"Tannhauser Overture" (abridged)

Richard Wagner

Scored for 12 trombones

arranged by

Bob Reifsnyder

Music from the

REVOLUTIONARY BONE COLLECTION

VOLUME THREE

About the Composer

"Tannhauser" of Richard Wagner (1813-83) was premiered in Dresden, Germany in 1845. It was the last of three operas to be produced there during his years as Kapellmeister of the city's Opera House (Rienzi and Der Fliegende Hollander are the others). It was completed at approximately the same time as "Macbeth" (1847) and "Damnation of Faust" (1846), with Verdi still in the early stages of his career and Berlioz in the middle of his. It is the second of his operas that is regularly performed in Bayreuth at the famous "Festspielhaus", which was built to premiere the "Ring of the Nibelung" by King Ludwig of Bavaria, Wagner's most important Patron.

Wagner's three early operas were all derivative of other composers. "Die Fleigende Hollander" is the first to be written in a totally original style, although he is still quite a ways away from the total maturity of the Ring of the Nibelung. One still finds arias and traditional operatic choruses, but he is beginning to use musical motives to represent characters and emotions throughout the opera. In Tannhauser, he takes this one step further, but not without one of the finest baritone arias ever composed as well as one of the most memorable choruses in the entire operatic literature. Unfortunately, the complete overture is almost never heard in the opera house, since it was shortened to make room for the "Venusberg" music, which Wagner added for its Paris premiere in 1861. Since this is the same period when he was composing "Tristan und Isolde", the music is too attractive to pass up; the original version of the opera is now almost never produced. Fortunately, Symphony orchestras still frequently program the original overture, which is the basis for this arrangement.

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.

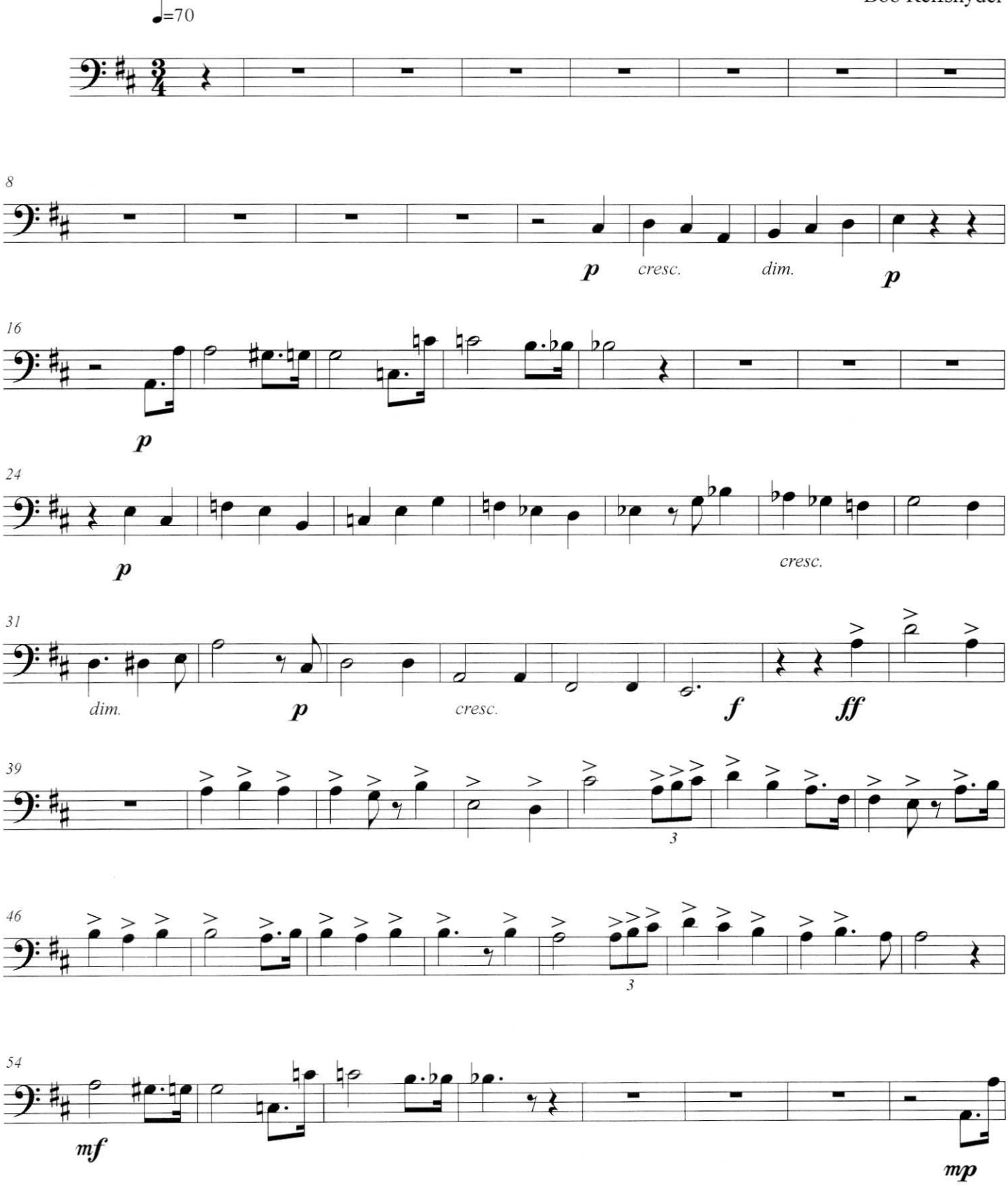
5. Breathing and Articulation- There are no breath marks in these transcriptions; that is perhaps the most personal decision a brass player ever makes. There are, however, notes left out in extended passages that would be otherwise impossible to perform well, hopefully in the most appropriate locations.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

