Spiral

for solo cello
with digital delay or prerecorded accompaniment
or three cellos

by Robert Davidson

Performance directions

This work may be performed by three cellists, or as a solo work using digital delay, or using a prerecorded accompaniment.

General directions

At many points, rhythmic interplay is created by the interaction of contrapuntal lines. The accuracy of these rhythms is critical. An example is the harmonics passage at bar 53 - by the entry of the third line, there should be a steady stream of quavers.

Trio performance directions

Spiral is a simple canon. Following the first performer, the second and third enter at four-bar intervals. At bar 213, the first cellist improvises a solo while the second and third cellists repeat bars 201-212 in canon until cued by the first cellist to go on to bar 217 (again following at four-bar intervals in canon).

The work ends when all players have reached the last line, at which point the first cellist should cue the final repeat and all should end together.

Solo performance directions - prerecorded accompaniment

Preferably the soloist should prepare her/his own recording of the accompaniment.

The recording should be played back as the first entry in the canon, with the soloist entering at bar one when the recording has reached bar five.

At bar 213 the soloist should improvise a solo, resuming the canon again as the second entry, following four bars after the recorded cello when it is heard performing bar 217.

When the final line is reached, the soloist should listen for when the recording fades out, and then fade out when the recording has completely faded.

Solo performance directions - digital delay

A wide range of digital delay units or software will be effective in realising the work.
The requirements for the technology are:

1. A delay time of 6.67 seconds
2. A sample and hold function to allow the improvised solo at bar 213
3. A feedback setting of 60 %

Ideally the signal processing should be performed by an assistant, though the soloist may be able to perform this task with some rehearsal. Upon reaching the last line, the soloist should repeat the four bars until the delay sound is in unison with the live sound. The assistant should then fade the delay sound and the soloist should fade out after the delay sound has been completely faded.

Program Note

Canons fascinate me - they seem a perfect balance of surprise and familiarity, as each bar contains something old and something new. I also love how the advent of recording has made it possible to play a canon, one of the most ancient musical structures, with oneself.

Spiral is a big arch form, gradually getting busier and more intense, calming in the centre before running in reverse back to the opening material.

The work was originally composed in 1998 for cellist Nicholas Bochner, and then recomposed in 2000 for violists Patricia Pollett and Bernard Hoey.

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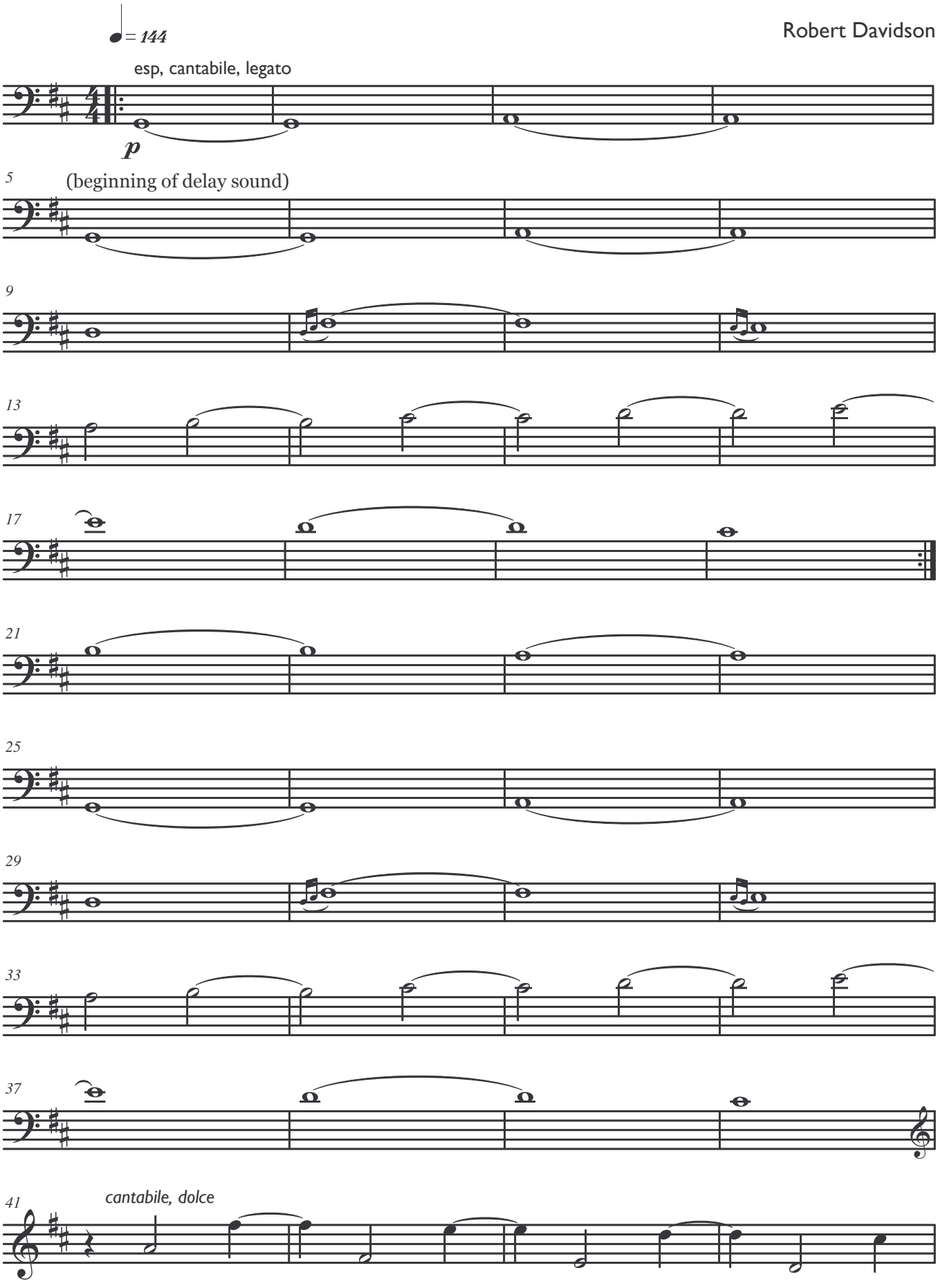
Spiral

