# RUSSELL STEINBERG

# Stories From My Favorite Planet

## A Musical Tribute to Journalist Daniel Pearl

Text by Daniel Pearl

Op. 48a

## For Violin, Piano, and Reader

I. Overture
II. Bureaucracy
III. Tears of Kosovo
IV. Missing Violin Tango
V. Tanzanite Tarantella
VI. Elegy
VII. Epilogue

Duration: 44 Minutes

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Stories From My Favorite Planet
For Violin, Piano, and Reader

Music by Russell Steinberg
Text by Daniel Pearl

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*"Likely the very first piece of music inspired by the Wall Street Journal!"*

Judea Pearl, father of Daniel Pearl

## ABOUT STORIES FROM MY FAVORITE PLANET

On an intuitive hunch, filmmaker Aviva Kempner urged me to meet Daniel Pearl's parents. During a wonderful impromptu evening together, the Pearls captivated me with stories of Danny's humor and insight. I had already known that both of us had grown up in Encino and attended Birmingham High School. What I didn't know was that Danny himself was an accomplished violinist and that his passion to play music helped him establish networks of friends wherever he went. How fascinating that Danny's curiosity and brilliant journalism led him from humble Encino to the central nexus of world politics. The result of our meeting was "Stories From My Favorite Planet," The piece intertwines readings from five articles published in *At Home in the World*, into a musical tapestry that portray Danny's compassion as well as his sense of the ridiculous.

We begin with a musical overture that represents Danny's drive from California to Massachusetts for his first job at the North Adams Transcript. In the first article, a young Danny delivers a hilarious indictment against the bureaucracy of the Registry of Motor Vehicles. A melancholy violin soliloquy precedes the next article, a powerful Wall Street Journal story set in Kosovo where Danny tries to discover if any Serb and Albanian friendships still remain amidst the war.

Perhaps Danny's most humorous article concerns the rediscovery of a UCLA-owned Stradivarius violin that fell off the roof of someone's car, but whose new owner is loathe to return it!
Danny writes:

*Ms. Salvato insists she only wants what is right for the instrument. The university "lost it once," she says. "They're really not careful."* Musically, I couldn't resist setting this movement as a tango.

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The climax of the work is a musical tarantella that prepares one of Danny's darkest stories detailing Osama Bin Laden's gem smuggling trade in Africa. Here Danny discovers how strongly Islamic fundamentalists desire to kill Americans, eerily anticipating his own fate. In the musical elegy that follows, I composed a 'ghost' version of the earlier tango.

Danny Pearl's wit would not stand for a depressing conclusion, so we end as we began, with a sequel to the first article in Massachusetts. Danny gloats that he has outlasted his "tormentor," the chief of the Motor Vehicle Registry, only to learn that you can't beat City Hall!

"Stories From My Favorite Planet" was commissioned by the Daniel Pearl Foundation for the second annual worldwide Daniel Pearl Music Day.

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# PERFORMANCE ORDER OF MUSIC AND READINGS

**A Musical Tribute to Journalist Daniel Pearl**
**Scored for Violin, Piano, and Reader**
**Text by Daniel Pearl**
**Music by Russell Steinberg**

**Music:**
**Mvt. 1 Overture (Violin and Piano)**

**Reader:**
North Adams Transcript
**August 28, 1986**
**Going to the Top Won't Get You to Bottom of Bureaucracy**

North Adams—Imagine, please, being stuck in a huge flaw in the system. I mean a crack 30 feet deep, so narrow that nobody will admit it's there. Now imagine being freed from the crack, and by a fluke coming face to face with the man who helped put you there.
This is how I felt on discovering a note Monday on the top file of my desk: "Alan Mackey, Mass. Commissioner of the Registry of Motor Vehicles, will be here Monday August 25. We need a story and photo. Joe." Like Ahab with the white whale, I would face my tormentor at last. Let me explain.

I bought a car, in June, in California. The next day I drove it to Massachusetts, arriving in seven days.
So far, I believe, I had committed no crime. I began work here, eagerly awaiting the arrival of my title and license plates from California. And I would have gone on waiting in peace had an accident not popped up on the police scanner one day, or had I not foolishly agreed to cover it. The accident was across the street from the police station, and as I turned into the parking lot I was stopped by an officer.

The officer told me he had seen me driving in Massachusetts for over 30 days, and since I was unregistered I would have to pay a $100 ticket and leave the car where it stood until I could register it here. The next day, I realized I could not register it here; I had no title.

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I called the California Department of Motor Vehicles in Sacramento. I called the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles in Boston. I called the dealer who sold me the car. I called the mayor, my congressman, and the state representative who heads the committee that deals with such things. I called my mother.

There was no way out. Massachusetts demanded the title and nothing less. California said that, according to their computer, my title would not be sent for another two weeks. The dealer said he was sorry. My mother said to quit my job and come home. Two weeks later, the title arrived and I registered my car, but if you have ever been throttled by a faceless bureaucracy, you will understand the relish with which I introduced myself to Mr. Mackey (The Registrar! In the flesh!) Monday morning. I savored my chance to confront him with The Gross Injustice.

I duly took notes as Mr. Mackey explained a new computer system the North Adams office would receive in April. Then I put down my notepad and began my diatribe. I had repeated my tale in 20 conversations with 12 separate authorities in seven different cities, so I had the act down—complete with “as a citizen of the commonwealth” and “denied me the mode of transportation necessary for my livelihood” and ending with “forced upon me the unwanted role of lawbreaker.” You get the idea.

“You shouldn’t have gone through all that trouble,” he said. “You should have called the ombudsman.” The ombudsman? THE OMBUDSMAN!!? I spent five hours running up a phone bill not seen since the *Transcript* called James Michener five times in Alaska. I went 10 days without a car. I could have called the ombudsman?
Mr. Mackey almost had my apologies. I was ready to express gratitude that he had hired a person to make an exception for me and pull me out of the crack.

It was not until Tuesday afternoon that I was able to bring myself to call the ombudsman. By my motor’s honor, I swear that the following is an accurate transcription of what happened.
“Hello, Registry.”
“Hi, I would like to speak to the ombudsman.”
“To whom? I didn’t get the name.”
“the ombudsman.”
“Is that a person’s name who works here?”

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“No, OMBUDSMAN. It’s a title.”
“Oh, he works in title!”
“No, no. It’s not a name. It’s a thing. It’s in the dictionary. Ombudsman.”
“We’re better off than we were before. Spell it.”
“O, M, B, U, D, S, M…”
“N?”
“M as in motor, A, N.”
“No.”
“No?”
“No.”
“No what?”
“Is that all one word?”
“Yes. Ombudsman.”

I could see I was getting nowhere, so I scrambled through my notes and actually managed to find a name.
“Let me speak to Jacqueline Dooley.”
“One minute.”

When I reached Ms. Dooley, after being put on hold and trying to explain myself a few more times, I discovered a helpful, pleasant lady. She said the registry could not do a thing for me, but after I whined a bit she said the people in title could probably have worked something out by “flagging” my registration.

Now, that’s a new one. “Flagging.” I had not heard that in any of my 21 conversations with 13 people in seven cities. She said she was glad that I had called, and she would be sure to share this “flagging” trick with the subordinates I had spoken with when my car was still unregistered.

I decided not to pursue the matter with the people in titles. The thing was moot, after all. And my conversation with Ms. Dooley had left me with a good feeling I didn’t want to jinx. I still was not sure if the bureaucrats could have helped me escape from the crack they had created.

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**Music:**
**Mvt. 2 Bureaucracy Runaround (Violin and Piano)**

**Reader:**
Wall Street Journal
12/02/1999
**Reporter's Notebook: Search for Mercy Ends in Tears on Quiet Kosovo Street**

KOSOVO, Yugoslavia -- President Clinton came to Kosovo last week pleading for a little ethnic reconciliation. This reminded me of my first trip here, in June, when I searched in vain for a story about ethnic Albanians and Serbs moving beyond their hatred.

In my search for a pocket of ethnic harmony, I tried the new soccer team (no Serbs), a once-mixed jazz band (no gigs), even a mental hospital. There, ethnic-Albanian nurses told me the Serb staff had fled, told the patients to leave, too, and taken the telephones. Only one encounter seemed to offer any hope for Serbs and Albanians living together. It took place on a quiet residential street. And last week, on a return trip to Kosovo, I decided to see if the story had a happy ending.

In the third house on the right lived Rade Volic, a 70-year-old ex-railroad worker. Rade is a Serb. Next door lived Hamit Fazliu, 68 years old, a retired mill worker and ethnic Albanian. He and Mr. Volic, neighbors for 30 years, worked to stay friends, even as an Albanian guerrilla war for independence and a Serbian ethnic cleansing campaign began.

On March 27, soon after the NATO bombing began, Serb vigilantes shot up Hamit's house while he cowered on the living room couch. Rade says he persuaded the vandals not to burn the house. Hamit spent the night at Rade's house, then left Kosovo. In their own tidy home, Rade and his wife showed me a letter their neighbor had written while taking shelter with them. "What will happen, nobody knows, but let this be proof that Rade is a good man, and his wife, and I'm very thankful," it read. Still, Rade and his wife weren't sure they would stay. All around, neighbors were pooling their money to rent trucks to move to Serbia proper.

That was four months ago... there are few mixed neighborhoods left. I visited Hamit first. He now had furniture, a television, new cabinets. He said he had made the rounds of neighbors at first, telling how Rade had helped him. But lately, he was asking Rade not to speak with him on the street. "Some of my relatives don't understand," he said, especially the ones who had immediate family members killed."

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Next door, Rade and his wife greeted me warmly, and asked if I could help them determine if the German-mark notes they were about to receive for their house were real. They had gone with one of the many Albanians who knocked on their door asking to buy the place. they were tired of rocks being thrown through the window, and they were moving in four days' time to live near their daughter and son in Belgrade.
It was a tearful moment. Rade and his wife had built the house thinking their children would live there. I wished them luck and said goodbye.

My driver was across the street. "I was worried, I thought maybe those Serbs killed you," he said. And then: "The people who bought this place are crazy. They could have it for free. The Serbs are going to have to leave anyhow."
"Thank you, Agim," I said as we rolled toward Pristina. "Thank you for reminding me that I'm in the Balkans."

**Music:**
**Mvt. 3 Soliloquy - Tears in Kosovo (Violin and Piano)**

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**Reader:**
Wall Street Journal
10/17/1994
**Missing Violin's Case: The Finder Fiddles While Losers Sue --- Alcantara' Stradivarius, Lost 27 Years Ago, Resurfaces But New Owner Plays Coy**

LOS ANGELES -- David Margetts still doesn't know if he left the borrowed Stradivarius on the roof of his car and drove off, or if it was stolen from the unlocked vehicle while he bought groceries. That was in August 1967. Mr. Margetts sent notices to pawn shops and violin stores and took out classified ads. He spent the next 27 years worrying that the "Duke of Alcantara" Stradivarius, made in 1732, was gone forever.

It wasn't. Officials of UCLA, to which the instrument had been donated, say the same violin reappeared this January. But the tale doesn't end there. University officials have discovered that once somebody is smitten with the love of a Stradivarius, taking it away is like wresting a baby from its mother's arms.

Joseph Grubaugh, a violin dealer in Petaluma, Calif., says that when a violin teacher showed him a student's instrument bearing a Stradivarius label one day in January, he thought he was looking at the real thing.

He opened his copy of the Iconography of Antonio Stradivari and found a photograph of a violin with similar scratch marks on the back. It was the Duke of Alcantara. A bigger shock came a week later when the violin teacher picked up the repaired fiddle. Mr. Grubaugh flipped through a violin registry and saw the instrument listed as stolen from UCLA.

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The student was amateur violinist Teresa Salvato, who says she got the violin as part of a divorce settlement last year. She says her husband received the violin around 1979 from his aunt, who helped run a music store. Where the aunt got the violin isn't known, Ms. Salvato says, but one piece of family lore had her picking it up beside a freeway on-ramp after mistaking the canvas-covered case for a baby. Ms. Salvato contacted UCLA, but over the next 10 months declined the university's pleas to surrender the violin. Also, Ms. Salvato didn't didn't appreciate the unannounced visit to her home in May by two campus police officer's who, she says, threatened to arrest her and told neighbors she was a theft suspect. When they reappeared last week to serve civil court papers, Ms. Salvato wouldn't leave her locked car. She now is staying in a hotel. And the Alcantara is in hiding.

Ms. Salvato played her mystery violin for the first time in January. It was "heavenly," she says, "smooth and gorgeous." It even helped her play in tune. "There are things I can't do on the violin, but I can execute them on that violin," she said.

During a recent telephone conversation with Robert Portillo, a musical curator for UCLA, Ms. Salvato asked if less-accomplished musicians might be allowed to play the violin. And she wondered "if there is any possible legal way I could keep it."

Ms. Salvato insists she only wants what is right for the instrument. The university "lost it once," she says. "They're really not careful."

Mr. Portillo -- who complains that Ms. Salvato is taking the university "for a ride" -- says UCLA will be extremely mindful of the instrument if it is returned. One faculty member who is likely to play it is Alexander Treger, concertmaster of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, who already plays an orchestra-owned 1711 Stradivarius. On tour, Mr. Treger says, "I don't leave the violin even if I have to go to the bathroom."

**Music:**
**Mvt. 4 Missing Violin Tango (Violin and Piano)**

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**Reader:**
Wall Street Journal
11/16/2001
**Underground Trade: Much-Smuggled Gem Called Tanzanite Helps Bin Laden Supporters**

MERERANI, Tanzania -- In the shadow of Mount Kilimanjaro, miners with flashlights tied to their heads crawl hundreds of feet beneath the East African plain, searching for a purple-brown crystal that will turn into a blue gem called tanzanite.

Many of the rare stones chipped off by the spacemen, as the miners are called, find their way to display cases at Zales, QVC or Tiffany. But it's a long way from these dusty plains to U.S. jewelry stores, and the stones pass through many hands on their journey. Some of those hands, it is increasingly clear, belong to active supporters of Osama bin Laden.

Muslim extremists loyal to Mr. bin Laden buy stones from miners and middlemen, smuggling them out of Tanzania to free-trade havens such as Dubai and Hong Kong.

"Yes, people here are trading for Osama. Just look around and you will find serious Muslims who believe in him and work for him," says Musa Abdallah, a Kenyan who has worked as a tanzanite miner for six years.

In Mererani, a new mosque called Taqwa has brought an openly radical Muslim presence to the tanzanite district. Taqwa's imam, Sheik Omari, has issued edicts that Muslims miners should sell their stones only to fellow Muslims. The diktats breed resentment.

The Taqwa mosque is still under construction on a dusty side street. Inside a temporary prayer hall of wood and corrugated metal, miners are taught the importance of avenging the "arrogance" of America and defending Afghanistan from "U.S. oppression." Support for Mr. bin Laden is a duty, miners are told. The faithful of Taqwa often address one another as Jahidini, a Swahili word that means Muslim militant. Some routinely greet one another as "Osama."

After prayers, the mosque's courtyard becomes an open-air gem-dealing space, where Sheik Omari and other mosque leaders trade tanzanite with small-time miners. In between haggling, the elders preach the virtues of suicide attacks as a way to defend their faith.

"Remember, Islam teaches us that your body is a weapon," Sheik Omari tells a group of young men in Swahili. "But if you die, you should take as many of your enemy with you as you can. This will be your ticket to paradise."

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**Music:**
**Mvt. 5 Tanzanite Trantella (Violin and Piano)**

**Reader:**
February 21, 2002
Karachi Pakistan
**U.S. JOURNALIST DANIEL PEARL**
**KILLED BY HIS CAPTORS**

Wall Street Journalist Daniel Pearl was confirmed dead after officials received a gruesome video tape recording his murder. Pearl was abducted by a group claiming to be Pakistani nationalists. The U.S. government condemned his killing as "an outrage" and the Wall Street Journal called it an "act of barbarism."

Pearl had been working on a story about "shoe bomber" Richard Reid when he followed up a tip to interview an Islamic fundamentalist Sheik about ties between Reid and a Pakistani militant. Four days later, a group calling itself "The National Movement for the Restoration of Pakistani Sovereignty" sent an e-mail, accompanied by pictures of the 38-year-old Mr. Pearl in chains and with a gun to his head. His kidnappers made several demands, including the release of Pakistani detainees at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. They also accused Pearl of being a spy -- an accusation strongly denied by the CIA and his newspaper -- and vowed to kill Pearl if their demands were not met.

Top U.S. and Pakistani officials appealed for his release, but several weeks elapsed without word of his fate until the video tape of his brutal execution surfaced. News of Pearl's murder provoked world wide outrage. President Bush said that those who "engage in criminal, barbaric acts need to know that these crimes ... only deepen the resolve of the United States of America to rid the world of these agents of terror". The Wall Street Journal added his kidnappers "claimed to be Pakistani nationalists, but their actions must surely bring shame to all true Pakistani patriots."

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Ironically, Pearl had dedicated himself to explaining the Arab and Islamic worlds to Wall Street Journal readers. Often skeptical of institutions, from big government to big business, his concerns and compassion extended to individuals and their motivations. Known for his warmth and wit, Mr. Pearl often seemed as much at home playing Bach or bluegrass on his violin as he was filing stories as a top reporter at a newspaper.

Pearl's wife, Marianne, is pregnant with their first child. His parents, Judea and Ruth Pearl, issued a statement from their home in Encino, California, describing Danny as "a walking sunshine of truth humor, friendship and compassion... and father to a child who will never know him."

**Music:**
**Mvt. 6  Elegy (Violin and Piano)**

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**Reader:**
North Adams Transcript
**April 25, 1987**

## Registry Saga, Part 2: Intrepid Reporter-Driver Outlasts Chief

North Adams—I, for one, was a little saddened to see Alan Mackey step down as registrar of the Registry of Vehicles this week. I had almost come to think of him as a friend, after all the trouble we have put each other through in the last year. Last month, I heard from Mr. Mackey again.

This time, he was far less pleasant. In fact, he had a photocopied signature at the bottom of a computerized letter informing me that I would have my license suspended in two weeks because I was in court default.

Not being fond of the word "default," I went to court and asked what this thing was all about. It was the ticket. Remember the ticket? Neither did I. I assumed the charge against me had been dropped. Nothing had been dropped. The ticket still stood. The hearing I requested had been held without me…

Wait! How could they hold the hearing without telling me?
"We sent you two notices," the clerk said, showing me two envelopes with "return to sender: address unknown" stamps on them. The notices had been sent to my old address, from which I moved a few days after getting the ticket.

"And you also hung up on me when I tried to tell you on the phone," the clerk said with a scowl.
No wait. Drive an unregistered vehicle, maybe. Forget to tell people my new address, conceivably. But hang up on an employee of the Trial Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, District Court Department, Northern Berkshire Division? Never.

Then I remembered: The *Transcript* newsroom, 30 minutes after deadline, the busiest time of the morning. Hairs are being pulled, death threats are being screamed across the room, fingers are flying at 120 words per minute.

I phoned the District Court to check the court date of an upcoming assault and battery trial. When I identified myself, the clerk said, "You have a motor vehicle violation." It's those parking tickets, I thought. I told her I would speak with her after deadline; now, could I please have that court date?

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That afternoon, I paid the parking tickets and forgot to call her back. Mea culpa. But why didn't the court people send my notice to the *Transcript?* And why couldn't they get my address from the Registry of Motor Vehicles?
"We're not an investigative agency," said the clerk.
Well, OK, but can't I file some kind of appeal?
"You had your appeal, and you missed it," said the magistrate. "The only thing we can do now is collect our money."

I took the next logical step. I called the Registry. Remember the ombudsman? So did I, so that's who I asked to speak with.
"the who?"
"The Om-buds-man."
"Is that a name?"
"No, it's not a name, it's a title. It means somebody that helps people with problems."
"Oh, it's a title."
"Yes."
"Is it a new title or a duplicate?"

I don't give up easily, as you can tell. I telephoned a prominent city attorney. He said he would investigate my options and get back to me.
"Is one of the options jail?" I asked.
"It could very well be," he answered.

Not long ago, a Berkshire County man got a full year in the slammer. A YEAR for driving on a revoked license. Sure, reporters will gladly serve time for protecting a source, or something like that, but for unlicensed driving? Not me, Jack. I paid the fine the day before the Registry scheduled to suspend my license. I paid cash—they wouldn't take my check.

Mr. Mackey is going to Florida now. He wants to spend more time with his family. Really, I don't blame him. And I wish his successor luck.

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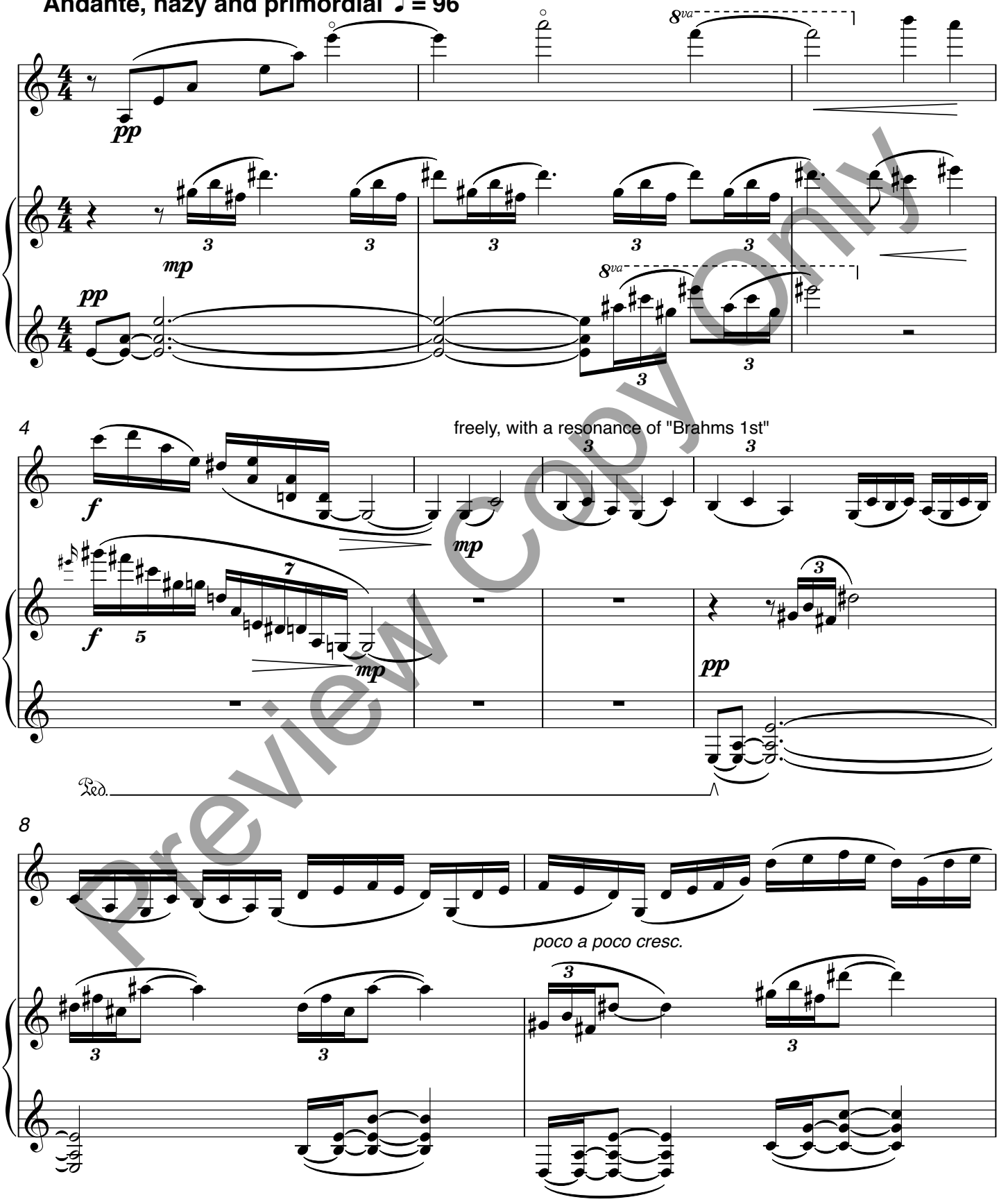
**Music:**
**Mvt. 7  Epilogue (Violin and Piano)**

# I. Overture

Commissioned by the Daniel Pearl Foundation

Russell Steinberg

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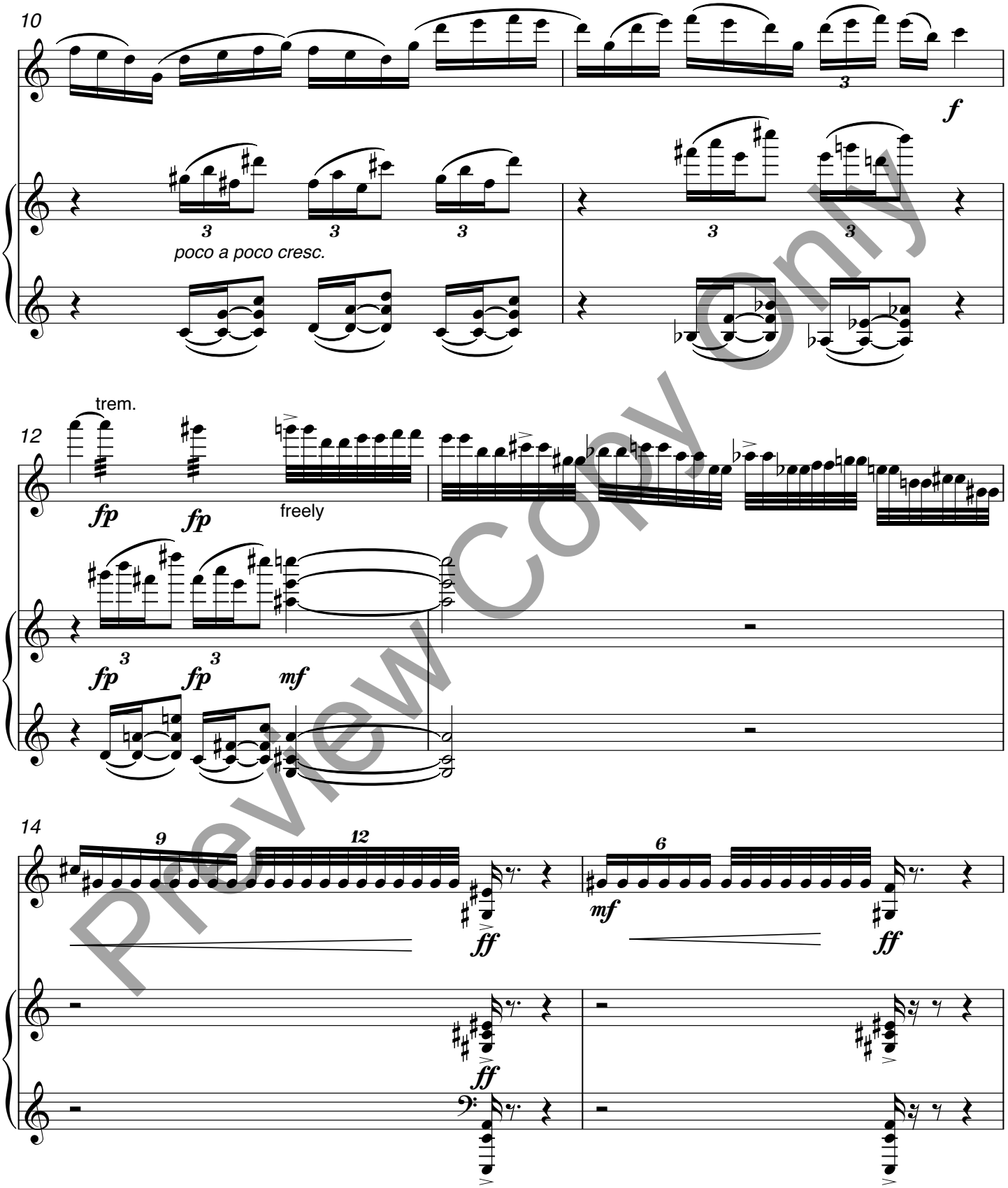


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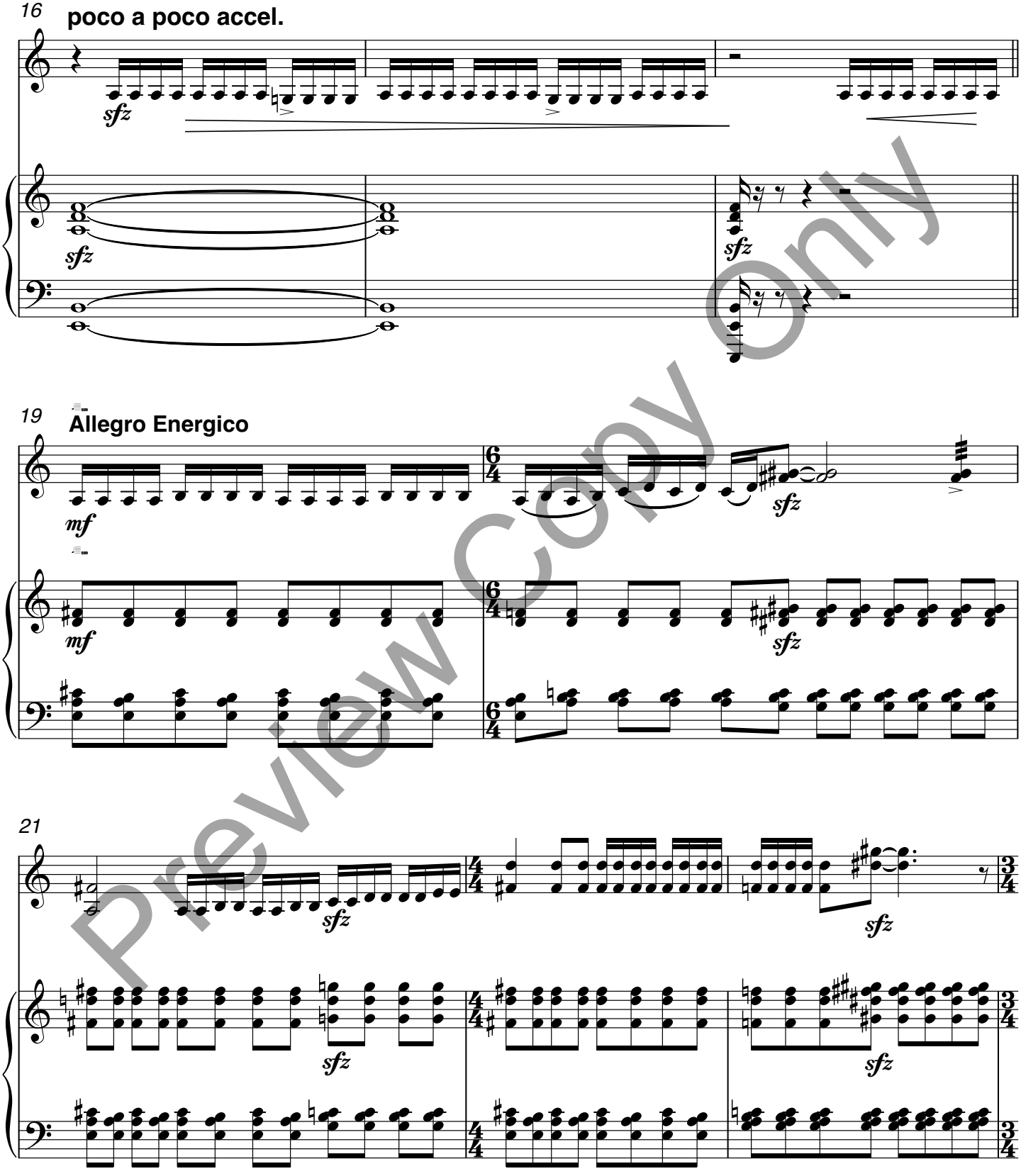


