PREFACE

ROGER SMITH: A BIOGRAPHICAL PORTRAIT

By Per Brevig

Roger Montgomery Smith was Principal Trombonist of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra from 1940 until his death in 1975 at the age of 59. He was my teacher at The Juilliard School of Music from 1959 through 1960 and from 1965 through 1968, at which time I became his Co-Principal at the Met.

Roger was an outstanding trombonist, musician, and teacher, and a very intelligent person with a most pleasant personality. He was a professor at The Juilliard School for 28 years and he also taught at Brooklyn College, New York State University at Purchase, New York University and The New England Music Camp in Oakland, Maine.

Earlier in his stellar career, before joining the Met Opera Orchestra, Roger played with the NBC Symphony and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. He had been a member of the Goldman Band since 1938 and the Assistant Conductor from 1957-1962. During these years he wrote many arrangements for the band and co-authored the book **Landmarks of Early American Music** with Richard Franko Goldman.

He studied at Yale, New York University, and at The Ernest Williams School of Music.

Roger Smith was married to Peggy Smithers Smith, who was a member of the Metropolitan Opera Ballet. They had three talented children: Paul, Brian and Karen.

On a personal note, the year 1975, when Roger passed away, was a particularly difficult year for me. In addition to Roger's death, my former teacher in Denmark, Palmer Traulsen, died in a tragic train accident. And my own father passed away the same year. I memorialized Roger at a concert I conducted at The Aspen Music Festival and School the summer of 1975.

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Sonata for Trombone and Piano

Originally Roger called his composition for trombone a concerto. However, during one of my lessons, he suddenly said “This piece is not substantial enough to be called a concerto.” Then he crossed out “Concerto” and wrote in capital letters: “A SHORT SONATA FOR TBN + PIANO”. Thus, the composition was eventually called **Sonata for Trombone and Piano.**

The first performance, as it was noted in the program, took place on August 14, 1966, at Juilliard’s old Claremont Avenue location at Broadway and 122nd St in New York City.

The **Sonata for Trombone and Piano** is a spirited piece of music. It consists of three movements: Allegro, Allegretto and Allegro. The outer movements are quite majestic with beautiful and expressive second themes. The beginning of the second movement contains music that students could benefit from including in their daily practice. It is a clever idea and while the solo part introduces the initial theme unaccompanied for four bars, the piano enters with an expressive counter melody. These two ideas are reversed the second time around. The movement ends, as it started, in a quiet and relaxed mood.

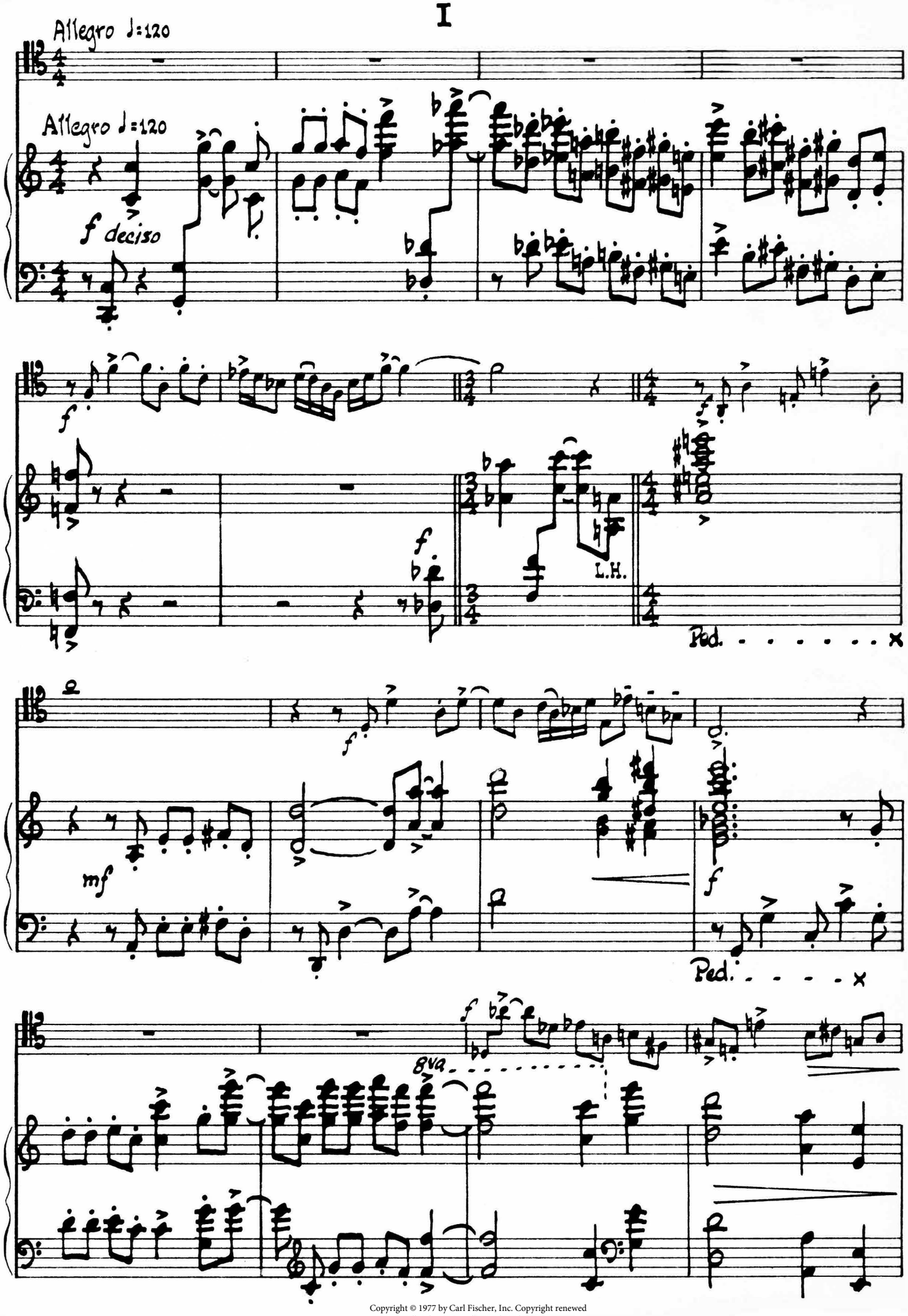
The third movement starts with the same rhythmic idea as the first movement. The second theme - entirely new material - is written in 6/4 time, introduced by the piano and contrasted with the 2/2 rhythm in the solo part consisting of the original rhythmic idea. The Sonata ends as spirited as it started.

