GIOVANNI GABRIELI

c. 1554/57–1612

Canzon a 4

Ch. 194

for two Trumpets in C or B♭ and two Trombones

after a manuscript in the
Biblioteca Capitolare, Verona

Edited, with editorial dynamics, preface, and commentary,
by Christopher Delgado

SCORE

Performing edition. Musical text not collated with the Verona manuscript.

TRUMPETOWN EDITION

Giovanni Gabrieli, *Canzon a 4*, Ch. 194. Four-part source: manuscript, Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare. A lute intabulation was printed in 1599.

Performing edition. The musical text is a modern arrangement for brass quartet and has not been collated with the Verona manuscript. The dynamics, which are all editorial and printed in square brackets, and the preface and commentary are the present editor's.

Editorial dynamics, preface, and commentary: © 2026 Christopher Delgado, released under CC BY-SA 4.0.

Facsimile plate reproduced from a public-domain scan of the 1597 print (IMSLP).

Parts available: Trumpet 1 and Trumpet 2, each in C and in B♭; Trombone; Bass Trombone.

TRUMPETOWN EDITION

TE-005

Arrangement after M. Rondeau, IMSLP (Werner Icking Music Collection), CC BY-SA 4.0.

PREFACE

The source, the instruments, and the question of dynamics

The source

Unlike the four canzonas *a 4* that Alessandro Raverii printed in 1608, the *Canzon a 4*, Ch. 194, survives in no printed edition for ensemble. David Bryant's work-list in *Grove Music Online*, which follows the numbering of Richard Charteris's thematic catalogue, gives one source for the four-part version, a manuscript in the Biblioteca Capitolare at Verona, together with two arrangements: an intabulation for lute printed in 1599 and a keyboard version in a manuscript in Vienna.[1] The lute print shows that the canzona was in circulation by 1599; its date of composition is not otherwise known. The Verona manuscript has not been consulted for this edition, and no facsimile of it is reproduced.

Venetian ensemble music around 1600 was played above all on cornetts and trombones, the core of the instrumental establishment at San Marco, alone or doubled by strings and organ.[2] A quartet of two trumpets and two trombones is a modern descendant of that sound, and the present edition is written for it.

The question of dynamics

The manuscript has not been consulted, so it cannot be said here whether it carries dynamic indications; the arrangement used for the musical text has none. Silence in a source of this period would not, in any case, be evidence that the music was played at one level. As Matthias Thiemel puts it in *Grove Music Online*, dynamic variation "can normally be assumed even when indications for it are mainly or even entirely absent from the notation," and already in the Renaissance "dynamic values were reflected in changes in the number of voices and their registers."[3] Gabrieli himself is the best witness. In the *Sacrae symphoniae* of 1597 he printed the words *Pian* and *Forte* in the parts of the *Sonata pian e forte* (Plate 1), and the placement is systematic: a single choir sounding alone is marked *pian*, and the two choirs together are marked *forte*. Dynamic level follows the number of choirs sounding.

Michael Praetorius, writing in 1619 for German musicians learning the new Italian music, confirms the principle. The Italians, he reports, mark *forte* and *piano* in their parts "because of the changes in both voices and choirs," a practice he approves, provided it is used with moderation.[4] The instruments were equal to it. Girolamo Dalla Casa, the first director of instrumental music at San Marco, wrote in 1584 that the cornett "is played piano and forte and in every sort of key, just as the voice." Jamie Savan, who translates the passage, suggests that the two words described tone quality, soft and hard, as well as level.[5]

Every dynamic in this score is therefore editorial, every one is printed in square brackets, and each is justified in the Commentary. The edition follows the practice Thomas Hiebert singled out for praise, in which editorial suggestions are "clearly differentiated" from the source.[6] Players who prefer the bare text can ignore the brackets.

1 David Bryant, "Gabrieli, Giovanni," *Grove Music Online* (2001; this version 25 February 2021), work-list, no. 194, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.40693; the four-part version is edited in Gabrieli's *Opera omnia*, Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae 12, vol. 10. Richard Charteris, *Giovanni Gabrieli (ca. 1555–1612): A Thematic Catalogue of His Music with a Guide to the Source Materials and Translations of His Vocal Texts* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1996).

2 For the instrumentalists at San Marco see Eleanor Selfridge-Field, "Bassano and the Orchestra of St Mark's," *Early Music* 4, no. 2 (1976): 153–58, at 155 (for Christmas 1602, six trombones, three cornetts, two violins, and violone were hired), and her *Venetian Instrumental Music from Gabrieli to Vivaldi*, 3rd rev. ed. (New York: Dover, 1994). See also Denis Arnold, *Giovanni Gabrieli and the Music of the Venetian High Renaissance* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), and, on the divided choirs of San Marco, David Bryant, "The *cori spezzati* of St Mark's: Myth and Reality," *Early Music History* 1 (1981): 165–86.

3 Matthias Thiemel, "Dynamics," *Grove Music Online* (2001; bibliography updated 2013), §1, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.08458. Thiemel cites Josquin's *Missa "Pange lingua"*, where paired imitation builds from two voices to four.

4 Michael Praetorius, *Syntagma musicum III* (Wolfenbüttel, 1619), trans. and ed. Jeffery T. Kite-Powell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); quoted from Hans Lampl, trans., "Praetorius on Performance: Excerpts from *Syntagma Musicum III*," selected with commentary by S. E. Plank, *Historic Brass Society Journal* 6 (1994): 244–68, at 248–49.

5 Girolamo Dalla Casa, *Il vero modo di diminuir* (Venice: Angelo Gardano, 1584): "Questo stromento si adopera piano, & forte, & in ogni sorte di Tuono, si come fa la voce"; trans. Jamie Savan, "Unlocking the Mysteries of the Venetian Cornett: *ad imitar piu la voce humana*," *Historic Brass Society Journal* 28 (2016): 31–56, at 50. On Dalla Casa's post see Selfridge-Field, "Bassano and the Orchestra," 153.

6 Thomas Hiebert, review of *Salzburger Hornduette*, ed. Johannes Brand, *Historic Brass Society Newsletter* 10 (1997): 38.

Principles of the editorial dynamics

Gabrieli's *Sonata pian e forte* is written for two choirs; this canzona is written for one. The edition extends the principle of the sonata to a single four-voice texture by analogy, and states openly that it does so. The rules are those of the first volume of this series (TE-001), applied to a canzona built from sharply contrasted sections.

Texture determines level. Where voices drop out and a new point of imitation is entered by single voices, the level is [*p*] or [*mf*]. Where all four parts join in rhythmically unified writing, it is [*f*]. Where the scoring alone produces the increase, as in the opening exposition, no marking is printed; [*f*] appears only where the voices also move together.

Changes of level fall at the seams. Changes of level fall at cadences and at the start of new points of imitation, not in the middle of a phrase. Where a voice runs on across a cadence, its marking is placed at the start of its next phrase. This is not a claim that the music was played in flat blocks of sound. Thiemel calls the twentieth-century idea of "terrace dynamics" erroneous, and the period sources describe the swelling and fading of the voice and of wind instruments: Caccini's *crescere e scemare della voce*, and Fantini's instruction of 1638 that long notes on the trumpet be held "in a singing fashion," swelling to the middle of the note and fading again.[7] The brackets mark only the level from which such shaping starts. No hairpins are printed; the shaping is left to the players.

Two expositions. The subject enters in the second trumpet (bar 1), the trombone (bar 2), the first trumpet (bar 2, beat 3), and the bass trombone (bar 4, beat 3). A second exposition in a new order follows (bars 9–14). Both are [*mf*]; only the first entries are marked.

A lighter point. Around the cadence on B-flat in bar 18, a scale figure, falling and then rising, passes from the first trumpet and trombone to the second trumpet and bass trombone (bars 20–21), which are silent in between. The thinner texture is marked [*p*].

A repeated exchange. From bar 26 a figure in semiquavers passes between the trombones and the trumpets, and bars 32–35 repeat bars 27–30 note for note. Players may take the repeat as an echo at [*p*]; the edition, which marks only what the texture shows, leaves both at [*mf*].

Two chordal blocks. In bars 36–40 the writing turns chordal: repeated-note chords in the lower parts (bar 37) are answered by the first trumpet (bar 38), and in bar 39 the trumpets and bass trombone move in one rhythm, the trombone against them. Bars 49–52 return to it, varied. Both blocks are [*f*].

Balance on modern instruments

The trumpet and trombone of today are louder and more brilliant than the cornett and sackbut, and the cornett in particular was prized for its likeness to the human voice. The bracketed dynamics should therefore be read as relationships, not as absolute levels. A bracketed [*f*] in this music is the full, rounded sound of a cornett and sackbut ensemble, not a modern orchestral forte. Period-instrument players have argued for more range, not less: the cornettist Jean Tubéry, recalling "what Dalla Casa says about playing loud and softly," suggested that players "can go further in that direction."[8] Modern players should explore the full range between [*p*] and [*f*] while keeping the relationships between the parts.

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7 Thiemel, "Dynamics," §§1–3; Giulio Caccini, *Le nuove musiche* (Florence, 1602), preface, ed. H. Wiley Hitchcock (Madison: A-R Editions, 1970; 2nd ed., Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, 2009); Girolamo Fantini, *Modo per imparare a sonare di tromba* (Frankfurt, 1638), 3, as translated in Steven E. Plank, "Trumpet and Horn," in *A Performer's Guide to Seventeenth-Century Music*, ed. Stewart Carter, rev. and expanded by Jeffery Kite-Powell, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 143–44. A sign for the swell and decay of a single note appears in print only later, in Domenico Mazzocchi's madrigals of 1638.

