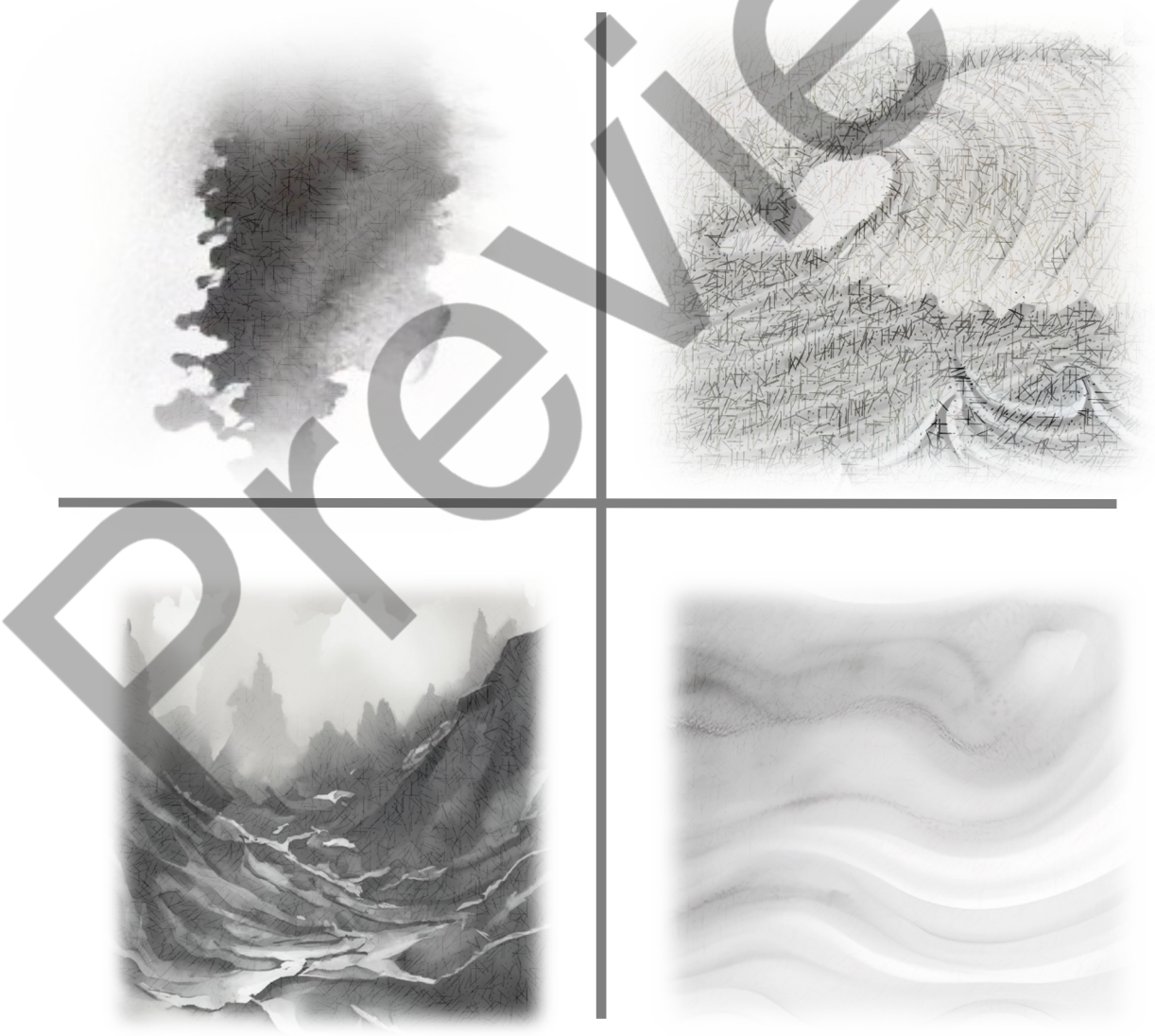
Stephen Mitton

Four Elemental Discourses

for Violin, Piano, and Fixed Media



Preview

Approx. 20:00

About this Piece:

Each movement of this piece represents one of the four classical elements (Fire, Water, Earth [Soil], and Air) and the impact that human activity has upon them. If they could speak, what would they tell us?

I. Fire Soliloquy:

Fire is a fascinating thing. Though inorganic, its vitality makes it seem alive to us. Though mindless, it seems to move according to its own whims, devouring everything in its path if given the chance. This movement presents an imagined firsthand account of the "life" of a fire, from the first dancing sparks to the formidable all-out blaze to the eventual demise in smoldering embers.

II. Water Elegy:

This movement is an adaptation of the first movement of my string quartet, "Currents," and is a plea to protect Earth's most vital resource: its water. As humankind's unsustainable consumption demands continue to grow, plastics manufacturing goes on relatively unchallenged. Much of this plastic is discarded into the oceans, where it fragments and deteriorates. Powerful ocean gyres then churn this debris in enormous "garbage patches" found in every ocean on the planet, which frequently become death traps for animals who ingest or become entangled in it.

III. Soil Threnody:

According to the World Wildlife Fund, half of the earth's topsoil has been lost to soil erosion and degradation in the past 150 years, threatening ecosystems across the globe.[1] Among the chief causes are deforestation and unsustainable mining practices. This movement is a lament built upon simultaneous descending and ascending chromatic scales representing both the erosion process and the resulting pollution as left-behind particles are blown into the air.

IV. Air Homily:

"For breath is life, and if you breathe well, you will live long on earth."

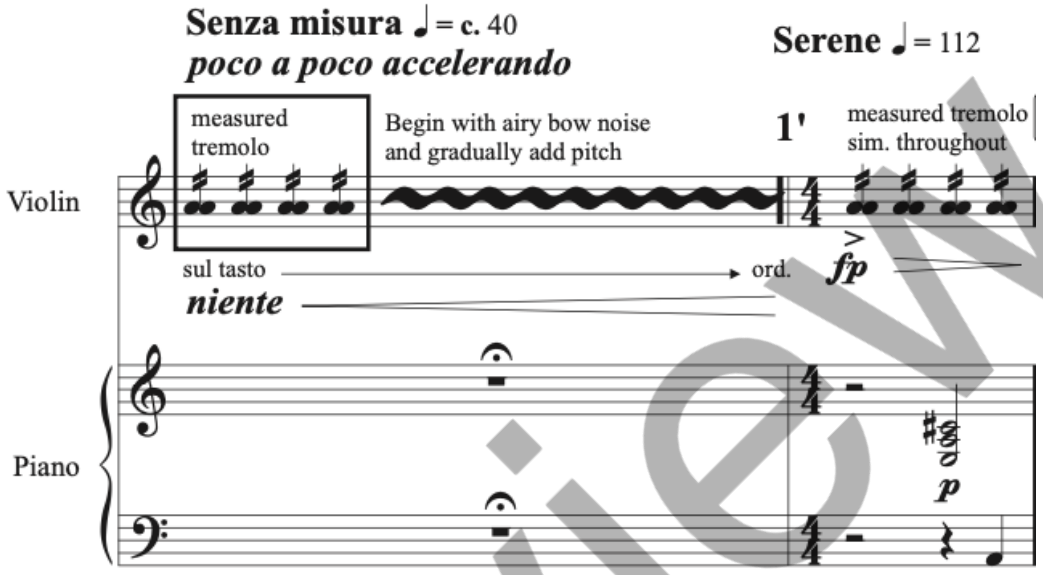
Sanskrit Proverb

[1] World Wildlife Fund, "Soil Erosion and Degradation," accessed September 6, 2023, https://www.worldwildlife.org/threats/soil-erosion-and-degradation.

Preview

Performance Notes:

Air Homily, opening passage:



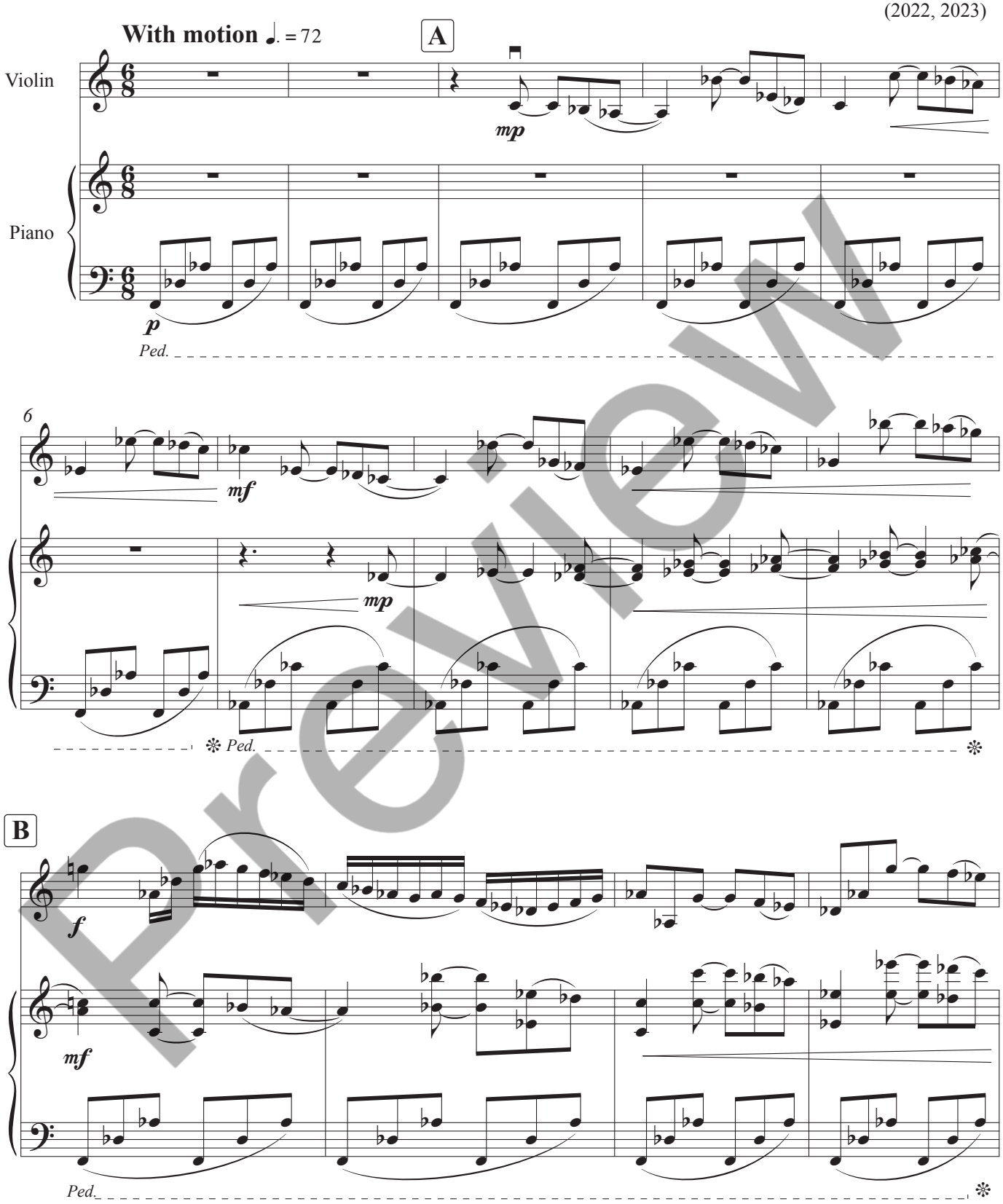
To successfully execute this passage, the performer should begin by slowly and evenly moving the bow back and forth on the fingerboard while dampening the strings with the fingers so that no pitch is audible (this is meant to approximate an airy breathing sound). The bow should gradually move faster while moving further down the fingerboard. The fingers should gradually relax so that pitch begins to appear as the rhythm approaches measured, pitched 16th notes after about one minute. The 16th notes that run throughout the violin part should always be played on the string. These instructions should be followed in reverse for the fade-out effect in the final measure of the piece.

Preview

Score

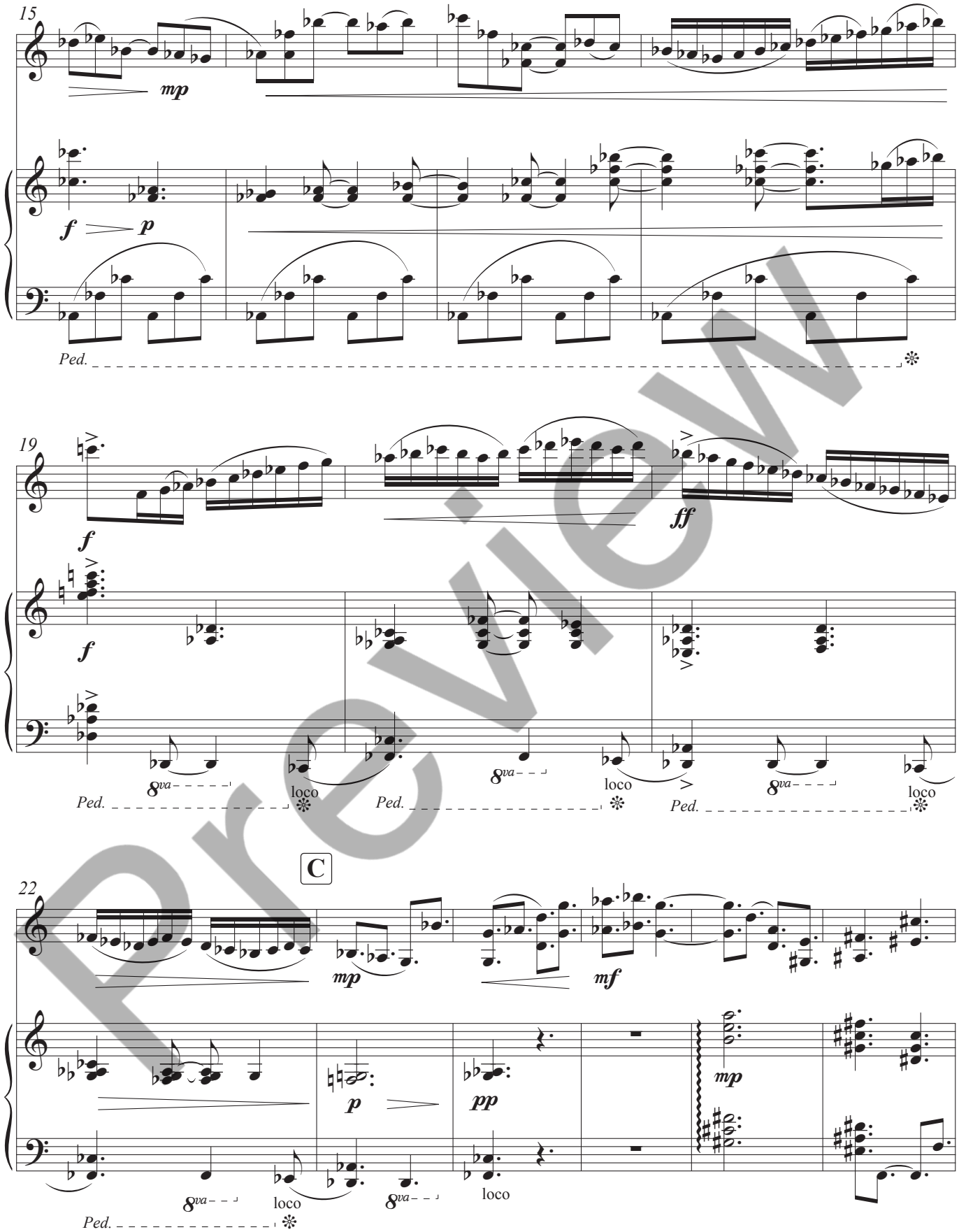
I. Fire Soliloquy

Stephen Mitton
(2022, 2023)



Preview

©2022, 2023 Stephen Mitton (ASCAP)



