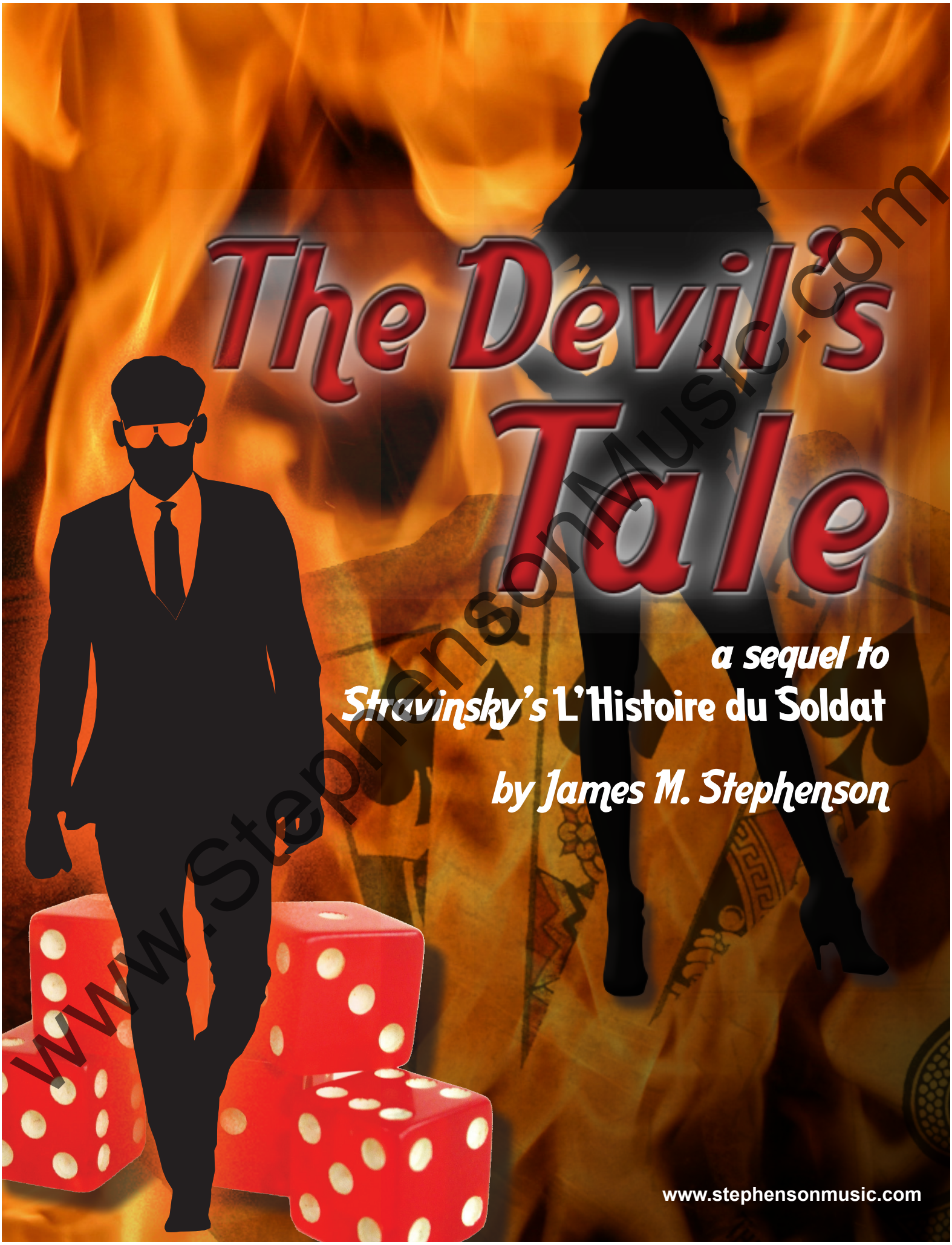

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# The Devil's Tale

## Story and Music by:
## James M. Stephenson

### Instrumentation:

**Violin, Contrabass, Clarinet (A/B♭), Bassoon, Trumpet, Trombone, Percussion (1 player)**
**Solo Narrator. Options available for dancers, actors - staging.**

### Duration:

**Music only: approx. 34 minutes**
**with Narration: approx. 45 minutes**

| Order of movements<br>* = complete production only | for Dance: |
|---|---|
| **PART I** | |
| intro: Percussion solo (reprises ending of Stravinsky: "L'histoire du soldat") | |
| I. Never Odd or Even | |
| II. Live, O Devil, revel ever! Live! Do evil | solo: HANNAH |
| III. Seven Eves | duet: JOE/HANNAH |
| IV. Too hot to hoot | solo: SAM |
| V. Three dances:<br>Cigar<br>Toss it in a Can<br>It is so Tragic | solo: HANNAH |
| VI. Now, I Won | |
| VII. *PART I Finale - (Three Dances reprise) | solo: HANNAH |
| **PART II** | |
| VIII. Devil never even lived | |
| IX. *Seven Eves (reprise) | |
| X. *Never Odd or Even (short reprise) | solo: HANNAH |
| XI. Evil, a sin, is alive | solo: JOE |
| XII. Name No One Man | duet: SAM, HANNAH |
| XIIa. (optional) *No, It is opposition | |
| XIII. *Never Odd or Even (short reprise) | solo: SAM |
| XIV. Now I Won (reprise) | |

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**Conductor's Score**

# The Devil's Tale

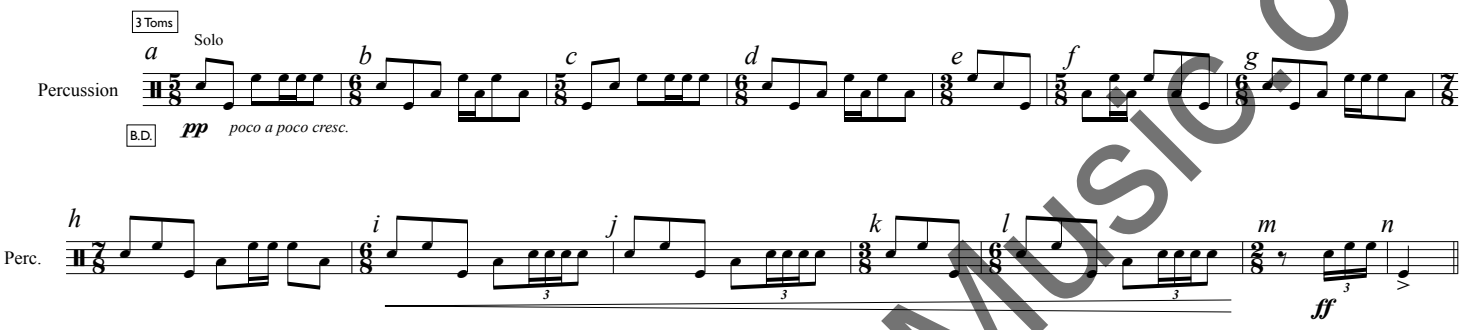
**(sequel to 'L'histoire du soldat')**

## Part I

**The Devil's Tale**

**Story and Music by:**
**James M. Stephenson**

**Solo percussion, BEFORE any narration:**




*On final loud drum-stroke, JOE wakes up to discover it was all just a dream. Next to him in bed, is his girlfriend, HANNAH, who is a showgirl in Vegas. It's already mid-afternoon (all Vegas performers sleep late).*

(Joe): It was all just a dream! It seemed so real, so true.
(Hannah) What seemed real? Hannah asked (waking up on cue).
(Joe): The devil, the fiddle, and you as a princess - all of it!
(Hannah): (jokingly upset) So I'm not a princess...I'm not fit...?

(Joe, not looking at Hannah): Please tell me you'll stick by my side; you won't be lost?
Through thick and thin, no matter the cost.

Narrator: But Hannah has left the room, and our story must resume...

[to music]

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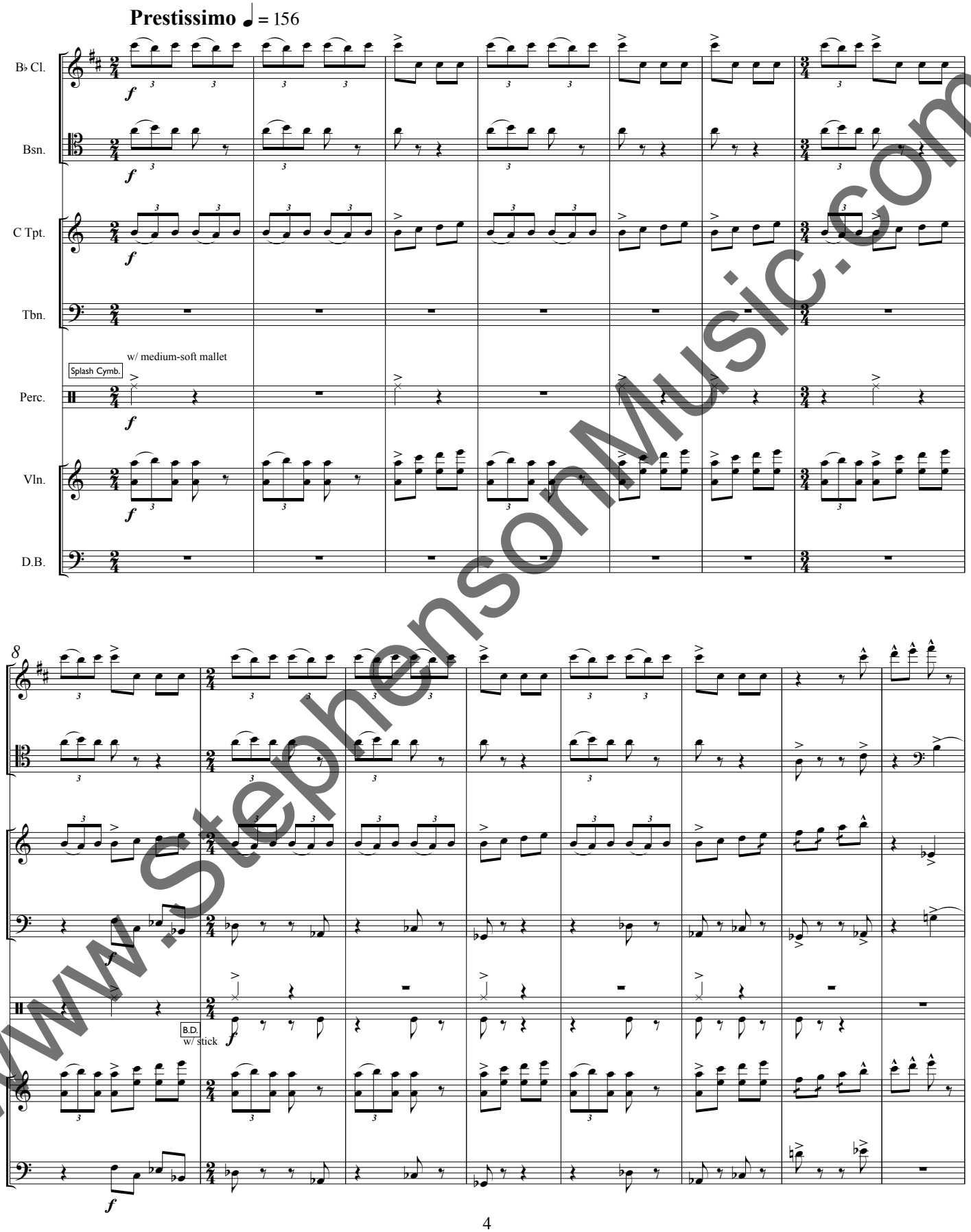
## I. NEVER ODD OR EVEN

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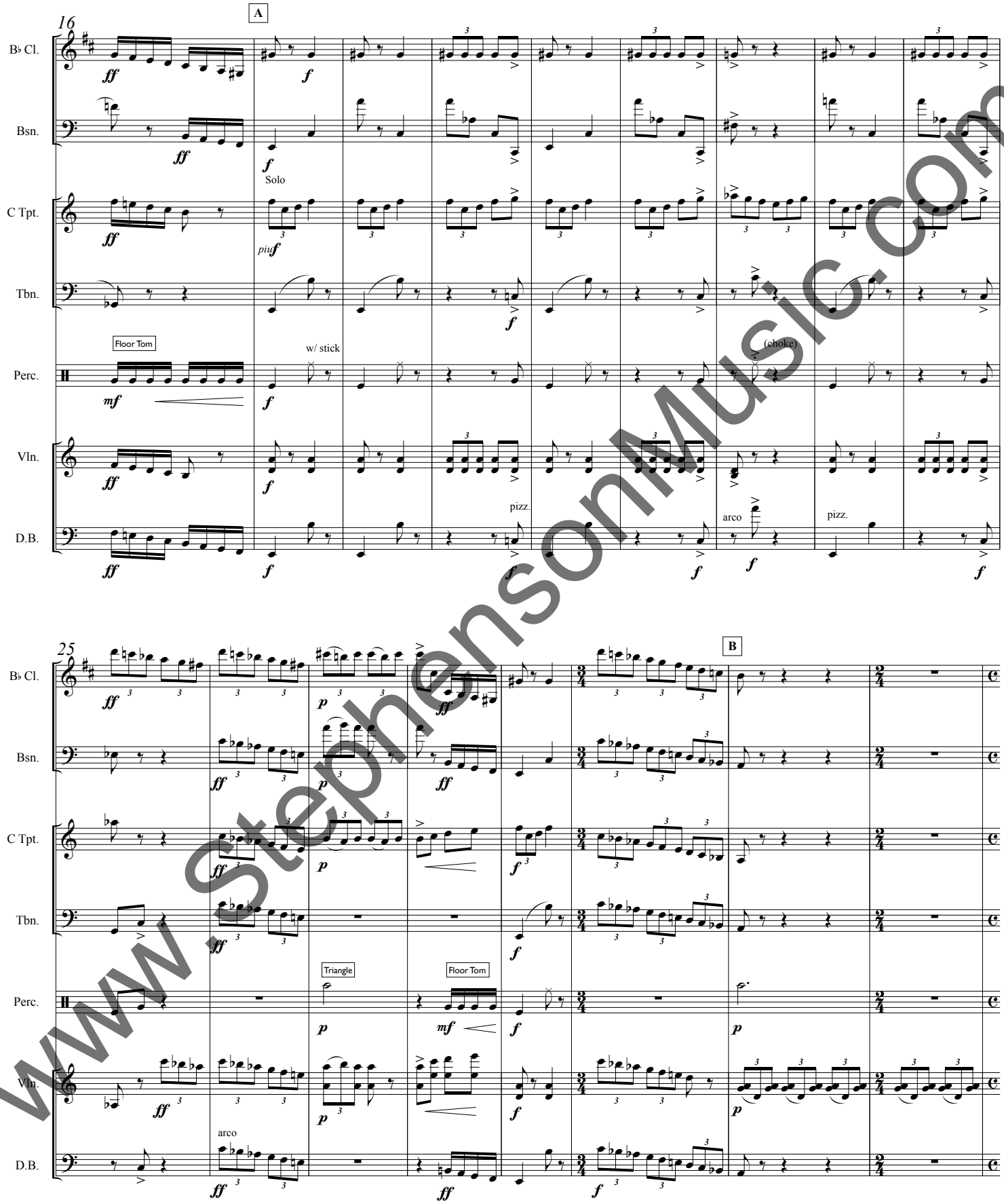


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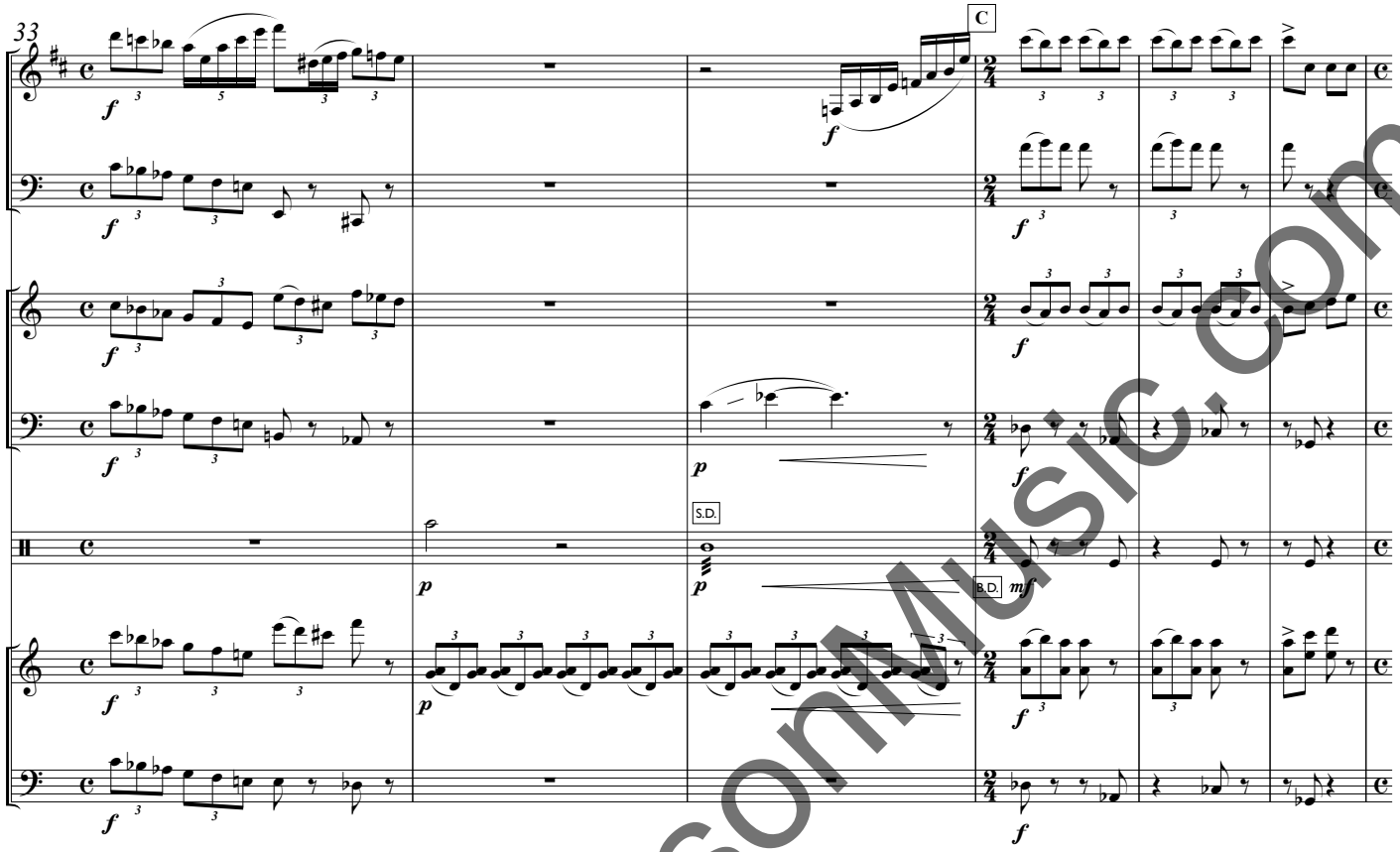


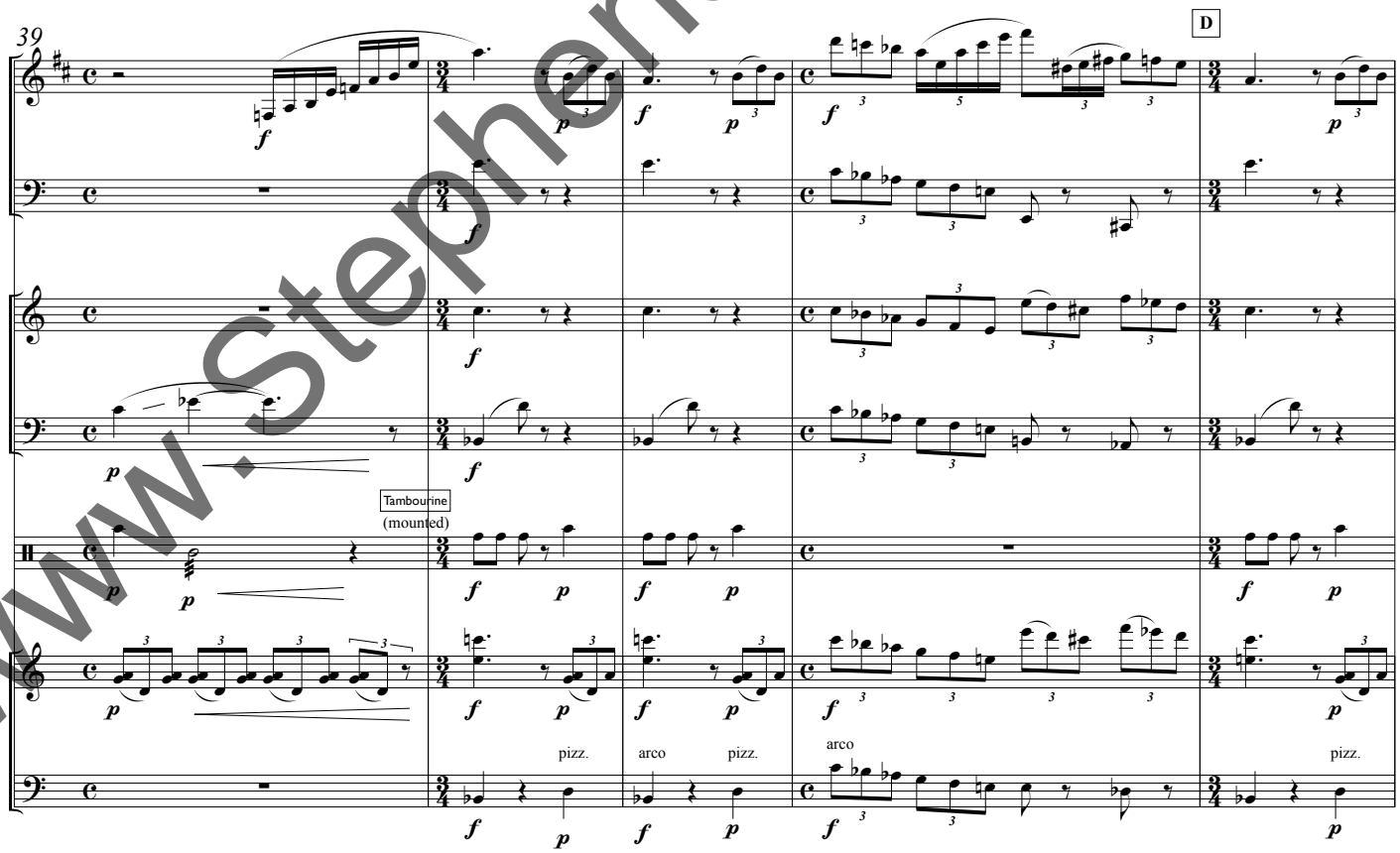


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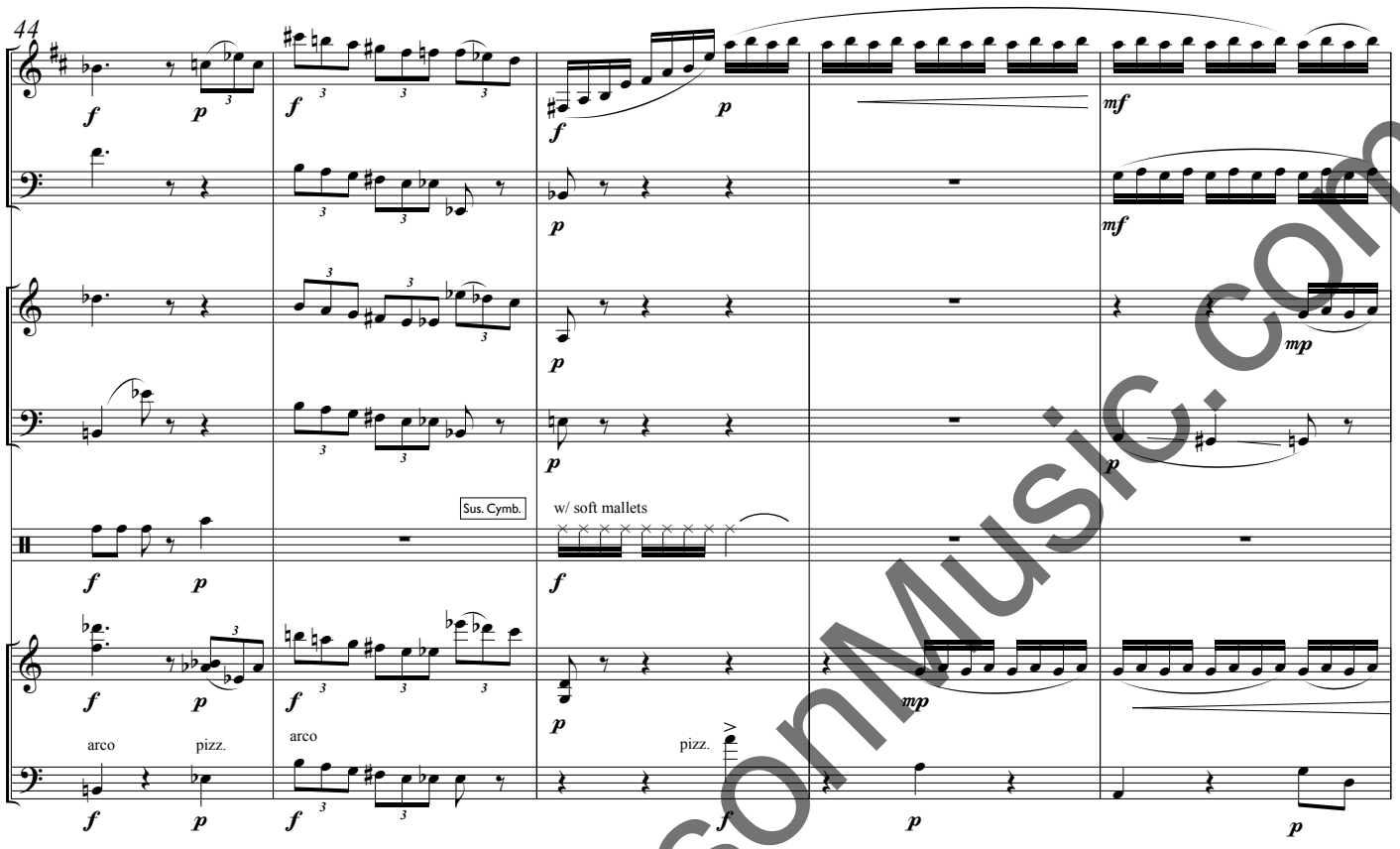


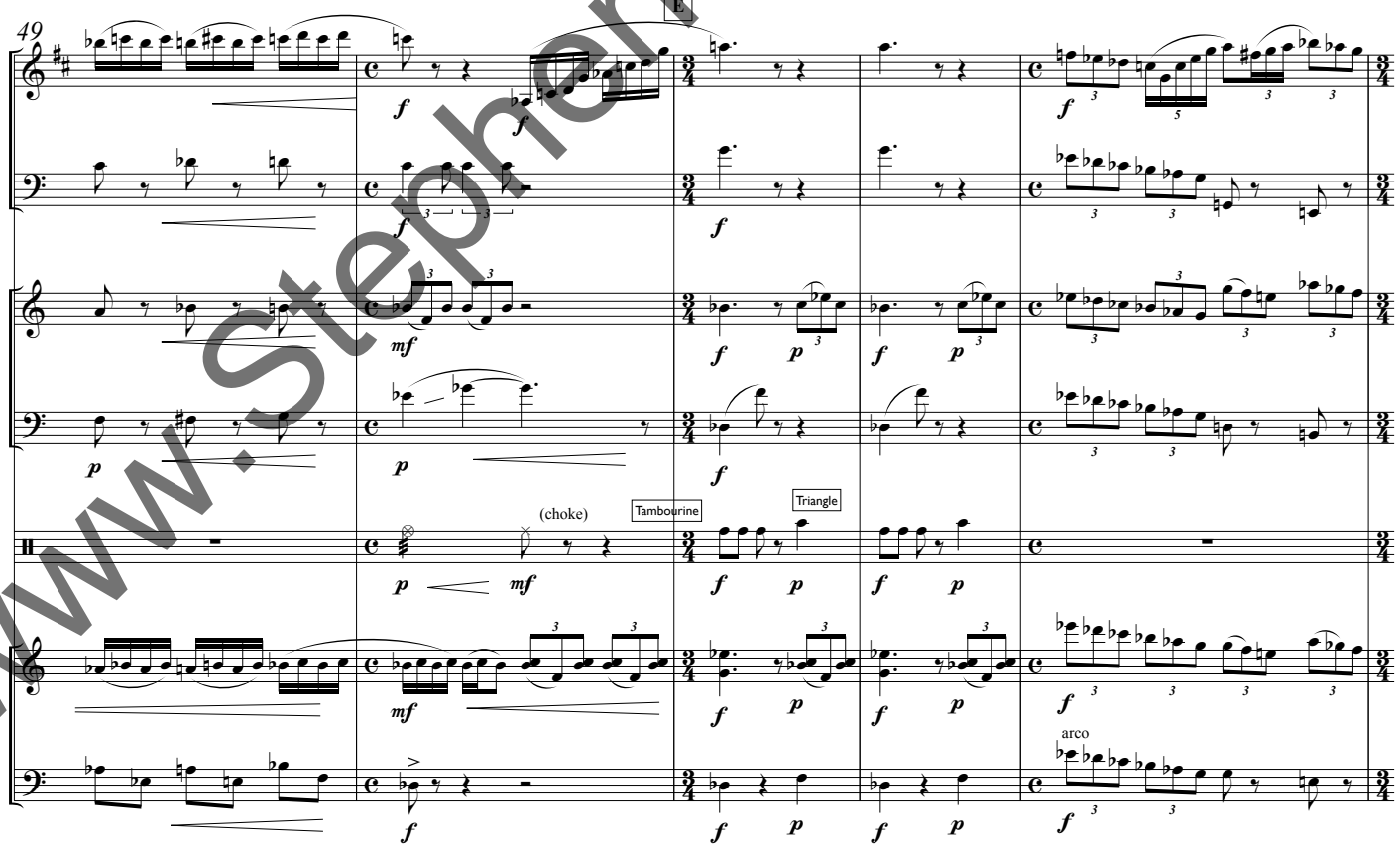


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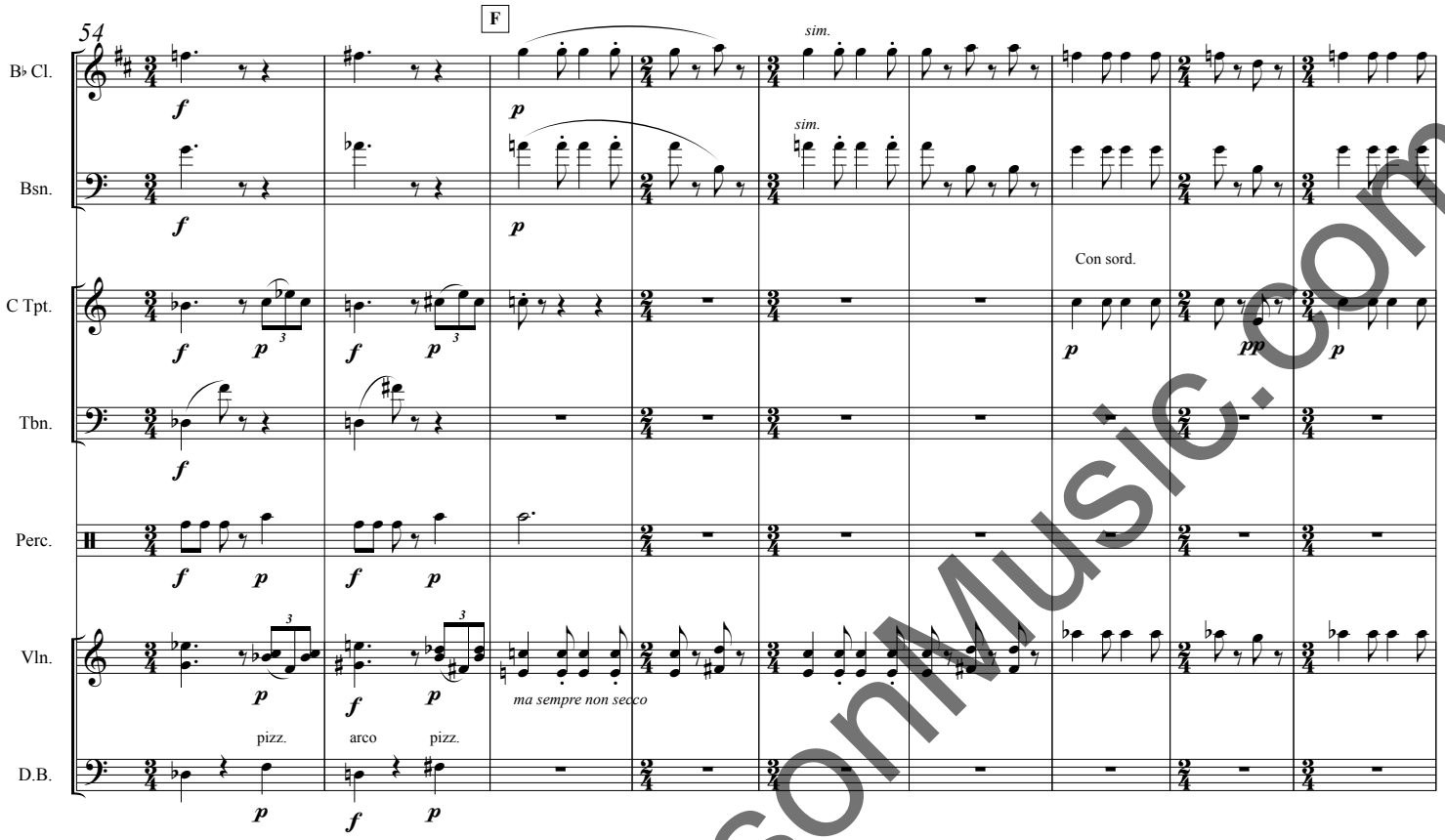


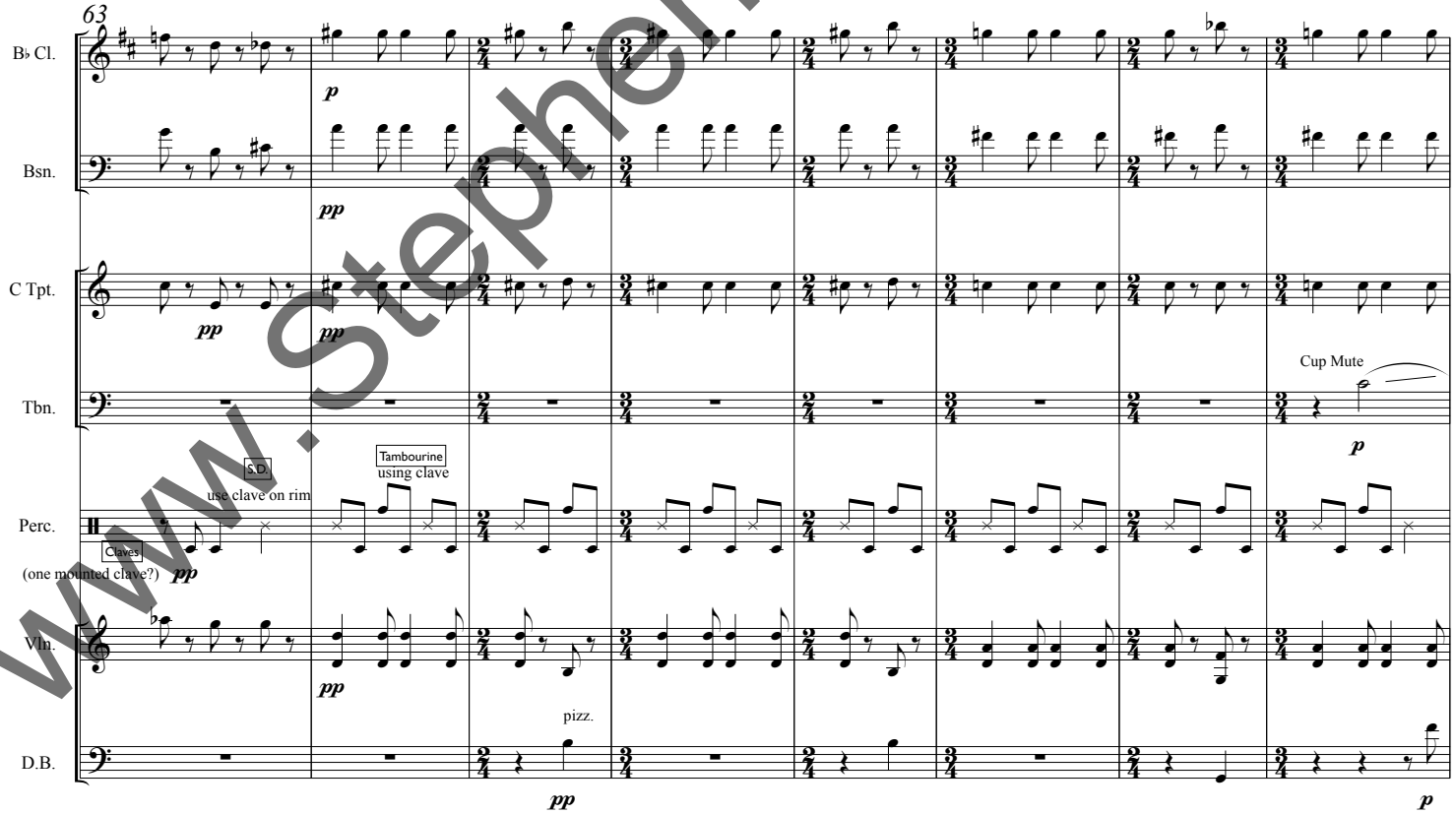


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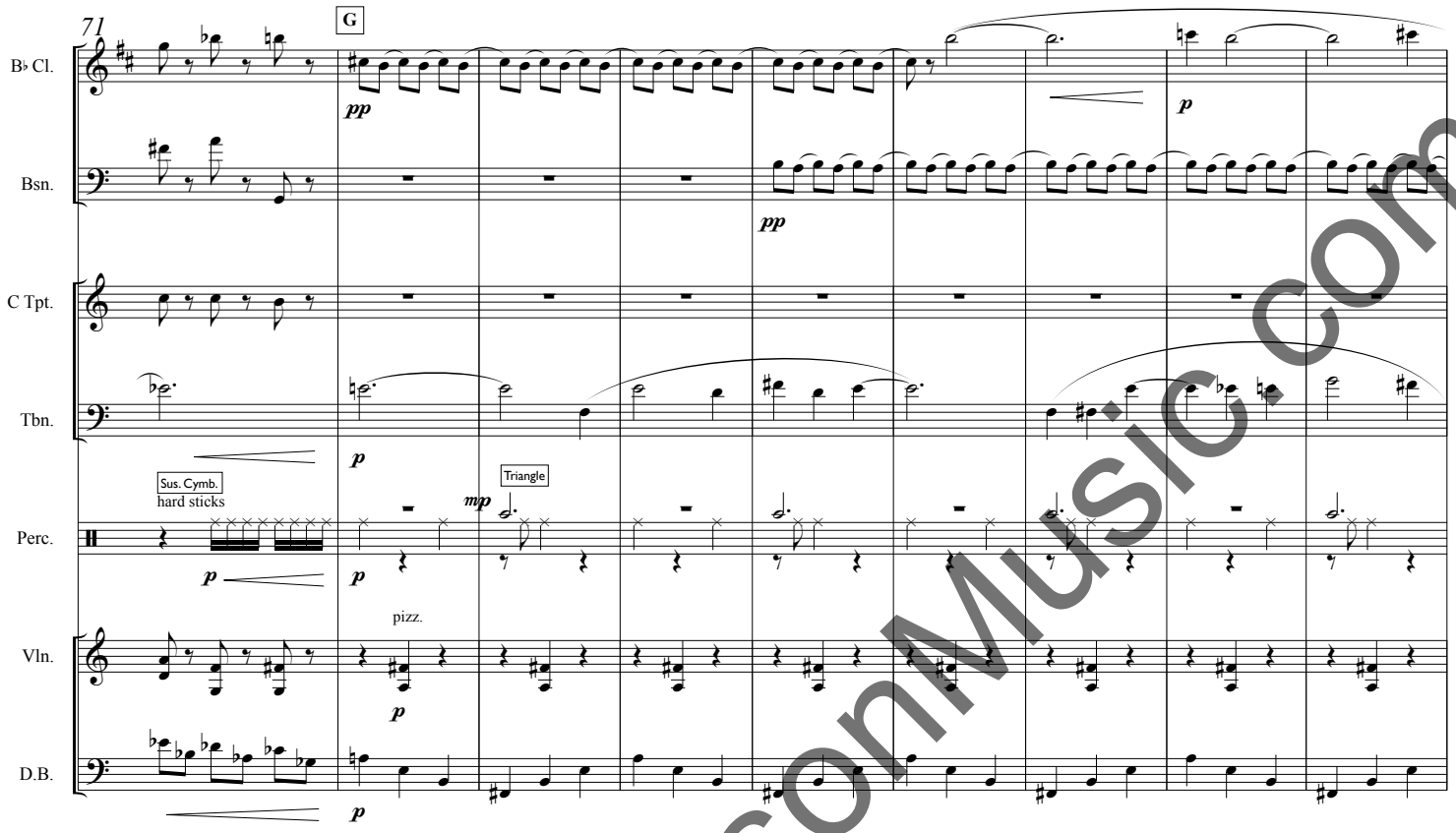


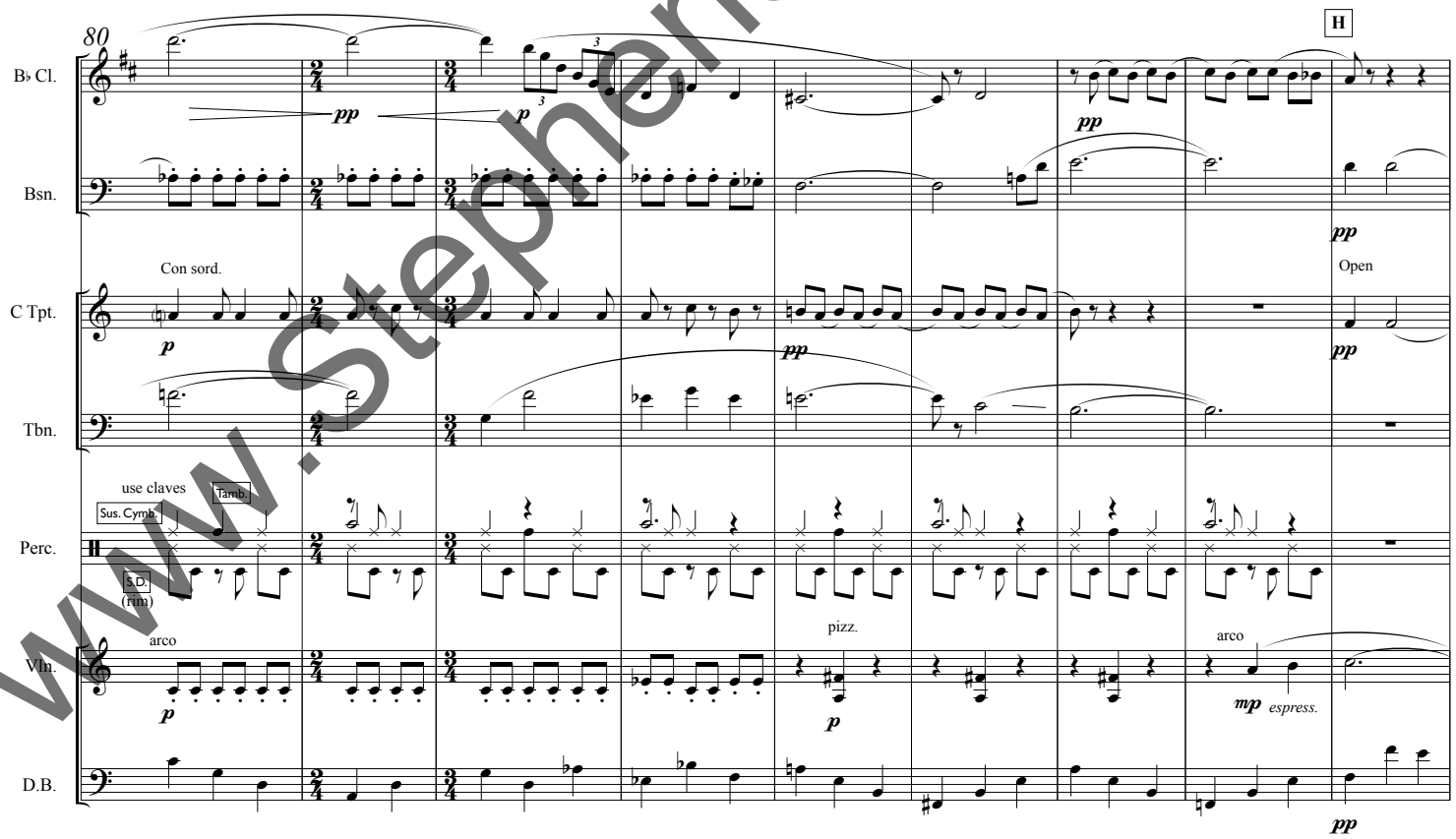


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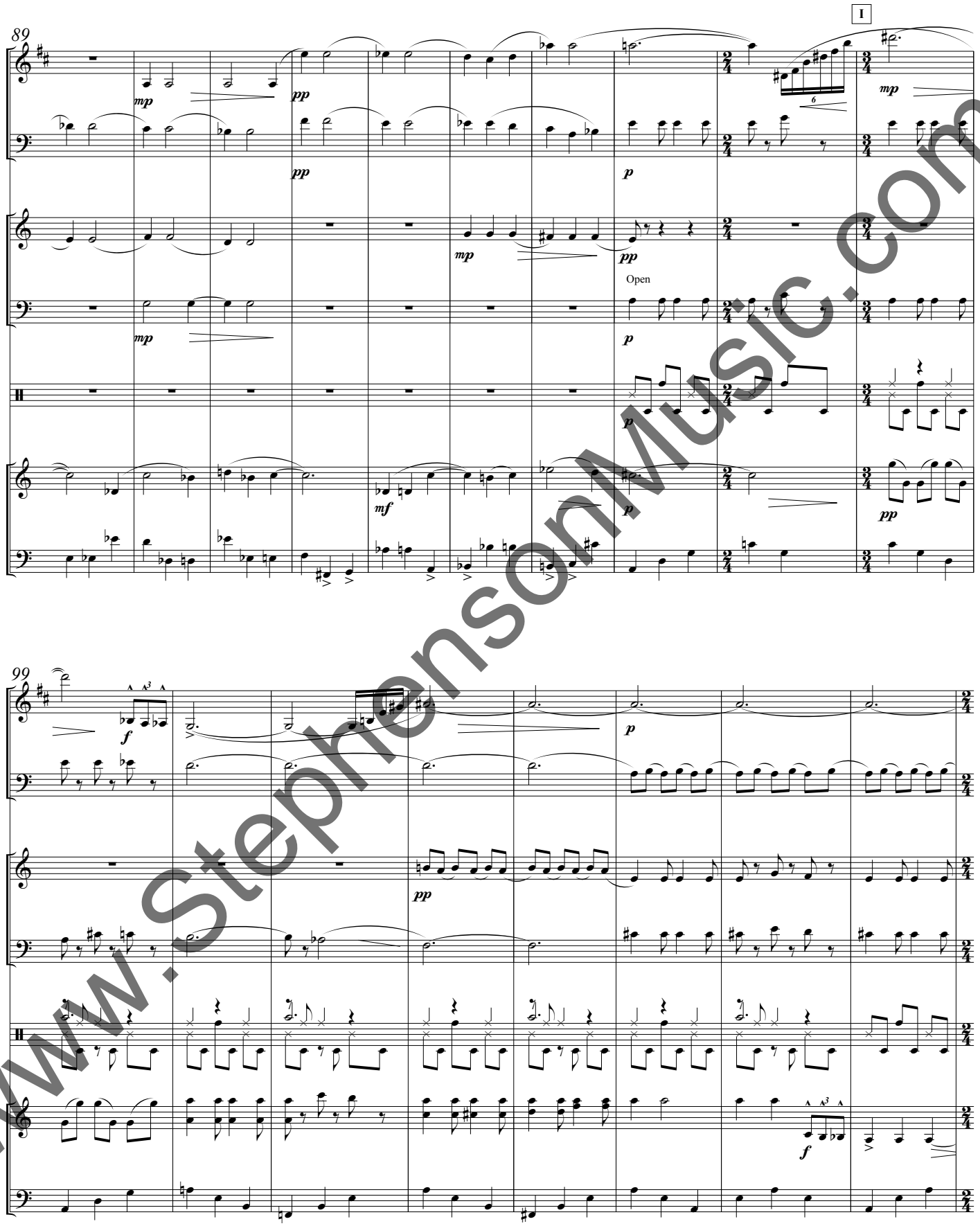


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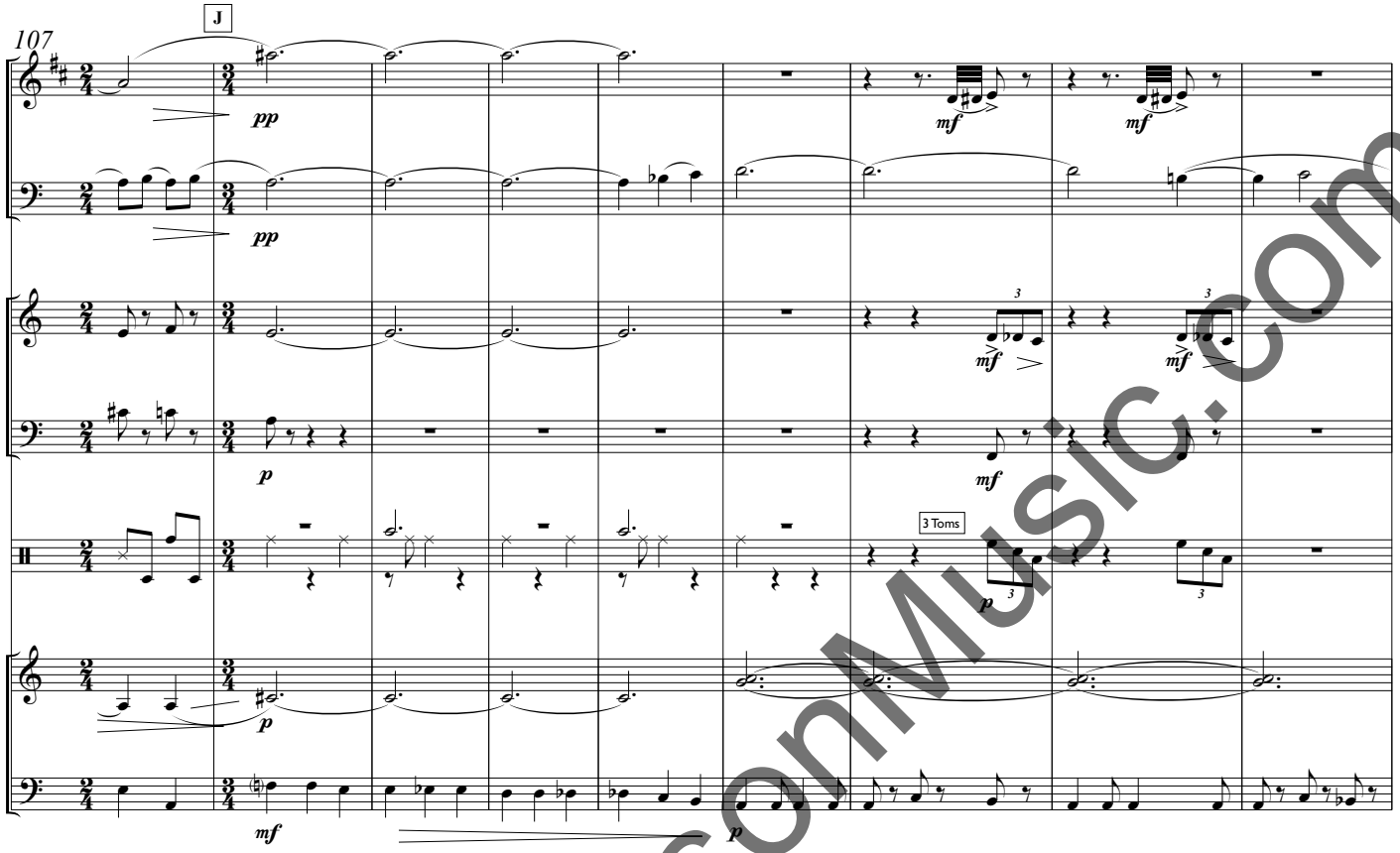


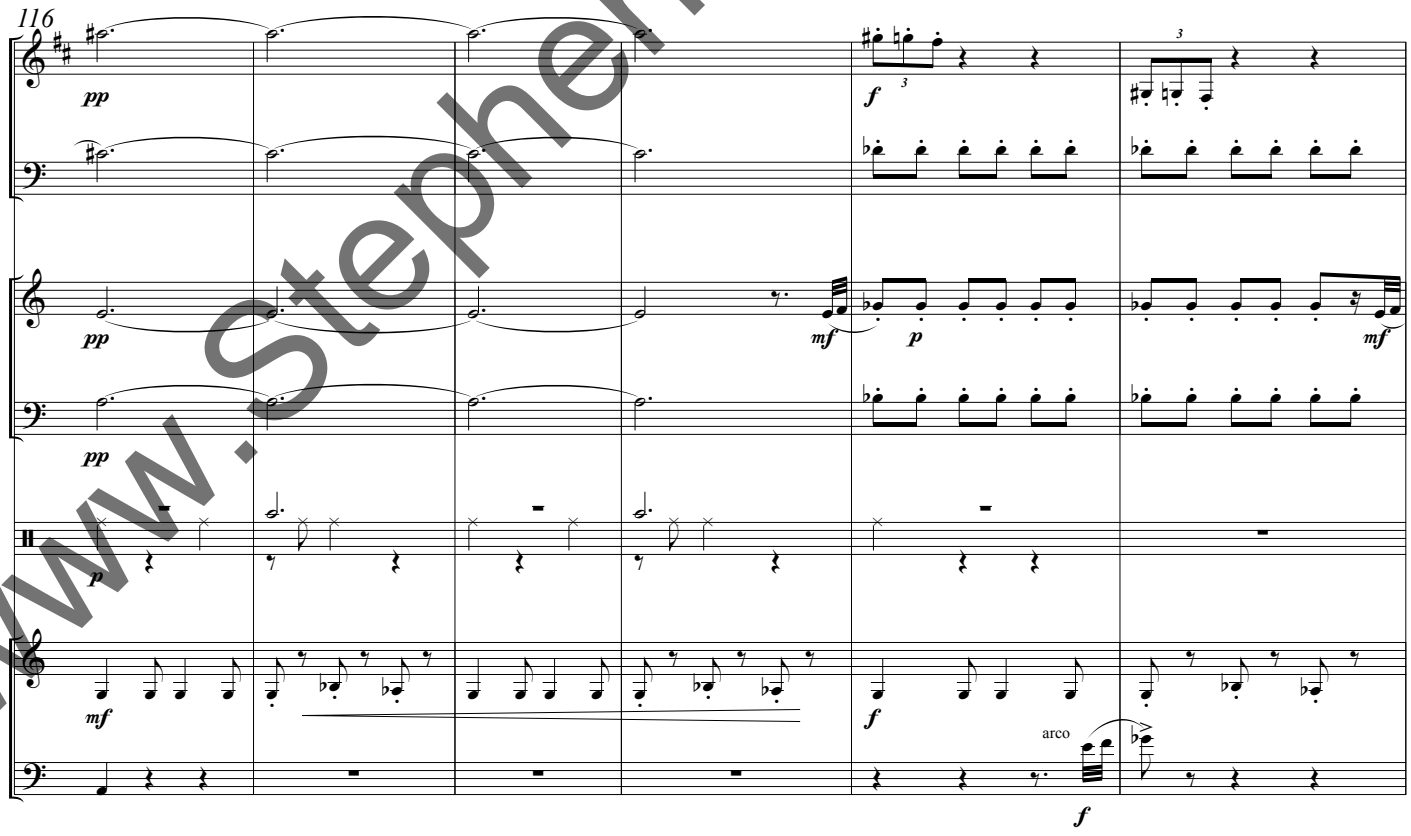


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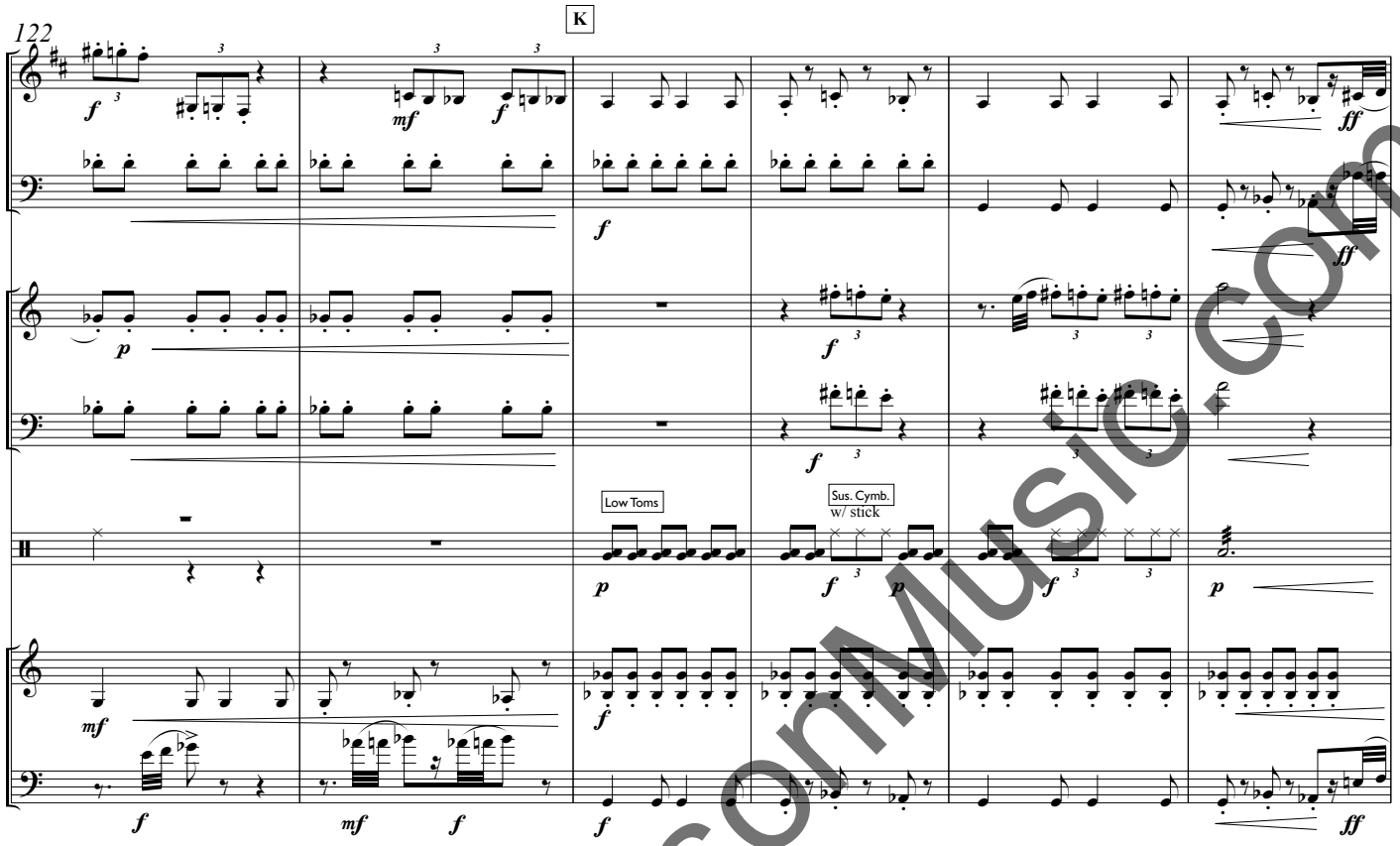


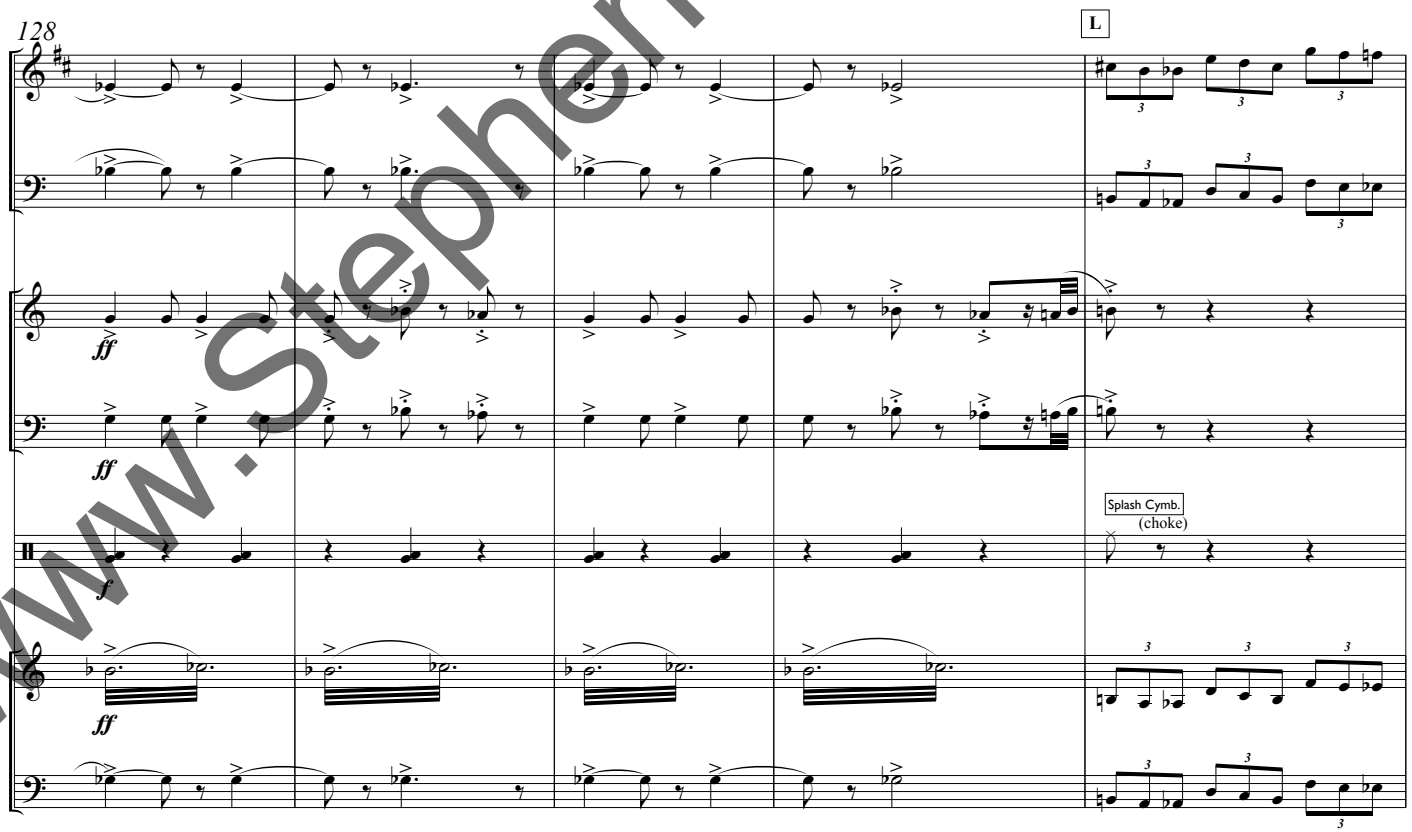


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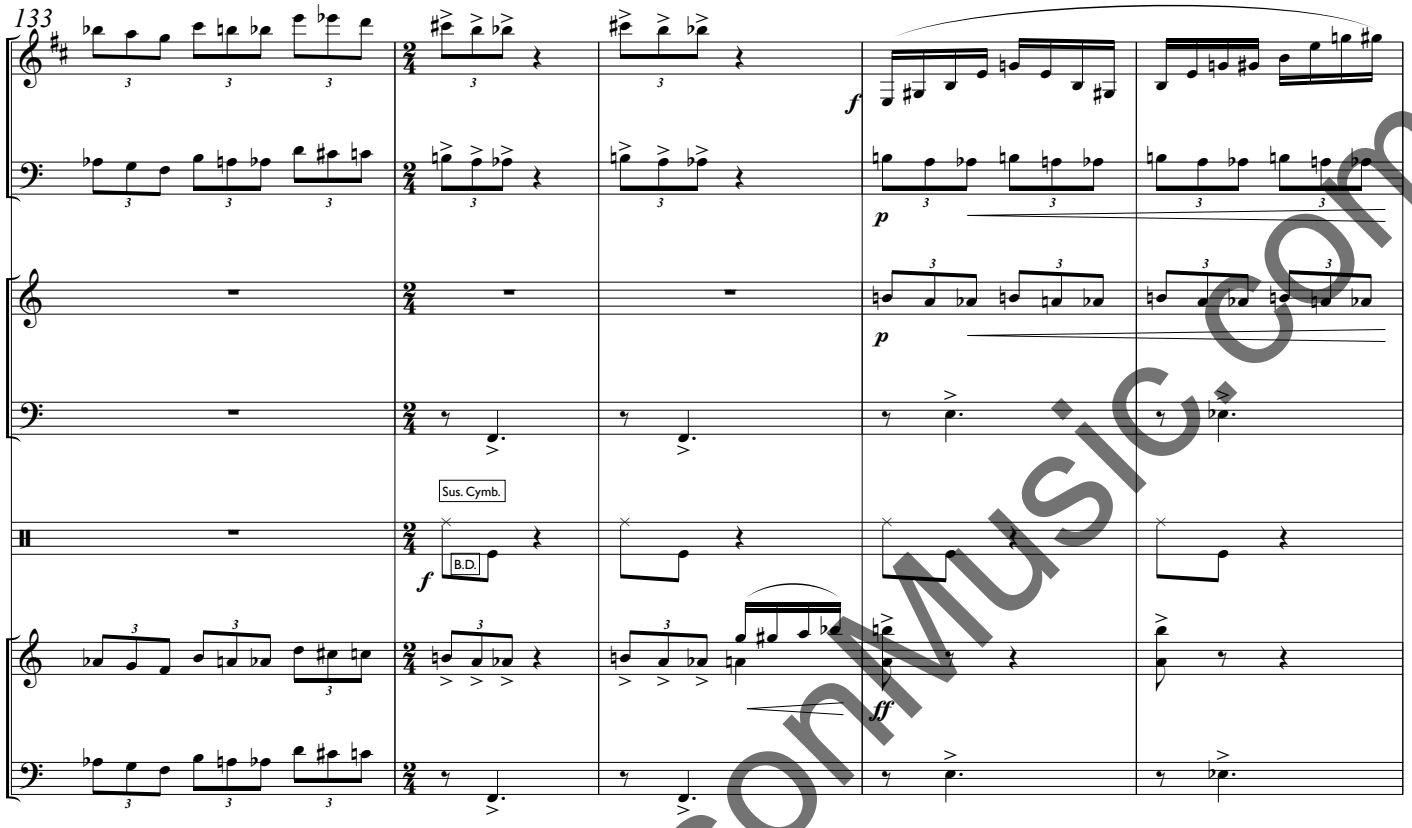