Bass Trombone 2

Tannhauser Overture

Wagner

Bob Reifsnyder



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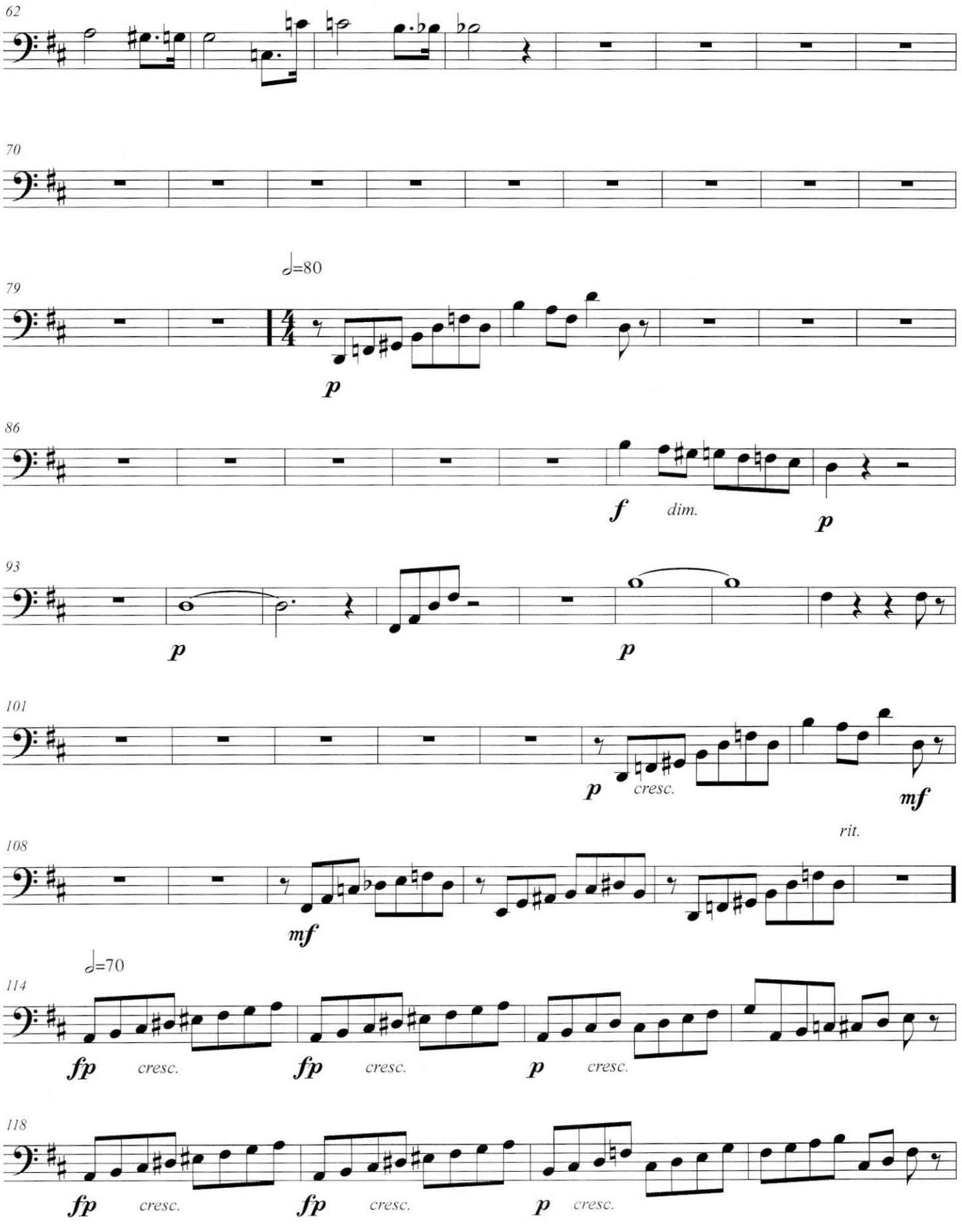
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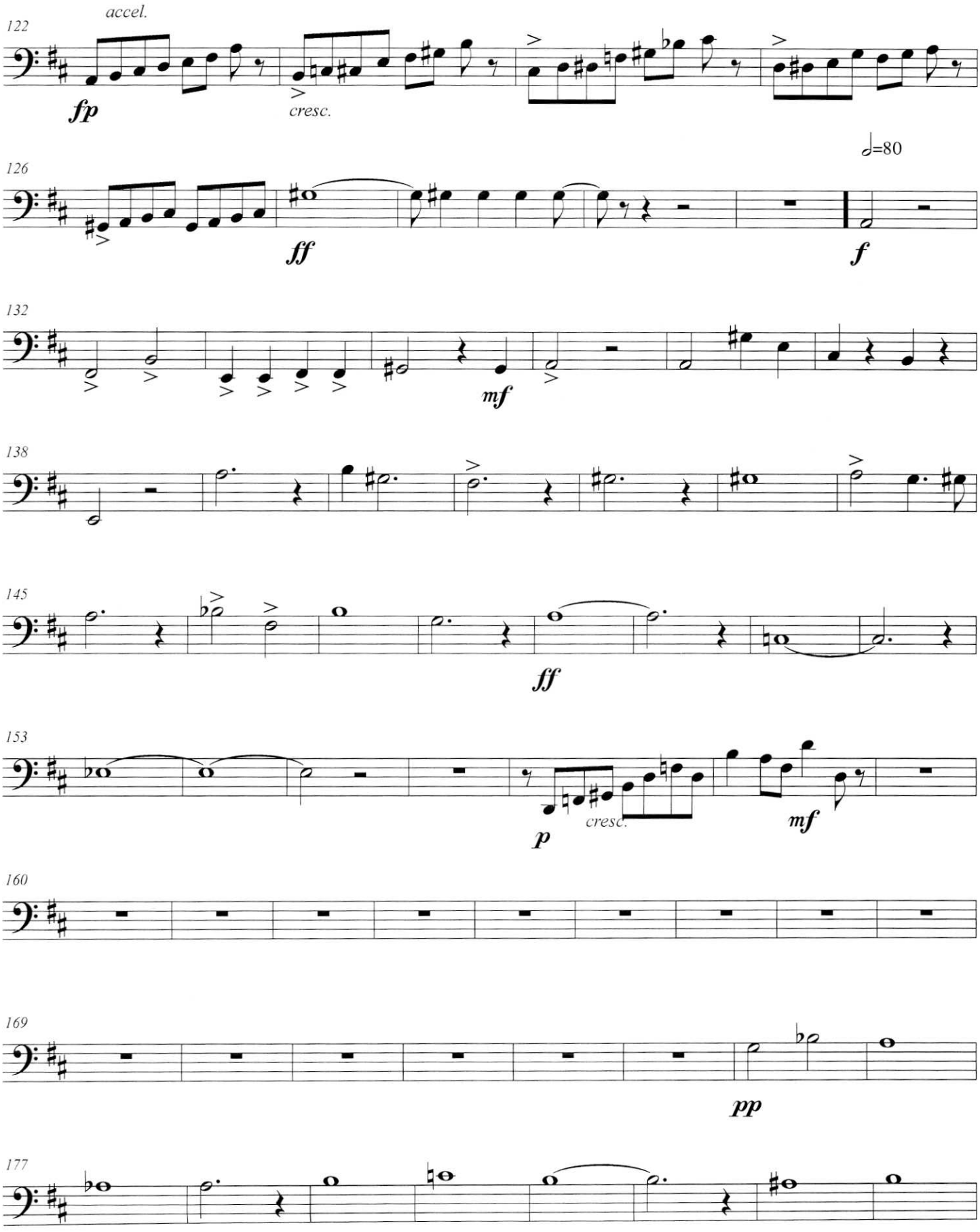
