J'ai ete au bal, Tuba Solo

Transposition Inquisition No. 86

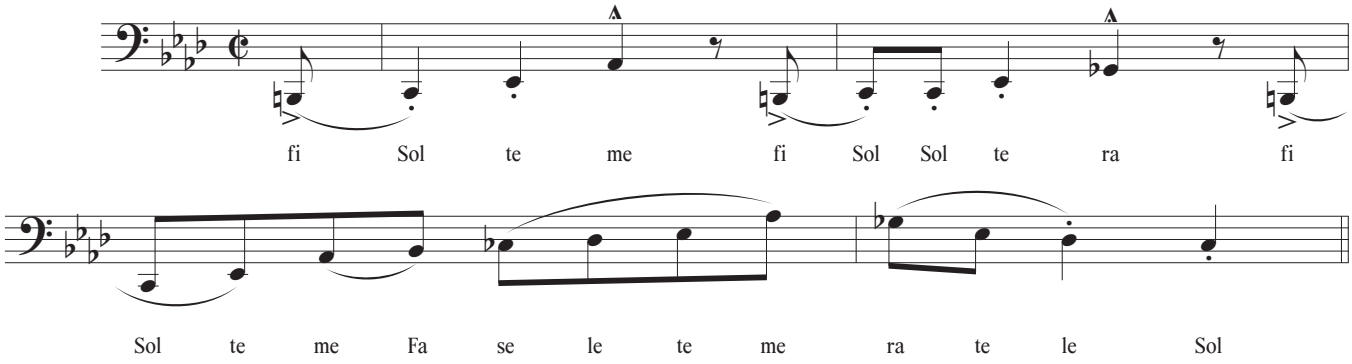
Donald Grantham

arr. Martorano

About the Composer:

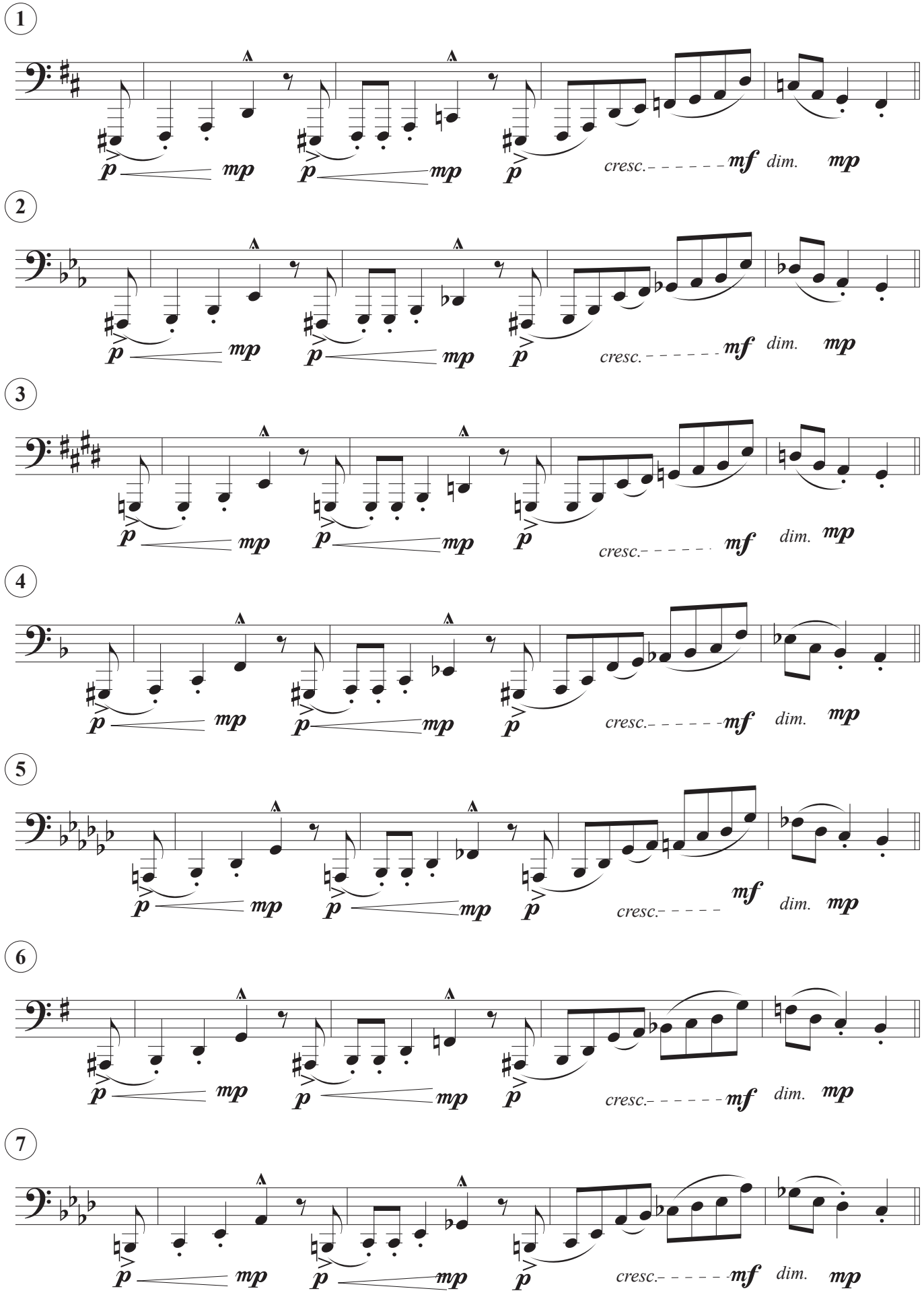
"American composer. He studied at the University of Oklahoma (BM 1970), with Boulanger at the American Conservatory, Fontainebleau (1973–4) and at the University of Southern California (MM 1974, DMA 1980), where his teachers included Halsey Stevens and Robert Linn. He joined the music department at the University of Texas, Austin in 1975. His numerous honours include the Prix Lili Boulanger (1976), a citation from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters (1980), a Guggenheim Fellowship (1990) and first prize in the National Opera Association's Biennial Competition (1991).

