PIANO REDUCTION

LIQUID MELANCHOLY

CONCERTO for CLARINET and ORCHESTRA

JAMES M. STEPHENSON

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James M. Stephenson

Liquid Melancholy

concerto for clarinet and orchestra
[2011]

(piano reduction: 2017)

Duration: approx: 16 min.

Program Notes (from the composer):

In the early spring of 2011, as an effort to keep up with my eldest daughter's reading assignments, I joined her in the enjoyable task of reading Ray Bradbury's "Fahrenheit 451." I had read it as a teenager myself, but little did I remember all of the wonderful metaphorical phrases he incorporated in that book! One such phrase was "Liquid Melancholy" - when referring to sleep-inducing medication. I knew right then that if I ever had the opportunity to use that as a title, I would jump on it.

That opportunity came just a few months later, when Liza Grossman, director of the Contemporary Youth Orchestra in Cleveland, asked to commission me to write a new clarinet concerto for Daniel Gilbert. A consortium of three ensembles was quickly formed, including Liza/CYO, the Midwest Young Artists (John Bruce Yeh, soloist, and Allan Dennis, conductor) and the Portland Youth Philharmonic (David Shiffrin, soloist and David Hattner, conductor). This project excited me on multiple levels: I had never written a major work for the clarinet, and everyone for whom I was writing were terrific friends and wonderful musicians (Liza, David Hattner and I going back to high school days at the Interlochen Arts Academy).

I've always been fascinated by the clarinet's ability to play such smooth and fluid lines, at all dynamic levels. This "liquidity" is something I wanted to highlight in this concerto. This is most evident in the 1st movement, when the clarinet is set against angular lines, first introduced by the solo cello. For the melancholy aspect, I wanted to write some searching music: some deeply personal and intimate music, a chance for the soloist and audience to relate and reflect upon what I put out there. This is the 2nd movement. The third and fourth movements are played without break: an accompanied cadenza followed by a wispy and light final scherzo.

The concerto is roughly 16 minutes, and is originally scored for Solo Clarinet + 2 Flutes, Piccolo, 2 Oboes, English Horn, 2 Bb Clarinets, Bass Clarinet, 2 Bassoons 4 Horns, 2 C Trumpets, 2 Trombones, Bass Trombone, Tuba, Timpani, 4 percussionists, Harp and Strings.

This new 'reduced' score was commissioned by the Lake Forest Symphony, to match their Bruckner 4 orchestration for the concert, plus the addition of harp and one more percussionist.

It is with great pleasure that I dedicate this work to the consortium of three orchestras/soloists + the Lake Forest Symphony for their belief in commissioning new music, and to Liza and Dan, for initiating the idea and premiering the work.

Jim Stephenson; January 2017.

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Co-commissioned by the Contemporary Youth Orchestra (lead member), Liza Grossman, director; the Midwest Young Artists, Allan Dennis, director; and the Portland Youth Philharmonic, David Hattner, director. Soloists: Daniel Gilbert (CYO), John Bruce Yeh (MYA) and David Shifrin (PYP).
Premiere date: December 10, 2011. Contemporary Youth Orchestra, Cleveland, Ohio.
Reduced orchestration commissioned by the Lake Forest Symphony.

Piano Reduction

Liquid Melancholy

Concerto for Clarinet and orchestra

I.

James M. Stephenson [2011]

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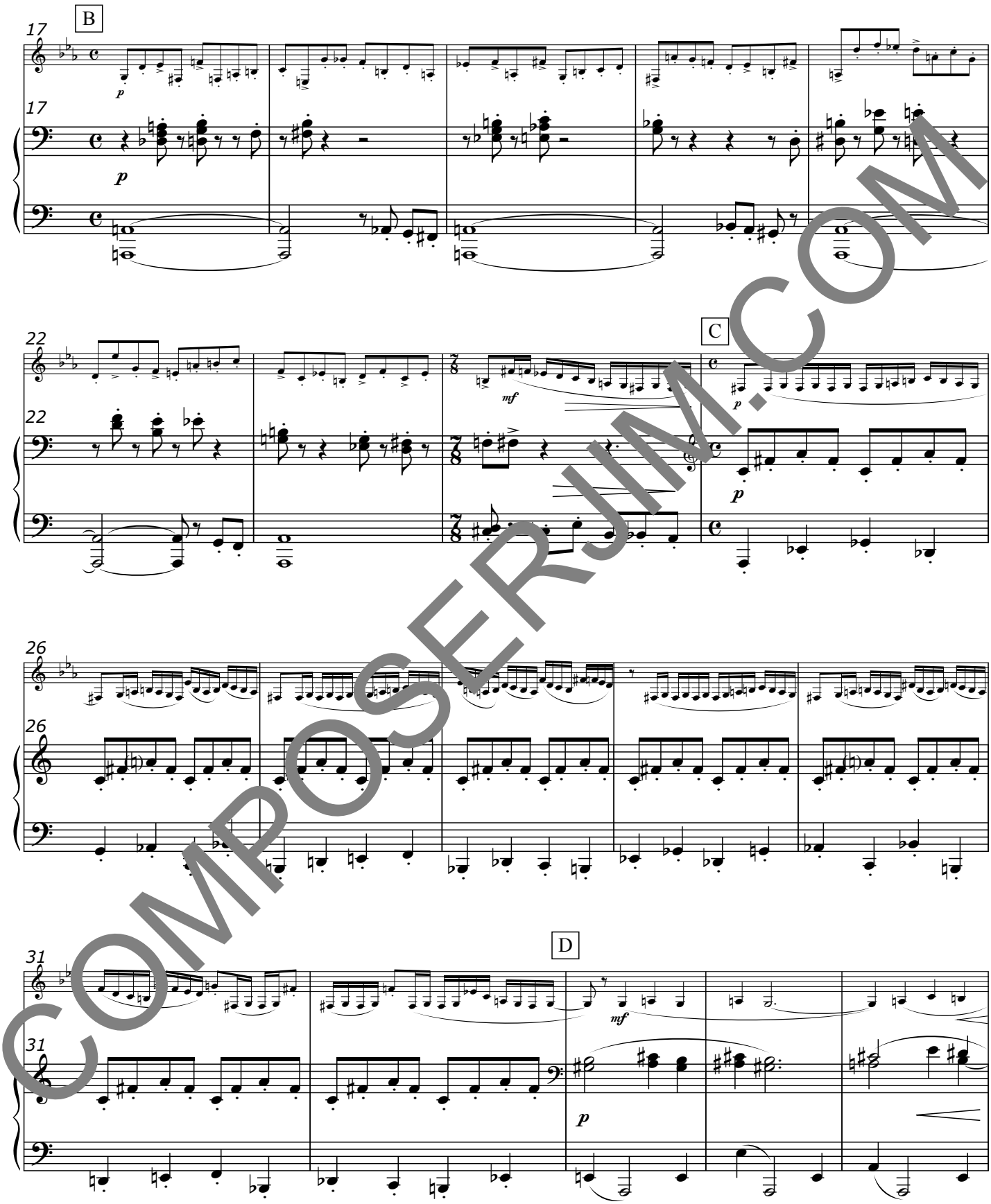

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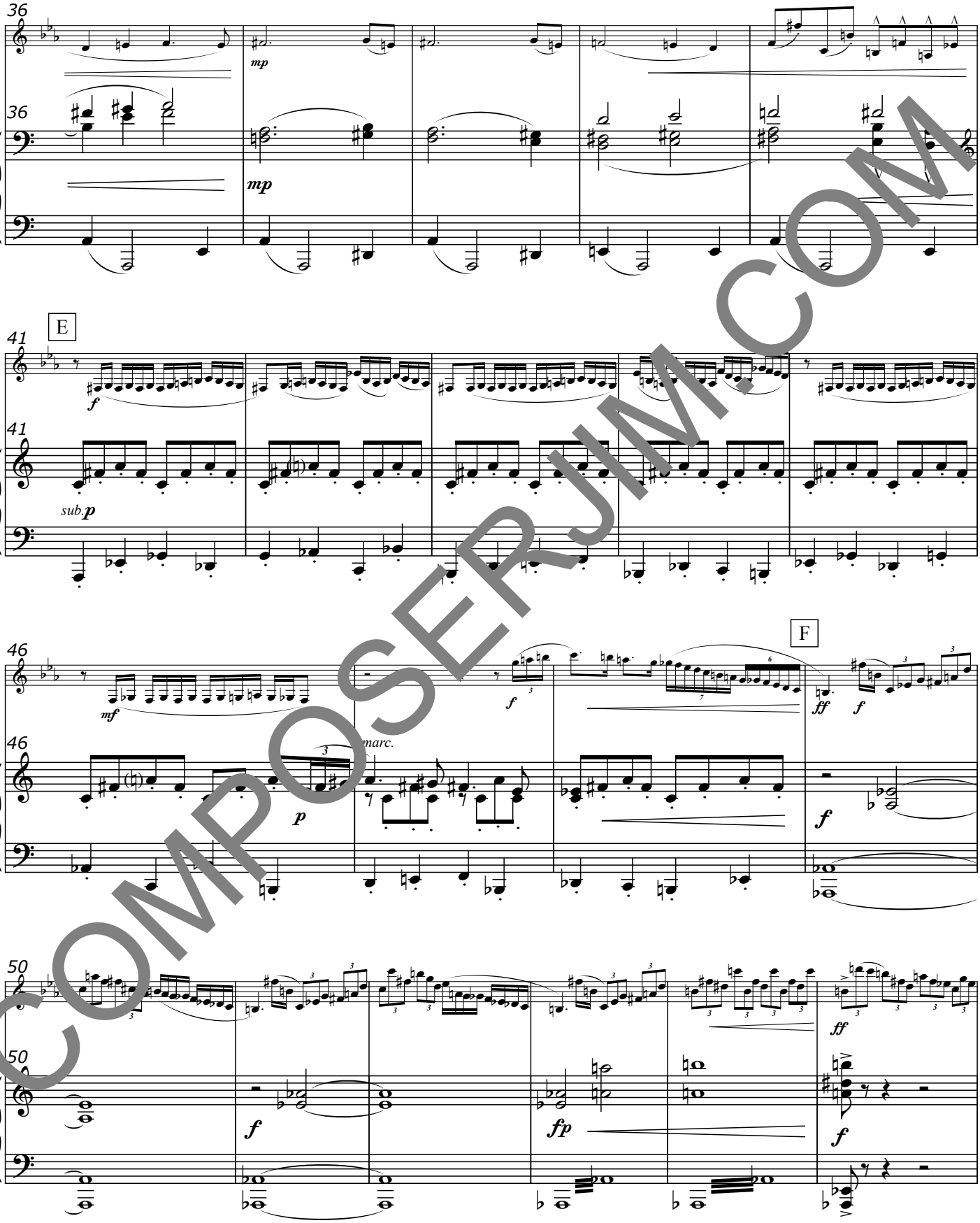

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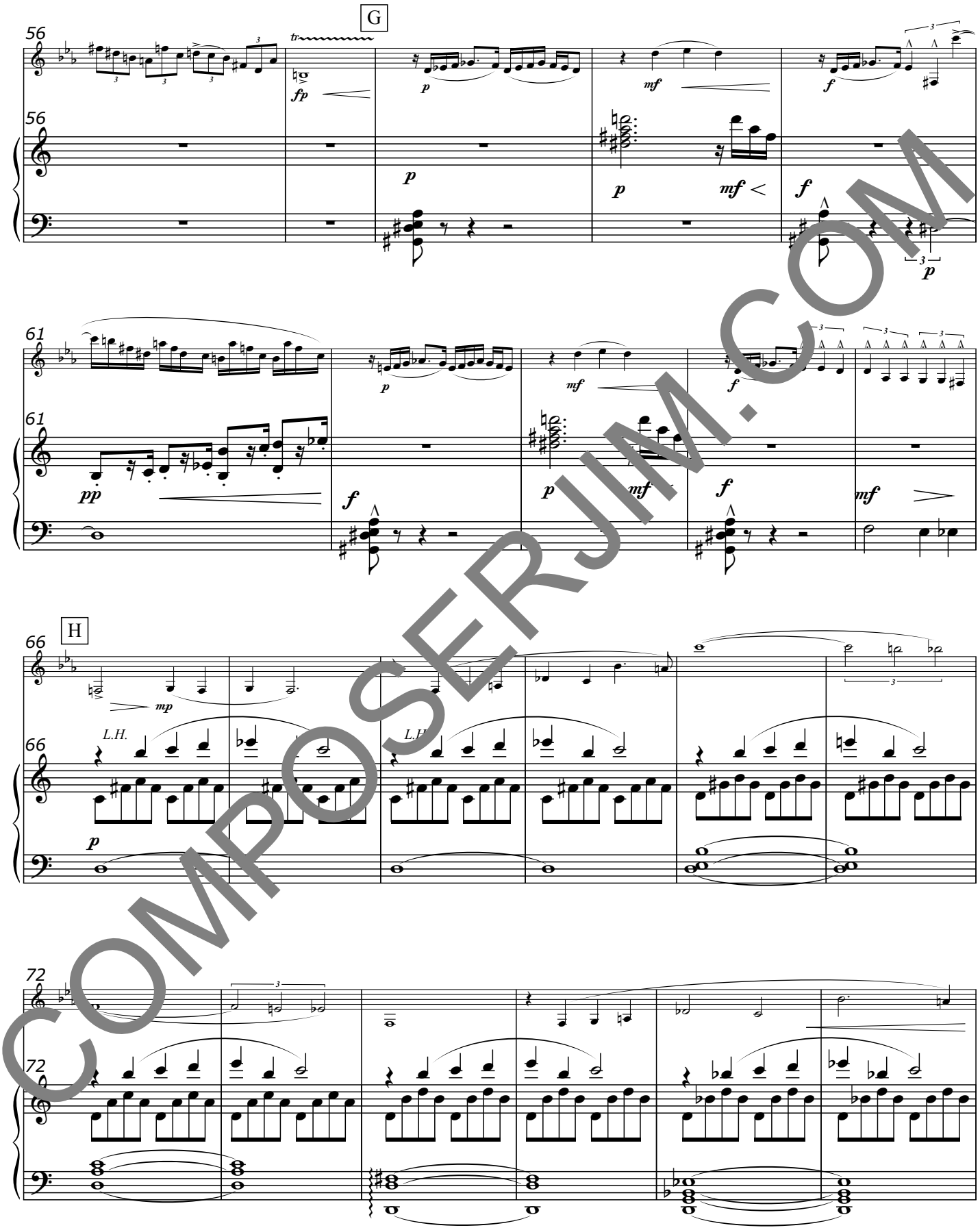

