NOTEFORGE

KYLE VANDERBURG

COURSE OF EMPIRE

Woodwind Quintet

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Program Note

Course of Empire takes its title and theme from a series of paintings by Thomas Cole. Over the course of these five paintings, an imaginary city rises and falls. A large boulder atop a cliff watches the scenes unfold: a wild and untamed landscape in the first painting; an agrarian, peaceful, arcadian state in the second; a decadent celebration in the third; the sack and destruction of the city in the fourth; and the ruins in the last.

I tried to work unifying musical motives throughout the quintet. The first movement, *The State of Nature*, begins with a twelve-tone texture. There is no sense of tonal hierarchy or pitch center. The music is in a state of balance, adhering to a natural system not discernable to the listener. The bassoon introduces the main motive representing the cliff, a pastoral sort of hiccup.

The second movement, *Daydreams of Arcadia*, begins with and develops the cliff motive, and has a more defined tonality. There is more action throughout the movement, as we're led to the peaceful beginnings of civilization. The Empire motive, a series of syncopated chords, shows up toward the end of the movement: This is the beginning of the end, where our imaginary city makes the change from existing in harmony with nature to conquering it.

The third movement, *Fulfillment of Empire*, begins with a cliff motive that has been added to, almost to the point of unrecognizability. Scenes of empire are shown musically, from a grand parade, to a show of naval forces, to the temple that occupies most of the painting. The Empire theme returns, expanded upon, but somehow sounding a little overextended.

The fourth movement, *The Fall*, alternates between unfriendly chords (and noises) and the Empire motive. Every iteration of the Empire motive gets a little weaker, as the foundations of the civilization are destroyed. The movement ends with a lone flute.

Movement five, *Redemption*, features some scenes that are familiar, but are now in ruins. The movement slips slowly back into the twelve-tone texture from the beginning. The Empire motive, or something like it, makes a brief appearance and passes through the ensemble, starting in the upper voices and sinking into the lower.

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Performance Notes

A slideshow of images from Thomas Cole's *Course of Empire* is available from NoteForge. Cues for this slideshow are designated by triangle cues throughout the score.

In *The Fall*, performers are given diamond noteheads throughout the movement. This can be any unpleasant sound: multiphonics, fluttertongue, pitch bends, etc.

Print Score and Parts ISMN: 979-0-60006-024-5
Digital Score and Parts ISMN: 979-0-60006-025-2

Duration: 15'

This work was engraved by NoteForge in Fargo. The music is set in Norfolk, provided by NYC Music Services. The text is set in Vollkorn, designed by Friedrich Althausen. The title font is Sonder Sans by Andrew Herndon. The cover was designed by Jamie Trosen Design + Creative. Where possible, we print on Whip Cream Hemptone made by French Paper.

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COURSE OF EMPIRE

I. The State of Nature

Kyle Vanderburg
(2012/2022)

1 2

Organically (♩ = 60)

Flute
Oboe
Clarinet in B♭
Horn in F
Bassoon

3

7

4 14

13

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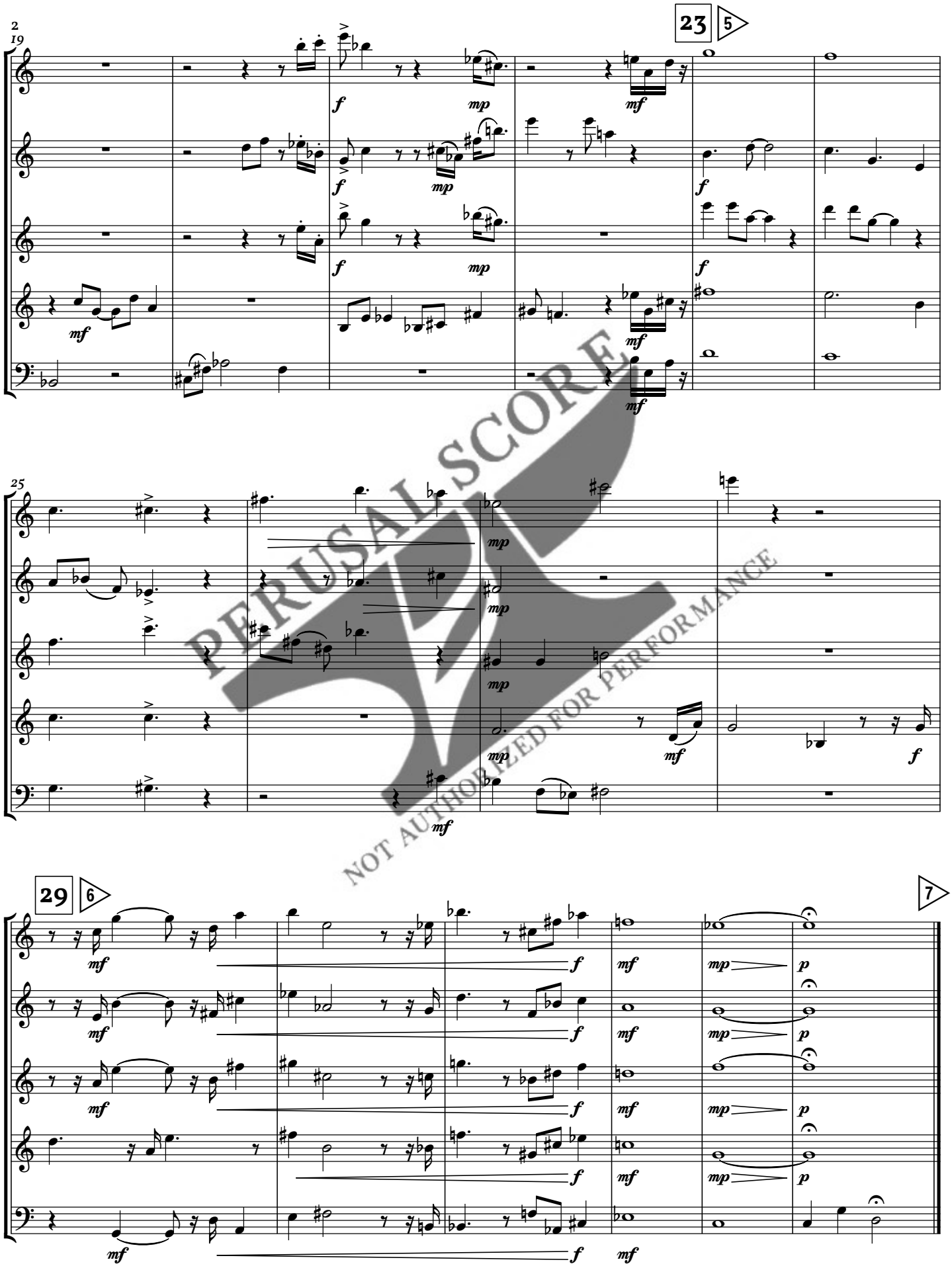

