Selah

סֶלָה

For violoncello and piano

Part for violoncello

Nigel Morgan

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Selah

For violoncello and piano

Music by Nigel Morgan

Selah is a difficult word to translate even though it appears over seventy times in the Psalms. To some it means a kind of Amen. We know that the Psalms were originally sung and accompanied by musical instruments. In that context *Selah* may have indicated a pause for a instrumental interlude to enable singers and congregation to reflect on what had just been sung.

This is one of two *selahs* composed to celebrate a Bar and Bat Mitzvah on 12 October 2013. This one for violoncello with piano is quite fast and rhythmic. The other, for violin and piano, is slow and serious. Both are the result of studying one of the great hymns of the Jewish liturgy, the *Adon Olam*. This is a poem attributed to the poet Solomon ibn Gabirol (1031 – 1070). It is found in so many different musical settings that there's now a whole website devoted to recordings in many different traditions across the Jewish world. There's even a current YouTube 'hit' by the New York *a capella* group Listen Up!

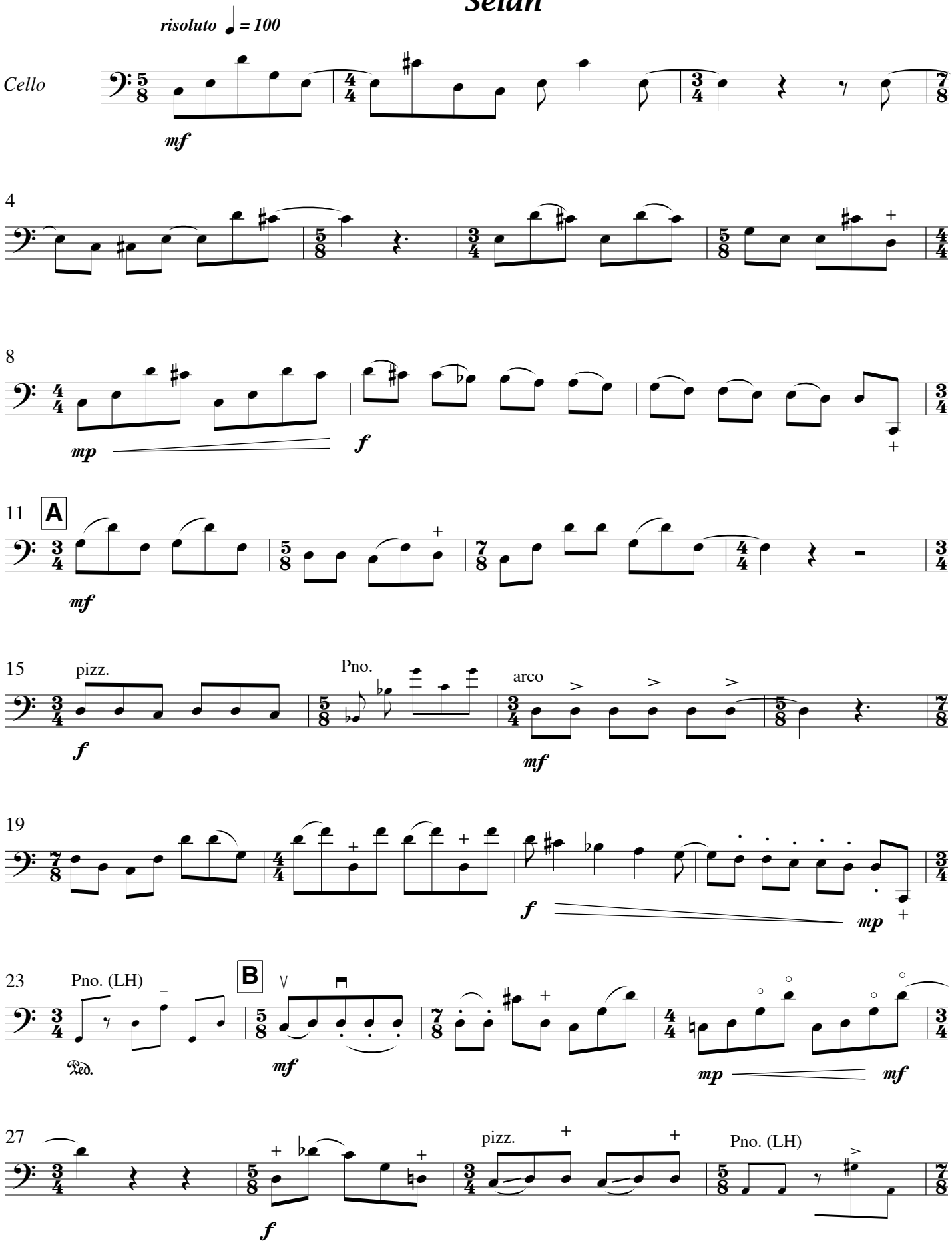
This *selah* is a kind of theme and variation backwards ending with a version of the *Adon Olam* by cellist Aaron Minsky's *Judaic Concert Suite*.

