"Beatrice and Benedict Overture" (abridged)

Hector Berlioz

Scored for 12 trombones

arranged by

Bob Reifsnyder

Music from the

ROMANTIC BONE COLLECTION

VOLUME SEVEN

About the Composer

"Beatrice and Benedict" of Hector Berlioz (1803-69) was commissioned for the opening of a new opera house in Baden-Baden, Germany, where Berlioz had enjoyed great success with his touring self-produced concerts. It was originally conceived as a one-act opera, but lengthened to two short acts for the premiere in 1862, where it was well received by both critics and audience. For a performance in Weimar, Germany in 1863, he lengthened it further to its present day form. It turned out to be his last composition; after his masterpiece "Les Troyens" was truncated for a production in Paris the following year, he became totally despondent and never picked up his pen again.

The opera is loosely based on Shakespeare's comedy "Much Ado about Nothing", which draws an obvious parallel with Verdi, who ended his career with his masterpiece (Othello), followed by his only comic opera (Falstaff). The overture manages to incorporate six different themes from the opera, which is indeed an unusually high number. The first part is atypical of Berlioz due to its lightness of character (he often referred to the work as an operatic caprice), but the rousing bombastic quality of the ending is unmistakably his typical overture style. It is certainly tragic that he lived for seven more years without producing any more music, much like such polar opposites as Rossini and Sibelius. Even more tragic is the fact that none of his four magnificent operas have managed to crack the standard repertoire of the world's major houses, although "Les Troyens" is at last close to achieving that status.

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.

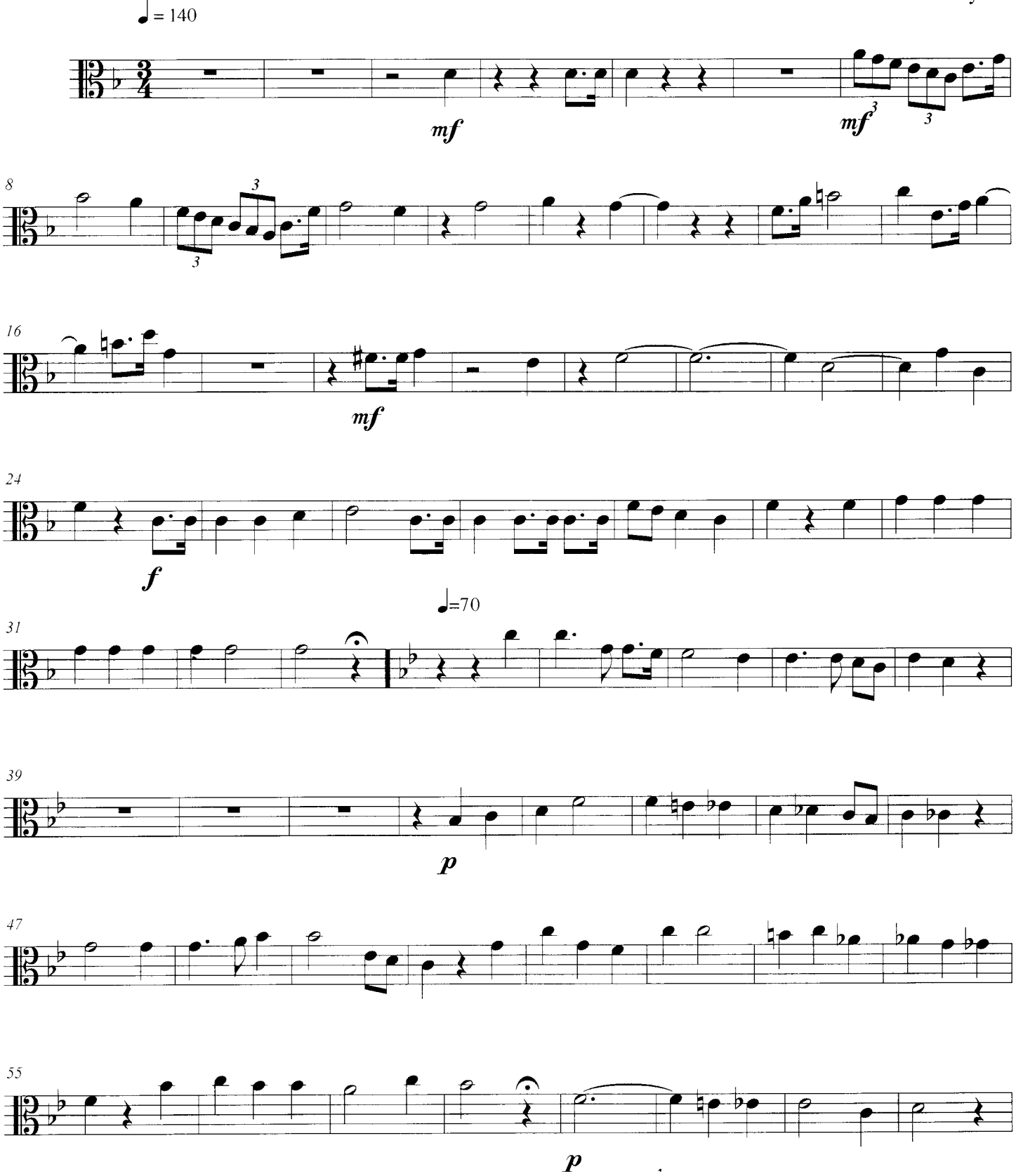
5. Breathing and Articulation- There are no breath marks in these transcriptions; that is perhaps the most personal decision a brass player ever makes. There are, however, notes left out in extended passages that would be otherwise impossible to perform well, hopefully in the most appropriate locations.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