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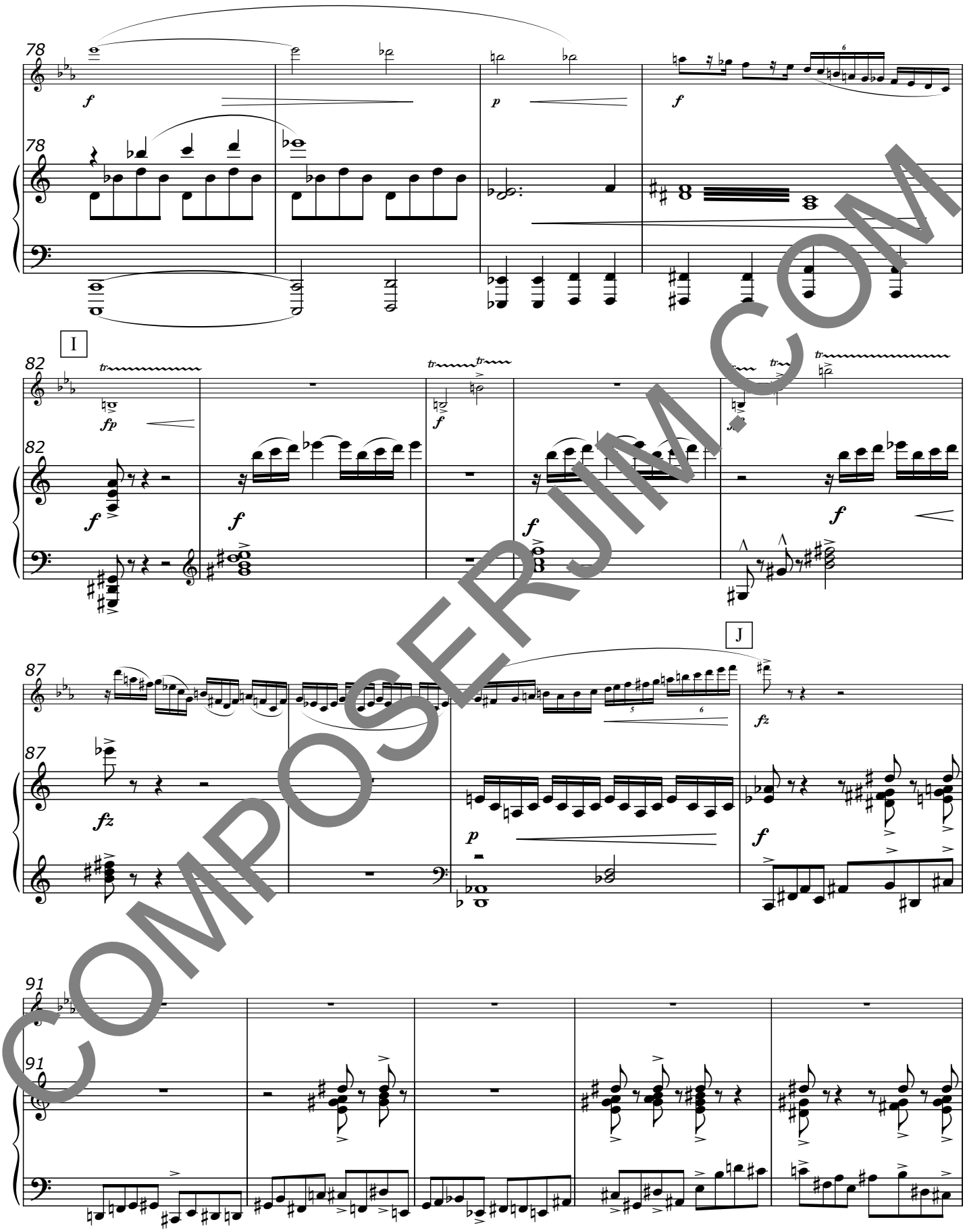

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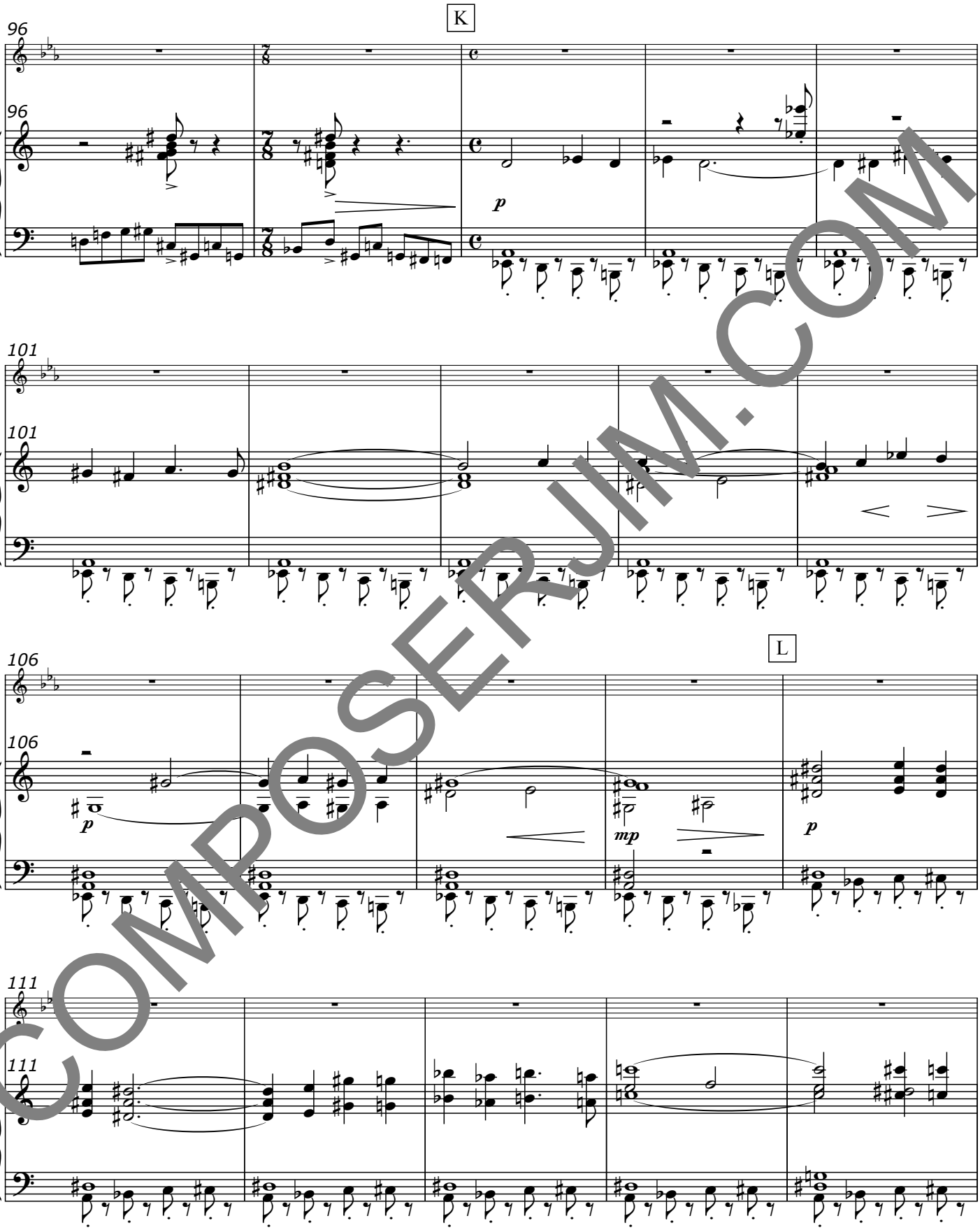

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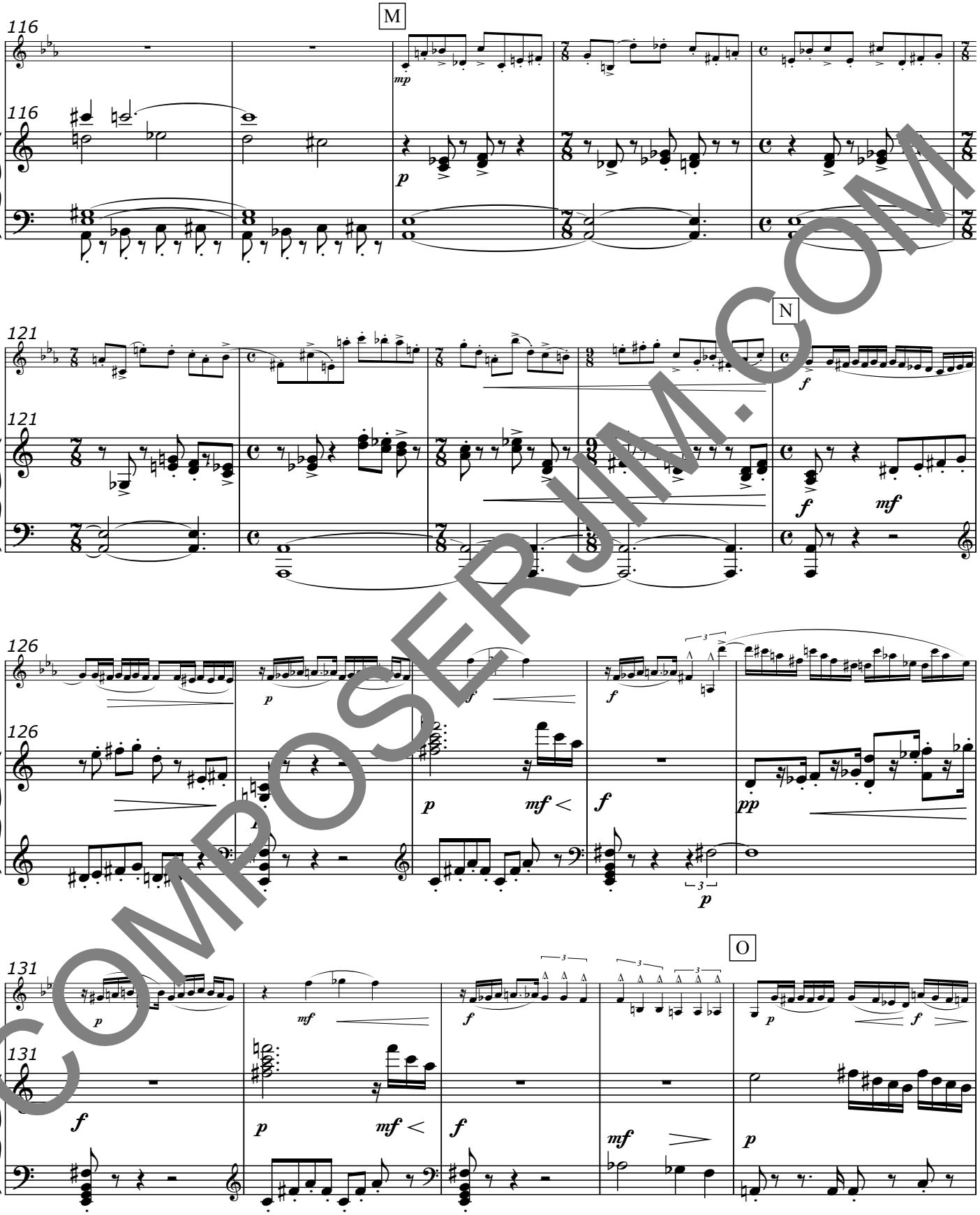

