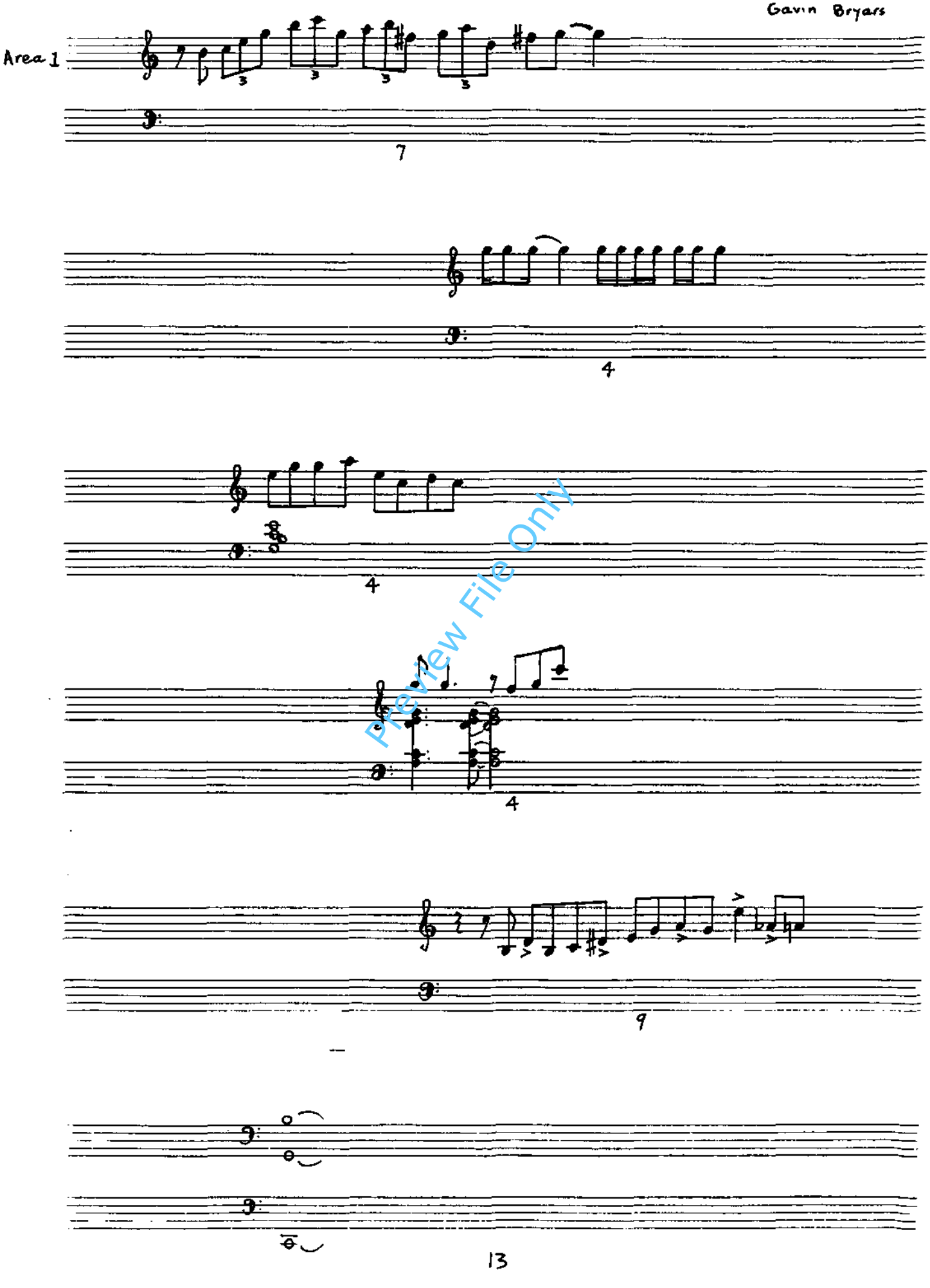
THE RIDE CYMBAL AND THE BAND THAT CAUSED THE FIRE IN THE SYCAMORE TREE

Gavin Bryars



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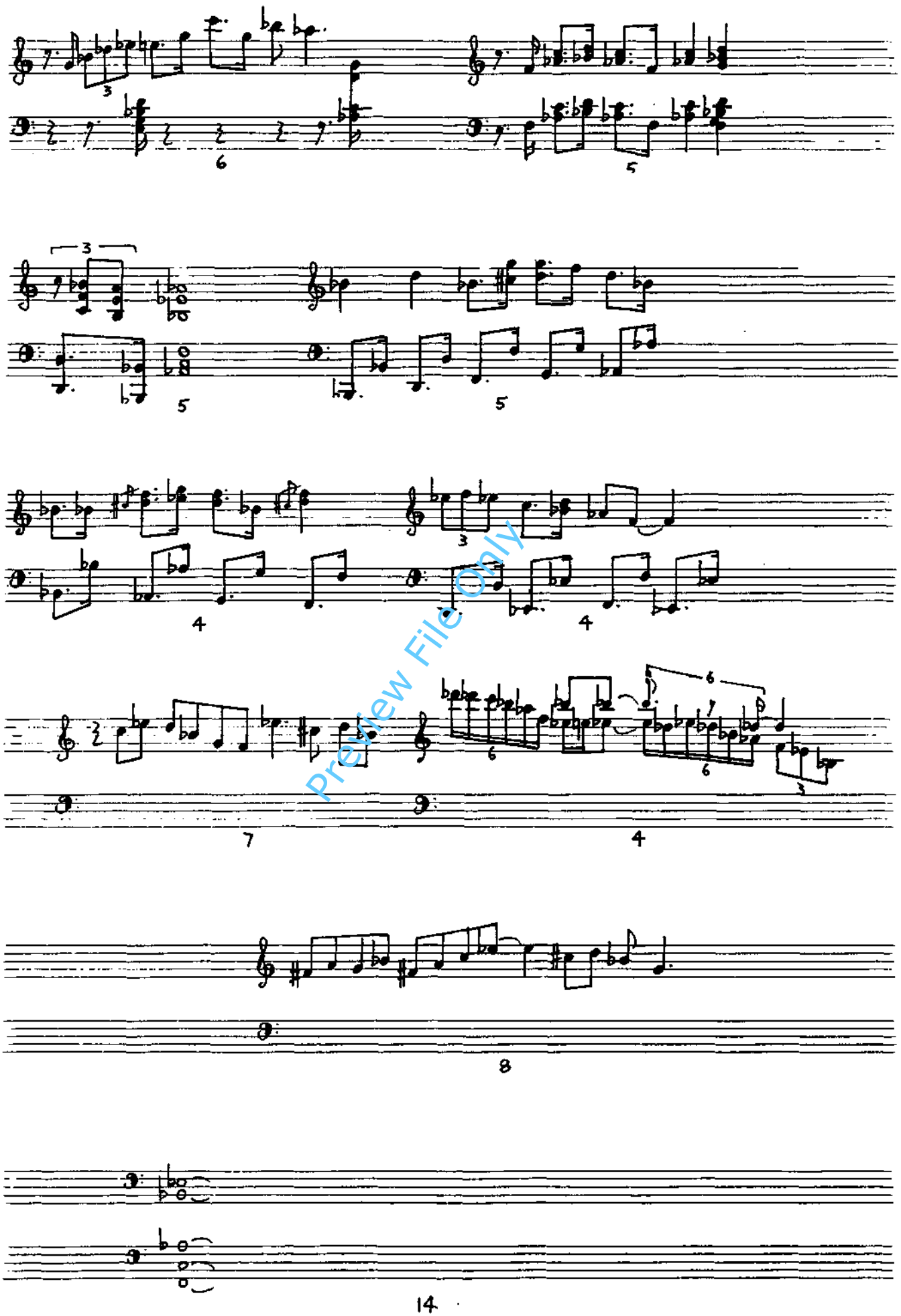

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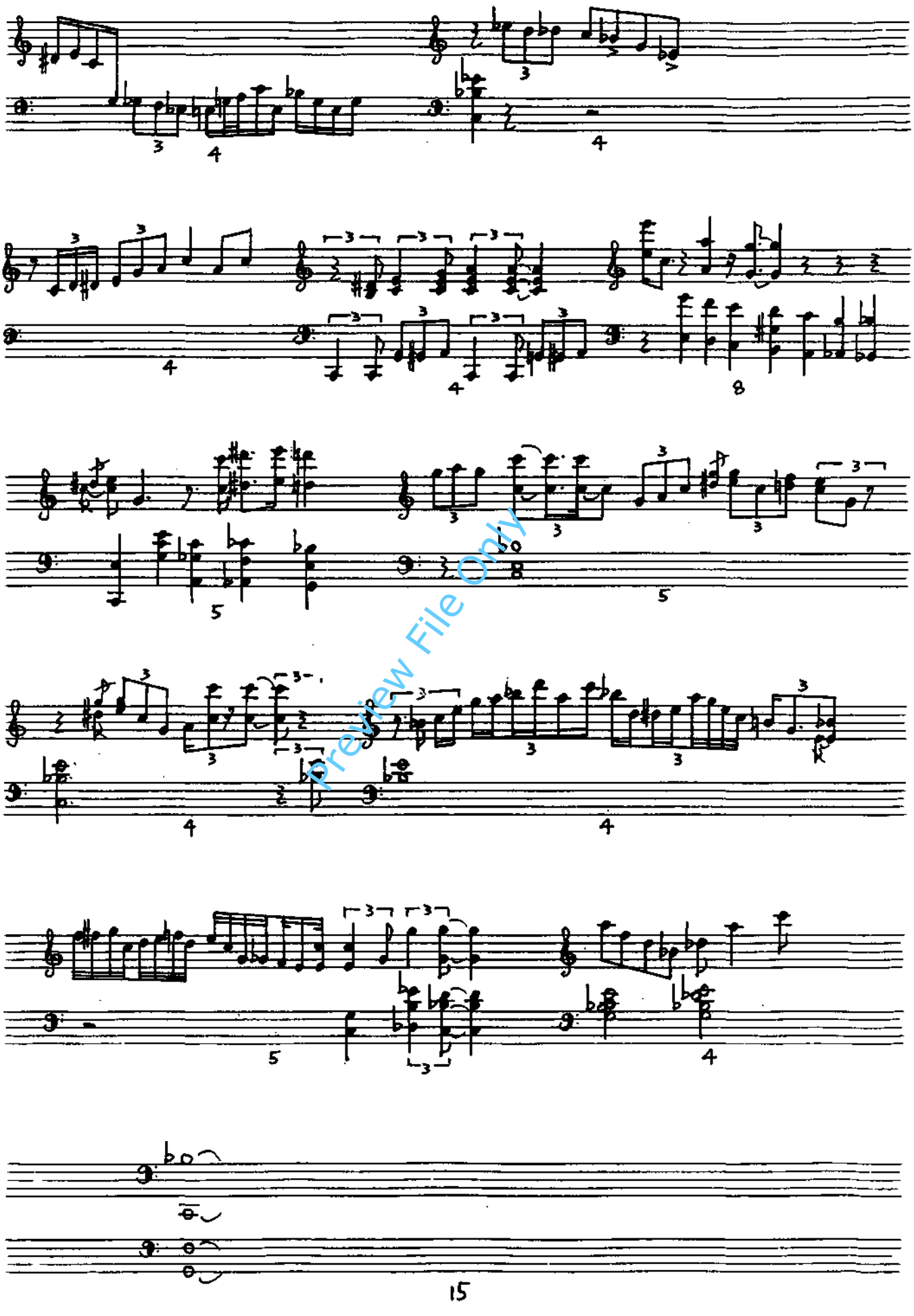

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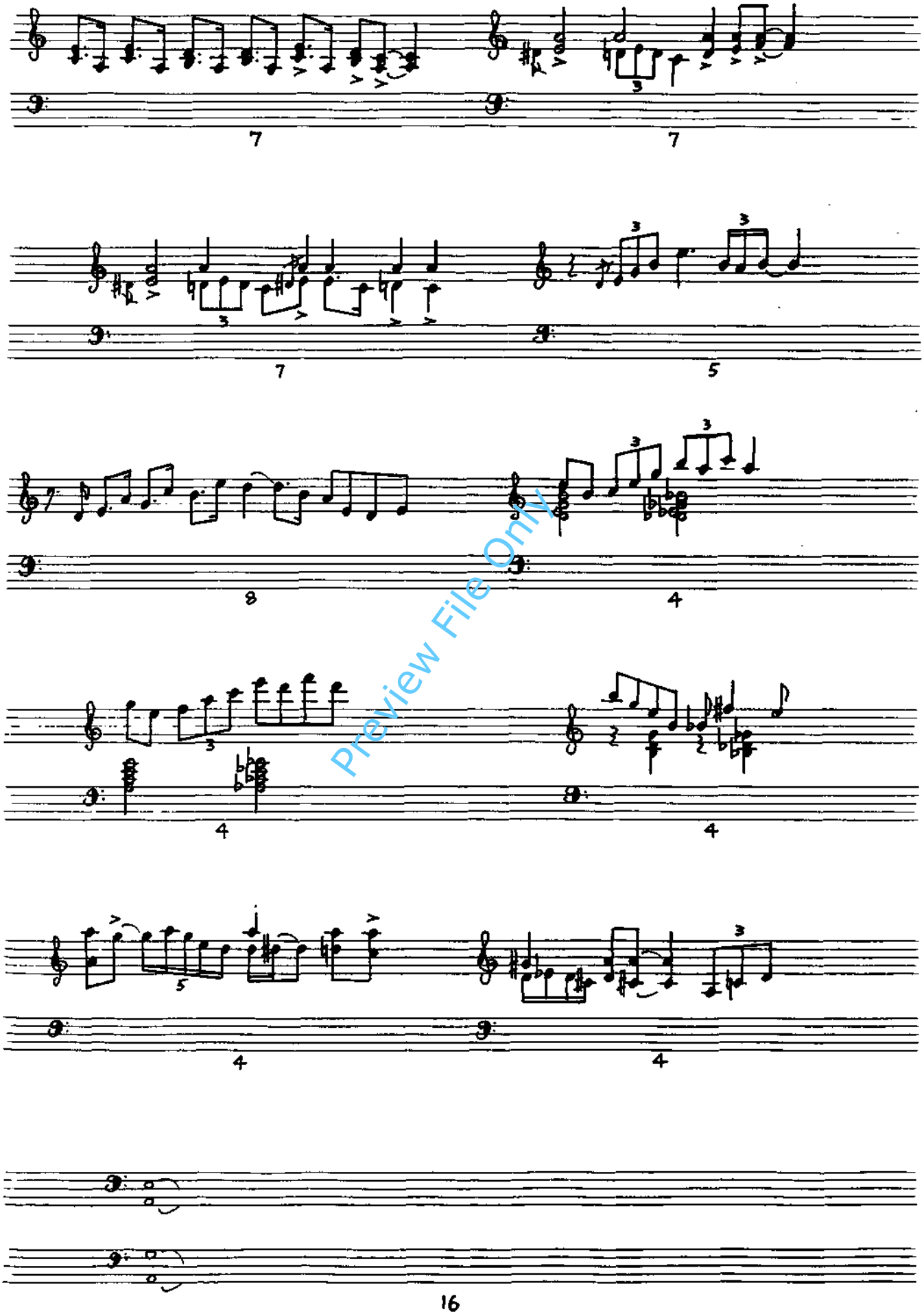

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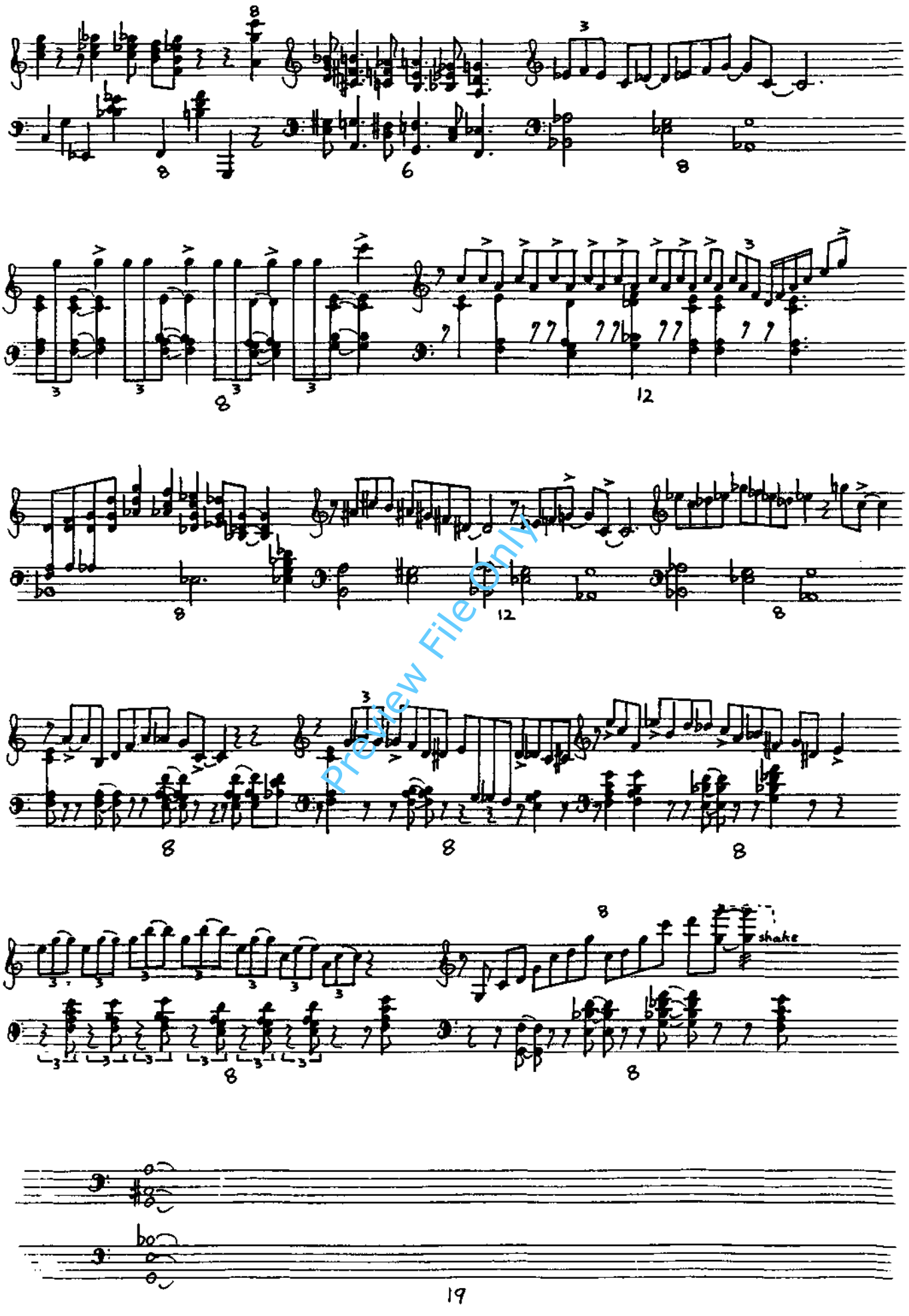

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Area 8 (2 page)

