Commissioned by
Jim Lowe, Janice Lee Sperling MD,
and British Horn Trust

SONATA

for

Eight Horns

(Op. 53)

by

ANDREW DOWNES

Preview File Only

LYNWOOD MUSIC
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ANDREW DOWNES: SONATA FOR 8 HORNS Opus 53 (1994) (5 movements - 26')

Commissioned by Jim Lowe, Janice Lee Sperling MD and the British Horn Trust, for Ellen Campbell and the Horn Octet of the University of New Mexico, this Sonata for 8 Horns was premiered at the University of New Mexico 1995 Composers' Symposium on 29th March 1995. Subsequent performances in the USA followed at Interlochen Centre for the Arts and the International Horn Society Convention in Oregon. The first British performance was on December 5th 1995 in the Adrian Boult Hall, Birmingham.
Stanislav Suchanek, who played first horn in the first performance, introduced the work to his colleagues in the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, with the result that the first Czech performance, by the Horns of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, took place at the International Horn Class '97 at Nove Straseci on 2nd August 1997. These players performed the work again on 21st January 1998 in the Suk Hall of the Rudolfinum, Prague; in August 1998, at the Lichtenstein Palace, Prague; and again in the Suk Hall in December 2001; with further performances planned for August 2002. In January and March 2000 they recorded the sonata for Czech Radio and for their CD entitled 'Czech Philharmonic Horns' (Classicprint label CPVP12CD), released in September 2000. The recording was voted CD of the month on musicweb and it has been broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and on Dutch Radio.
As a result of the CD, Andrew Downes was commissioned to compose a Concerto for 4 Horns and Orchestra, which was performed by the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Vladimir Valek in the Dvorak Hall, Prague, on 28th February and 1st March 2002, and a work for 8 Wagner Tubas for the following Czech Philharmonic season. Downes' Sonata for Brass Sextet, dedicated to Stanislav Suchanek and the Czech Philharmonic Brass, as a token of the composers' gratitude for the wonderful interpretation of his Sonata for 8 Horns, was premiered in the Dvorak Hall, Prague, on 21st February 2001.

Andrew Downes' Sonata for 4 Horns and his Suite for 6 Horns have now been recorded in Vienna on the Aricord label by the Vienna Horn Society. Sample tracks of the Sonata for 8 Horns and the Suite for 6 Horns can be heard on:
www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~downlyn

Reviews on the Sonata for 8 Horns:-

'This is an excellent addition to the horn ensemble repertoire... has plenty to engage all eight players, as well as the listener.. a challenging and satisfying piece.'
John Pineguy - THE HORN MAGAZINE

'...25 minutes of real quality, immediately attractive, deeply-felt, elegantly idiomatic in scoring, and profoundly memorable. The music paints the wide open spaces of New World landscapes, buoyed up with the upbeat rhythms of Africa. Melodies ride broadly over compelling textures or dance gravely in echoes of the Renaissance. A scherzo movement revels in the horn's natural 'hunting' quality...'

THE BIRMINGHAM POST

"... an amazing piece. Full of interest, contrast and logical musicality. It is not just a showpiece. In fact, most of the music is thoughtful. We are not in the world of pomposity or braying hunting horns. It is, first and foremost, good music. The sweetness of some of the horn playing is simply exquisite. The performance is unequalled. All who have heard this recording has praised it highly and rightly so.

Andrew's music... has lovely themes. He has a wonderful knack of writing fascinating slow movements too. There is a poignancy that is superlative. I know no other living composer who is so good at this. I also admire the fact that the music is always controlled. While recklessness in horn writing is very exciting, here we have a refinement that is laudable. Reflective horn playing is an art in itself! Immaculate music, immaculately played. A real winner both in composition and performance. ...This is a must. It deserves to be a great success!"

Dr David Wright - Review on www.musicweb.uk.net - CD of the month (September 2000)

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ISMNs: (M) 57019 096 6 (score)
(M) 57019 097 3 (parts)

SONATA FOR 8 HORNS PROGAMME NOTE BY ANDREW DOWNES

This work was composed during 1994 for the University of New Mexico Horn Octet, and was first performed by that ensemble in Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA in March 1995.

It is in five movements, and the main ideas of each are organically derived from each other.

The First Movement displays a wide range of emotions, beginning slowly, quietly and mysteriously, but developing towards a triumphant climax, accompanied by boldly defined arpeggios, which appears twice. Just before the second of these climaxes, there is a section of music derived from the quiet opening which is perhaps suggestive of a wide American landscape.

Most of the Second Movement is Scherzo-like in character, giving a sense of the "hunting horn" origins of the instrument. However, the movement ends with a more reflective section based on plainsong-like music. During the movement, there are passages in multi-tempo, giving, hopefully, a sense of the freedom and joy of much African tribal music.

The Third Movement has something of the elegance and grace of a stately Renaissance dance, but is combined with hints of a more robust Irish-like folk dance, and again with some of the freedom of African music.

In the Fourth Movement, the music is joyful and fast moving, giving the composer a sense of moving quickly through a warm and sunny landscape. Even the slower middle section does not detract from this feeling. Again, the feeling of Africa is never far away.

The Finale contains music influenced by "blues" and the European Renaissance, but once again it is the melody, harmony and rhythm of Africa which most draws the composer towards it.

As always, this composer finds it impossible to convey, through words, the heartfelt passion, tragedy and joy which can only be experienced through the sound of the music, but he fervently hopes that these few words, inadequate though they may be, help his audience to enjoy this work.

ANDREW DOWNES
January 1995

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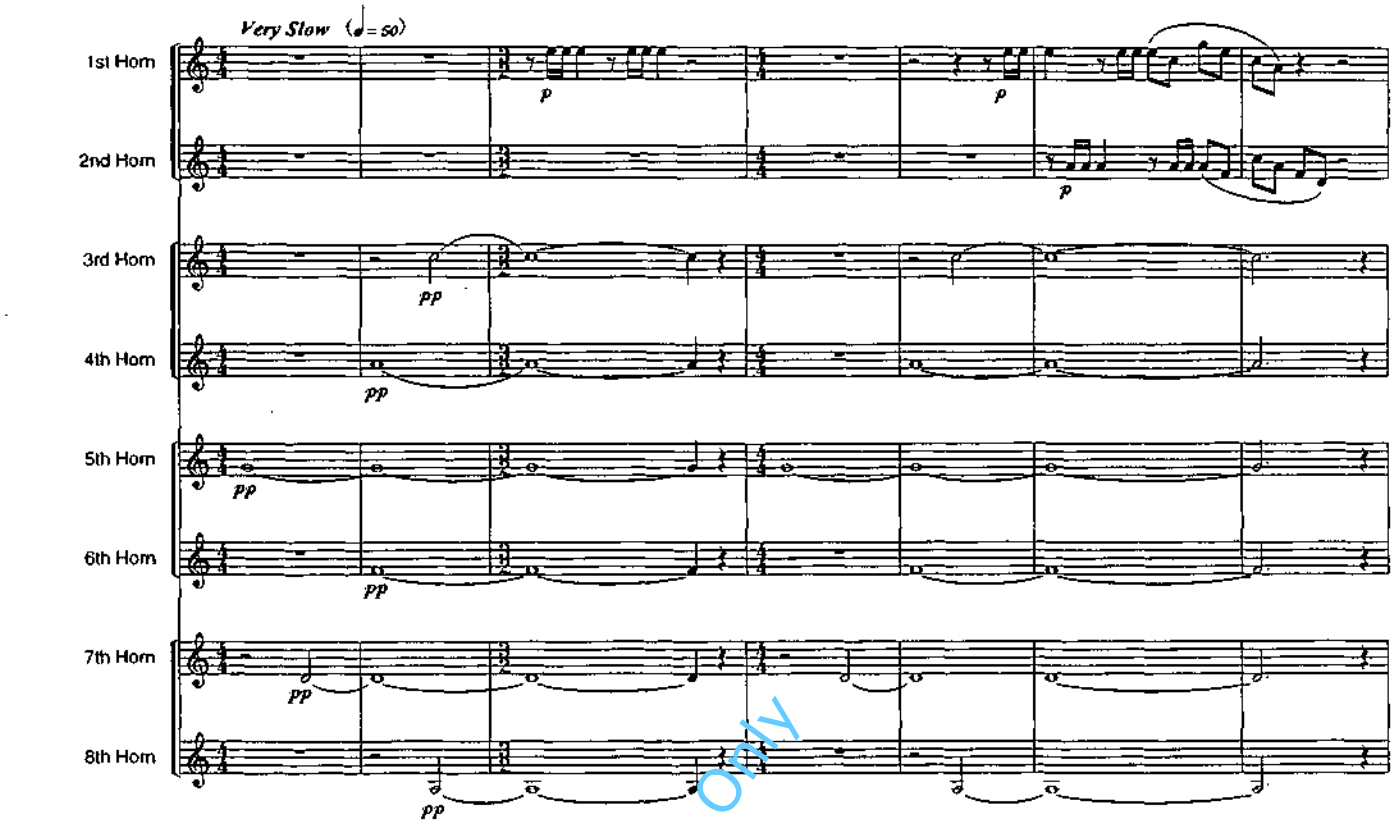
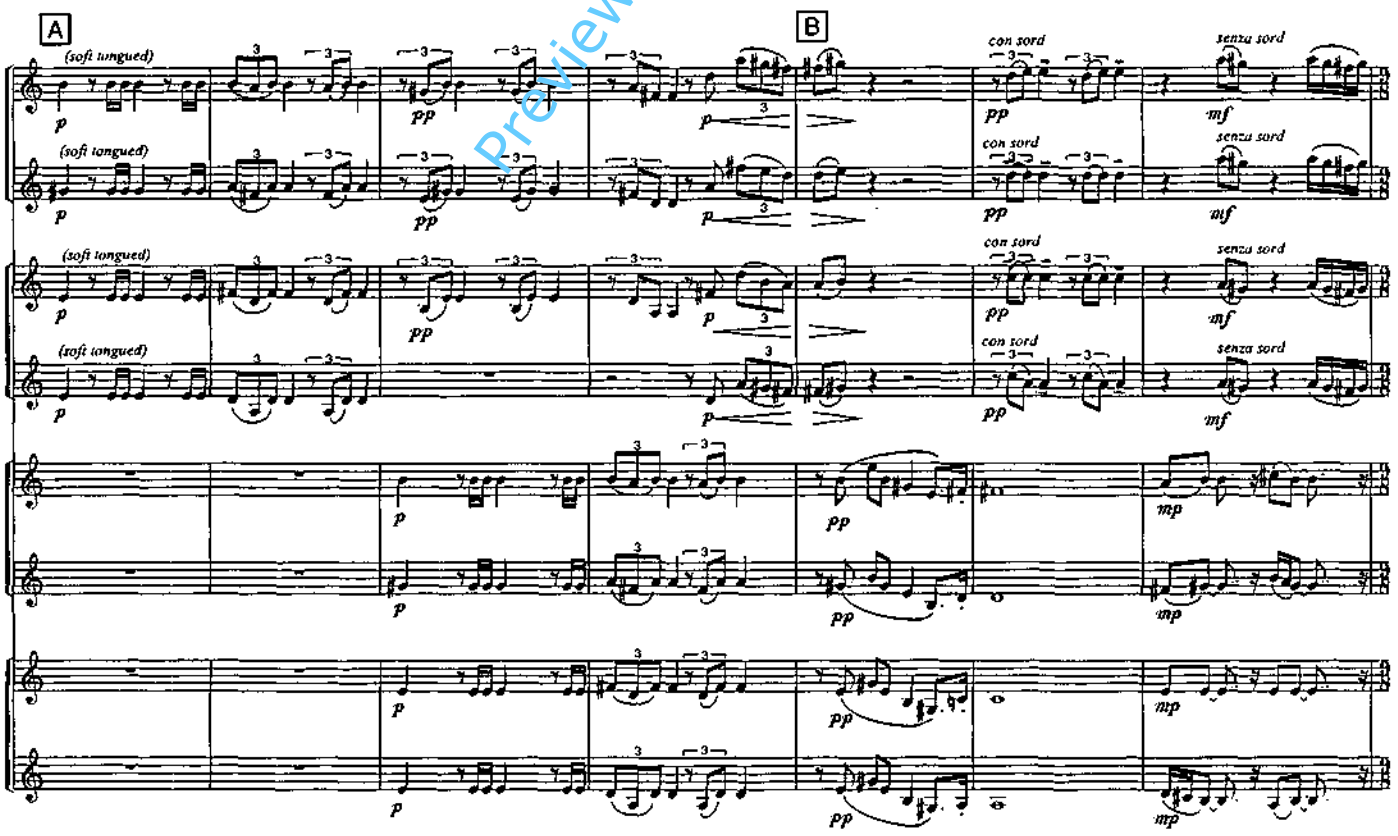
Score in F

Sonata for Eight Horns *(Op. 53)*

For Ellen Campbell & The Horn Octet
of The University of New Mexico

Andrew Downes





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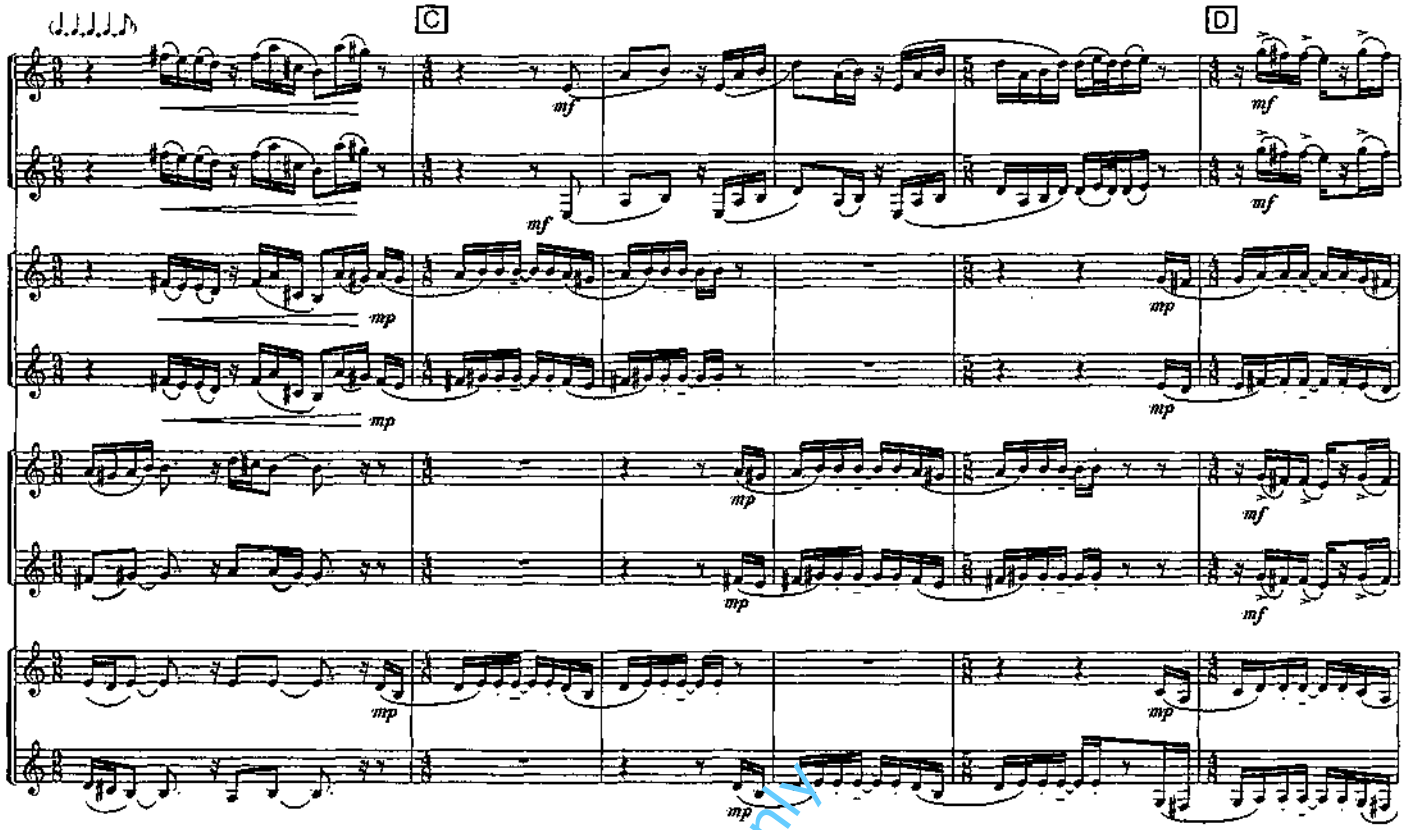

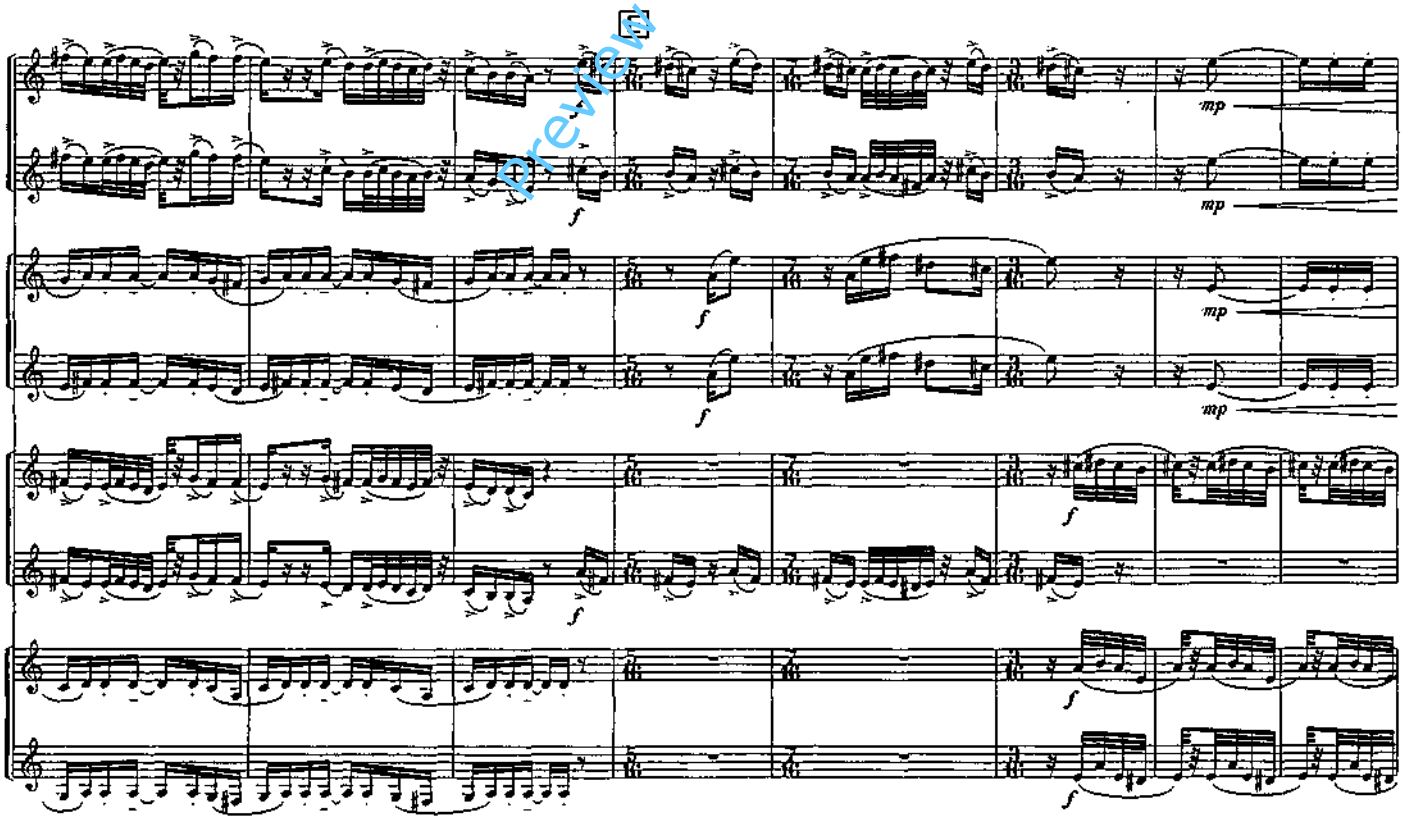

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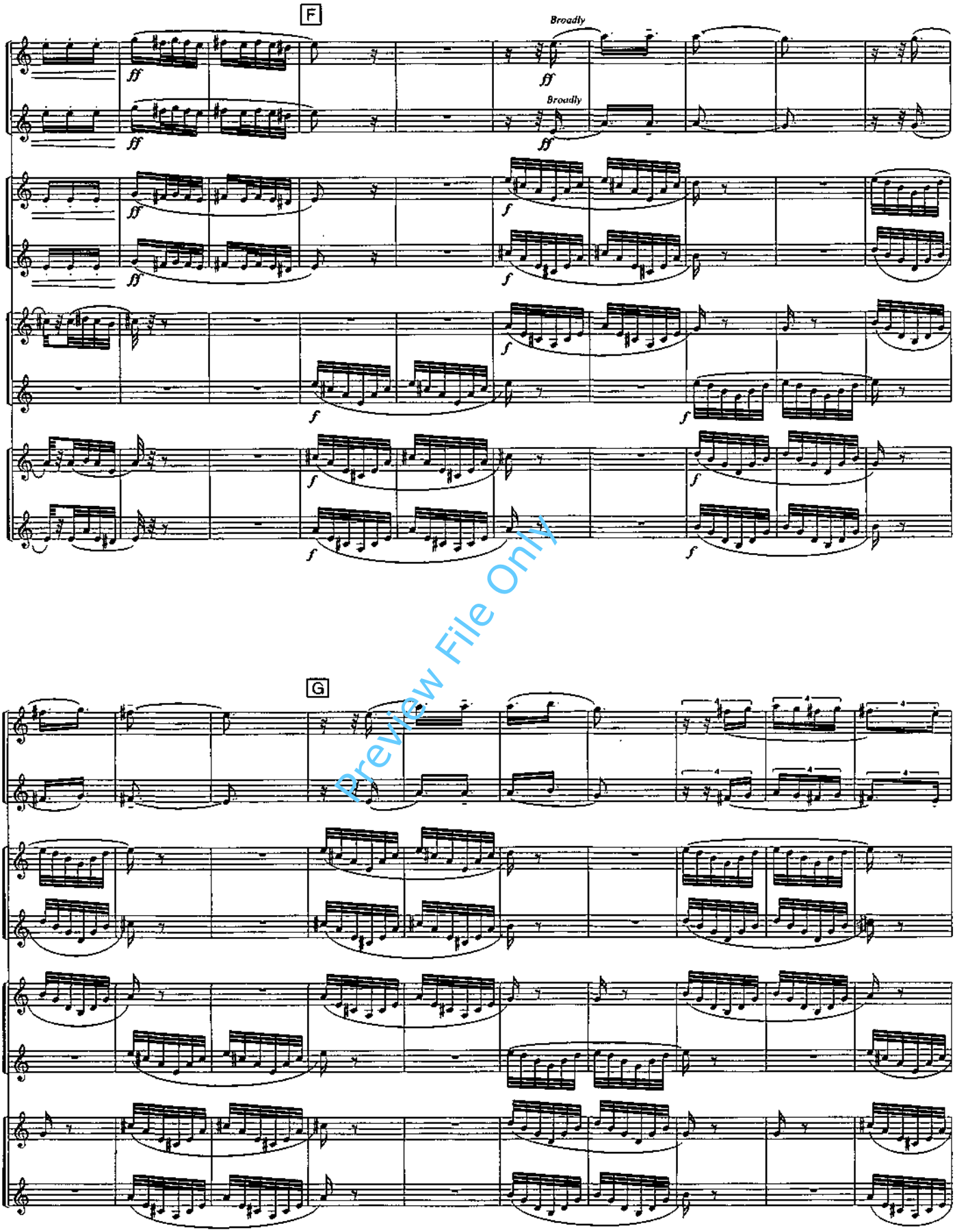

