Aaron Houston

Delirium Nocturnum

-- for small chamber ensemble --

Full Score

Aaron Houston Music, 2018
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Full Score

Duration: ca. 7:30 minutes

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Instrumentation

Violin
Viola
Cello
Double Bass

Piano

Program Note

On October 10, 2018, Hurricane Michael made landfall in the Florida panhandle as a category 4 hurricane. It would end up being the strongest hurricane to hit that part of the state. Living in Tallahassee, I did not have to endure the worst of the storm; however, even being on the outer edges of the vicious winds was enough to uproot ancient trees and tear through power lines and houses as if they were never there. The storm left neighborhoods and cities in the dark for days and weeks.

Only a few days before this storm, I was informed I had been awarded the opportunity to participate in the RED NOTE New Music Festival and compose a new work to be premiered at the festival. As I began this new work in the aftermath of Hurricane Michael, I was surrounded by the unnatural silence of a neighborhood with no electricity and the ever-dancing shadows created by candlelight (yes, I found and lit every candle I could so I would have enough light to work from). Quickly, I discovered my mind does not like the silence or the darkness. In our current world full of constant distractions and never-ceasing methods of occupying our attention, I was anxious about being caught in the lightlessness, and the quietness that should have offered a sense of calm after the storm only provided me uneasiness.

Delirium Nocturnum was born out of this disquiet restlessness. The dancing shadows always moving in the corner of my eyes along the wall and the whispering howls echoing after the hurricane winds passed through found their way onto the page and began to move. As the darkness lingered, these voices grew and twisted with the flickering candlelight. By the end of the piece, the distant howls and shapeless dancers have been defined and can be seen (and heard) for what they are: the wild and frantic creations of a restless mind at night.

Delirium Nocturnum was premiered by members of Fifth House Ensemble as part of the RED NOTE New Music Festival in February of 2019.

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Performance Notes

Technique indications:

"s.t." = sul tasto

"s.p." = sul ponticello

"ord." = ordinario; used to cancel out sul pont. or sul tasto

" " = transition between bowing locations over time

" " = to move the bow in a circular motion across the string

= a gradual increase in the bow pressure toward an excessive amount to "distort" the sound.
Measures 142 to the end of the piece are to be played with this heavy, distorted sound from bow pressure.

" " = a sudden stop of the bow on the string. It should be like pulling a needle off a record.

Square noteheads are used to indicate playing with less finger pressure. The result should be a sound that still has some discernable pitch to it, but is perhaps less clear and a little "dirty" sounding.

"x" noteheads for the piano indicate for the note to be dampened in order to get a percussive attack from the hammer hitting the string.

Accidentals:

= a quarter tone sharp
= a standard half-step sharp
= a quarter tone flat
♭ = a standard half-step flat

All trills are half-step trills.

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Score

Delirium Nocturnum

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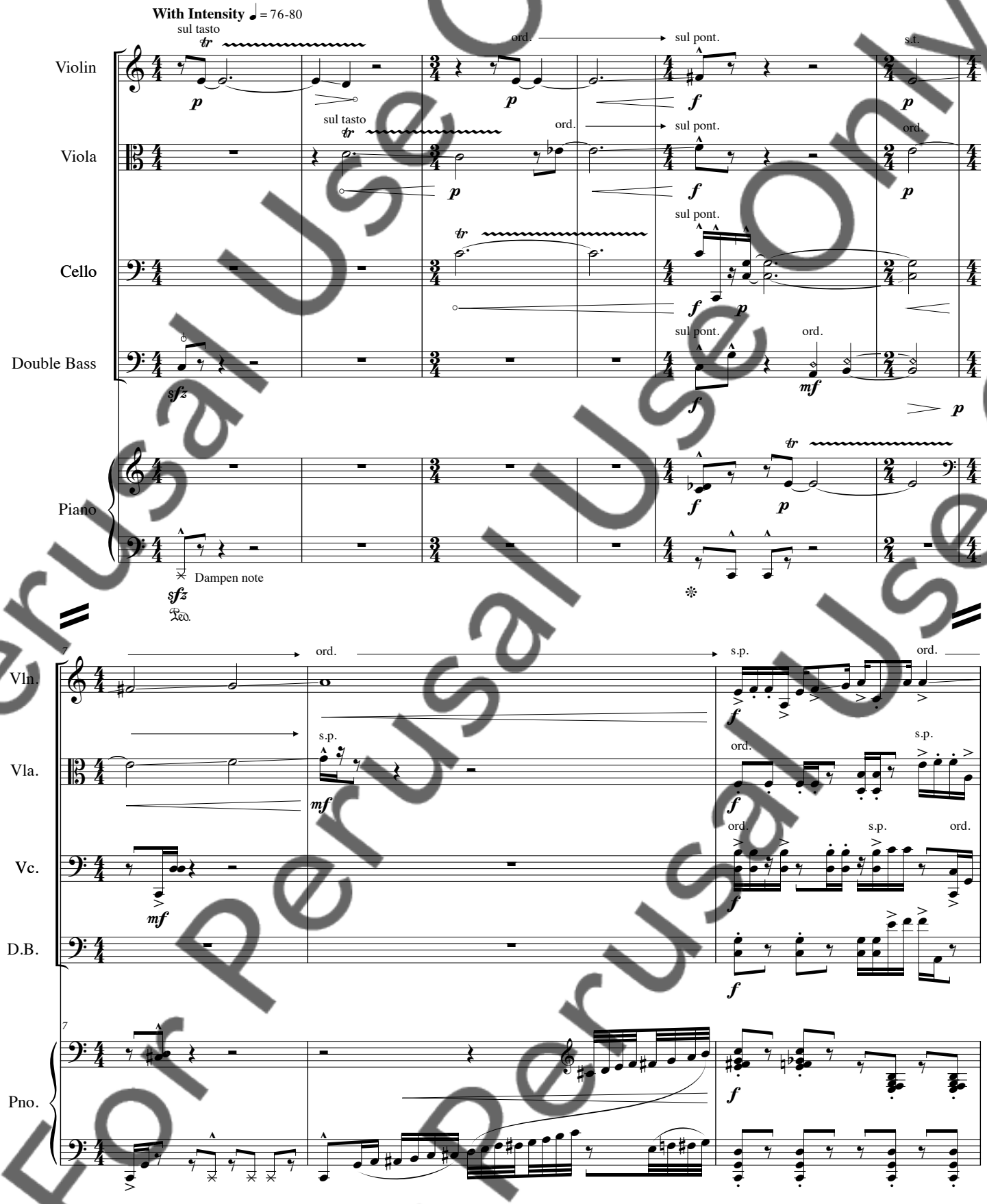

