Autumn Suite

For Solo Viola

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Jonathan Crosmer

June 2012

Performance Notes

Modern music is sometimes filled with picky markings that the composer expects will be stringently followed. I prefer to think that the performer will learn a piece well enough to make most of the performance decisions. Tempo markings, bowings, dynamics, etc. are provided as suggestions only; please use your musical judgment. In general, this piece should be performed with flexibility of tempo but without losing a dance-like quality of rhythm.

The chords at the beginning of the Lament are not meant to be bowed 2+2 in the traditional manner. Instead, they should be arpeggiated with the fingers, so the lower notes are essentially grace notes before the beat. (Notating the chords as arpeggios would result in a much less readable score.) In the case that the upper two notes lie on adjacent strings, the performer may hold the penultimate note slightly, so that the top interval sounds briefly, but only the top note should be fully sustained. The chord on the downbeat of m. 16 is also played this way on the G string, while sustaining the top note on the D string, requiring a gentle rocking of the bow. The chords at m. 42 and in the rest of the movement may be performed in the standard way. Some of the voicings in this movement require careful fingerings. The harmonics at the end should all be played as natural harmonics, with the sounding note printed. It is probably best to avoid the octave harmonic in this passage, except for the G "eighth note" and the last D, as it is significantly louder and may stick out. The durations here are up to the performer; the given noteheads are just a hint, not meant for strict interpretation.

In the Snow Dance at m. 28, the sixteenth notes that begin after the beat should be played late and fast. Sixteenth note groups beginning on a beat should be more in rhythm, as in the last beat of m. 35 and the downbeat of m. 36; also mm. 45-46 should be in rhythm. At m. 74, the empty notehead and dotted slur indicate that the open A should continue as a kind of drone until m. 85, regardless of the bowing the performer selects. The drone is used on different open strings in this movement. (Again, notating the open string as a double stop would make the music very difficult to read.) The performer may wish to experiment with expressive intonation in the Presto. I suggest keeping the more consonant intervals, the perfect fifth and major third, tuned pure against the drones, but others may be stretched one way or another for a kind of exotic or primal sound.

Program Notes

Autumn Suite is loosely modeled after the Bach cello suites, containing a series of dance movements. Most of the dances are in irregular meters and use a more Romantic harmonic language, but the textures and formal shapes have a Baroque origin. Like the Bach suites, *Autumn Suite* weaves contrapuntal lines and complexity into a piece that can barely be contained on a single instrument. One major departure from the Baroque aesthetic that this piece makes is that each movement is not limited to a single affect. There is play between light and darkness, joy and melancholy, within each movement and even from measure to measure. This quality is meant to reflect the kind of feeling one may have on a crisp fall day, when the sky is grey and the weather seems to teeter on the edge of winter.

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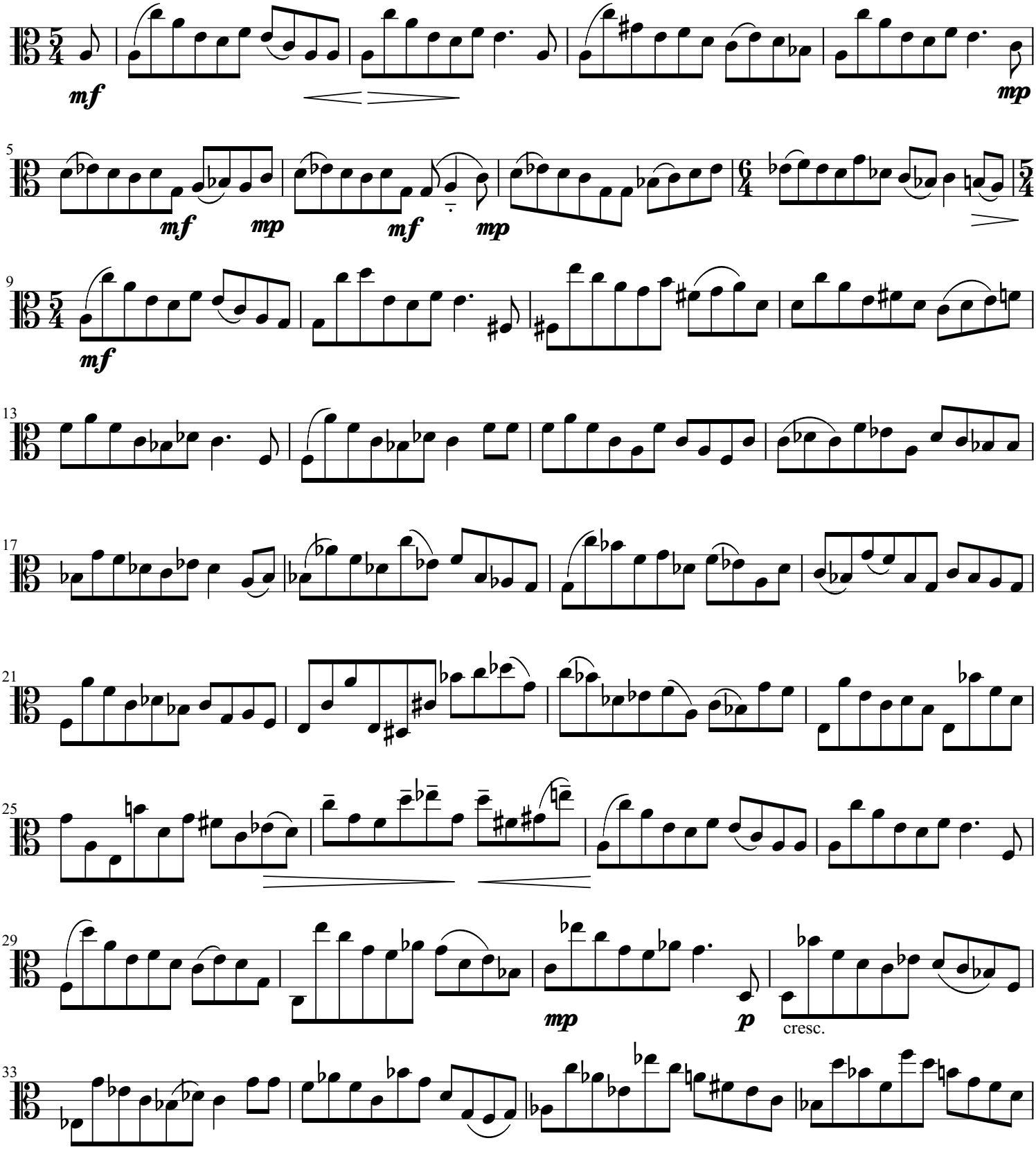
Autumn Suite

