# Sonata for Two Pianos

"The Lord will be a refuge for the Oppressed;
a refuge in times of trouble." (Ps. 9, v.9.)

Opus 40

Andrew Downes

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Commissioned by
The Interdenominational Society for
Russian Jewry
with funds from
West Midlands Arts

To be First Performed on July 12th 1987 by
Joseph Weingarten & Margaret Newman
in the
Sir Adrian Boult Hall, Birmingham.

Lynwood Music

**ANDREW DOWNES: SONATA FOR TWO PIANOS 'The Lord will be a Refuge for the Oppressed; a Refuge in Times of Trouble' (Ps.9 v.9) Opus 40 (1987) Duration 20'**

This *Sonata for Two Pianos* was composed for Margaret Newman and Joseph Weingarten for their concerts in aid of the Interdenominational Society for Soviet Jewry and was first performed by them on July 12th 1987 in the Adrian Boult Hall, Birmingham. A commercial cassette recording was made of this concert. Many performances have since followed.
The first performance in Israel was by Bracha Eden and Alexander Tamir in January 1989 in the Israel Philharmonic Guest House, Tel Aviv, in a concert celebrating the return to Israel of the Refusnik, Elena Keiss-Kuna. Eden and Tamir came to Birmingham in 1990 to perform the work as part of a recital which was broadcast on BBC Radio 3.
In November 1995 the Duo Scaramouche performed the work in Paris and Birmingham and also in a live recital on Radio 'France Musique'. In March 1996 a concert for Peace in the Middle East, featuring the Sonata performed by the Duo Scaramouche in the Medieval Church of Santa Andrea in Barletta, Italy, was filmed by Italian Television and was broadcast both in Italy and by many television stations around the world in news bulletins and in two full length programmes.

'Andrew Downes' *Sonata for Two Pianos* impressed me for its imaginative and profoundly moving qualities. Downes has taken Psalm verses as his inspiration for a deeply felt lament. The music, with its use of Jewish religious musical idioms, is beautifully written.
'There is poignancy, great dramatic tension and an overwhelming tenderness and all this came across magnificently in this first performance by Weingarten and Newman'
THE BIRMINGHAM POST

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# Sonata for Two Pianos

**'The Lord will be a Refuge for the Oppressed, a Refuge in Times of Trouble' (Ps.9 v.9)**

**Opus 40**

**Andrew Downes**

## Programme note

The Interdenominational Society for Soviet Jewry existed during the years of the communist regime in the USSR. It campaigned in the west for the release of Jews who were held in the USSR against their will. Andrew Downes saw in the plight of the 'Refusniks' parallels with the tribulations and persecution suffered by the Jews throughout their history. In his *Sonata for Two Pianos* he turned mainly to the Old Testament and particularly to the Psalms for his inspiration.

The opening of the work is inspired by Psalm 10 verse 1:
'Why standest Thou afar off, O Lord, why hidest thou thy face in times of trouble?'
The music begins full of yearning and has at the same time a Jewish character. A more comforting mood then takes over, inspired by Psalm 69 v.33:
'For the Lord heareth the poor and despiseth not His prisoners.'
The movement moves into a long energetic and agitated section before the yearning of the opening re-emerges. The end of the movement is full of pathos, but at the same time optimism.

The second movement is for the most part meditative in mood, inspired by Psalm 80, which likens the Jewish race to a vine which God brought out of Egypt and planted. It grew and spread, but its enemies cut it down. Twice in the movement the music becomes excited and perturbed, each time returning to the predominantly reflective mood.

The music moves into the third movement without a break and by means of a jubilant passage which wants to herald a future of great hope. There immediately follows, however, a passage of sinister foreboding. The movement swings from the one mood to the other, but the final coda is a return to jubilation, like an announcement from God beckoning his people and their turning to him. In its final version the theme goes into 'slow motion' as they walk to their refuge of eternal peace:
'Open the gates of Righteouness. I will go into them and I will praise the Lord' (Ps.118 v.19).

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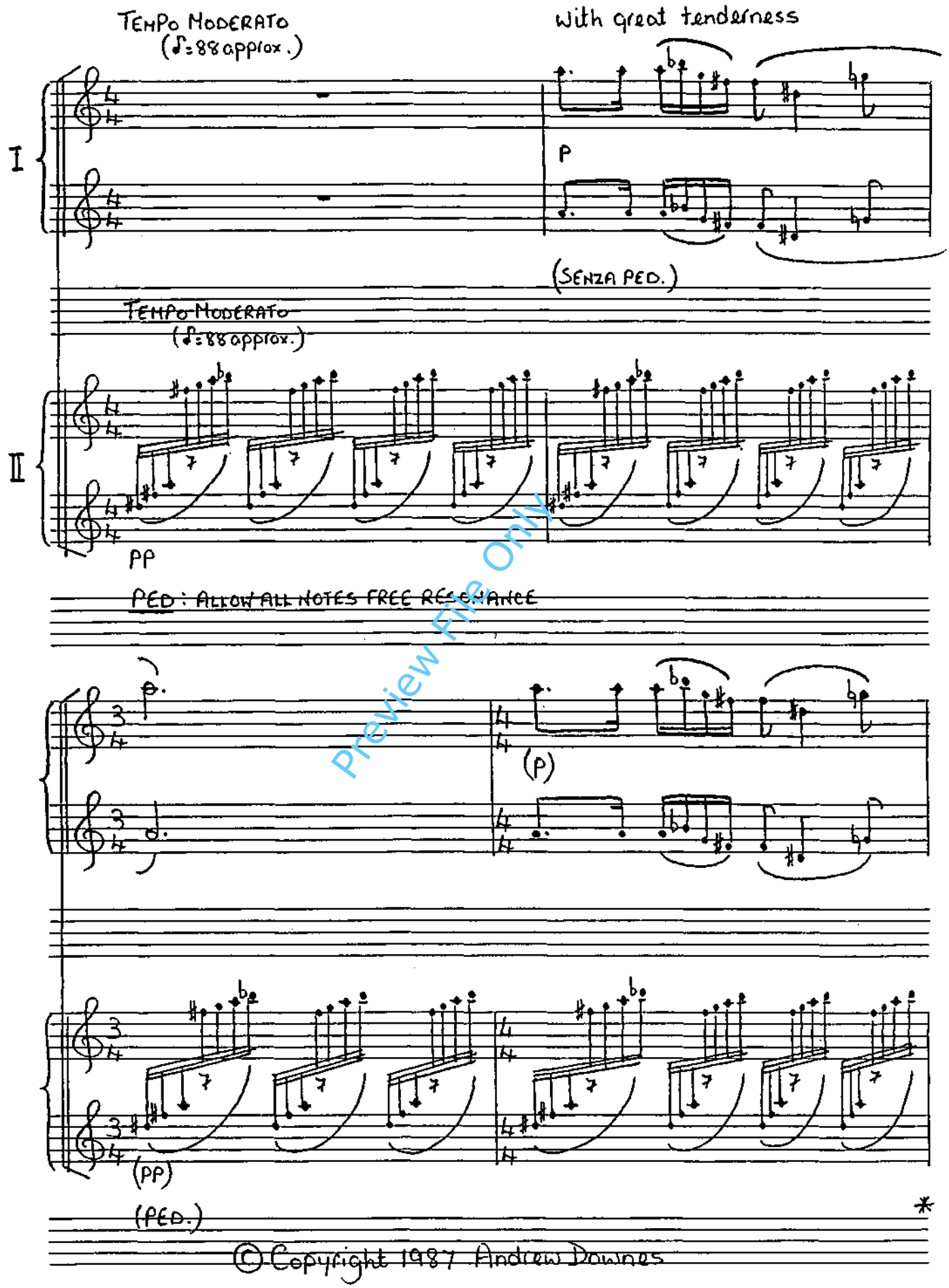
# Sonata for Two Pianos

## I

Andrew Downes

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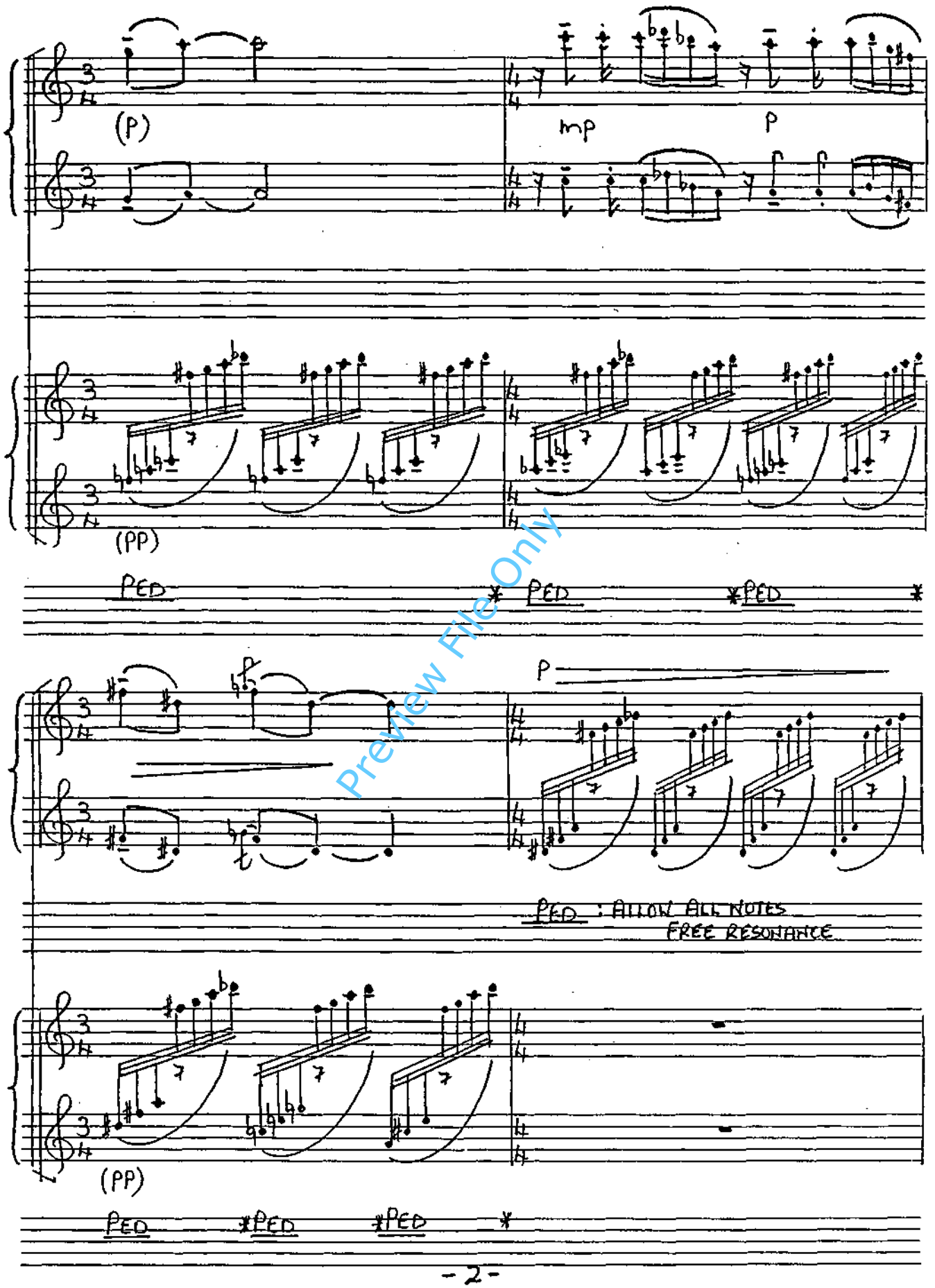


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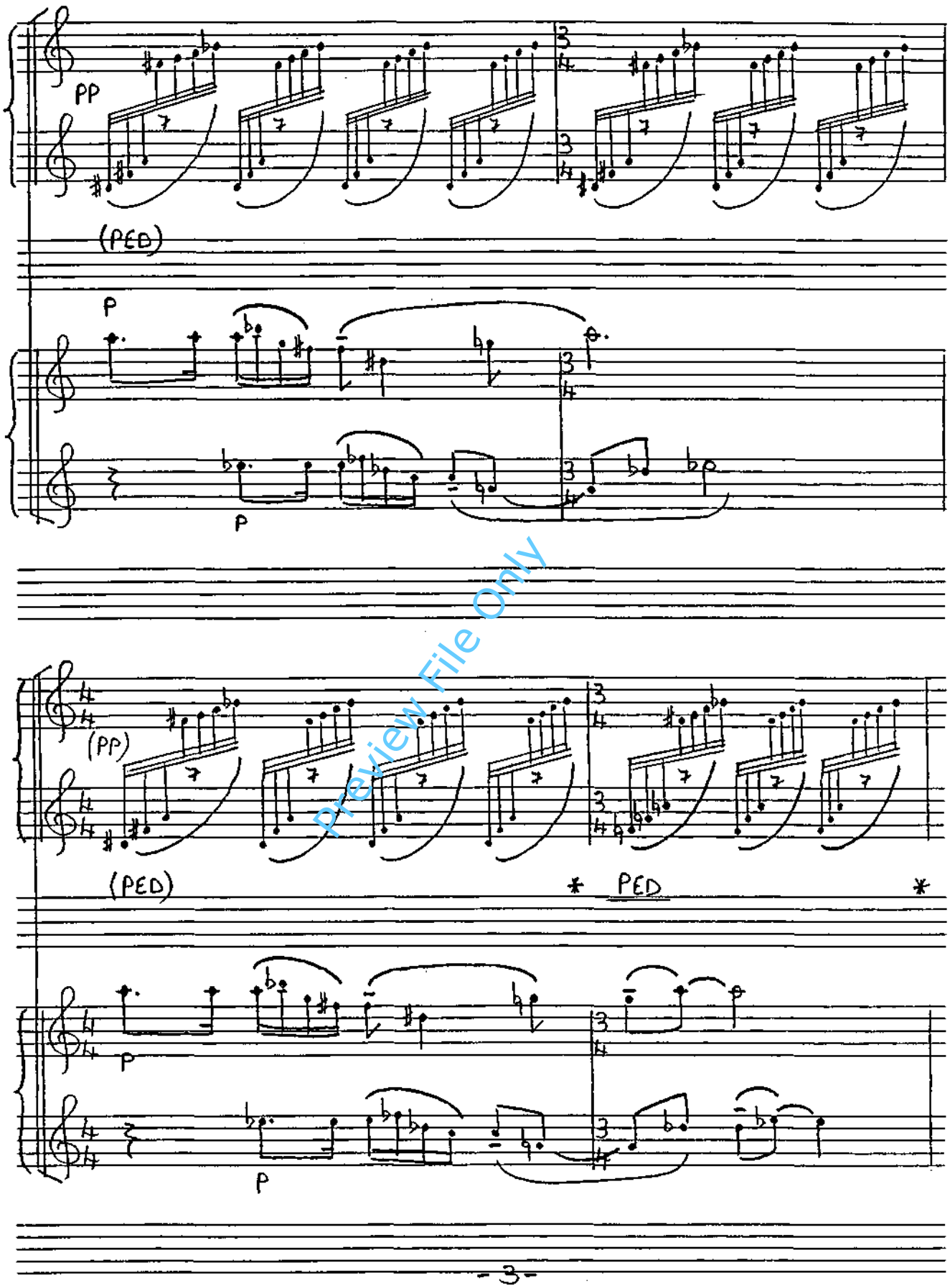


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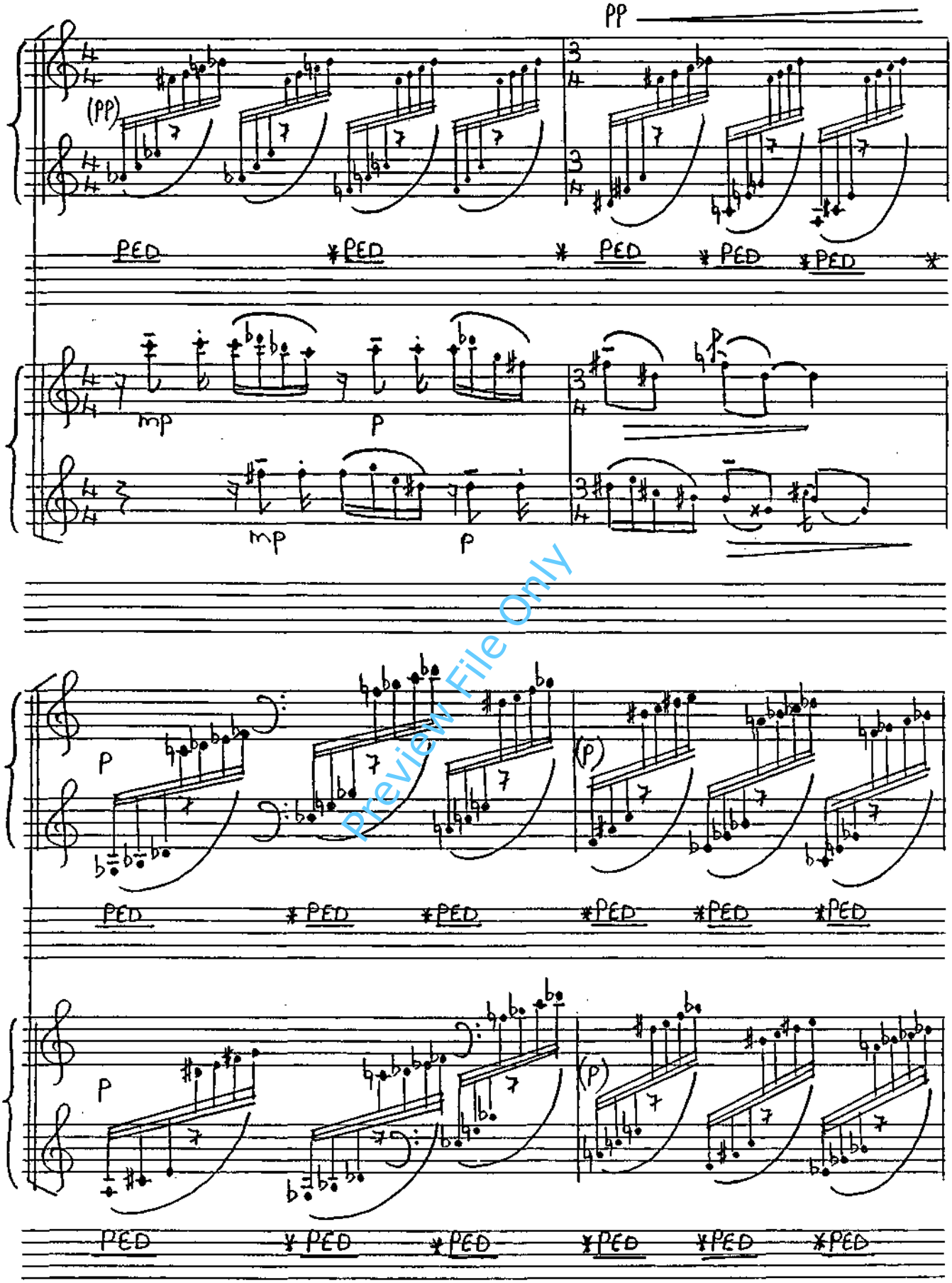


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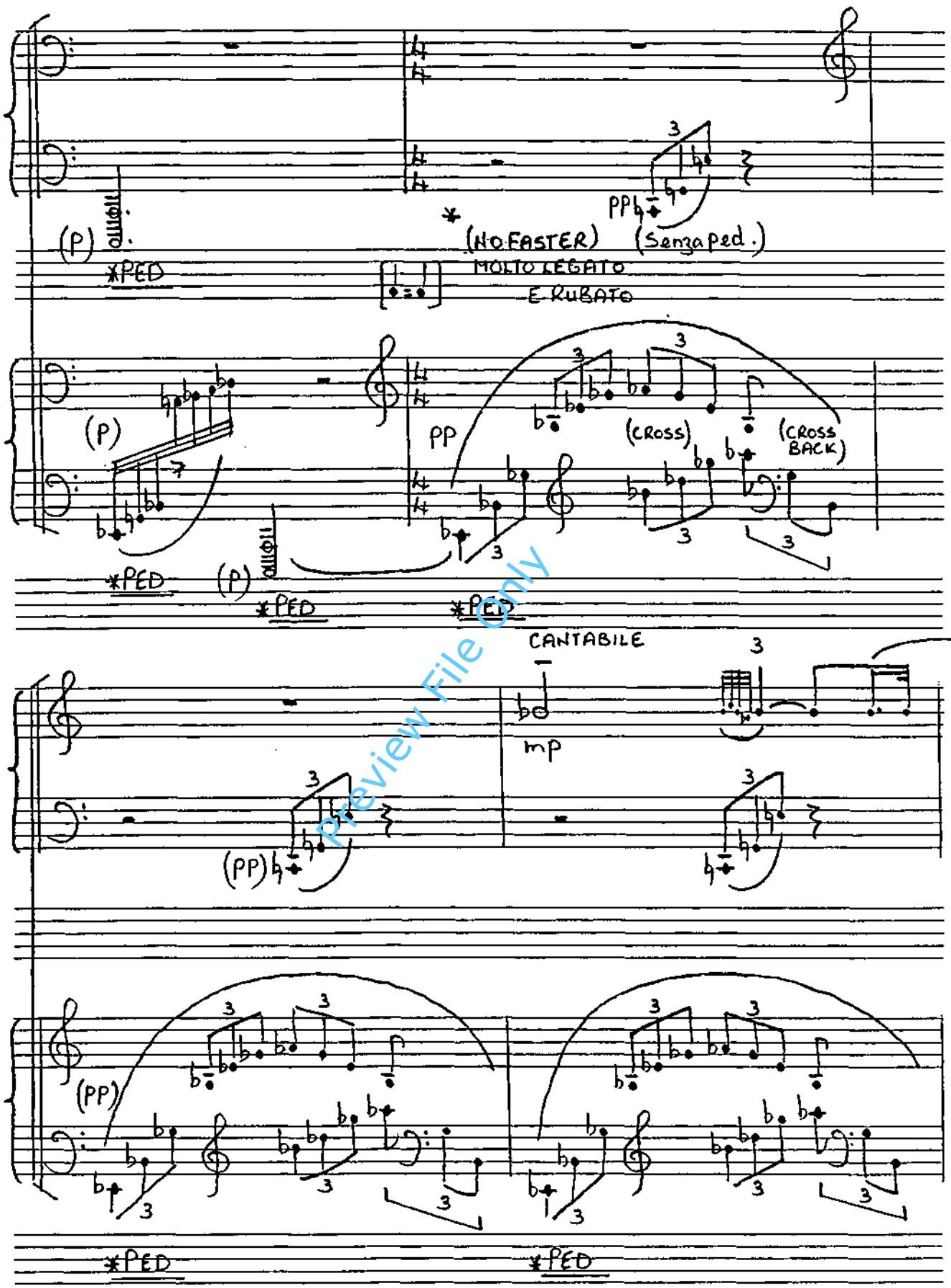


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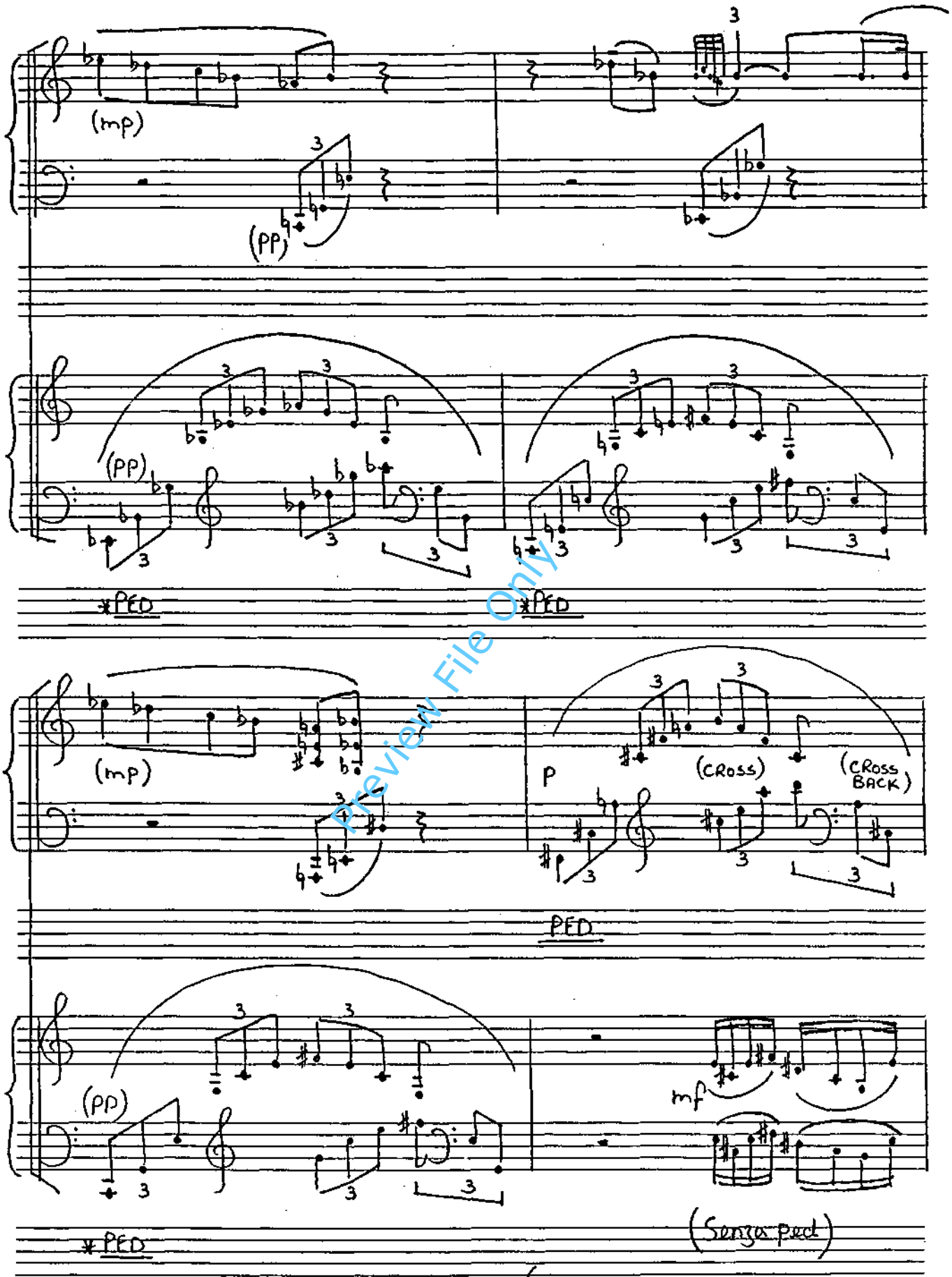


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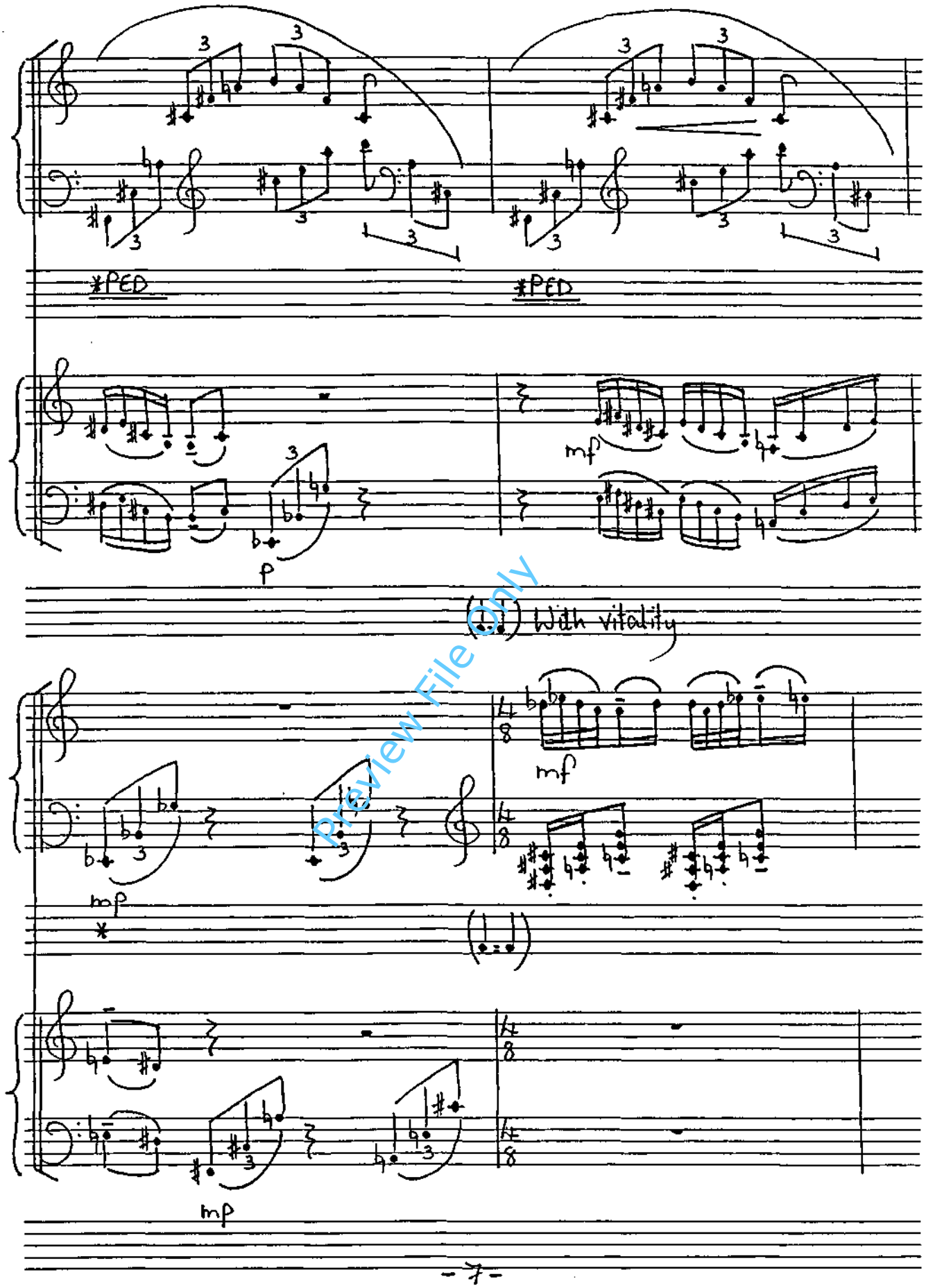