8 Susan Smith, "A Cacophony of Cornettists," *Historic Brass Society Newsletter* 9 (1996): 26–32, at 28. Conversation with Michael Collver, Bruce Dickey, Stephen Escher, Douglas Kirk, Jean Tubéry, and Jeremy West.

Dynamics in the hands of players

Musicians of Gabrieli's own generation added dynamics to his music where the print had none. In a score book begun in 1599, the Augsburg composer and teacher Adam Gumpelzhaimer copied Gabrieli's ten-voice motet *Domine exaudi orationem meam* from the *Sacrae symphoniae* of 1597. The book names its players, on instruments that include cornetts, trombones, and a bassoon, and Gumpelzhaimer supplied dynamic indications throughout, alternating *Pian* and *Forte*. Richard Charteris, who describes the source, reads it as "a record of how the instrumentalists treated this work."[9] Bruce Dickey notes that *piano* and *forte* in music of the period usually mark echo effects or the contrast of tutti and solo sections, and Gary Towne writes that dynamic markings of the period "merely signal to players the size of the ensemble playing at any given moment," and warns against over-interpreting them.[10]

The instruments and their model

In their practical guide of 1975, Clifford Bartlett and Peter Holman observe that Gabrieli and his contemporaries treated the cornett and the violin as alternatives, and conclude that it is "far better to replace them with violins than with anachronistic oboes or trumpets."[11] This edition answers the objection in how the trumpets are played. Dickey, writing for players of the cornett and sackbut, names the human voice as "the principal model (and not the modern trumpet or trombone!)" for tone, articulation, and dynamic range.[12]

Bartlett and Holman call the organ "the obvious accompanying instrument" in church music of the period.[13] The arrangement used here has no organ part; an organist doubling the bass line would add a sound the period took for granted.

Articulation

Dickey identifies articulation as the area in which modern and historical playing differ most. Wind players of the period used pairs of unequal syllables, *te che*, *te re*, and *le re*, in a kind of double tonguing whose aim was not evenness but inequality: metrically strong, consonant "good" notes slightly stressed, weak and passing "bad" notes unstressed. Dickey recommends a compound tonguing for "all notes of the speed of eighth notes or faster," with repeated and leaping notes single-tongued; for *re* he suggests the soft *t* of a relaxed American "water."[14] In the canzonas of 1608 the arranger halves the original note values; if he has done the same here, Dickey's eighth notes are the semiquavers of this score.

Tempo

Without the manuscript, neither its mensuration sign nor its note values can be reported here. George Houle explains that music in "canzona style," notated in small values, was beaten with the tactus on the semibreve, taken slower than in music notated in long values, "so as not to rush the fast notes"; he cites Marin Mersenne's normative tactus of 1636, "about MM 60."[15] The arranger's *Allegro*, crotchet = 120, is his own. If he has halved the original values, one tactus is one minim here, and his marking puts it at 60 a minute: Mersenne's norm, not the slower canzona tactus Houle describes. Players may prefer a broader pulse.

9 Richard Charteris, "The Performance of Giovanni Gabrieli's Vocal Works: Indications in the Early Sources," *Music & Letters* 71, no. 3 (1990): 336–51, at 342. The score book is Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Mus. ms. 40028.

10 Bruce Dickey, "Ornamentation in Early Seventeenth-Century Italian Music," in *A Performer's Guide to Seventeenth-Century Music*, ed. Stewart Carter, rev. and expanded by Jeffery Kite-Powell, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 308; Gary Towne, "Choral Music in Italy and the Germanic Lands," ibid., 63.

11 Clifford Bartlett and Peter Holman, "Giovanni Gabrieli: A Guide to the Performance of His Instrumental Music," *Early Music* 3, no. 1 (1975): 25–32, at 27.

12 Bruce Dickey, "Cornett and Sackbut," in *A Performer's Guide to Seventeenth-Century Music*, 109.

13 Bartlett and Holman, "Giovanni Gabrieli," 27.

14 Dickey, "Cornett and Sackbut," 111–12.

15 George Houle, "Meter and Tempo," in *A Performer's Guide to Seventeenth-Century Music*, 353.

Christopher Delgado
New Jersey, November 2026

COMMENTARY

The editorial dynamics, bar by bar

Sources. *MS* = Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare, the manuscript source of the four-part version (Bryant, *Grove*, work-list no. 194); not consulted. *SS* = Giovanni Gabrieli, *Sacrae symphoniae* (Venice: Angelo Gardano, 1597), *Sonata pian e forte*, cited as the model for texture-based dynamics. *T* = the modern arrangement used for the musical text (see imprint).
Abbreviations. Tpt 1, Tpt 2 = Trumpets (parts in C and in B♭); Tbn = Trombone; B Tbn = Bass Trombone (in the score: Tpt. in C 1, Tpt. in C 2, Tbn., B. Tbn.); all = all four parts. Bar numbers follow *T*.

Bar	Part	Marking and rationale
1, 2, 2, 4	Tpt 2, Tbn, Tpt 1, B Tbn	[*mf*] at each entry of the subject (Tpt 2 bar 1, Tbn bar 2, Tpt 1 bar 2 beat 3, B Tbn bar 4 beat 3). The exposition builds from one voice to four; the increase is written into the scoring, so no further marking is printed. The second exposition (Tpt 1 bar 9 beat 3, B Tbn bar 11 beat 3, Tpt 2 bar 12, Tbn bar 14 beat 3) stays at this level.
18, 20	Tpt 1, Tbn; Tpt 2, B Tbn	[*p*]. A new point, a scale figure falling and then rising, around the cadence on B-flat in bar 18: Tpt 1 bar 18 beat 2½ (after its rests), Tbn bar 18 beat 4½; then Tpt 2 bar 20 beat 3½ and B Tbn bar 20 beat 4½, after rests. Tpt 1 and Tbn sound alone from bar 19 beat 3 to bar 20 beat 3½.
26, 27	Tbn, B Tbn, Tpt 2, Tpt 1	[*mf*]. After the cadence on B-flat in bar 26 the semiquaver figure passes from the trombones (Tbn bar 26 beat 1½, after its cadence note; B Tbn bar 26 beat 2½) to the trumpets (Tpt 2 bar 26 beat 4½, Tpt 1 bar 27 beat 3½). Bars 32–35 repeat bars 27–30 and stay at this level (see Preface).
36	all	[*f*]. Tpt 2, Tbn, B Tbn bar 36 beat 2, after the cadence note; Tpt 1 bar 36 beat 4. The writing turns chordal (see Preface). *SS*: both choirs together = *forte*.
40, 41	Tbn, B Tbn, Tpt 2, Tpt 1	[*mf*] at the start of the scalar point that follows the chordal block: Tbn bar 40 beat 1½, B Tbn bar 40 beat 2½, Tpt 2 bar 40 beat 3½, Tpt 1 bar 41 beat 2½.
49	all	[*f*]. Tpt 1 bar 49 beat 2; Tpt 2, Tbn, B Tbn bar 49 beat 4, after the cadence on B-flat. The varied return of the chordal block of bars 36–40.
52, 53	Tbn, B Tbn, Tpt 2, Tpt 1	[*mf*] as the scalar point returns: Tbn bar 52 beat 3½, B Tbn bar 52 beat 4½, Tpt 2 bar 53 beat 1½, Tpt 1 bar 53 beat 4½. The level holds to the end.

Markings deliberately not added

No hairpins (see Preface). No echo for the repeat of bars 32–35 (see Preface). No final [*f*]: the canzona ends in its scalar point and closes on a held chord. No dynamic for the final fermata. No articulation has been added to *T*.

Editorial method

This is a performing edition. The musical text is a modern arrangement for brass quartet (see the imprint page). Its pitch level (B-flat; IMSLP lists the work in C), note values, barring, metre signature, tempo indication (*Allegro*, crotchet = 120), and final fermata belong to the arrangement. The text has not been collated with the Verona manuscript, which has not been consulted. The present editor's contribution is confined to the bracketed dynamics, the preface, and the commentary.