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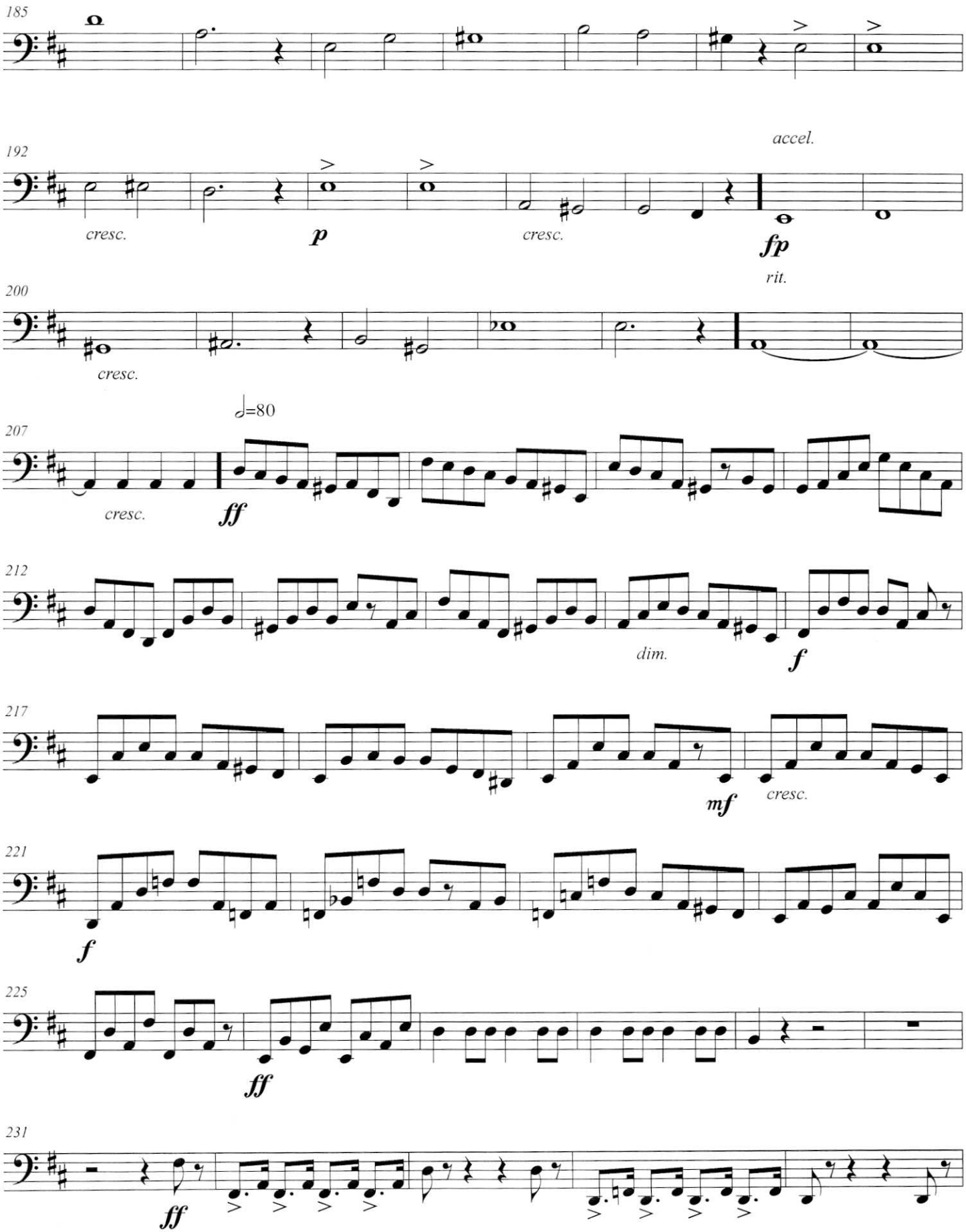
