Silvina Milstein

A love song for Psyche and Cupid (1994)
mezzo-soprano, violin, cello & piano
first performance: Jane Manning, King's College London, 14 February 1994

duration 20 minutes

The myth which tells of Cupid's nightly visits to Psyche is woven into a story of love in old age in this collaboration with poet Caroline Smith.
S.M.

A love song for Psyche and Cupid

Venus has stabbed
the puffed thin skin of their young love
burnt it black like potatoes
sighed and deflated.

Left alone
on the top storey
of Mortlock Court,
Wyn Boiling had come
into the old folks home
to share the warmth of bed pans
and perimeters of walking frames.

By day, she sat in the silent
limpid laager of chairs,
brown wedged bag on her lap,
long beige stockinged legs
slanted sidewards like a deer
hiding in the grey scarred disarray
of pollarded trees.

Then, as the red-fox light of evenings
stole over their gouted breathing night-shapes,
they turned into an enchanted forest
of majestic trees.
She found herself in a beautiful palace
where a bird of brilliant plumage spoke to her
from its gilded cage.
Four cooks prepared her lavish meal.
In time a courtier would lead her to her bath.

At night, after they had been put to bed,
the god of love himself
would come again to her.
He stood before her door,
legs bent, slightly stooping over his stick,
his loose hand knocking lightly against
the door to her chamber -
his long drooped face

Preview File Only

requesting an audience.

In the yellow night light,
in the deep rift of their narrow bed,
they manoeuvred together.
Her fingers felt out the soft hollow of his stomach
with its raised moles and single tough hairs,
like sedges stalking out into a quiet fen.
On, down into the tangled thicket of bracken
catching her jewelled fingers in its strong roots, crunched over,
prising free from its nest
a log, long lain in damp beech leaves;
digging him out from the crease of his old trousers,
a bear at the entrance to its cave,
wet nose swaying in the spring air.

They were wet as red mellow wood,
slimy as leather,
fruit rotted together on the forest floor.
She had become Venus, herself, fiercely
in love with her old beauty
and her ripened fruit
she named Pleasure

Caroline Smith

The myth of 'Psyche and Cupid' as told in Apuleius '*The Golden Ass*'

Psyche (soul) was a princess, and so beautiful that her father's subjects abandoned the shrines of Venus to worship her instead. Angry and jealous, Venus sent her son Cupid to make Psyche fall in love with a thoroughly worthless man. But the unforeseen happened: Cupid himself fell in love with Psyche.

... Her parents were told by Apollo's oracle to lead their daughter in her wedding dress to a remote mountain-top, where they were to leave her ... Then, unknown to them, Psyche was carried magically by the wind into the grounds of a magnificent building ... Inside the palace Psyche saw no one, but was guided by sweet voices. She found fine clothes and jewellery, exquisite food and fragrant water to bathe in. At night cupid came to her bed and made love to her, but he always departed before daylight and Psyche remained ignorant of his identity. All went well, until Psyche persuaded her lover to let her see her sisters again. She brought them back to the palace and showed them her new possessions. In their jealousy, the sisters plotted to destroy Psyche's miraculous good fortune ...

Her sisters persuaded her to identify her mysterious lover. They frightened her: maybe he would turn into a deadly snake and devour her. On their advice, one night Psyche sharpened a knife, ready to kill her lover, and hid it with a lamp in the bedroom. When Cupid fell asleep Psyche saw for the first time that he was the god of love himself. She fell on him with renewed passion, but spilt oil from the lamp on his shoulder. Cupid took one look at the lamp and the knife, and flew out of the window up into the sky with Psyche clinging in desperation to his leg. The poor girl soon grew tired and fell to earth, unharmed, but quite alone.

...The lovers were eventually reunited, despite Venus' attempt to kill Psyche by setting her impossible tasks, including a visit to the underworld. It was Jupiter who decreed that Psyche should become an immortal, and that Cupid would be kept out of mischief by marrying her.

Psyche was properly married to Cupid and in due time she bore him her child, a daughter whose name was Pleasure (Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*)

(from Felicity Woolf, *Myths & Legends, Paintings in the National Gallery*)

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A love song for Psyche and Cupid

words by Caroline Smith

music by Silvina Milstein [1994]

for mezzo-soprano, violin, cello and piano

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Caroline Smith

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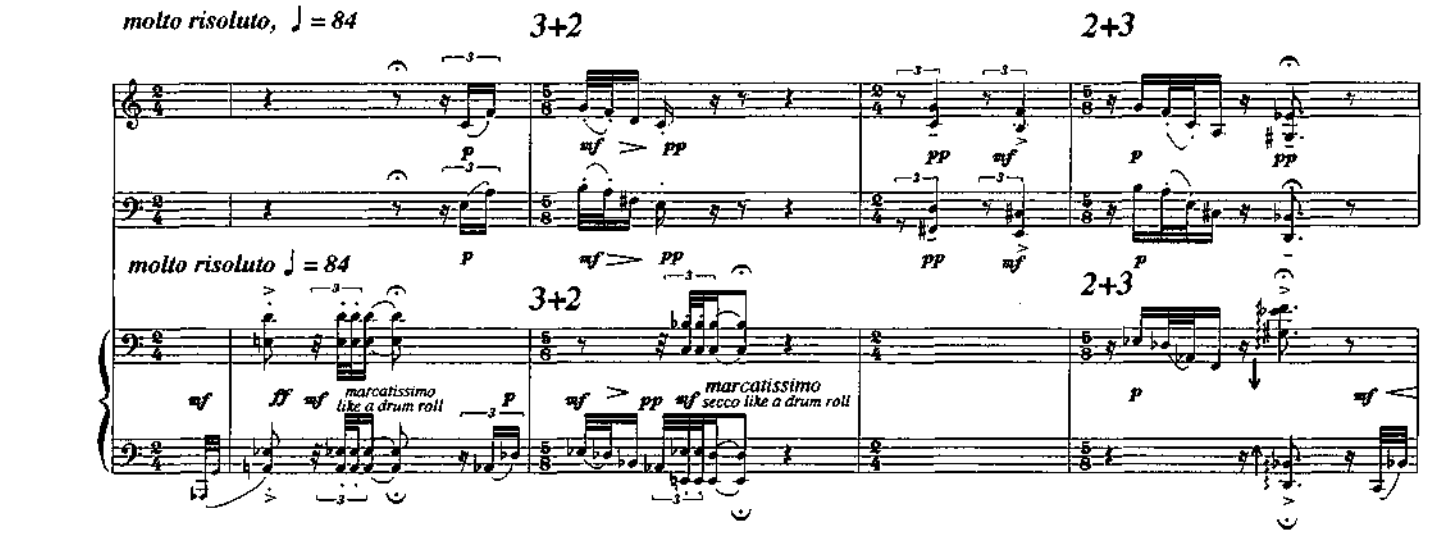

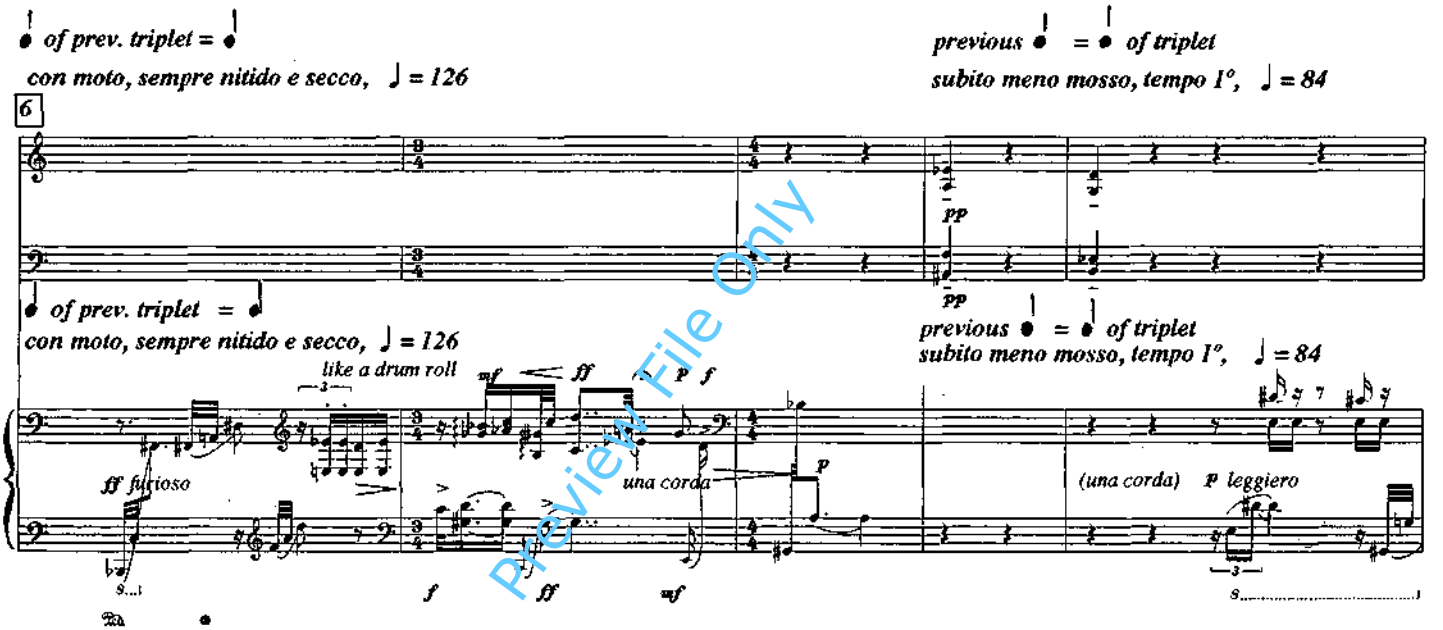

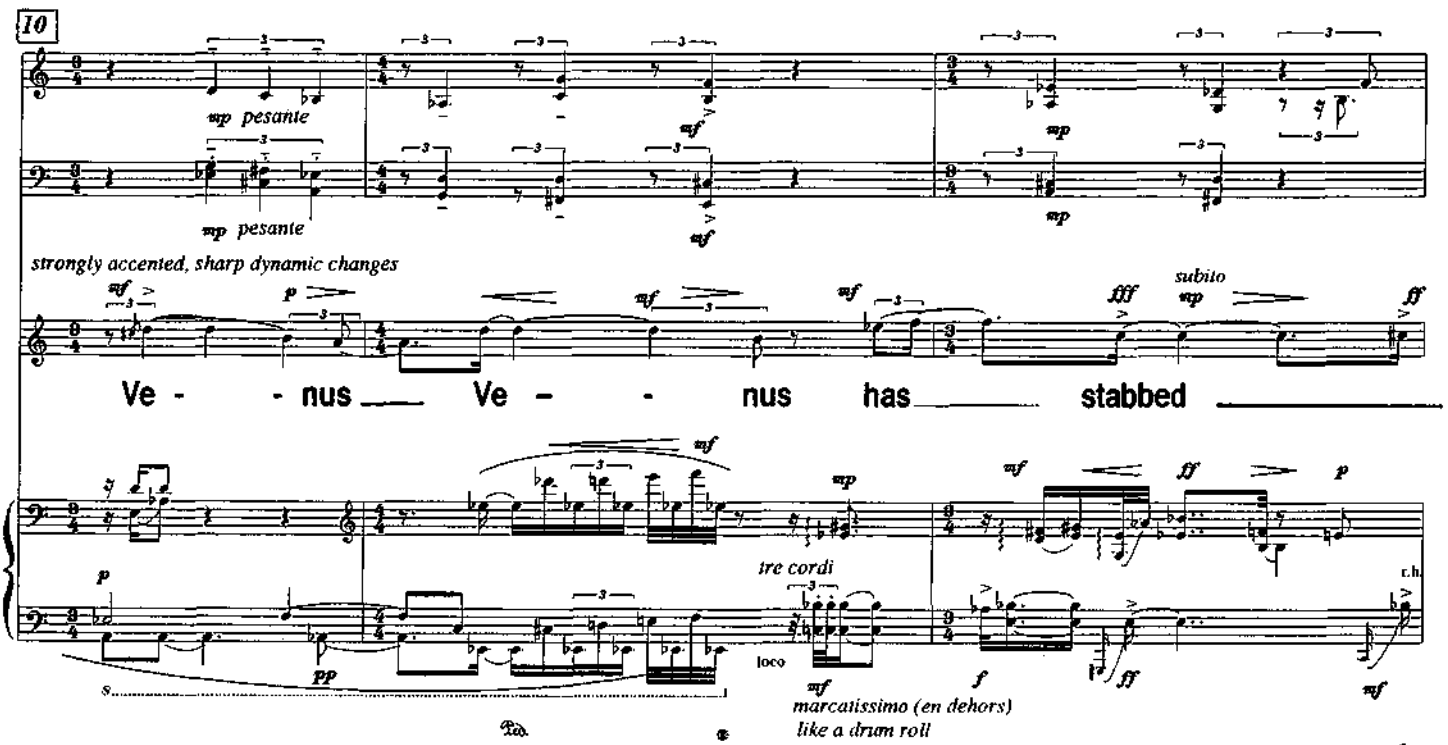

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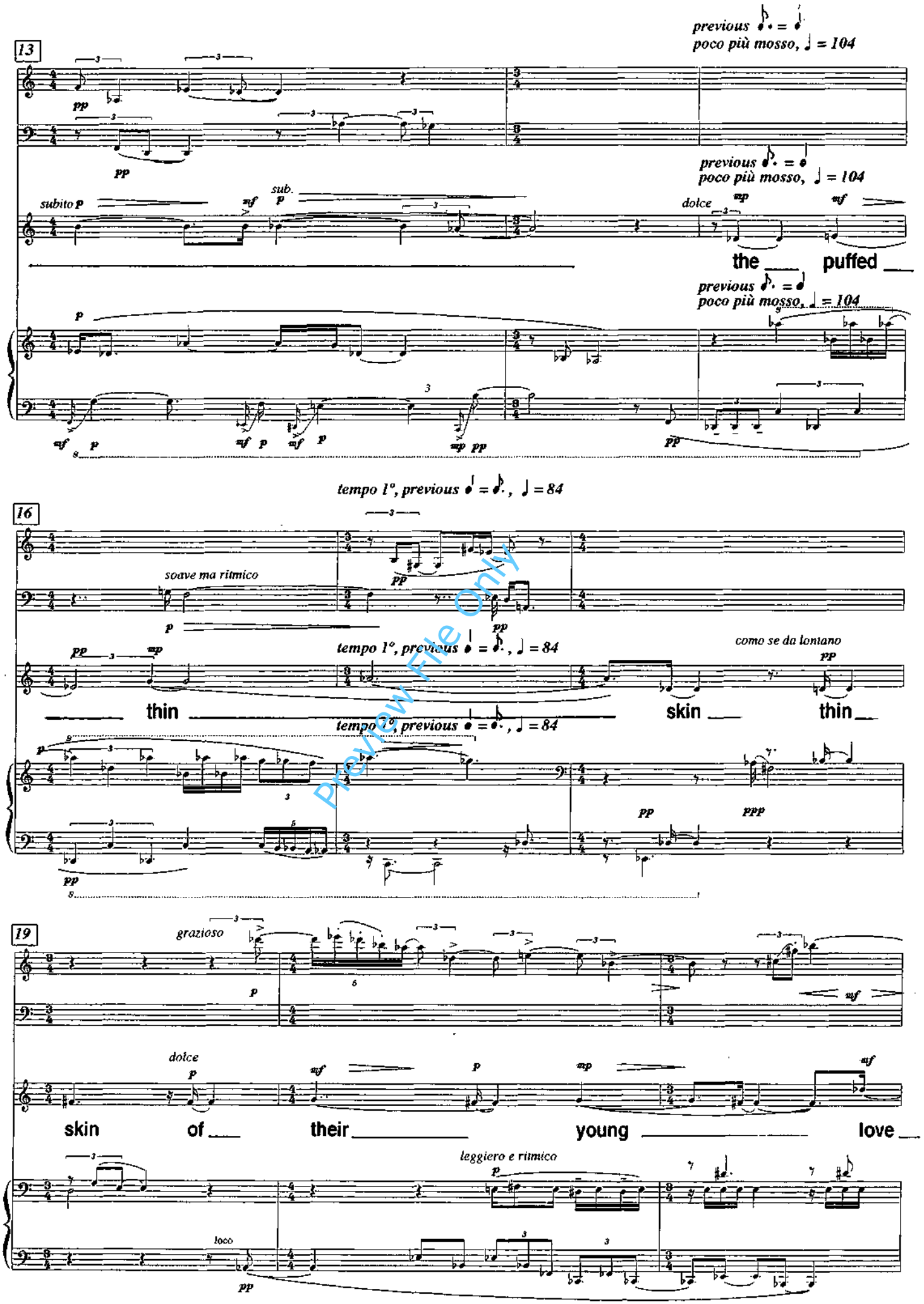

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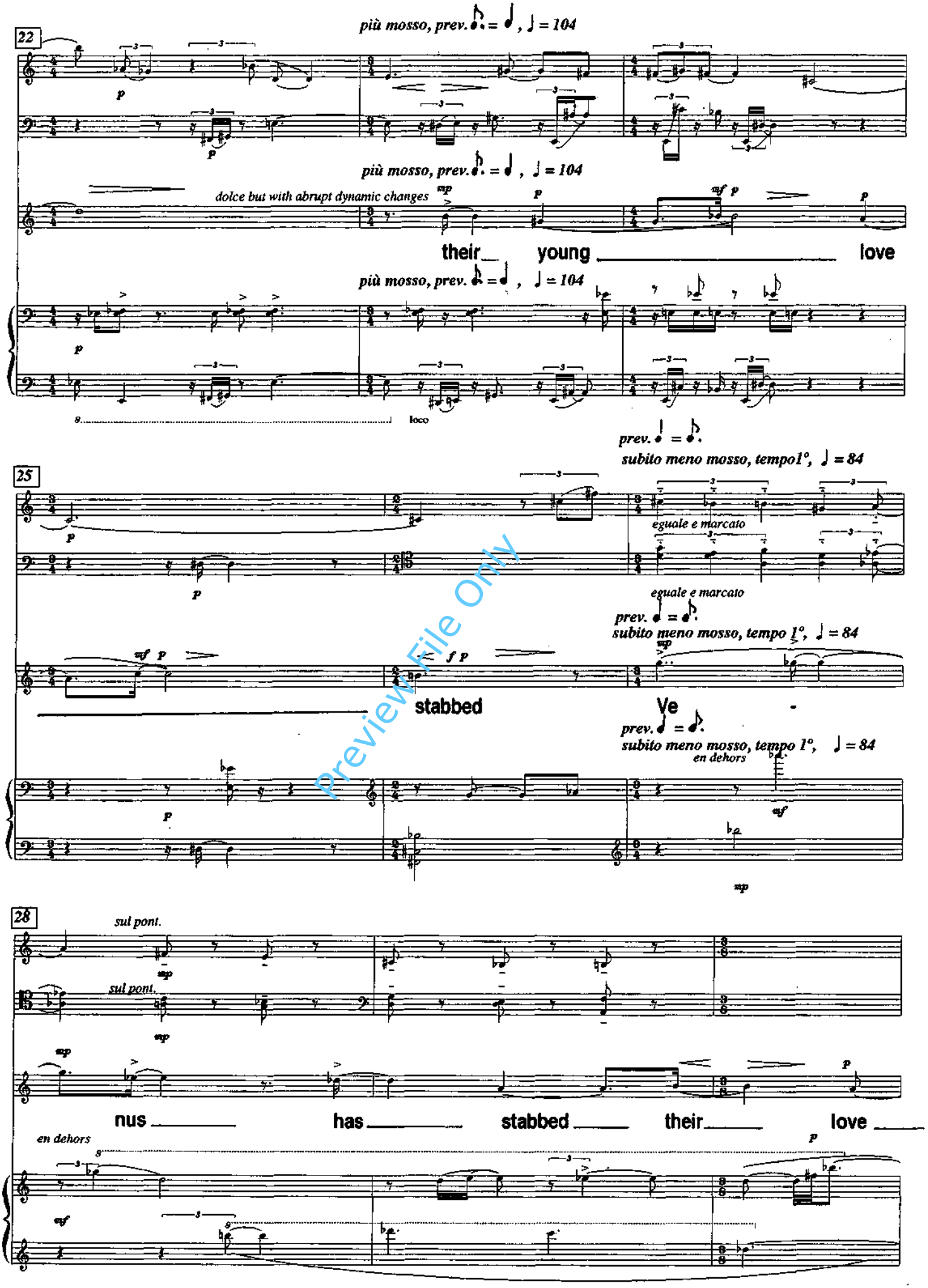

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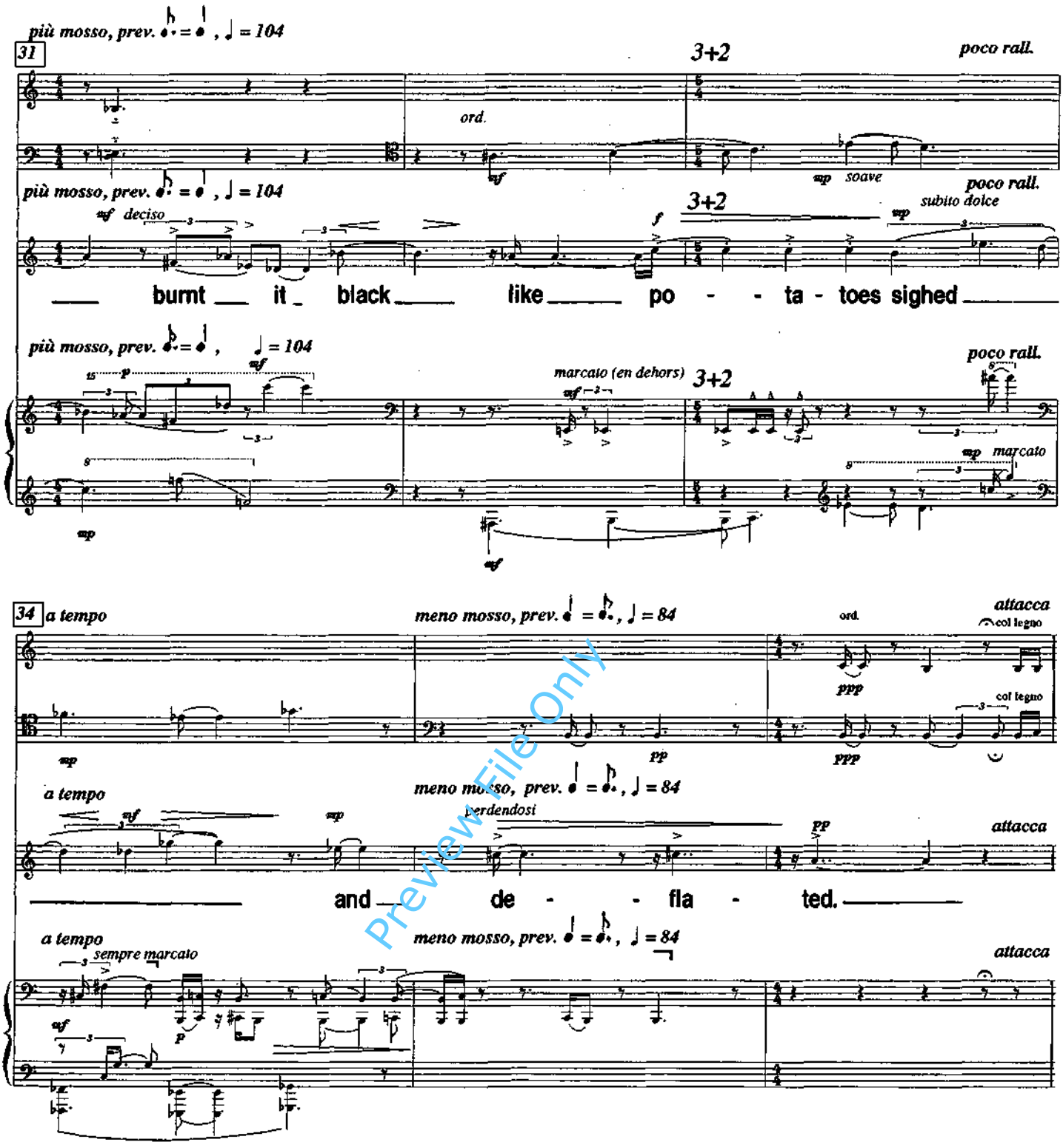

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II

like distant bells, l'istesso tempo, ♩ = 84

ord. sul tasto

ord. sul tasto

like distant bells, l'istesso tempo, ♩ = 84

en dehors

8

ord. sul pont. ord.

una corda tre cordi

13

sul tasto ord.

una corda *en dehors*

loco

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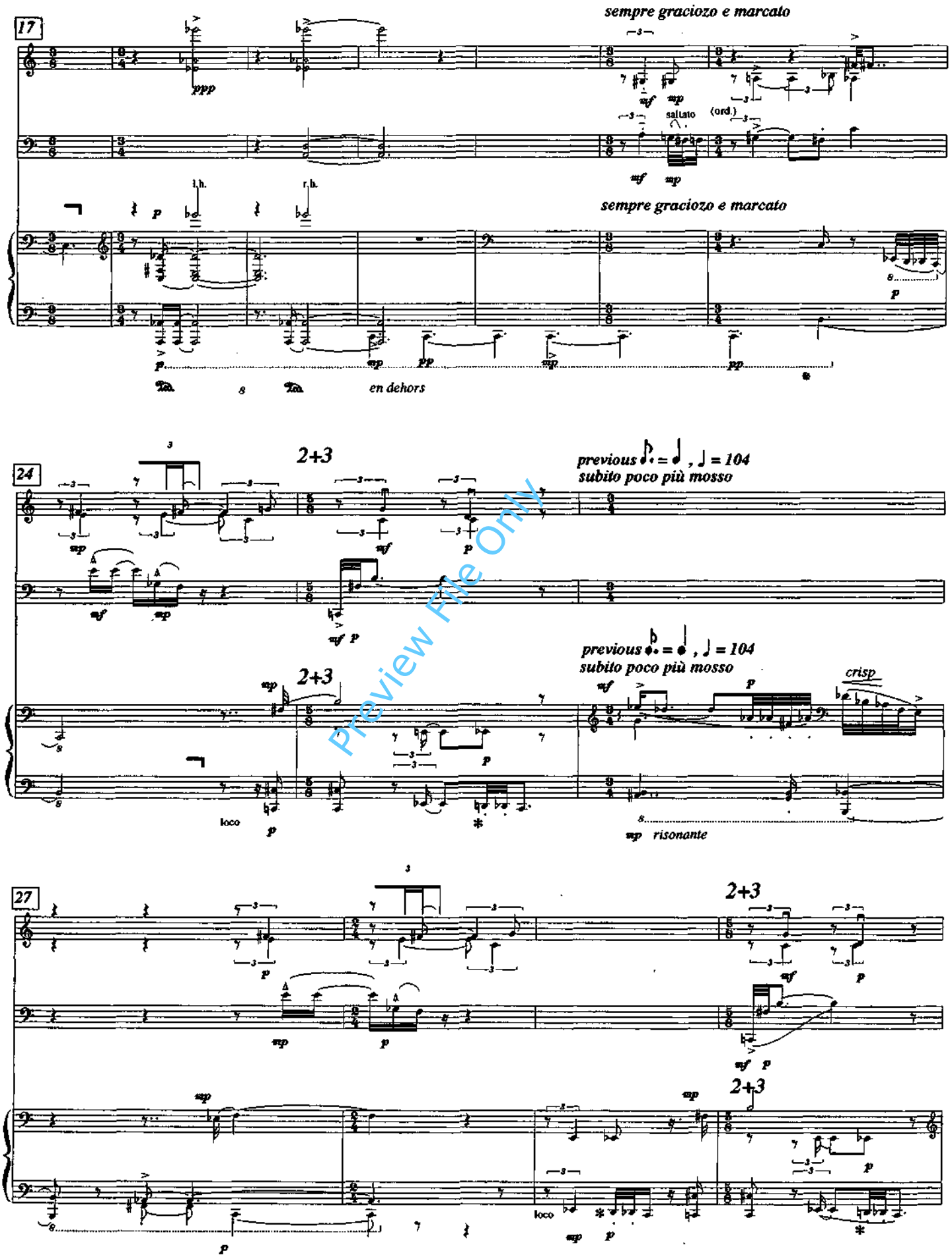

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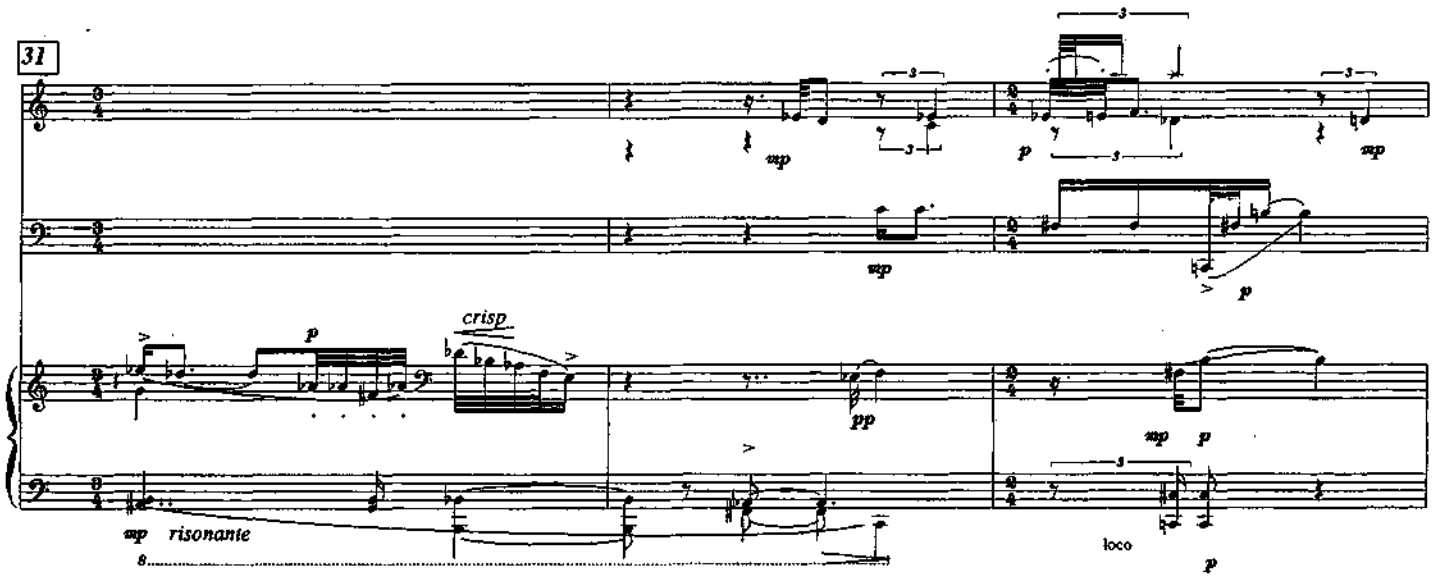
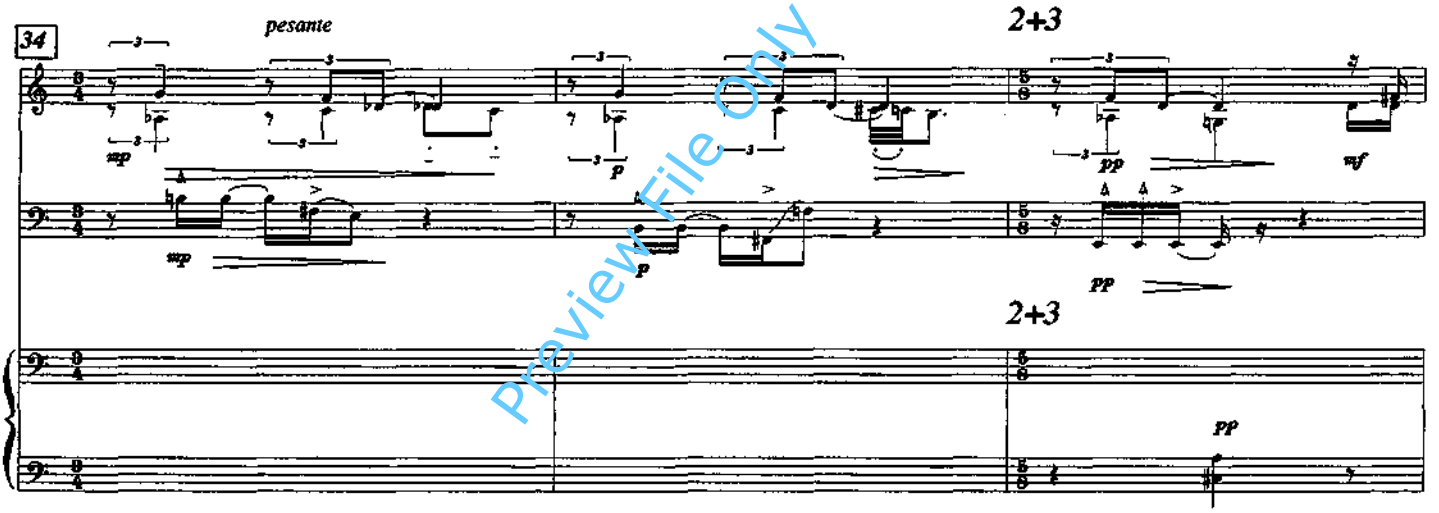
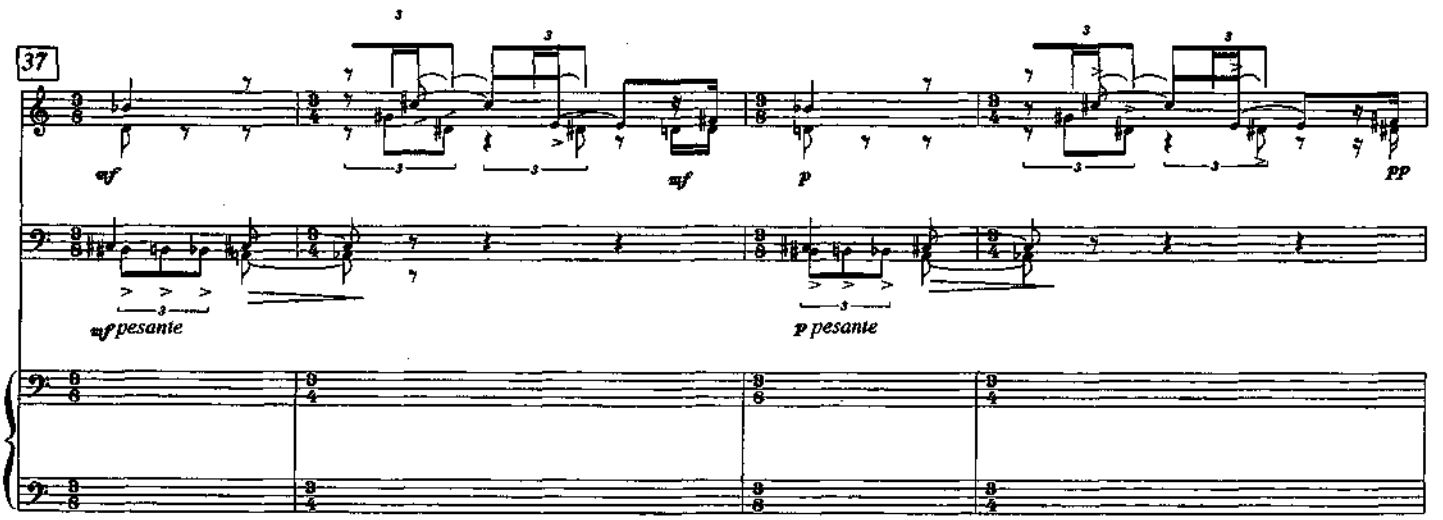
* this figure always very crisp