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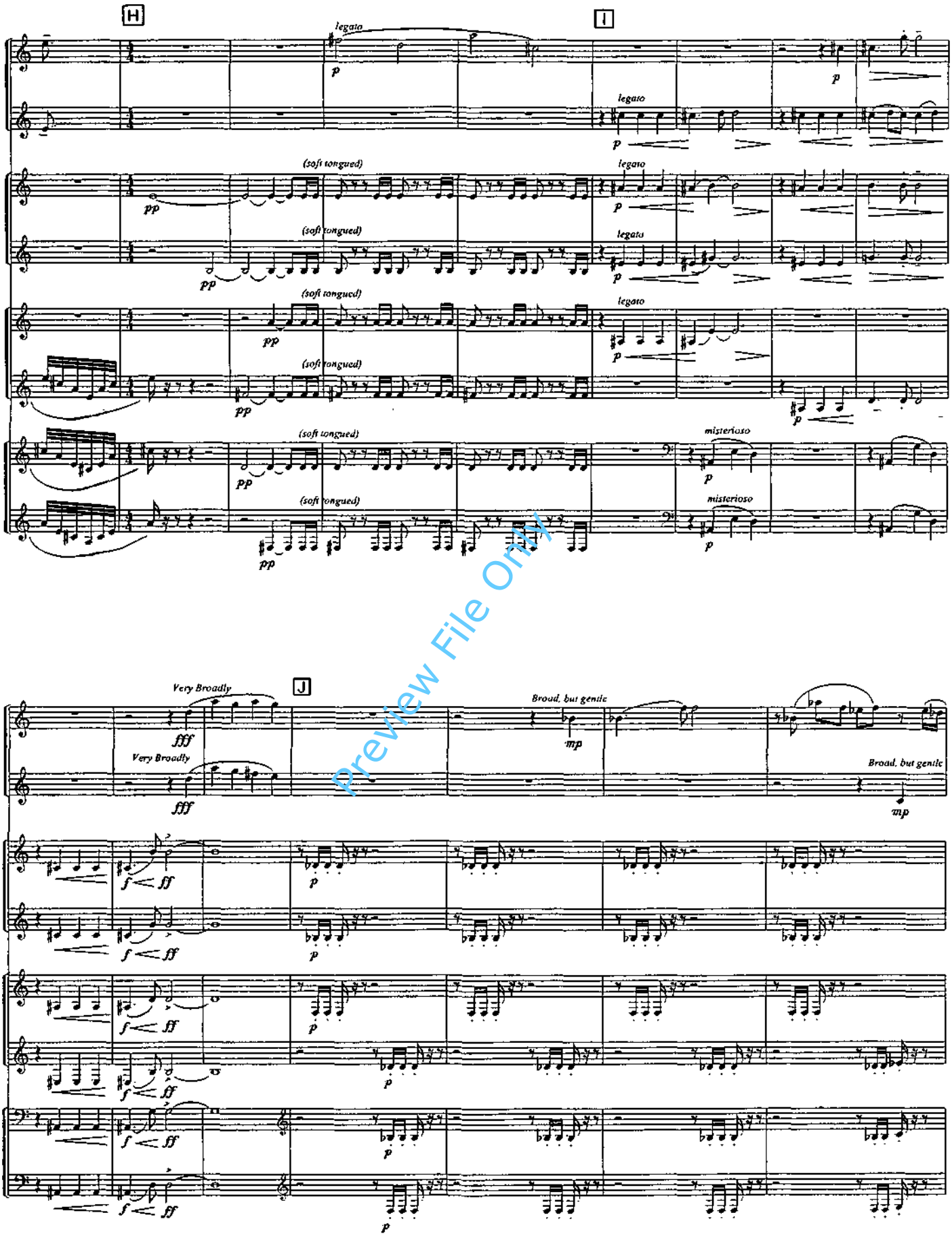
H
I
J
legato
(soft tongued)
misterioso
Very Broadly
Broad, but gentle
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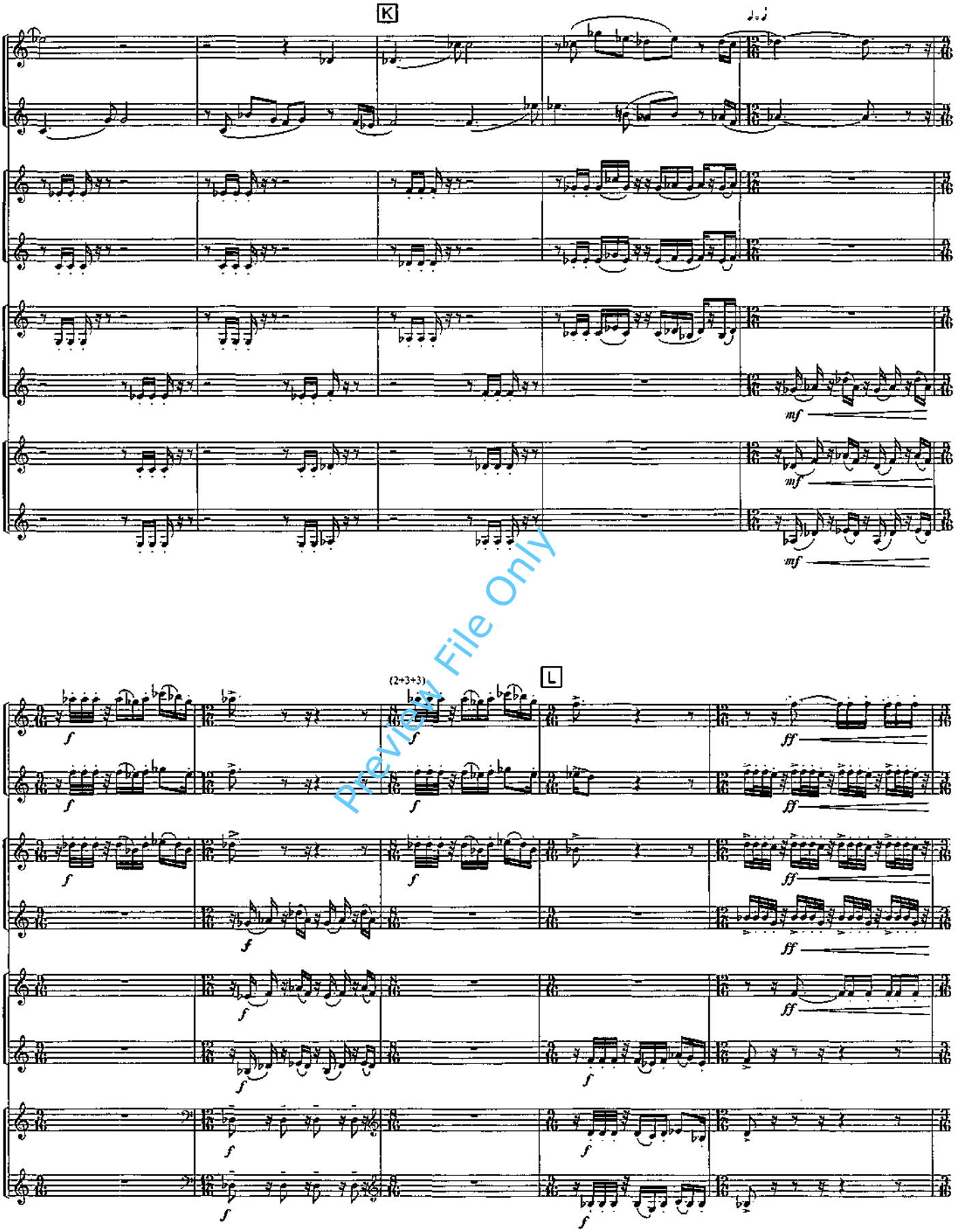

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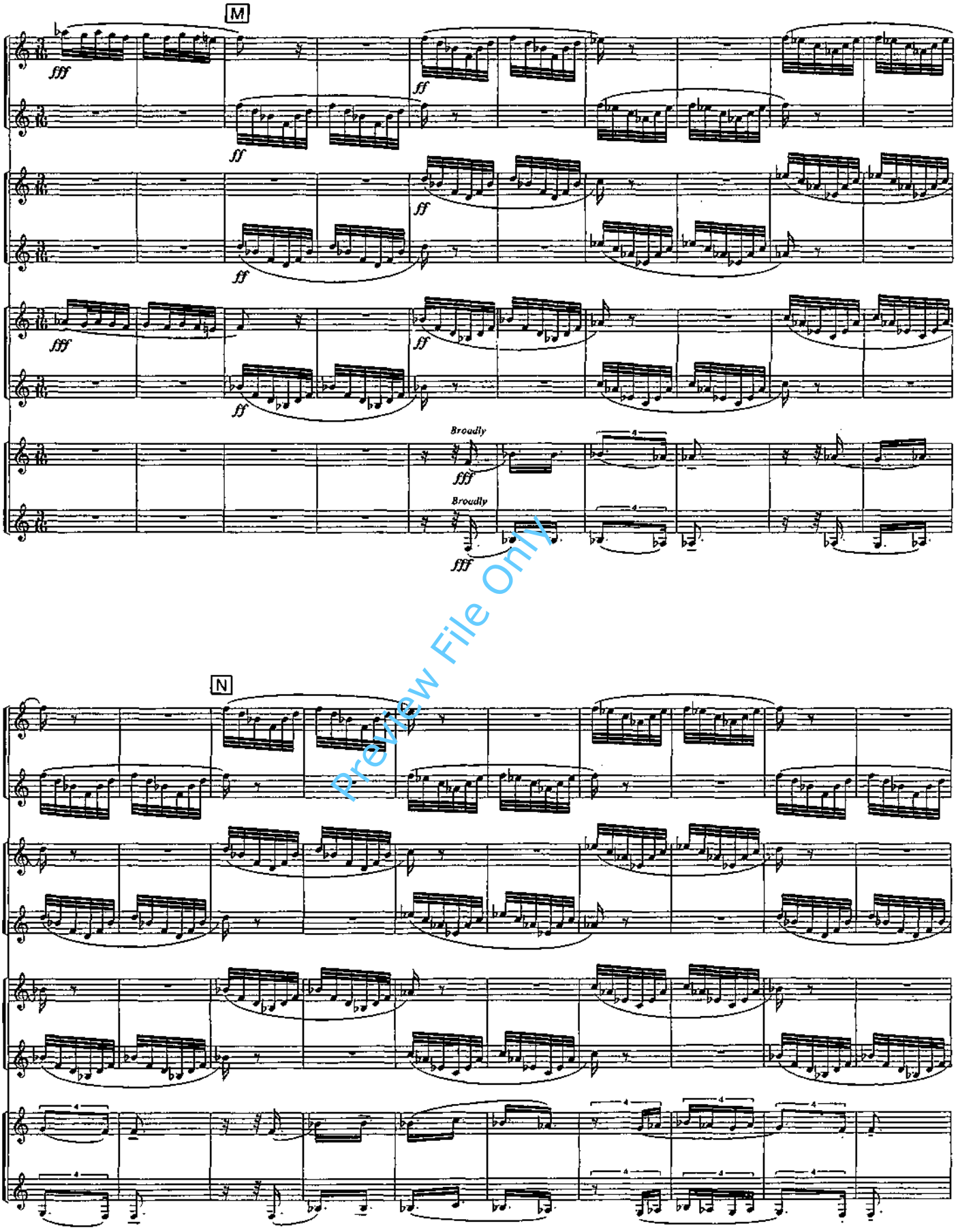

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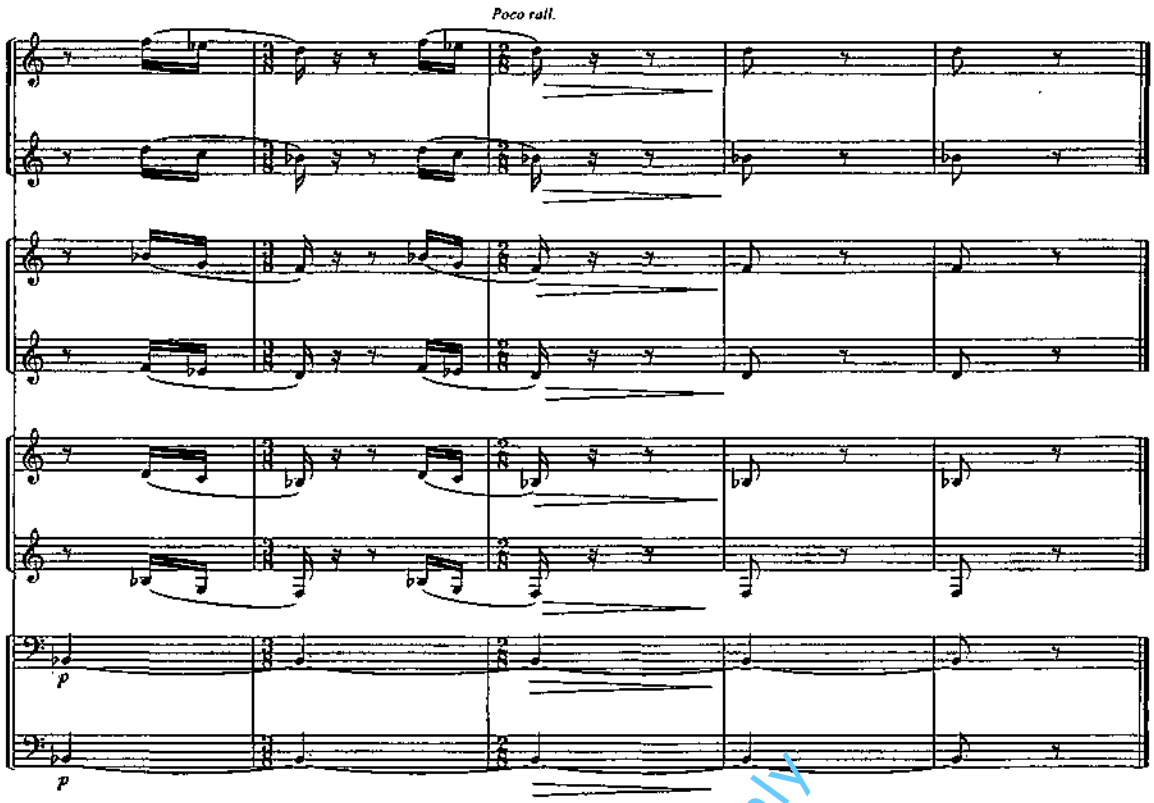

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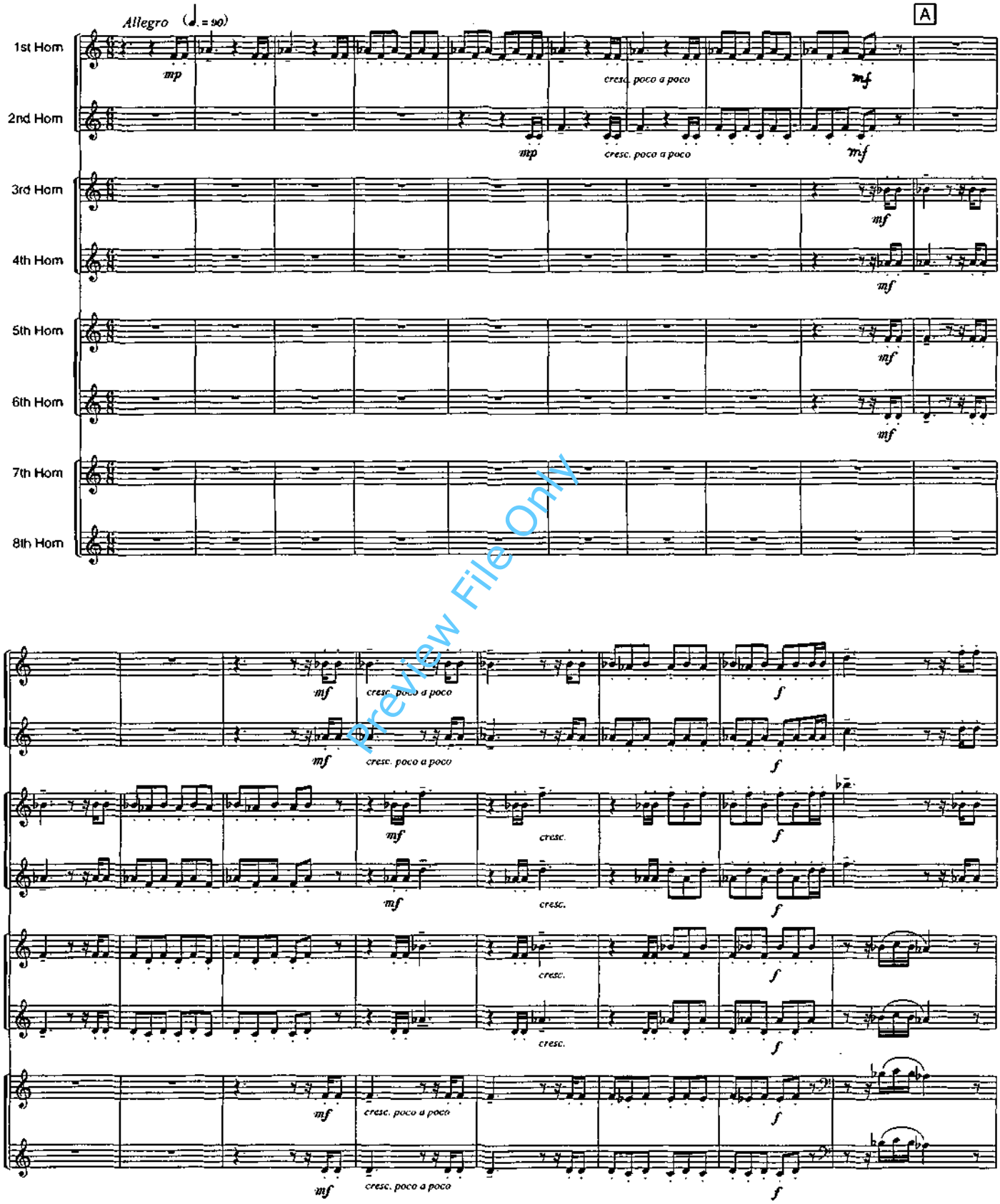

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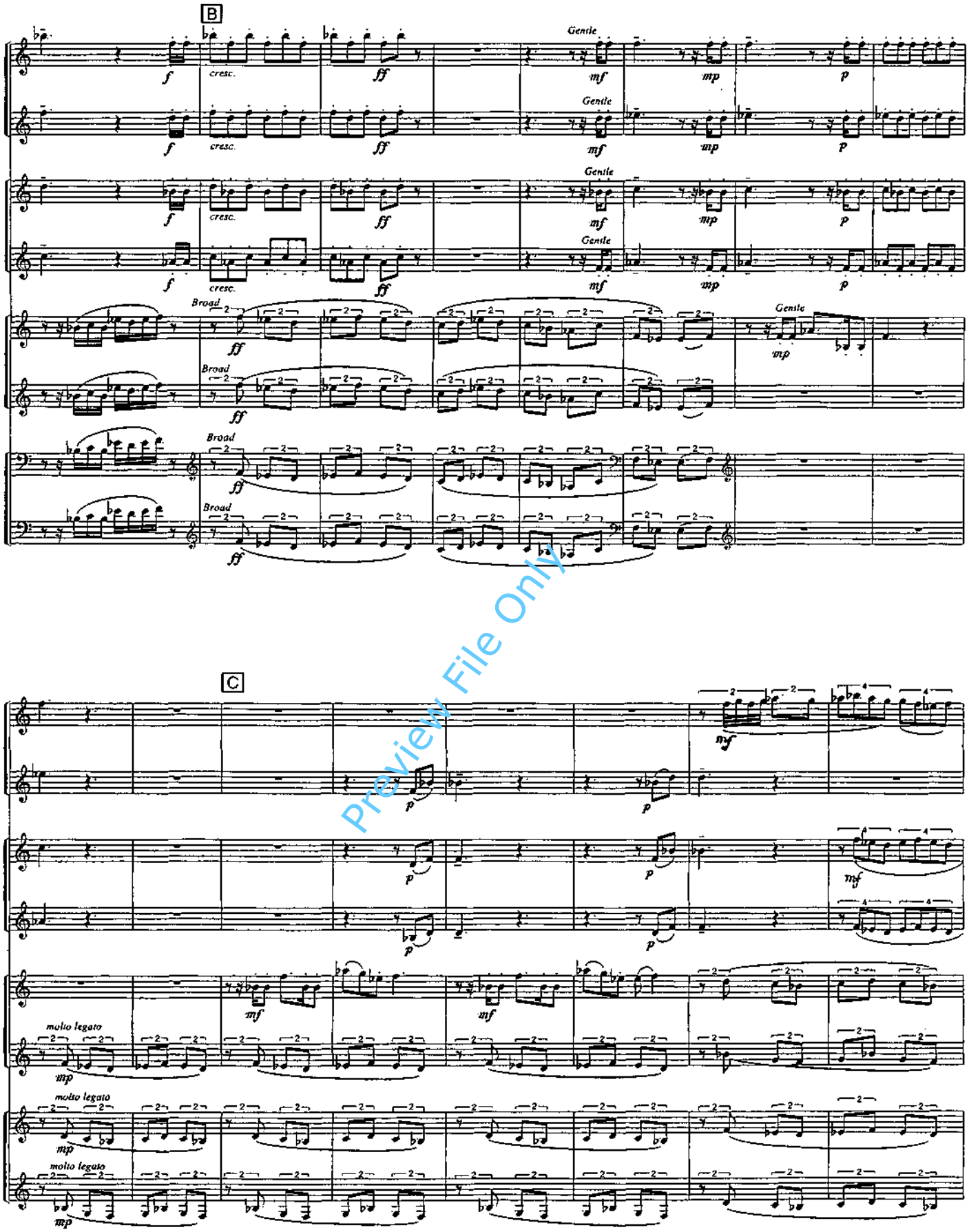

