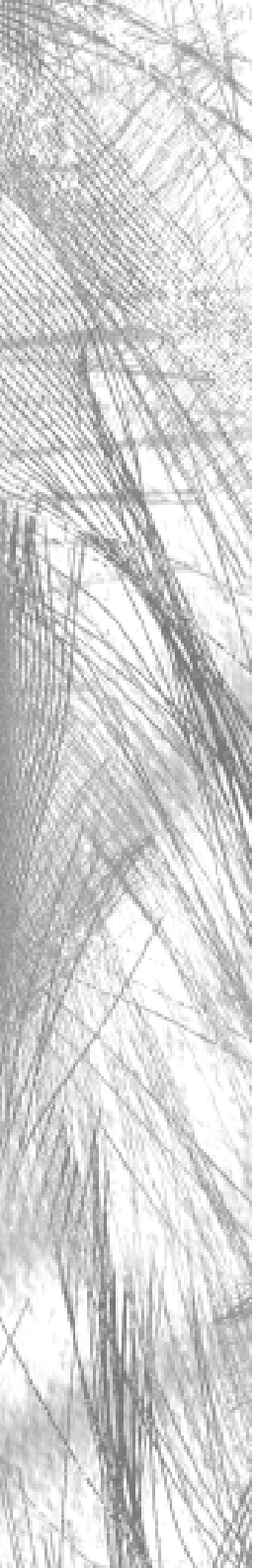

Conversation with Magic Stones

(after the sculpture by Barbara Hepworth)

For solo double bass

Poem by Margaret Morgan

Music by Nigel Morgan

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About the music

These 5 conversations for solo bass were written for the Canadian bassist David Langstroth for a performance surrounded by Hepworth's strange group of monolithic stones at Yorkshire Sculpture Park. The piece is also part of Music for Sculptures, a sequence of pieces that celebrate Hepworth's lifelong fascination for music and musical forms. Conversations is the only one of the sequence that doesn't carry a musical title, but in discussions with Sophie Bowness, Hepworth's granddaughter, this sculpture - usually seen in the sculptor's studio garden at St Ives - was felt to be complimentary with the others chosen. That said, the notion of a musical conversation between instruments is commonplace in chamber music, but here the conversation is definitely one imagined between the bass and the stones themselves!

The work may be played on any contrabass instrument and has been performed on contra-bassoon, tuba and electric fretless bass. There is an ensemble version available for this work created for the American bassist Susan Kixmiller scored for bass and five instruments (flute, oboe, clarinet in Bb, trunpet in Bb and tenor trombone).

Conversation with Magic Stones

A few black and green yews
are where these forms choose,
for privacy or camouflage,
to stage their large self-absorption.

Among them
no bend.
No stoop.
I turn.
The bland
smile of
innuendo
glances
off my back.
Verdigris
mouths
grimace.

But oblique is the glance of the magic stones.
No horizontals but a line of obedient water
where yew needles ride, idle in the shallow
bronze crater in a warm bronze plain.
One stone bends an avian eye
but the other, with lowered gaze,
exposes its receptivity,
its vulnerable fontanelle.

A figure
confronts
a stone.
Severe
Vedigris
mouth.
Smooth
face, hard.

The stone deflects all words,
with every plane, line and angle
points to escape routes.
I stand where the stones
overlap in my sight
Each seems a child
with an incalculable centre.

There is no end to the secrets
they slip each other.

