Overture to "King Lear" (abridged)

Hector Berlioz

Scored for 12 trombones

arranged by

Bob Reifsnyder

Music from the

ROMANTIC BONE COLLECTION

VOLUME THREE

About the Composer

The Overture to "King Lear" of Hector Berlioz (1803-69) is the first of three maor works composed during his "Prix de Rome" years of 1831 and 1832, although it was actually composed in Nice, where he stayed for three weeks on his way to Rome. The other two are Rob Roy overture, based on the Sir Walter Scott novel, and Lelio, a sequel to "Symphonie Fantastique" that also has references to Shakespeare (Hamlet and The Tempest). This preoccupation certainly had a lot to do with his obsession with the English Shakespearean actress Harriet Smithson, who he eventually married. It turned out to be a very unhappy alliance, although his love for Shakespeare never wavered. His later masterpieces, the Romeo and Juliet Symphony and the Opera Beatrice and Benedict (Much Ado about Nothing), certainly attest to that fact.

"King Lear" is stylistically very similar to the first movement of "Symphonie Fantastique", a strong indication that he was reluctant to move on from the success of that work. Lelio, his unprecedented work that features a narrator, tenor and piano as an orchestral instrument (the first appearance in the literature for all three), even quotes the principal theme at the beginning and end of the orchestral passages in the composition. Once he returned to Paris, though, he started moving in other directions, this time with an obvious reflection upon his two years in Italy. ("Harold in Italy", the viola symphony, and the opera "Benvenuto Cellini"). All of Berlioz' Shakespearean works (King Lear, Lelio, Romeo and Juliet, Beatrice and Benedict) easily fall into the category of neglected masterpieces; none of them receives anything but token performances today.

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.

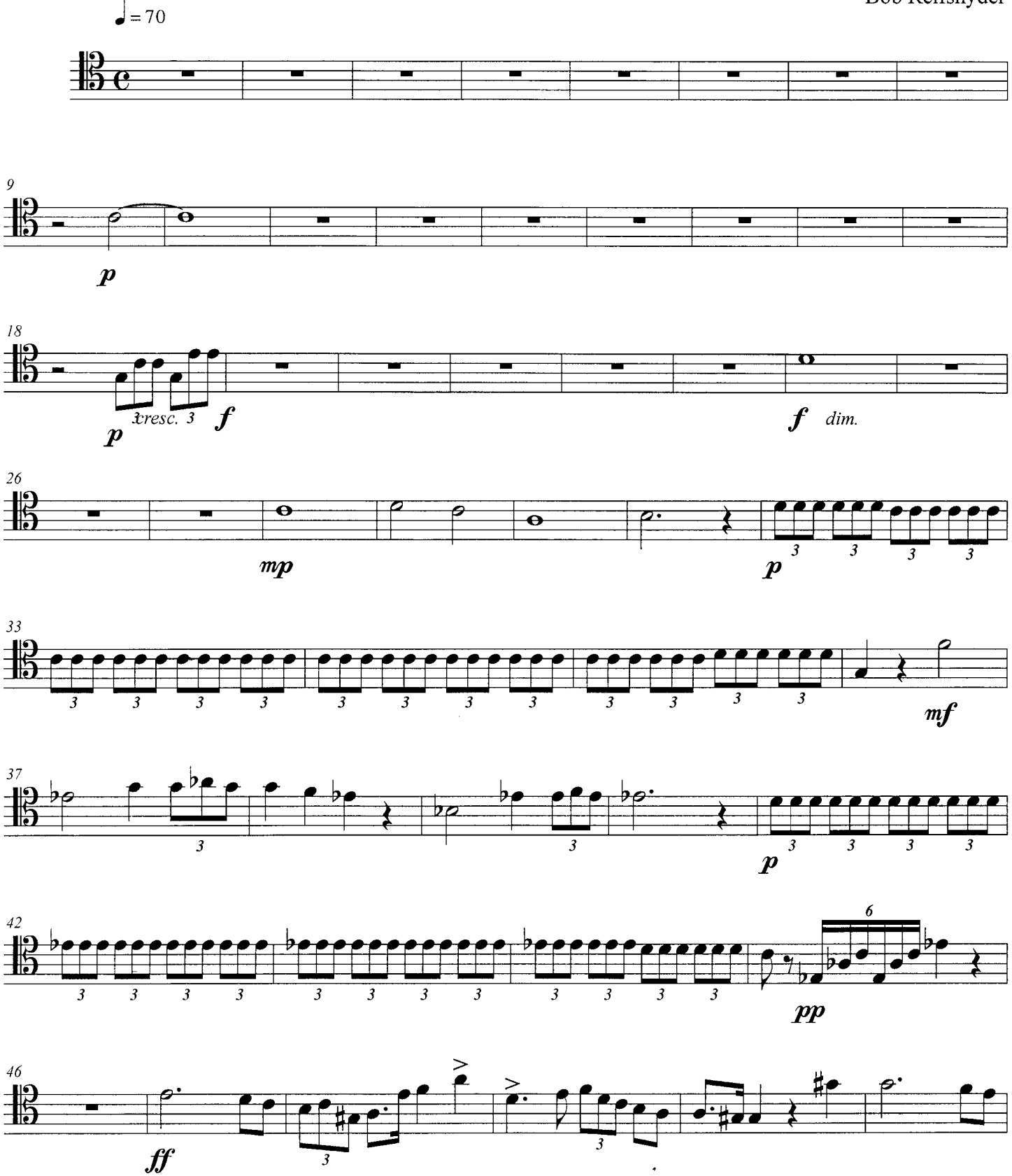
5. Breathing and Articulation- There are no breath marks in these transcriptions; that is perhaps the most personal decision a brass player ever makes. There are, however, notes left out in extended passages that would be otherwise impossible to perform well, hopefully in the most appropriate locations.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

