OF PASSION'S TIDE

song cycle
for tenor and piano

music by Jeffrey Ryan
poems by C. P. Cavafy
(translated by Rae Dalven)

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OF PASSION'S TIDE

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Performance notes for *Of Passion's Tide*:

Total performance time c. 18'
Total vocal range B^2-$G\#^4$

Programme note for *Of Passion's Tide*:

So many of the texts that composers set to art song are about love and relationships. But while men and women sing about each other, and women sing about women (often through texts in a "male voice"), ***Of Passion's Tide*** is my contribution to the still-scant repertoire of songs in which men sing about men.

Of Passion's Tide is a setting of six poems written in the 1910s and '20s by C. P. Cavafy (1863-1933), used here in Rae Dalven's English translation from the original Greek. Cavafy wrote frankly, honestly, and beautifully about male relationships from his perspective and experience as a gay man in the early 20th century. These particular poems, selected from Cavafy's collected works, fall nicely into an umbrella storyline of an older man reflecting on a relationship from his youth. The first song, *Desires*, expresses the importance of acting on one's feelings while one has the chance. In the second song, *The Next Table,* he sees a young man at a café who reminds him of his past love. The next three songs chronicle that relationship from its rapturous beginning to its unavoidable ending. Finally, *Return* expresses his yearning to rediscover those sensations of his youth.

Of Passion's Tide

poems by C. P. Cavafy, translated by Rae Dalven

Desires

Like beautiful bodies of the dead who had not grown old
and they shut them, with tears, in a magnificent mausoleum,
with roses at the head and jasmine at the feet—
that is how desires look that have passed
without fulfillment; without one of them having achieved
a night of sensual delight, or a moonlit morn.

The Next Table

He must be scarcely twenty-two years old.
And yet I am certain that nearly as many
years ago, I enjoyed the very same body.

It isn't at all infatuation of love.
I entered the casino only a little while ago;
I didn't even have time to drink much.
I have enjoyed the same body.

If I can't recall where—one lapse of memory means nothing.

Ah see, now that he is sitting down at the next table
I know every movement he makes—and beneath his clothes,
once more I see the beloved bare limbs.

At the Theater

I was bored looking at the stage,
and I lifted my eyes to the loges
and I saw you in a loge
with your strange beauty, your dissolute youth.
And at once there came back to my mind
all they had told me about you in the afternoon,
and my mind and body were moved.
And while fascinated I gazed
at your tired beauty, your tired youth,
your tastefully selected clothes,
I imagined you and depicted you,
the way they spoke to me of you that afternoon.

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Picture of a 23-year-old youth painted by his friend of the same age, an amateur

He finished the painting yesterday noon. Now
he studies it in detail He has painted him in a
gray unbuttoned coat, a deep gray; without
any vest or any tie. With a rose-colored shirt;
open at the collar, so something might be seen
also of the beauty of his chest, of his neck.
The right temple is almost entirely
covered by his hair, his beautiful hair
(parted in the manner he prefers it this year).
There is the completely voluptuous tone
he wanted to put into it when he was doing the eyes,
when he was doing the lips… His mouth, the lips
that are made for consummation, for choice love-making.

Before Time Changes Them

They were both deeply grieved at their separation.
They did not desire it; it was circumstances.
The needs of a living obliged one of them
to go to a distant place— New York or Canada.
Their love certainly was not what it had been before;
for the attraction had gradually waned.
for love's attraction had considerably waned.
But they did not desire to be separated.
It was circumstances.— Or perhaps Destiny
had appeared as an artist separating them now
before their feeling should fade, before Time had changed them;
so each for the other will remain forever as he had been,
a handsome young man of twenty-four years.

Return

Return often and take me,
beloved sensation, return and take me—
when the memory of the body awakens,
and old desire again runs through the blood;
when the lips and the skin remember,
and the hands feel as if they touch again.

Return often and take me at night,
when the lips and the skin remember…

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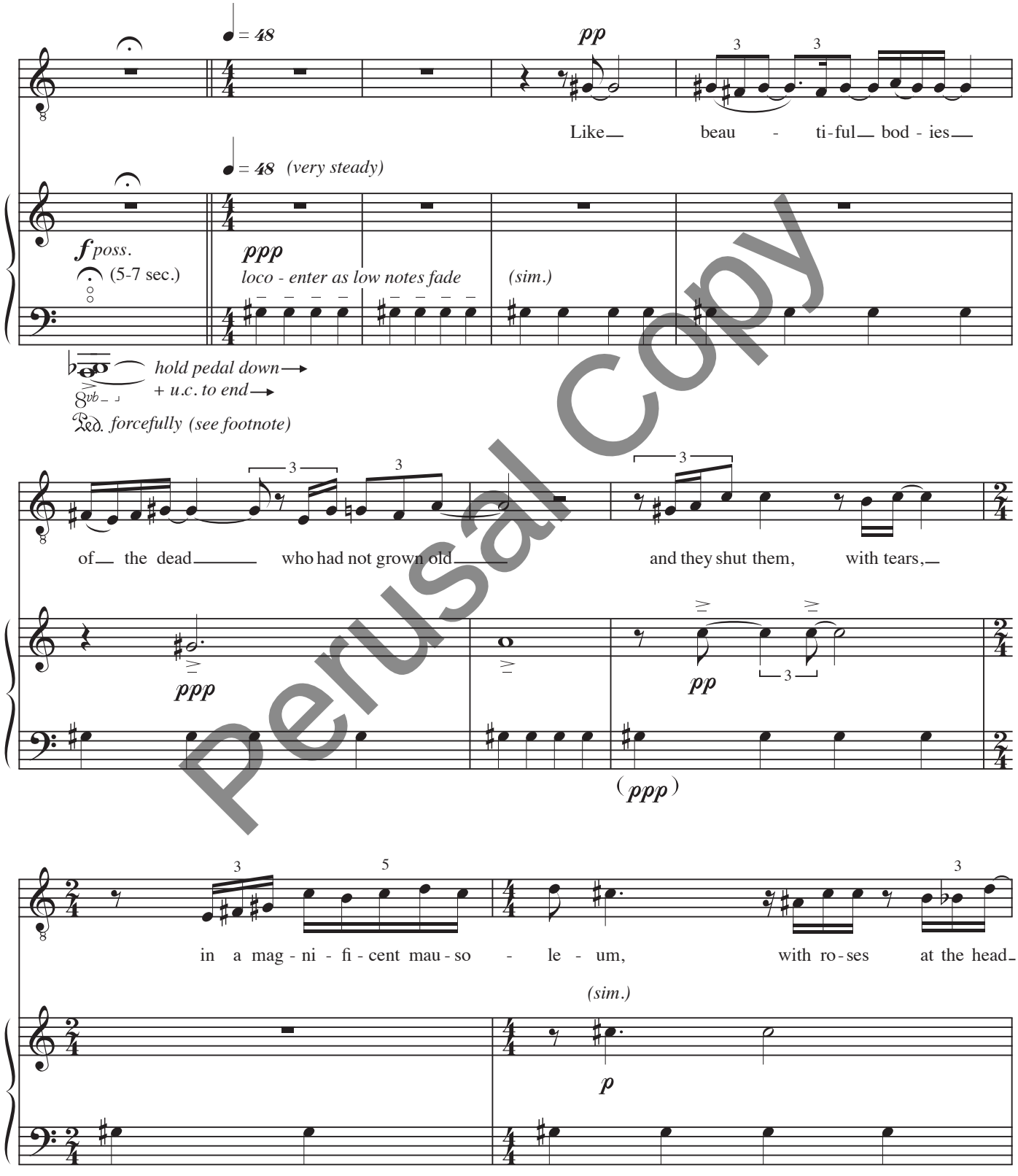
Poems from **THE COMPLETE POEMS OF CAVAFY**, translated by Rae Dalven, ©1961, 1989, published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.; used and reprinted with permission of The Alexander S. Onassis Program in Hellenic Studies at New York University.

poems by C. P. Cavafy
trans. Rae Dalven

Of Passion's Tide
Desires

music by Jeffrey Ryan



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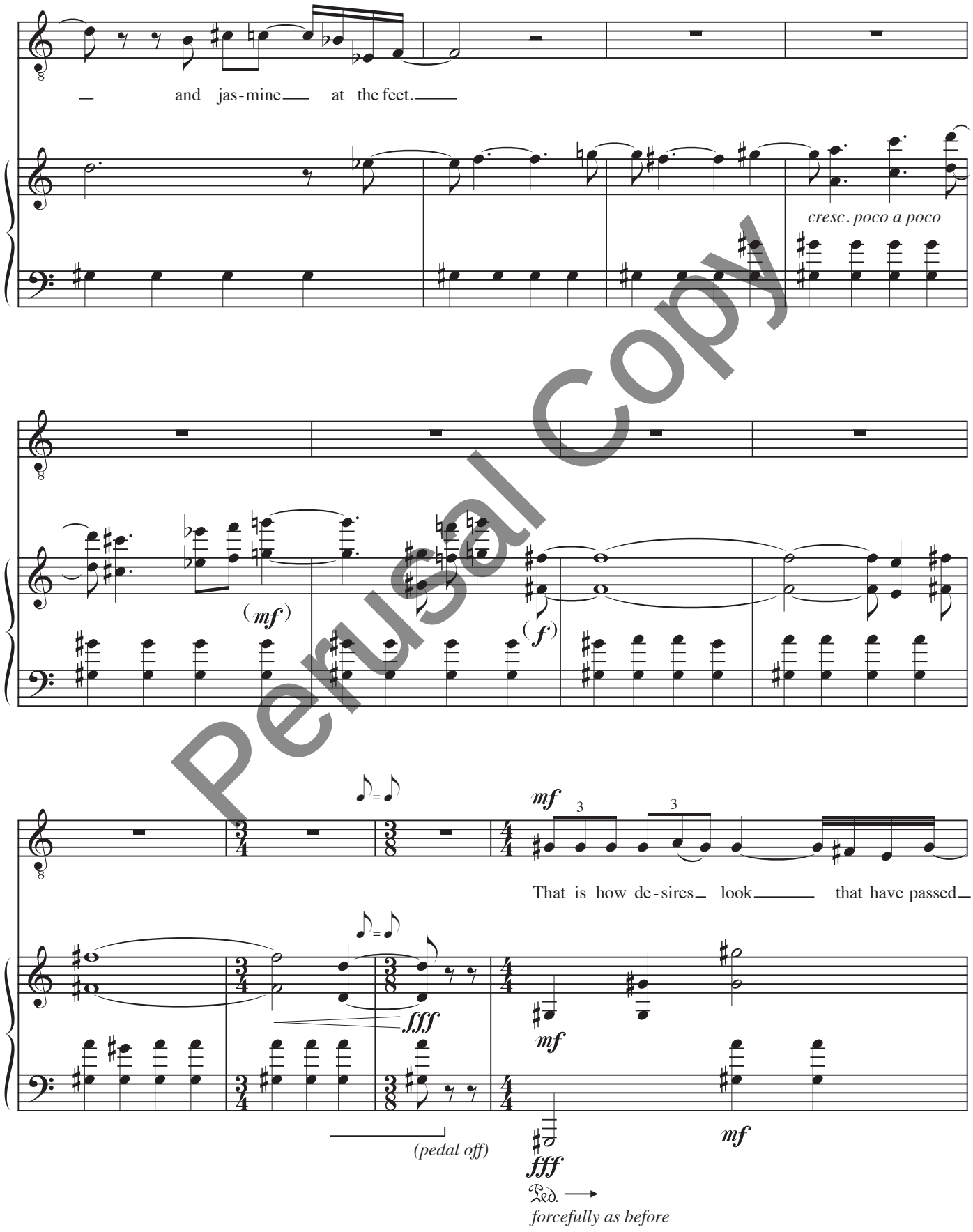
*Press strings inside piano, bending them downward slightly, at a point as far inside the piano as is comfortable while still sitting. Release immediately after striking. Apply pedal forcefully, simultaneously with the played pitches, so as to vibrate all the strings. The pedal should make an audible "clunk". The resulting sound should be like a low bell. Keep the sostenuto pedal down until indicated; apply the una corda pedal silently towards the end of the first measure.

music ©1991 rev. 2009 Jeffrey Ryan



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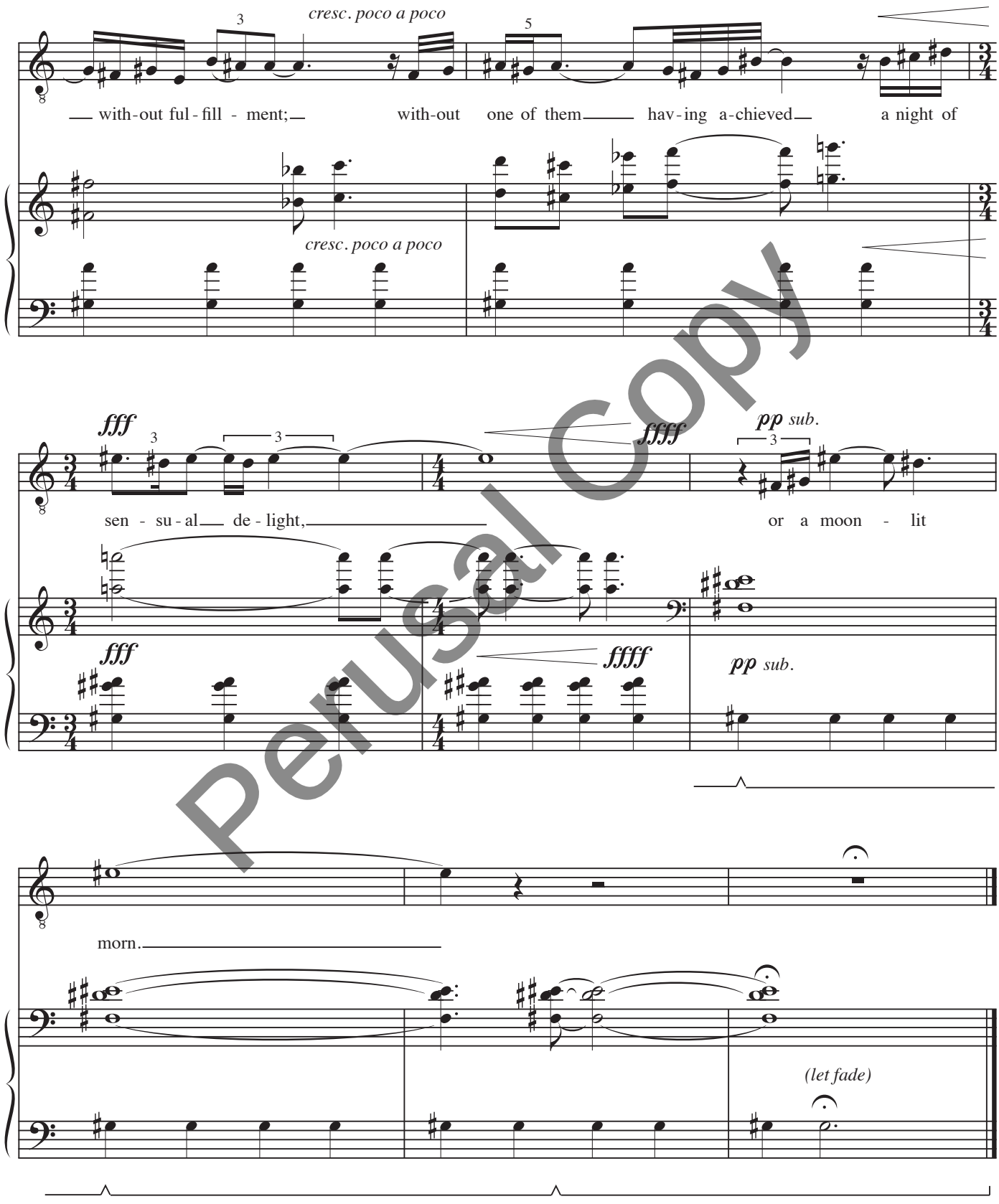