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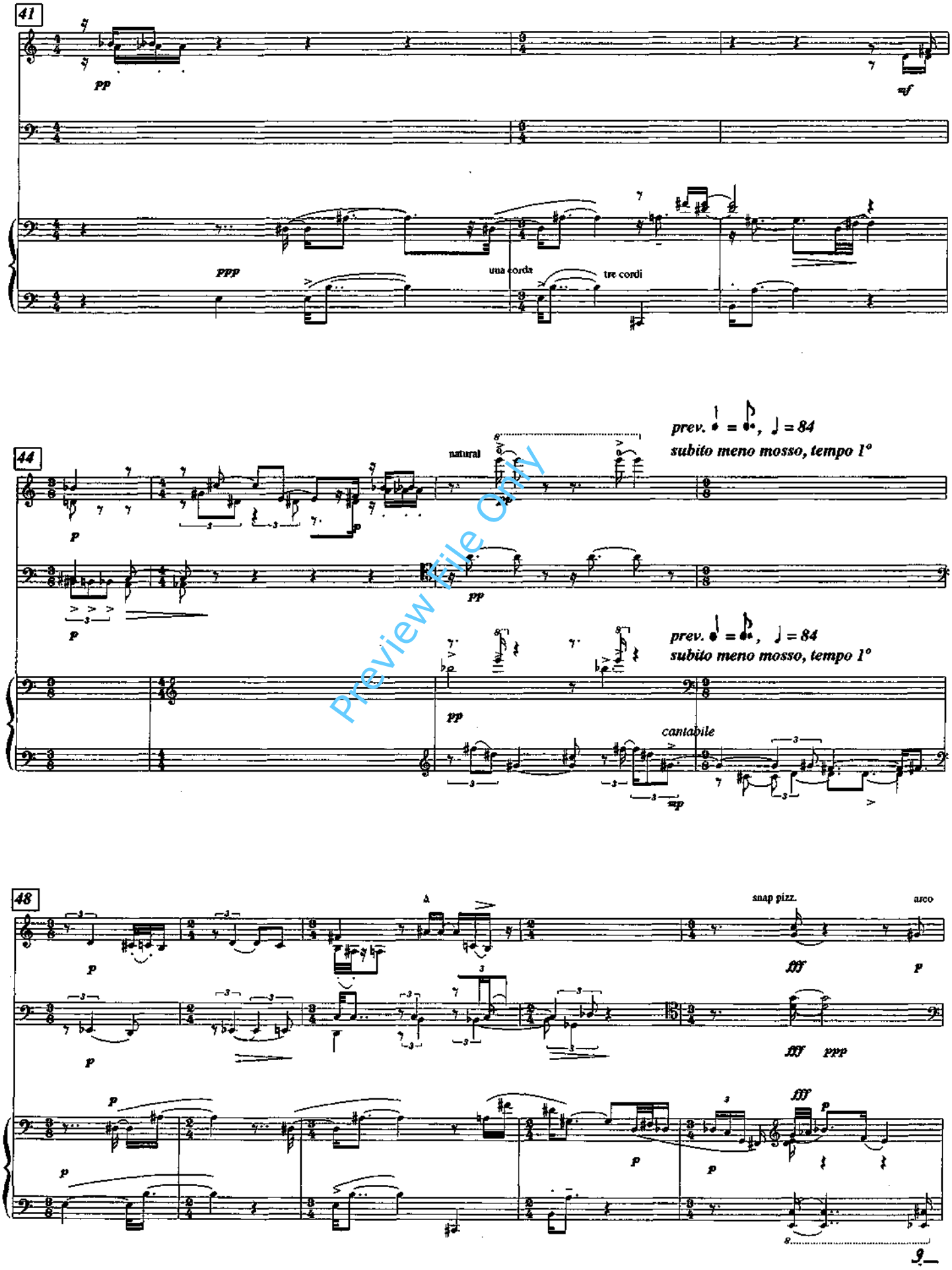

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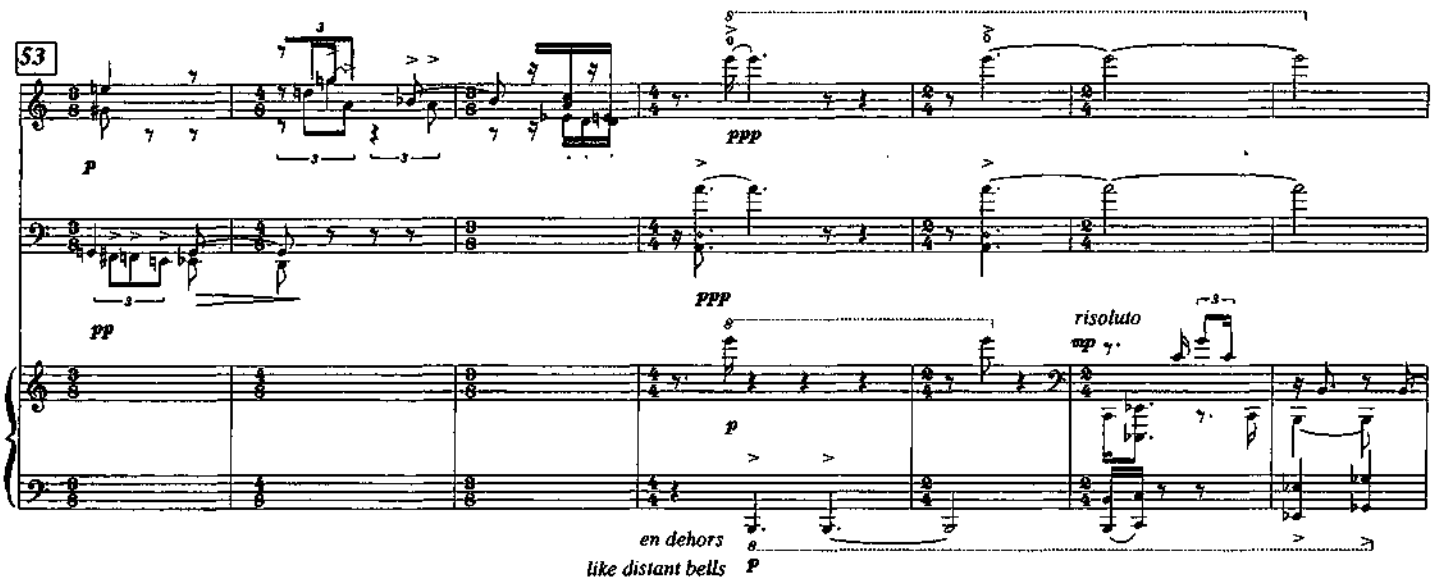

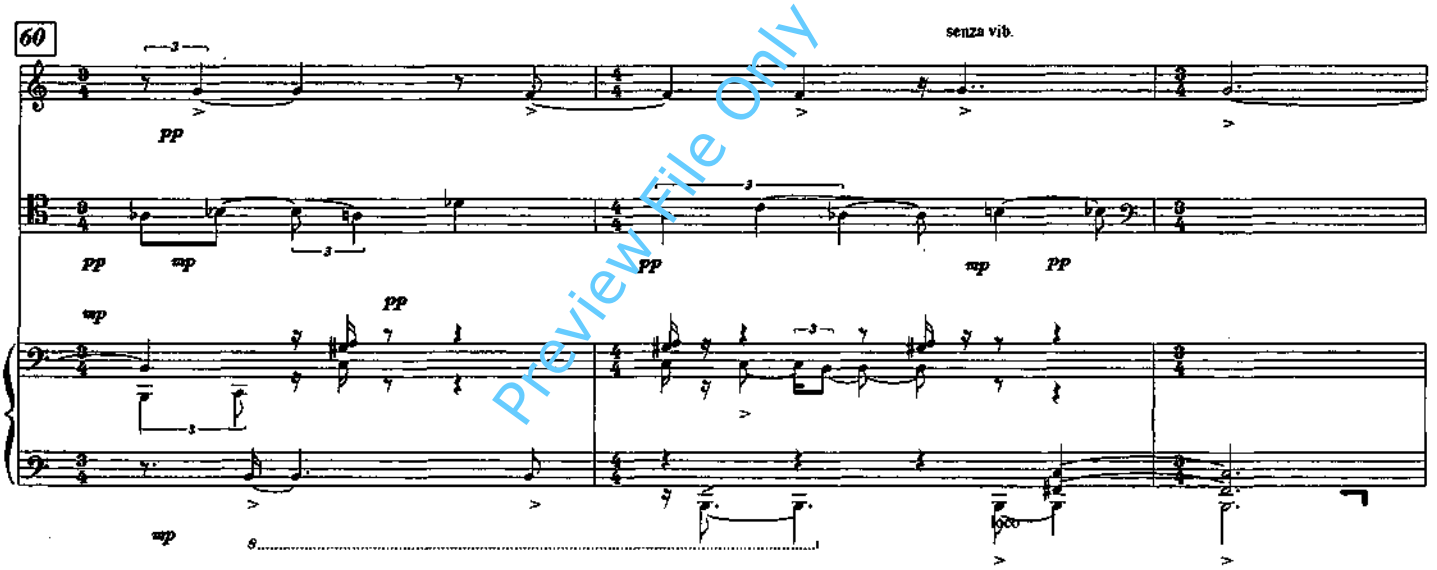

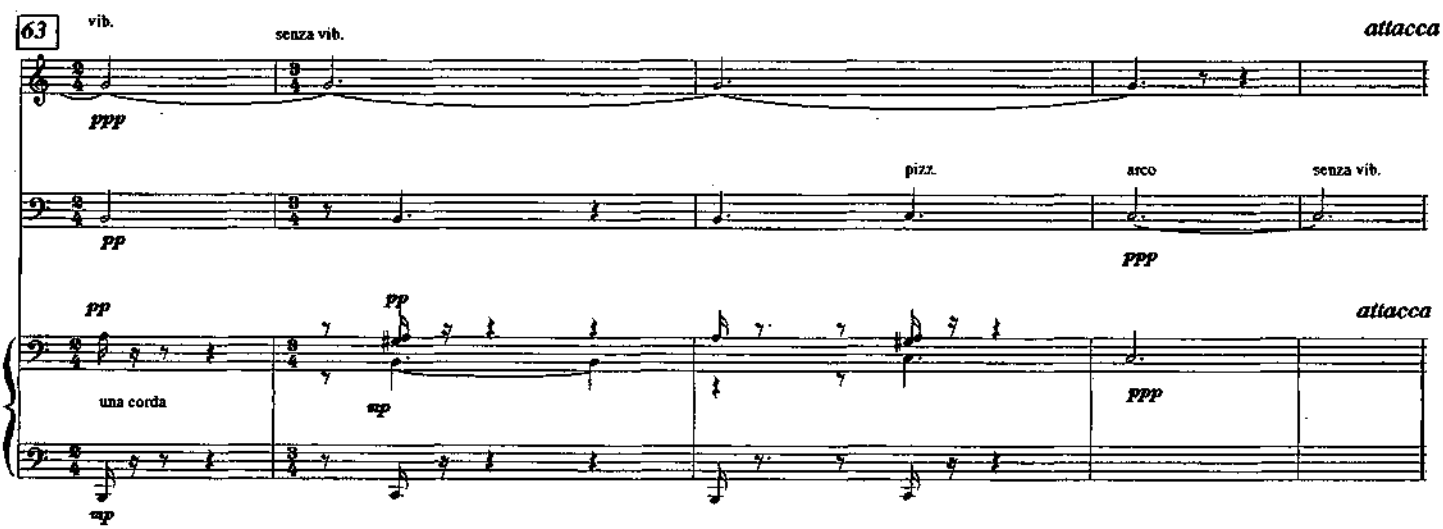

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III

calmo ma ritmico, prev. ♩. = ♩ , ♩ = 104

sempre poco vib.

sul pont. ord.

mp p mf

sempre poco vib.

gliss. sul pont.

mp pp mp pp

mf

sul pont. ord.

mp mf marcato p

calmo ma ritmico, prev. ♩. = ♩ , ♩ = 104

figures involving major and minor seconds sungwith slow portamento almost gliss.

mp gliss.

Left à -

calmo ma ritmico, prev. ♩. = ♩ , ♩ = 104

pp

5

sul pont. ord.

mf p

p mf

f mp

gliss.

- - lone on the top sto -

p

mf

p

p pp

8

rall.

mp pp ppp pont.

mf ppp

pont.

rall.

fp p fp mf pp mf ppp

- - rey of Mort - - -

rall.

p p pp

loco

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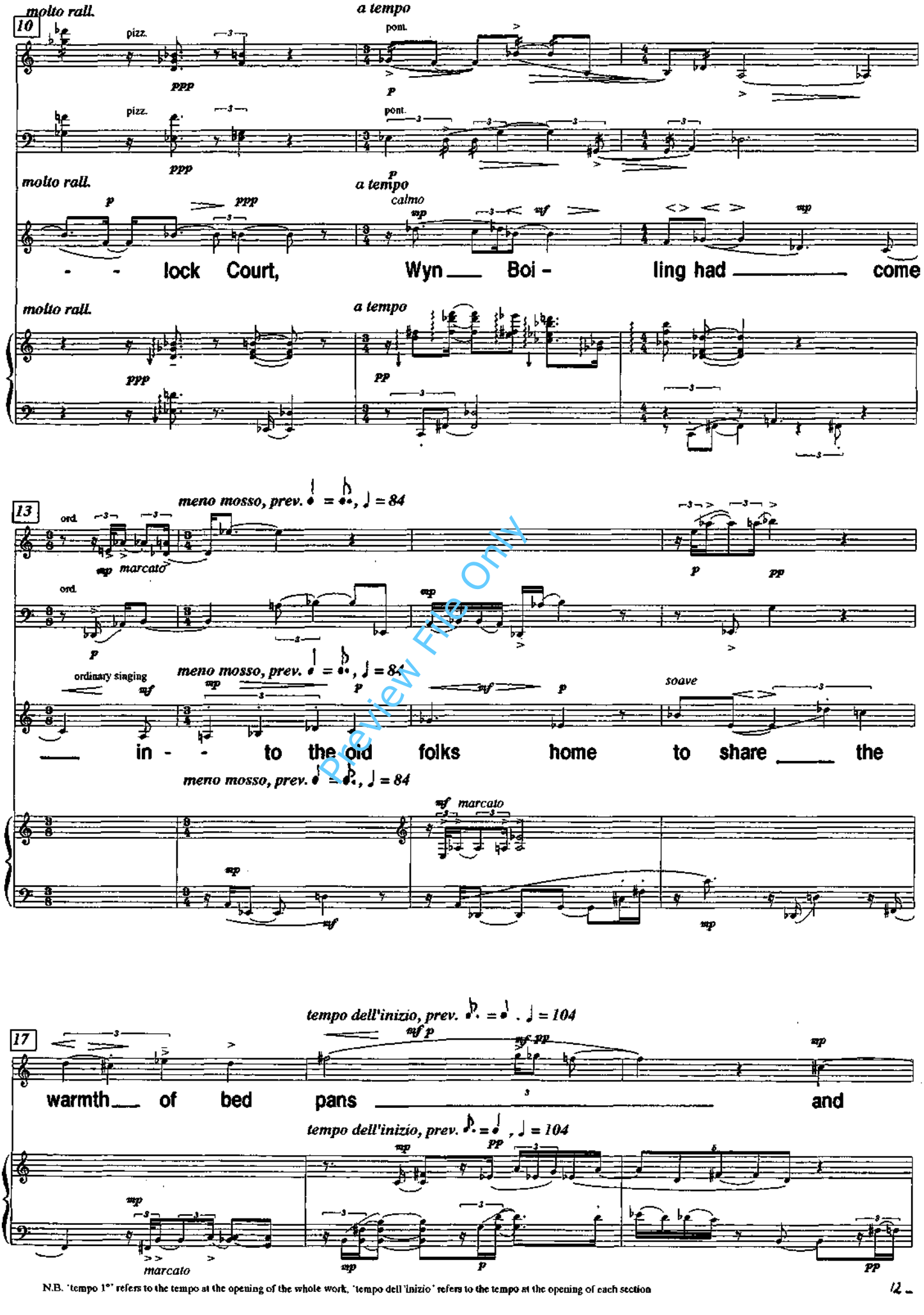

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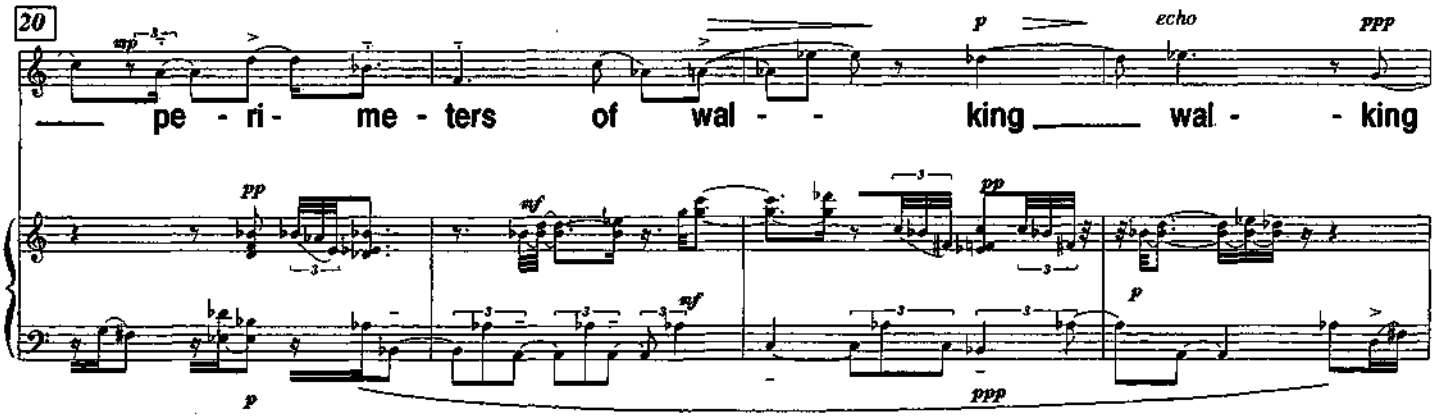
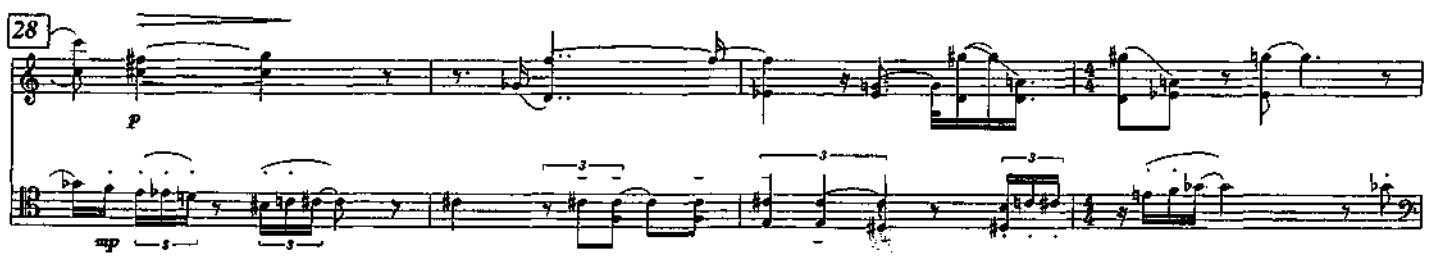
N.B. 'tempo 1°' refers to the tempo at the opening of the whole work, 'tempo dell'inizio' refers to the tempo at the opening of each section





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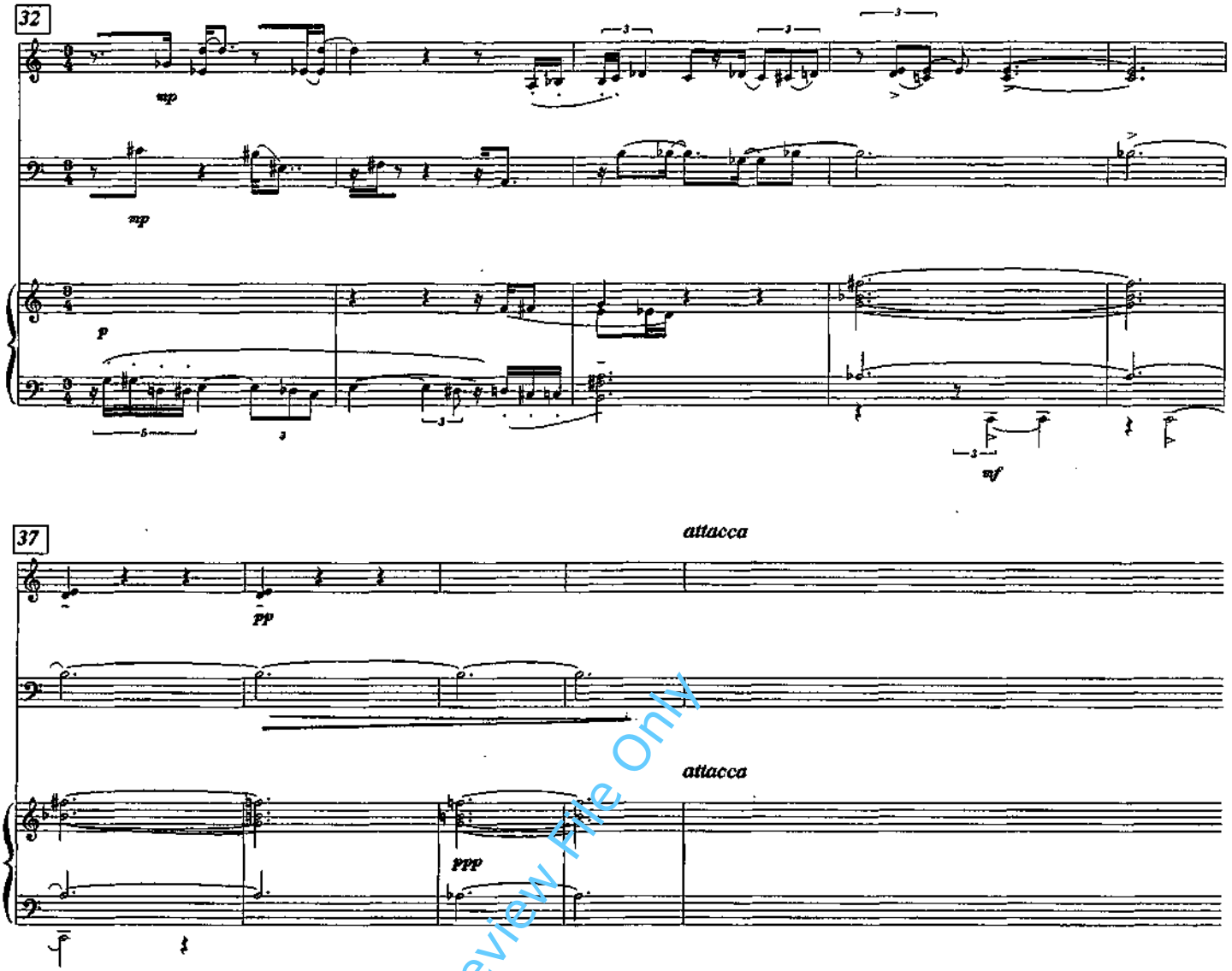

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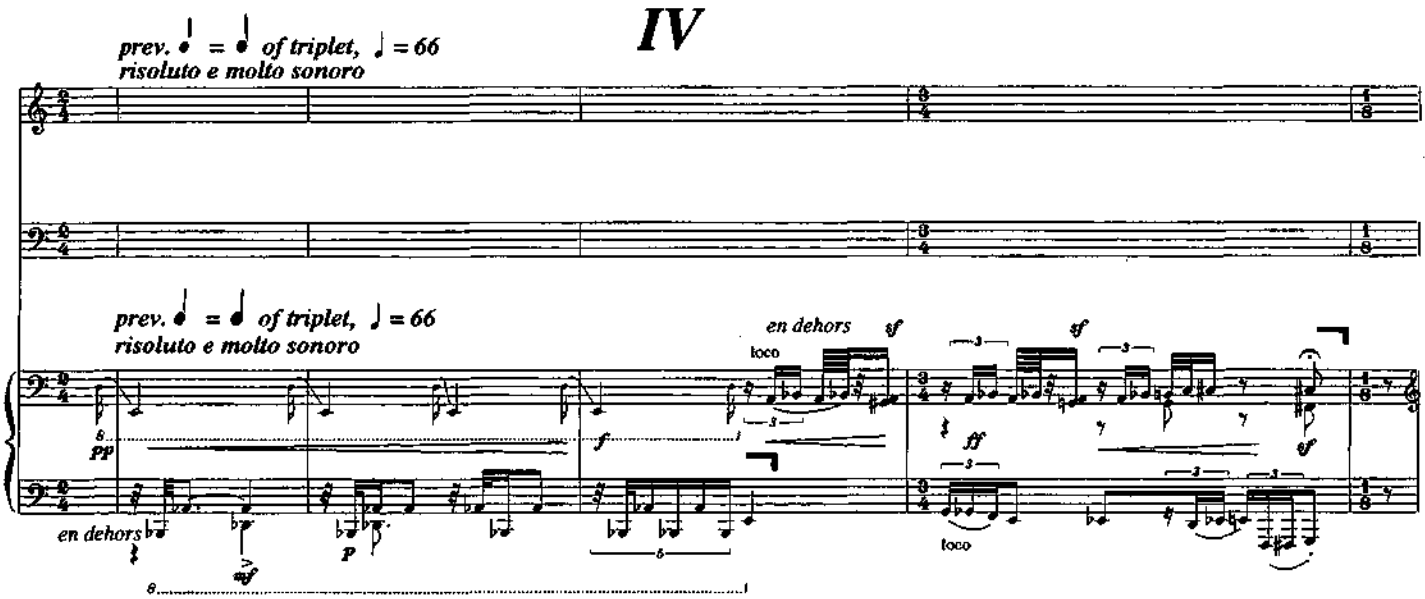
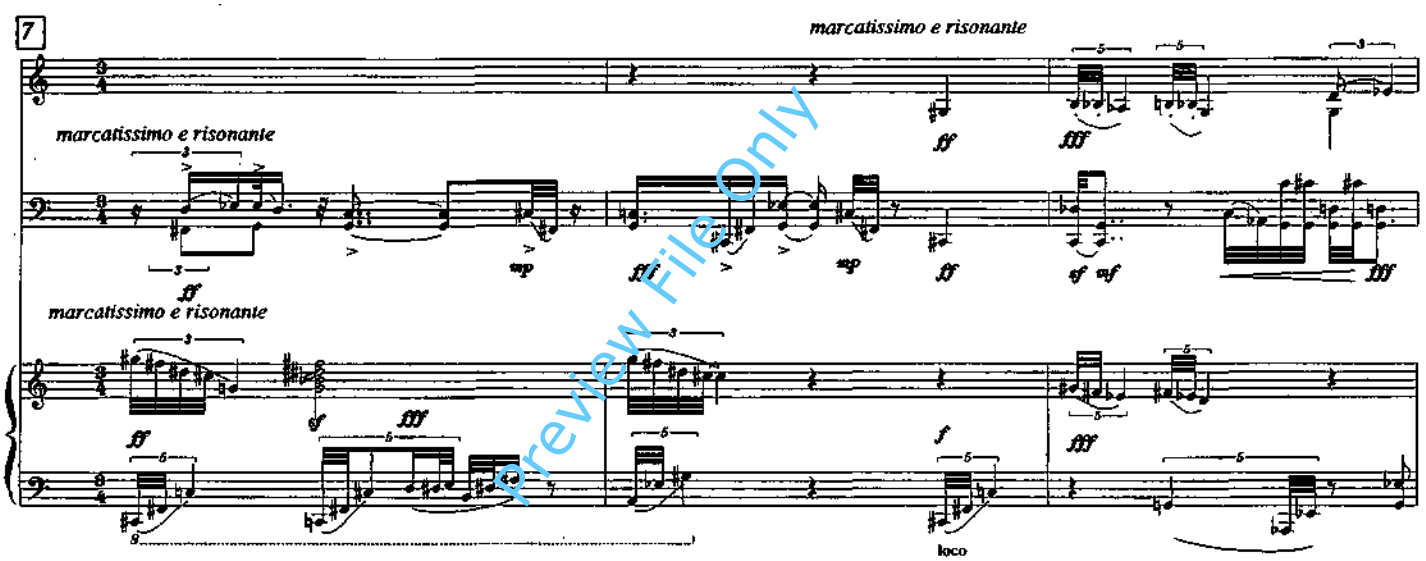
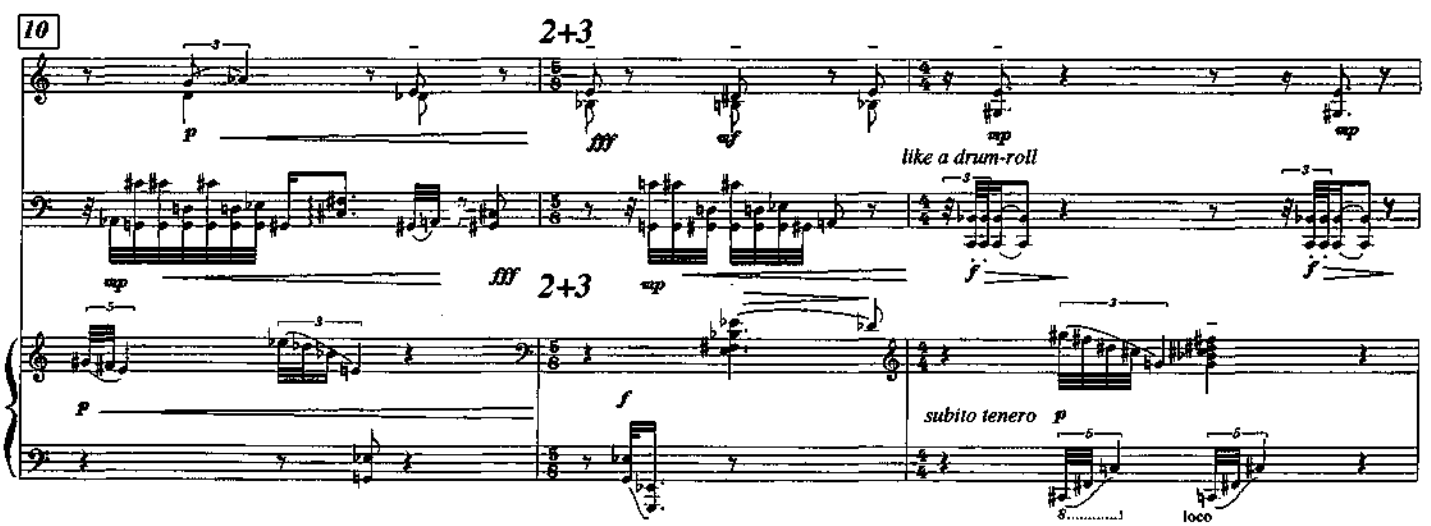
IV







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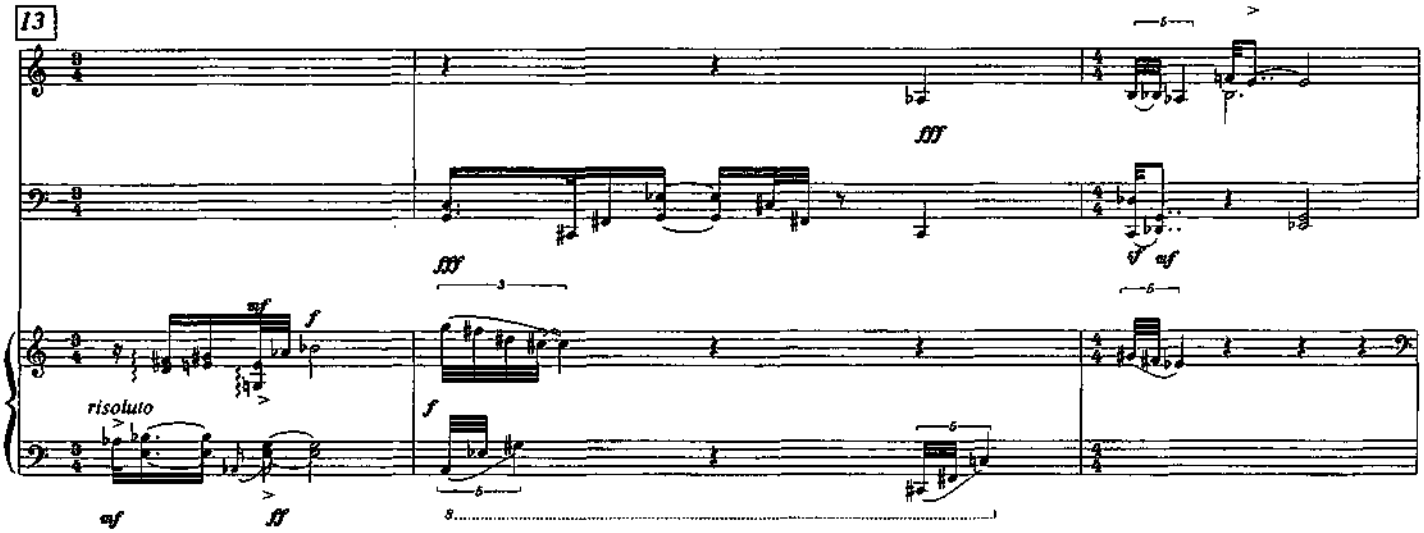

