Full Score

Gilad Cohen

Doaa and Masa

for harp solo

(2016)

Written with support from Ramapo College Faculty Development Fund

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Doaa and Masa

Program notes

In August of 2014, Syrian refugees Doaa Al Zamel and her fiancé Bassem had to flee their temporary home in Egypt after living there without a work permit and in constant fear. Bassem spent his life savings and hired smugglers who took them on a packed old fishing boat, with the hope of getting married and building a new life in Europe. After a few days another smugglers' ship showed up and rammed a hole in the boat. Most of the passengers died, while the rest tried to survive by swimming. Doaa could not swim, but luckily Bassem found a life preserver and gave it to her. After a day passed, Bassem ran out of energy. He drowned before her eyes. Doaa was one of 11 out of 500 passengers who survived the wreck. Another was Masa, an 18-month old girl who was handed to Doaa by her mother, who drowned shortly after she gave her child to Doaa. Doaa not only miraculously survived four days in the sea without food or water before being rescued by a Greek vessel; she also saved the life of Masa, playing with her and singing to her afloat on the small life preserver in the middle of the ocean.

My wife and I heard this story one day on WNYC Radio as told by UN's High Commissioner for Refugees Melissa Fleming. I was overwhelmed with tears. How did Doaa find the strength to witness her love drown, survive in the sea for four days, and save a stranger's baby? My wife suggested that I would write a piece about it, and this became *Doaa and Masa,* which I wrote for my friend, harpist Sivan Magen. The harp is a natural instrument to represent a stormy ocean, and in order to situate it in the Middle East, I structured a mode that superimposes two appearances of a tetra-cord that is common in traditional Arabic music (Hijaz tetra-cord: half step – three half step – half step). I likewise employed a type of texture that is common in this music: a melody over a repeated rhythmic pattern using long meters such as 10/4 and 17/8. While writing the piece I was visualizing the inconceivable image of Doaa on a life preserver in the middle of the ocean, singing to Masa. I consequently wrote a short lullaby that can be heard twice in the piece accompanied by a texture that resembles a Qanoon, a string instrument commonly used in Syrian music. Above anything else, the moment that breaks my heart in this incredible story is when Doaa's fiance died right before her eyes. And so, the piece ends with a lament for Bassem and for anyone who lost their life while fleeing their homeland.

Performance notes

* Harmonics are written where played, sounding an octave higher.

* In all pedal glissandi the second note is not plucked.

* The marking >***pp***< indicates a note in ***pp*** that is isolated from its surrounding dynamics.

* - short, rhythmic descending/ascending glissando into the indicated note

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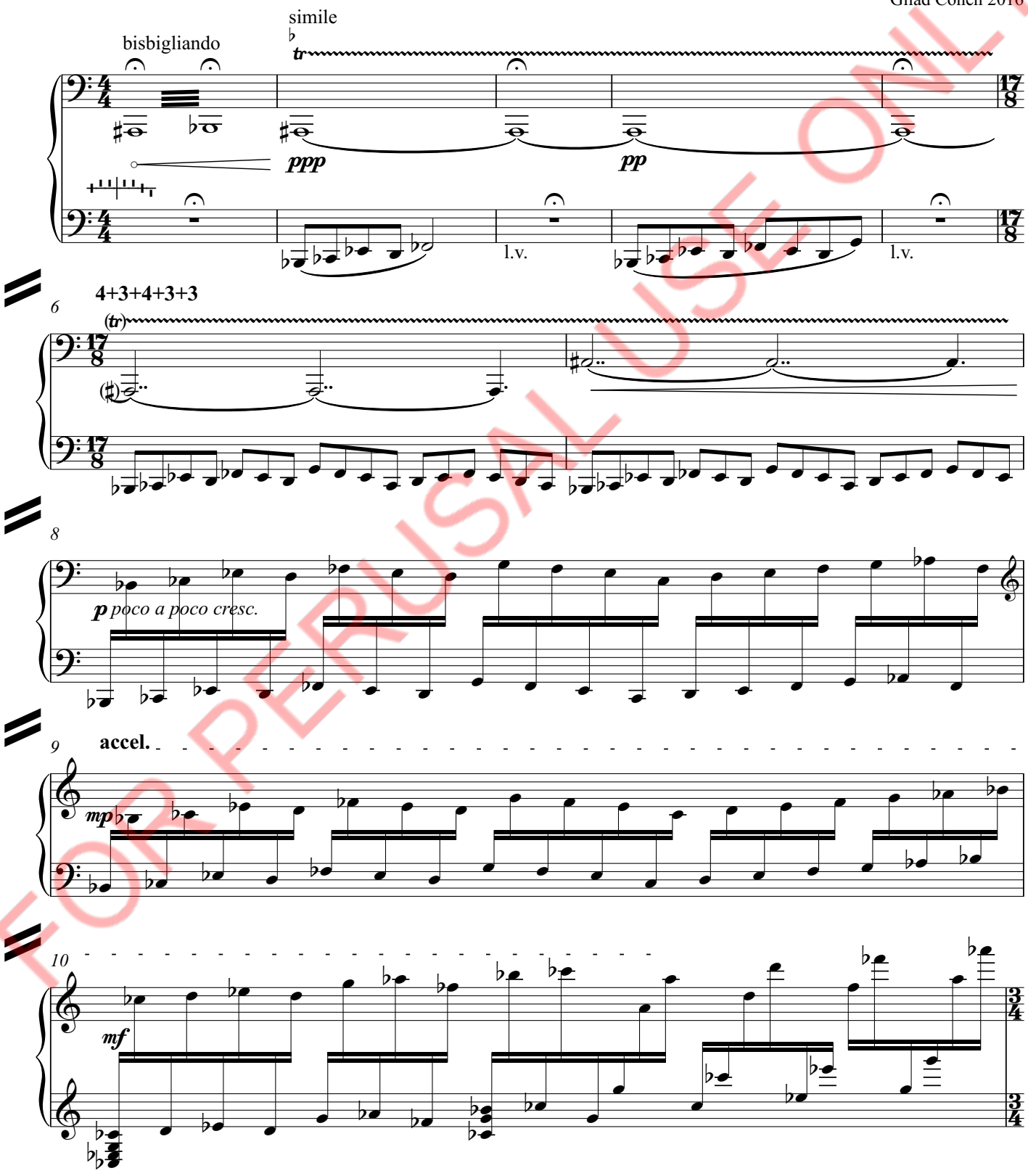
Doaa and Masa

For harp solo
vesrion December 2023

Presto (𝅗𝅥=170), dark, stormy and unclear

Gilad Cohen 2016



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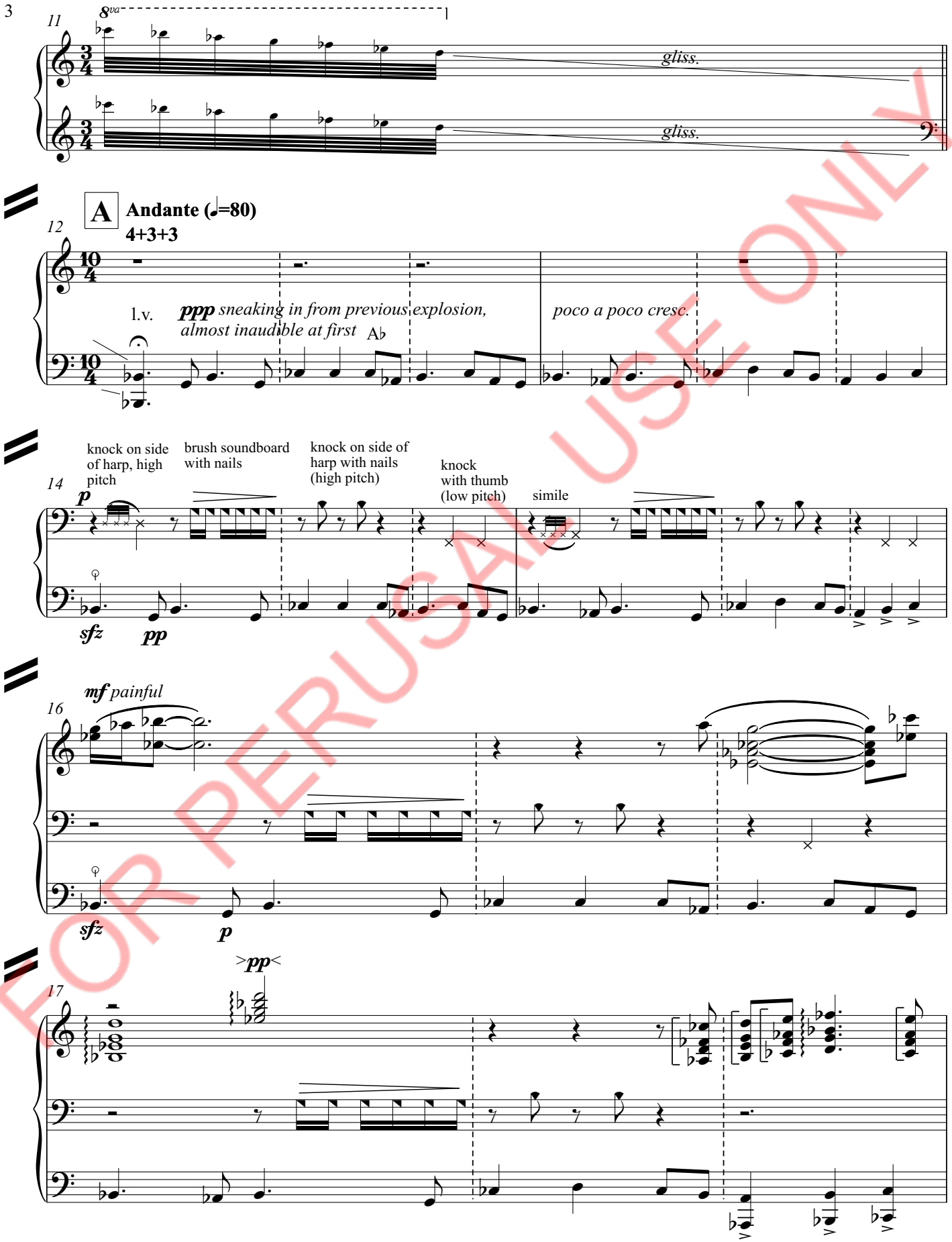