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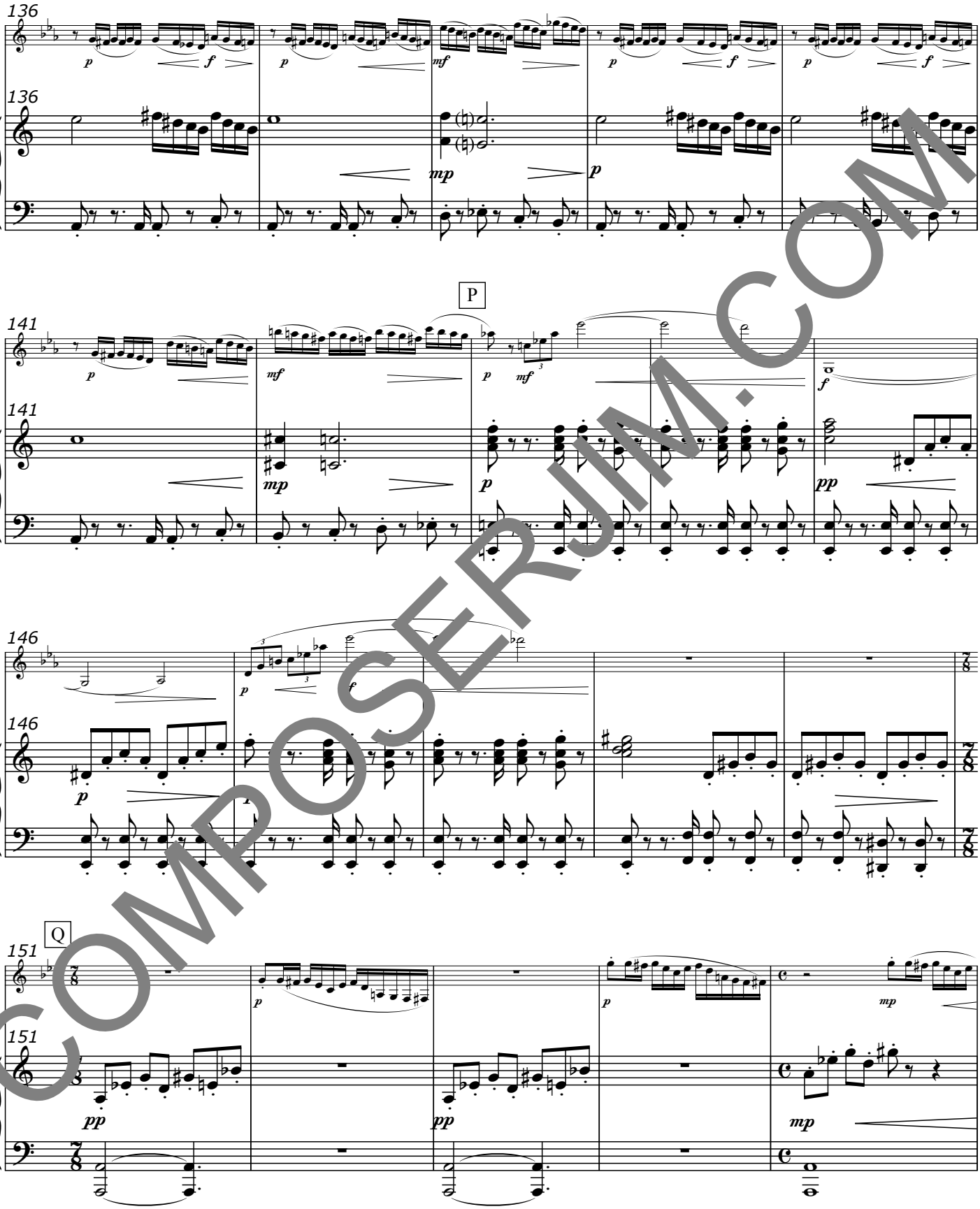

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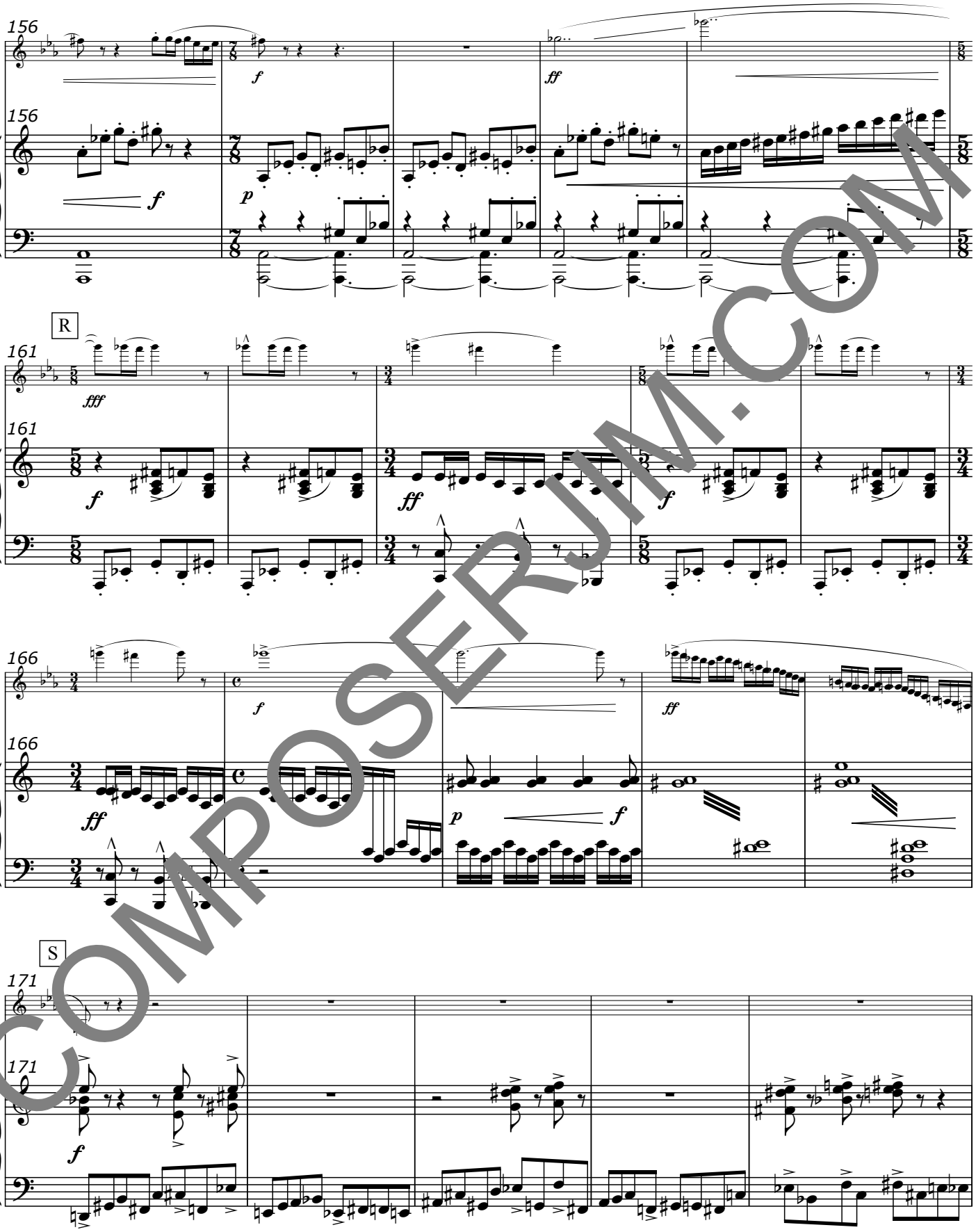

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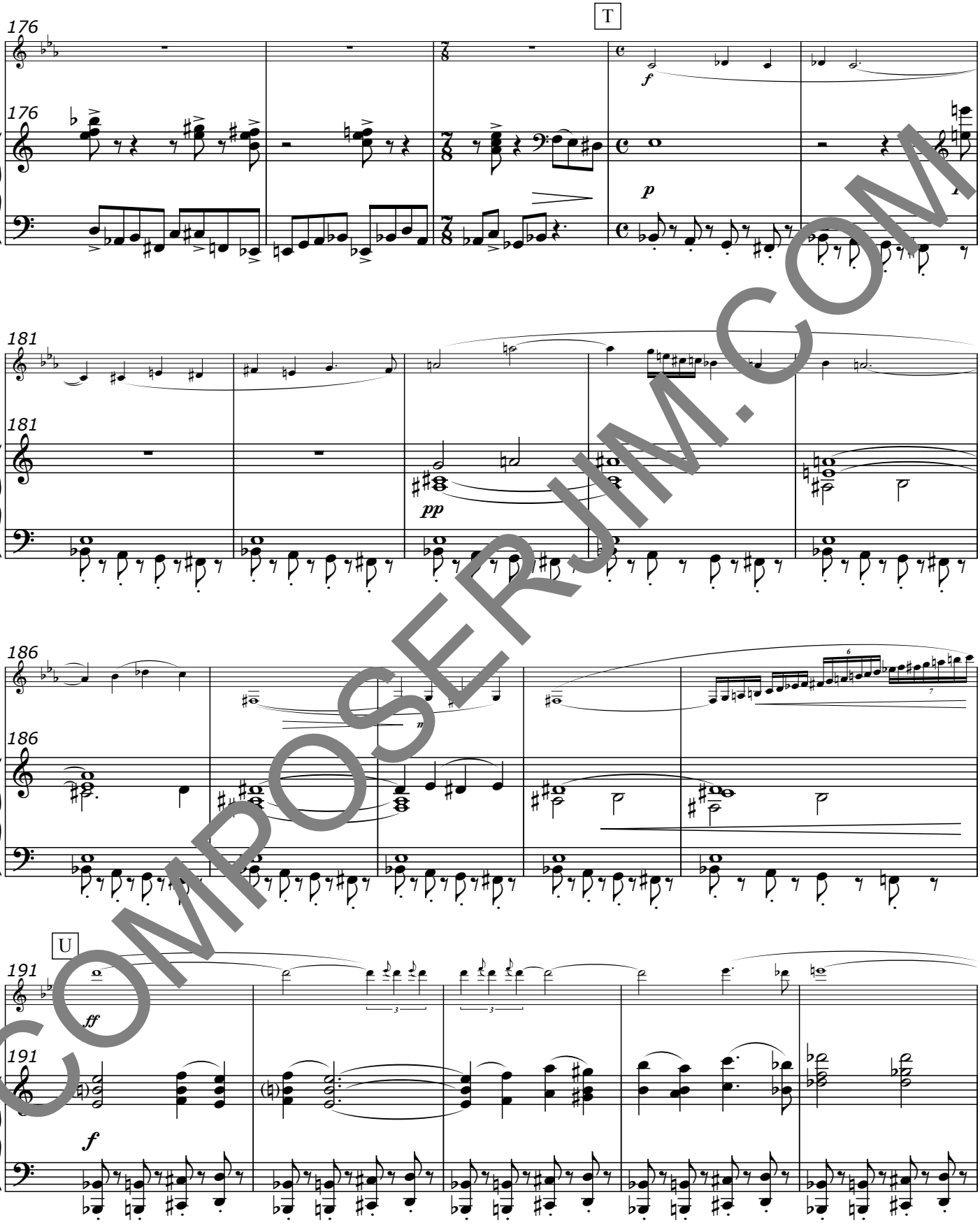

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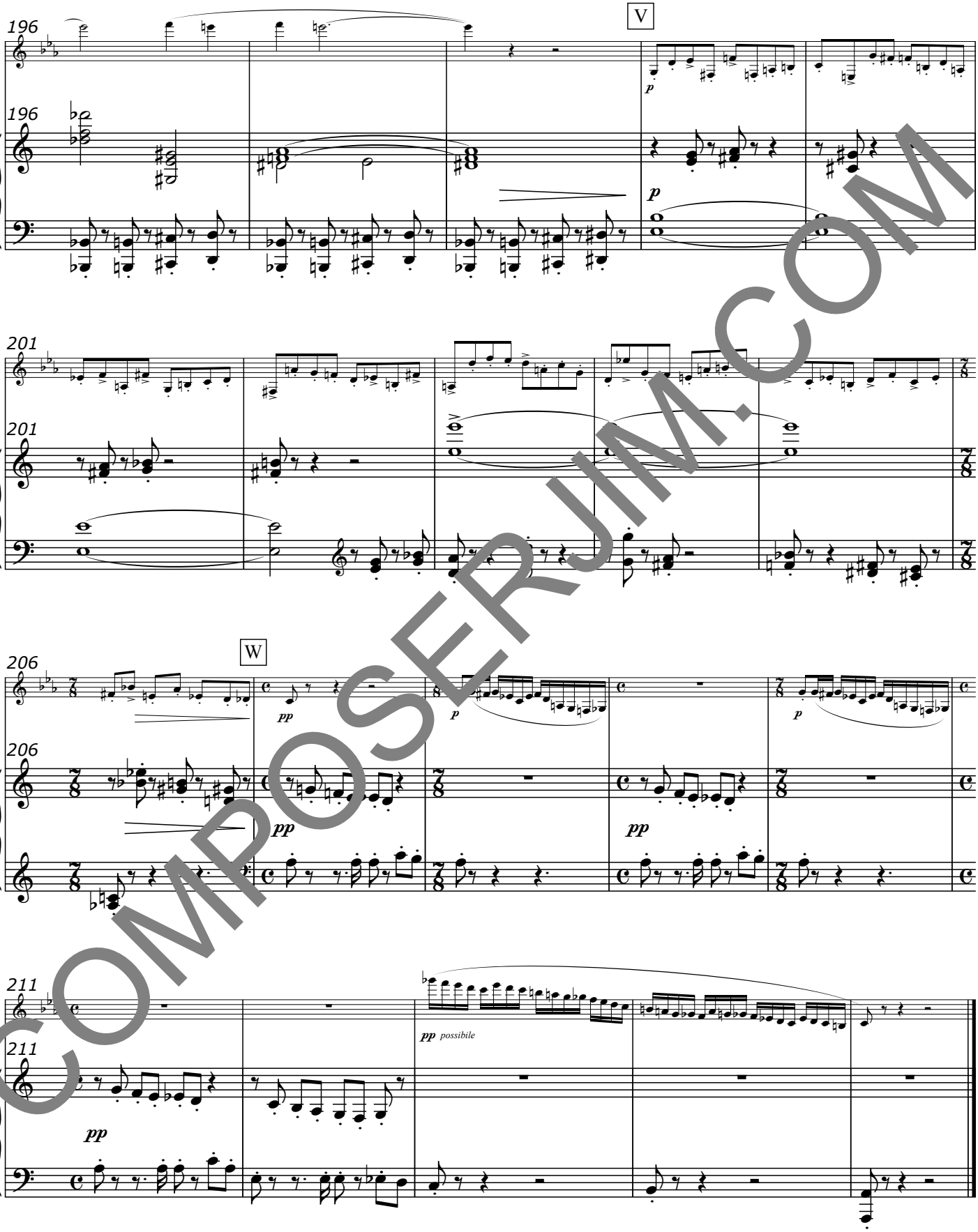