For Solo Viola

Jonathan Crosmer

For Derek Mosloff

I. Prelude. Moderato contemplativo (♩ = 100)



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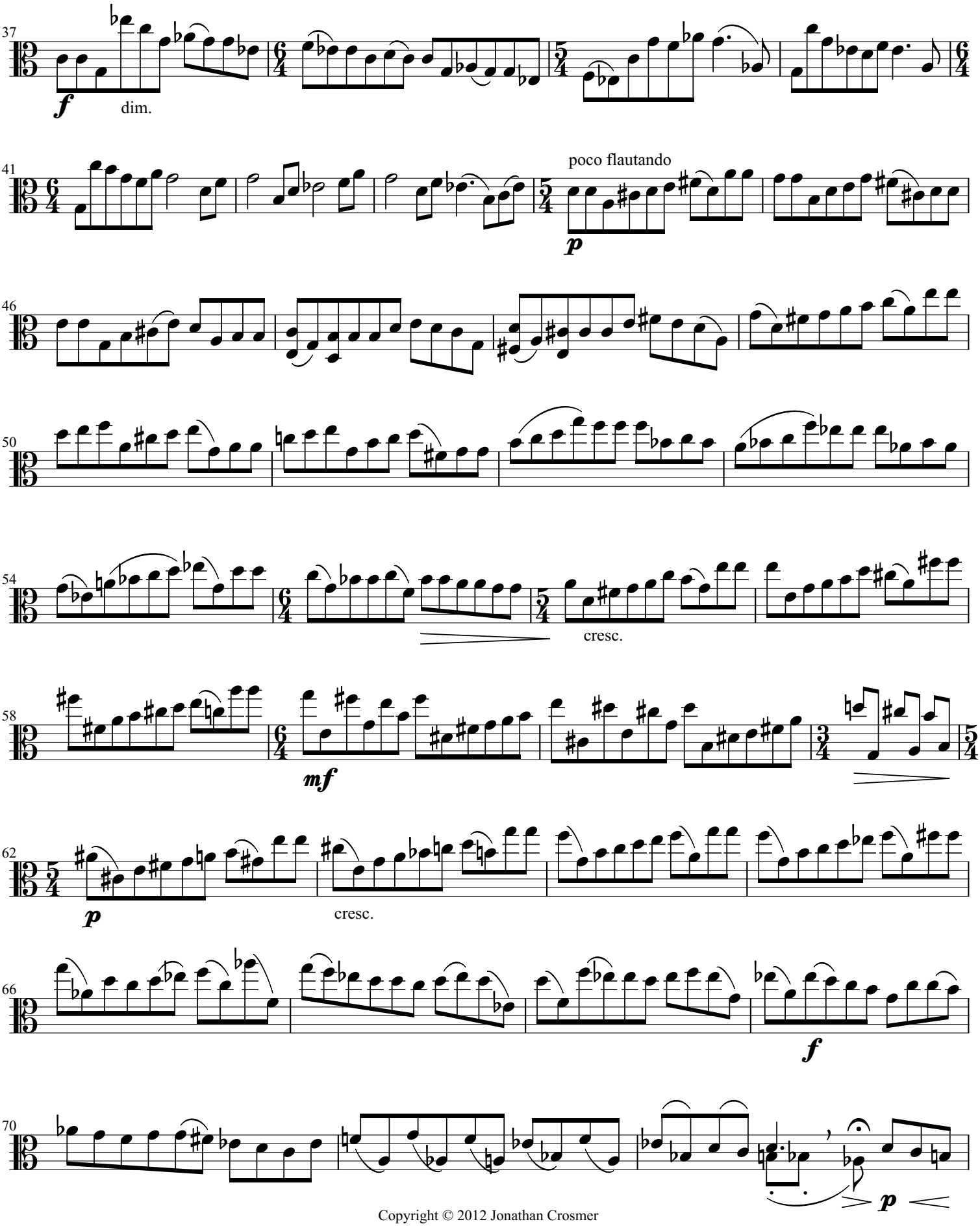

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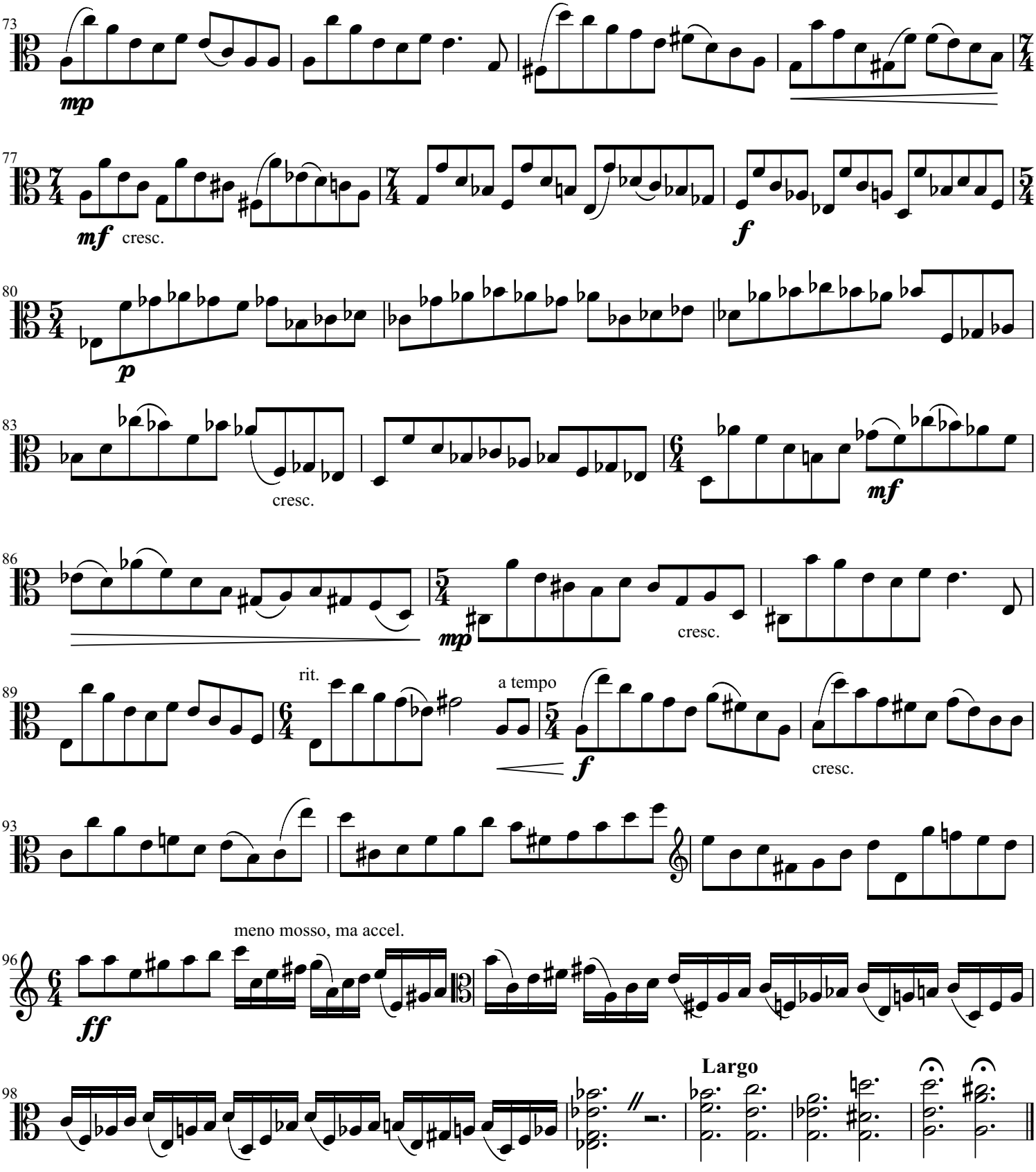

