FOUR COMIC PORTRAITS

for solo cello

I. Ignatius J. Reilly

II. Montmorency

III. Tabitha Bramble

IV. Sir John Falstaff

Steven Watson

An Introduction to the Four Portraits:

Ignatius J. Reilly is an indolent and repulsive thirty-year-old gargantua from New Orleans whose chief occupation is spluttering and moaning about the horrors of the modern world. Over the course of John Kennedy Toole's novel *A Confedereacy of Dunces*, Reilly attempts quixotic schemes to fix various social ills, which all end in grand failure. But he is at his happiest, in a perverse sense, when yelling vulgarities at the cinema or lamenting on subjects like the spiritual ill-effects of canned food. He frequently despairs, in particular, over the absence of 'theology and geometry' in the modern world. There is, at least, some geometry in this movement, which is an eccentric fugue where none of the voices sound together. (I have coloured the three voices green, blue, and red to make the score more legible.)

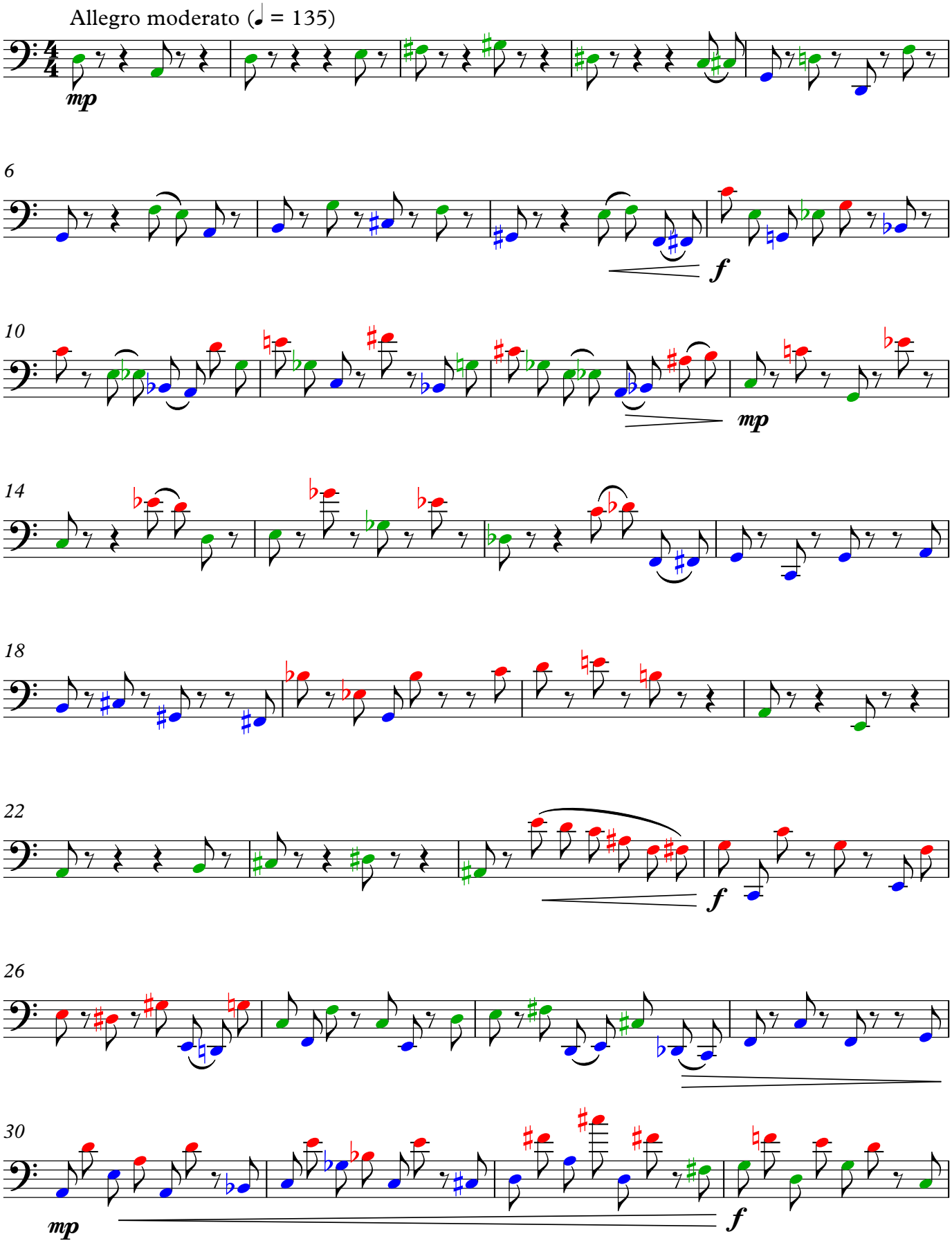
In Jerome K. Jerome's novel *Three Men in a Boat*, the dog Montmorency accompanies the men wherever they go. The flaws and foibles of the men are comically mirrored in the dog. The poor thing is never particularly successful, whether it be in his battles against cats or kettles. Of the four characters in this suite, he is the only one who is unconditionally likeable. But this may have something to do with the fact that he has the good fortune not to be a human being.