Trombone 2

Overture to "King Lear"

Berlioz

Bob Reifsnyder



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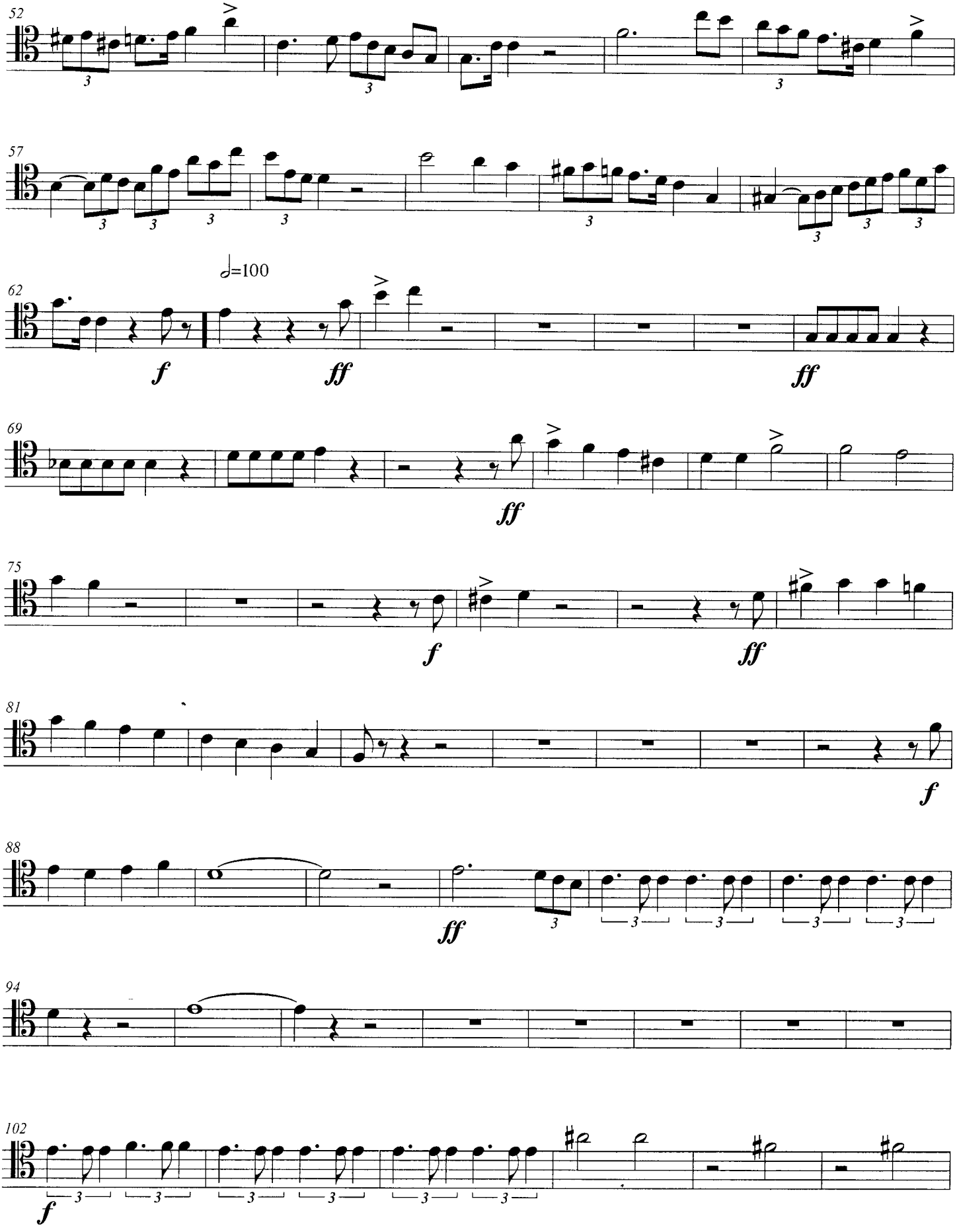
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57
62