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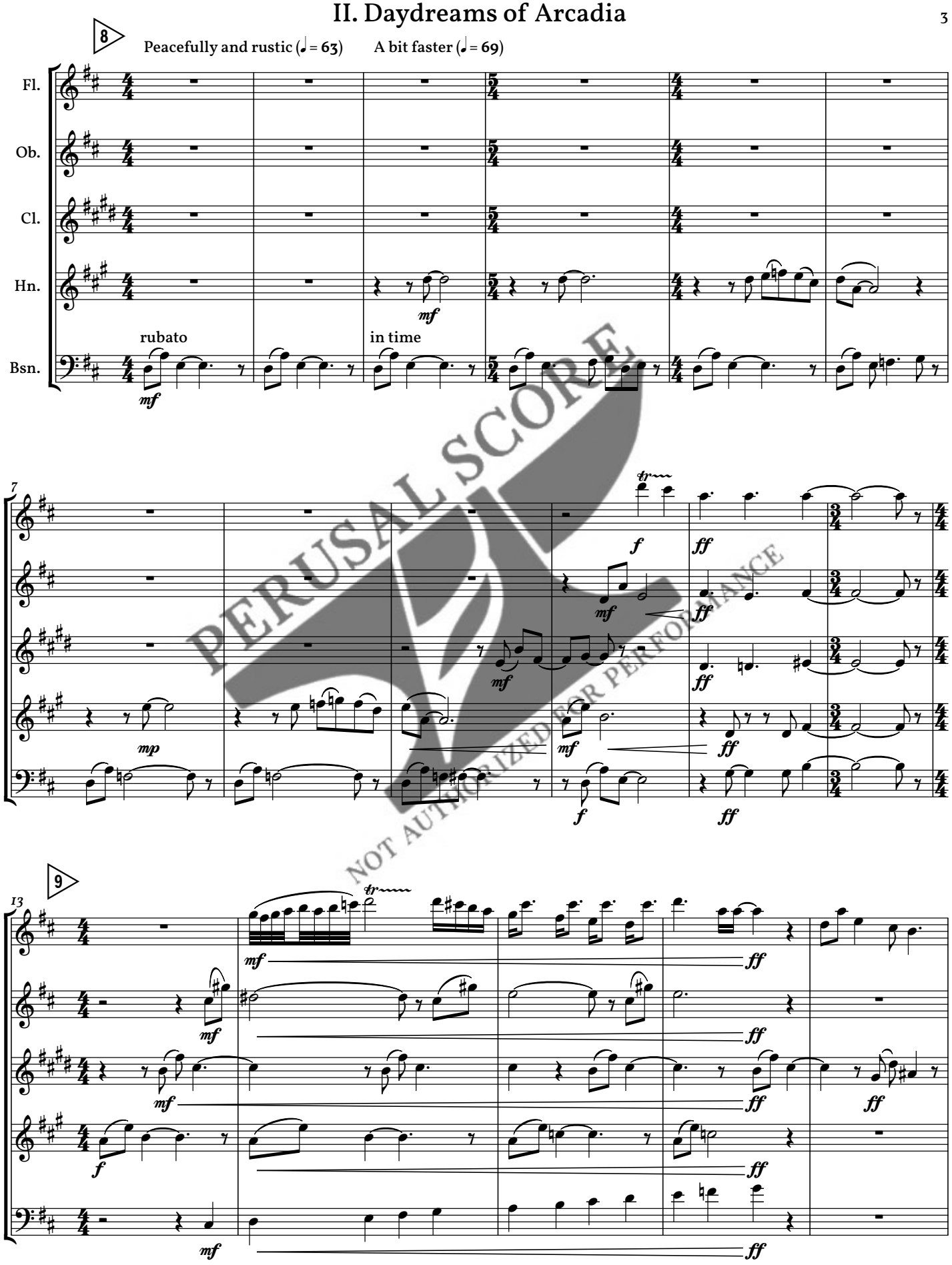

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20 10

18

ff

mf

mf

24

mf

mf

mp

30

mf

mf

p

mf

mf

p

mf

mf

f

f

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38 11

36

rit. Slow (♩= 40)

mf p ppp

42

Suddenly faster (♩ = 108) molto accel.

12

fl.

mf

48

mf ff

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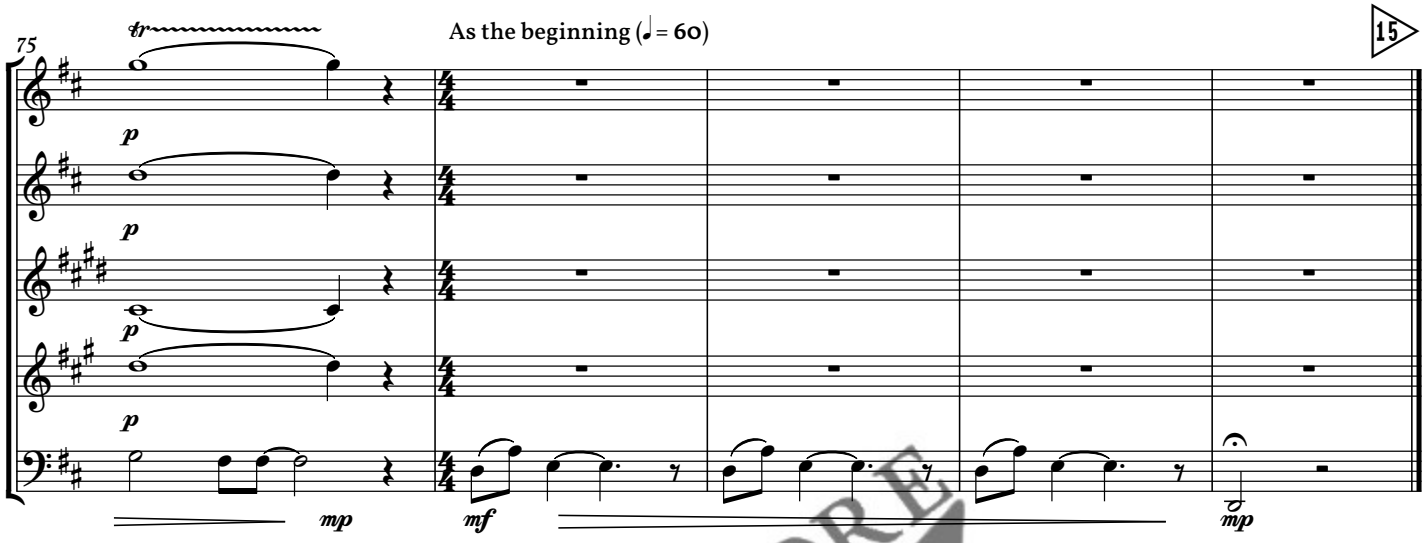