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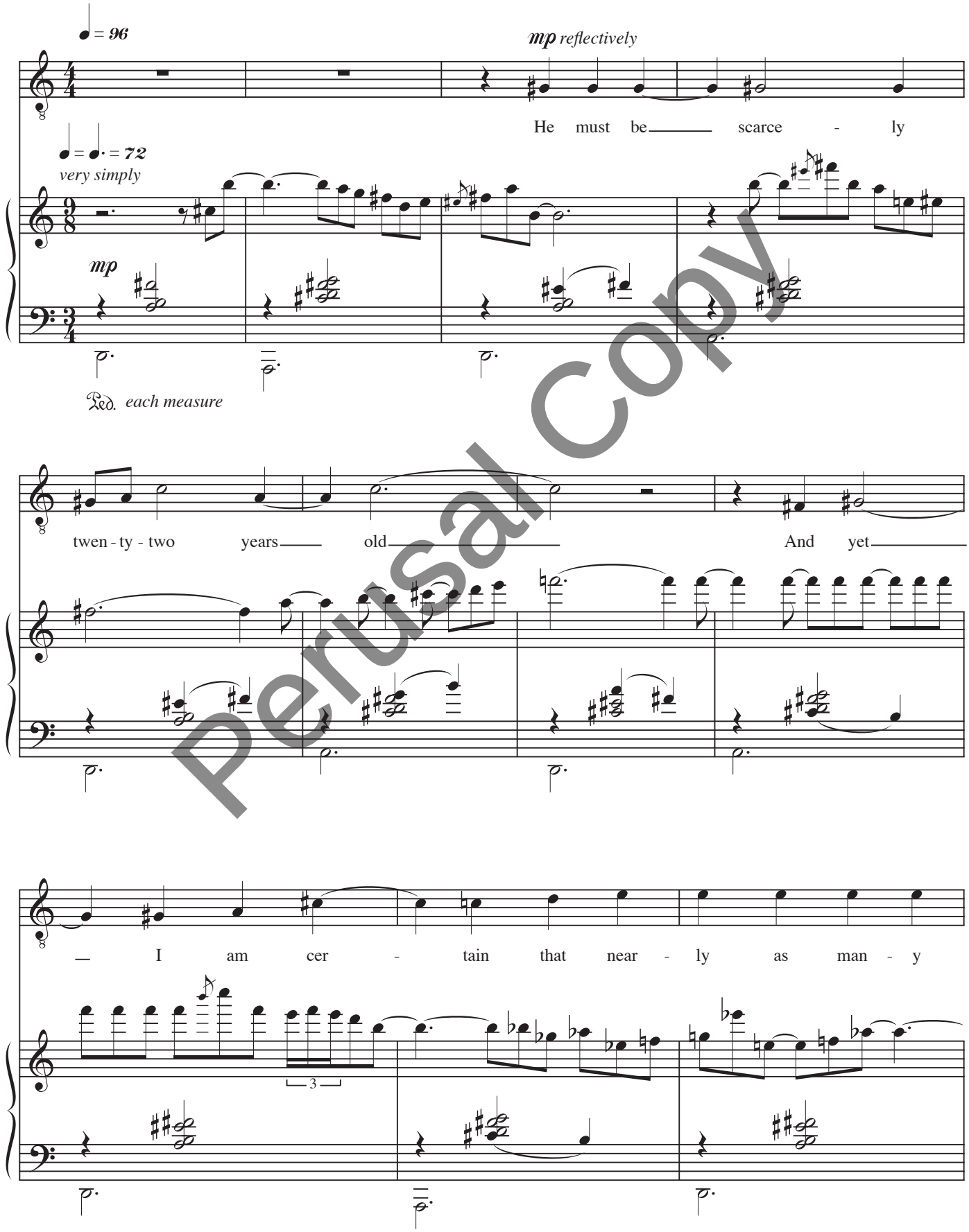
The Next Table



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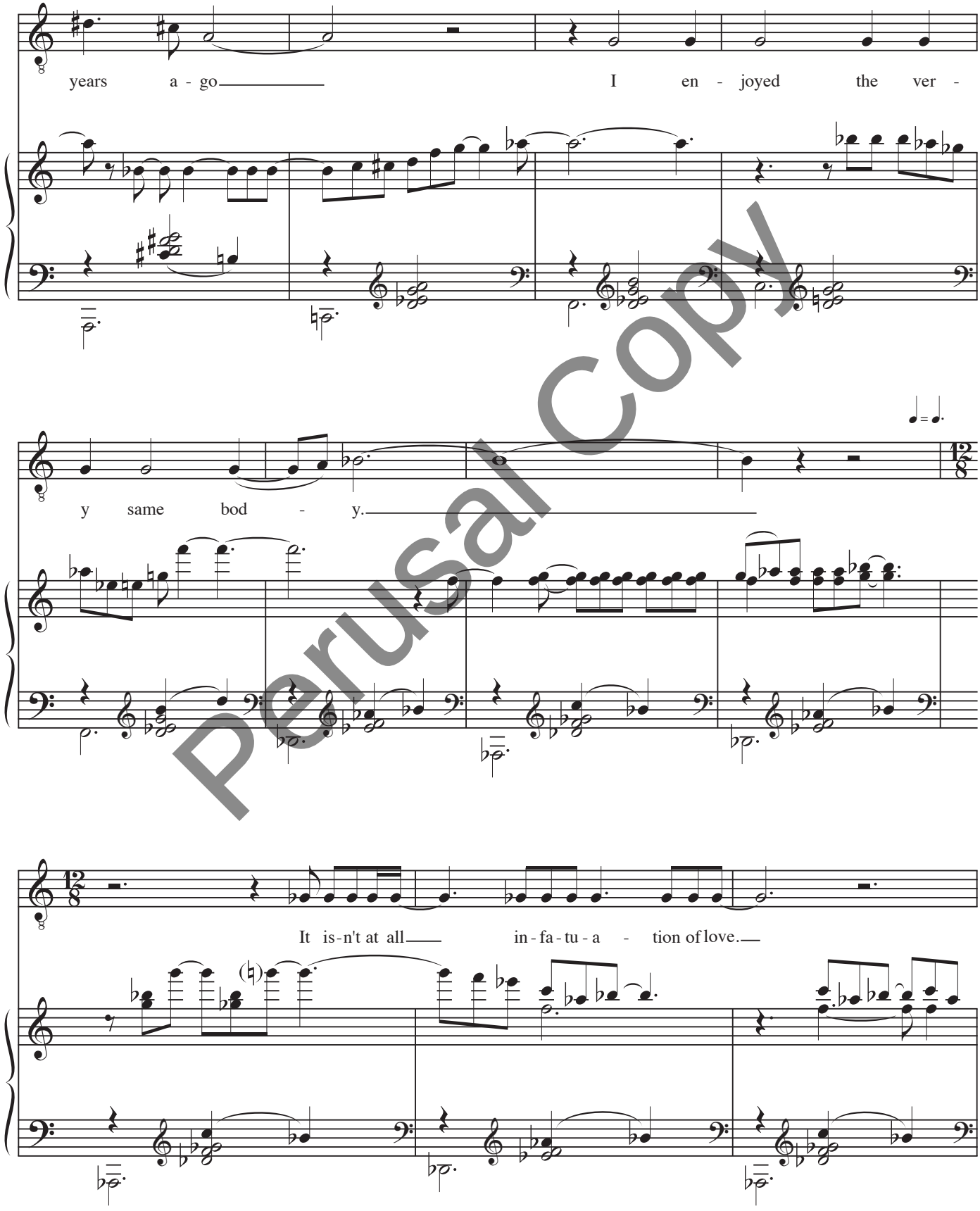

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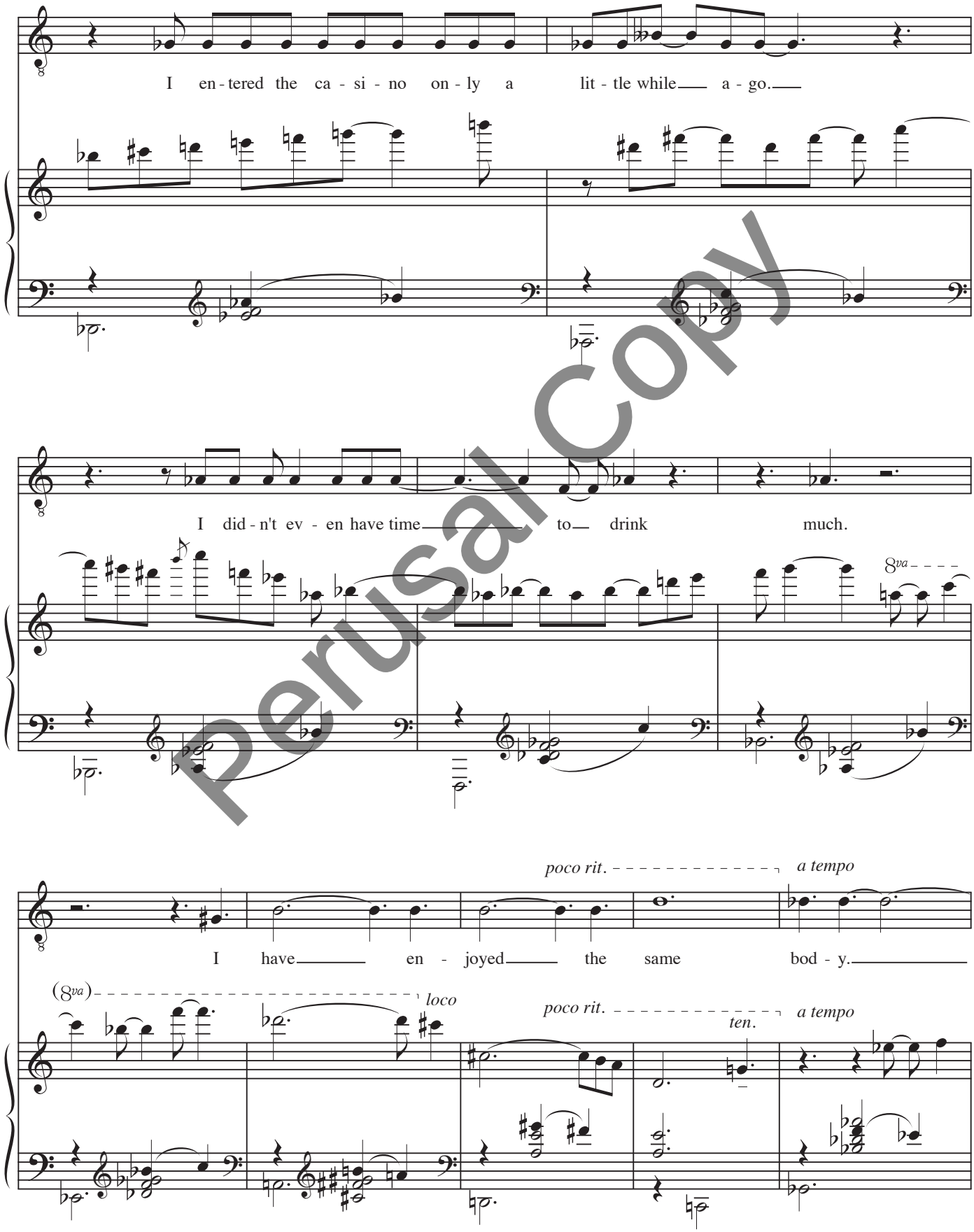

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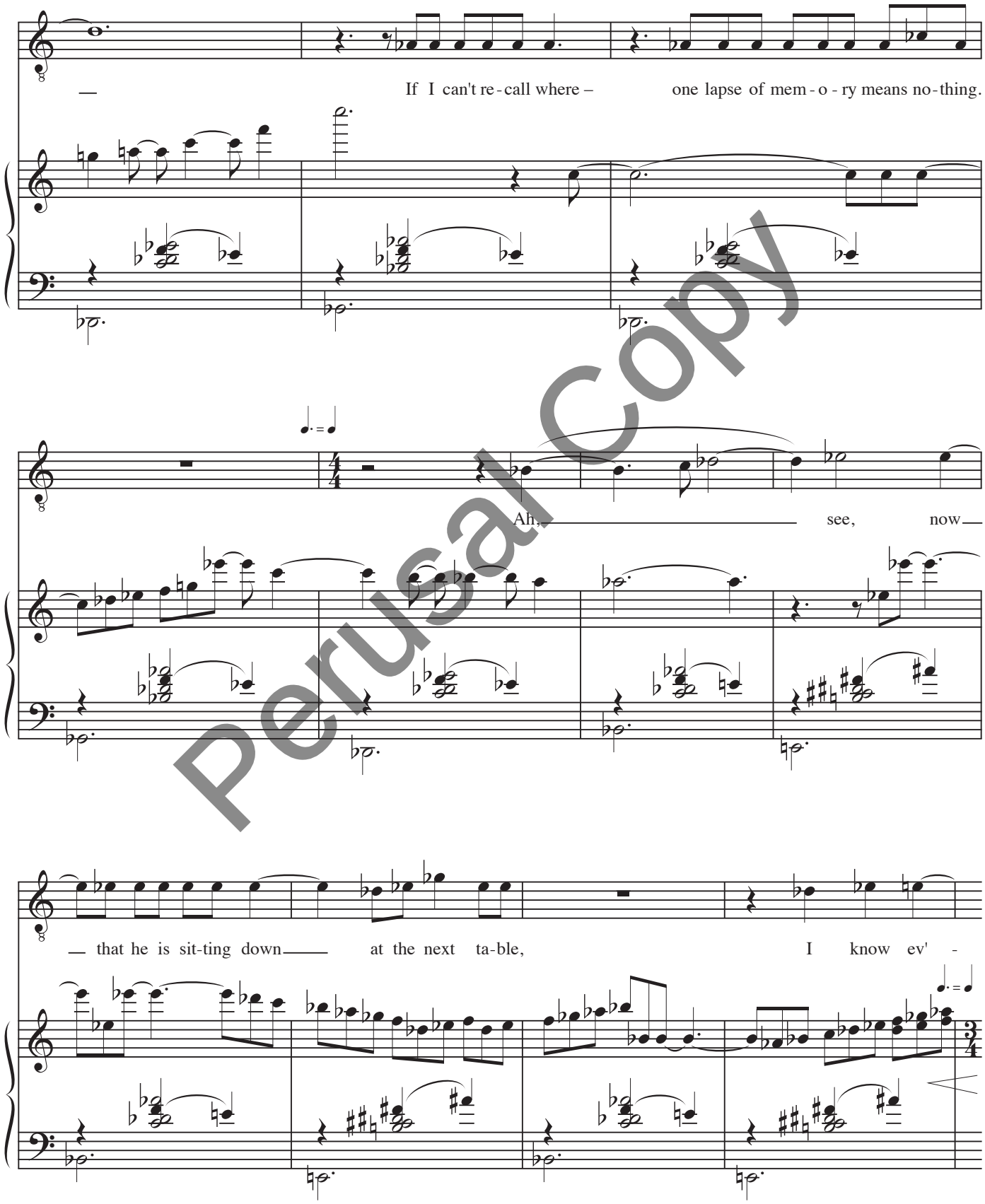

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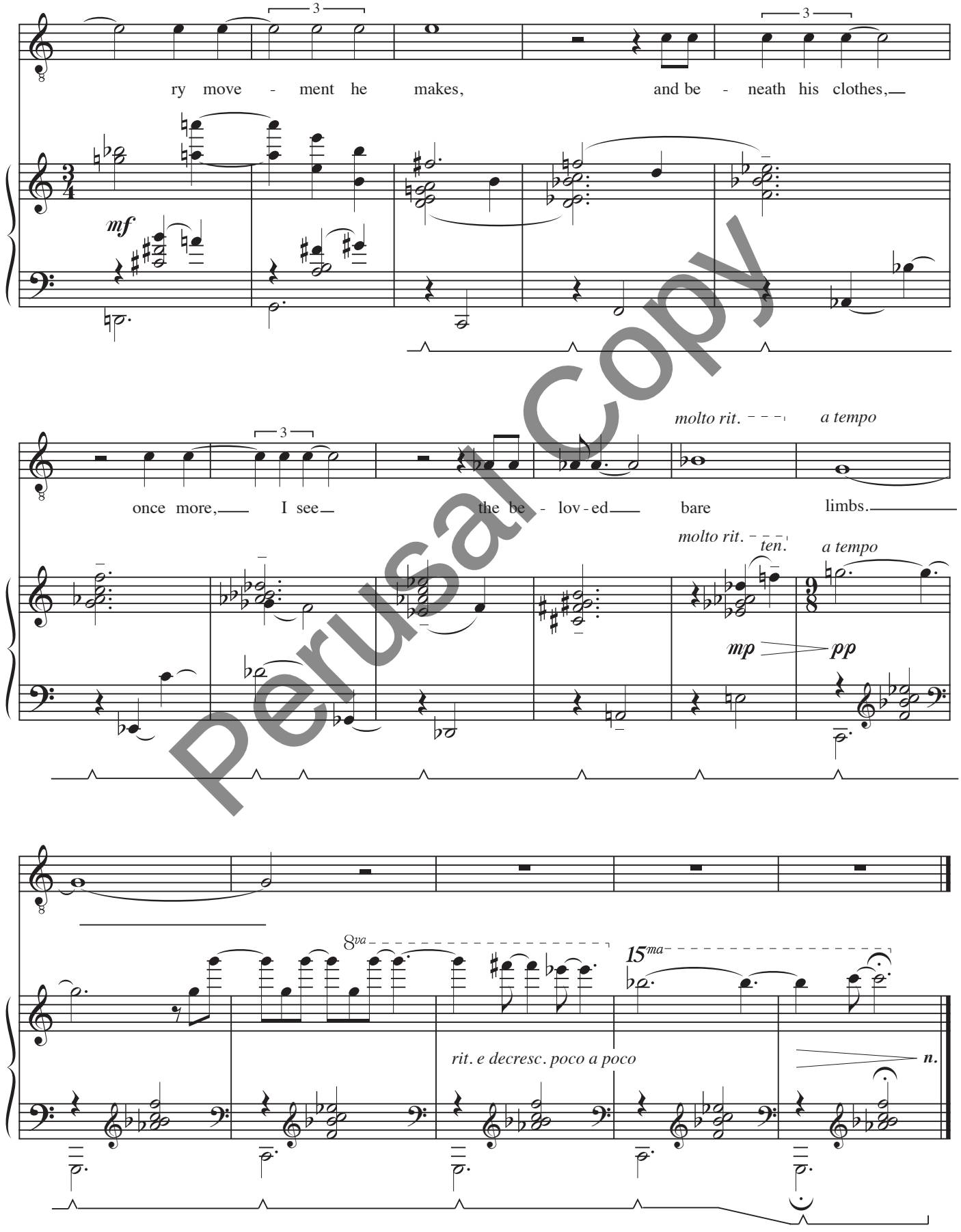