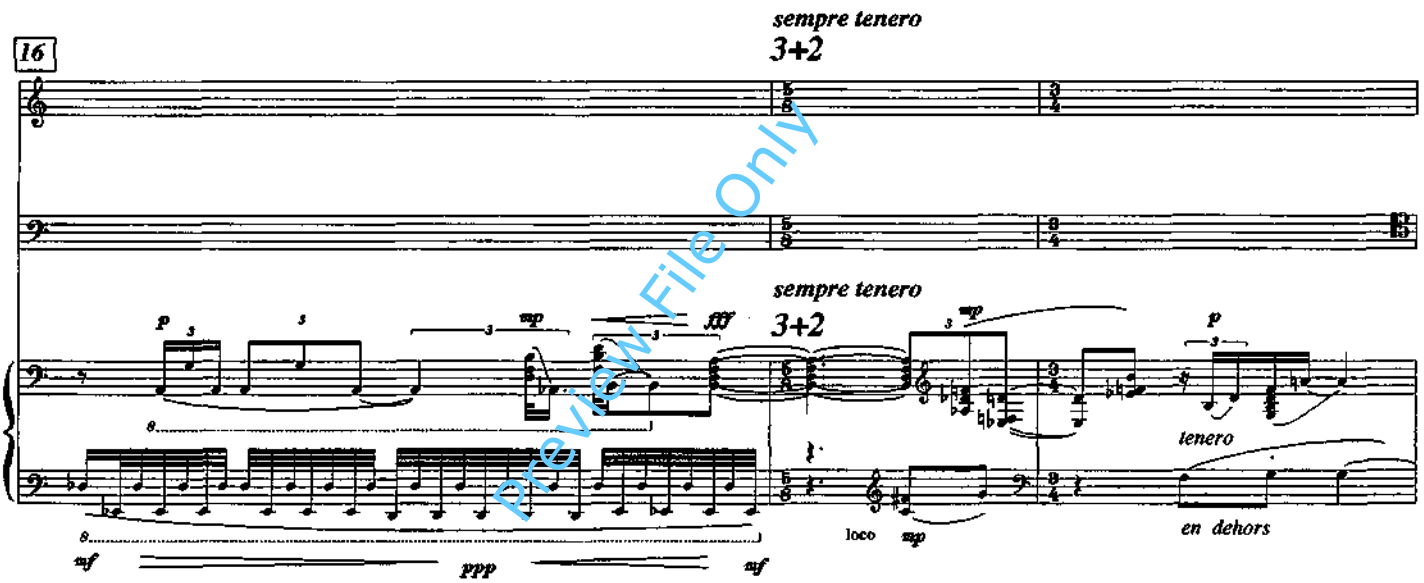

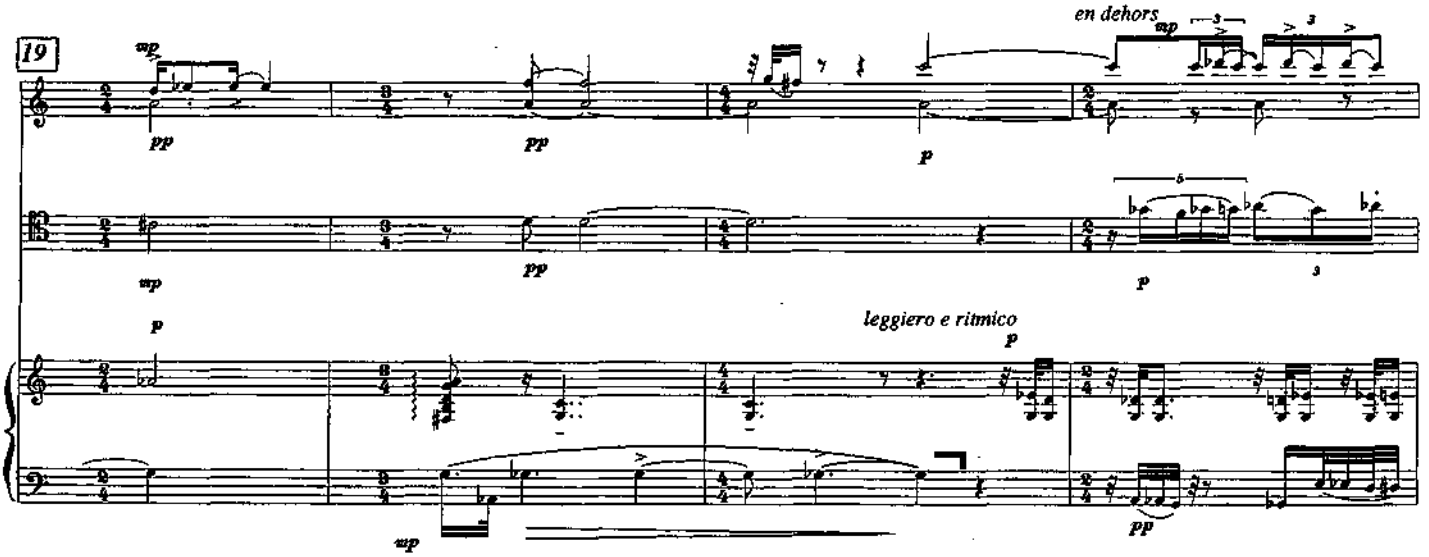

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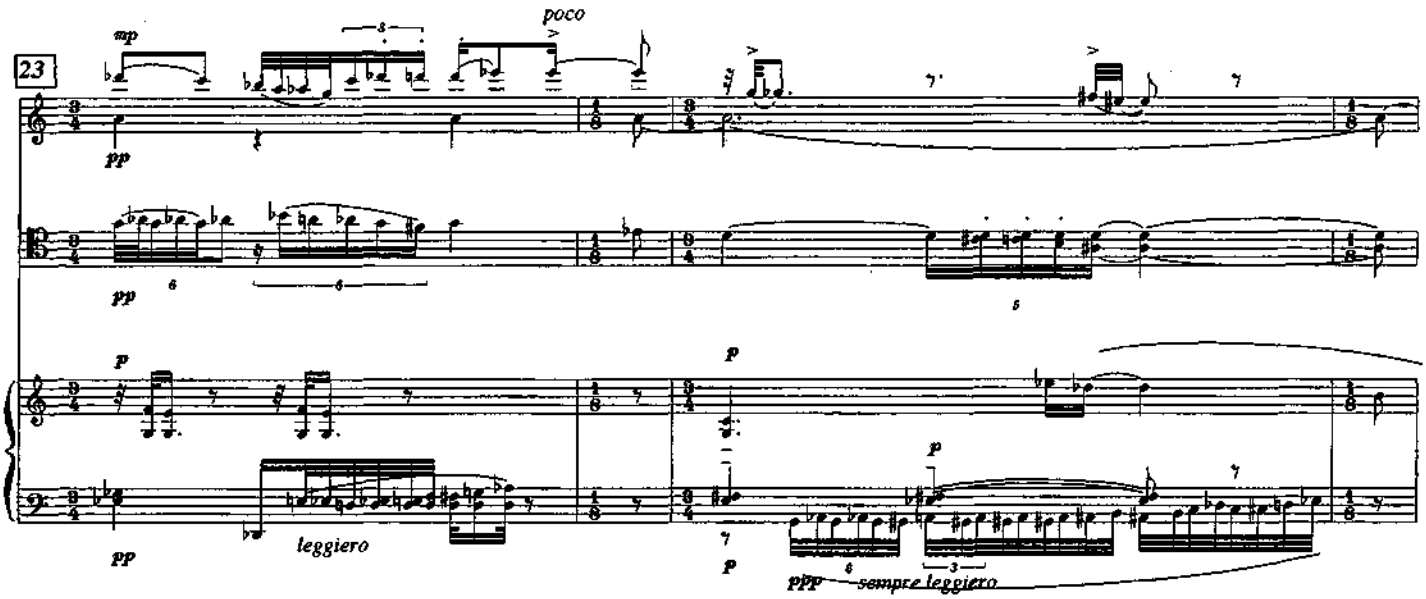

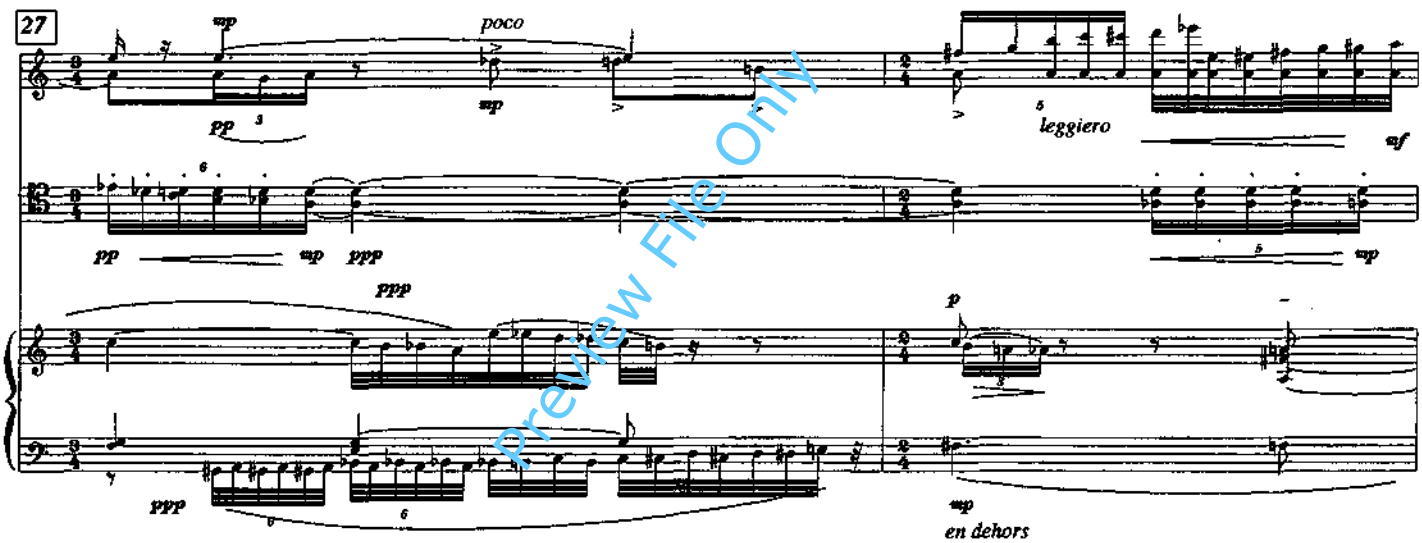

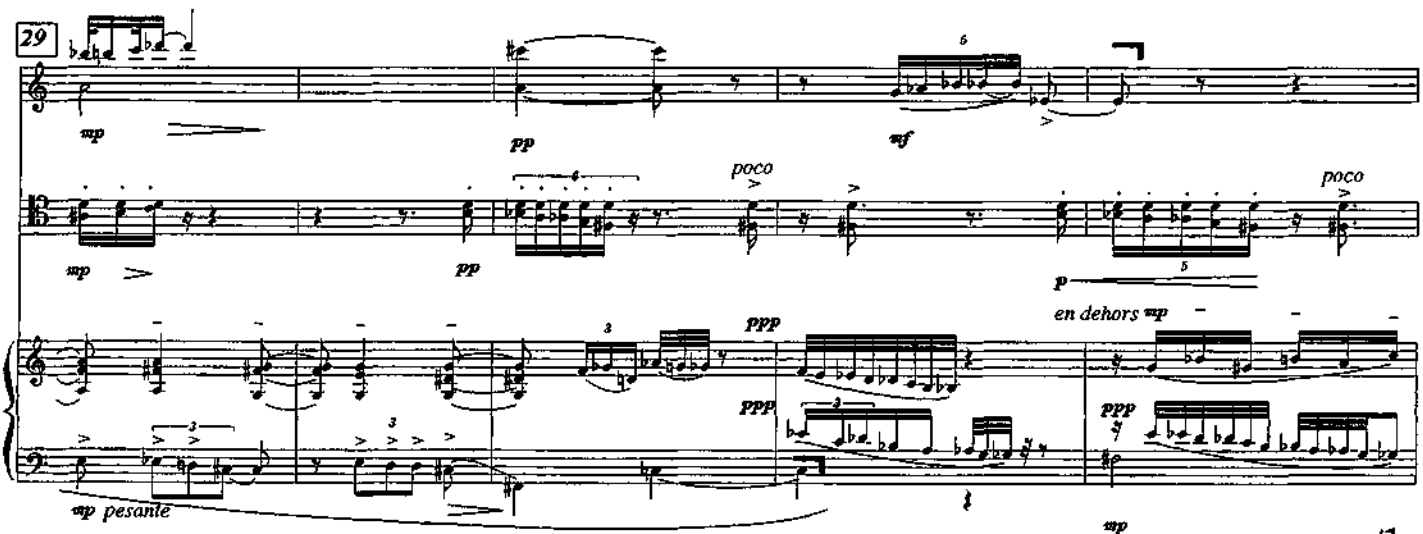

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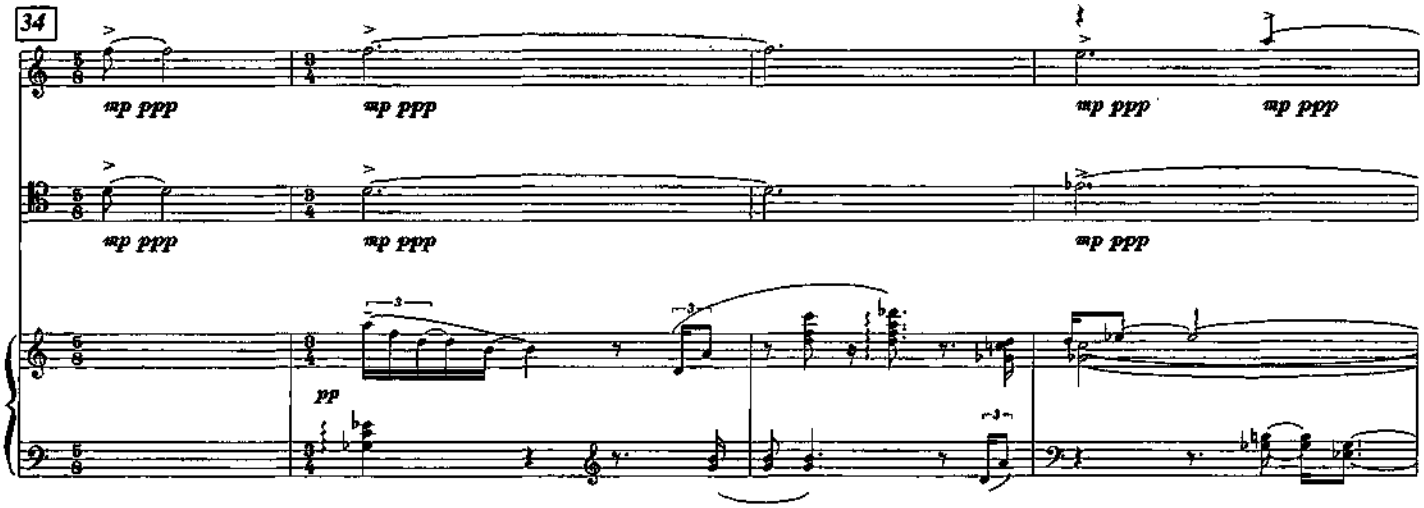

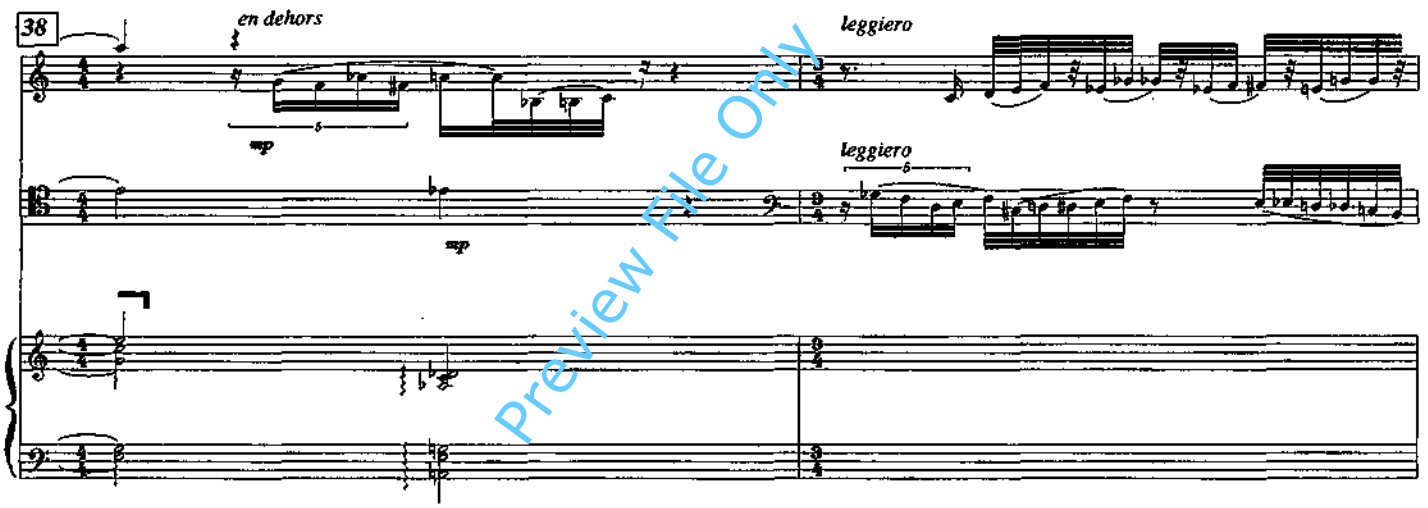

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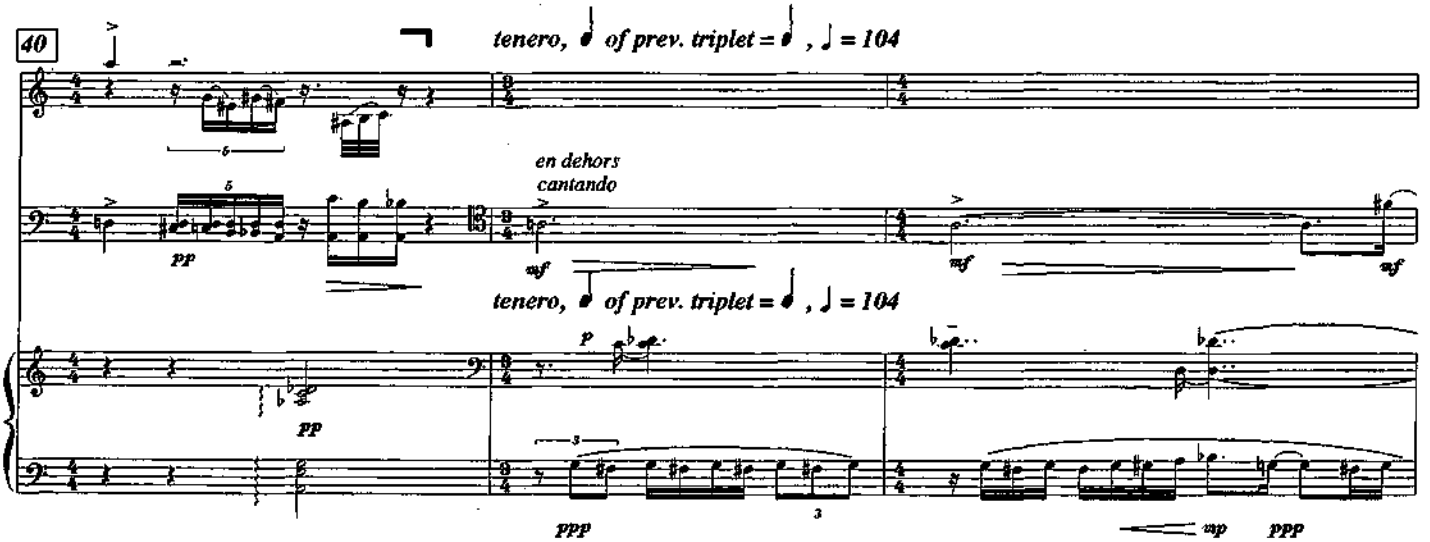

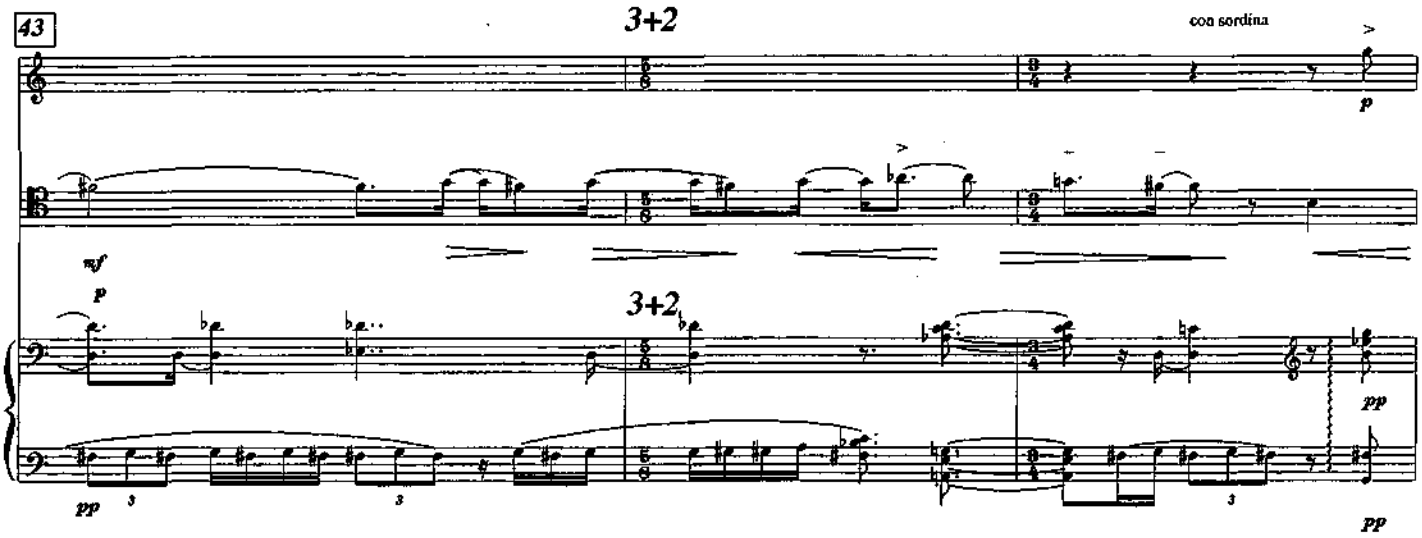

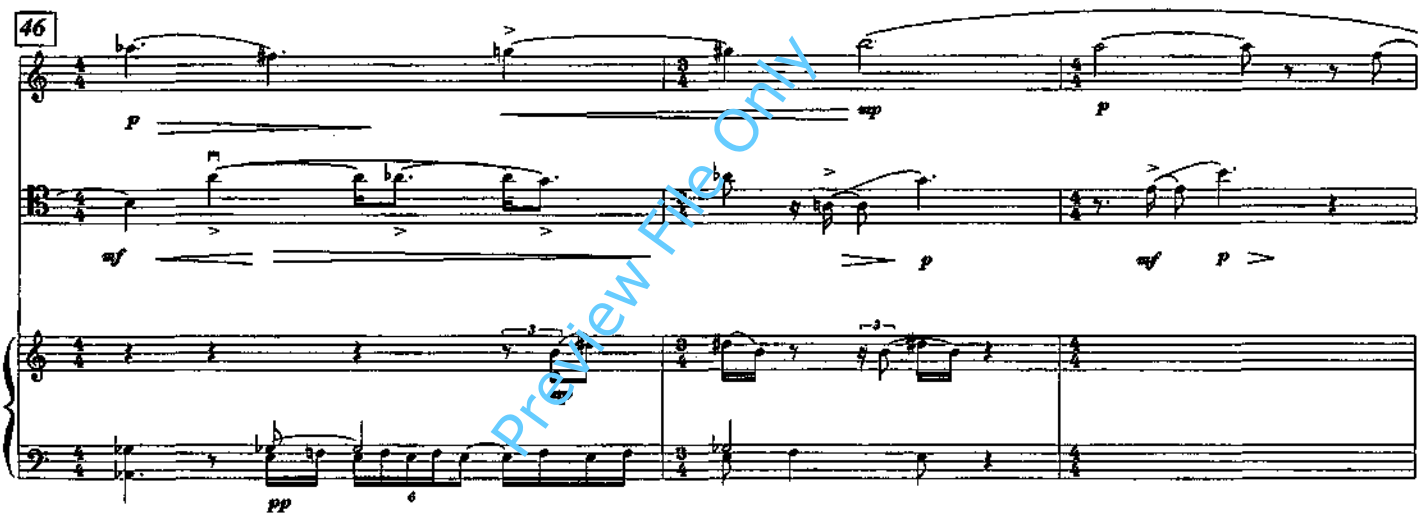

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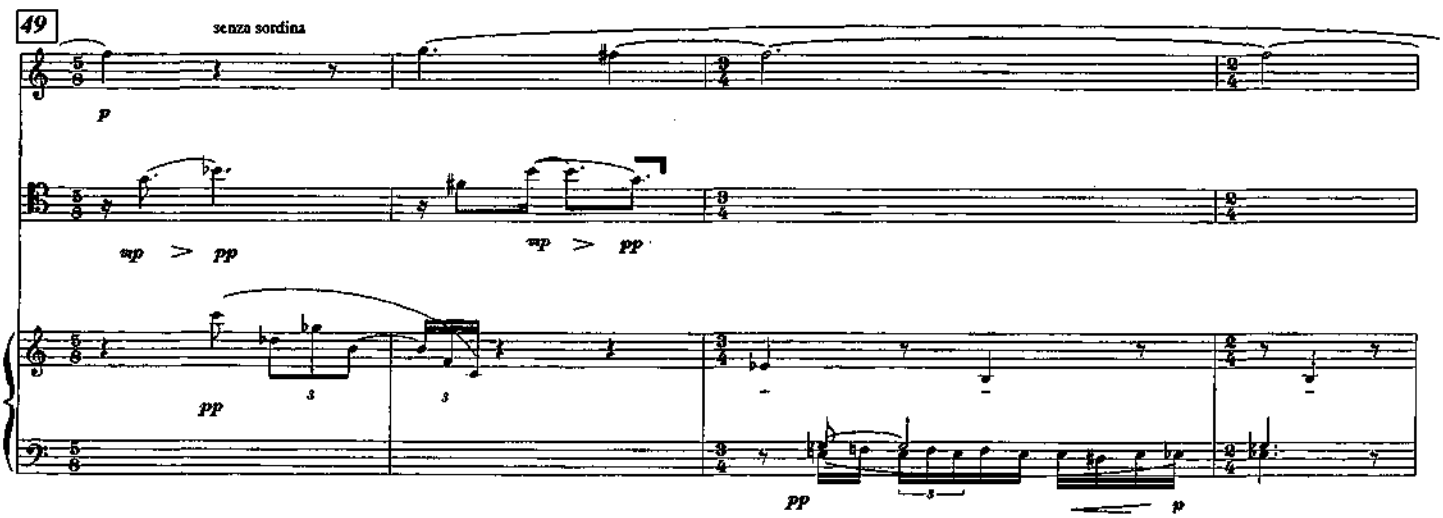

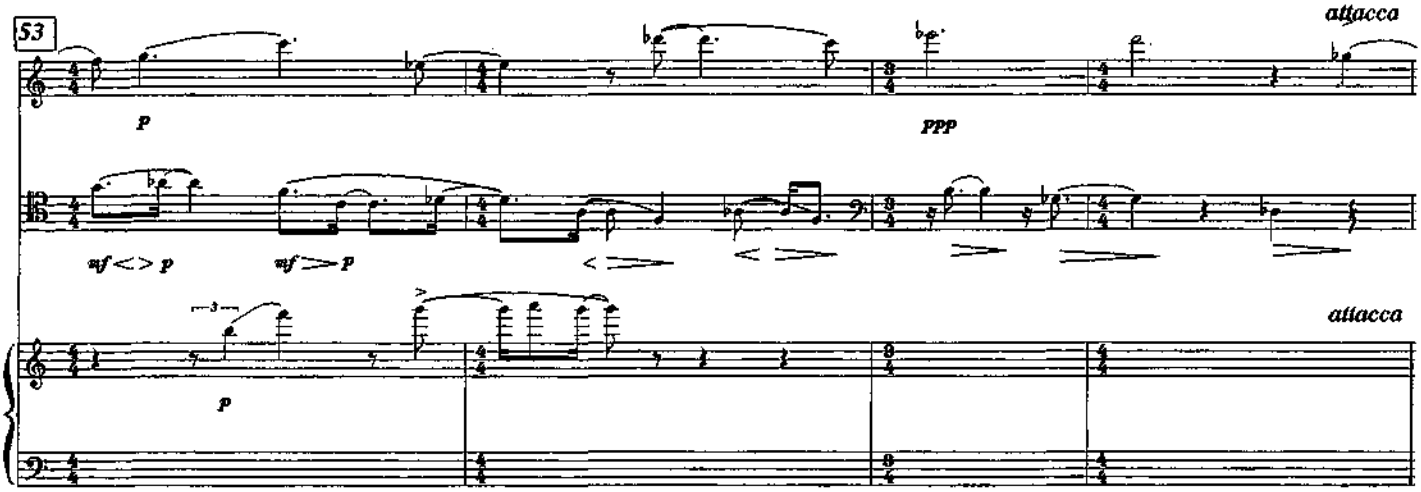

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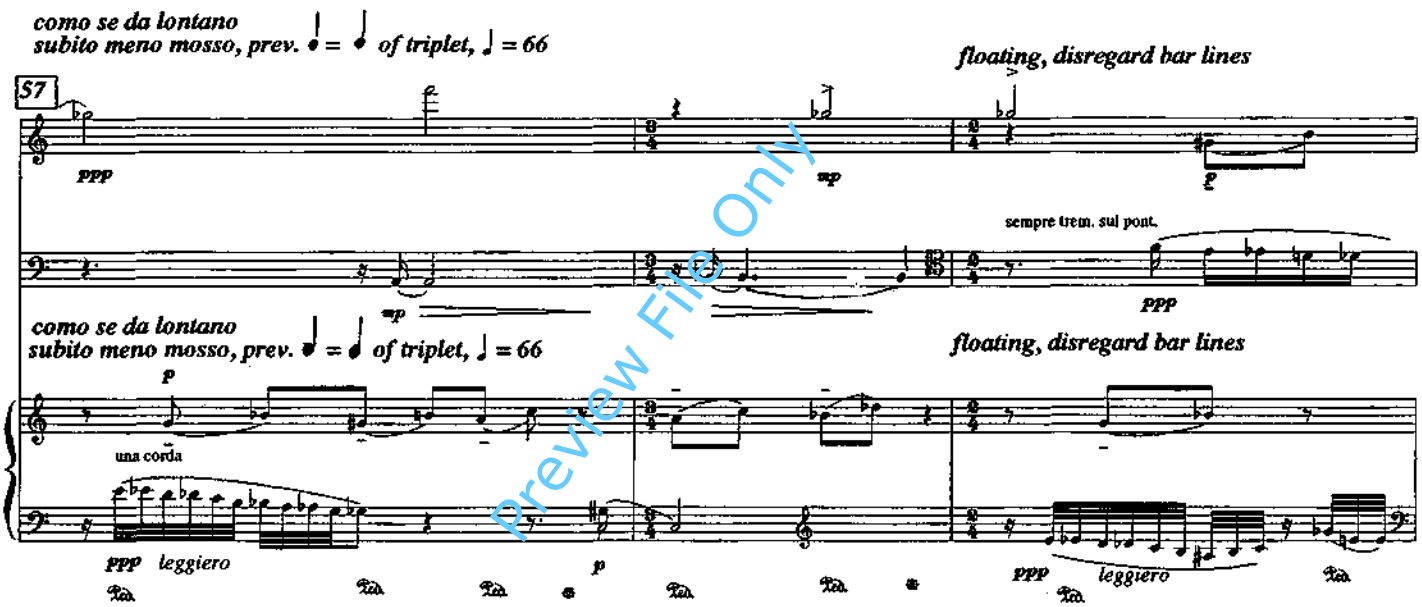

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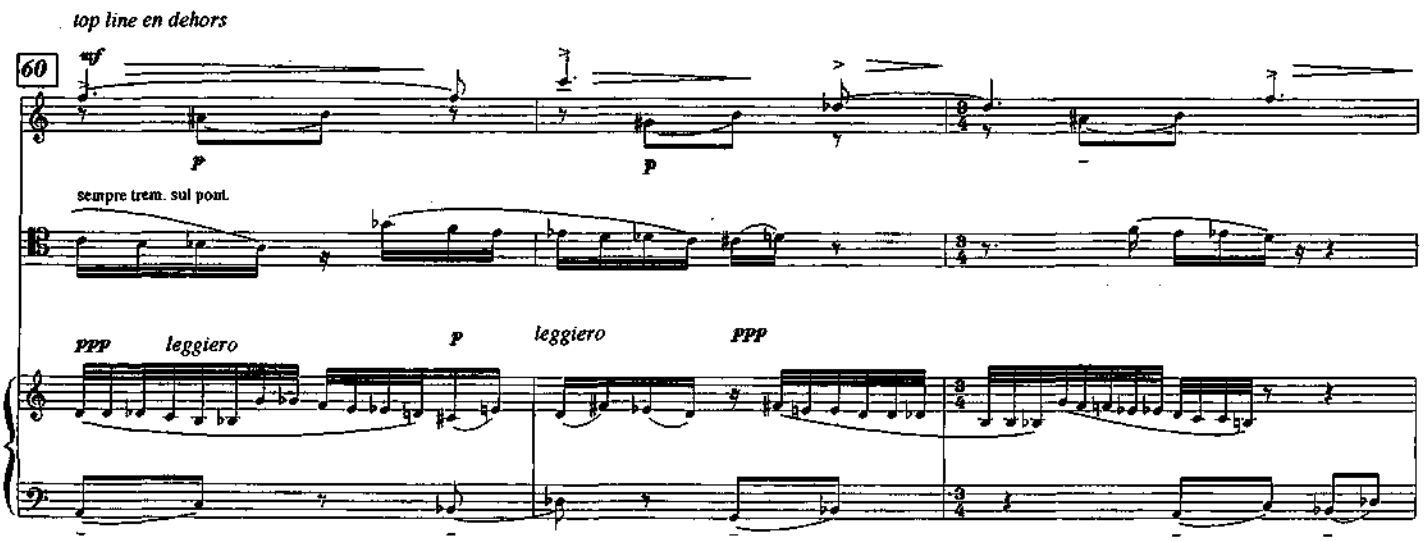

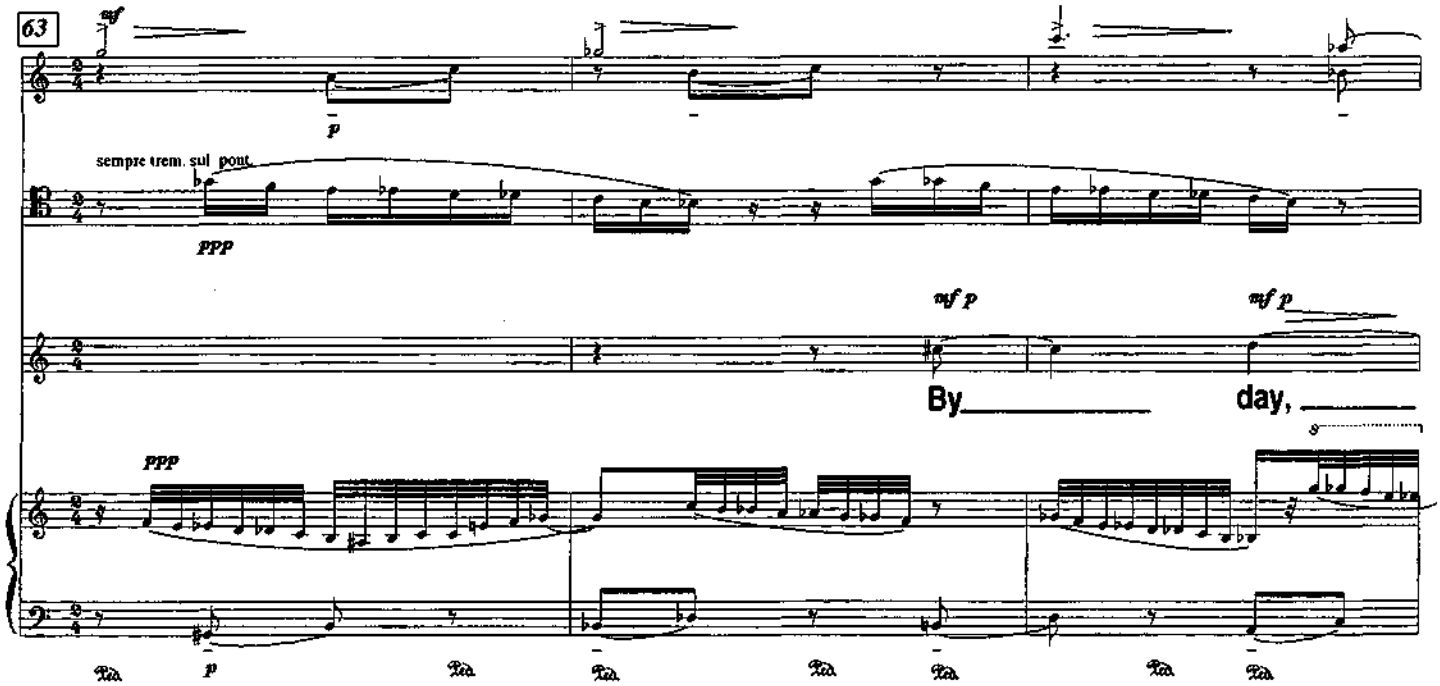

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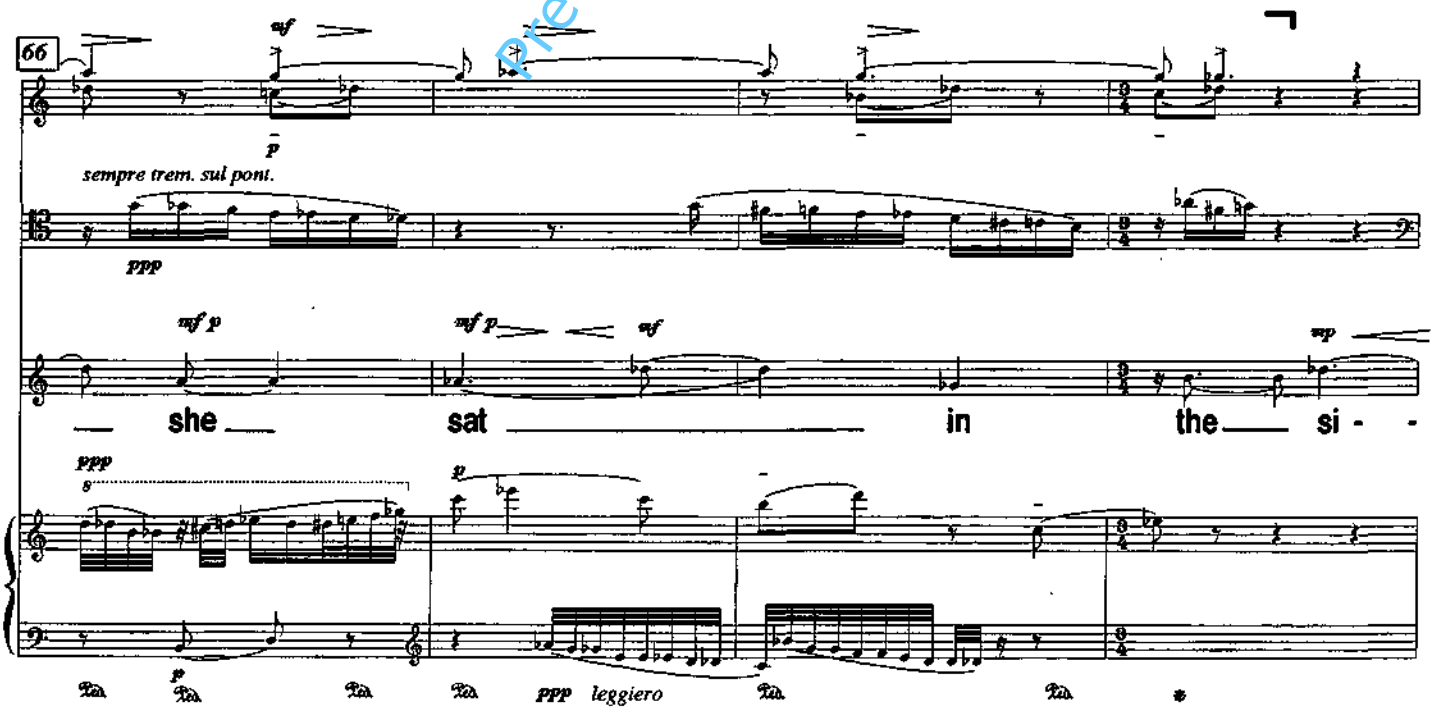