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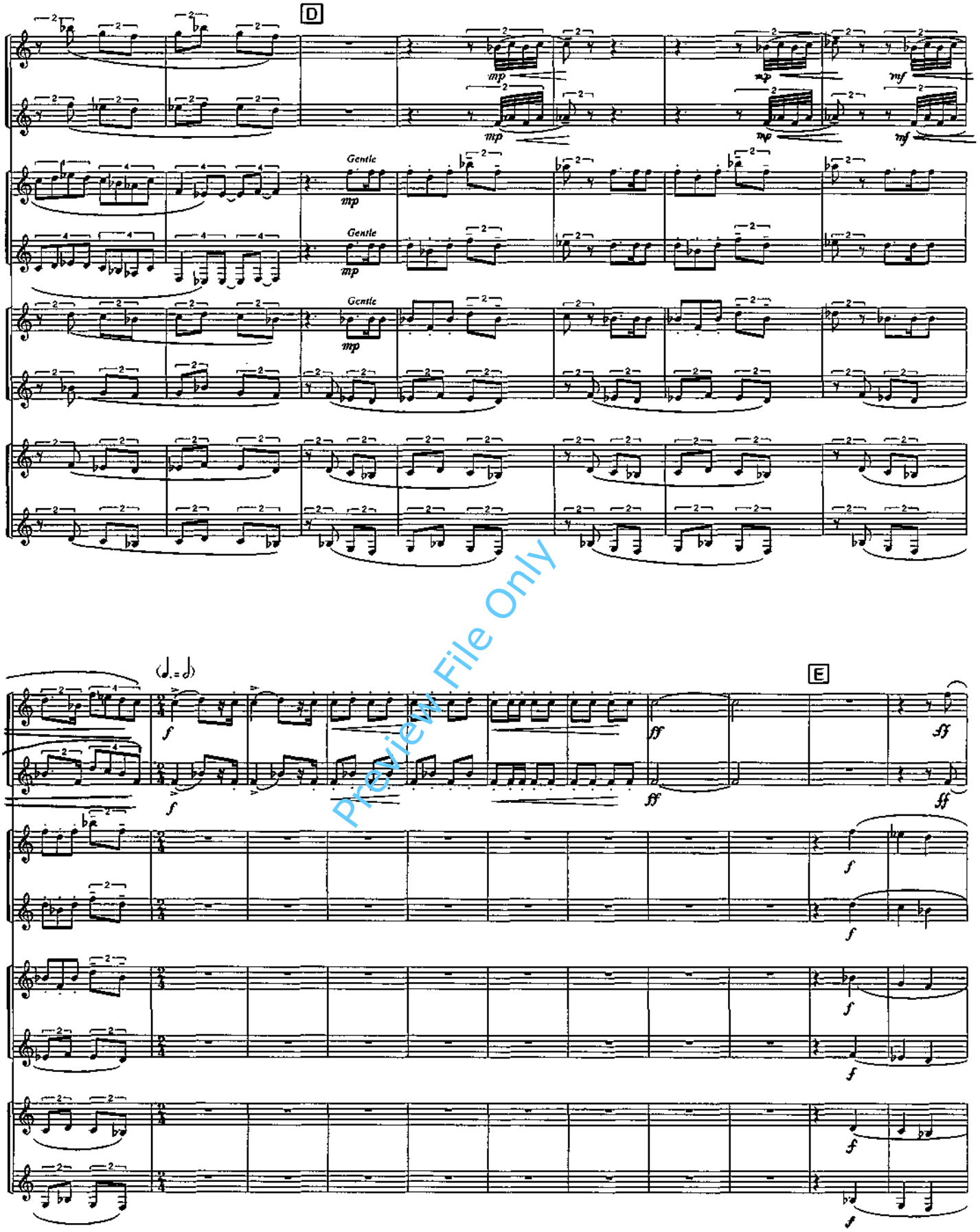

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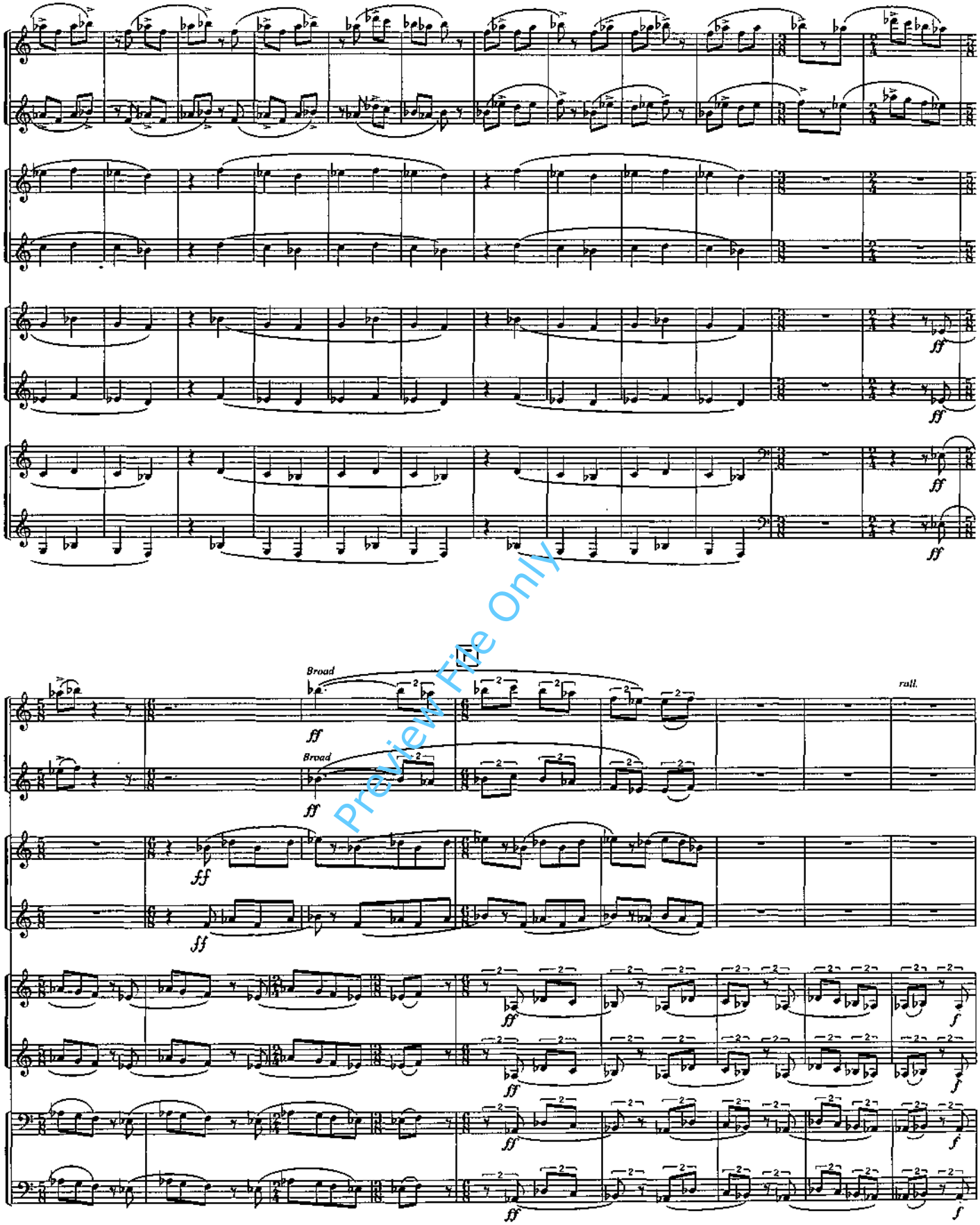

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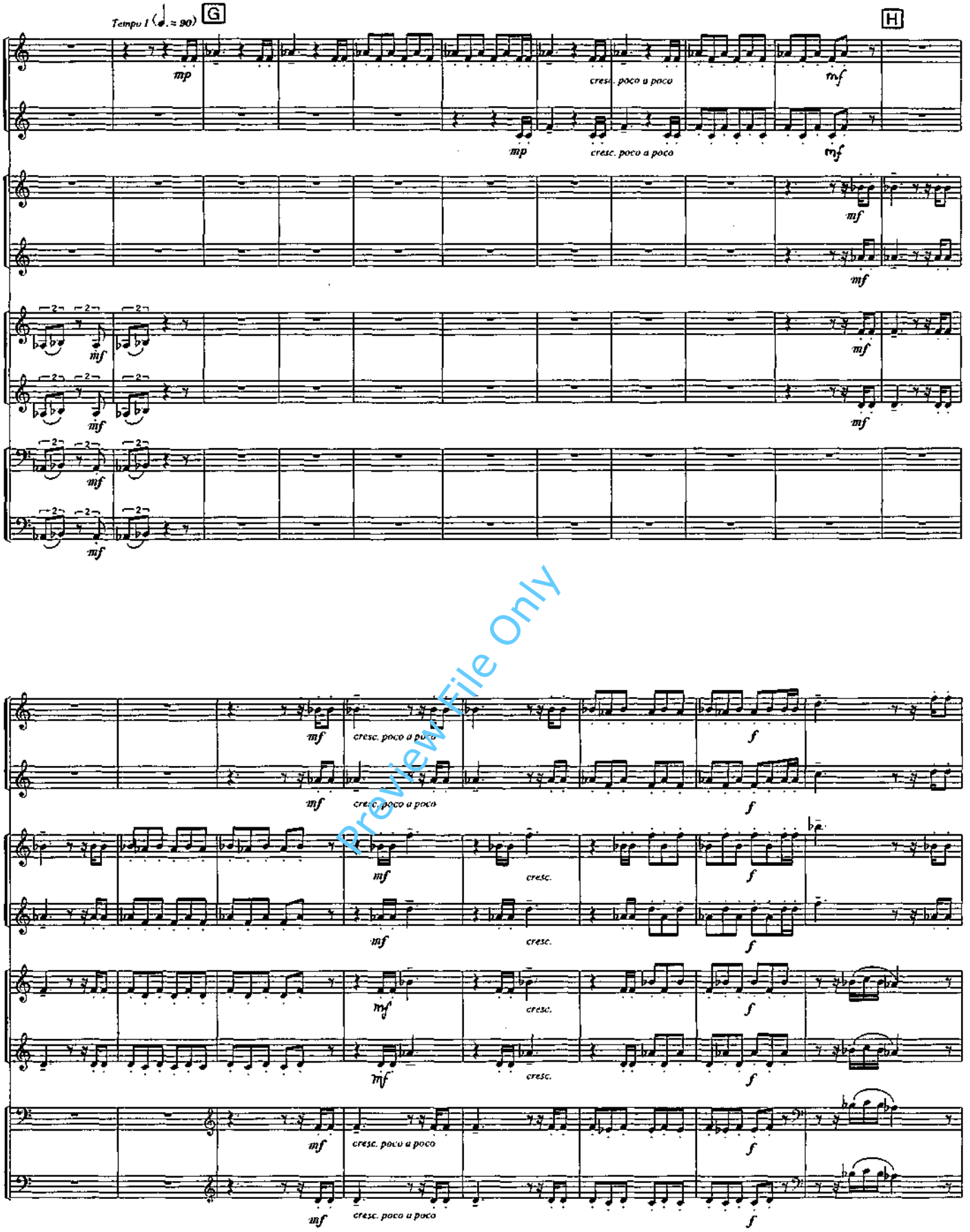

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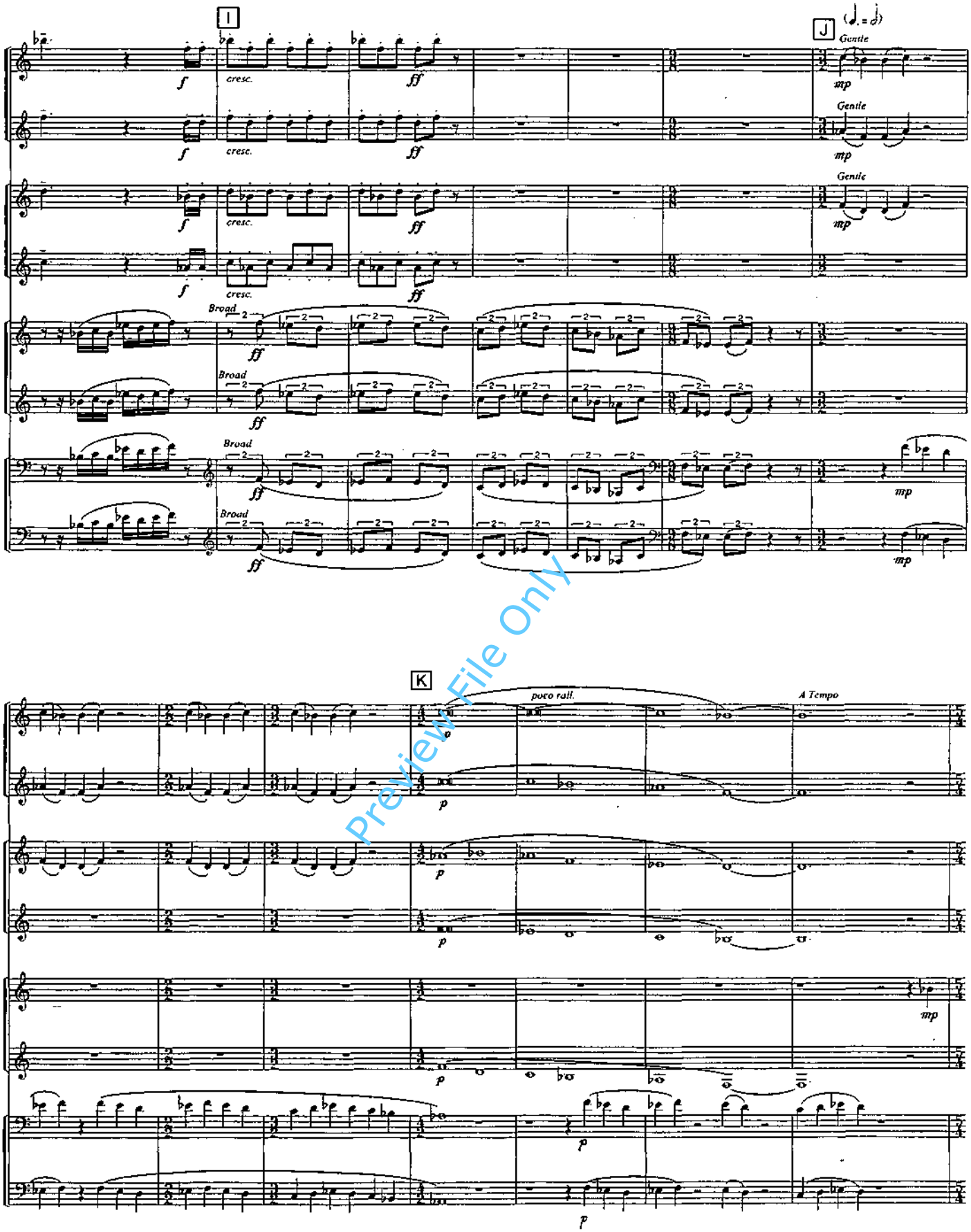
I
J
Gentle
K
poco rall.
A Tempo
Broad
cresc.
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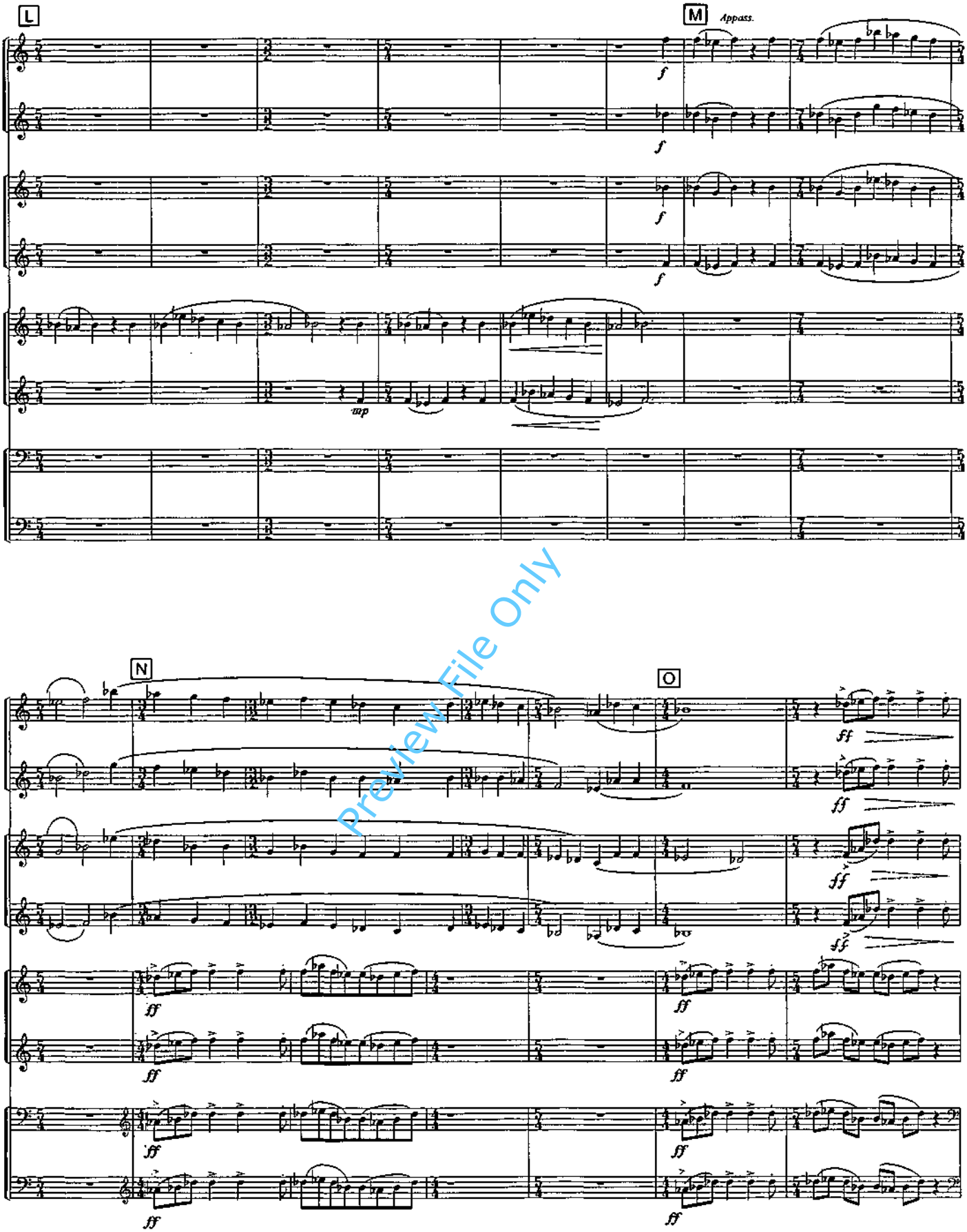

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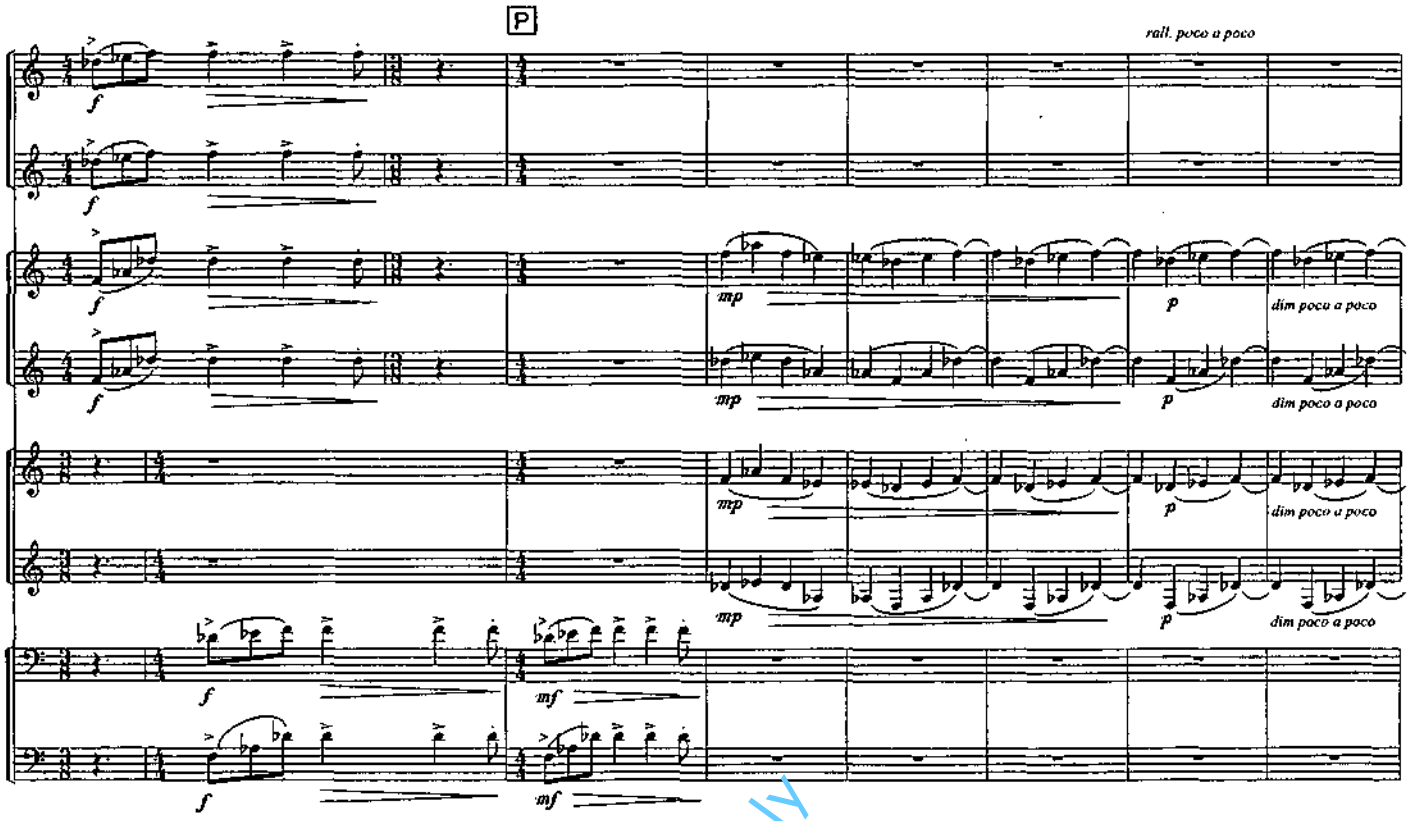

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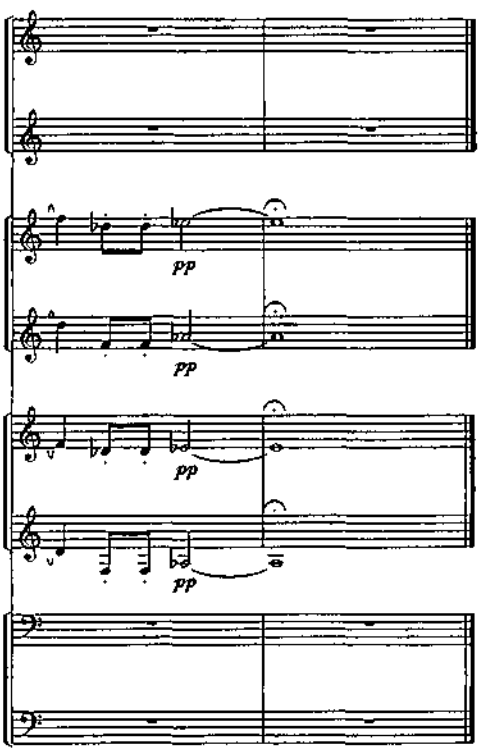