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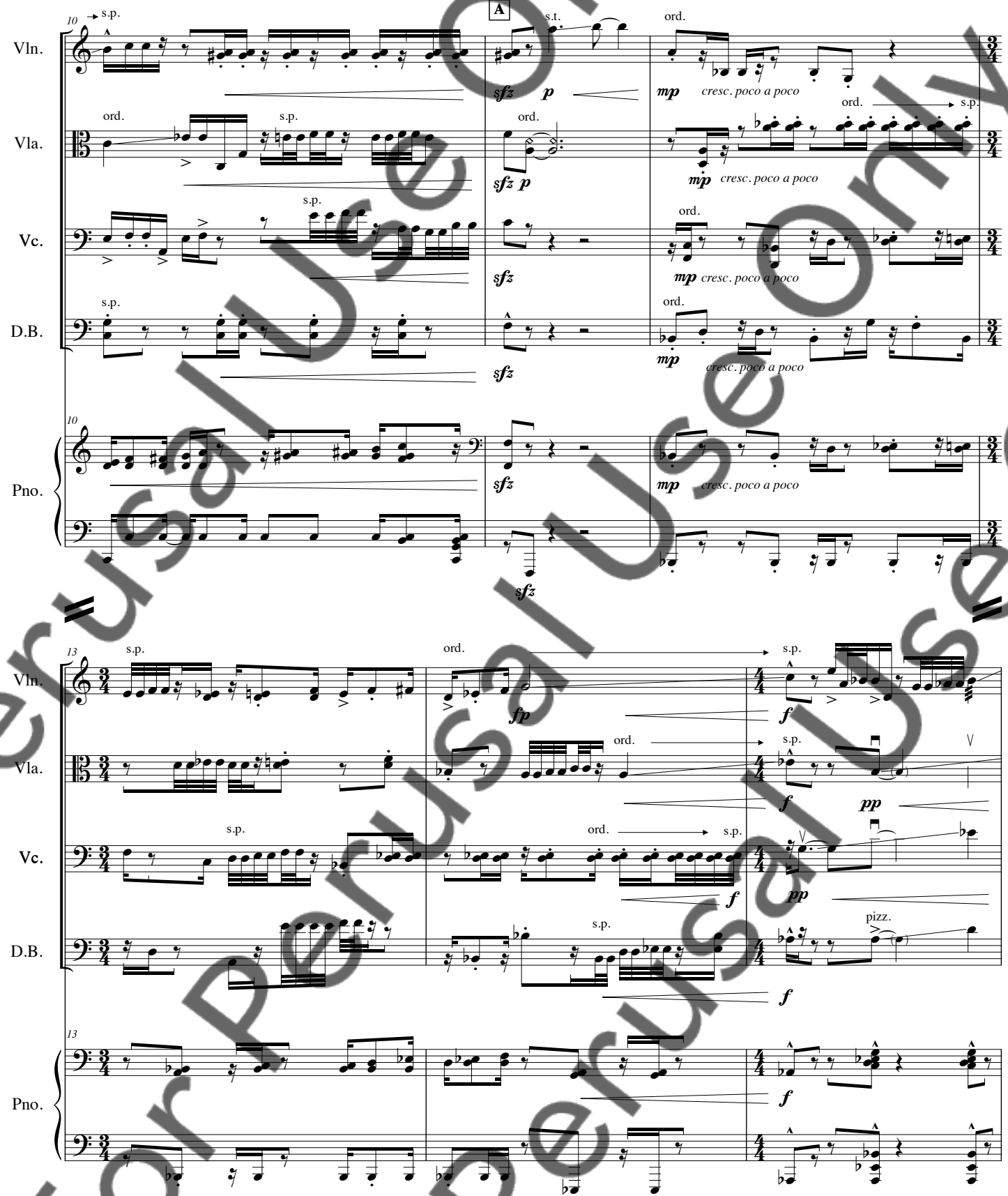

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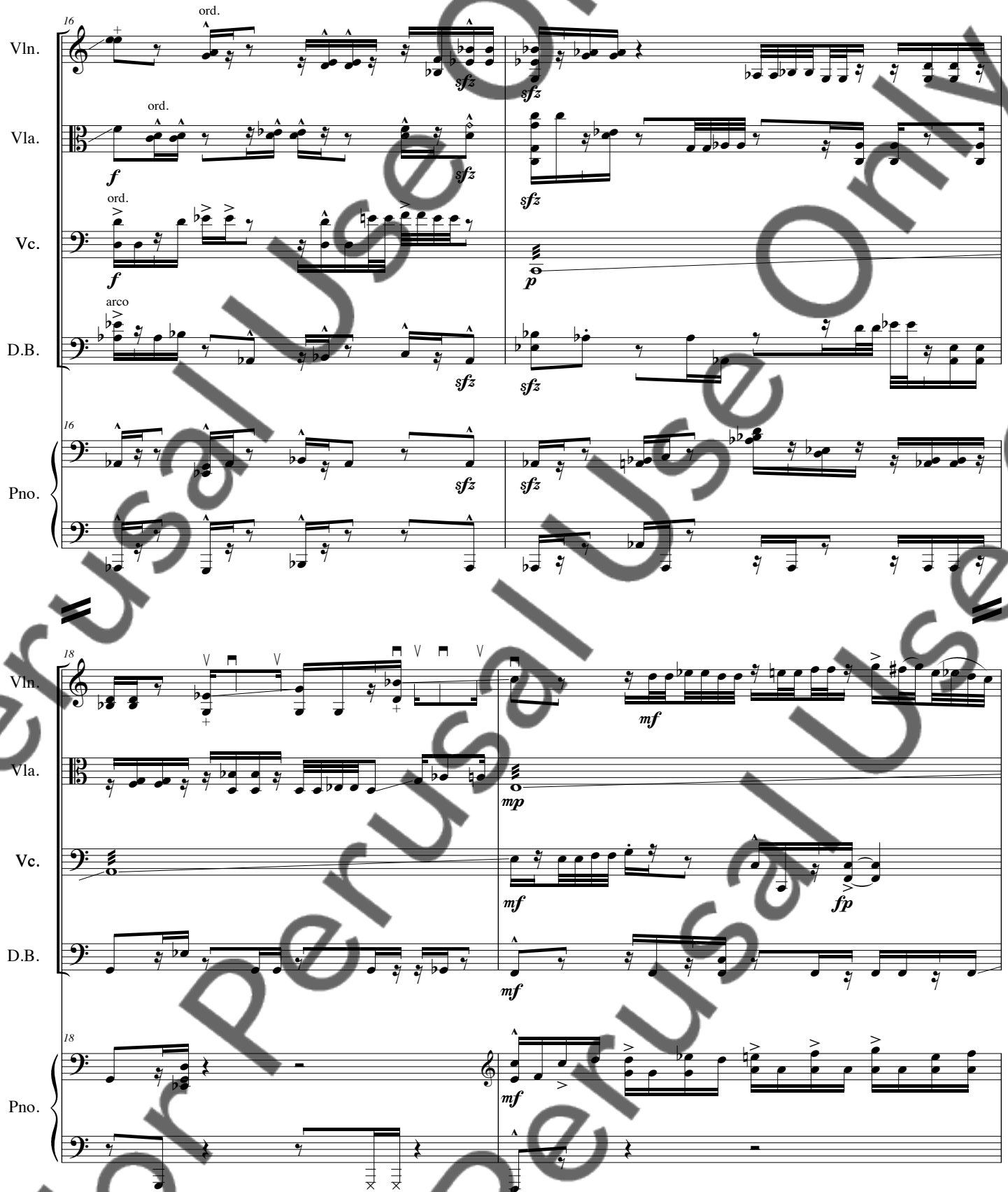

