Oci oci

for saxophone quartet

* * *

Flannery Cunningham

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[Transposed score]

ca. 6.5’

Bb soprano sax
Eb alto sax
Bb tenor sax
Eb baritone sax

Composer’s notes:

Oci oci was written for PRISM Quartet through their Robert Cappana Commission Award. The piece is titled after the syllables used for the nightingale’s call in medieval French chansons and prose, which come from the French verb “ocir,” or to kill. 13th- and 14th-century French artists and thinkers had a fascinating conception of birdsong’s ambiguous status as music, and there is a particularly rich tradition of nightingale “calls” and textual references in troubadour and trouvère song. Sometimes the nightingale’s “oci, oci” is a call for death stemming from the pains of overwhelming love; other times that love is a religious rather than romantic one, and the cry is one of anguish for Christ’s suffering. In either case, the nightingale is often used as an example of a bird who sings particularly sweetly (and is thus able to aestheticize her yearning and torment).

I wrote the core material of *Oci oci* soon after my daughter was born, in just the sort of heightened state of love and pain of the piece’s namesake. I also spent hours listening to the same “most beautiful birds of the world” playlist with her, which helped calm her when not much else could. One of these birdsongs is woven into the texture of *Oci oci* (it can be heard most clearly at rehearsal letters C and G). That bird felt like my nightingale in the medieval sense: an example of how to musicalize intensely felt moments.

Any questions can be addressed to me at flanncunningham@gmail.com. Thank you for your playing!

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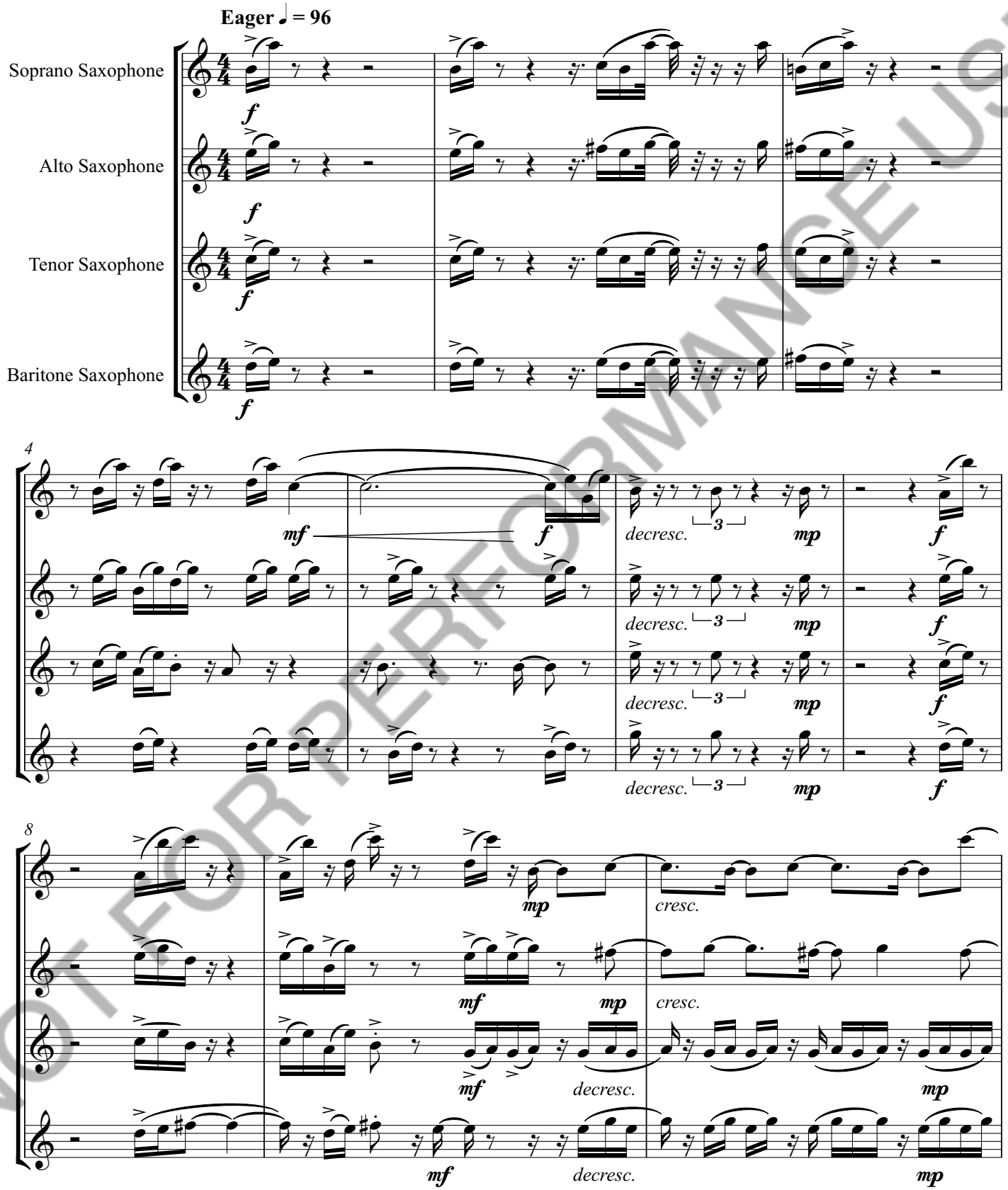
Oci oci