Trombone 4

Overture to "Beatrice and Benedict"

Berlioz

Bob Reifsnyder



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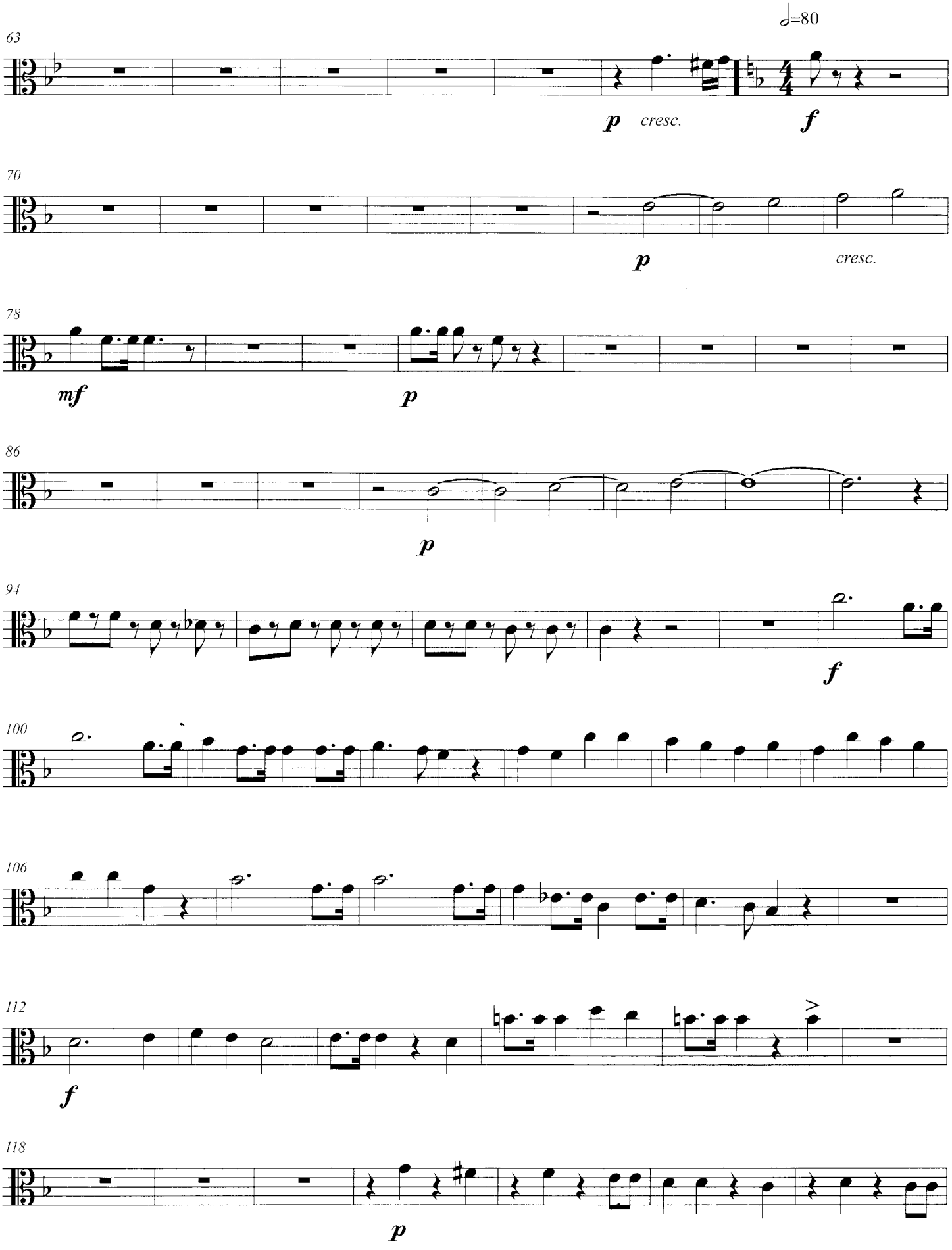
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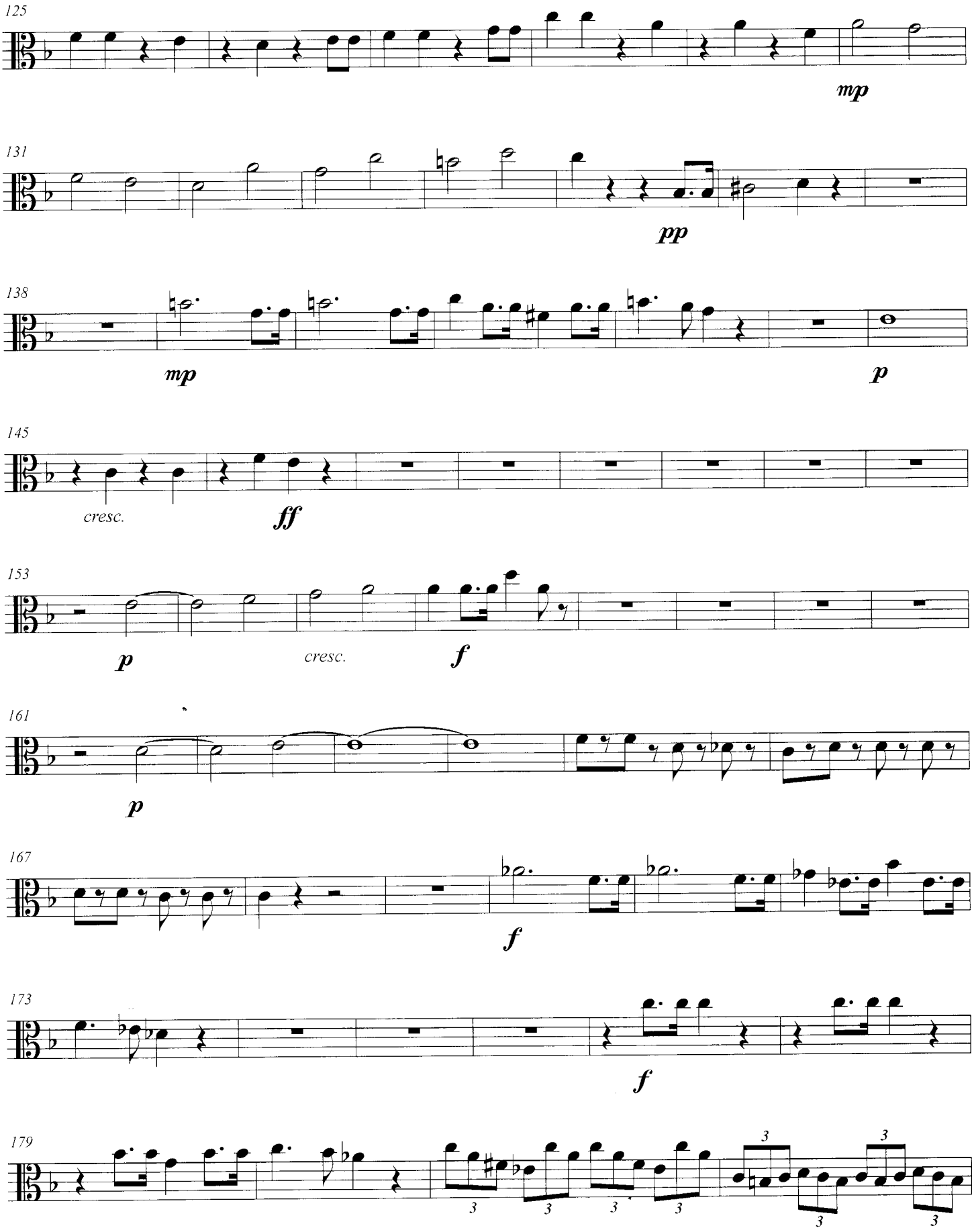