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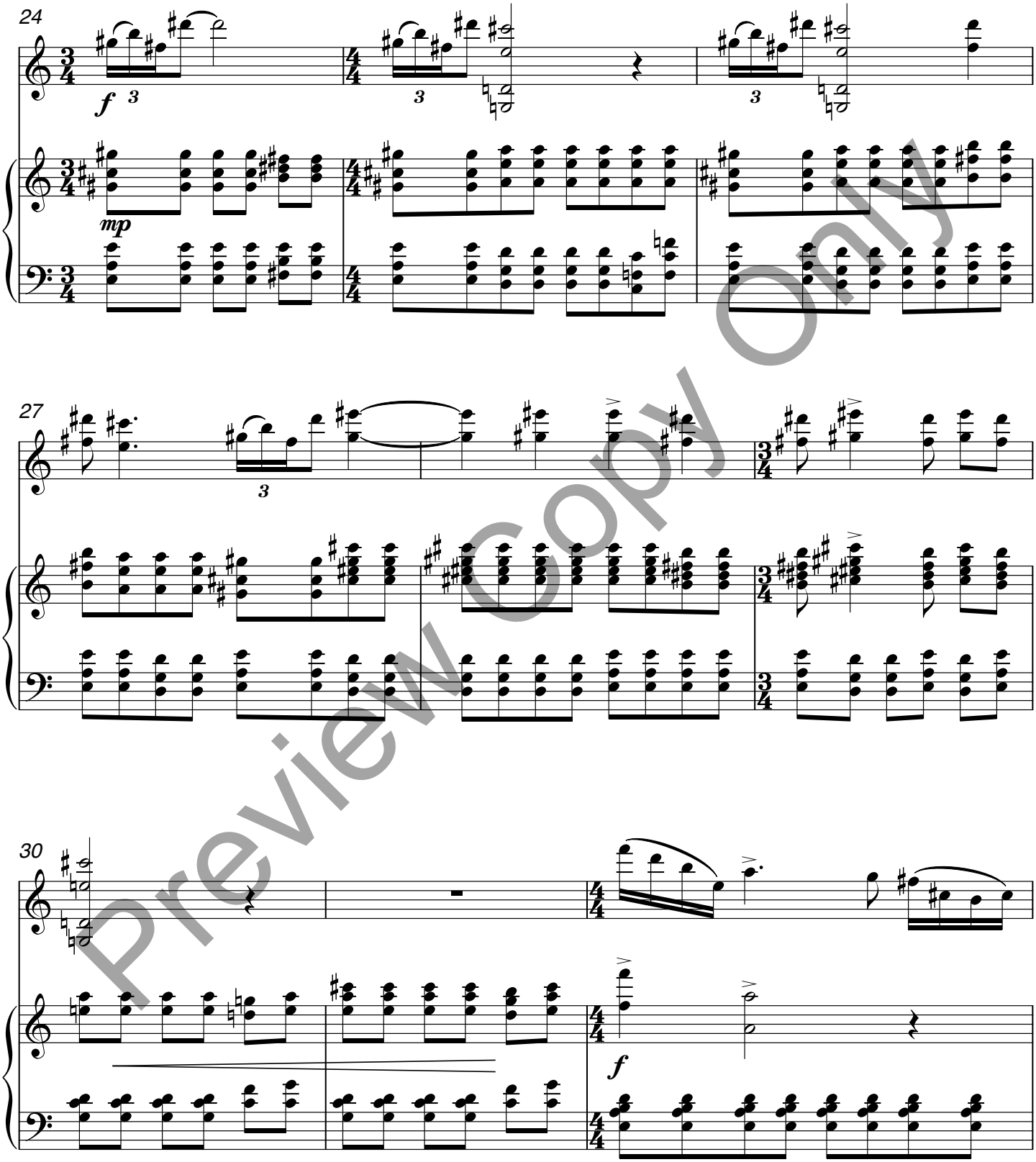


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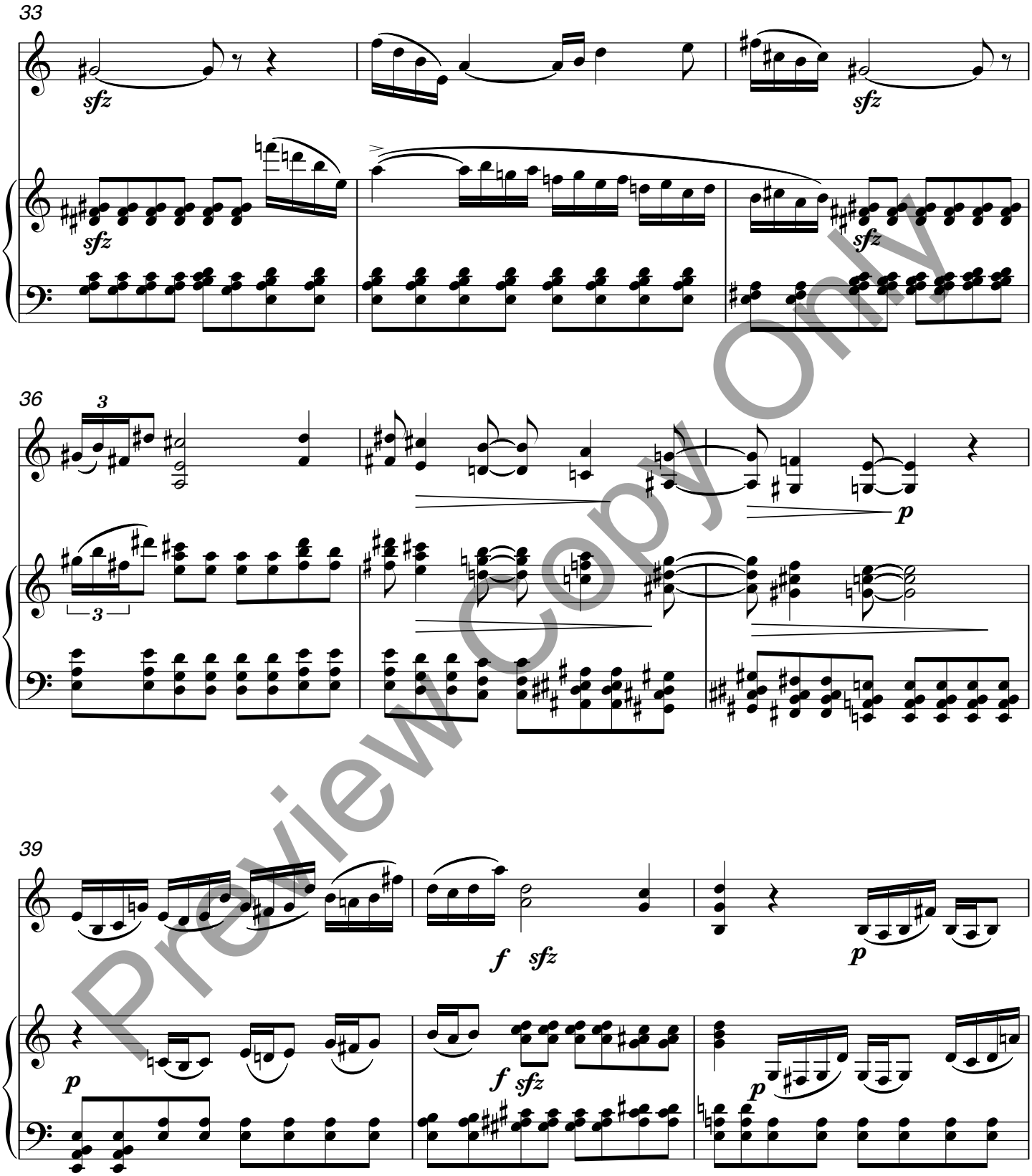


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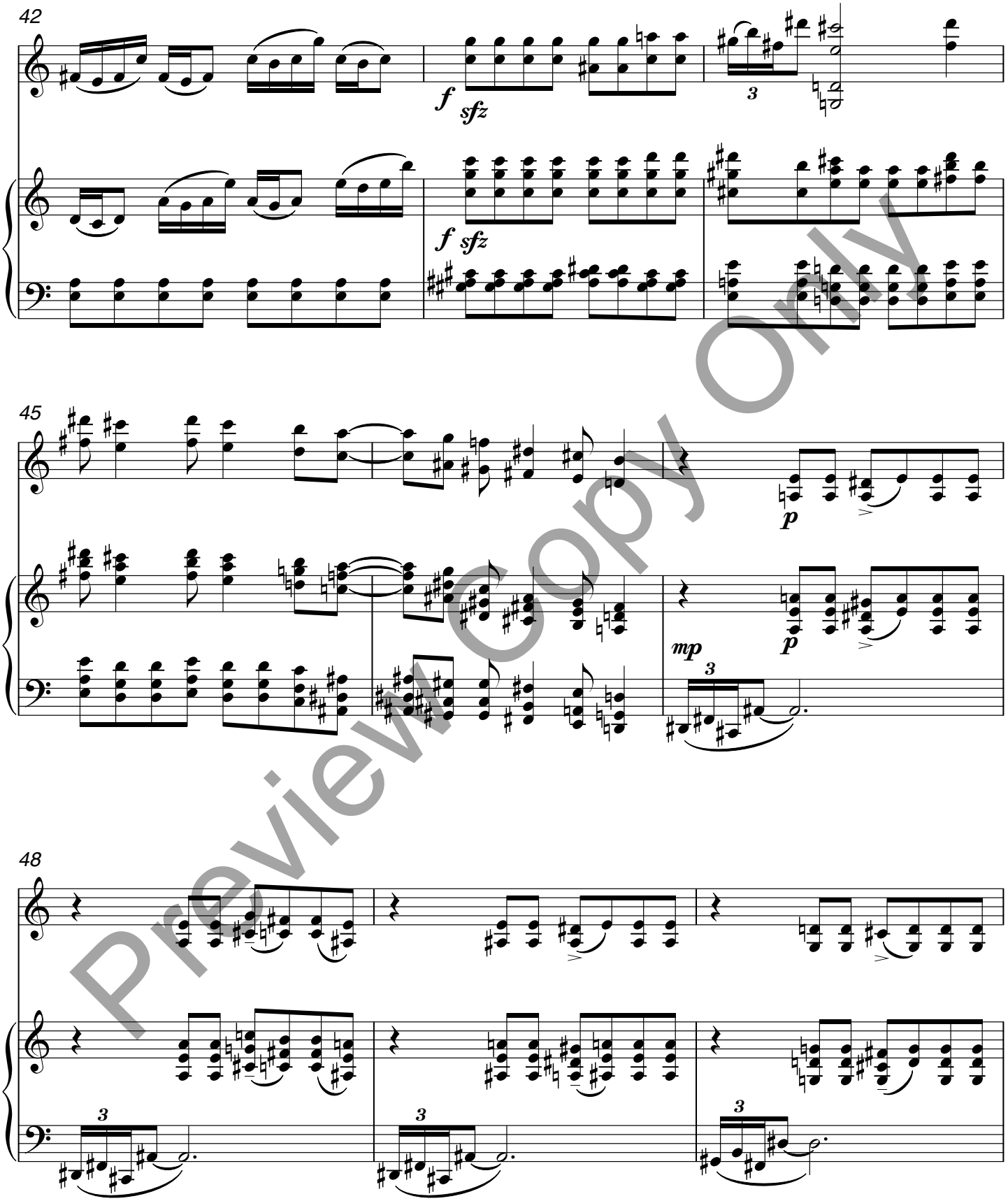


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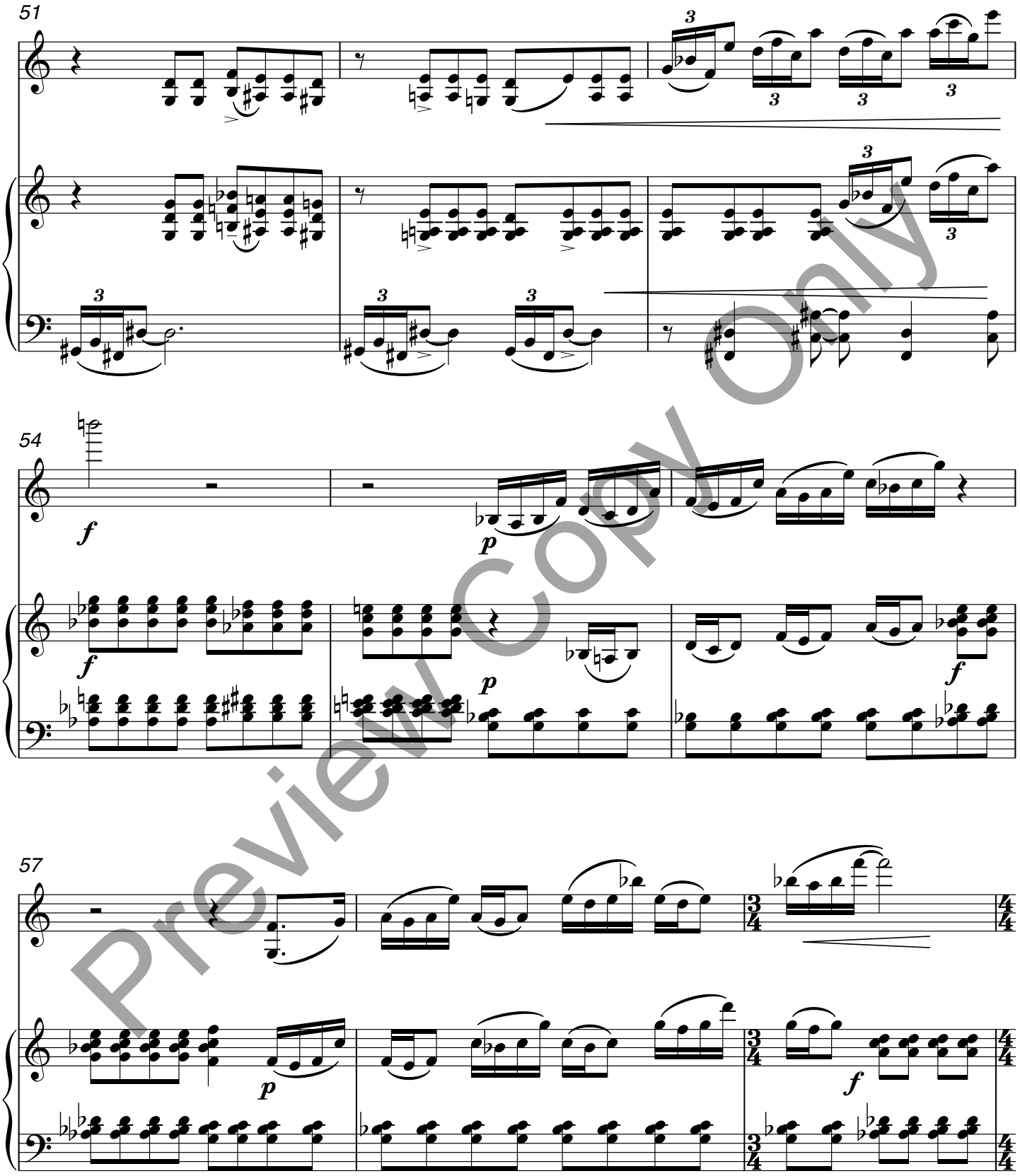


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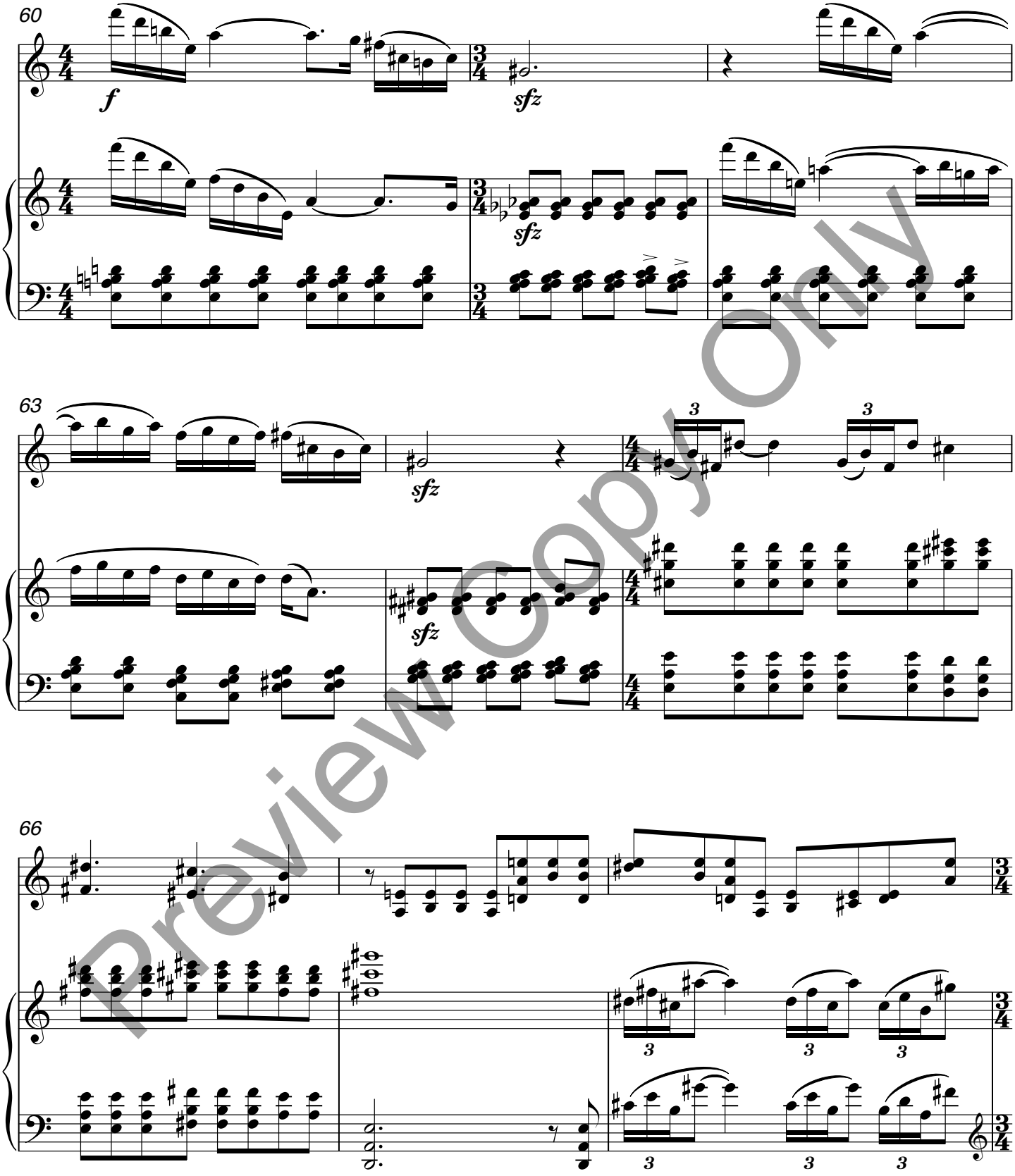


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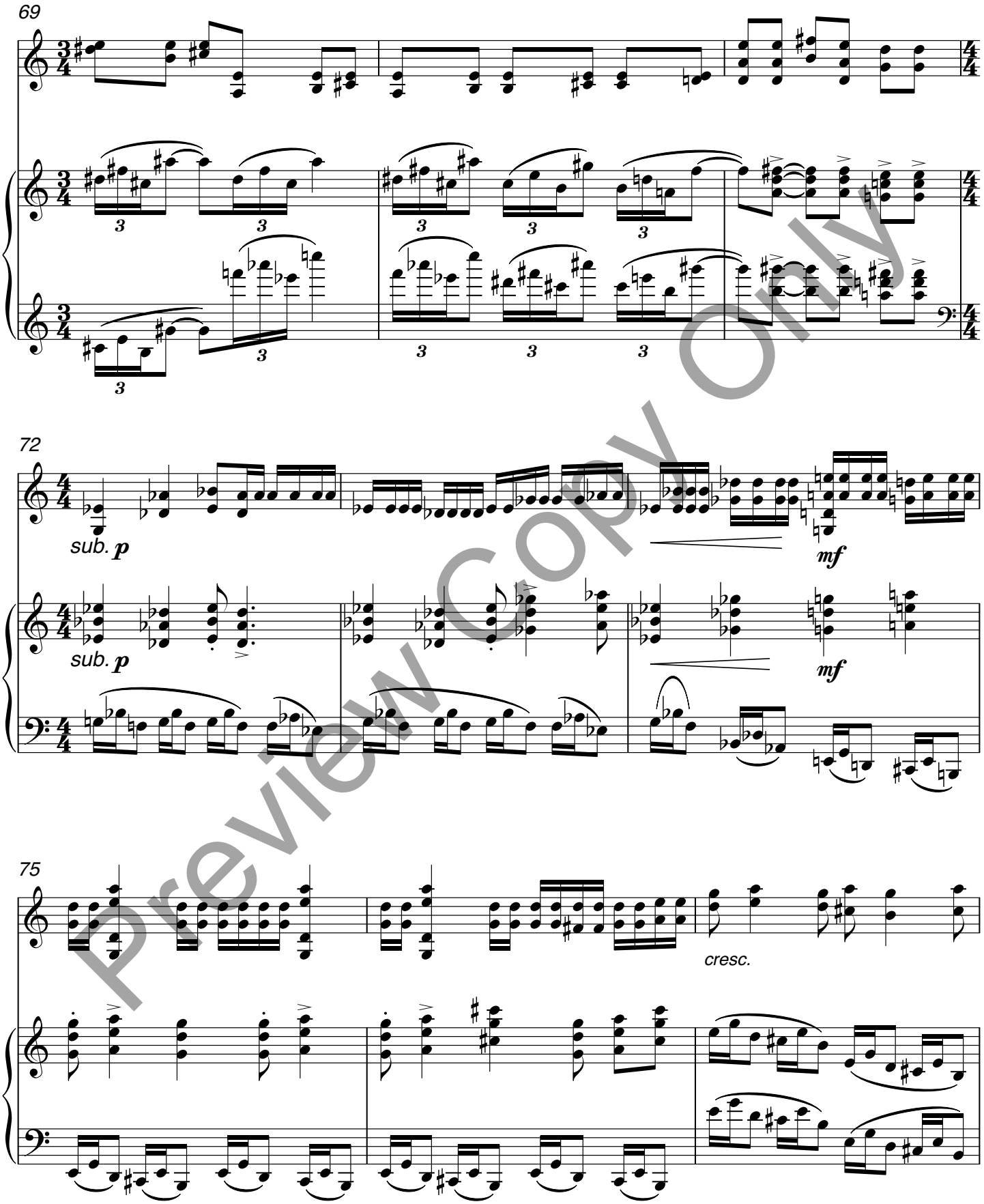


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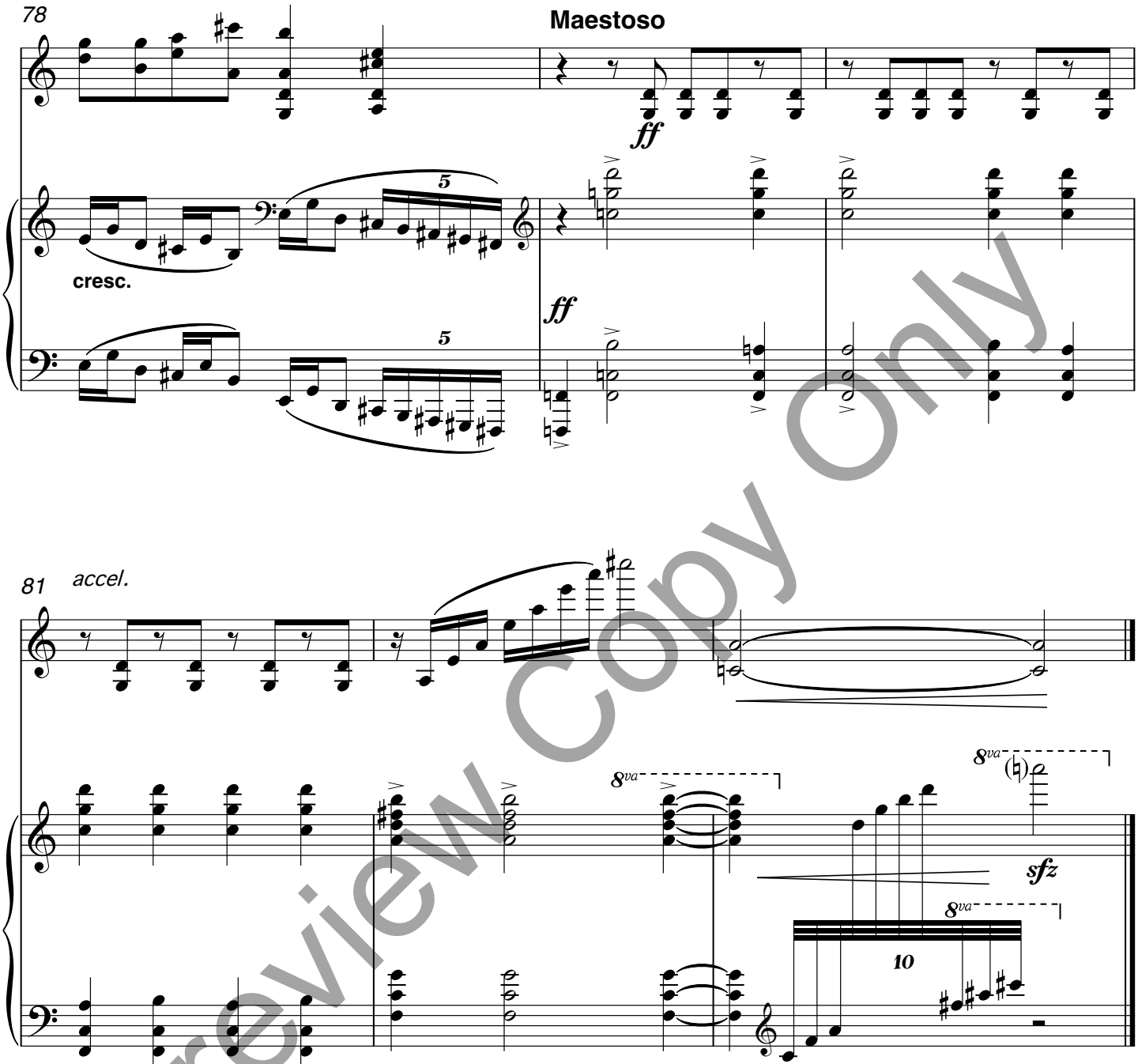


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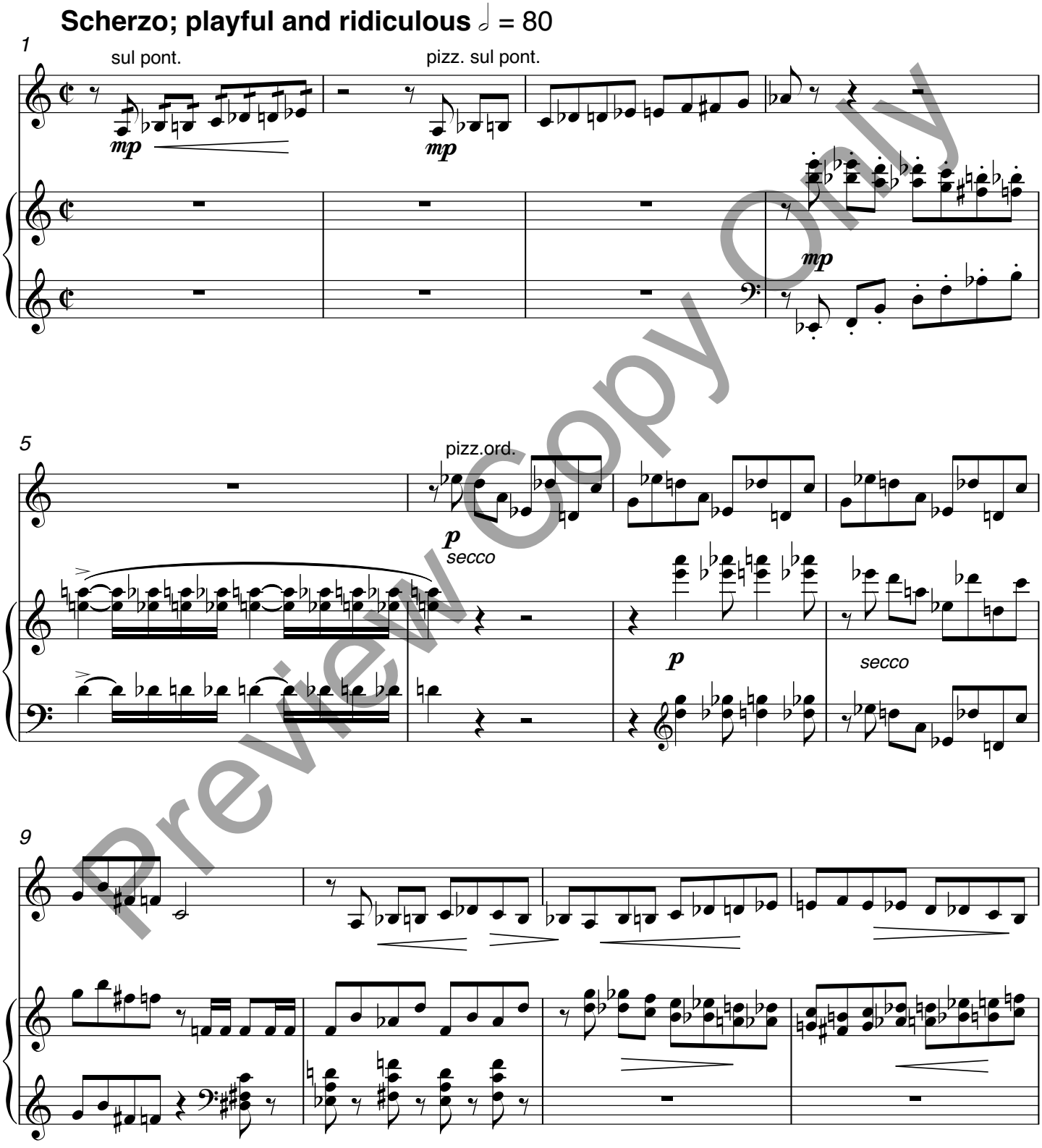
# II. Bureaucracy Runaround