SOURCES AND LITERATURE

Works cited in the preface and commentary

Musical sources

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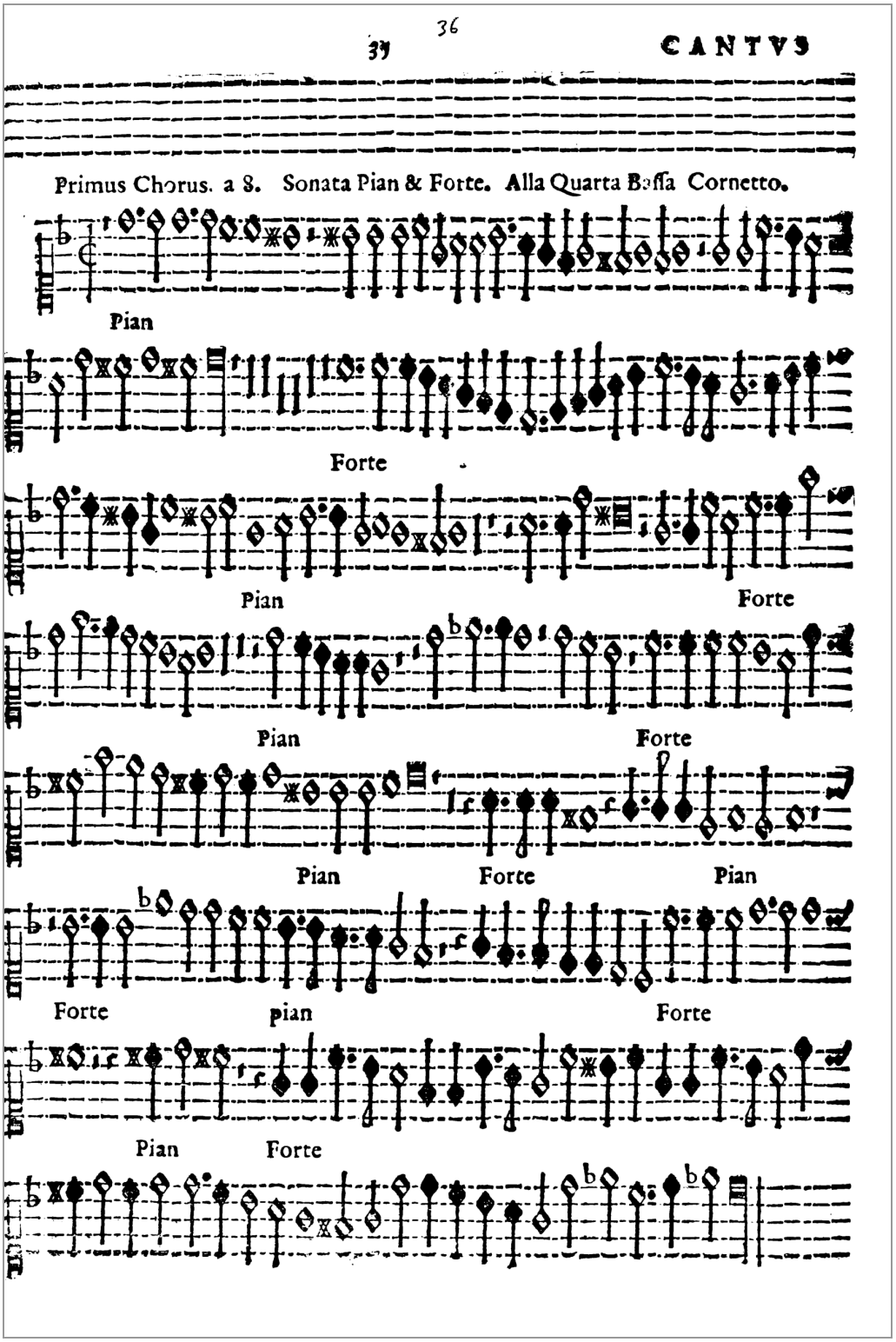
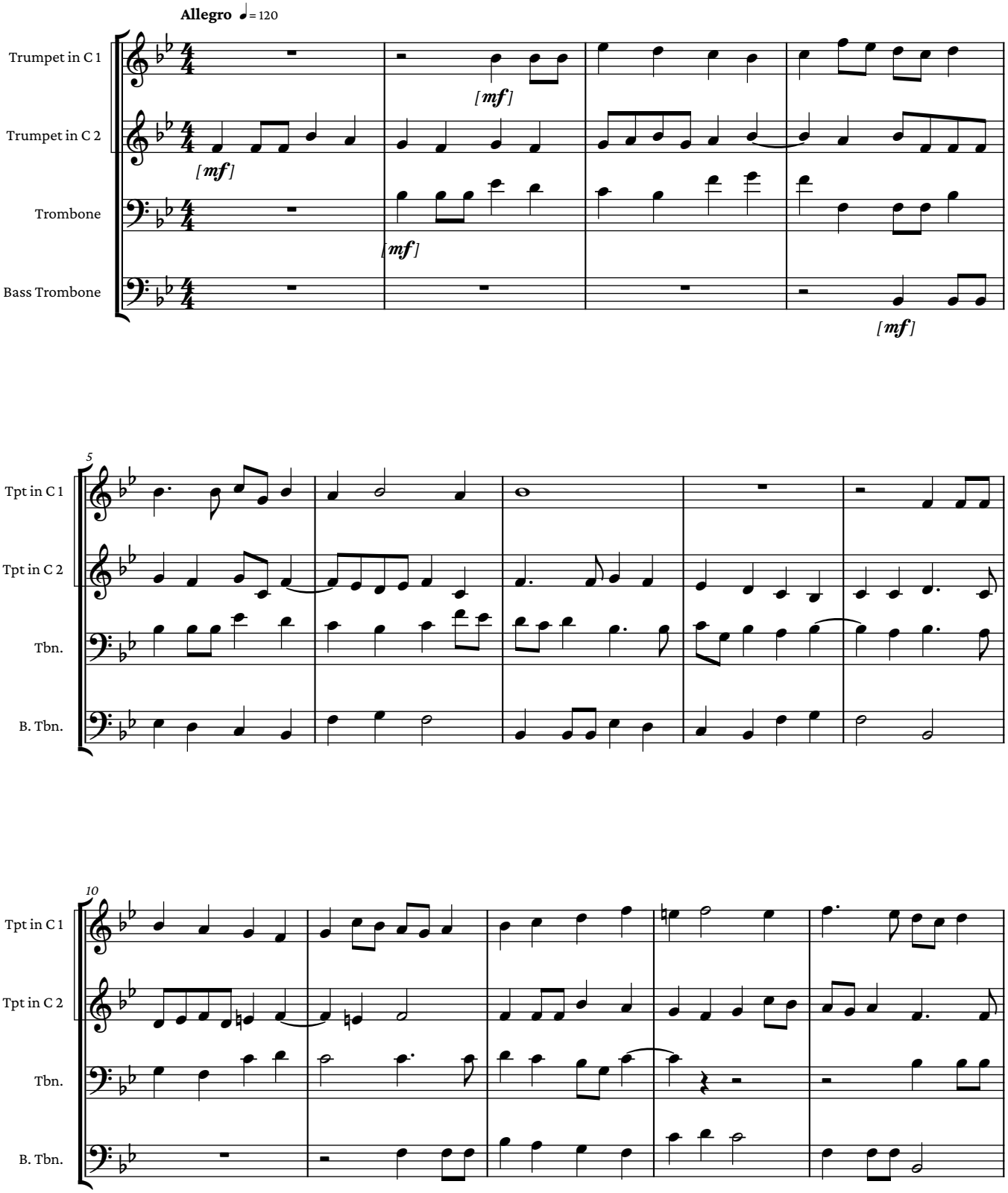


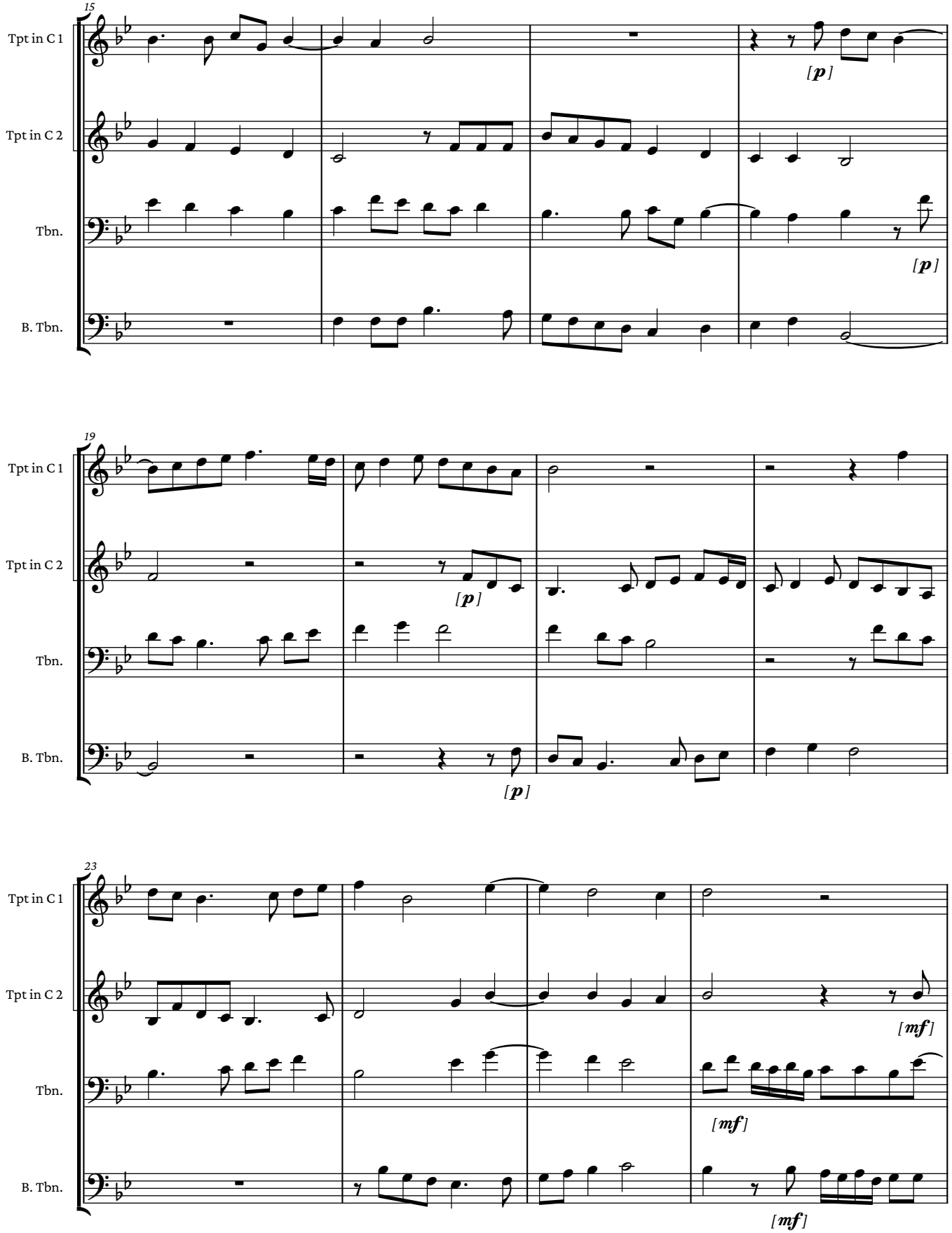
Plate 1. *Gabrieli, Sacrae symphoniae (Venice, 1597), Cantus partbook, Sonata pian & forte, Choir I cornetto part: the printed Pian and Forte mark where this choir plays alone and where both choirs sound. Vienna, ÖNB.*