for PRISM Quartet

Flannery Cunningham



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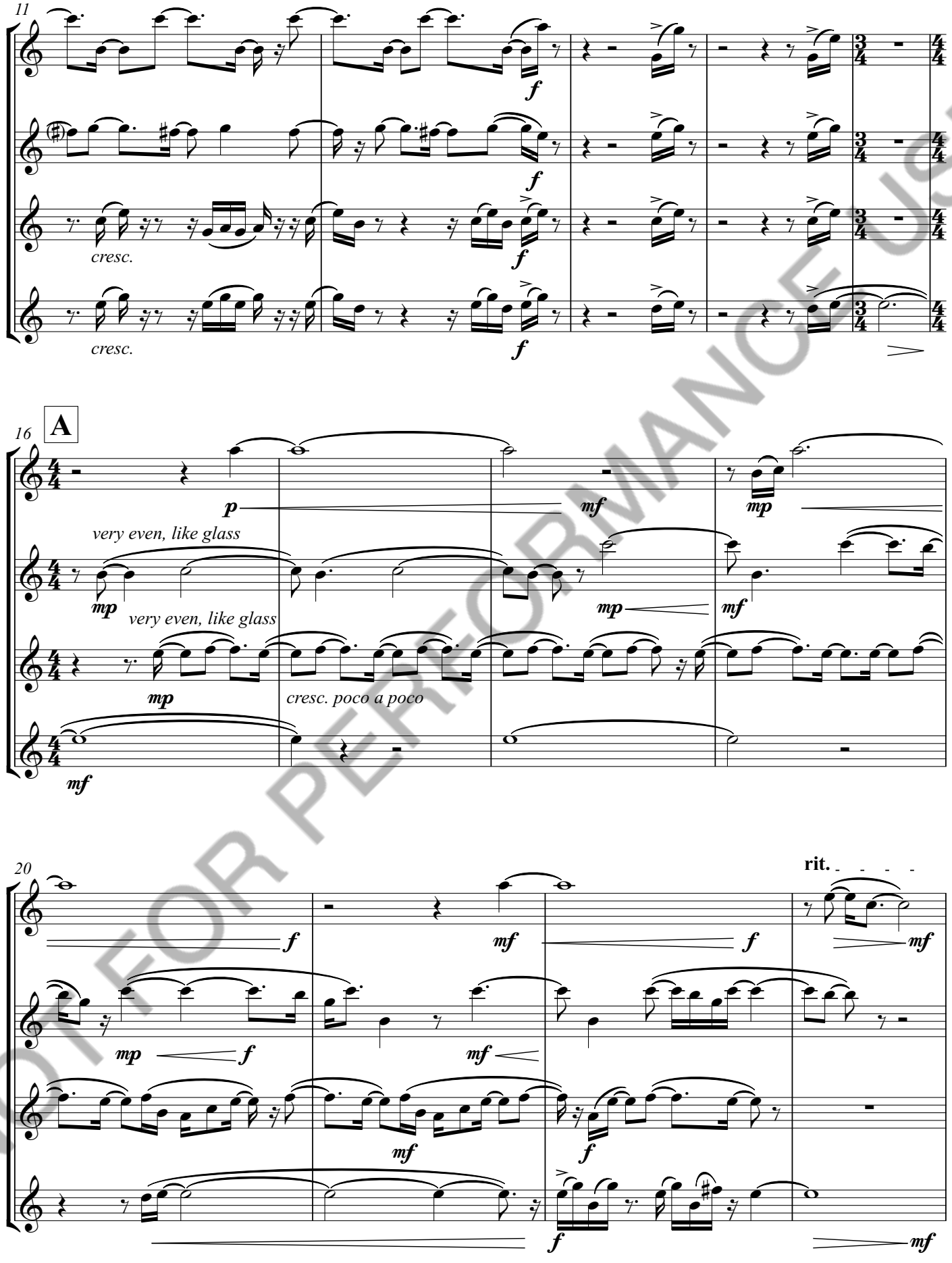

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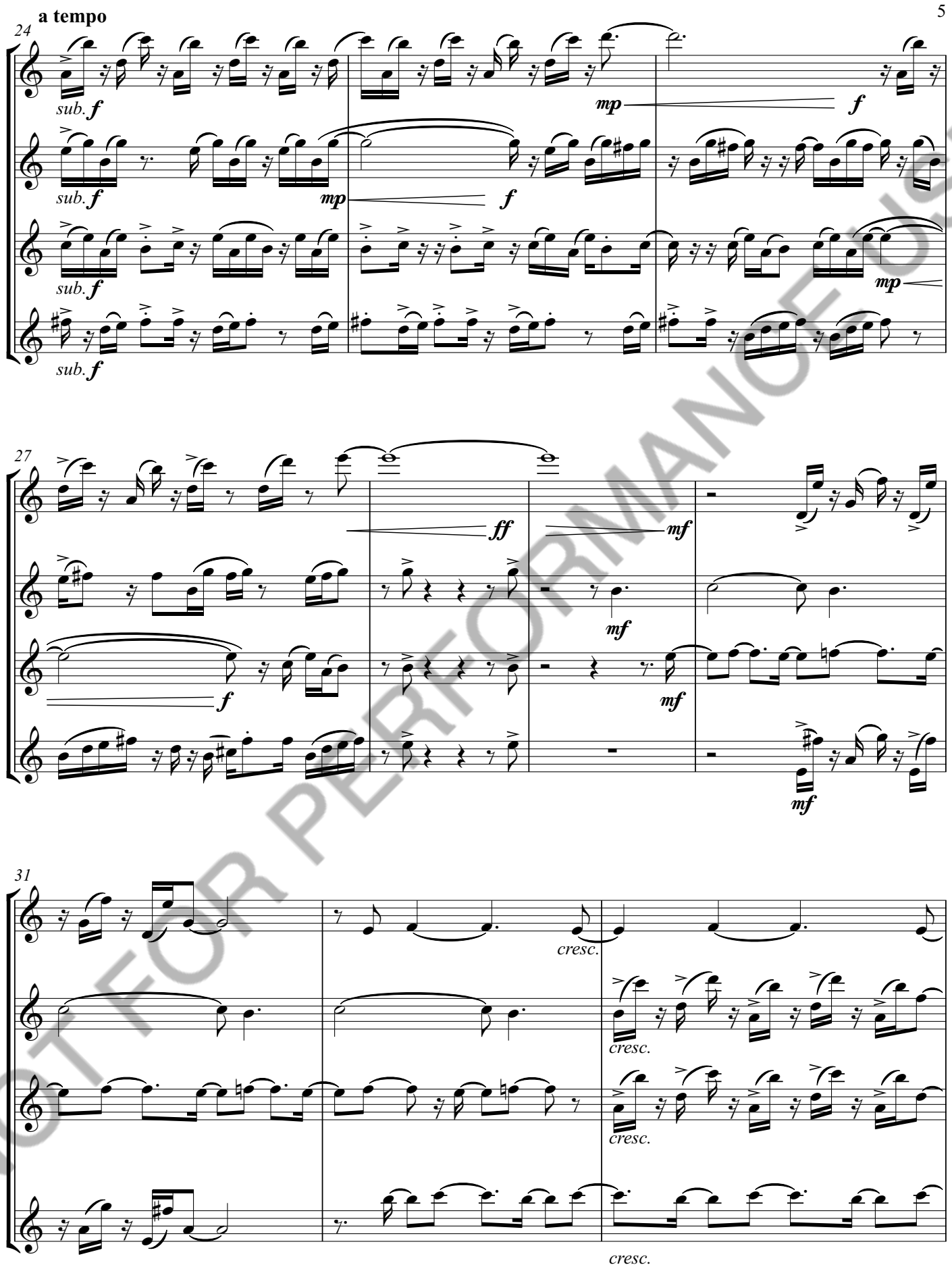