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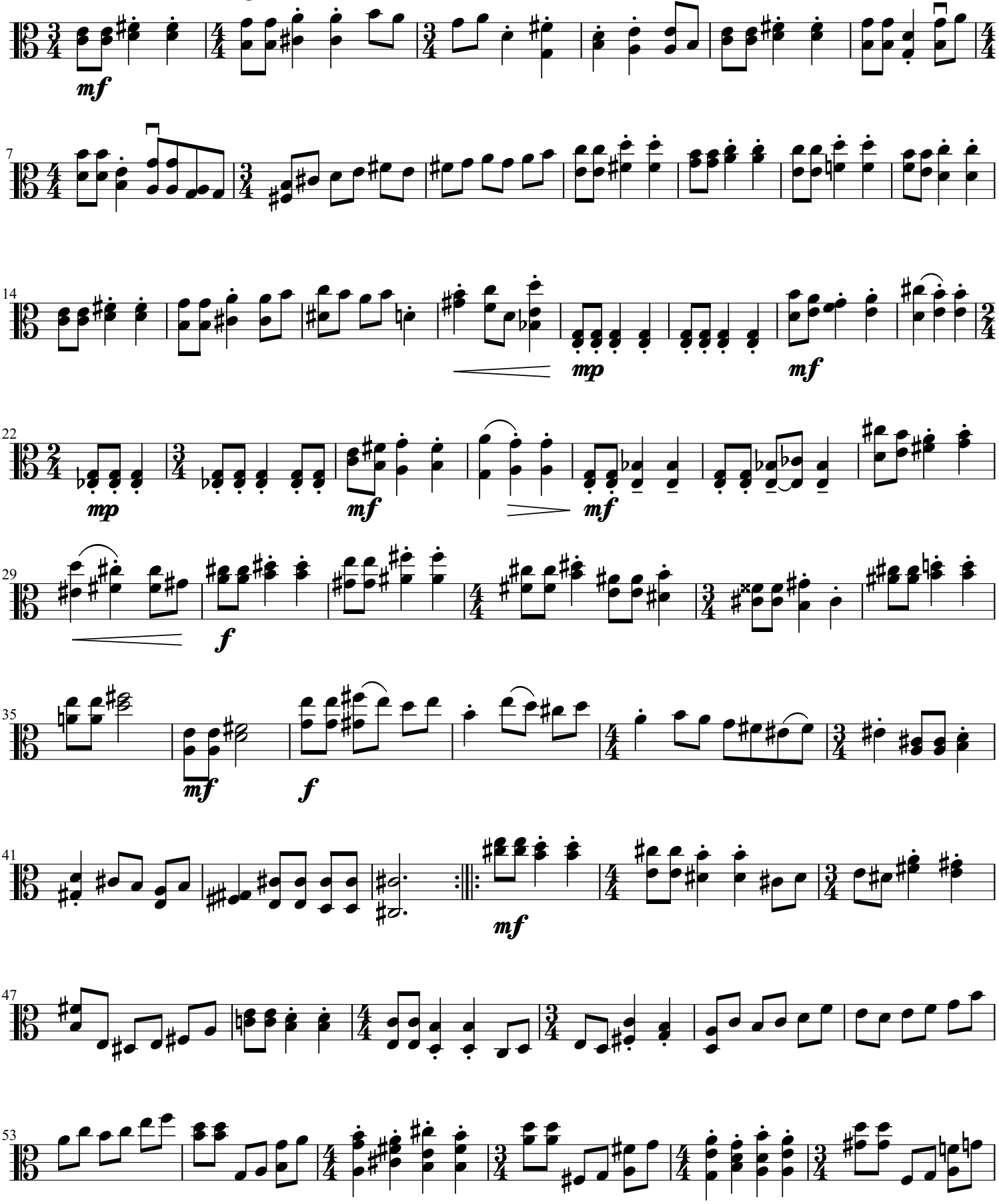
II. Rabbit Dance. Allegretto vivace (♩ = 144)



