Commissioned by the Coull String Quartet
for their 21st anniversary season with
funds from West Midlands Arts
and the Cargill Fund

DAVID MATTHEWS

Skies now are skies (string quartet no 7)

for tenor and string quartet

(1994)

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Duration 18 minutes

Faber Music Ltd
3 Queen Square
London
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David Matthews : **String Quartet no 7 'Skies now are skies',** for tenor and string quartet, op 65

Skies now are skies was written in 1994 as a wedding present for my wife Jean. Because she is American, and because I was composing the music partly in London and partly in Boston, I wanted to set both English and American poetry. So I chose a poem by one of my favourite writers, D.H.Lawrence, from his volume *Look! We Have Come Through!* which was written shortly after his elopement to Italy with Frieda Weekly, and coupled it with one of e.e.cummings's marvellous love poems for his third wife Marion Morehouse. A phrase from this poem also suppled the title of the quartet. As a complement, I added my setting of a passage from *The Song of Songs* which I had made for my *Vespers* in 1993, adapting it for tenor and string quartet from its original setting for mezzo-soprano, tenor and orchestra. The three songs are separated by interludes for string quartet alone based on the instrumental introduction. The brief scherzo before the final song also develops material from the first two songs. The quartet ends with an instrumental postlude.

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Not I, not I, but the wind that blows through me!
A fine wind is blowing the new direction of Time.
If only I let it bear me, carry me, if only it carry me!
If only I am sensitive, subtle, oh, delicate, a winged gift!
If only, most lovely of all, I yield myself and am borrowed
By the fine, fine wind that takes its course through the chaos of the world
Like a fine, an exquisite chisel, a wedge-blade inserted;
If only I am keen and hard like the sheer tip of a wedge
Driven by invisible blows,
The rock will split, we shall come at the wonder, we shall find the Hesperides.

Oh, for the wonder that bubbles into my soul,
I would be a good fountain, a good well-head,
Would blur no whisper, spoil no expression.

What is the knocking?
What is the knocking at the door in the night?
It is someone wants to do us harm.

No, no, it is the three strange angels.
Admit them, admit them.

D.H.Lawrence

now air is air and thing is thing:no bliss

of heavenly earth beguiles our spirits,whose
miraculously disenchanted eyes

live the magnificent honesty of space.

Mountains are mountains now;skies now are skies--
and such a sharpening freedom lifts our blood
as if whole supreme this compete doubtless

universe we'd(and we alone had)made

--yes;or as is if our souls,awakened from
summer's green trance,would not adventure soon
a deeper magic:that white sleep wherein
all human curiosity we'll spend
(gladly,as lovers must)immortal and

the courage to receive time's mightiest dream

e.e.cummings

Pulchra es, amica mea, Suavis et decora filia Jerusalem.	Thou art beautiful, my love, Gentle and comely as a daughter of Jerusalem.
Pone me ut signaculum super cor tuum, Ut signaculum super brachium tuum. Quia fortis est mors dilectio.	Set me as a seal upon thine heart, As a seal upon thine arm. For love is strong as death.
Quam pulchra es et quam decora, Carissima, in deliciis.	How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights.