cello canon

Robert Davidson



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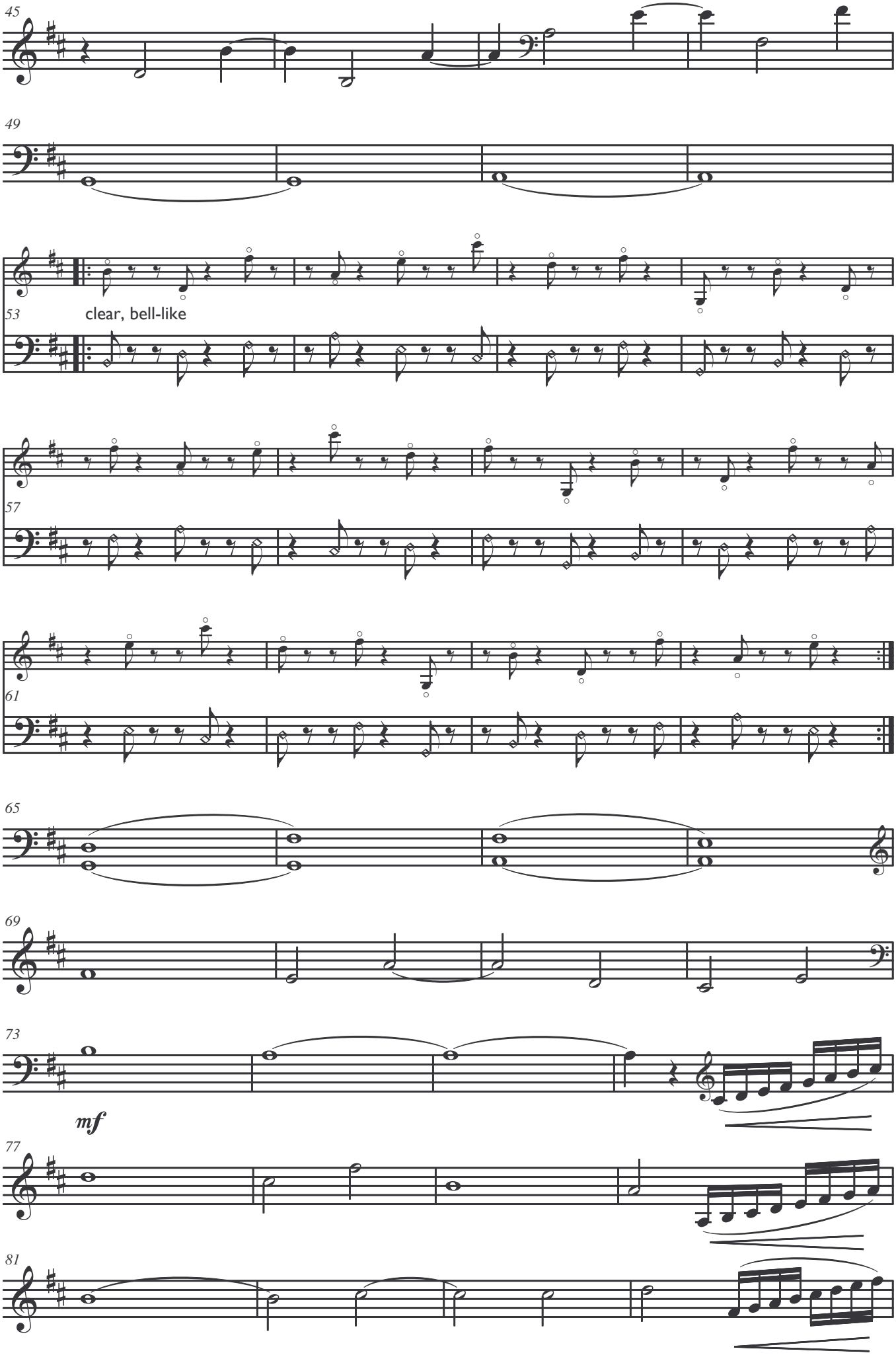