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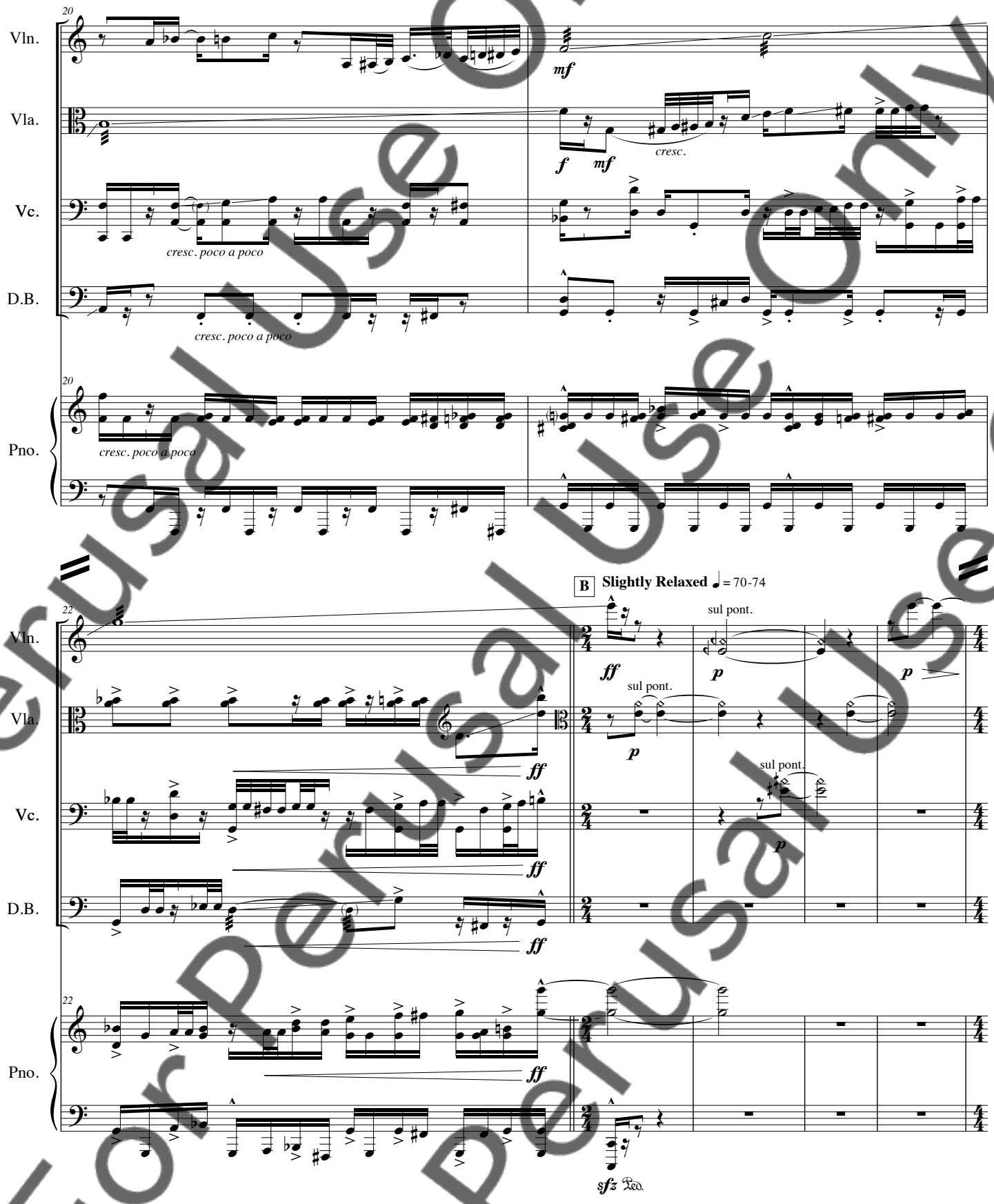

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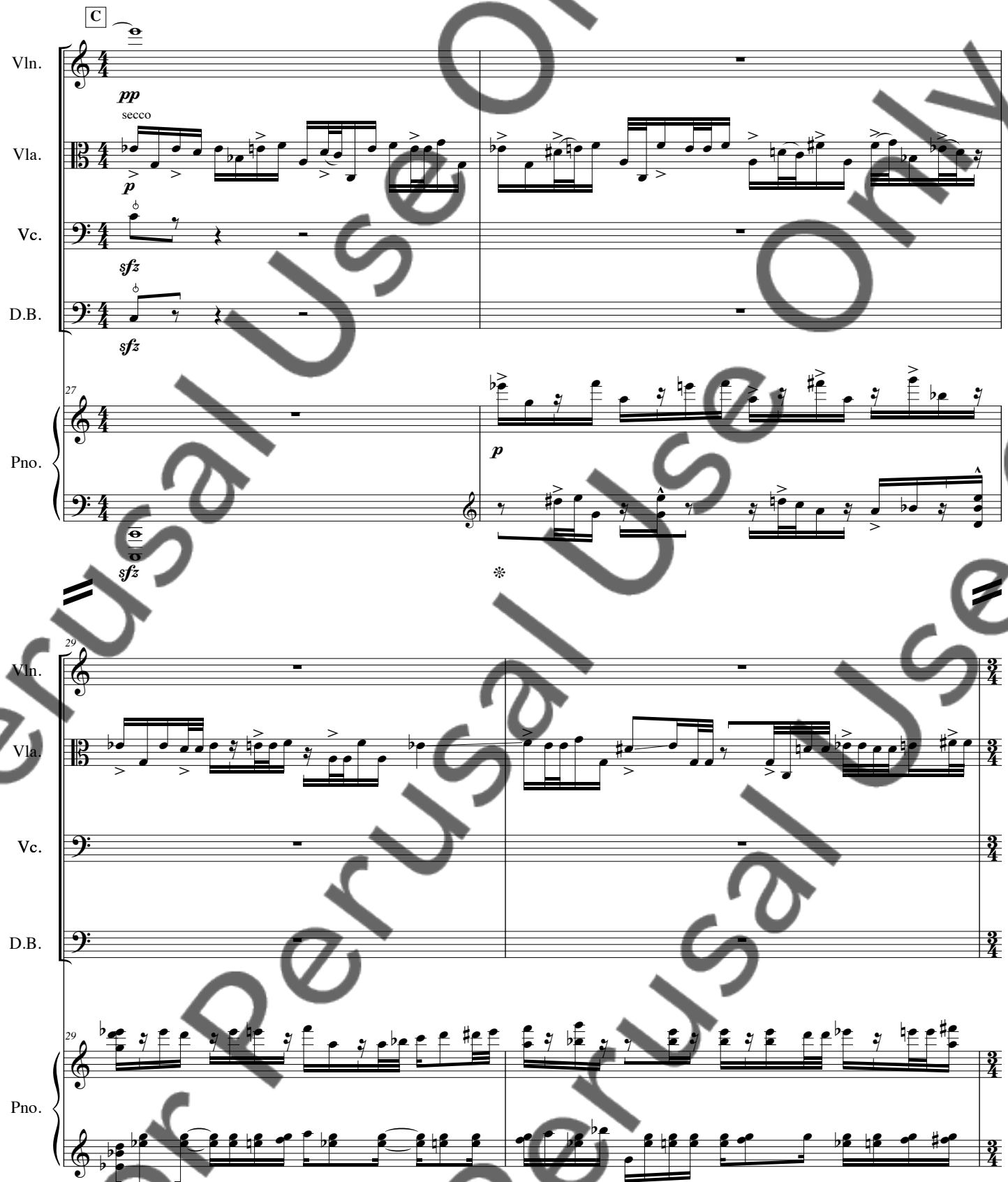

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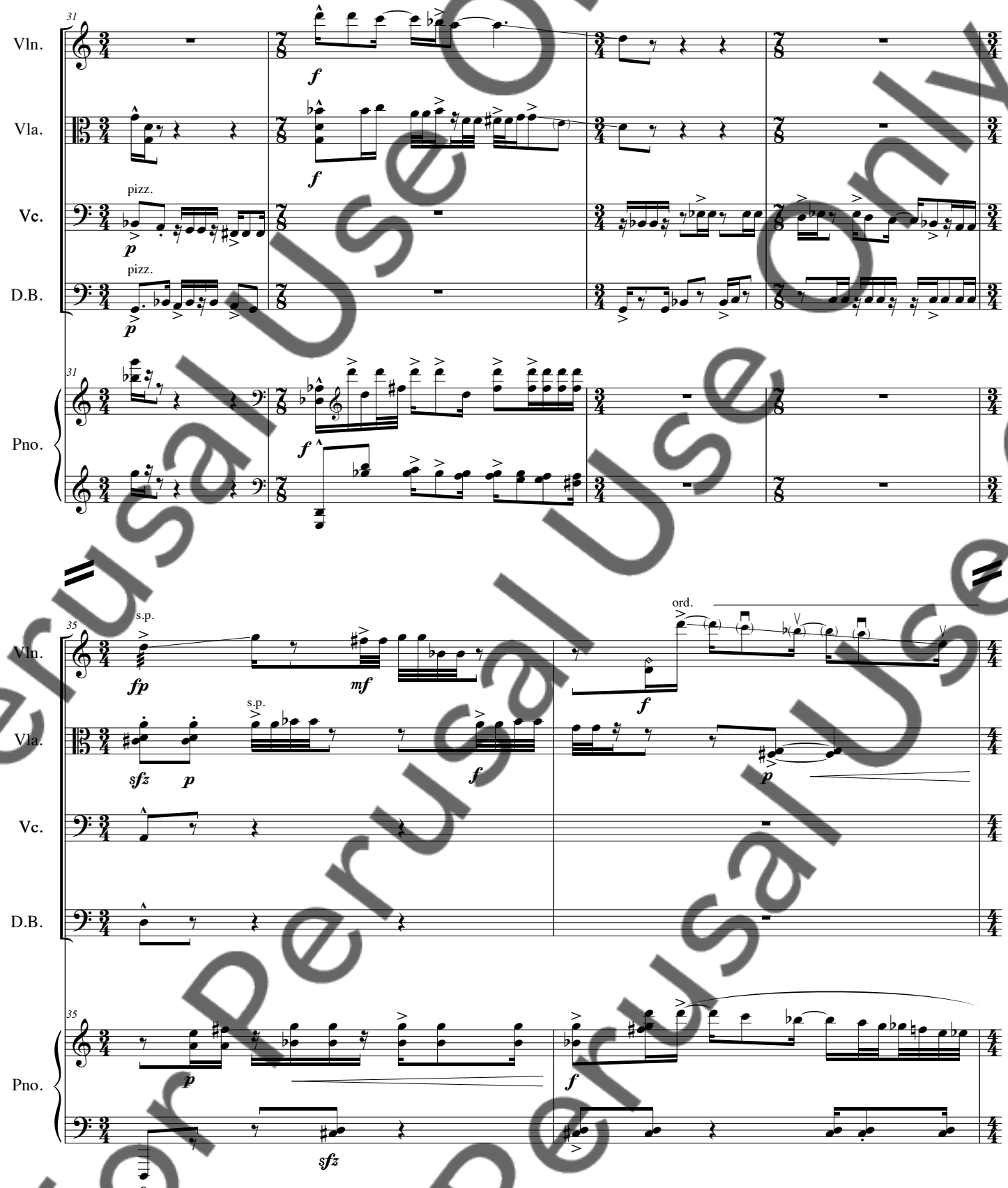