from The Song of Songs

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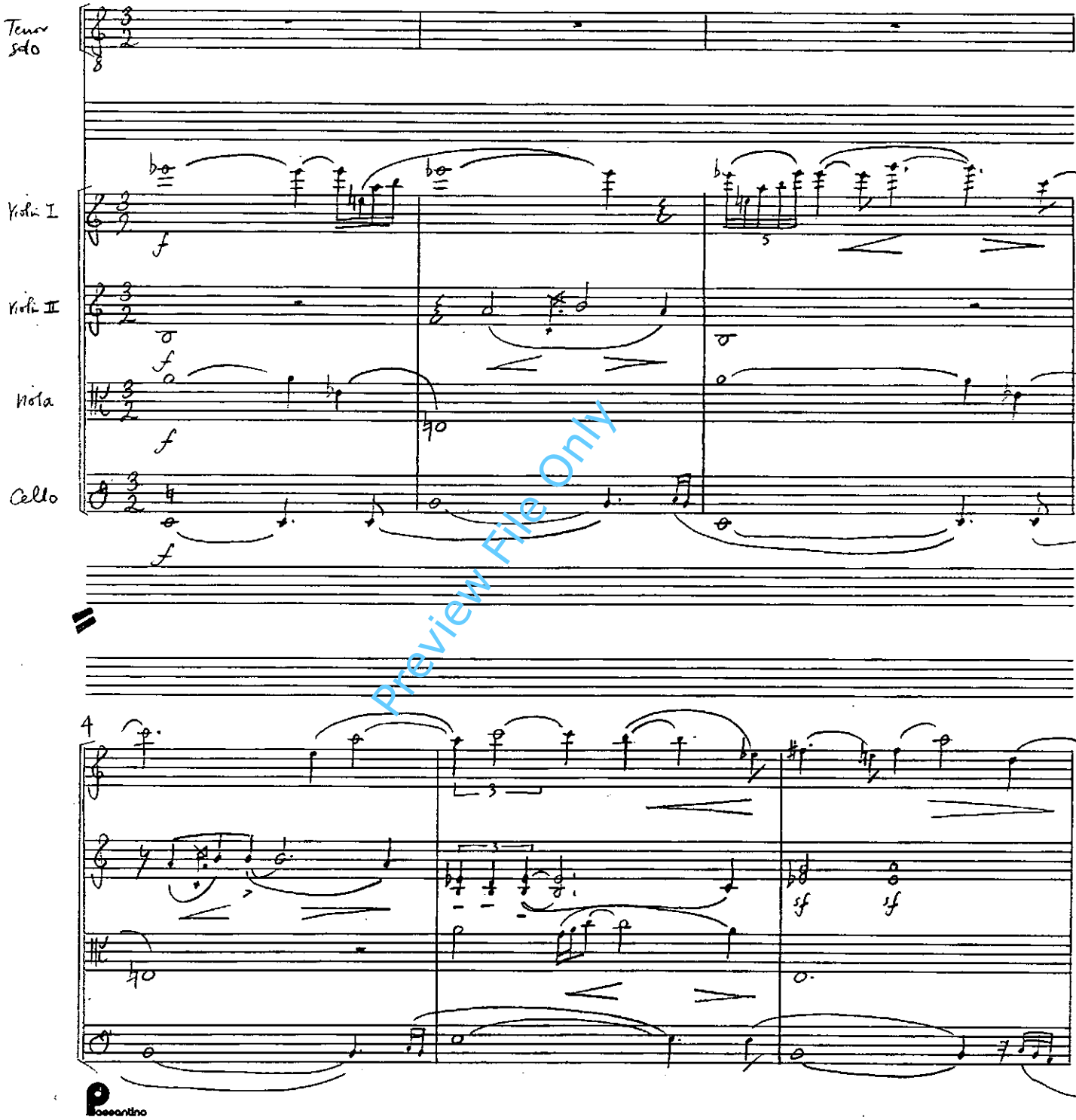
for Jean

SKIES NOW ARE SKIES
(String Quartet no 7)

Con moto appassionato (♩ = c.63)