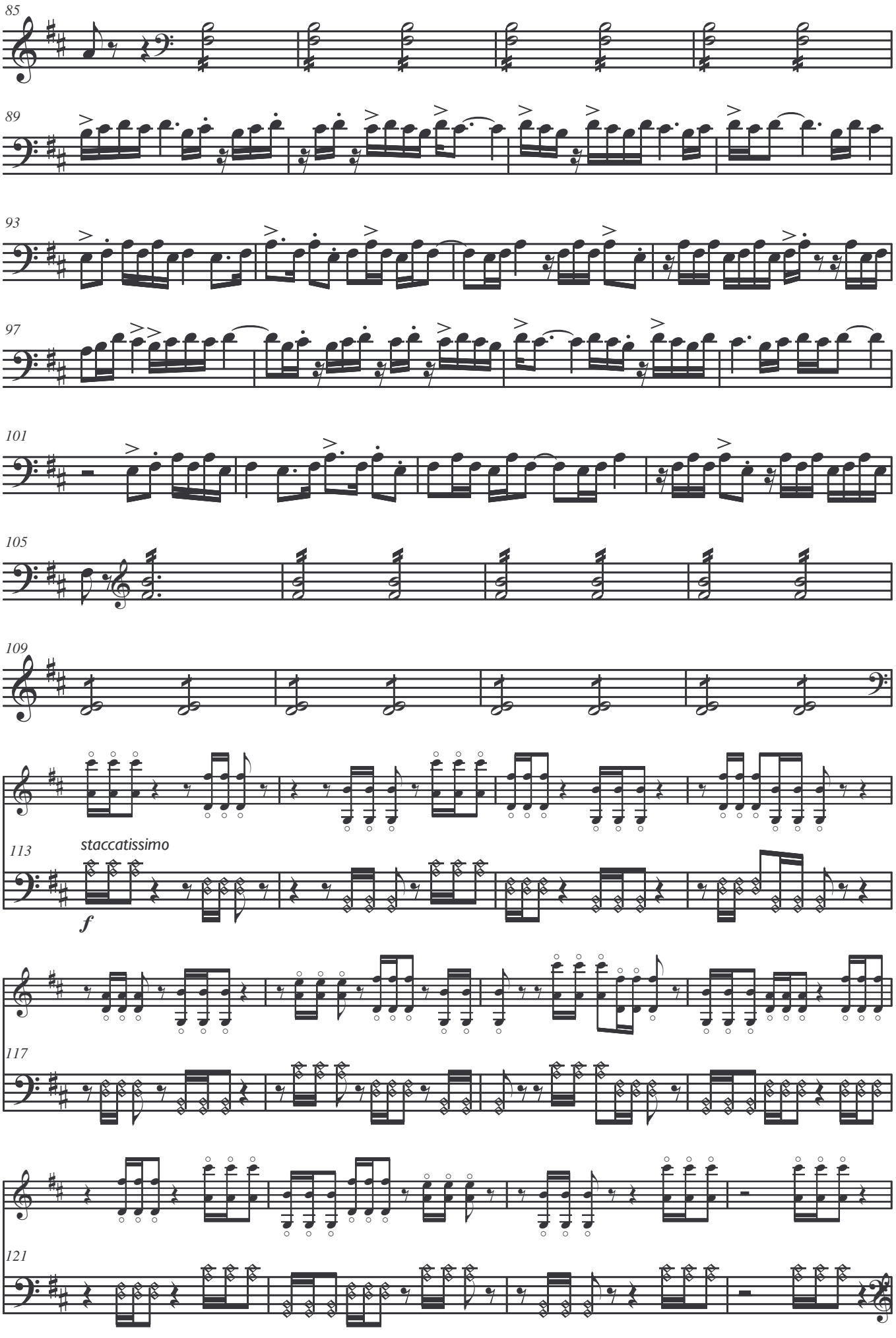
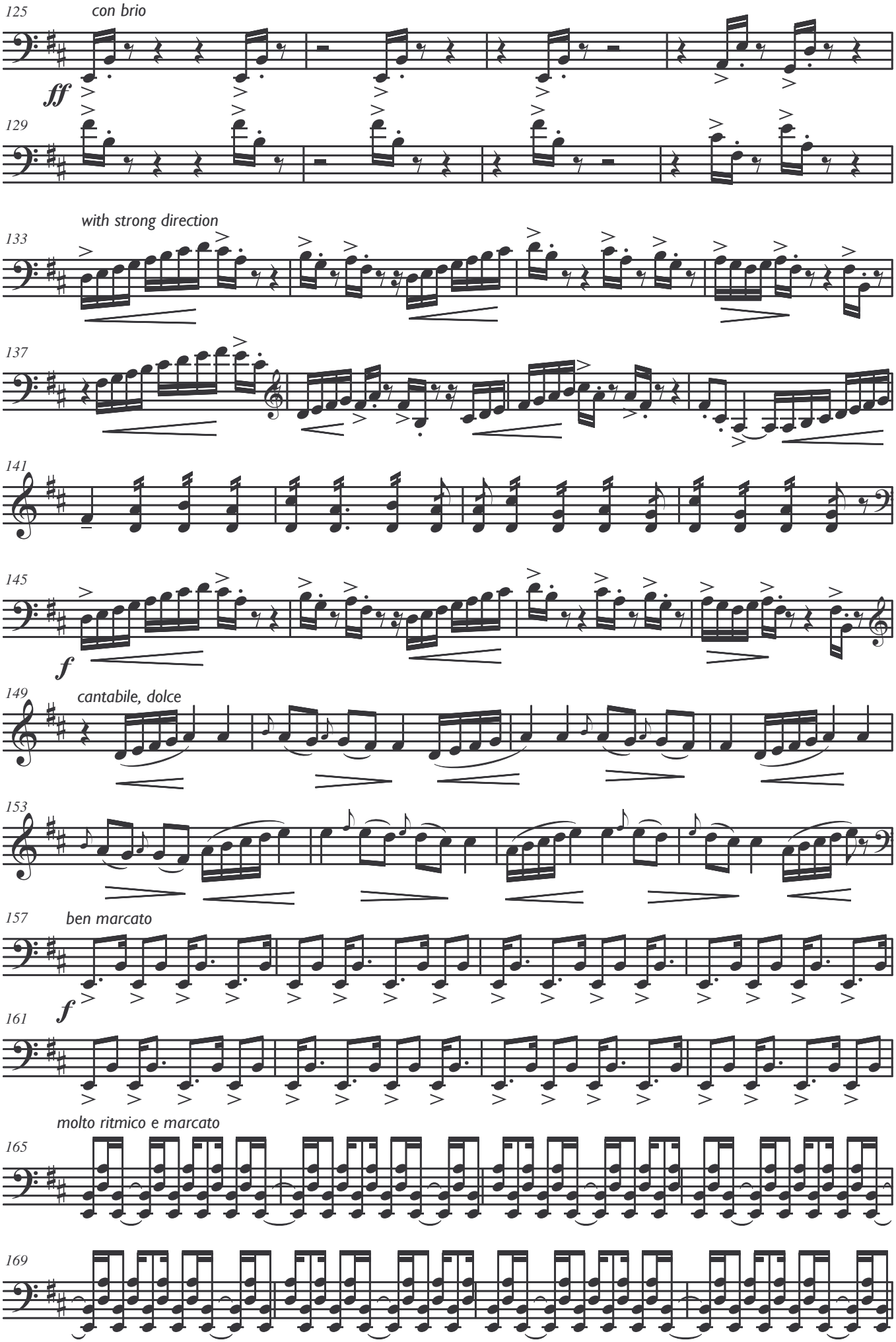