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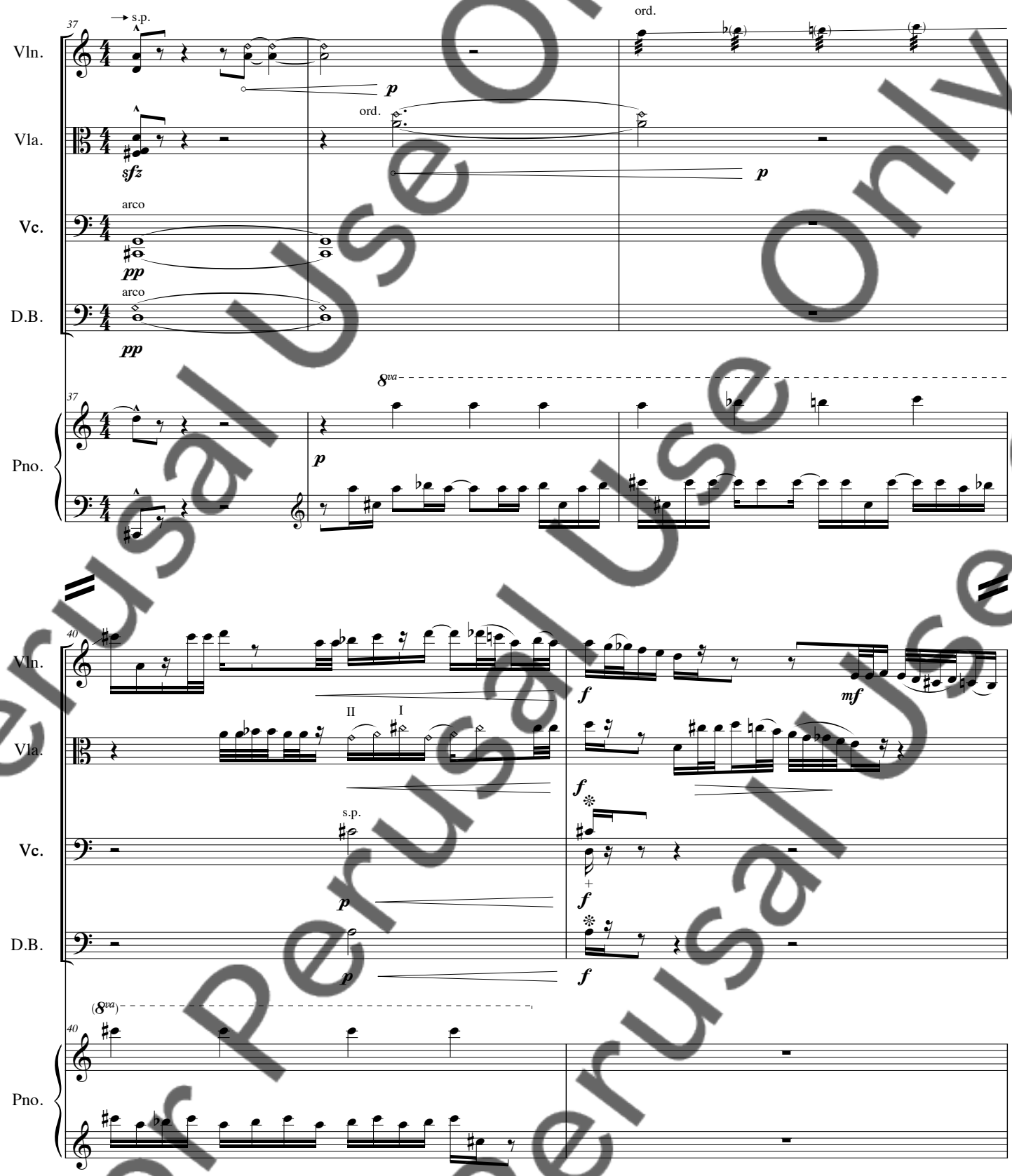

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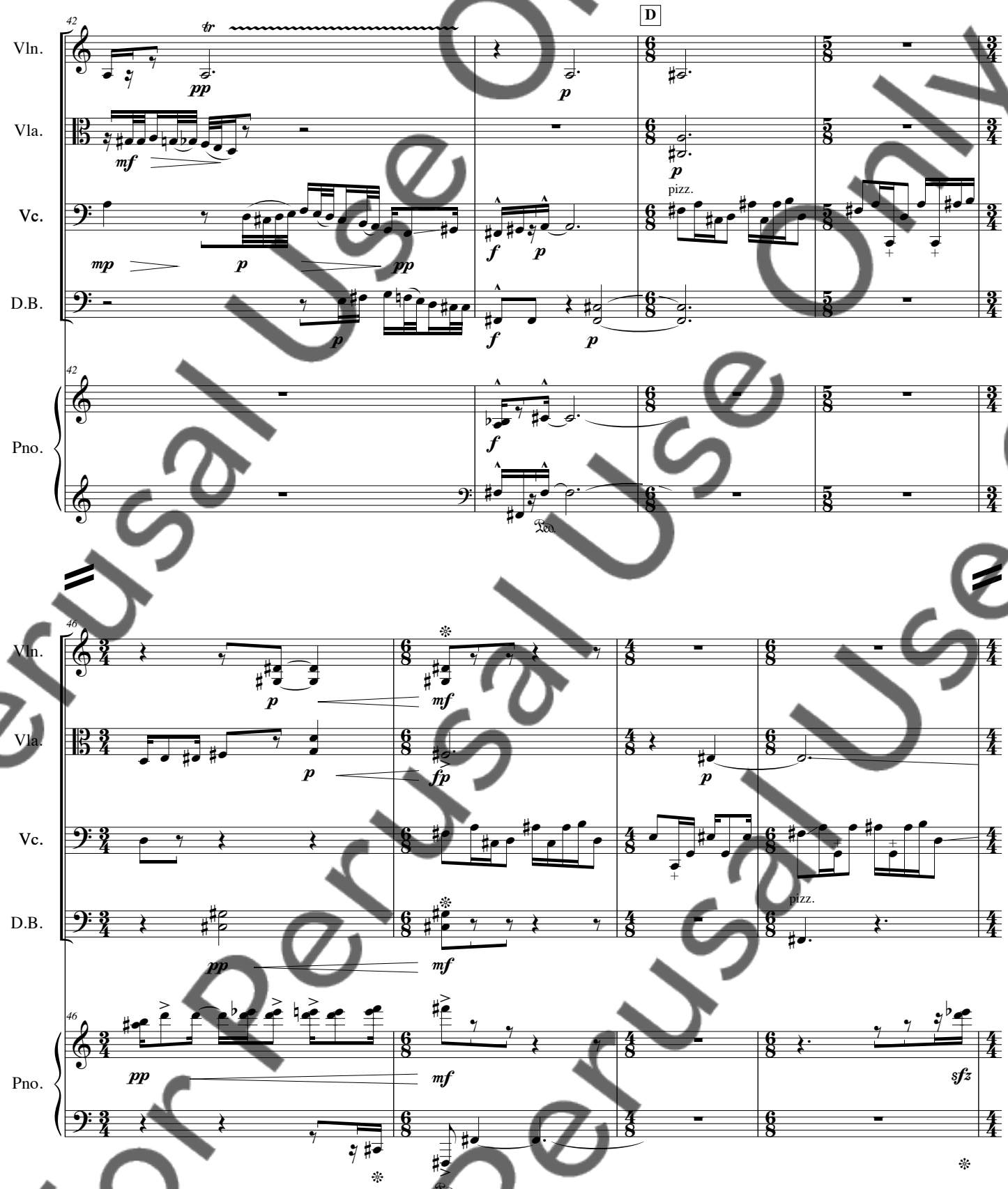

