SIMON EMMERSON

FIELDS OF ATTRACTION

(String quartet and live electronics)
(1997)

QUARTET SCORE

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EDITION 2.0 (March 1997)
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A score with full details of the electronics is available from the composer. For contact address see the British Music Yearbook.

Commissioned by the Smith Quartet with funds provided by the Arts Council of England and first performed by them at the Purcell Room, London on the 1st of April 1997

Simon Emmerson

Fields of Attraction

String quartet and electronics

Performance notes

The tempo at crotchet =96 is approximate. It should certainly not run slower! Much of the piece should have a metric and mechanical feel. Though succeeding sections do not have to run at the same tempo they should not push and pull too much (apart from the cadenzas). The piece is 'relentless' and intended to be 'quite exhausting to listen to'.

The dynamics are indicated as terraced in general but rehearsals should bring in variation and transitions as appropriate.

Accidentals apply to the notes they precede and immediate repeats and pattern repeats including these pitches. They never imply similar transposition for the same pitches at octaves.

The electronic transformations have several functions: throwing the sound across the hall, colouring the drones. The overall aim is to create a sense of space within which the quartet plays 'over and around the audience'. The electronics are not indicated on the performance score presented here. A score giving full details of the electronics may be obtained from the composer.

There are four types of material in the work each of which has a specific feel in interpretation. In order of appearance:

'Chorale recit material' (first occurrence bars 1-9))

Over the five clear occurrences the parts slowly coordinate. The 'held notes' should begin and end broadly as notated (though tempo need not be very strict), with the grace note groups as up-beats. Full tone (at any dynamic) but senza vibrato.

'Undulating material, measured trills, tremolos, with held drone pitches' (first occurrence bars 13-21)

These should be played slightly detache with separate short bows; each pitch quite clearly articulated. But the held pitches change colour most of the time as indicated as follows:

norm. normal sul tasto position
s.p. sul ponticello (though not so much the pitch is lost)

The terms are used with an arrow in the following sense:

norm.-> s.p.-> norm.

means starts normal and moves steadily sul pont and steadily back to normal where it stays as there is no further arrow:
i.e. no arrow: stay there (no change!)
arrow: change slowly towards indicated state!

'Stream material, alternating between instruments, with held drone pitches' (first occurrence fragment bar 11 then bars 23-28)

Similar at times to the previous material but this moves over harmonic fields which (usually, though not always) occupy greater ranges of pitch.

Most are played:

m.s.t. molto sul tasto

a ghostly timbre somewhat breathy. The 'melodic' lines are played louder than the drone notes to which they fade.

The time coordination of the two parts which interplay in these sections is important. The feel should be very metric and mechanical, the line crossing obviously between the instruments.

'Cadenzas'

Each instrument has an obvious cadenza, marked 'fl' the dynamic and tempo are free to pull around, though the feel is intended to be virtuosic, dramatic and always pushing ahead - though dramatic pauses (on notes or silence) might assist this at well chosen moments.

The other instruments pick up pitches pp (m.s.t.) with minimum attack and molto lontano! Exact time placing of these pick up drone notes is not important though they should not come in too soon!

'ff close chords' (first occurrence bars 146-154)

These occur in the second half of the piece. Always 'up/down' scrub, aggressive probably up to fff as they build. Attack them mercilessly, but they're off as abruptly too, usually cutting to quieter held pitches. Perhaps insert dramatic commas at these points.

The electronics (summary)

The live electronics are controlled by a fifth performer at the mixing console. Air microphones for the four instruments are fed to four loudspeakers in their close vicinity on stage. A contact microphone feed from each of the four performers is split to three desk inputs - hence 12 further inputs in all. These are grouped in three consecutive 'quartets' (violins 1, 2, viola, cello) looking at the faders. These faders **are not routed to the diffusion** but are used as controls for the inputs to the three processing modules (via postfade auxiliary sends). While at the first performance the following processors were used, the composer anticipates versions for other processors:

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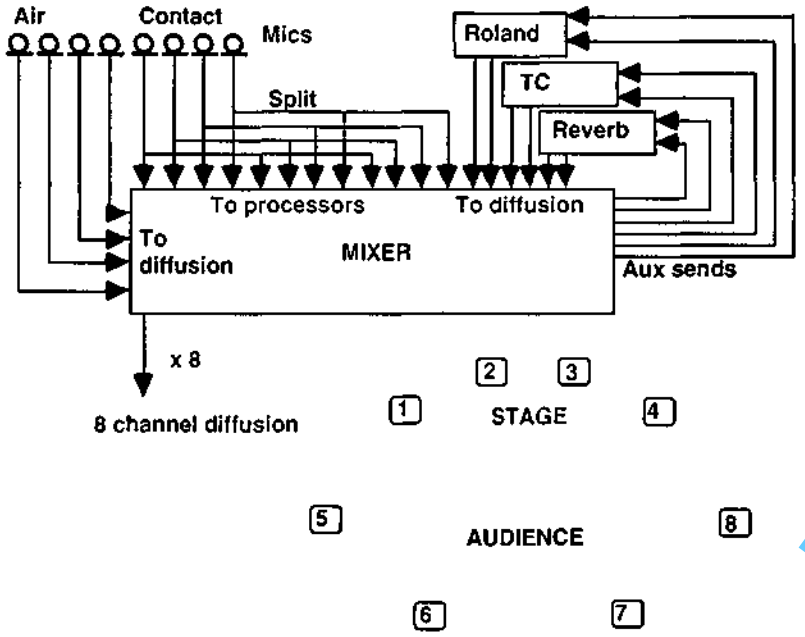
TC electronics M5000
Roland SDE 330
A high quality reverberation unit (which can deliver a reverberation setting of ca.30s) (e.g. Yamaha SPX1000 or suitable Lexicon)

The outputs from these processors are routed to the diffusion: the Roland to the stage channels 1-4, the TC and the reverberation to the arena channels (5-8).

A score with full details of the mixer routing, processor patches and the active routing of the instruments to them in performance may be obtained from the composer (see a current edition of the British Music Yearbook for contact details).



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SIMON EMMERSON

Fields of Attraction

(string quartet and live electronics)

Programme Note

Fields of Attraction was written in 1996 and early 1997 for the Smith Quartet who commissioned it with funds provided by the Arts Council of England and who gave its first performance at the Purcell Room, London on the 1st of April 1997.

The live electronics transform the quartet in two distinct areas. Near them on stage and fully integrated with their acoustic sound we hear transformations that in turn gel together the group or project individual members, while over the audience there is a landscape of echoes and auras which is quite separate and contrasting. The director of the sound system is a fifth performer with a very active part!

The form of the piece is made from about five types of material which alternate and intercut quickly, always changing in detail and duration, contrasting duos, trios and quartets. Each instrument also has a virtuosic cadenza in the course of the work. *Fields of Attraction* lasts just under 15 minutes.

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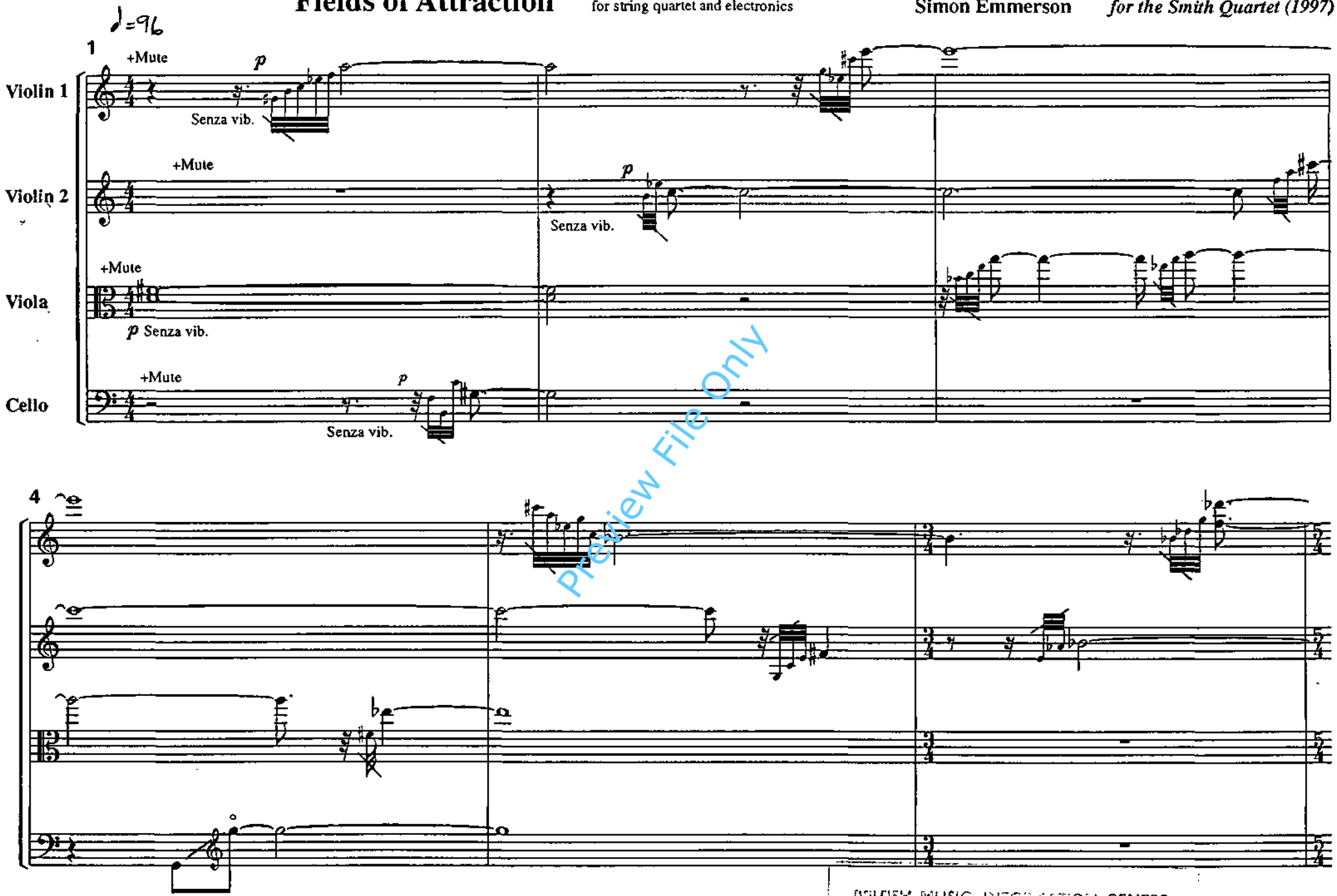
Fields of Attraction

for string quartet and electronics

Simon Emmerson

for the Smith Quartet (1997)



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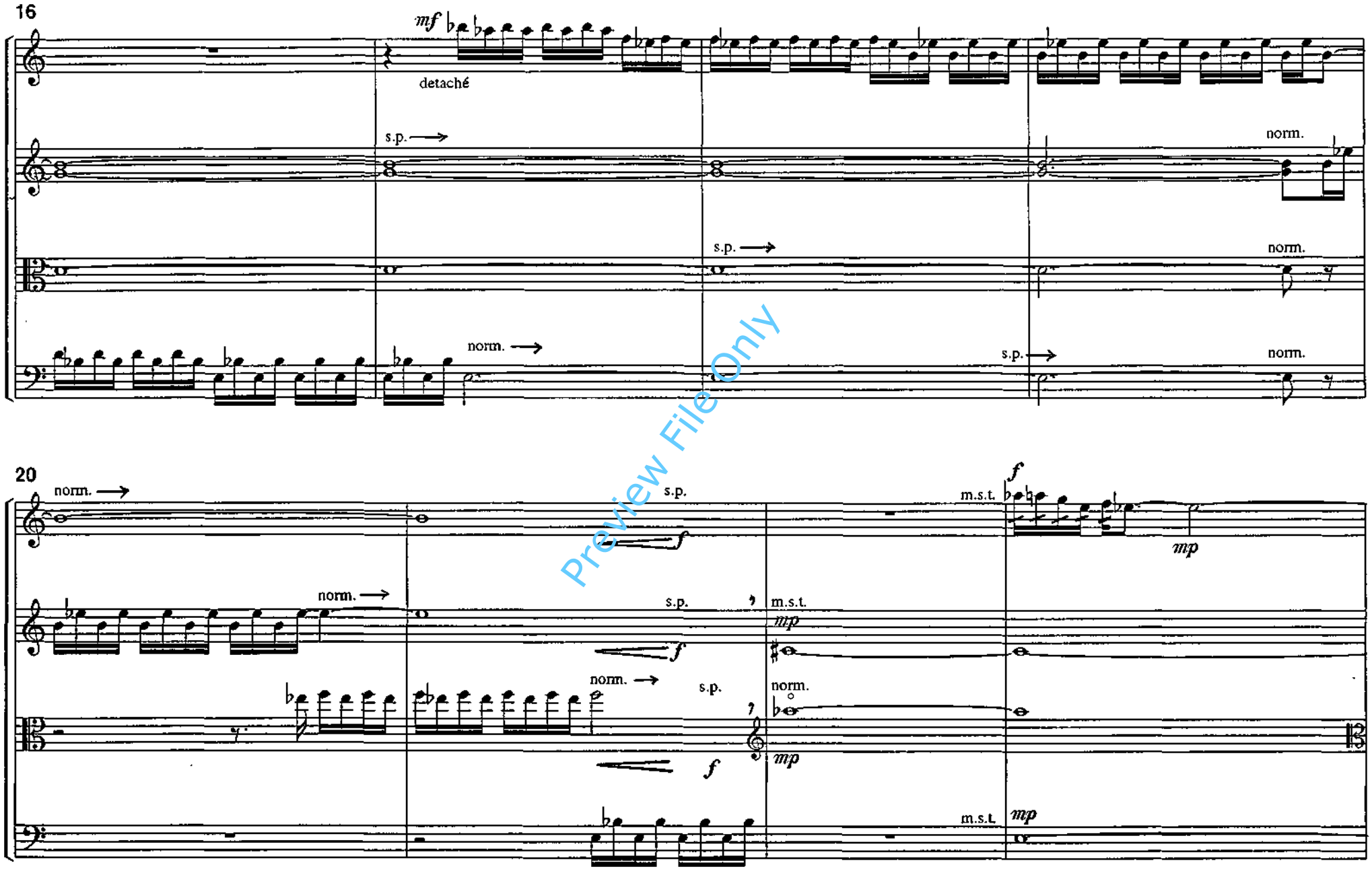

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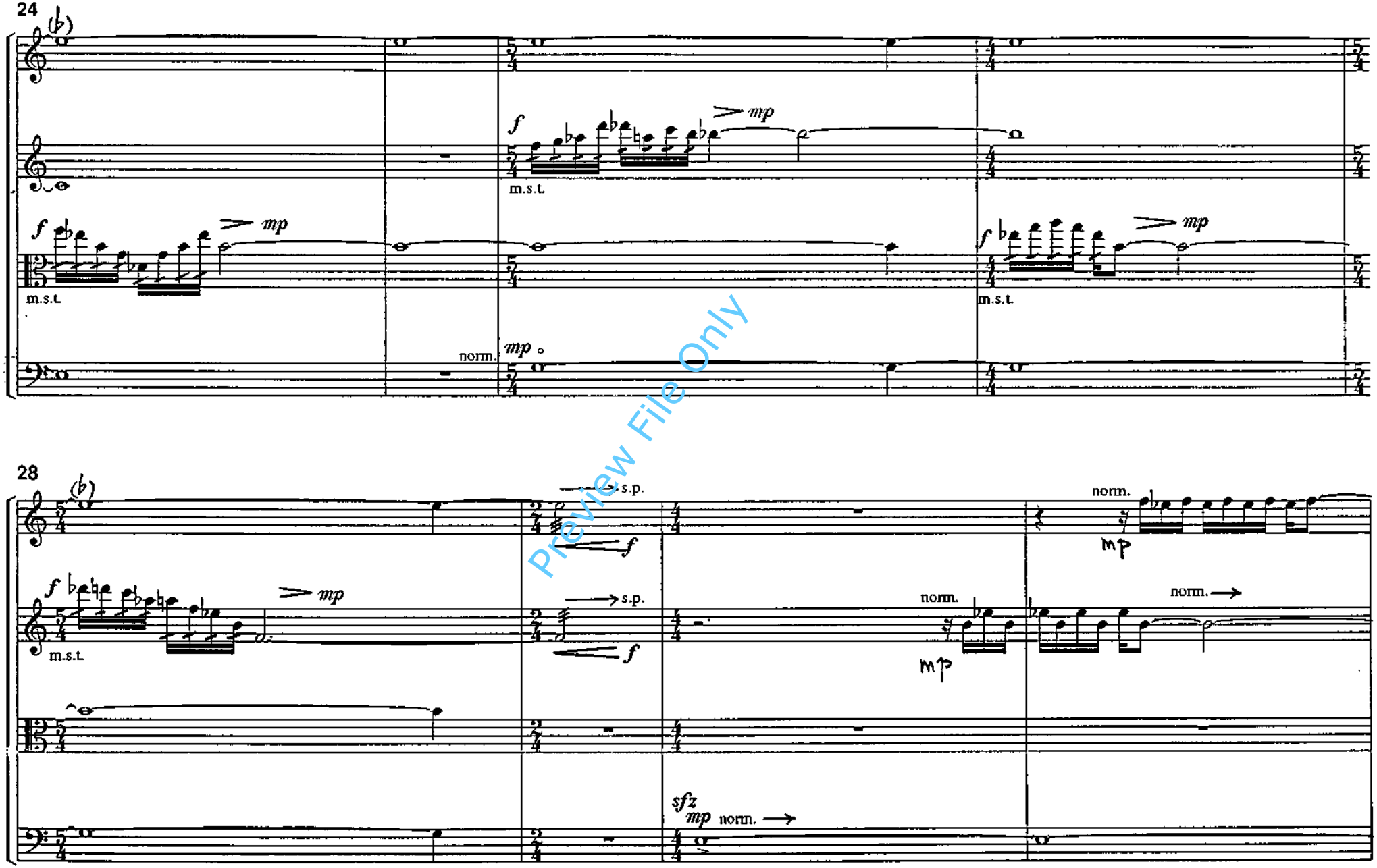