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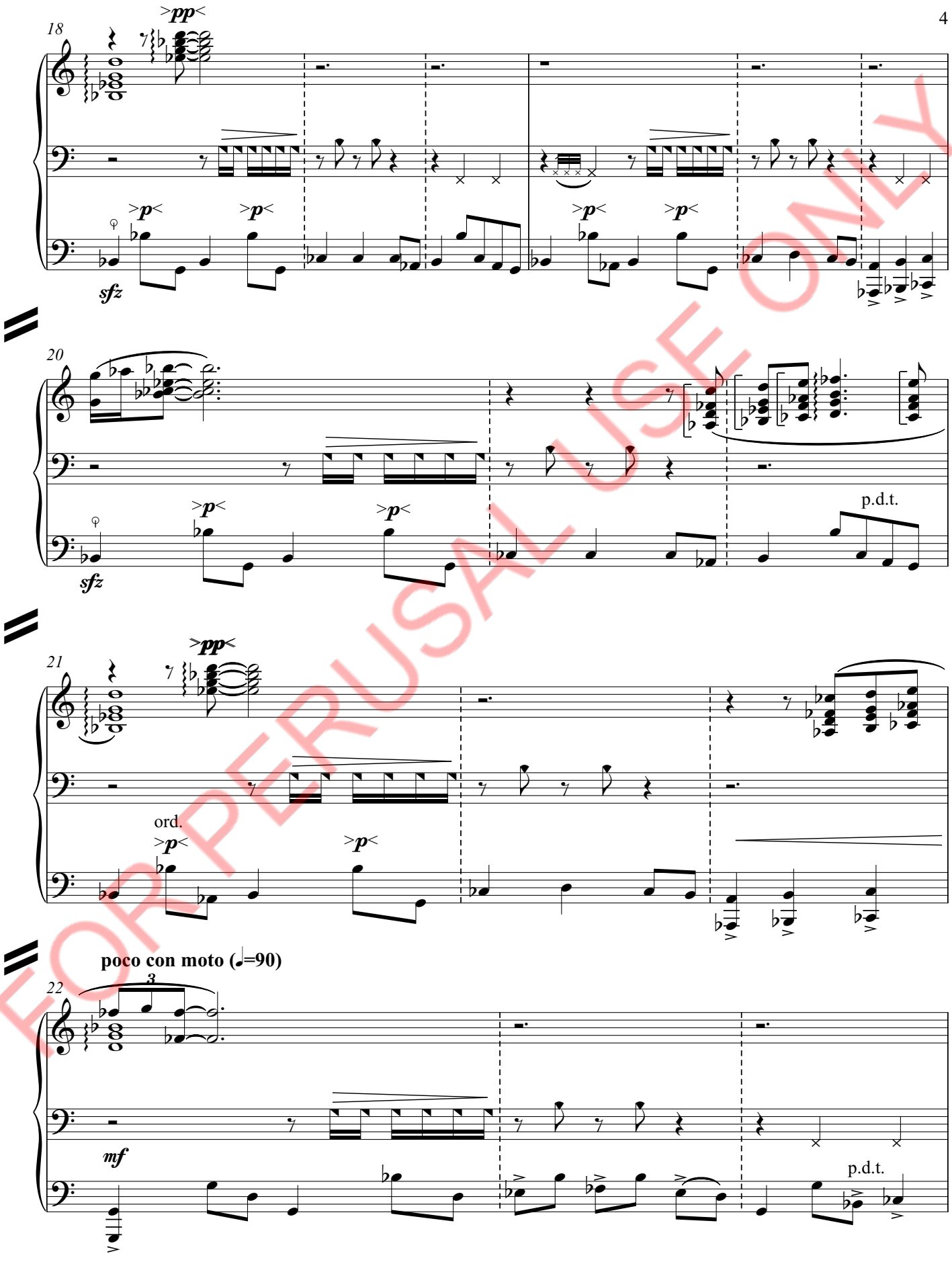

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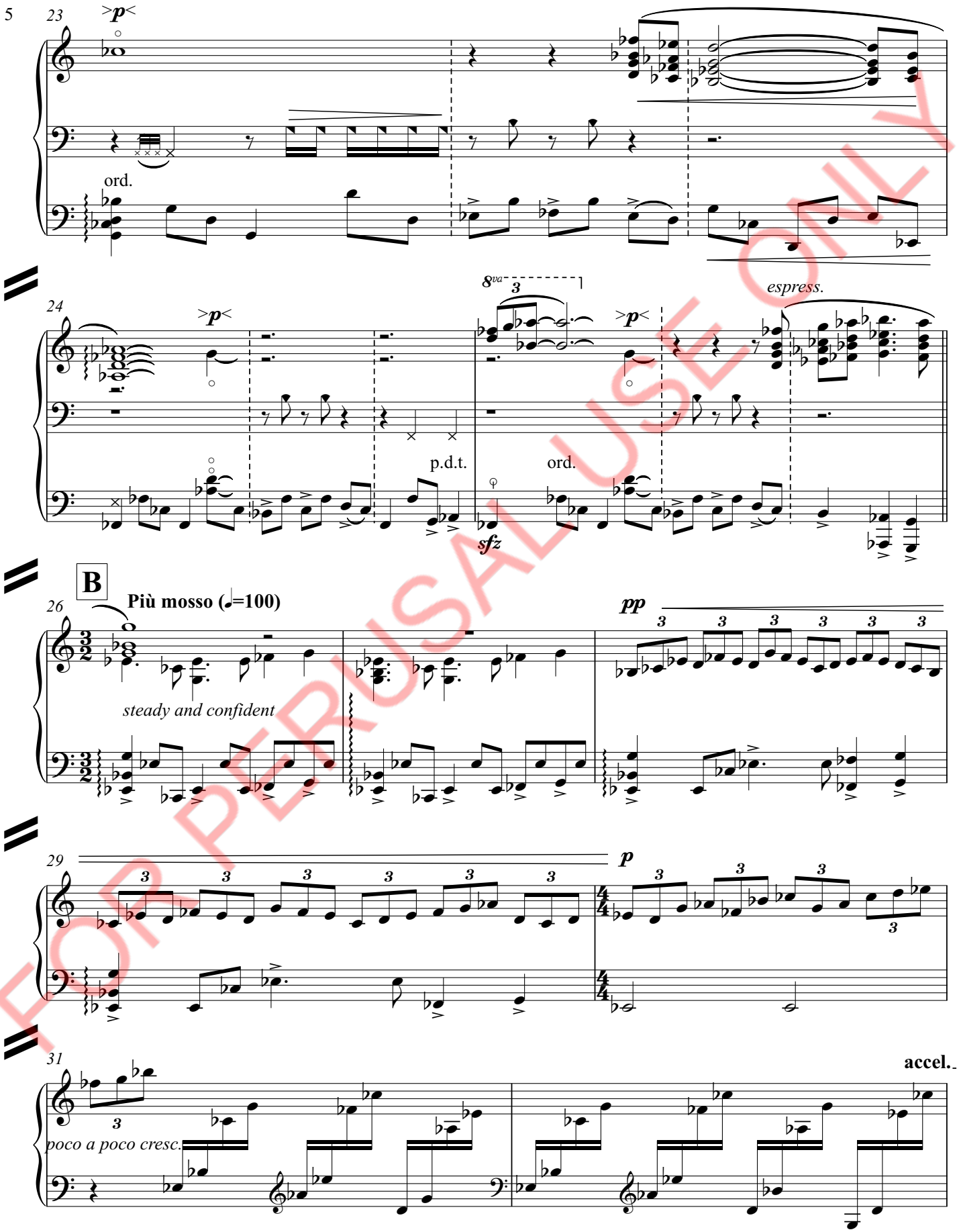

