Dance Suite

for string orchestra

by

Arthur J. Michaels
(ASCAP)

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GMP4001

Dance Suite
for string orchestra

Arthur J. Michaels

I. Danzetta (2:48) 3

"Danzetta" is an energetic and moderately difficult movement. It features a lively rhythmic and melodic motif, imitative sections, dynamic antiphonal phrases, and contrary motion. This movement is useful for teaching ensemble and musicianship lessons to players with strong intermediate but advancing skills. Nevertheless, its nuances make it challenging and effective for more experienced string orchestras.

II. St. Thomas Excursion (3:42) . . 11

"St. Thomas Excursion" depicts a pleasant open-air safari ride on the narrow, steep and curvy roads of St. Thomas, in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The bumpy road feeling and dancelike air contrast with the island's many overlooks with their breathtaking landscape vistas and water views.

III. Terpsichore's Dance (2:39) . . 21

"Terpsichore's Dance" is a spirited, moderately difficult movement with animated rhythmic and melodic motifs, imitative antiphonal sections, contrary motion, a bluesy section, and driving rhythms. Terpsichore is one of nine Muses in Greek mythology, ruling over dance and the dramatic chorus. This ballet is imagined as something that Terpsichore herself might have performed.

Rehearsal Notes 30

Arthur J. Michaels earned a bachelor of music degree in music education from the Eastman School of Music and a master of arts degree in teaching from Teachers College, Columbia University. He has taught instrumental music in grades 4 through 12 in New York and in New Jersey. His concert band and string orchestra works have won contest awards and were selected in competition for performances. His published works include music for concert band, chorus, string orchestra, and instrumental ensembles. He is a member of the National Association for Music Education, the Florida Music Educators Association, and ASCAP.

Other works by Arthur J. Michaels

Divertimento for Wind Quintet

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Dedicated to the Symphoria Youth String Orchestra, conducted by Rebecca Dodd

Dance Suite

for string orchestra

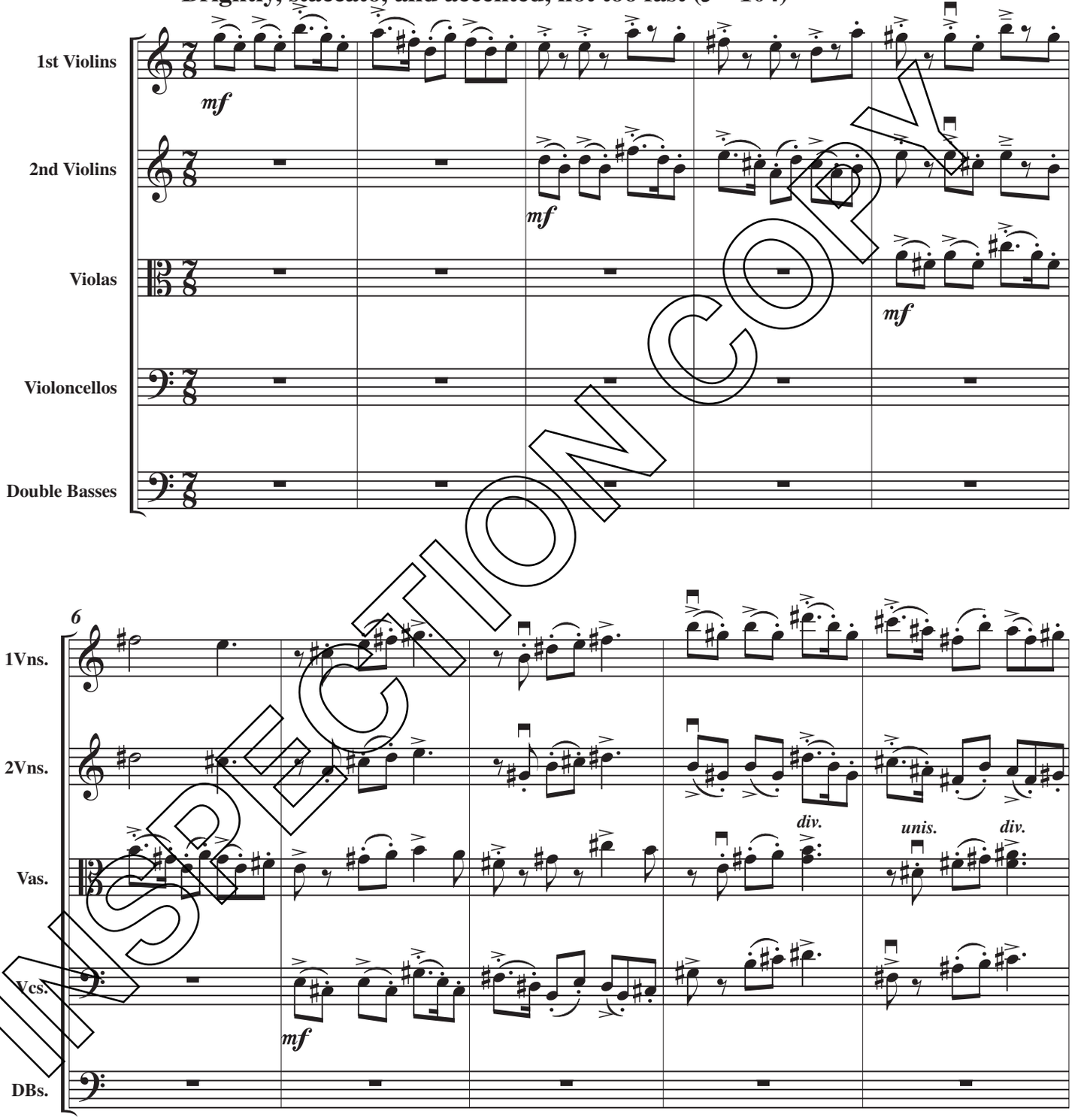
Score

Arthur J. Michaels
(ASCAP)

I. Danzetta

an energetic, playful dance

Brightly, staccato, and accented, not too fast (♩ = 104)



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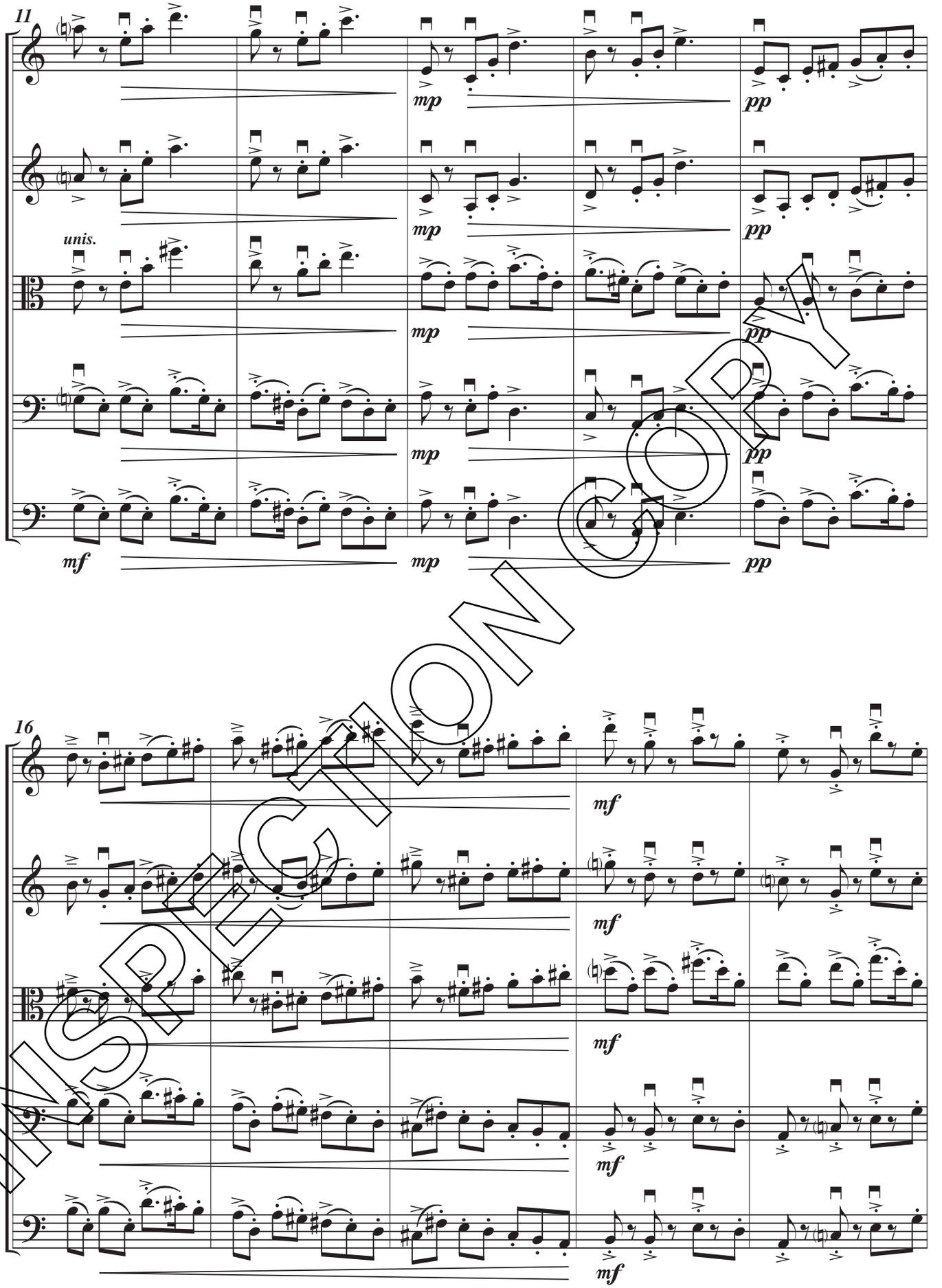

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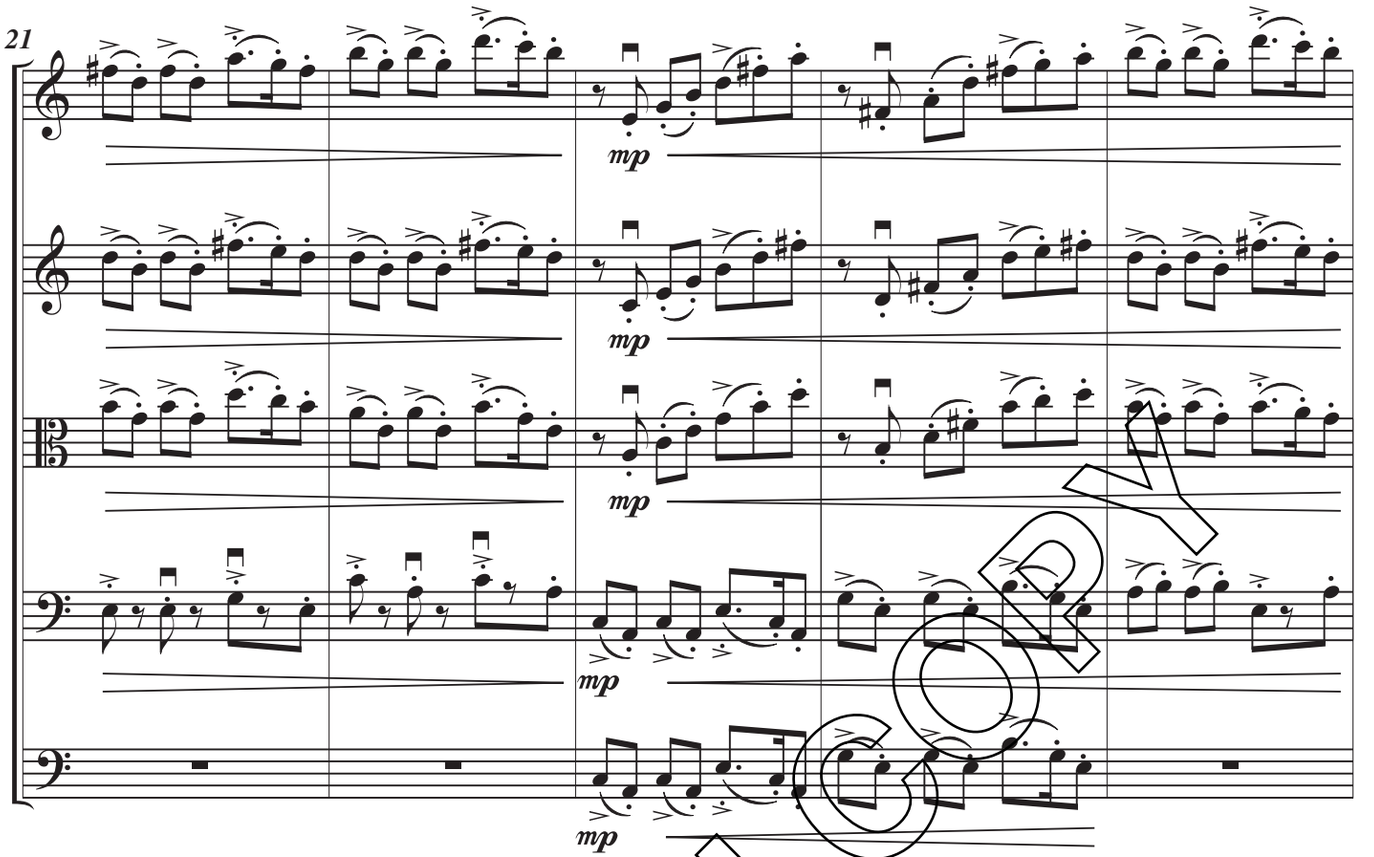

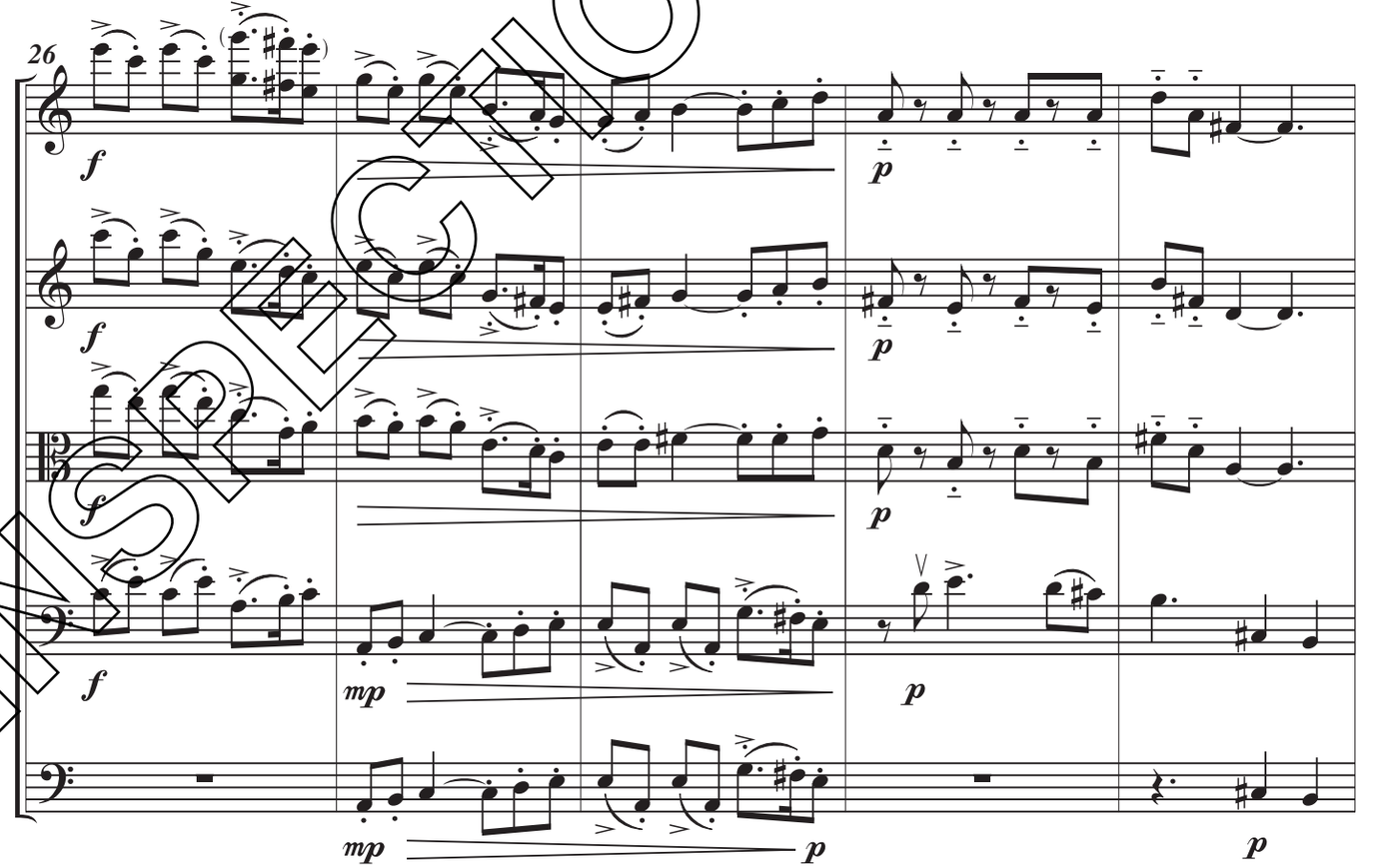

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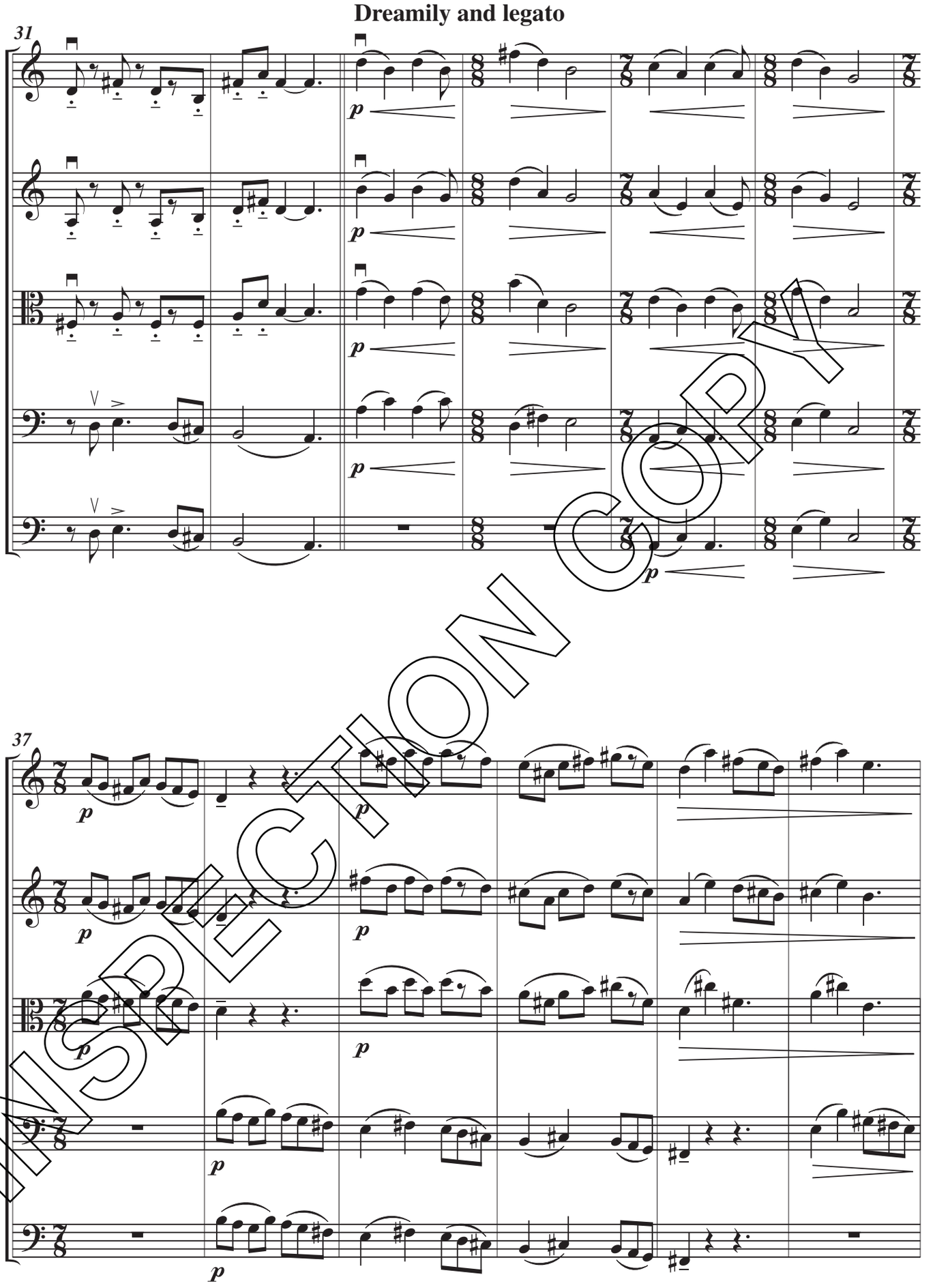