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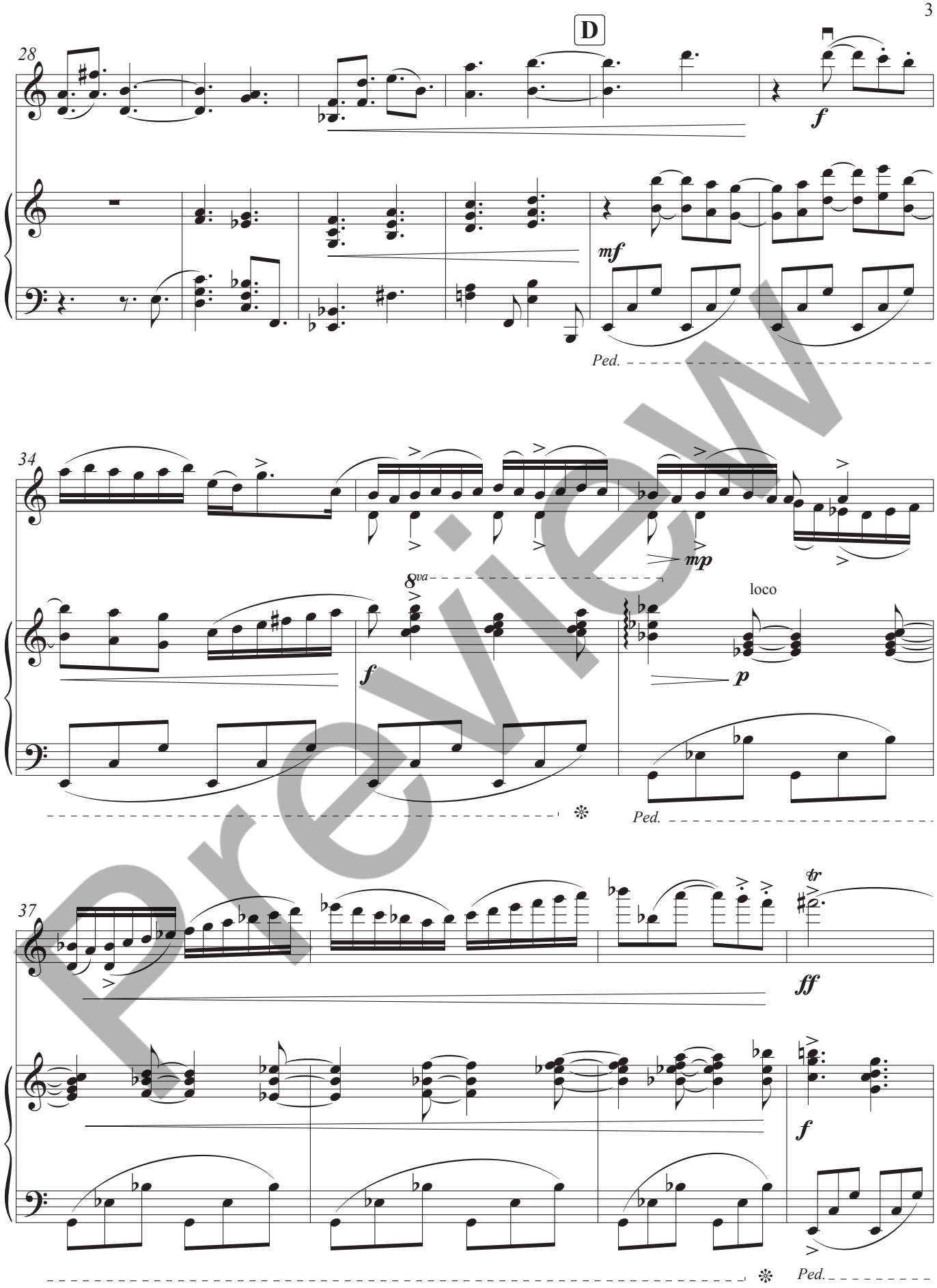

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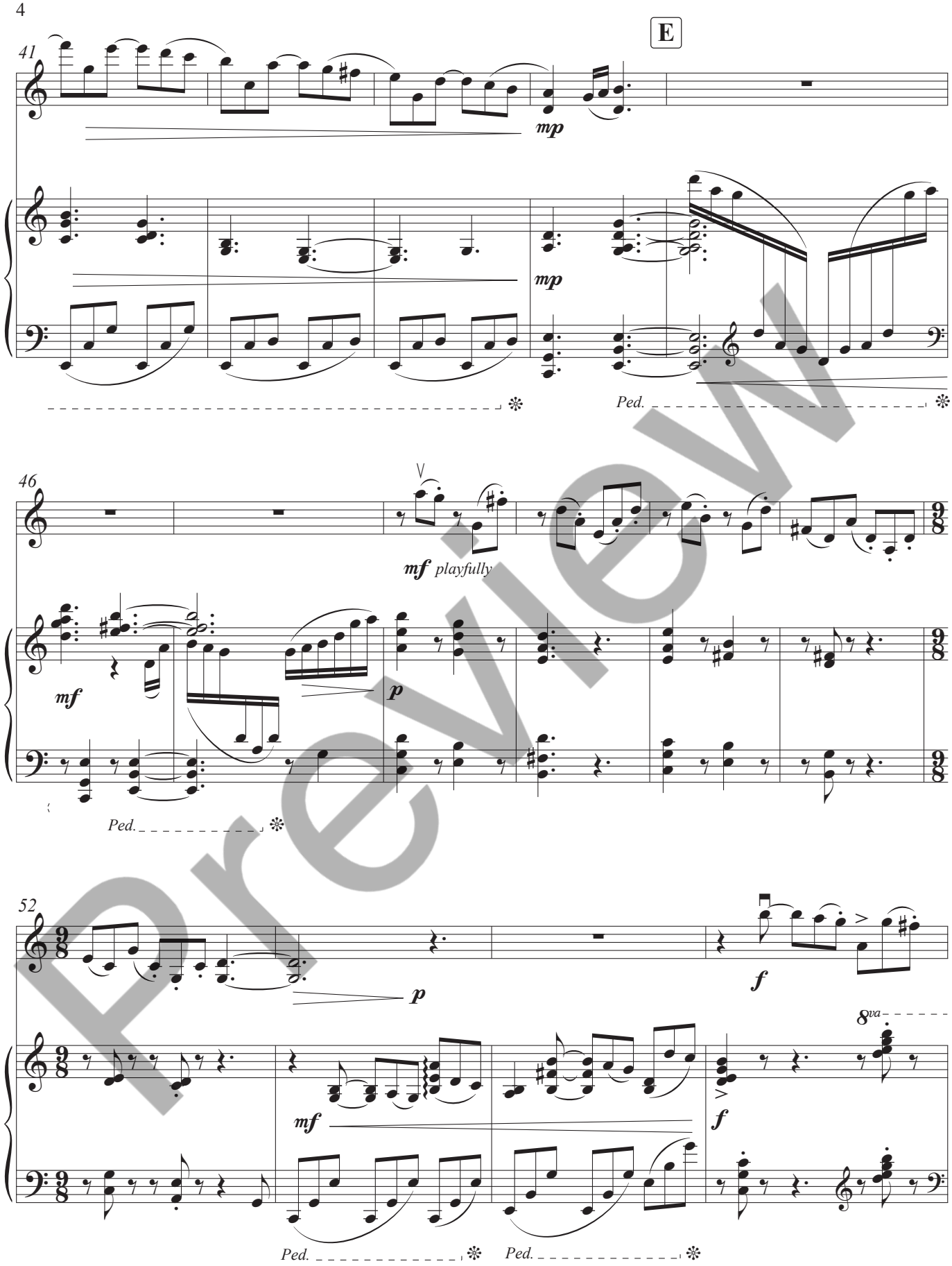

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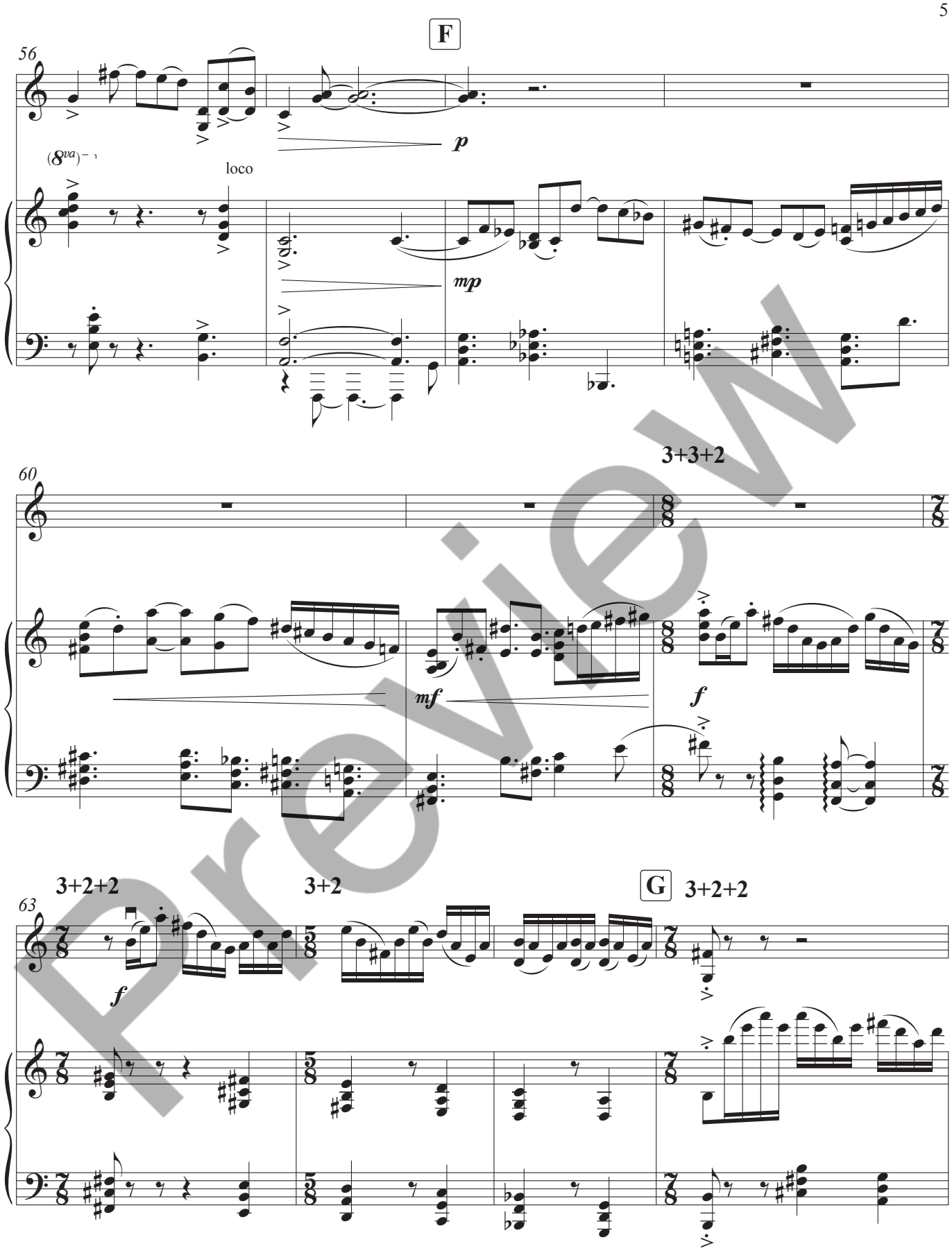

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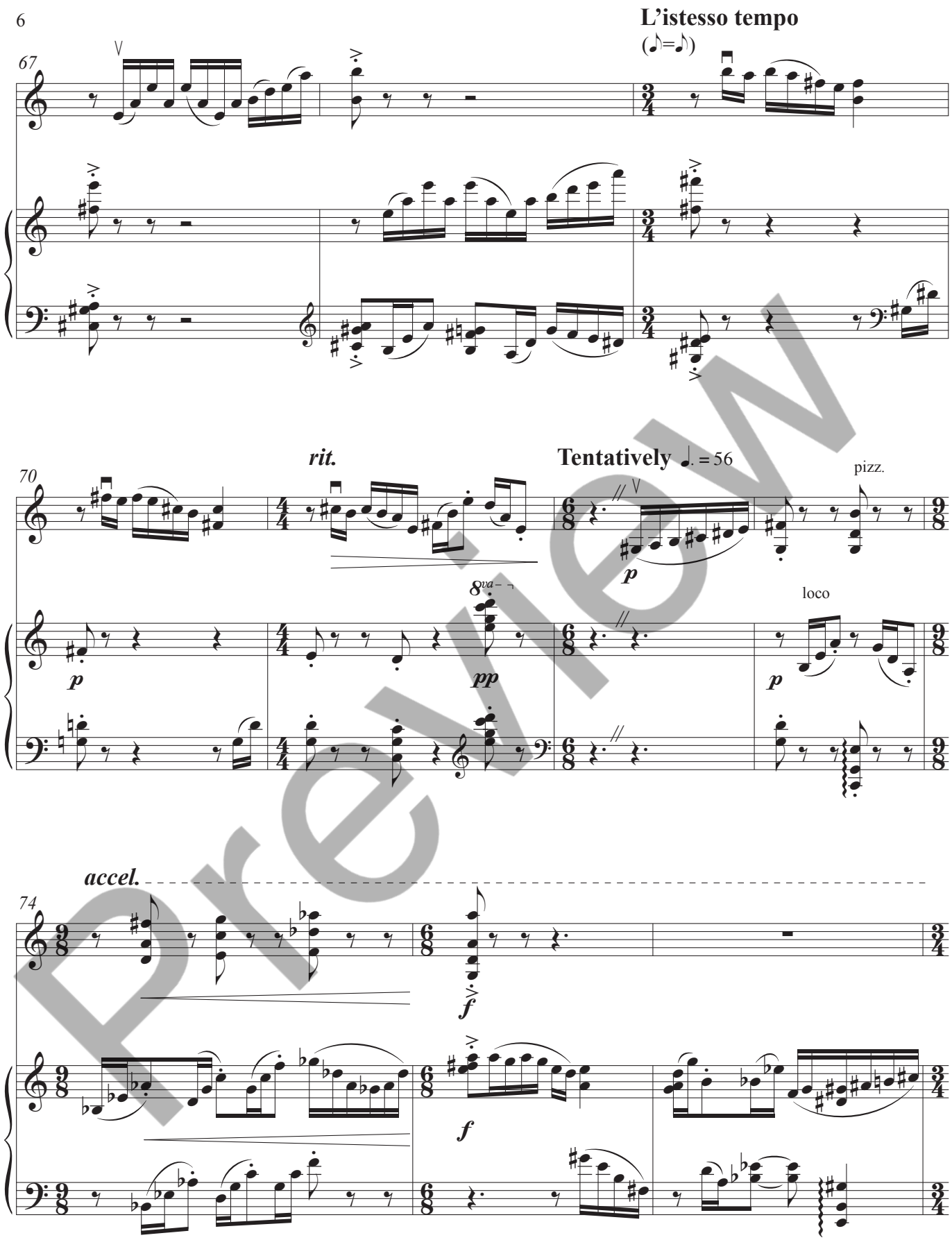
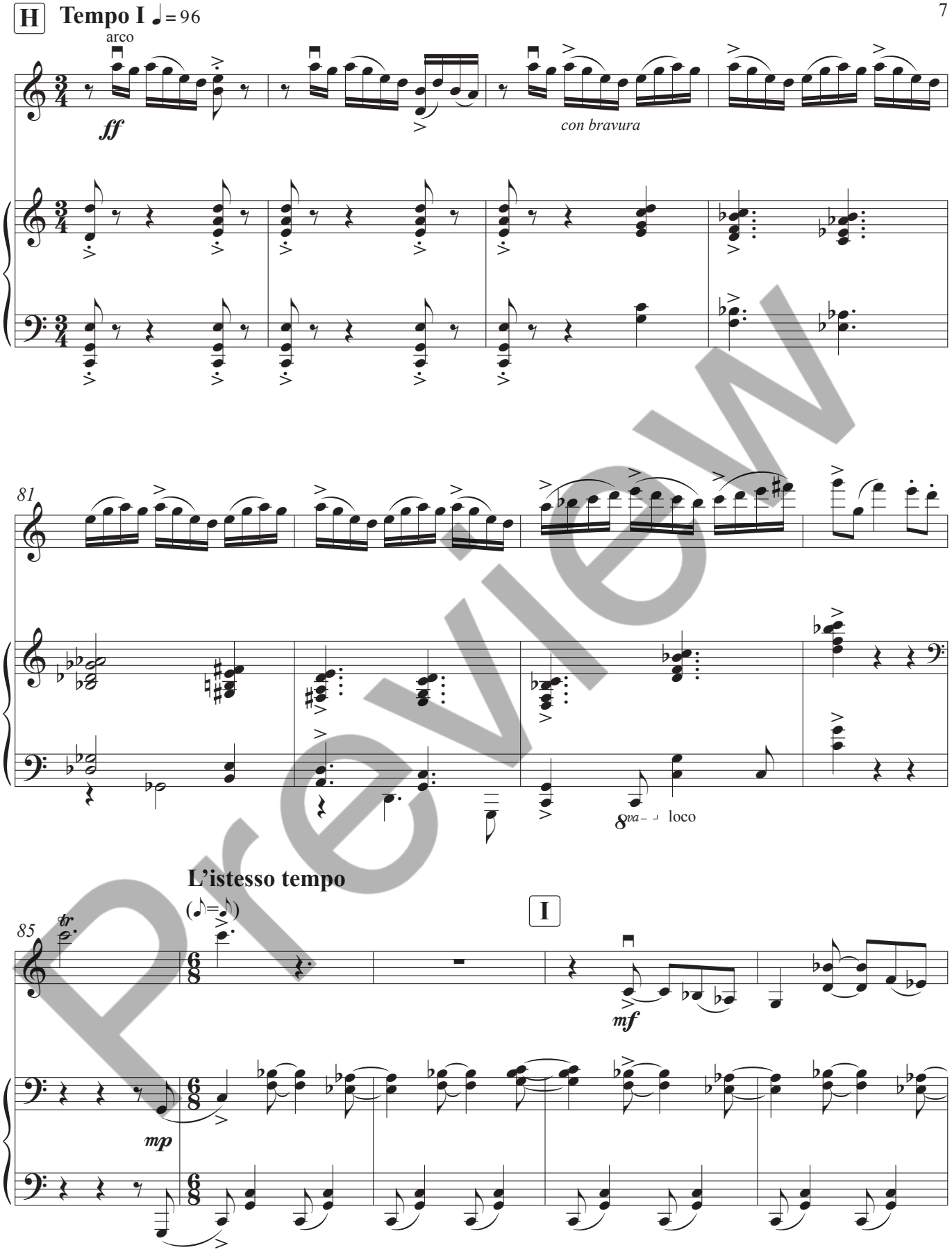
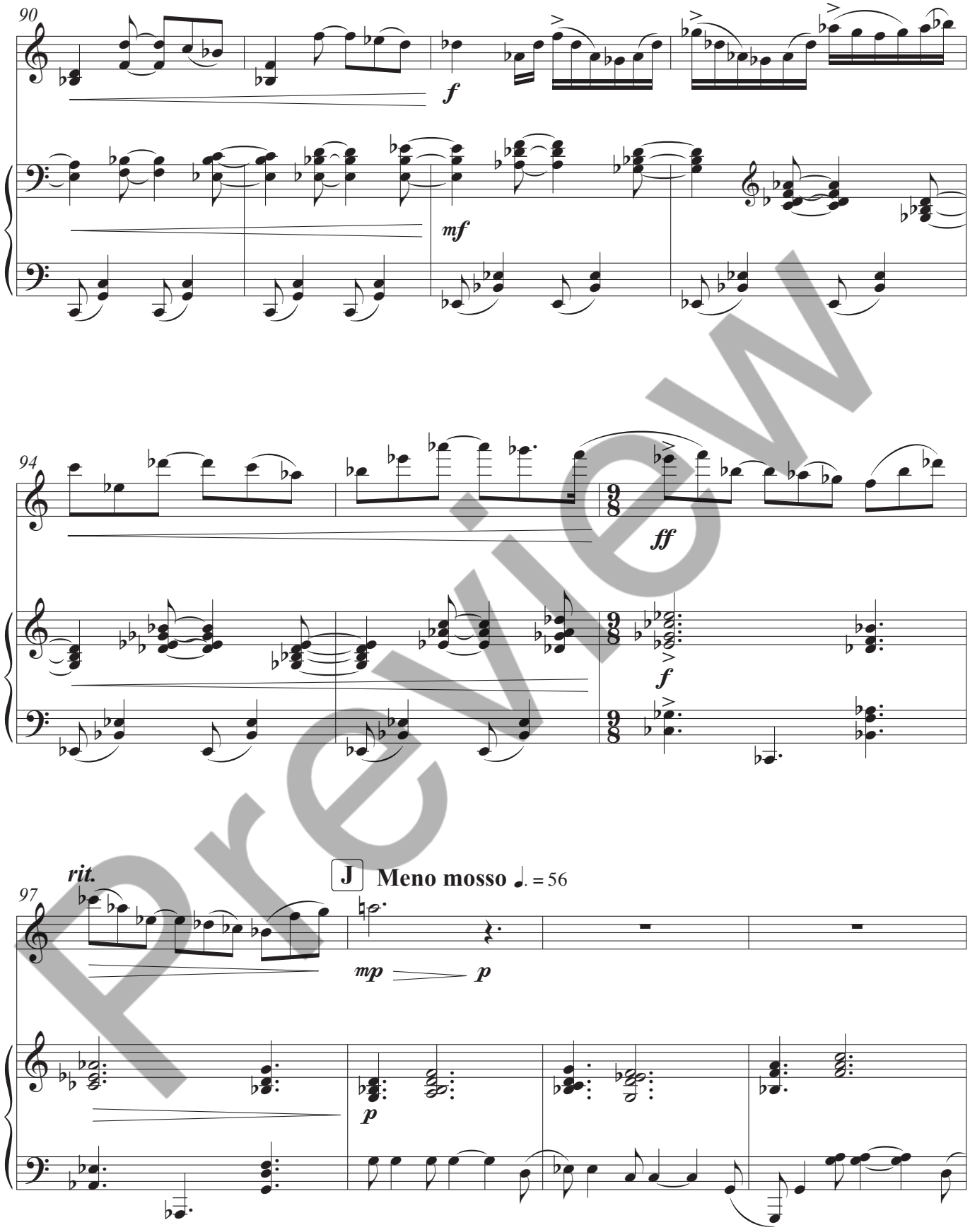