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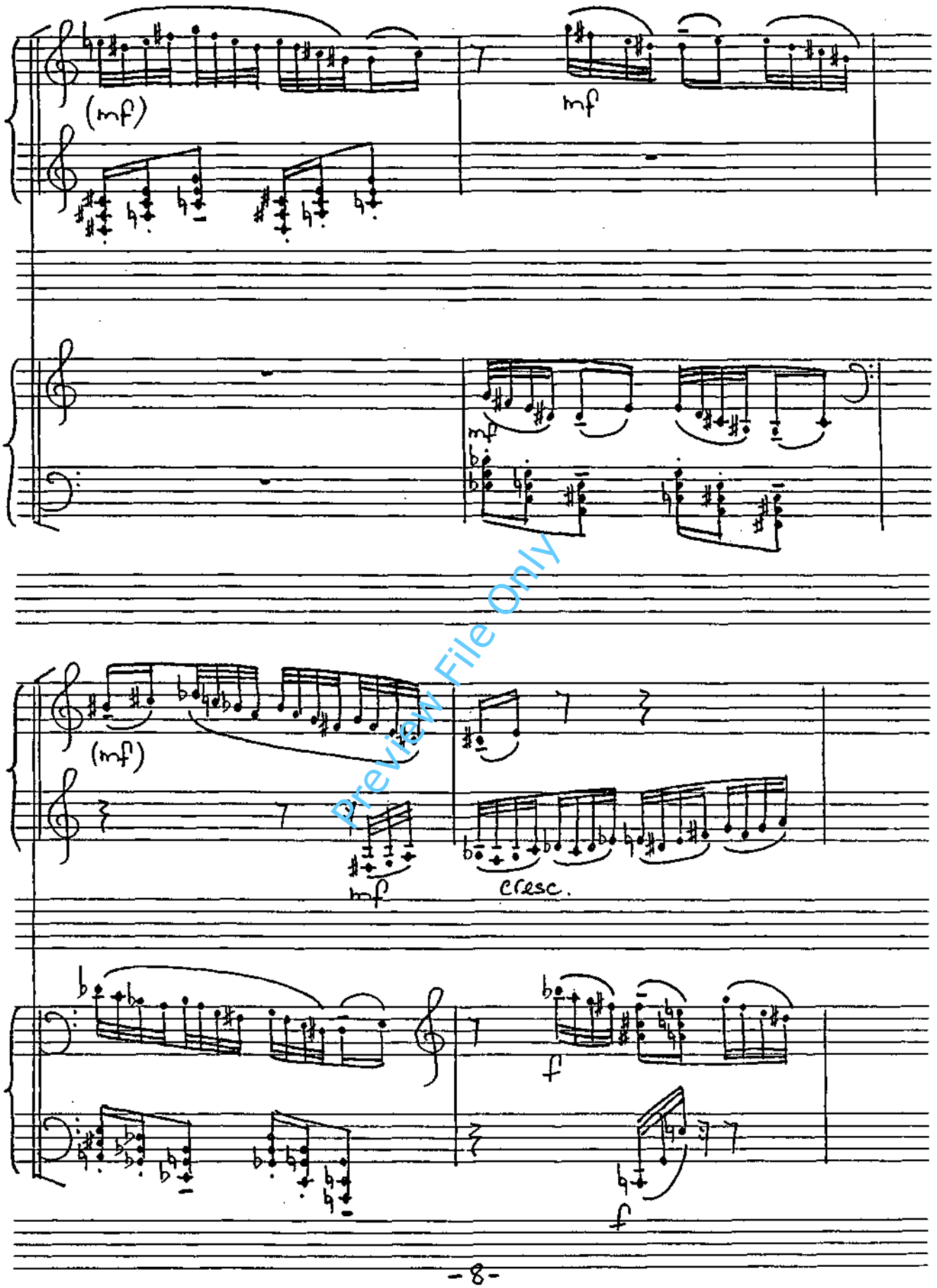


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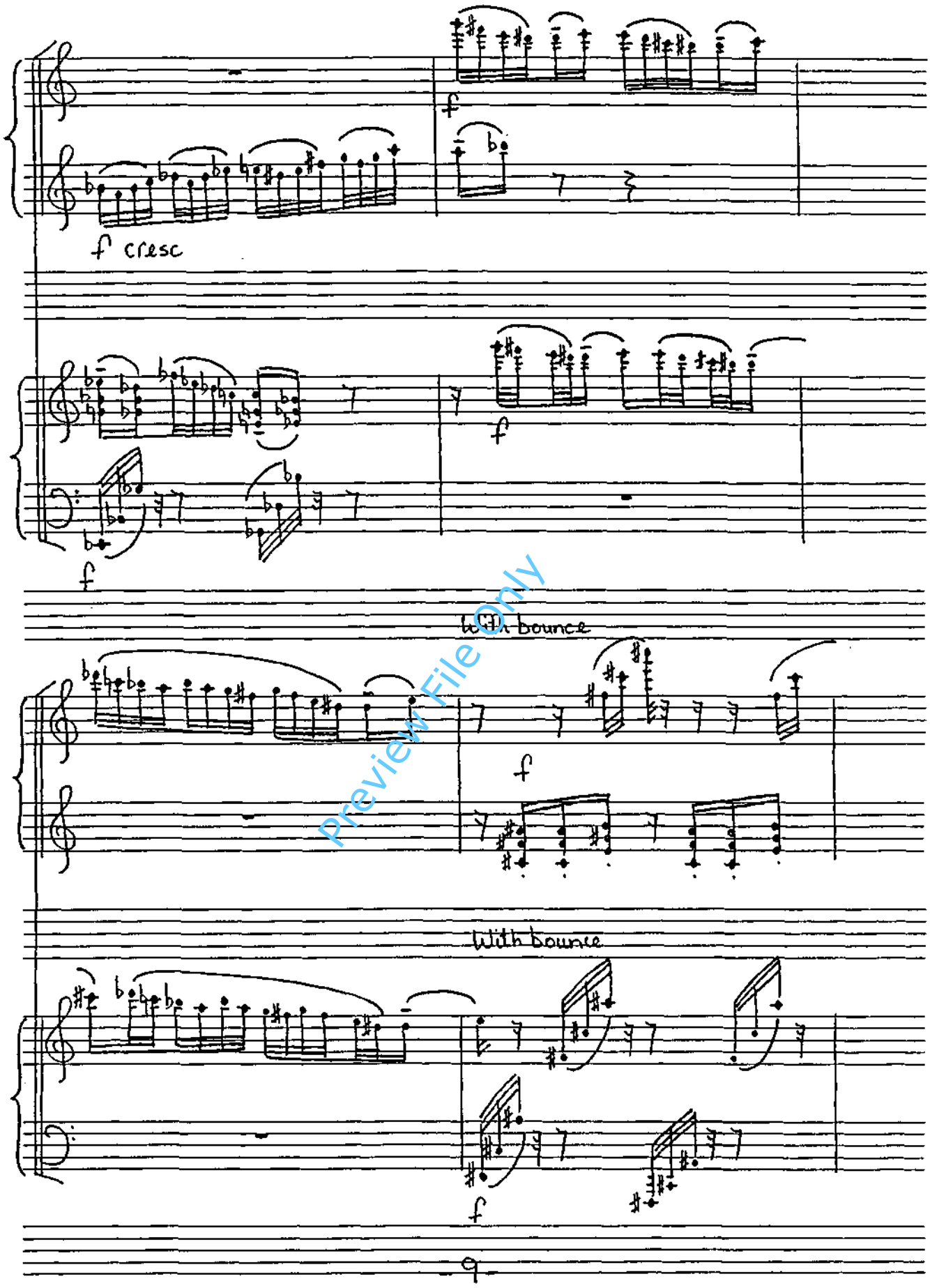

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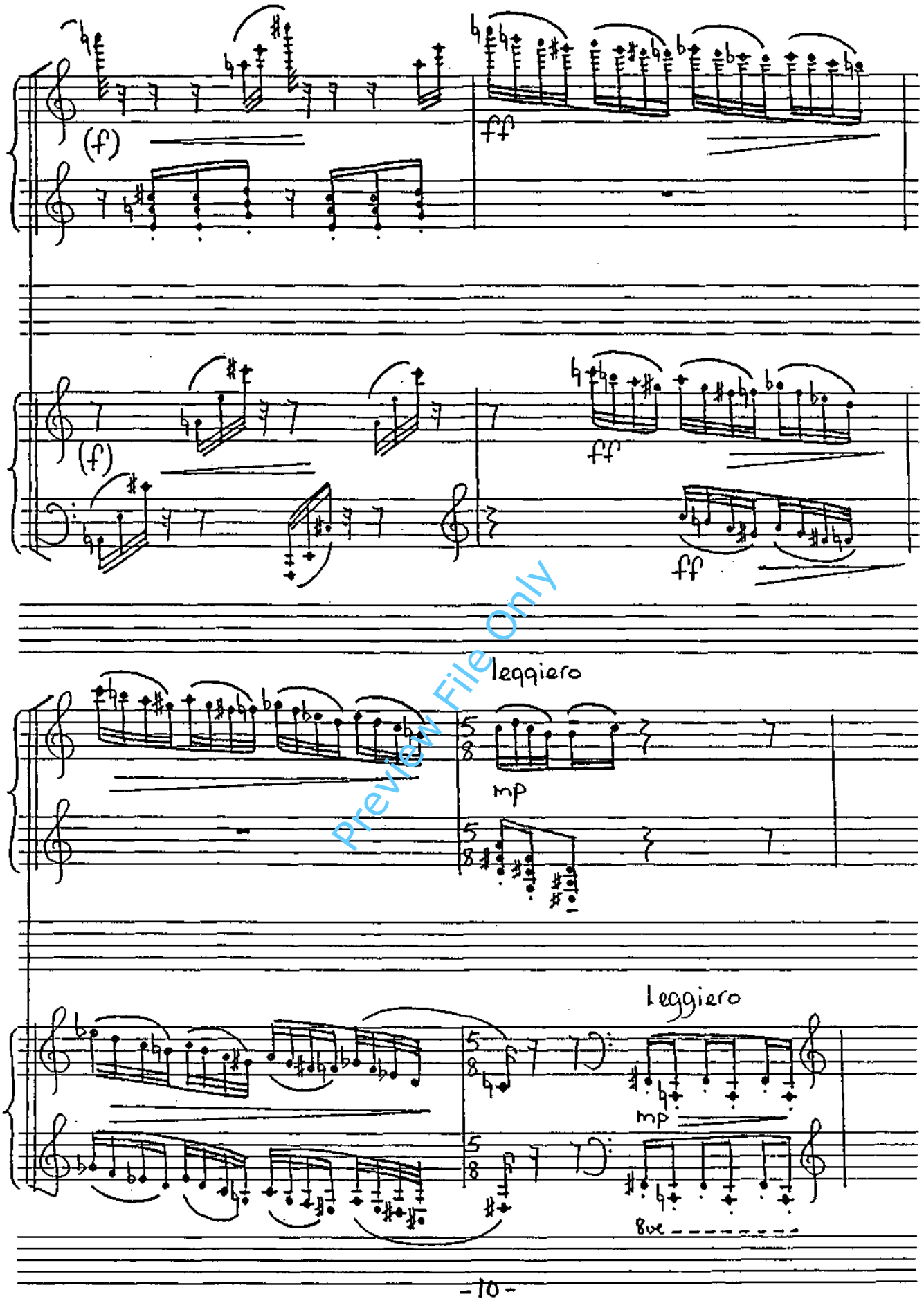


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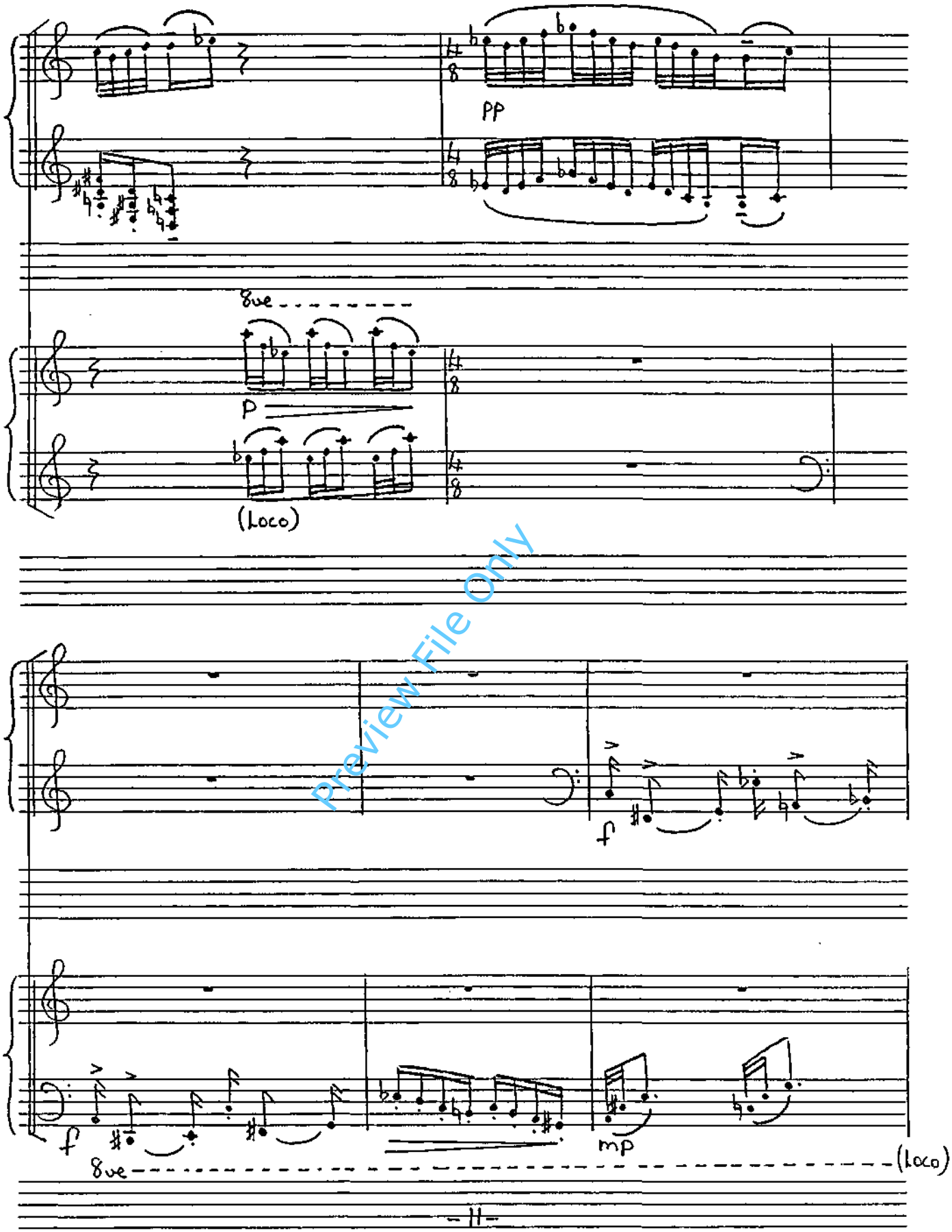

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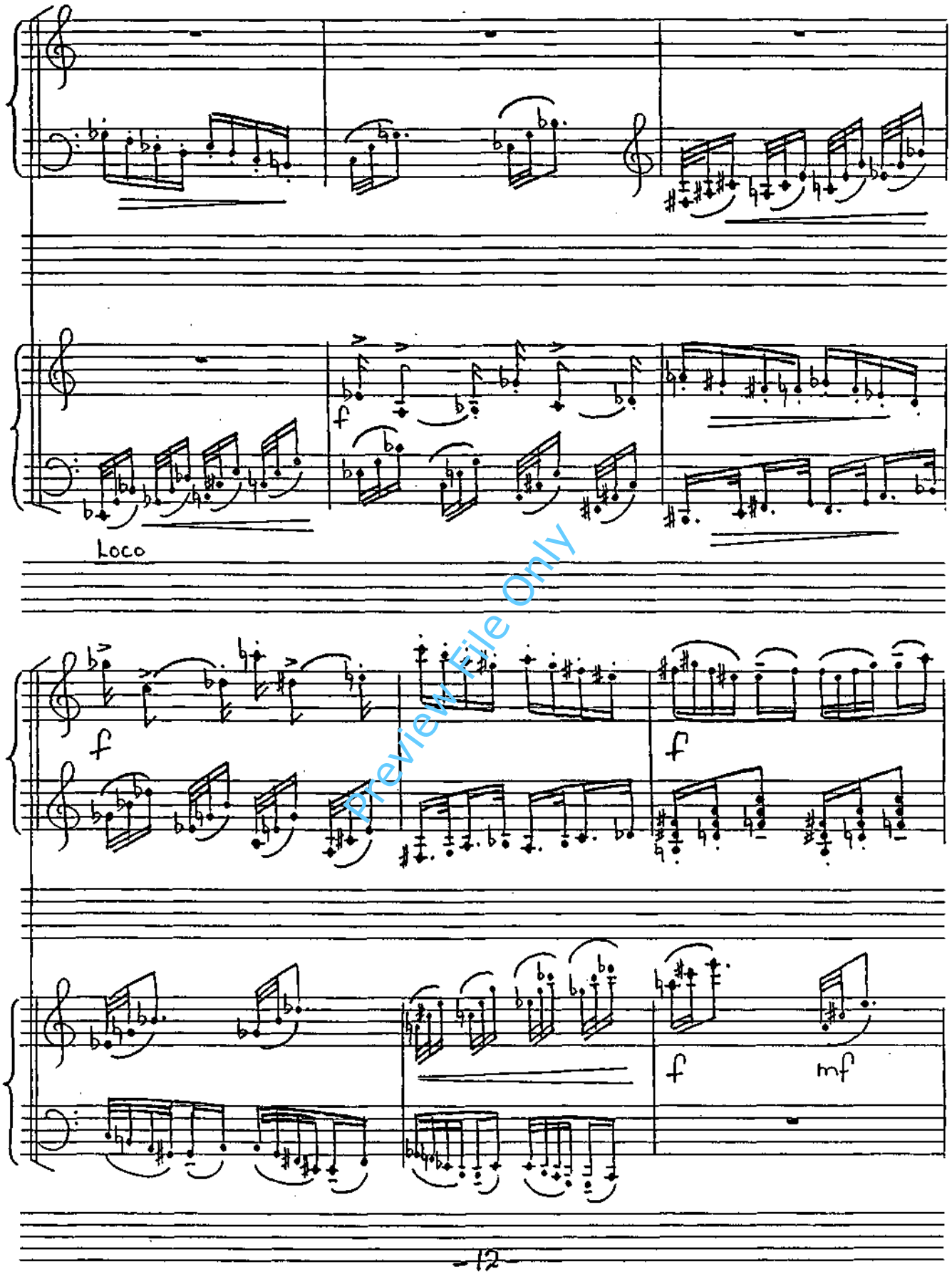


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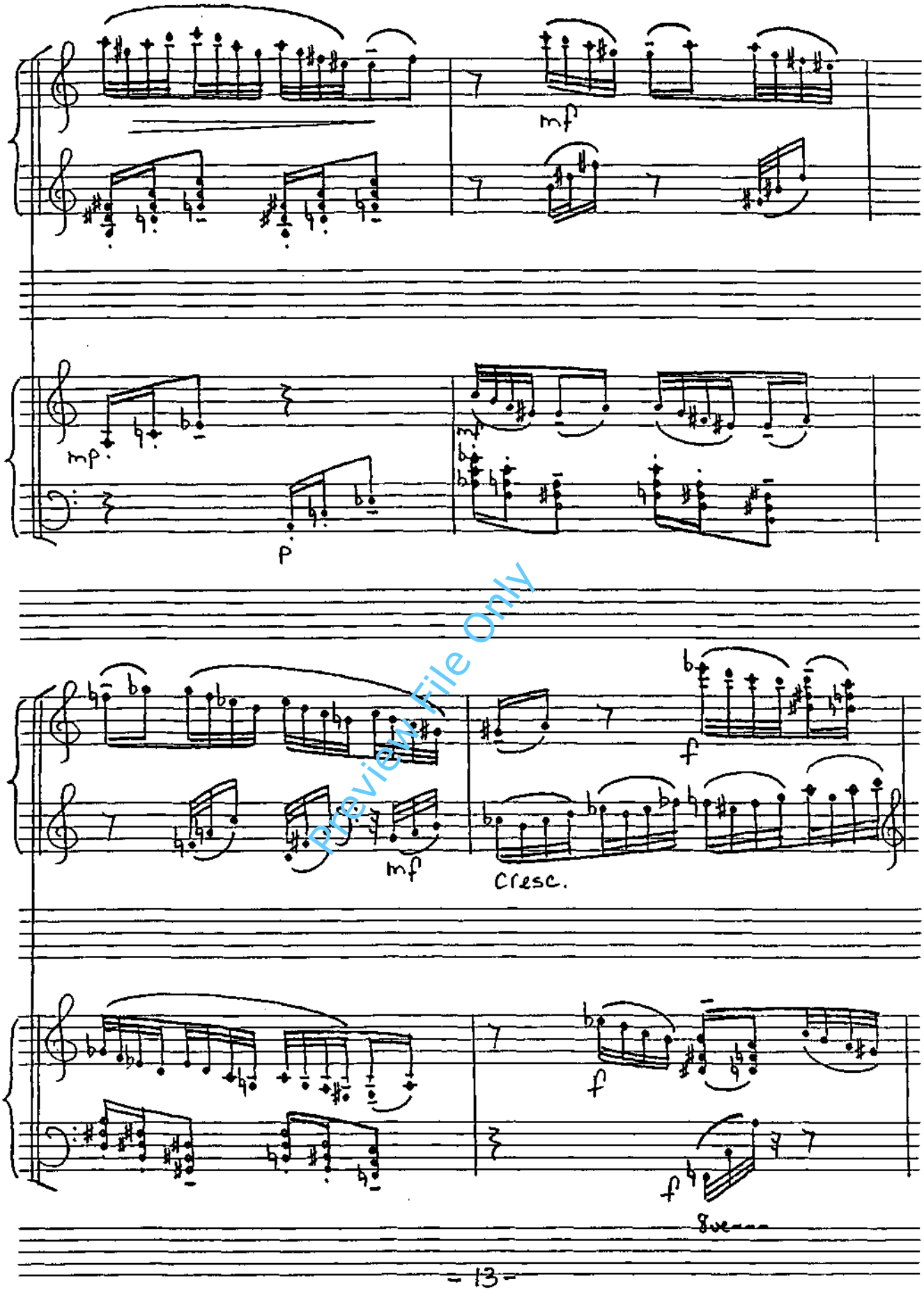


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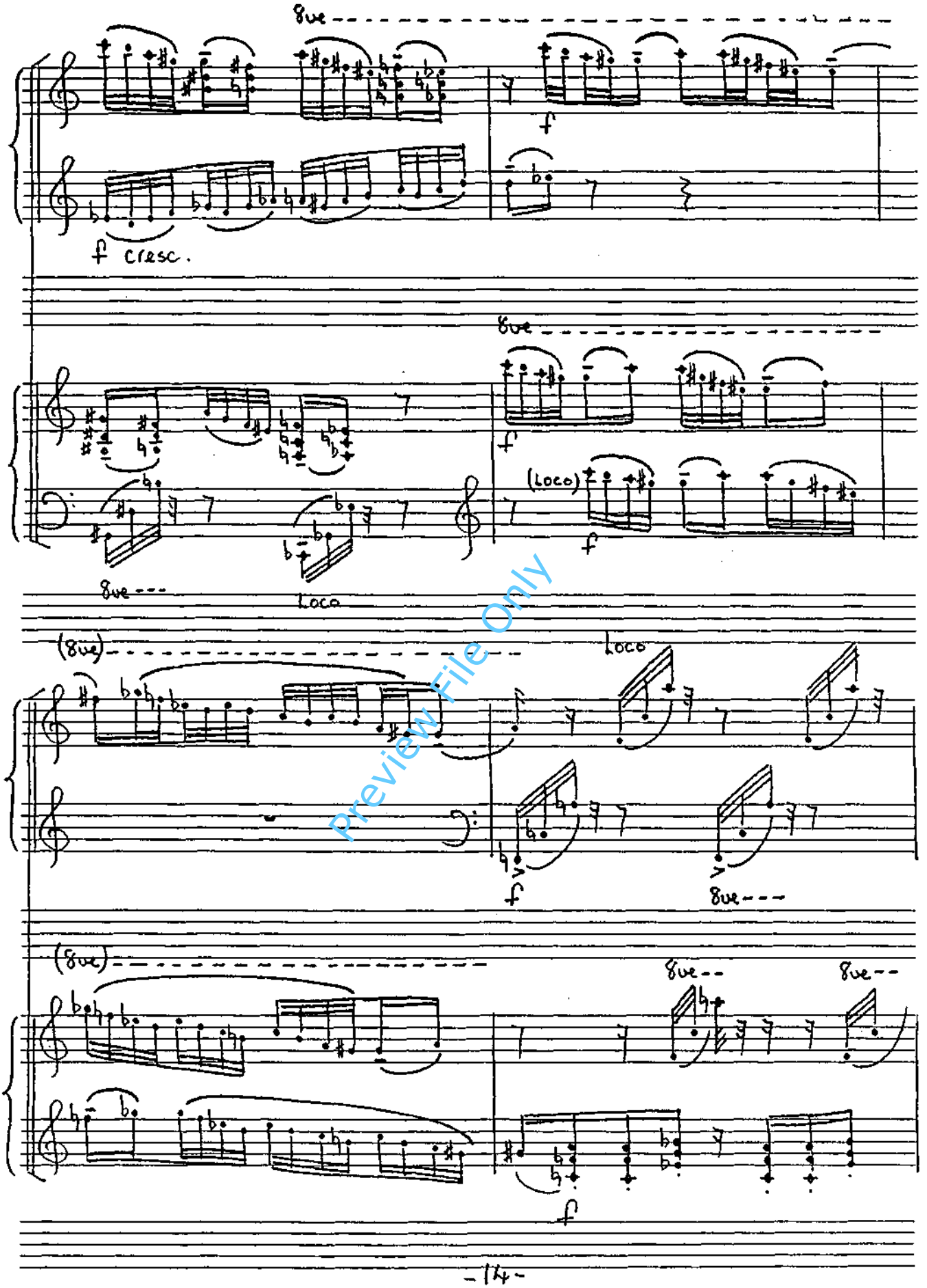