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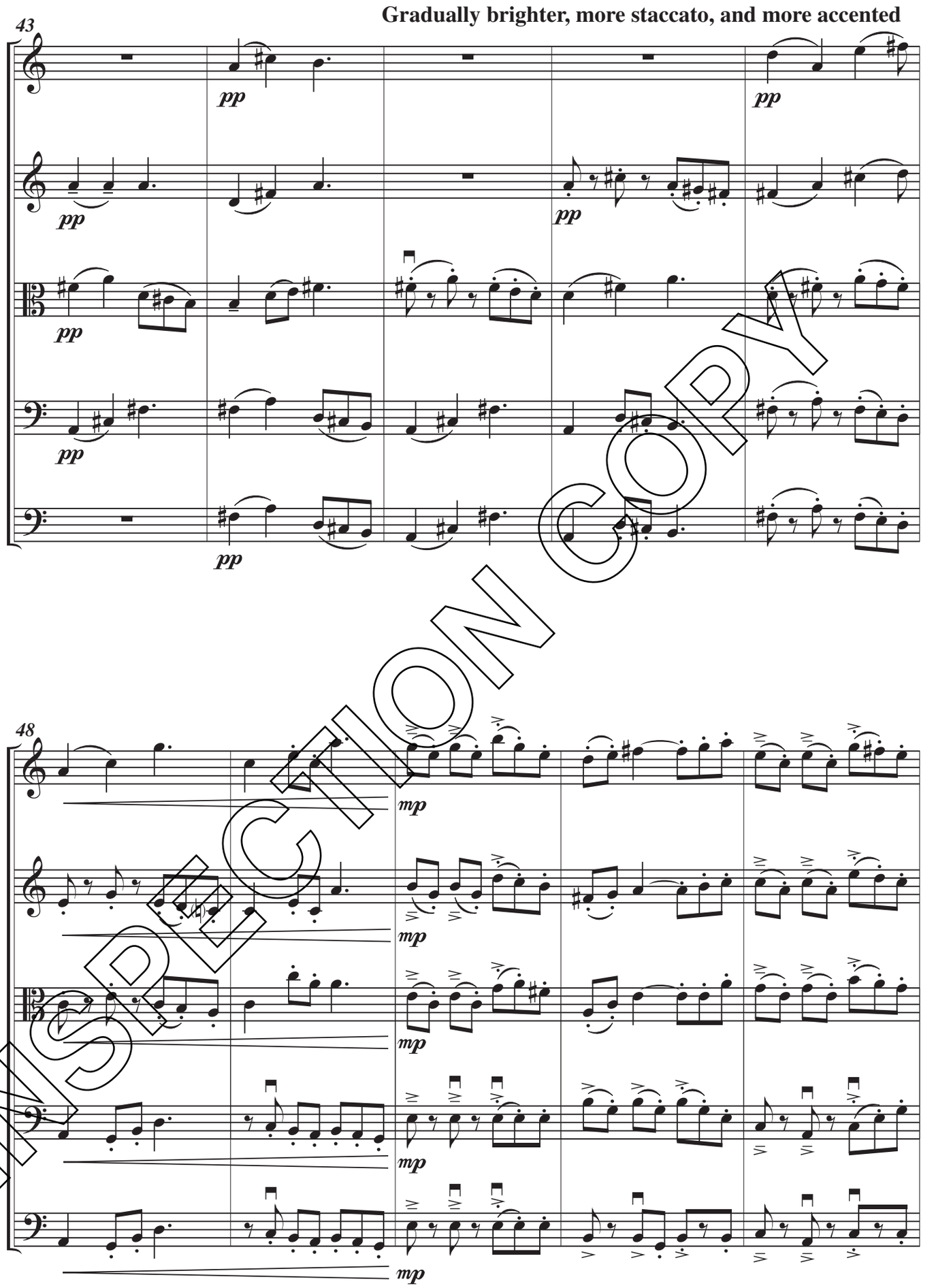

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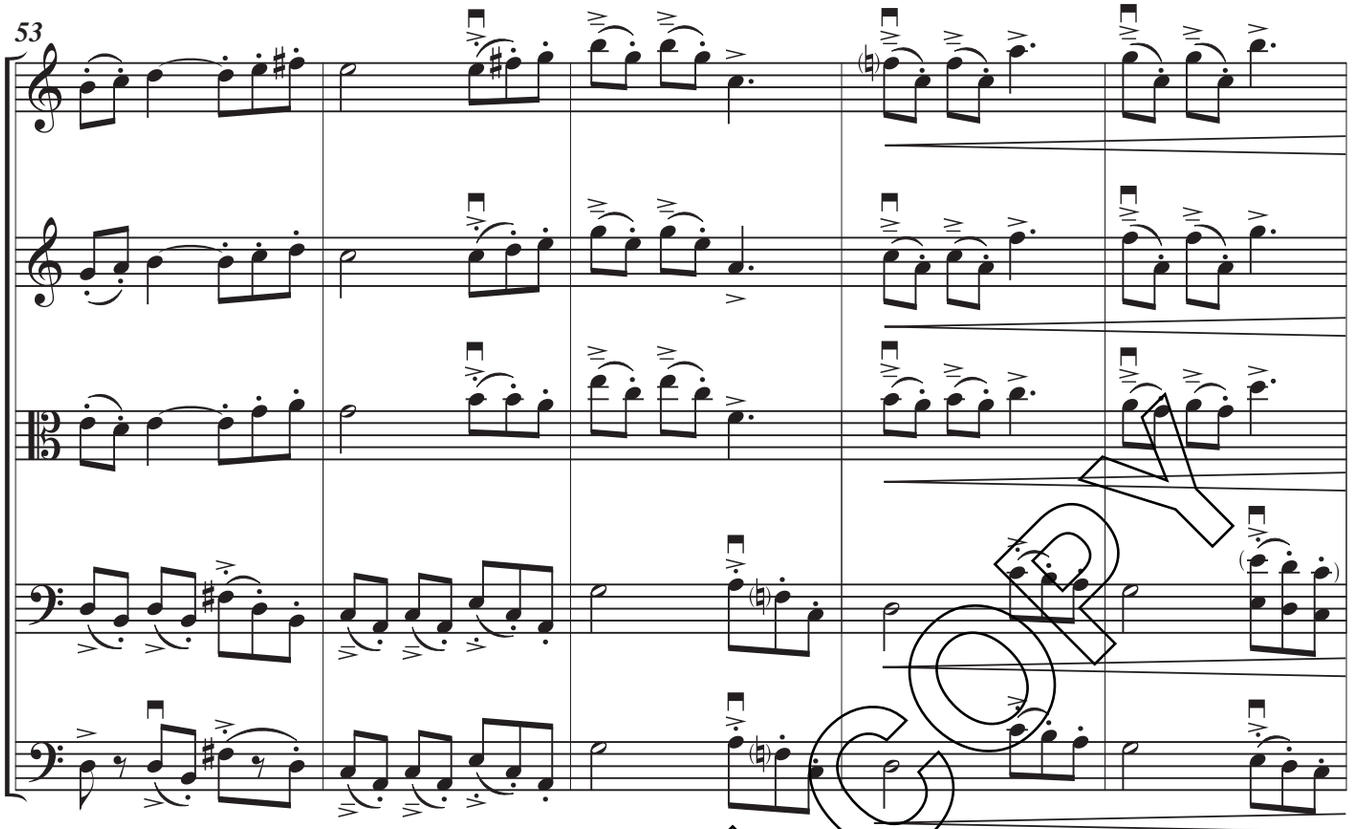
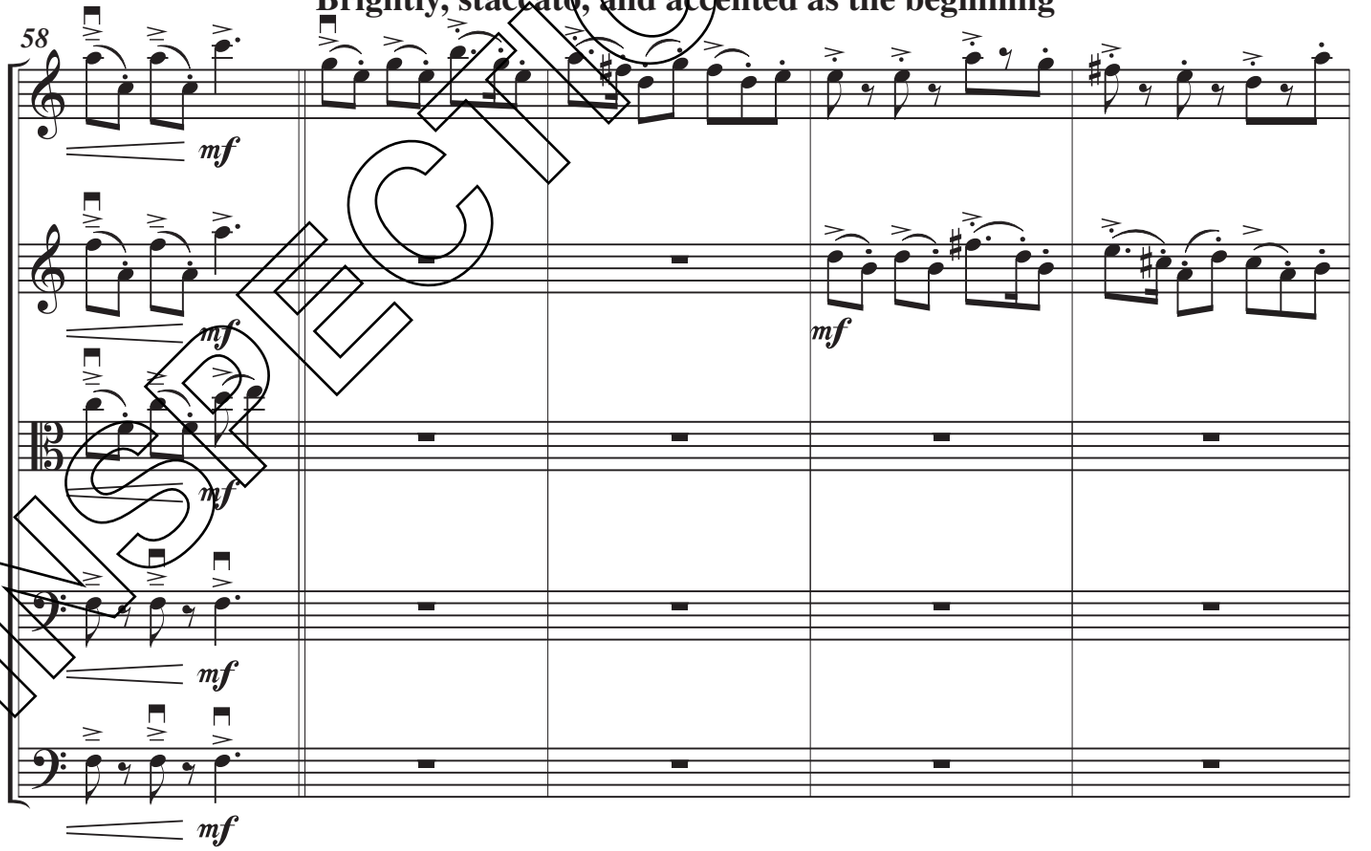


Brightly, staccato, and accented as the beginning



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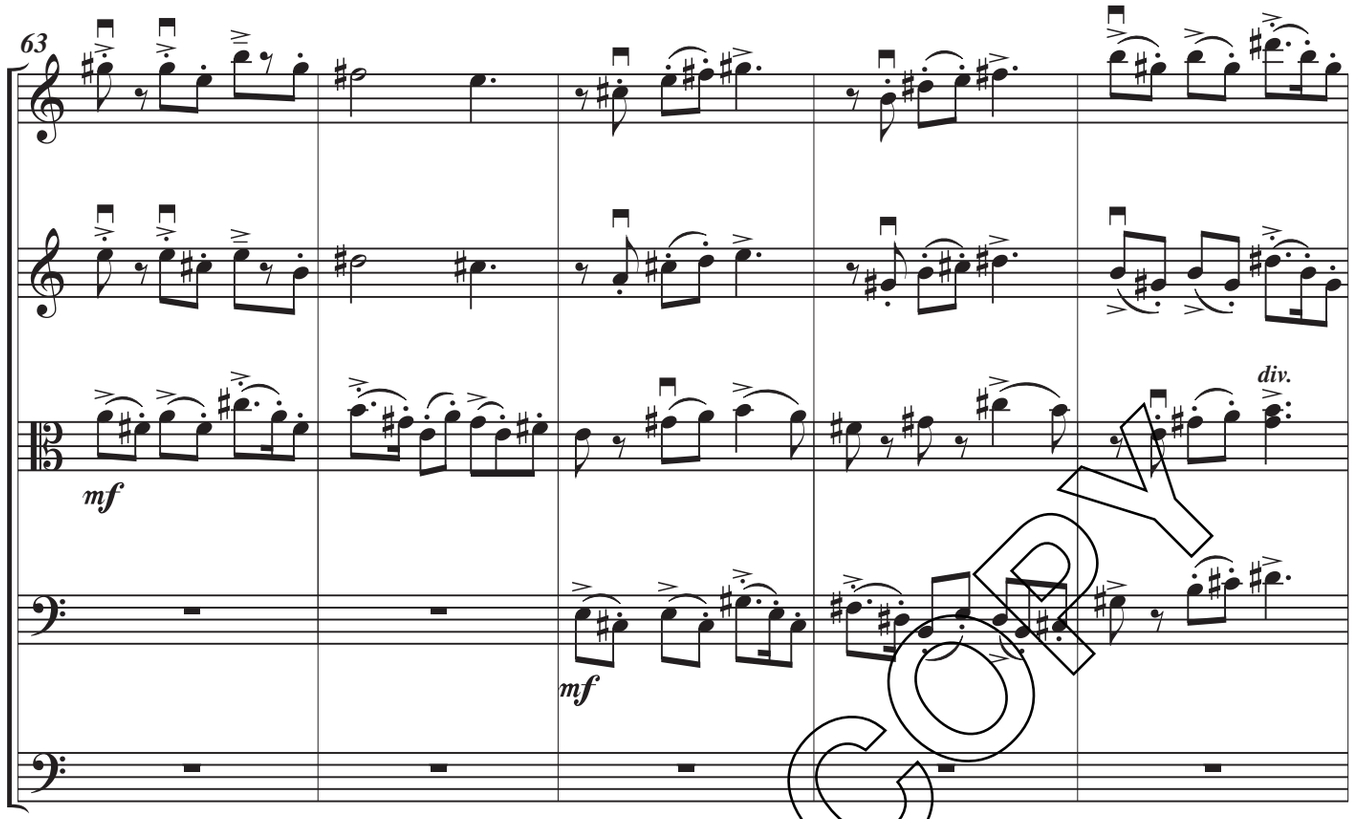

