**Jeffrey Ryan**

# String Quartet #3
## (sonata distorta)

*commissioned by the Penderecki Quartet*
*with funding from Music Toronto*

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# String Quartet #3
## (sonata distorta)

### *Performance notes:*

Total performance time ca. 12'15"

*n.v.* = non-vibrato
*s.t.* = sul tasto
*s.p.* = sul ponticello

All glissandi should begin immediately after the first pitch is sounded; glissandi of duration greater than a quarter note are notated with an opening eighth note along with the required duration.

note ends with no bow change

give note a slight rhythmic and dynamic stress

Other performance notes are given as required in the score and/or part.

### *Programme Note:*

Tolstoy's novella *The Kreutzer Sonata* takes place in a train compartment, where a quiet but intense man relates to a fellow traveler the tale of how he came to murder his wife. As he describes the early days of his marriage and the events that led him to that fateful night, it becomes clear that he is a complete misogynist, deeply tormented and repulsed by sexuality, seeing women as devils for enticing innocent men into depravity, and believing that between husband and wife there is an uncrossable abyss and an innate hostility that is covered up by the sexual act.

When his wife accompanies the violinist Trukhachevski at the piano for a performance of Beethoven's "Kreutzer" Sonata, his torment takes a focus. He feels transformed by the music, yet jealous of the musical connection between his wife and her new friend, and he begins to suspect an affair, though in the novella it is not clear whether this is a reality or a product of his tormented imagination.

It is easy to see why Tolstoy chose Beethoven's sonata as the trigger. Particularly in the first movement, the chromaticism, the unsettledness of the tonality, the short phrases interrupted by extemporisation, and the underlying sense of frenetic panic, all mirror his feelings of jealousy and lack of control.

In this one-movement work, *String Quartet #3 (sonata distorta)* attempts to enter the protagonist's tormented mind as he rushes home, convinced he will find his wife with Trukhachevski. Elements from Beethoven's work appear distorted at various levels in the music, from the sonata's opening melody here played out obsessively in slow motion as the harmony dissolves, to the imagined mocking laughter implied by the rhythm of Beethoven's closing gigue. Disconnected thoughts are reflected by the music's sudden shifts between dense and oppressive repeated patterns and the "harmony" of idealized love. In a central slow section, soft sustained chords call out to a devastating emptiness, in their futility becoming more and more dissonant, leading to a final section that conveys the rising intensity and singularity of purpose that propels him to the drawing-room door.

*String Quartet #3 (sonata distorta)* was commissioned by the Penderecki Quartet with funding from Music Toronto.

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*to the Penderecki Quartet*

# String Quartet #3

## (sonata distorta)

**Jeffrey Ryan**

♩ = 72

*Very intensely*

1

*change bow freely but imperceptibly*

vn I

vn II

va

vc

*f*

*no bow change on slurred pitch changes

12

(*mf*)

IV

III

18

A

(*mp*)

*p*

*ff*

*gl.*

3

*(short gl. to next note)*

*espr.*

*mp*

*pp*

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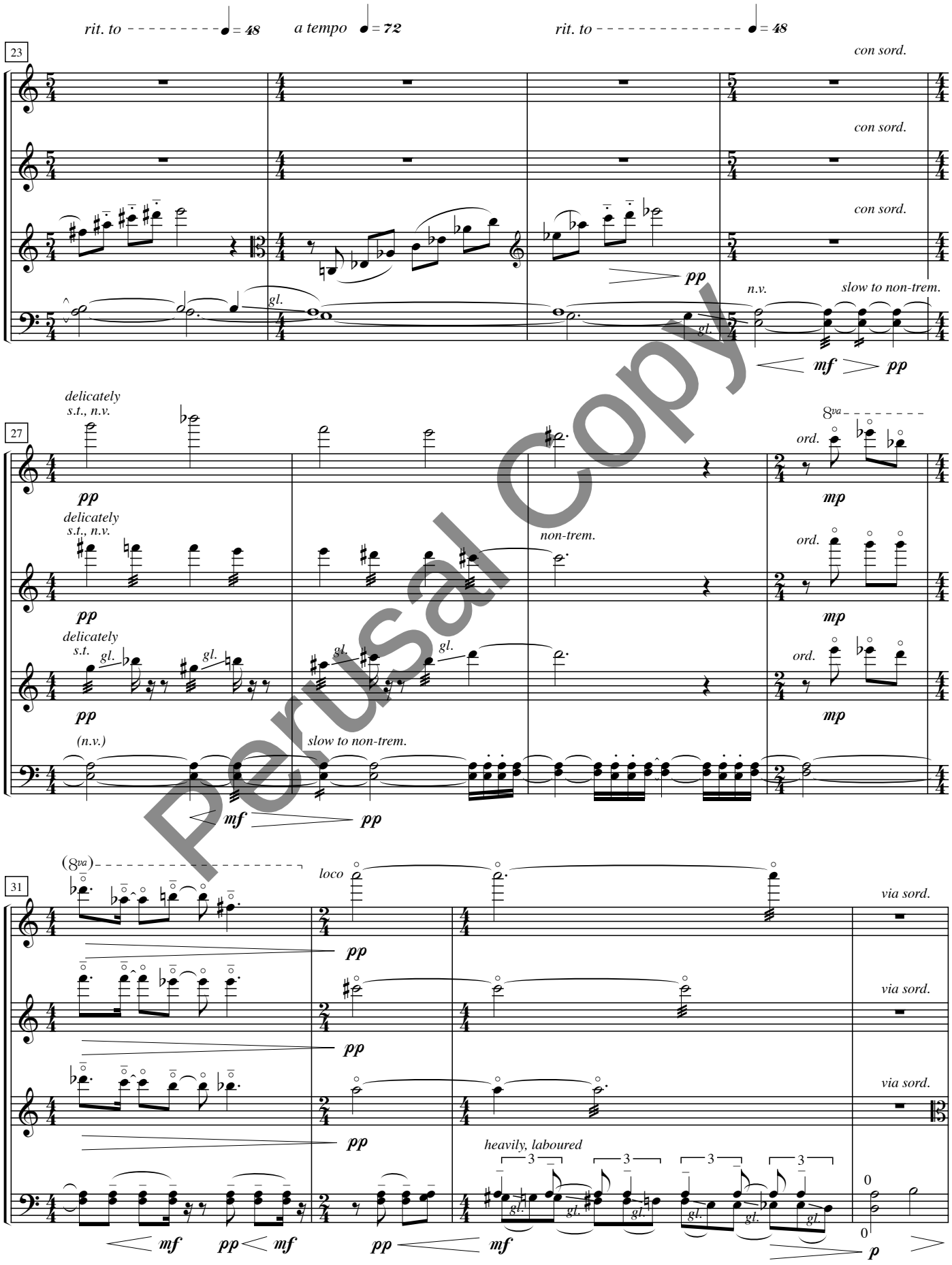


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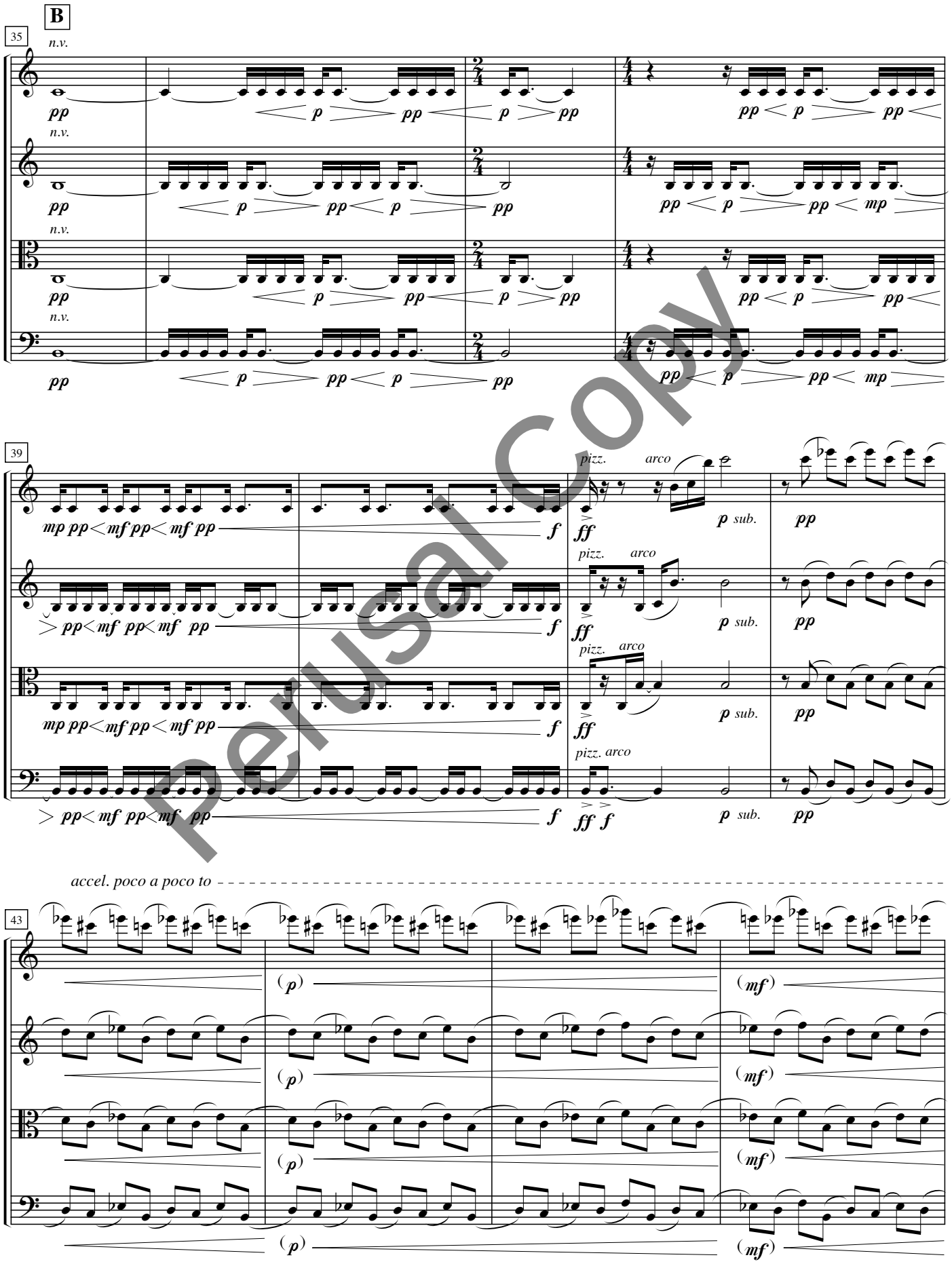