Daniel Jones, op. 65



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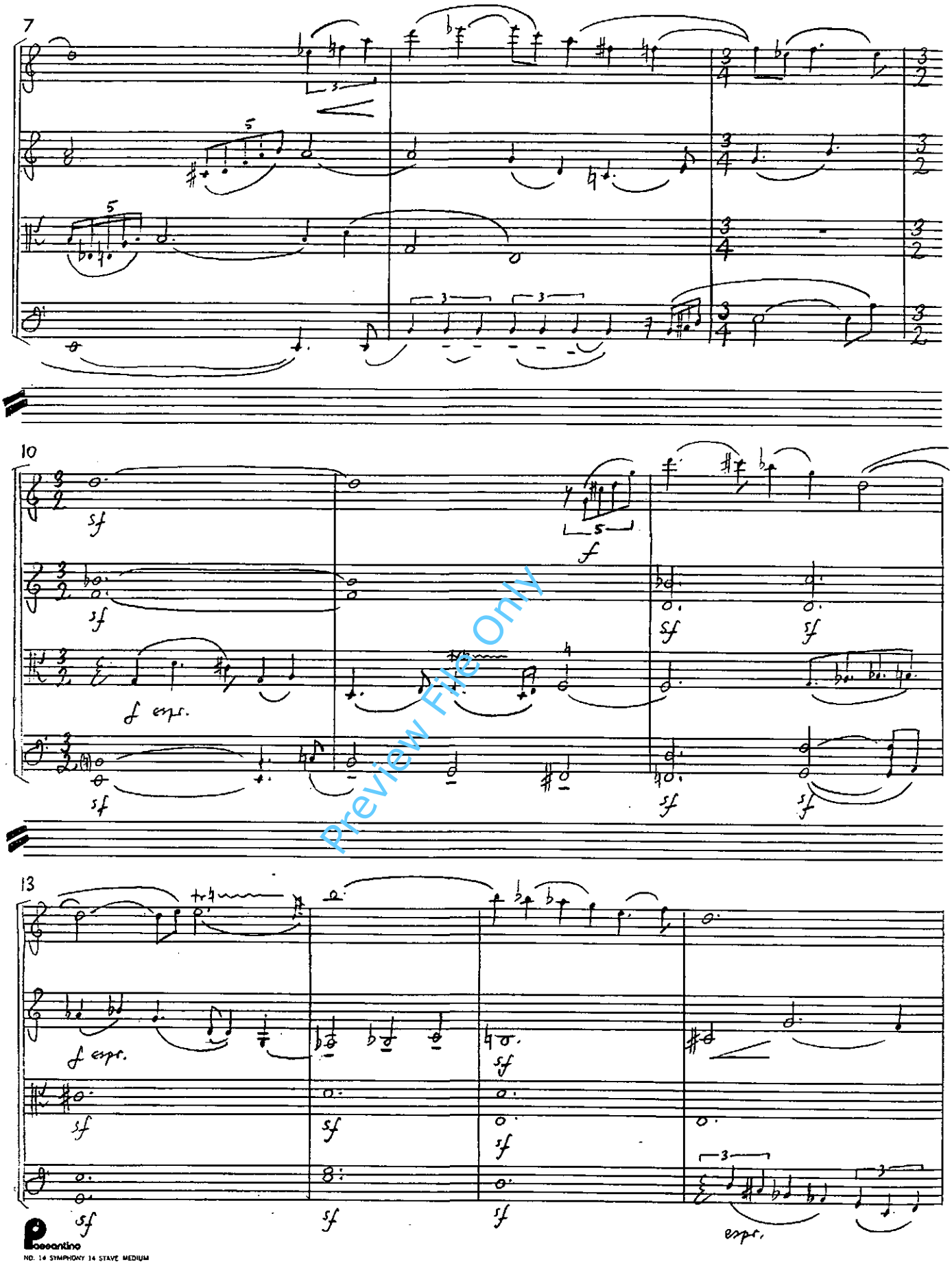