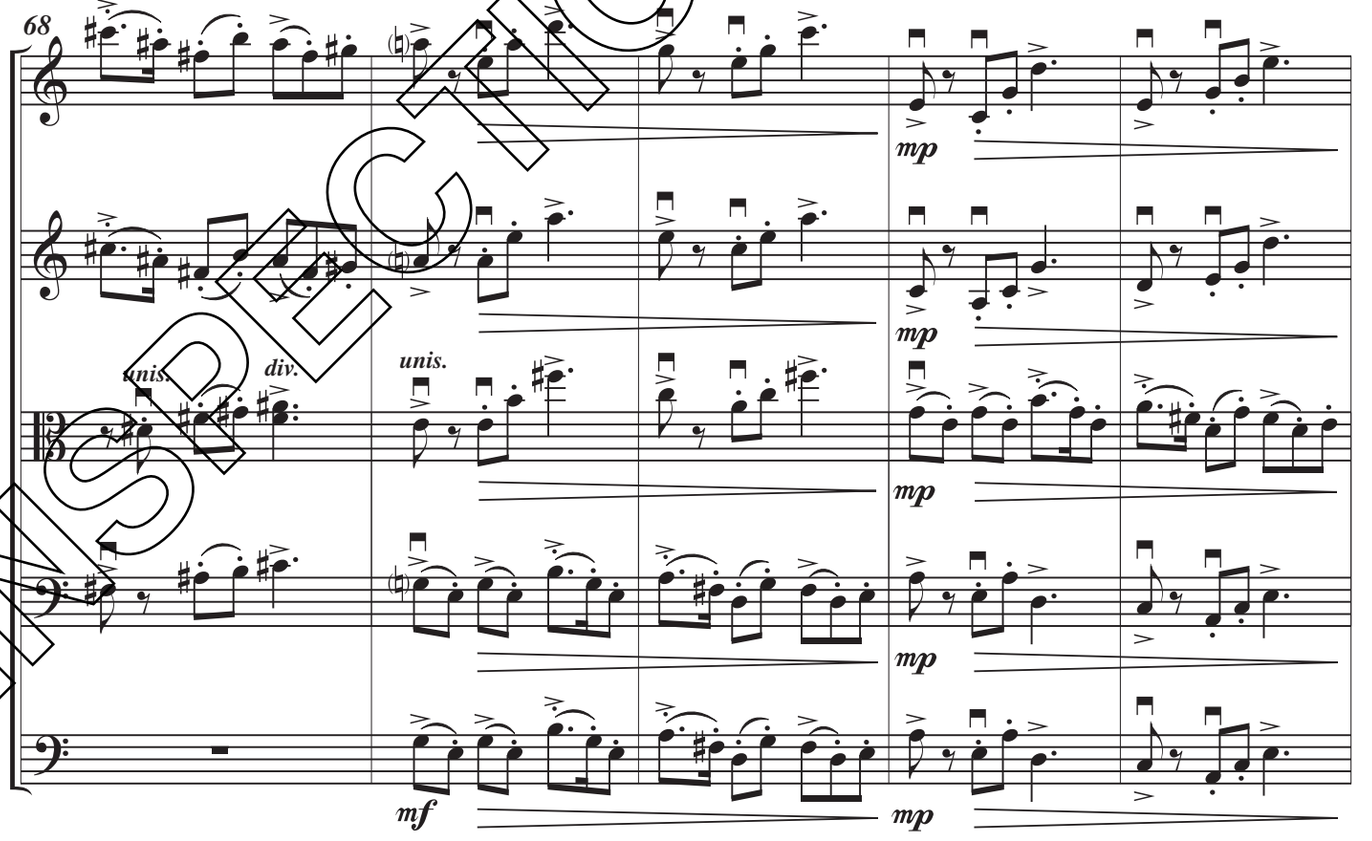

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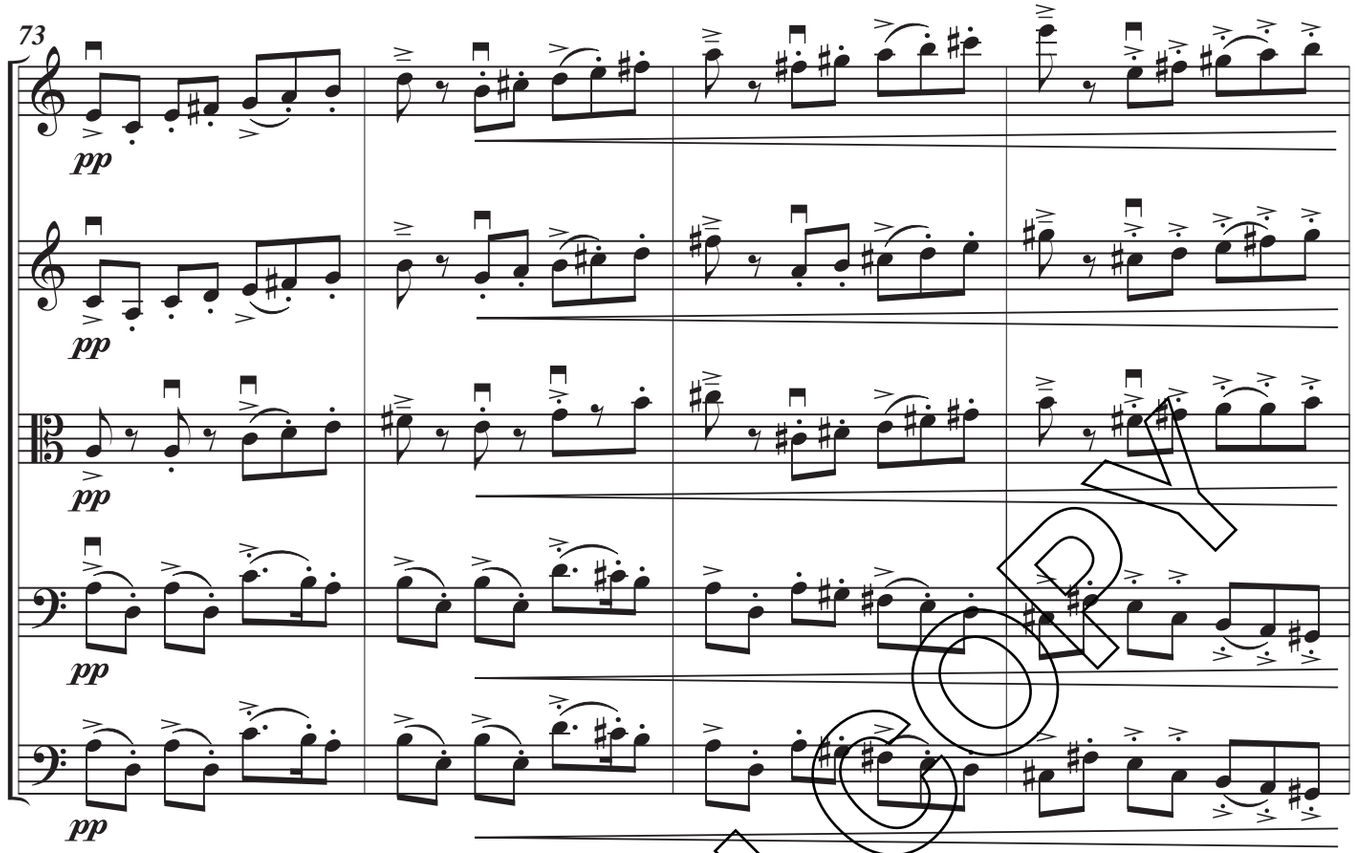

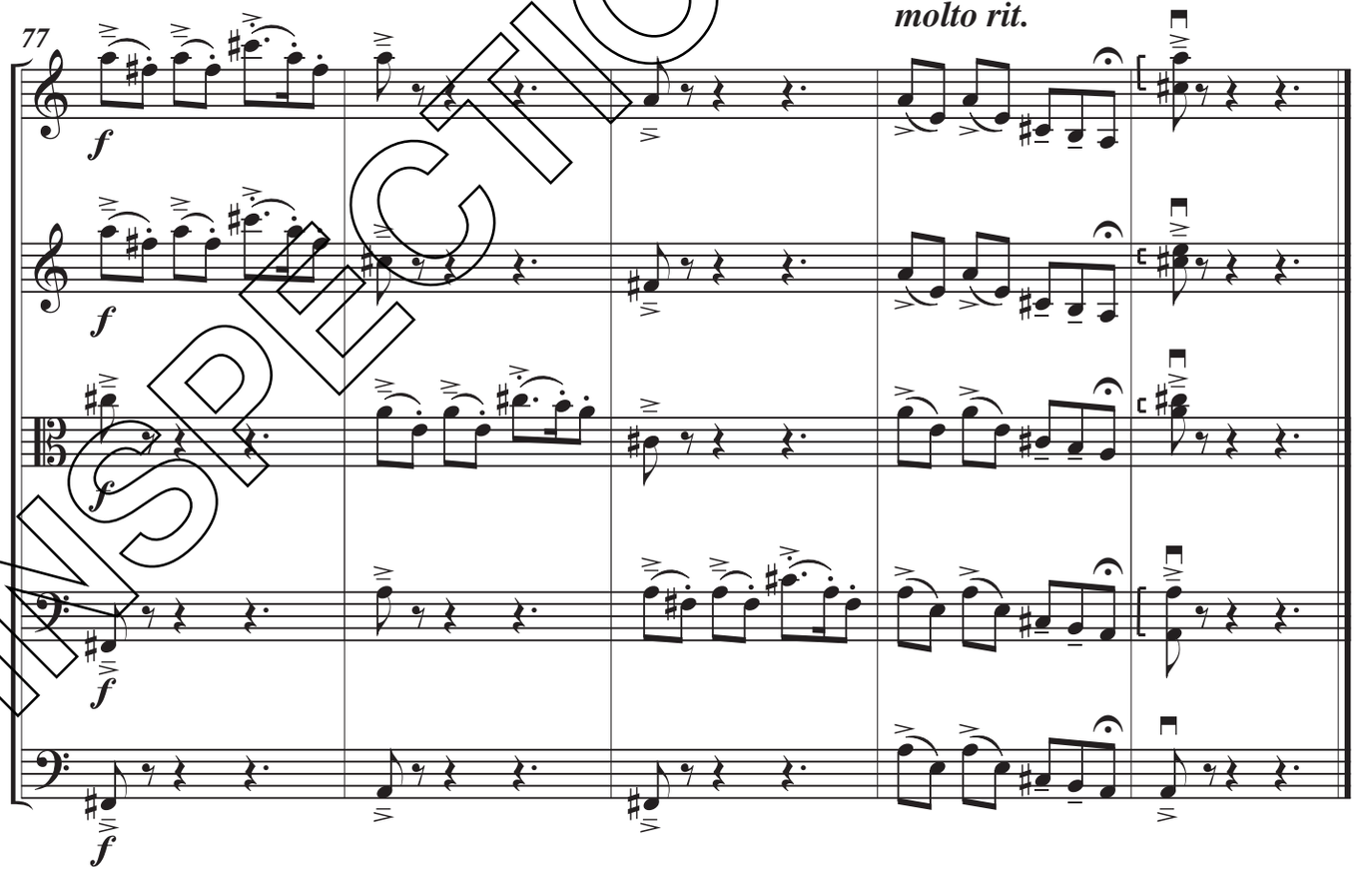

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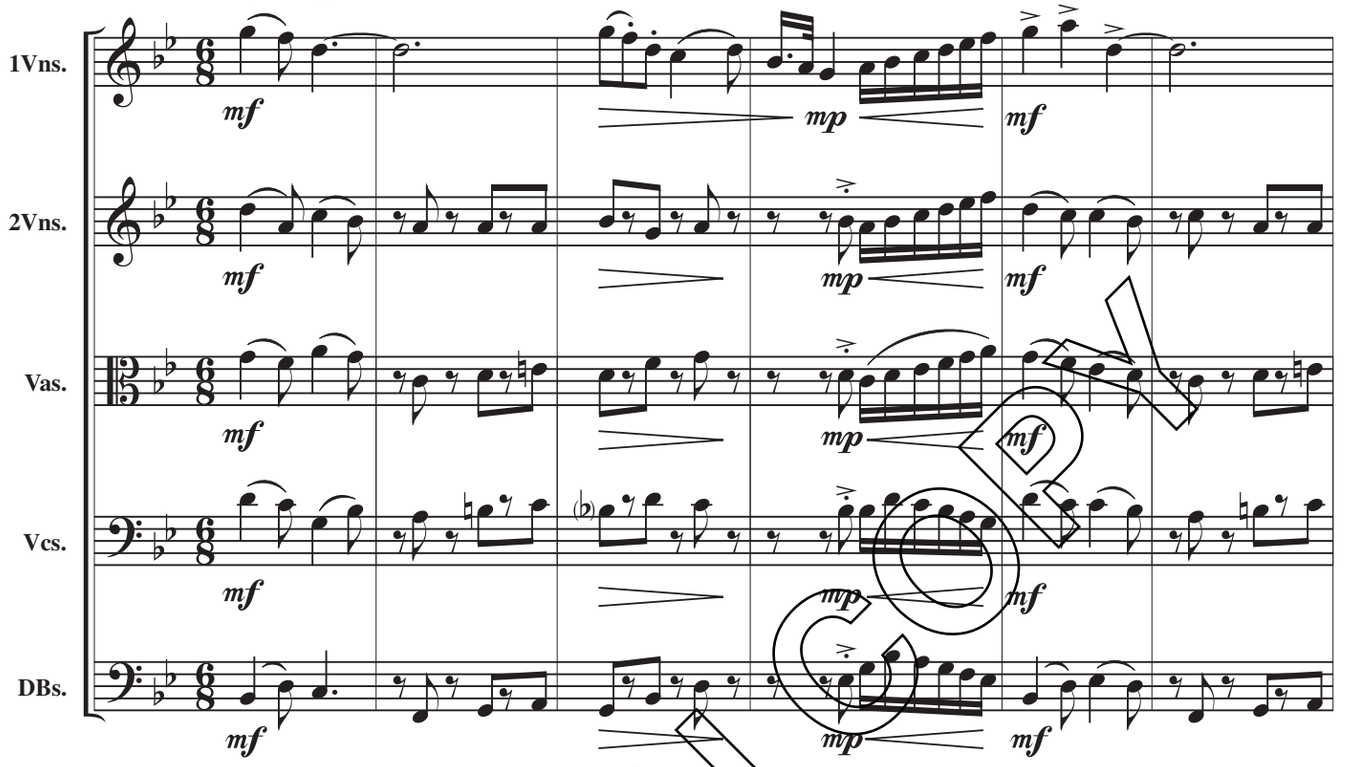
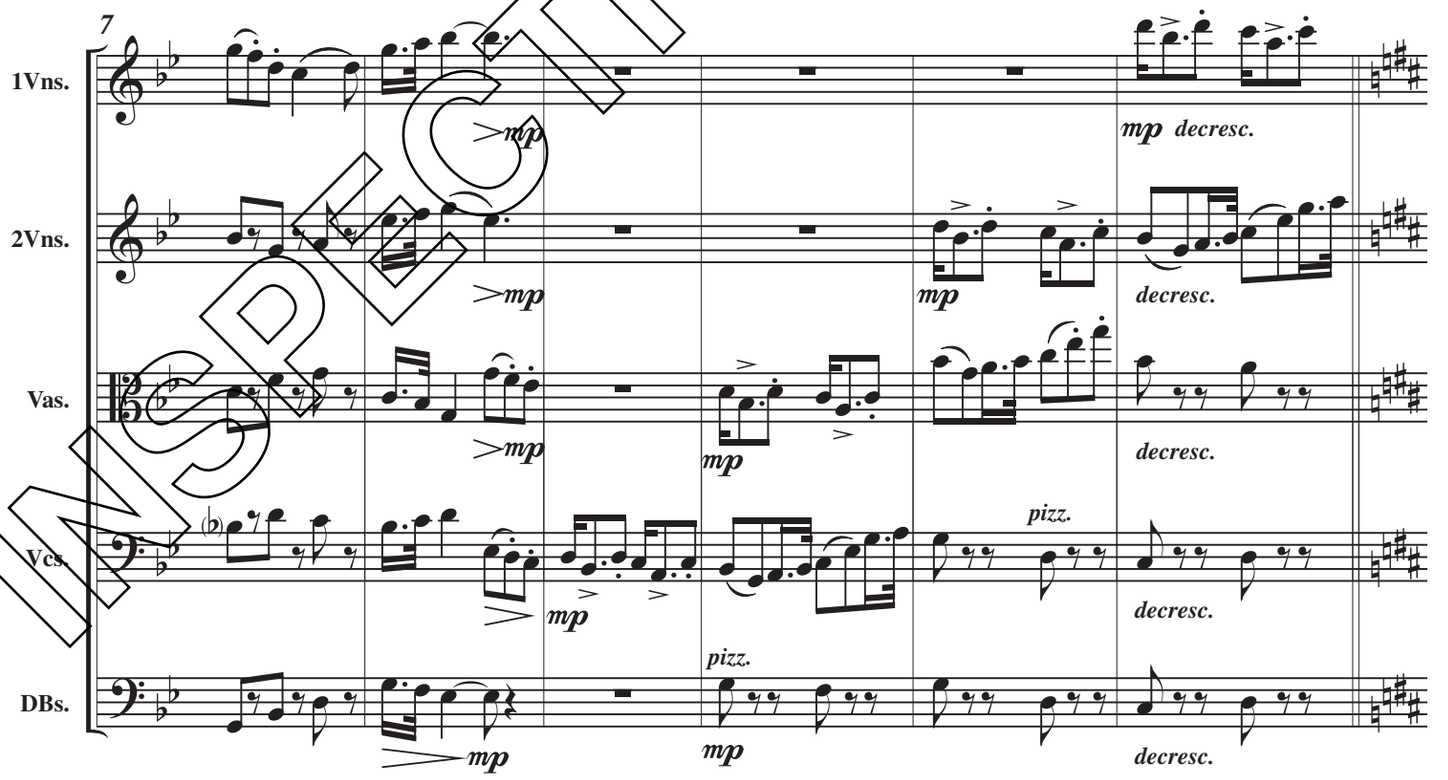
II. St. Thomas Excursion

a syncopated dancelike outing on narrow, steep, and curvy roads

Playfully, not too fast (♩. = 66)





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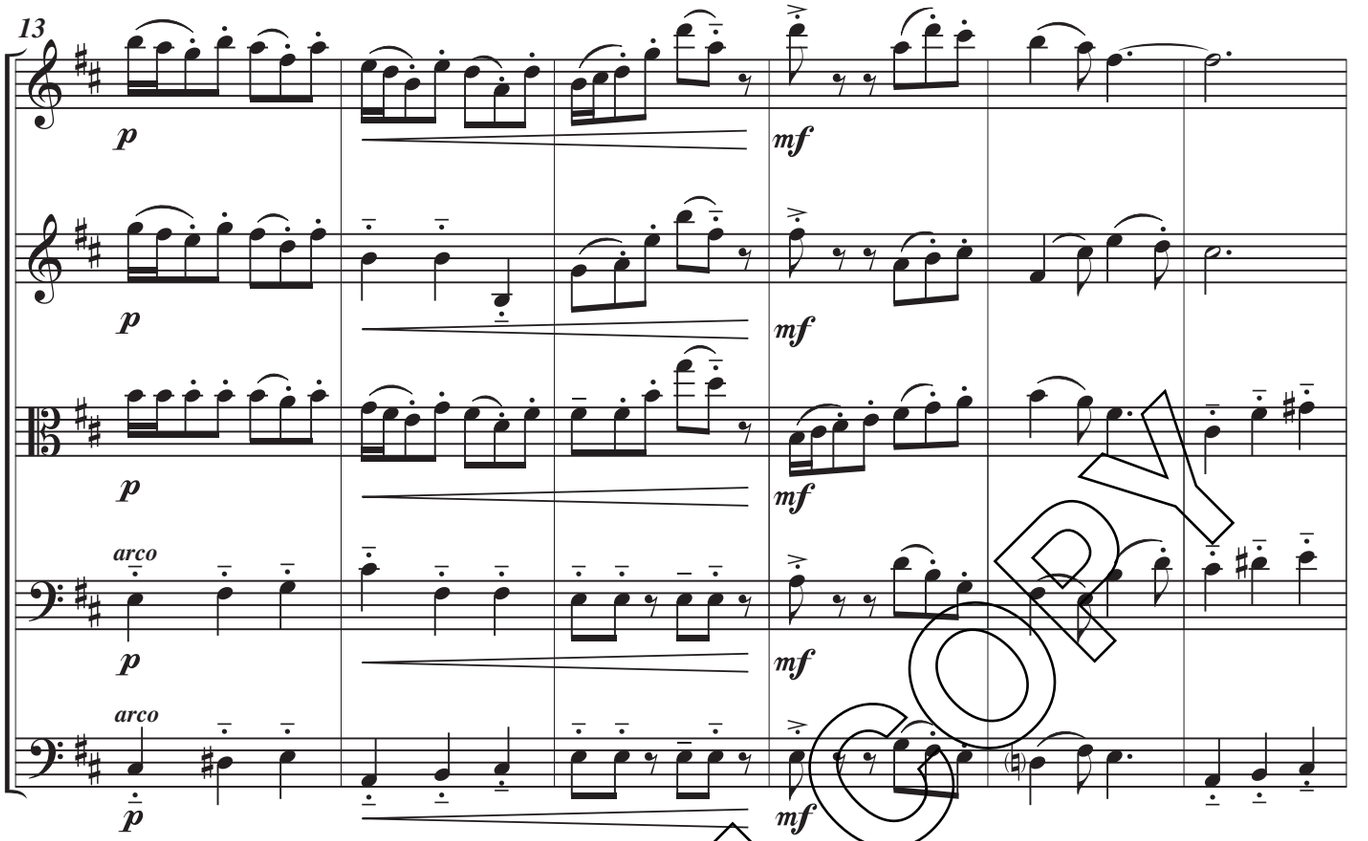

