Silvina Milstein

Book of Shadows

for string quartet and narrator

Preview File Only

This work was commissioned by the Endellion String Quartet with financial assistance from the Eastern Arts Board

First performance: 21 January 1998
University of Cambridge, Faculty of Music Endellion Concert Series
Endellion String Quartet and Kate Buffery
West Road Concert Hall
Cambridge

duration: 20 mins

Preview File Only

Silvina Milstein

Book of Shadows (1998)
string quartet & narrator

first performance: Endellion String Quartet with Kate Buffery (narrator), 21 January 98, West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge

Endellion String Quartet commission with funding from Eastern Arts
duration 20 minutes

I - Chang, the magician (after traditional Chinese, and Gustave Flaubert 'The Temptation of St. Antony')
II - The sentence (Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Pit and the Pendulum')
III - The Mirror of wind and moon (after Tsao Hsueh-Chin, 'the Dream of the Red Chamber' and Gustave Flaubert, 'The Temptation of St. Antony')

Book of Shadows is a montage of two Chinese tales and a fragment from a story by Edgar Allan Poe. Motifs of magic, love and death cast shadows upon each other.

The first leaf of the Book of Shadows tells the story of Wu of Ch'iang Ling, a man of letters, who has offended 'Chang, the magician'. Convinced that Chang will seek vengeance, Wu spends the night awake reading the Book of Changes by the light of a candle. Suddenly a warrior appears. Wu knocks him down with the book, but as he kneels down, notices that the warrior is no more than a paper cut-out. Wu imprisons the figure between the pages of his book. At midnight a woman with tears in her eyes knocks at the door. 'I am Chang's wife; you imprisoned him in your book. I beg you let him go. Should you not let him go by dawn, he will certainly die.' In the morning, the magician is found dead in his bed.

'The sentence', a fragment from Poe's 'The Pit and the Pendulum', is an account of the images that rush through the mind of a prisoner of the Inquisition as he hears 'the dream-sentence of death'.

The cycle closes with an episode from 'The Dream of the Red Chamber.' Kia Yui's is ill; the image of the inaccessible Madame Phoenix wastes his days; nightmares and insomnia, his nights. One day a Taoist beggar calls at the door claiming he can cure the diseases of the soul. 'No medicine can cure you but I can lend you a precious object that will heal you the mirror of Wind-and-Moon.' The mirror has two sides; you may look only on the reverse side. Tomorrow I'll fetch the mirror and you will be cured.'
Kia Yui looks into the reverse side and sees a grinning skull. He turns the mirror round and looks at the forbidden side. From its depth, his beloved Phoenix calls him. He goes through the mirror and embraces Phoenix. Although exhausted by his pleasures he turns the mirror round again. Still not satisfied, Kia Yui goes into the mirror again and again. But finally, as he is about to return from the mirror, two figures approach him and put chains around him. 'I will follow you, but let me take the mirror with me'. Kia Yui is found dead on a stained sheet.
S.M.

Preview File Only

Book of Shadows

for string quartet and narrator by
Silvina Milstein

outline

Book of Shadows is a montage of two Chinese tales and a fragment from a story by Edgar Allan Poe. Motifs of **magic**, **love** and **death** cast shadows upon each other.

The first leaf of the **Book of Shadows** tells the story of Wu of Ch'iang Ling, a man of letters, who has offended **Chang, the magician**. Convinced that Chang will seek vengeance, Wu spends the night awake reading the Book of Changes by the light of a candle. Suddenly a warrior appears. Wu knocks him down with the book, but as he kneels down, notices that the warrior is no more than a paper cut-out. Wu imprisons the figure between the pages of his book. At midnight a woman with tears in her eyes knocks at the door. '*I am Chang's wife; you imprisoned him in your book. I beg you let him go. Should you not let him go by dawn, he will certainly die.*' In the morning, the magician is found dead in his bed.

The sentence, a fragment from Poe's 'The Pit and the Pendulum', is an account of the images that rush through the mind of a prisoner of the Inquisition as he hears 'the dream-sentence of death'.

The cycle closes with an episode from *The Dream of the Red Chamber*. Kia Yui's is ill; the image of the inaccessible Madame Phoenix wastes his days; nightmares and insomnia, his nights. One day a Taoist beggar calls at the door claiming he can cure the diseases of the soul. '*No medicine can cure you but I can lend you a precious object that will heal you:* ***the mirror of Wind-and-Moon.*** *The mirror has two sides; you may look only on the reverse side. Tomorrow I'll fetch the mirror and you will be cured.*'

Kia Yui looks into the reverse side and sees a grinning skull. He turns the mirror round and looks at the forbidden side. From its depth, his beloved Phoenix calls him. He goes through the mirror and embraces Phoenix. Although exhausted by his pleasures he turns the mirror round again. Still not satisfied, Kia Yui goes into the mirror again and again. But finally, as he is about to return from the mirror, two figures approach him and put chains around him. '*I will follow you, but let me take the mirror with me*'. Kia Yui is found dead on a stained sheet.

S.M.

Preview File Only

Book of Shadows

I– Chang, the Magician

1– Wu of Ch'iang Ling, a man of letters, has offended Chang, the magician. Convinced that Chang will seek vengeance, Wu spends the night awake reading the sacred Book of Changes by the light of a candle.

2- Wu hears a whisper. It is the wind hissing through the cracks between the rocks; and in those confused sonorities Wu distinguishes voices, as though the air itself were speaking.

3-Meanwhile objects are transformed:

At the edge of the cliff, the old palm tree changes into the torso of a woman leaning over the abyss, her long hair waving in the wind.

The stool supporting the great book whose pages are covered with black characters, seems to him changed into a bush crammed with swallows.

Wu *It must be the candle which is making this strange play of light... Let us put it out!*

4- The obscurity becomes deeper, the darkness profound. Images appear suddenly, percussively, as in flashes. Their motion accelerates. Sometimes again, they pause and gradually pale and melt away.

Wu closes his eyelids. Images multiply, surround him, besiege him. An unspeakable fear takes possession of him. His being seems to dissolve; – and, no longer able to resist, Wu falls prostrate upon his mat.

5-Then a great shadow defines itself on the ground. It is a warrior, leaning upon the roof of the hut like some gigantic bat threatening him with his spear. Wu knocks him down with the book, and suddenly awakes.

Wu *Did I dream? It was all so vivid!*

As he kneels down, Wu notices that the warrior is no more than a paper cut-out. He folds the figure and keeps it between the pages of his book.

6-At midnight, a woman knocks at the door. As she emerges from the darkness, Wu notices the tears on her face.

Chang's wife *I am Chang's wife; my husband came to attack you and you imprisoned him in your book. I beg you let him go.*

Wu *Your husband is not in my book. I have only captured a paper figure.*

Chang's wife *His soul is in that figure. His body is awaiting in our home. Should you not let him go by dawn, he will certainly die.*

Wu *Wretched magician!– I will not let him go.*

In the morning, Wu learns that the magician was found dead in his bed.

G. Willoughby-Meade, *Chinese Ghouls and Goblins*, and Gustave Flaubert, *The Temptation of St Anthony*, translated by L. Hearn.

***

Preview File Only

The sentence

I felt that my senses were leaving me. The sentence–the dream sentence of death–was the last of distinct accentuations which reached my ears. After that the sound of the inquisitorial voice seemed merged in one dreamy indeterminate hum. .. I heard no more. I saw the lips of the black-robed judges. I saw them fashion the syllables of my name; and I shuddered because no sound succeeded. And there stole into my fancy, like a rich musical note, the thought of what sweet rest there must be in the grave. The figures of the judges vanished, as if magically, from before me; the tall candles sank into nothingness; the flames went out utterly; the blackness of darkness supervened; all sensations appeared swallowed up in a mad rushing descent as of the soul of Hades. Then silence, and stillness, and night were the universe.

...

(from Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Pit and the Pendulum')

***

Preview File Only

The Mirror of Wind and Moon

After one year, Kia Yui's health has deteriorated badly. The image of the inaccessible Madame Phoenix wastes his days; nightmares and insomnia, his nights.

One day a Taoist beggar calls at the door asking for alms and claiming he can cure the diseases of the soul. Kia Yui, calls out for him from his bed.

Holy man cure me!, Kia Yui cries many times.

The beggar tells him :

No medicine can cure your sickness but I can lend you a precious object that will heal you if you do as I say. This is the mirror of the Wind-and-Moon, and it can cure the sufferings caused by impure thoughts and desires. This mirror has two sides, you may only look on the reverse side. Remember, never look into the front side. Tomorrow I'll fetch the mirror and you will be cured.

When Kia Yui looks into the reverse side, as instructed, he sees a skull grinning at him from the polished metal.

Irritated Kia Yui turns the mirror round and looks at the forbidden side. From its depth, his beloved Phoenix, hair the colour of fire, is calling him.

Ah! Kia Yui'! Kia Yui'! Oh, if thou wast willing! if thou wast willing! ...
All the imaginations of thy desire thou hast only to ask for them! I am not a woman: I am a world! My cloak has only to fall ...

Kia Yui' feels his senses leave him as he goes through the mirror and embraces Phoenix.

Although exhausted by the pleasure he turns the mirror round again. Phoenix's husky voice is calling him:

Ah! Kia Yui'! Kia Yui'! Look at me in the eyes! Place but thy finger upon my shoulder: it will be as though a stream of fire shot through all thy veins. Approach thy lips : there is a sweetness in my kisses as of a fruit dissolving within thy heart. Ah! how thou wilt lose thyself beneath my long hair, inhale the perfume of my bosom, madden thyself with the beauty of my limbs .

Still not satisfied, Kia Yui returns into the mirror innumerable times. But the last time, as he is about to leave the mirror, two figures approach him and put chains around him. *I will follow you, but let me take the mirror with me.*

These were his last words. Kia Yui was found dead on the stained sheet.

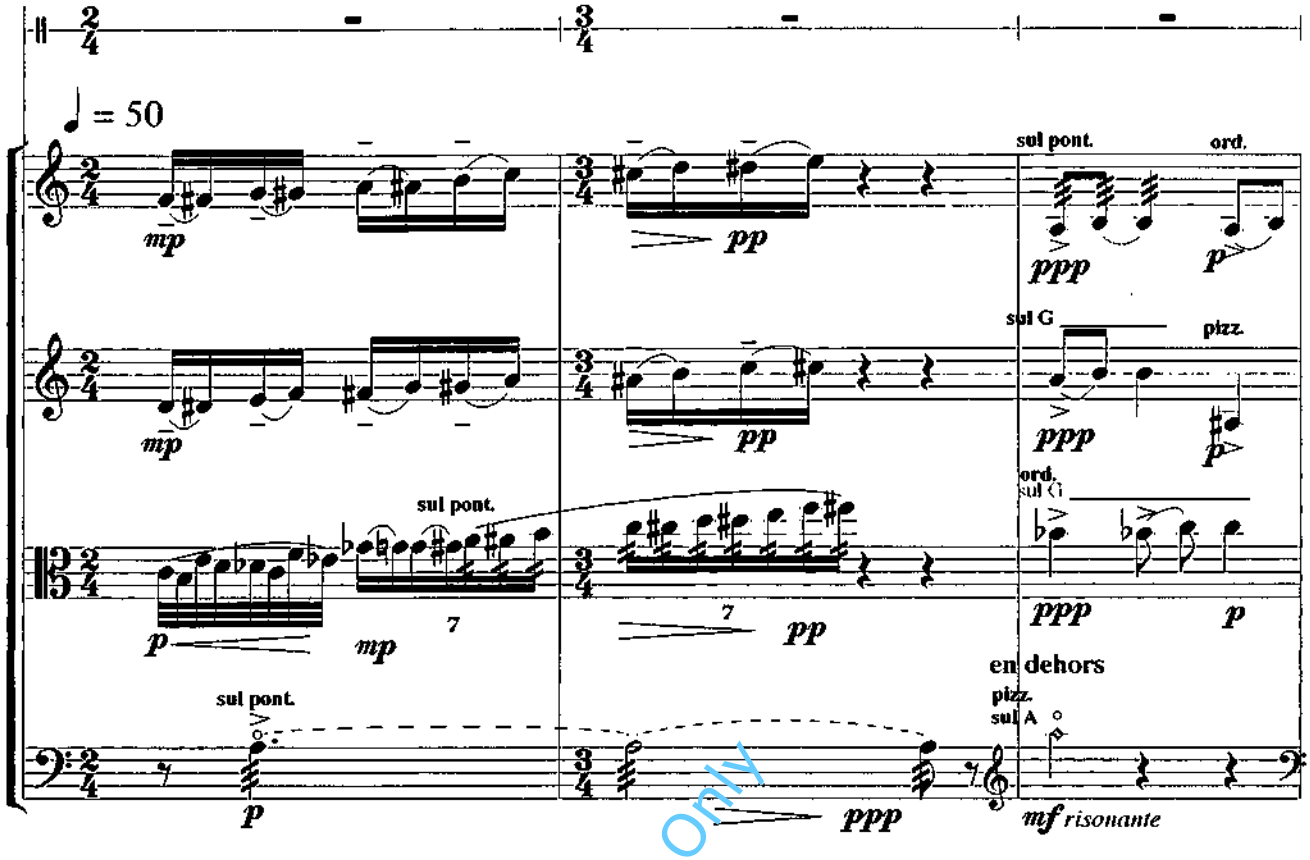
from Cao Xuequin, the *Dream of the Red Chamber* and Gustave Flaubert, *The Temptation of St Anthony.*

Preview File Only

BRITISH MUSIC INFORMATION CENTRE,
10, Stratford Place, London, W.1

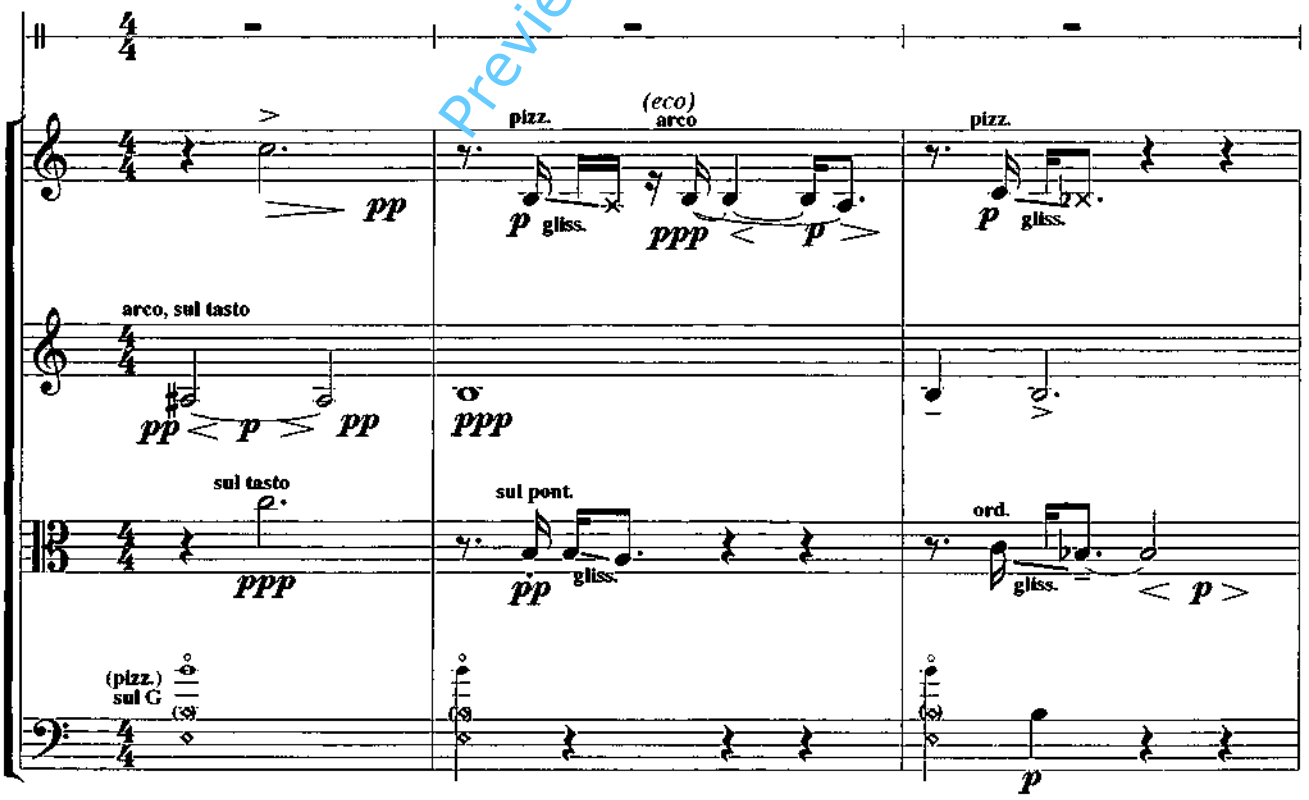
Chang, the Magician

I - Introduction

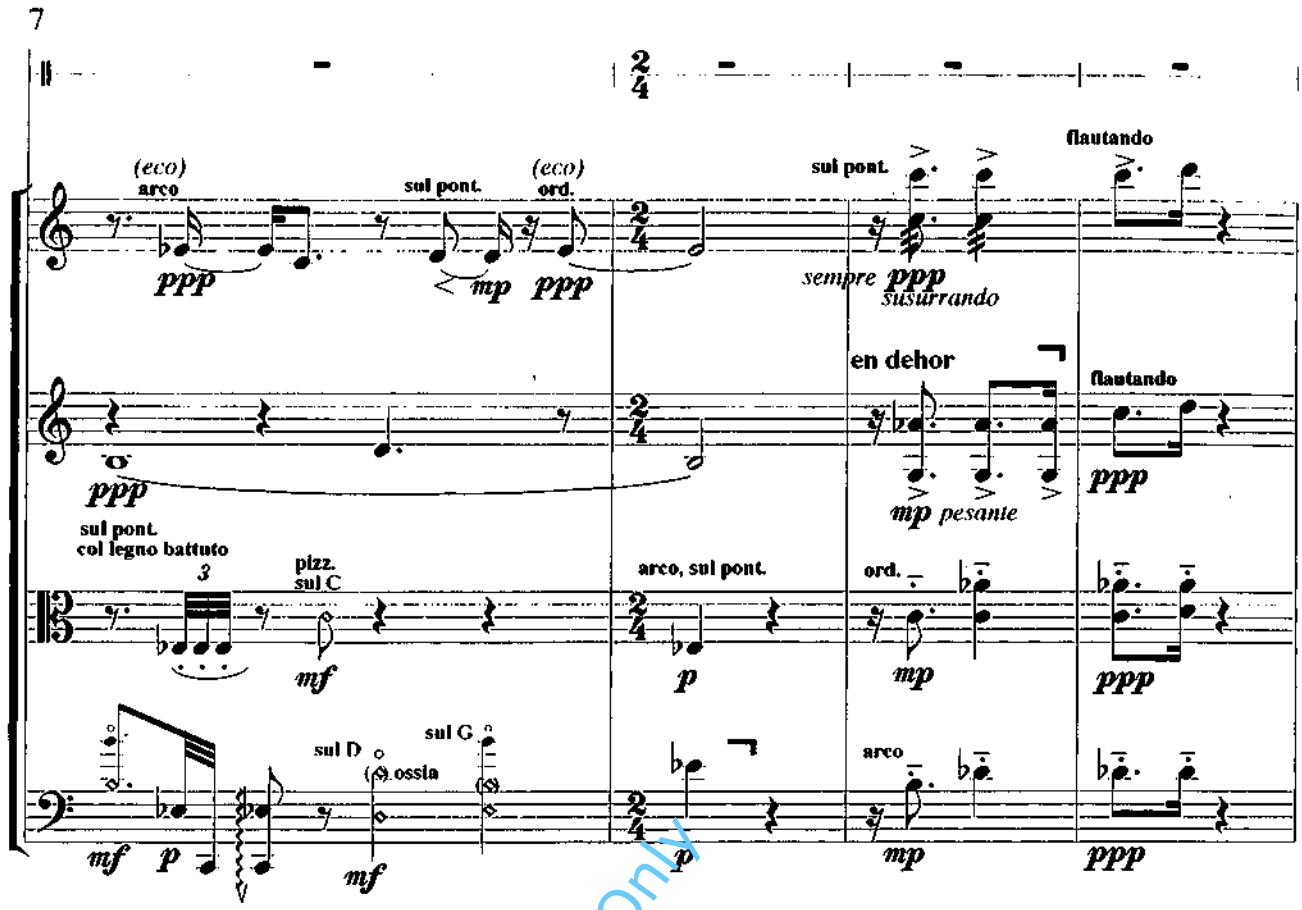


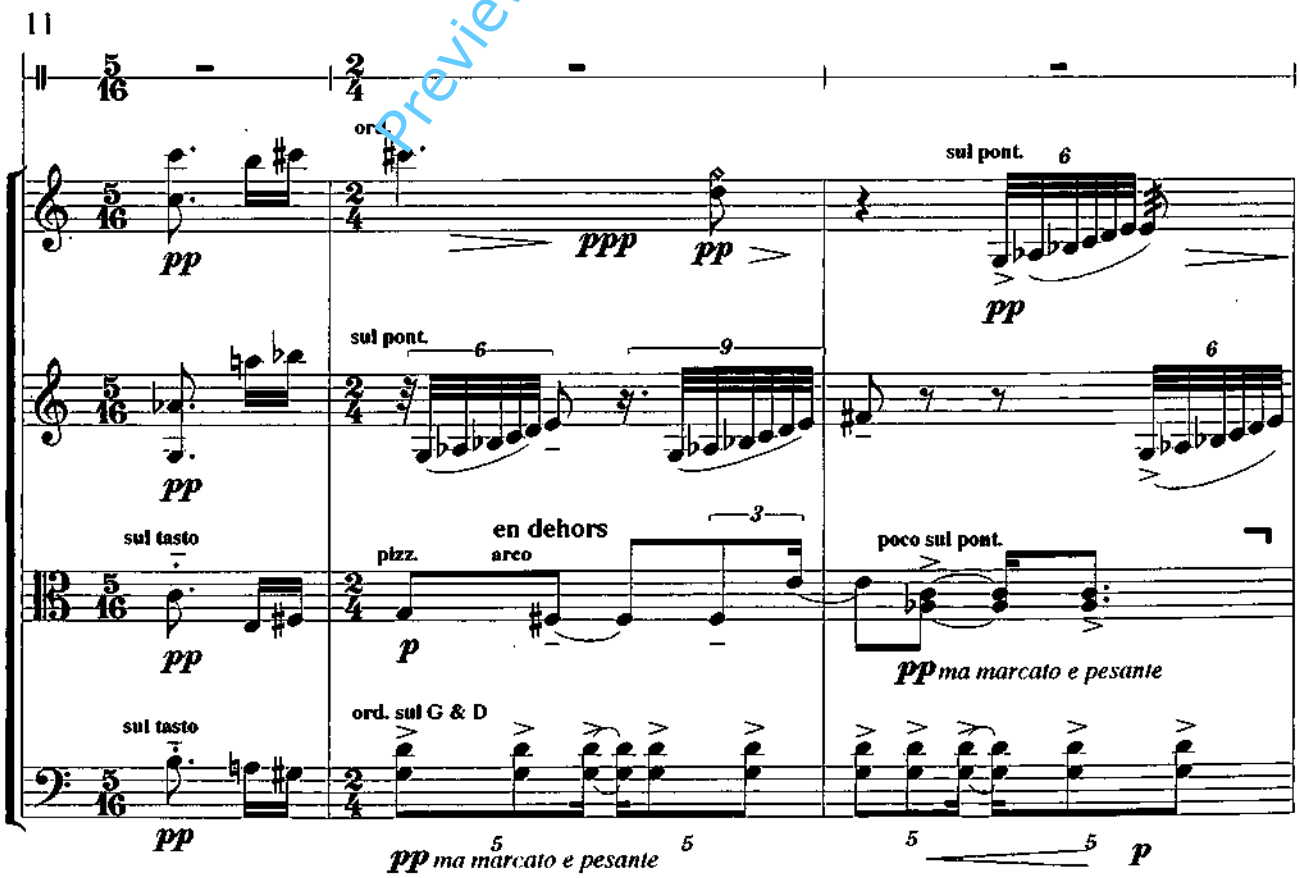
Preview File Only

4

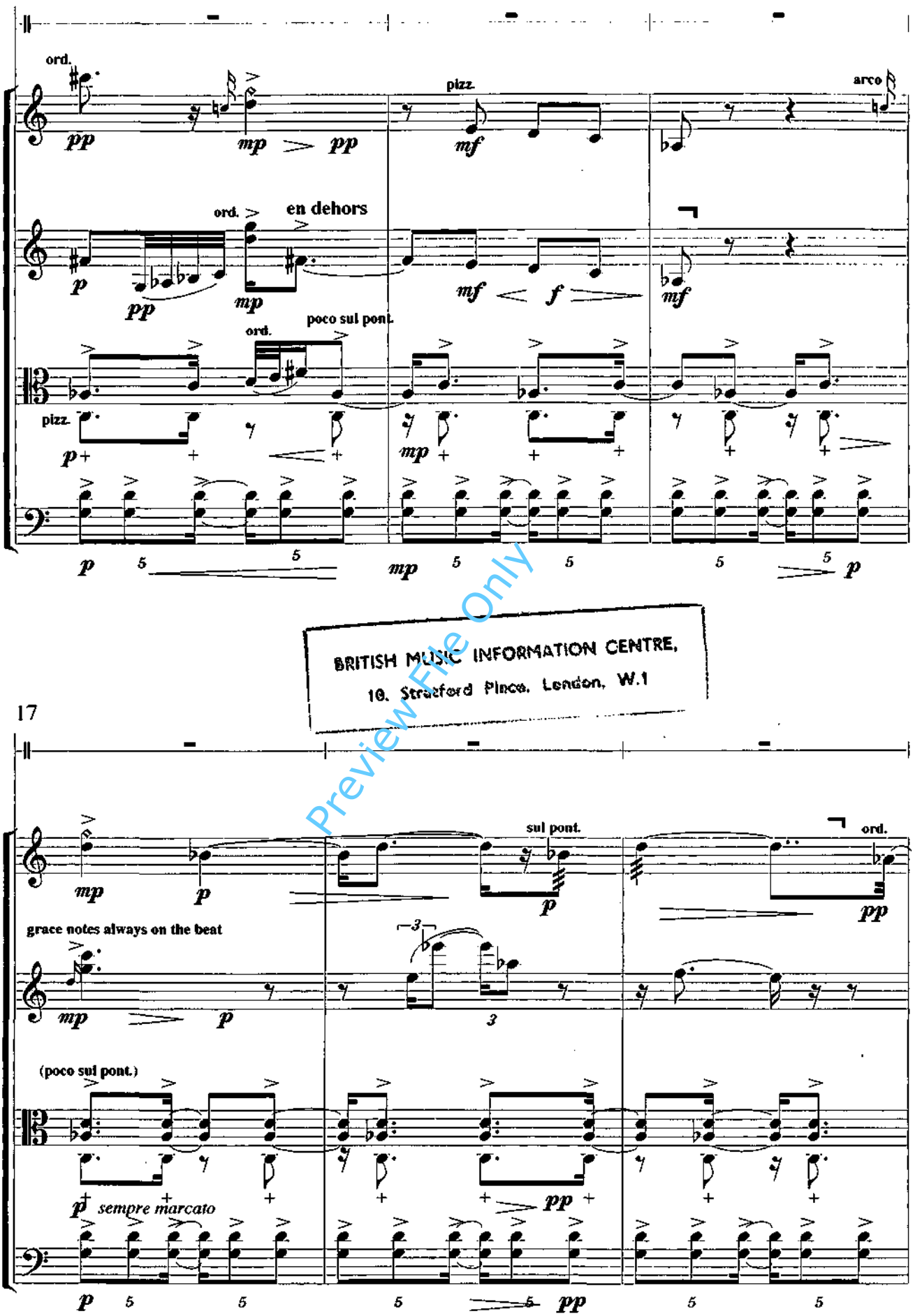


(pizz. harmonics should sound like harp harmonics, after plucking with the nail release the string and let ring)



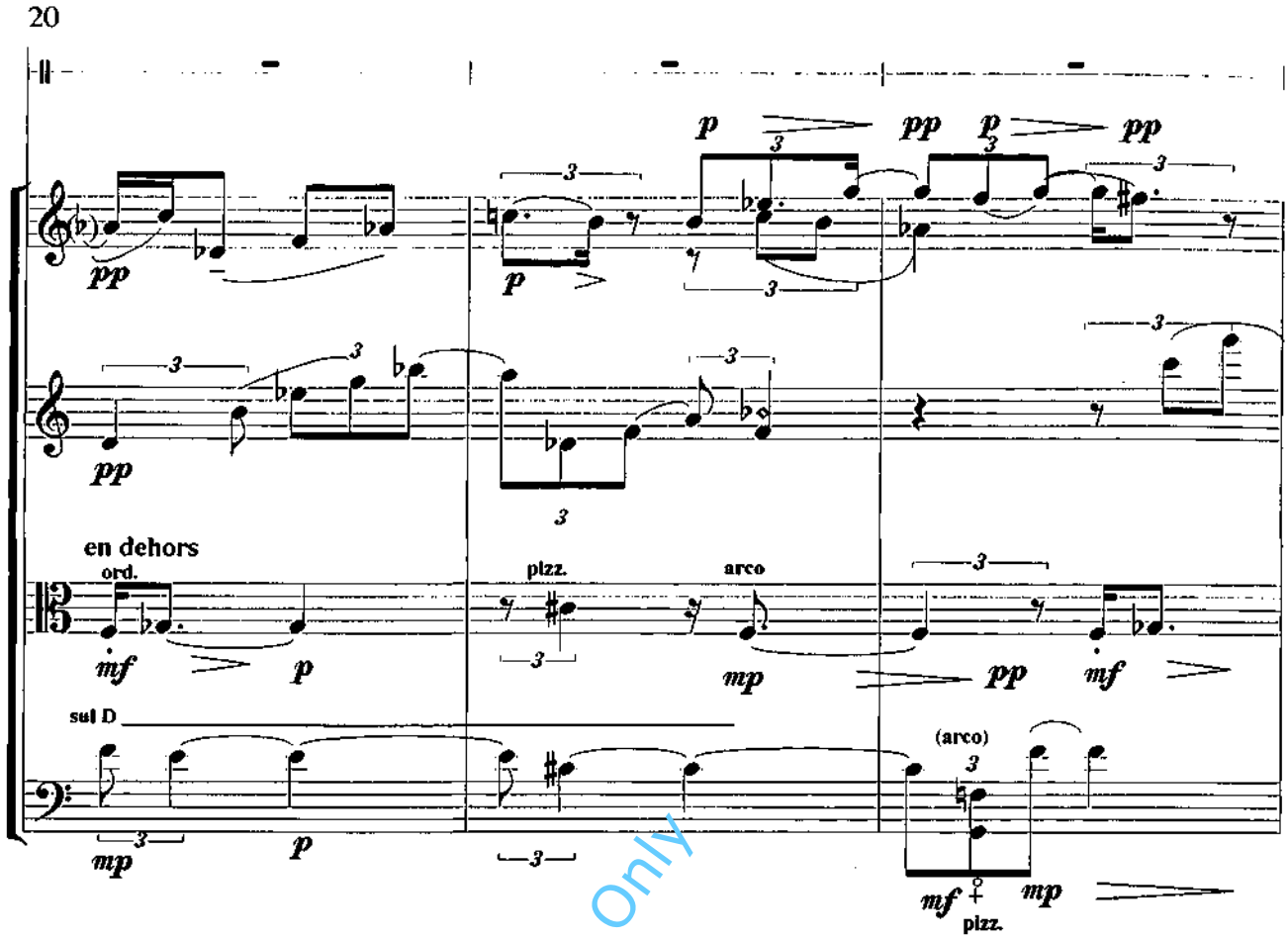


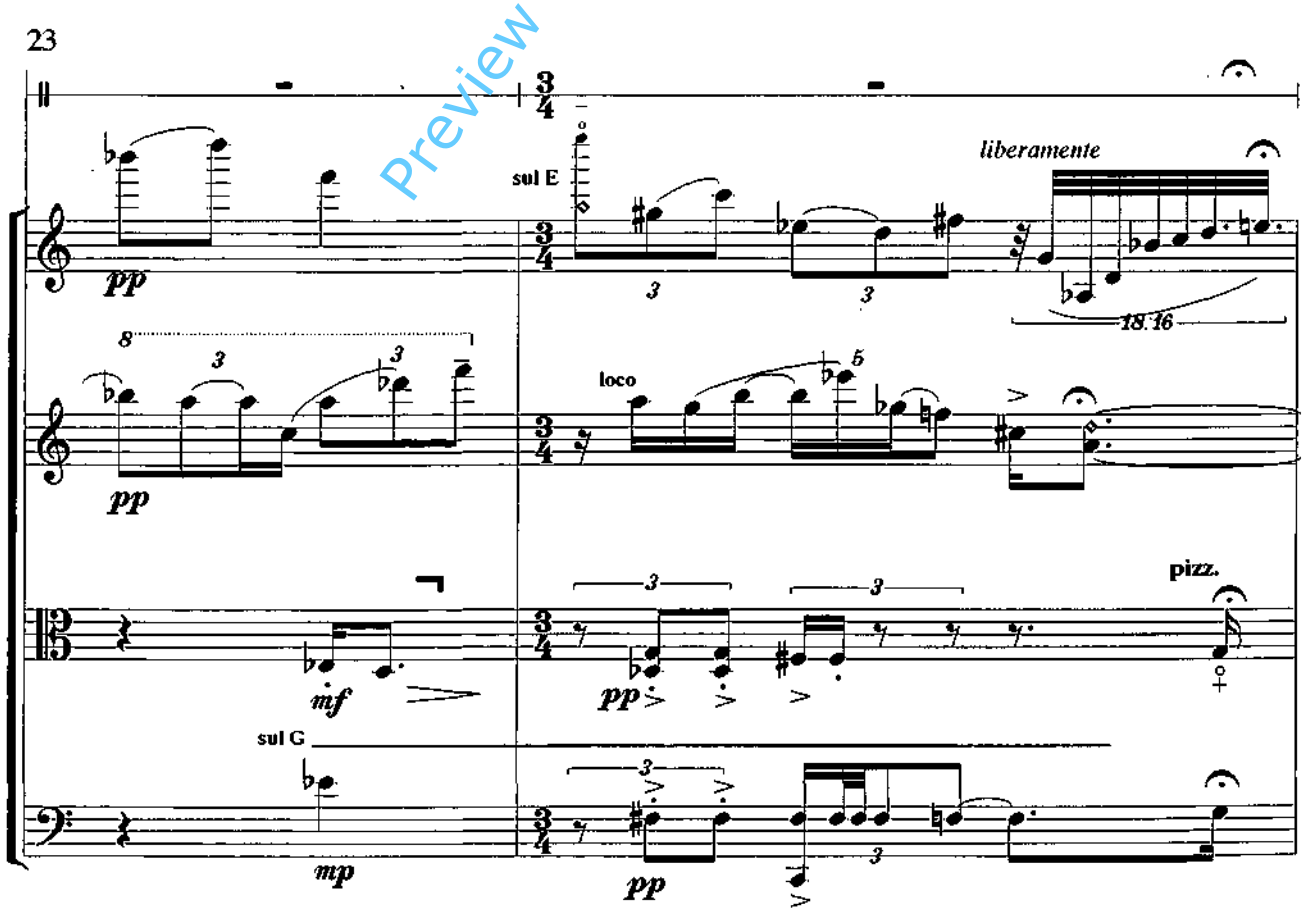
Preview File Only



BRITISH MUSIC INFORMATION CENTRE,
10, Stratford Place, London, W.1

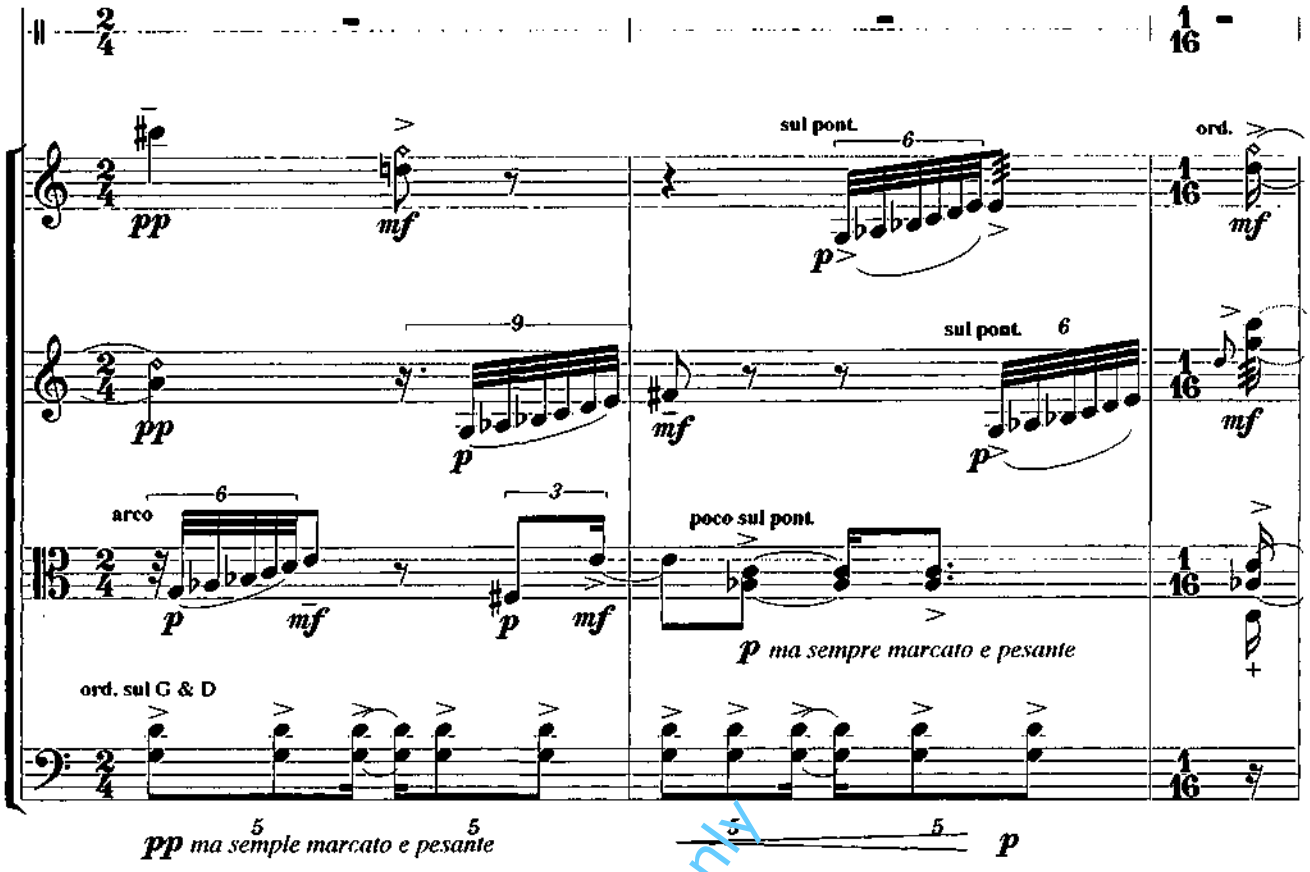
Preview File Only





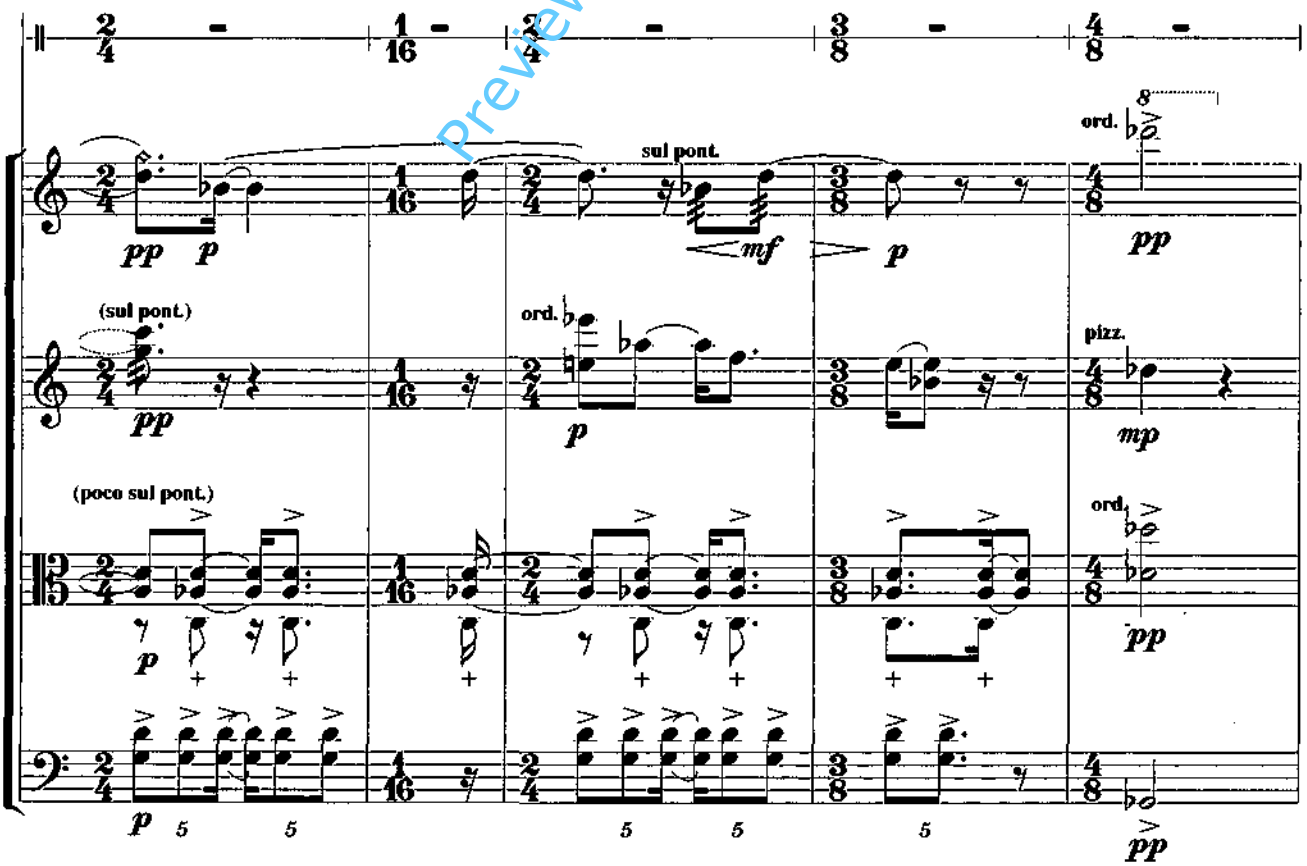
Preview File Only

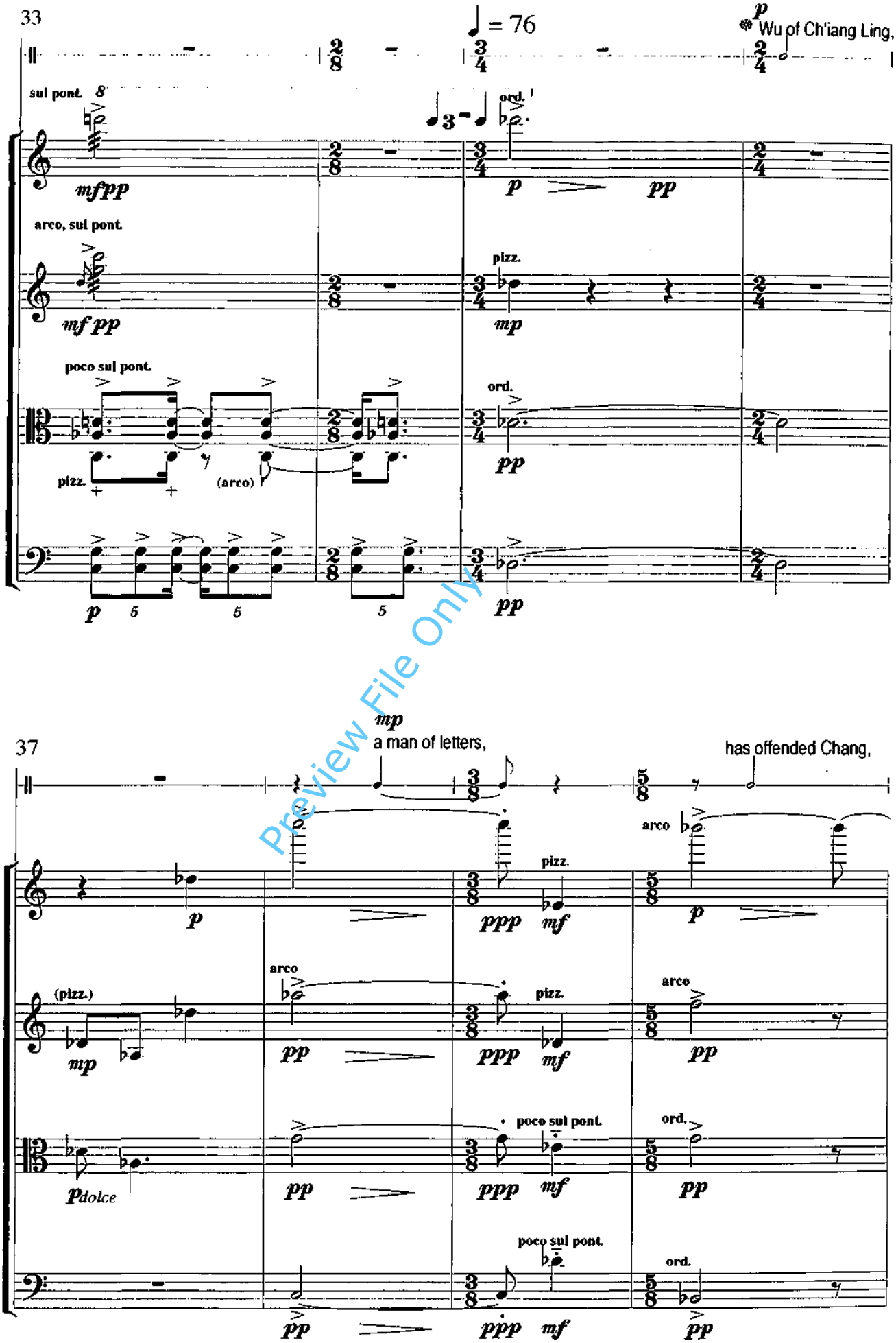
25



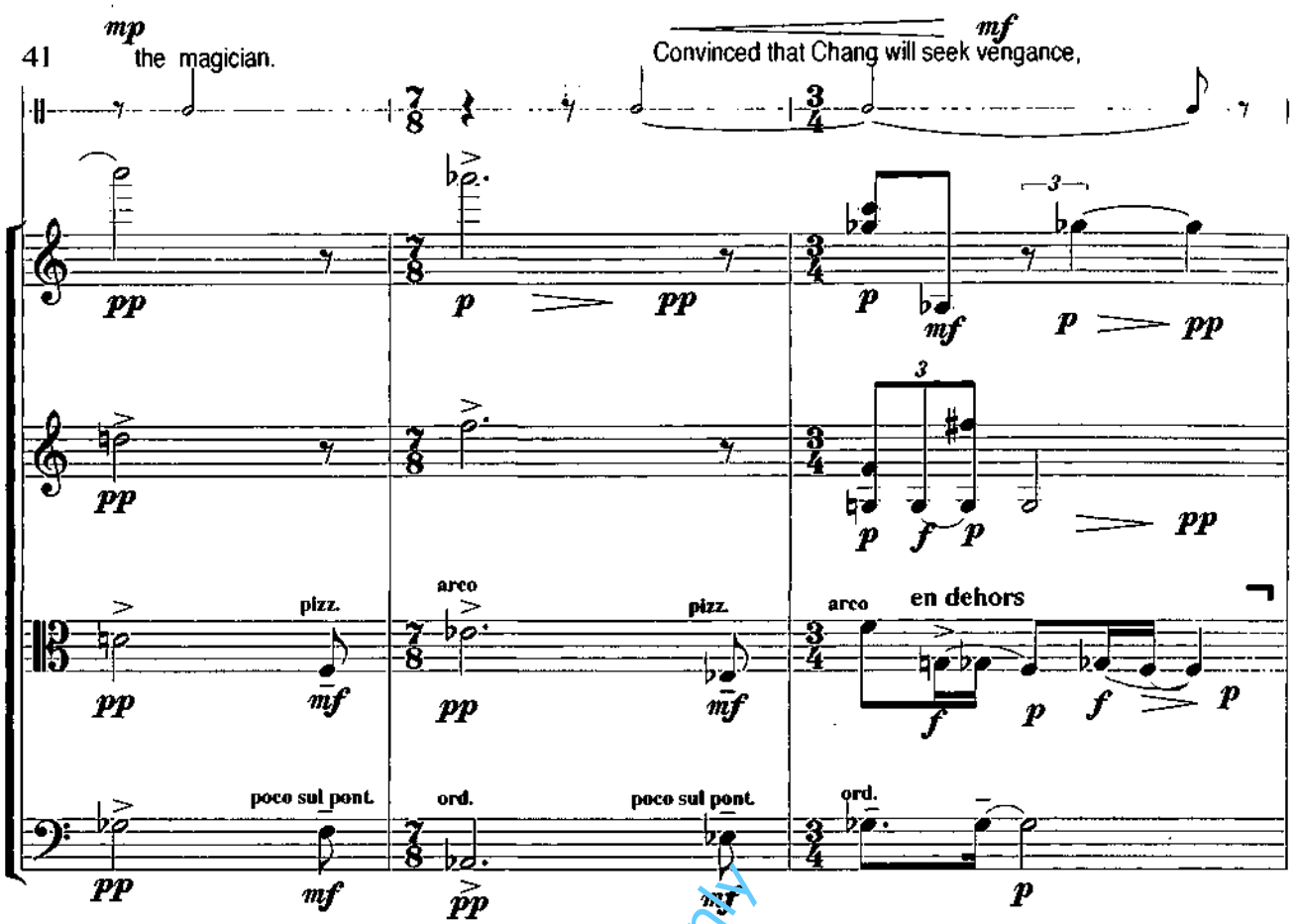
Preview File Only

28

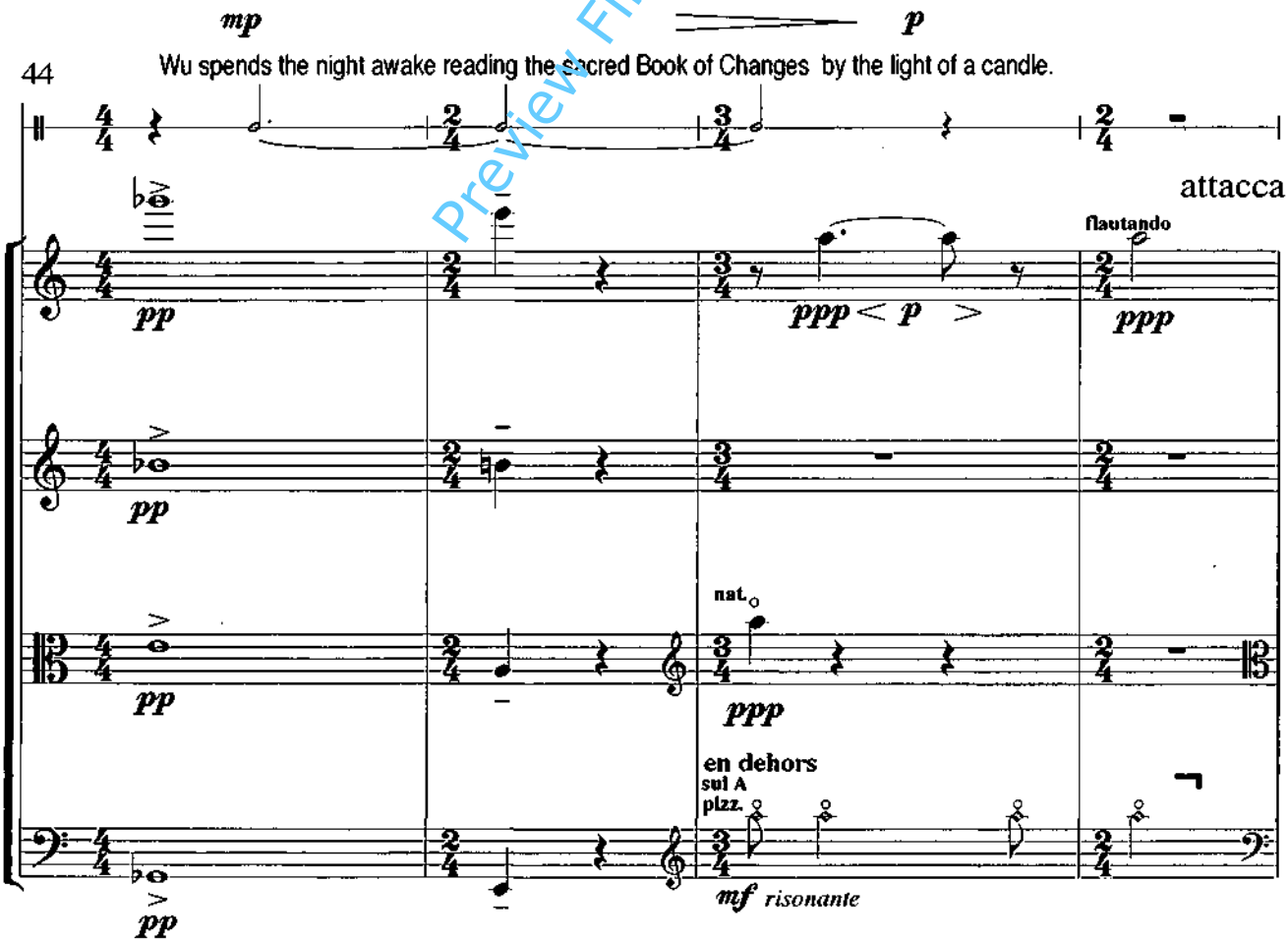


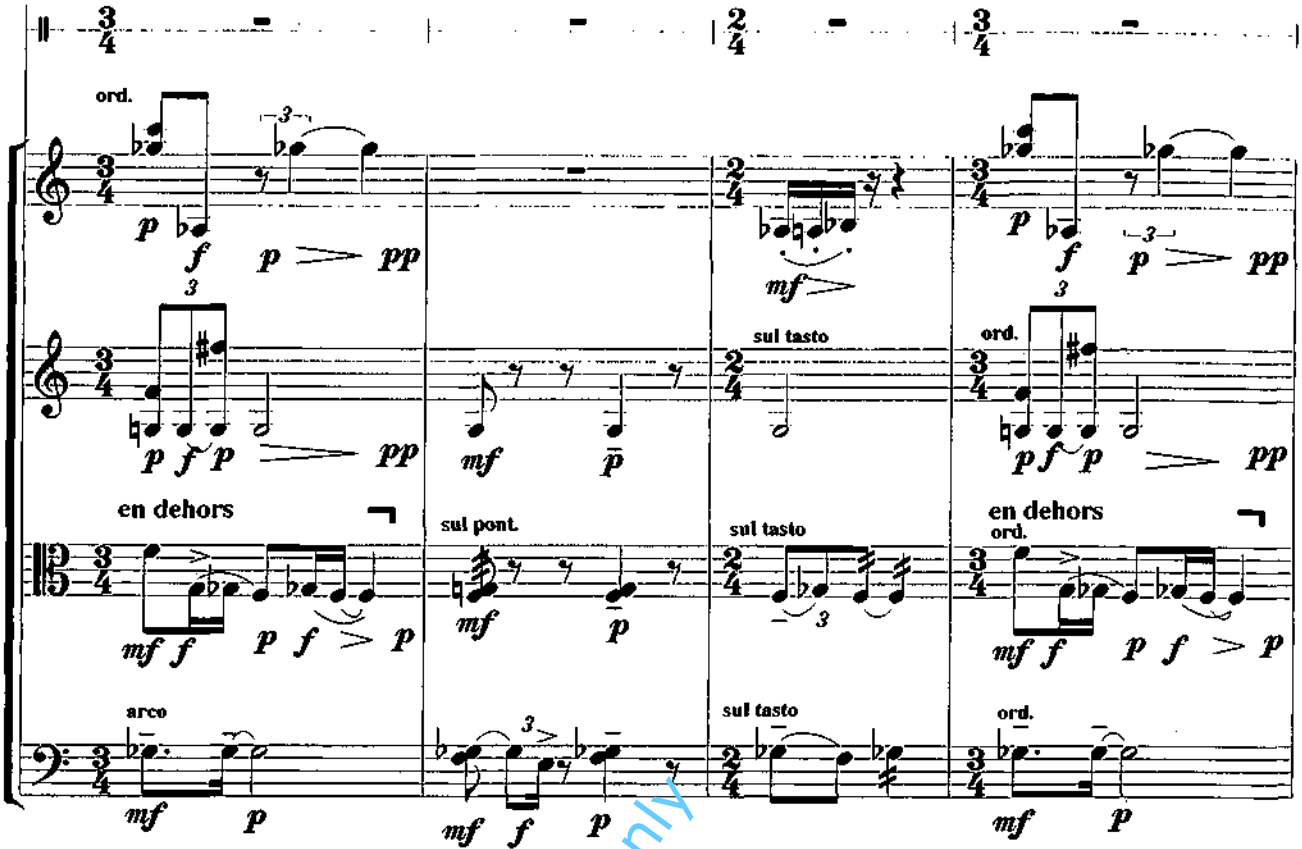


Preview File Only

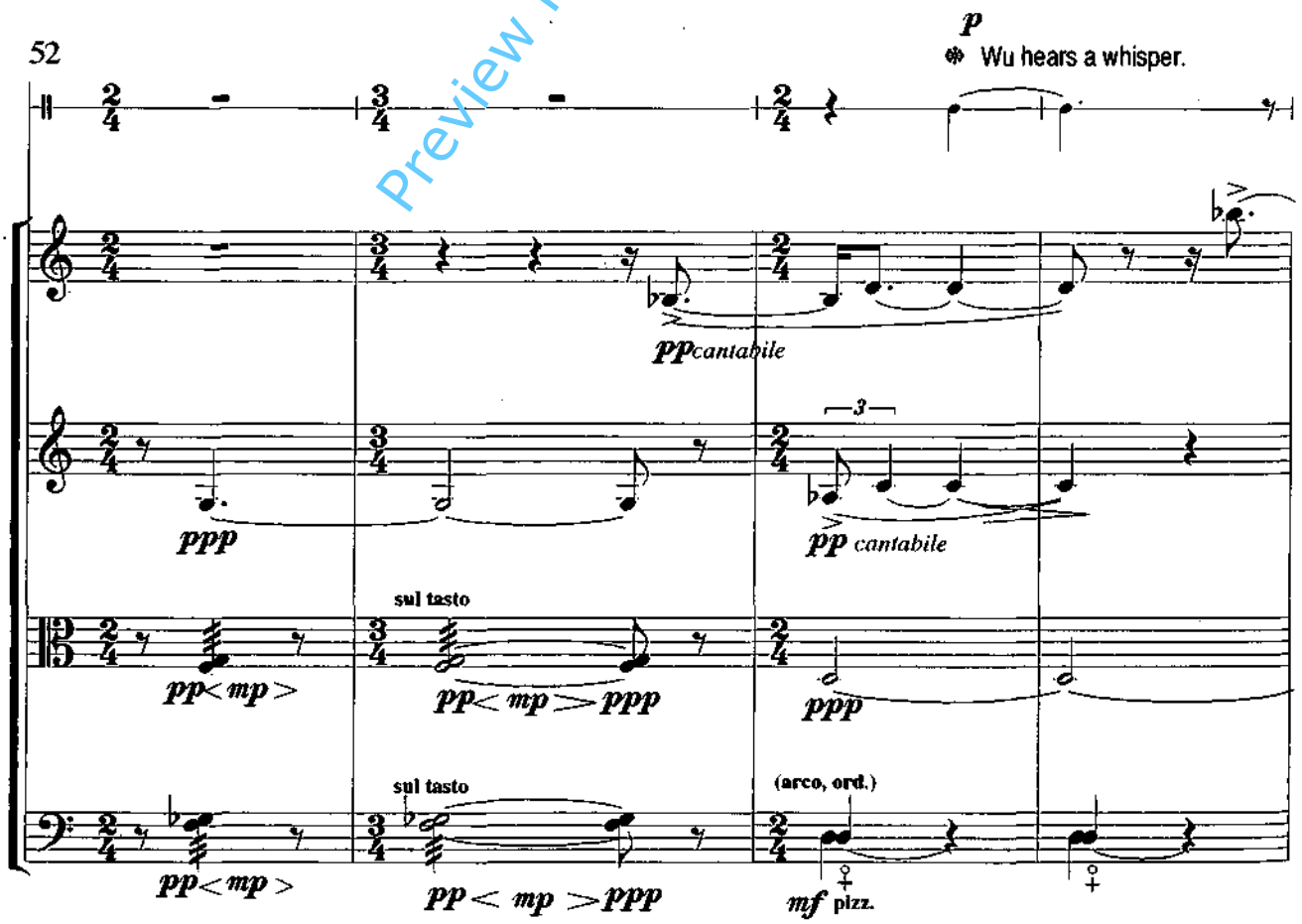


Preview File Only





Preview File Only



56

p

It is the wind hissing through the cracks between the rocks;

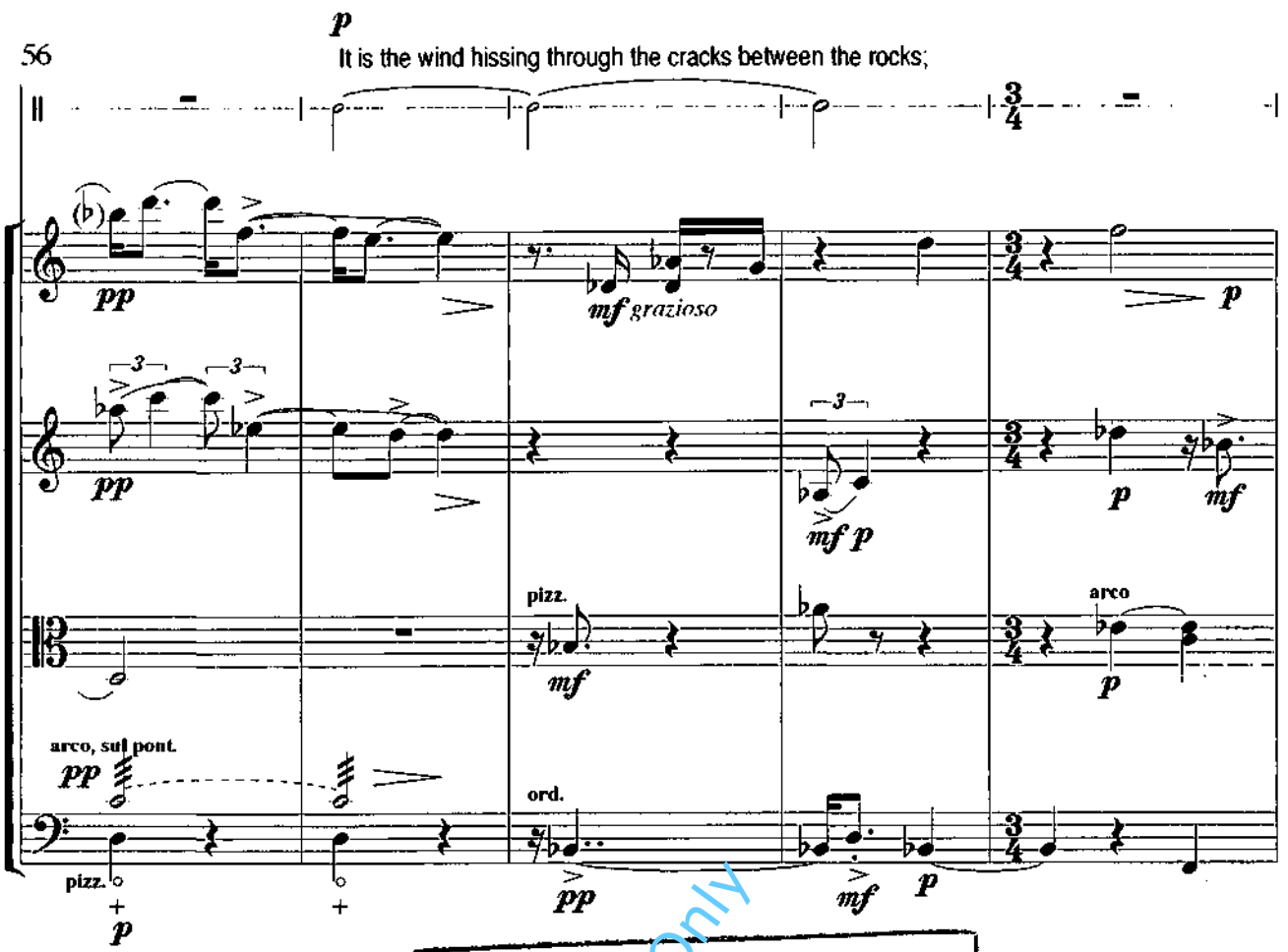
pp *mf grazioso* *p*

pp *mf p* *p* *mf*

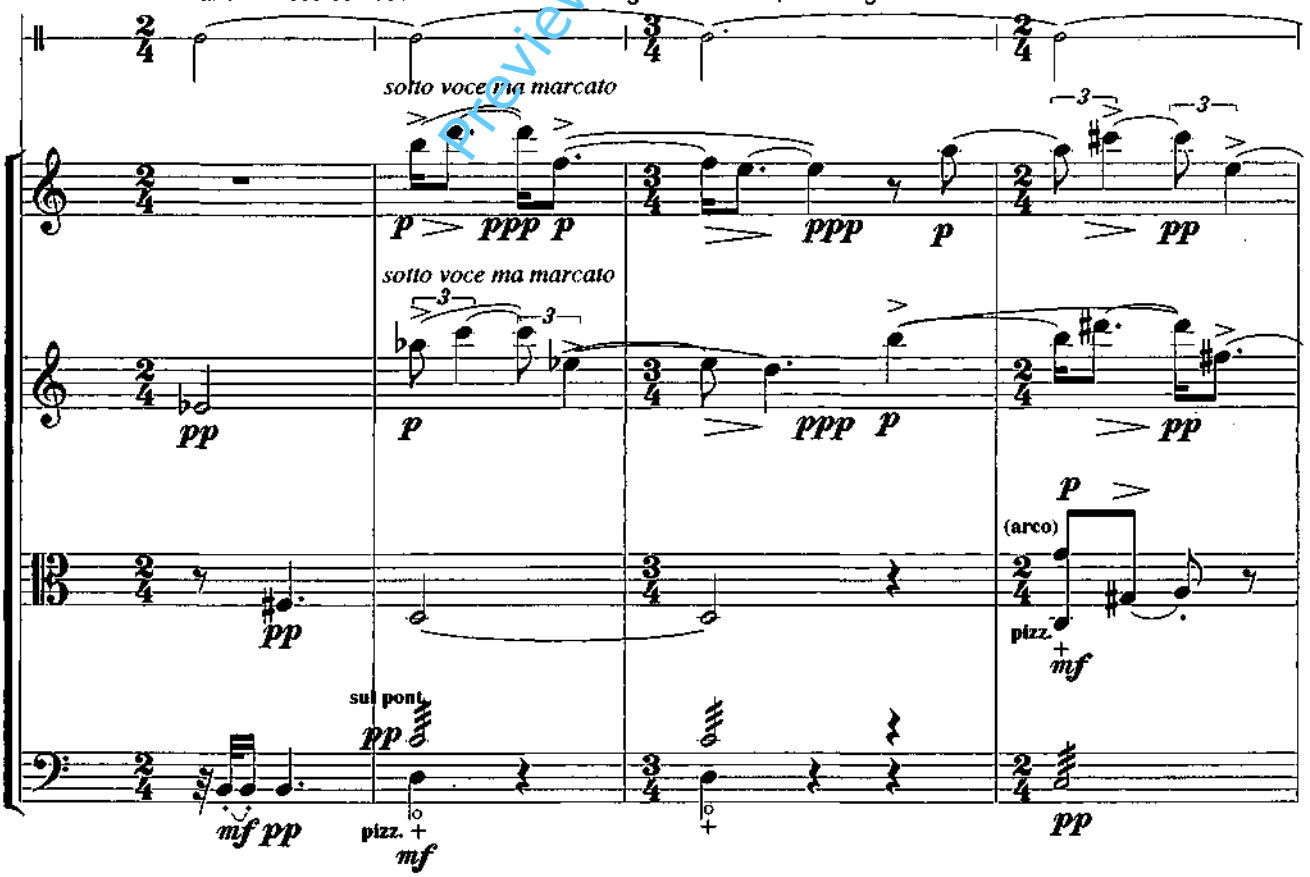
pizz. *mf* arco *p*

arco, sul pont. *pp* ord.

pizz. *p* *pp* *mf* *p*



BRITISH MUSIC INFORMATION CENTRE,
18, Stratford Place, London, W.1



61

p

and in those confused sonorities Wu distinguishes voices, as though the air itself

sotto voce ma marcato

p *ppp* *p* *ppp* *p* *pp*

sotto voce ma marcato

pp *p* *ppp* *p* *pp*

p

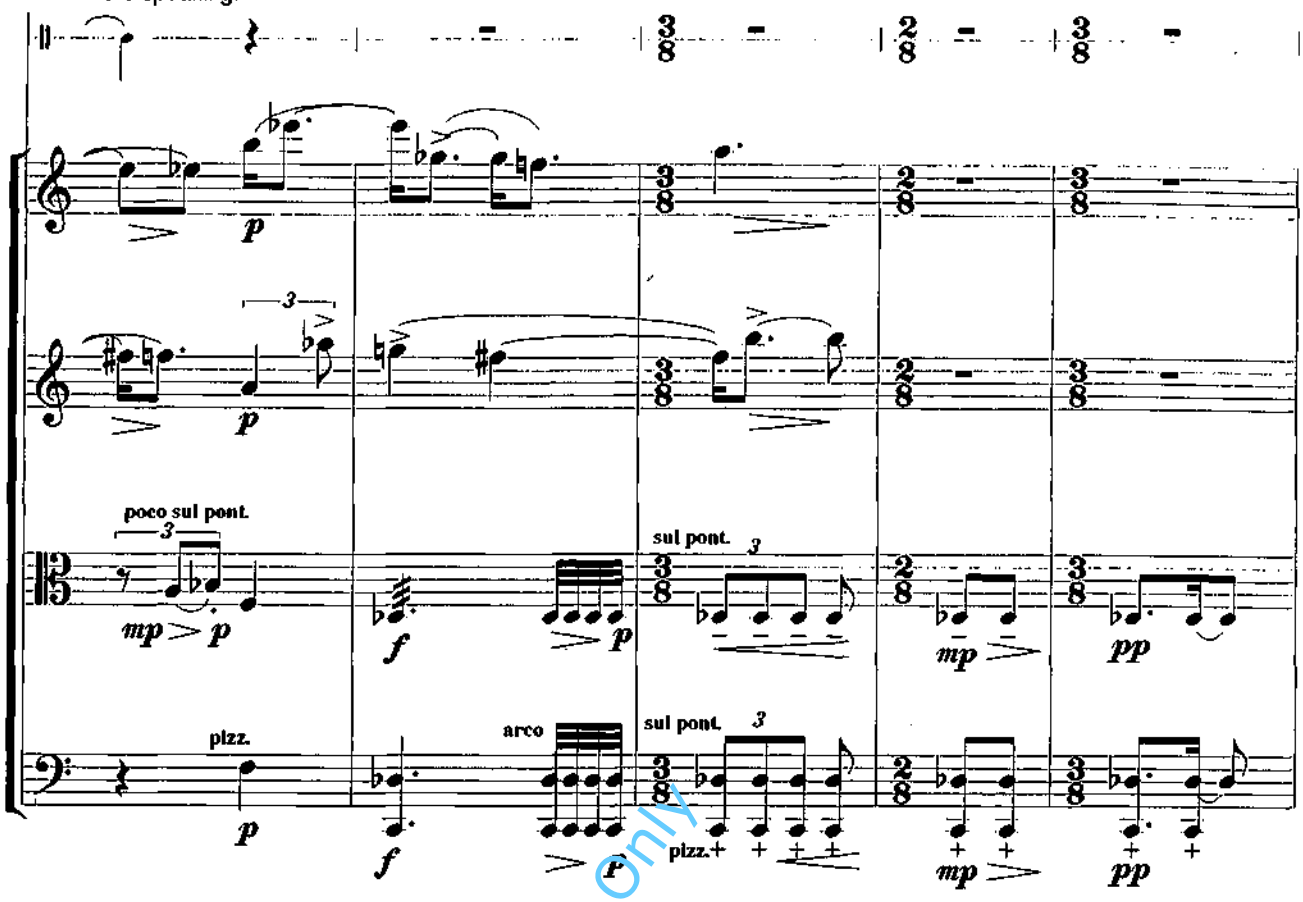
(arco)