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III. Fulfillment of Empire

16 Bustling (♩ = 120)

Fl. Ob. Cl. Hn. Bsn.

mf *cresc.*

17 10 Stately (♩ = 100)

7

ff *f* *mf*

15

14

mp *f*

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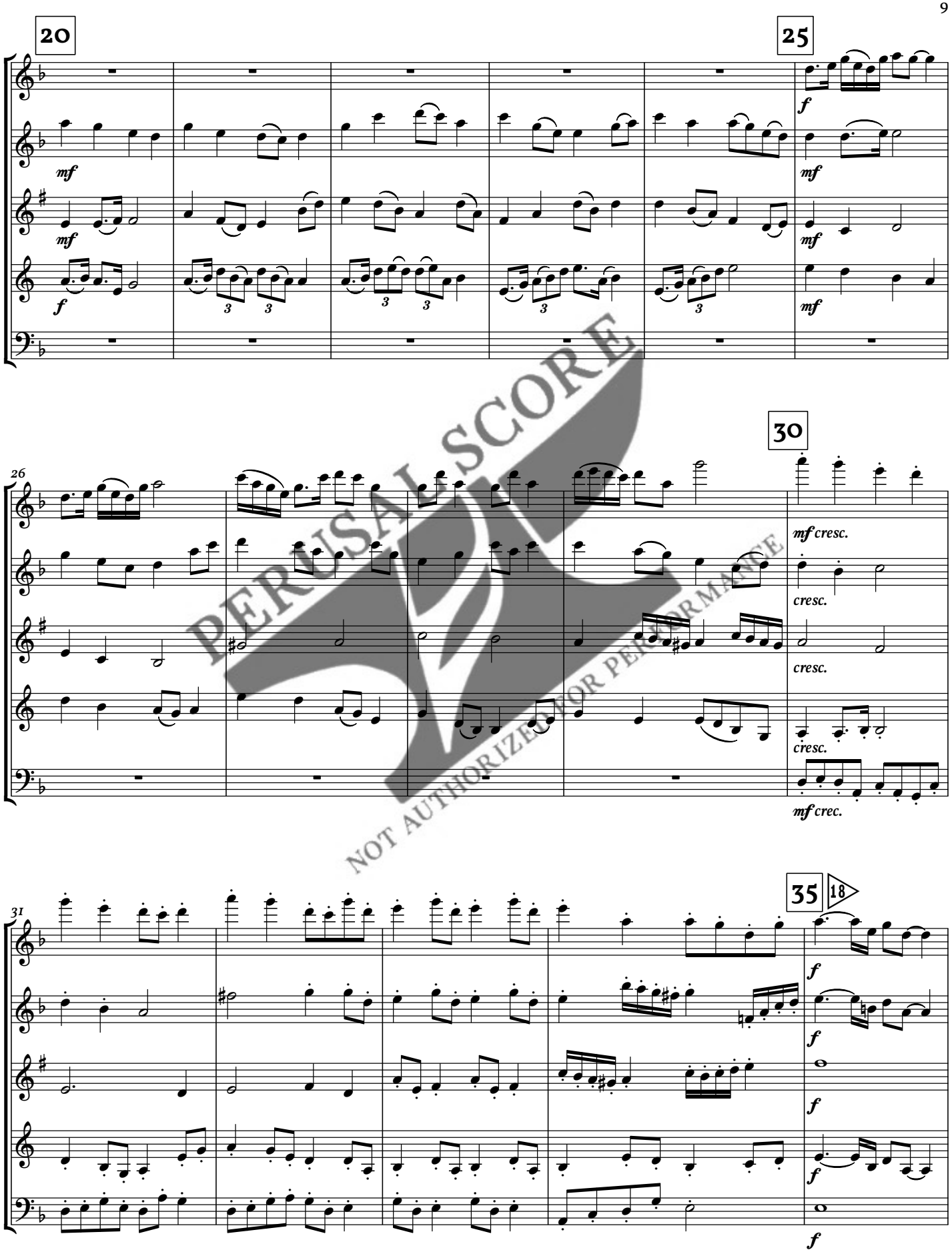