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f
ff
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75
f
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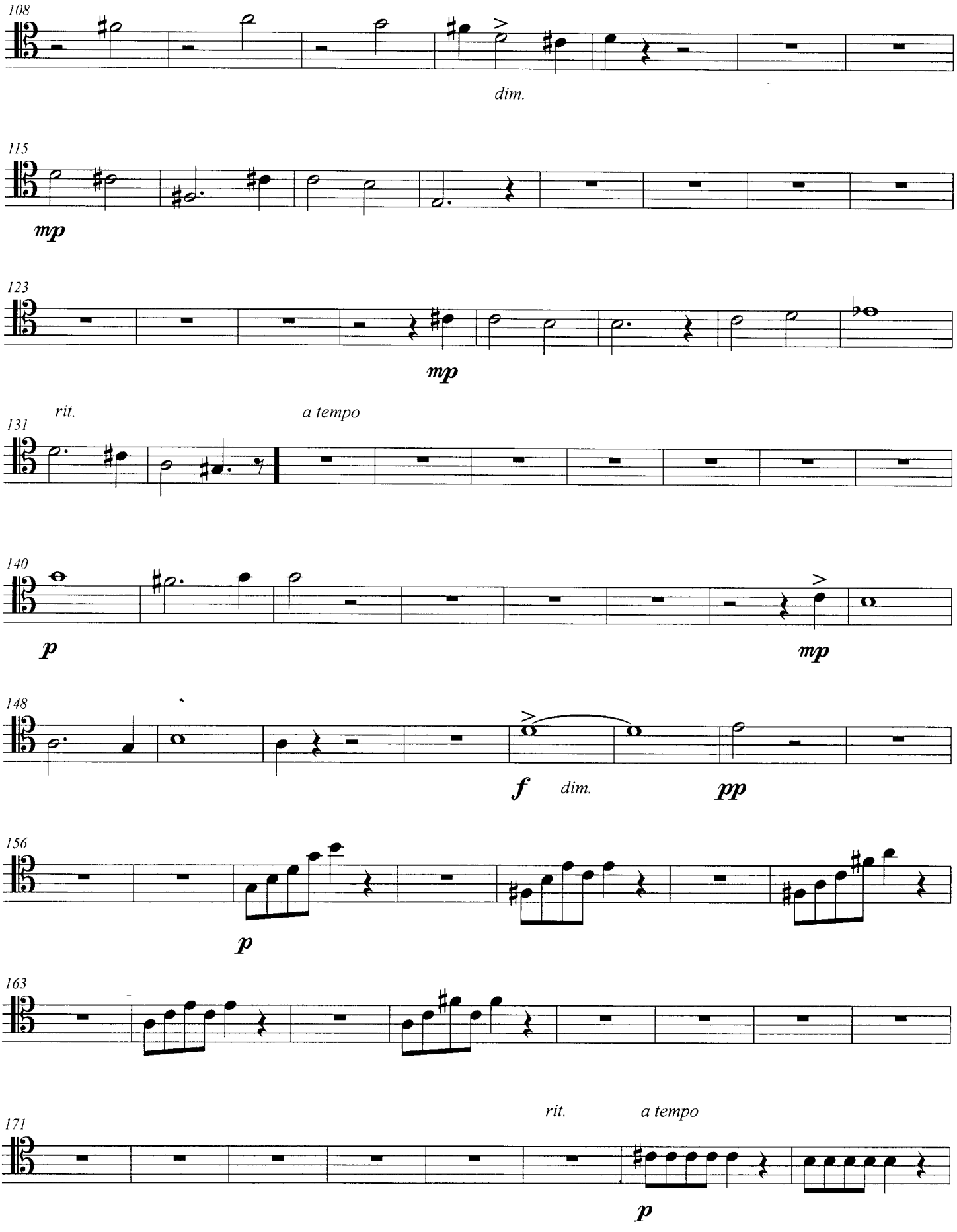
88
ff
94
102
f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