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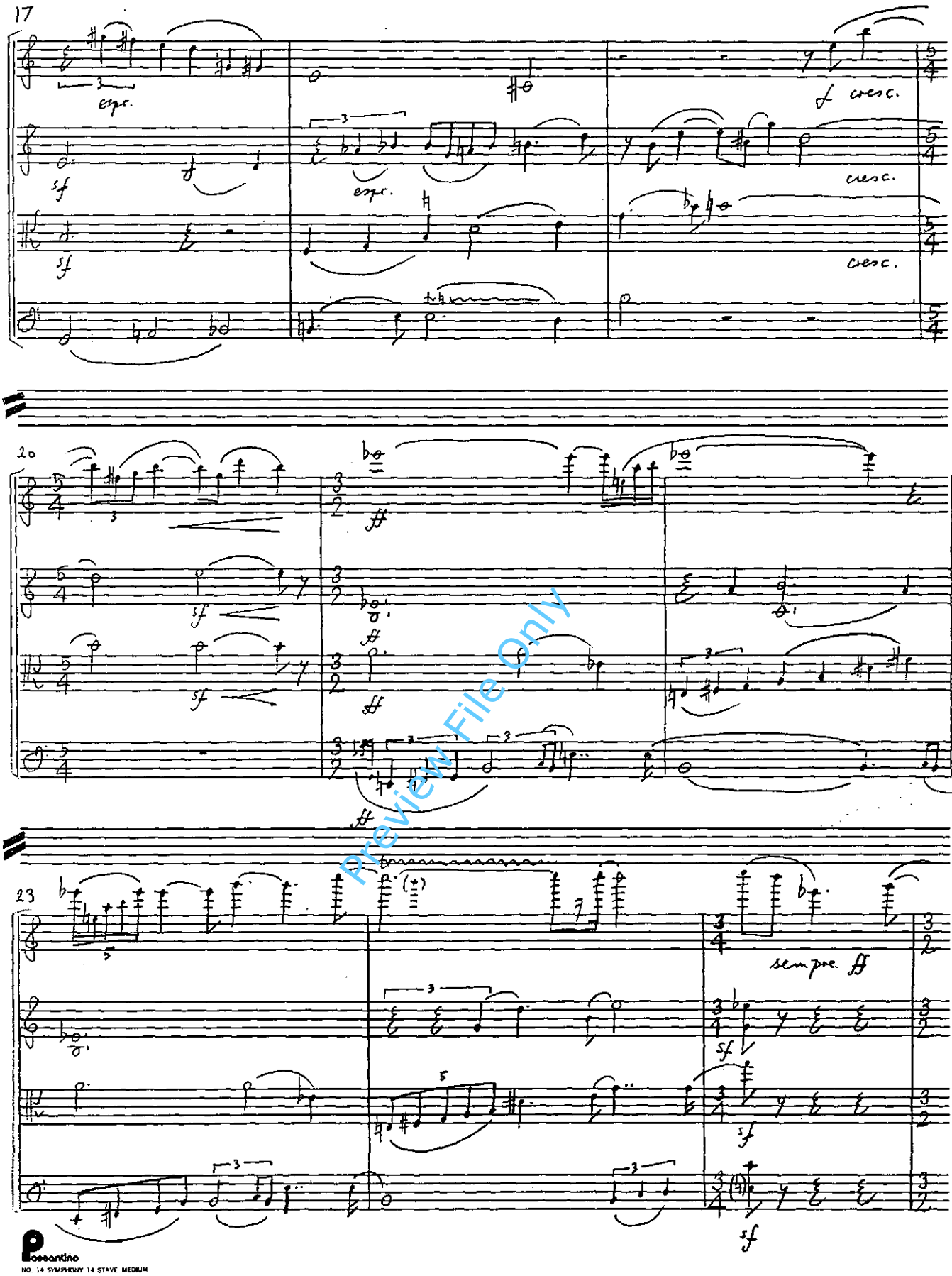

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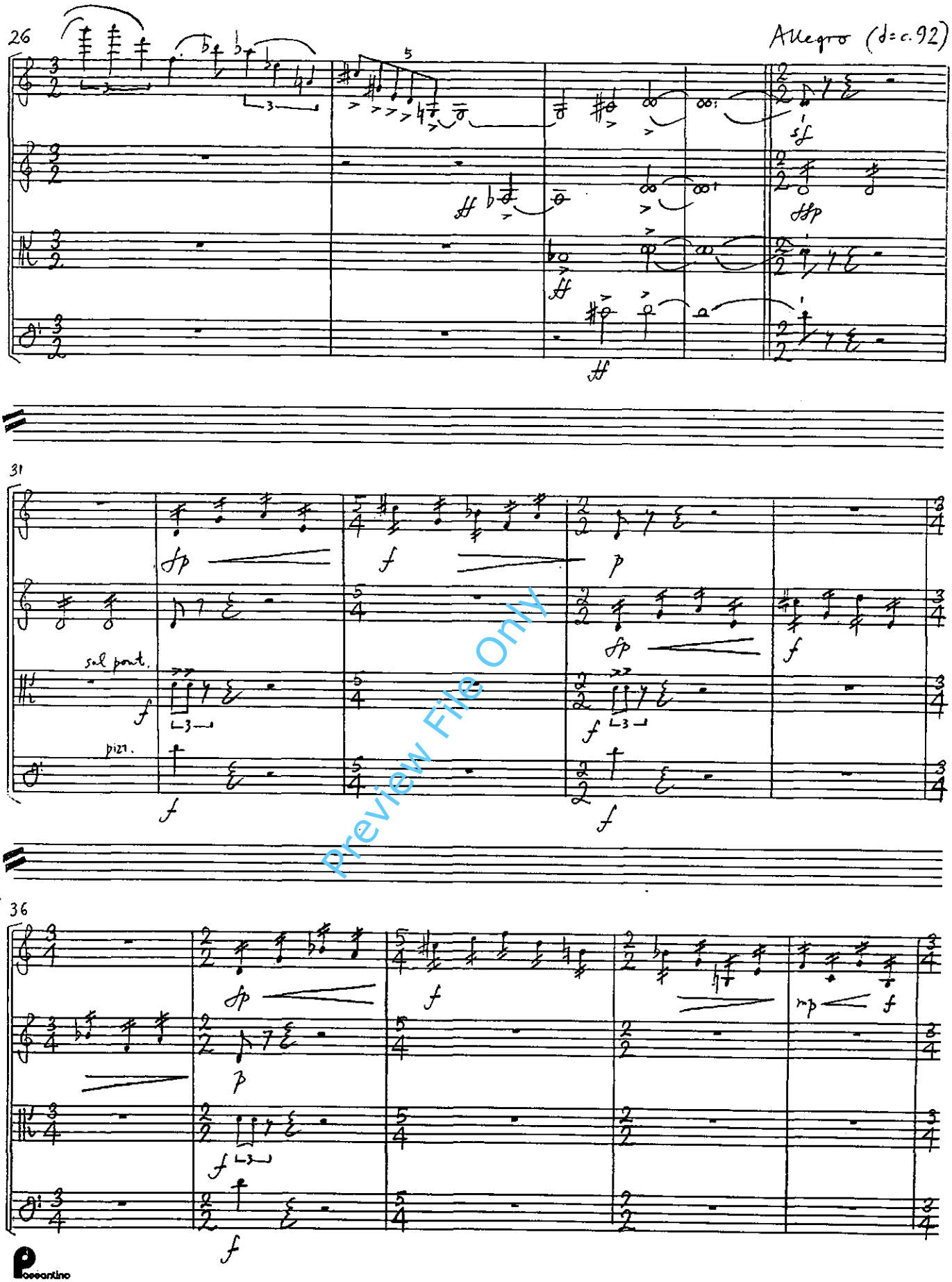