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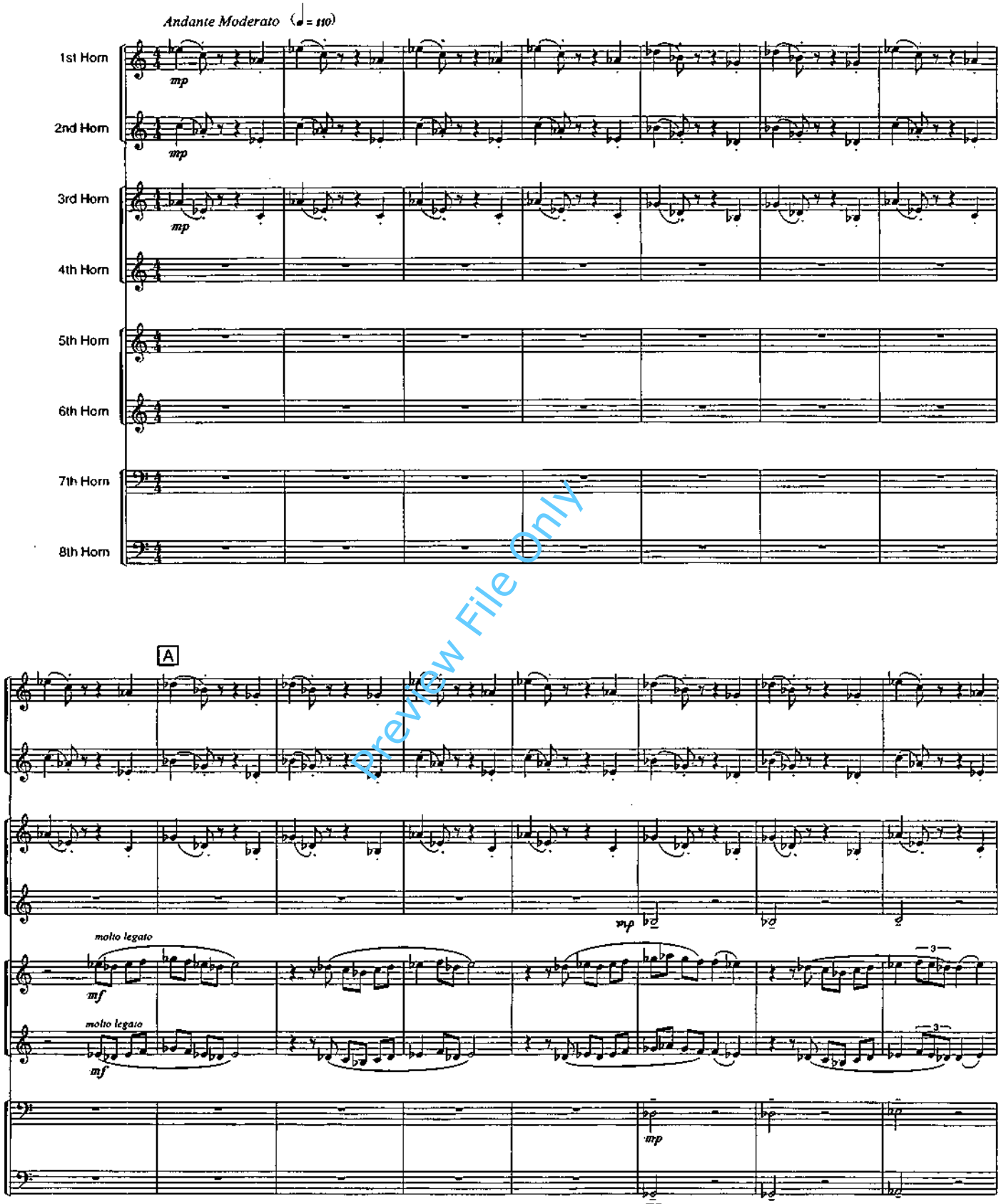

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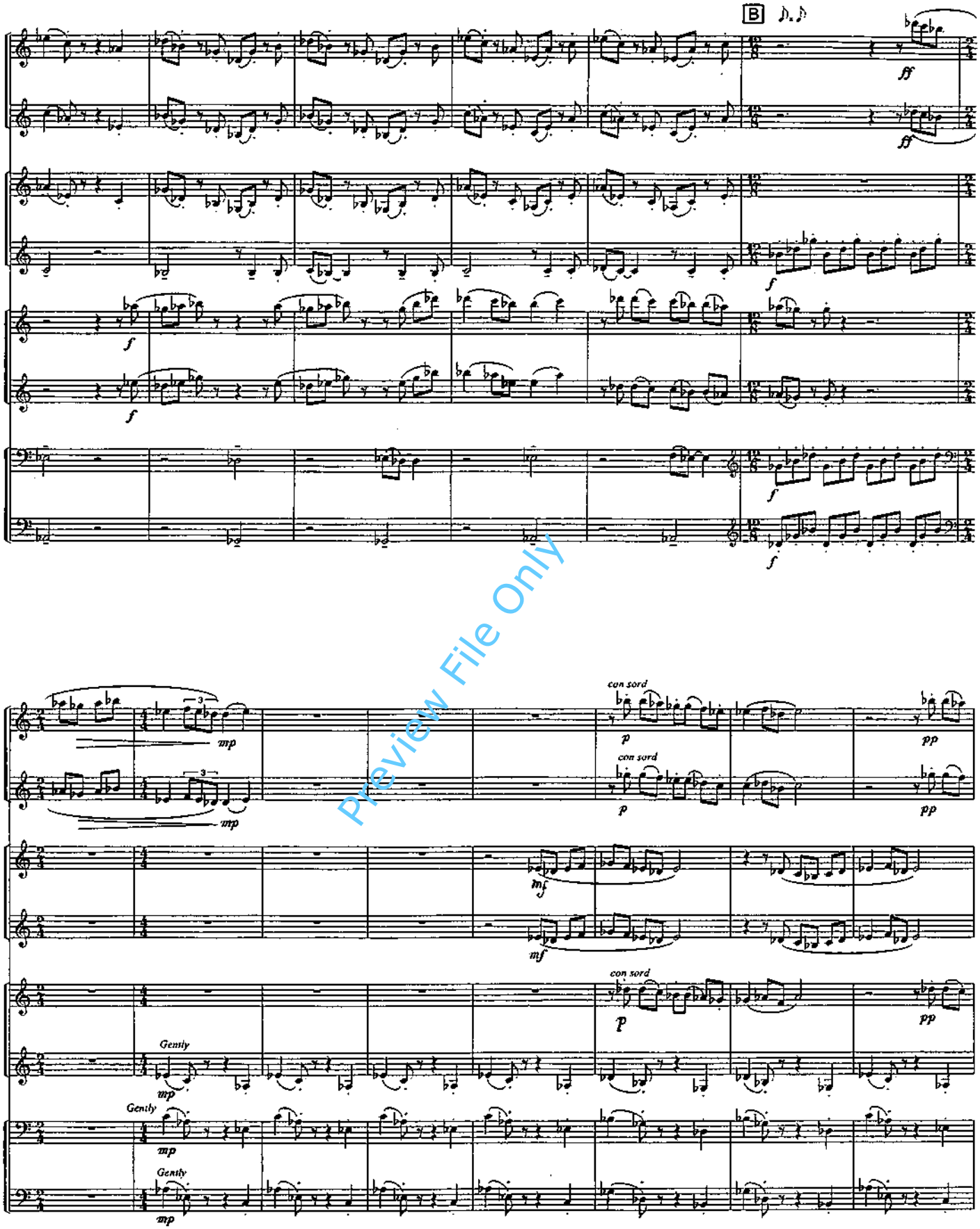

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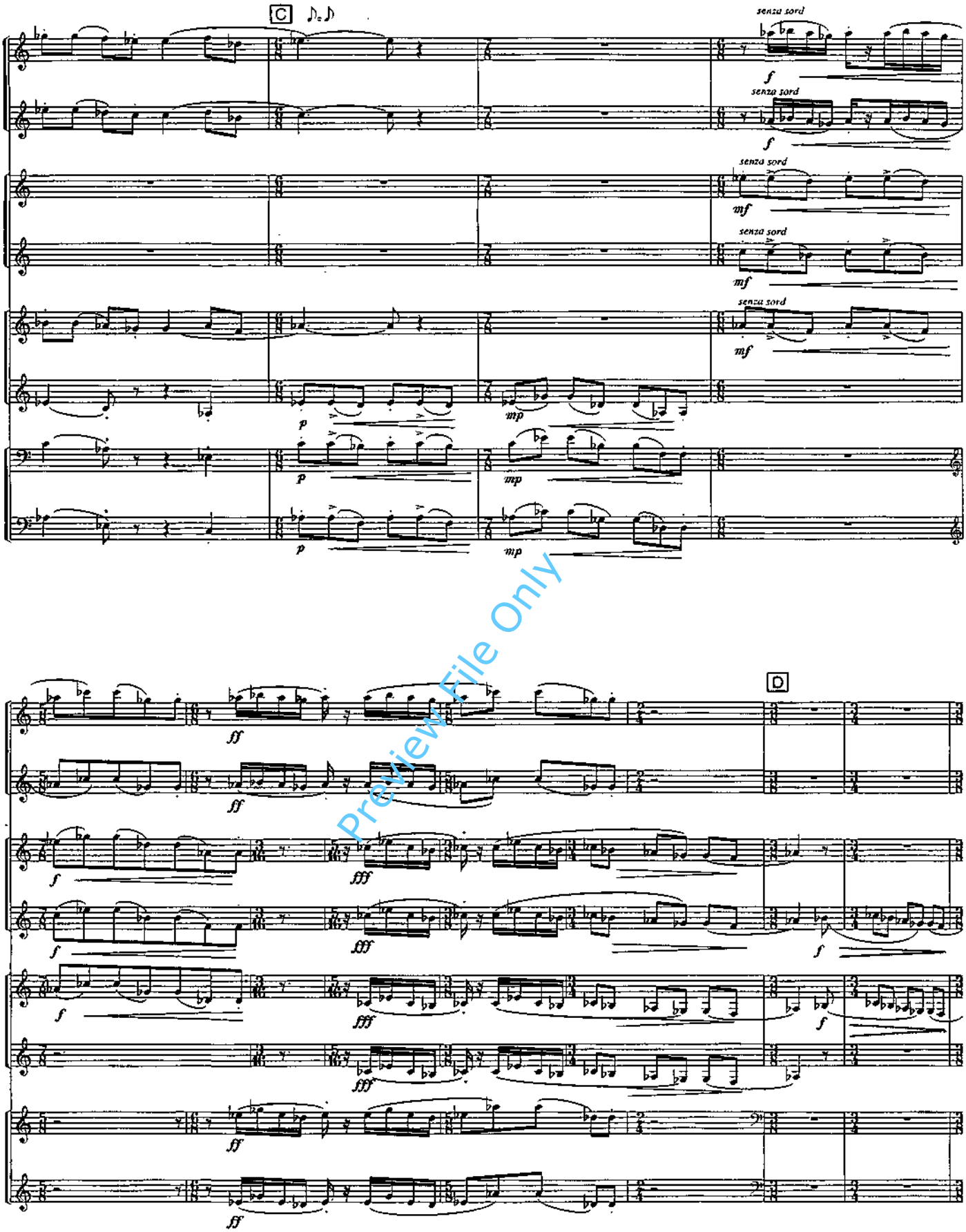

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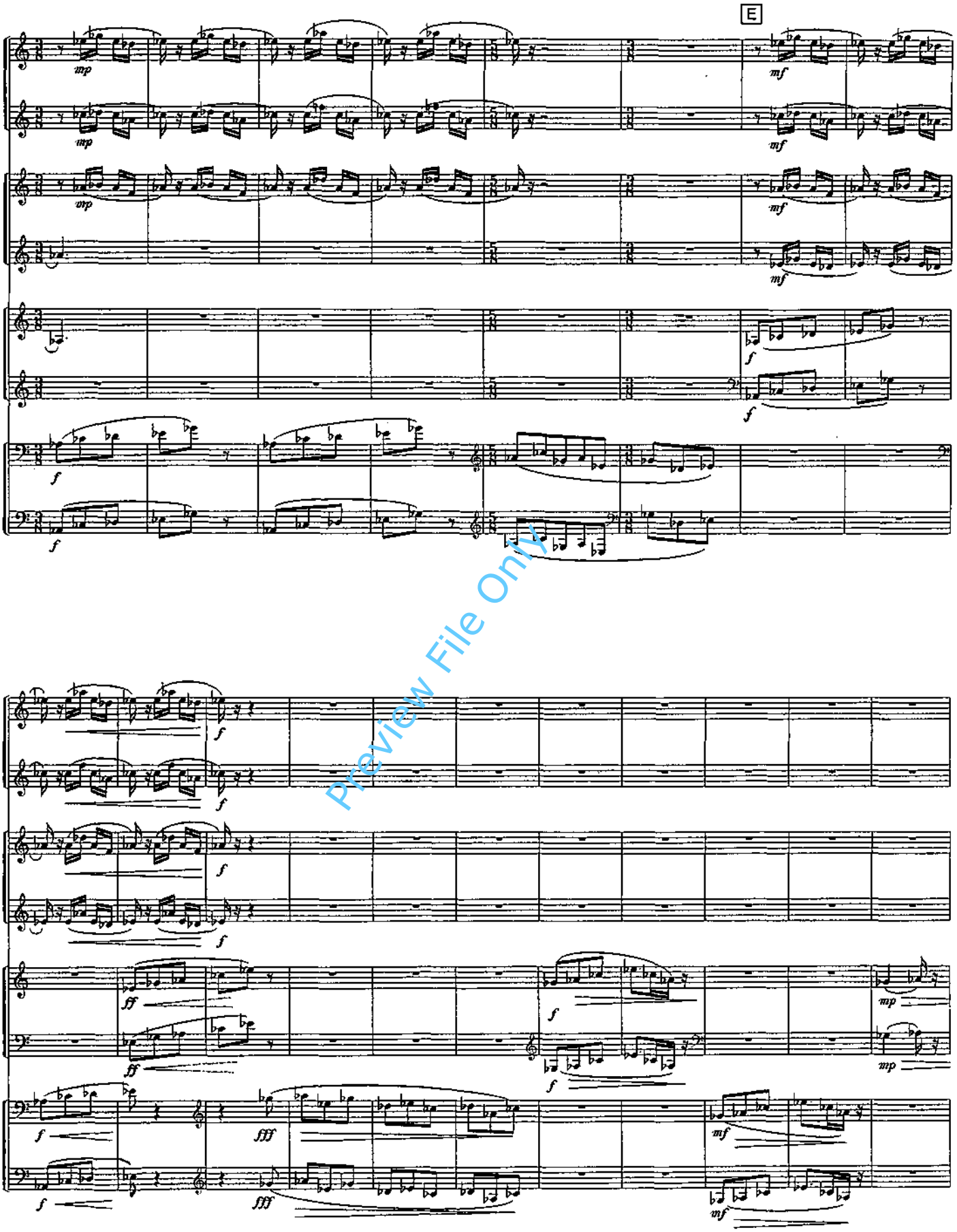

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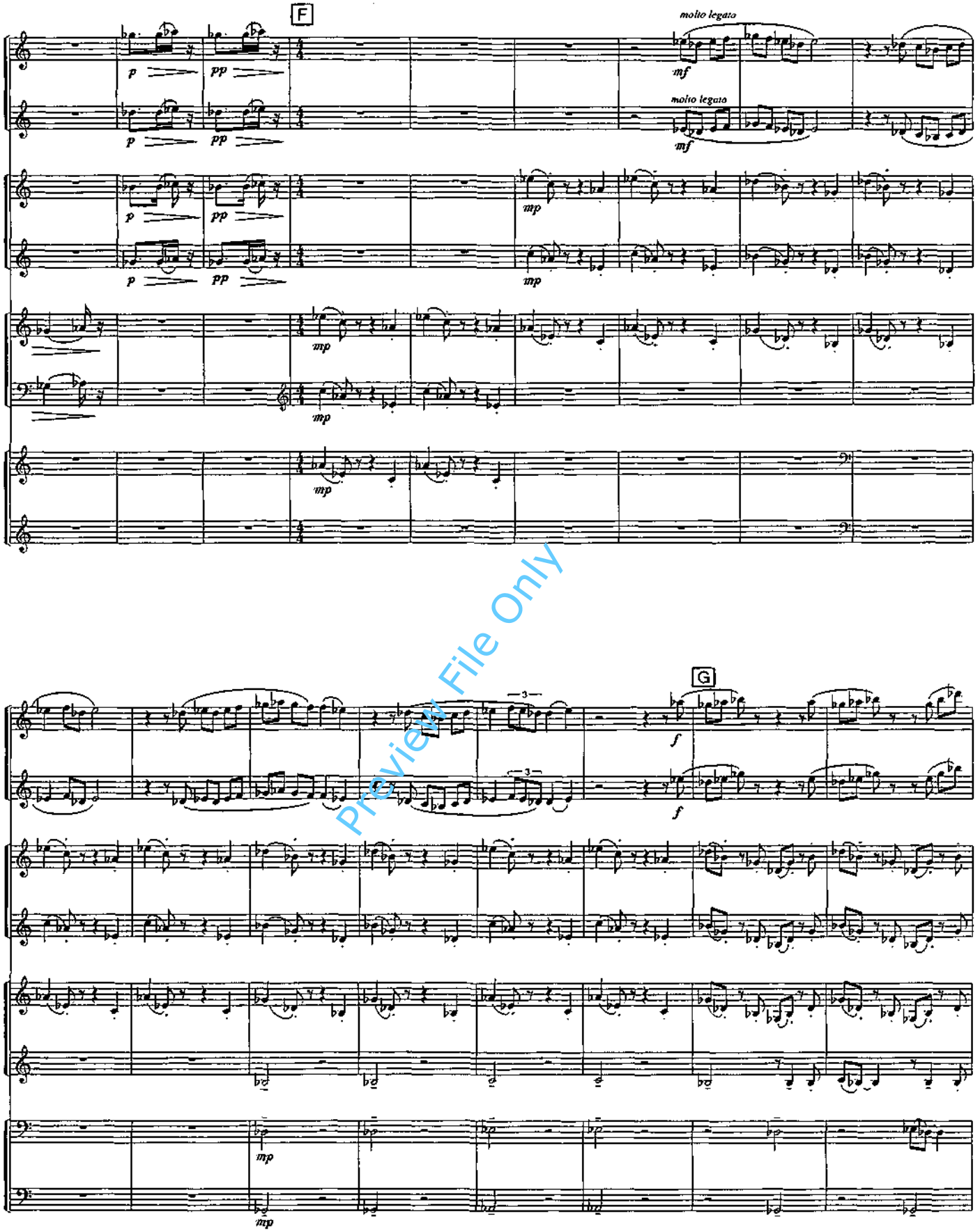

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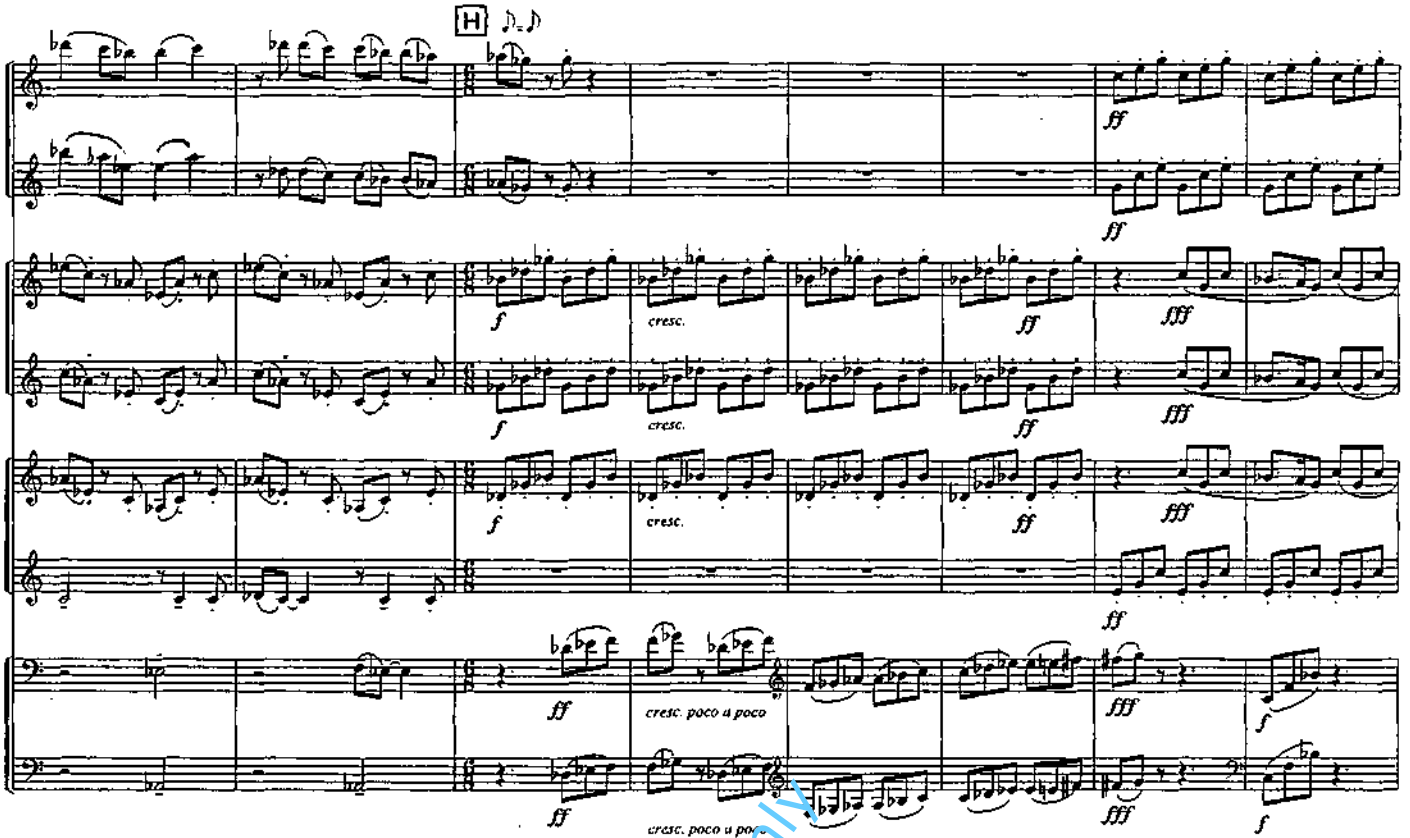