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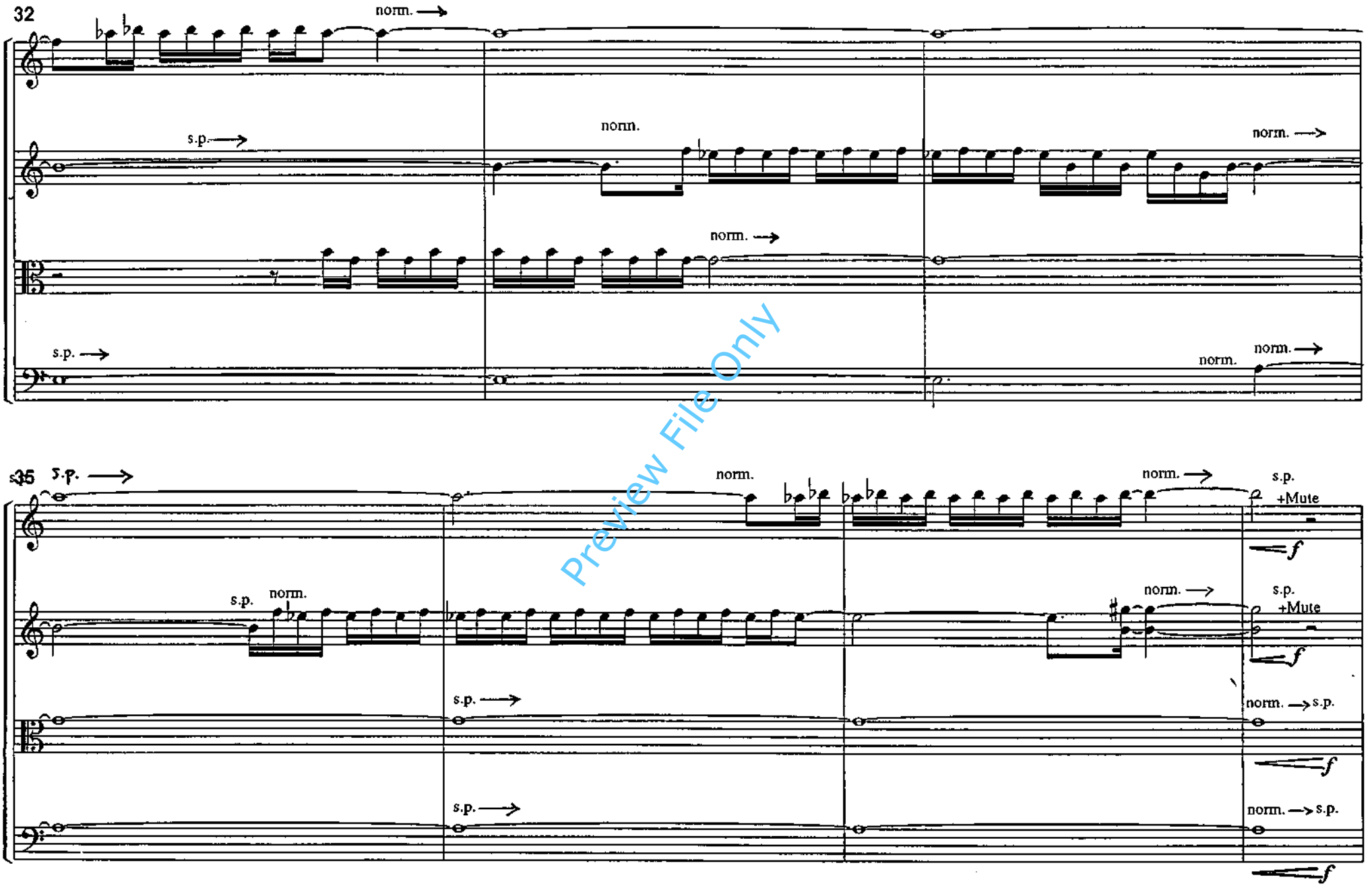

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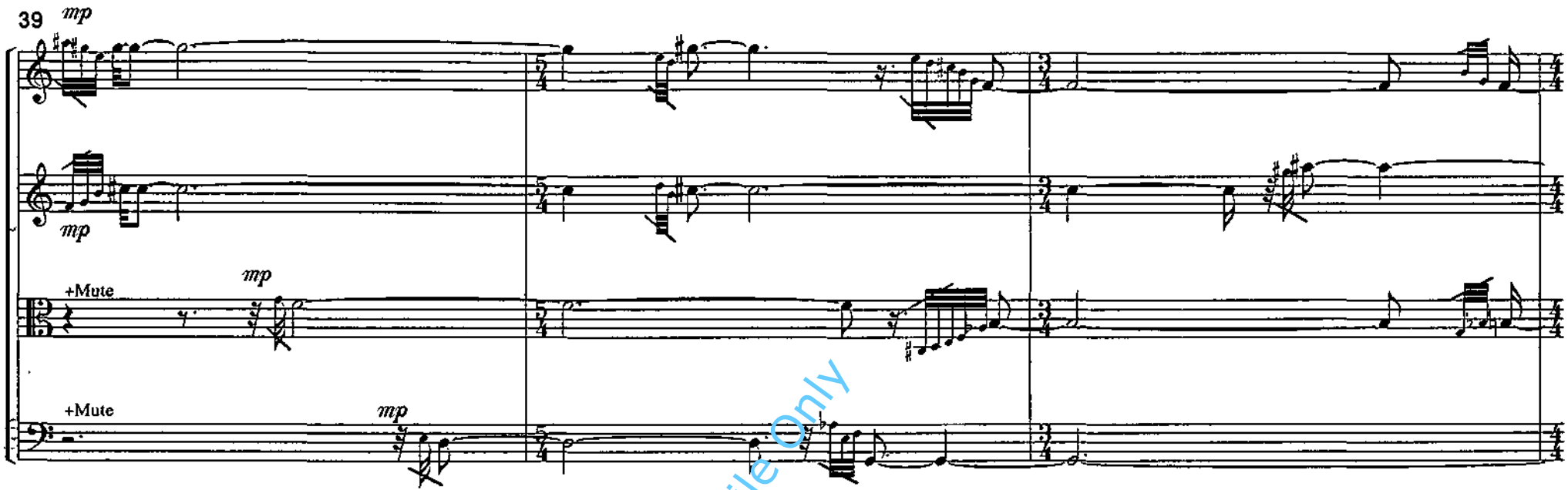

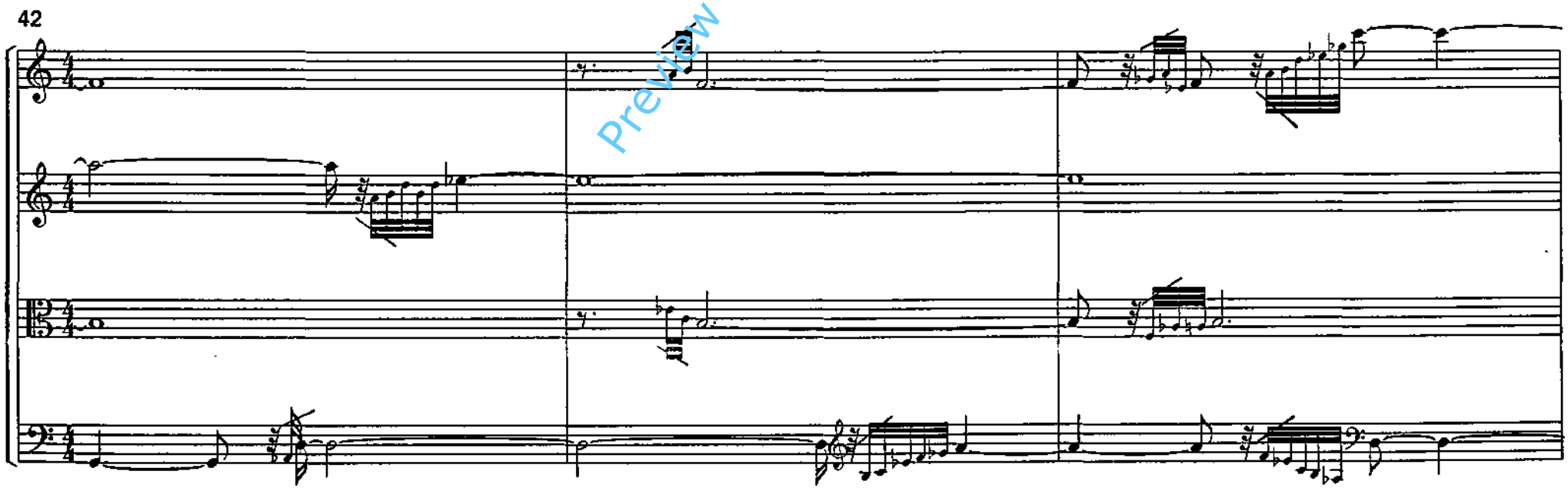

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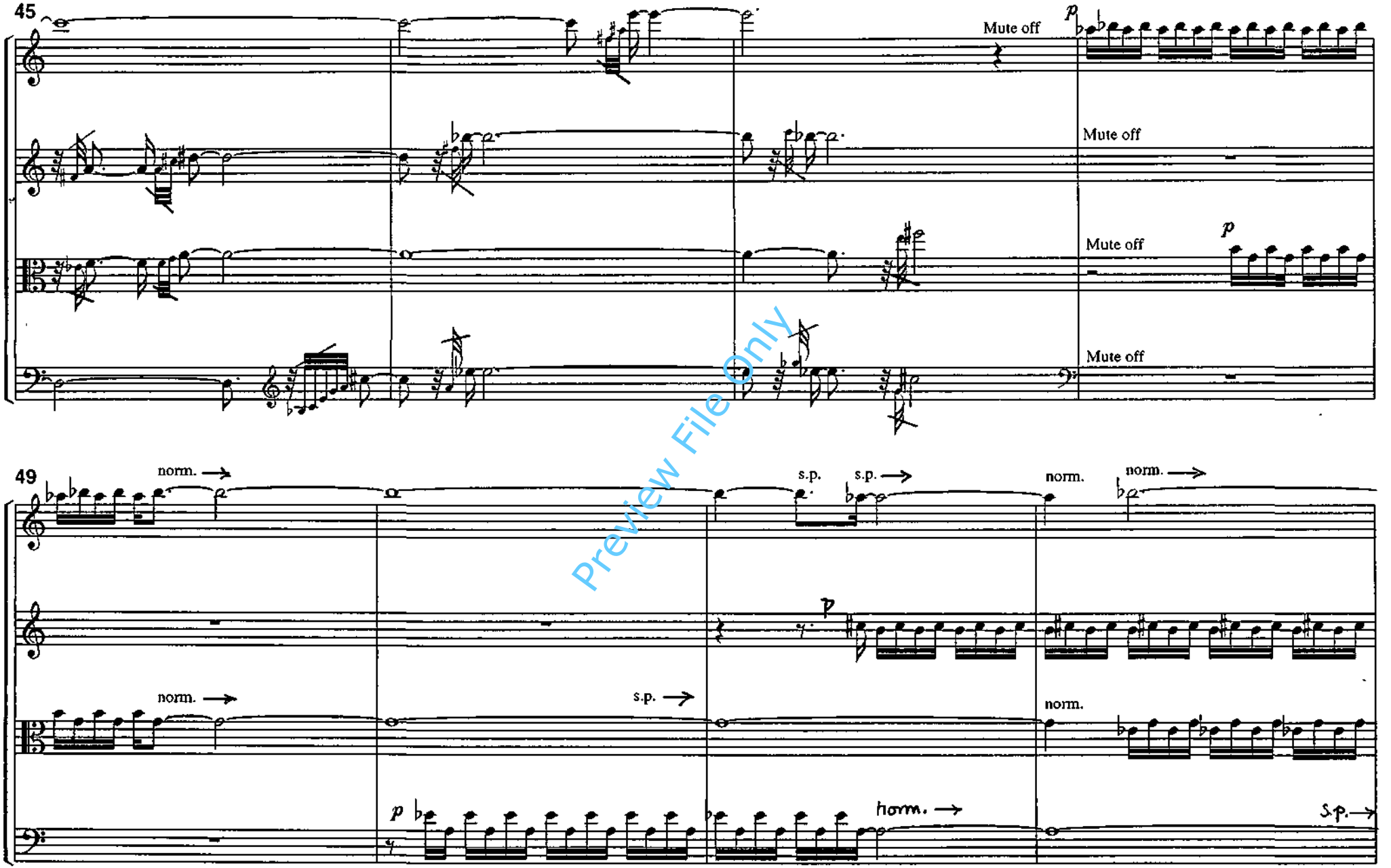

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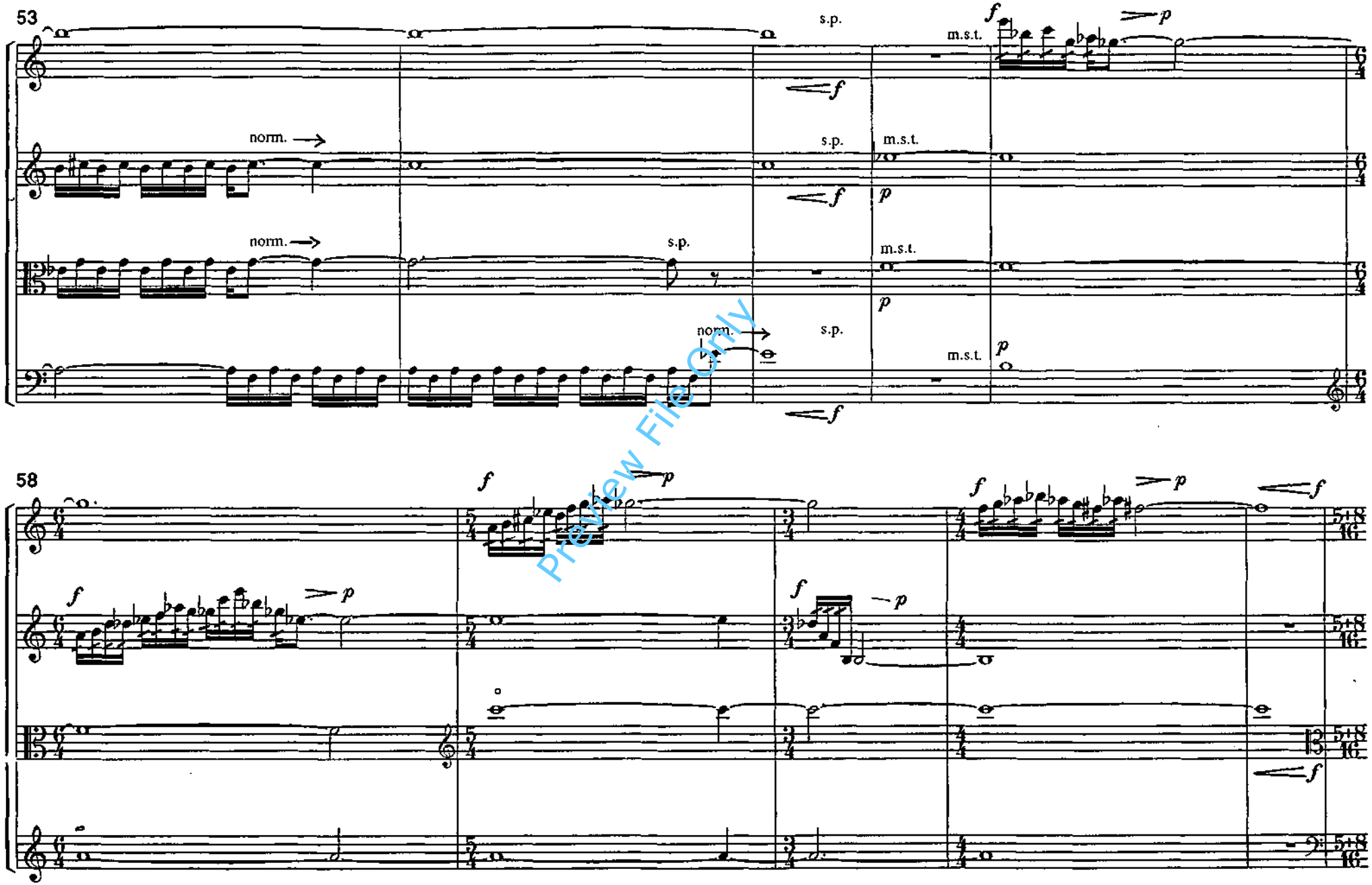

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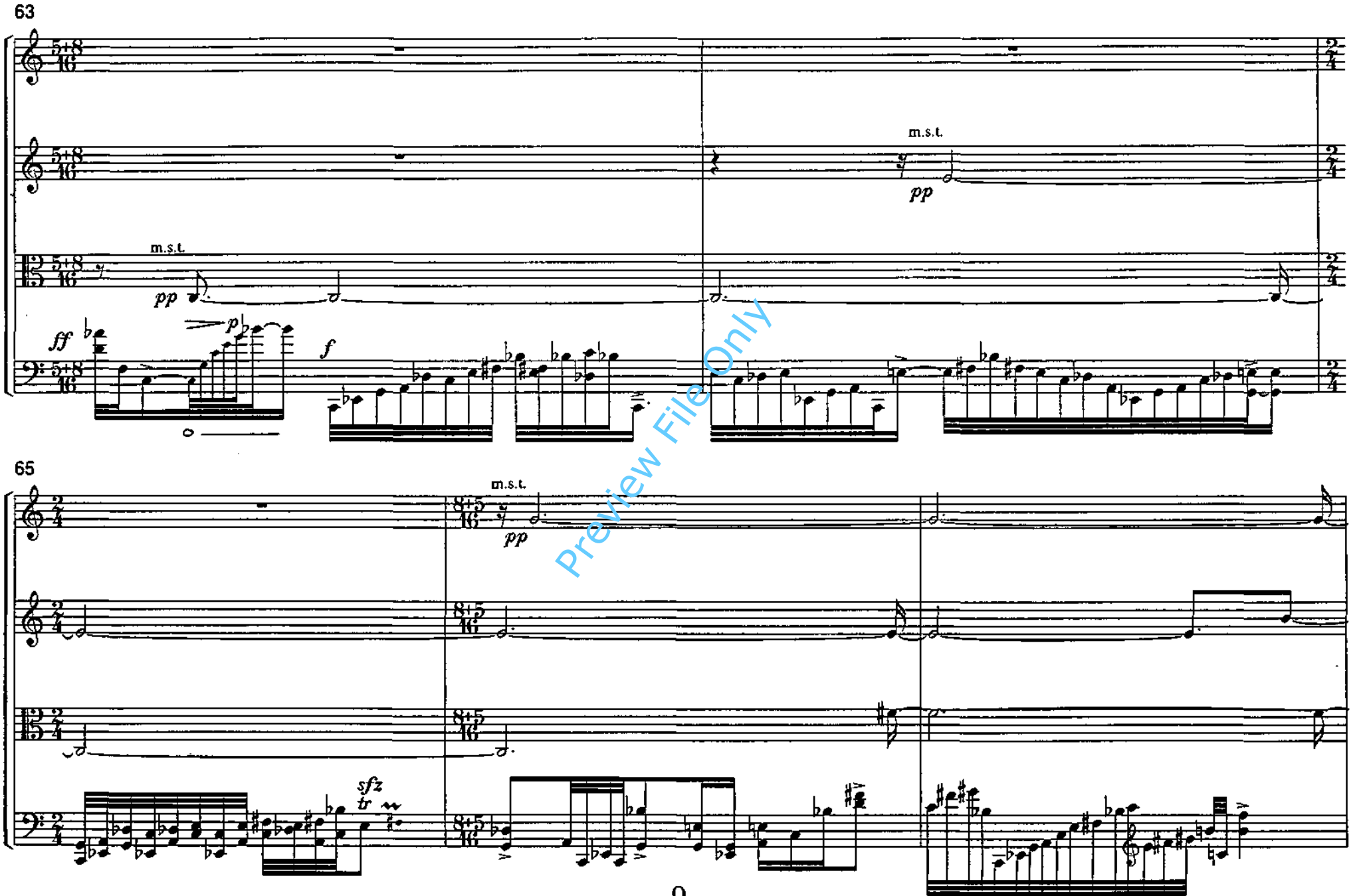