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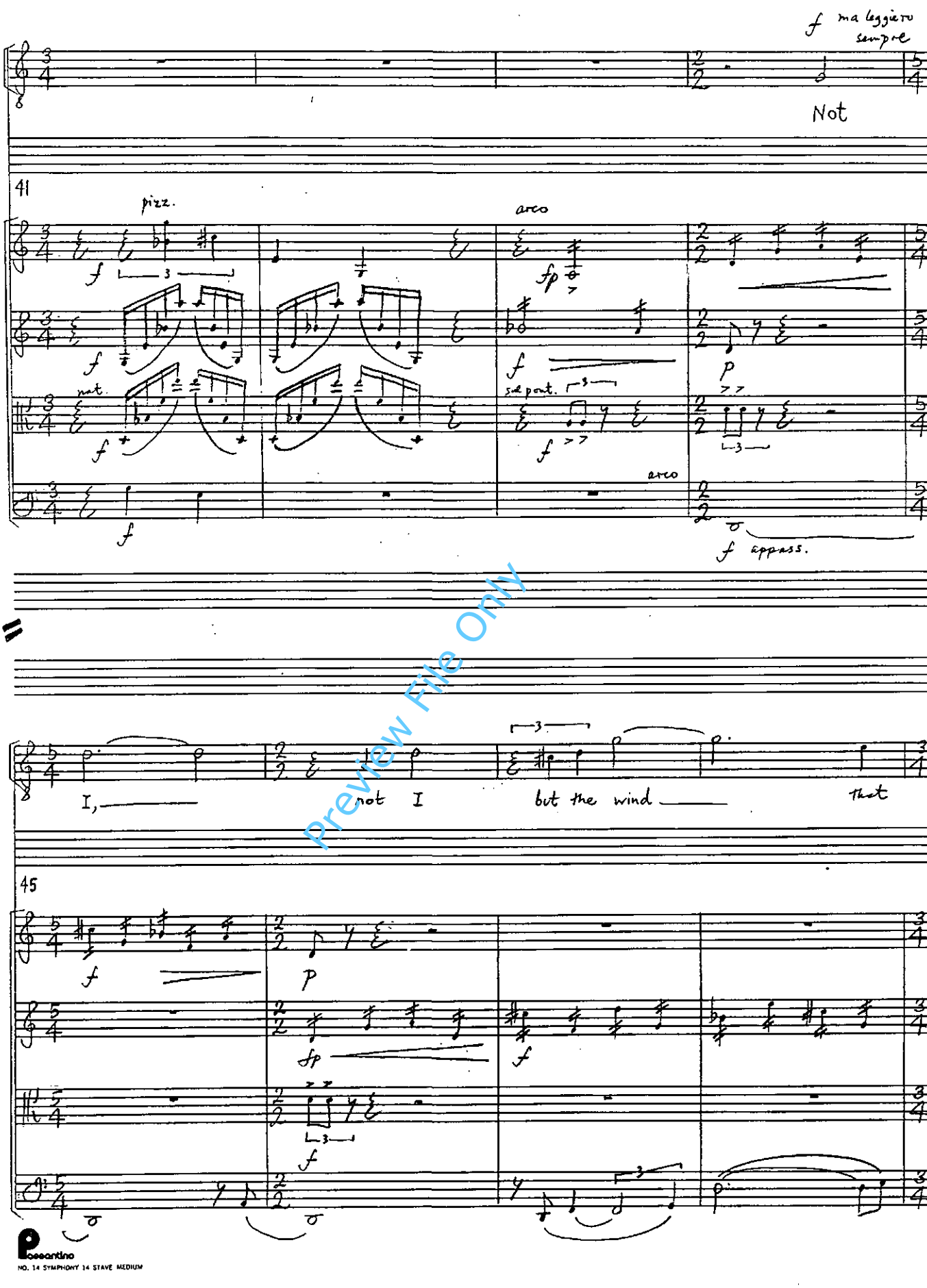