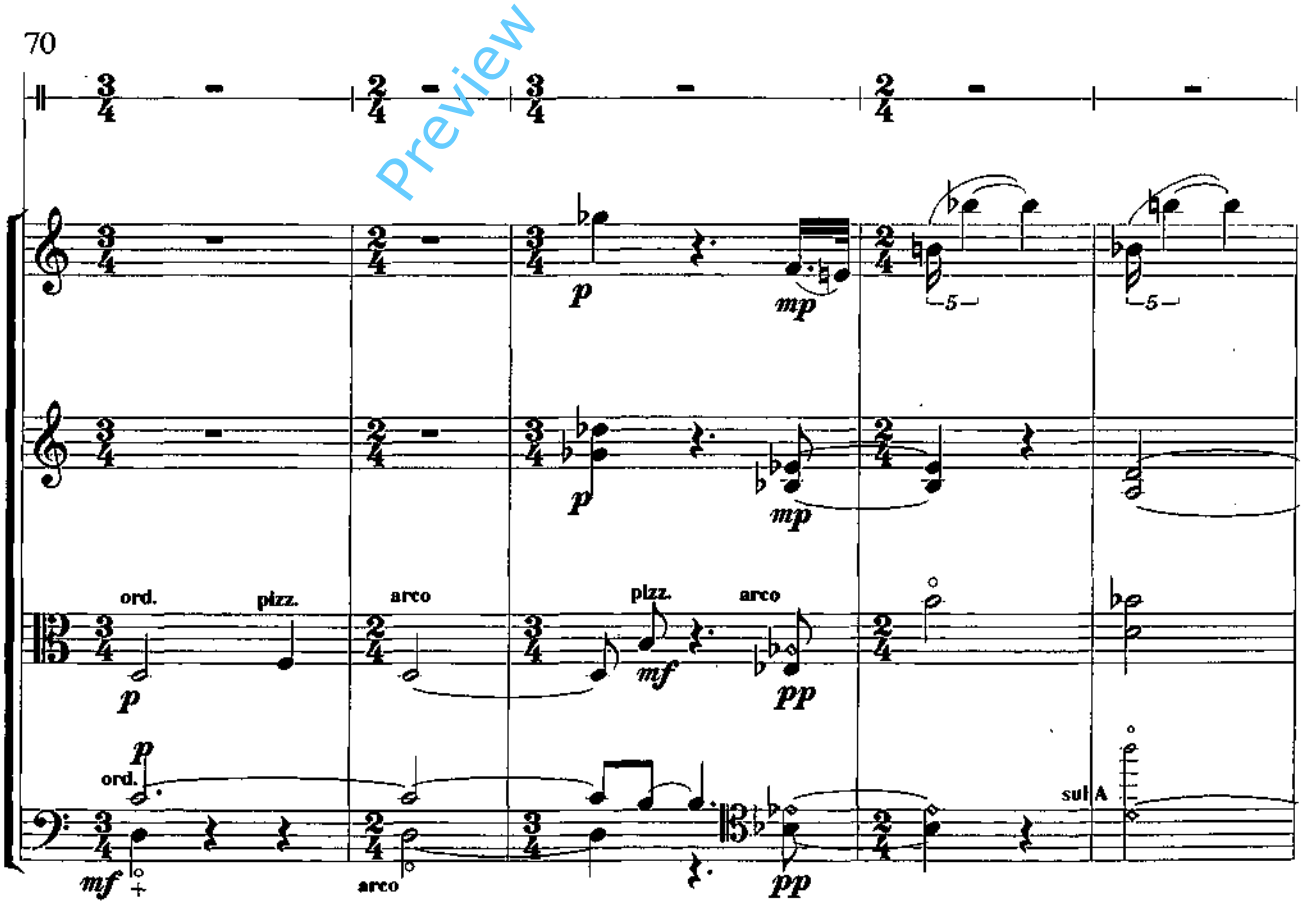
pp pizz. *mf*

sul pont. *pp*

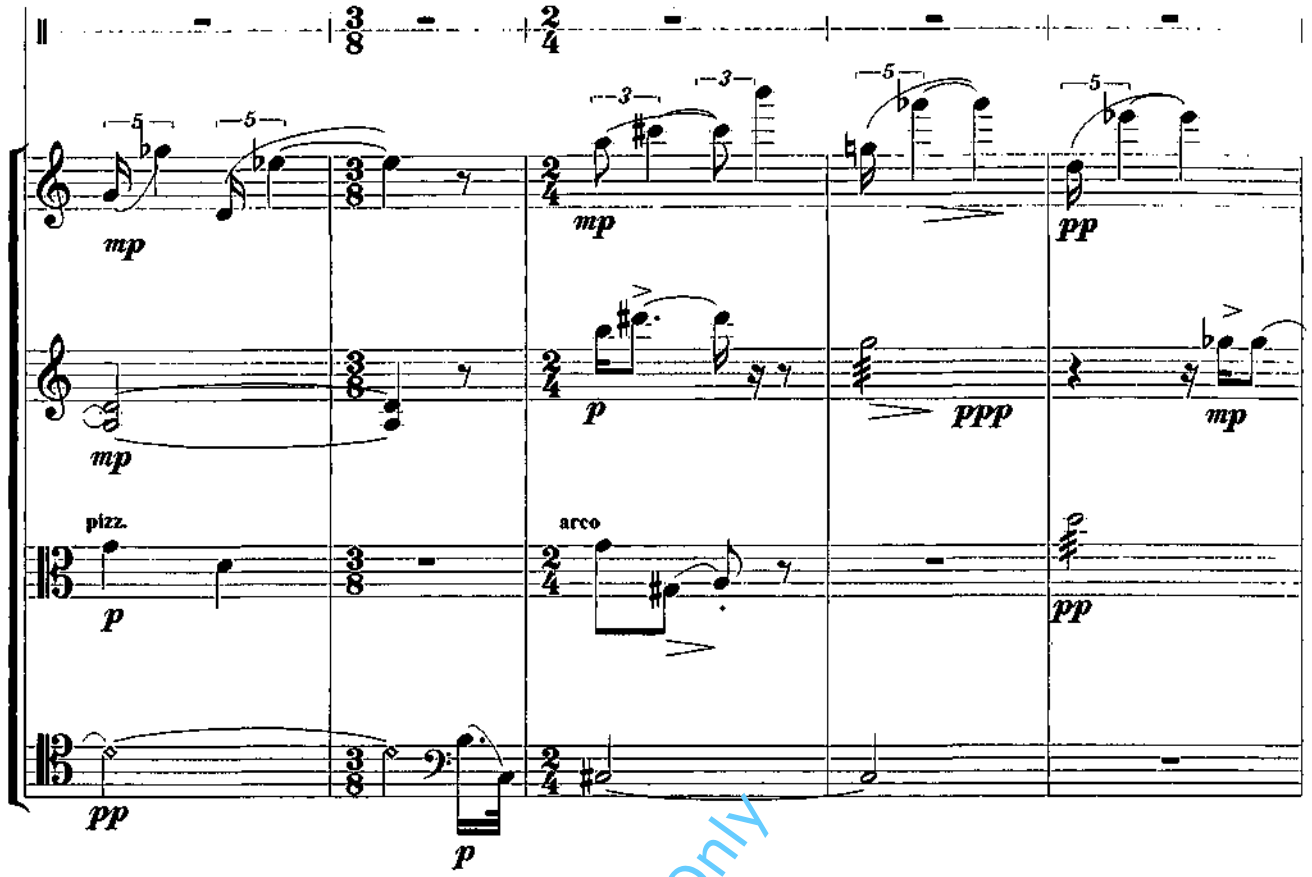
mf pp pizz. *mf* *pp*

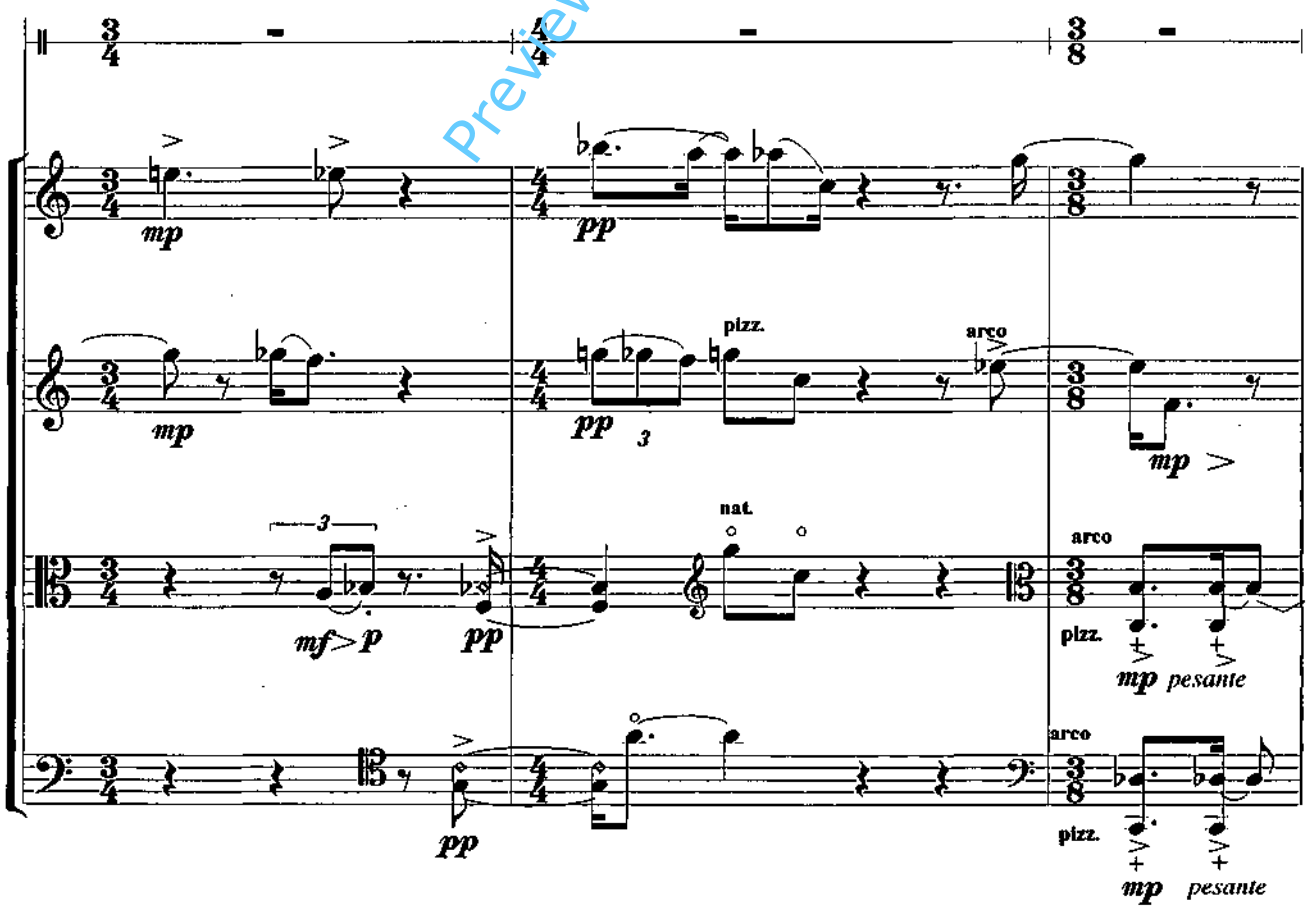
Preview File Only



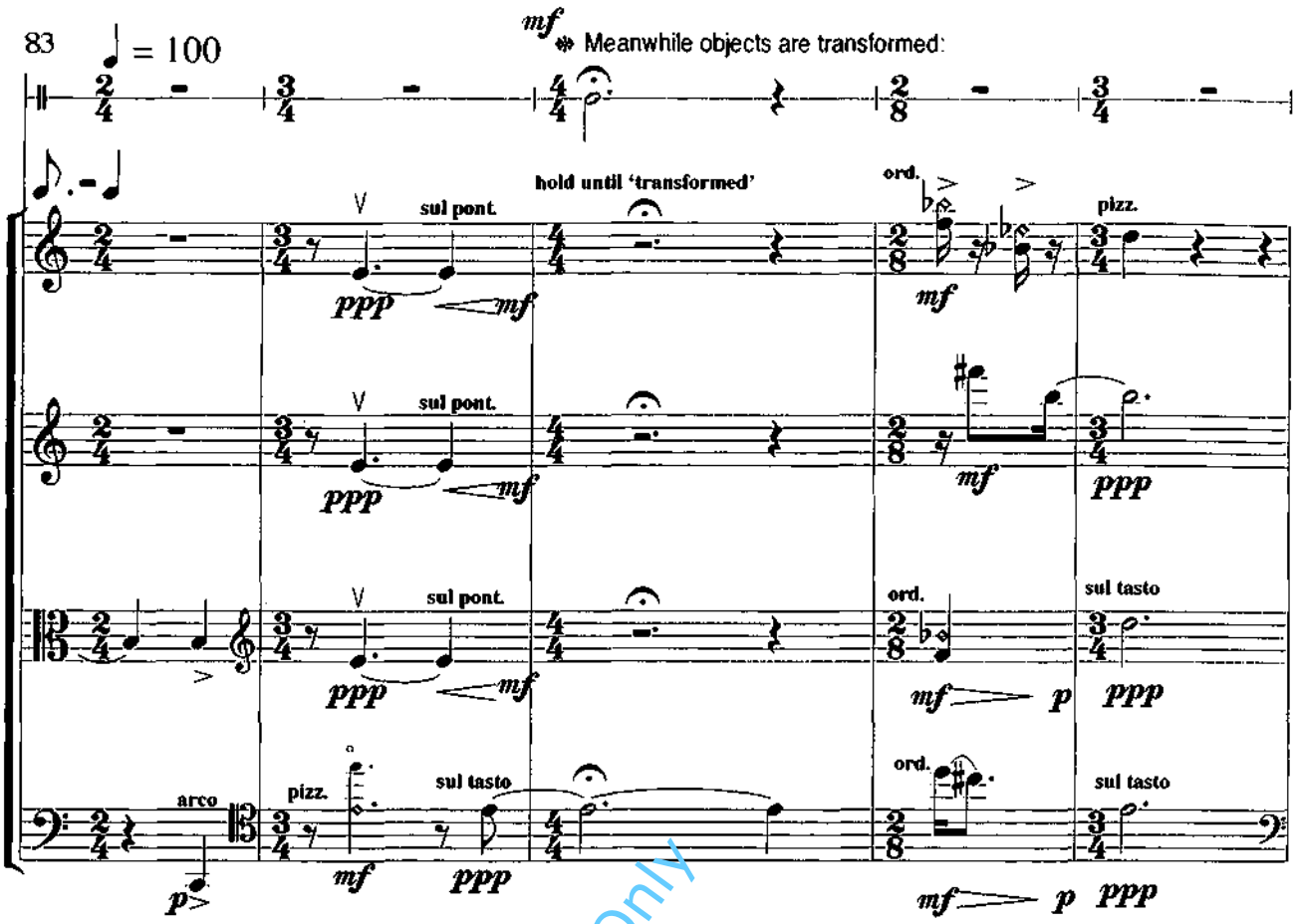


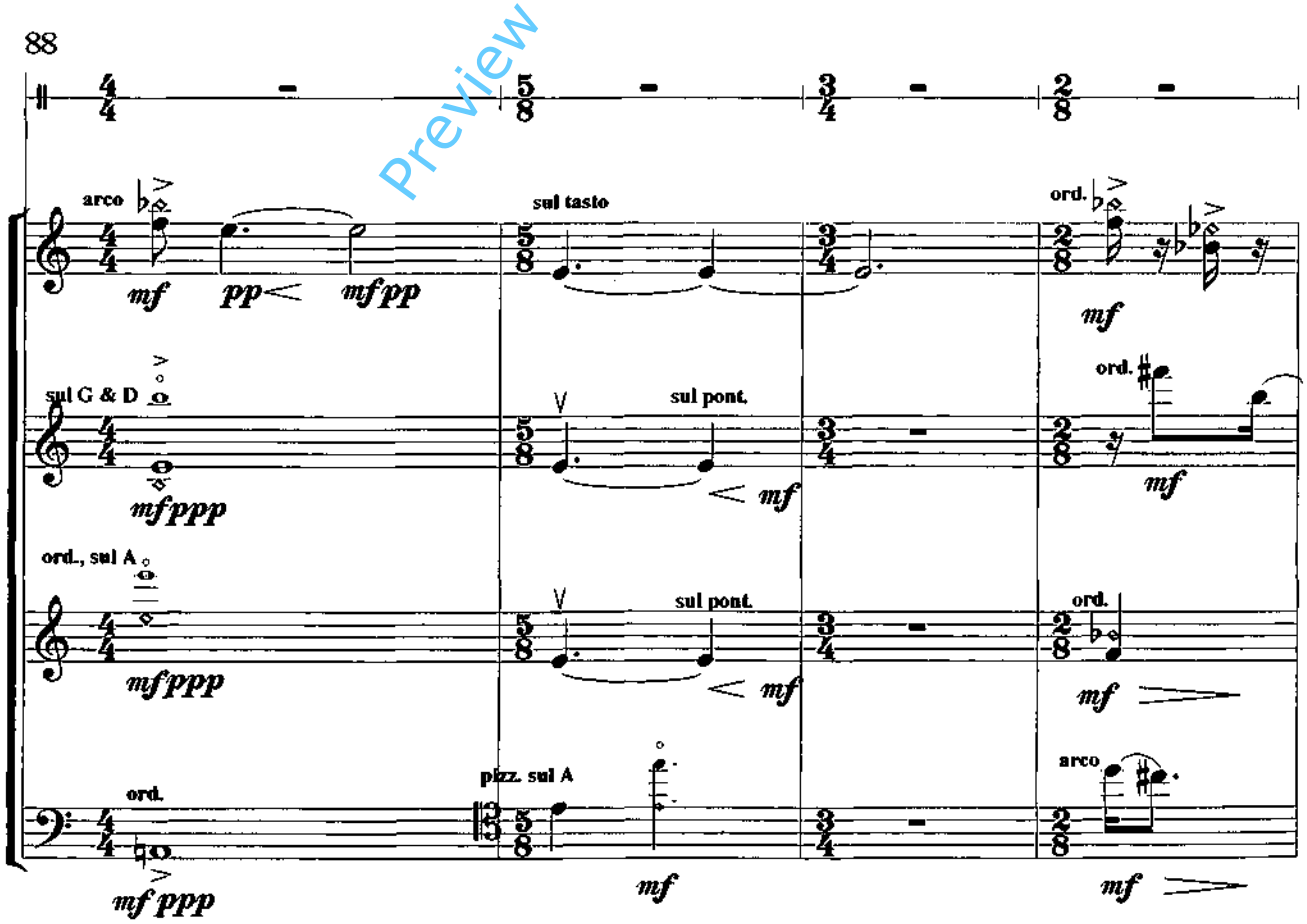
Preview File Only



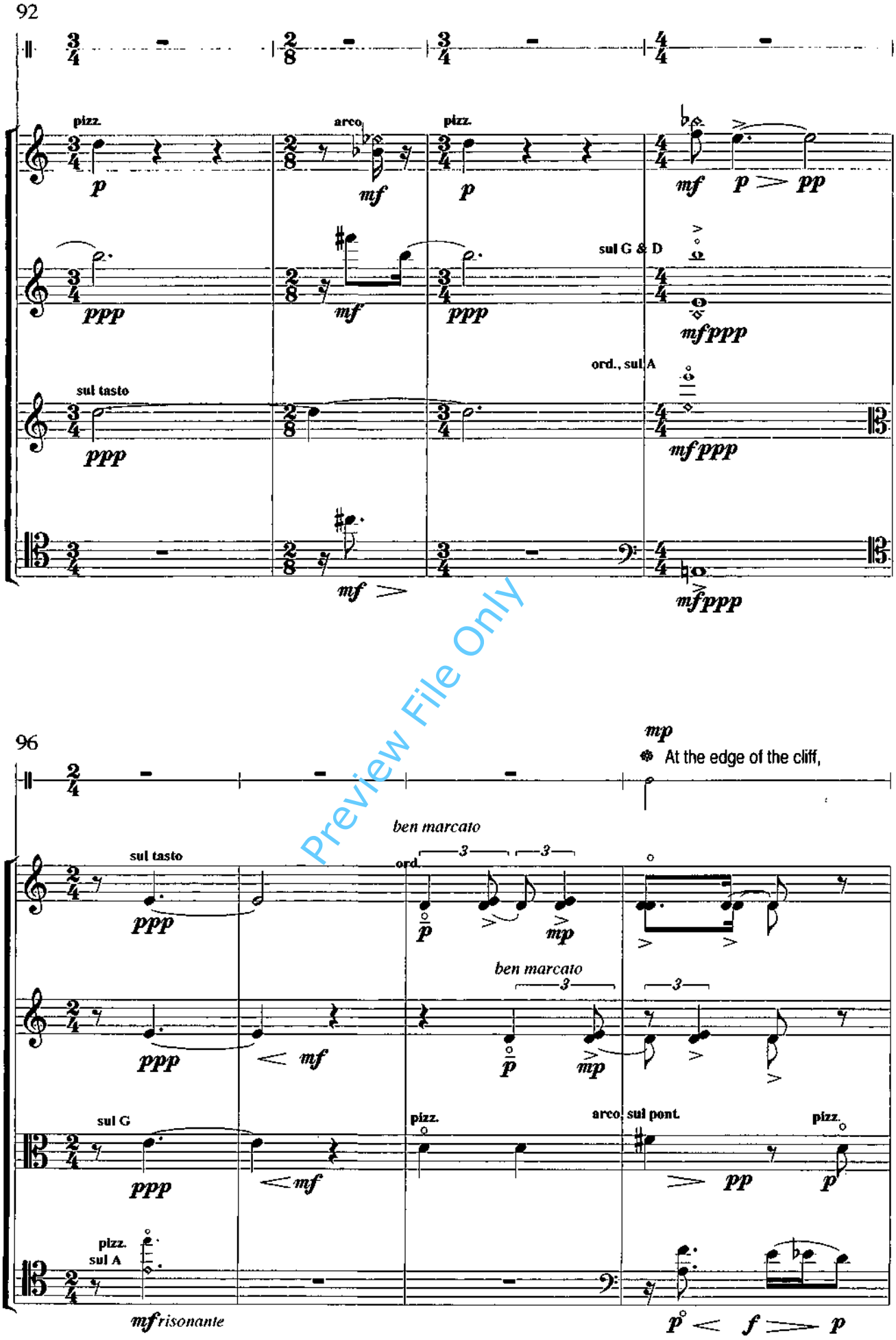


Preview File Only

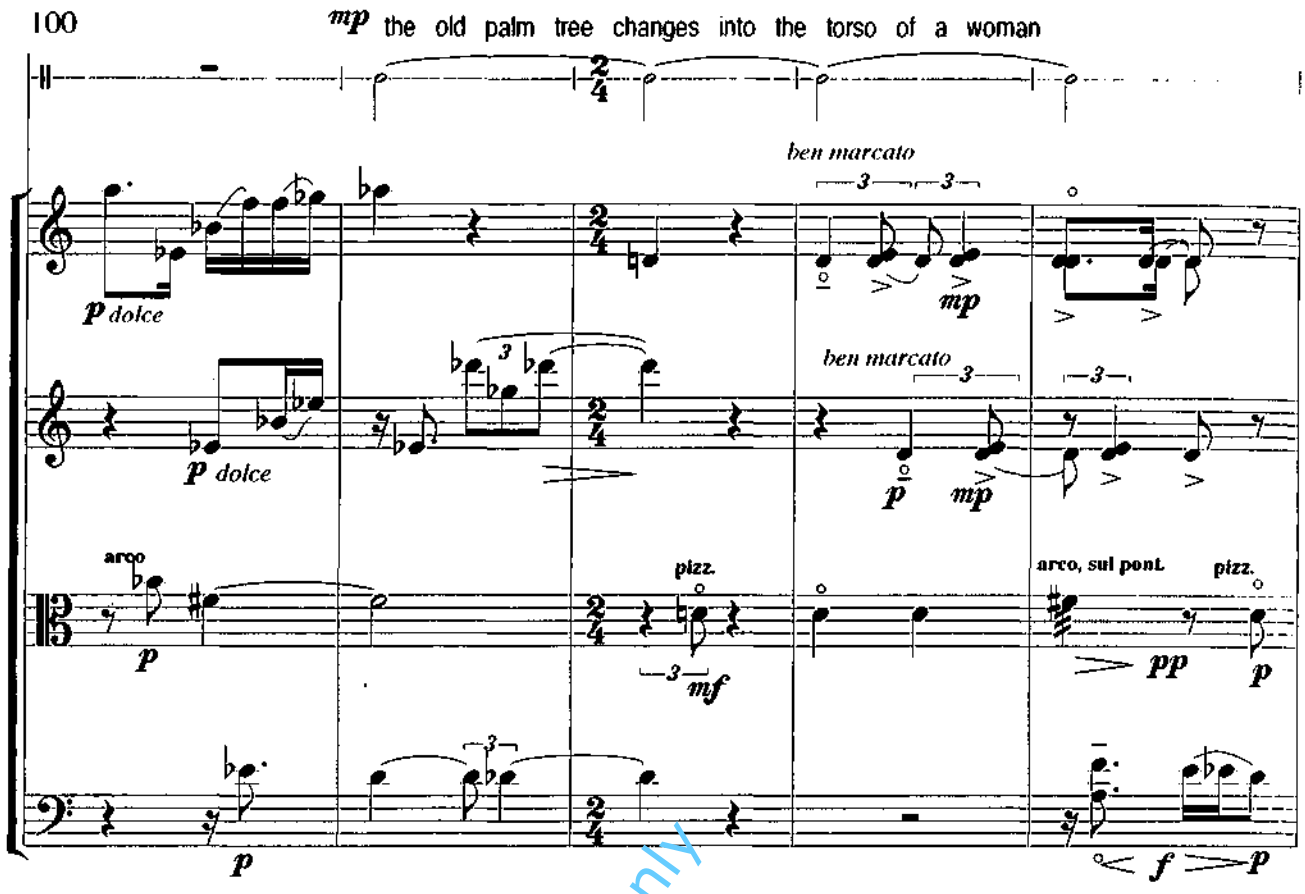


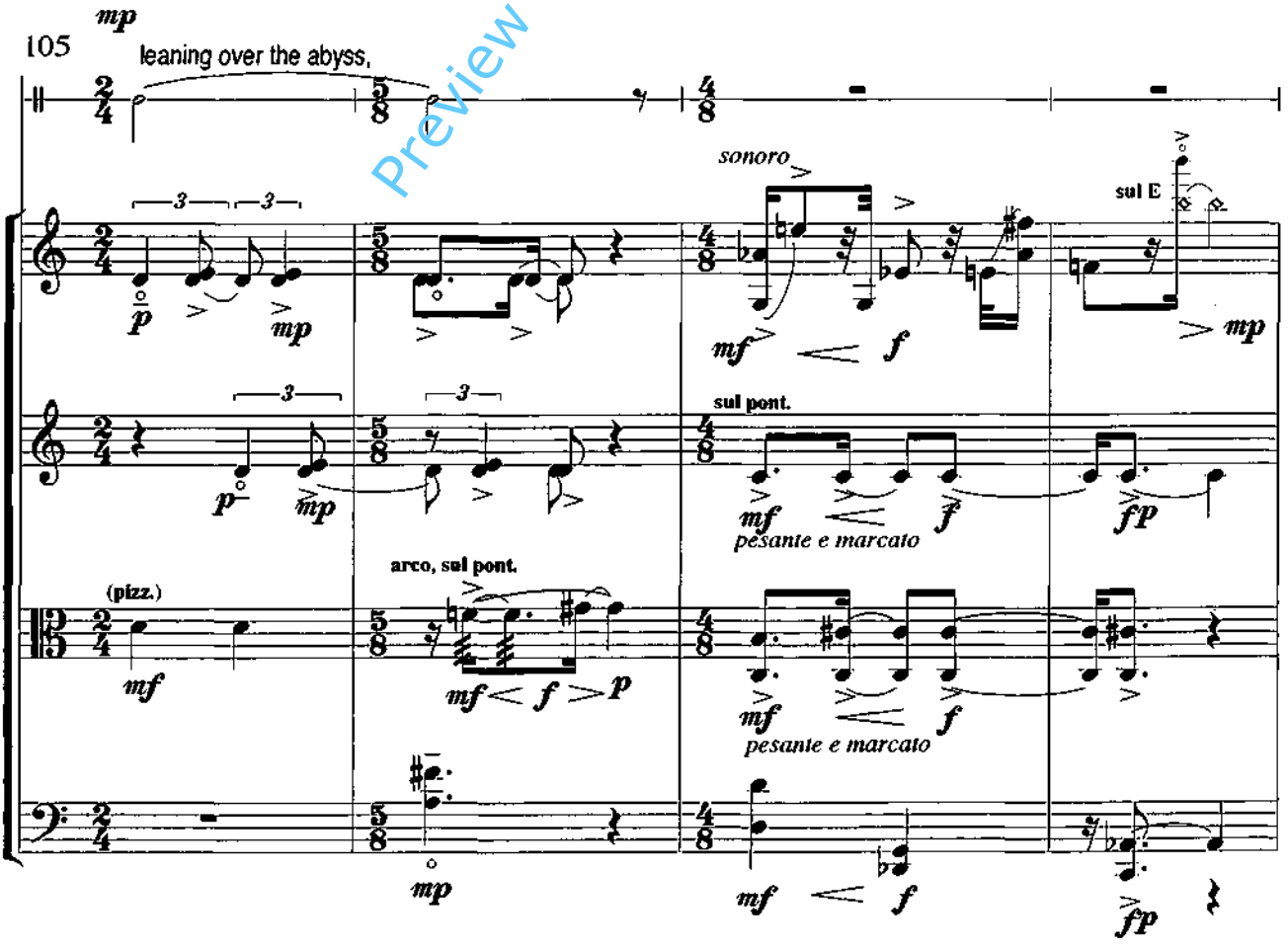


Preview File Only

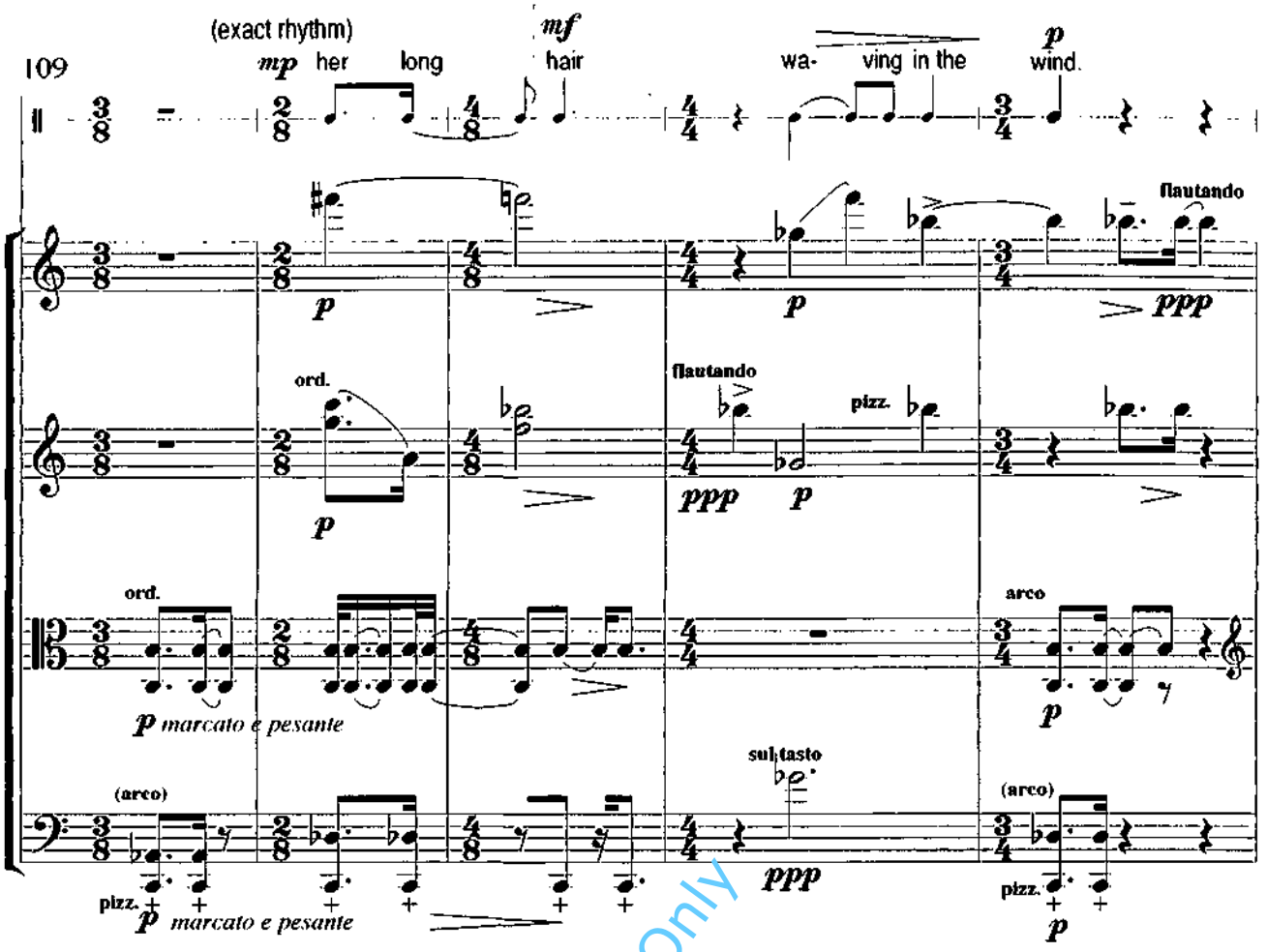


Preview File Only

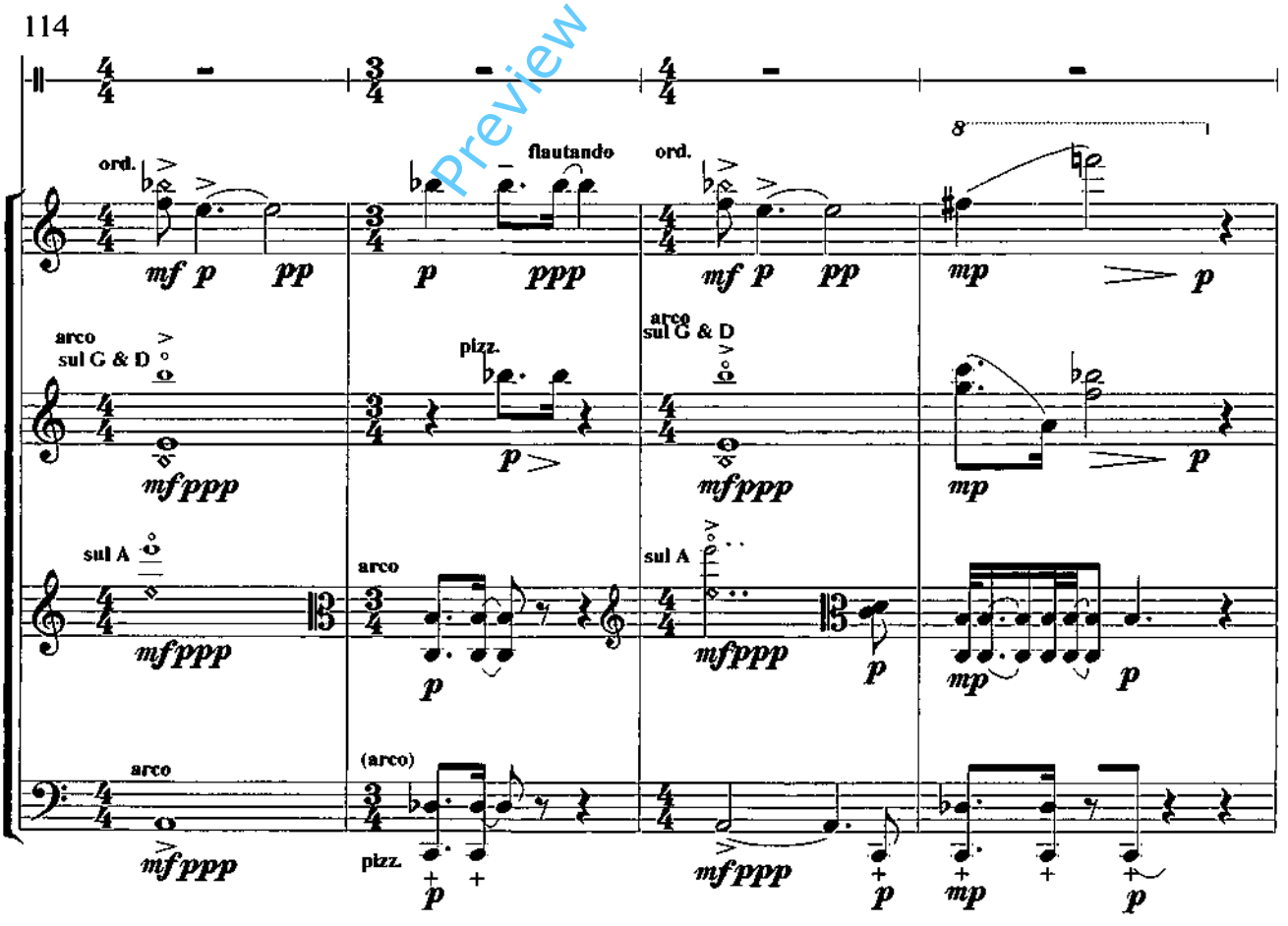




Preview File Only



Preview File Only



118

mp The stool supporting the great book

ben marcato

pizz.

arco

leggiero

122

mp whose pages are covered with black characters, seems to him changed into a bush crammed with

leggiero

ben marcato

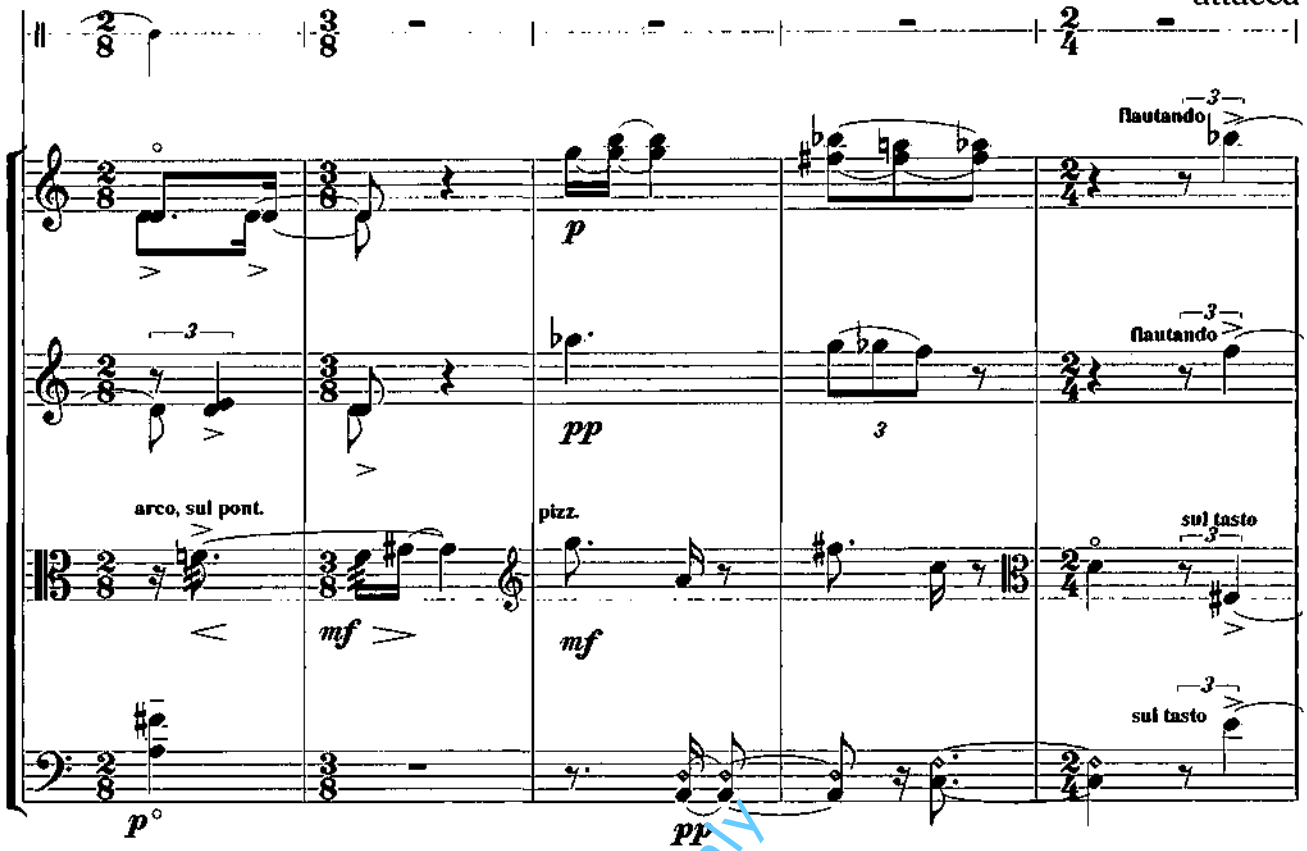
sul pont.

ord.

Preview File Only

126 swallows.

attacca



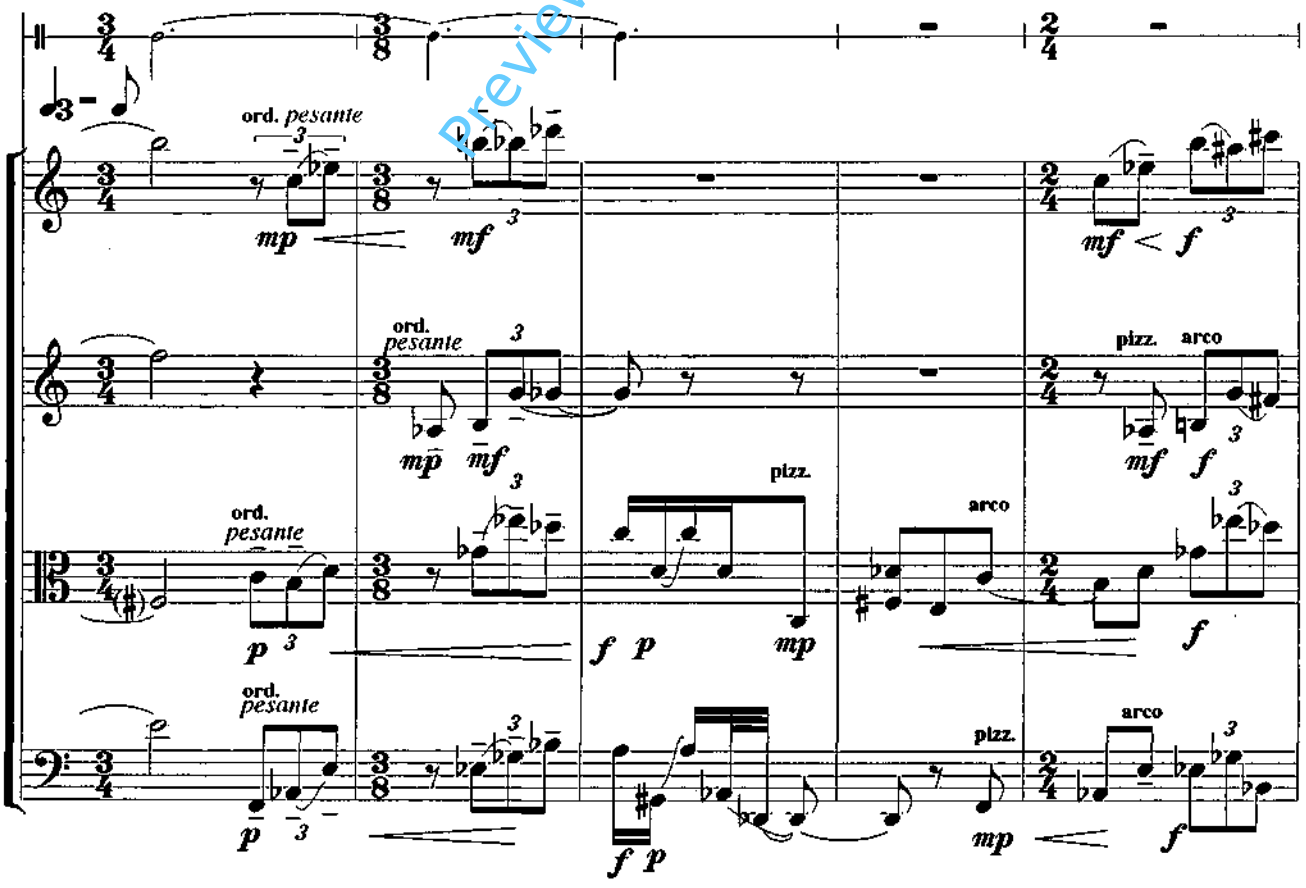
3 - Wu's Dream

♩ = 76

131

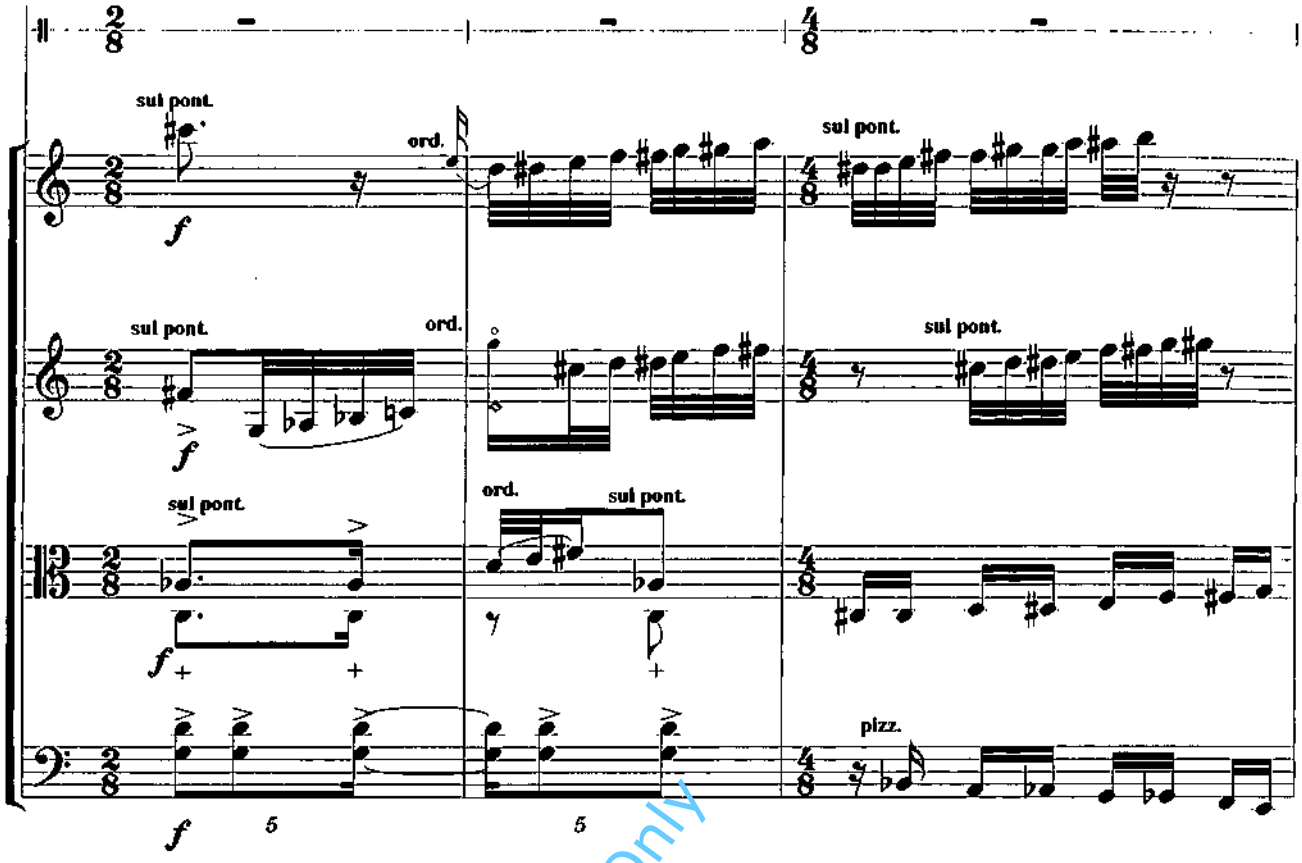
Wu

mp ***It must be the candle which is making this strange play of light ... Let's put it out!***



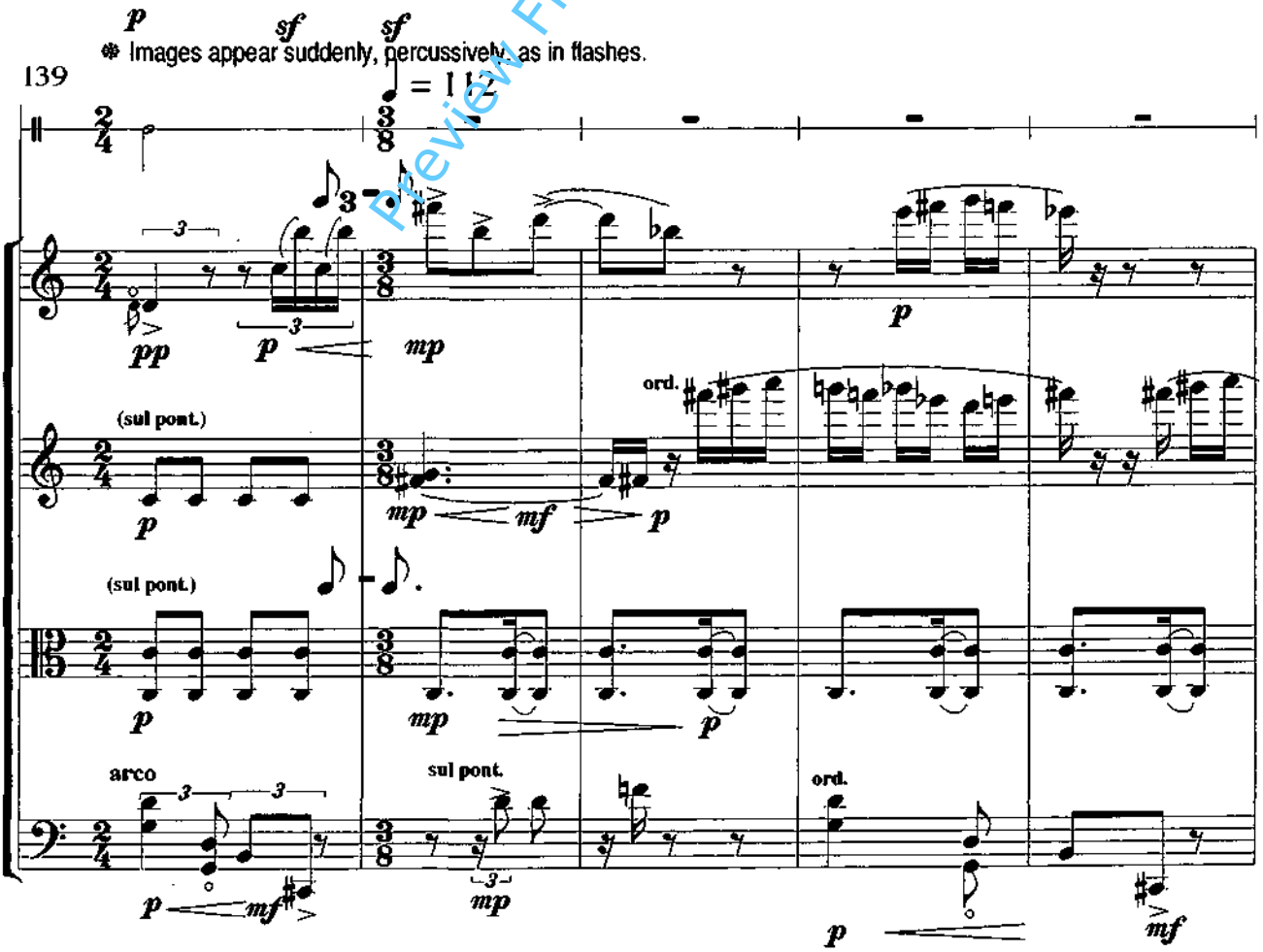
Preview File Only

136

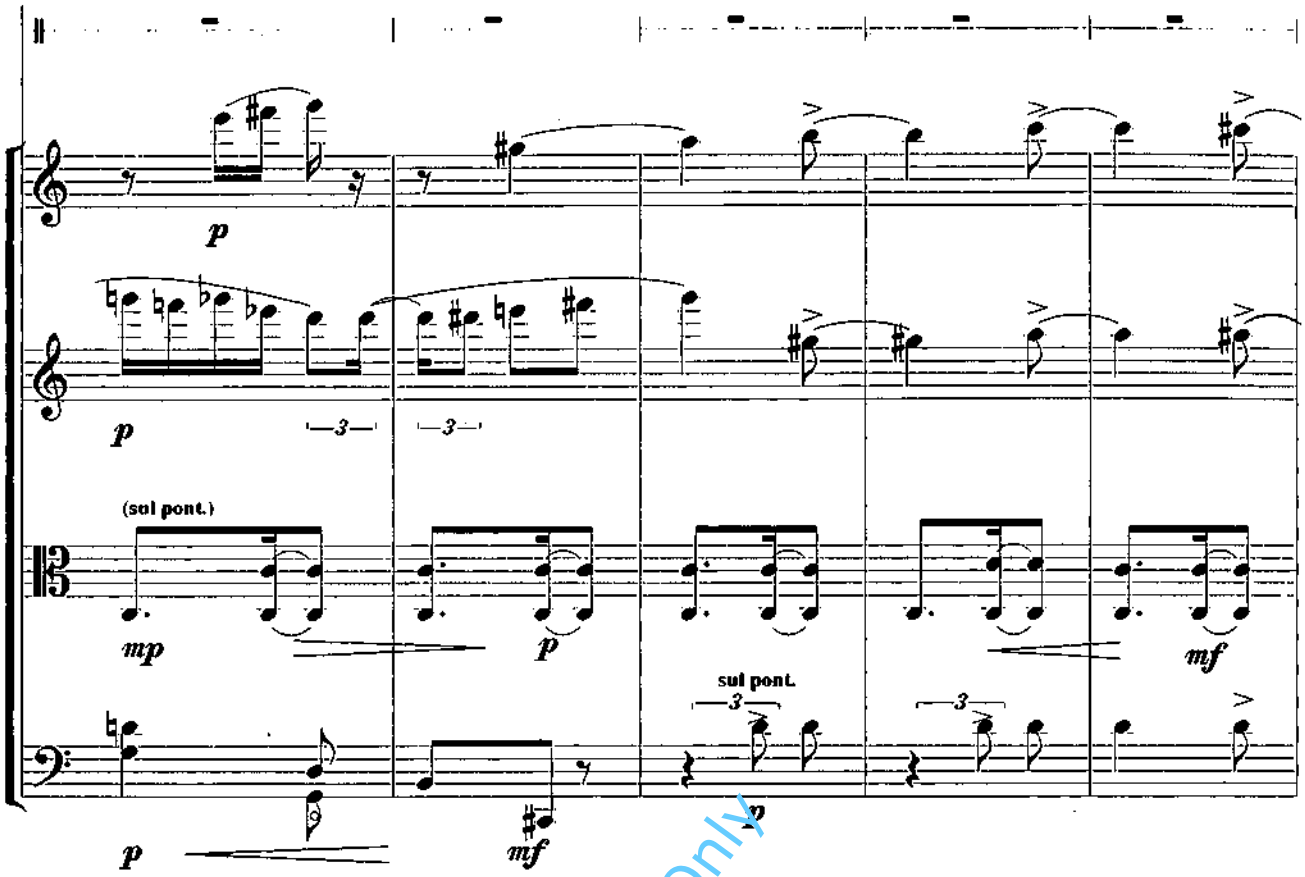


Preview File Only

139



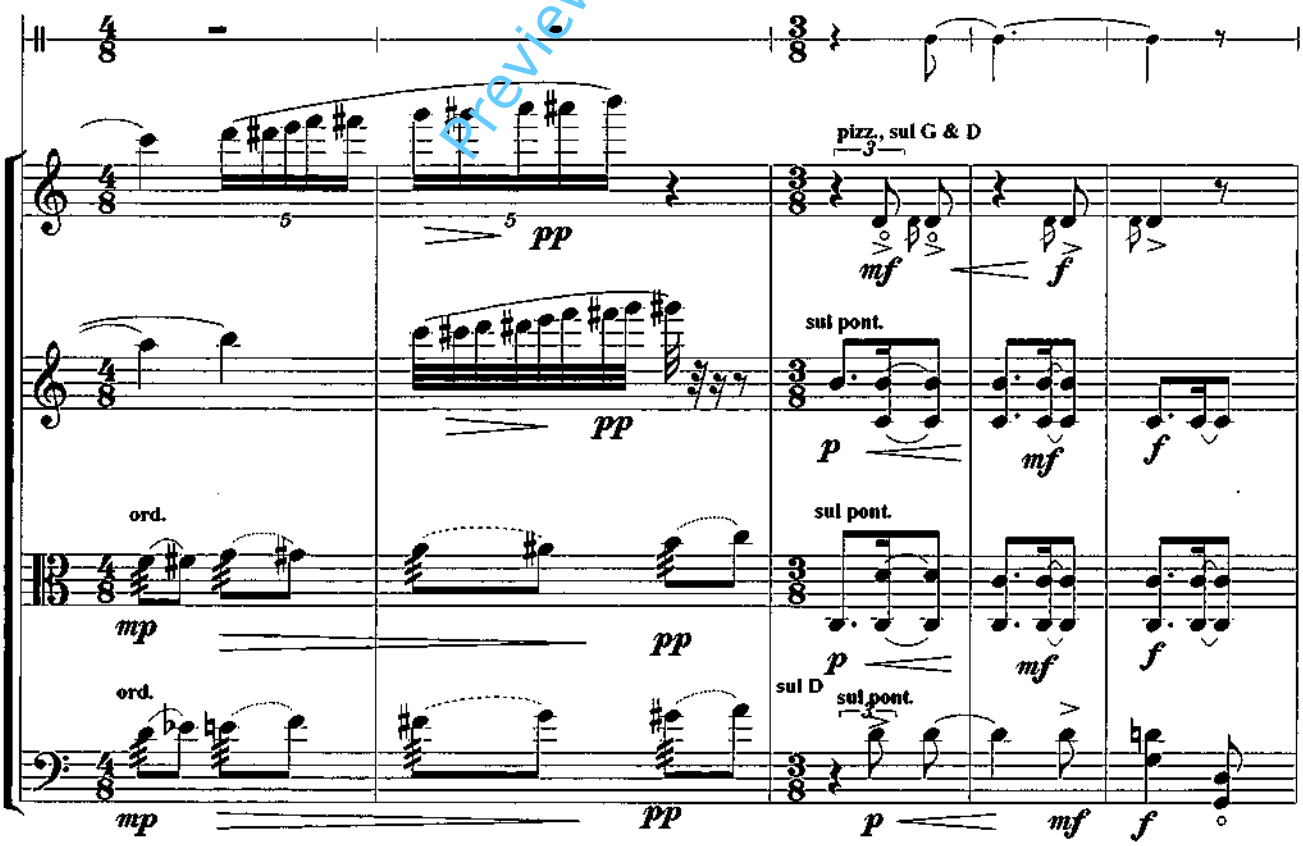
144



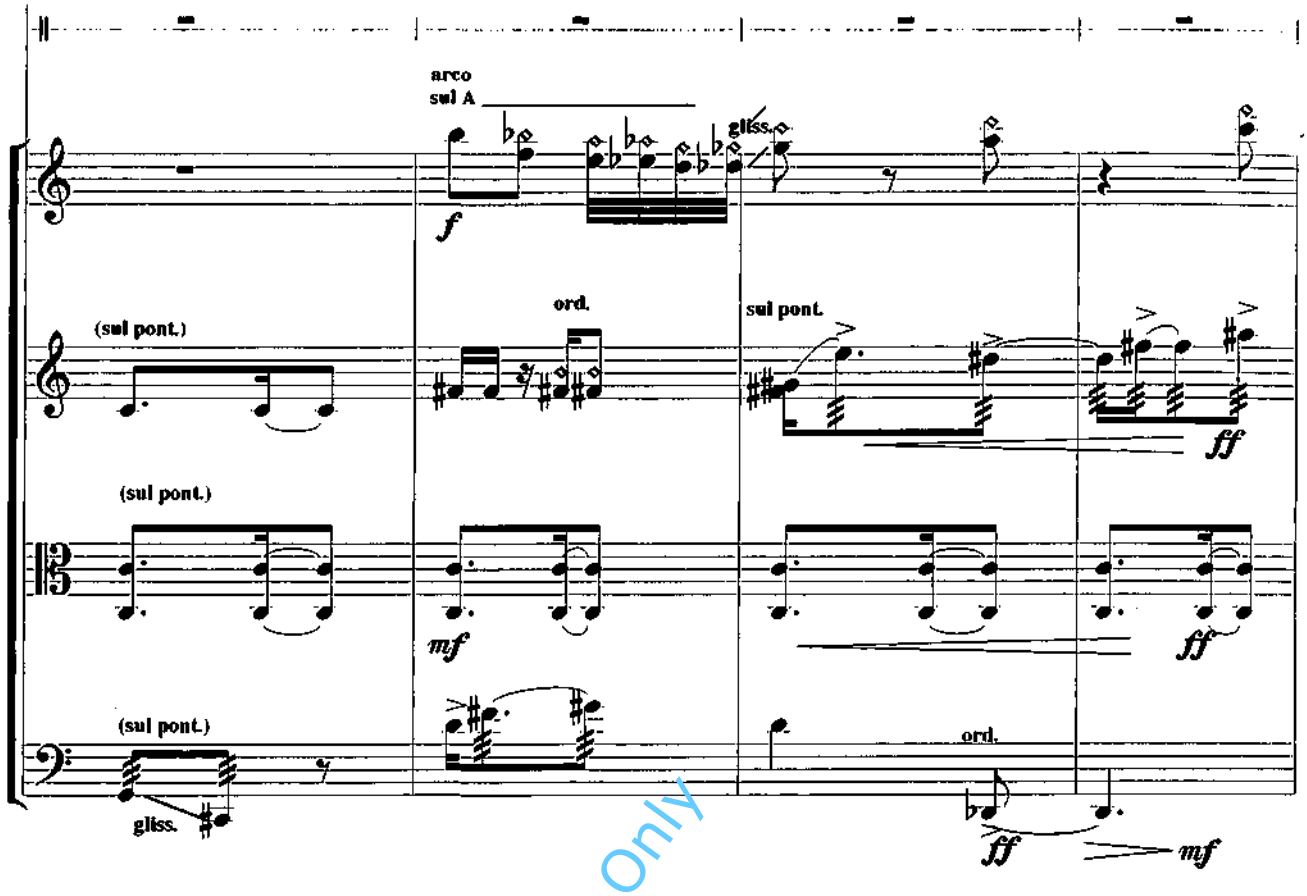
Preview File Only

149

mf sff
Their motion accelerates.