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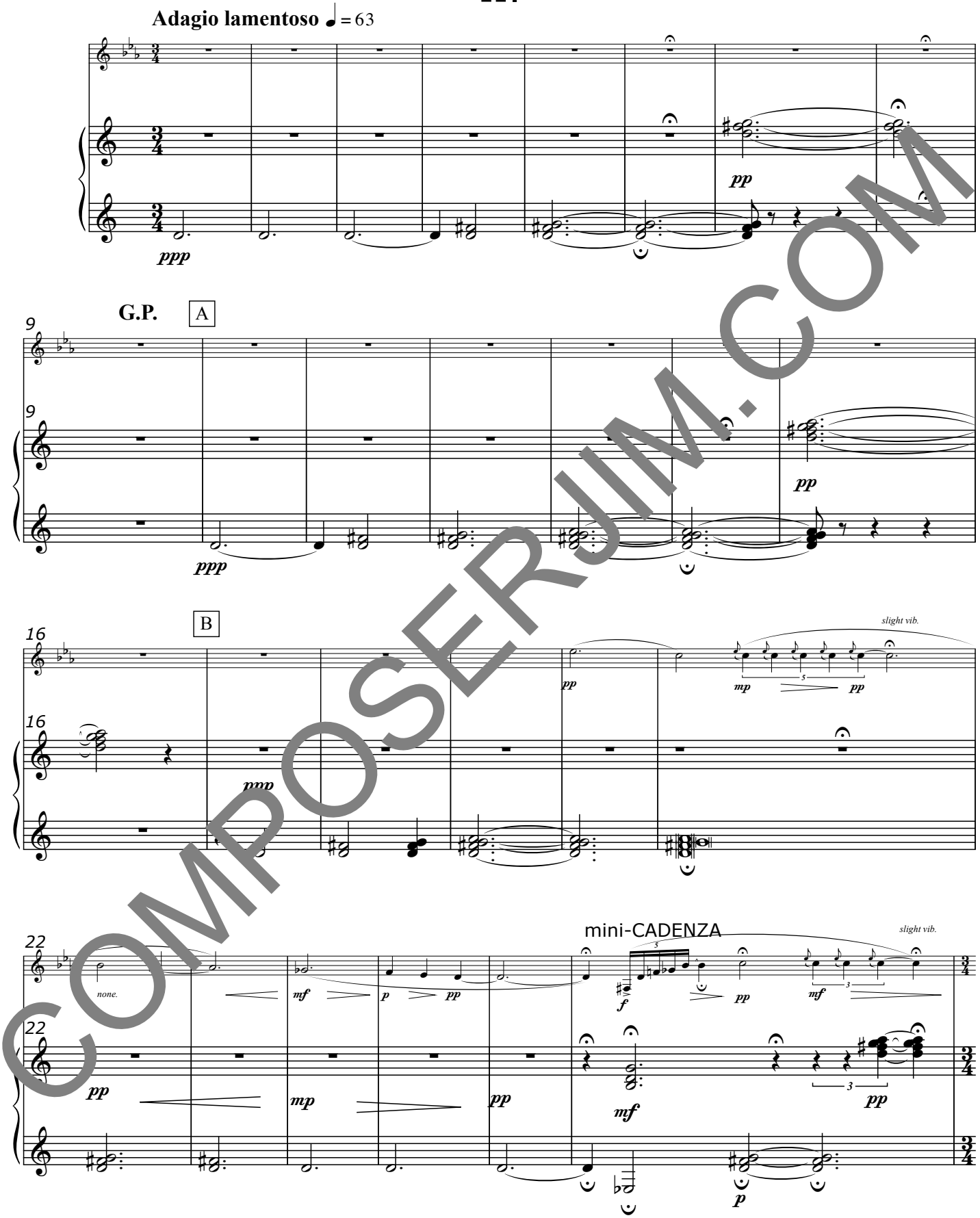

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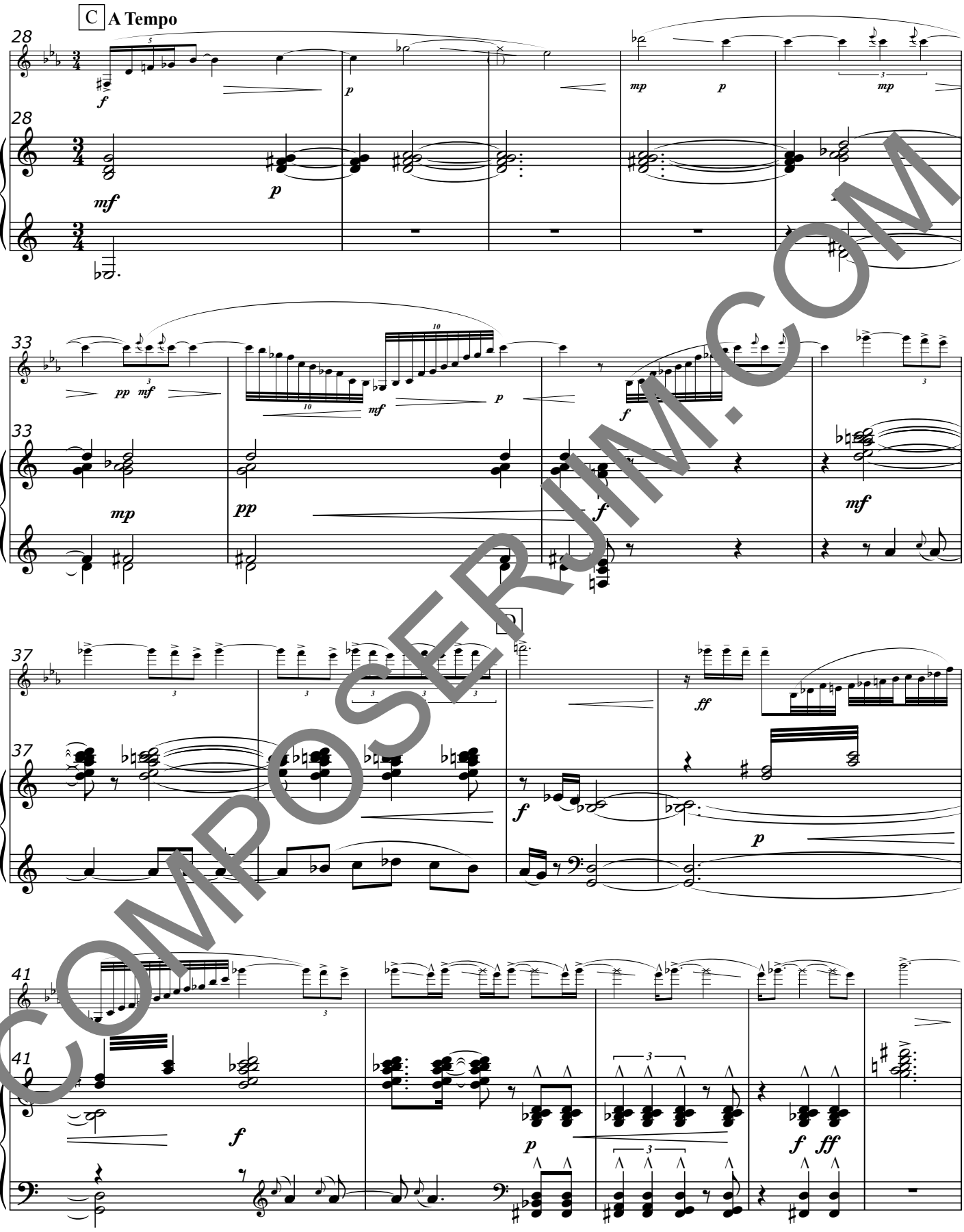

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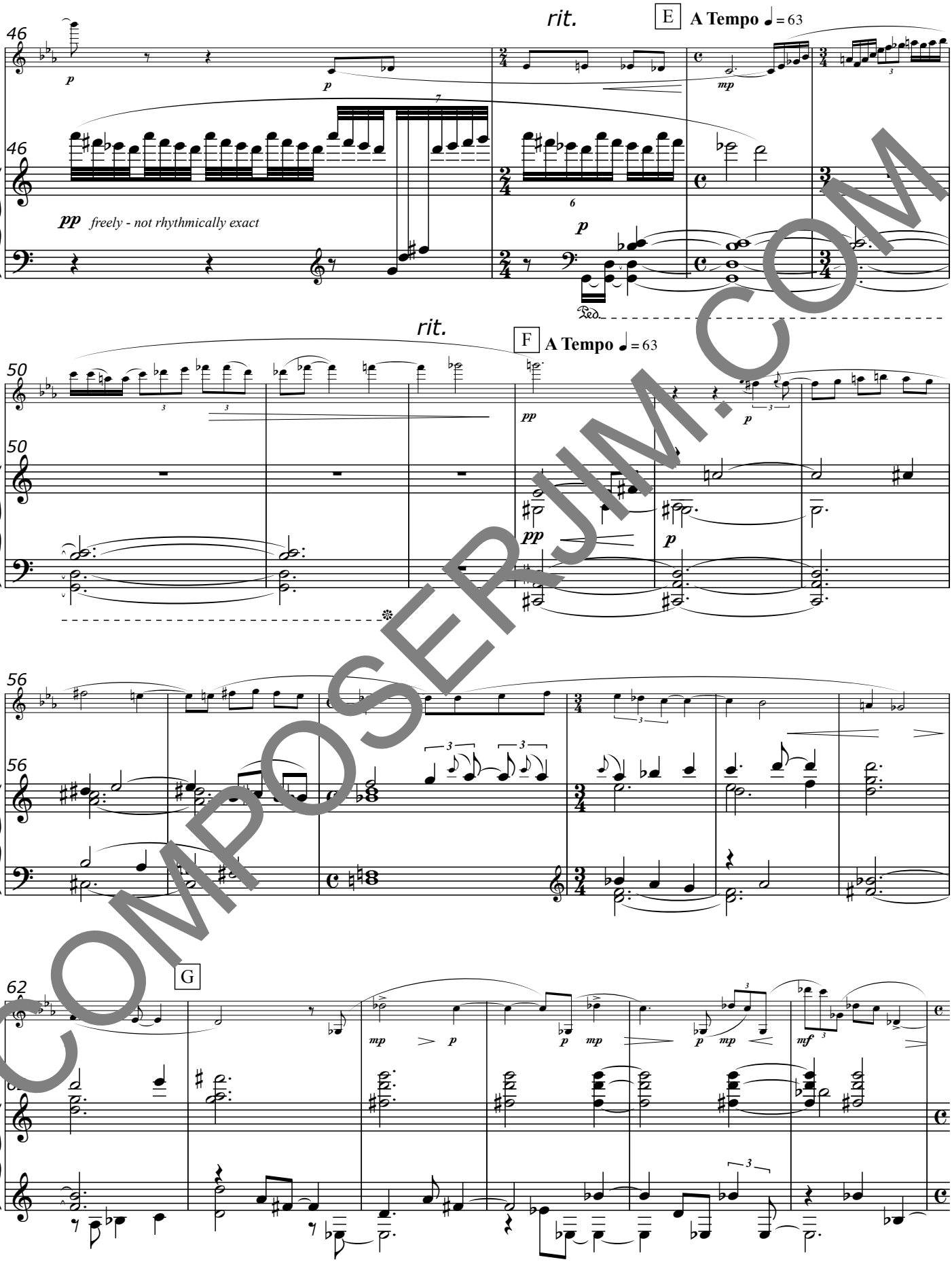