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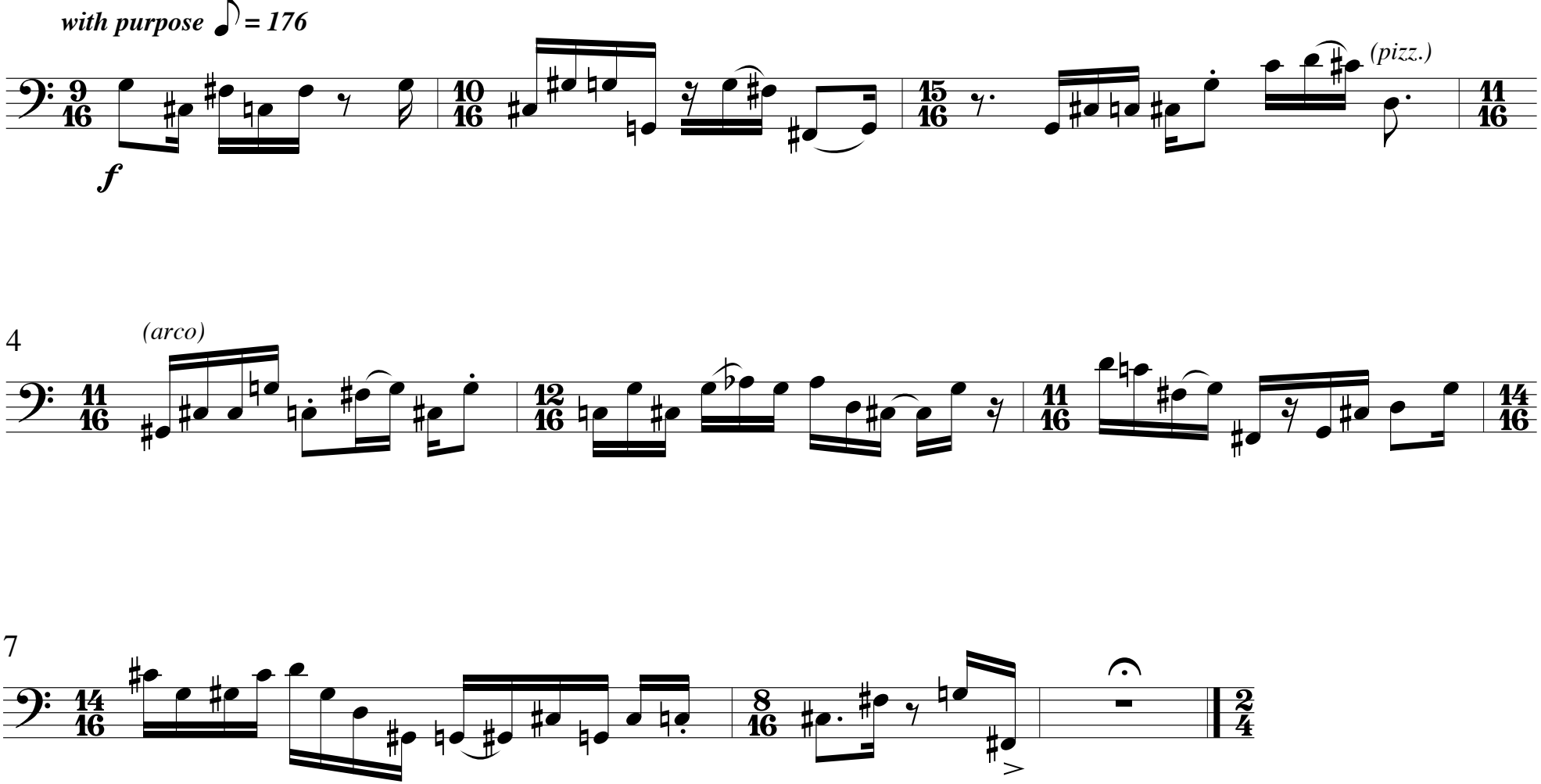
I