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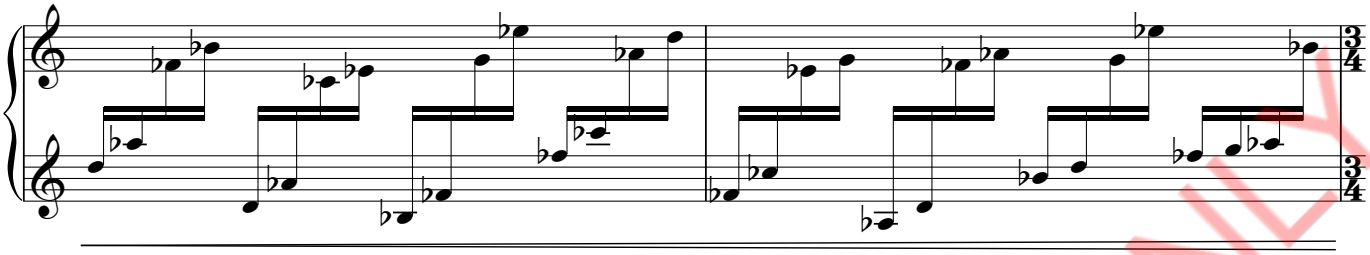
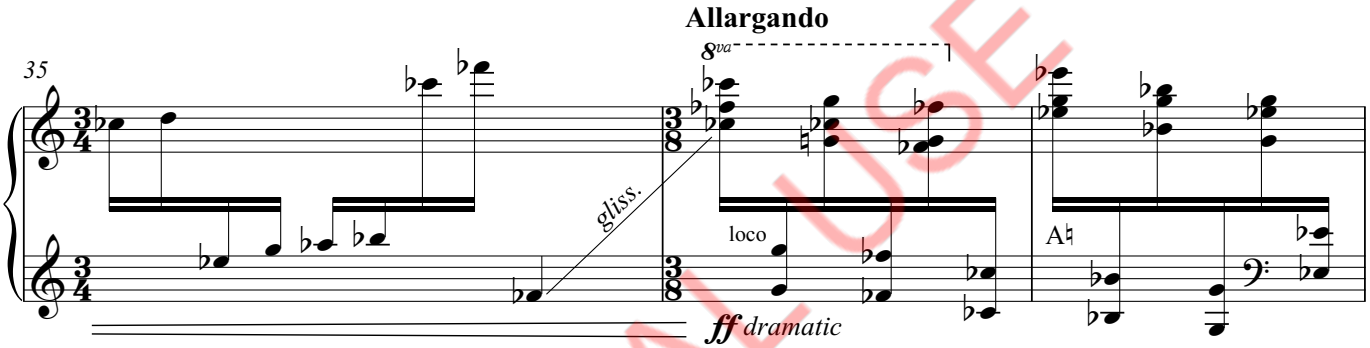
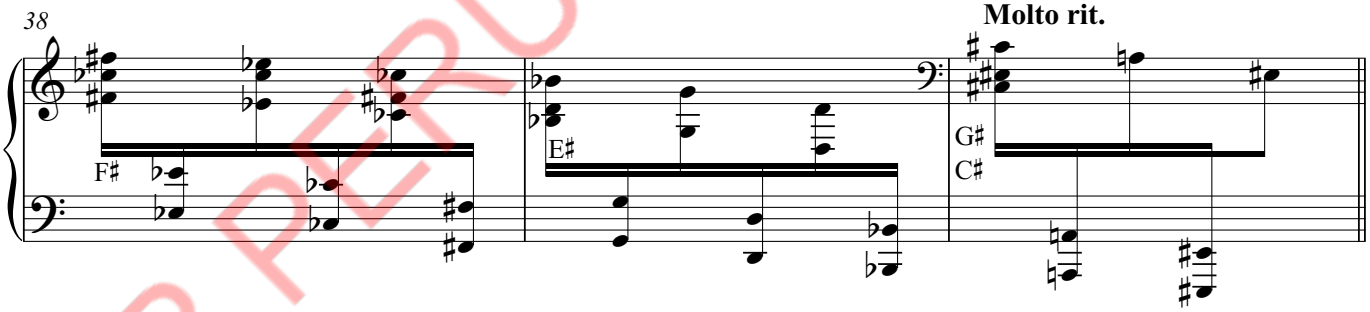
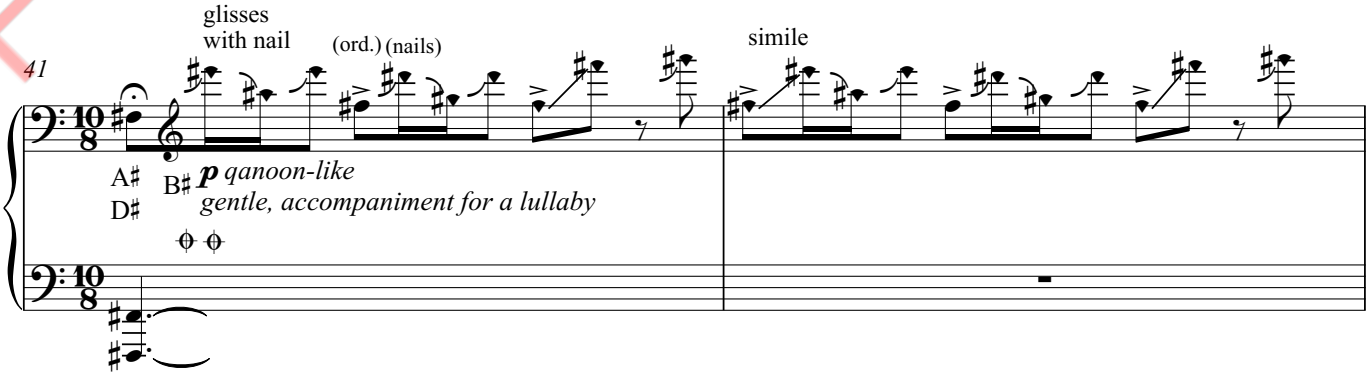
33 (♩=140)







C **Moderato, light, poco rubato (♪=160)**
3+3+2+2



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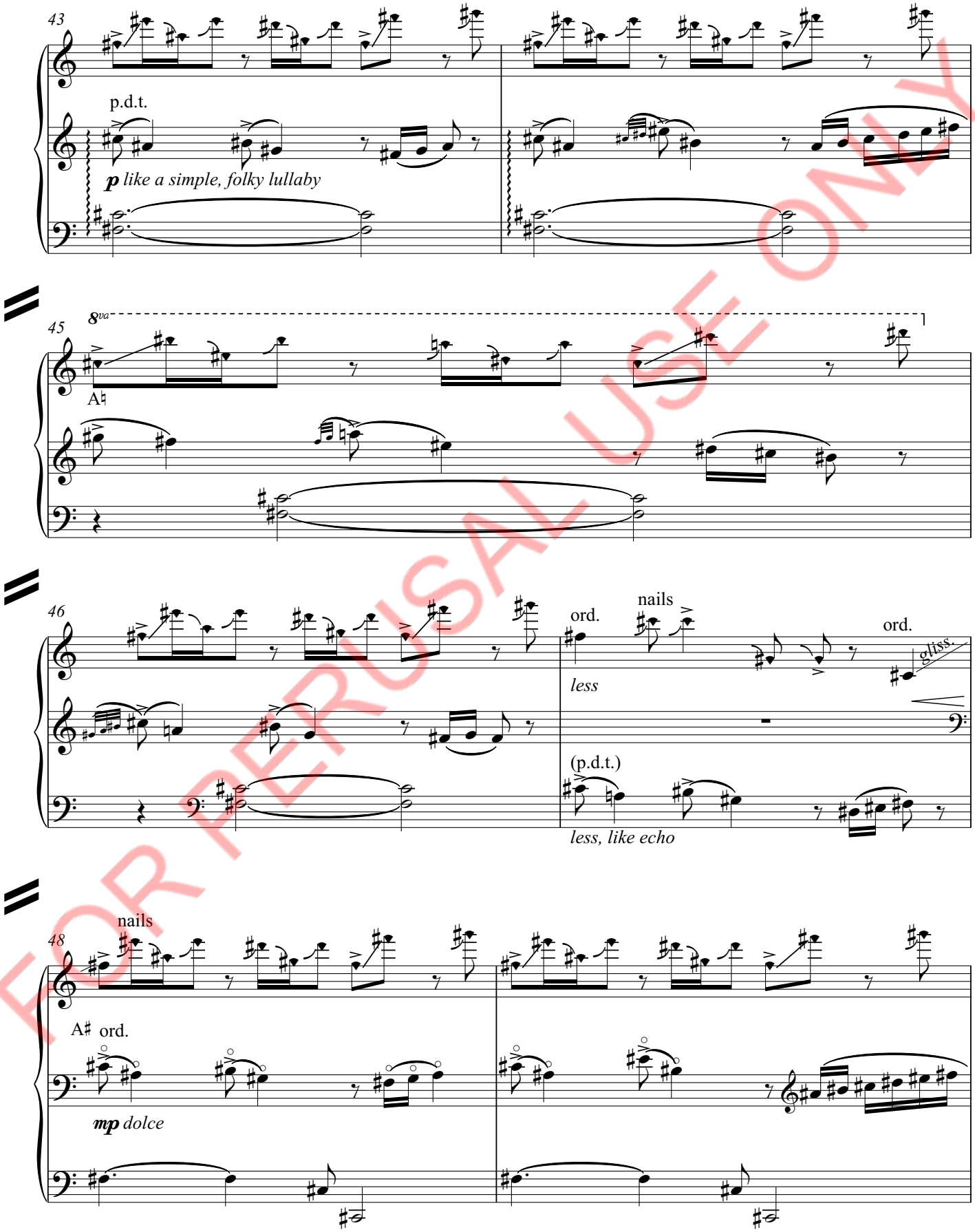