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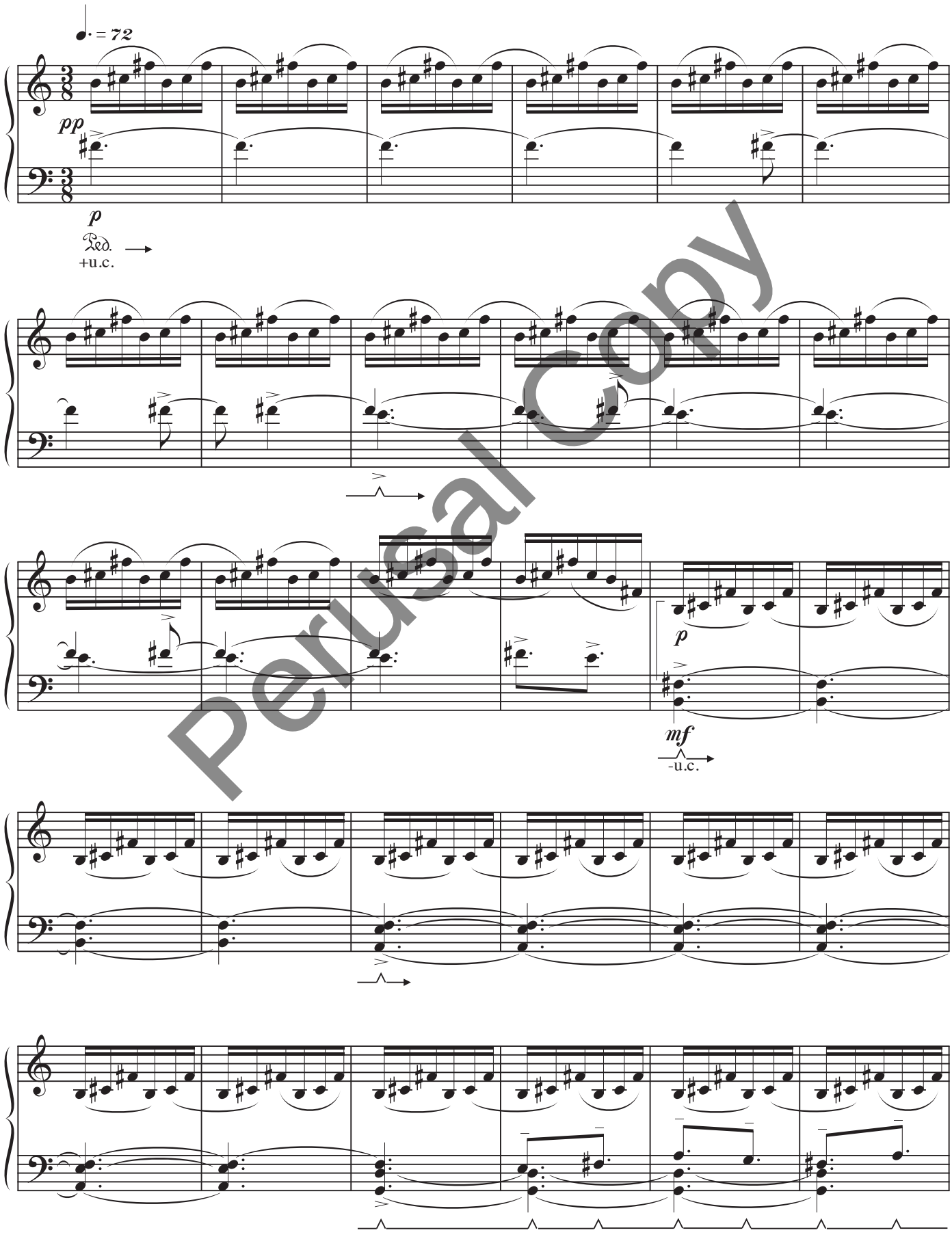
At the Theater



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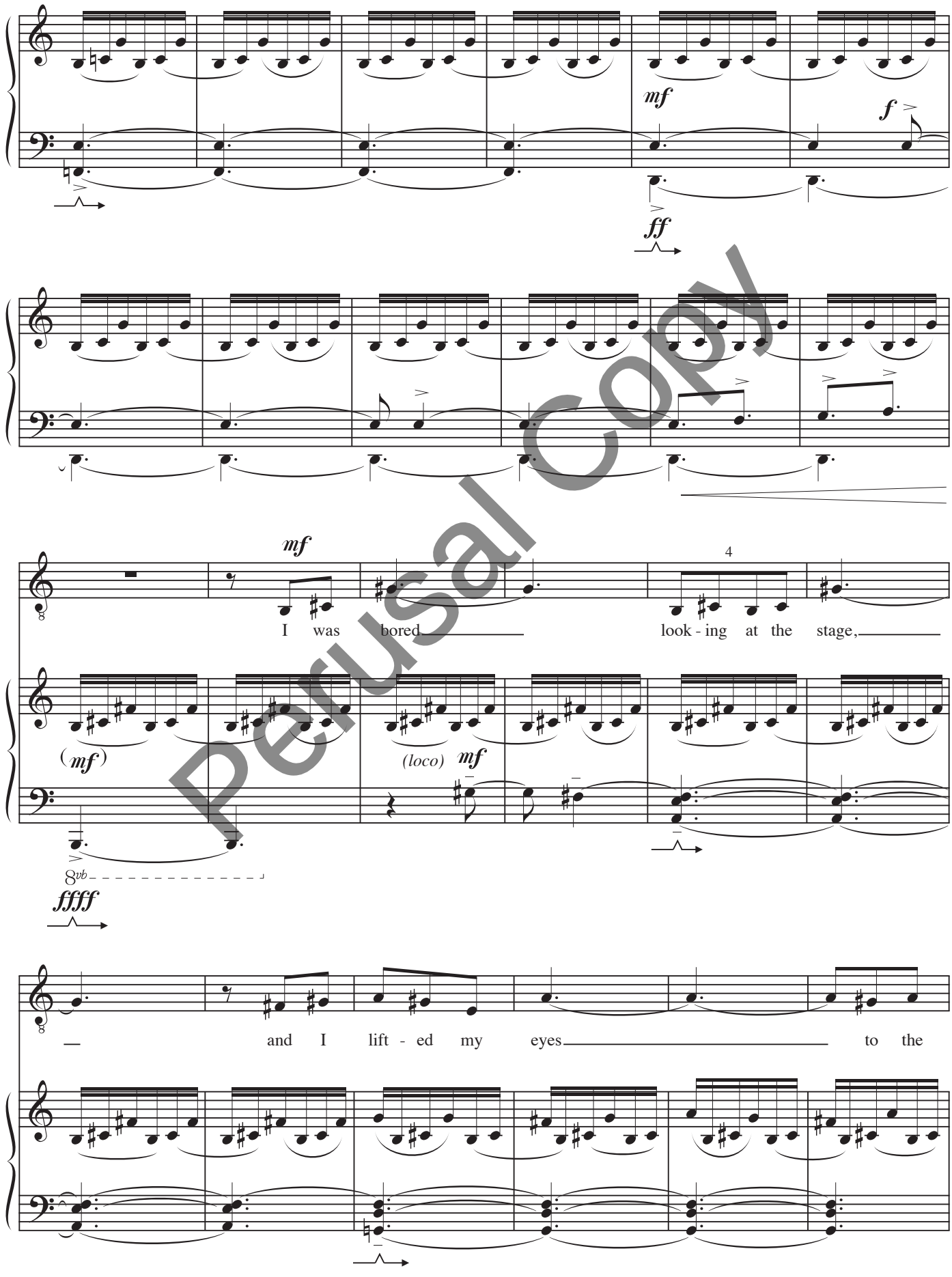

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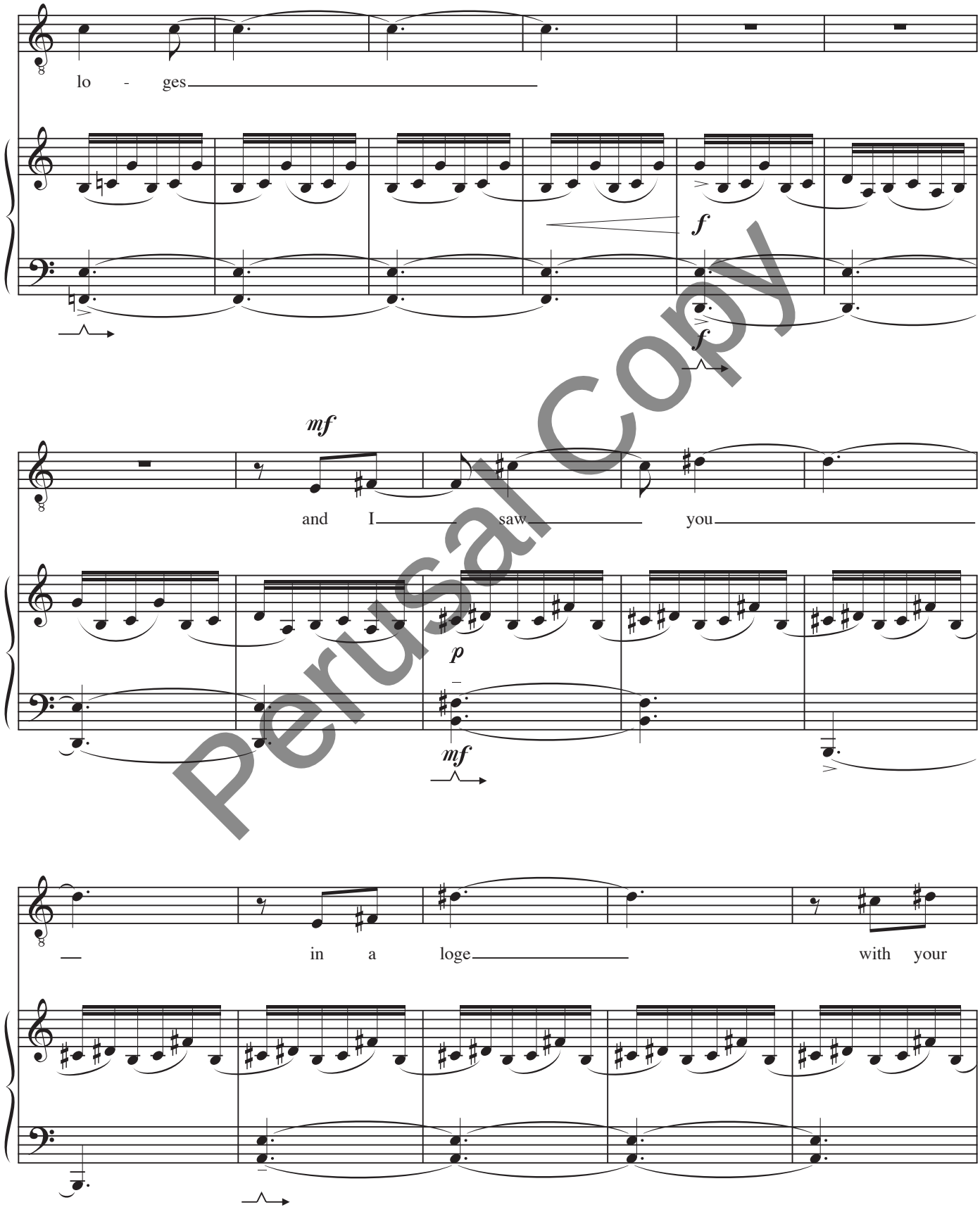

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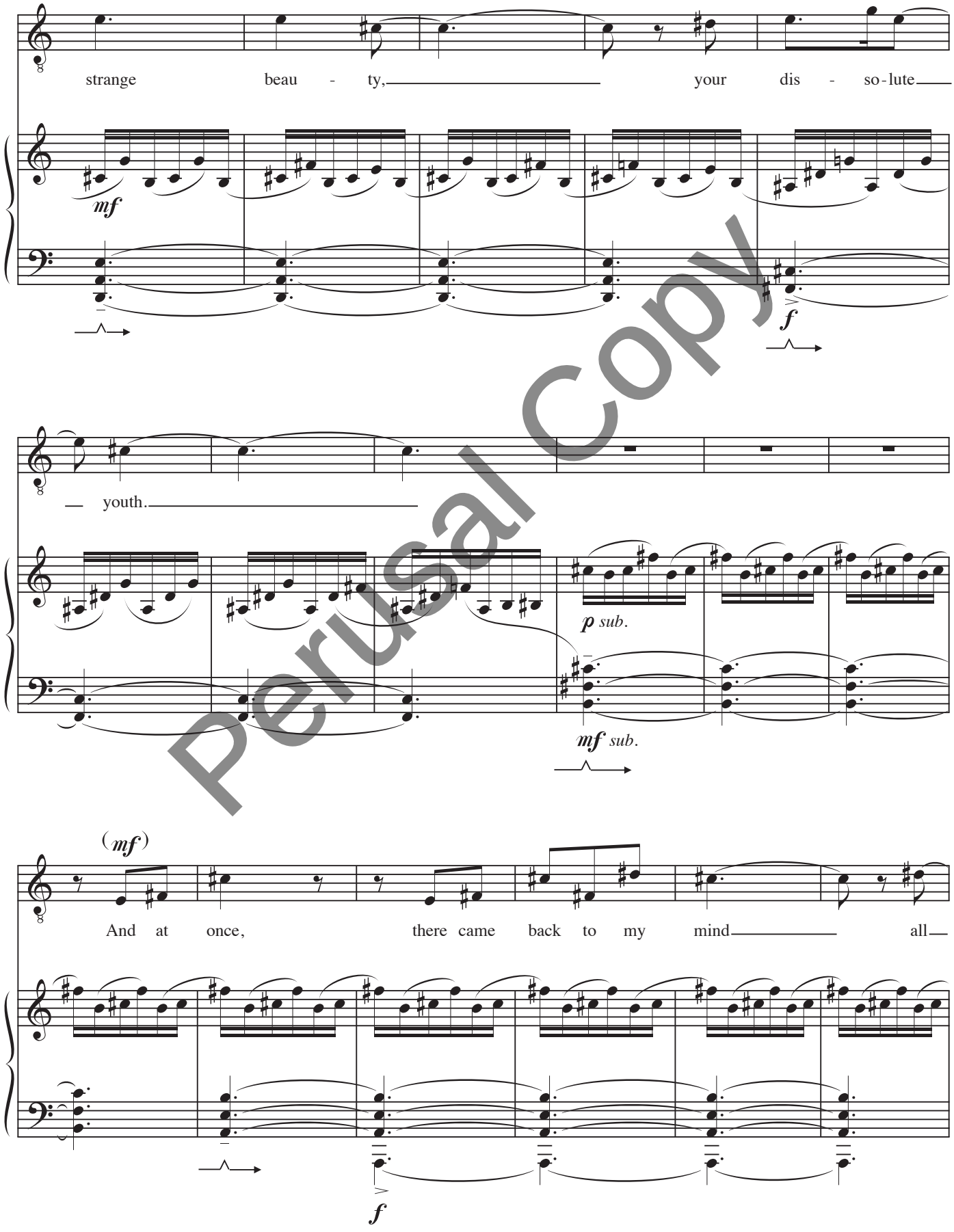