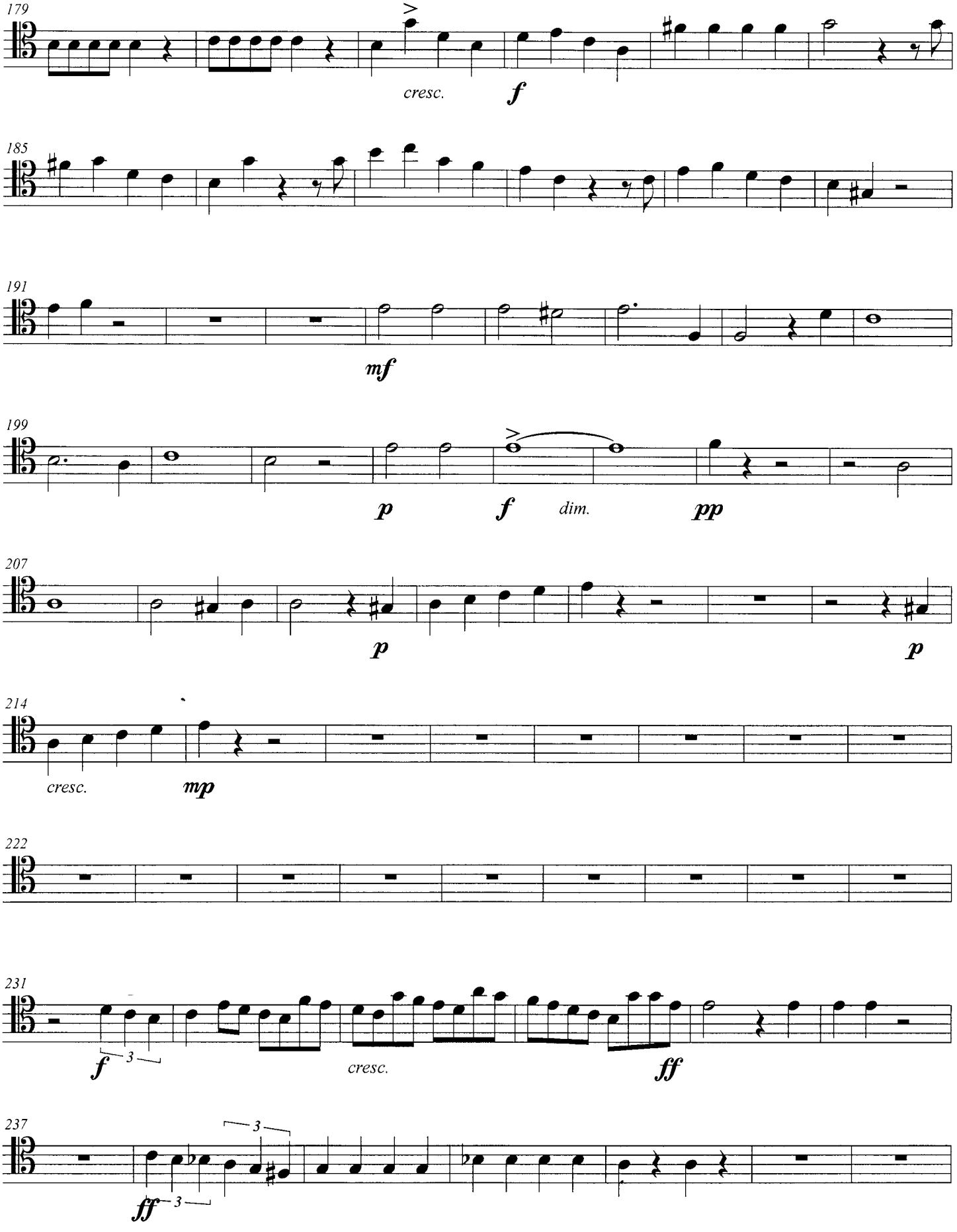
dim.
115
mp
123
mp
131
rit.
a tempo
140
p
mp
148
f
dim.
pp
156
p
163
171
rit.
a tempo
p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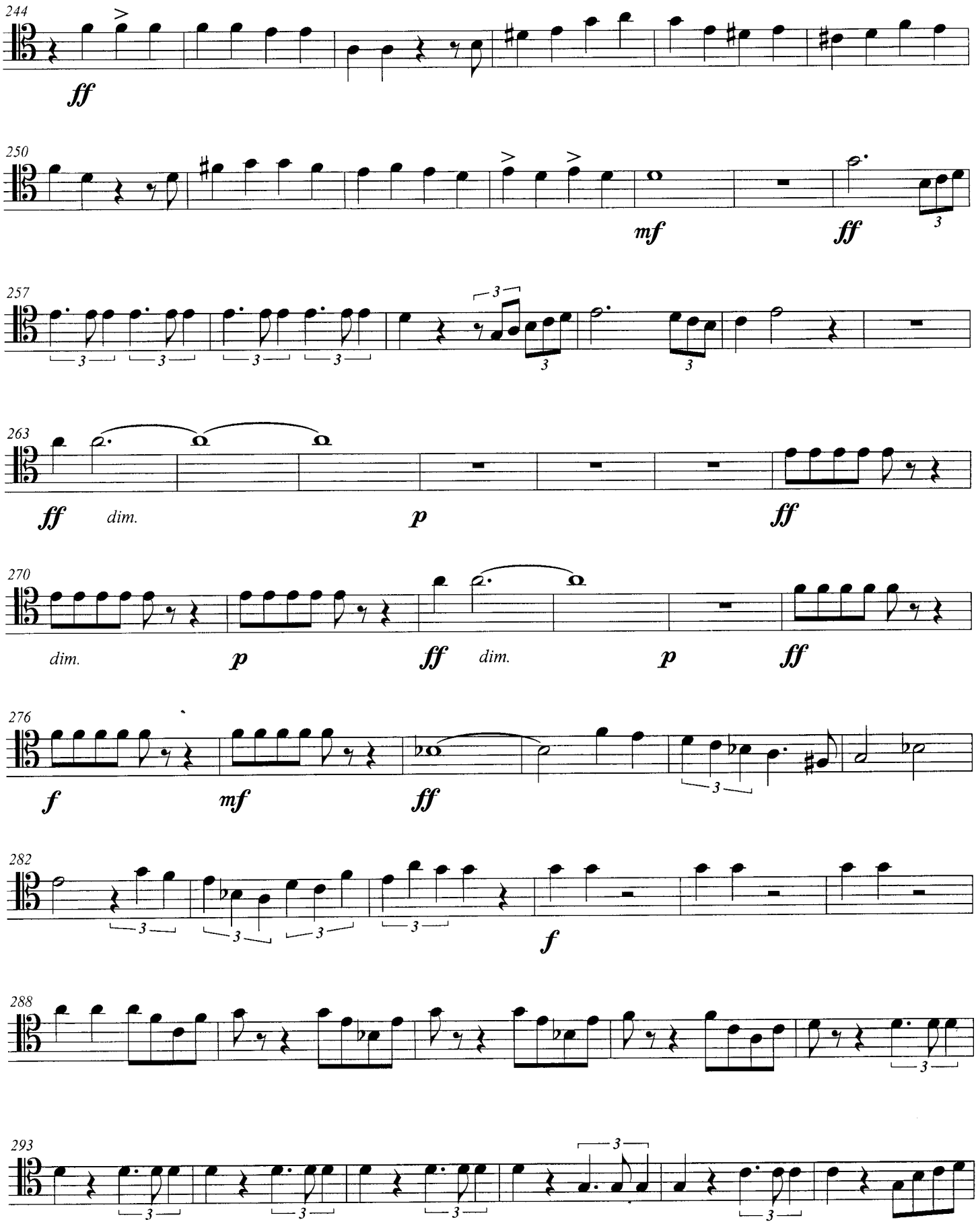