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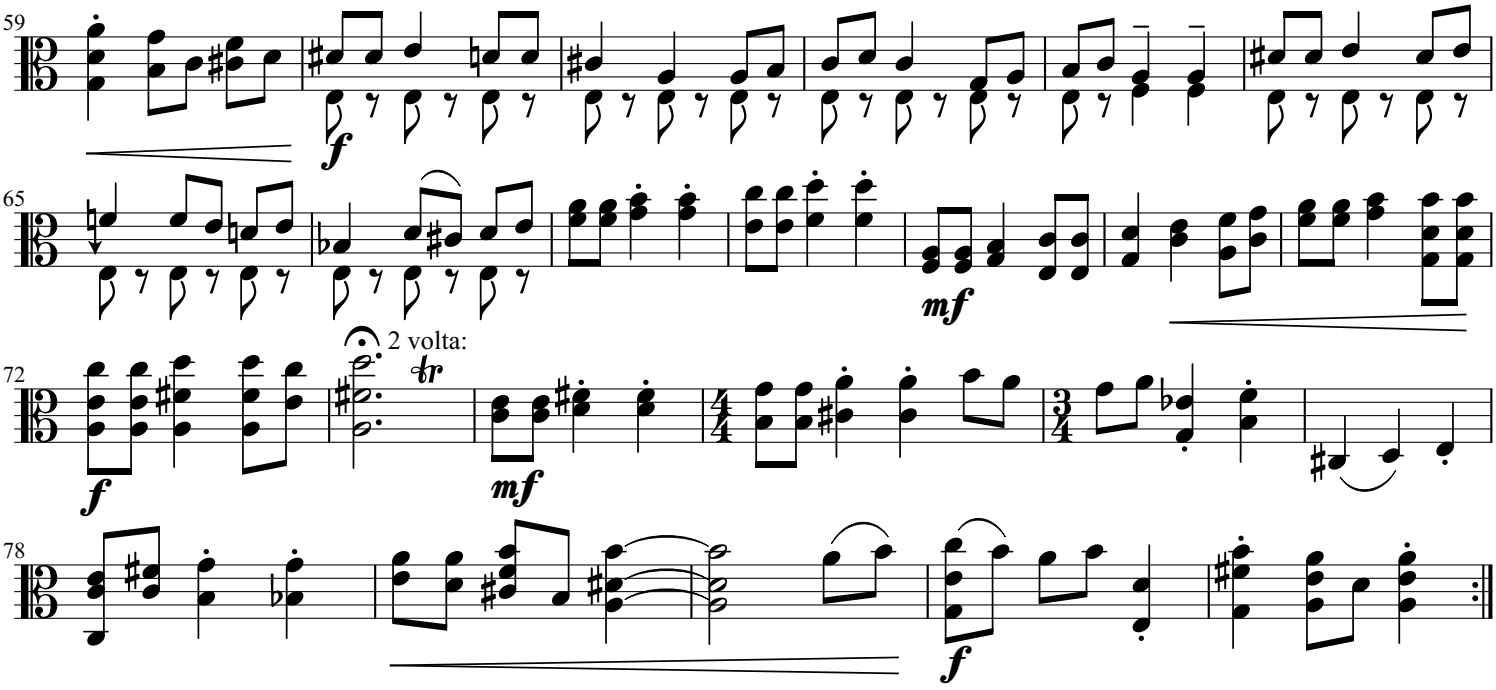

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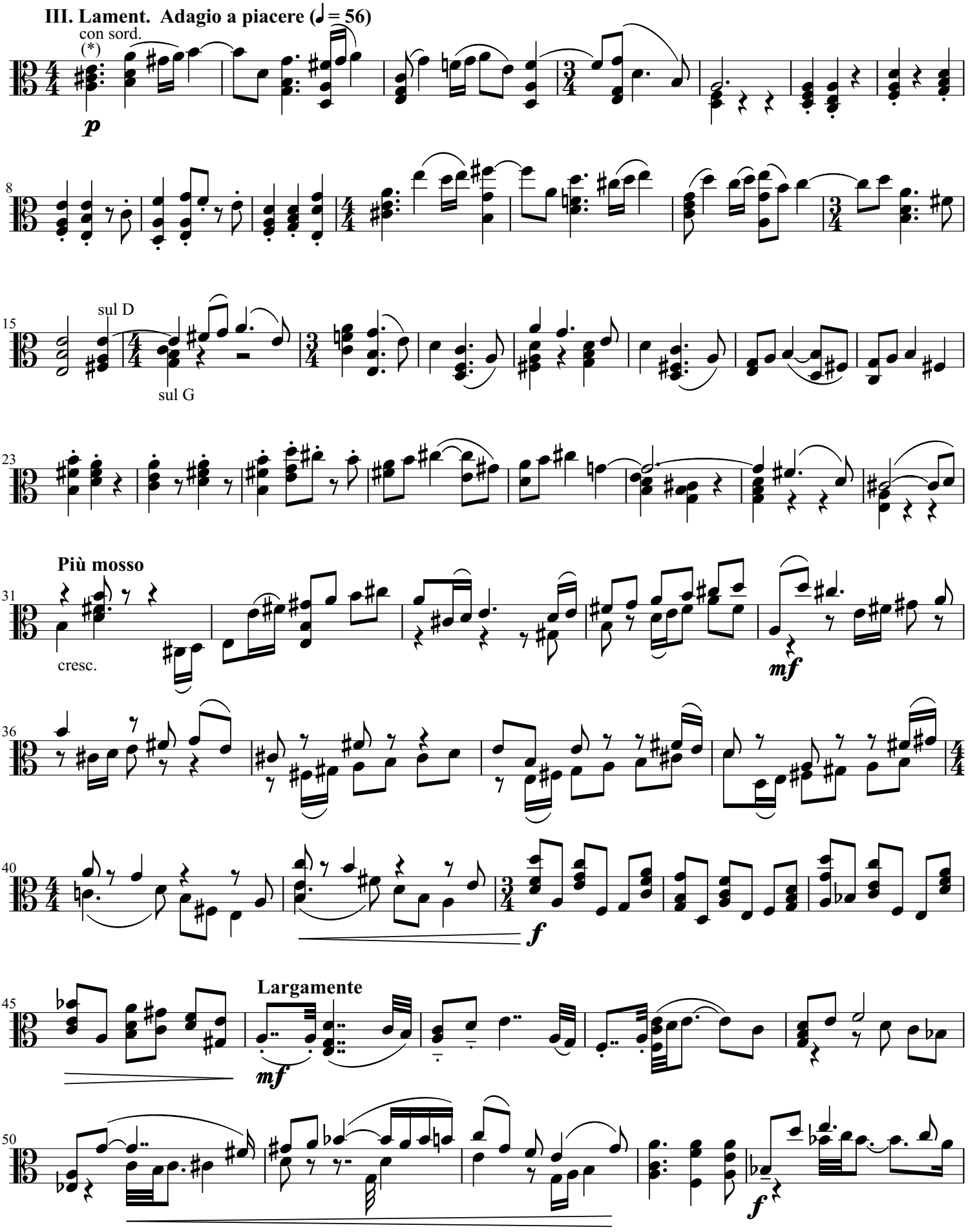

(*) These chords are to be gently arpeggiated with the fingers; see performance notes.