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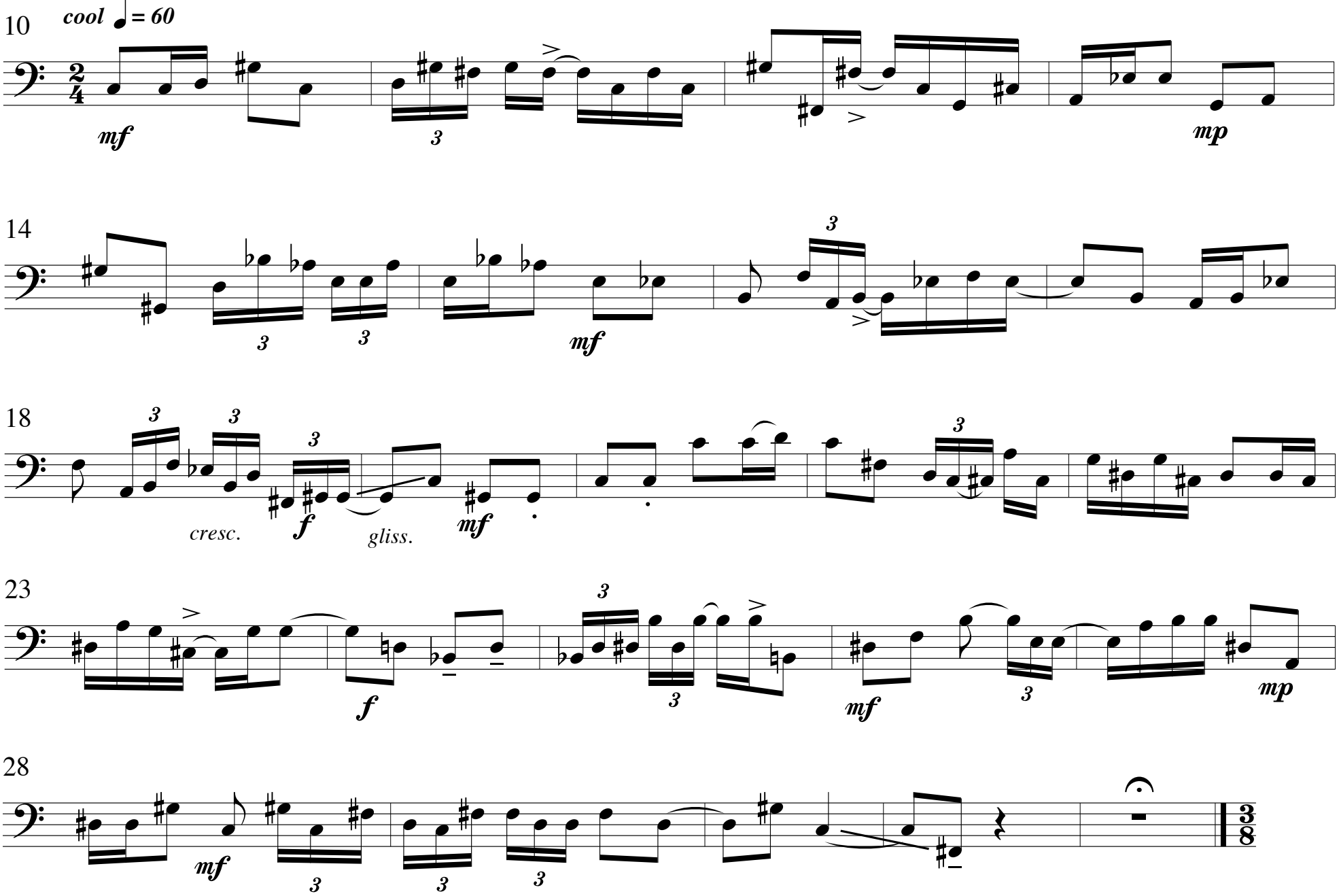
II