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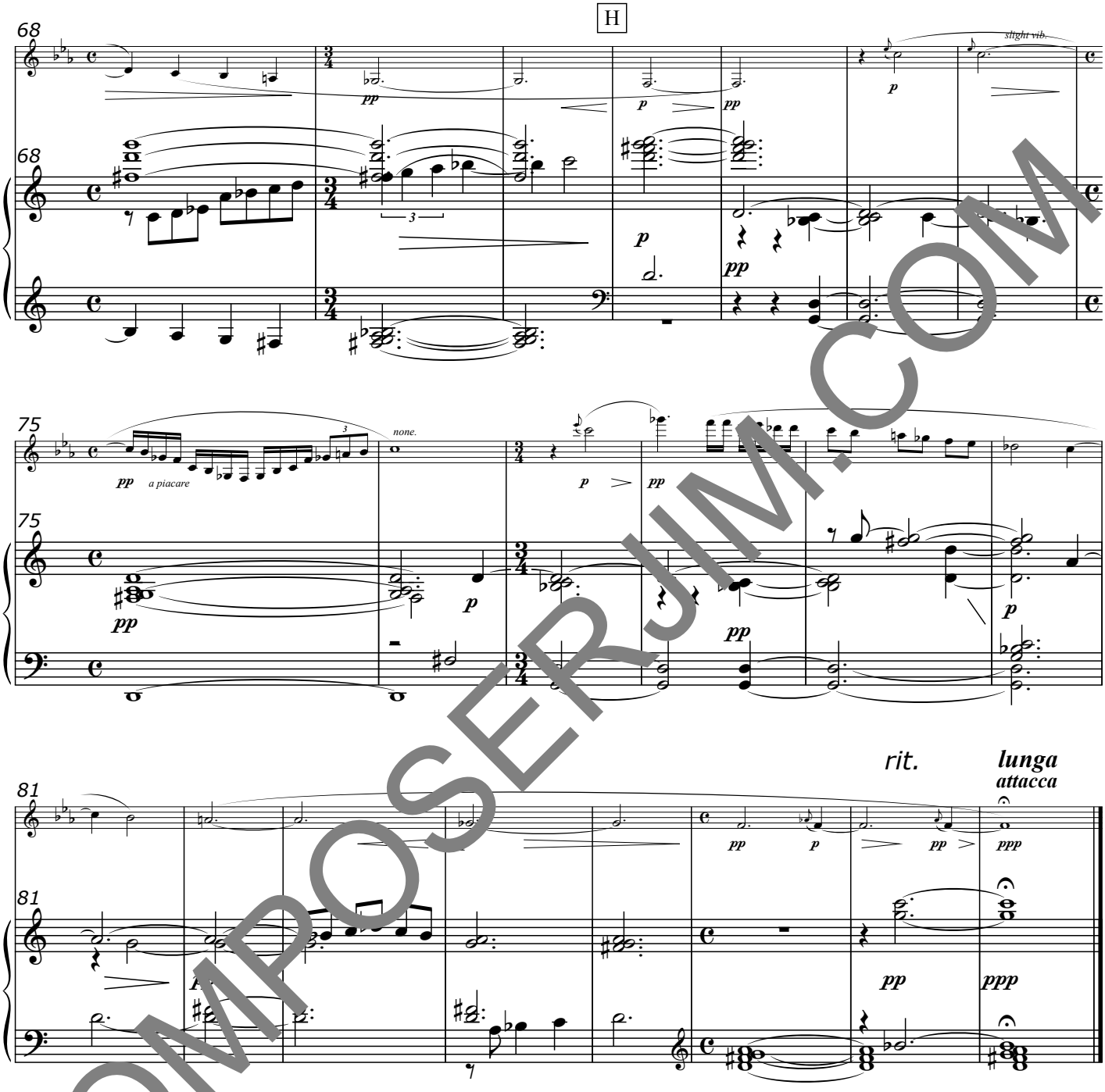

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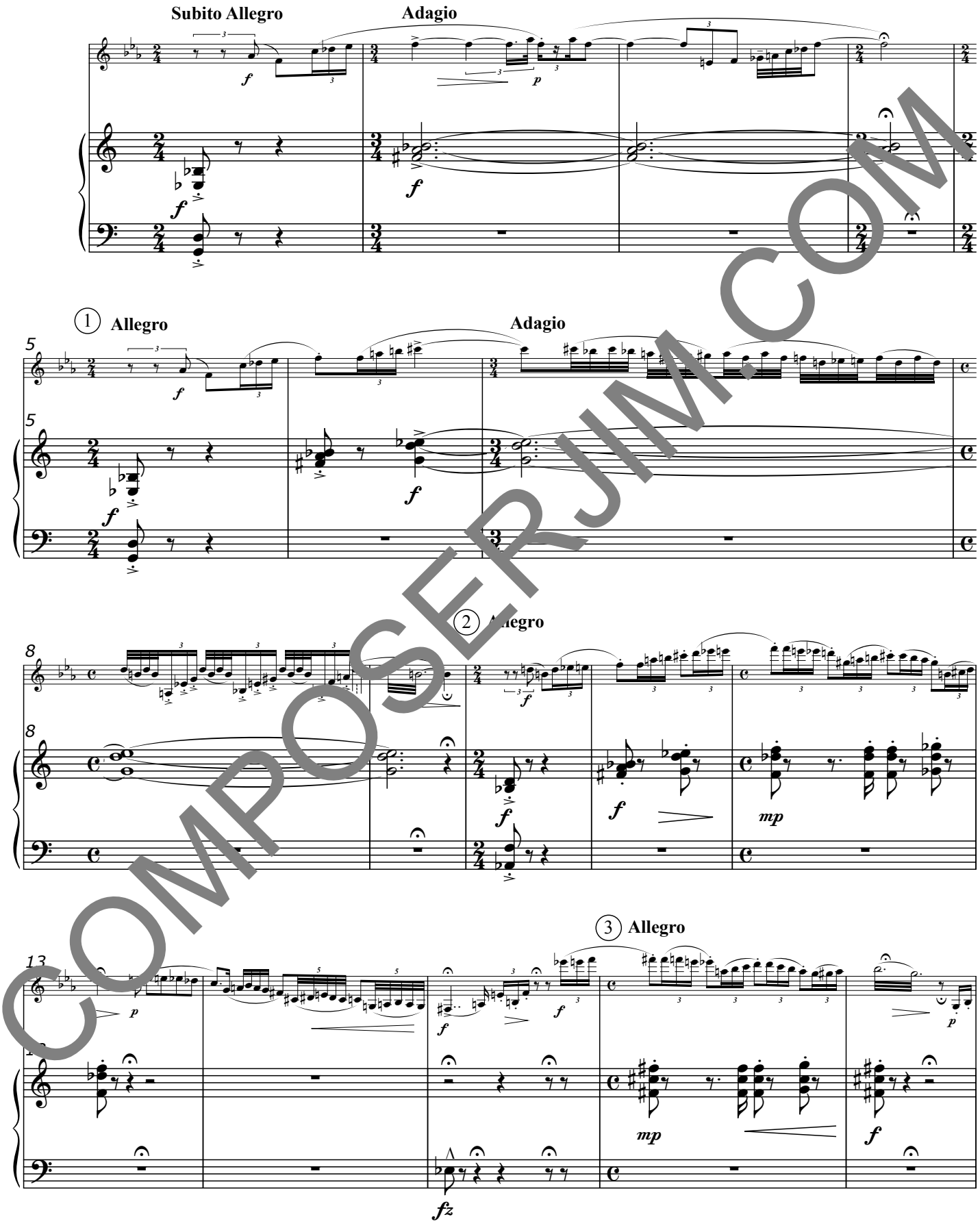

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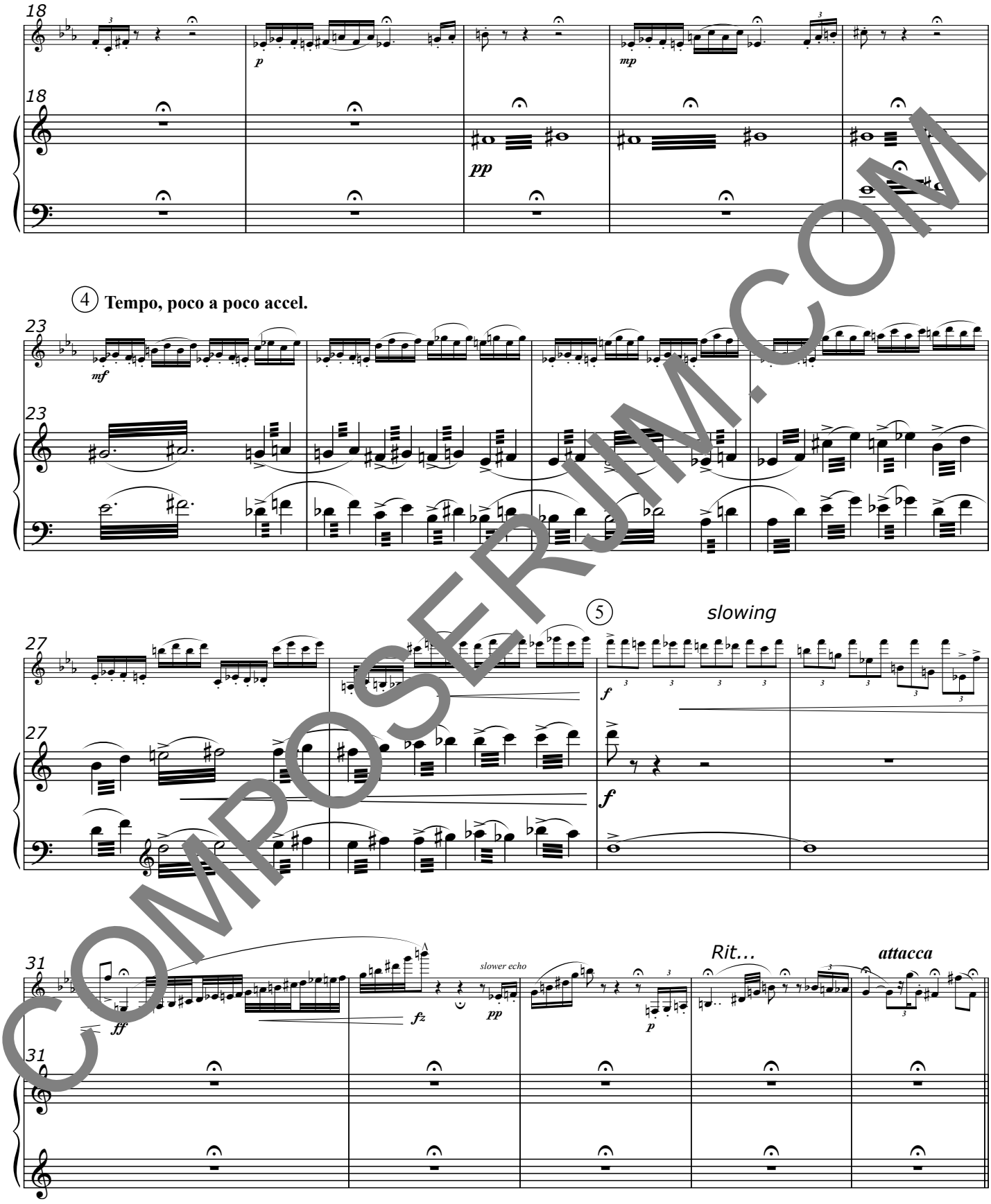

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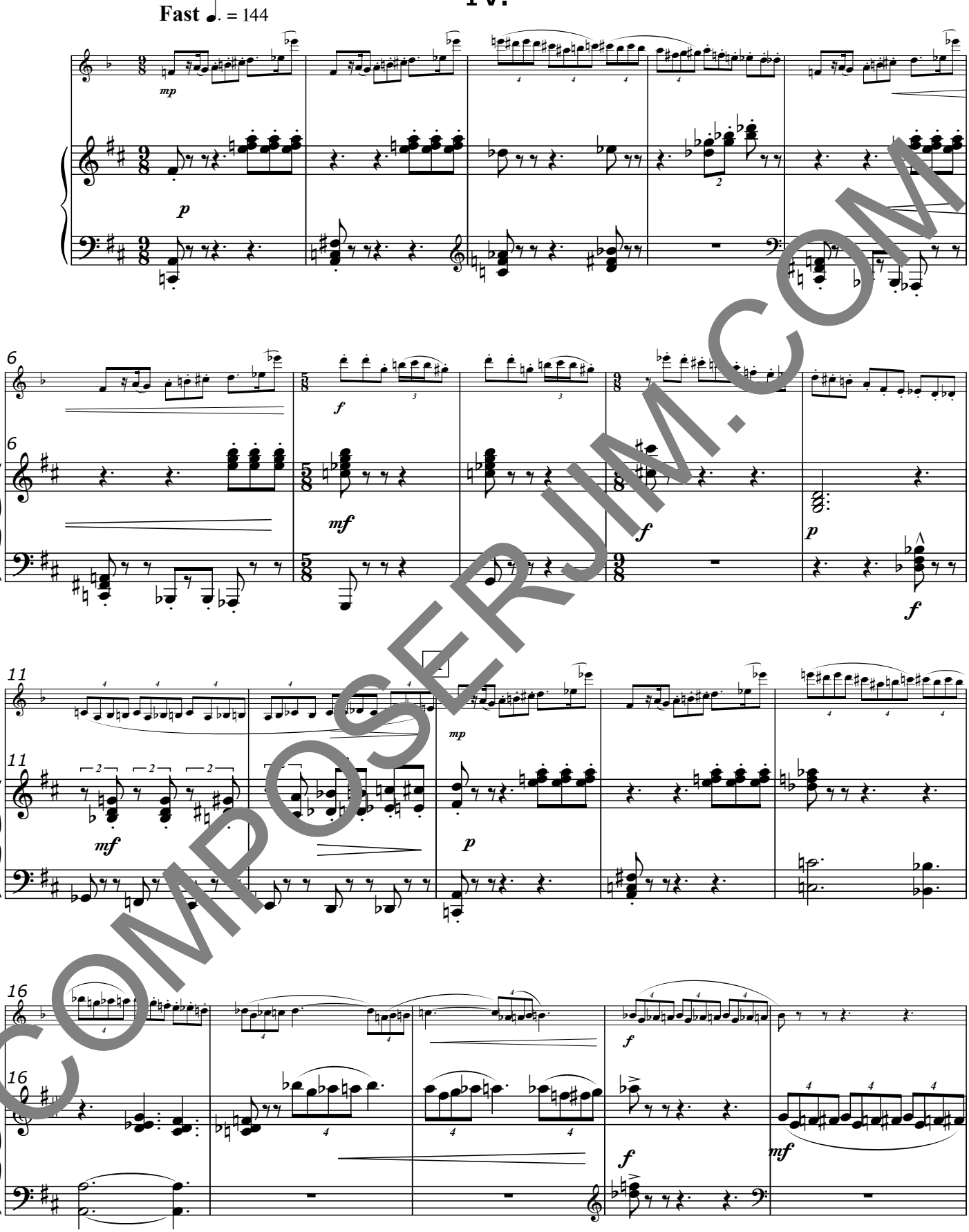