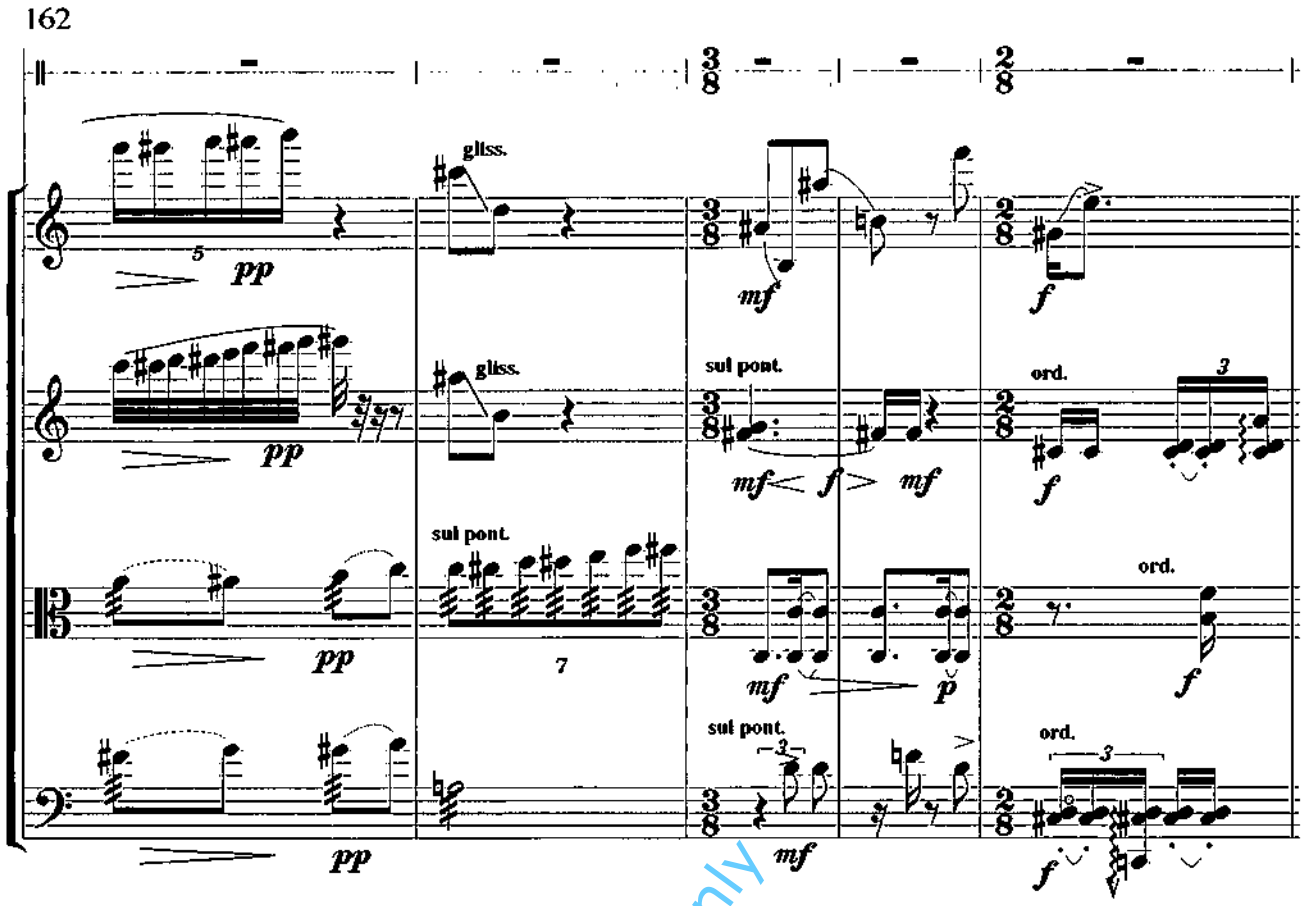


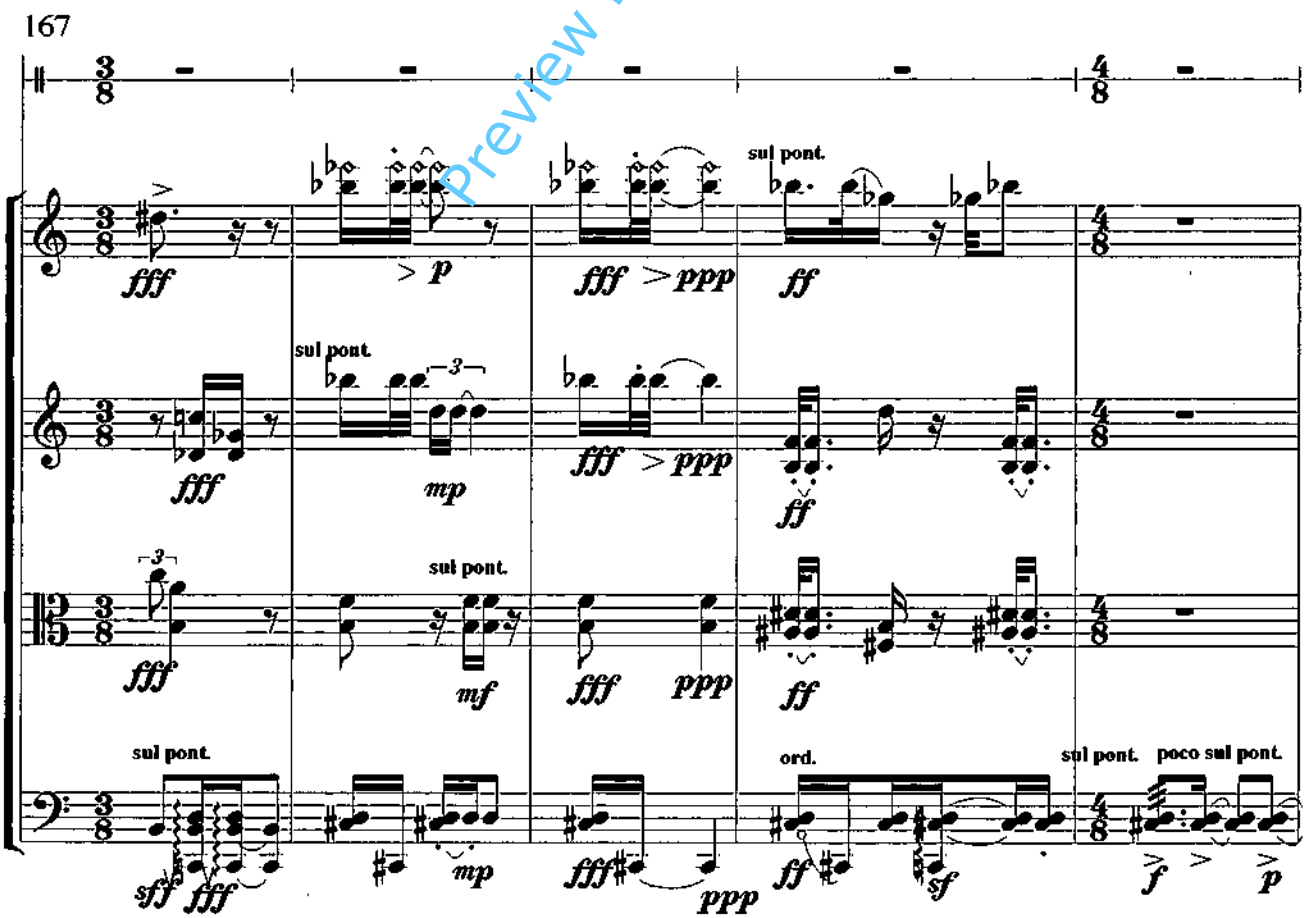
154



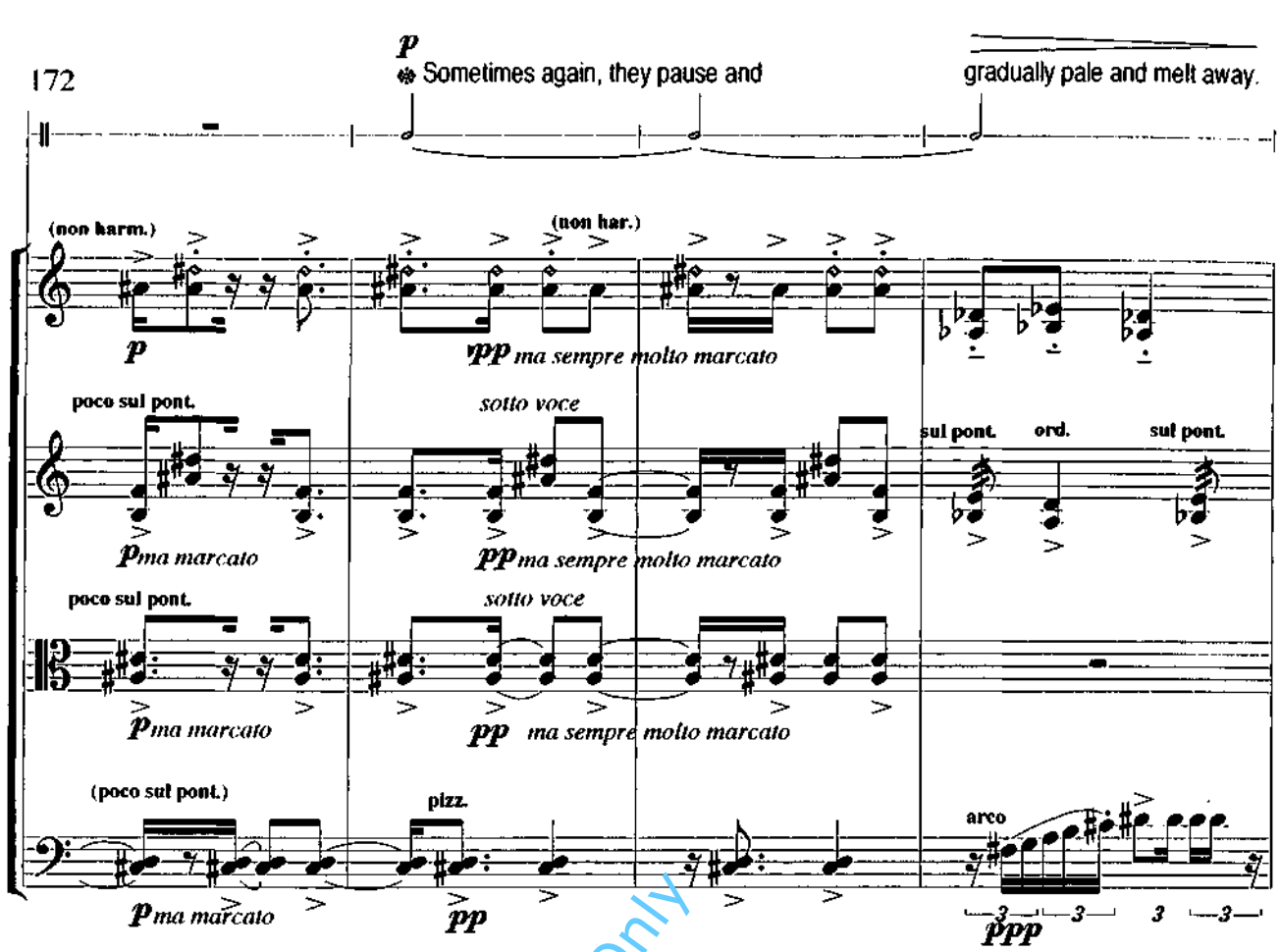
158

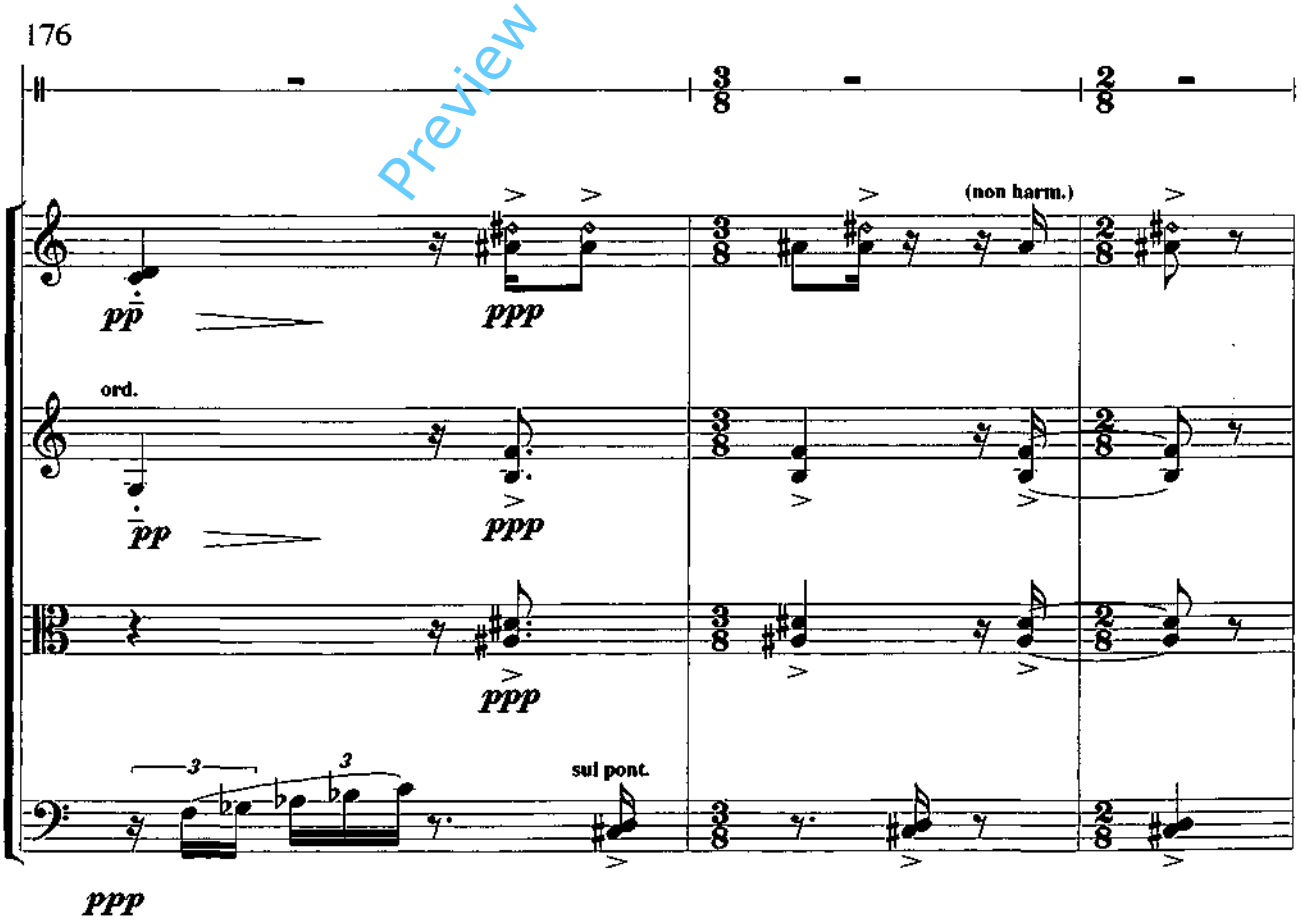
Preview File Only



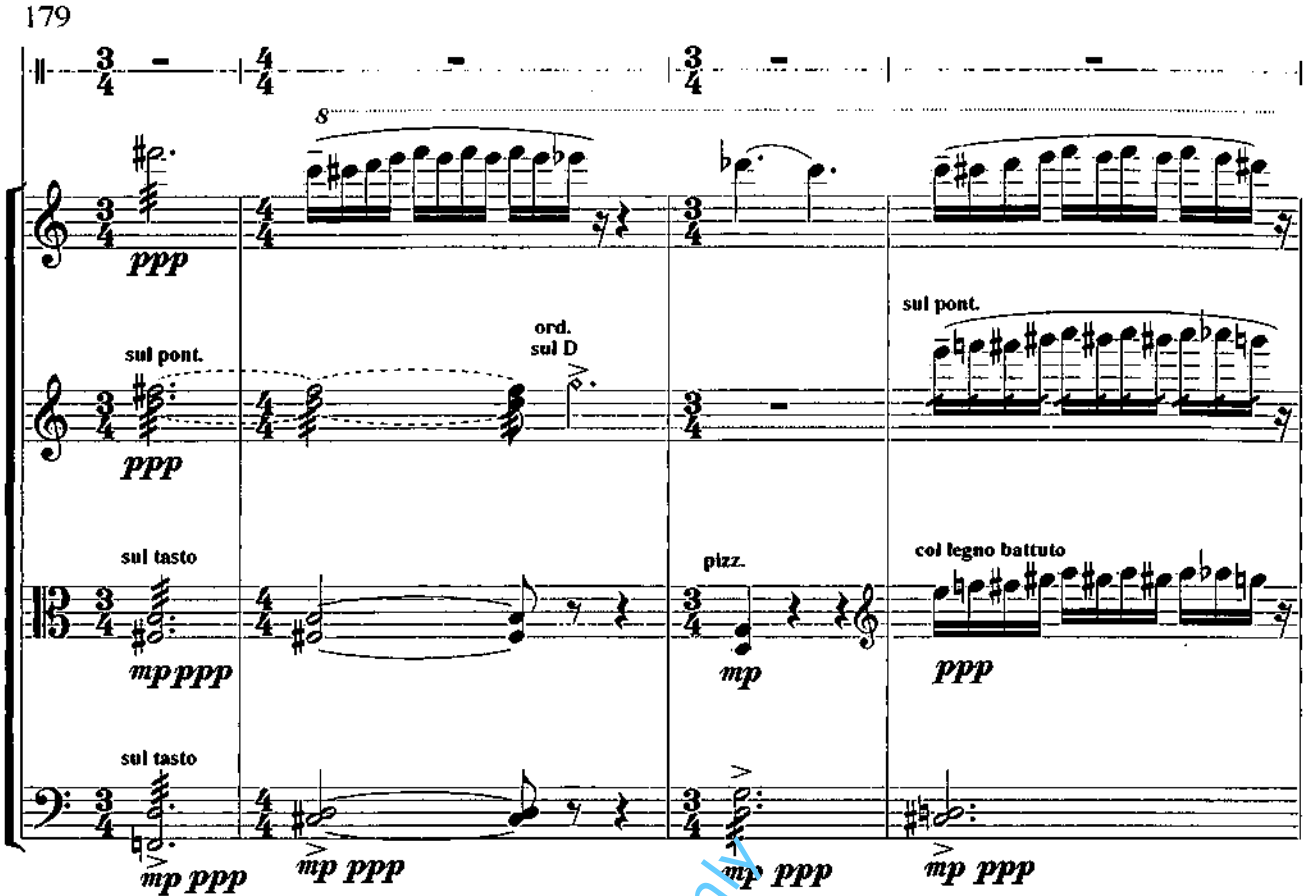


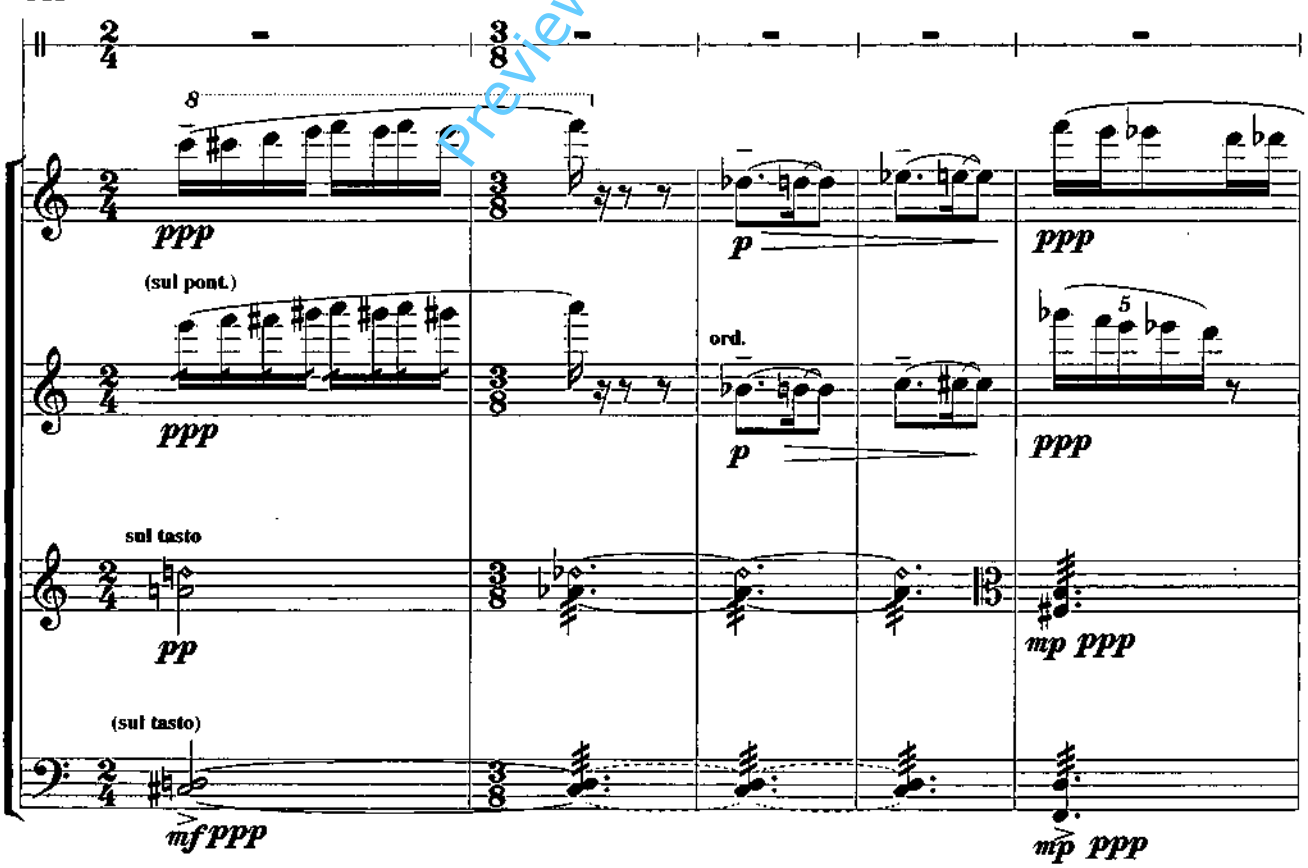
Preview File Only





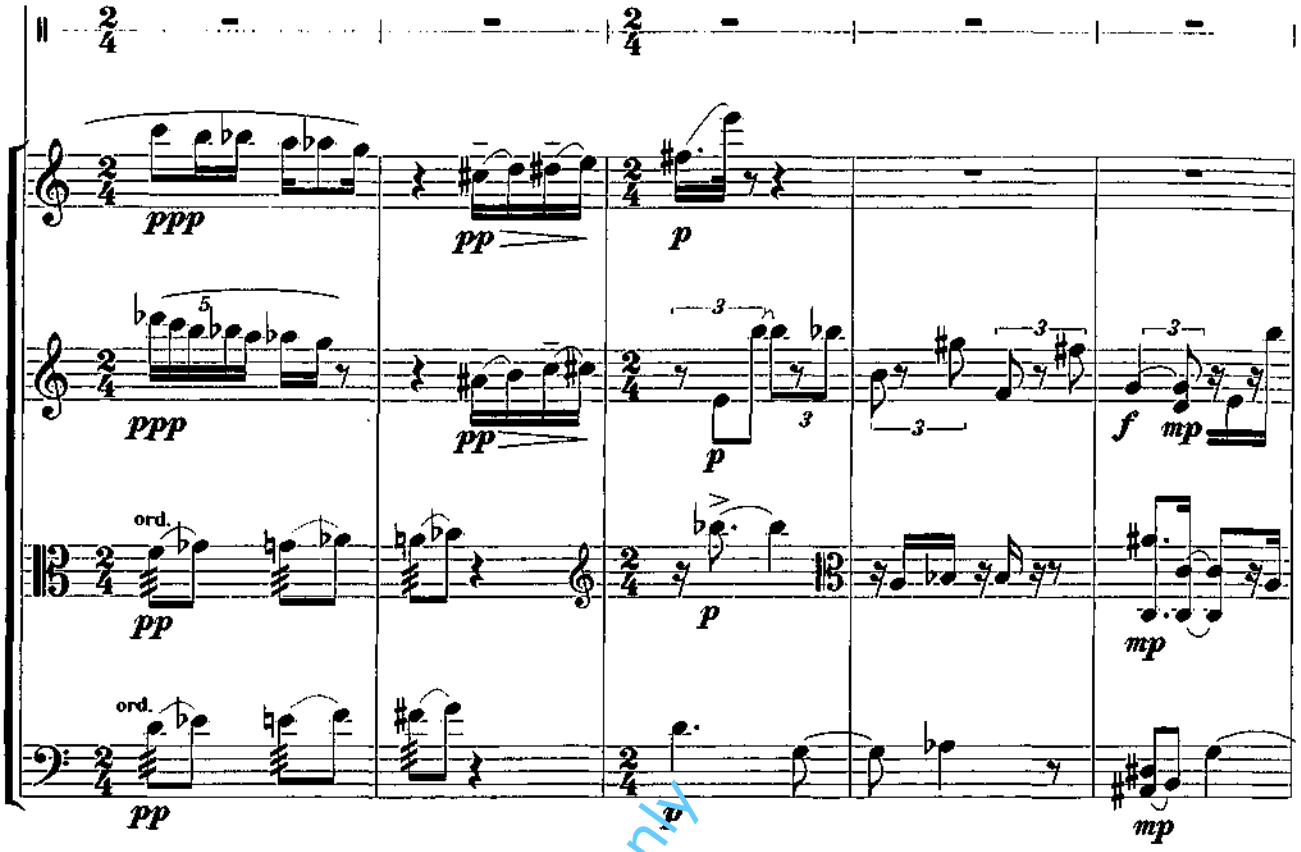
Preview File Only



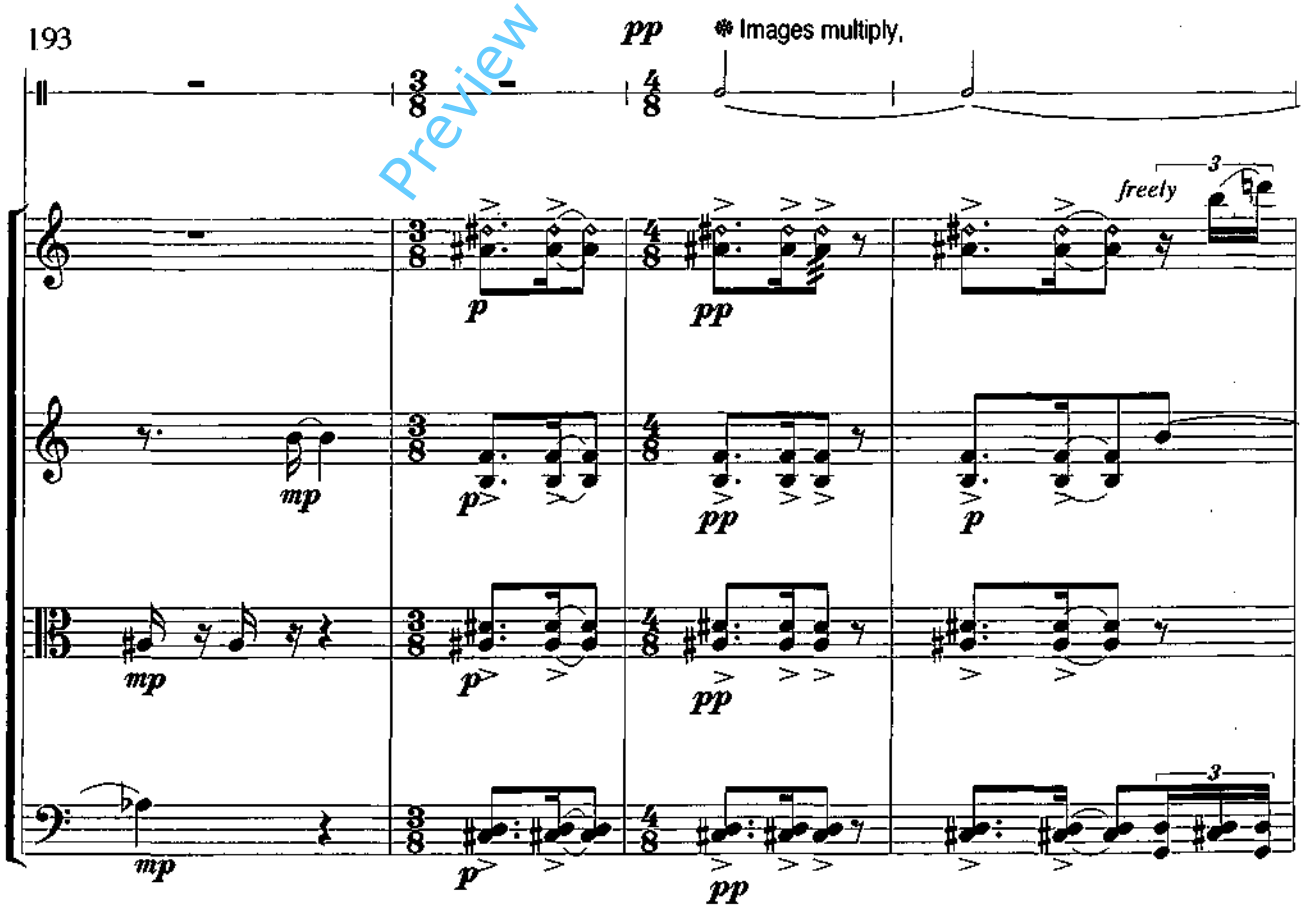


Preview File Only

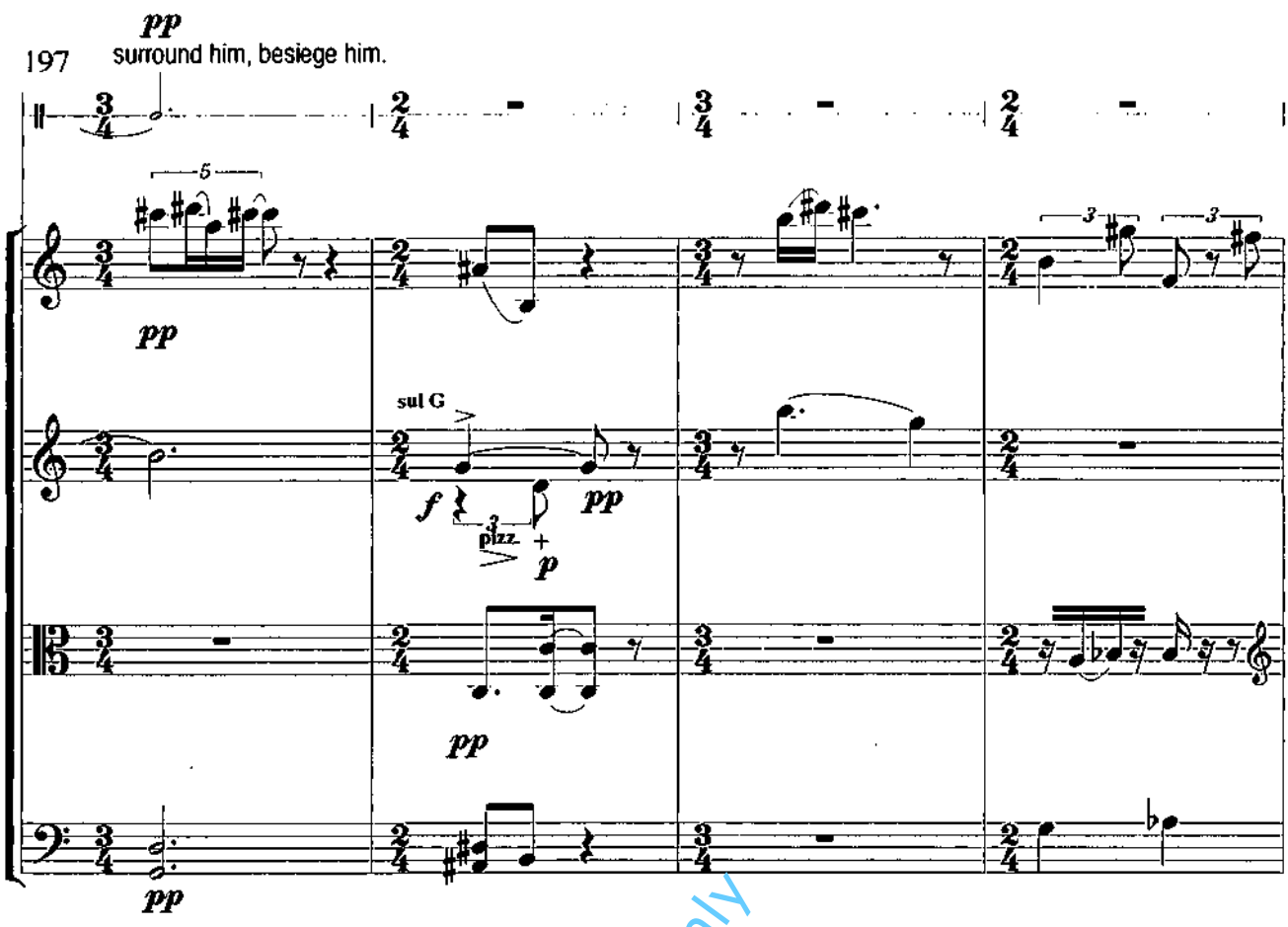
188



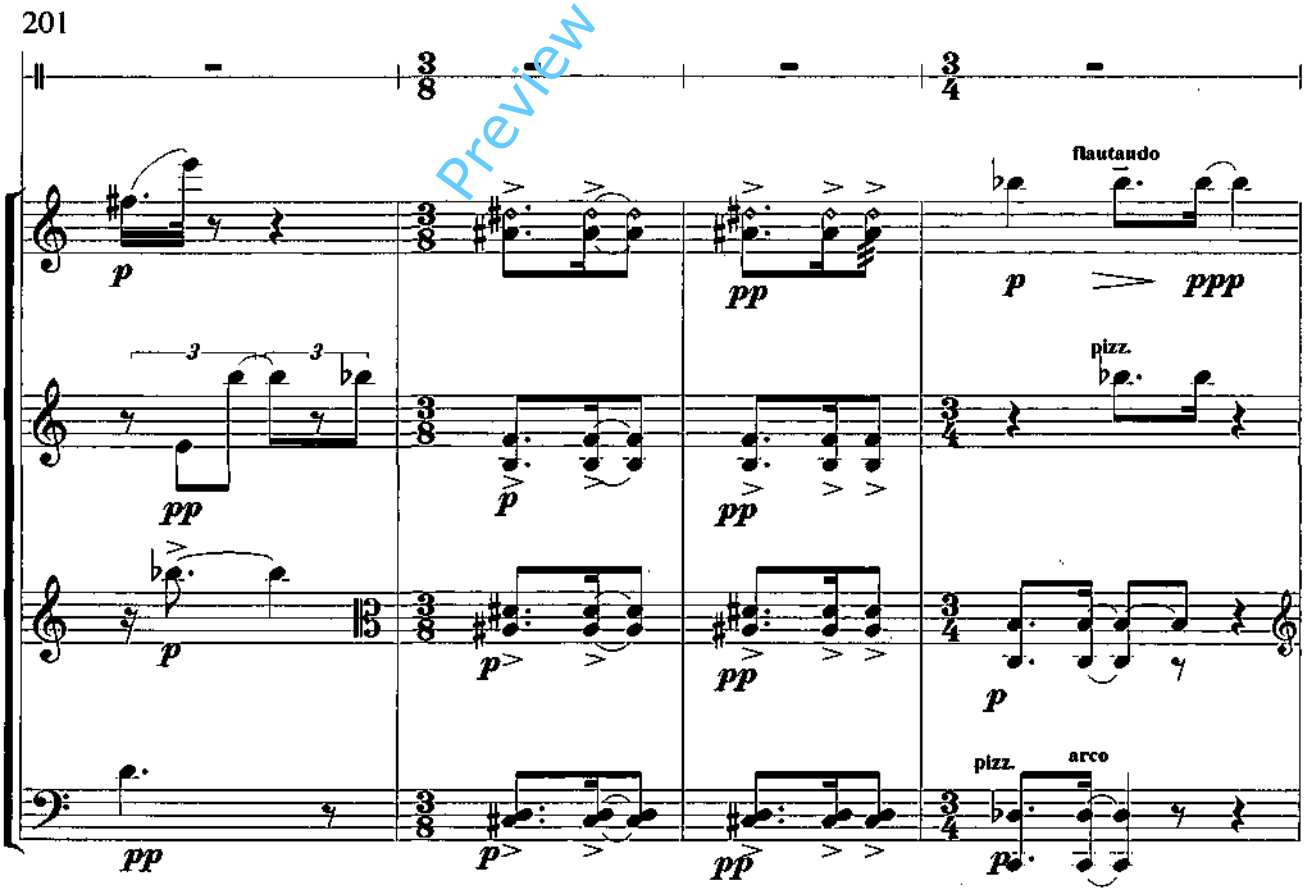
193

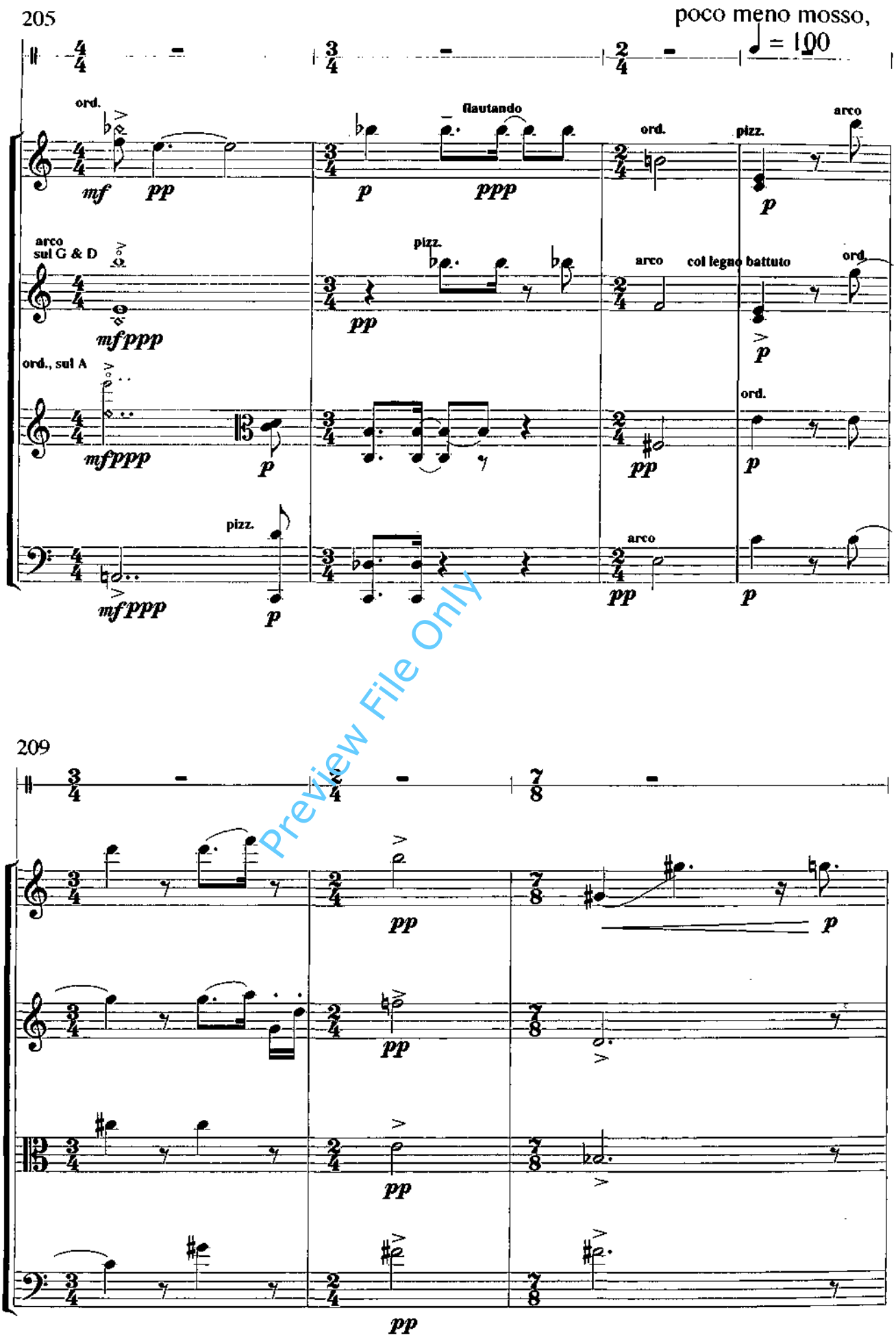


Preview File Only



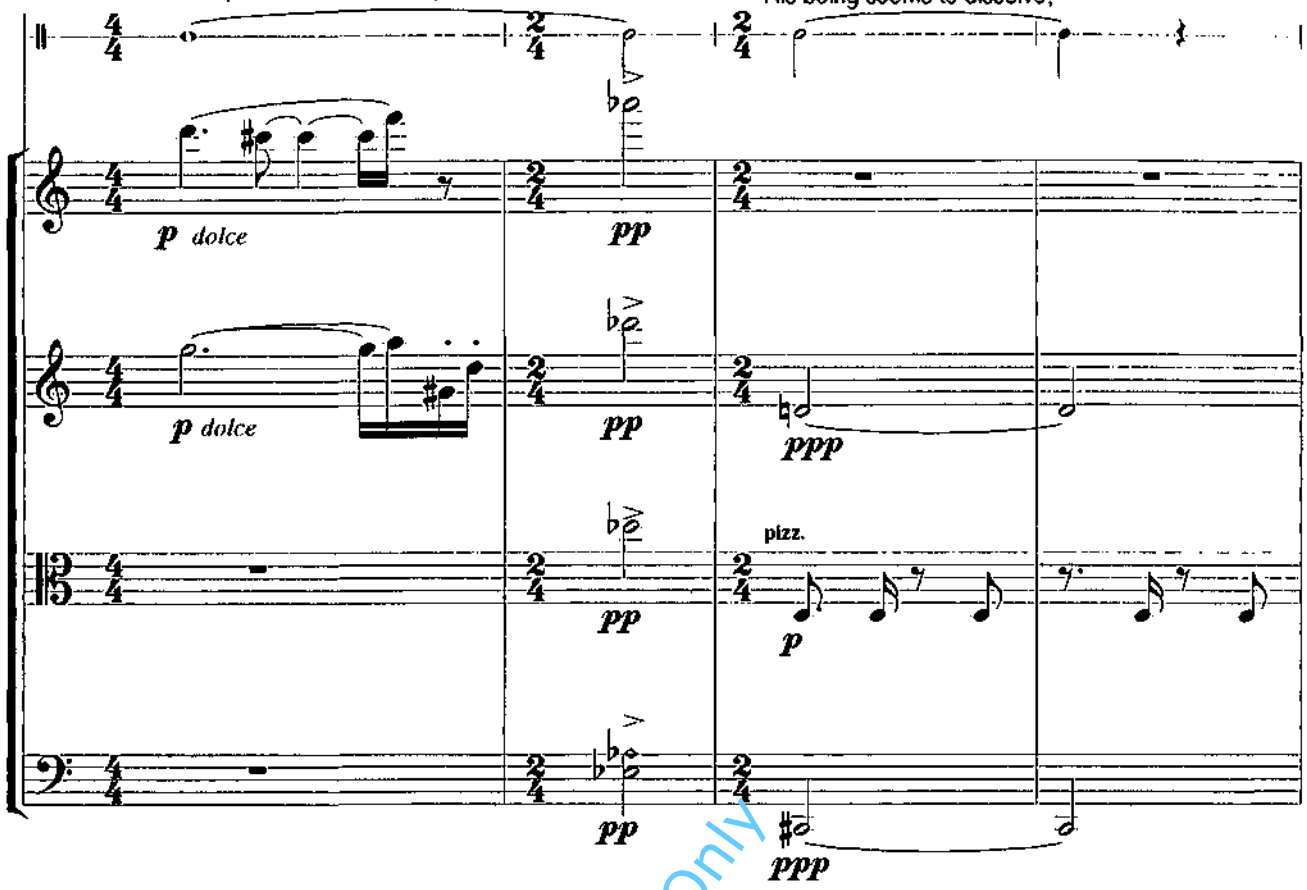
Preview File Only





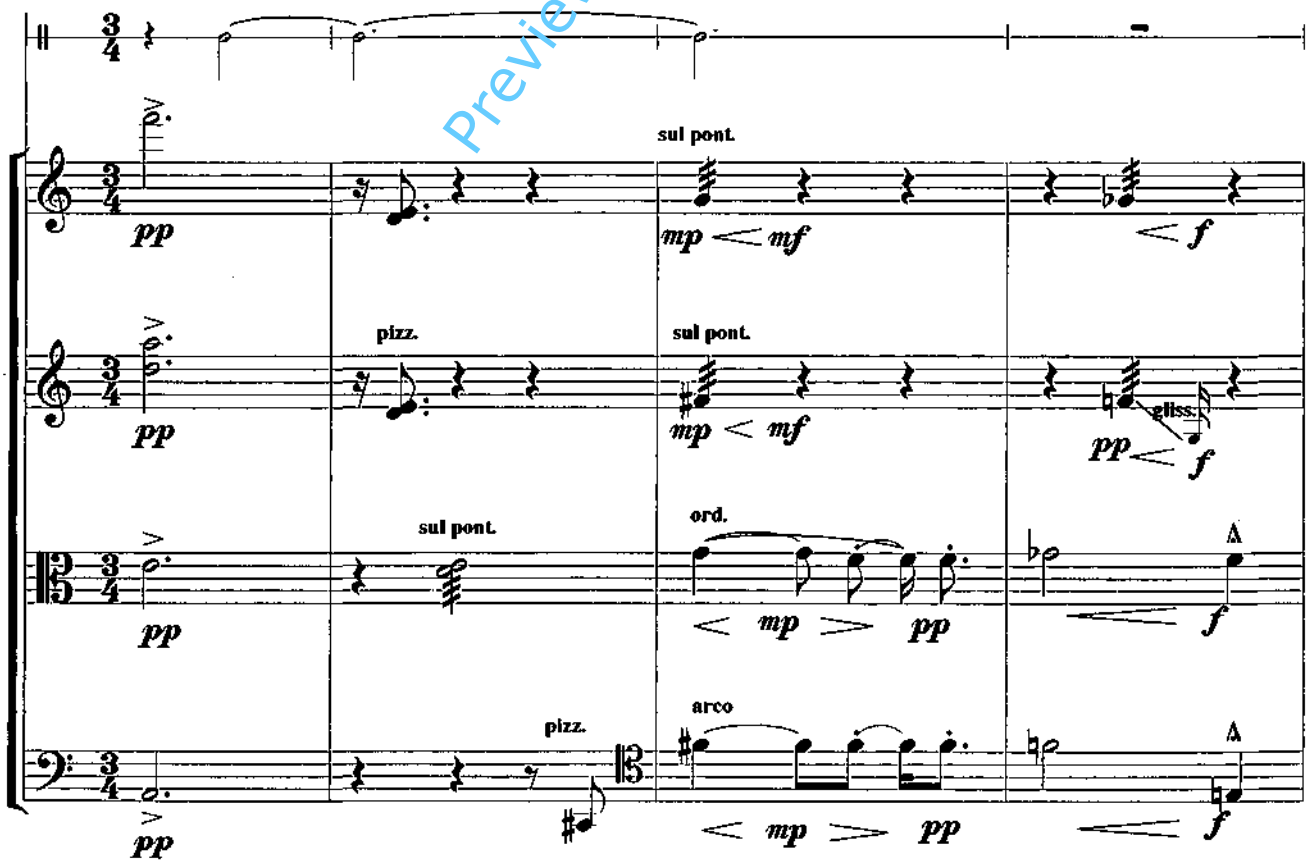
Preview File Only

212 *p* ❄ An unspeakable fear takes possession of him. His being seems to dissolve;



Preview File Only

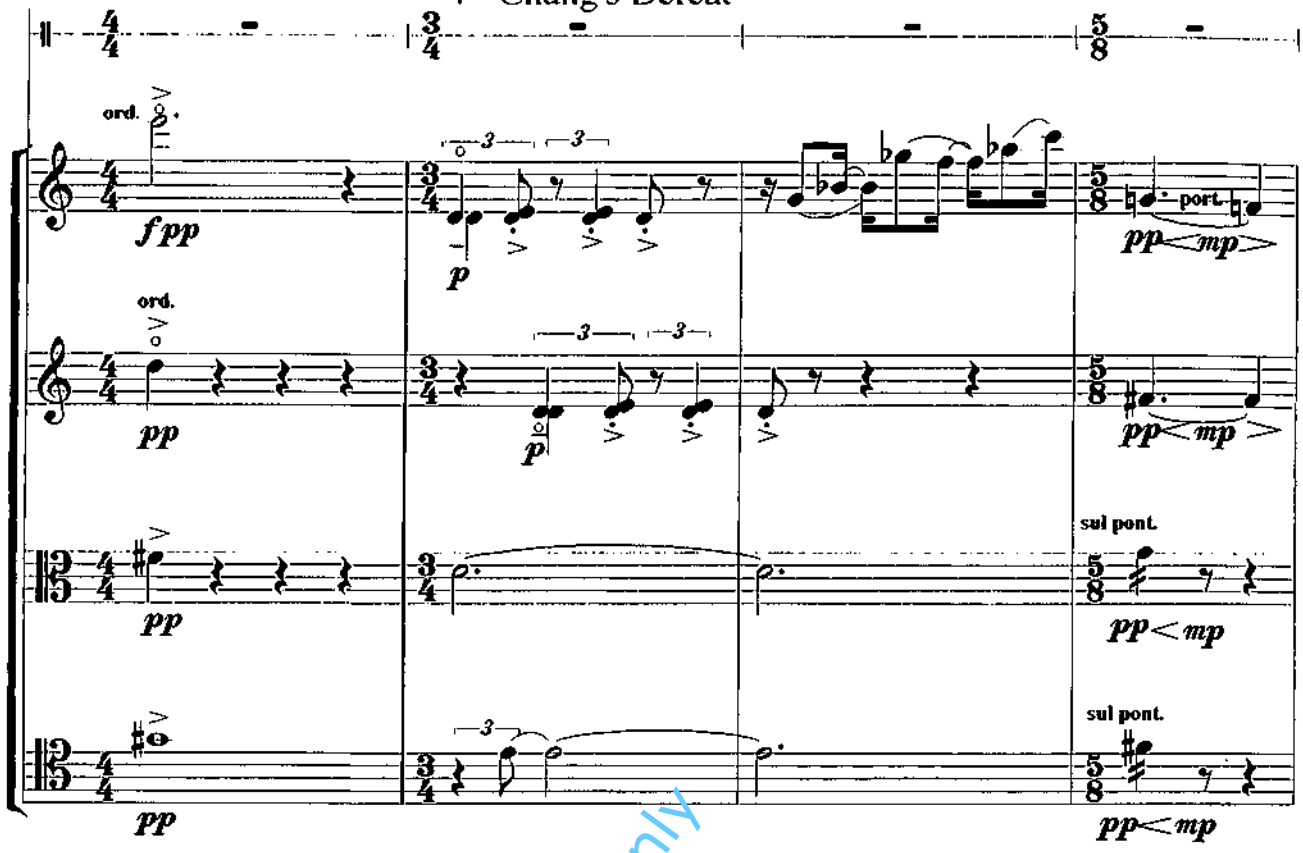
216 *mp* – and, no longer able to resist, Wu falls prostrate upon his mat.



attacca

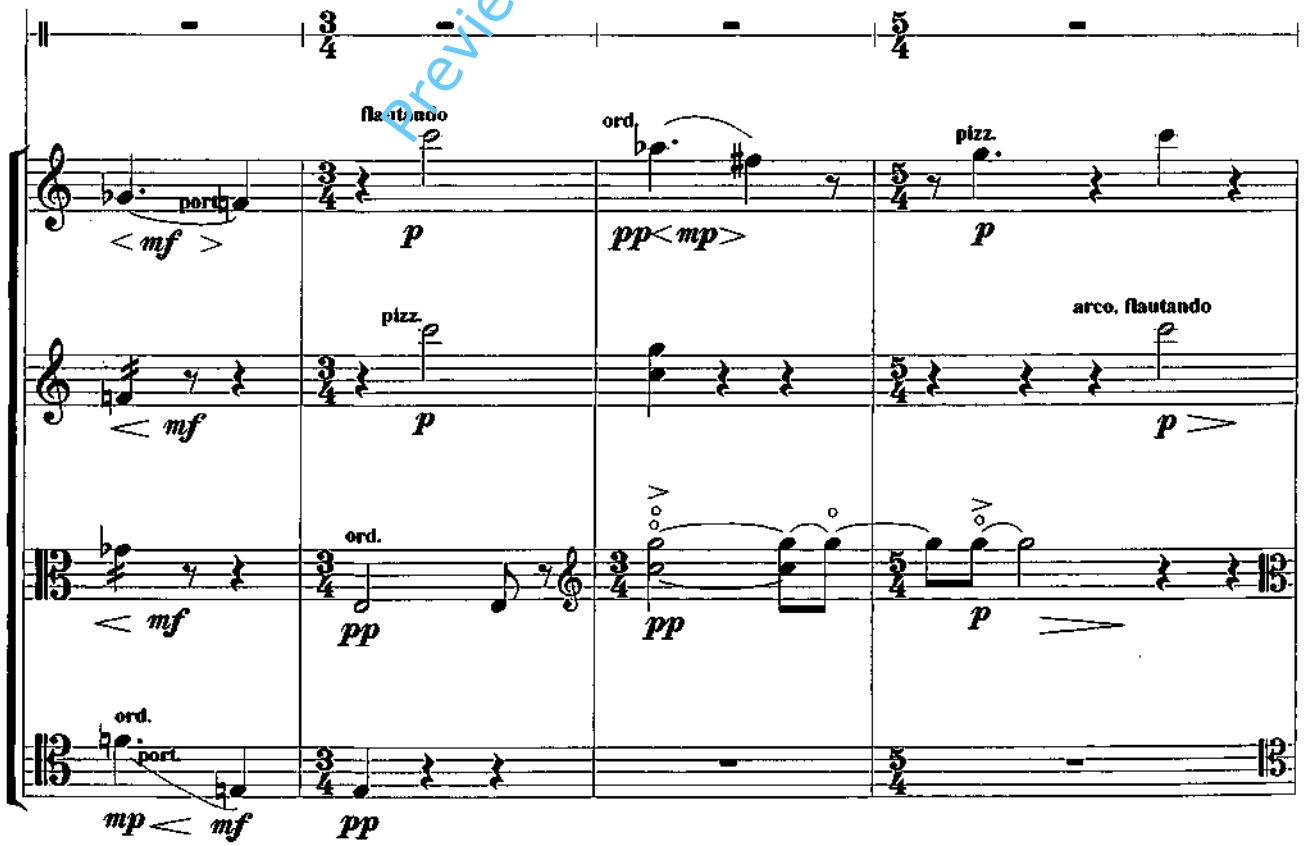
220

4 - Chang's Defeat

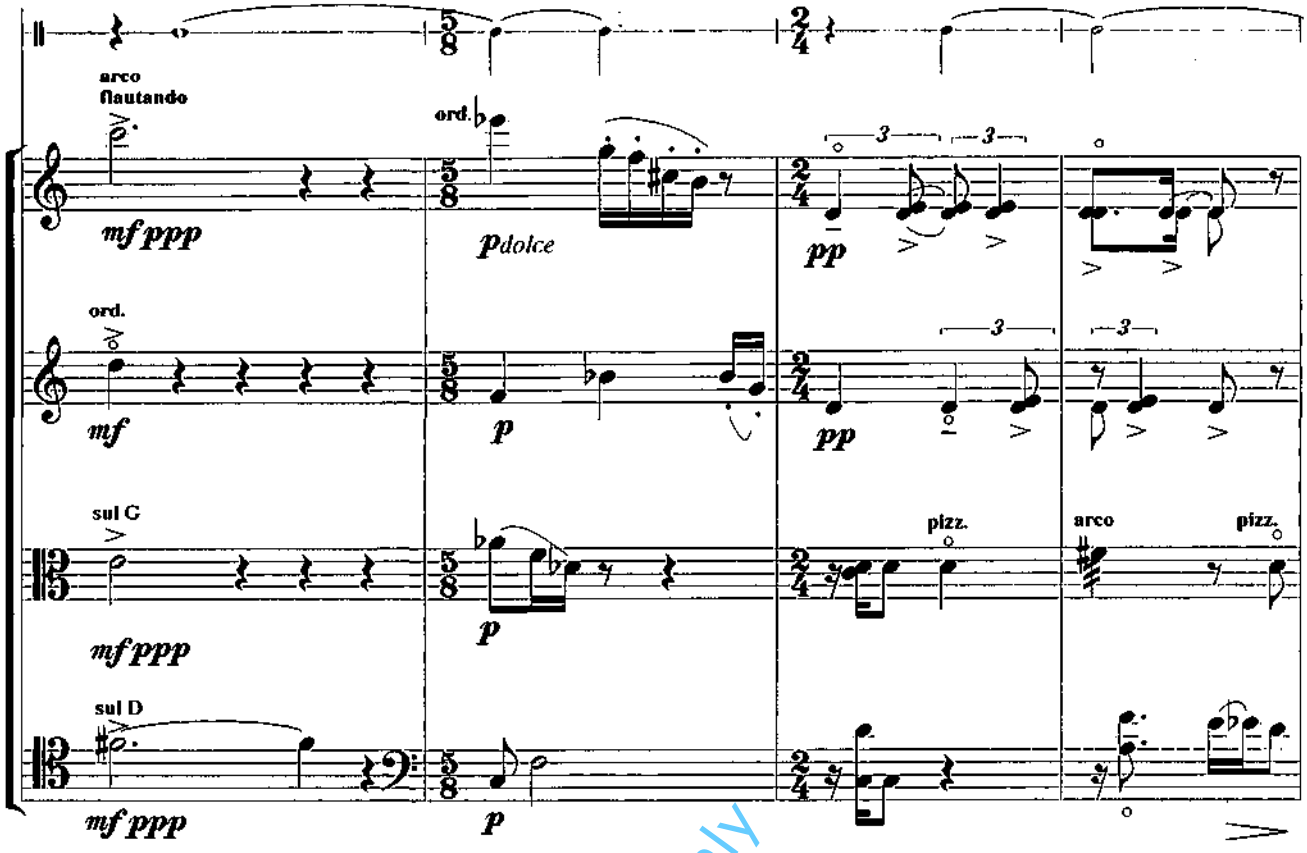


Preview File Only

224



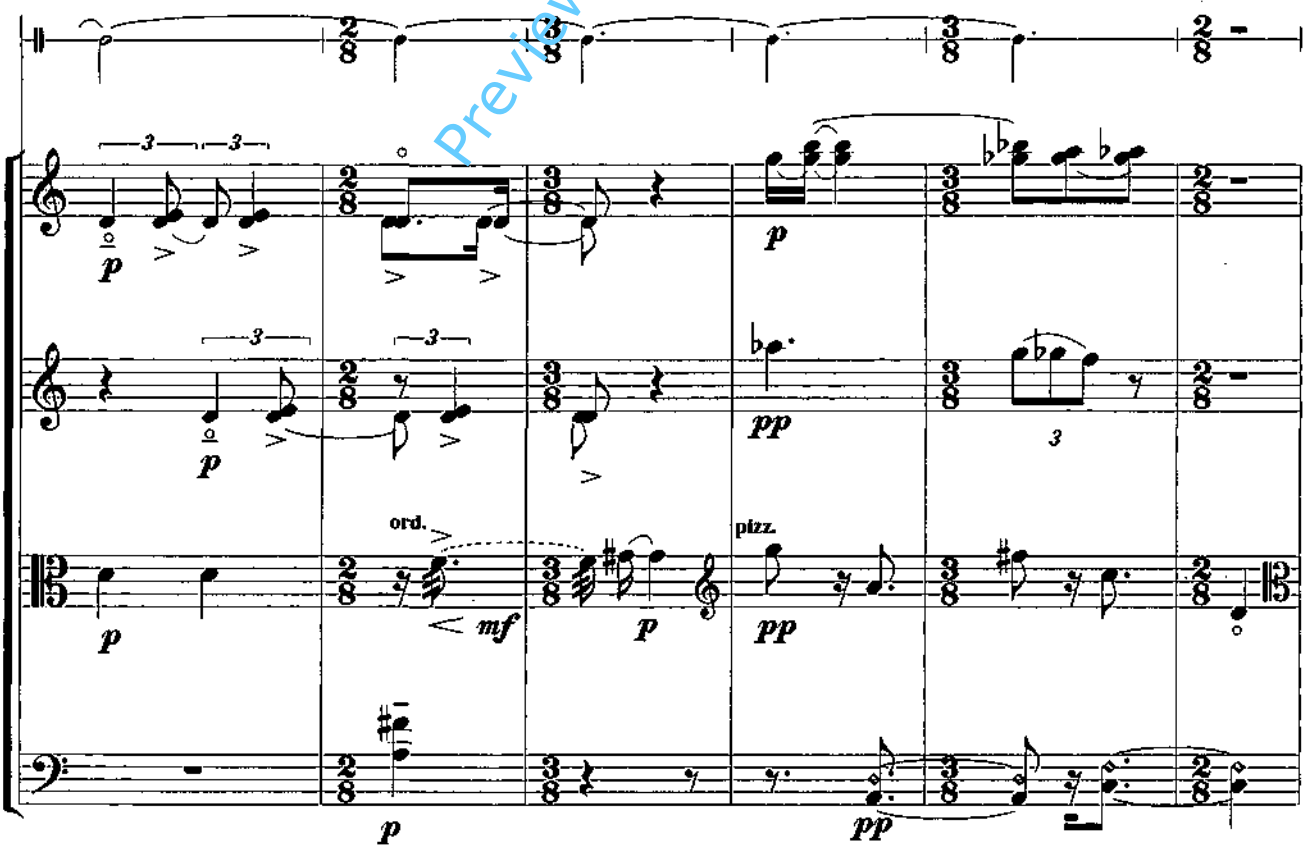
228 *mp* ❁Then a great shadow defines itself on the ground. *mp* It is a warrior, leaning



Preview File Only

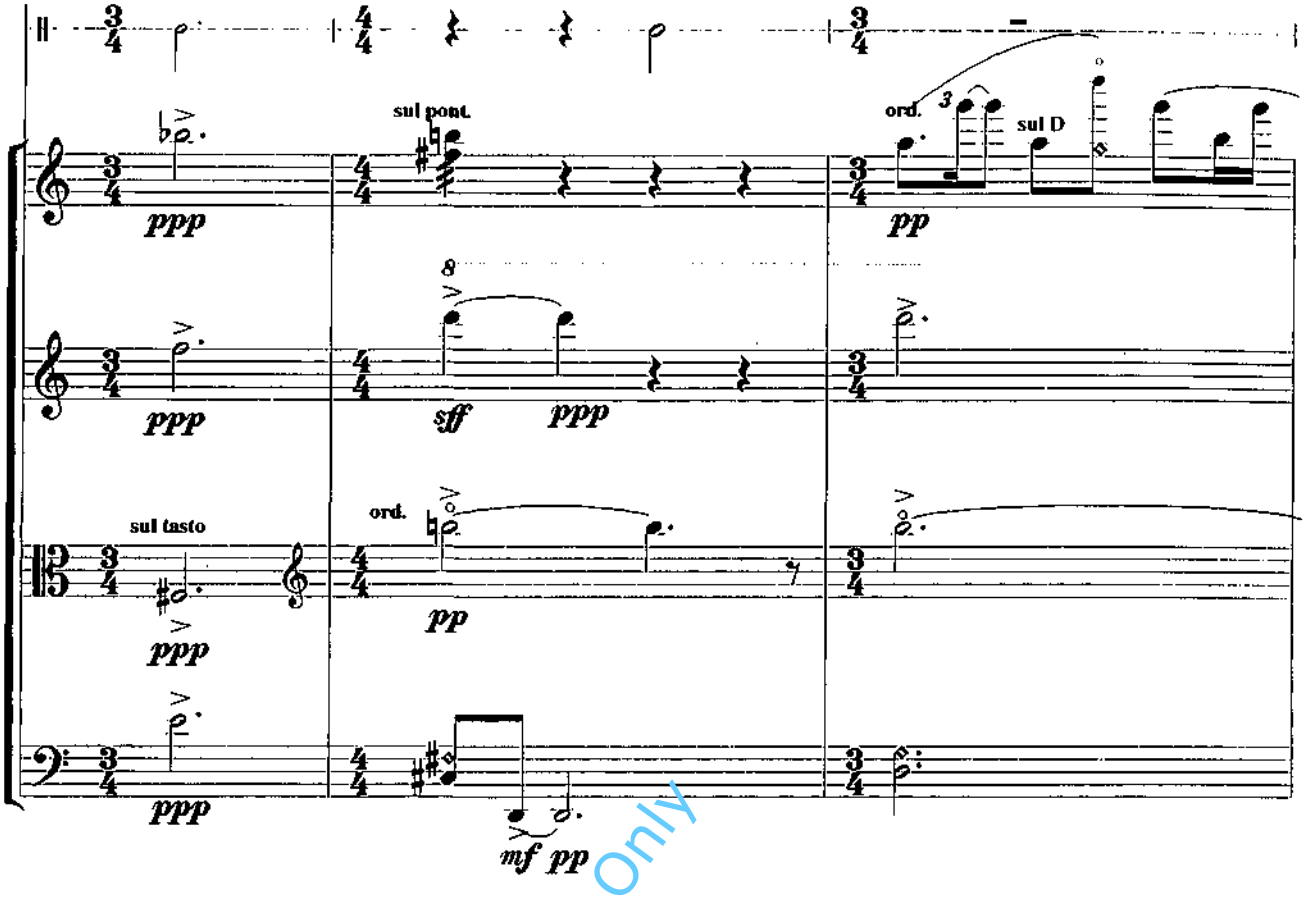
mp

232 upon the roof of the hut like some gigantic bat, threatening him with his spear.



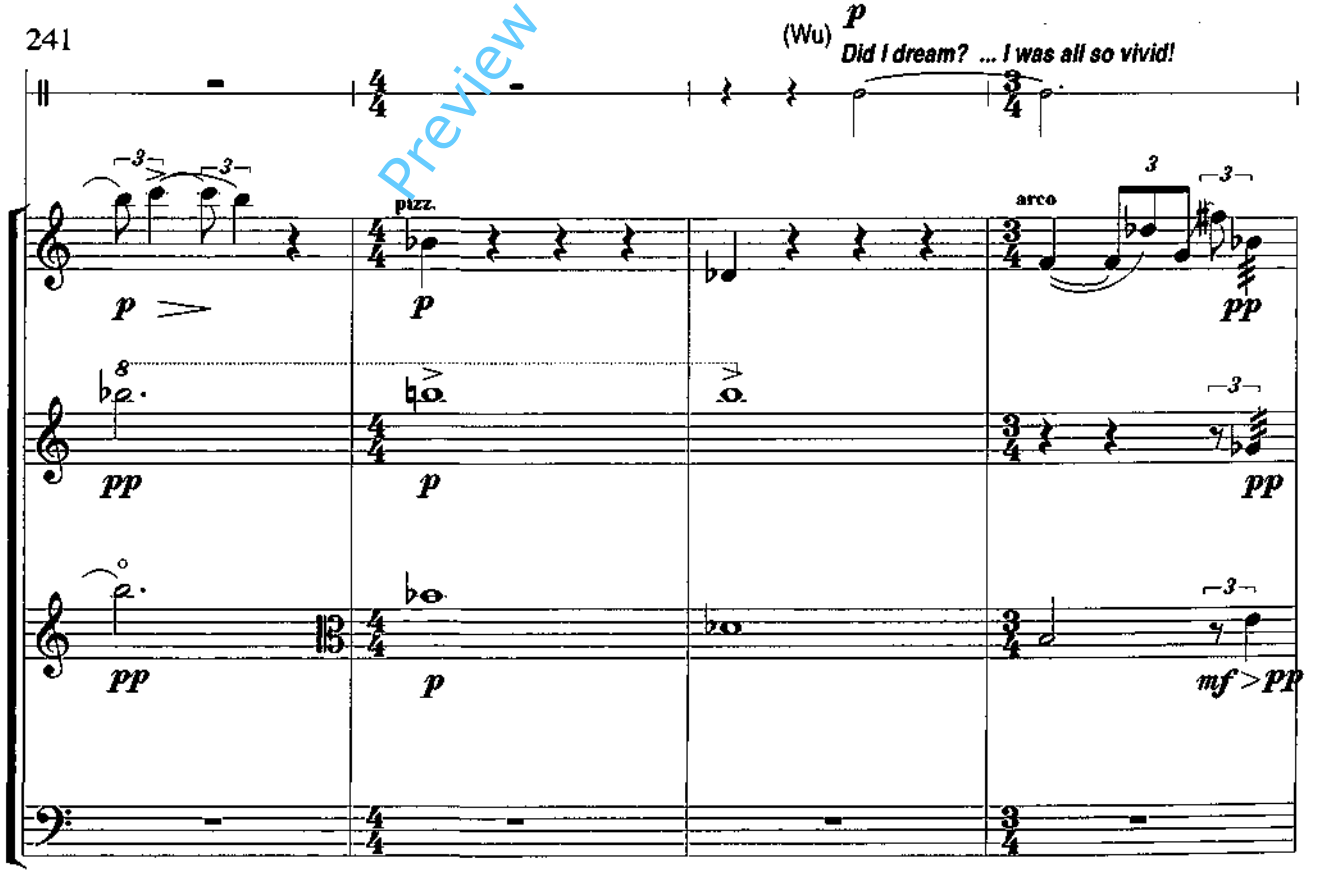
mf but lightly *p*

238 Wu knocks him down with the book, and suddenly awakes.



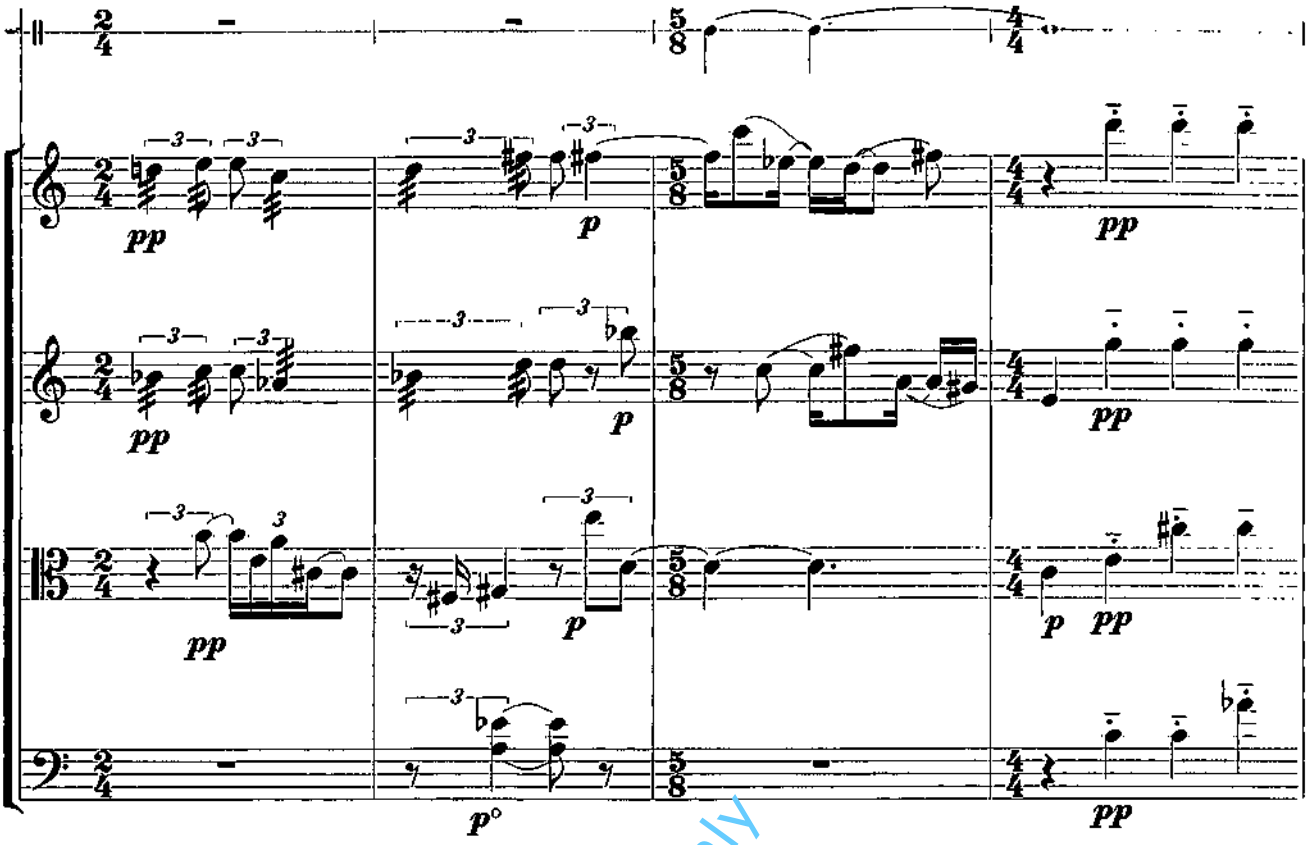
Preview File Only

241 (Wu) *p* *Did I dream? ... I was all so vivid!*



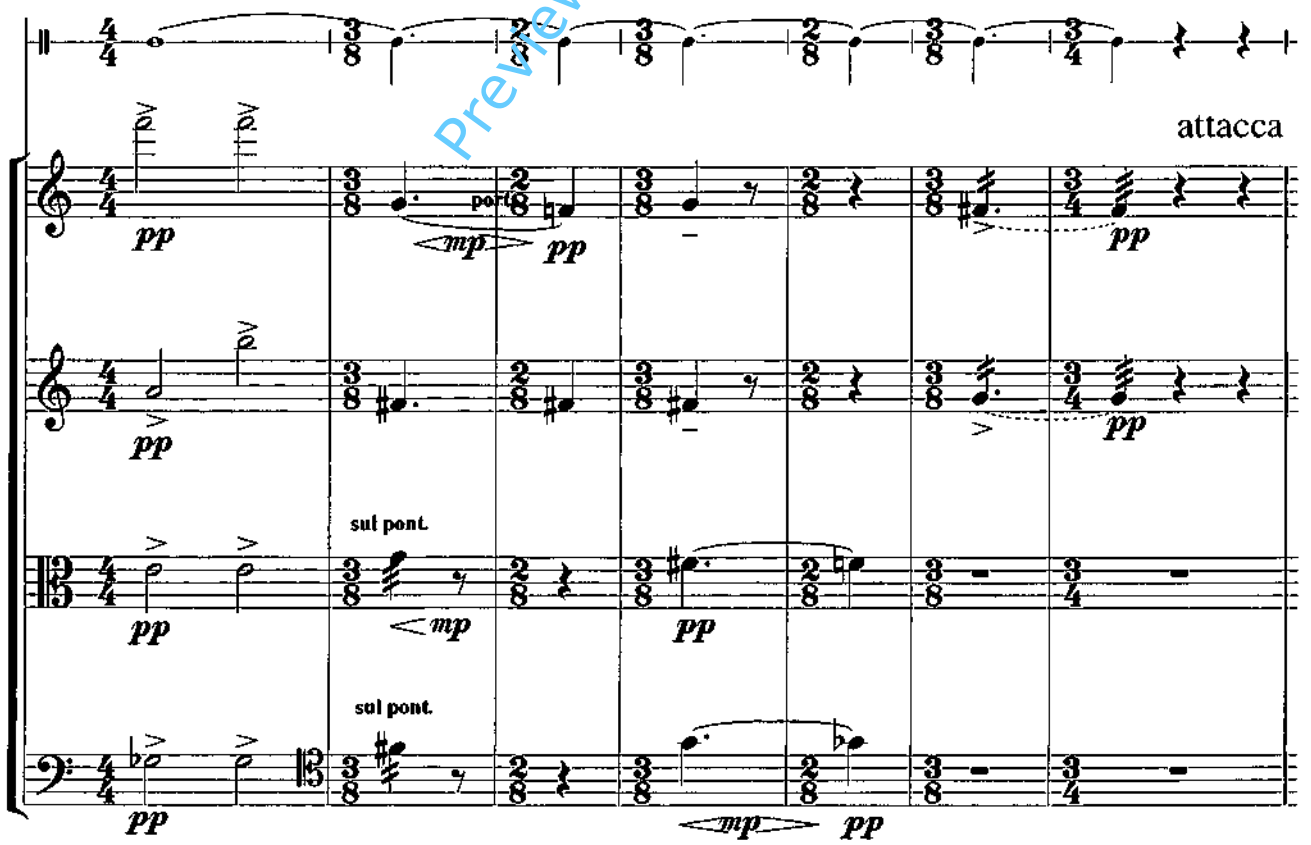
245

As he kneels down, Wu notices that the warrior



Preview File Only

249 p is no more than a paper cut-out. He folds the figure and keeps it between the pages of his book.



5 - Chang's wife confronts Wu

256

p At midnight, a woman knocks at the door.

sul pont.

f

sul pont.

f

ord.

p pesante e marcato

ord.

p

f

ord.

p pesante e marcato

p

f

Preview File Only

260

♪ = 200

As she emerges from the darkness, Wu notices the tears on her face.

(sul pont.)

p

ord.

pp

(sul pont.)

p

ord.

sul pont.

p

ord.

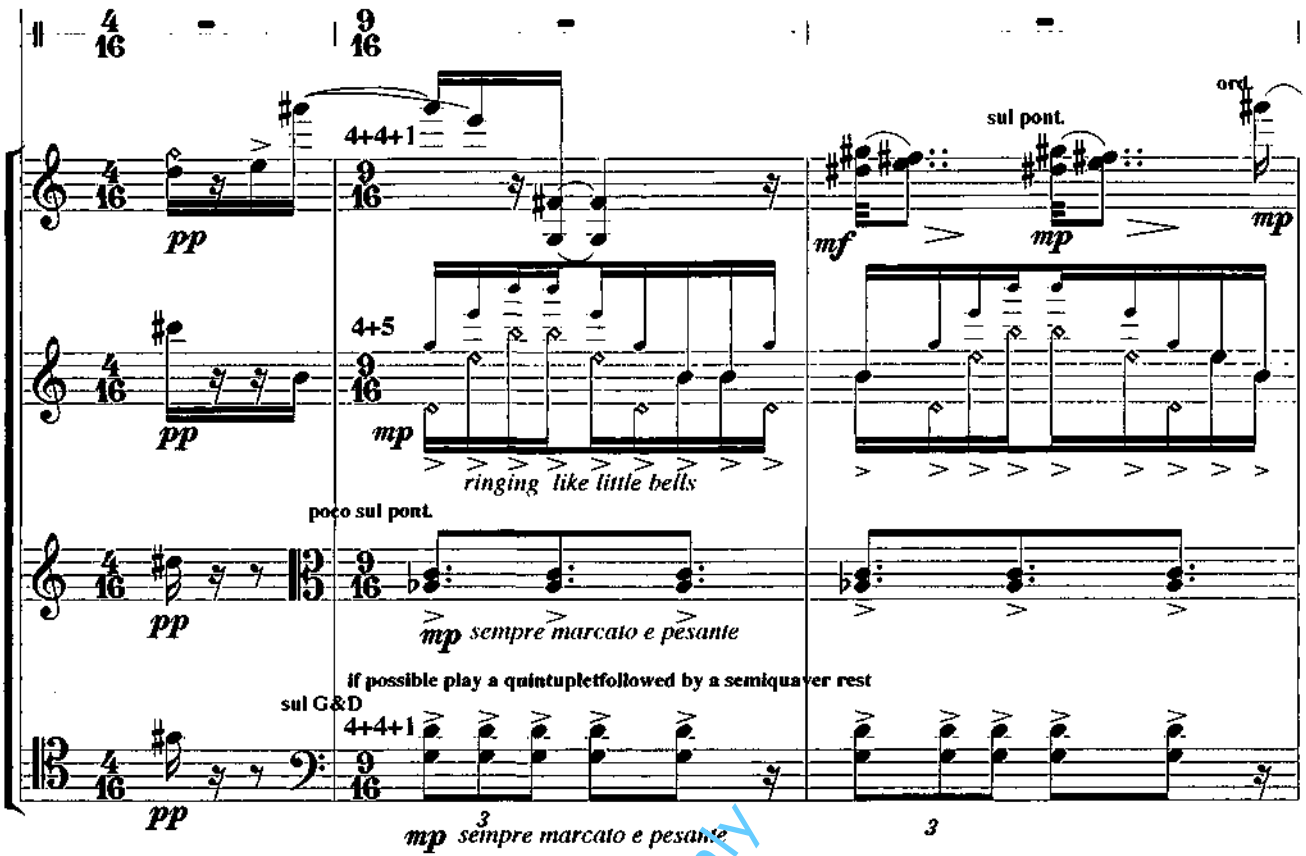
pp

sul pont.

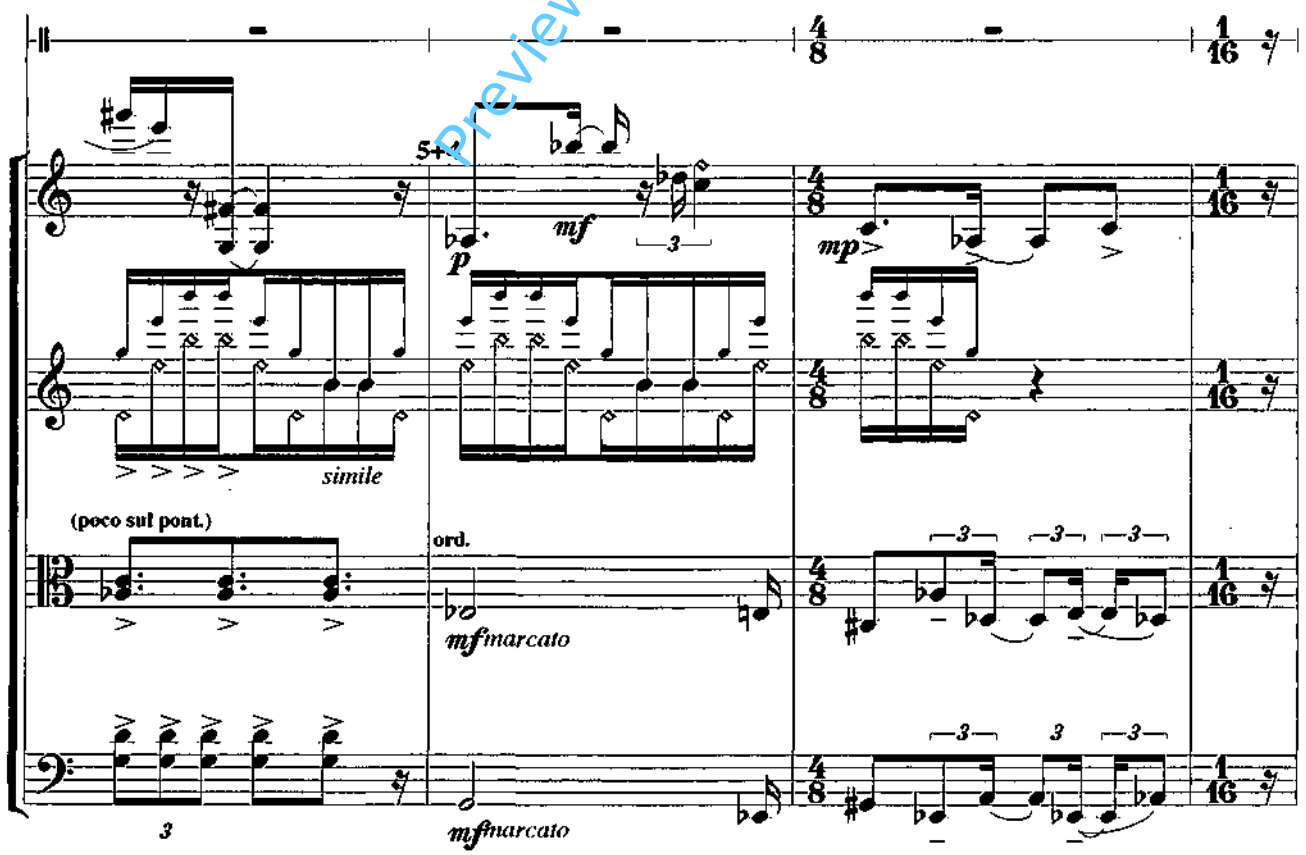
p

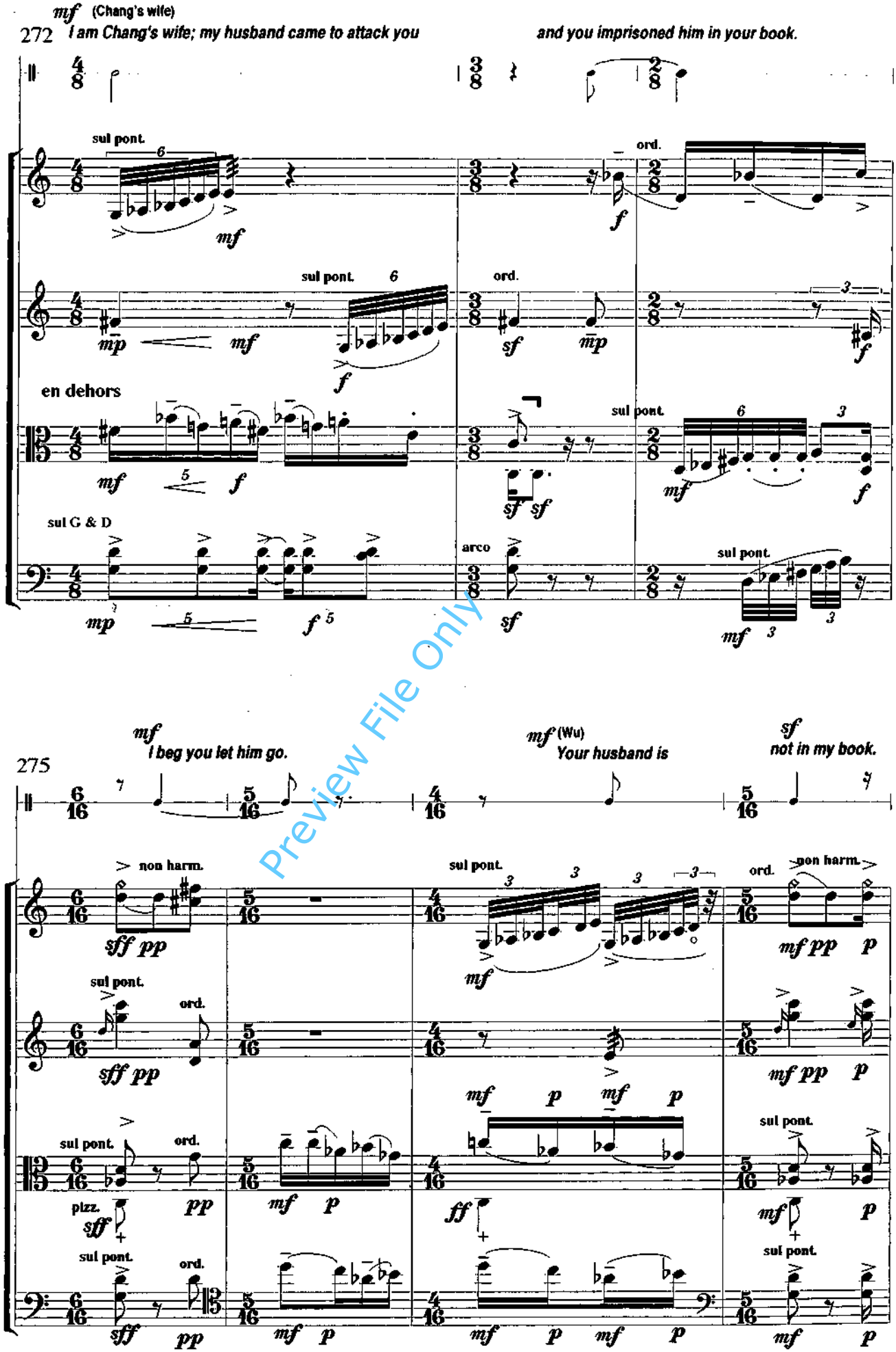
ord.

pp



Preview File Only

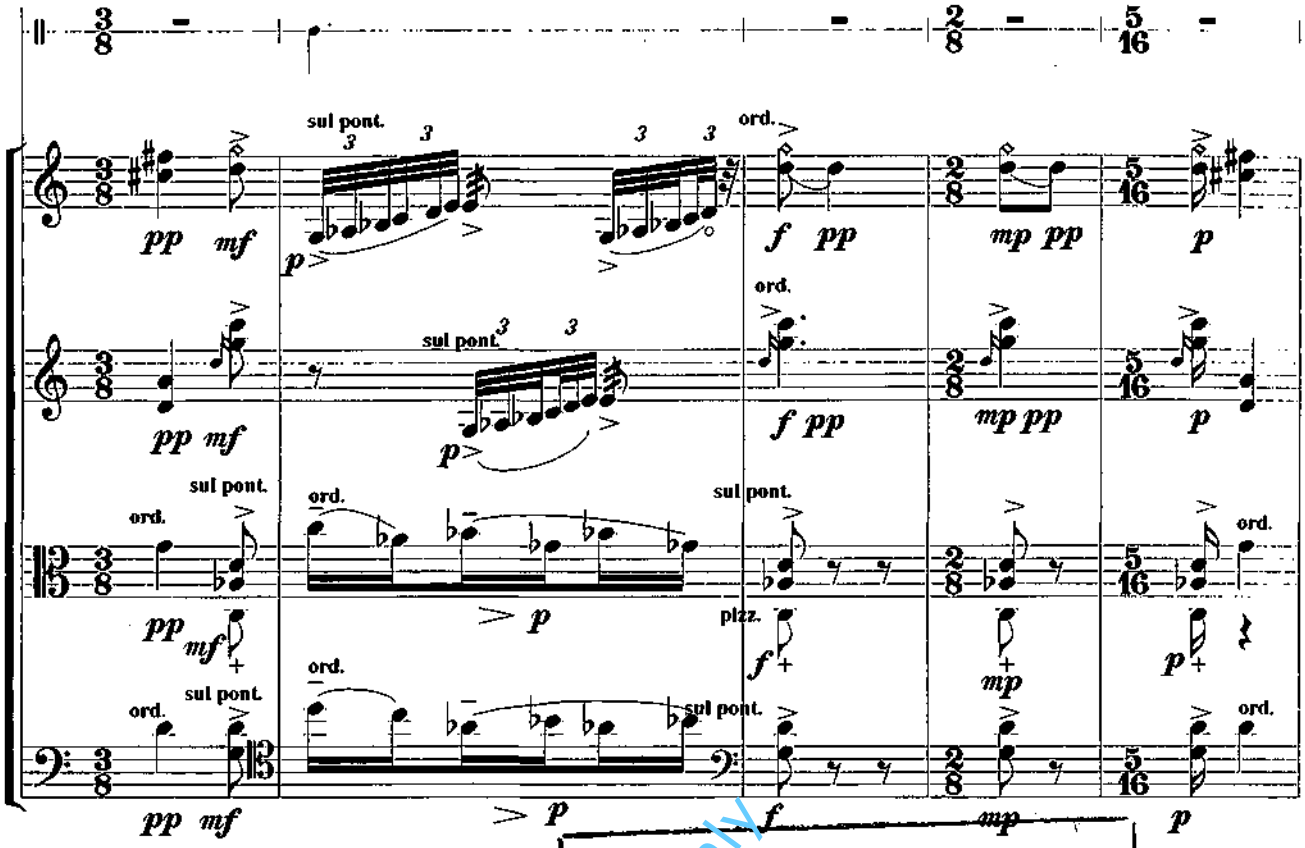




Preview File Only

279

mf
I have only captured a paper figure.