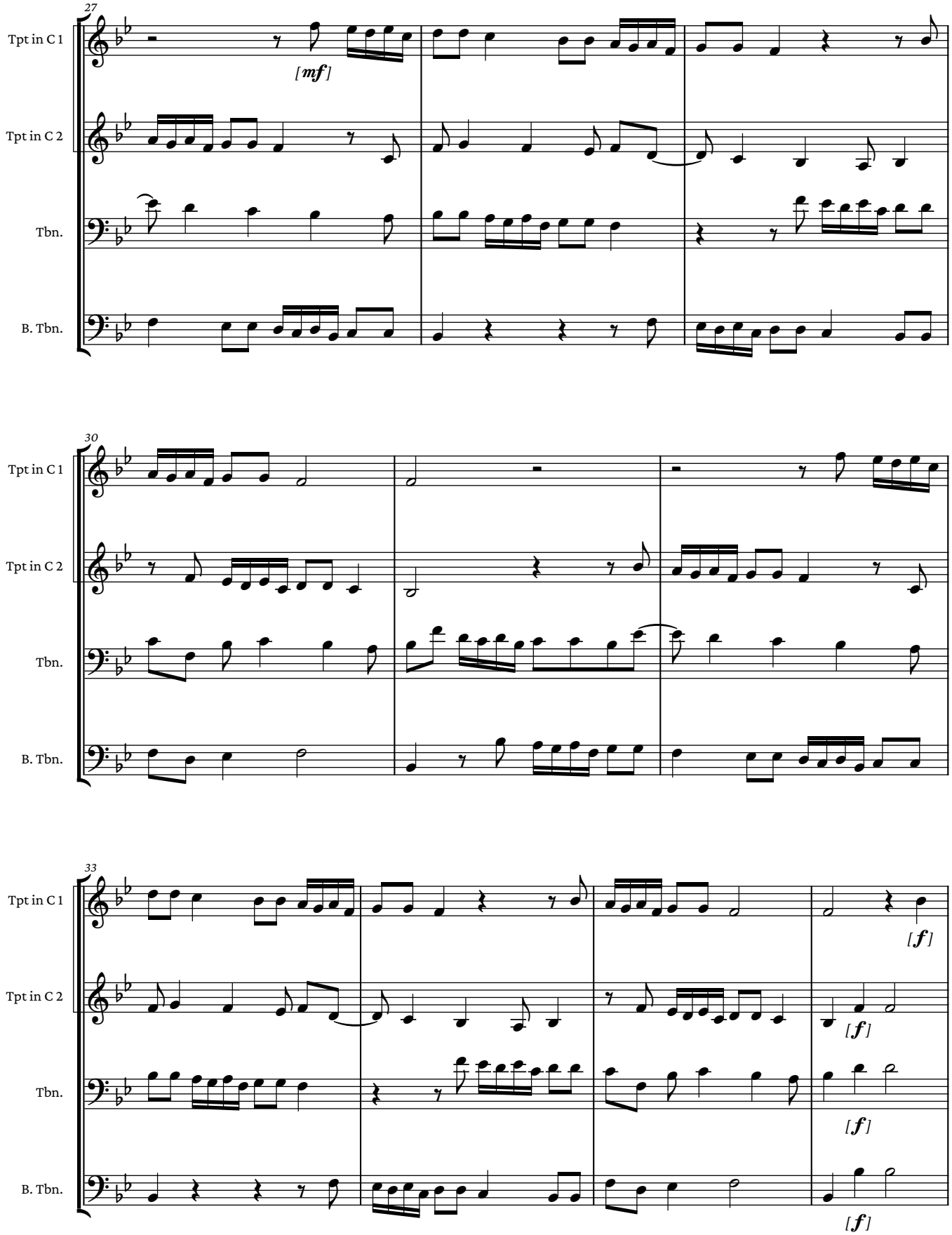
Canzon a 4

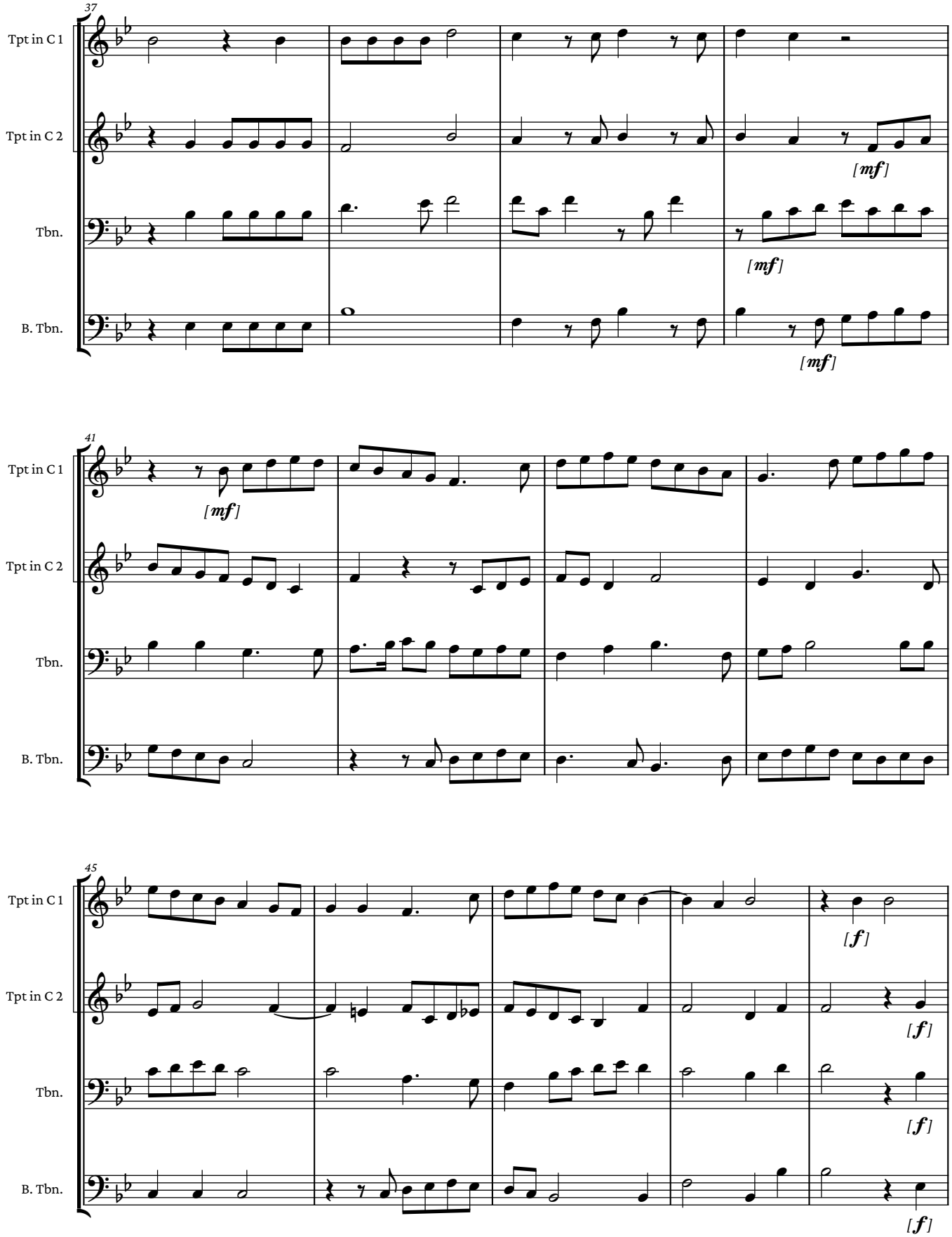
Giovanni Gabrieli (c. 1554/57–1612)
Edited by Christopher Delgado