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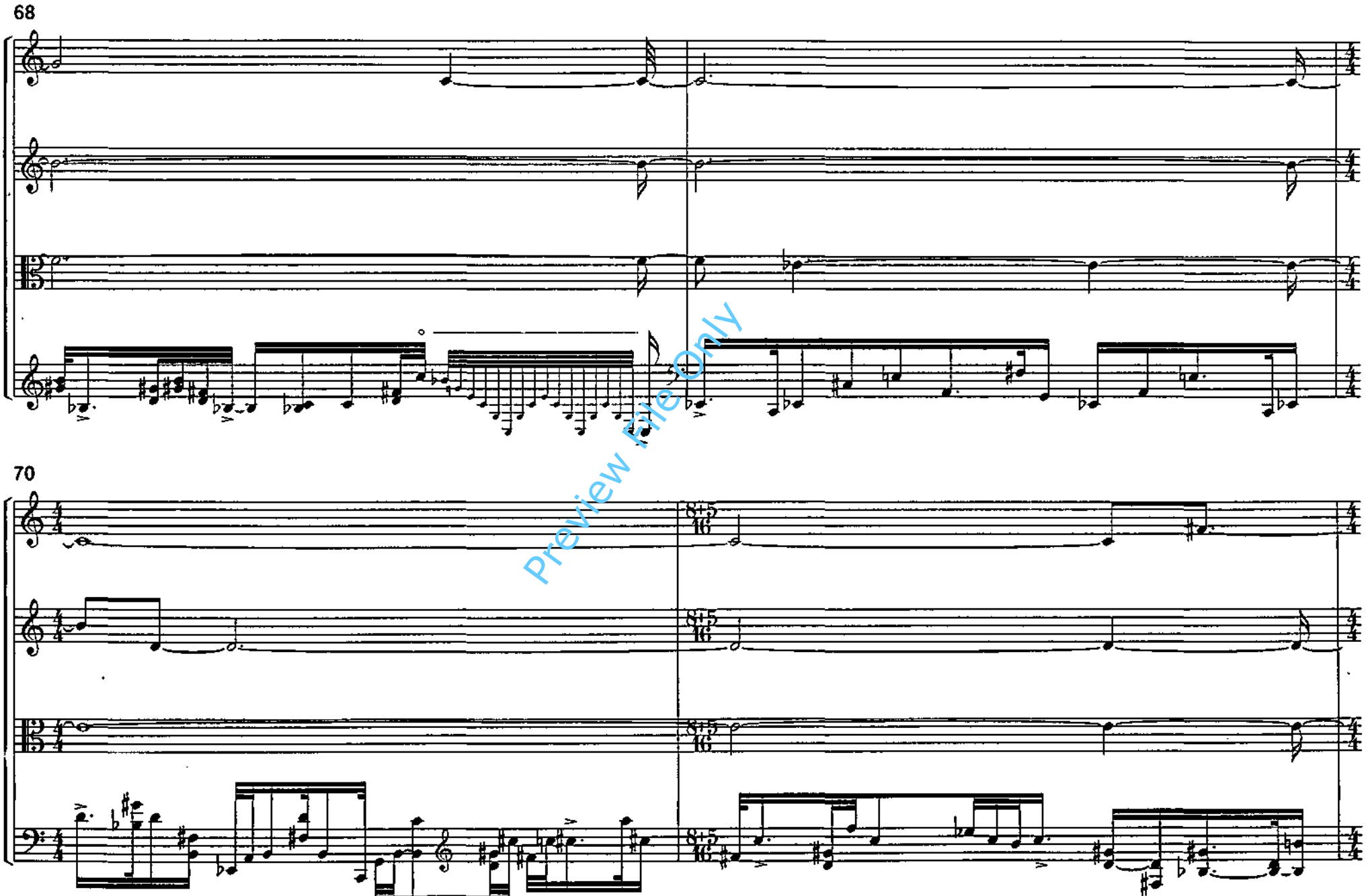

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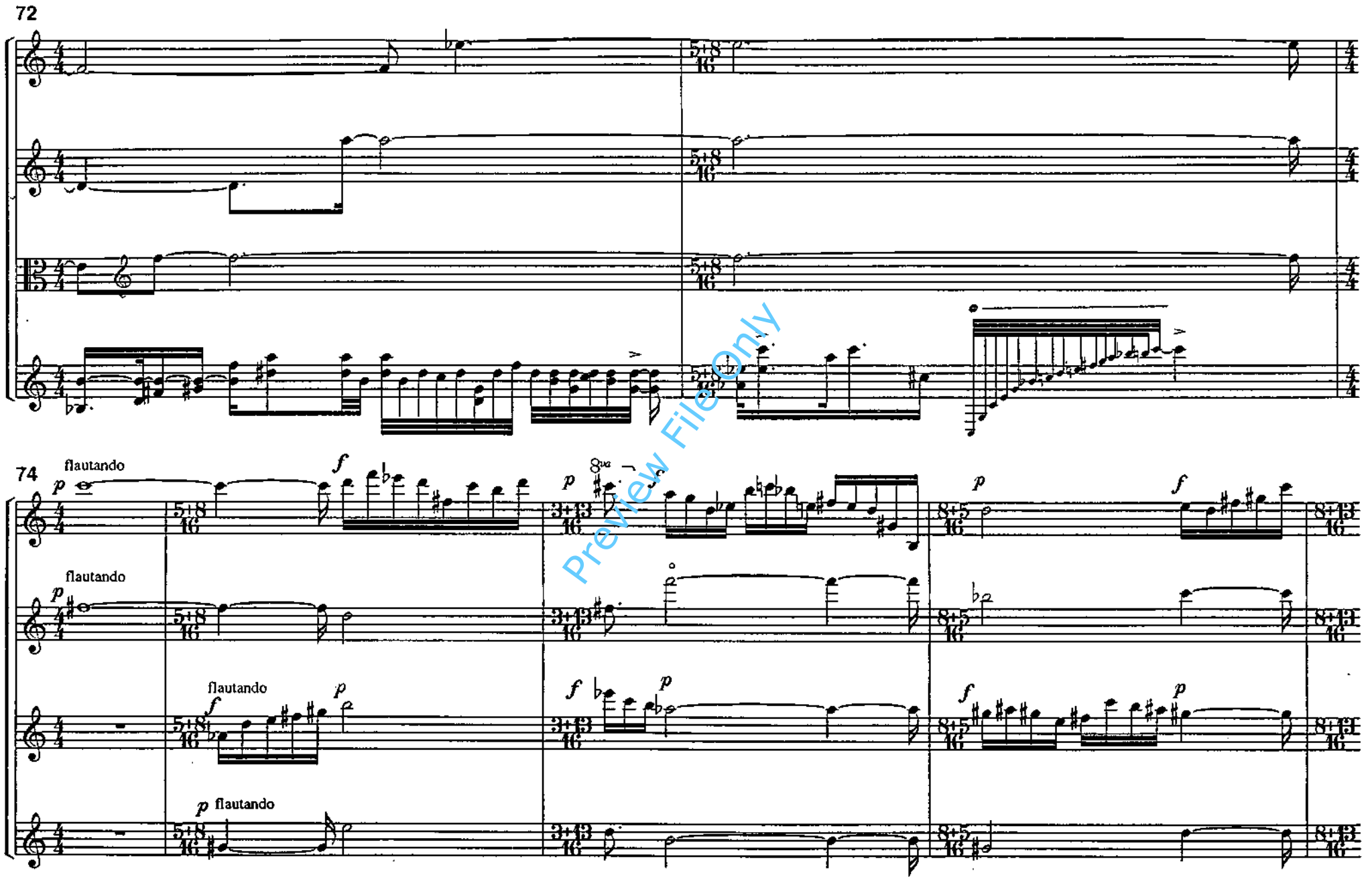

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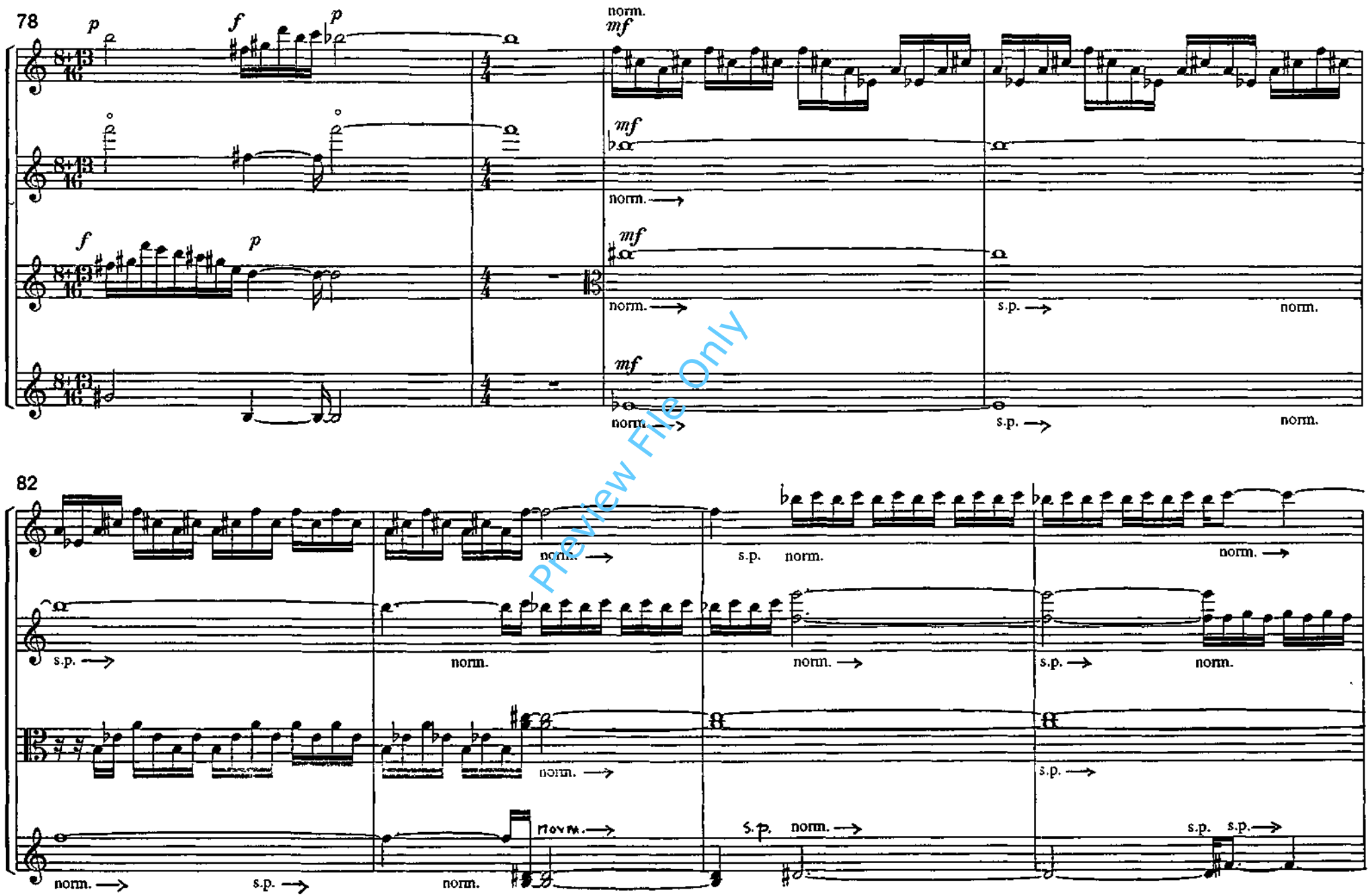

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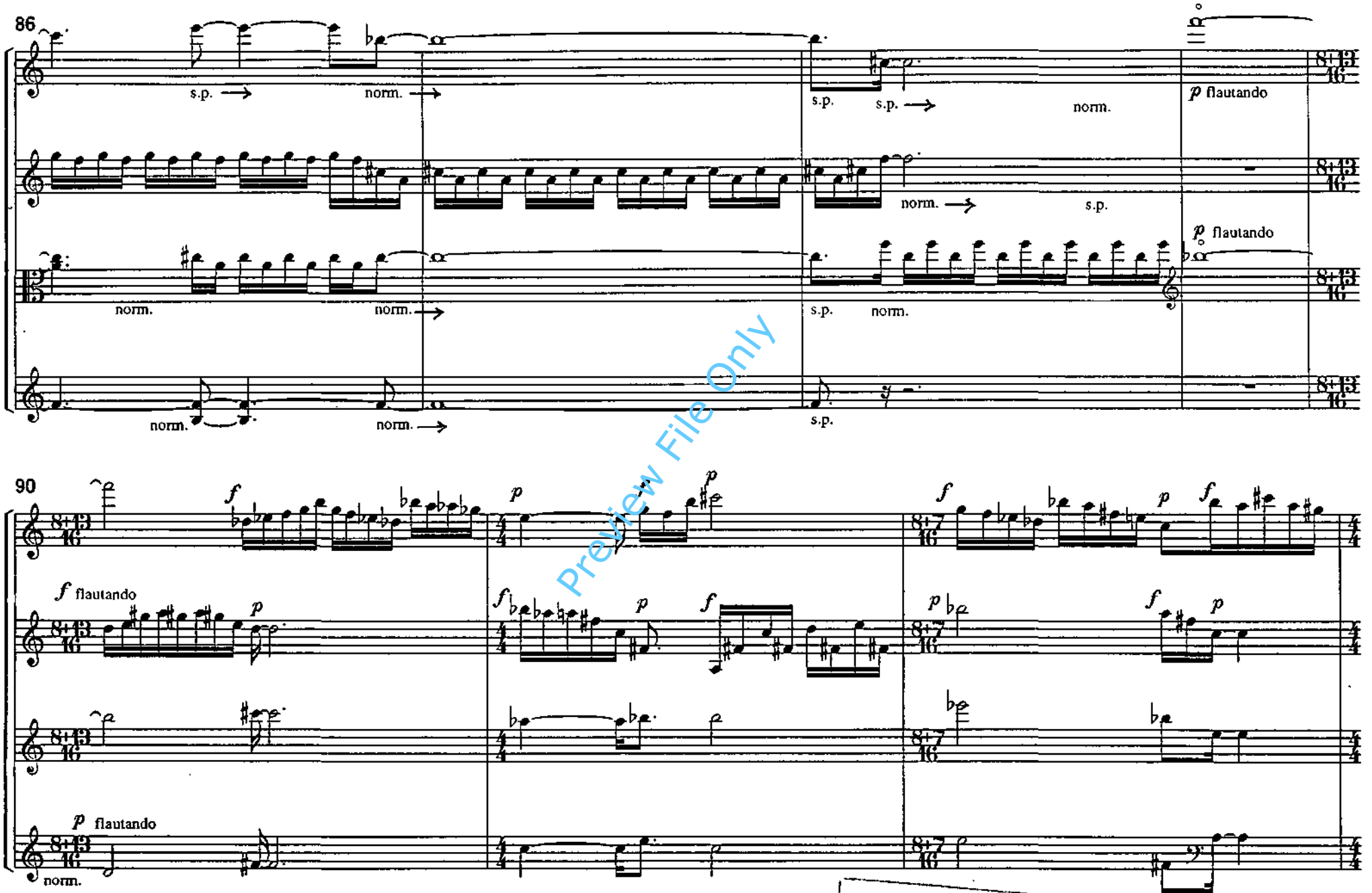

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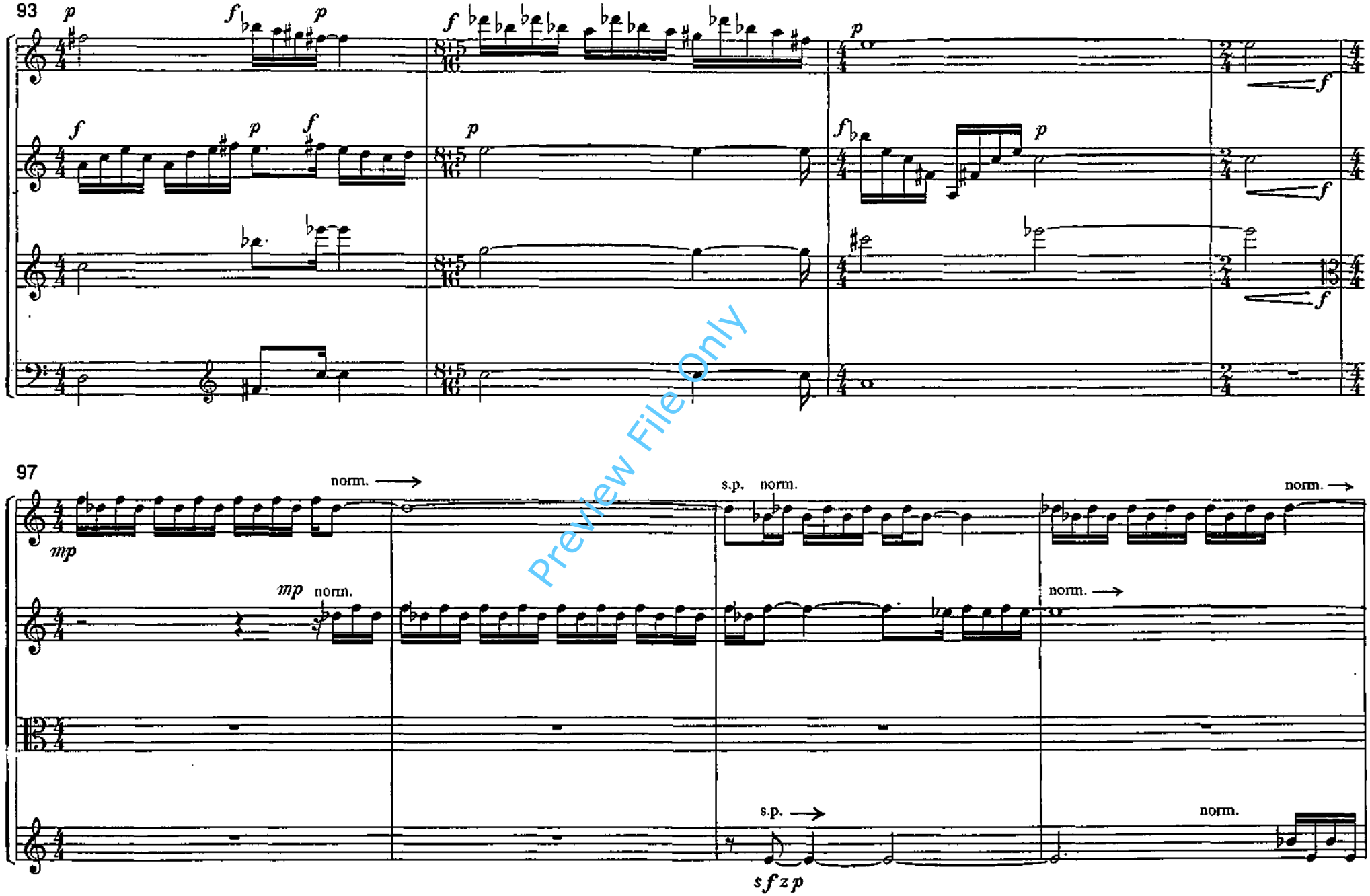