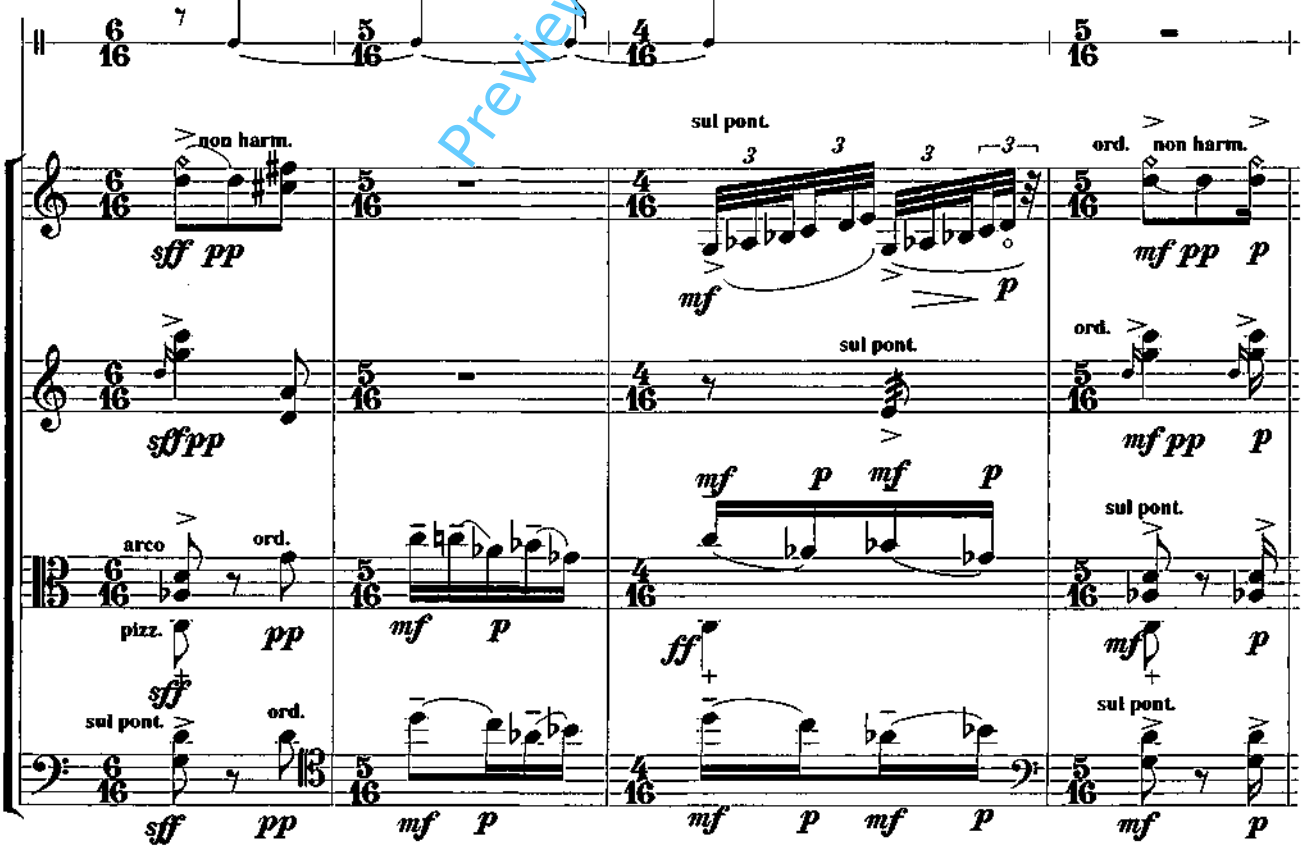


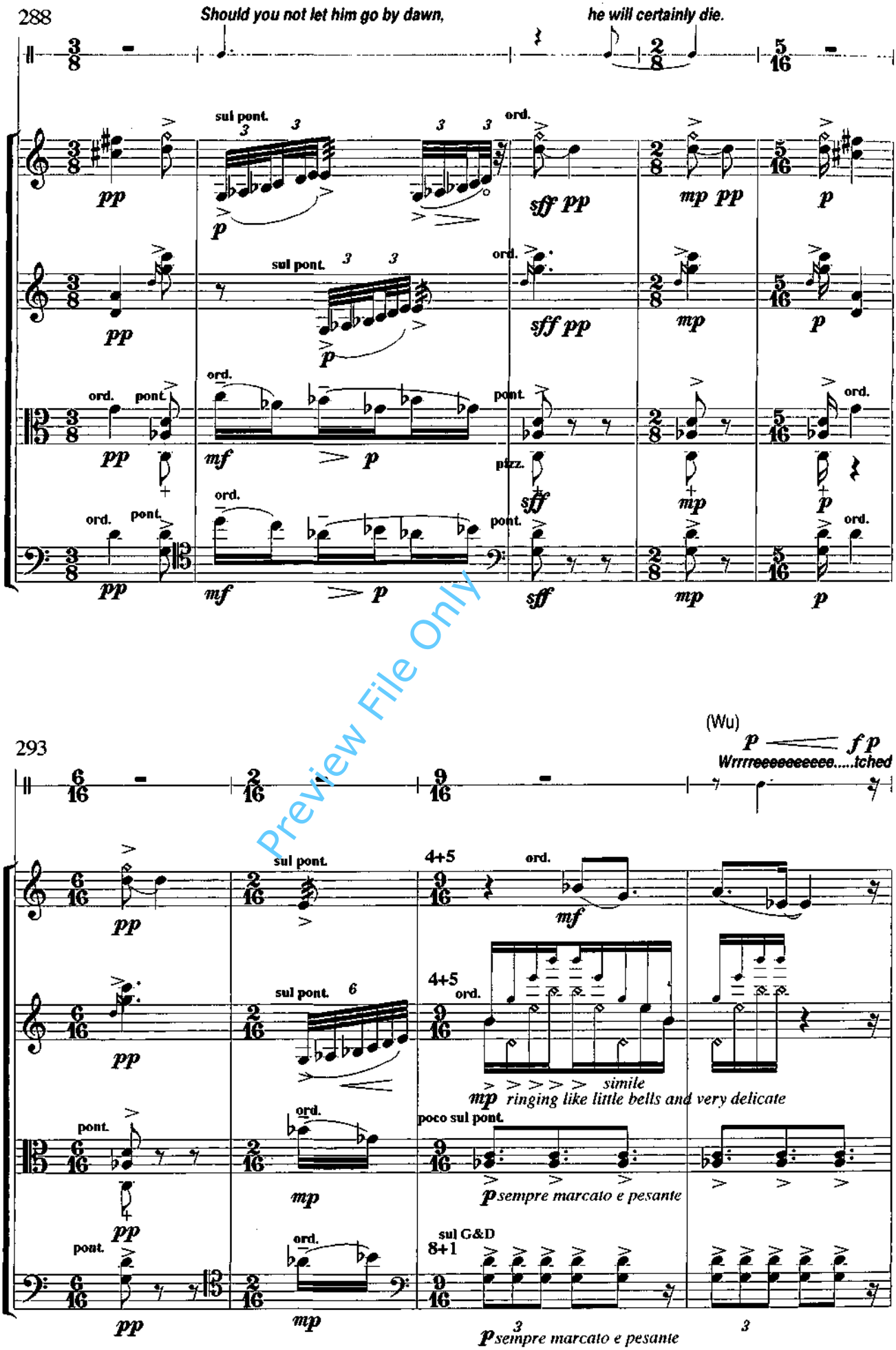
BRITISH MUSIC INFORMATION CENTRE,
10, Stratford Place, London, W.1

Preview File Only

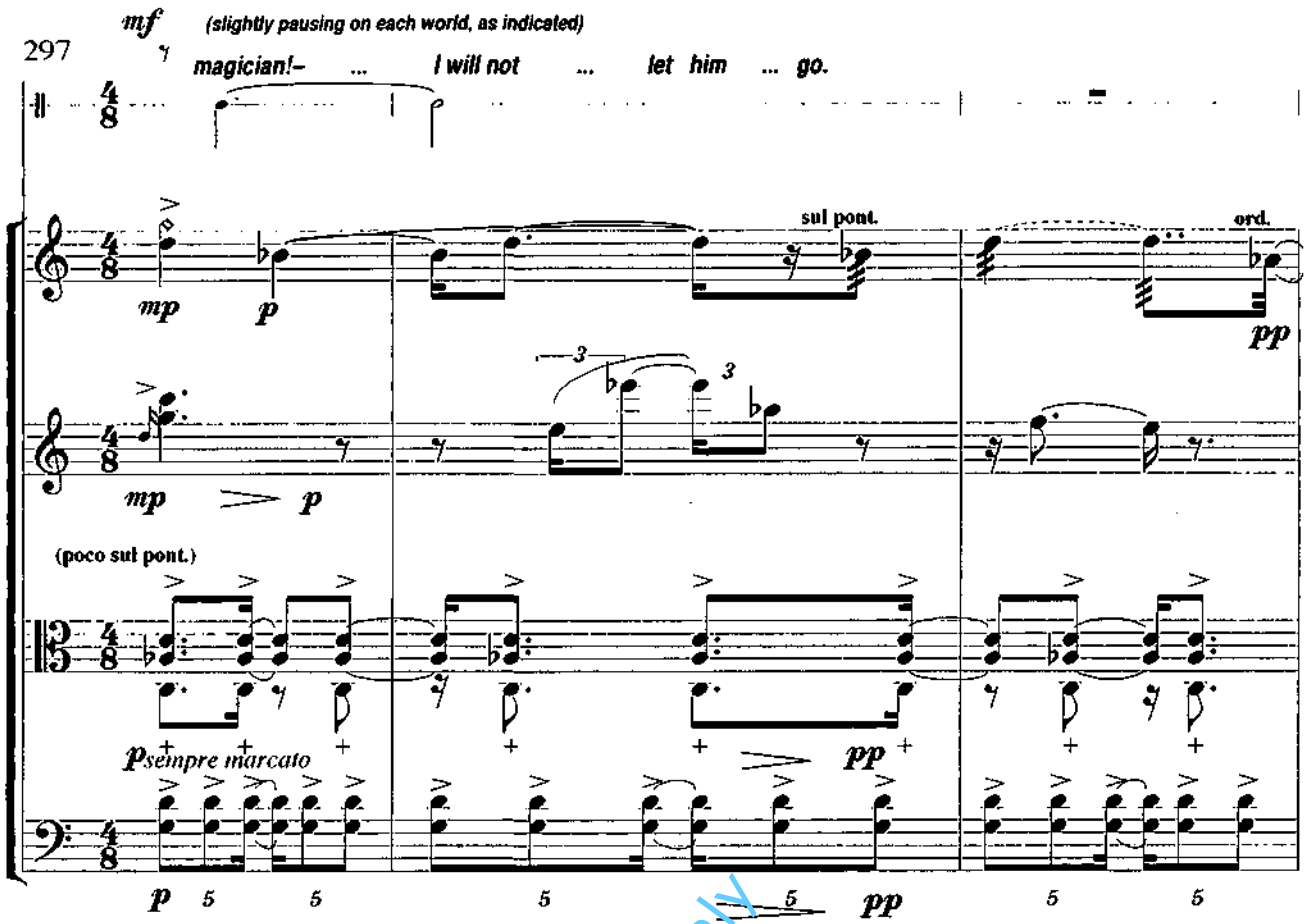
284

mf
(Chang's wife)
His soul is in that figure. His body is awaiting in our home.

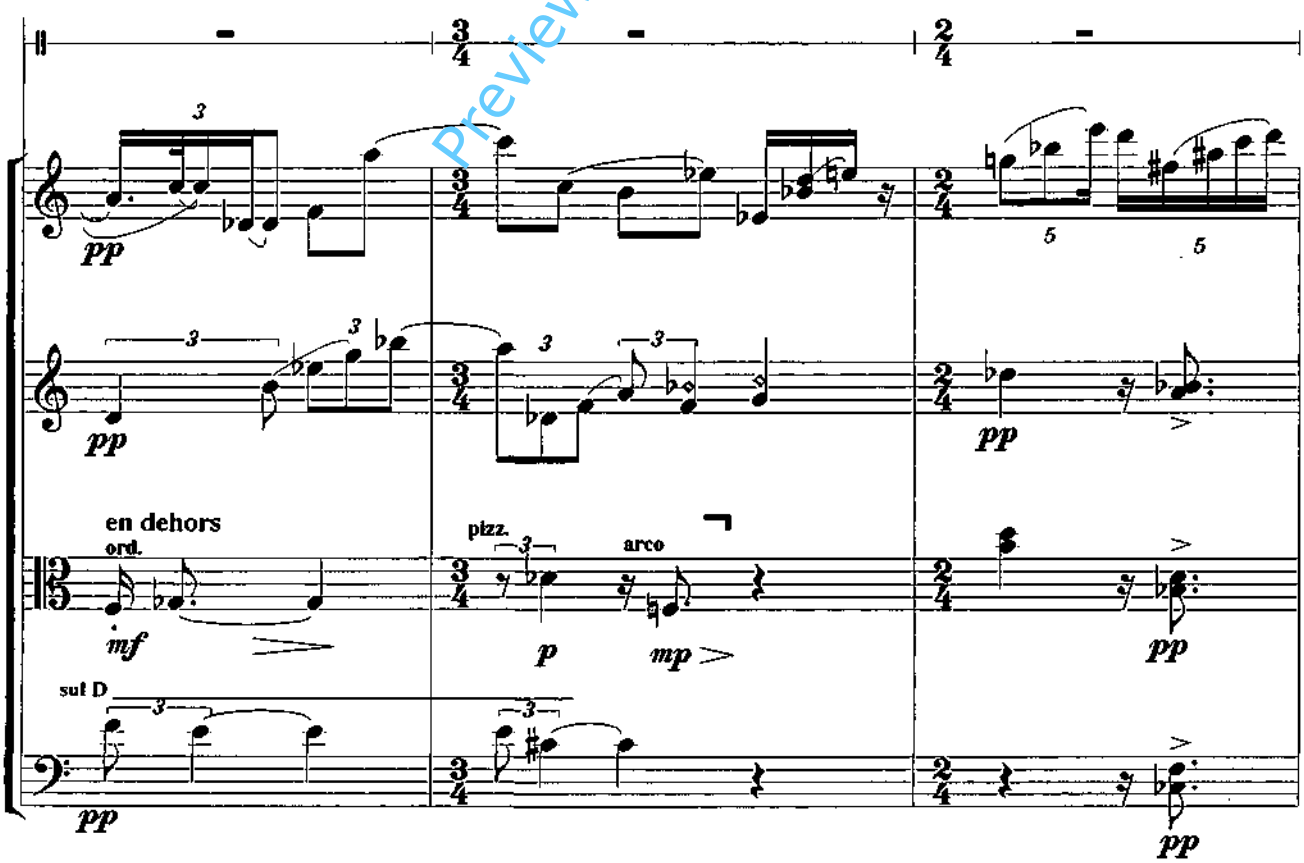




Preview File Only



Preview File Only



303

attacca

6 - postlude

306

♩ = 100

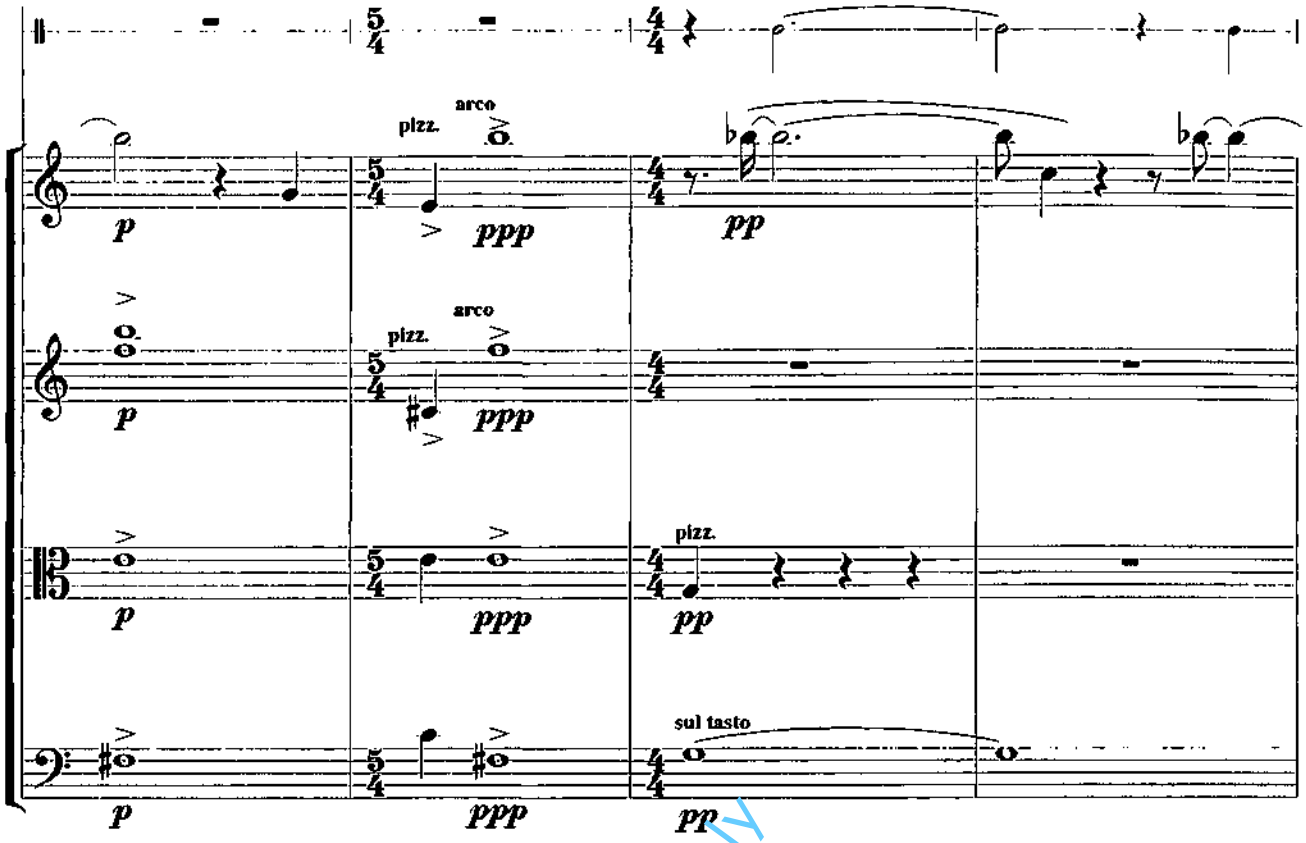
pizz.

arco

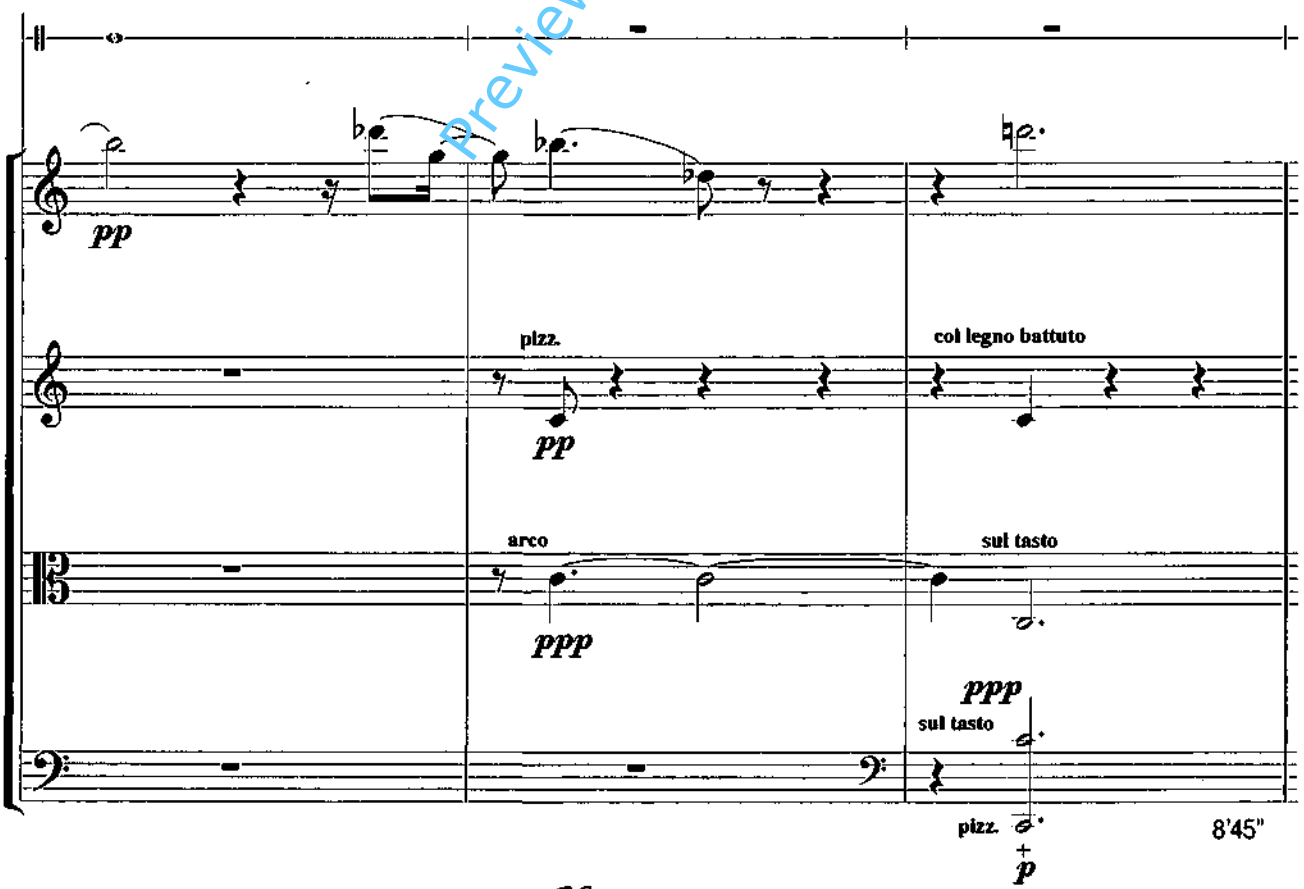
Preview File Only

311

p In the morning, Wu learns that

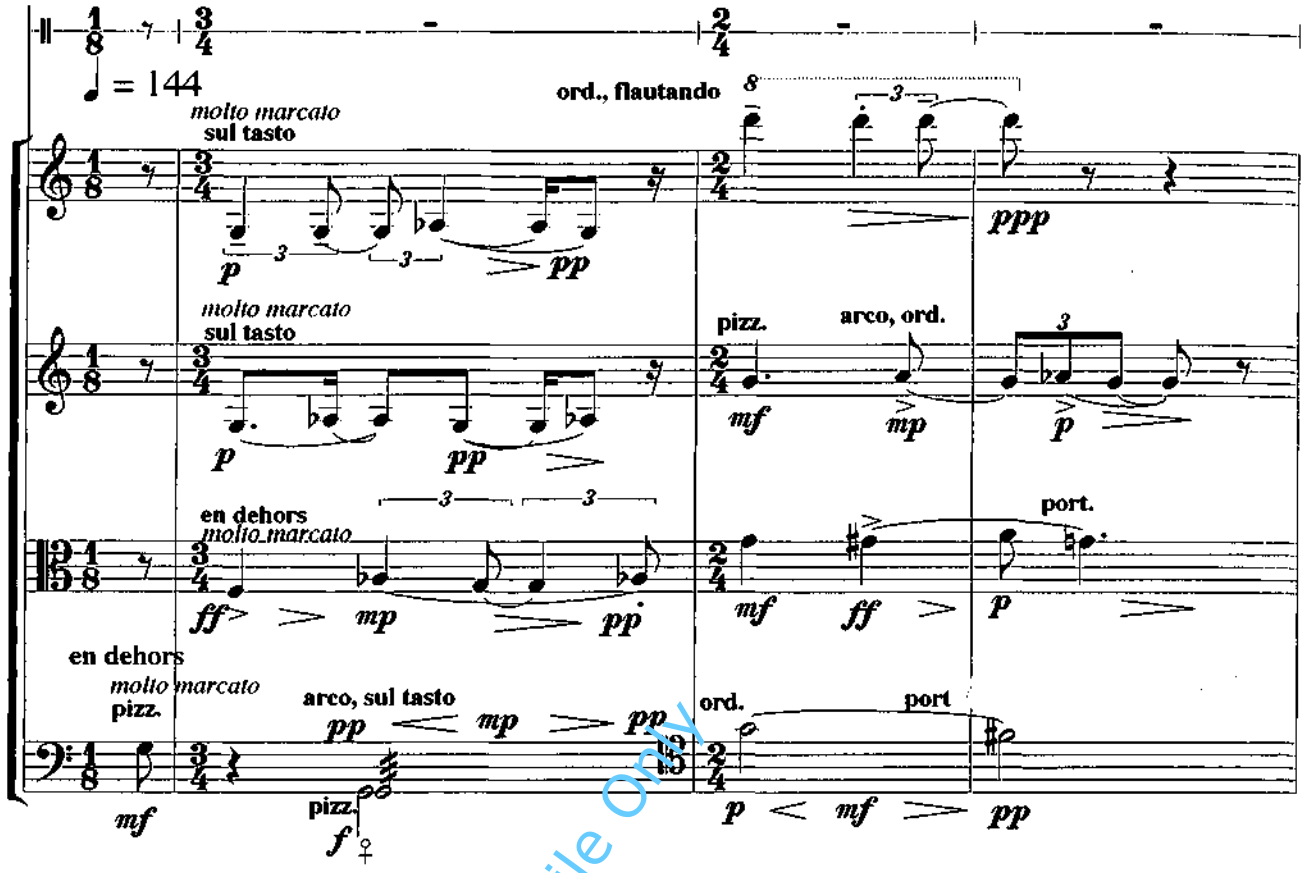


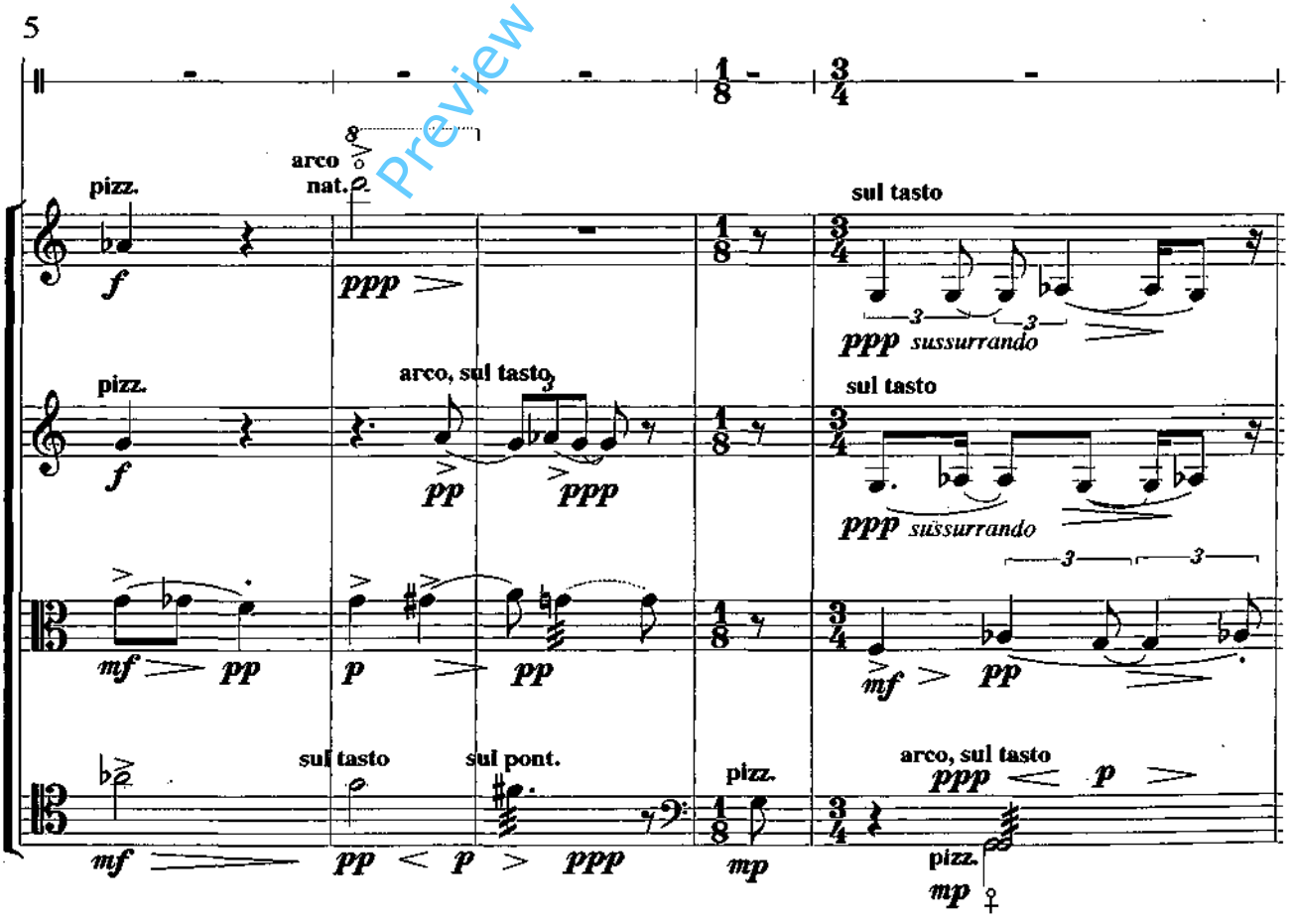
315 the magician was found dead in his bed.