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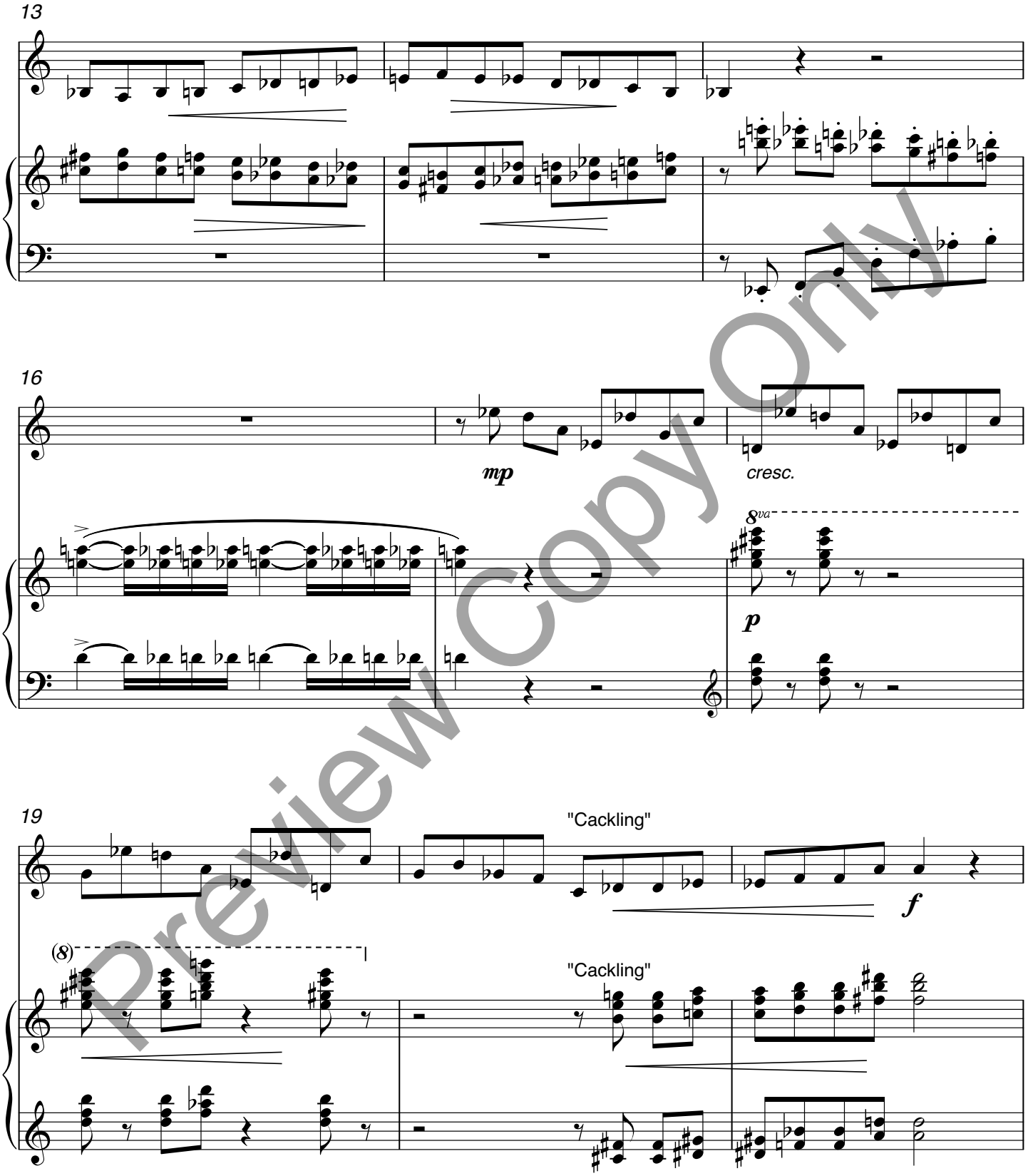


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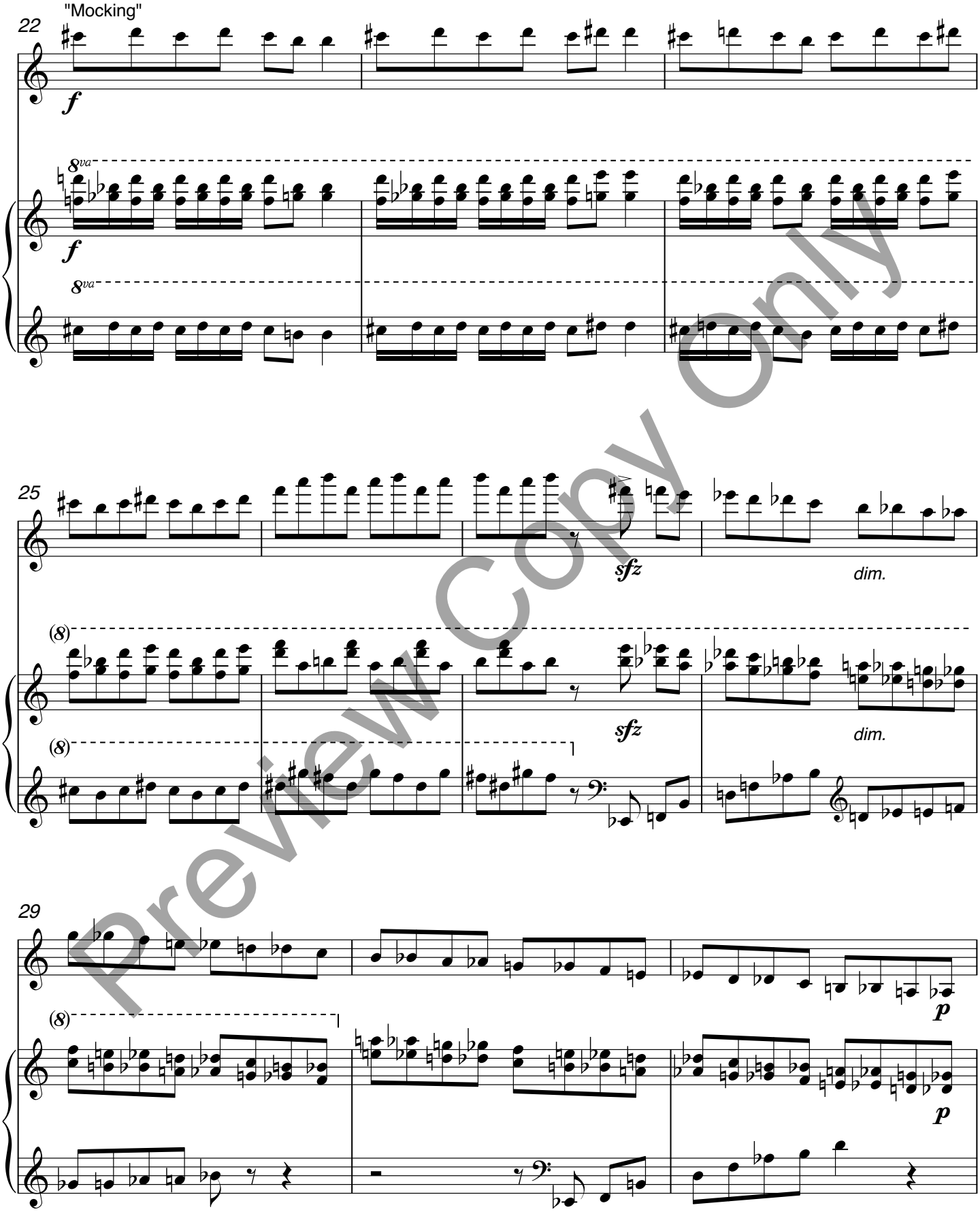


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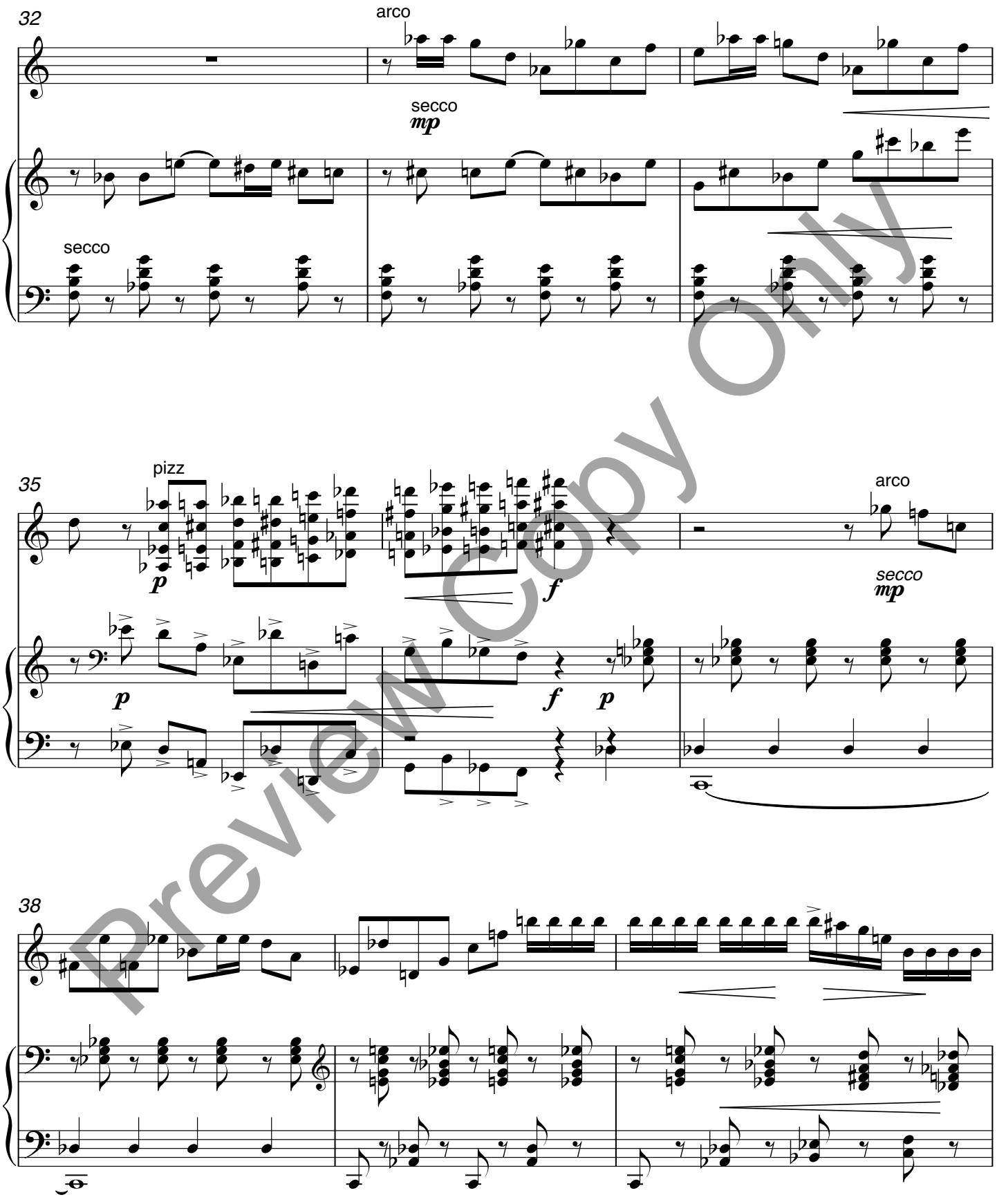


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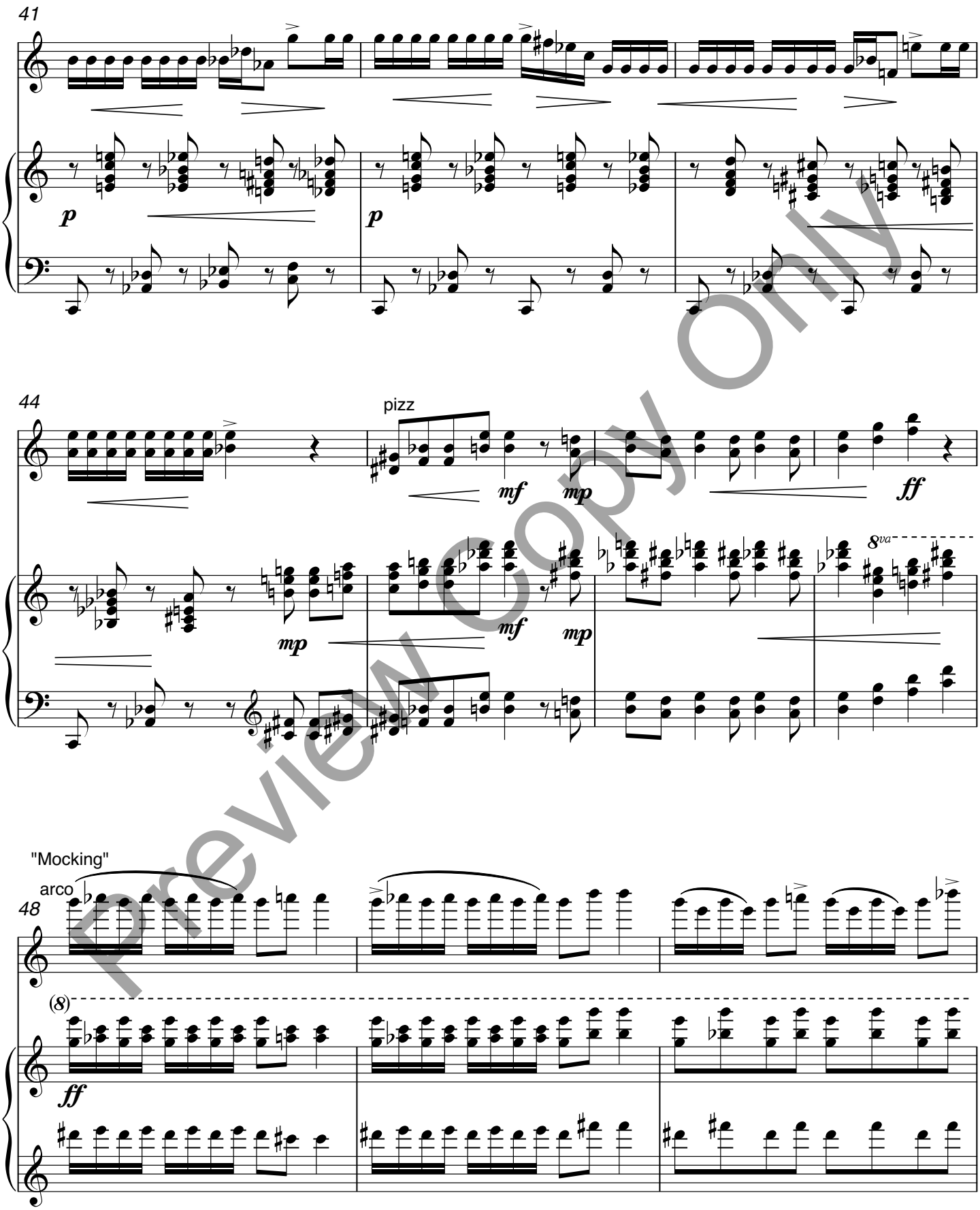


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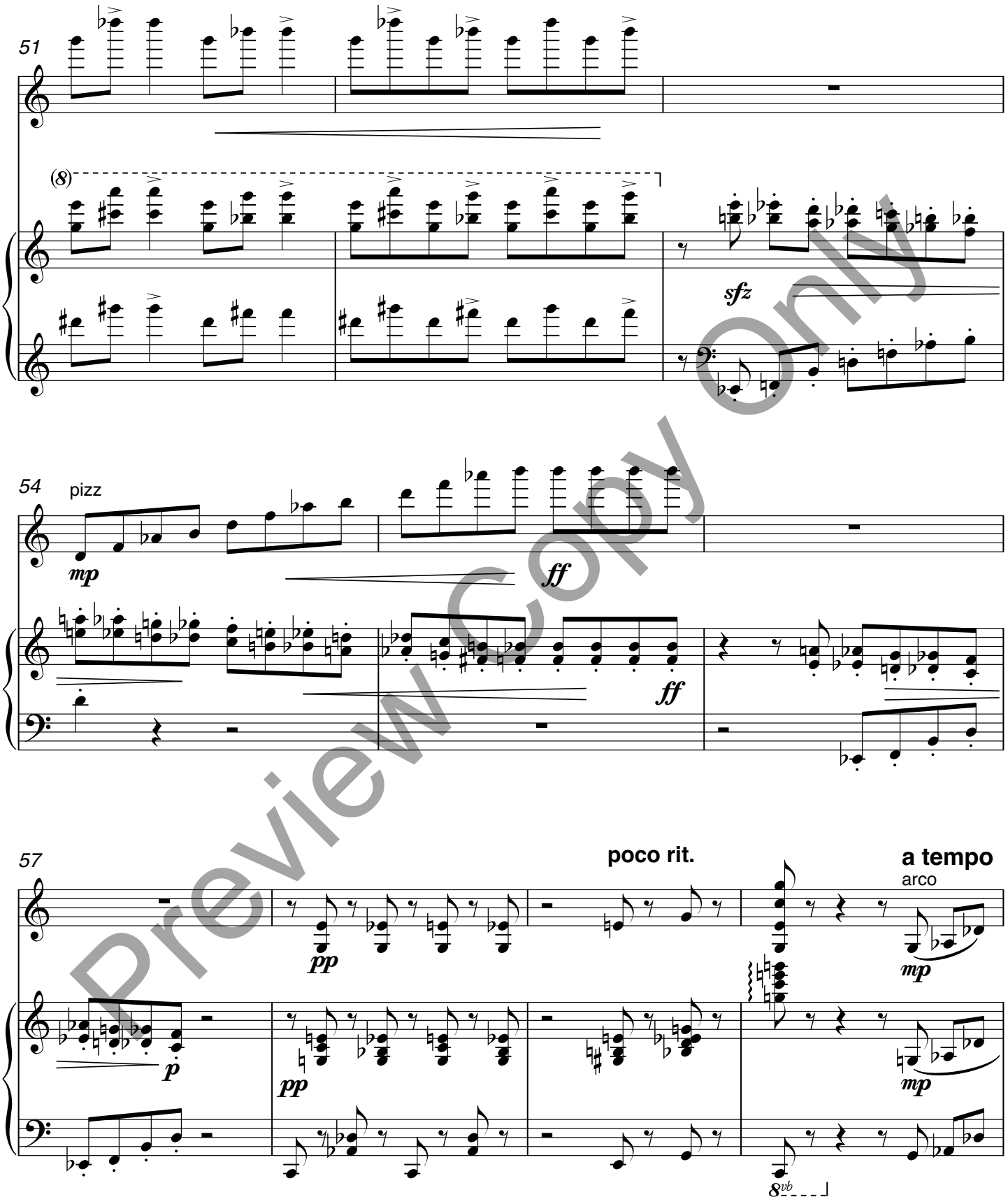


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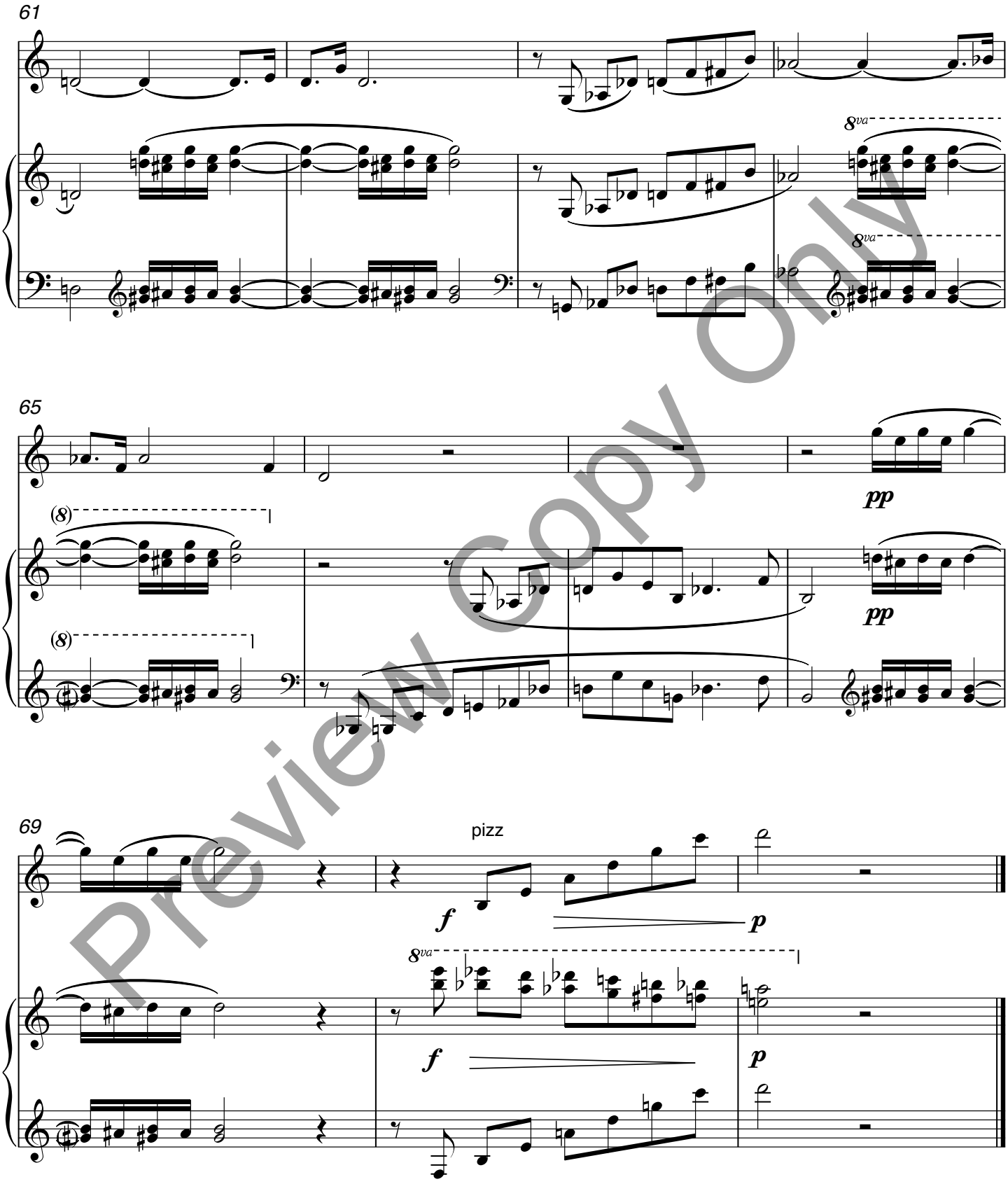



Preview Copy Only

# III. Tears in Kosovo

**Andante con espressivo ♩ = 66**

*con espress.*
*con sord.*

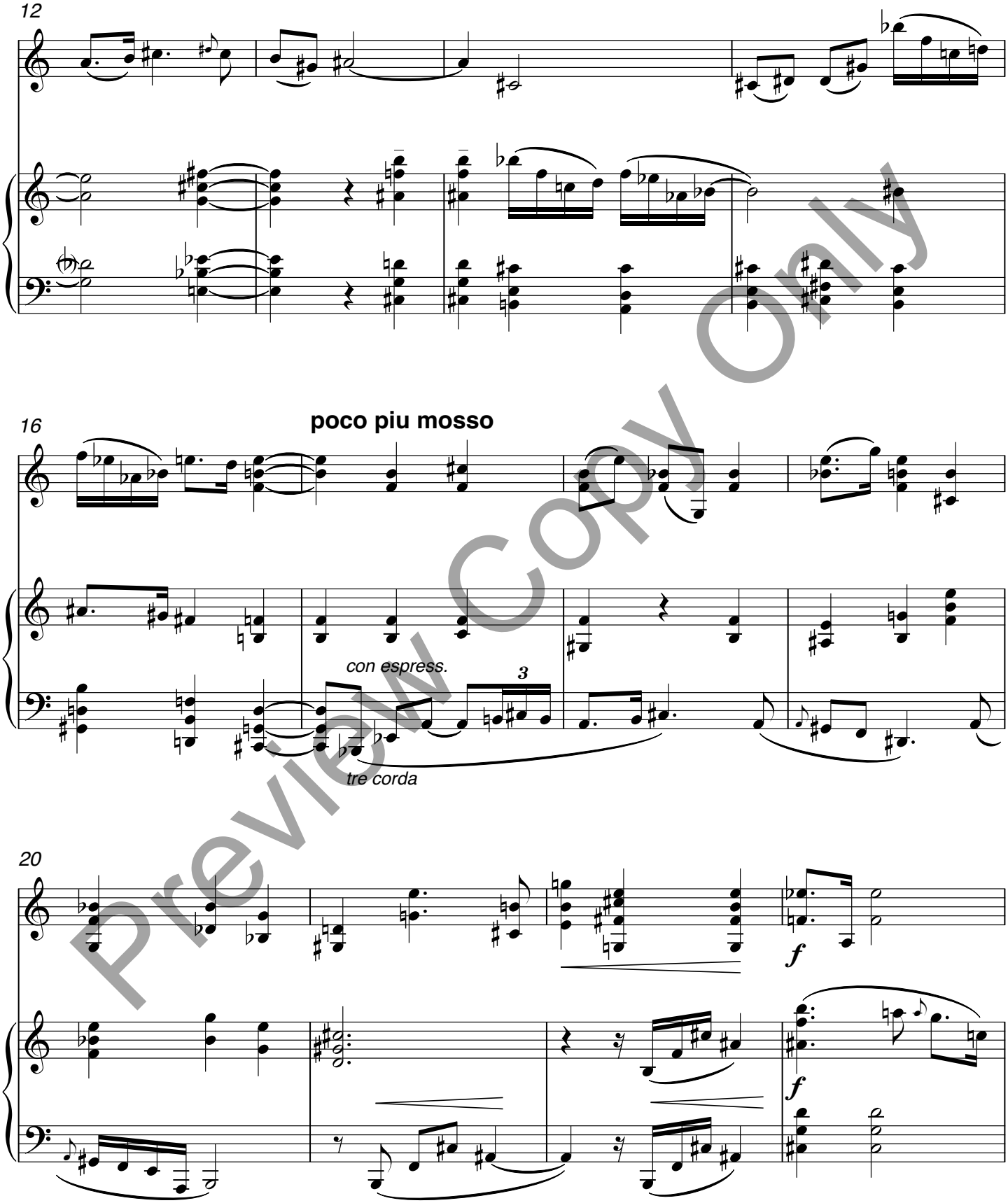
1

*una corda*

4

8

Preview Copy Only

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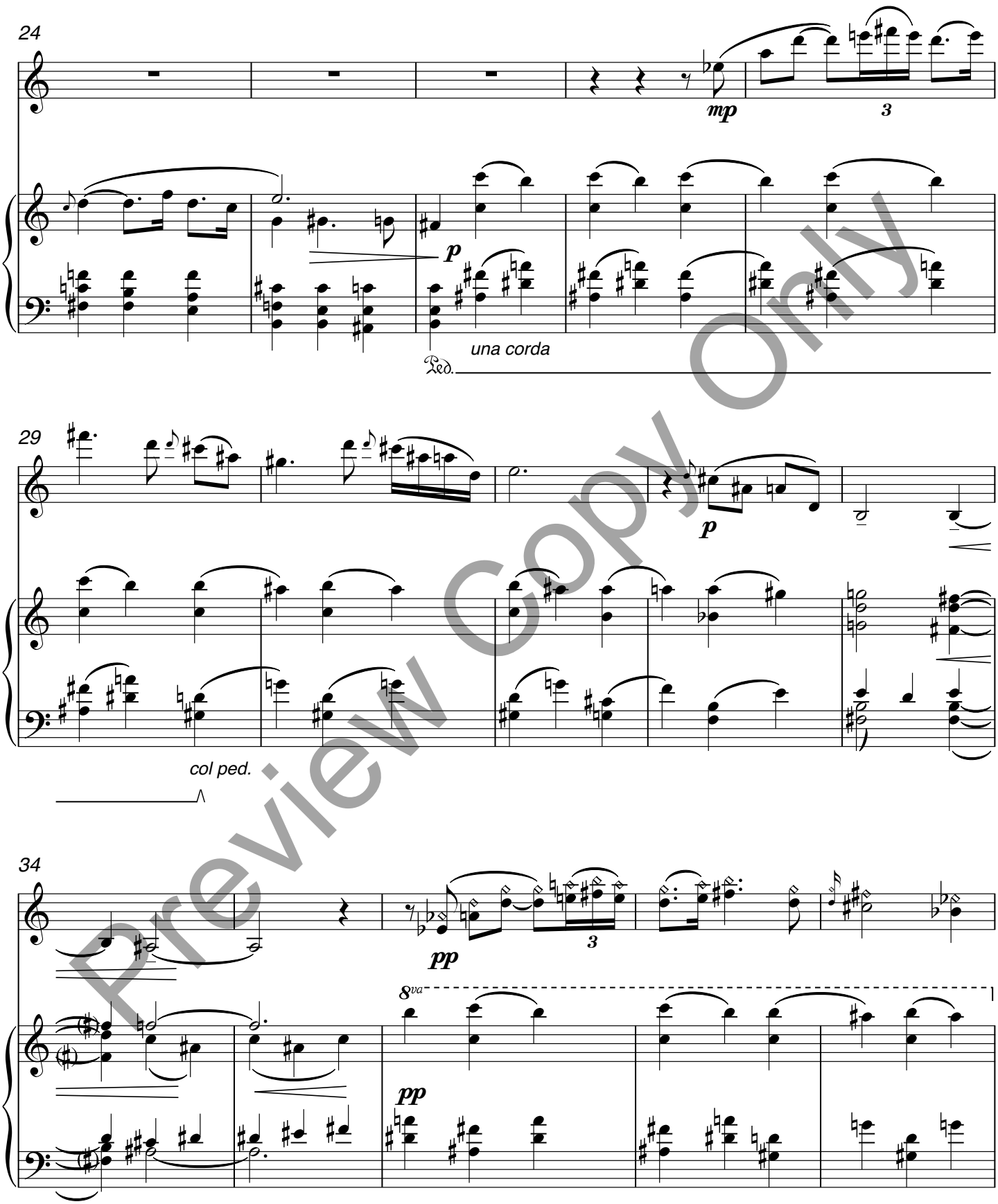