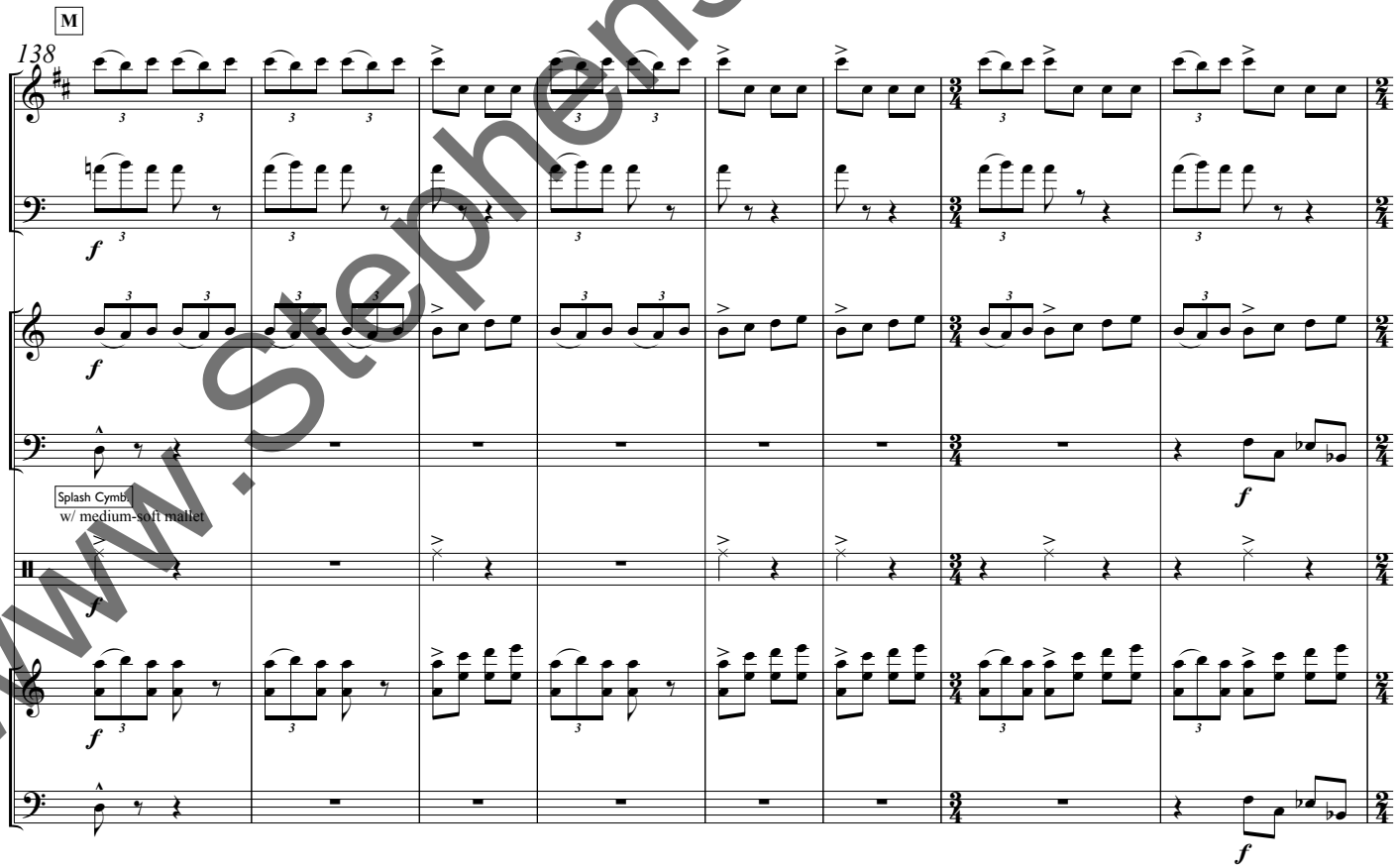


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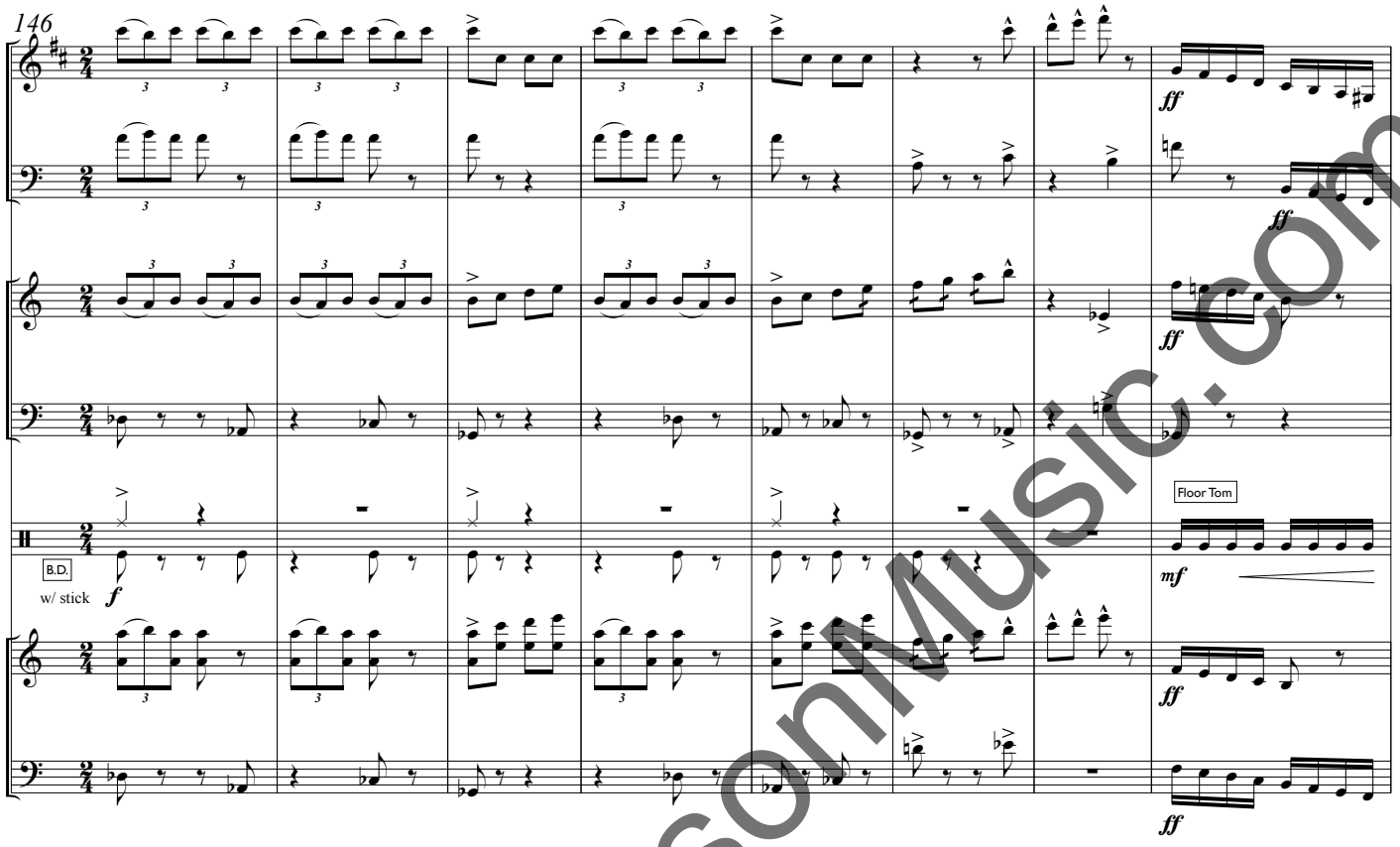


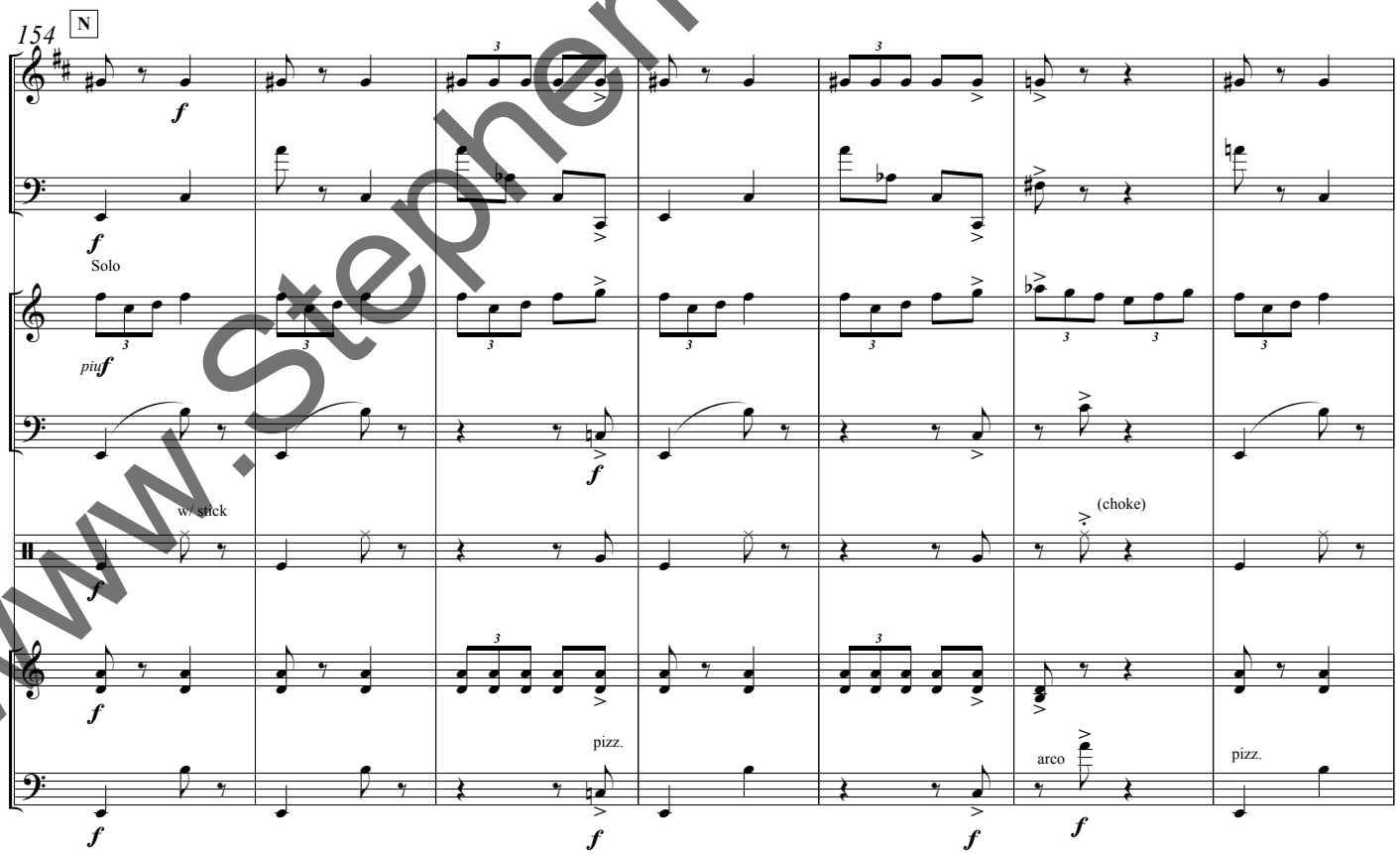


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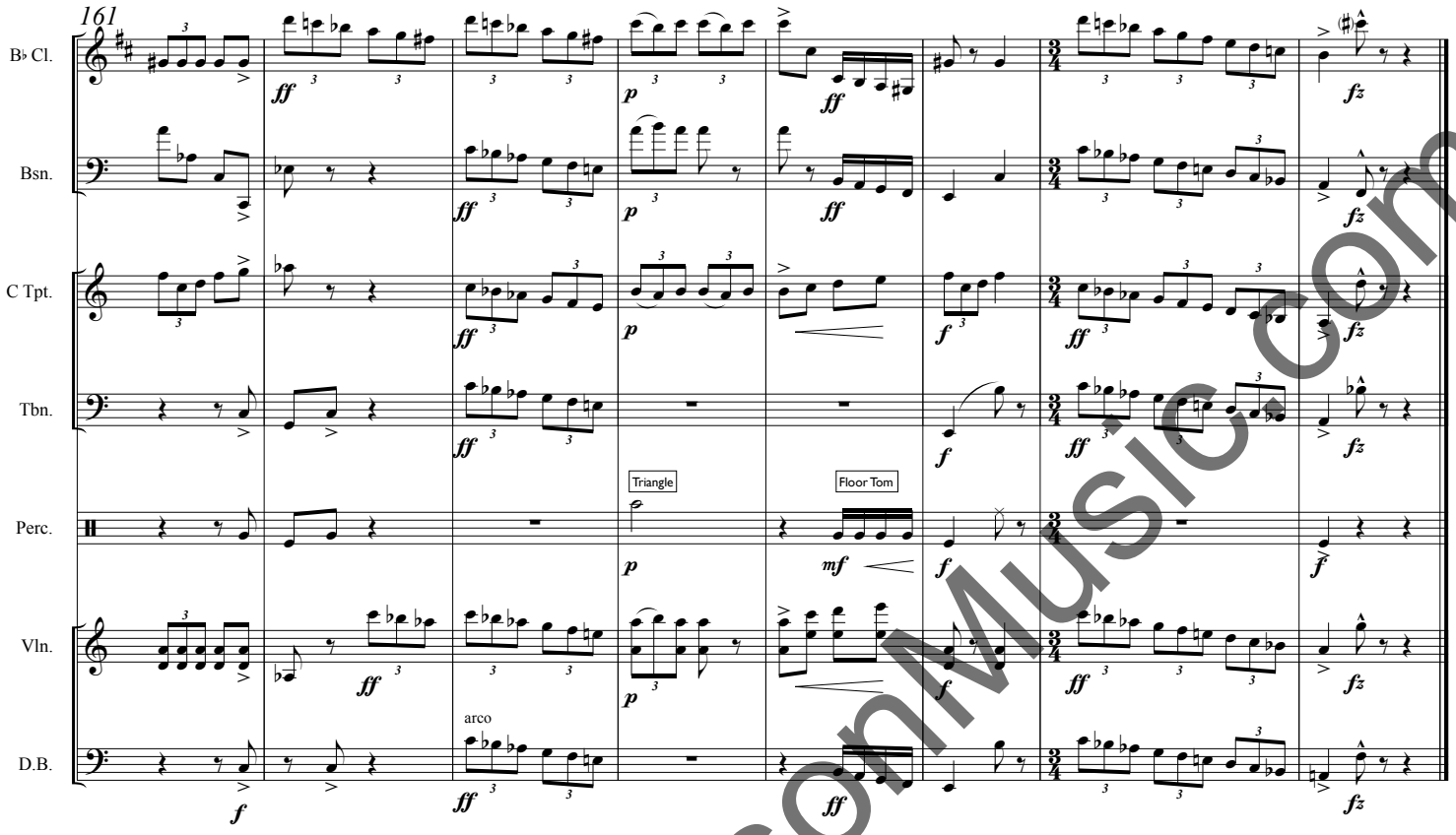


(Joe): I need to get warmed up for the show. Big premiere tonight, you know.
(Hannah): (not so enthused) Yeah, it's great... but I'm so sick of this life. I wanna go home to Tulsa, Joe - and someday be your wife.
(Joe): I know, babe. Me too. Just trust me. See this through.

Narrator: Joe hesitates leaving the room, then crosses the threshold; walking anywhere near the blackjack tables always makes him grow cold. Unavoidably, he passes near the table of Sam Hill: a dealer, an agent, the devil.

(Sam): (*with a showgirl on his arm - if possible*) Hi Joe. Always good to see you. But never as nice as to see Hannah too. She's a good one, you know, quite the catch. Some riffs between us I'd like to patch. (*winks*).

(Joe): (*obviously annoyed*) Hannah's still asleep. She's my girl now, you know. We all must choose. You reap what you sow. (*Narrator*: ever so slightly, Sam winces, not taking Joe's words too lightly). (Joe continues, facing his foe): We can all only star in one show. You must follow your path, your dream. No one else's life to live, it would seem. (*he pauses, changing the subject*). One thing for sure, from my view: you sure do like showgirls, don't you?

(Sam): Wouldn't be seen with anything less (*winks again*). And you? Come on now, confess.

(Joe): (*ignoring the question - looking at blackjack table*) Why do you contribute to such sin? You sit here, all day, taking people's money in. You're a snake - and how you treat and own your girls (*gesturing toward girl*): all at what stake? (*pause*) Your heart is a sieve. Have you ever really lived?

(Sam): Oh yes, I've lived. (*winks again, this time at girl*) To have my life, what you wouldn't give! As for the girls, I'm just doing my civic duty. (*gestures toward table*) Care to place a bet, play a couple hands, maybe three? Right, you quit - what was the reason?

(Joe): Civic duty - and a certain agreement...

(Sam): (*an air of victory*) Of course. (*changing the subject*) The new show: what's the name again?

(Joe): Starts tonight: "Never Odd or Even"

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(Sam): Hmmm... Interesting name for a Vegas show. Tough to bet on that, though. (*reflecting*) Reminds me of a riddle, something about which I used to fiddle: "Never odd or even. I prefer pi. On desserts, I stressed No! I prefer pi. Never odd or even."

(Joe): What is that nonsense you believe in?

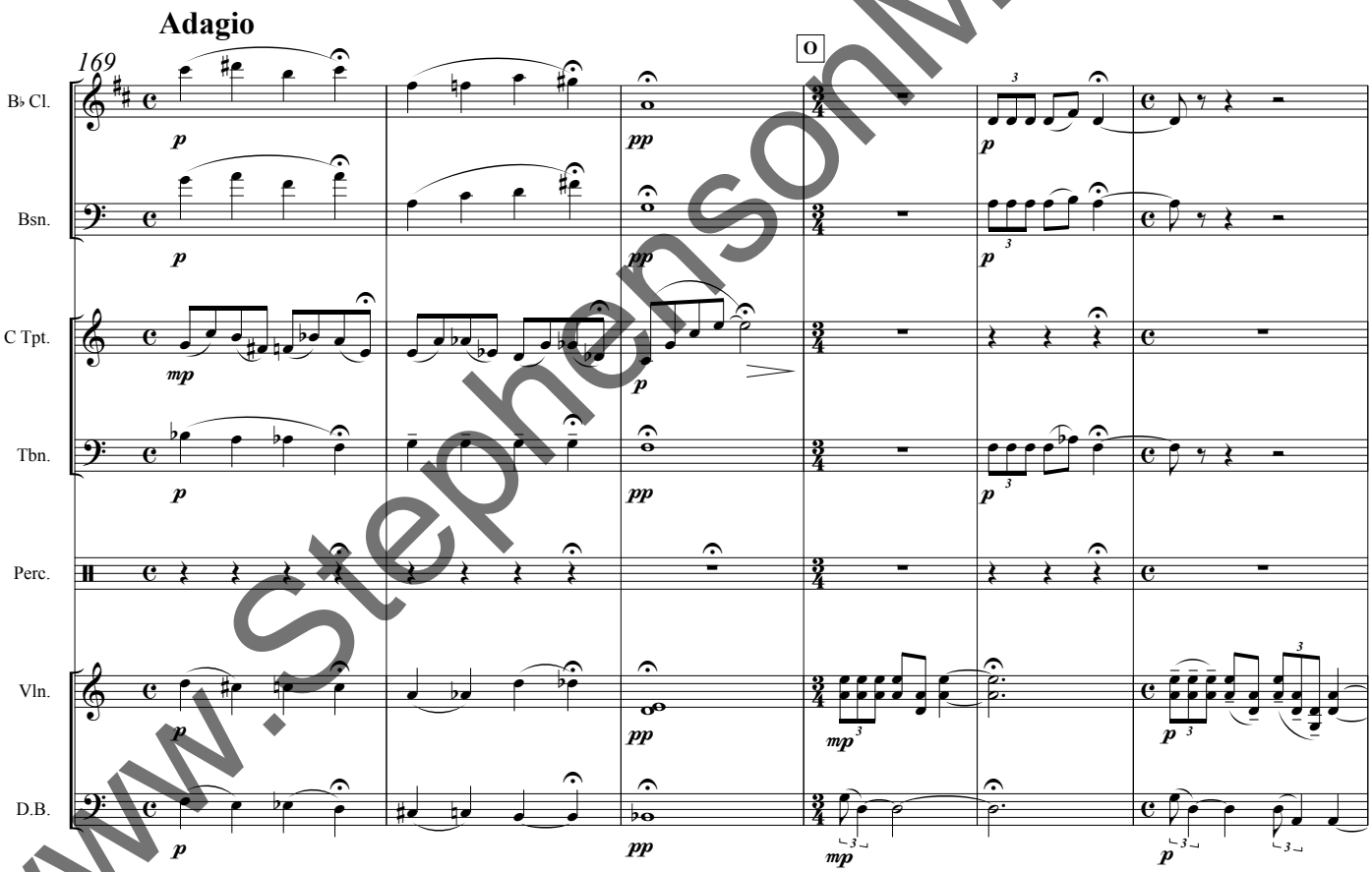
(Sam): Just something to consider, in case you lose something precious to a higher bidder.

(Joe): Whatever... I gotta go. Can't wait to get out of this place - this hell-hole.

(Sam): You kidding? I love this place! Some day I will own it (Narrator: A smile washed across his face).

Narrator: Joe leaves the table, to warm up for the show. Hannah is already stretching, having arrived a few minutes ago.

**II. LIVE, O DEVIL, REVEL EVER! LIVE! DO EVIL!**

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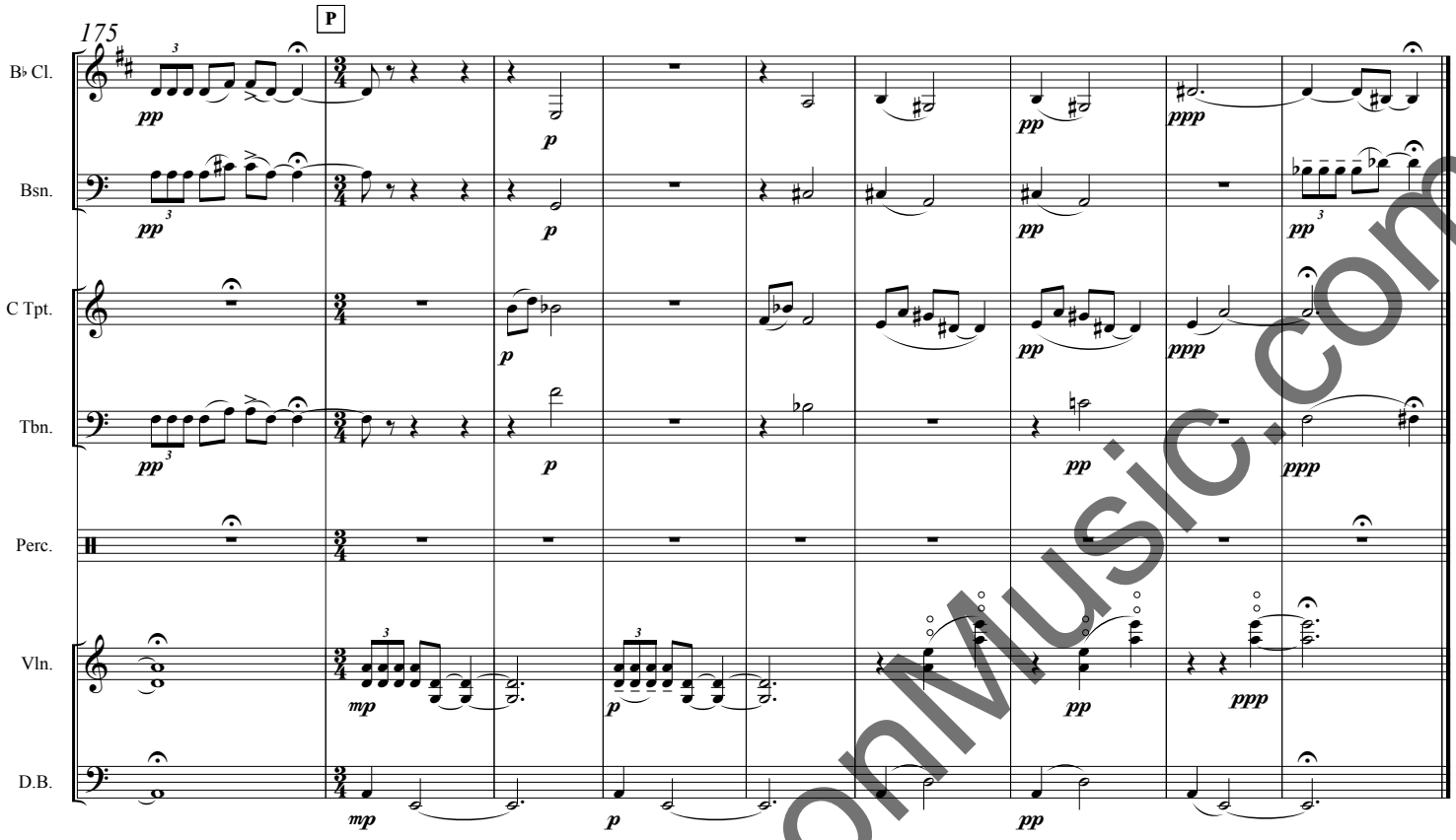


Narrator: Sam pops his head into the room. Joe and Hannah know that wherever Sam is, evil must loom.

(Sam): Well, hello Hannah, my friend. (*Narrator*: he winks again, meant to offend). (to Joe):
Don't forget our little deal. Too soon to pack your bags quite yet, I feel. (*Sam leaves, briefly*)

Narrator: Hannah is confused; Joe upset, not amused.

(Hannah): Joe, what was that all about?

(Joe): Nothing. It's all fine. In a week we're gone, no doubt.

(Hannah): Joe, what isn't 'fine'?

(Joe): Trust me, Hannah, it's all part of the design. (*they hug*)

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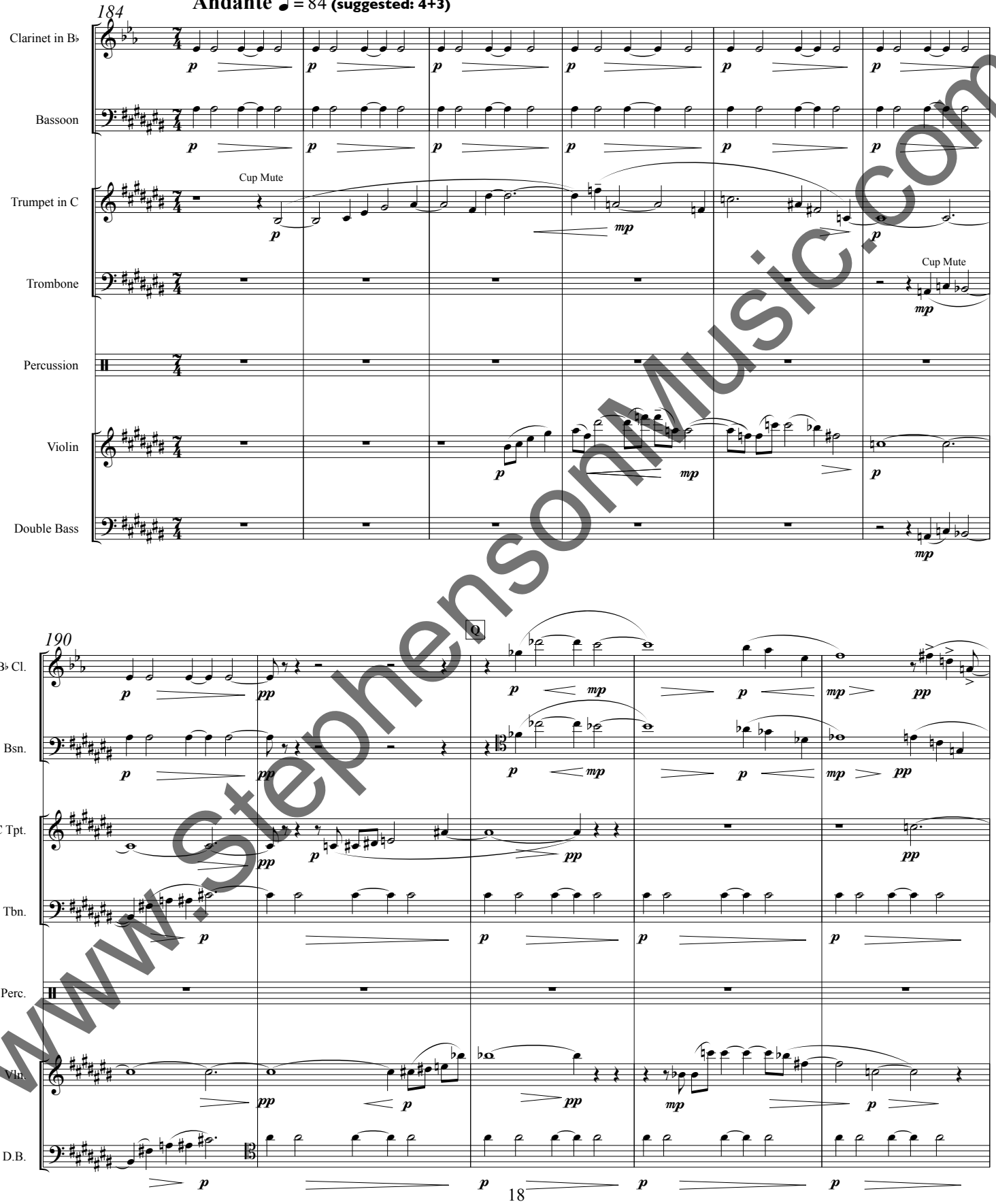
## III. Seven Eves

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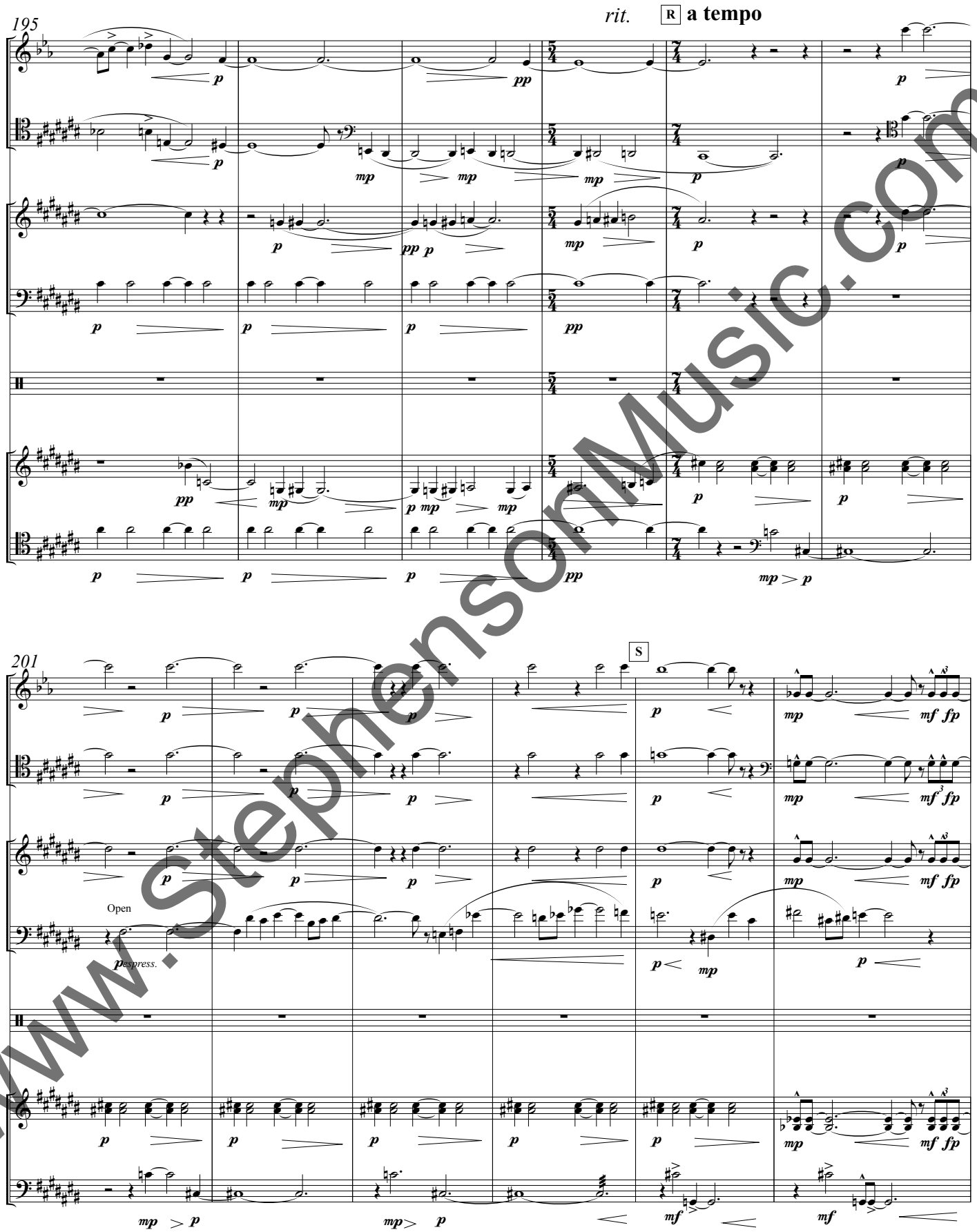


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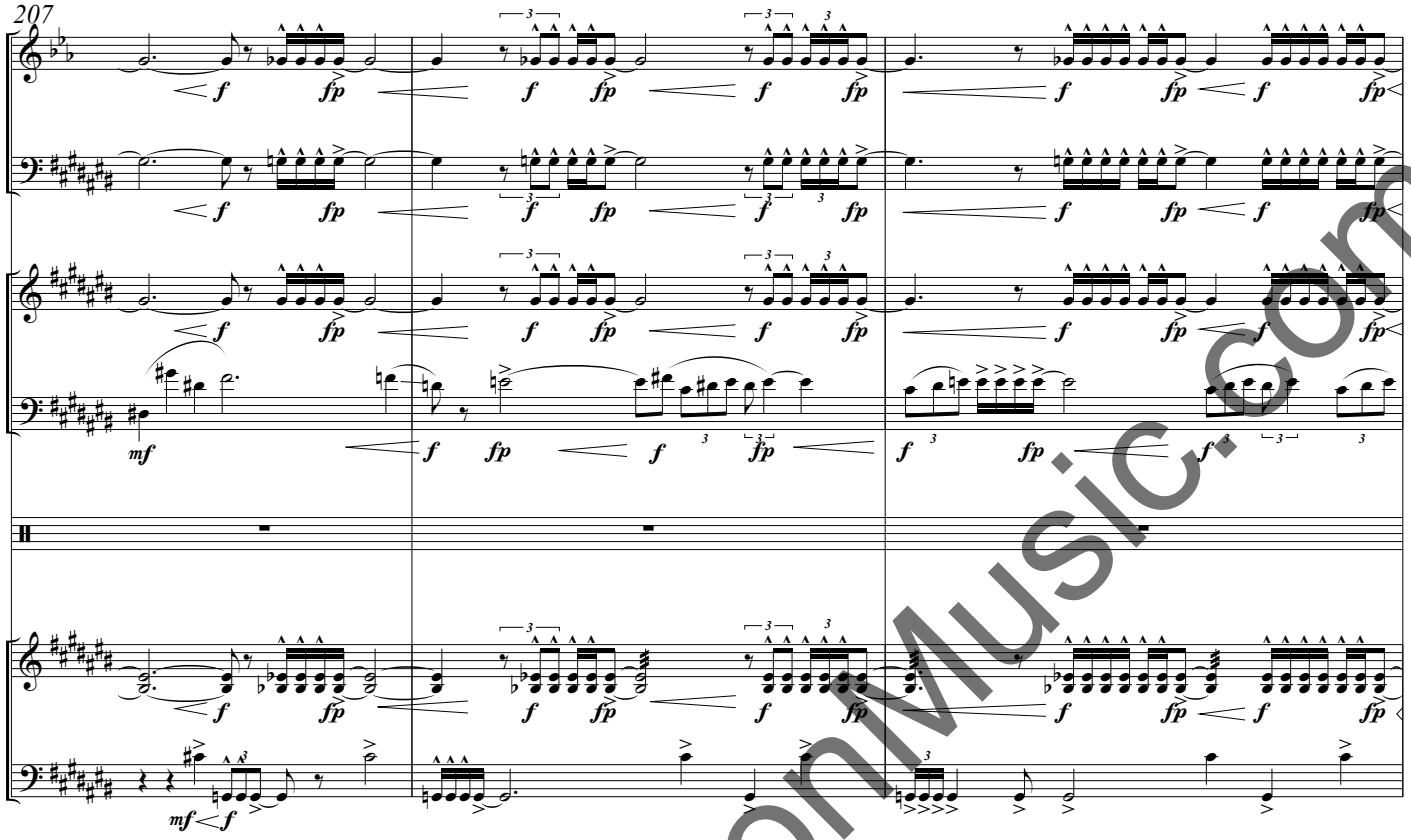


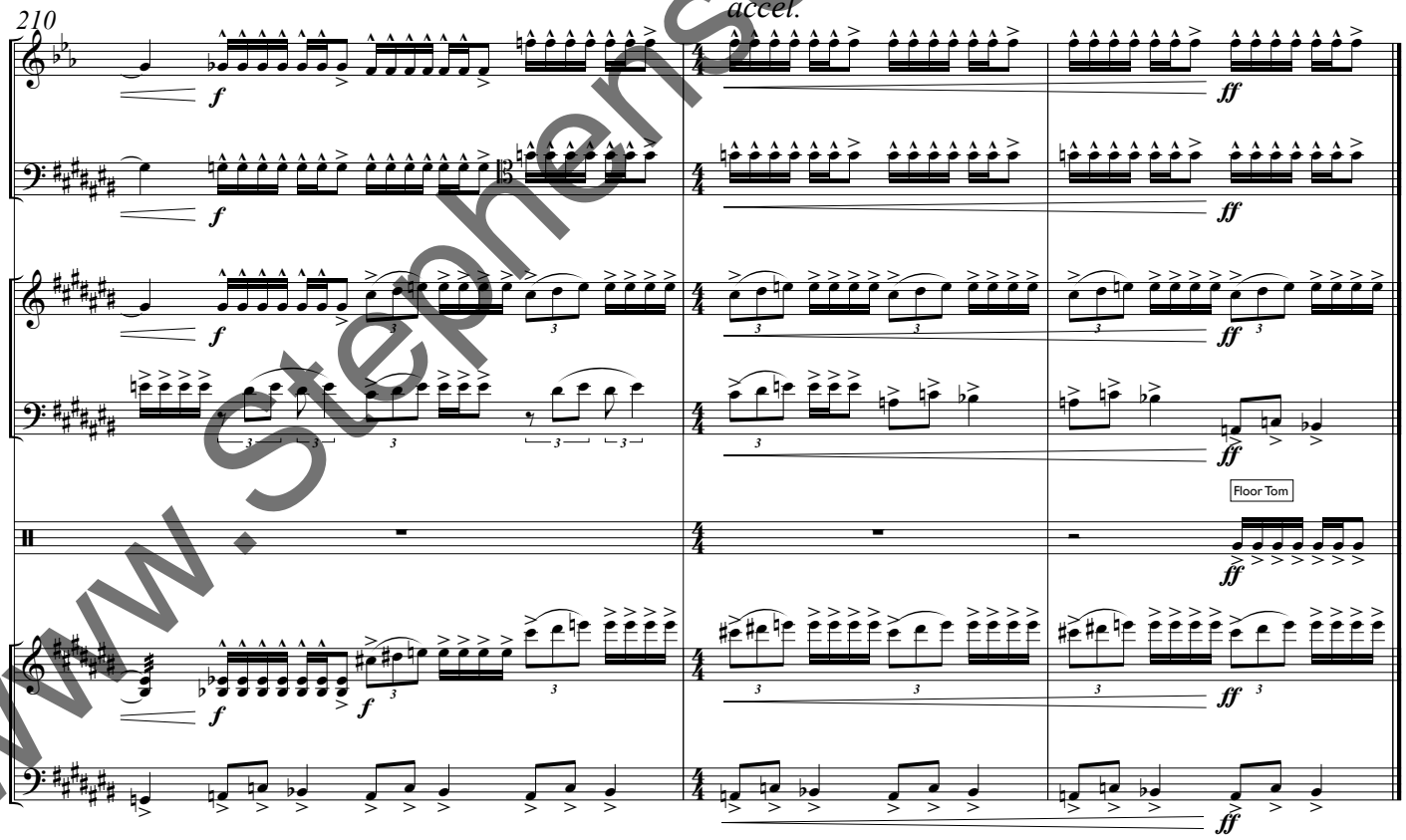


[*Sam returns and knocks along with the final 7 notes in percussion*]

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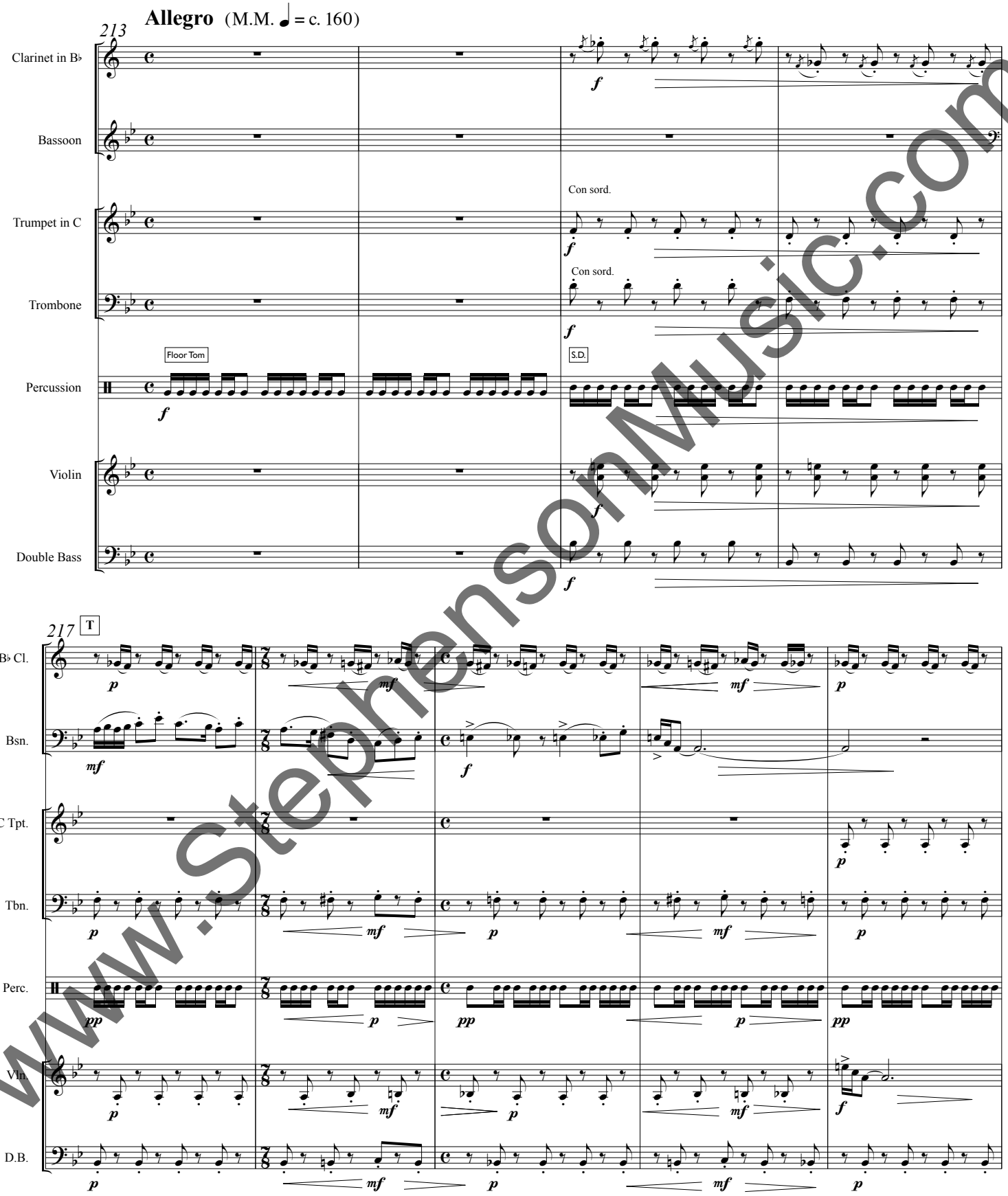
(Sam): (to Joe) Remember, our deal. Perhaps this would appeal. (*Narrator*: He hands Joe a deck of cards, who recoils at the sight.)
(Sam): all will be fine, if you play your cards right.

## IV. Too Hot to Hoot

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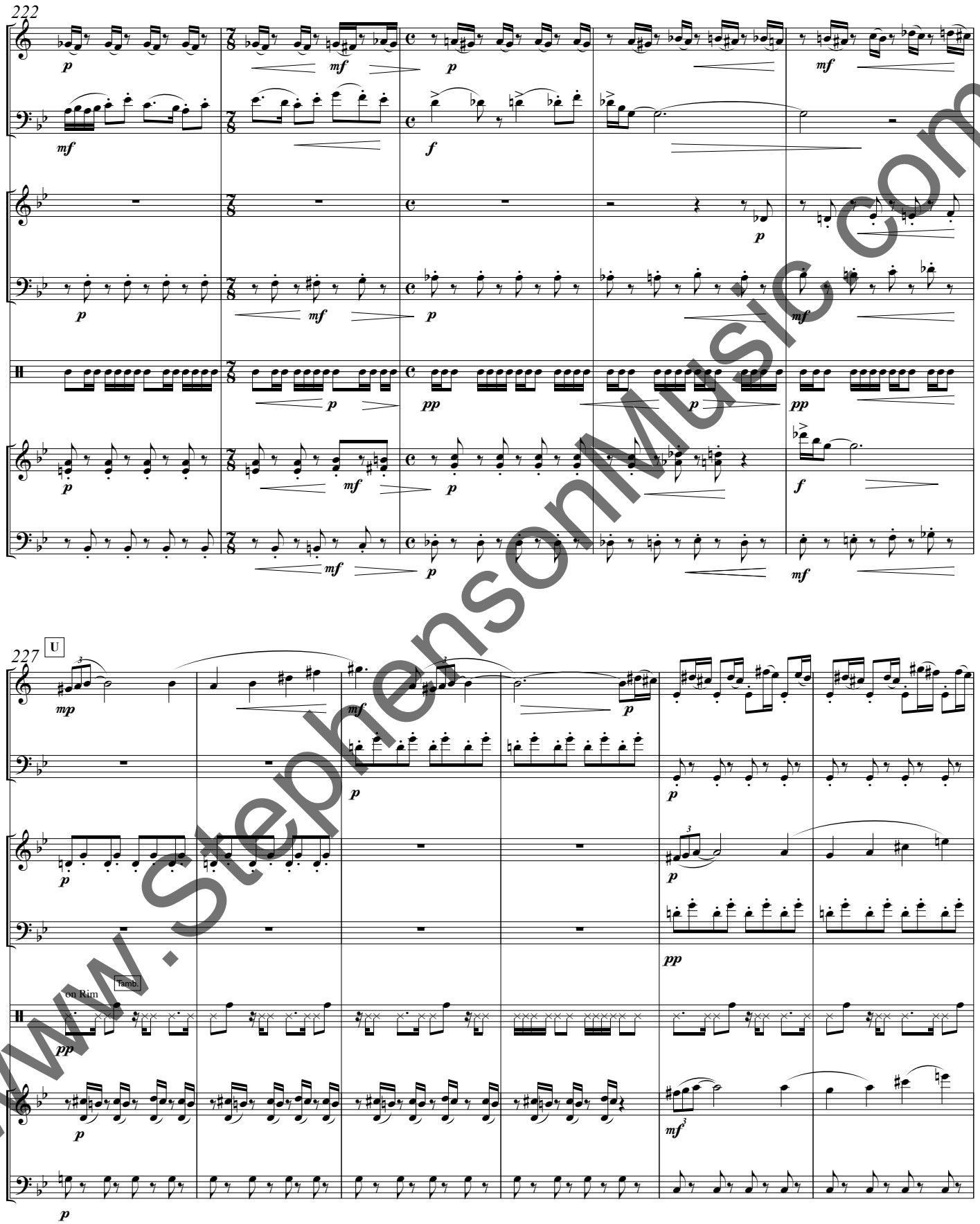


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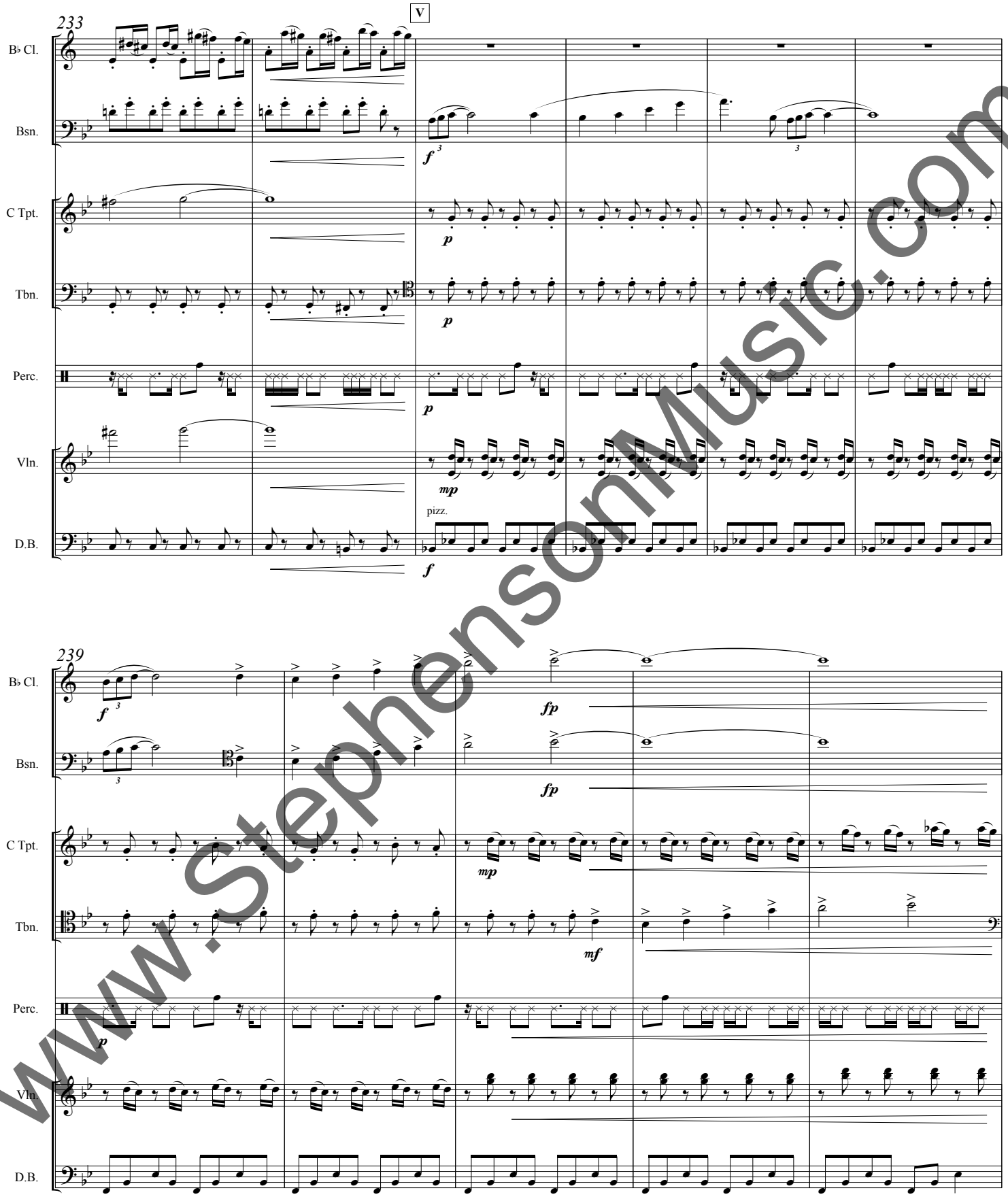


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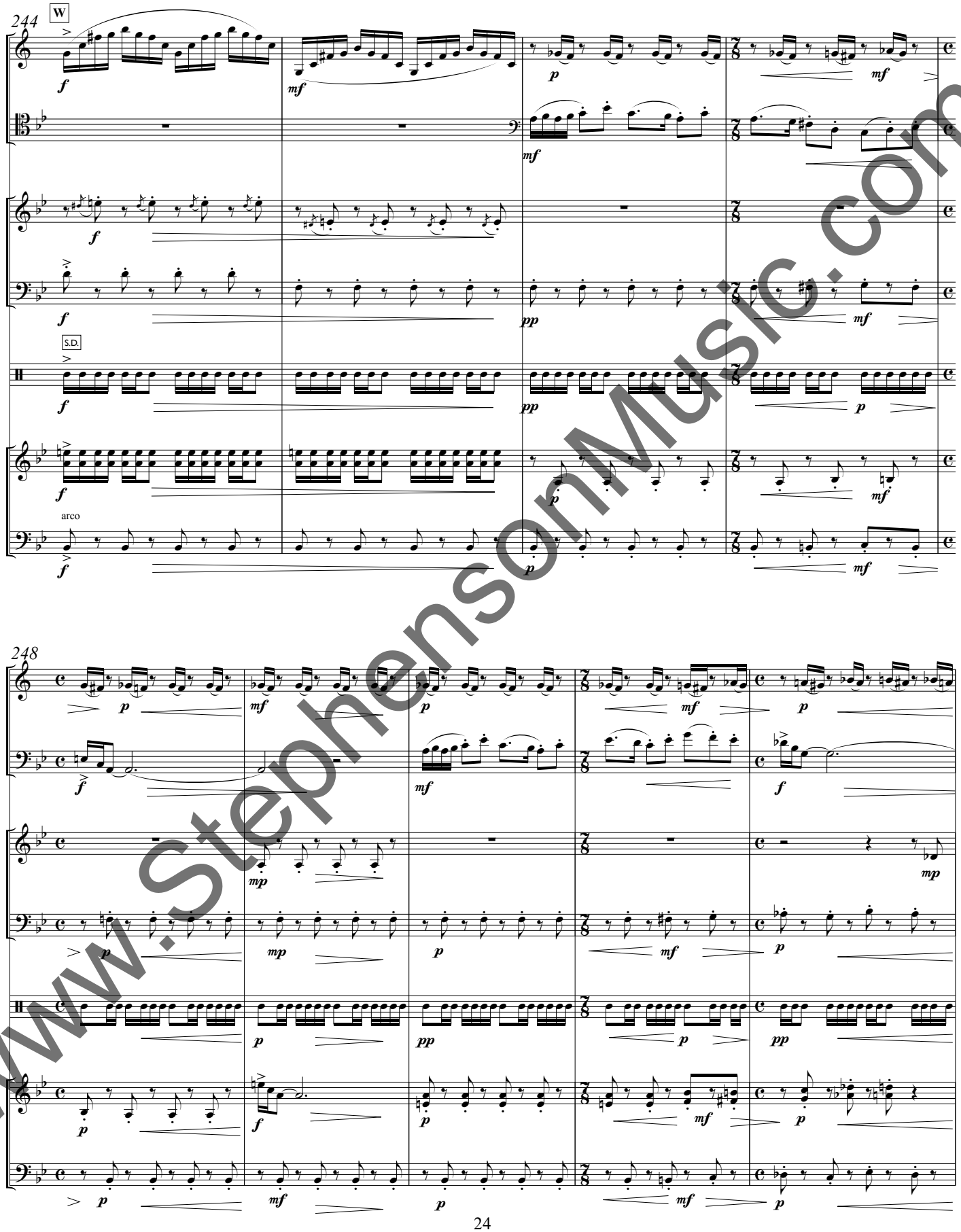


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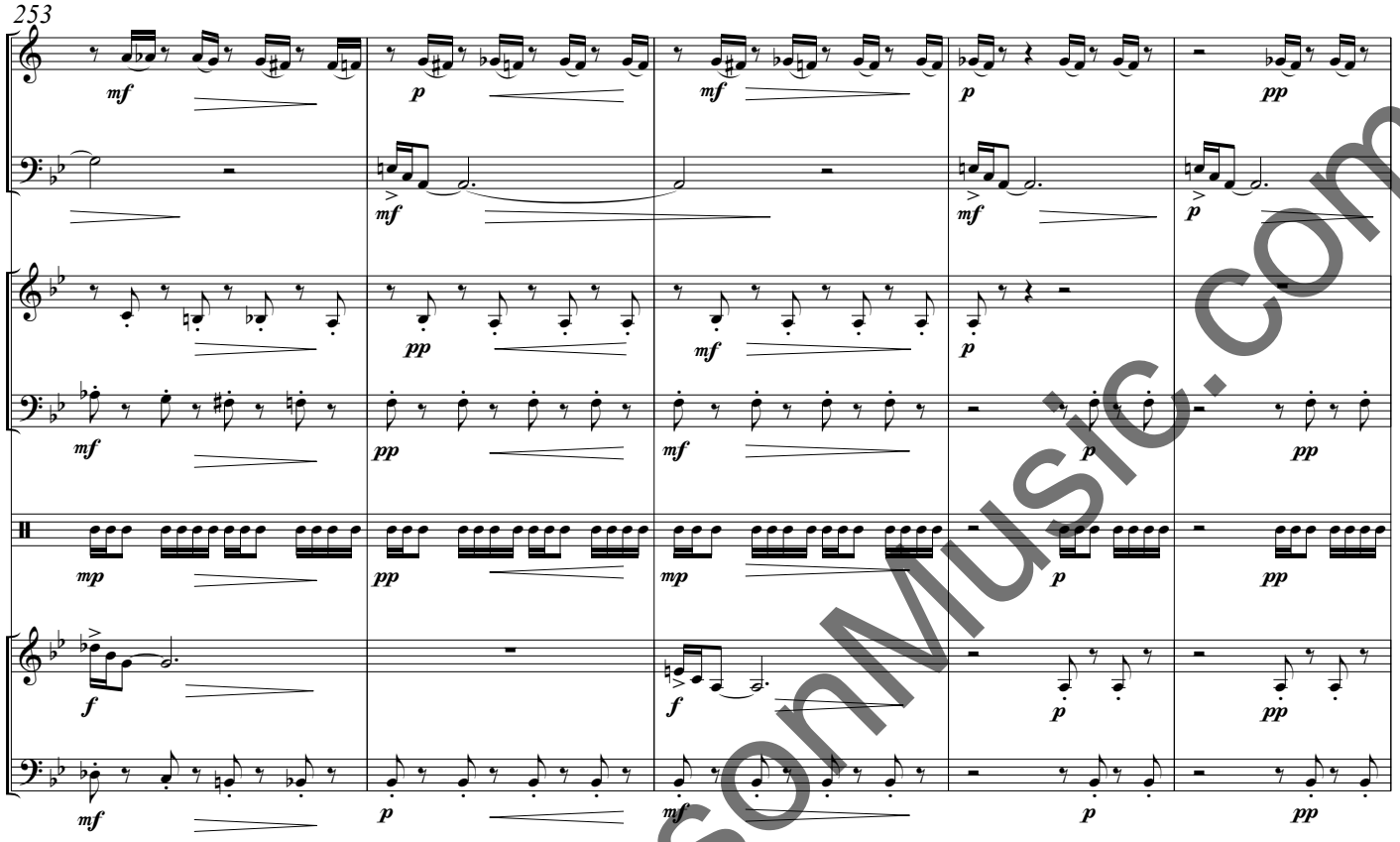


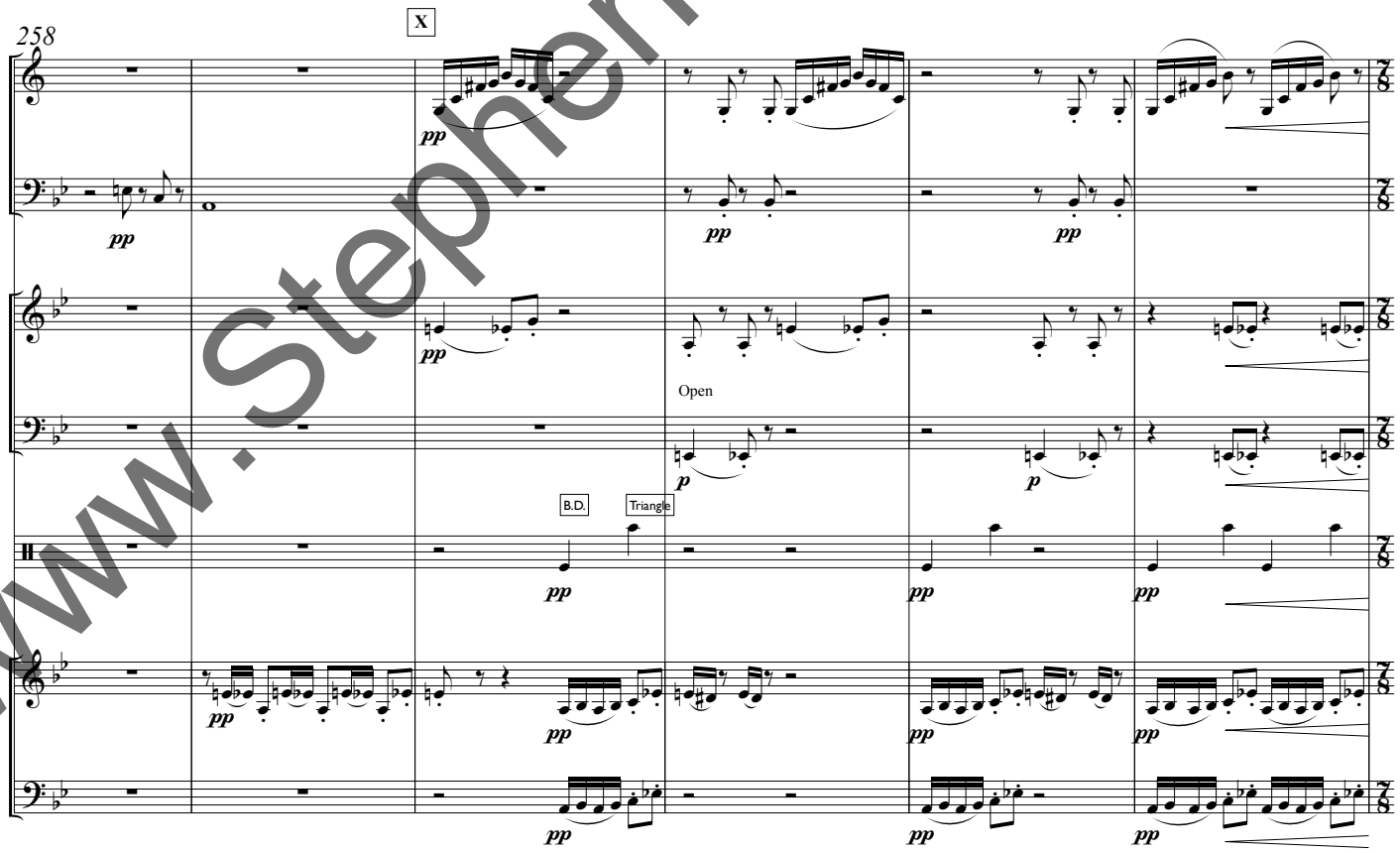


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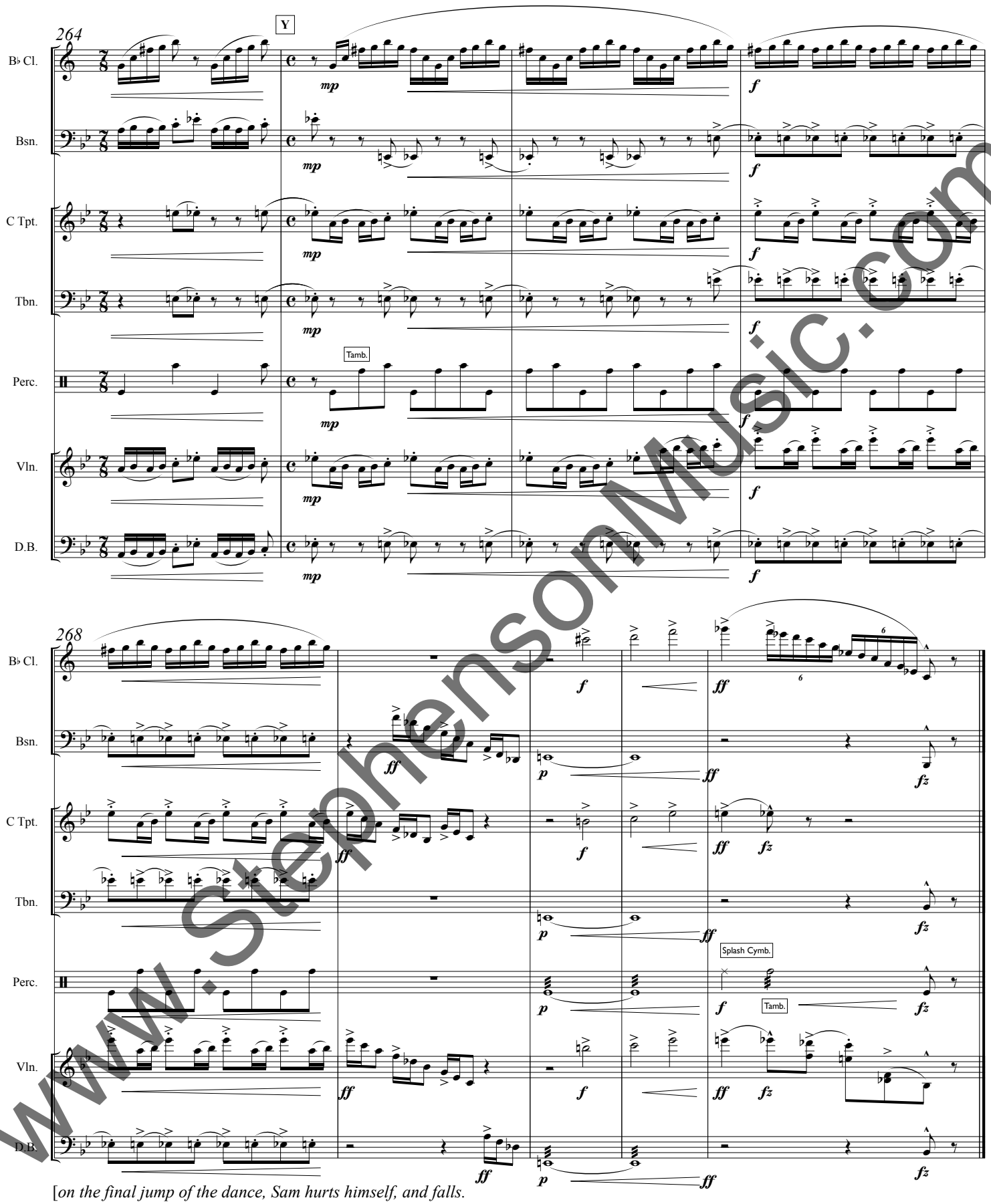


[*on the final jump of the dance, Sam hurts himself, and falls.*
*He leaves, limping. Joe witnesses it all, and the limp gives him an idea for the future]*
[*if done without actors/dancers, narrator might say*: By lucky stroke of chance, Joe notices Sam hurt at the end of the dance. Watching Sam limp away, an idea strikes Joe for another day.]