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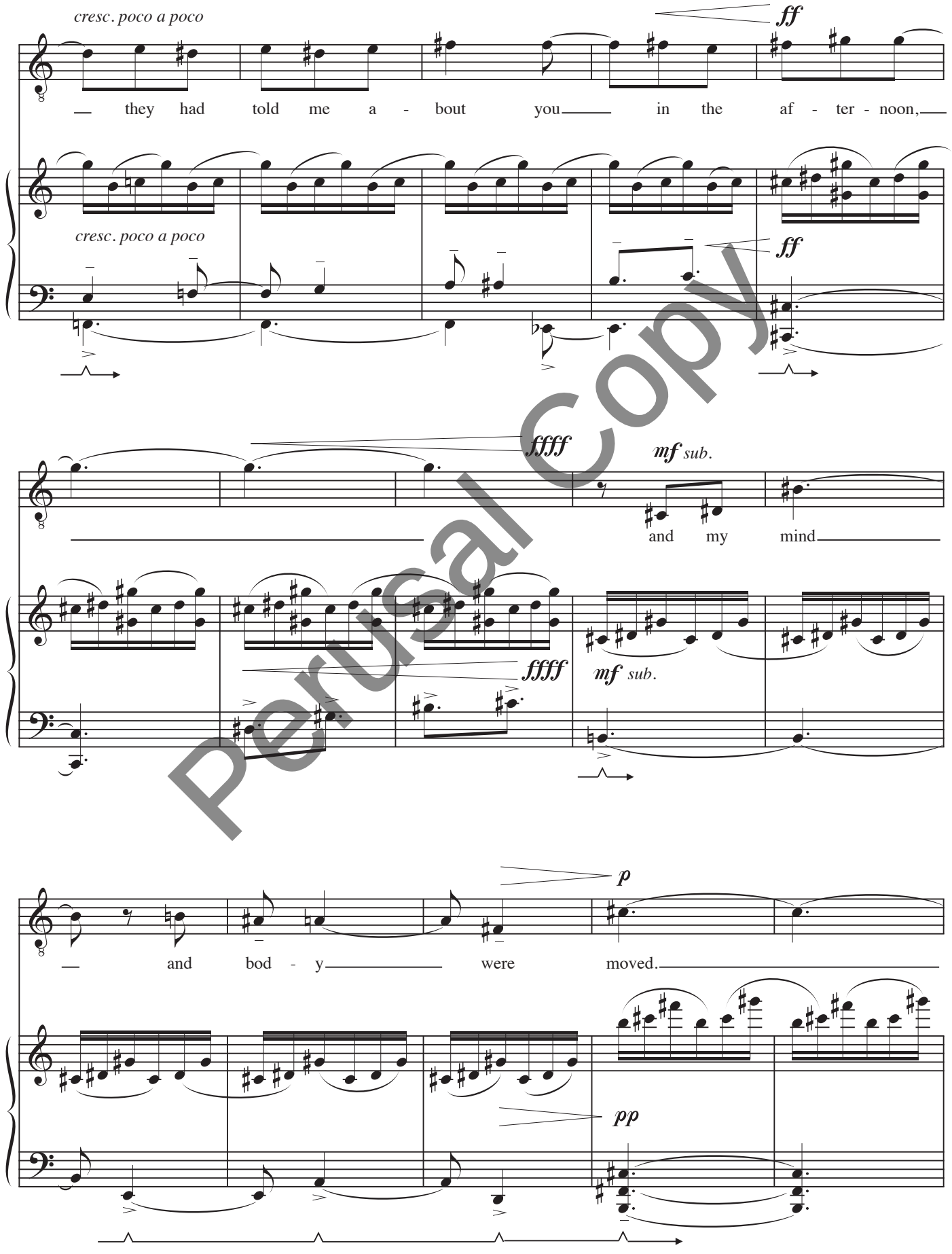

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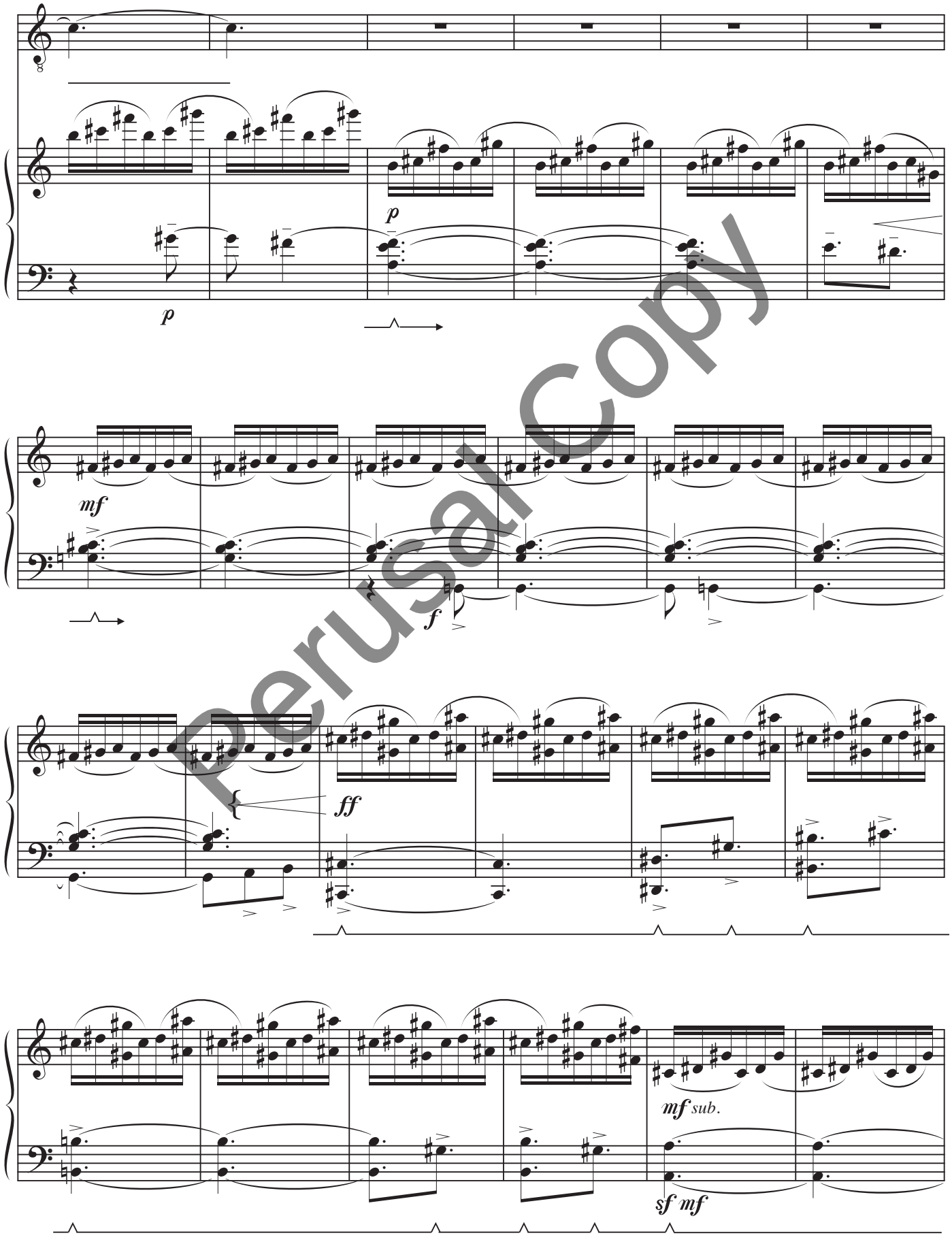

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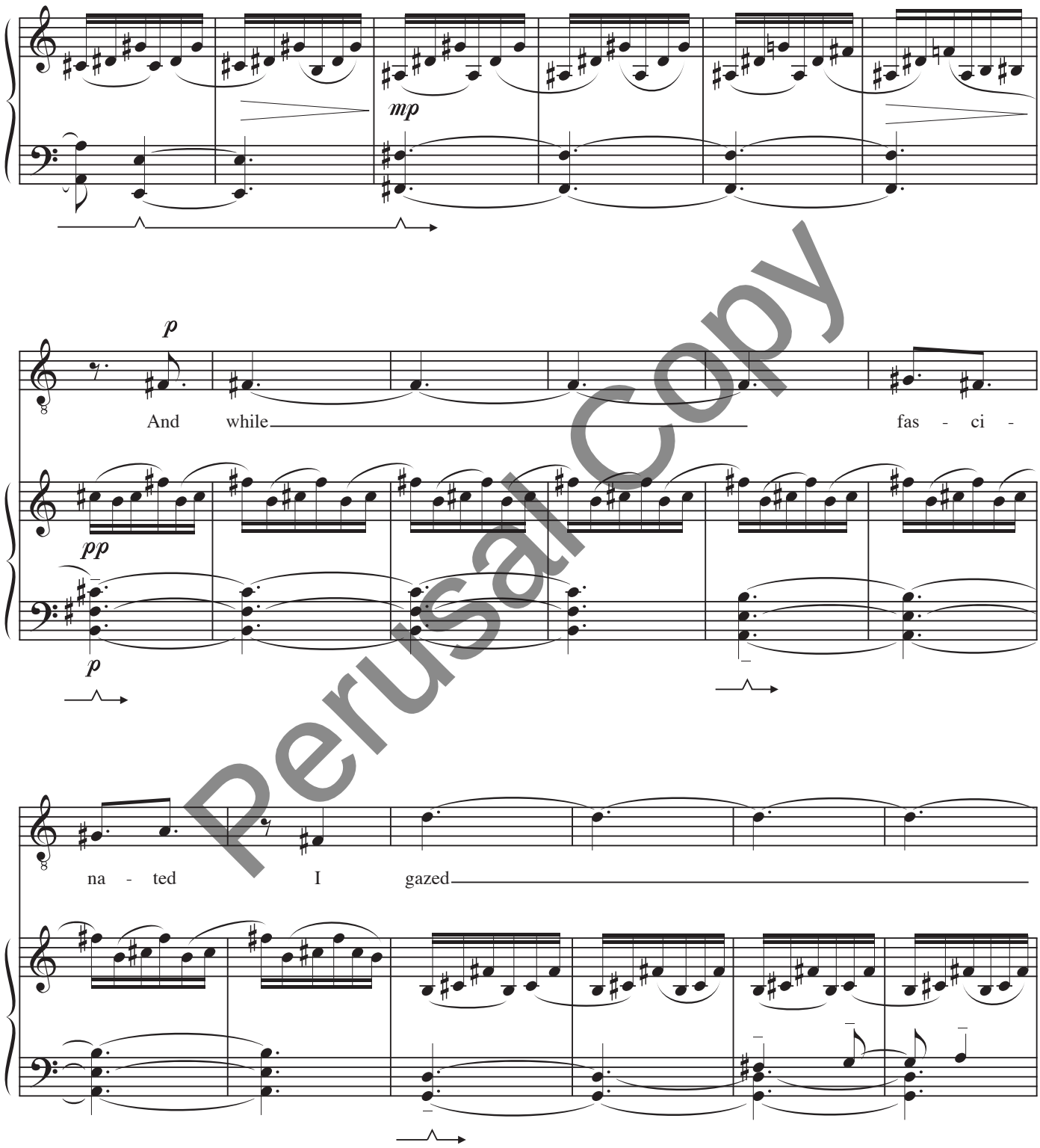

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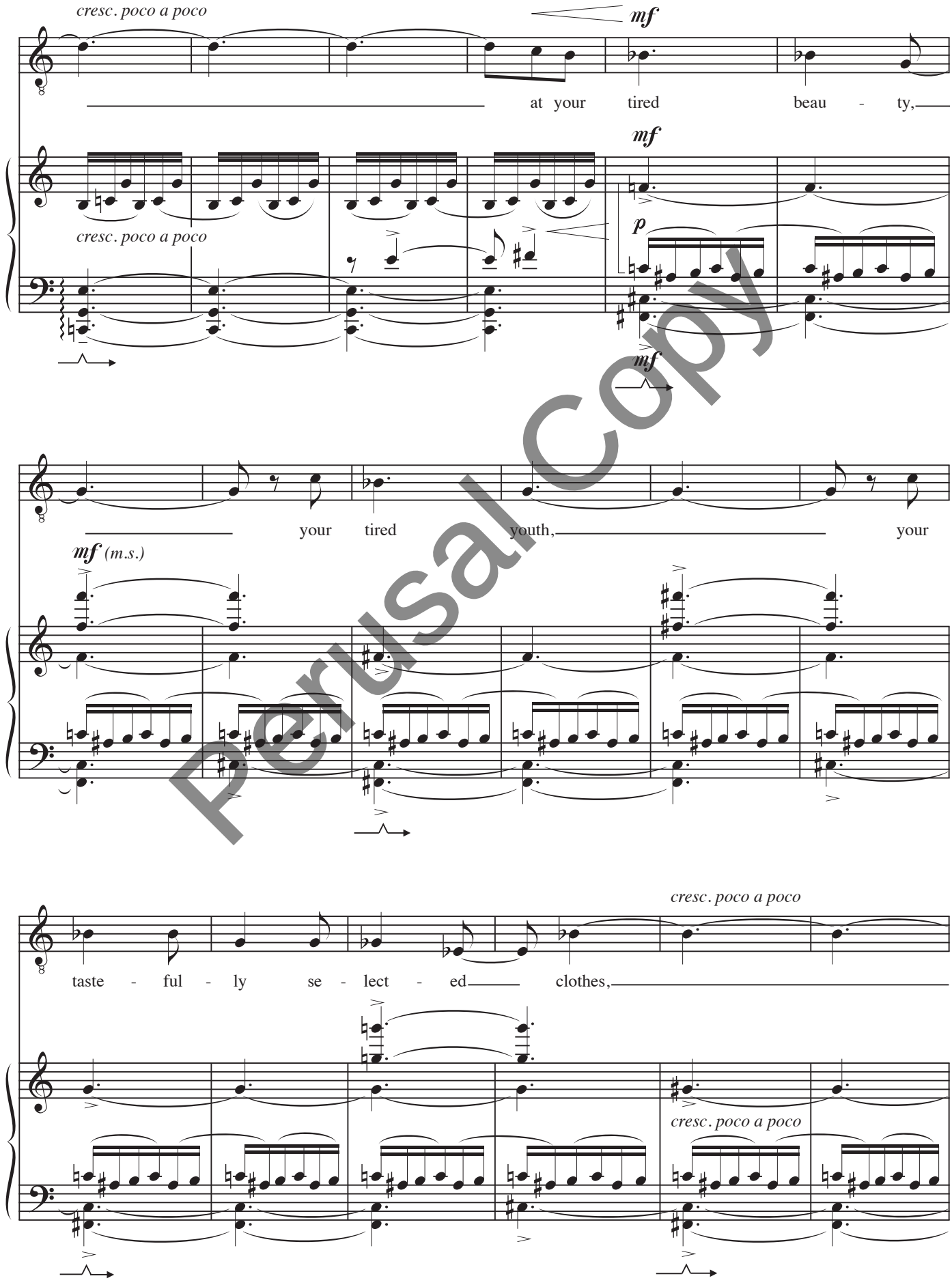

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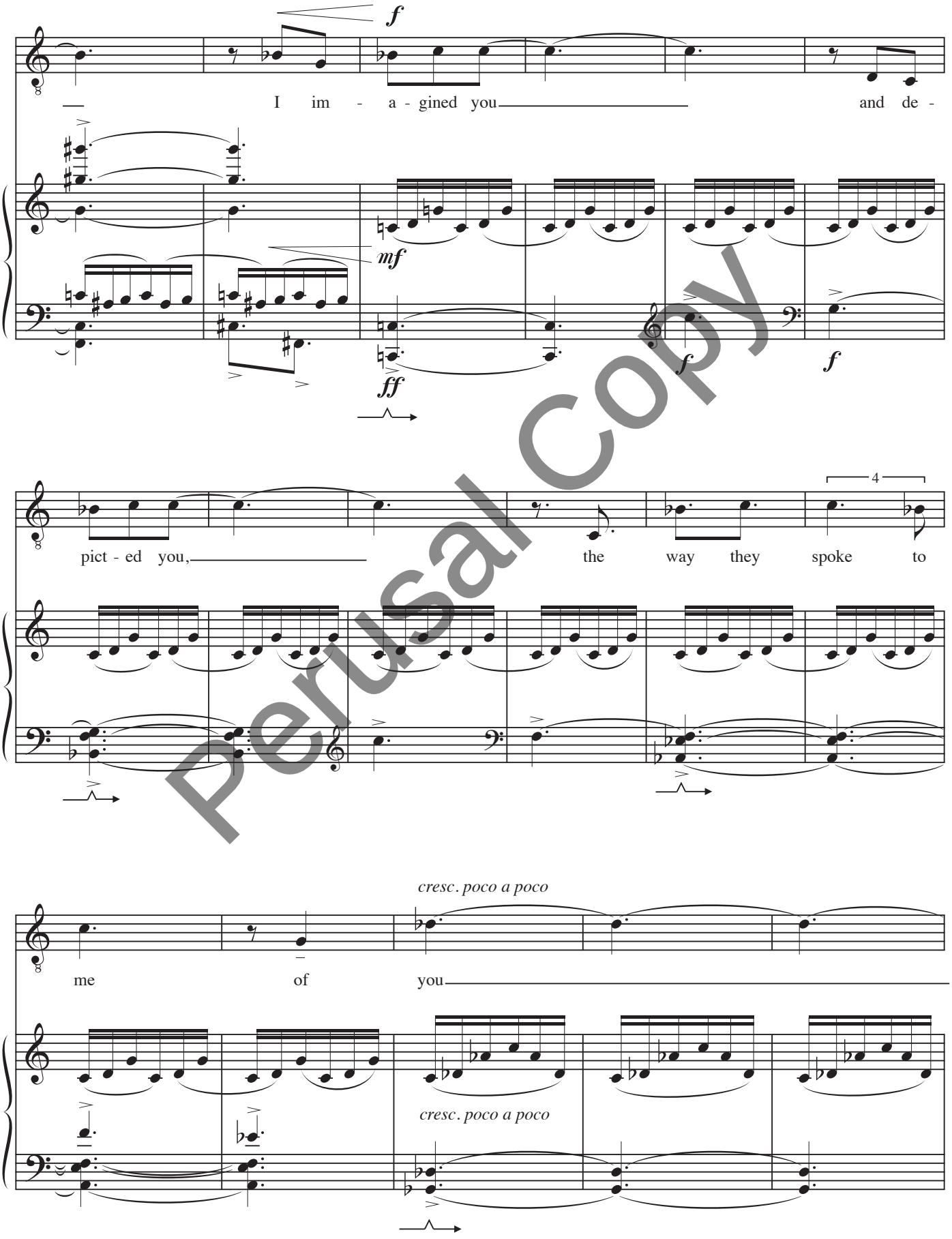