L'istesso tempo
(♪=♪)
67
rit.
Tentatively ♩. = 56
70
pizz.
loco
8va
accel.
74

Preview


H
Tempo I ♩= 96
arco
ff
con bravura
81
8va
loco
L'istesso tempo
(♪=♪)
I
85
tr
mf
mp

Preview



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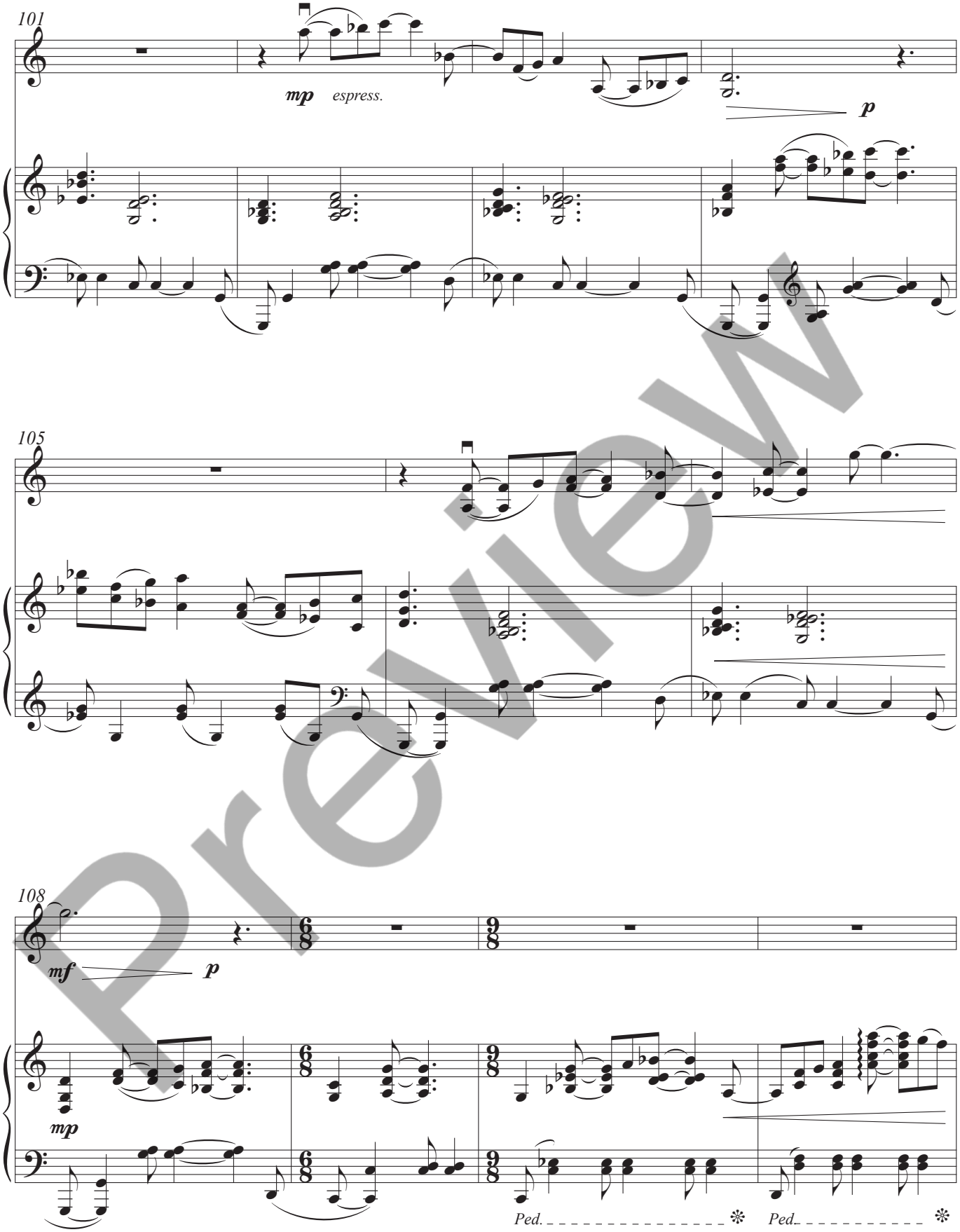

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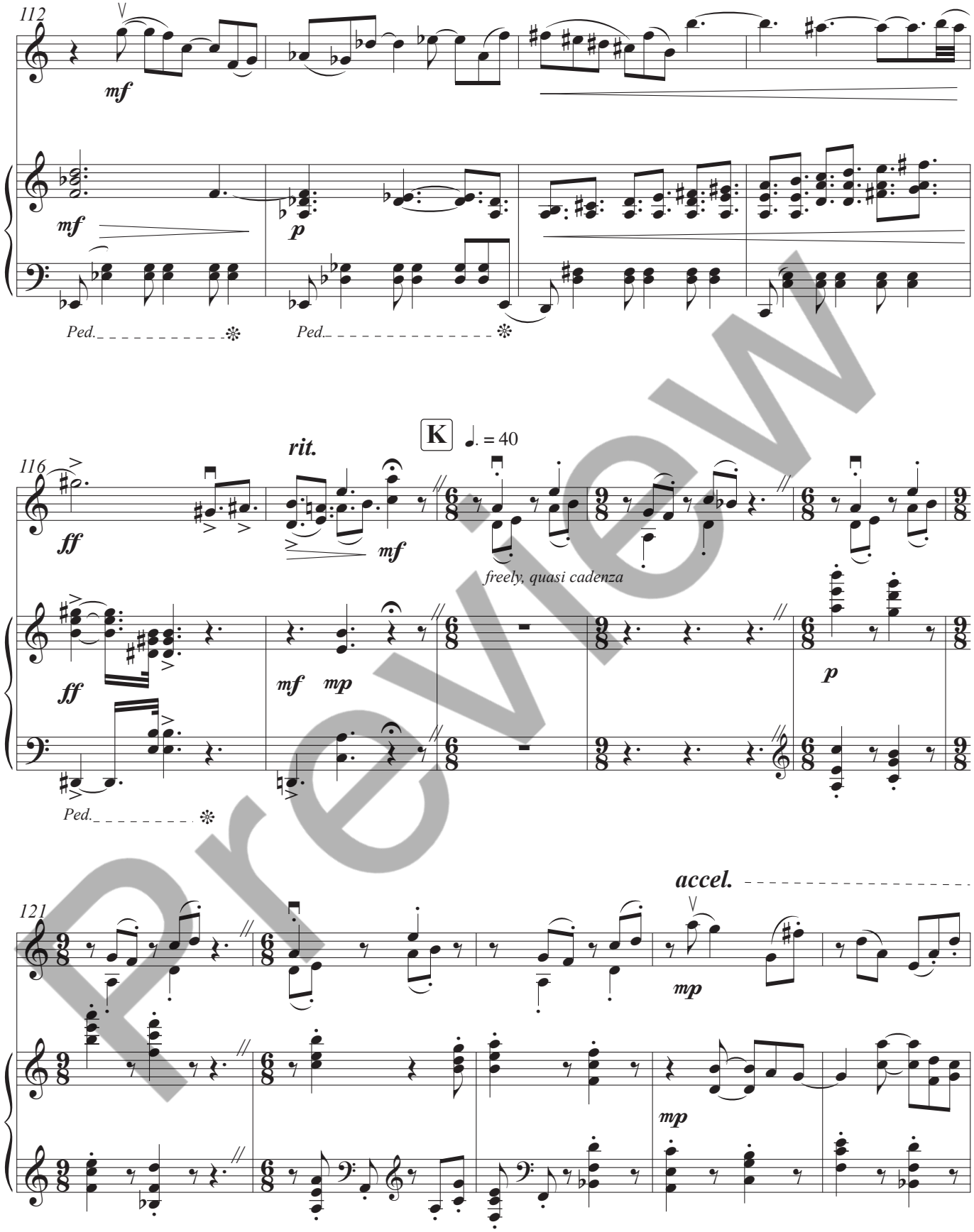
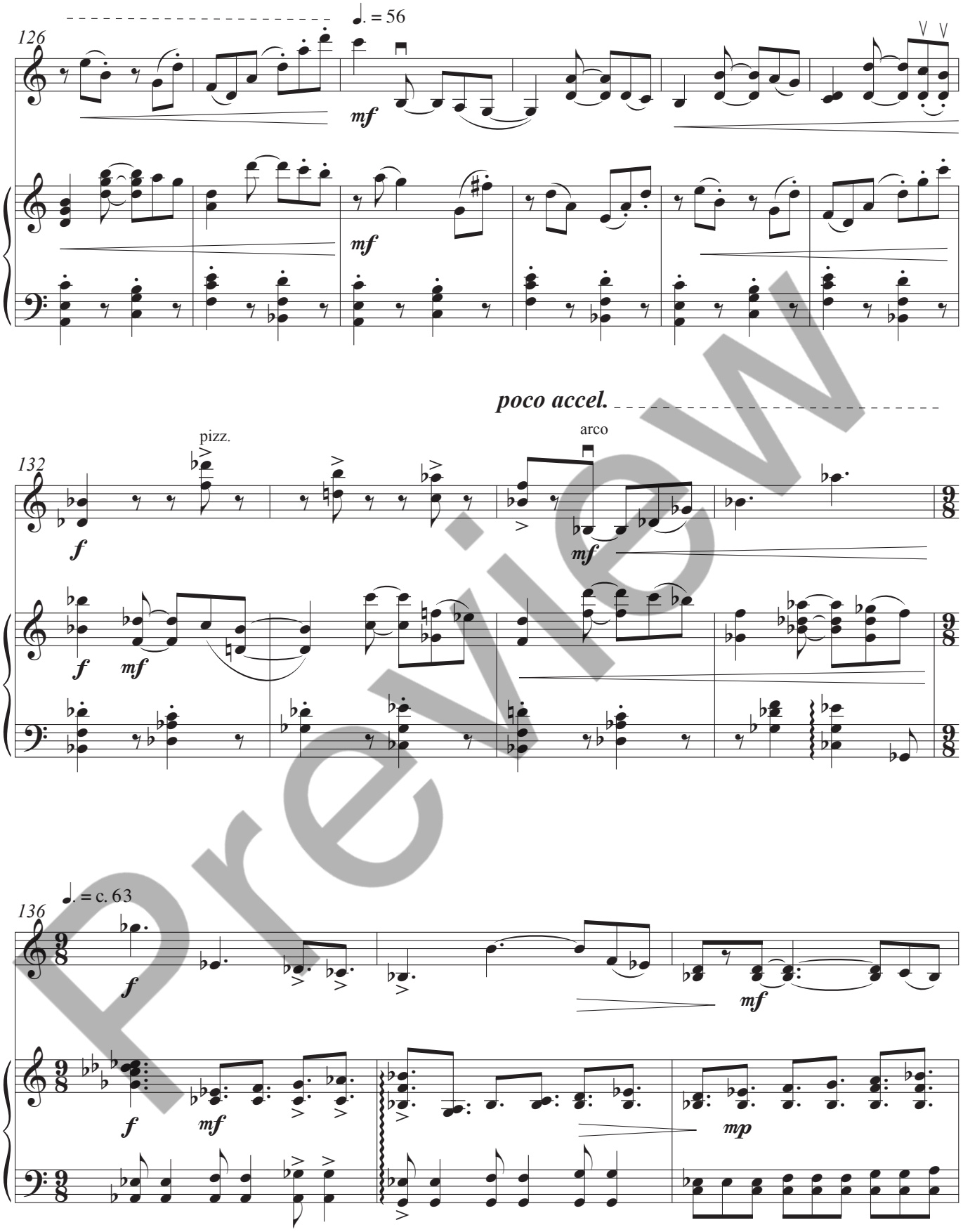

112
mf
mf
p
Ped.
Ped.
116
ff
rit.
mf
K
♩. = 40
freely, quasi cadenza
ff
mf
mp
p
Ped.
121
accel.
mp
mp