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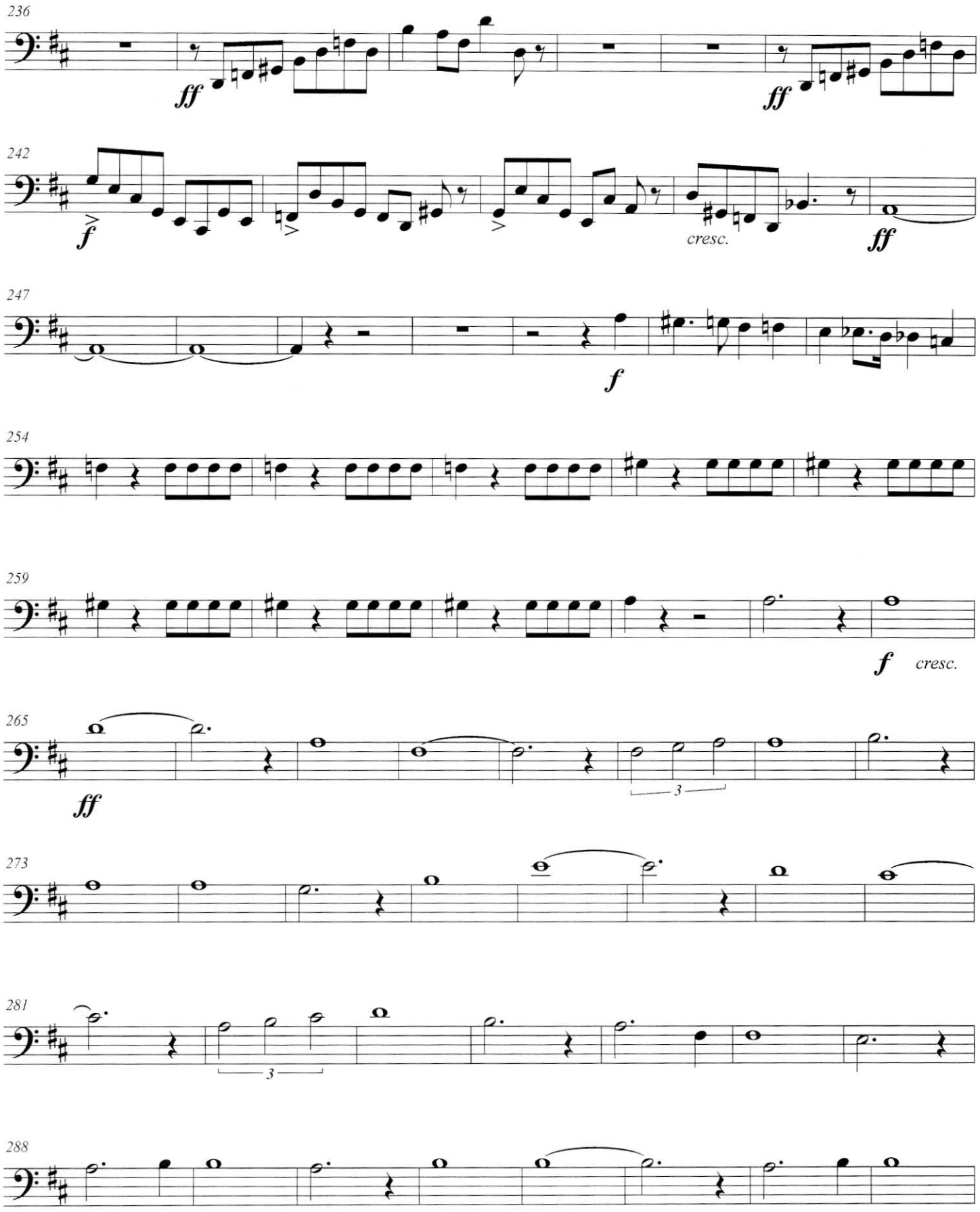
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