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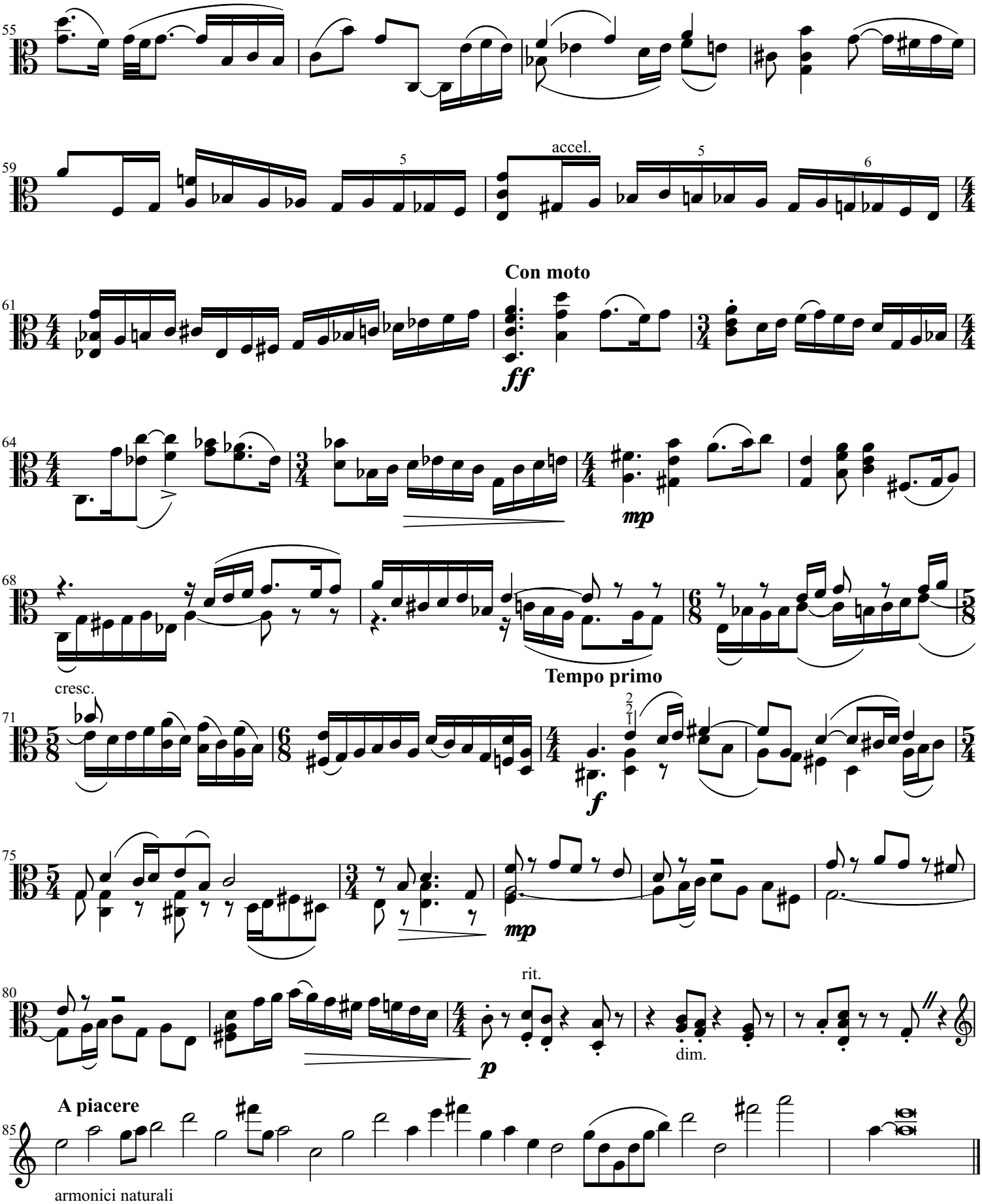

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IV. Snow Dance. Allegro grazioso (♩. = 92)

senza sord.

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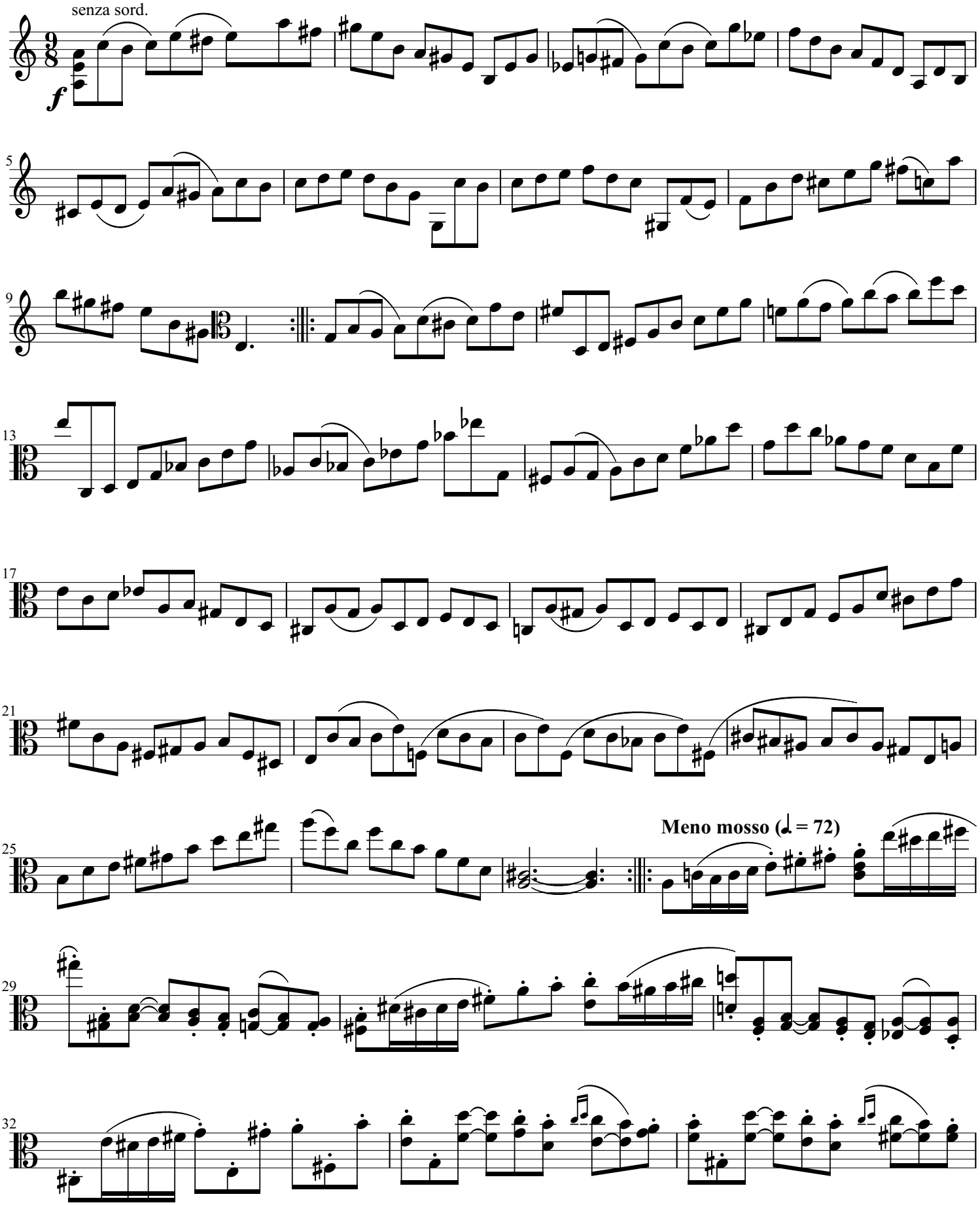