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**SCENE CHANGE**

*Sam is now dressed as billboard guy on street. Joe and Hannah are nearby.*

Narrator: It is the day of the opening, and on the street is Sam, advertising for a show to compete: "Come see 'Wicked One' - the best show in

(Hannah): Why does he do this? I'm on his roster.

(Joe): He's crazy. He's a monster. Dammit, I'm mad. We're being maligned. I'm gonna go give that little boob a piece of my mind.

Narrator: Joe walks over to Sam in a hurry, each step increasing his fury.

(Joe): (to Sam) That's it, ok, you win. I'll play you for the girl - just say when. If I win, all contracts scratched and Hannah and I leave for Tuls

(Sam): ahhh. gonna come back to the table, eh? Deal. One week from today, we play.

Narrator: Joe returns to Hannah, not as quickly, deep in thought, looking somewhat sickly.

(Hannah): I can't believe his foul play. This isn't fair. What did you say?

(Joe): (*regaining his confidence*) Just letting him know that I'm not your average Joe. I'm someone to be dealt with, you know.

**SCENE CHANGE**

*"Never Odd or Even" staged for show.*

Narrator: The time has arrived, everything in place. Everyone having prepared at furious pace.
Cast and crew, rehearsed and steady, the audience now in their seats and ready.
The show has commenced, about 20 minutes in, Hannah's big numbers next to be danced.

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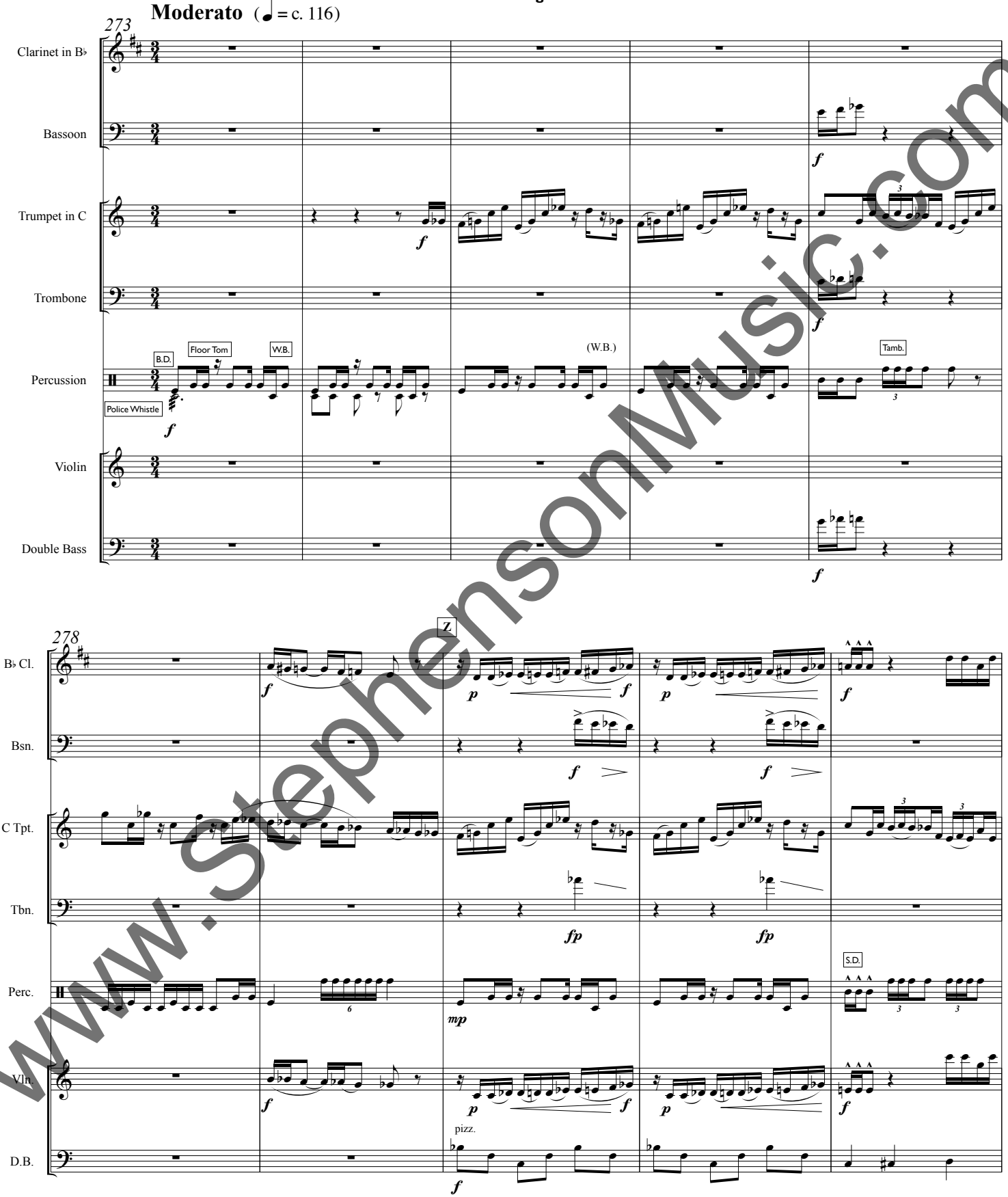
## V. Three Dances
## Cigar - Toss It in a Can - It is so Tragic.

### Va. Cigar

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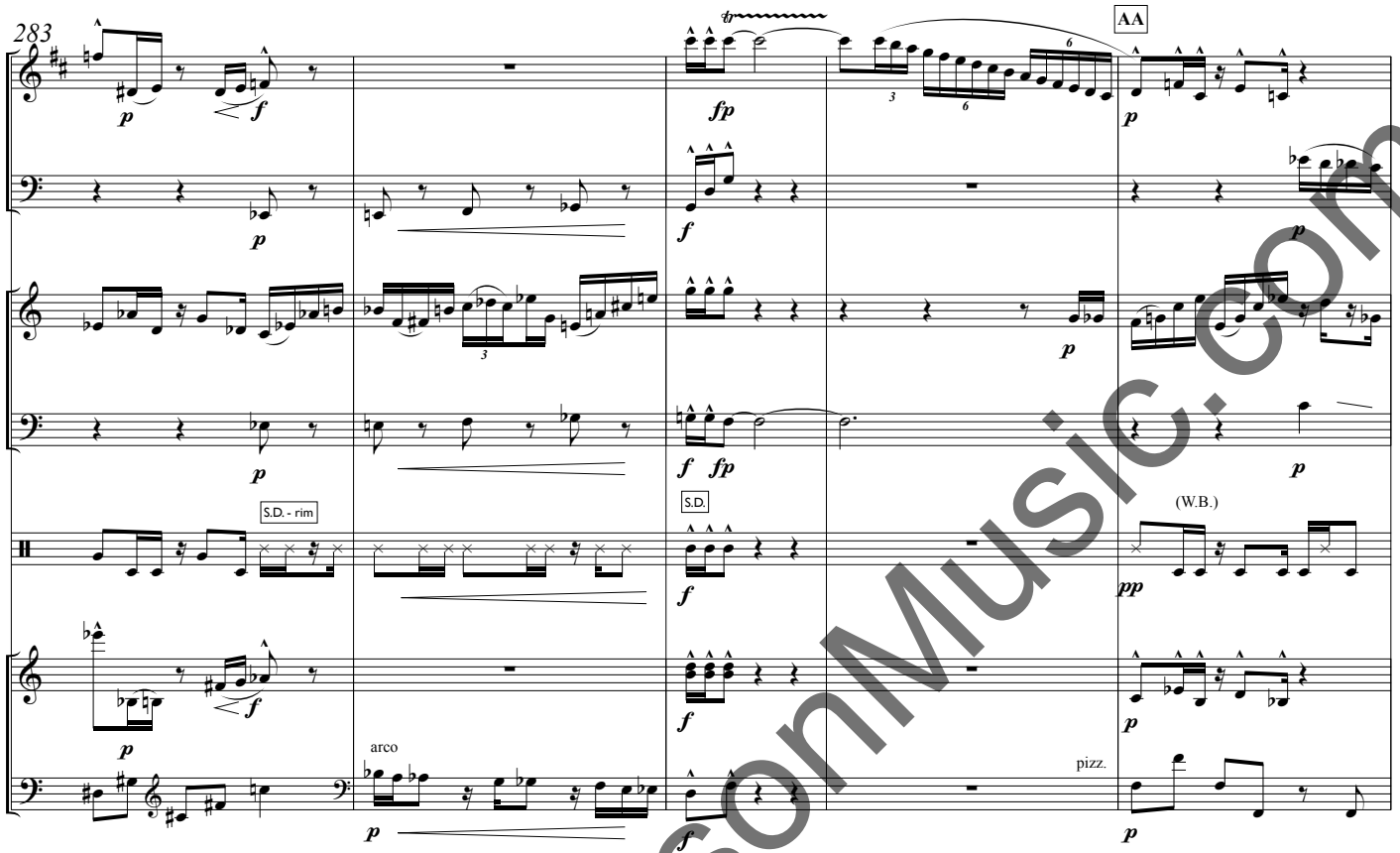


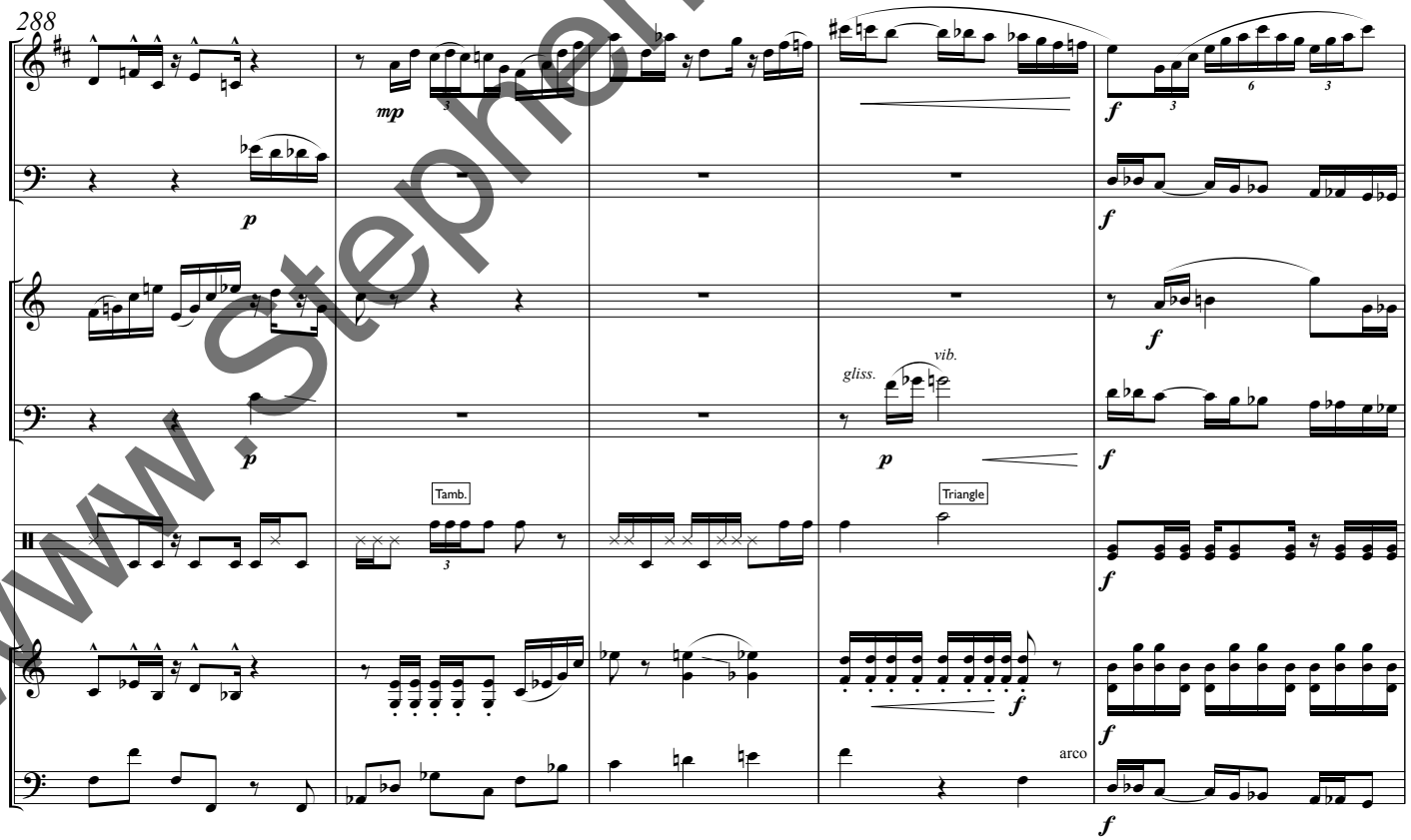


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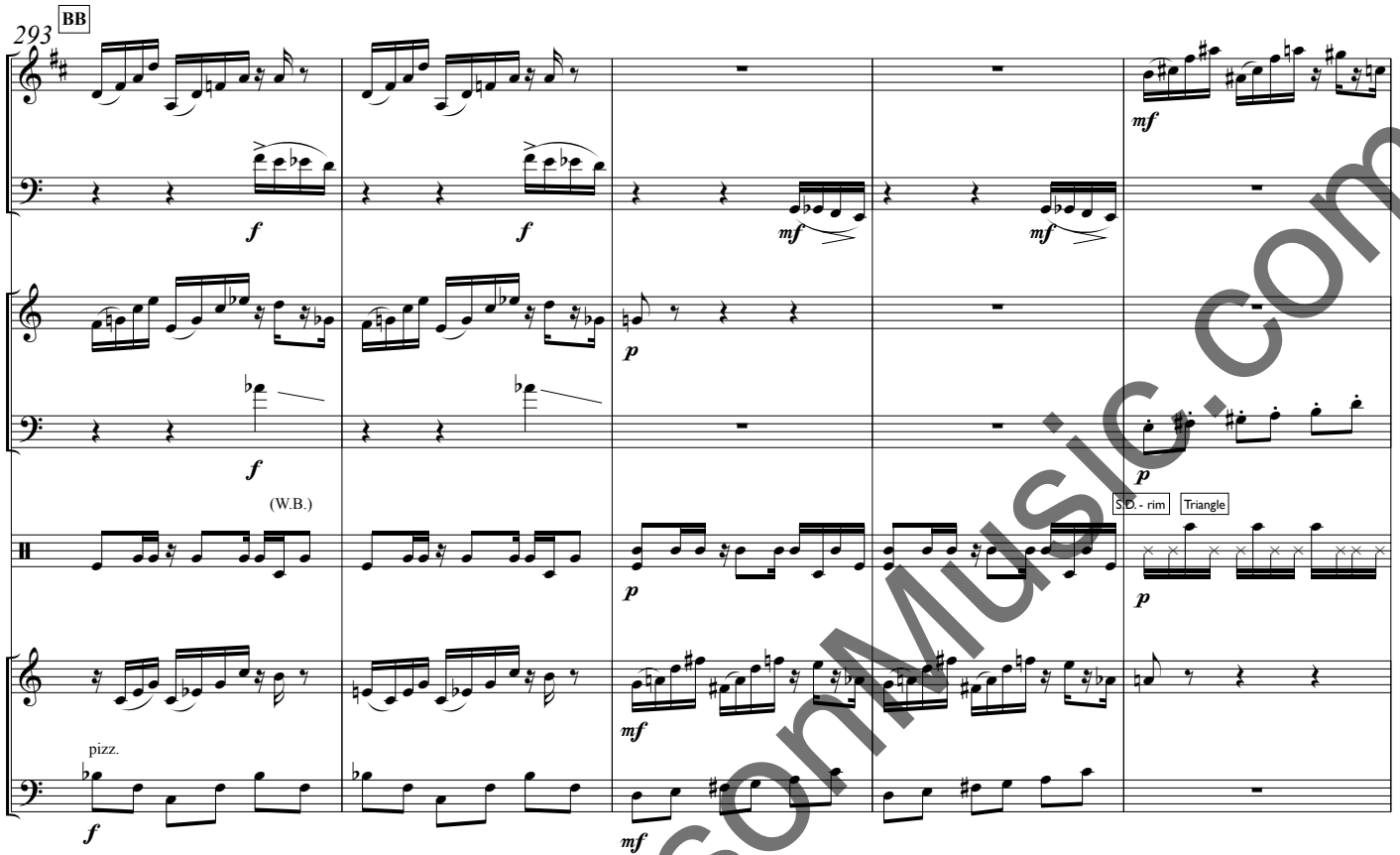


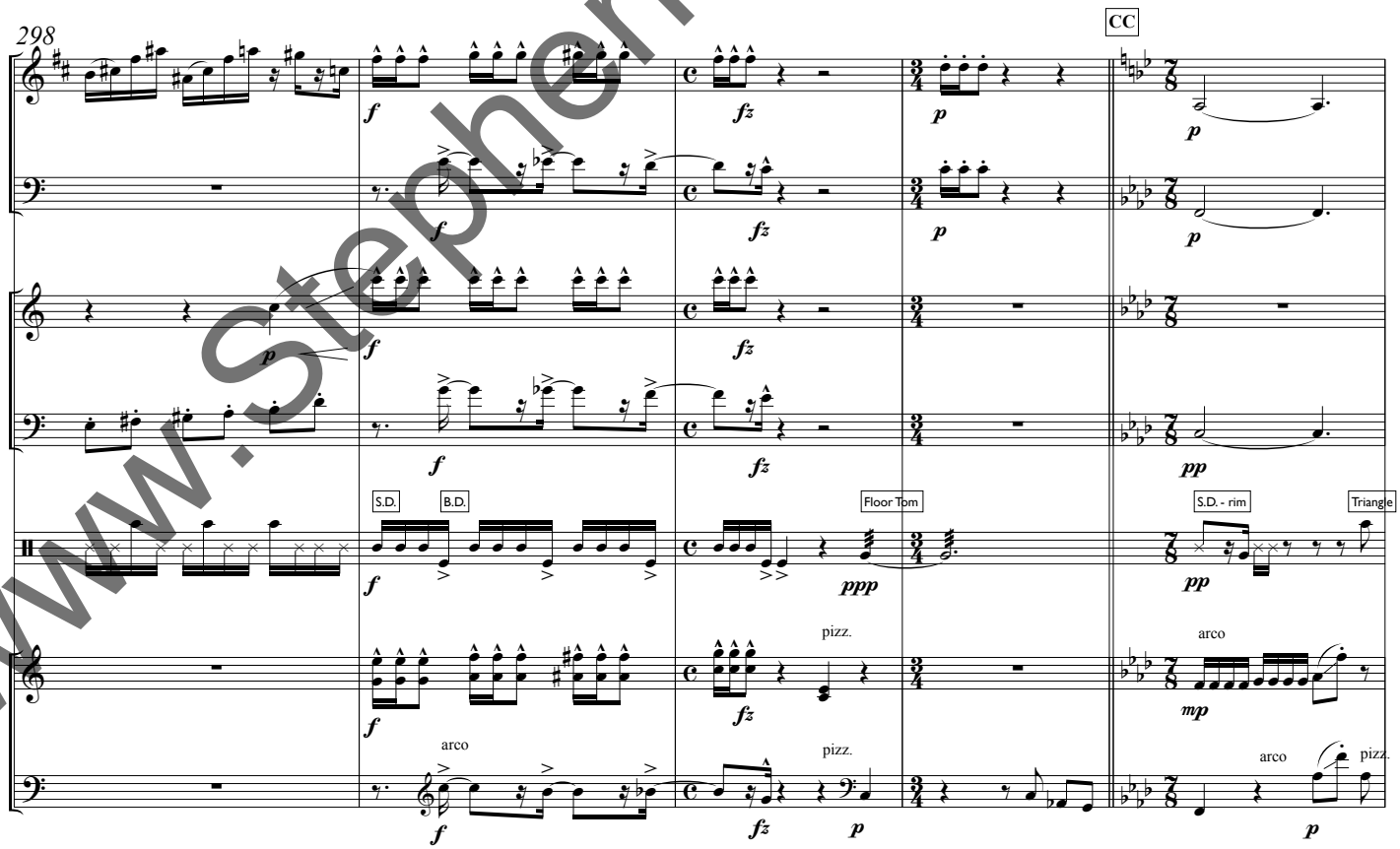


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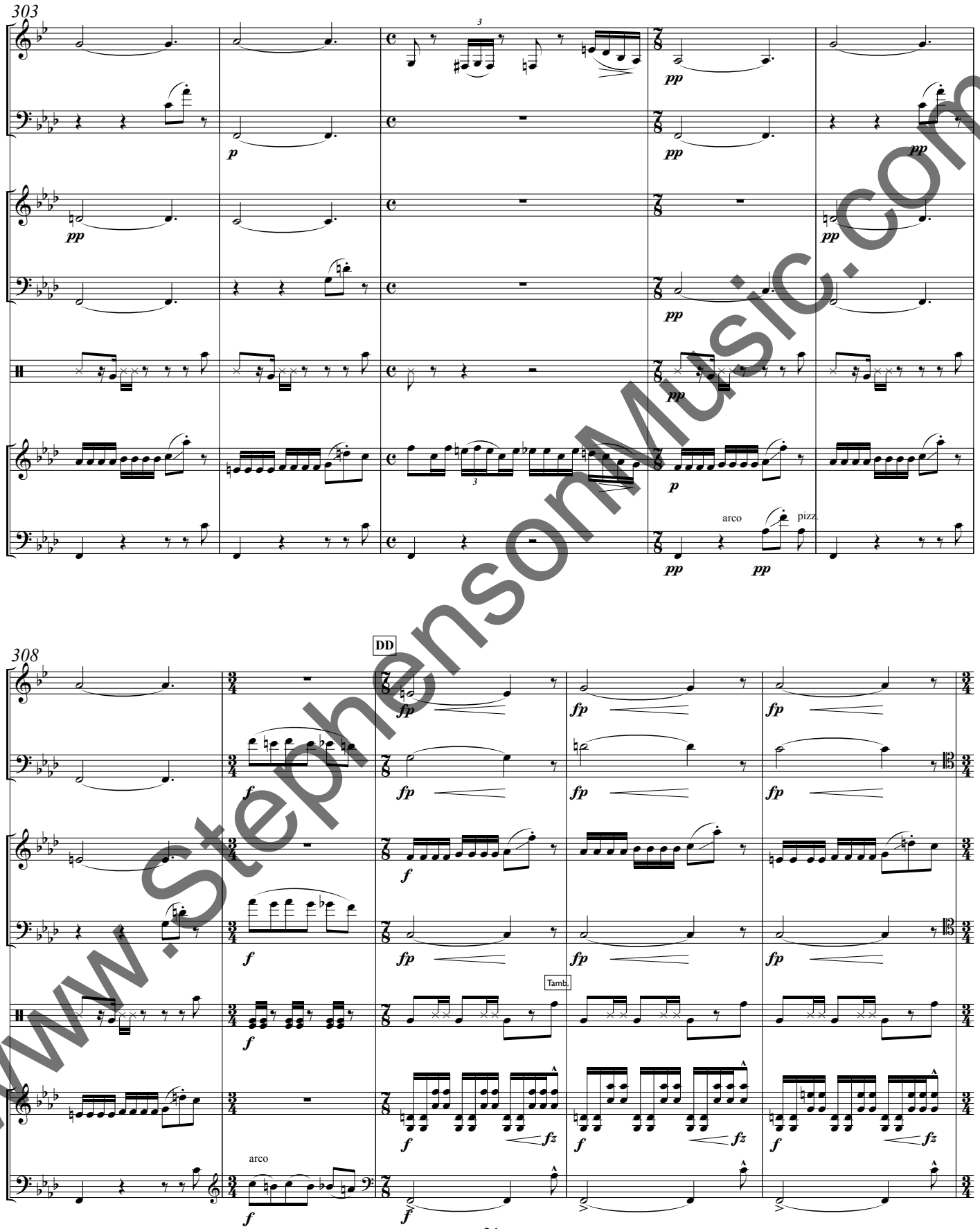


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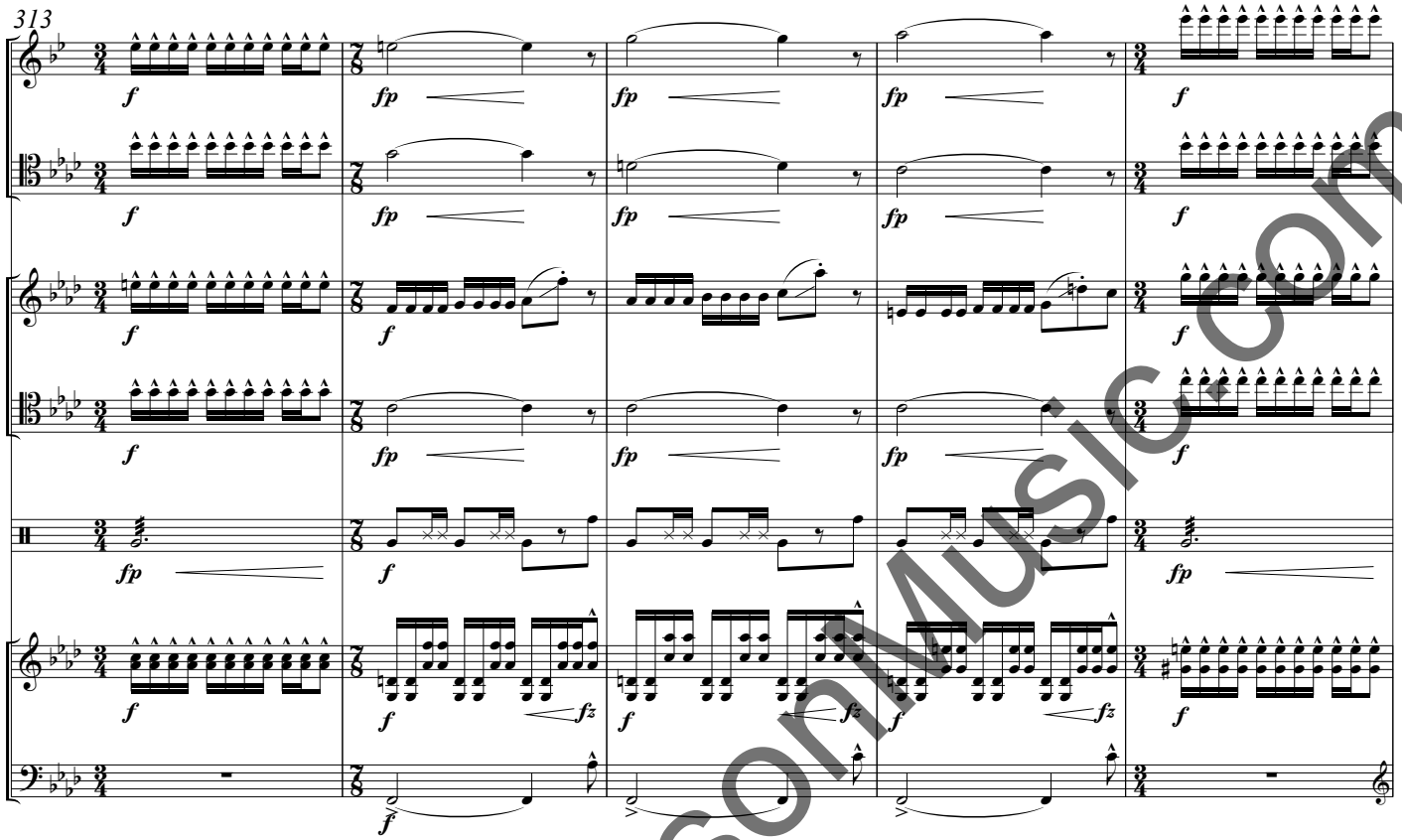


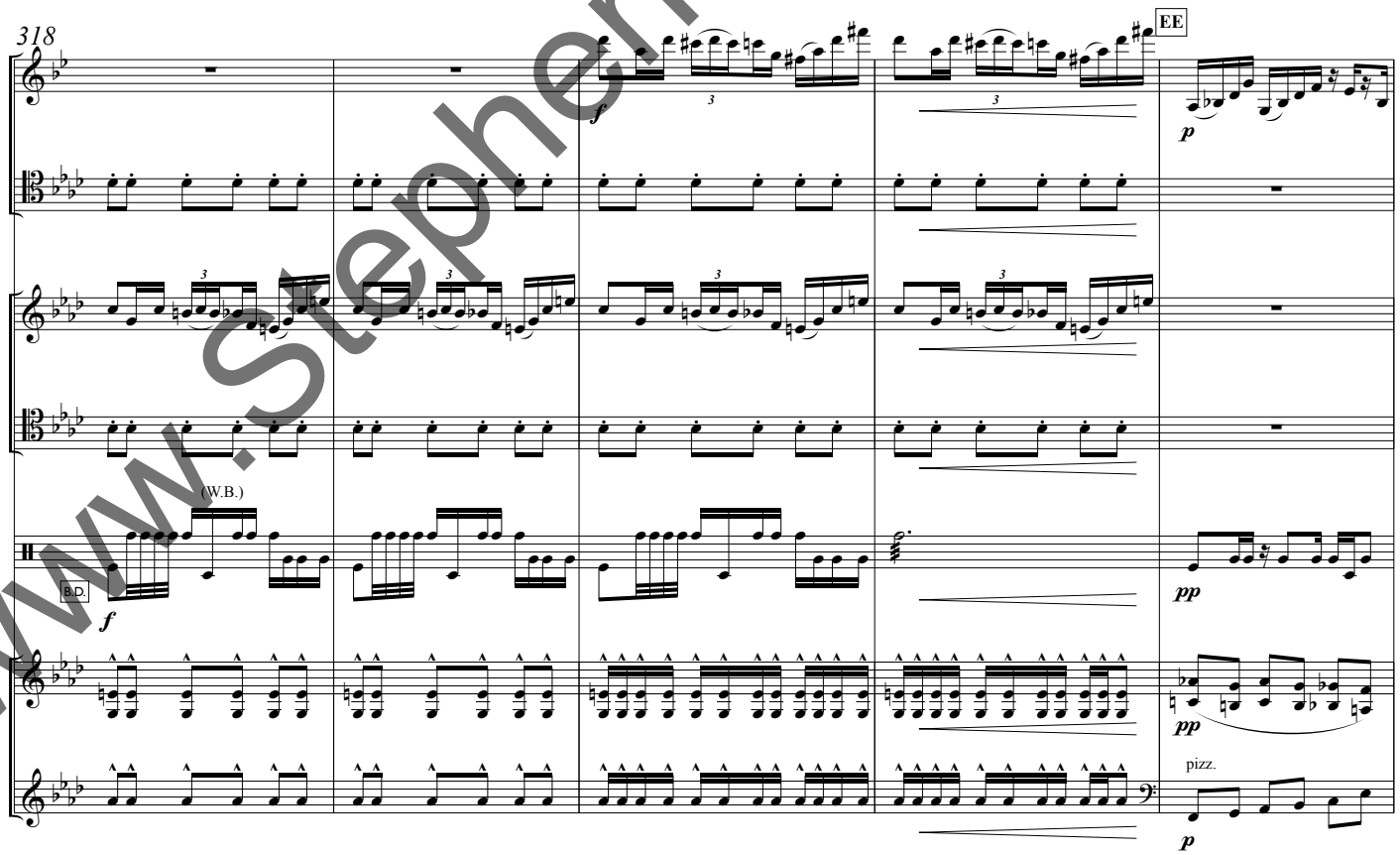


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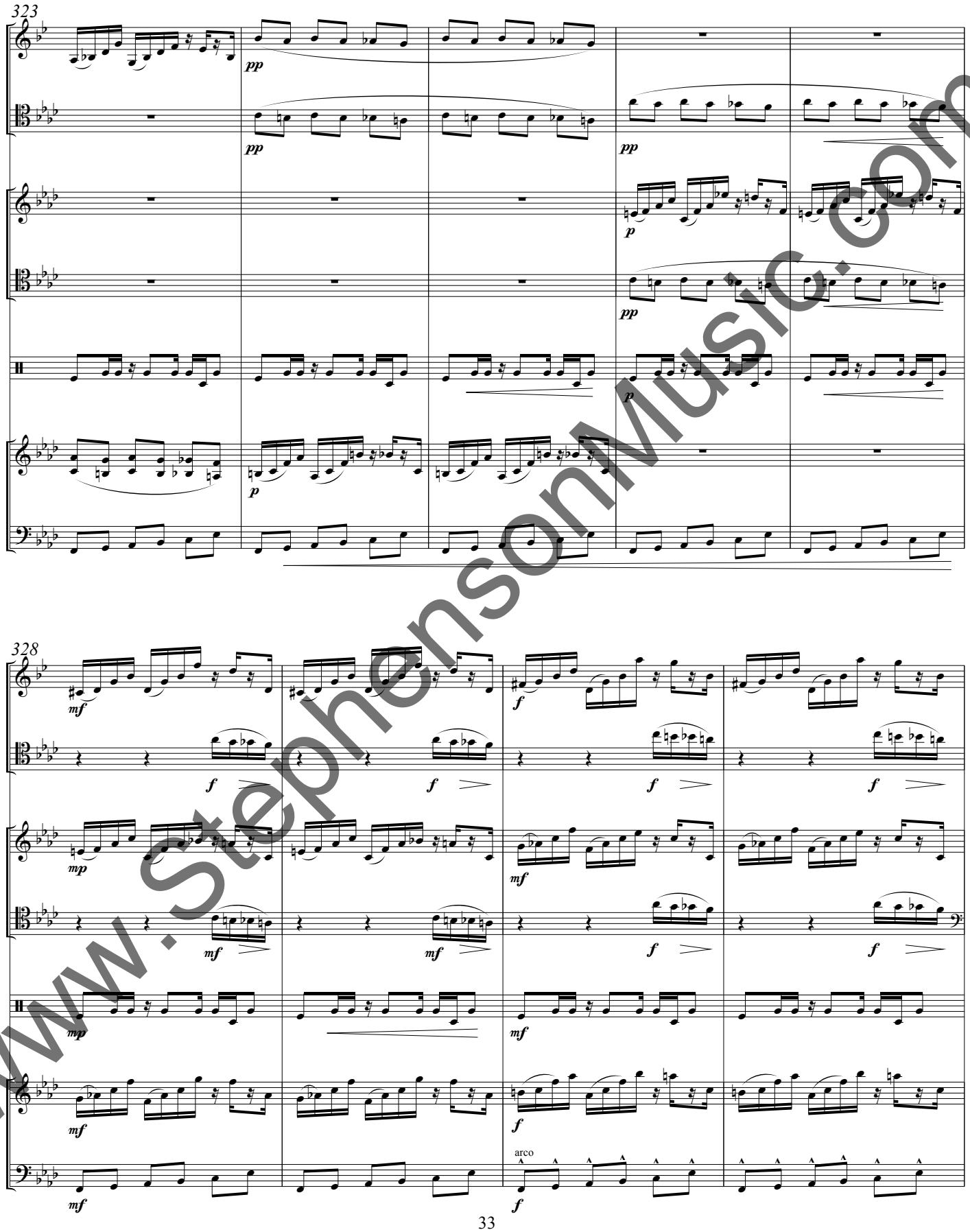


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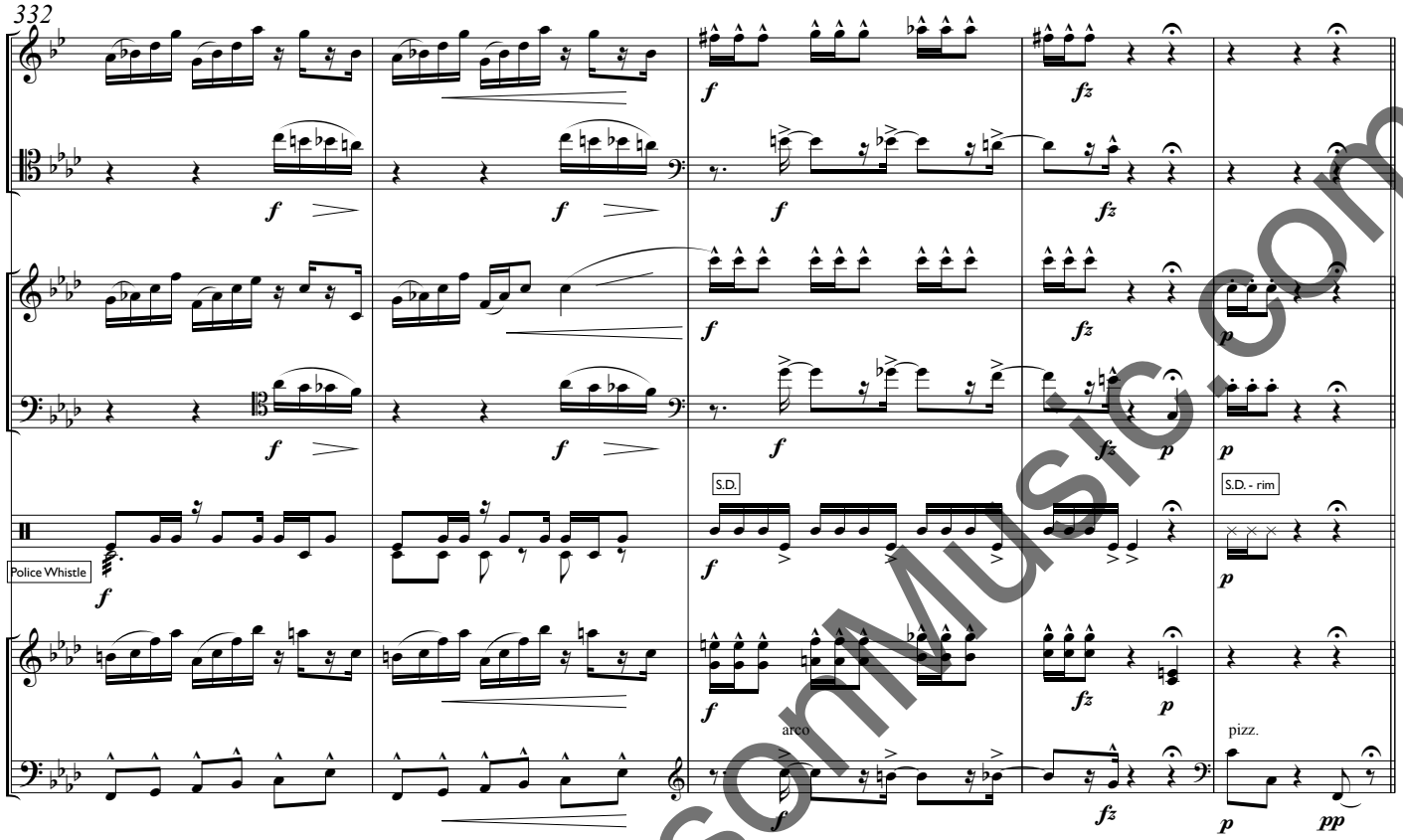
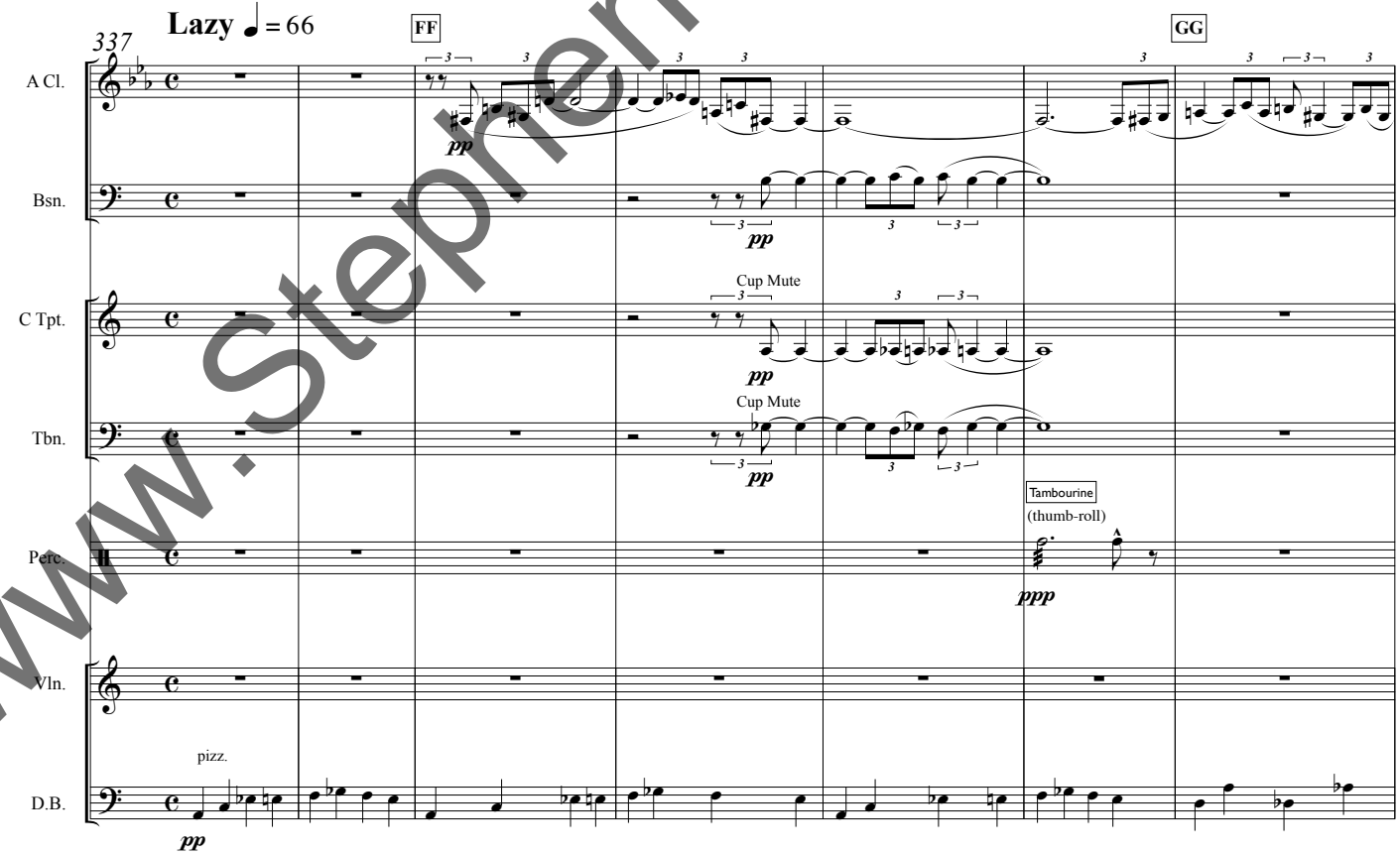



**Vb. Toss it in a Can**

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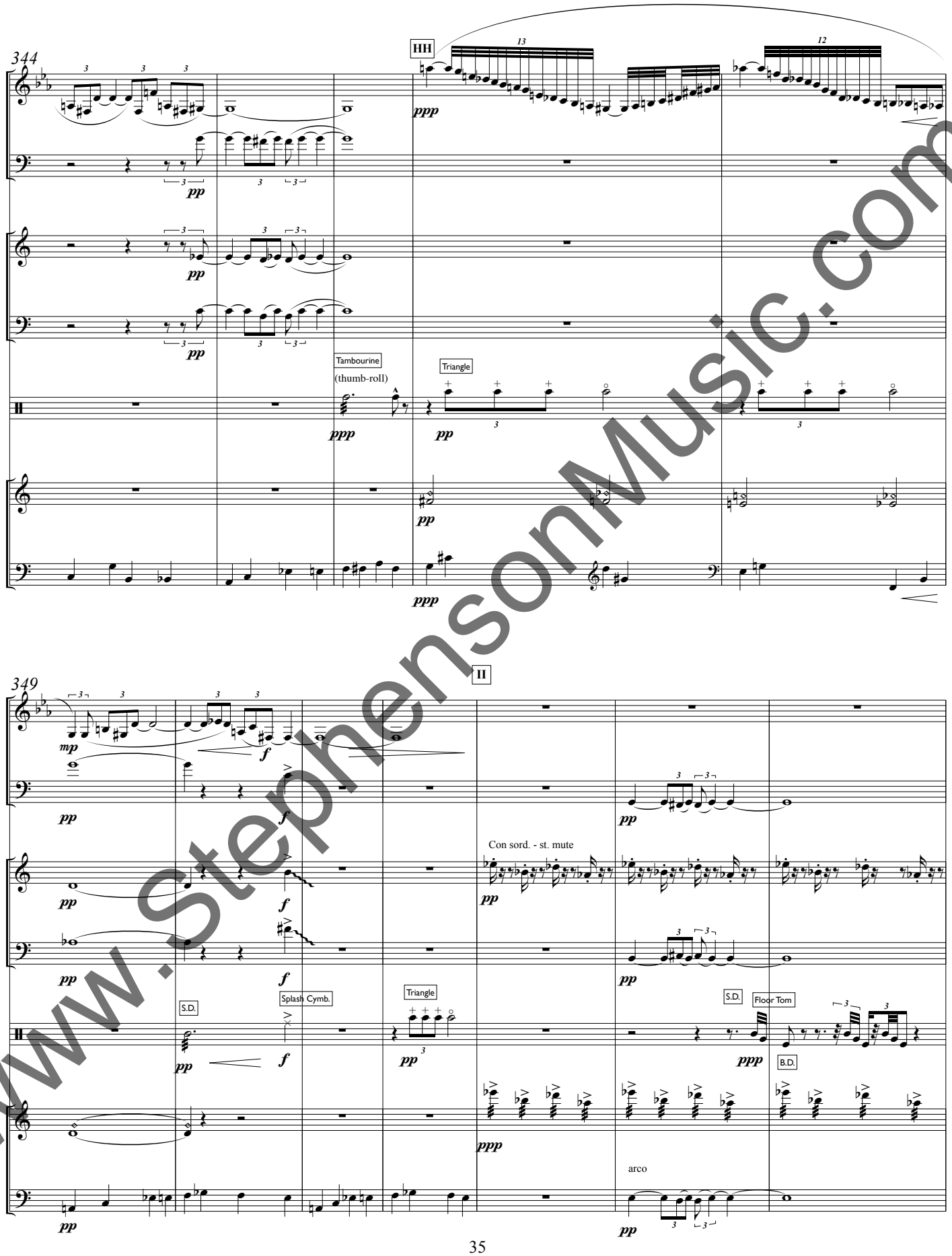


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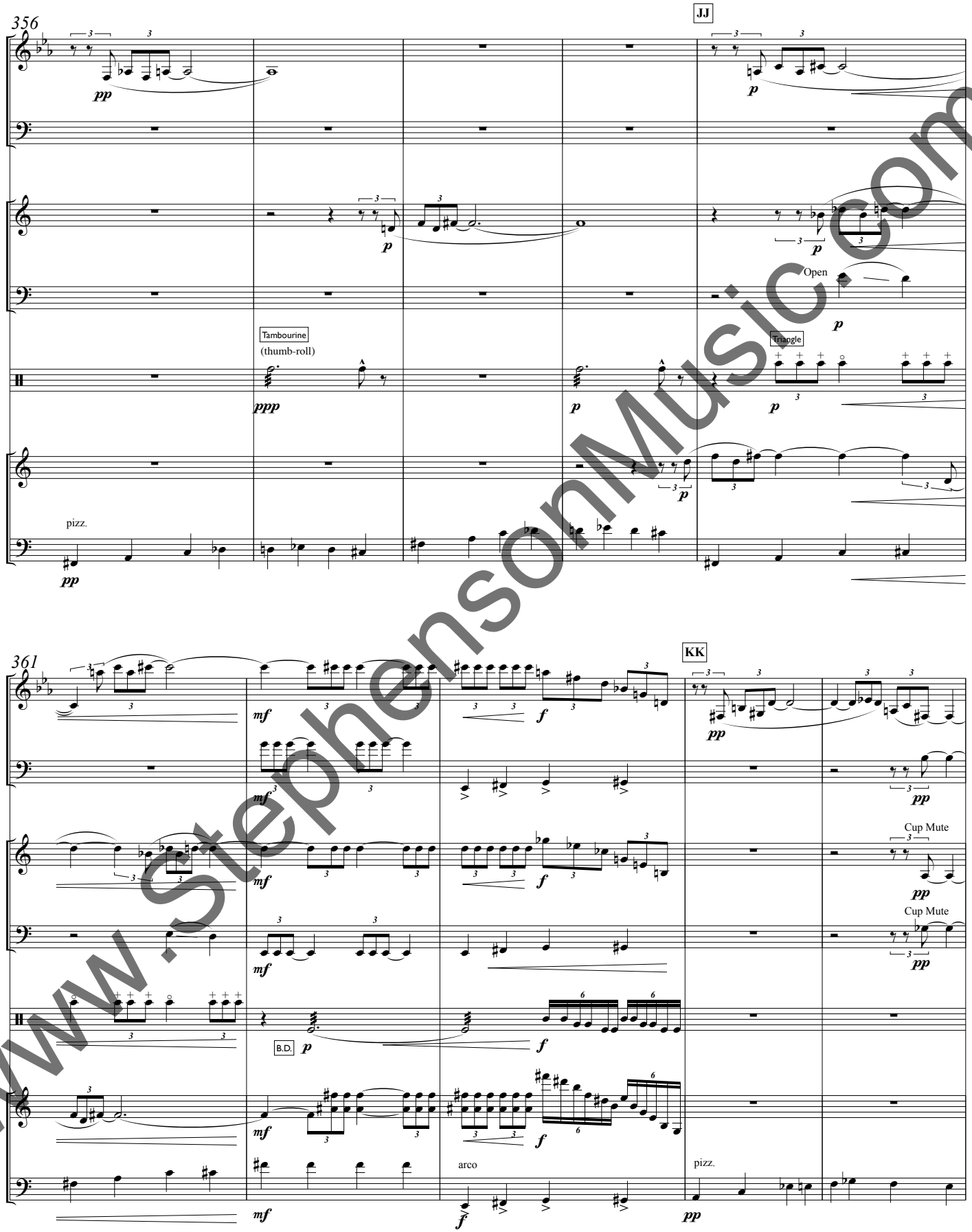


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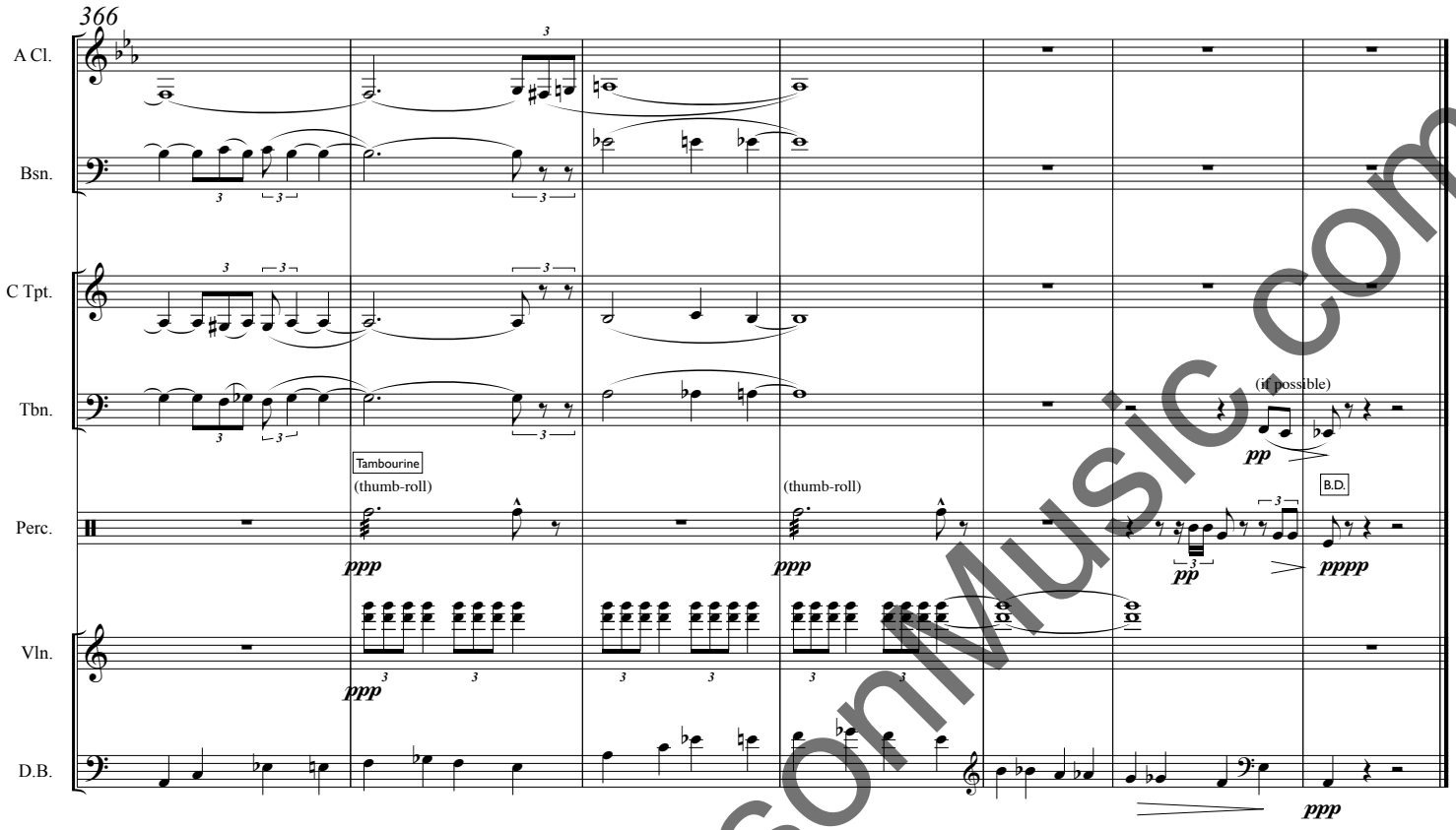
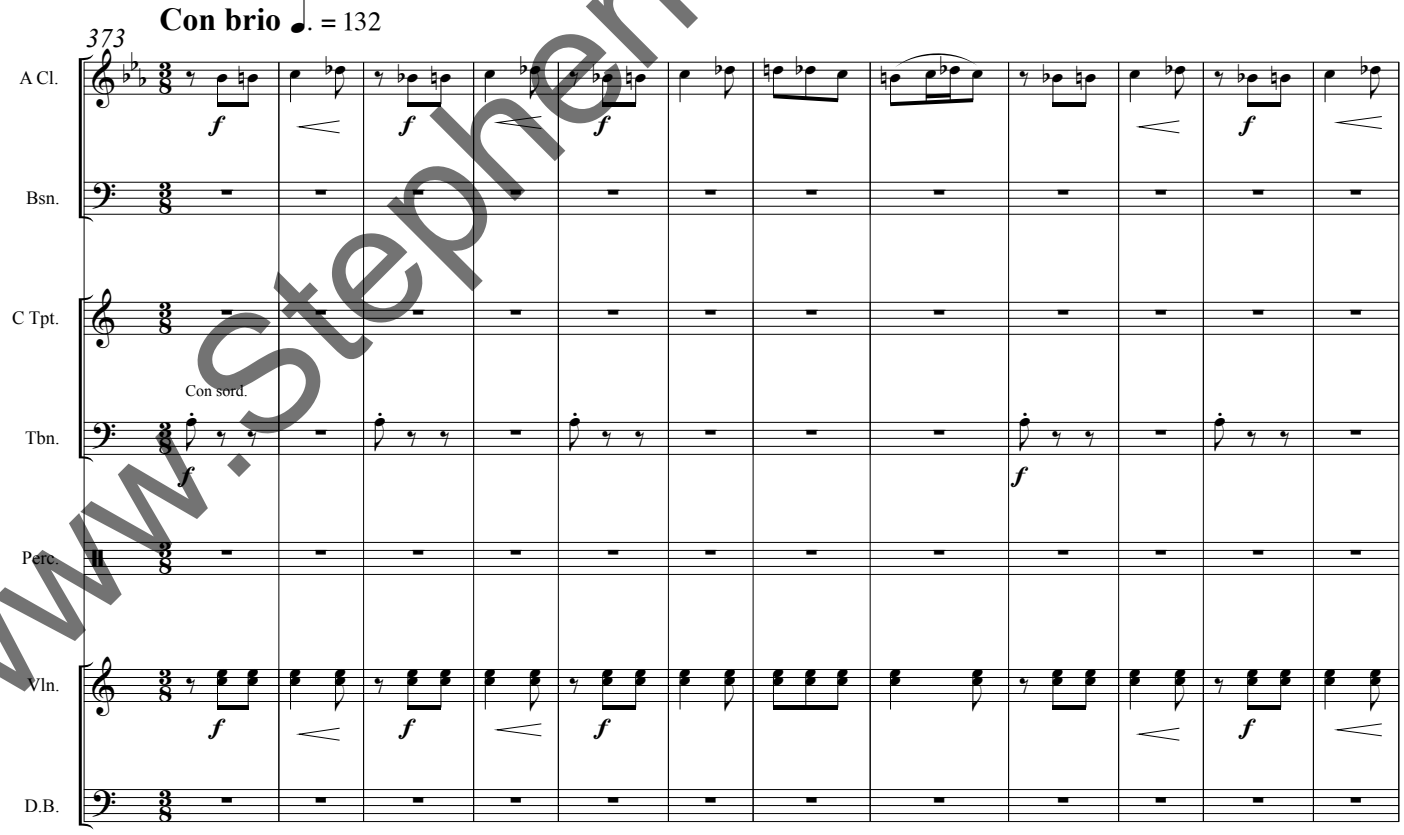



**Vc. It is so Tragic**

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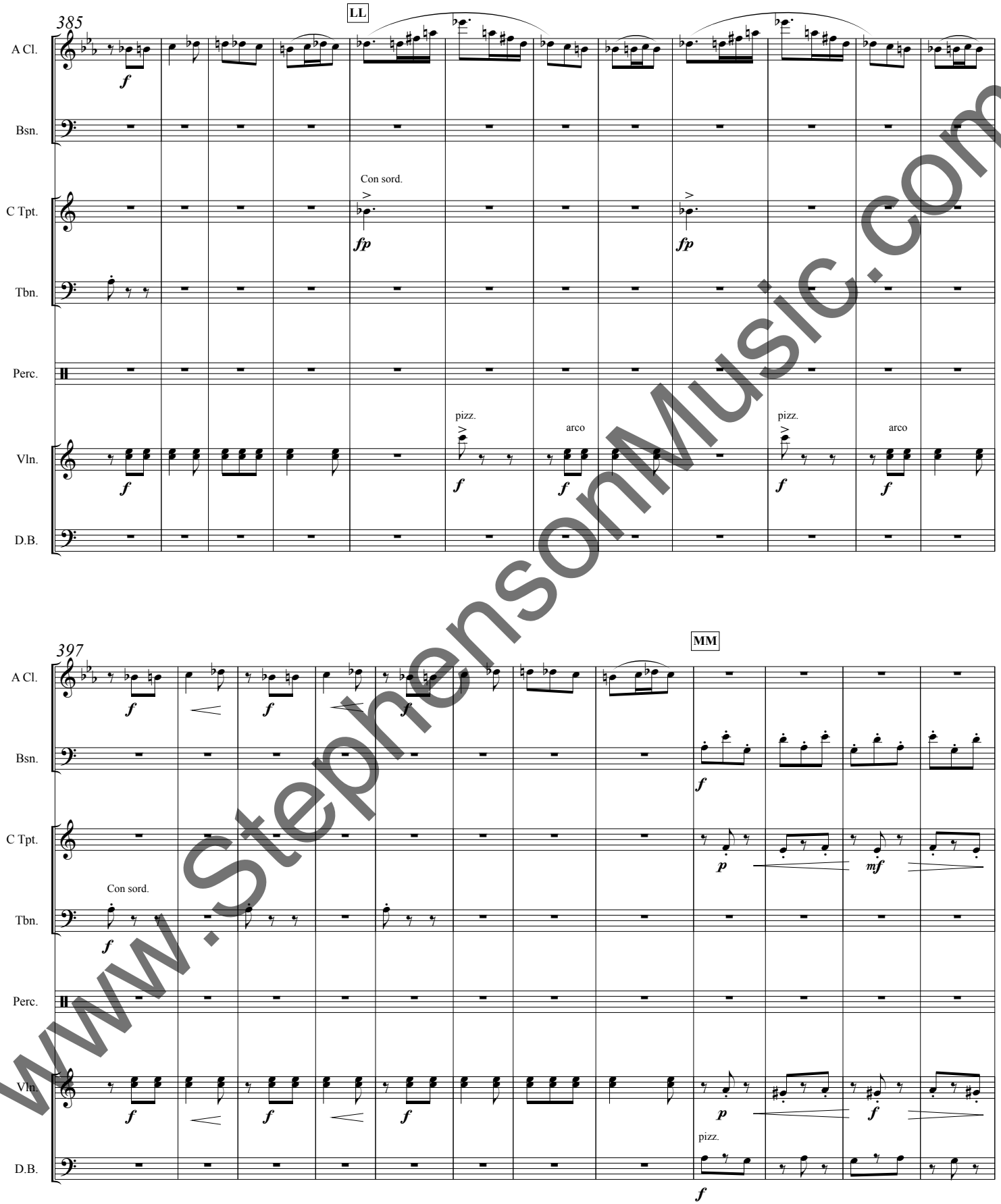