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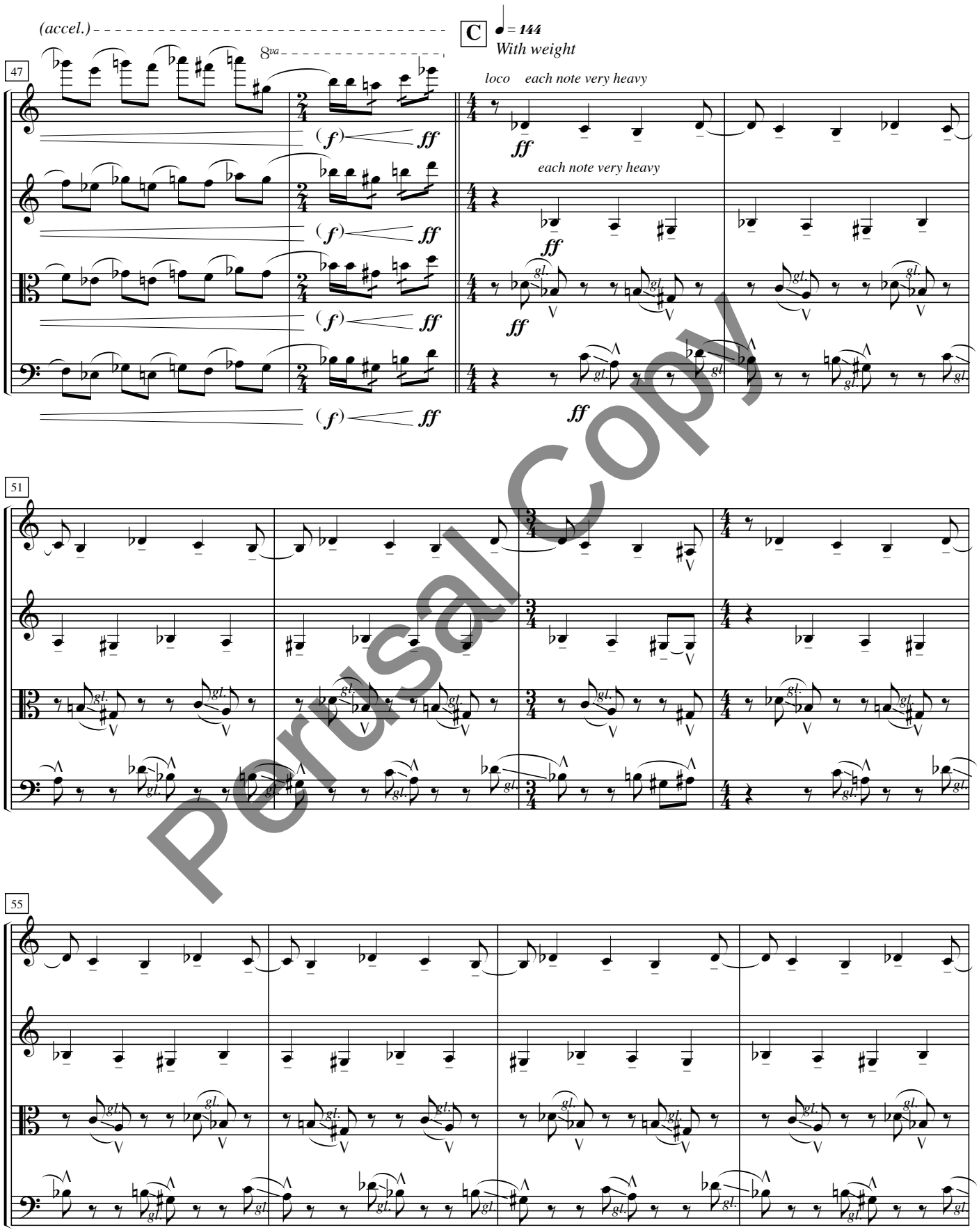


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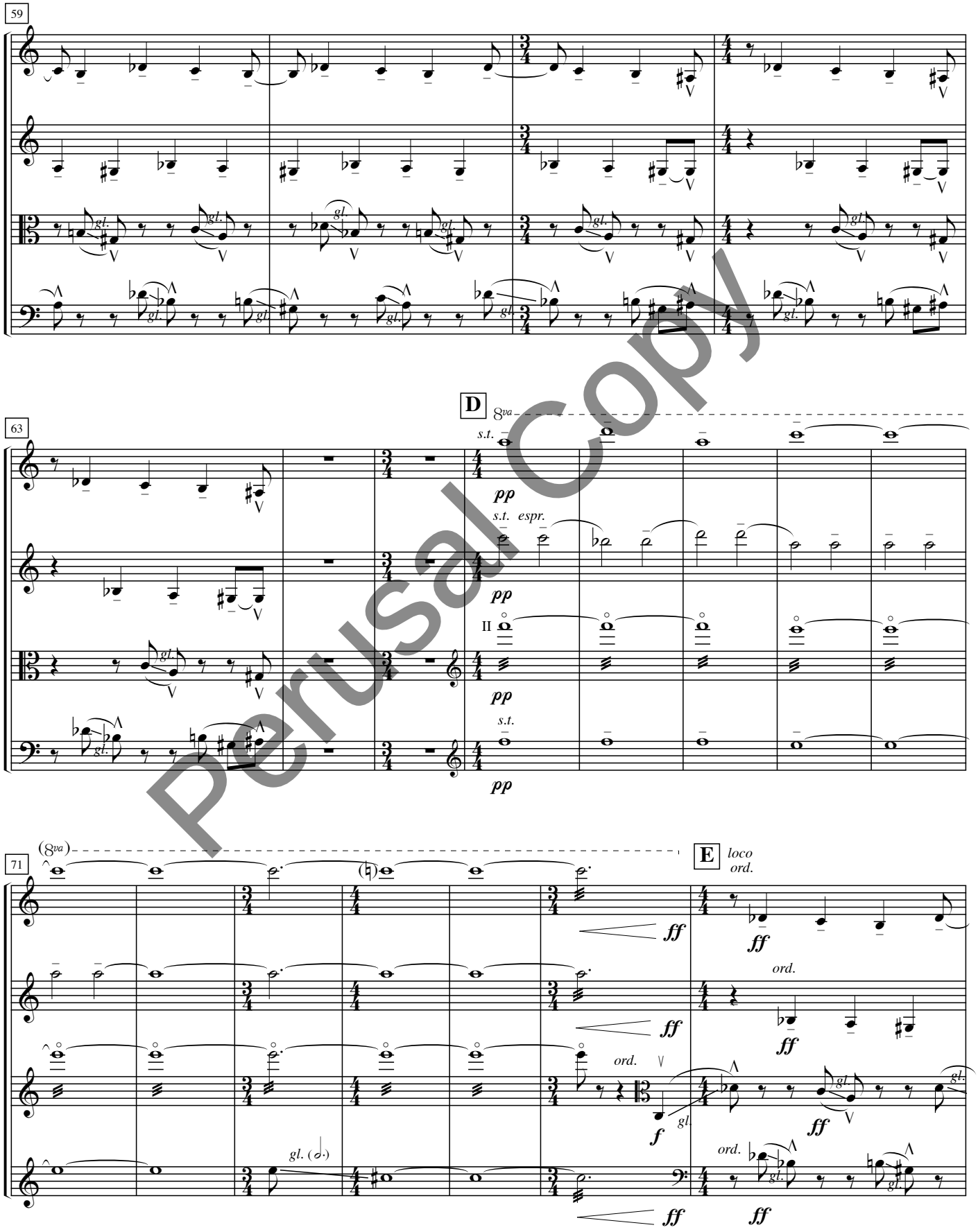


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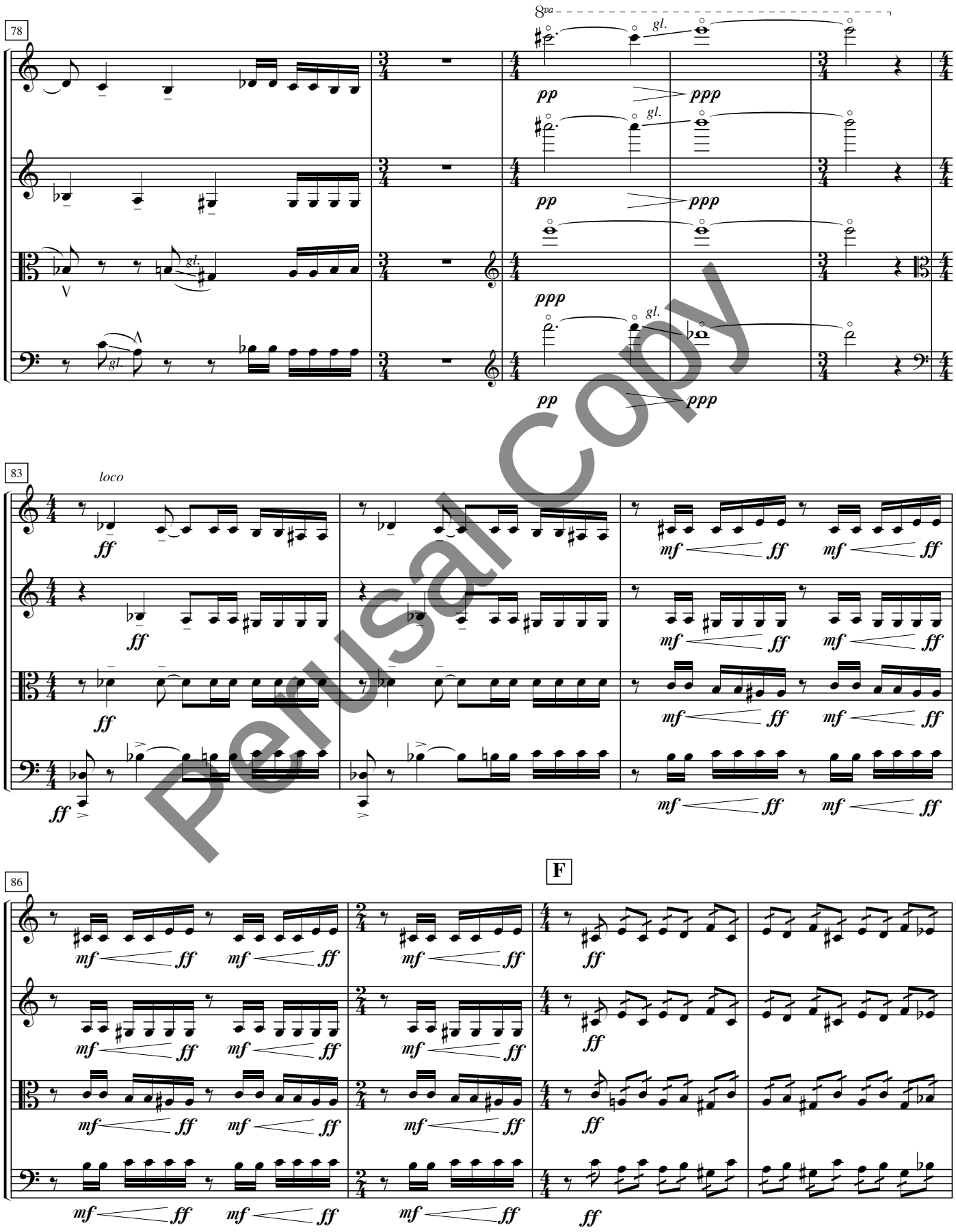