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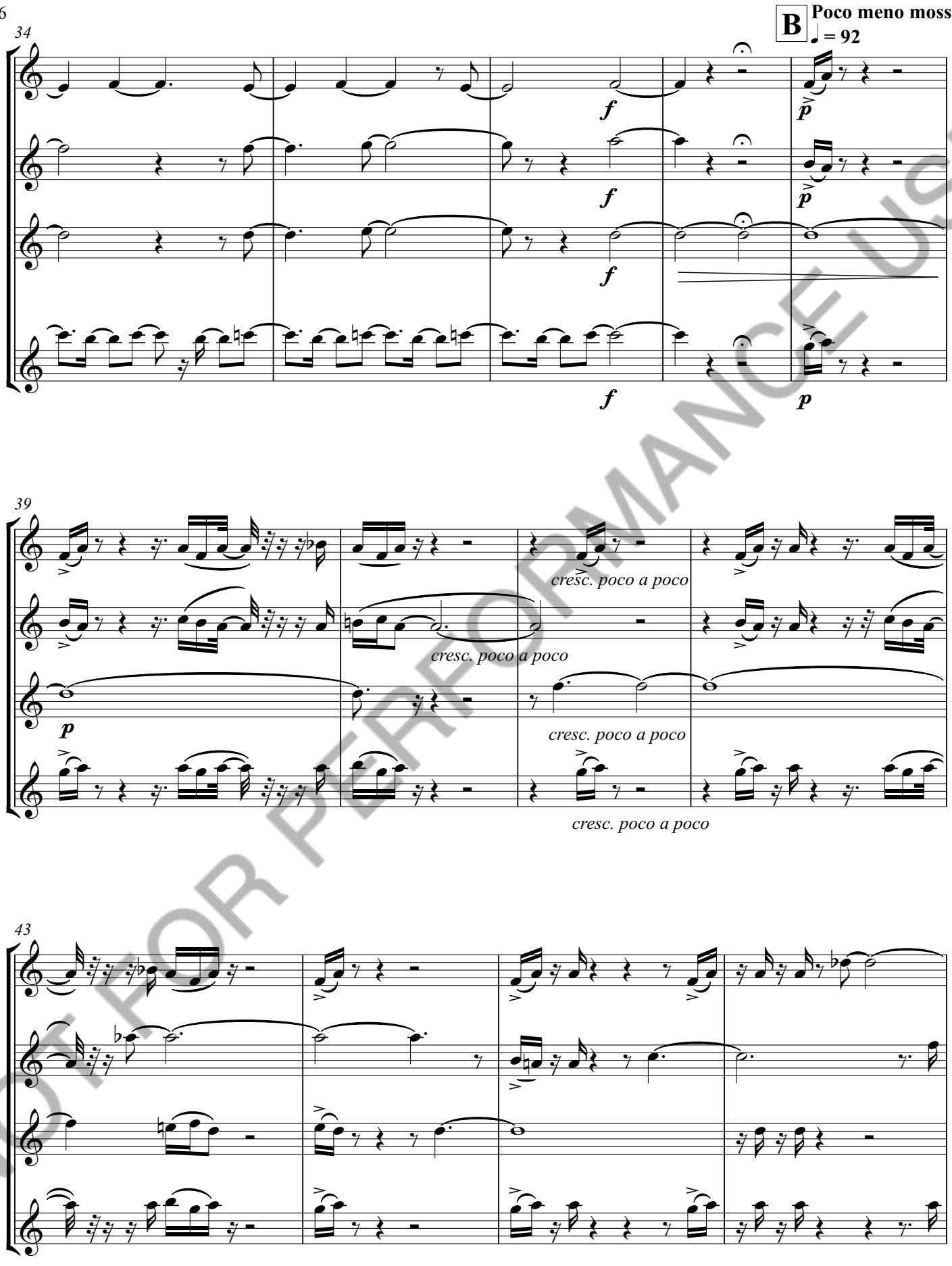

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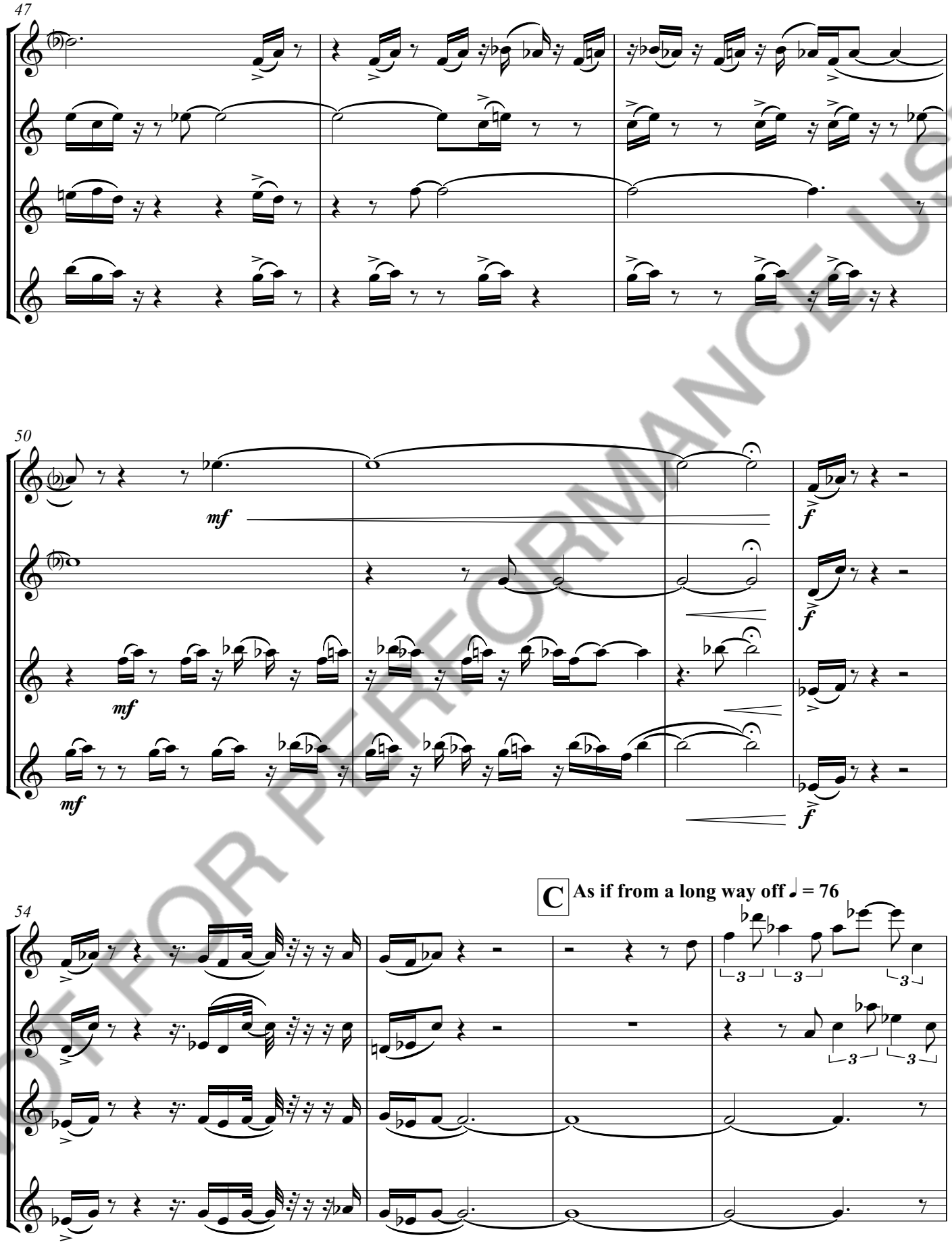