Preview



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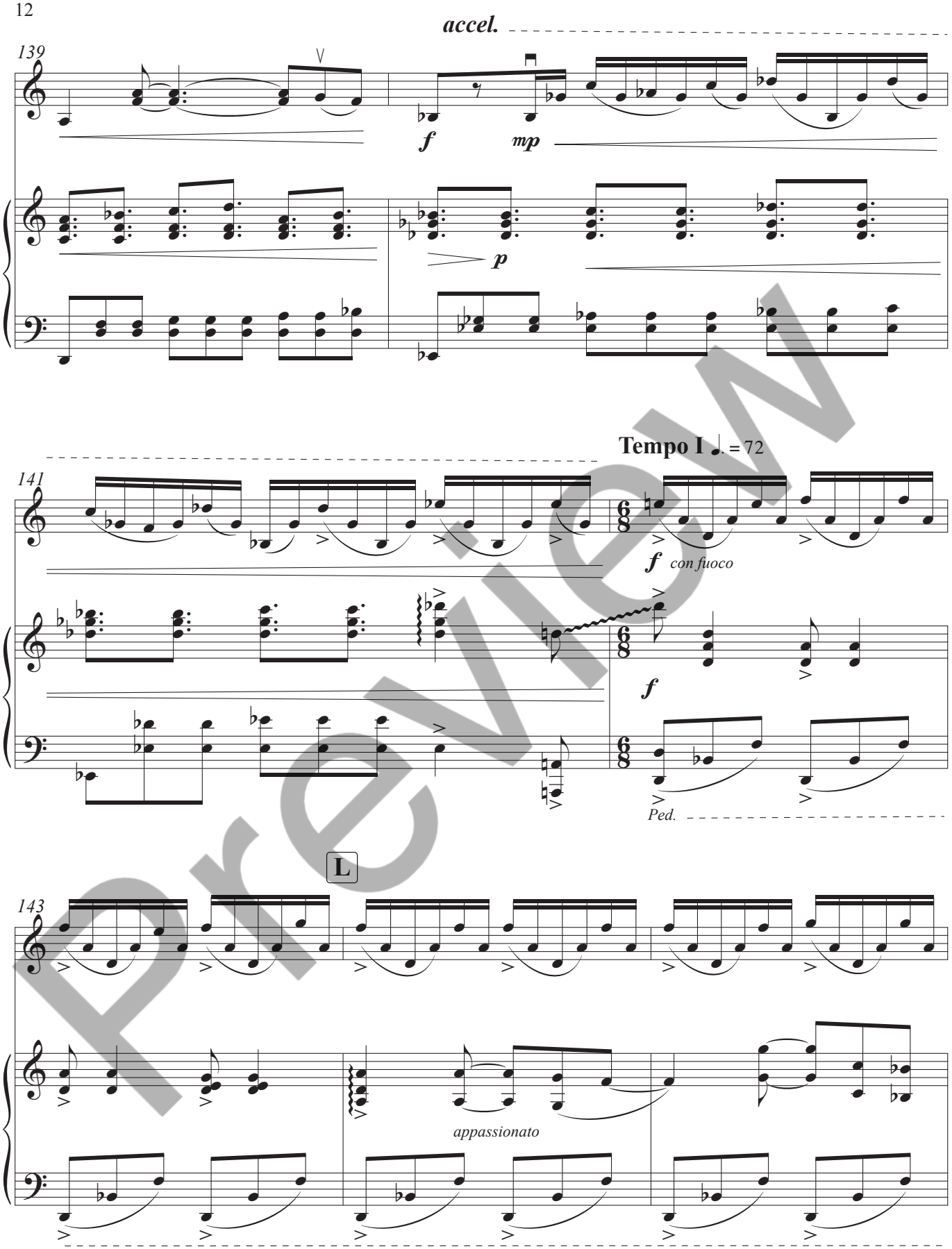
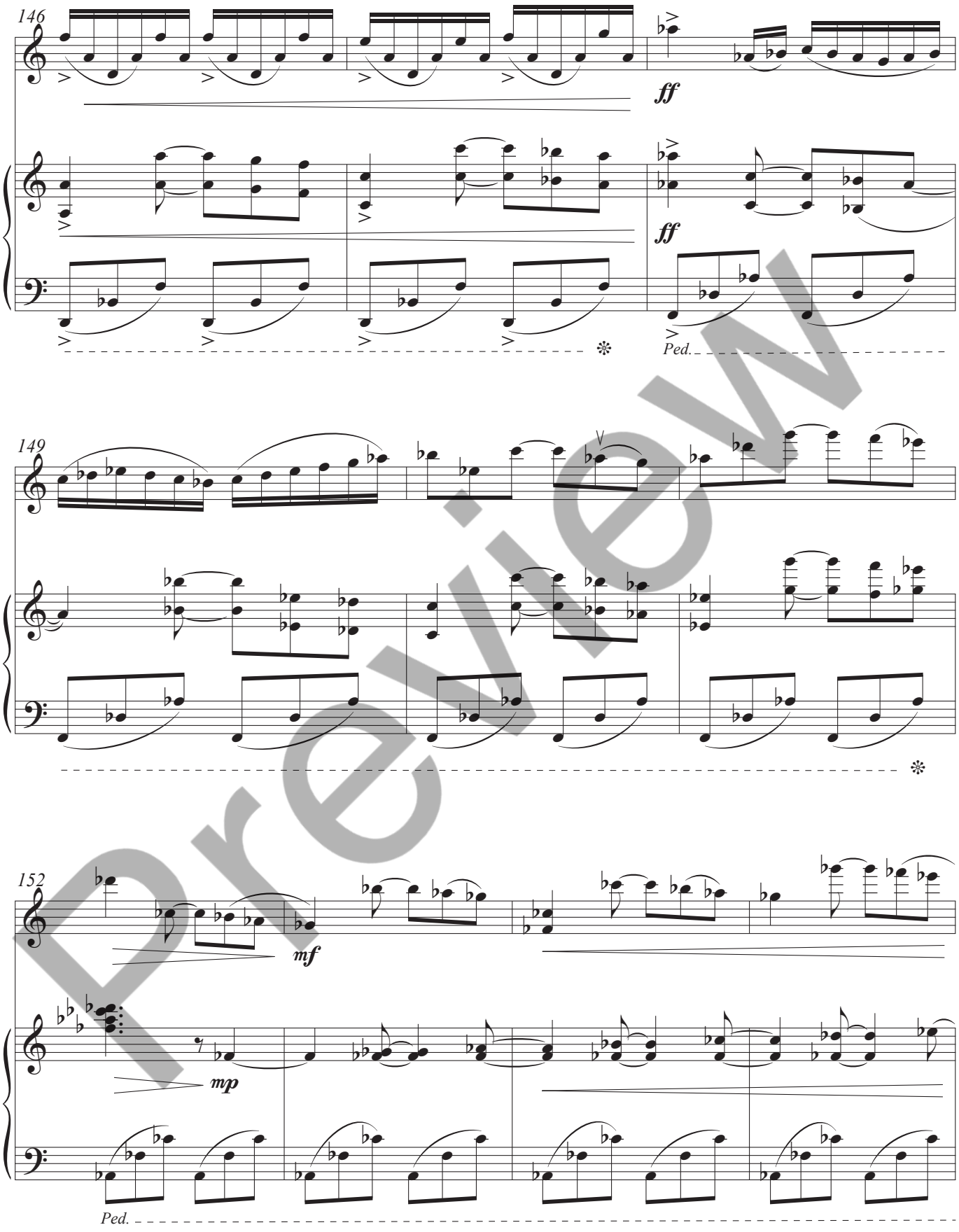

accel.
139
f
mp
p
Tempo I ♩. = 72
141
f con fuoco
f
Ped.
L
143
appassionato

Preview



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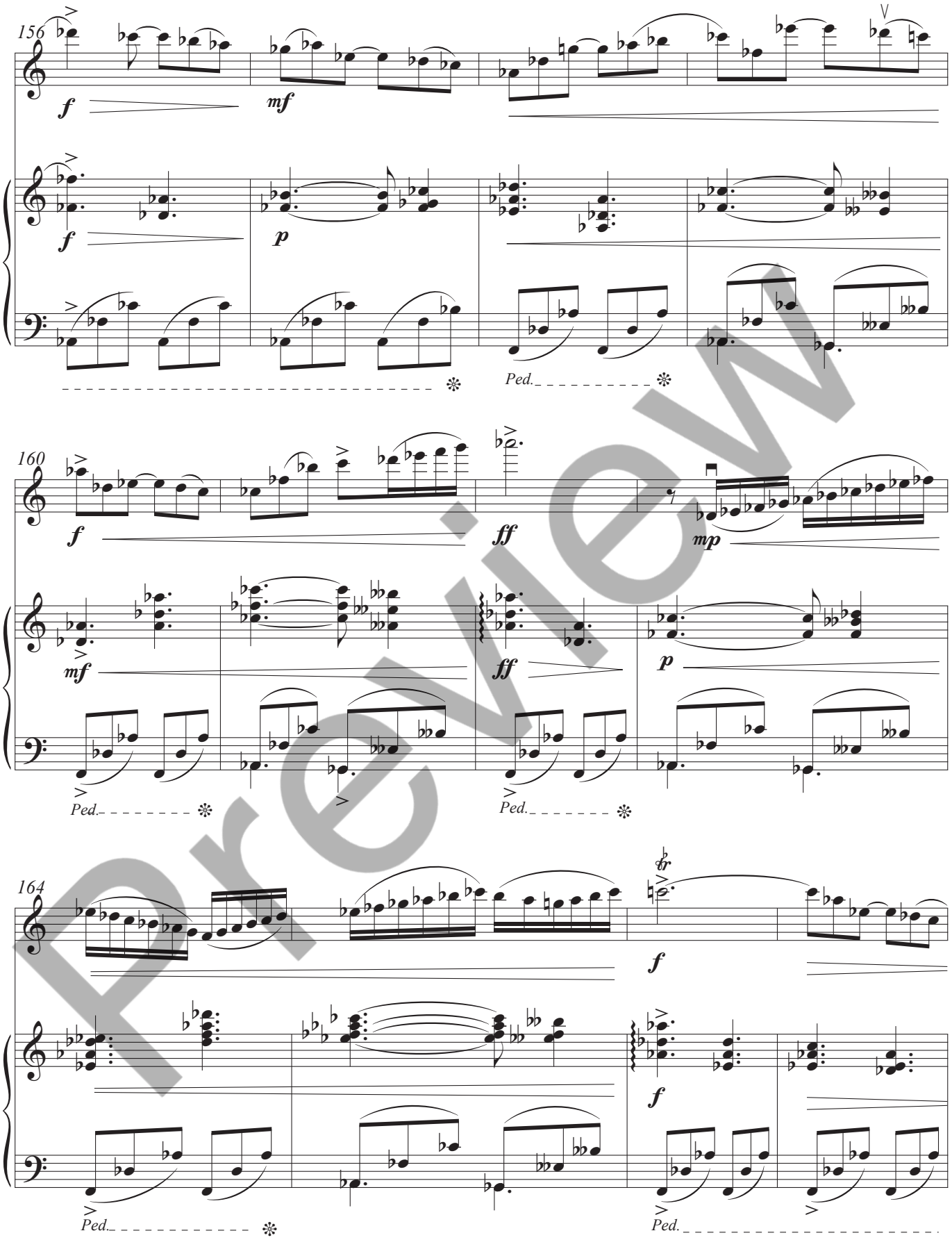

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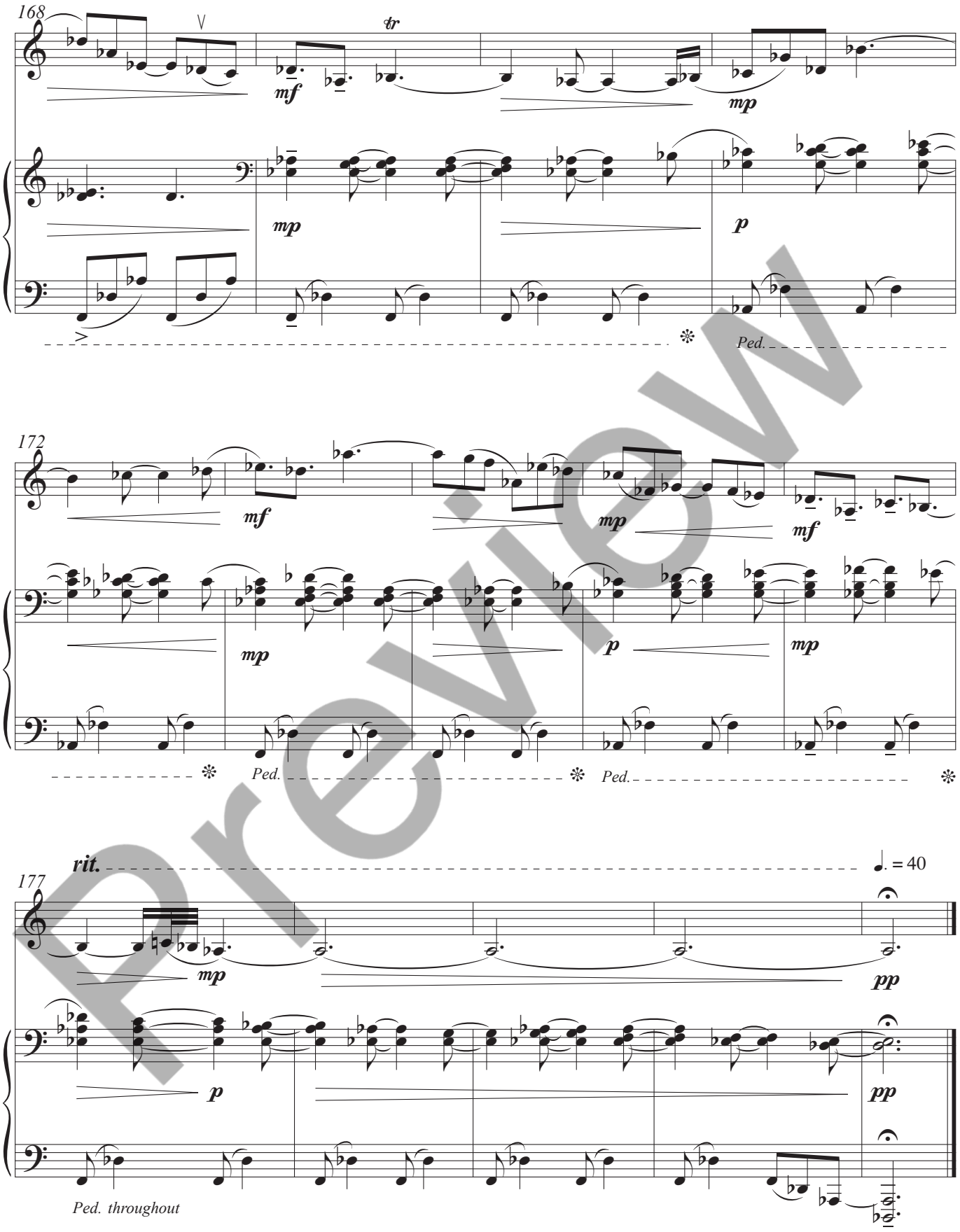
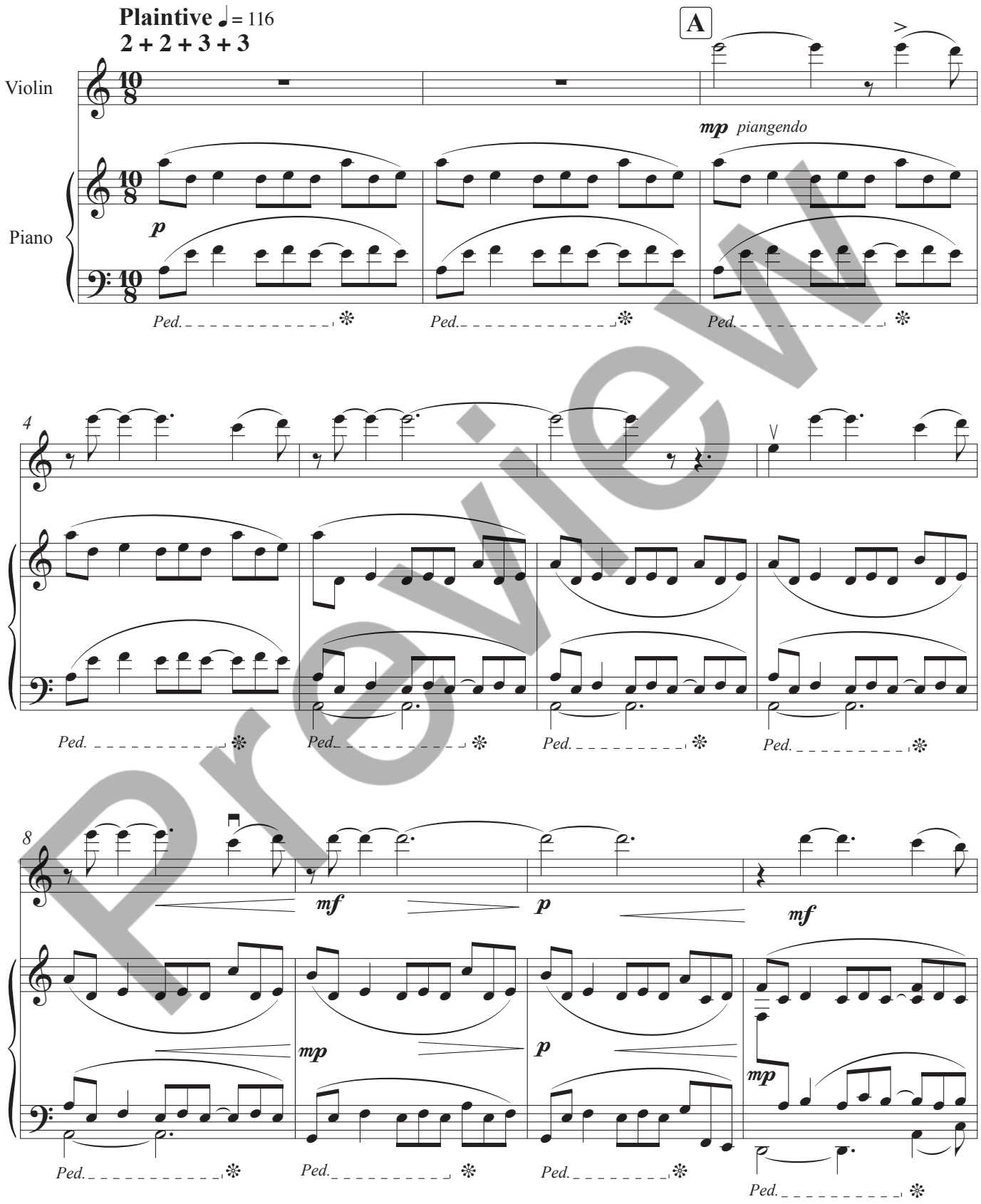