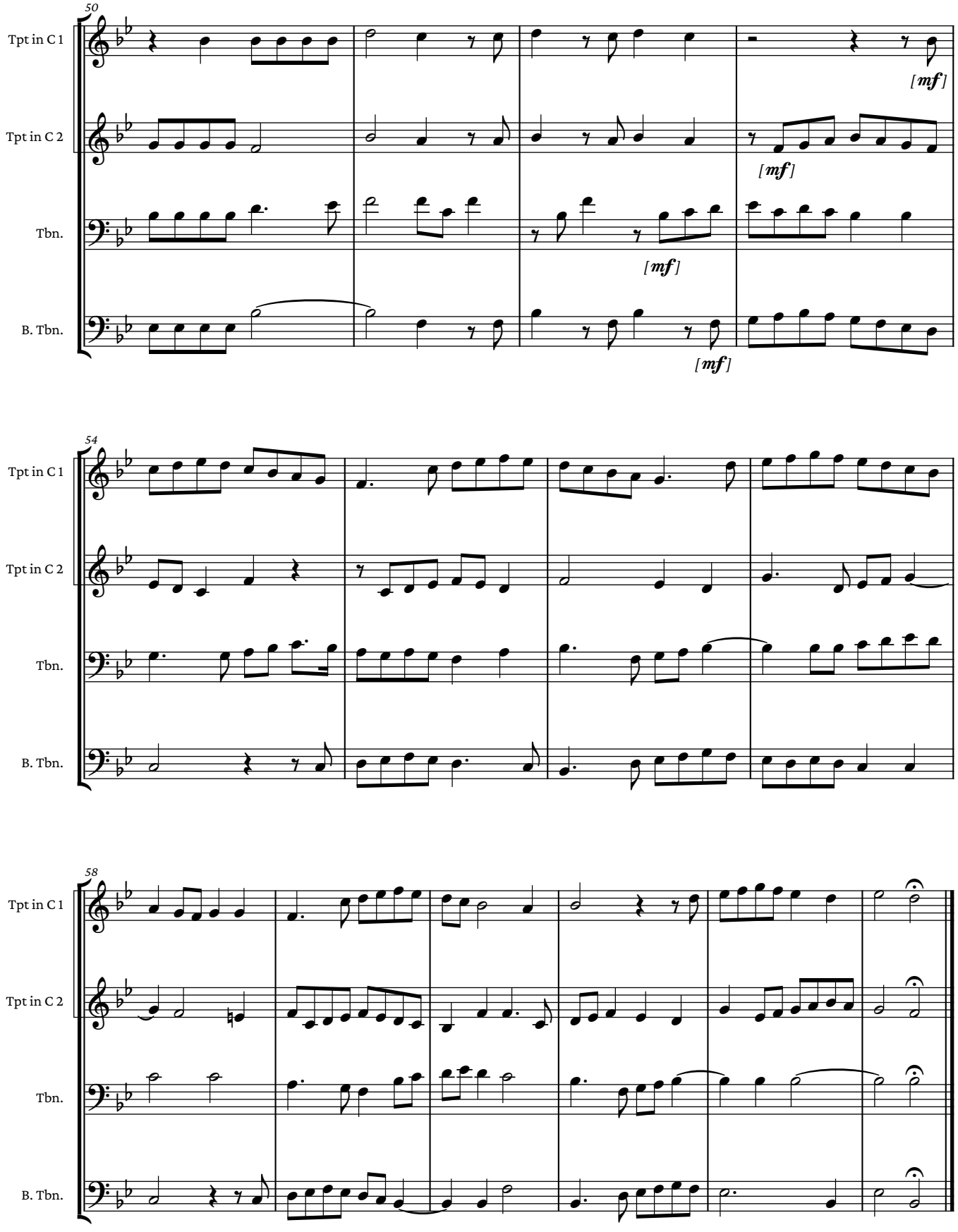


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15
Tpt in C 1
Tpt in C 2
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
[p]
[p]
19
Tpt in C 1
Tpt in C 2
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
[p]
[p]
23
Tpt in C 1
Tpt in C 2
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
[mf]
[mf]
[mf]


27
Tpt in C 1
Tpt in C 2
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
[mf]
30
Tpt in C 1
Tpt in C 2
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
33
Tpt in C 1
Tpt in C 2
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
[f]
[f]
[f]
[f]

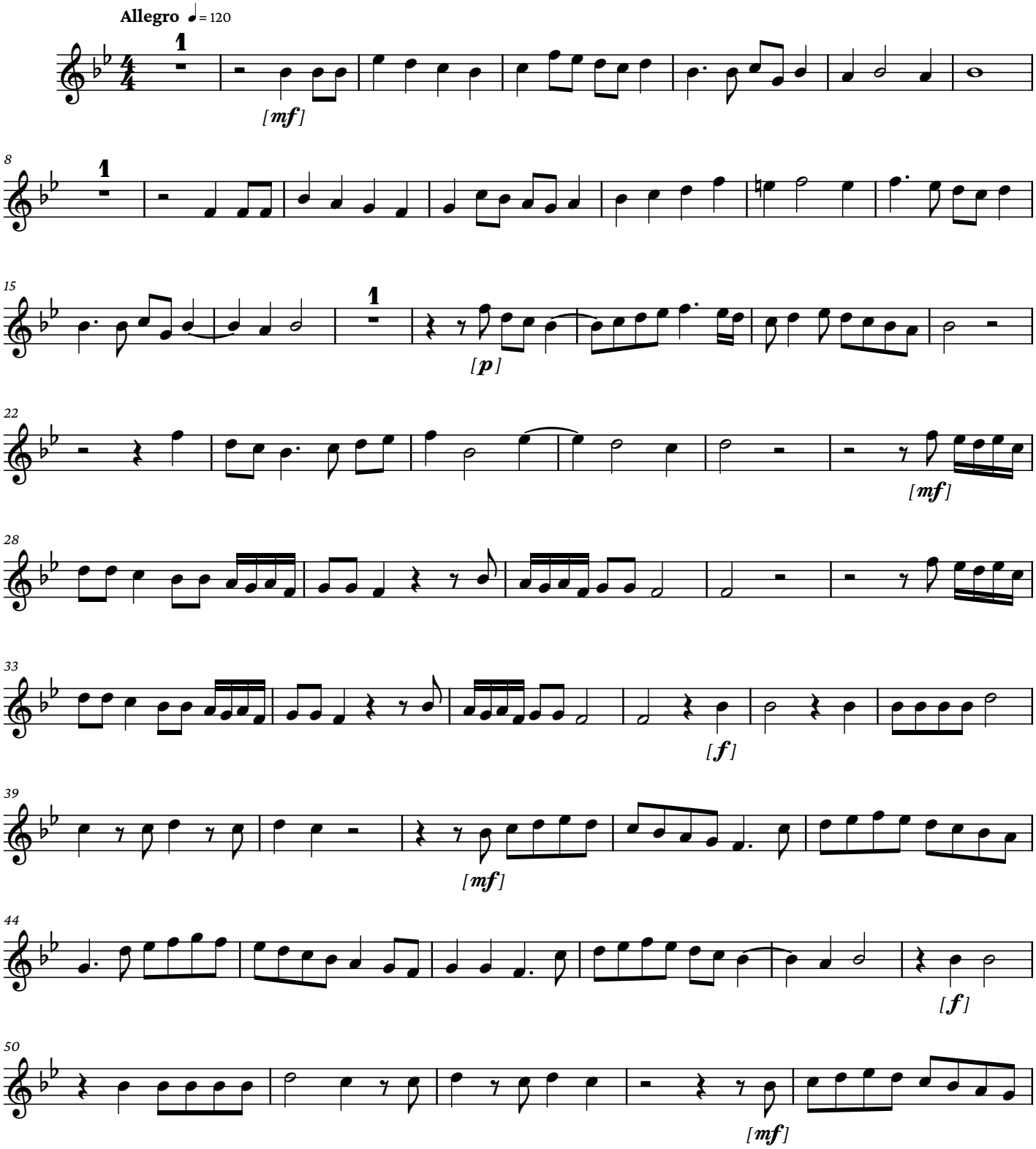

37
Tpt in C 1
Tpt in C 2
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
[mf]
[mf]
[mf]
41
Tpt in C 1
Tpt in C 2
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
[mf]
45
Tpt in C 1
Tpt in C 2
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
[f]
[f]
[f]
[f]


50
Tpt in C 1
Tpt in C 2
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
[mf]
[mf]
[mf]
[mf]
54
Tpt in C 1
Tpt in C 2
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
58
Tpt in C 1
Tpt in C 2
Tbn.
B. Tbn.