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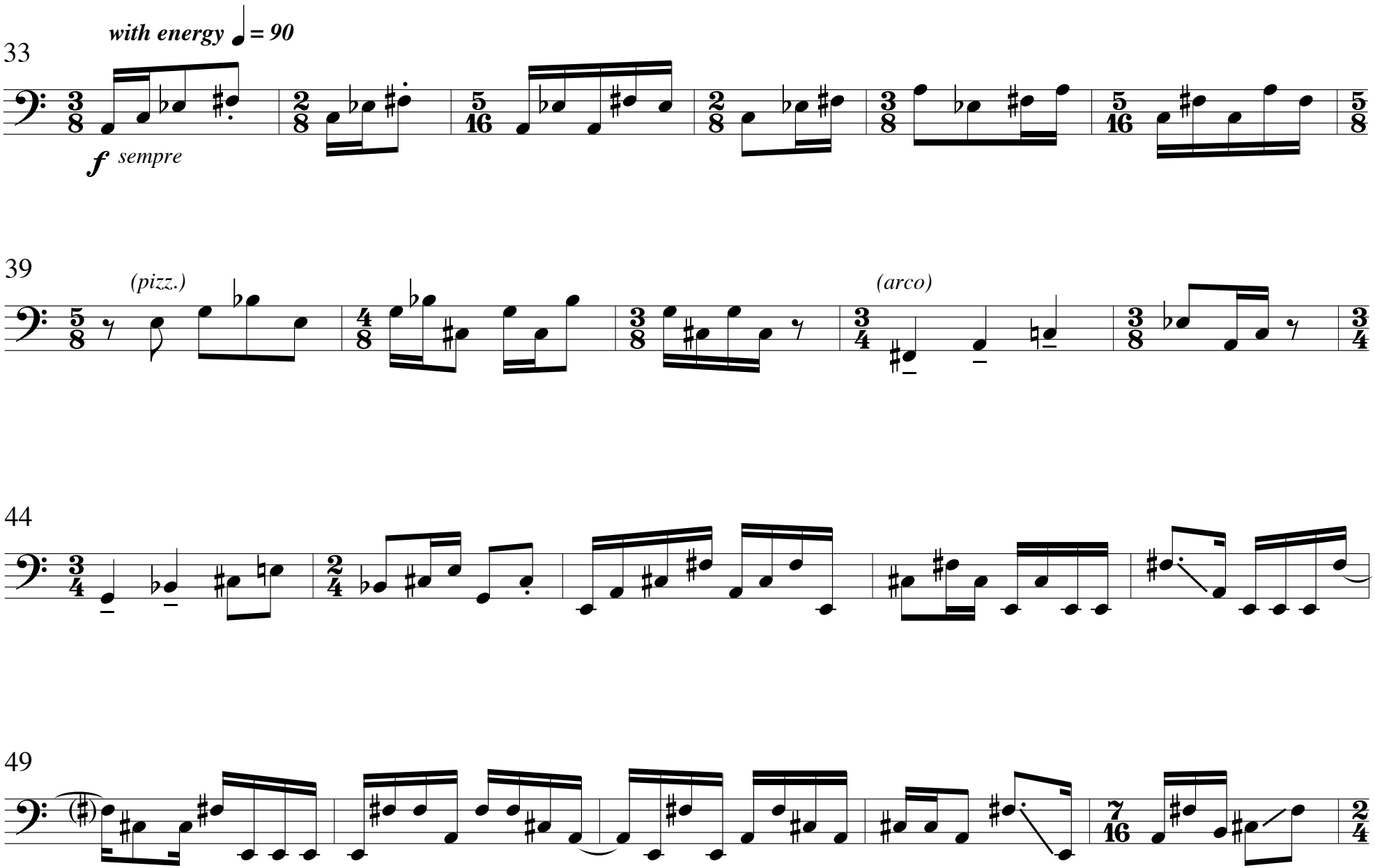

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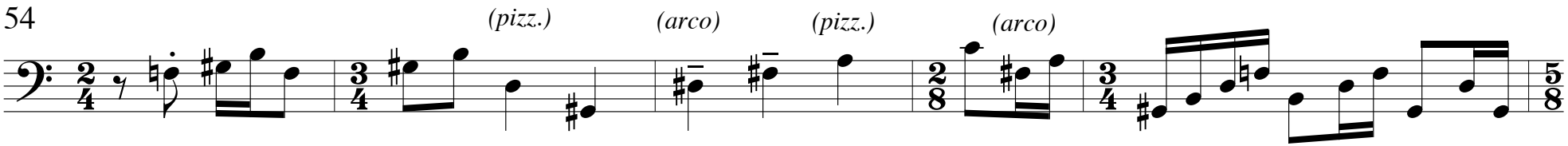

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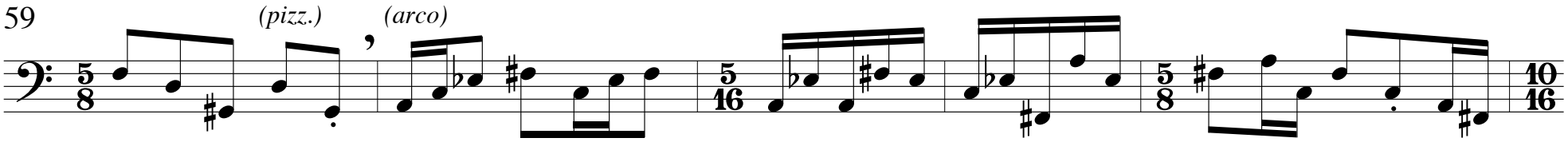