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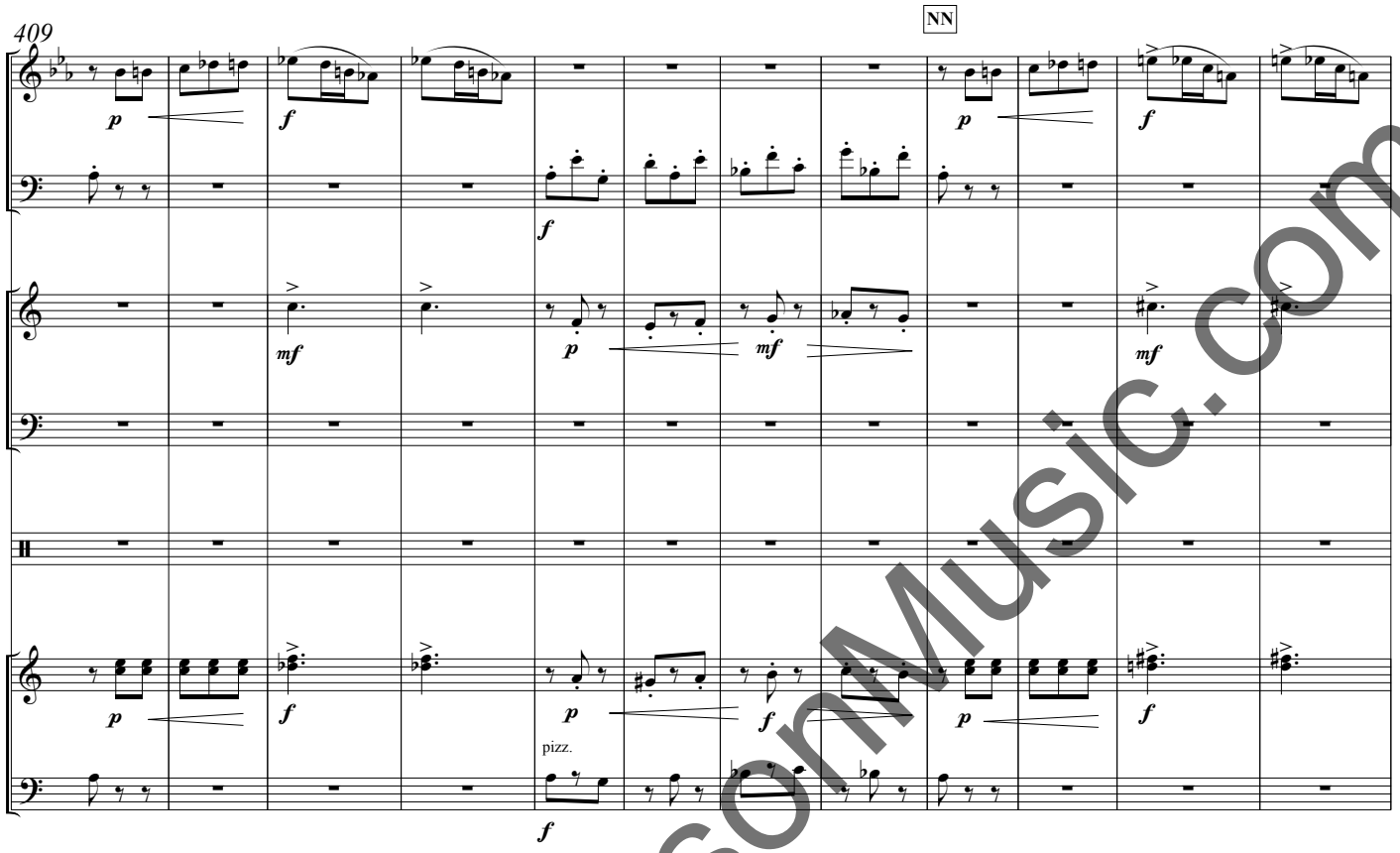


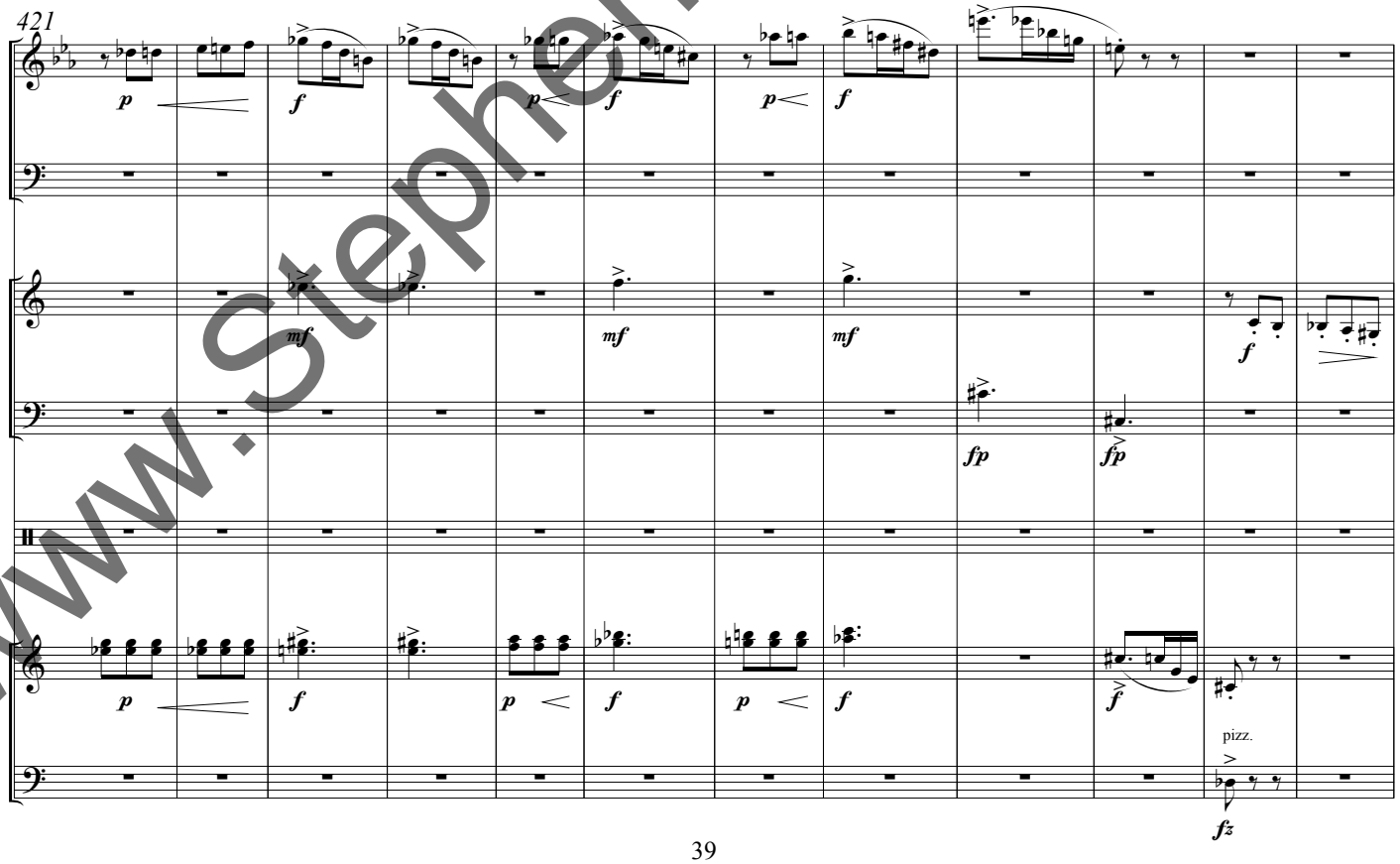


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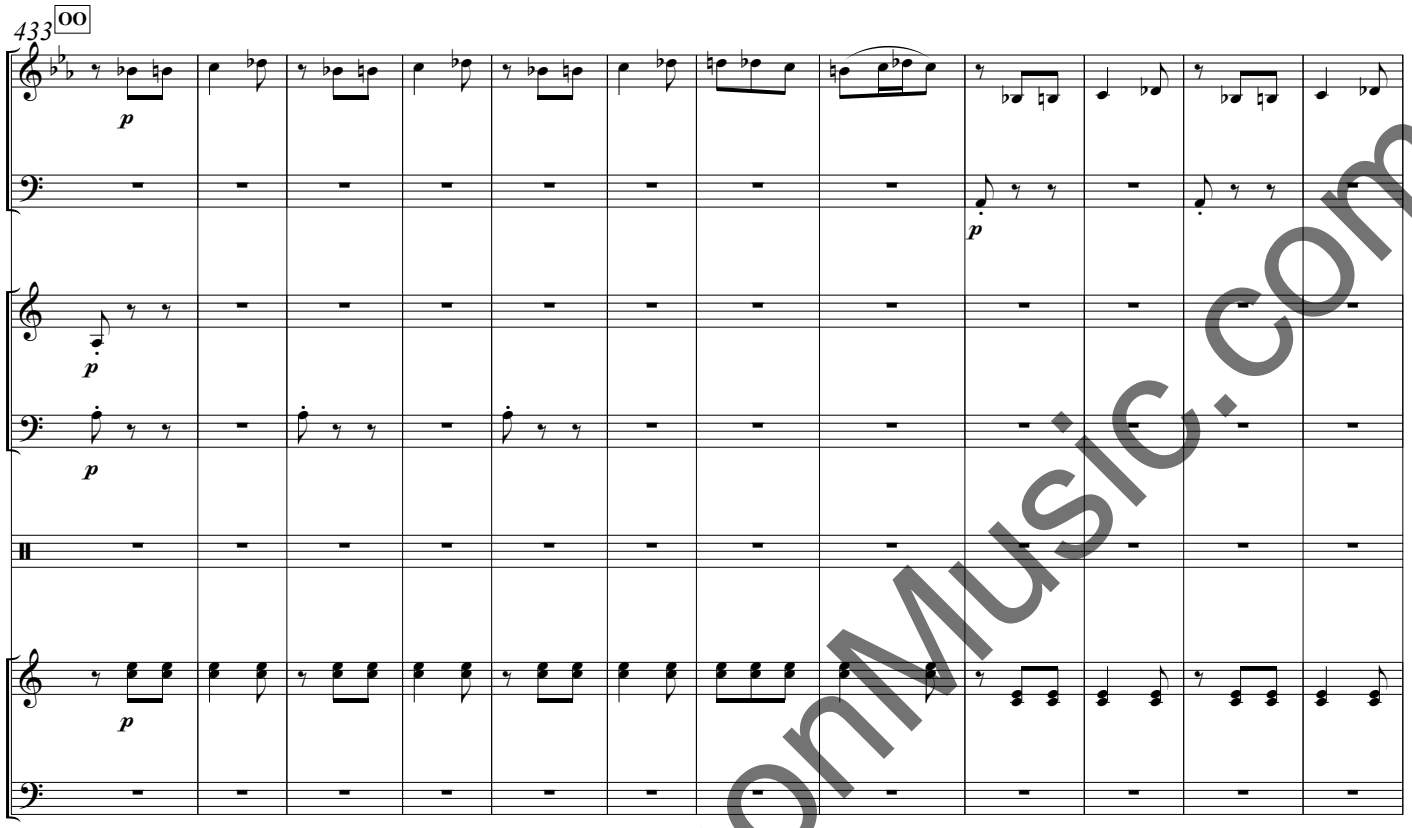


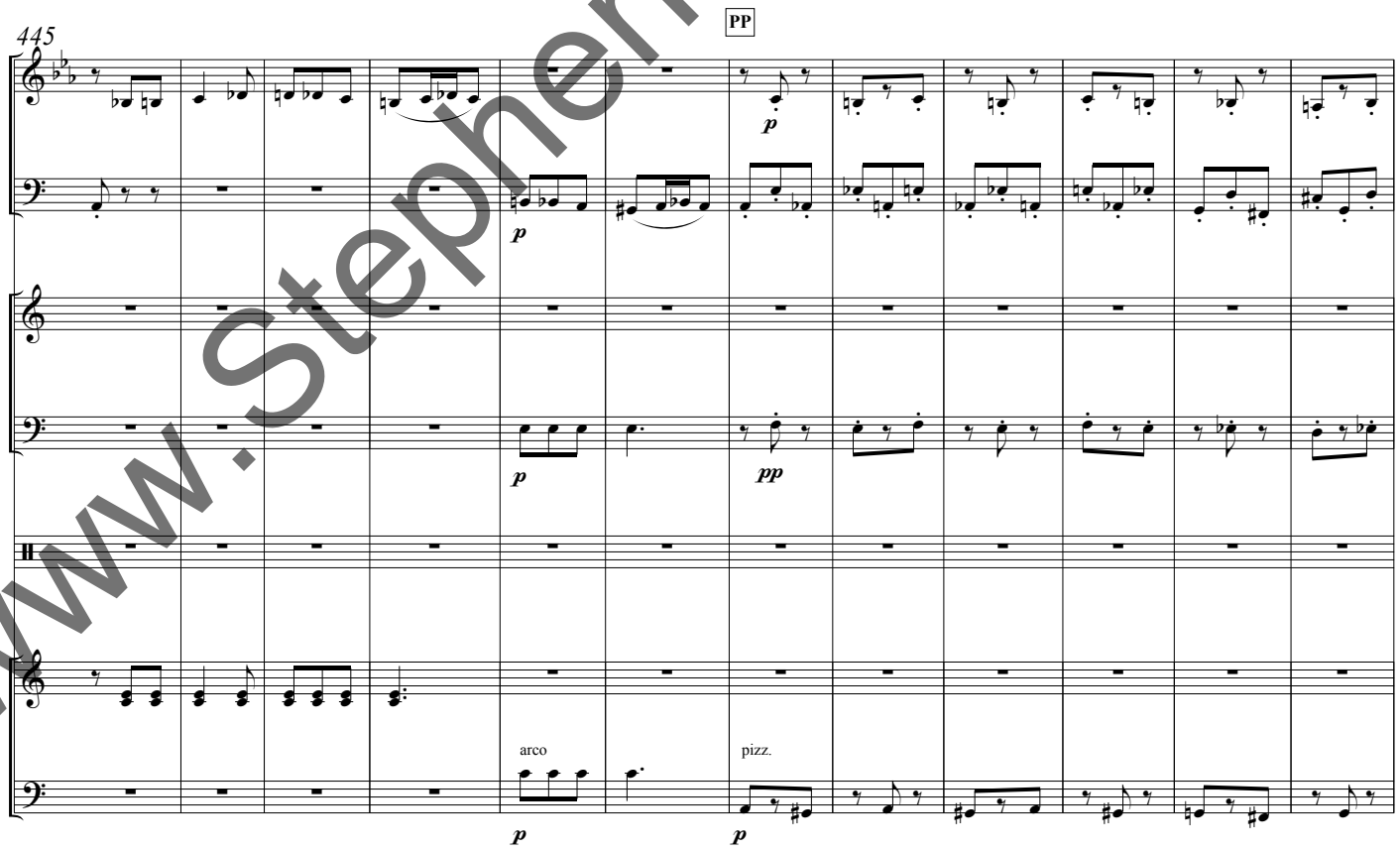


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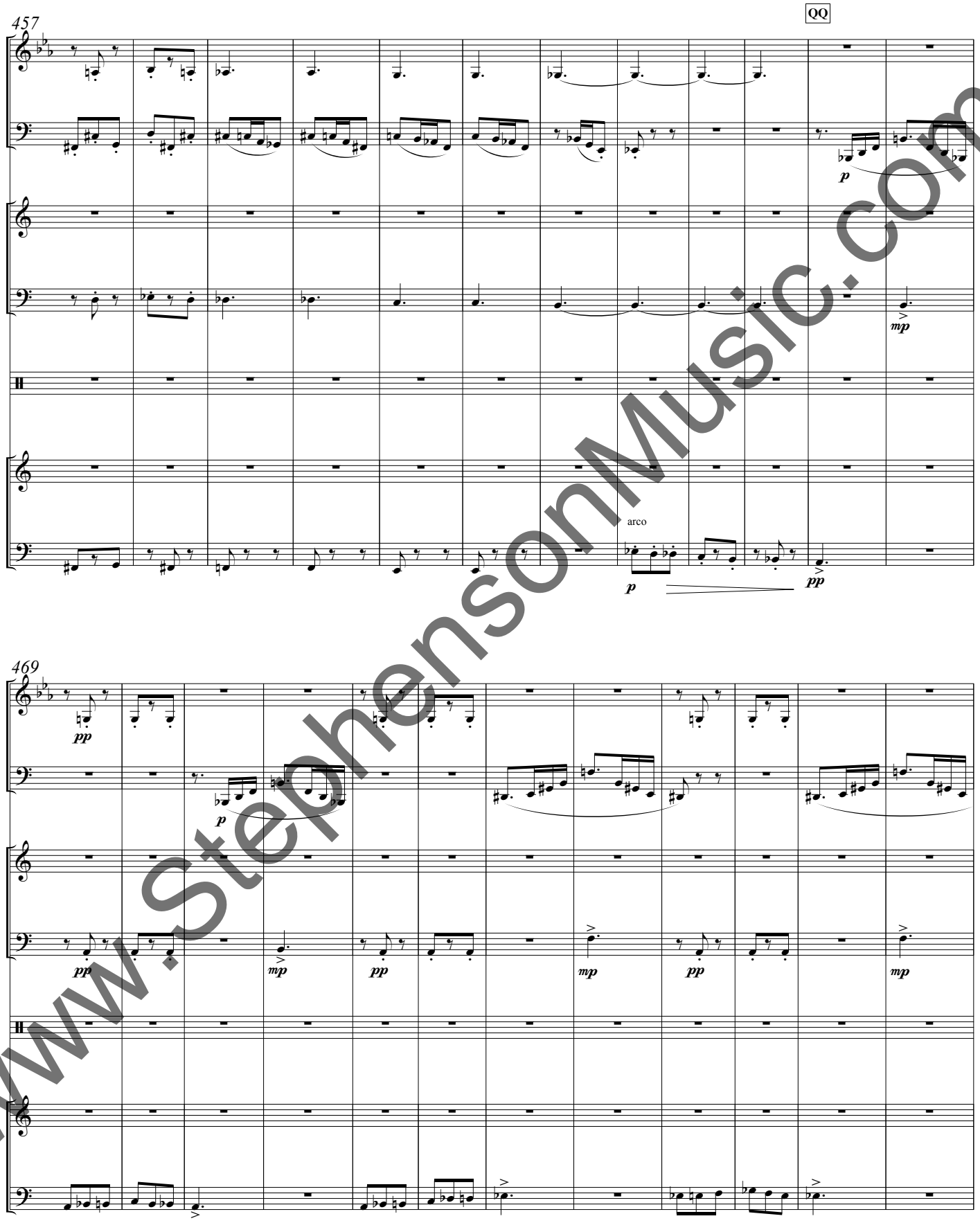


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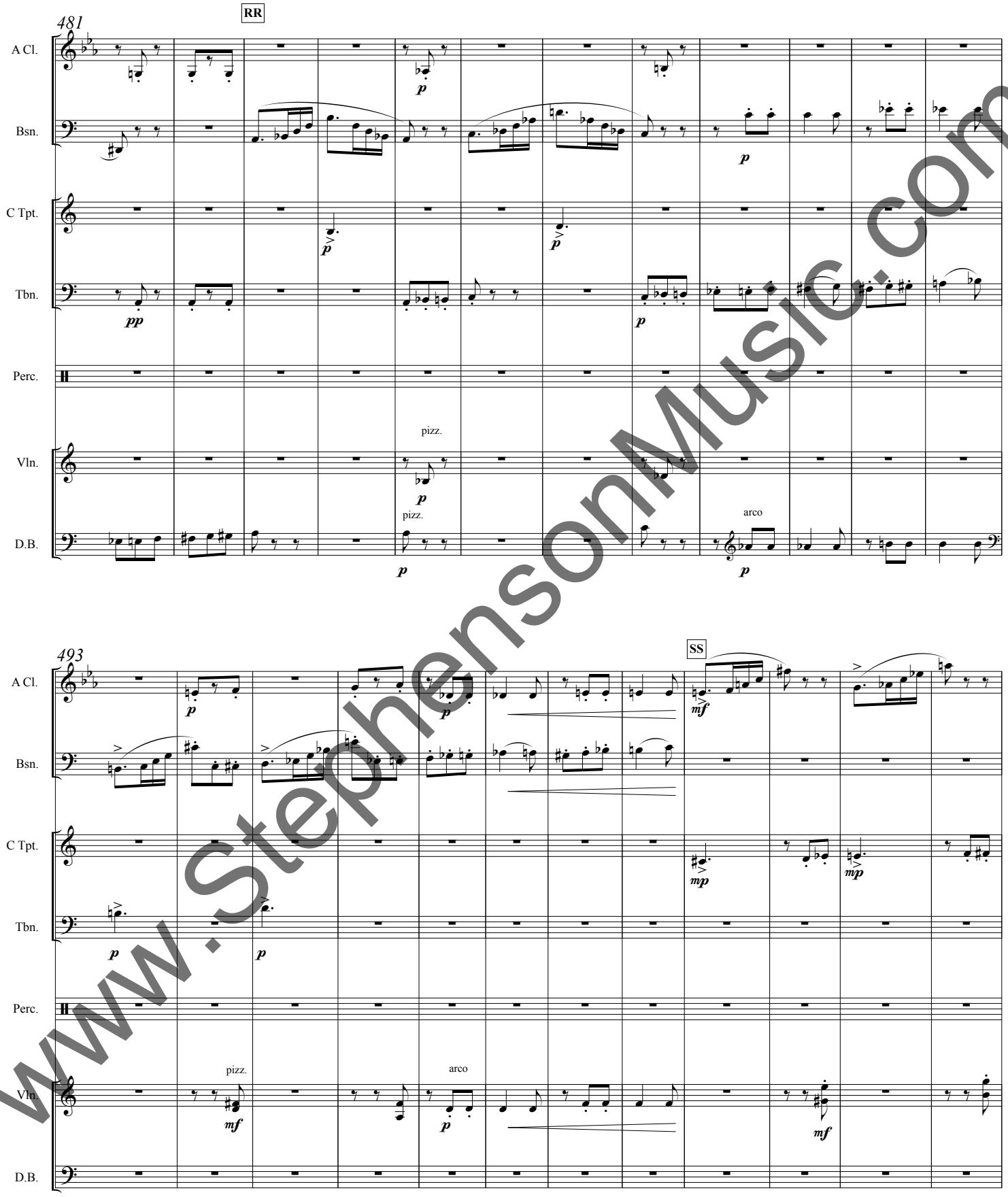


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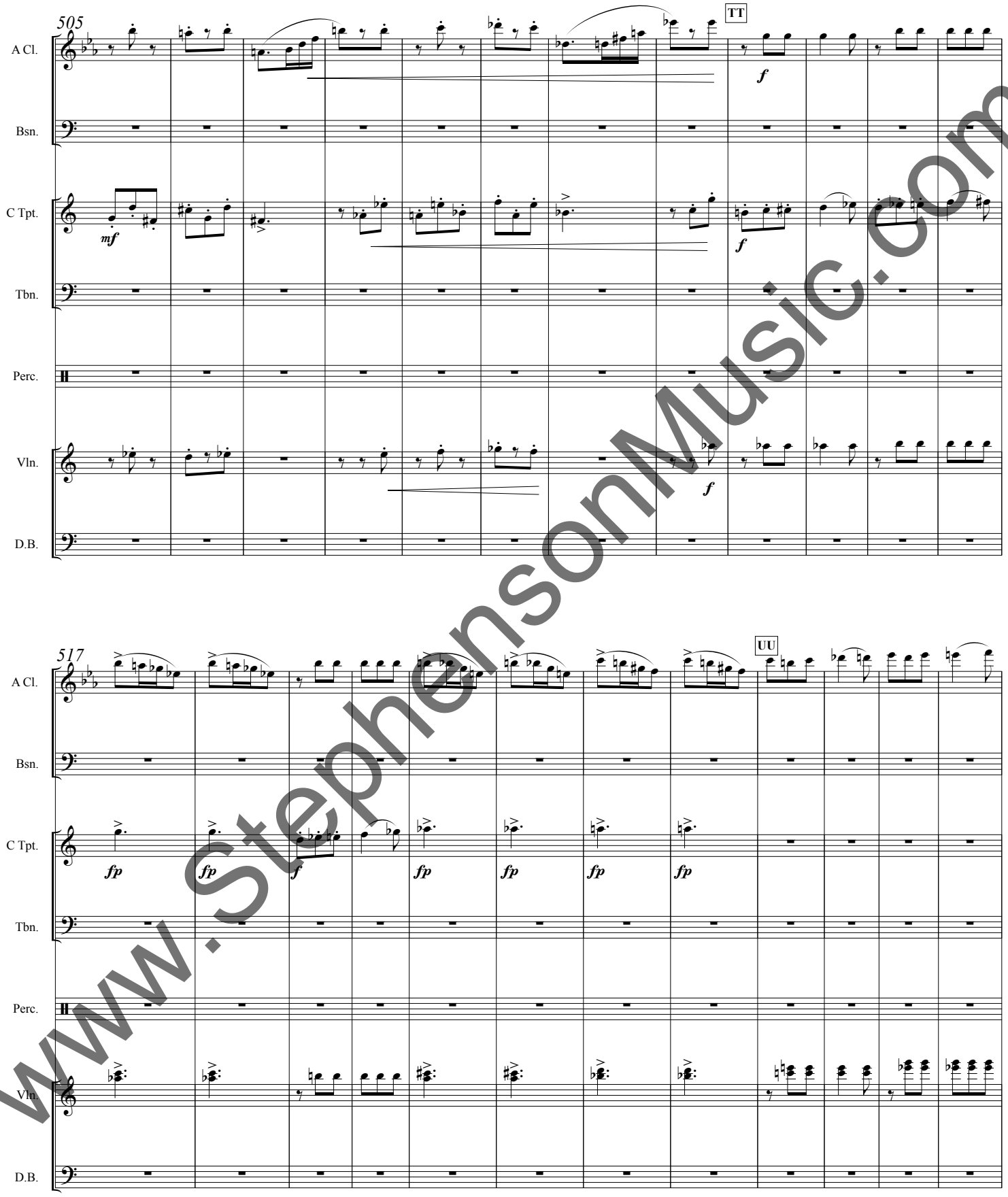


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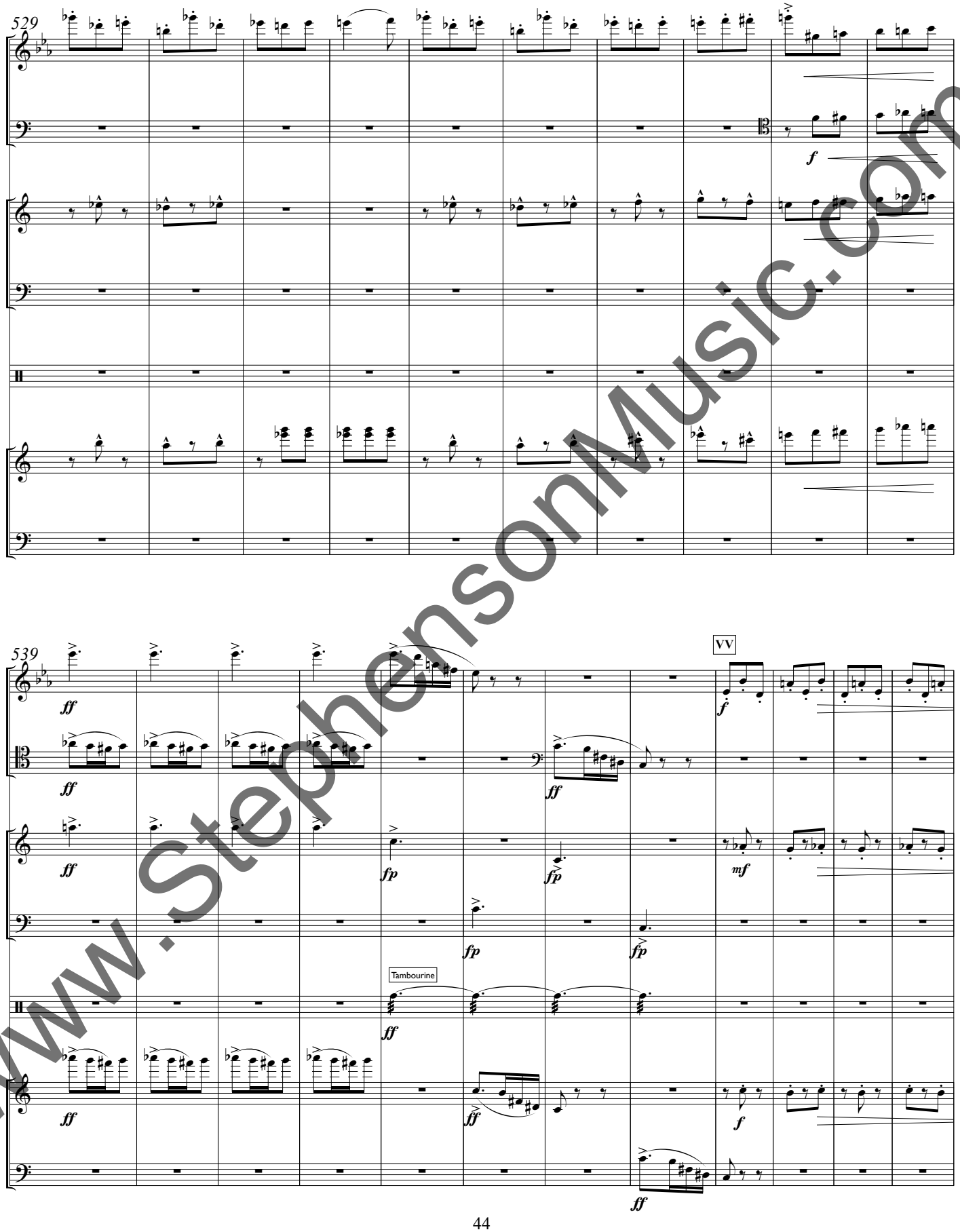


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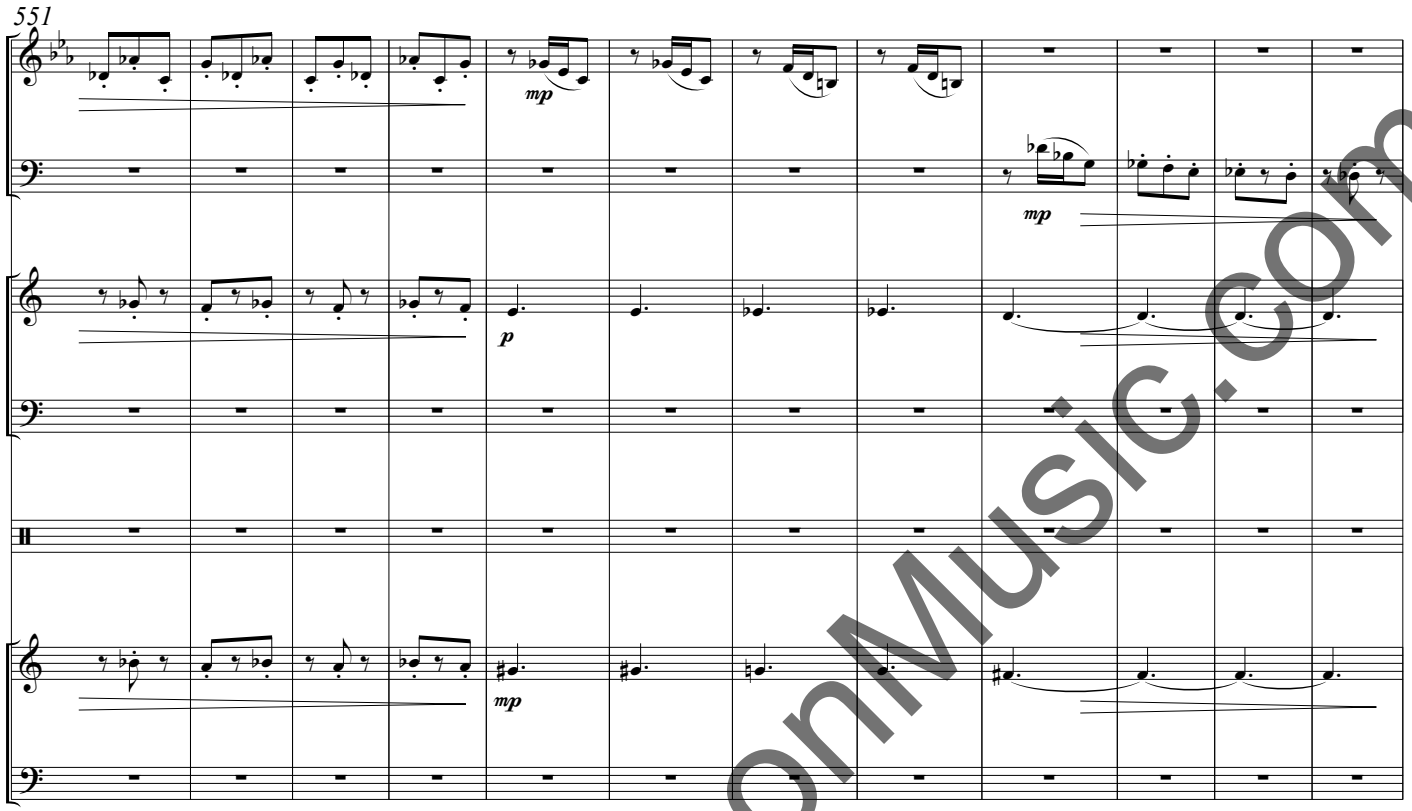


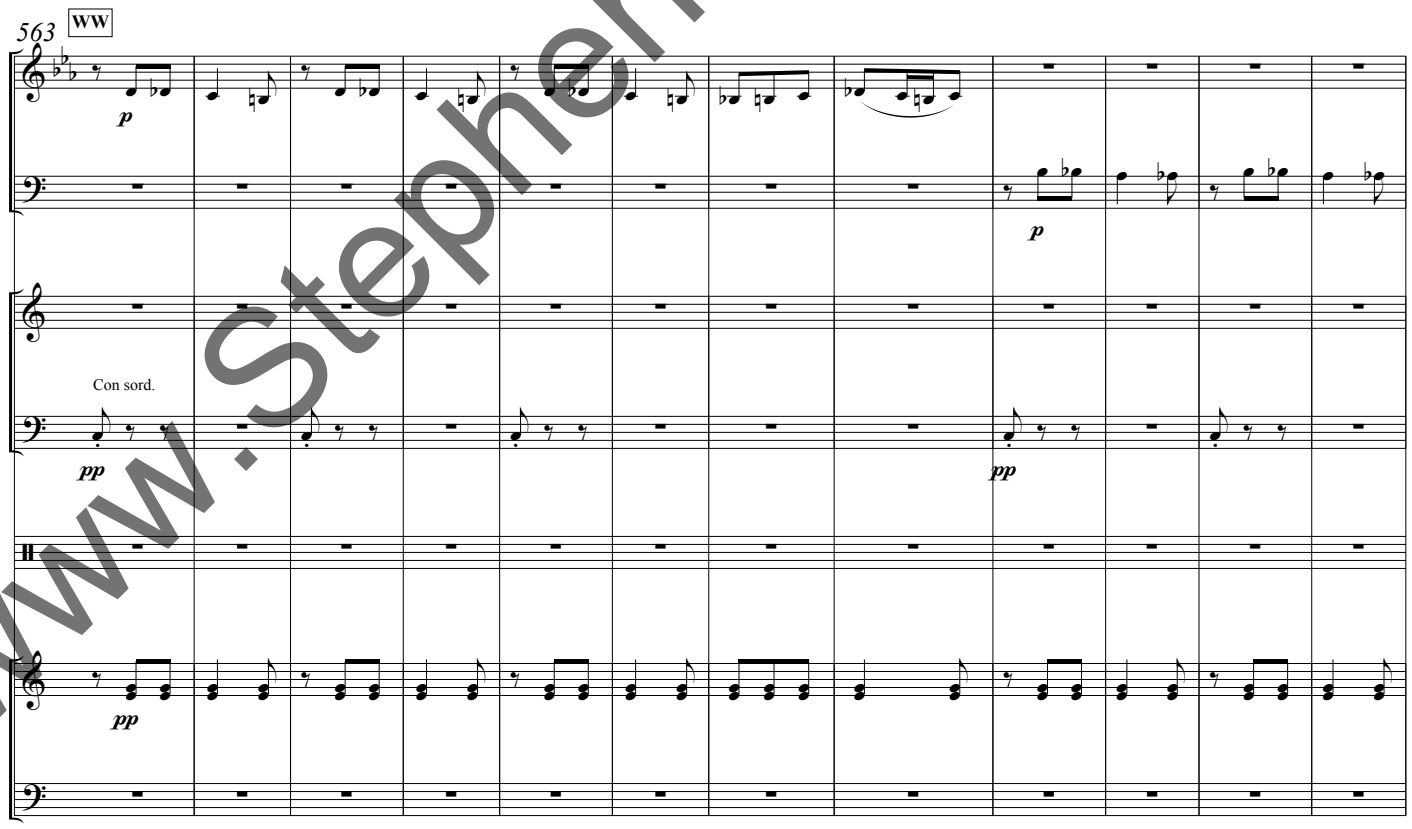


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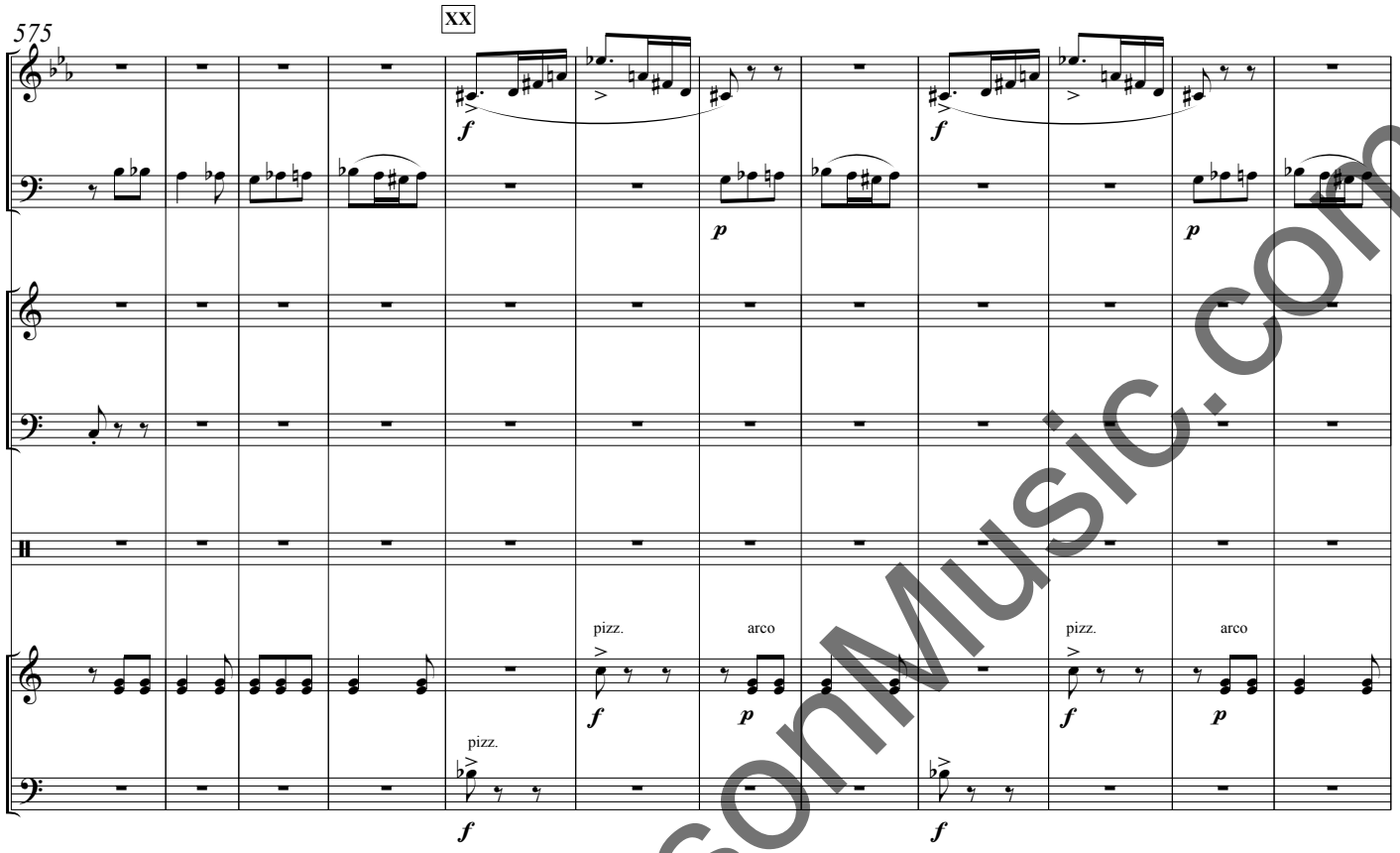


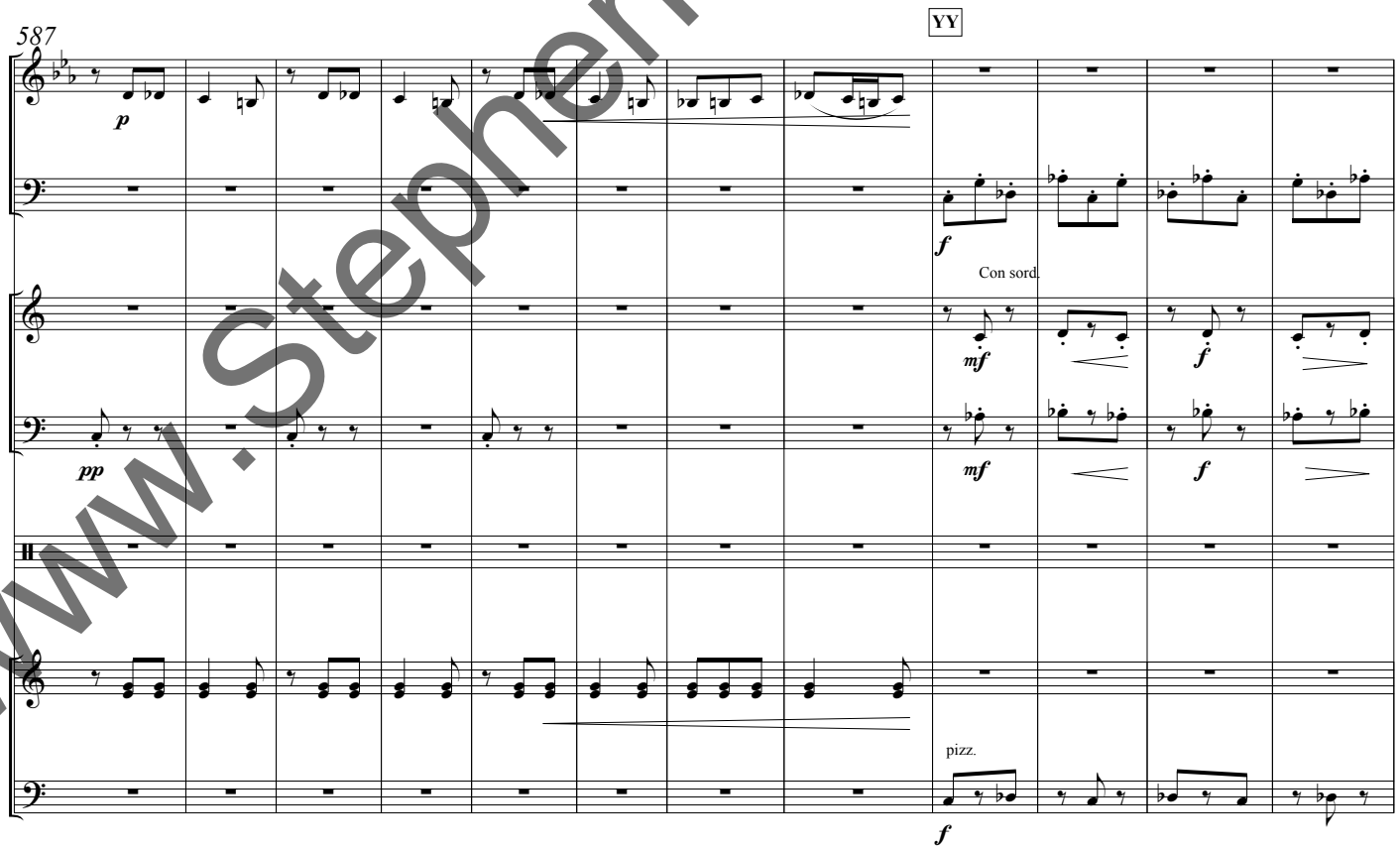


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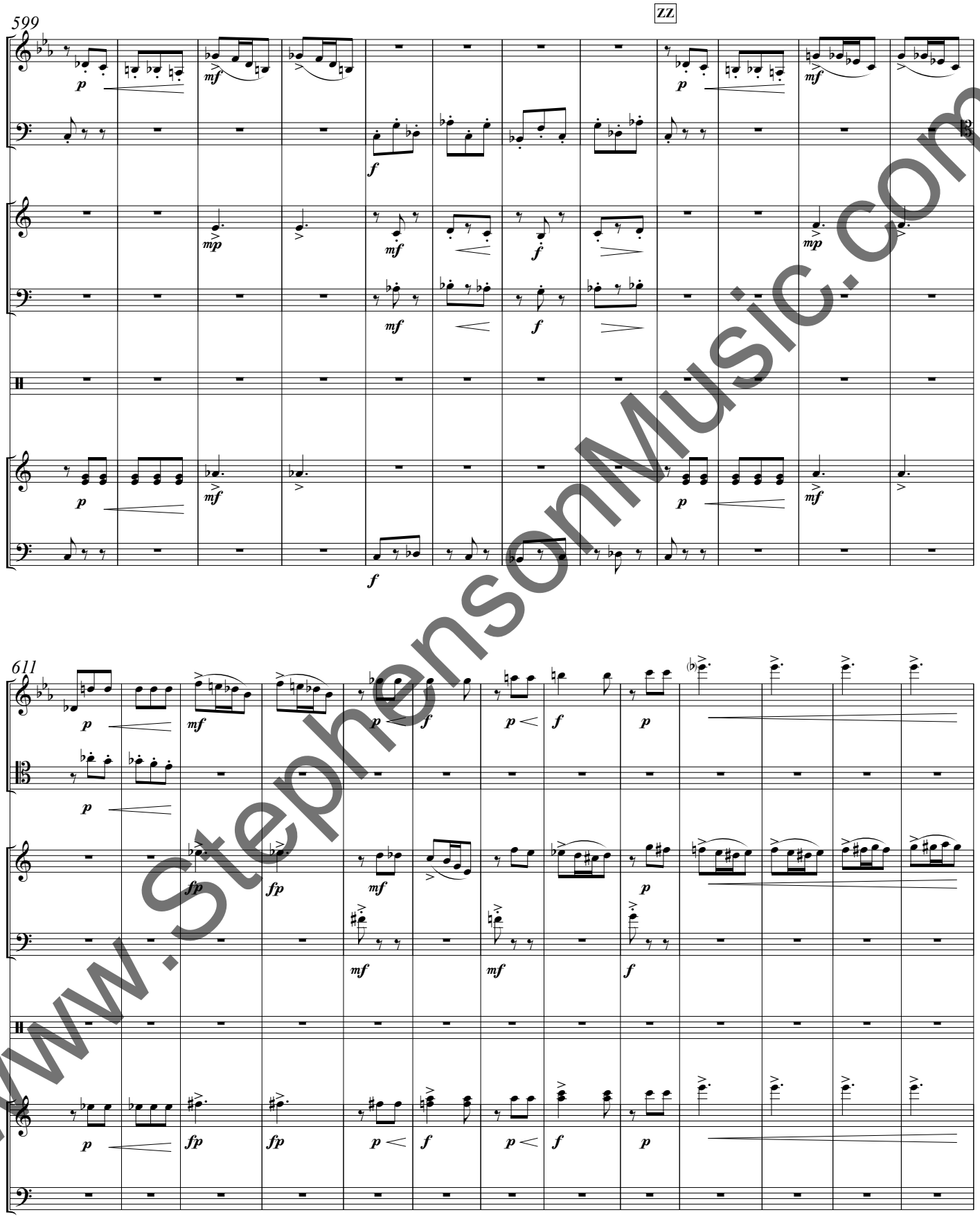


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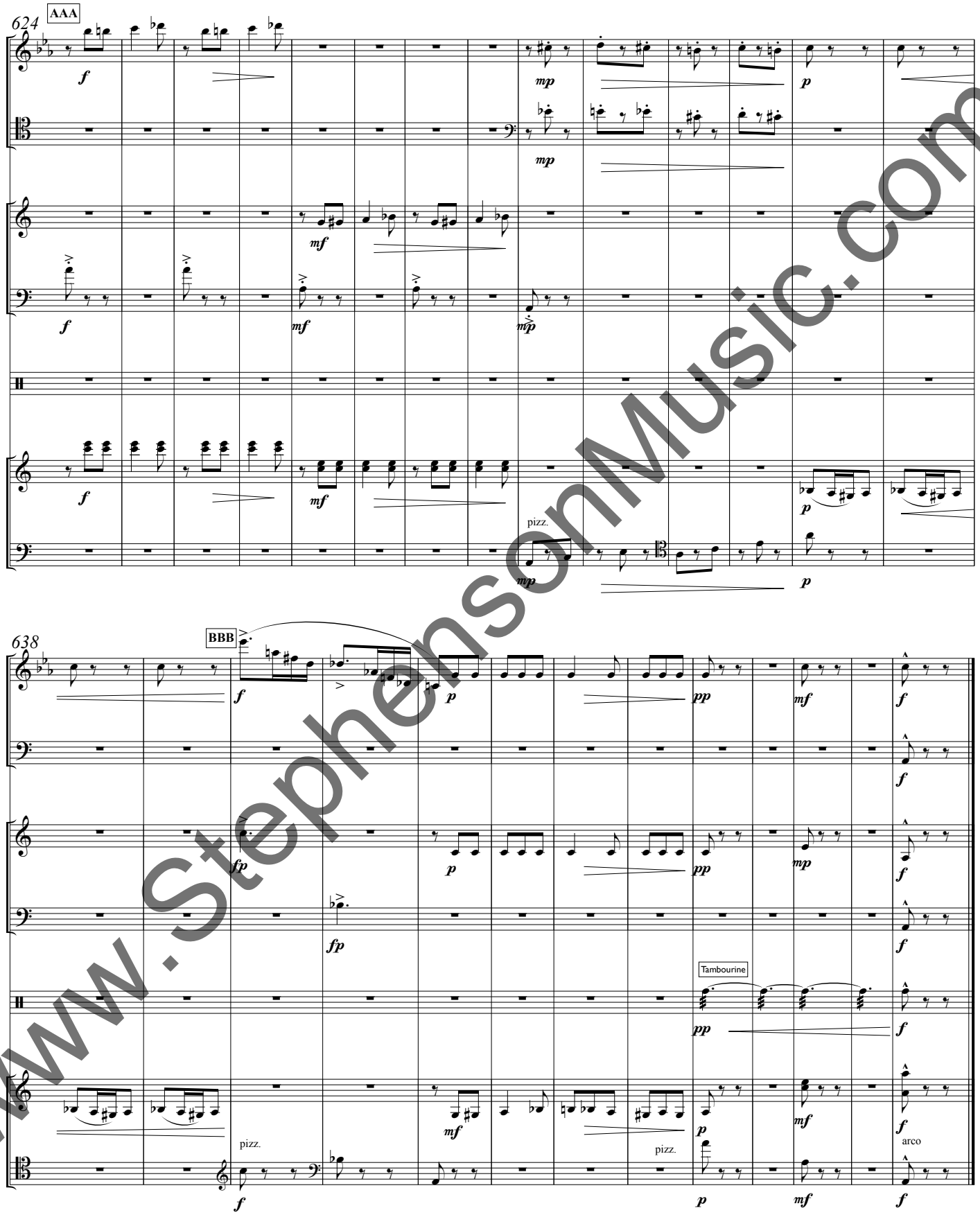


*Important: Ending of 3rd movement*
*(It is so tragic) features big move/jump for dancer.*

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**SCENE CHANGE**

*back in hotel room*

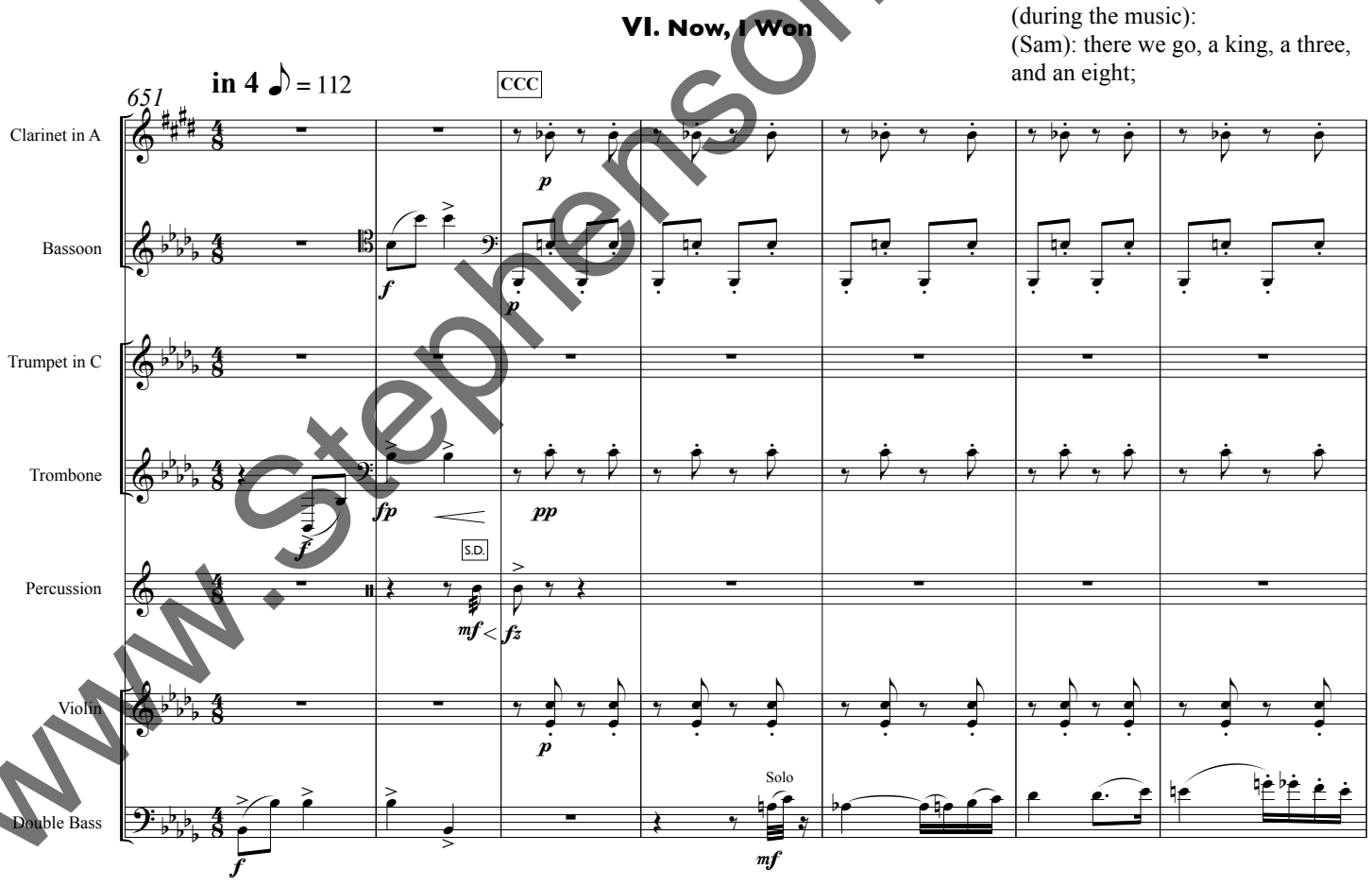
Narrator: It is later that night; they are back in their room, alone by themselves, out of costume.
The show was a big success, Hannah a star, nothing but good press. Joe begins to unravel his plan, slowly, carefully, to be sure that Hannah understands.

(Joe): One week from tonight, at the table with Sam, I'll play him in cards - allowing him the slam.
I will lose, again and again, as he grows ever more confident with each win.
That night, at the show - you will injure your foot. That final jump, in the last dance, come down hard, make sure it 'hurts'. You'll be done, off the show. Sam won't want you; he'll pretend you're someone he doesn't even know.
(Hannah): But Sam is my boss. He owns me. He won't want the loss.

(Joe): Trust me. Sam won't want you for keeps. He only dates working showgirls.
He's one of the world's biggest creeps. Make the injury a good one. Make it for real.
It needs to look like the leg is shattered from knee to heel.

**SCENE CHANGE**

Narrator: It is one week later. Joe and Sam play cards, Sam's confidence increasingly greater.
It is crucial that Joe succeed, in losing, of course, fueling Sam's greed.

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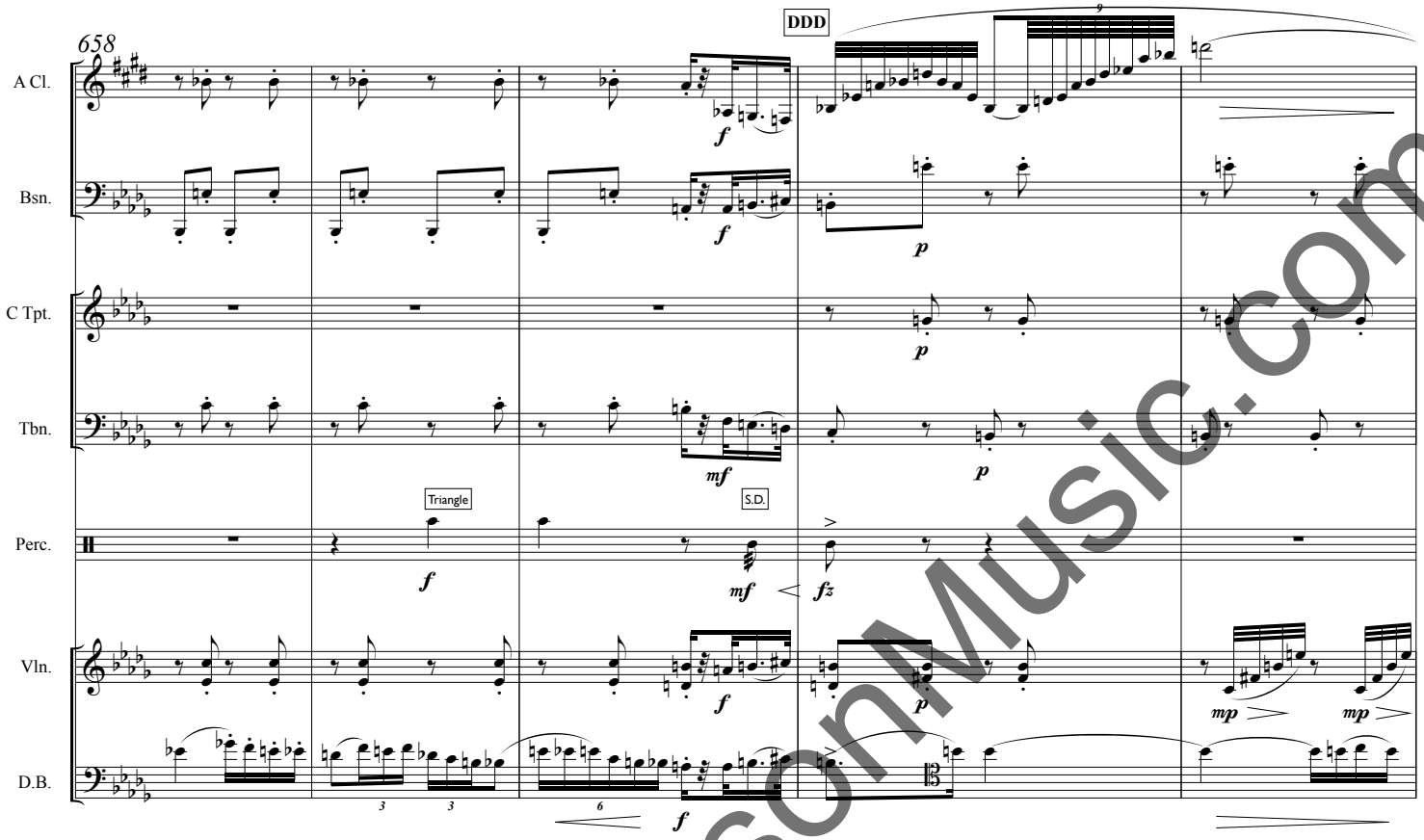
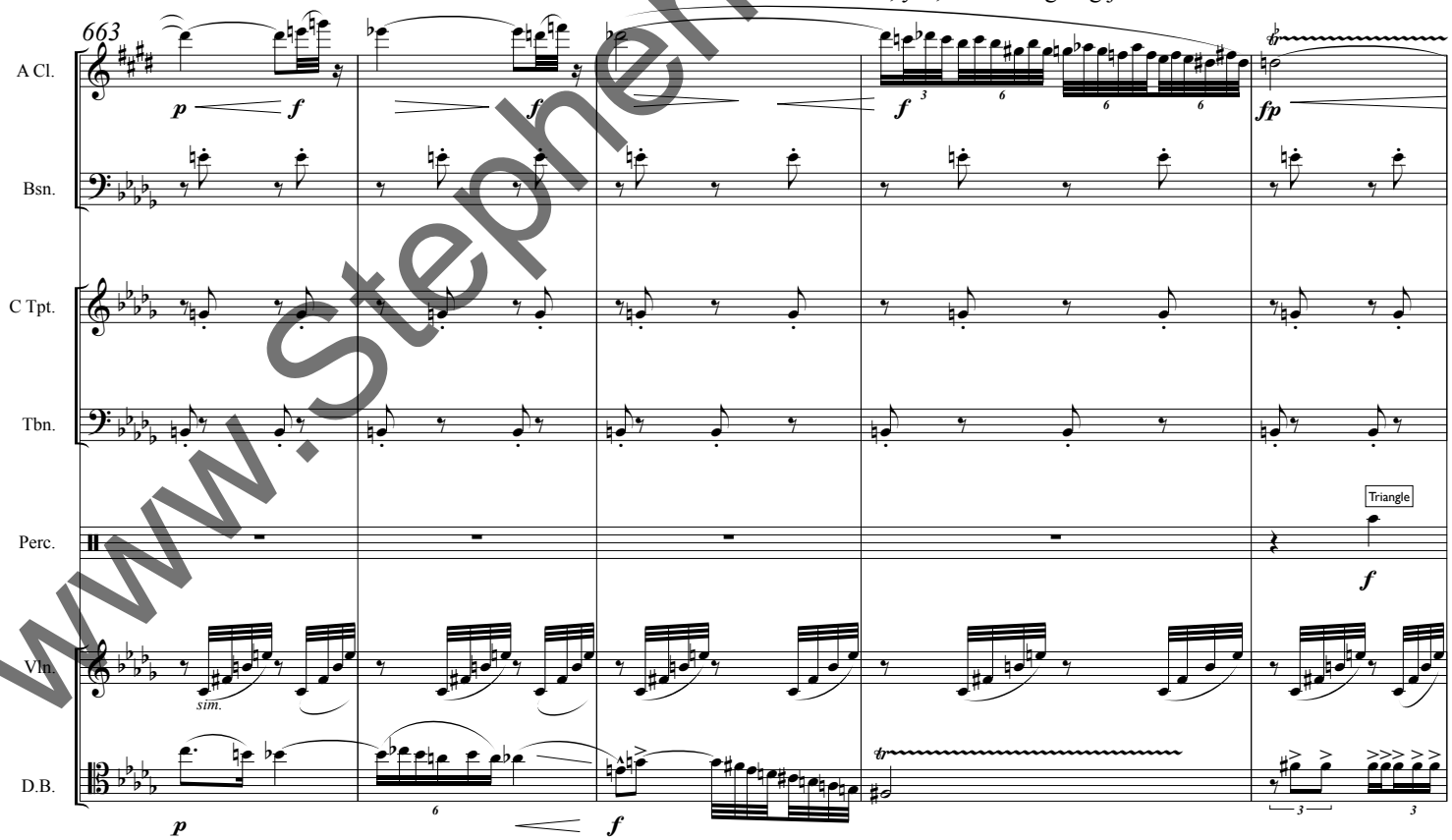
Victory is surely my fate. [*rhythmically, as indicated, with music*: "Now, I won!"]




(*still during music*) - and again! a jack, a two and a nine;
ah, yes, this is all going just fine...