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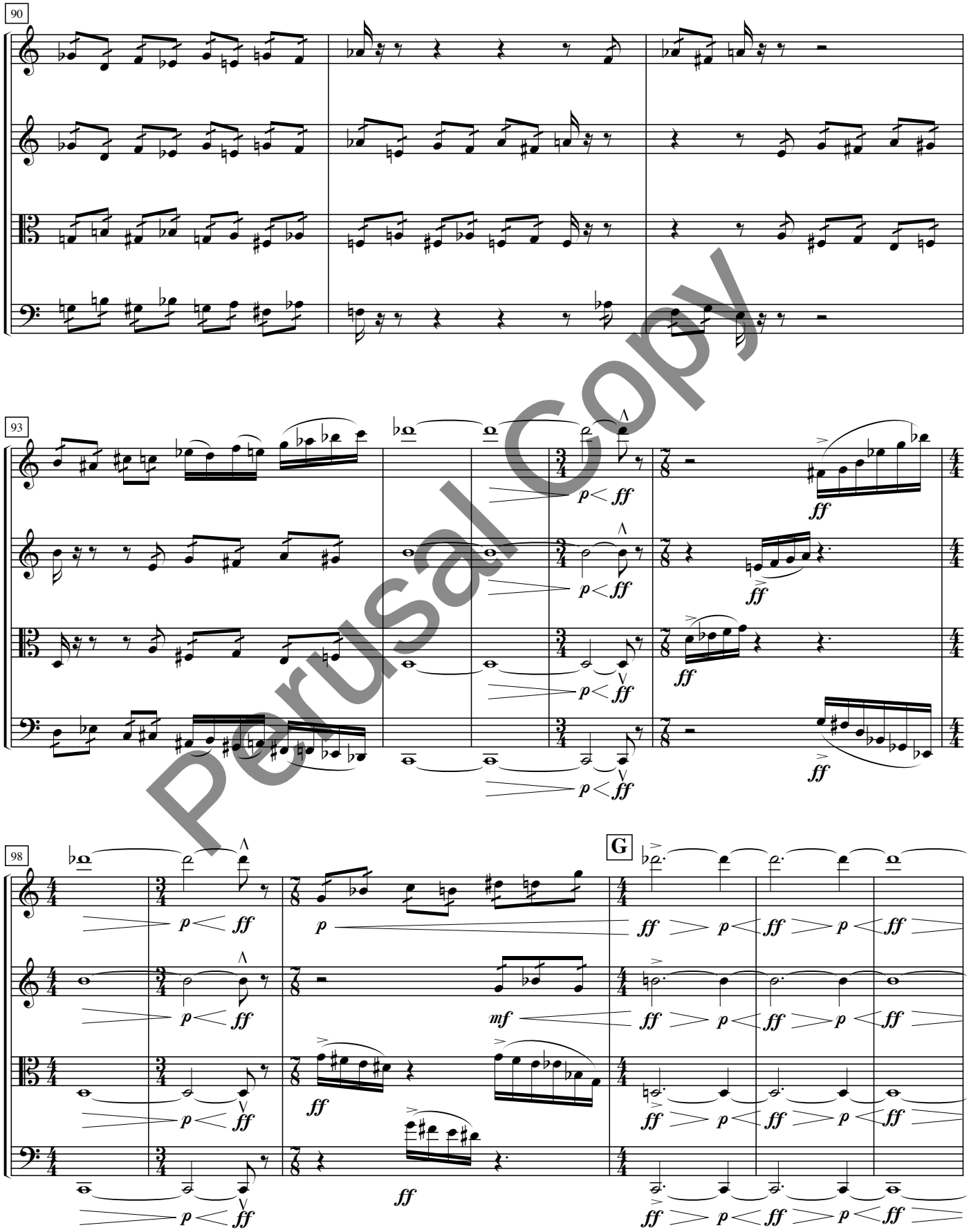


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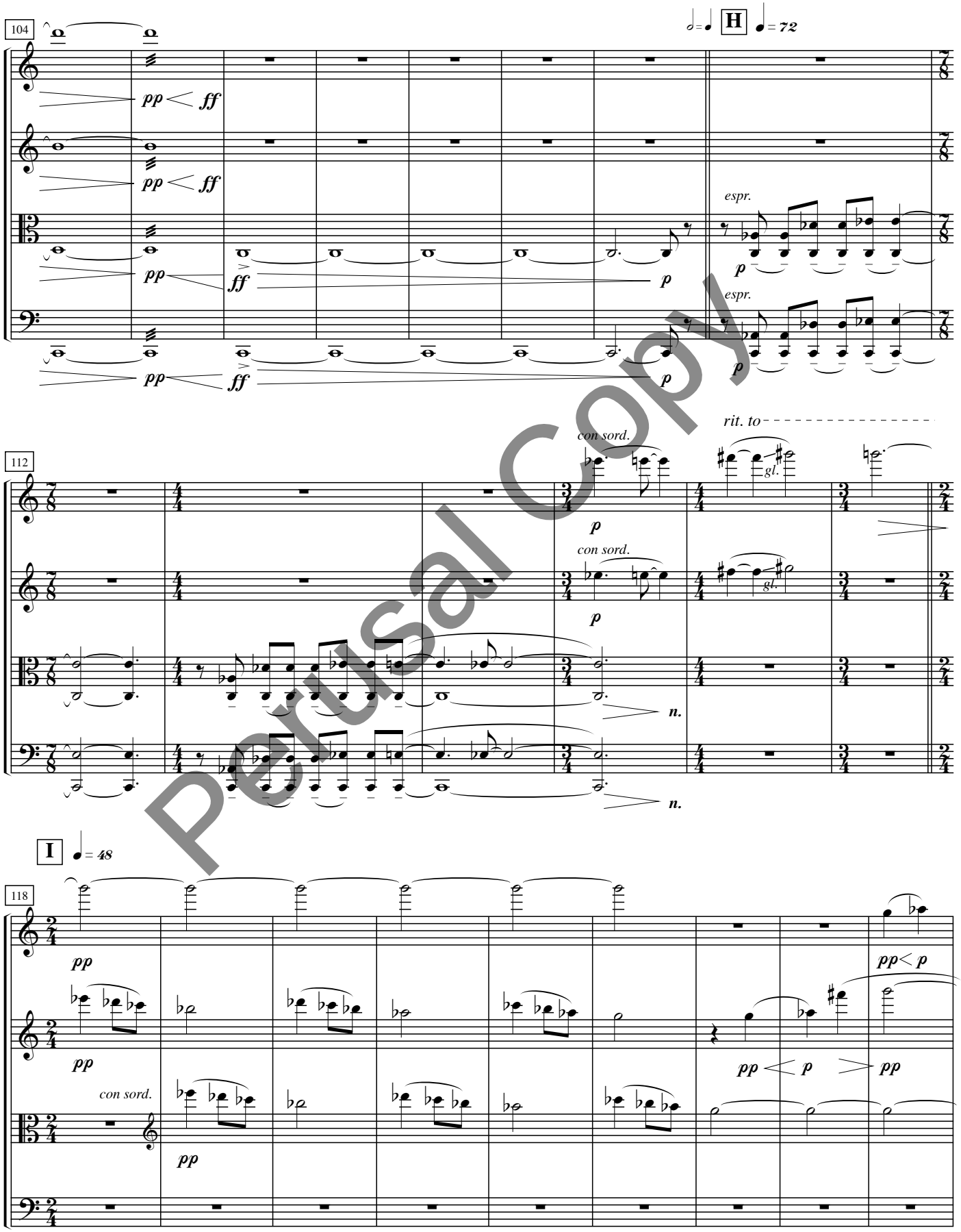


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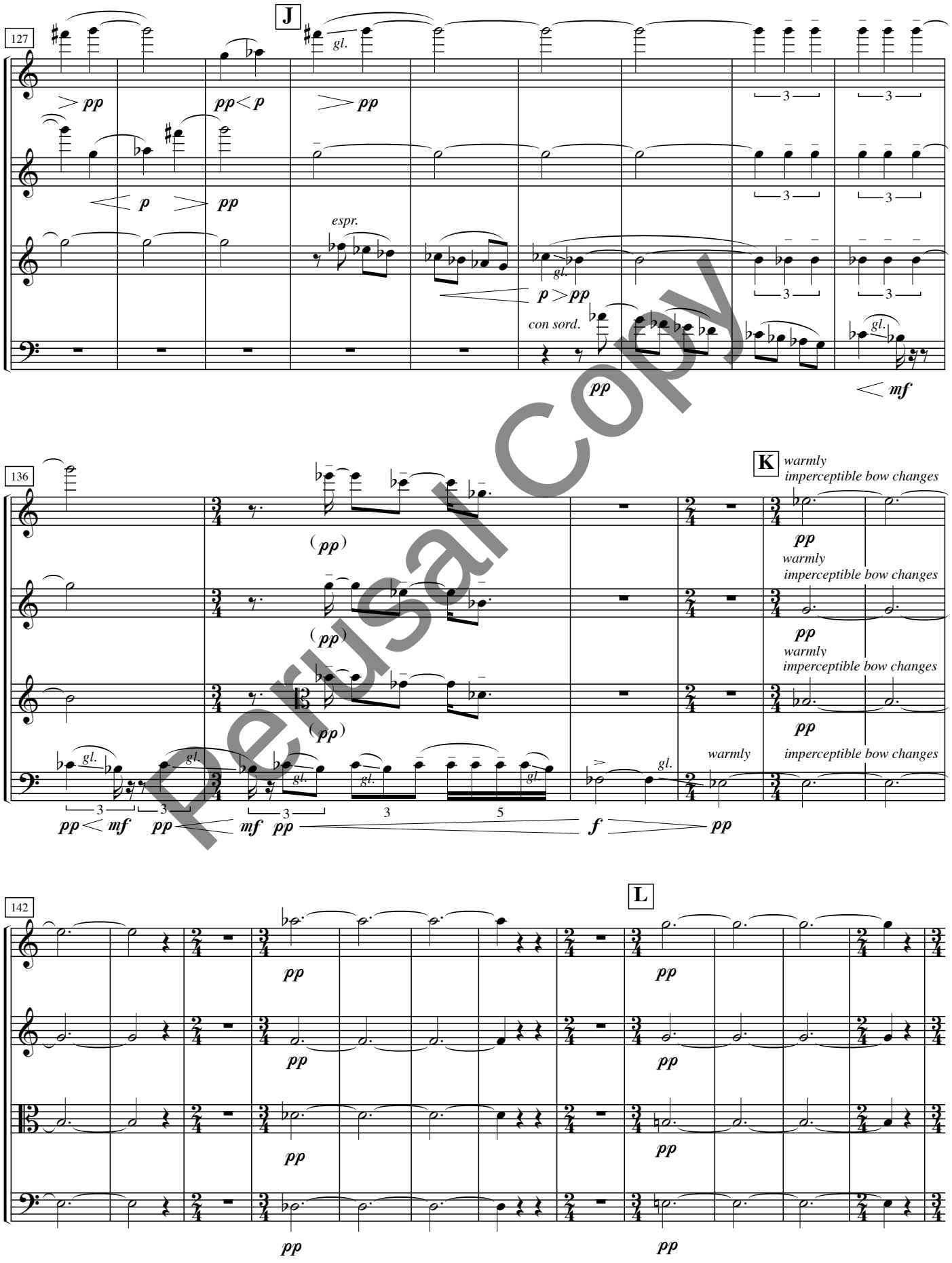