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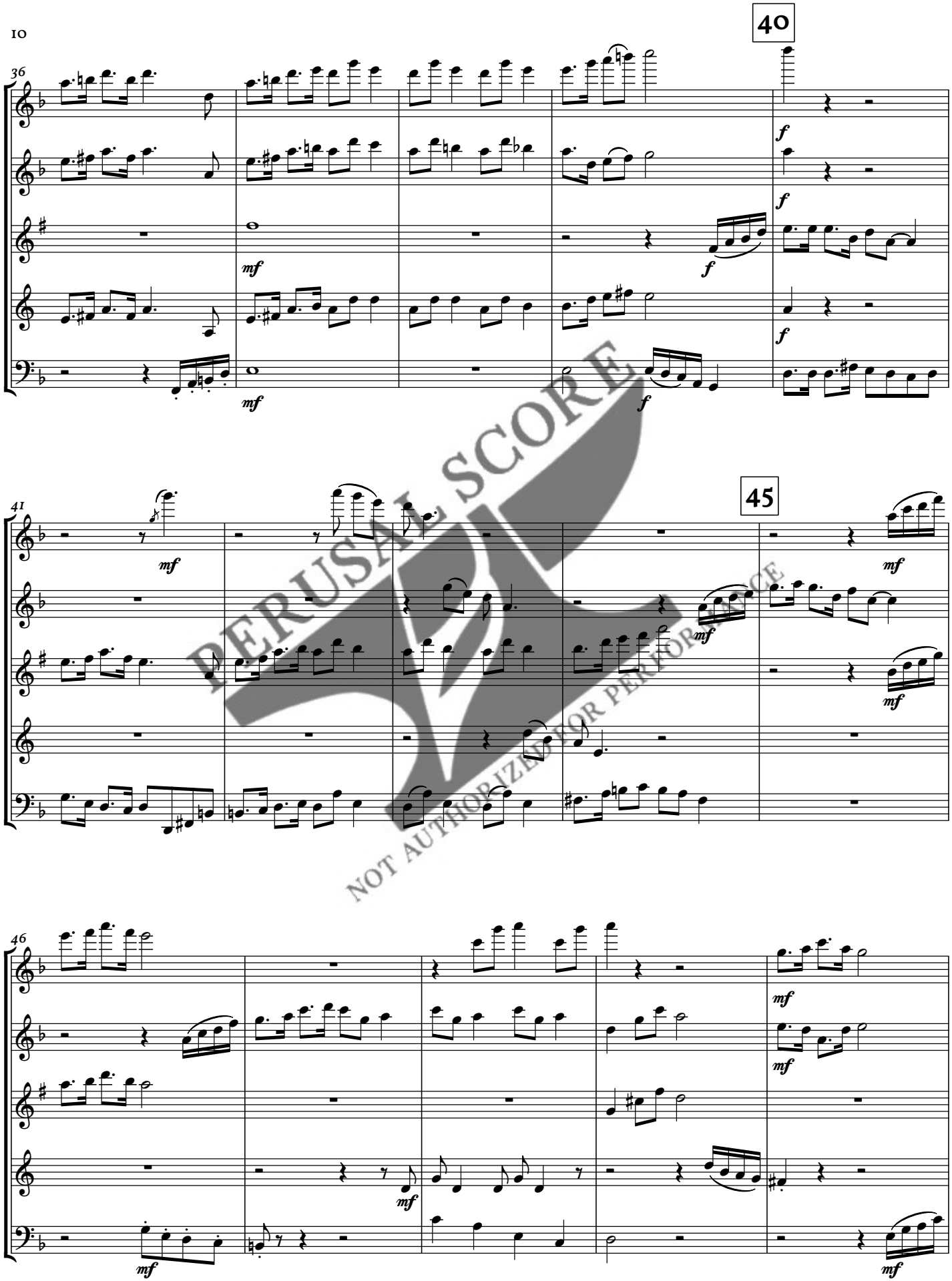

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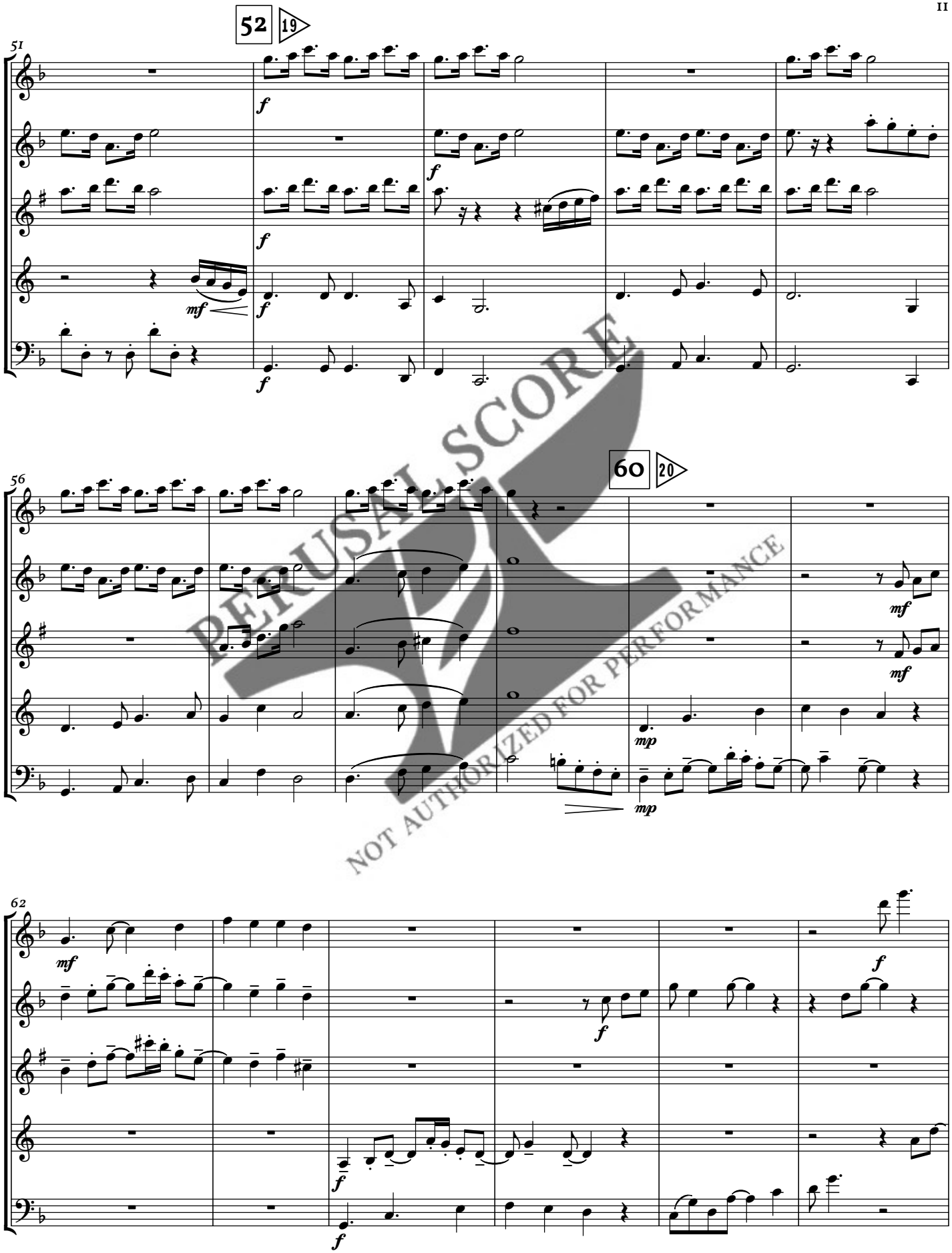