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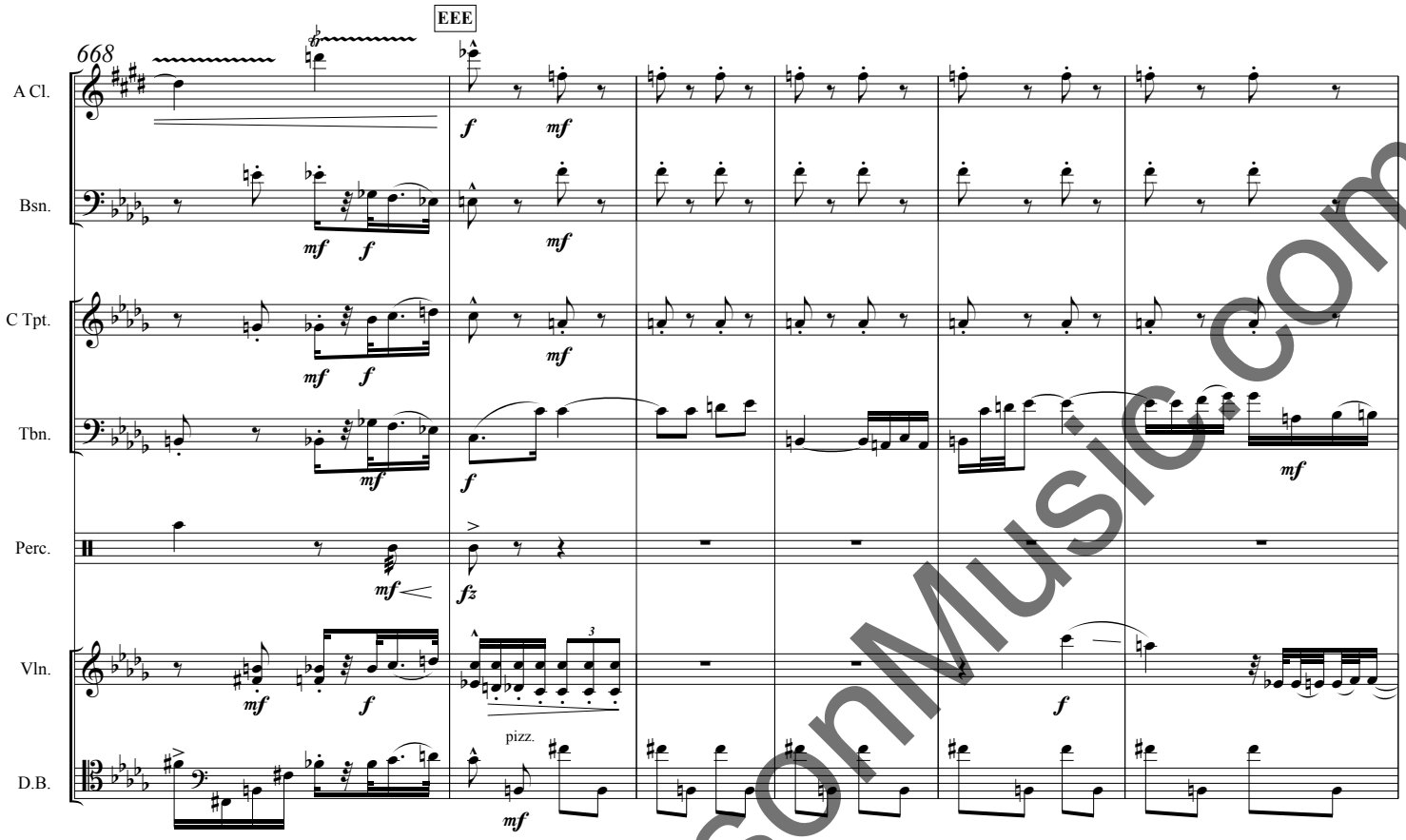
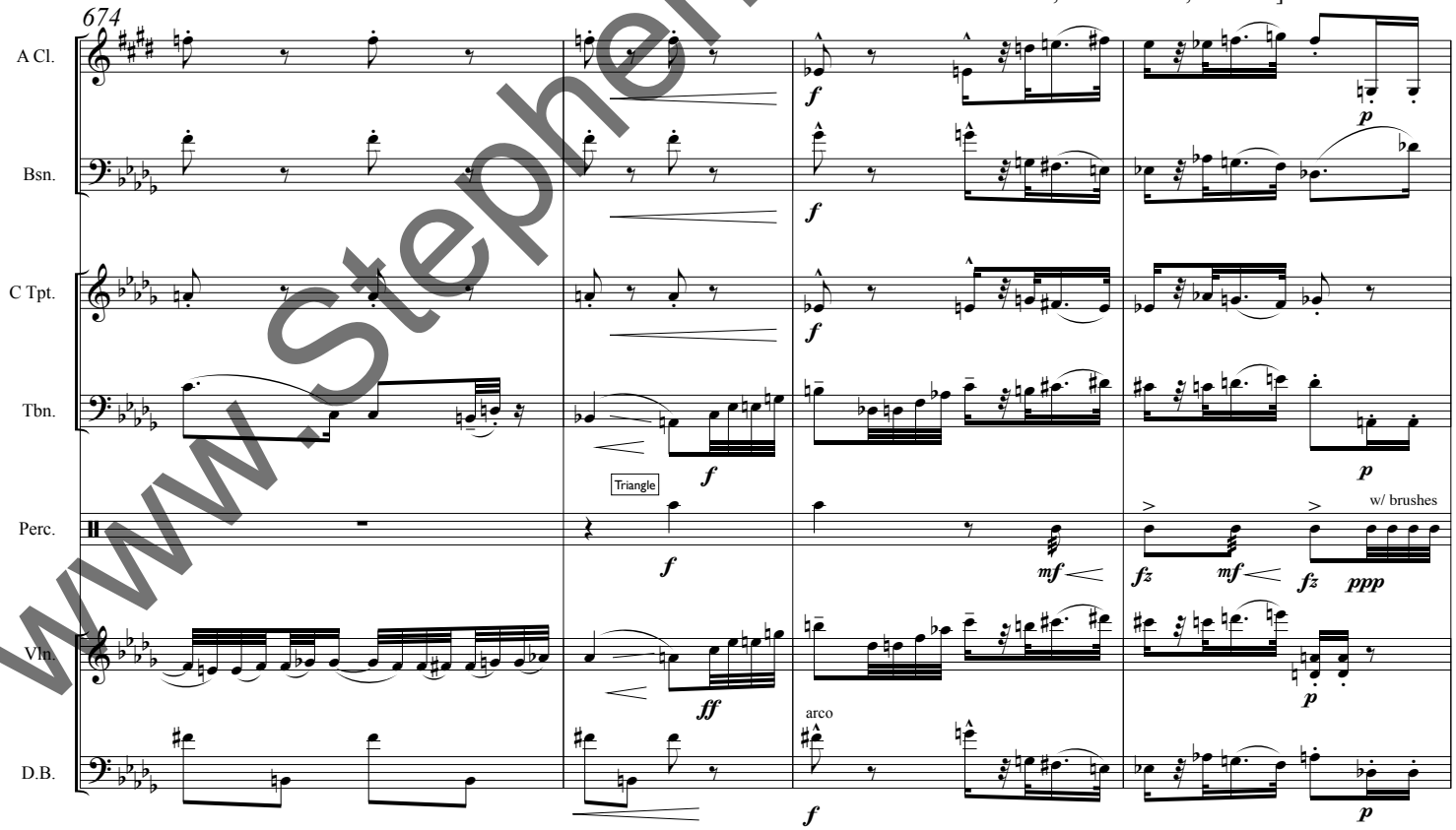
[*rhythmically, with music*: "Now, I won!"]




(*still during music*) - Look at you, you're getting redder and redder; perhaps you should give up; might be better.

[*rhythmically, with music*: "Now, I won! Now, I won!"]

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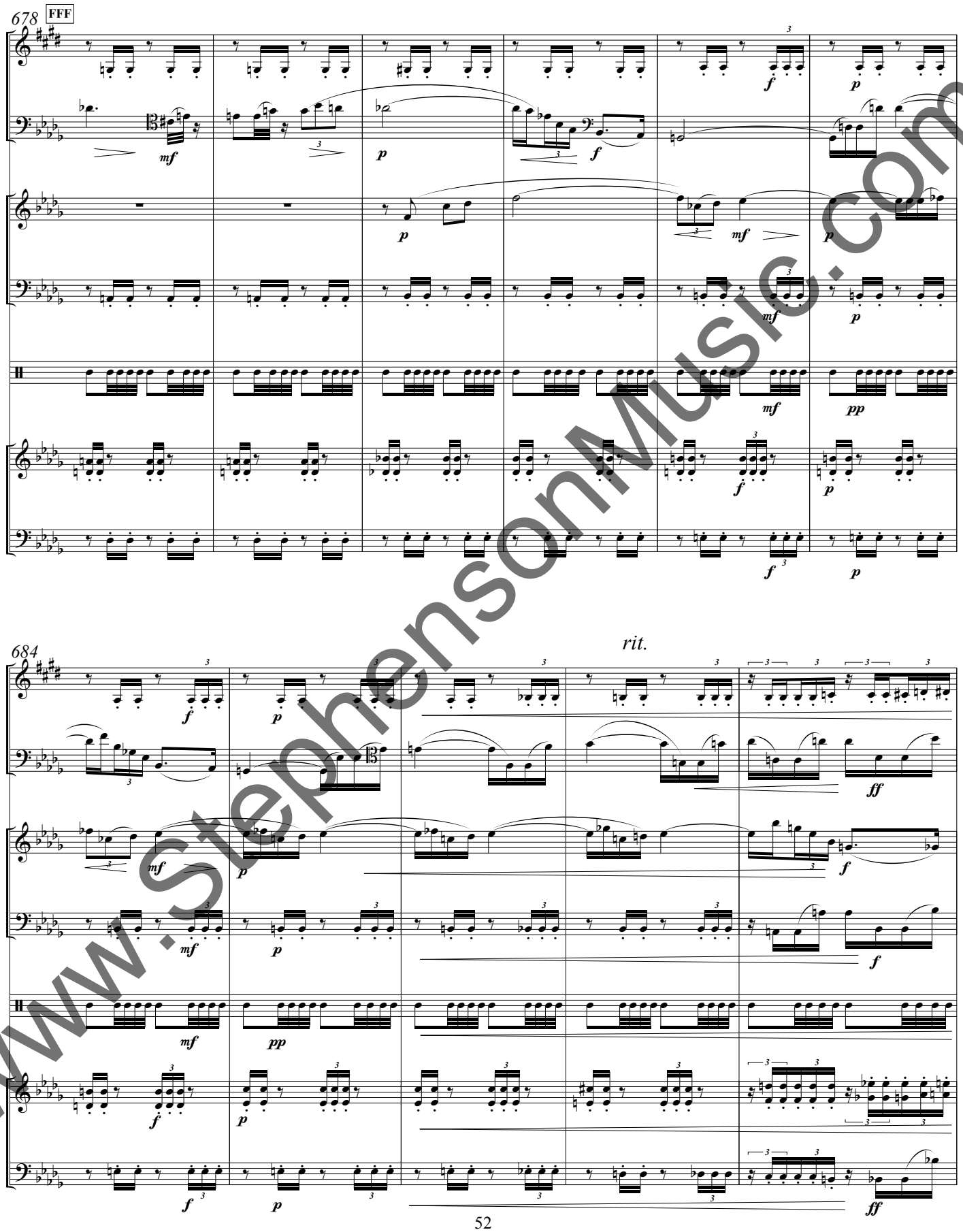


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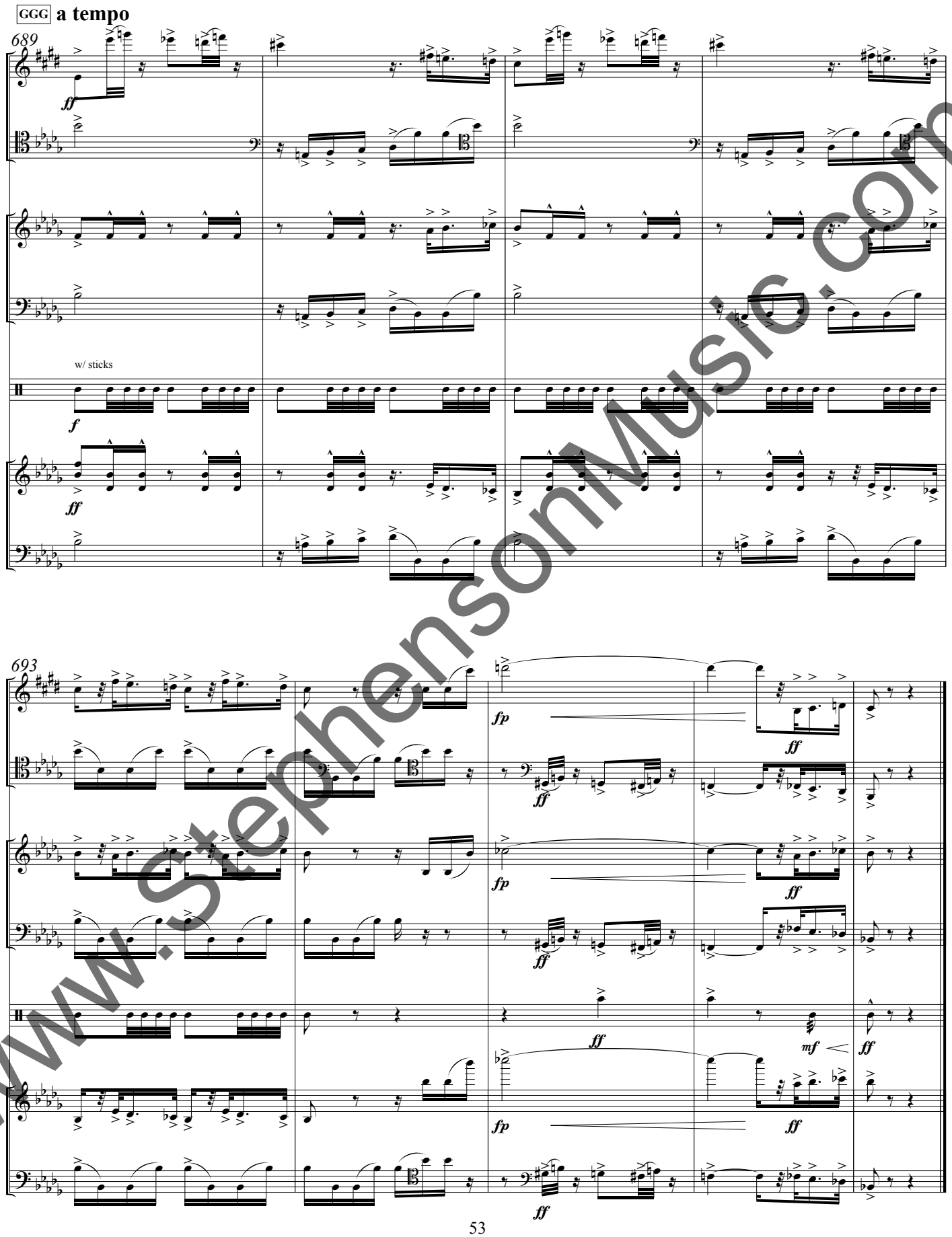


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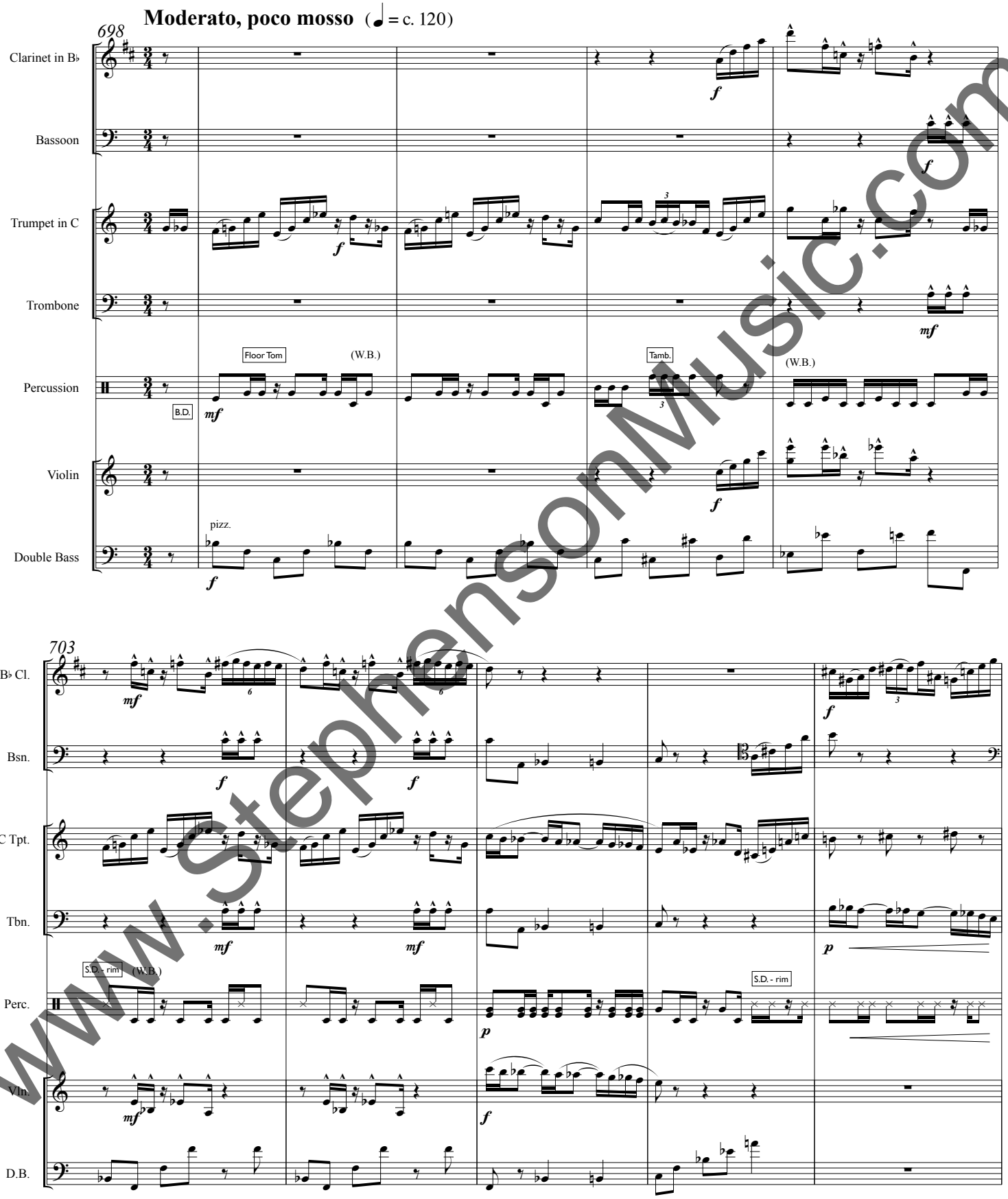
## VII. Part I - Finale
### -- Three Dances Reprise --

(Joe): Fine. After the show tonight I will leave.
I have lost. You get the girl. For me, this is my cost.

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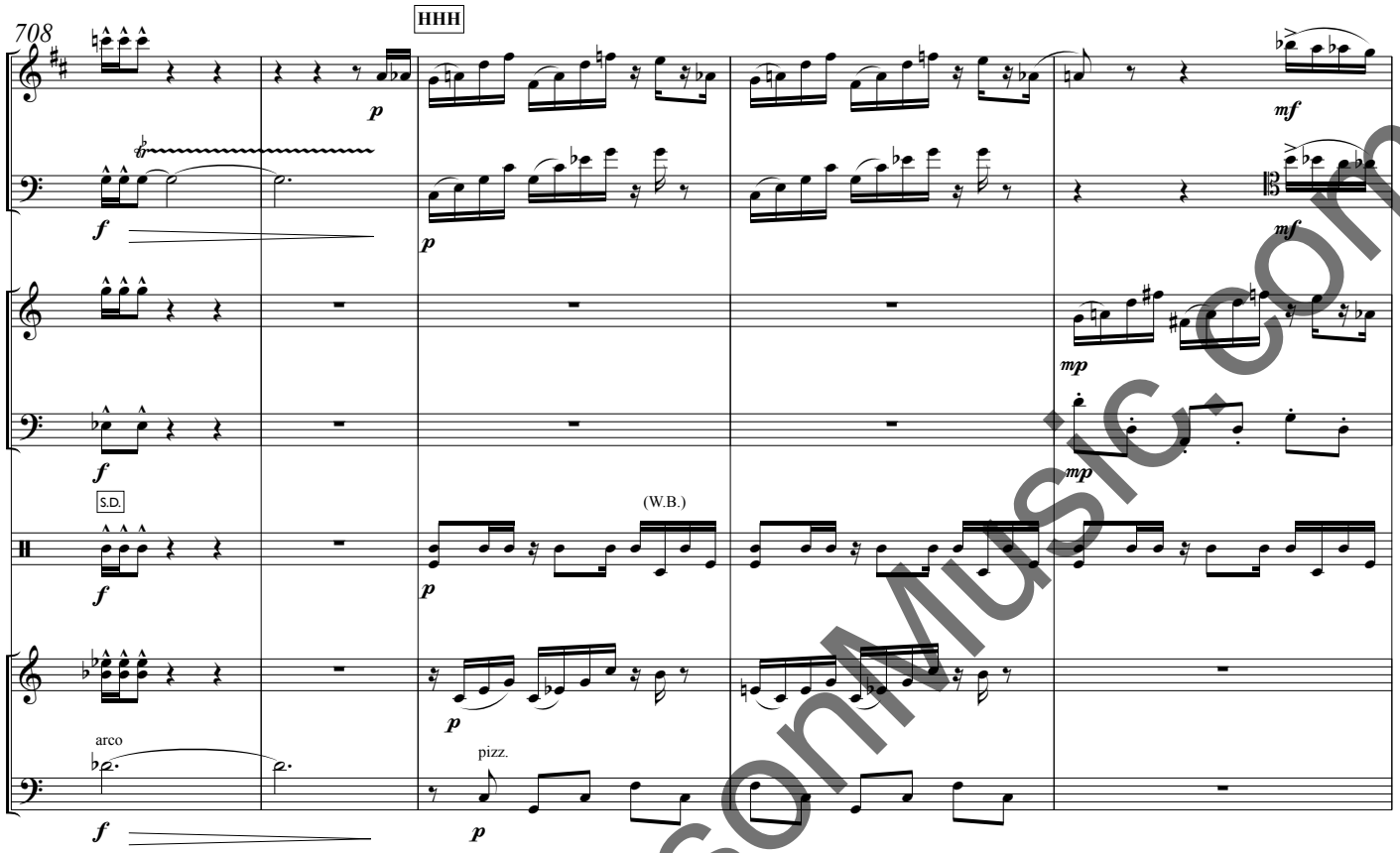


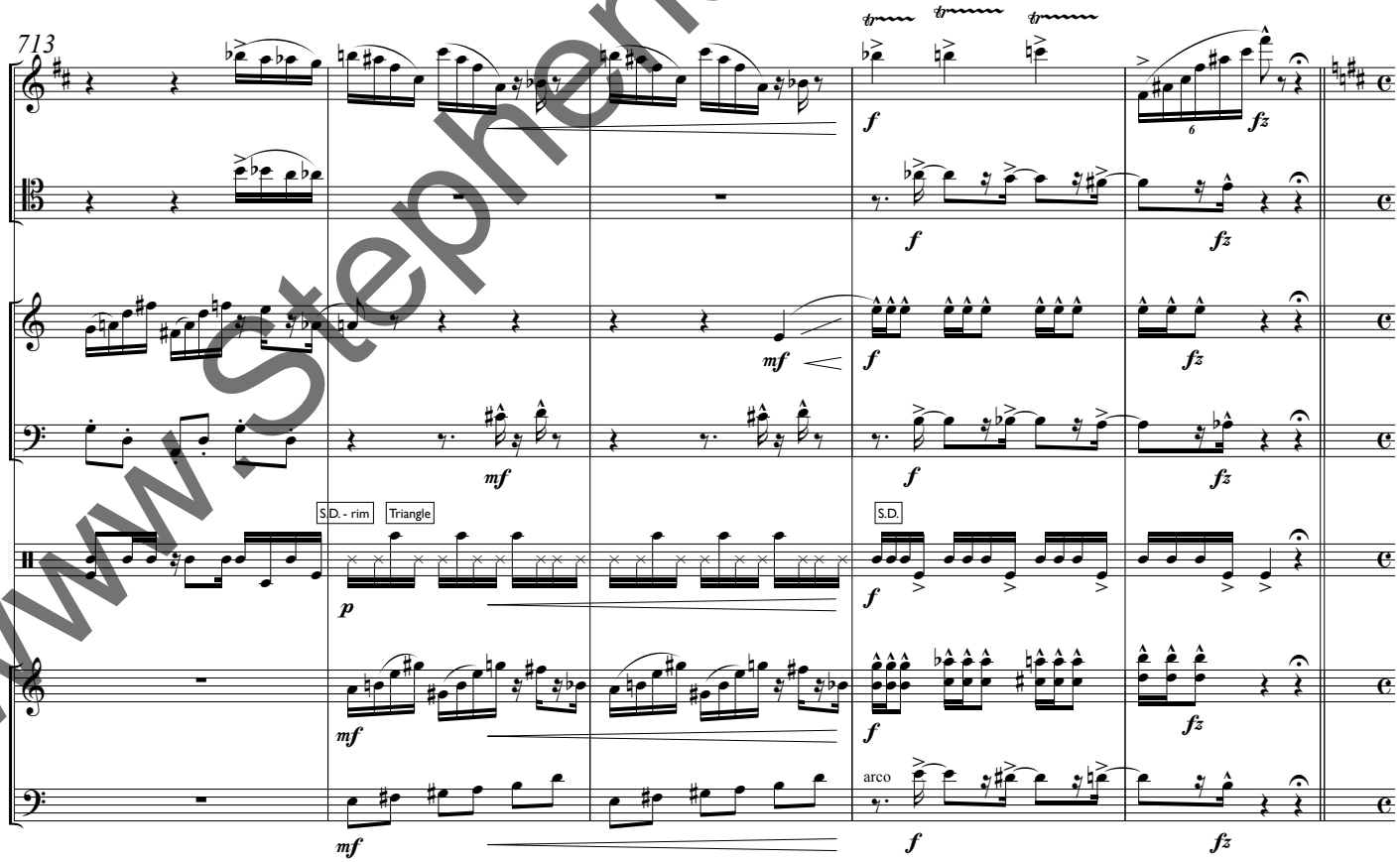


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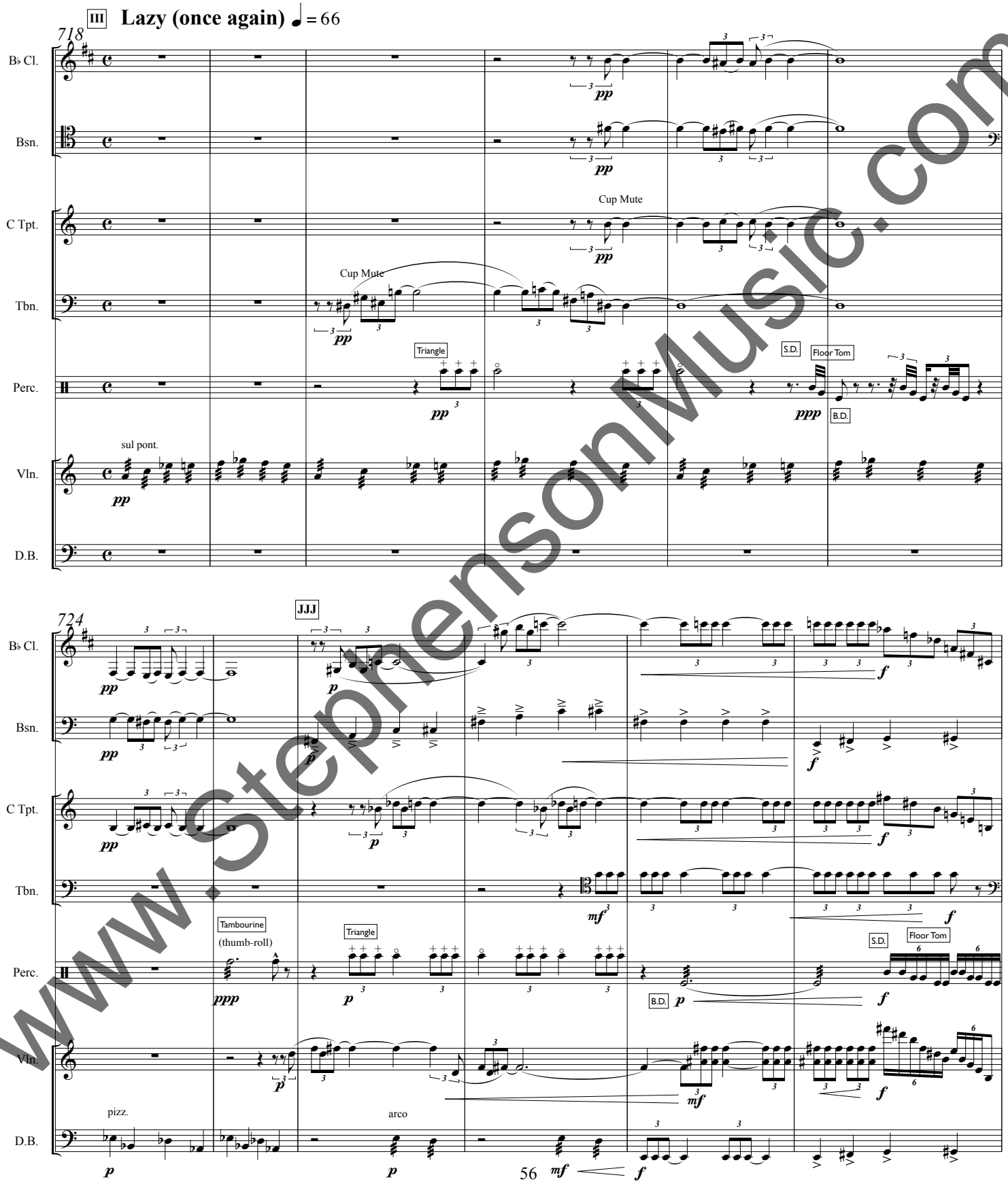
[*Narrator speaks over music*]
Narrator: It is again time for the show. Joe and Hannah are nervous,
Hannah on-stage, Joe, in the pit below.

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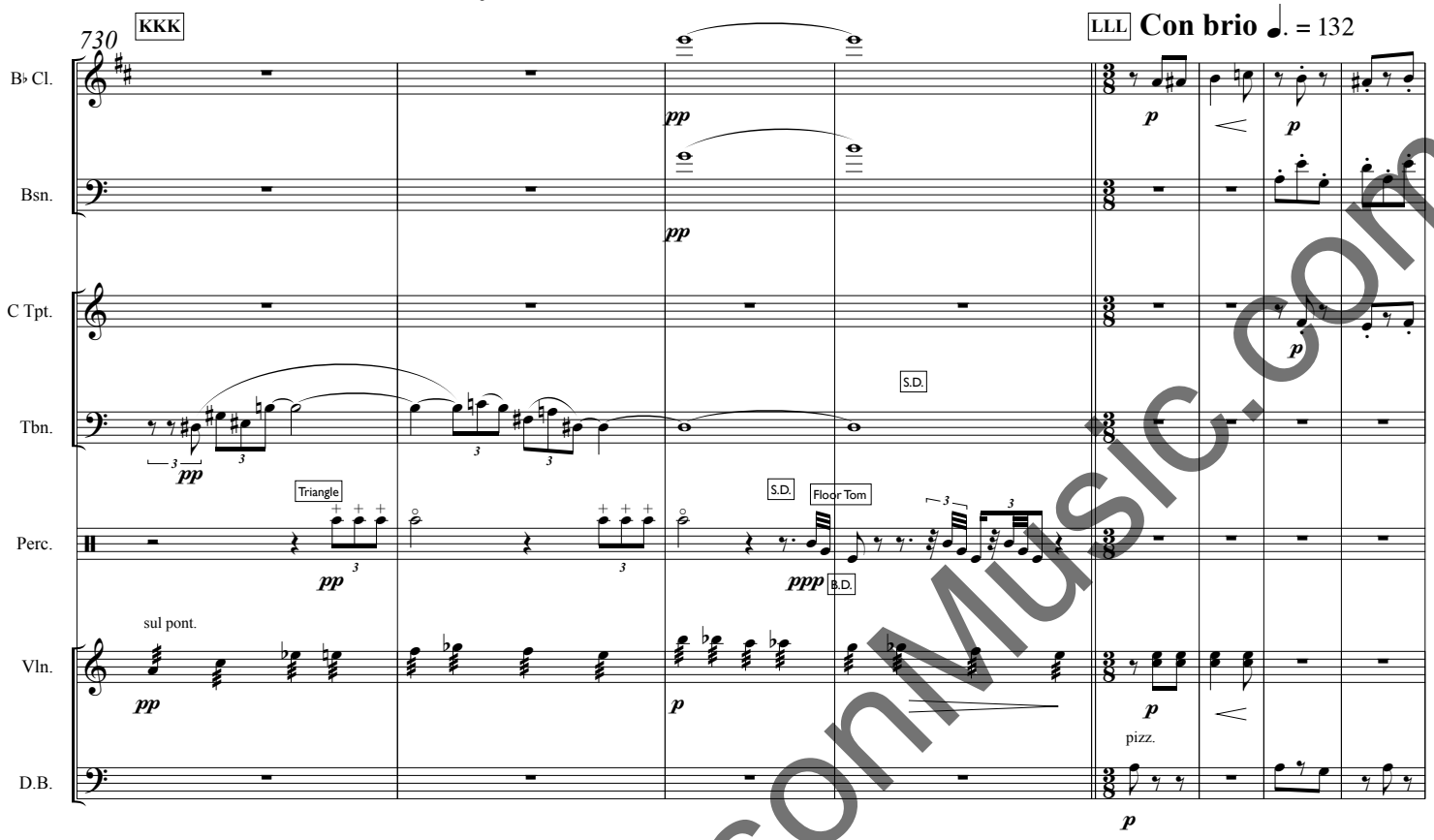
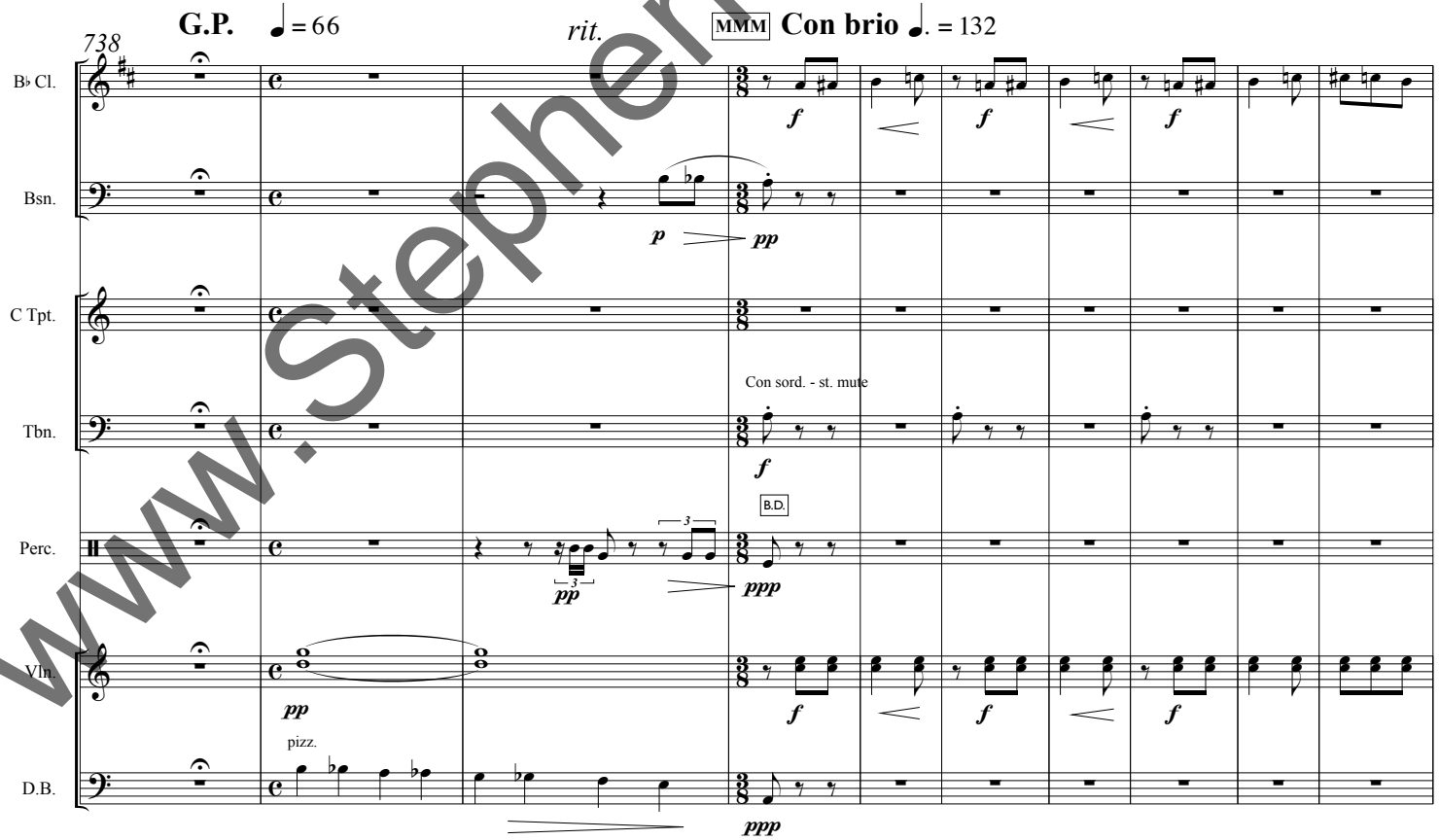
There can be no mistake; more than just two careers at stake.




Joe is getting anxious in his seat; so far Hannah's performance can't be beat. The pressure is much too great; Joe begins to hesitate...

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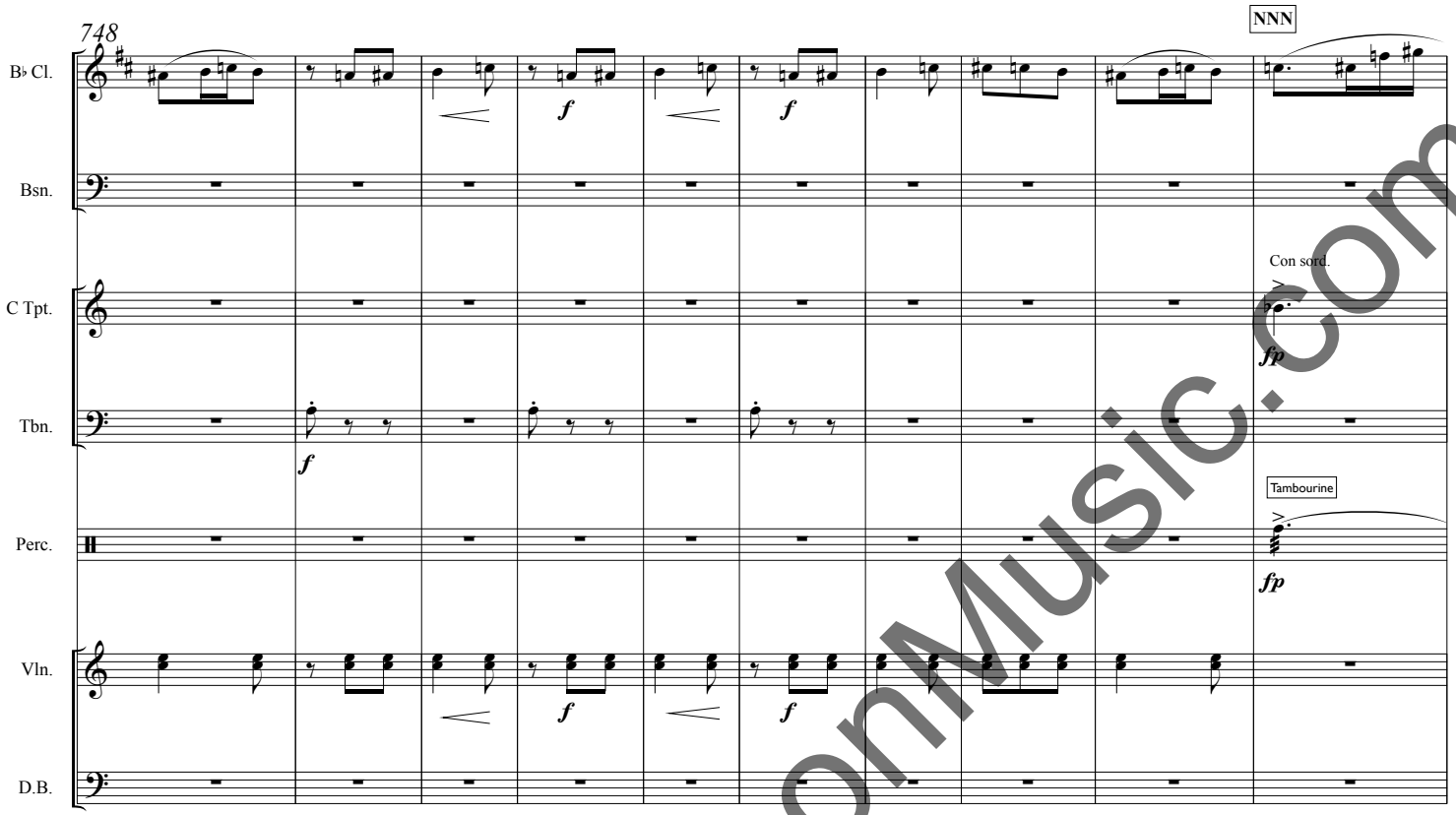


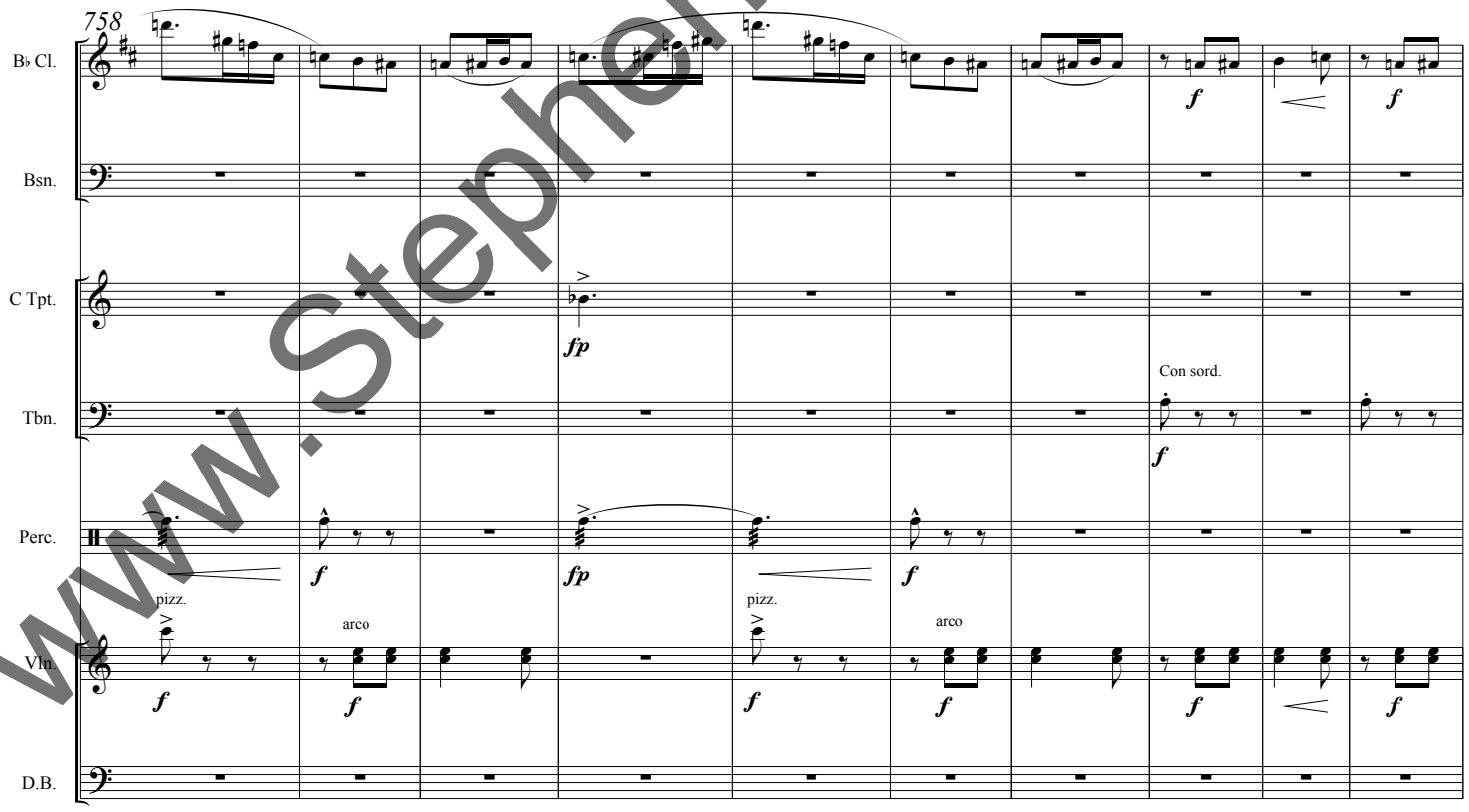


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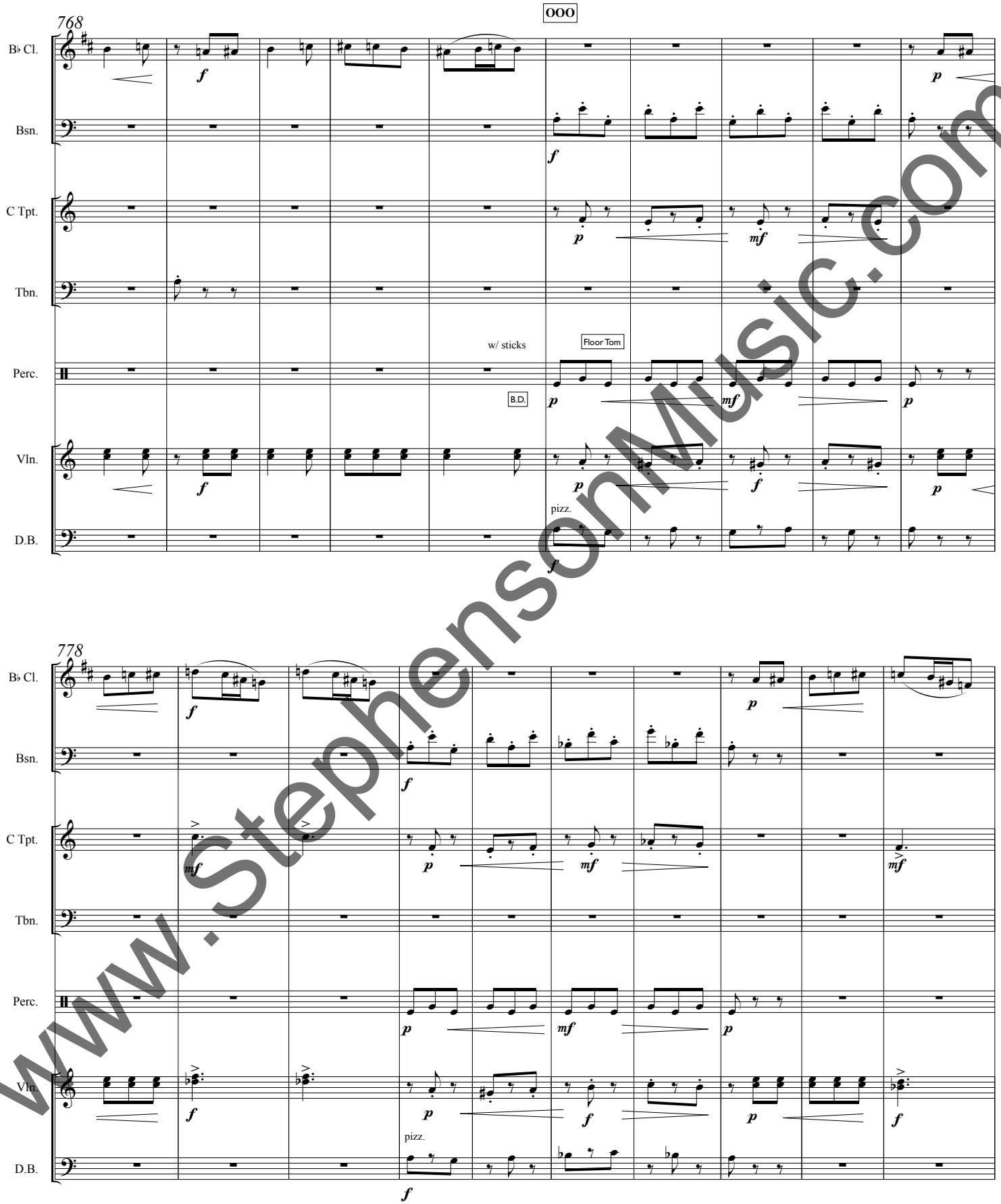


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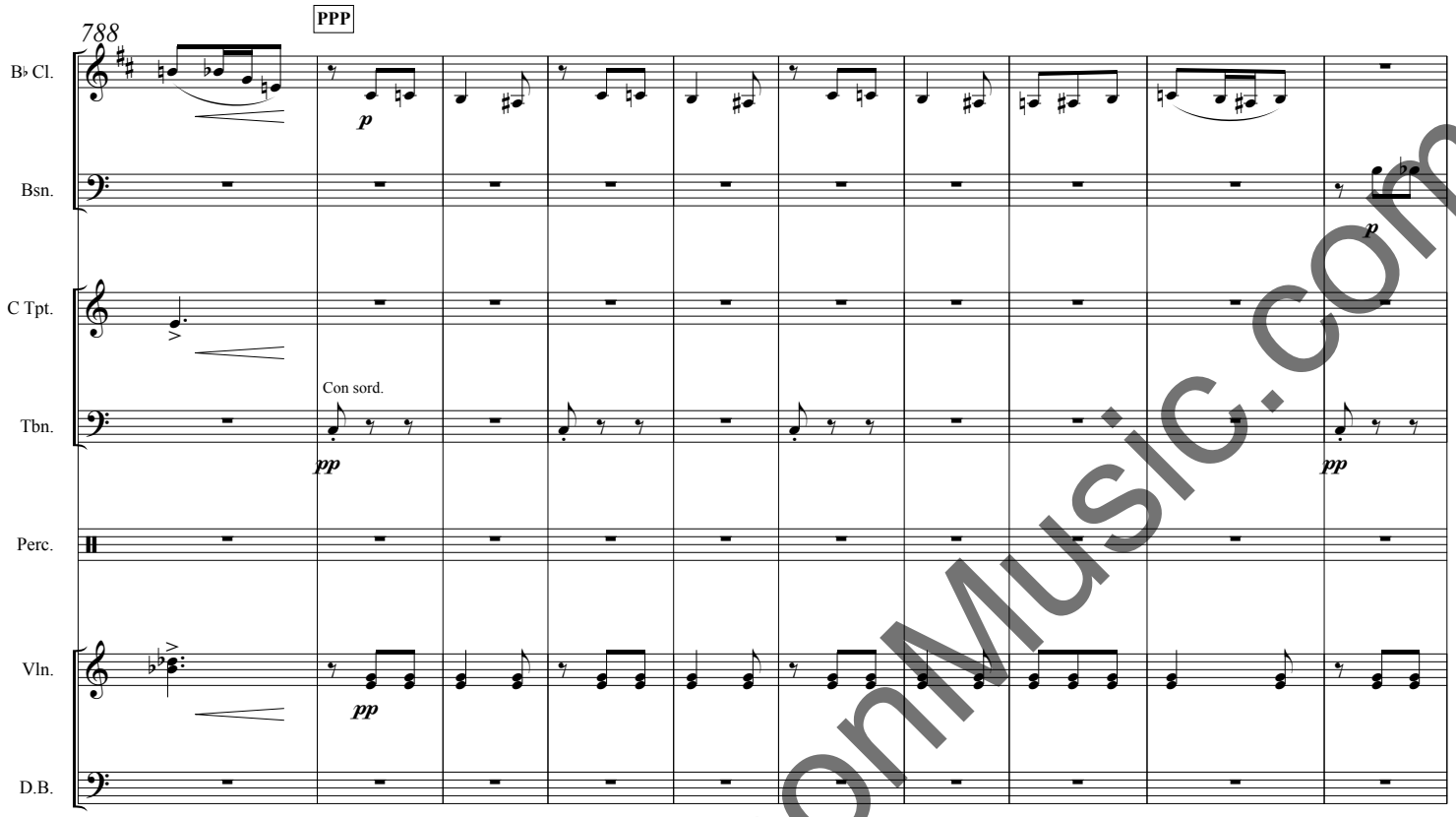


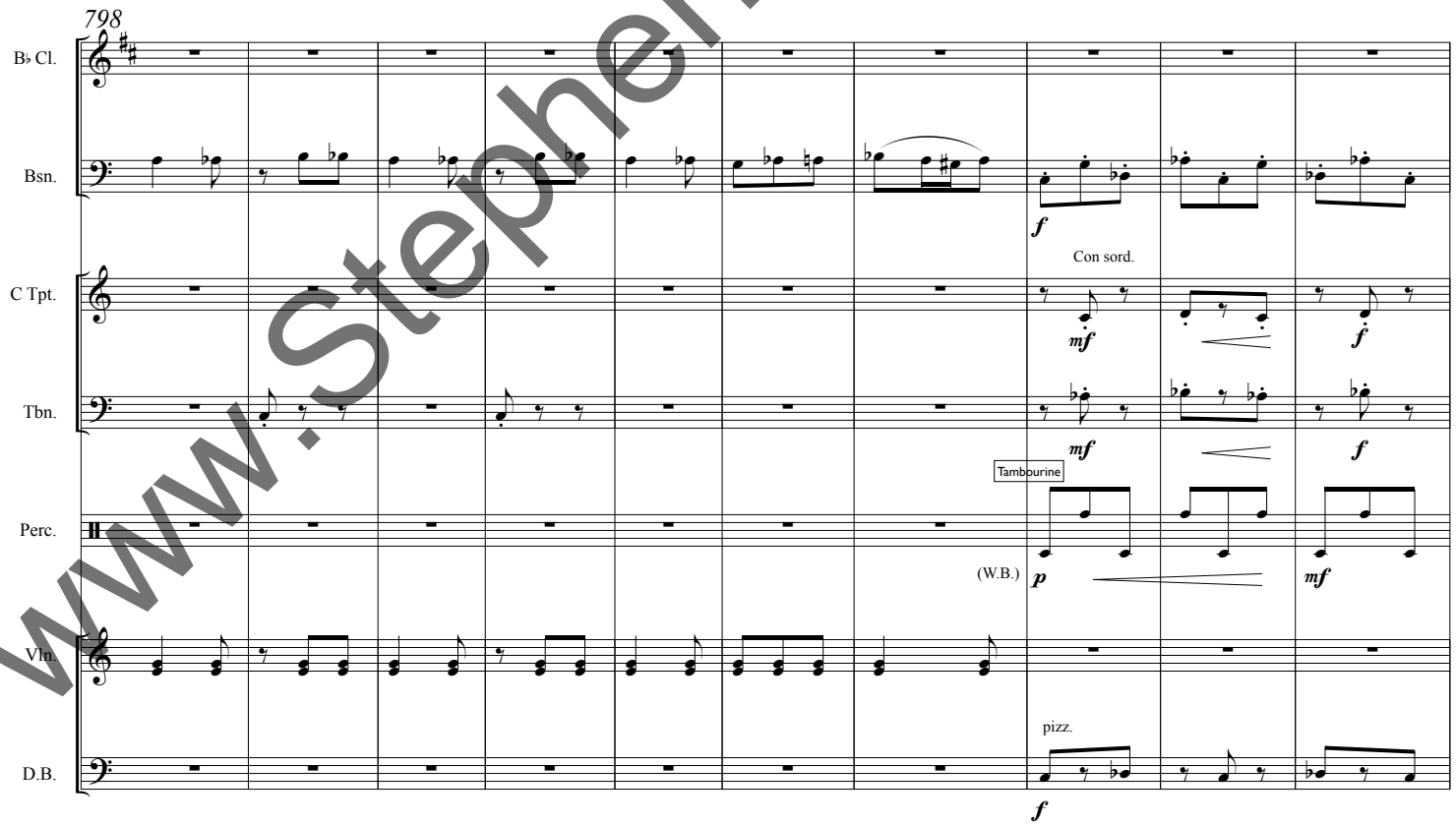


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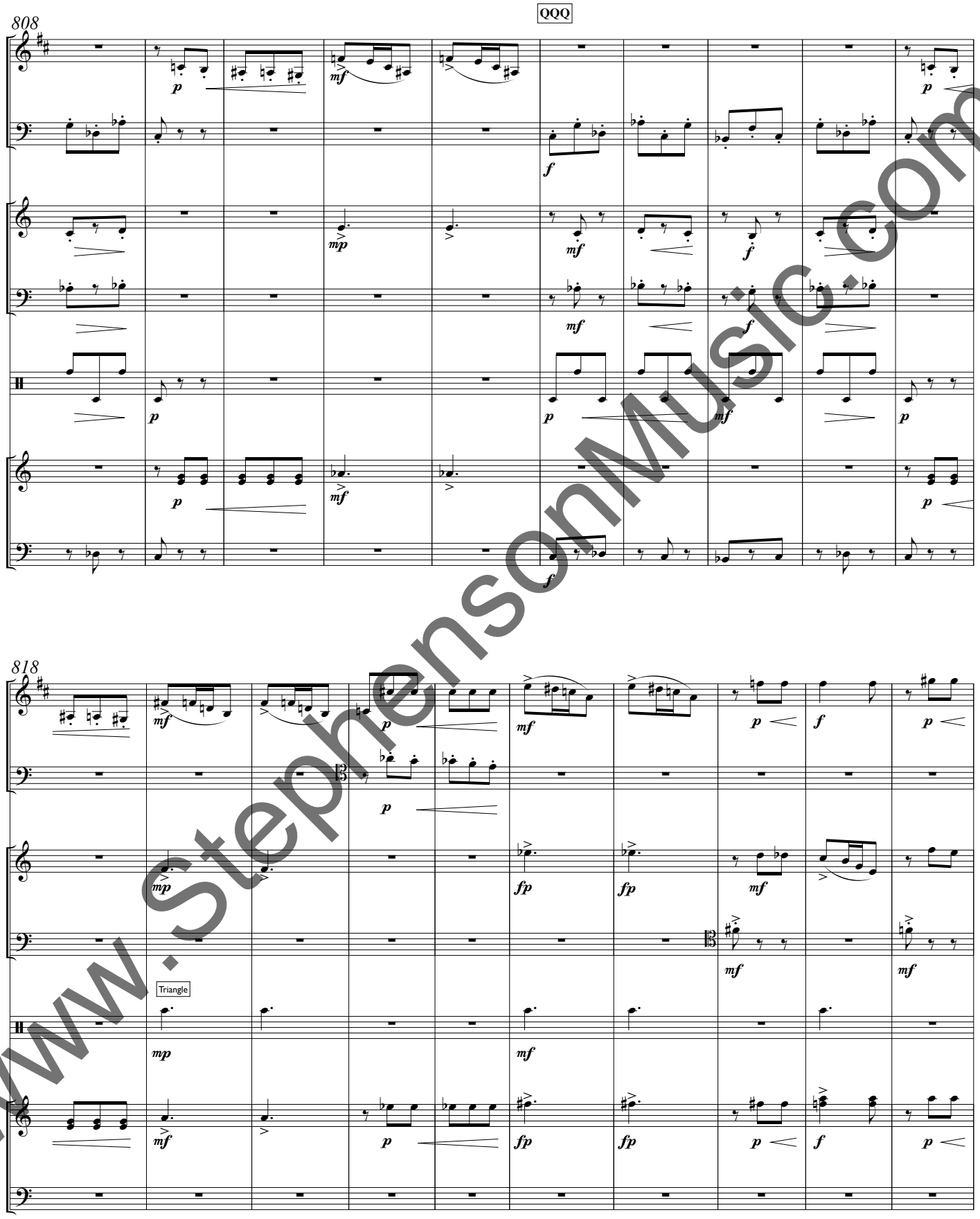


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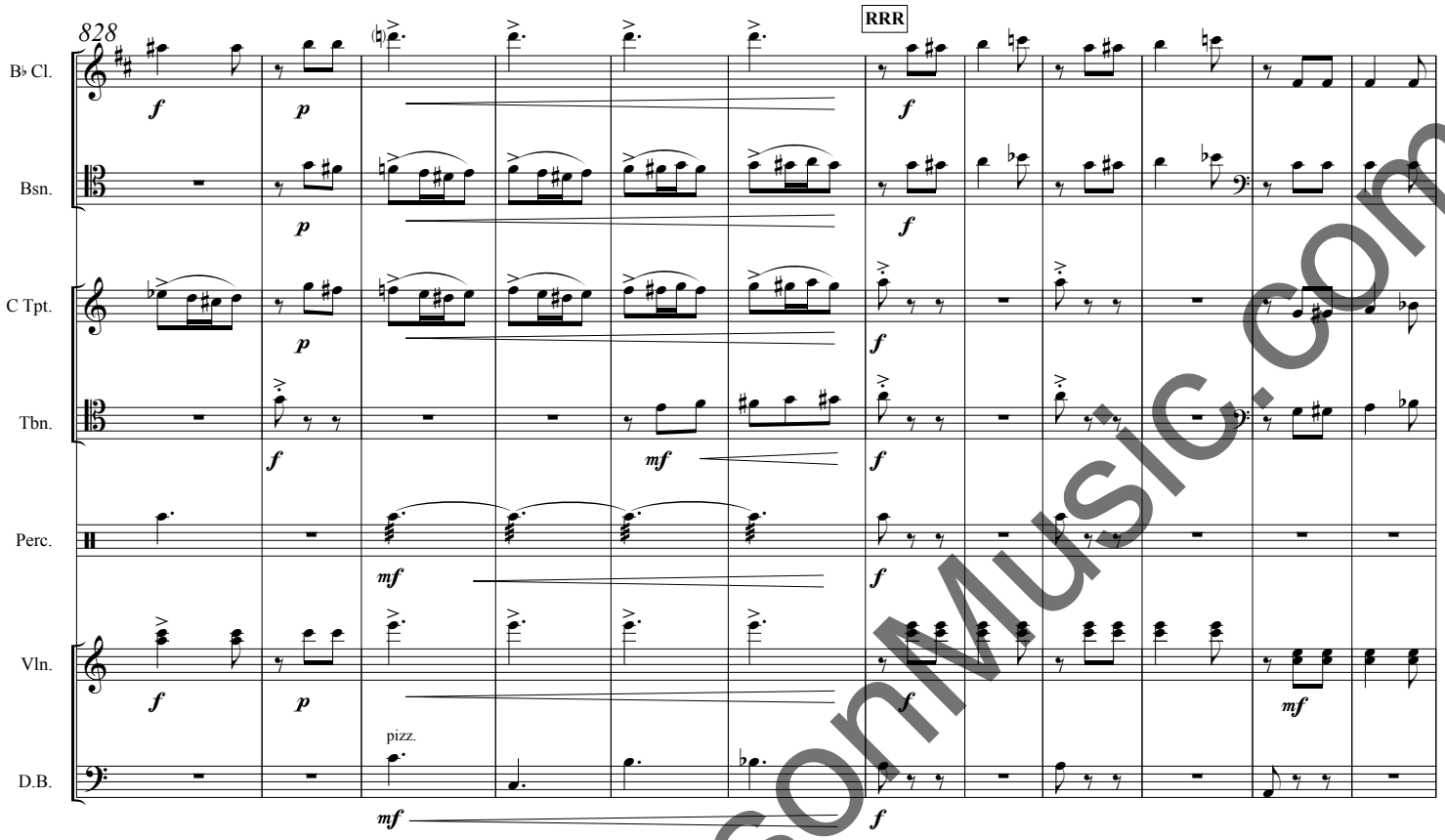


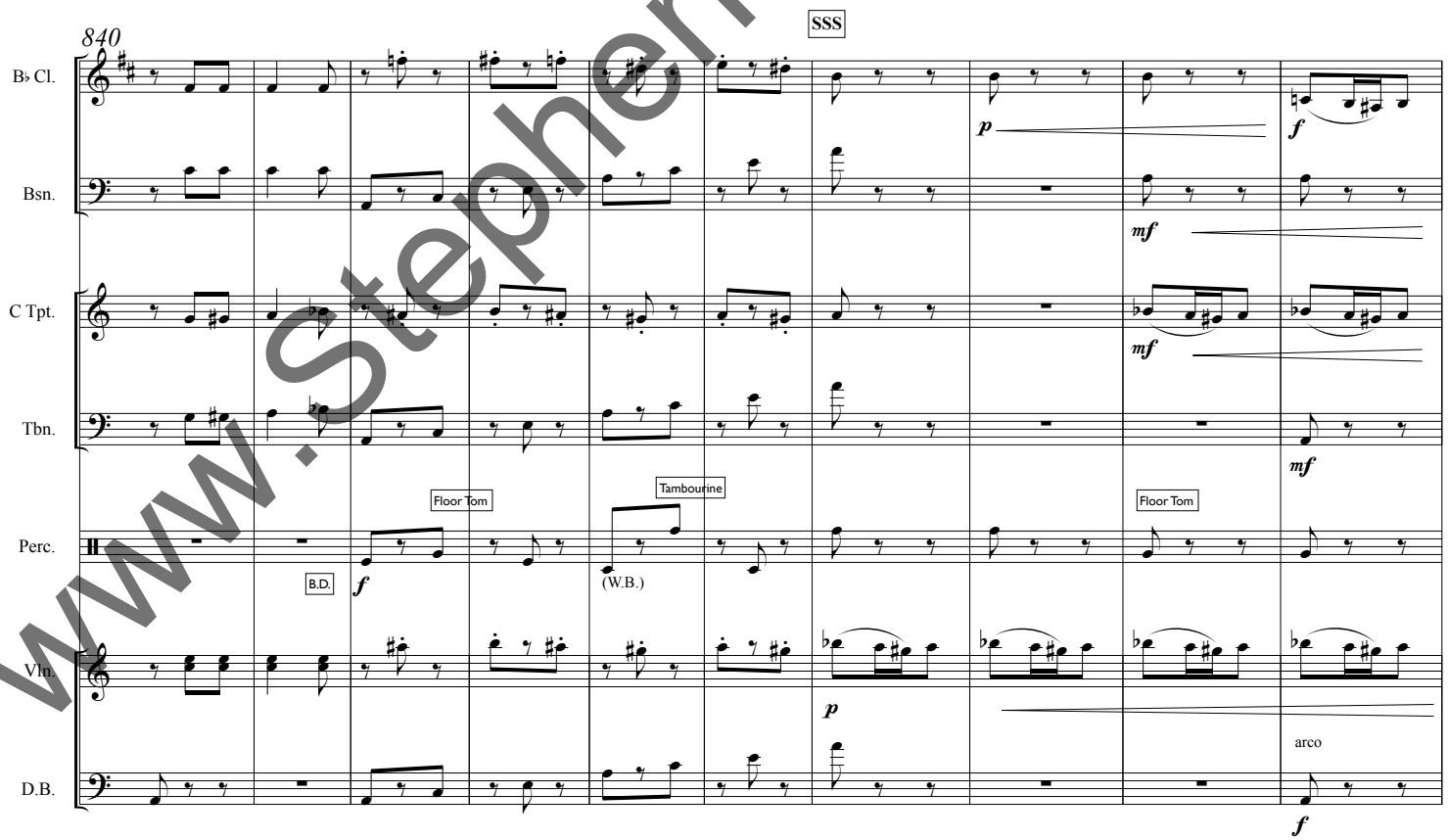


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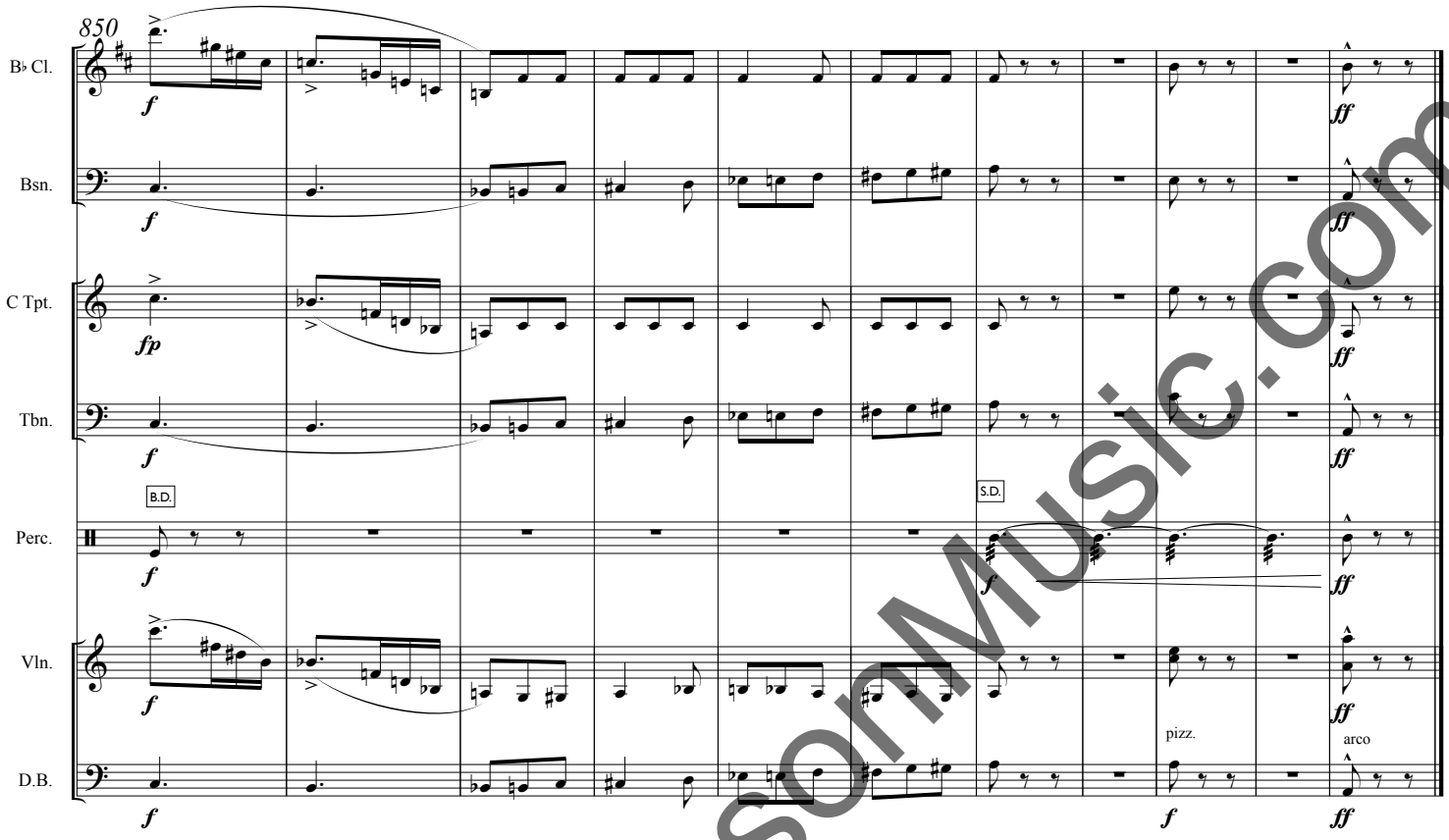


*on final jump, Hannah falls to the ground in 'agony'...*

Narrator: Hannah falls, hurt, and is carried off stage. Sam runs to find them, afterward, enraged.
But Joe finds Sam first, Joe acting in despair, while Hannah sits nearby, crutches against a chair.