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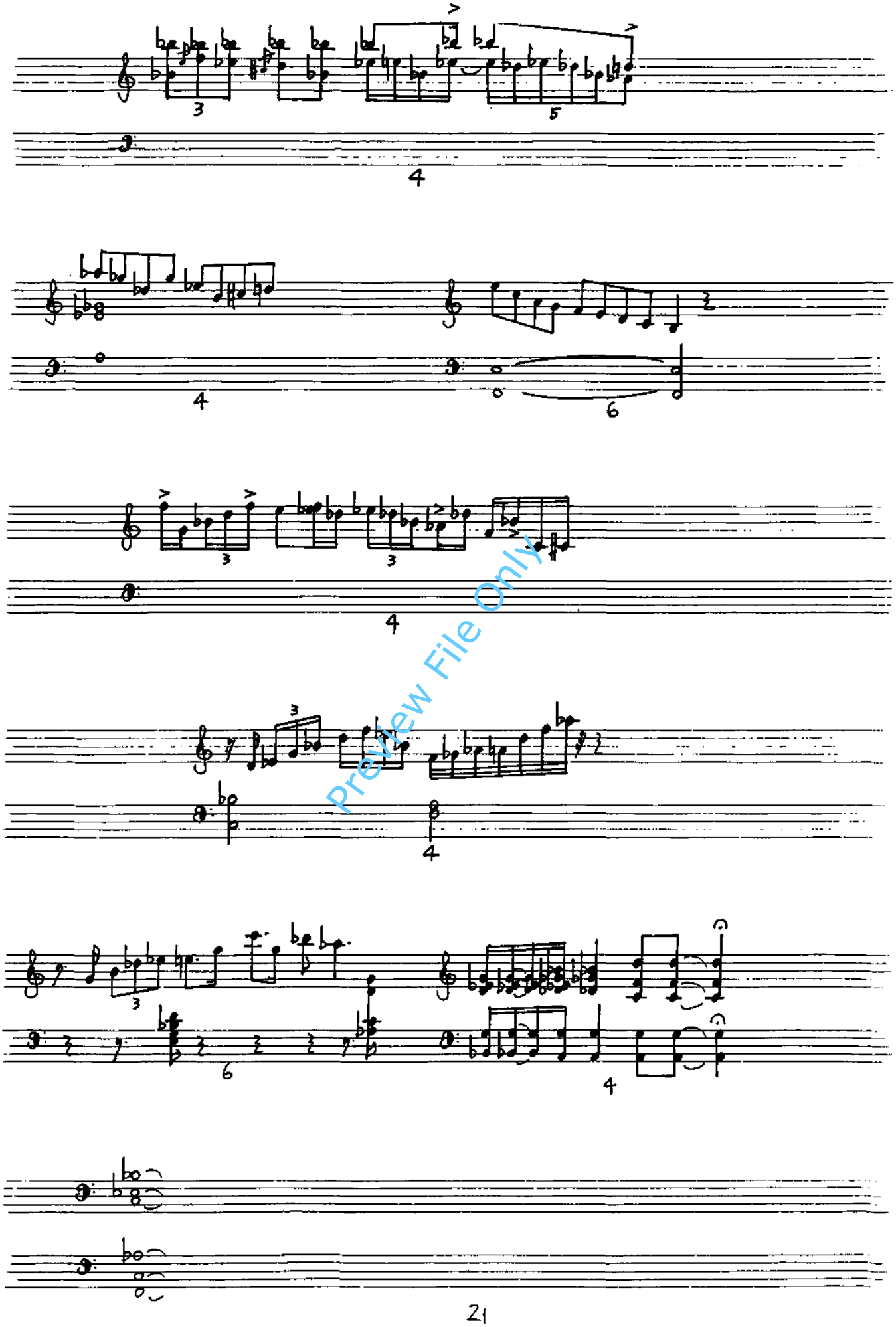
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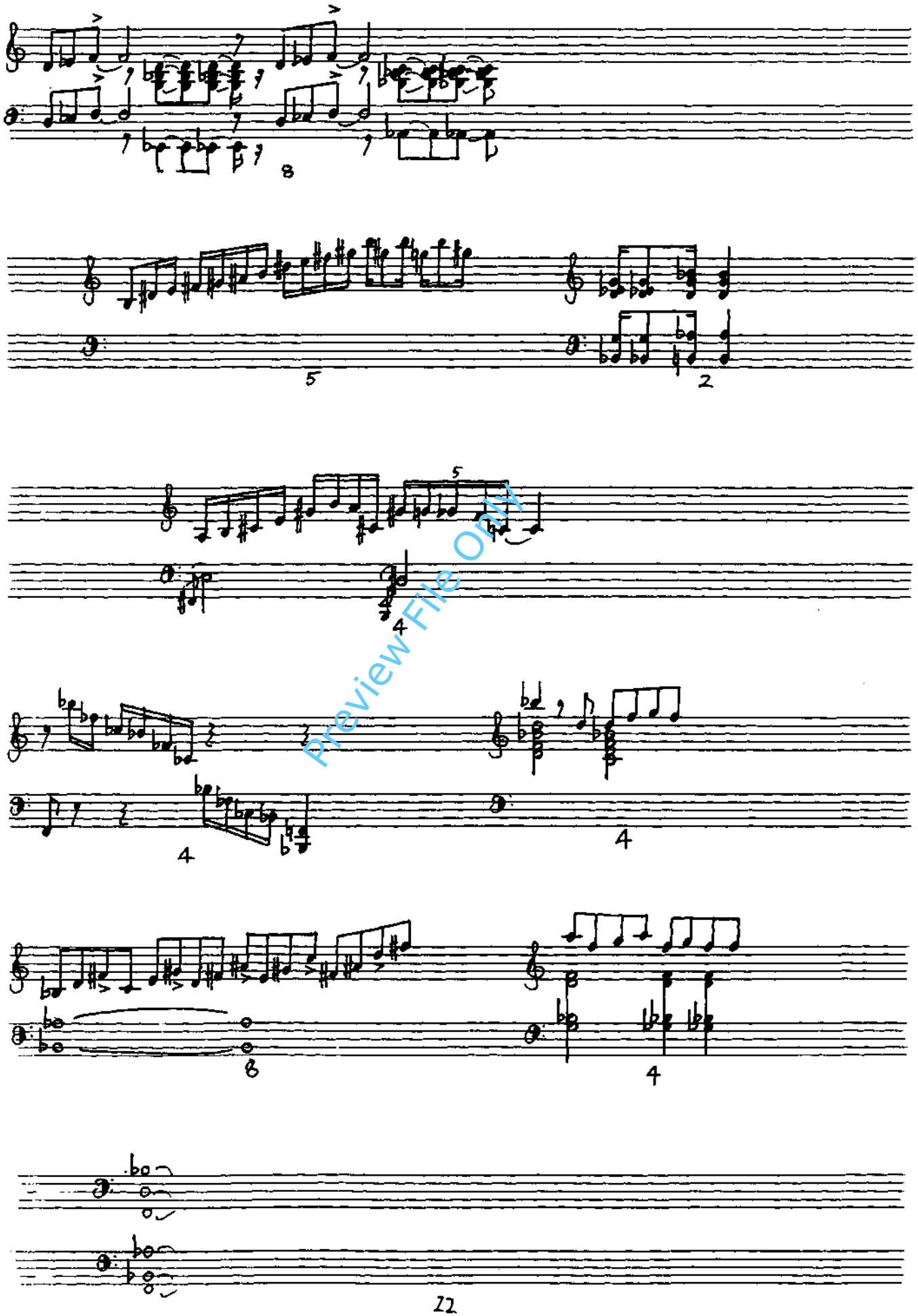

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Area 10

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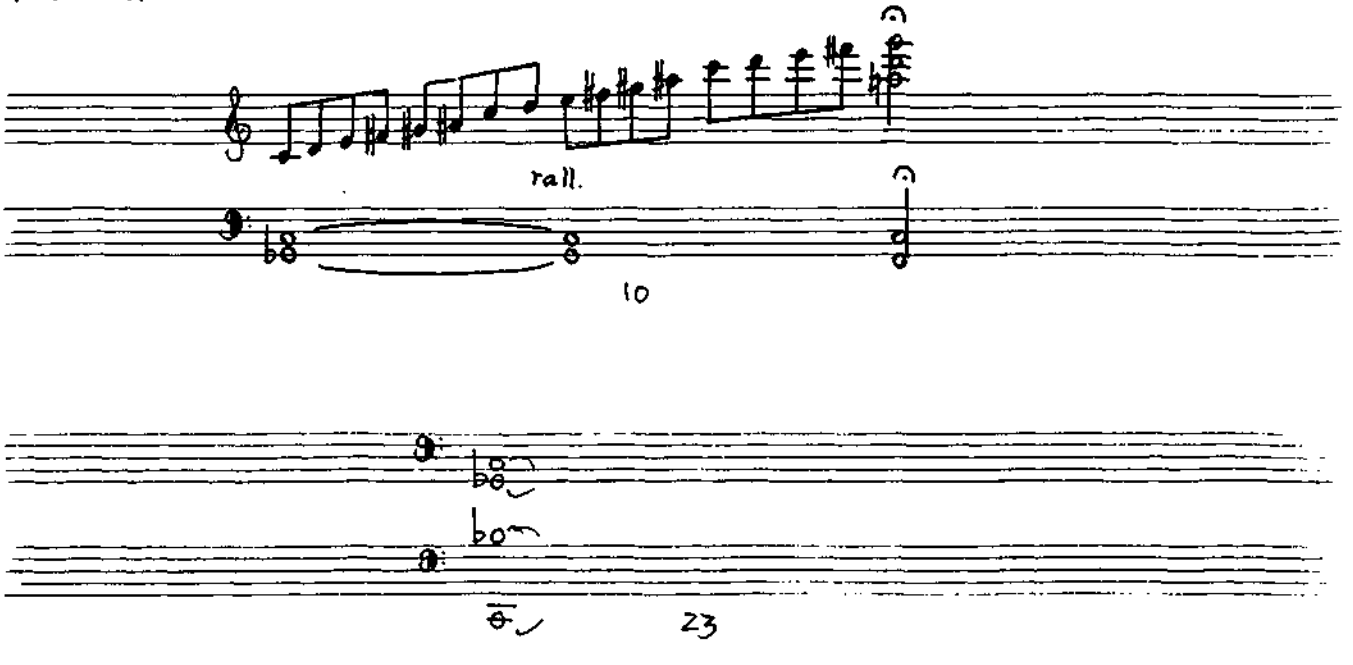
Area 11



The Ride Cymbal and the Band that caused the fire in the Sycamore Trees

For Prepared piano(s) and 2 celli or other sustaining instruments. The piano preparation is absolutely