168
tr
mf
mp
mp
p
Ped.
172
mf
mp
mf
mp
p
mp
Ped.
Ped.
177
rit.
♩. = 40
mp
pp
p
pp
Ped. throughout

Preview

II. Water Elegy

From *String Quartet No. 3*, "Currents"



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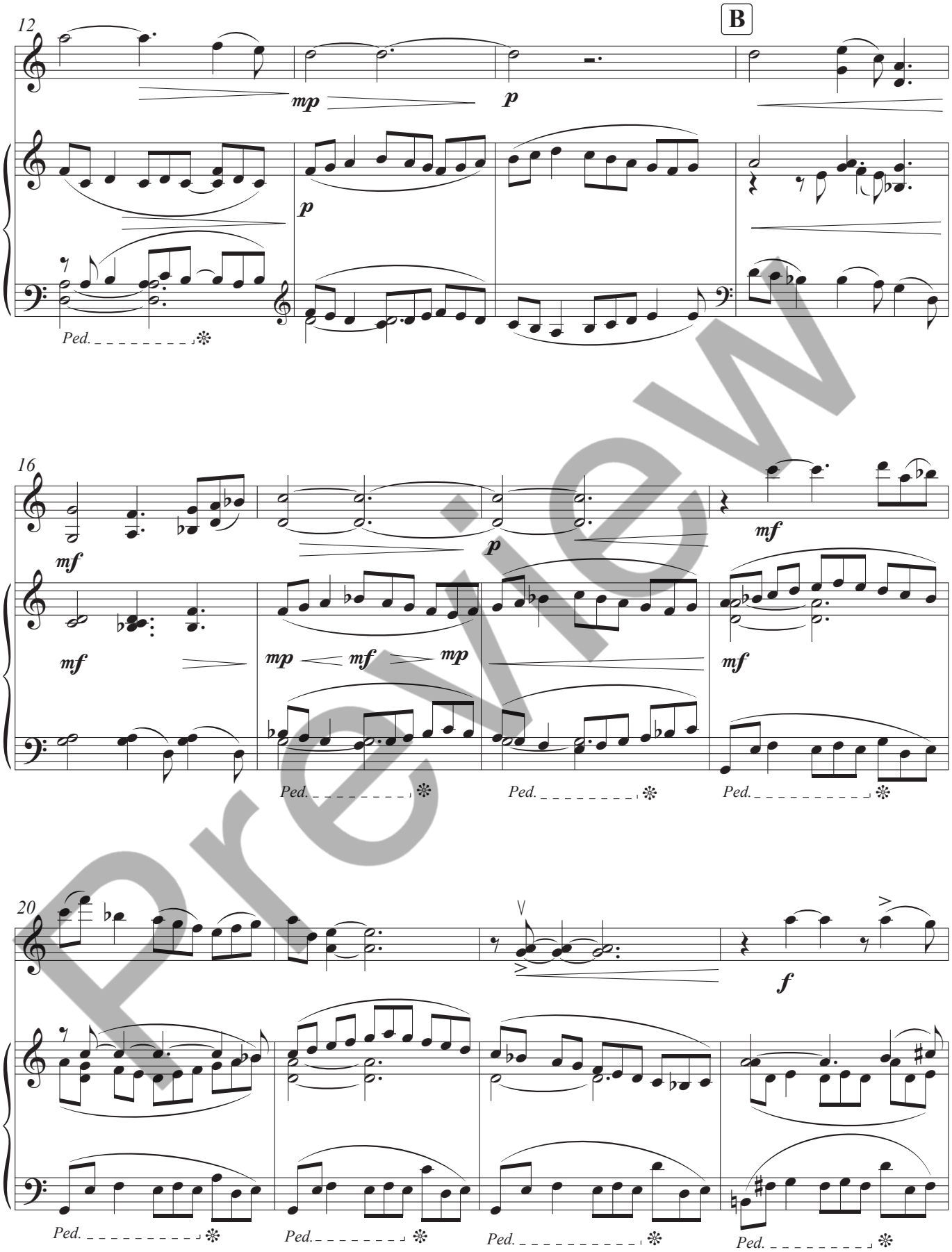
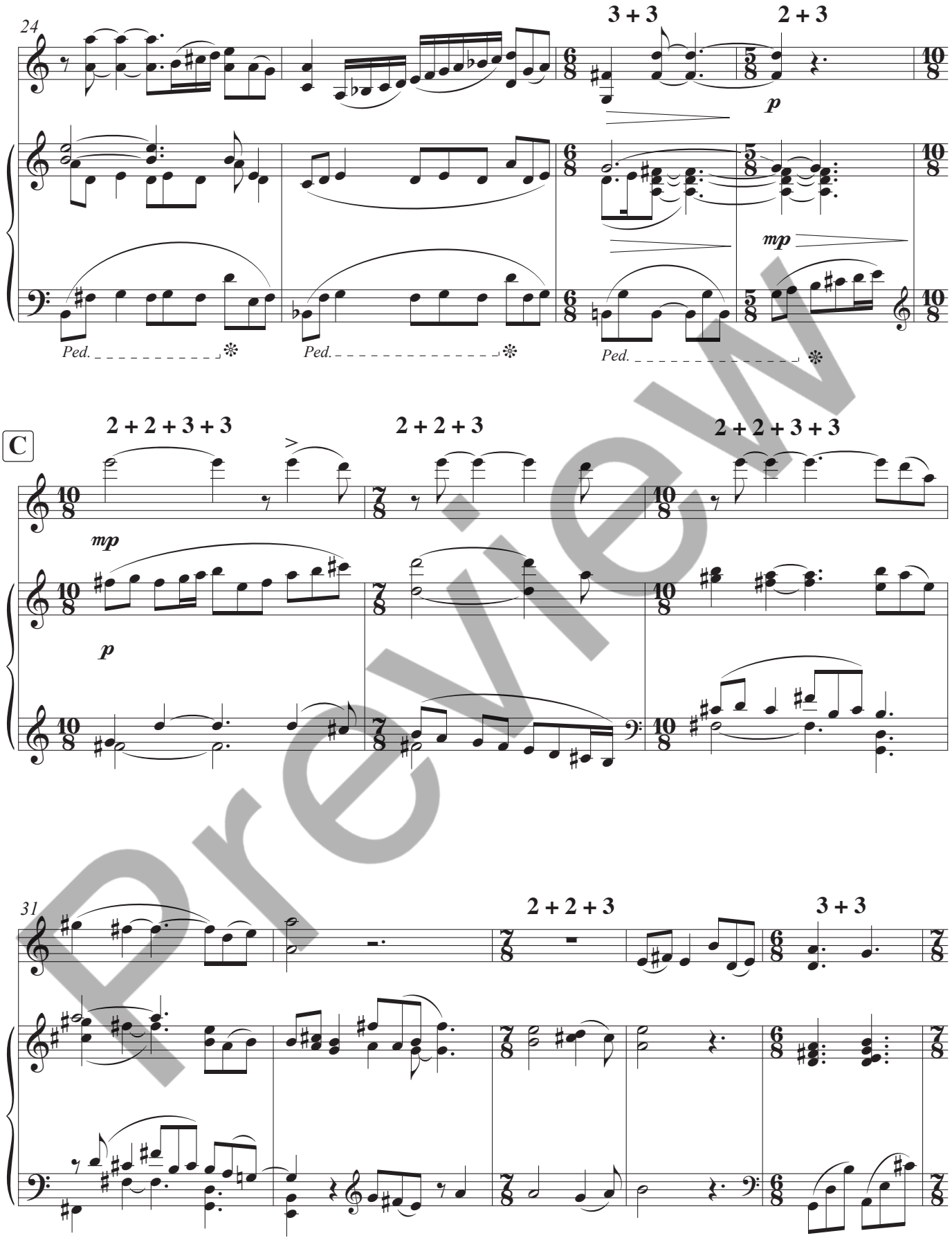

12
B
mp
p
p
Ped.
16
mf
p
mf
mf
mp
mf
mp
mf
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
20
f
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.

Preview



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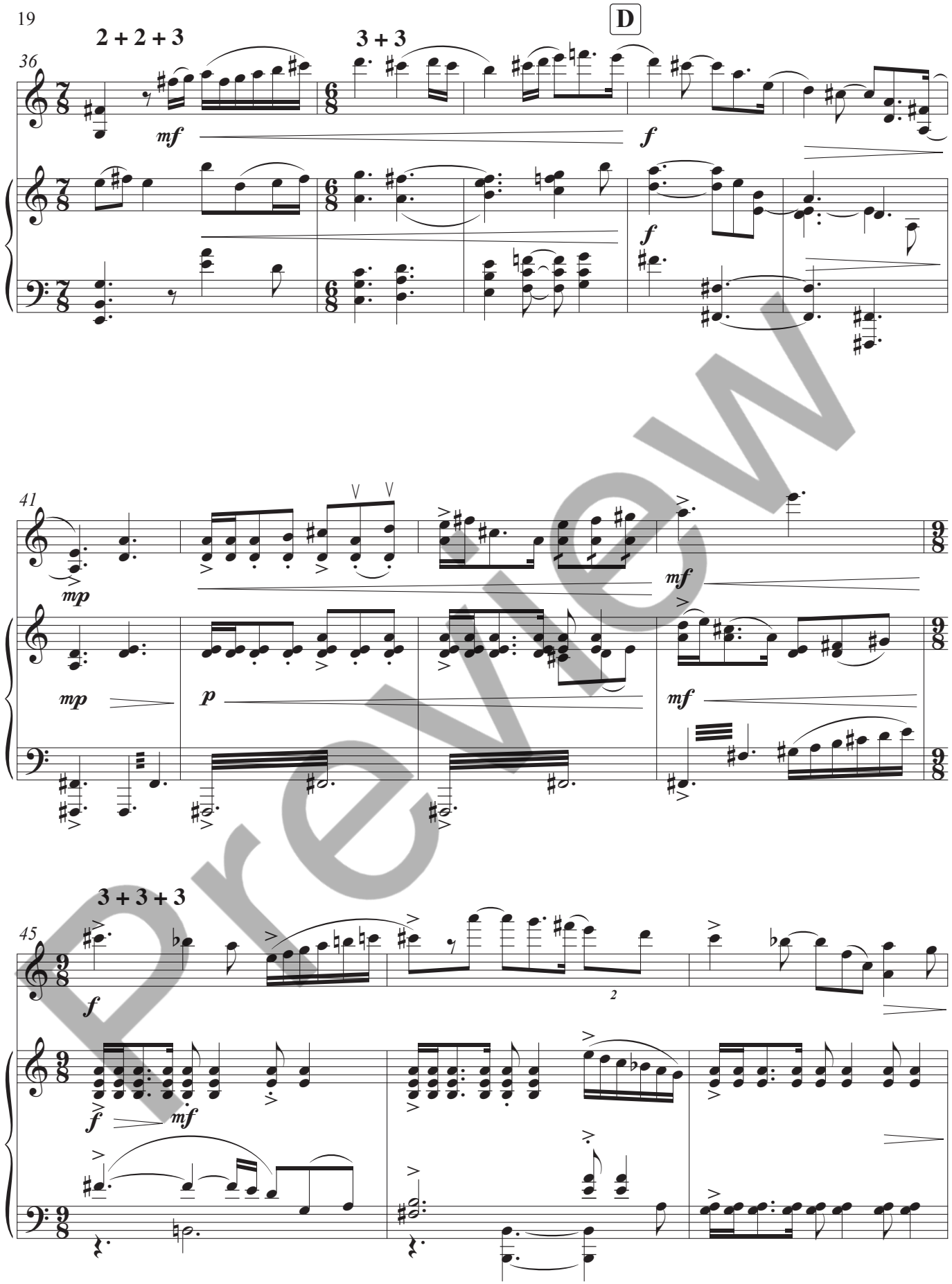

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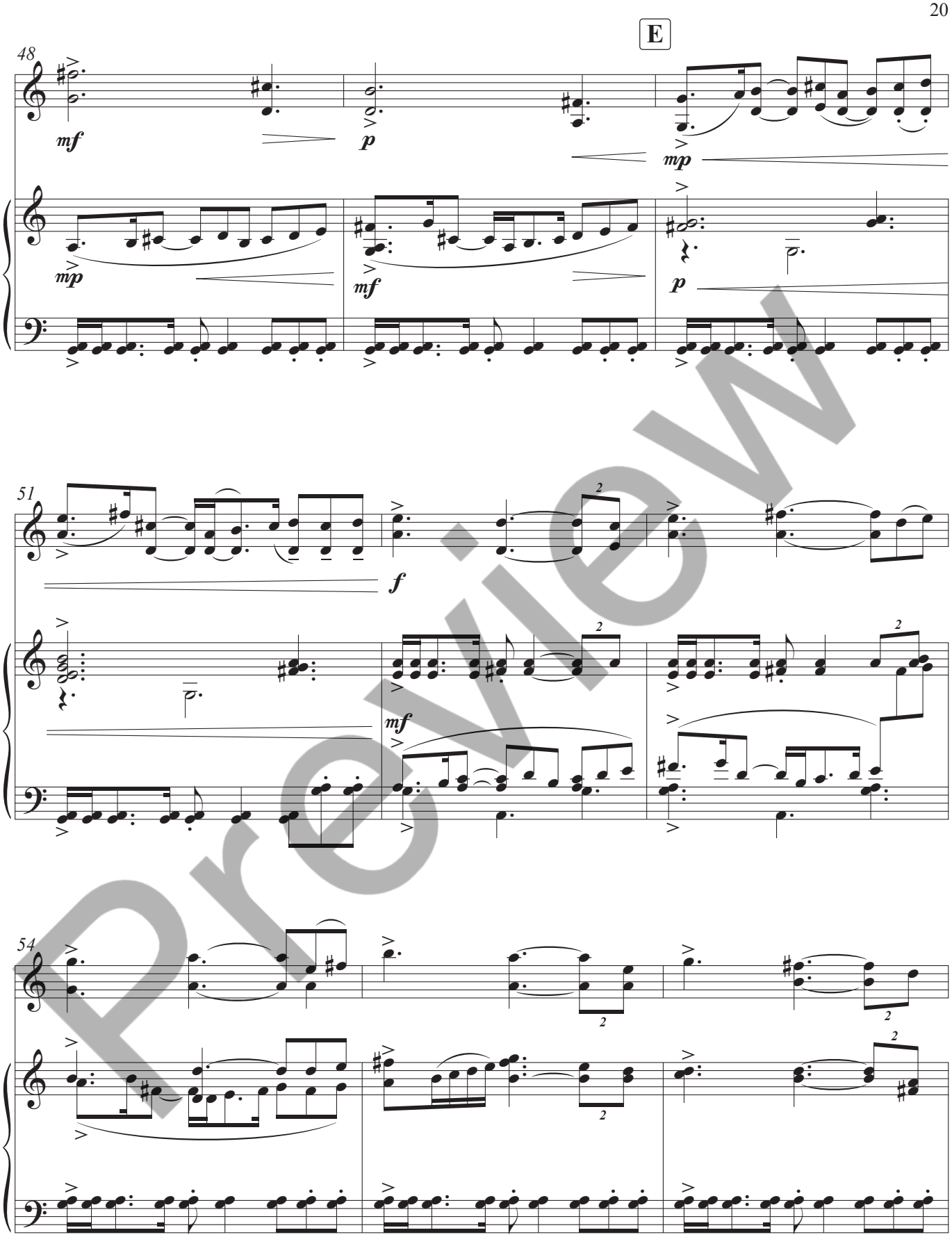