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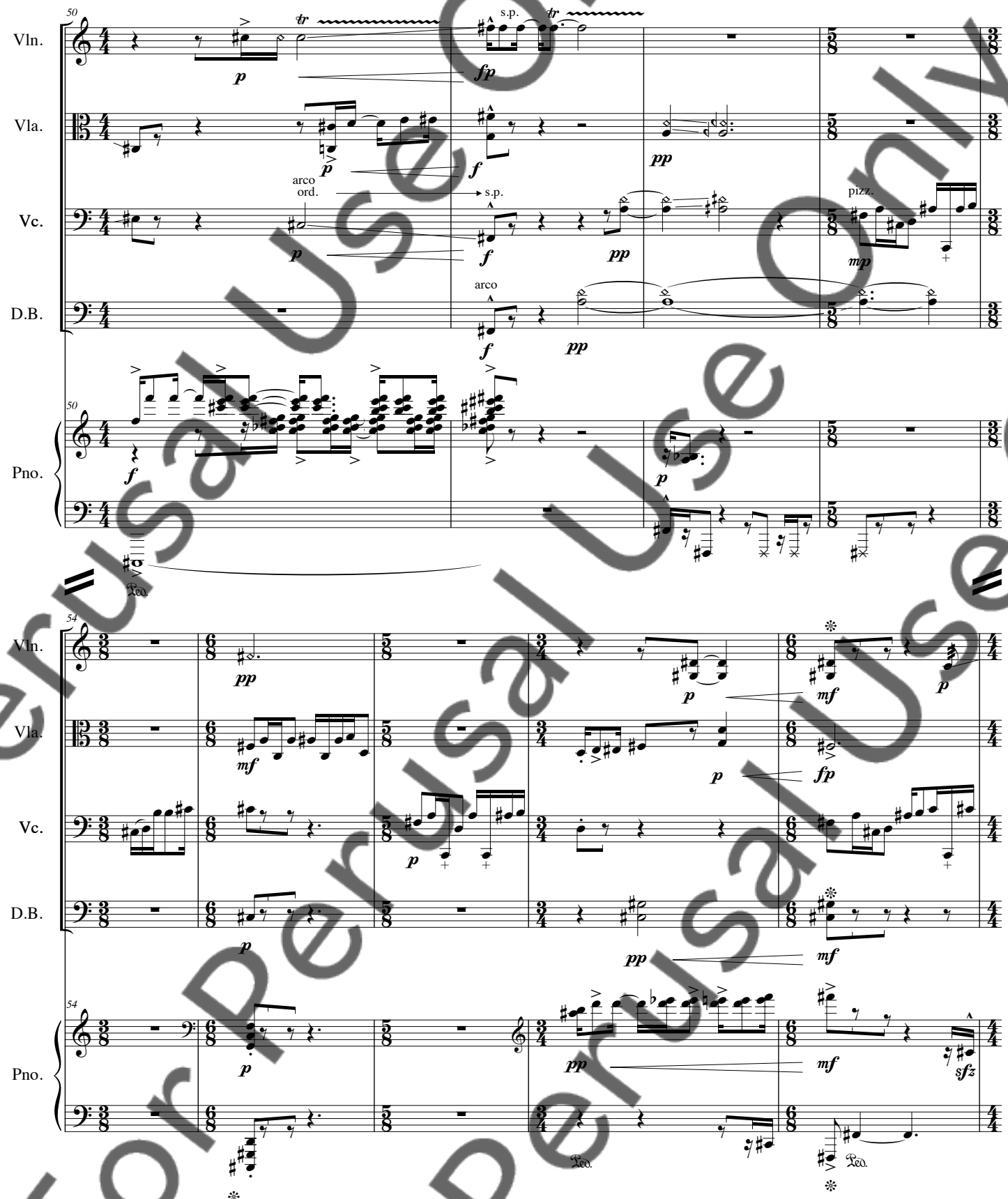

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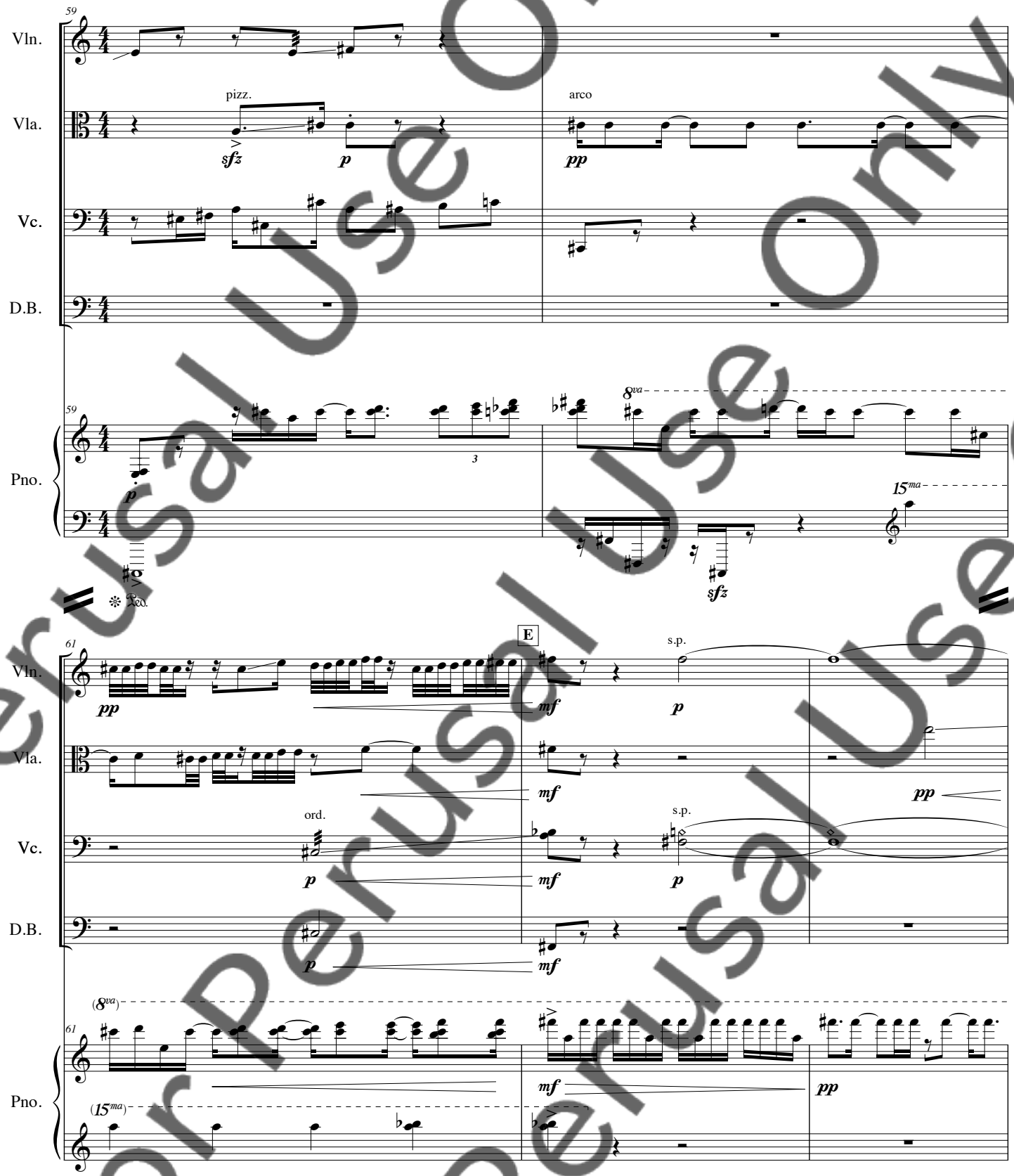