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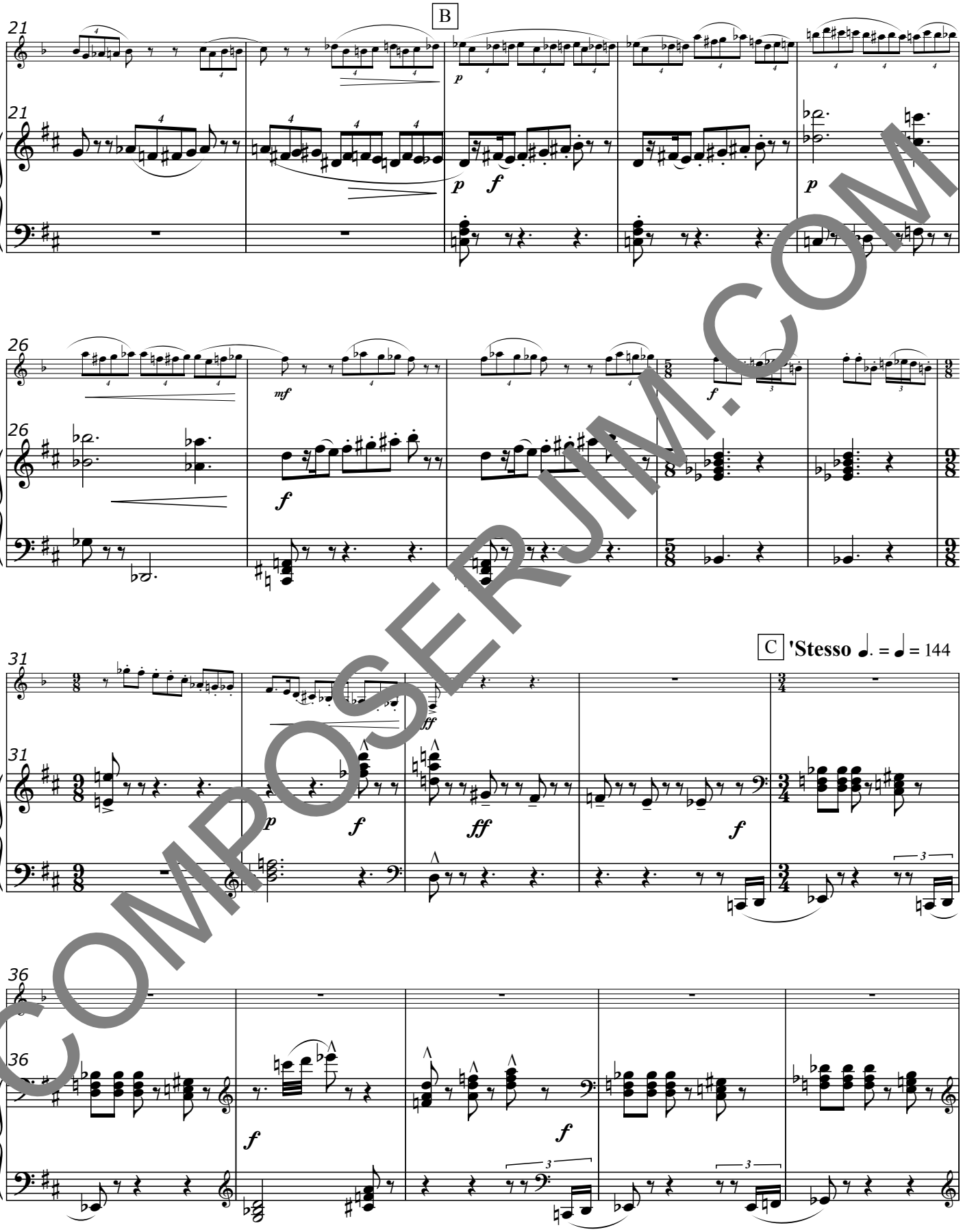

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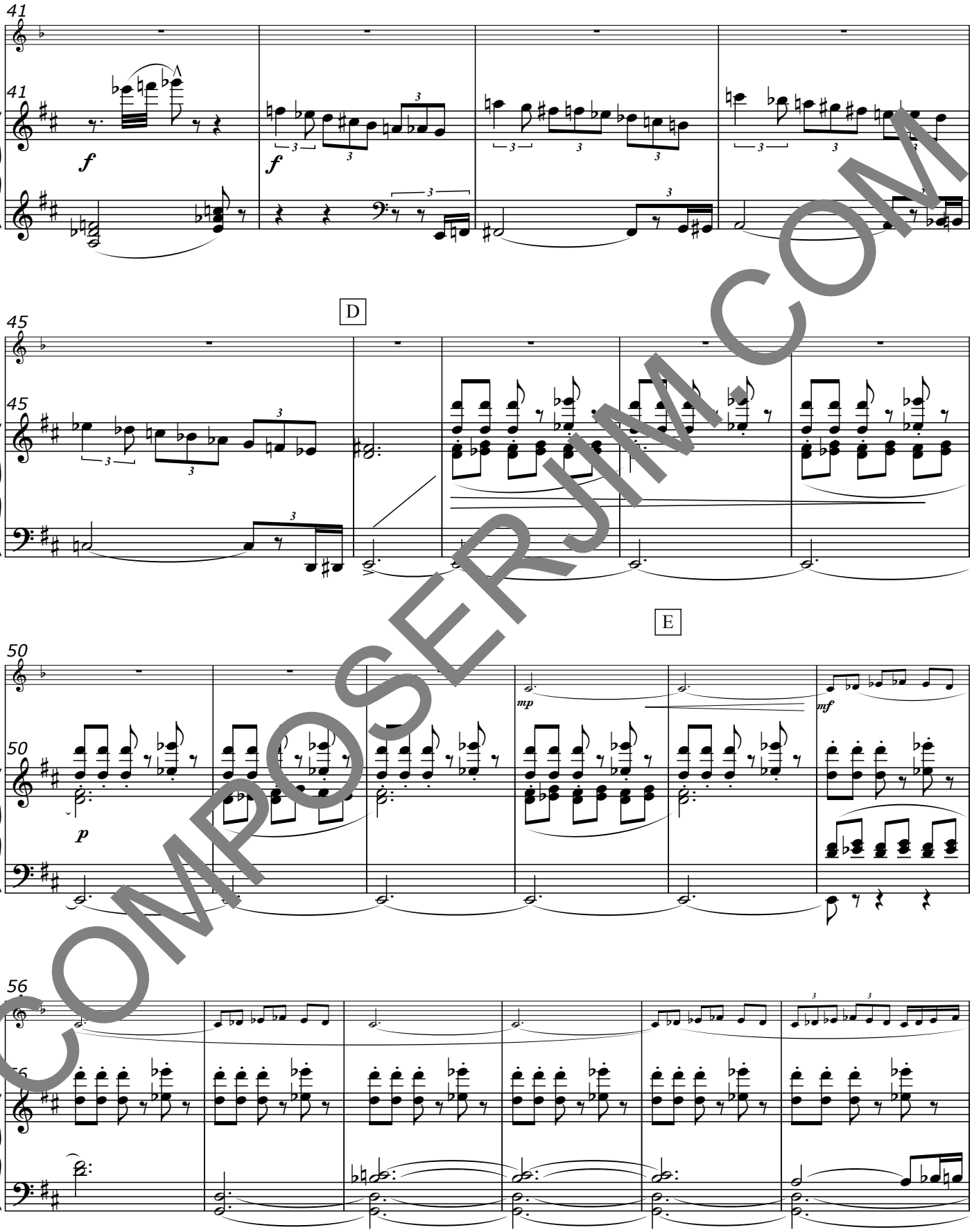

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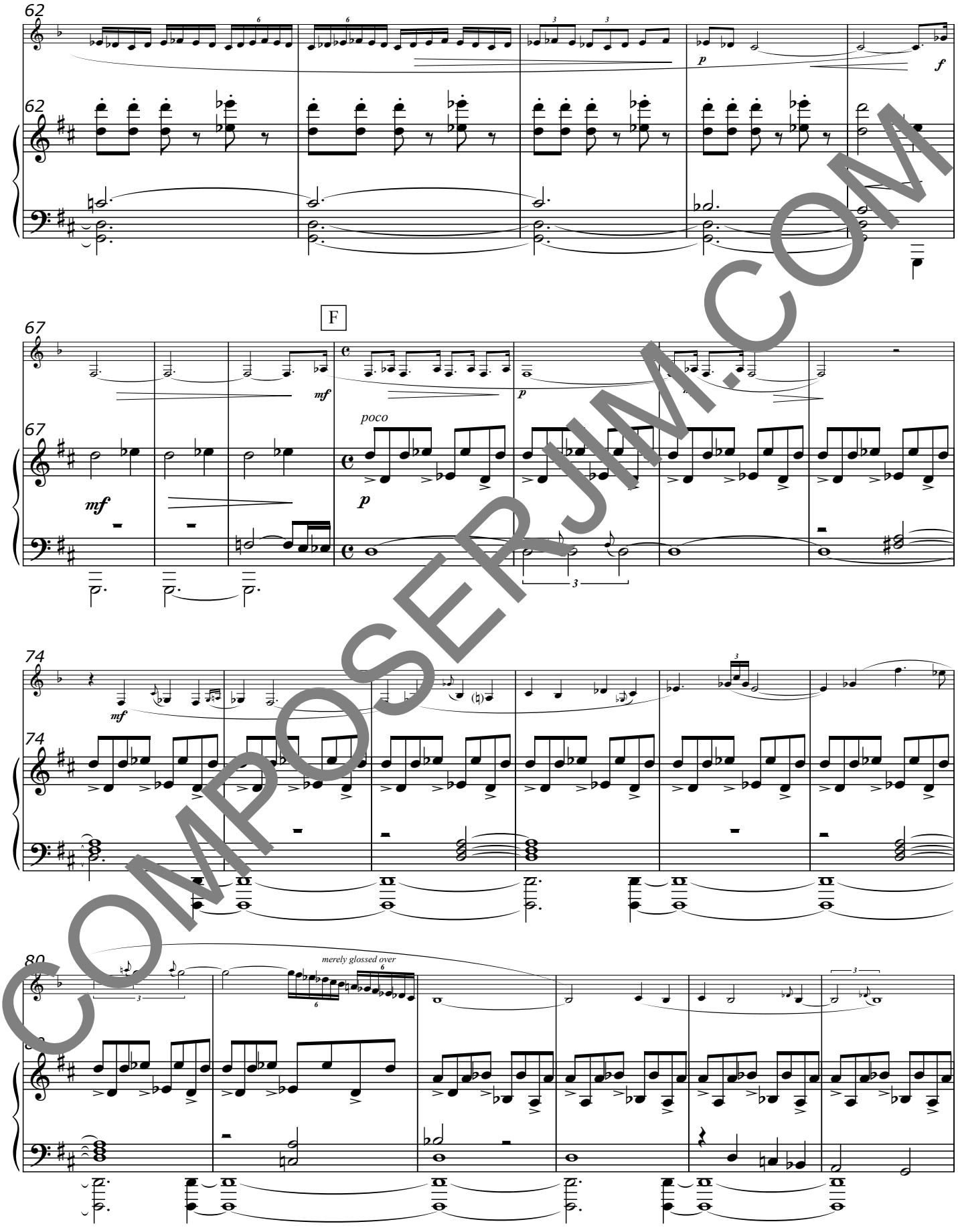