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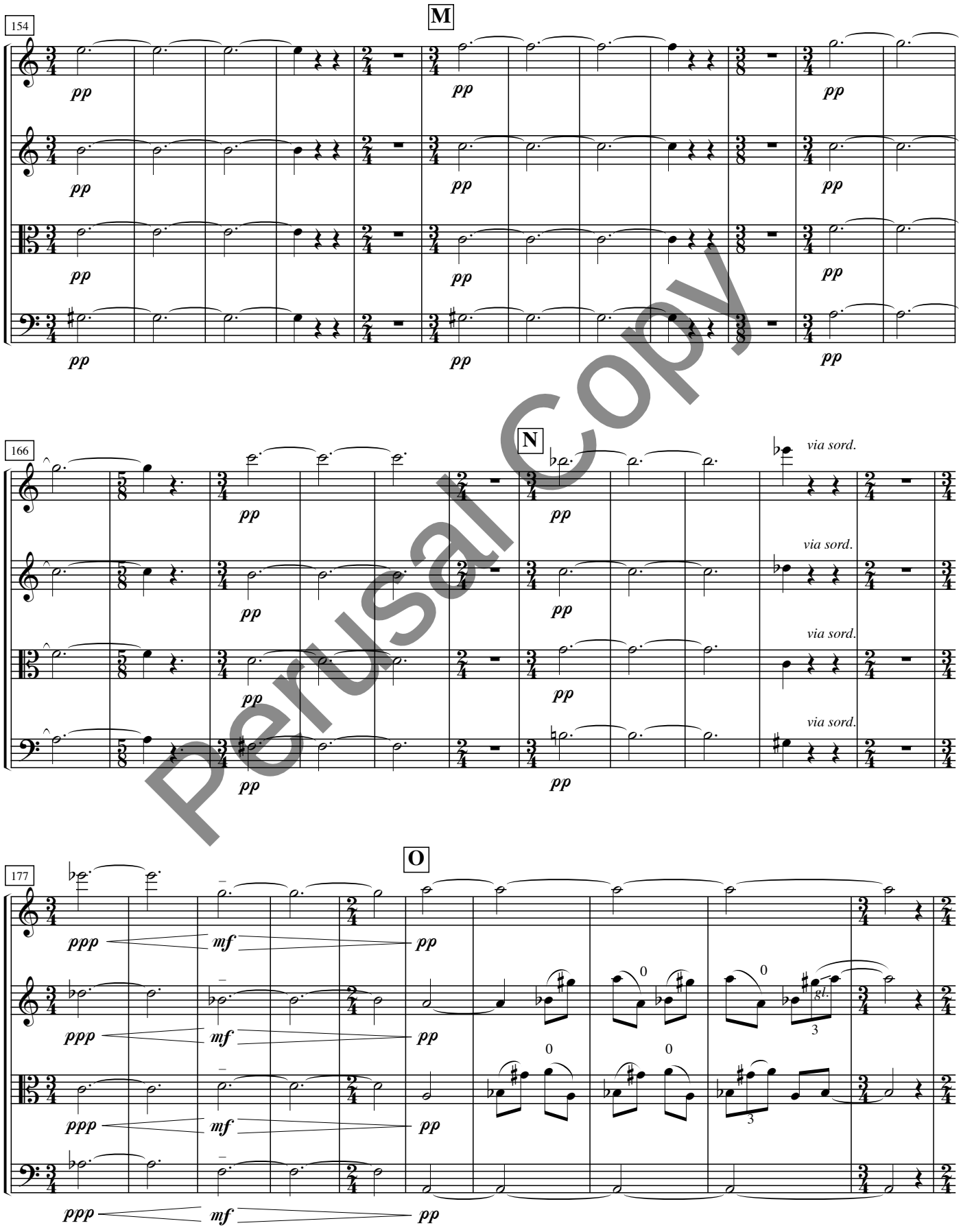


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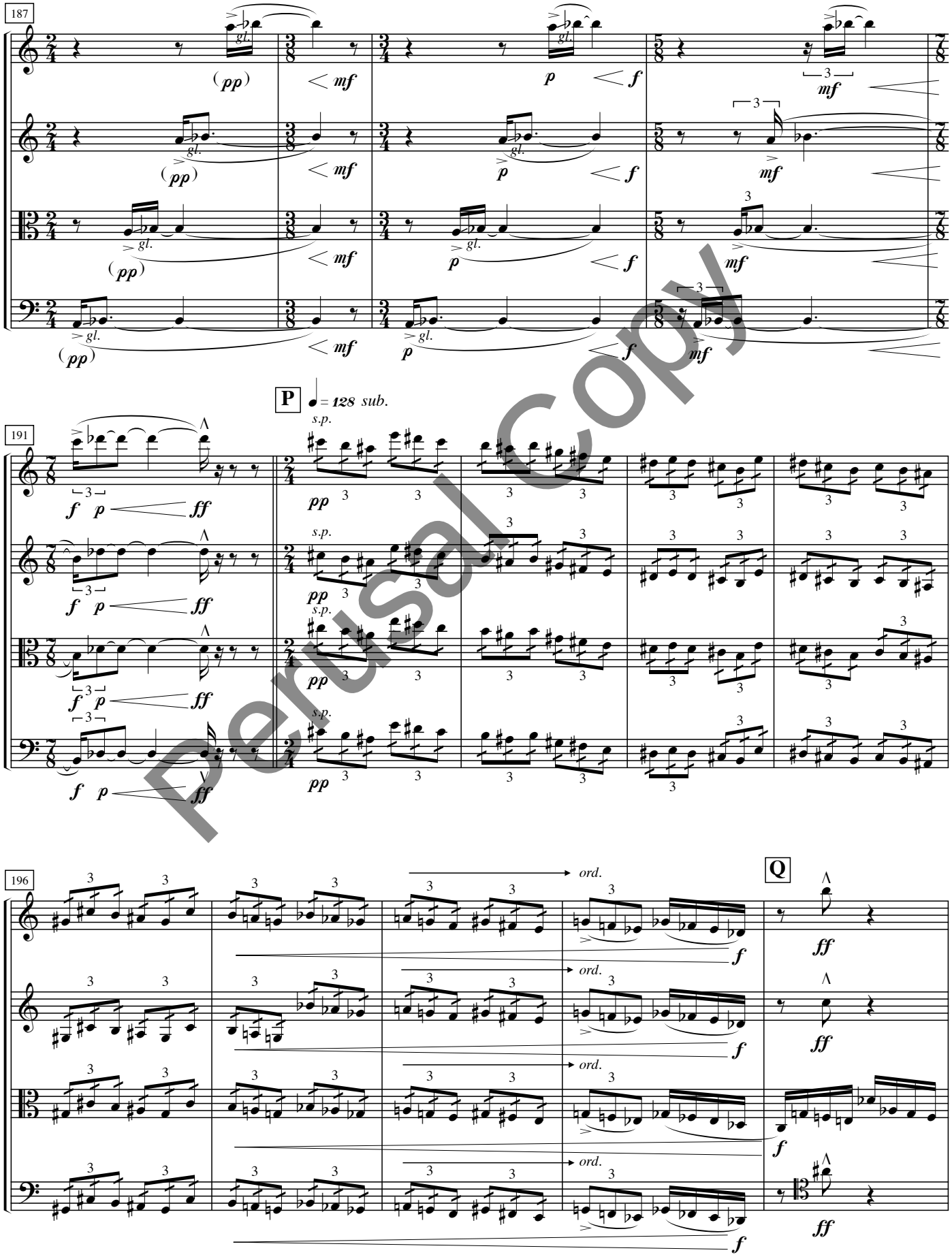


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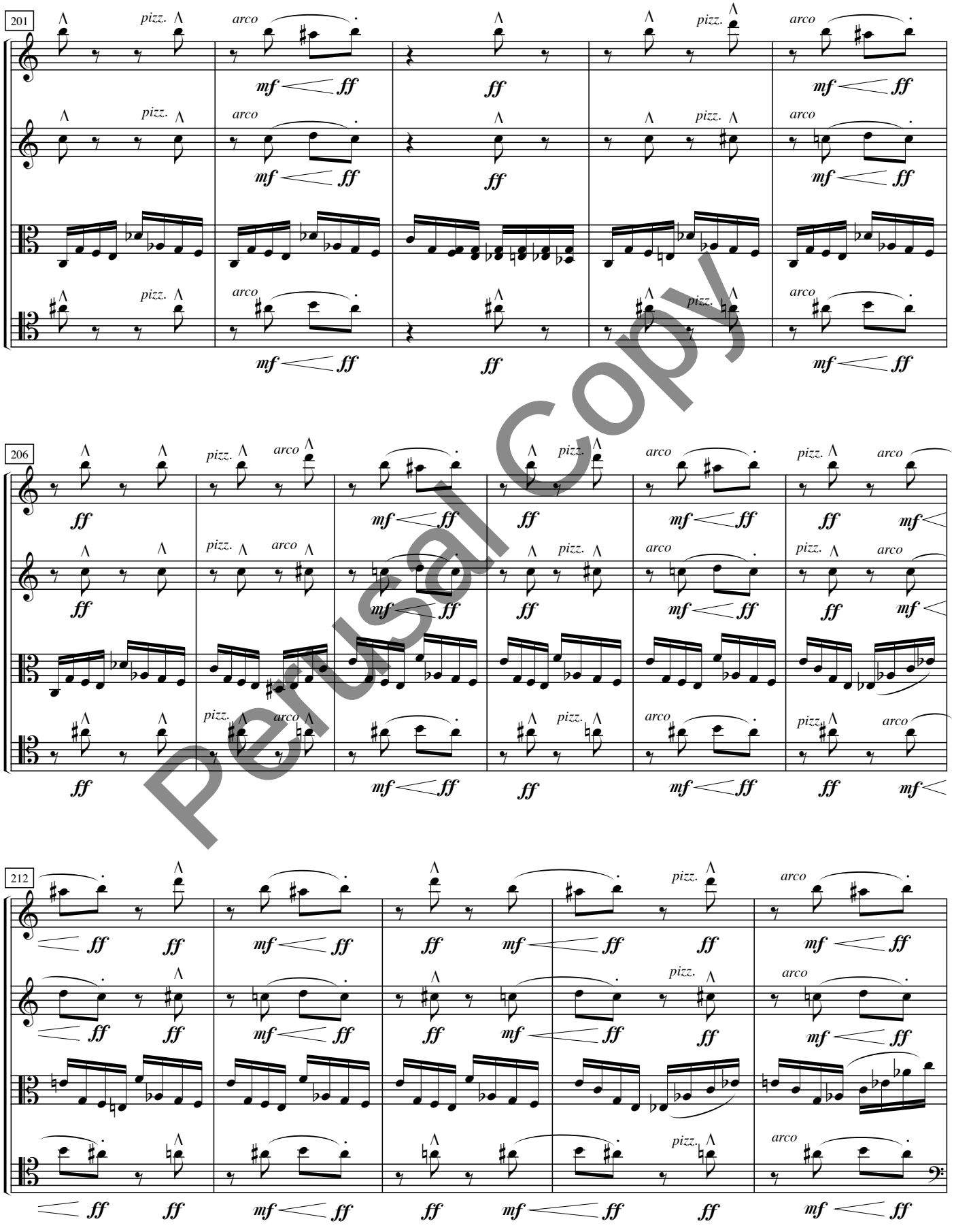