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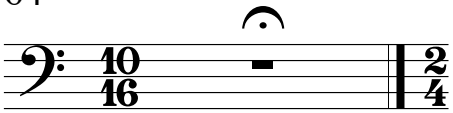

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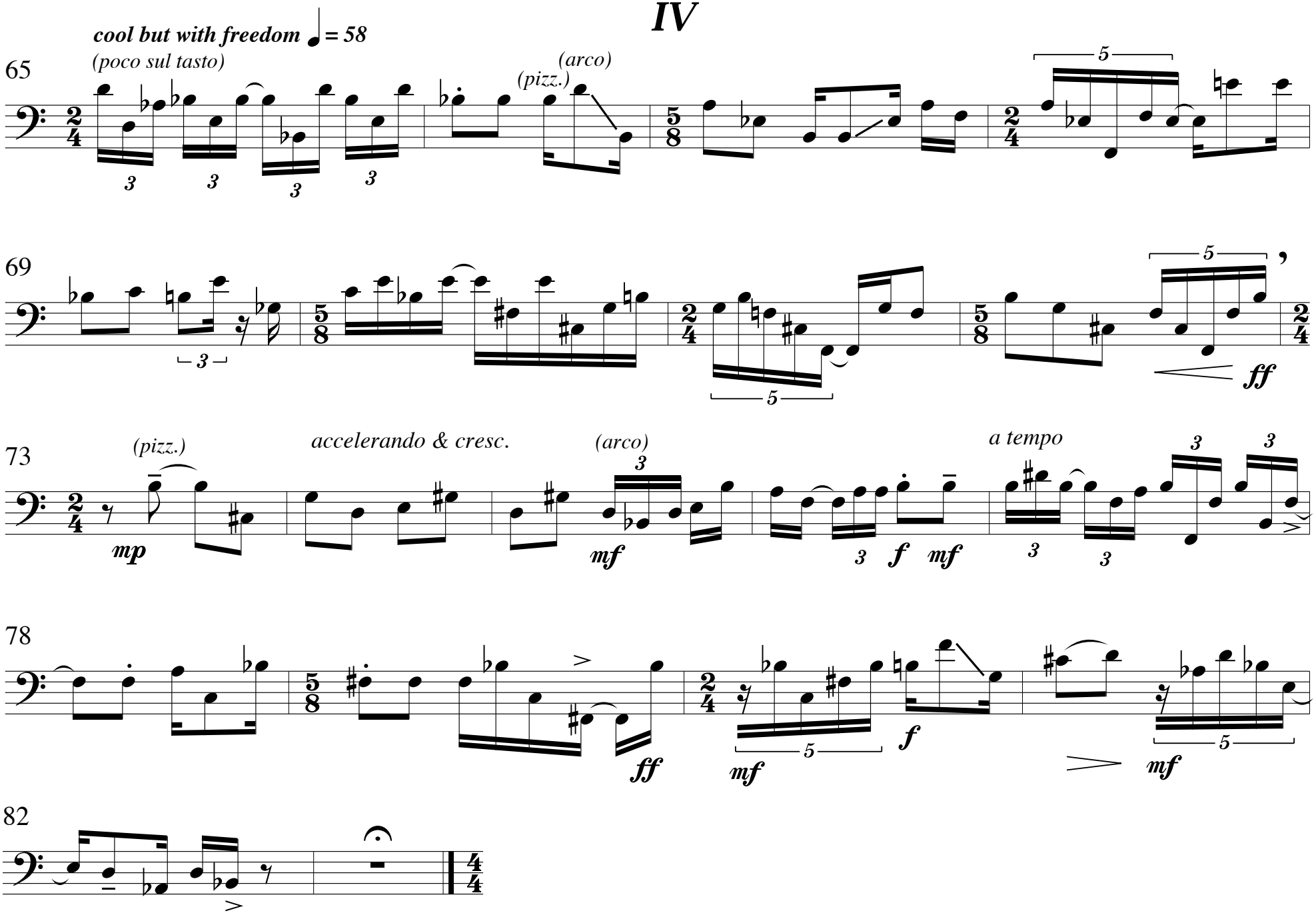