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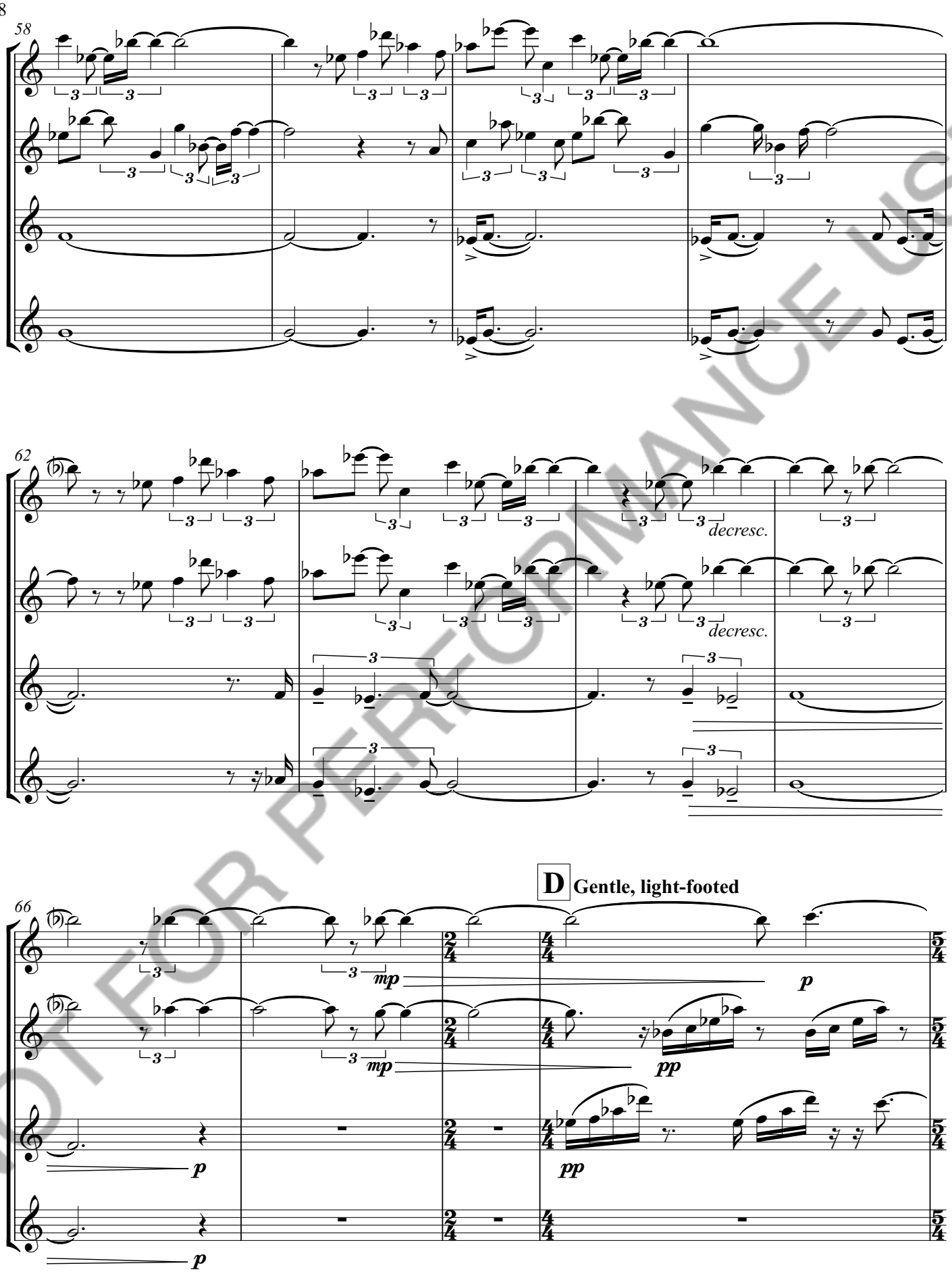

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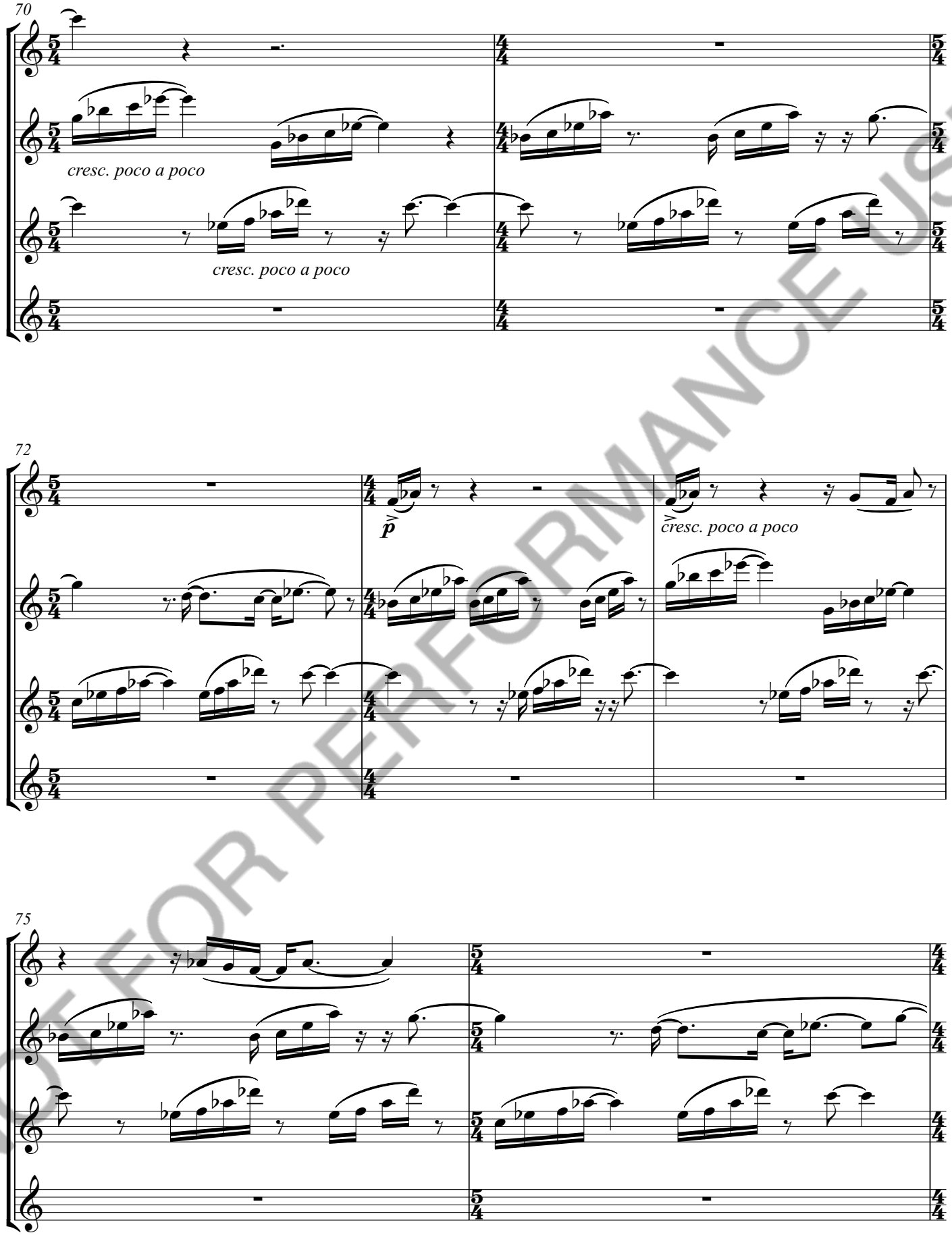