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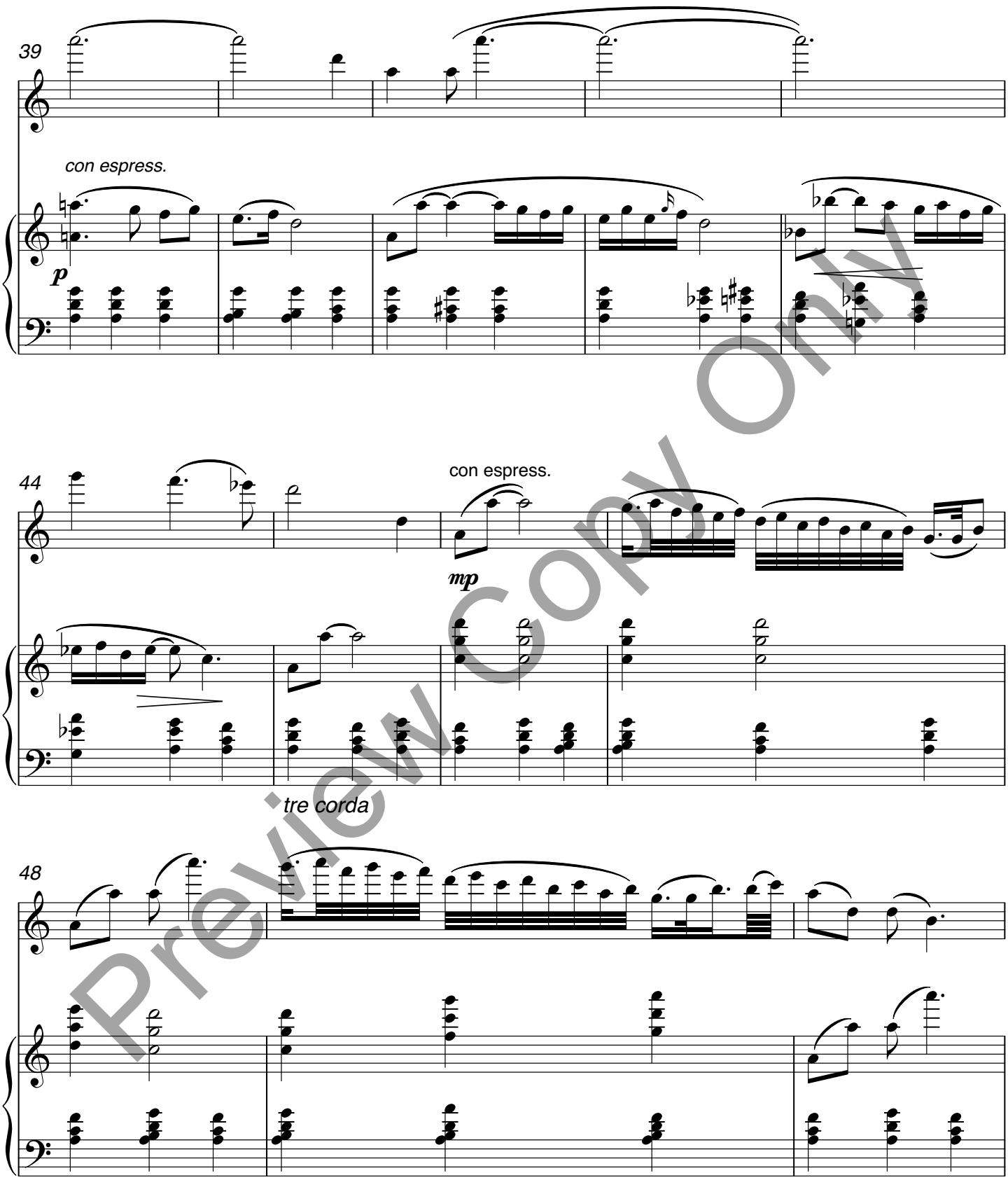


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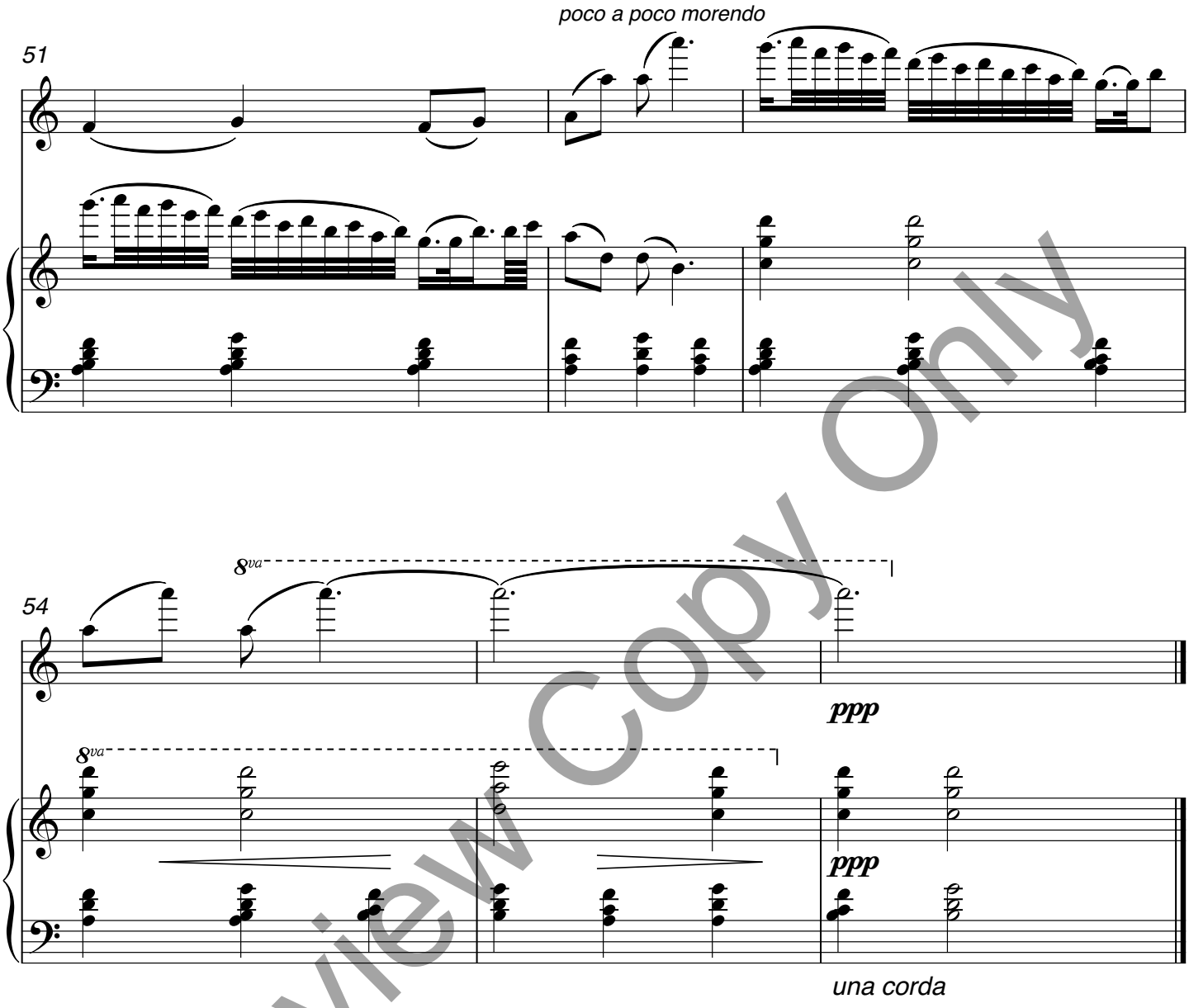


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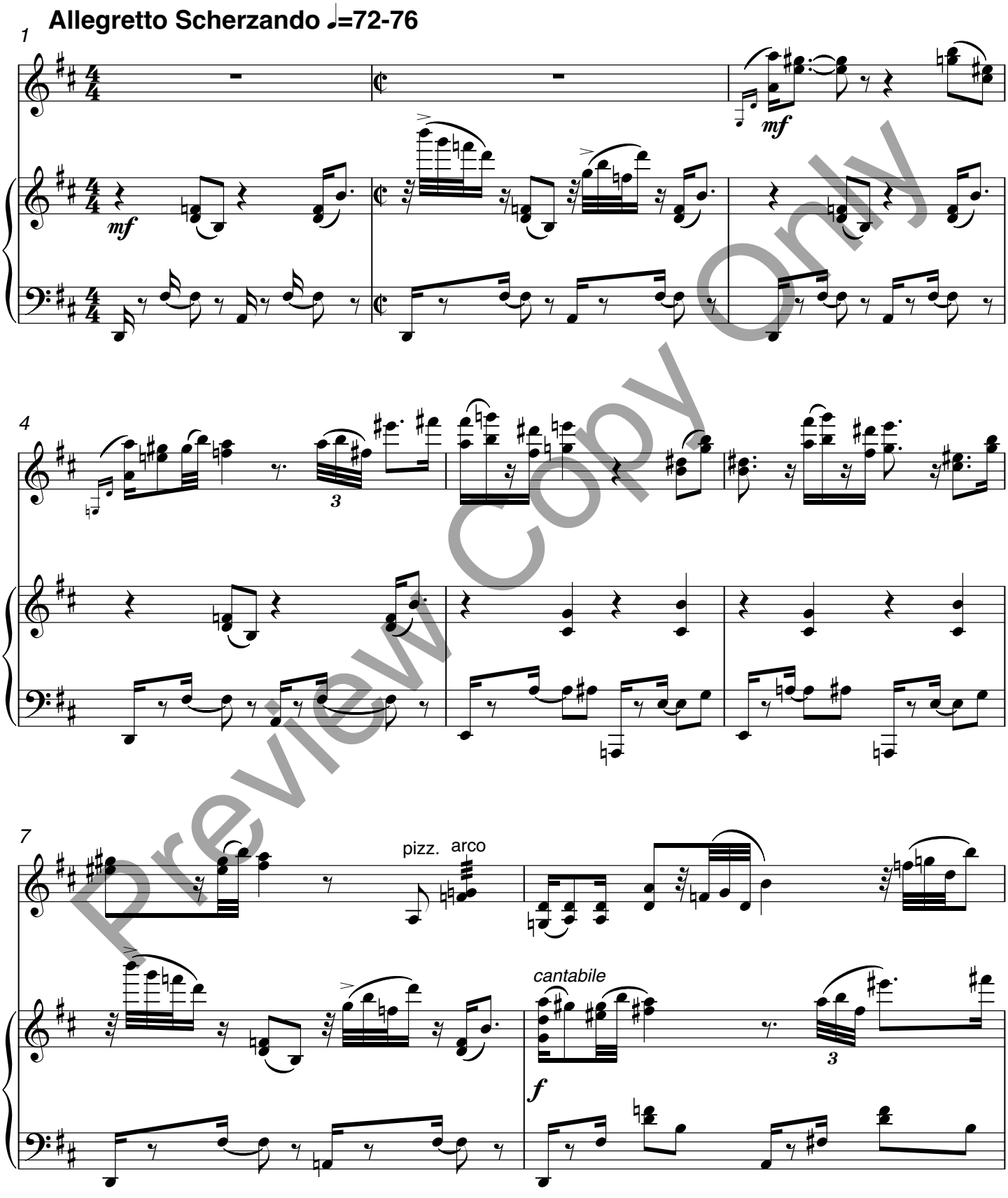
# IV. Missing Violin Tango

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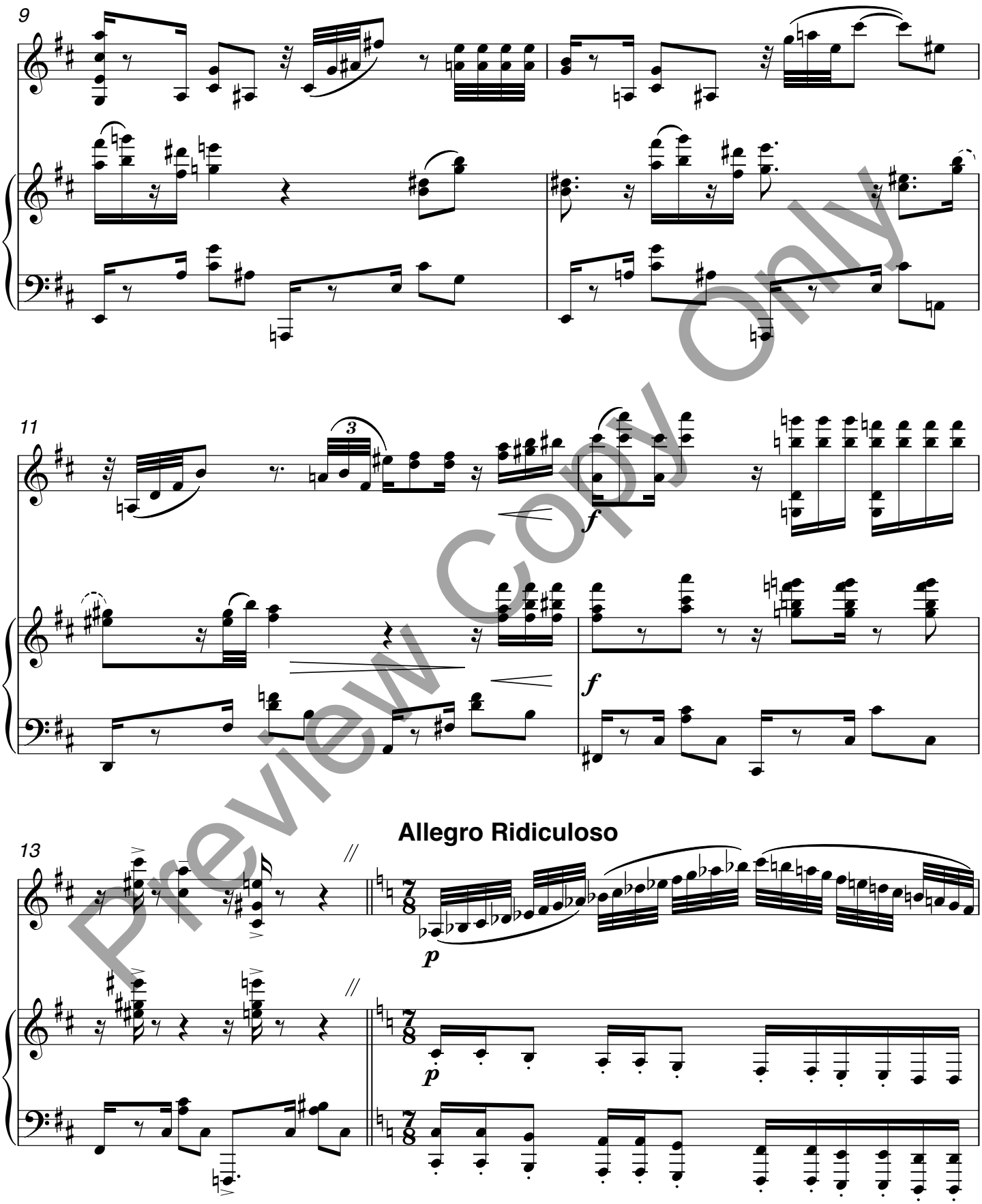


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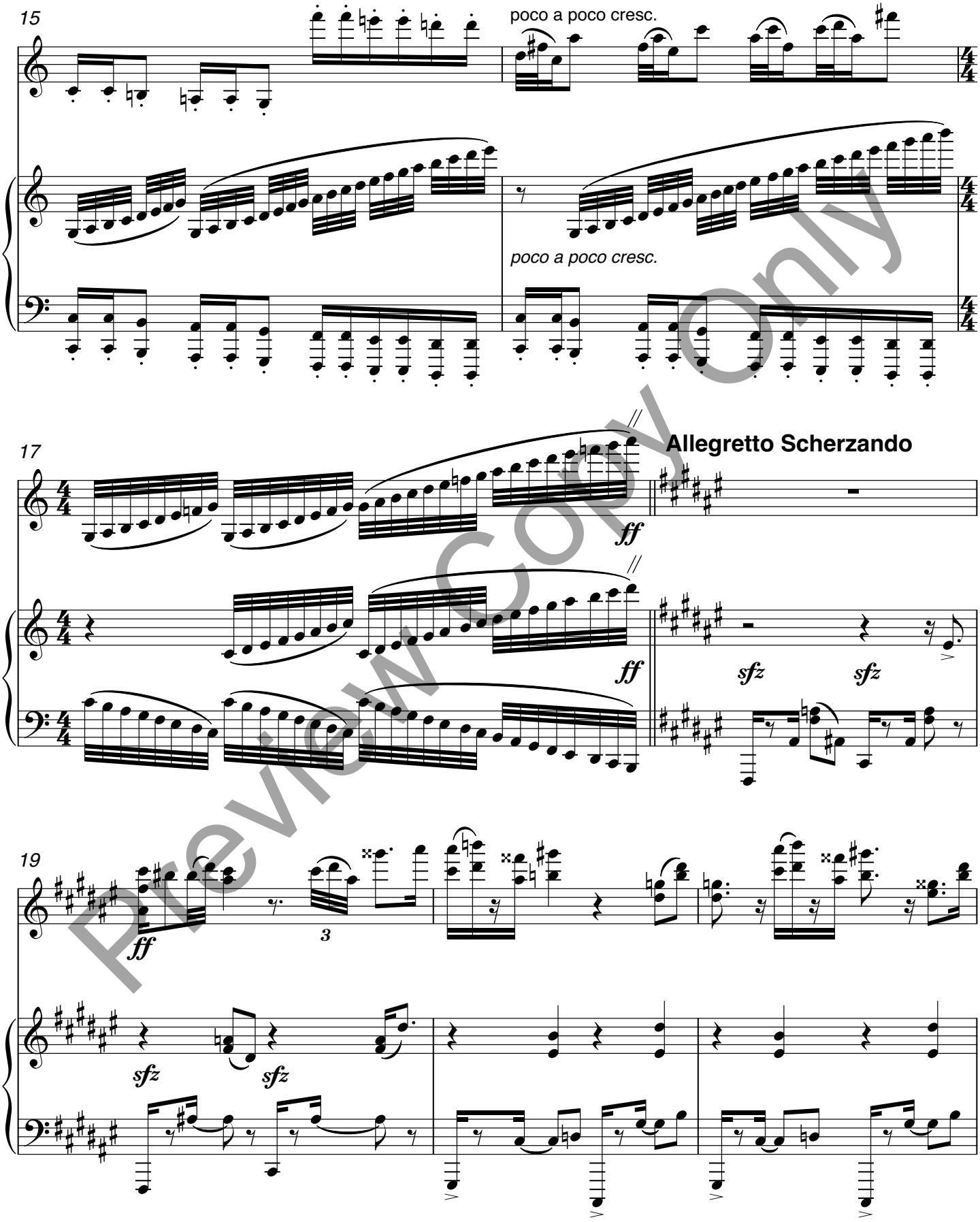


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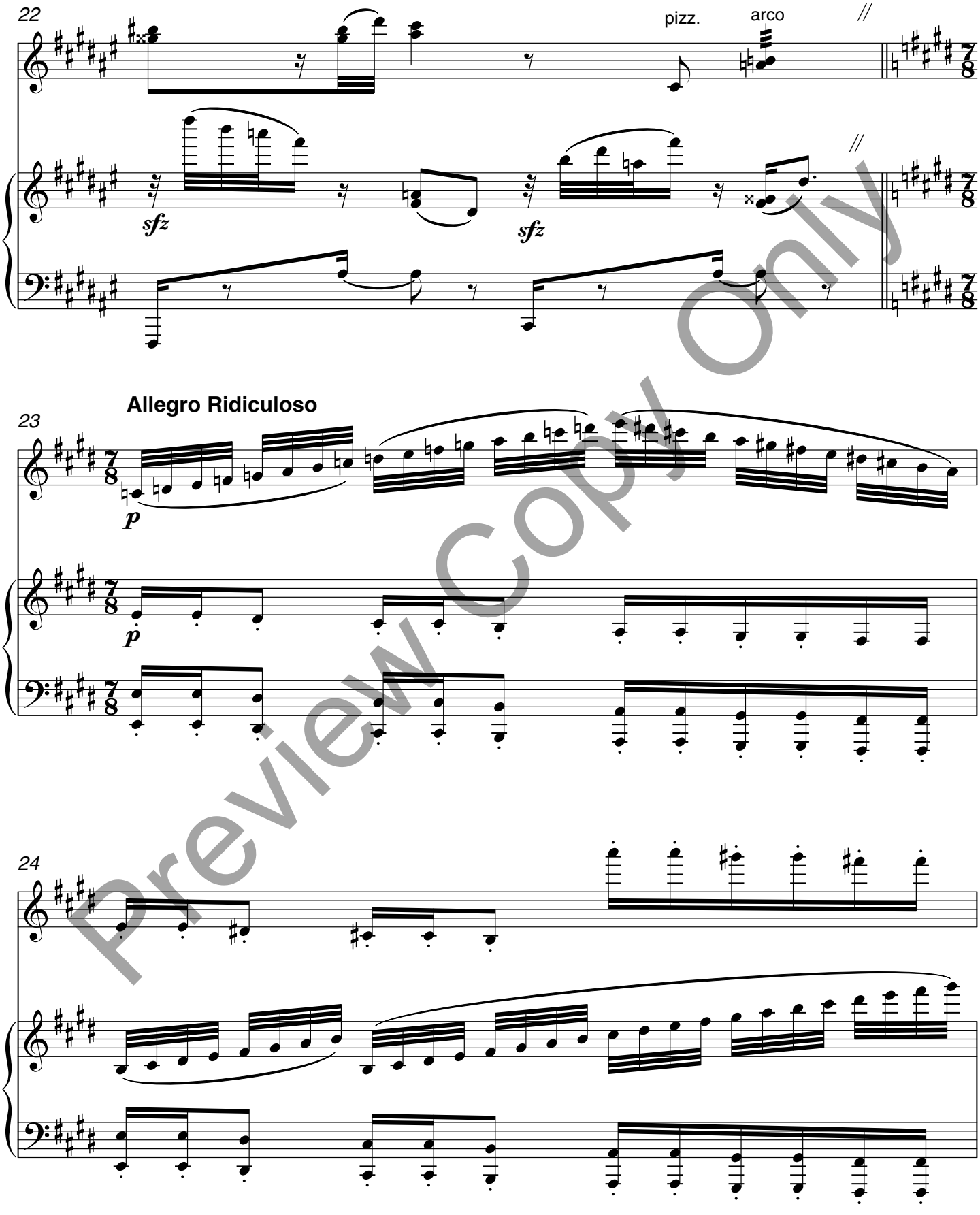


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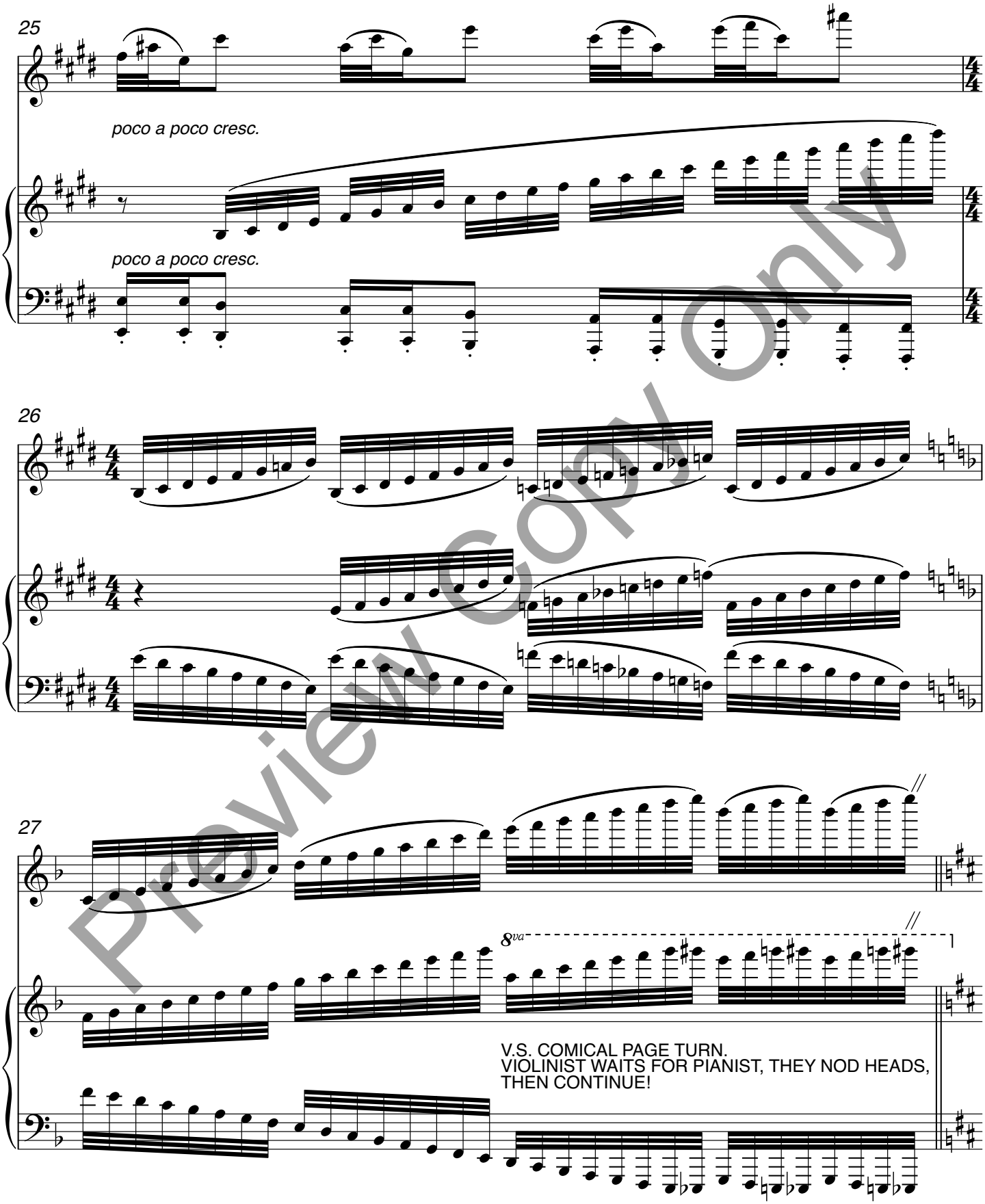


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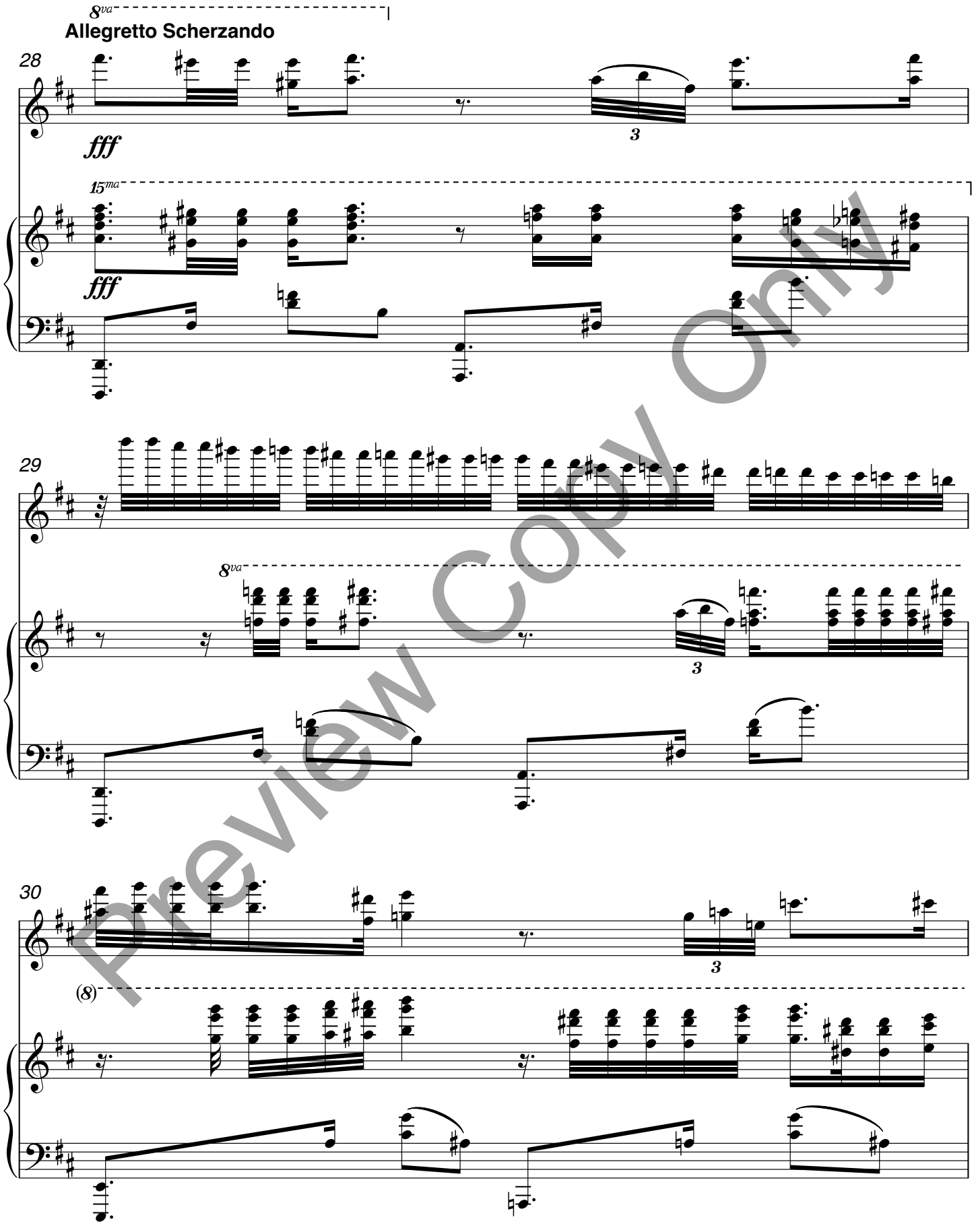