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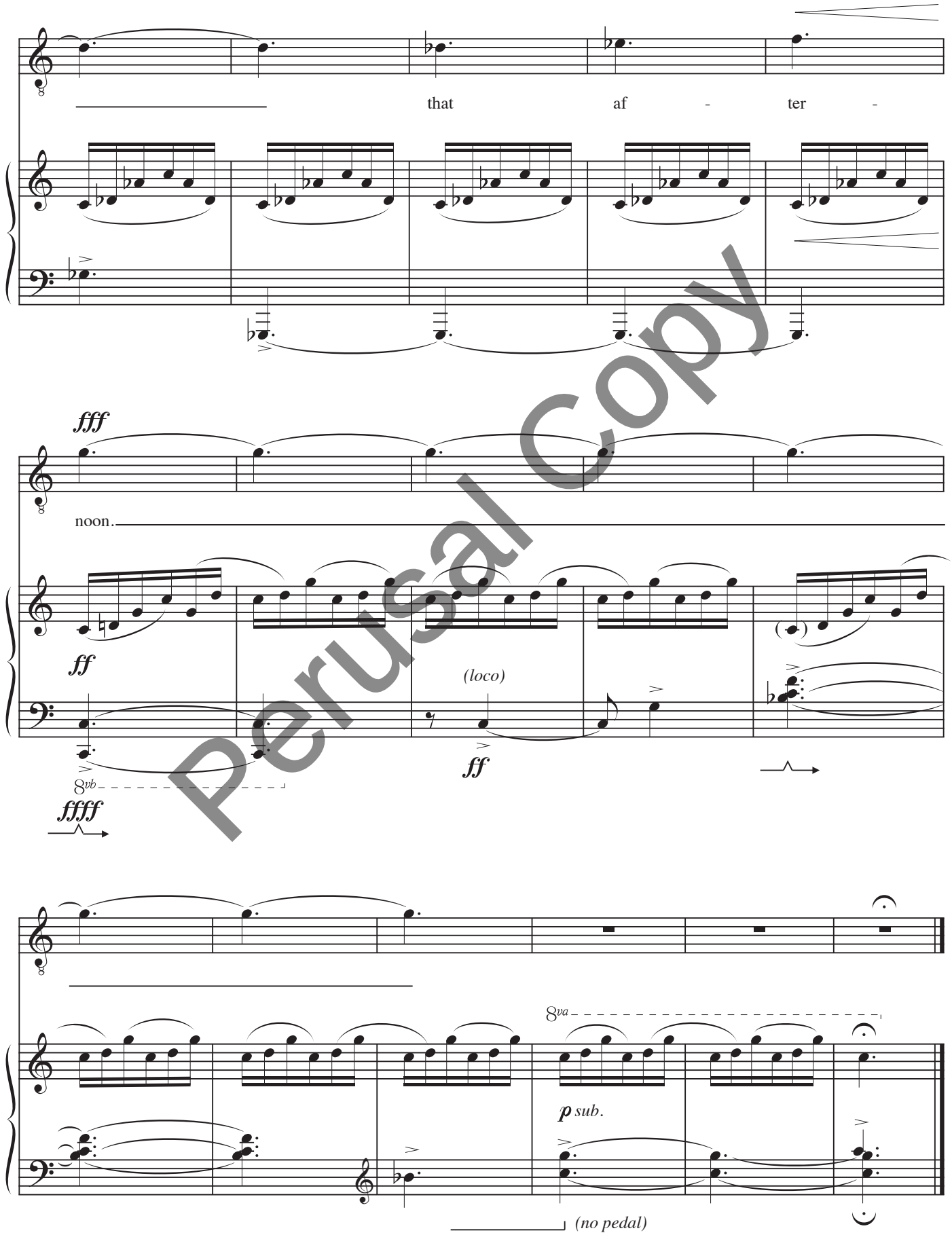

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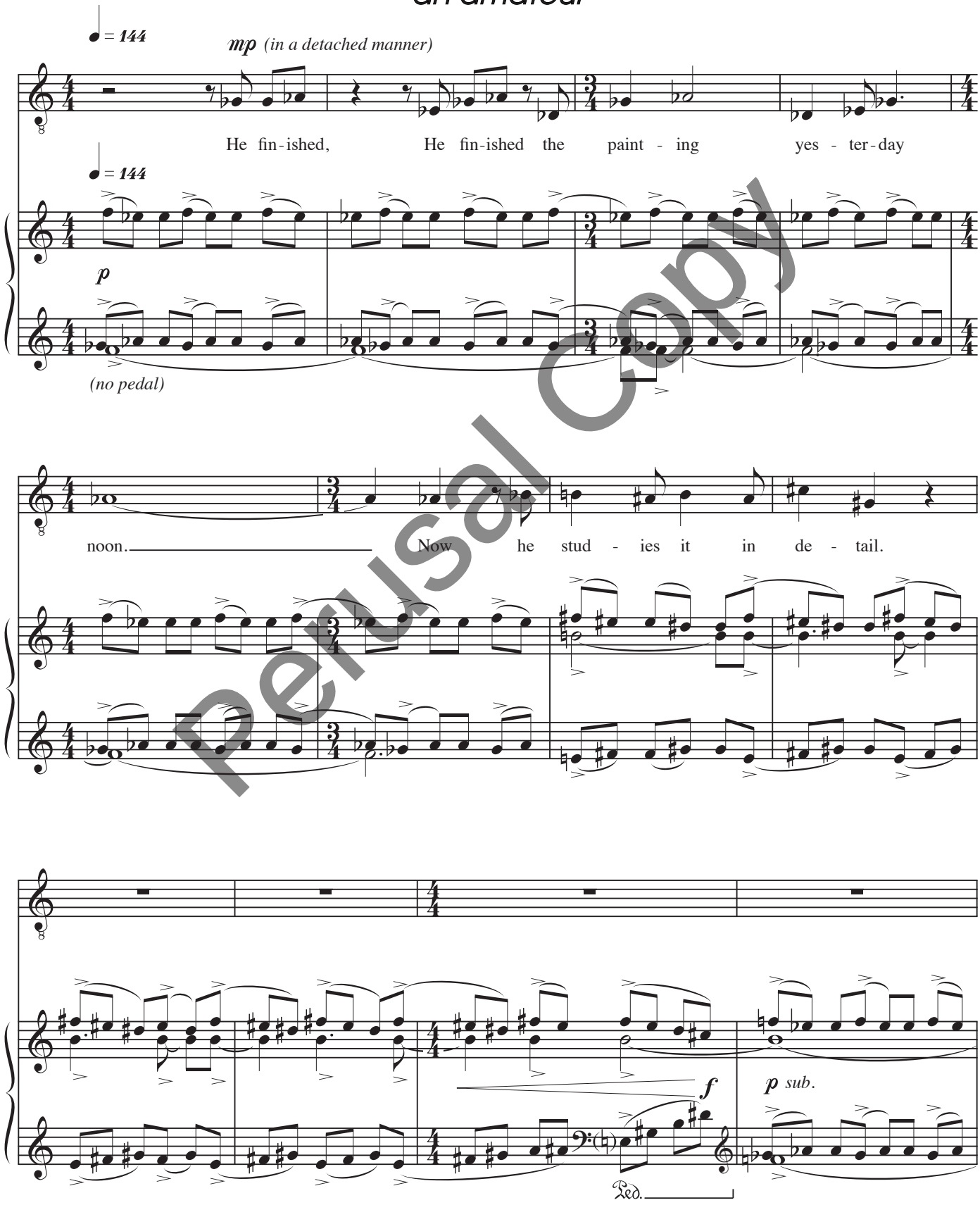
Picture of a 23-year-old youth painted by his friend of the same age, an amateur



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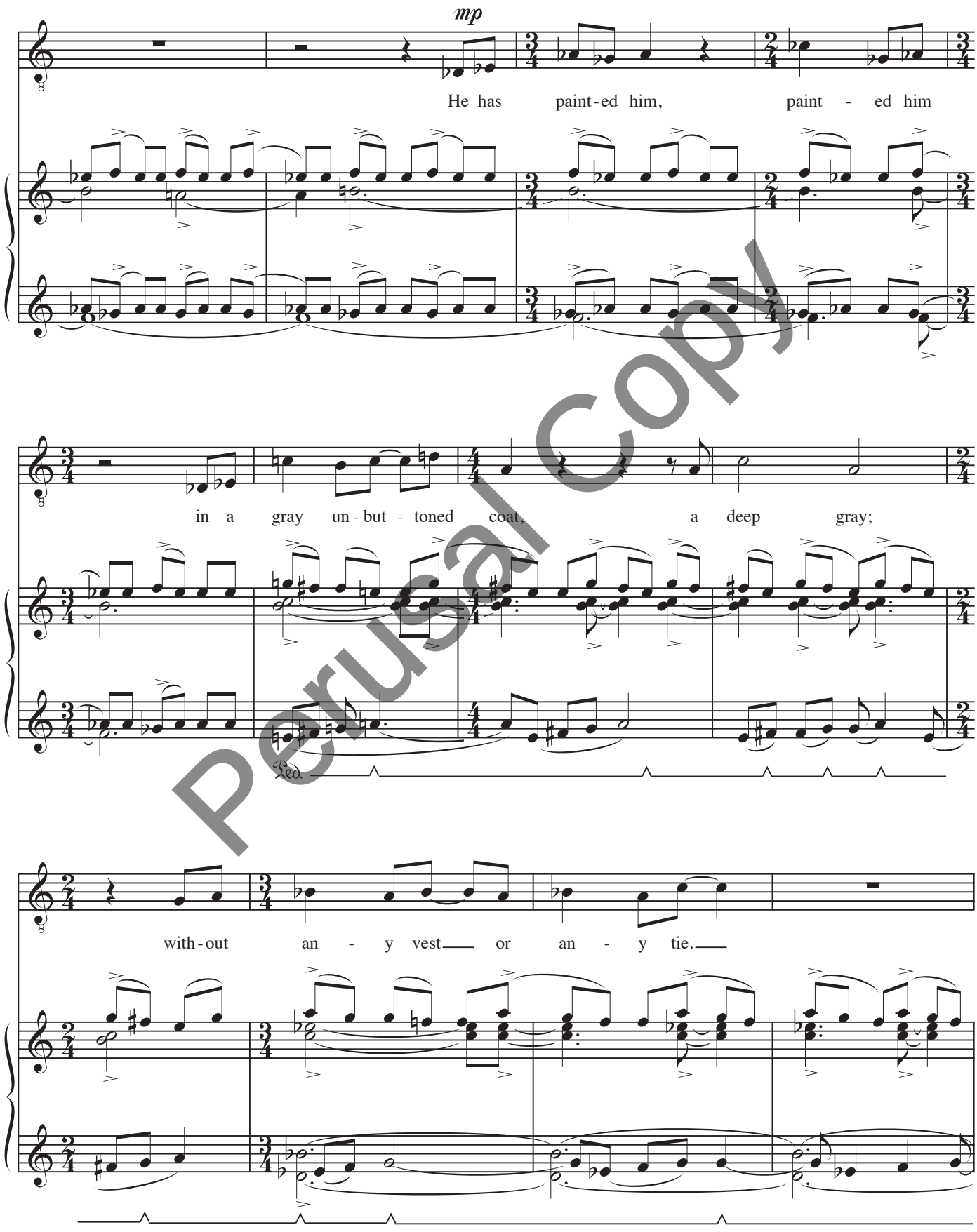

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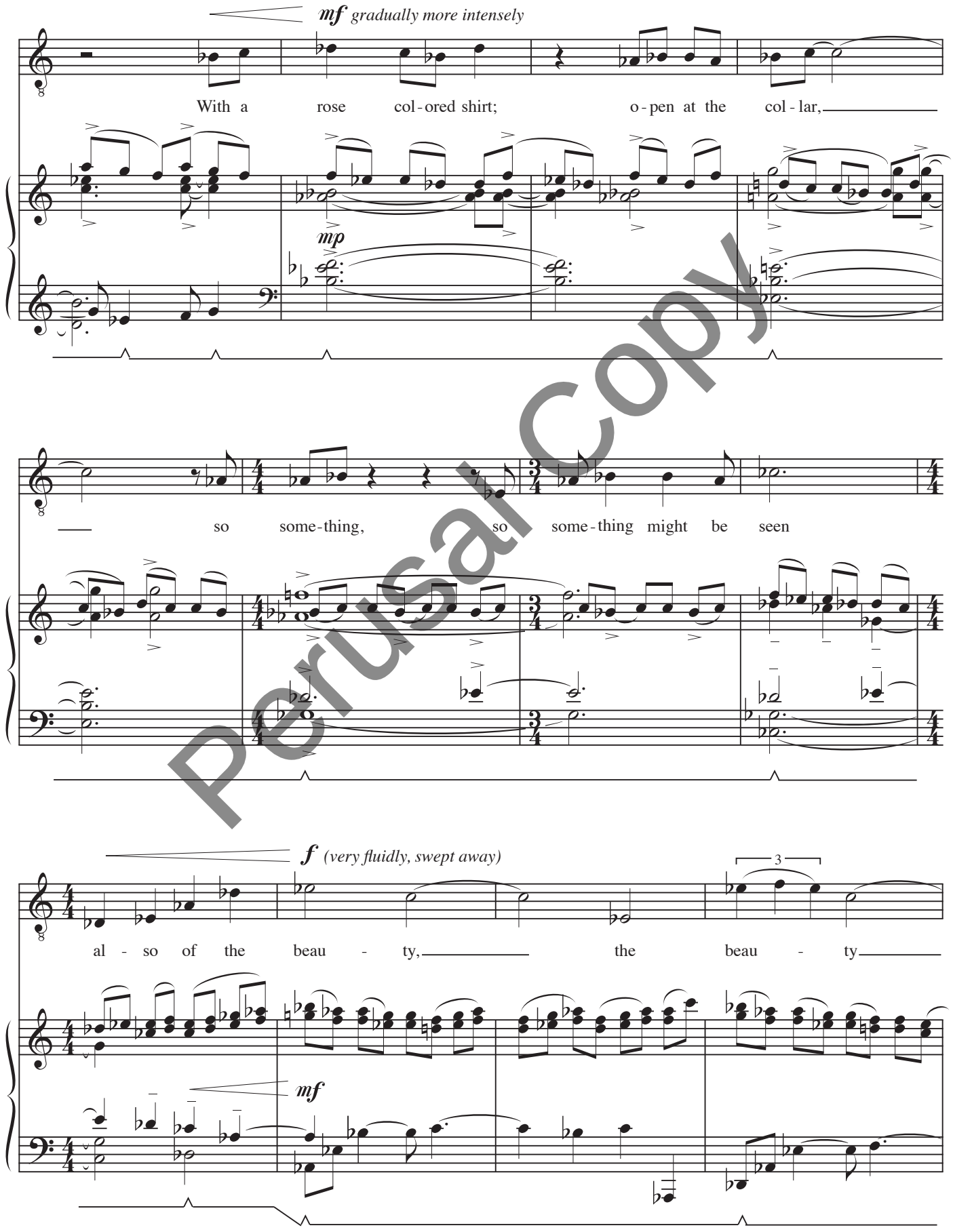