Preview File Only

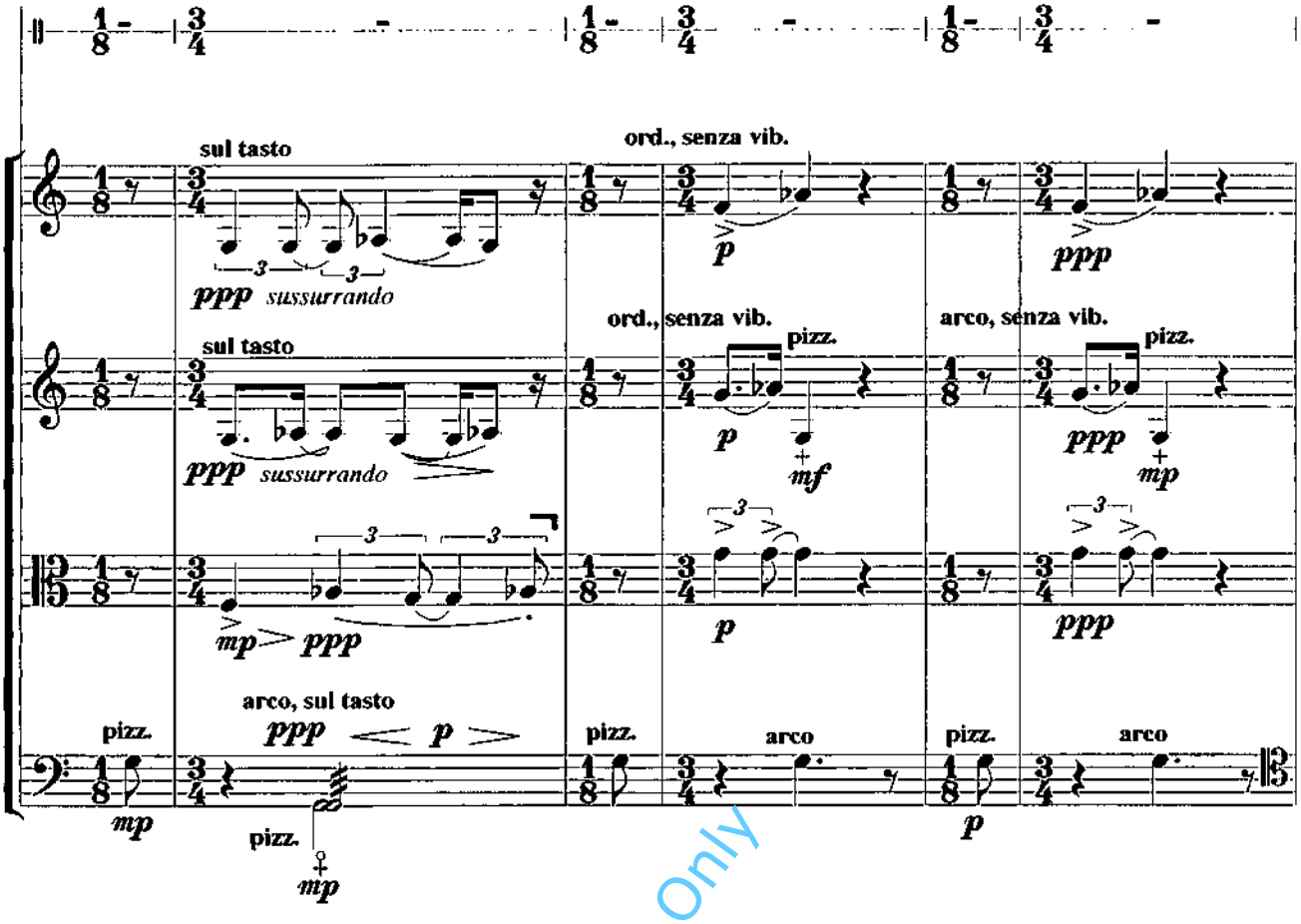
2 – The Sentence





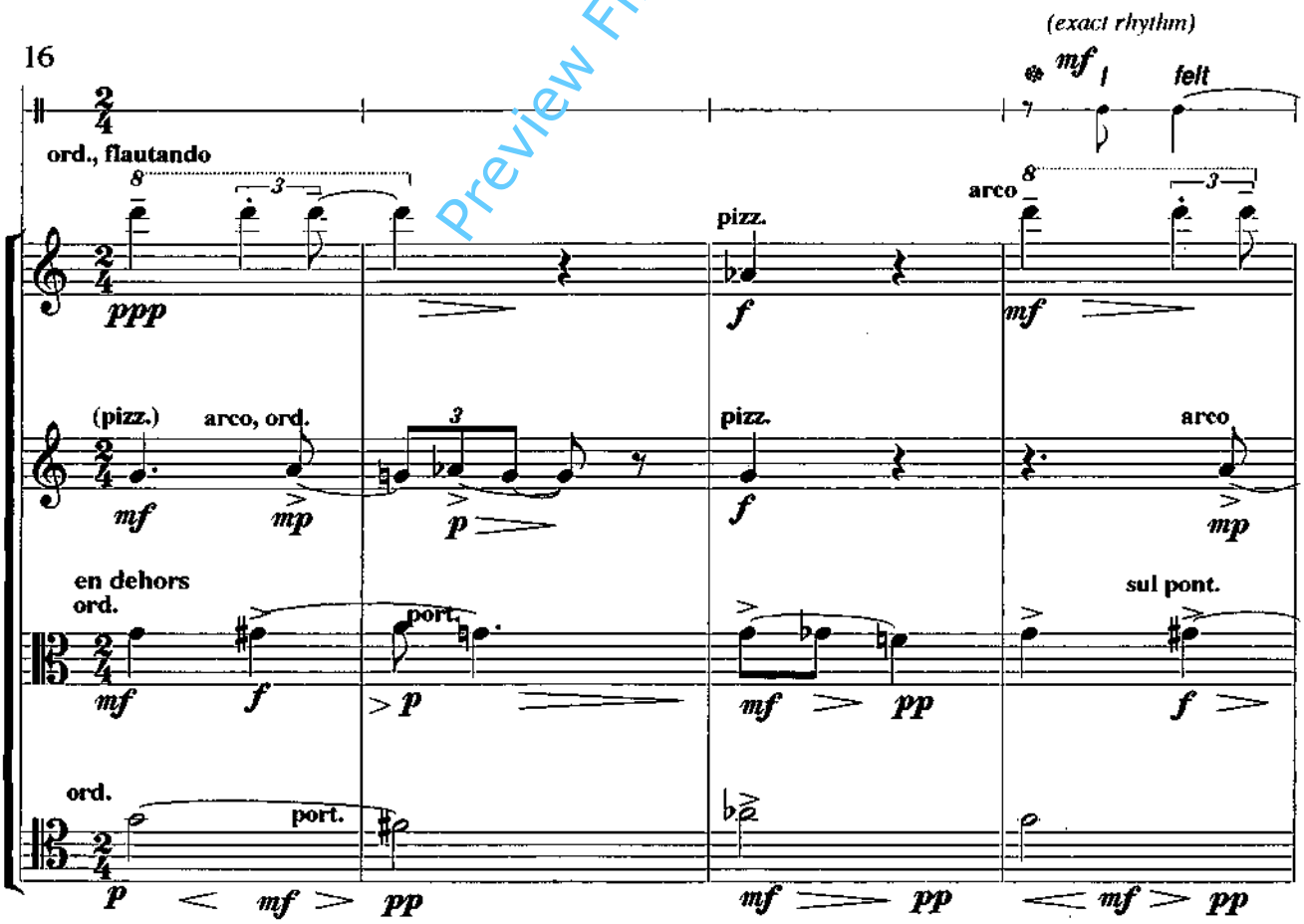
Preview File Only

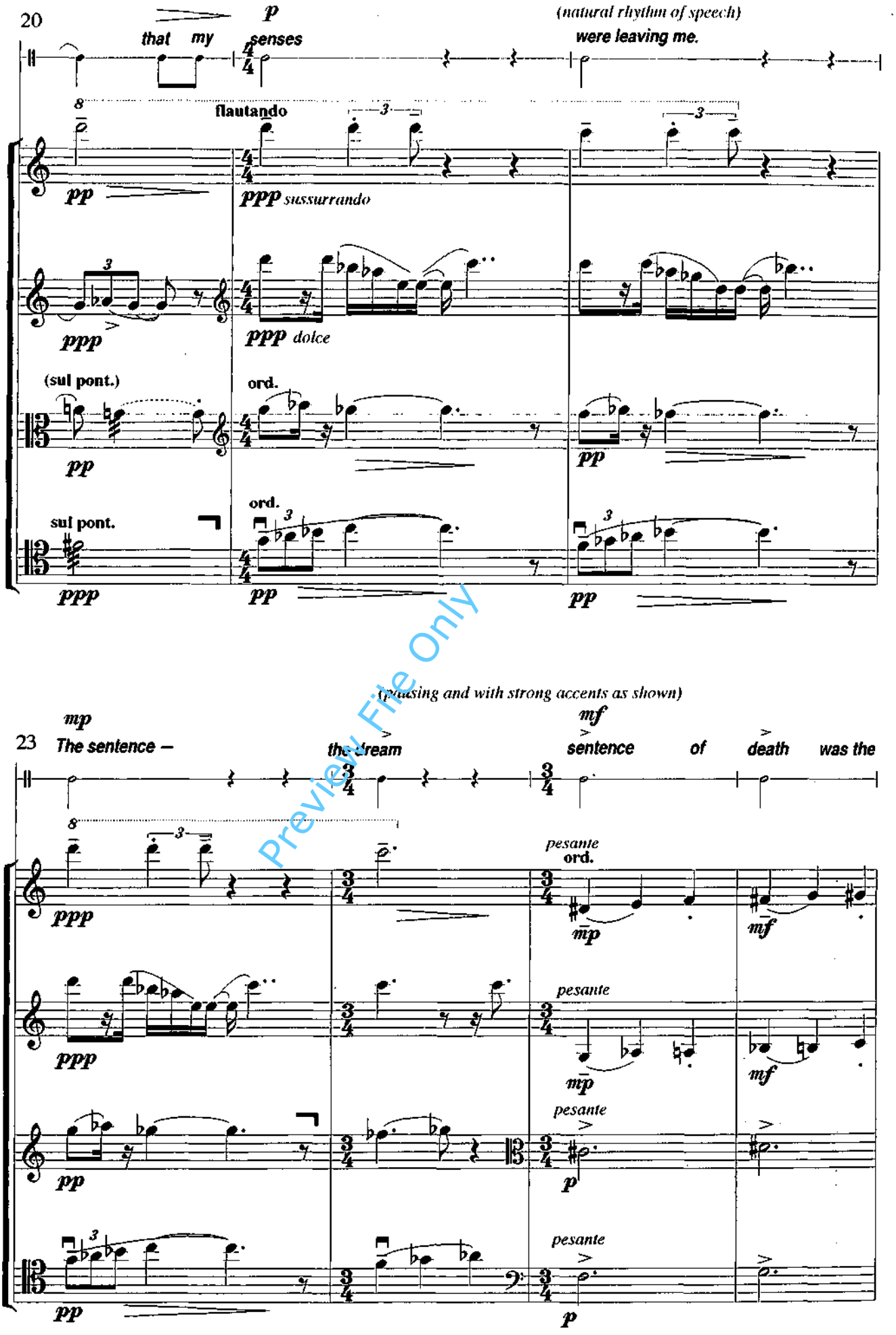
10



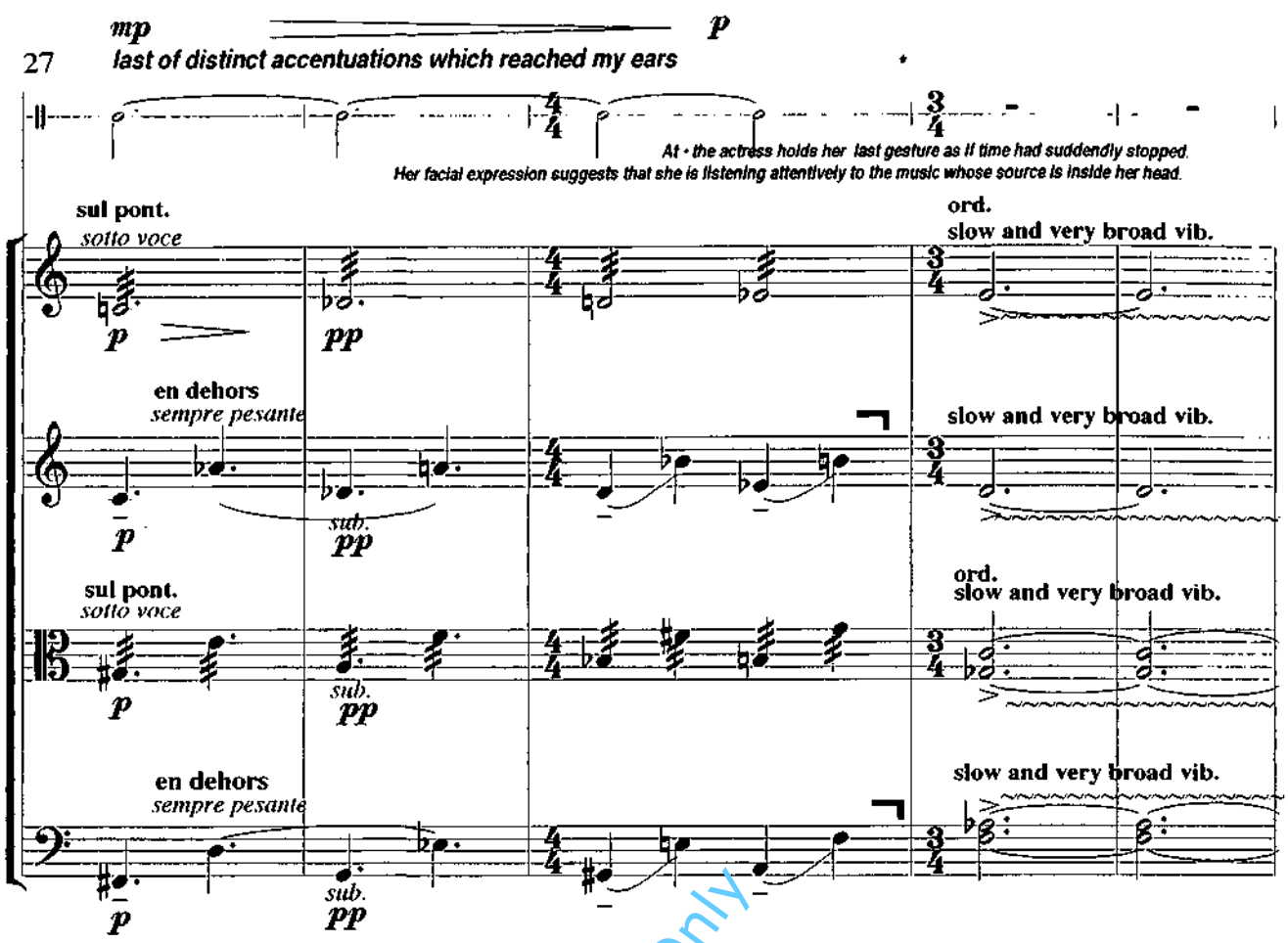
Preview File Only

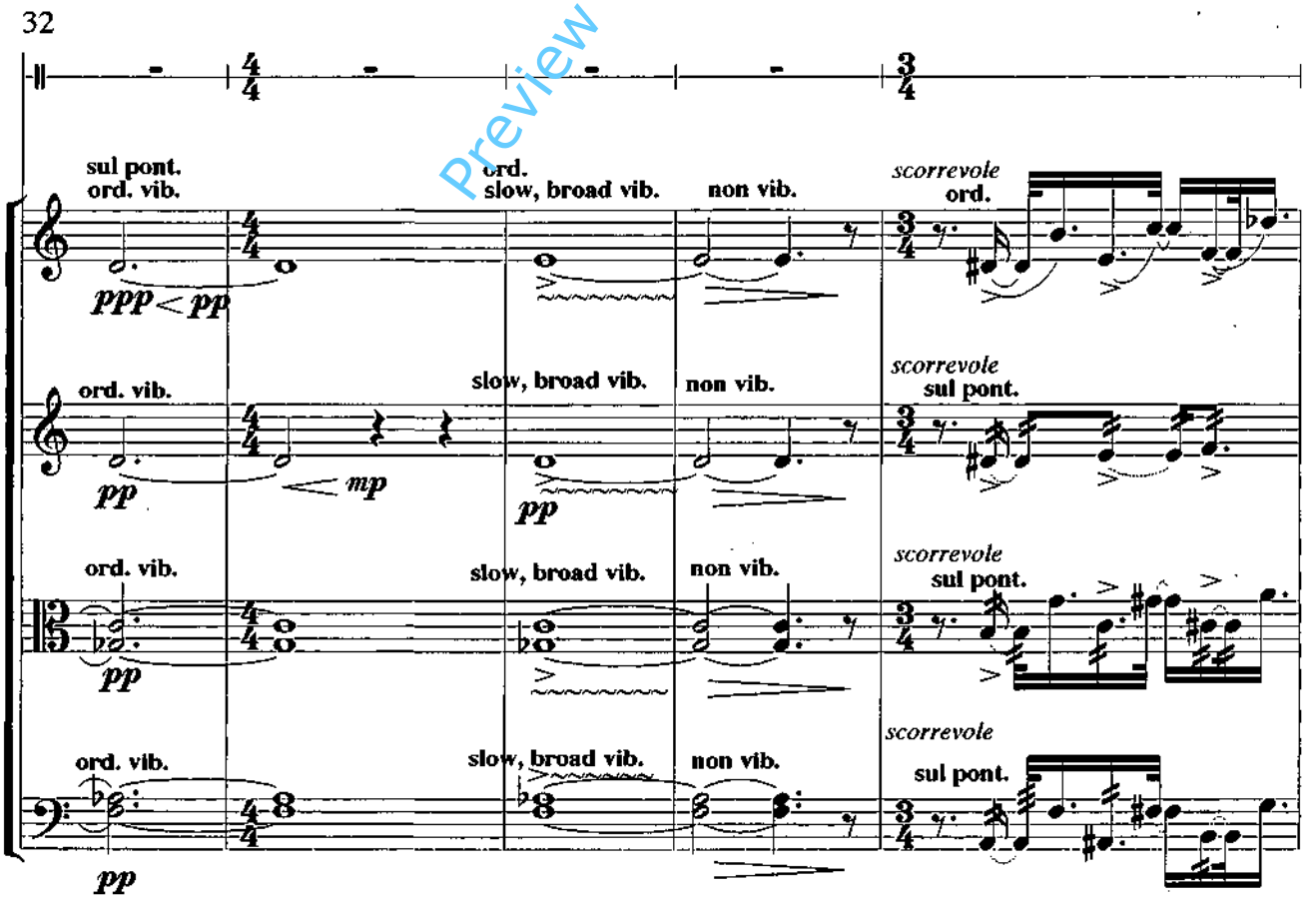
16





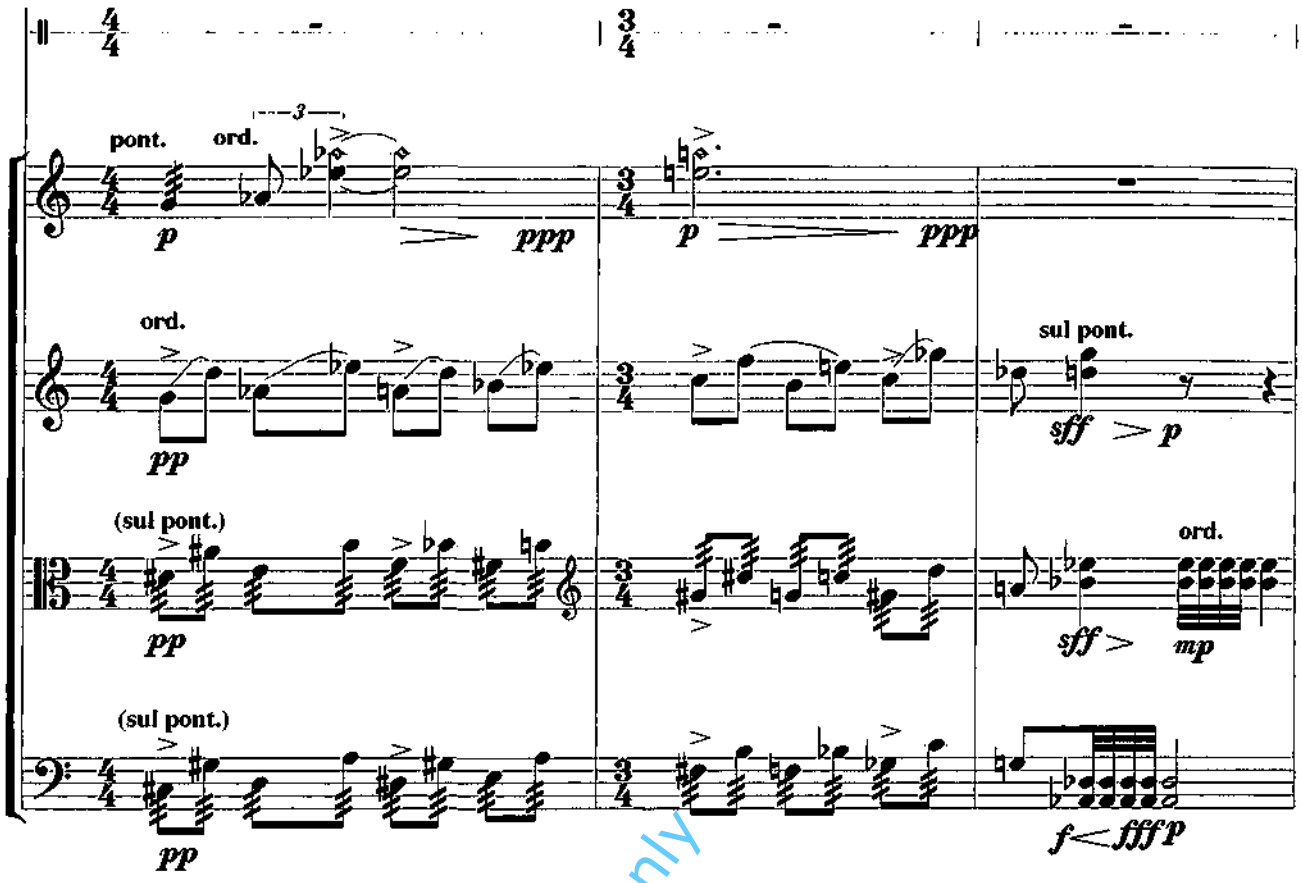
Preview File Only





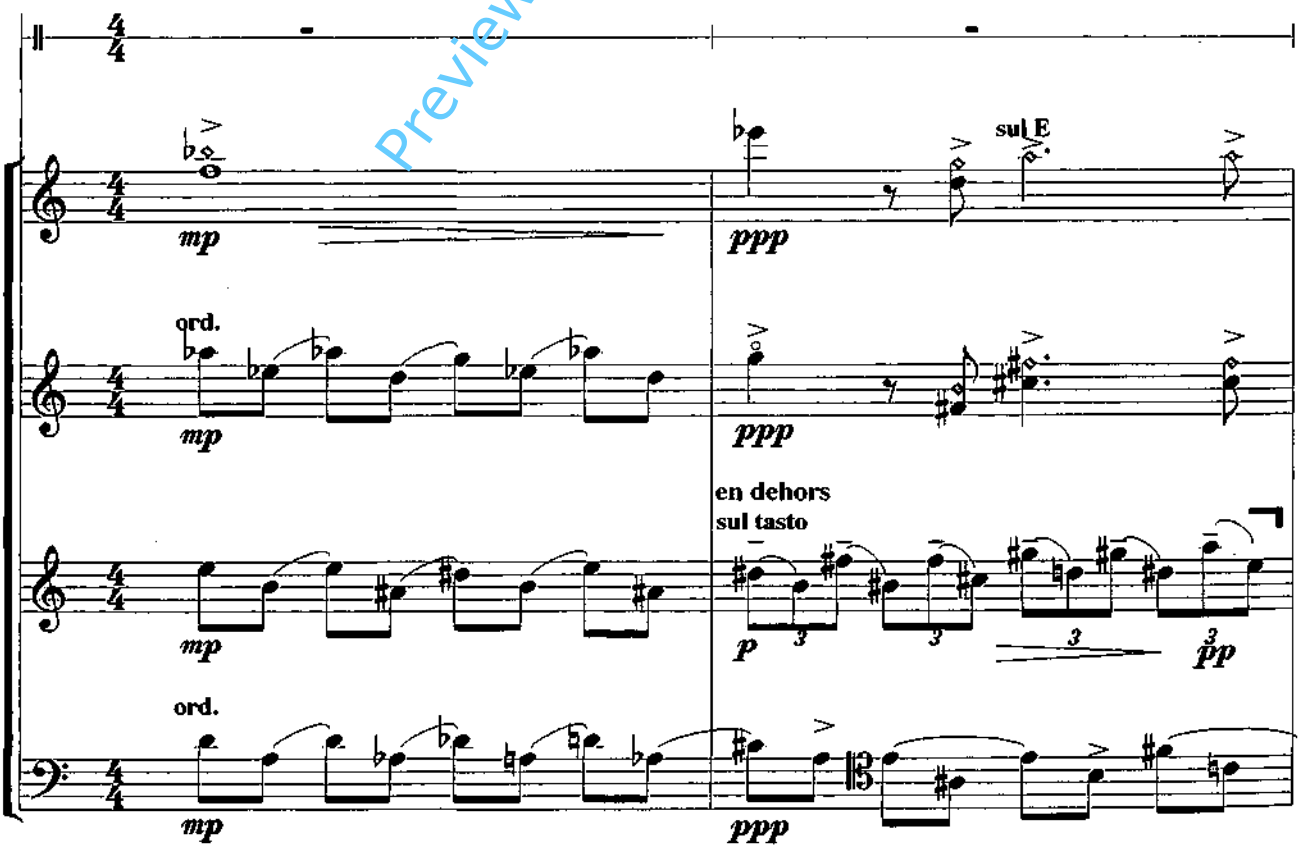
Preview File Only

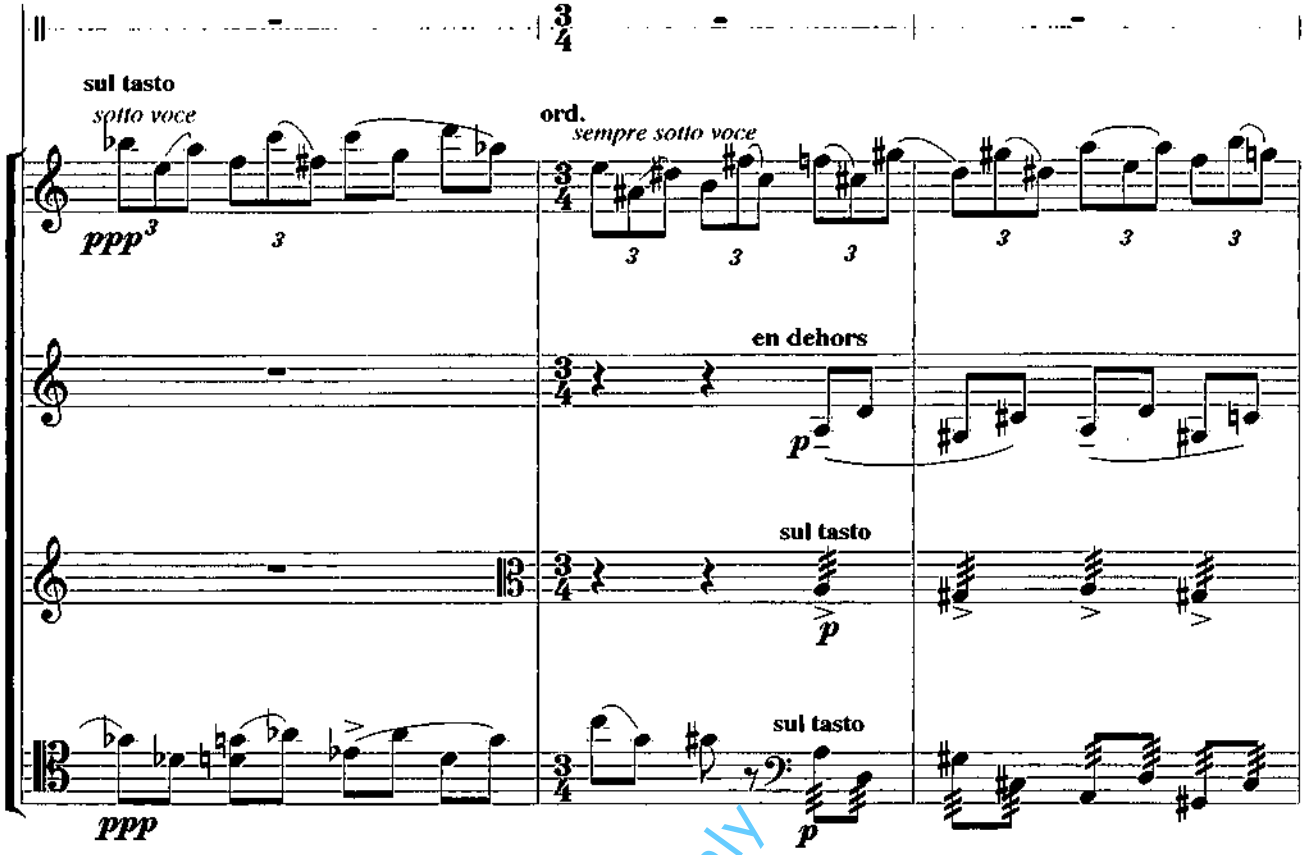
37



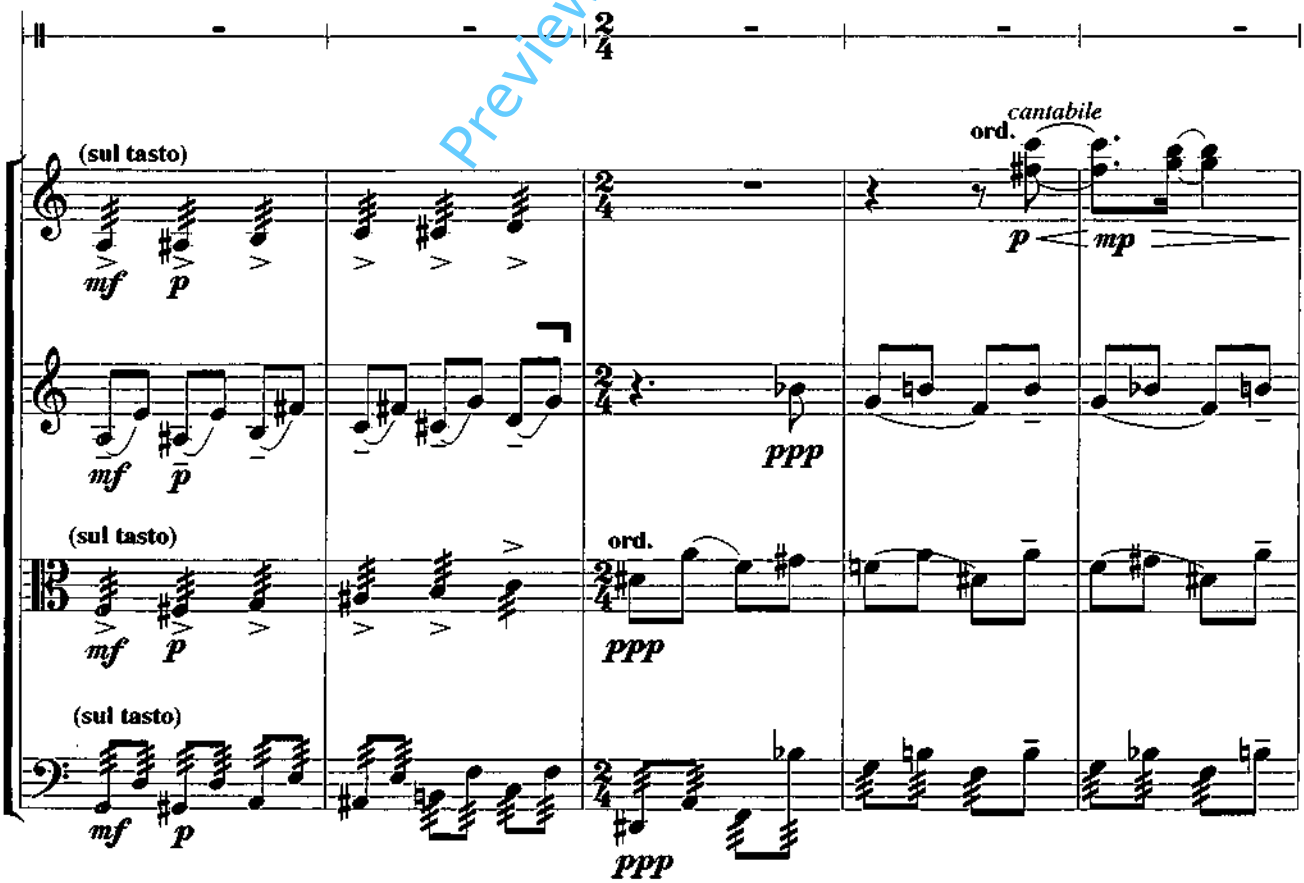
Preview File Only

40

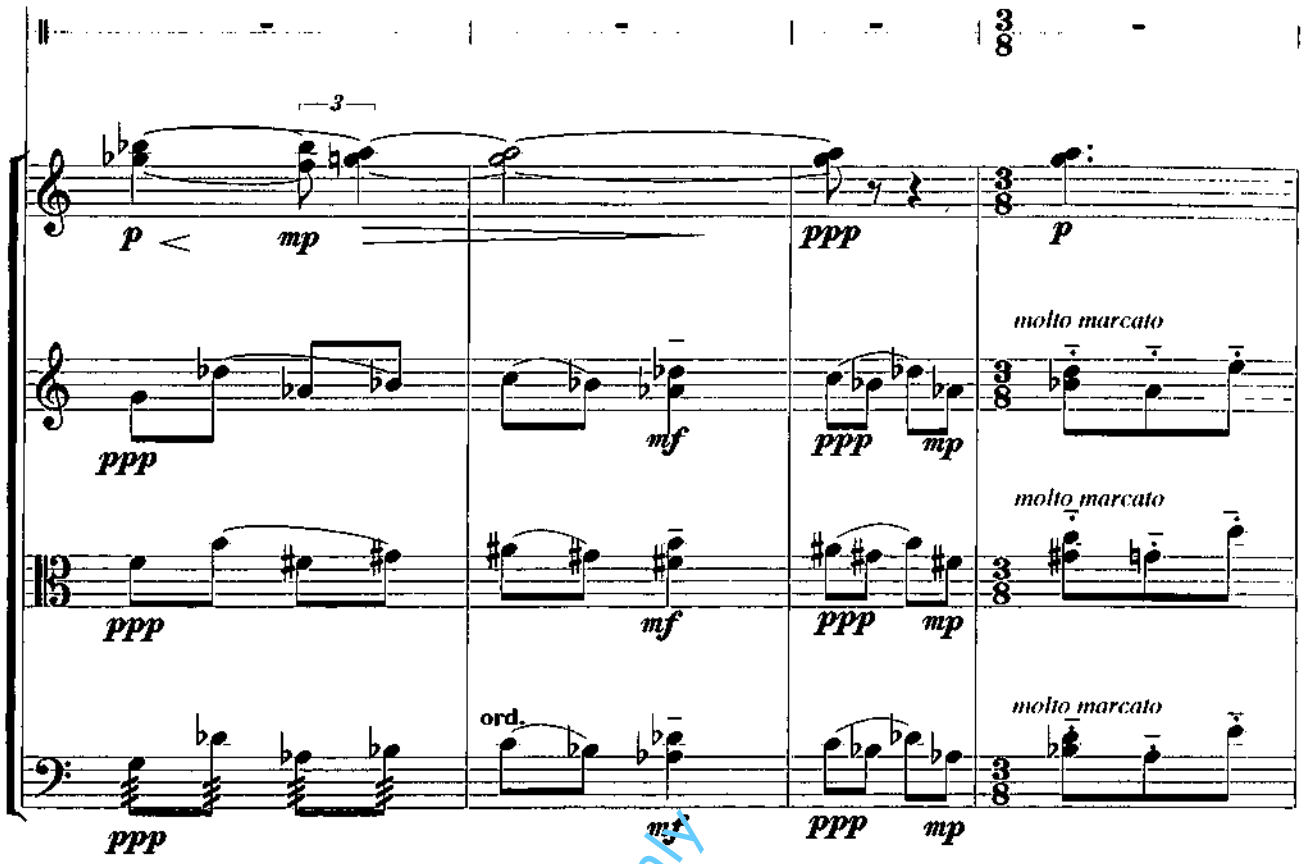




Preview File Only

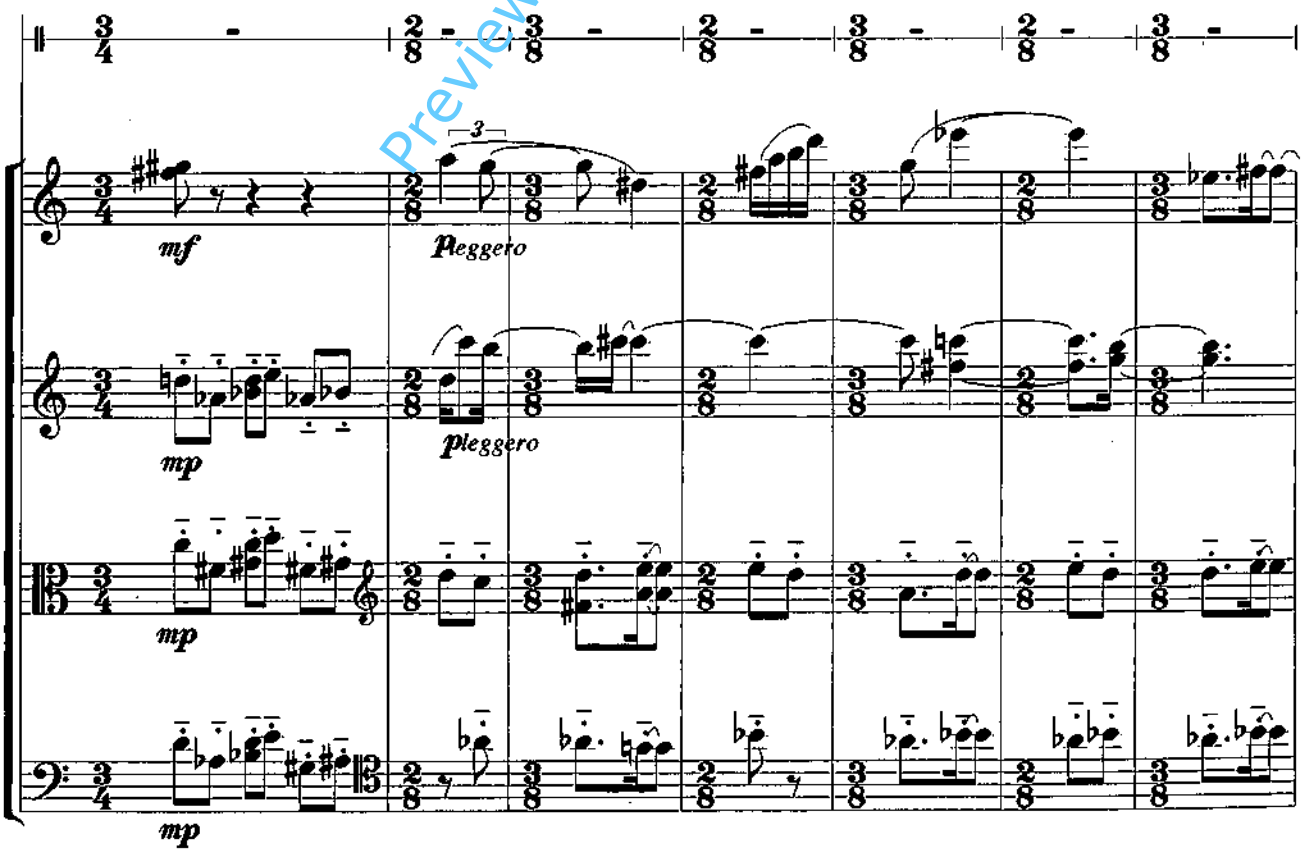


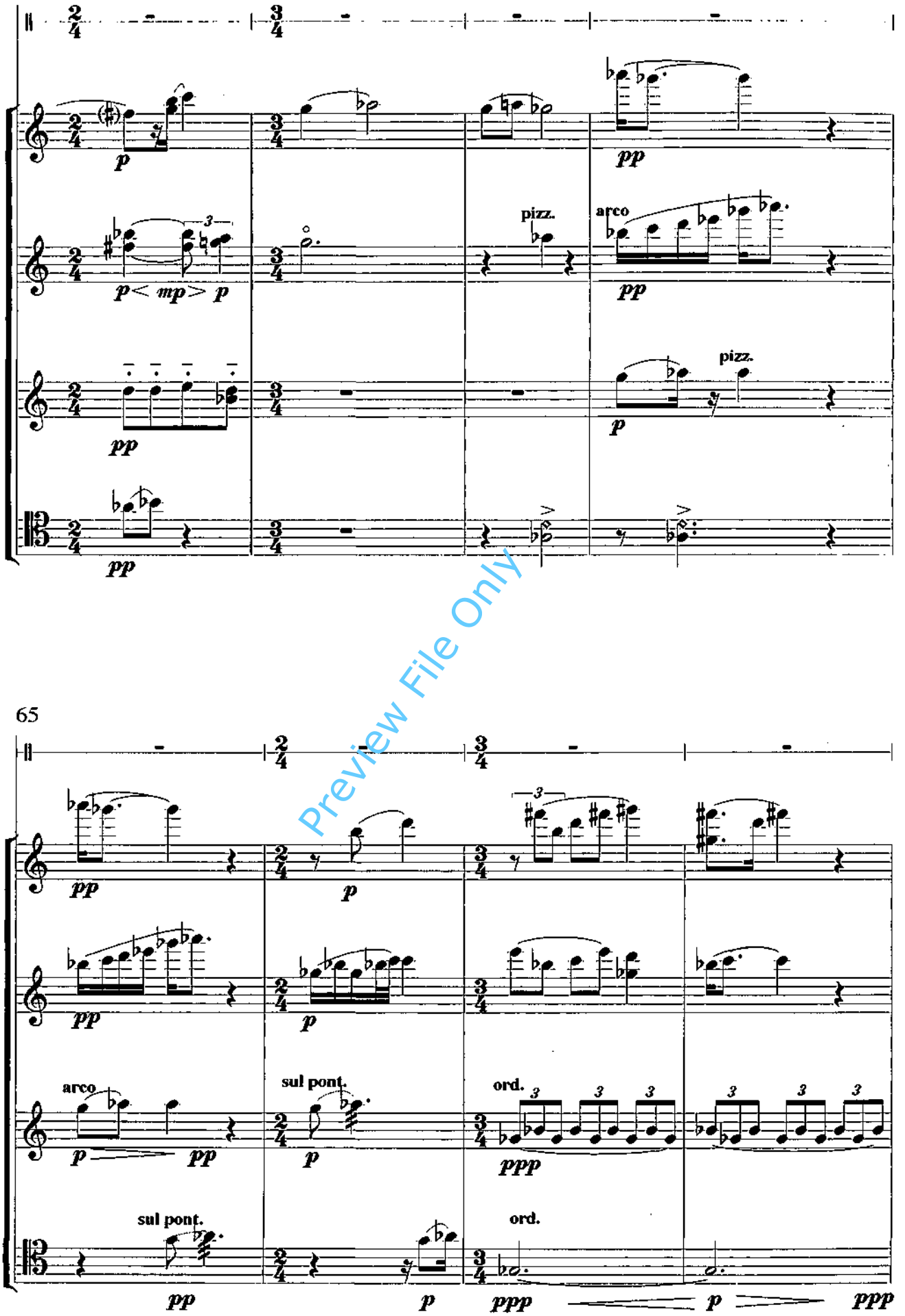
50



Preview File Only

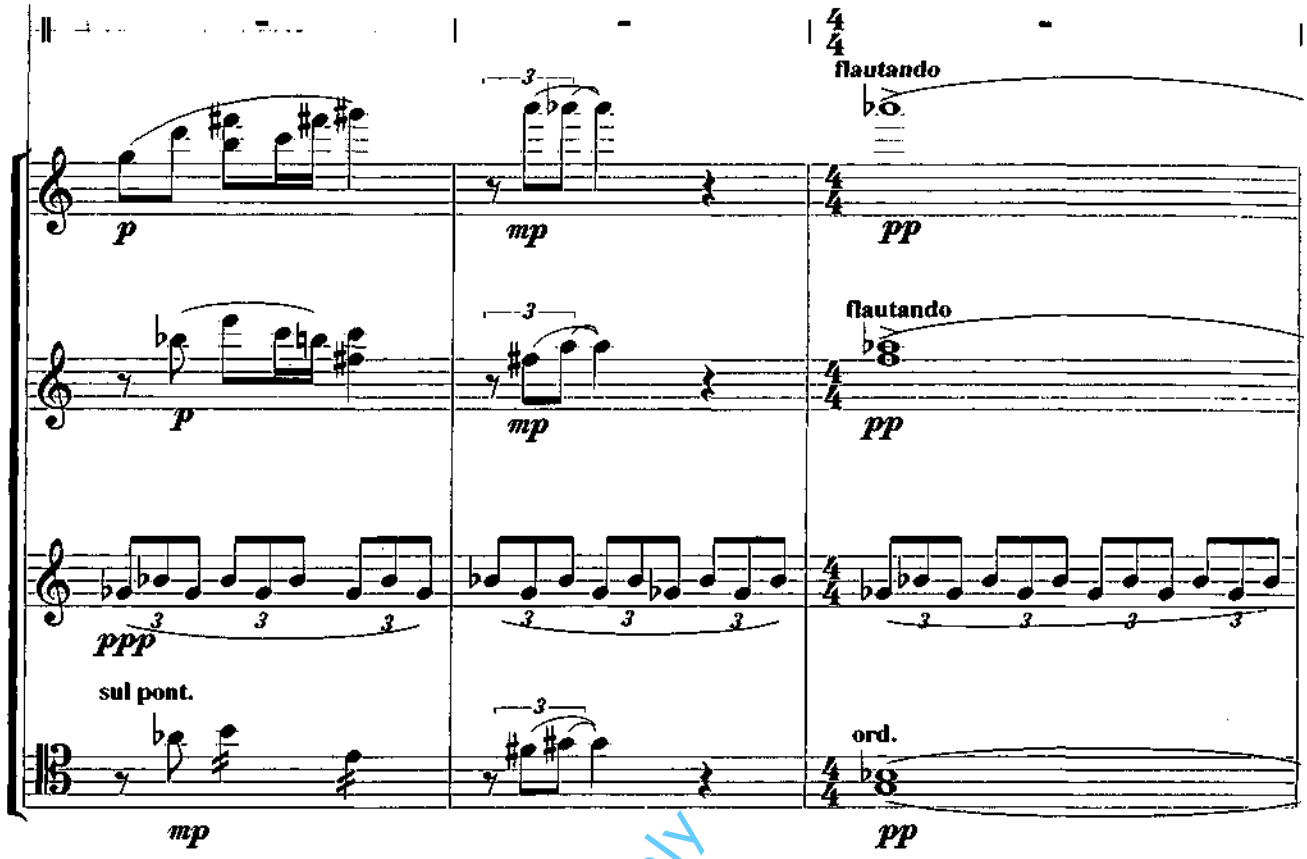
54





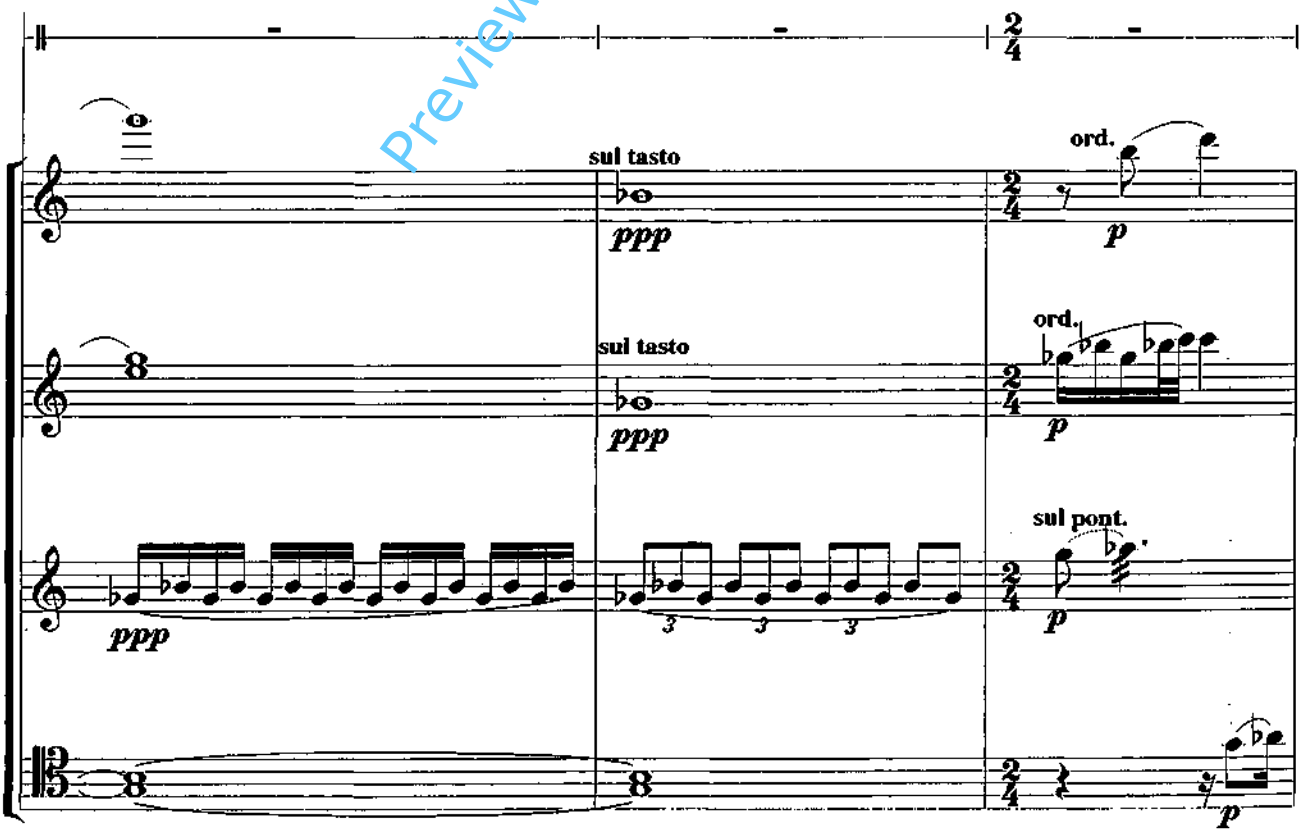
Preview File Only

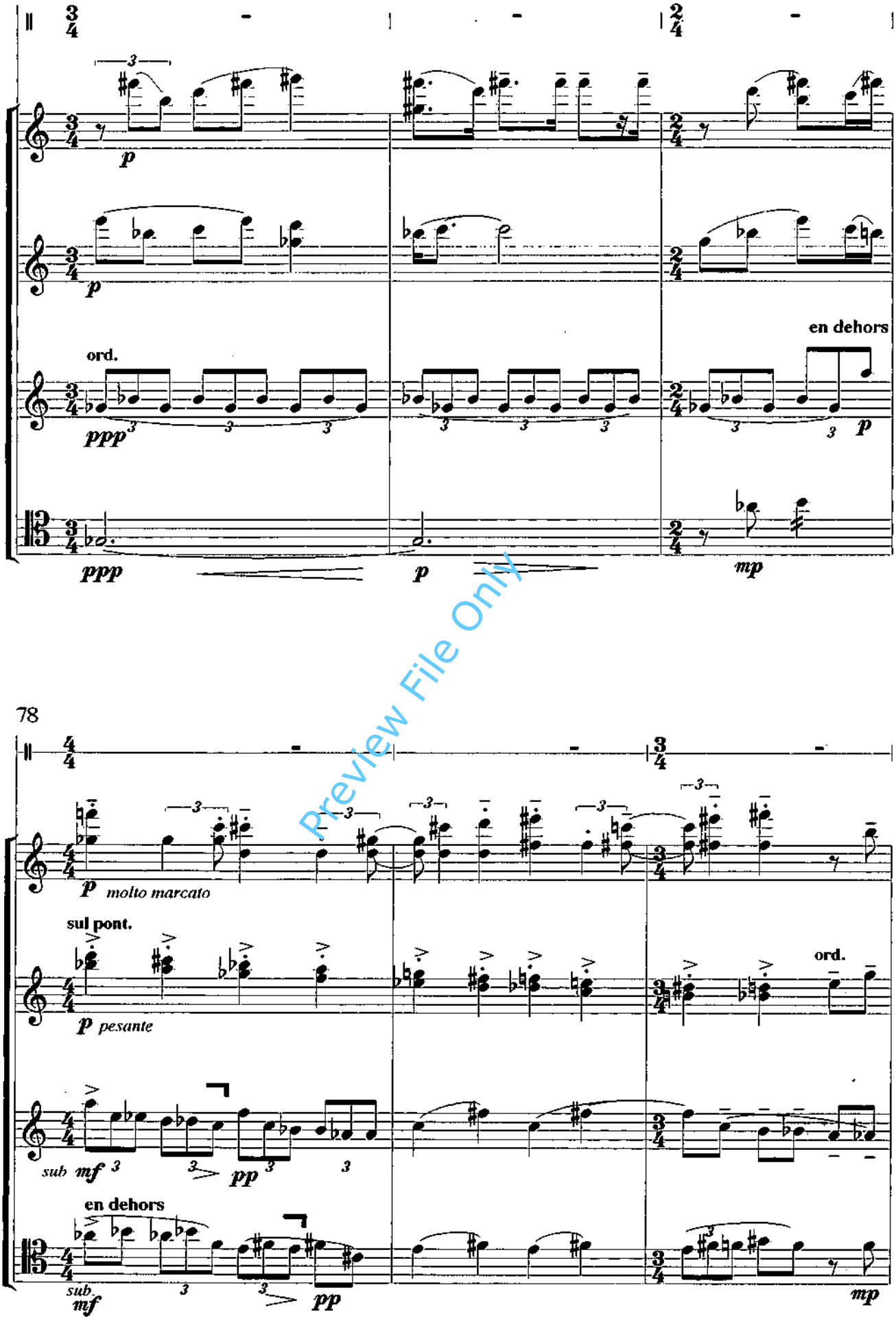
69



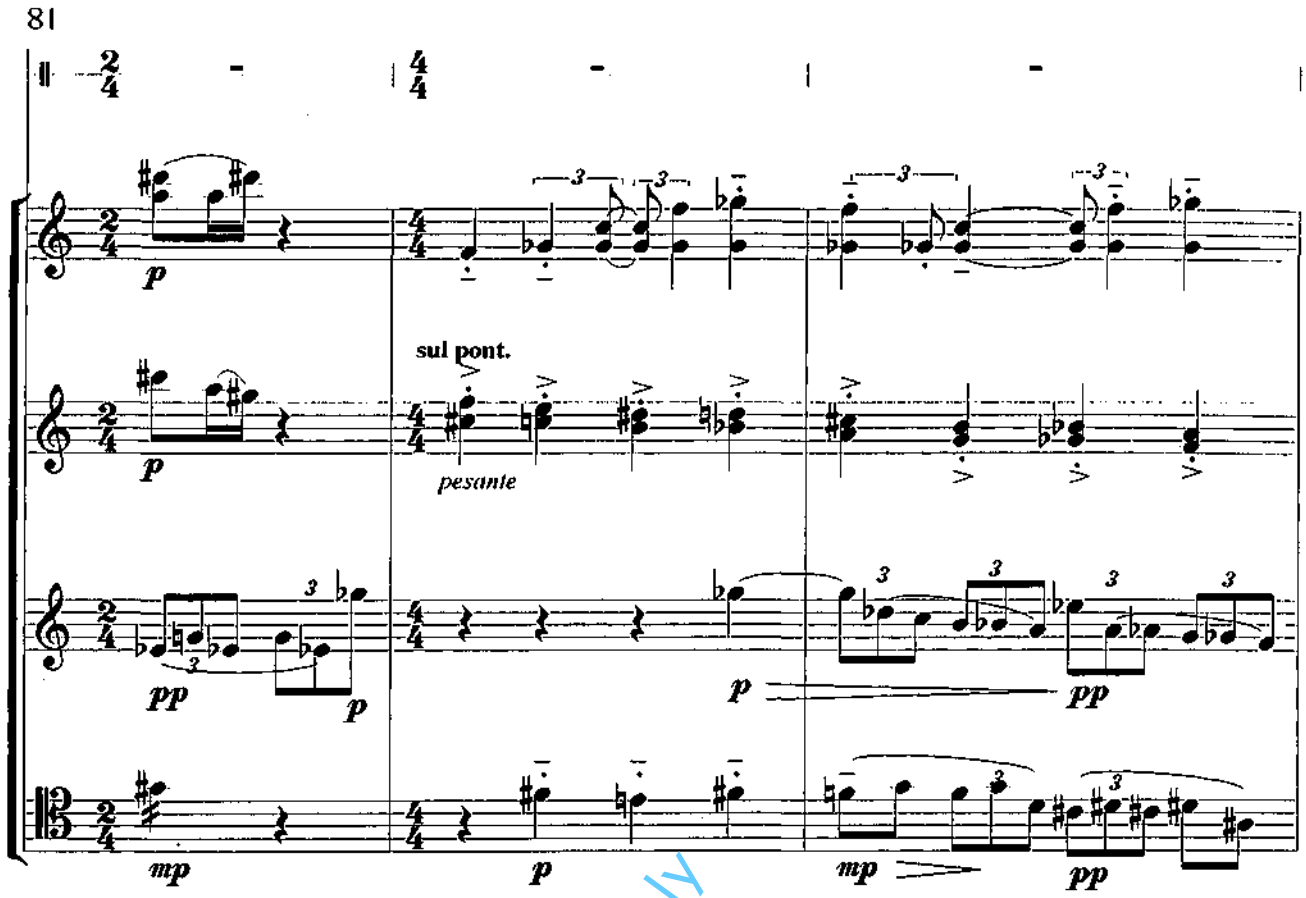
Preview File Only

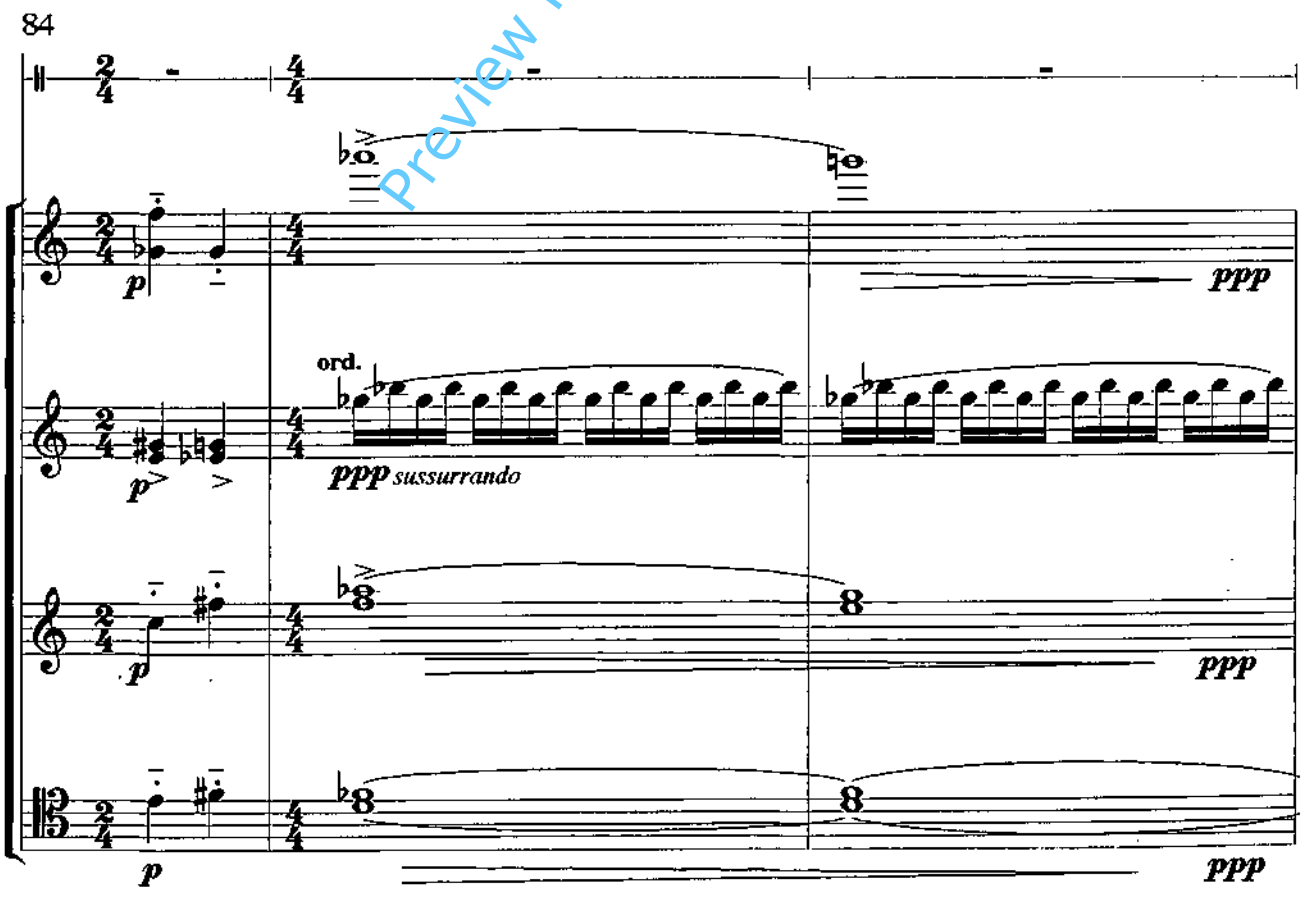
72





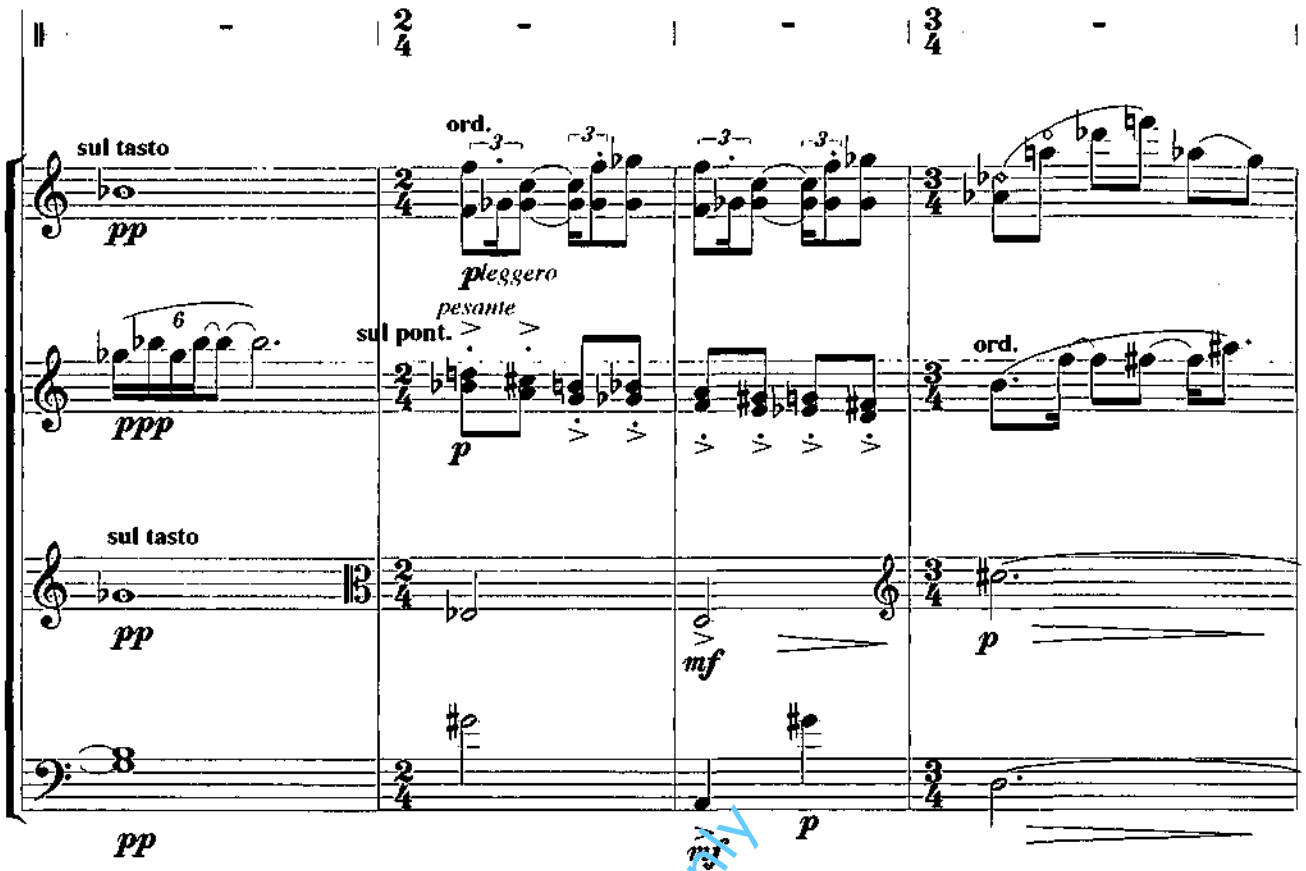
Preview File Only





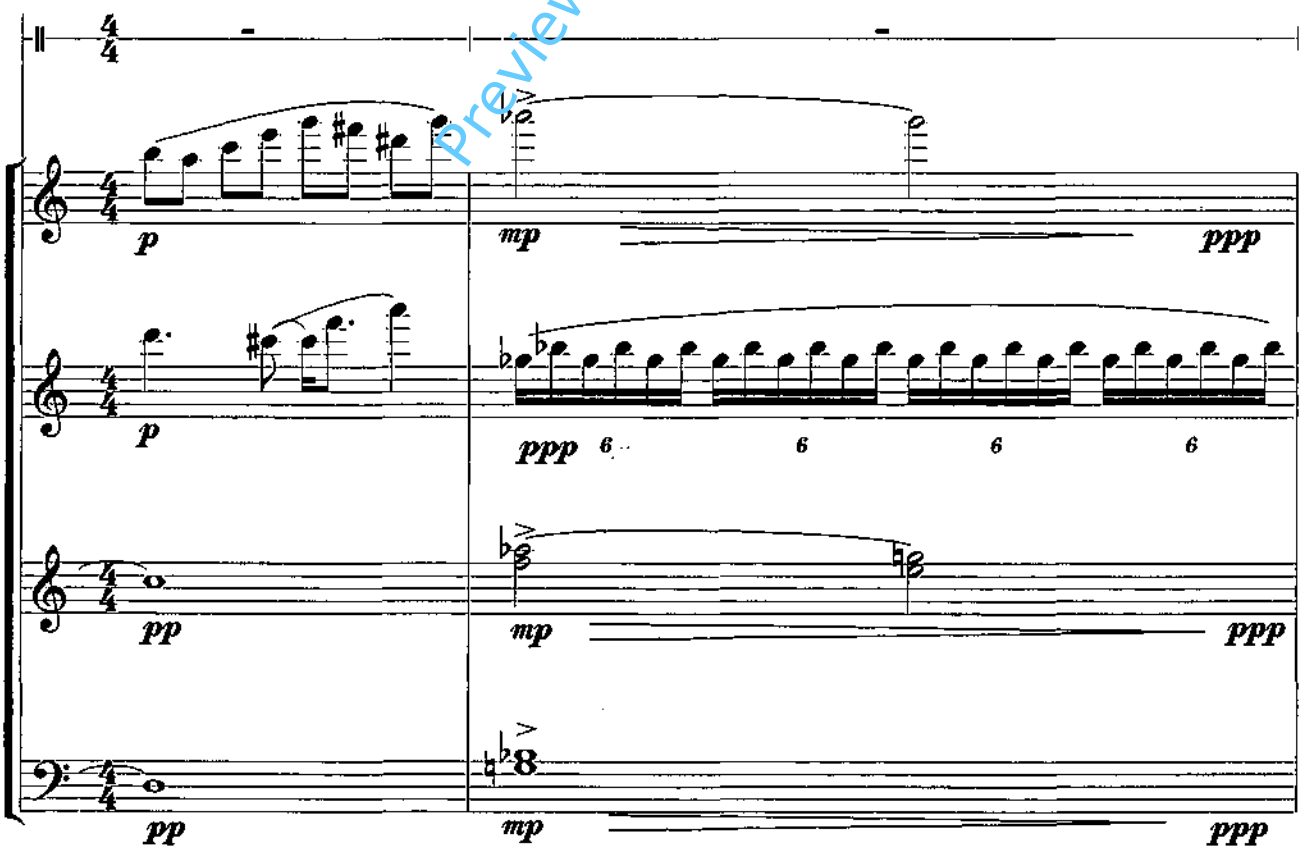
Preview File Only

87

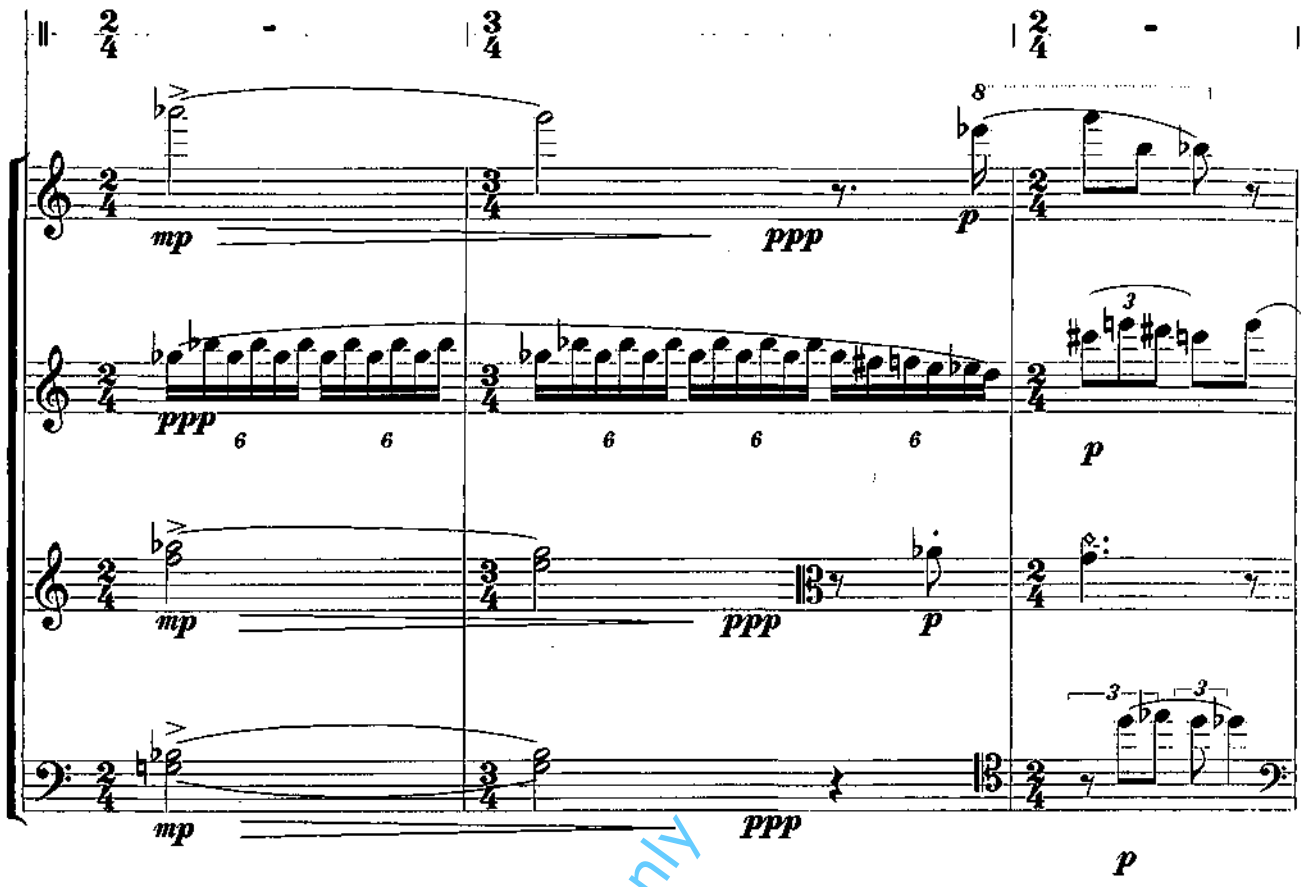


Preview File Only

91

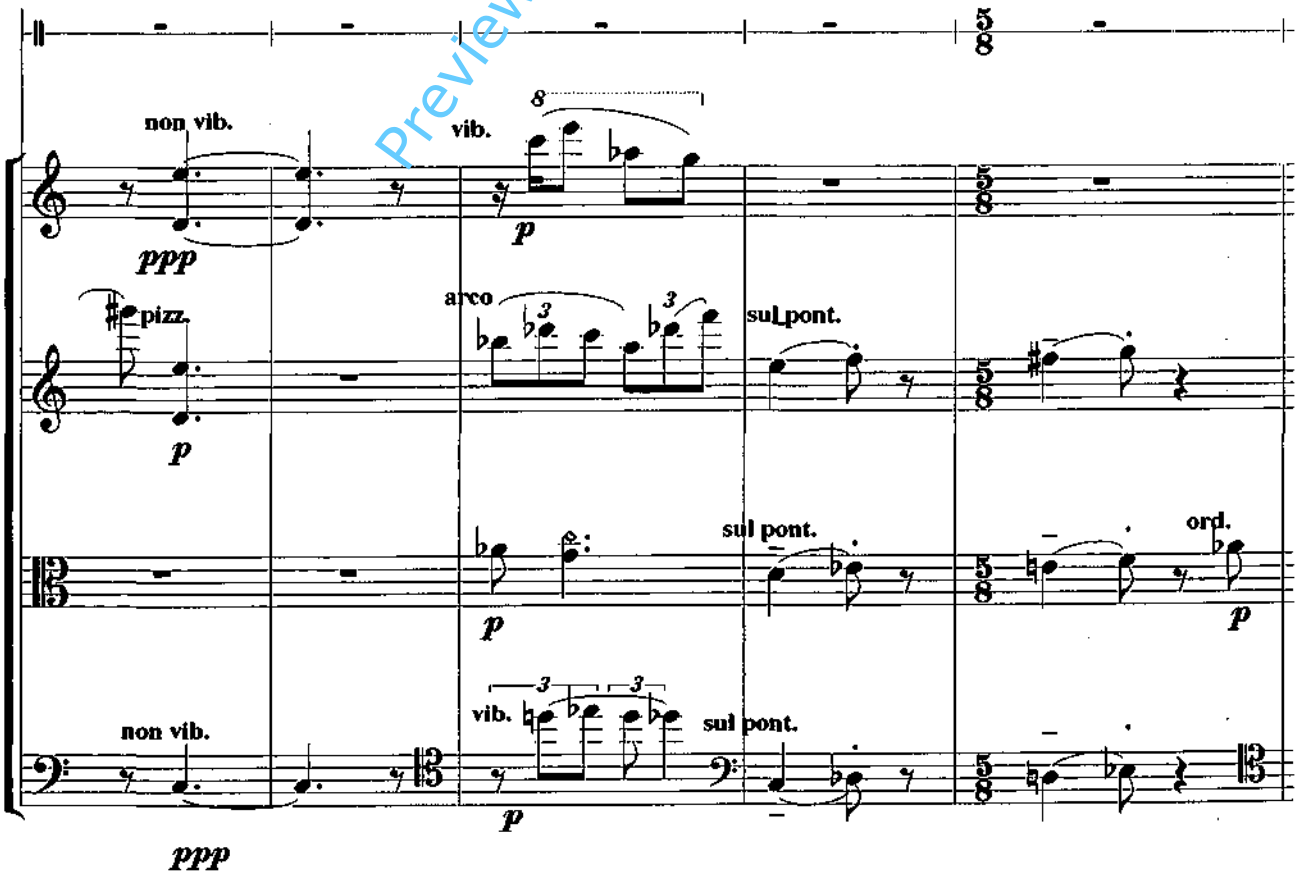


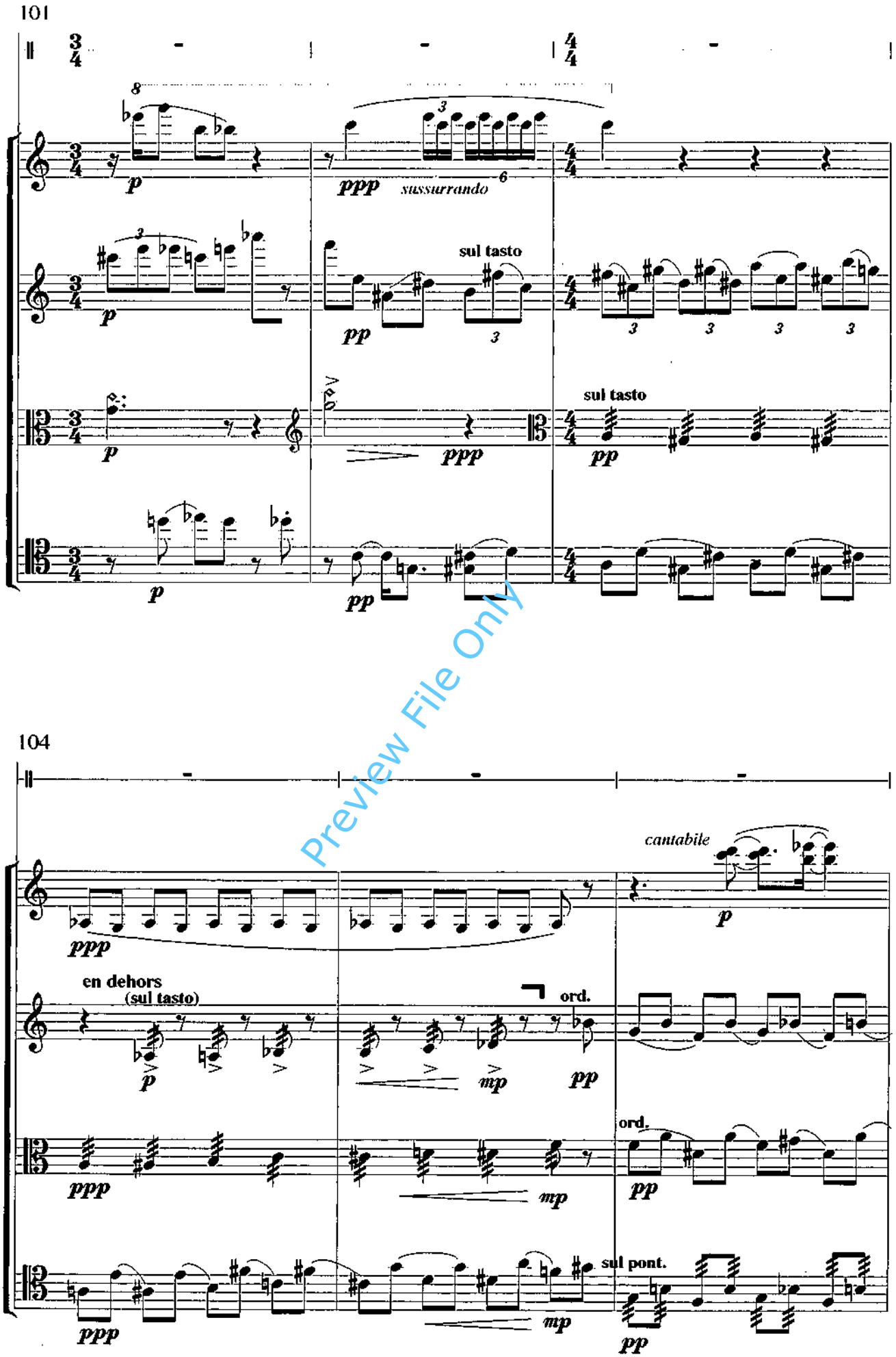
93



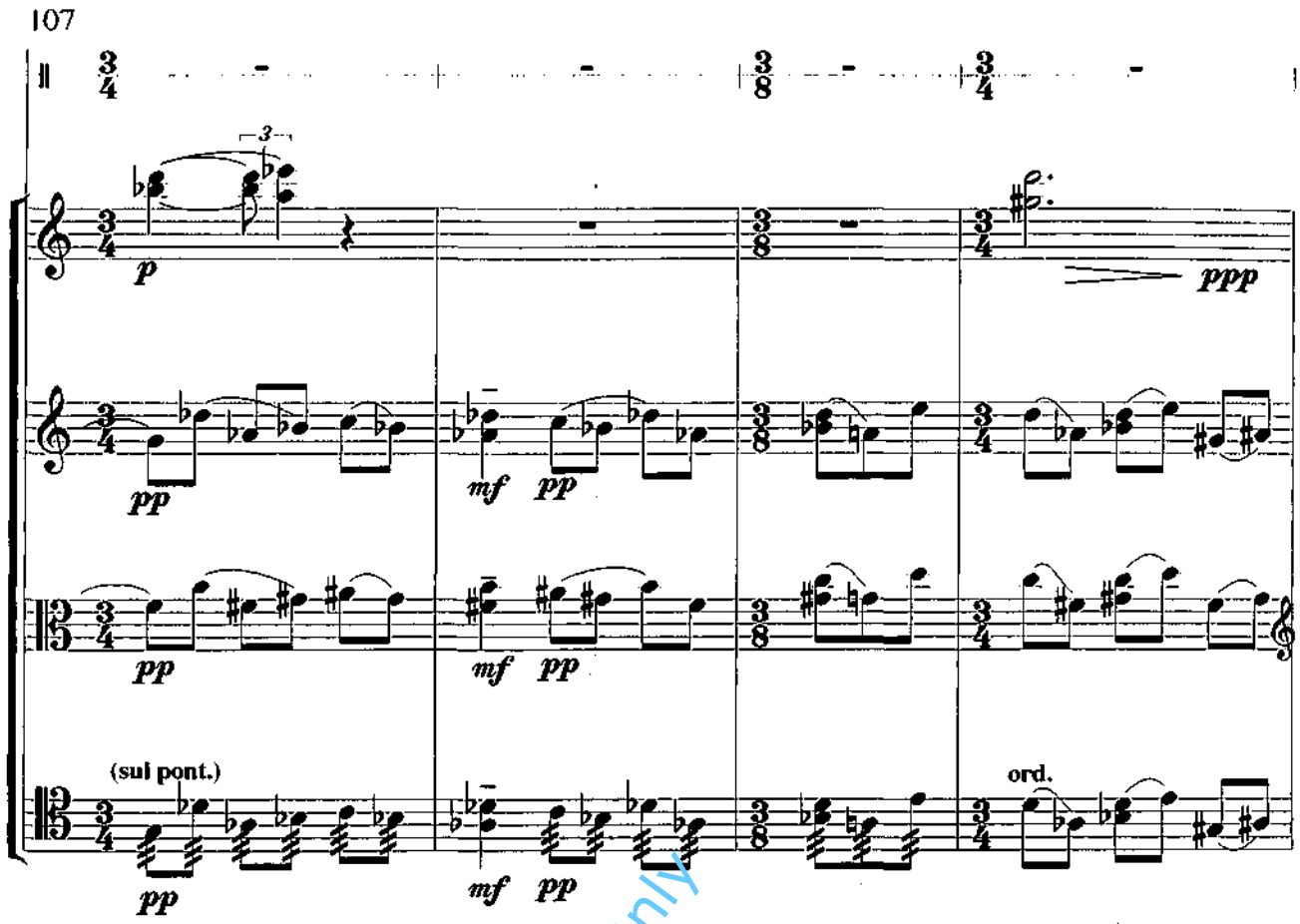
Preview File Only

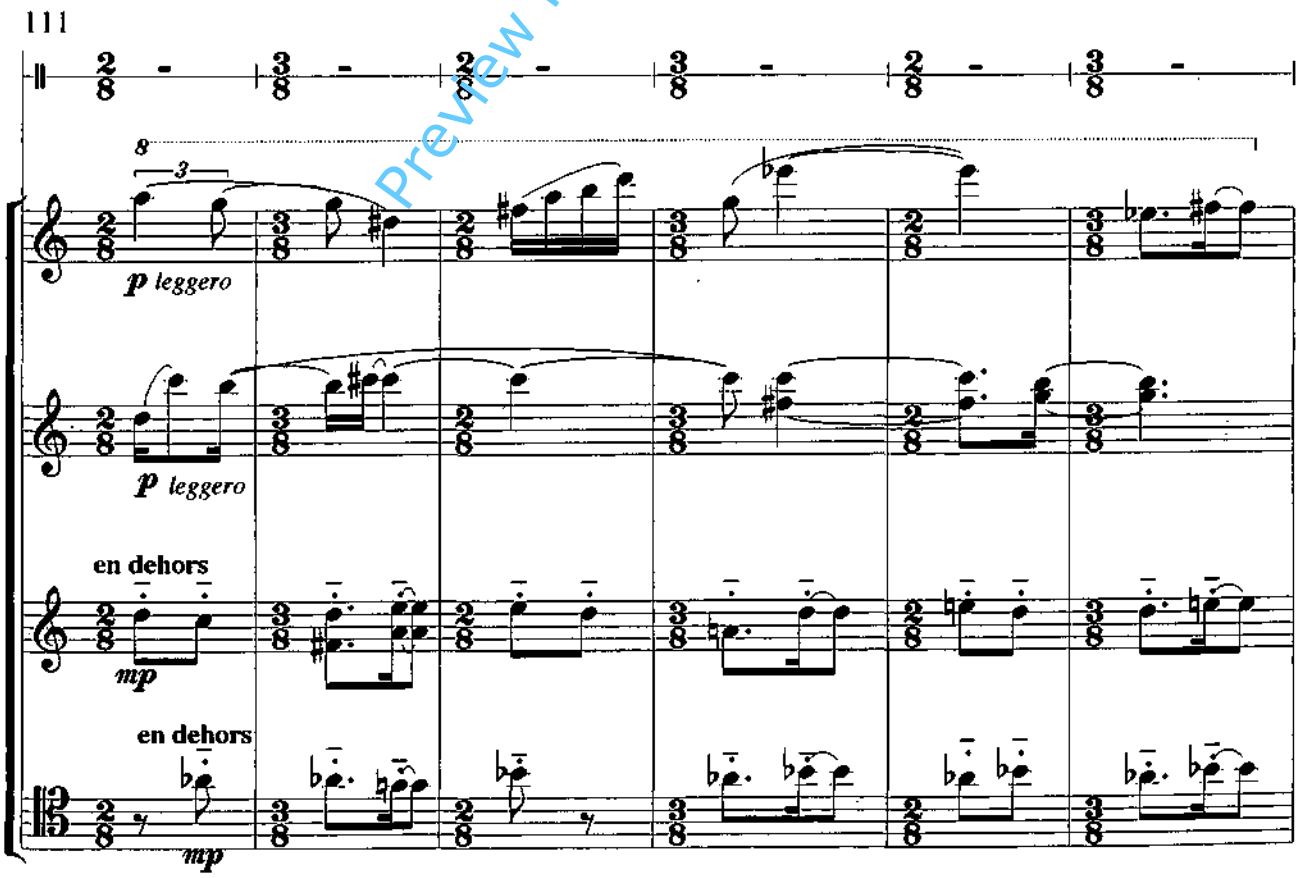
96





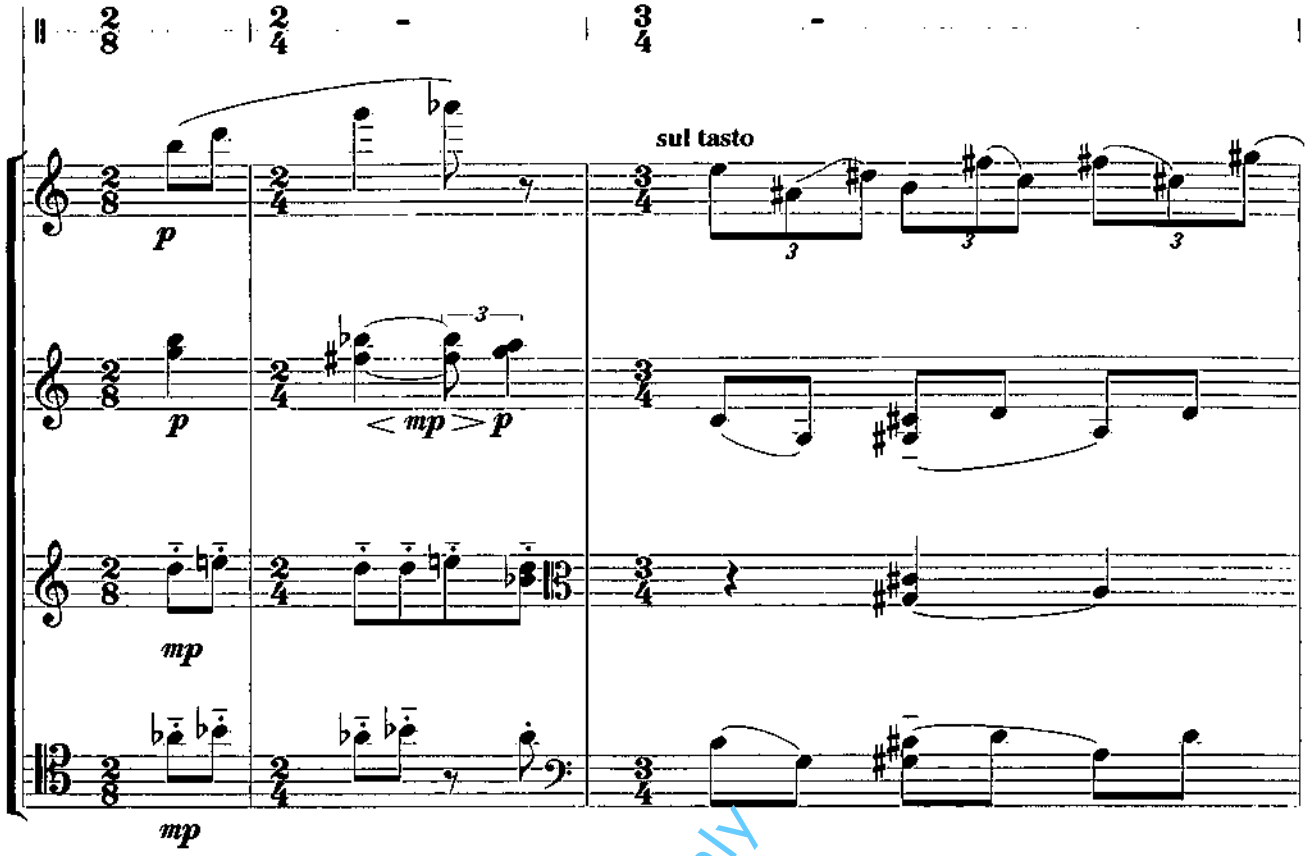
Preview File Only





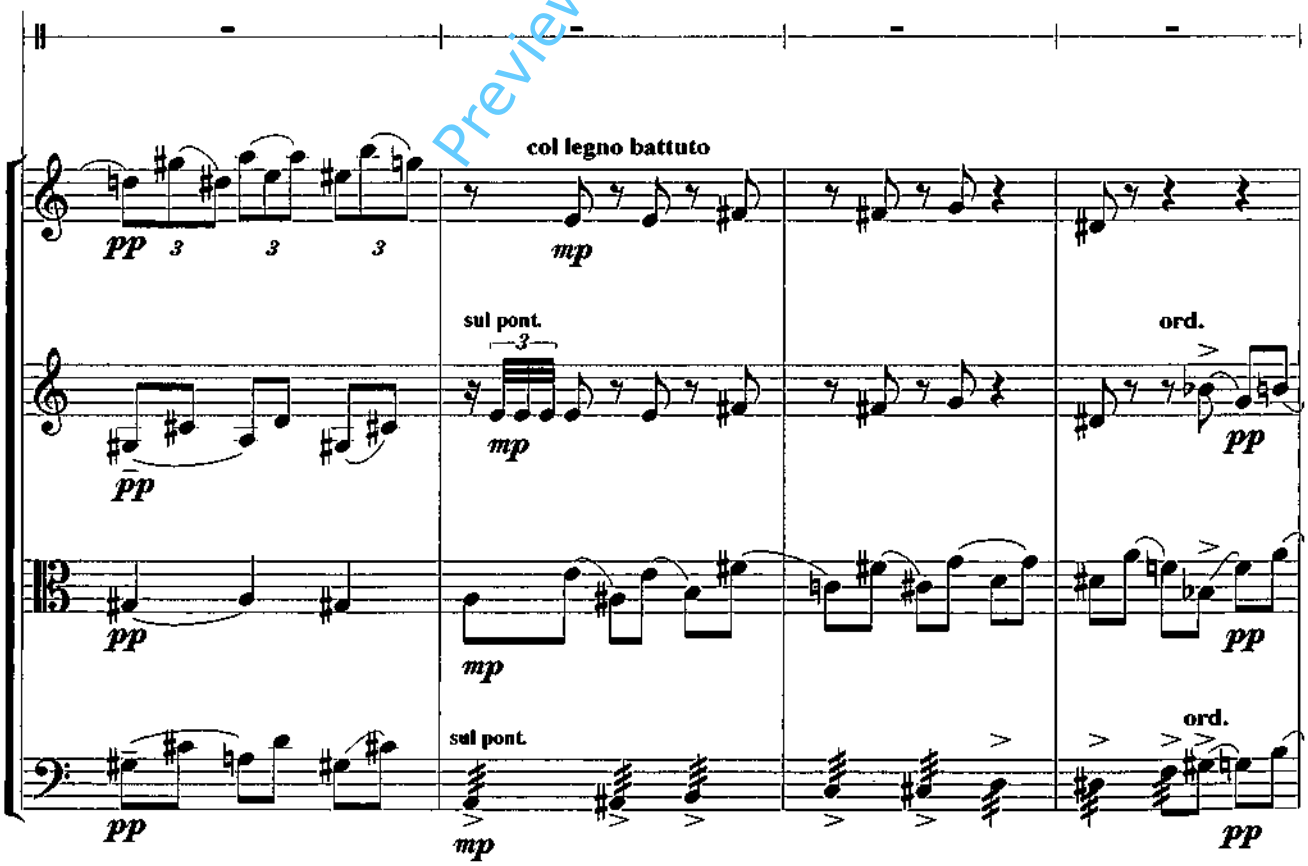
Preview File Only

117

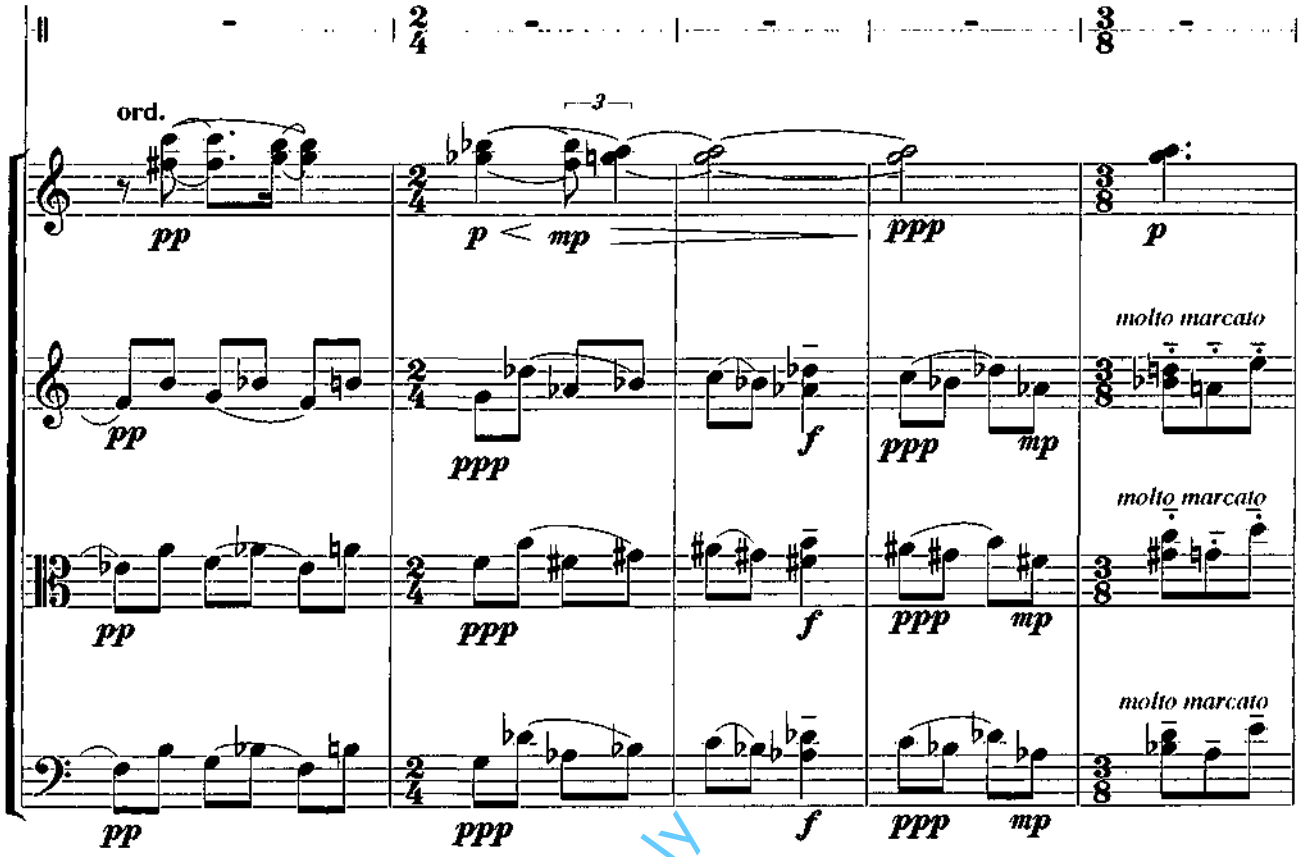


Preview File Only

120