(Joe): (*quietly*) Congratulations. Hannah is all yours. I'll pack my bags, we've settled all scores.

(Sam): (*angrily*) Are you kidding? She can't dance anymore! She's no good. Take her. Get out the door!
Quick. Take her back to that awful place, that I don't know what: Tulsa: night life, gin, a slut.

Narrator: He motions toward Hannah, on the final word. Hannah is obviously offended at what she overheard.
But Joe grabs her, and they run out of the hall. Hannah leaves her crutches behind, no sign of a limp at all.
Sam, realizing he's been tricked, by something even he couldn't predict,
begins to devise a scheme, realizing things aren't always as easy as they seem.

**TAG: After final text: "*things aren't always as they seem.*"**
**REPEAT rehearsal RRR to end.**

**END - PART I**

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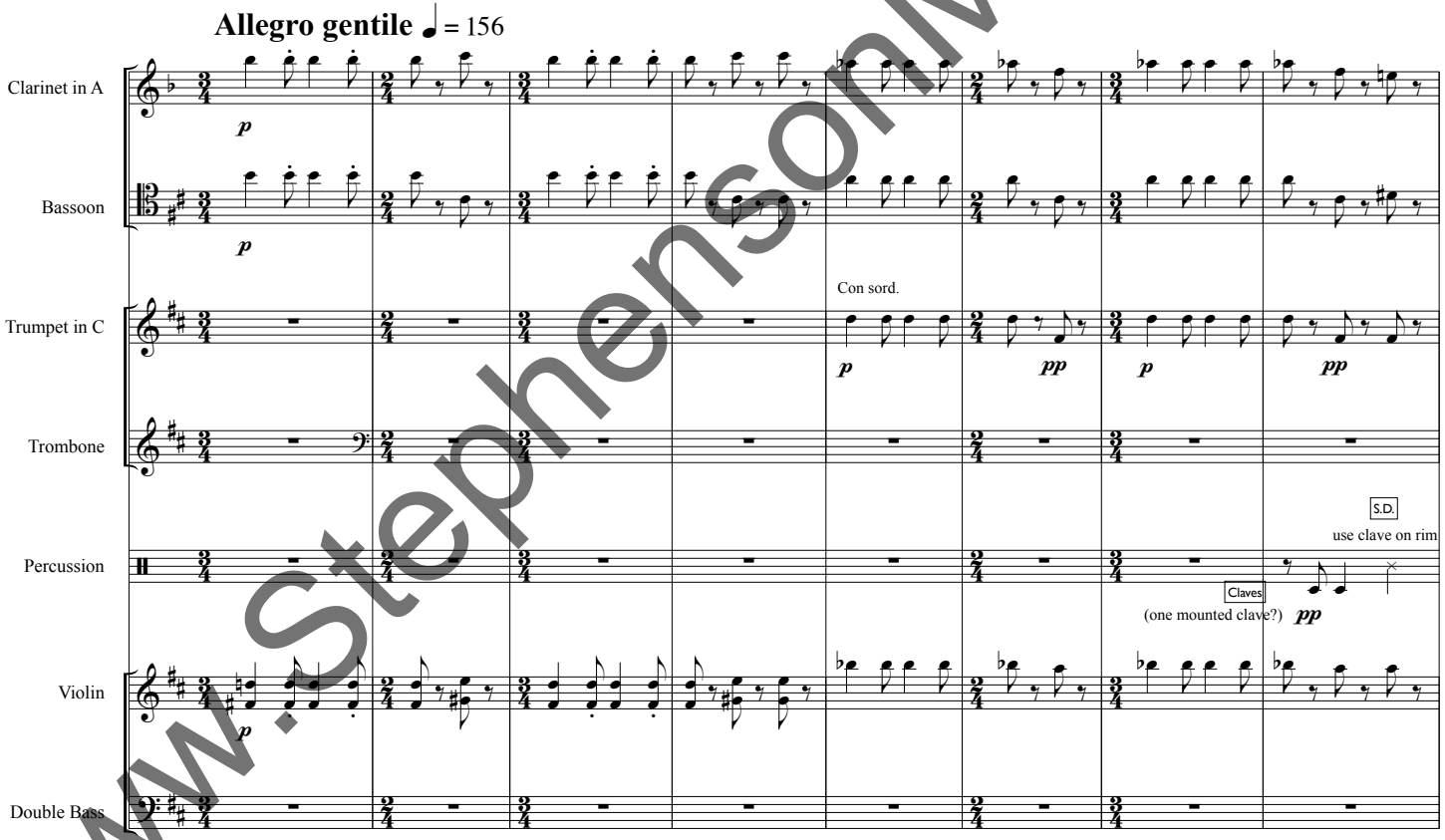
# The Devil's Tale
# Part II

Narrator: Tulsa, Oklahoma. It's the holidays. Time has passed, things have progressed a ways.
There is a small store-front, decorated in holiday decor. The store has a sign: "Lucy's Fur".
Joe and Hannah are walking downtown; Hannah humming loudly, happy at the new life they've found.

## VIII. Devil Never Even Lived

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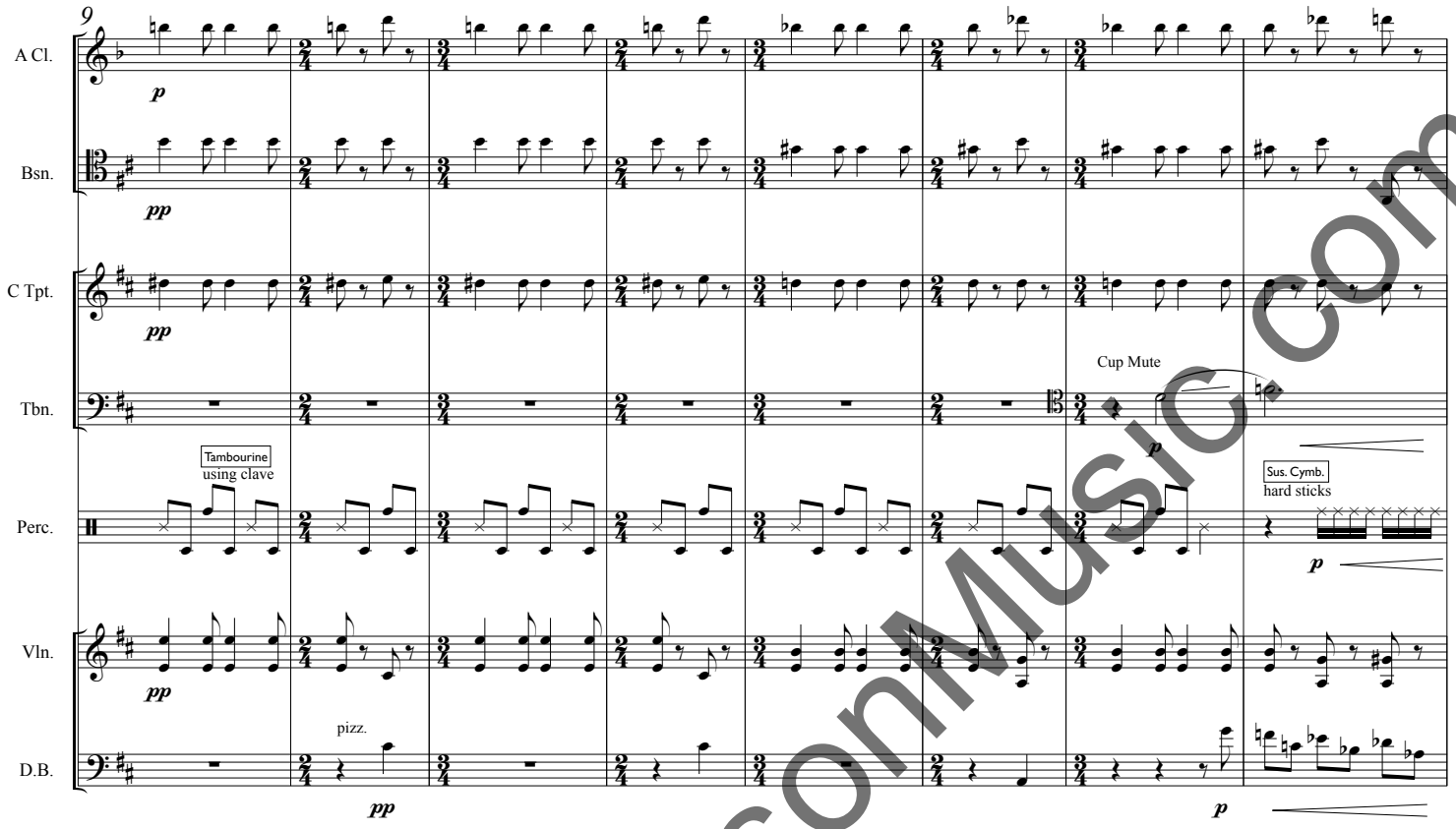


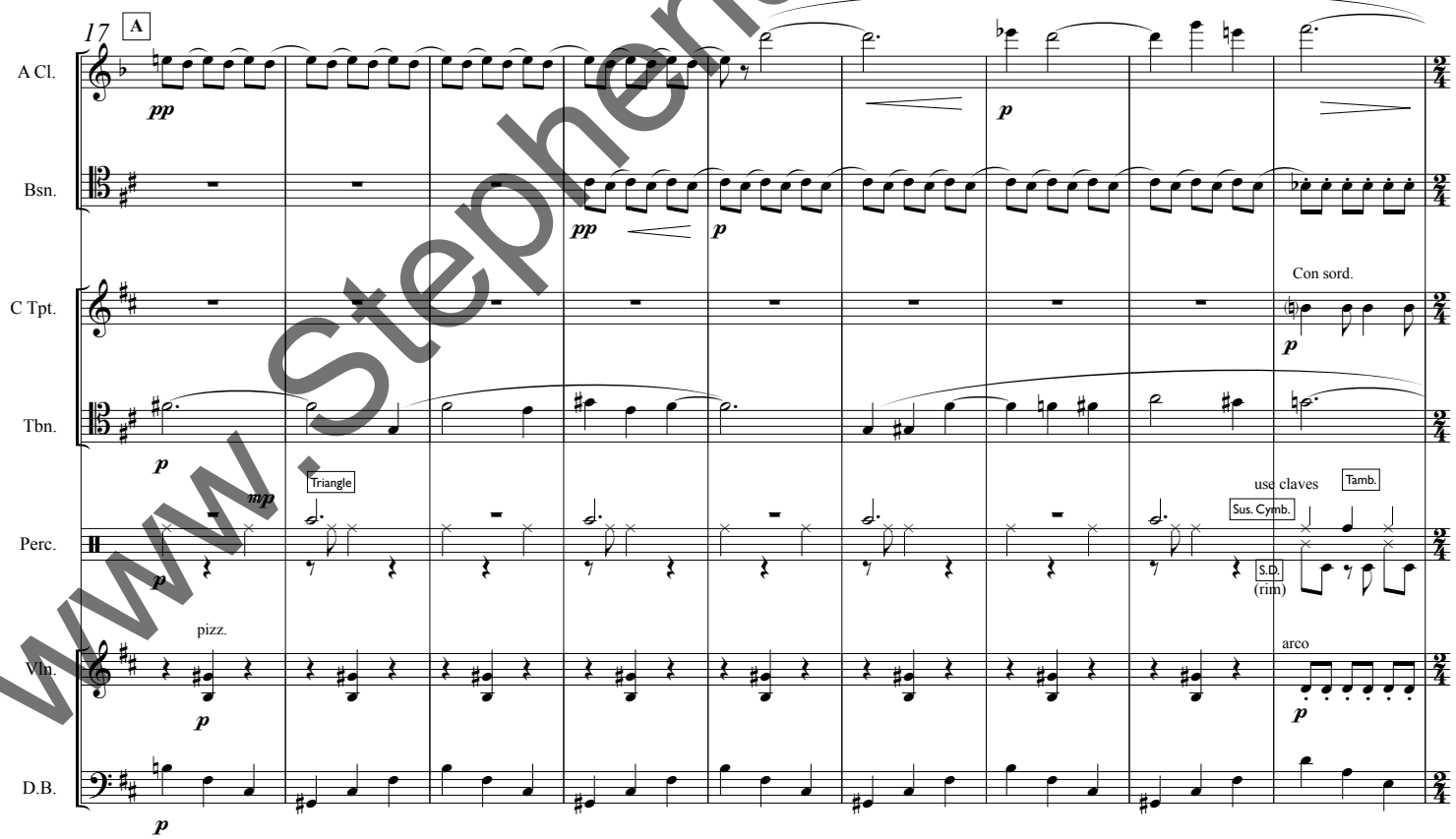


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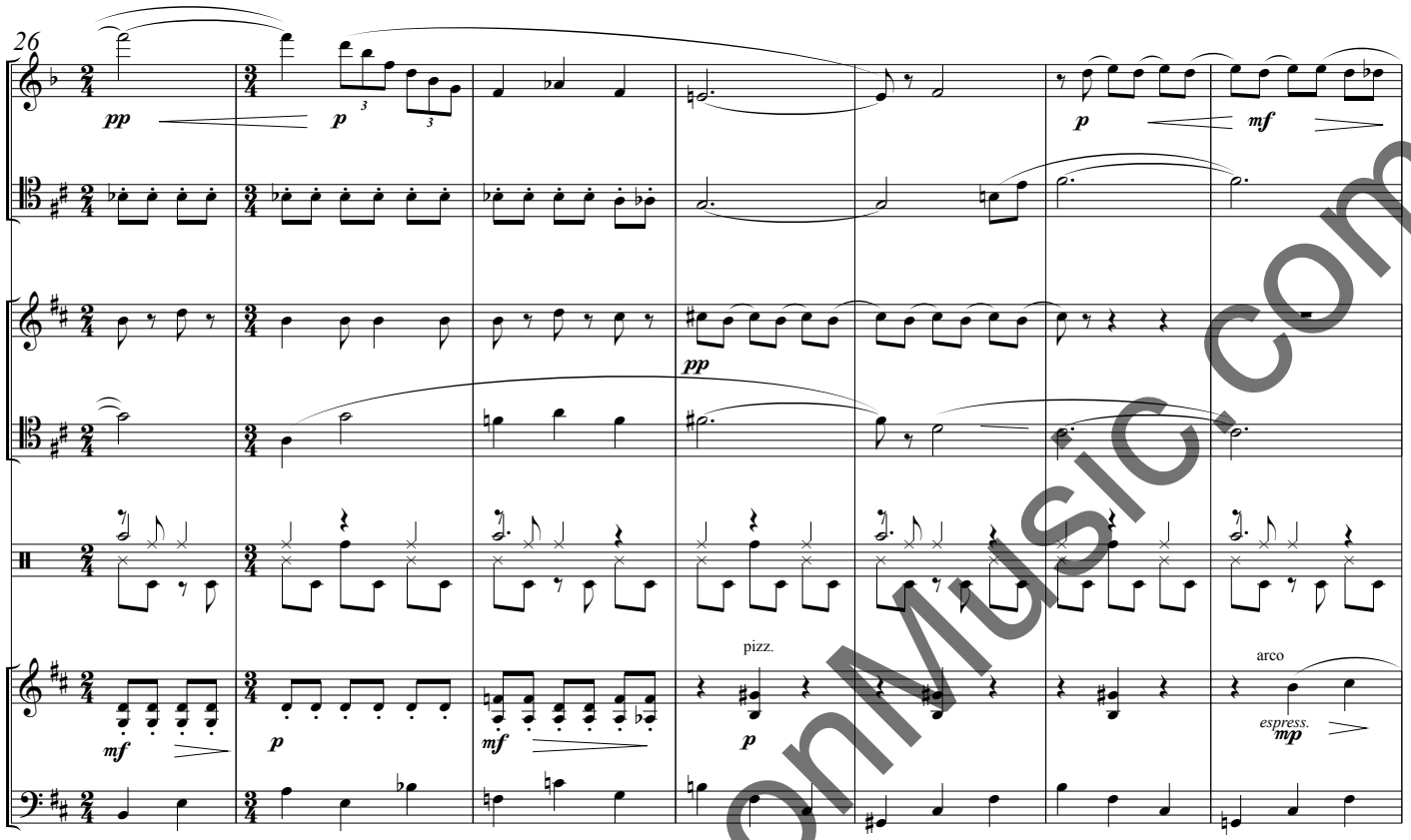


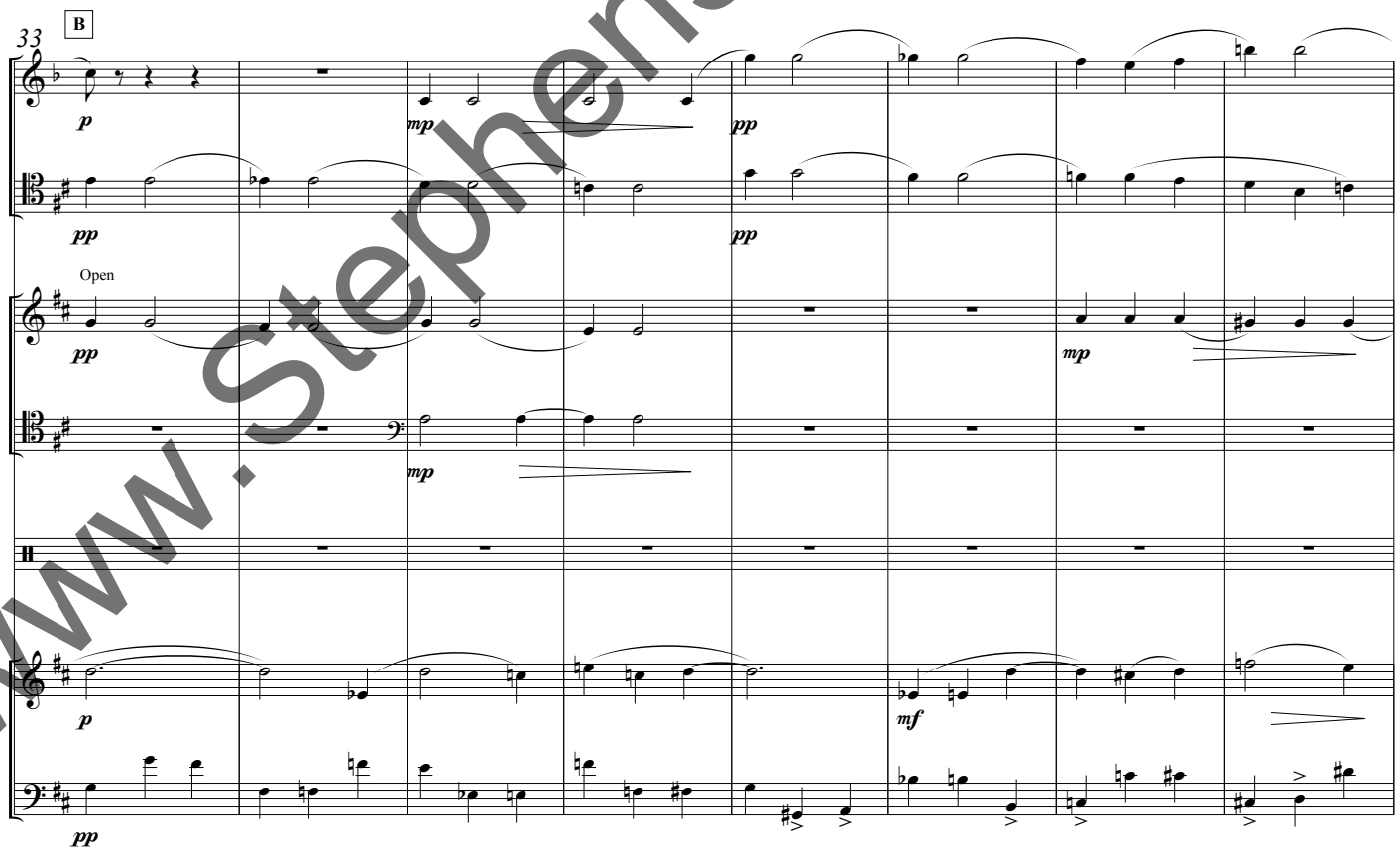


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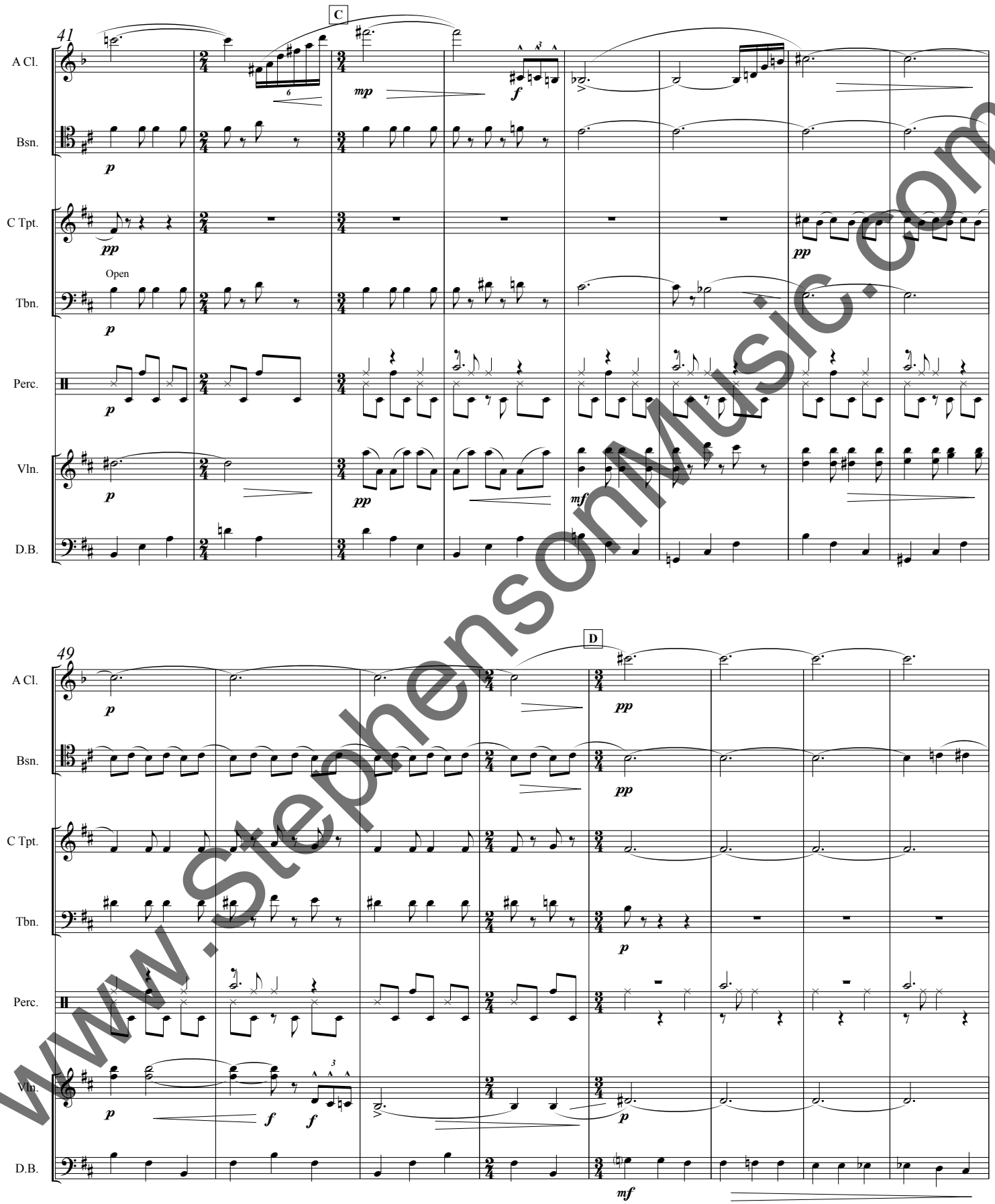


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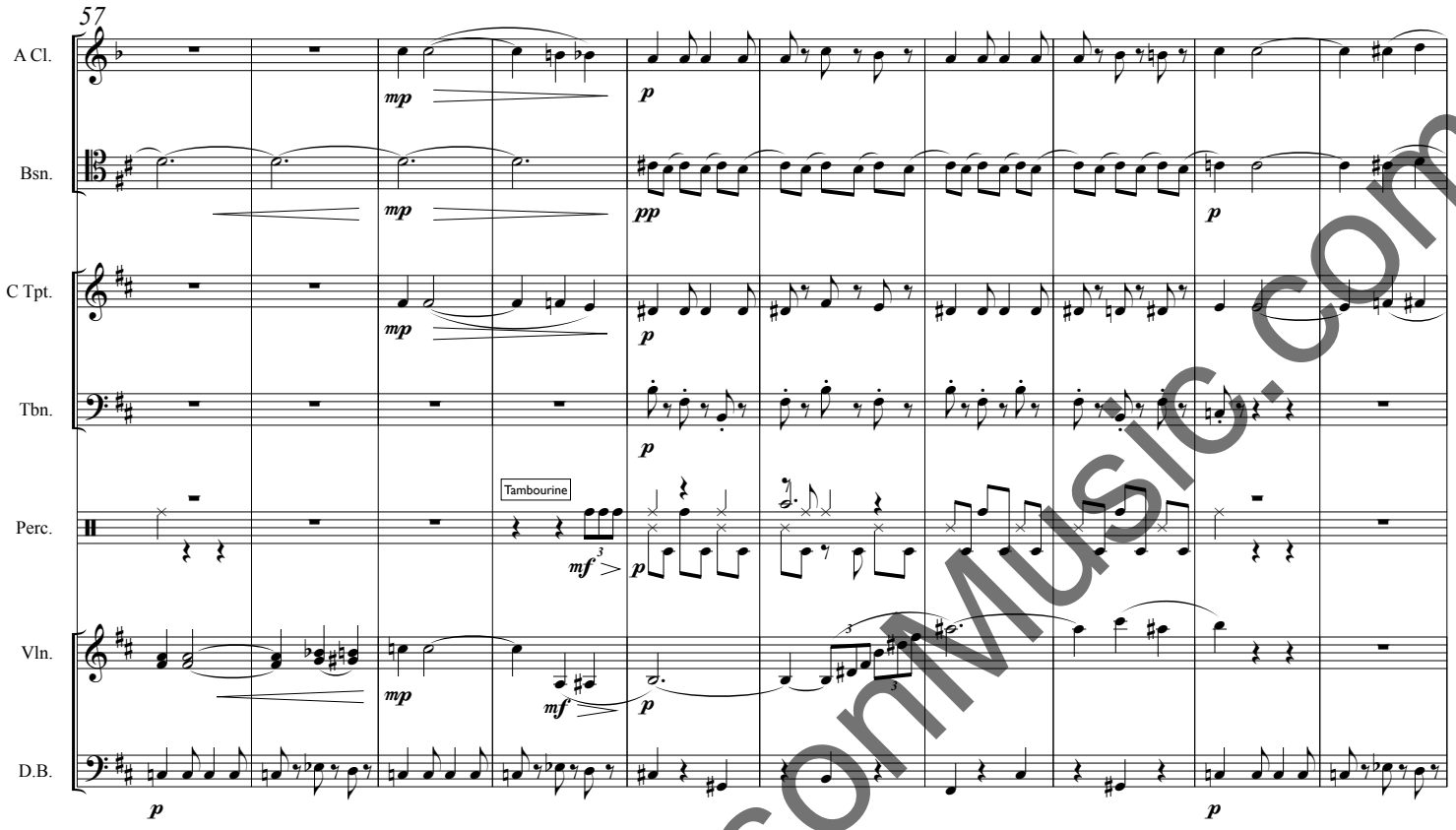


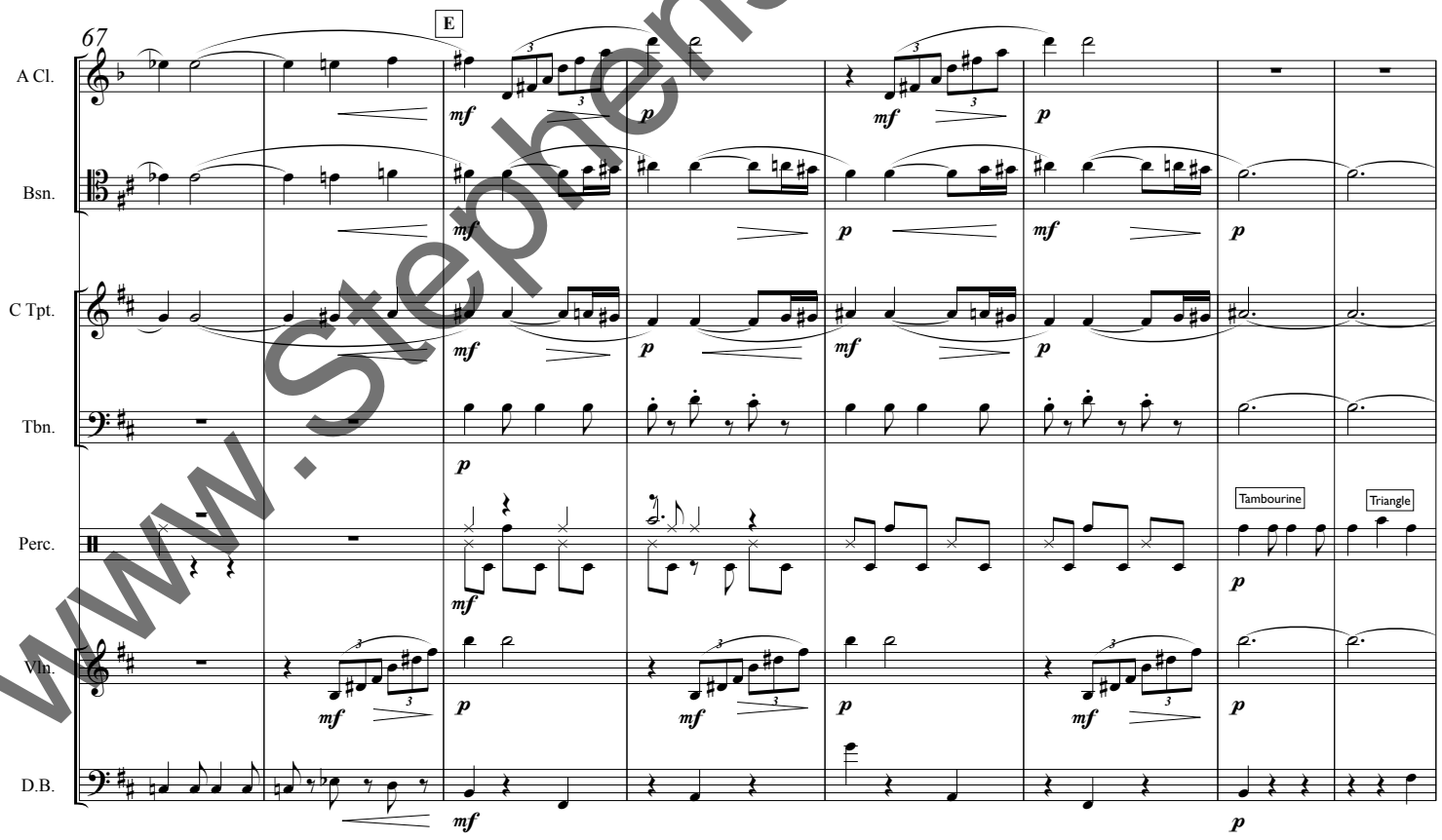


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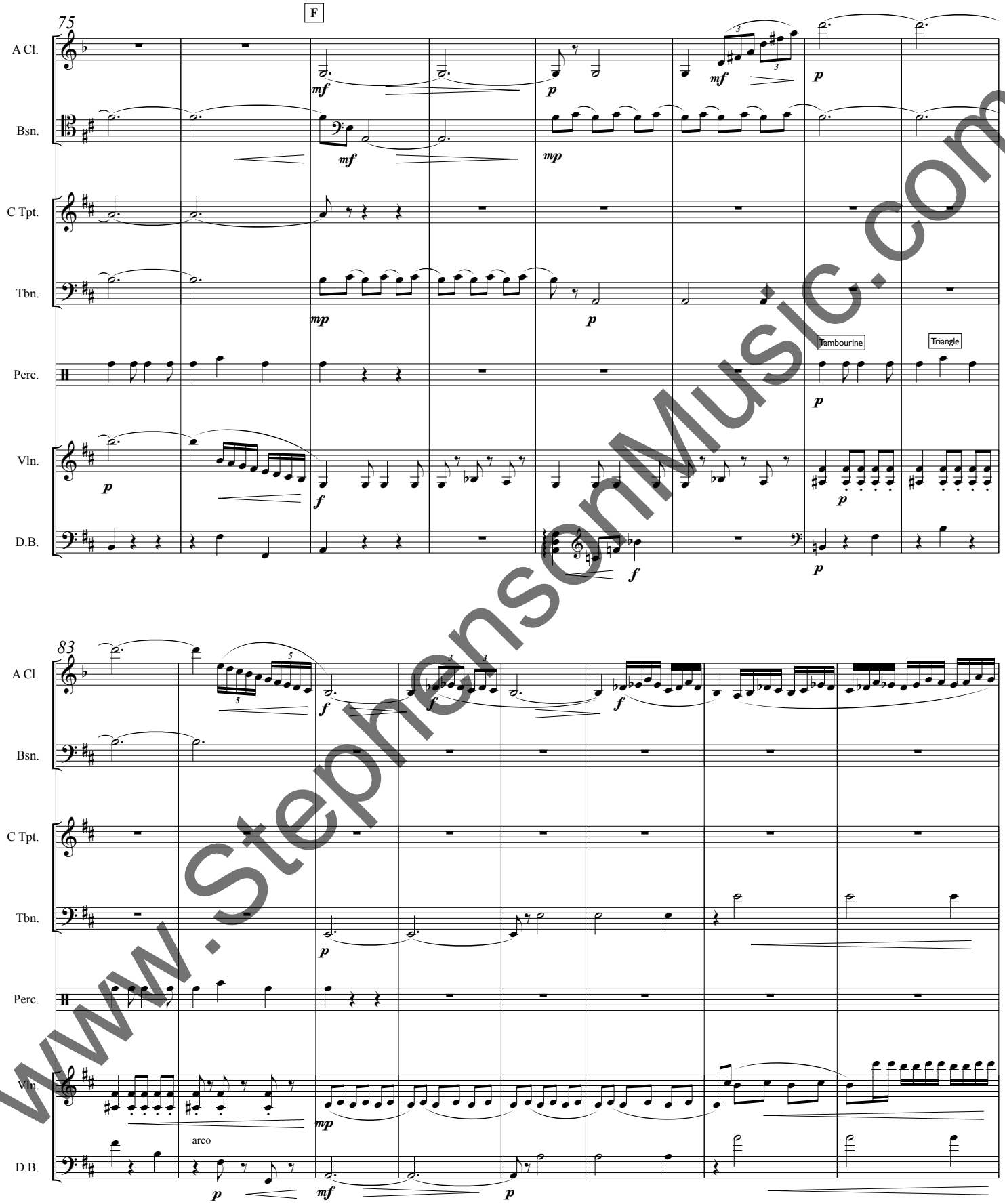


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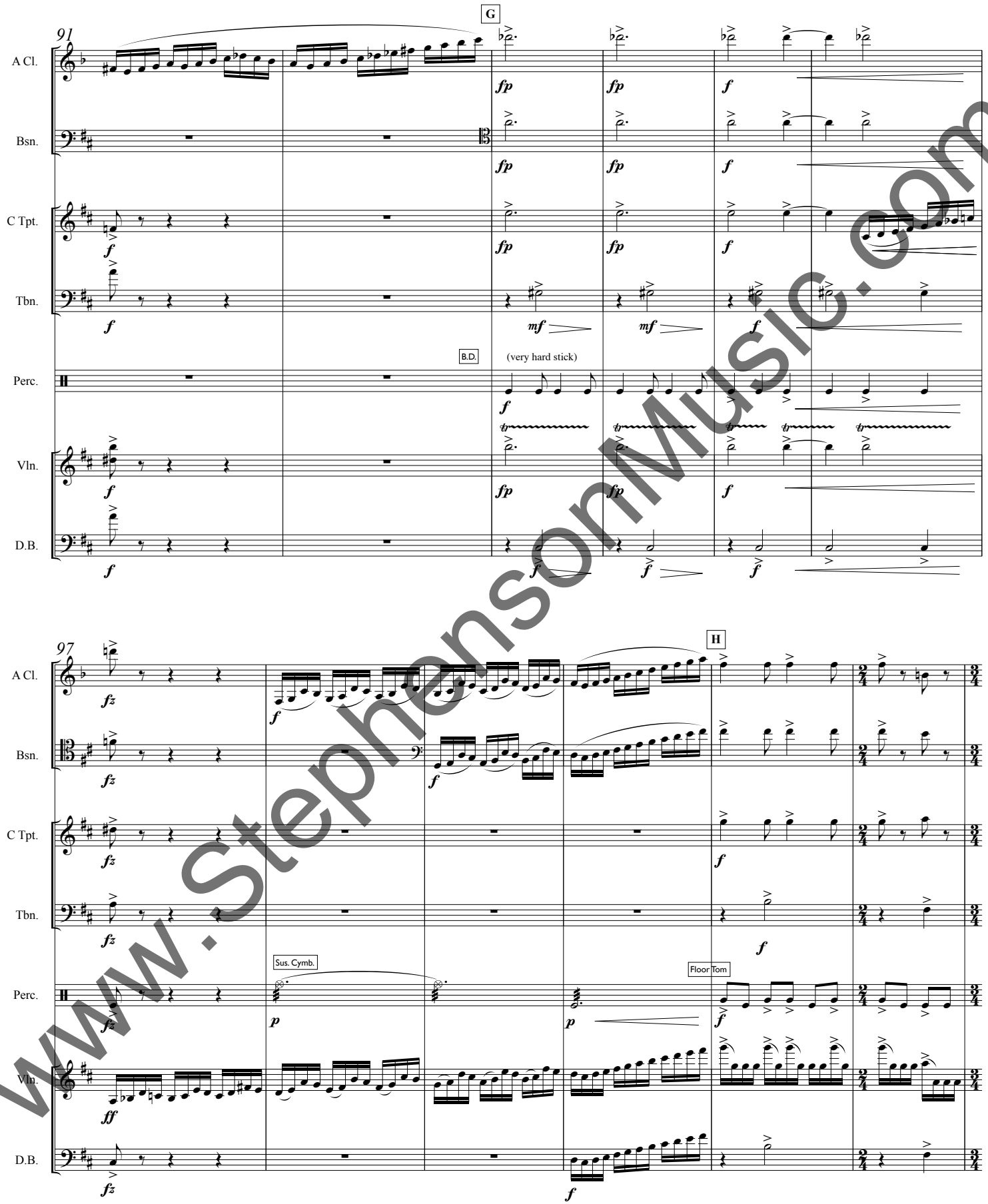


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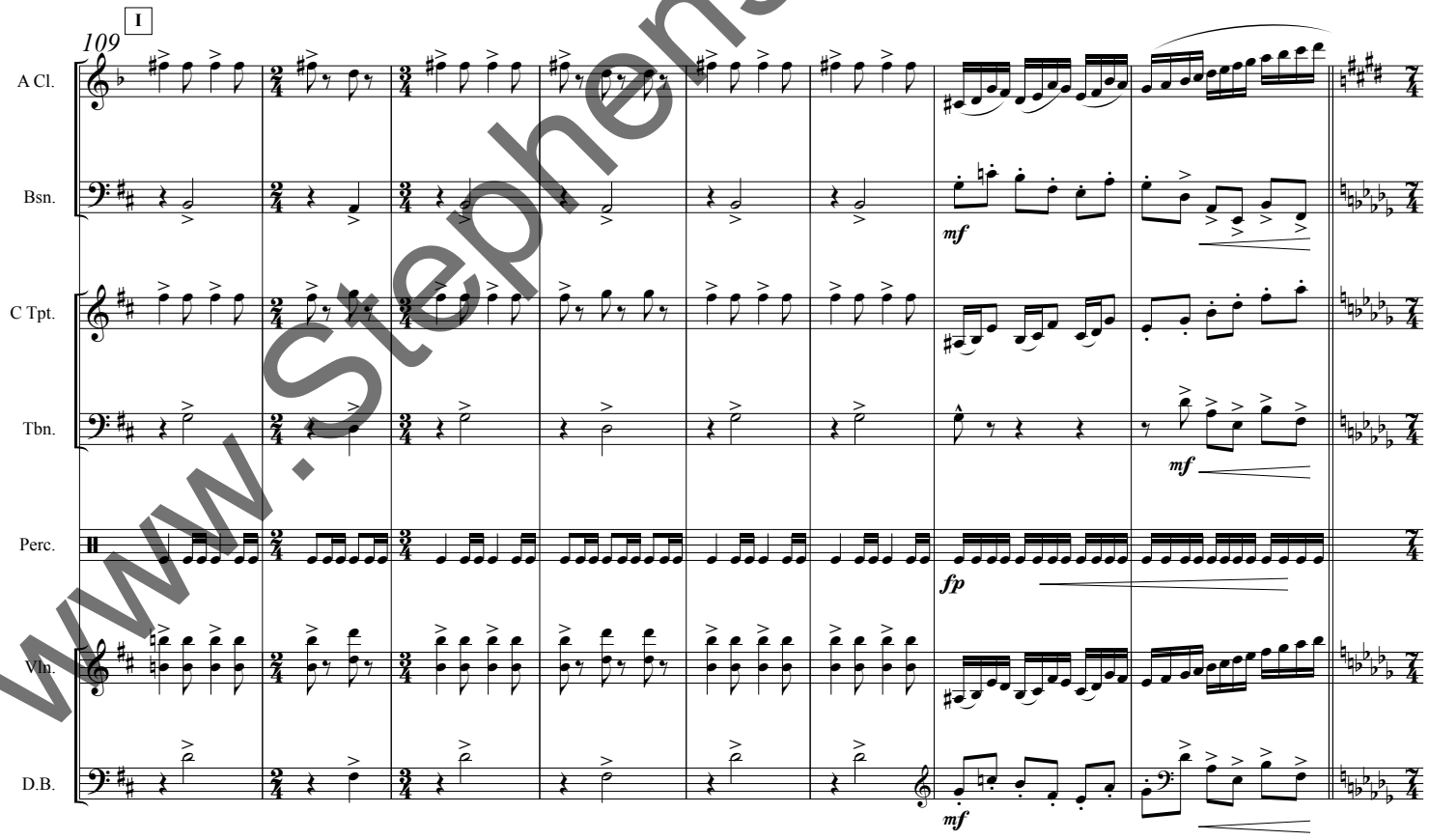


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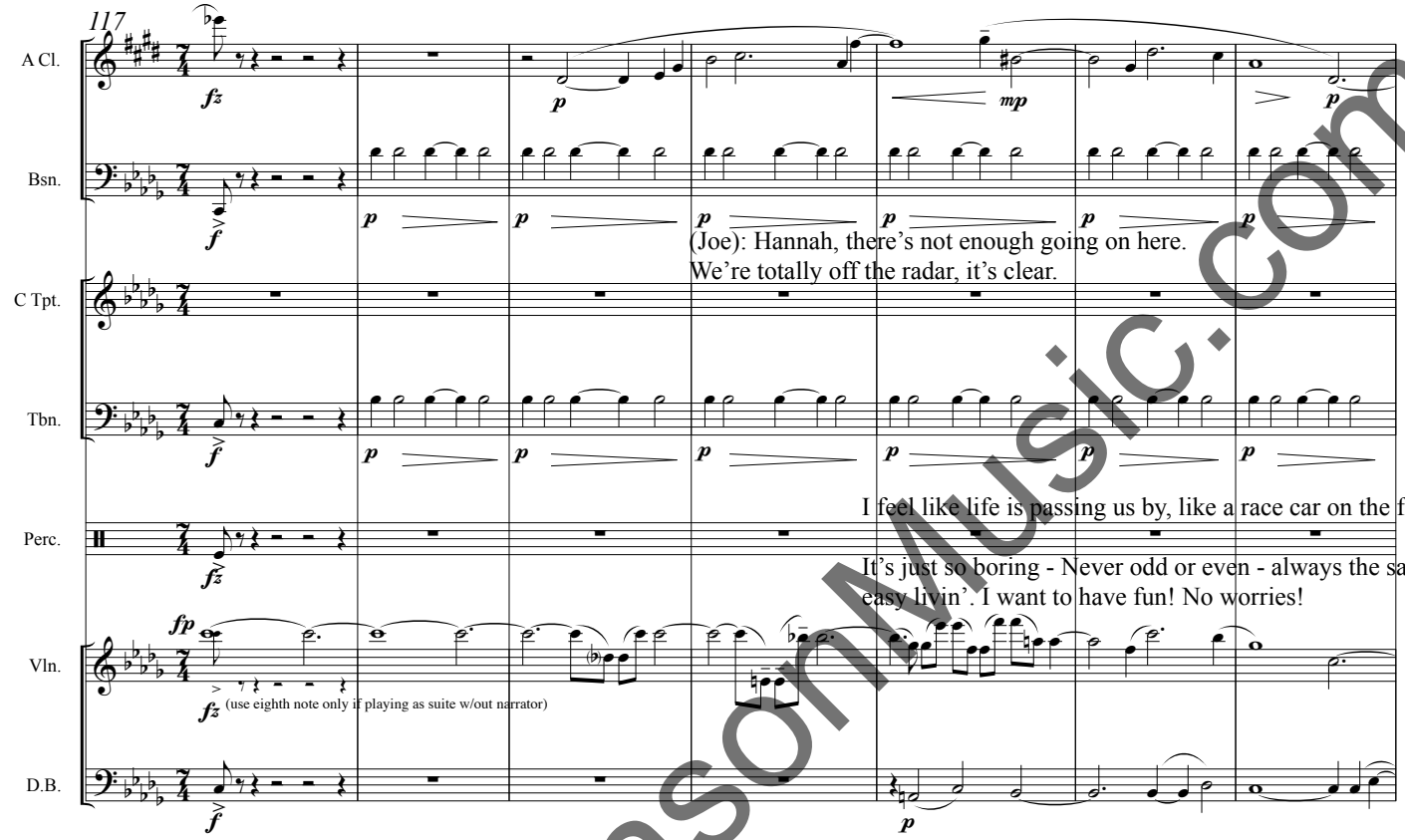
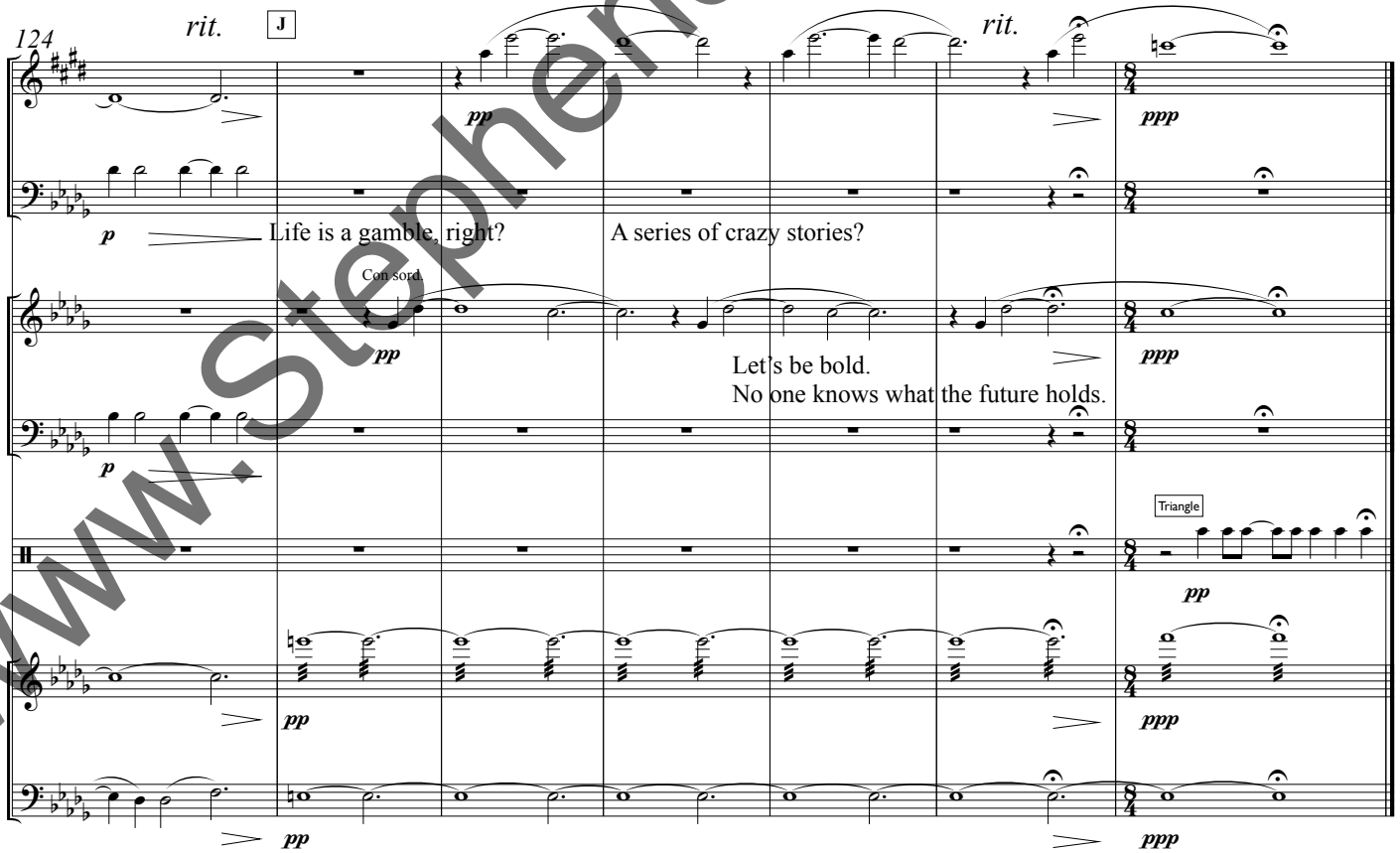
## IX. Seven Eves (reprise)

Narrator: (*during music*) a travel ad for Vegas sits in the glass pane.
Joe looks at it, and begins to miss life in the fast lane.

**Andante** ♩ = 84 **(suggested: 4+3)**

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Narrator: Sam is now disguised as a woman peddler, dismissed at first by the couple as a crazy heckler.
'He' tries to sell Hannah some furs; she dismisses them, they show no allure. But then Sam offers something of note:
"With this fur purchase, two free tickets to Vegas" was the quote.
This is too much for Joe, he talks Hannah into the fur; Hannah takes the tickets, and puts them in her purse.

(Joe): I need some coffee. I'll get you a cup too.
(*Narrator*: Sam and Hannah carry the transaction through. Joe returns, coffee in hand).

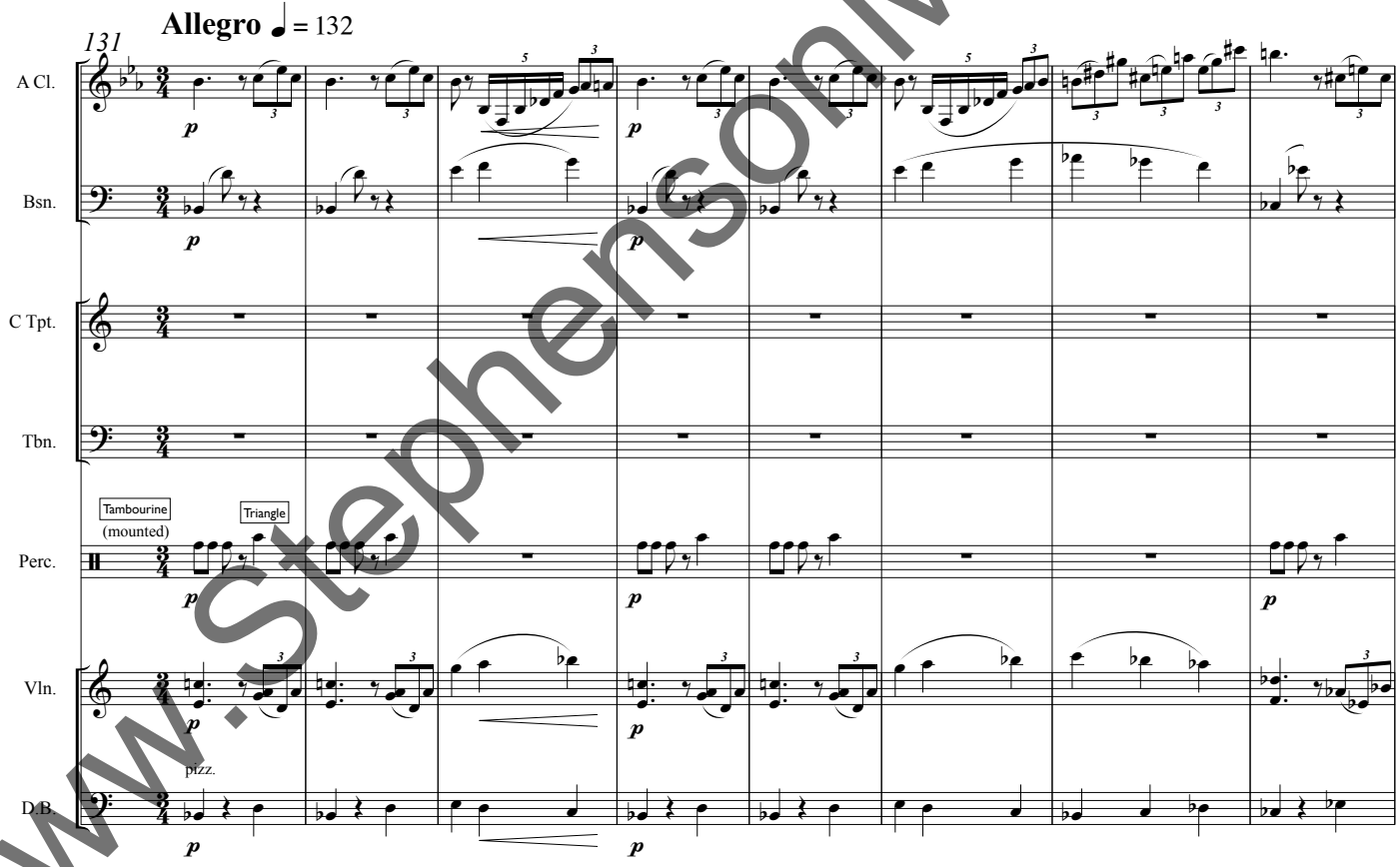
(Joe): Here you are honey, your favorite brand. (*Narrator*: Hannah, looking at the coffee, is obviously frustrated).

(Hannah): Did you forget, and get caffeinated? Joe, I can tell. (*turning to Sam*) Drinking this stuff is pure hell.
(*still to Sam*): You know the saying, to avoid trouble: "Lived on decaf, faced no devil"

Narrator: An argument ensues, and Sam leaves, smug with success, and content to deceive.
Joe also departs, to fix his mistake; Hannah is alone, and begins to think.

(Hannah): Maybe it is time, to try once again. I believe dancing still lies within.