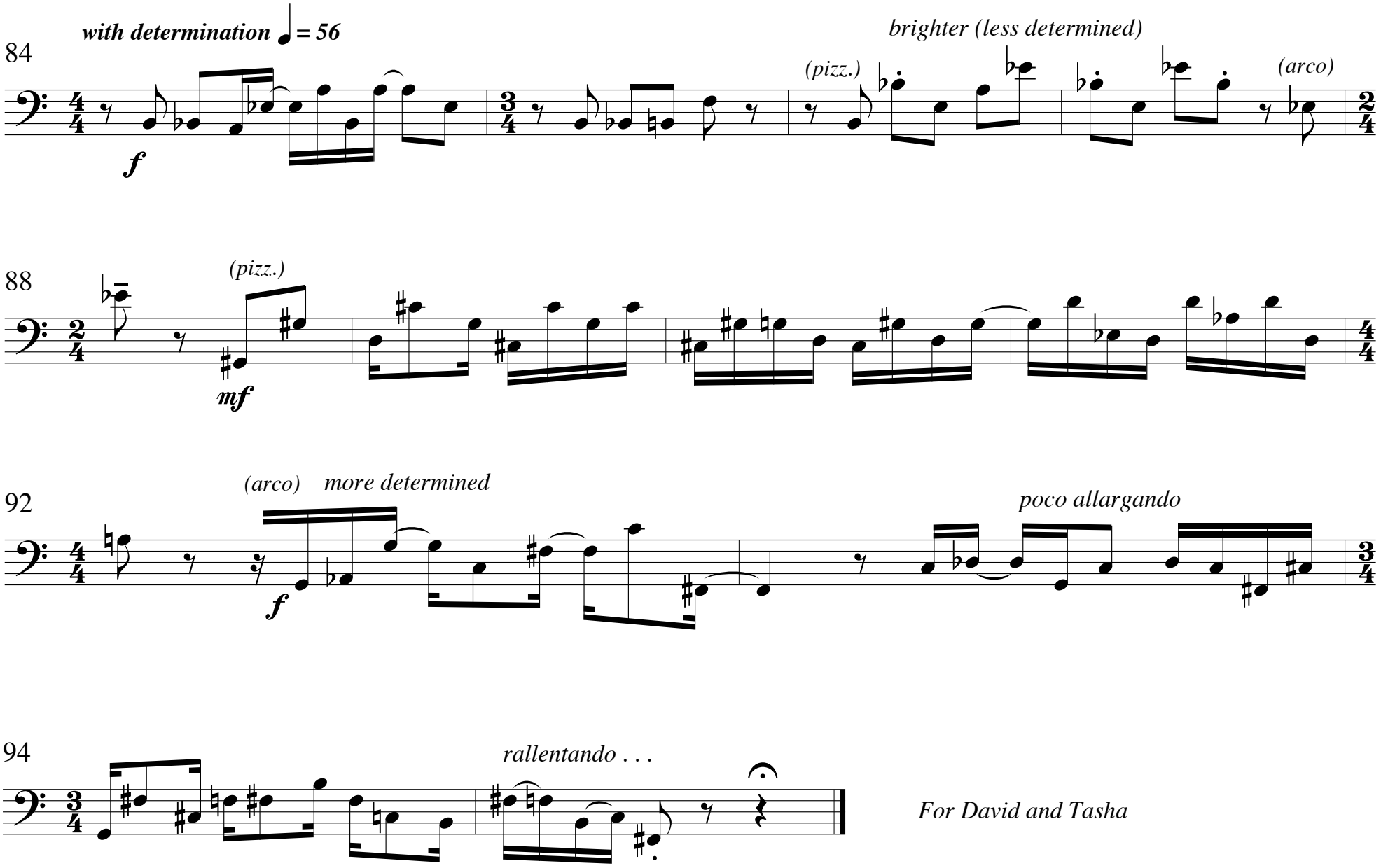

cool but with freedom ♩ = 58
(poco sul tasto)
65
(pizz.)
(arco)
69
ff
73
(pizz.)
accelerando & cresc.
(arco)
a tempo
mp
mf
f
78
ff
mf
82

V



For David and Tasha