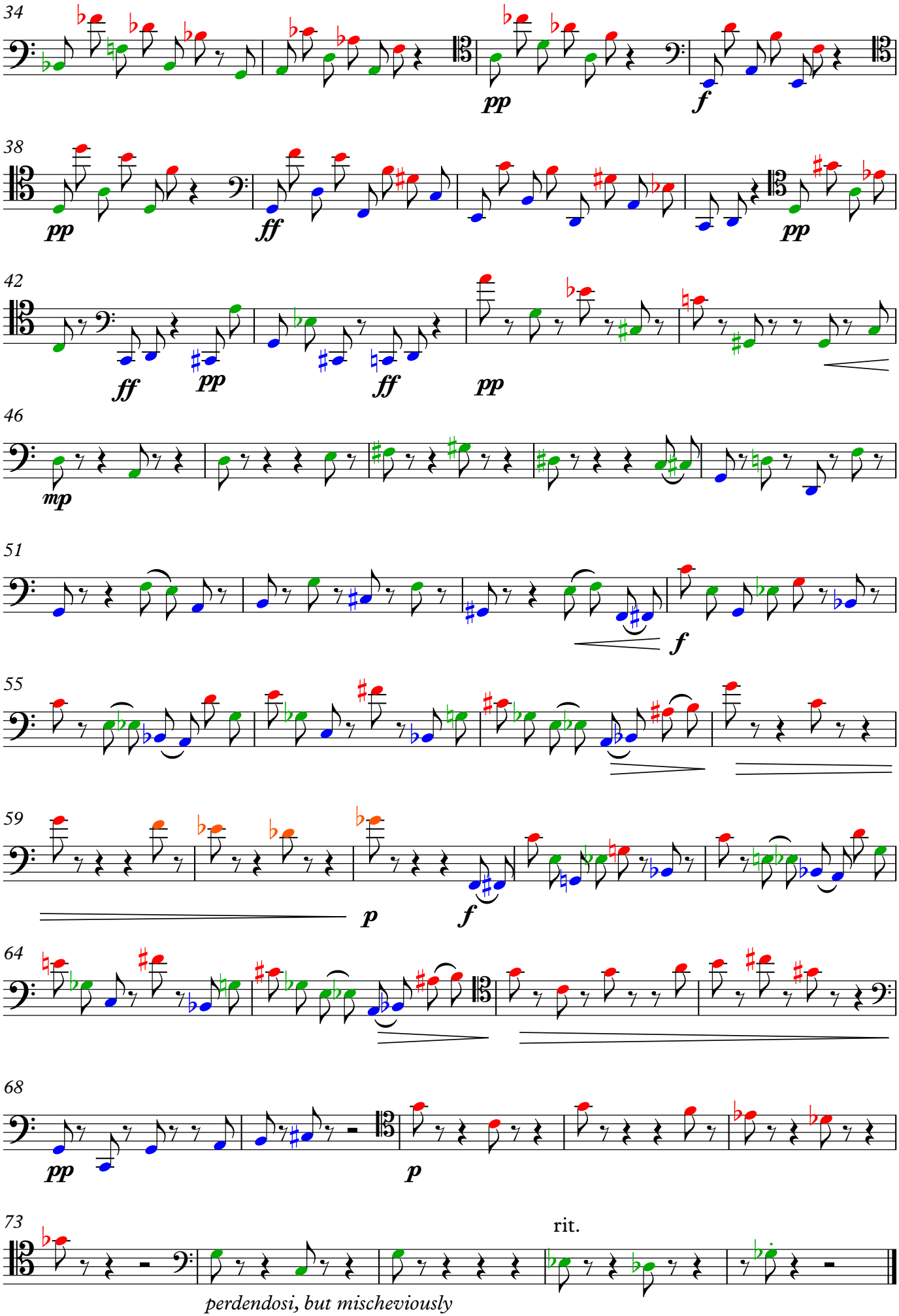
In Tobias Smollett's comic travel novel *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, the middle-aged Tabitha Bramble is obsessed about status and eager to find a suitable husband for herself – whom she eventually does in the equally disagreeable Lismahago. An epistolary novel, her letters in *Humphry Clinker* are frequently amusing, and I think rather endearing, on account of their mistakes and unintended double entendres. For example, she complains about one of her servants, that, 'Roger gets this, and Roger gets that; but I'd have you to know, I won't be rogered at this rate by any ragmatical fellow in the kingdom.'