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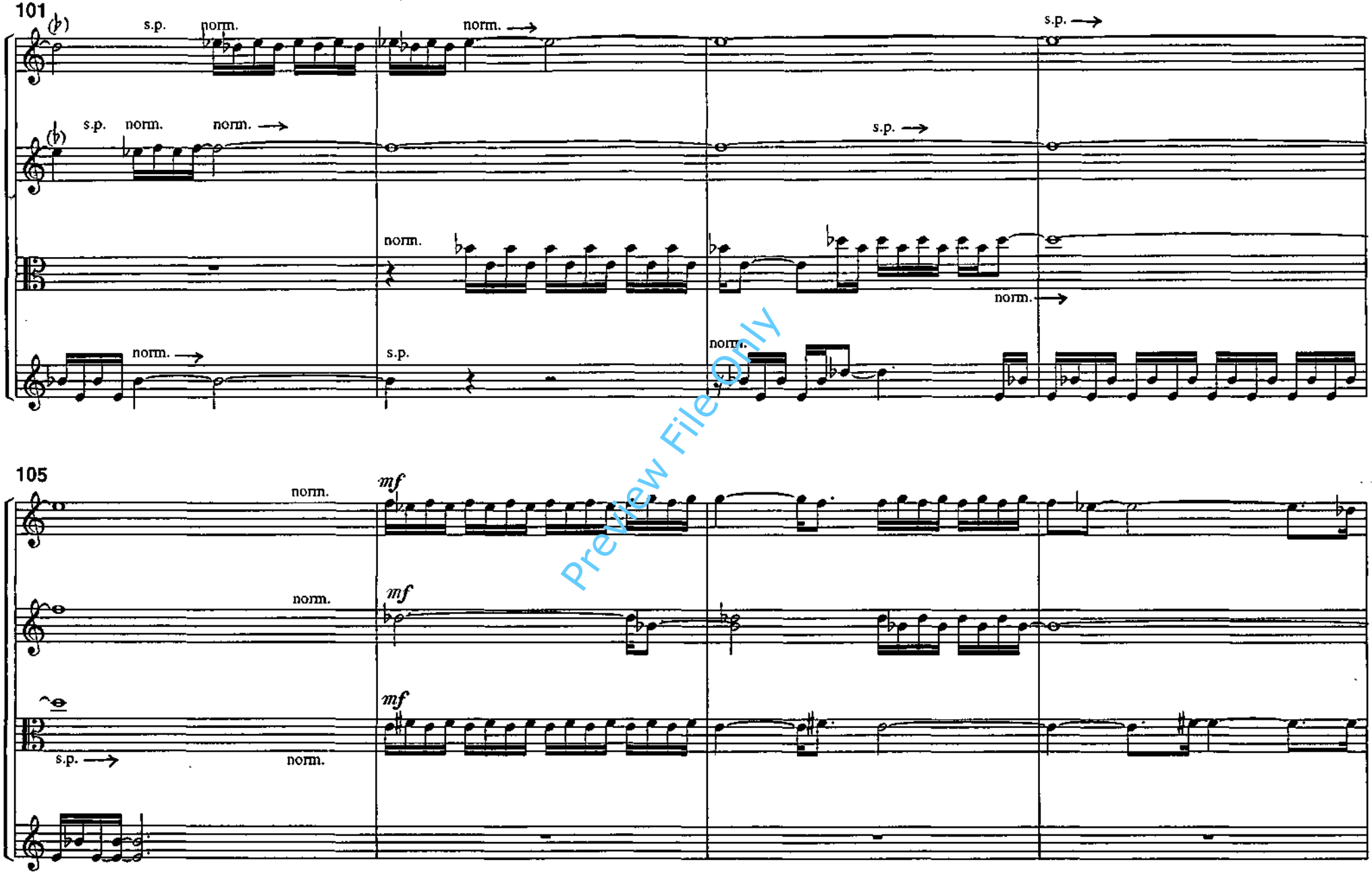

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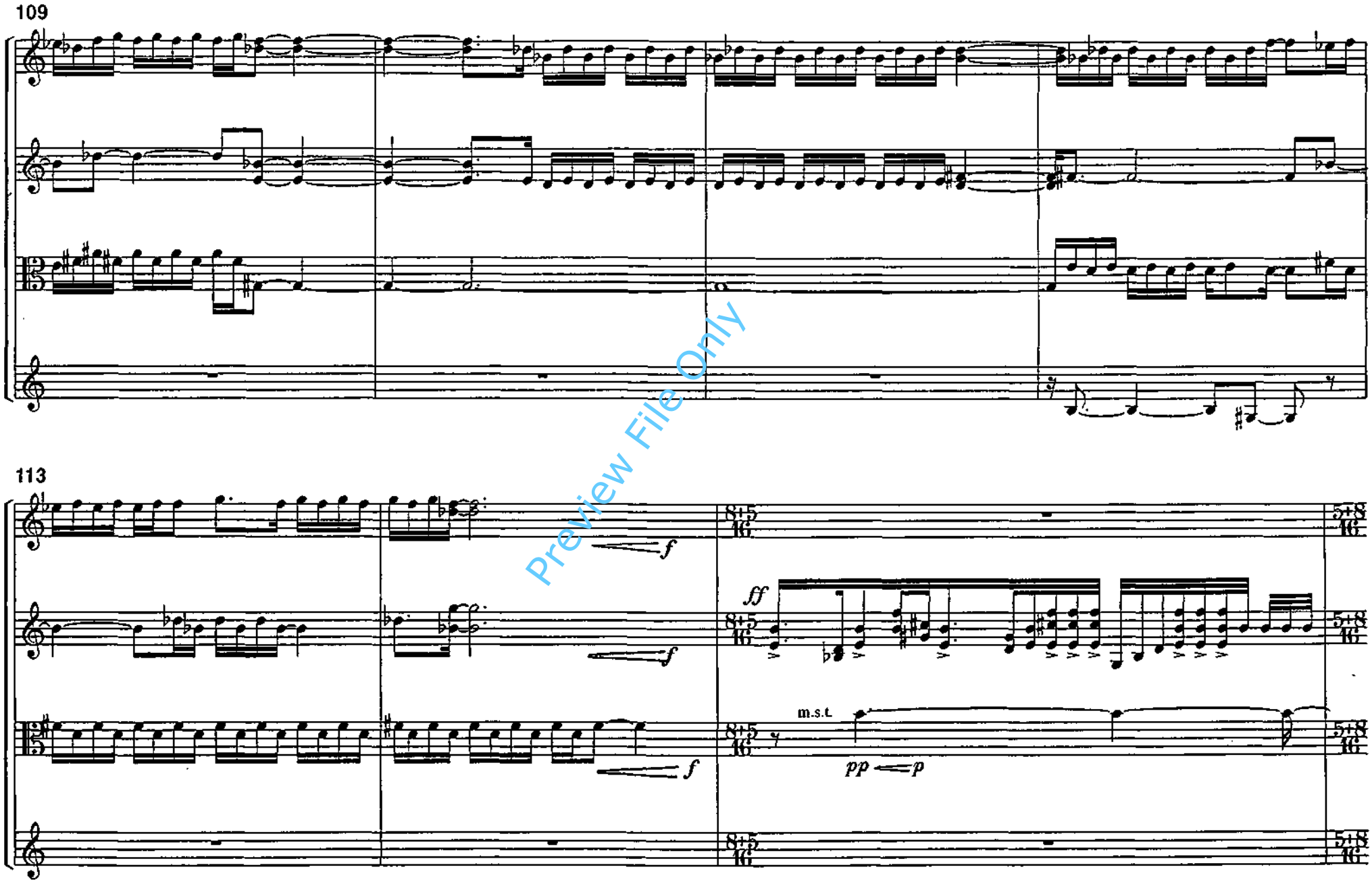

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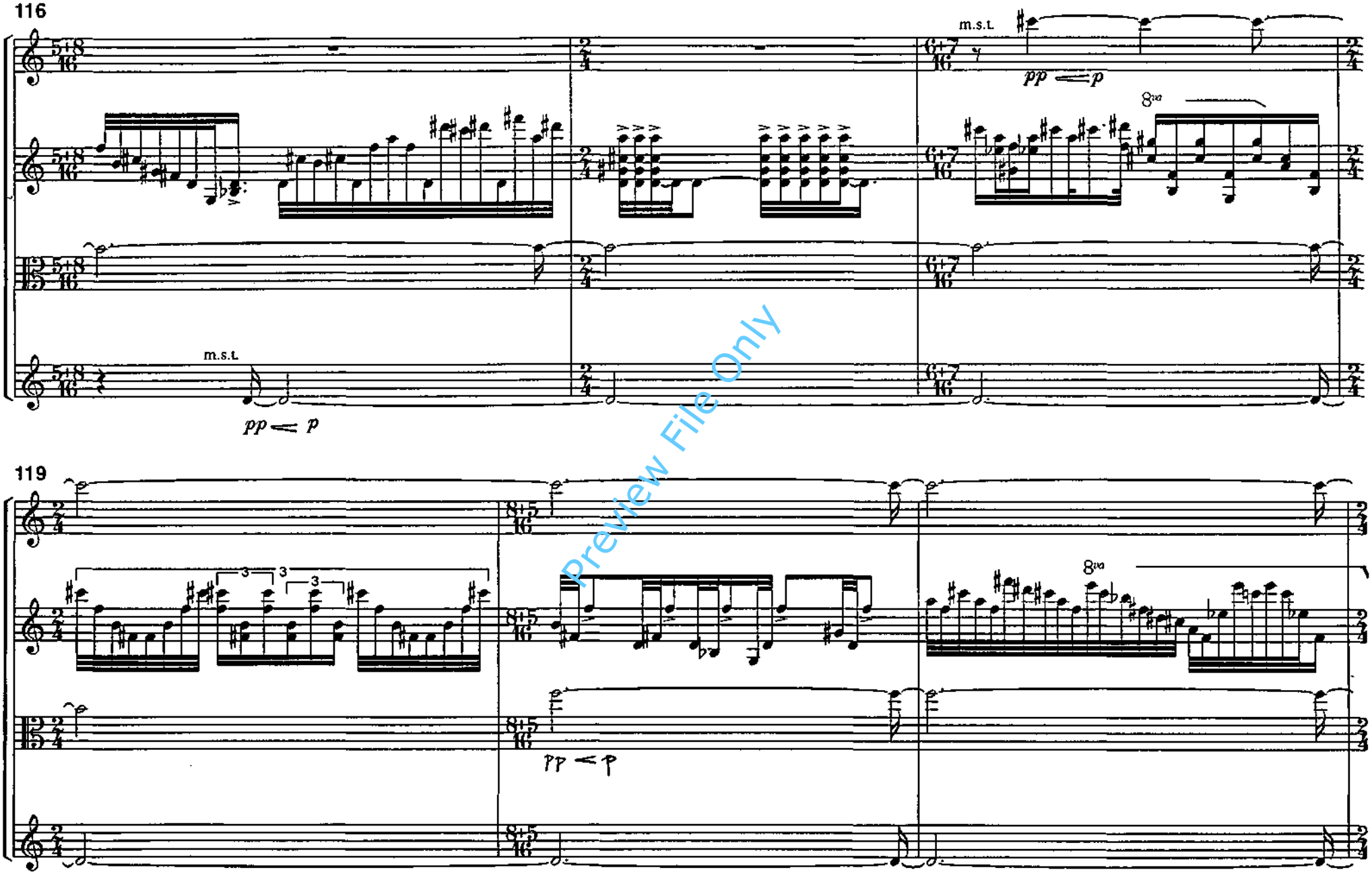

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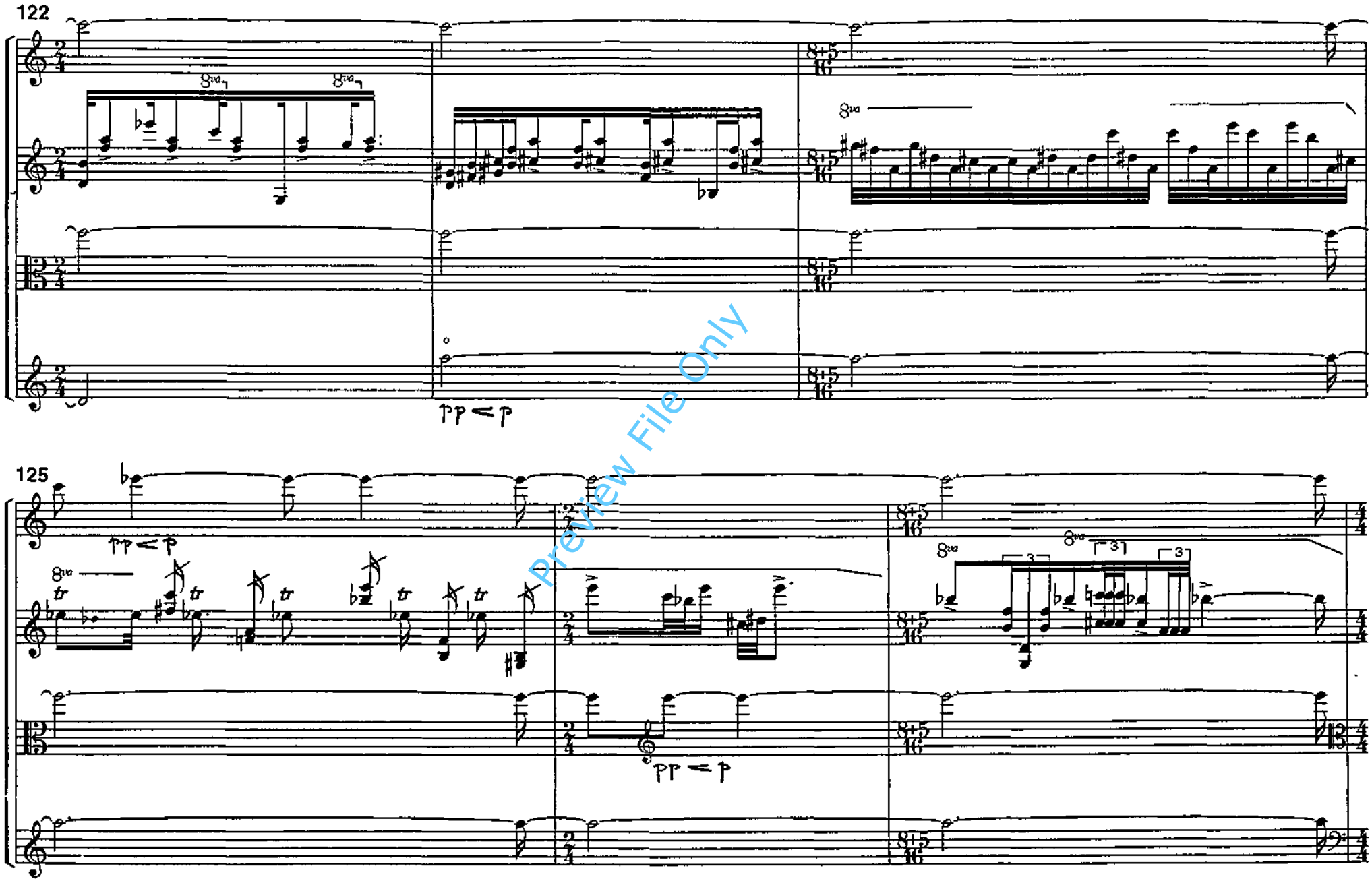

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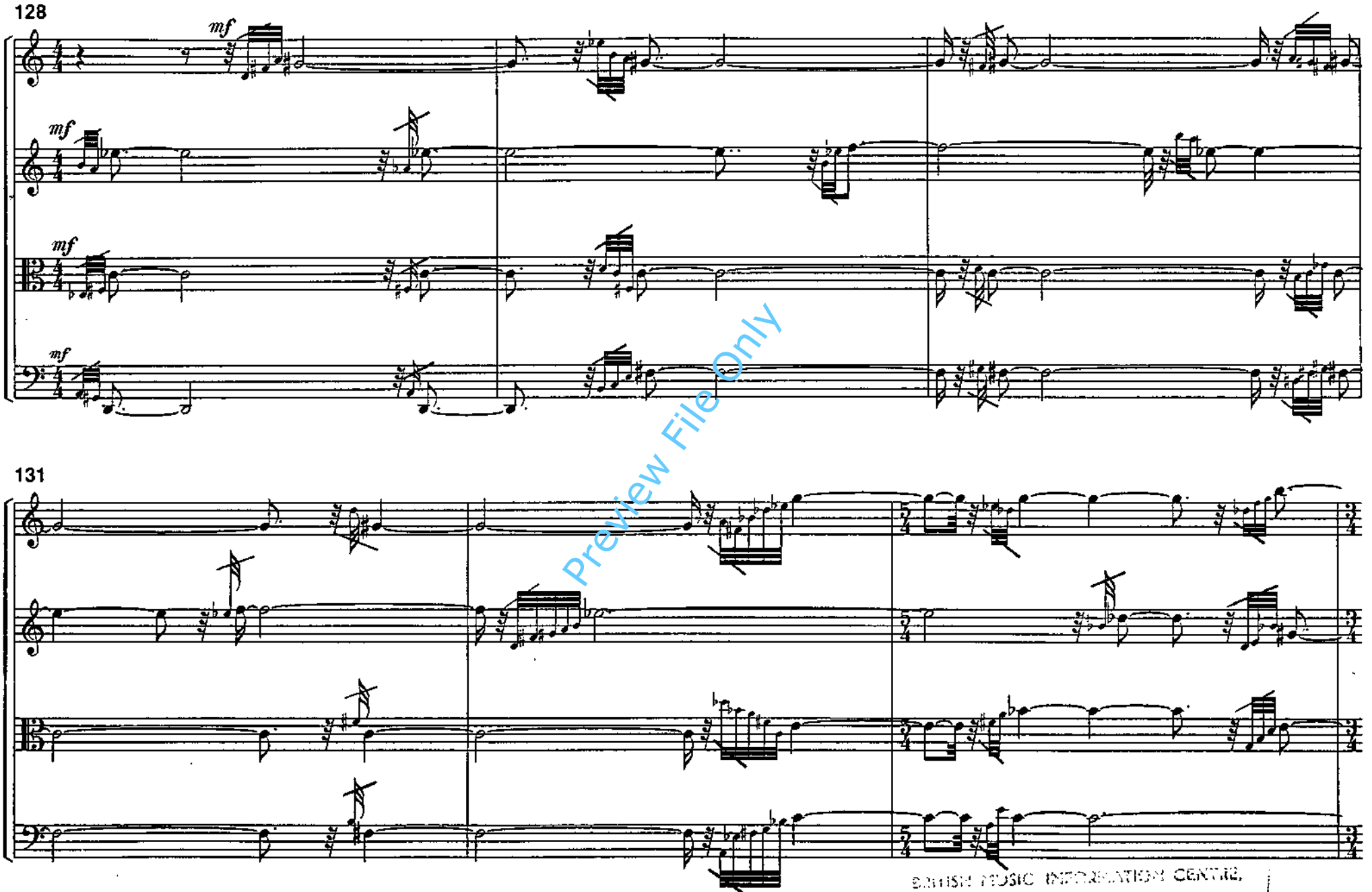