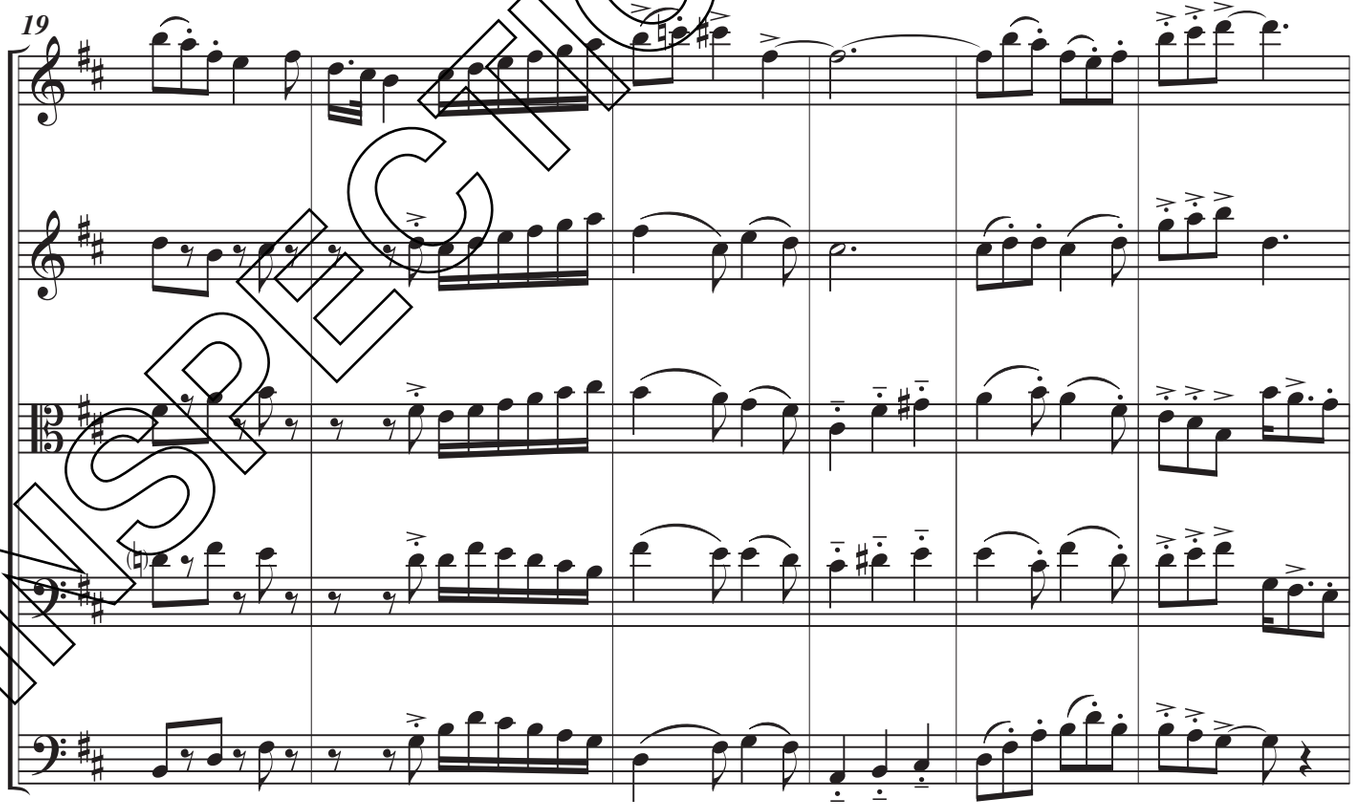

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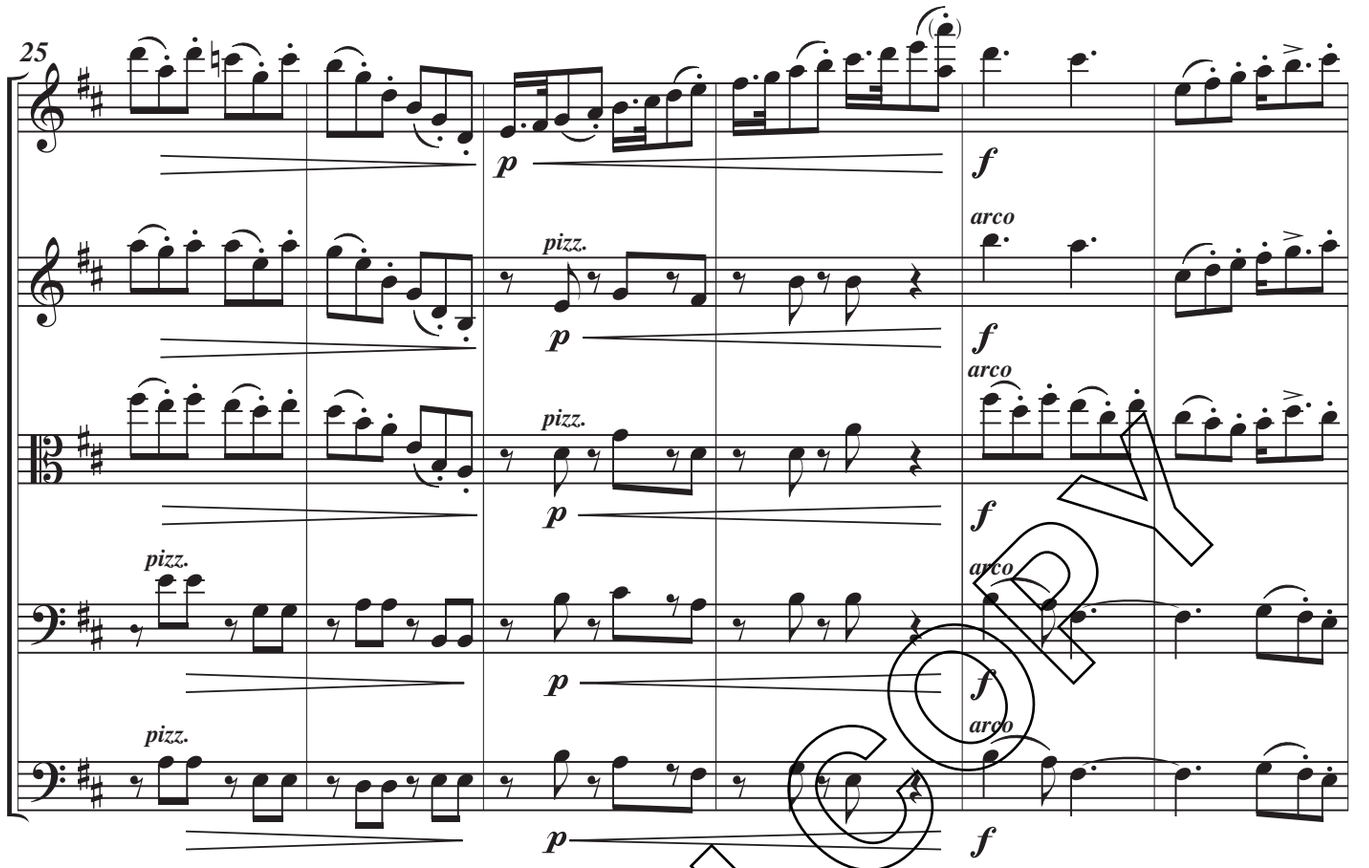

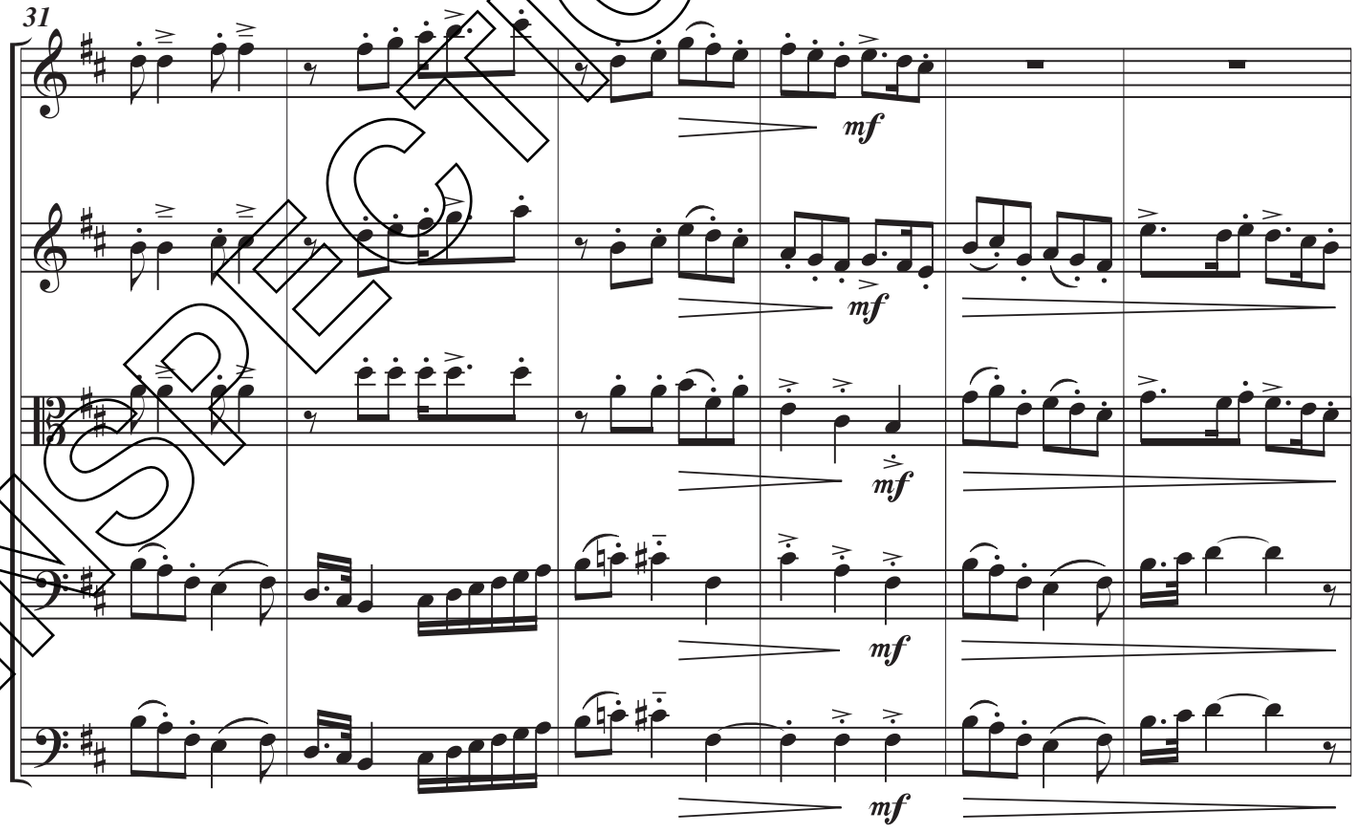

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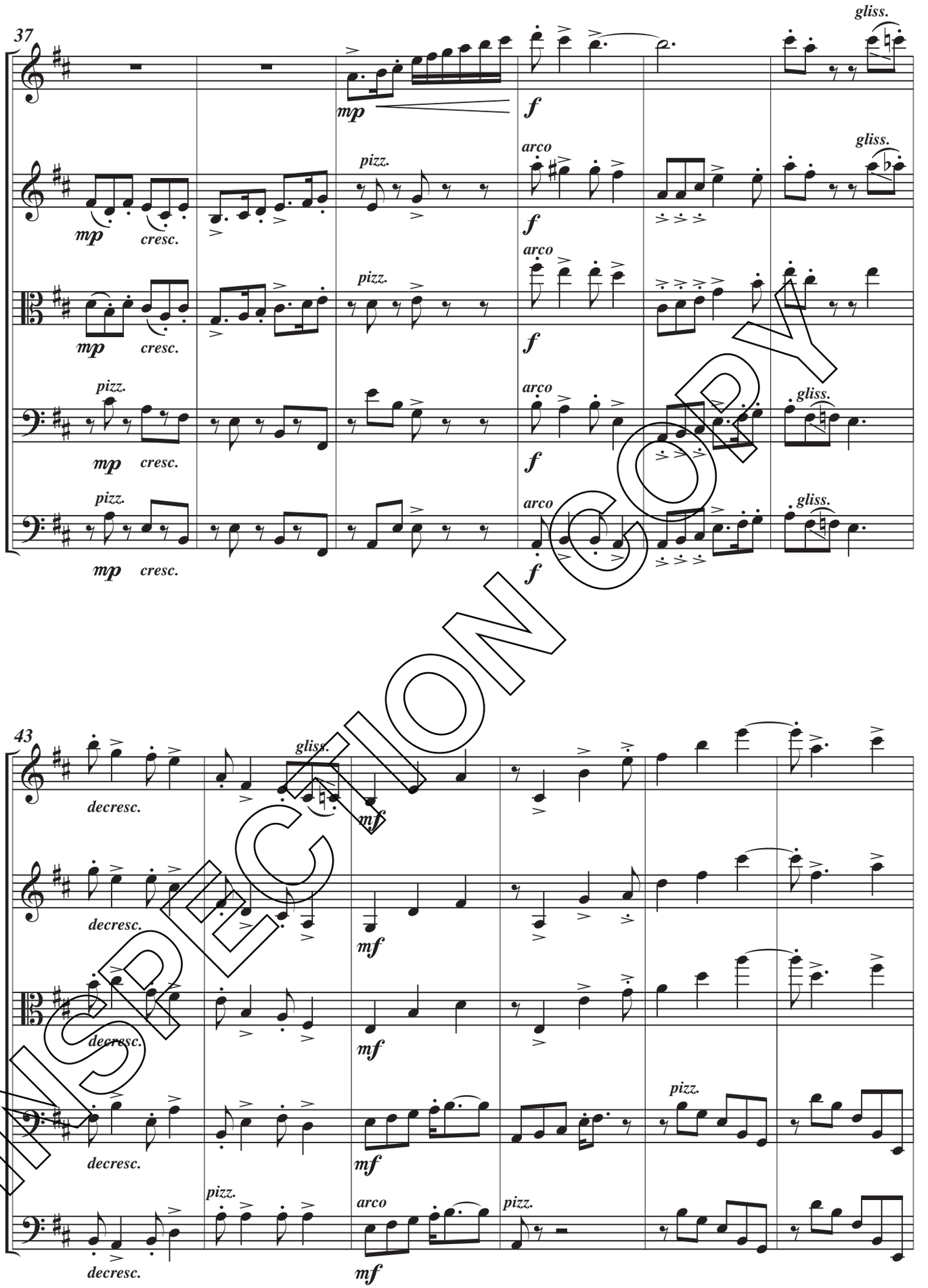

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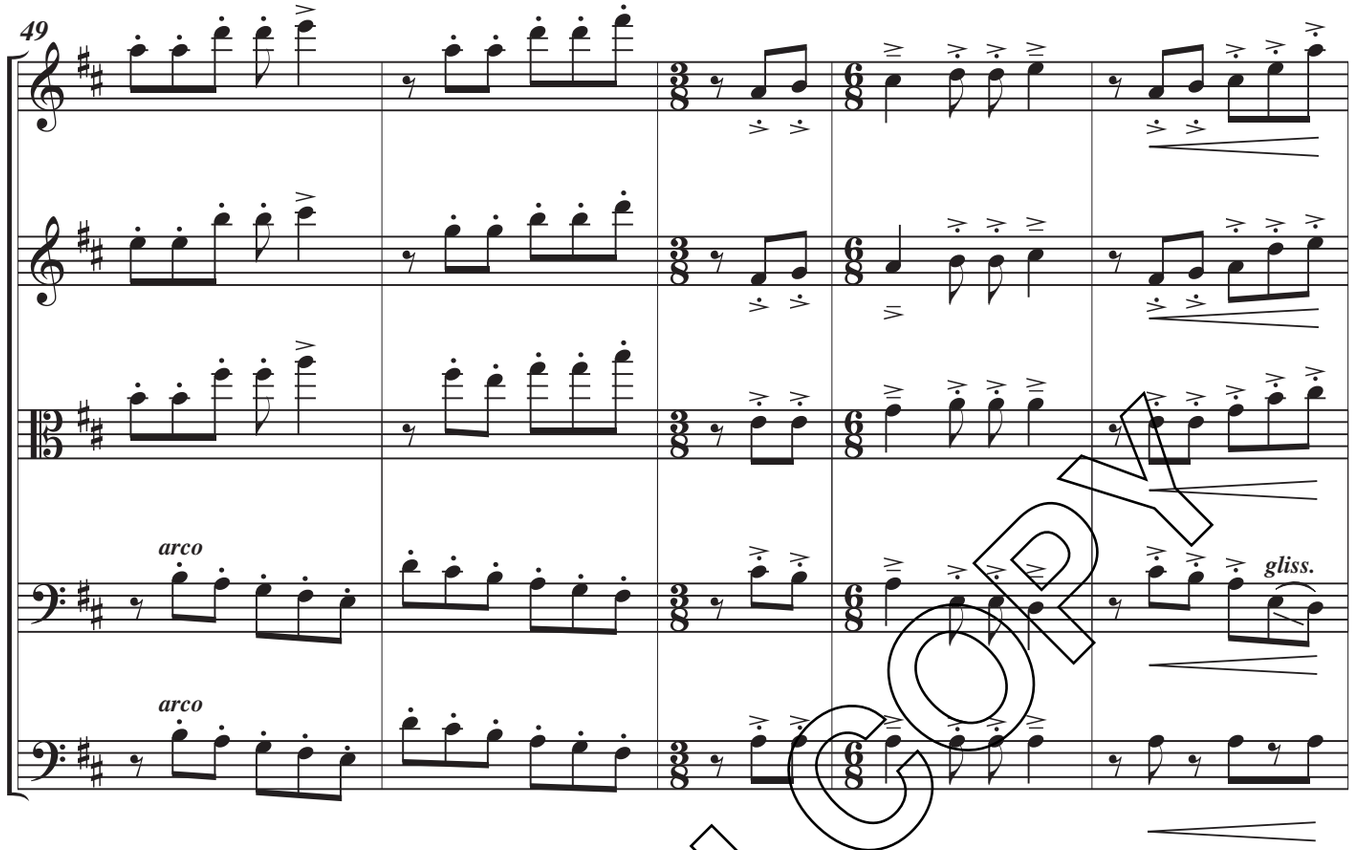