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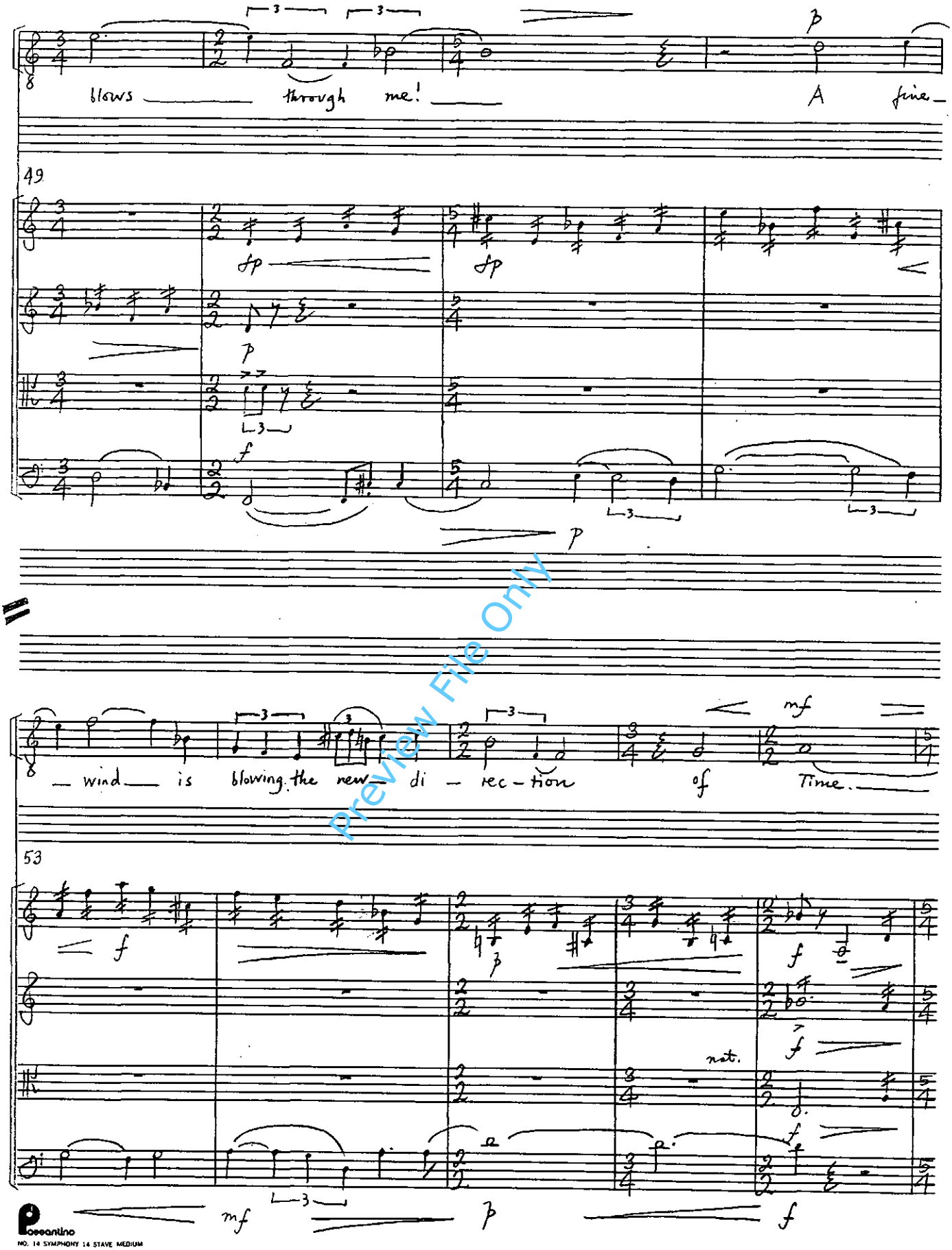