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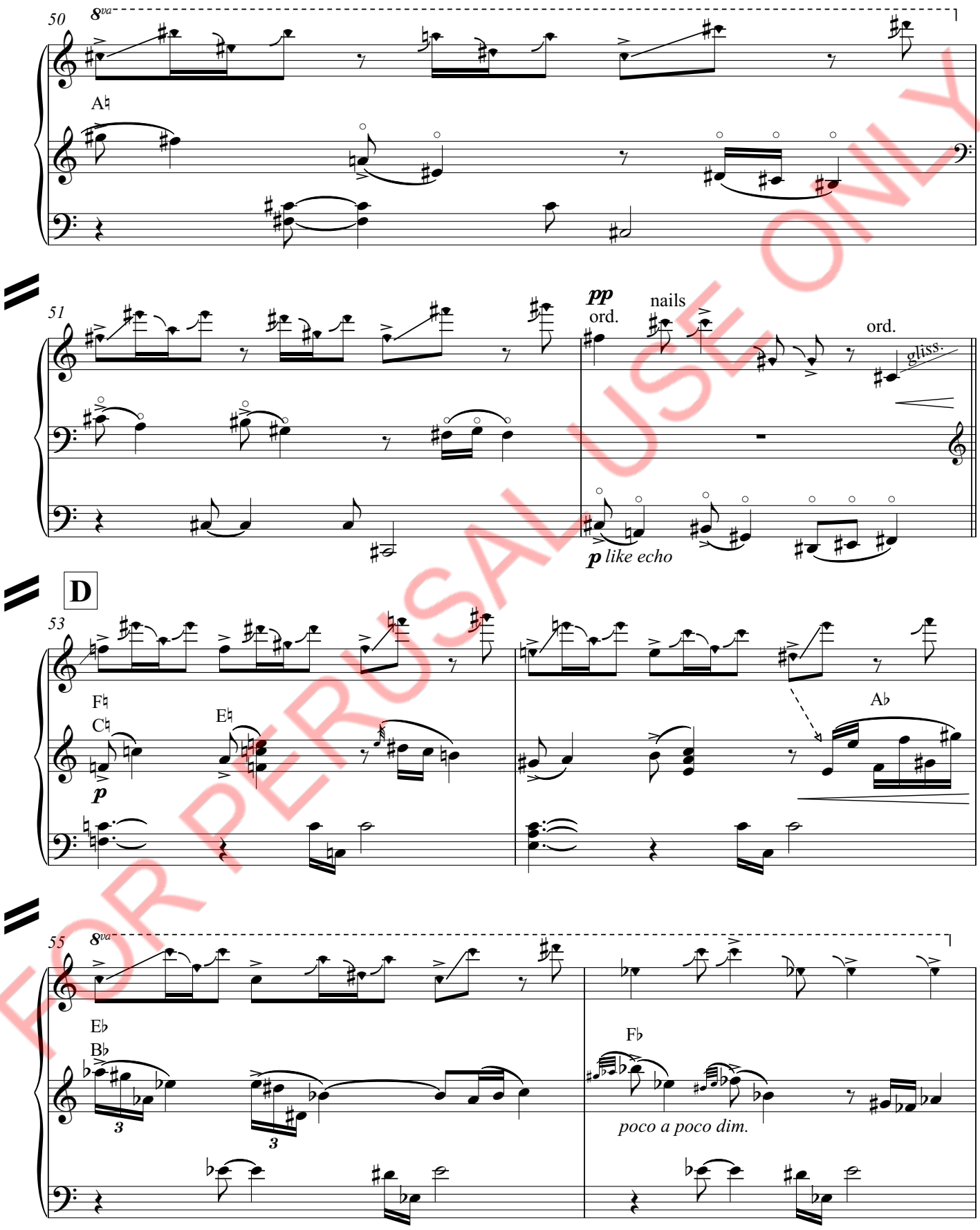

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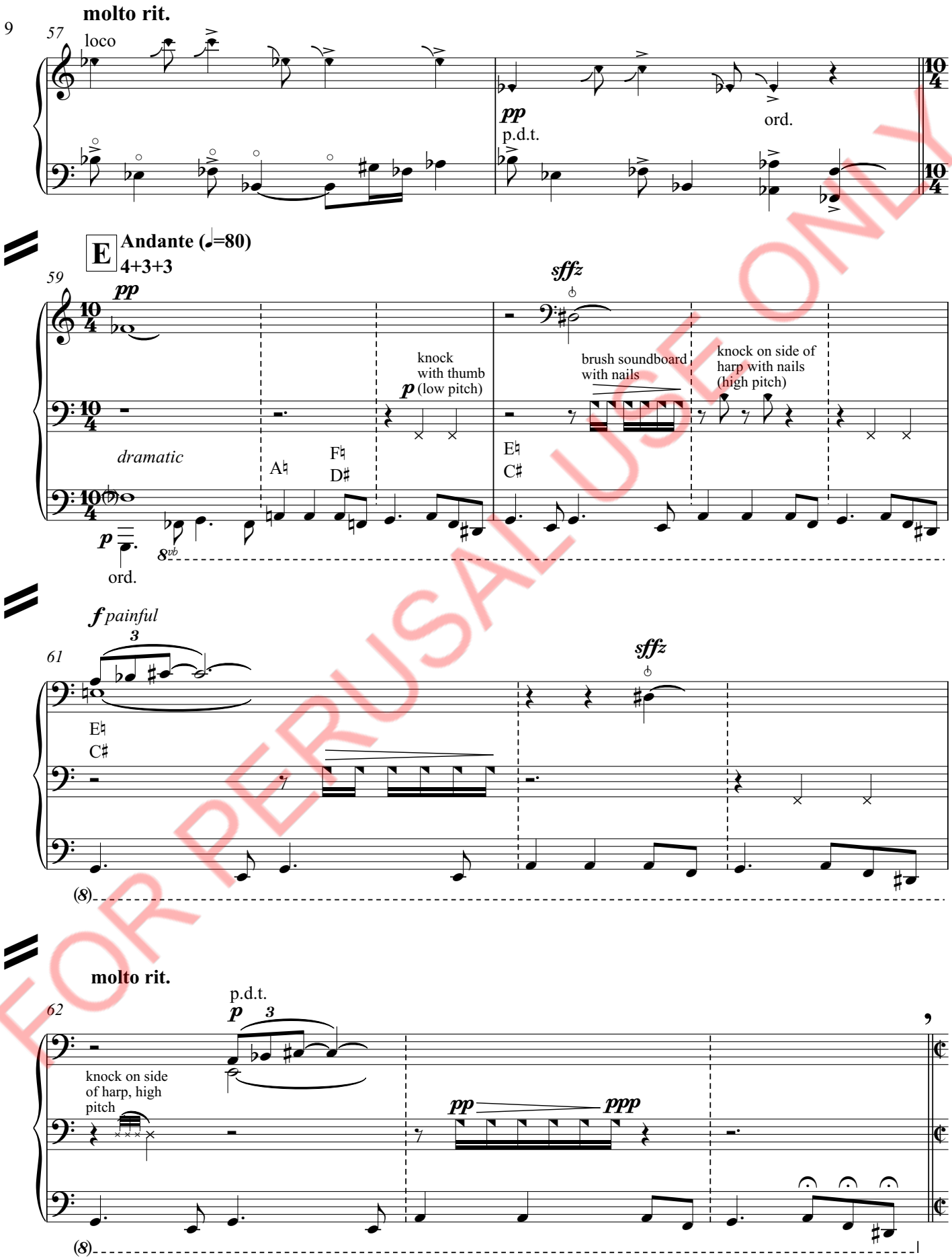