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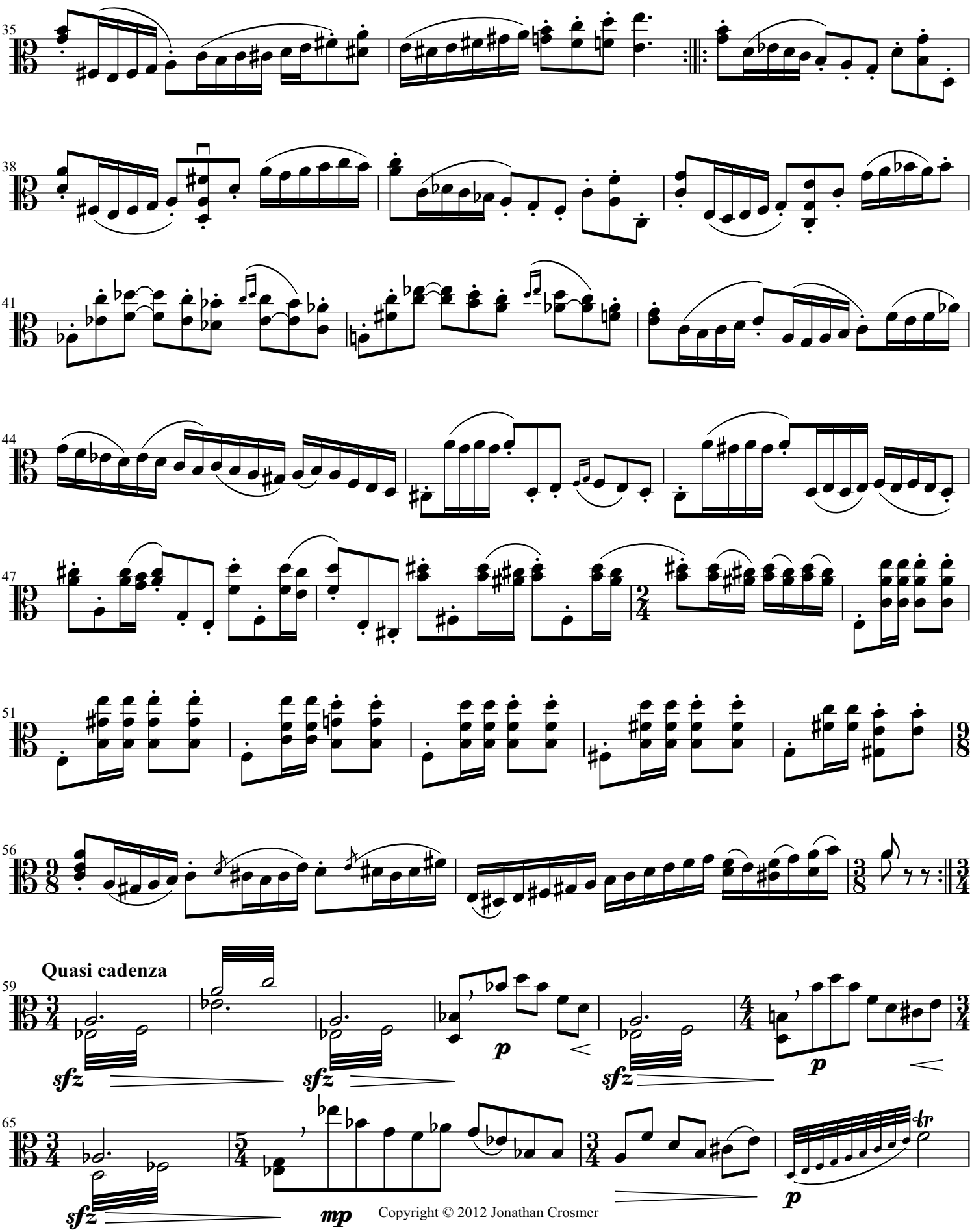

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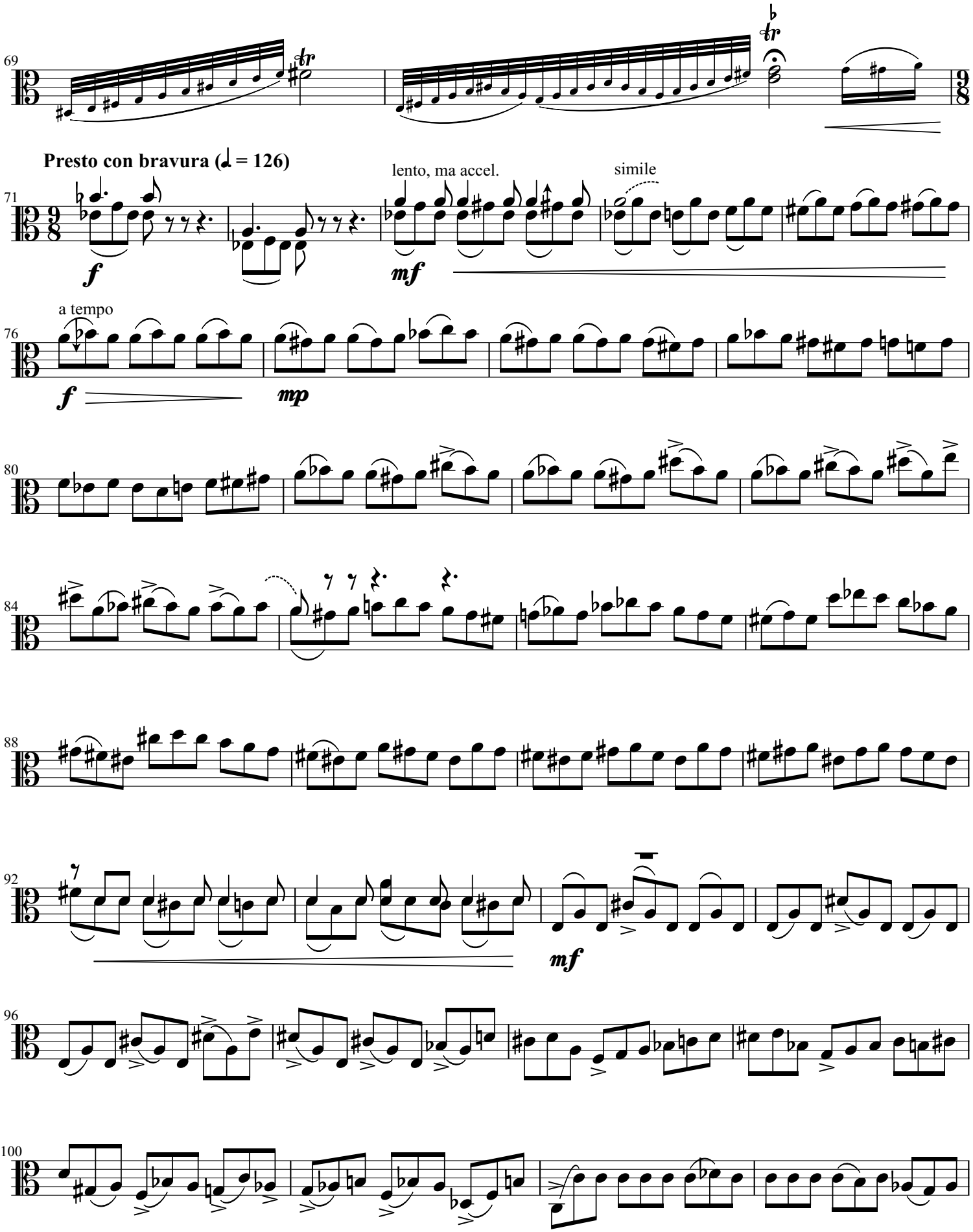