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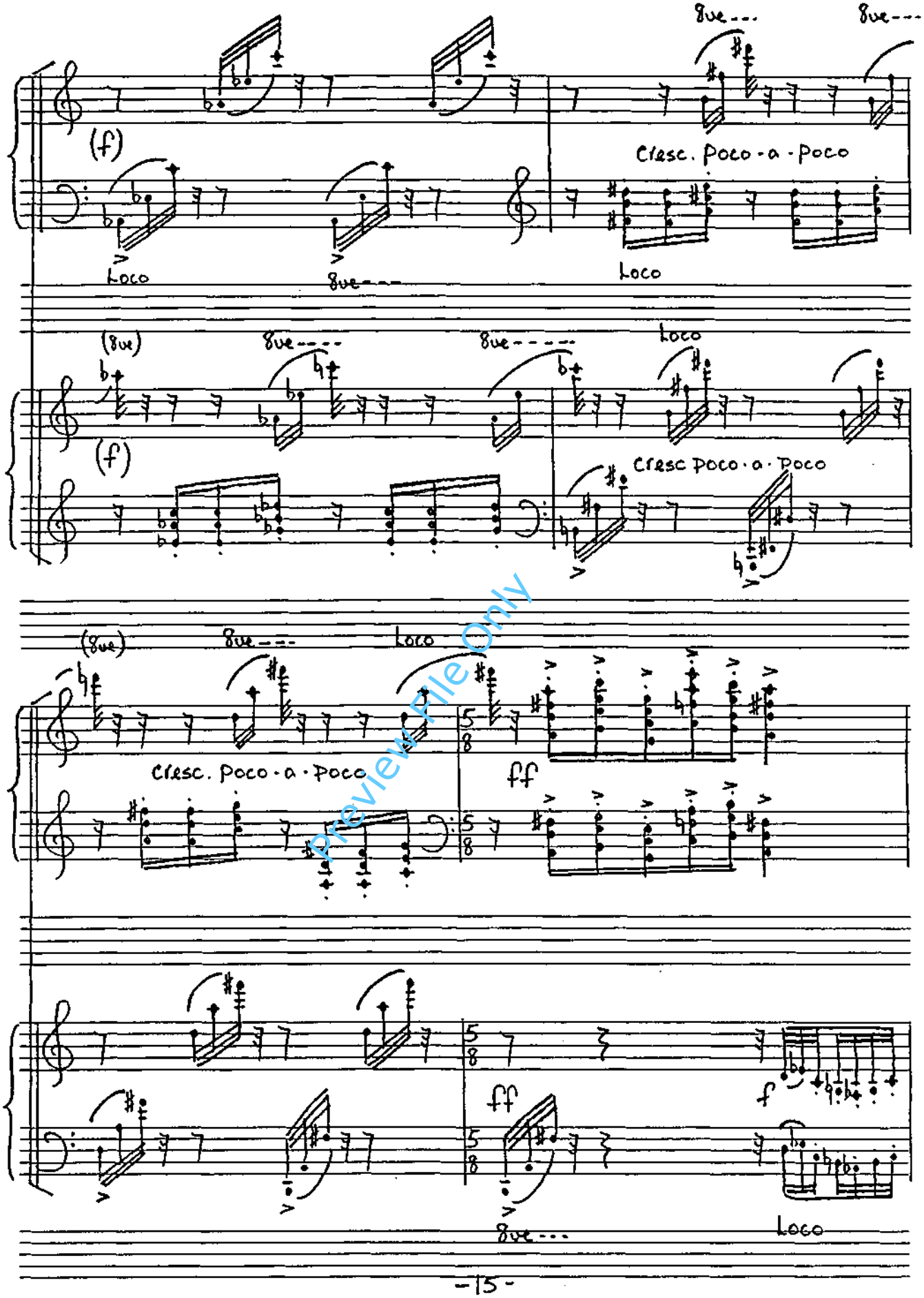


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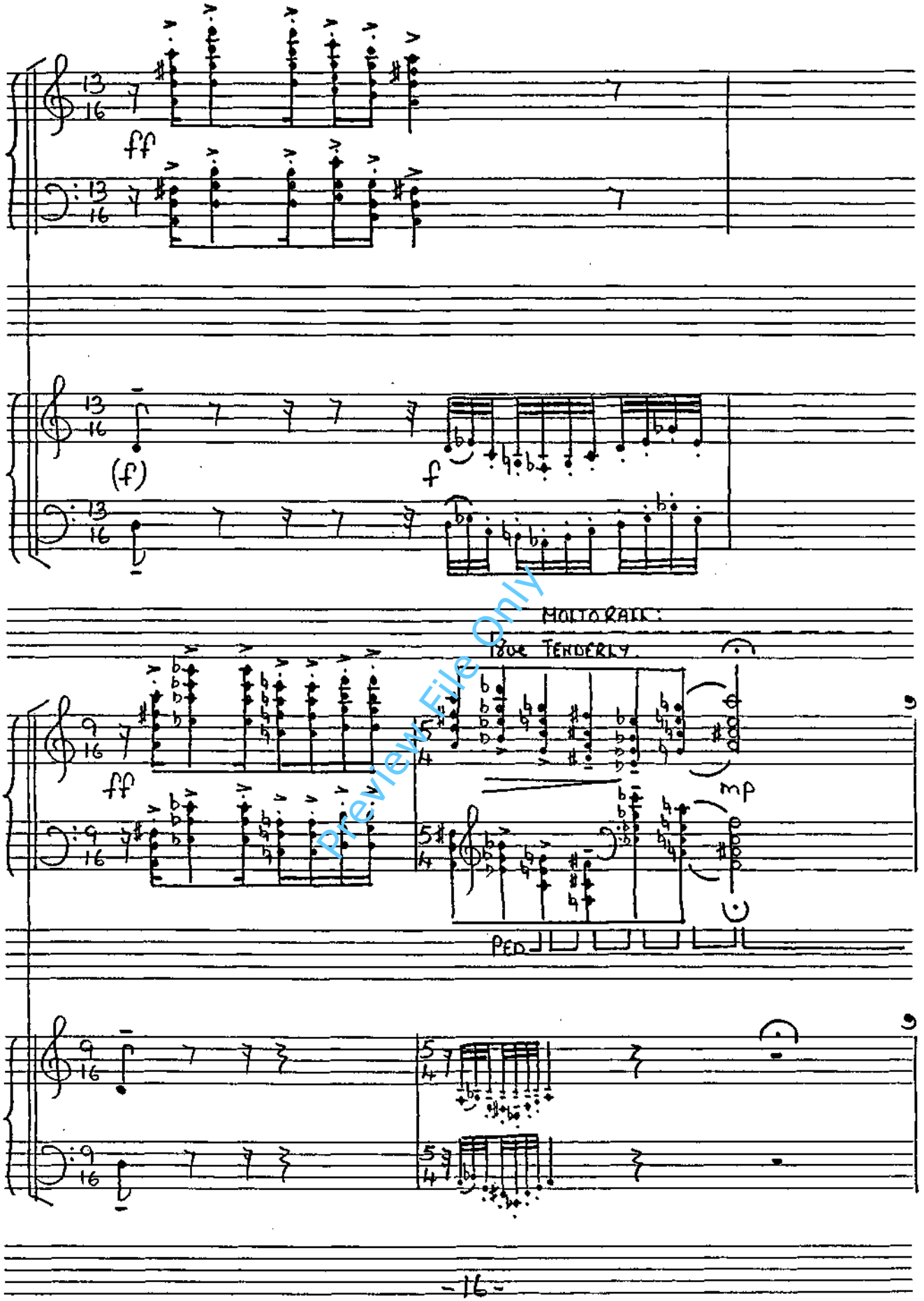


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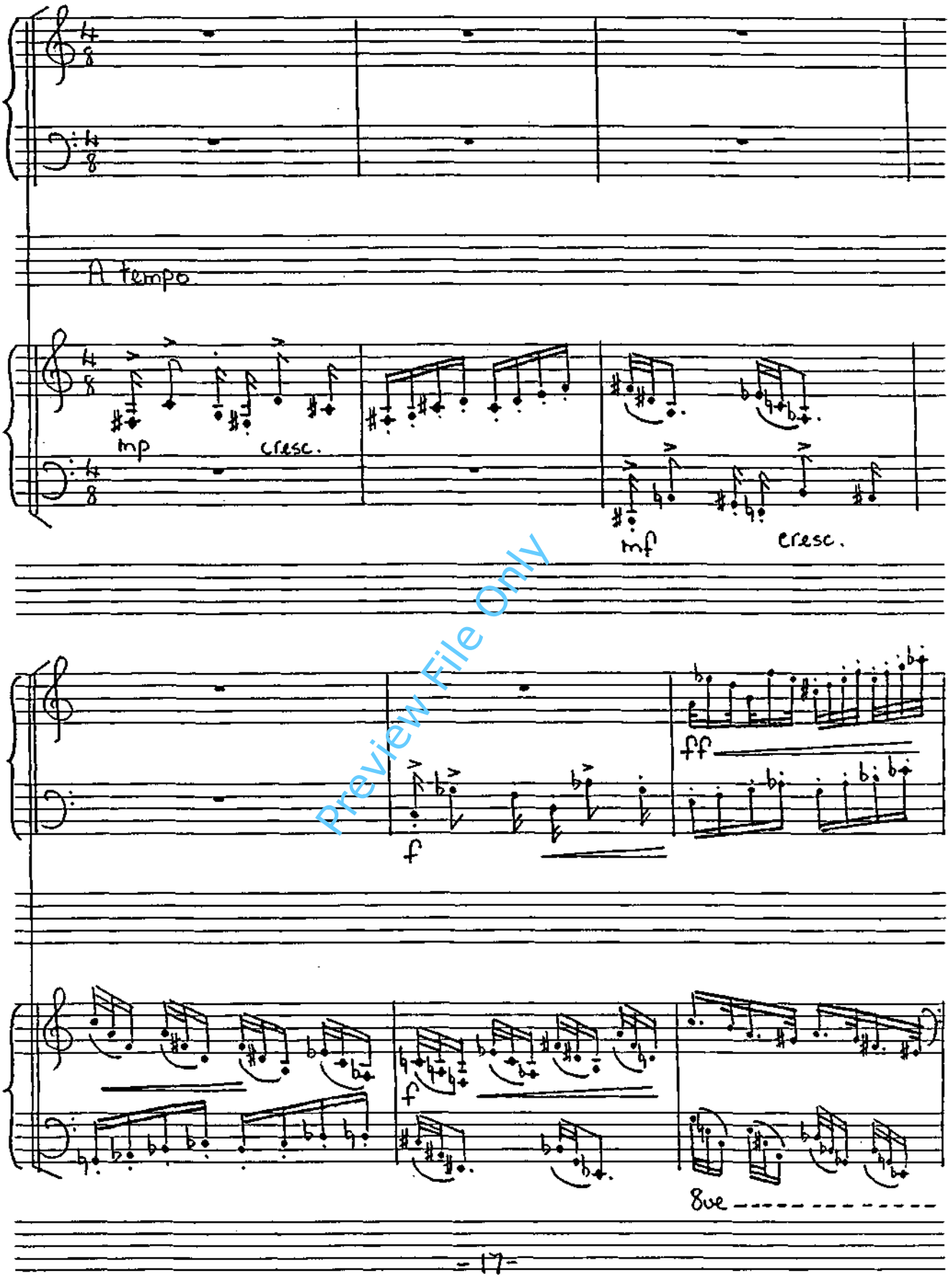


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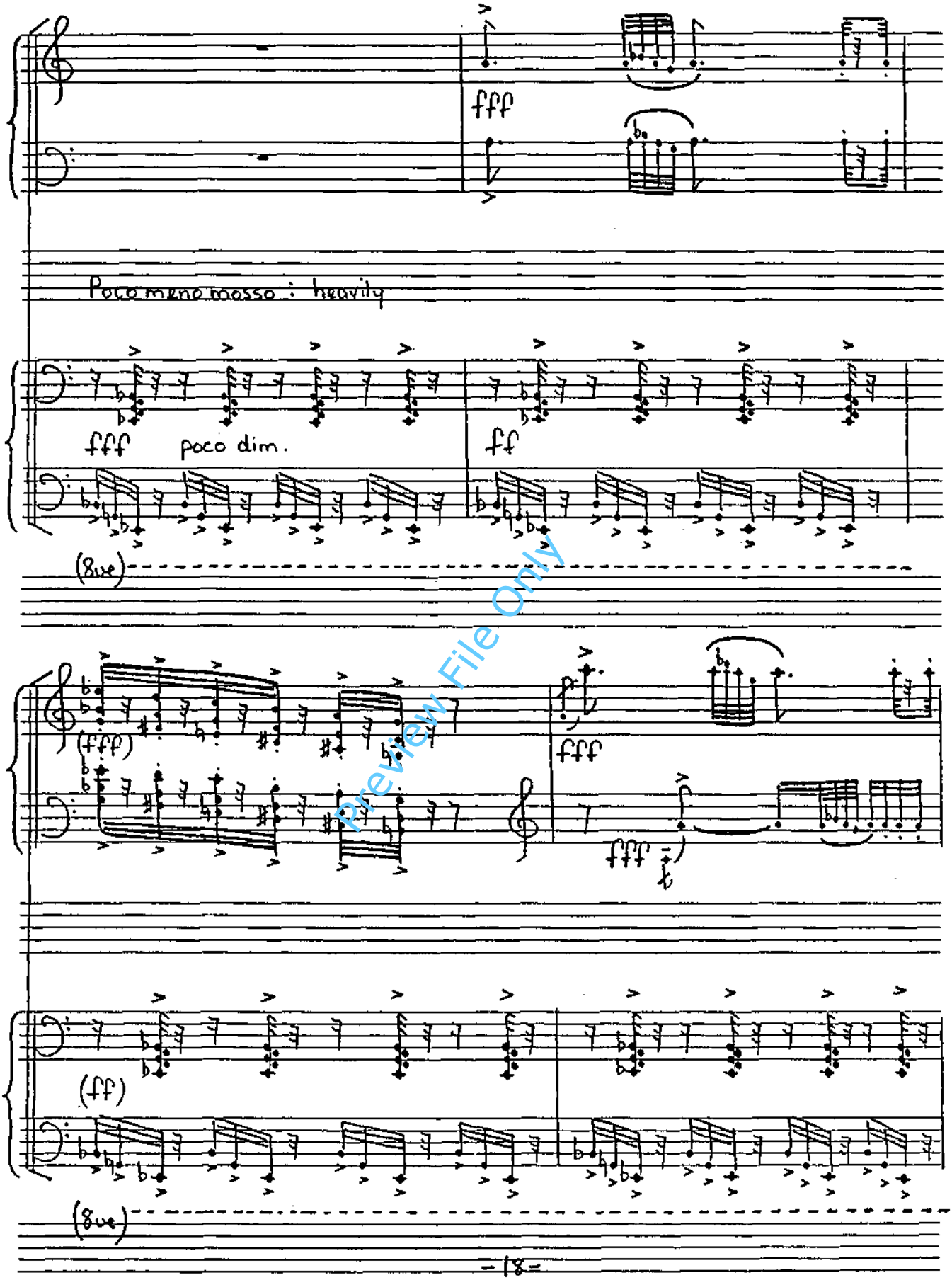


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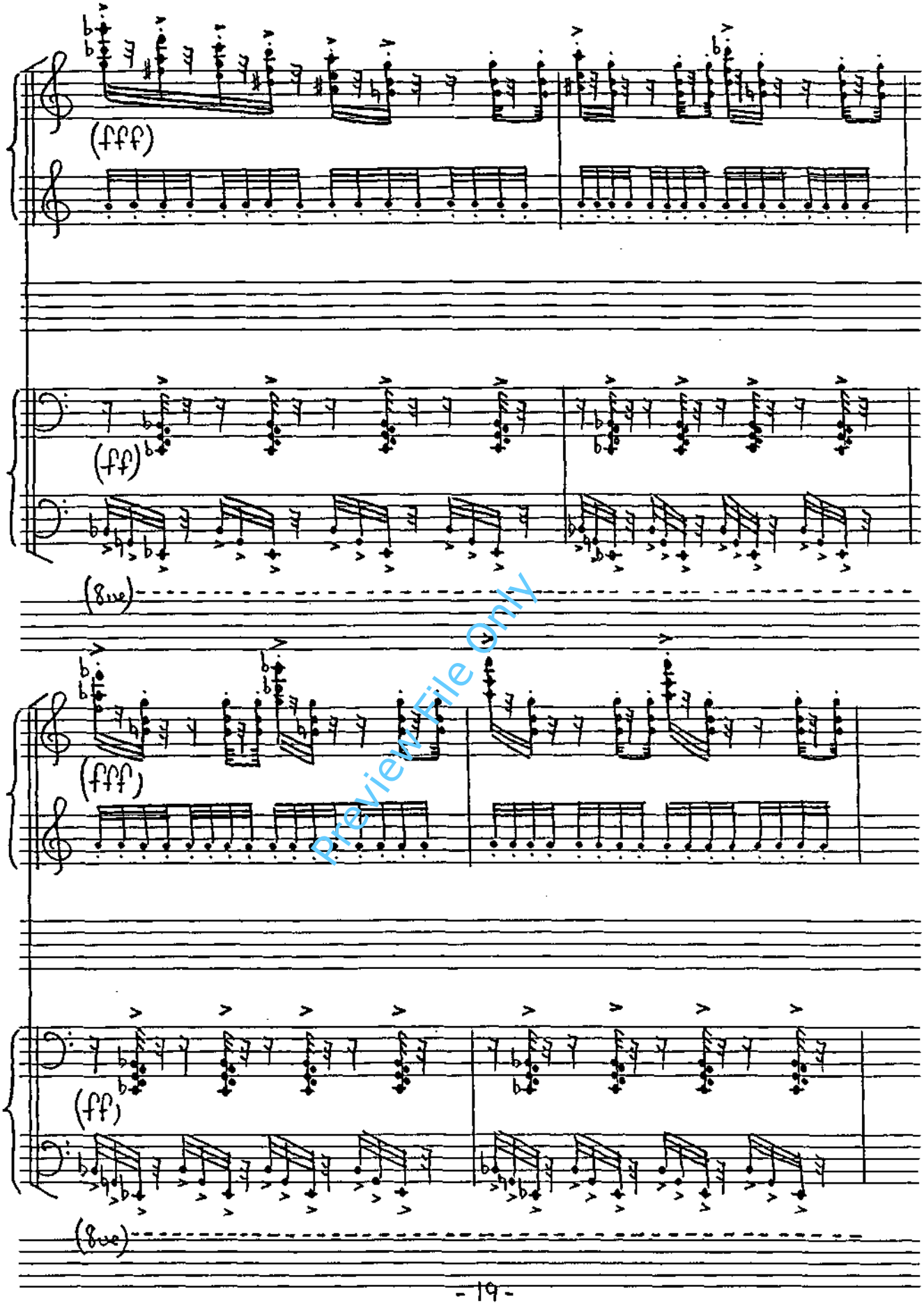

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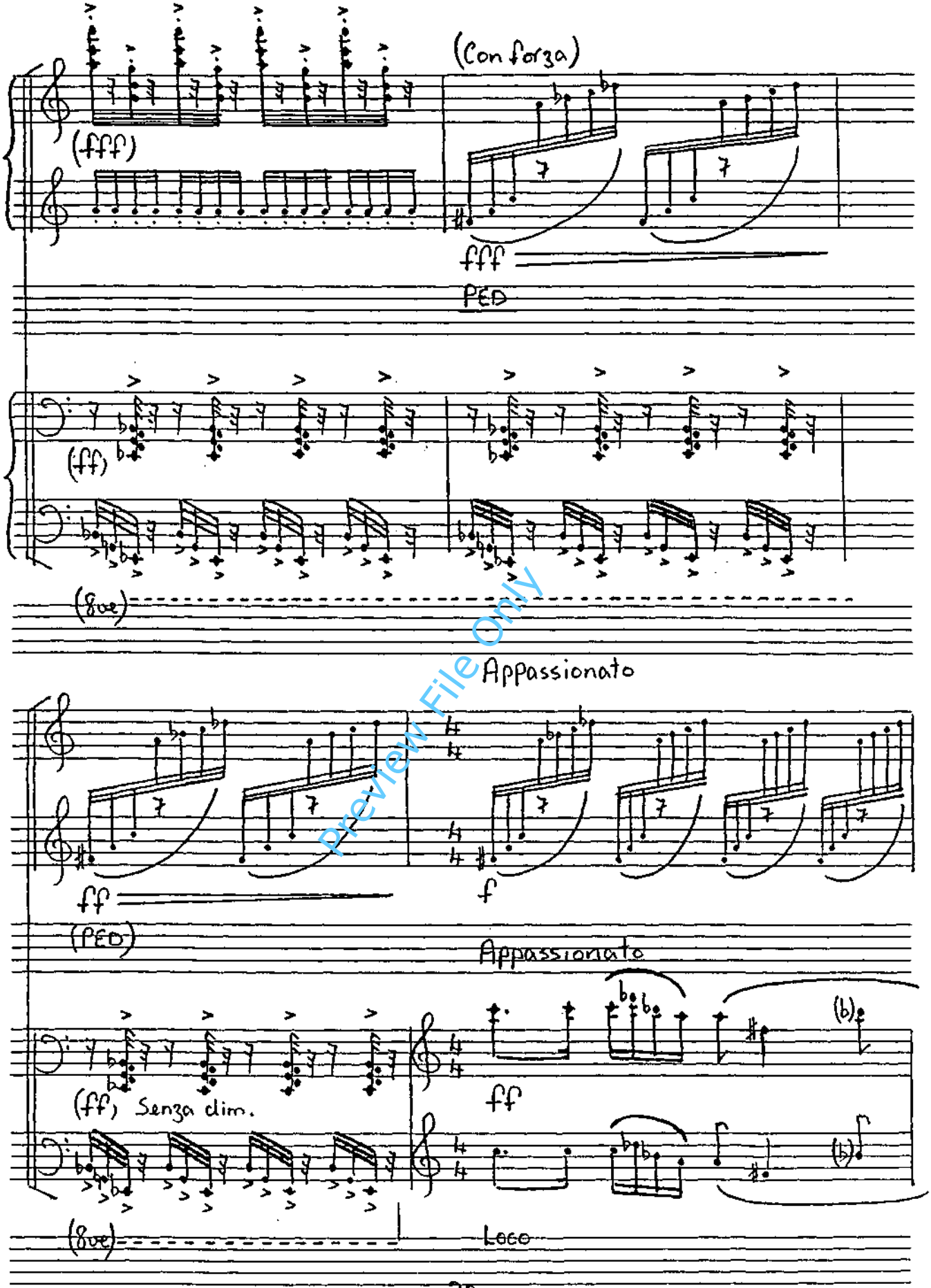

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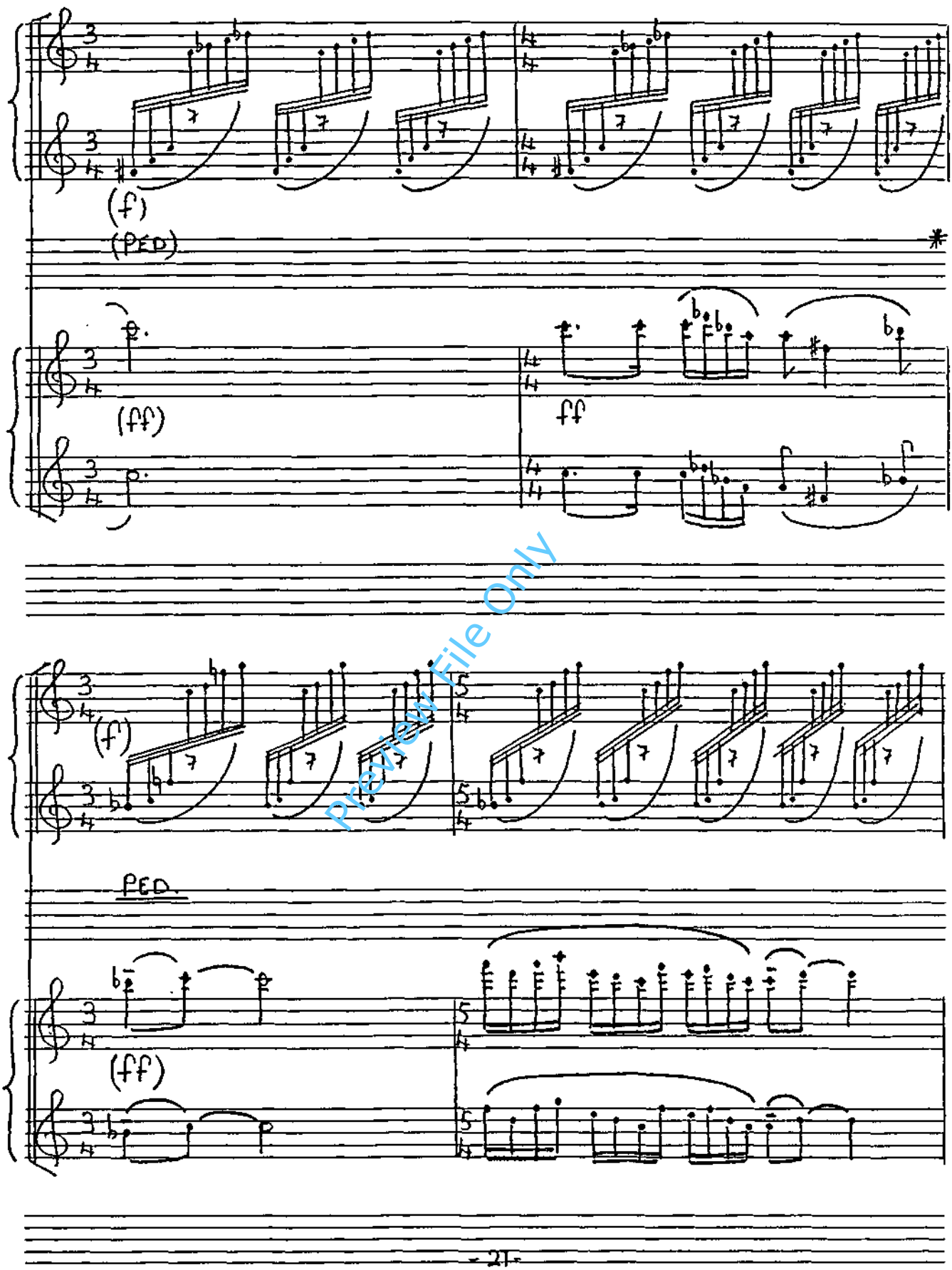


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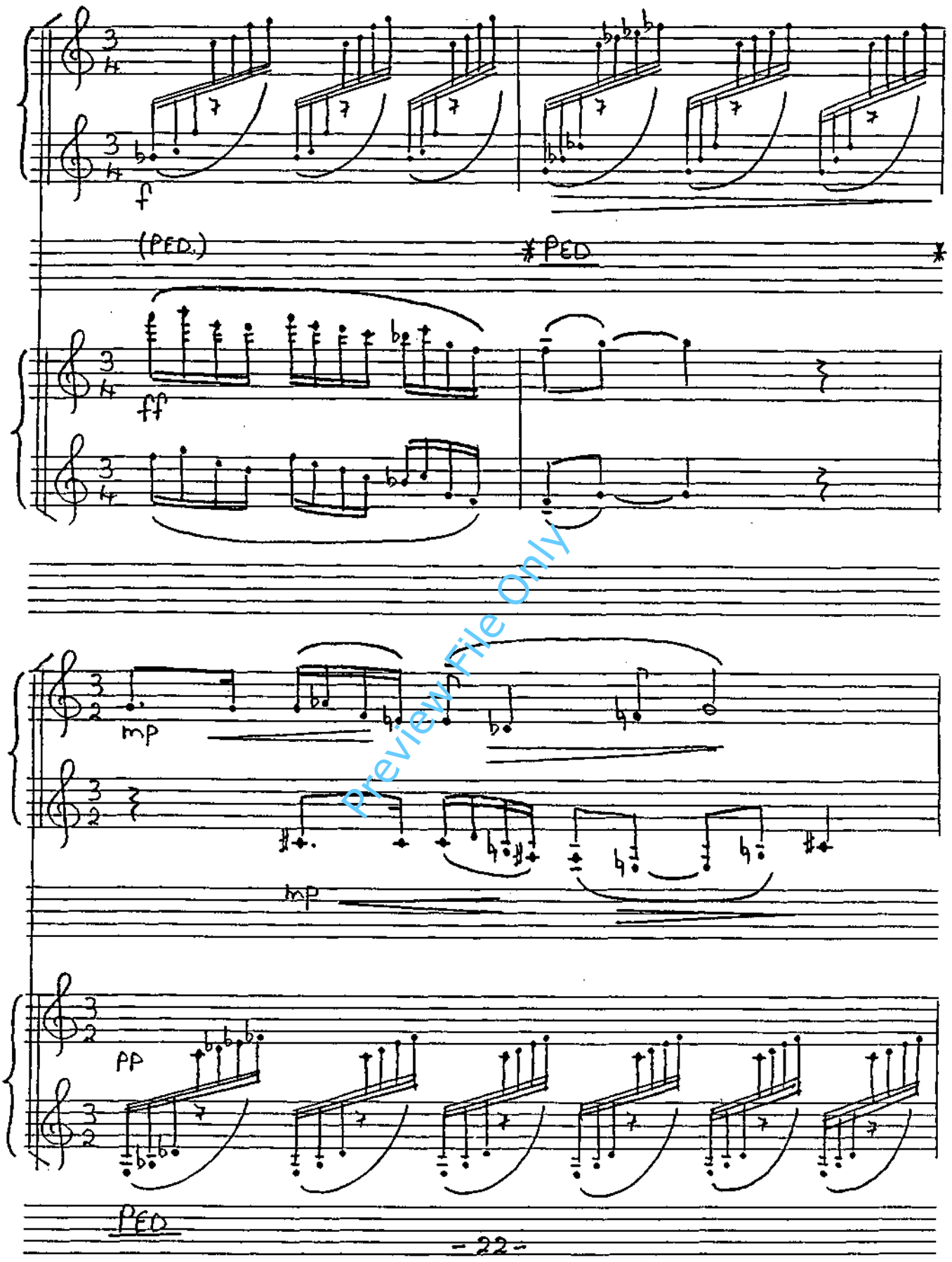