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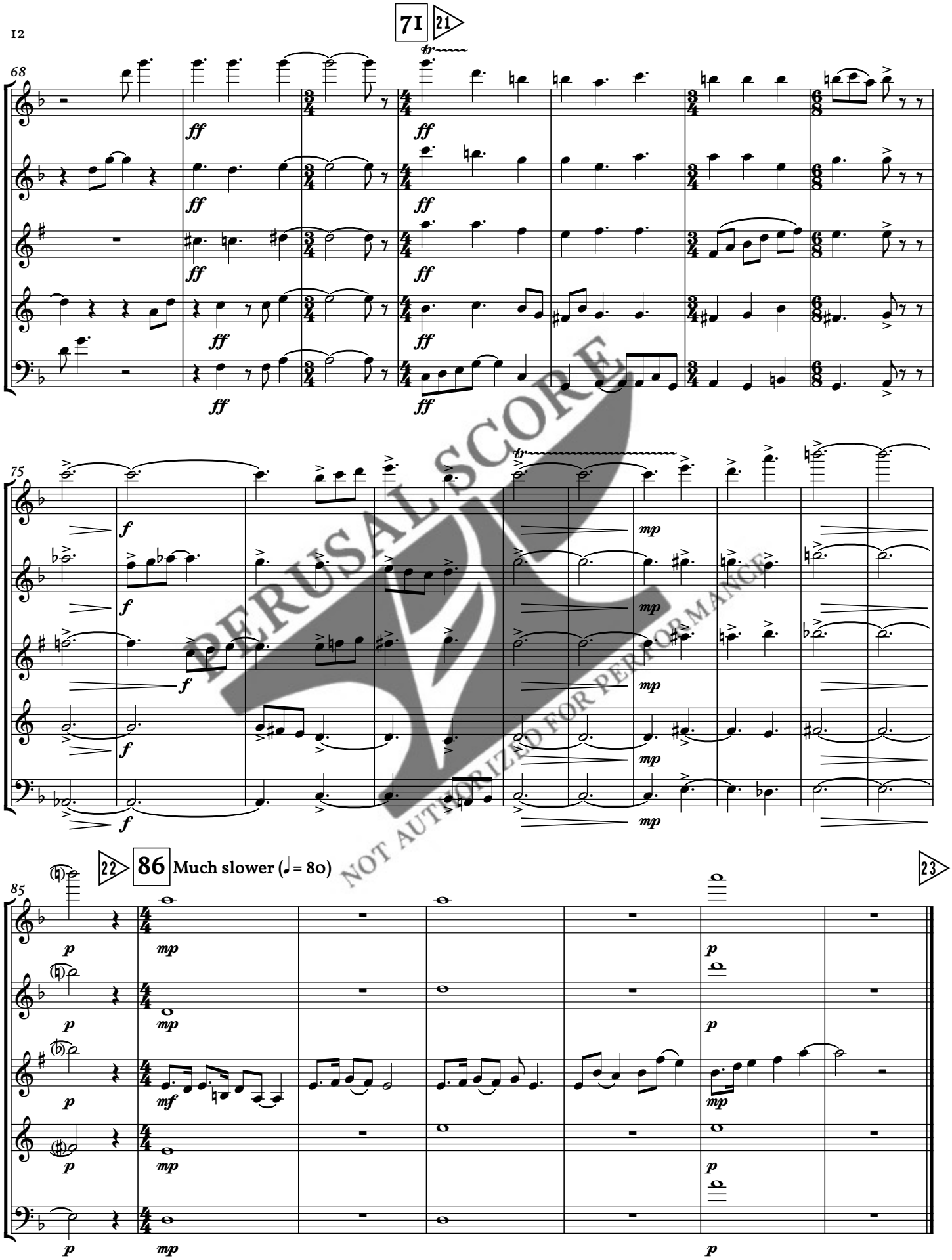

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IV. The Fall

24 Ominous (♩ = 63)

Suddenly faster (♩ = 108) molto accel.

Fl. Ob. Cl. Hn. Bsn.