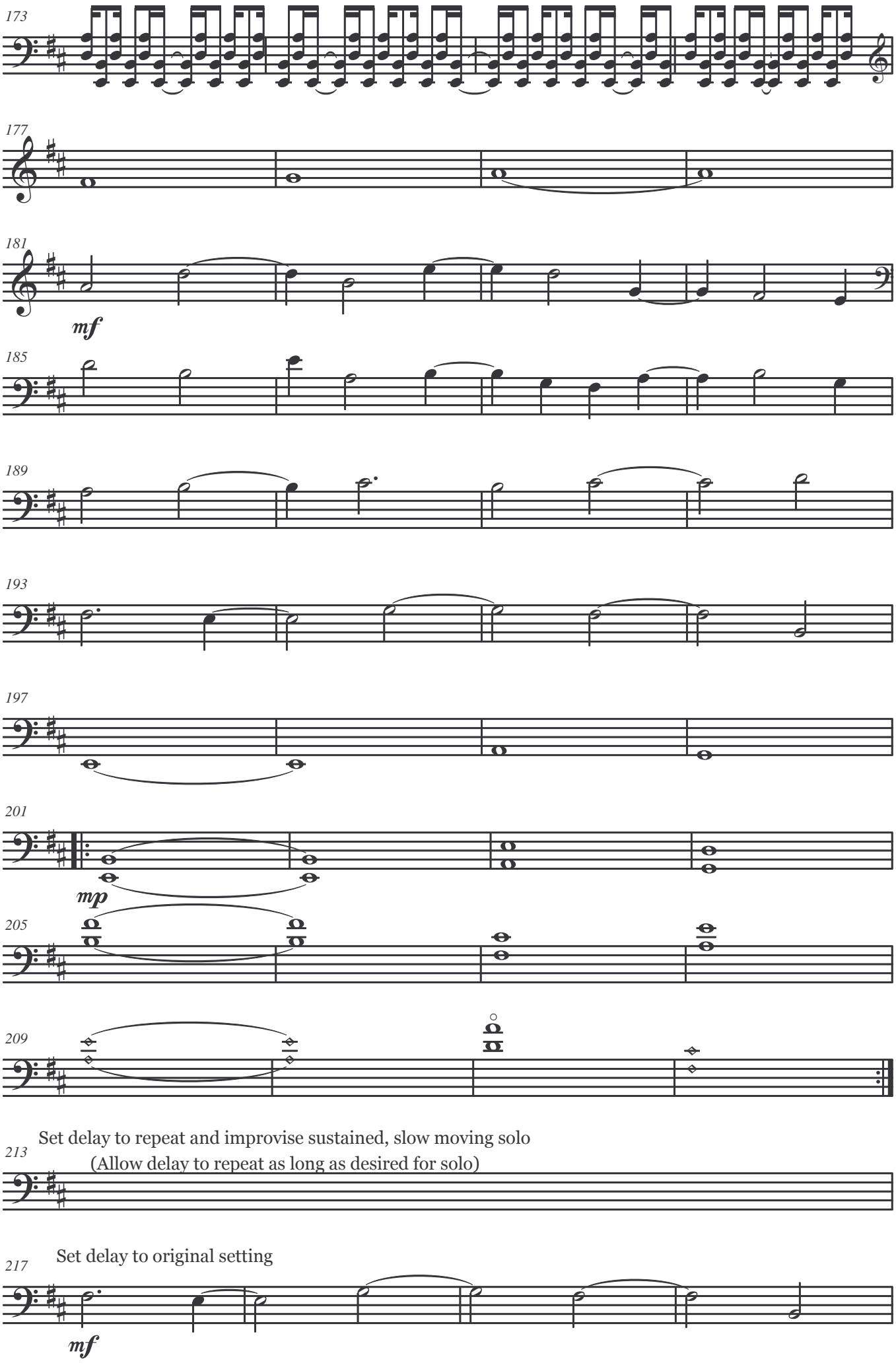
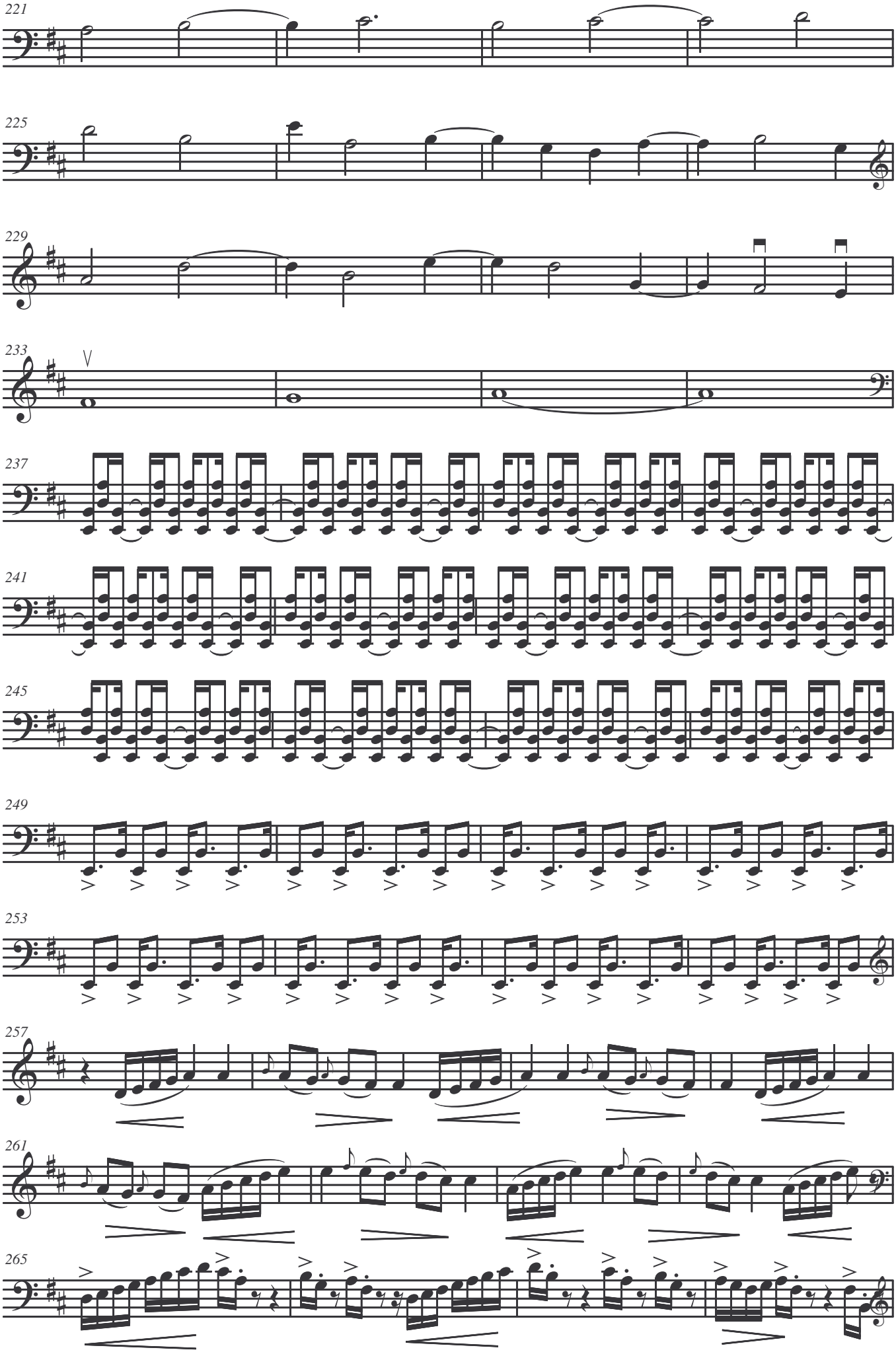