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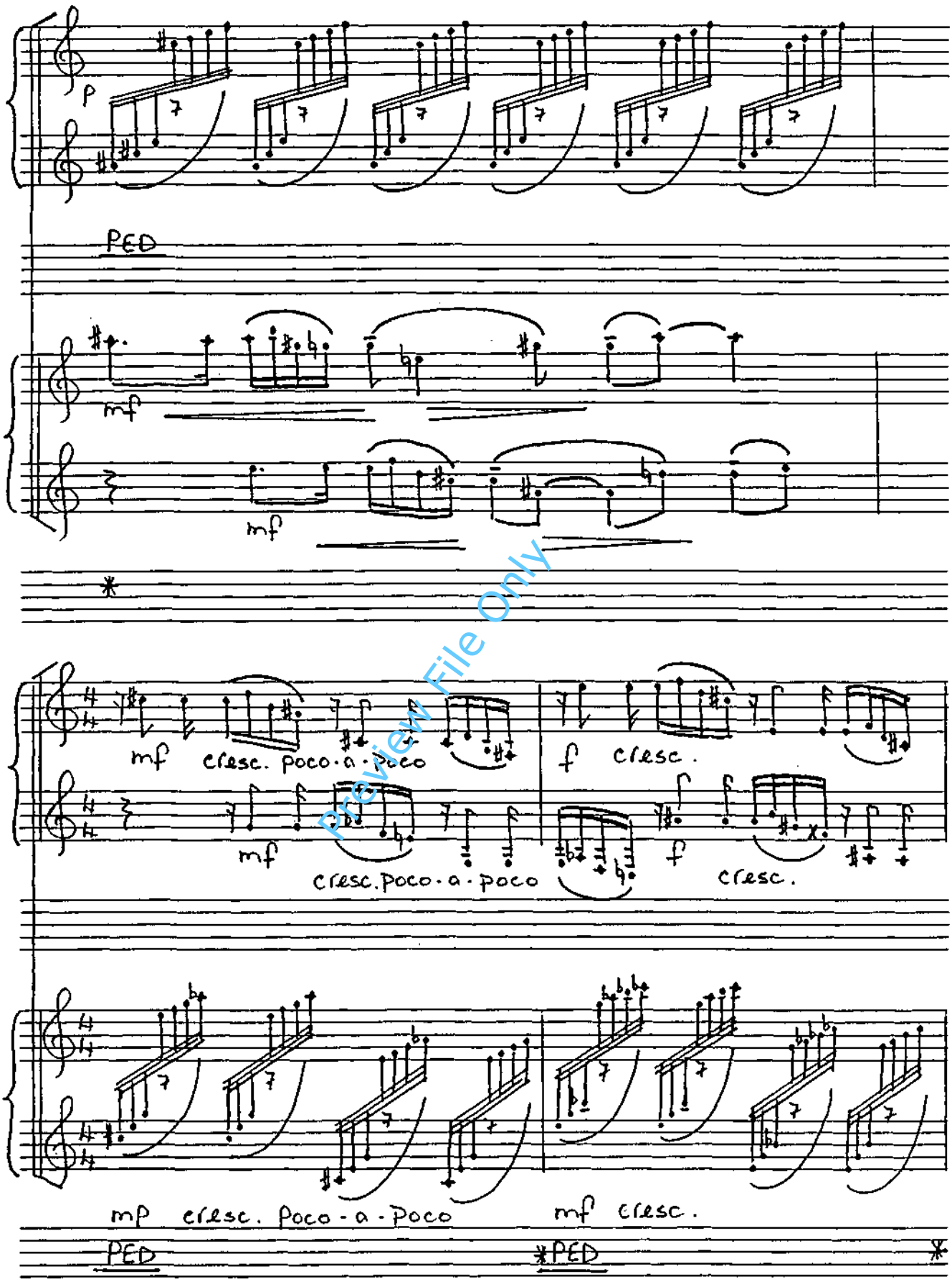


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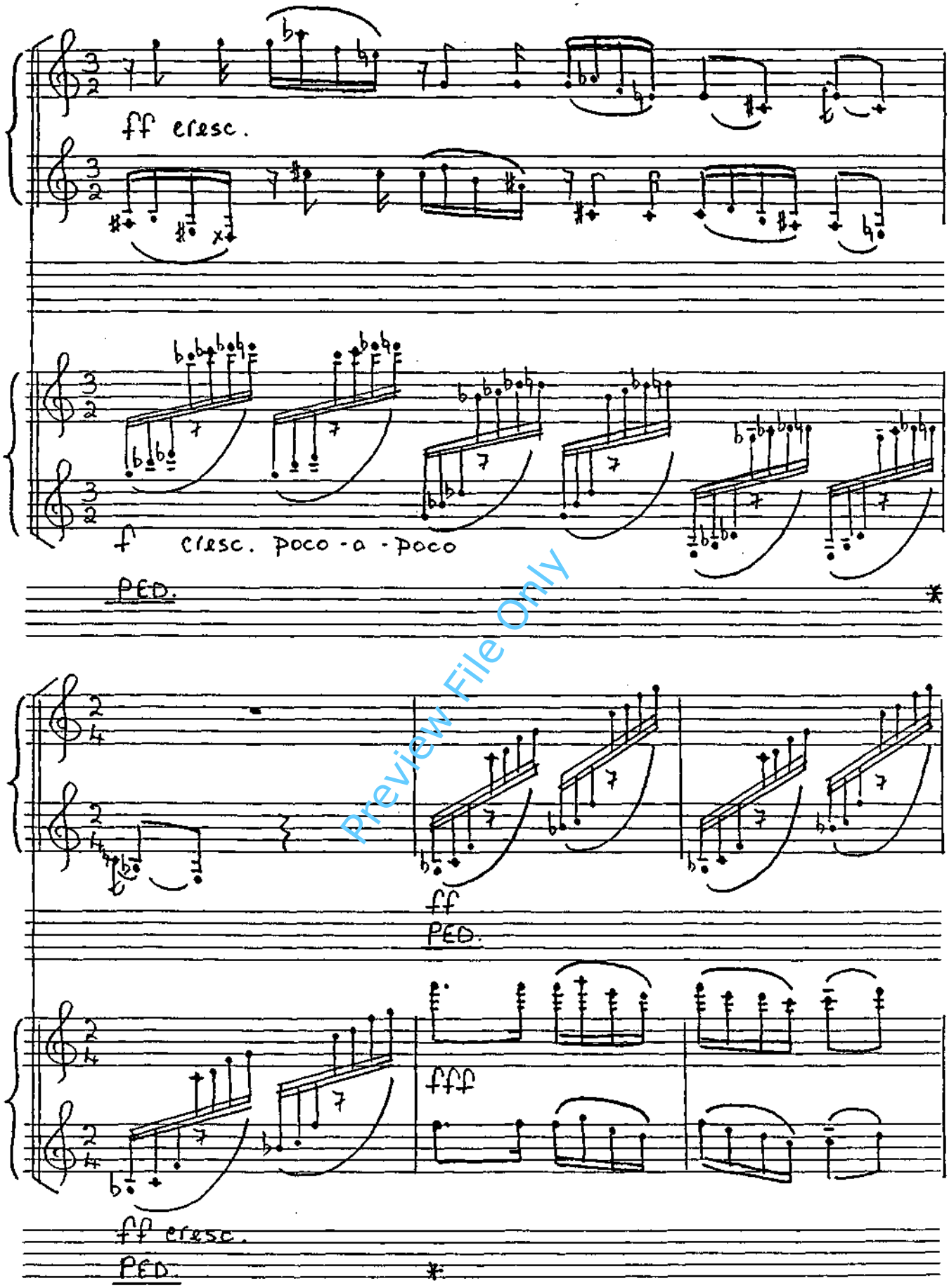


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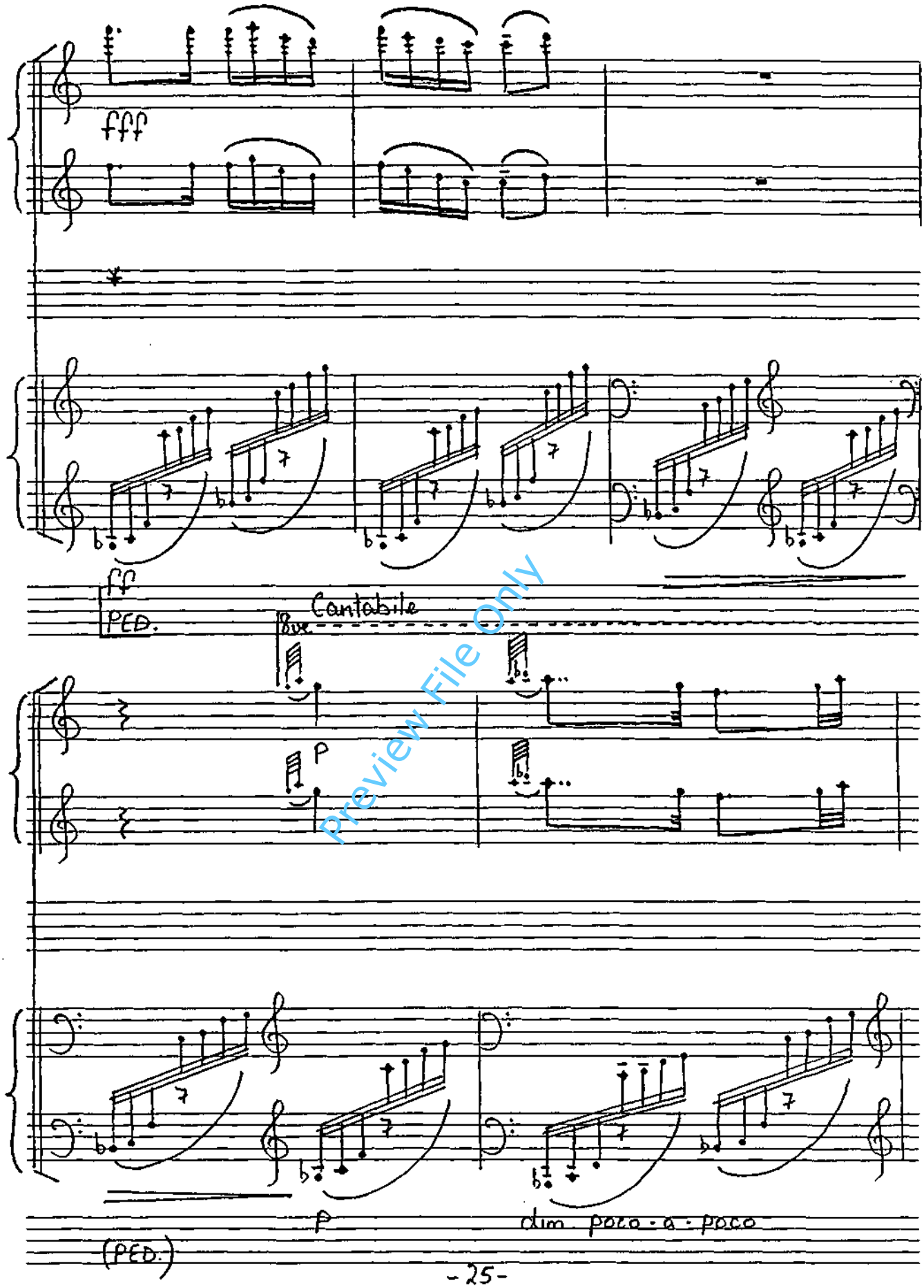


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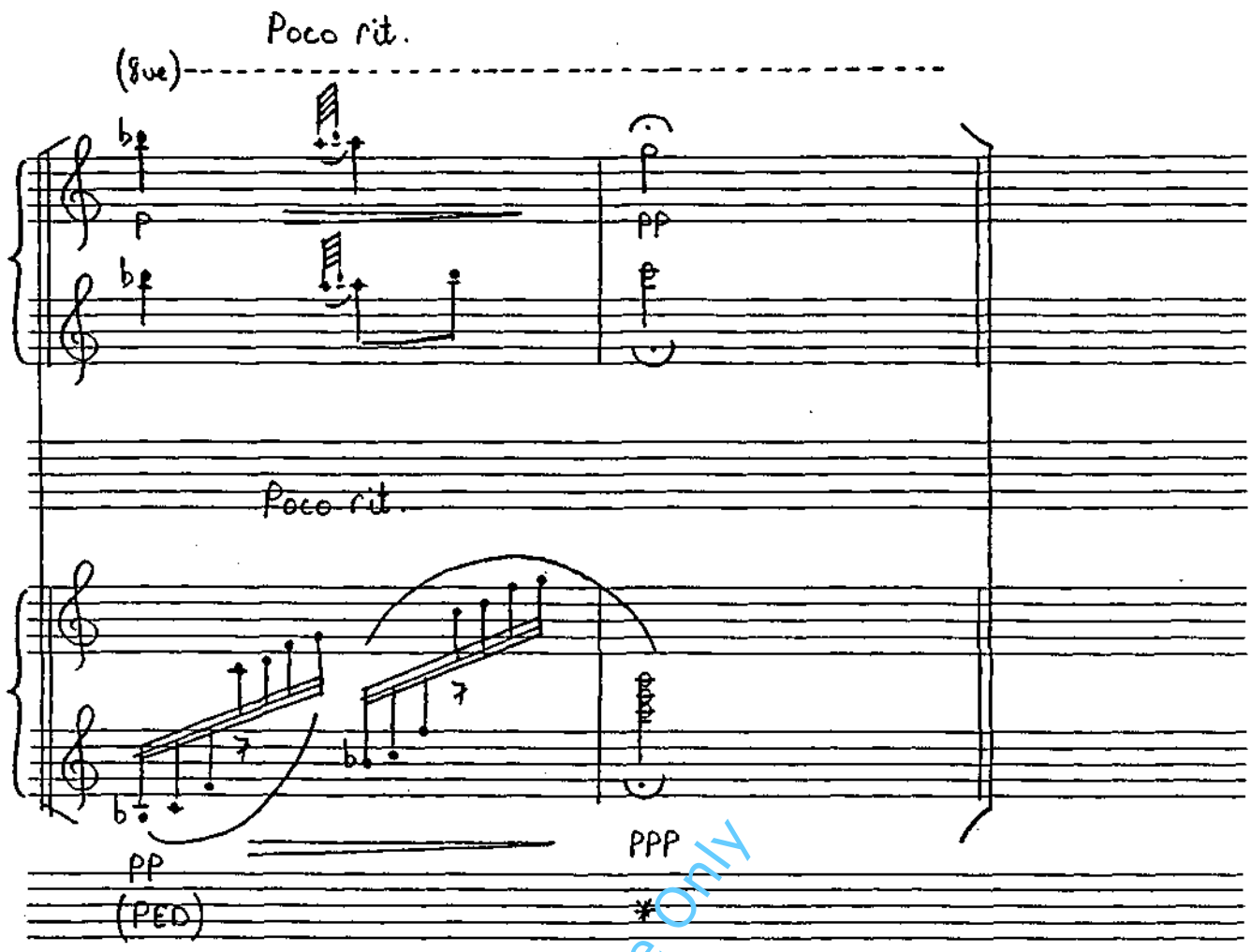


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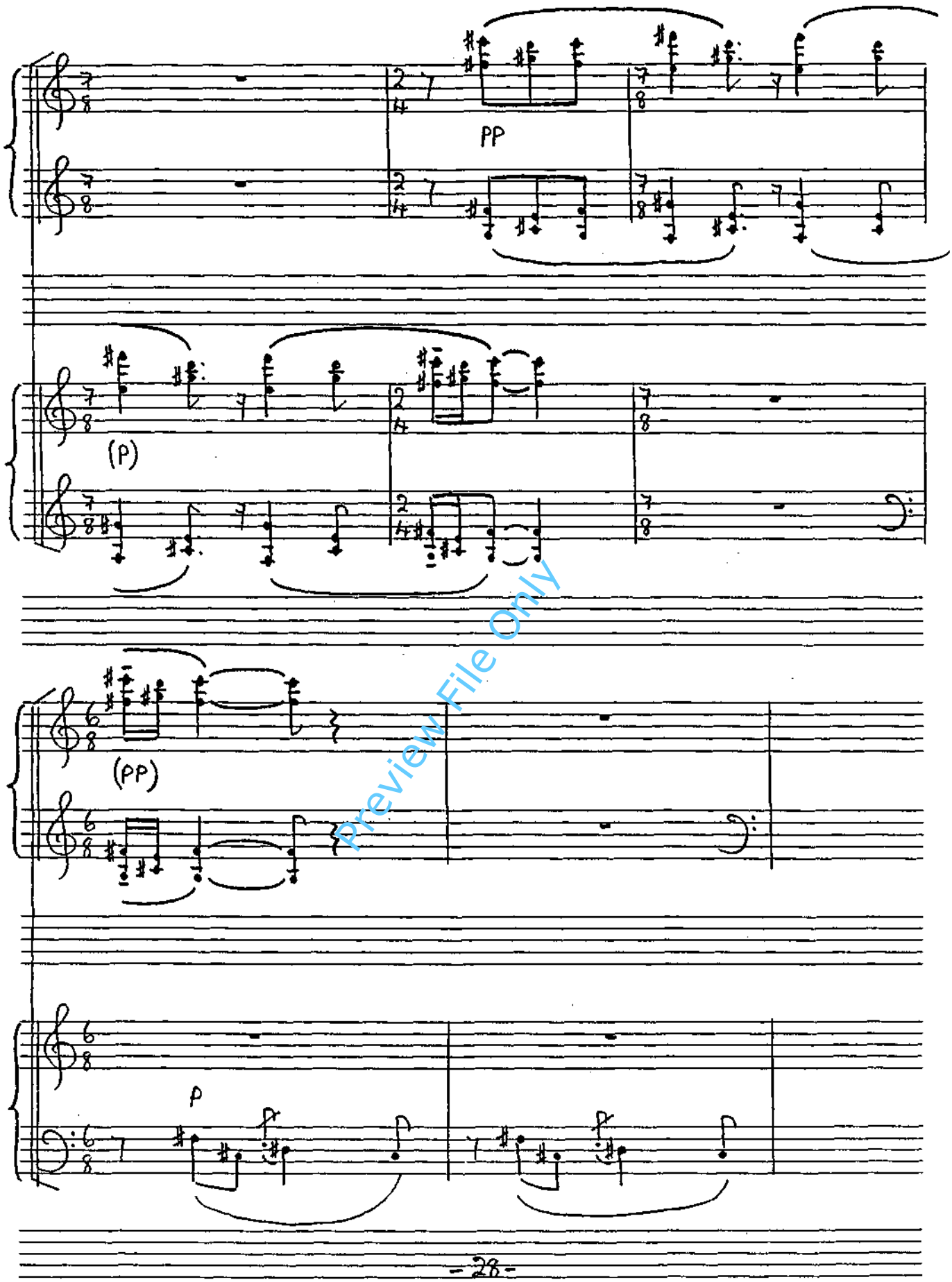


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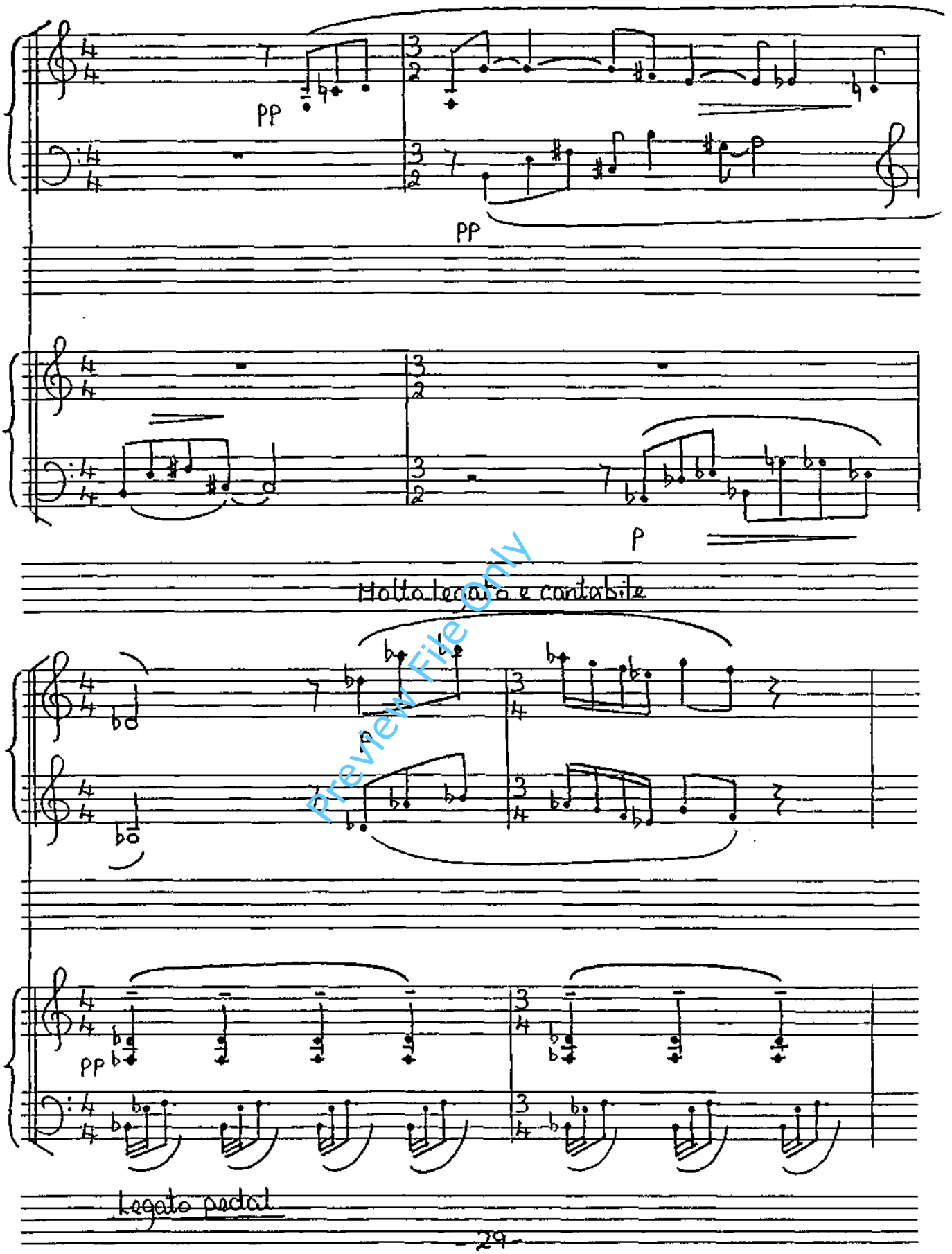

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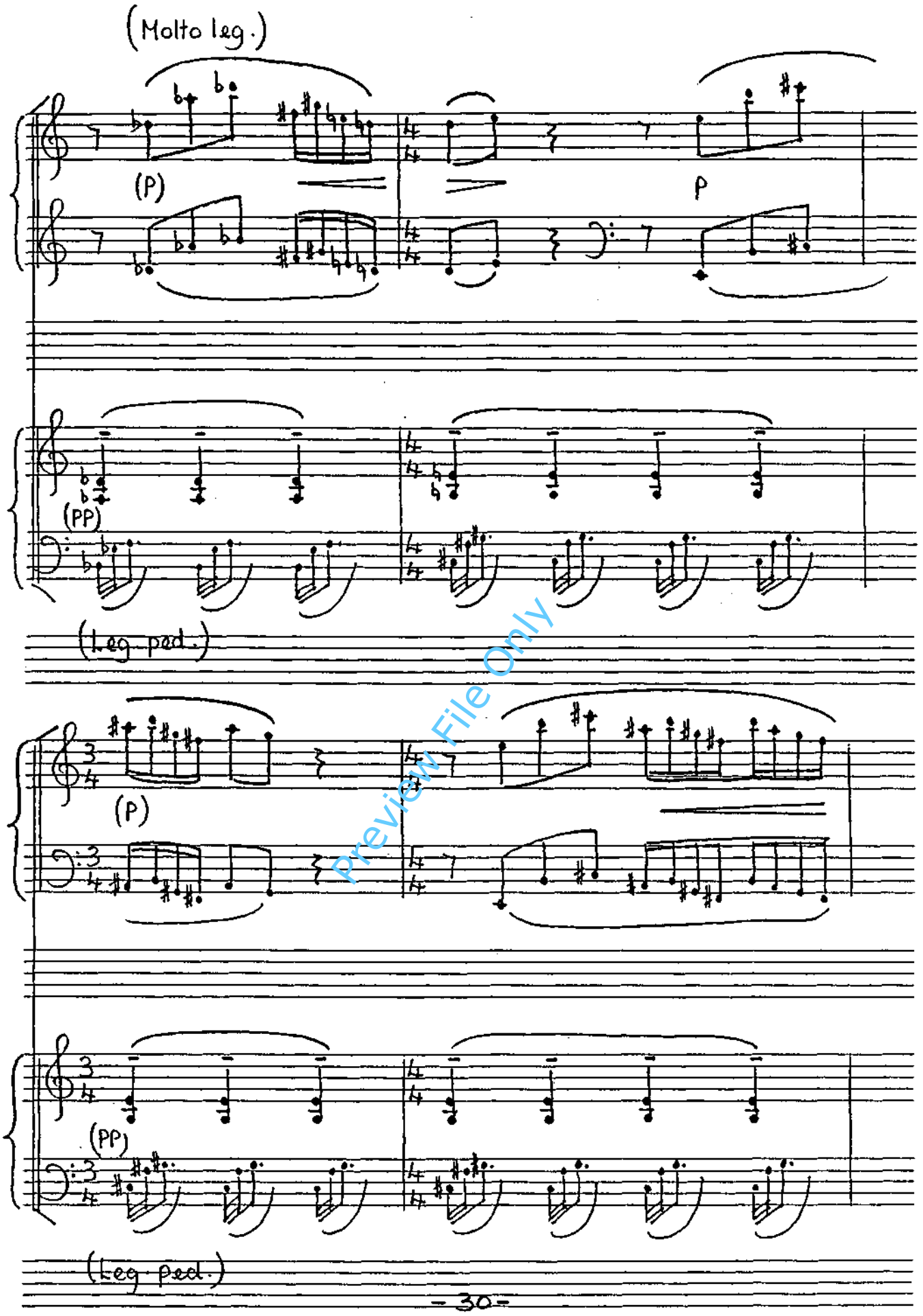


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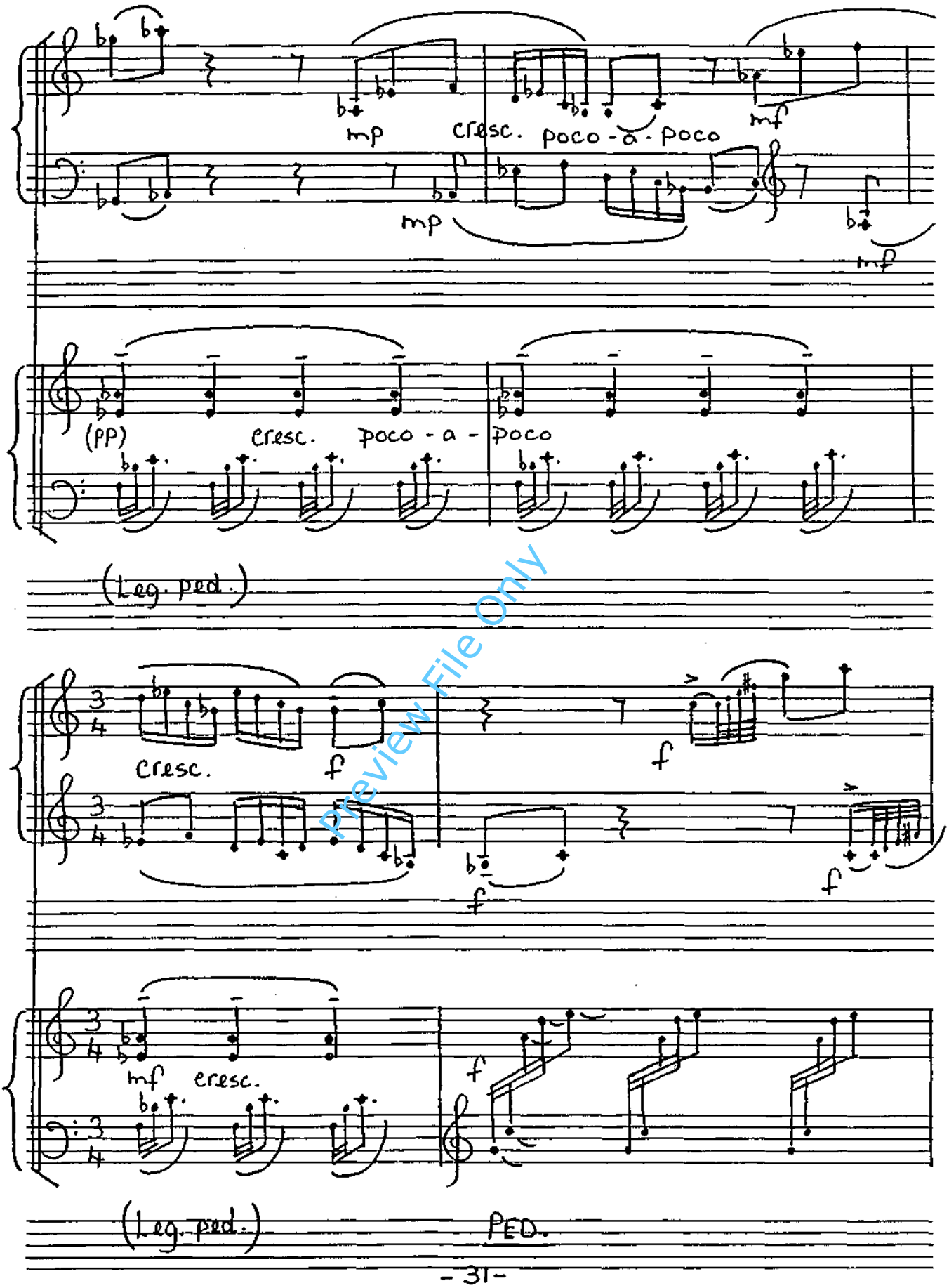