mp *mf* *cresc.*

9 Frantic (♩ = 144)

13 25

f *cresc.*

15 18

f *ff*

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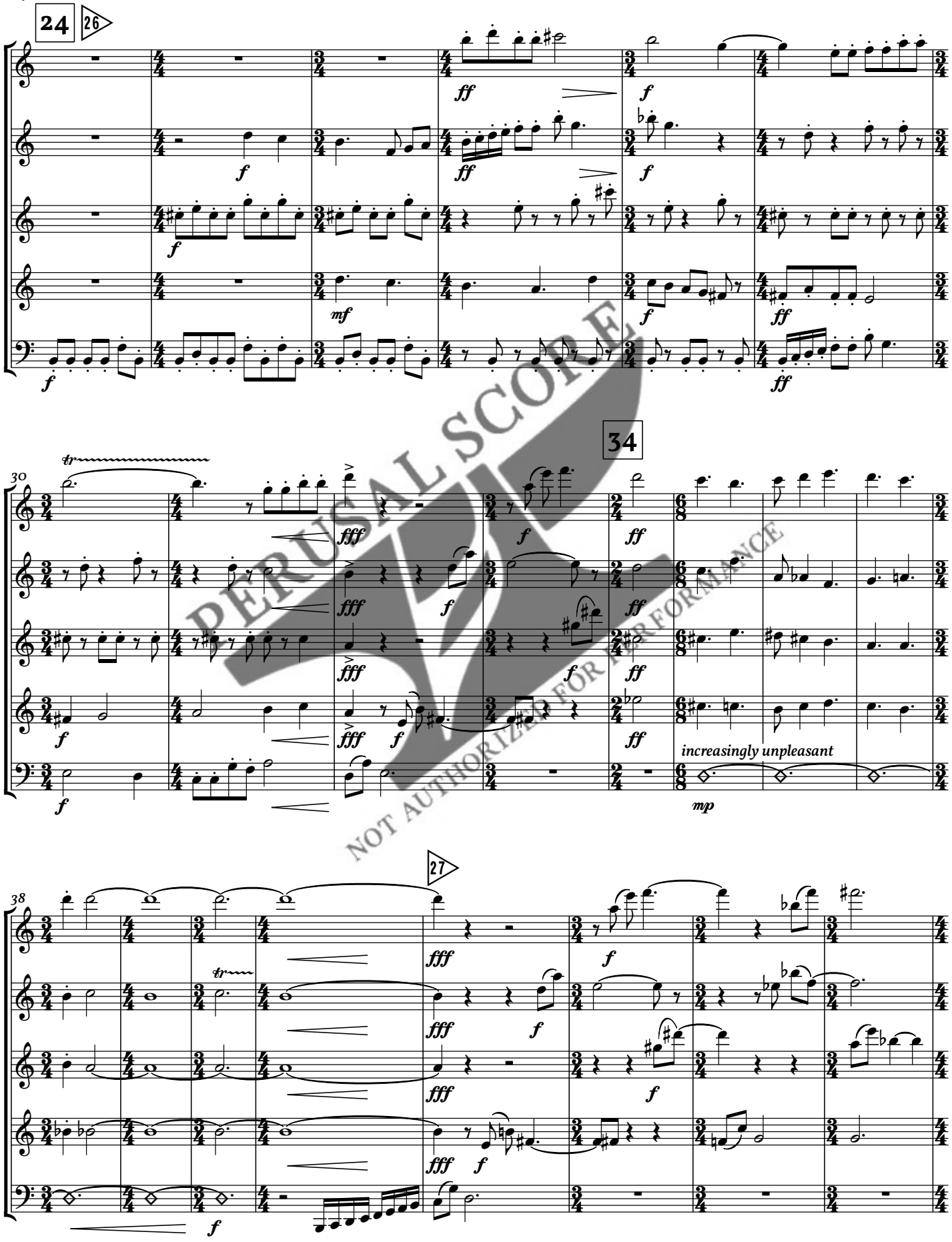

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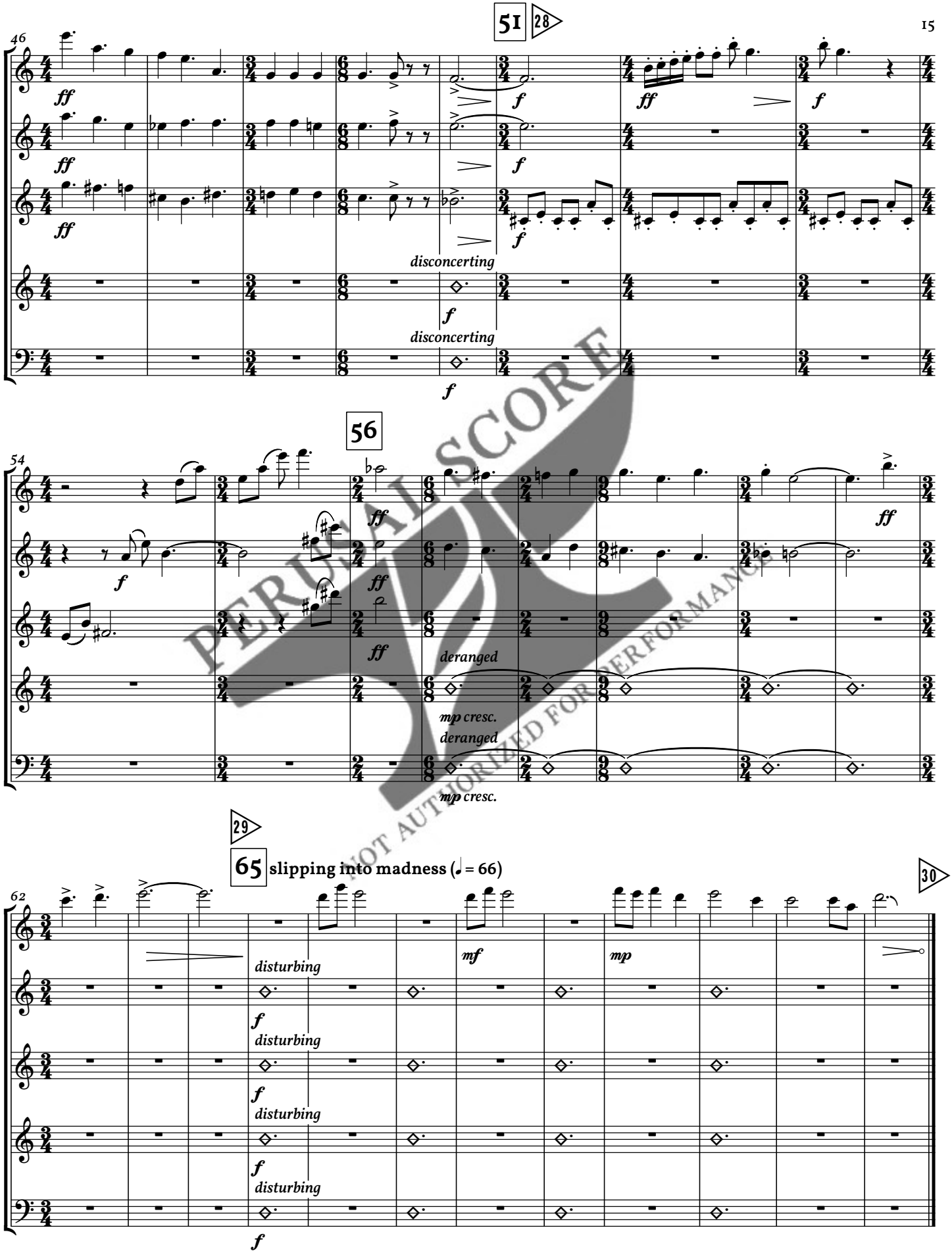