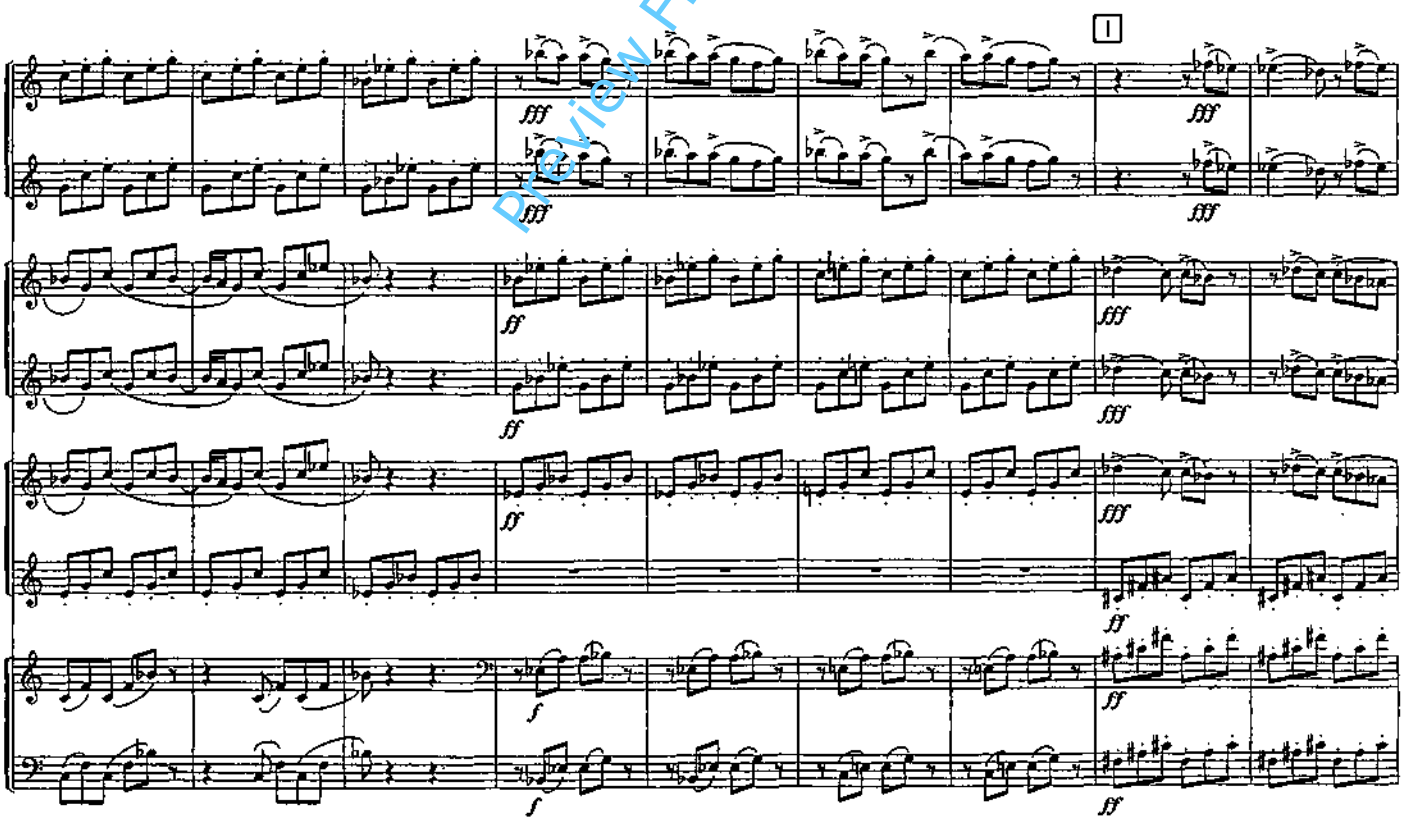

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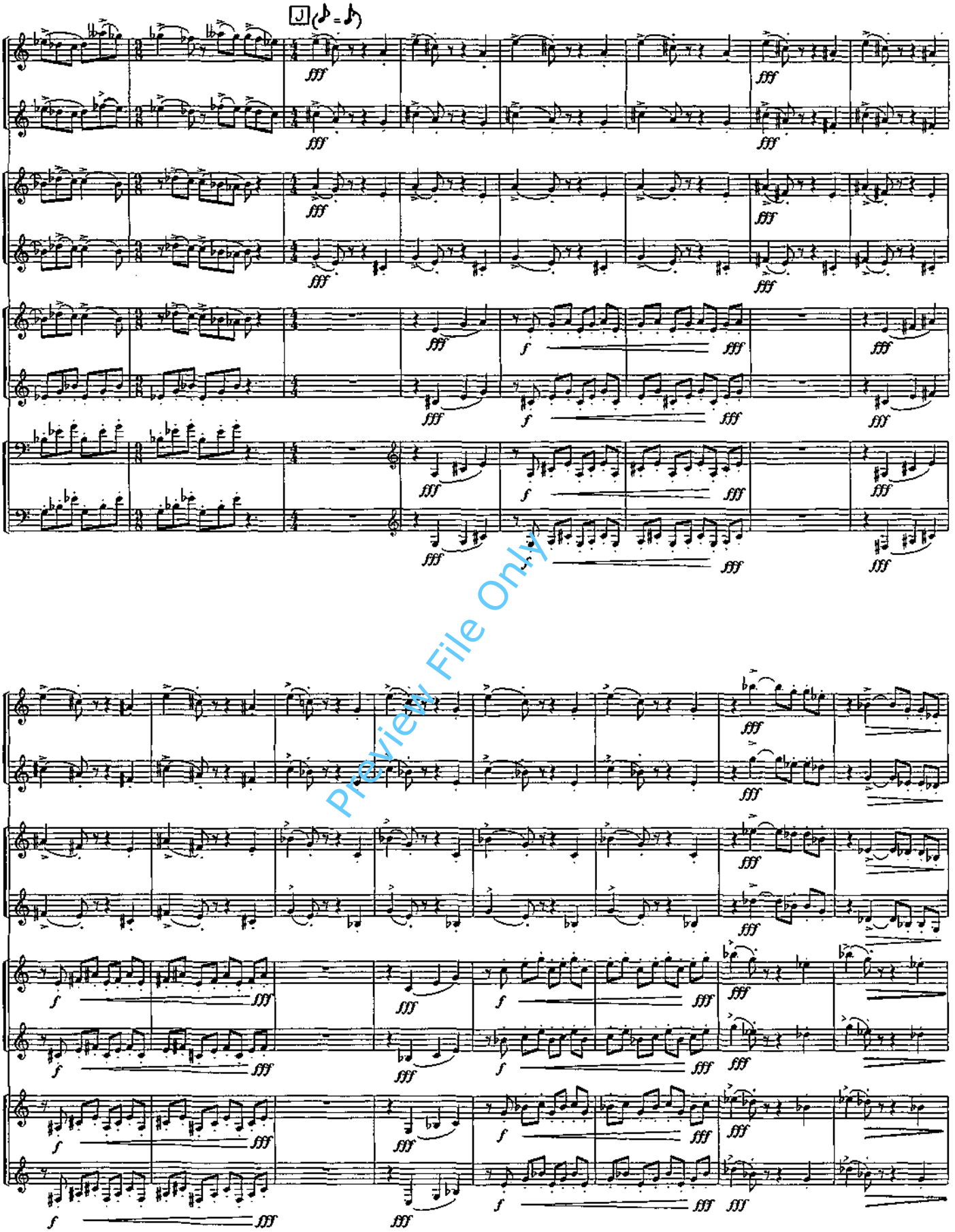

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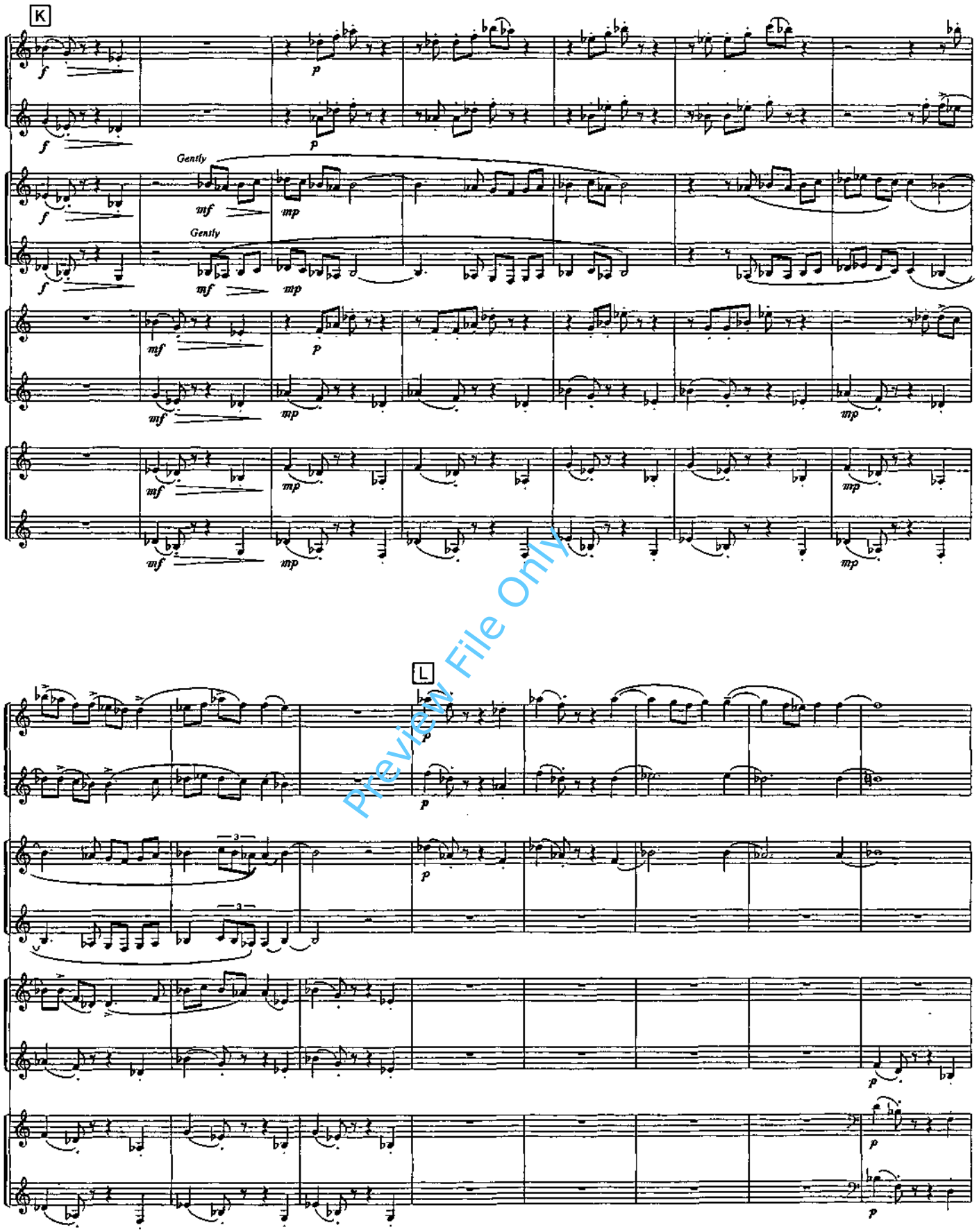

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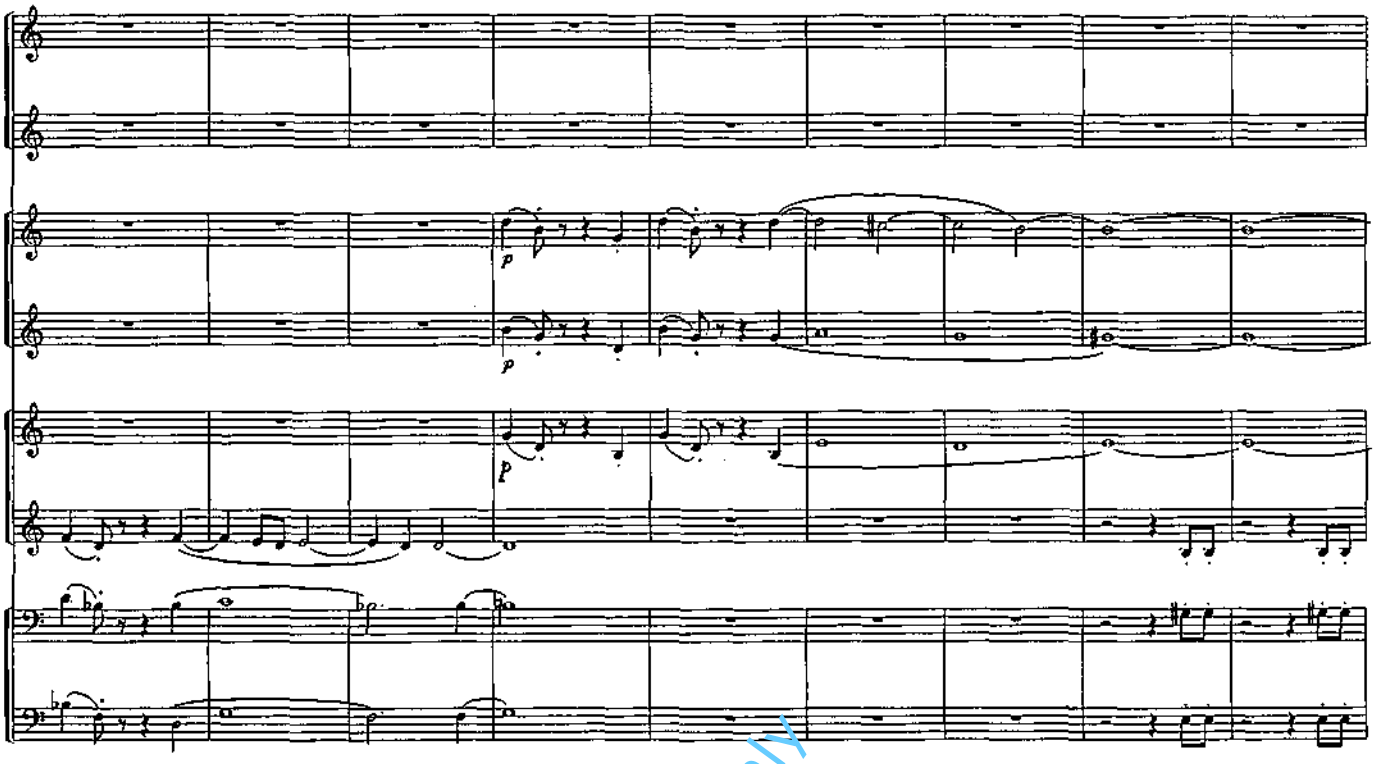

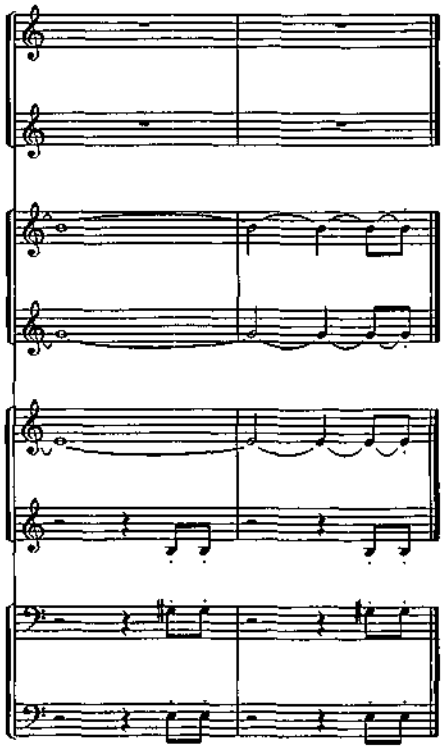

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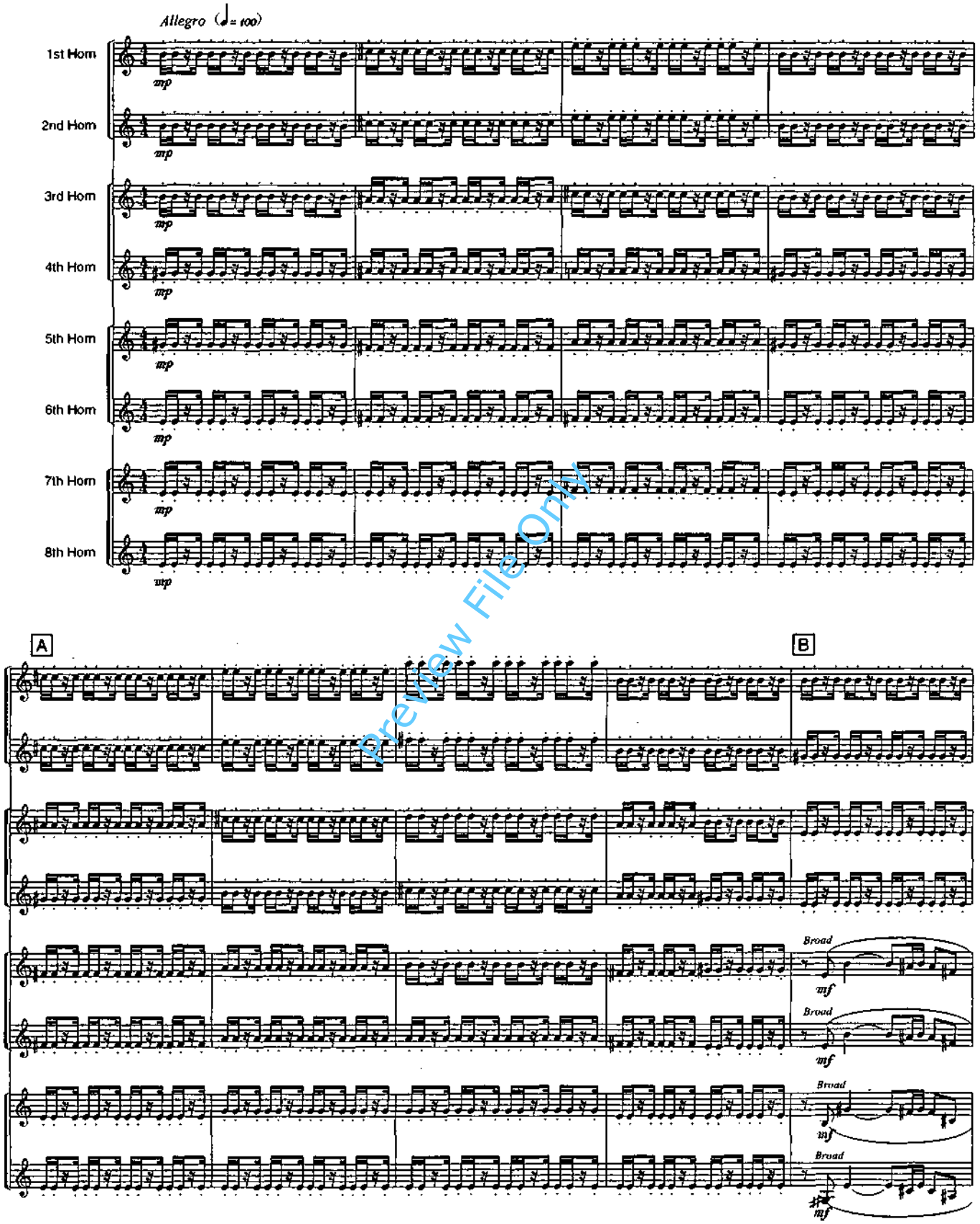

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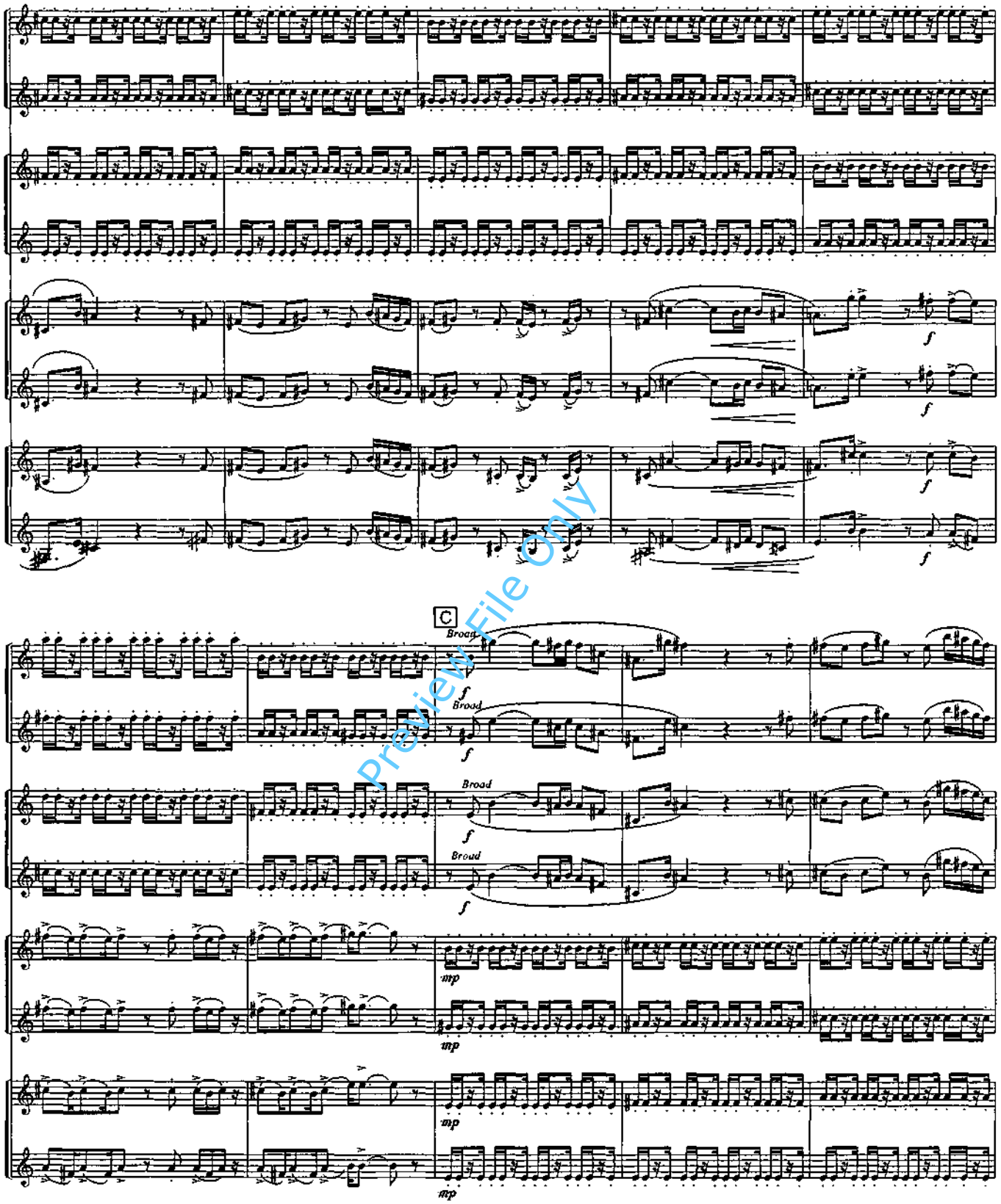