45
49
53
clear, bell-like
57
61
65
69
73
mf
77
81


85
89
93
97
101
105
109
staccatissimo
113
f
117
121


125
con brio
ff
129
with strong direction
133
137
141
145
f
149
cantabile, dolce
153
157
ben marcato
f
161
molto ritmico e marcato
165
169


173
177
181
mf
185
189
193
197
201
mp
205
209
213
Set delay to repeat and improvise sustained, slow moving solo
(Allow delay to repeat as long as desired for solo)
217
Set delay to original setting
mf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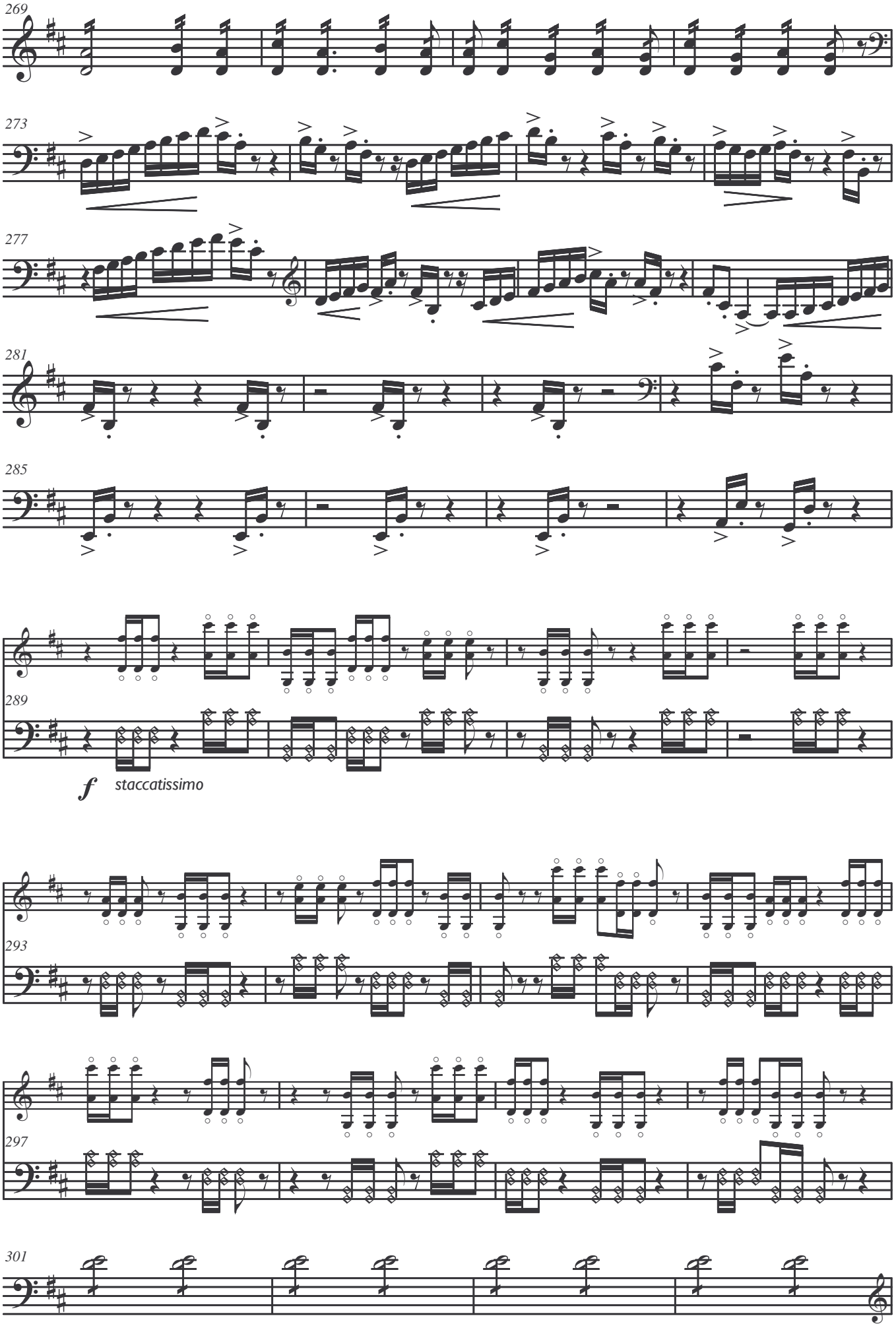
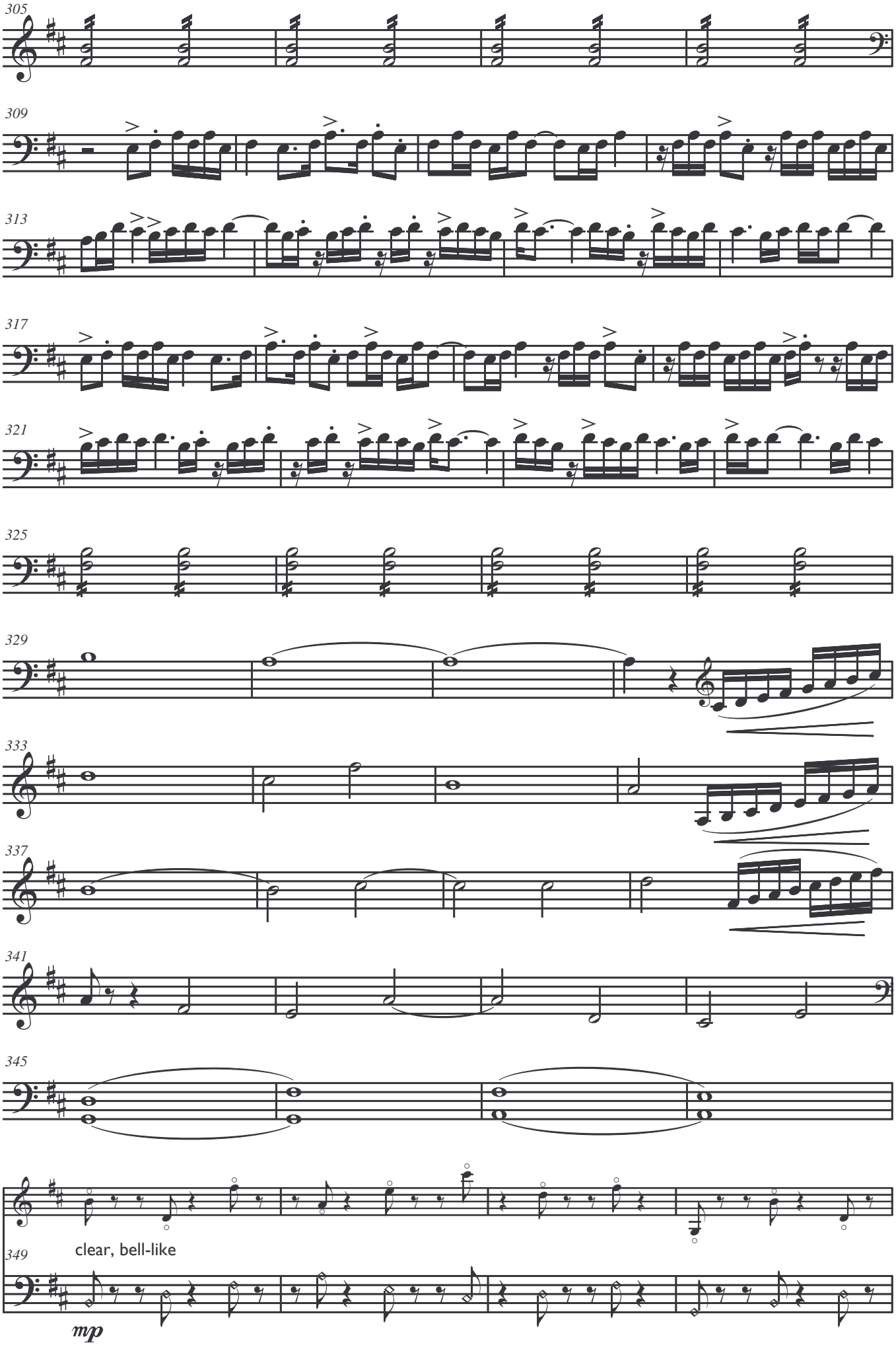