cresc.
f
185
191
mf
199
p
f
dim.
pp
207
p
p
214
cresc.
mp
222
231
f
3
cresc.
ff
237
ff
3
3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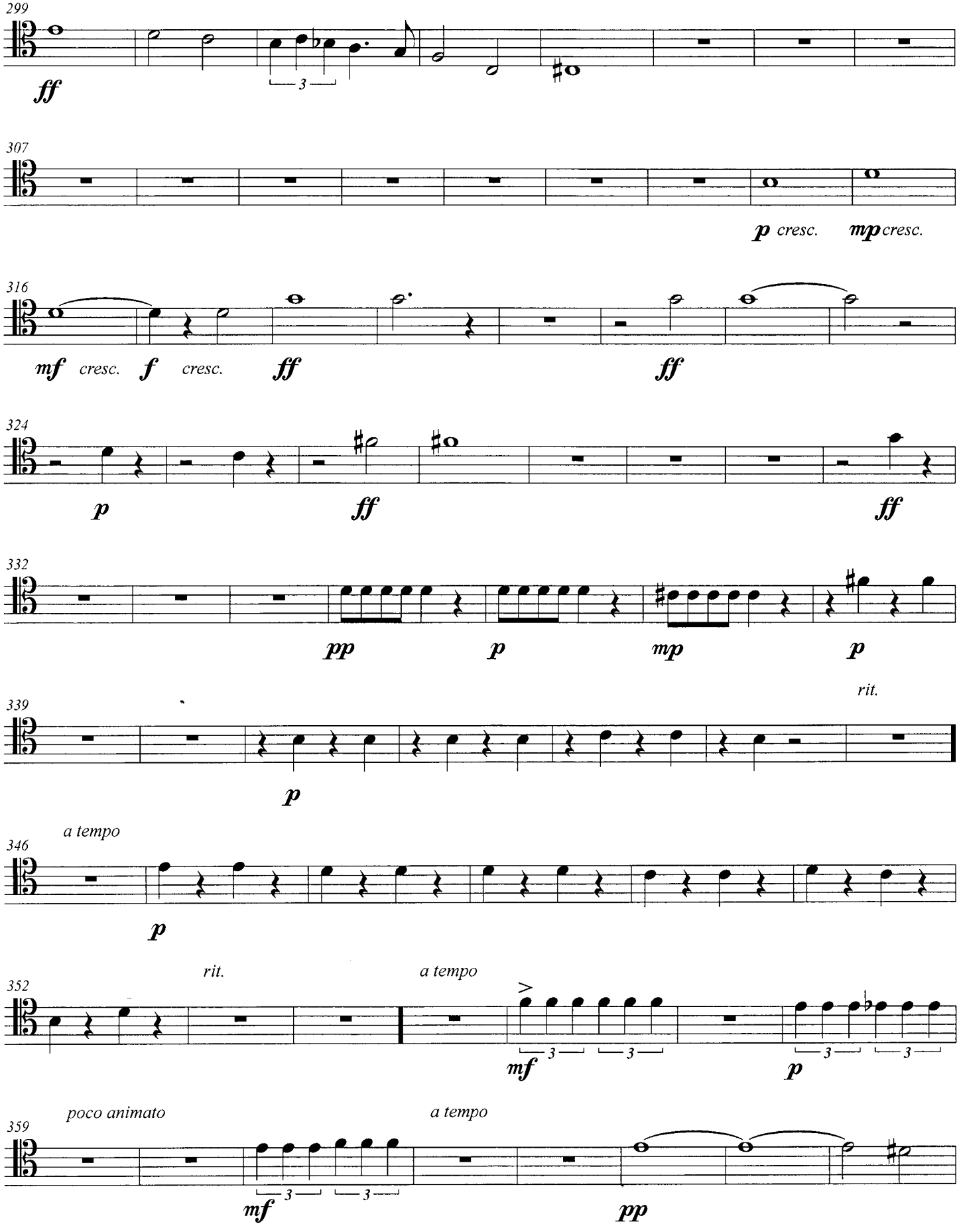
250
mf
ff
257
263
ff
dim.
p
ff
270
dim.
p
ff
dim.
p
ff