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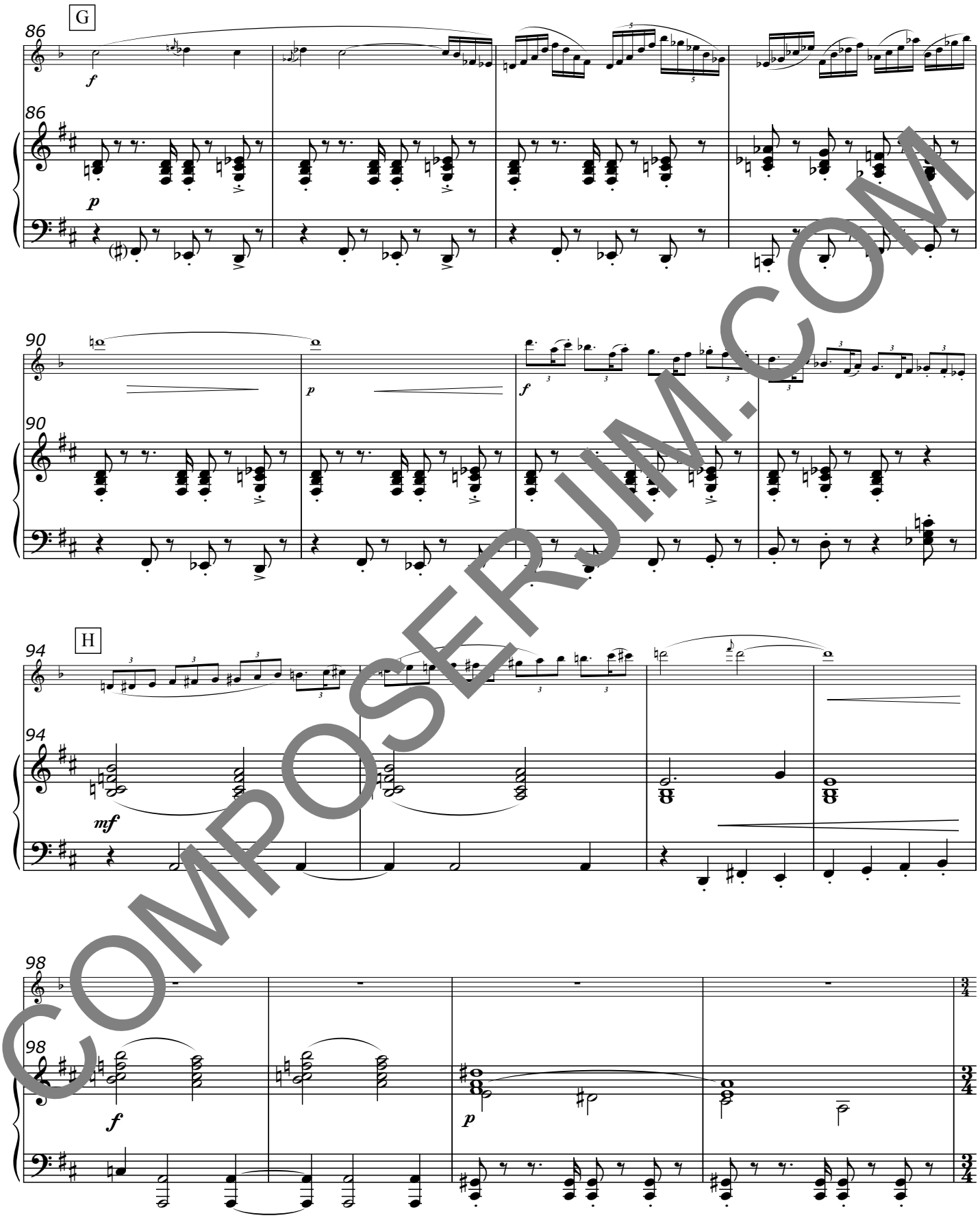

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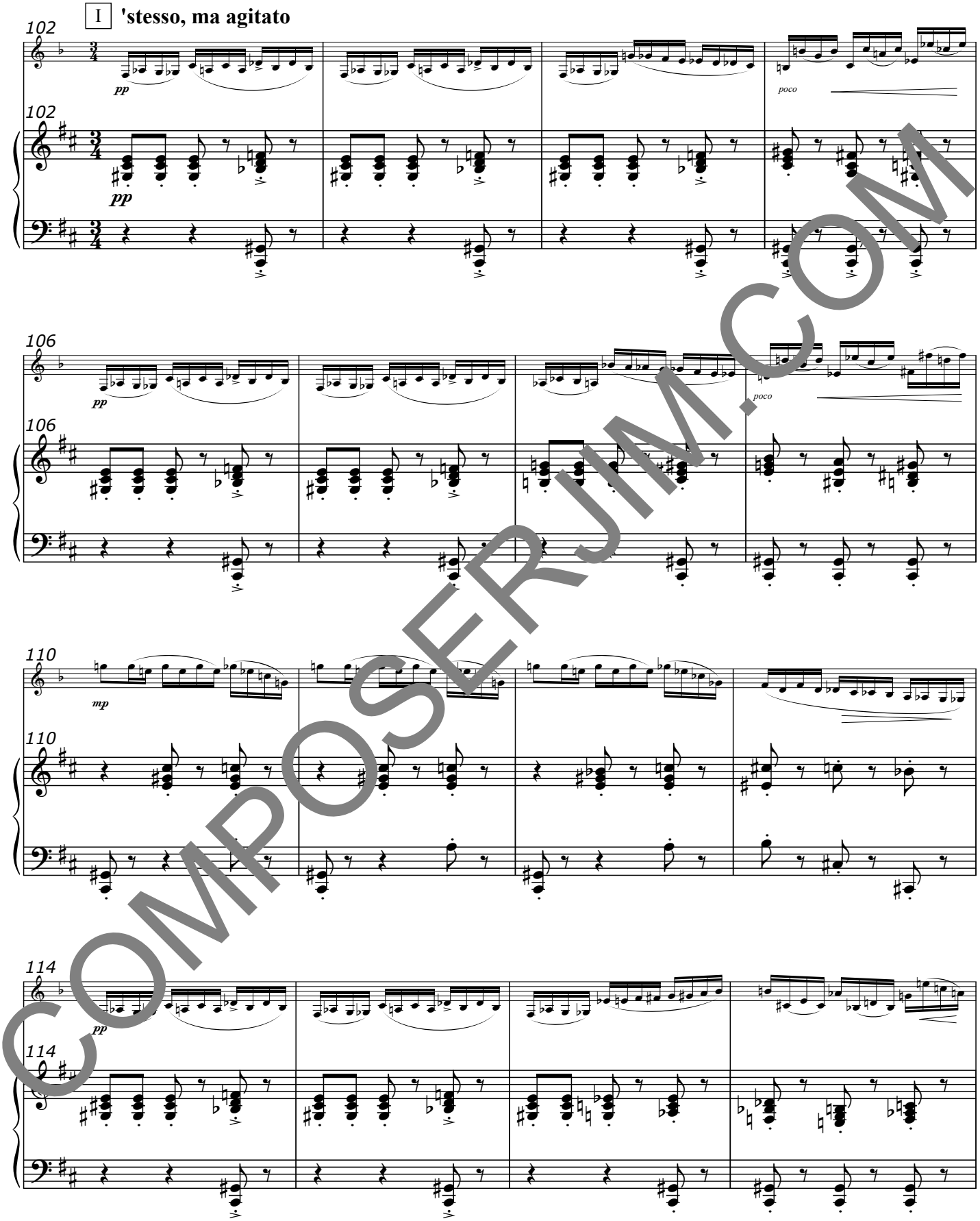

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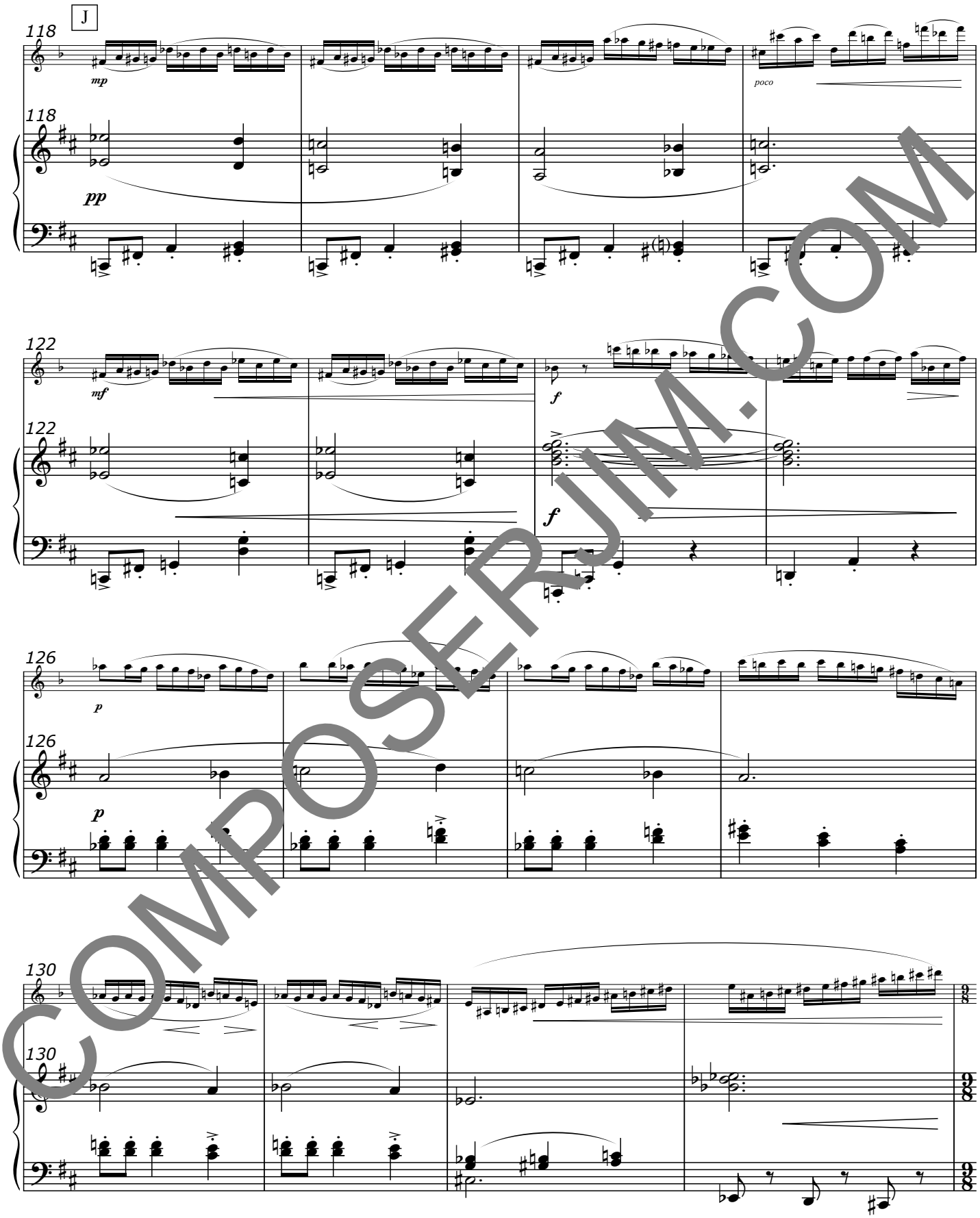

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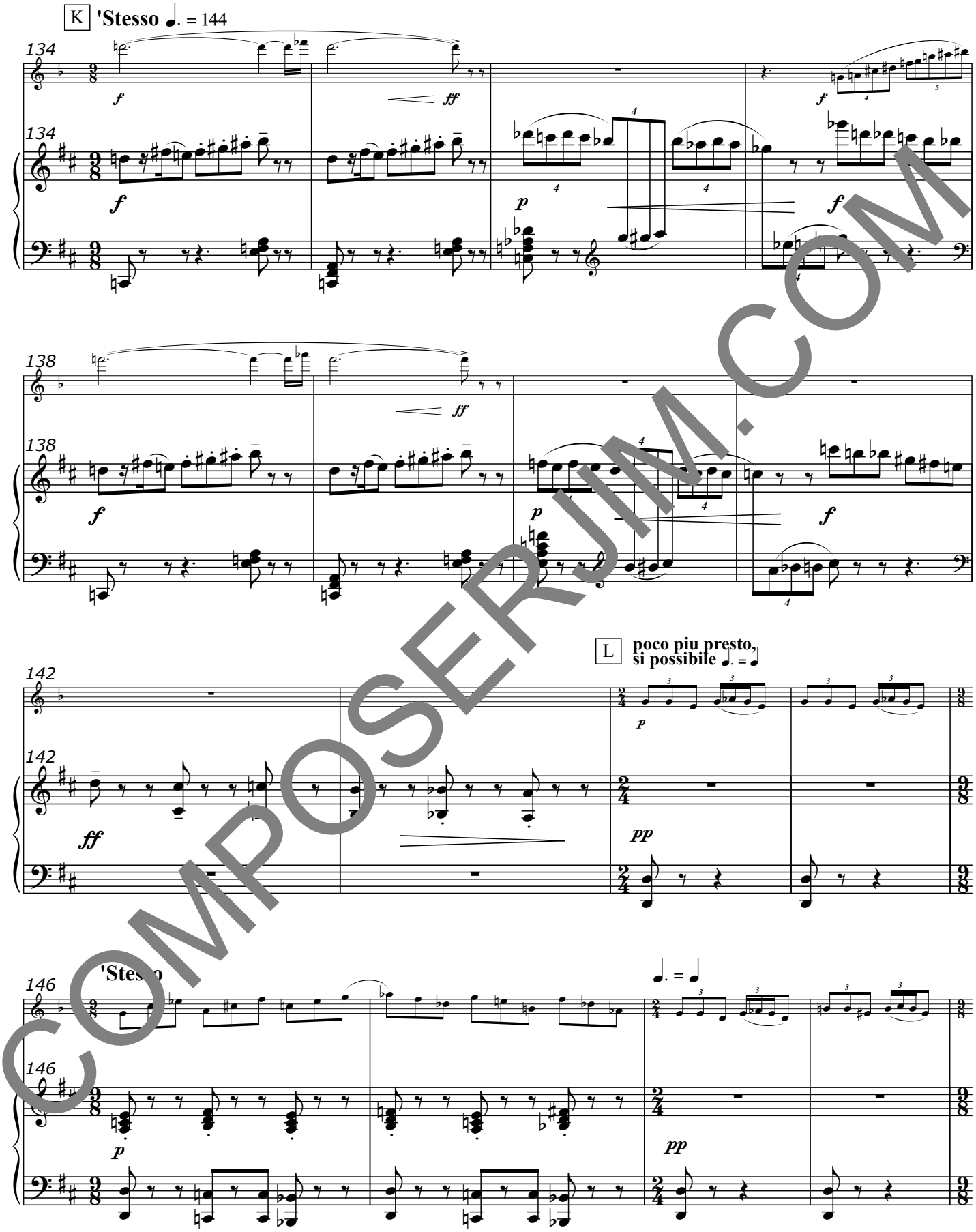