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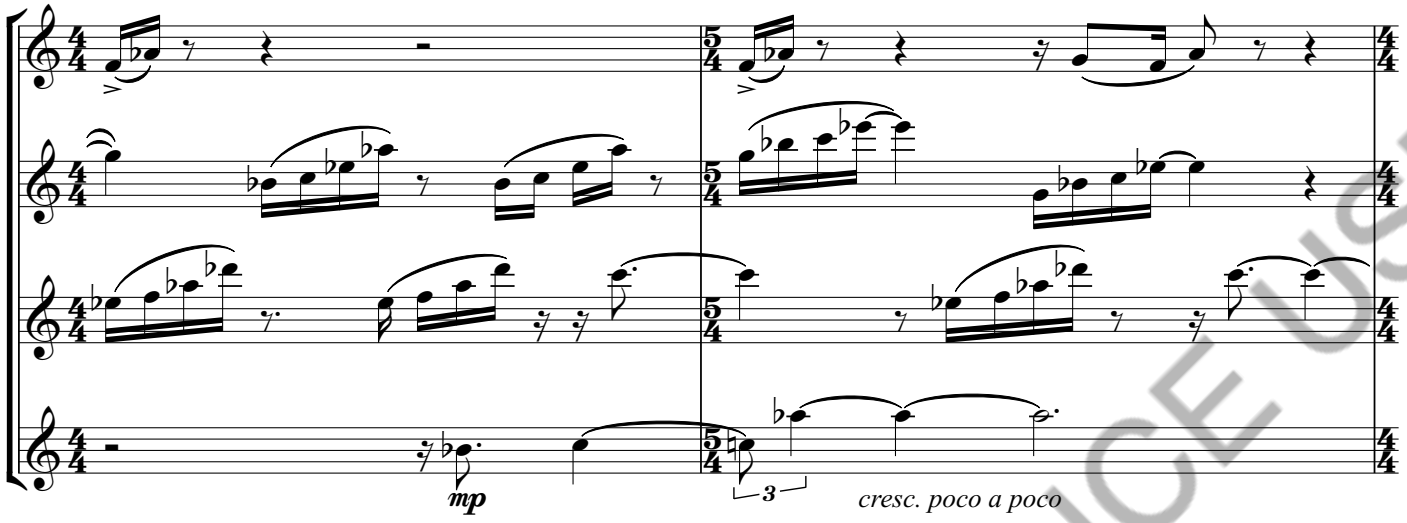

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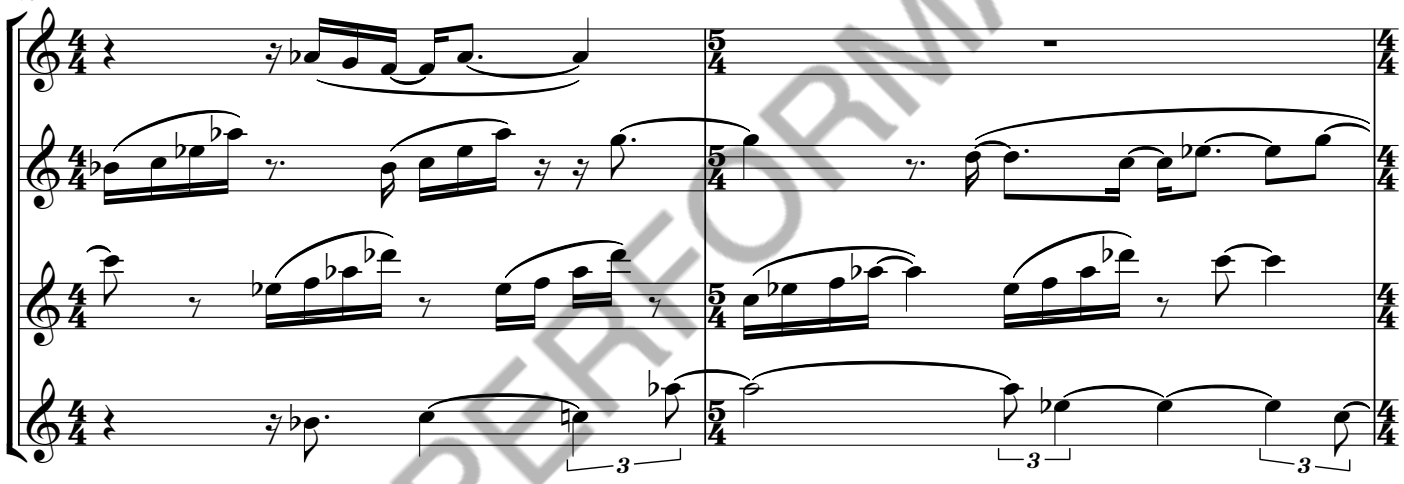

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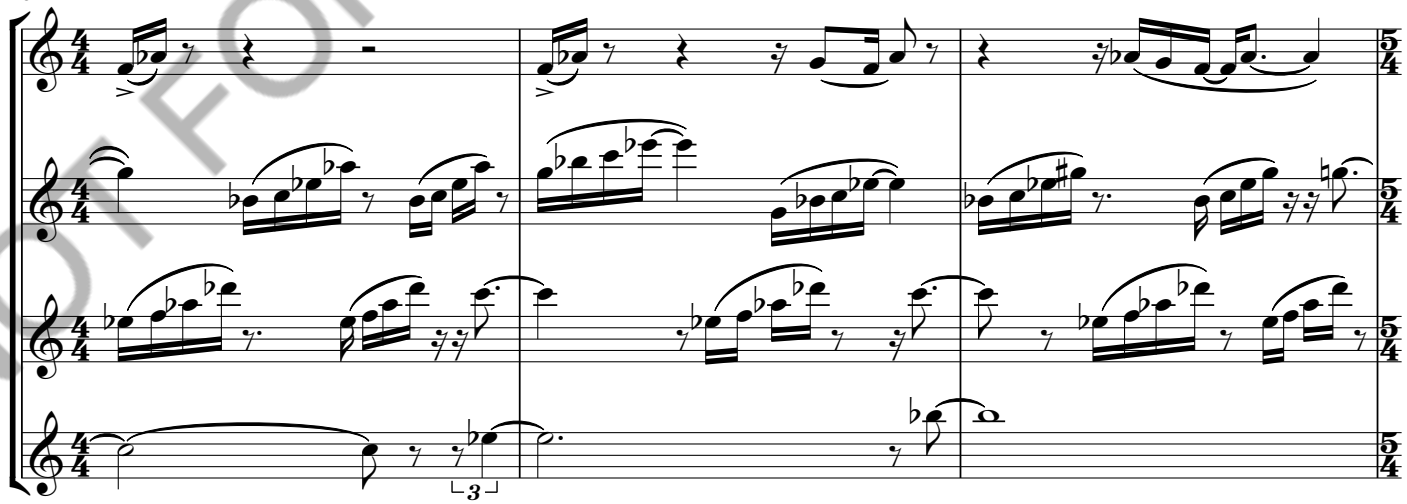