276
f
mf
ff
282
f
288
293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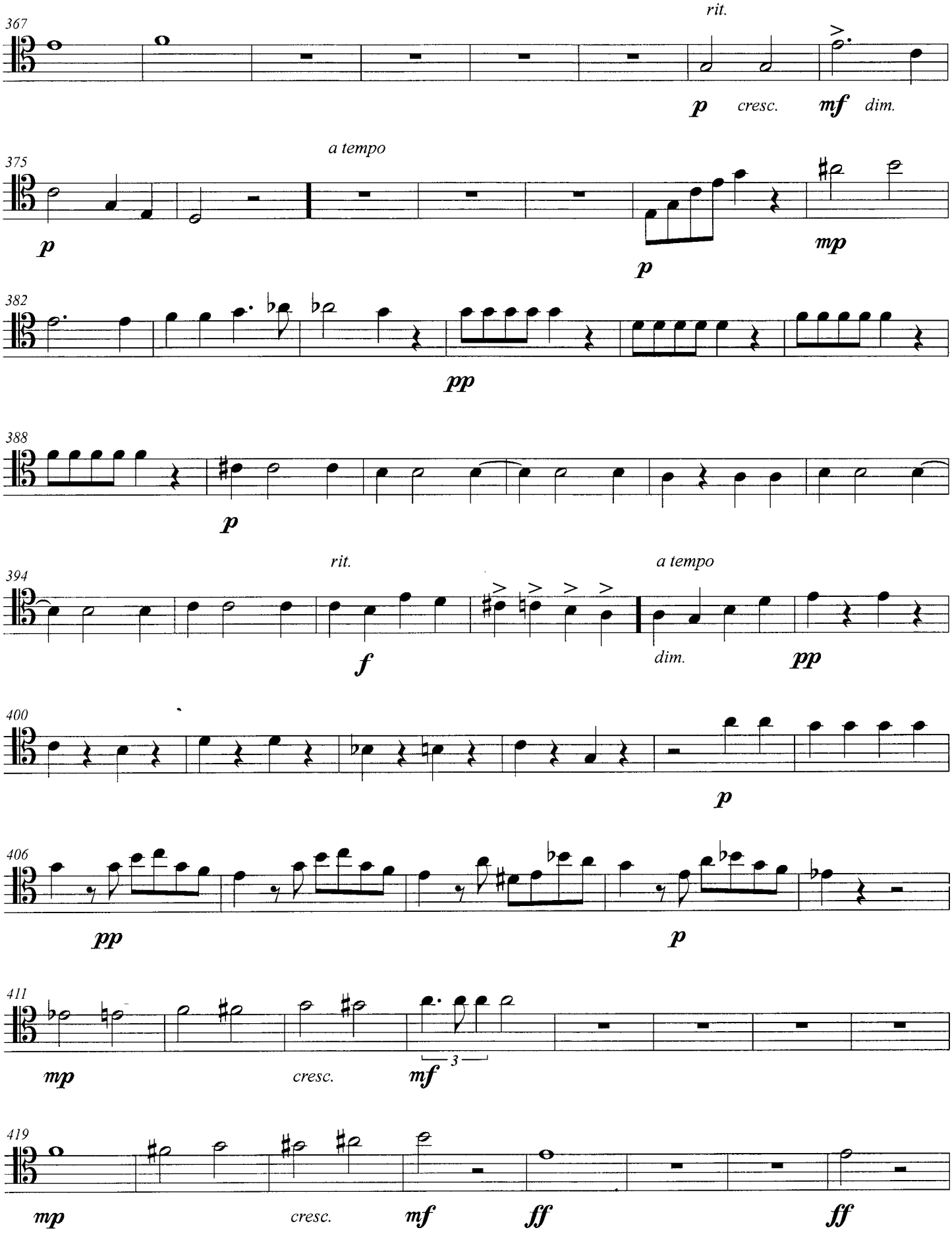
ff
3
307
p cresc.
mp cresc.
316
mf cresc.
f cresc.
ff
ff
324
p
ff
ff
332
pp
p
mp
p
339
rit.
p
a tempo
346
p
rit.
a tempo