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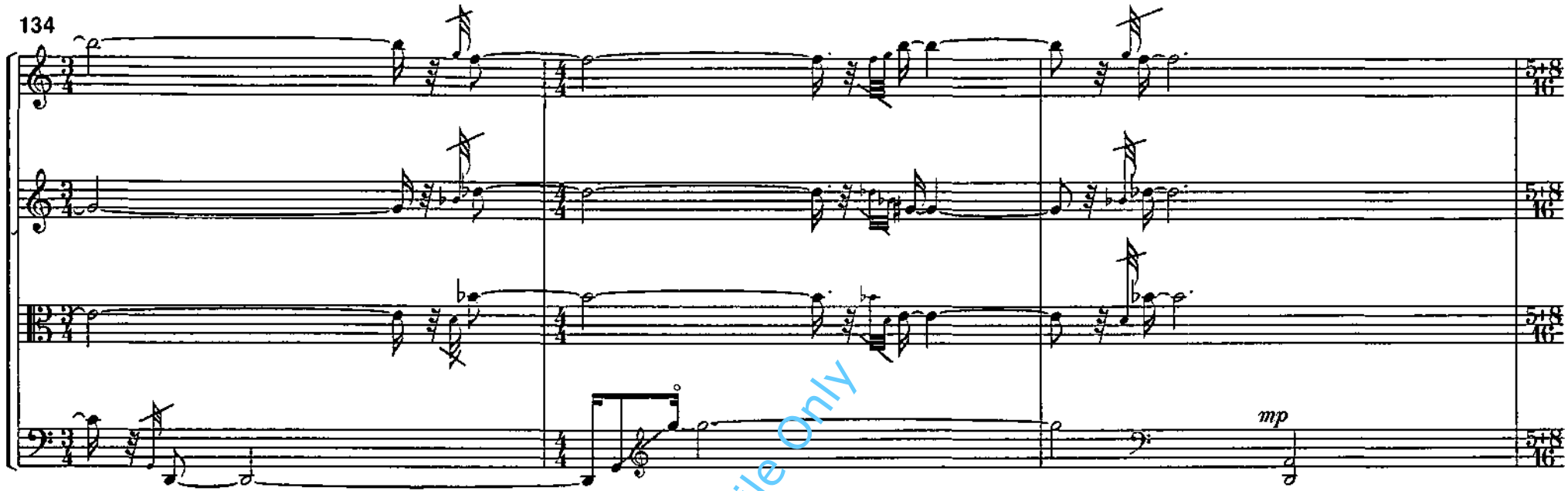

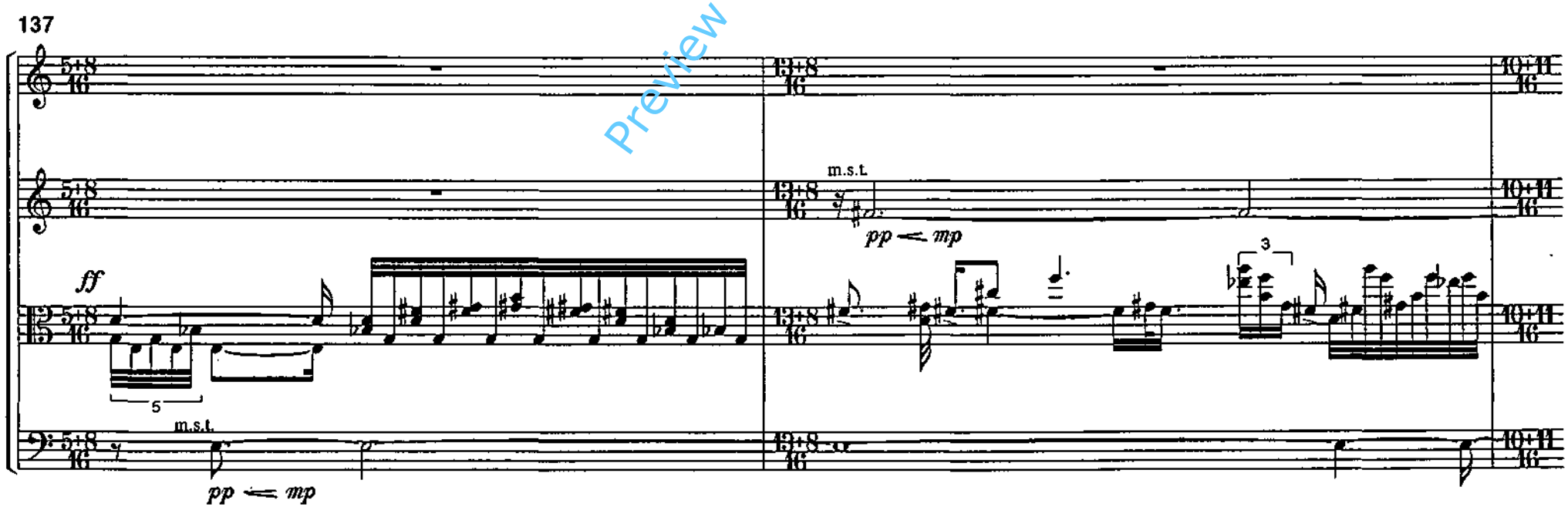

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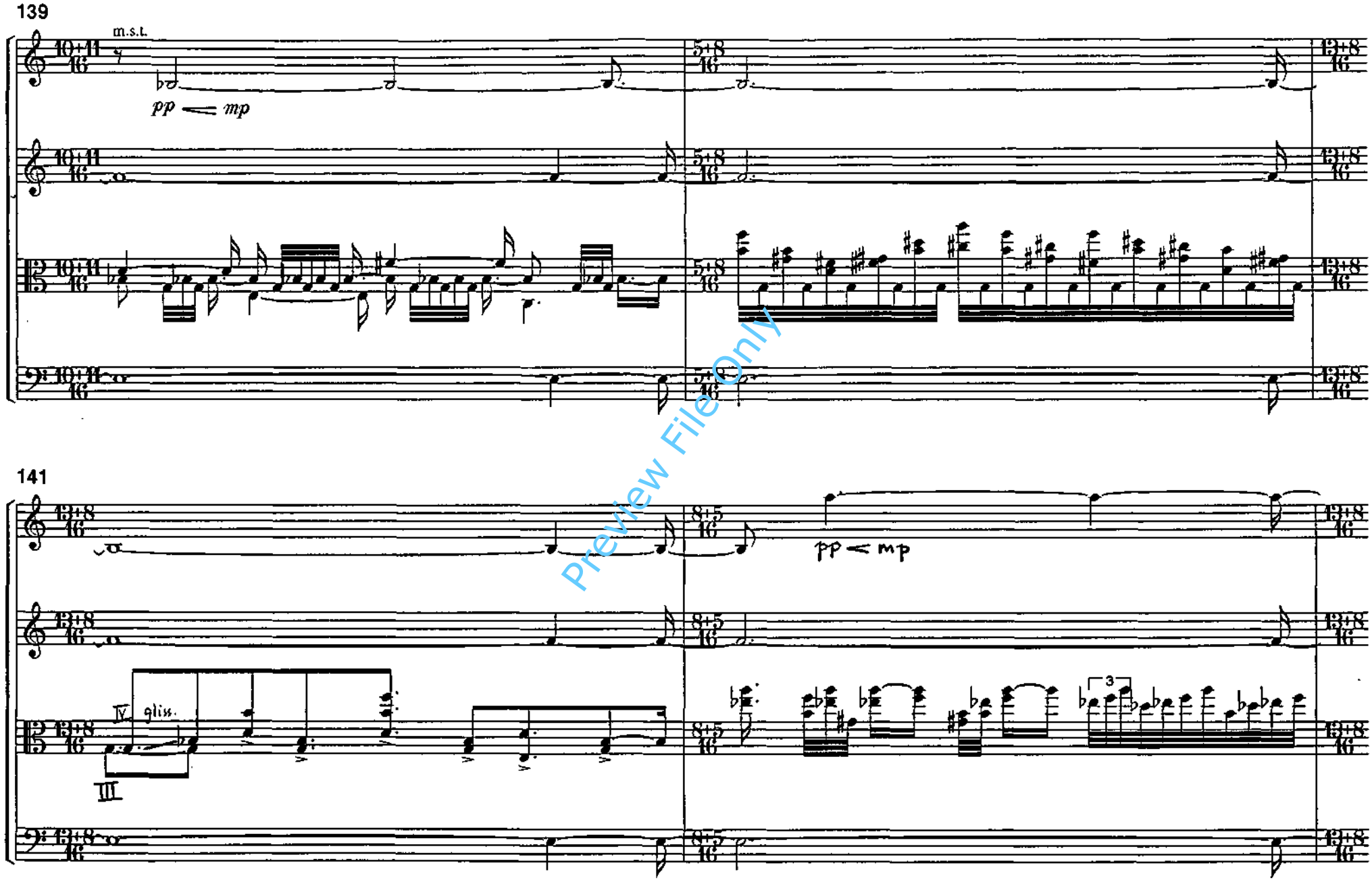

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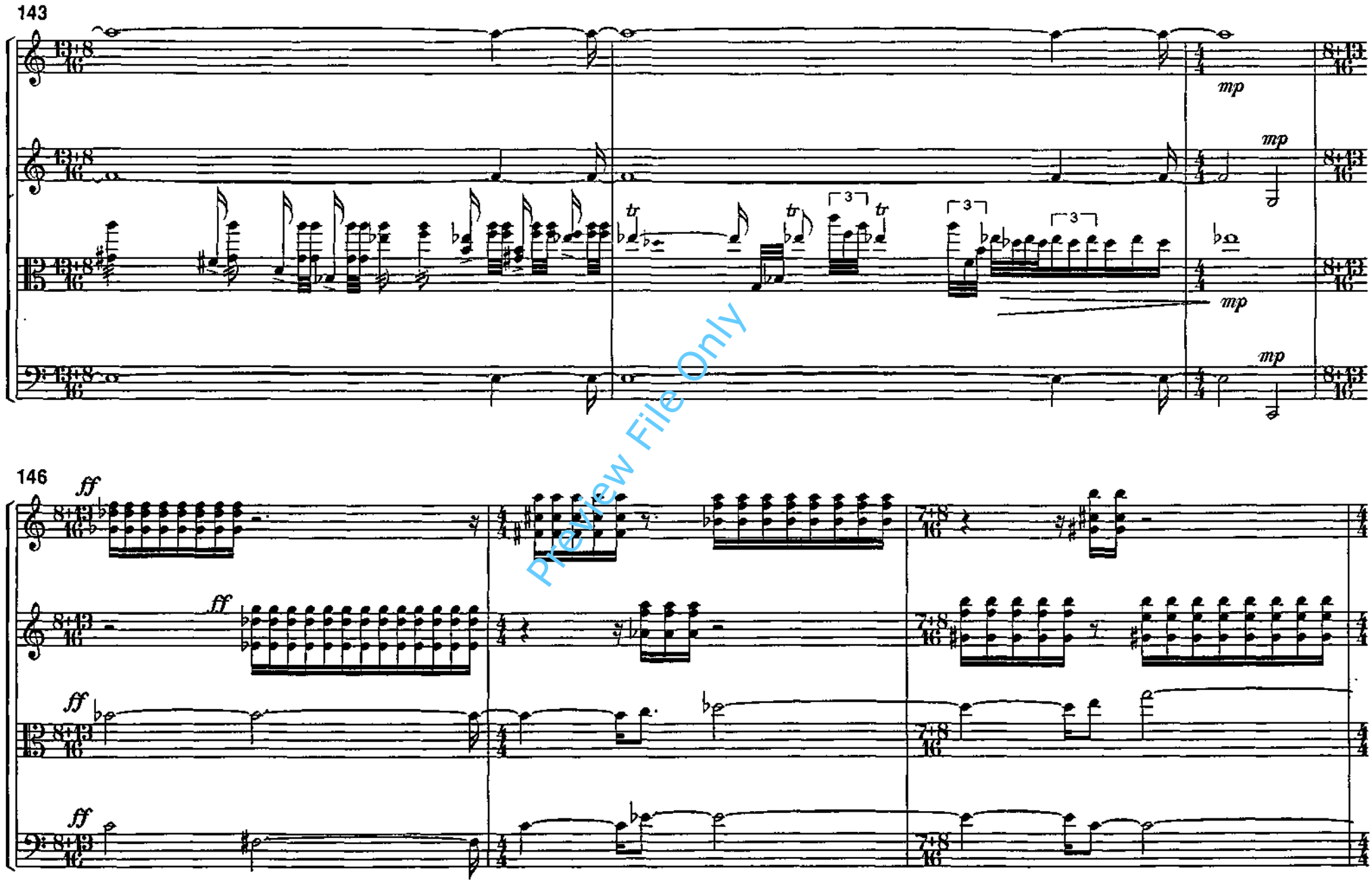

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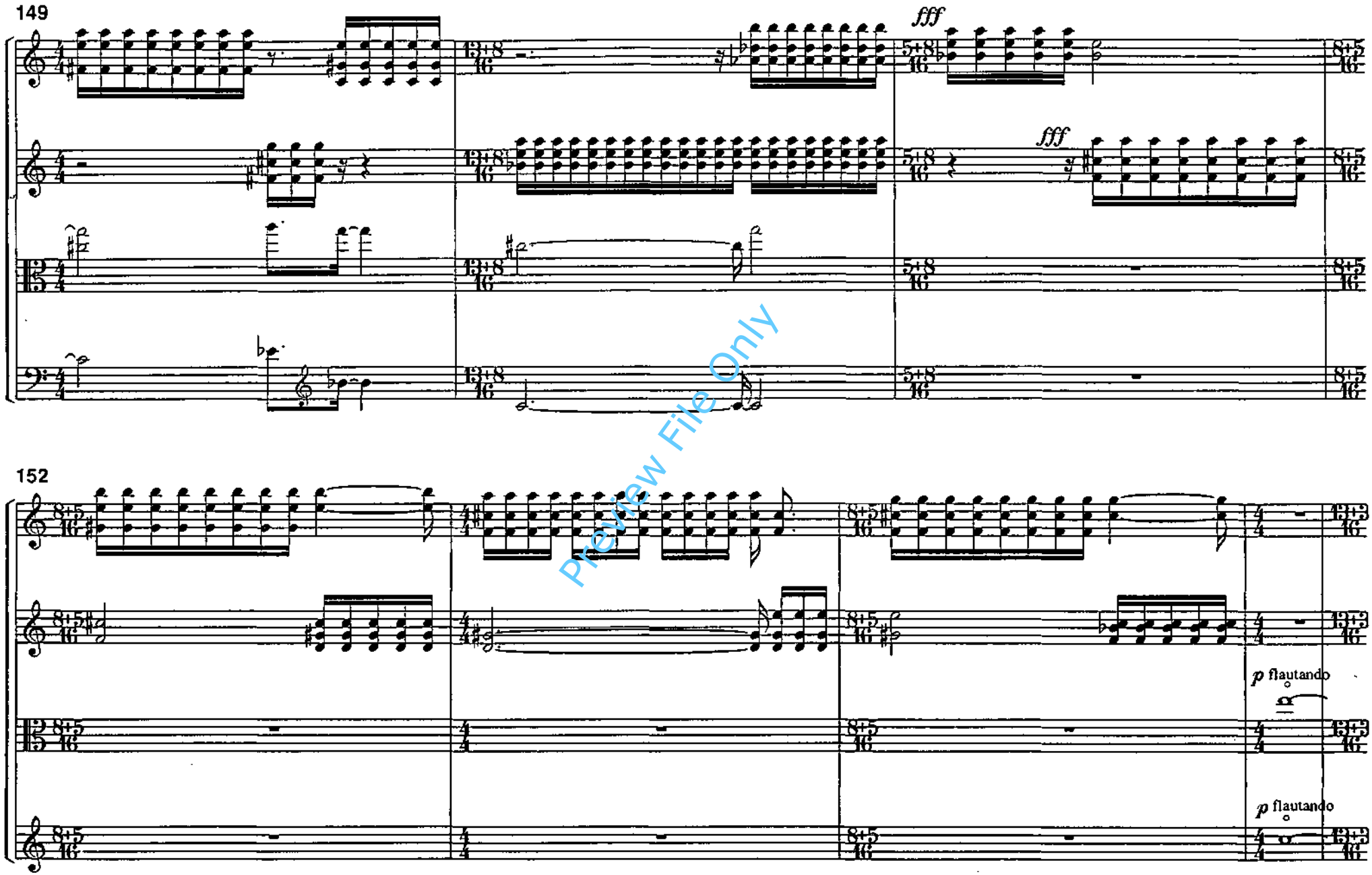

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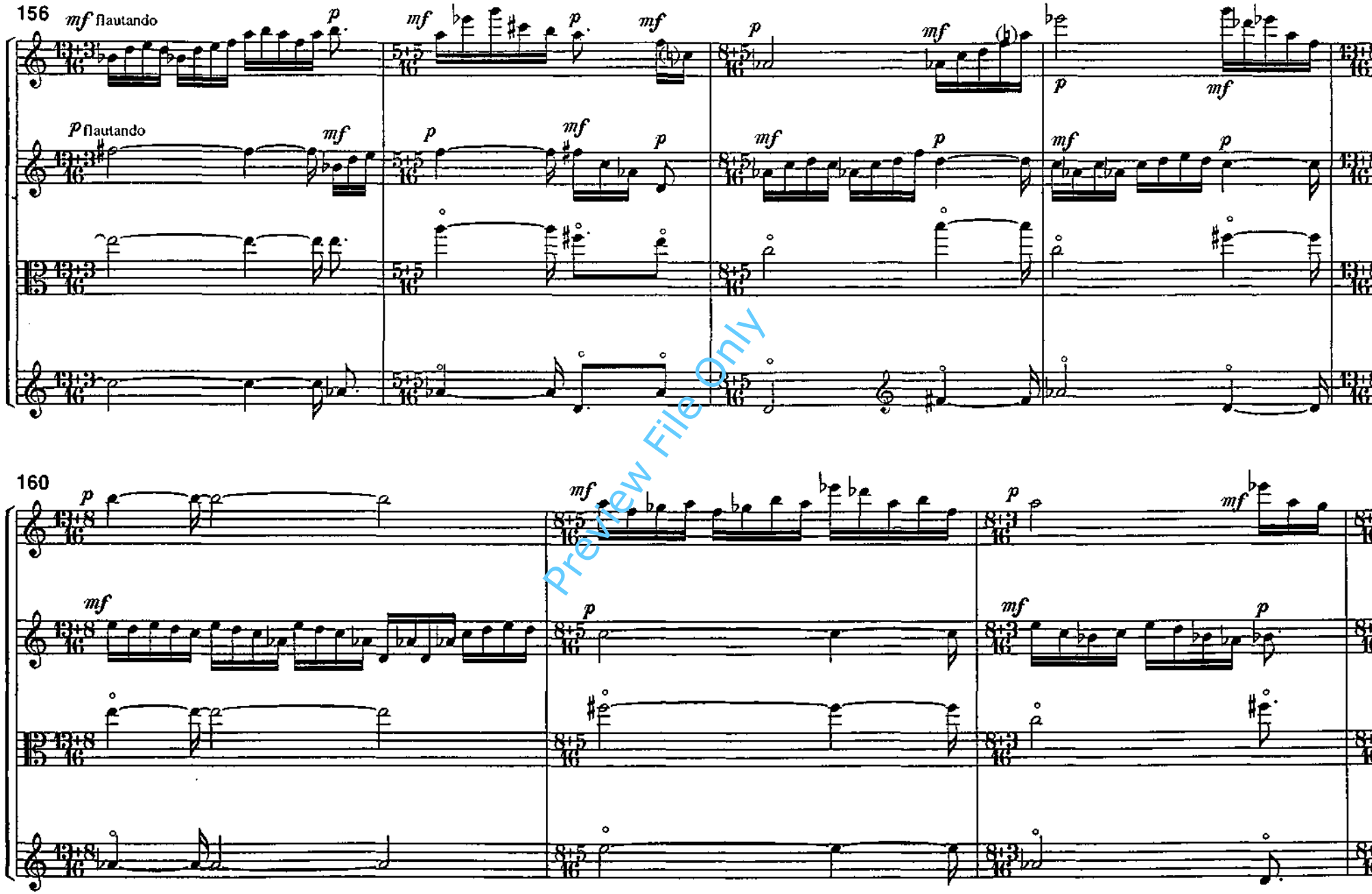