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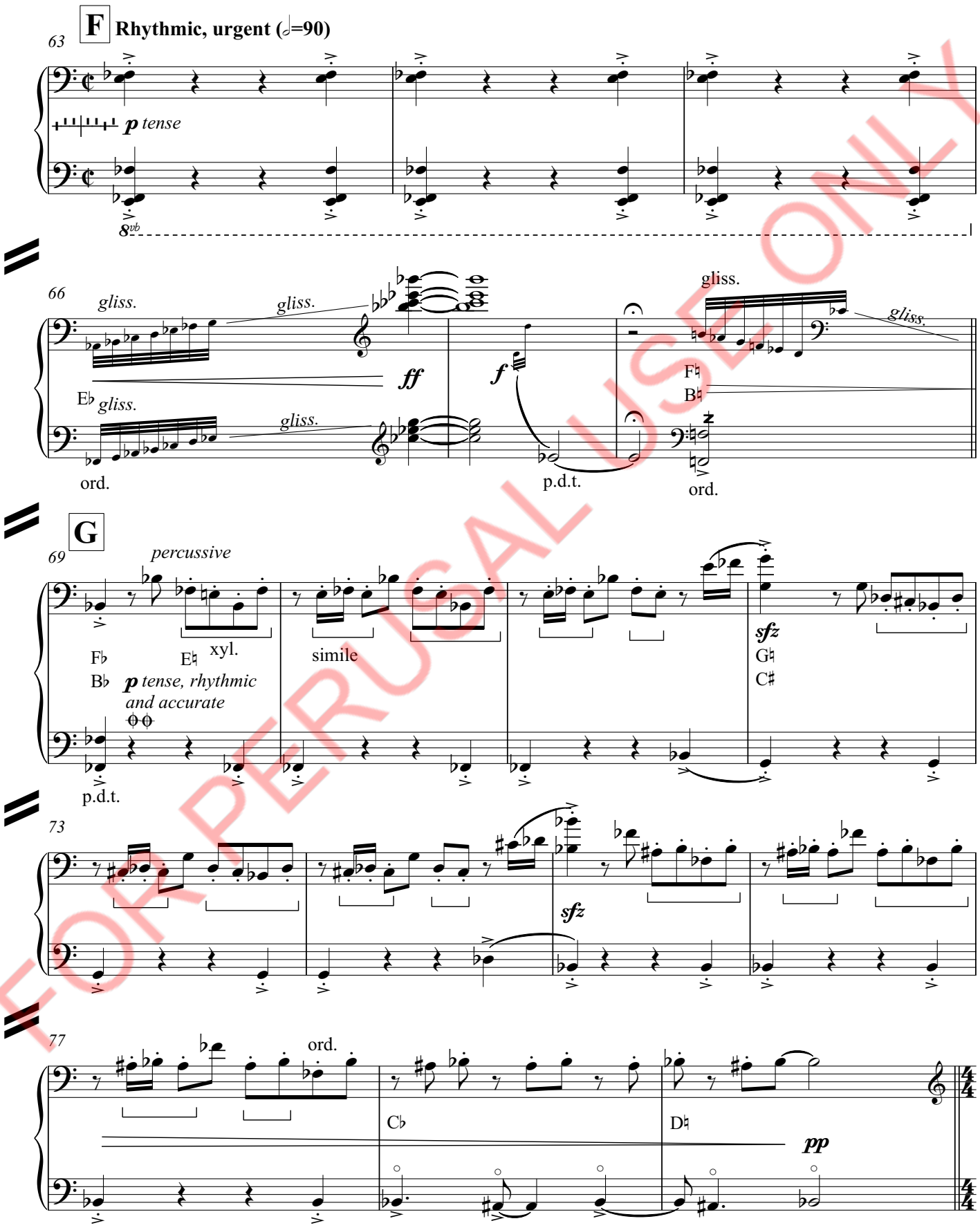

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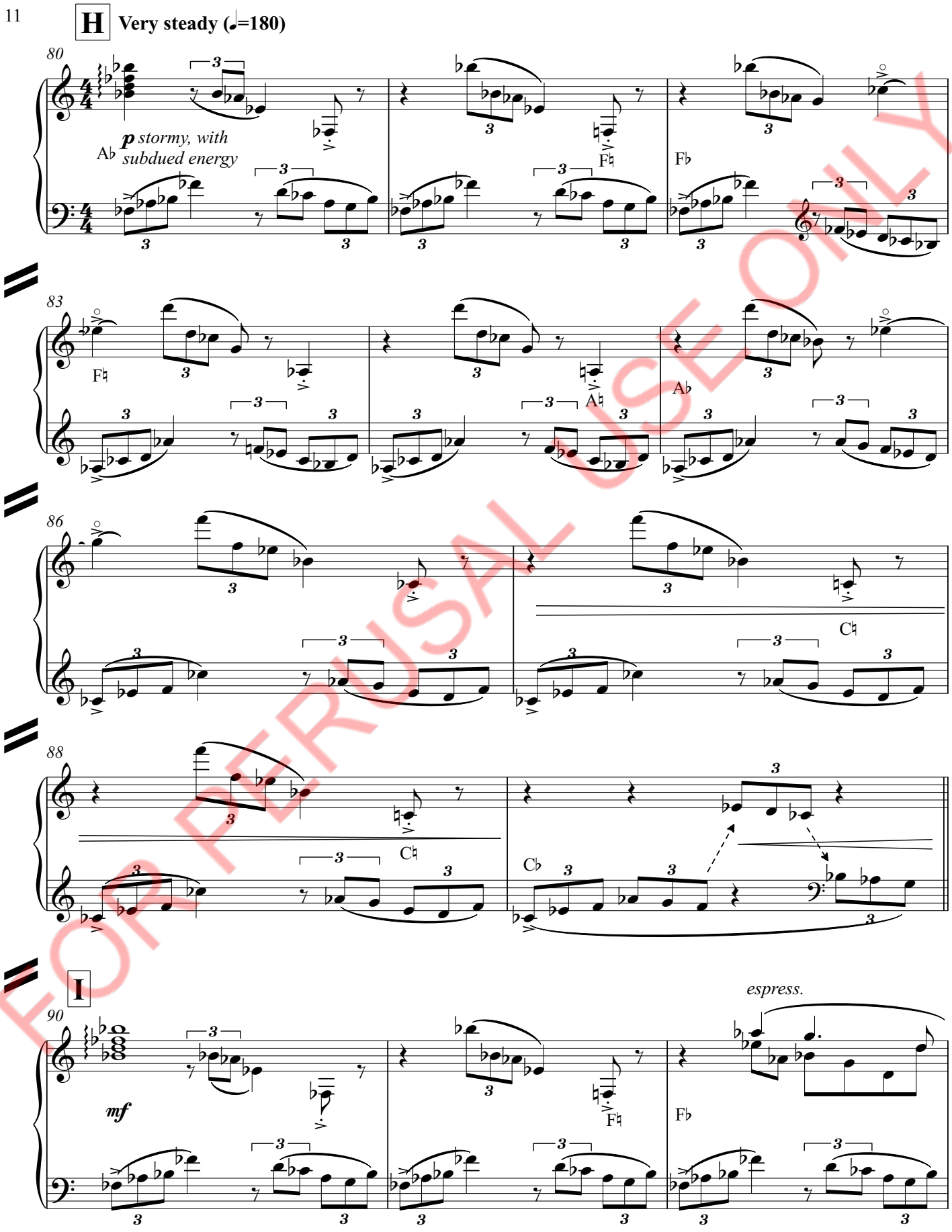