## X. Never Odd or Even (reprise)

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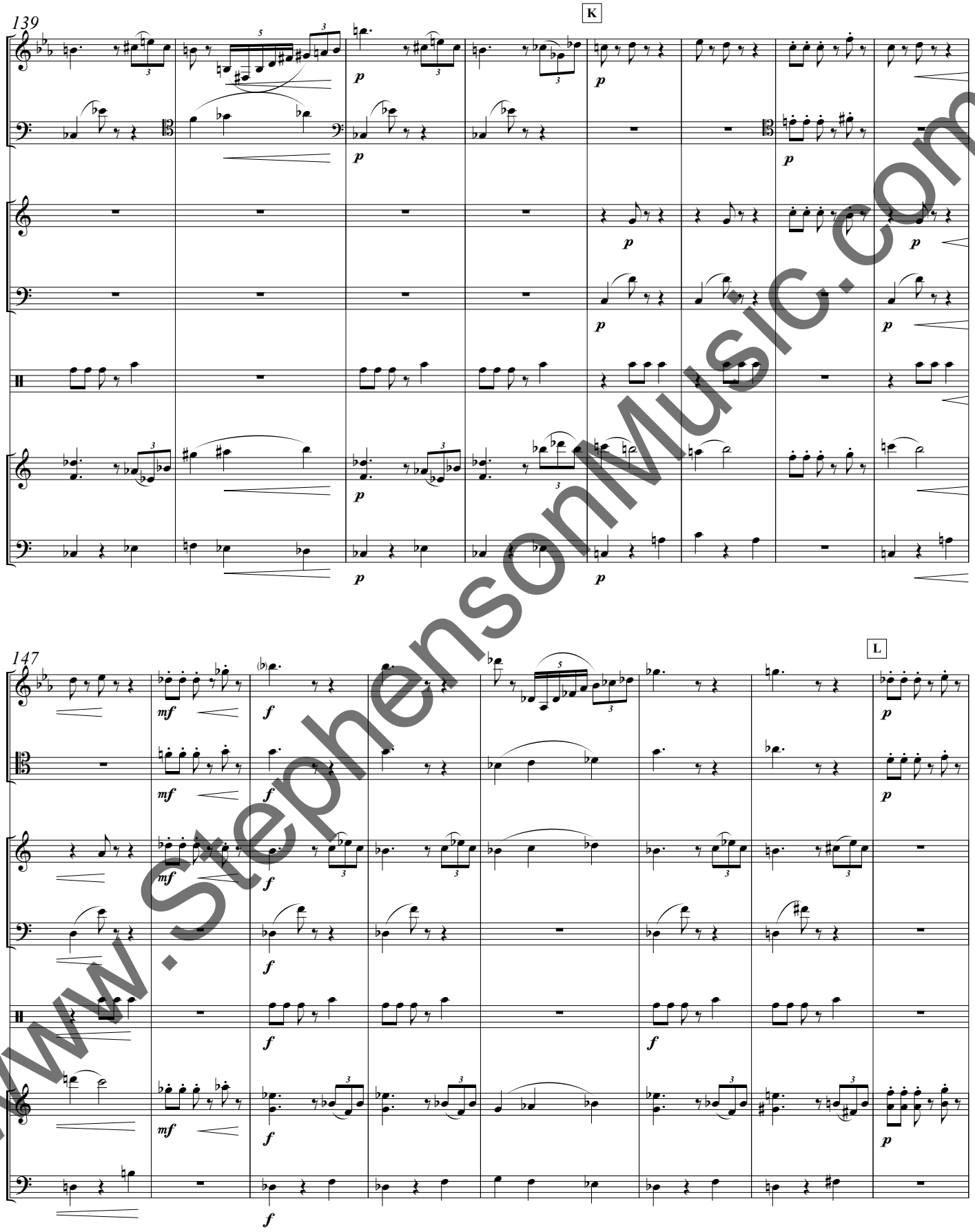


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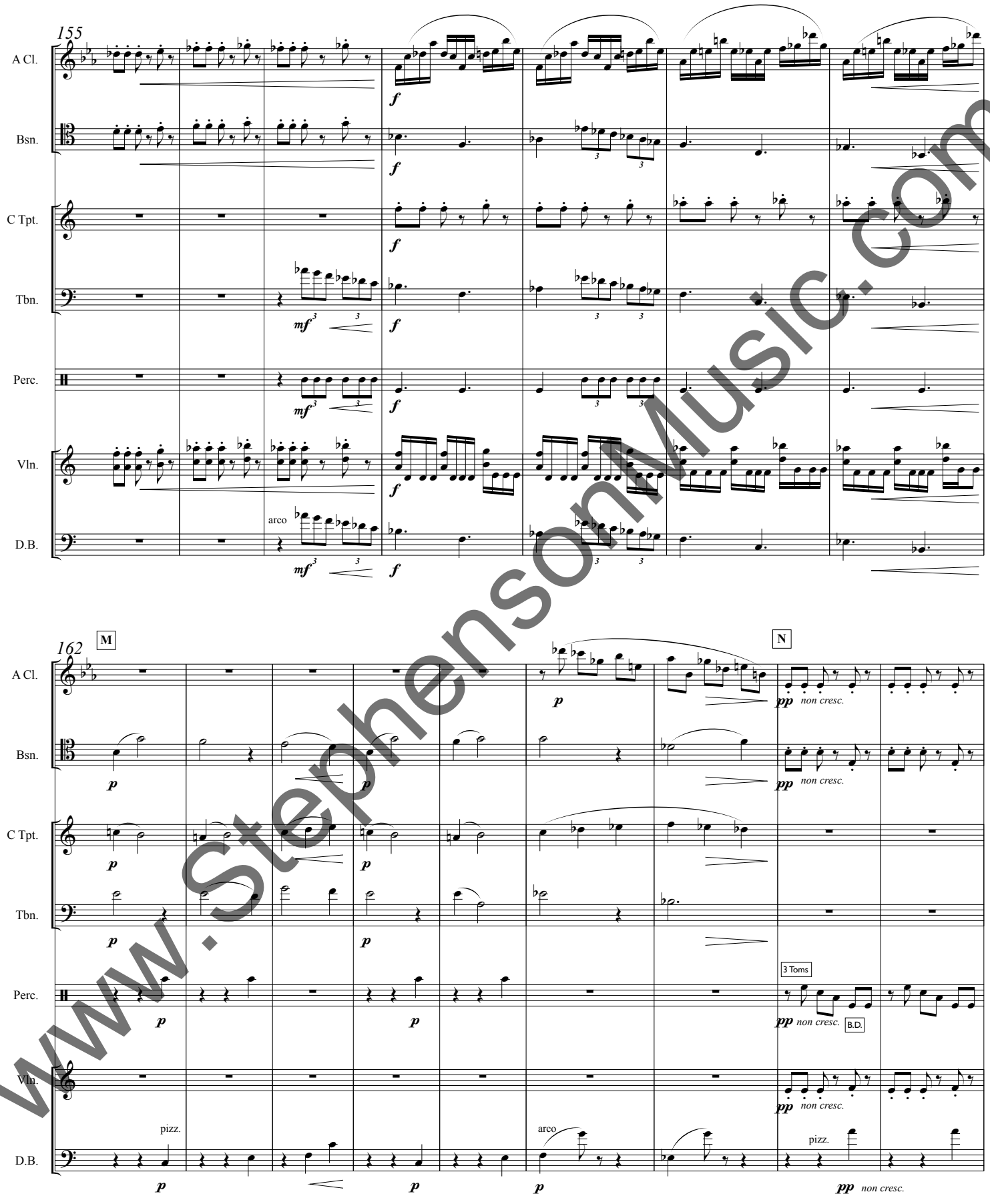


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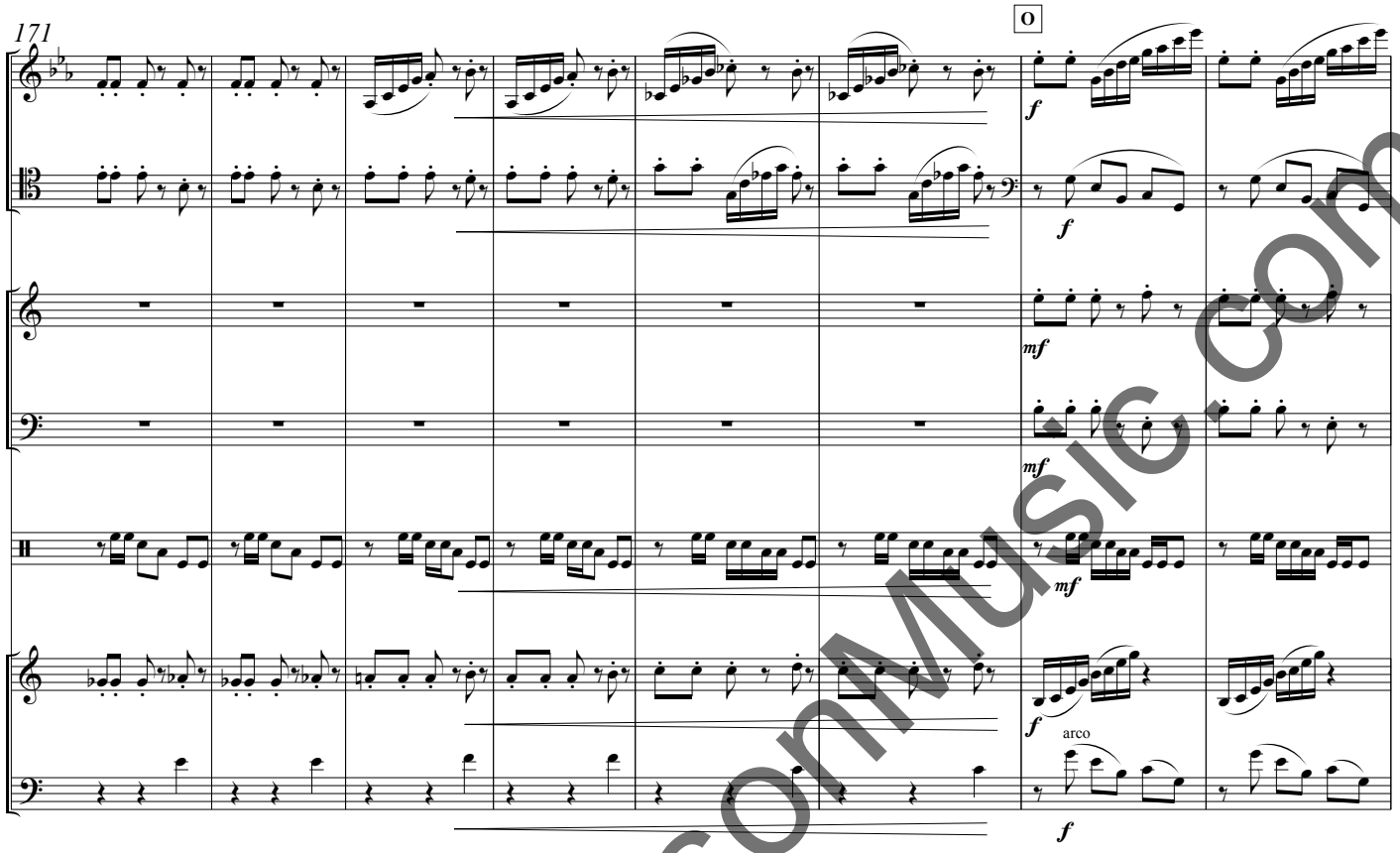


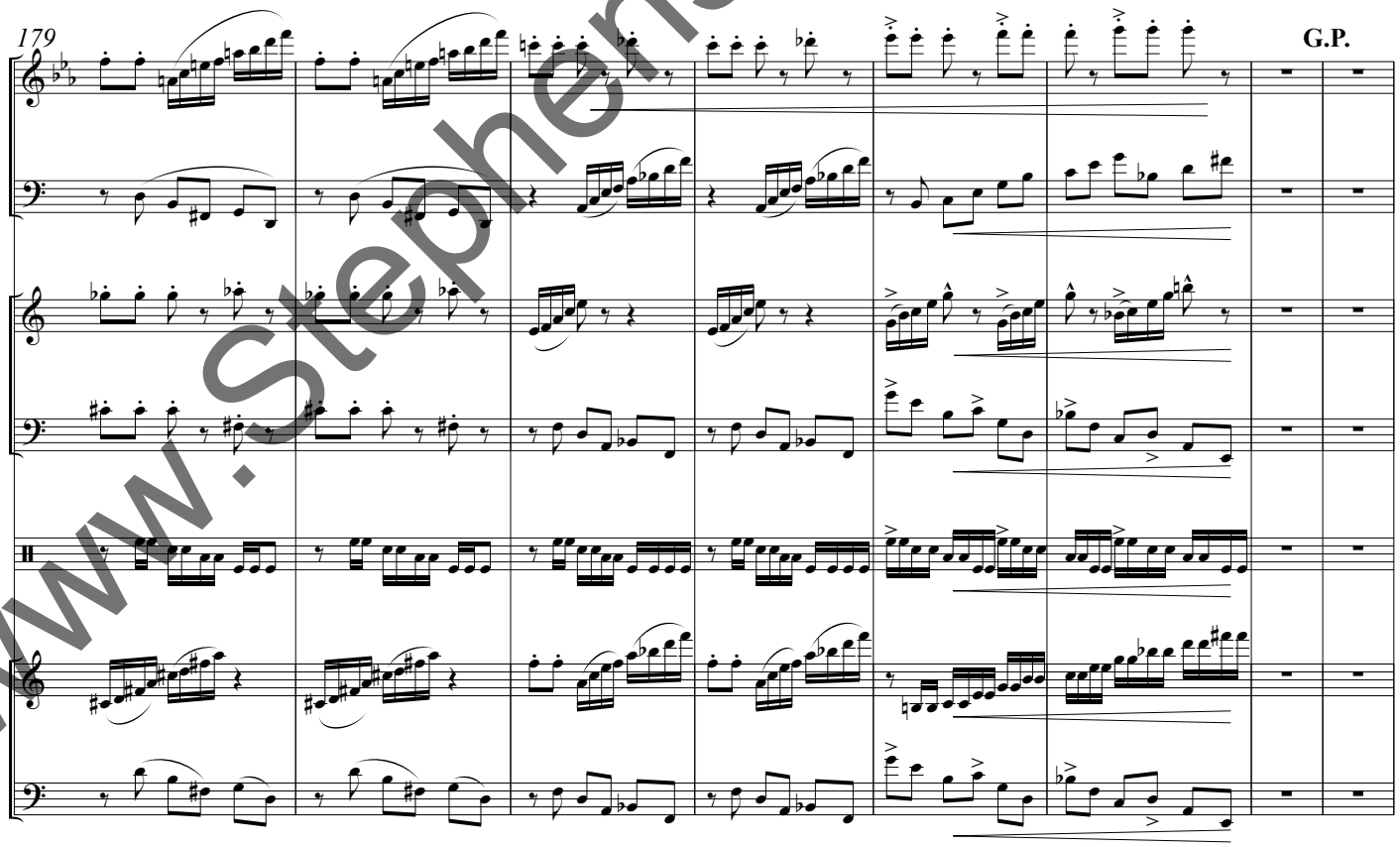


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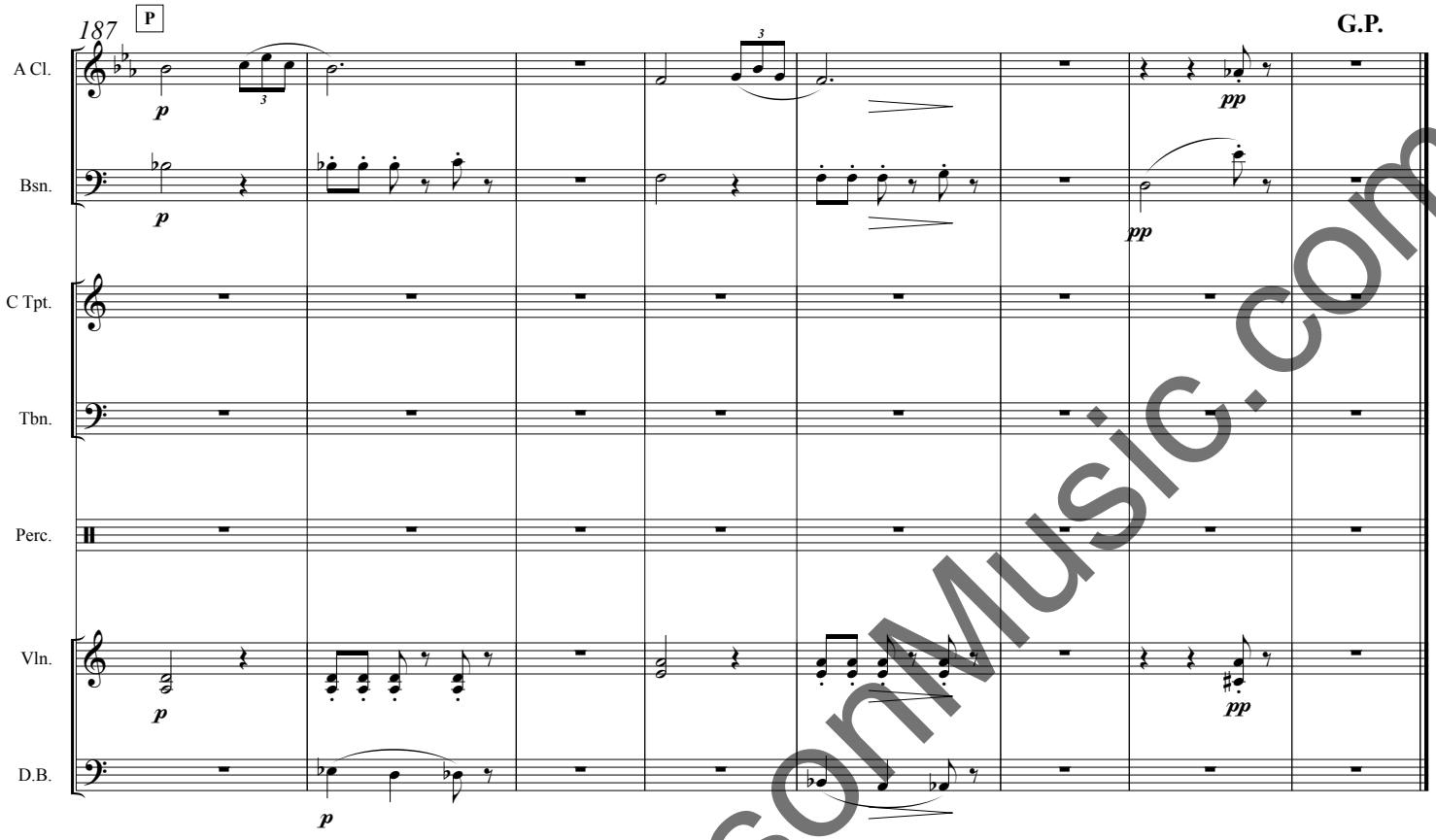


Narrator: Hannah is again approached by Sam, this time disguised as a talent agent, (up to another sham).

(Sam): Madam, I'm Adam, and I have an offer. I need a new showgirl in Vegas - might be good for the coffers?
The show is called "Name No One Man", and it's clear where you'd stand.
You'd be the perfect lead, for sure, and your salary would be: (*Narrator*: he whispers in her ear).

Narrator: Hannah is of course, flattered, suddenly intrigued. (Hannah): Seriously? Can you level with me? Is this real or rigged?

(Sam): Yes it's true (*winks to audience*). But rehearsals start day after next. We must go now. No time to reflect.

(Hannah): Off we go, then, we can catch the next flight. I happen to have two tickets (*motions to purse*) - we'll be there tonight.

Narrator: Sam walks ahead, and Hannah quickly jots a note: "Joe, hold on to this fur" she wrote.
"I'm following the dream, just as you said. This isn't the life to be led."
Joe returns soon thereafter, finds everything and reads.
Angrily, he throws down coffee and fur, not knowing how to proceed.

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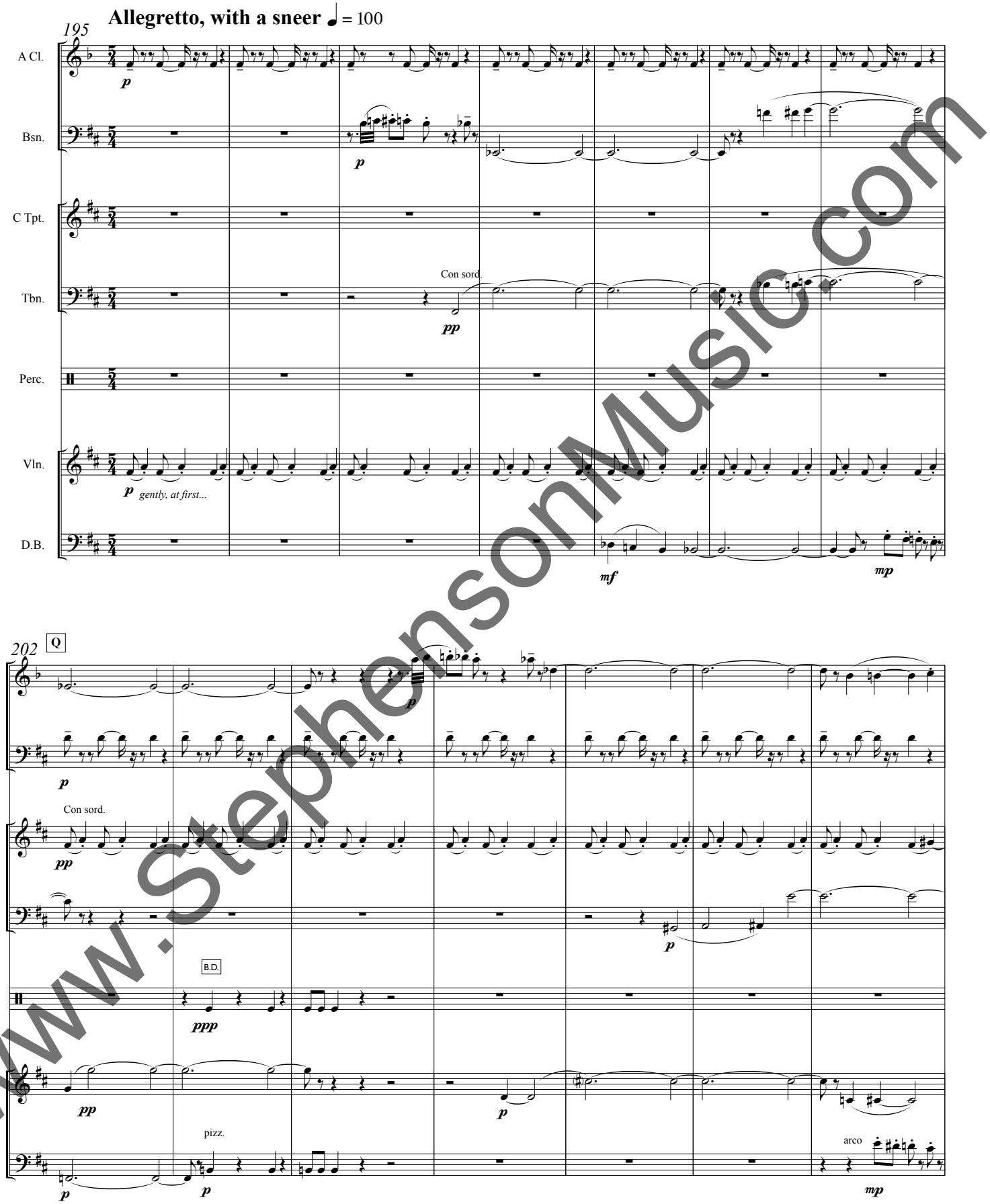
**XI. EVIL. A SIN, IS ALIVE**

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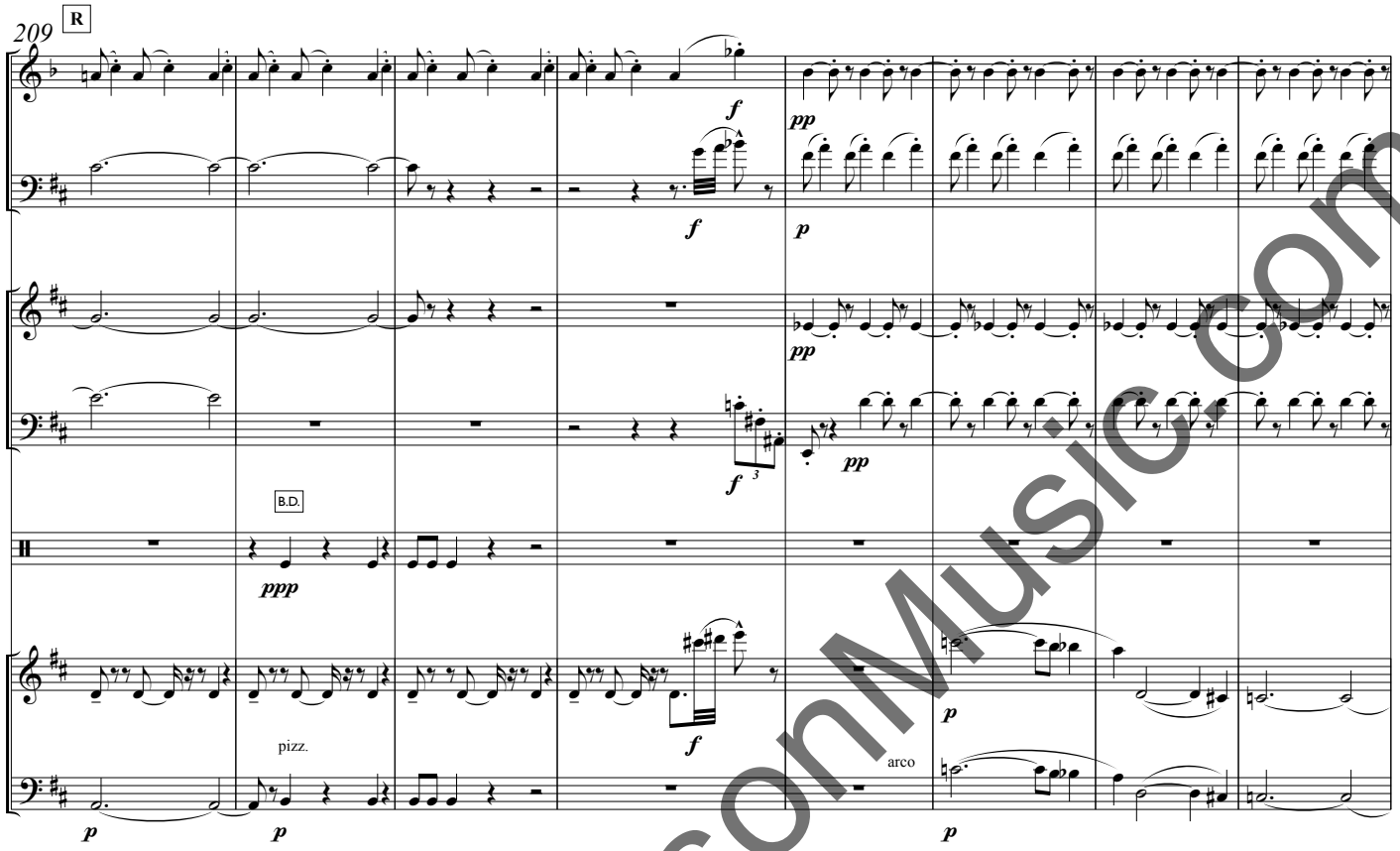


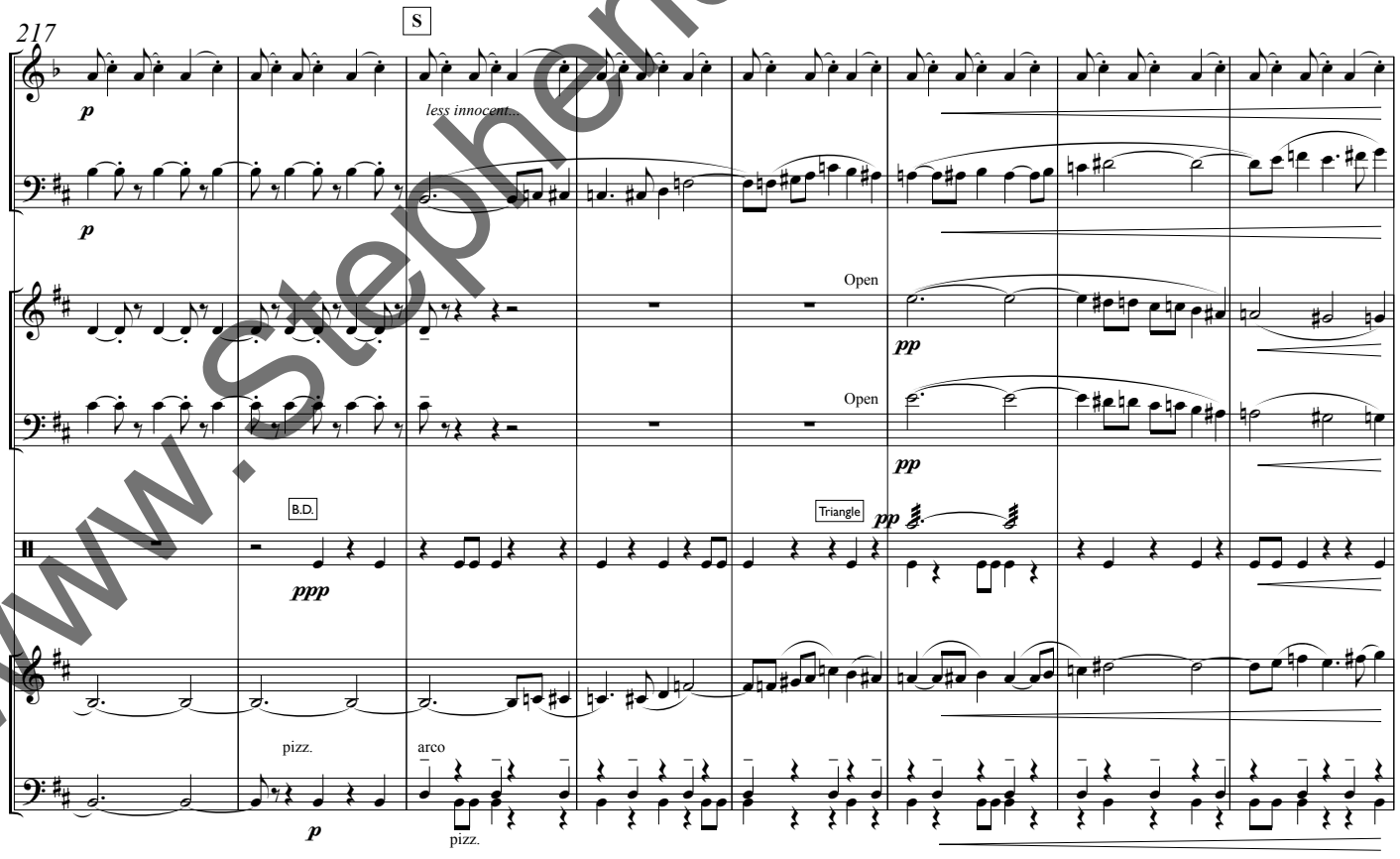


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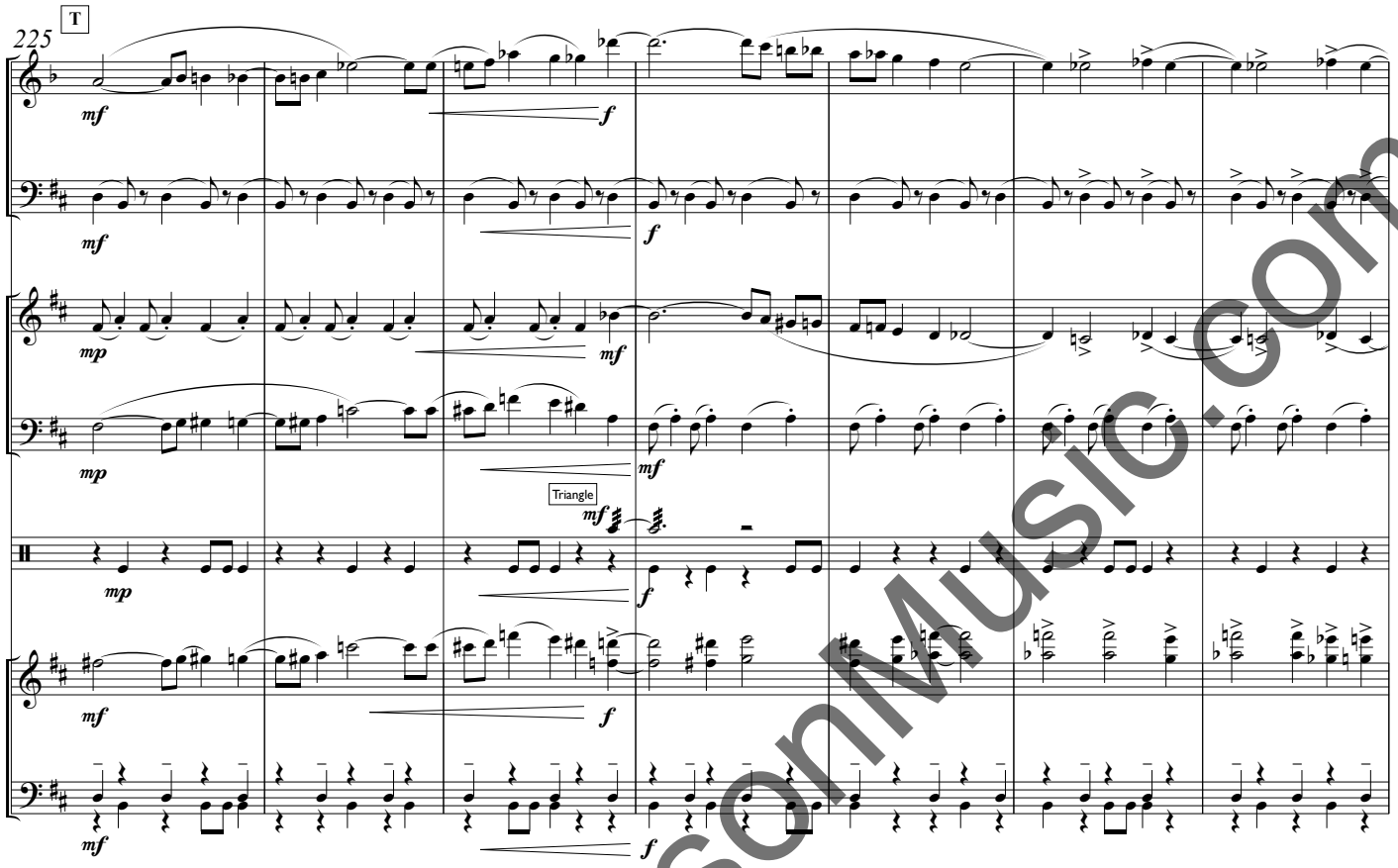


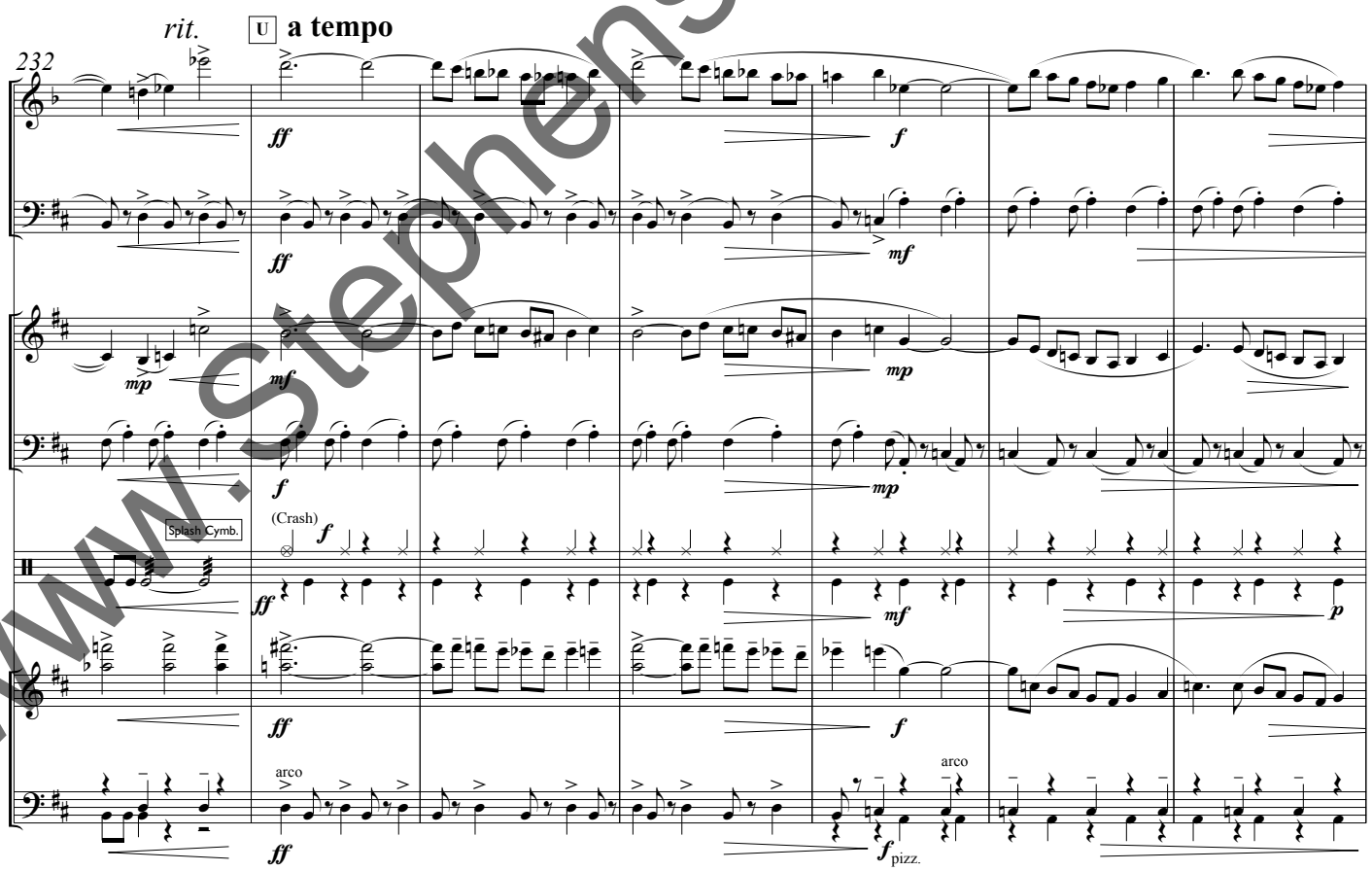


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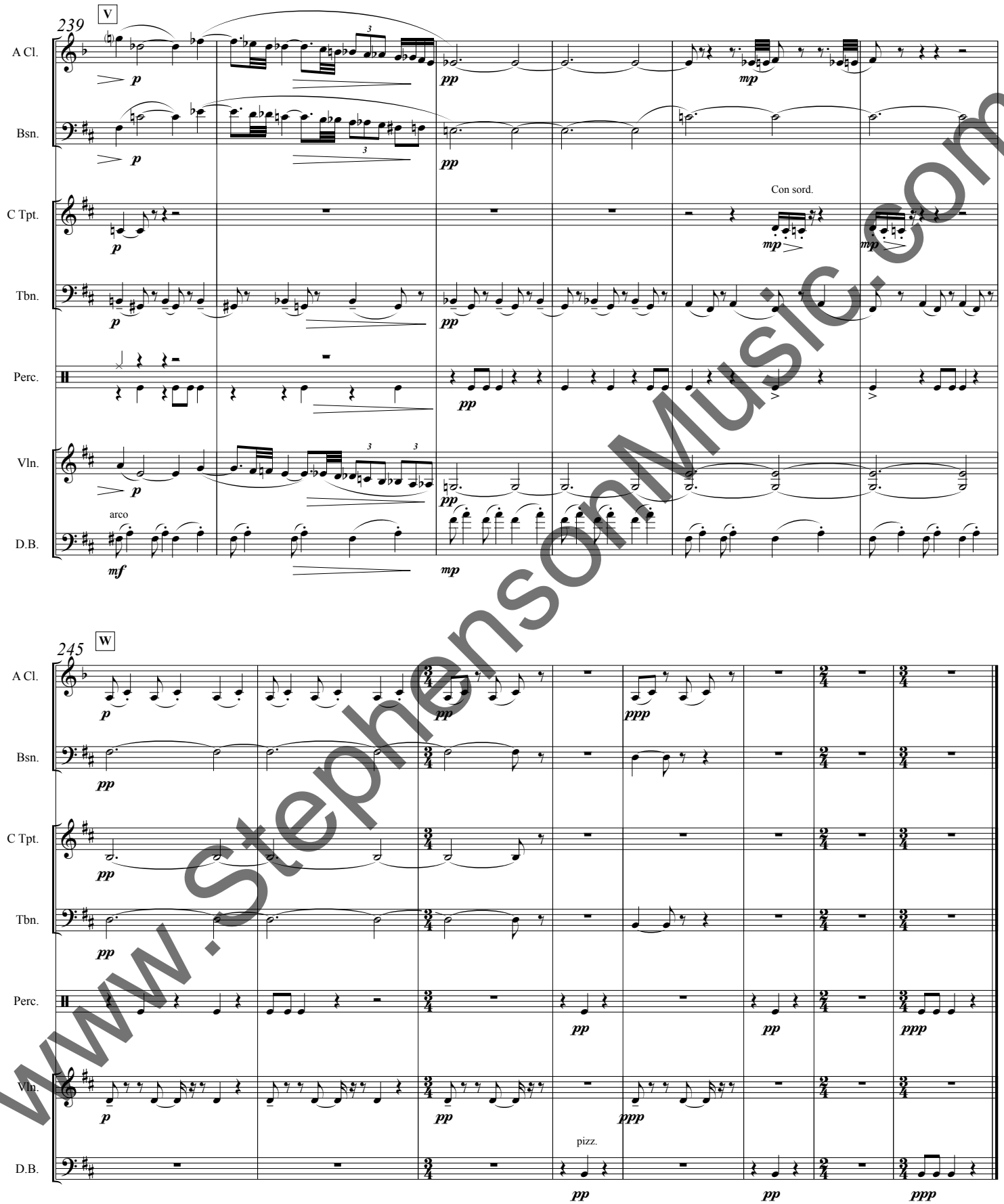


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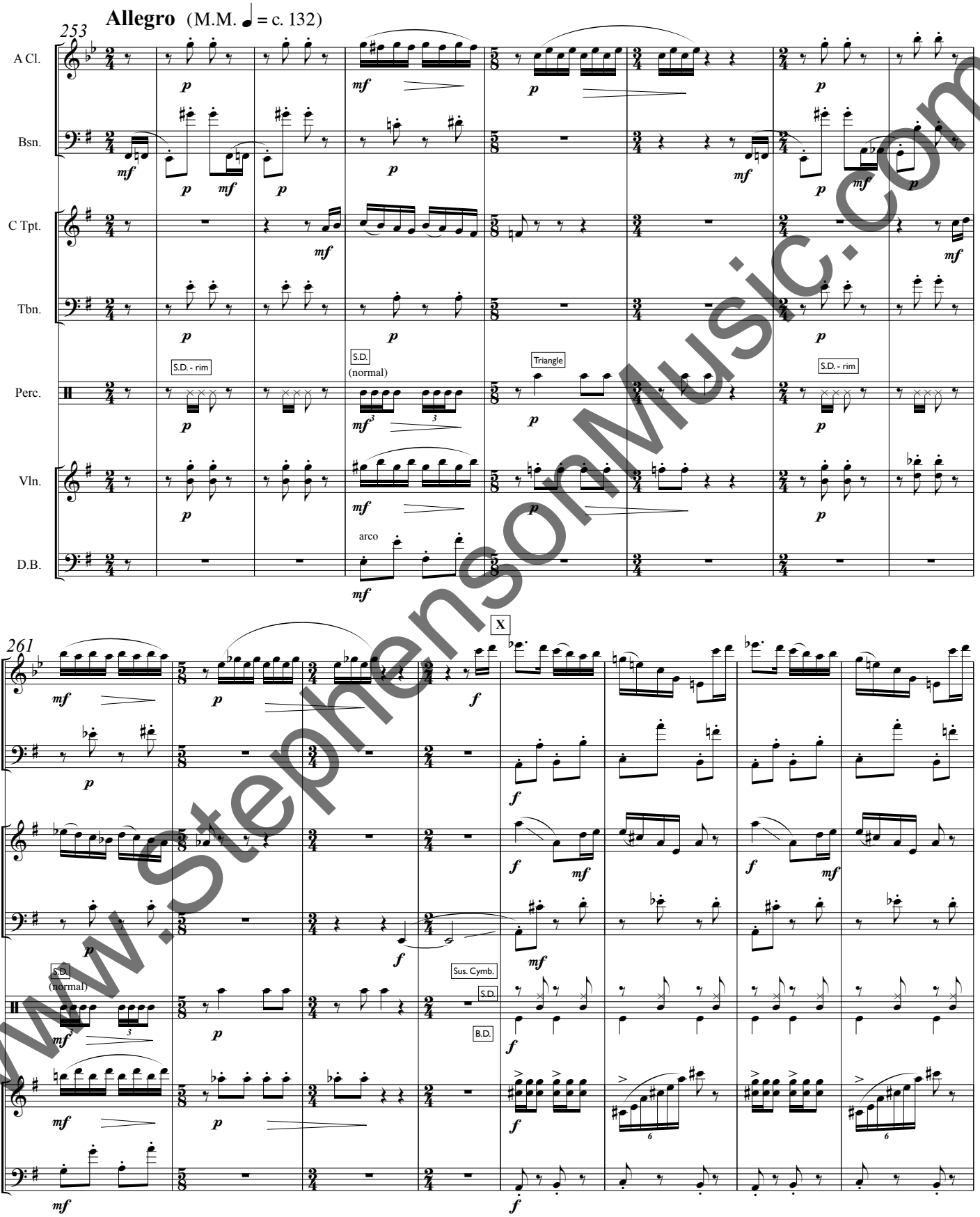
Narrator: The scene shifts back to the strip; Sam in his element, having given Joe the slip. Time has passed. Sam and Hannah are a couple, though somewhat miscast.

**XII. Name No One Man**

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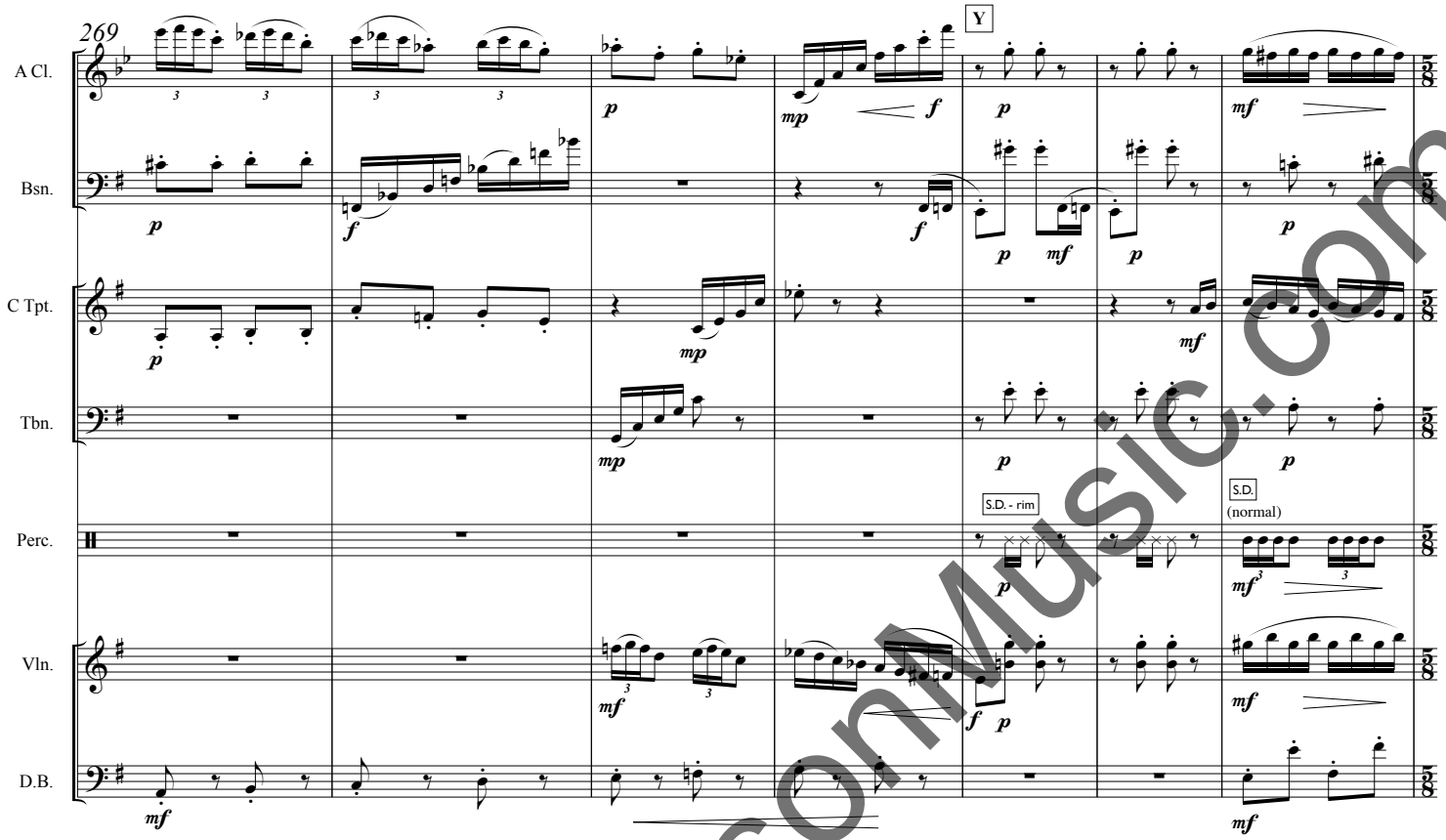


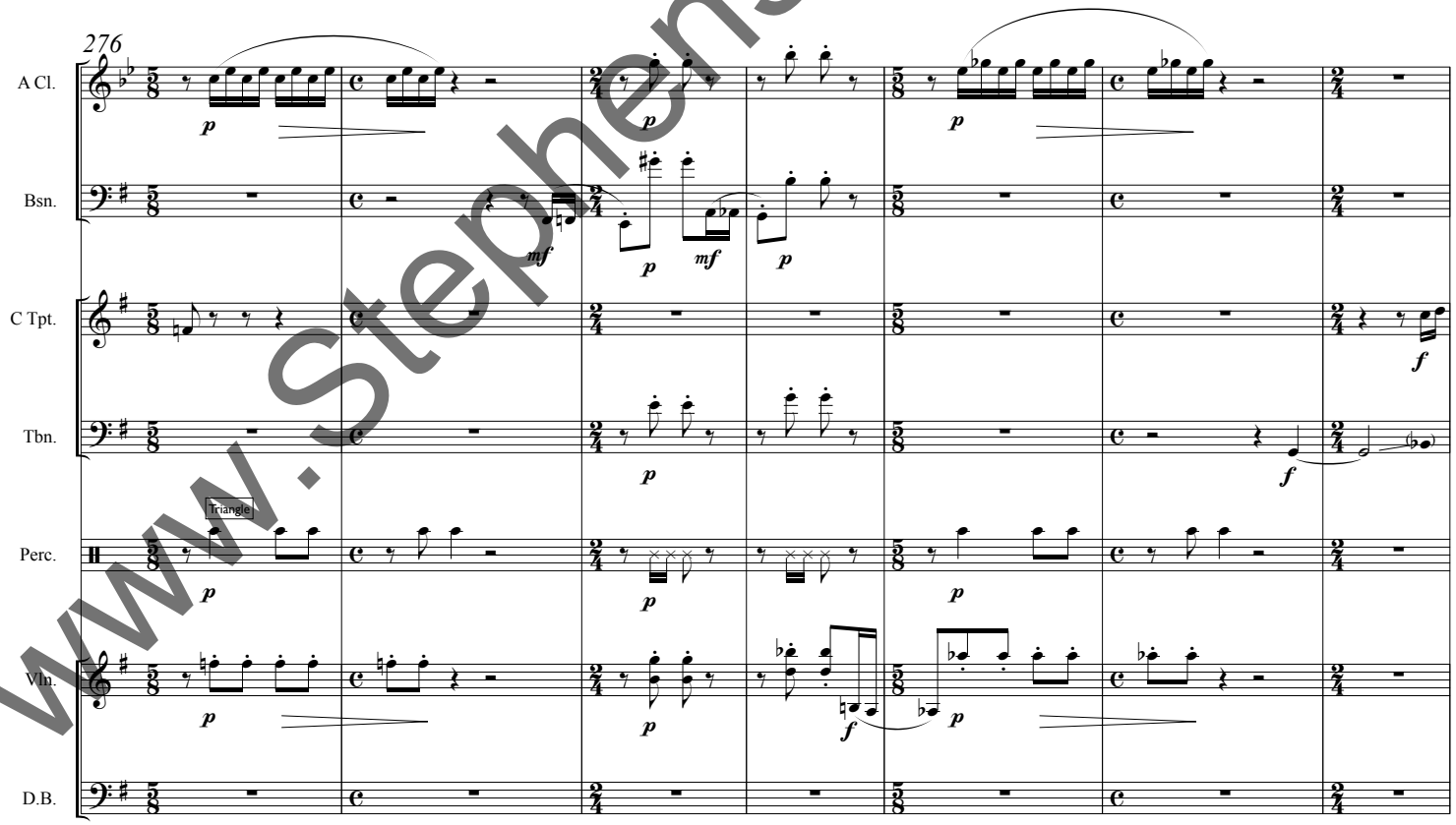


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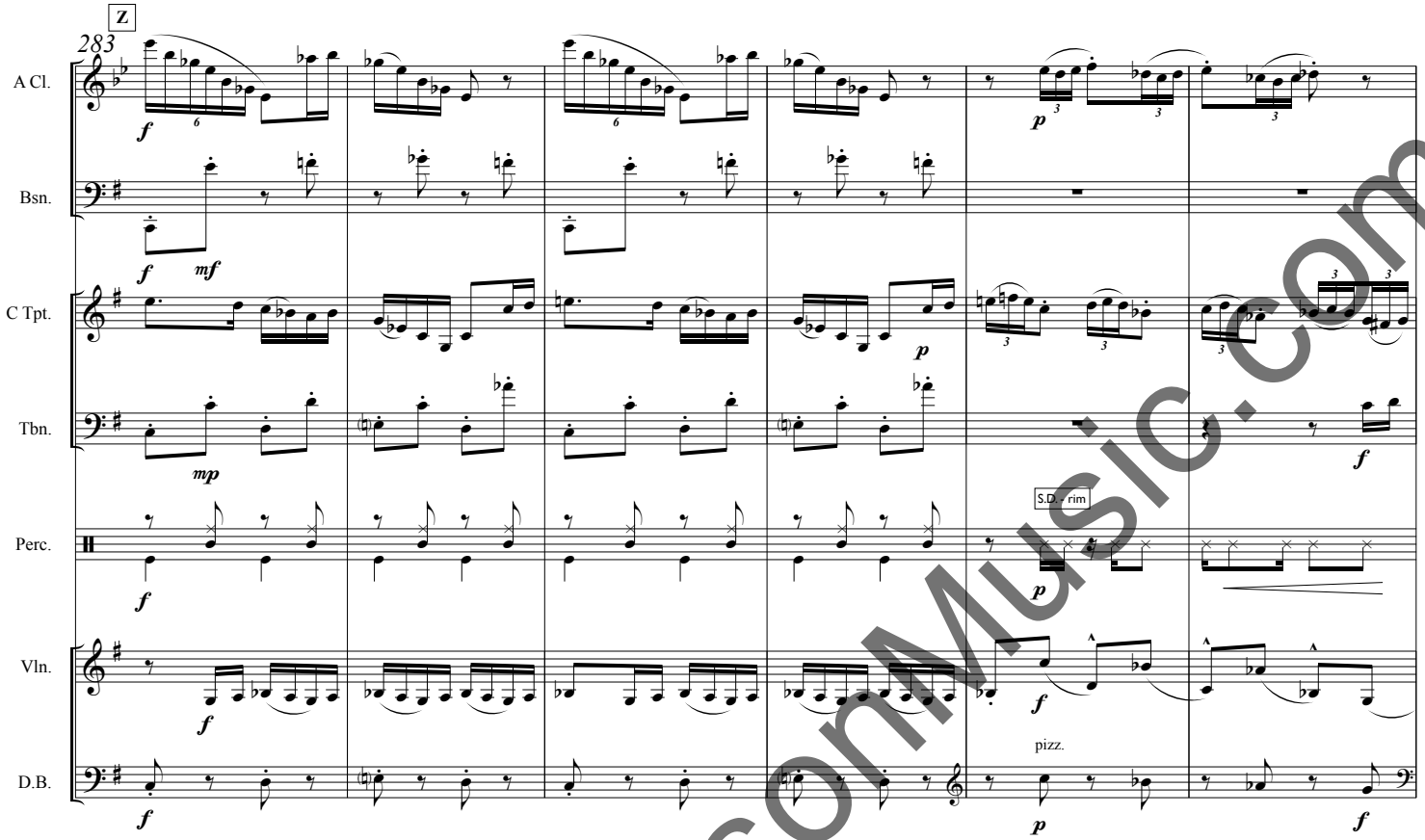


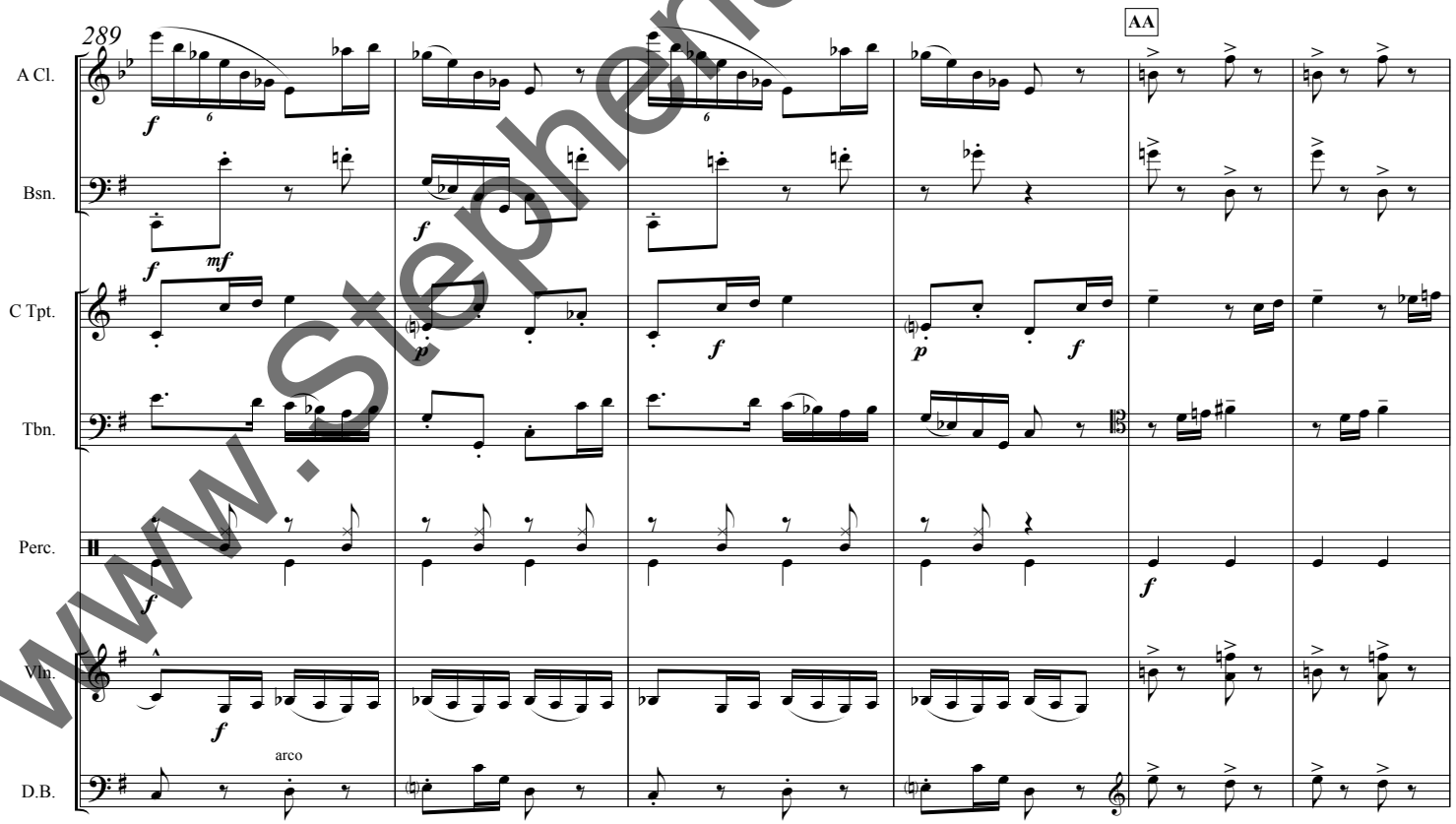


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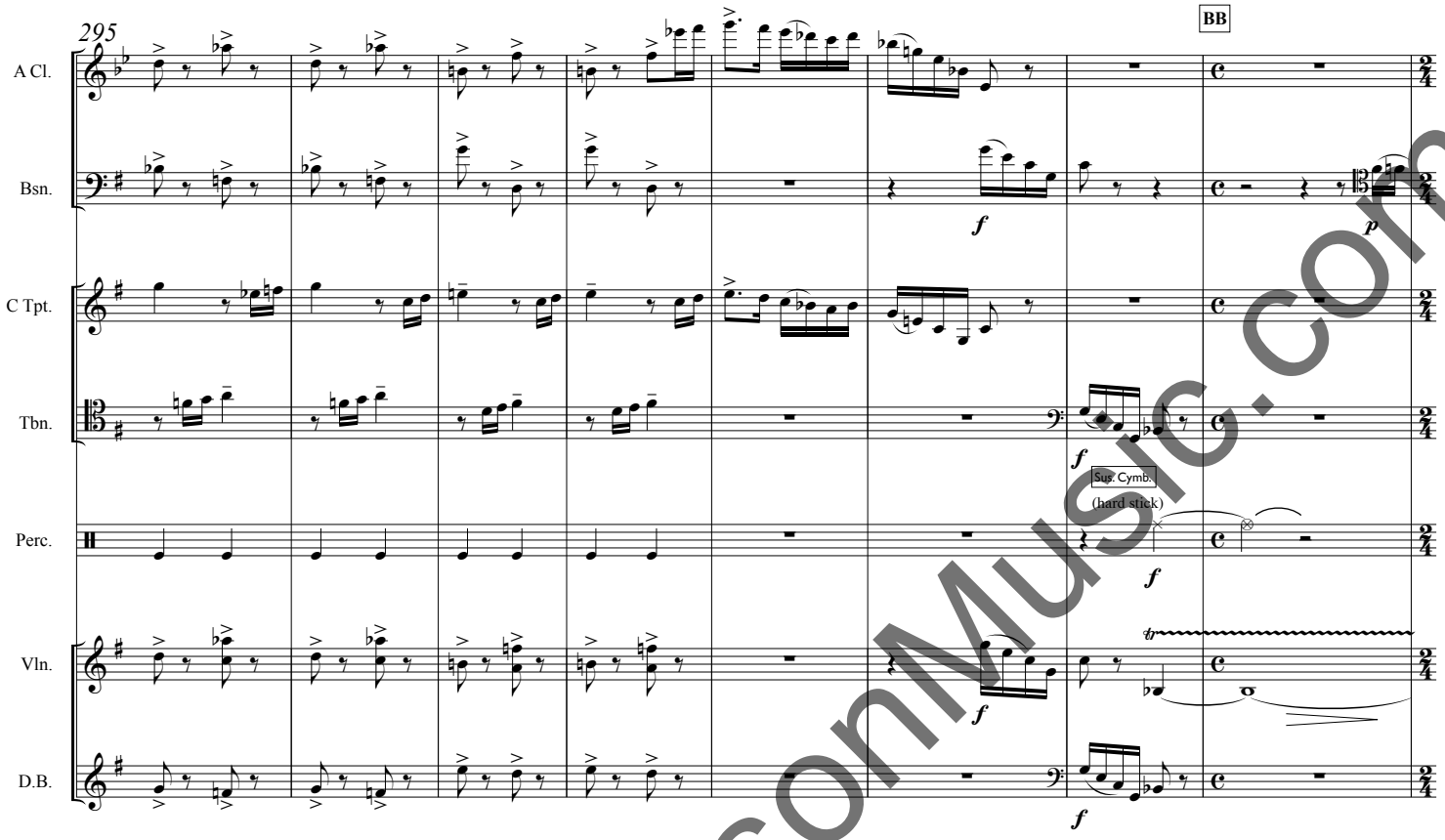


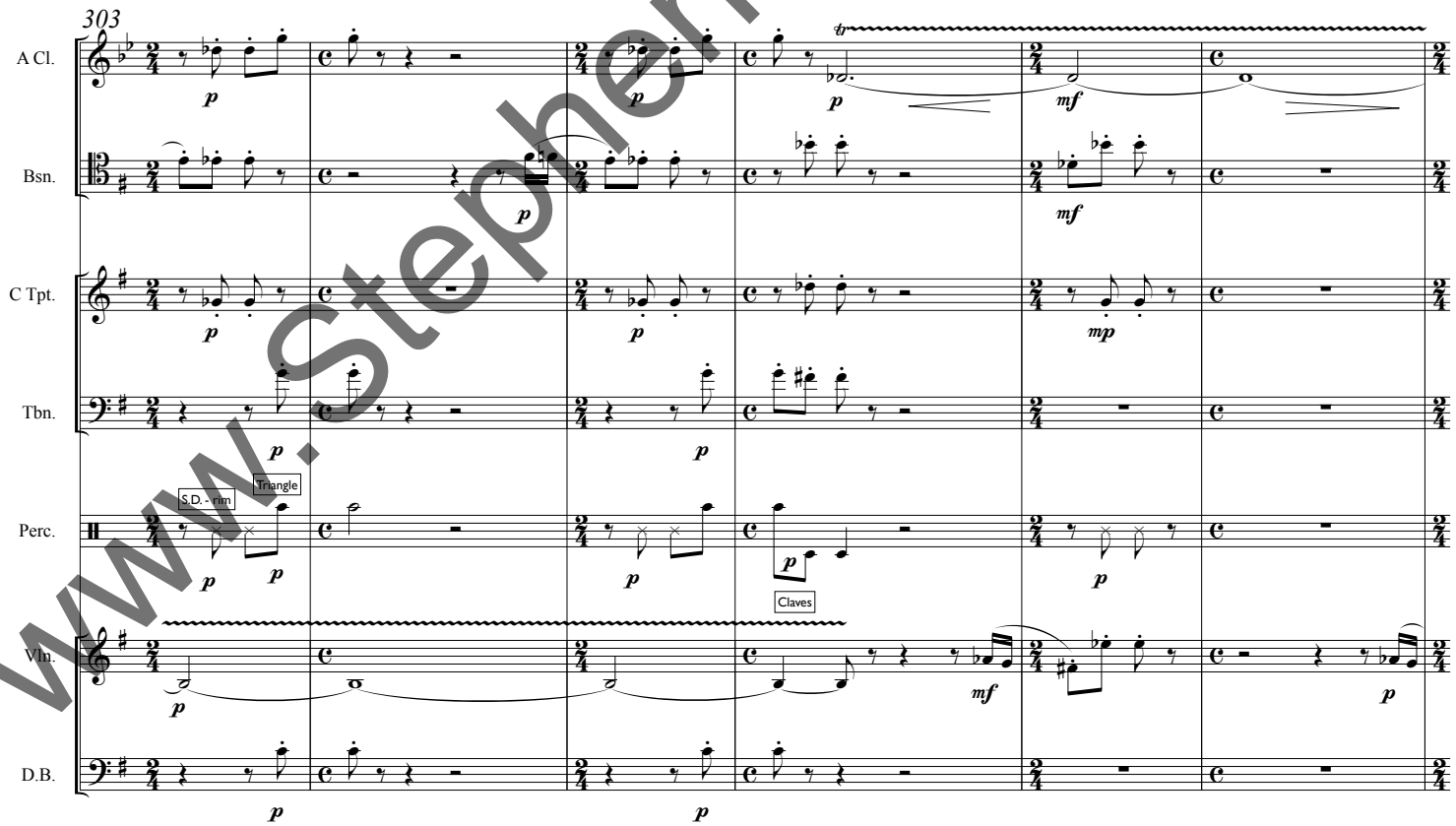


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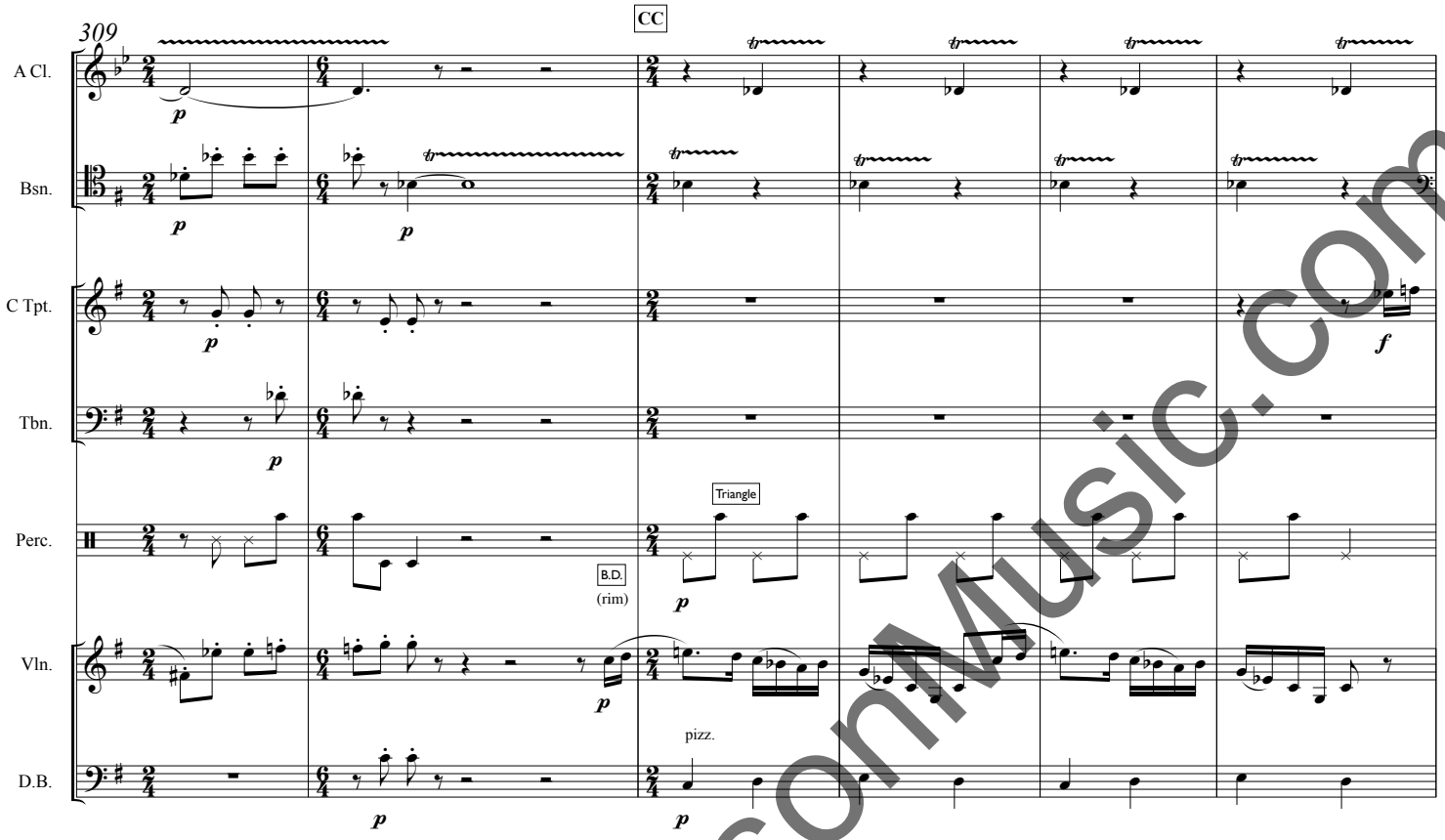