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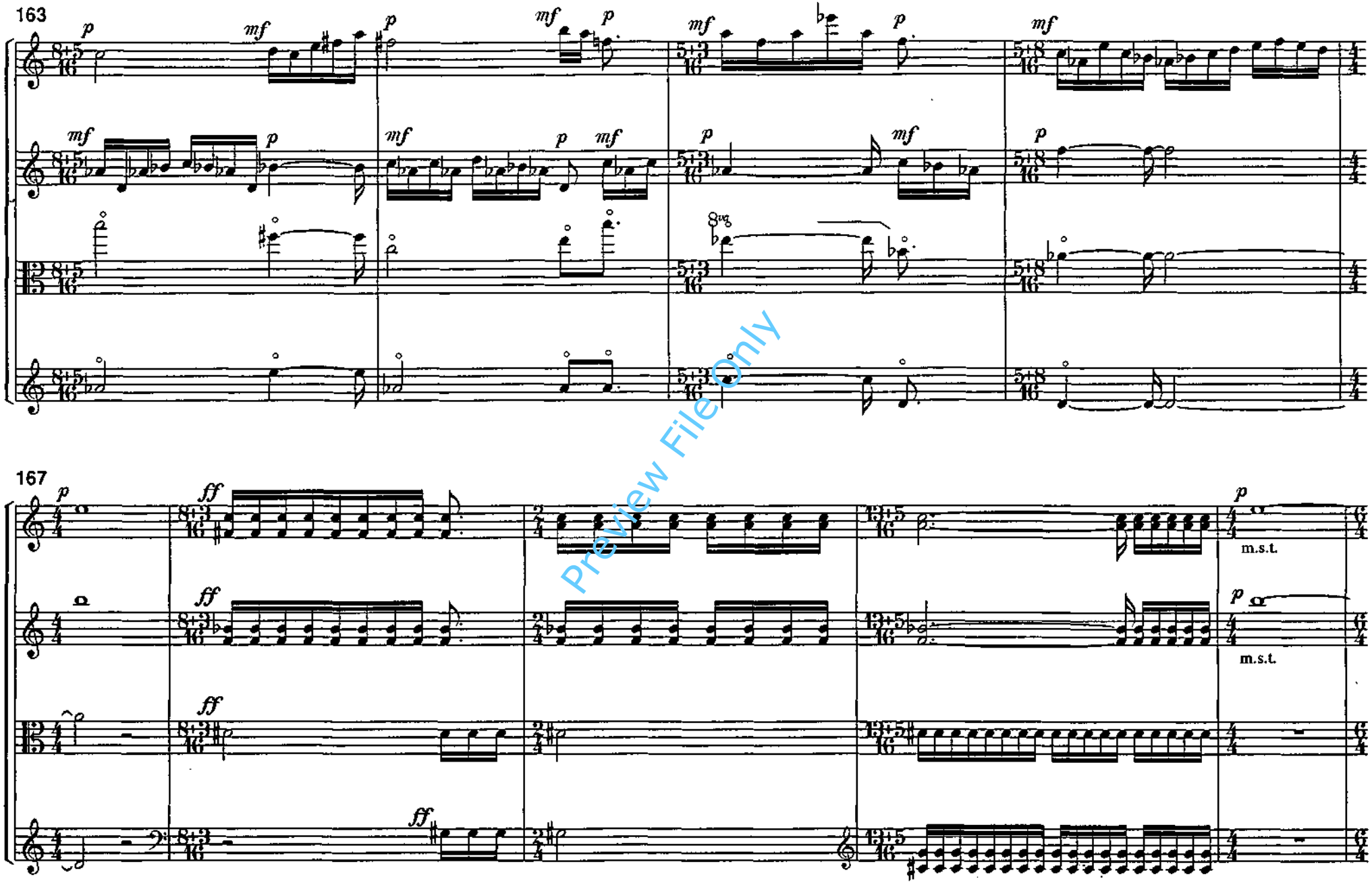

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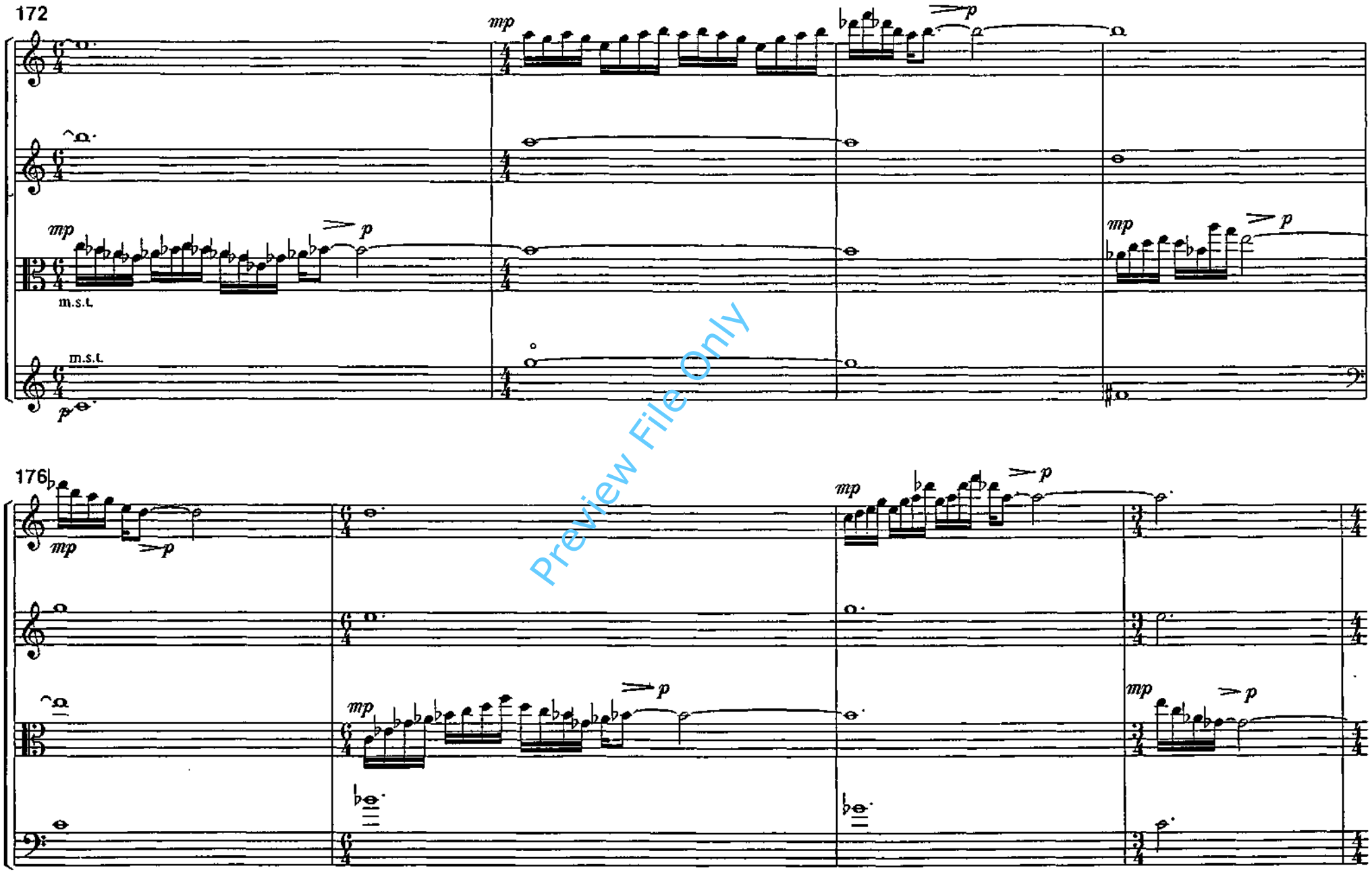

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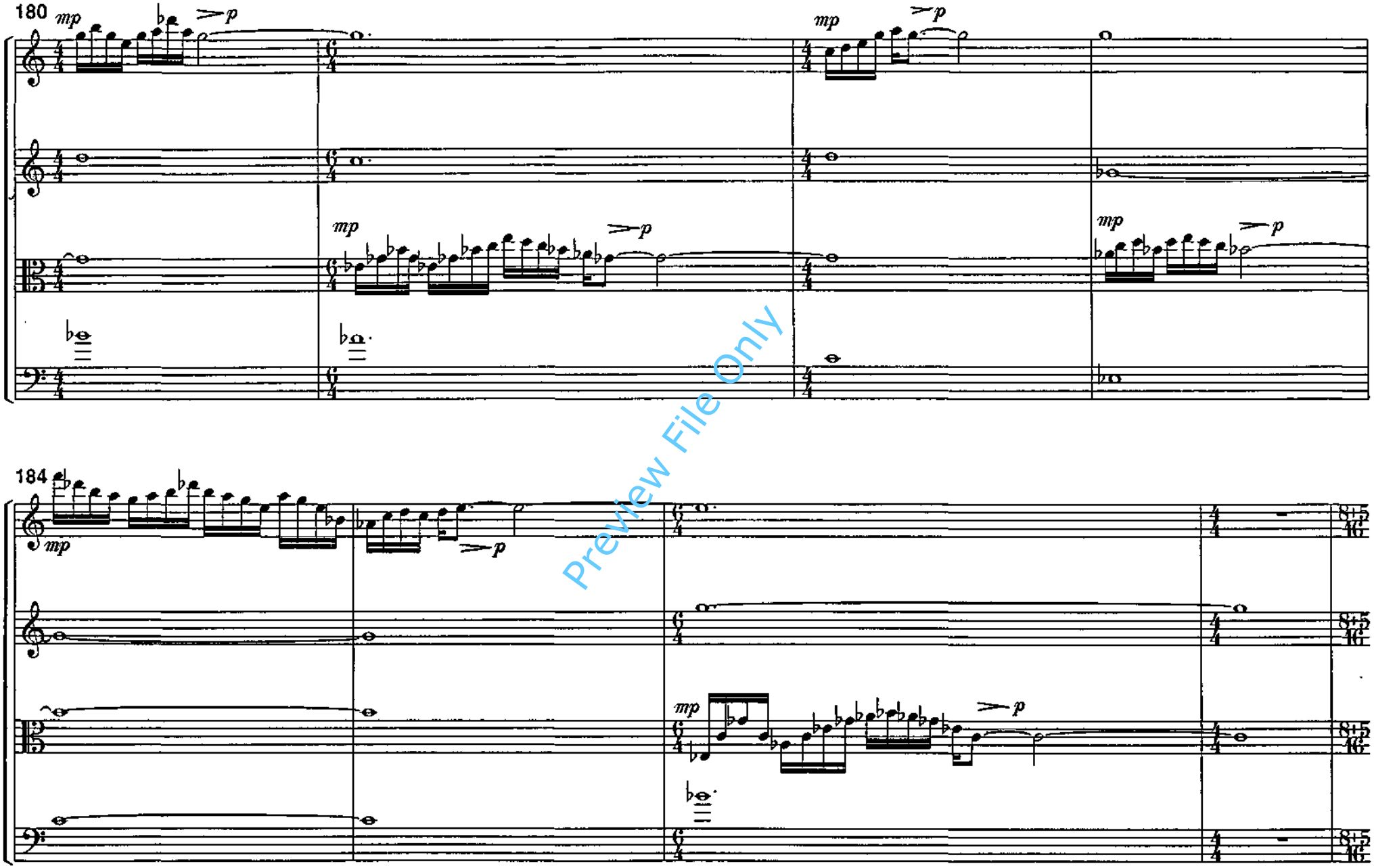

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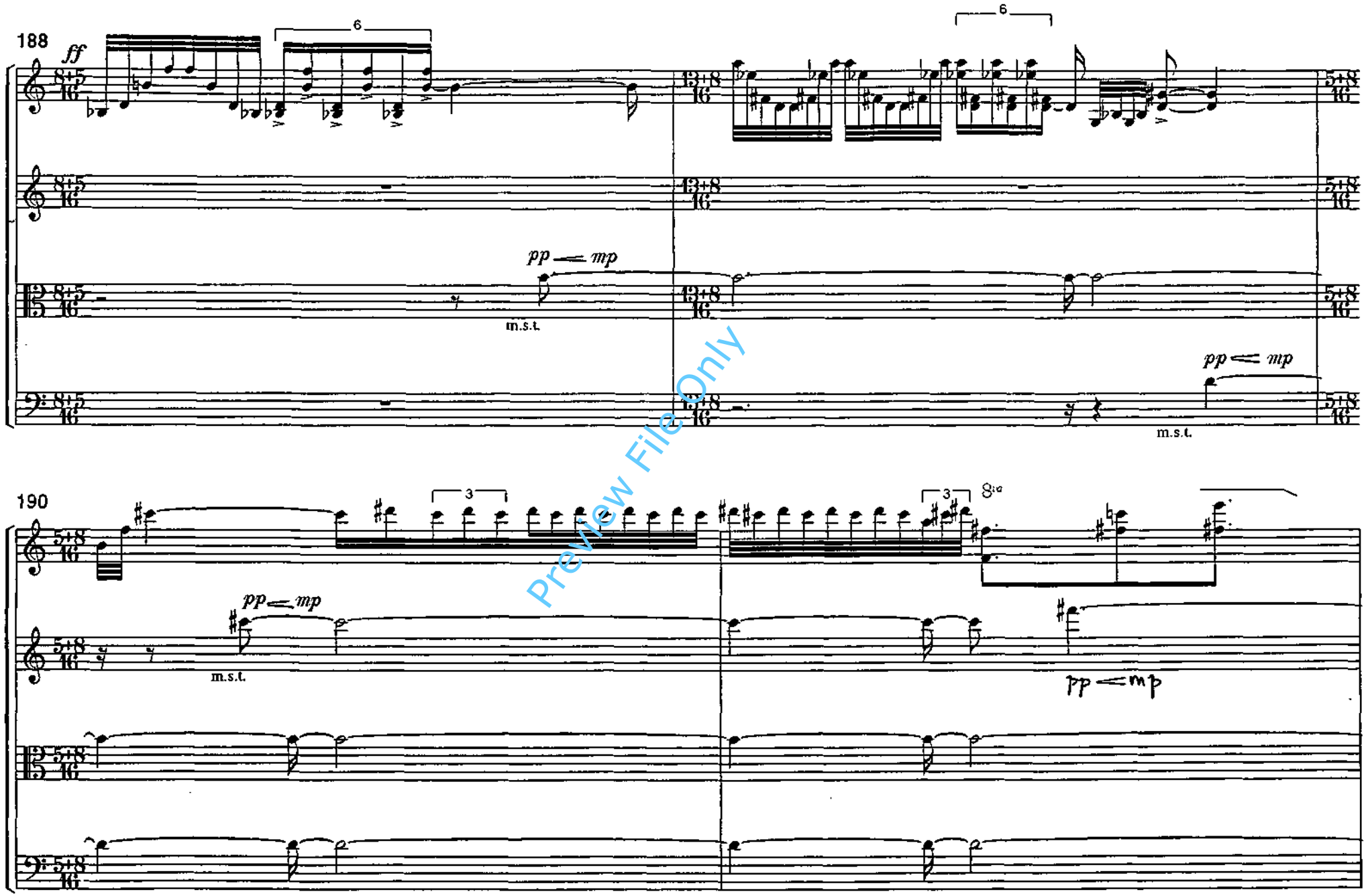

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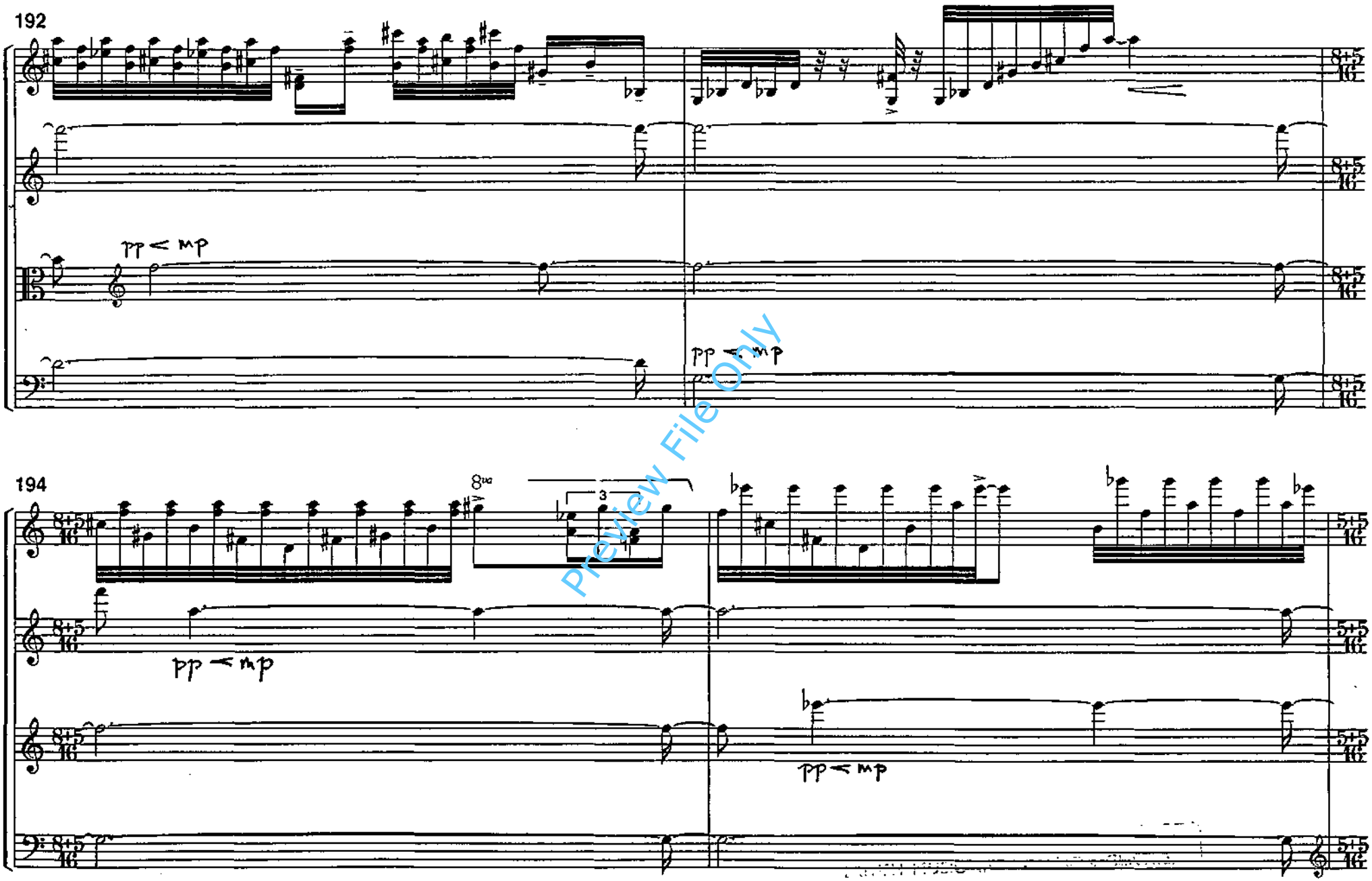