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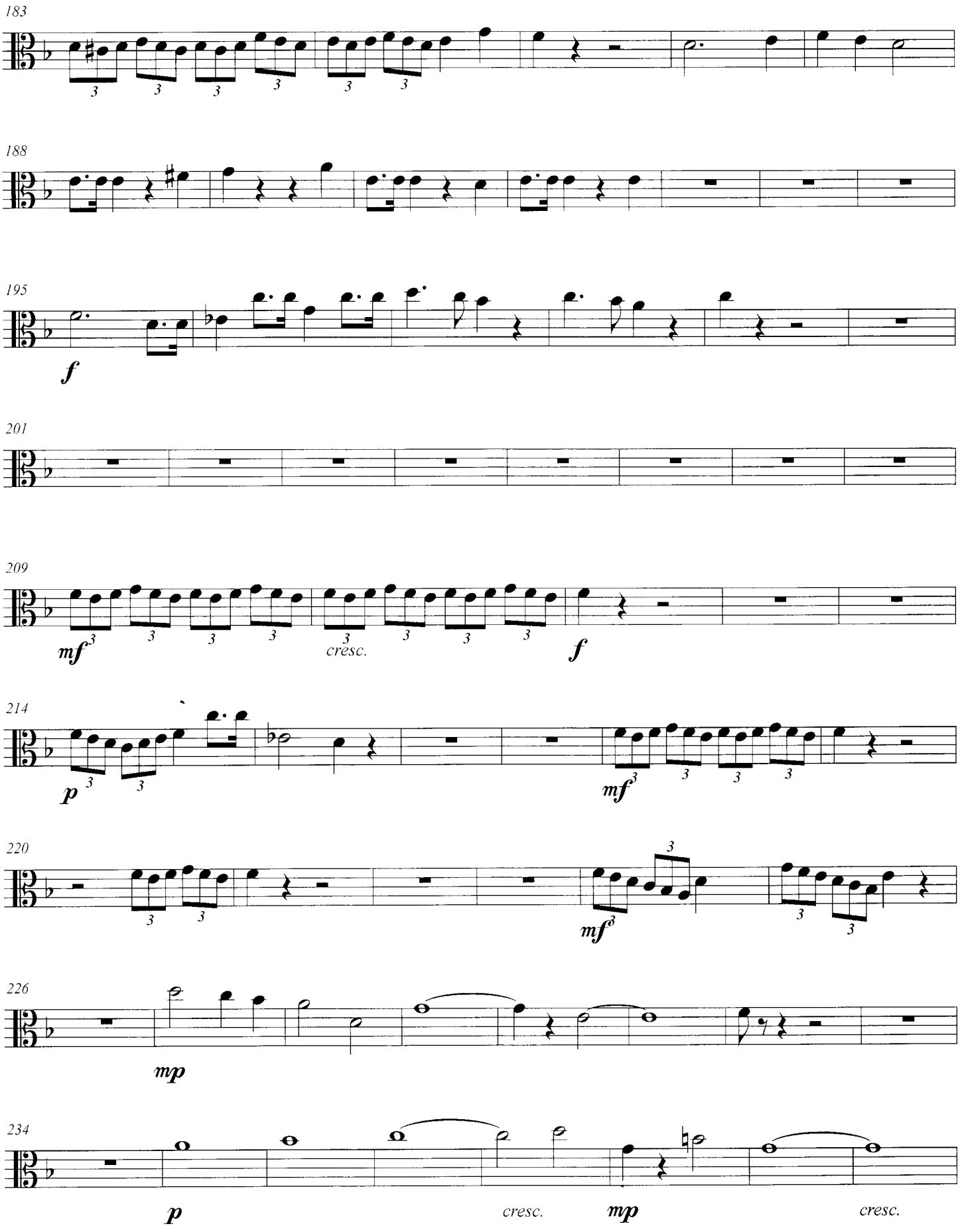