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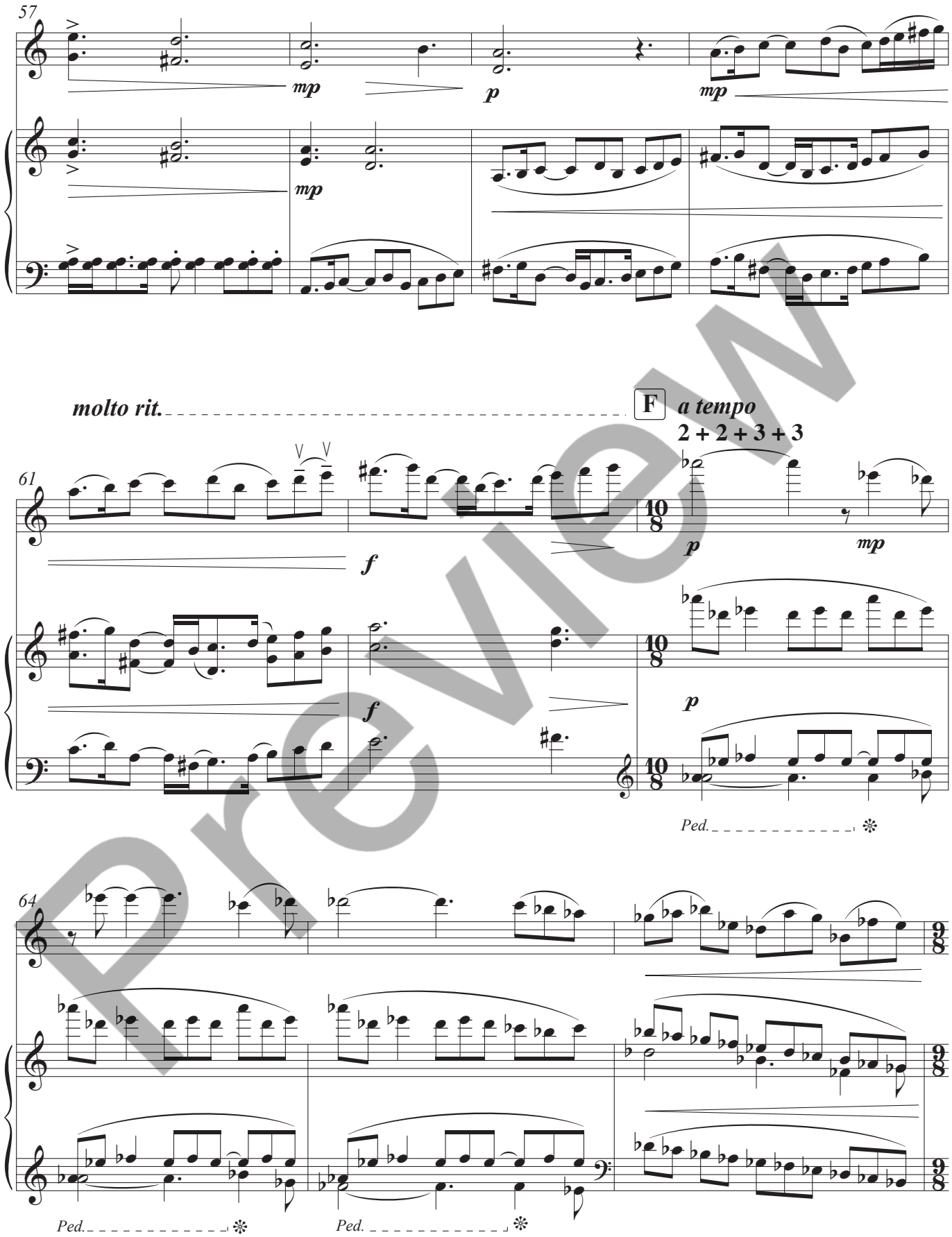

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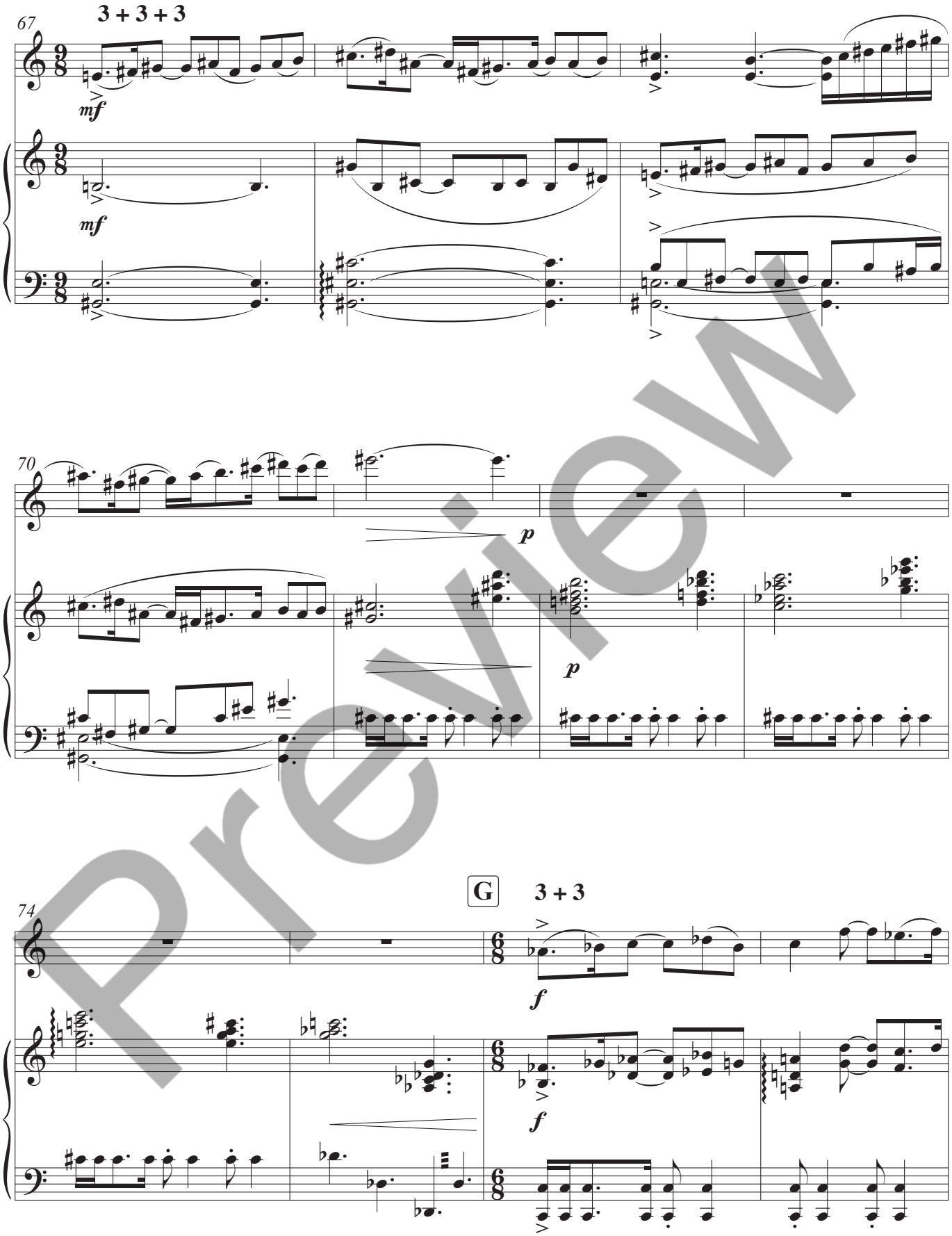

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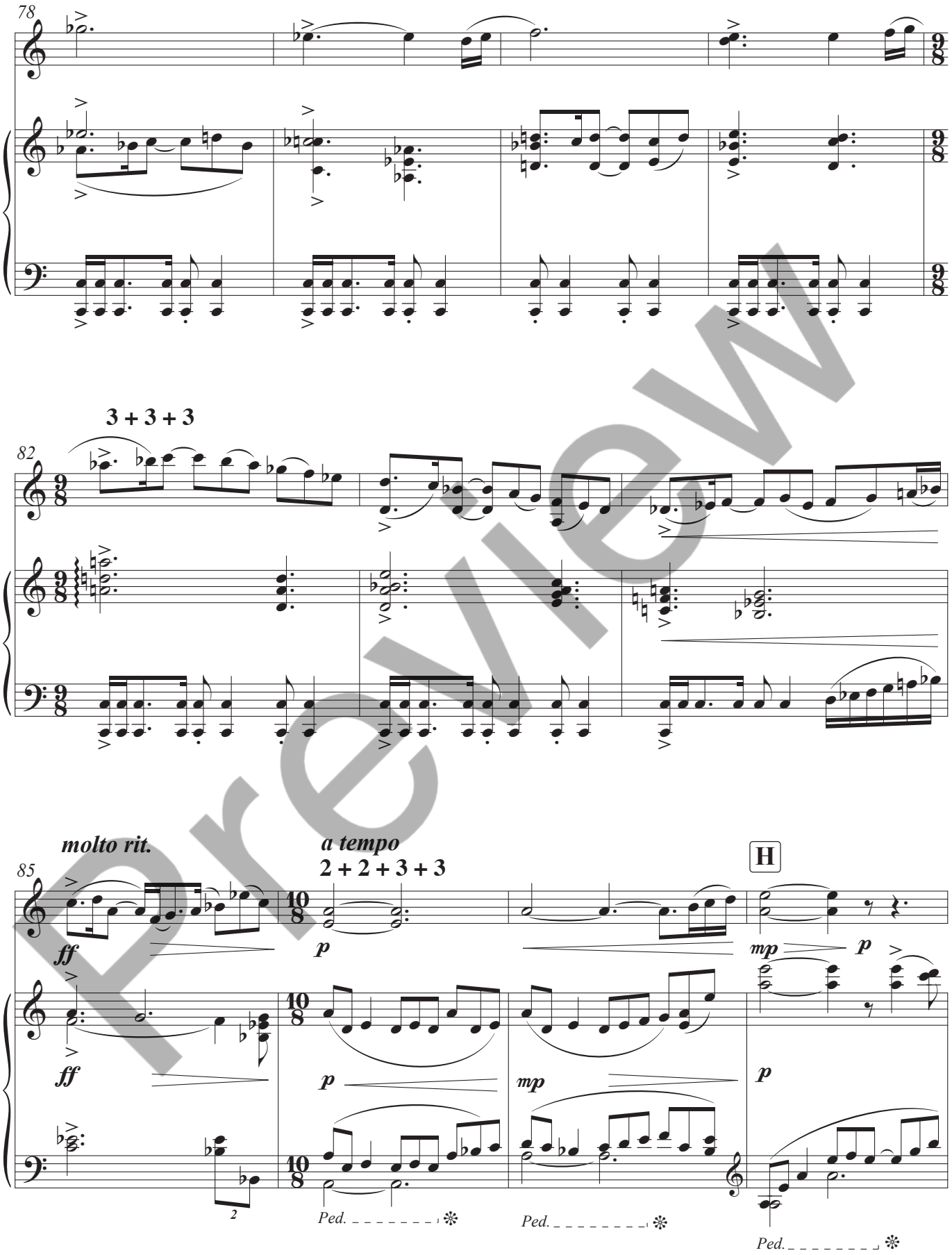