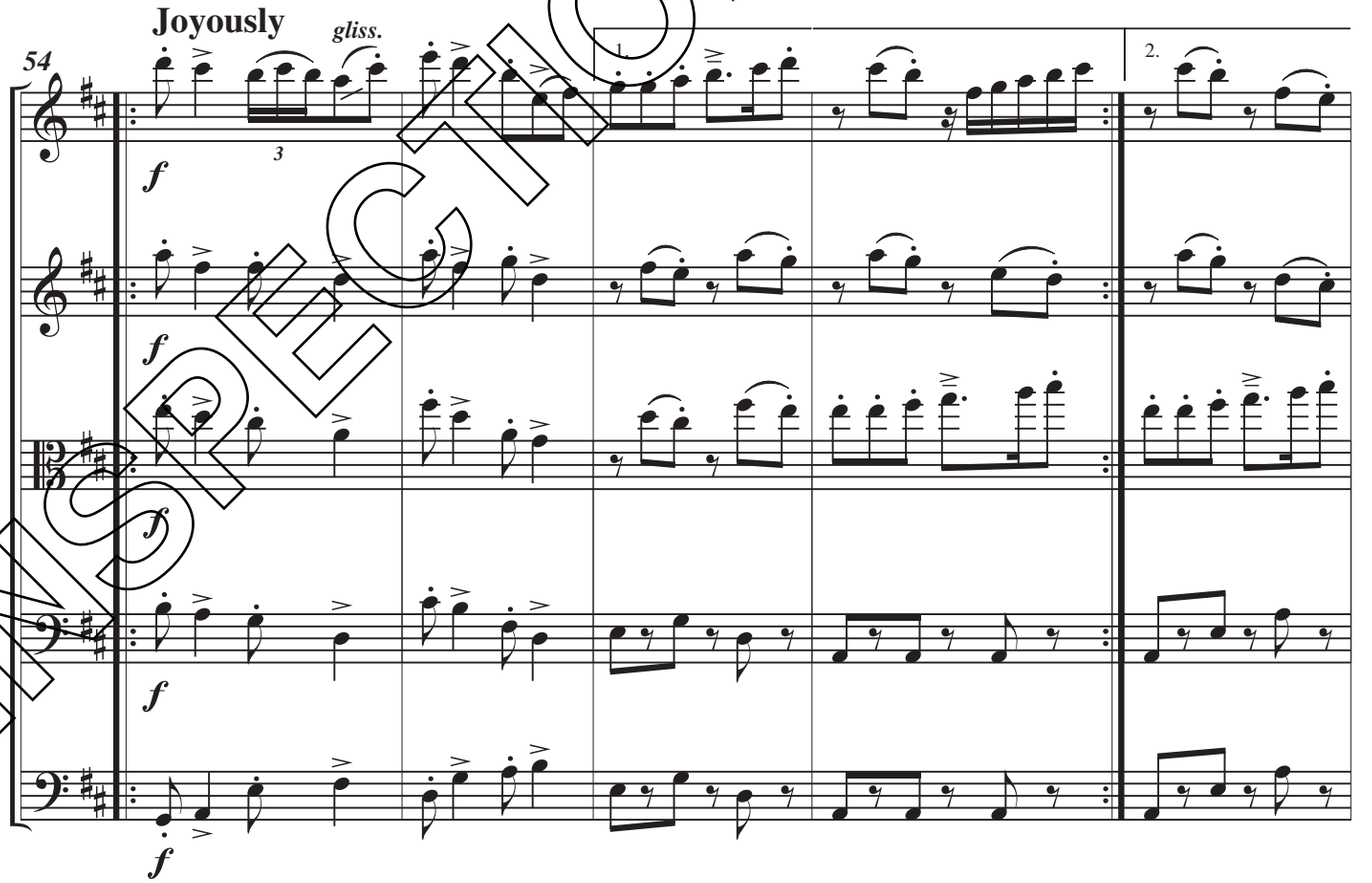

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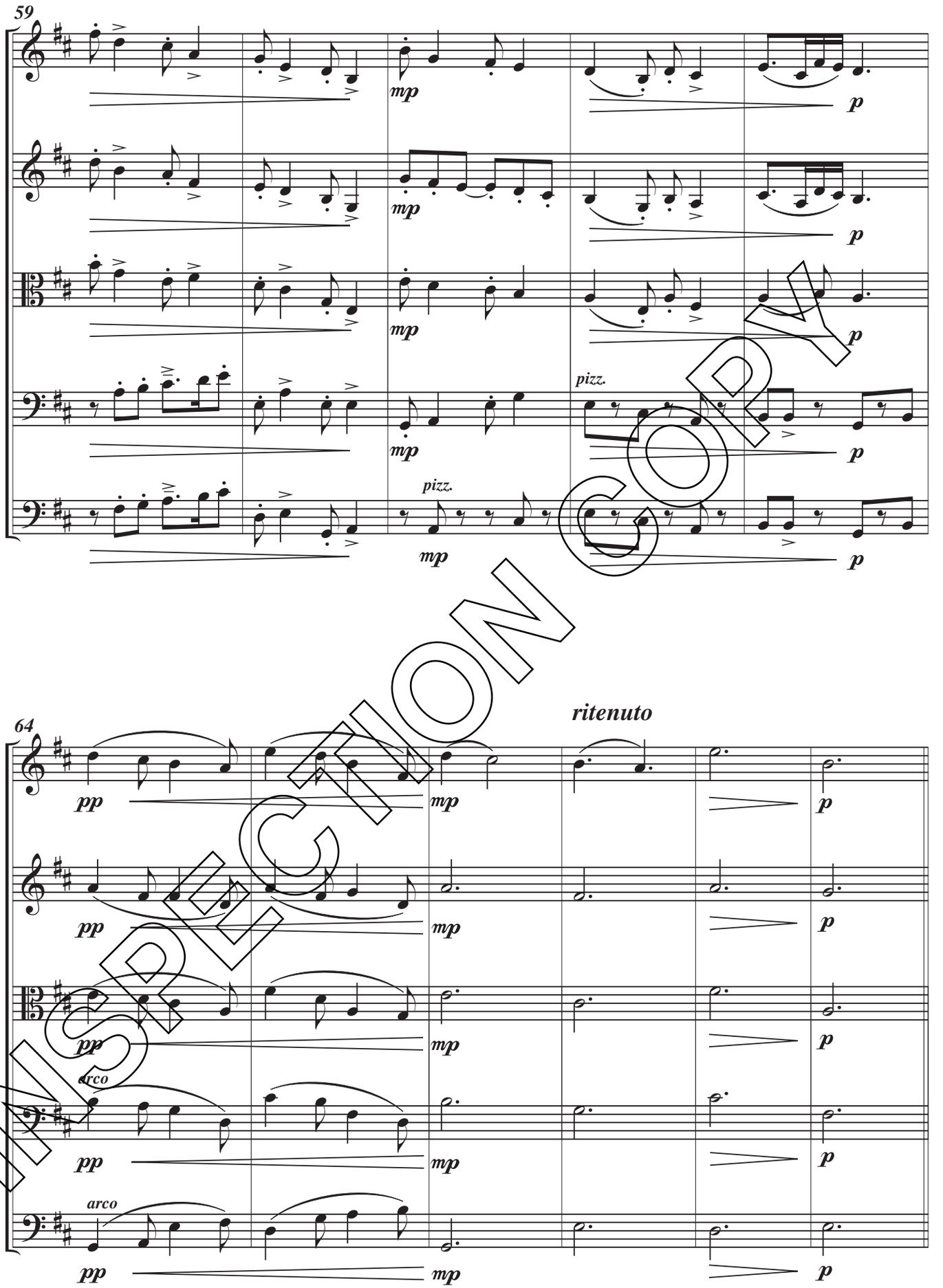

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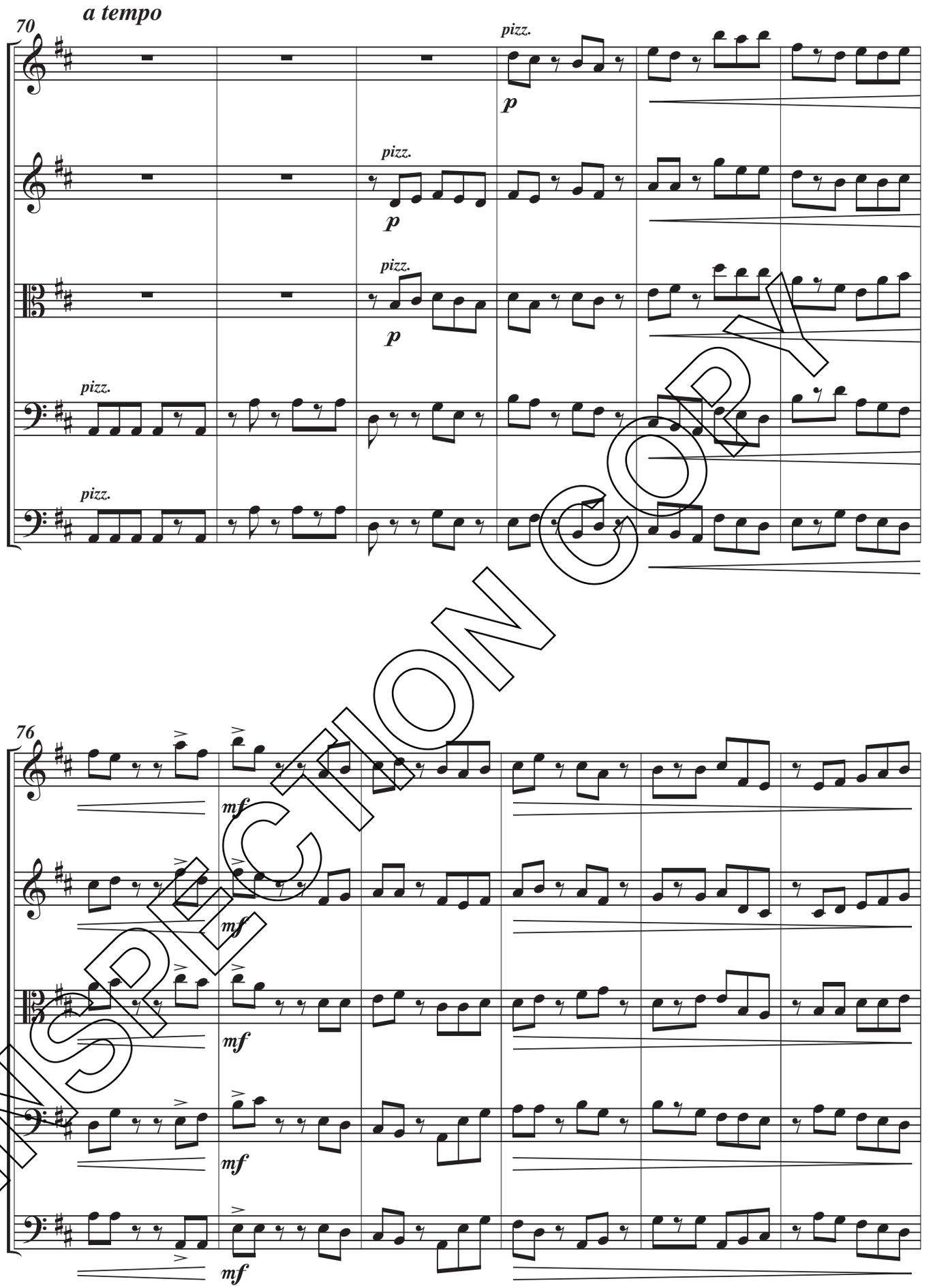

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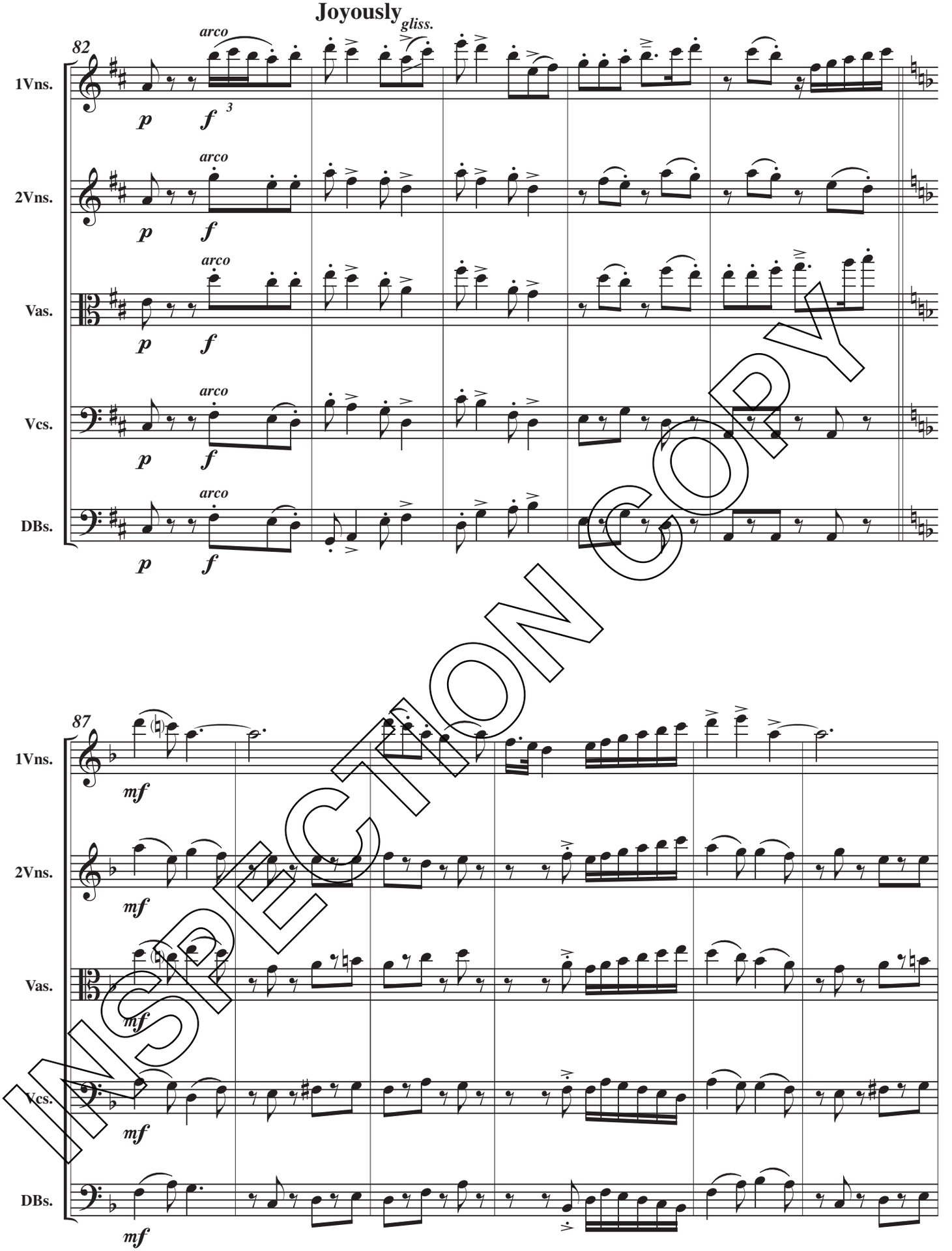

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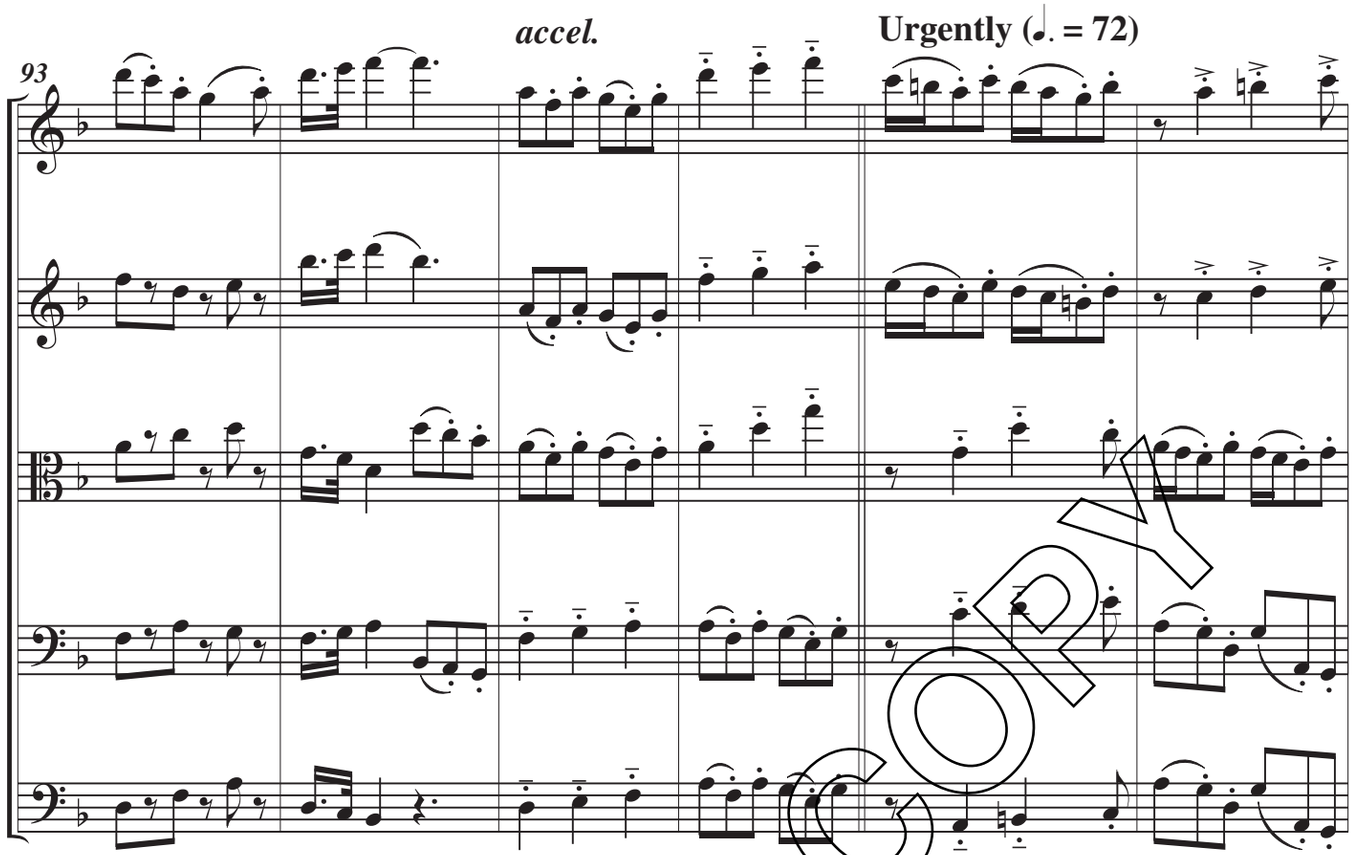