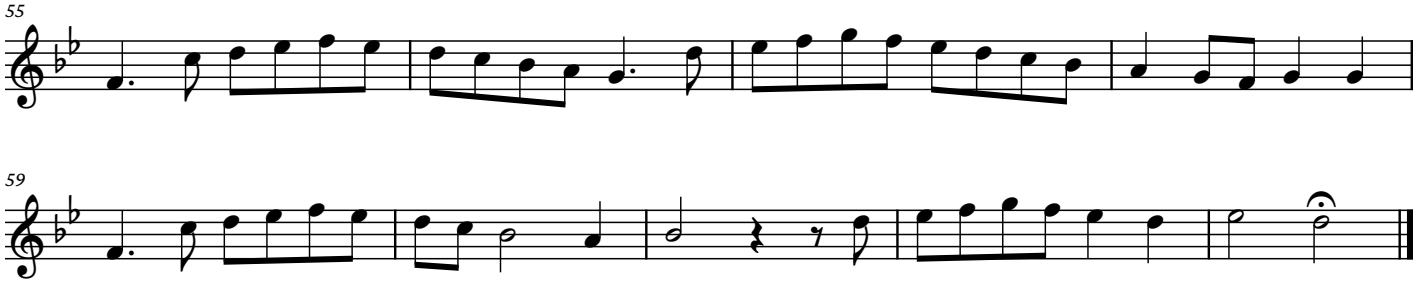
Trumpet 1 in C

Canzon a 4

Giovanni Gabrieli (c. 1554/57–1612)
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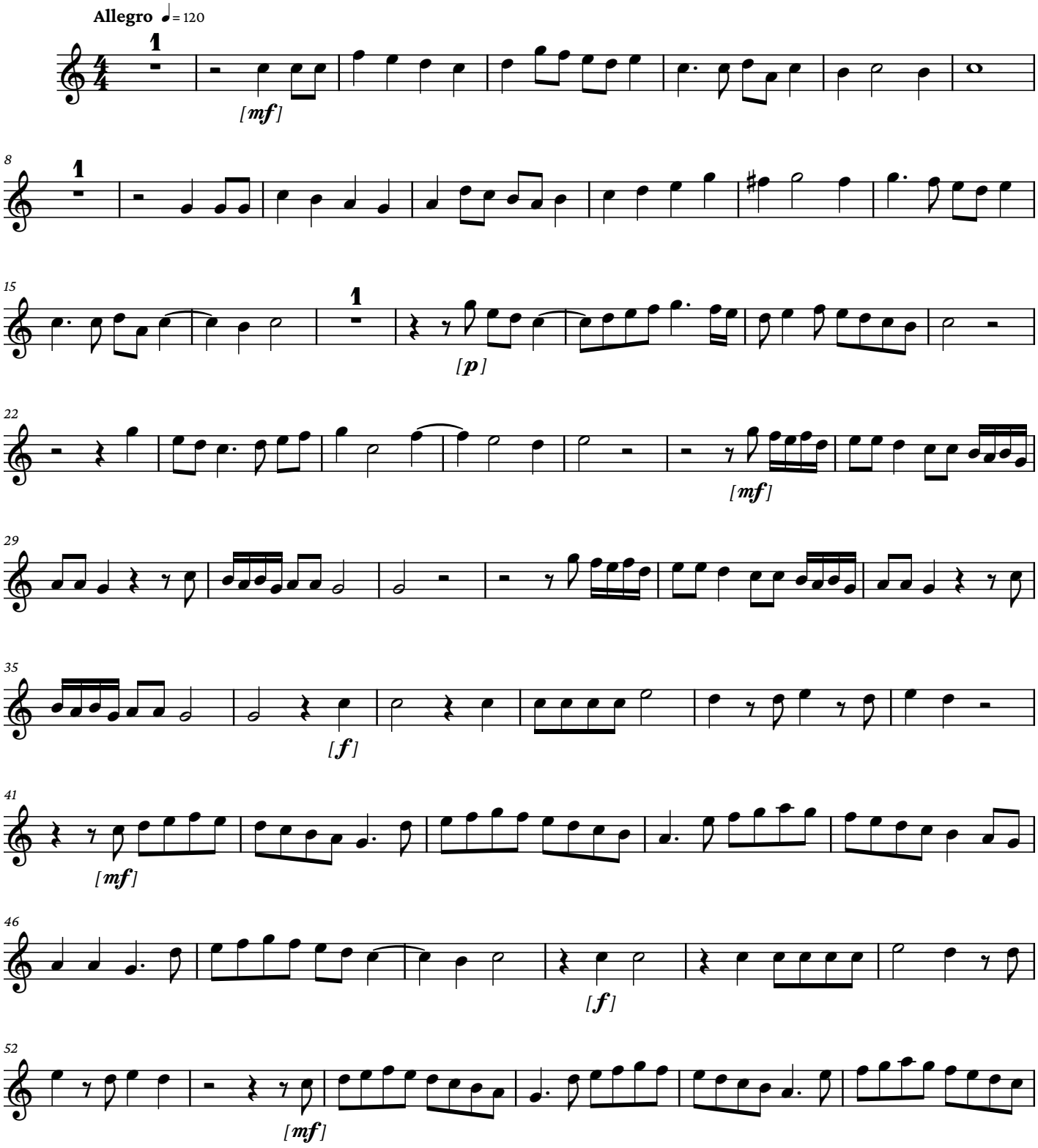
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55
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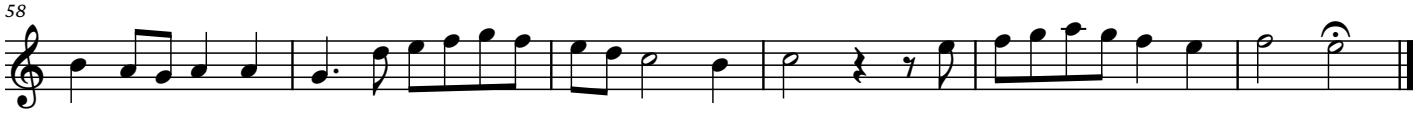
Trumpet 1 in B ♭

Canzon a 4

Giovanni Gabrieli (c. 1554/57–1612)
Edited by Christopher Delgado



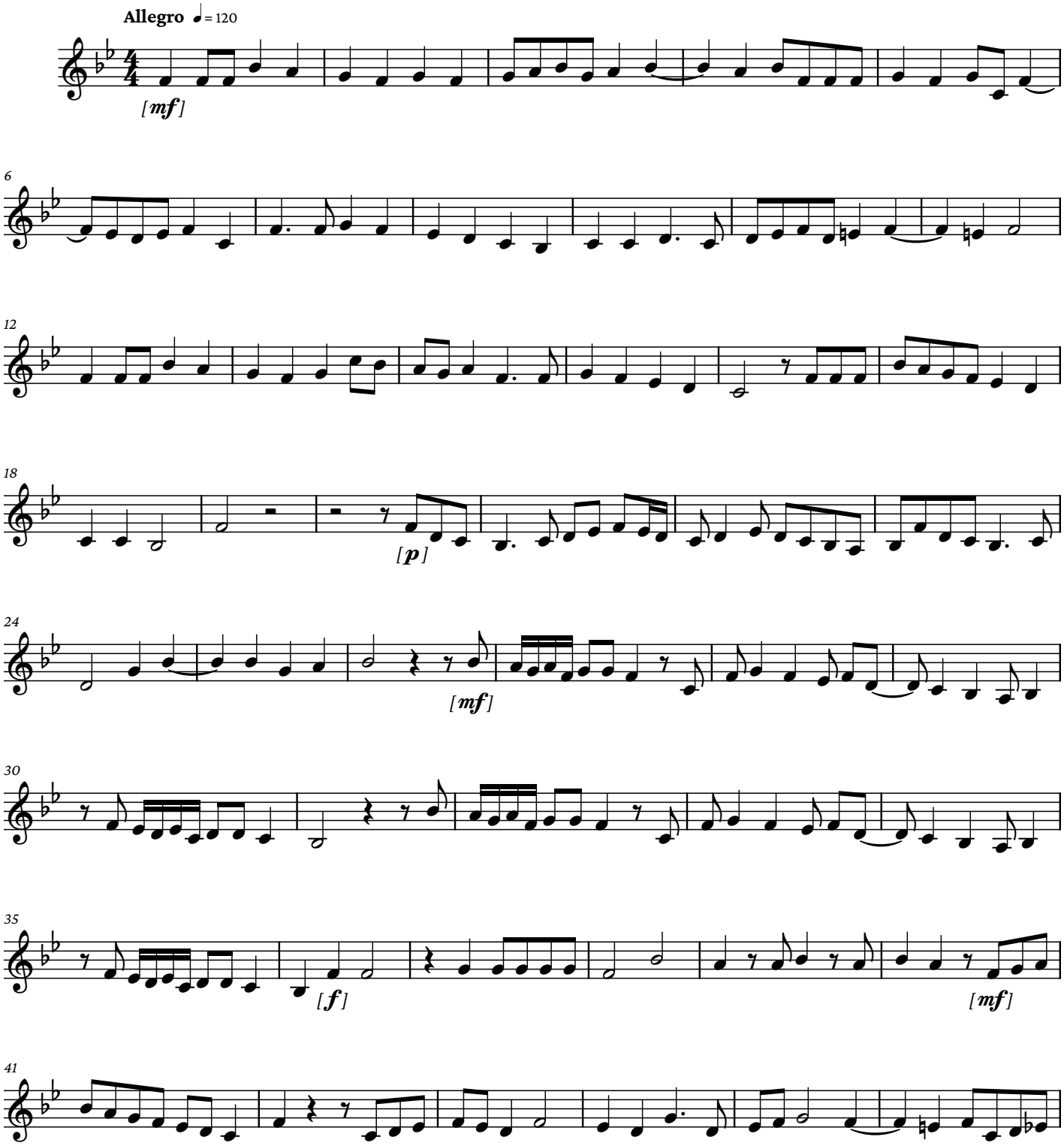
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58