A versatile musician, Grantham has a particular affinity for the composition of large vocal works, including opera, and music for wind ensemble. His orchestral music, virtually all of which has programmatic associations, is also widely performed. A skilful contrapuntalist, he engages the listener with musical intricacy without being pedantic. His musical wit is rarely absent, sometimes manifesting itself as darkly humorous character sketches, and elsewhere as stylistic mockery.



About the Composition:

"J'ai été au bal is a celebration of some of the popular/folk music styles of Louisiana, in particular Cajun music and the brass band tradition of New Orleans. The dance flavor of much of the music is suggested by the title ("I went to the dance"), and two traditional Cajun dance tunes are employed. The first appears near the beginning and later at the end. "Allons danser, Colinda" ('lets go dancing, Colinda') is a boy's attempt to coax Colinda into going dancing, and part of his argument is "it's not everyone who knows how to dance the two-beat waltzes." The touching little tune does work better in a syncopated two, but is usually represented in the notation as 3+3+2. The second Cajun song is "Les flames d'enfer" ('the flames of hell'), most often performed as a heavily-accented two-step. My version is much faster and lighter, and is introduced by a country-fiddle style tune. The brass band begins with solo tuba, followed by a duet with the euphonium, and culminating in a full brass presentation.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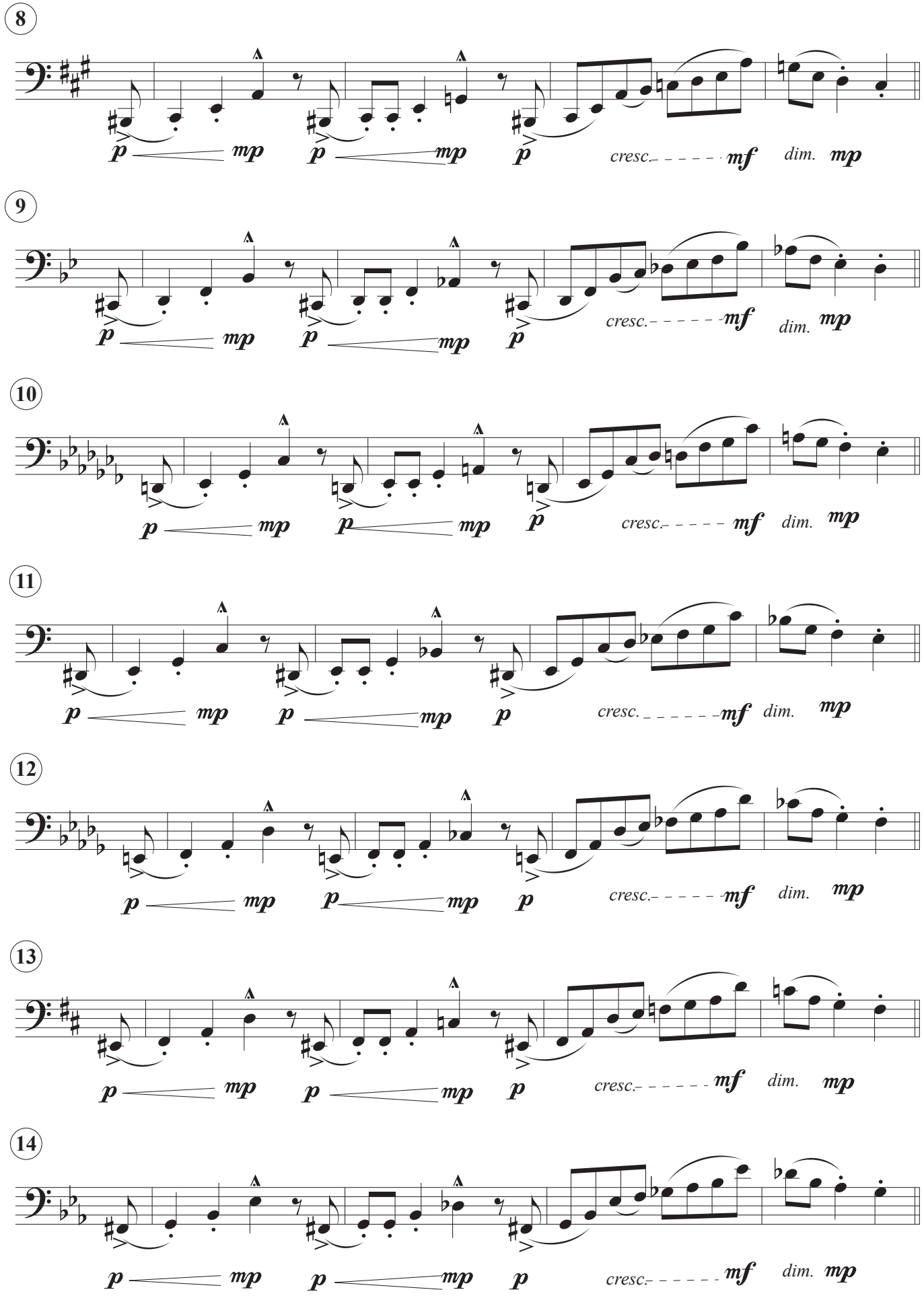
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