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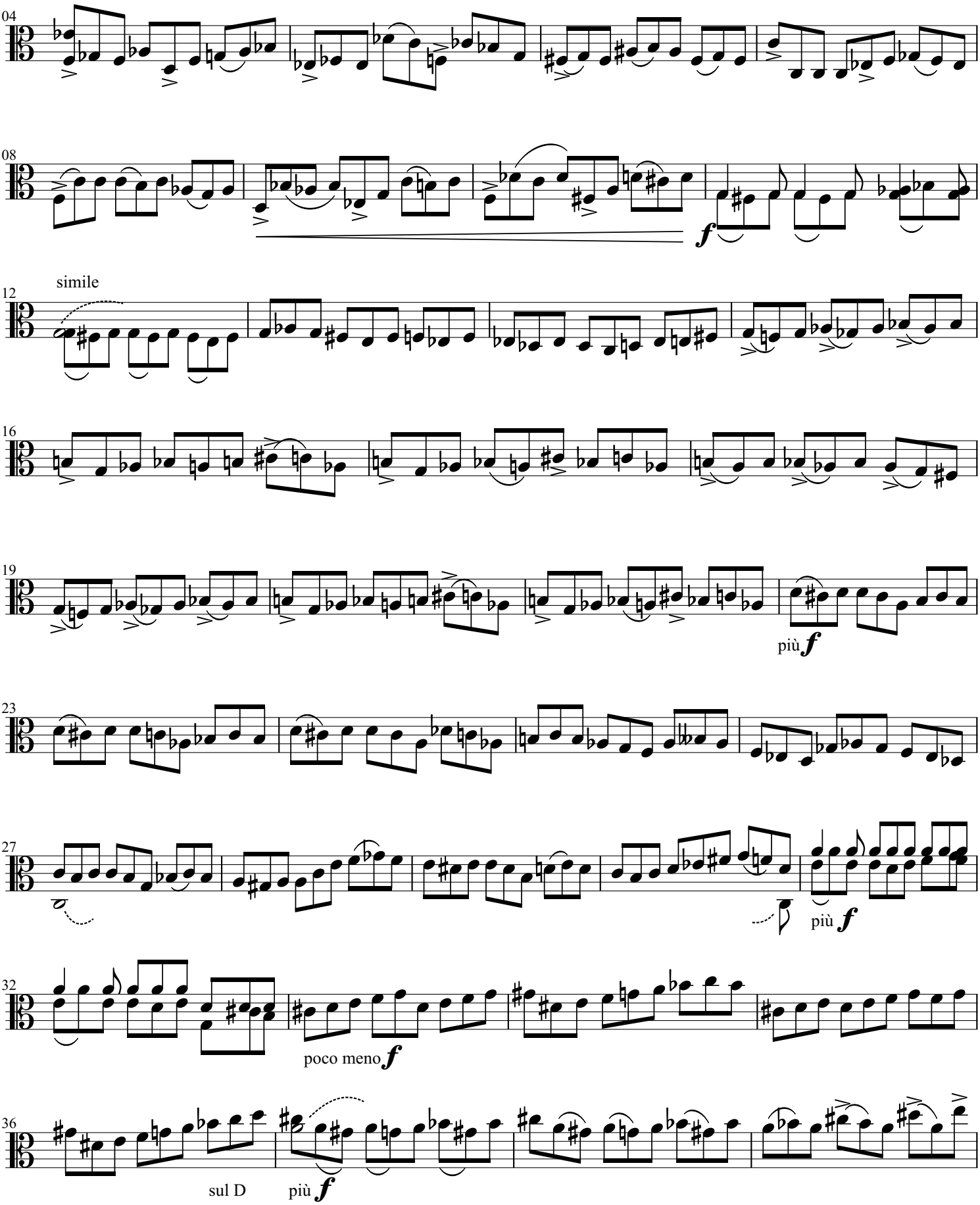