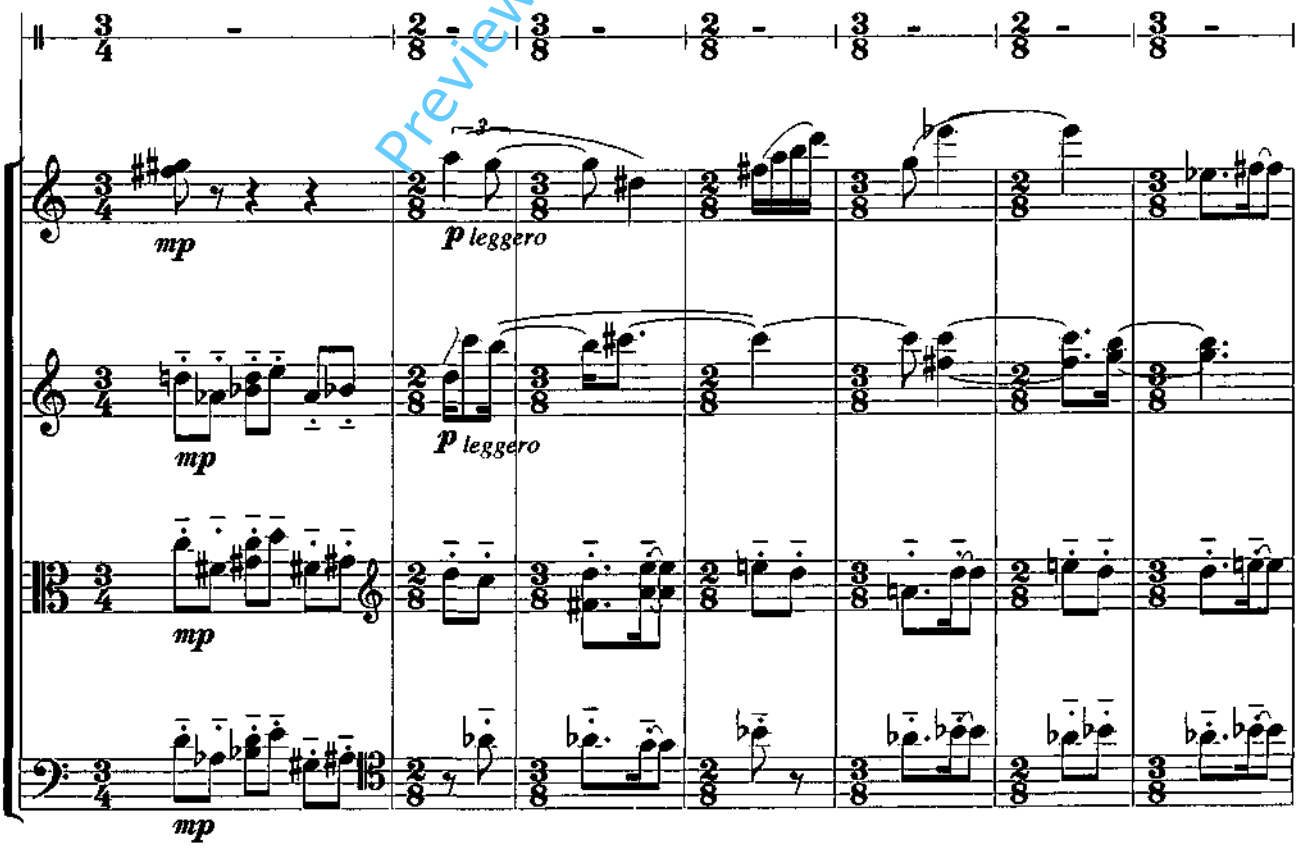


124

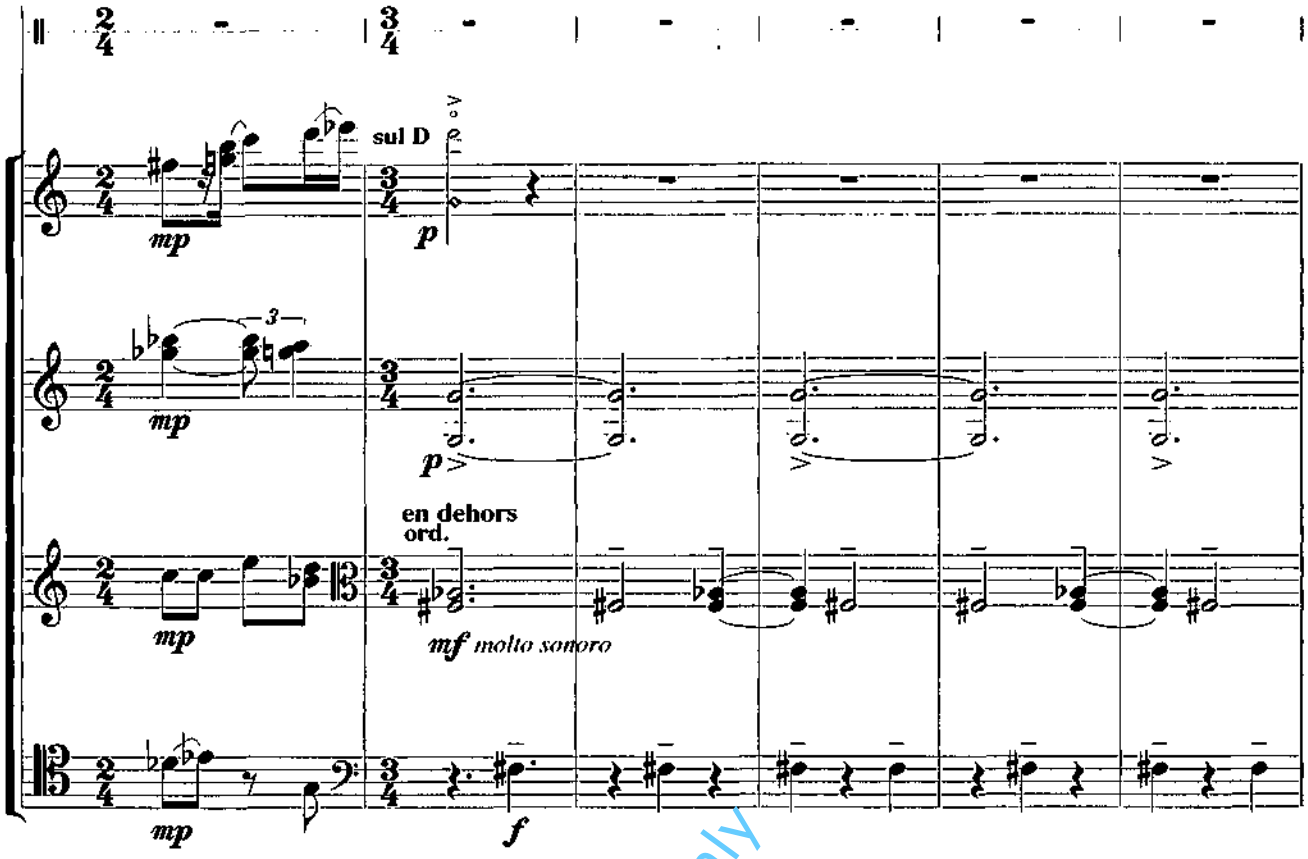


Preview File Only

129

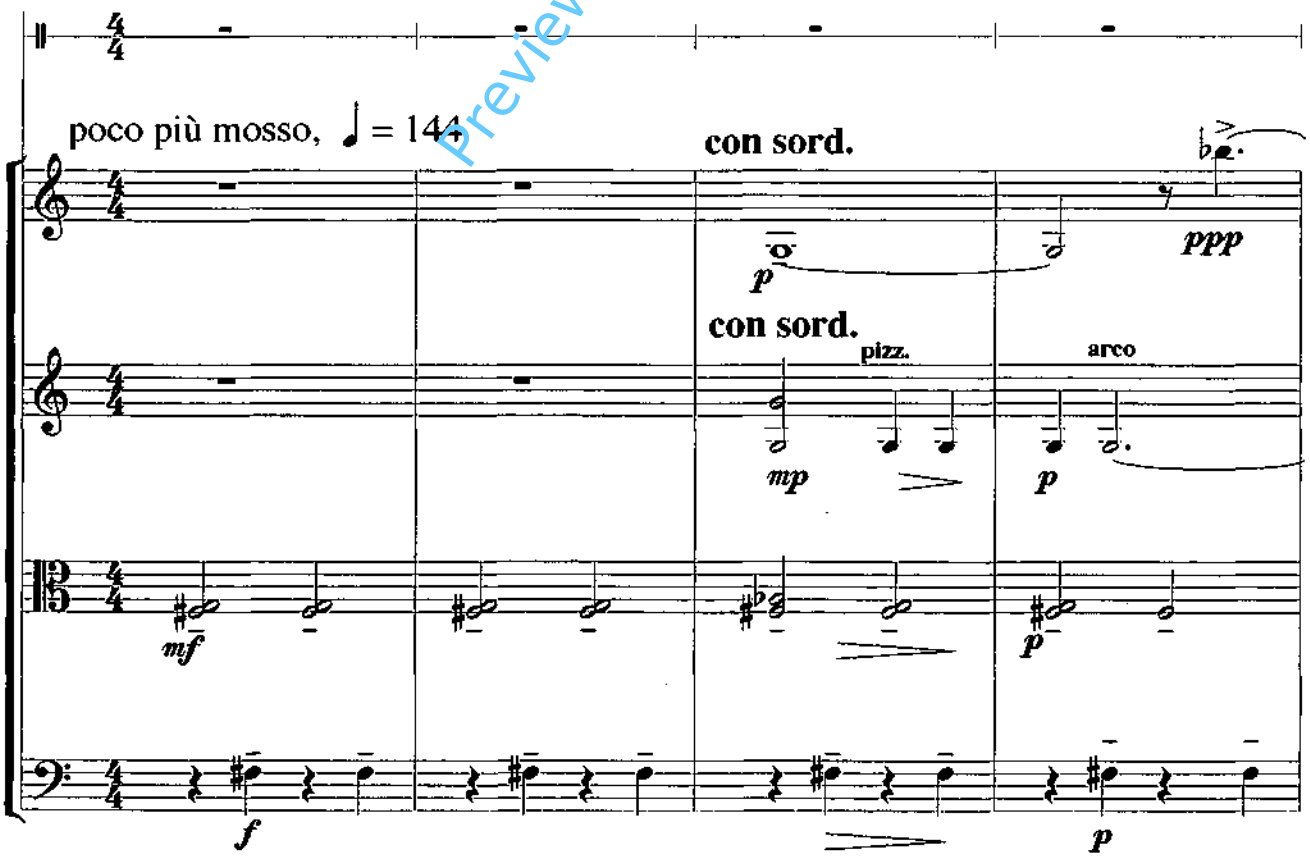


136

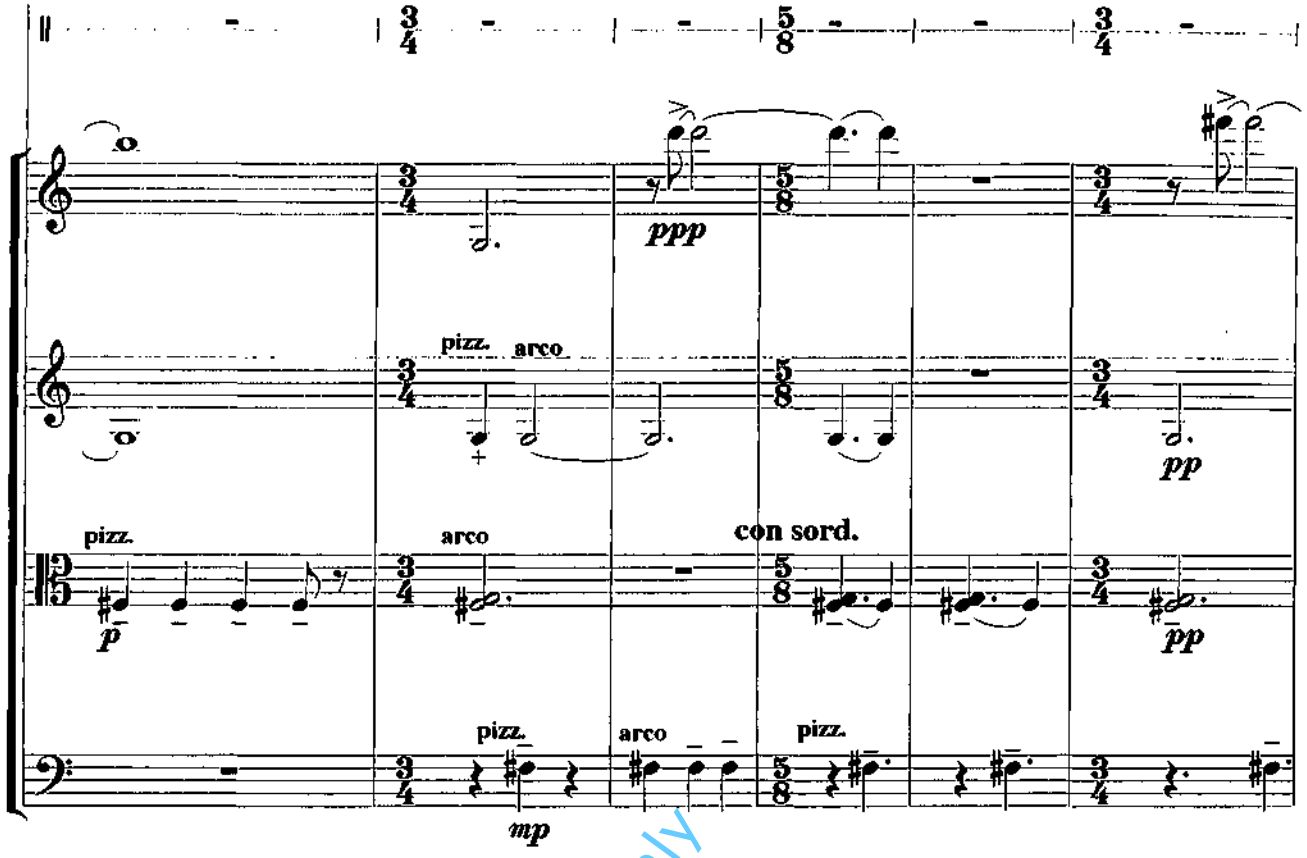


Preview File Only

142

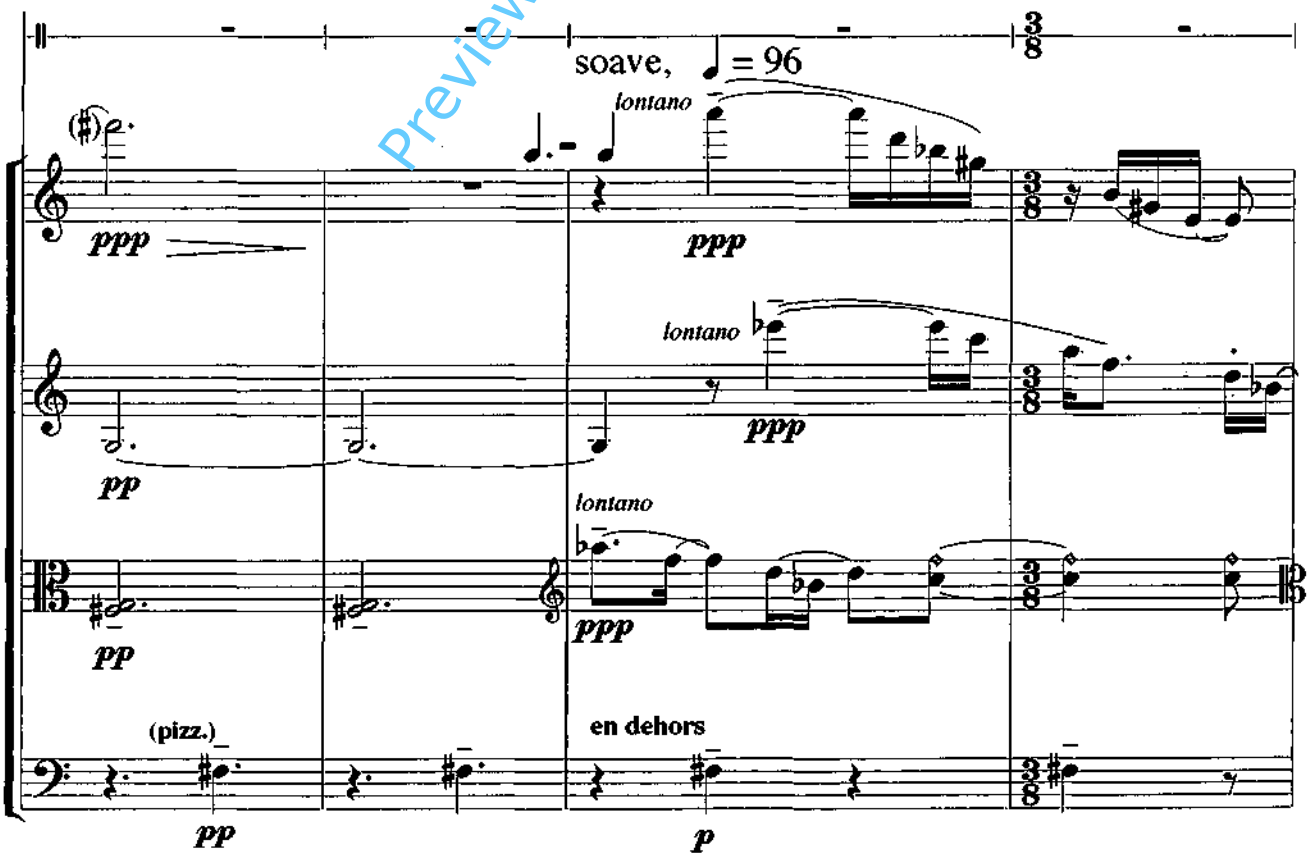


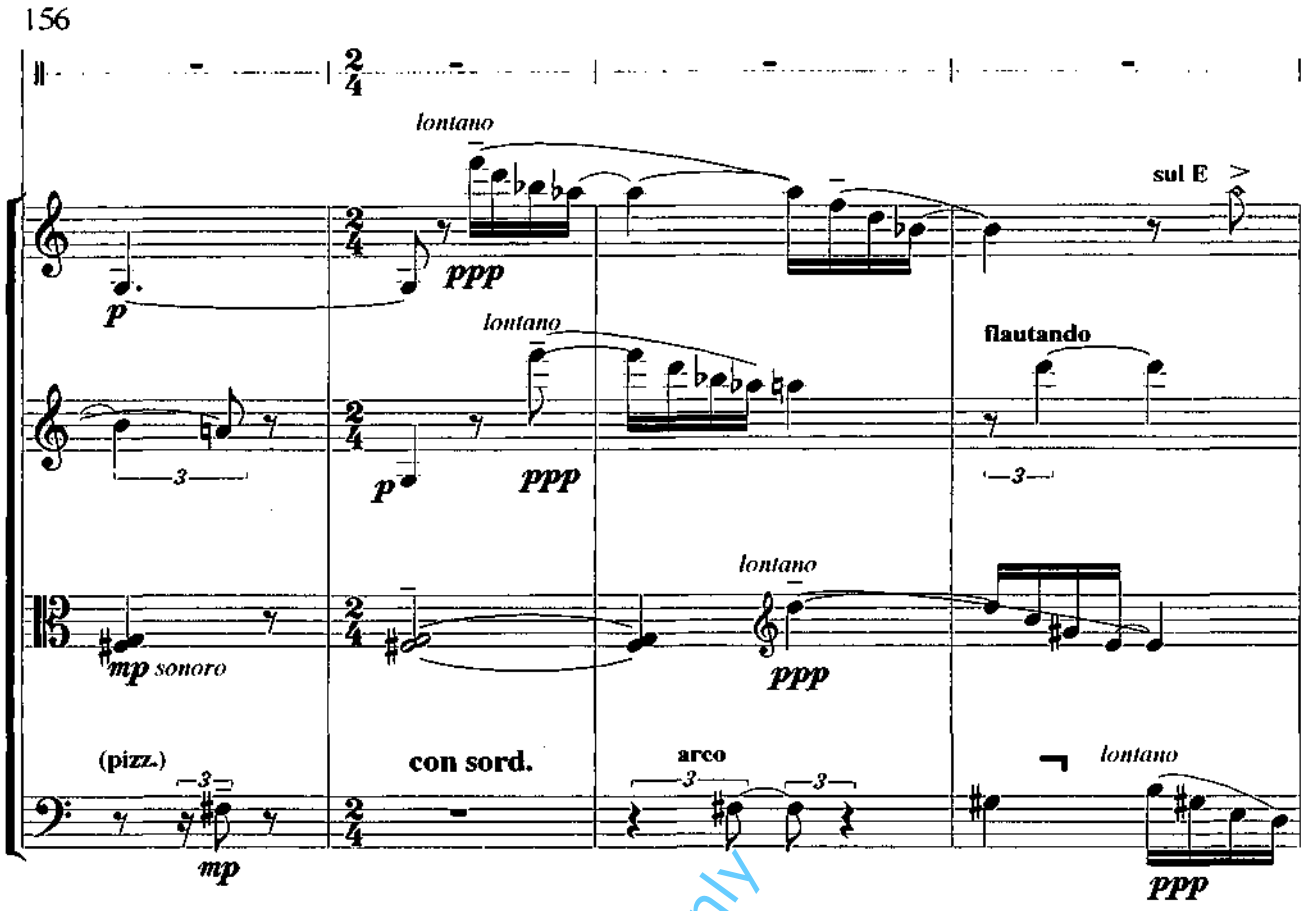
146



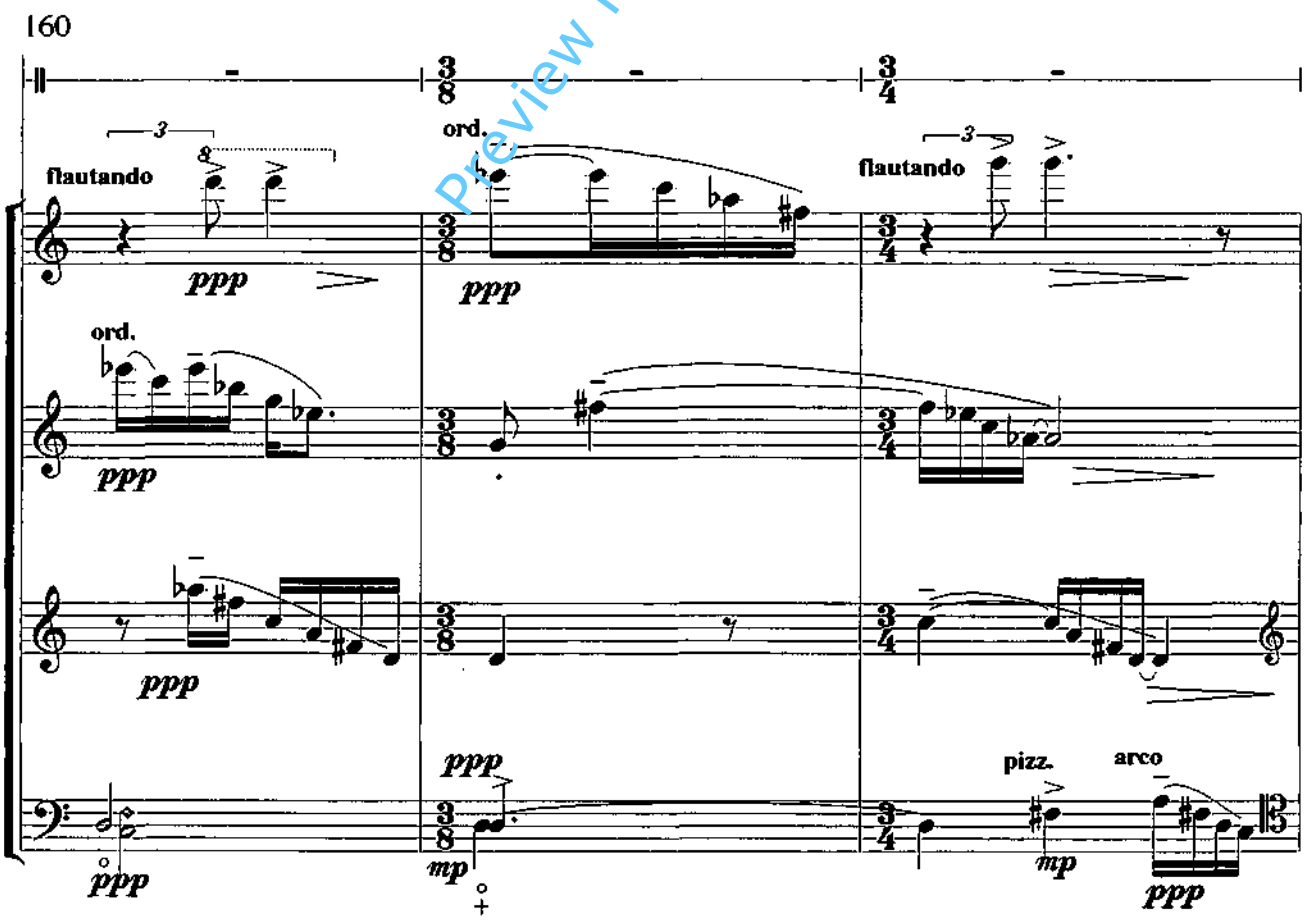
Preview File Only

152

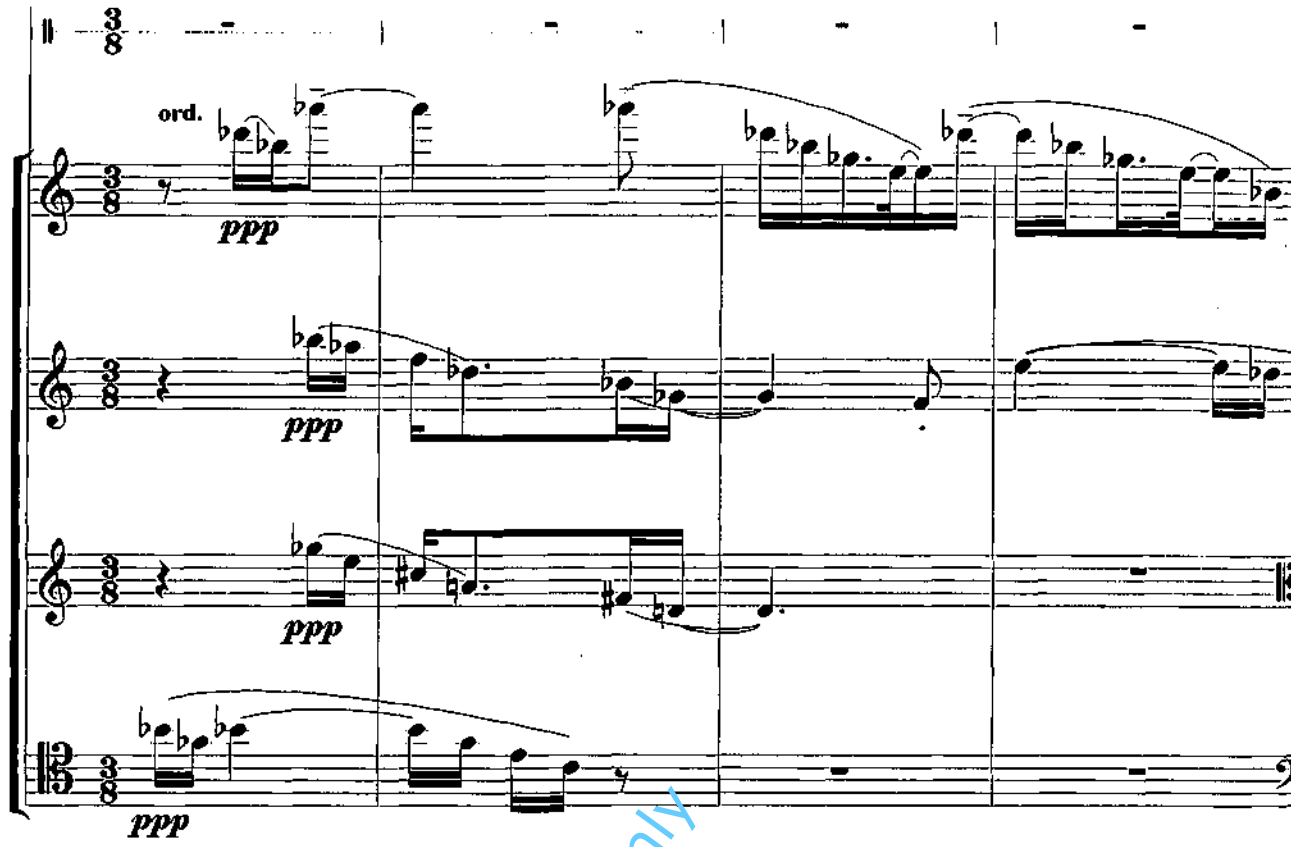




Preview File Only

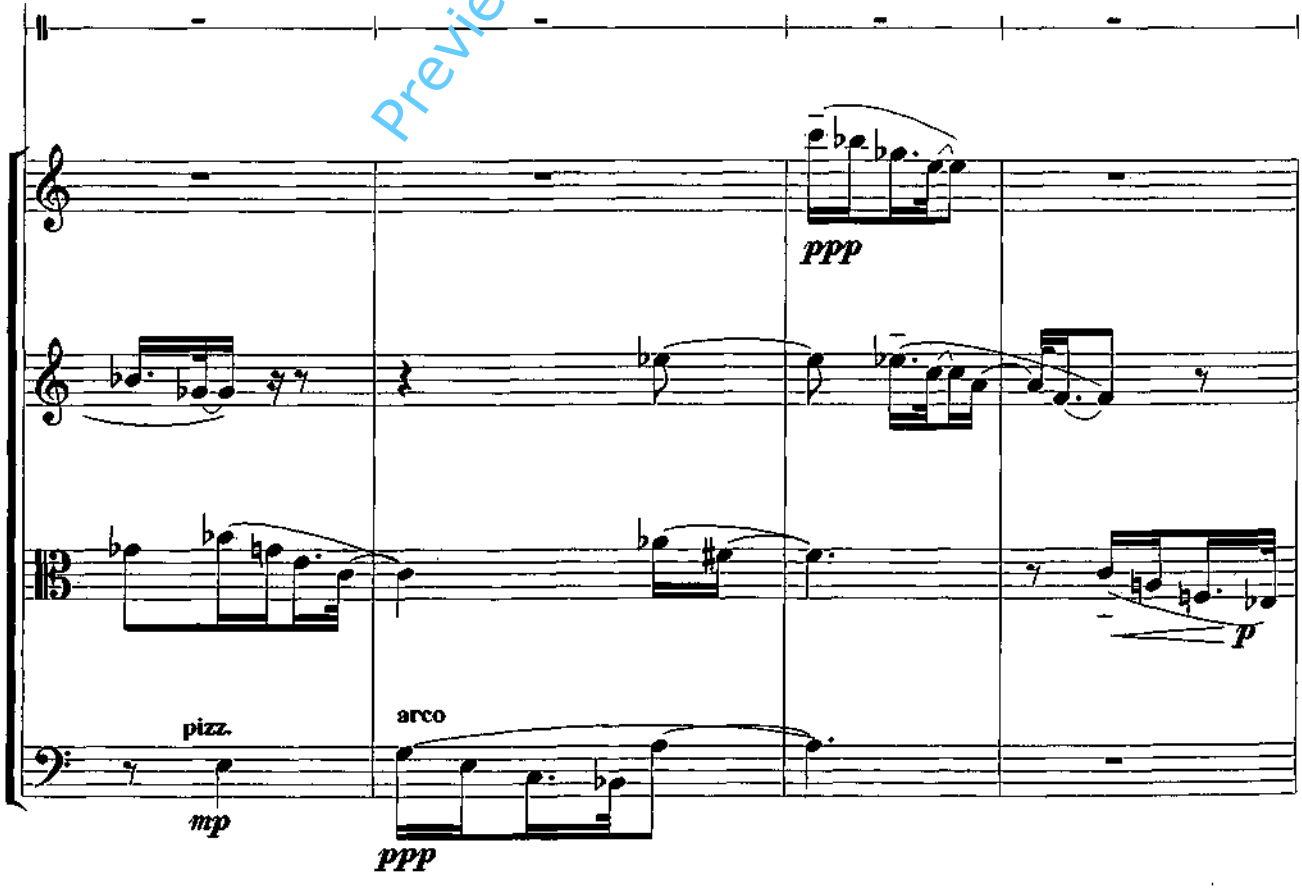


163

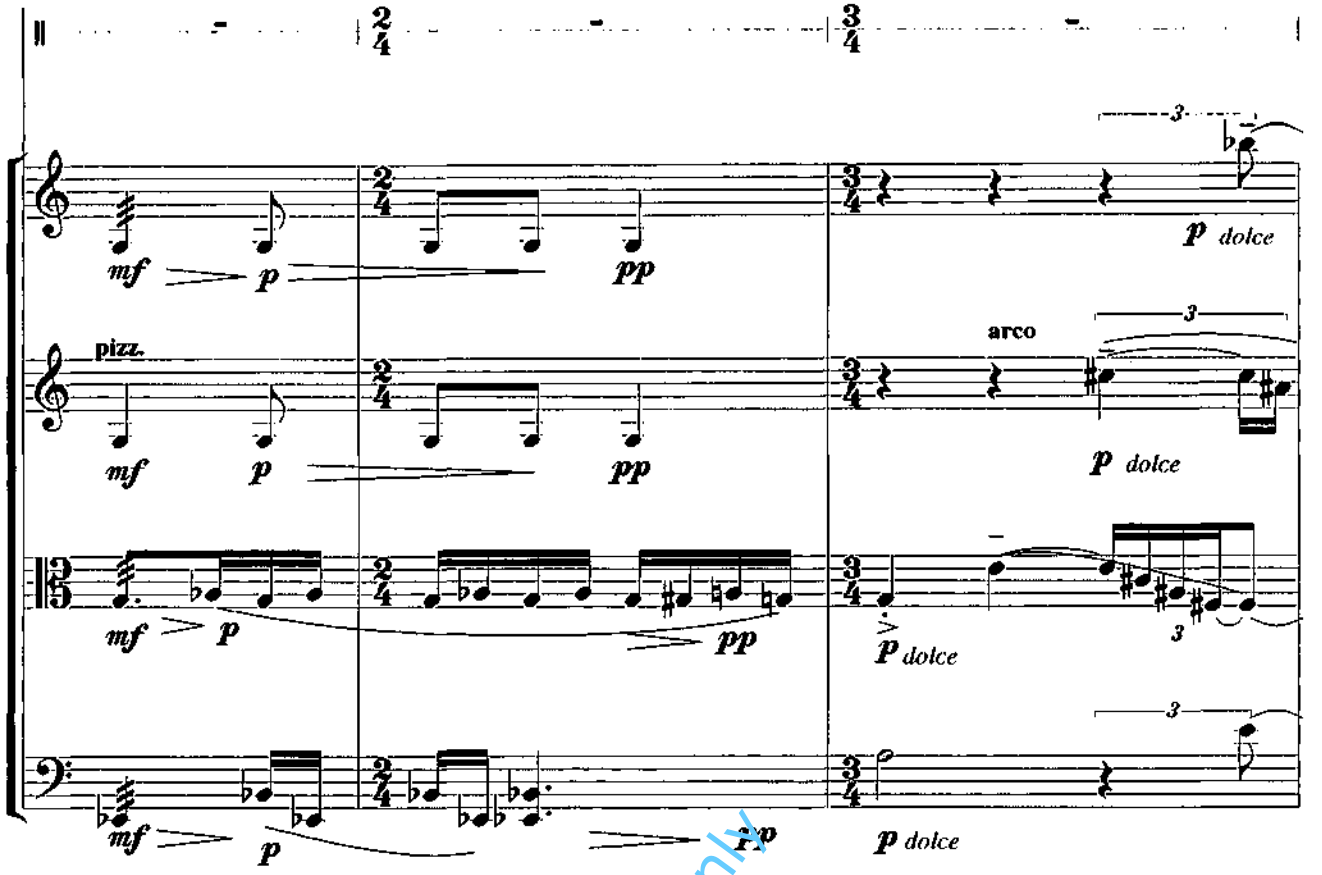


Preview File Only

167

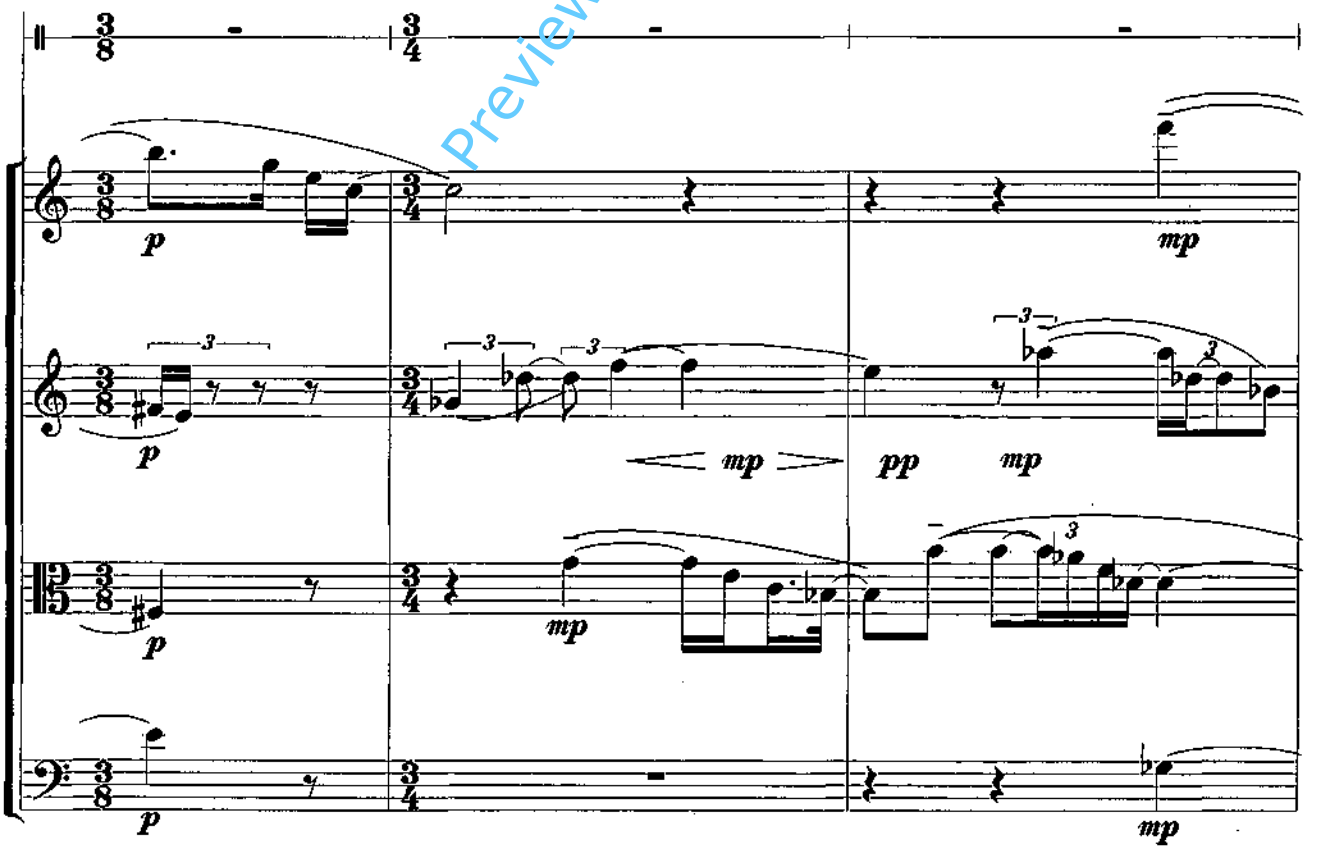


171

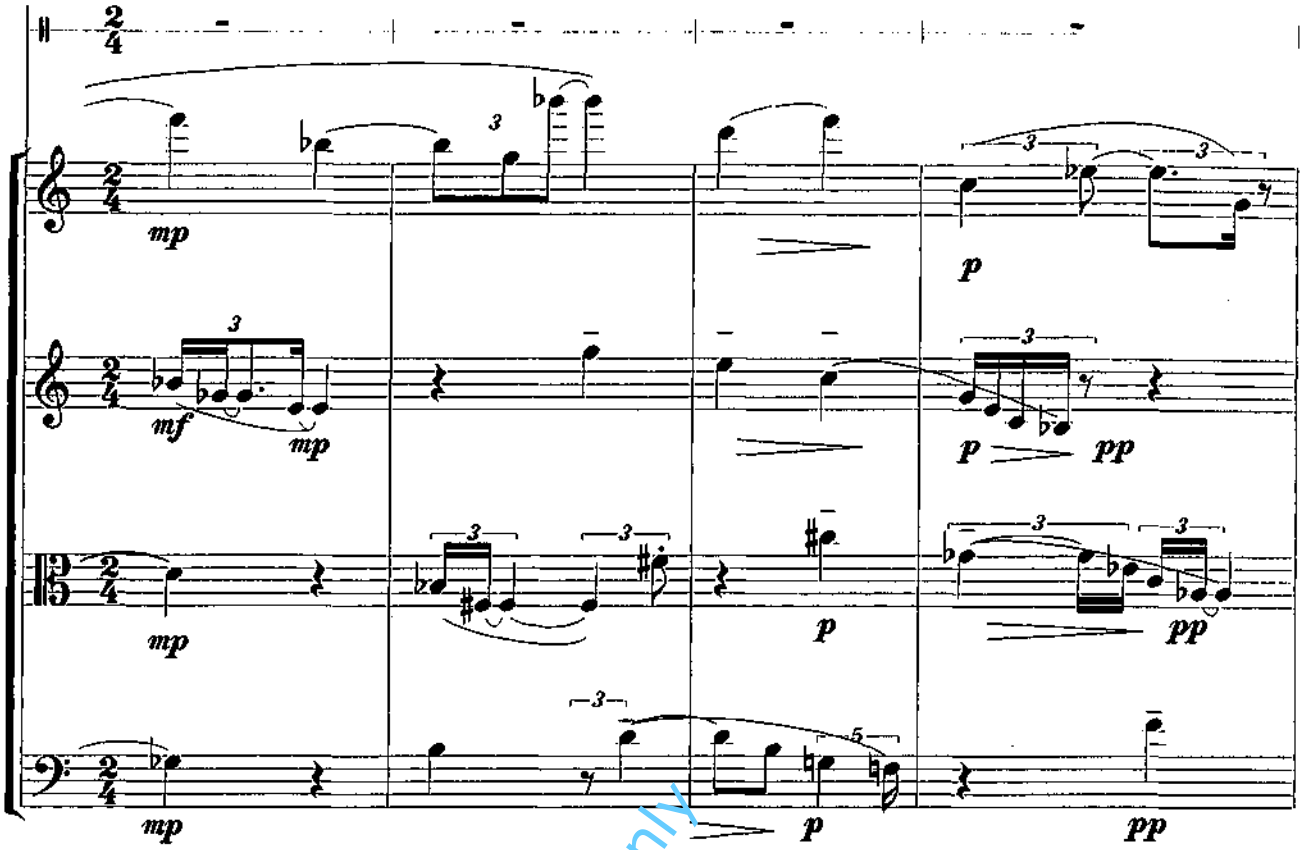


Preview File Only

174

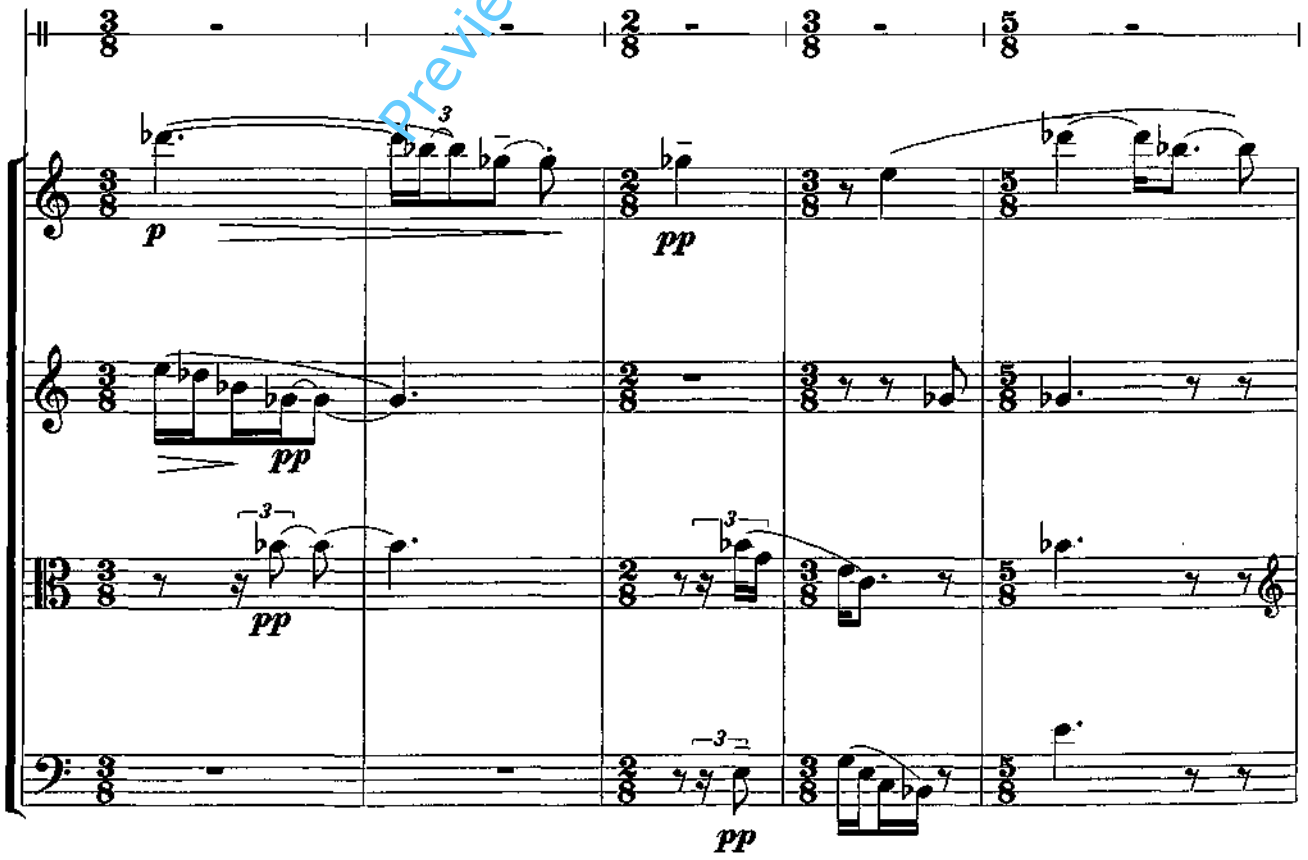


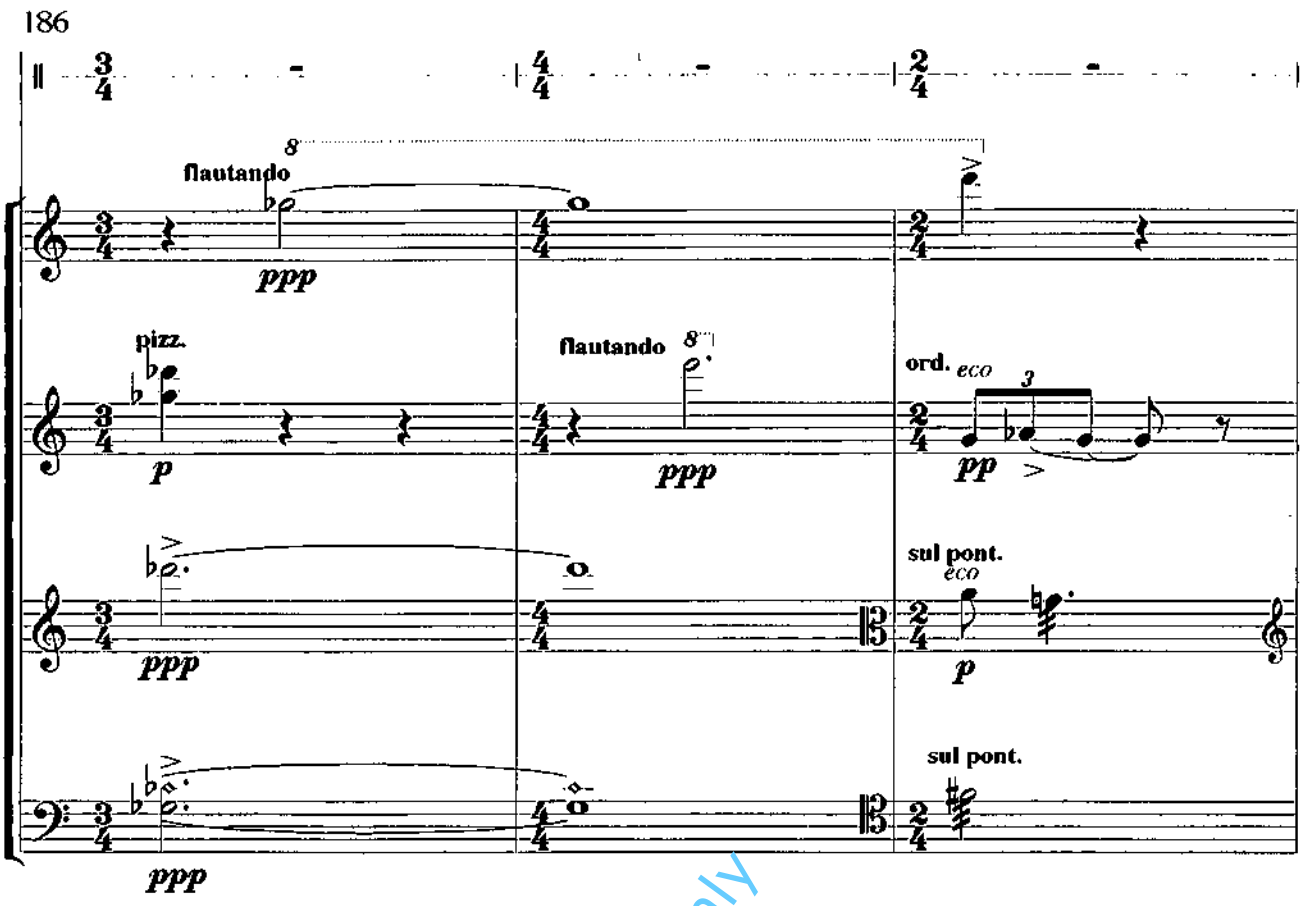
177



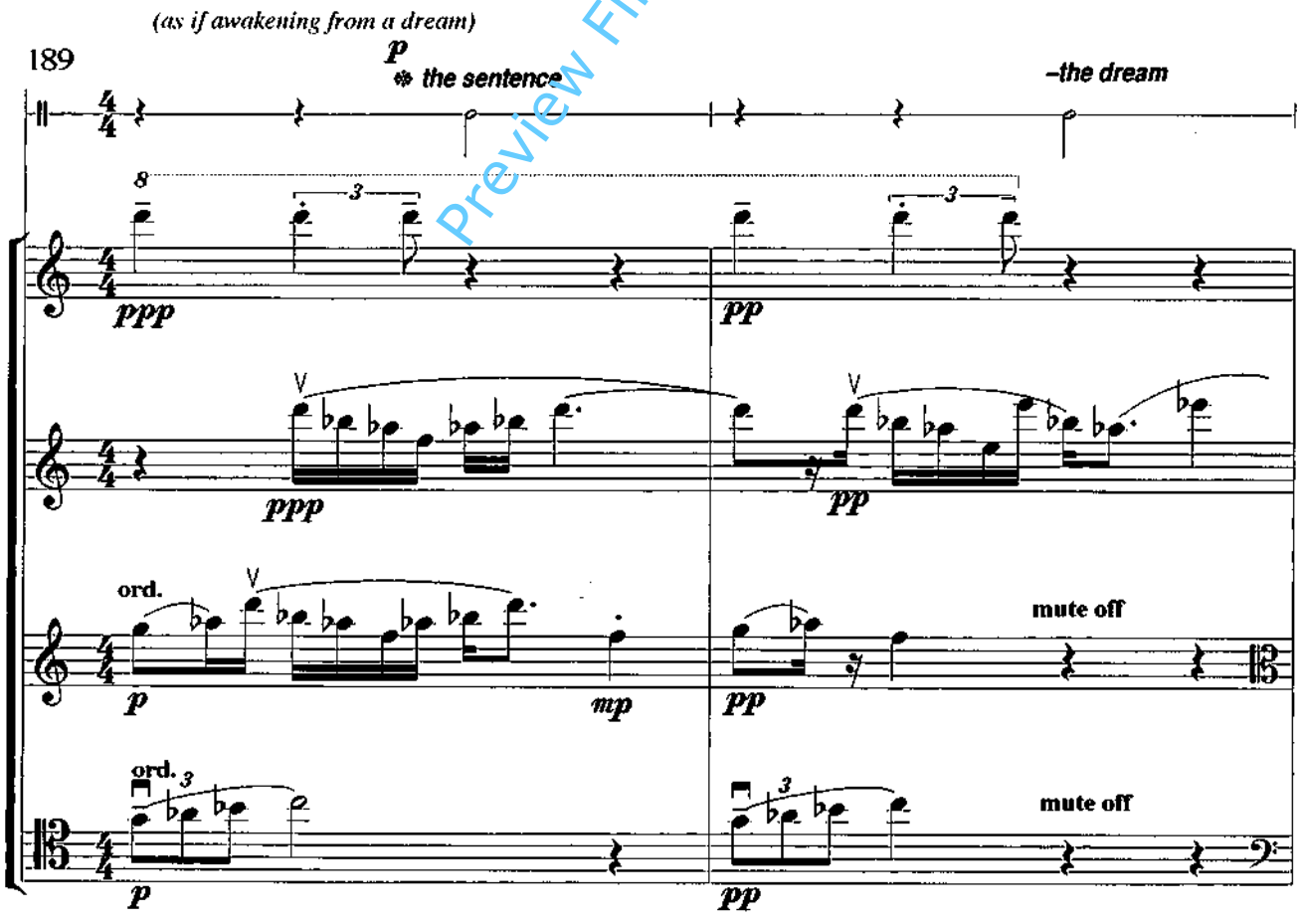
Preview File Only

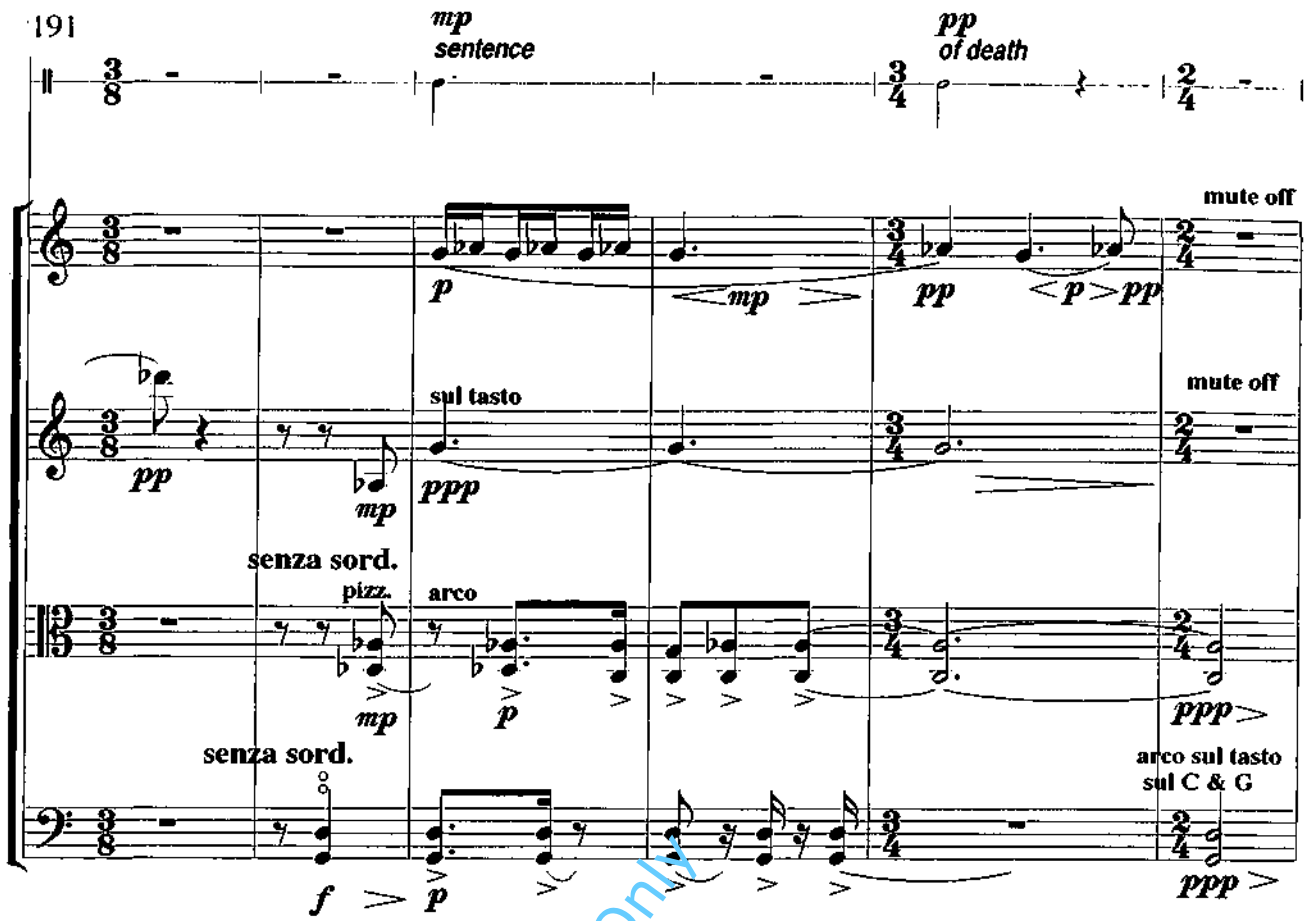
181



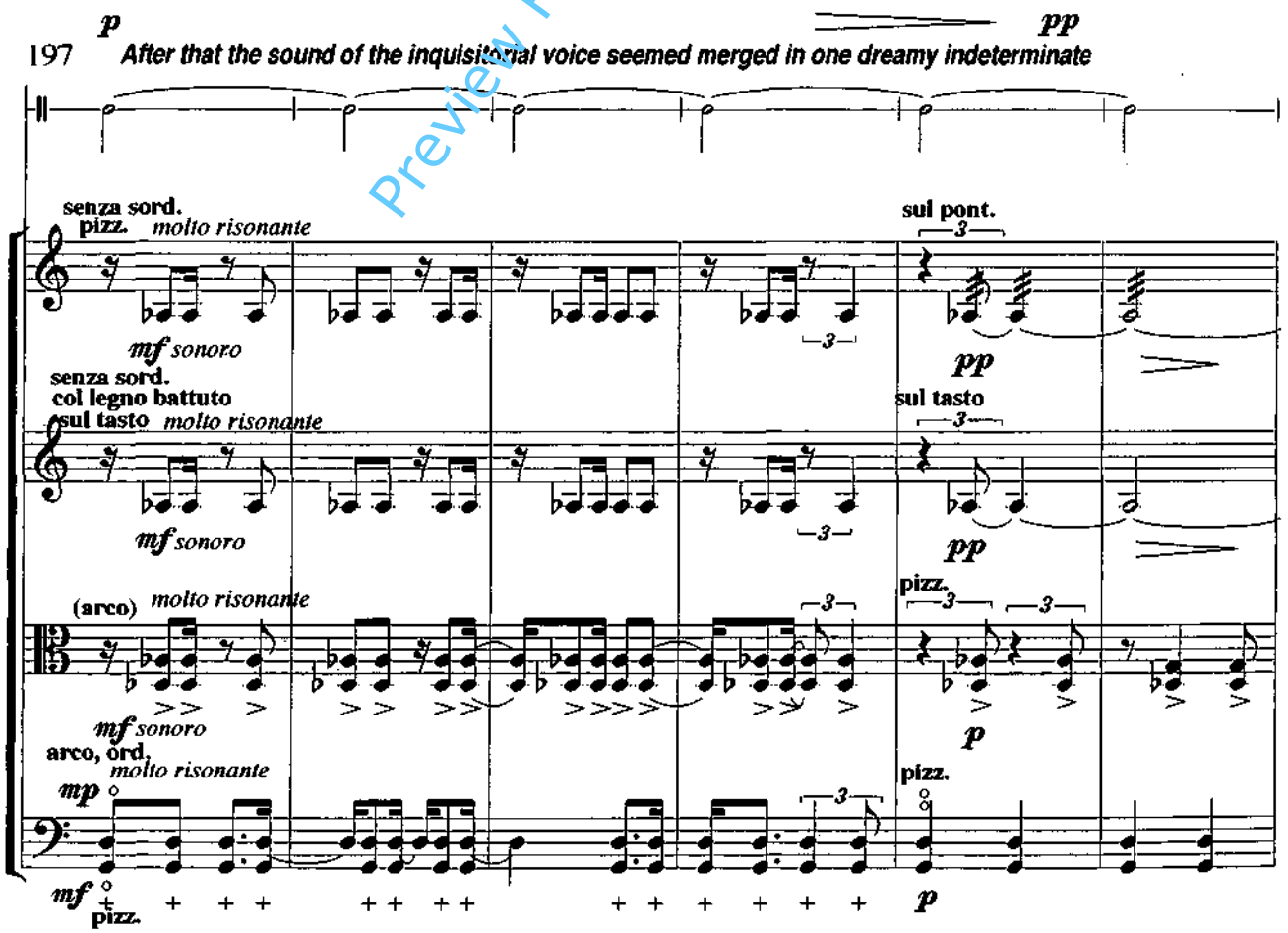


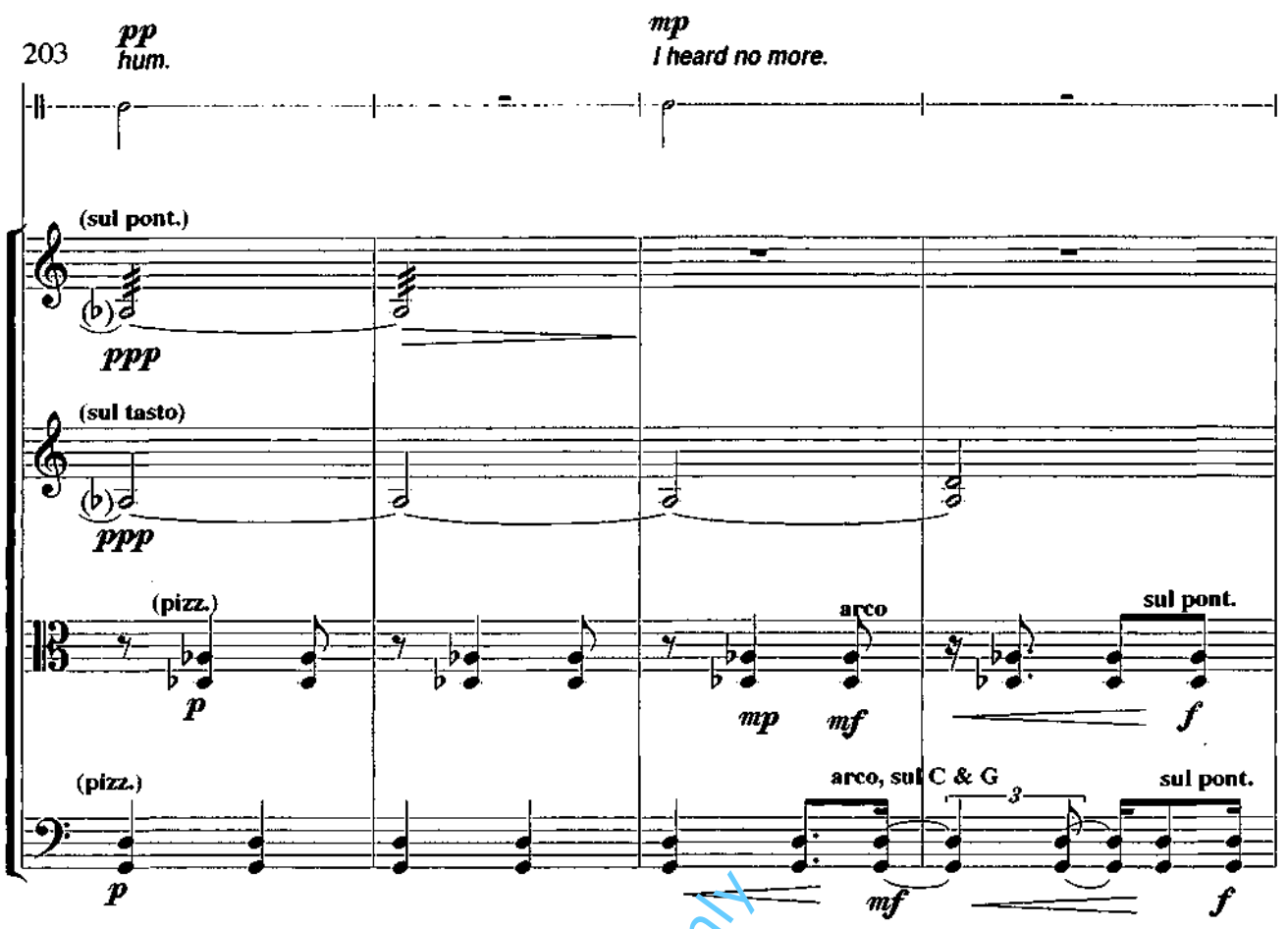
Preview File Only





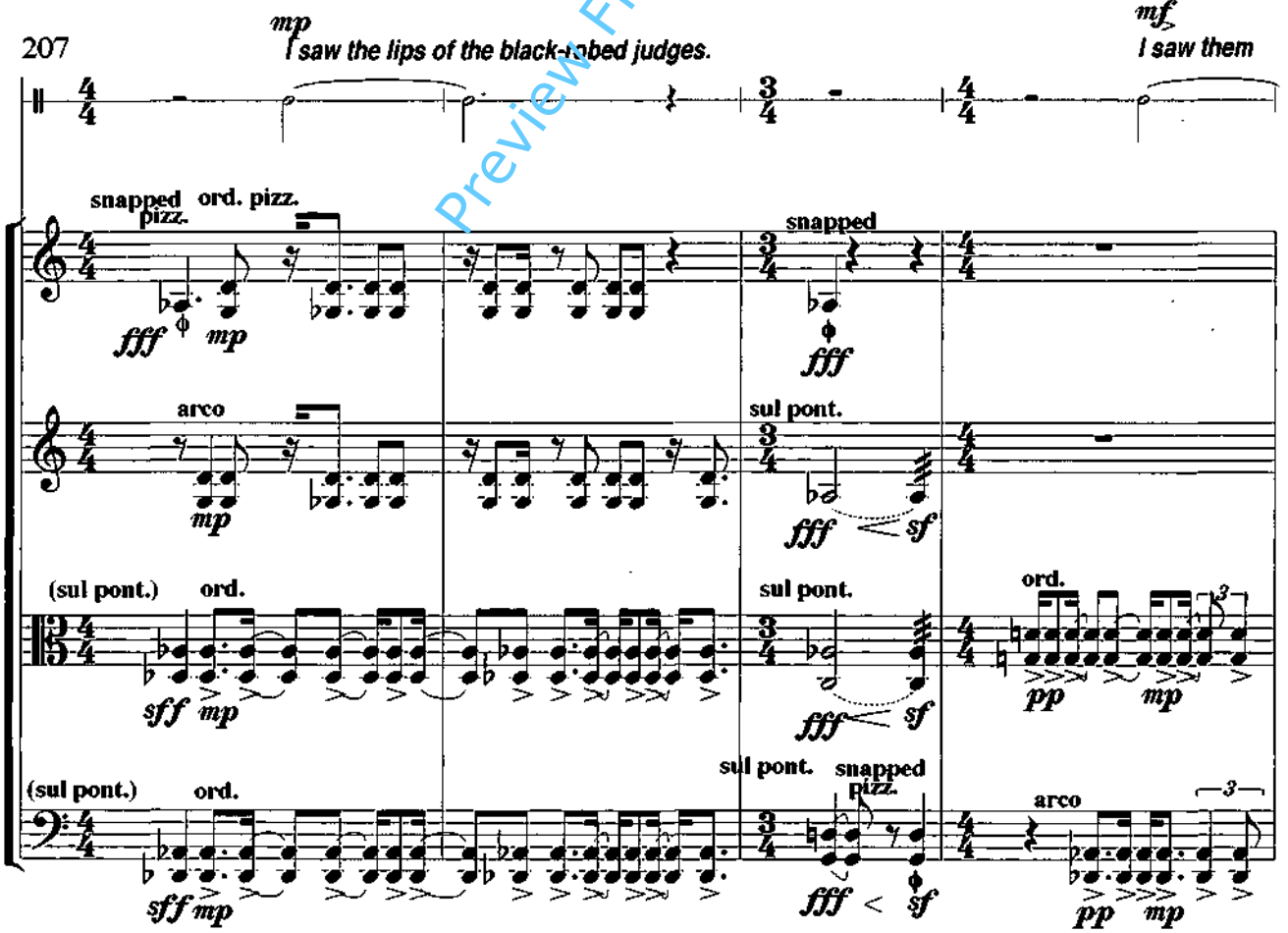
Preview File Only

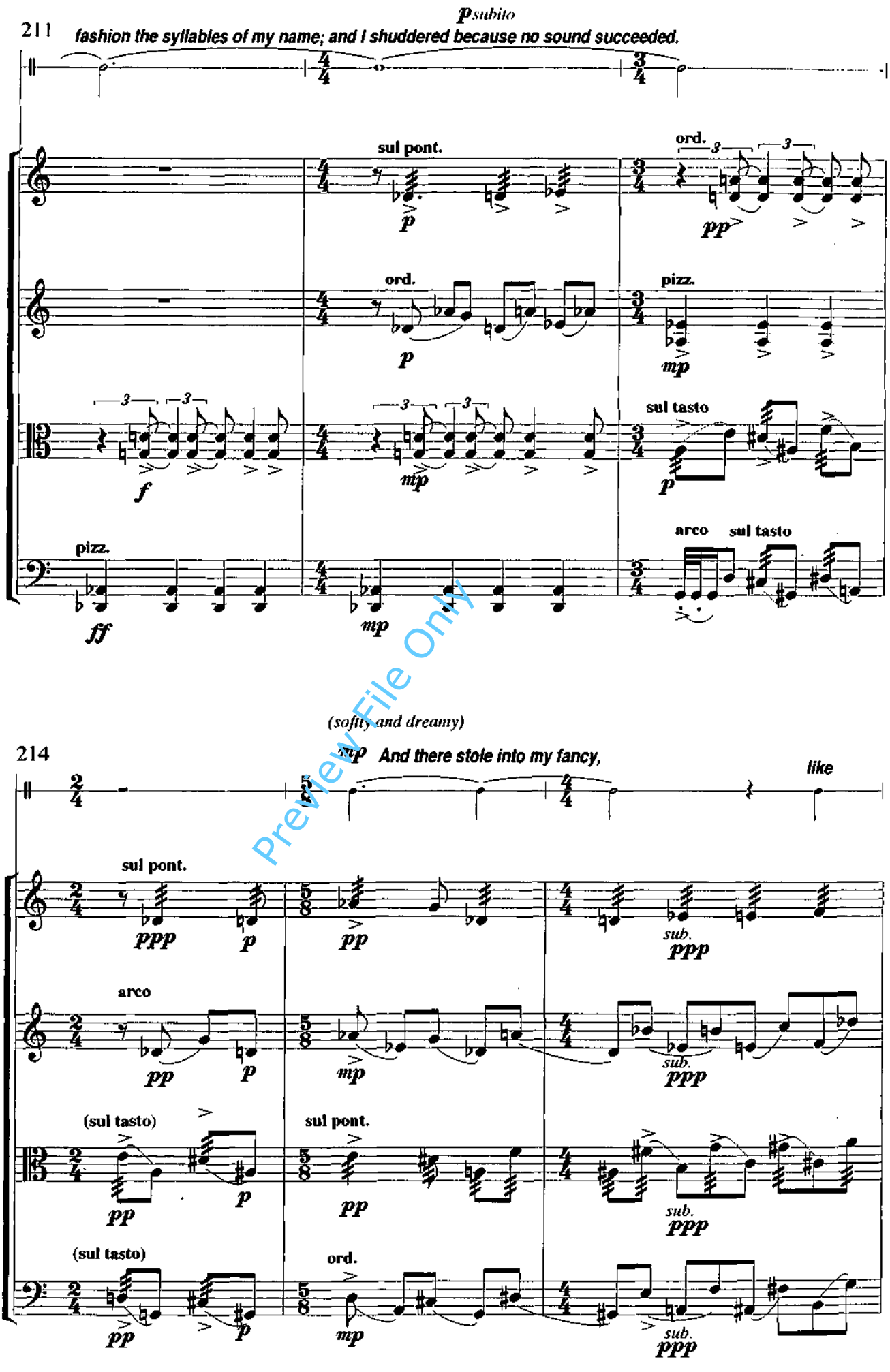




Preview File Only

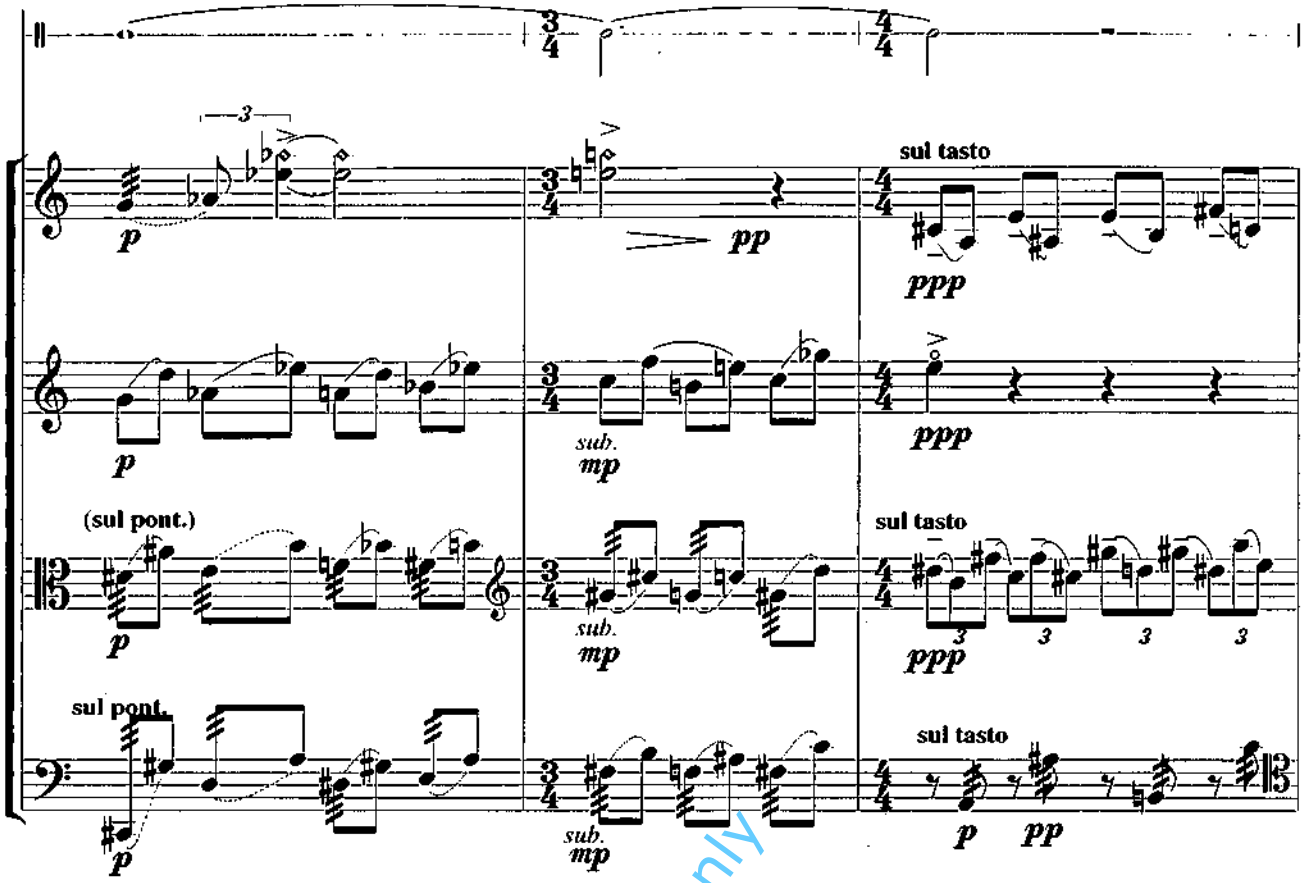
(the tone of the speech becomes increasingly more intense)





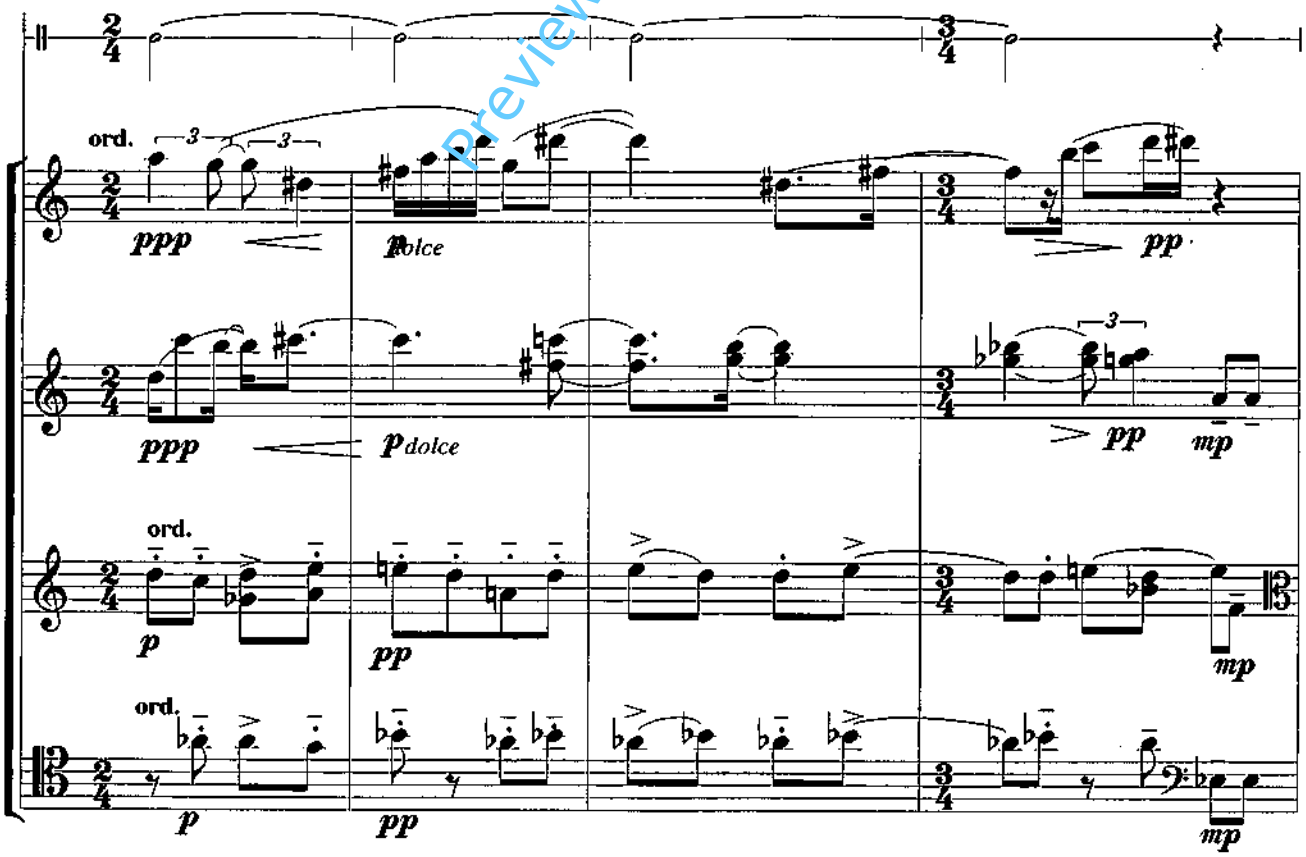
Preview File Only

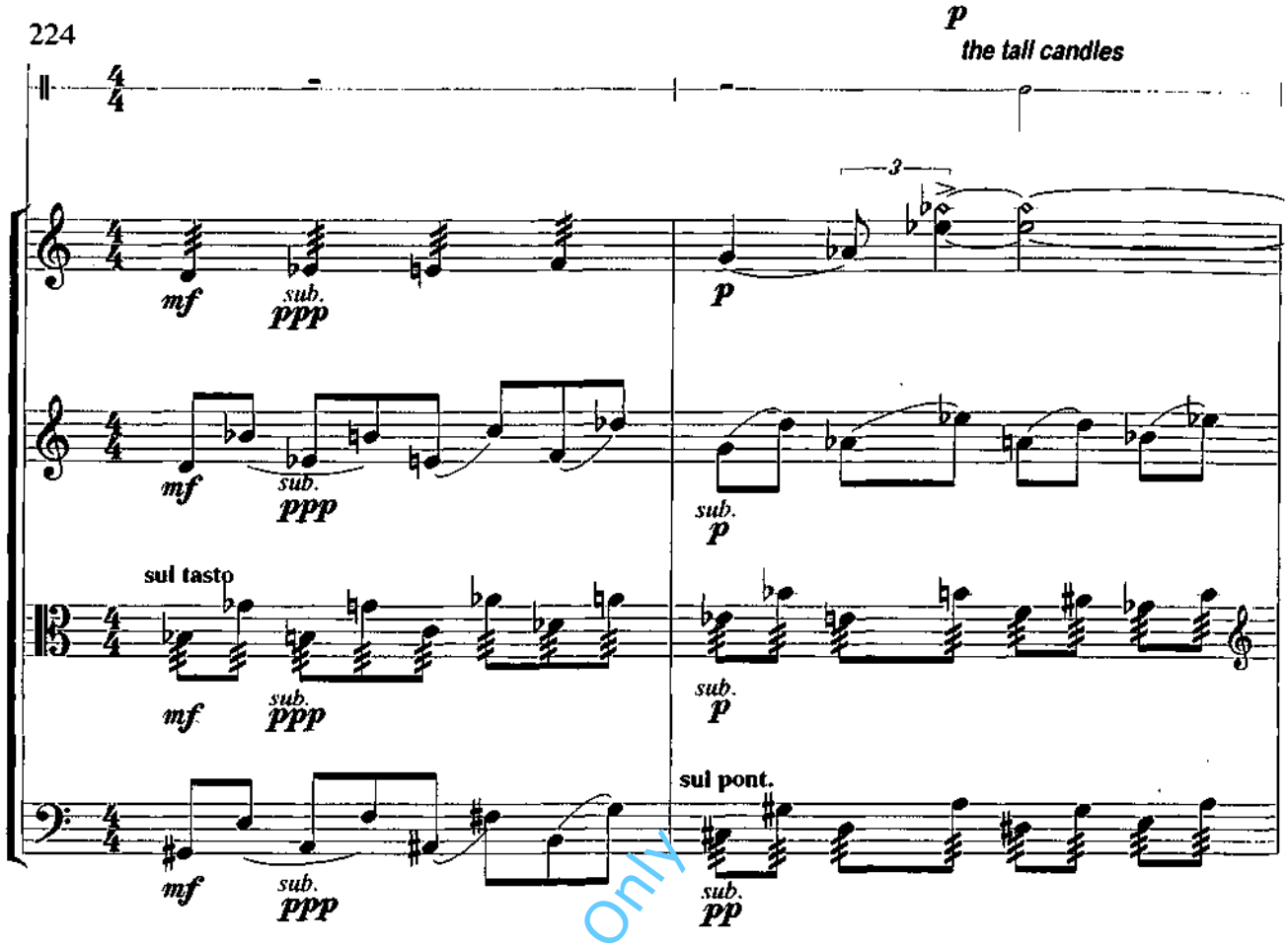
217 *a rich musical note, the thought of what sweet rest there must be in the grave.*

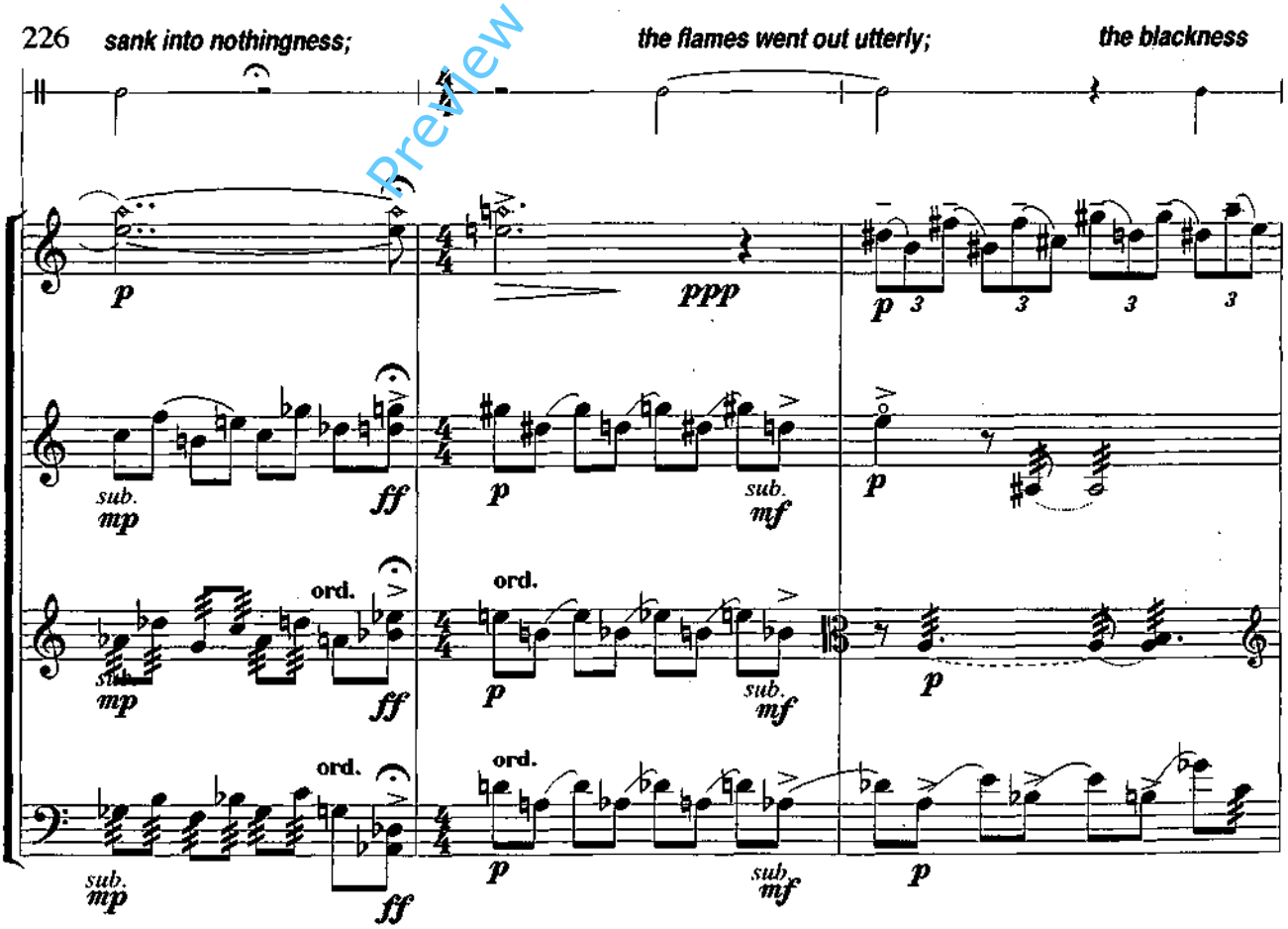


Preview File Only

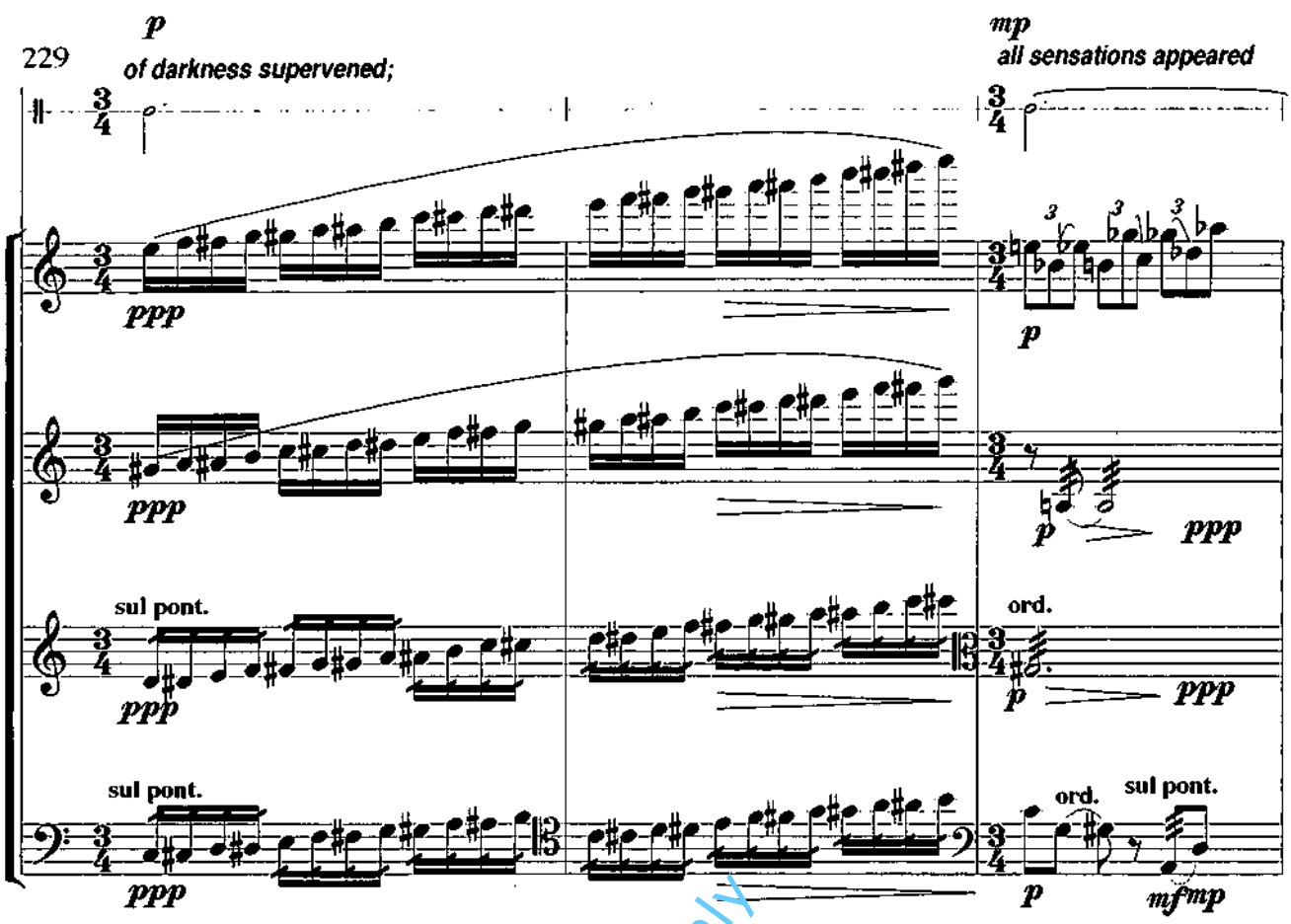
220 *The figures of the judges vanished, as if magically, from before me;*