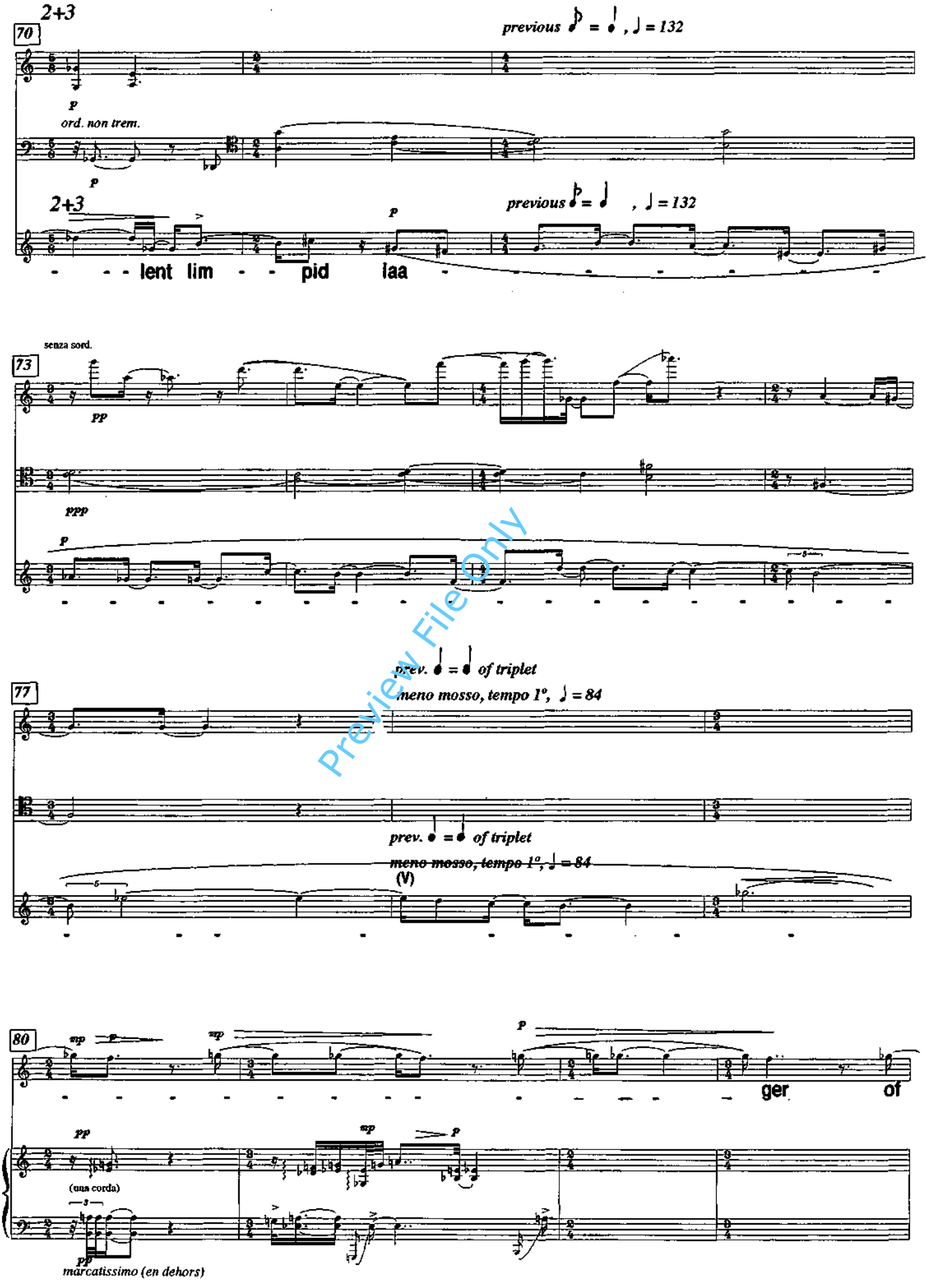

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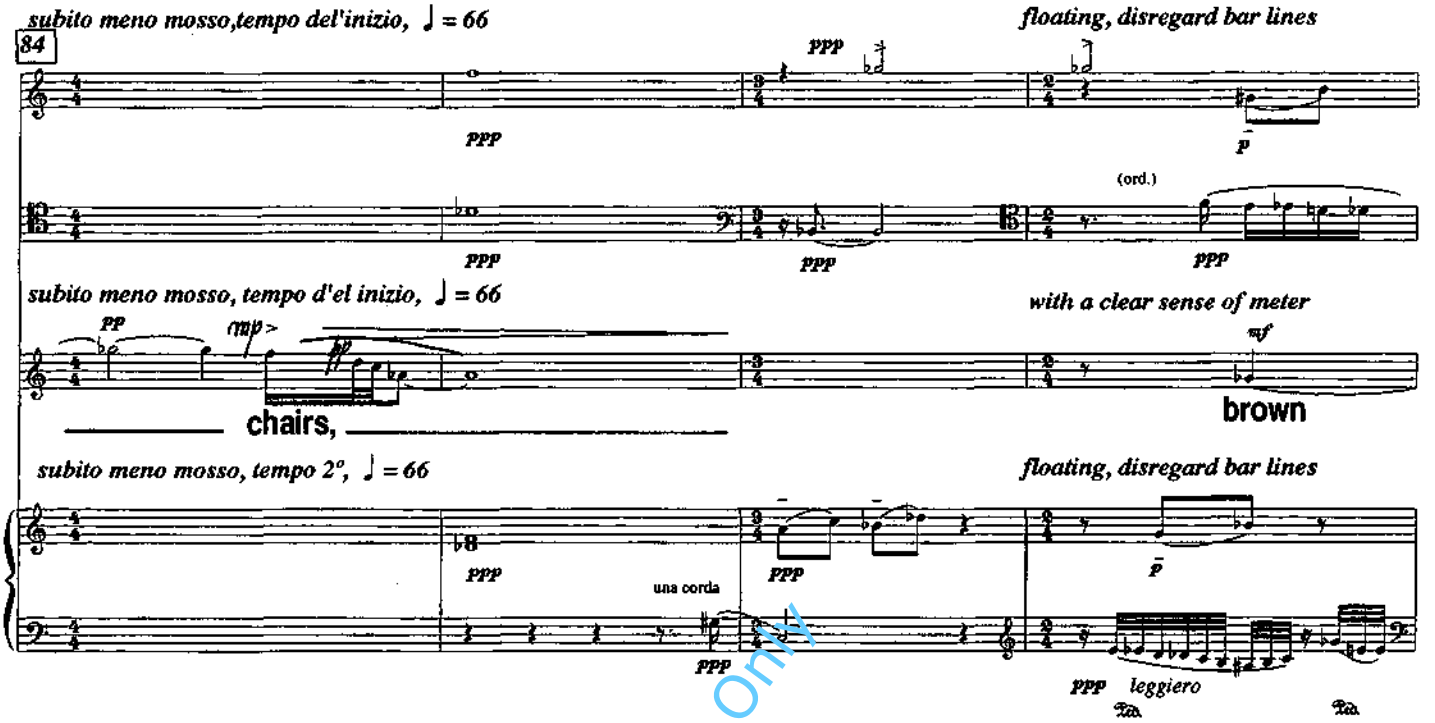

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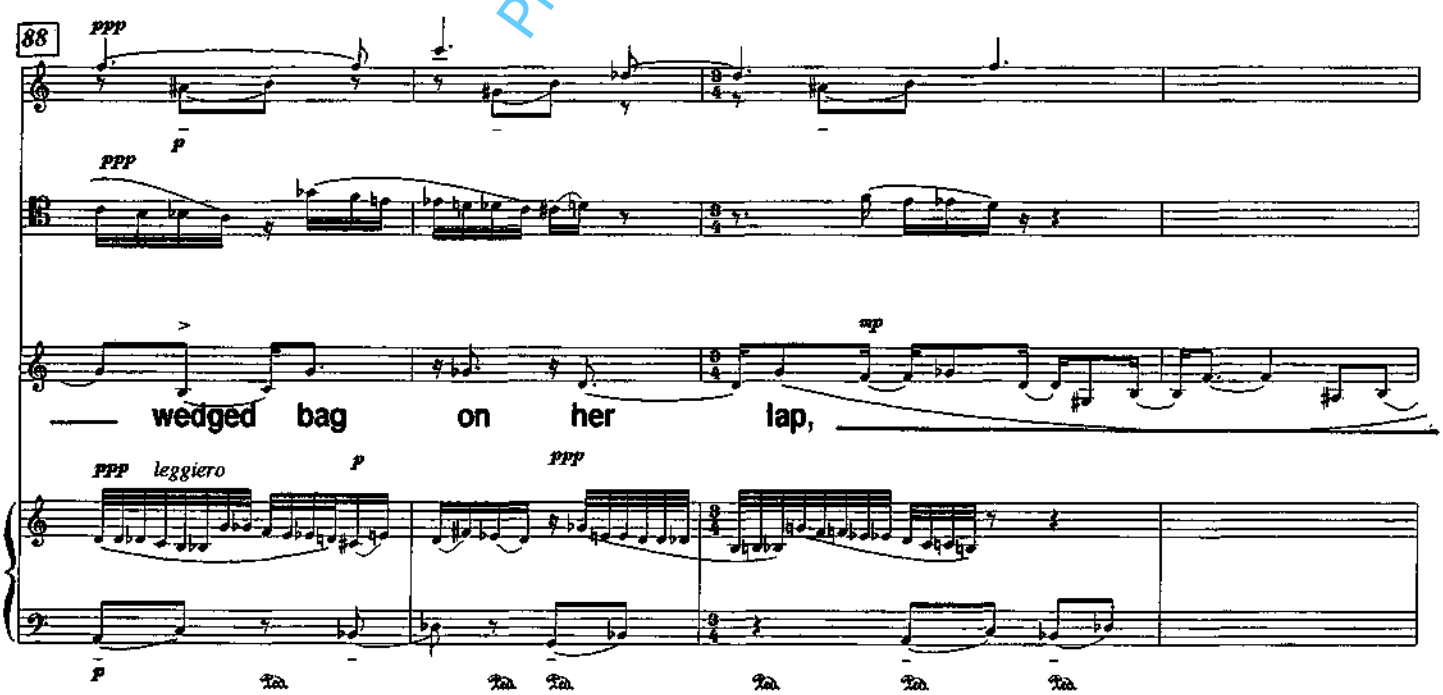

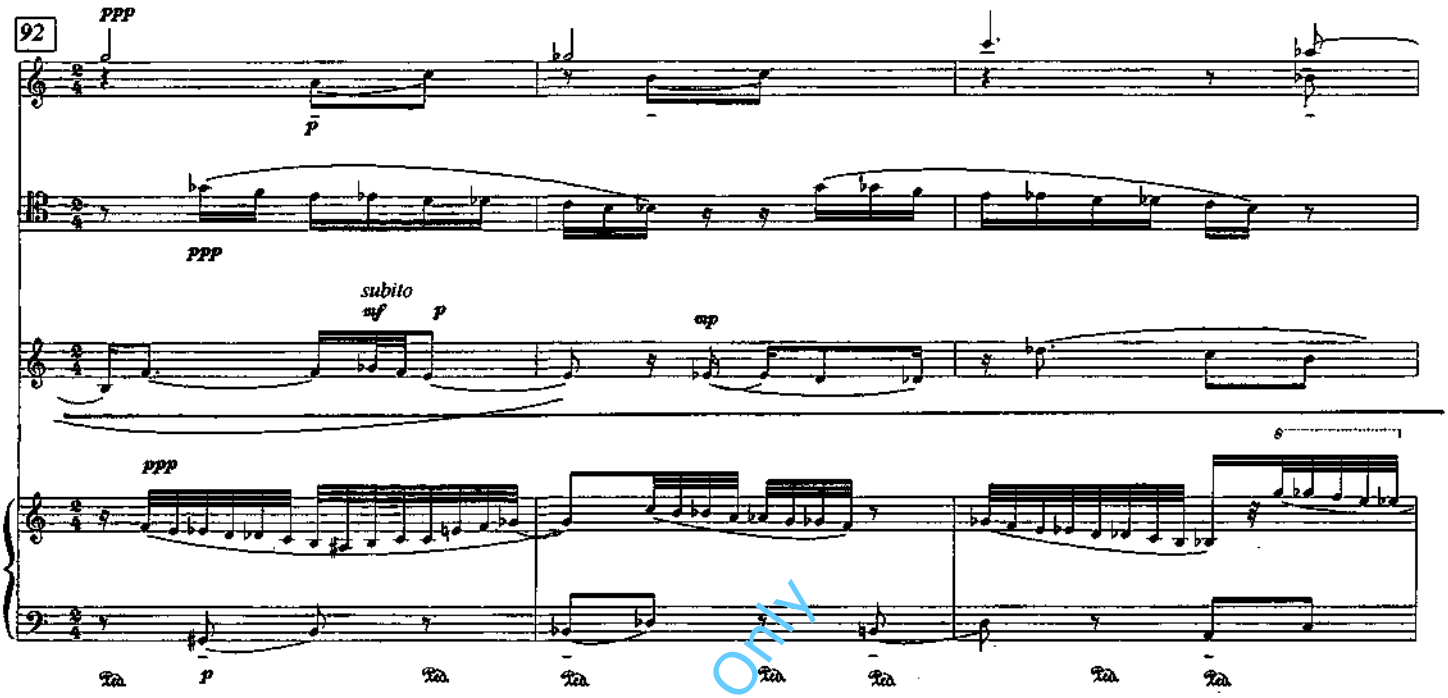

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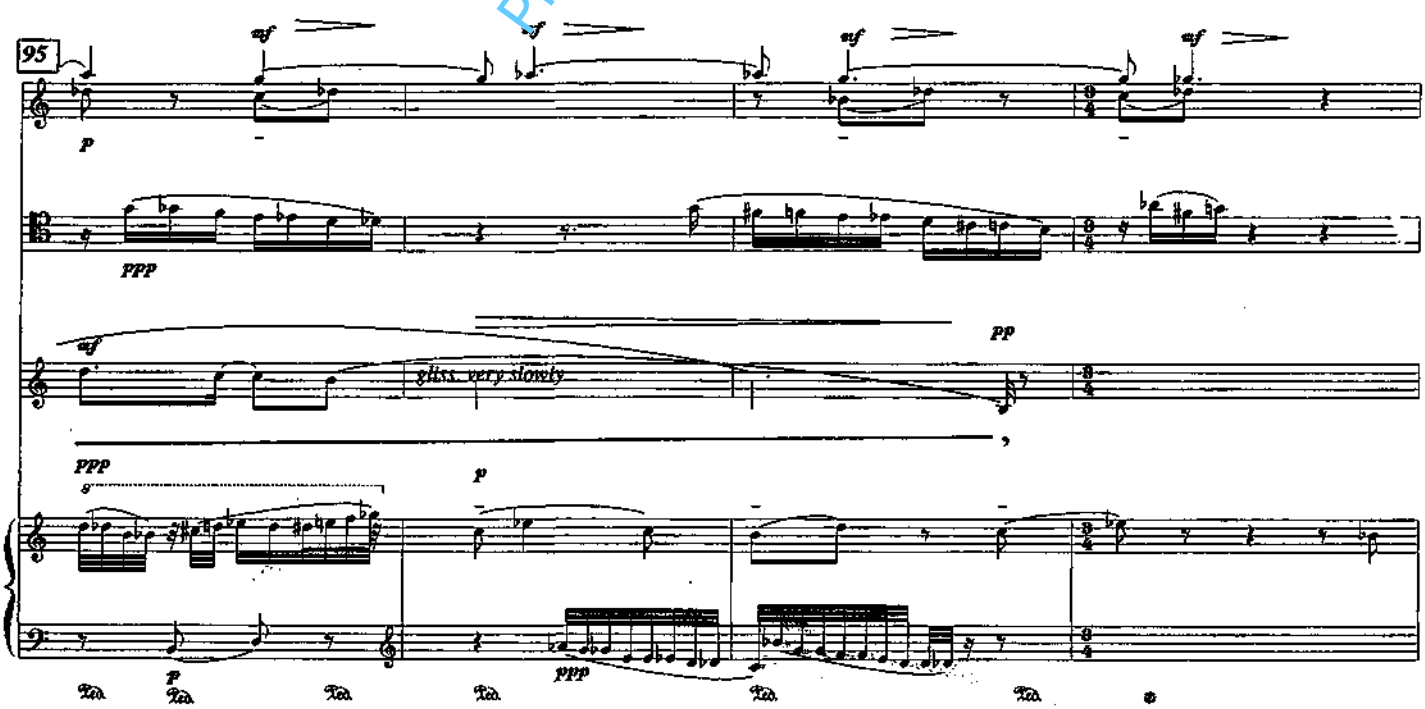

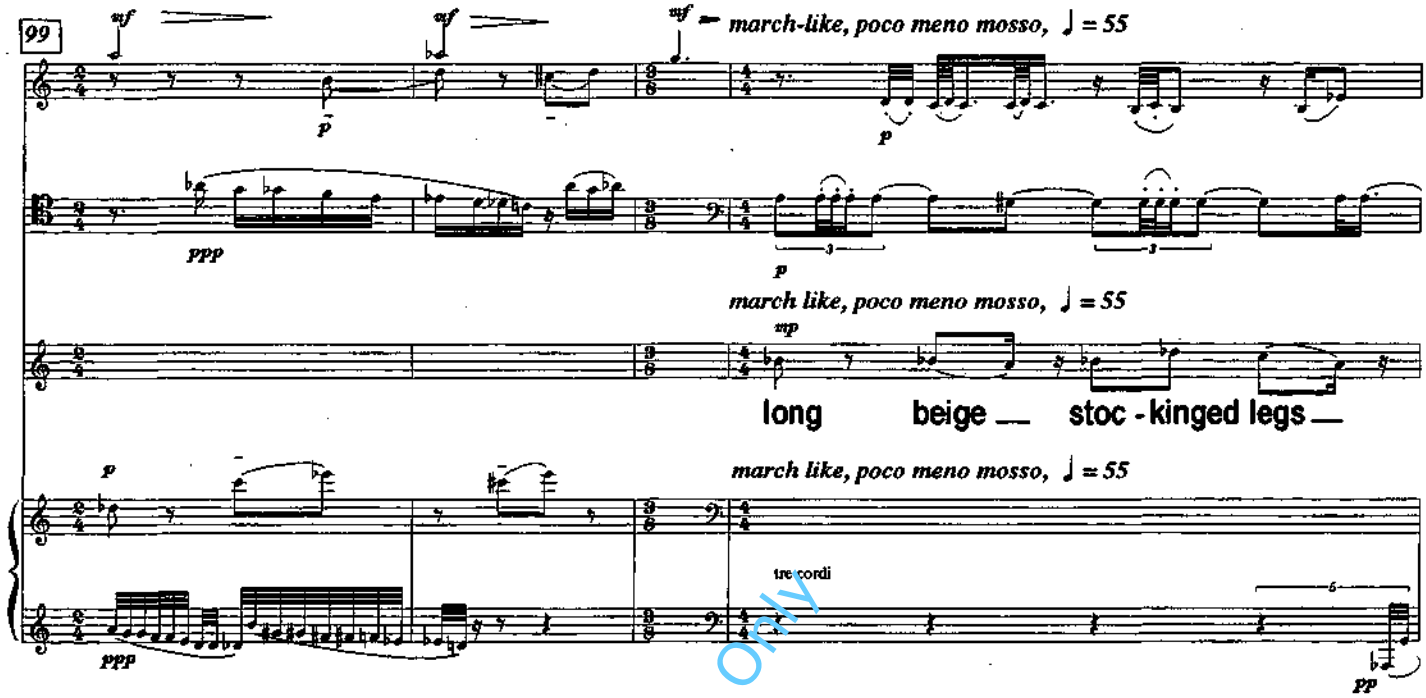

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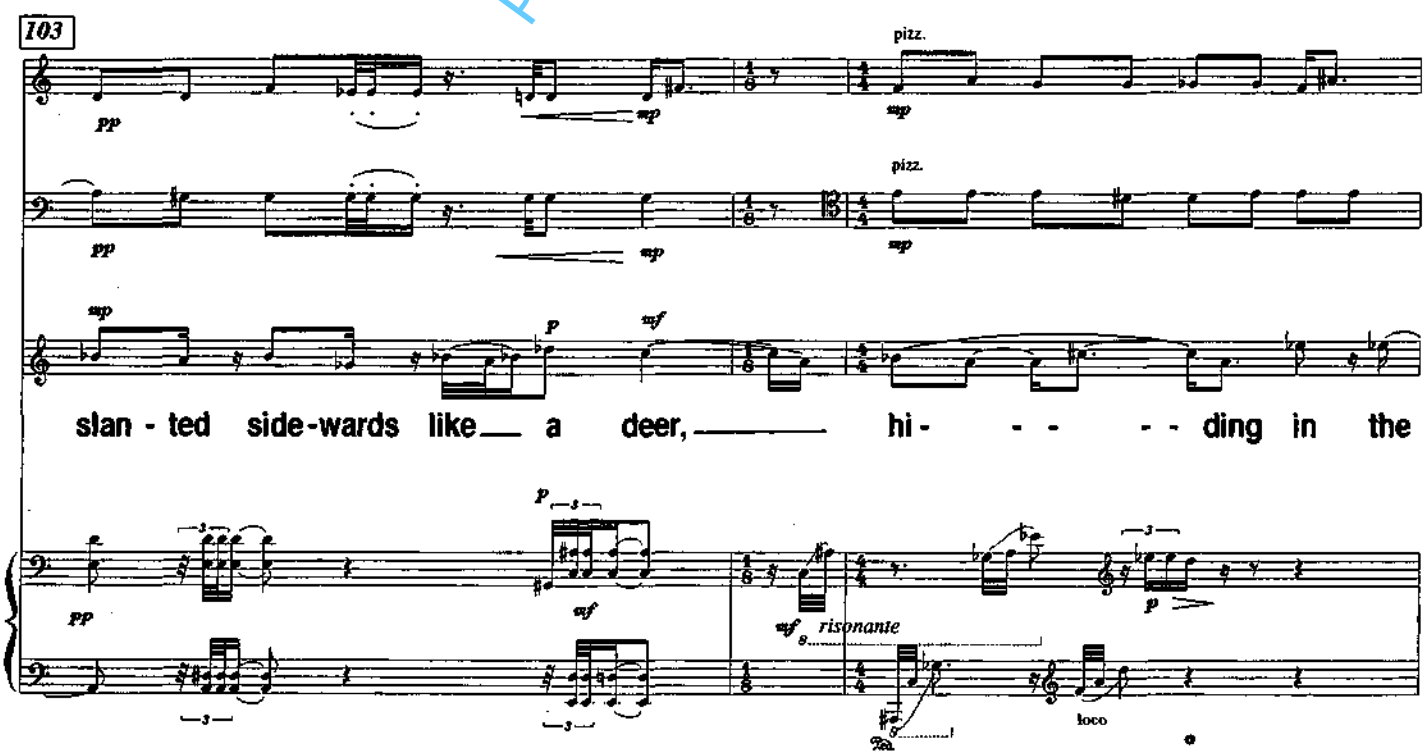

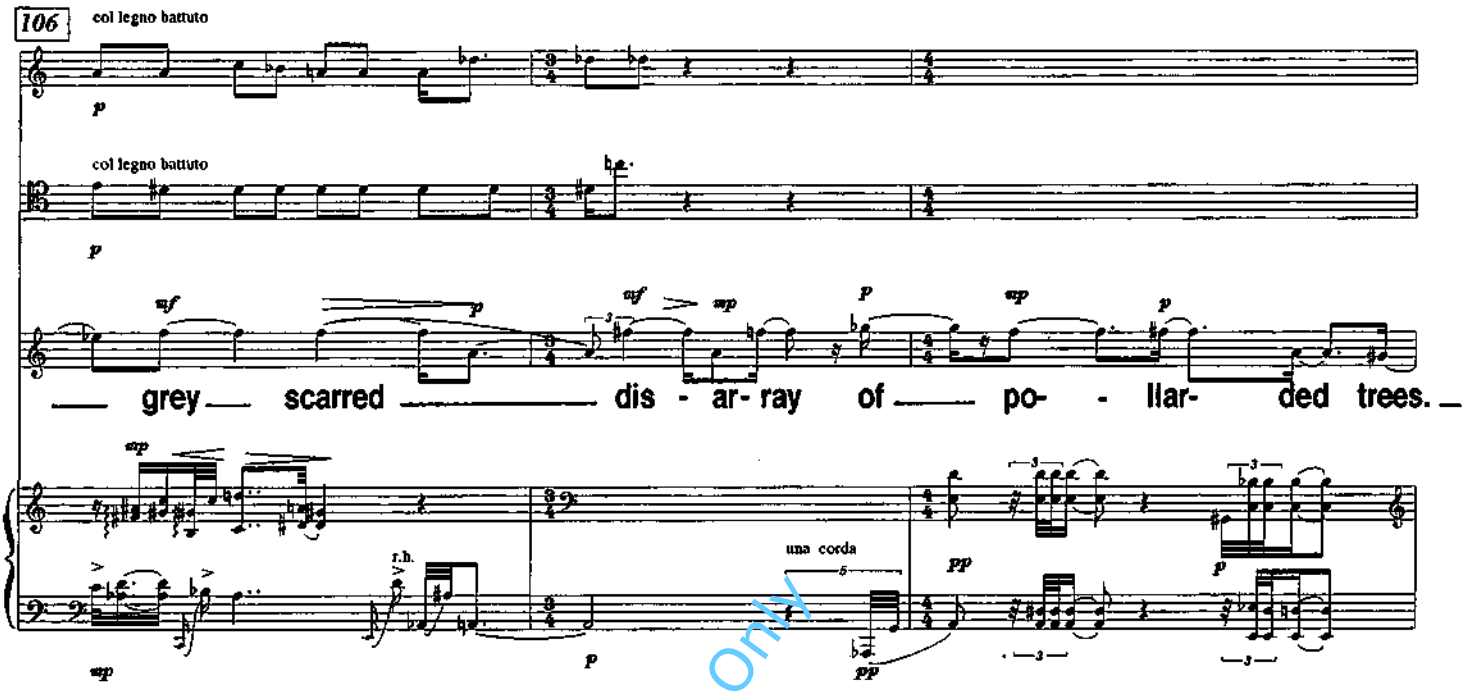

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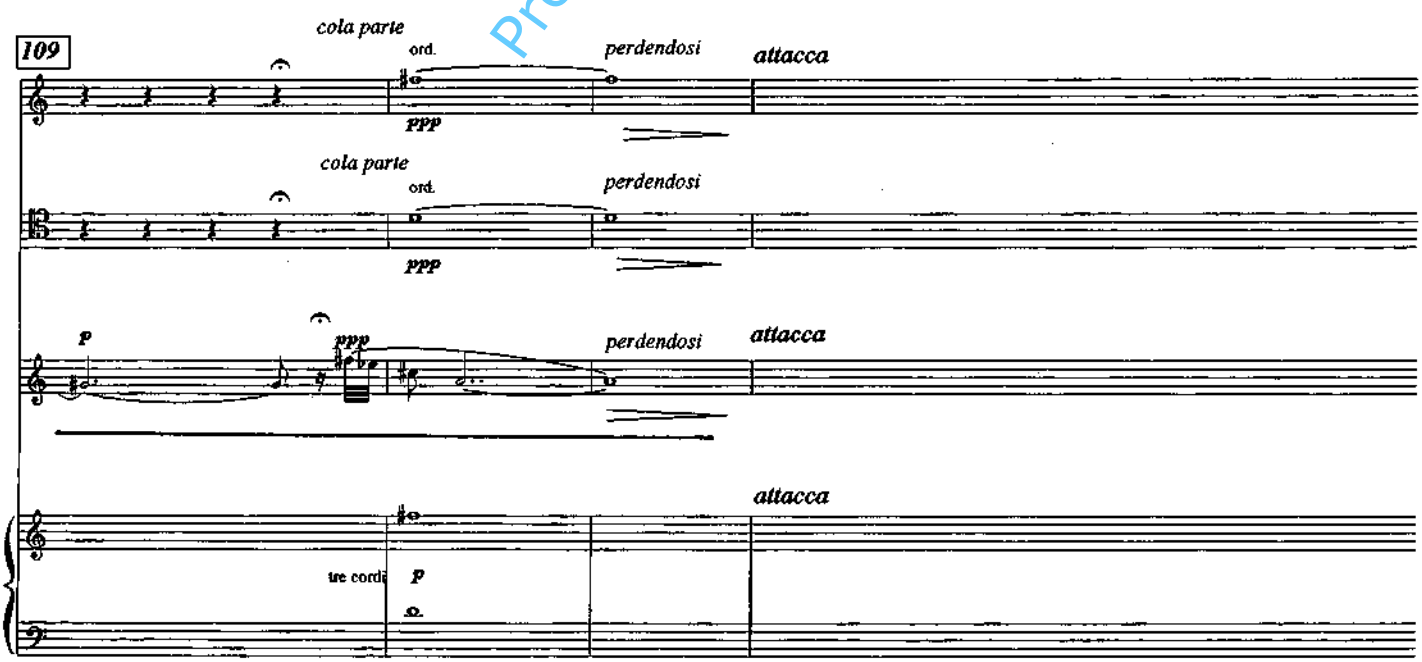
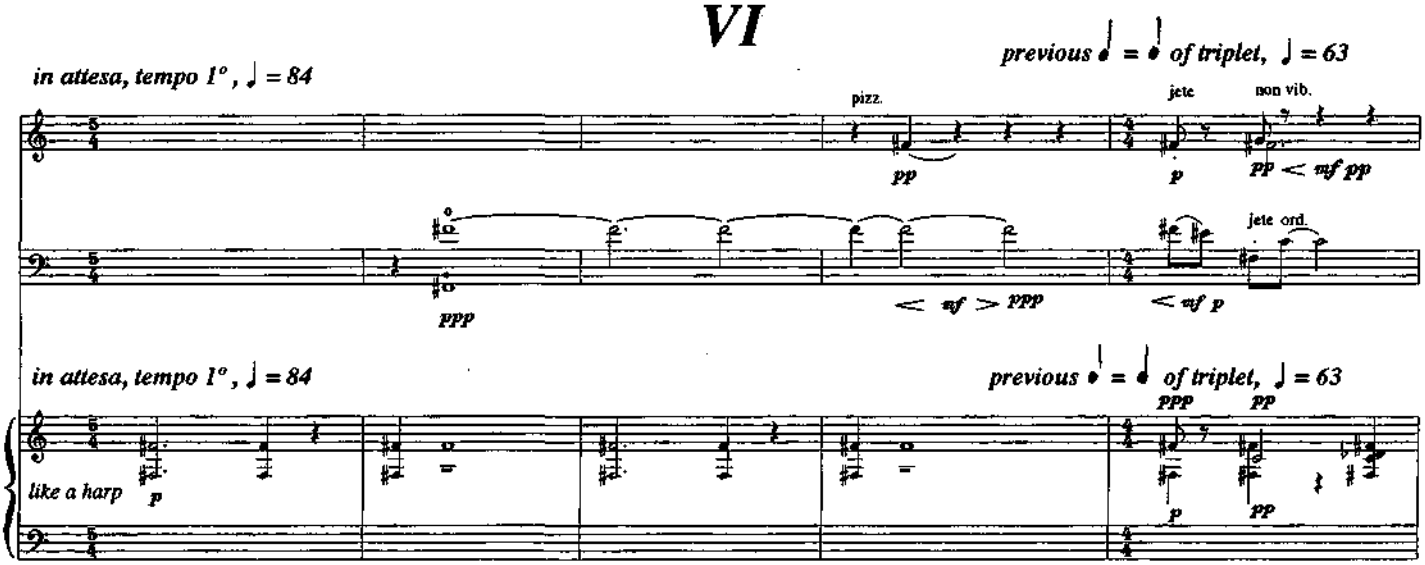
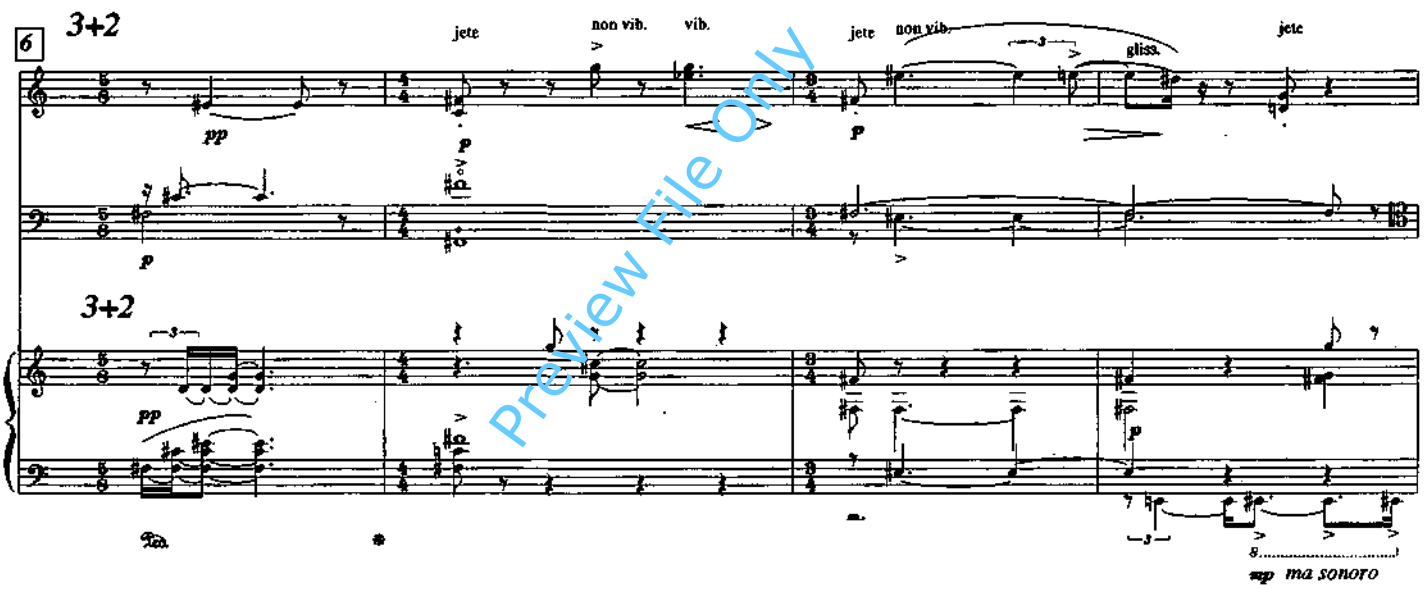
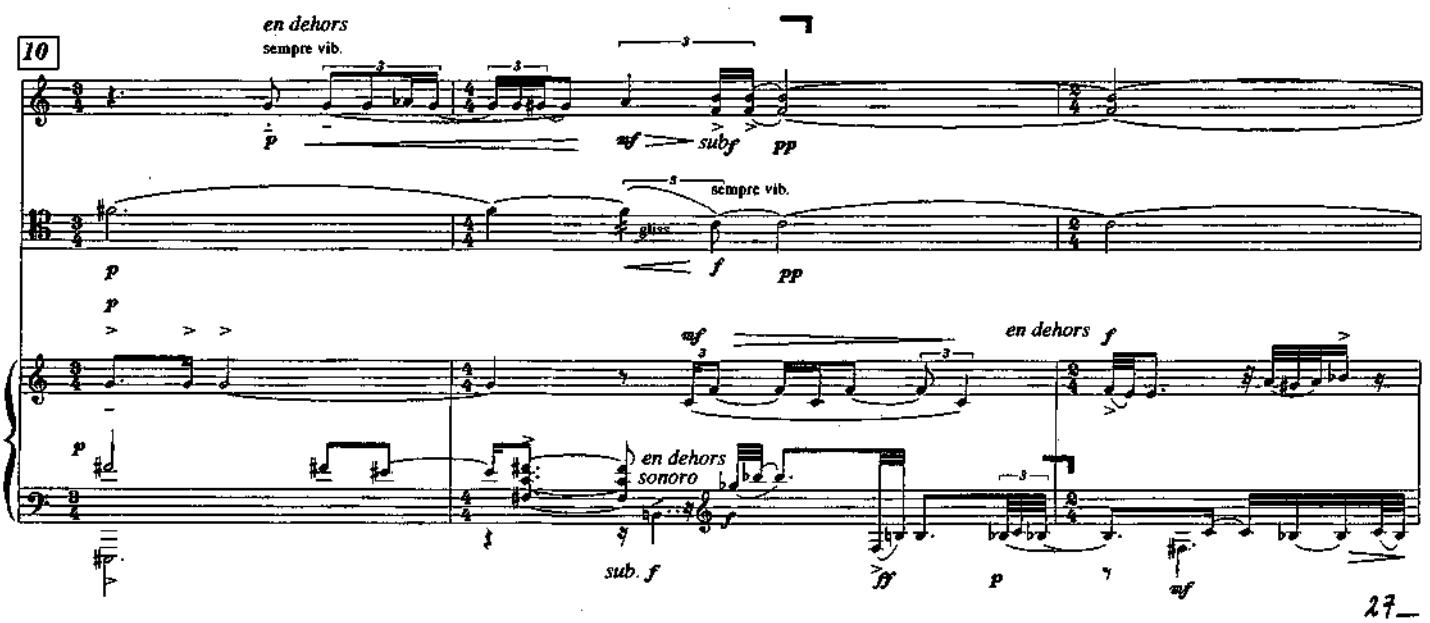