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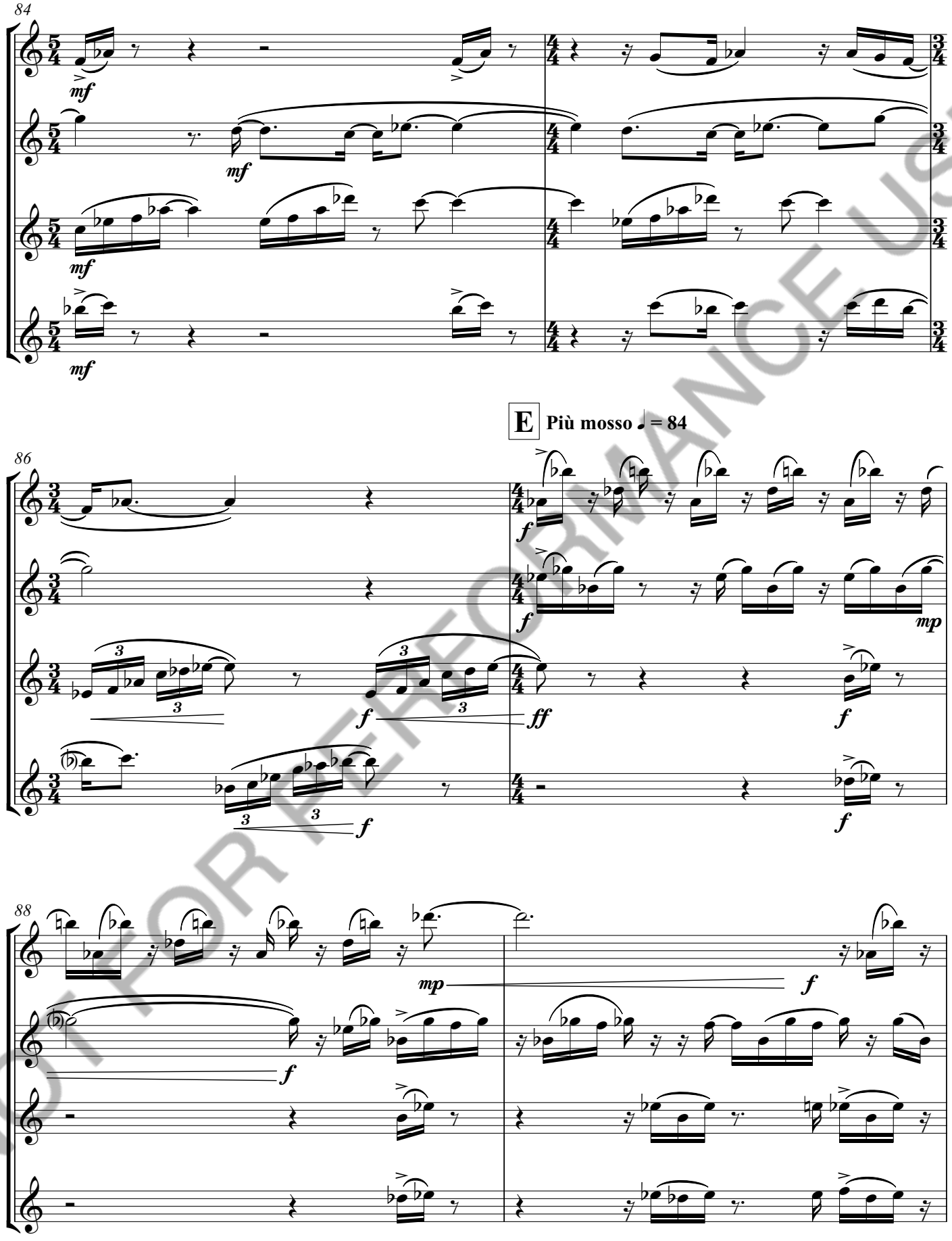

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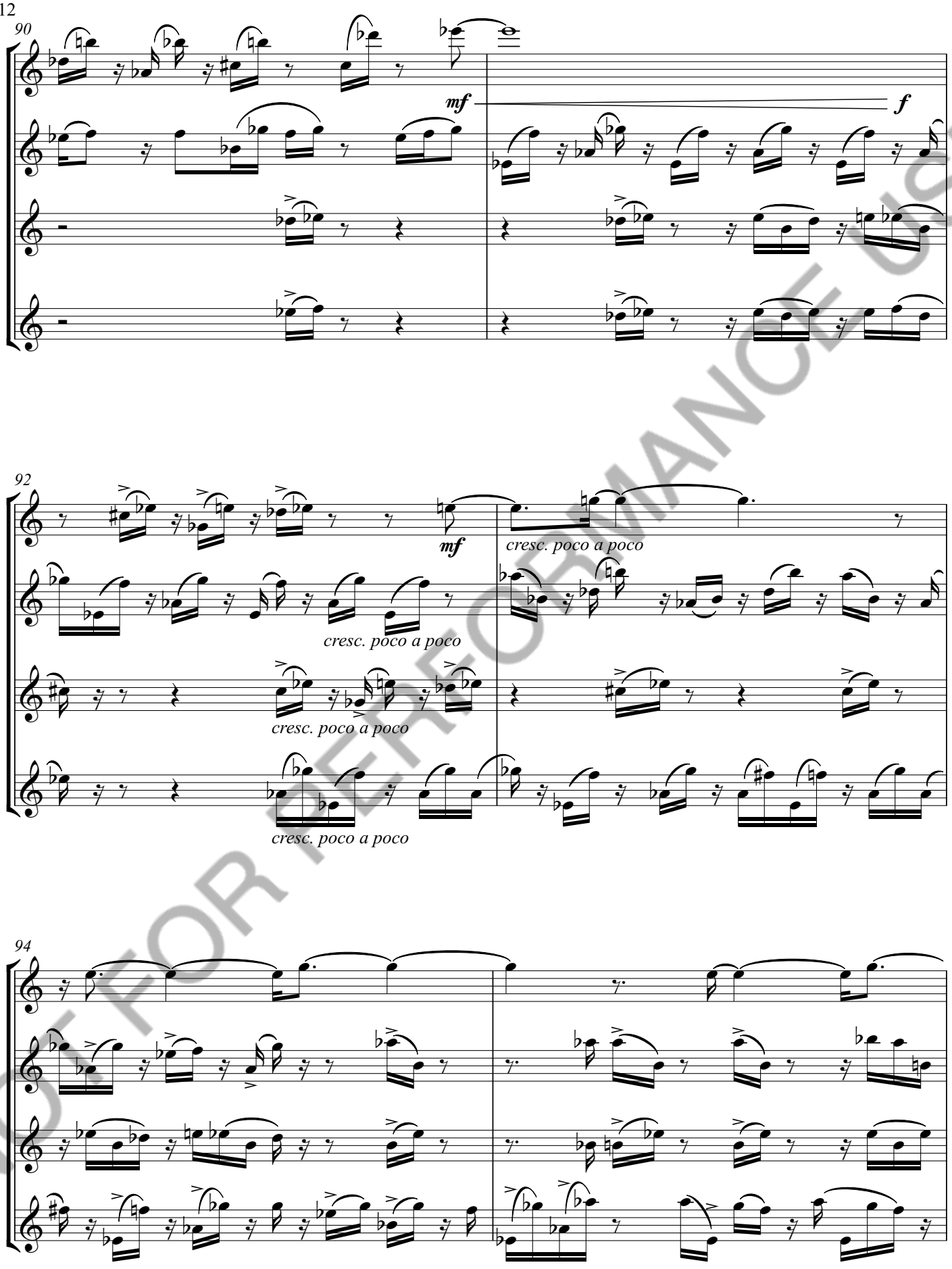

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short **F** breathe if/as necessary and re-enter

96

f

ff

ff

ff

mp

mp

floating above texture; as restrained as possible

99

mp

floating above texture; as restrained as possible

mp

102

f

mf

f

ff

f

cresc.