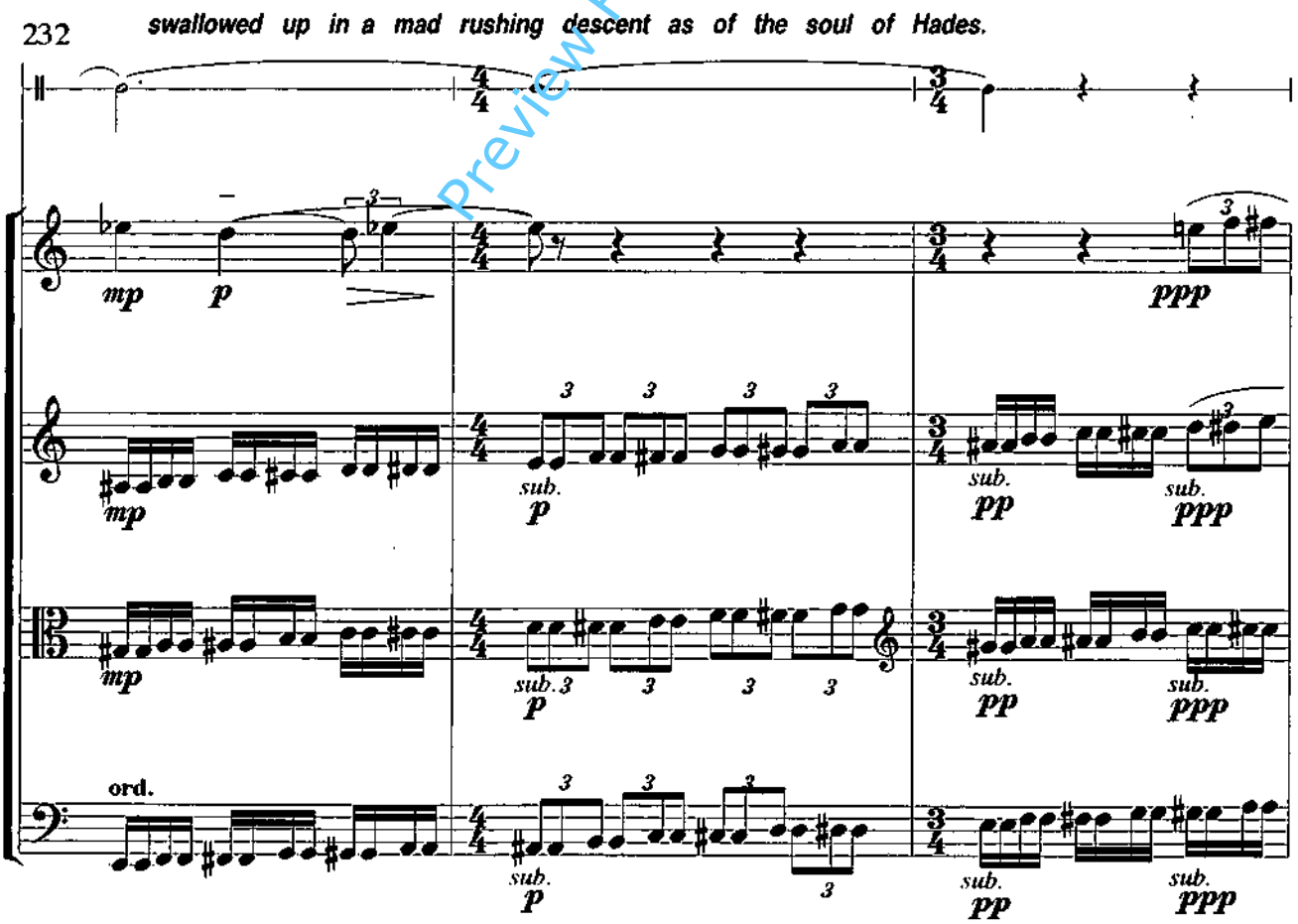




Preview File Only

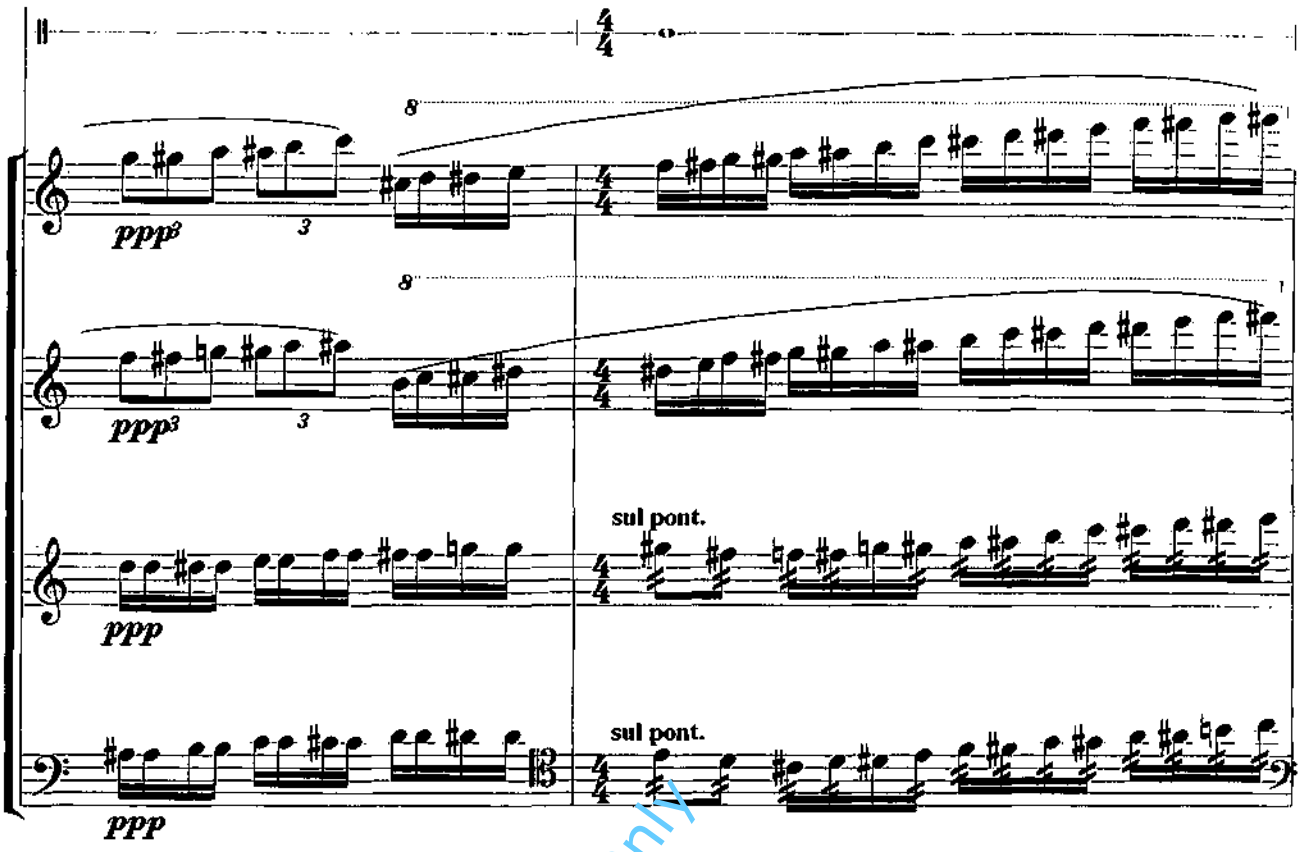


Preview File Only



235

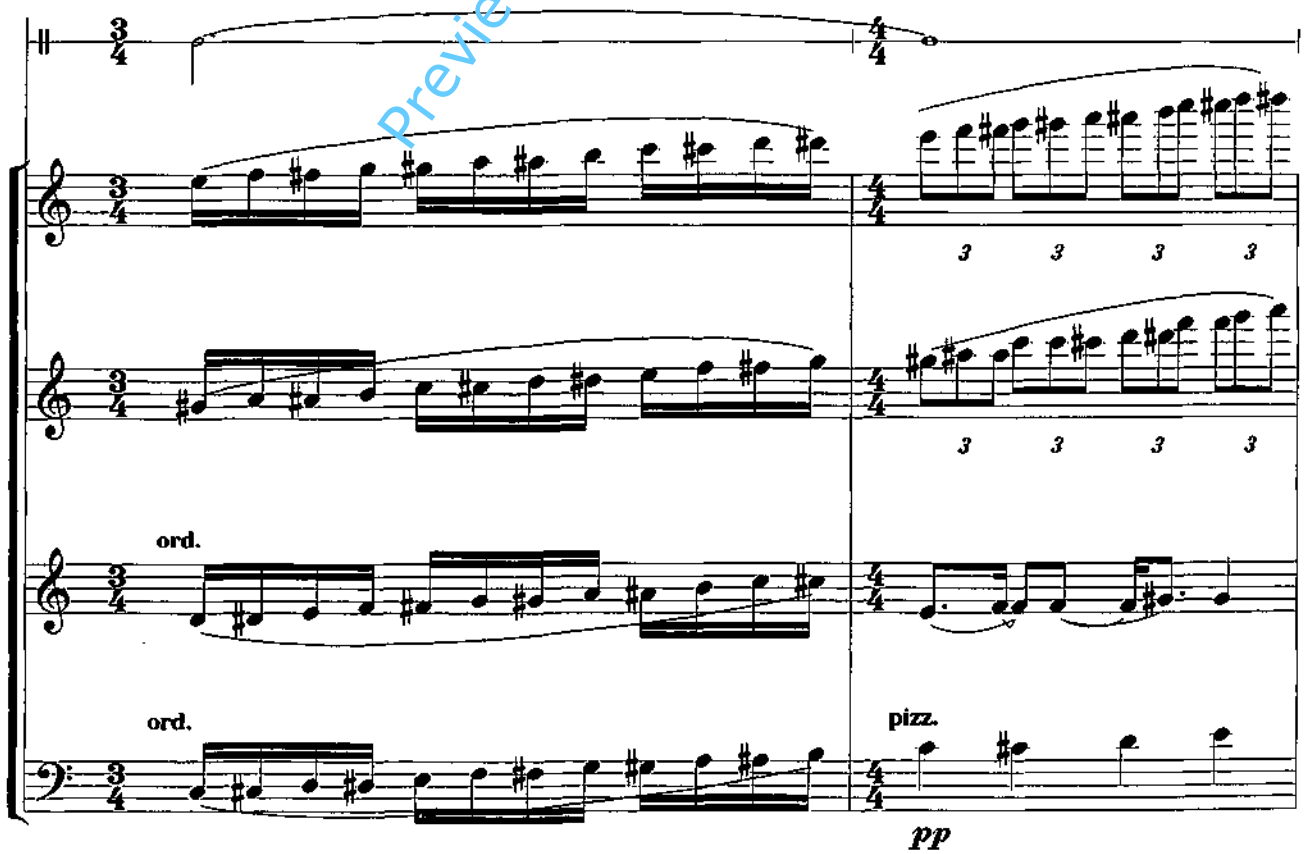
p *Then siiii.....lence,*

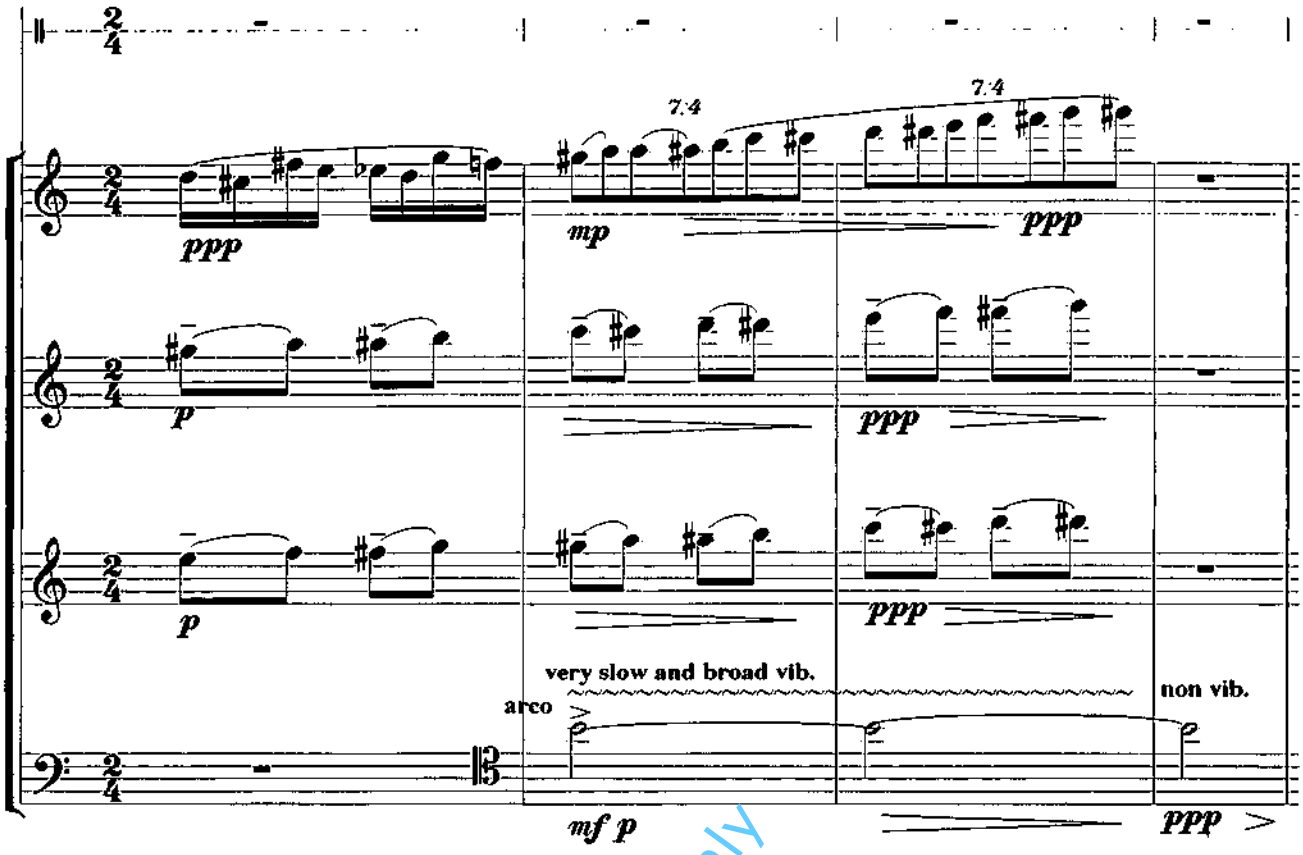


Preview File Only

237

and stillness, and night were the universe.