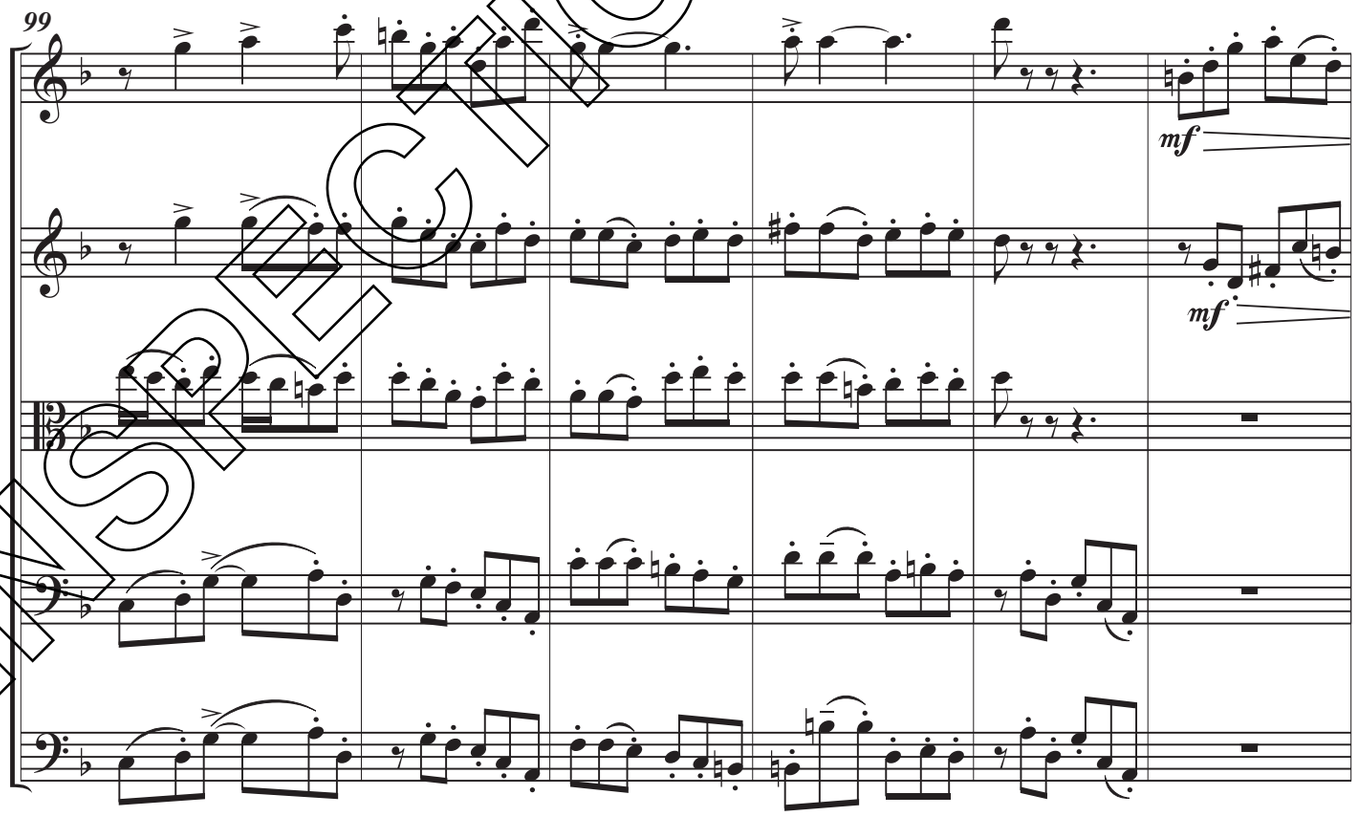

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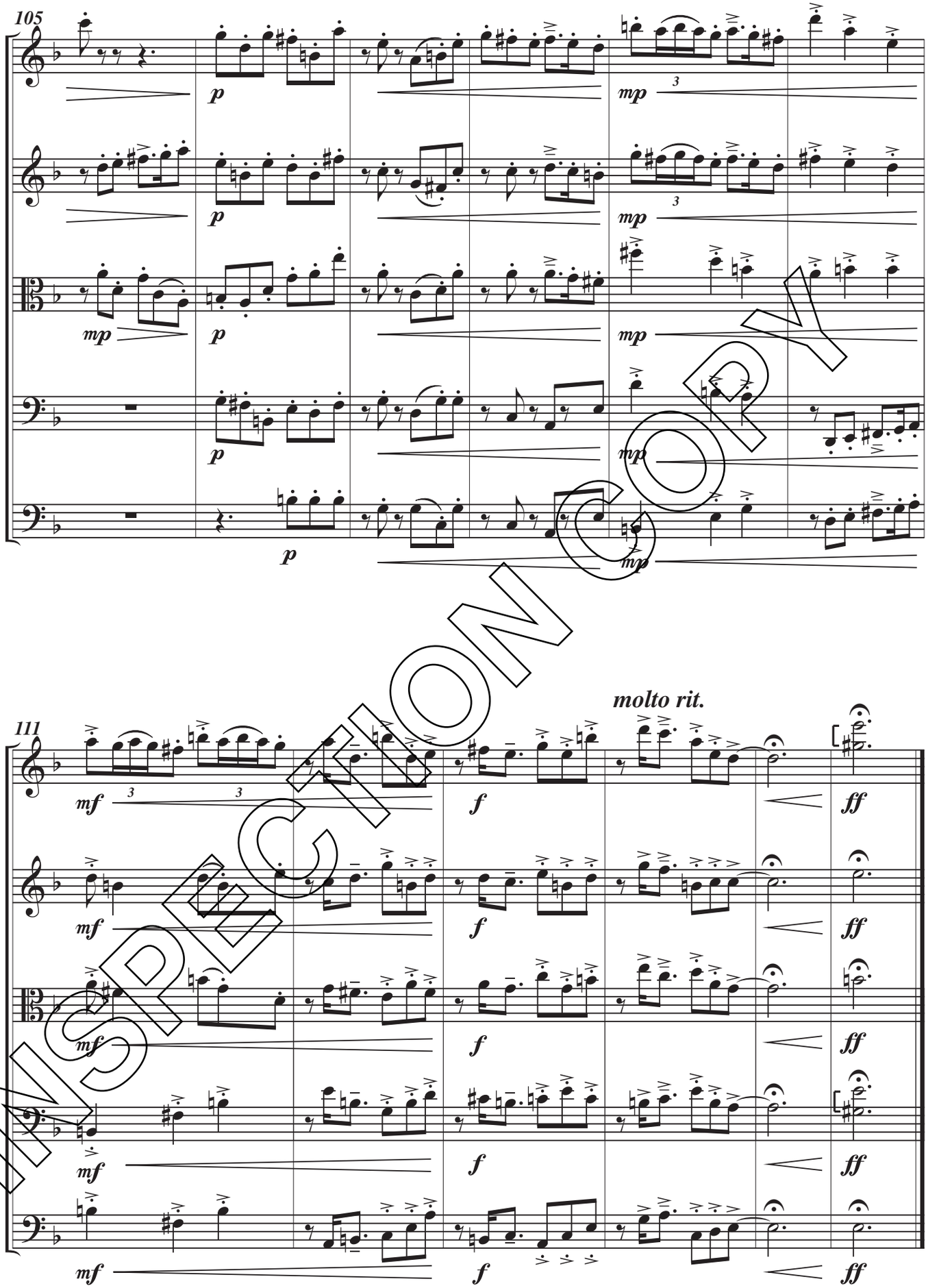

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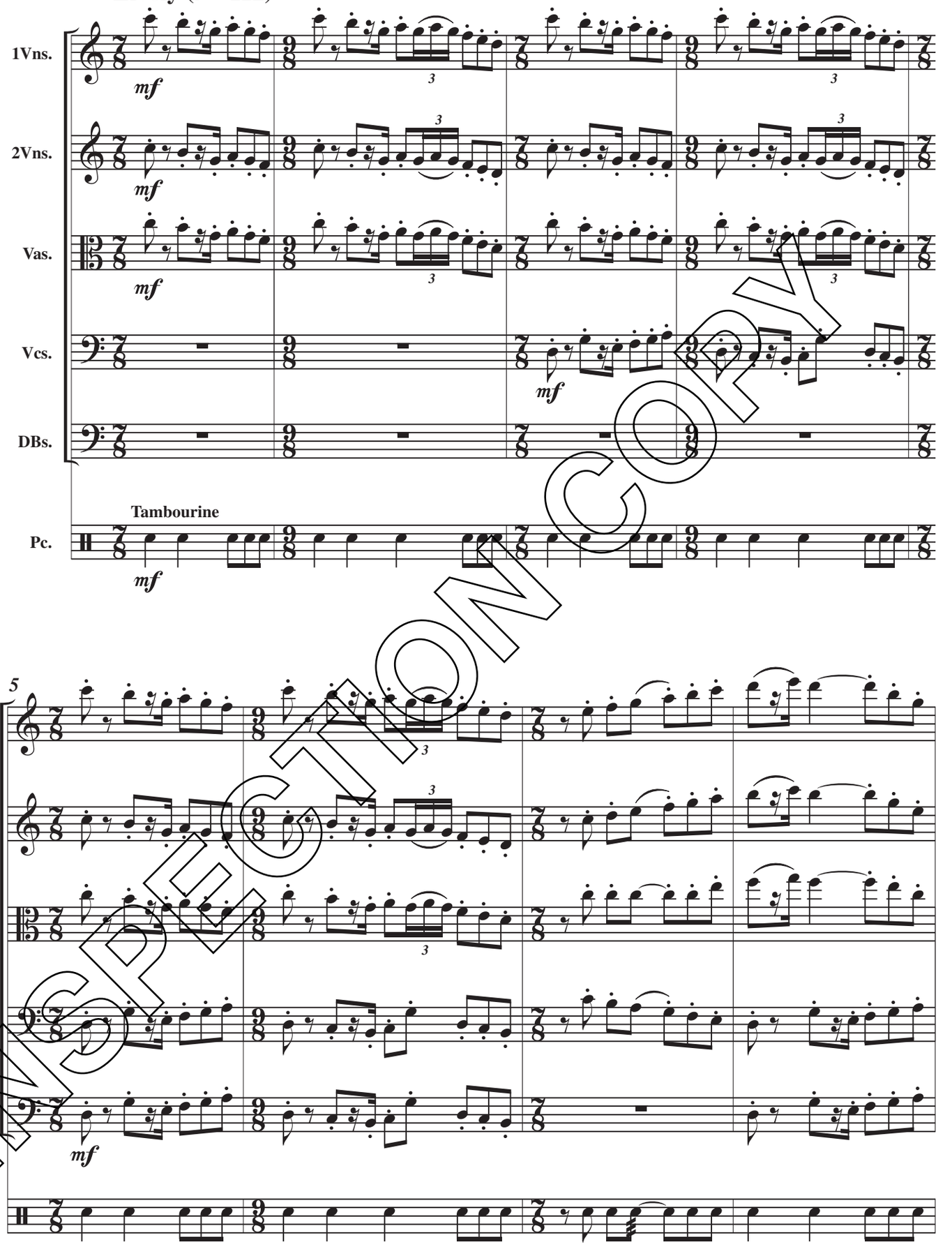
III. Terpsichore's Dance

a short ballet with optional percussion

Lively (♩. = 112)



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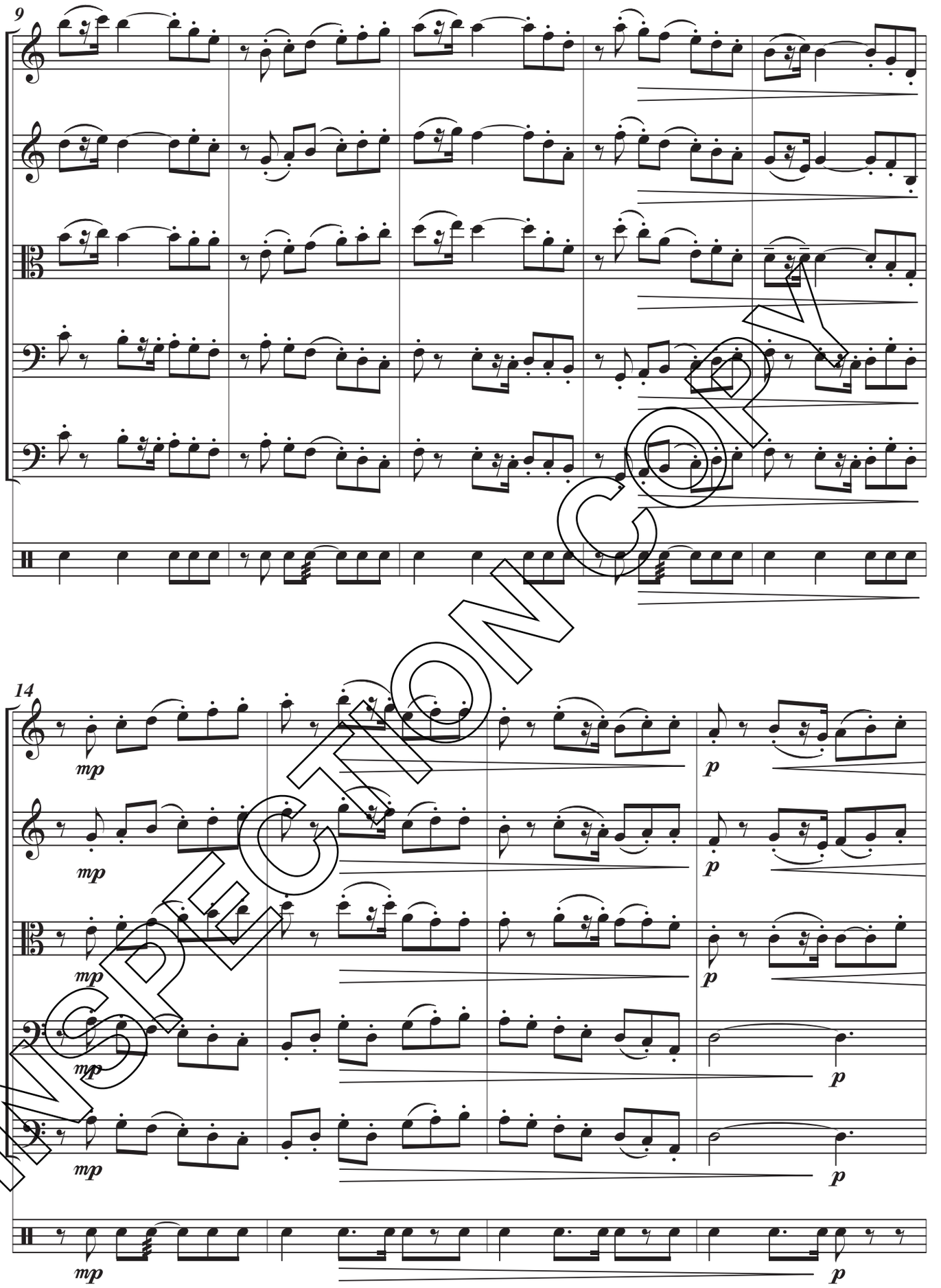

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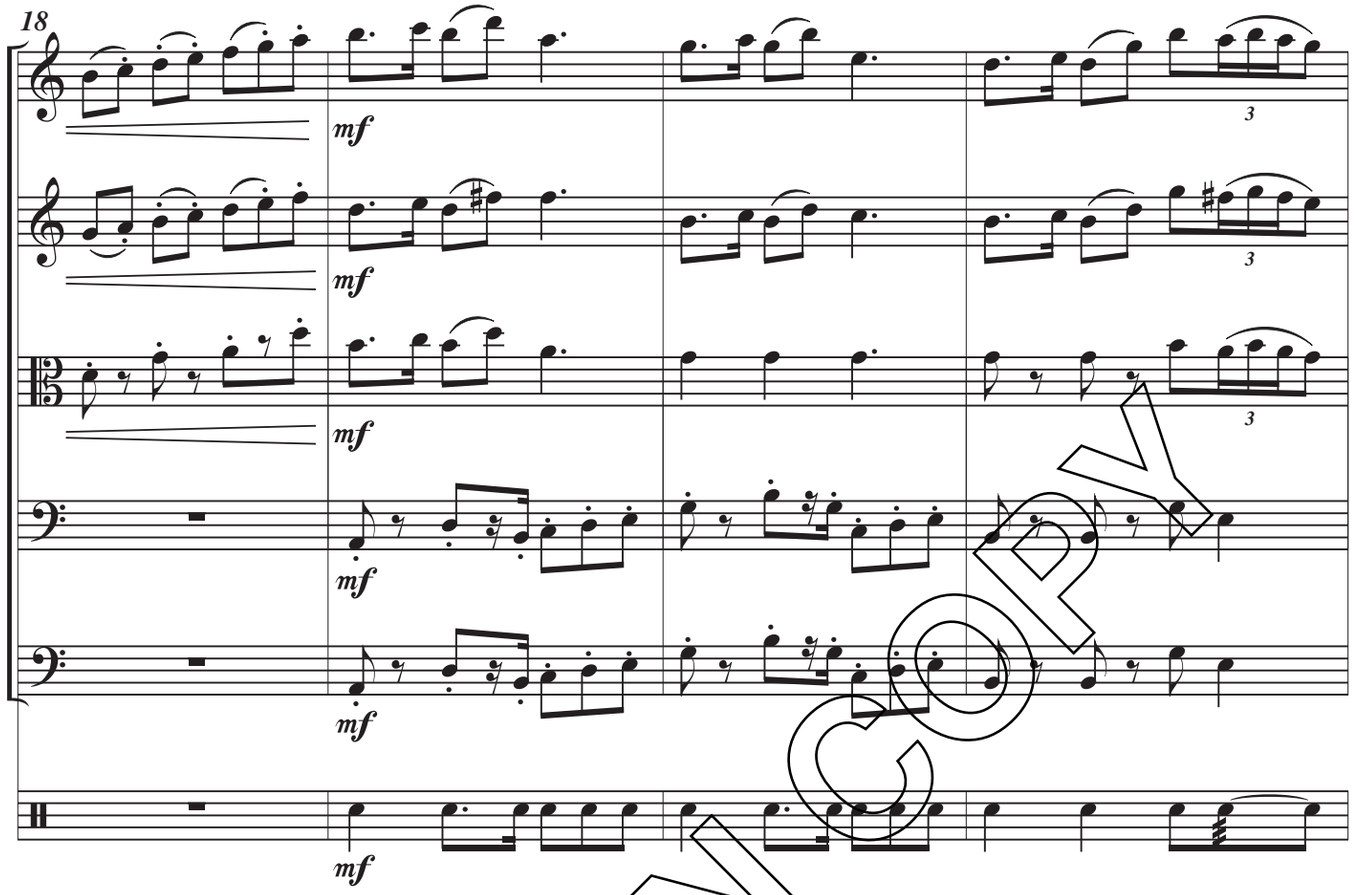