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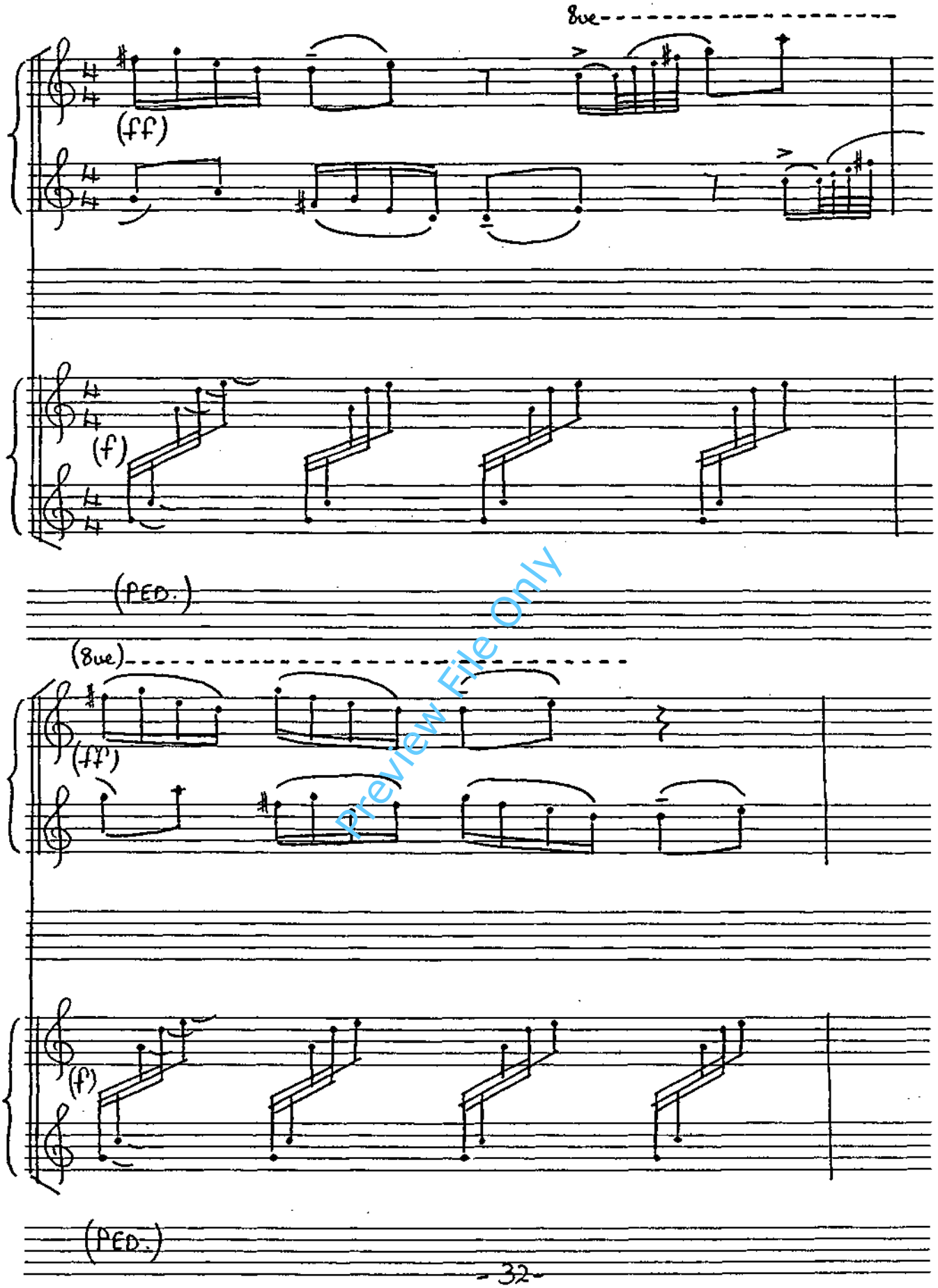


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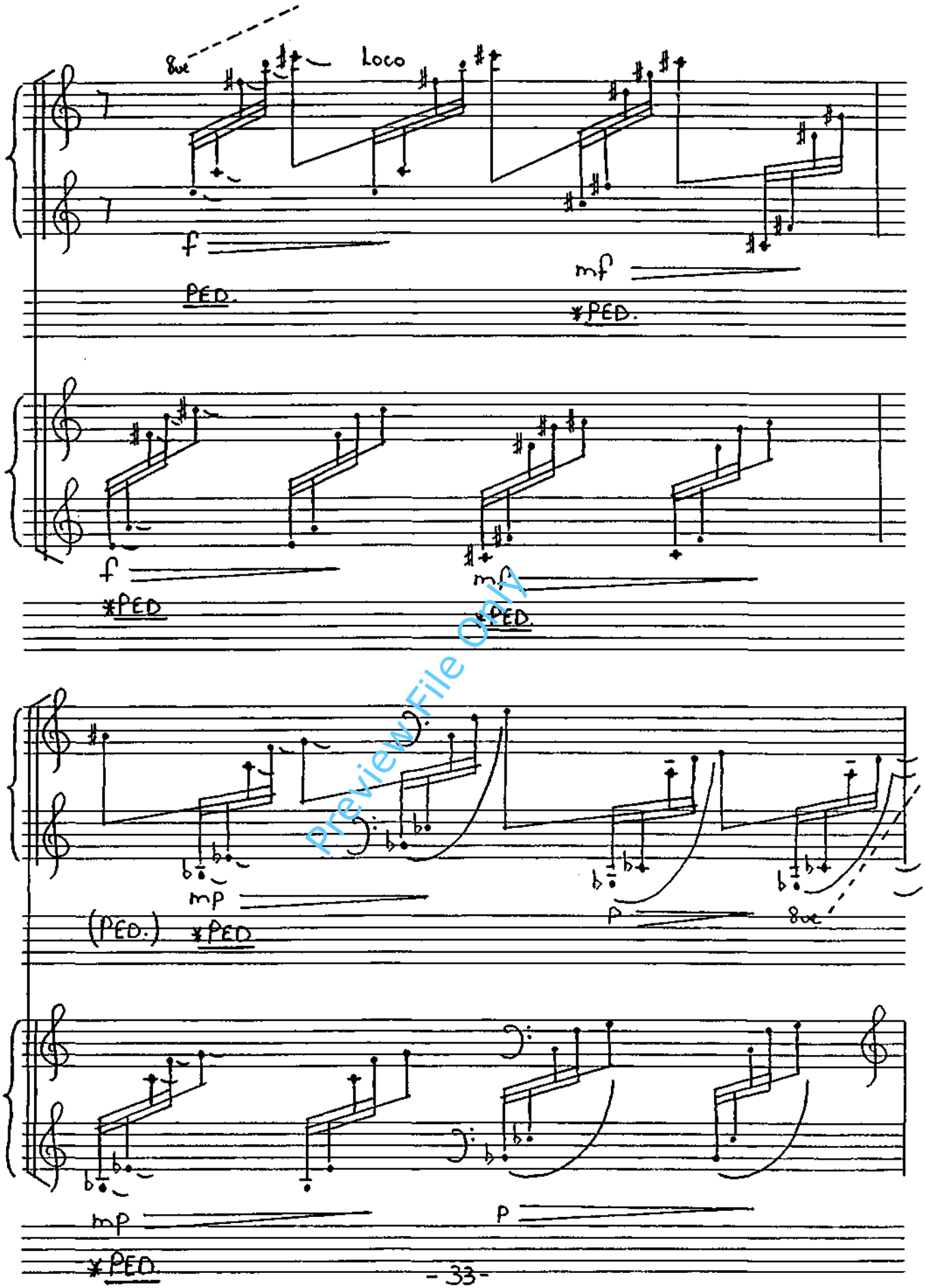


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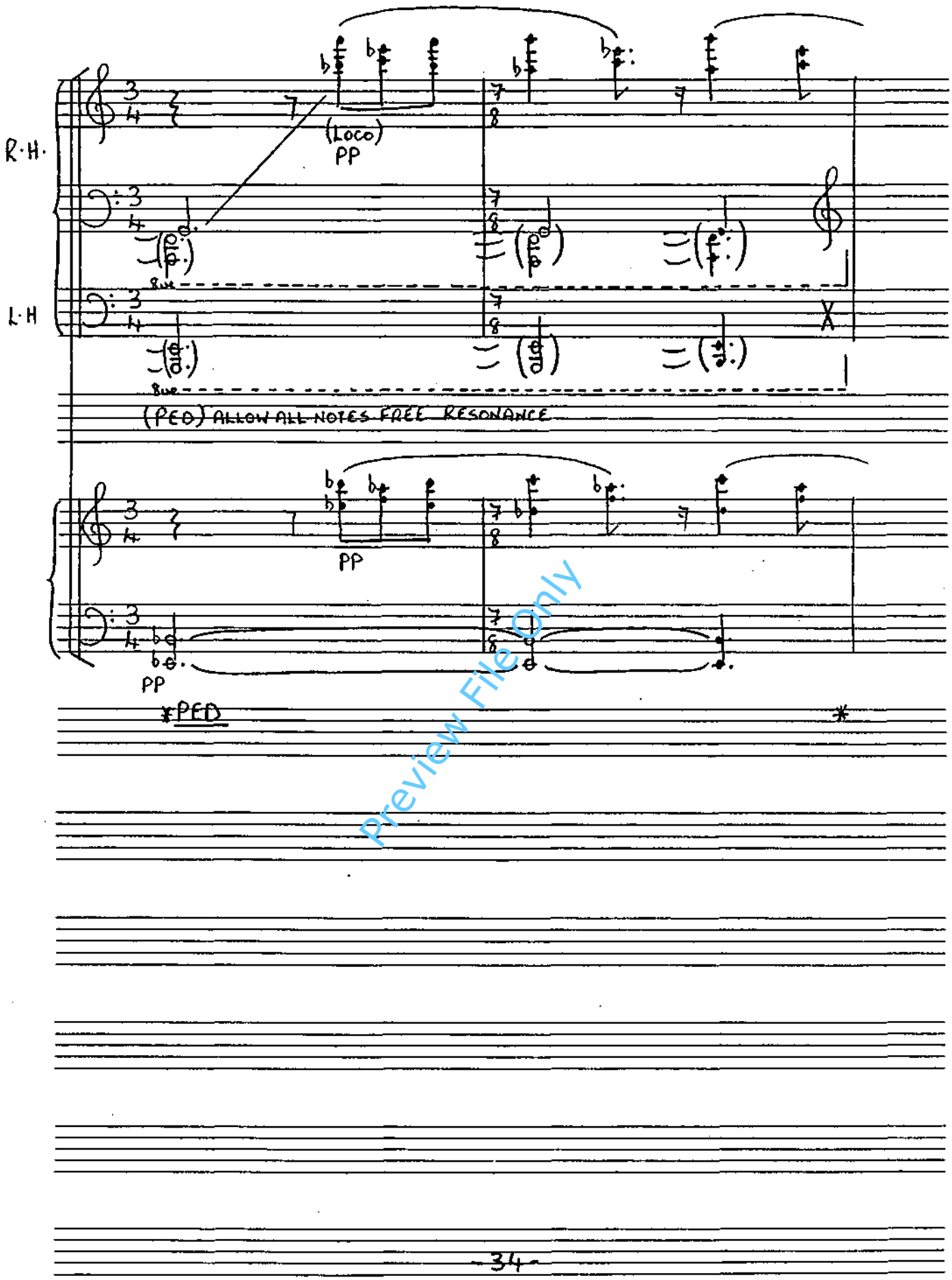


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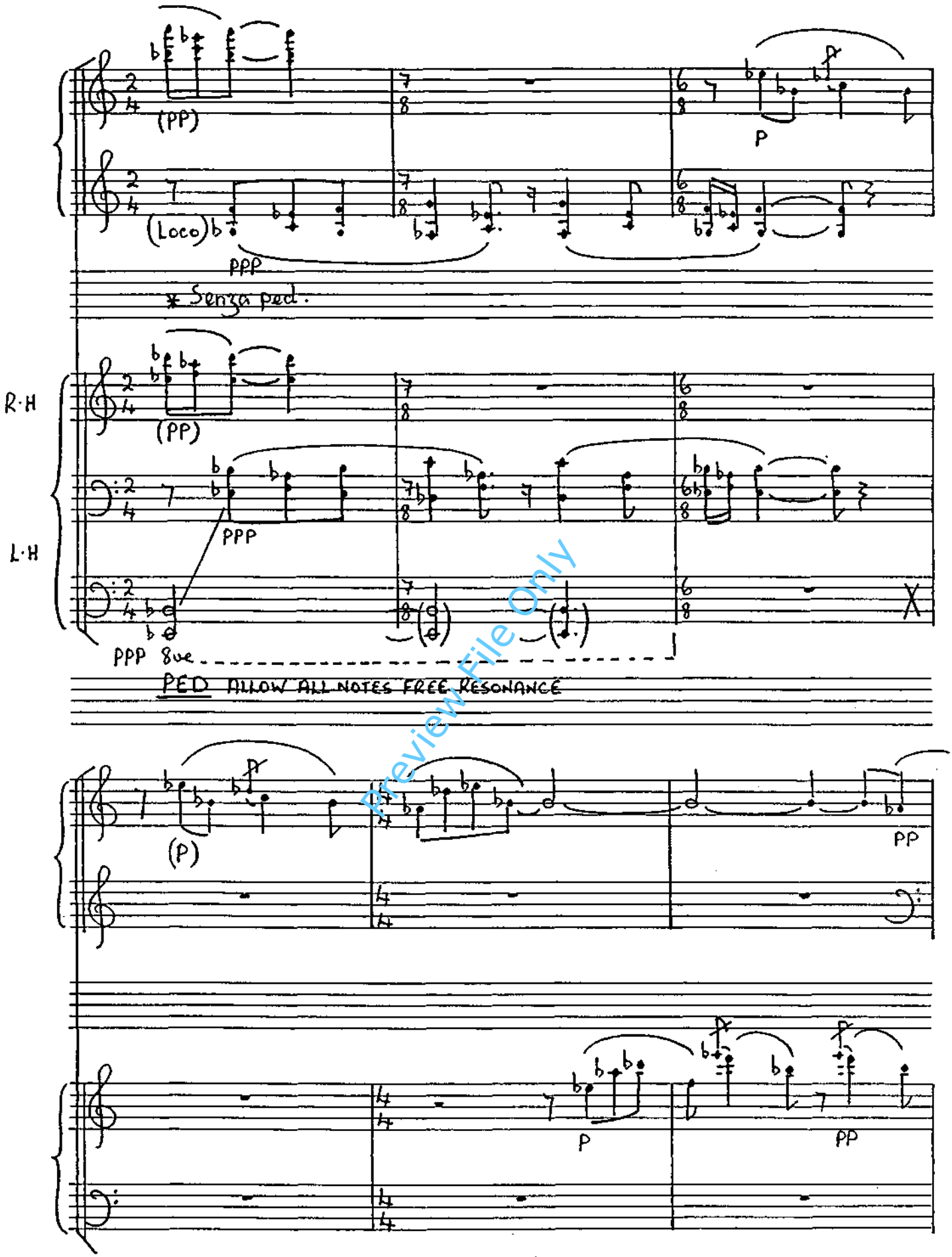


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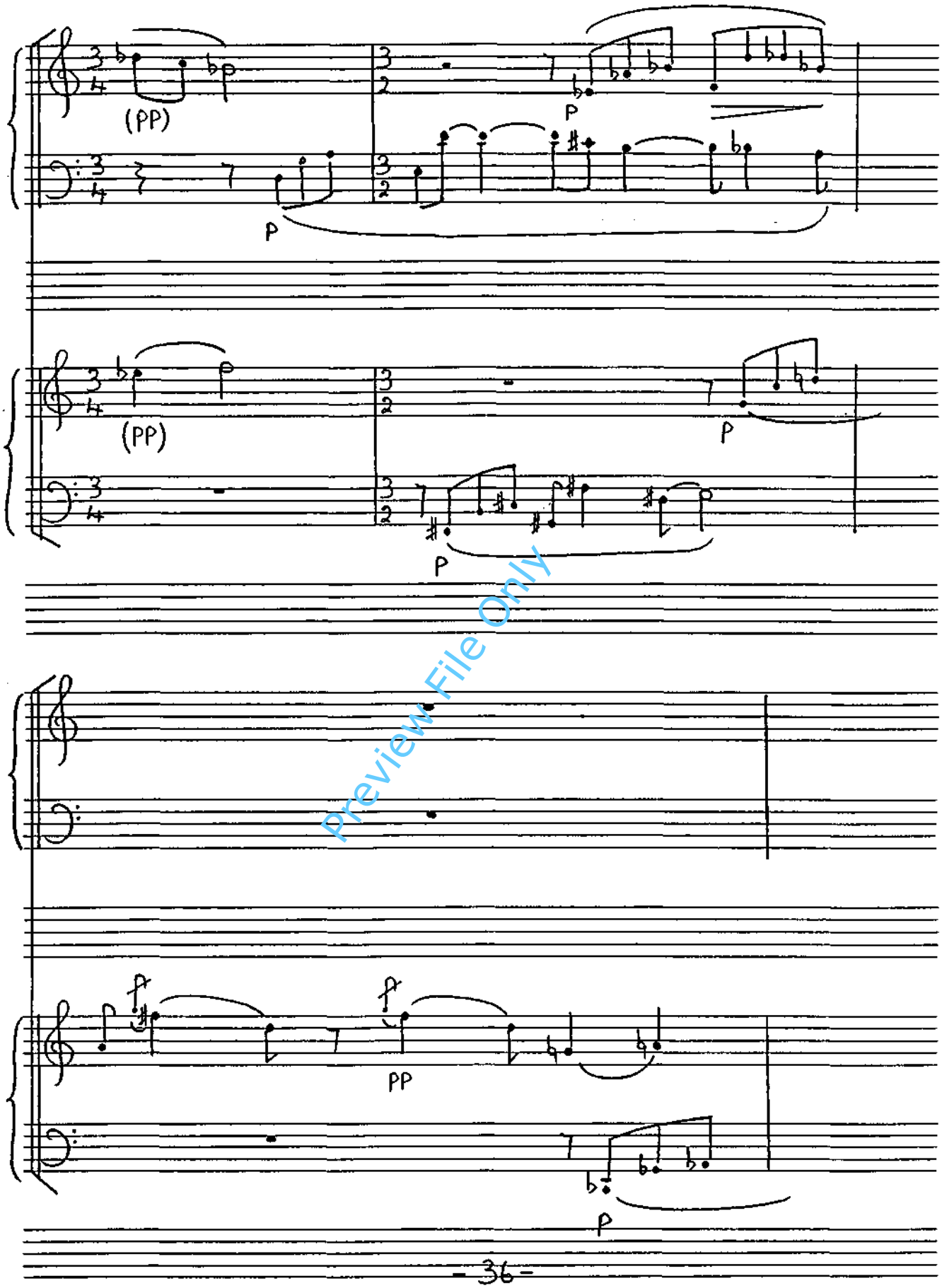


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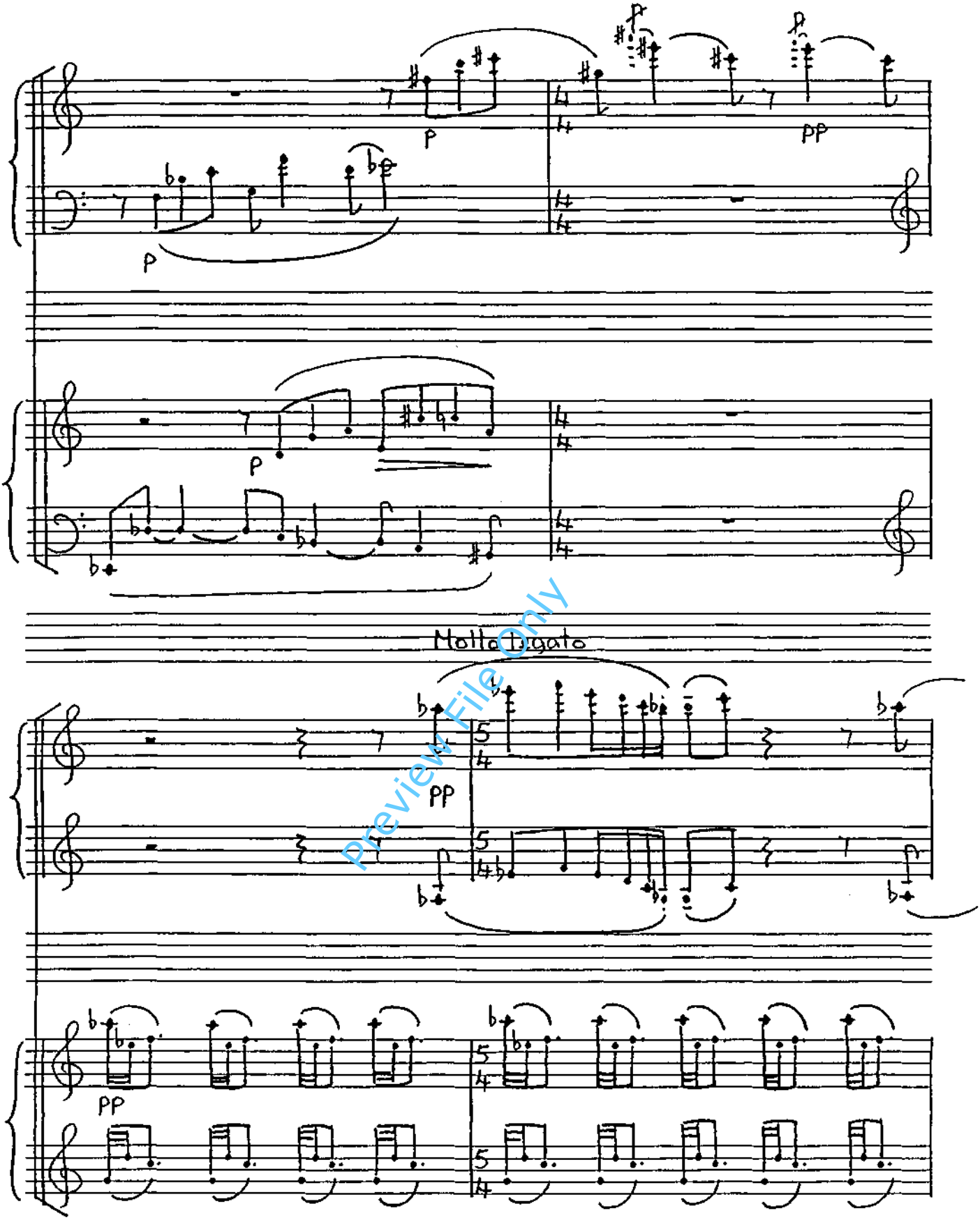


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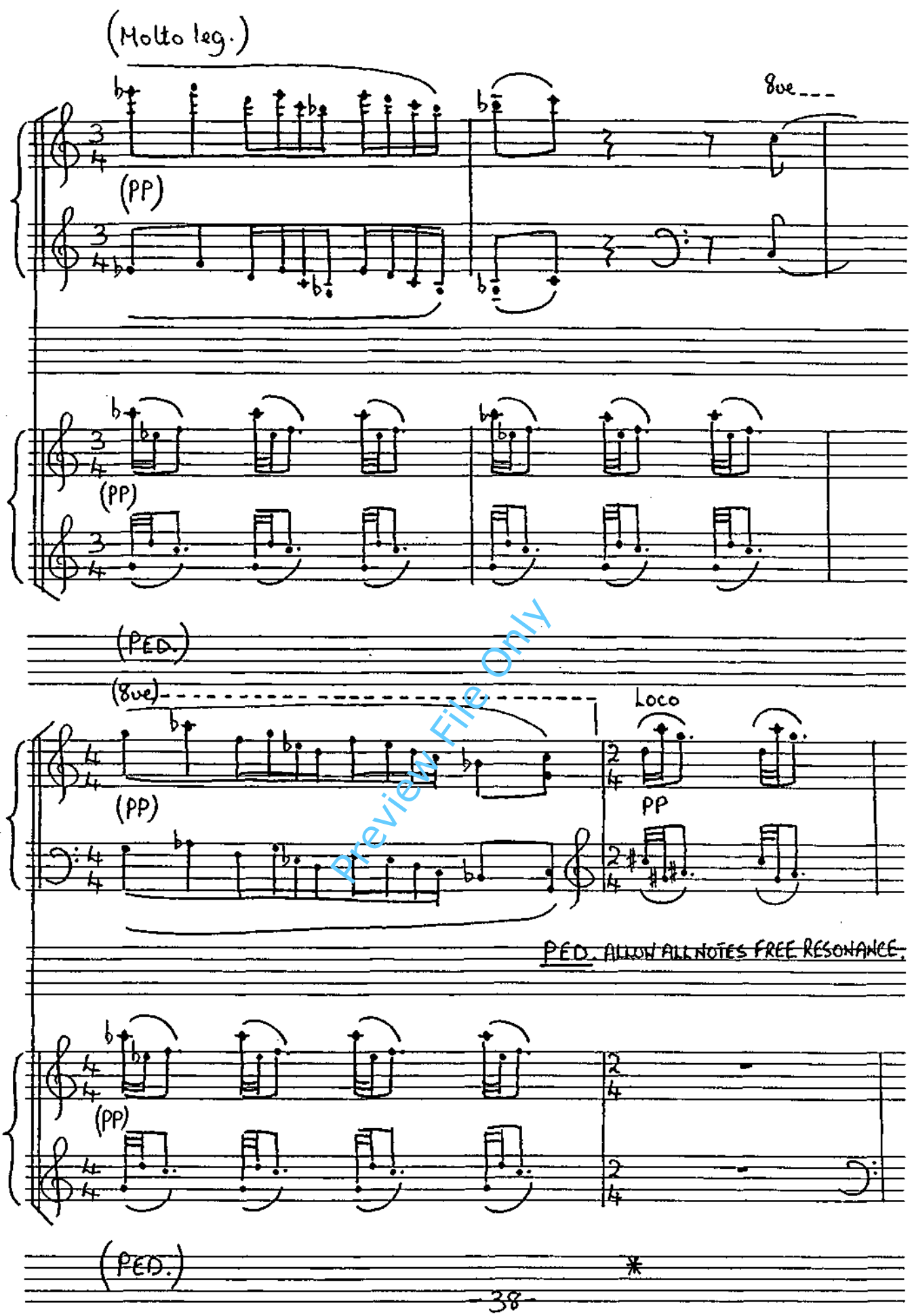


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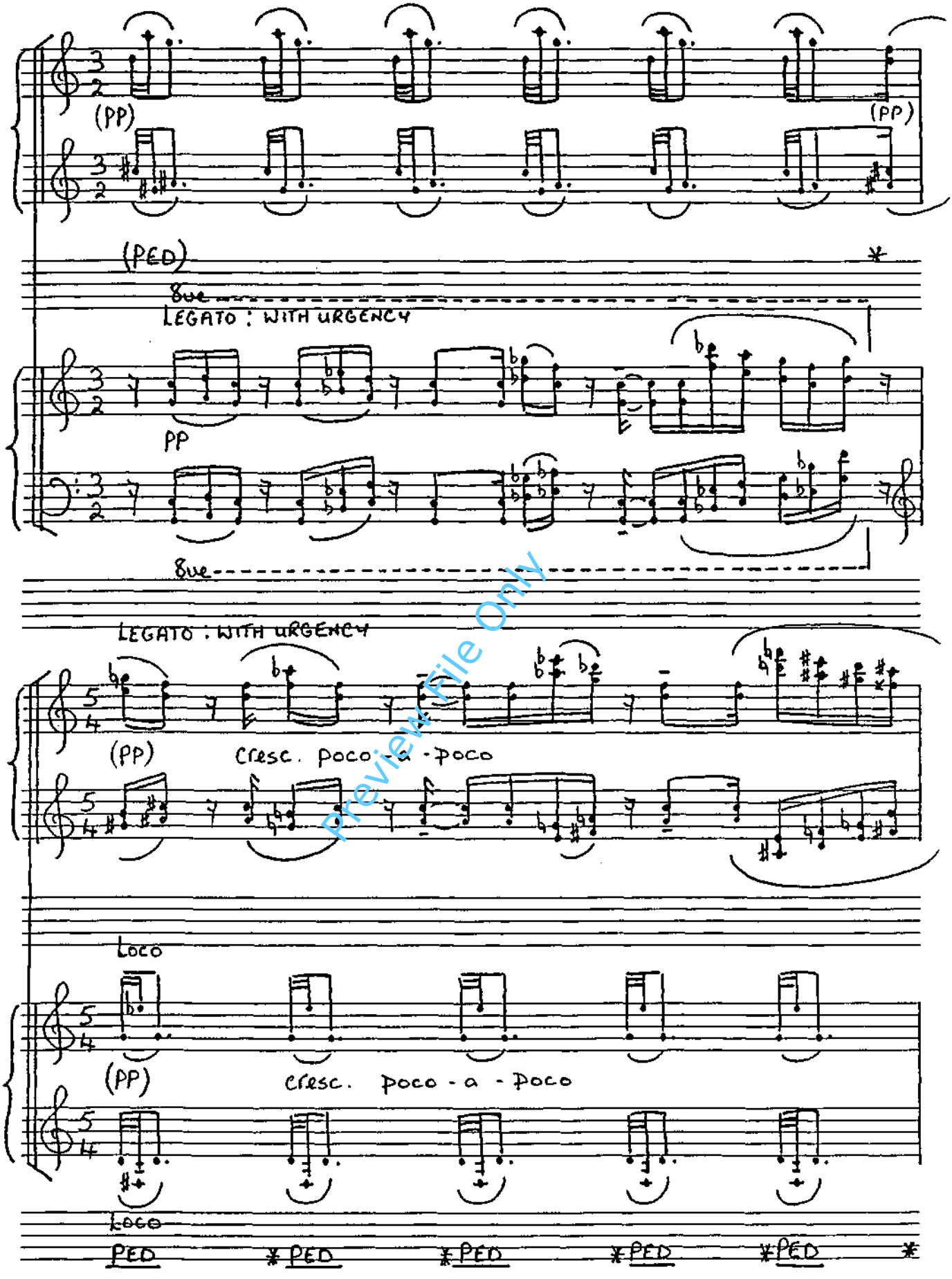