Falstaff needs no introduction (though I'm sure he would not object to one). The music I've given him is suitably bouncy and gregarious, with some impatient and prideful moments, especially in the middle. Although Falstaff's death was a sad one, I couldn't bring myself to end the music that way. Rather, I imagined the music's end being Falstaff's sham victory at the Battle of Shrewsbury.

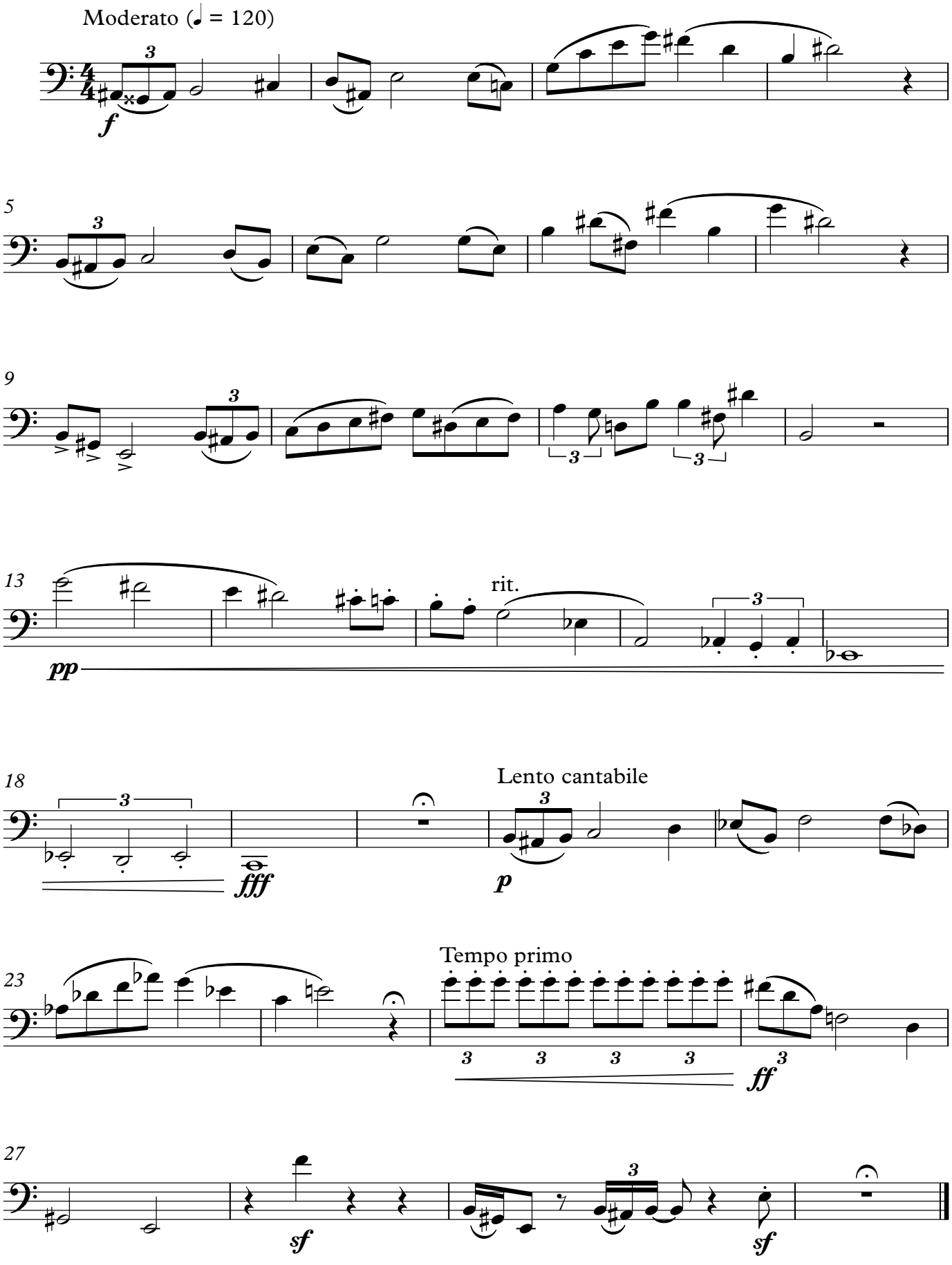
Steven Watson

I. Ignatius J. Reilly

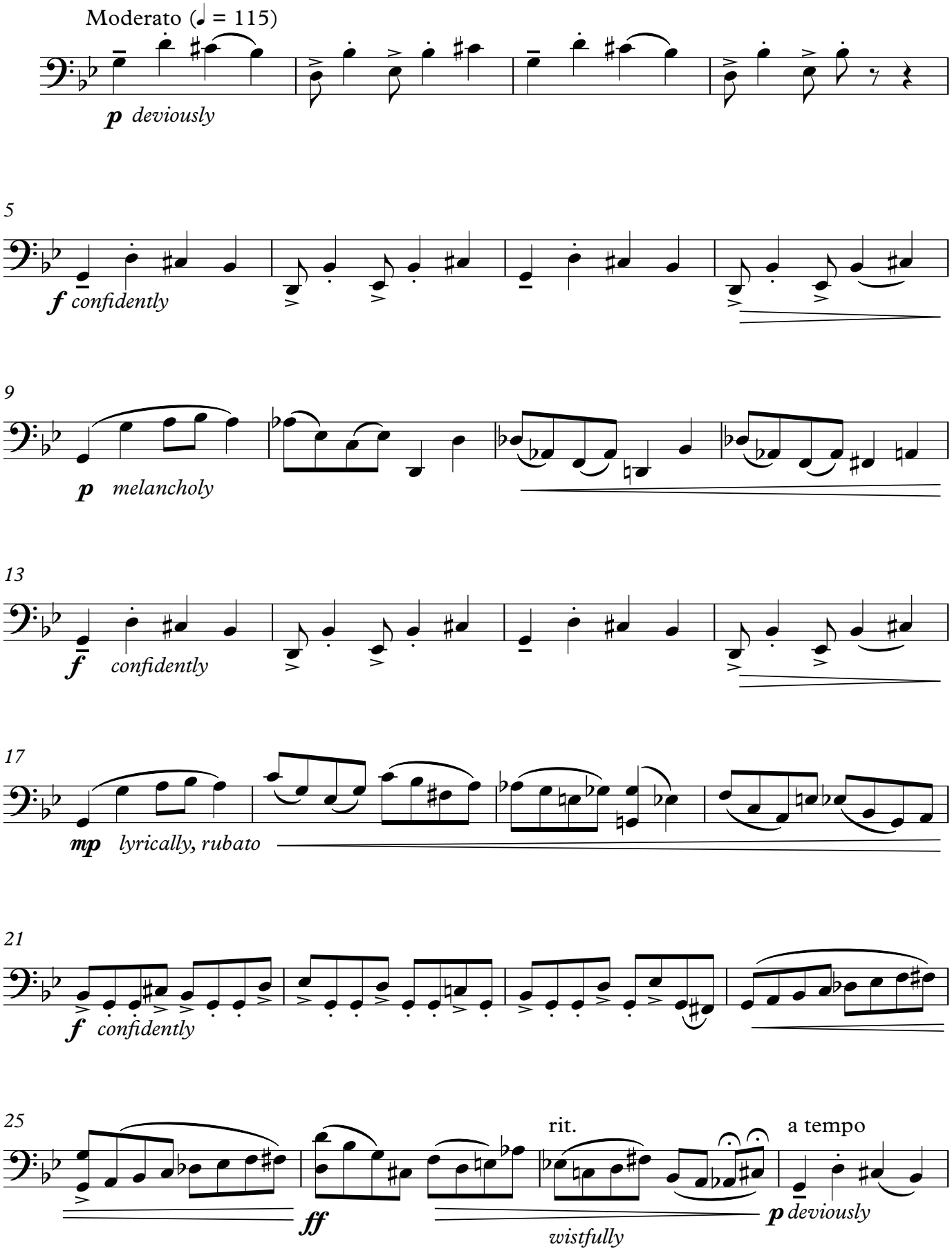



34
pp
f
38
pp
ff
pp
42
ff
pp
ff
pp
46
mp
51
f
55
59
p
f
64
68
pp
p
73
rit.
perdendosi, but mischeviously