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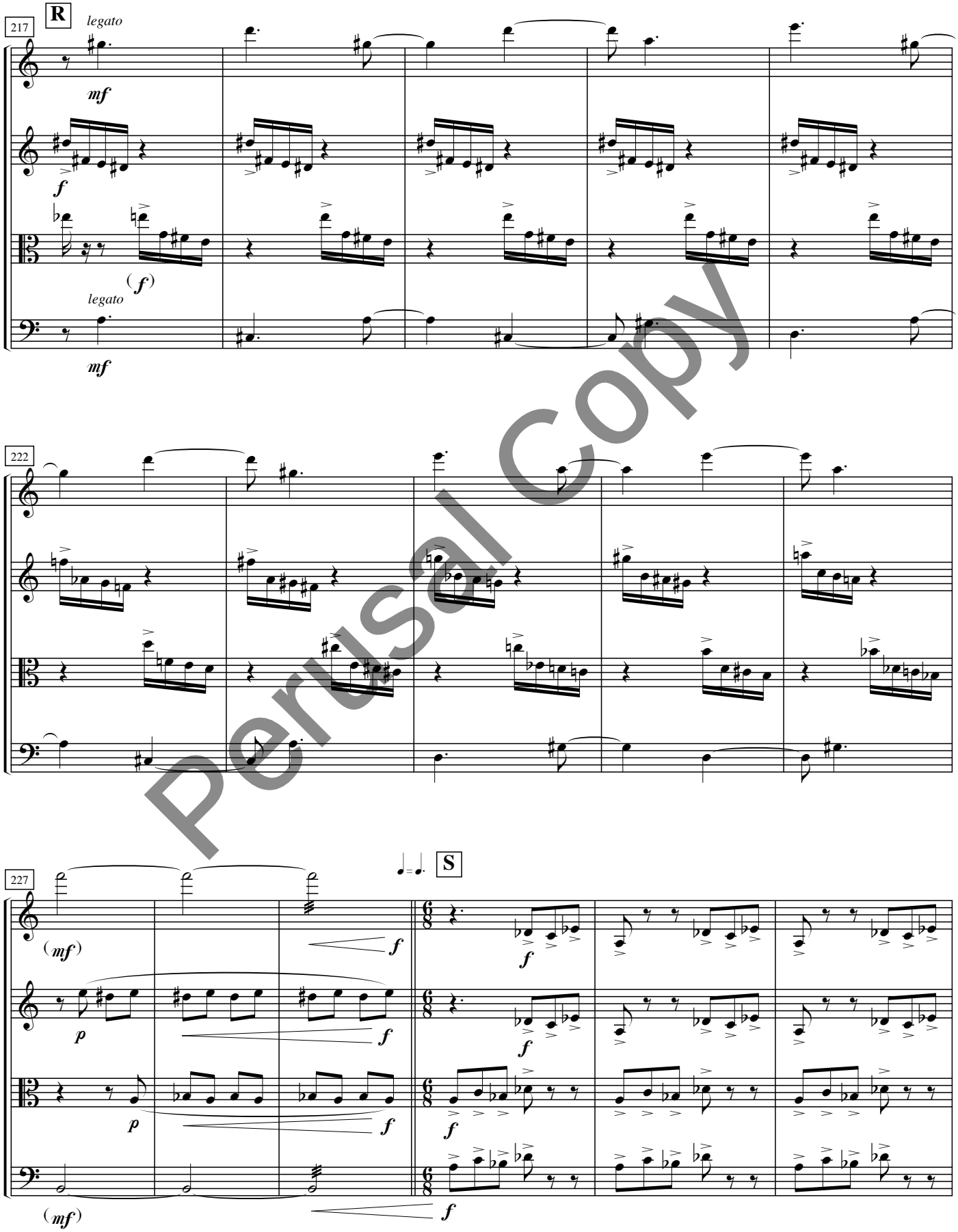


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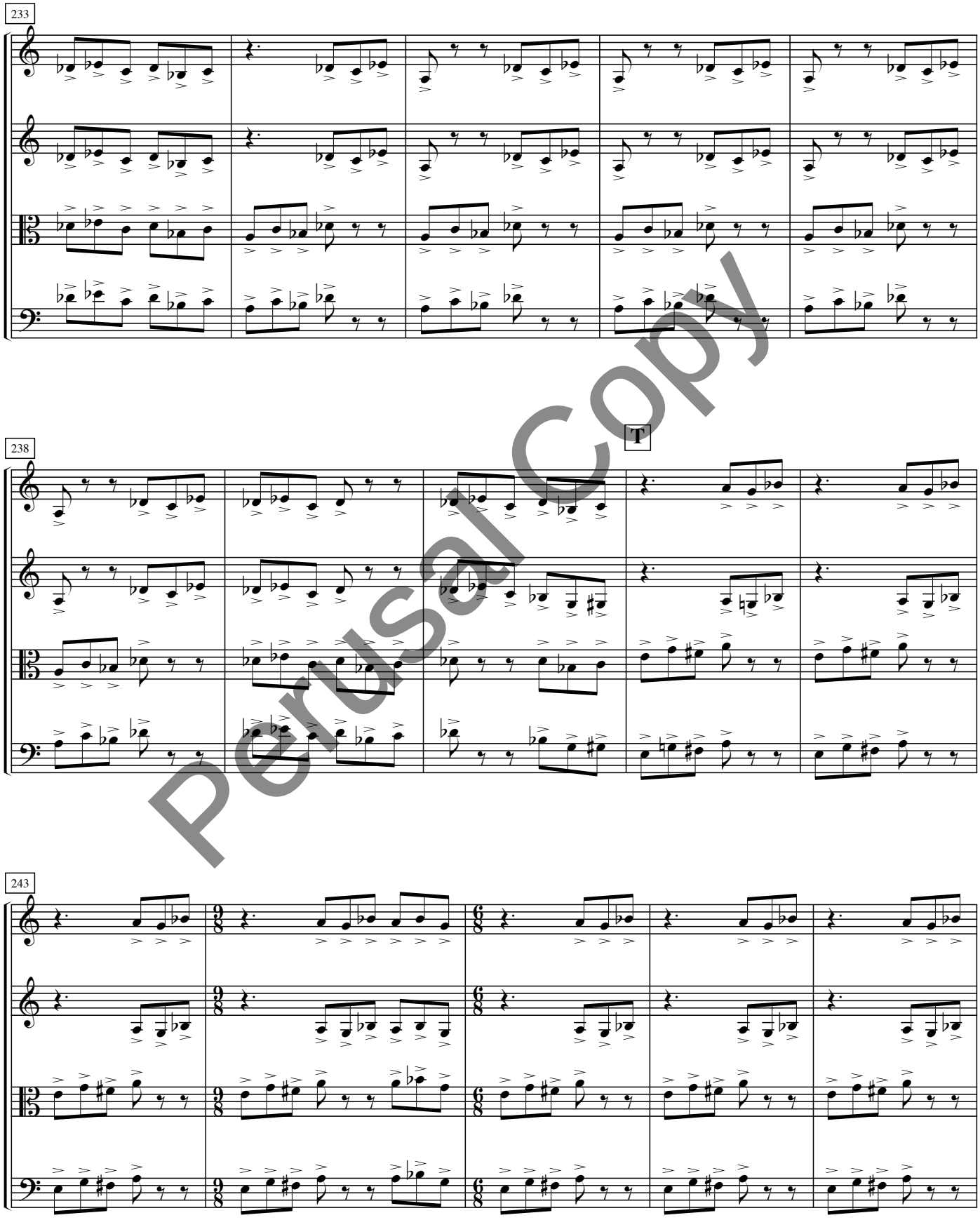


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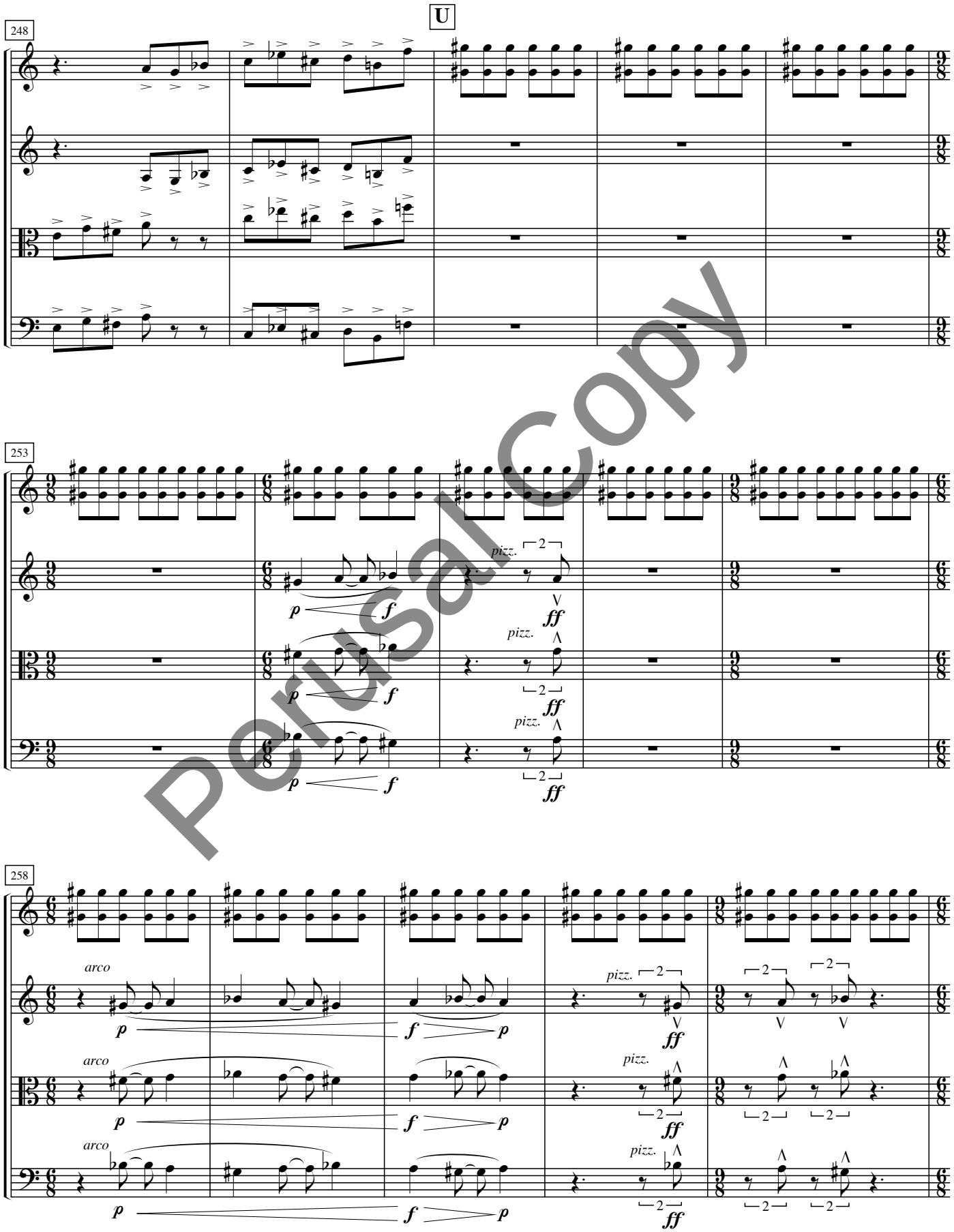


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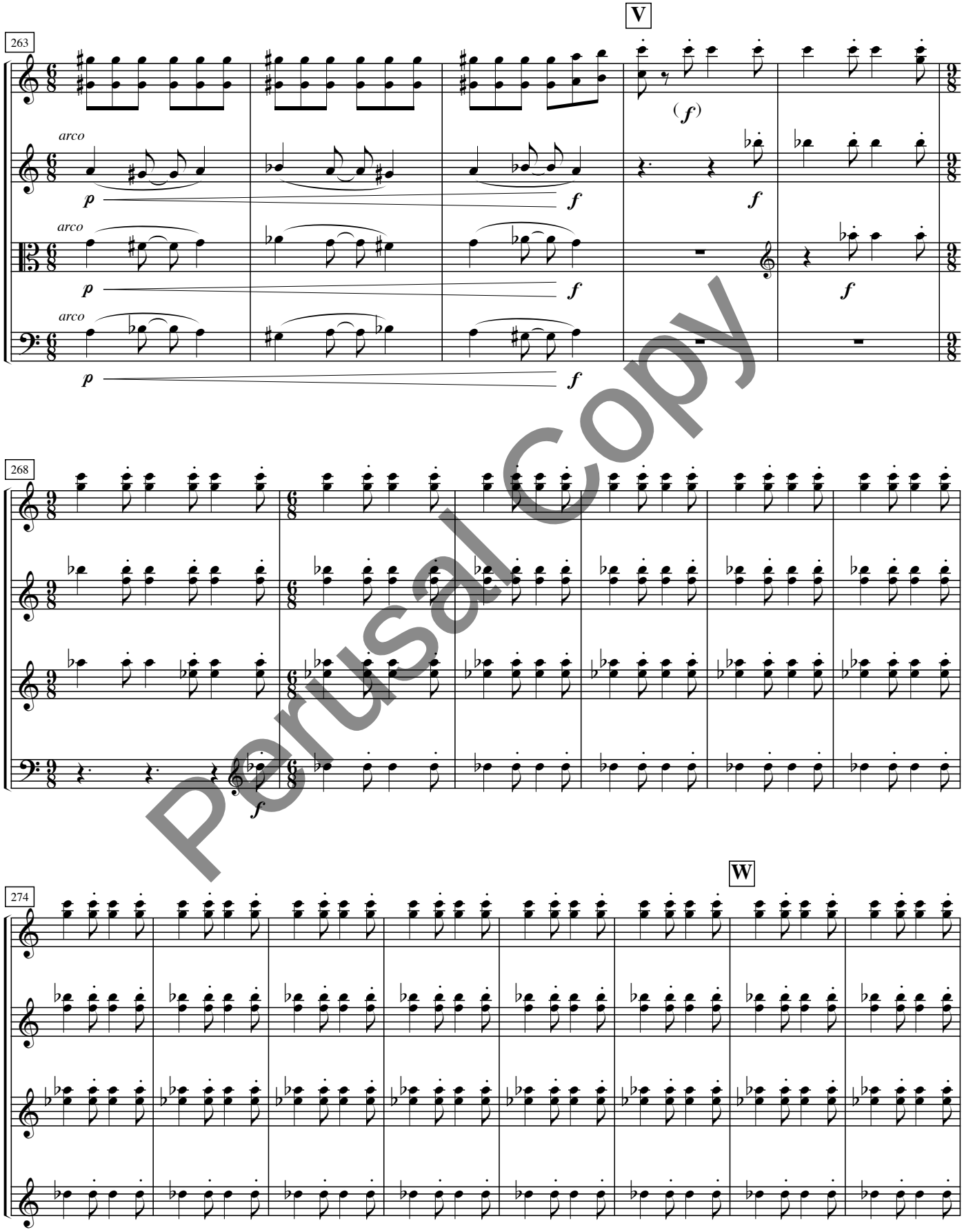