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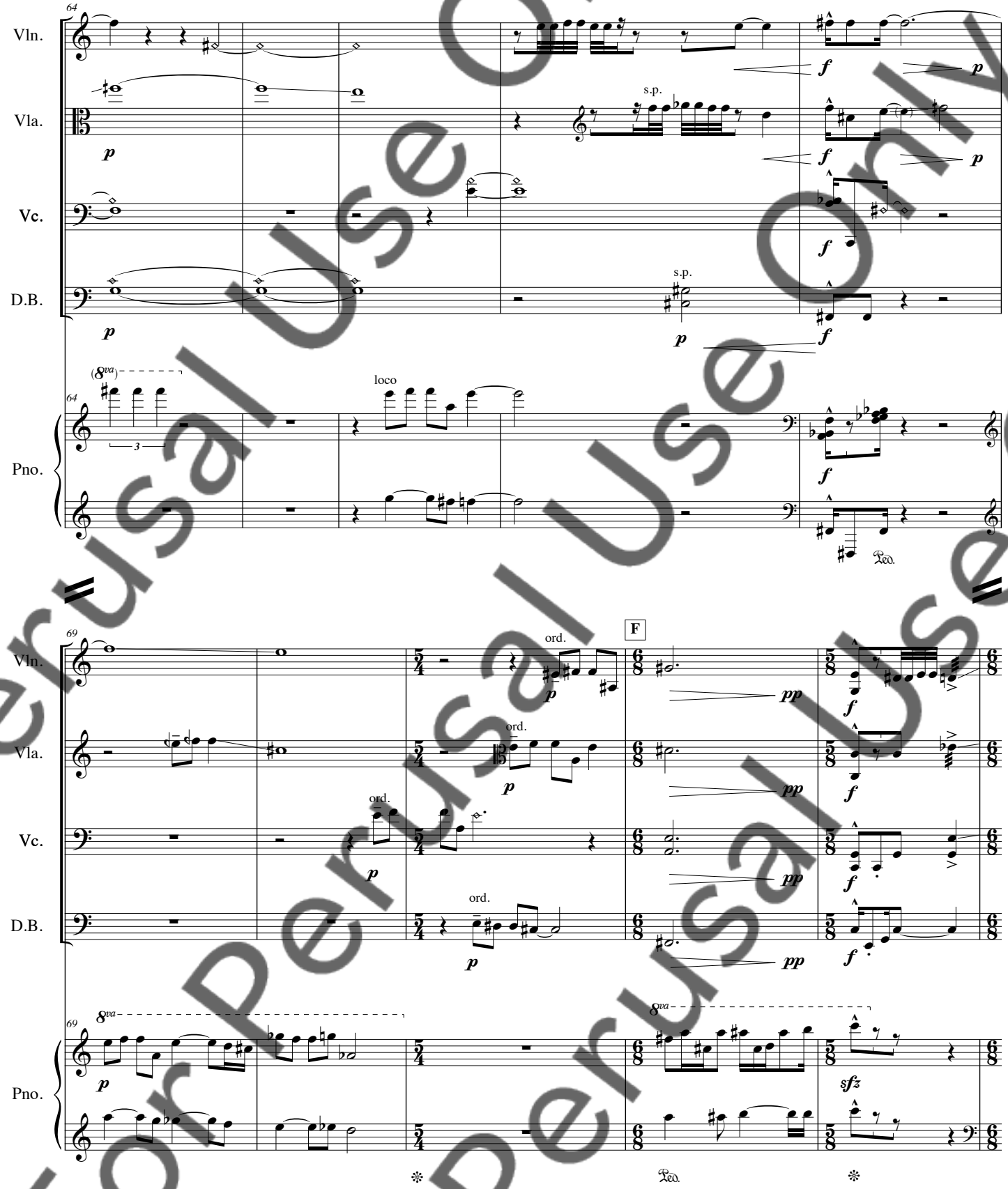

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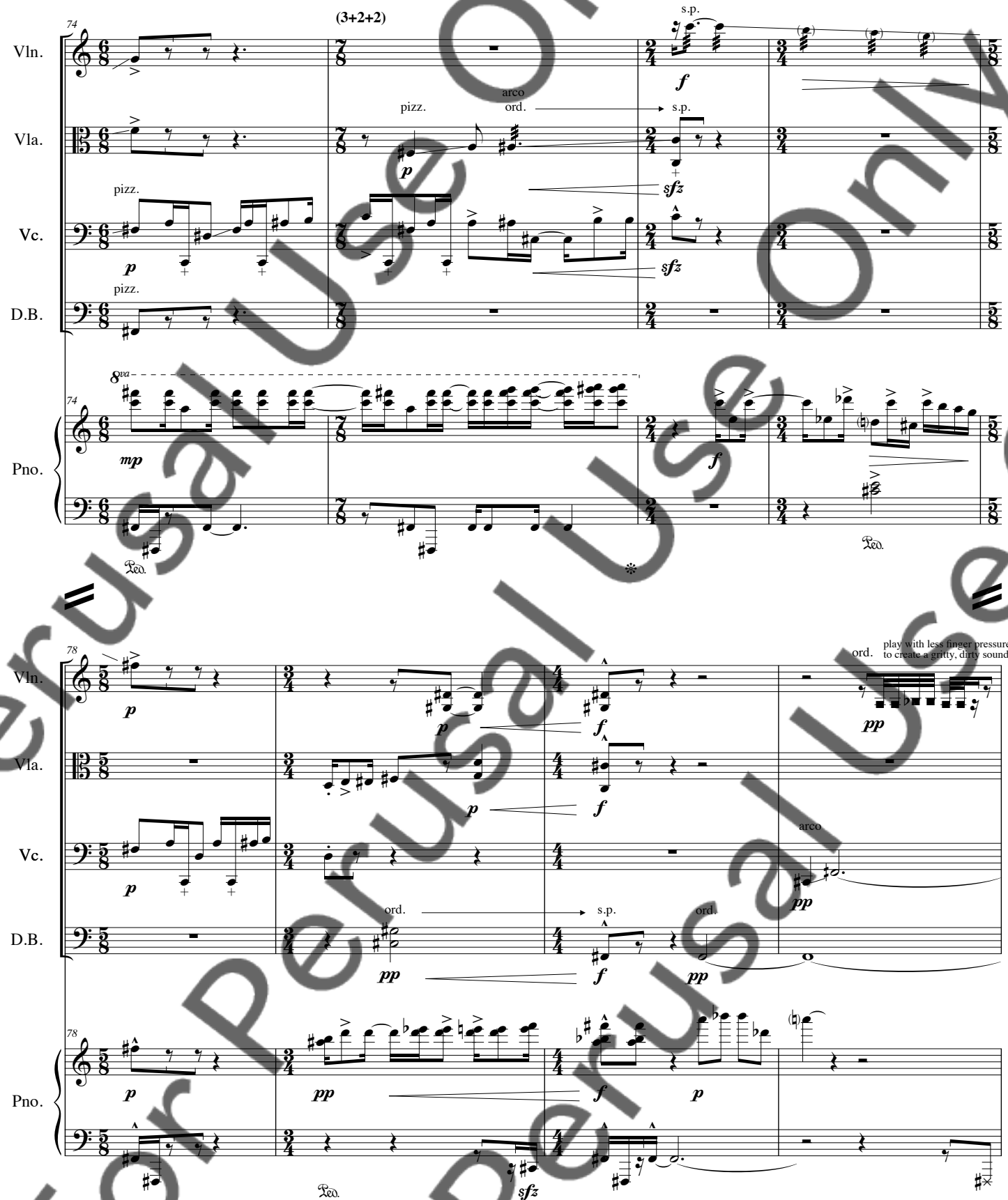