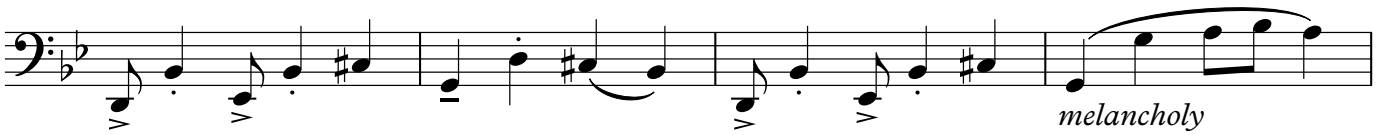
II. Montmorency



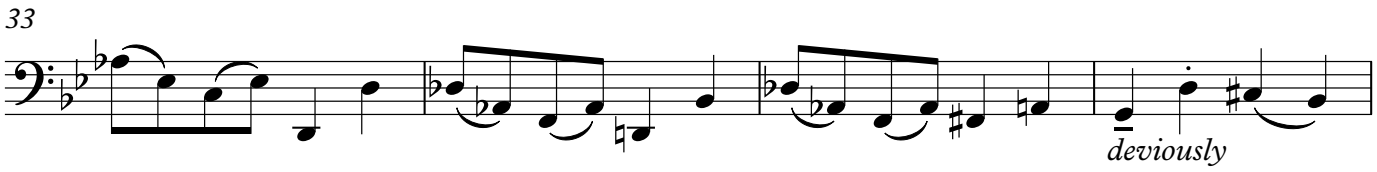
III. Tabitha Bramble



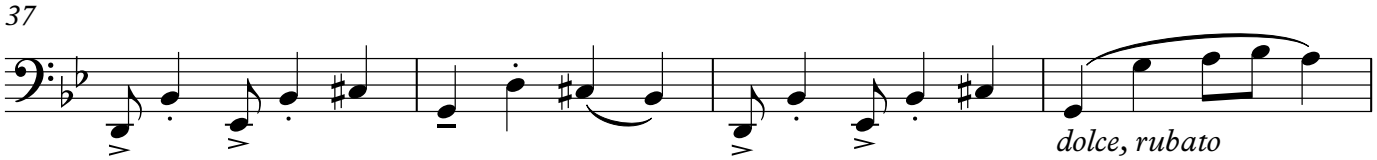
29



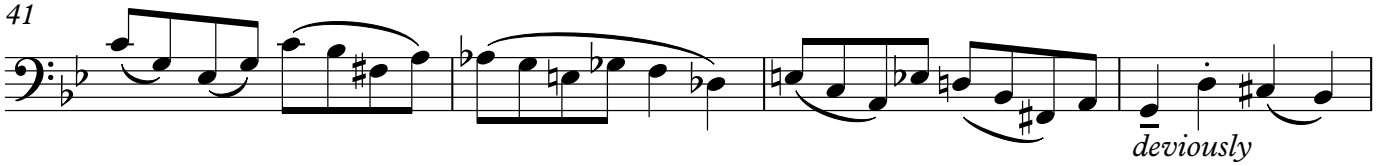