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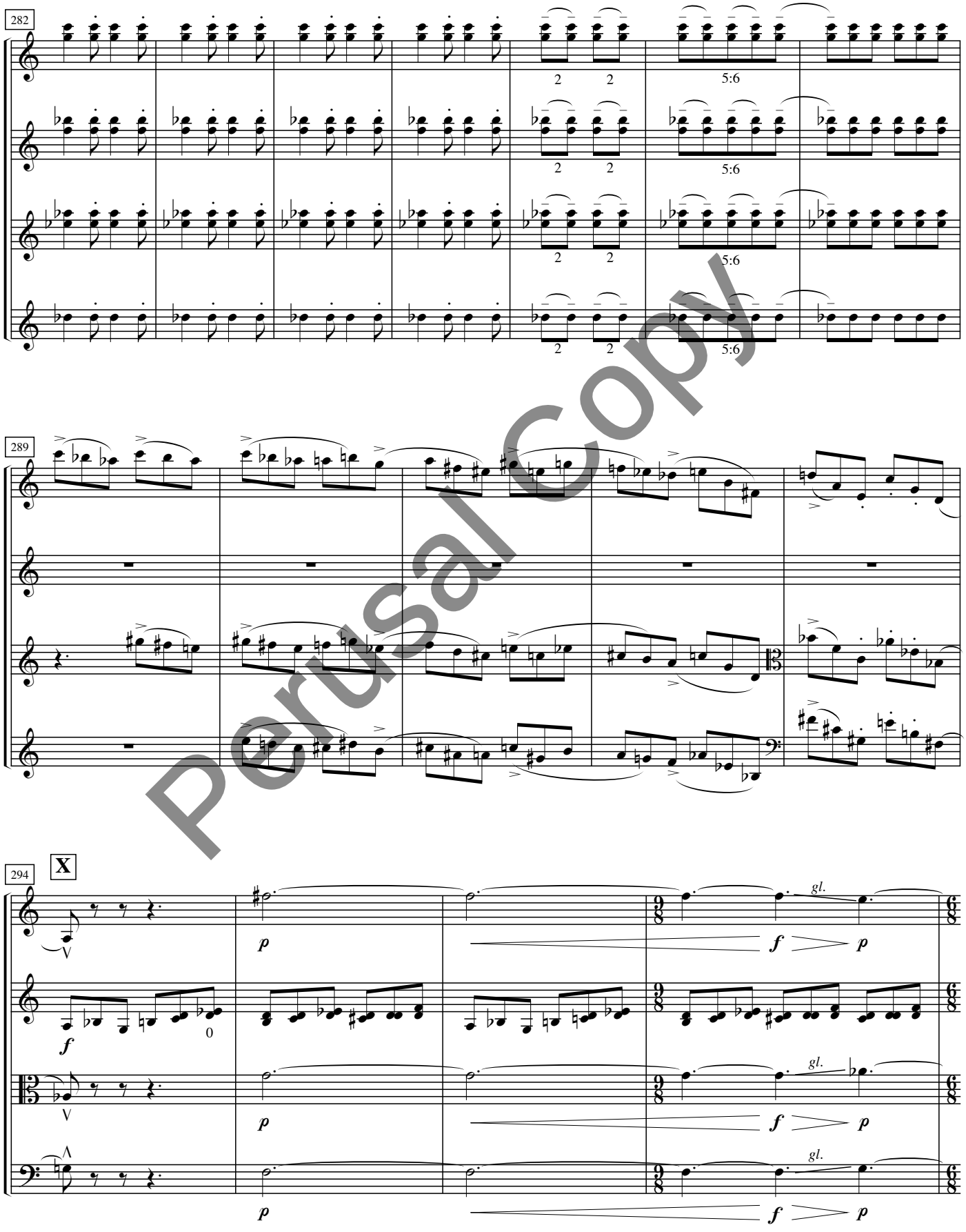


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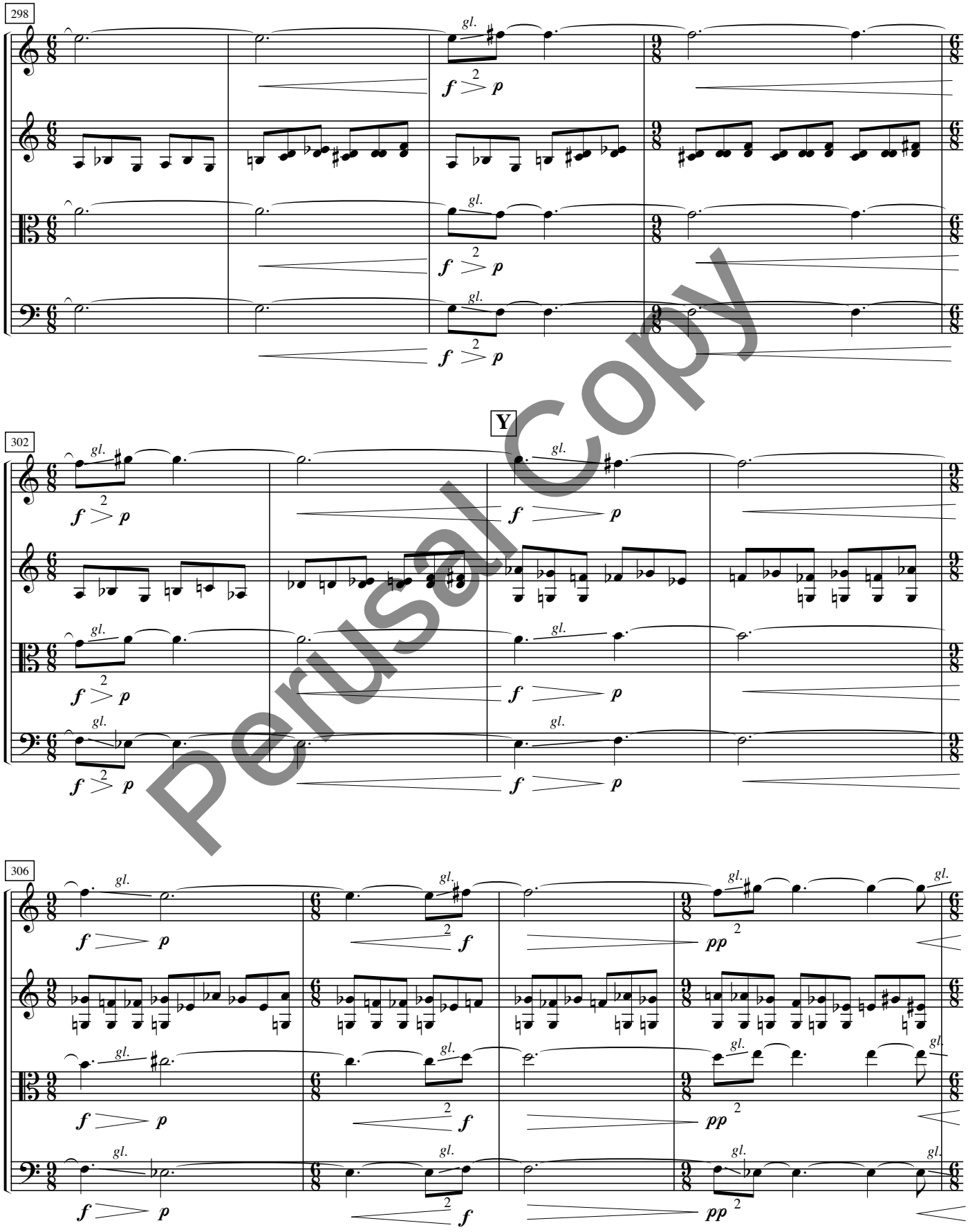


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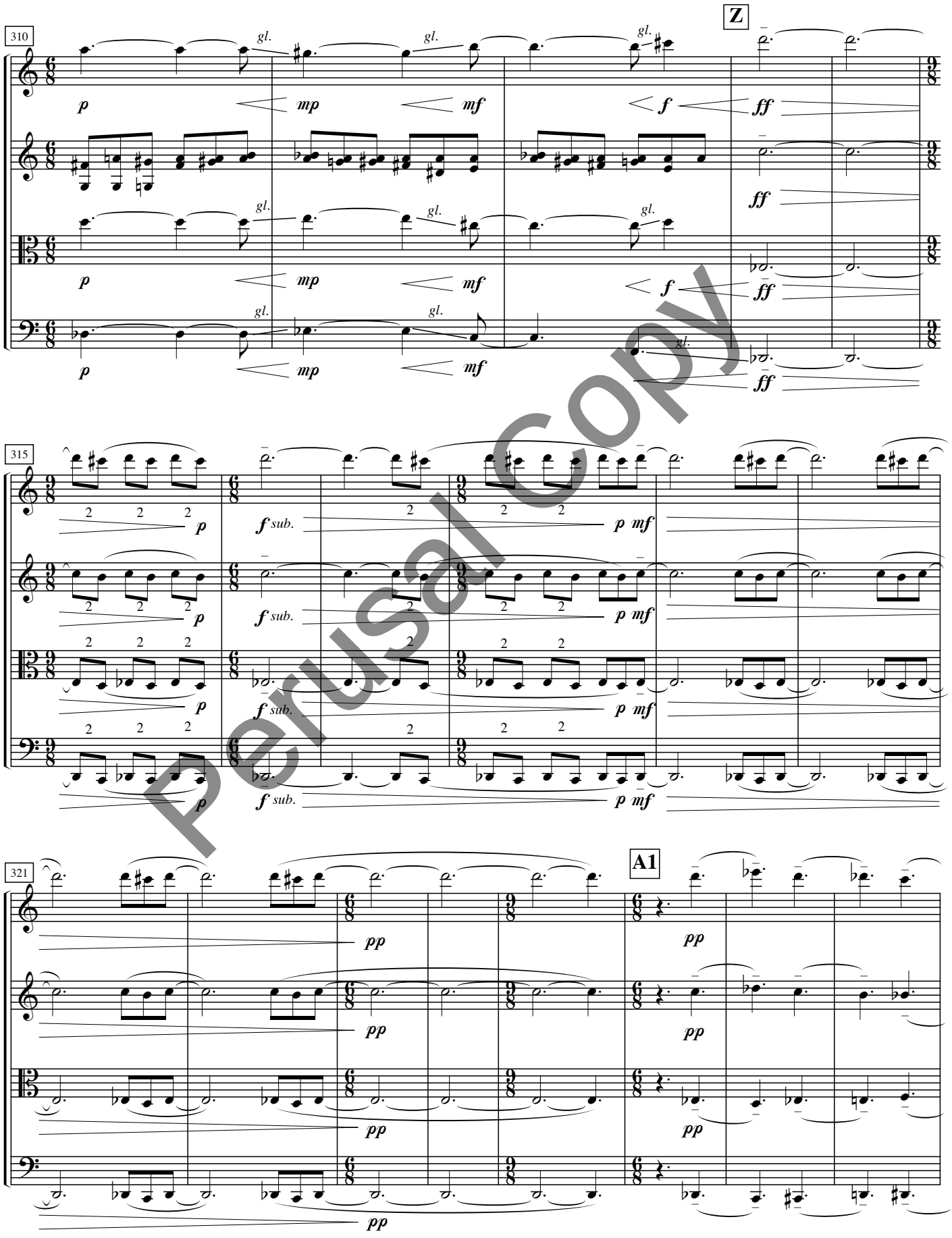