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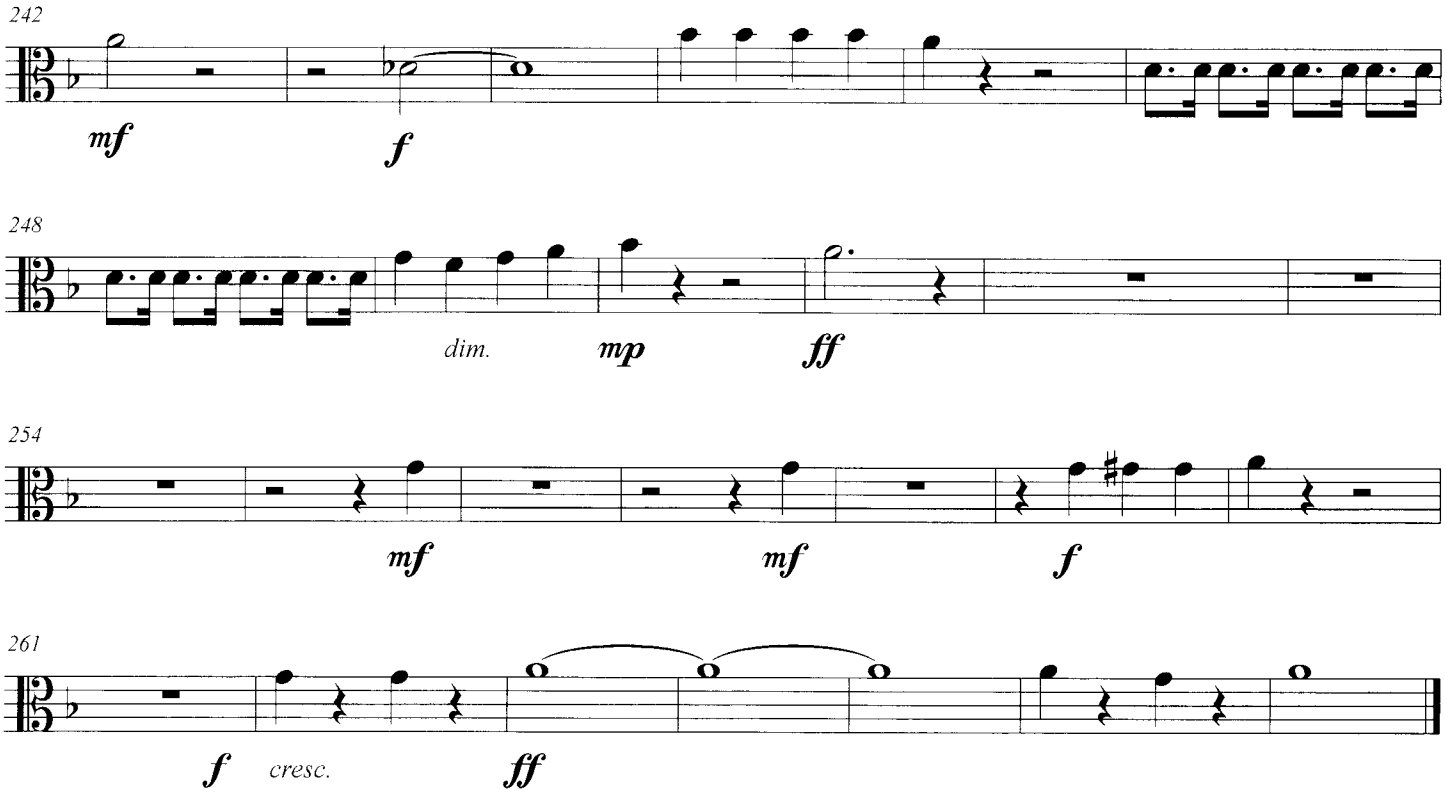
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