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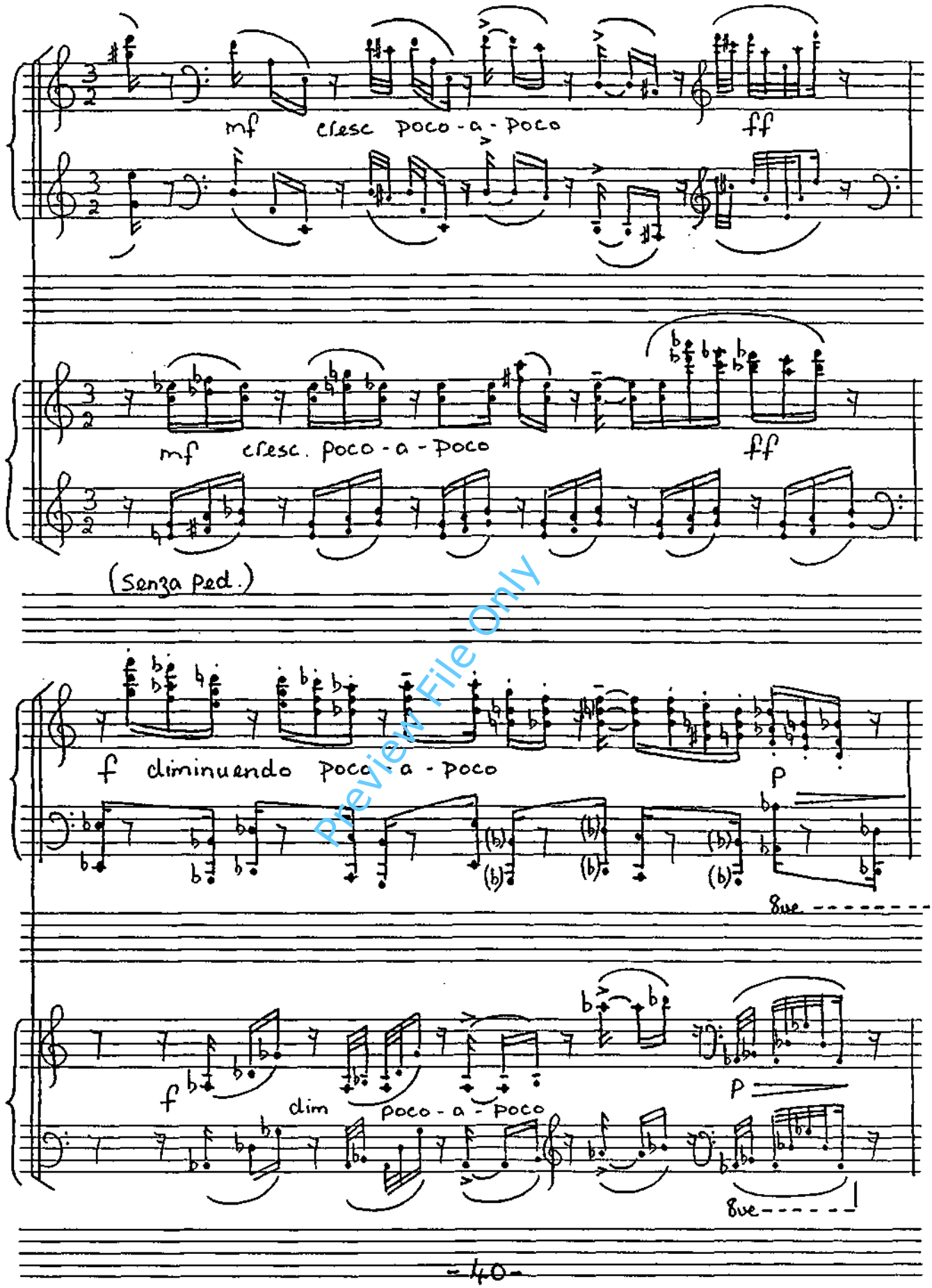


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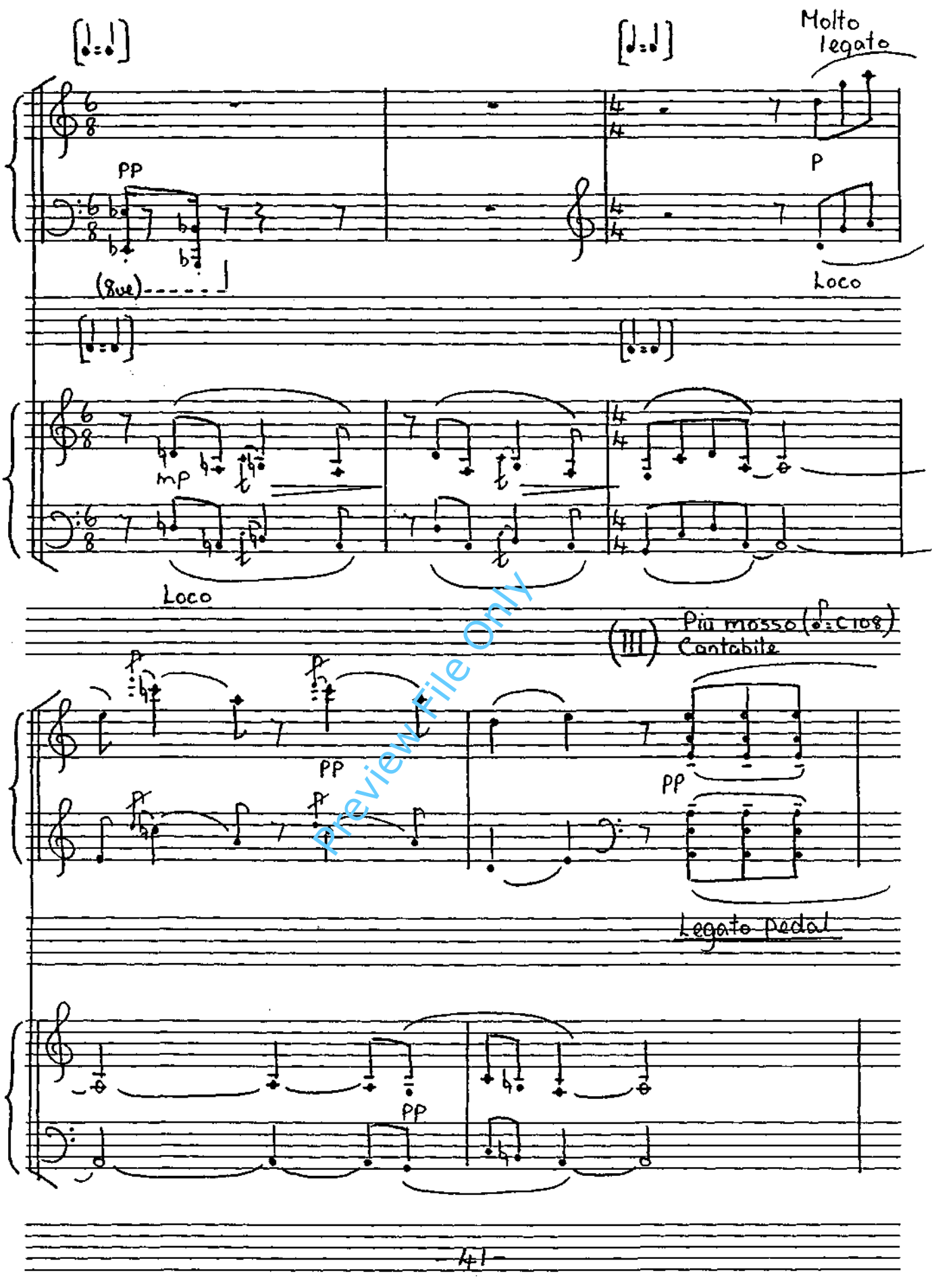

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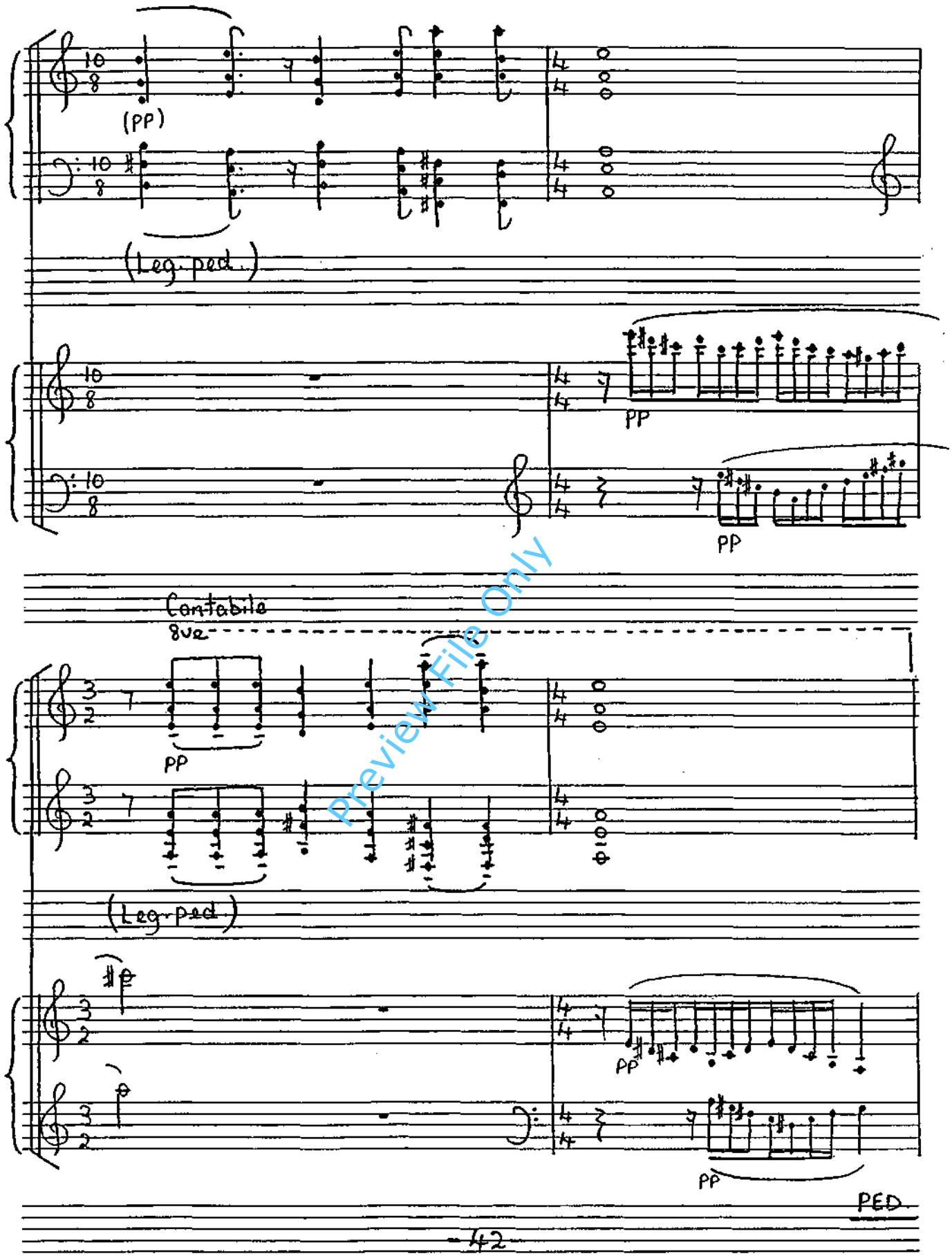


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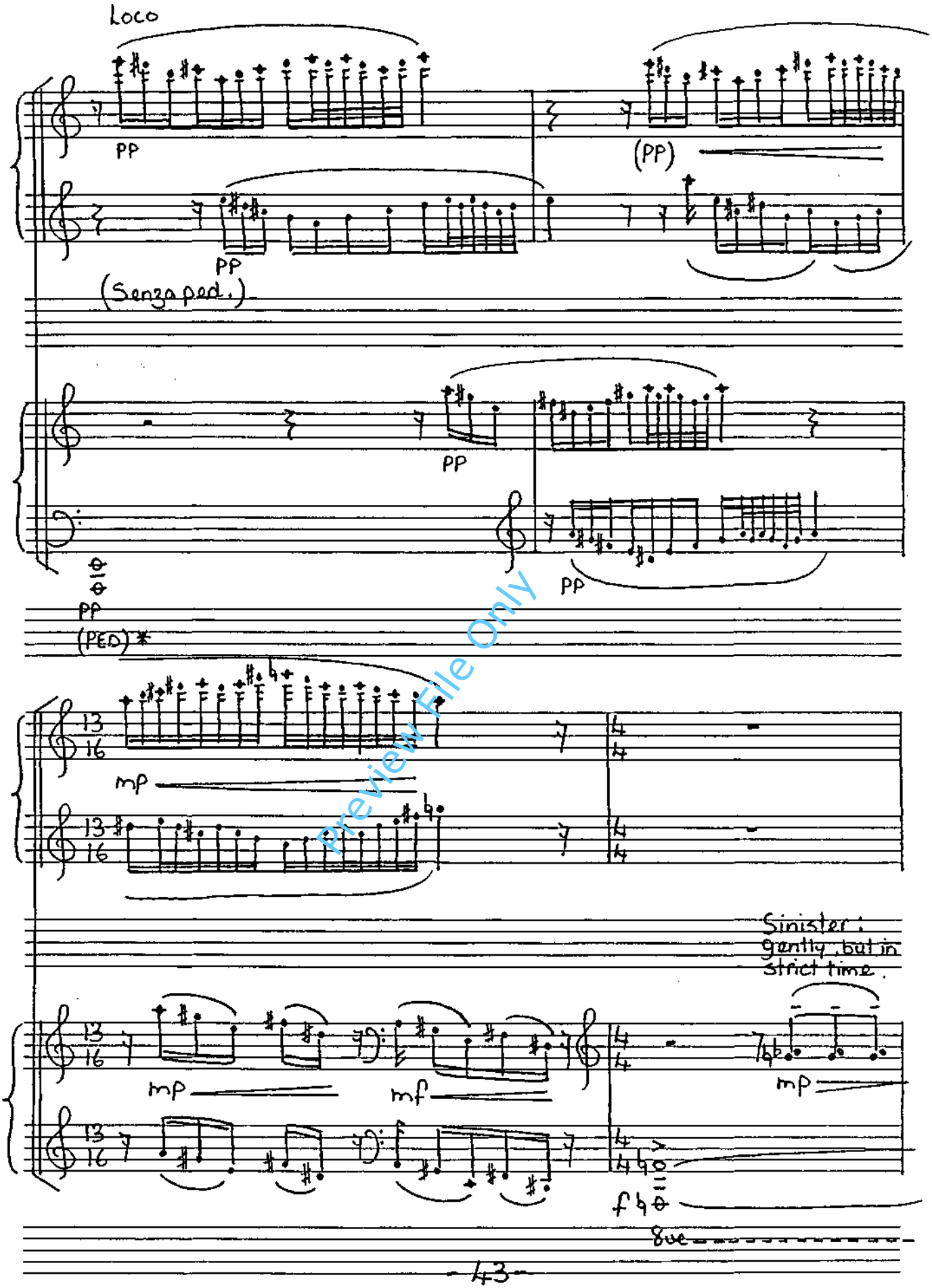

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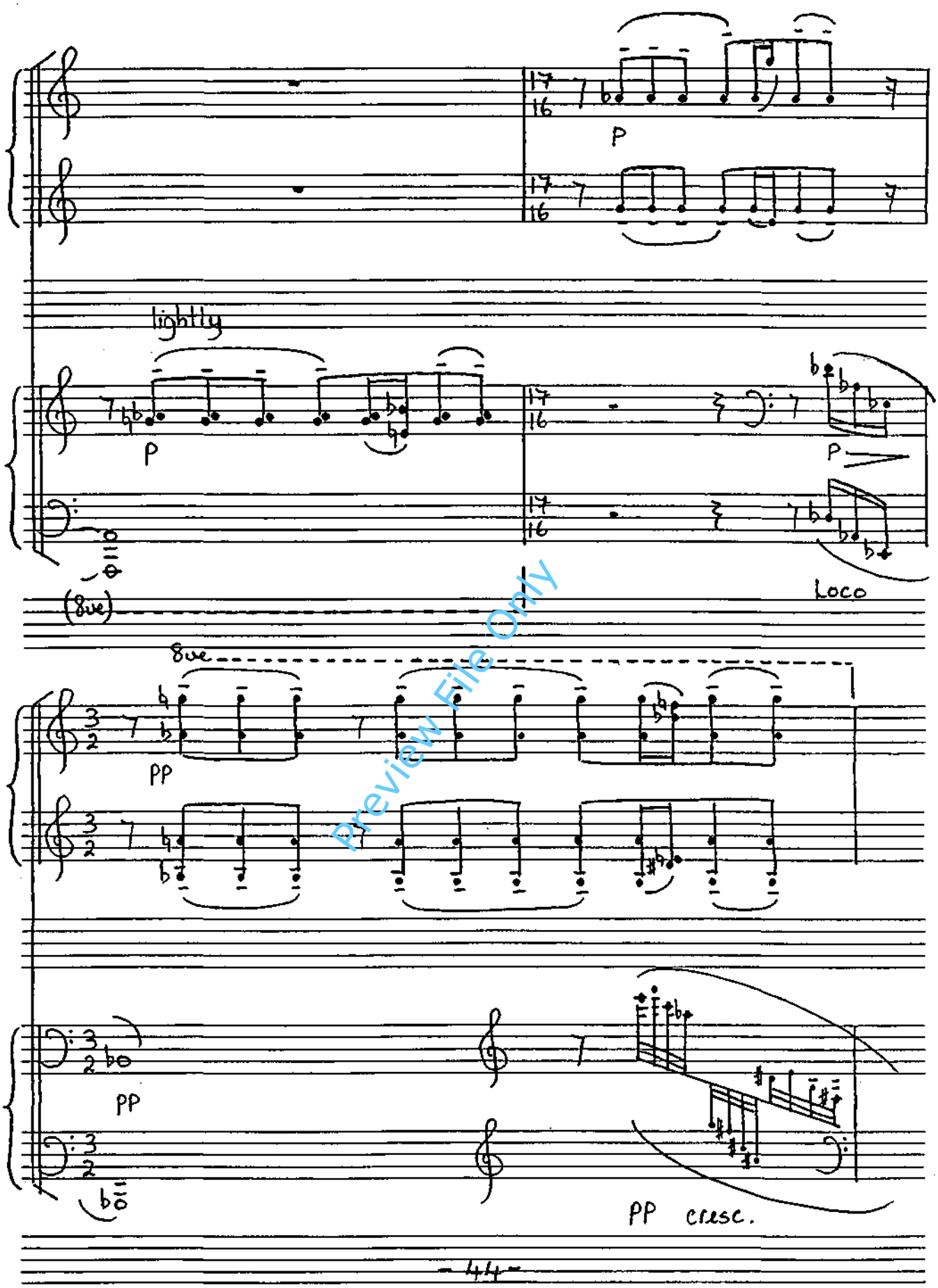

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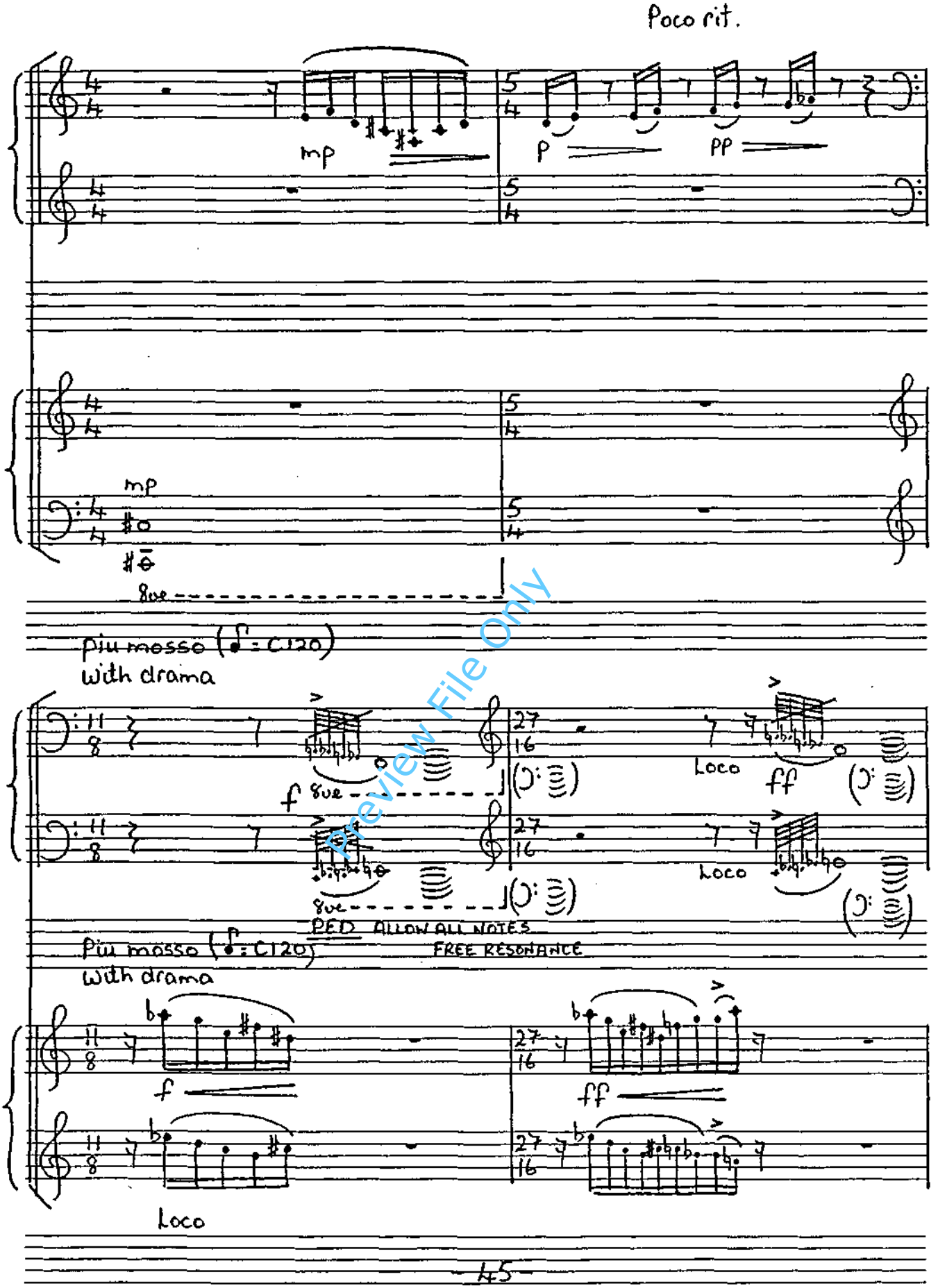


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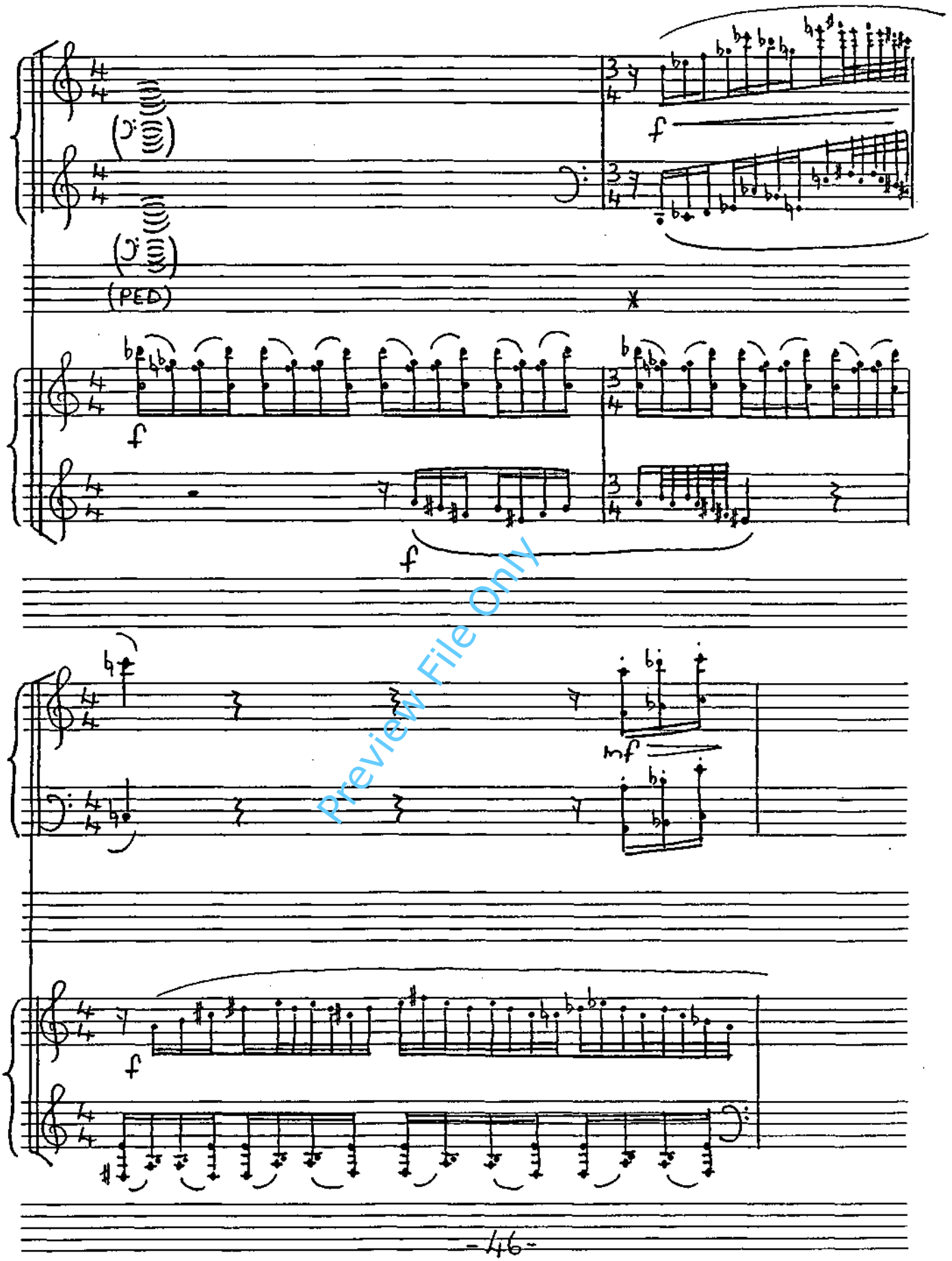