33



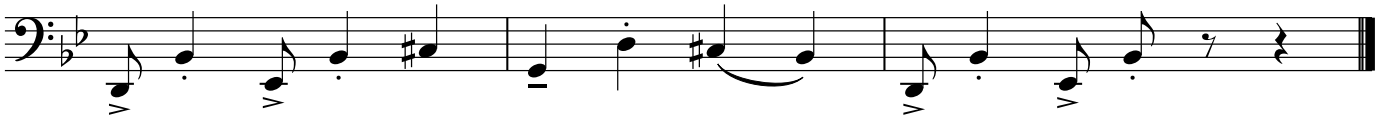
37



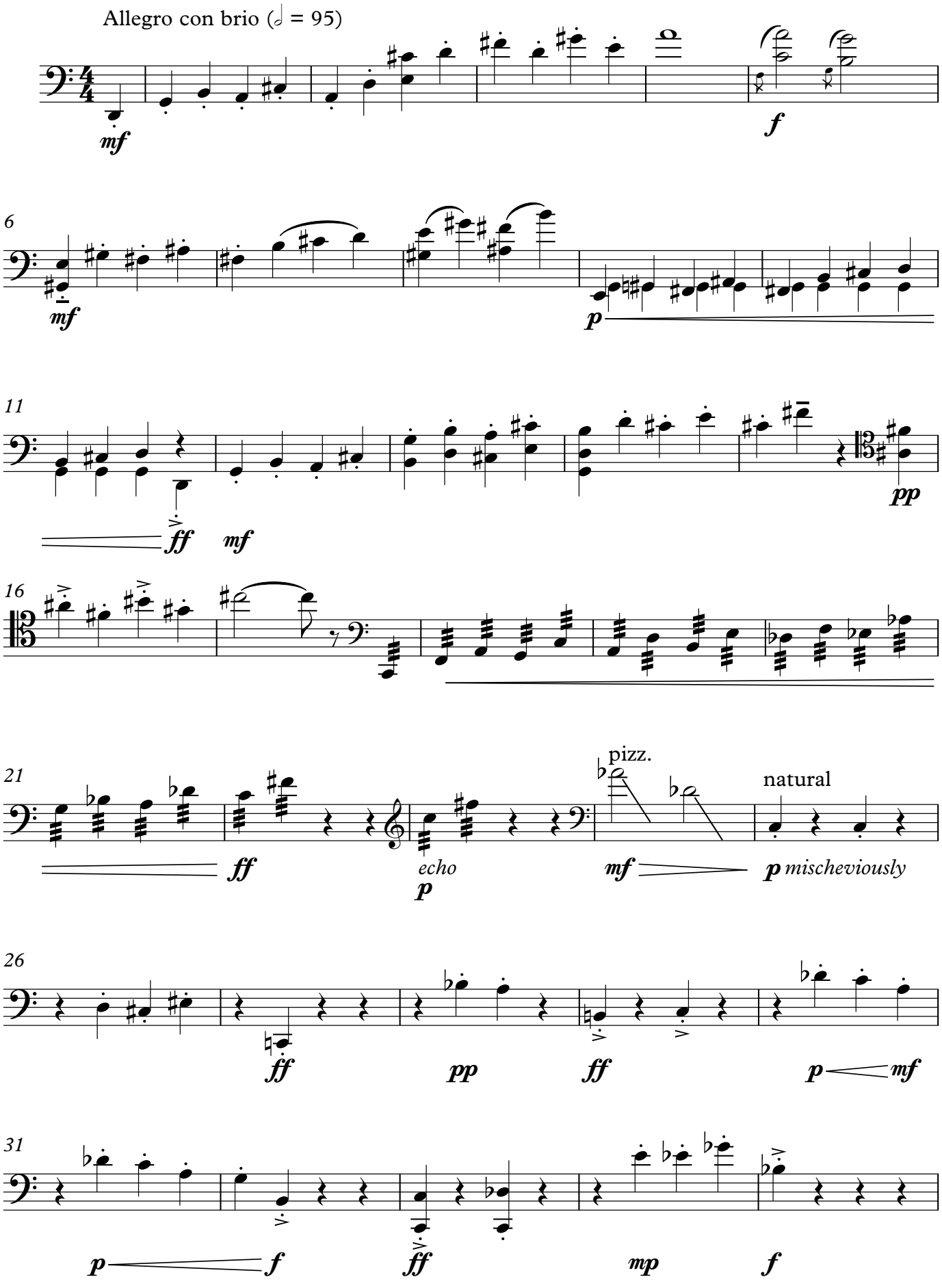
41

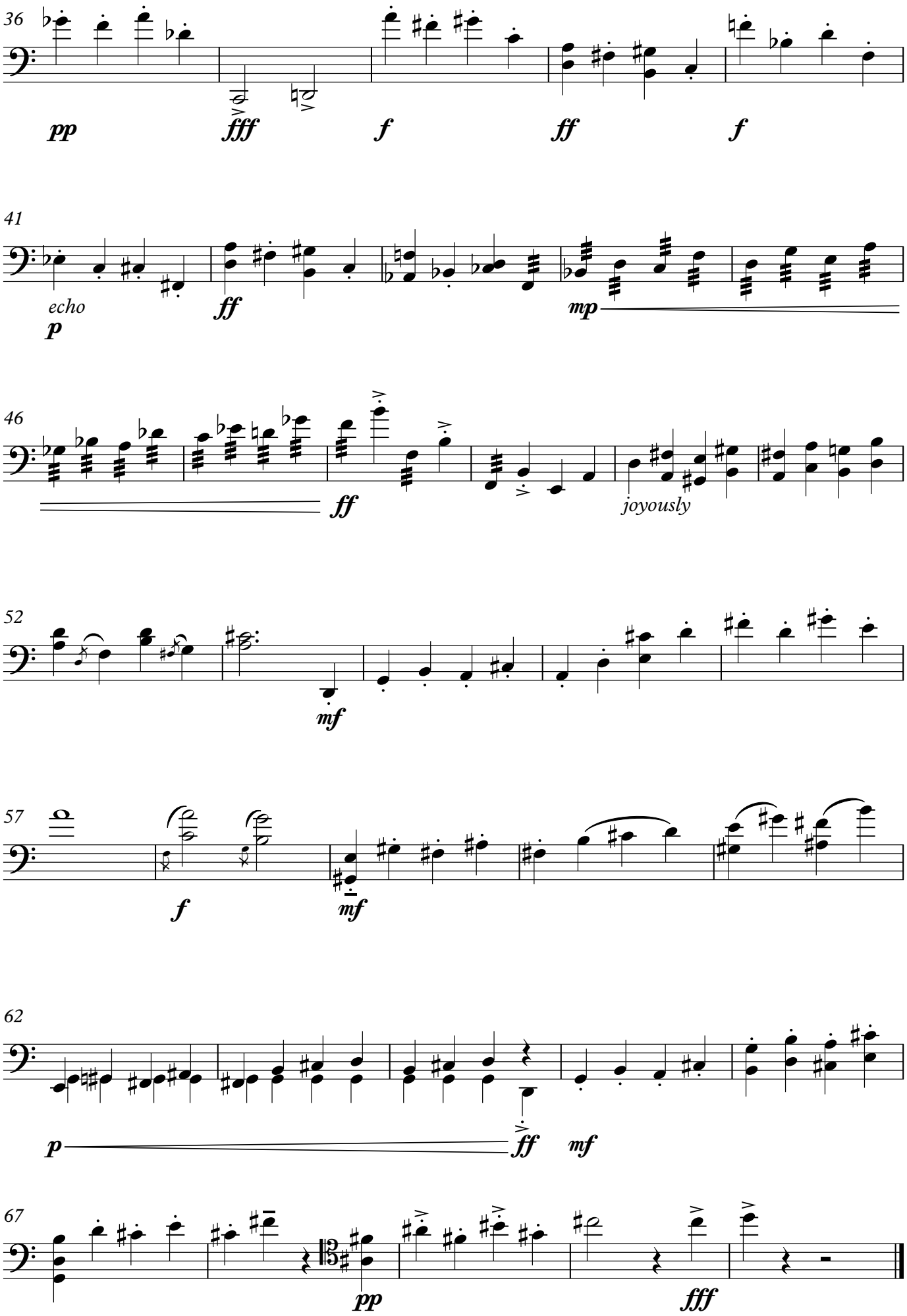


45



Falstaff


Allegro con brio (𝅗𝅥 = 95)
mf
f
6
mf
p
11
ff
mf
pp
16
21
ff
echo
p
pizz.
mf
natural
p mischeviously
26
ff
pp
ff
p
mf
31
p
f
ff
mp
f


36
pp
fff
f
ff
f
41
echo
p
ff
mp
46
ff
joyously
52
mf
57
f
mf
62
p
ff
mf
67
pp
fff