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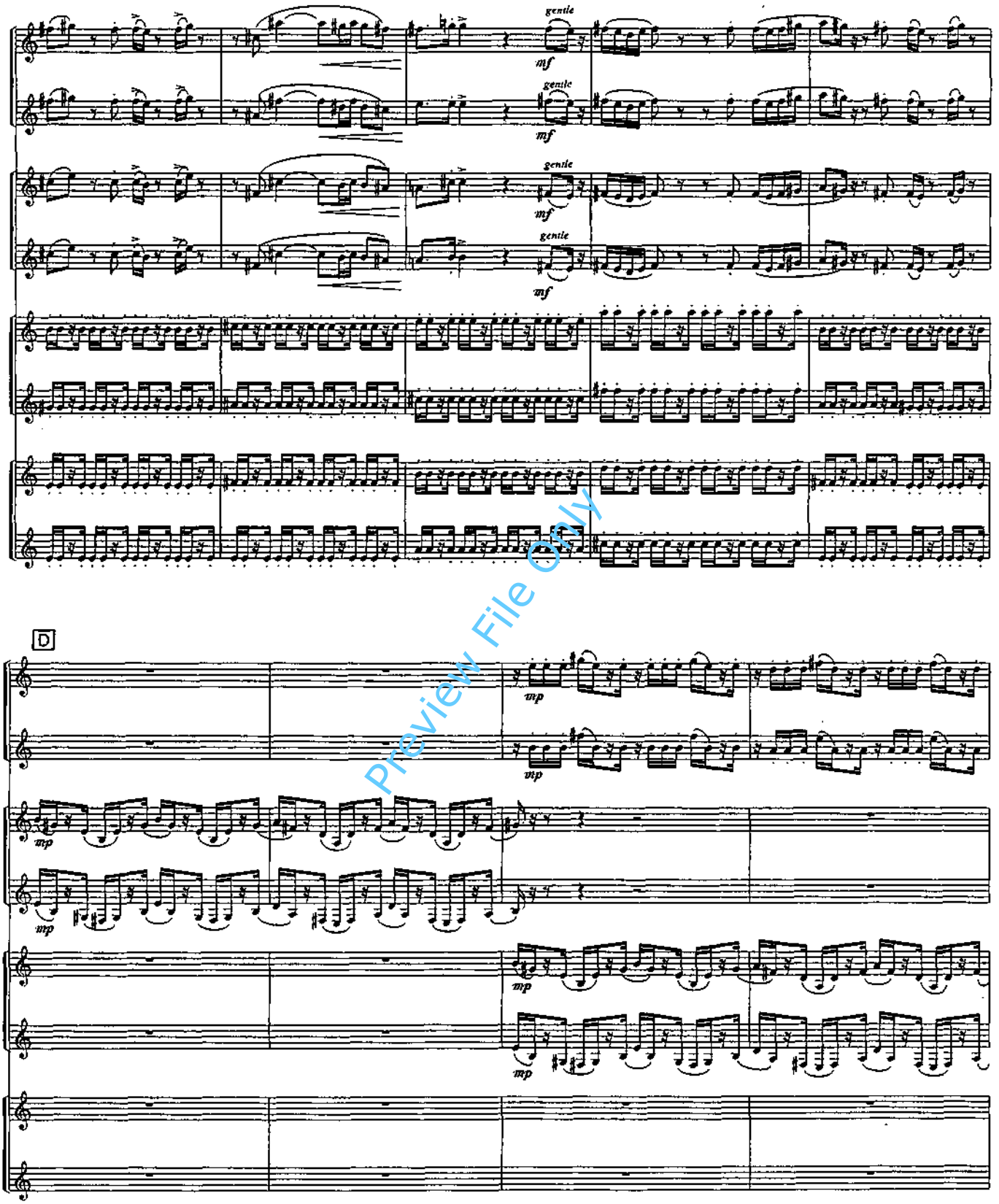

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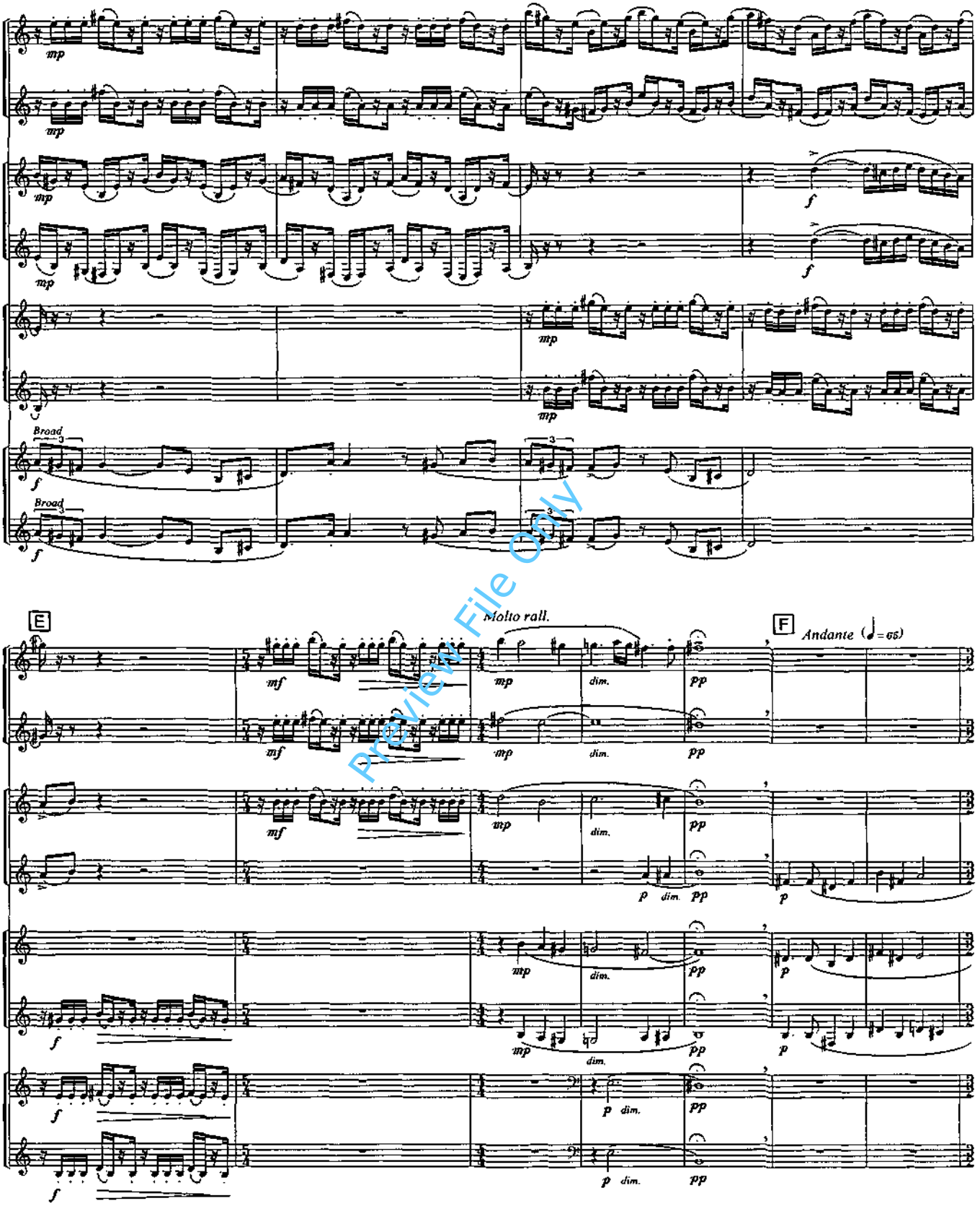

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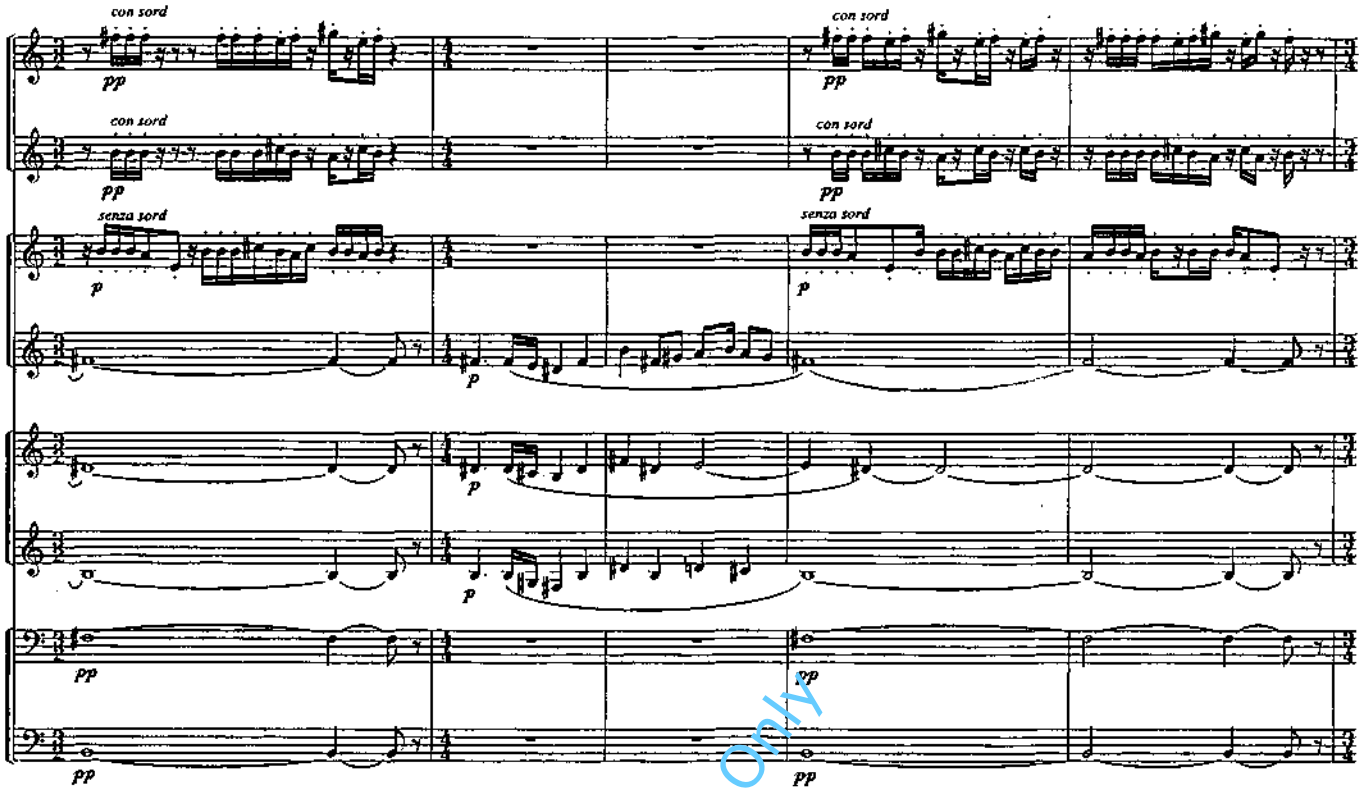

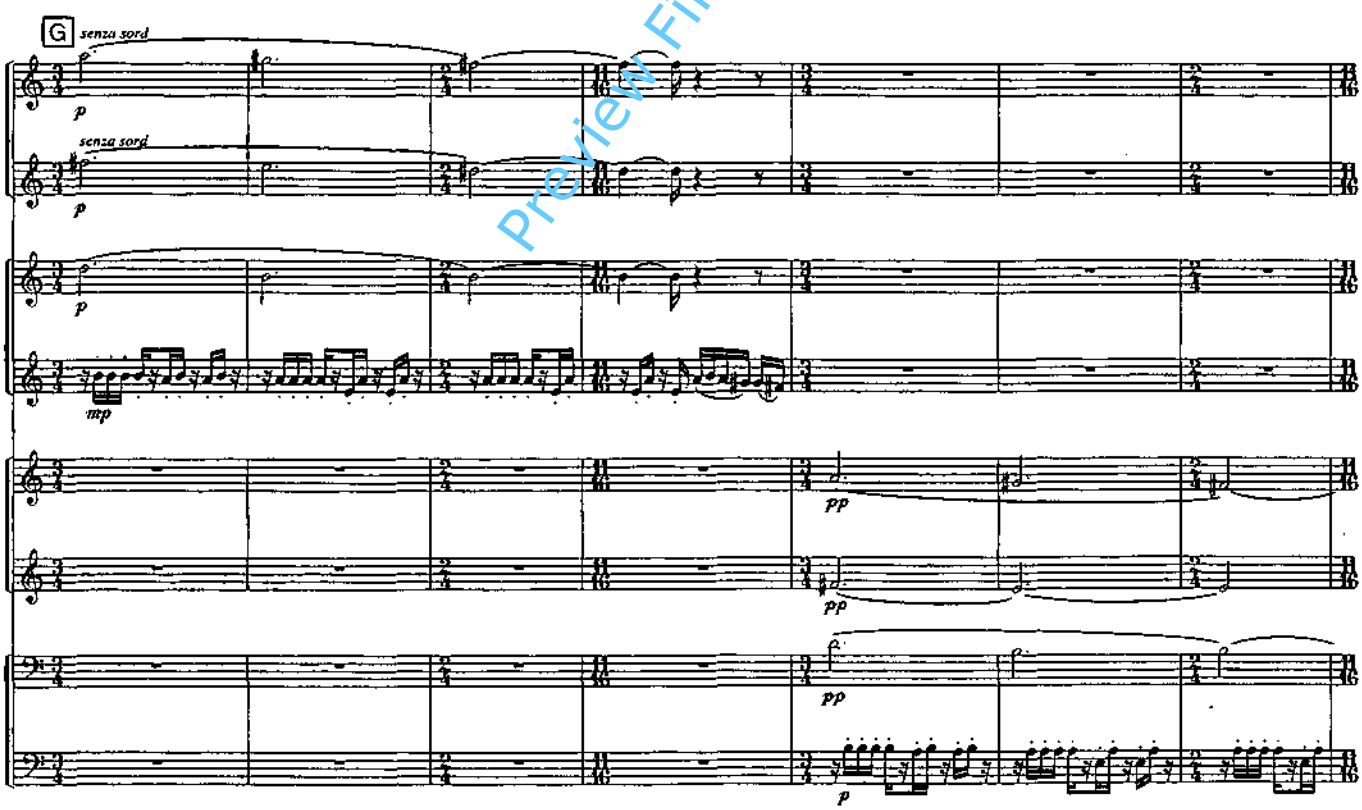

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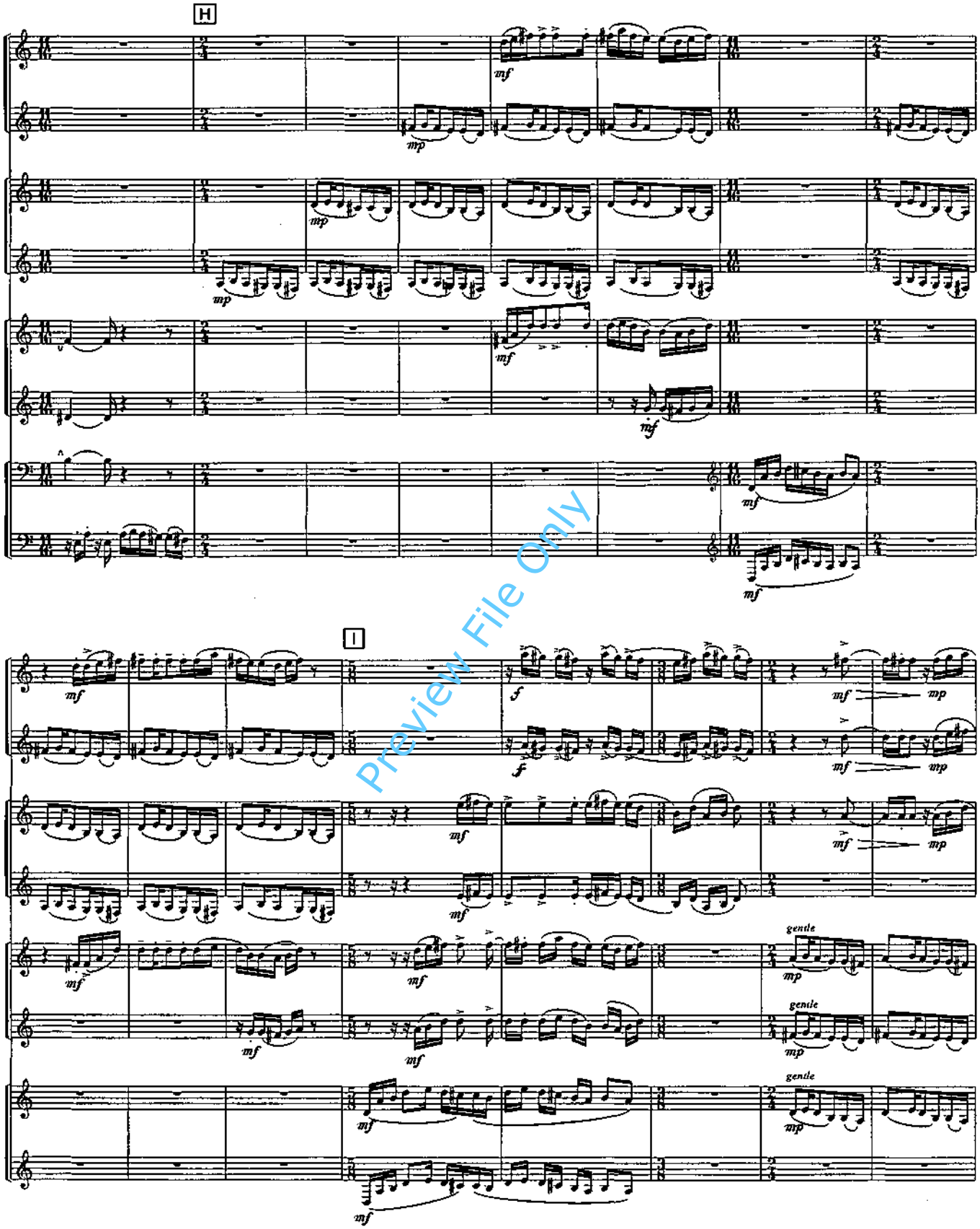

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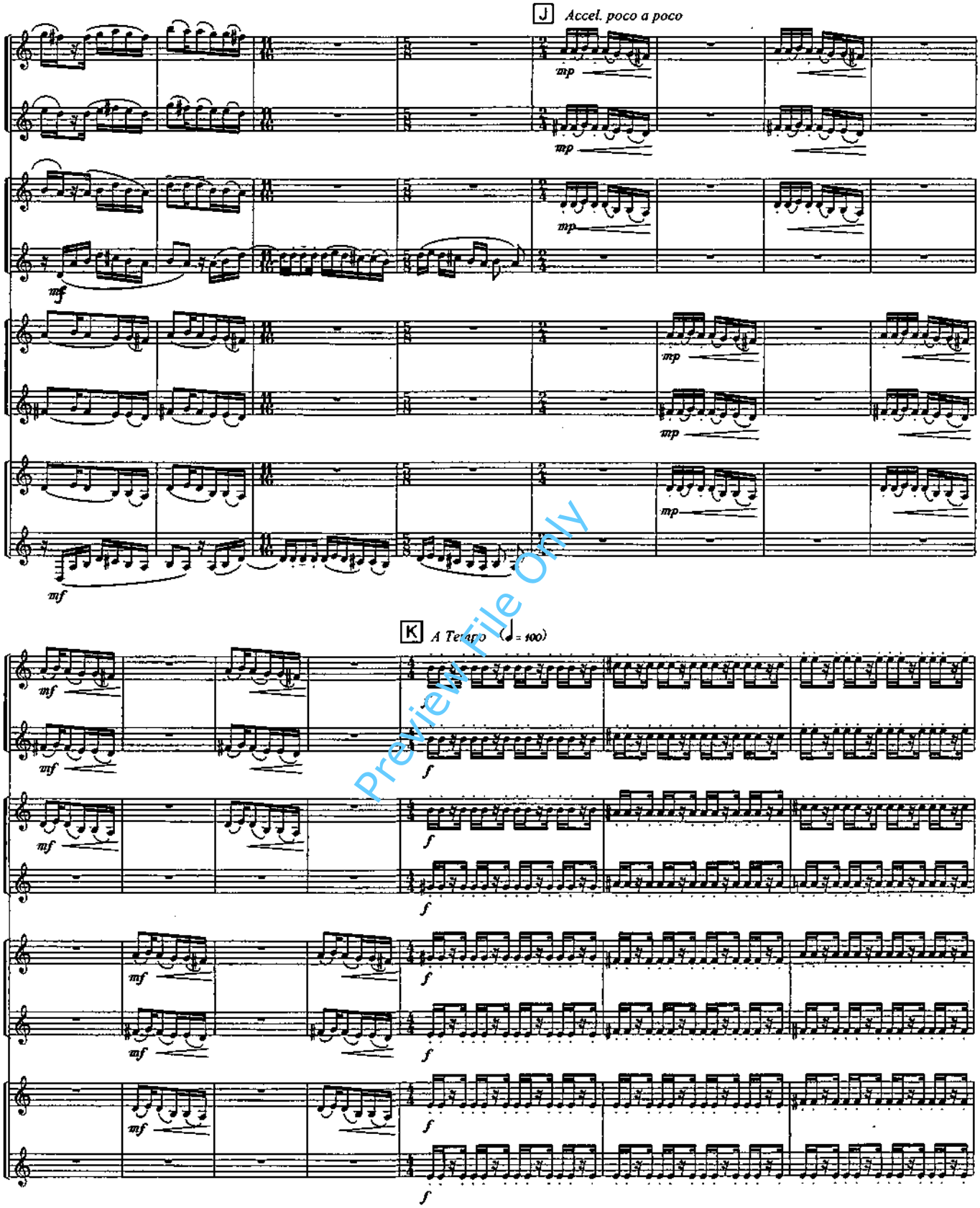

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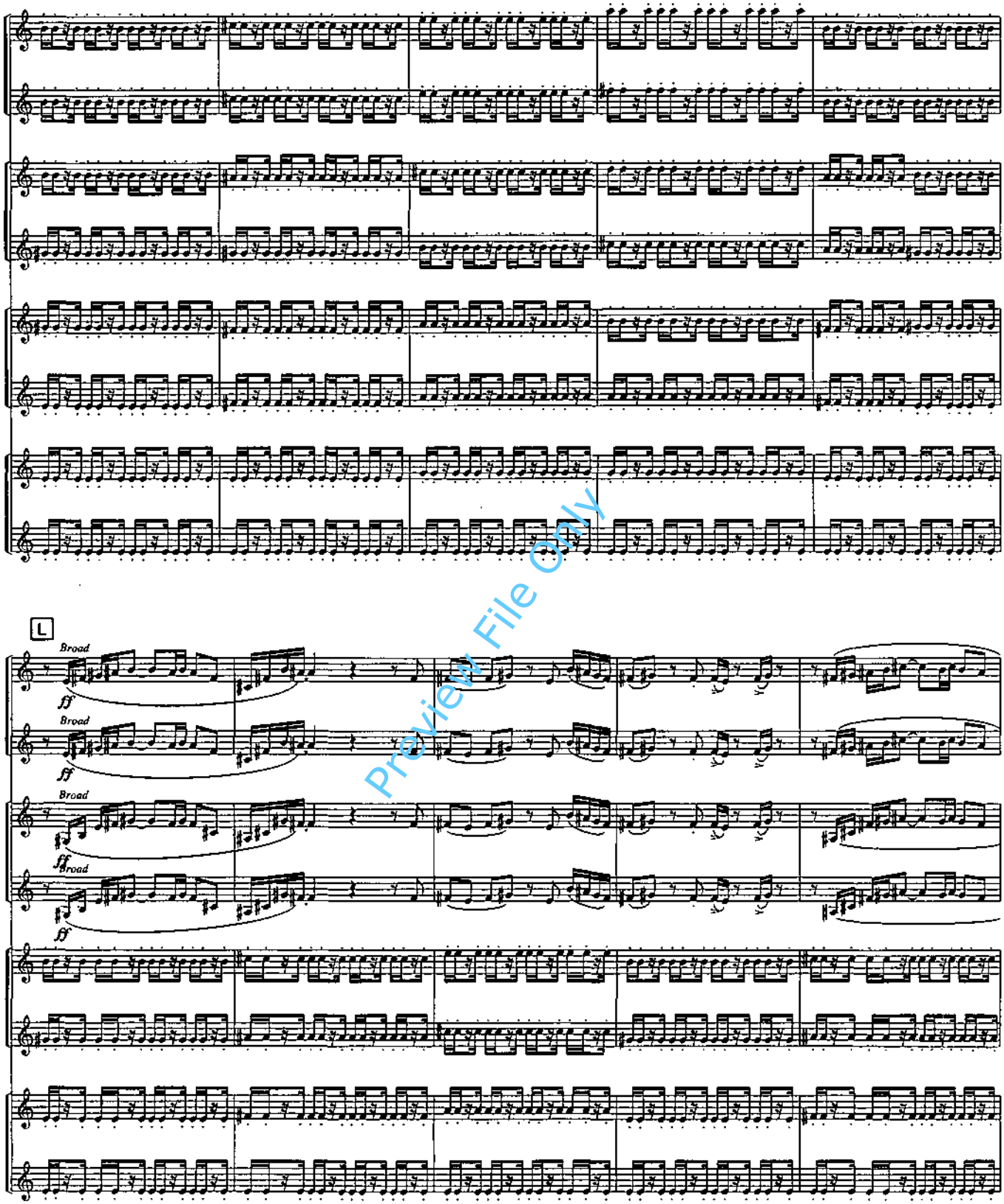