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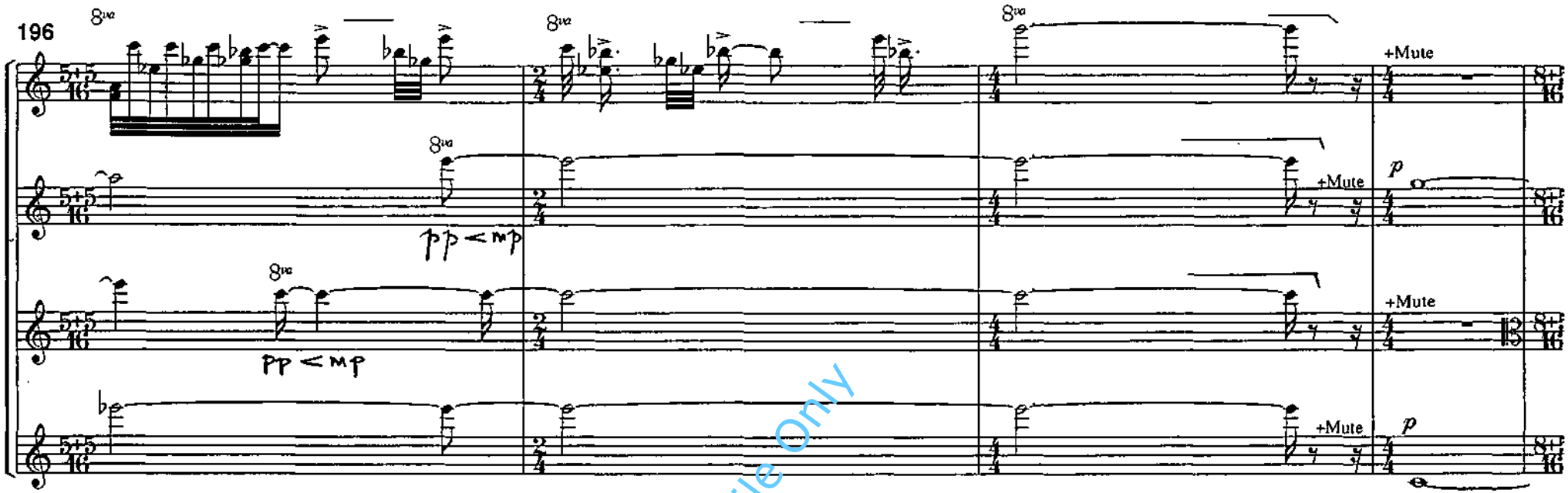

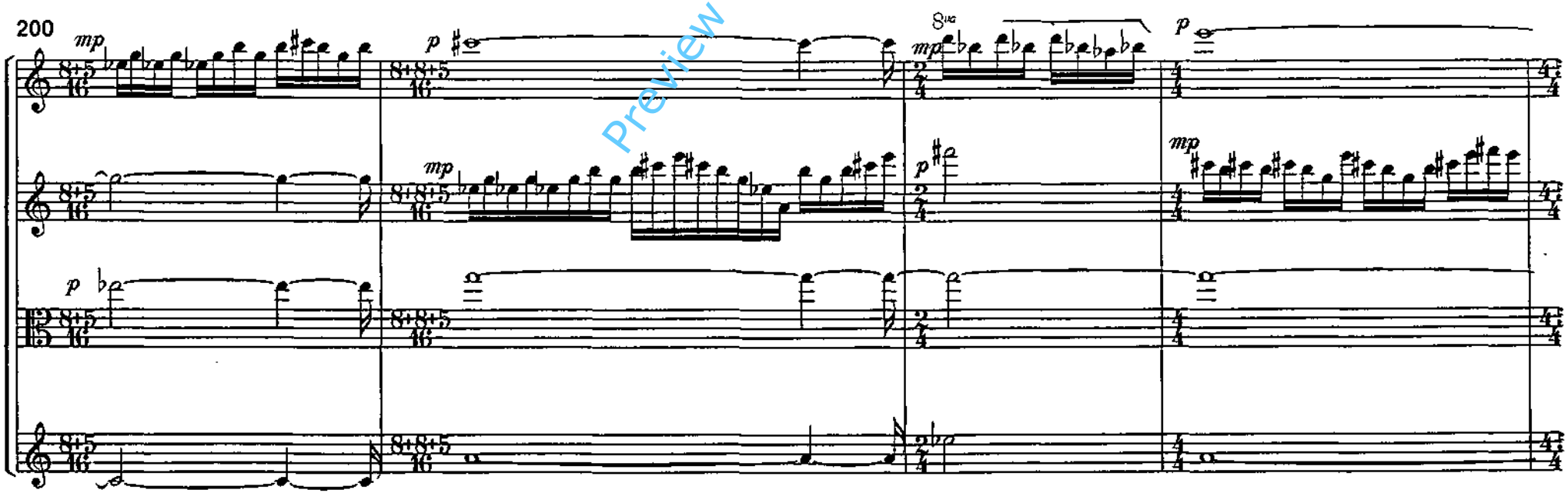

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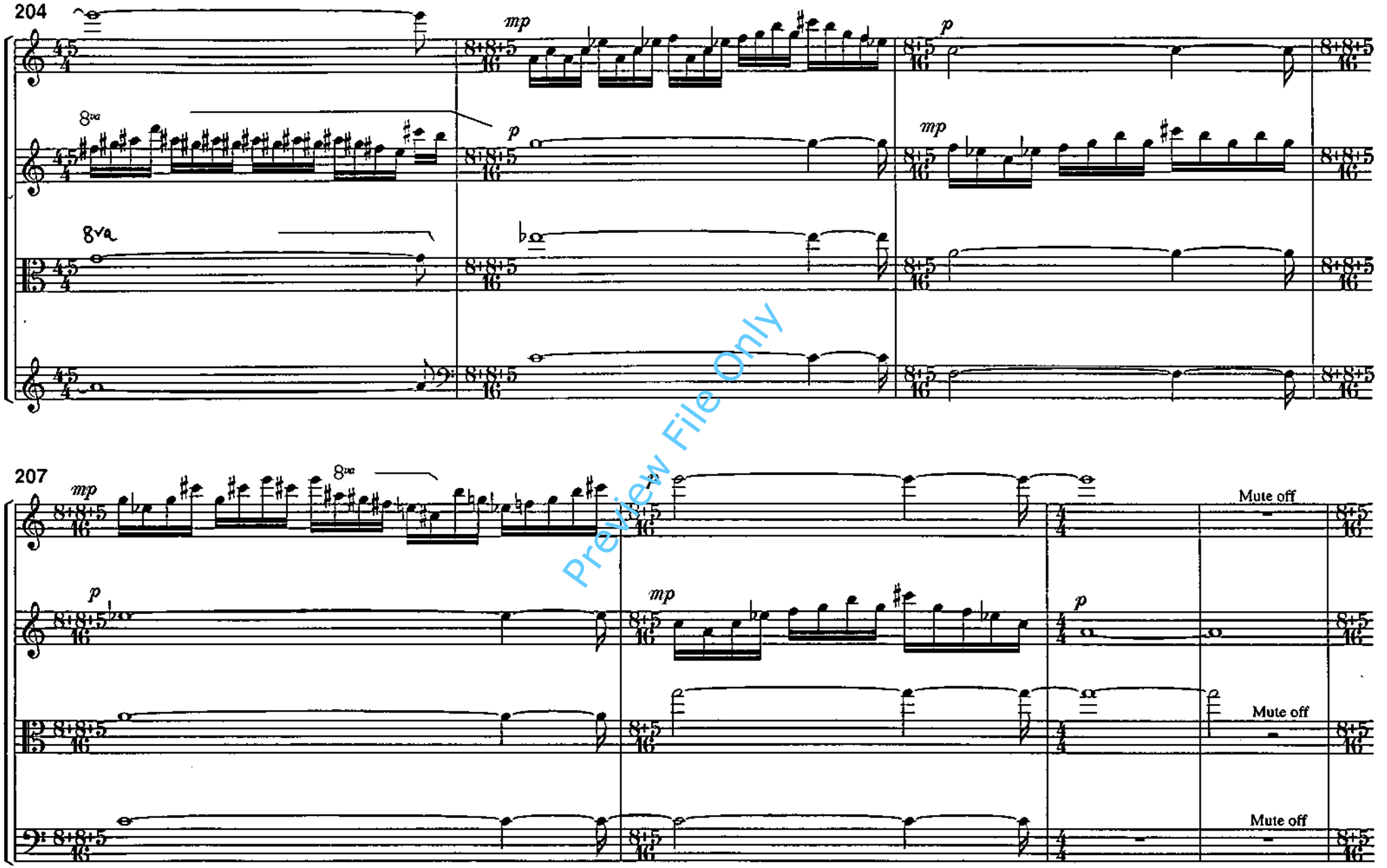

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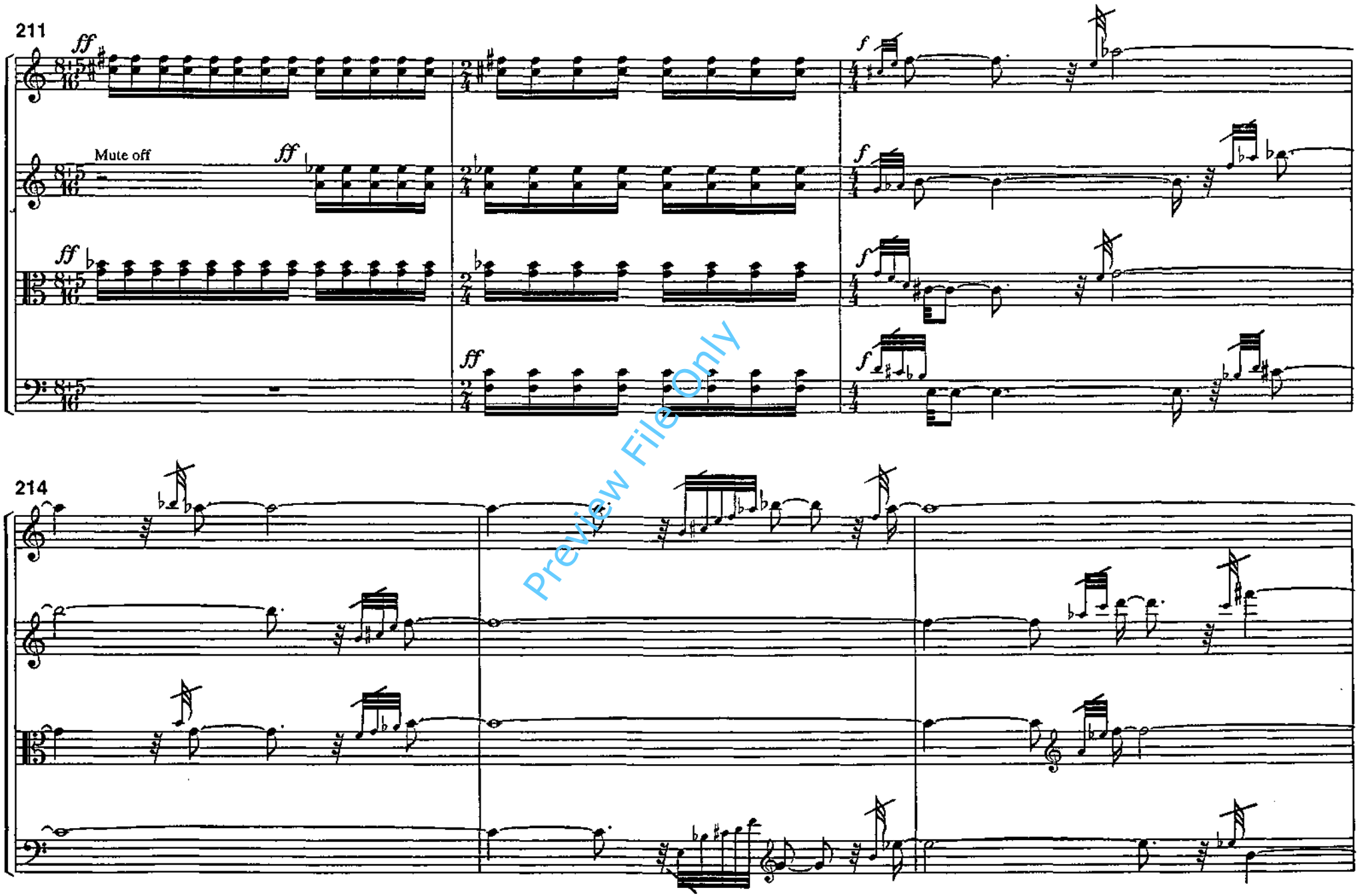

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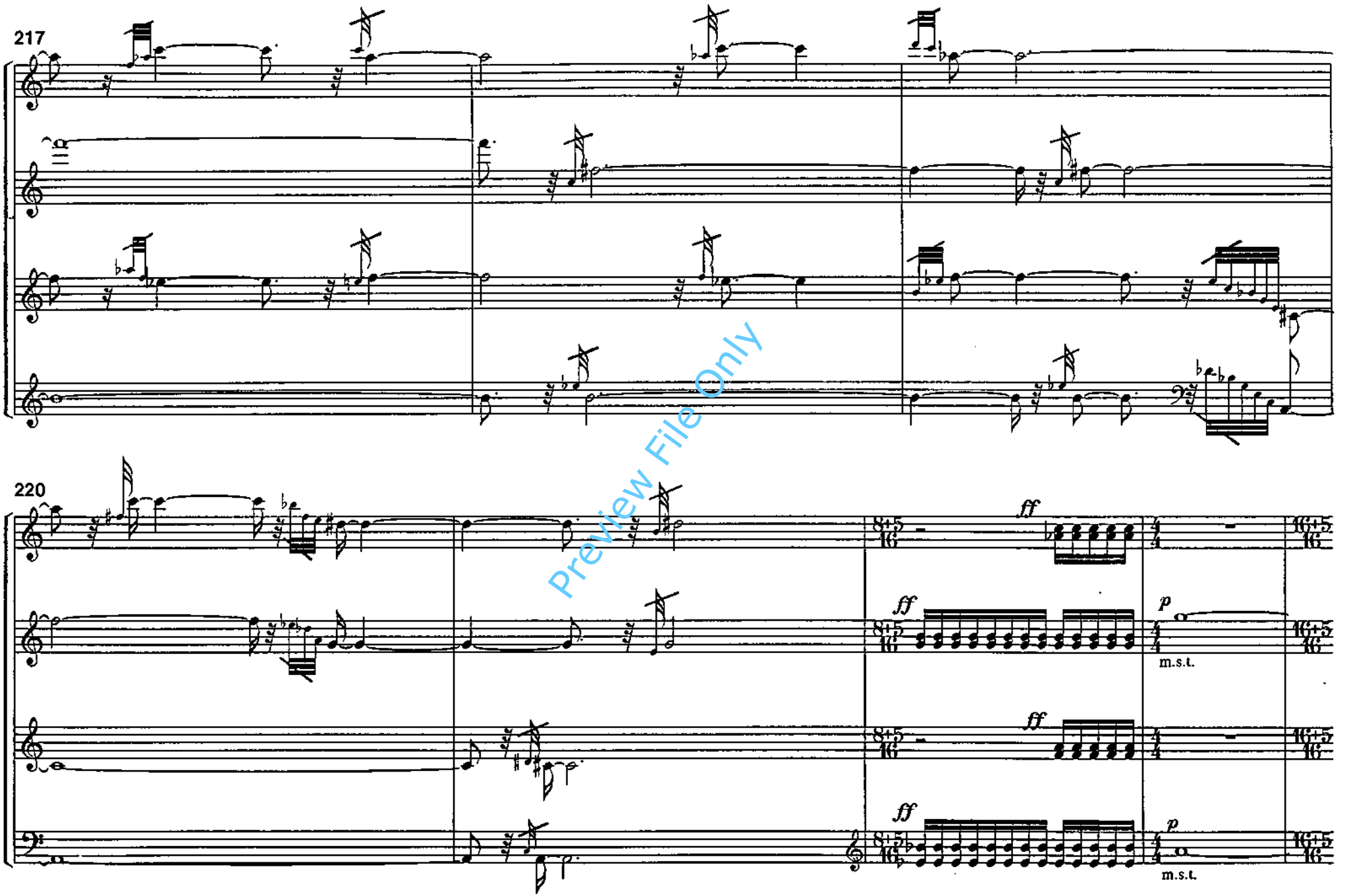

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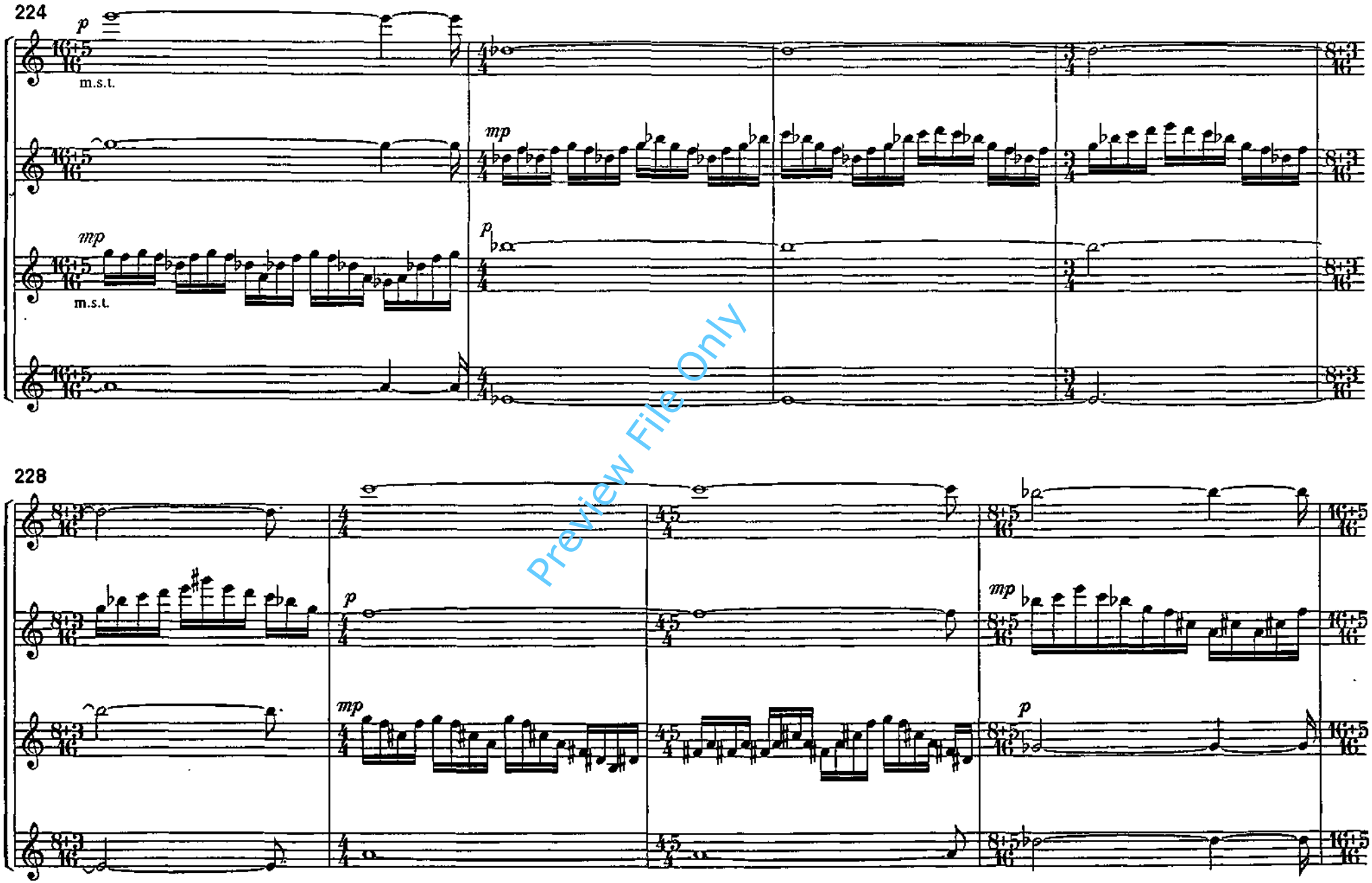

