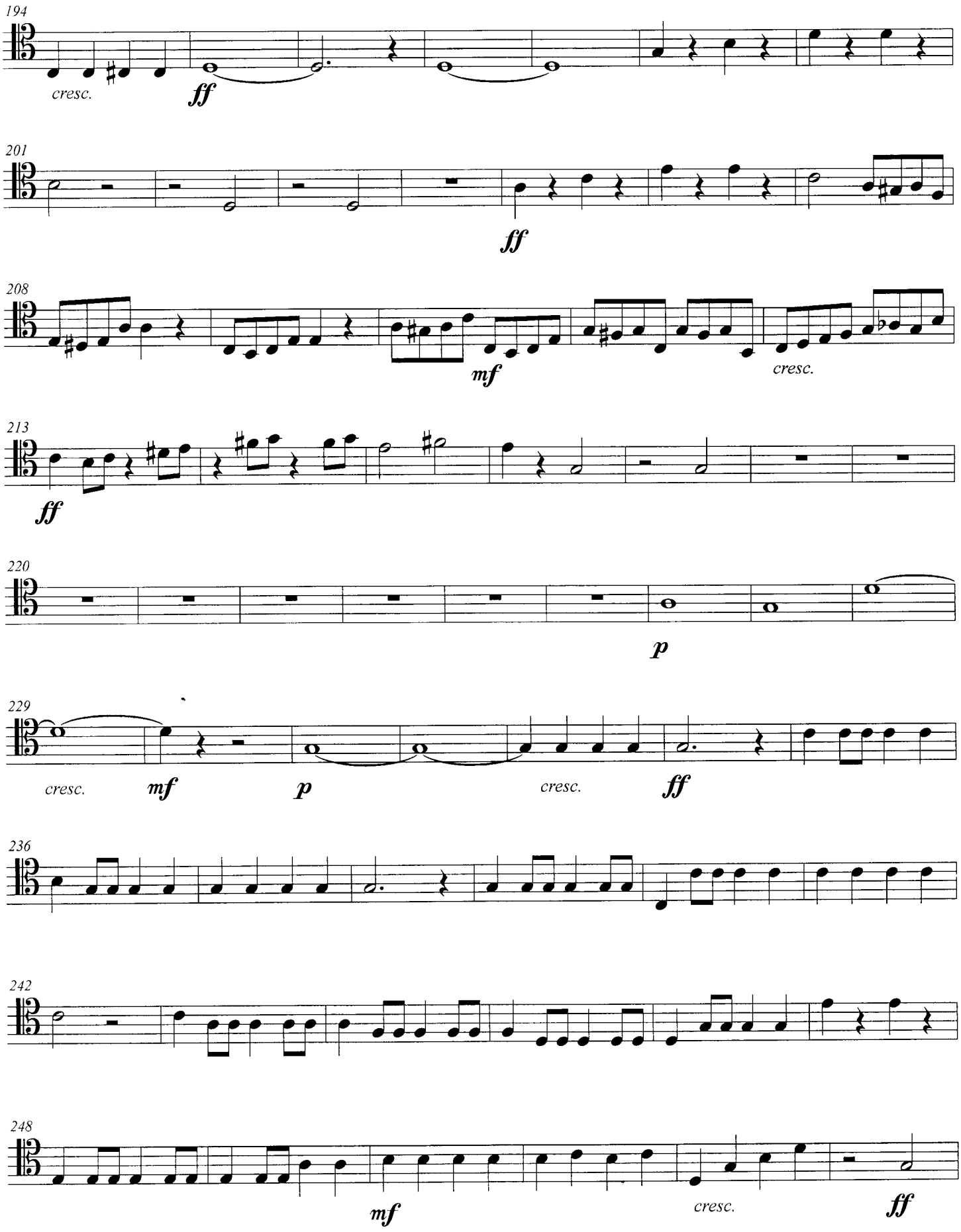
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