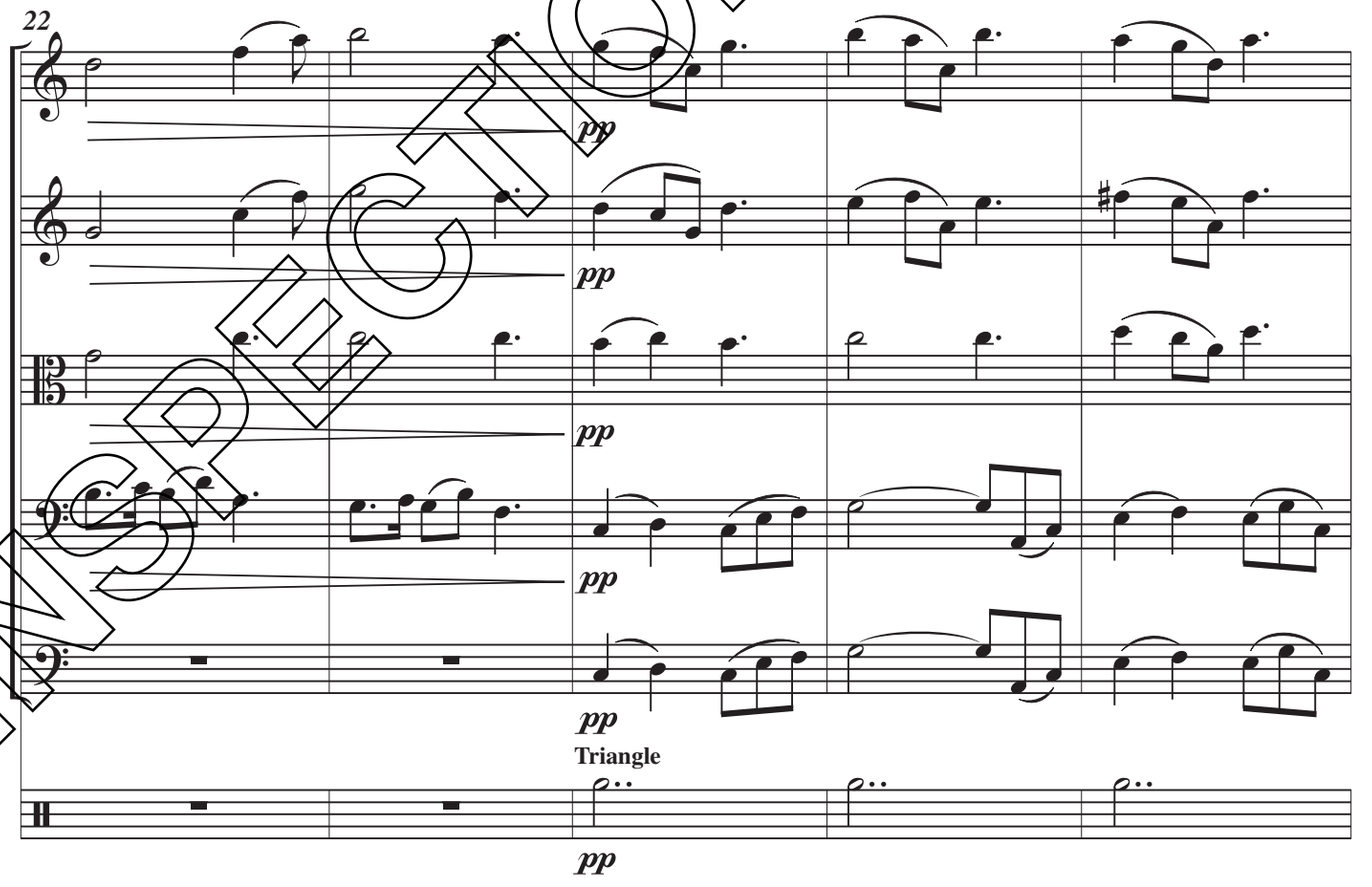

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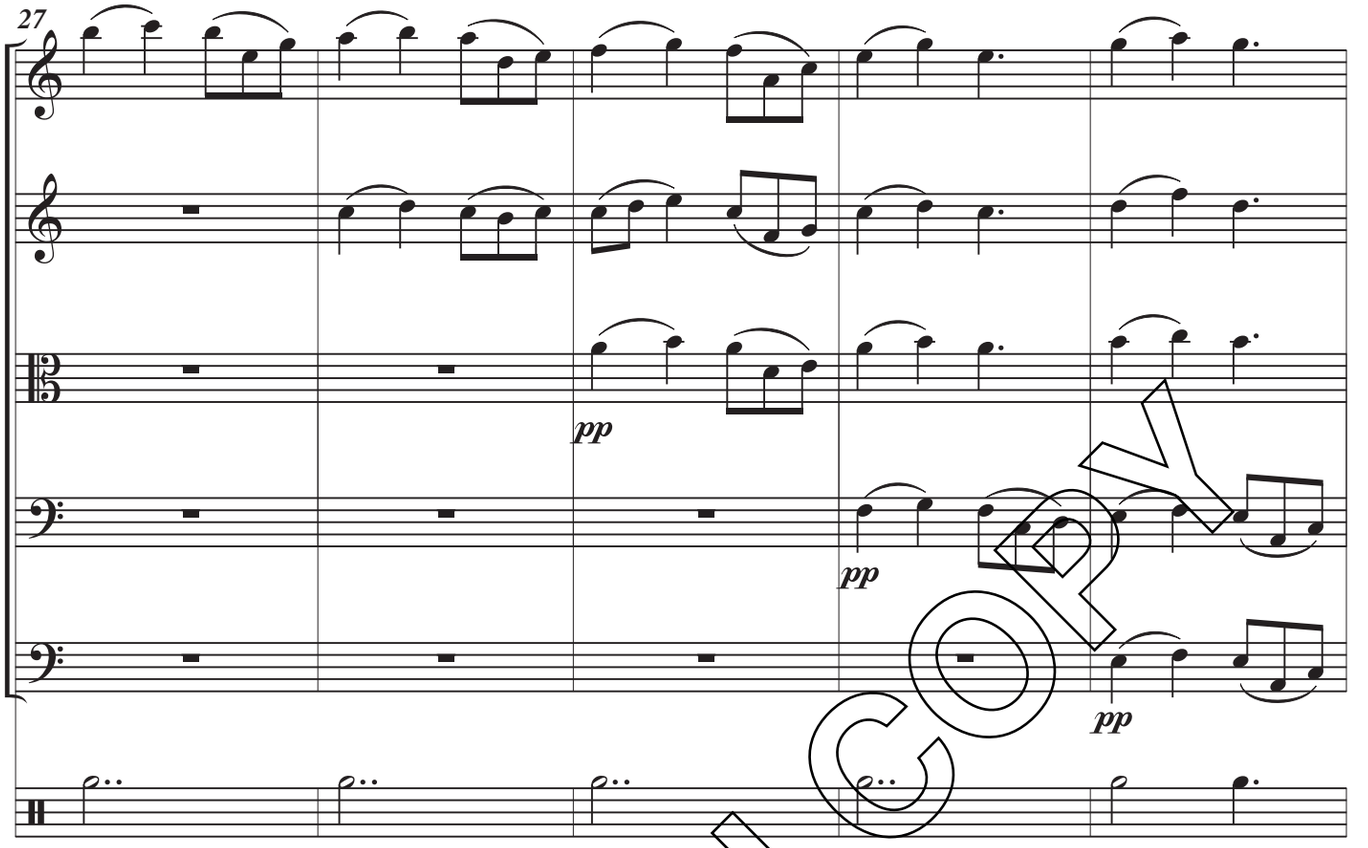

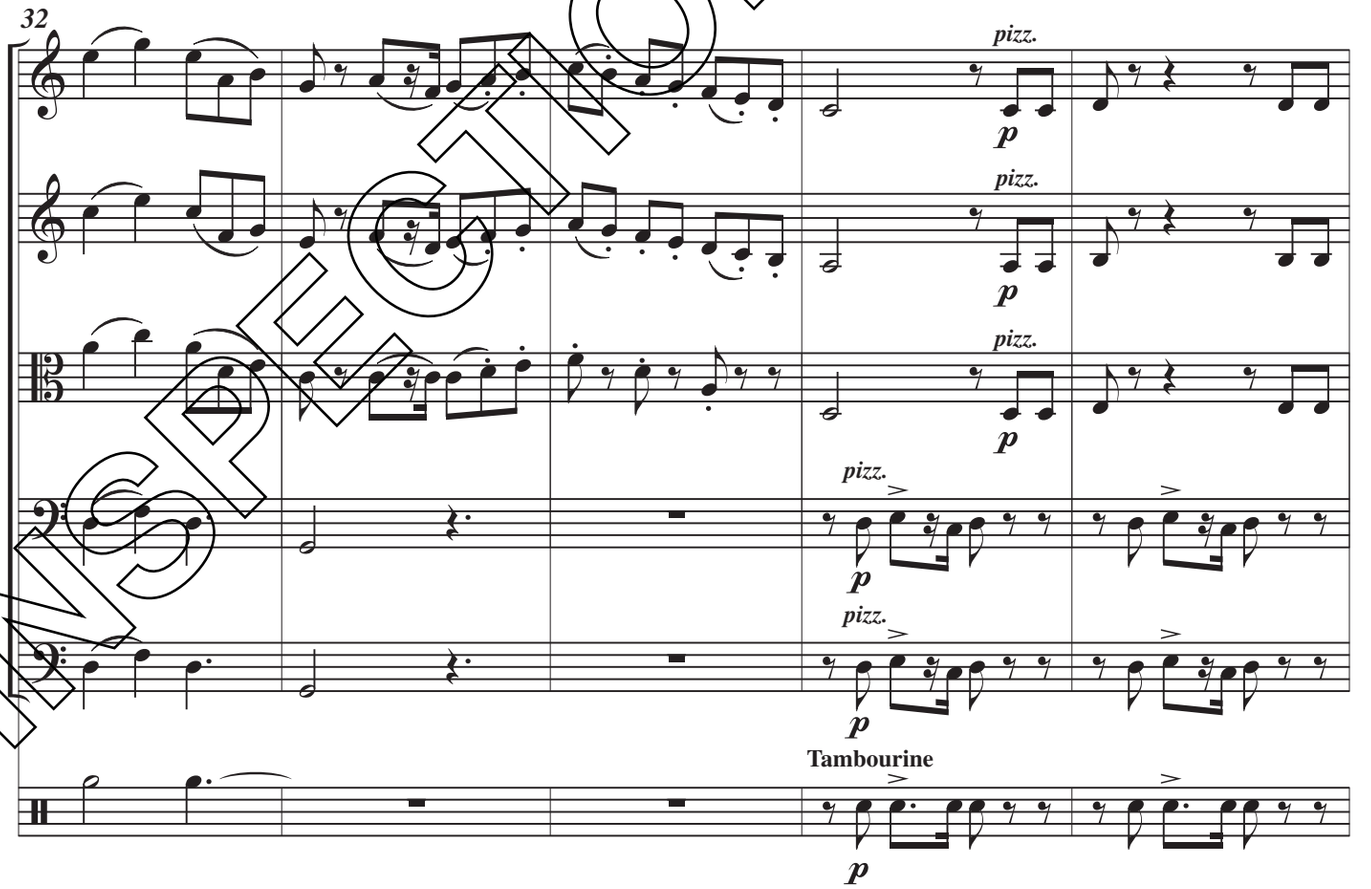

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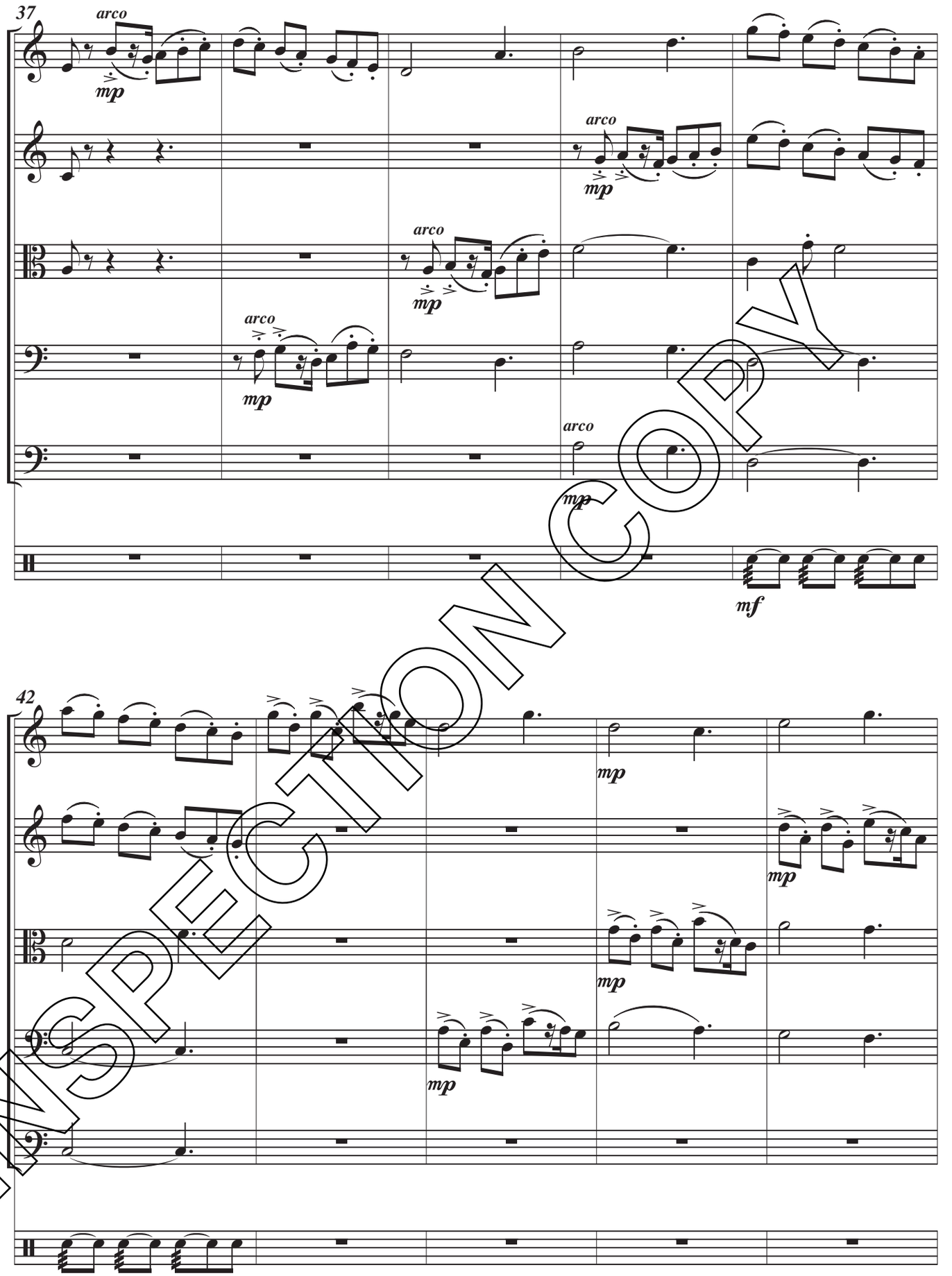

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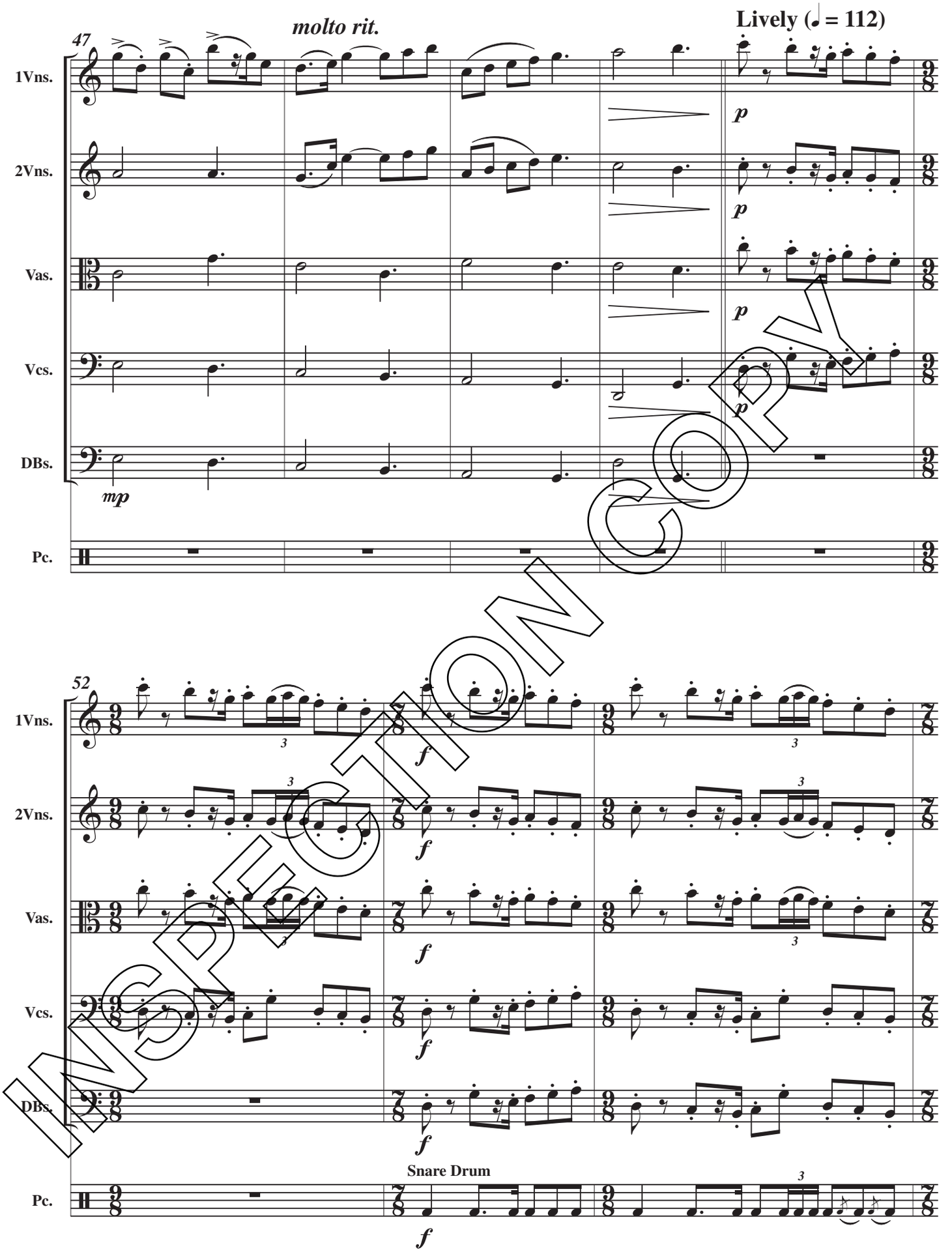