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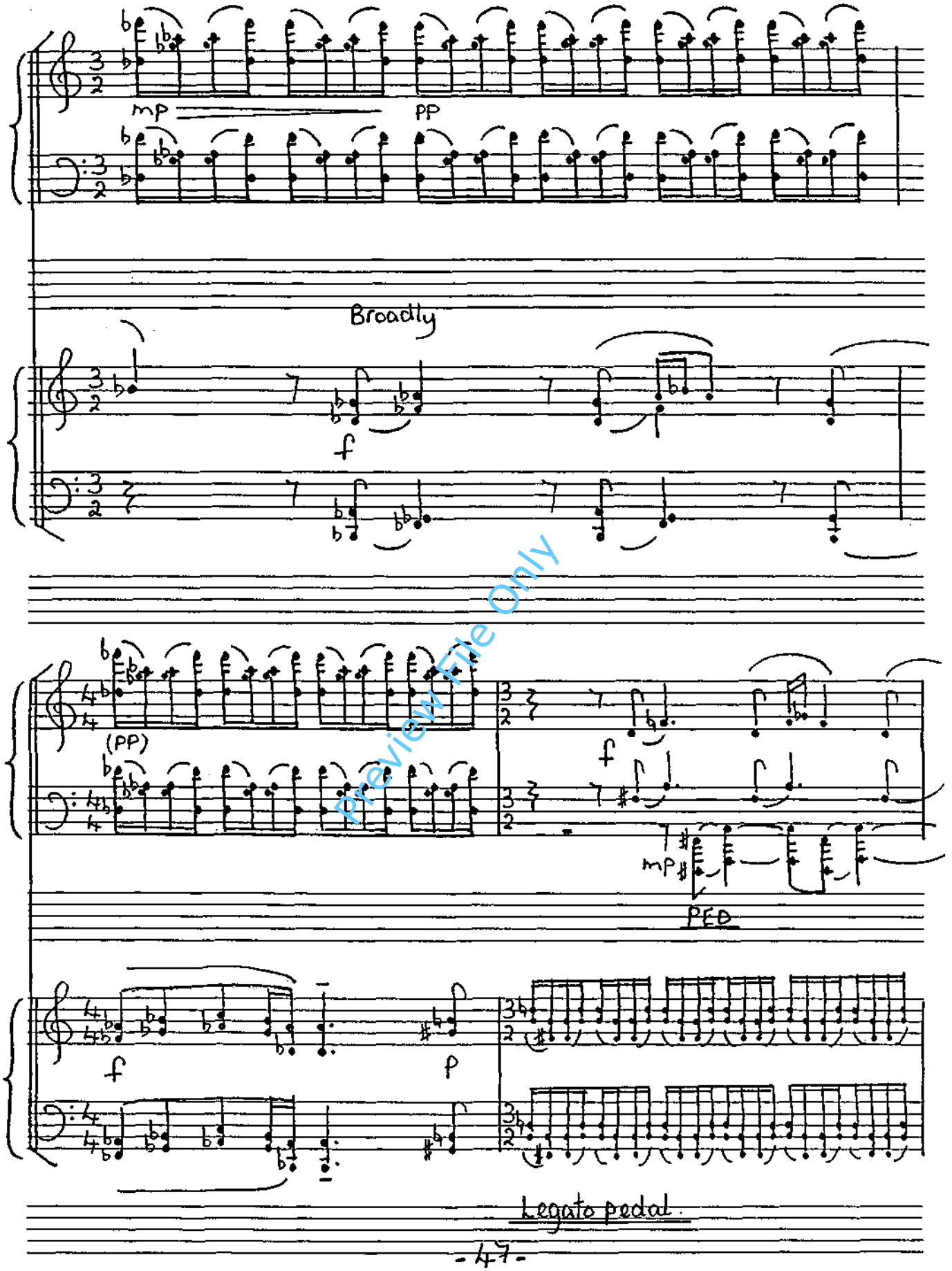


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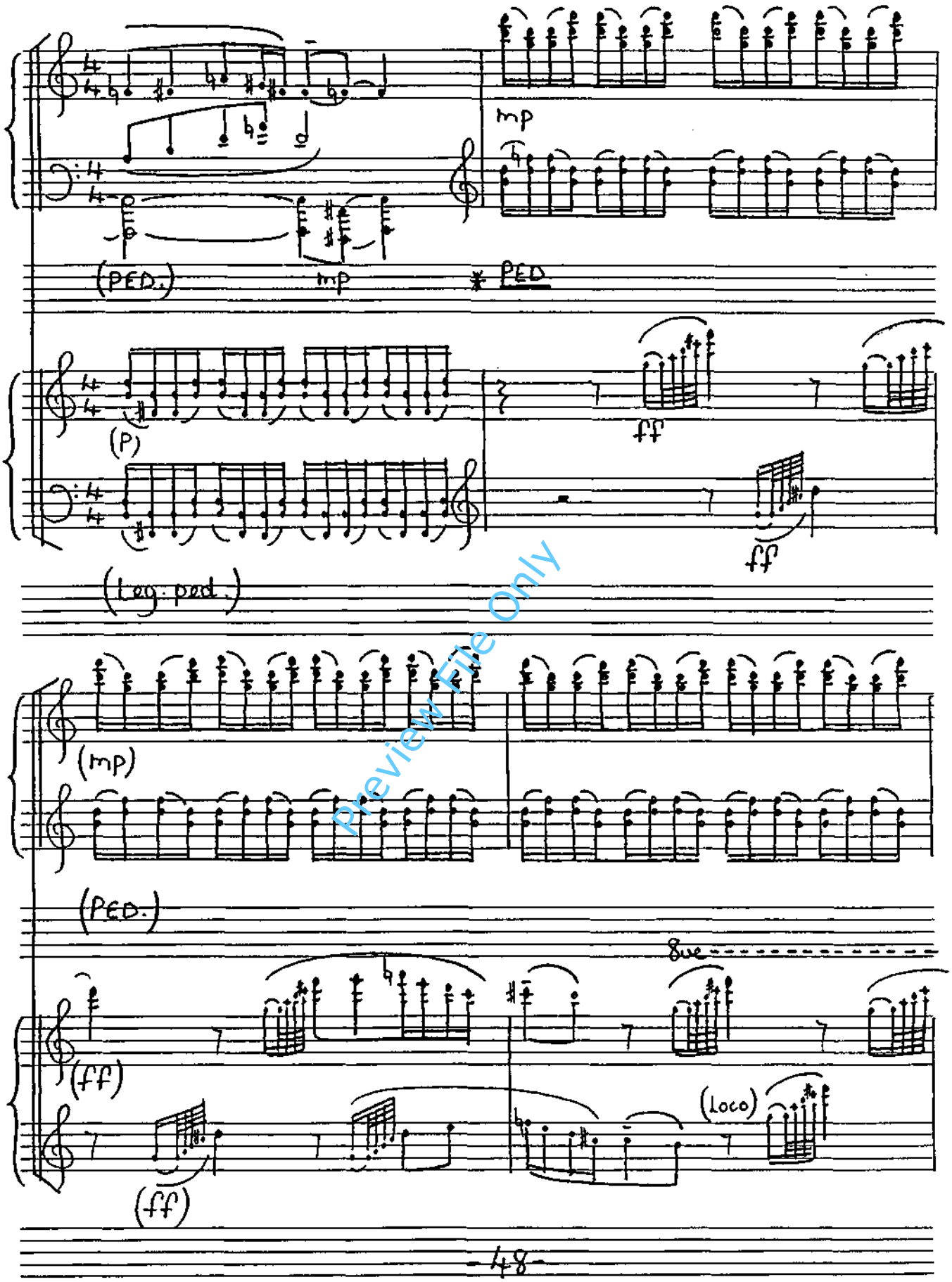

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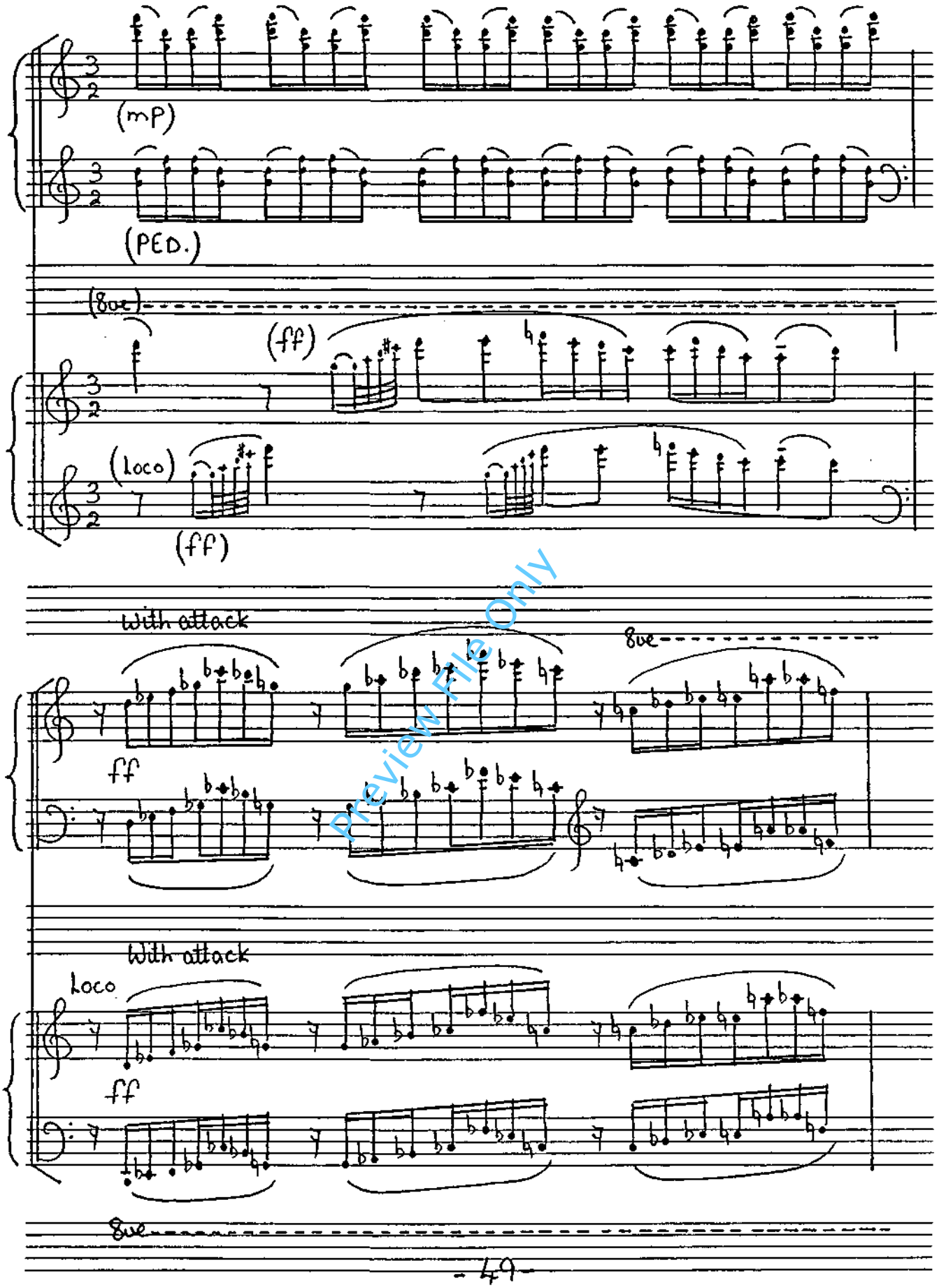


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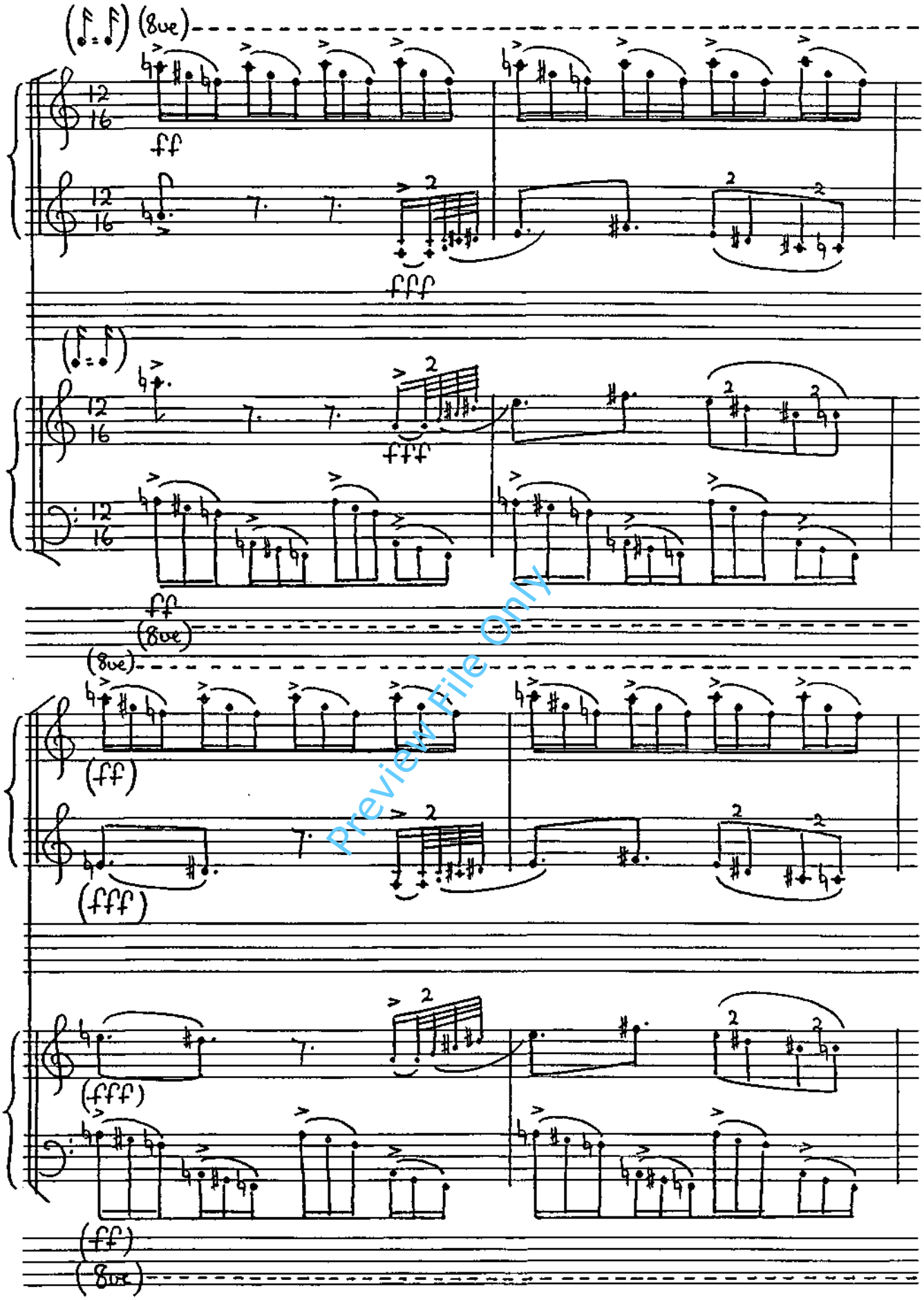


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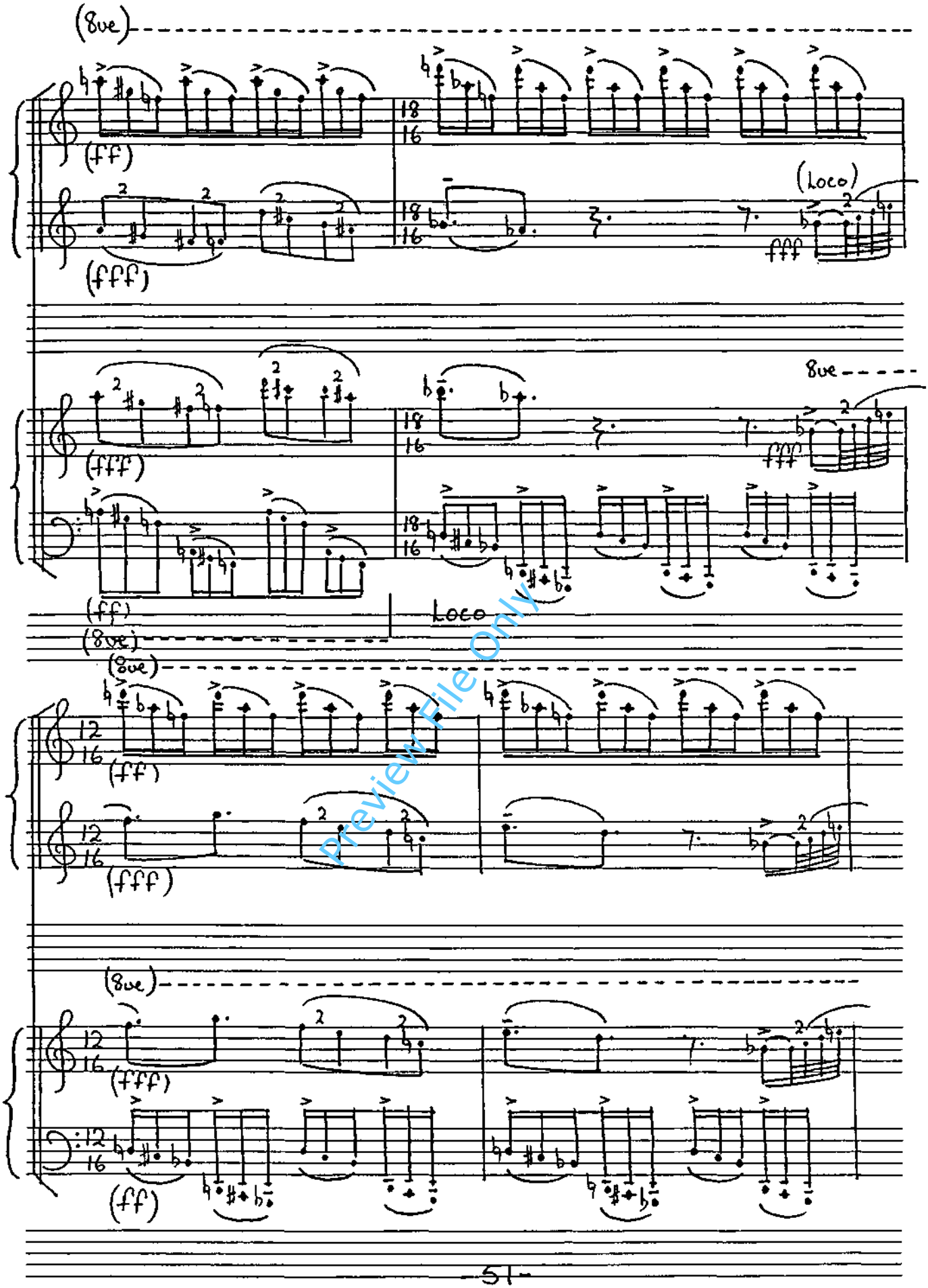


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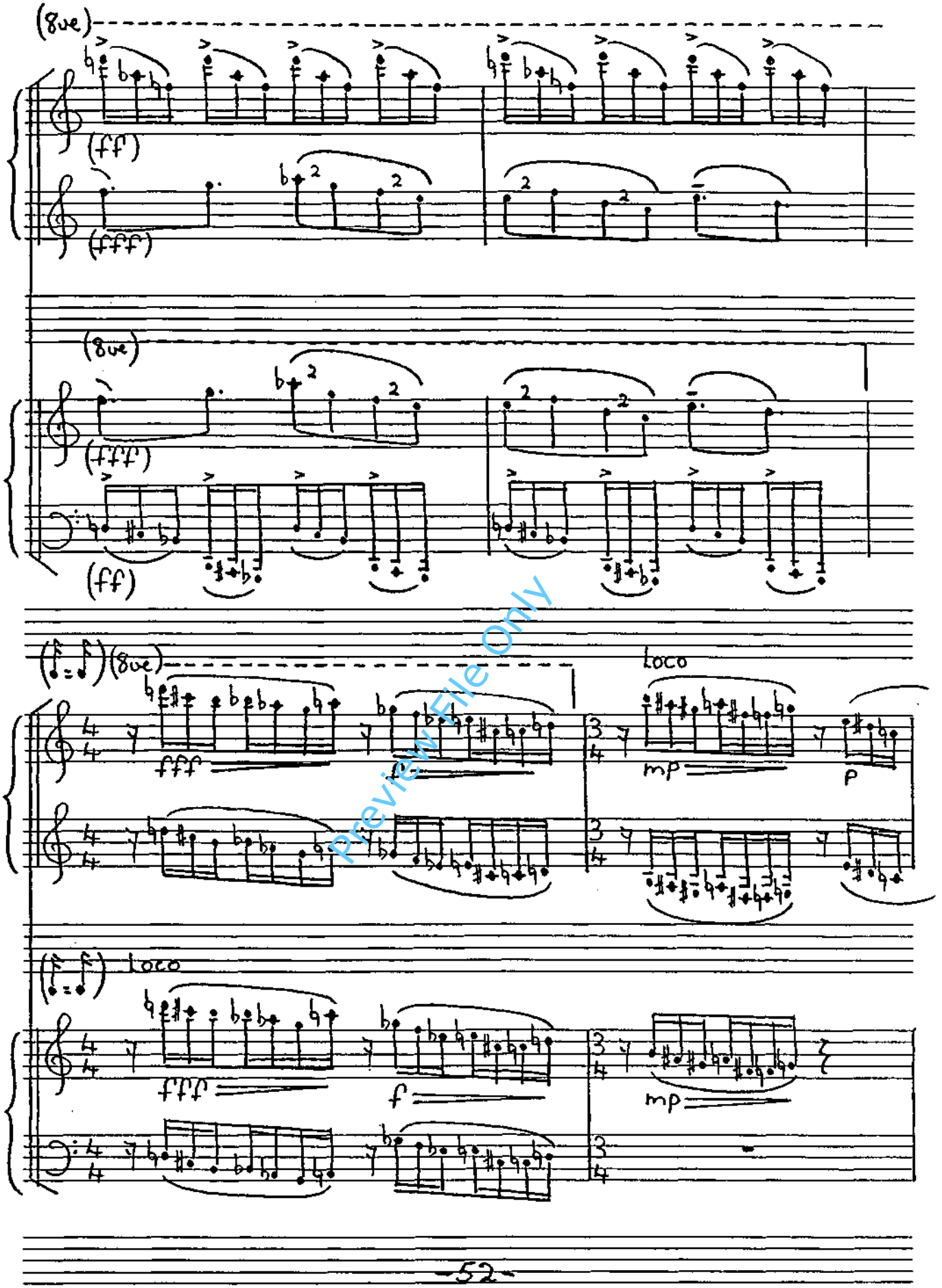


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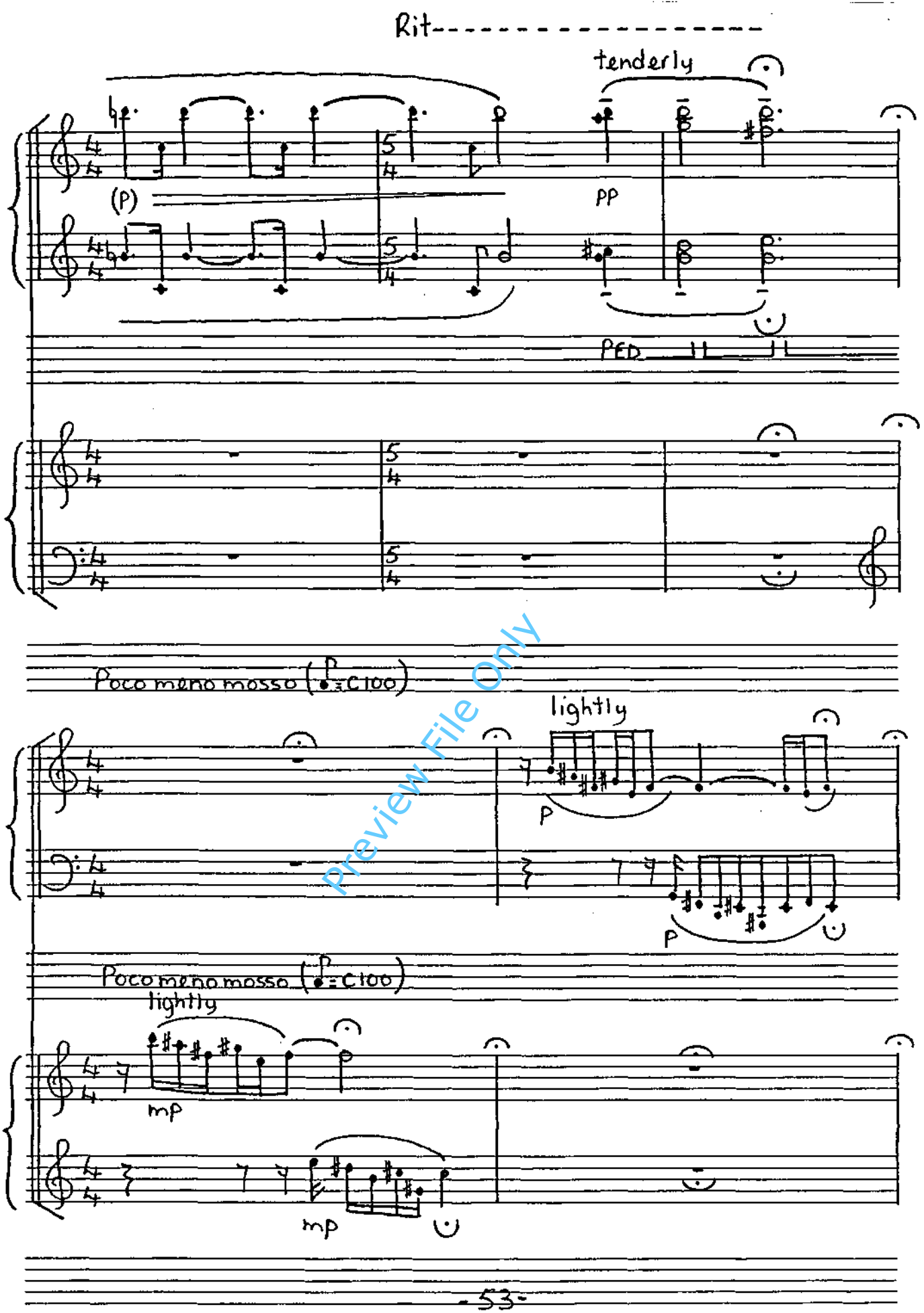


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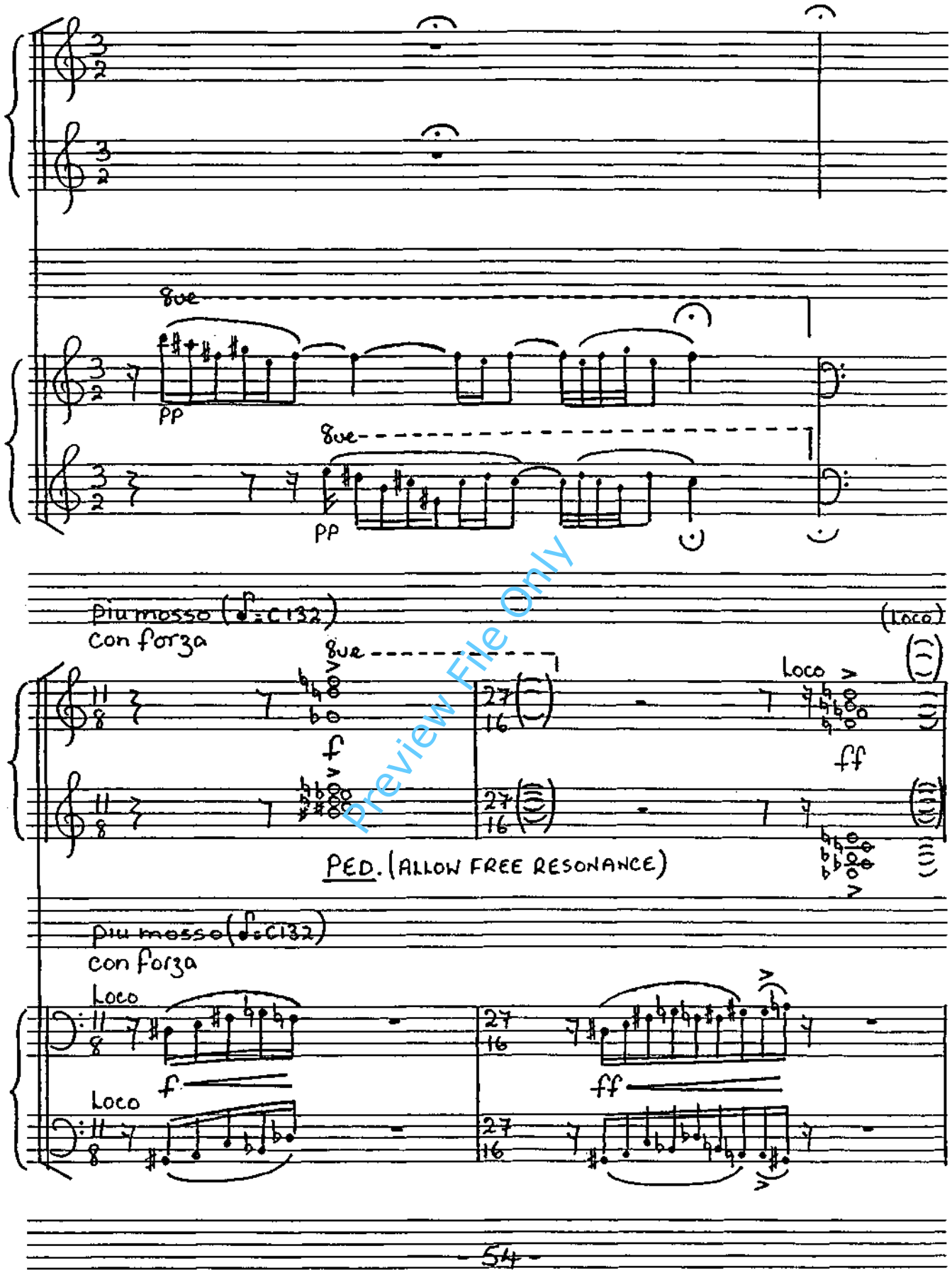