VI







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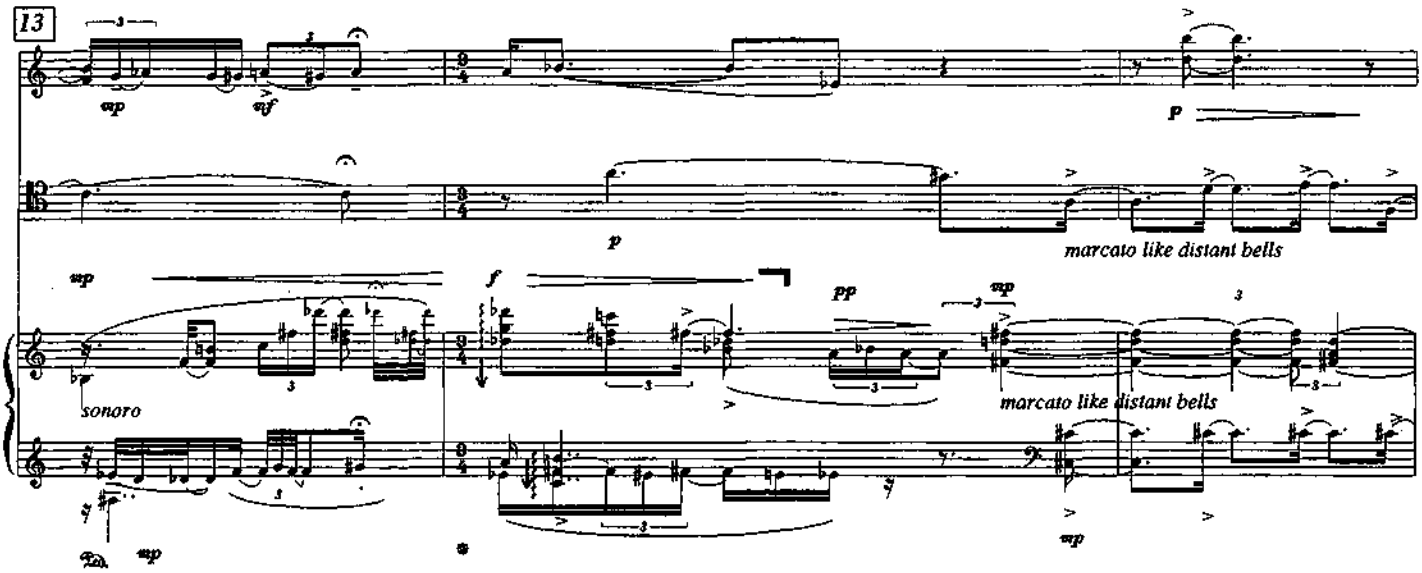

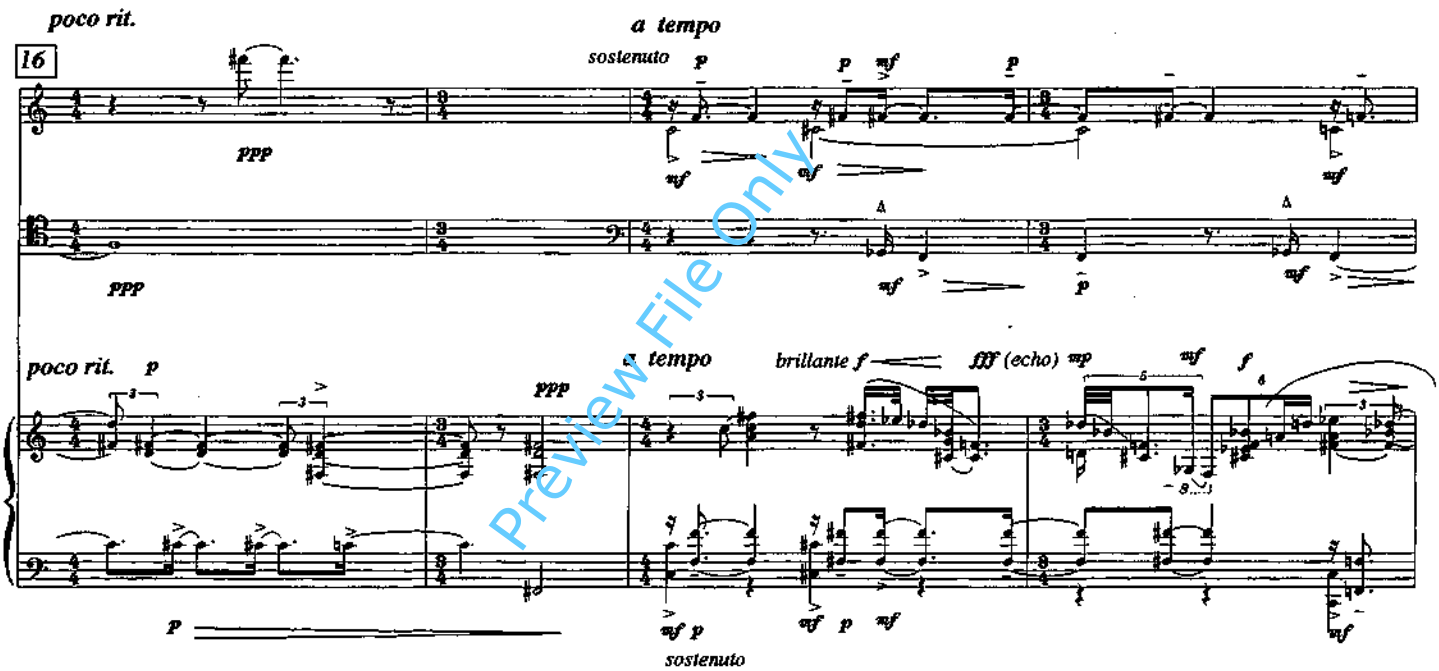

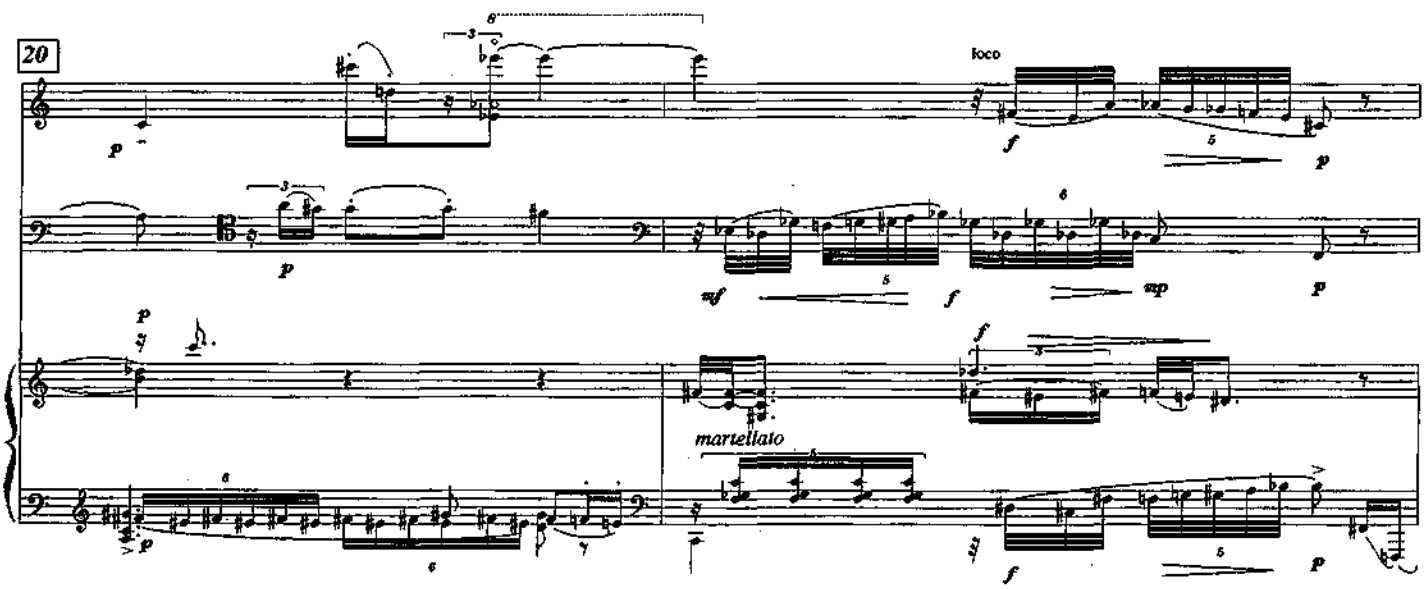

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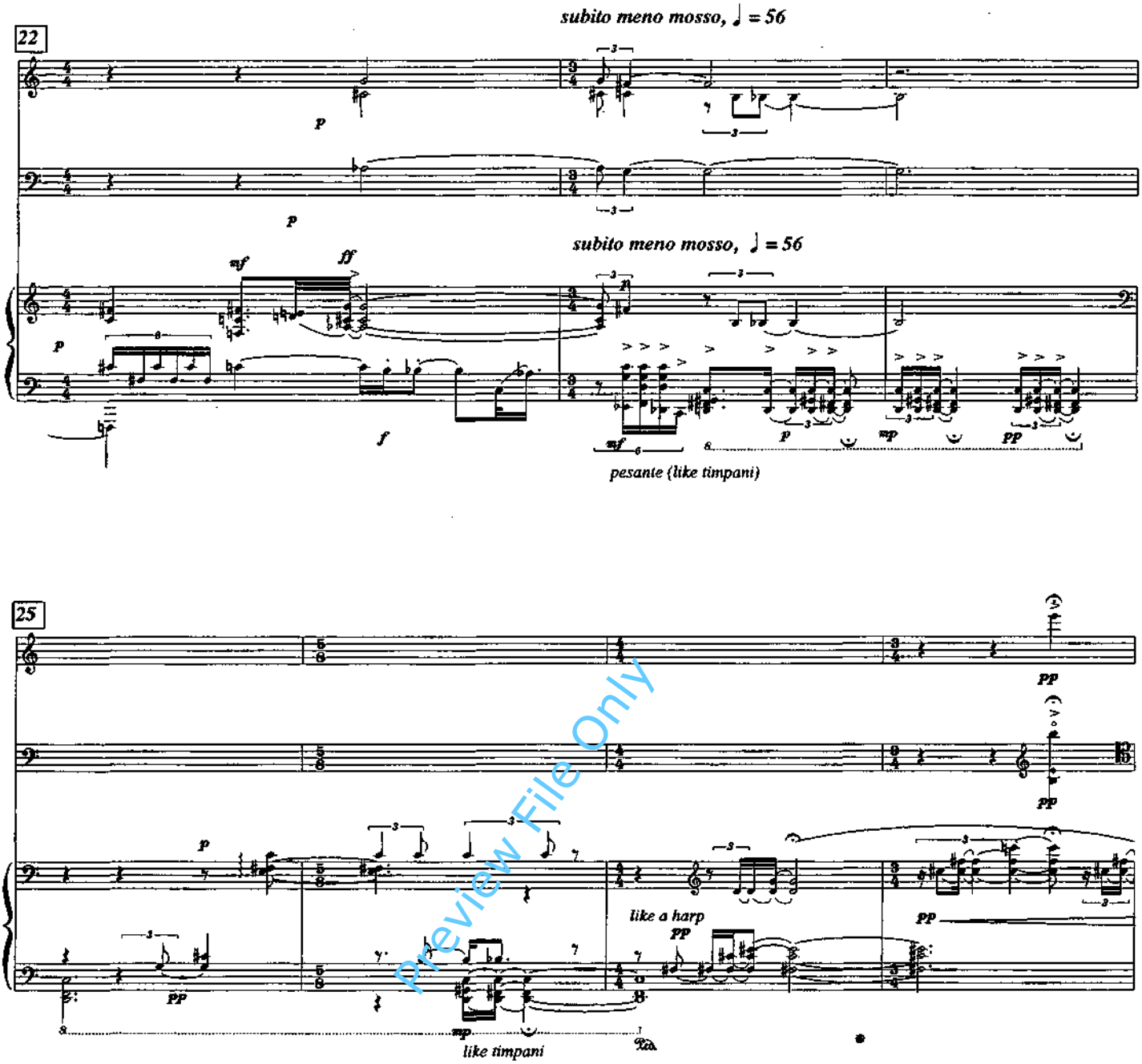

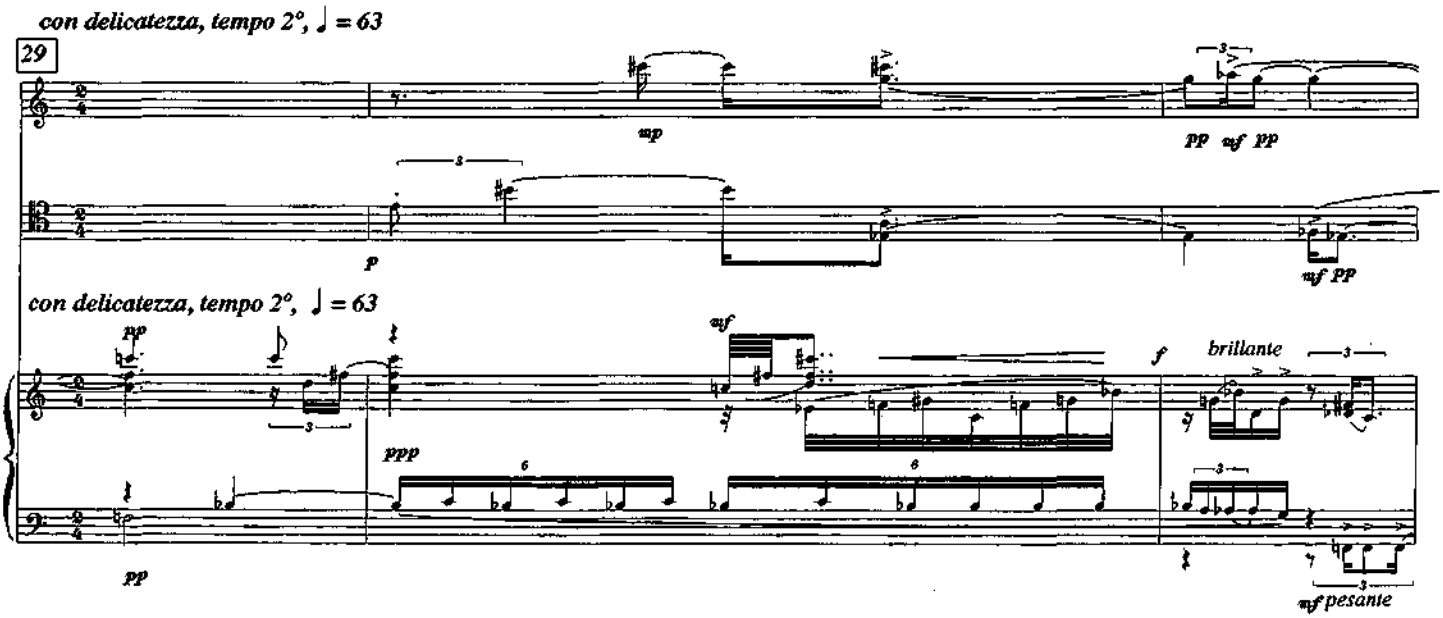

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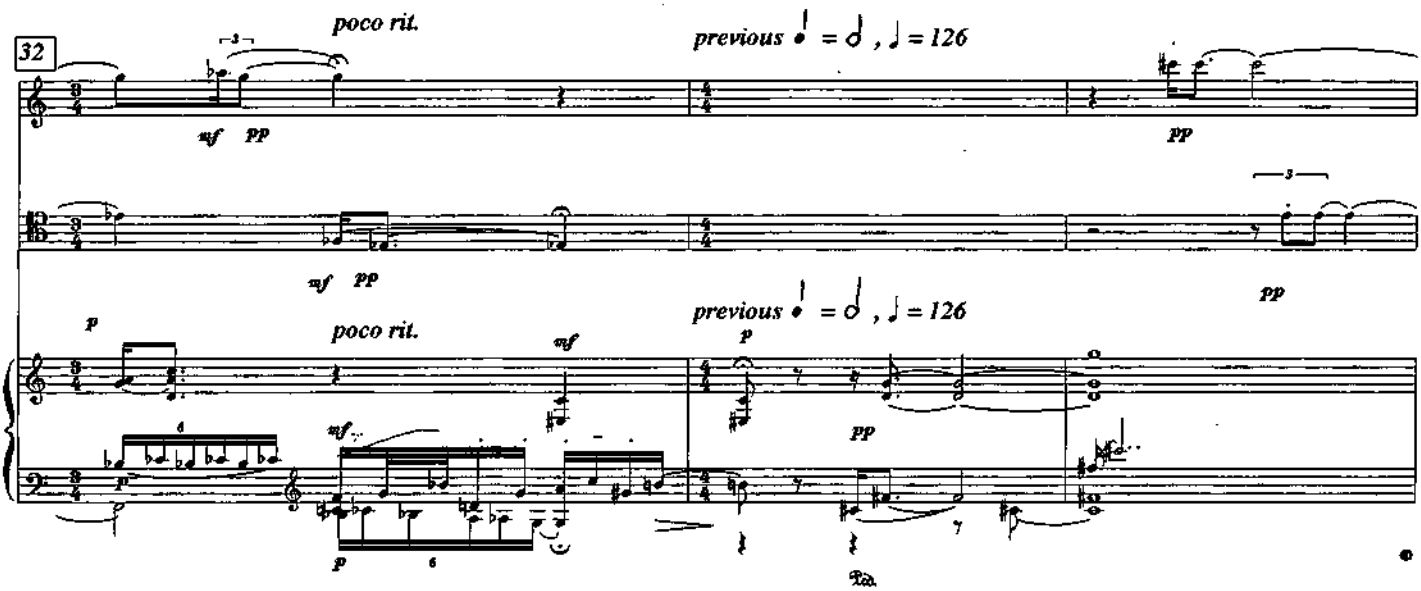

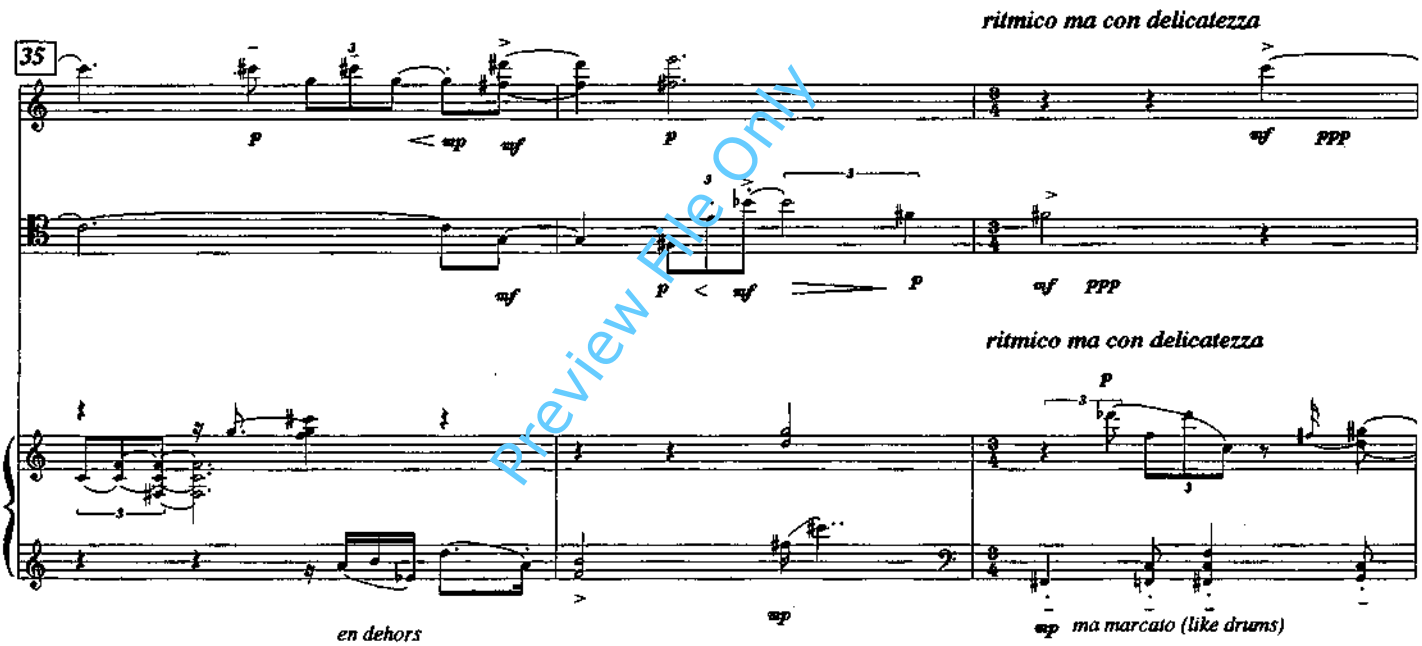

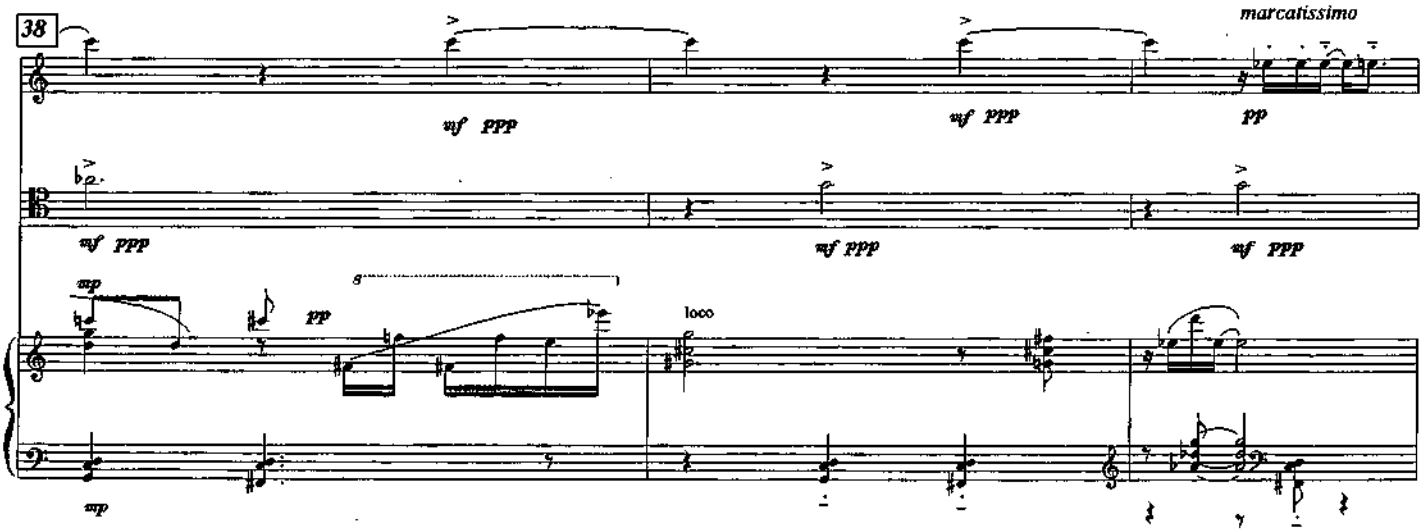

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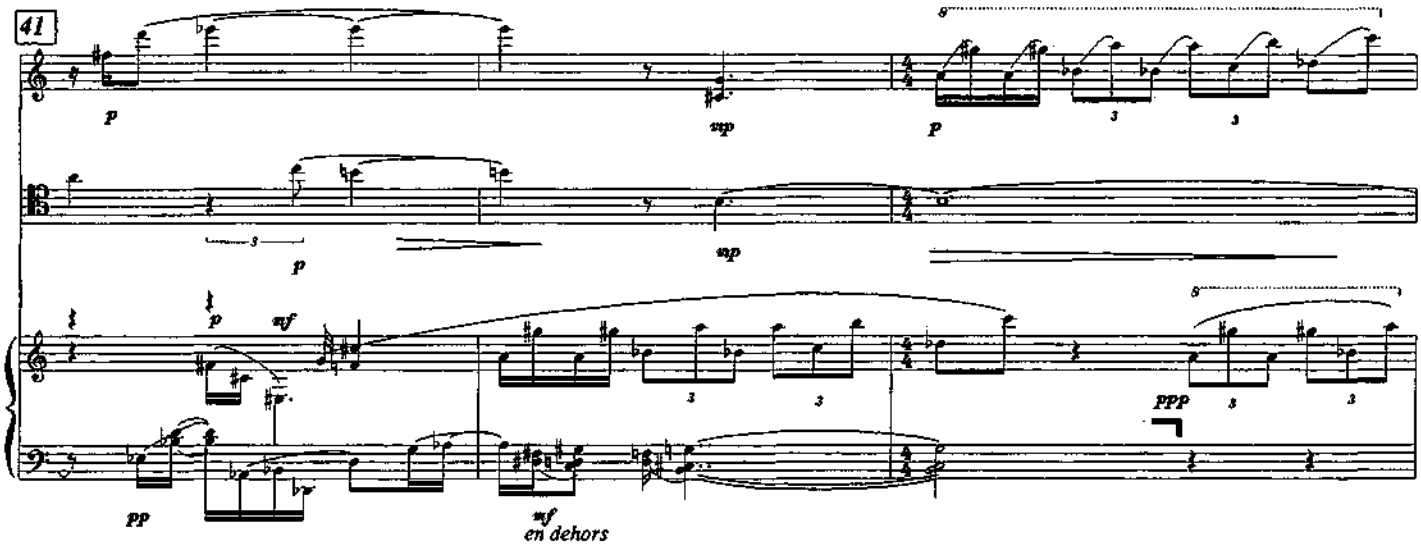

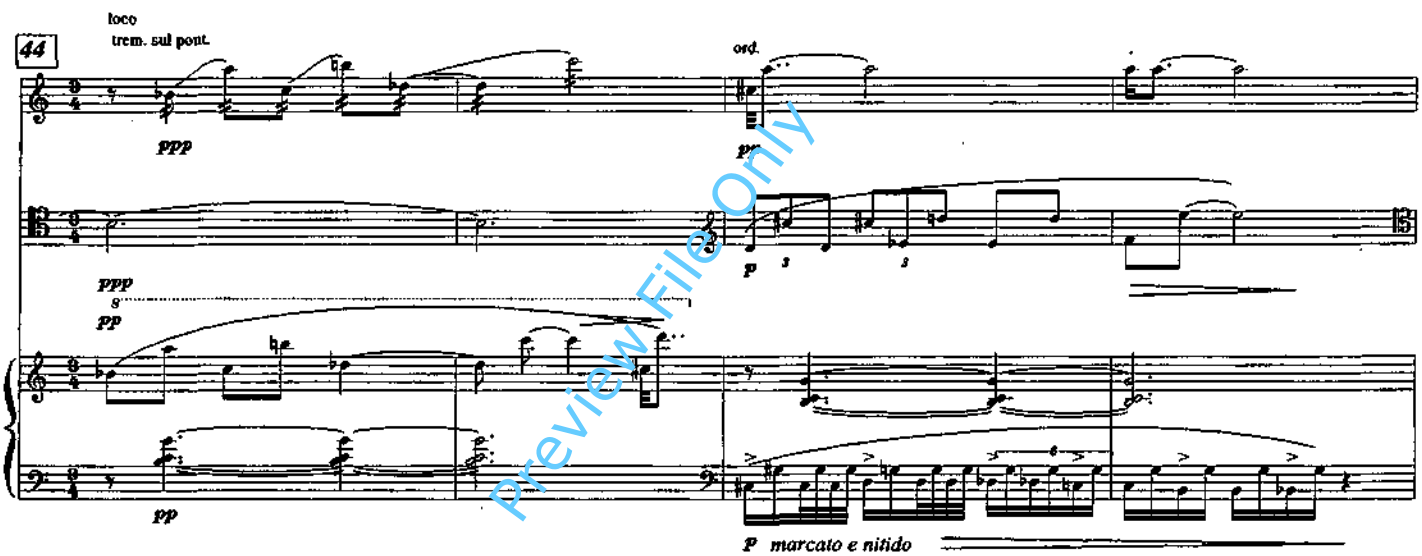

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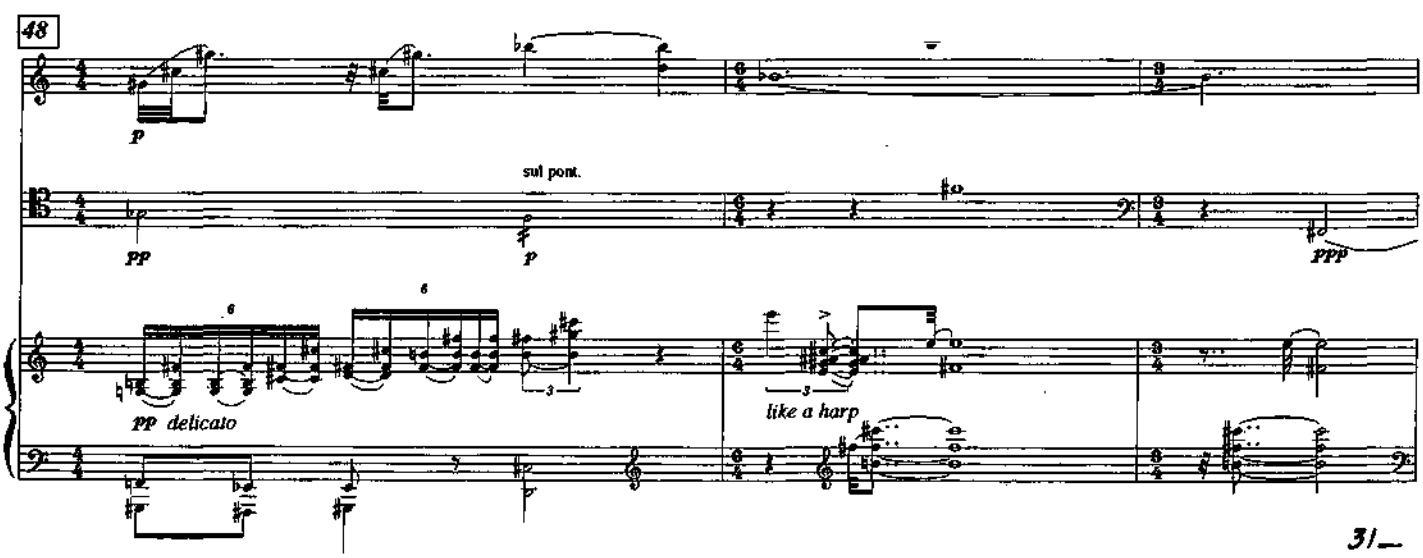


l'istesso tempo, previous ♩ = ♩., ♩ = 63

51

l'istesso tempo, previous ♩ = ♩., ♩ = 63

misterioso

Then, as the red - - - - fox light

l'istesso tempo, previous ♩ = ♩., ♩ = 63

ma risonante

Preview File Only

54 4+3

prev. ♩ = ♩ of triplet, ♩ = 42

en dehors cantando

sul pont.

ord.