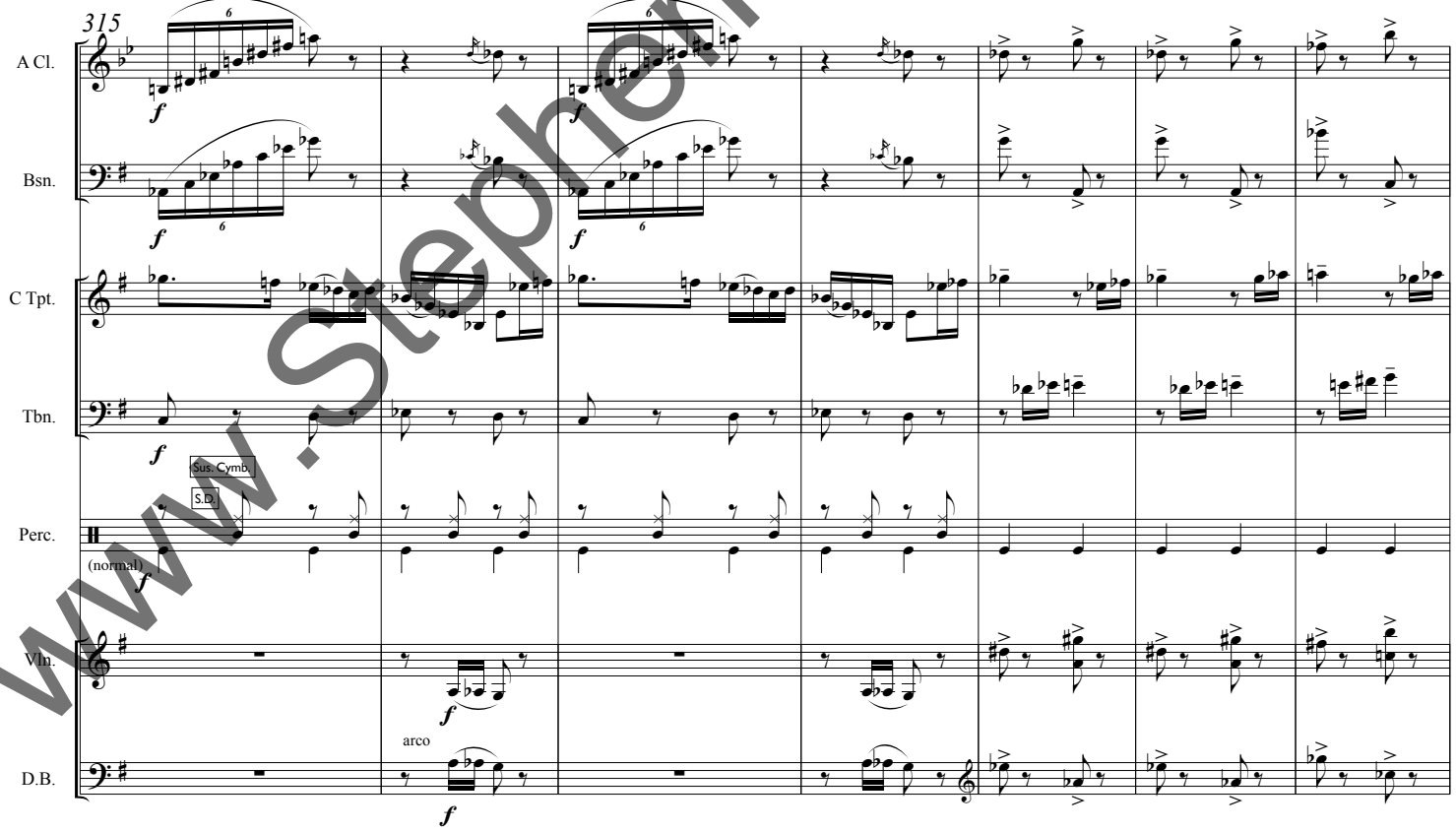


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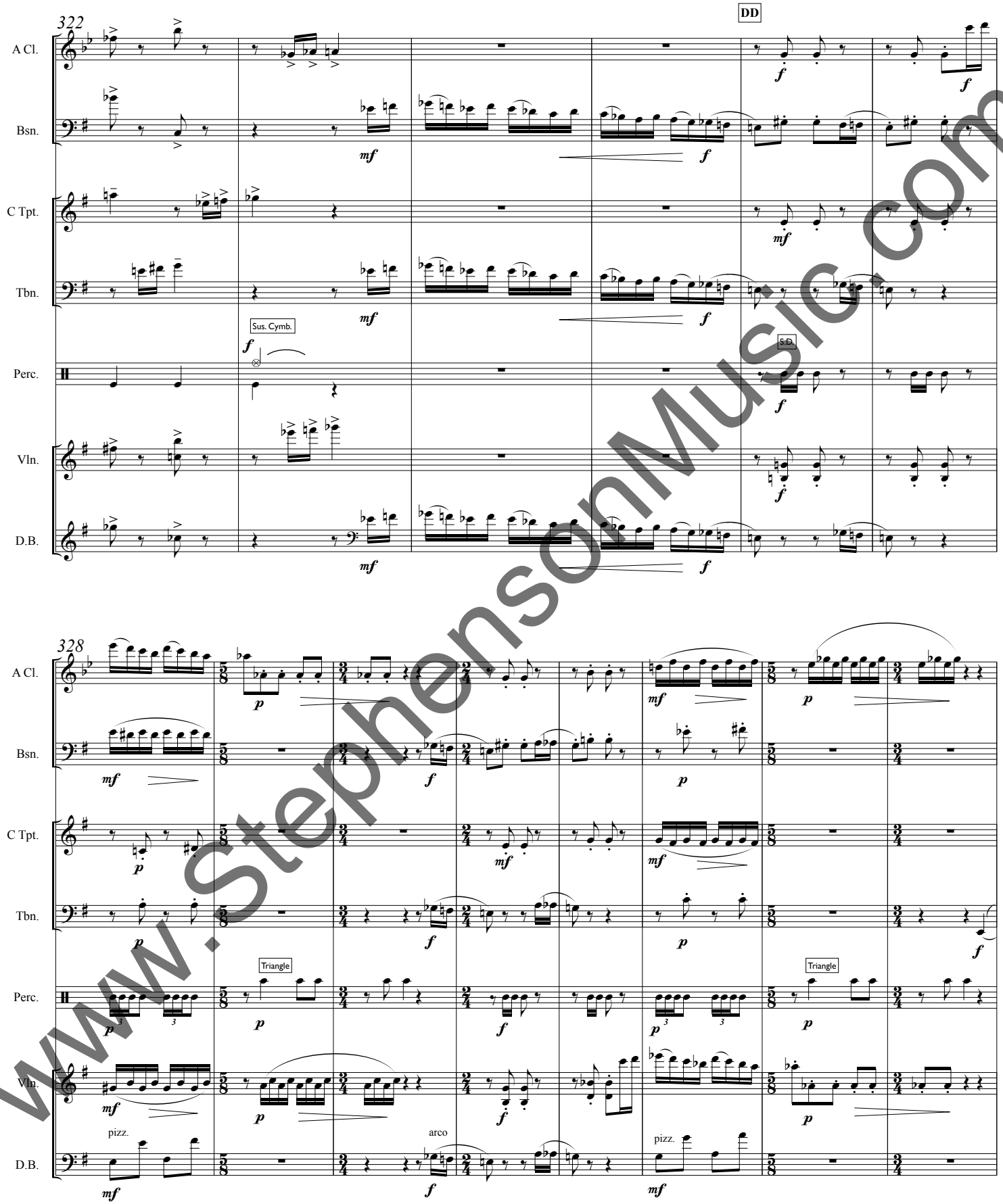


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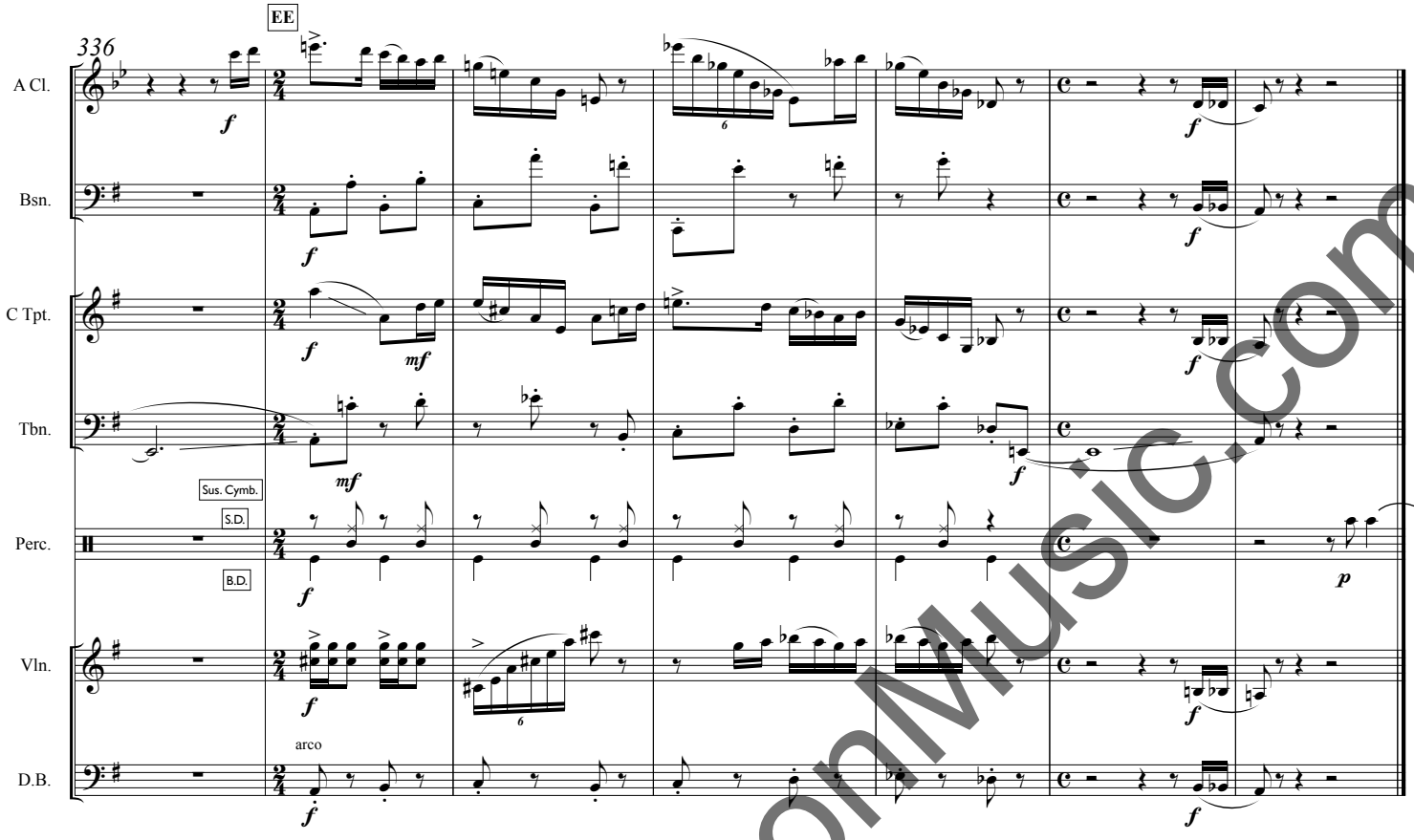
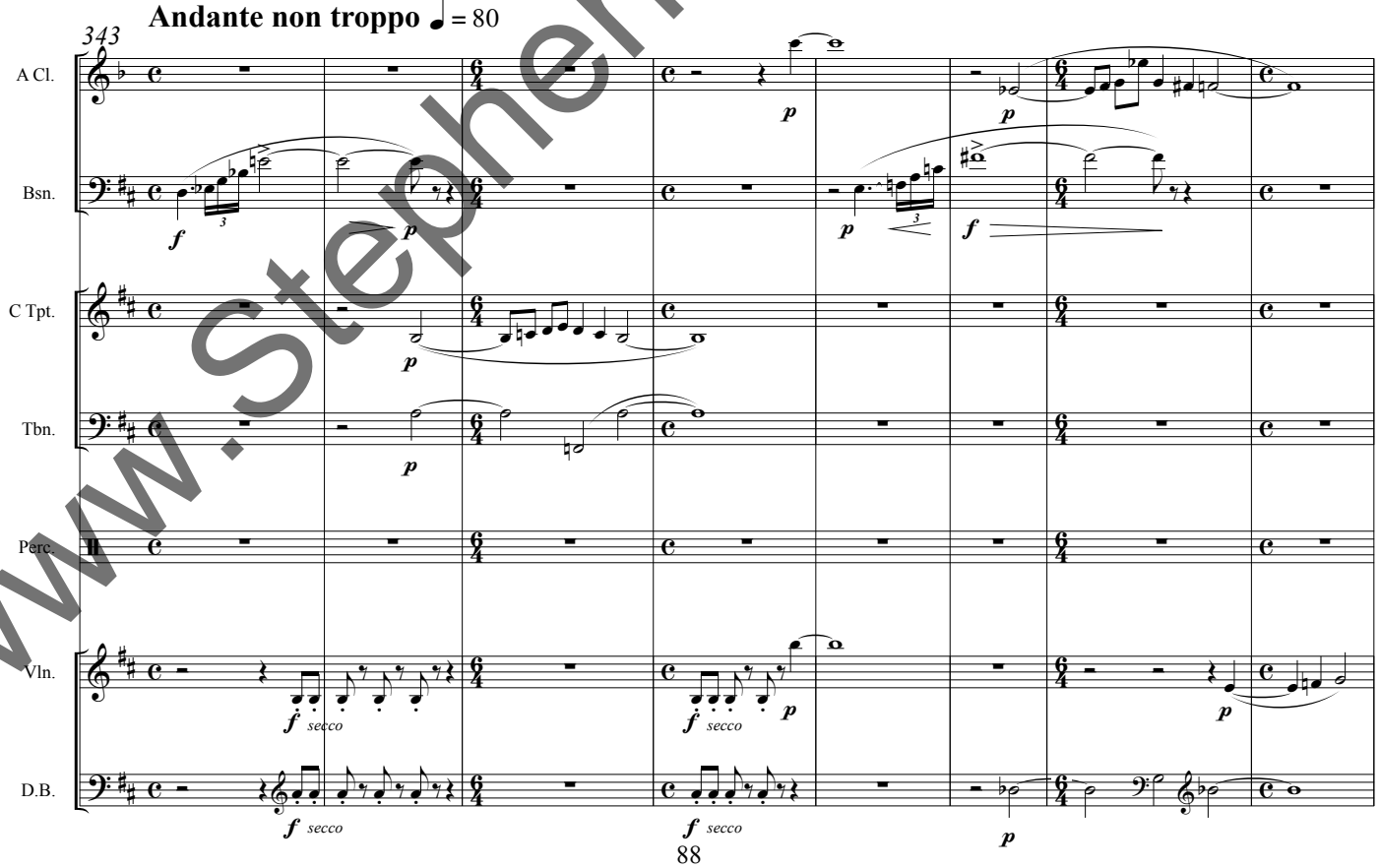



Narrator: Joe has returned to Vegas to try to win Hannah back. No one speaks to him.
He's been given the sack. Having quit the show, he's off the list. For musicians, he doesn't even exist.

**XIIa. No, It is Opposition**

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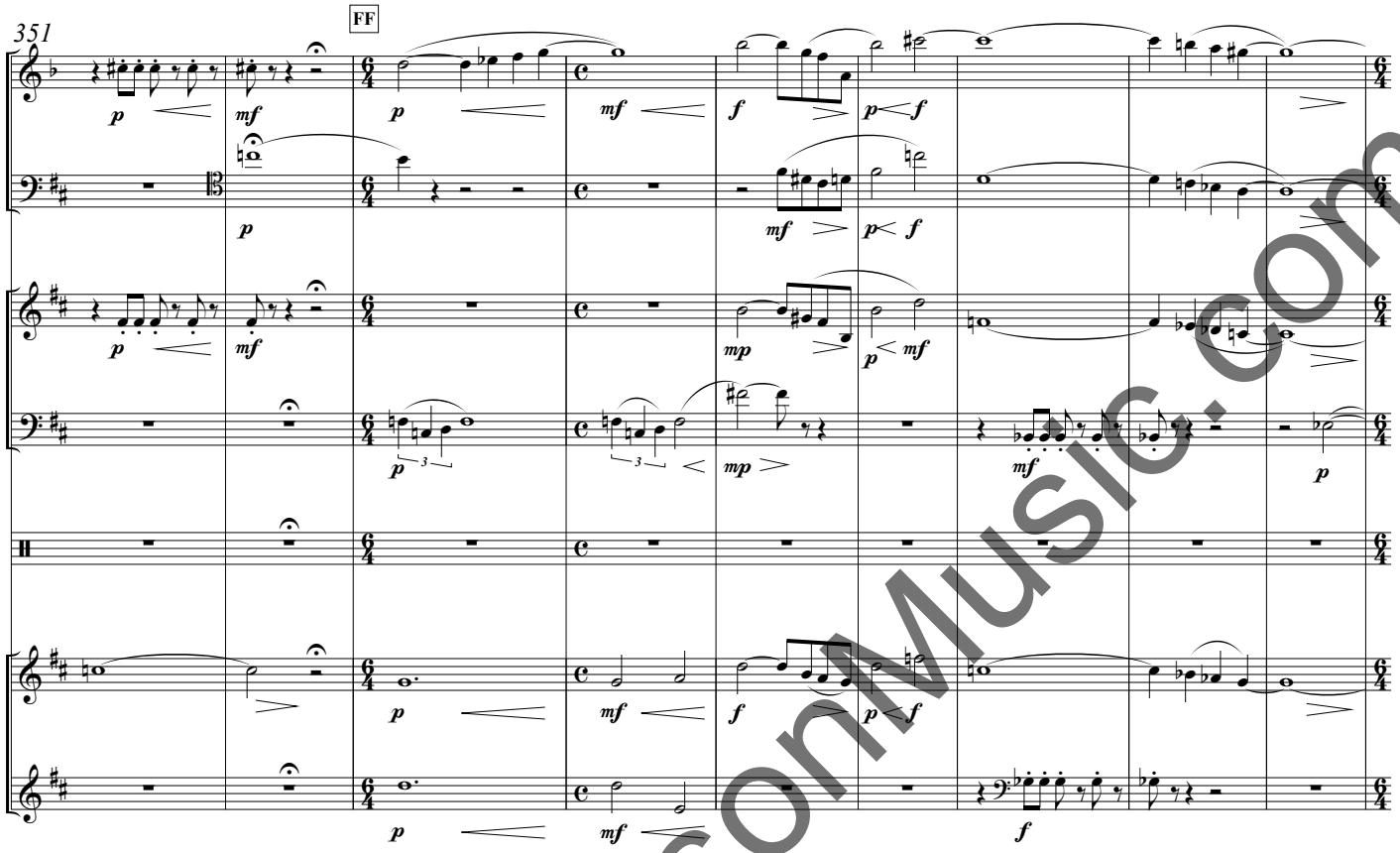


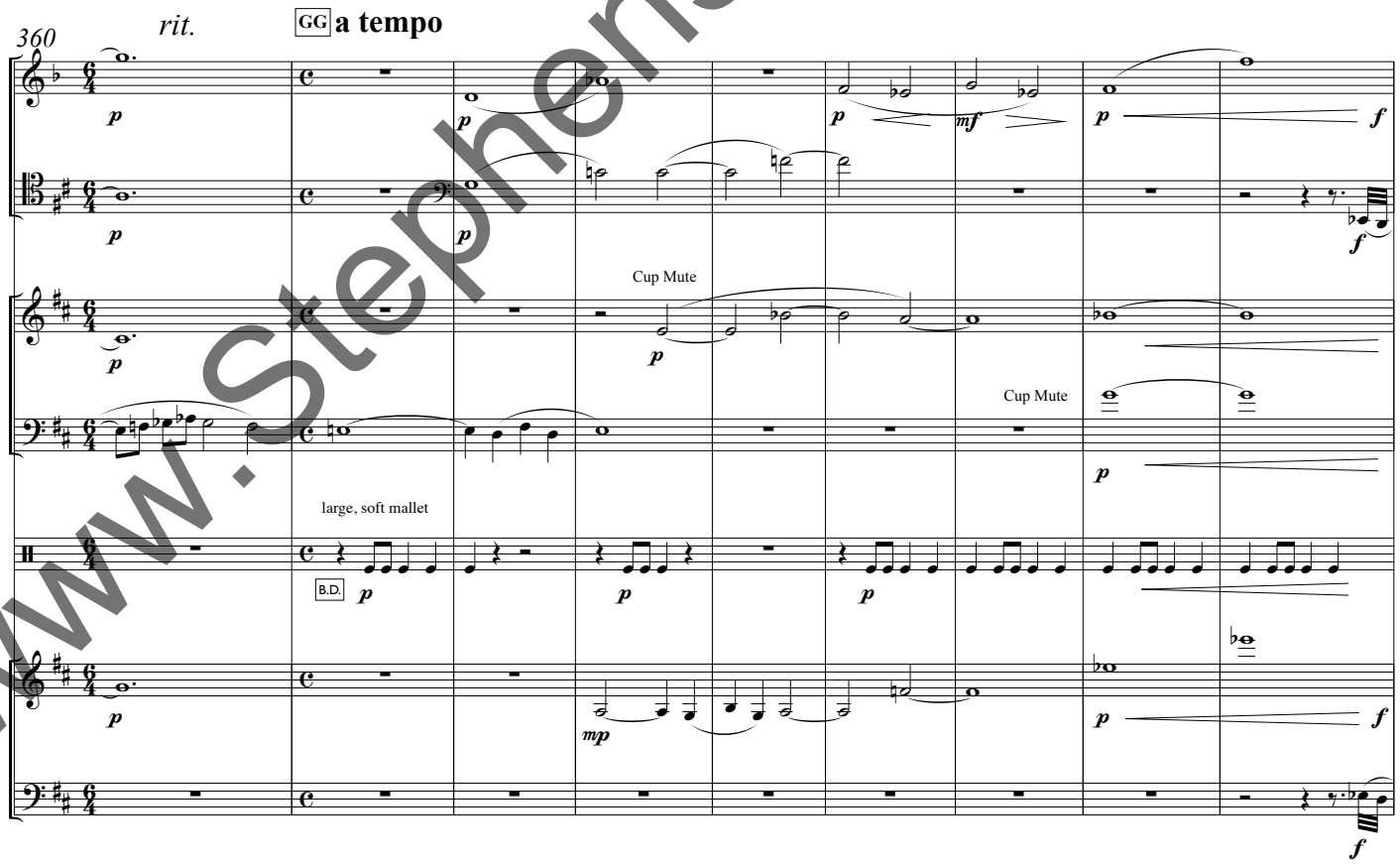


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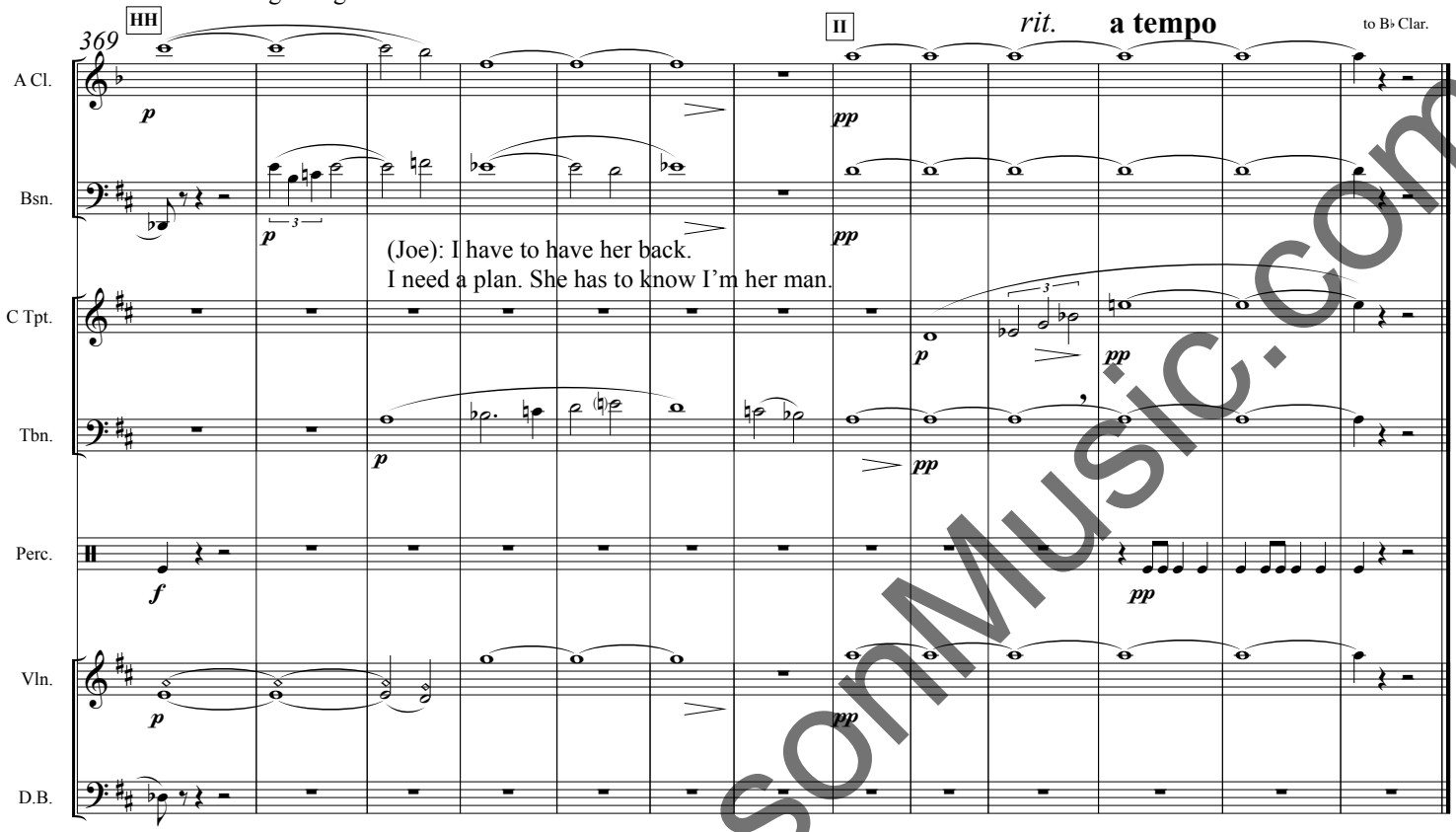
Narrator: (*during music*)
Hannah is with Sam, of course,
basking in fame for which he is the source.
Joe watches them from afar, his heart still broken,
now beginning to scar.




Narrator: A few days later, it is mid-afternoon; in a Vegas casino, Joe spots Sam, not a moment too soon.

Narrator: Now disguised as a top casino owner, Joe motions to Sam, inviting him over.

(Joe): (Holding up a familiar deck of cards) Care for a quick game?

(Sam): (too impressed to recognize cards) Sure, what's the aim?

(Joe): Stakes are high. I can't deny. Let's play. Or are you too shy?

(Sam): I'm intrigued, for sure. Let's see where this goes. I feel secure.

Narrator: They play. Joe loses, and again loses some more. He offers Sam a drink, and then another four.

(Sam): I probably should stop drinking, before going adrift.

(Joe): Nonsense. No, tie it on. You haven't lived.

Narrator: Joe pours Sam another drink, the bets still rise. Finally he offers, looking right into Sam's eyes:

(Joe): I tell you what. I'm out of dough. But, should I lose again, I can offer the casino.

Narrator: They play again, Sam eager for the keys. It's only a matter of time, as he wins with ease.

(Joe): Here you go. The keys to my office. The door's over there; no need to be cautious.

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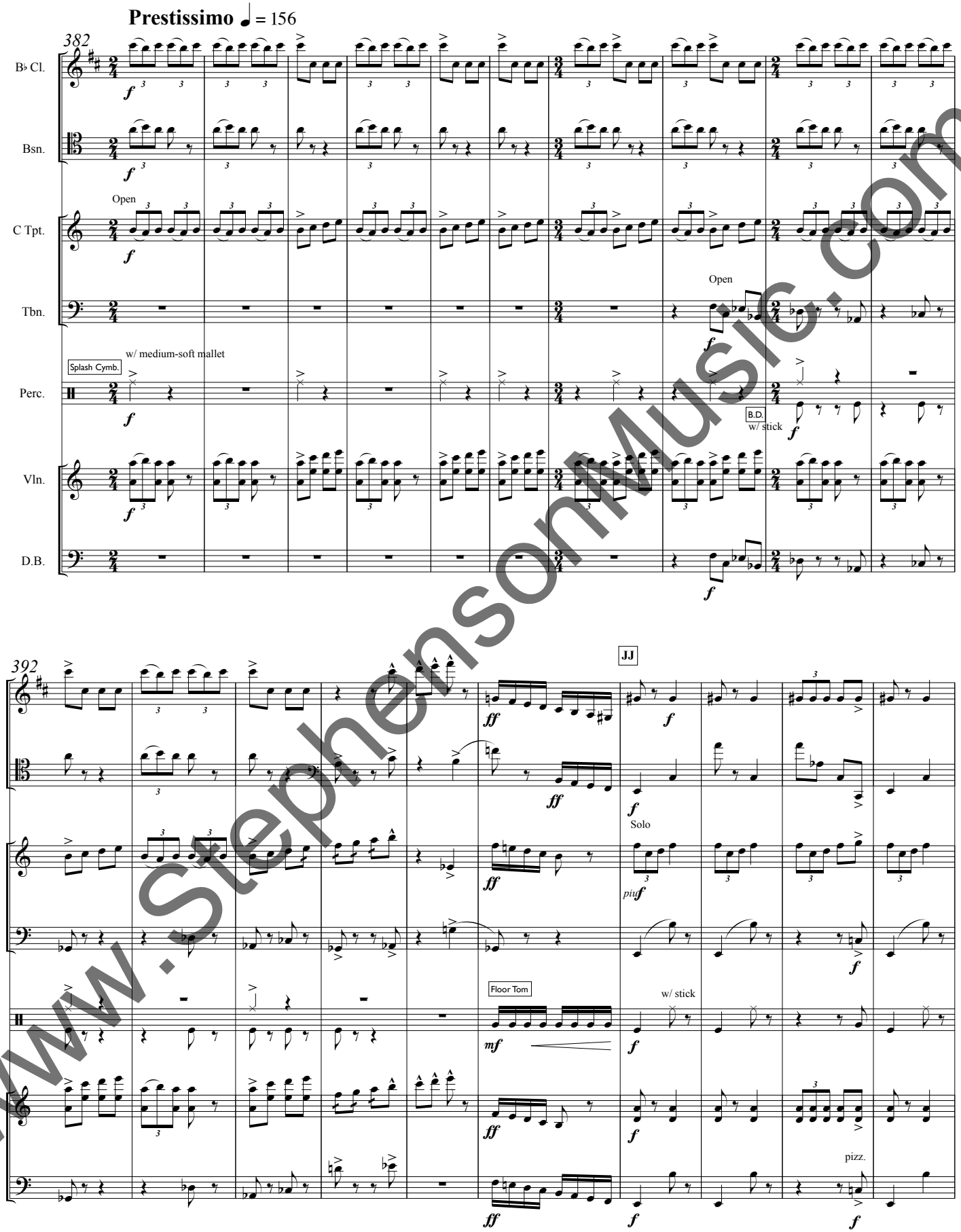
**XIII. Never Odd or Even (2nd reprise)**

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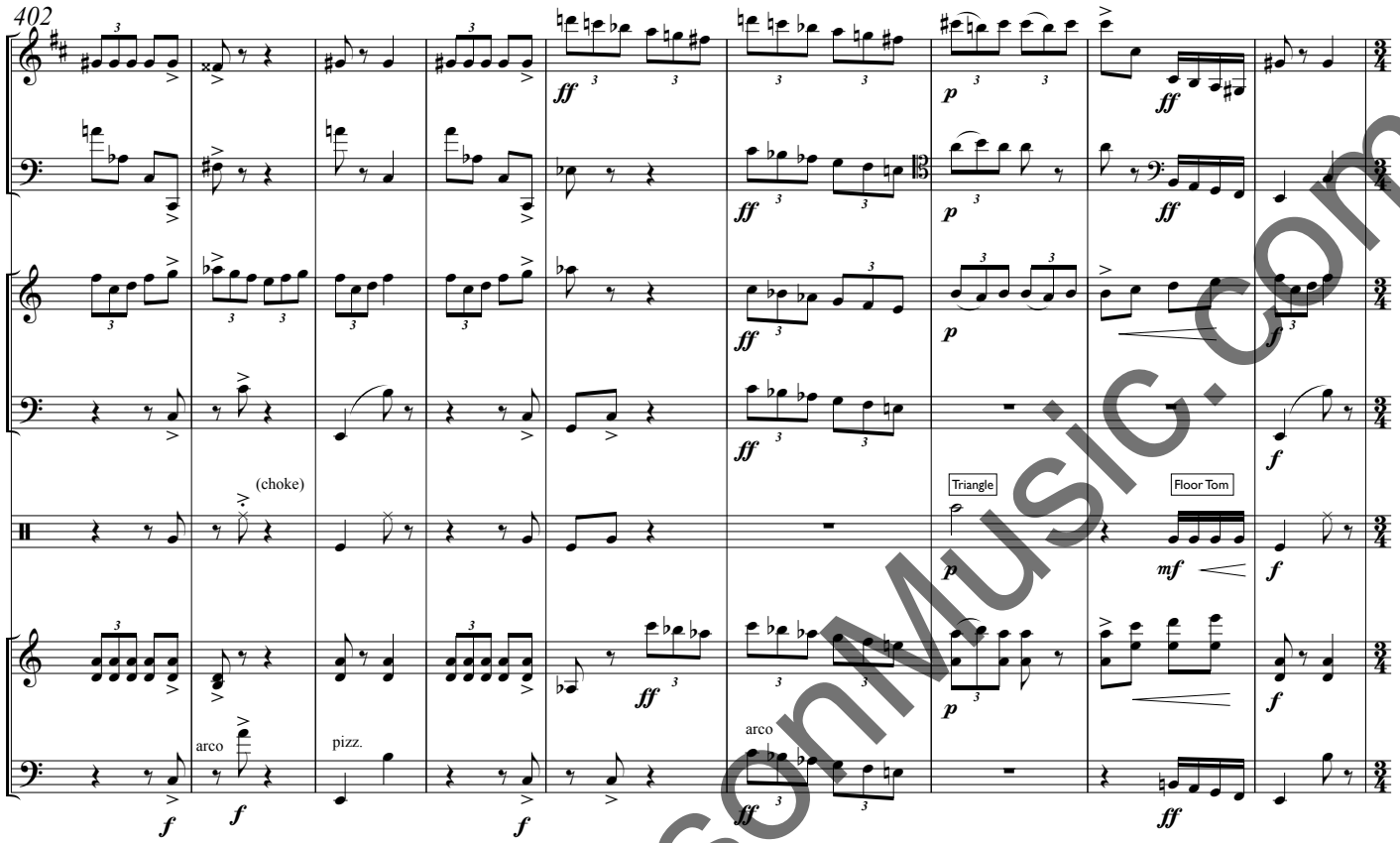


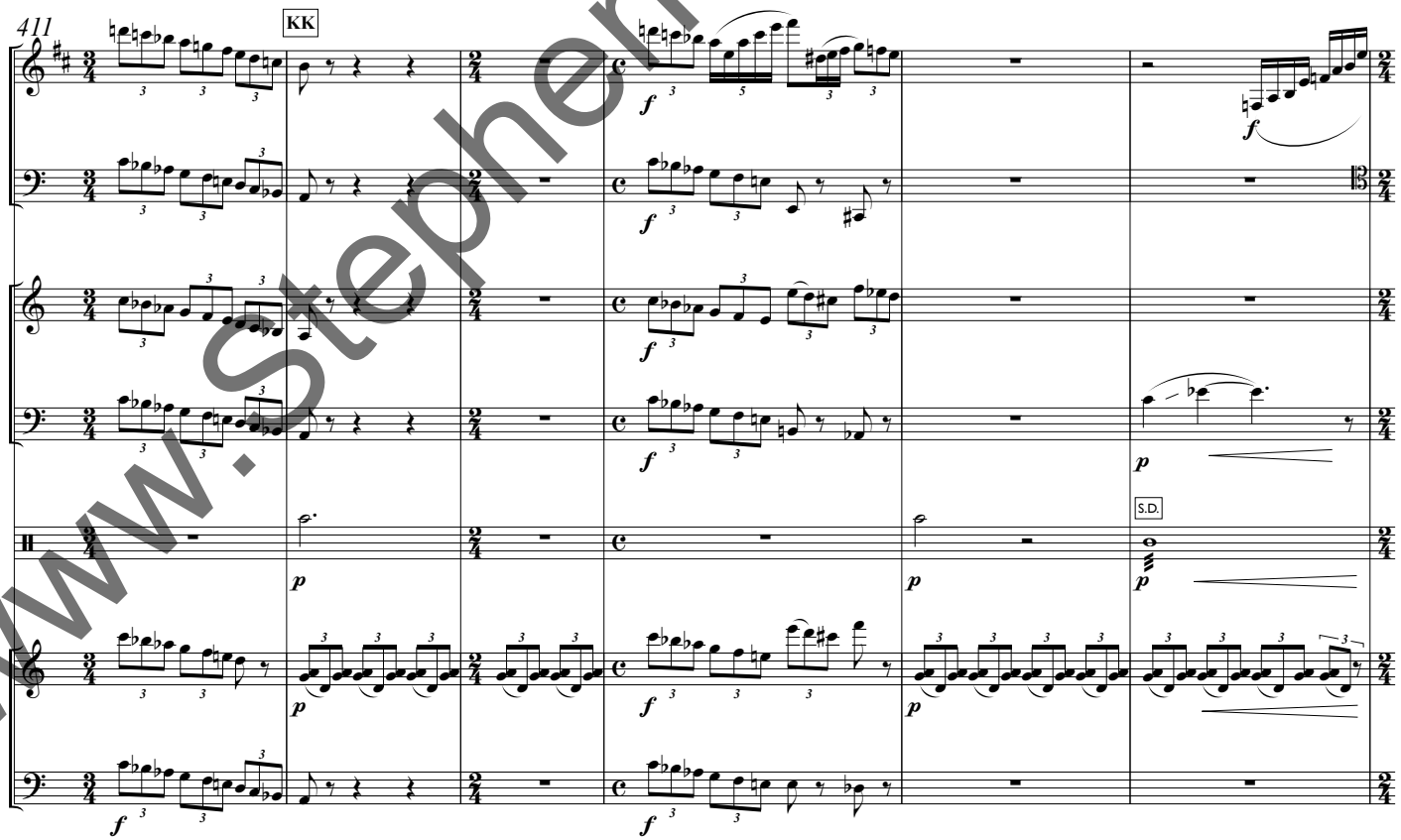


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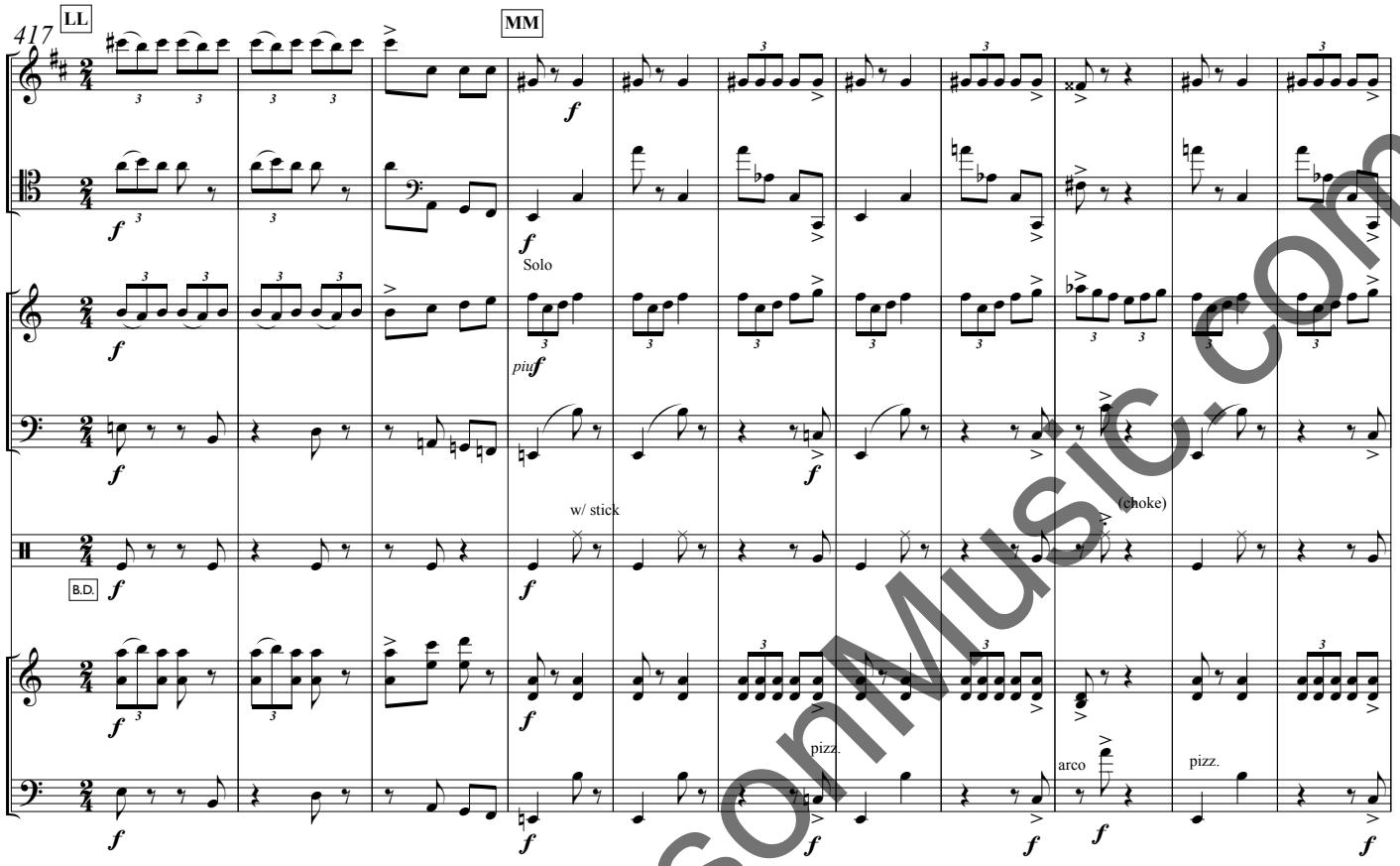


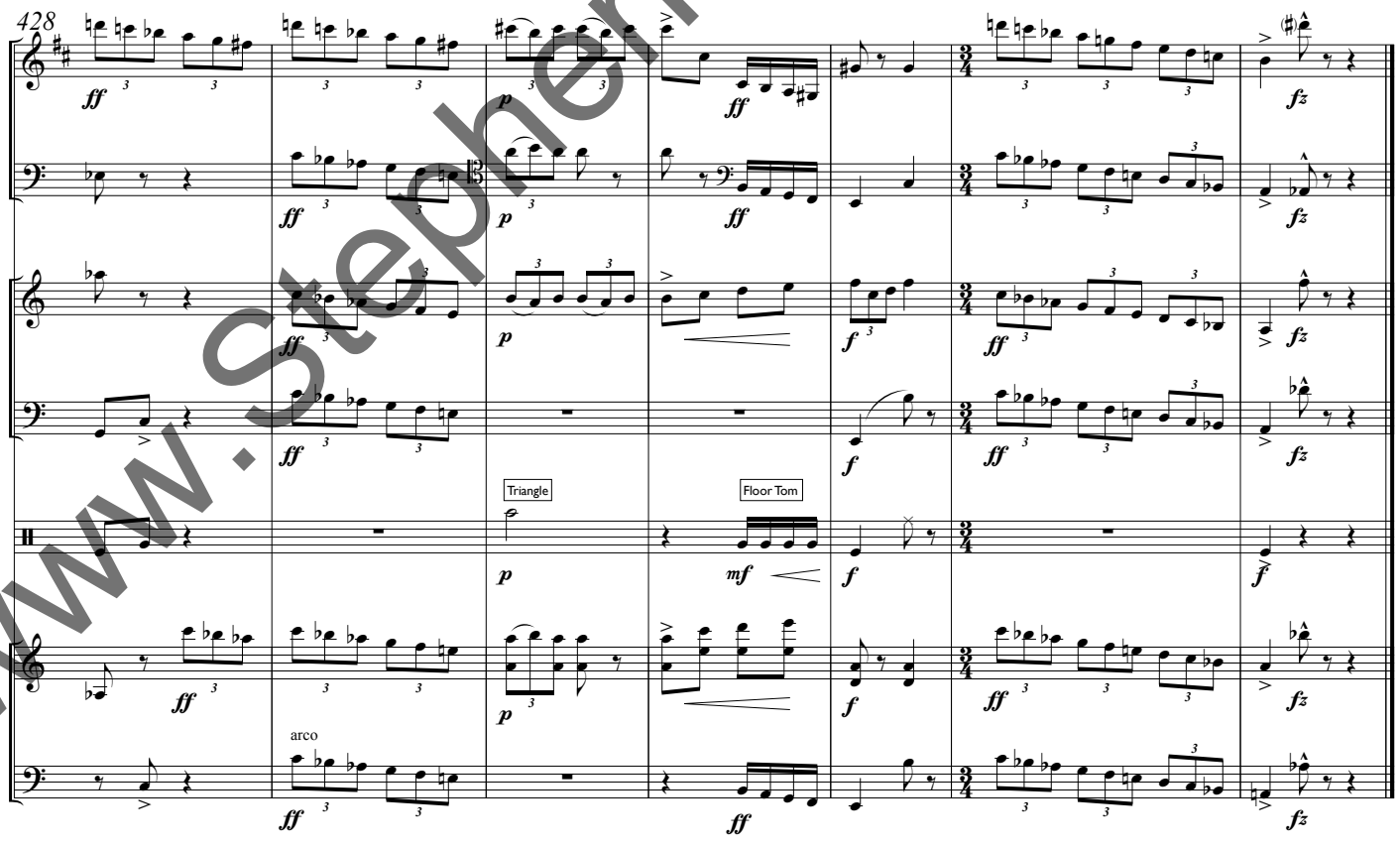


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Narrator: In his excitement of wealth untold, Sam runs to the door, barely controlled.
He struggles at the lock; the keys, (of course) being of the wrong stock. He fails to notice, while furious at the task,
the police coming, no questions to ask. Taken away, under police protection, he passes Joe and Hannah, glancing their direction:

(Sam): You tricked me, Joe. You caught me in your butterfly net. Beat me at my own game. You won the bet.
Evil did I dwell; lewd did I live. Alas, no devil lived on - can you ever forgive?

(Joe): You were a liar from the beginning. It's all primeval. One can live not on evil. I get it now.
I had it all wrong. I prefer pi. Never odd or even: Had both backwards all along.

Narrator: (now turning to Hannah, more conscious of his thoughts): (*Joe*): I had it backwards, Hannah.
I got lost in spots. Looking for happiness, I kept running all over the place. All along, it was right in front of me,
in front of my face. I get it now - I was such a bother. We don't have to be odd or even, one or the other.
We can have all the numbers, forever and ever; it's like Pi - ending never. It may be irrational, but I prefer pi - and this is why:

(he takes her arms, and continues on, wanting to get it all out, before the moment is gone)

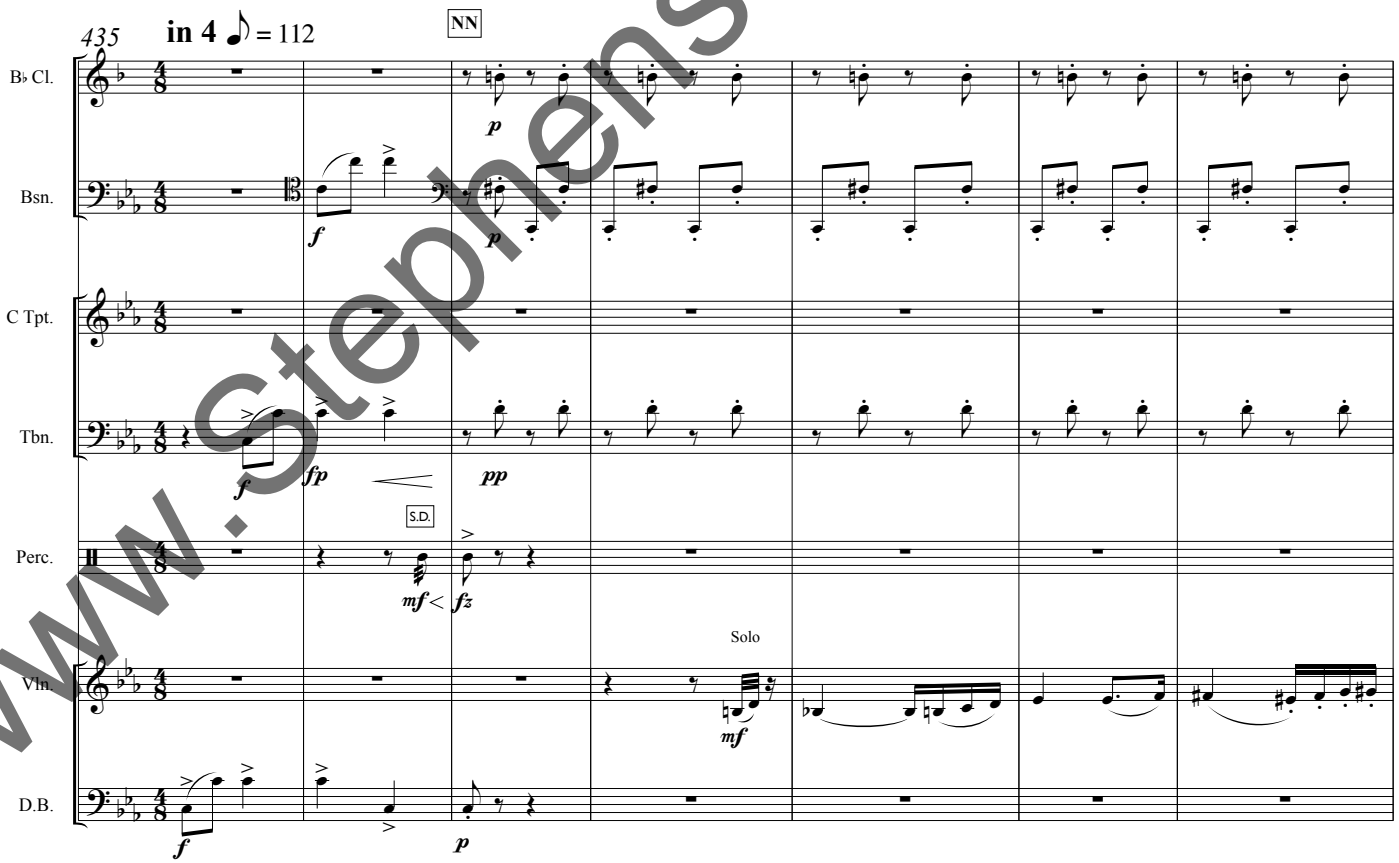
(Joe): No one knows what the future holds, but you can take hold of your future, be bold!
Sure, life's a gamble, but we keep movin' on. (*pause*) For sure I can tell you: Now, I won.
(*Narrator*: Joe repeats it again, a little slower this time. He wants his girl to hear three words, so sublime:
"Now, I won" he says, "our lives have just begun".)

(Hannah): Joe, let's start anew. Tulsa, OK with you?

(Joe): OK with me.

Narrator: They leave the casino immediately. They have their bags in tow. It's dusty and hot outside, as they walk down the road.

**XIV. Now I Won (reprise)**

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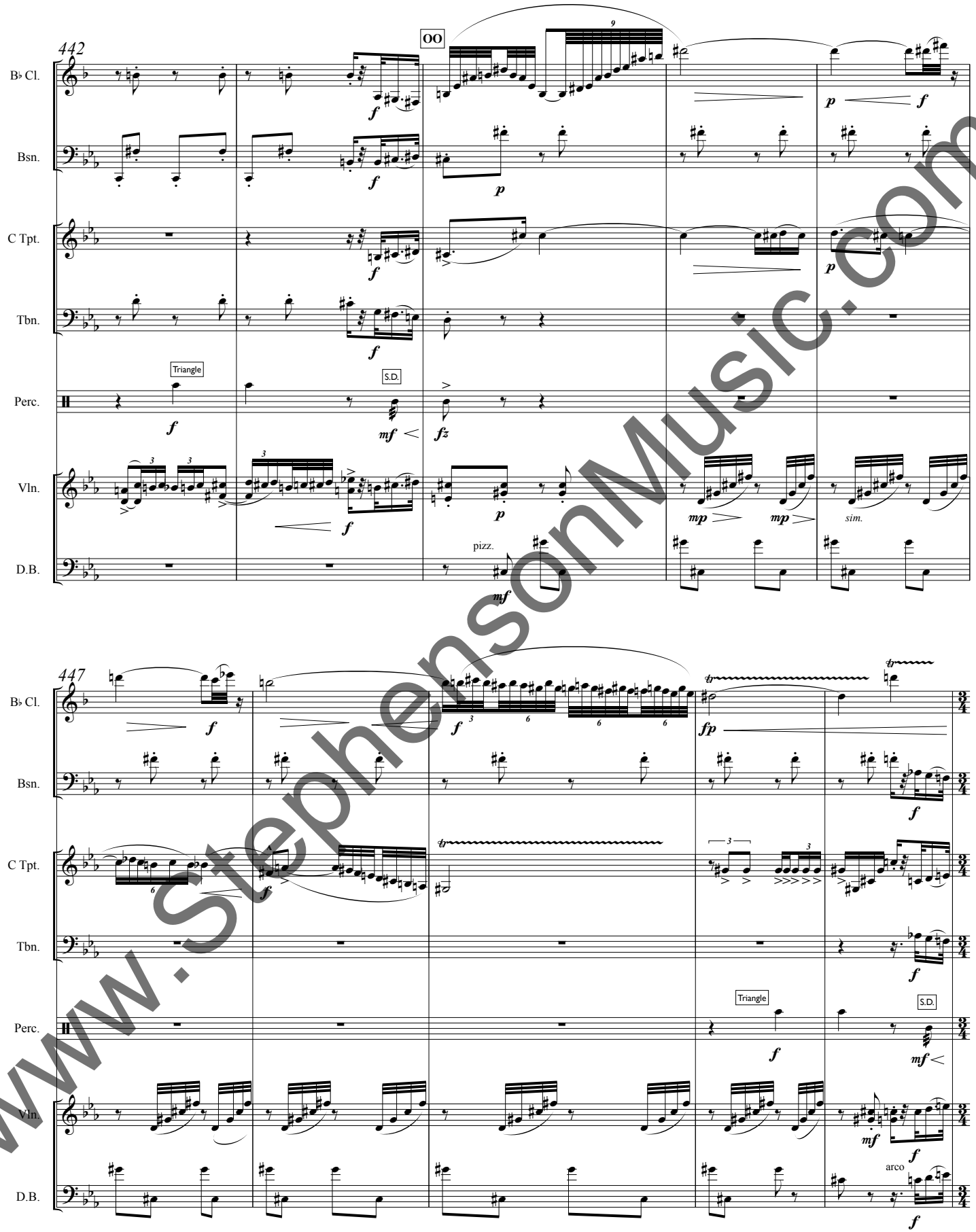


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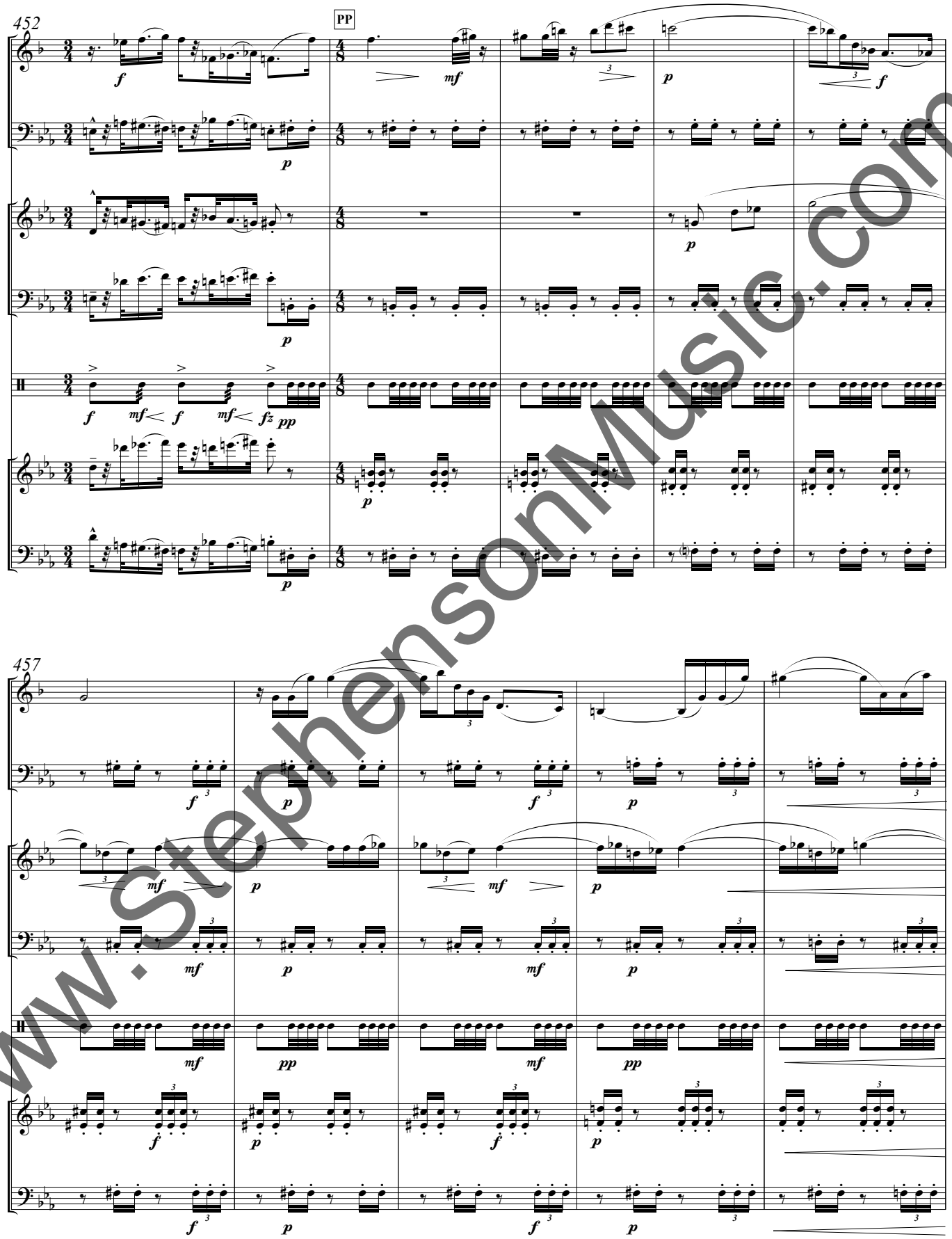


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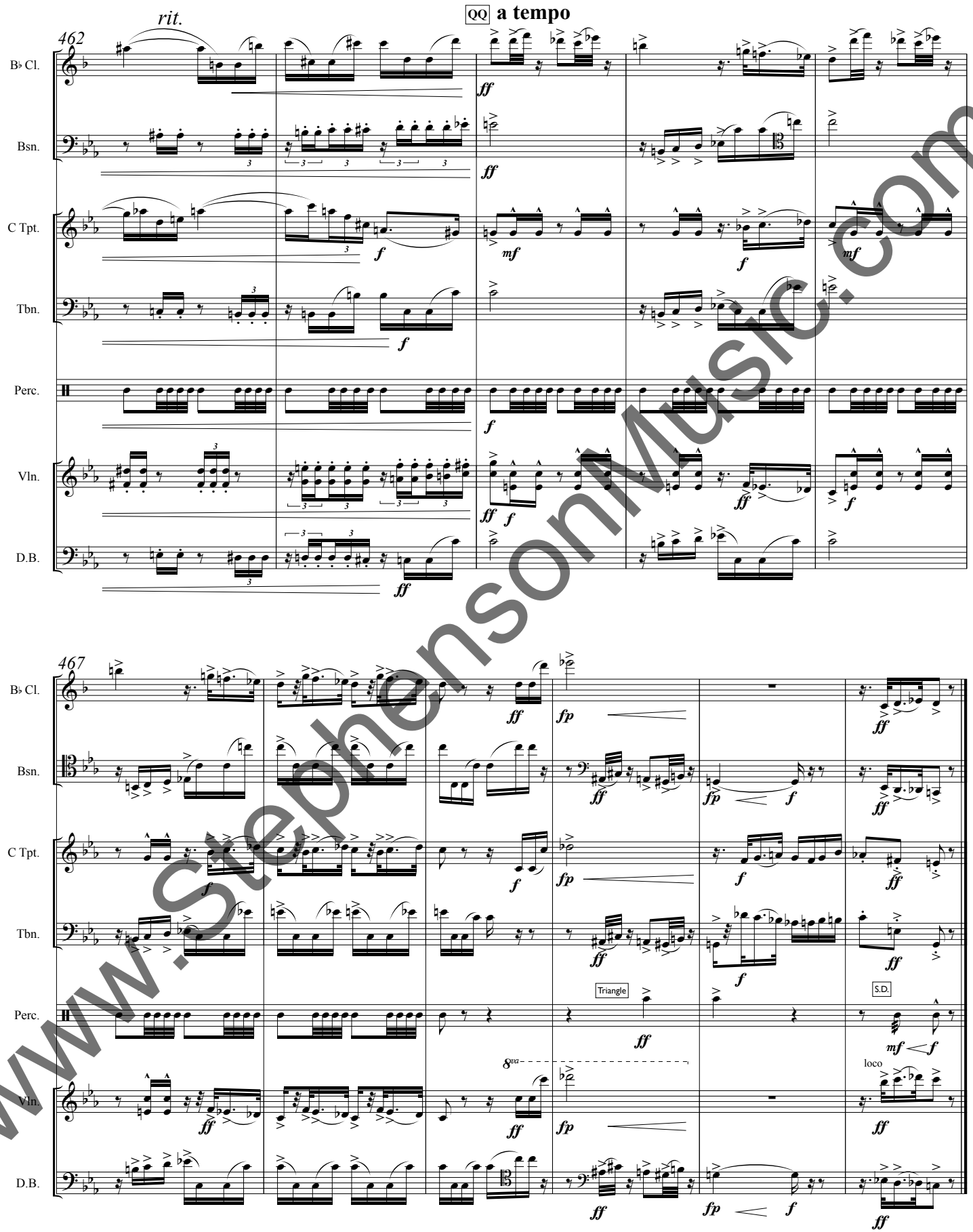


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