ff

f

cresc.

ff

f

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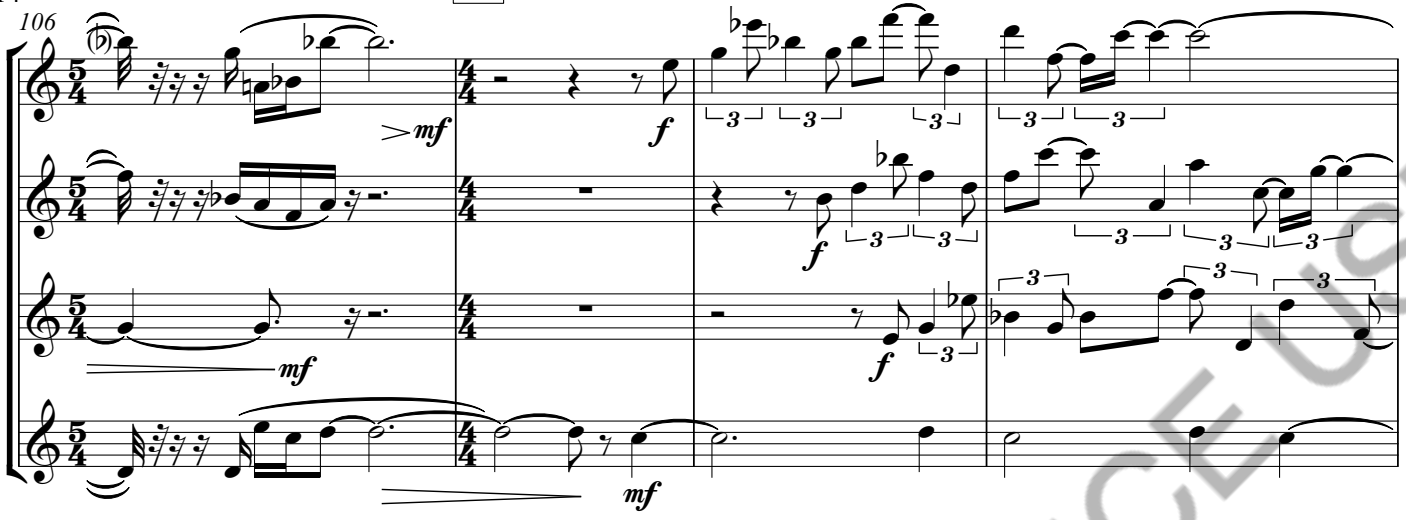
G **Broad, full ♩ = ca. 92**

106



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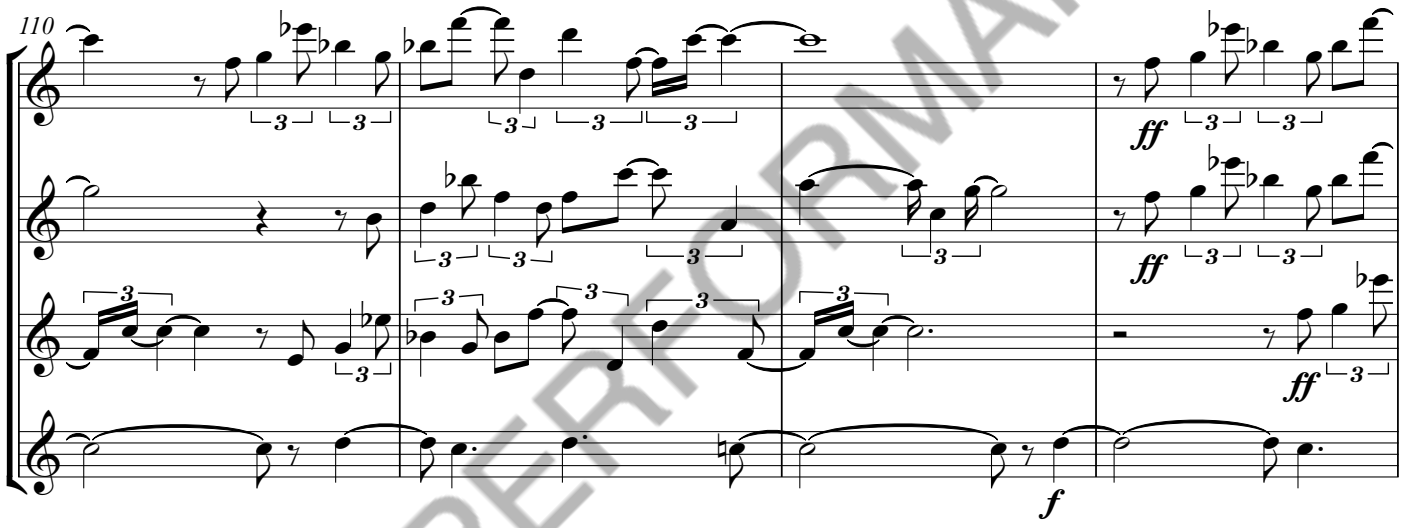

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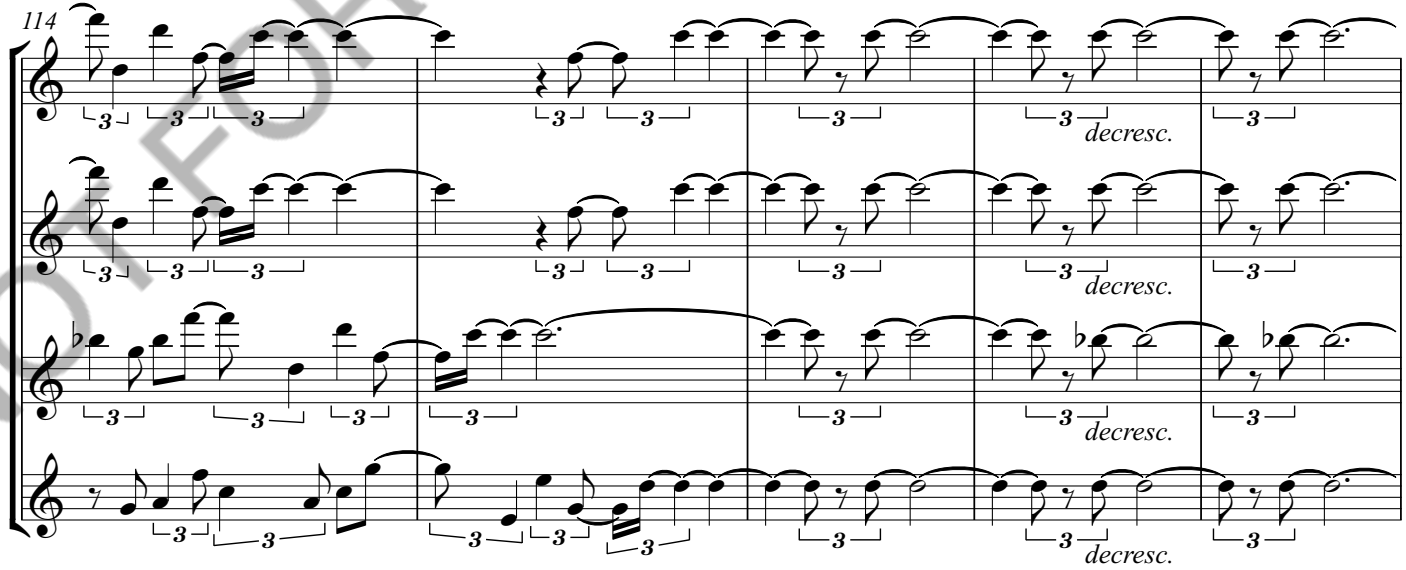