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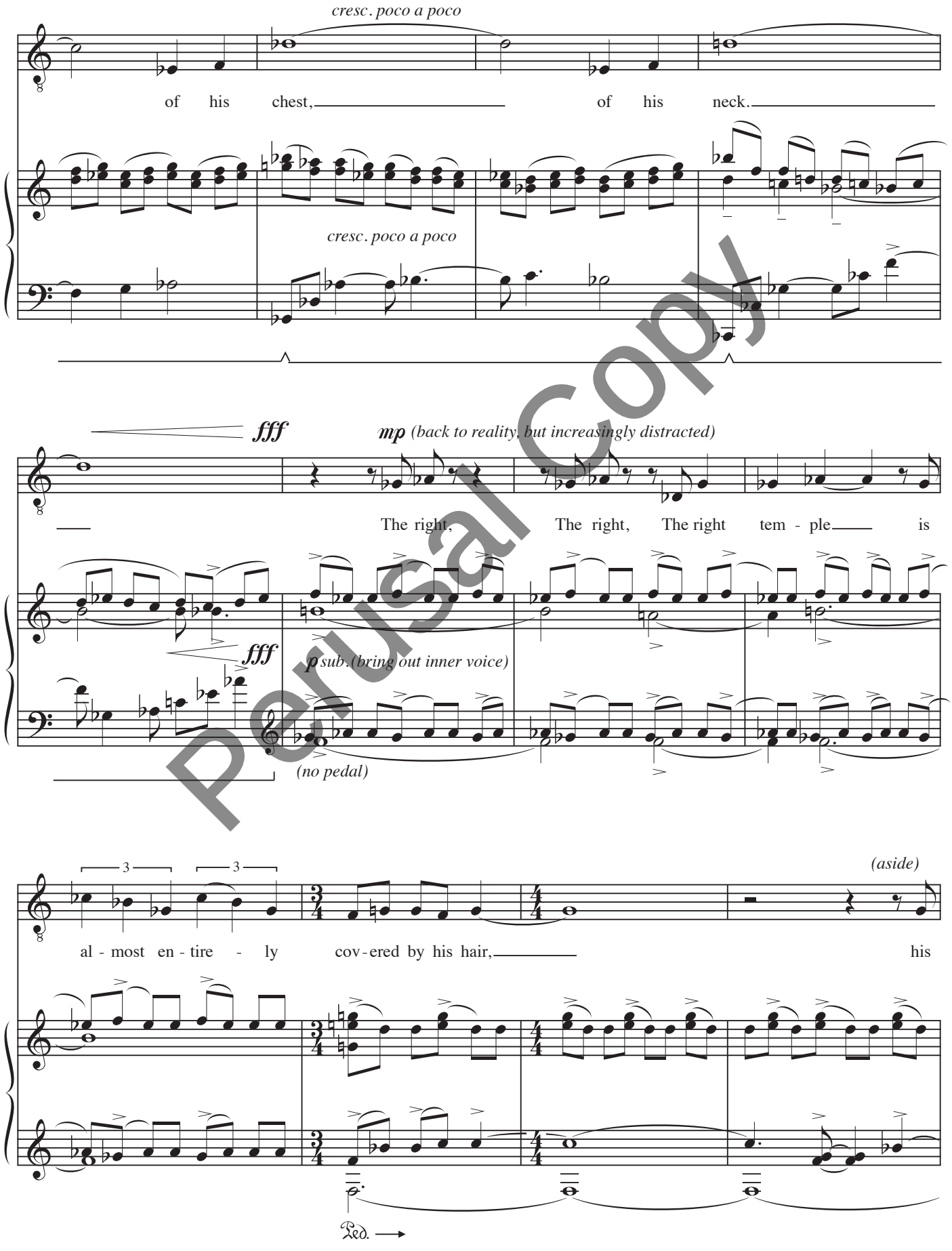

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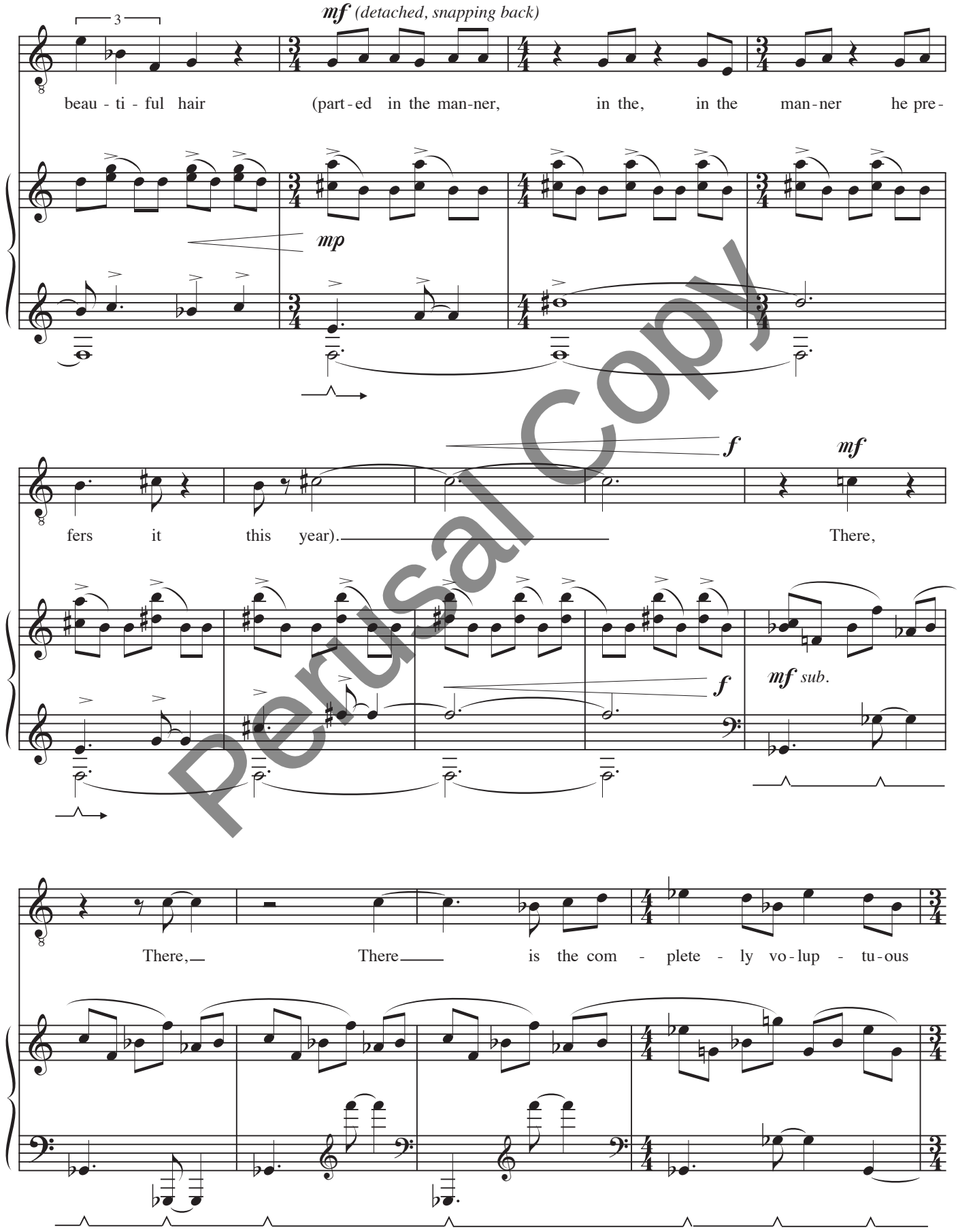

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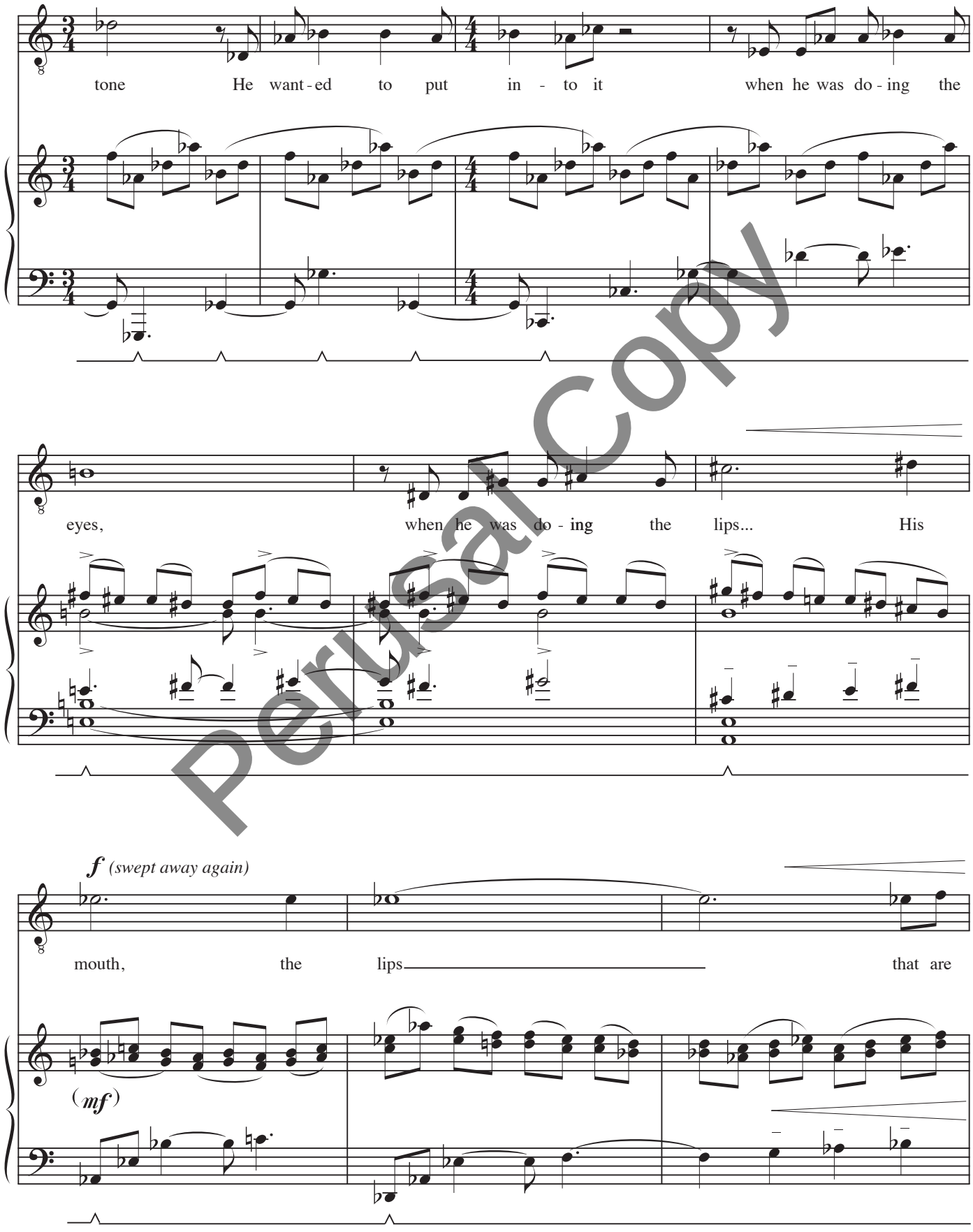

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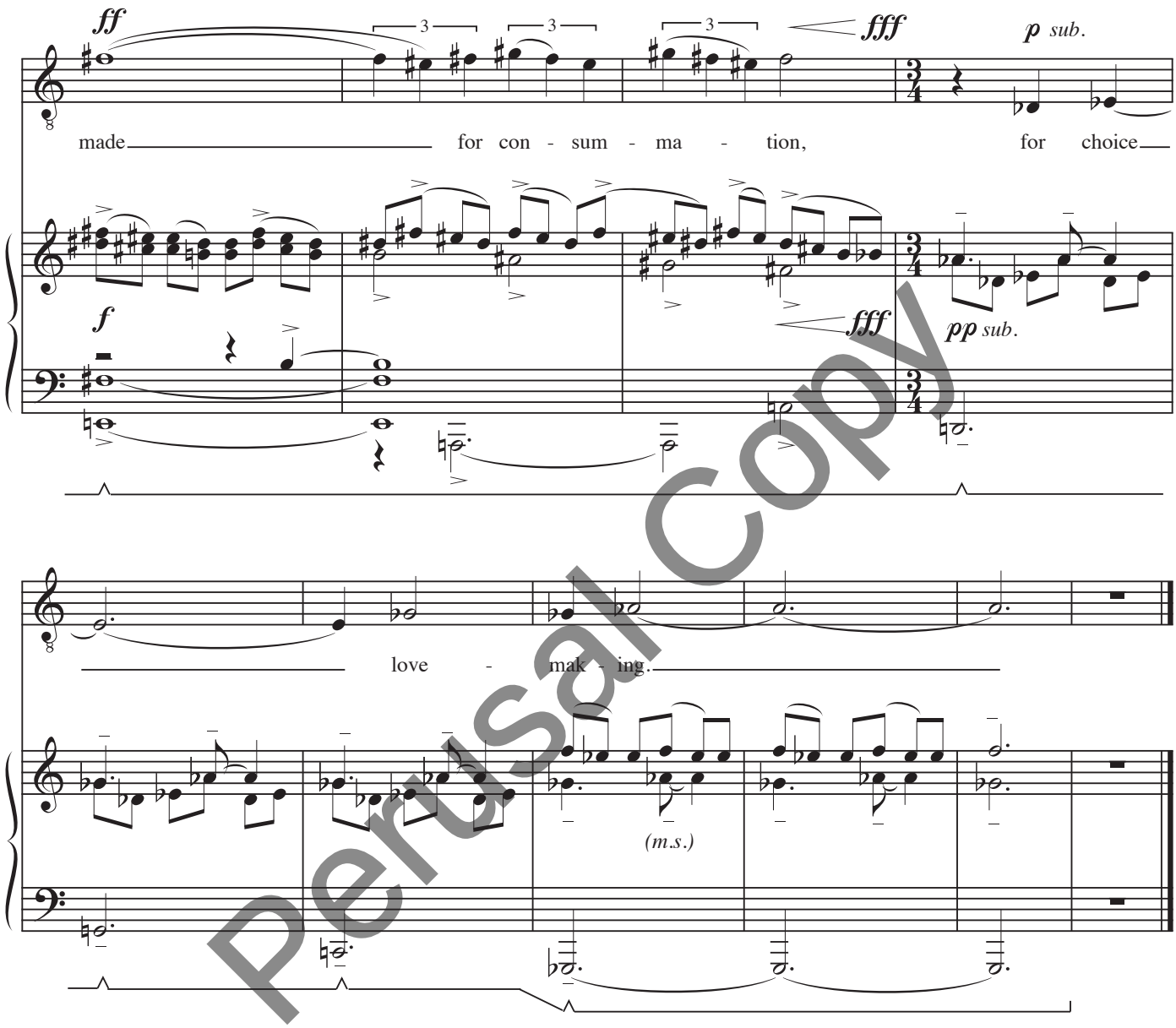

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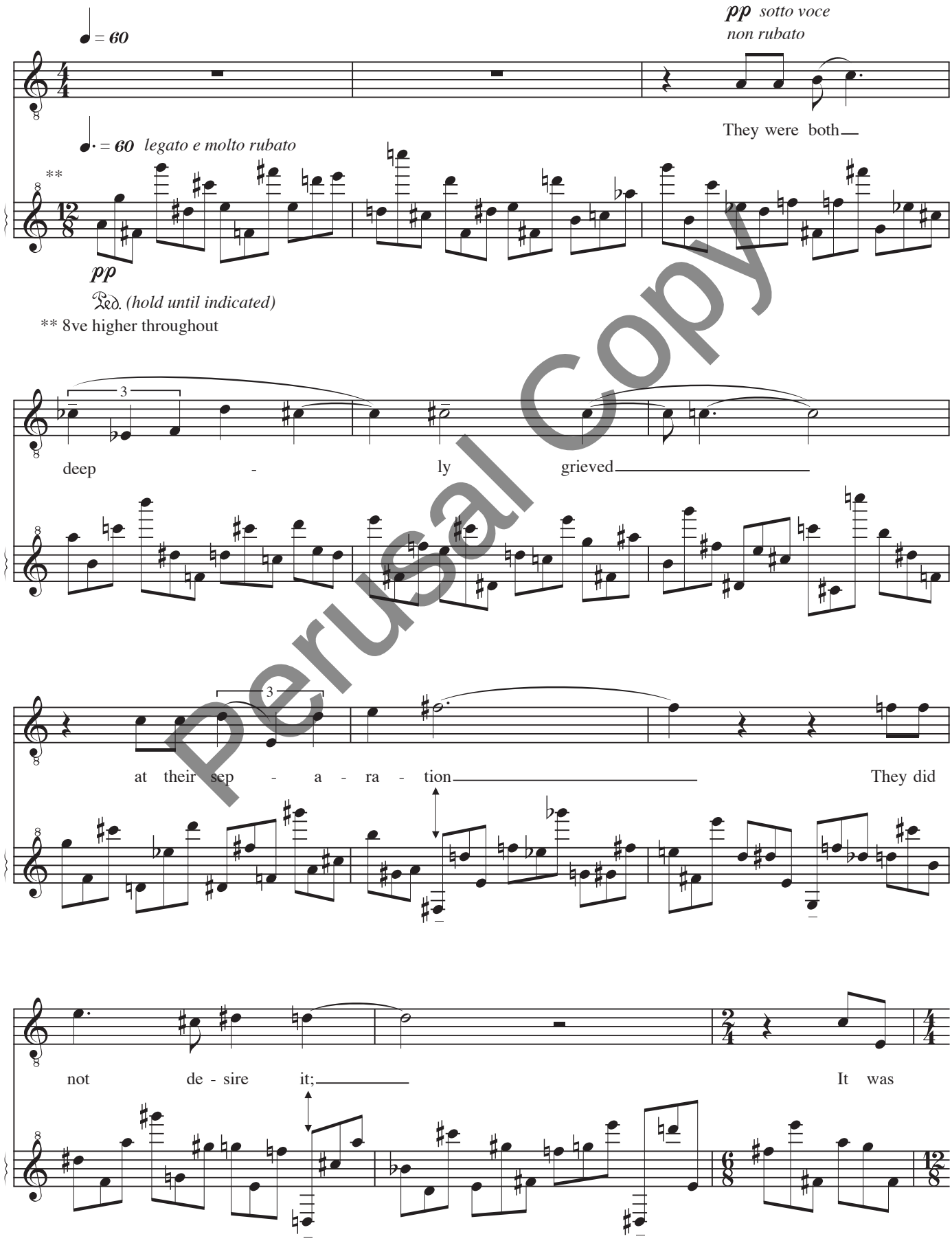
Before Time Changes Them