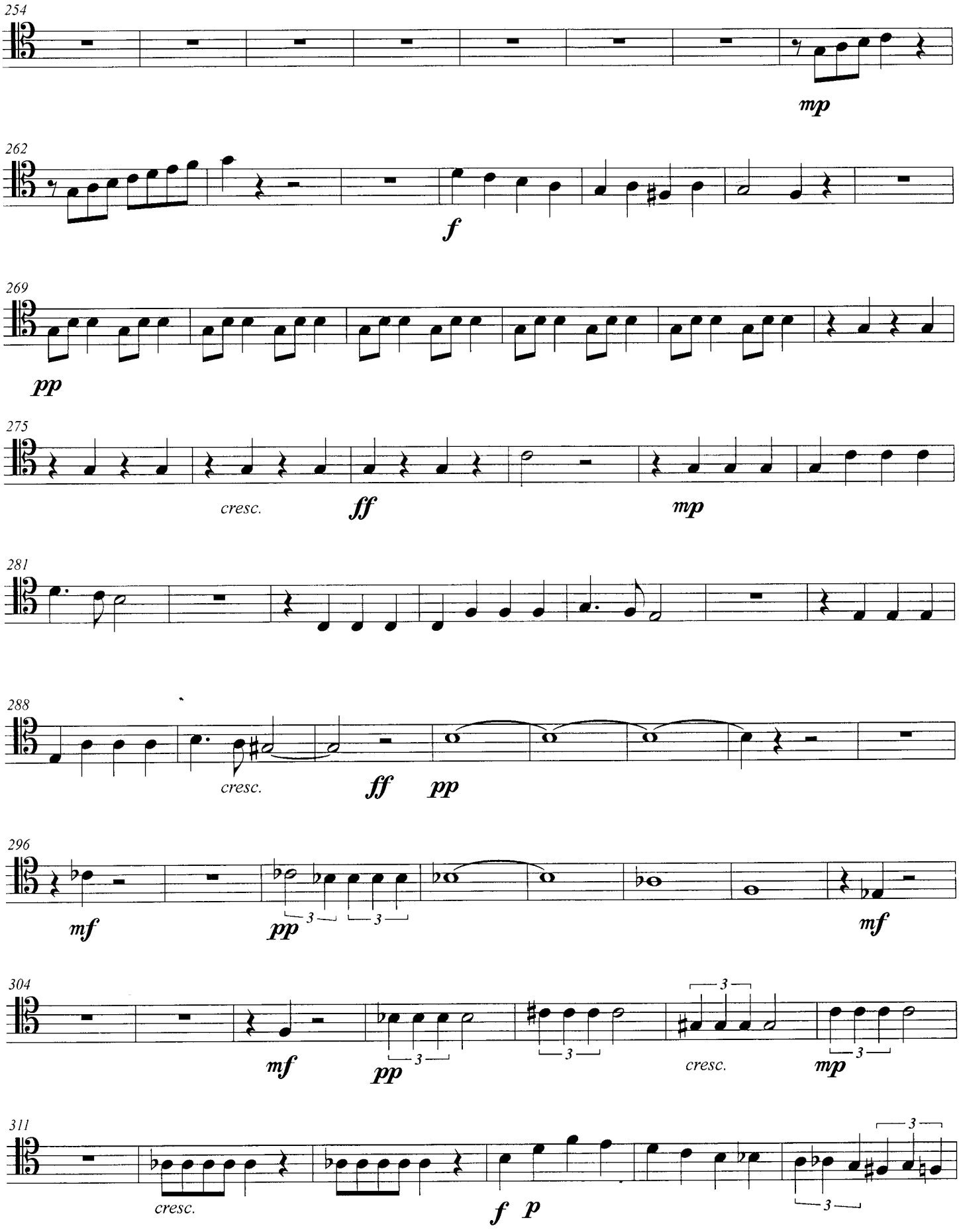
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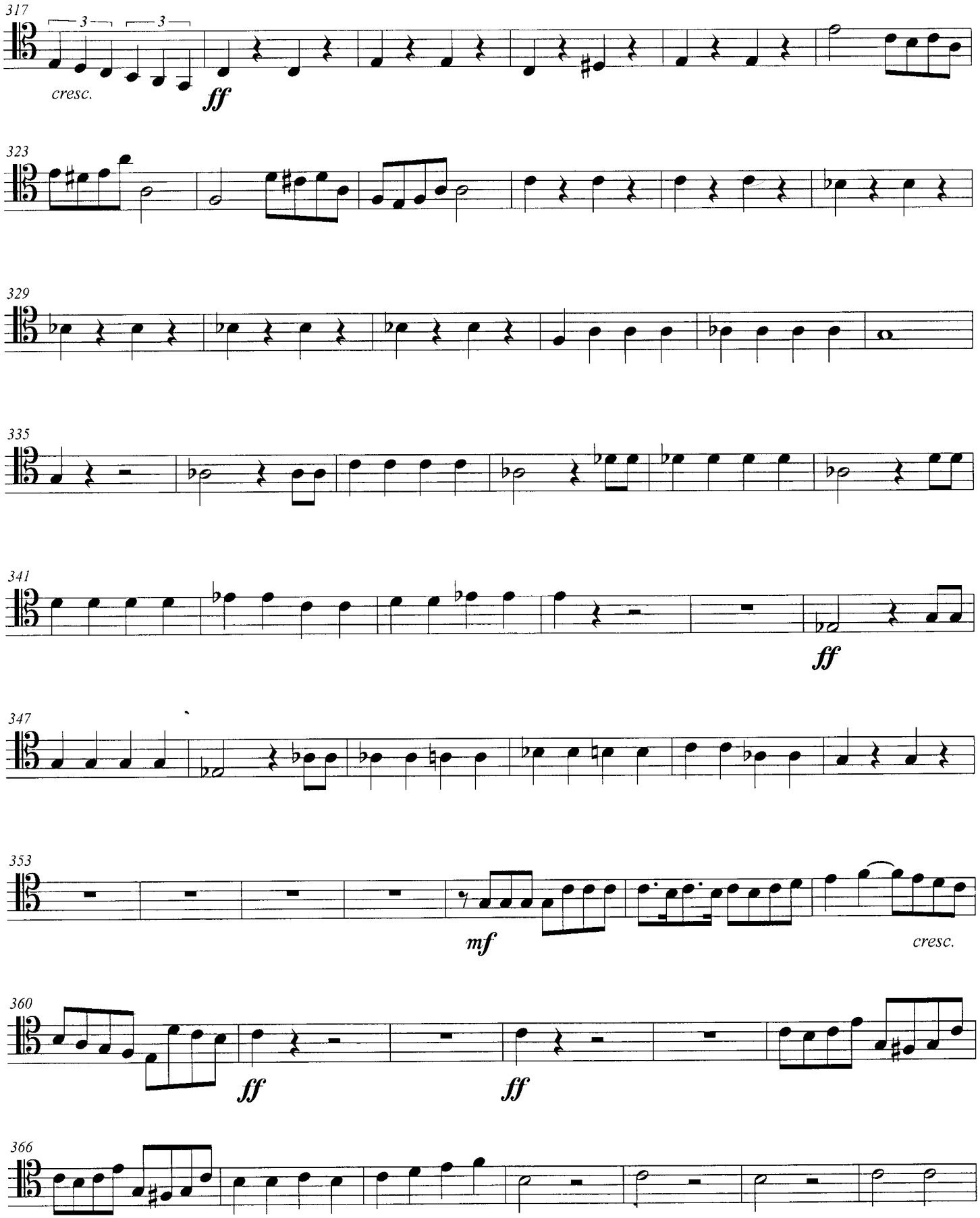
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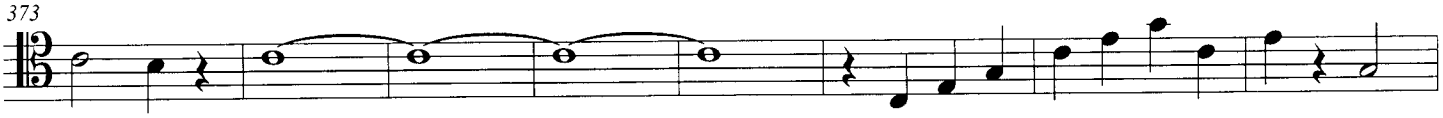

381