269
273
277
281
285
289
f staccatissimo
293
297
301


305
309
313
317
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325
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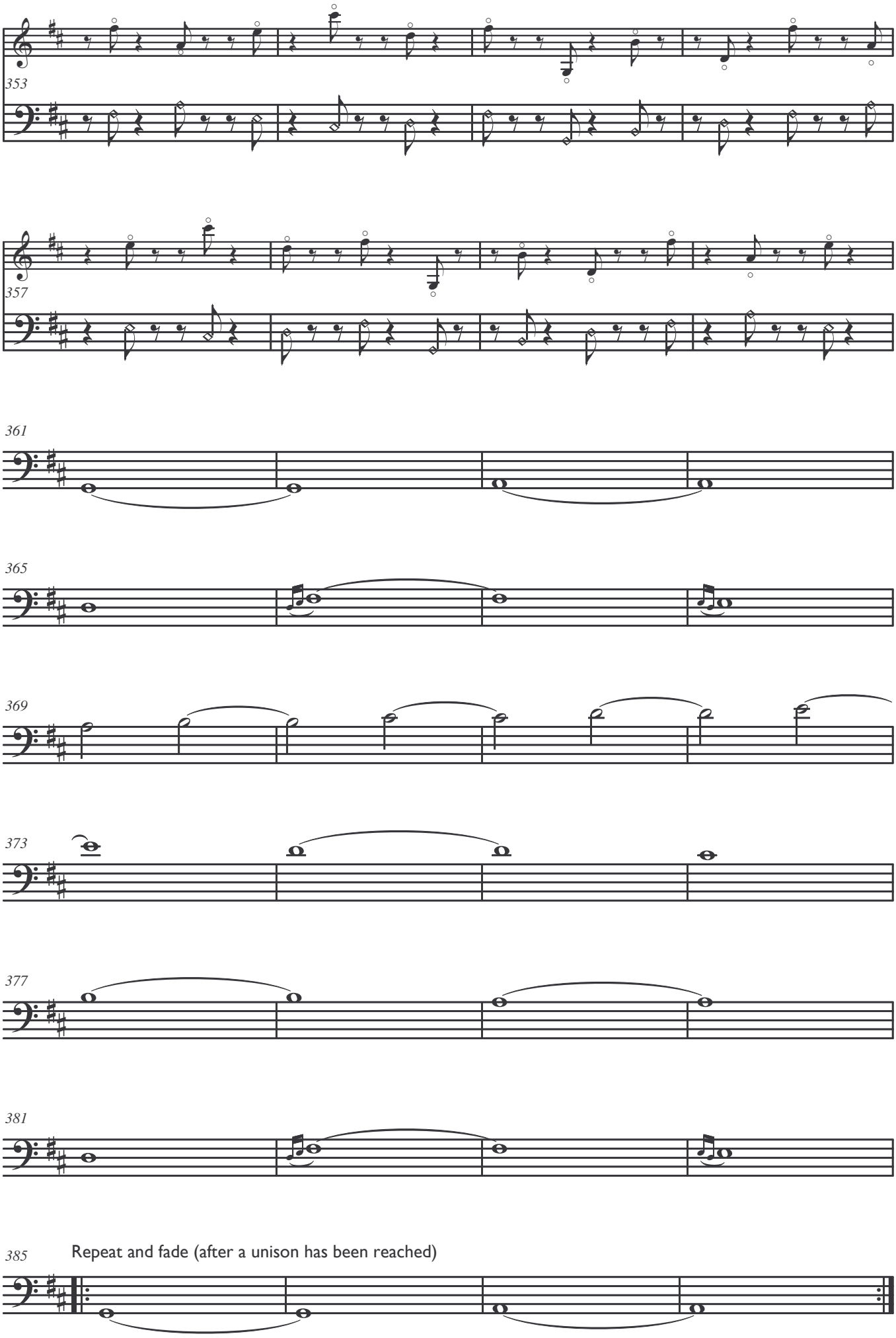
349
clear, bell-like
mp


353
357
361
365
369
373
377
381
385
Repeat and fade (after a unison has been reached)