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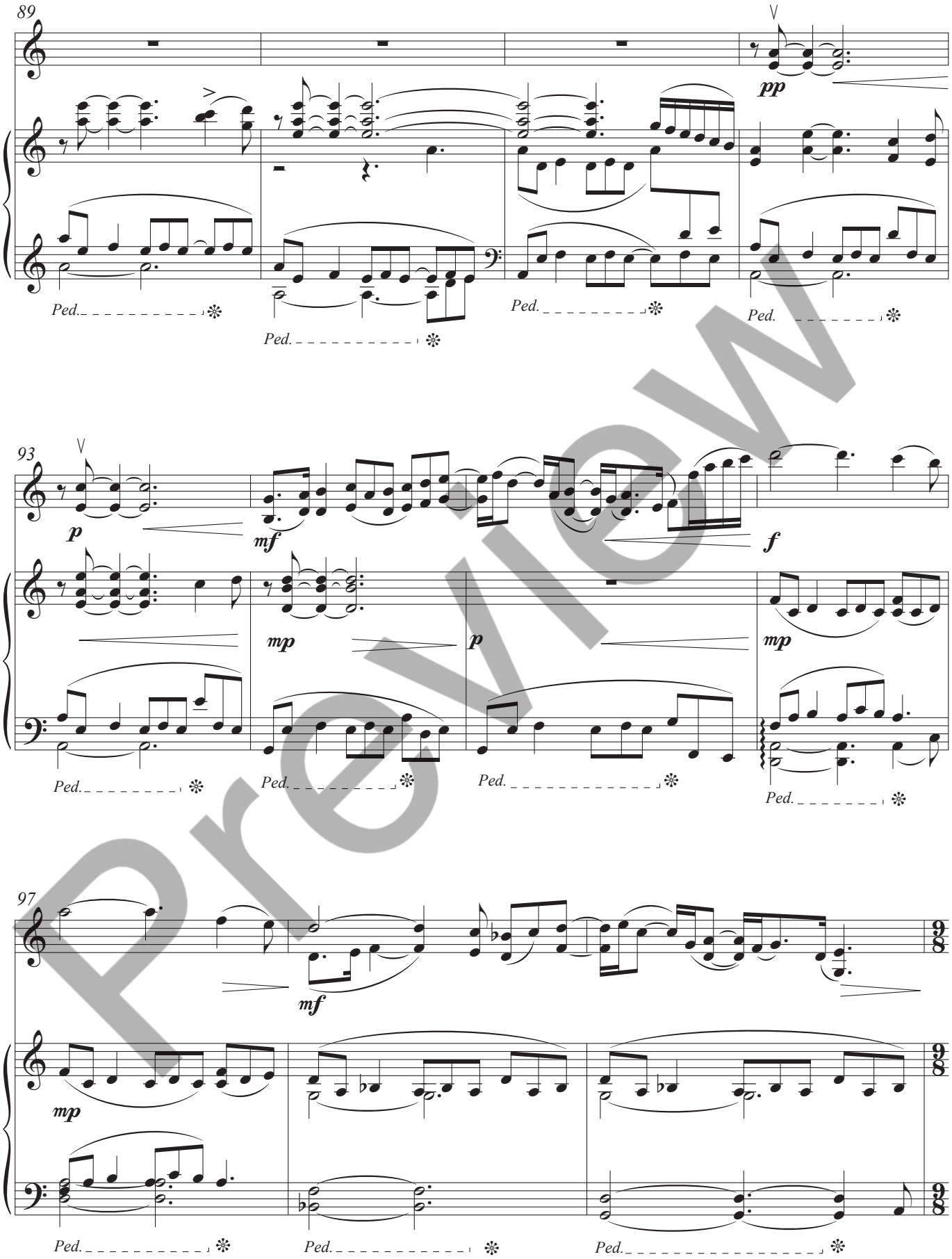
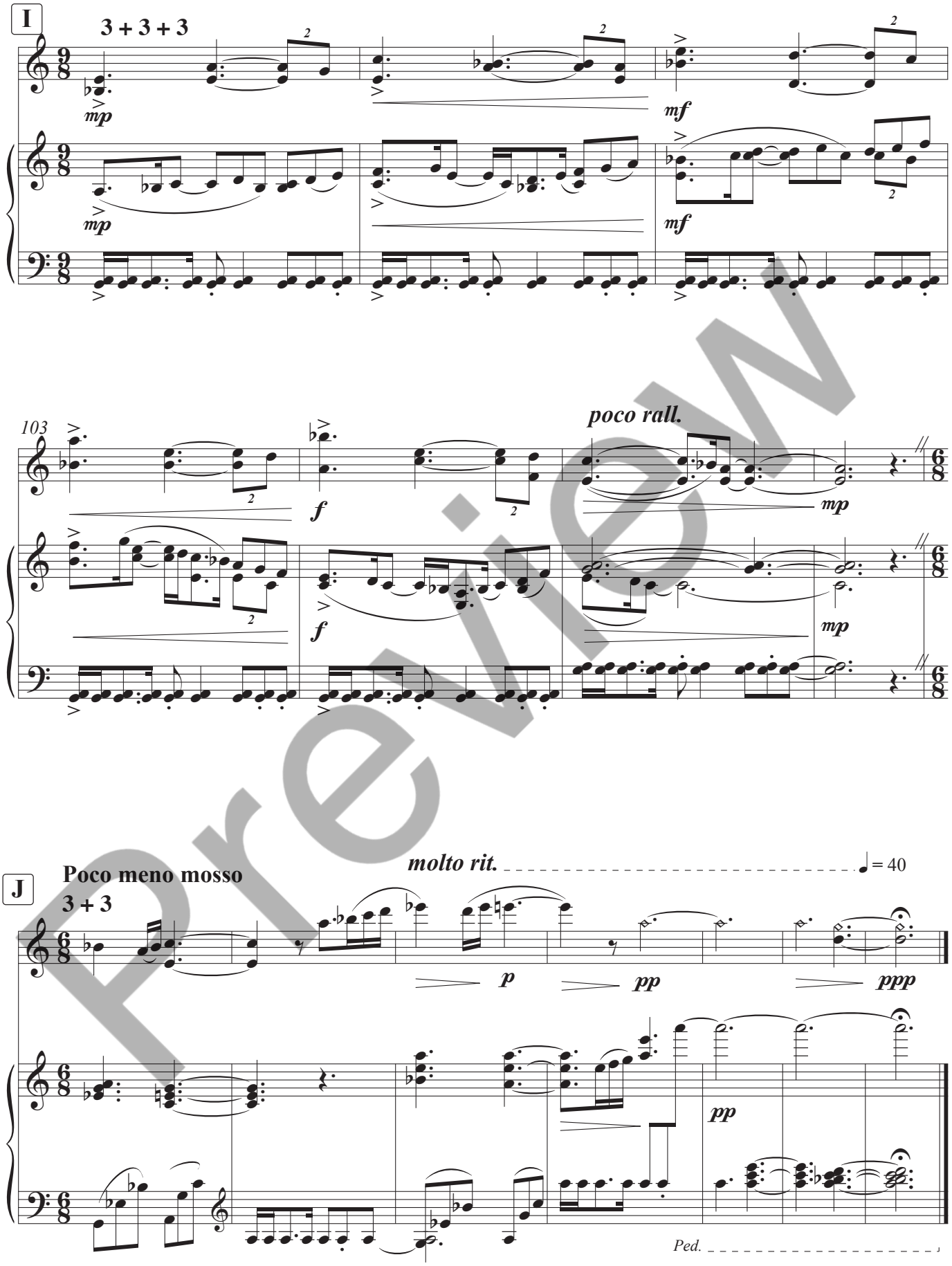
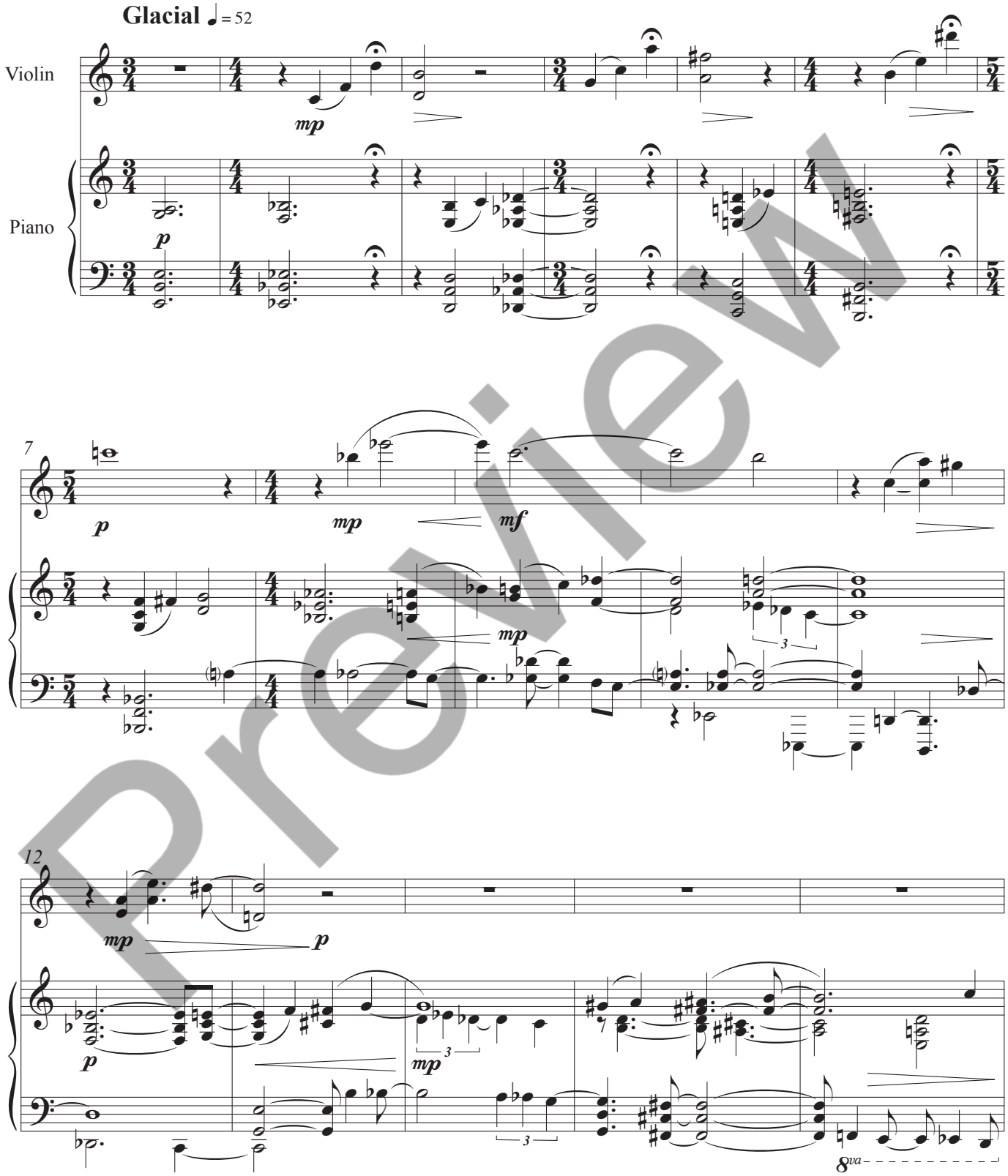

89
pp
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
93
p
mf
f
mp
p
mp
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.
97
mf
mp
9/8
Ped.
Ped.
Ped.

Preview


I
3 + 3 + 3
mp
mf
103
f
poco rall.
mp
J
Poco meno mosso
3 + 3
molto rit.
♩ = 40
p
pp
ppp
pp
Ped.

Preview

III. Soil Threnody



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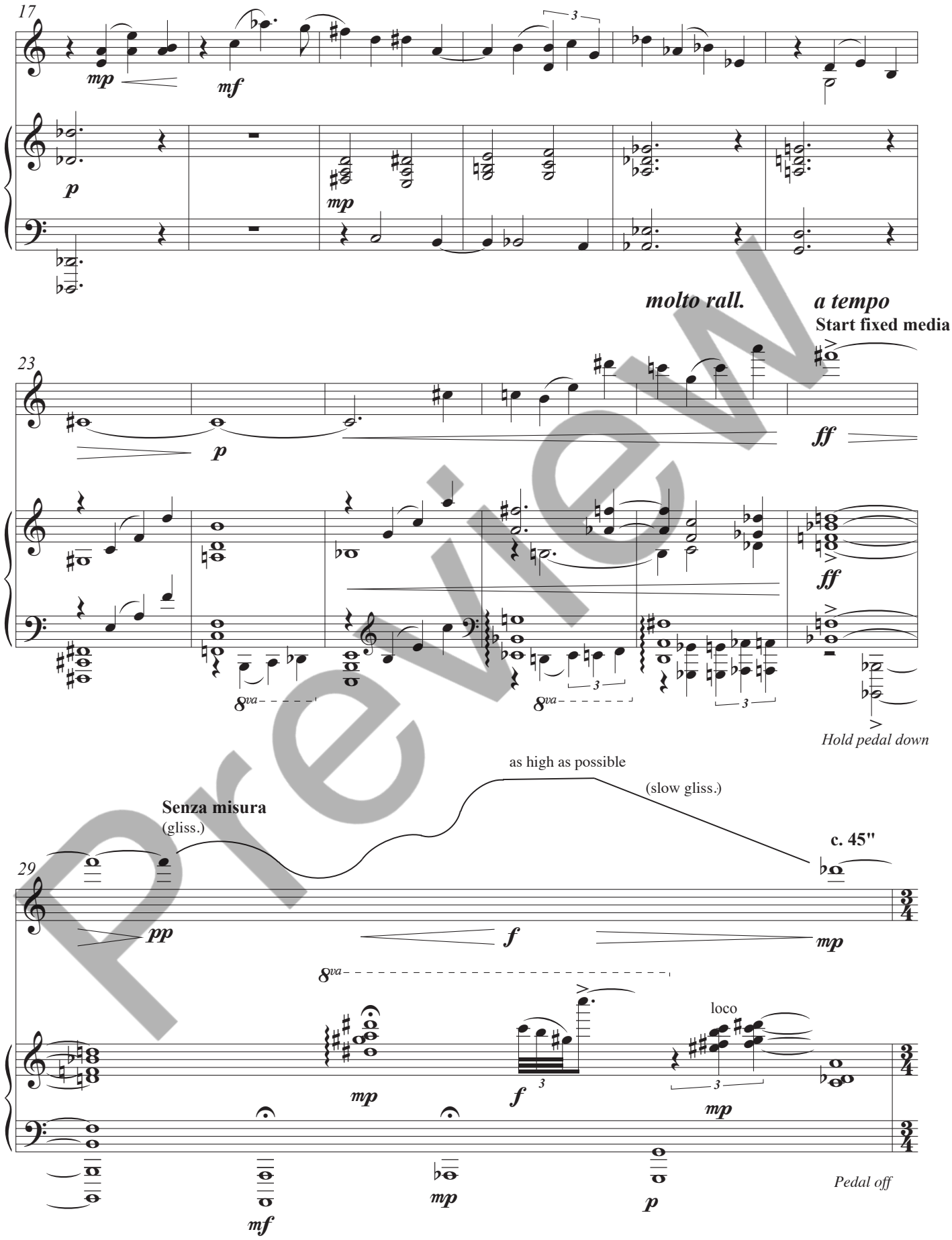
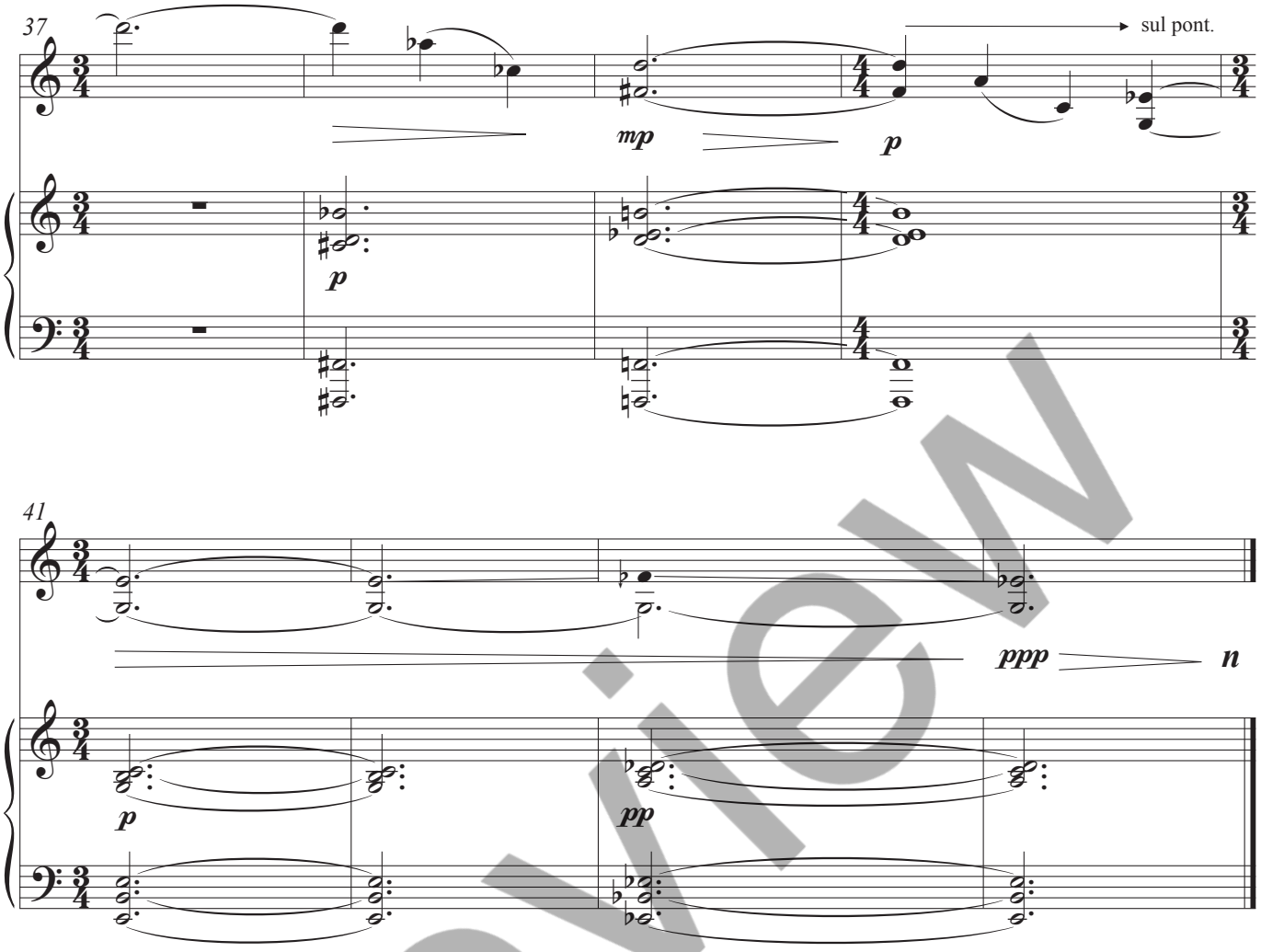

17
mp
mf
p
mp
molto rall.
a tempo
Start fixed media
23
p
ff
ff
8va
8va
Hold pedal down
as high as possible
(slow gliss.)
Senza misura
(gliss.)
c. 45"
29
pp
f
mp
8va
mp
f
loco
mp
mf
mp
p
Pedal off