uniform insofar as the line of the preparations is at a uniform distance from the edge of the sound-board in such a way that the division of the string is always in the same ratio; e.g. all the strings divided in half, or all the strings prepared in the ratio 2:3 where 2 represents the distance from the bridge to the preparation and 3 represents the distance from the preparation to the edge of the sound-board or end of string. If more than one piano is used, then a tape of the second piano (also prepared but in a different ratio-system to the 'live' piano) should be played through an audio transducer attached to the sound-board of the piano, or, if this is too difficult, through a speaker located in such a way that there is no difference between the 'live' piano and the taped one in terms either of balance or of direction: the sole difference should be in the preparation.

Each fragment in between double bars is played as a loop and movement may be freely made between loops contained within the same area (it is also possible to play each loop once before moving to another and thus moving more quickly about the area, returning to loops at will until a decision is taken to leave the area). The sequence of the areas is fixed and the whole is in strict sequence. The piano parts should be played with an absolutely uniform 'jazz' beat, and if the pianist is not already capable in jazz, he may use a tape of a rhythm section or just a metronome or a drum, but always in headphones, never generally audible). The bracketted numbers underneath the fragments indicate the number of beats in that fragment. This may be used in one of two ways, viz:- to indicate how many beats (thus each beat that is contained in chronological time should be accounted for by the total number of beats played e.g. if the tempo is crotchet = 120, and the piece is played for 1 hour, then a sum total of 7,200 beats would be played and this should correspond with the total number of beats played in the fragments) or a fixed 'bar' of 4/4 may be felt (or heard through headset) in which case each fragment is then played in relation to that 'bar'; e.g. in a fragment of 4 beats, this would occupy 1 bar, and a fragment of 8 beats or 12 would occupy 2 and 3 bars respectively. However, fragments of 5, 3 would have to be played against an (implied) 4 beat bar, and 6, 7, 10 against 2 4-beat bars, thus altering the uniformity of the (implied) beat.

The two sustaining instruments sustain the implied harmonies as does the rhythm section in jazz, but here they are arhythmic. Occasionally they have '2-bar breaks' during which they are silent and they must synchronise their re-entry after a gap of 8 beats (2 implied bars). These exits and re-entries should be played with precise attacks i.e. the cut-offs should be together as should the new attack. If necessary, one player should tap his foot and nod at the new attack. Within the rest of the piece, they play their parts freely but locating their pitches within the correct harmonic area of the piano part. The ending is slowed down by a rallentando loop giving the effect of a cadenza, the opposite to the classical cadenza in which there is added impetus. The whole piece should be played very quietly and should swing gently.

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