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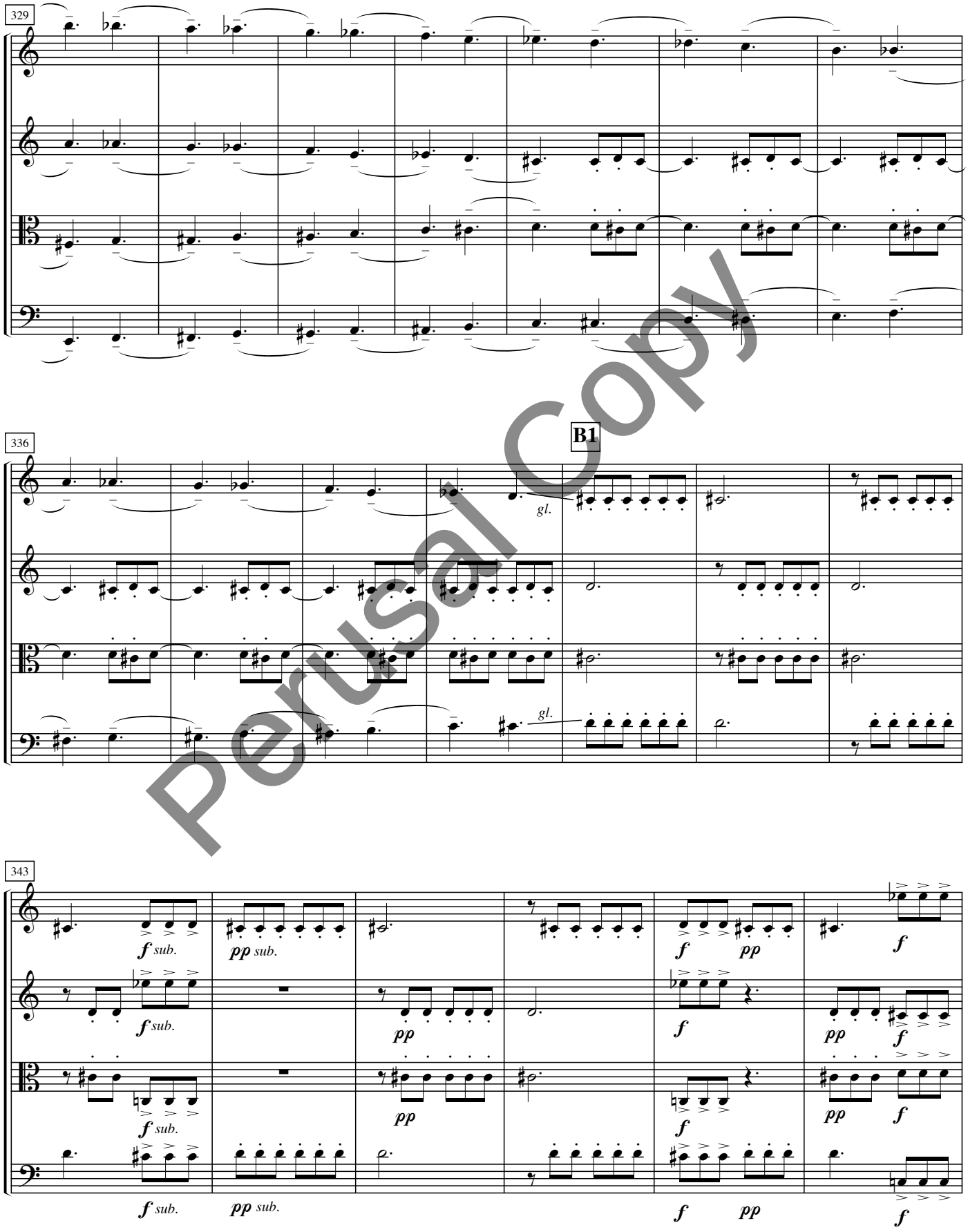


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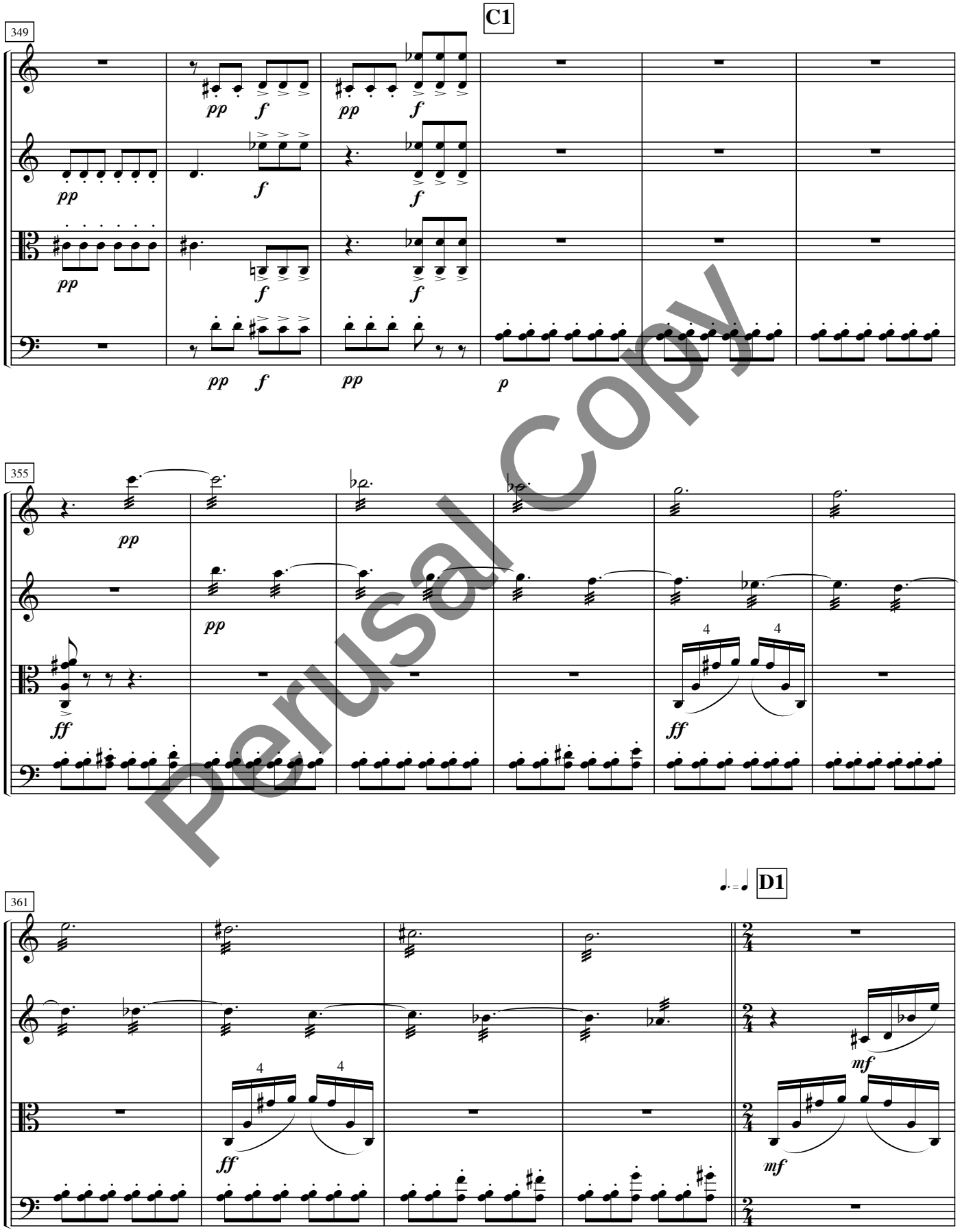


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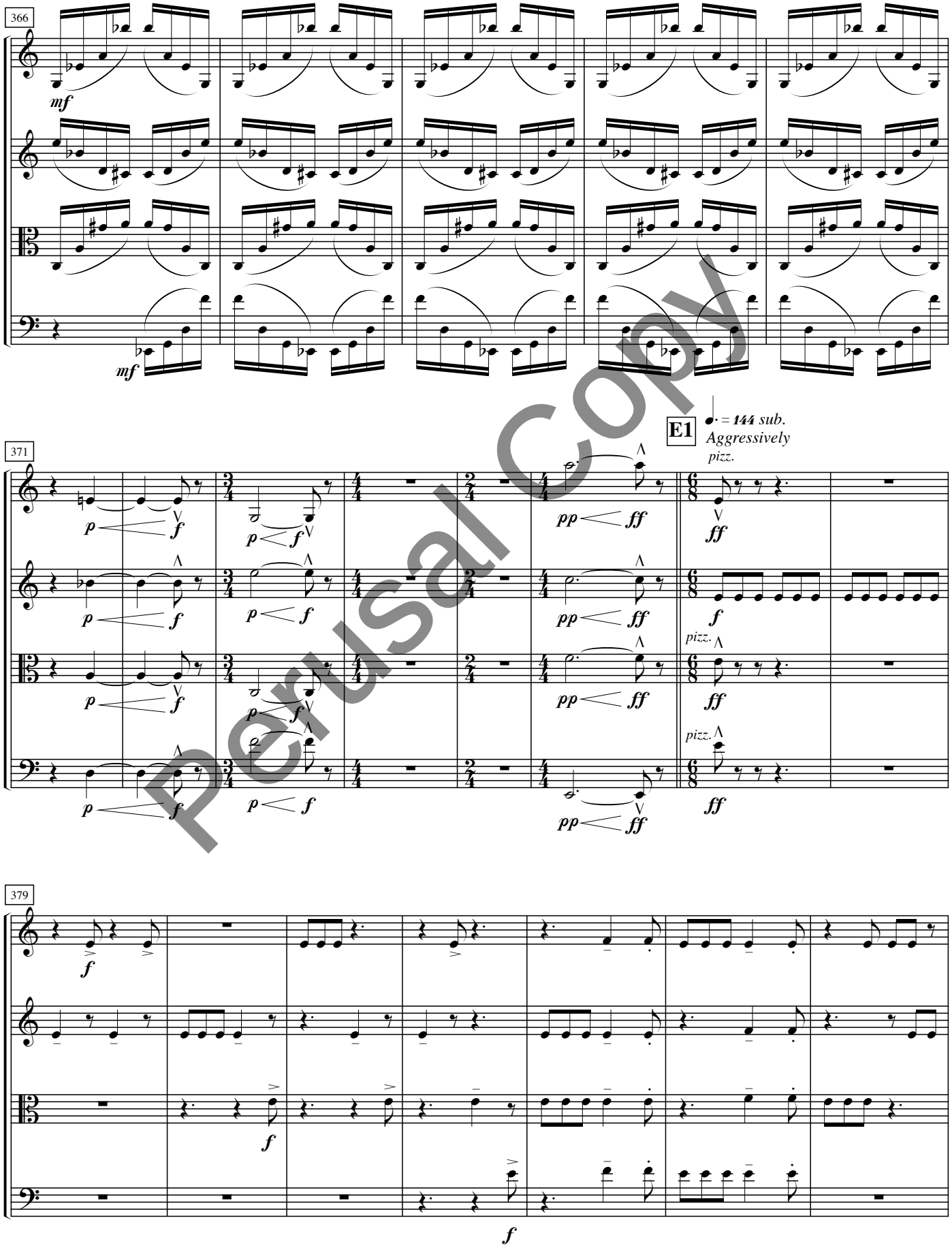