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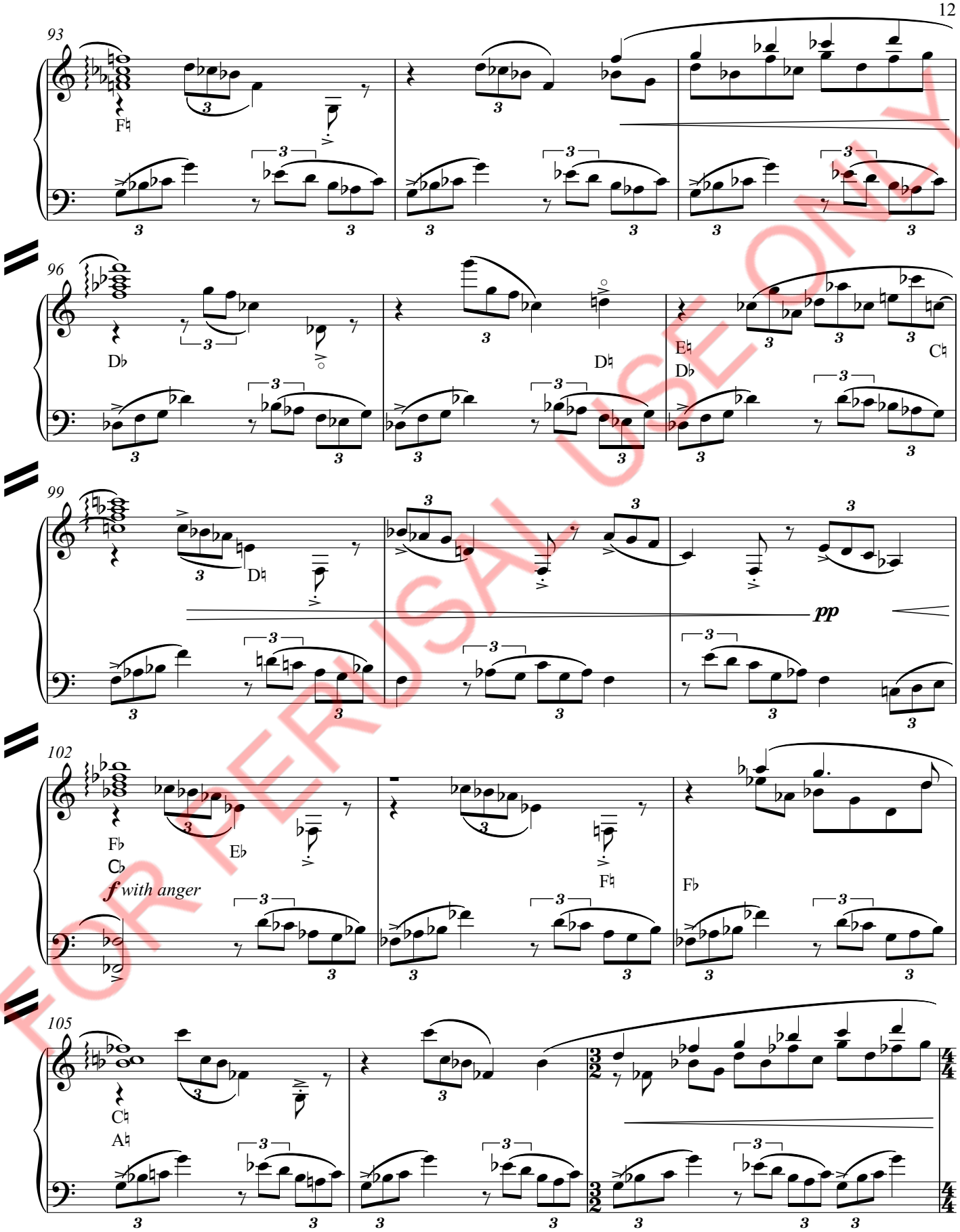

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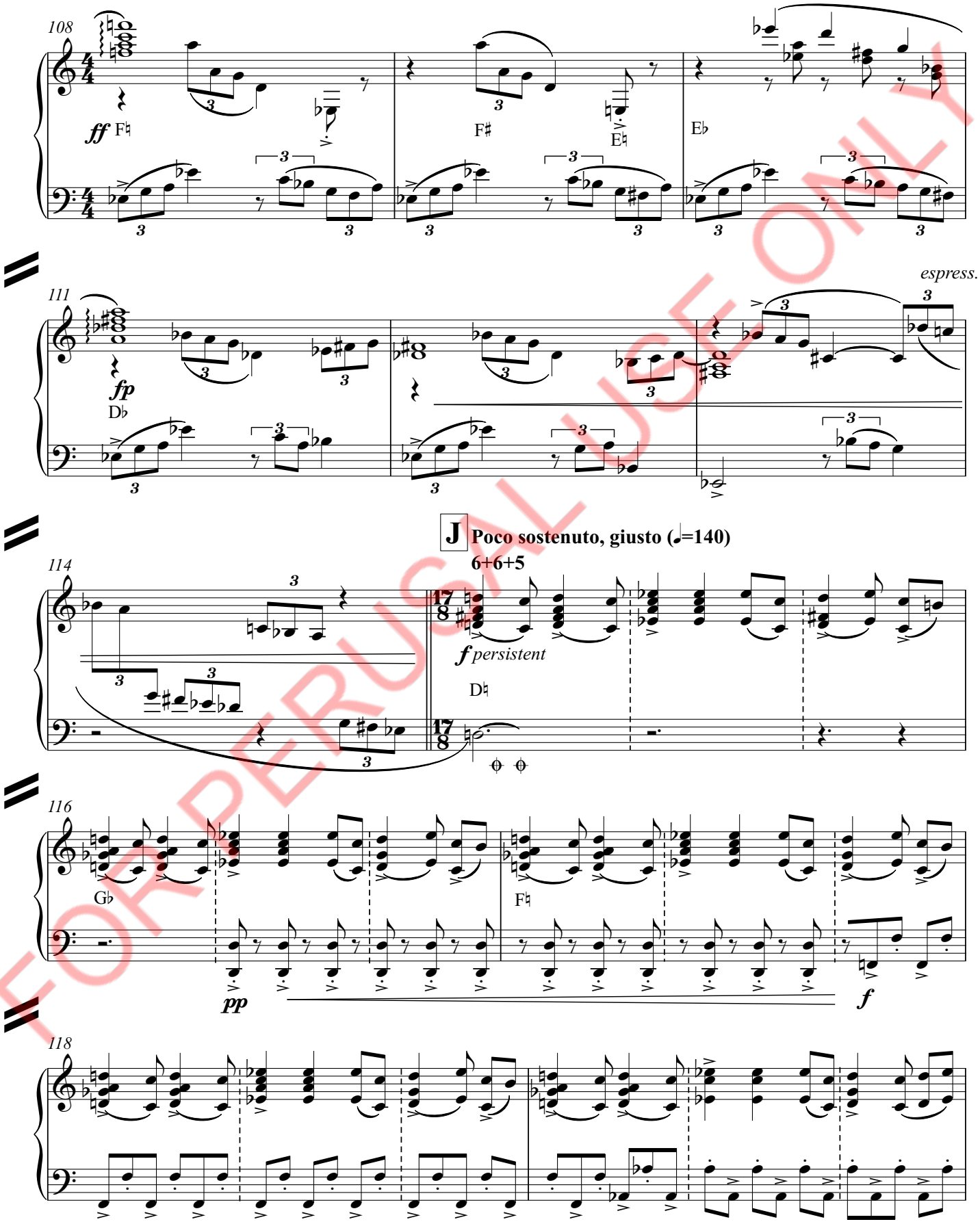

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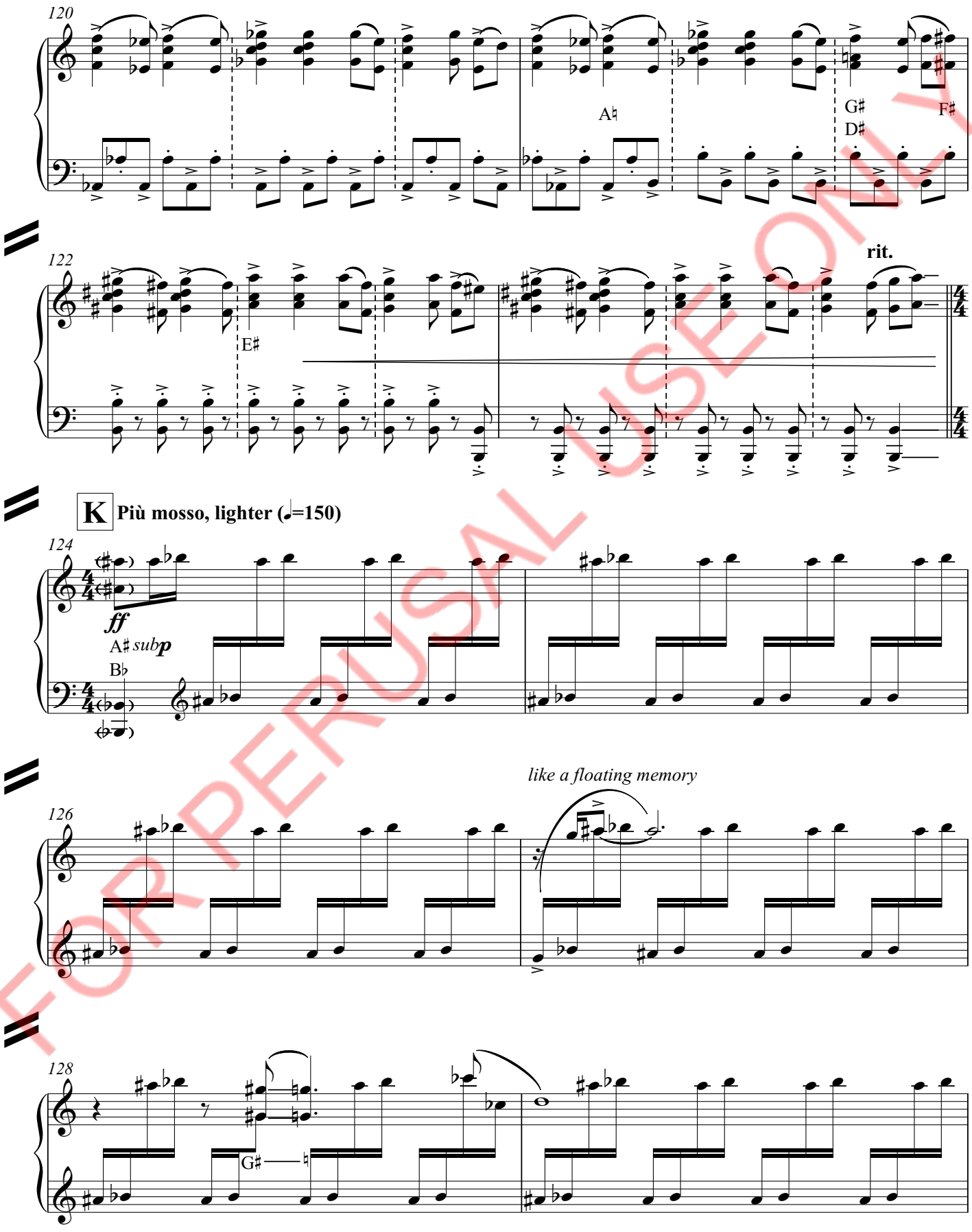