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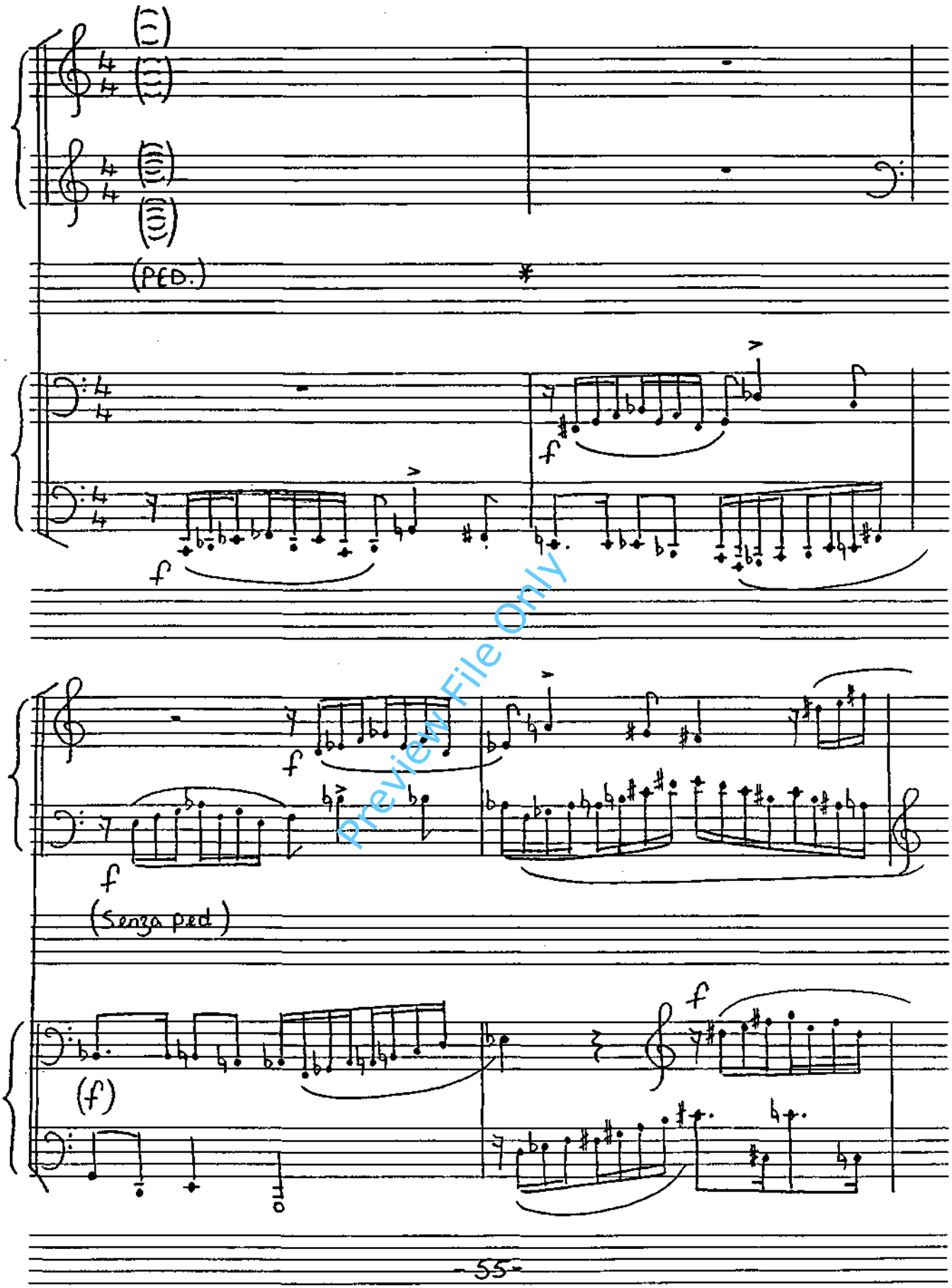


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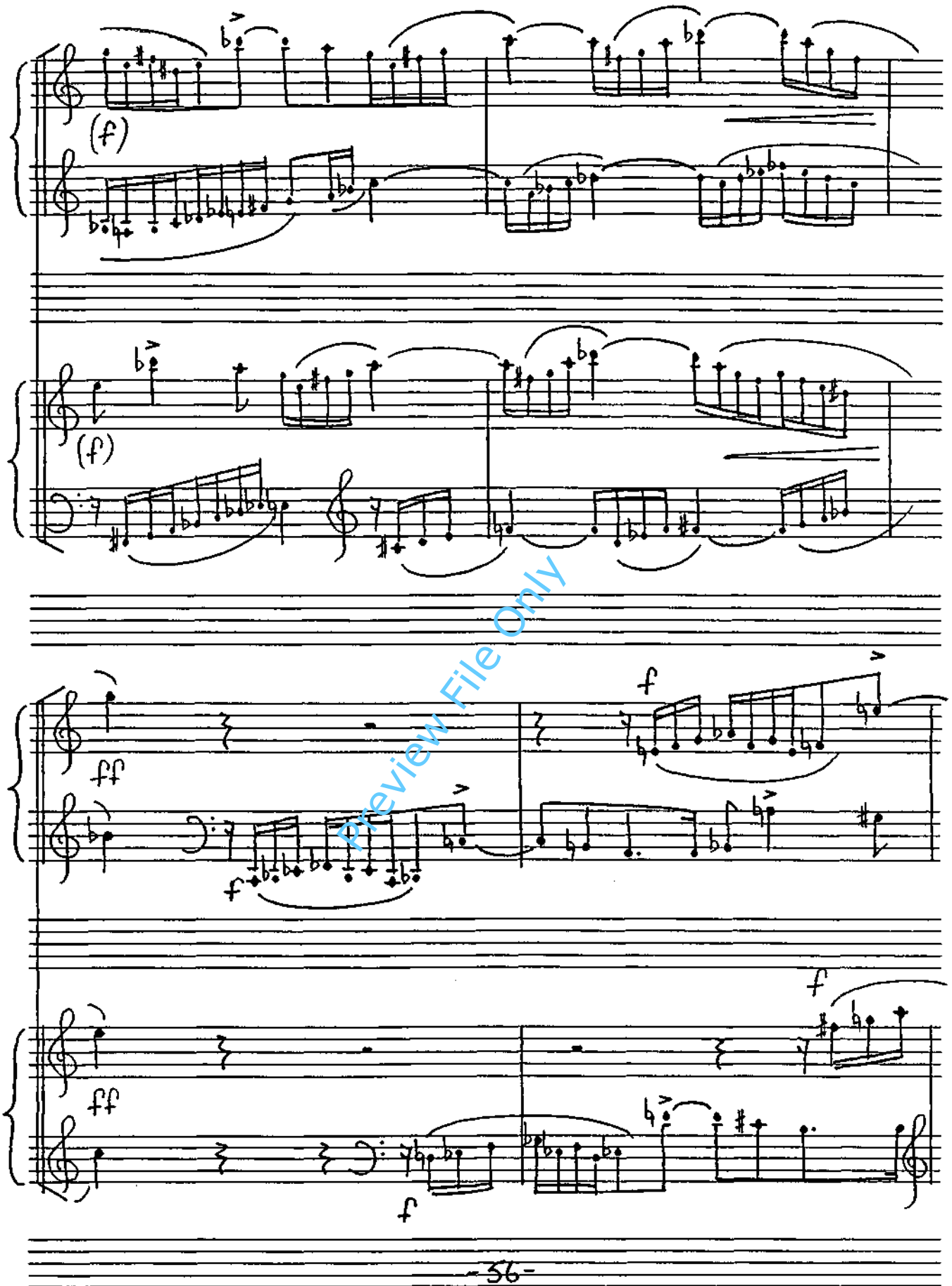


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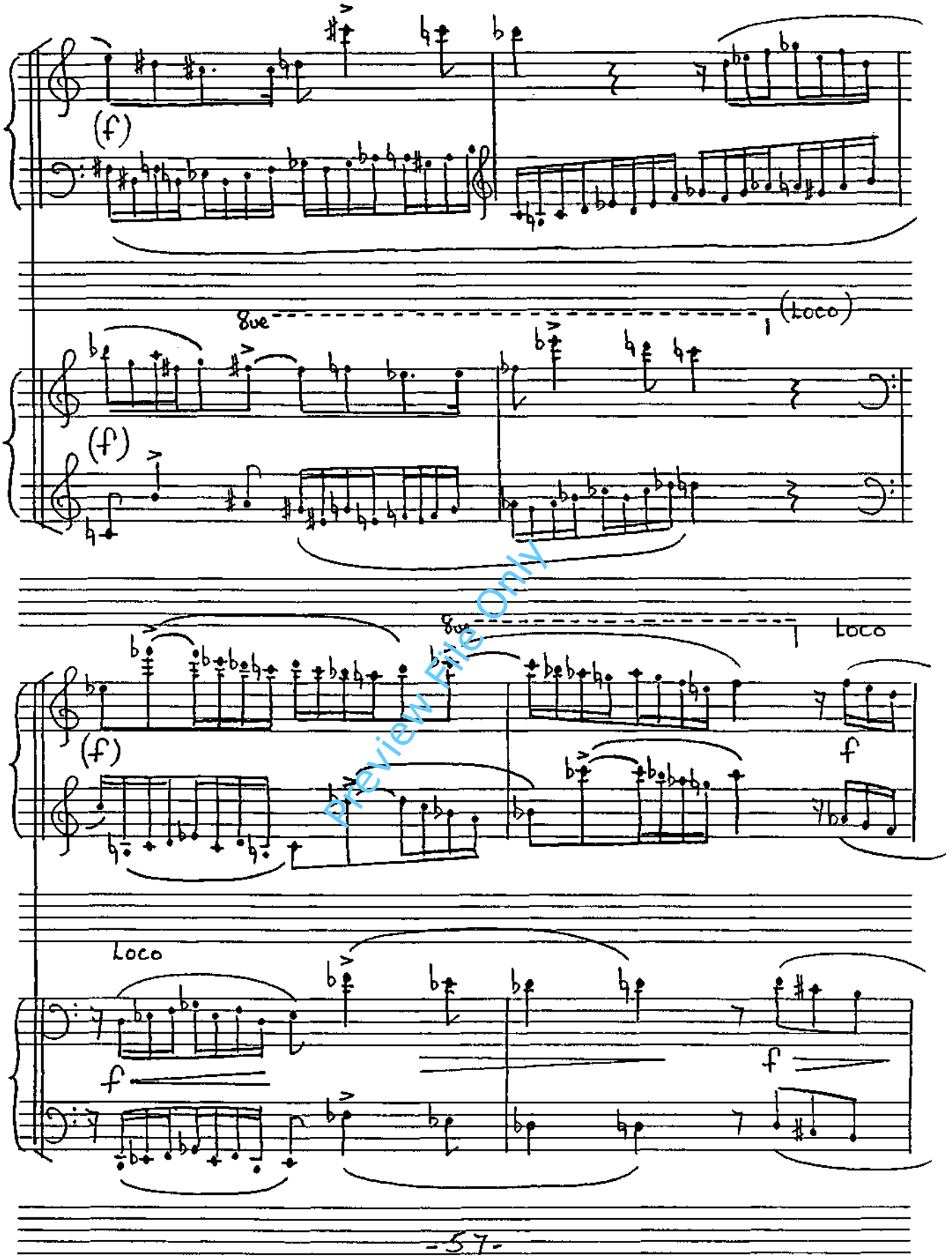


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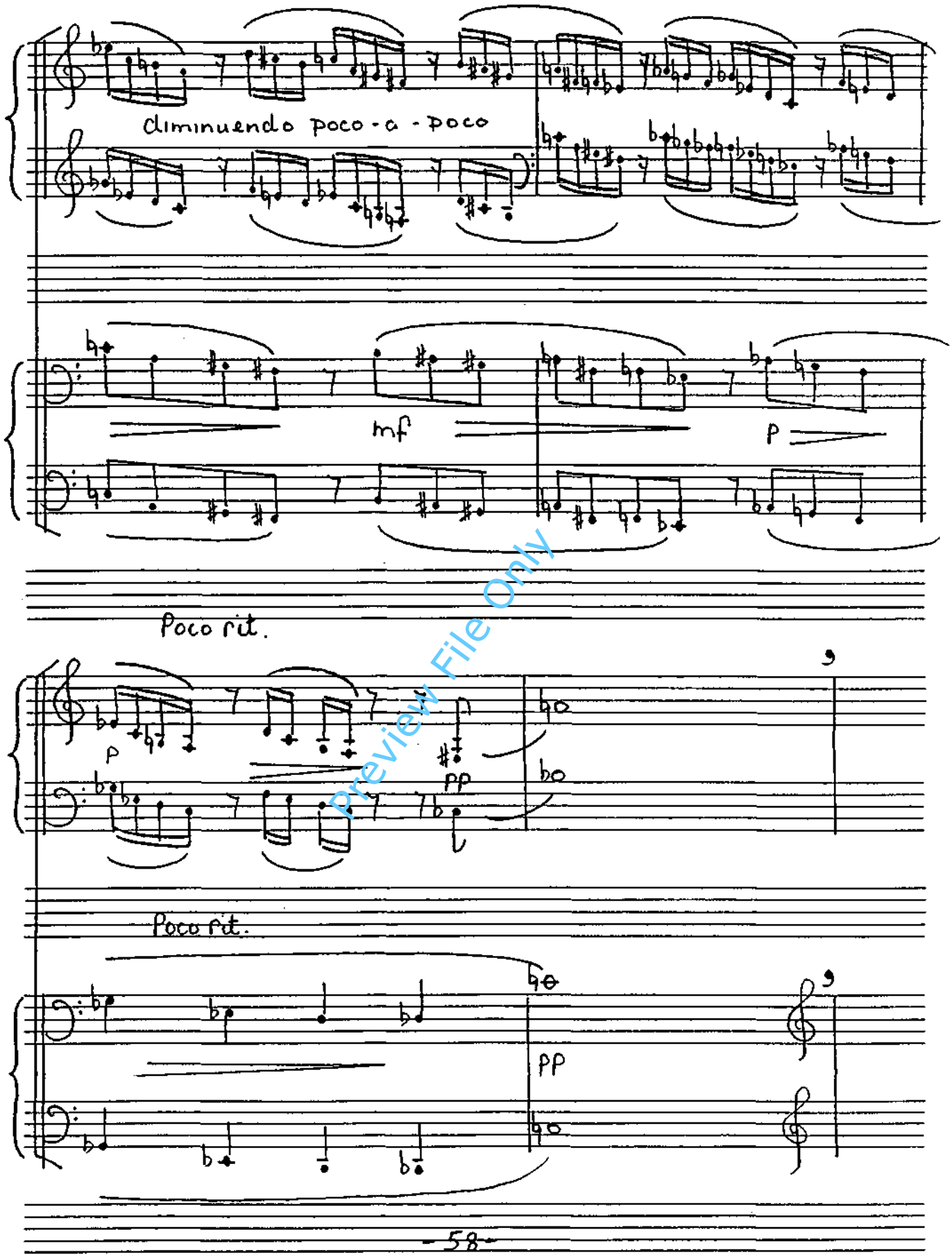


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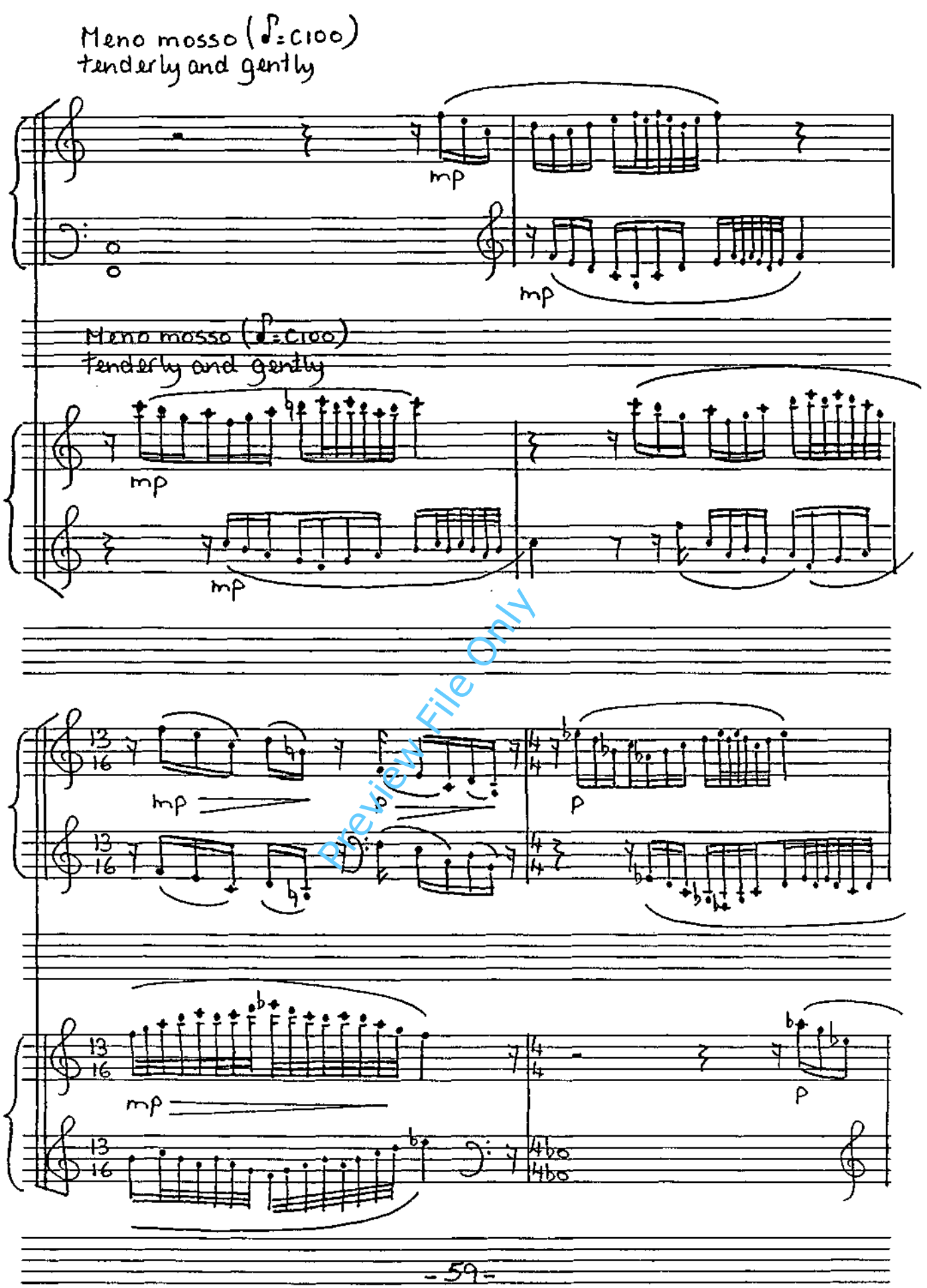


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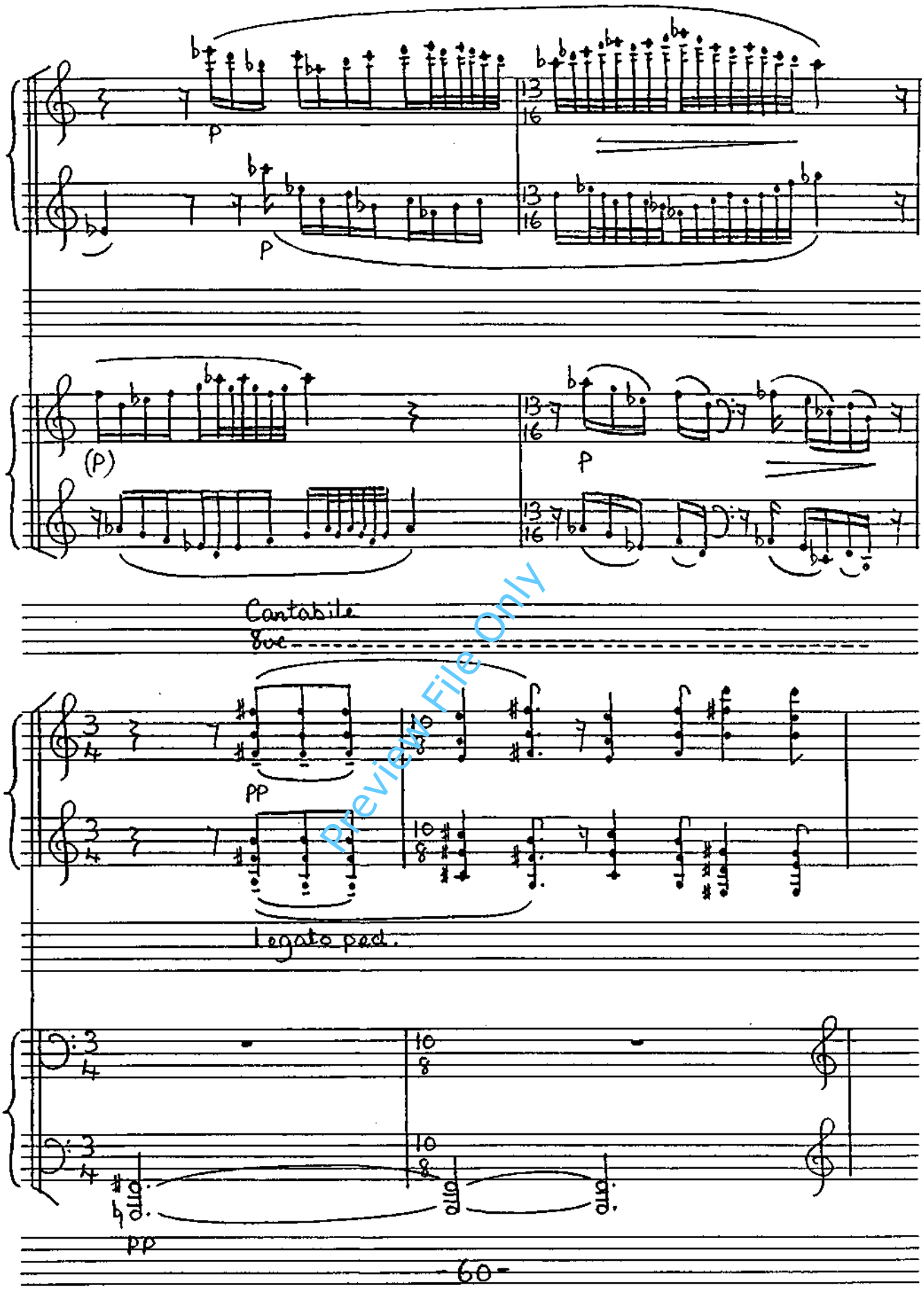


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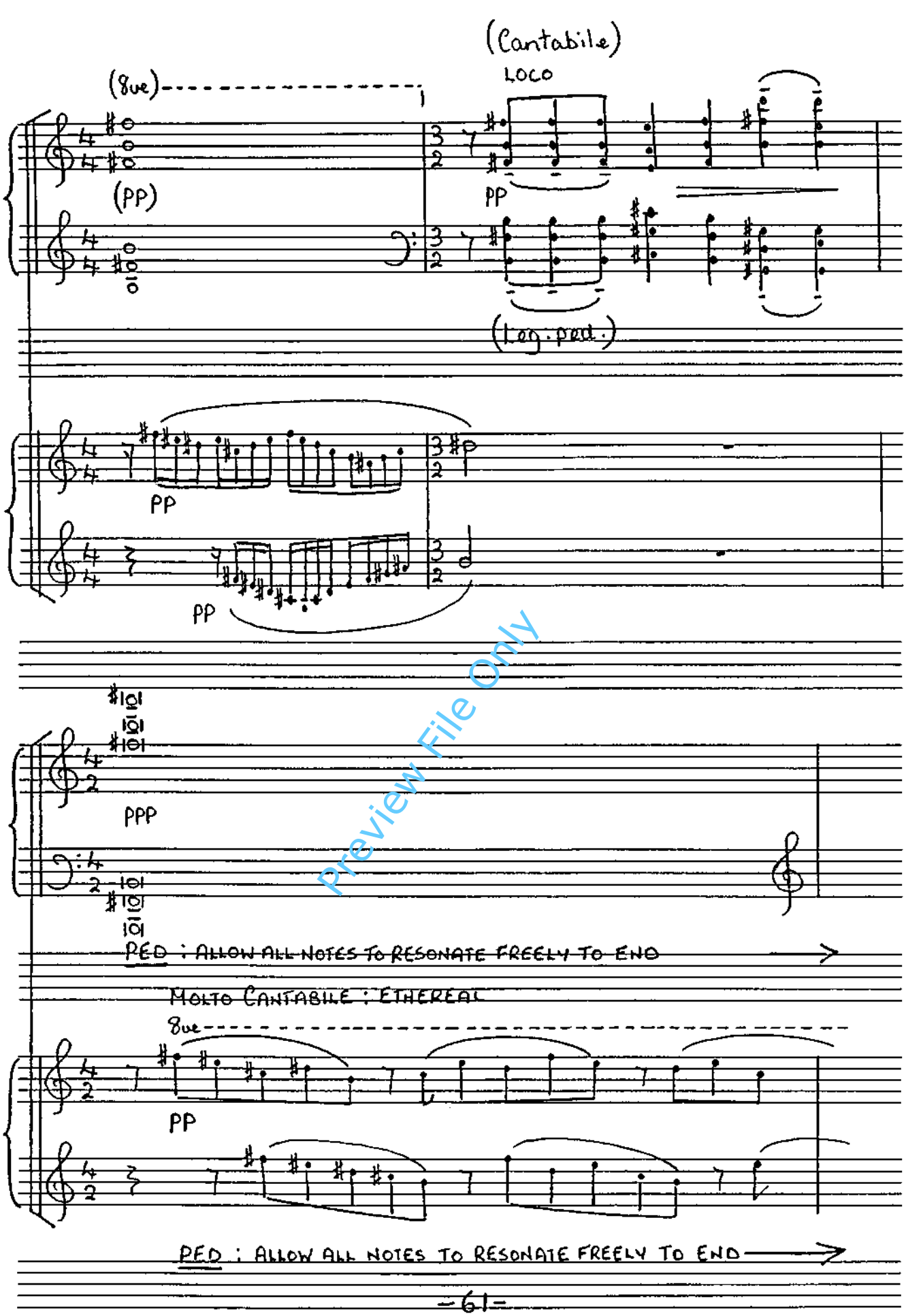


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MOLTO CANTABILE : ETHEREAL

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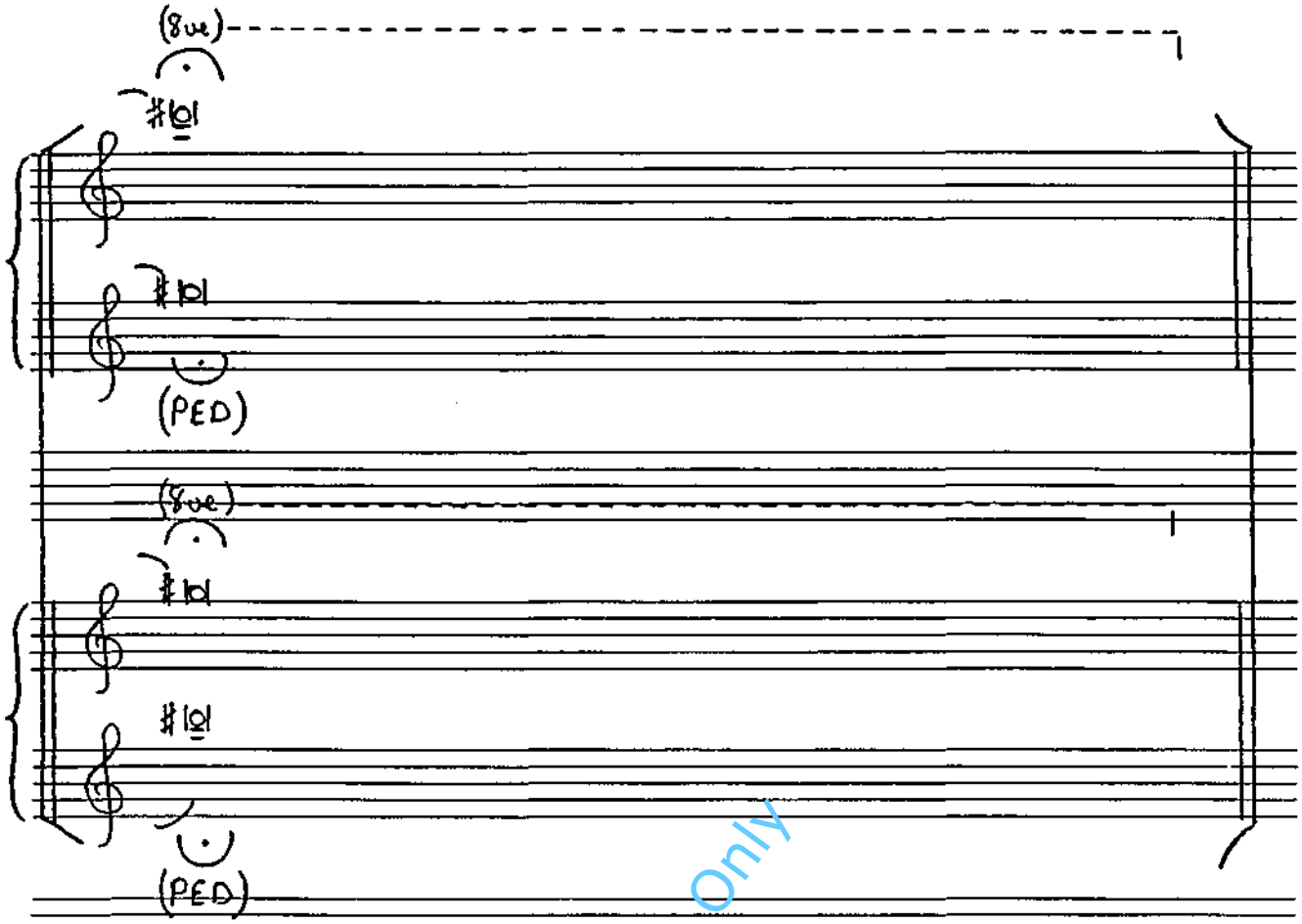


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