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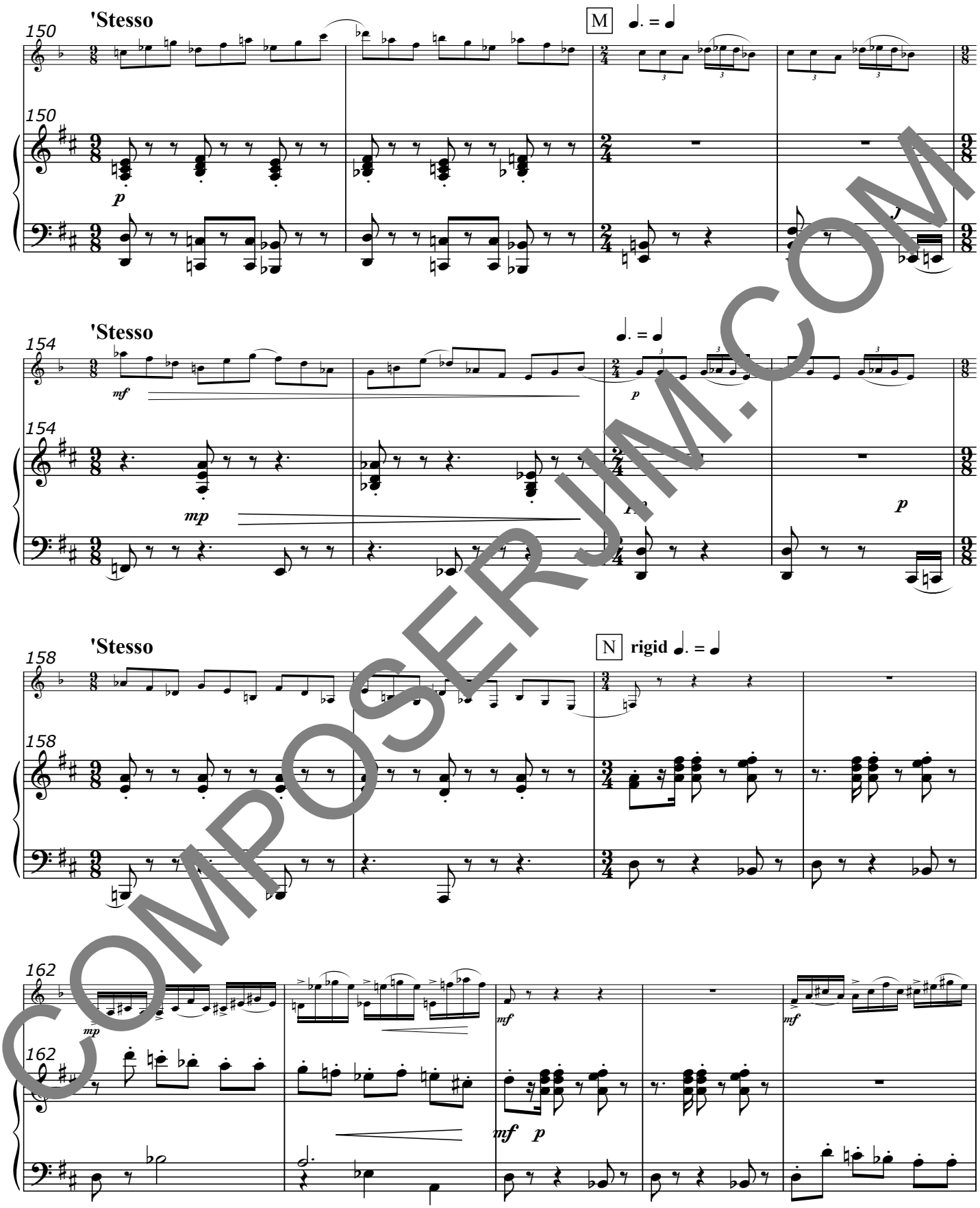

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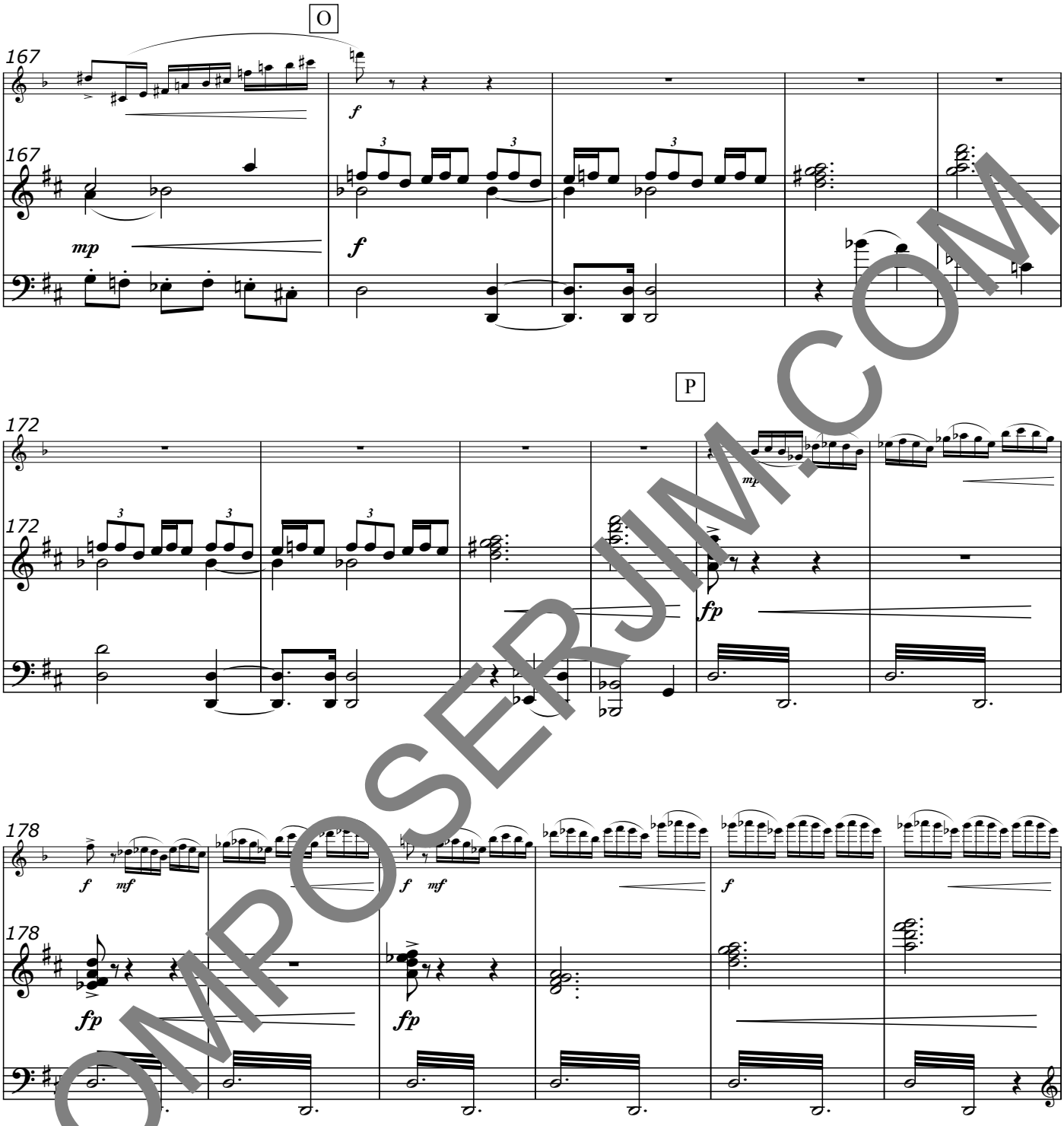

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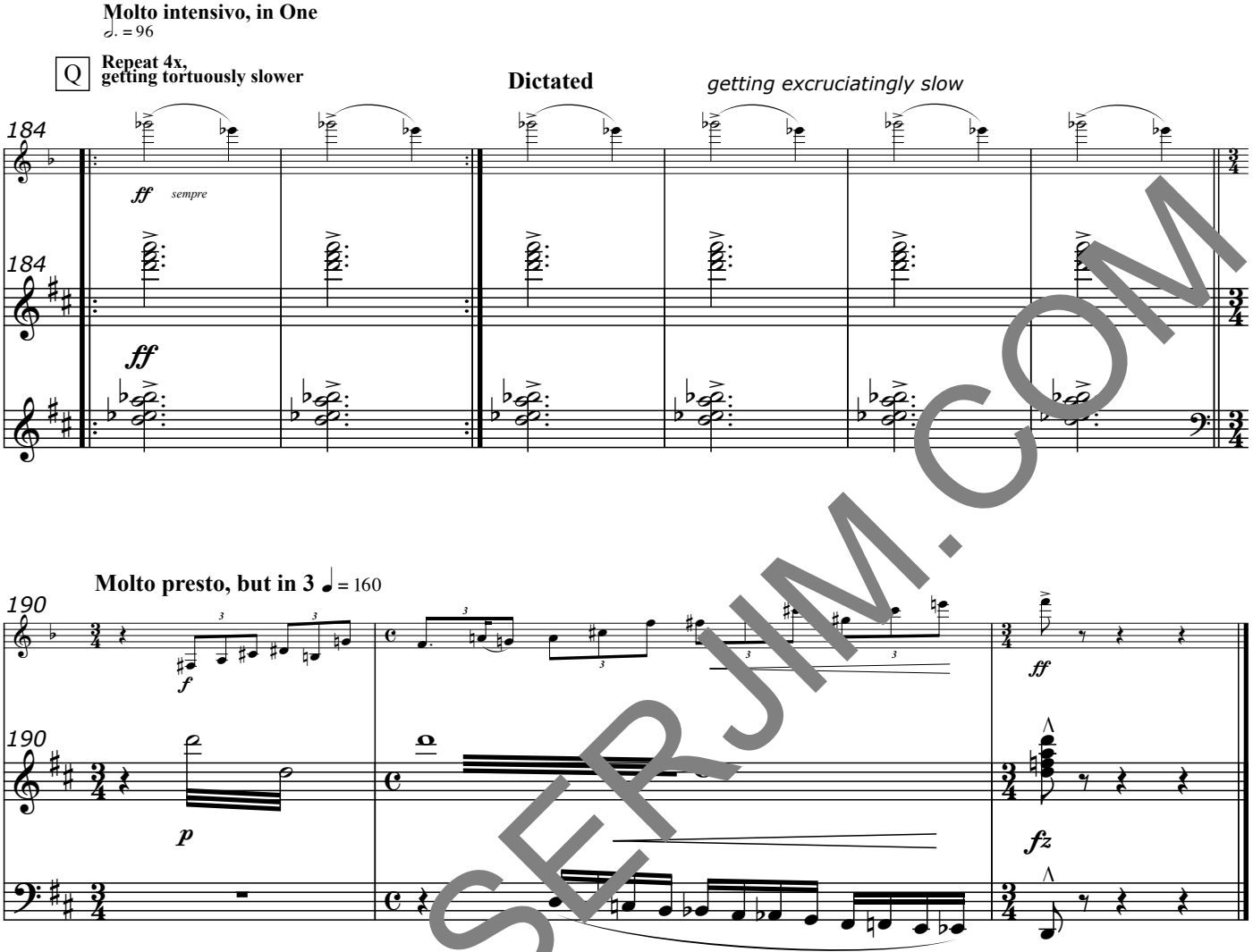

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