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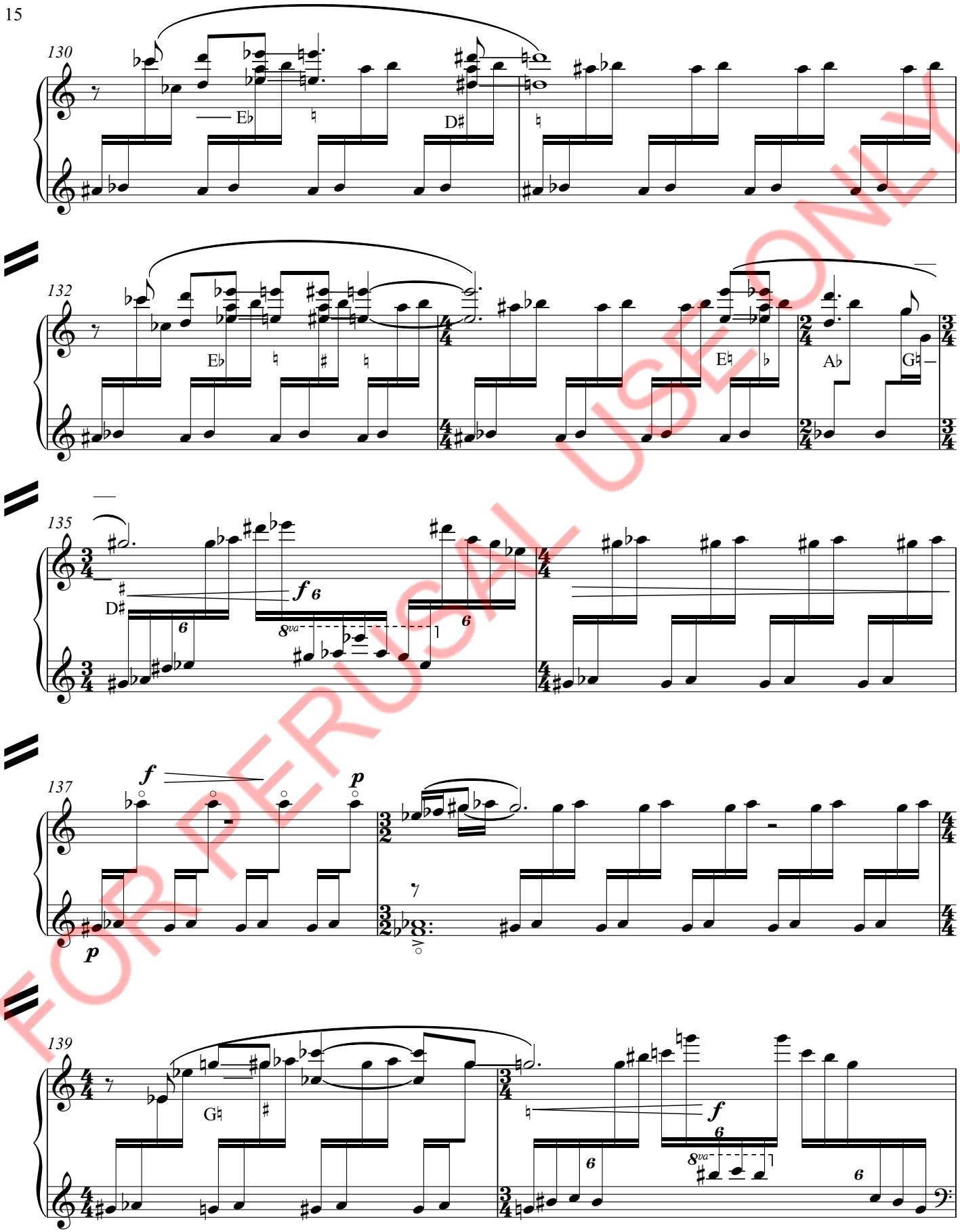

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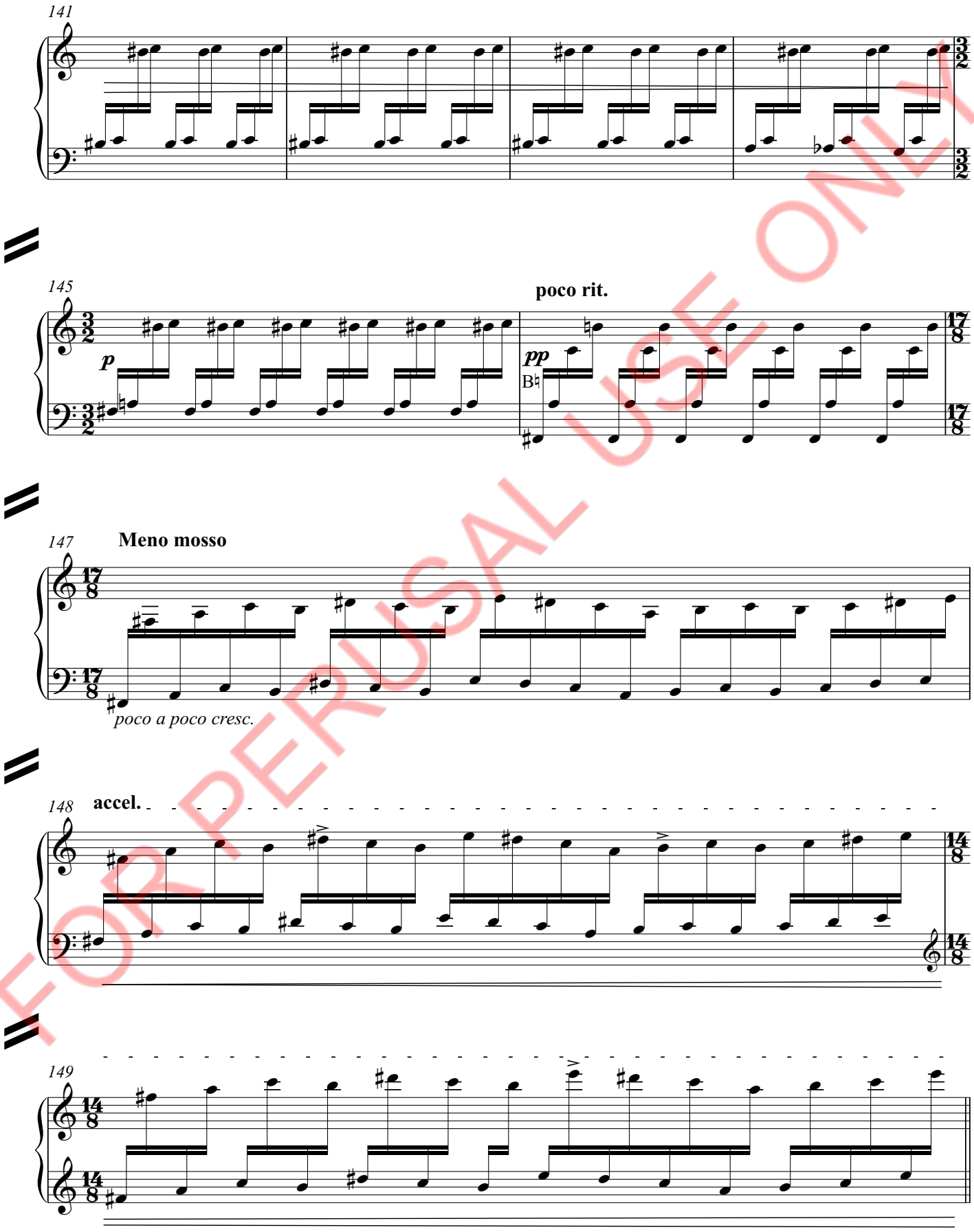

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L **Moderato, light (♪=160)**
3+3+2+2

glisses short glisses
with nail anticipating notes

150

(ord.) (nails) simile

f *p qanoon-like*

F♮ D♮ D♯ D♮ D♯

152

D♮ D♯ D♮ D♯

(ord.)

mp gentle

154

8va

A♭ D♮

ord. nails **poco rit.** ord.

gliss.