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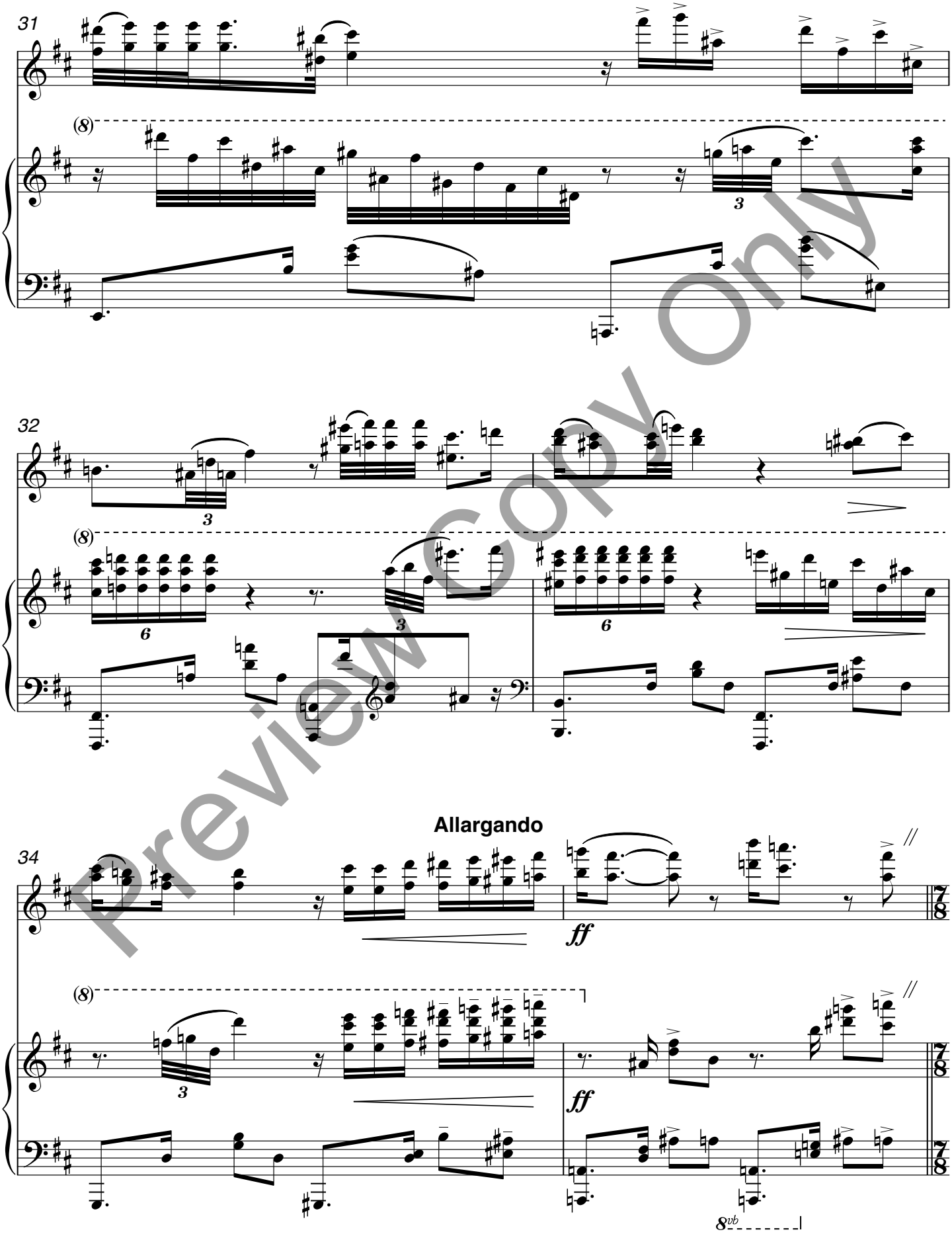


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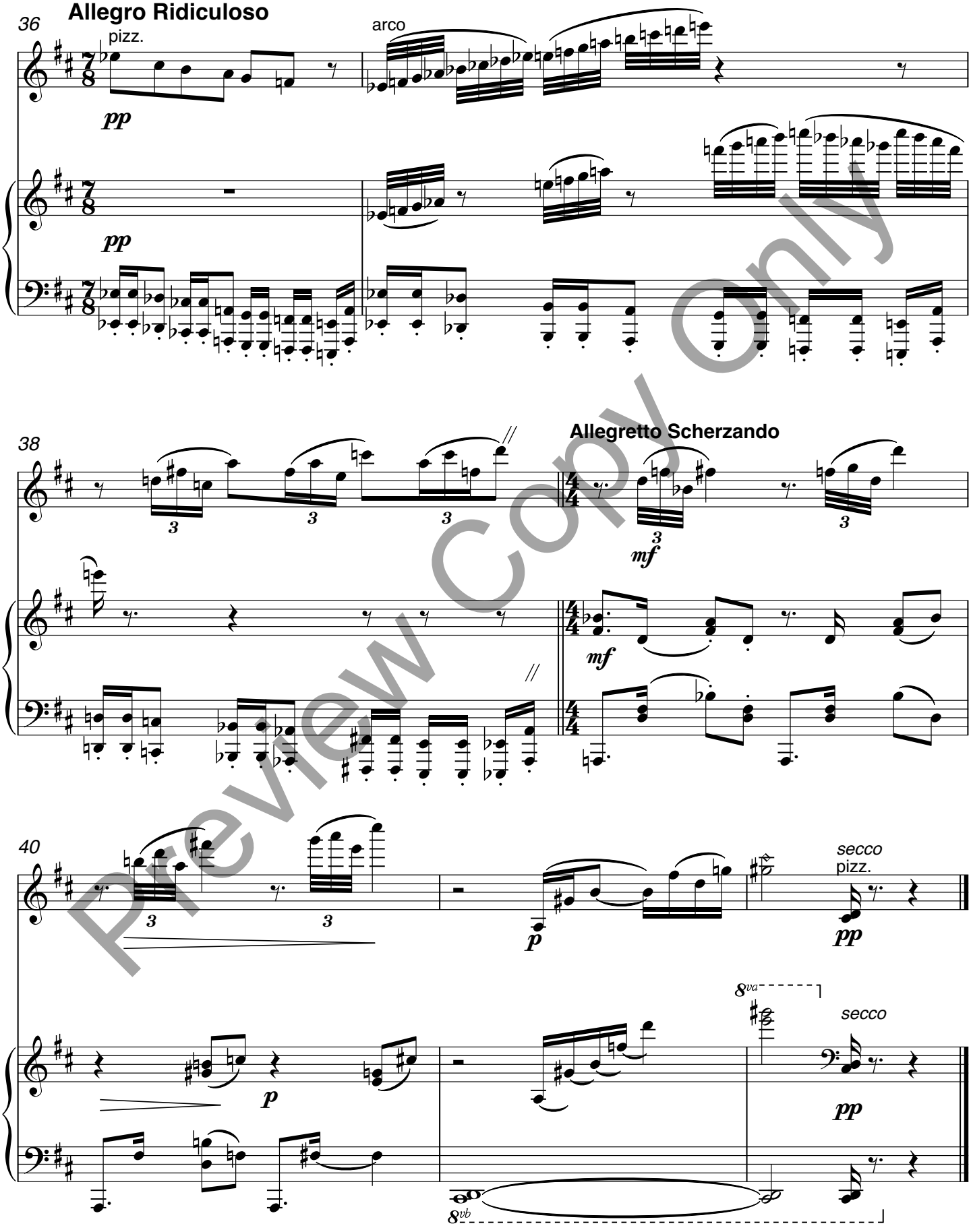


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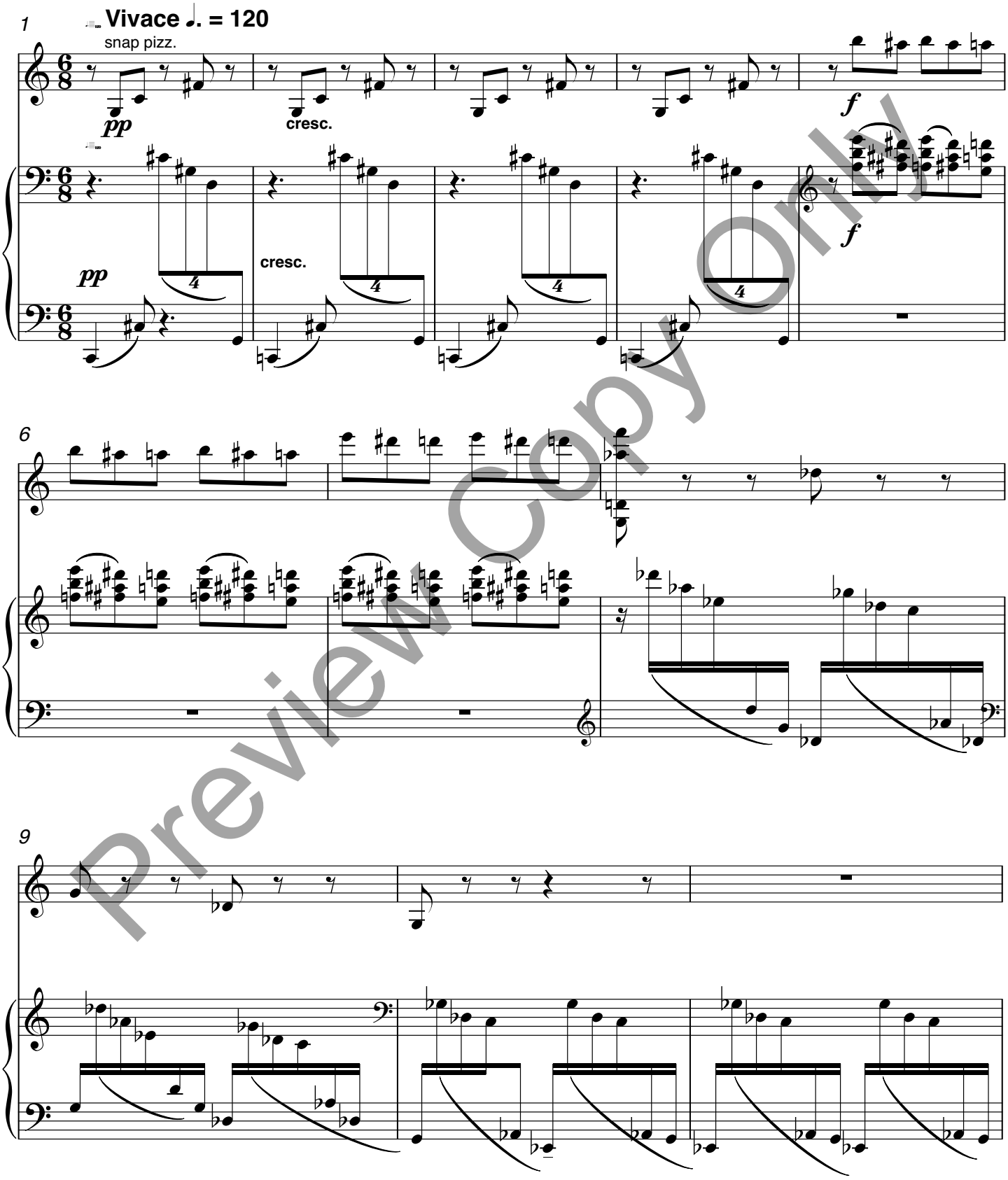
# V. Tanzanite Tarantella

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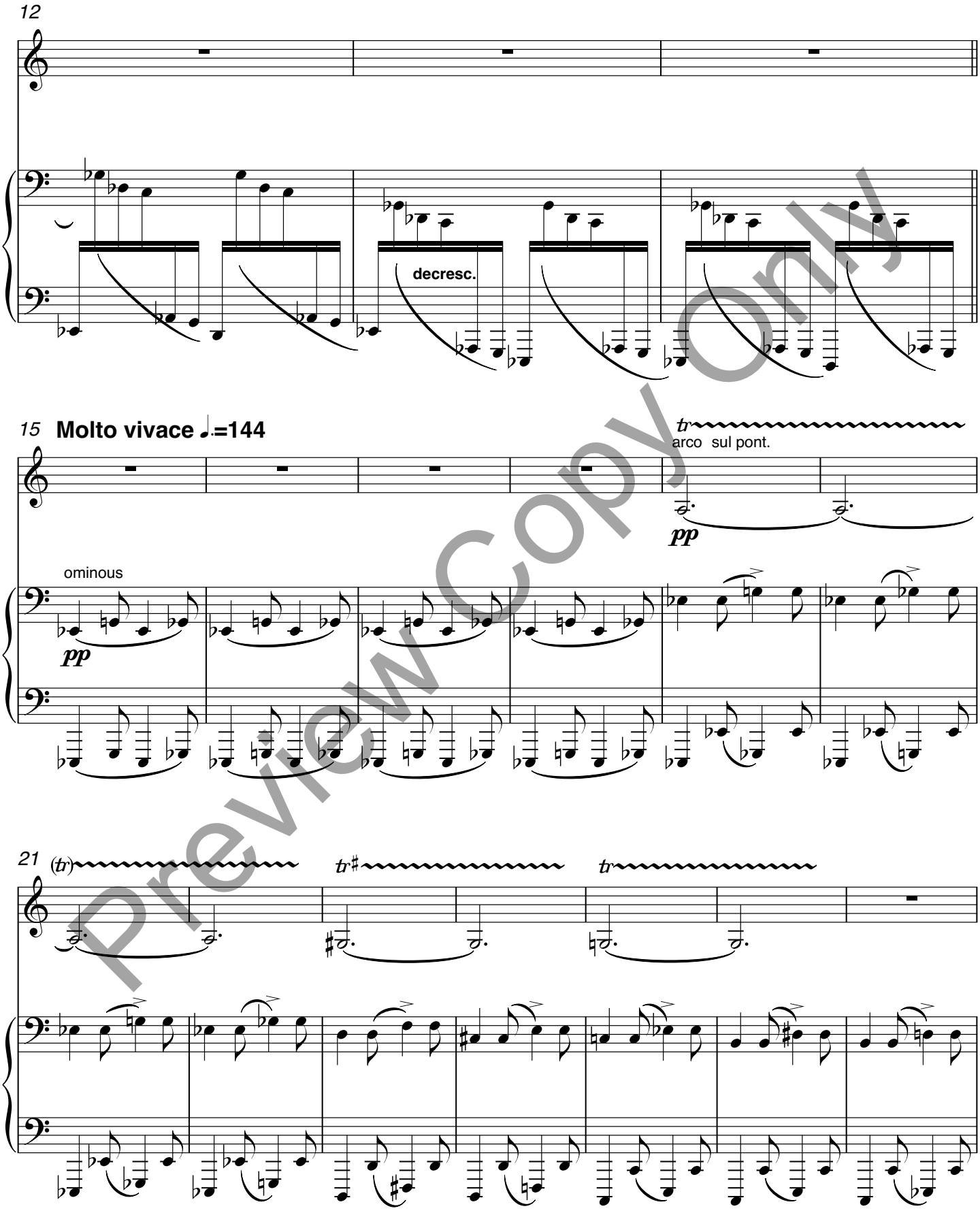


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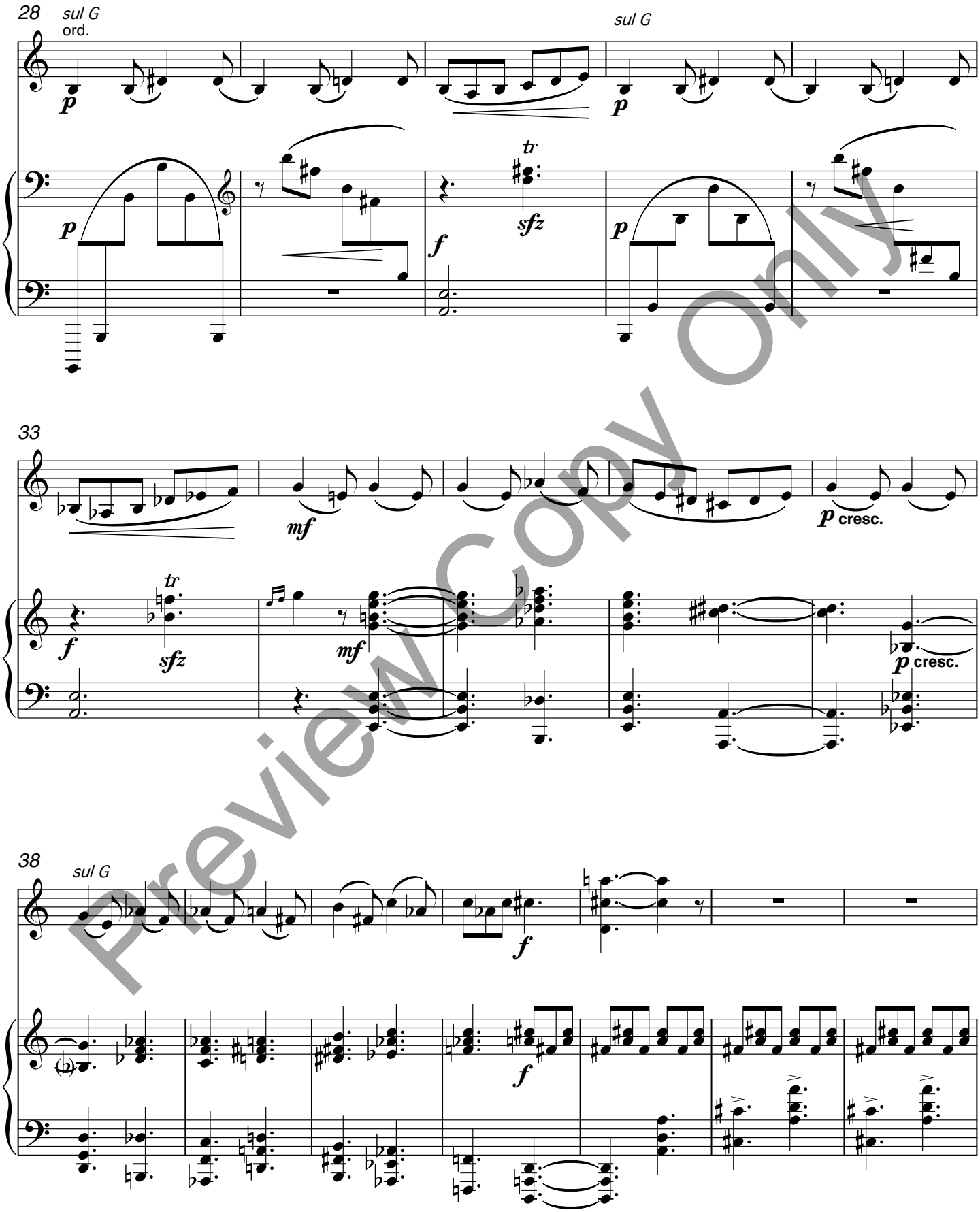


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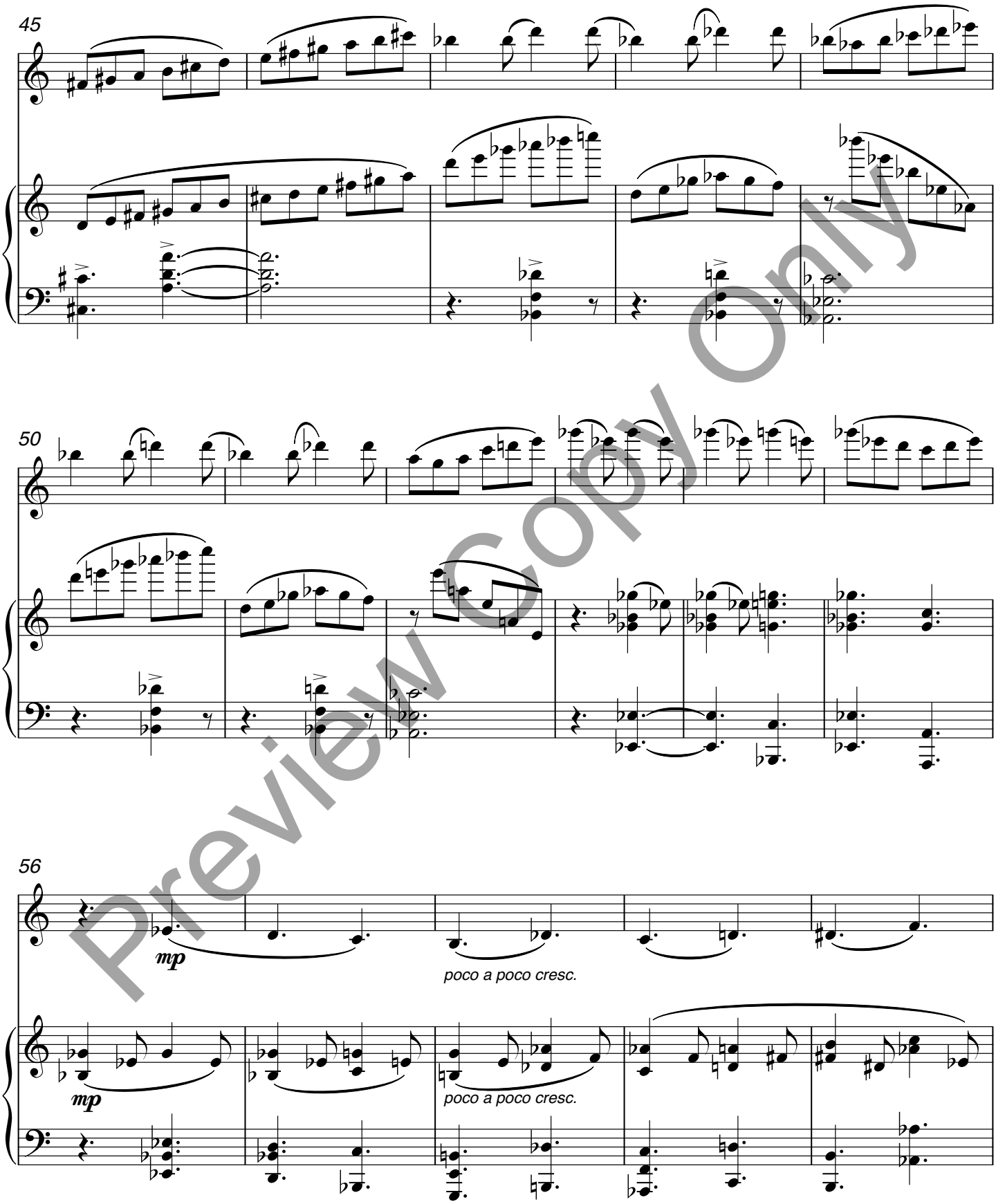


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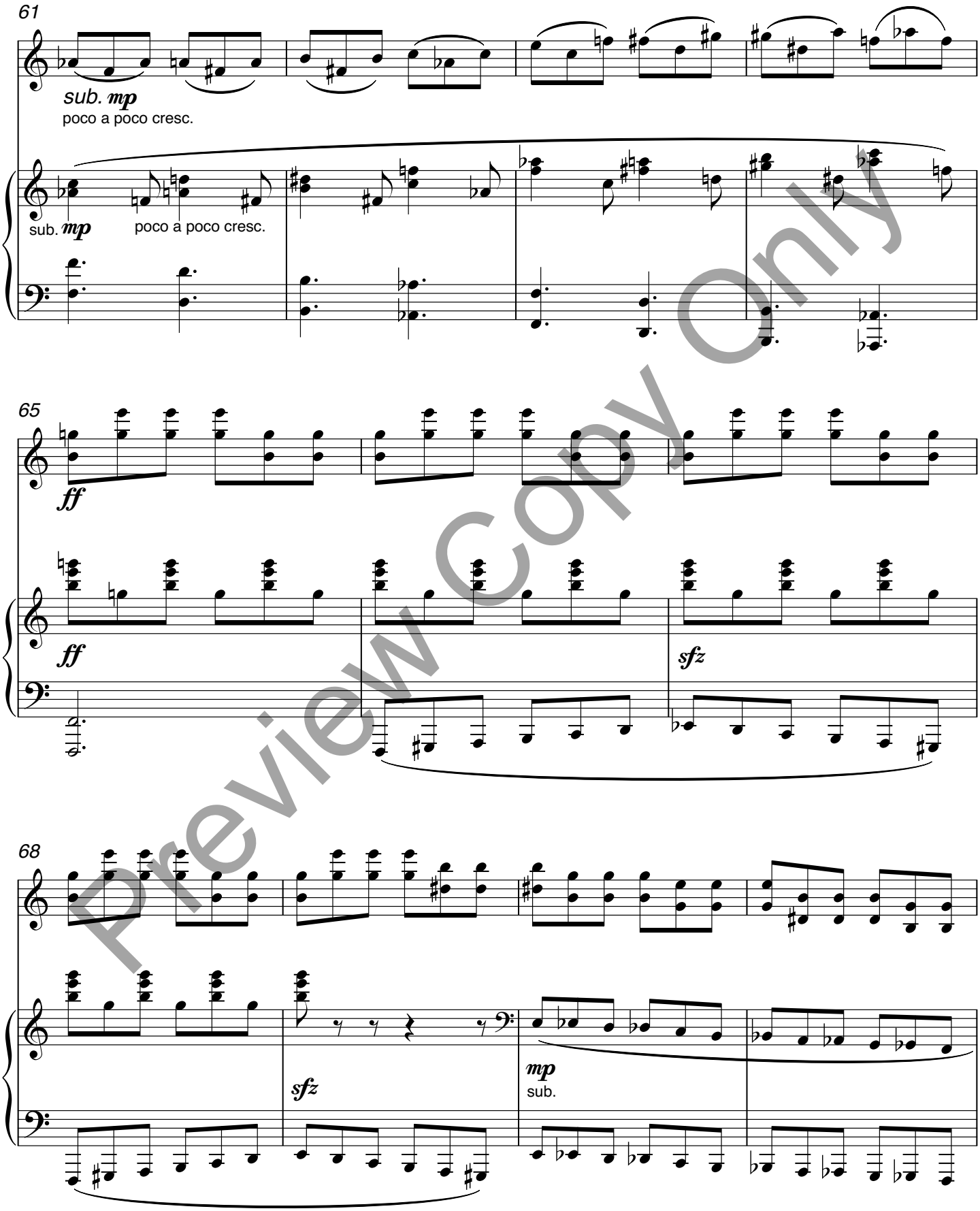


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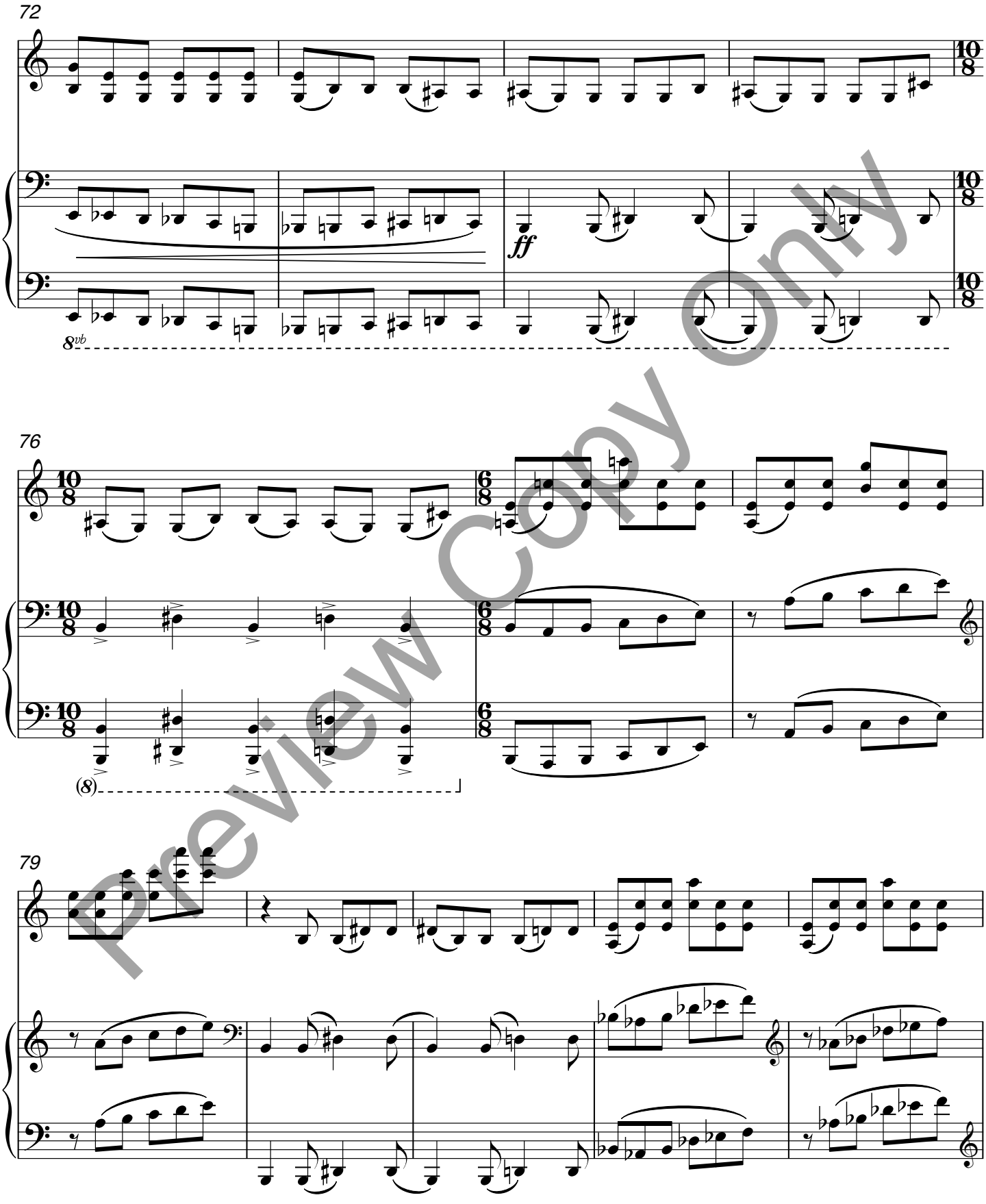