4+3

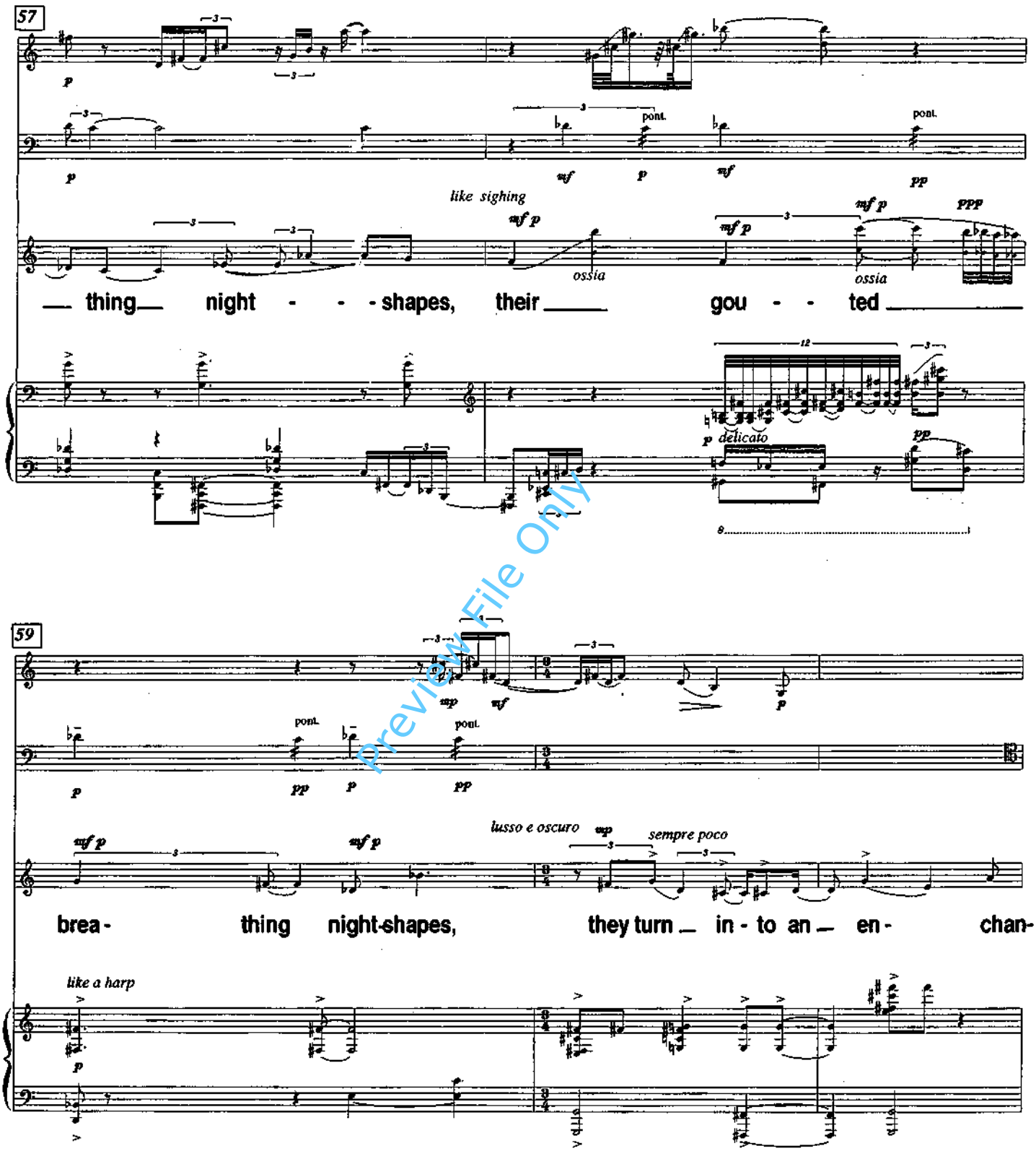
prev. ♩ = ♩ of triplet, ♩ = 42

of e - ve- nings stole o - ver their gou - ted brea-

4+3

prev. ♩ = ♩ of triplet, ♩ = 42

(like timpani)



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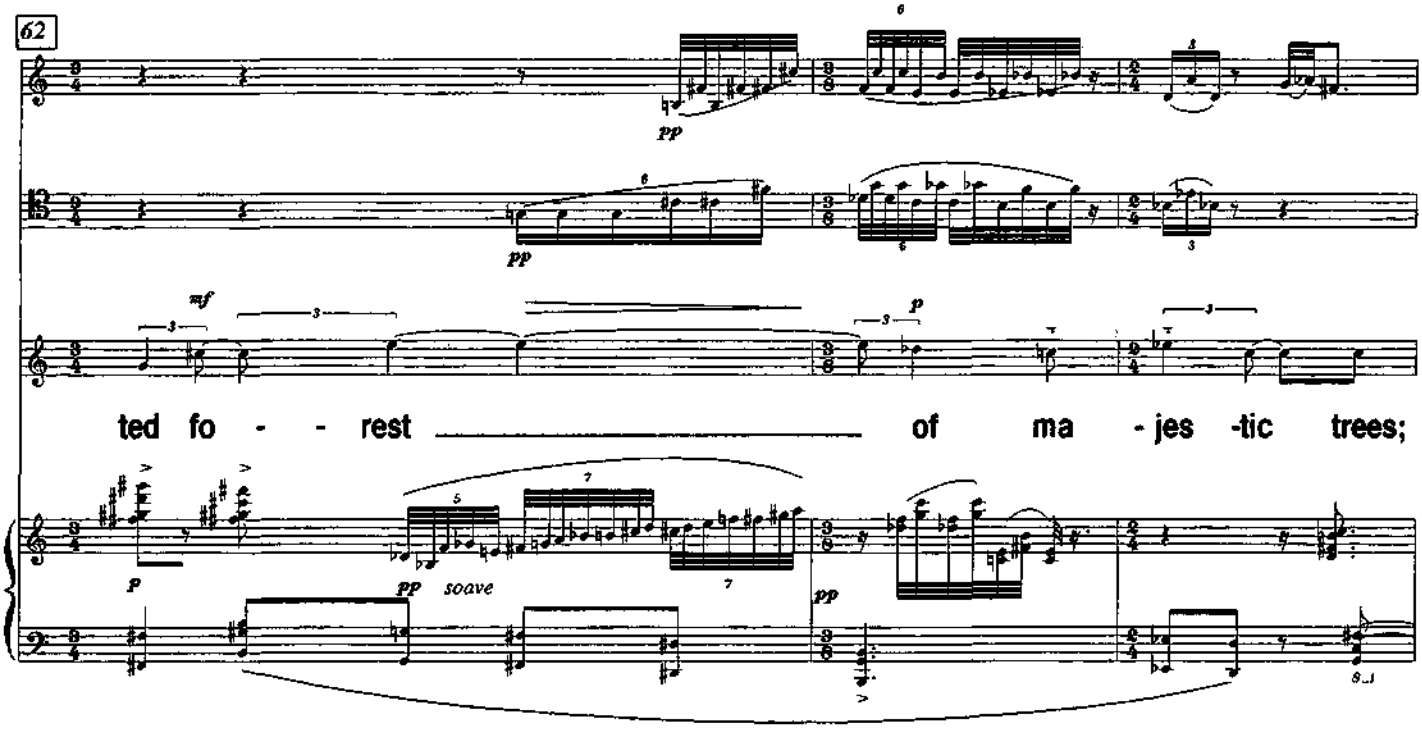

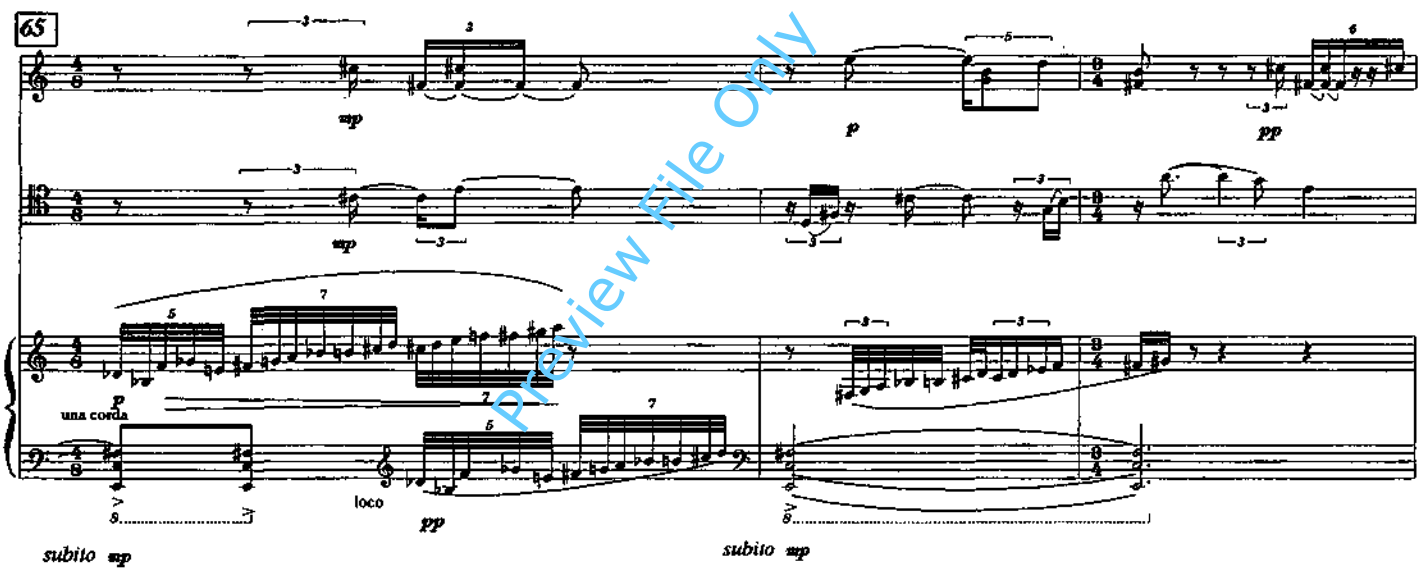

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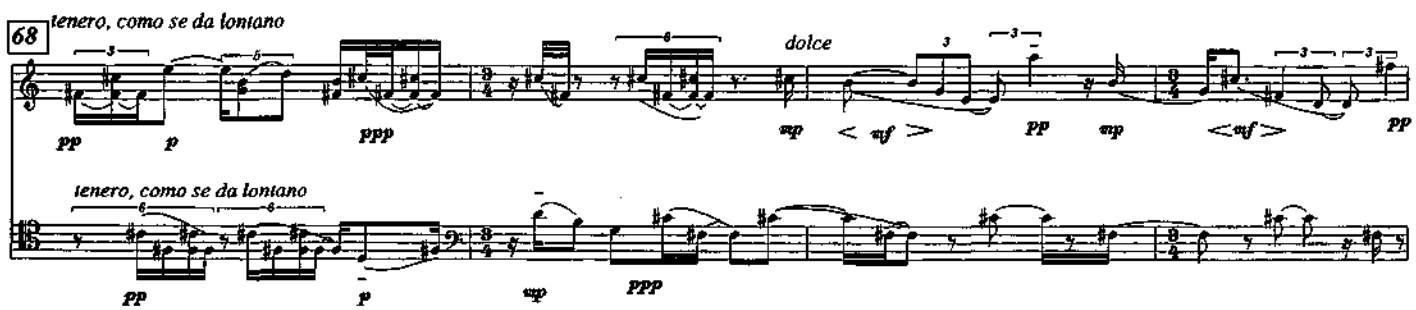

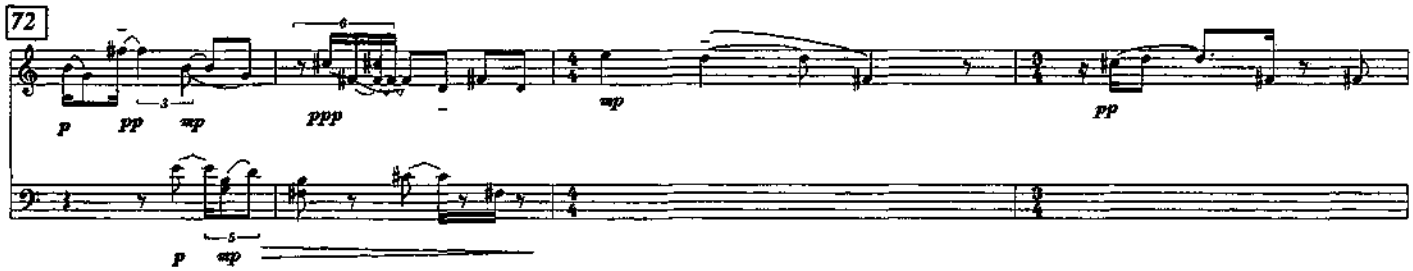

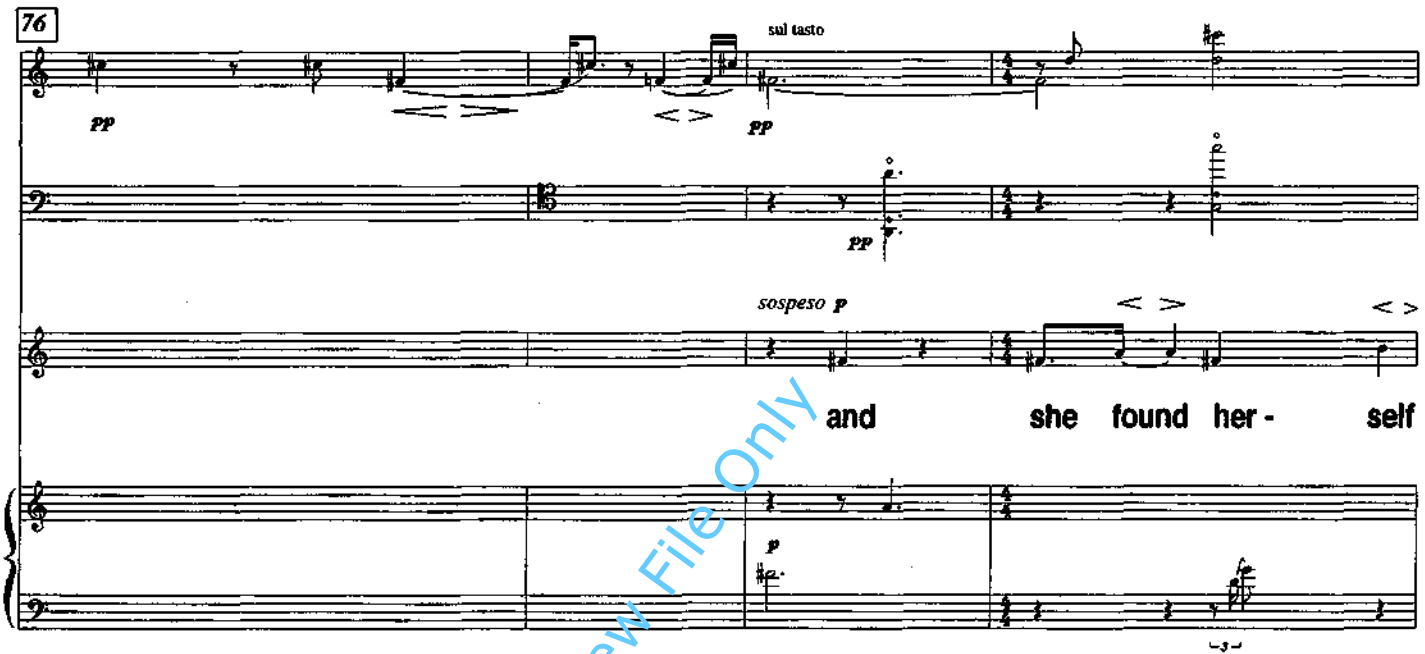

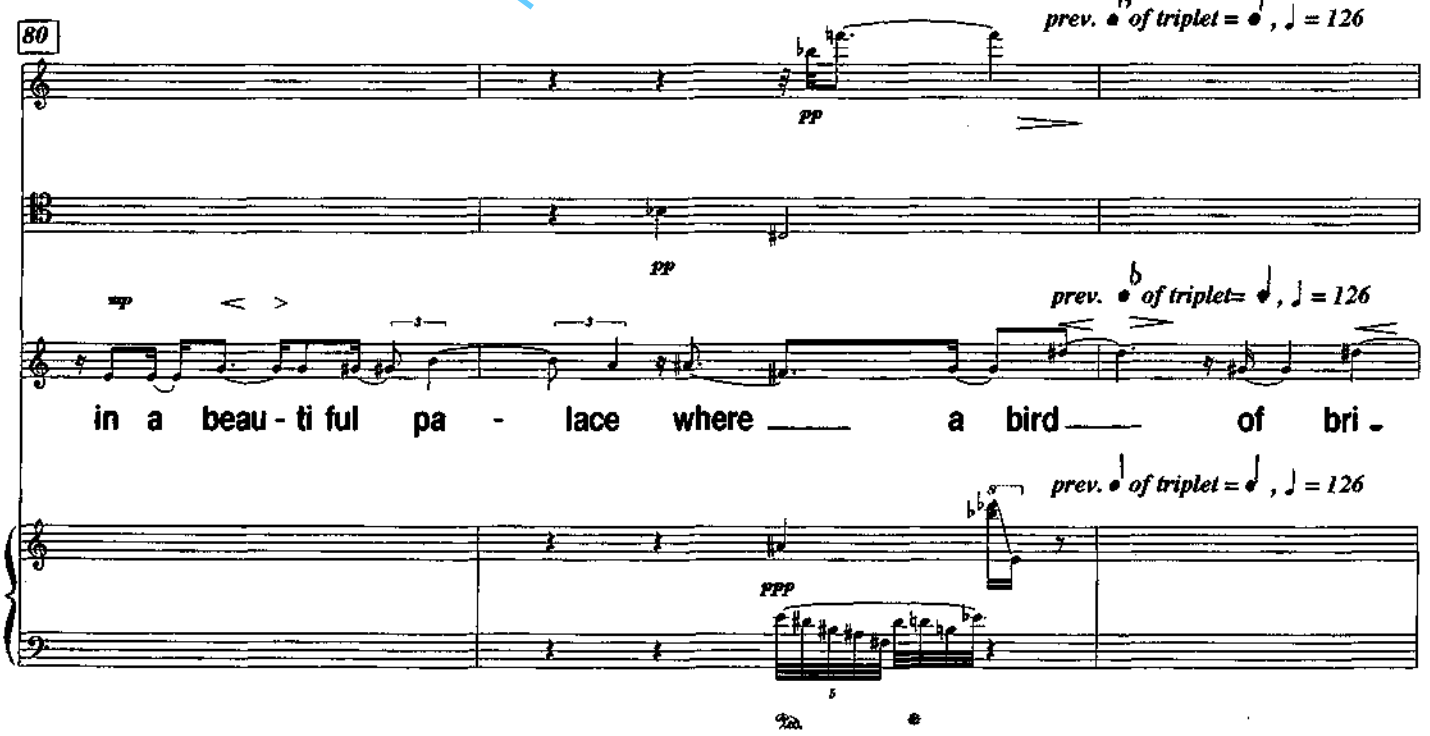

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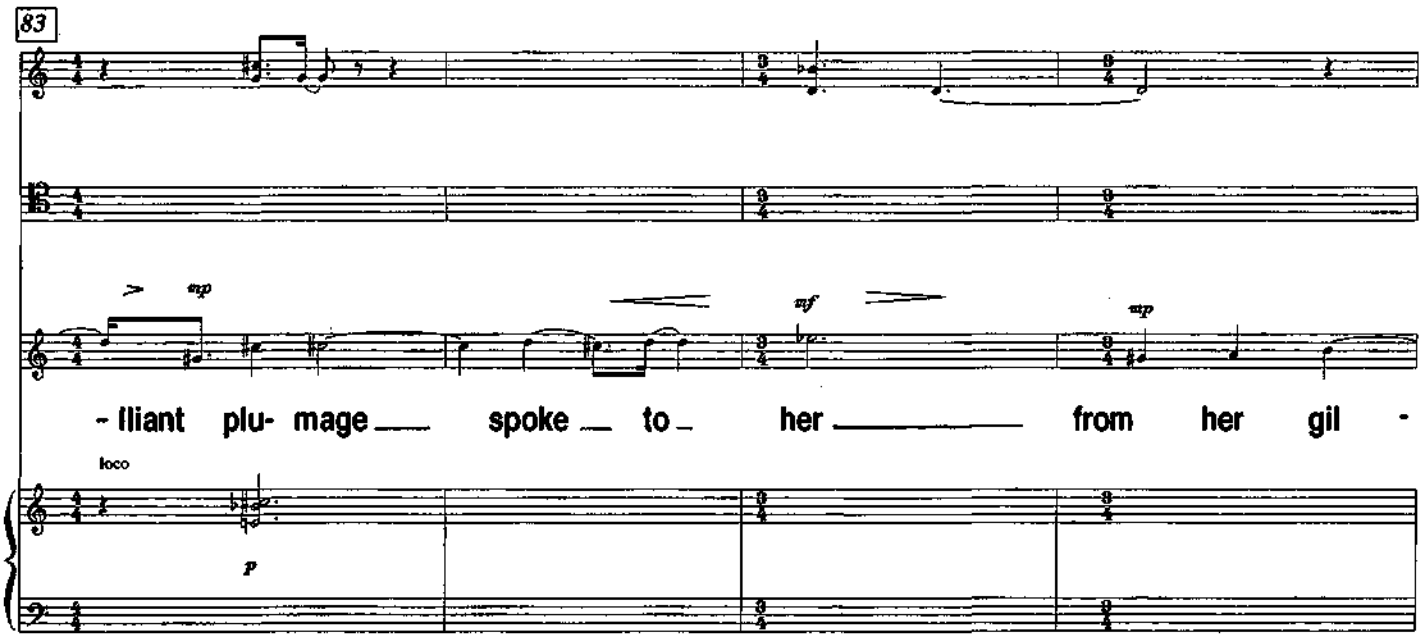

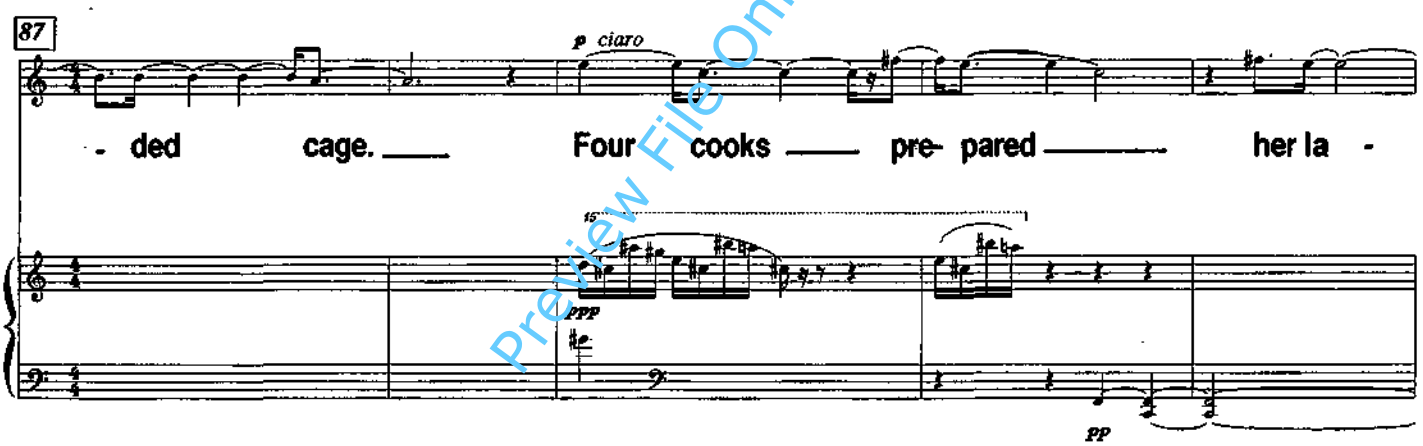

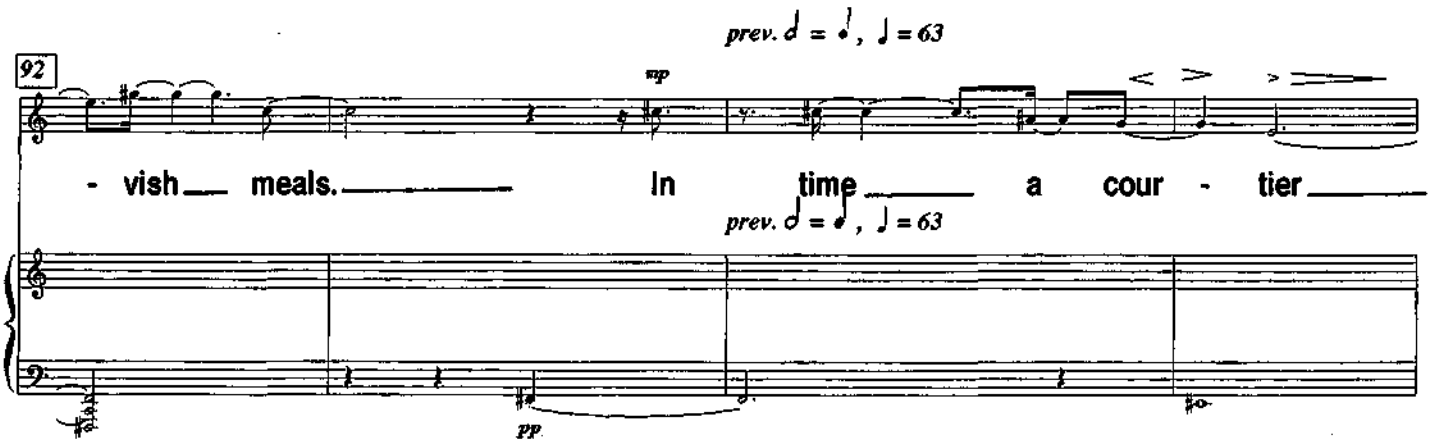

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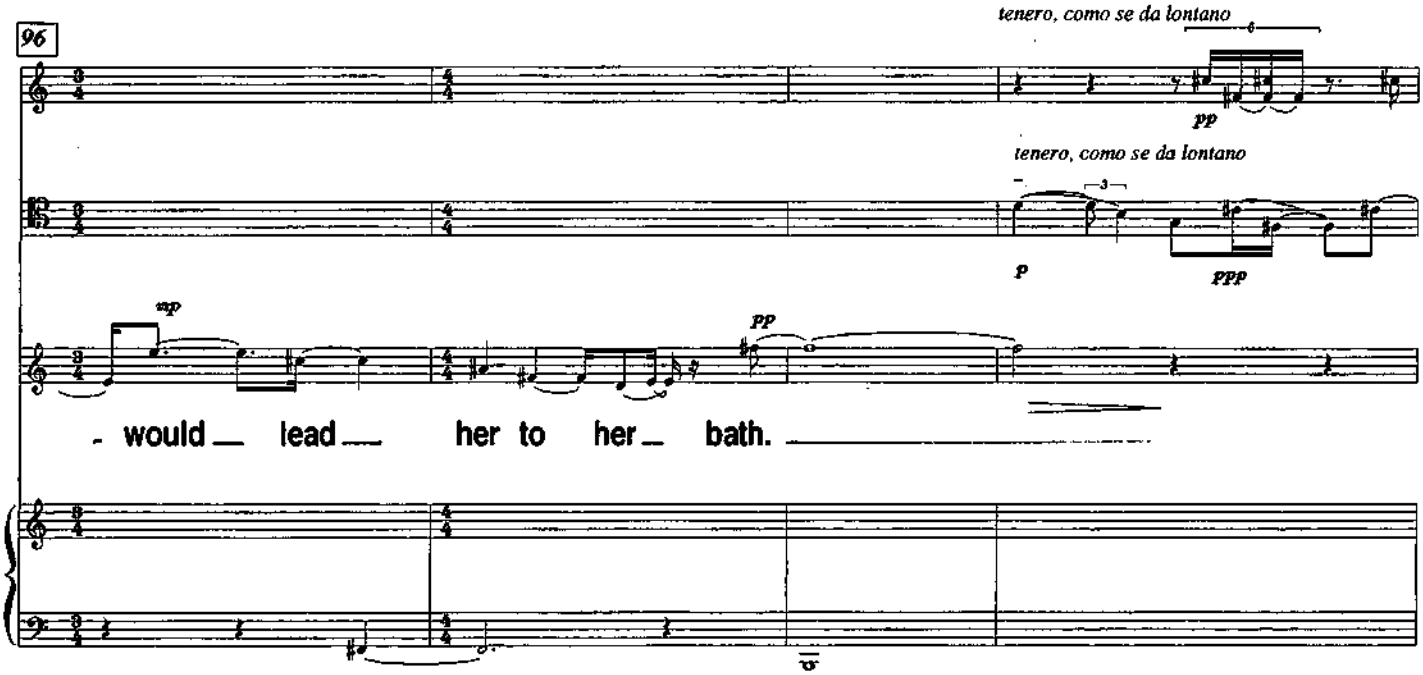

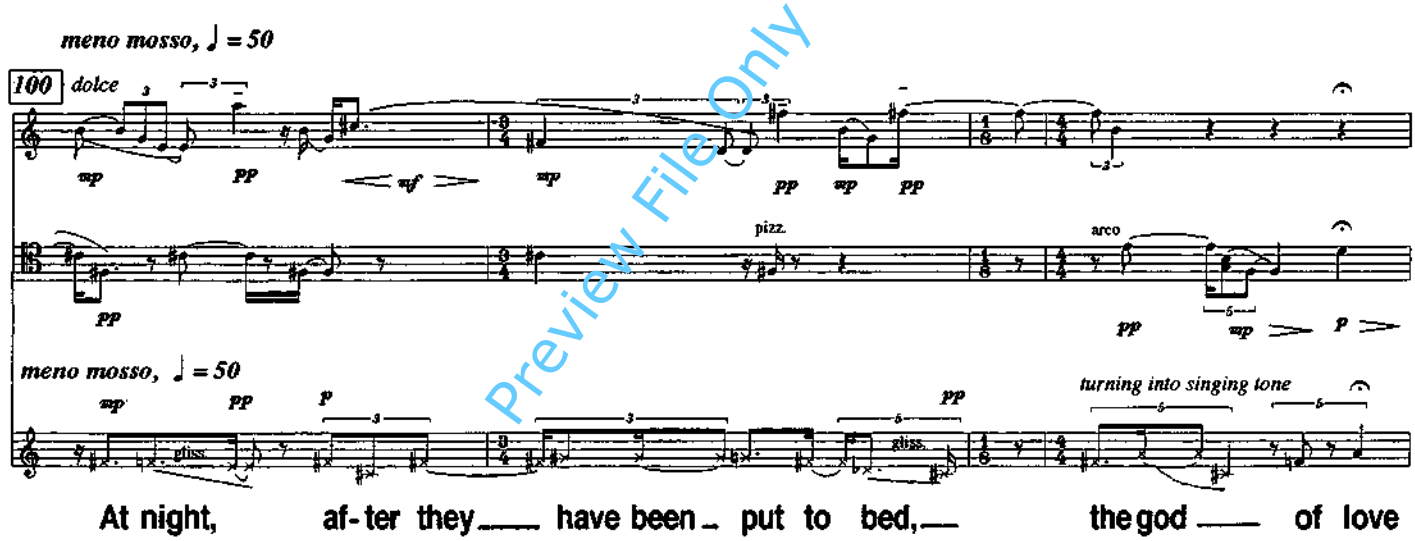

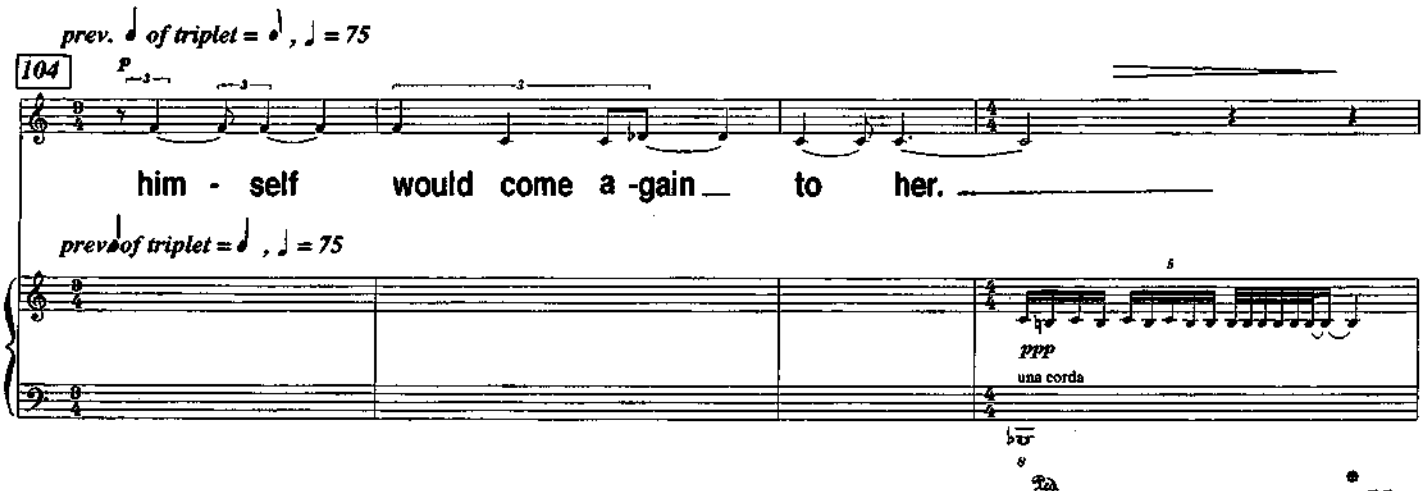

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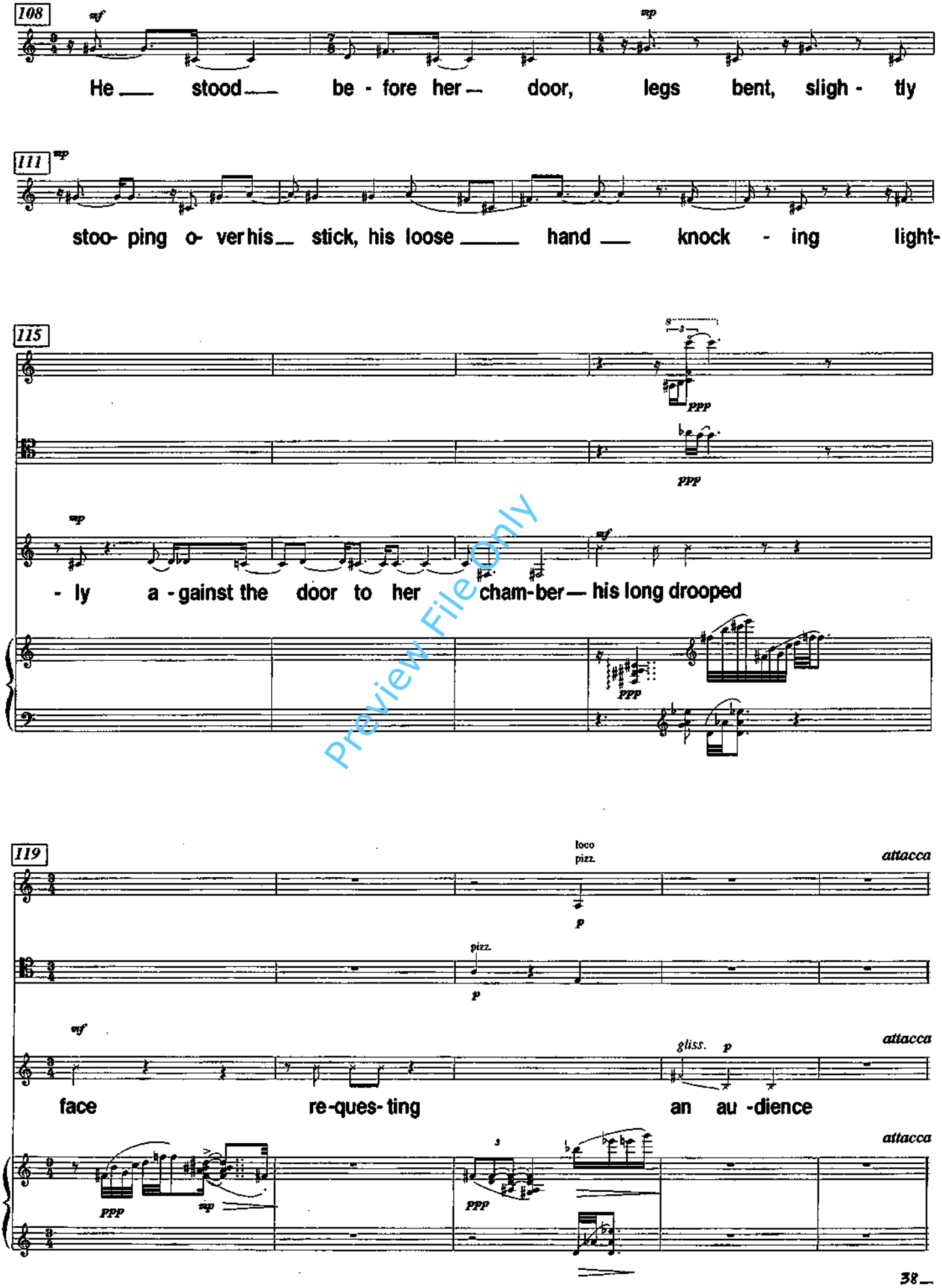