My performance of Roger’s piece was taped and later transcribed to CD, which most of my performances were at that time. The Sonata concludes Roger’s oeuvre as a composer. It is, in my opinion, a wonderful piece of music which can successfully be performed by most serious students of the trombone.

I have been most fortunate to have had the opportunity to study with Roger and, later, become his colleague at The Met. The most unfortunate thing is that he left us much too early in his life, at the age of 59.

We can only imagine what he could have accomplished. I miss him.

I



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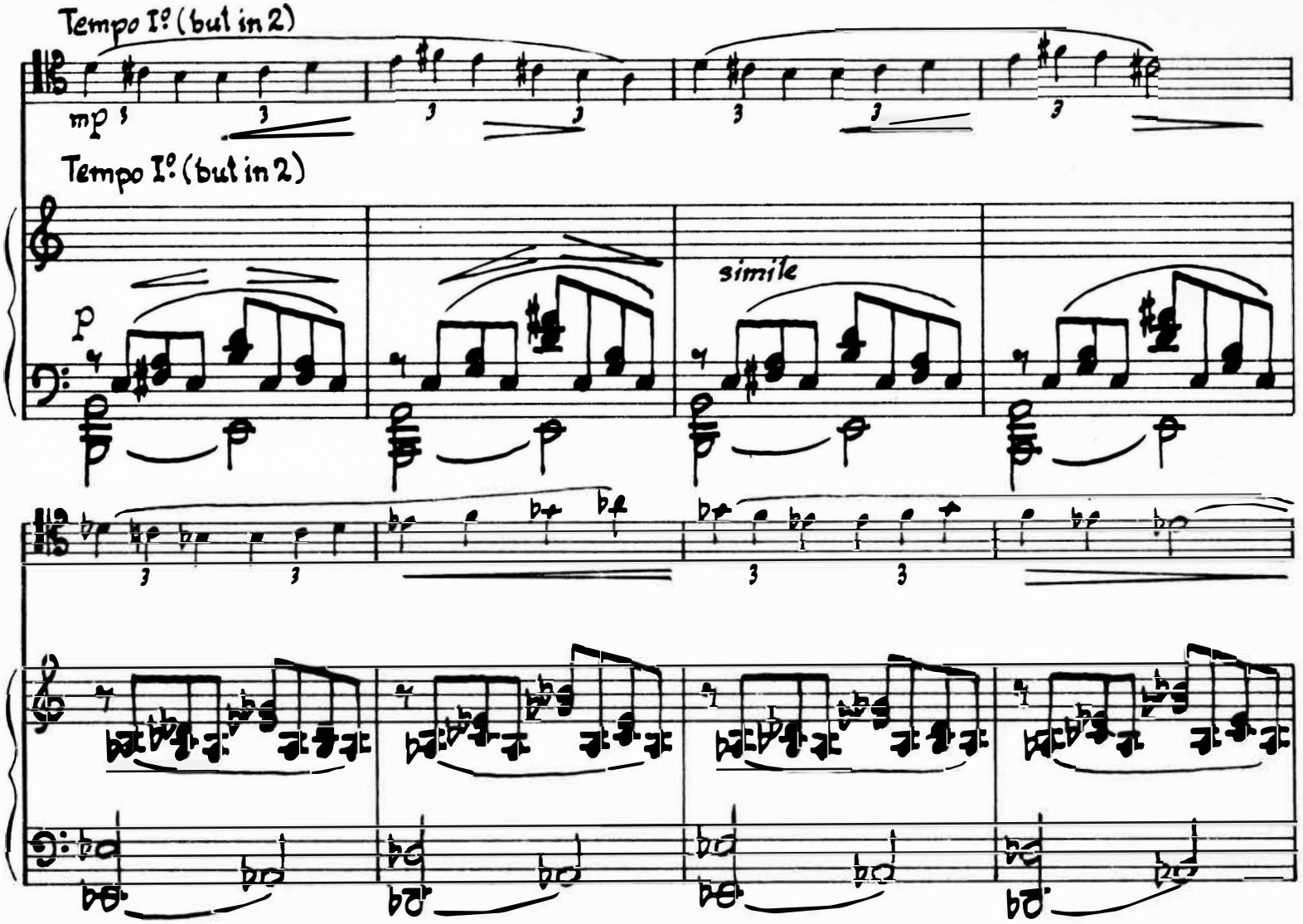
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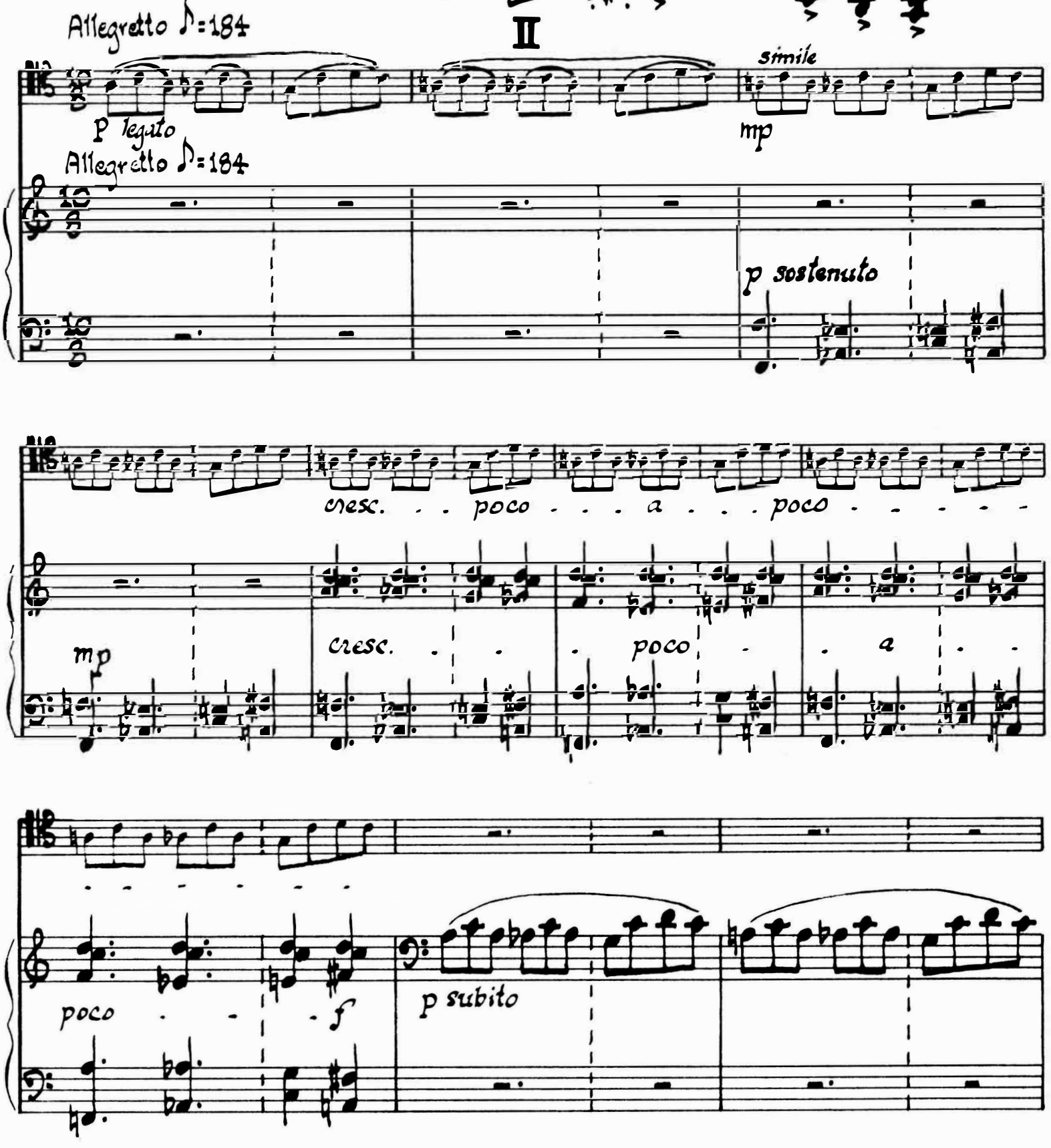
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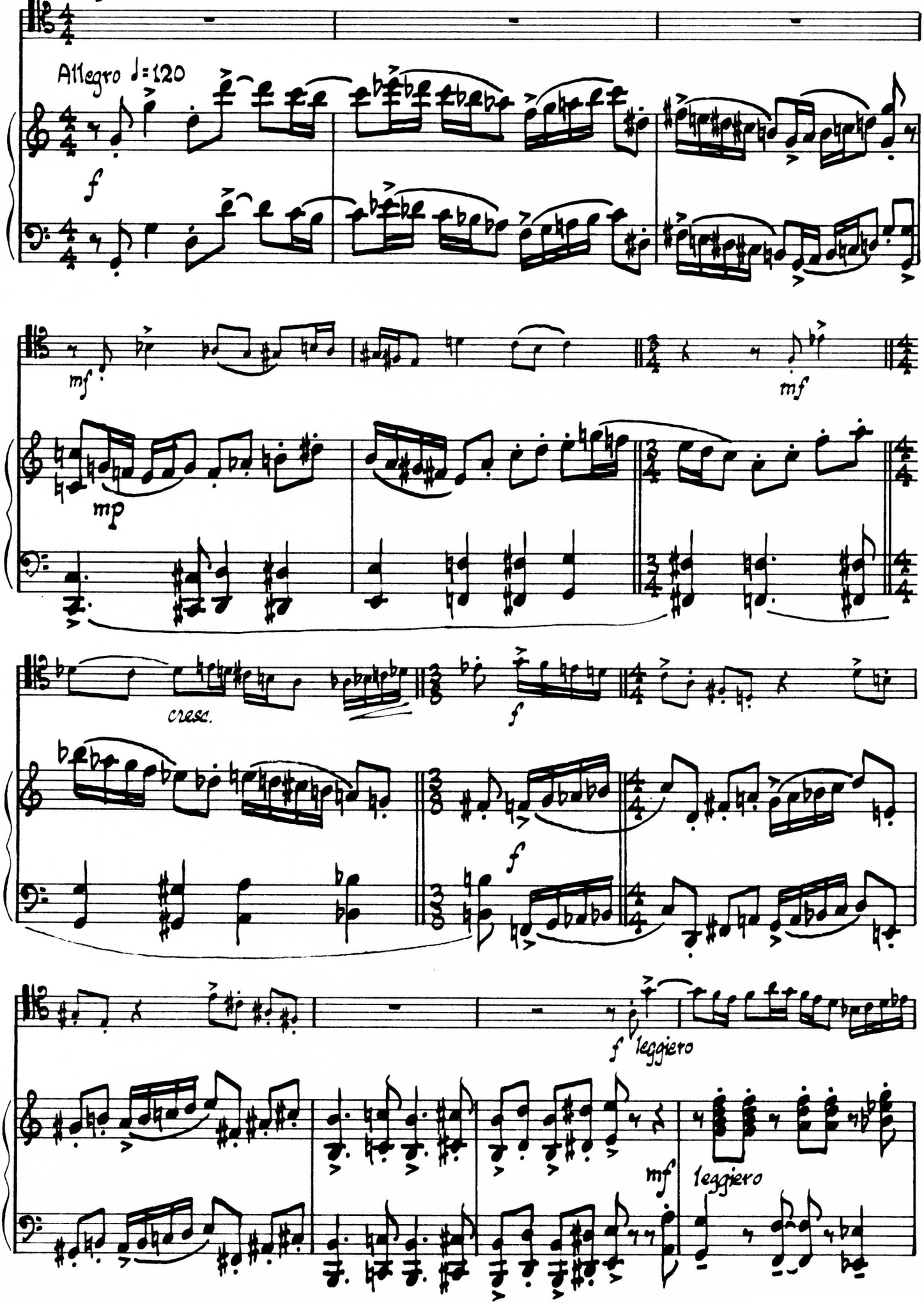