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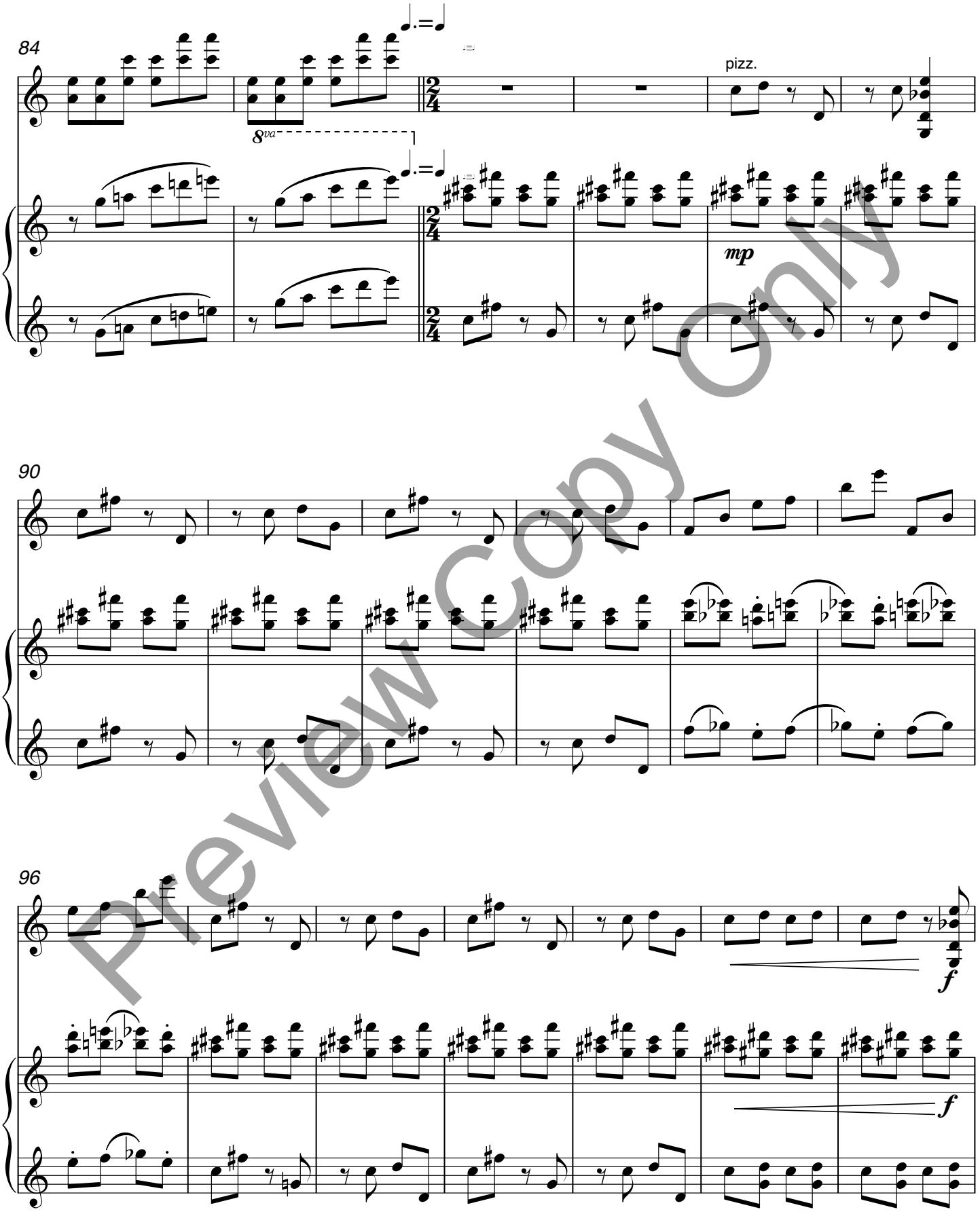


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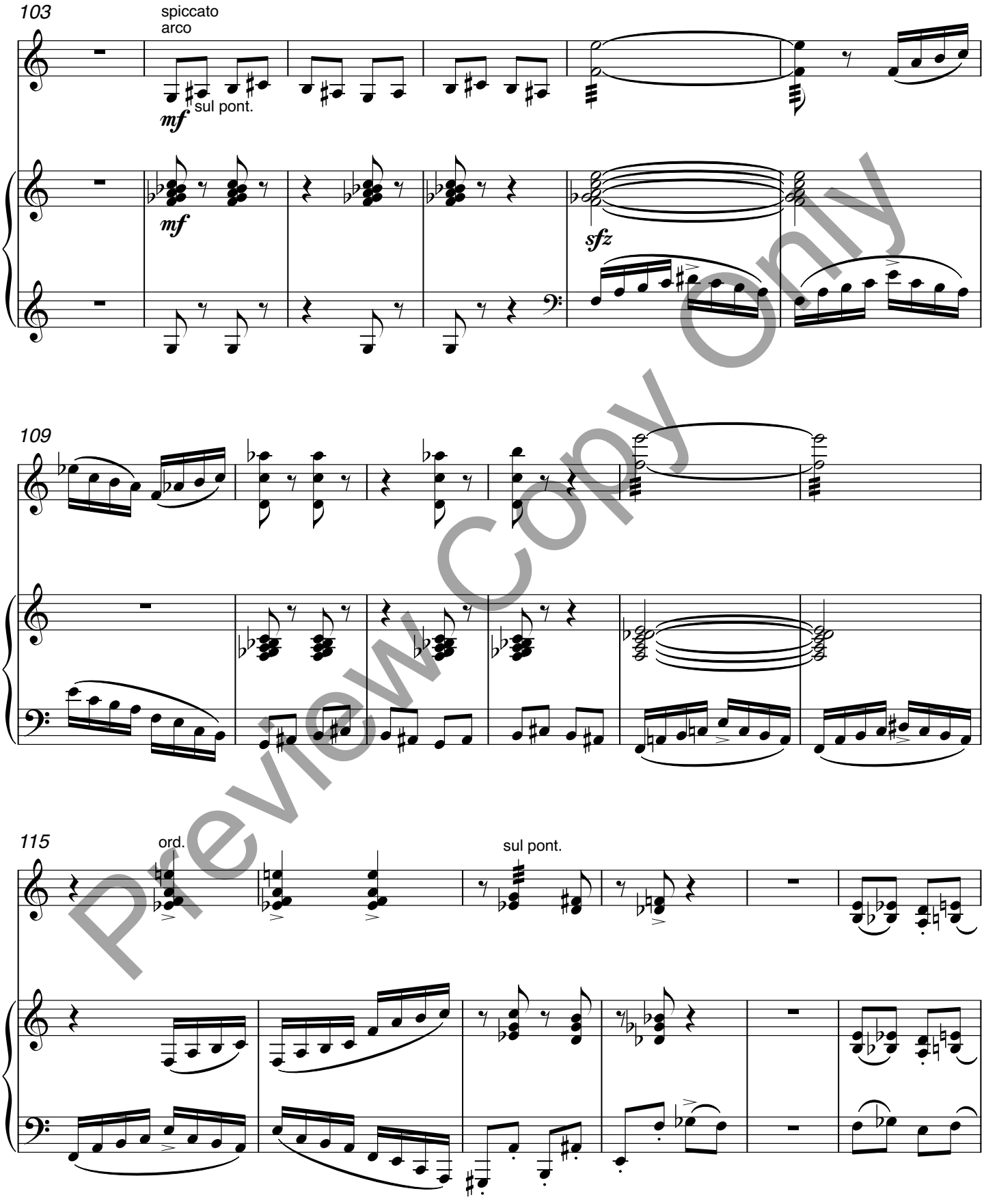


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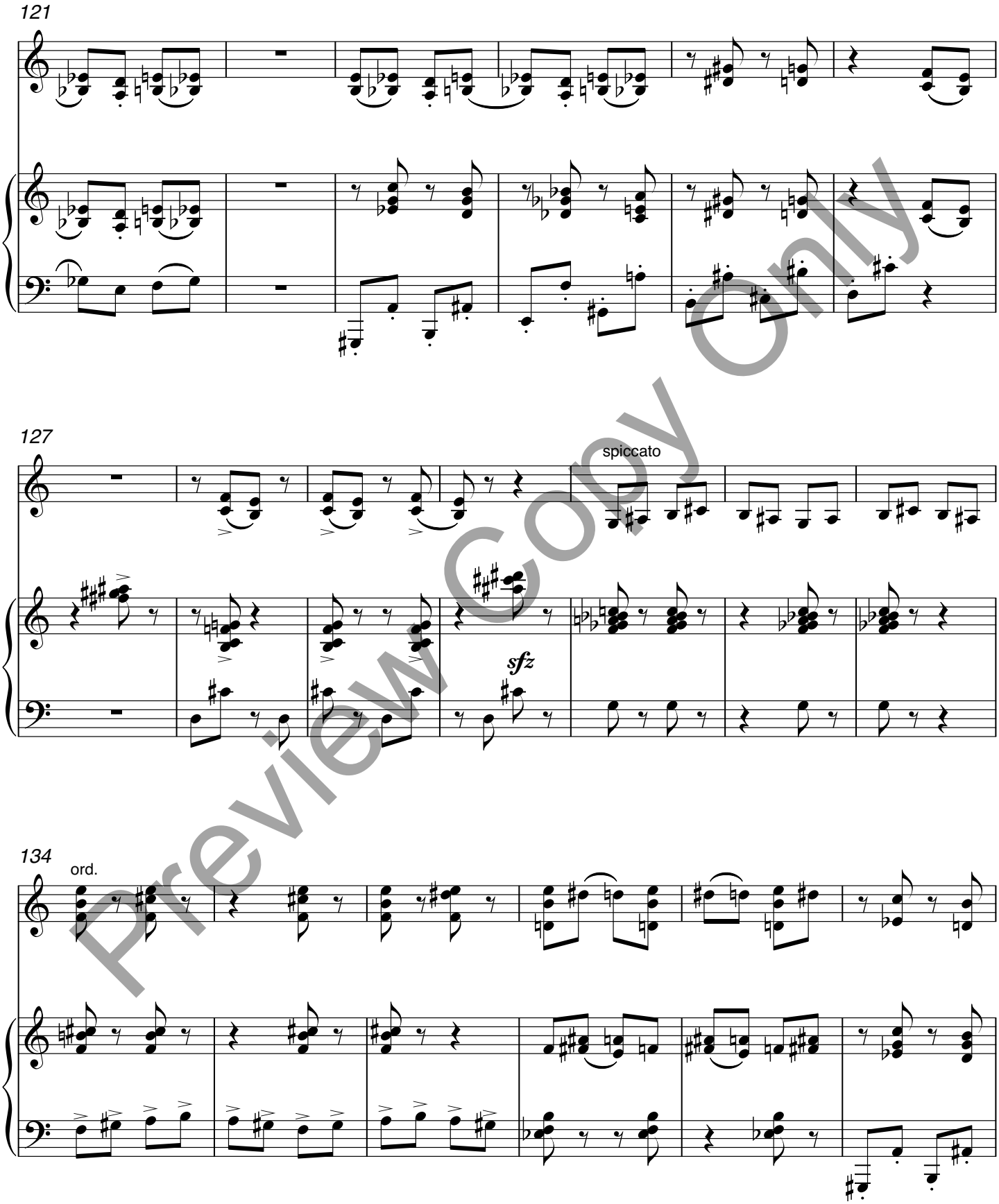


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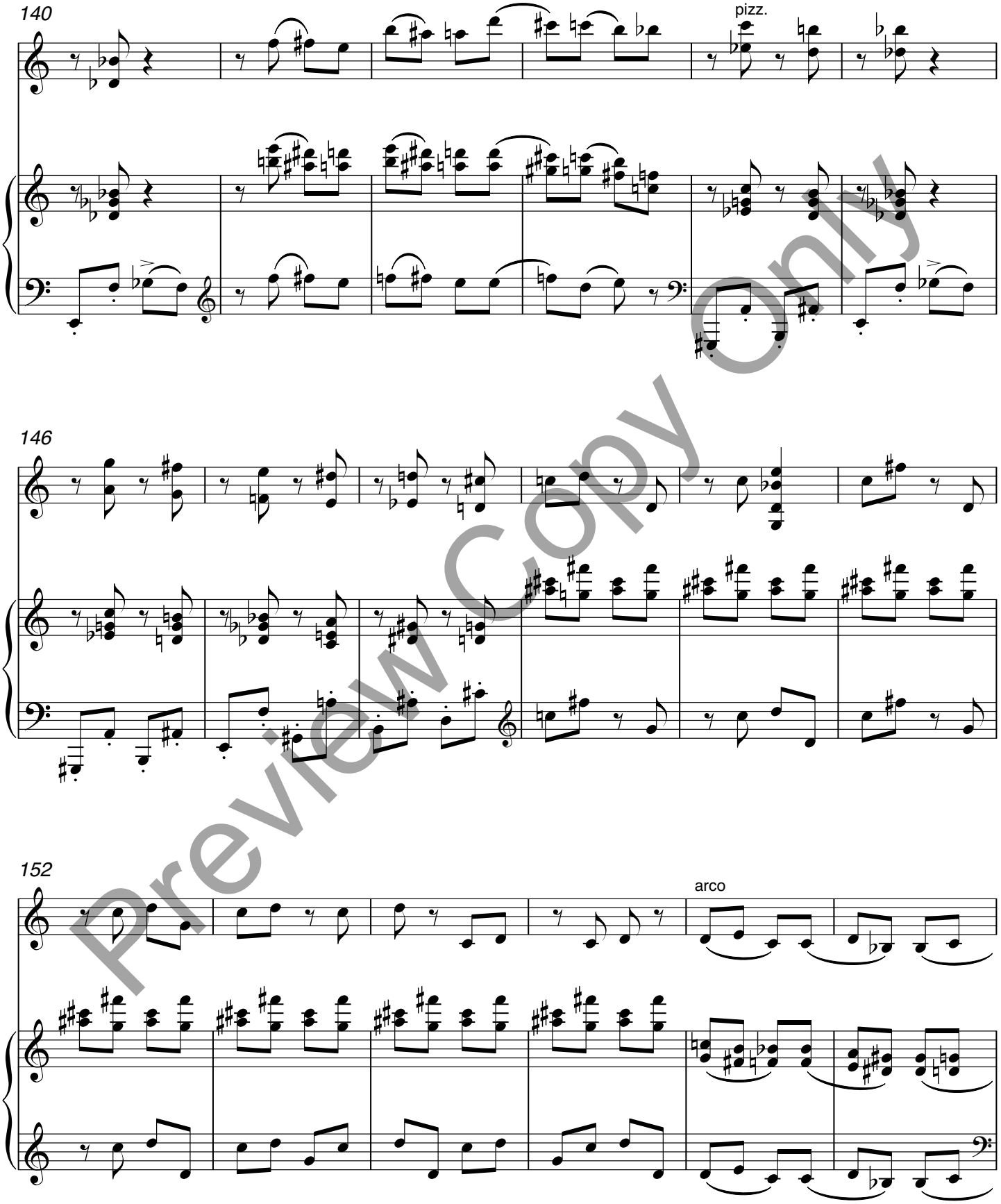


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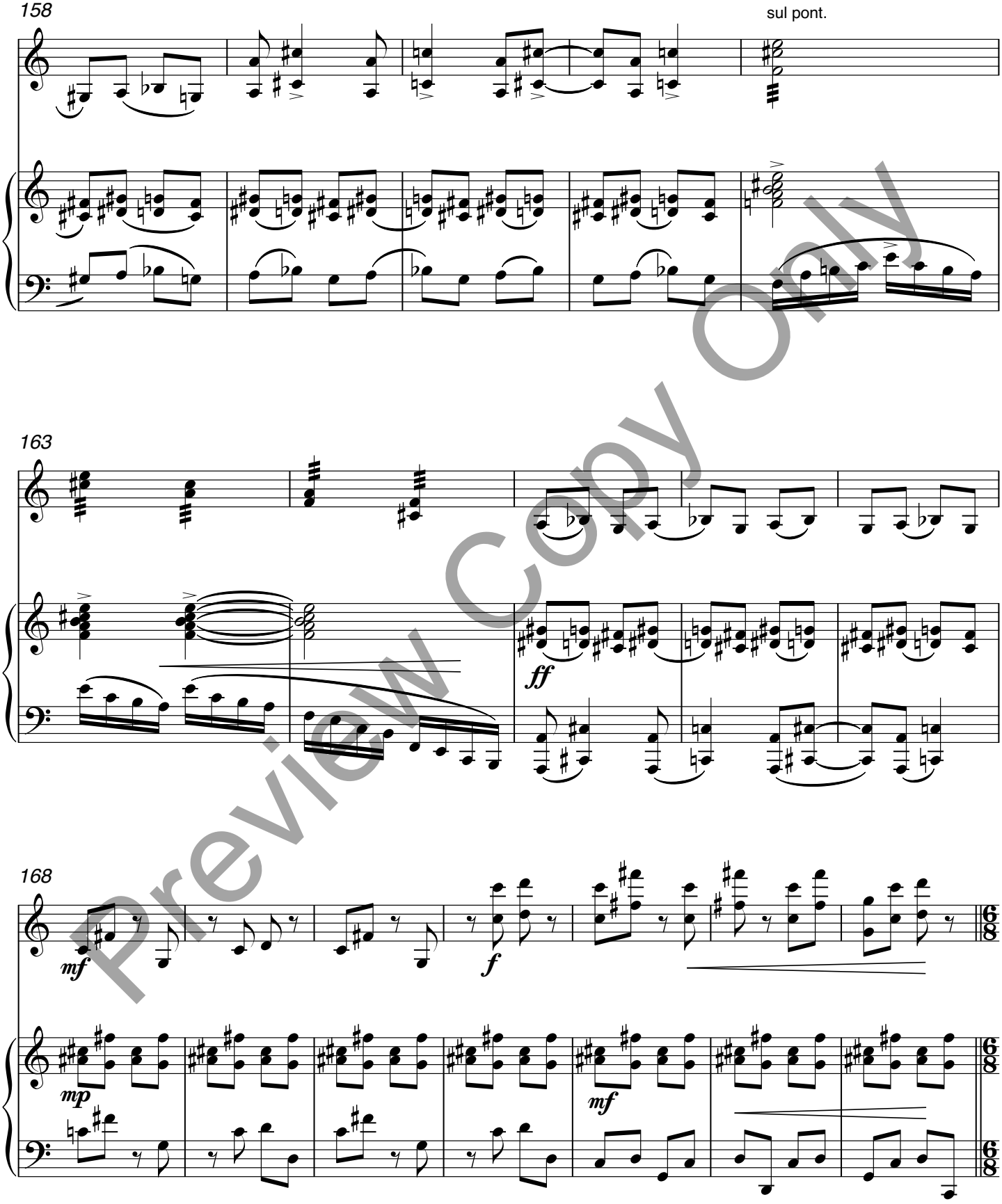


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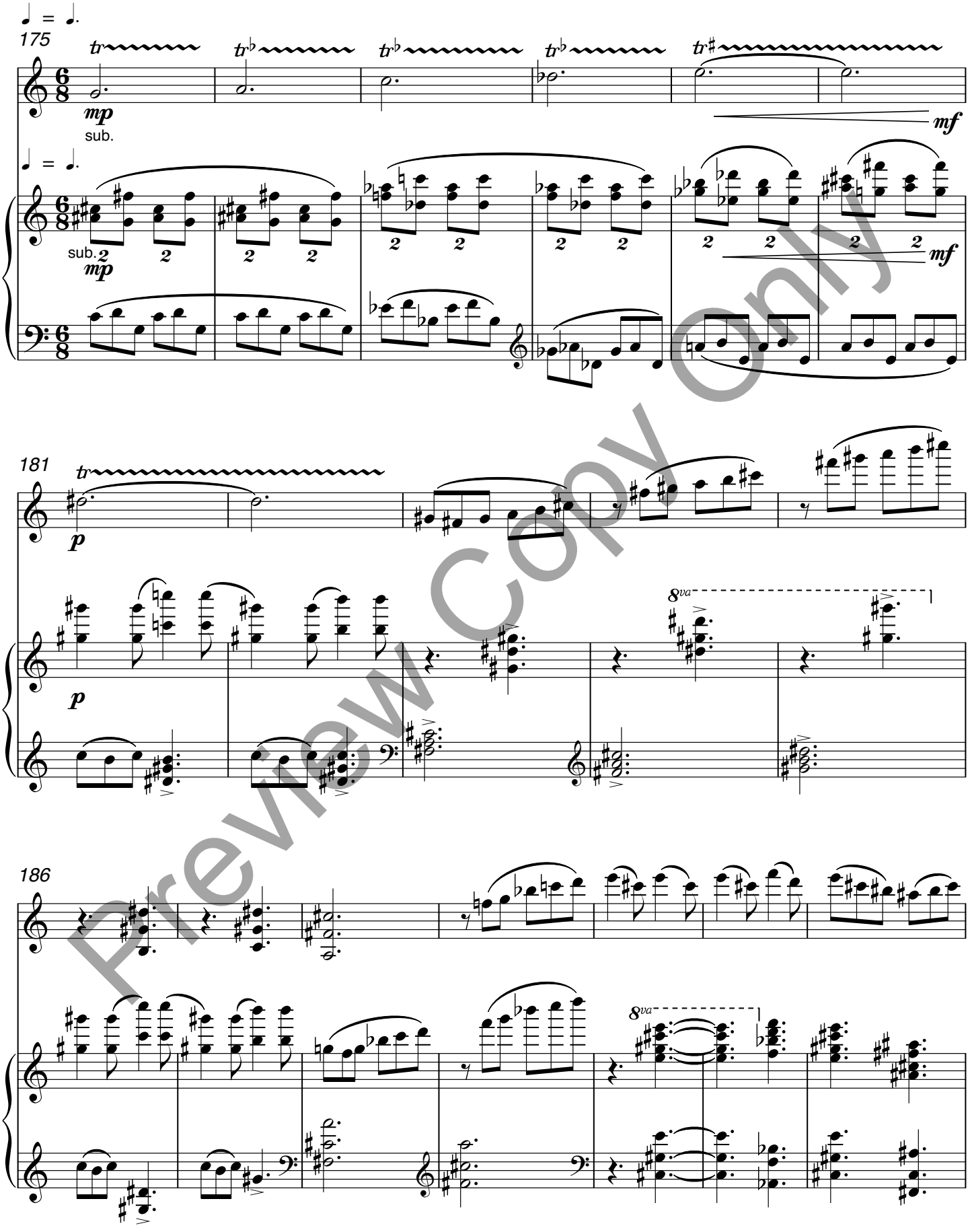


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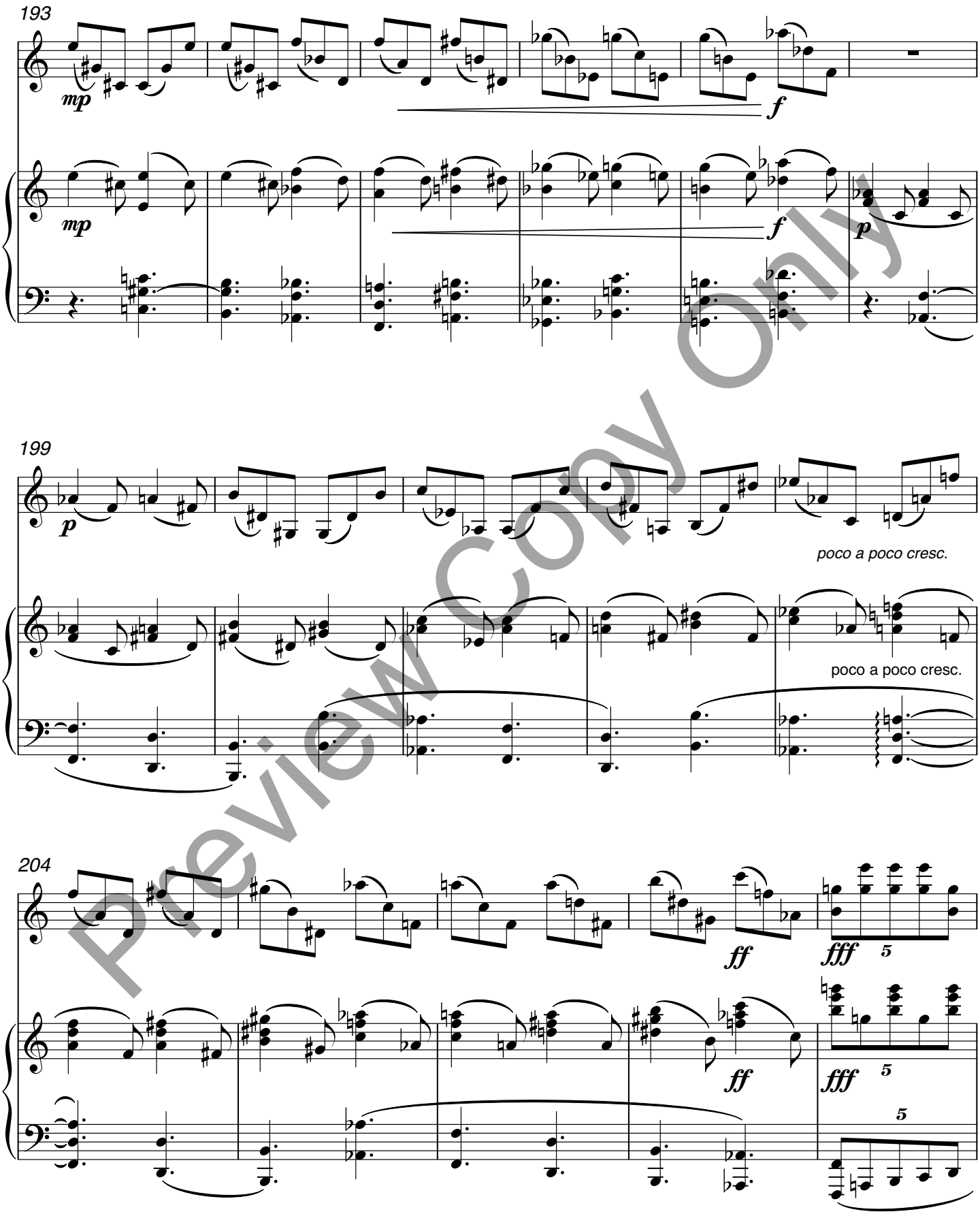


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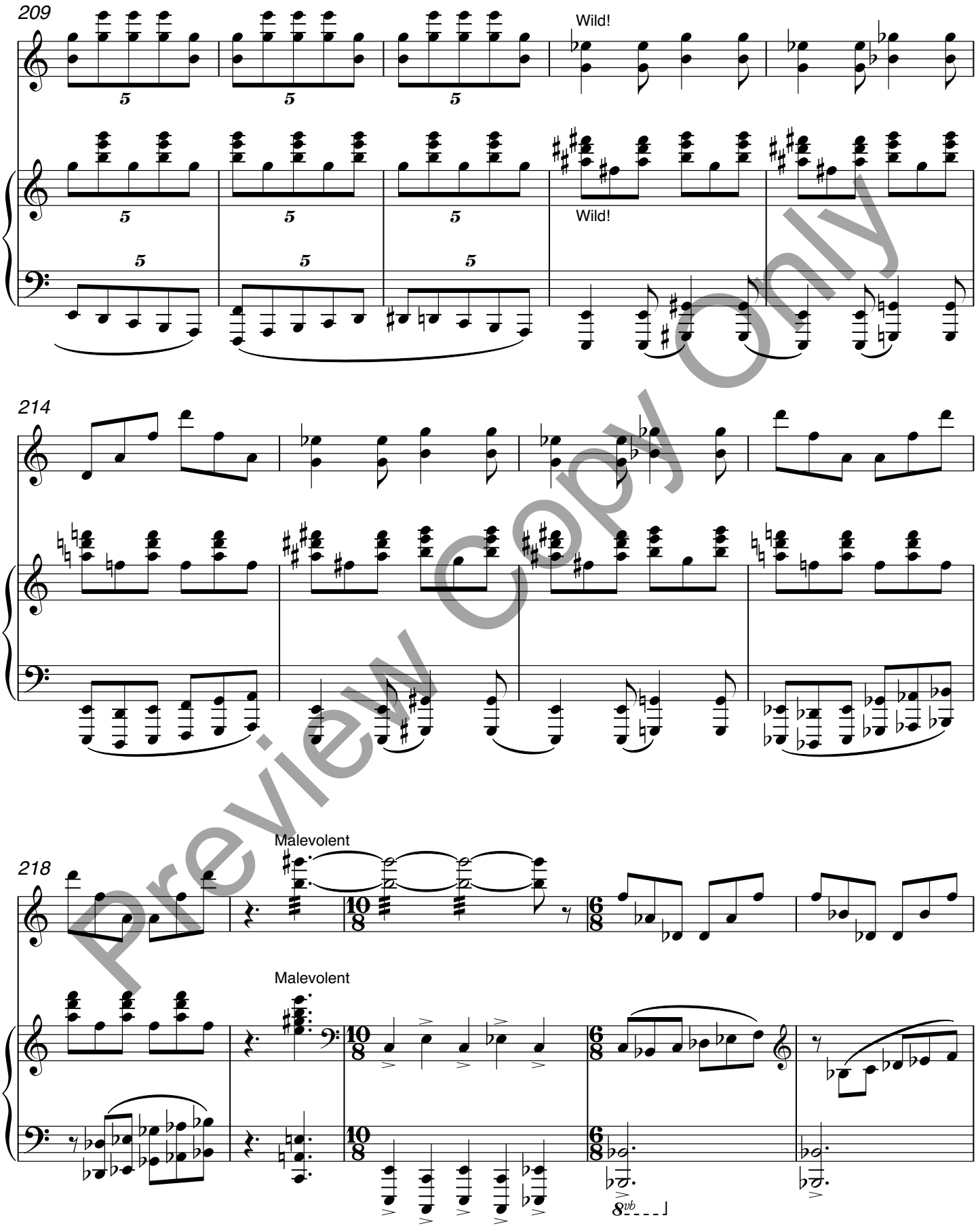