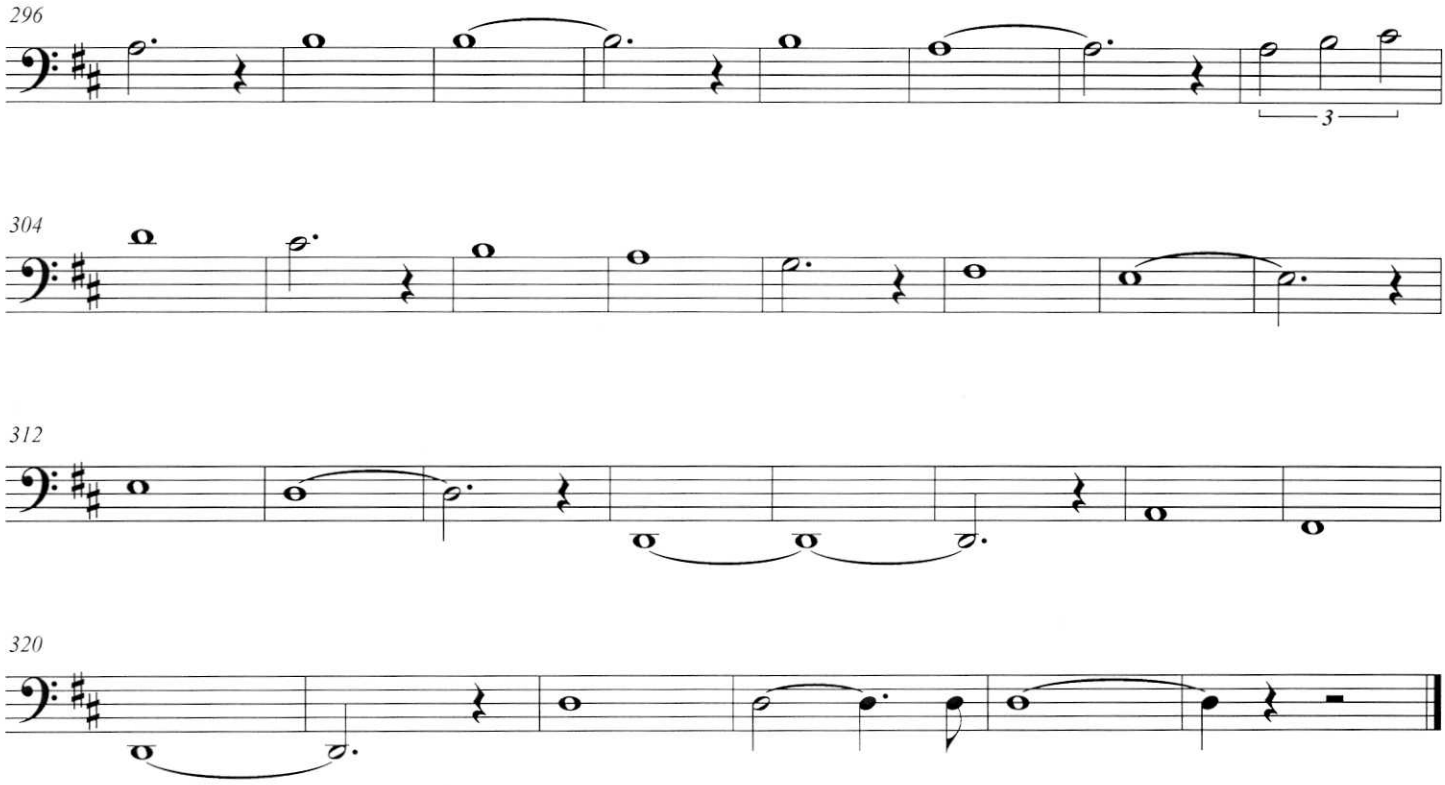
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