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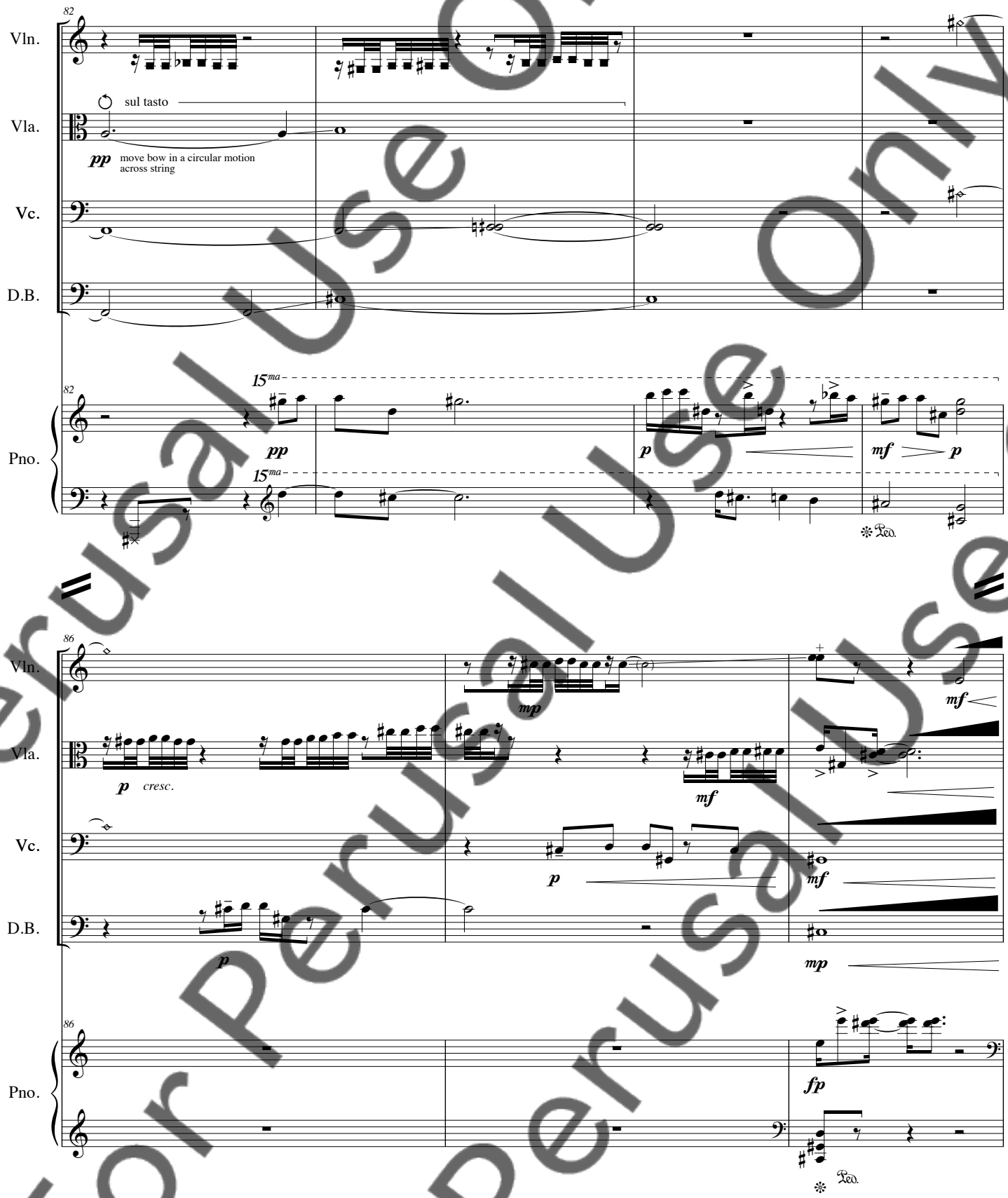

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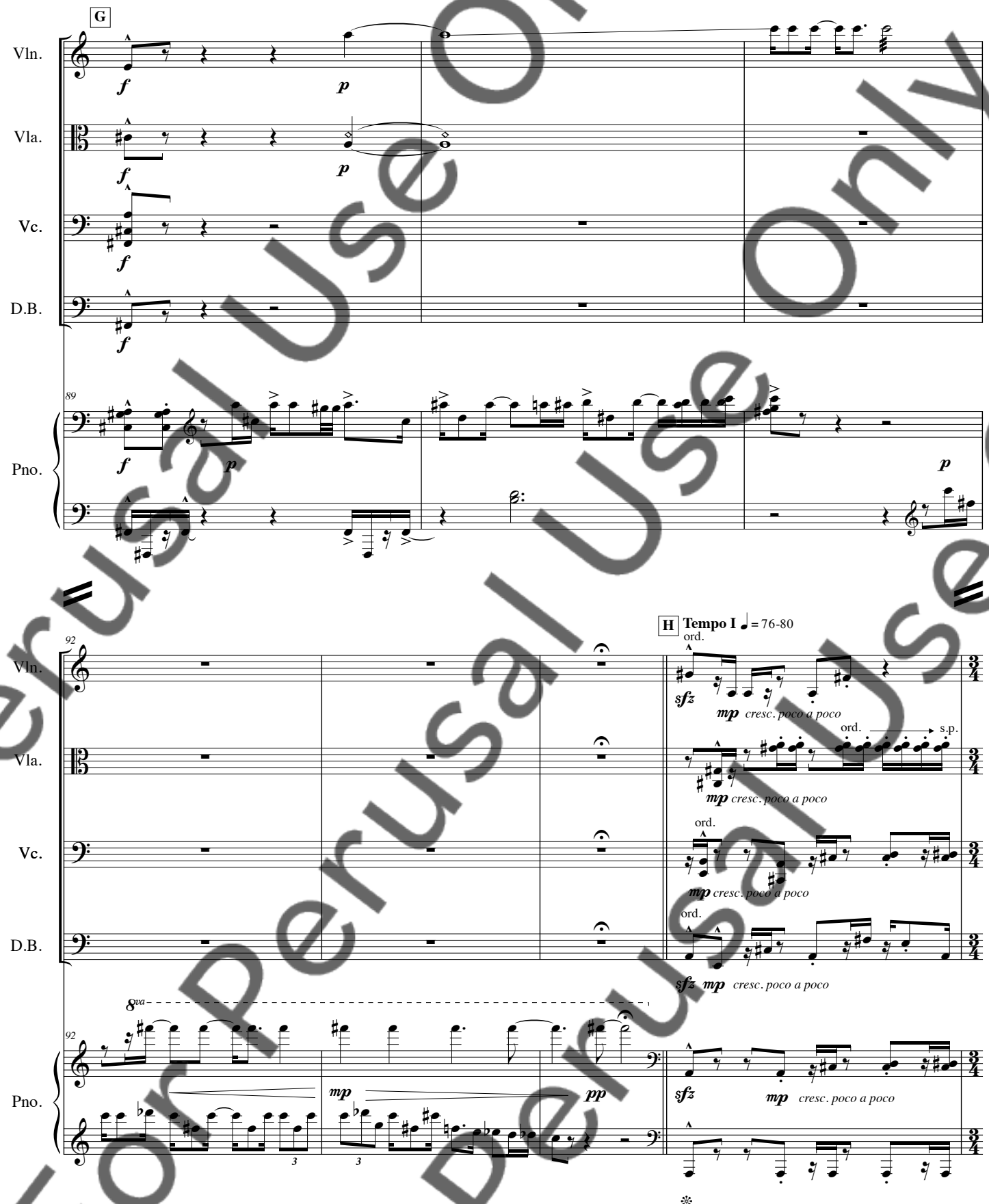