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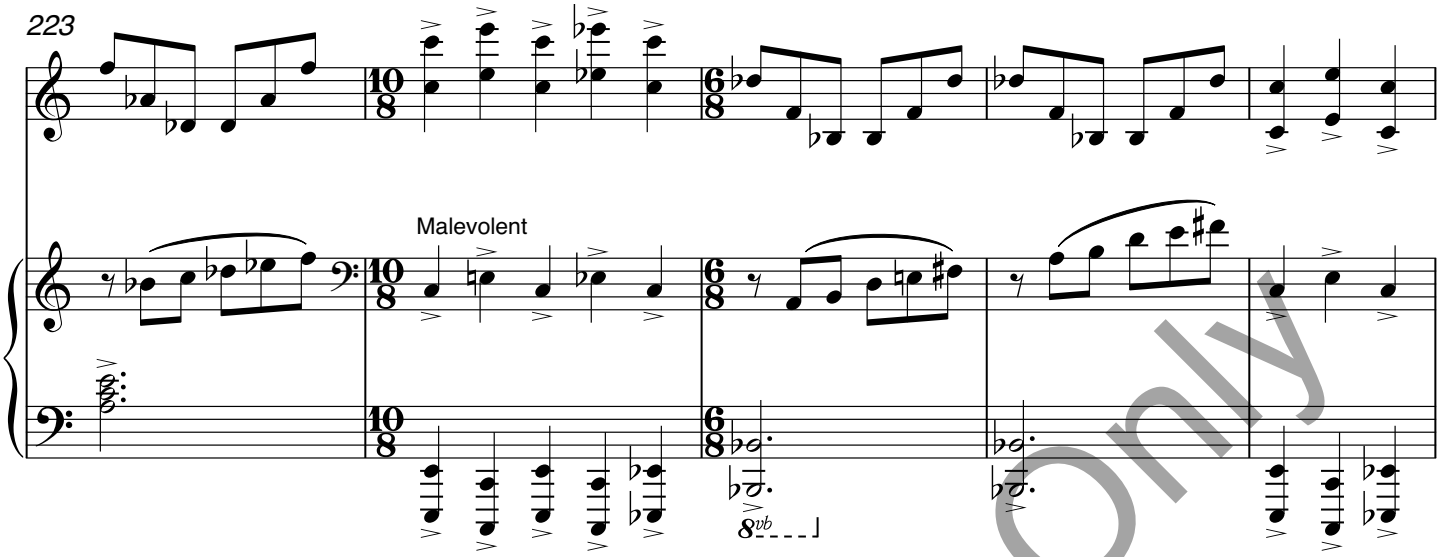
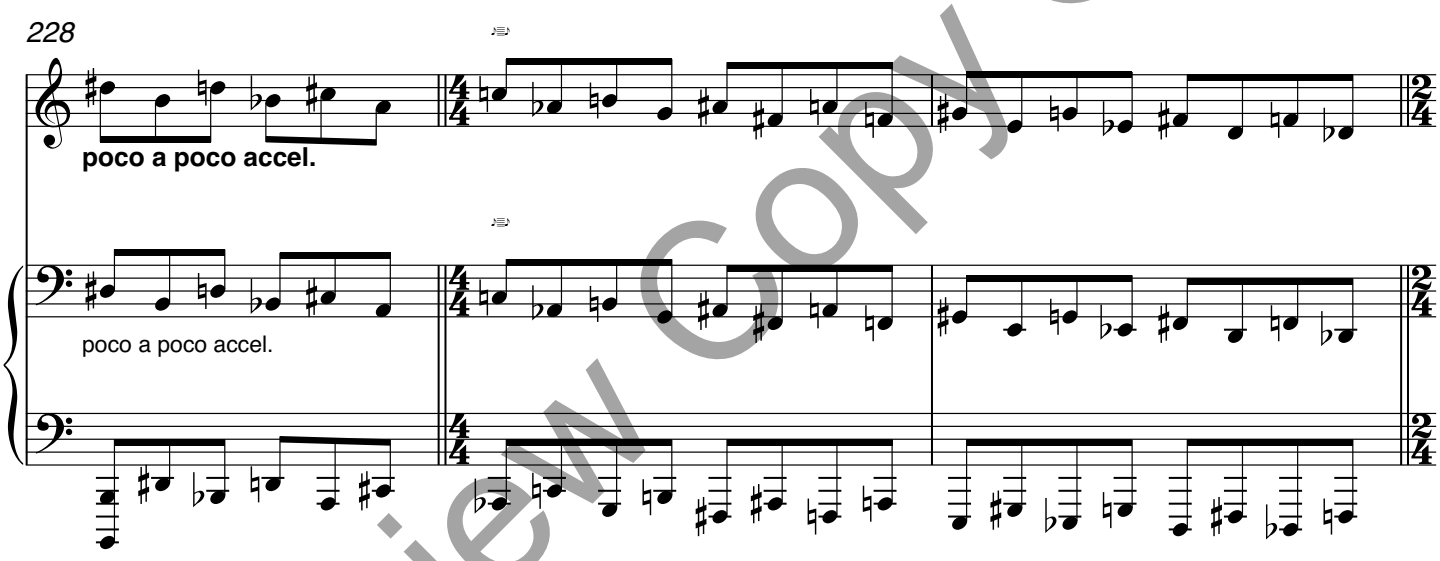
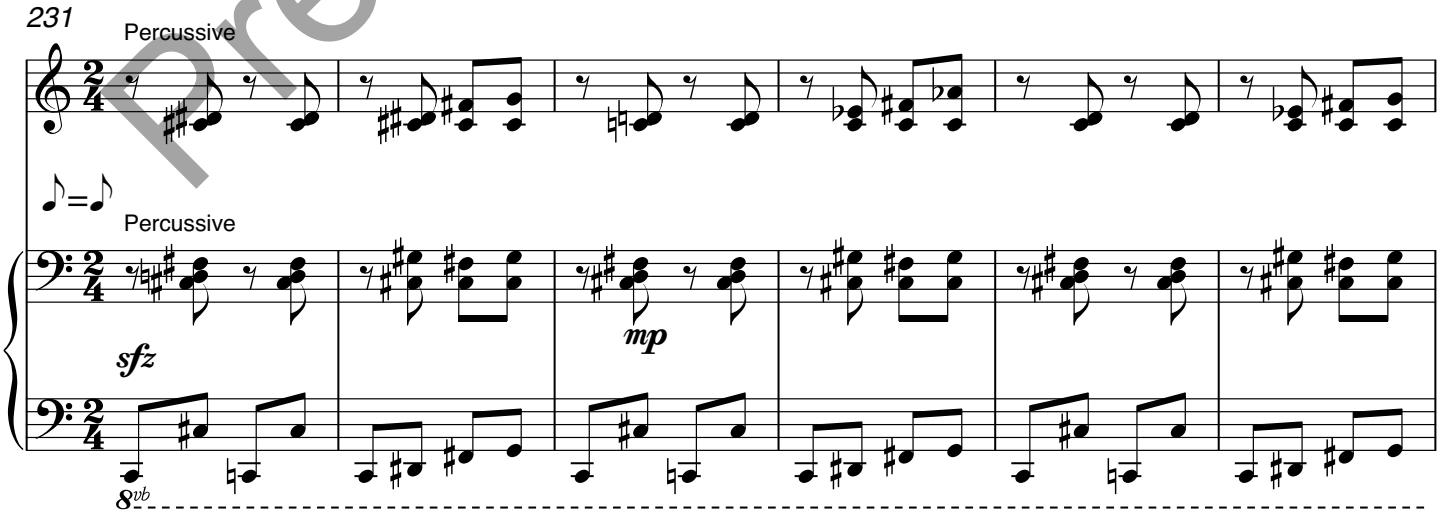



♪=♪

**African Rhythmic Style ♩ = 168**

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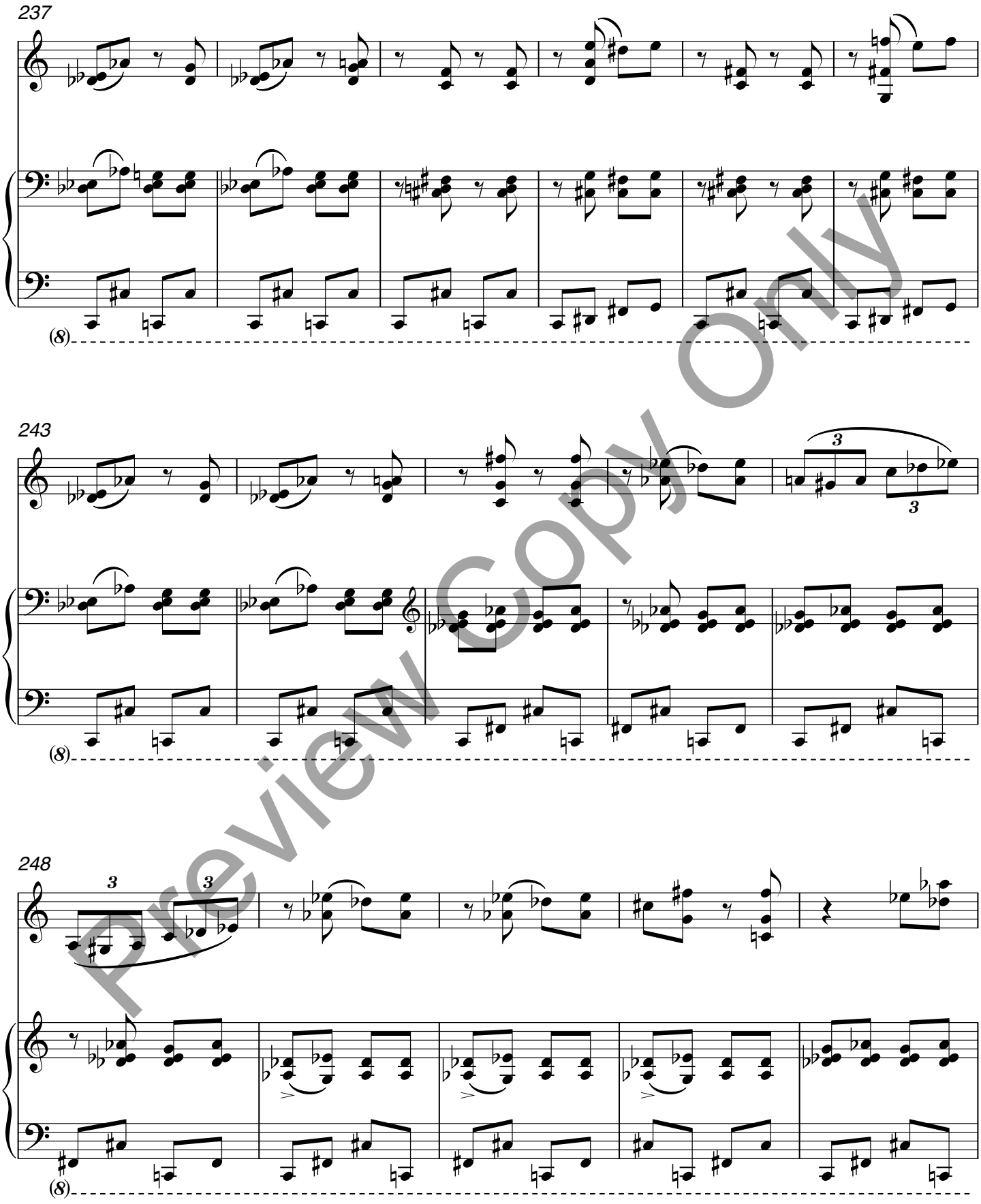


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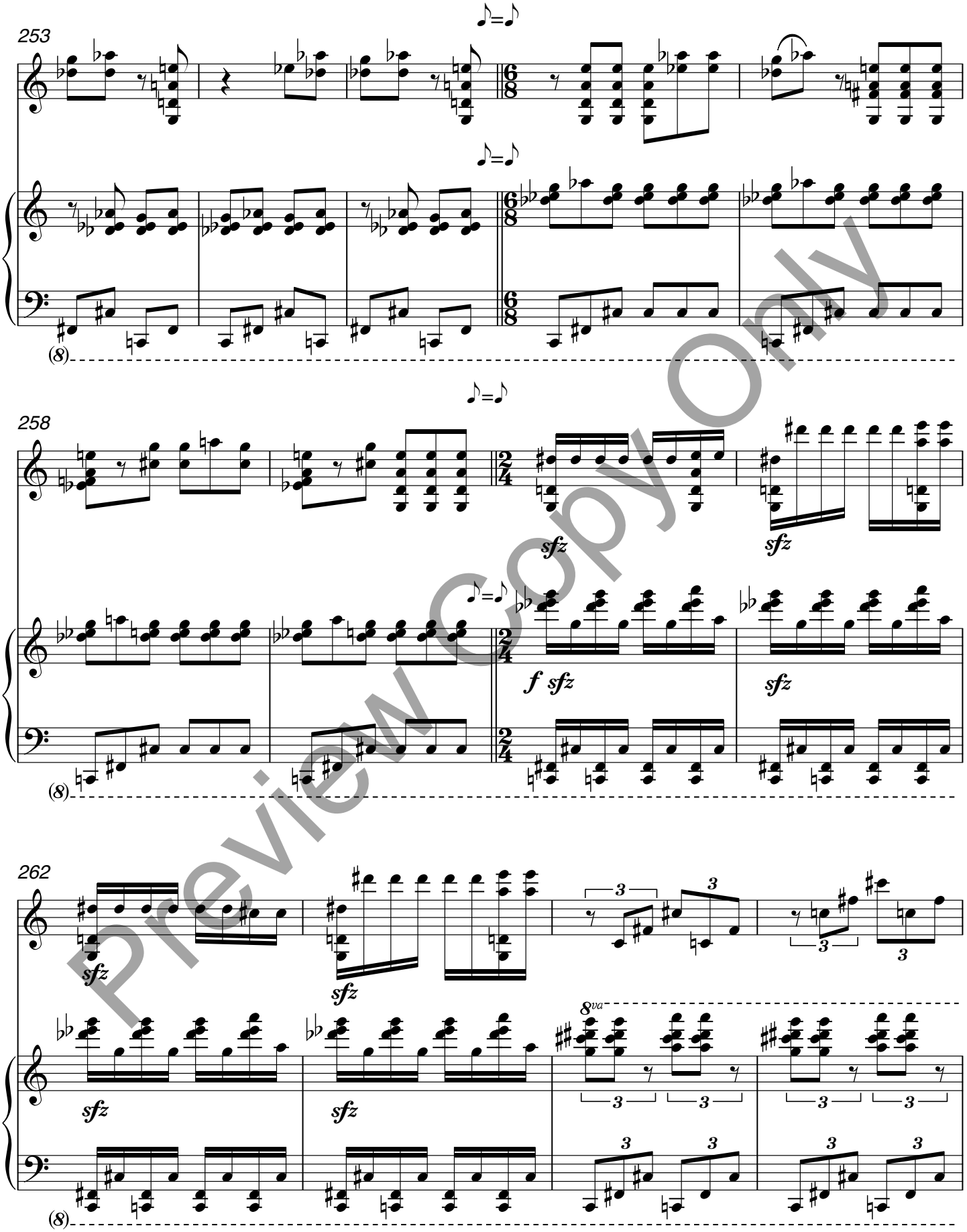


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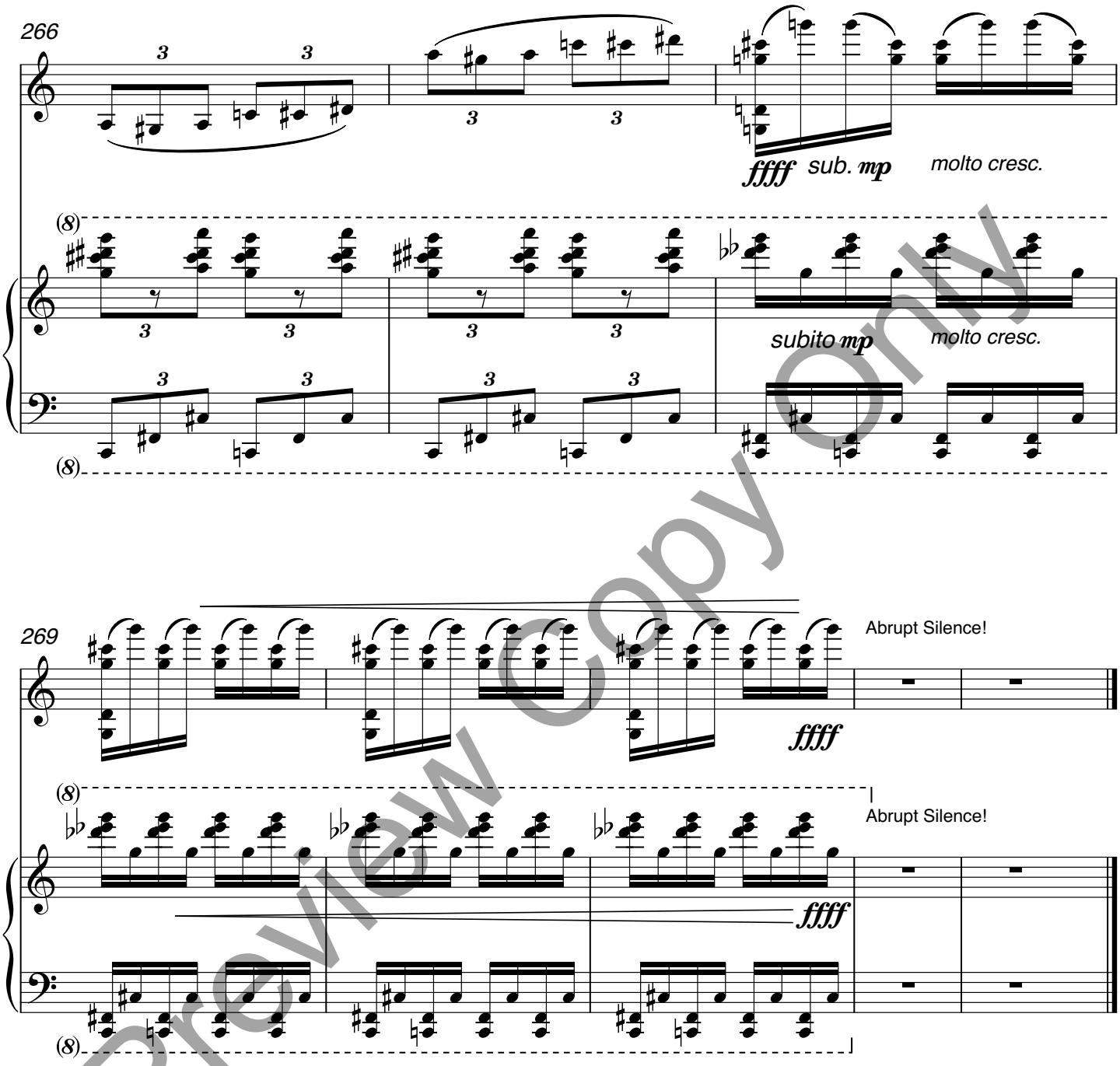


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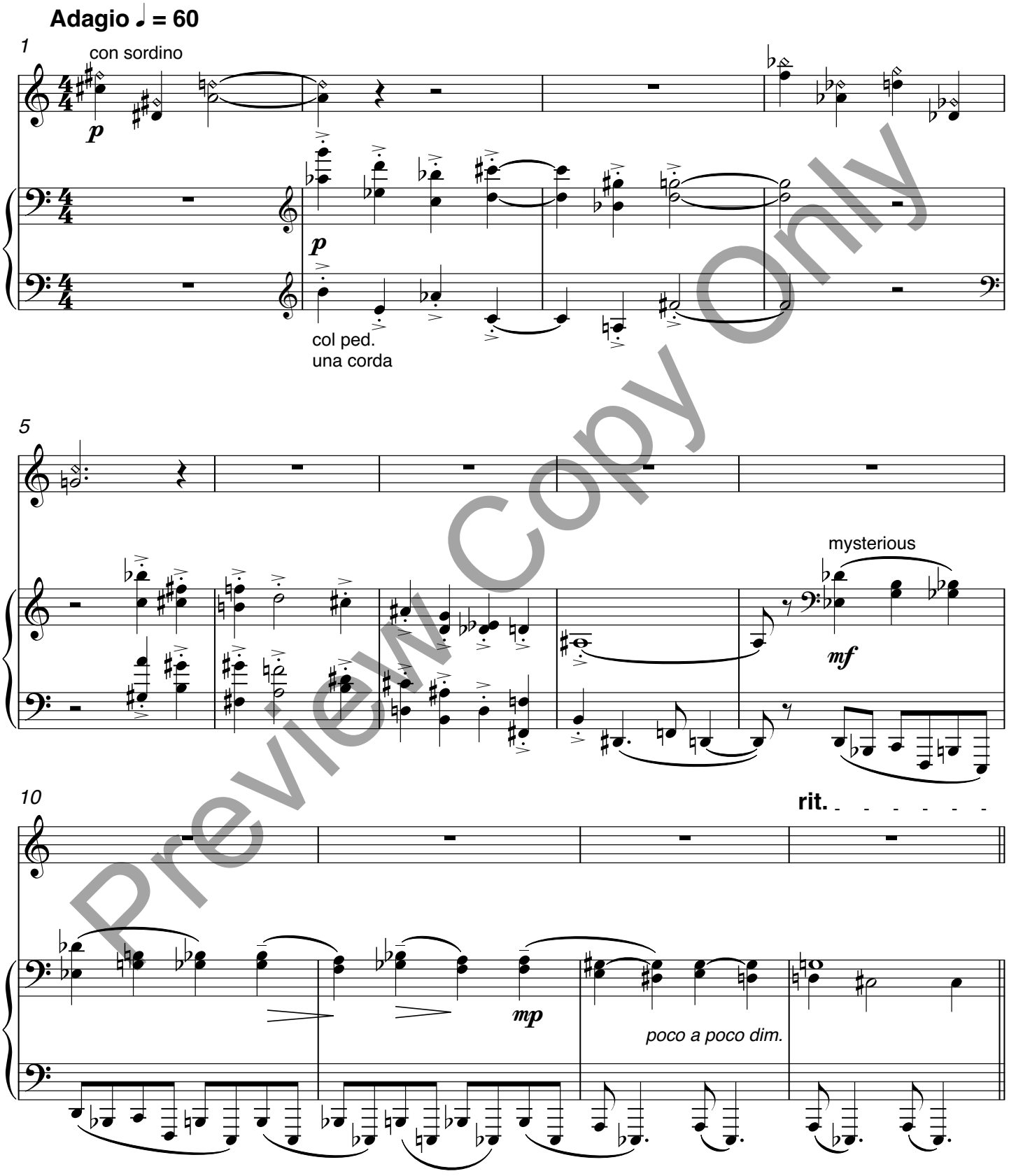
# VI. Elegy

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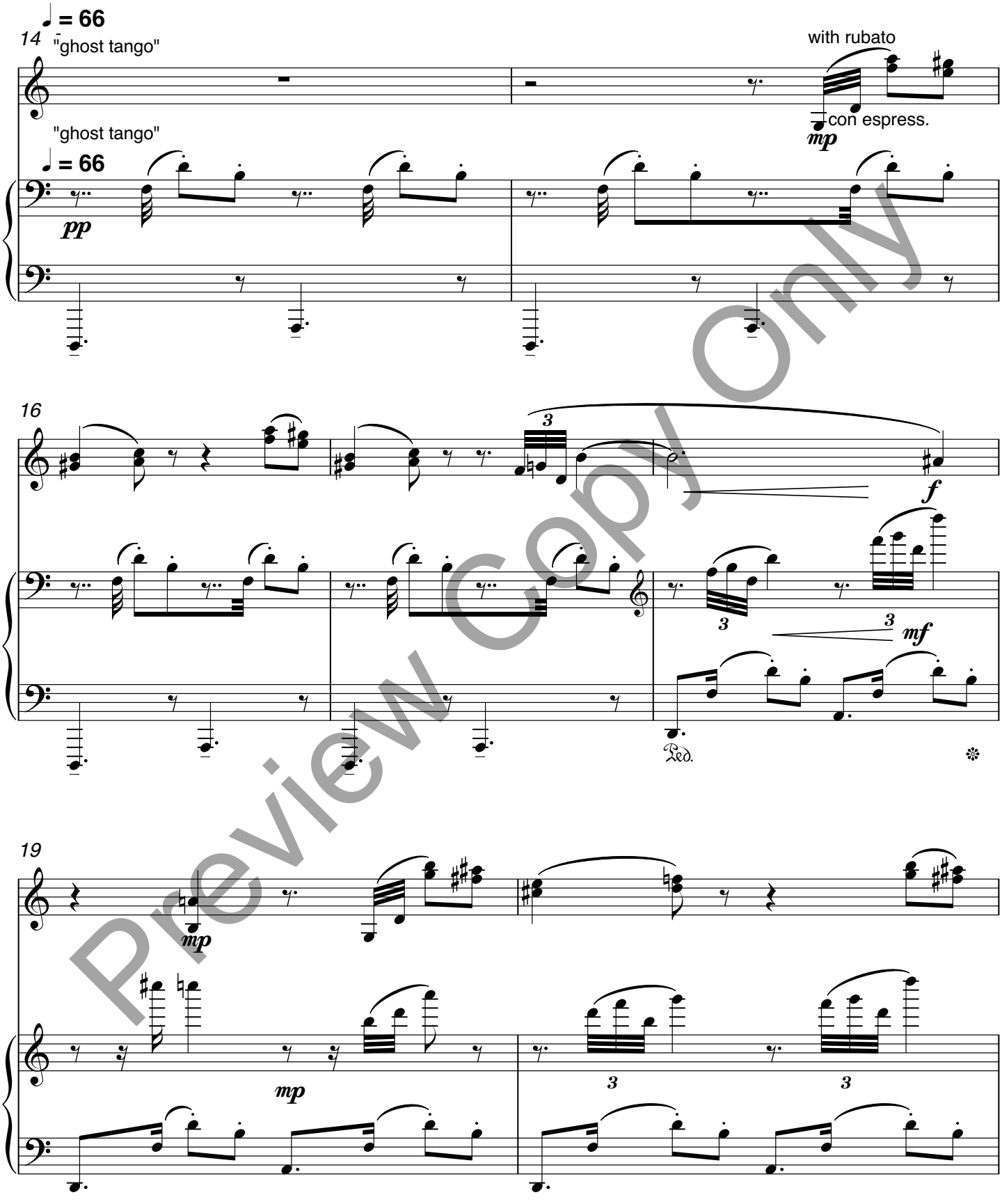


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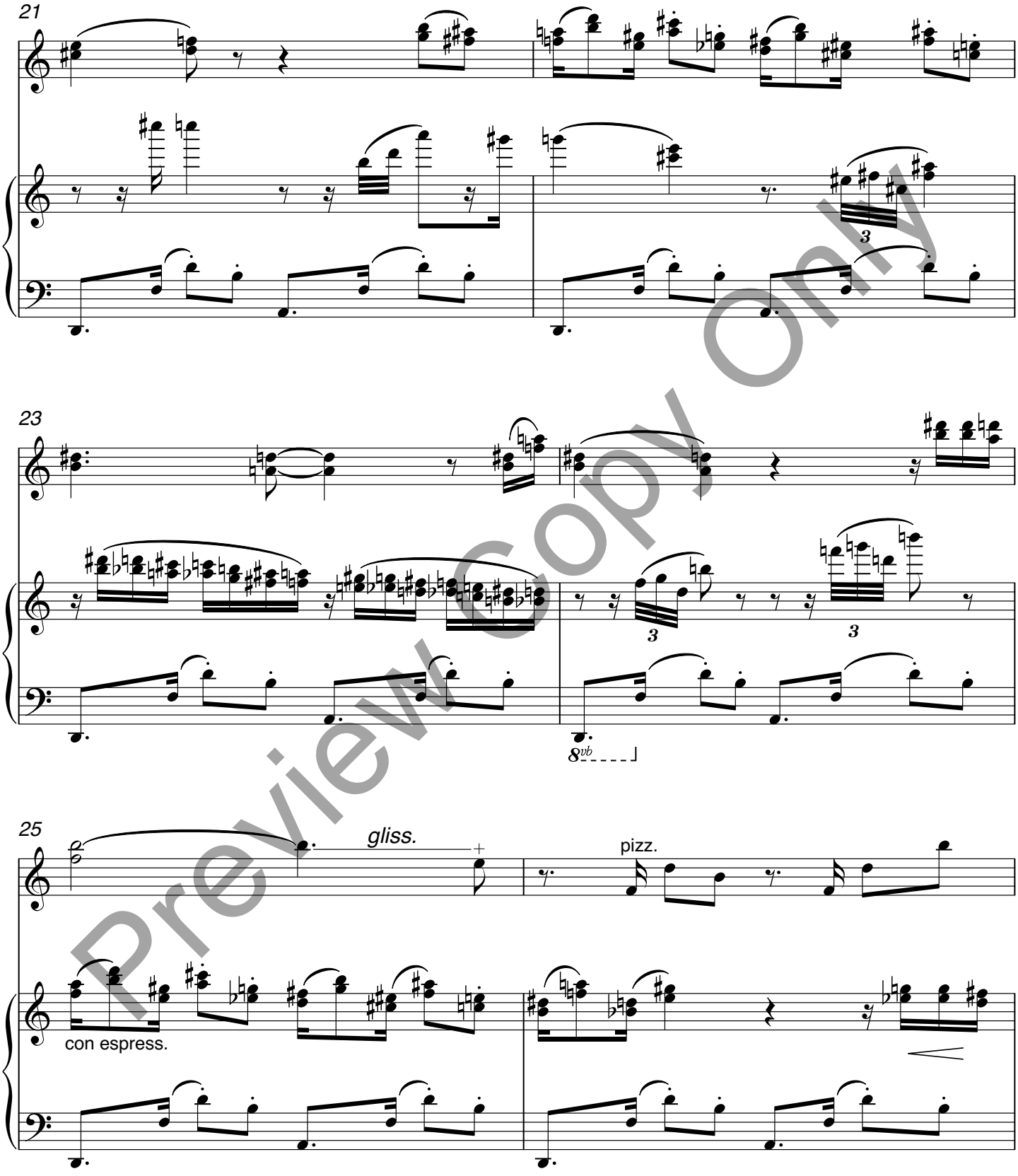


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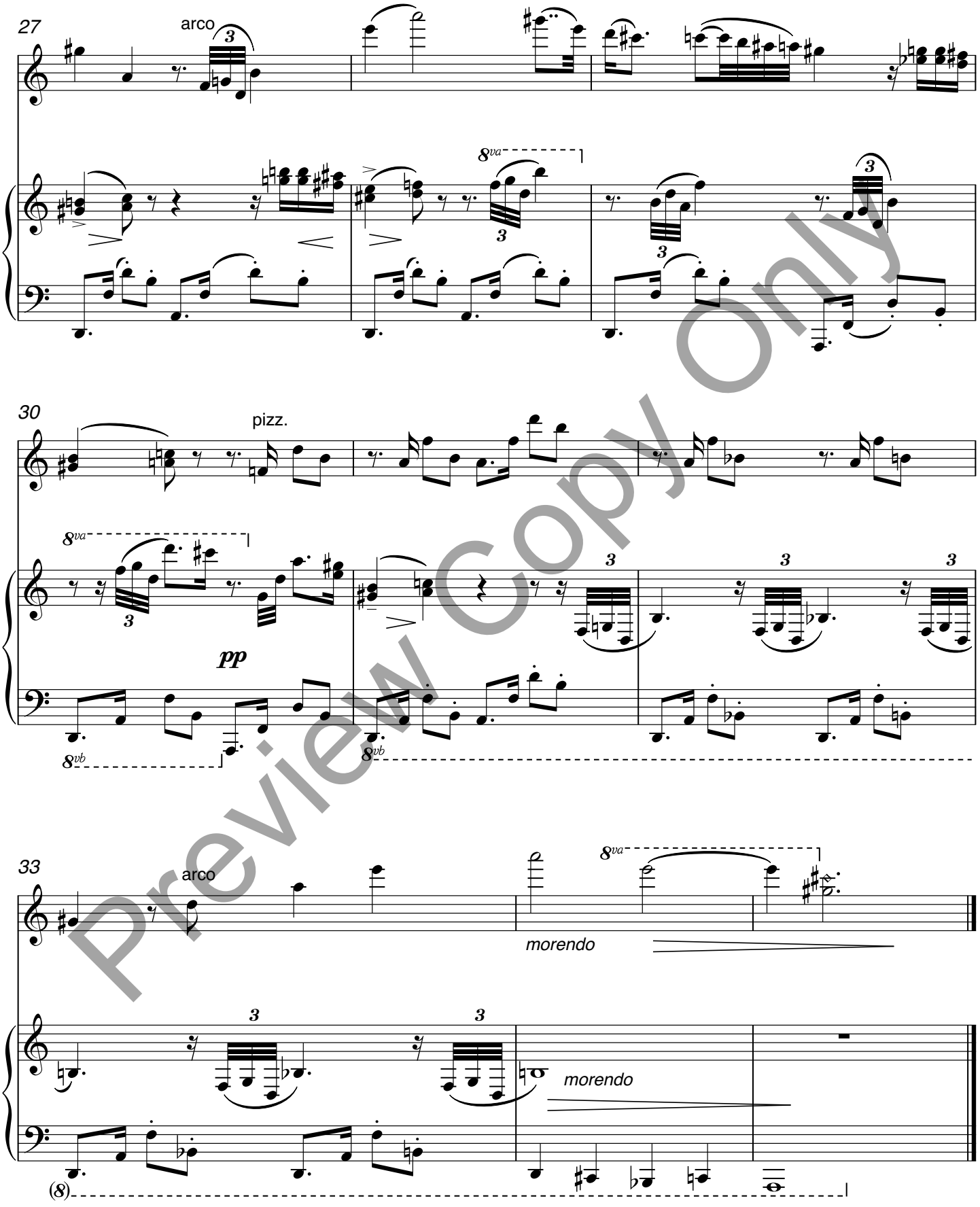