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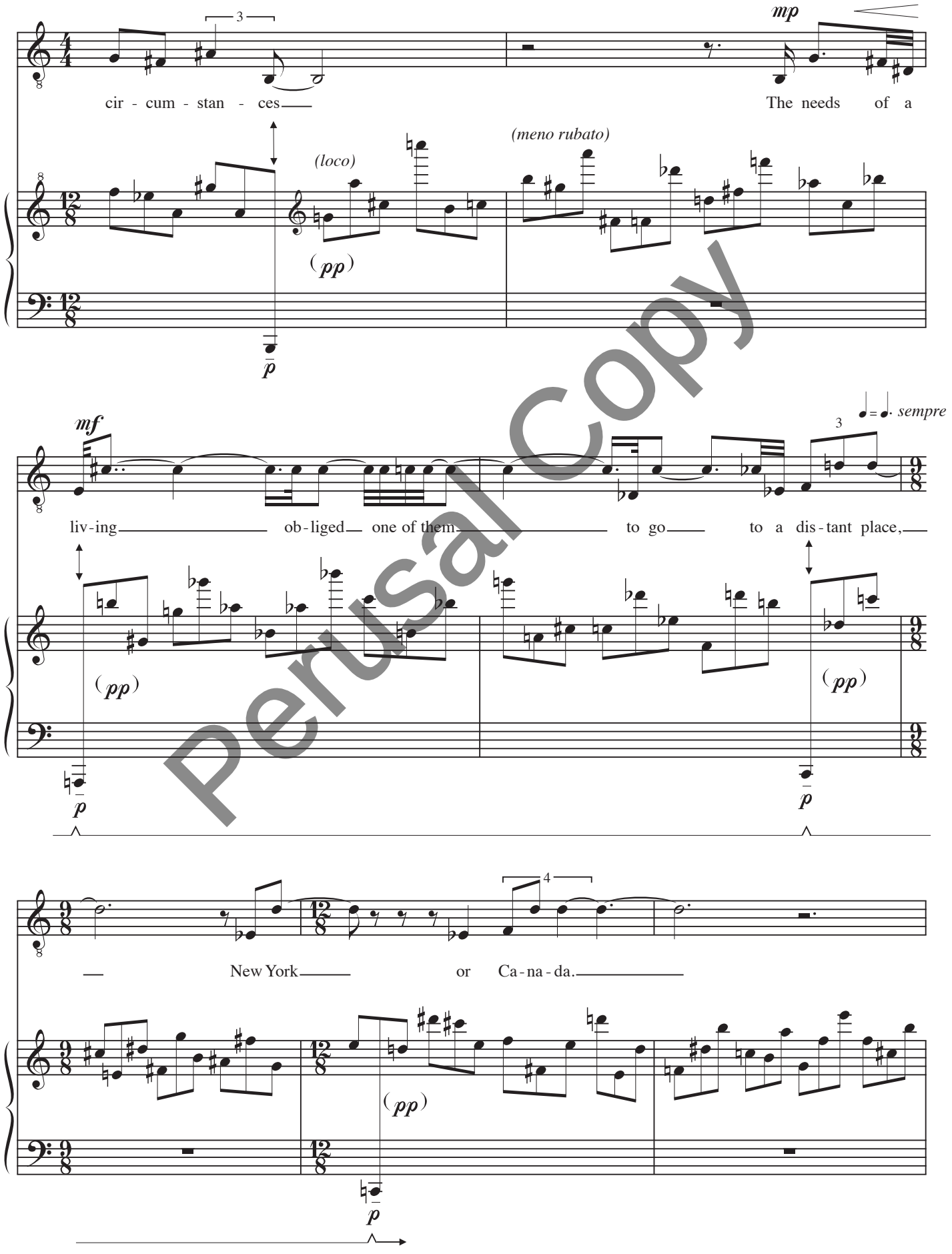

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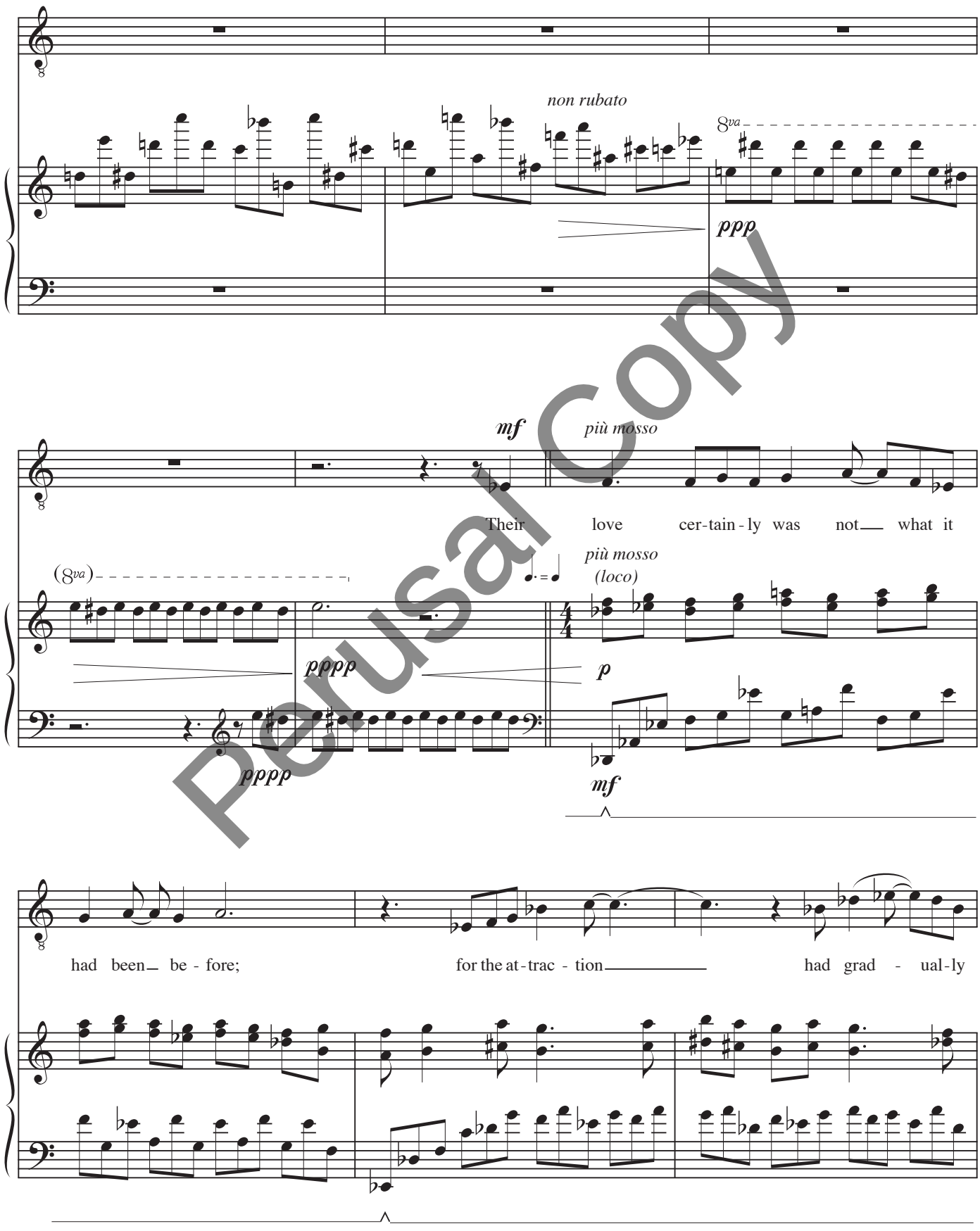

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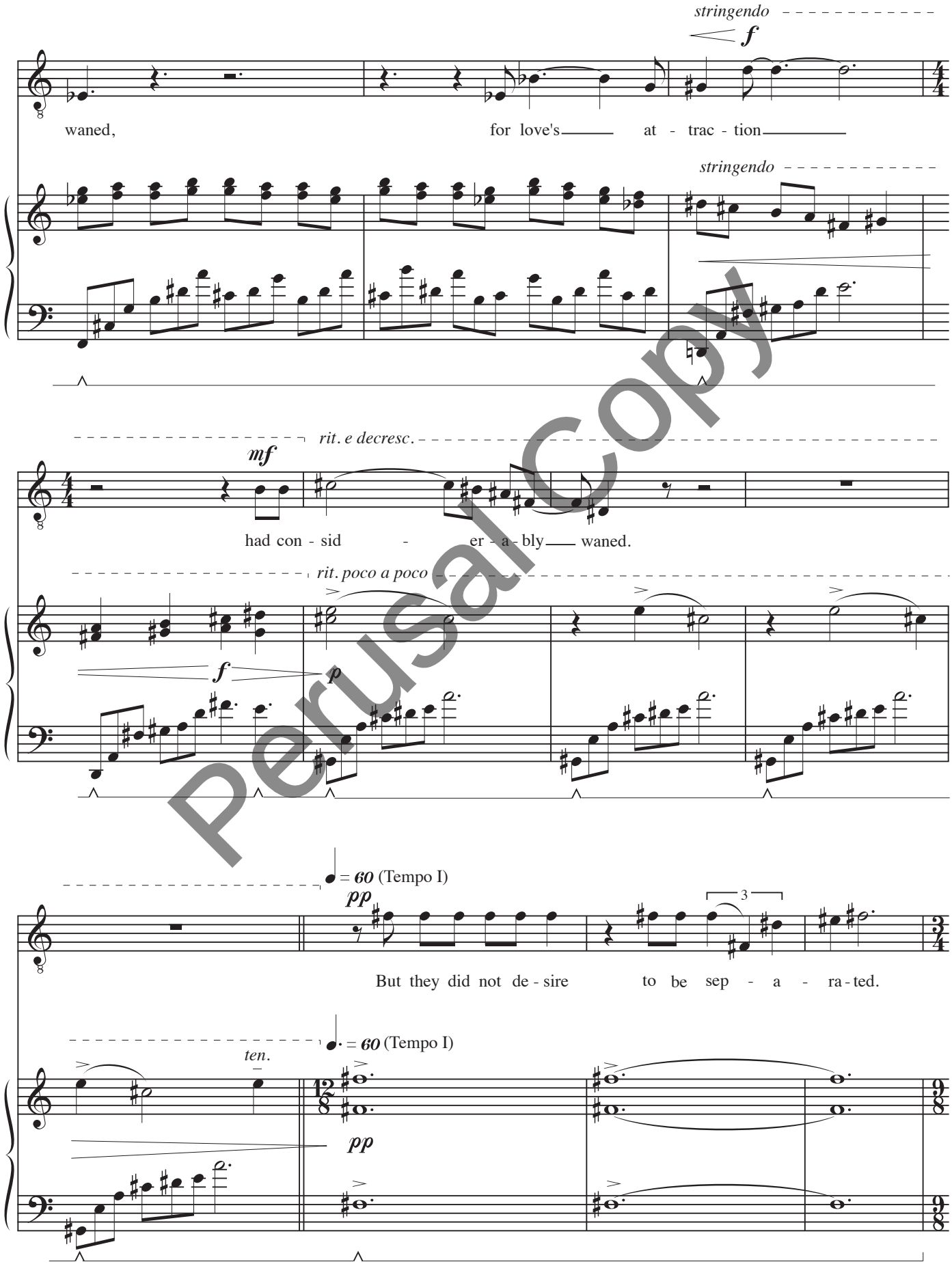

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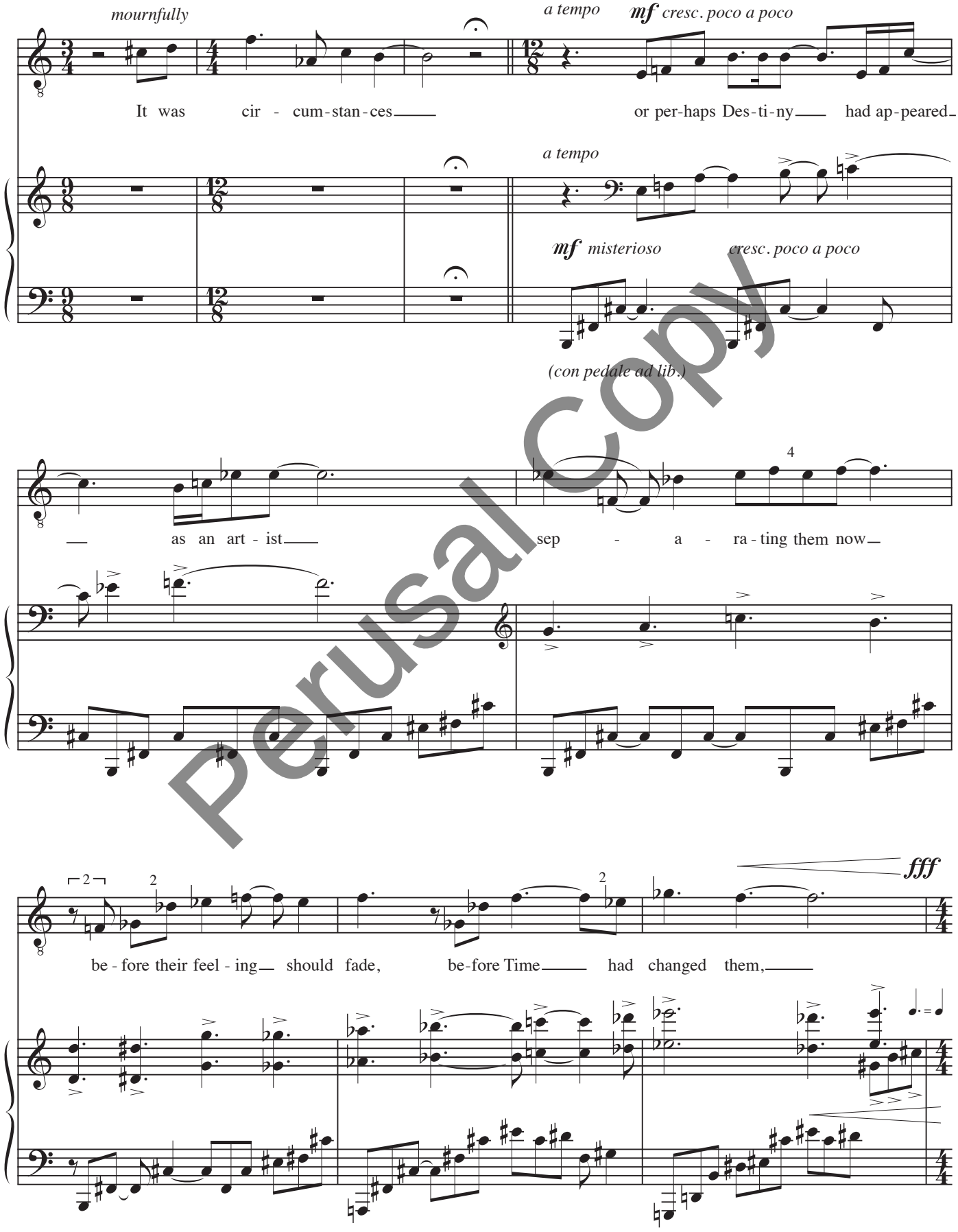