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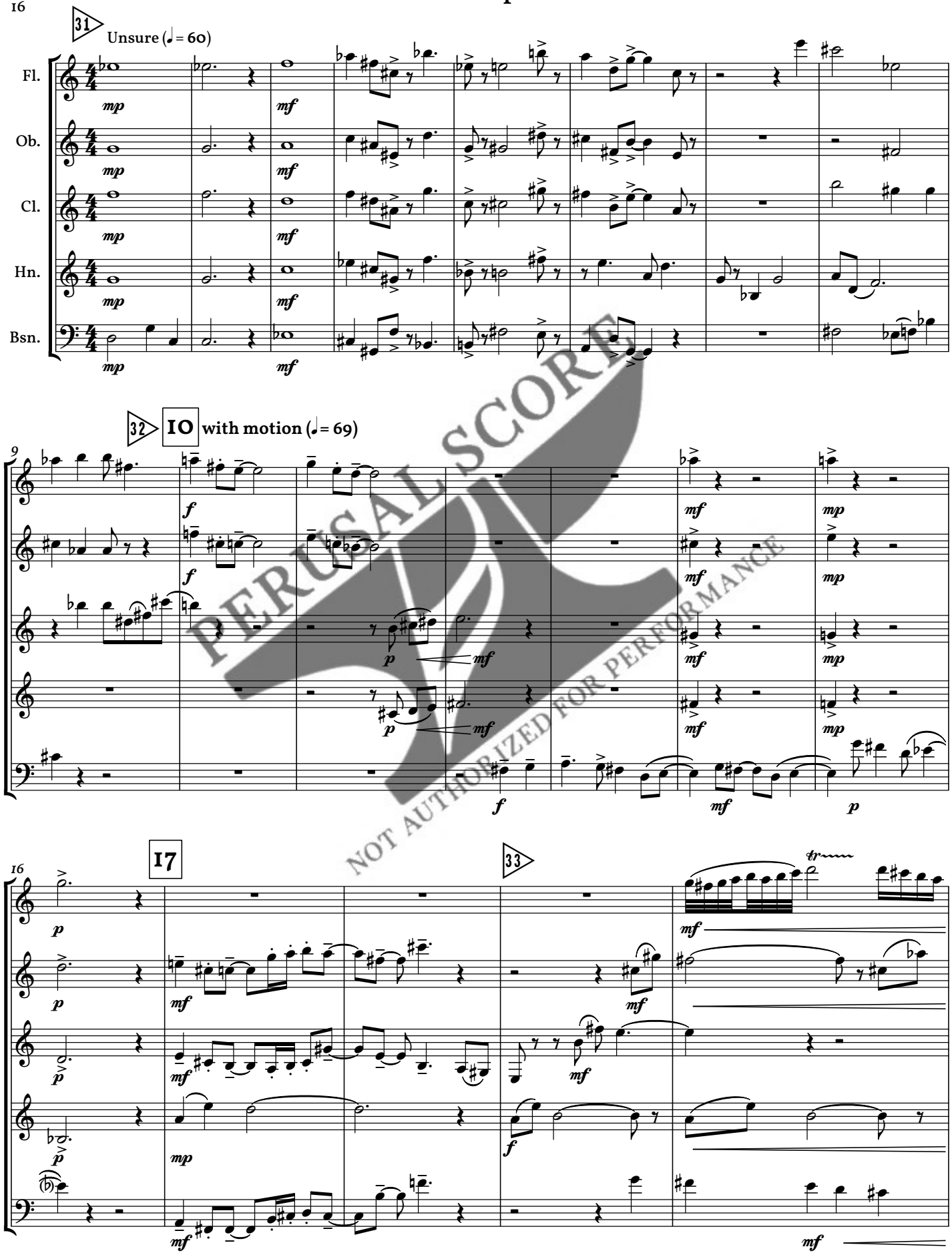

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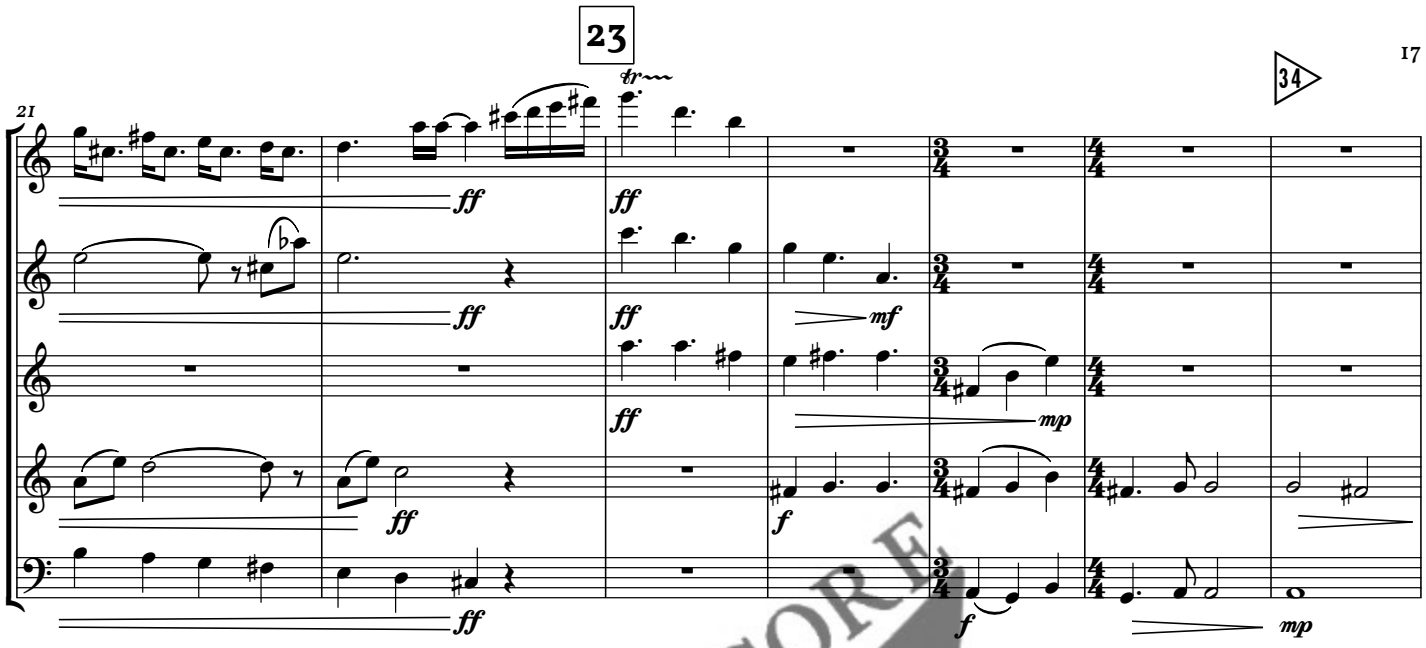