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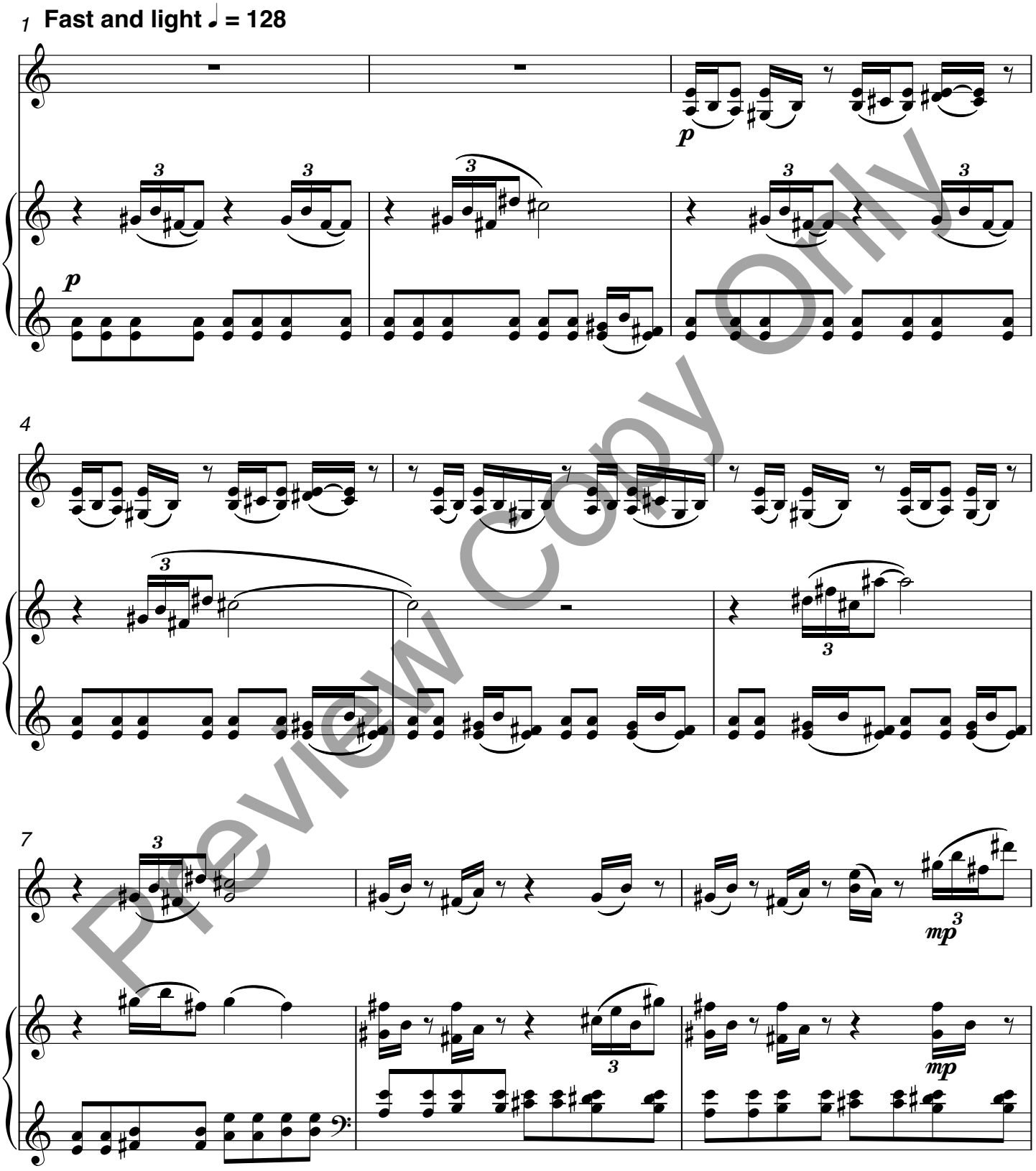
# VII. Epilogue

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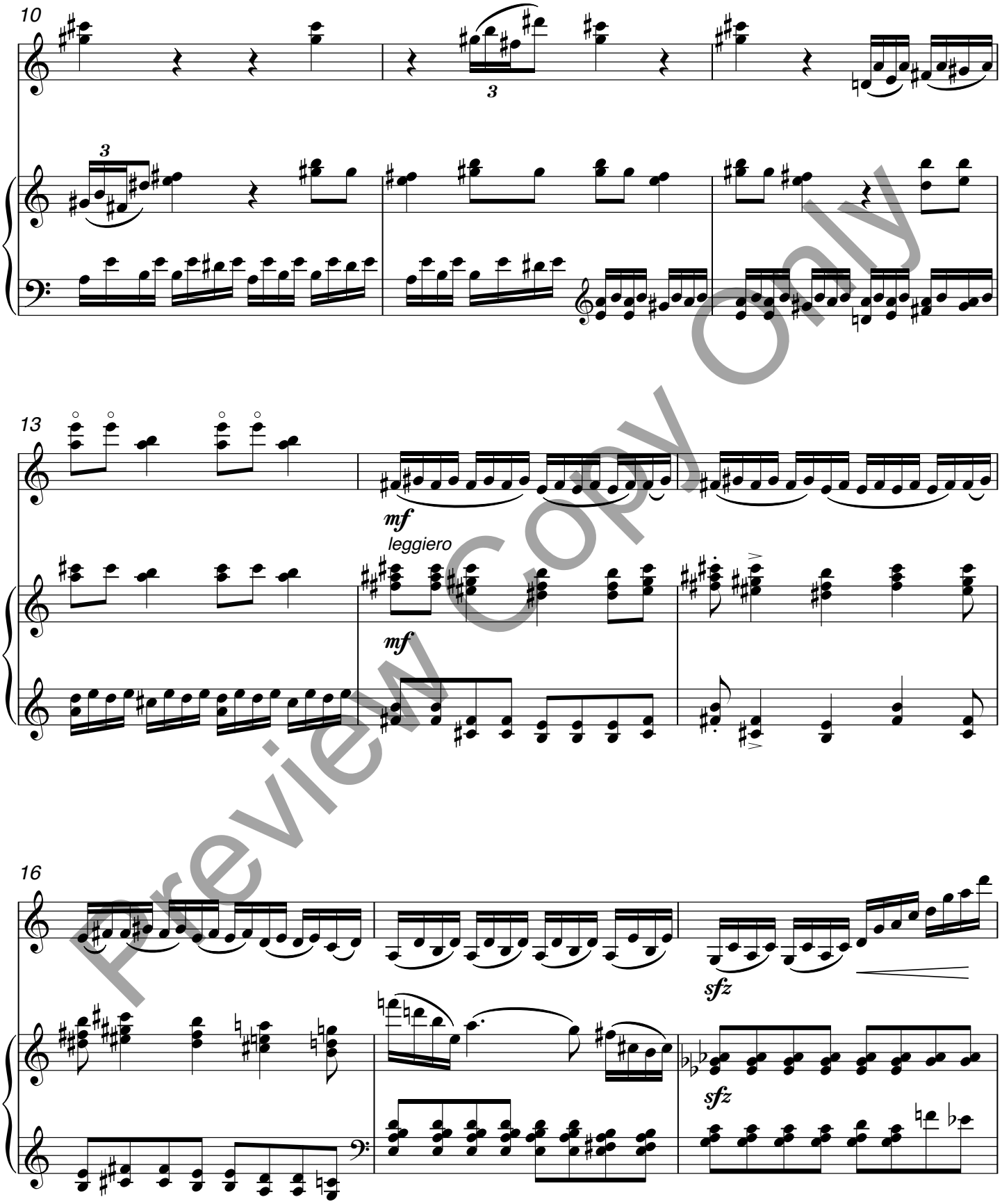


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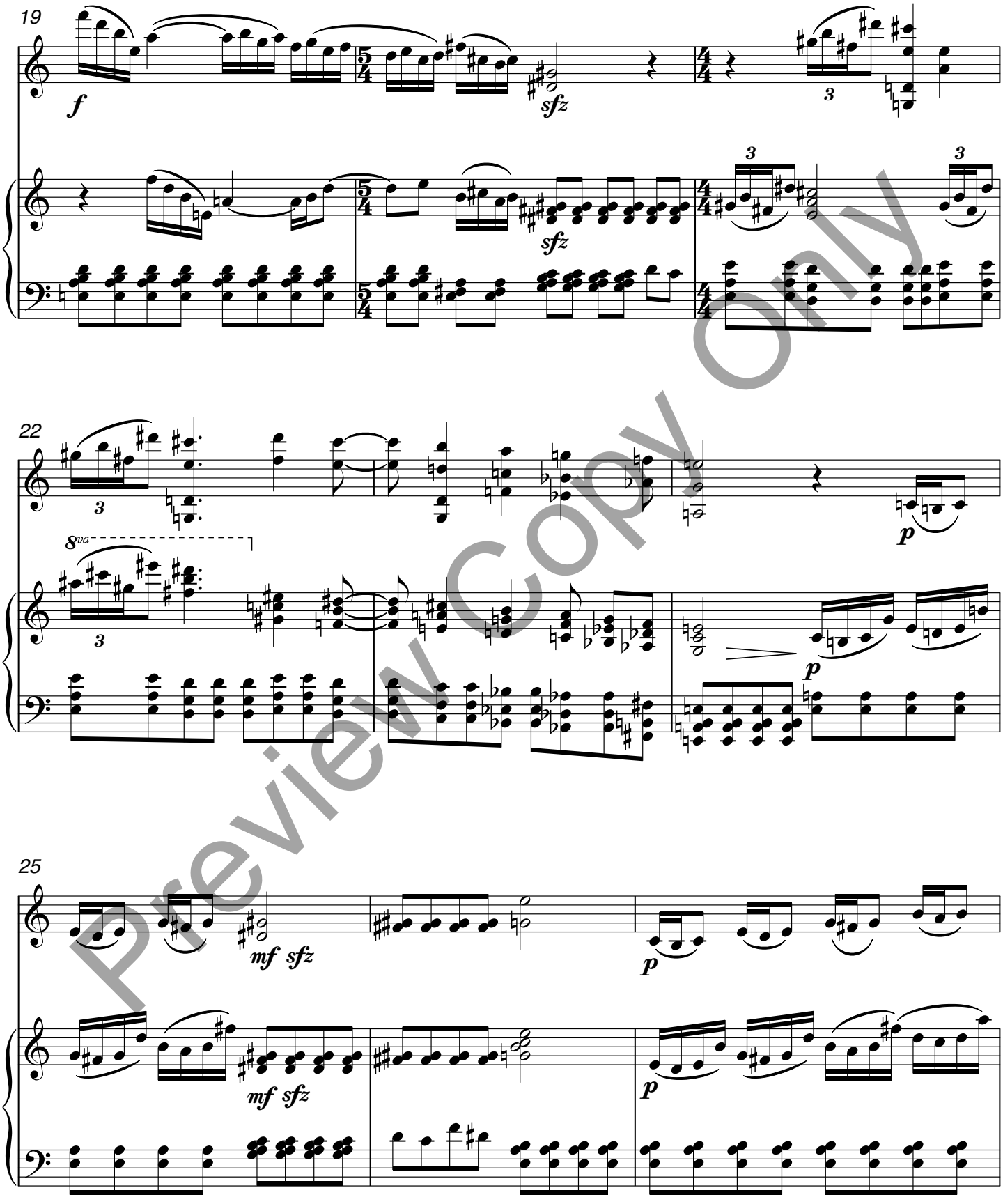


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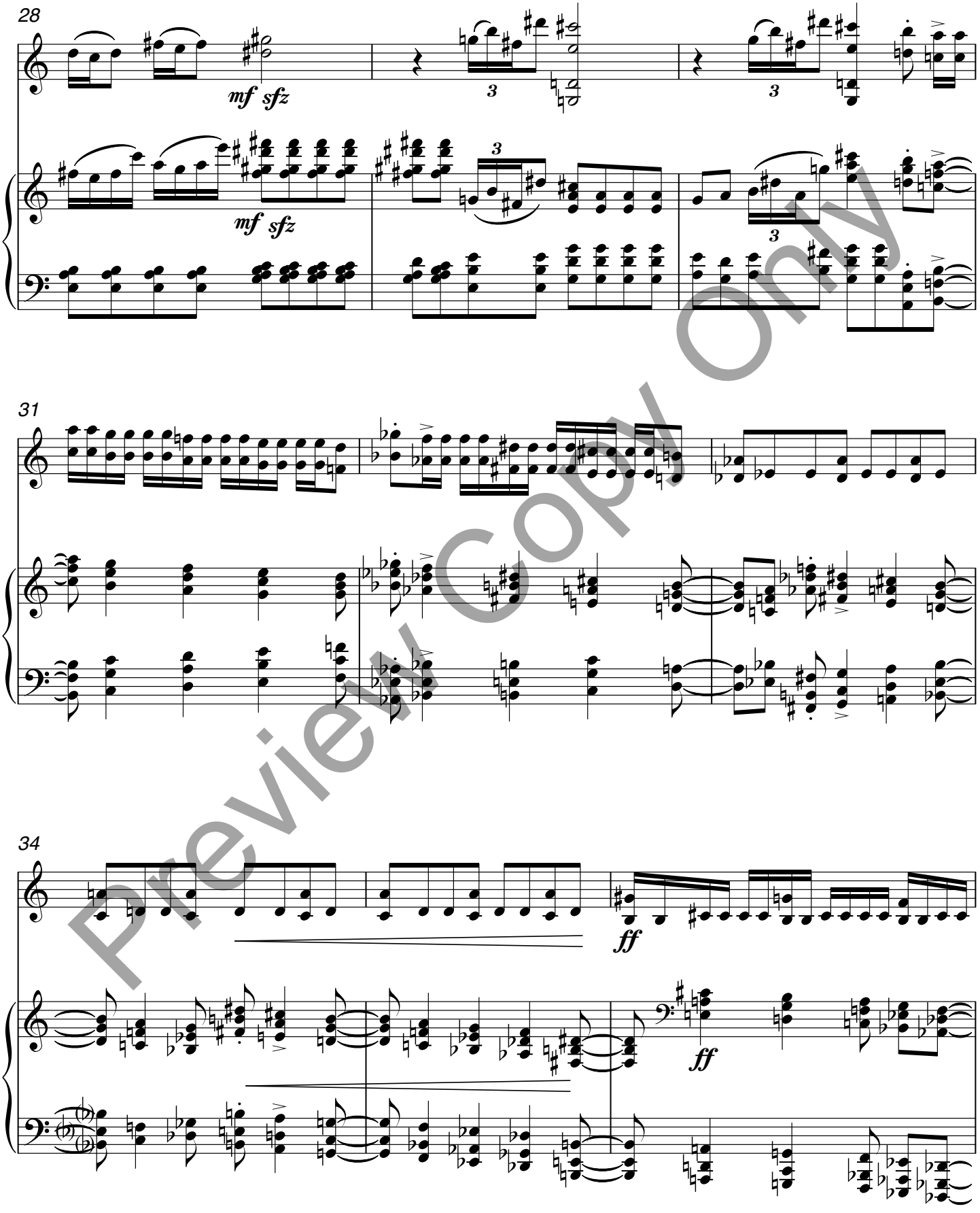


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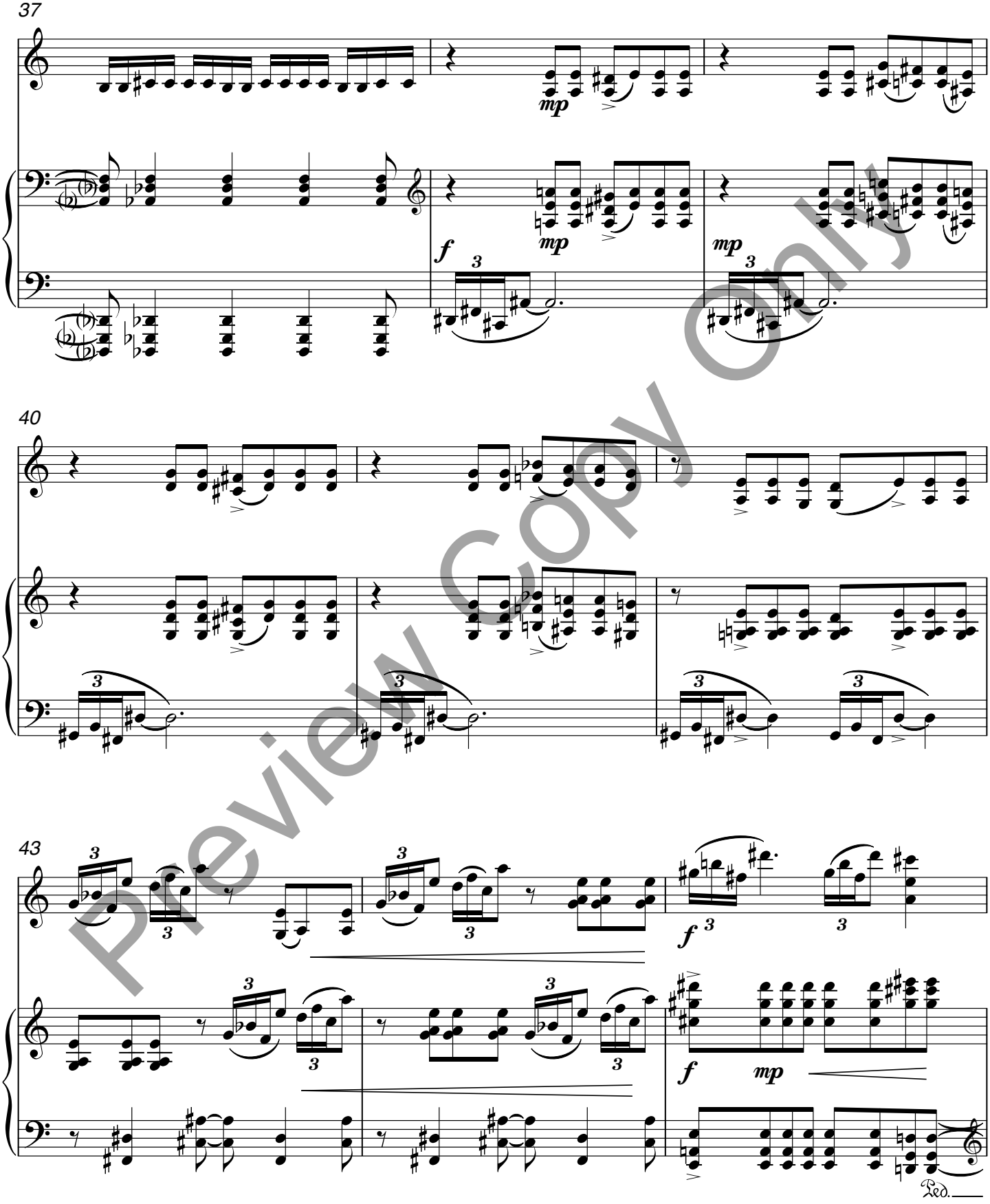


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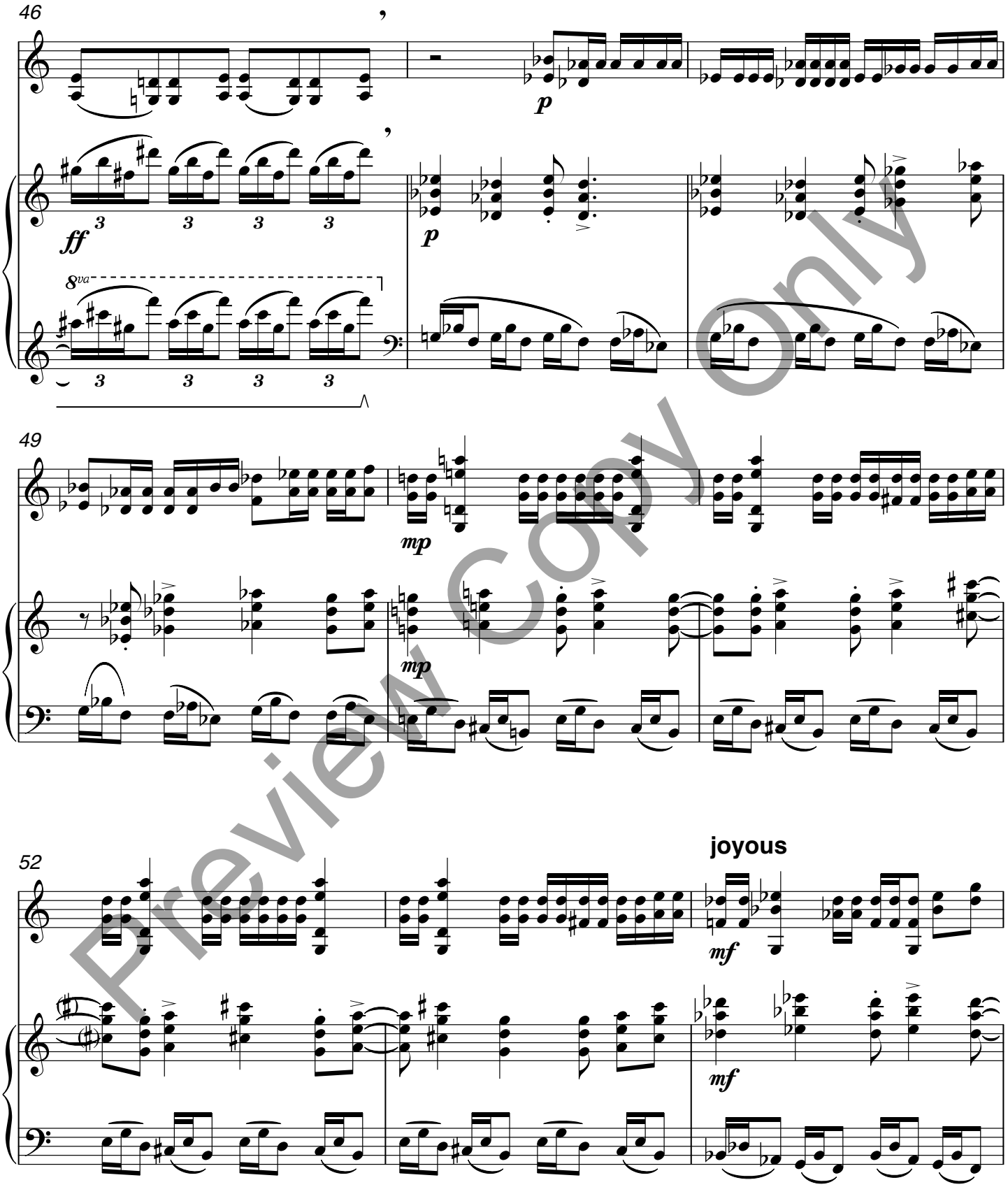


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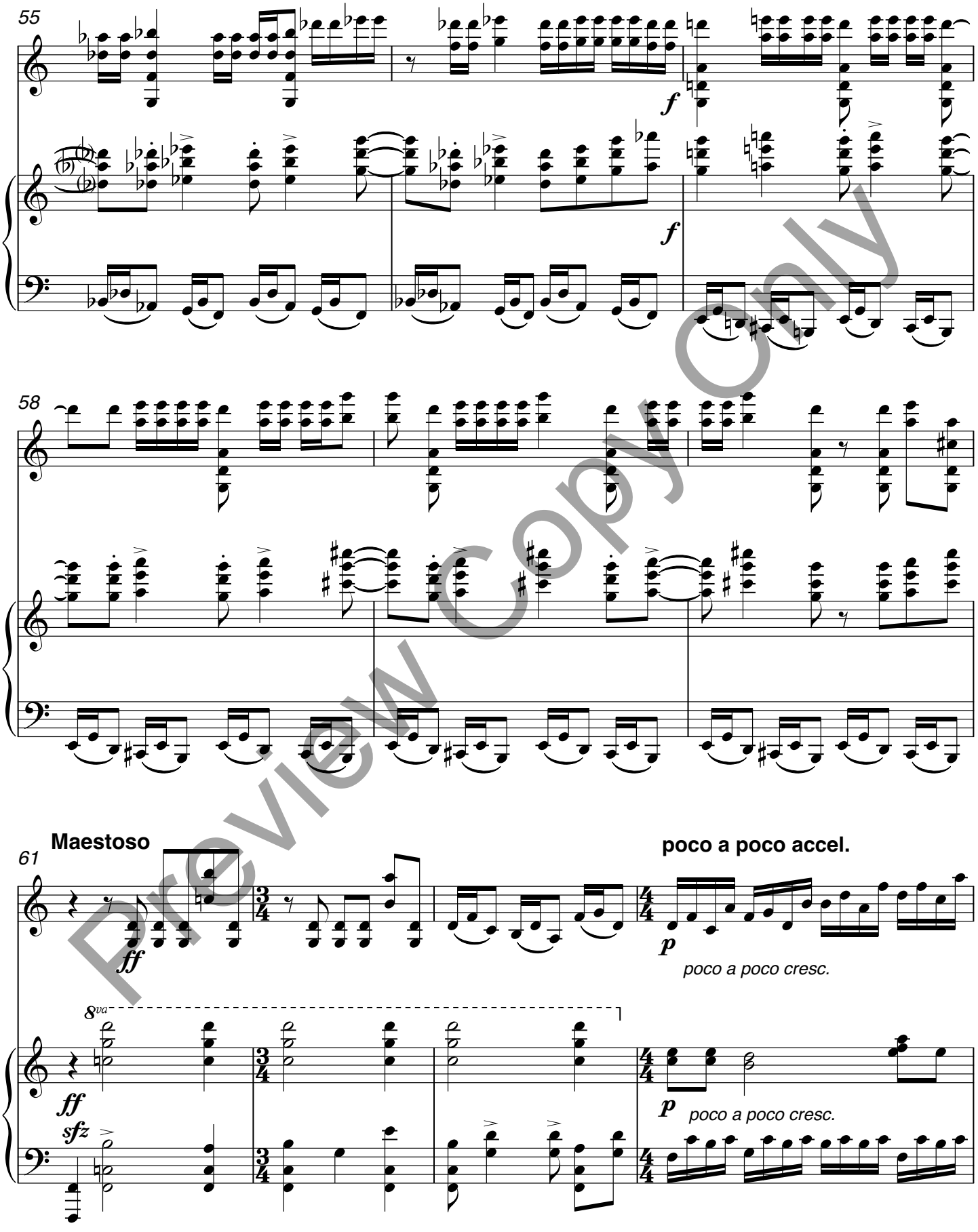


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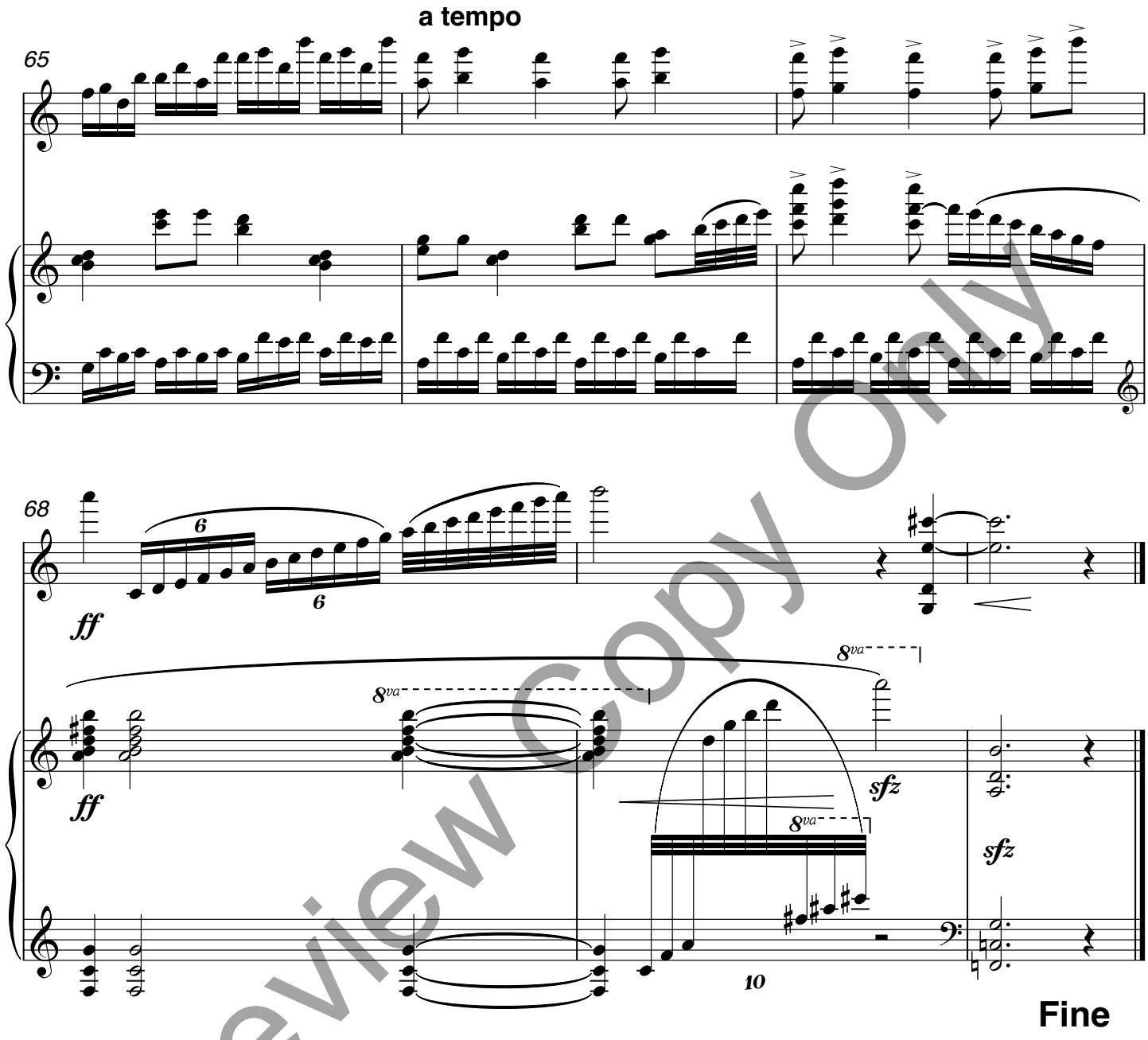


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