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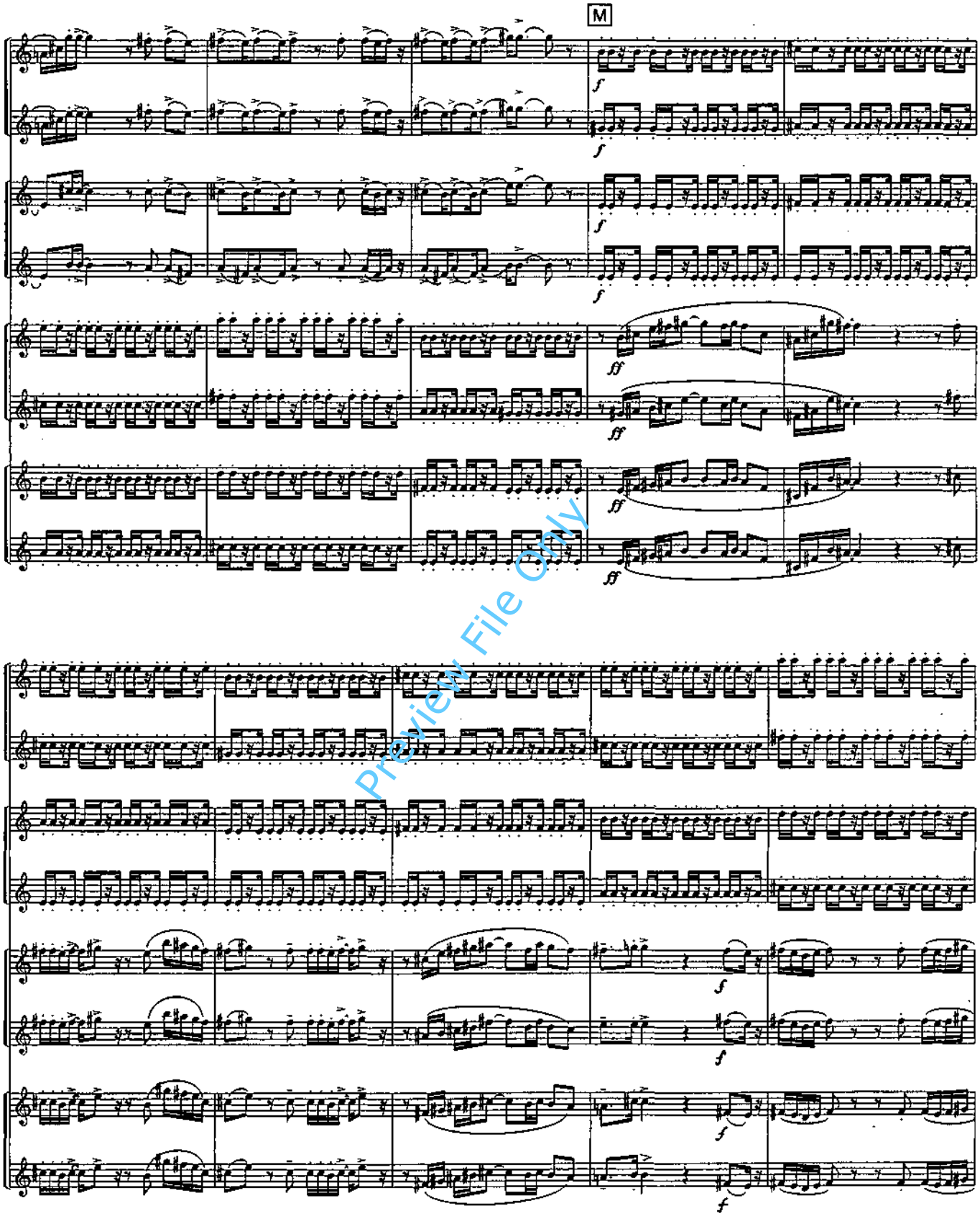

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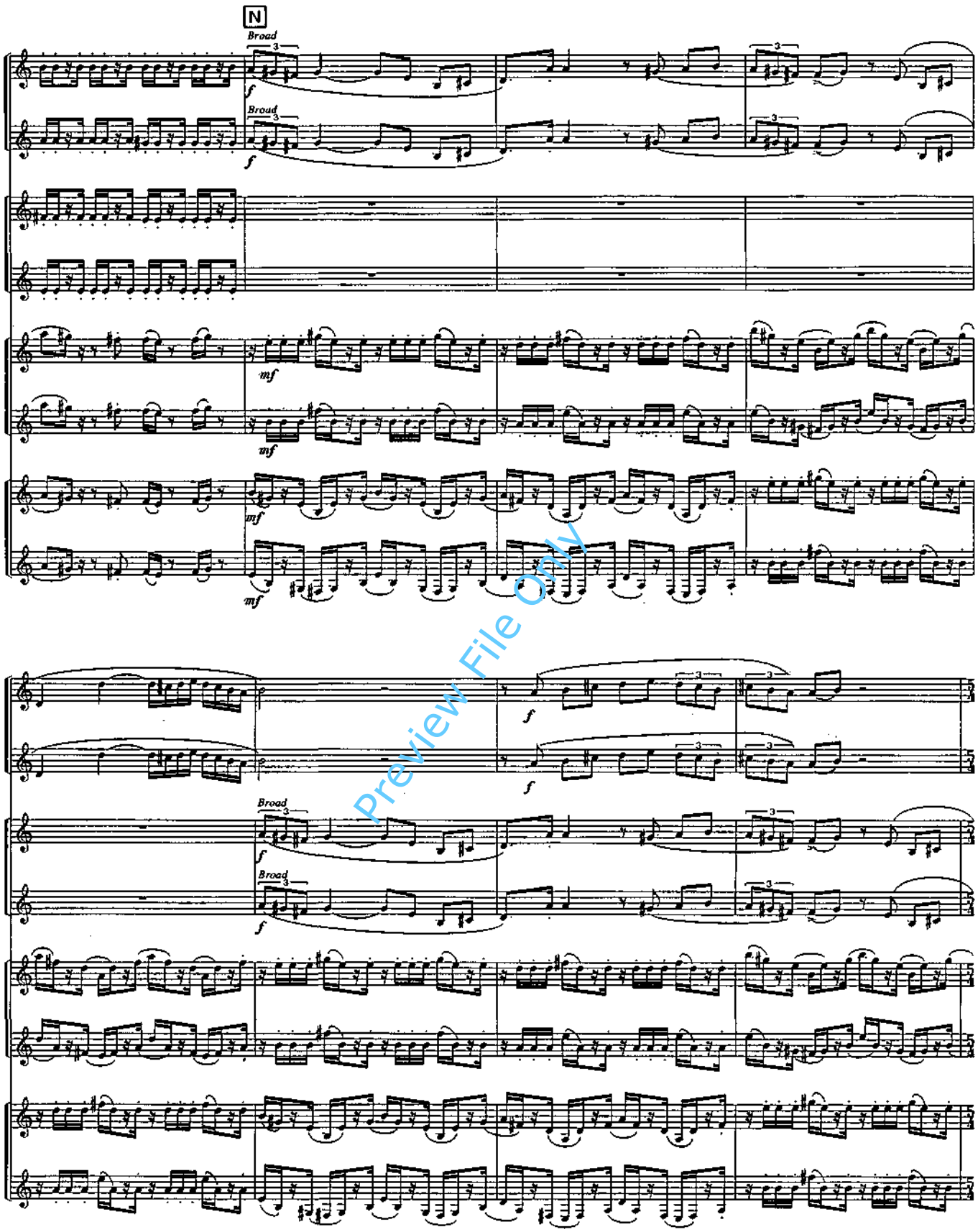

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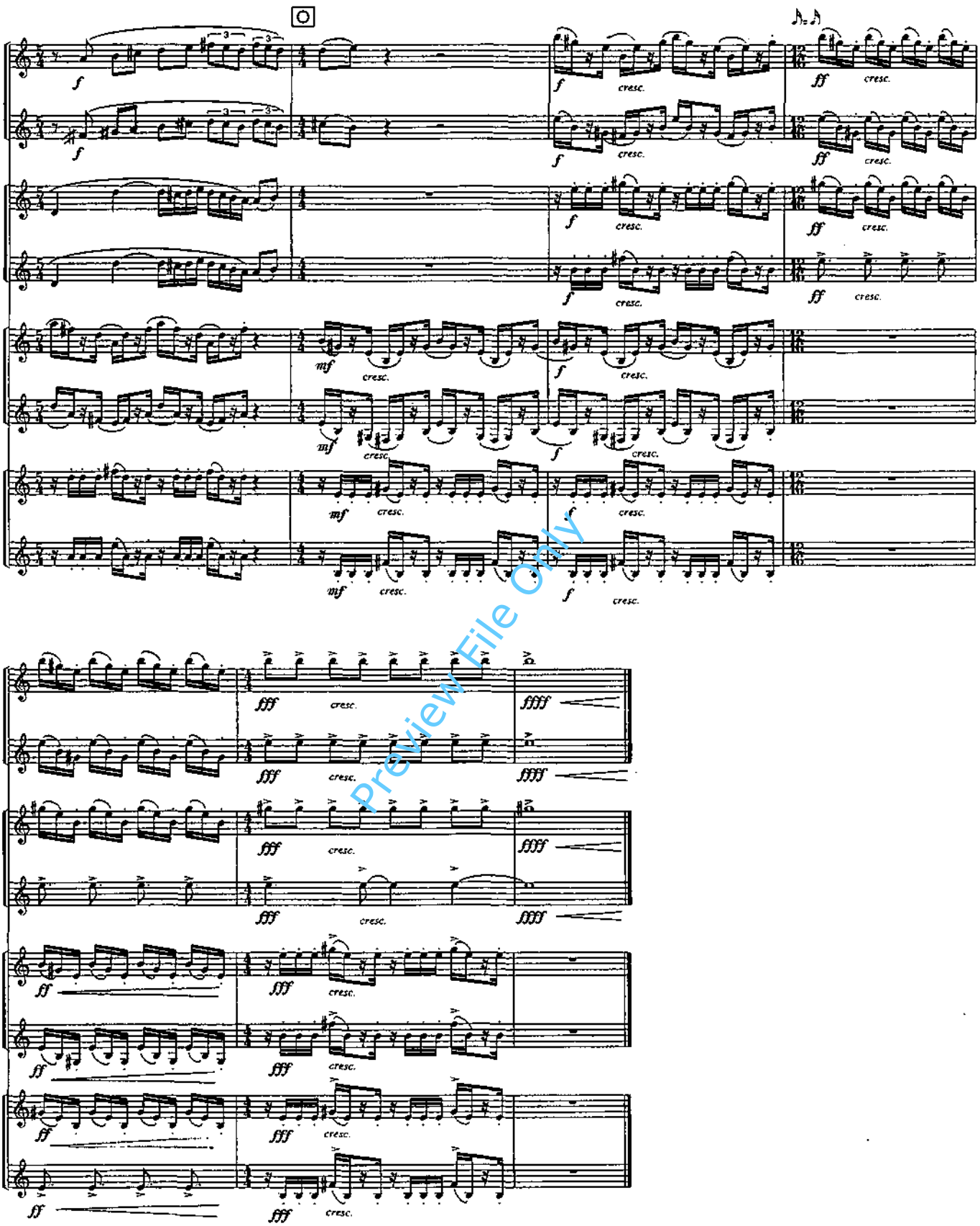

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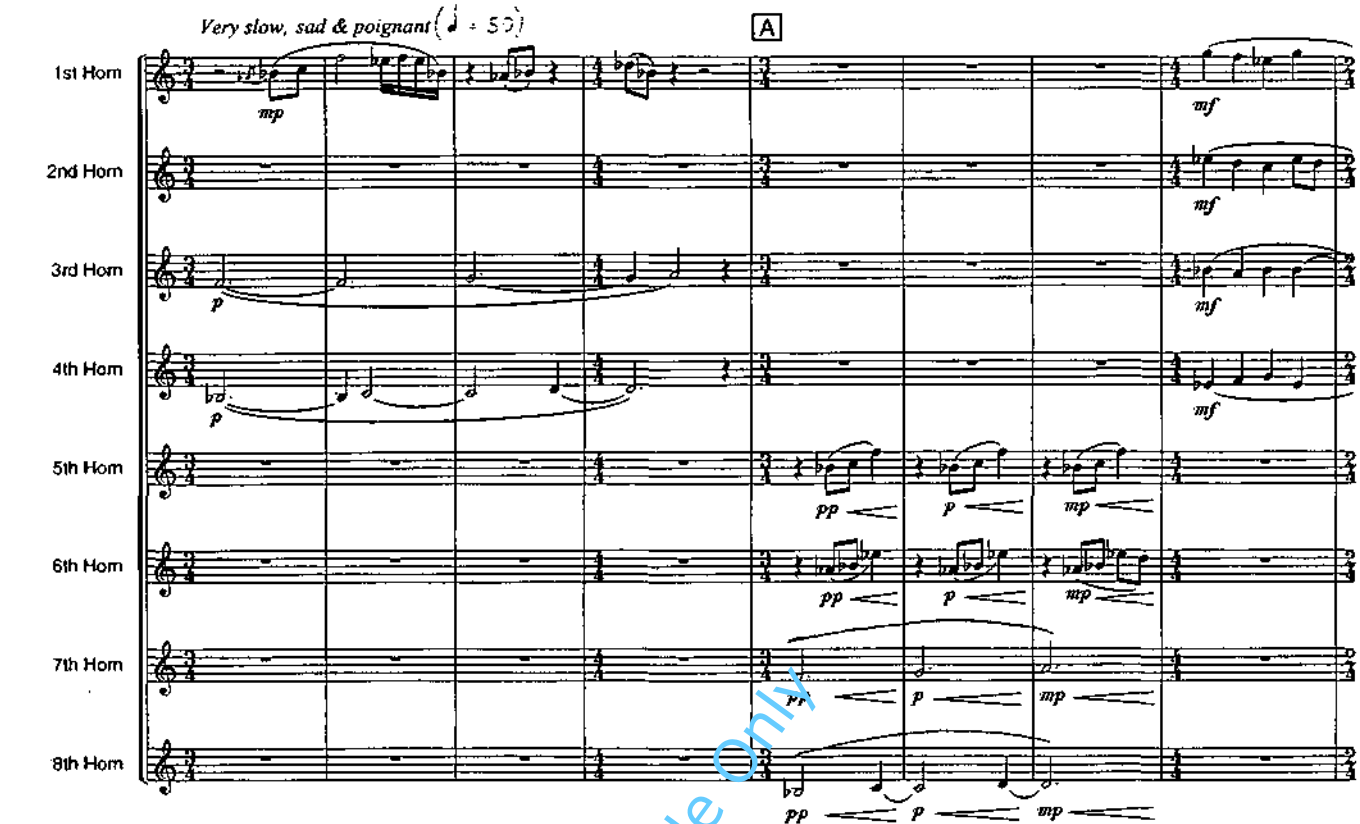

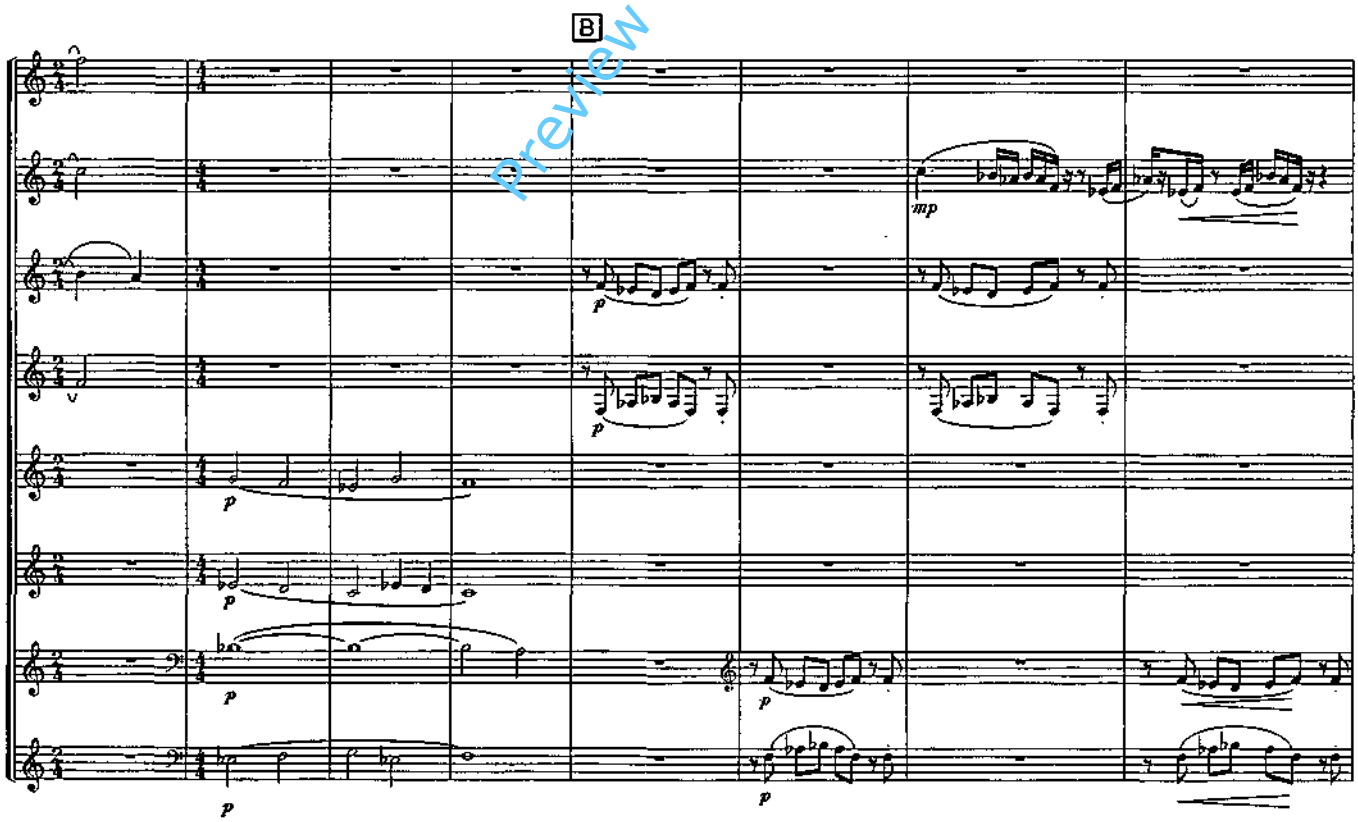

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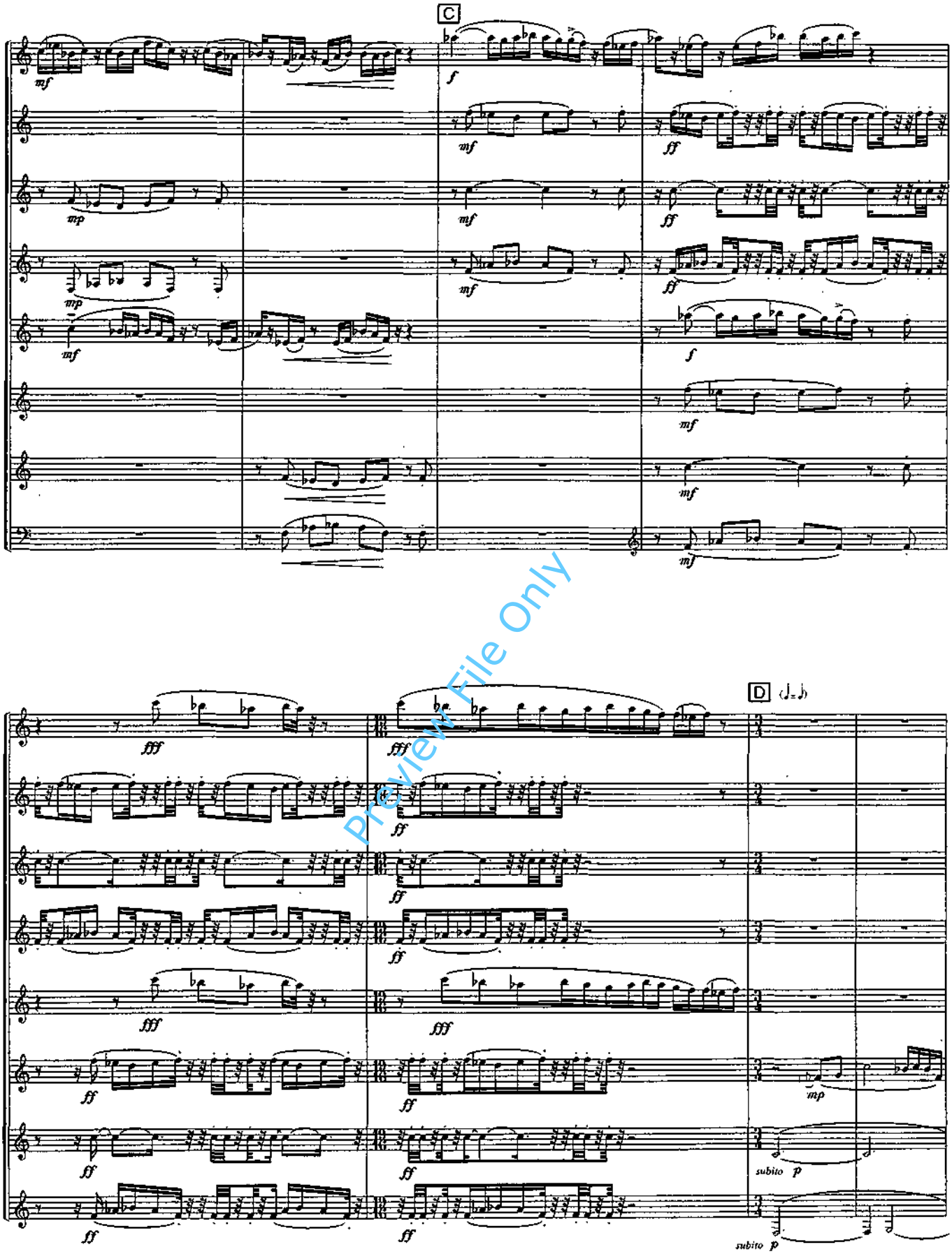