352
mf
3
3
p
3
3
poco animato
a tempo
359
mf
3
3
pp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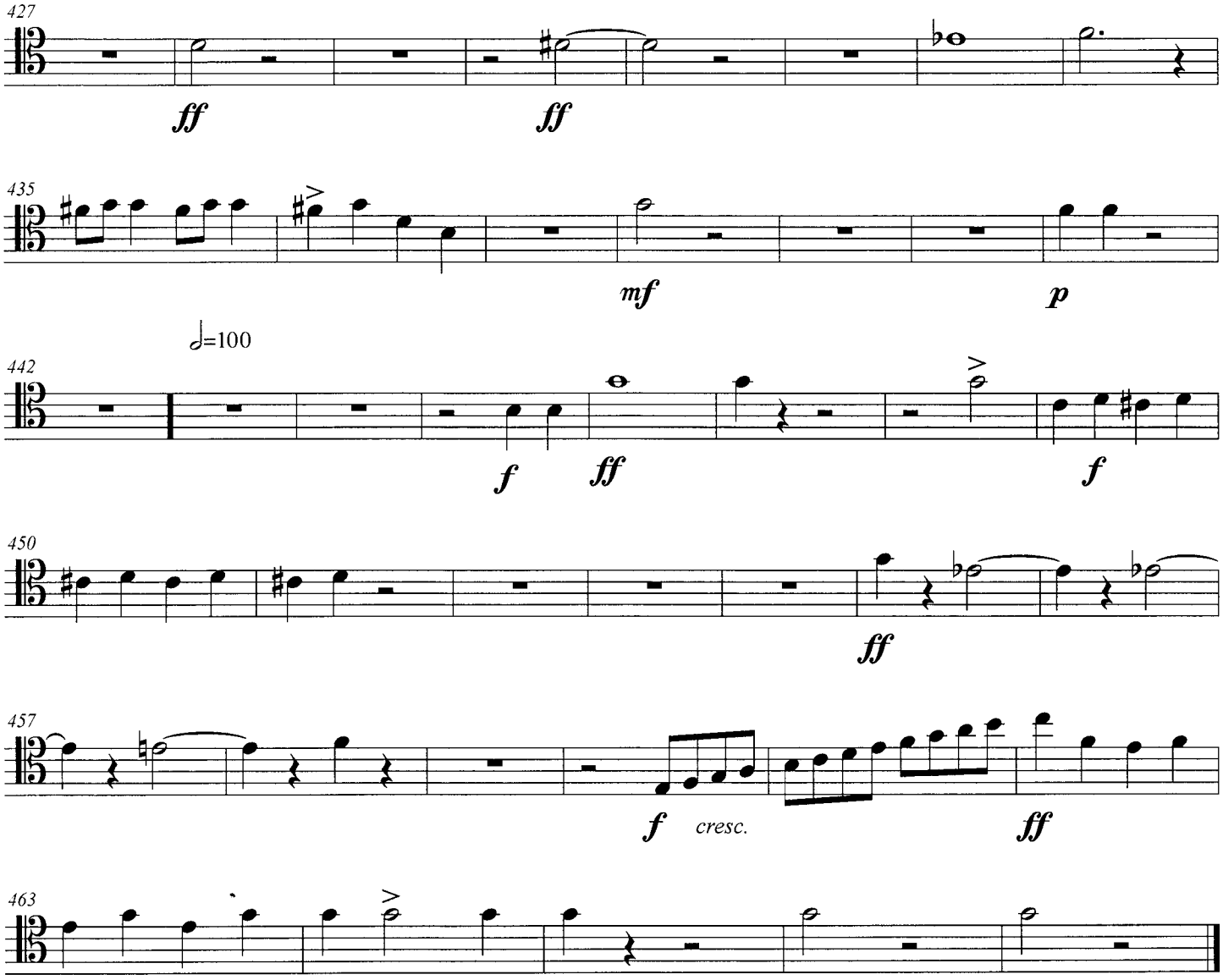
rit.
p
cresc.
mf
dim.
375
a tempo
p
p
mp
382
pp
388
p
394
rit.
a tempo
f
dim.
pp
400
p
406
pp
p
411
mp
cresc.
mf
3
419
mp
cresc.
mf
ff
ff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mf
p
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f
ff
f
450
ff
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f
cresc.
ff
463