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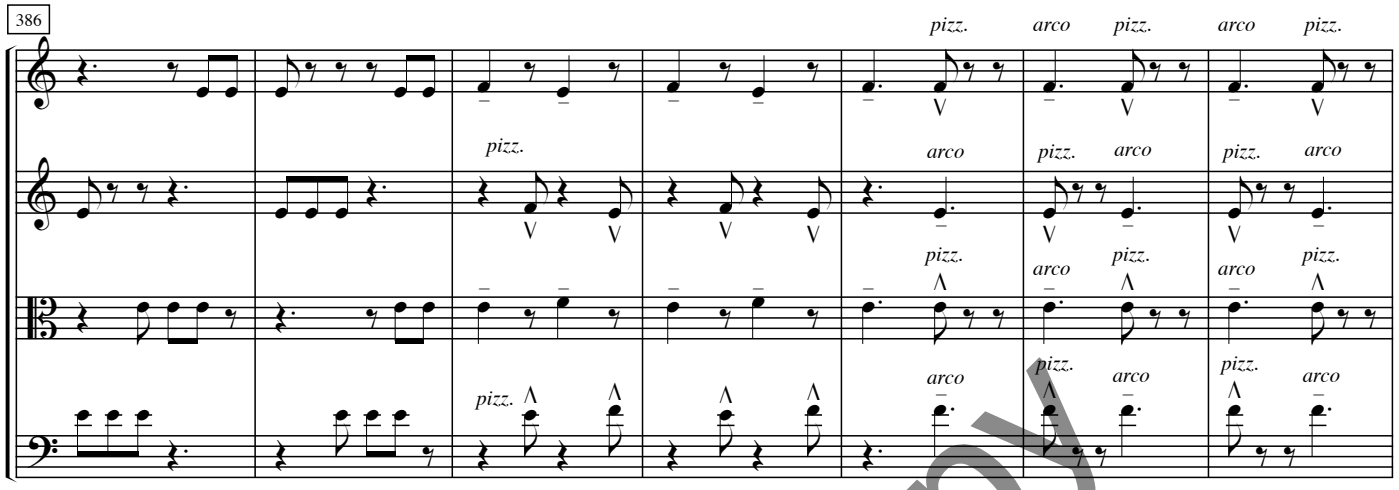


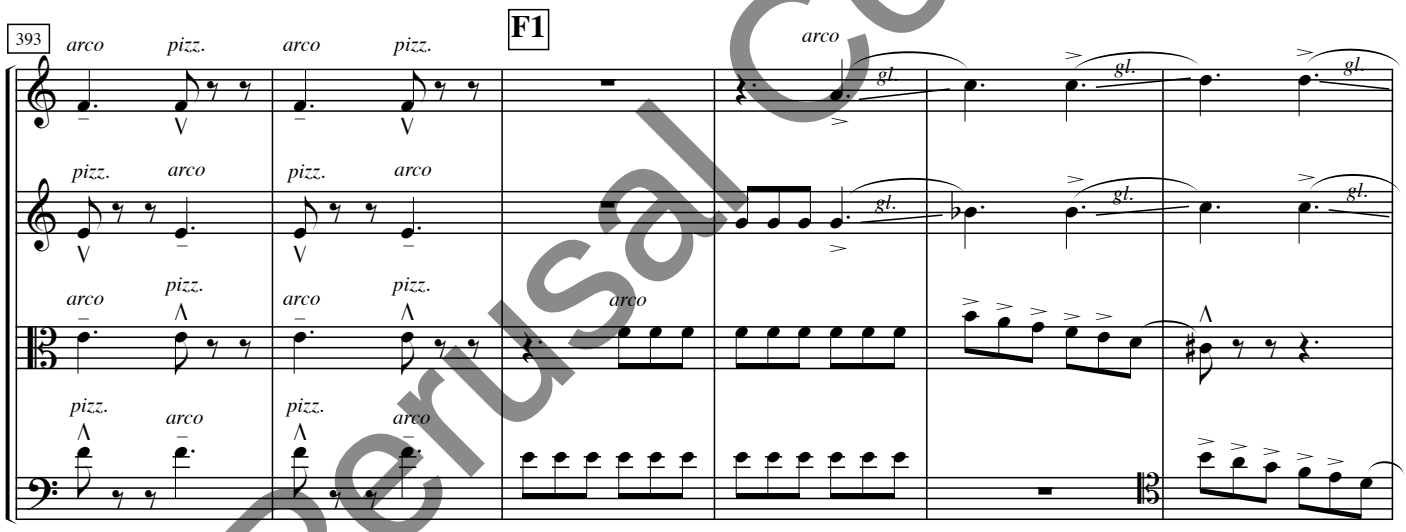


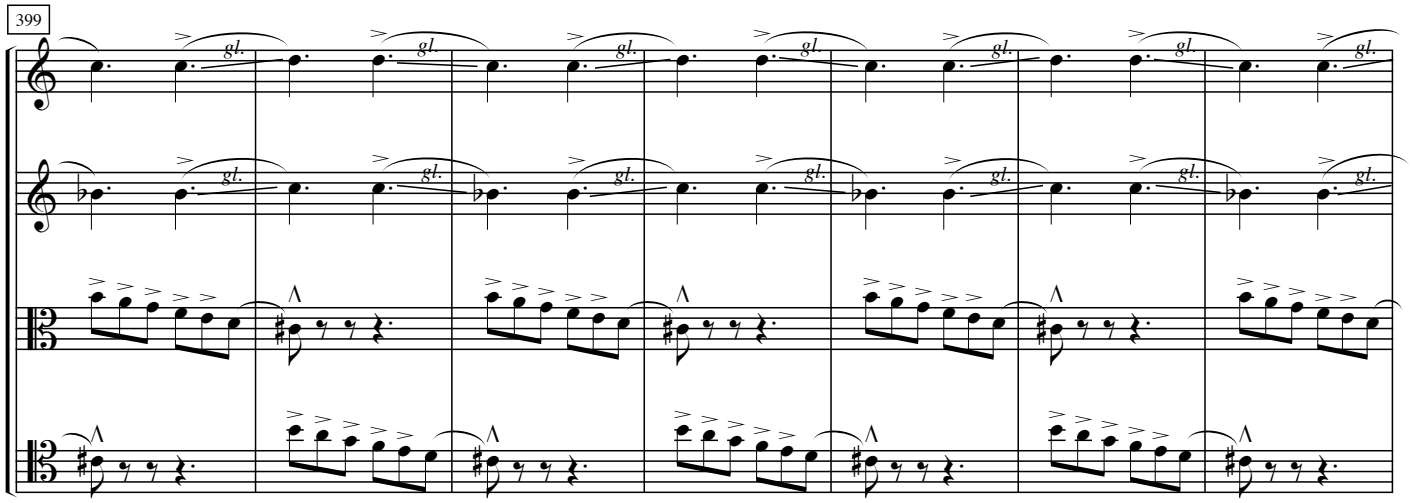


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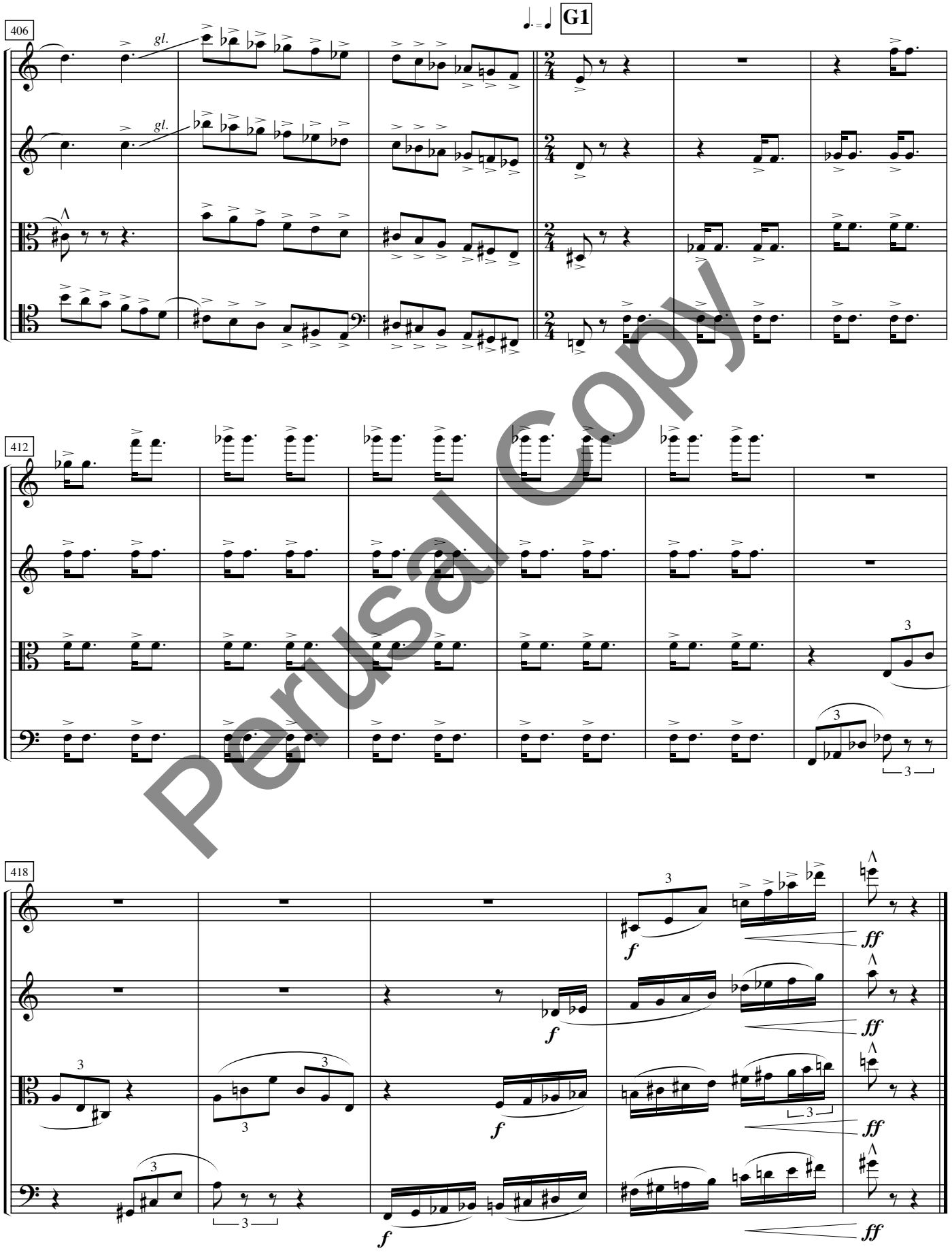


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