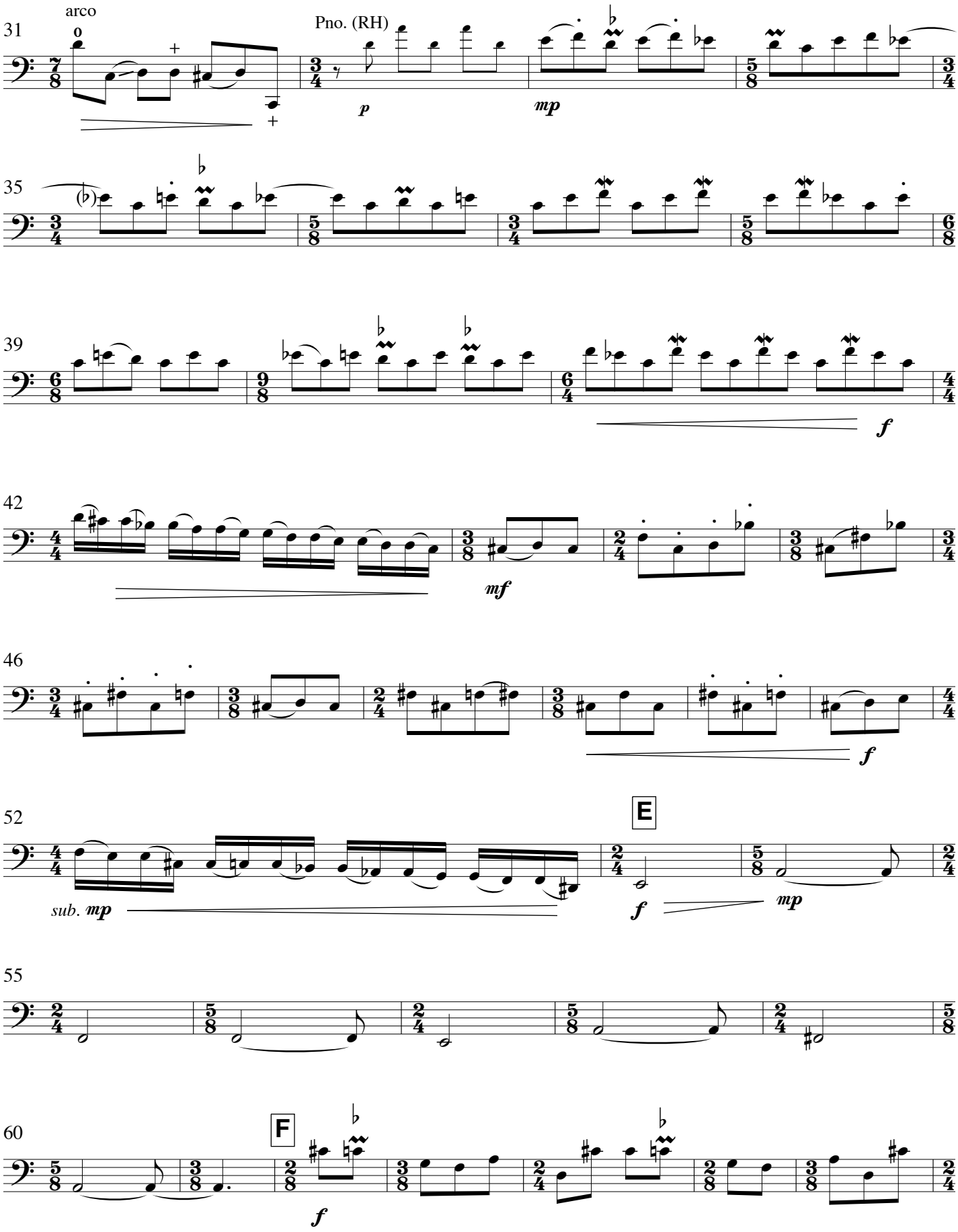
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_8EAfsysIG0