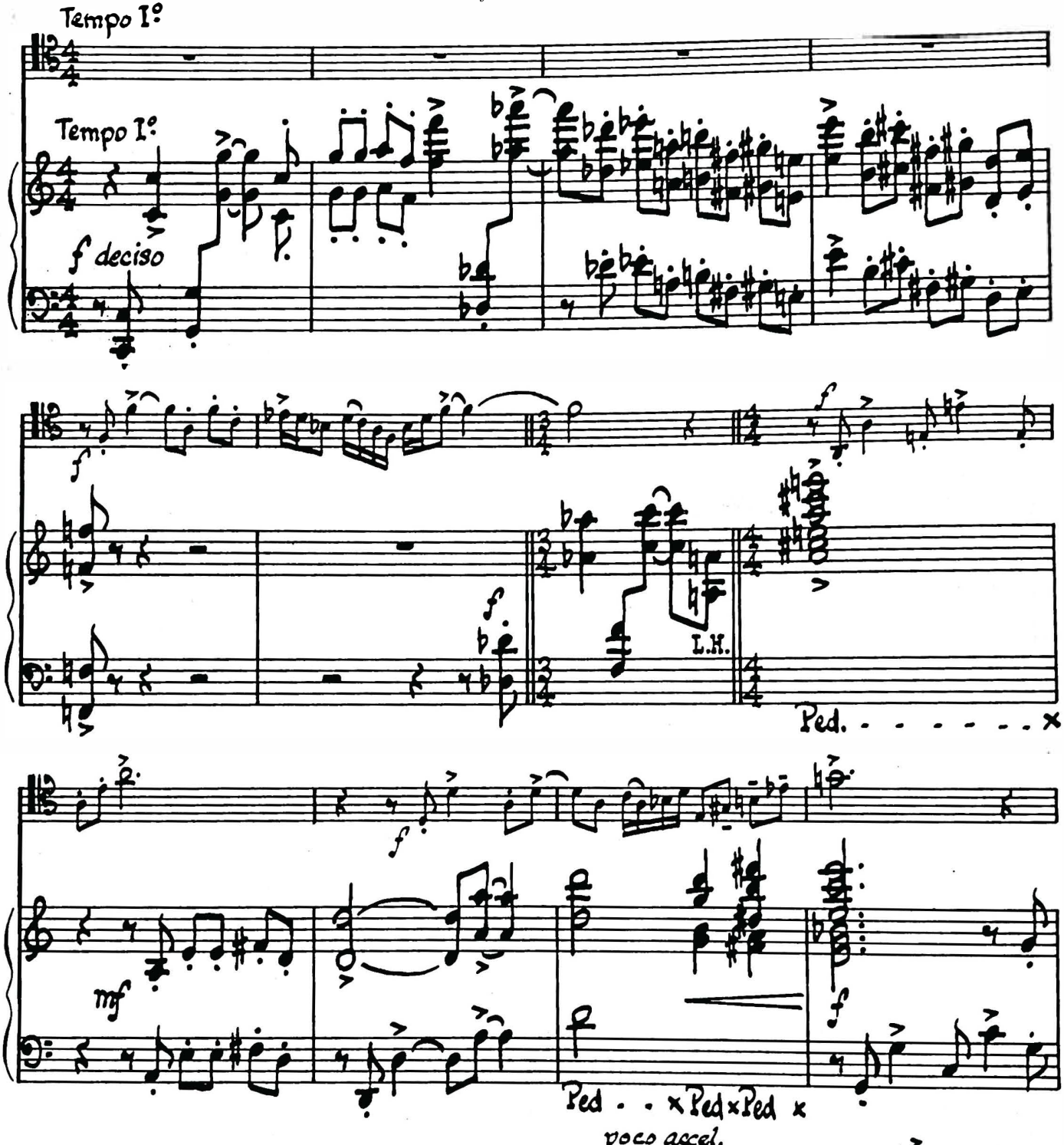
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