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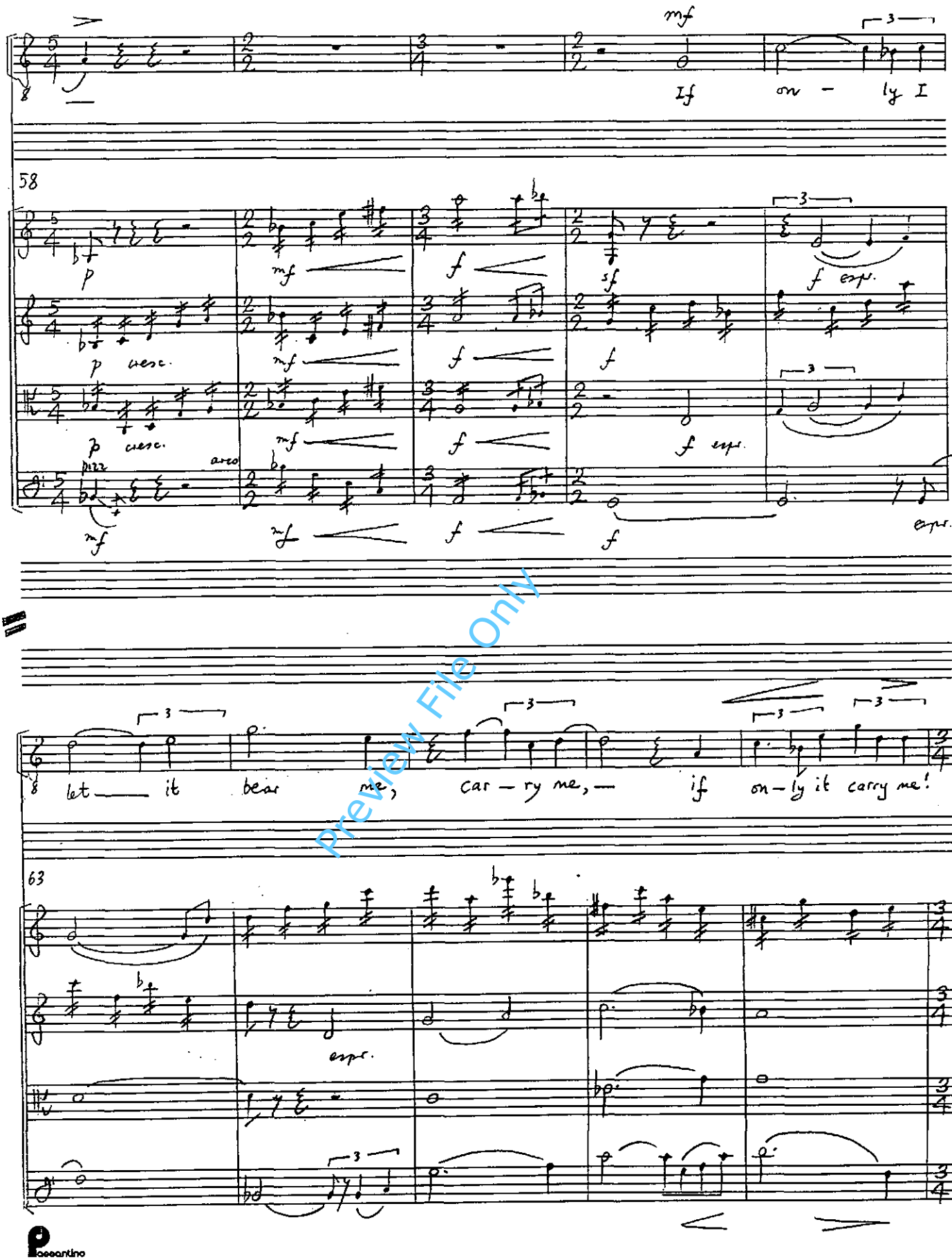