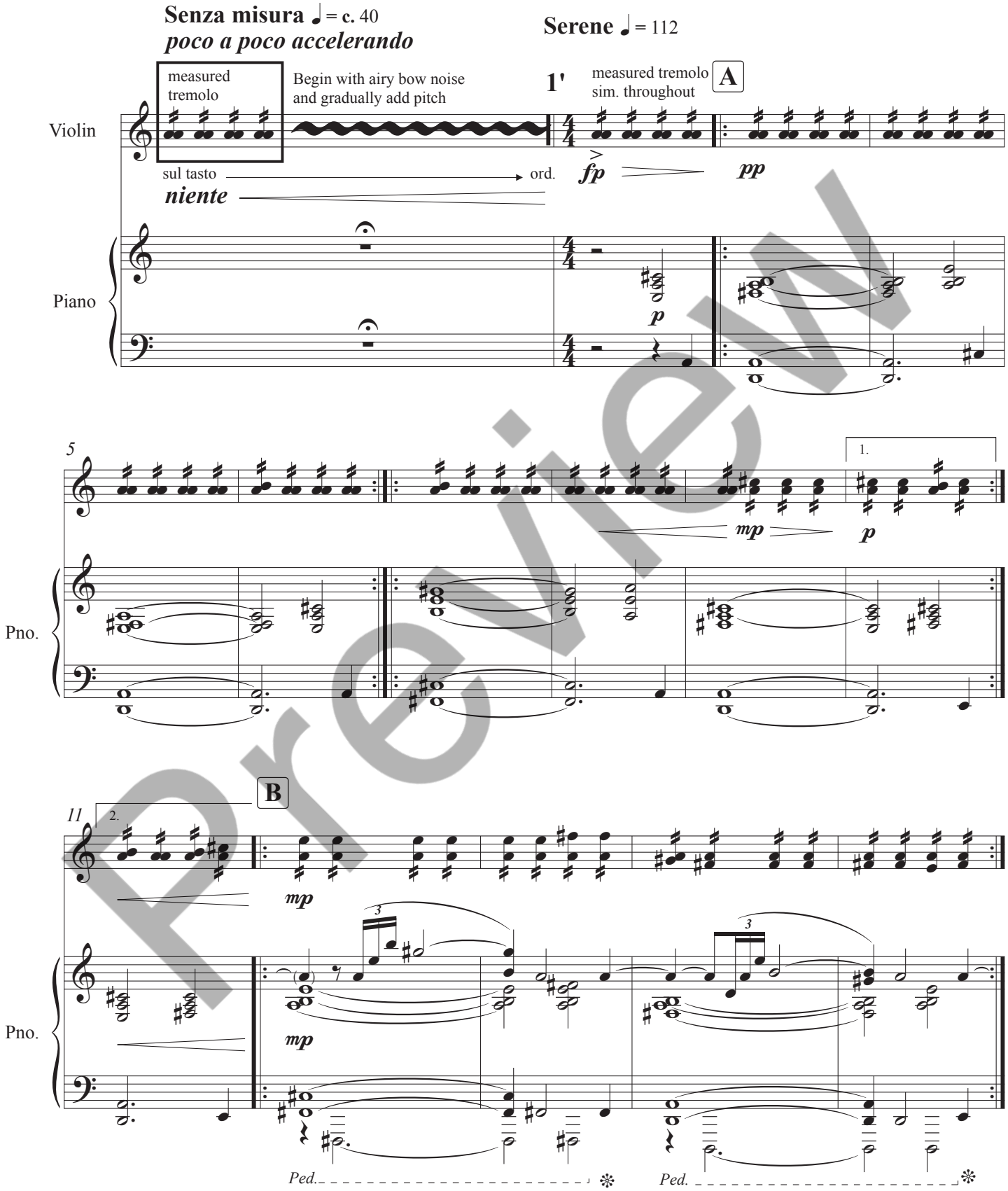
Preview



attacca mvt. IV

Preview

IV. Air Homily



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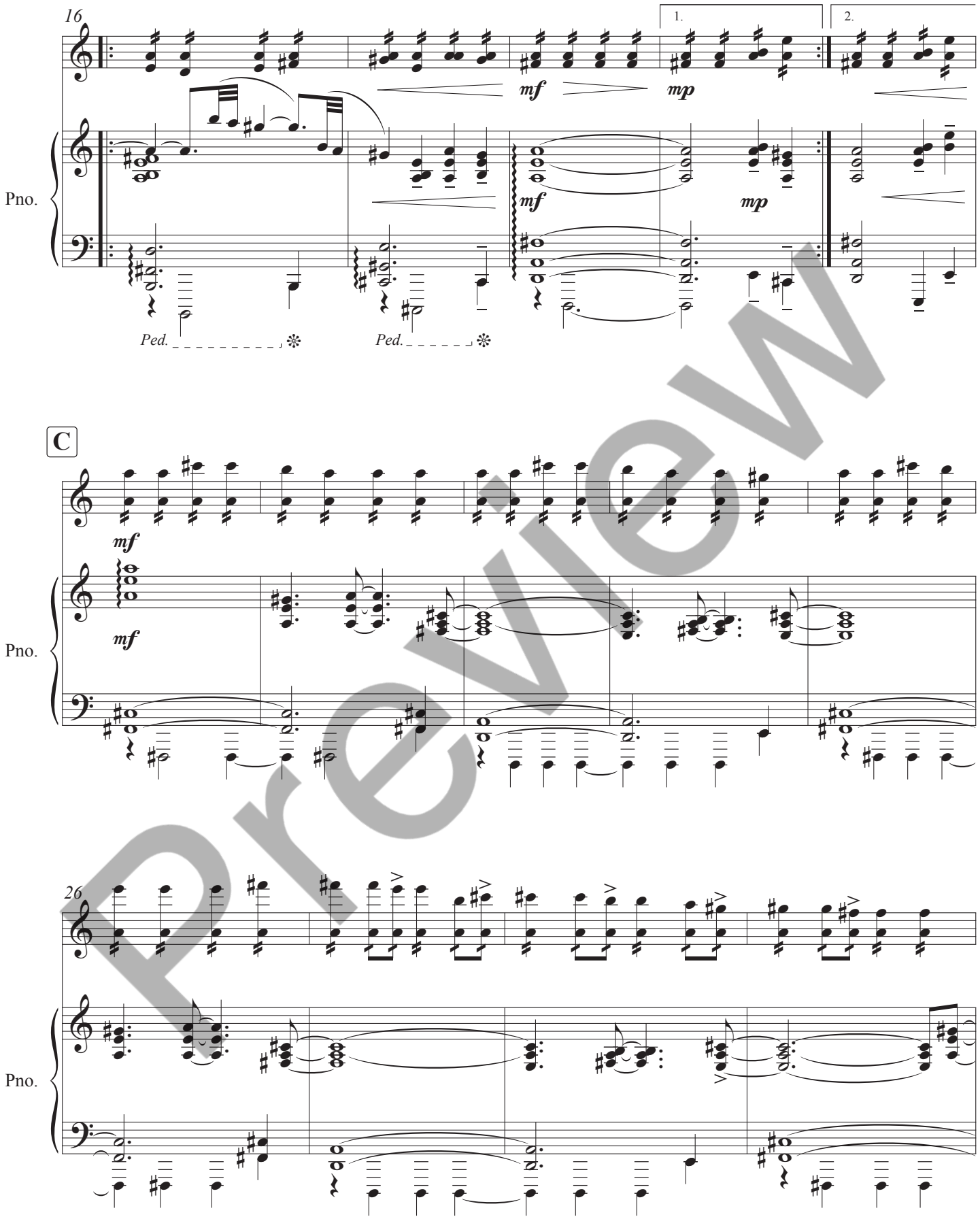

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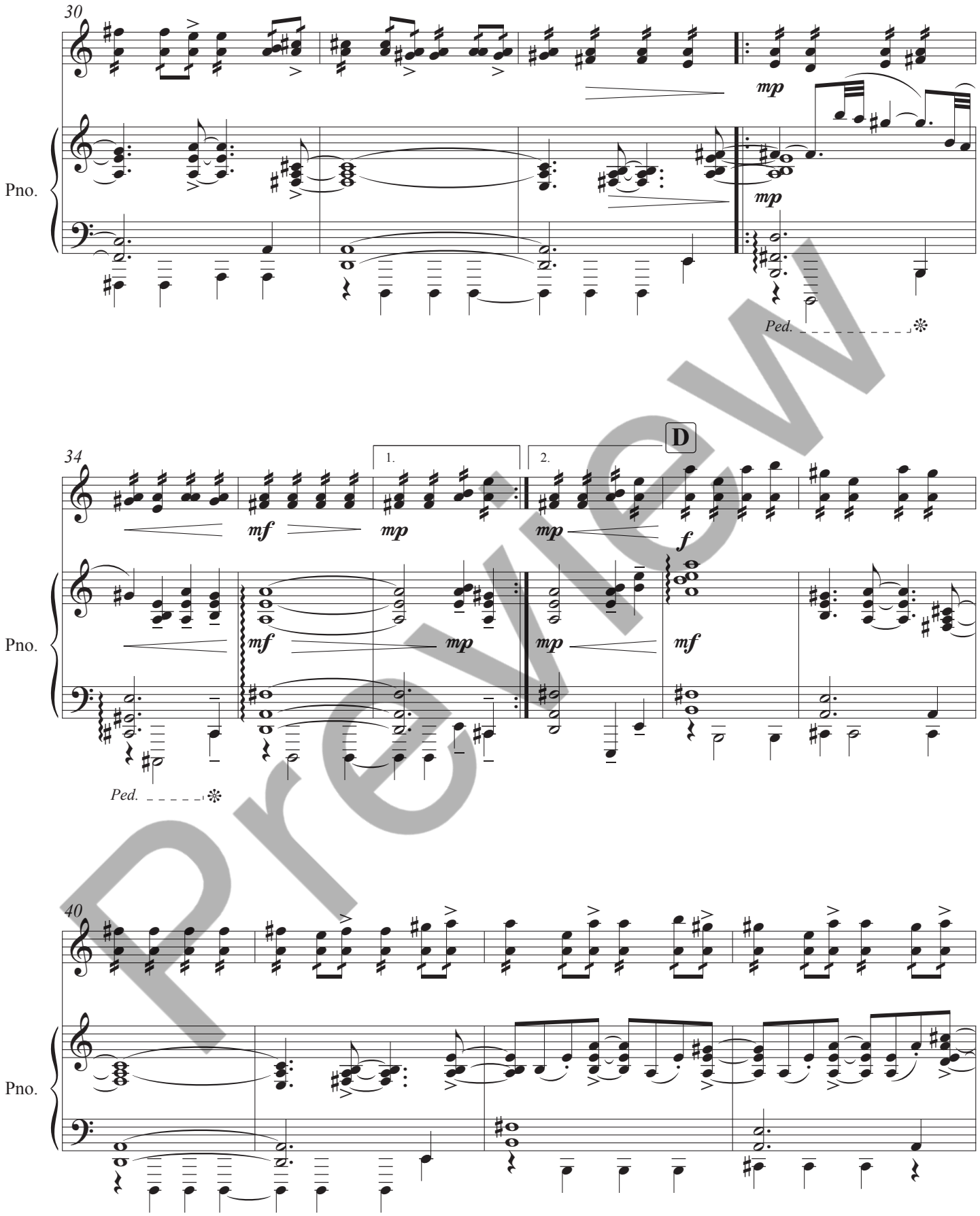

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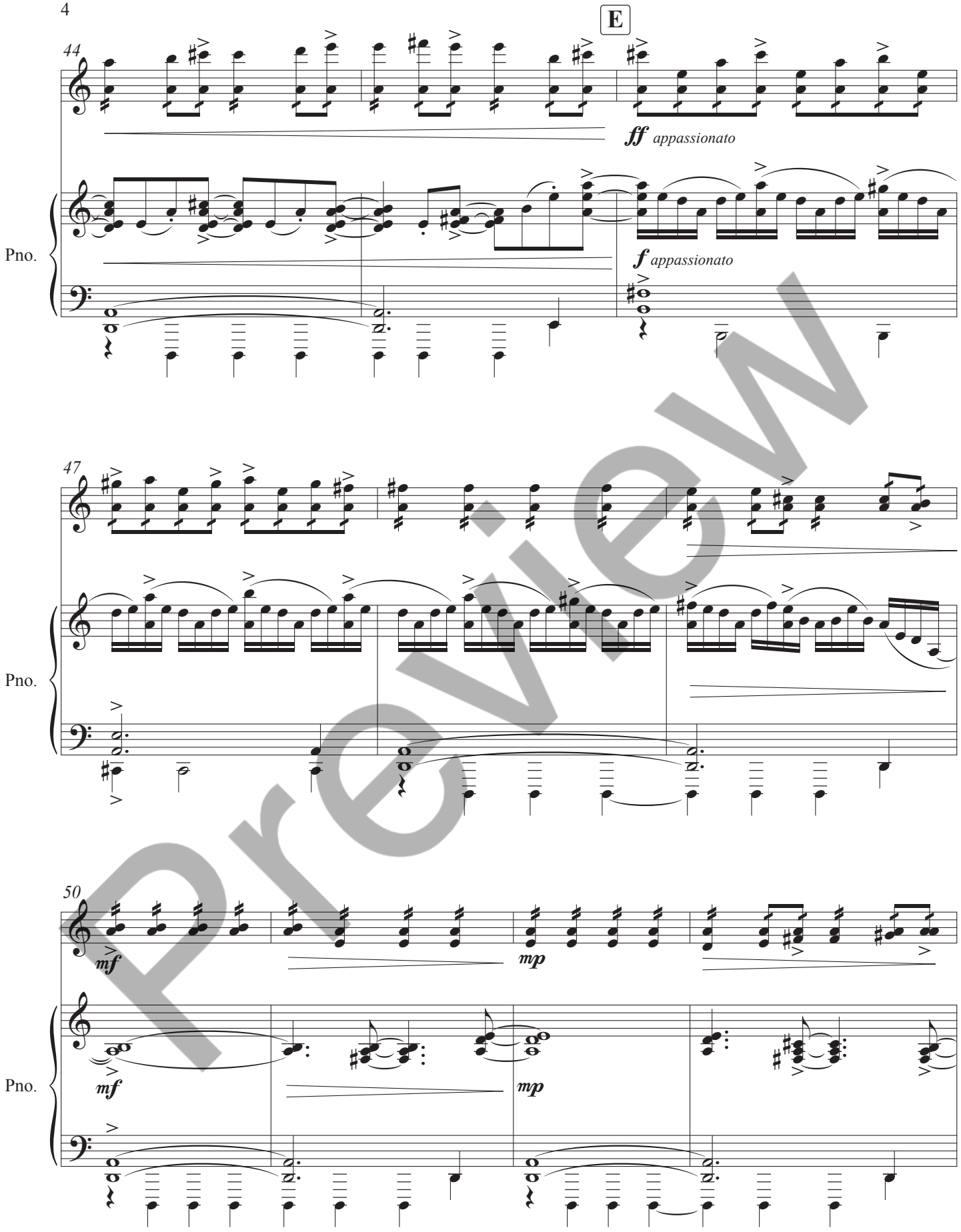

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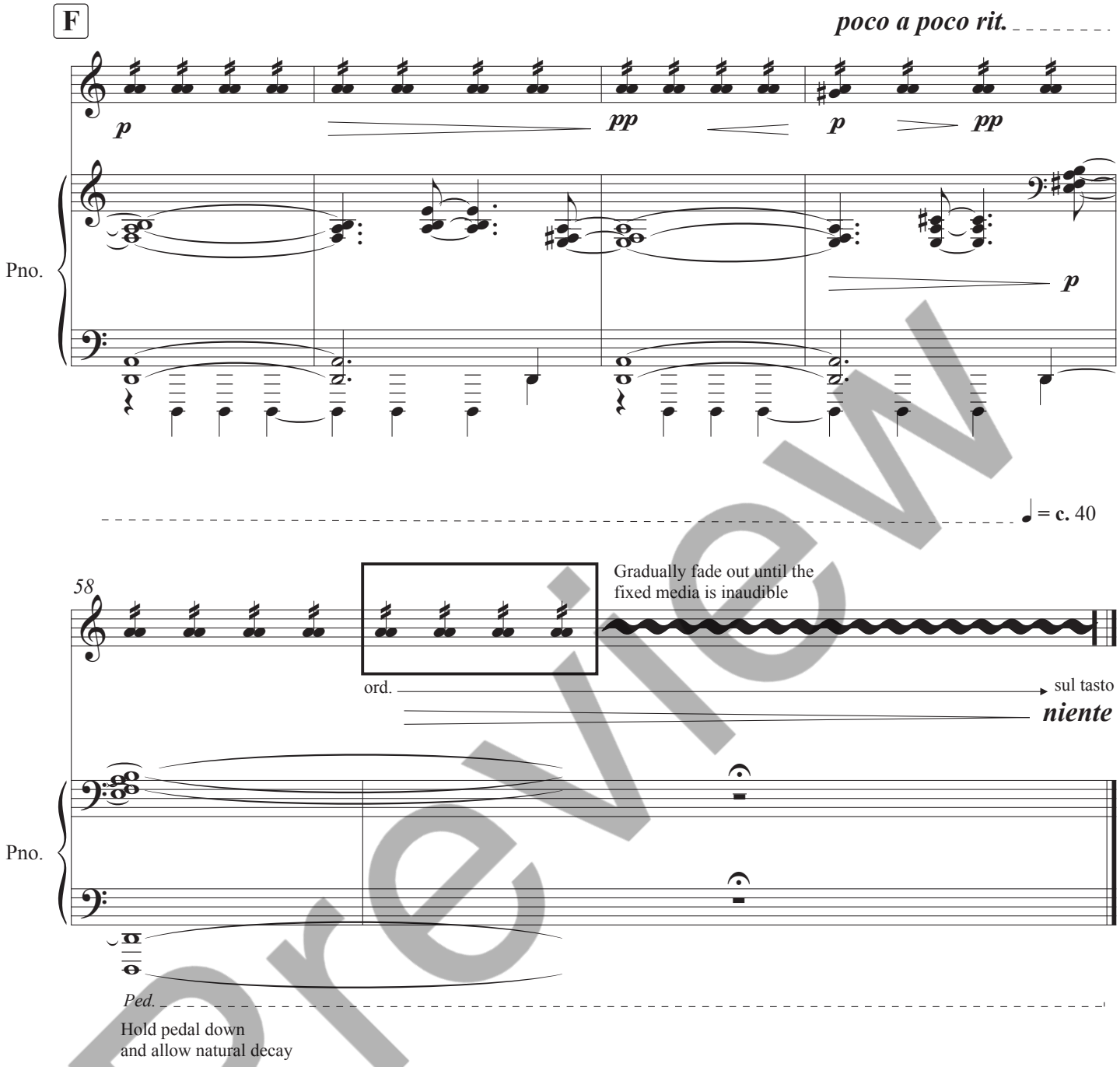
F
poco a poco rit.
p
pp
p
pp
Pno.
p
♩ = c. 40
58
Gradually fade out until the
fixed media is inaudible
ord.
sul tasto
niente
Pno.
Ped.
Hold pedal down
and allow natural decay

Preview