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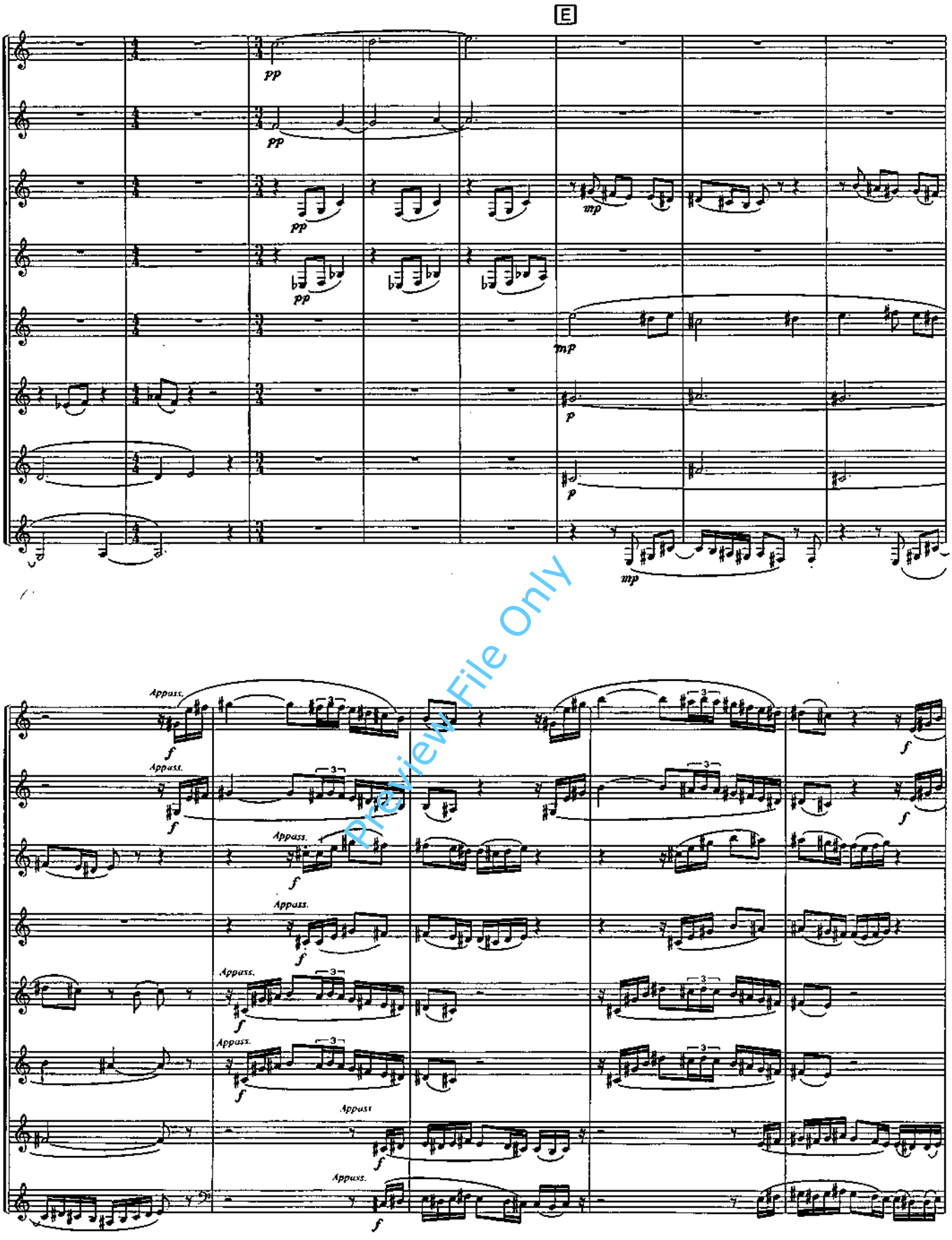

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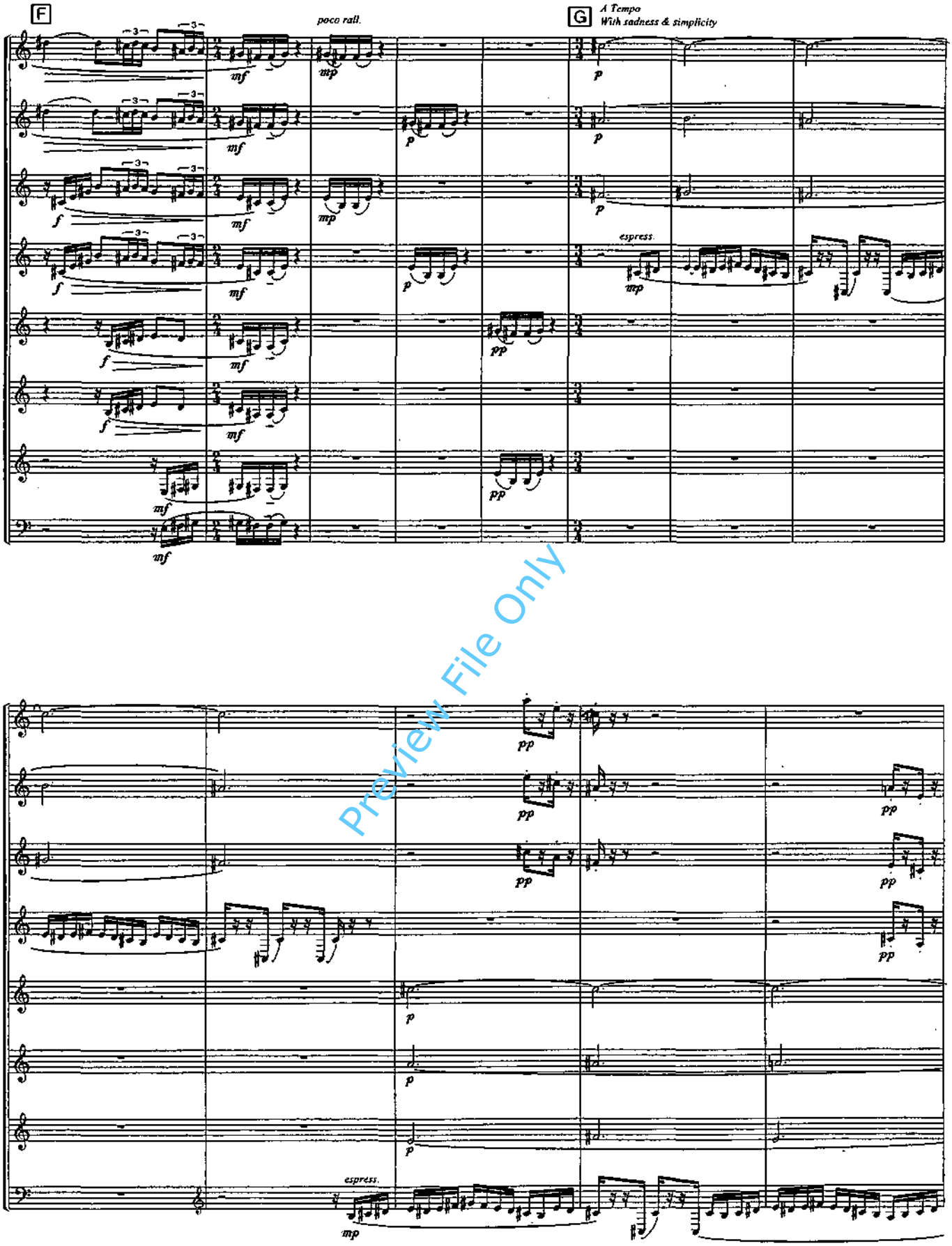

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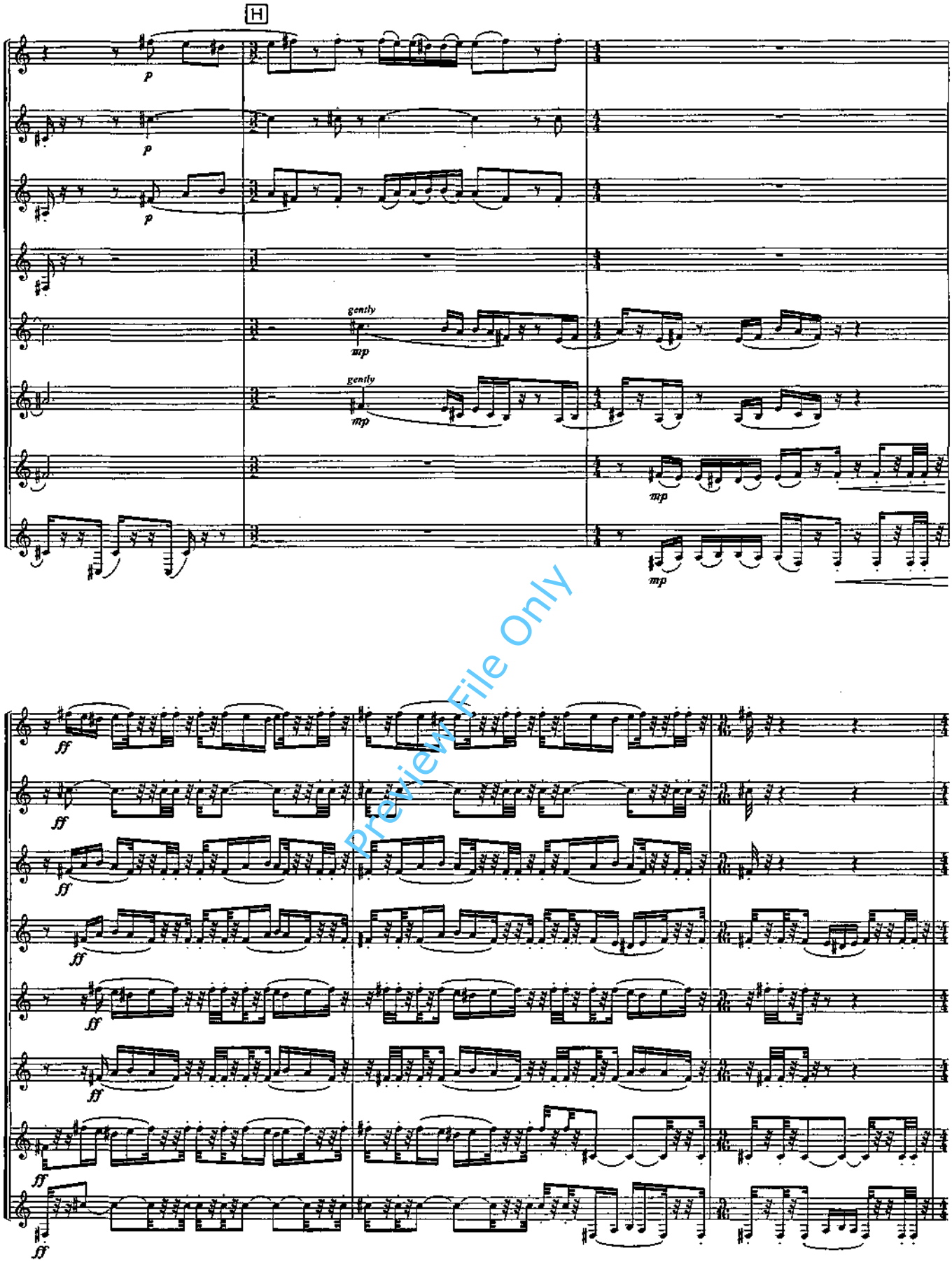

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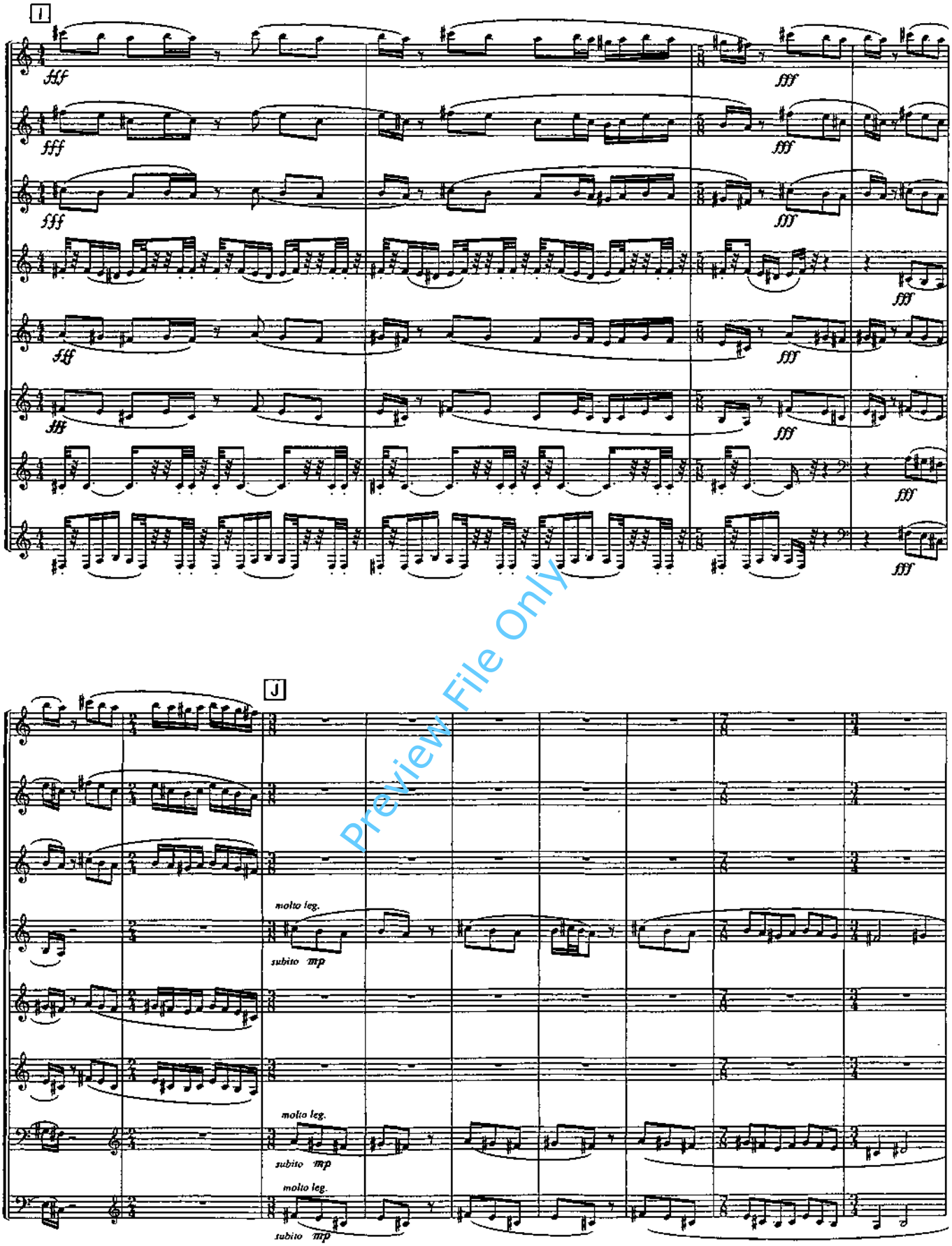

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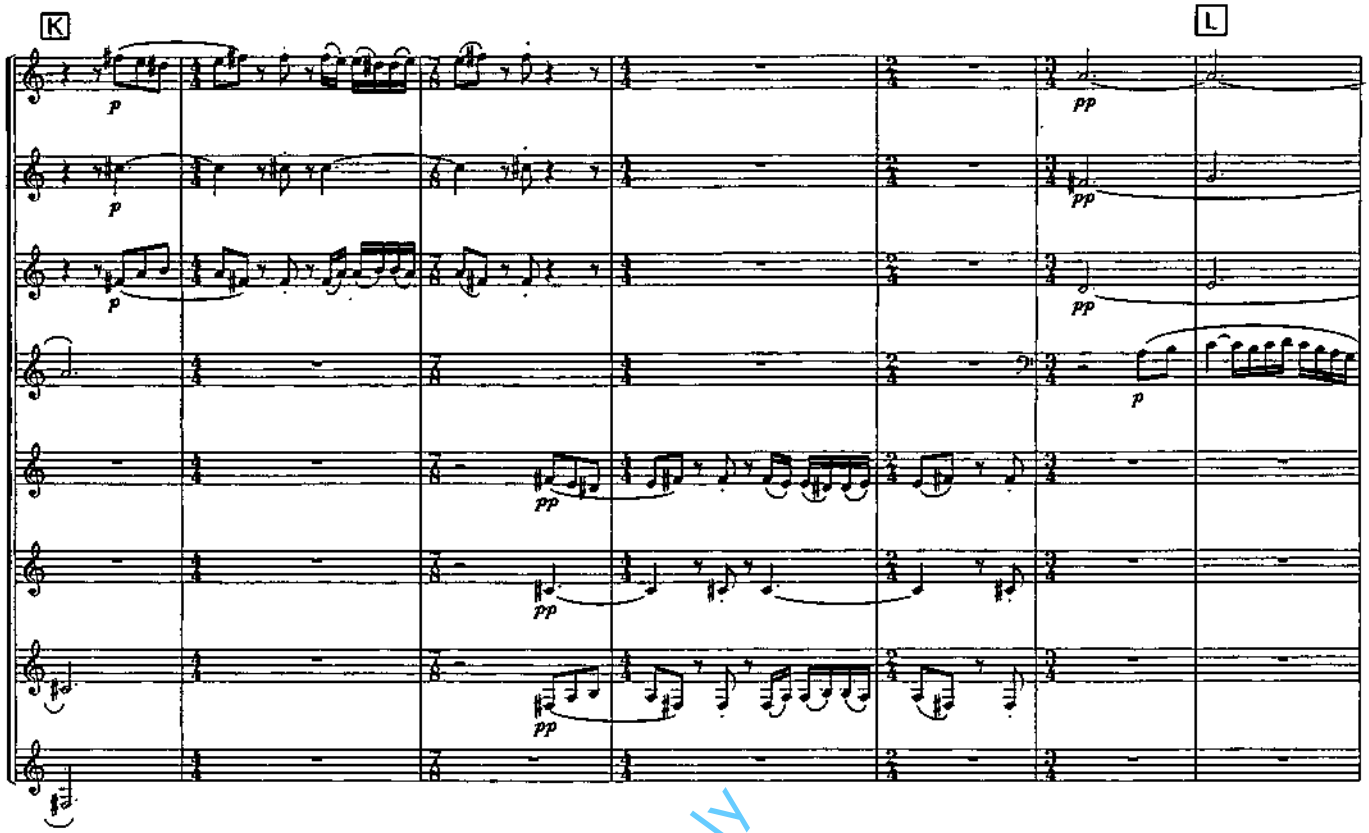

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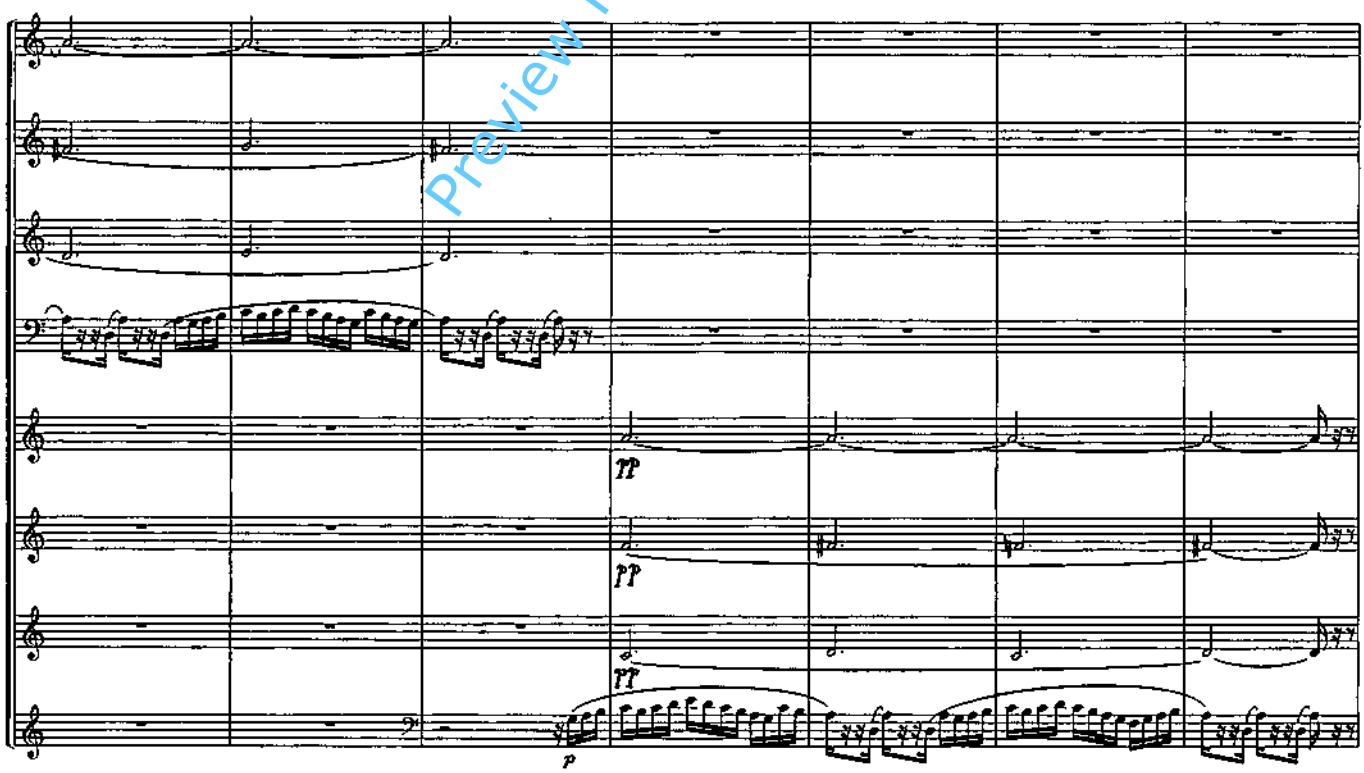

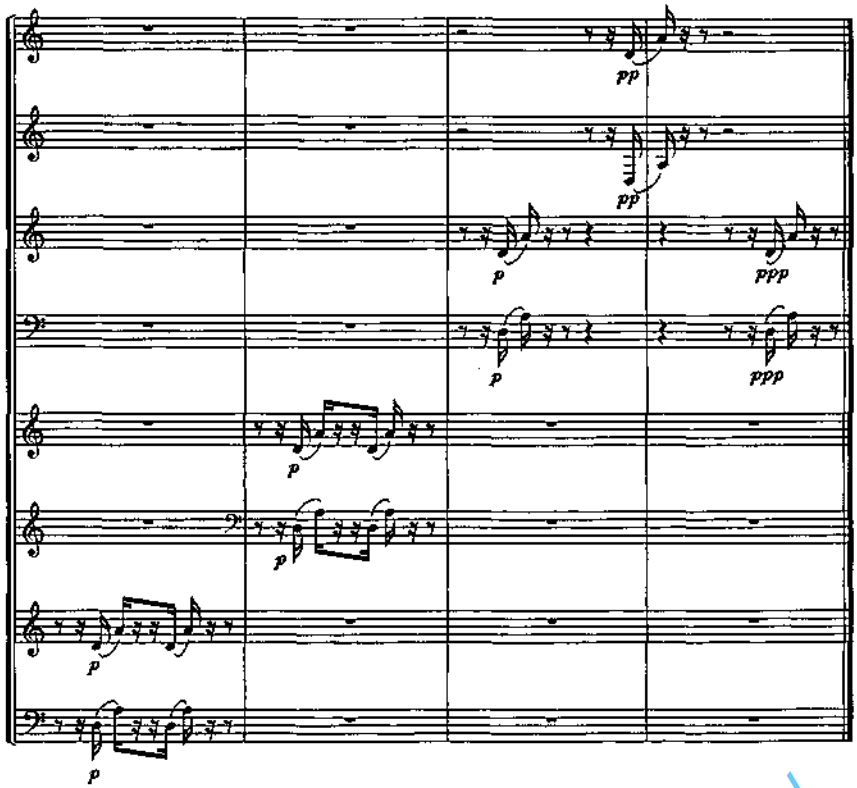

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