A tempo

156

A♮ D♮ D♯ D♮ D♯

f determined

secco

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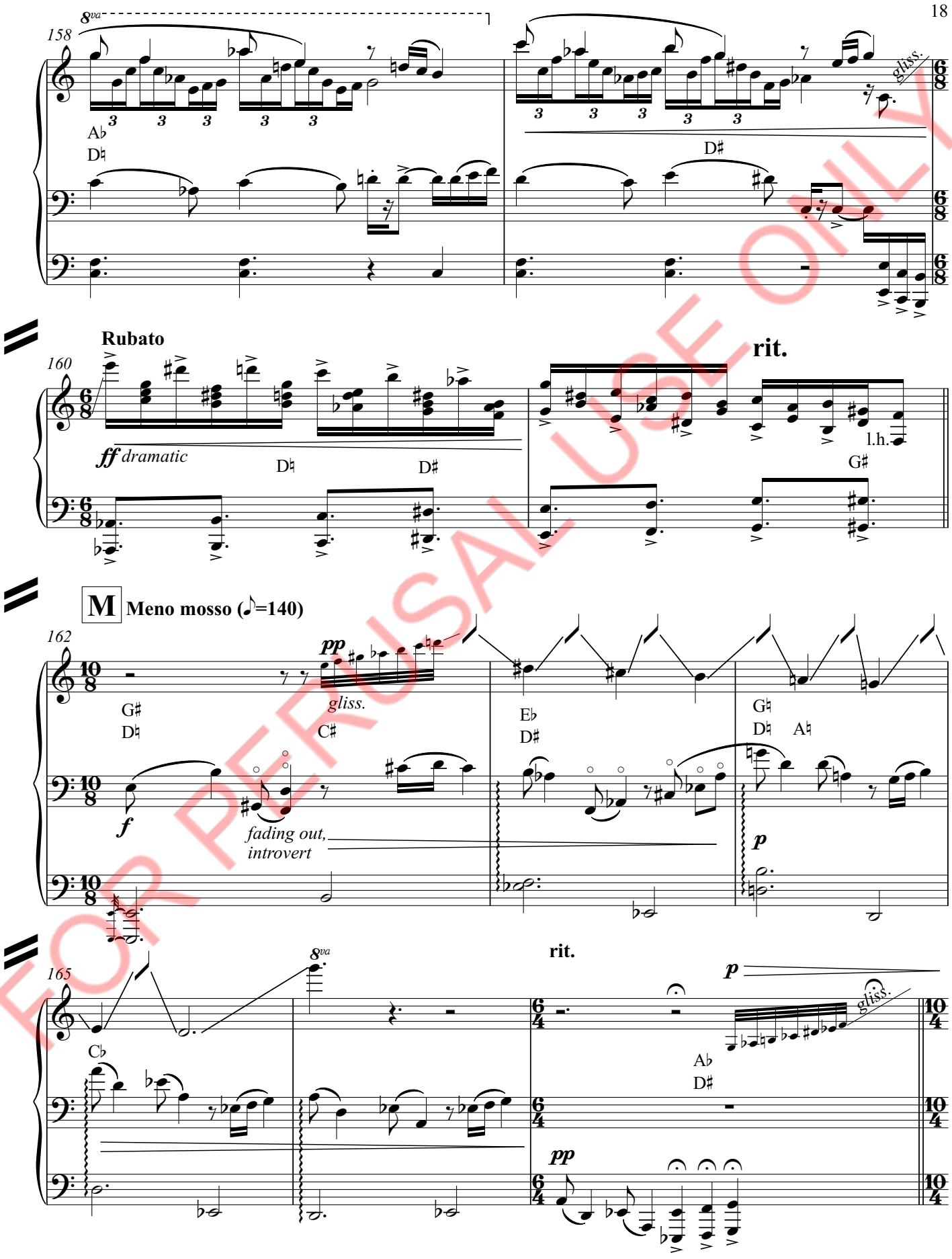

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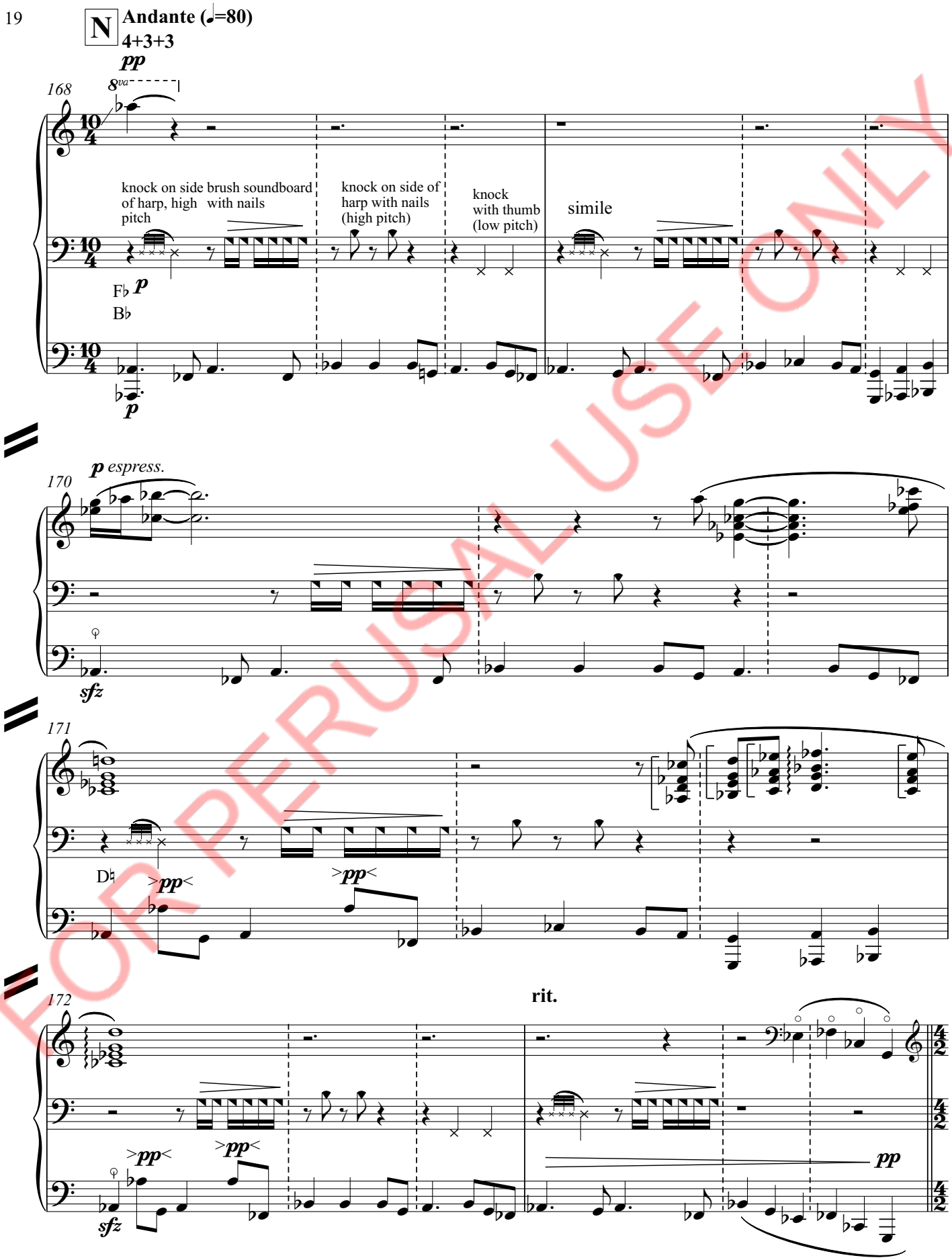

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O **Lament rubato (𝅗𝅥=45)**

(A tempo) **(Meno mosso)** **(A tempo)** **(Meno mosso)**

174

p mourning, espress. *(melody)* (l.v.) *(pp)* *(melody)*

(simile)

176

178

Db *pp*

180

p Db

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August 2016
Ridgewood, NJ, USA