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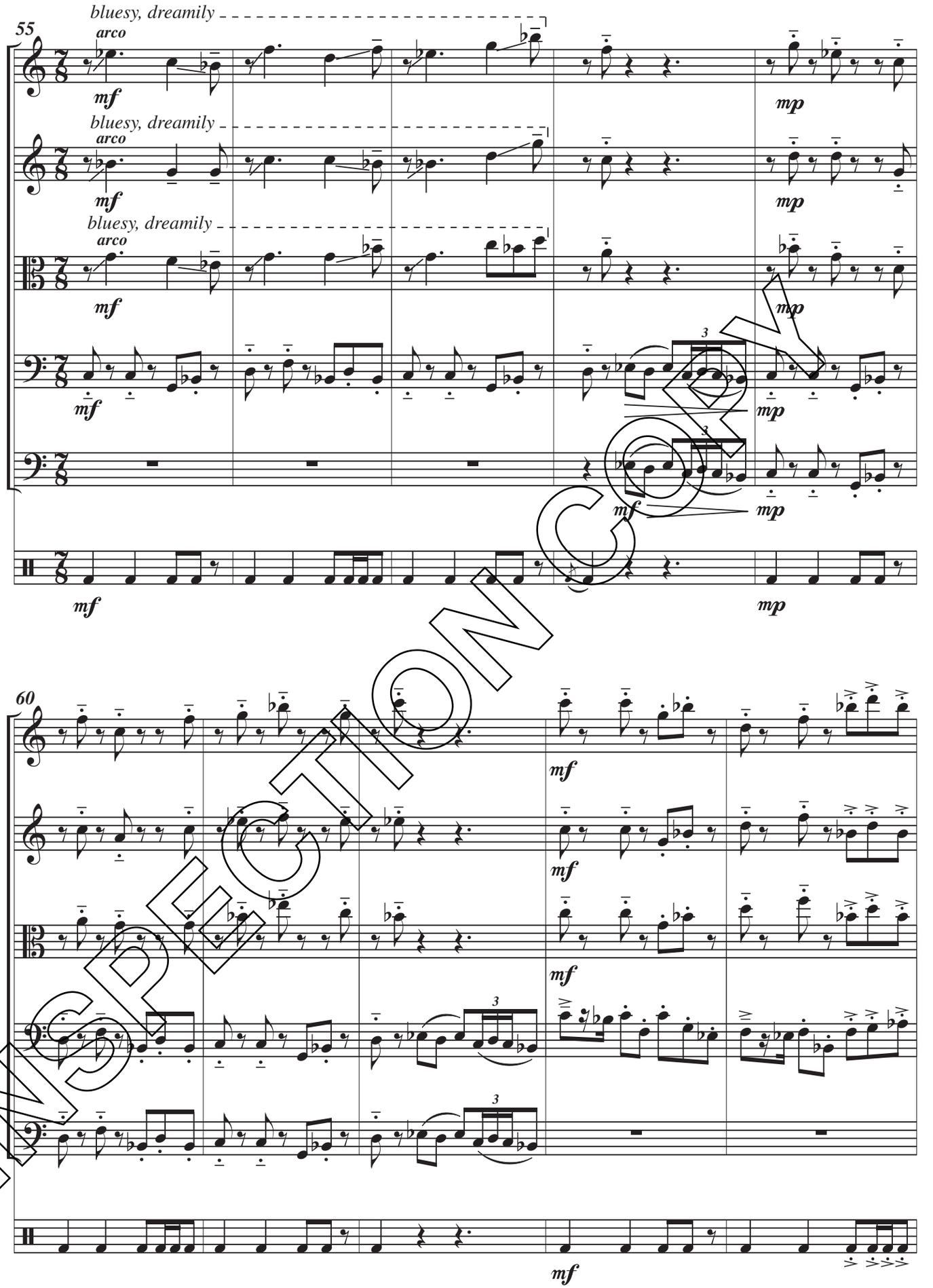

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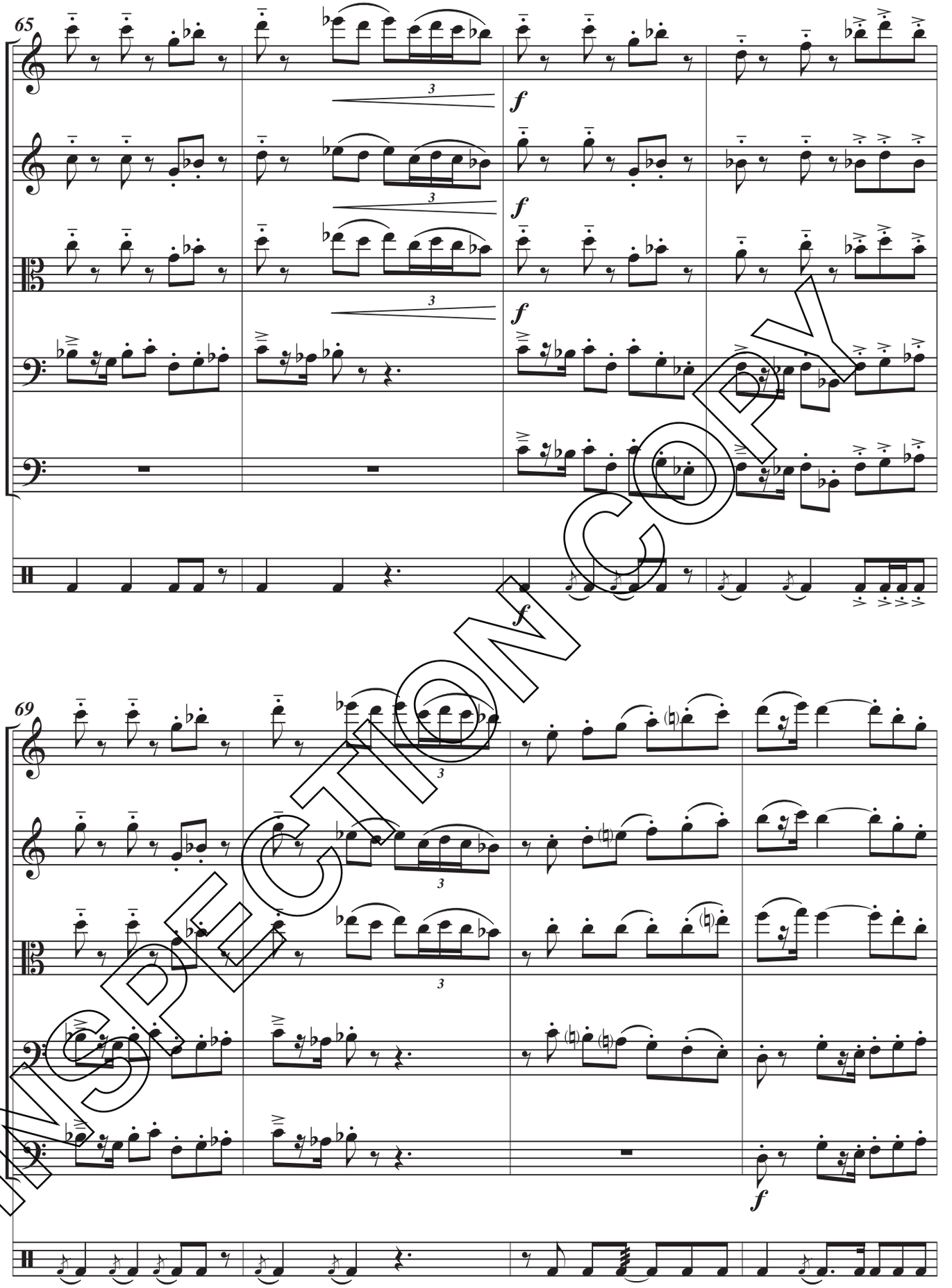

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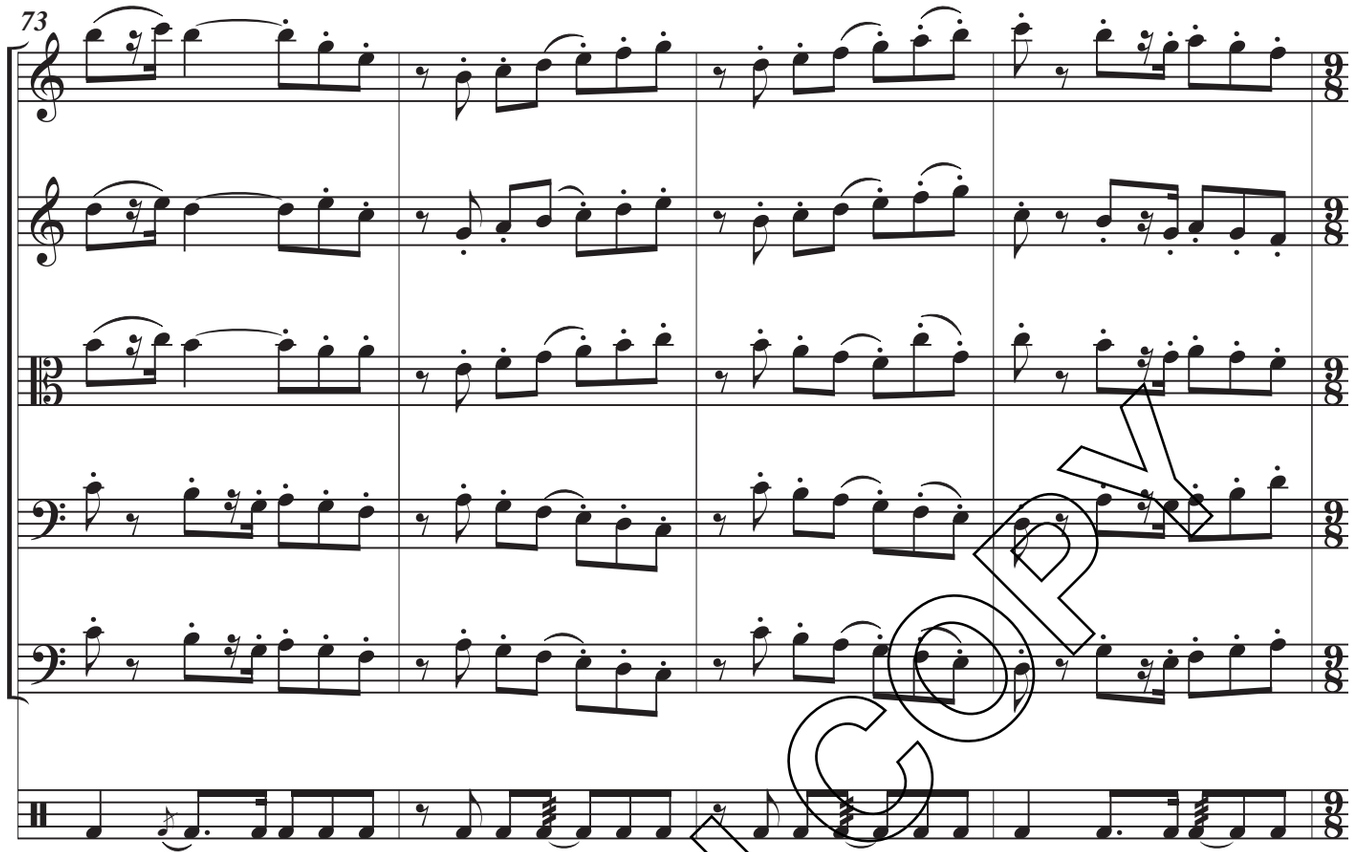

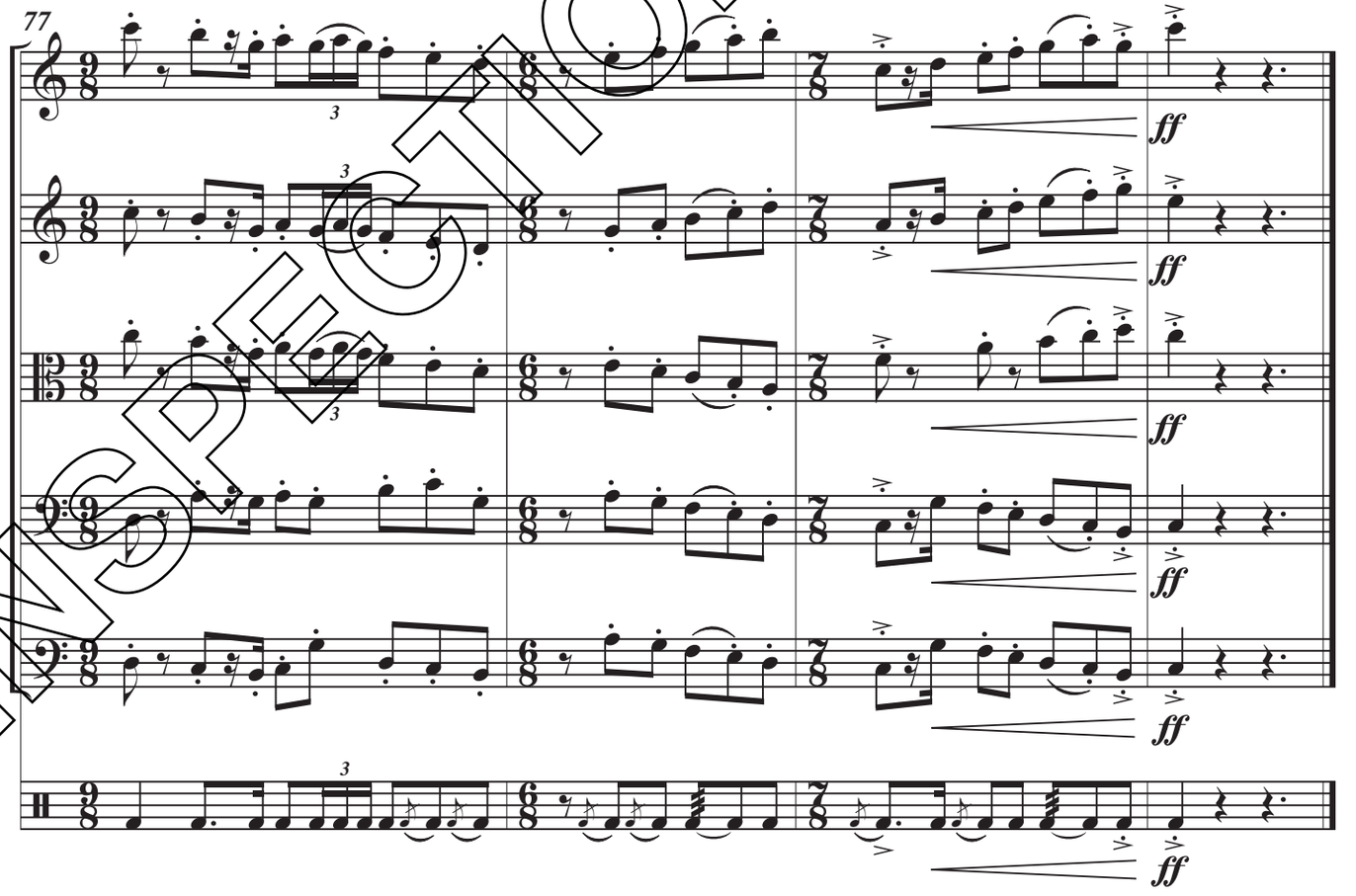

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Rehearsal Notes

I. Danzetta

Rehearse "Danzetta" with the goal of creating a spirited performance. Let players become accustomed to the predominant 7/8 time signature by carefully observing the accents and phrasing. Guard against rushing, and heed the initial tempo marking and the dynamics throughout to maintain the work's moods and contrasts.

Begin the piece at the prescribed tempo. Beware of rushing, especially after measure 10 with the orchestra's tutti playing. Let the section beginning at measure 33, marked "Dreamily and legato," contrast greatly with the previous accented, staccato section. Note the hairpin swells in measures 33-34 and 35-36. A return to the original bright, energetic feel begins with viola in measure 45 and violin II in measure 46 as more staccato elements reappear. This transition finishes at measure 59, where the mood returns fully to that of the beginning. Carefully observe the pianissimo in measure 73 so that the crescendo to the forte in measure 77 is most effective. The last measure, 81, includes double stops for violin I, violin II, viola, and cello.

II. St. Thomas Excursion

"St. Thomas Excursion," a difficult work, provides ample opportunities to teach advanced lessons in ensemble playing, blending, phrasing, and independence.

Be sure to begin the piece at the indicated tempo. Both too slow and too fast a tempo ruin the mood. Observe dynamics and hairpins carefully—they contribute to the work's character. Ensure adequate contrast between quieter and louder sections, and staccato and legato portions.

Work for equal balance among the parts, but in measures 29 through 36, bring out the cellos and basses playing the melody. Similarly, bring out the viola part in measures 57, 58, 86, 98, and 99. Note the many places in which violins and violas play different motifs from those played by cellos and basses. Sometimes, these divisions include violins contrasting with violas, cellos, and basses. In all of these places, in addition to achieving good balance, work for clarity and togetherness while carefully observing articulations.

III. Terpsichore's Dance

Begin "Terpsichore's Dance" precisely at the indicated tempo. Too slow a beginning and the piece drags. Too fast and the mood and subtleties are lost.

The counterpoint and imitative phrases beginning in measure 24 characterize a light, legato section through measure 32. Rehearse for smoothness and balance so that each voice has its say.

The molto ritenuto that starts in measure 48 sets up measure 51's return to the beginning melodic and rhythmic motif. Take your time with the molto ritenuto to increase the contrast with the "Lively" tempo indication at measure 51. At measure 51, though, like the beginning, rehearse to hit the indicated tempo precisely. Keep measures 51-52 at the indicated piano dynamic so that these two measures contrast greatly with the forte dynamic in measure 53. This contrast creates a more surprising and dramatic snare drum entrance at measure 53.

At measure 55 the music takes a surprising turn with cello and bass beginning a vamp with violins and viola playing "bluesy, dreamily." Check tempo and intonation here carefully, and maintain a steady tempo.

The coda begins in measure 71, with violins and viola echoing the second melodic and rhythmic motif, and cello and bass recalling the first melodic and rhythmic motif. Don't rush the tempo. Rehearse for contrast between staccato notes and slurred notes. Measure 76 marks the return of all instruments to the original melodic and rhythmic motif, with contrary motion that builds to a stunning finish.

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