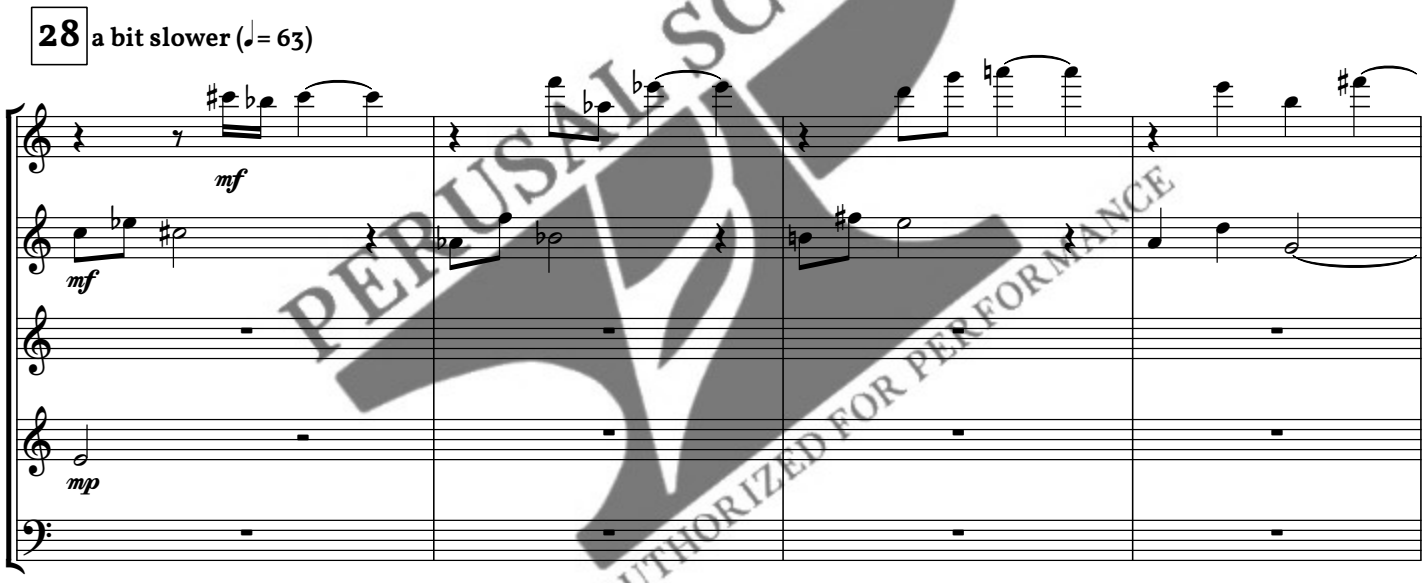

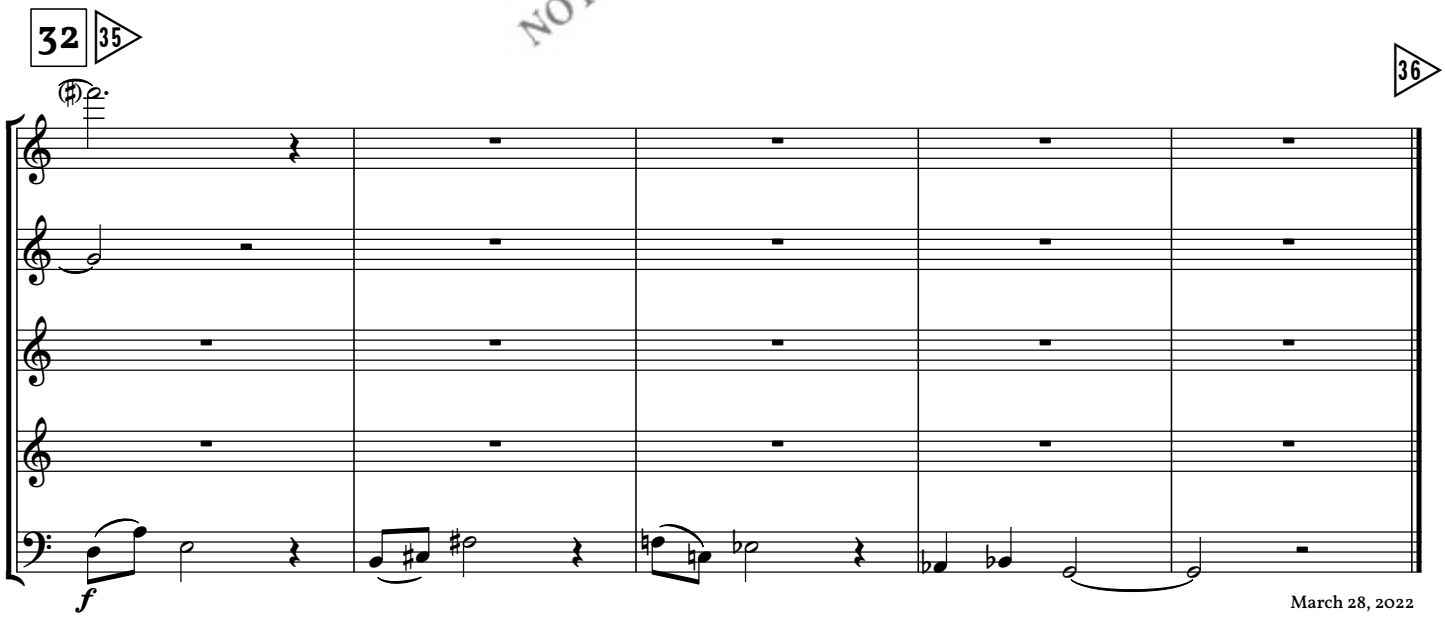

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March 28, 2022
Fargo, North Dakota
Duration: 15'

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