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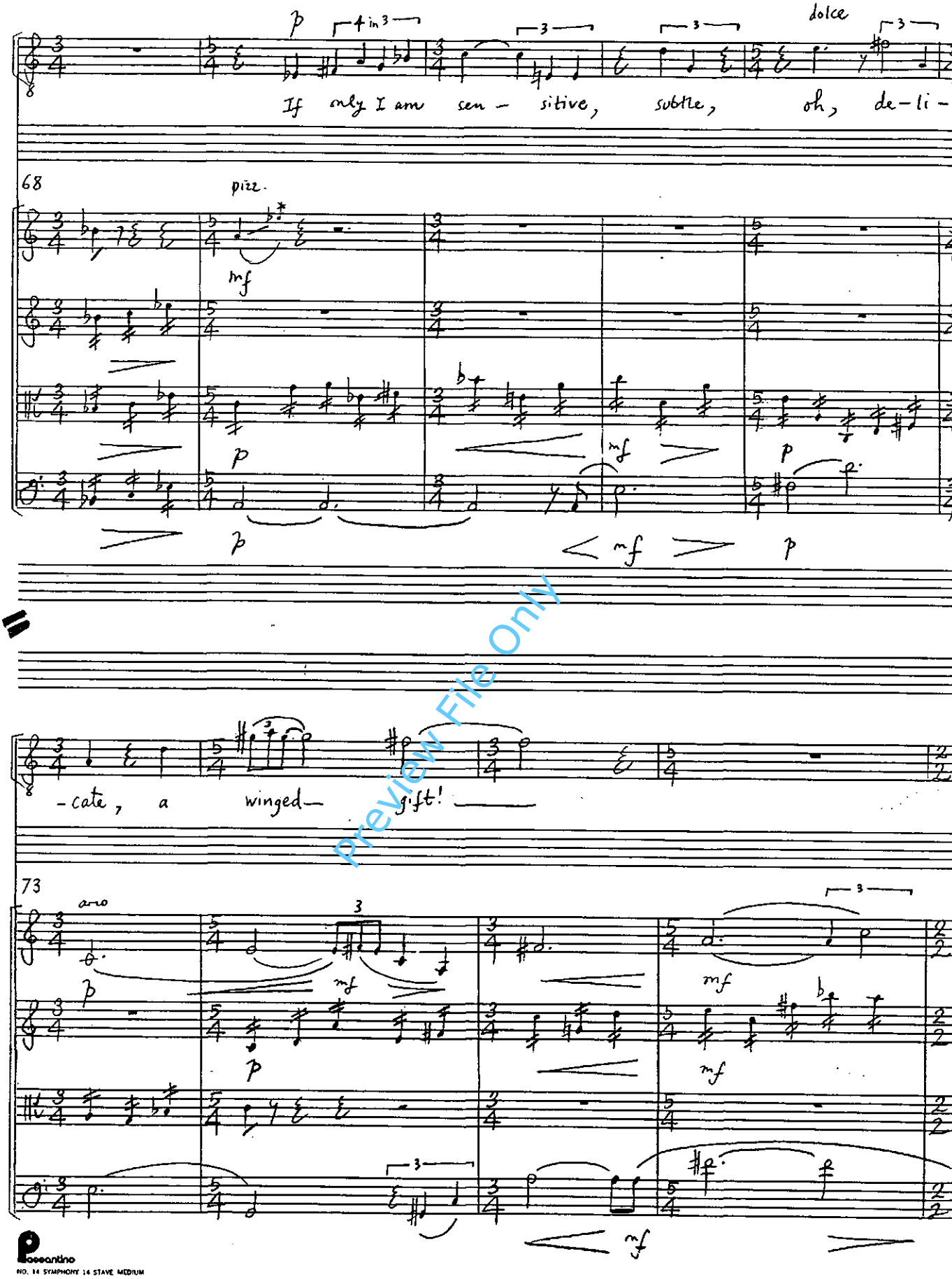

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