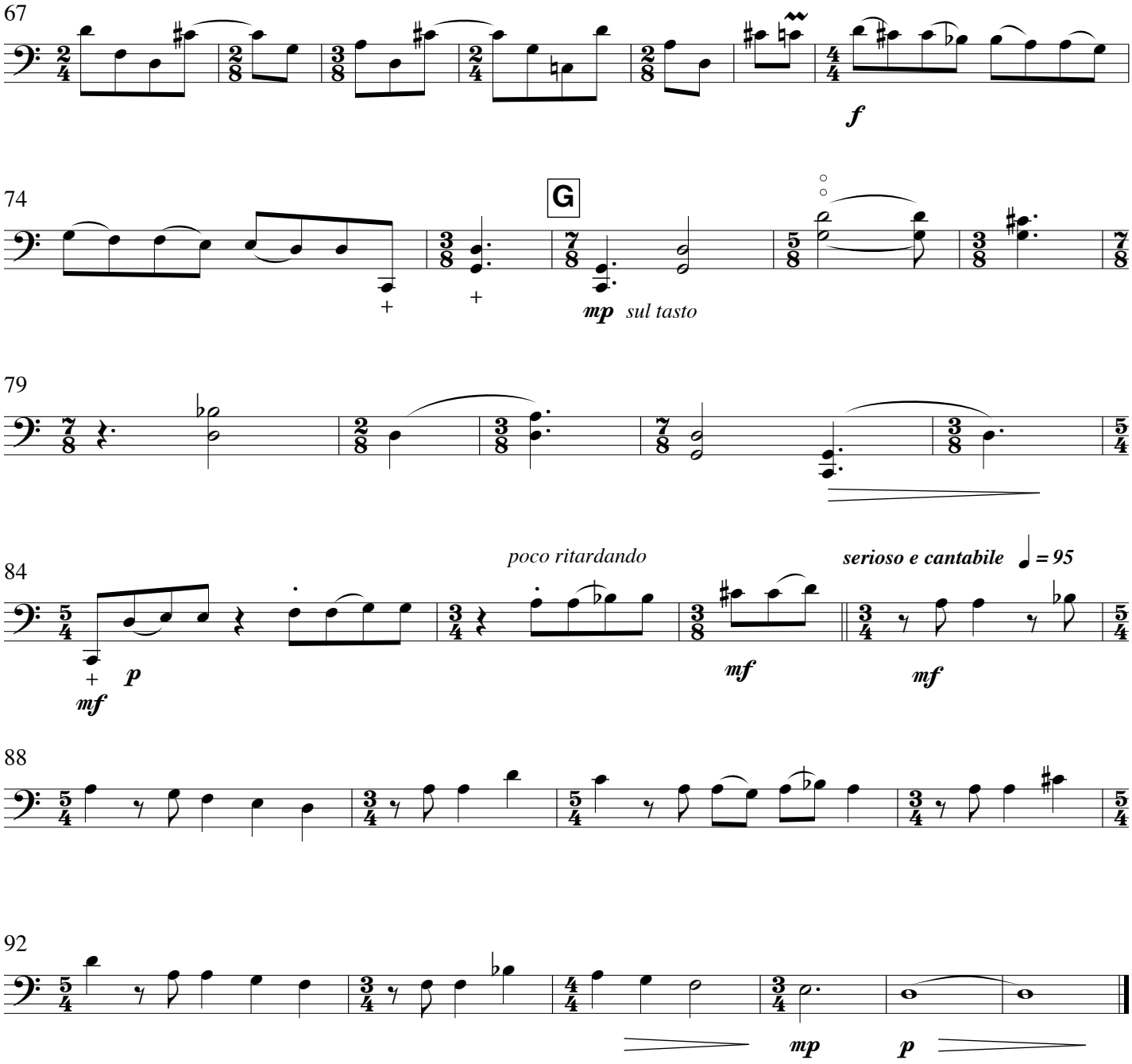
For the composer to write these pieces has revealed much about the Jewish faith and traditions, not least in reading the Authorised Daily Prayer Book. In his introduction the former Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks writes; the fact that the Jewish faith was written into prayers, rather than analysed in works of theology, is of immense significance. We do not analyse our faith: we pray it. We do not philosophise about truth: we sing it.

This isn't that far from William Byrd's statement that to sing is to pray twice.

Selah


risoluto ♩ = 100
Cello
mf
4
8
mp
f
11
A
mf
15
pizz.
f
Pno.
arco
mf
19
f
mp
23
Pno. (LH)
Ped.
B
mf
mp
mf
27
f
pizz.
Pno. (LH)


31
arco
Pno. (RH)
p
mp
35
39
f
42
mf
46
f
52
E
sub. mp
f
mp
55
60
F
f


67
f
74
G
mp
sul tasto
79
84
p
mf
poco ritardando
mf
serioso e cantabile
= 95
mf
88
92
mp
p