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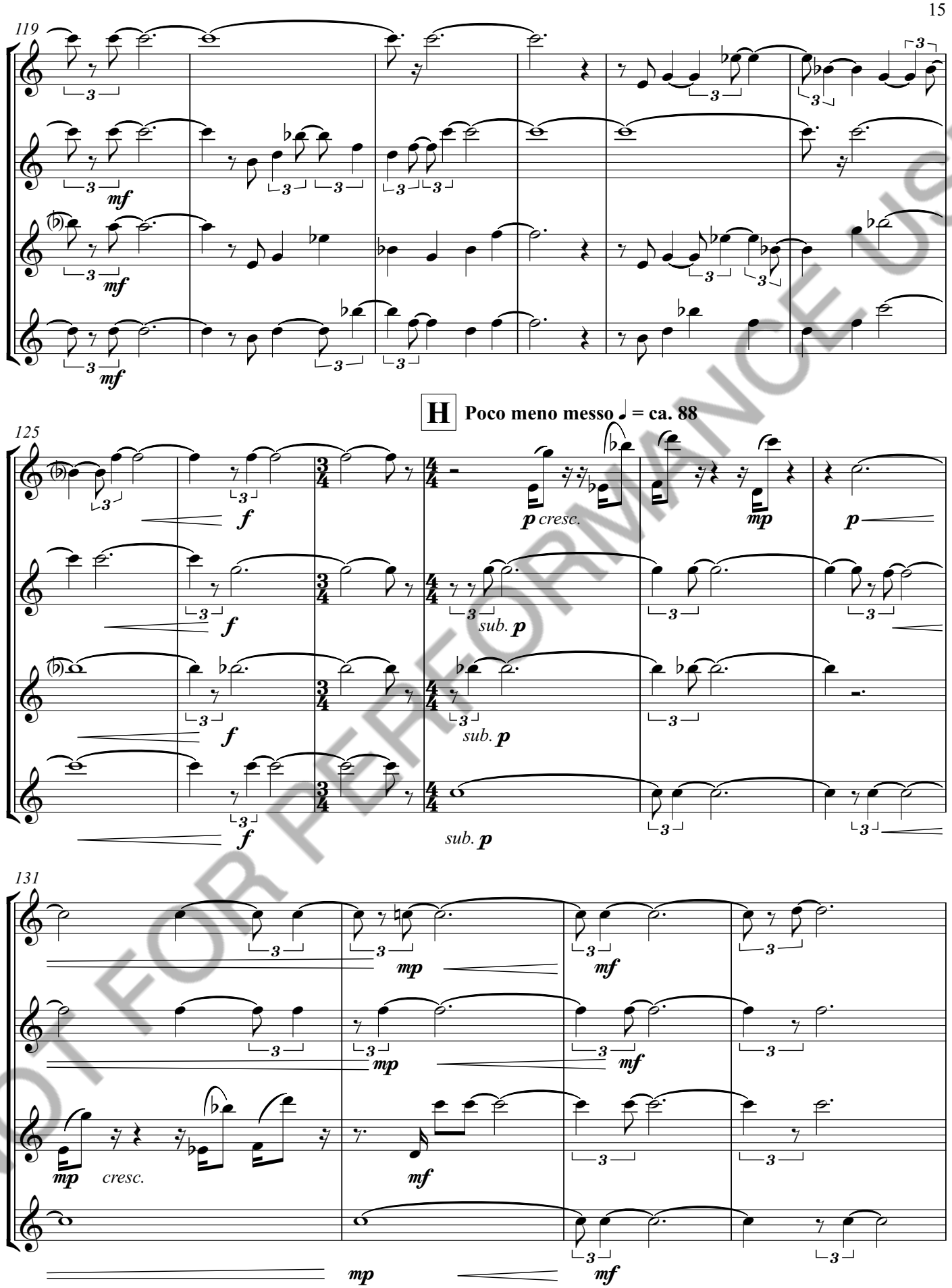

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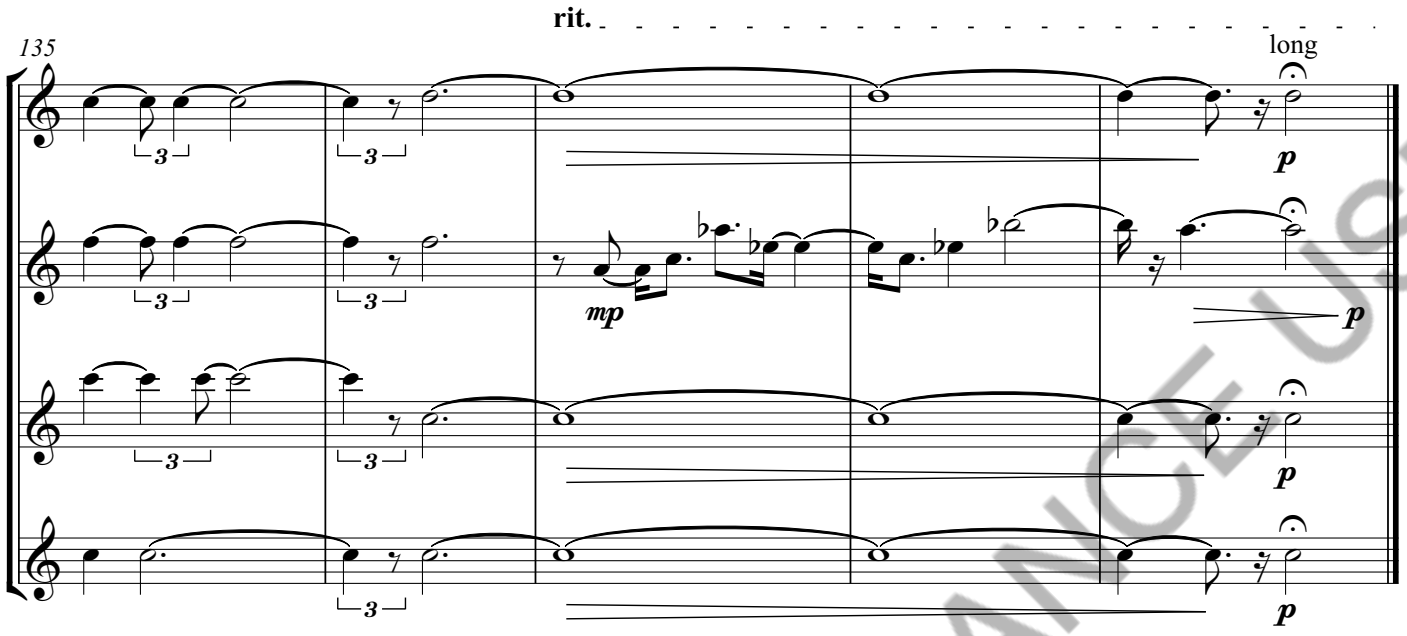

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