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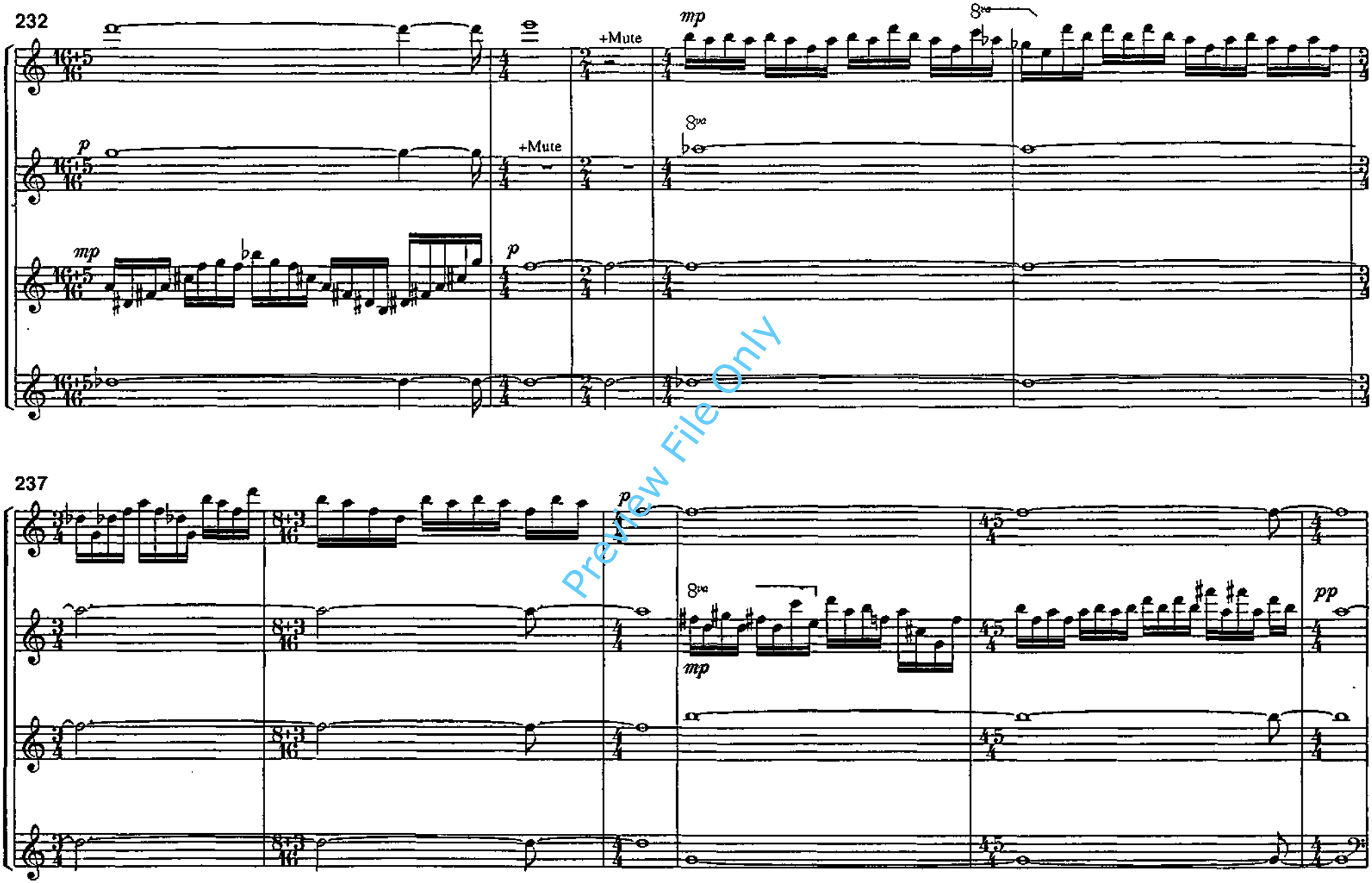

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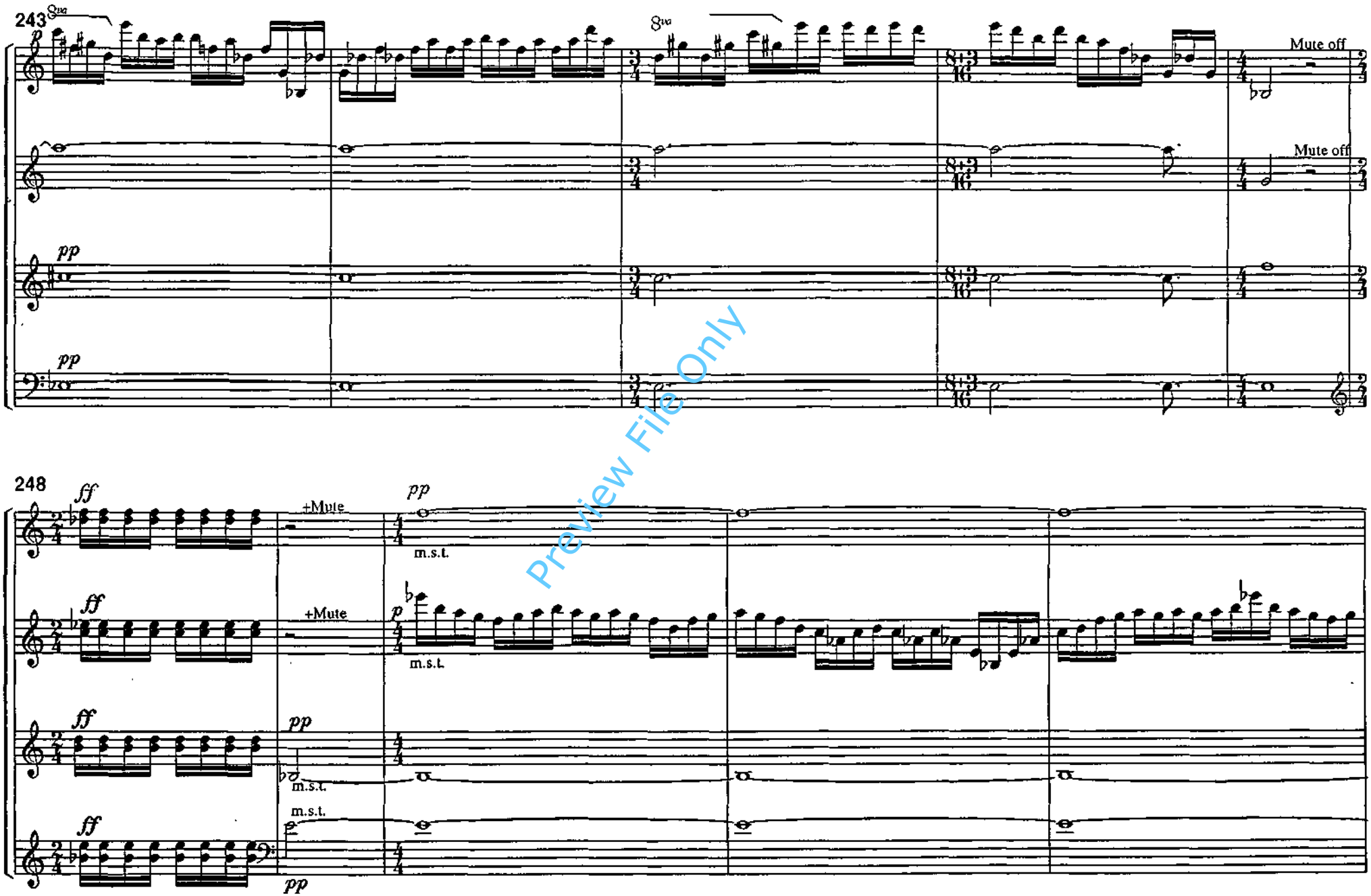

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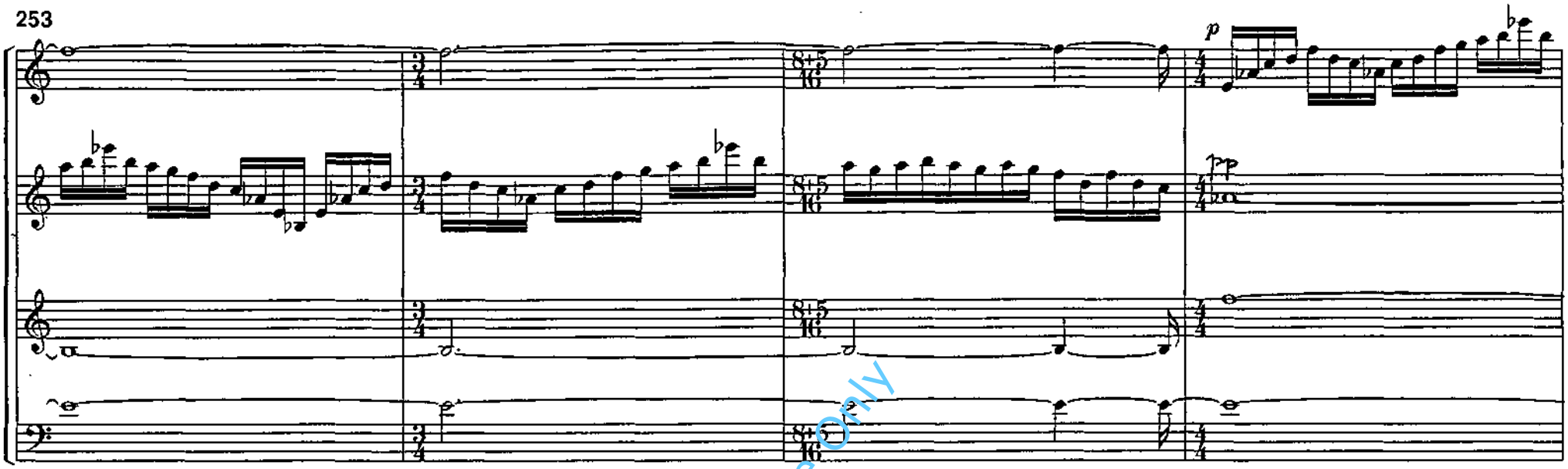

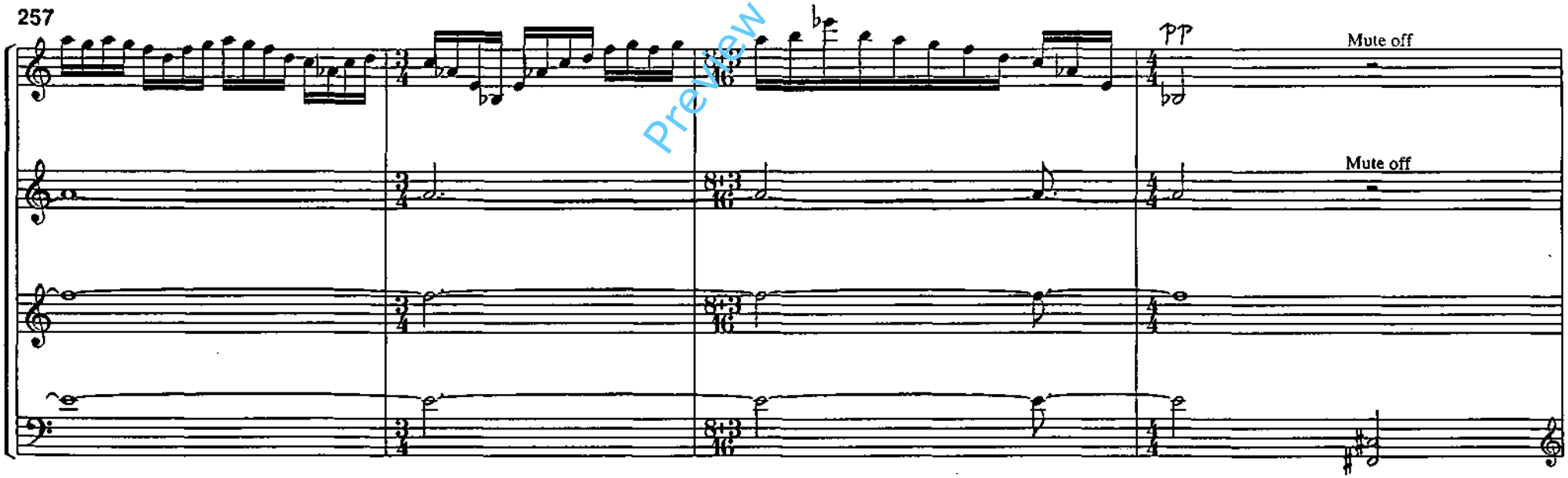

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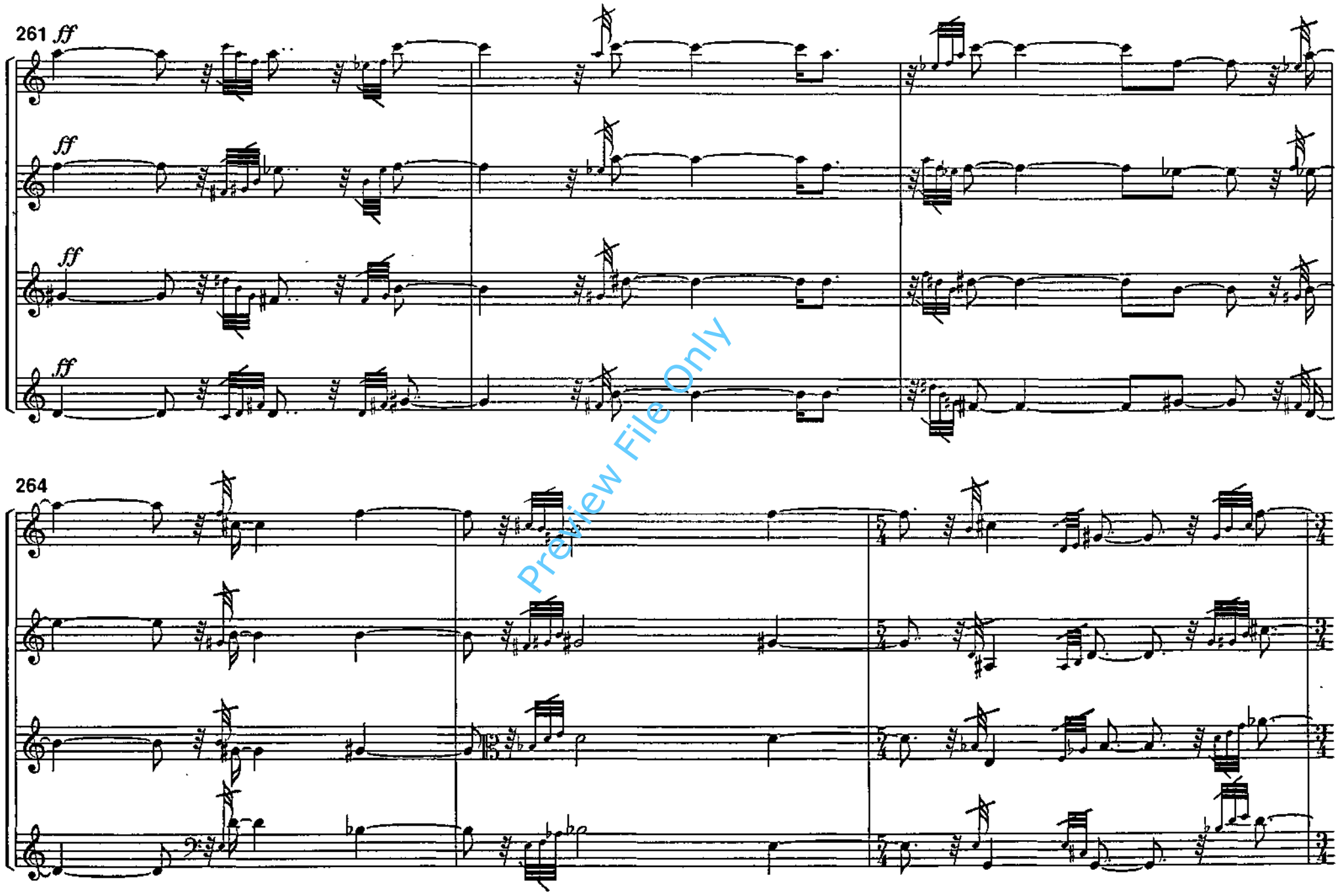

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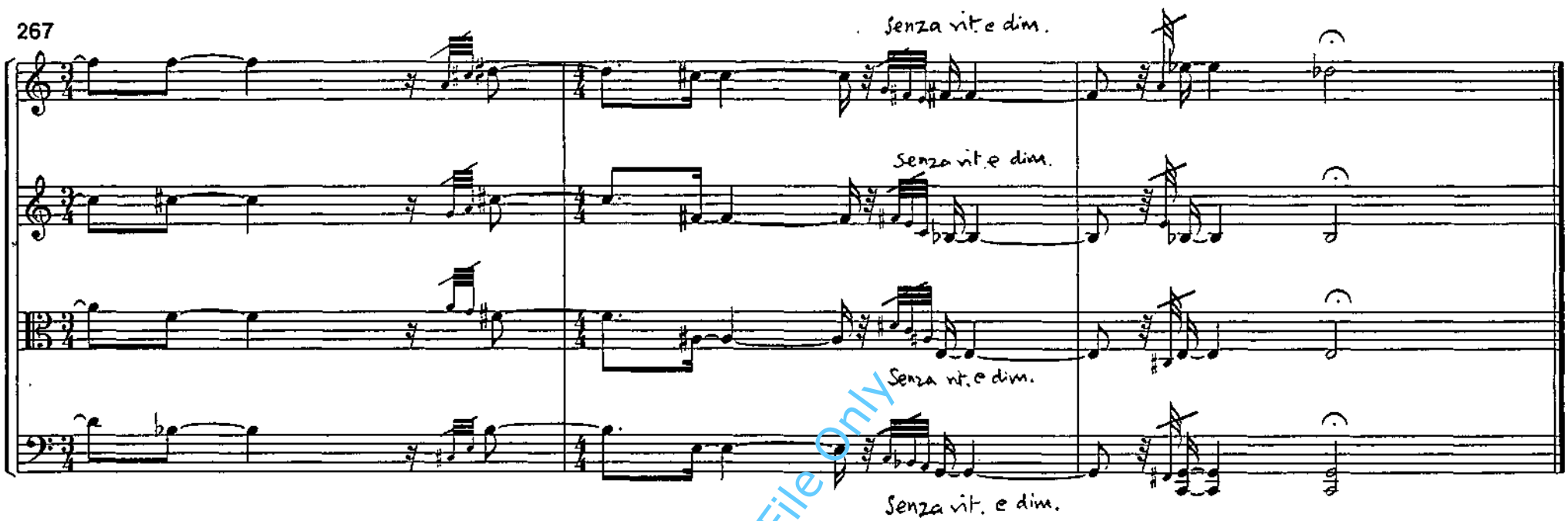

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