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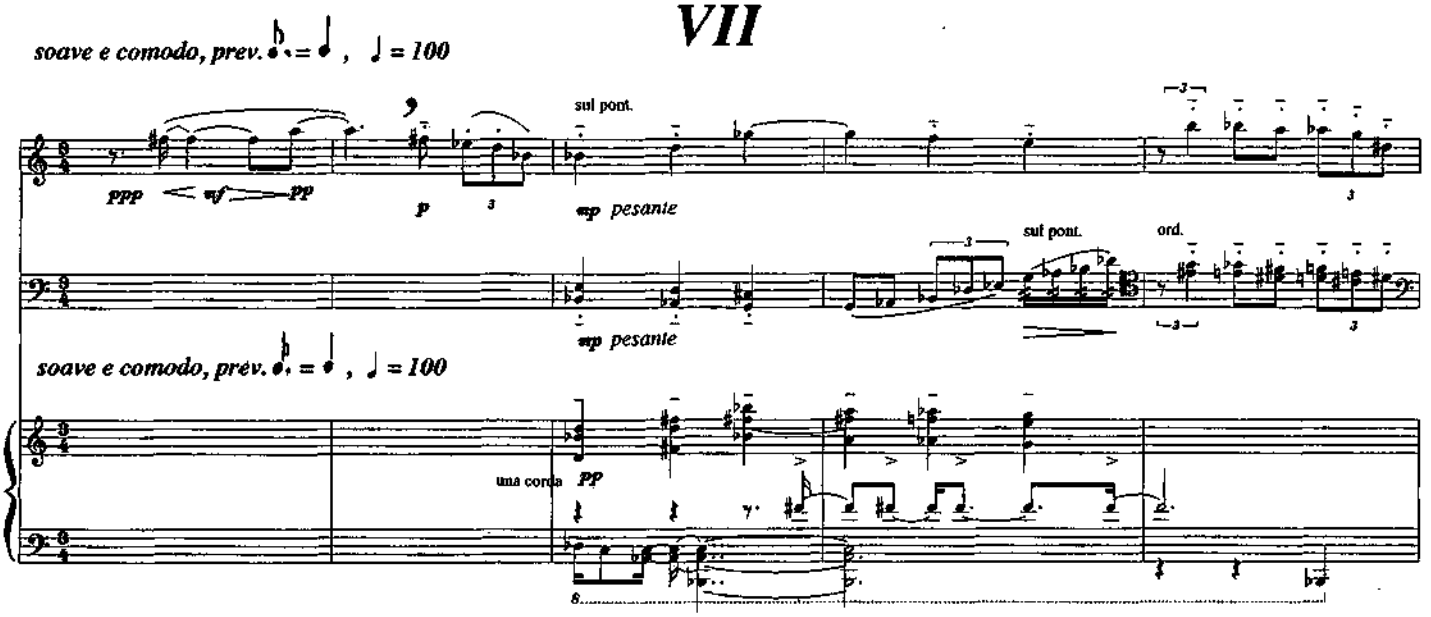

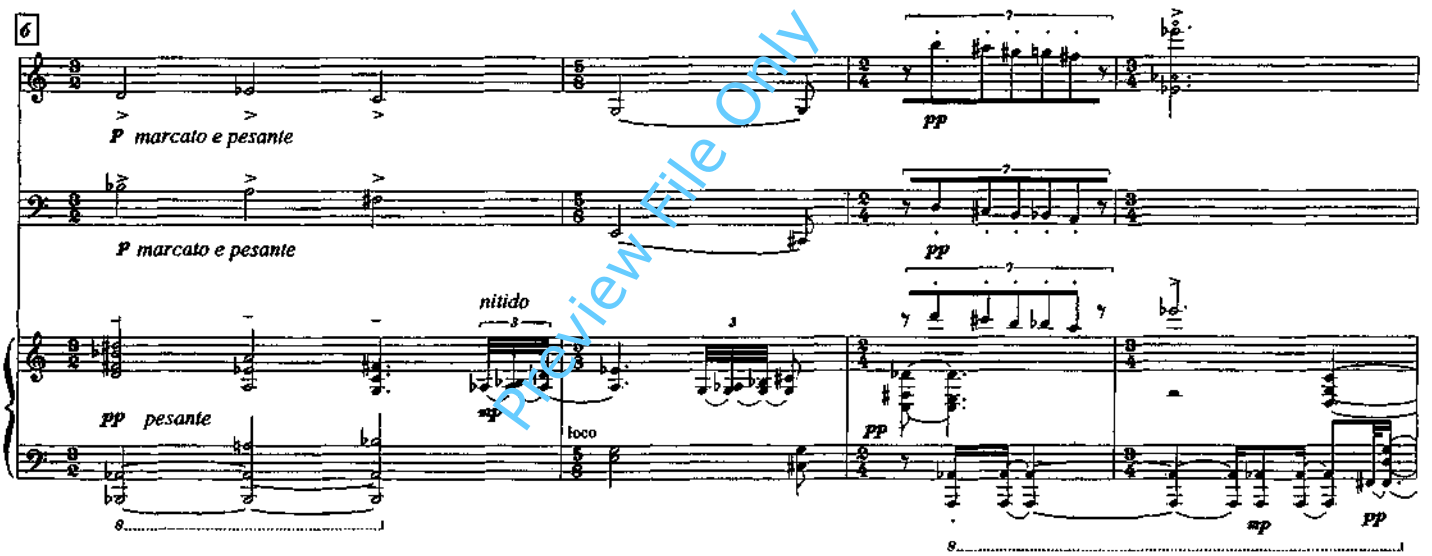

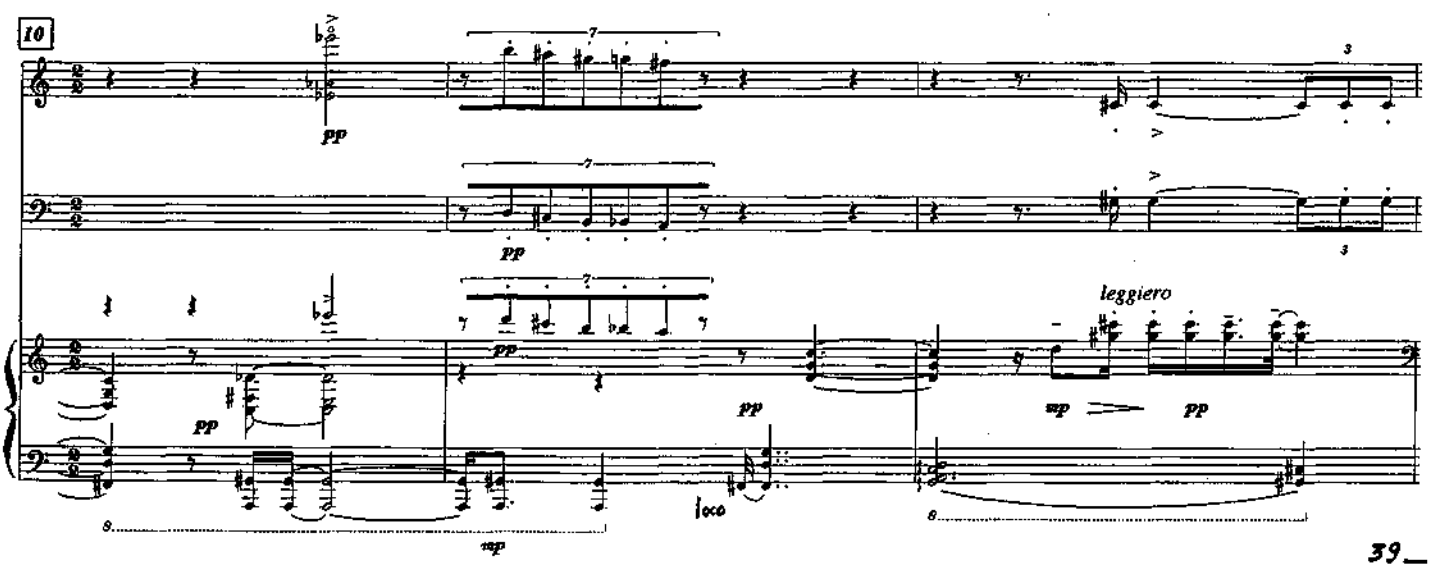

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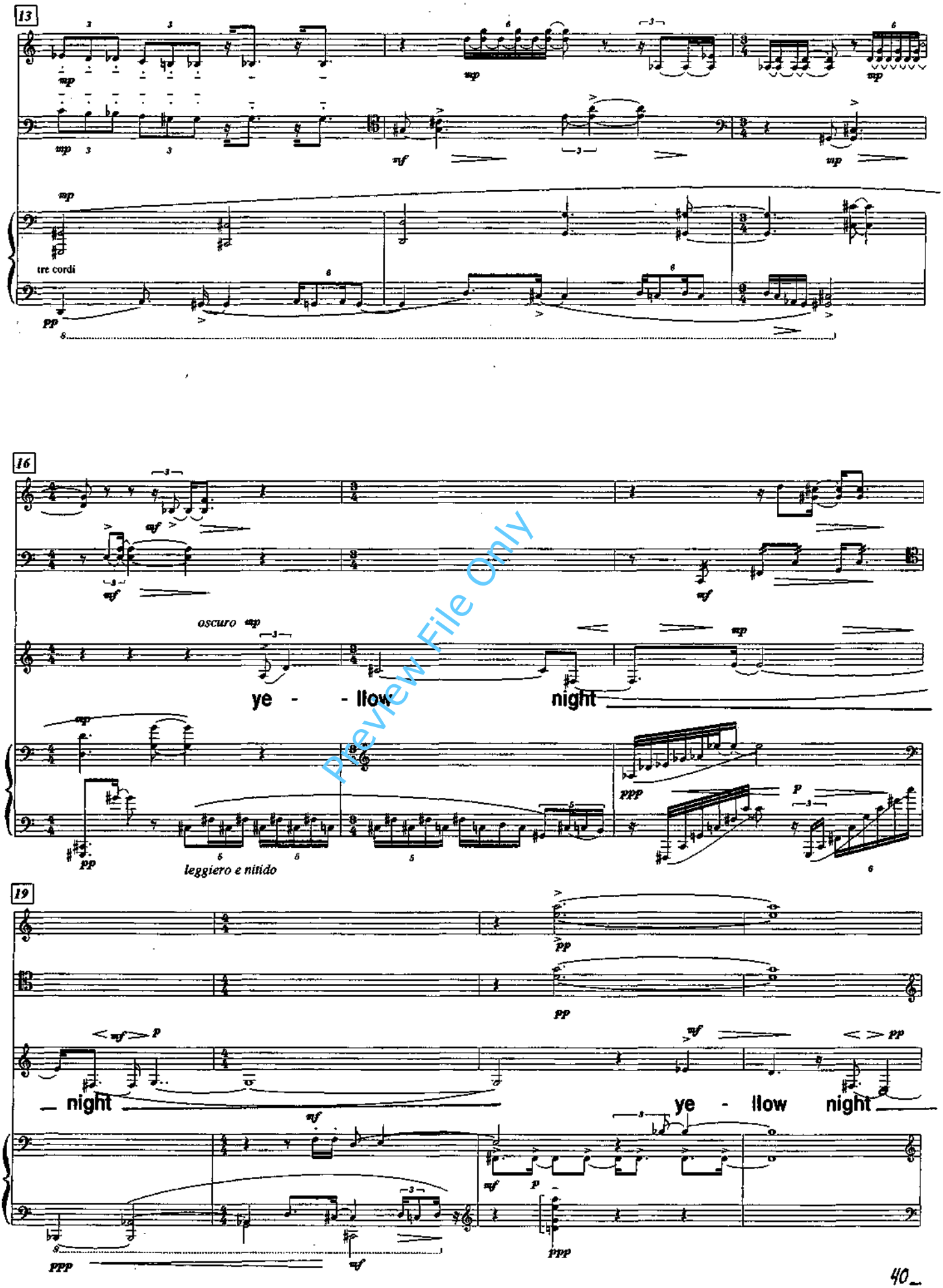

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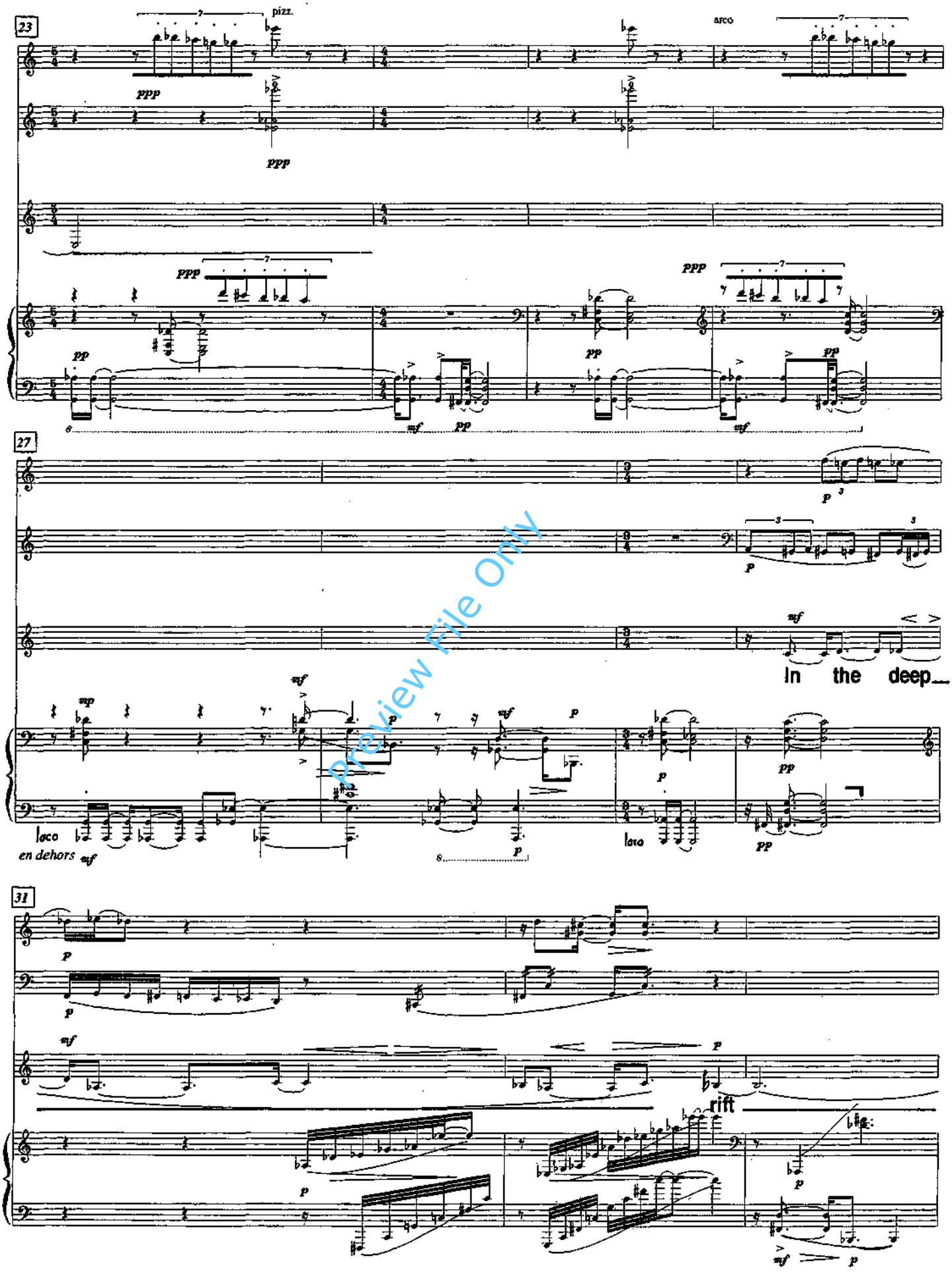

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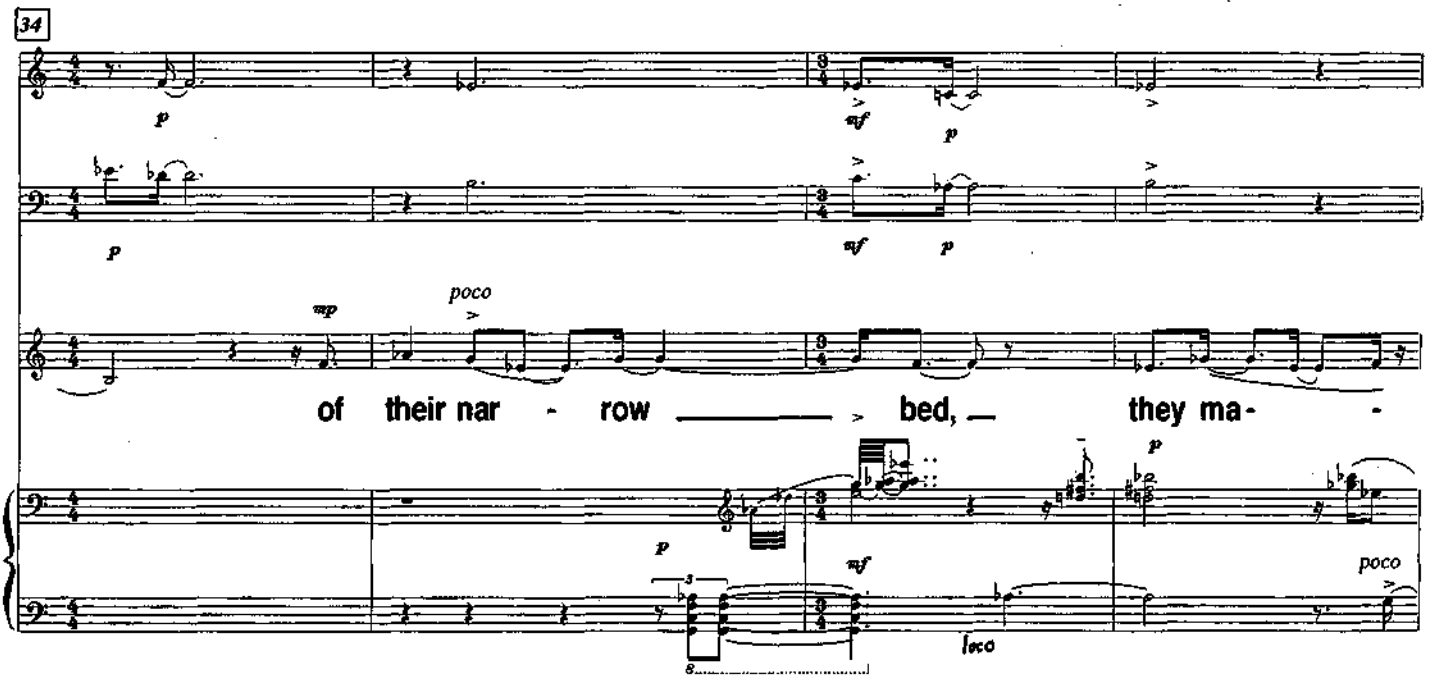

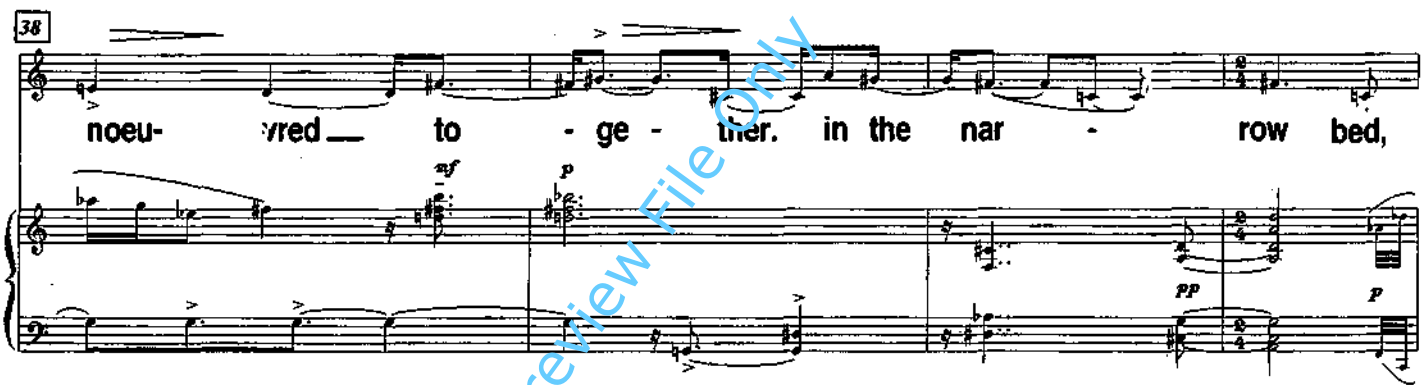

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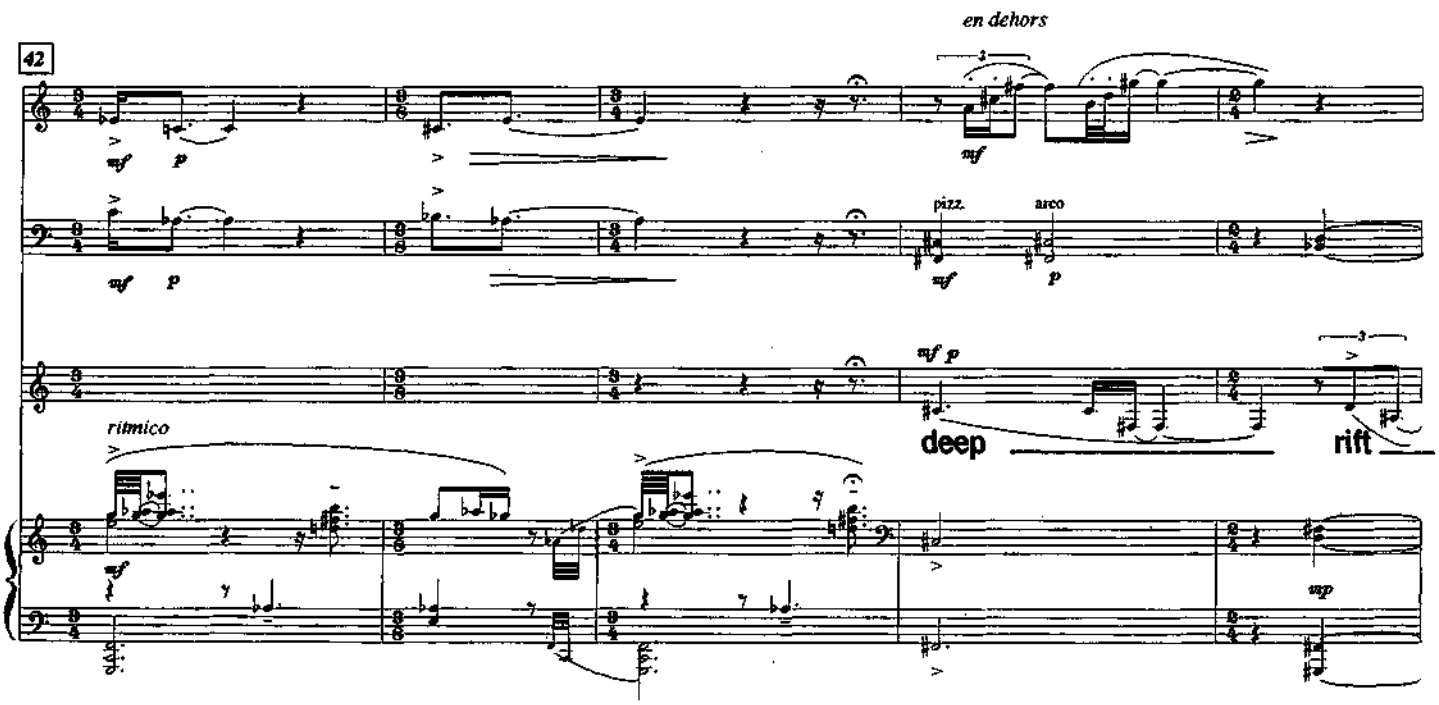

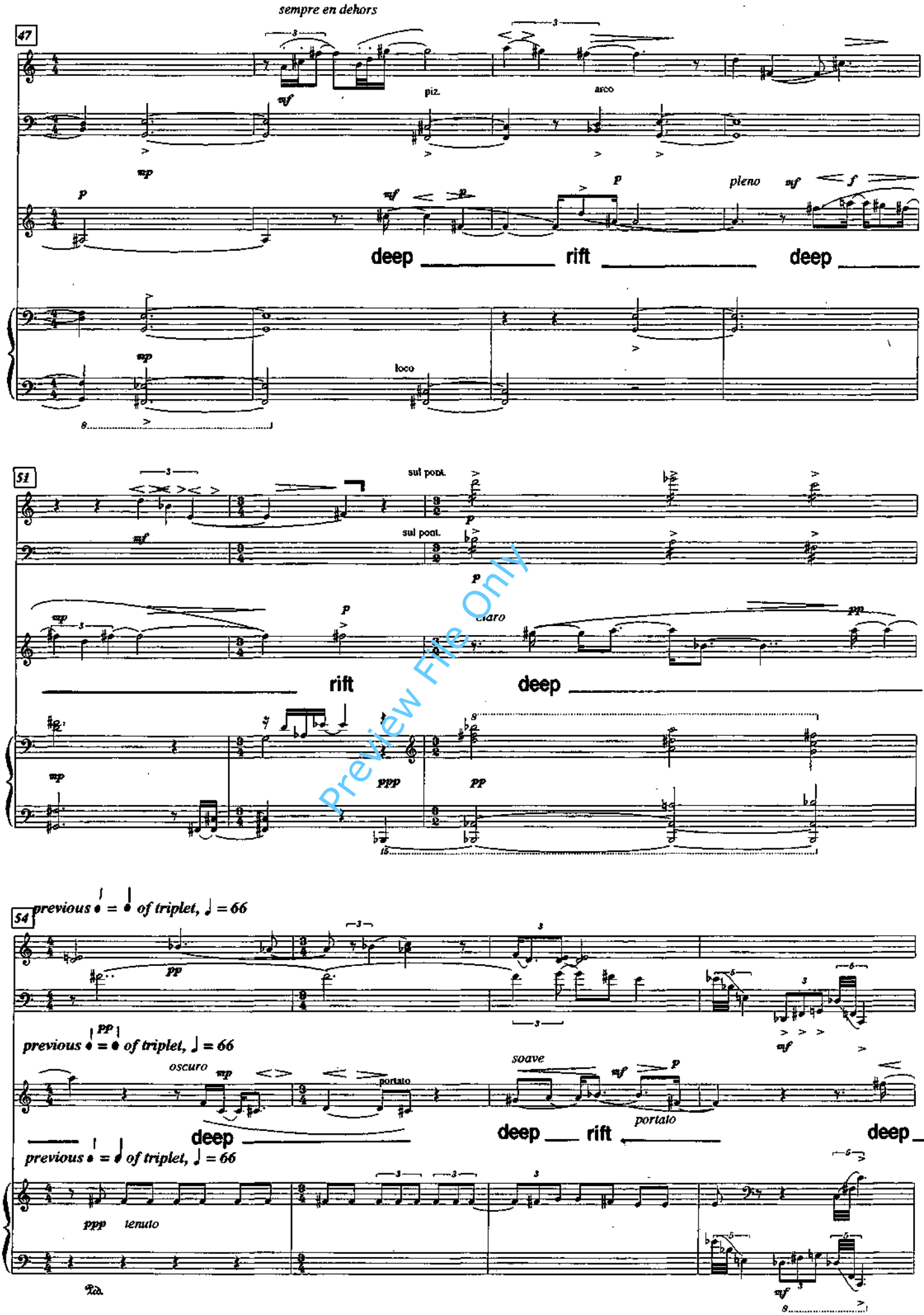

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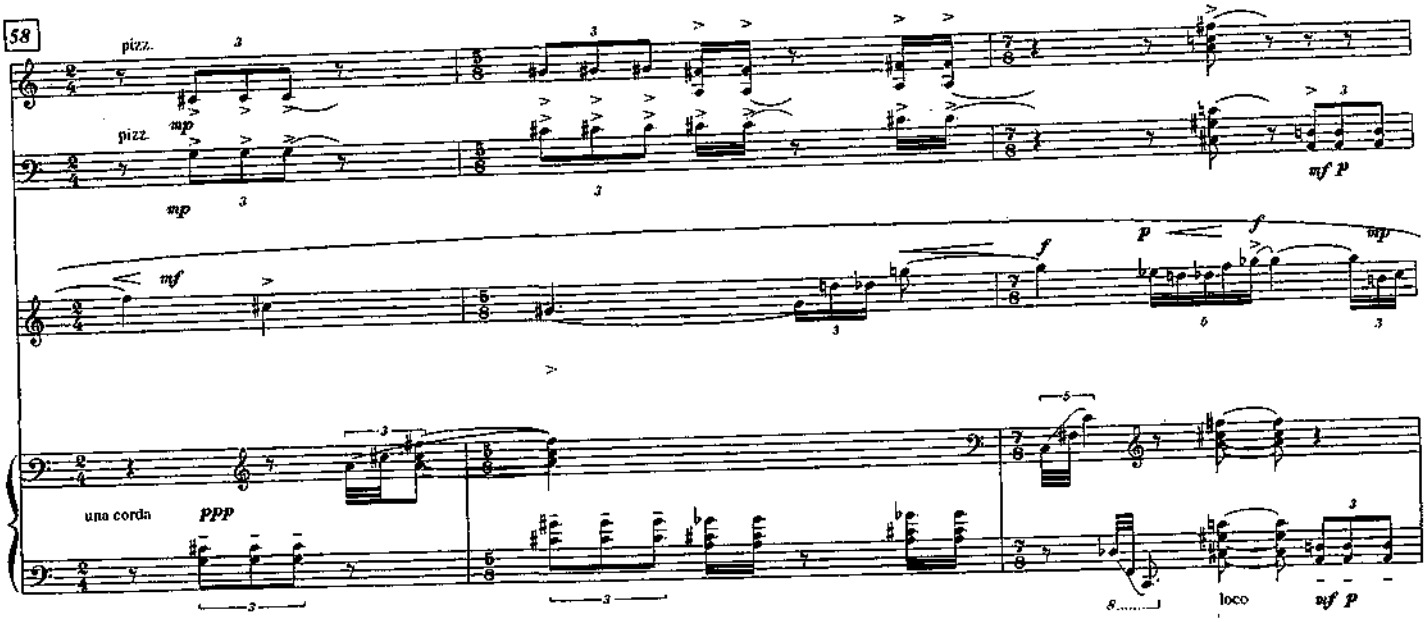
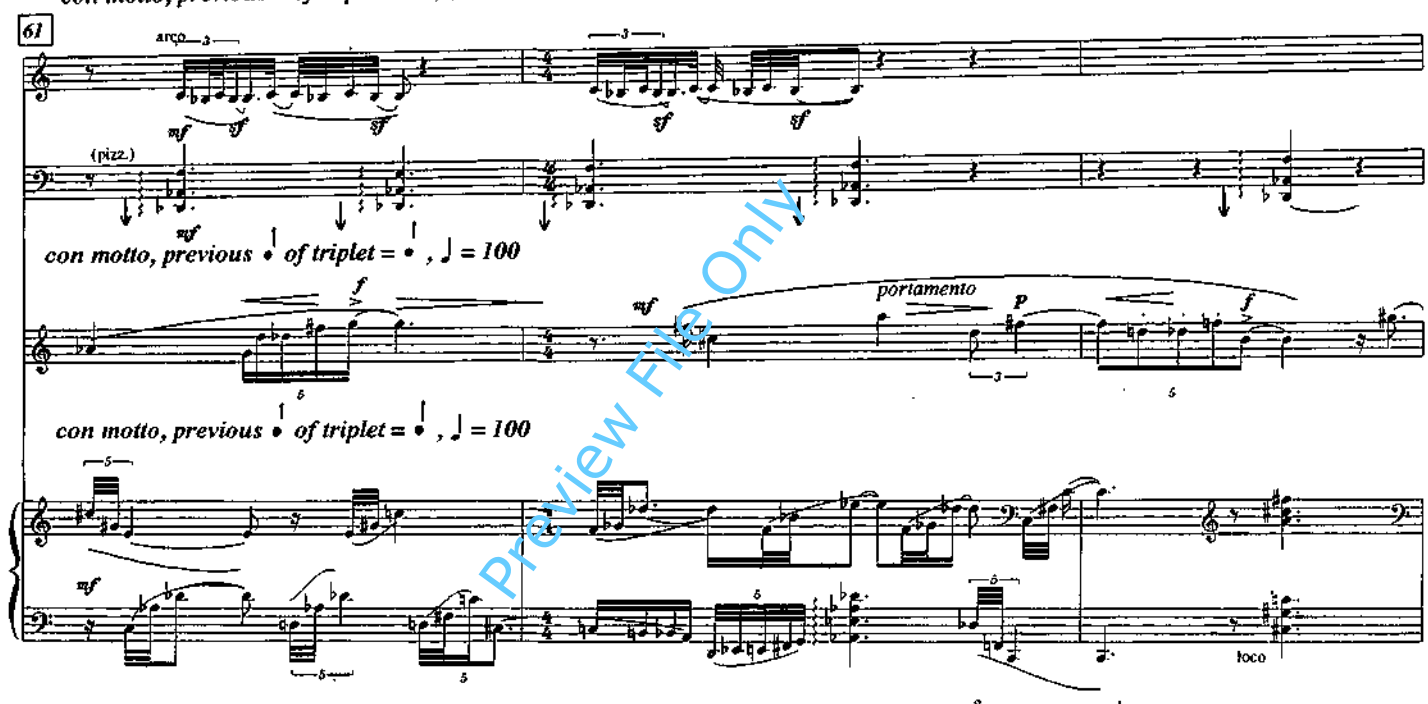
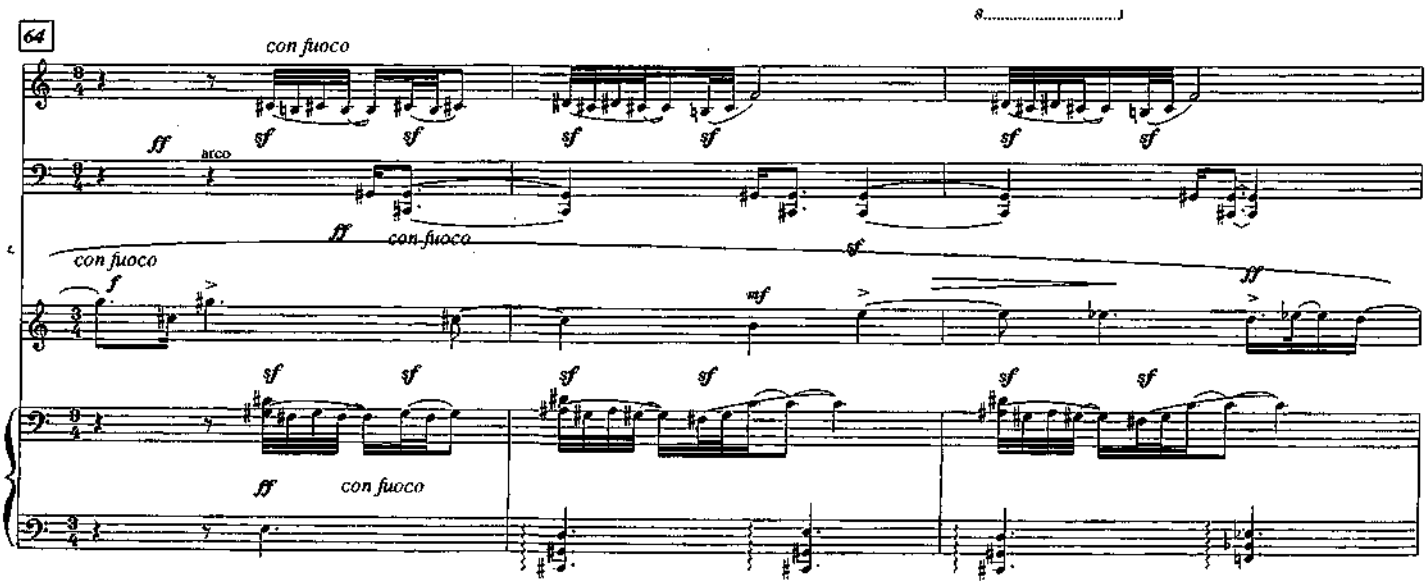


con motto, previous ♩ of triplet = ♩ , ♩ = 100





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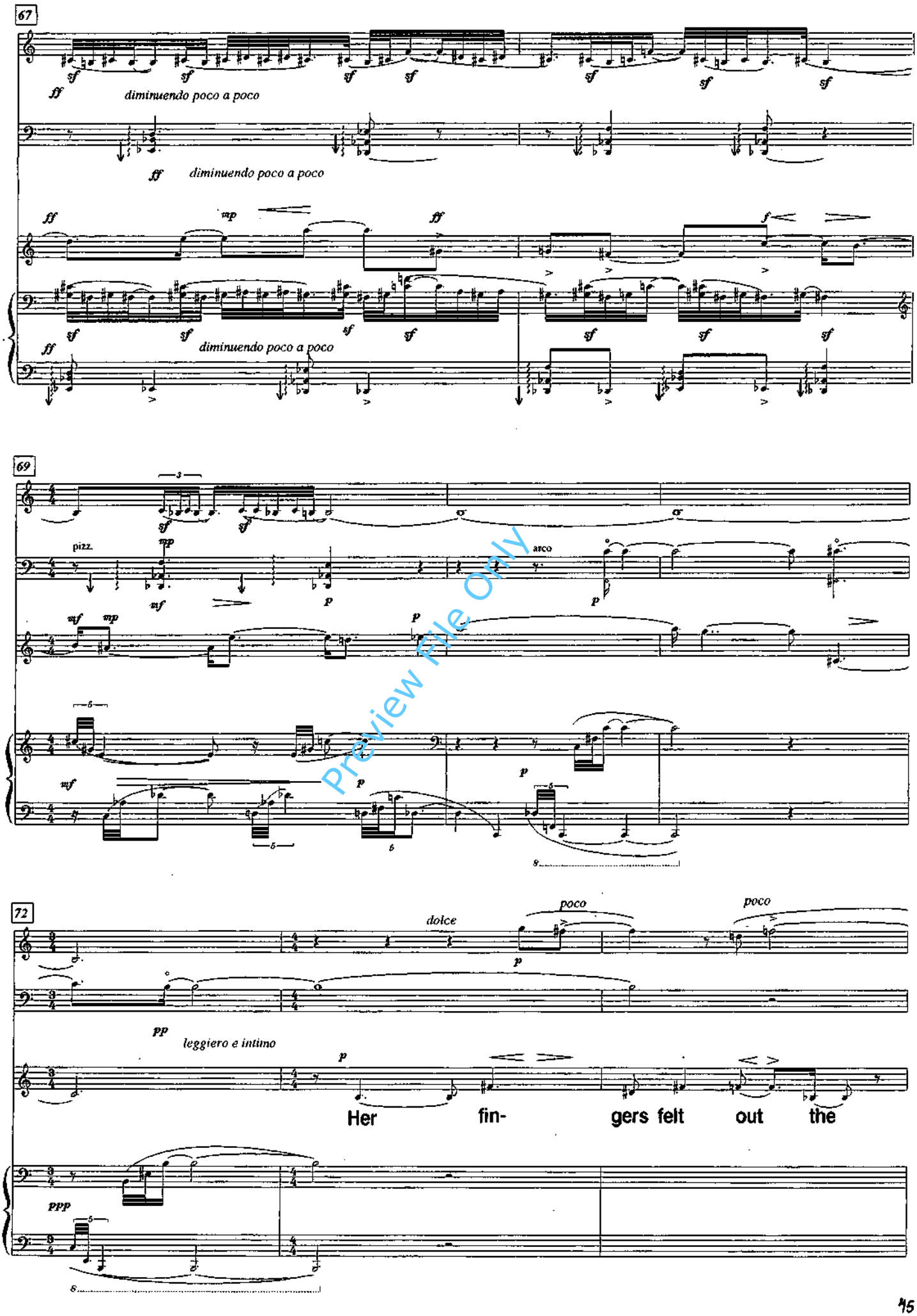