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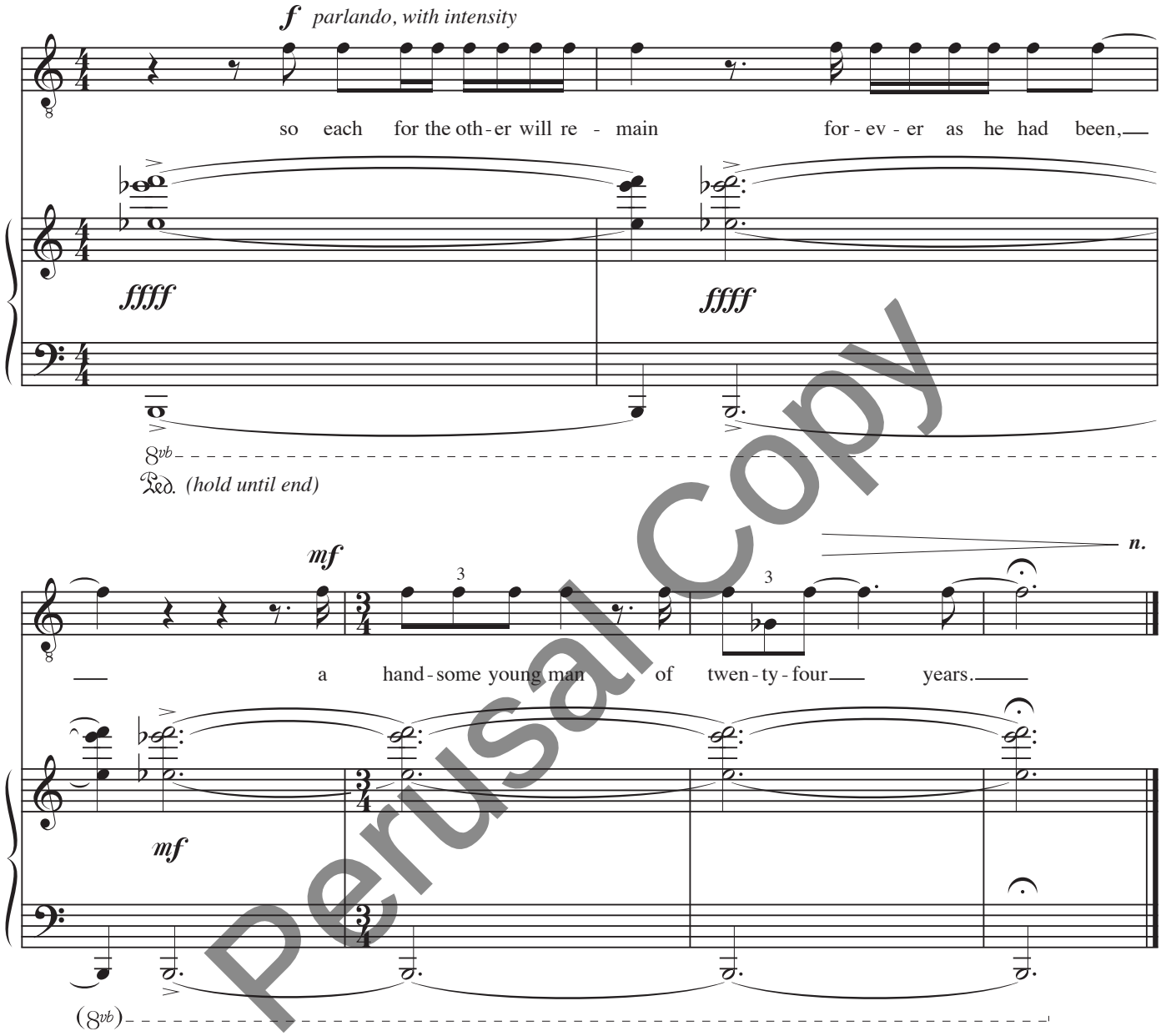

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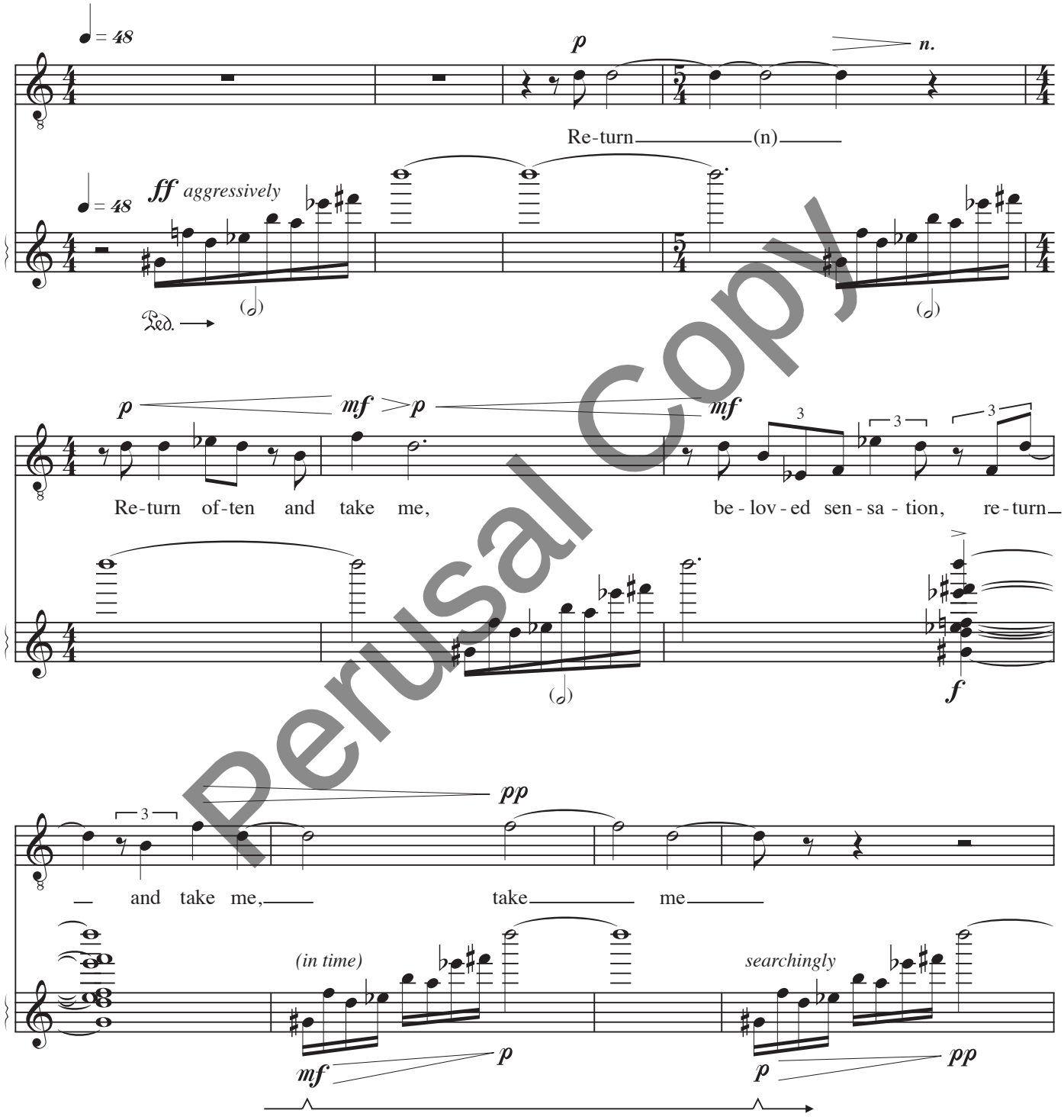
Return



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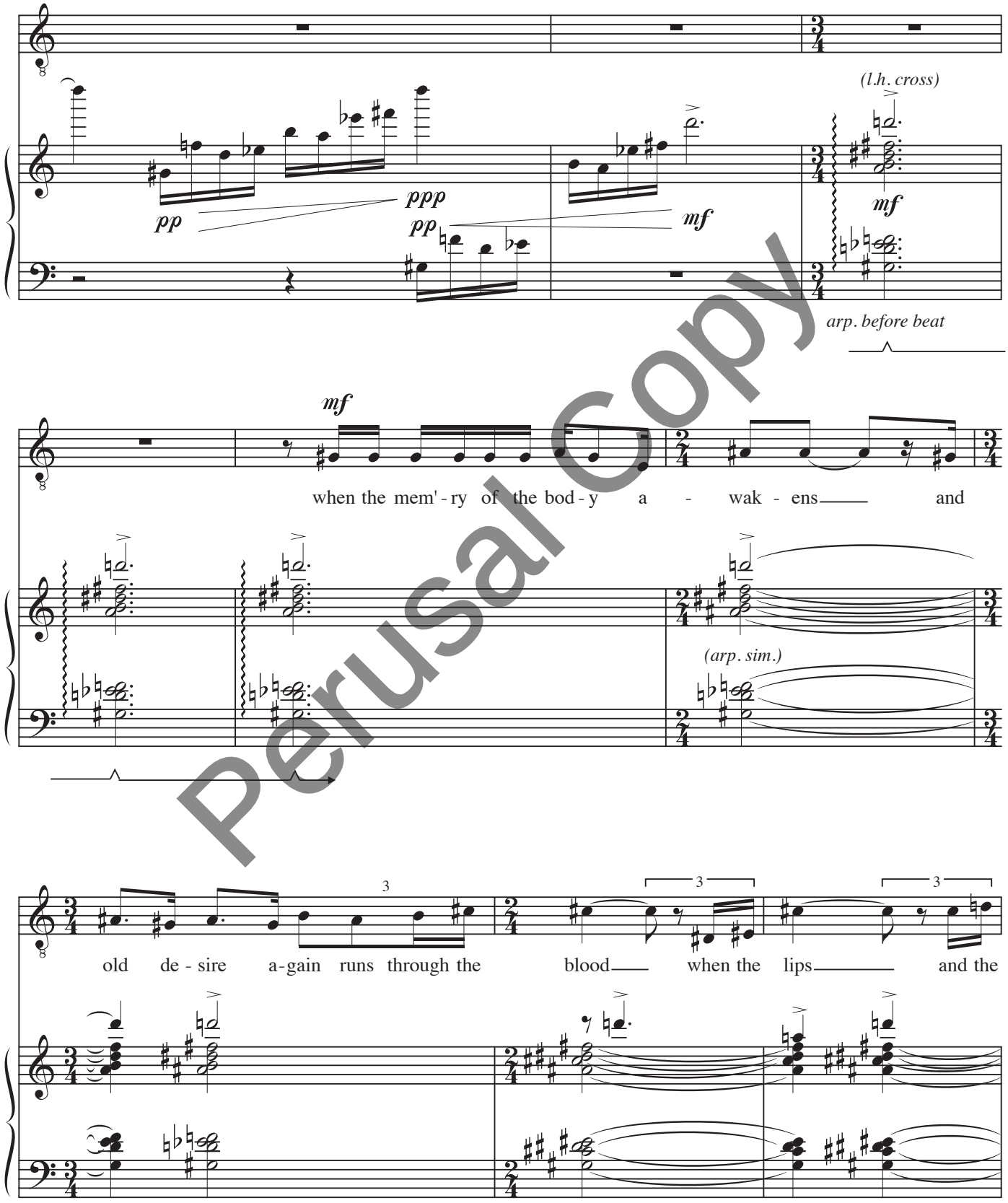

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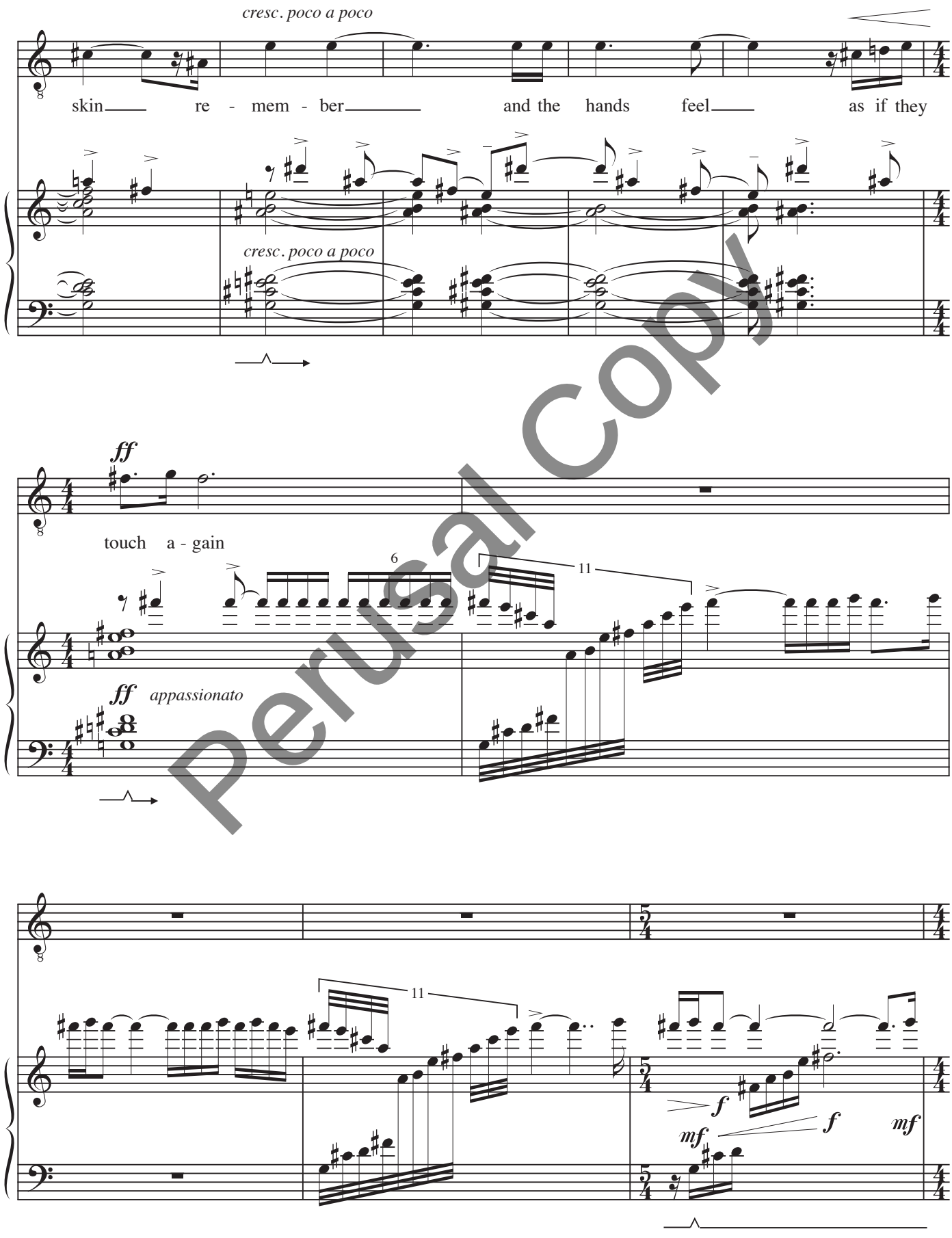

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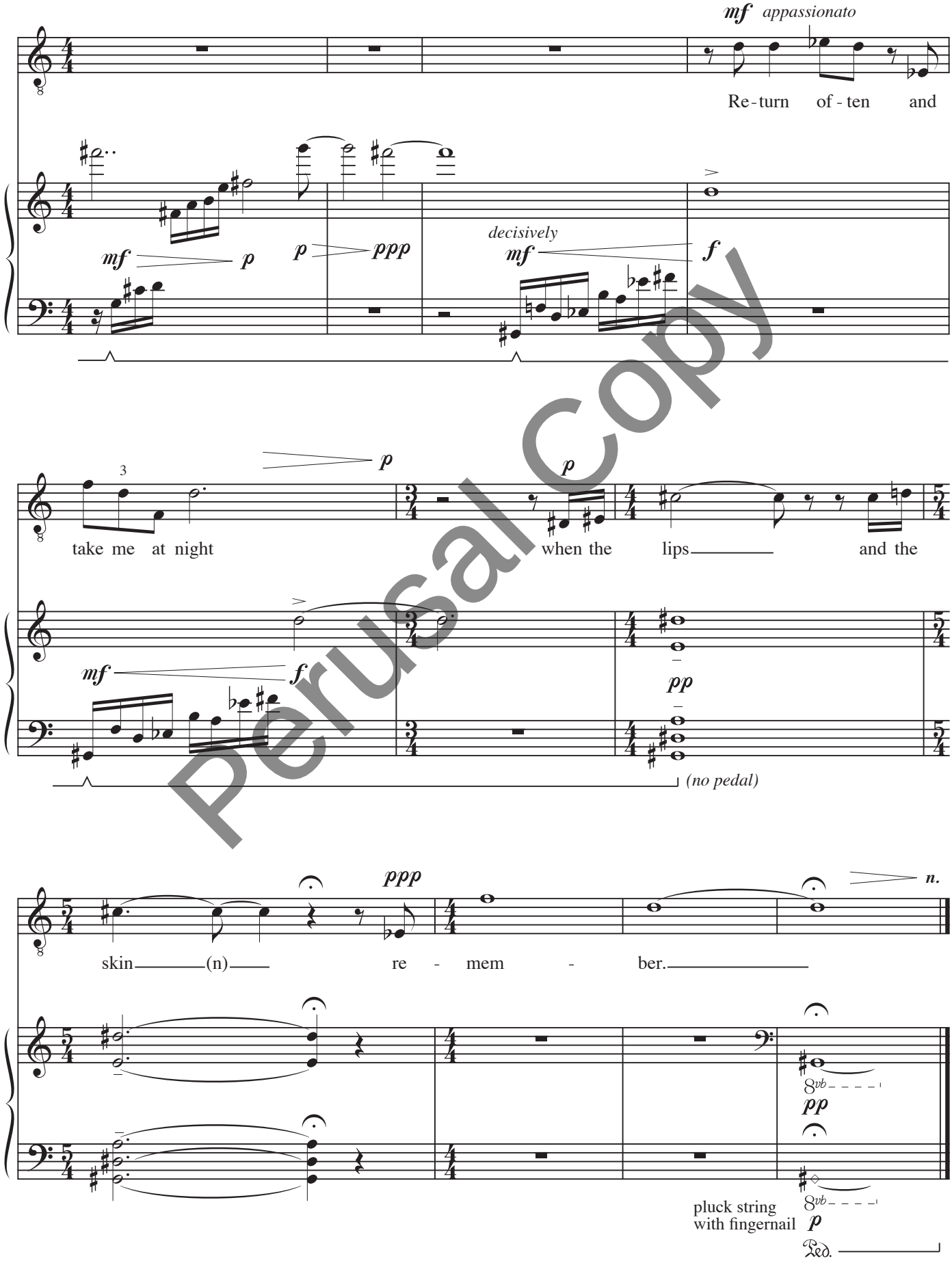

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