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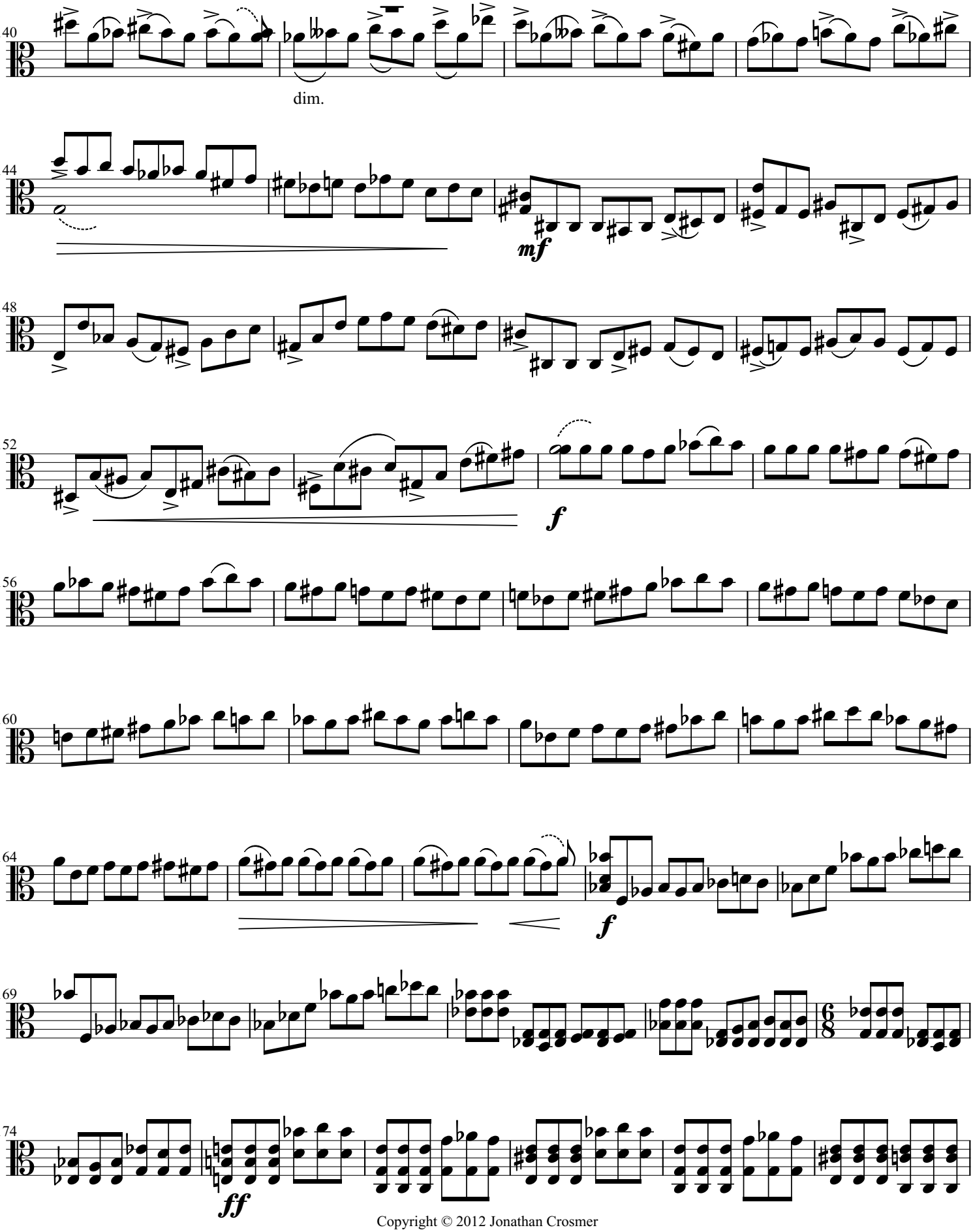

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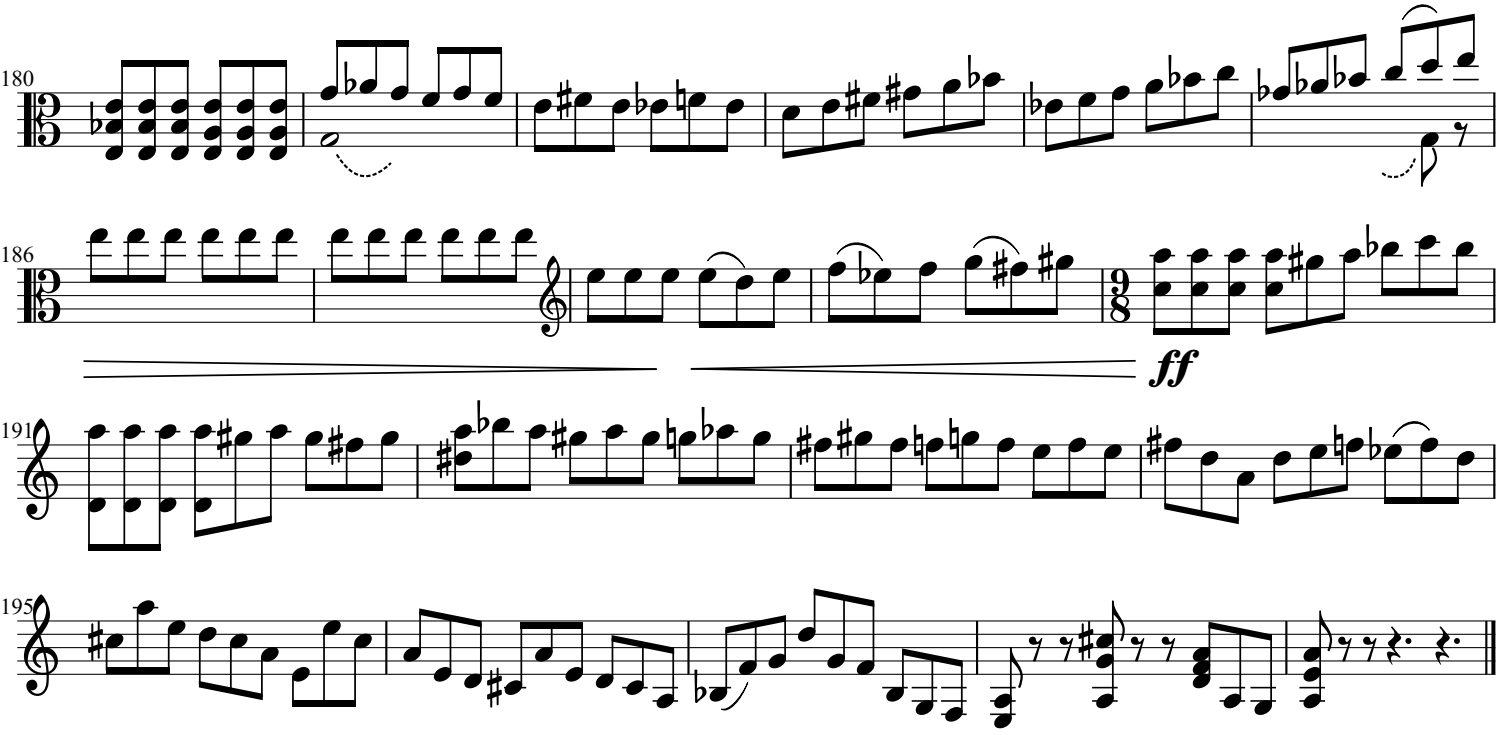

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