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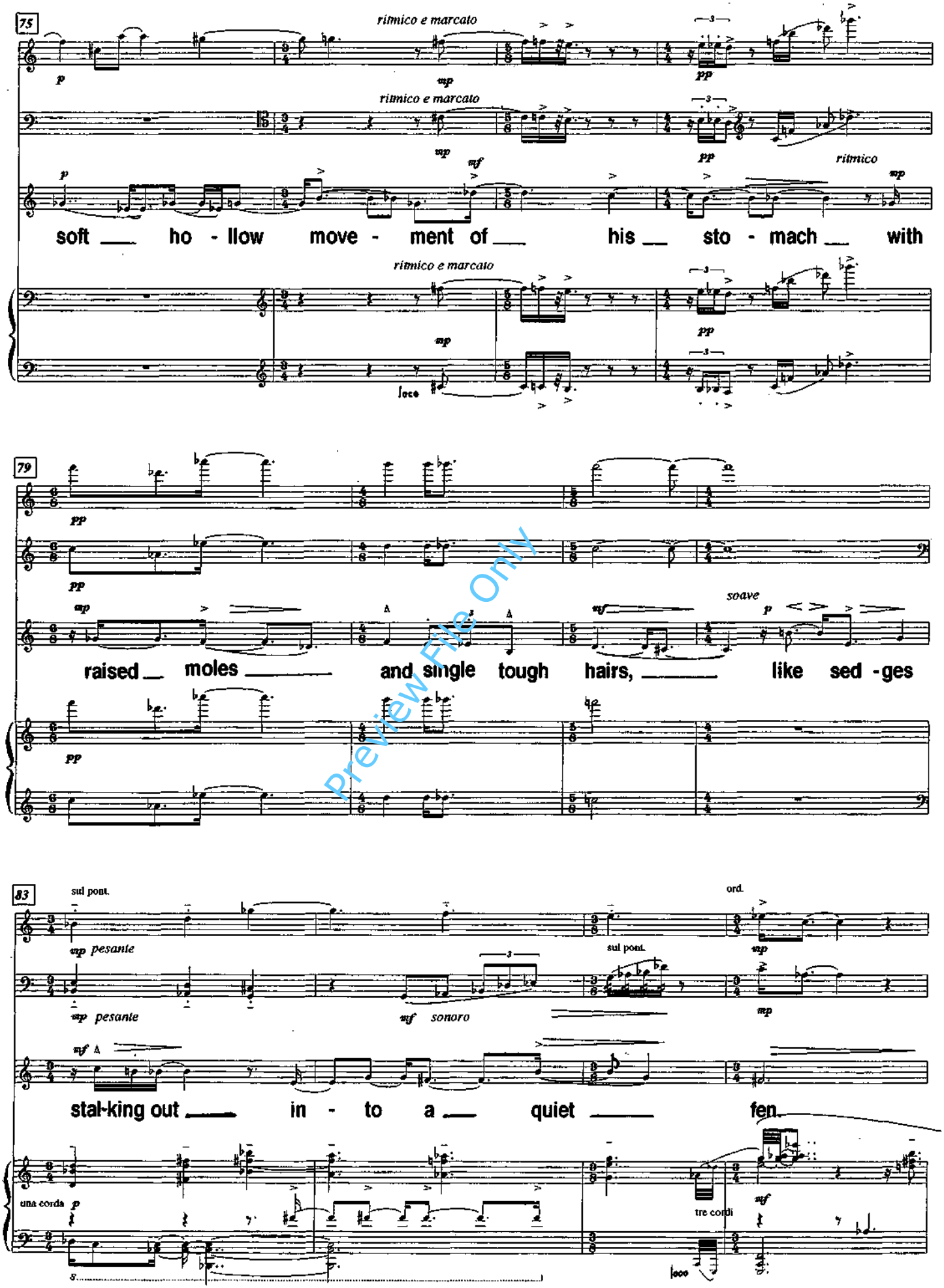

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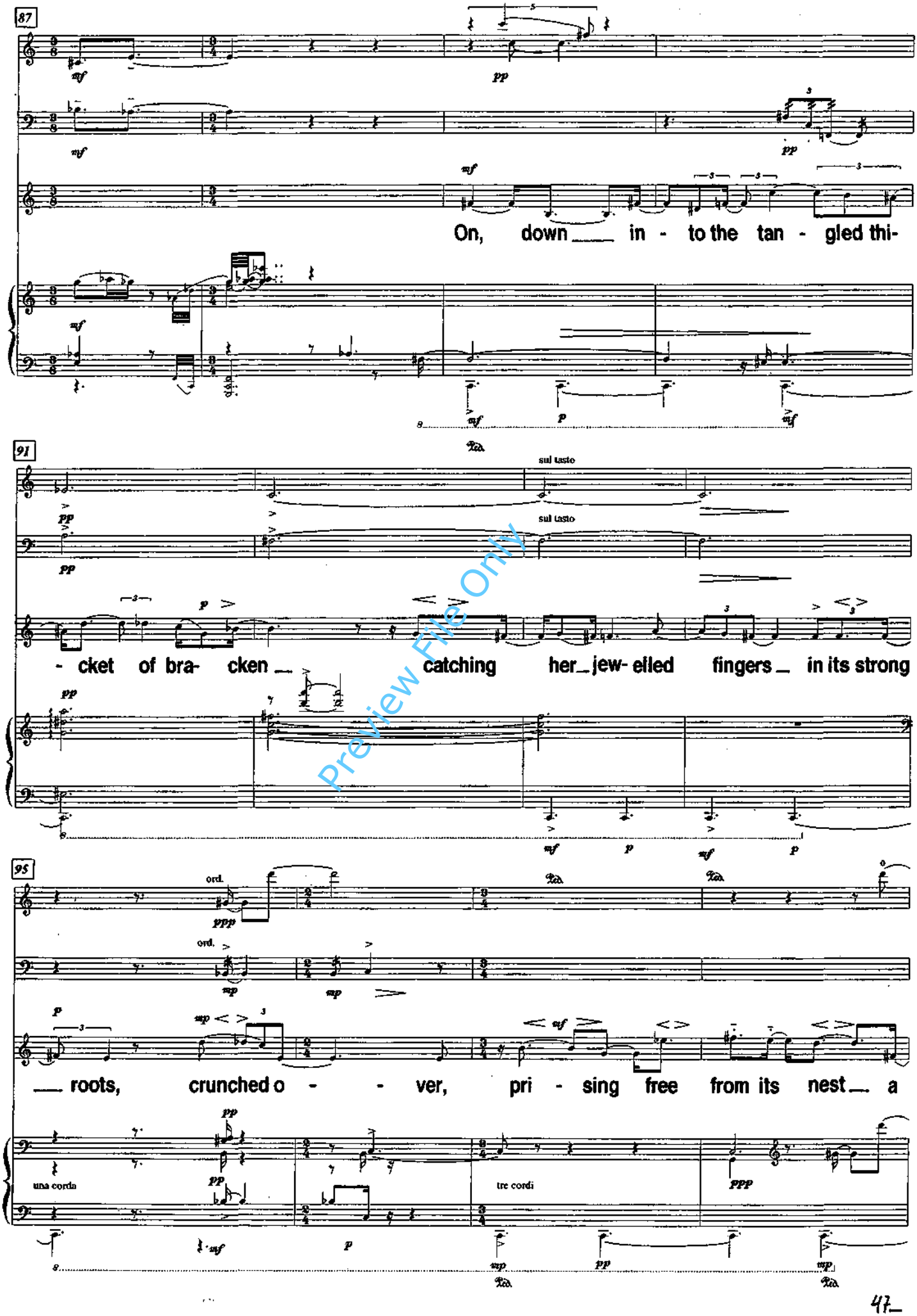

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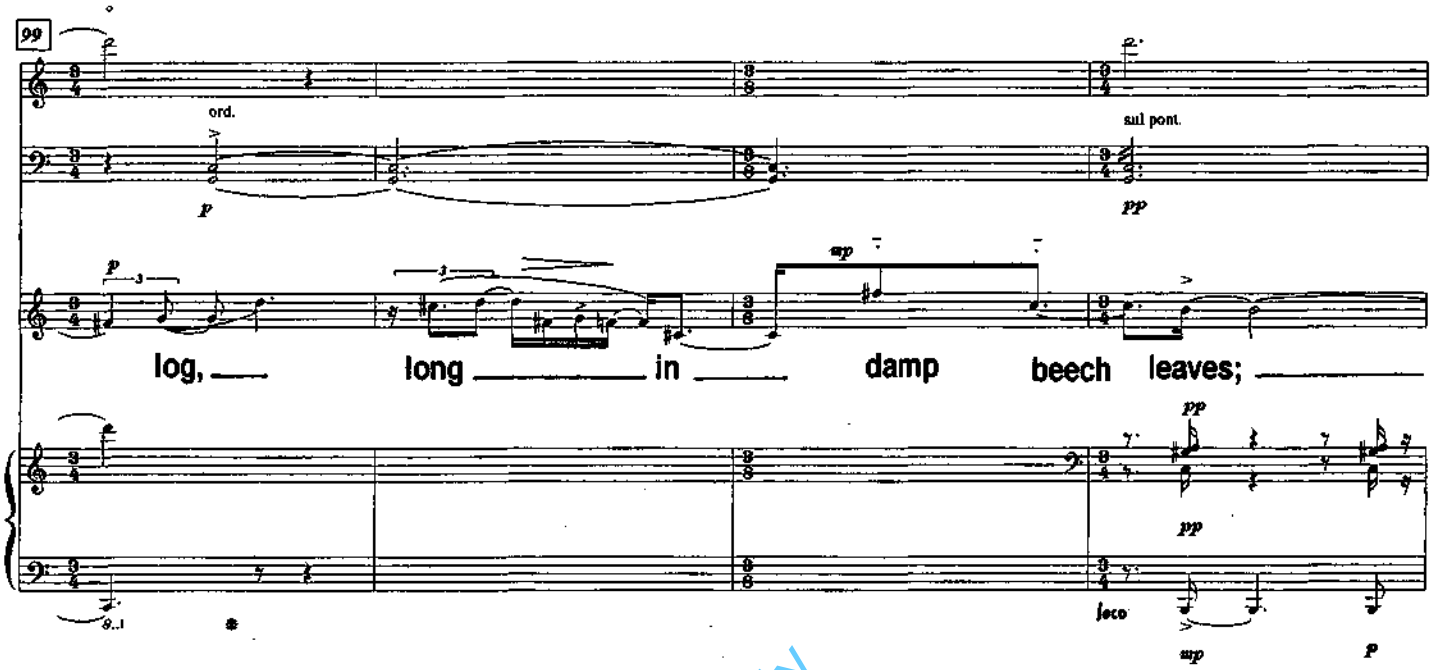

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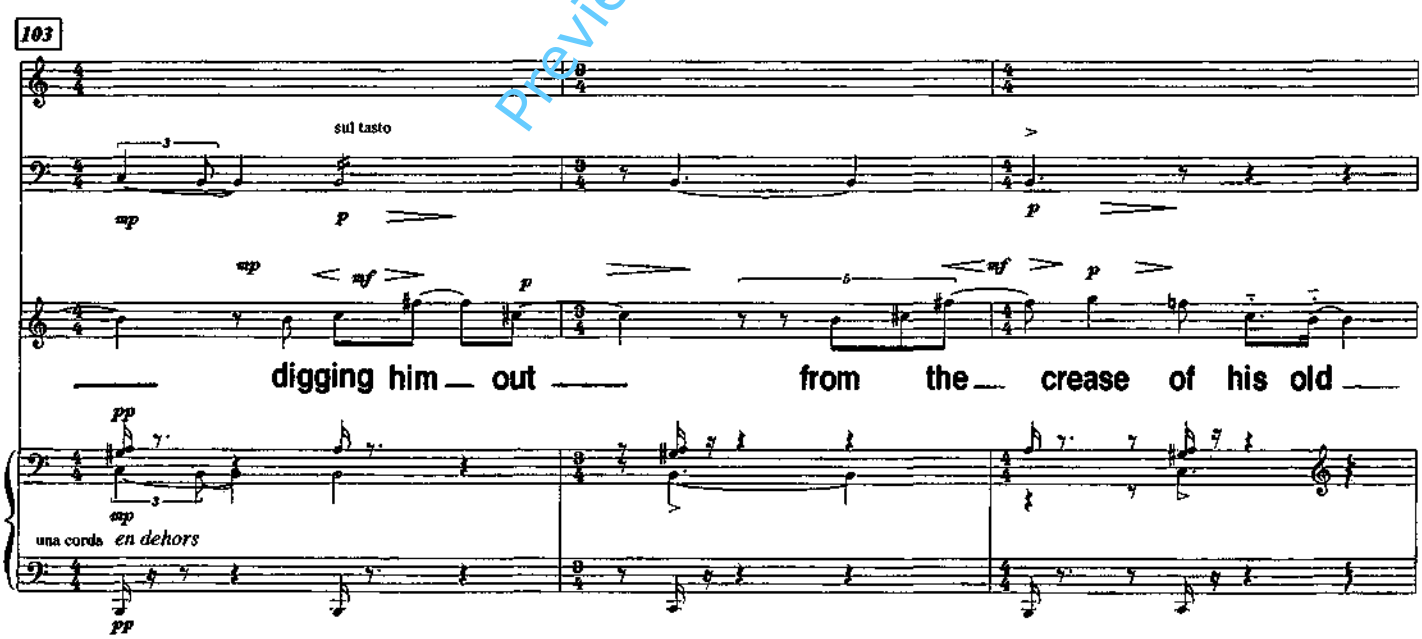

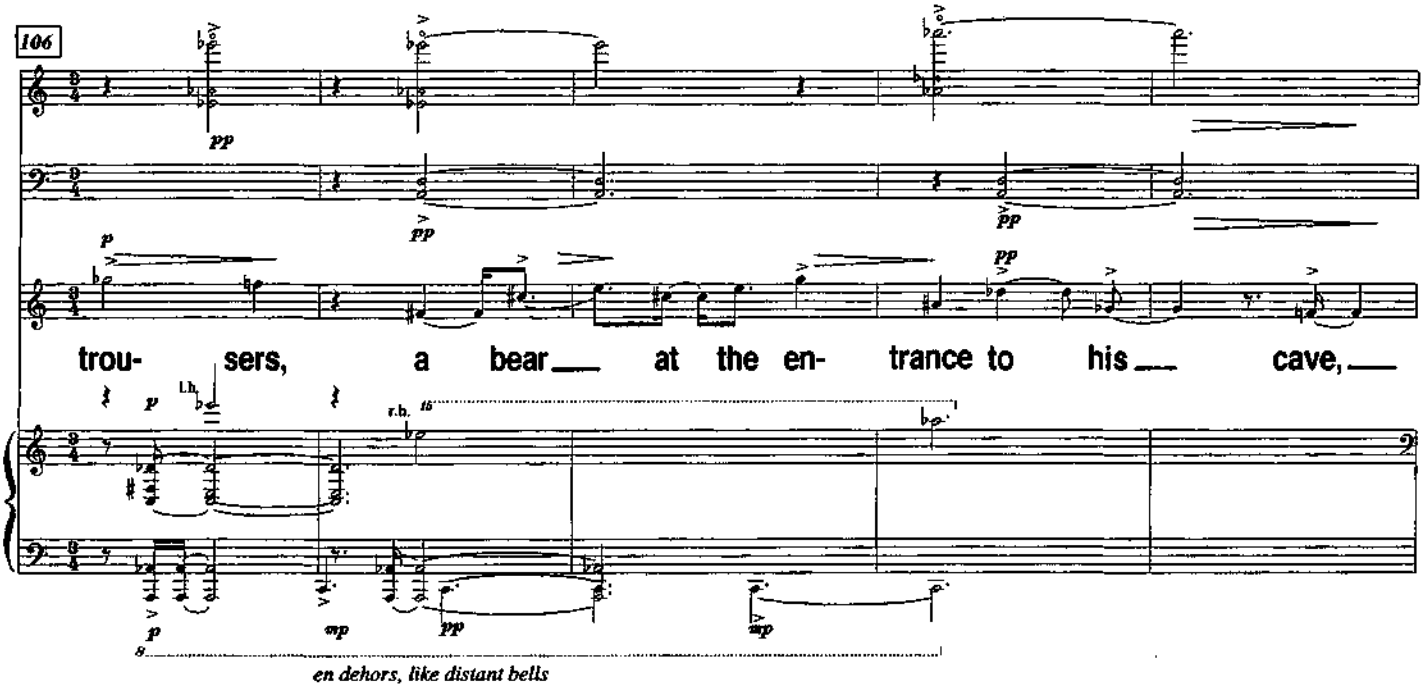

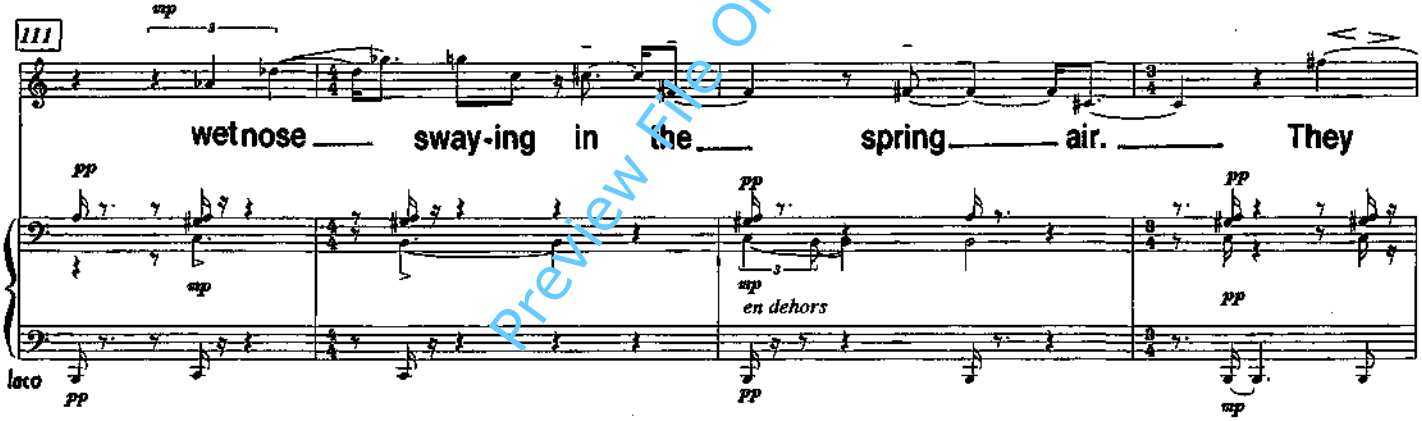

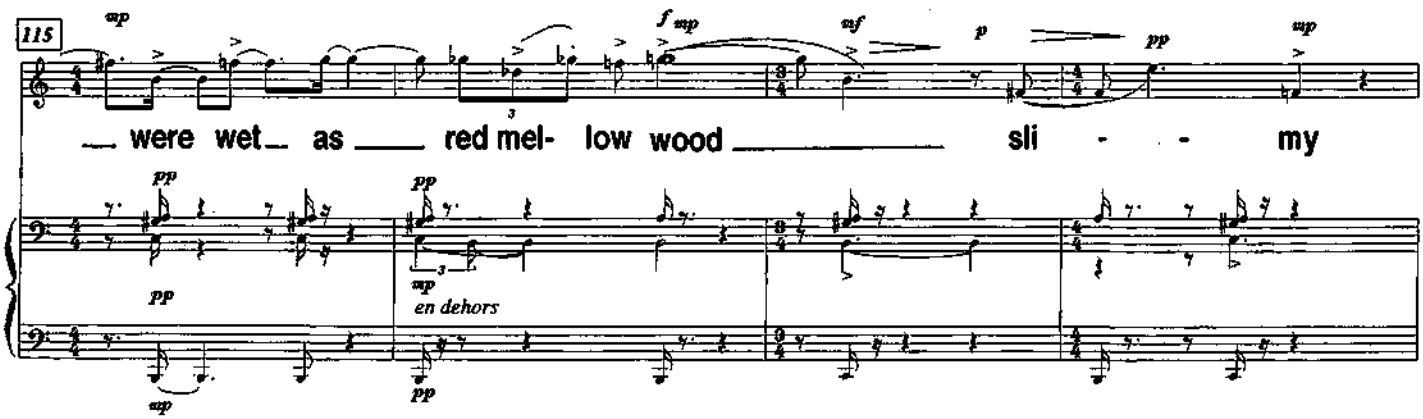

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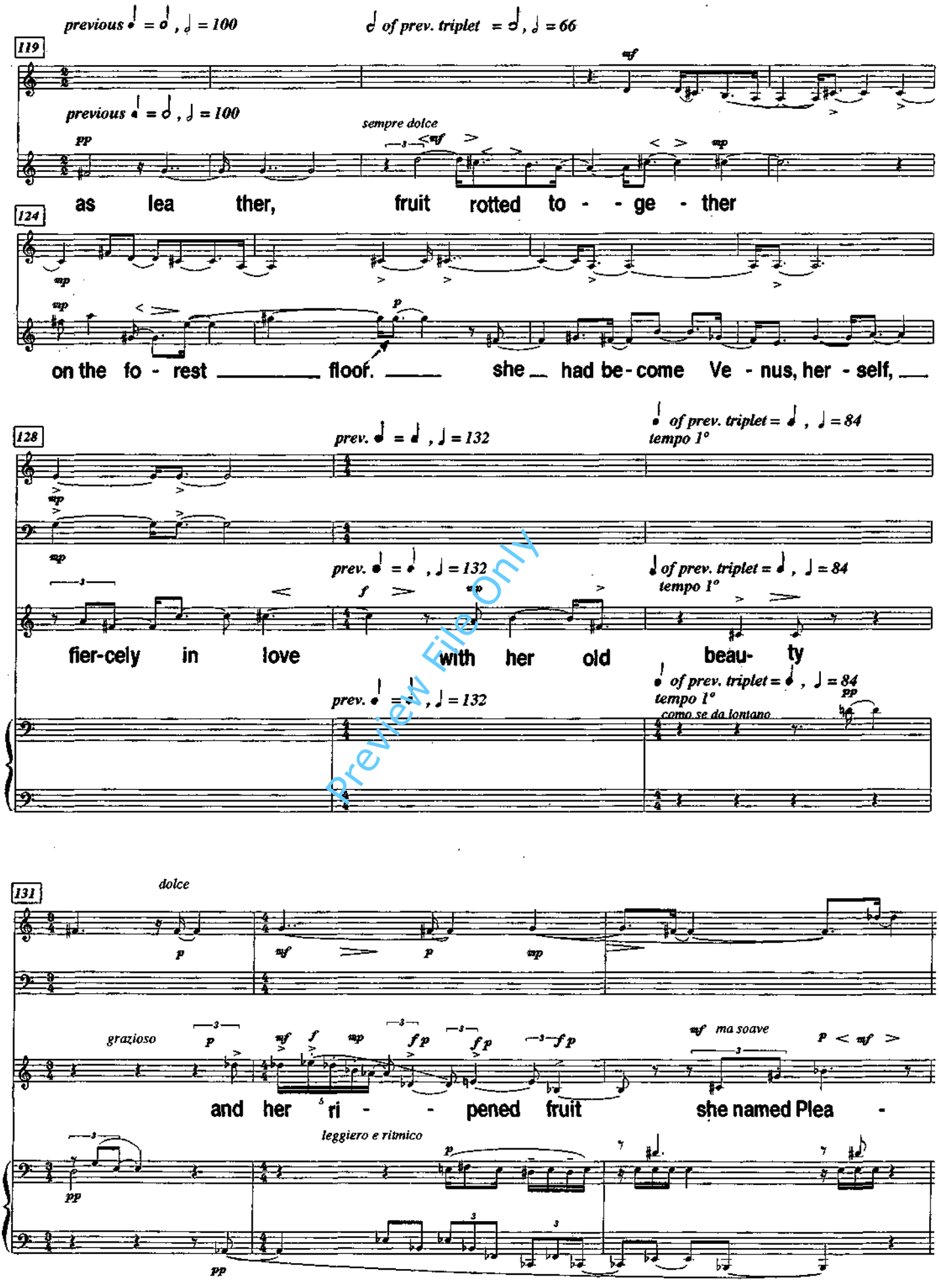

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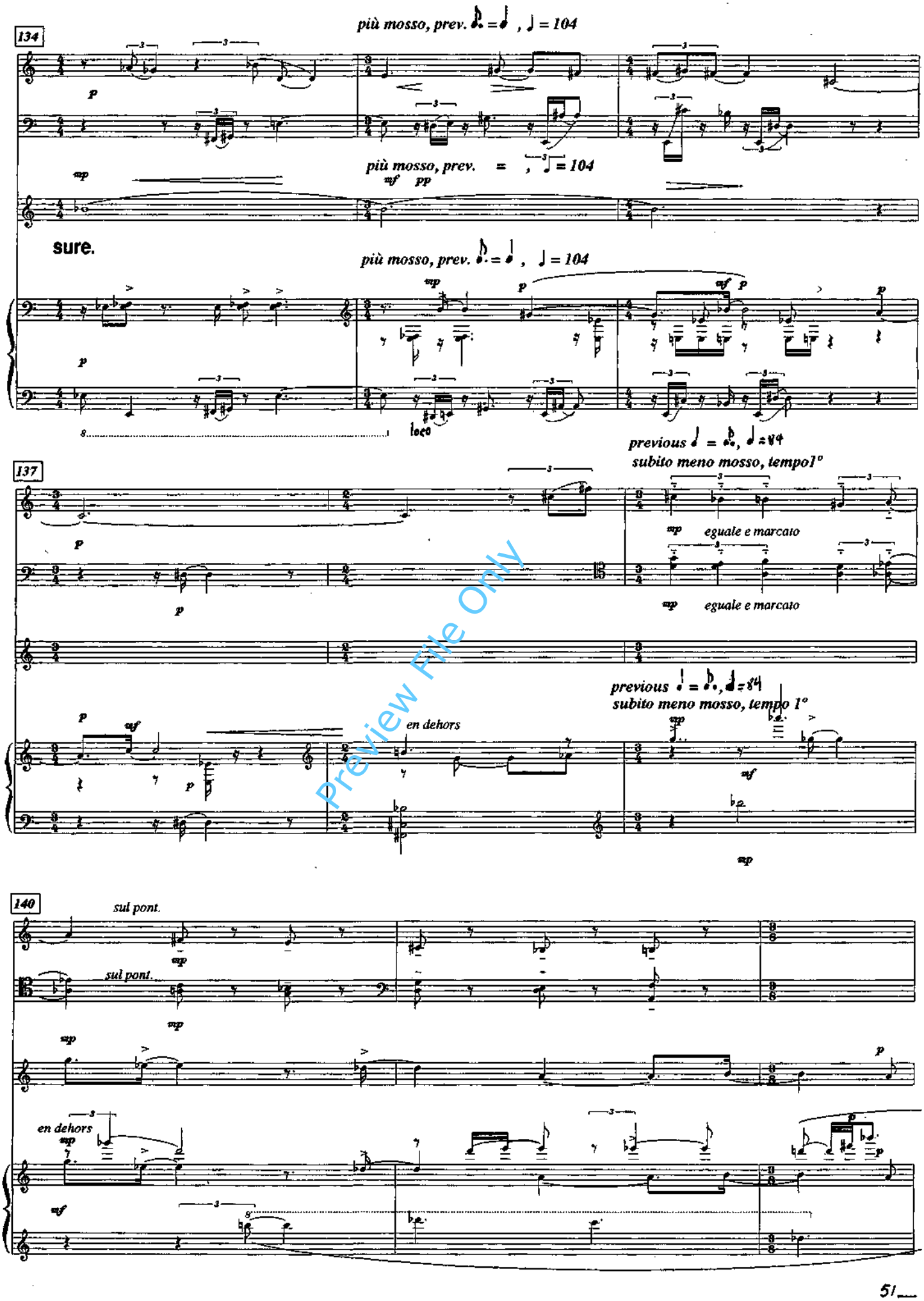

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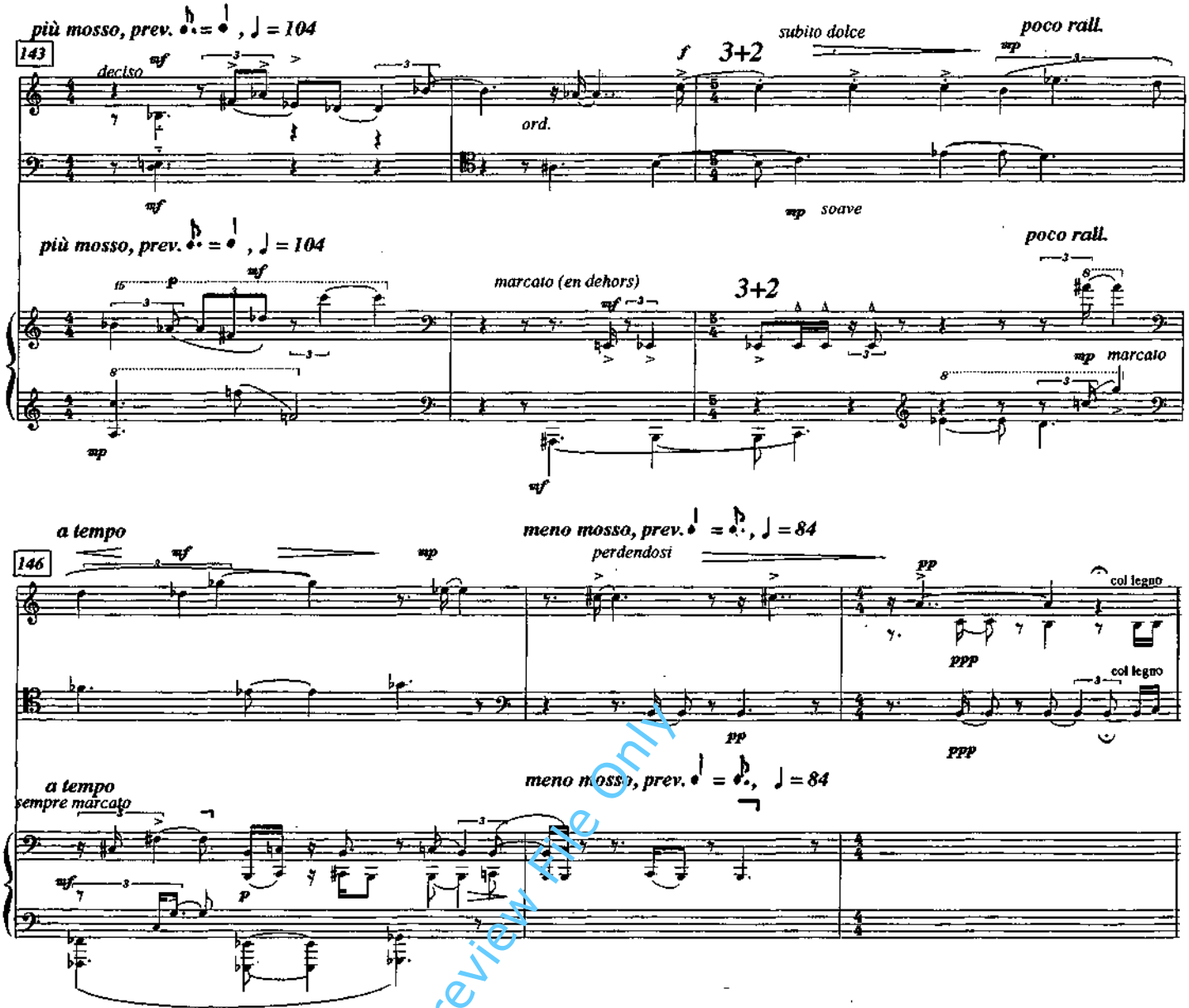

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