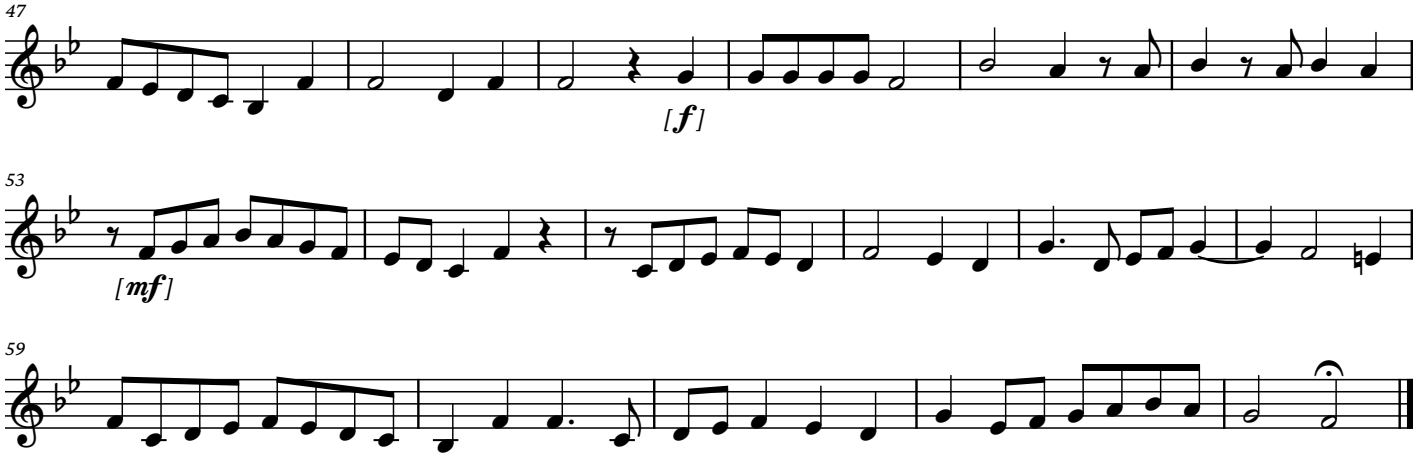
Trumpet 2 in C

Canzon a 4

Giovanni Gabrieli (c. 1554/57–1612)
Edited by Christopher Delgado



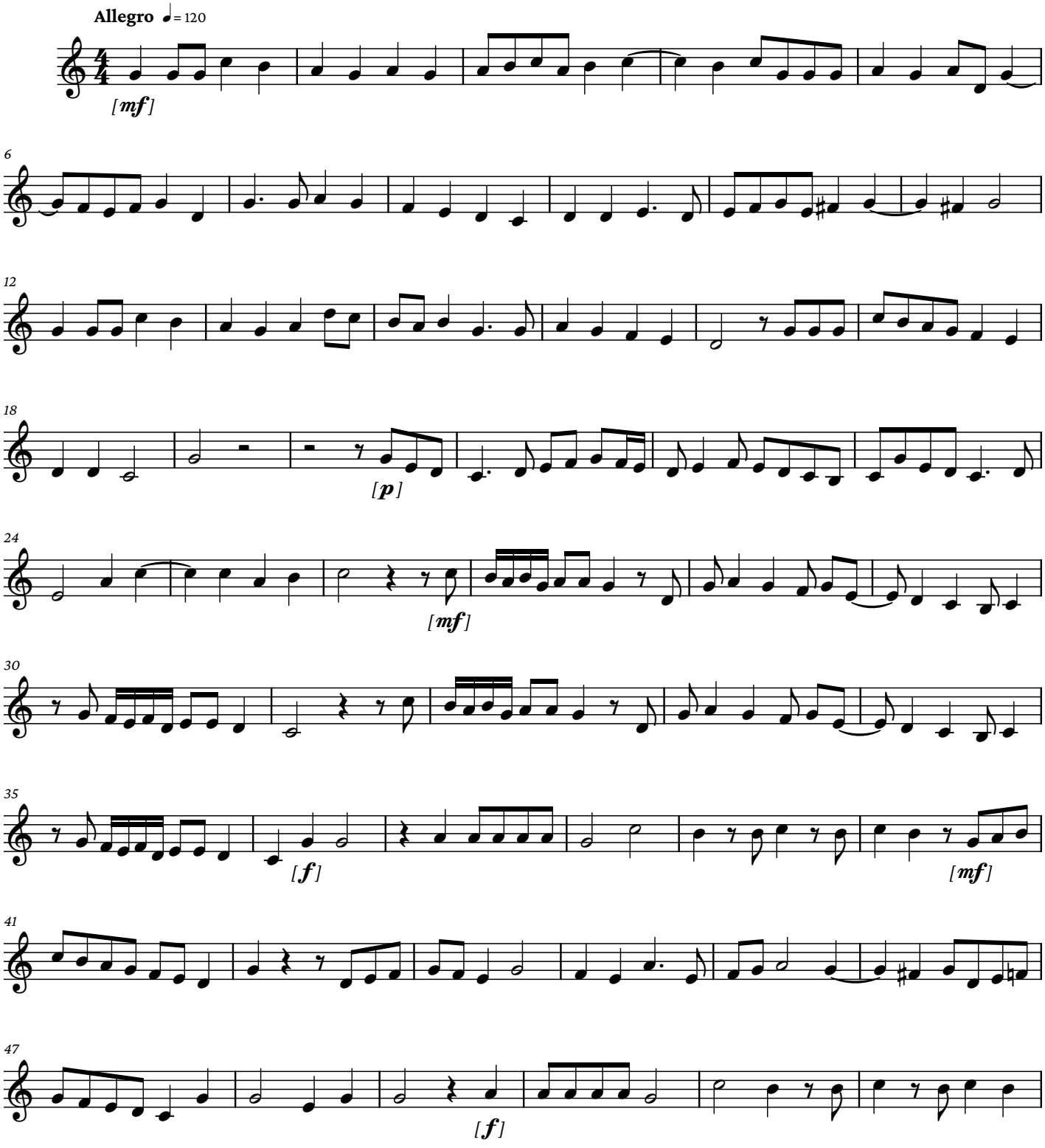
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47
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53
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59

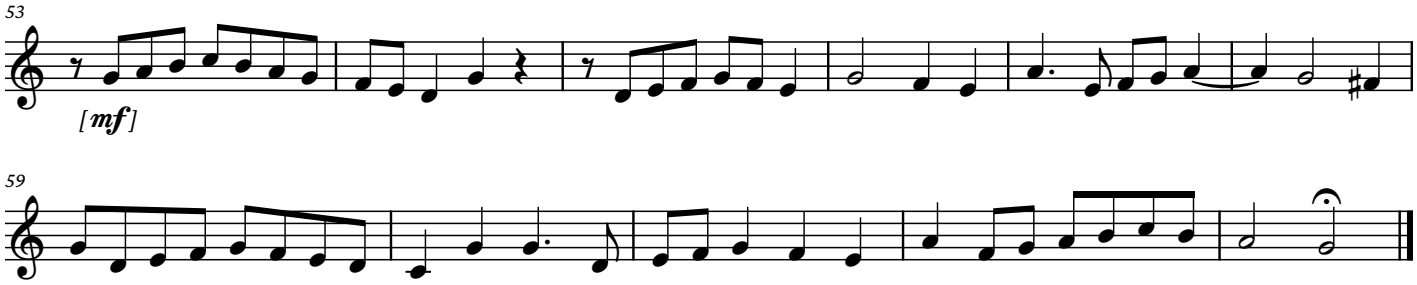
Trumpet 2 in B ♭

Canzon a 4

Giovanni Gabrieli (c. 1554/57–1612)
Edited by Christopher Delgado



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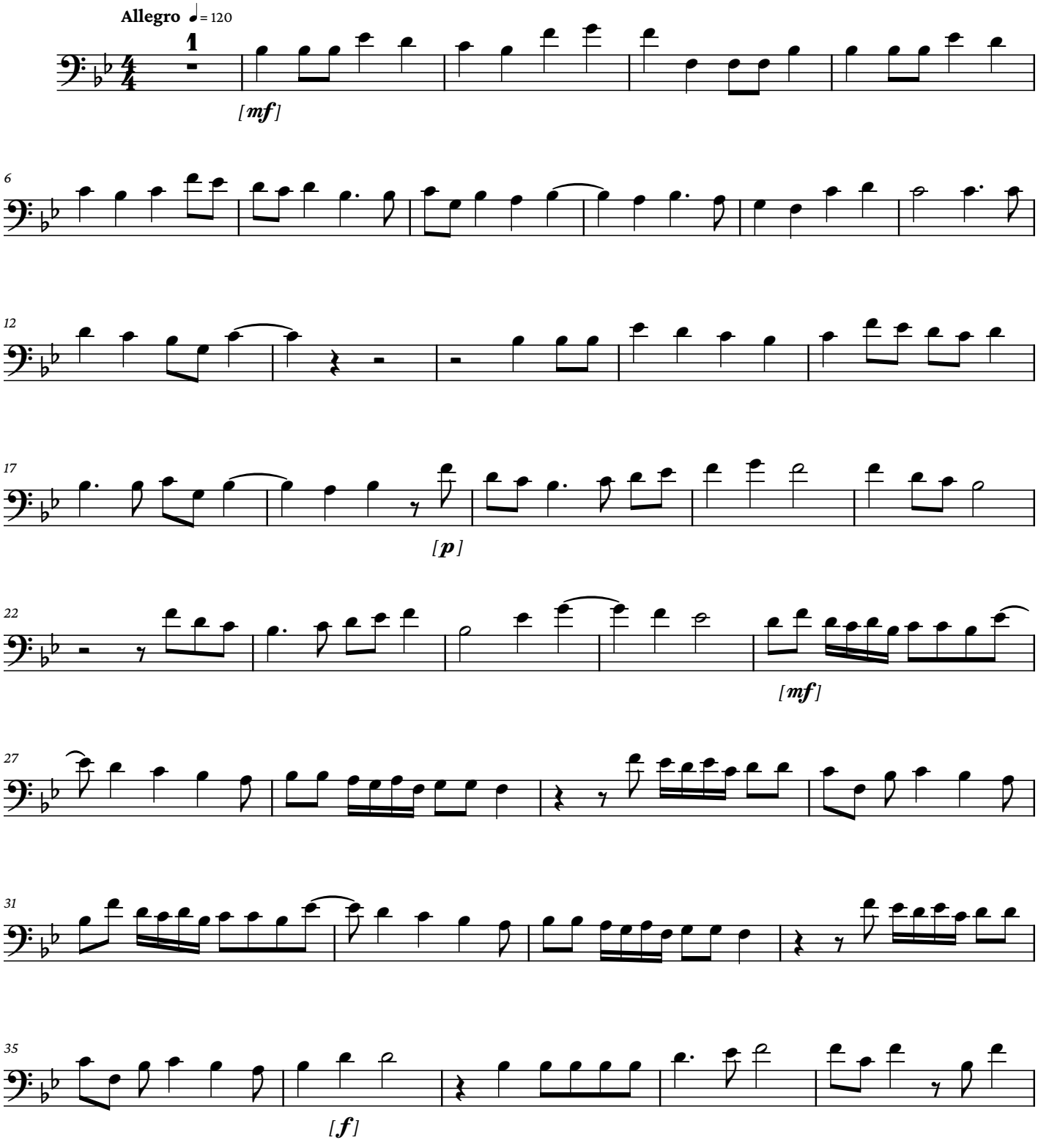