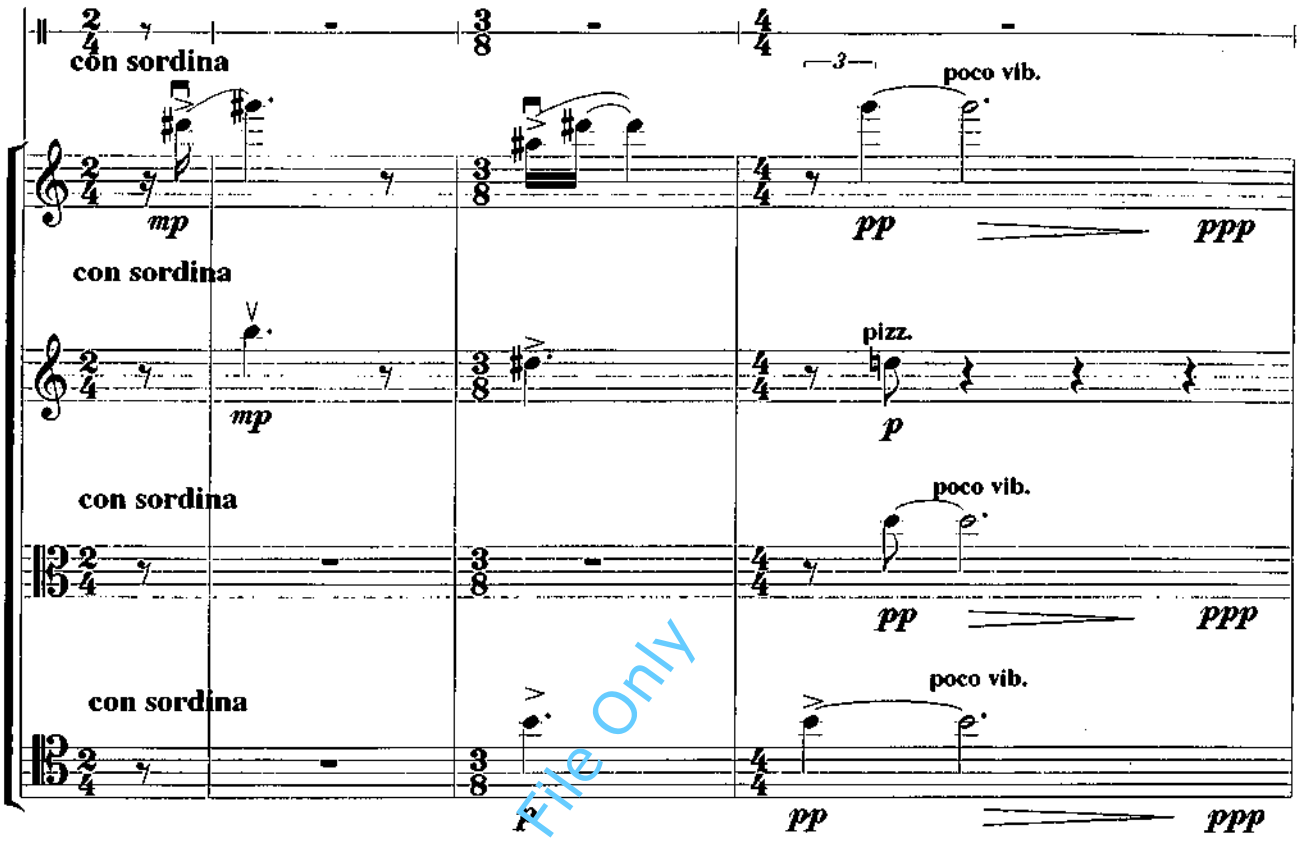


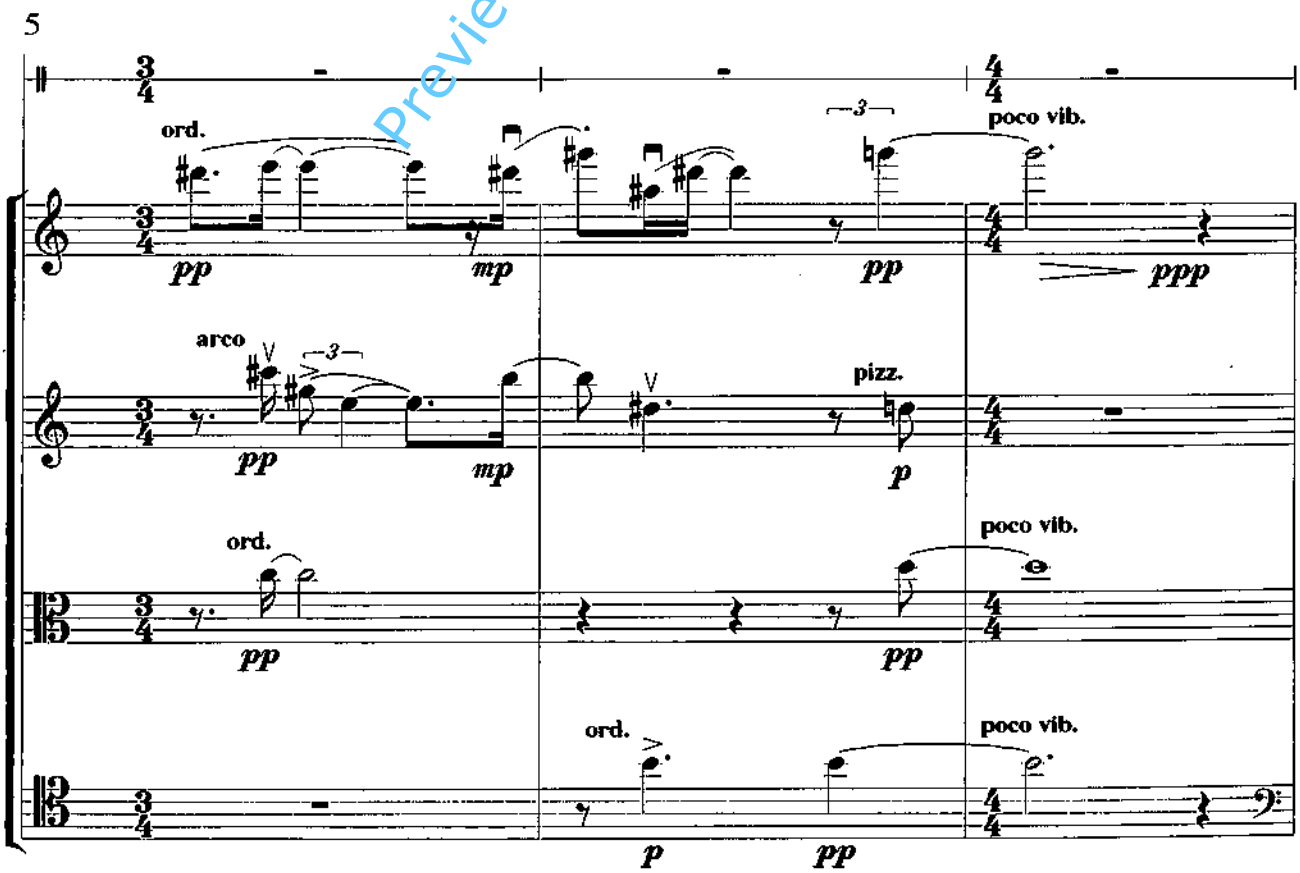
Preview File Only

III – The Mirror of Wind and Moon

I – prelude

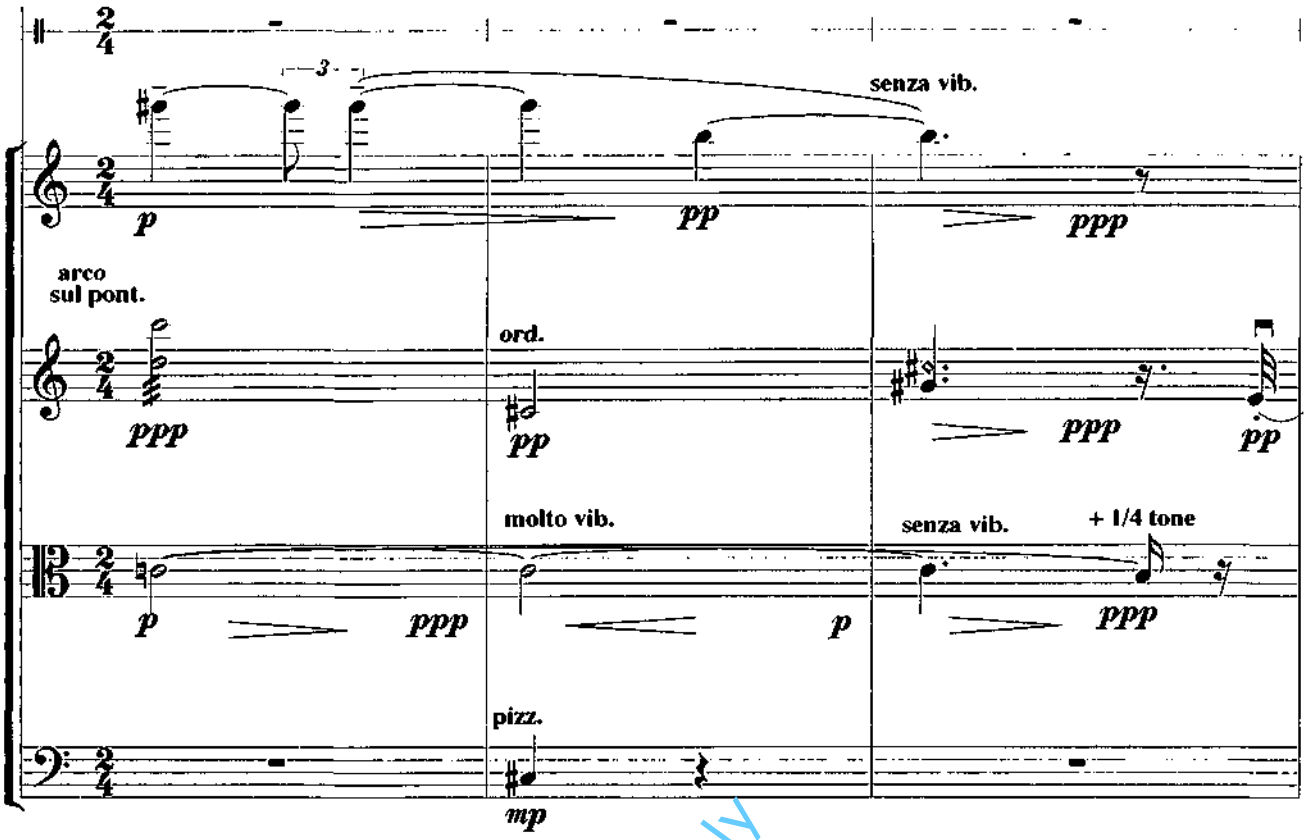
come se da lontano, ♩ = 84





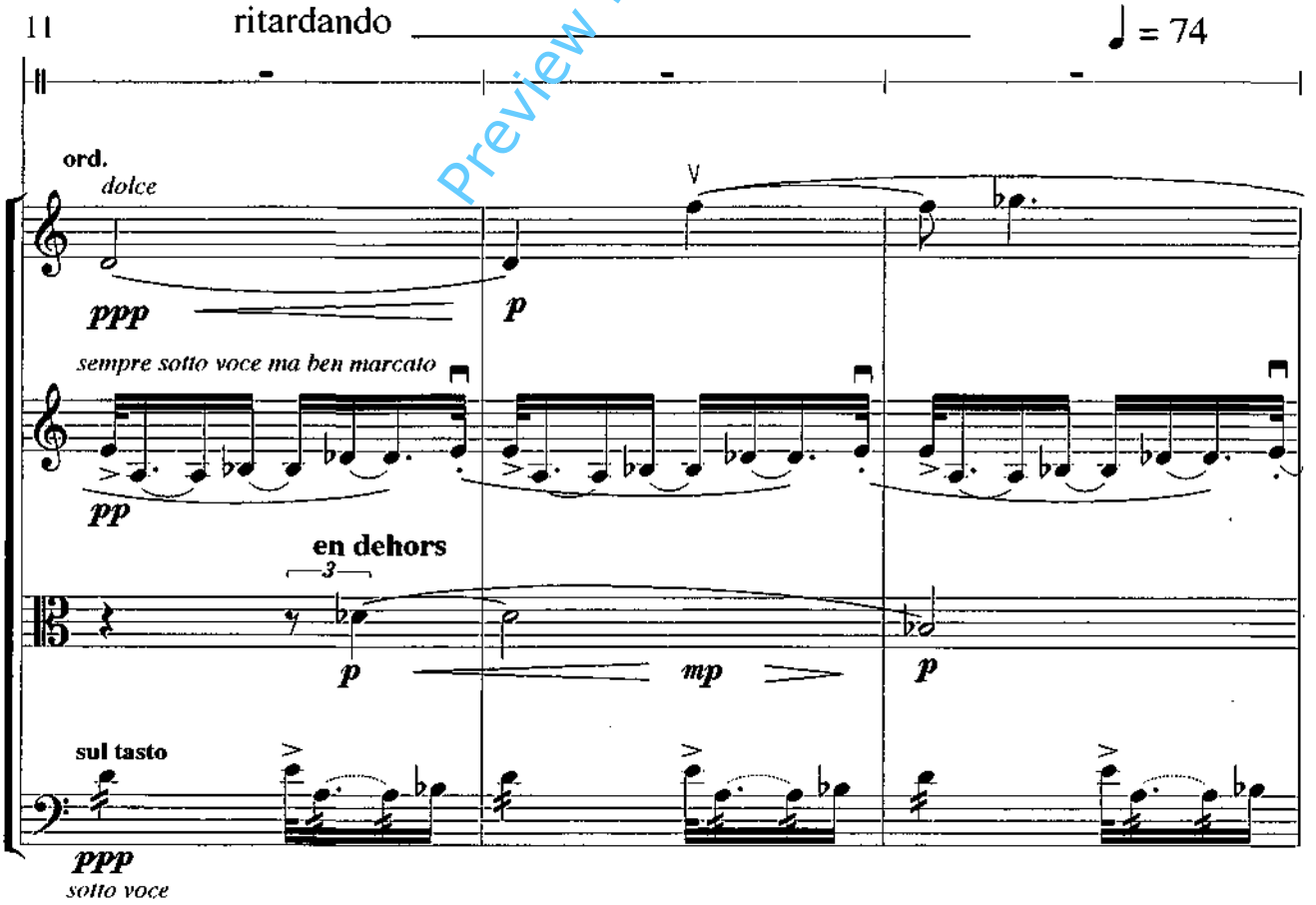
Preview File Only

8

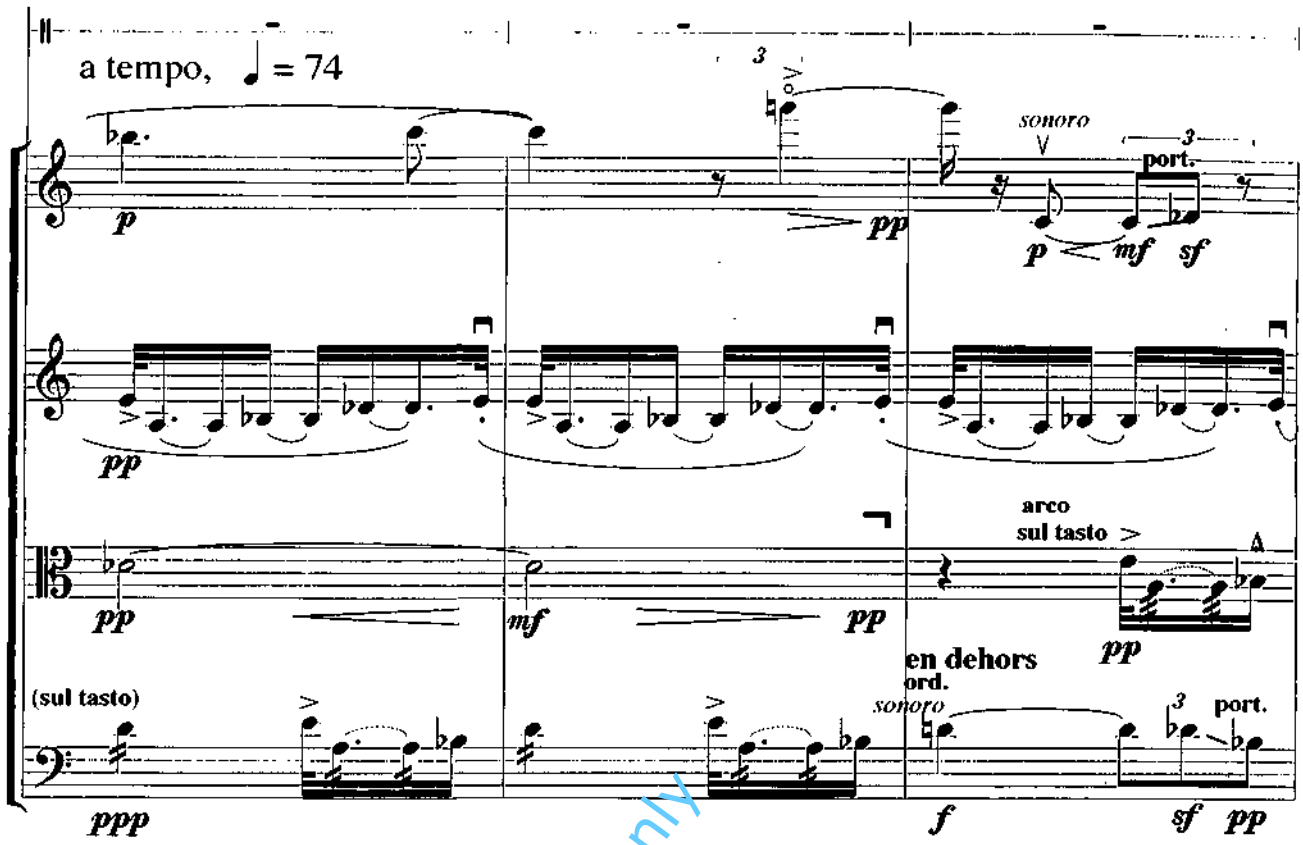


Preview File Only

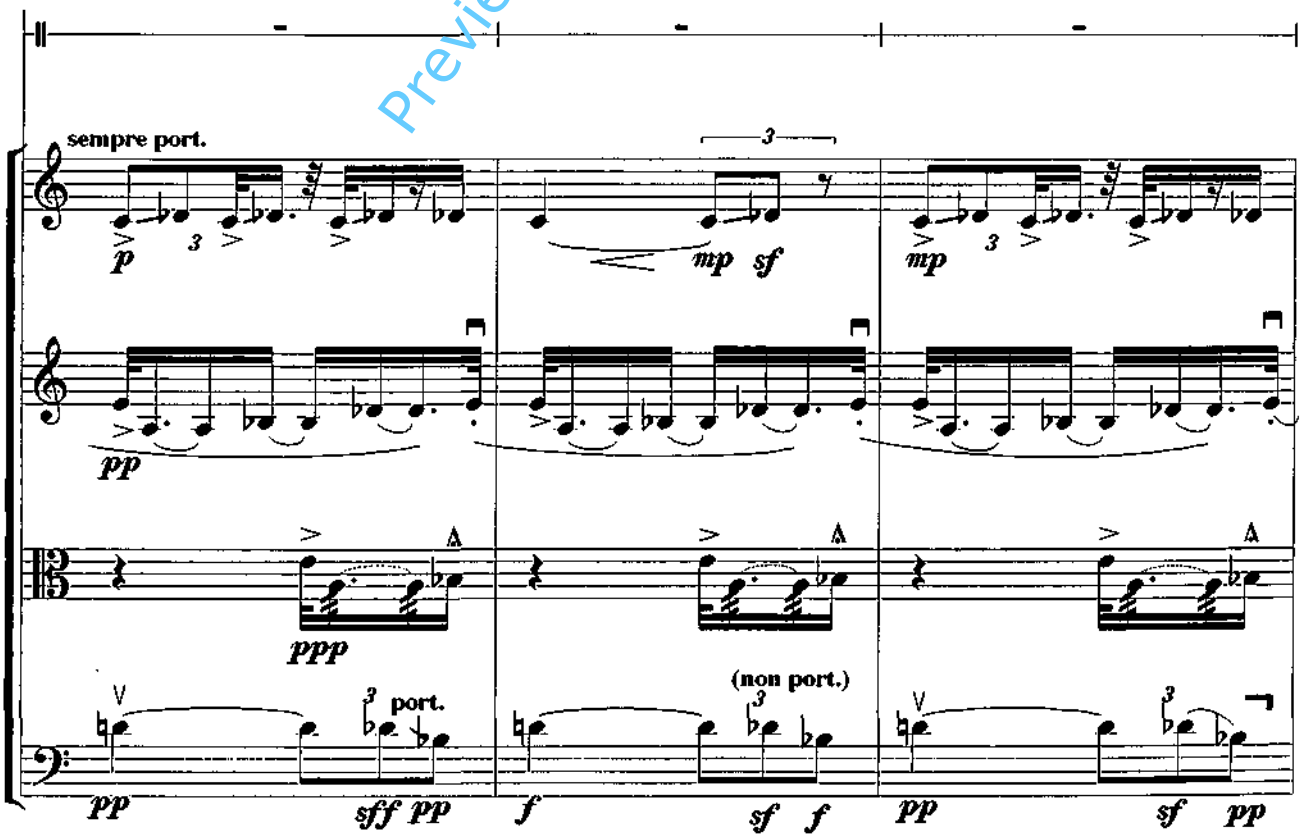
11 ritardando ♩ = 74



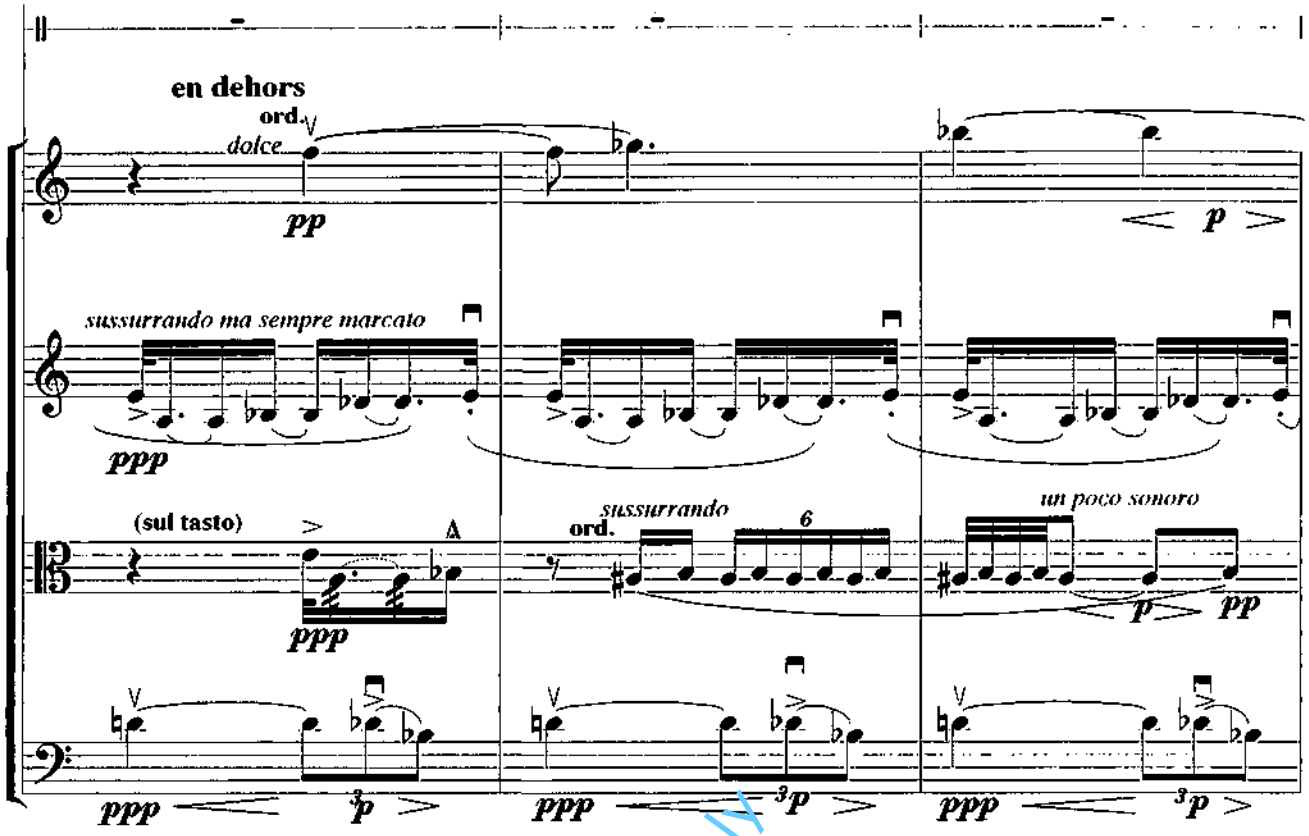
14



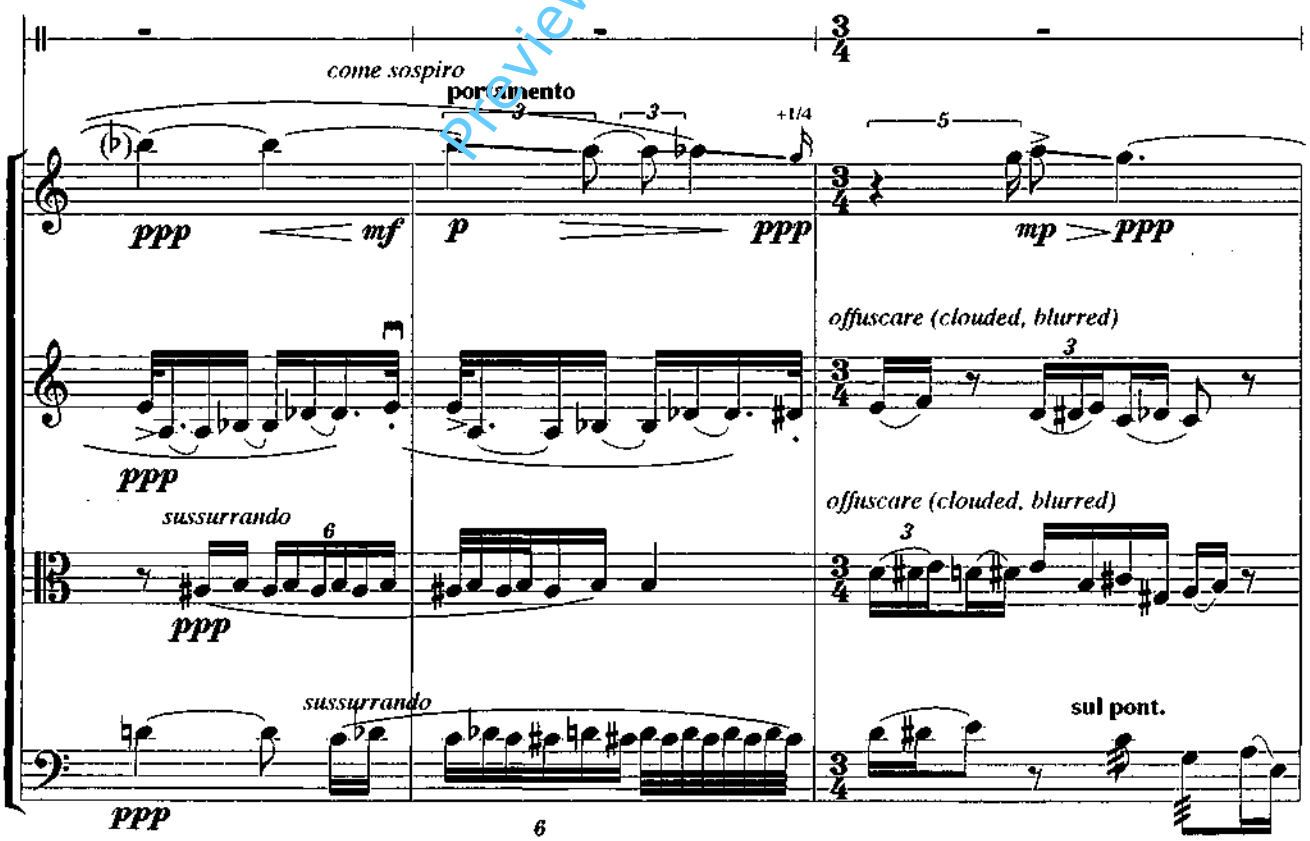
17

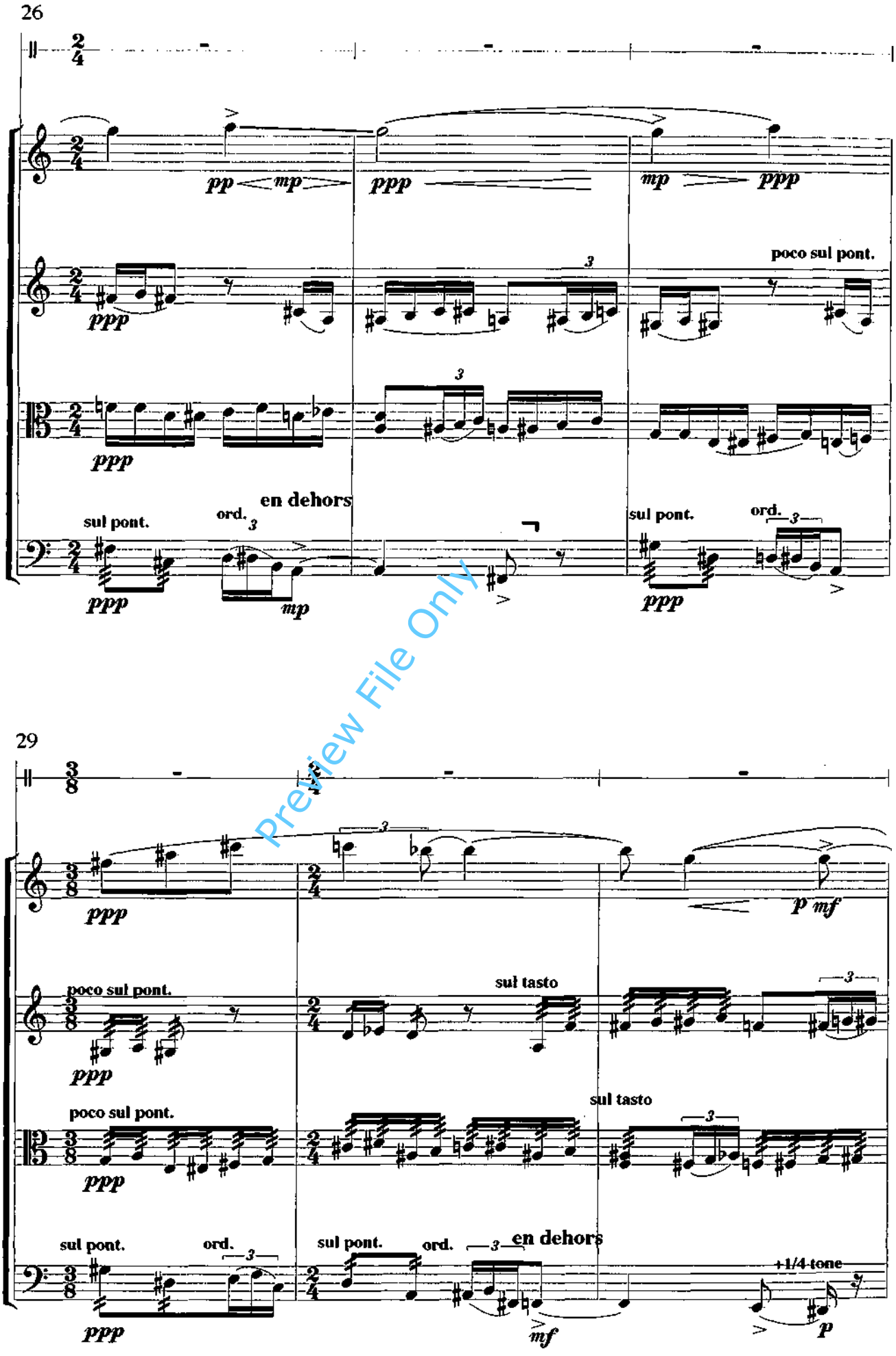


Preview File Only



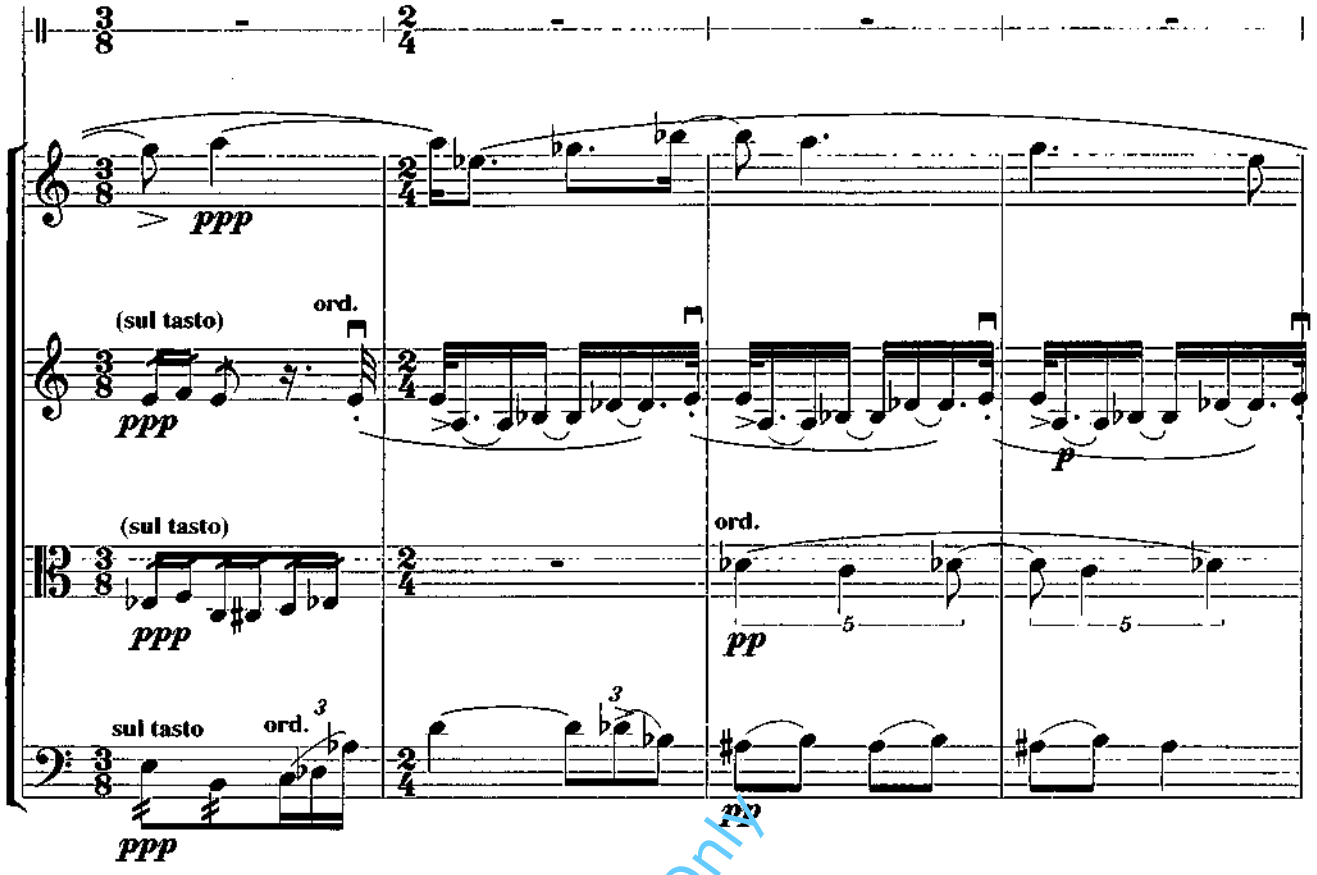
Preview File Only





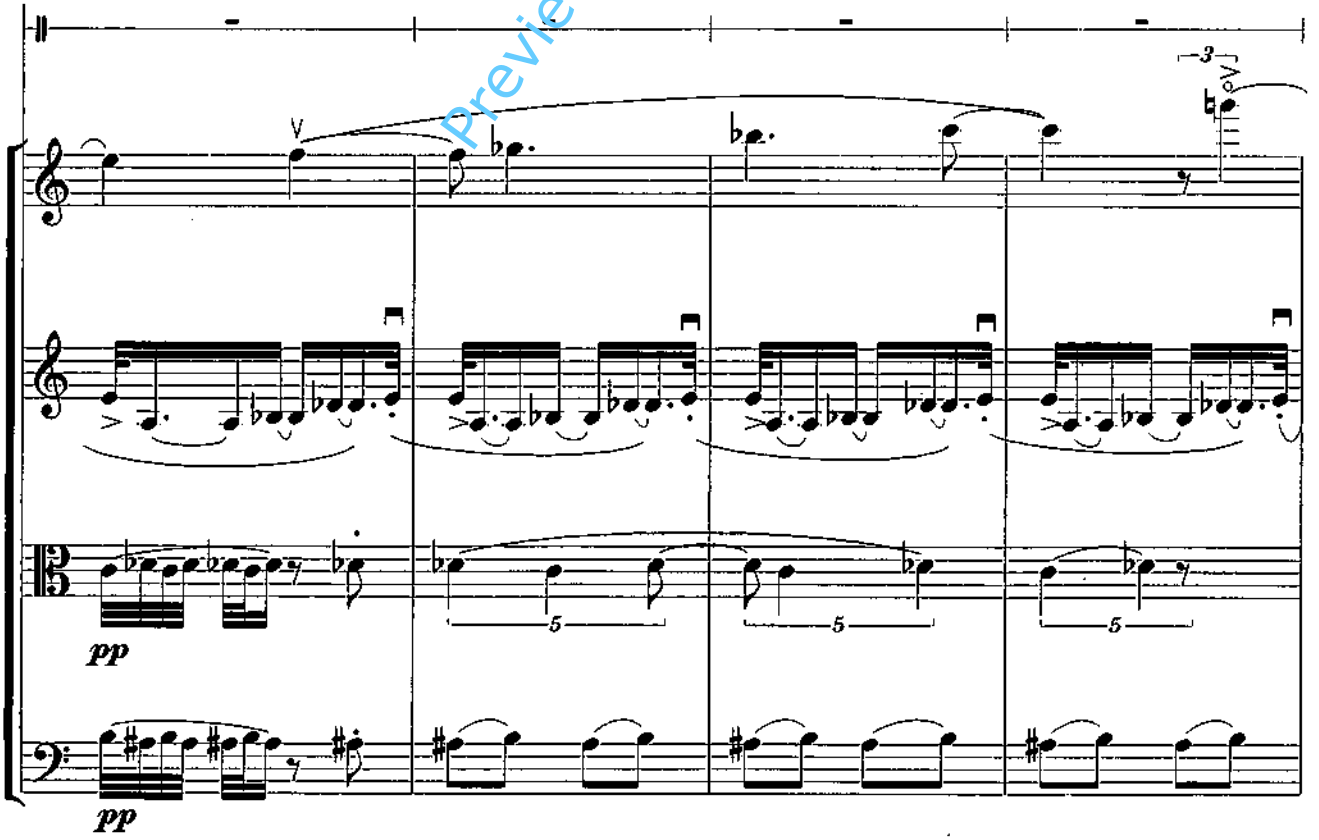
Preview File Only

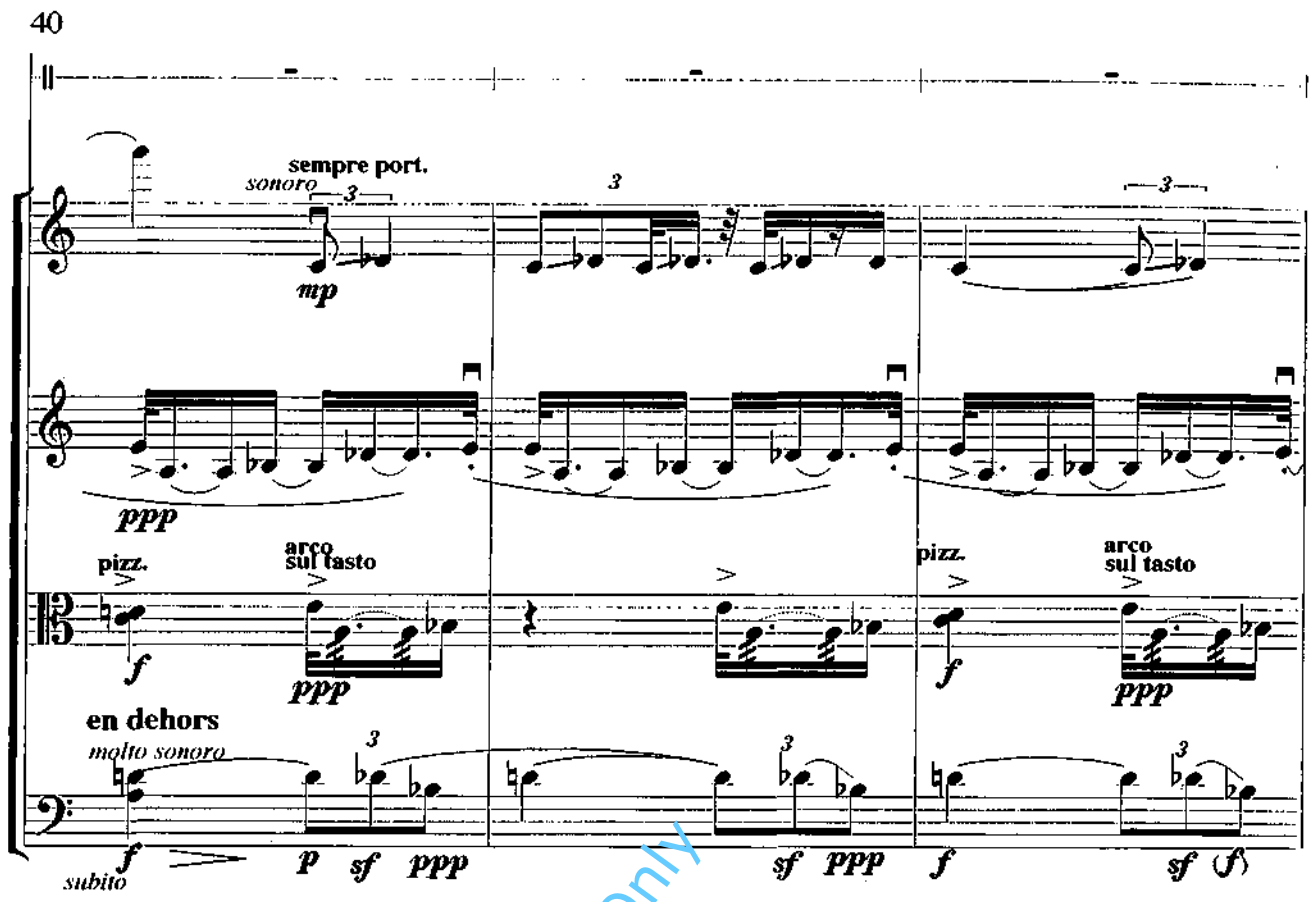
32

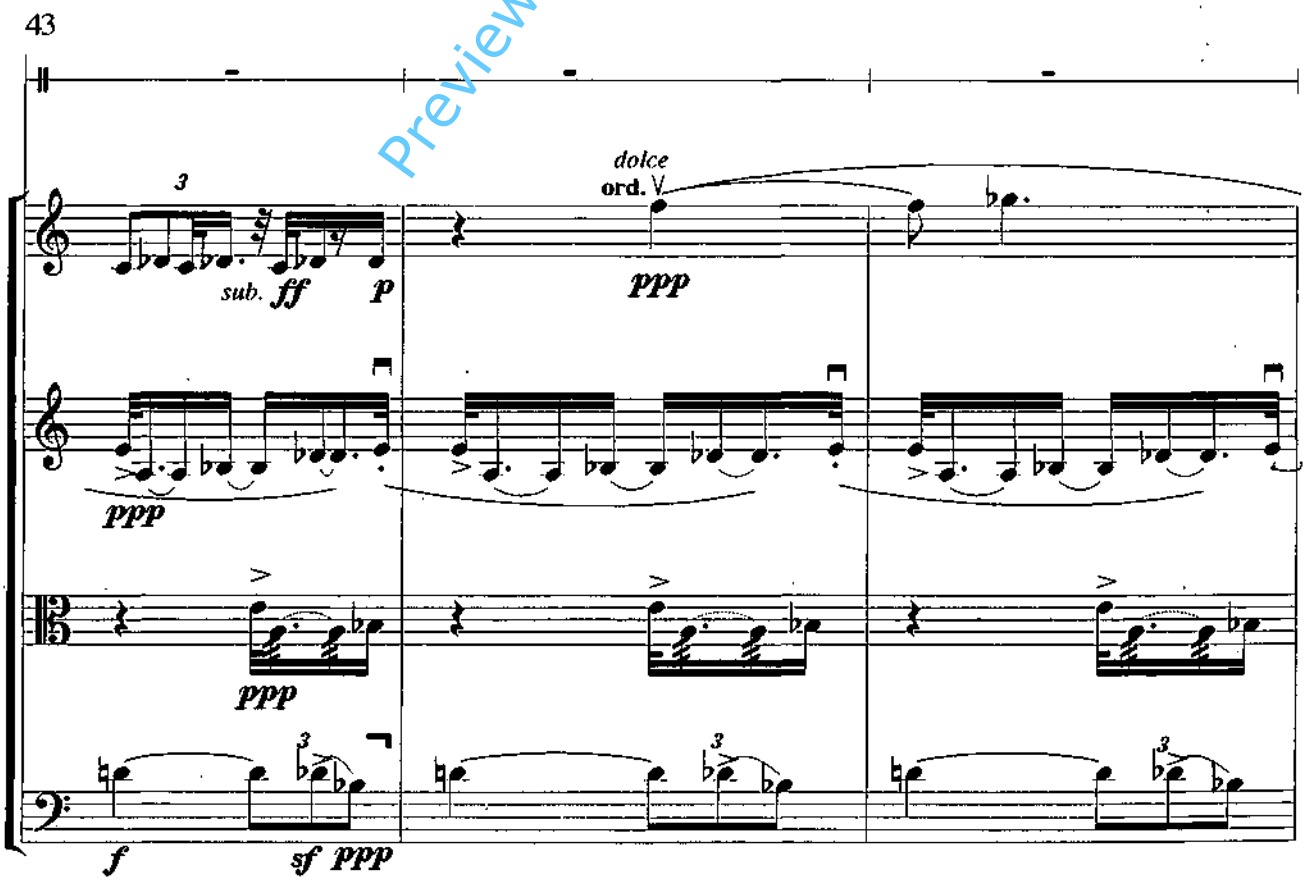


Preview File Only

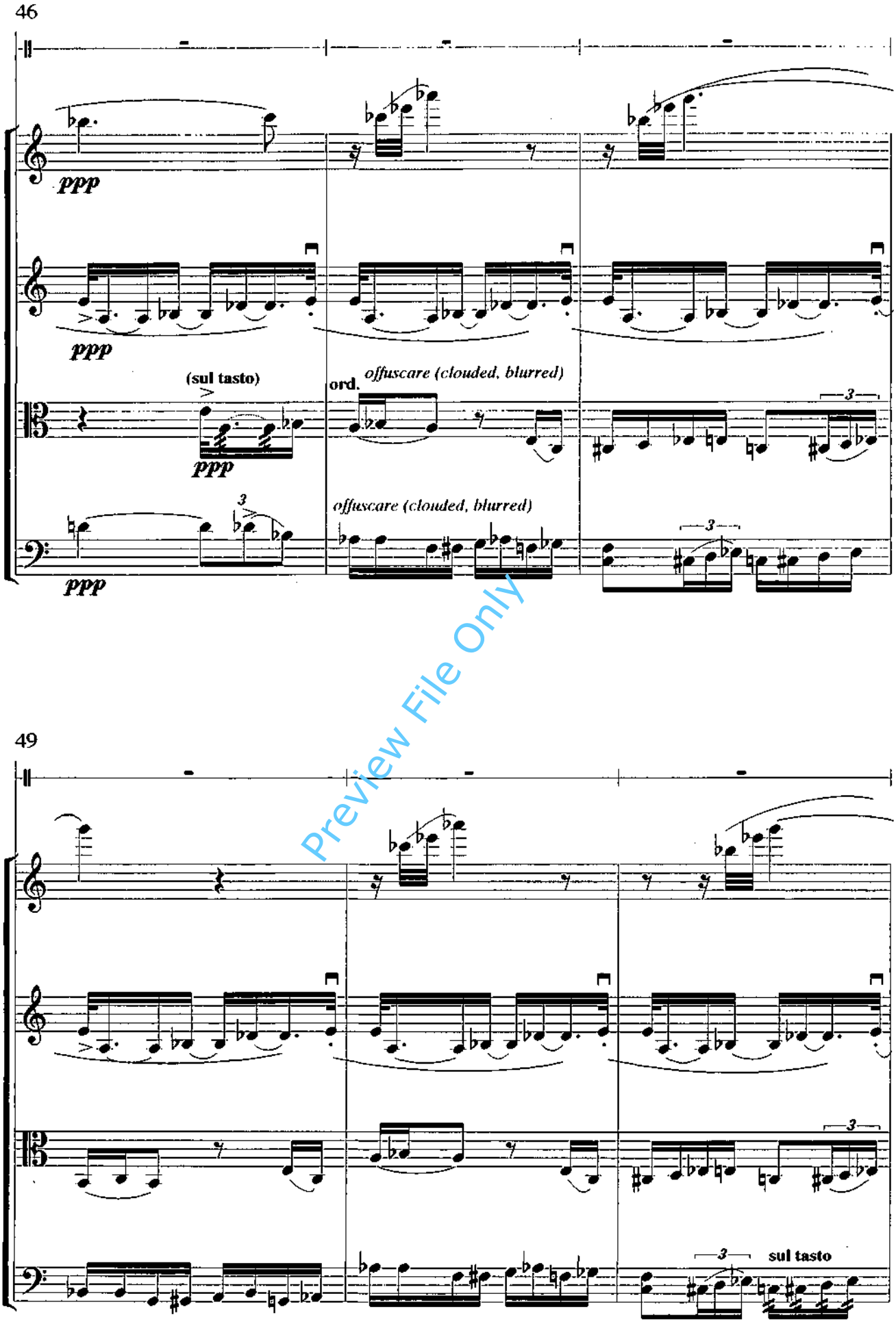
36



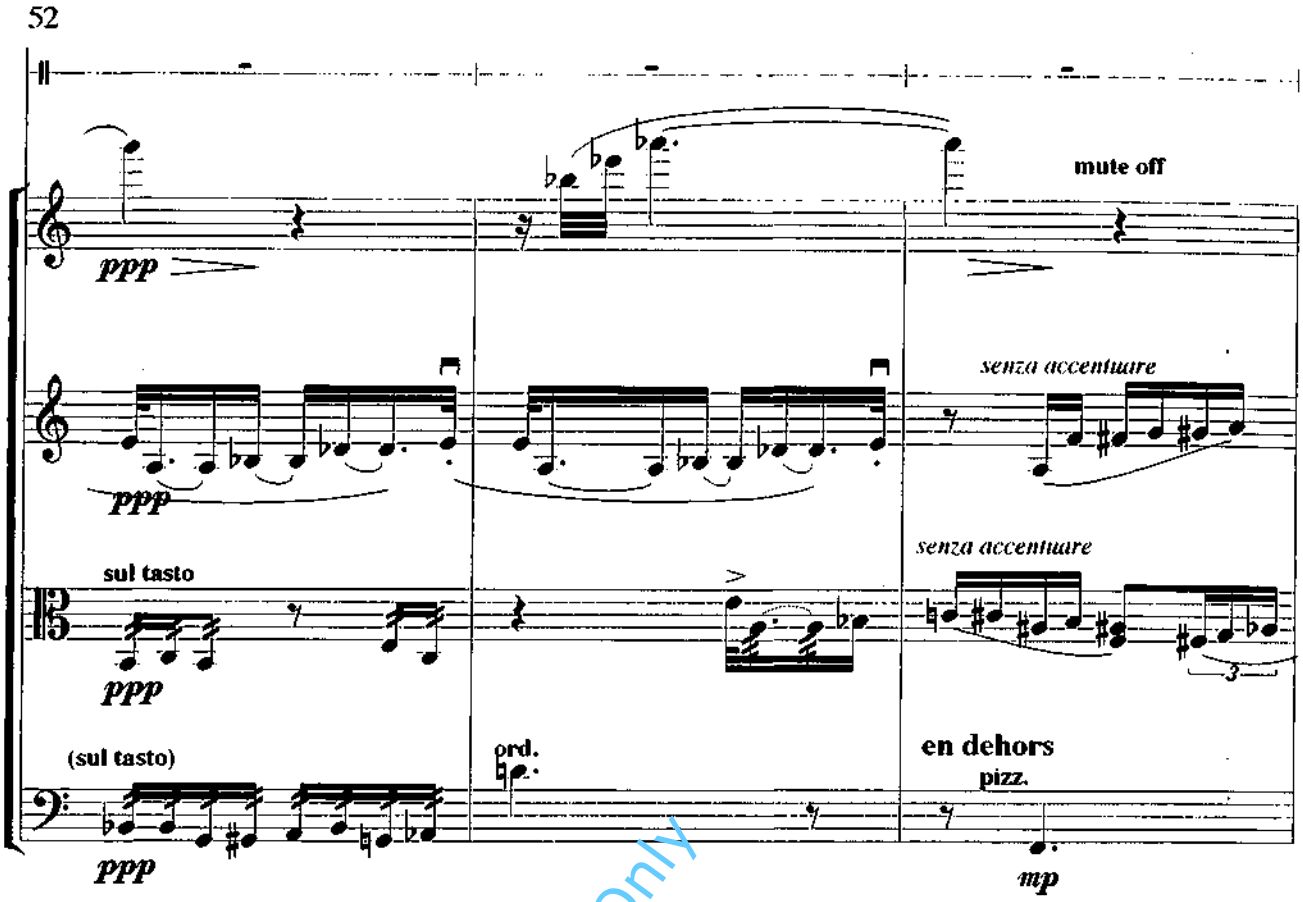




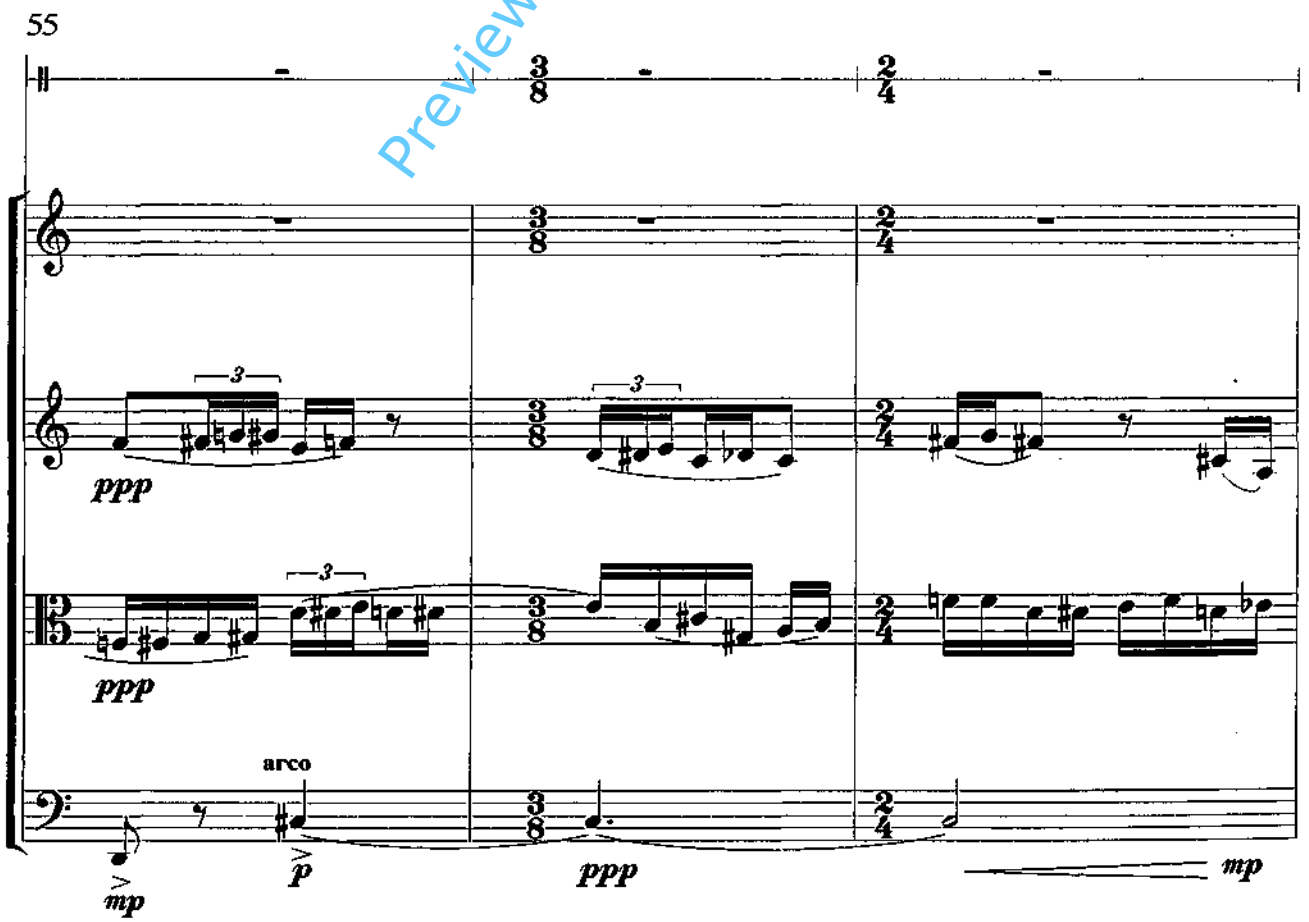
Preview File Only

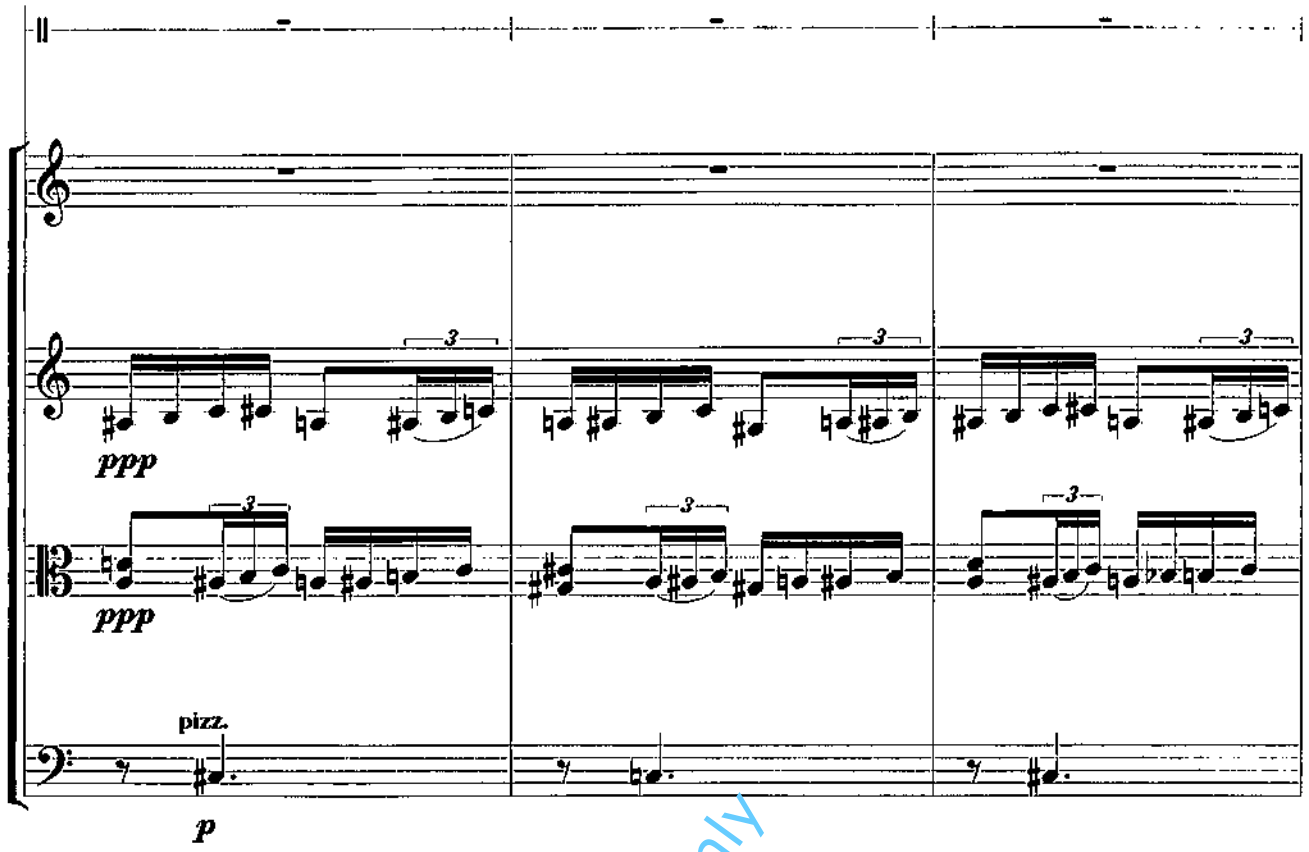


Preview File Only



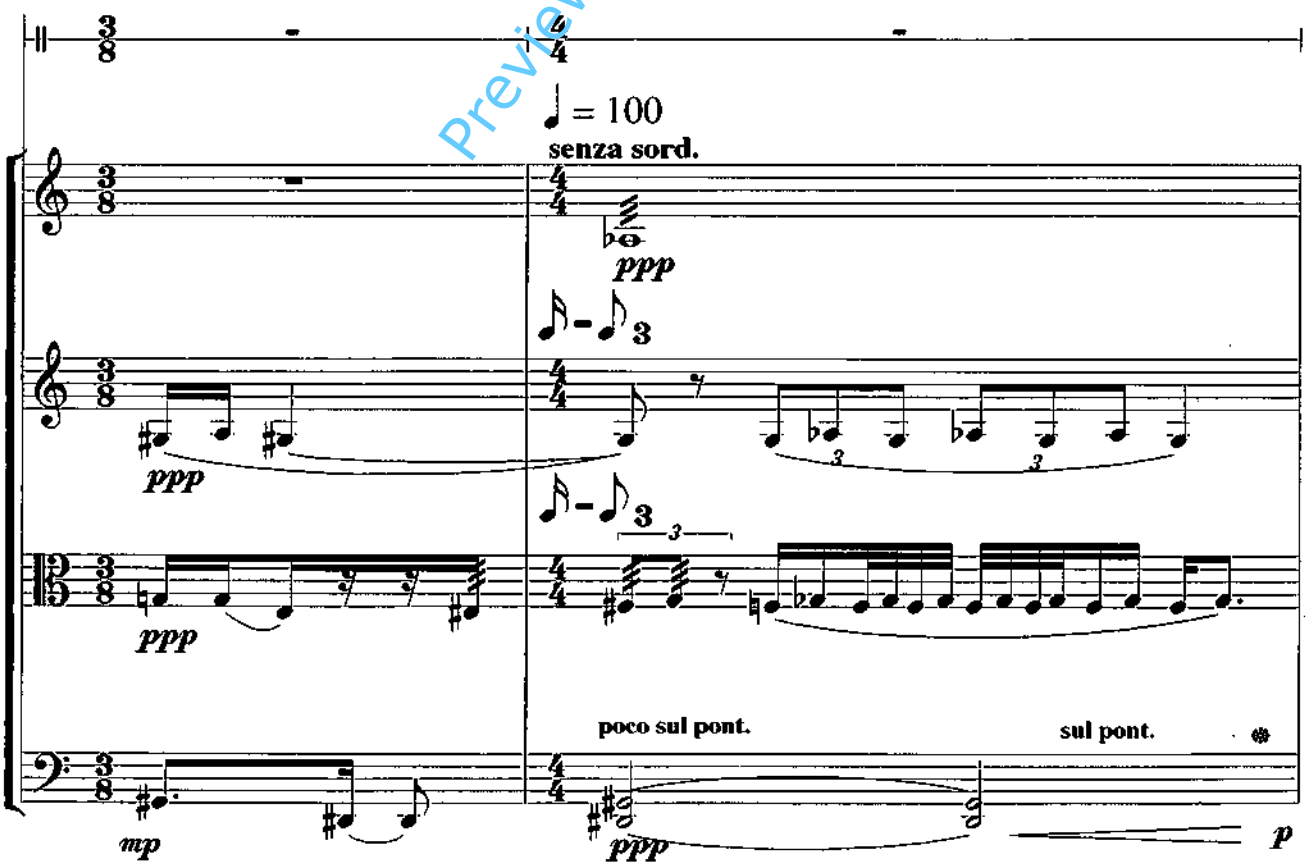
Preview File Only





Preview File Only

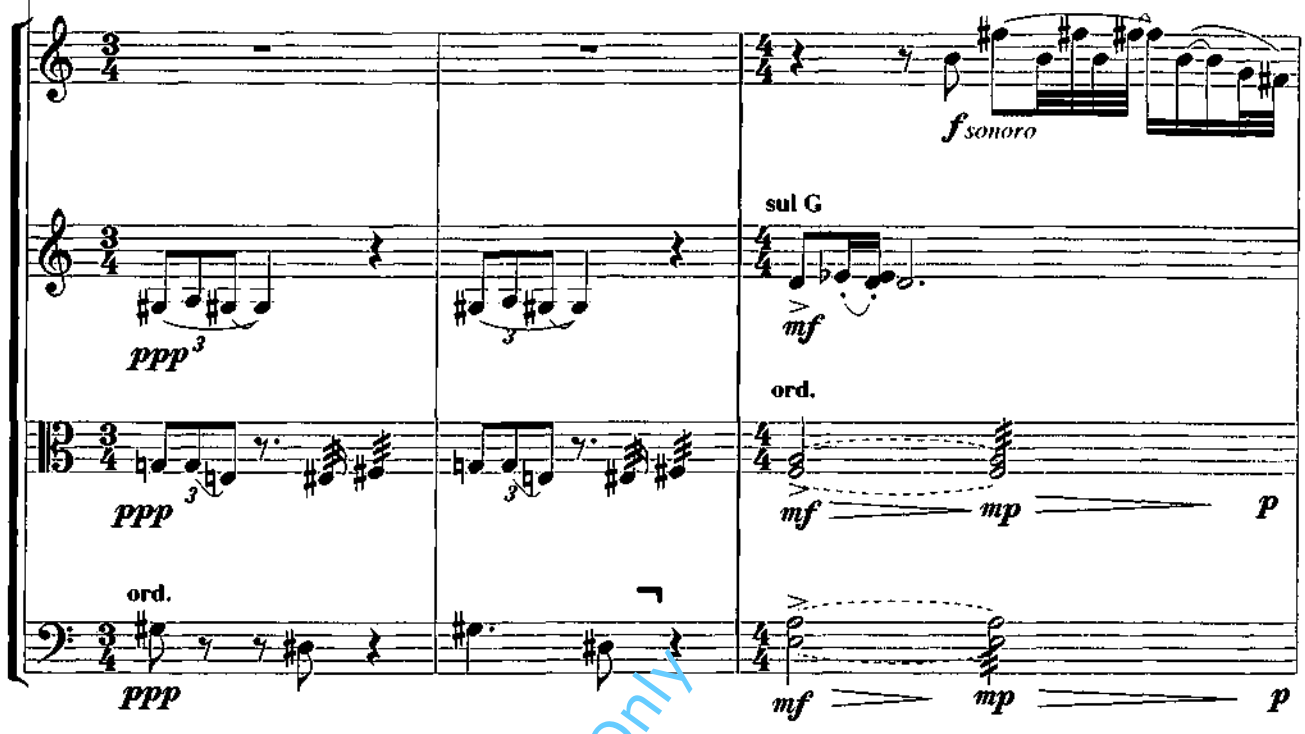
61



• only let the higher harmonics ring loudly towards the end of the note

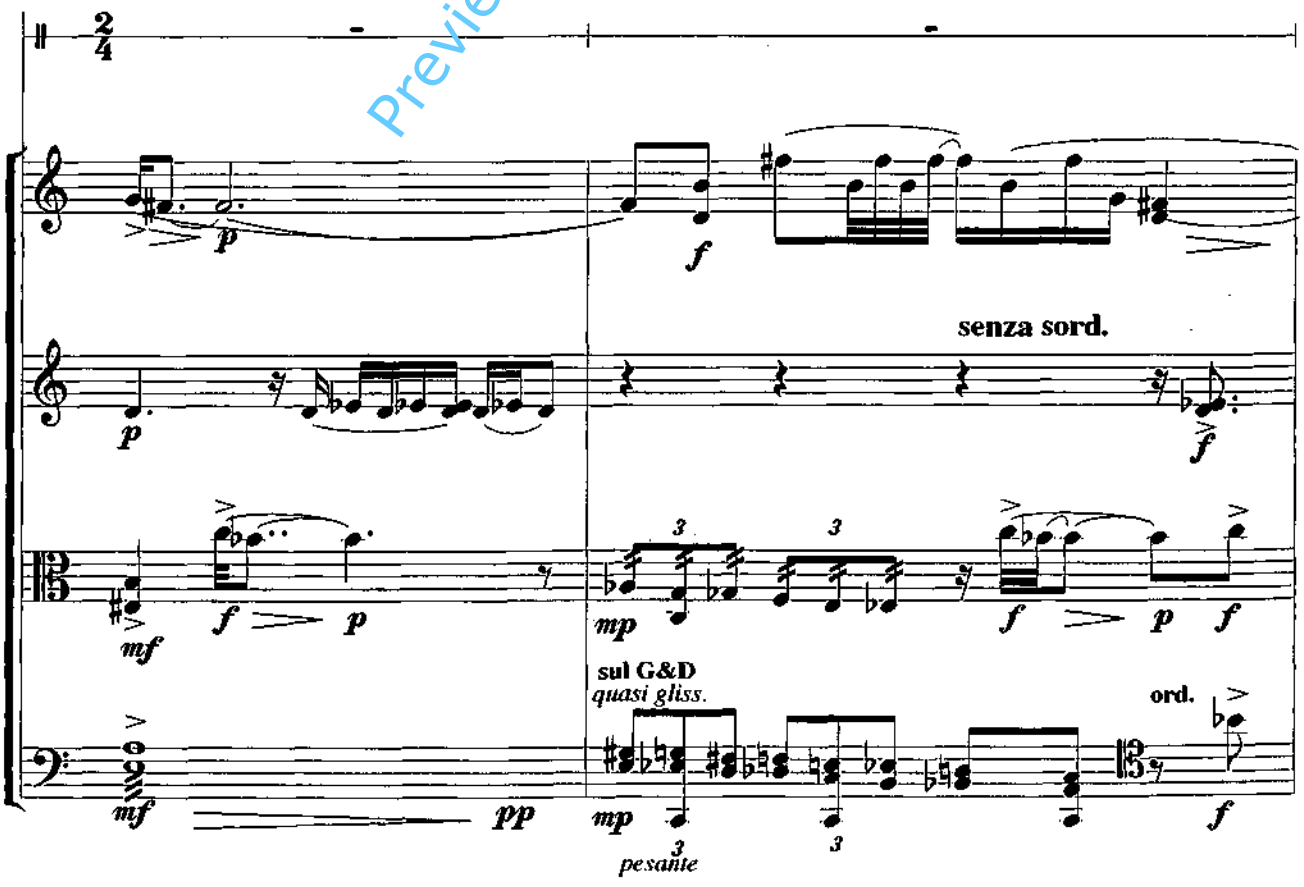
2 – fanfare

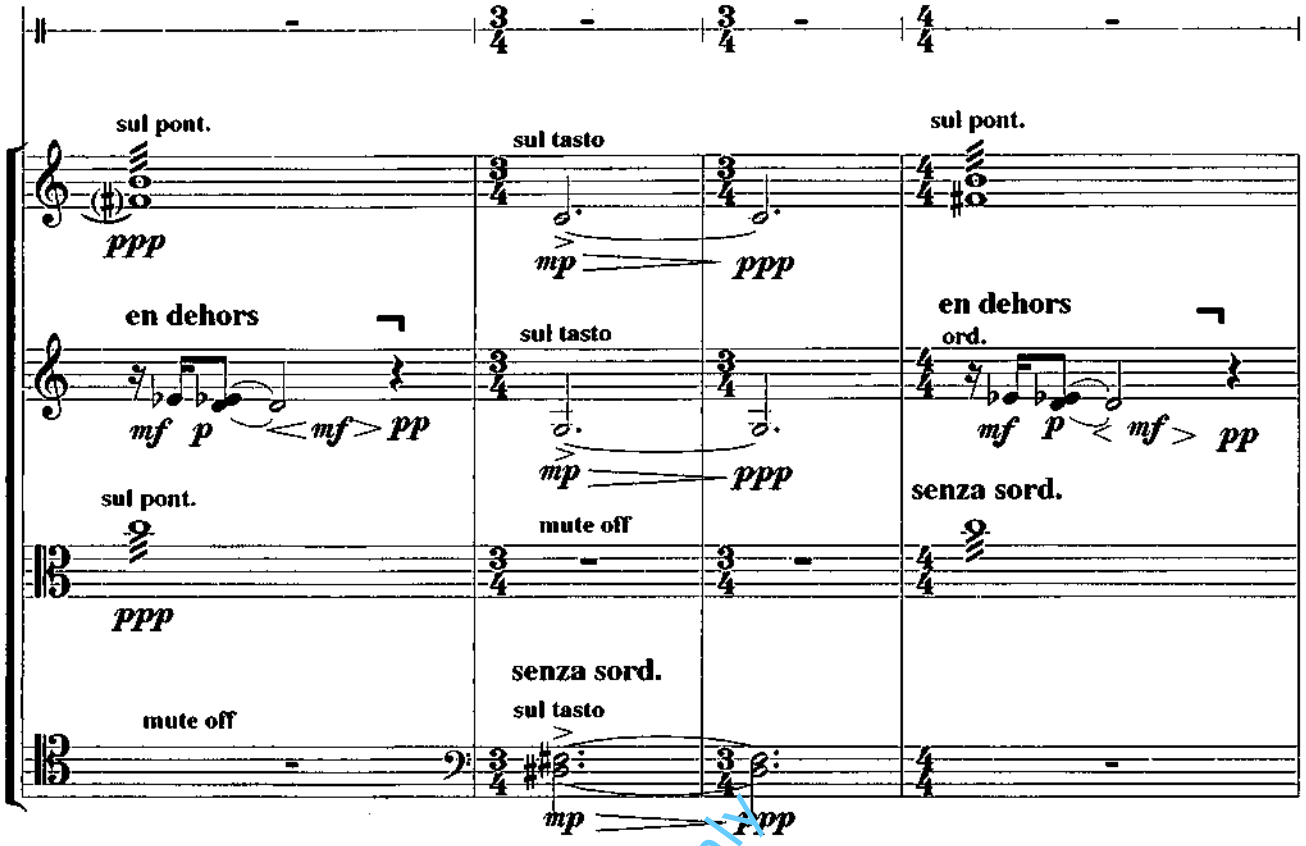
poco più mosso, ♩ = 112



Preview File Only

66



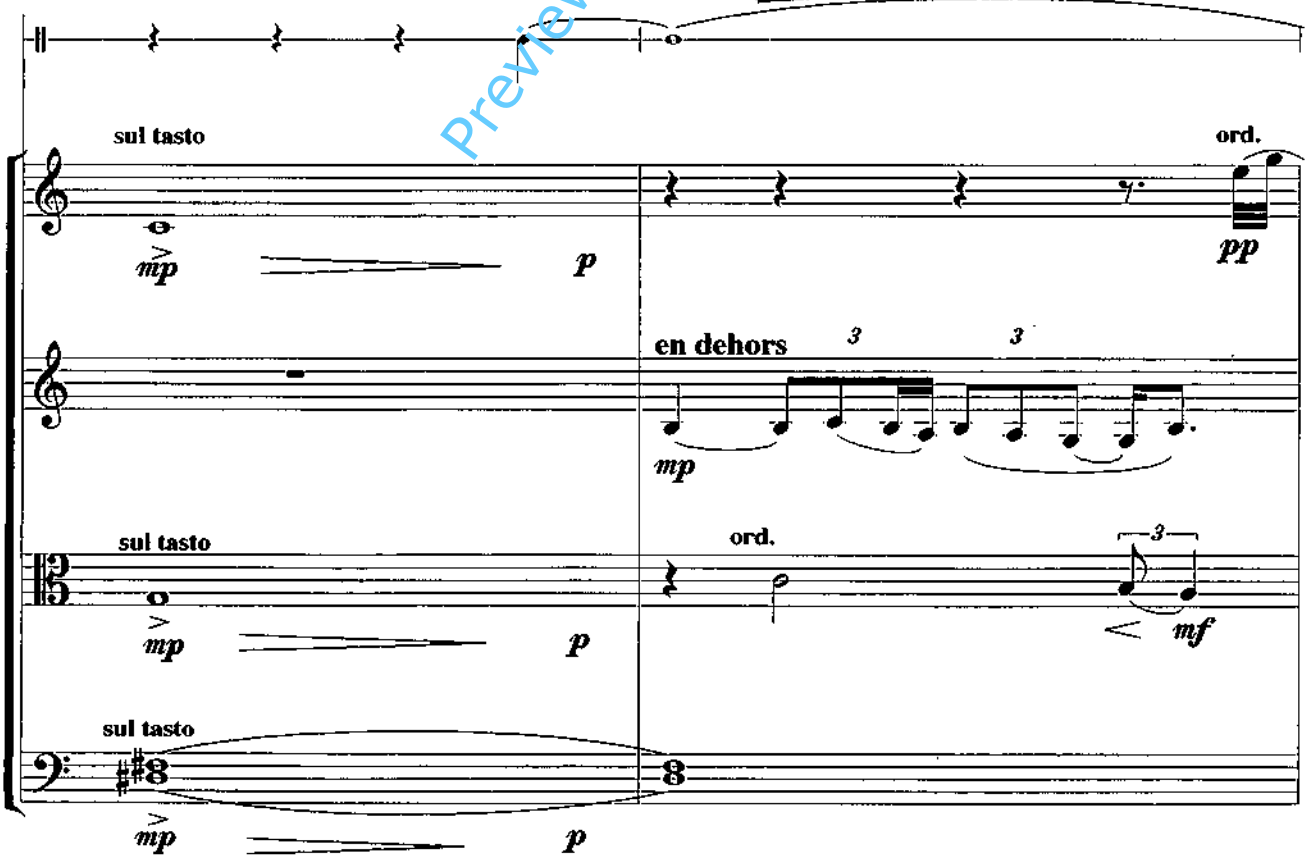


Preview File Only

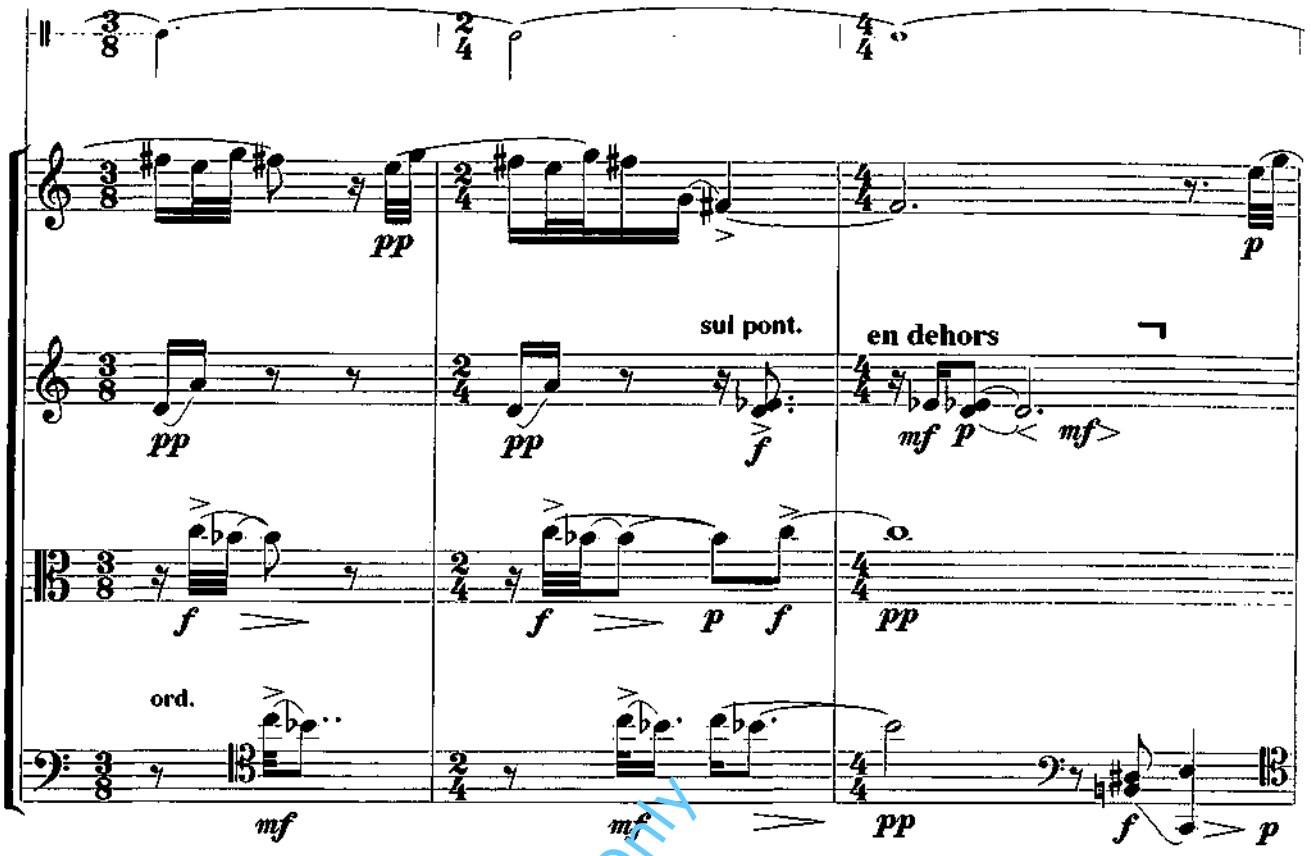
BRITISH MUSIC INFORMATION CENTRE,
10, Stratford Place, London, W.1

mp

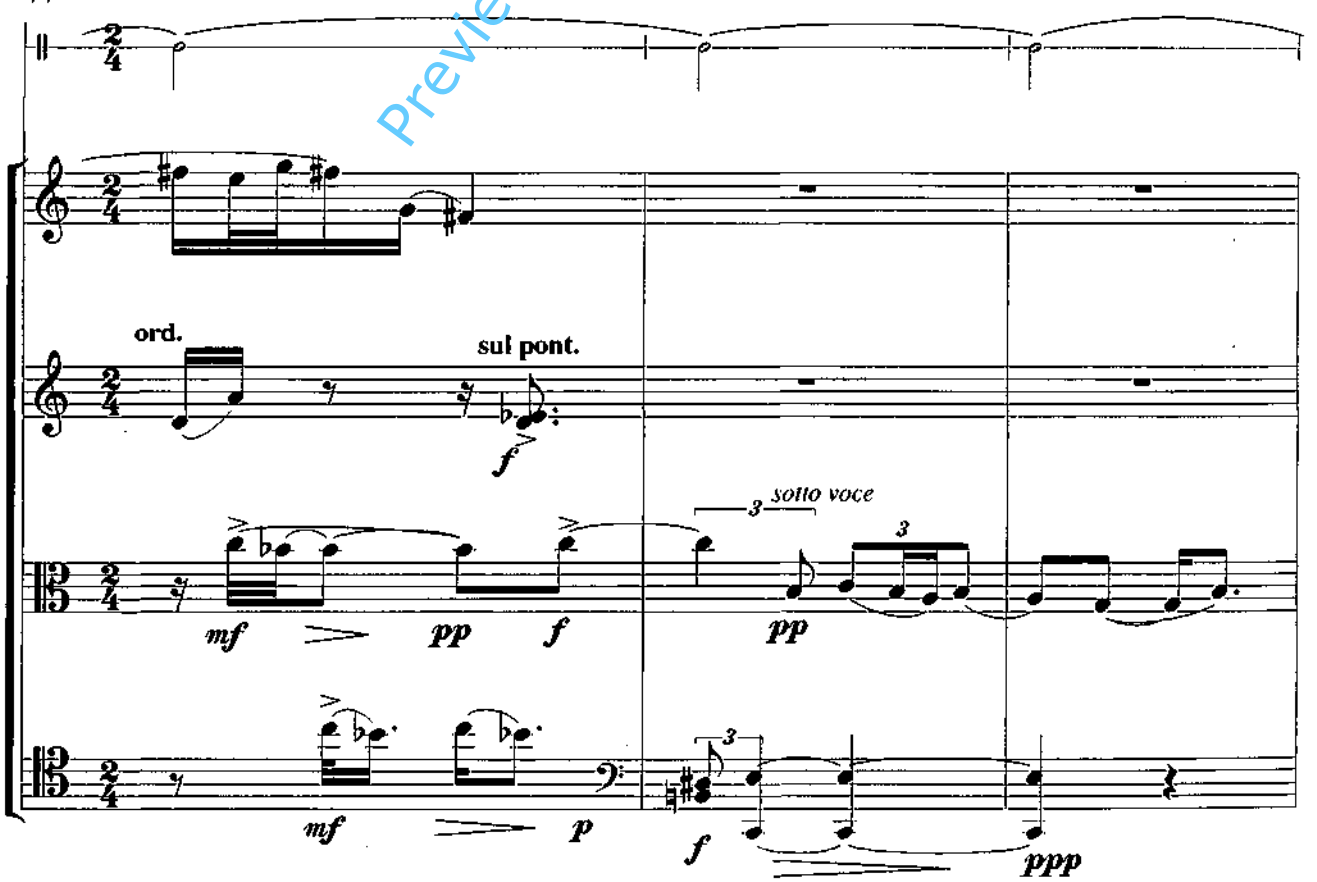
After one year, Kia Yui's health



74 has deteriorated badly. The image of the

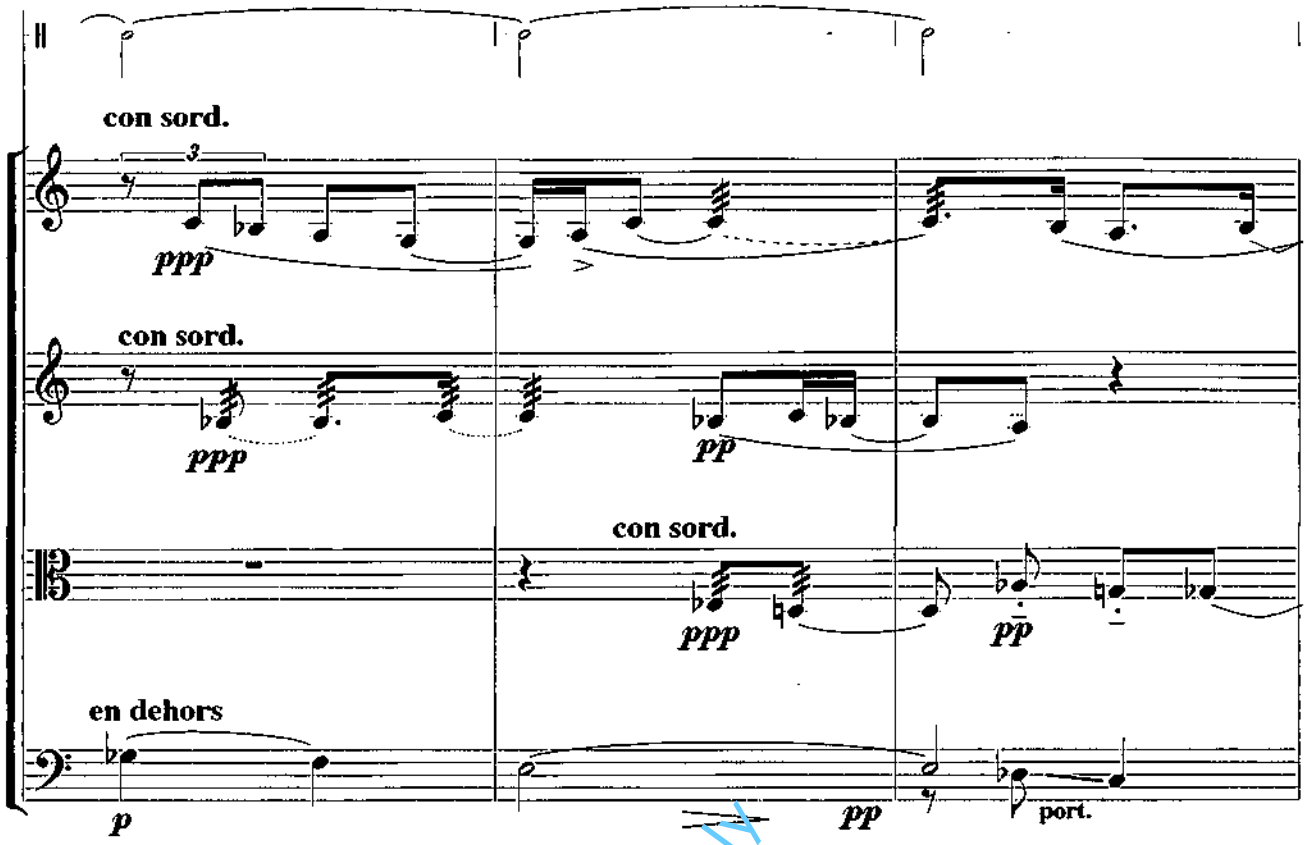


77 inaccesible Madame Phoenix wastes his days;



Preview File Only

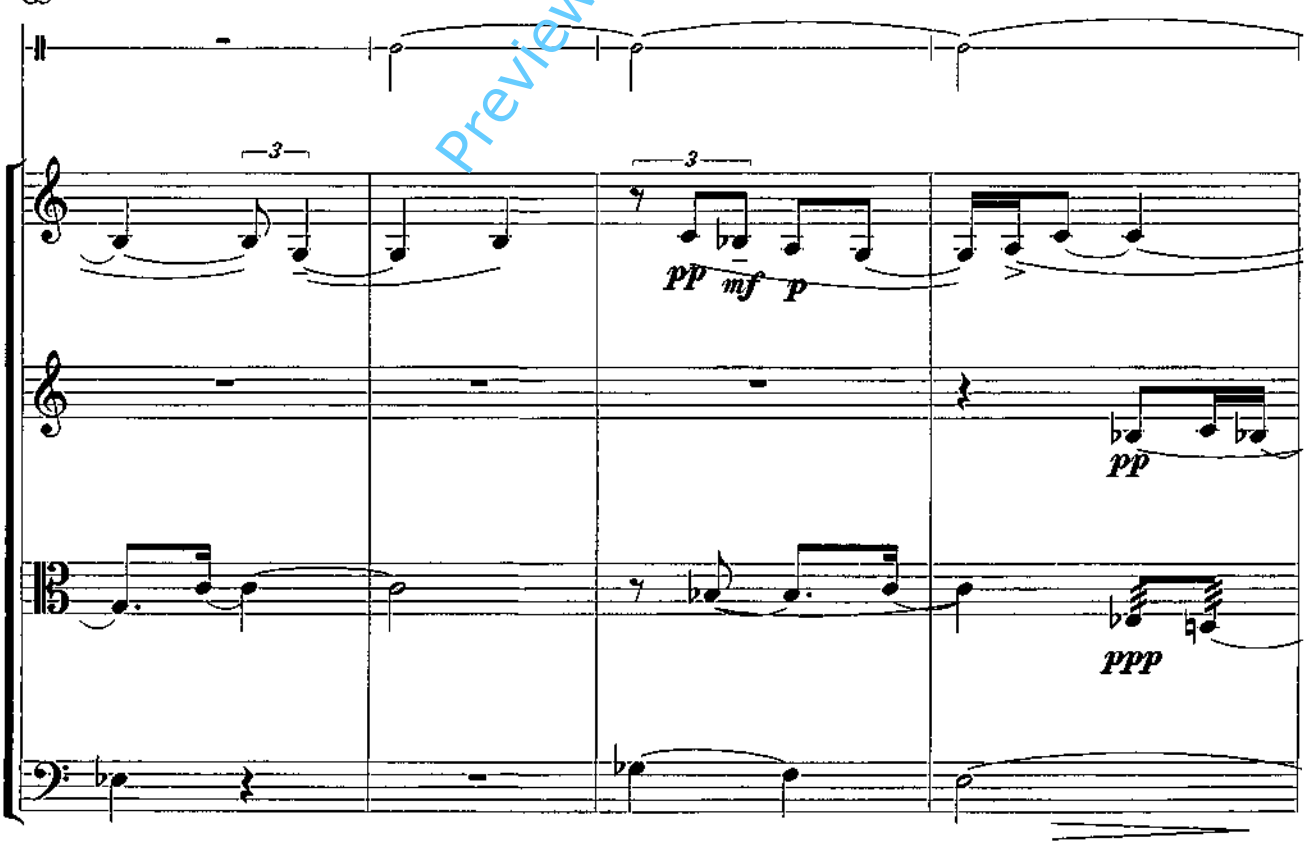
80 nightmares and insomnia, his nights.



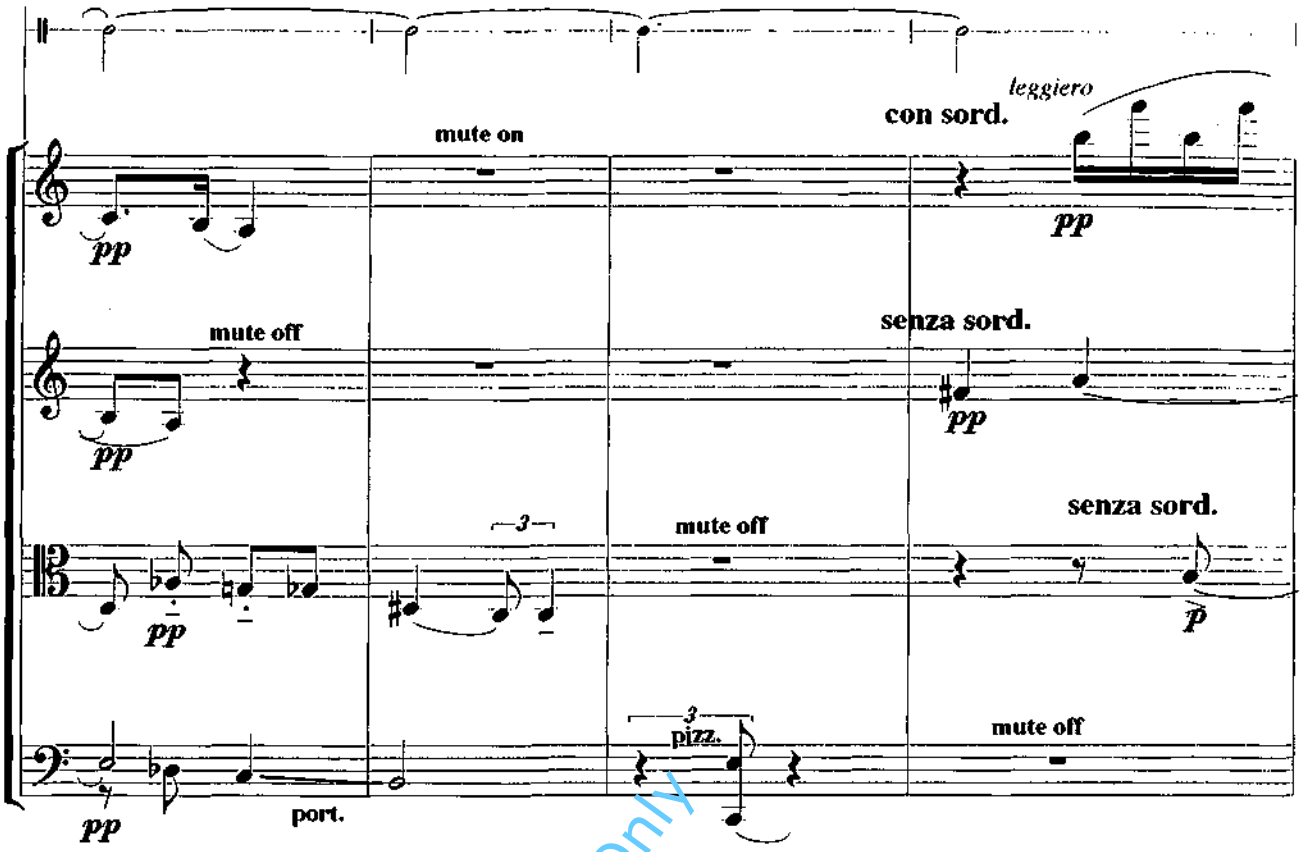
Preview File Only

p

83 One day, a Taoist beggar calls at the door

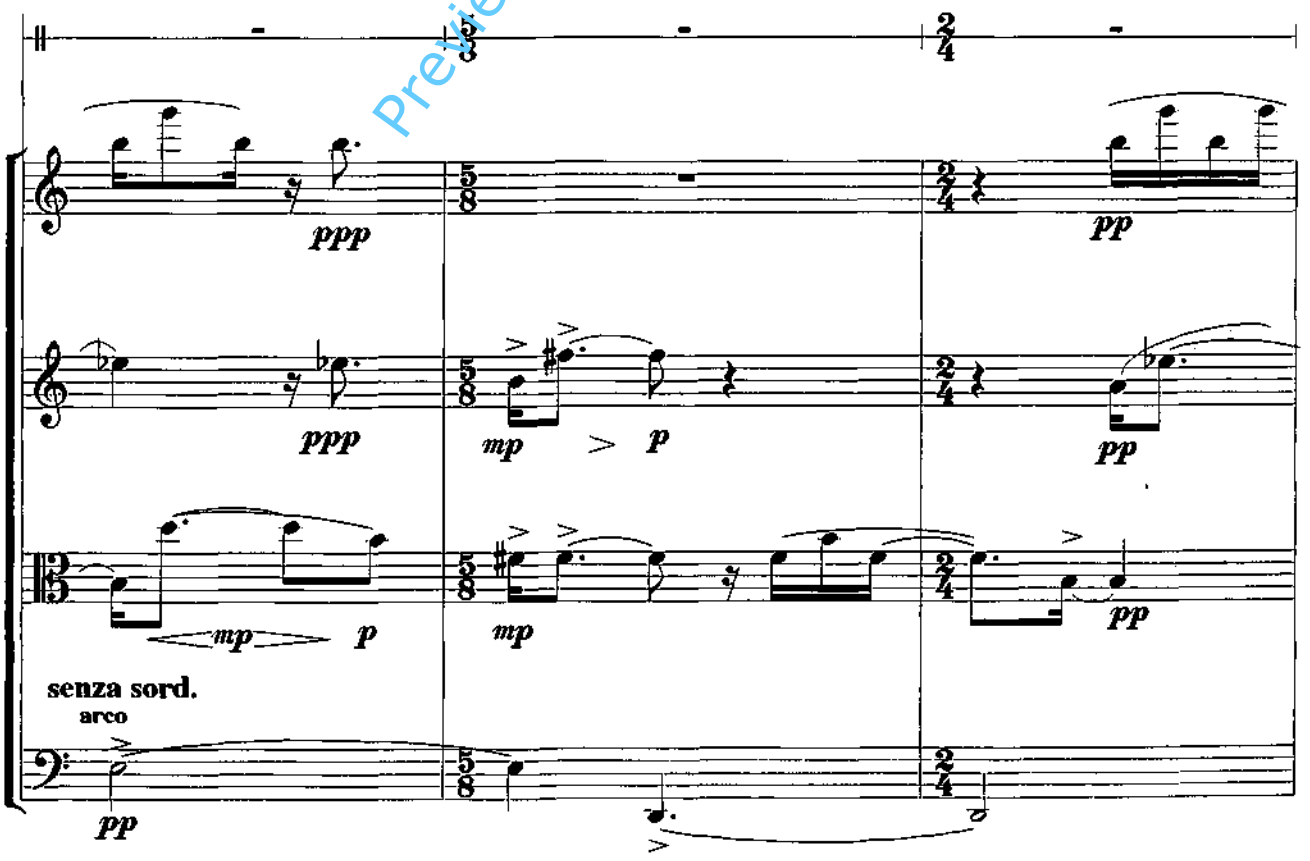


87 asking for alms and claiming he can cure the diseases of the soul.

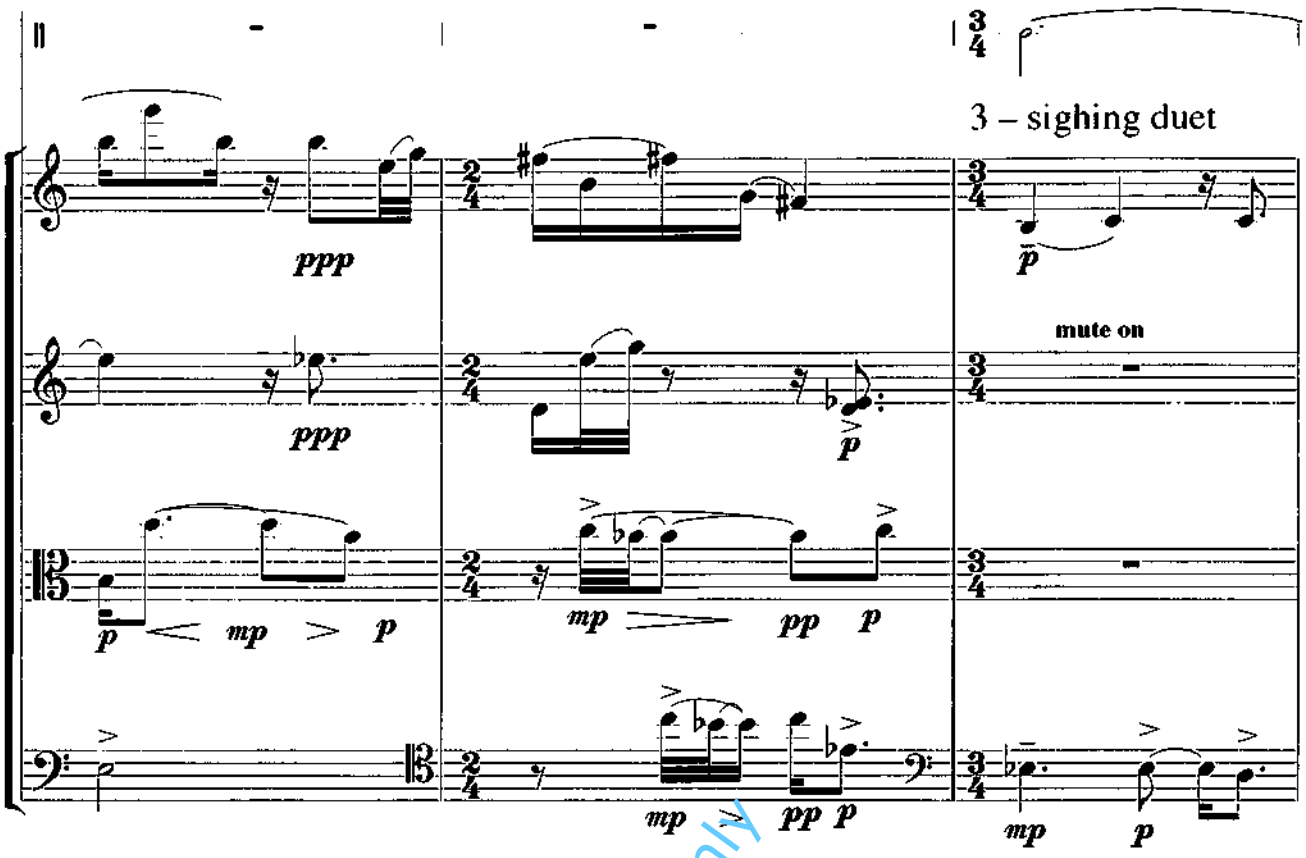


Preview File Only

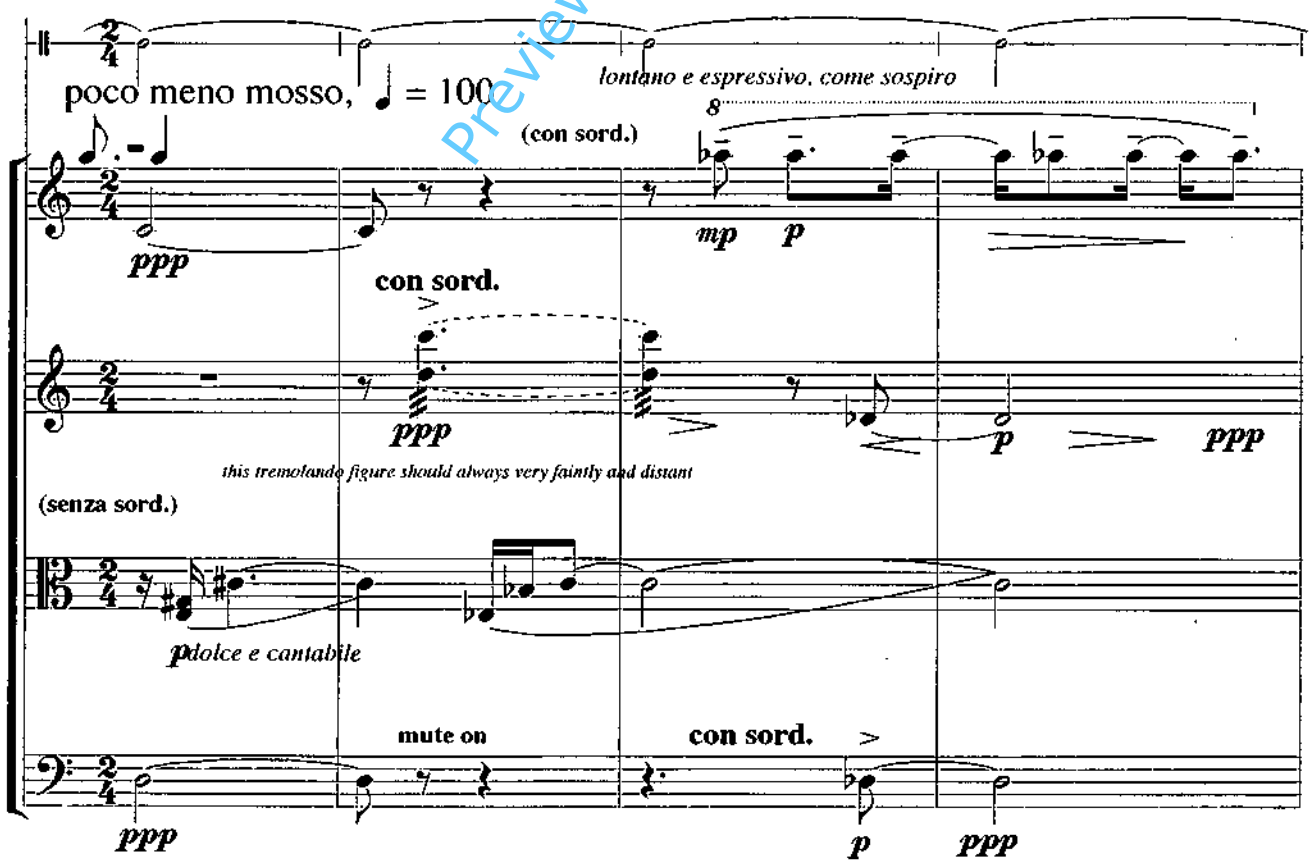
91



Kia Yui, calls out for him



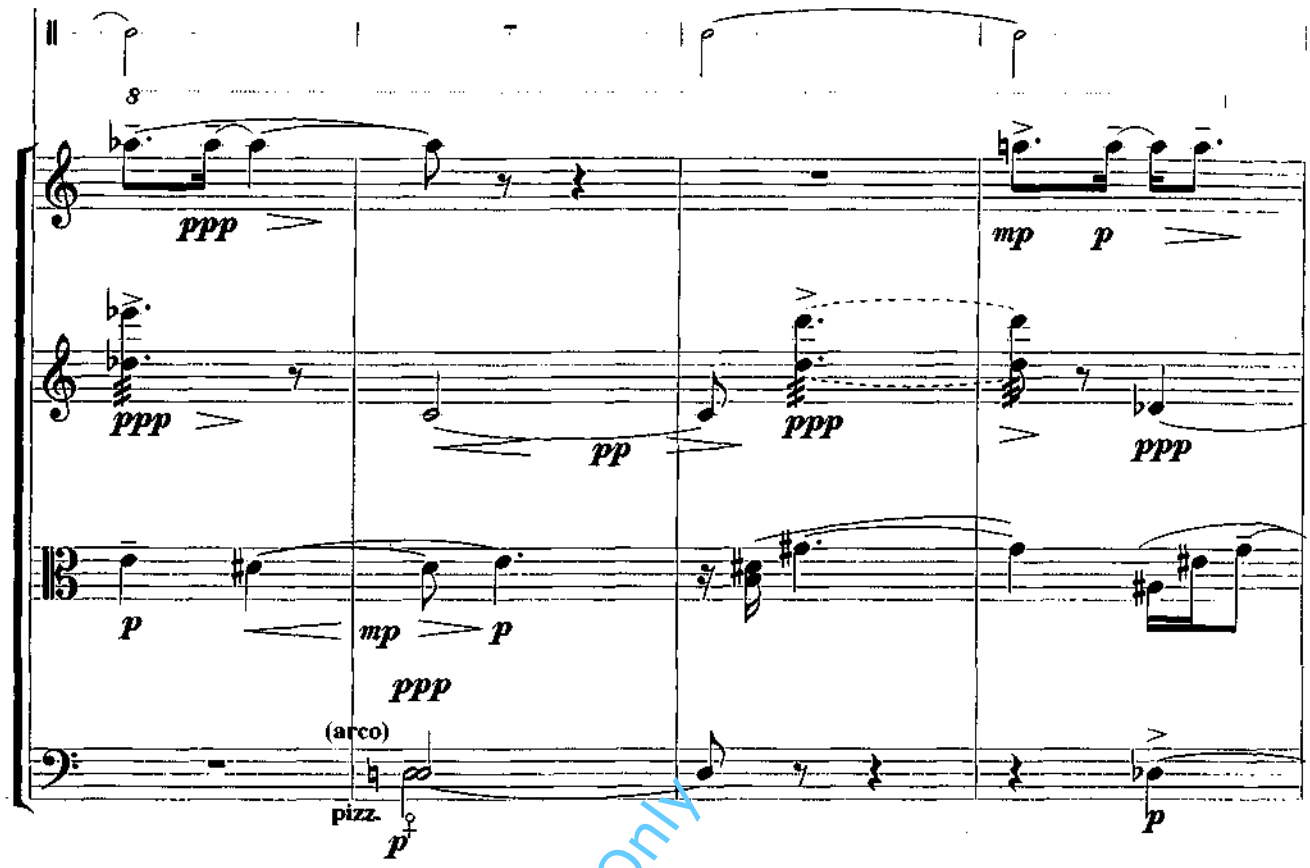
97 from his bed: pp Holy man, cure me! .... p cure me! ....



Preview File Only

101

p The beggar tells him :

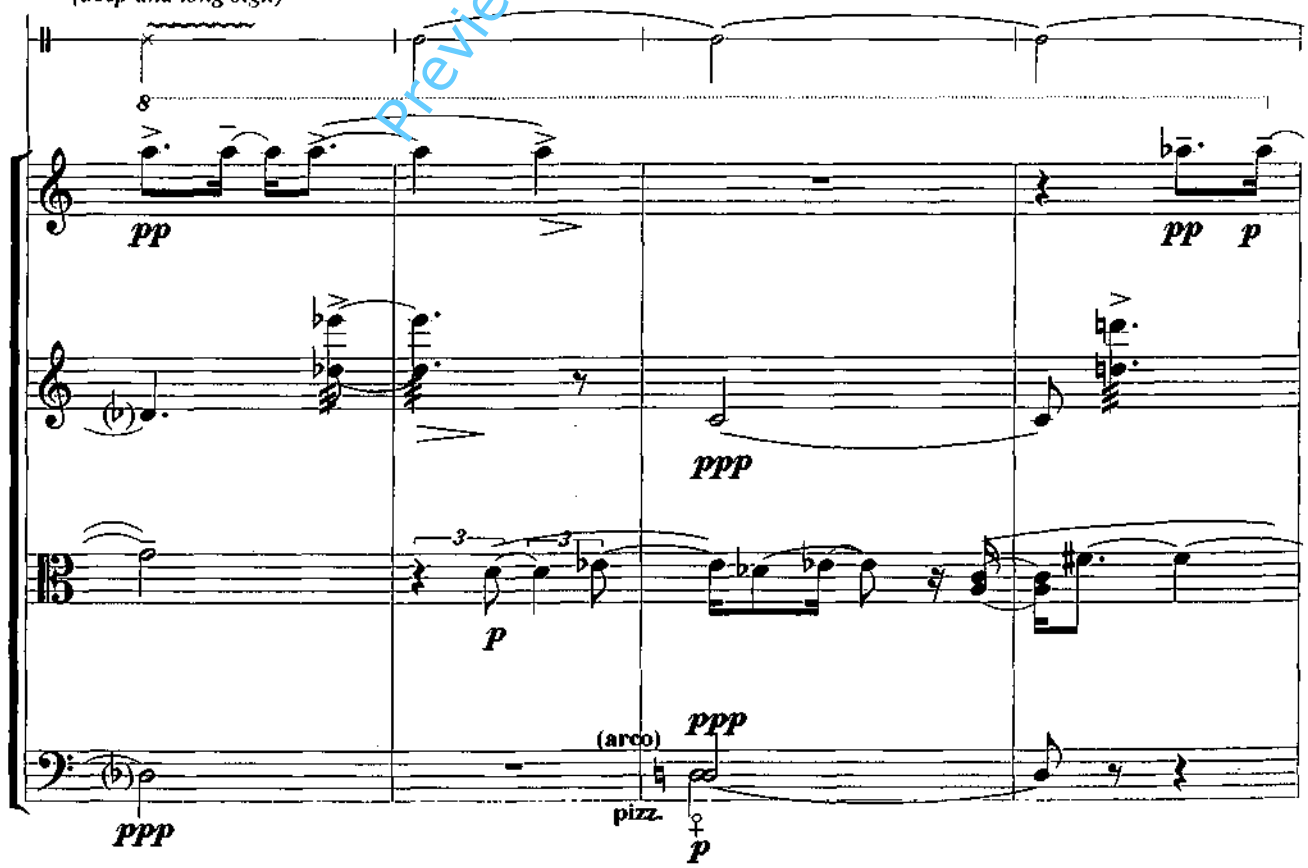


Preview File Only

(soothingly and very slow)

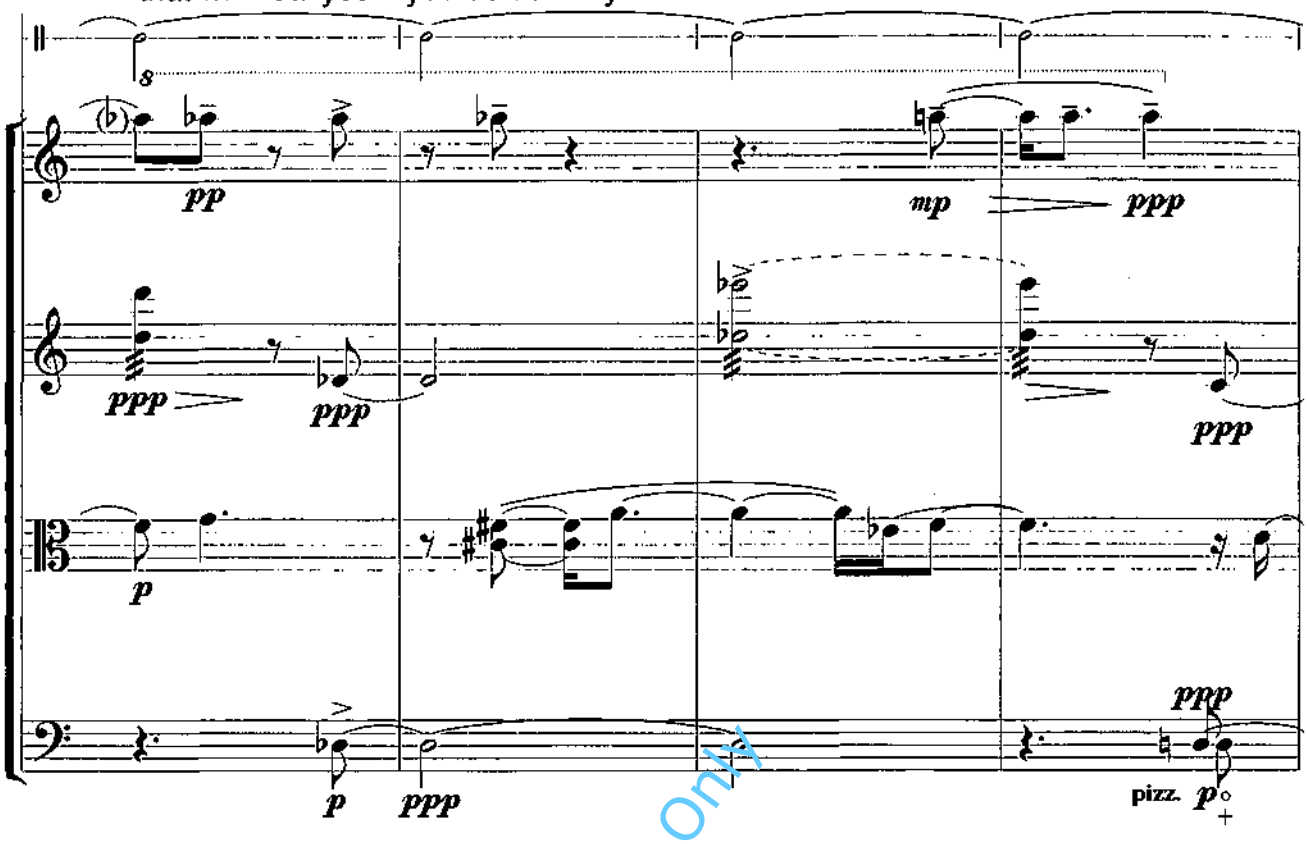
No medicine can cure your sickness but I can lend you a precious object

105 *(deep and long sigh)*



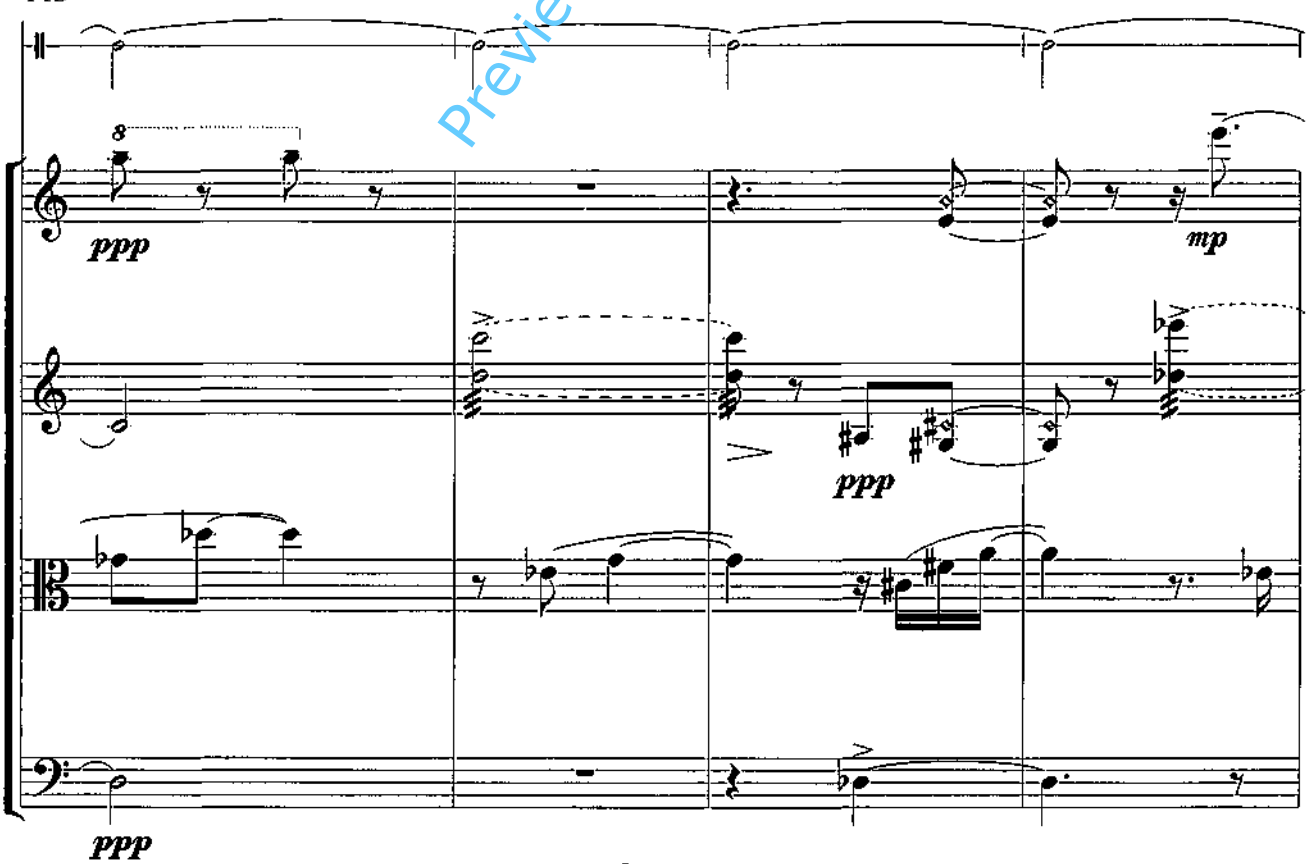
(very slowly outlines a large circle with the hands in the air, this gesture should last 4 to 6bars, and finally hands it over to Kia Yui)

109 that will heal you if you do as I say. This is the mirror of the

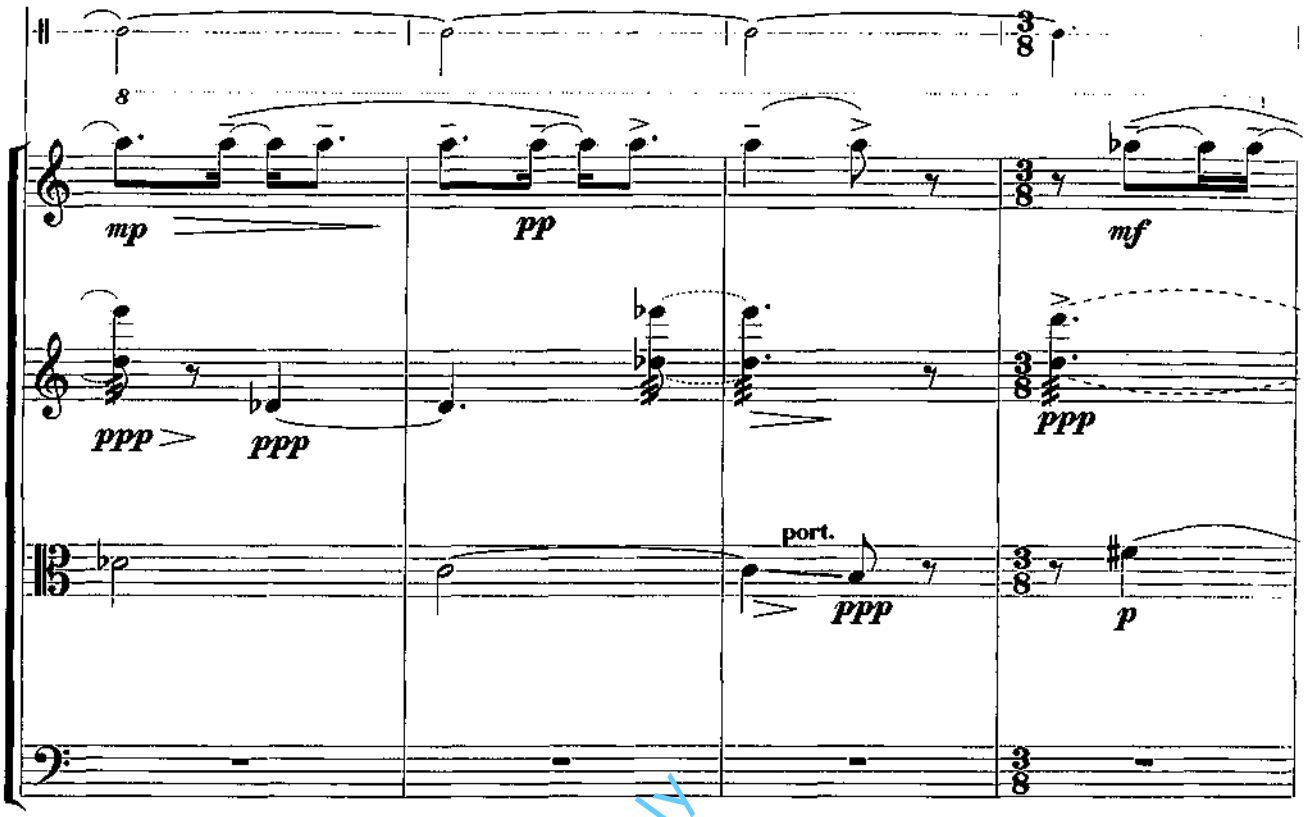


Preview File Only

113 Wind-and-Moon, and it can cure the sufferings caused by impure thoughts and

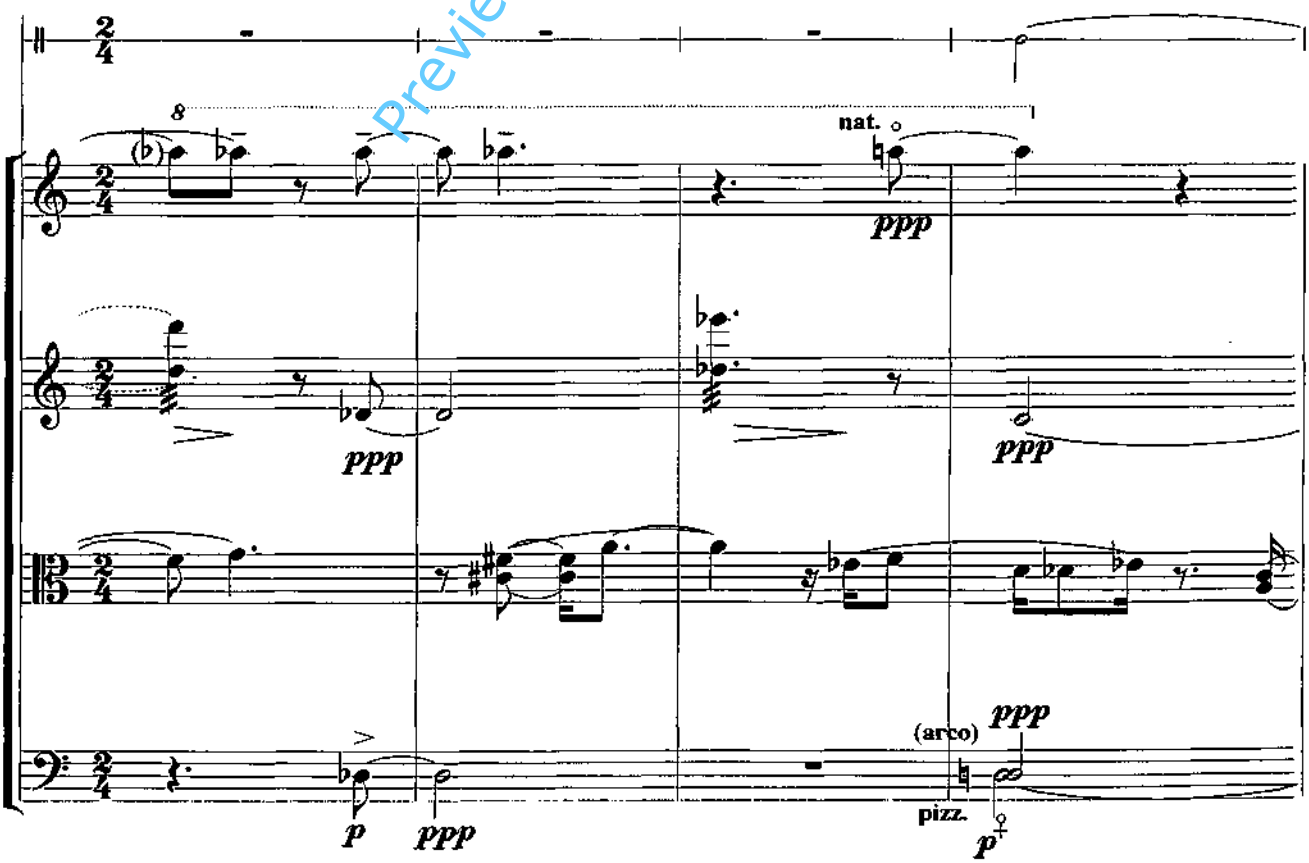


117 desires. This mirror has two sides, you may only look on the reverse side.

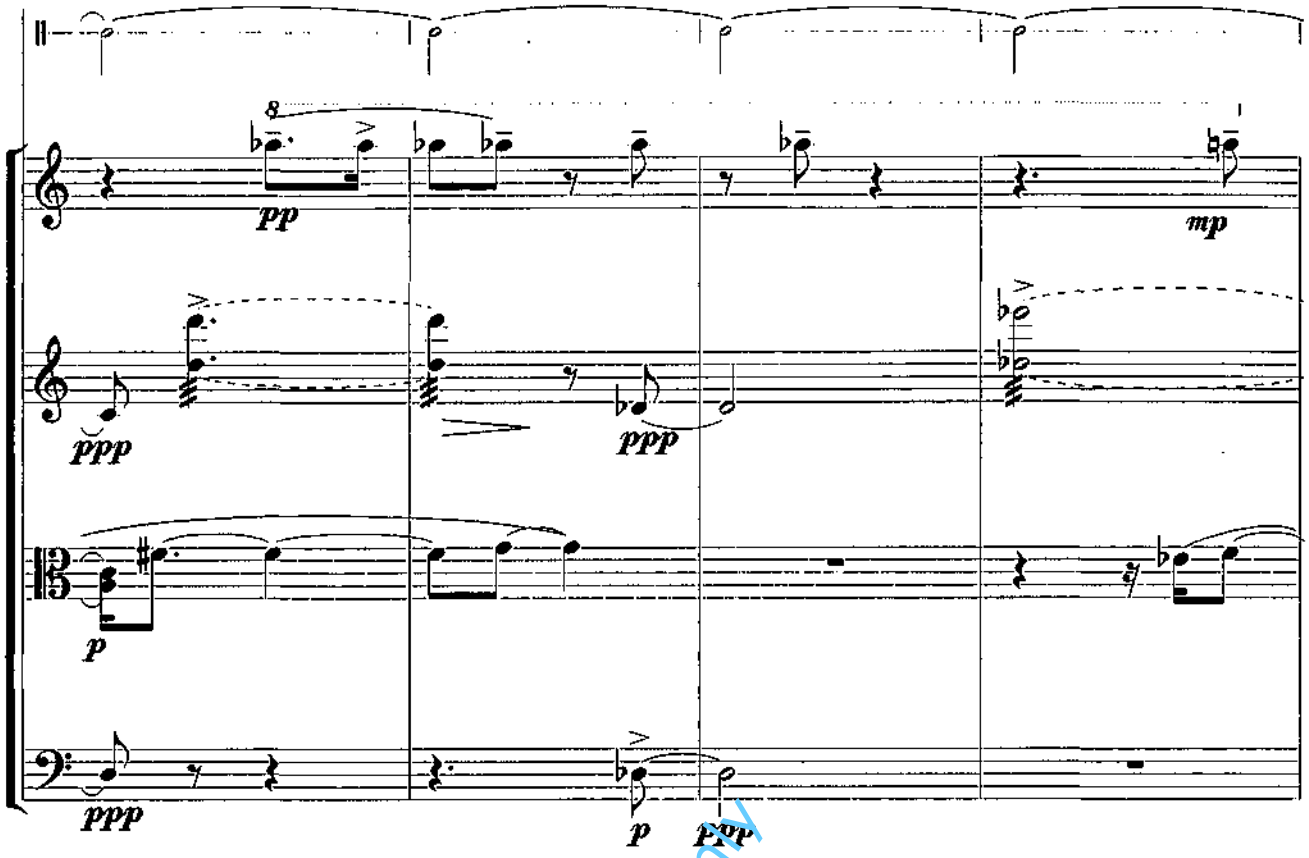


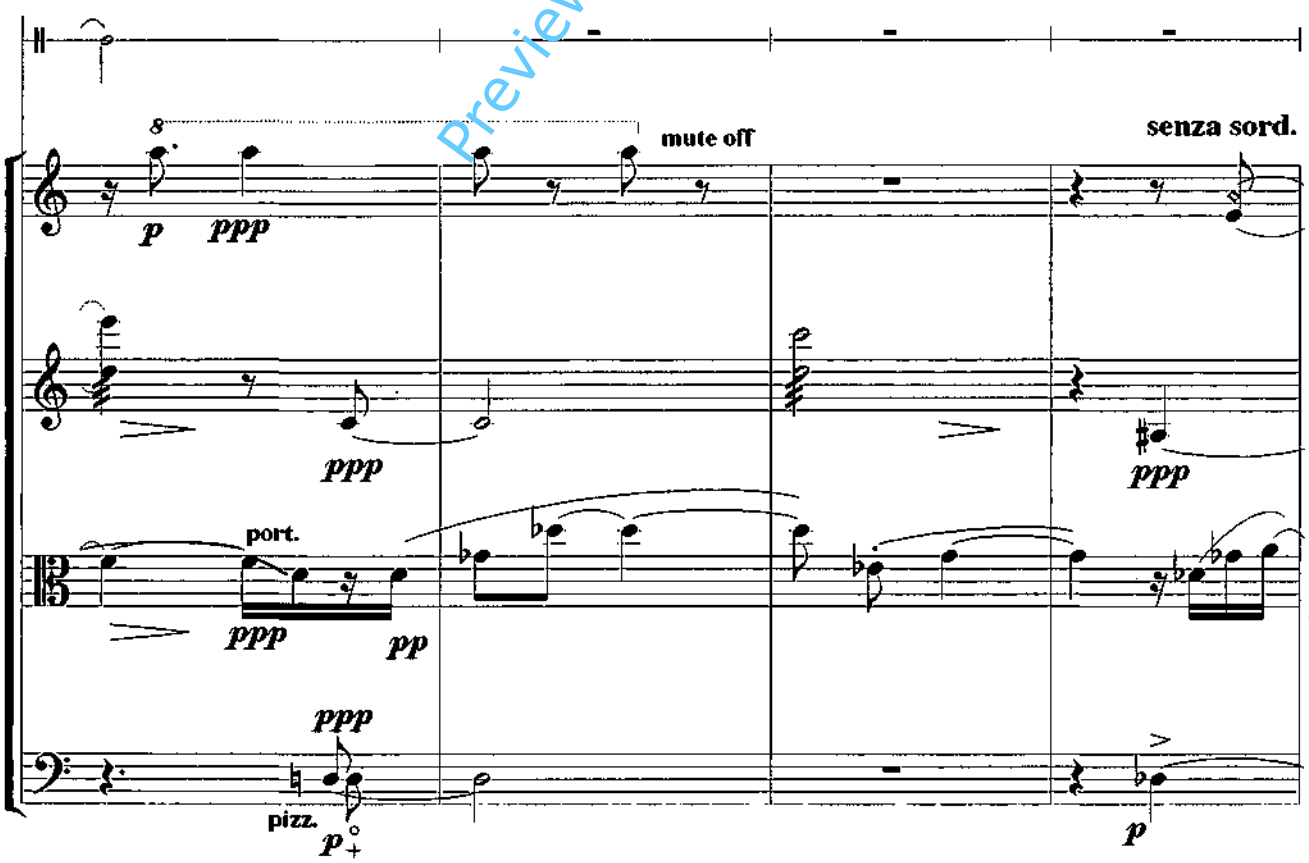
Preview File Only

121 Remember, never



125 look into the front side. Tomorrow I'll fetch the mirror and you'll



Preview File Only

129 be cured.