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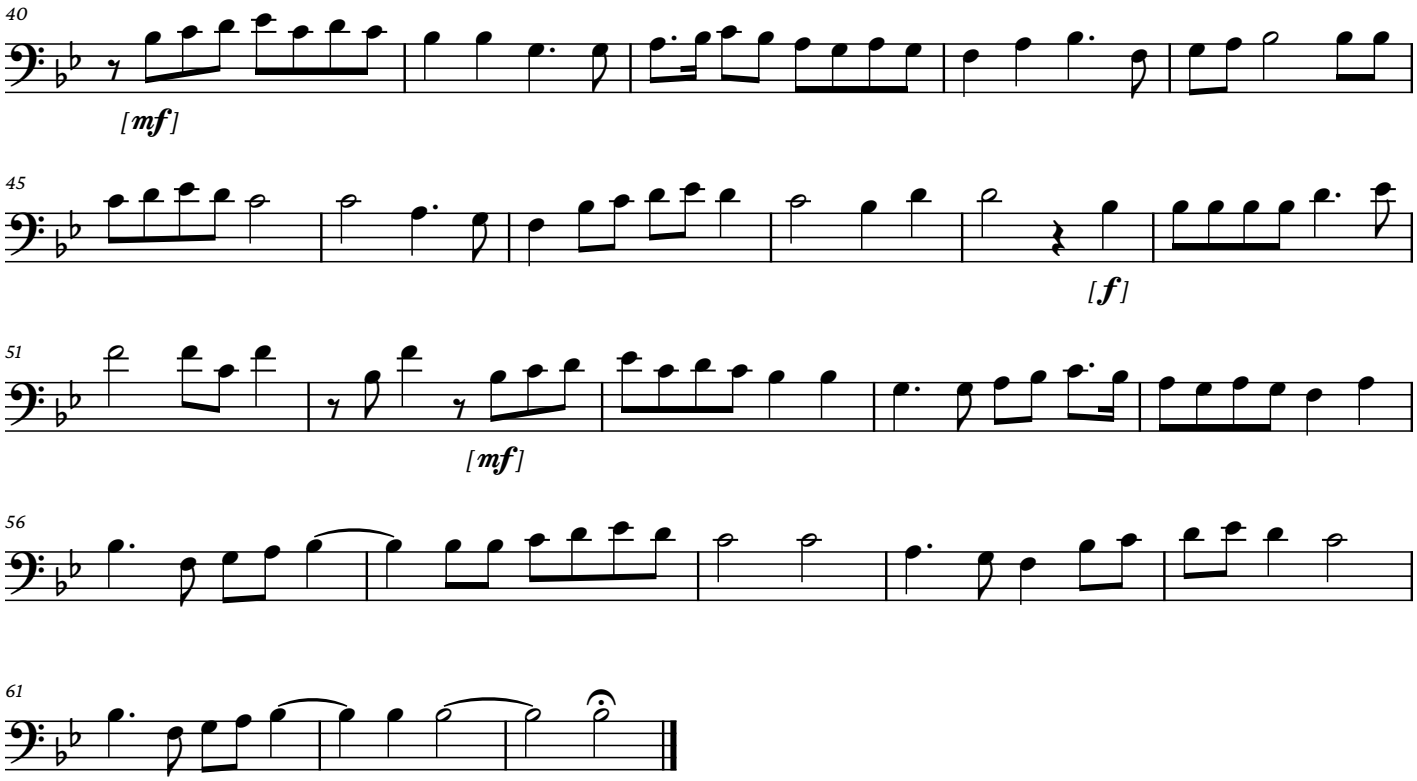
Trombone

Canzon a 4

Giovanni Gabrieli (c. 1554/57–1612)
Edited by Christopher Delgado



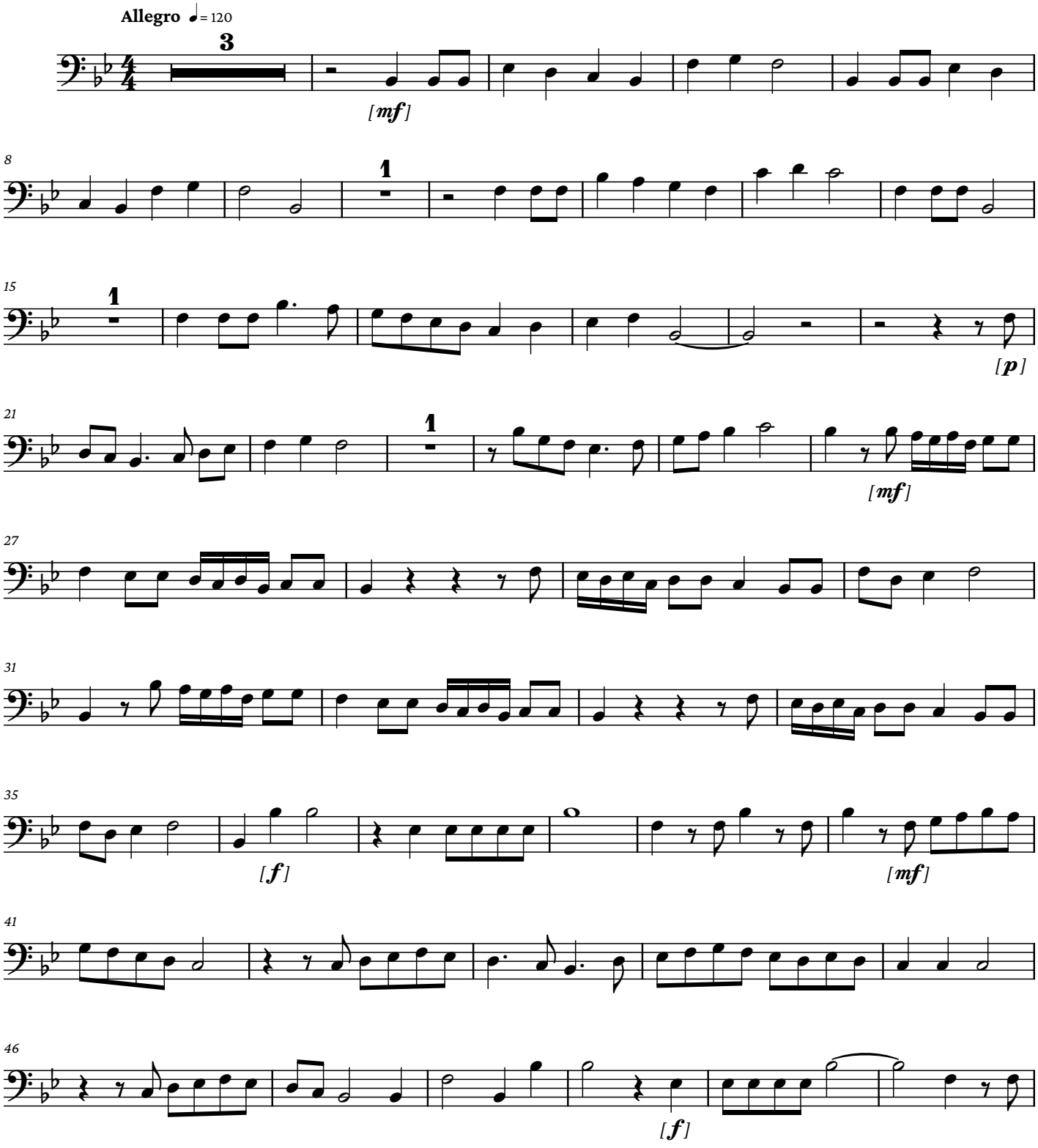
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40
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45
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51
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56
61

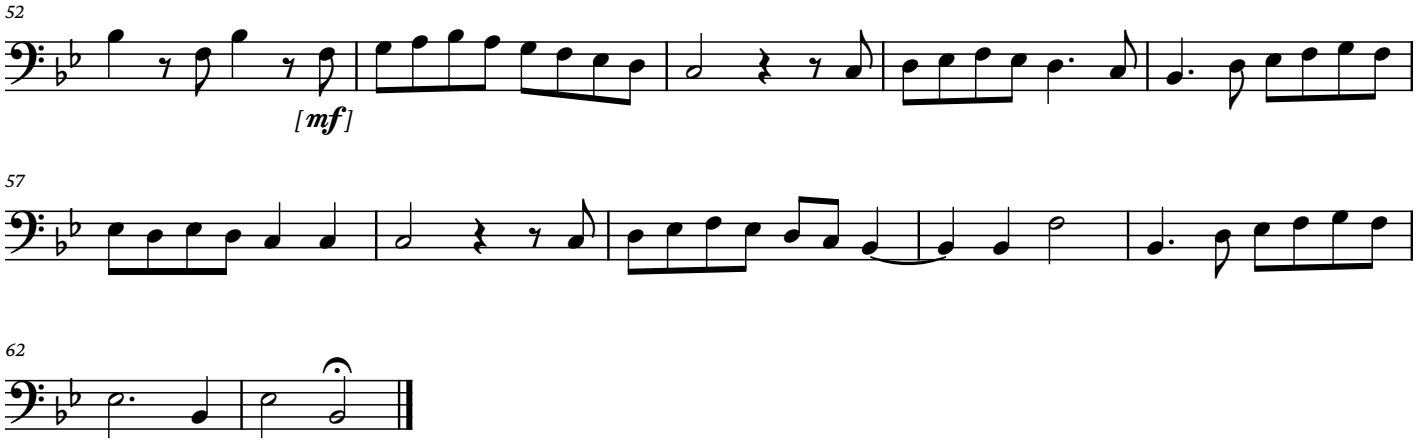
Bass Trombone

Canzon a 4

Giovanni Gabrieli (c. 1554/57–1612)
Edited by Christopher Delgado



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52
[mf]
57
62