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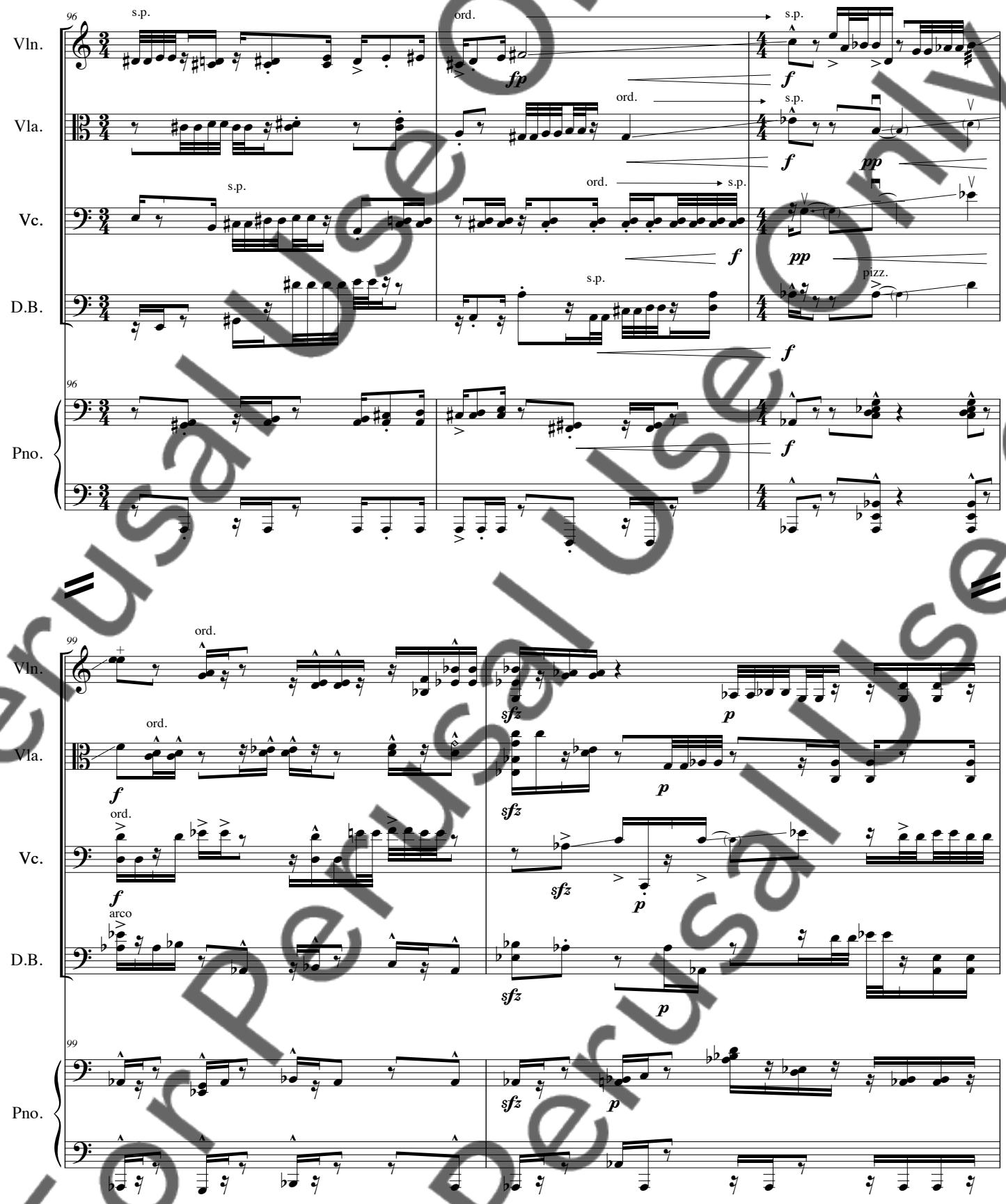

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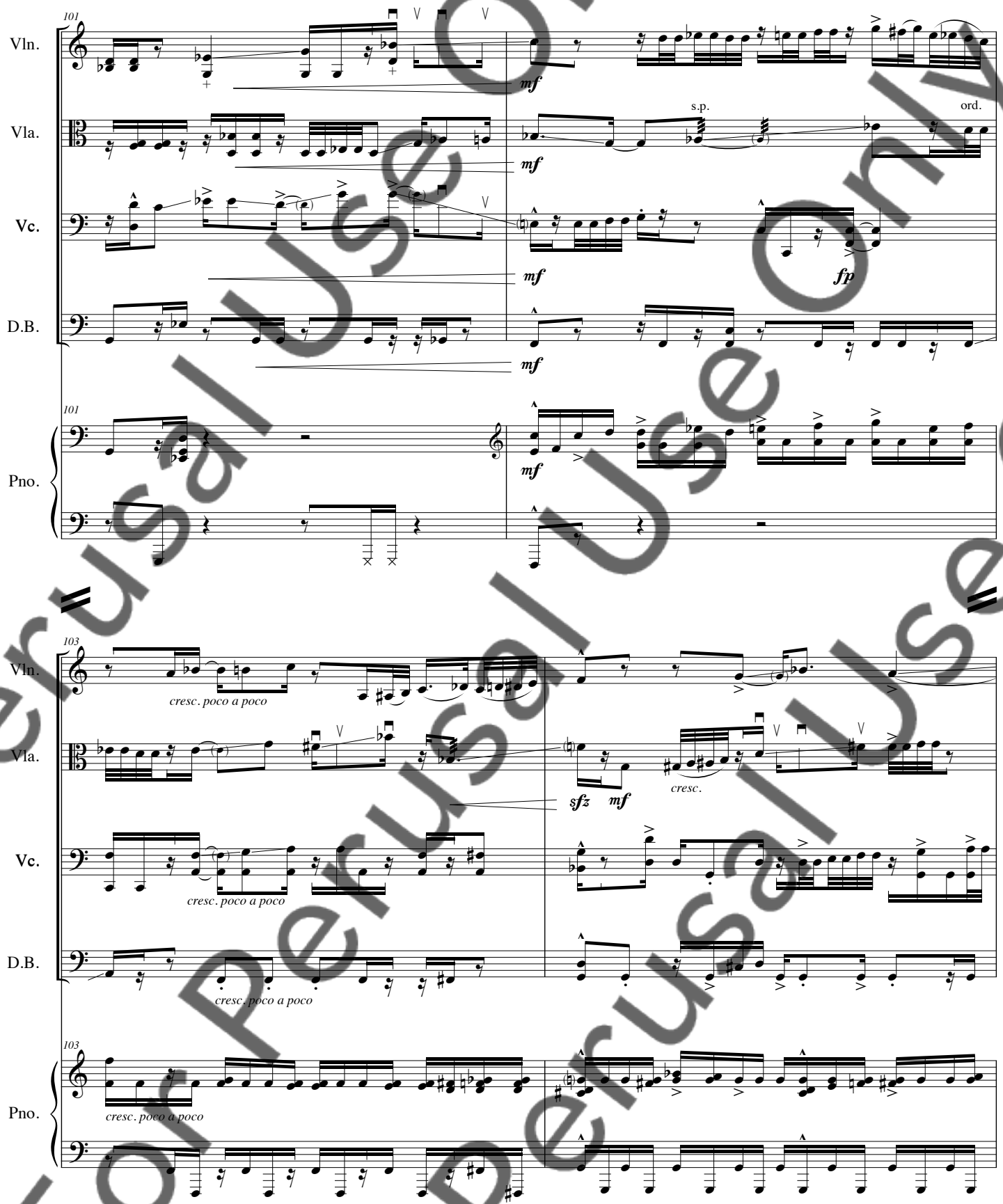

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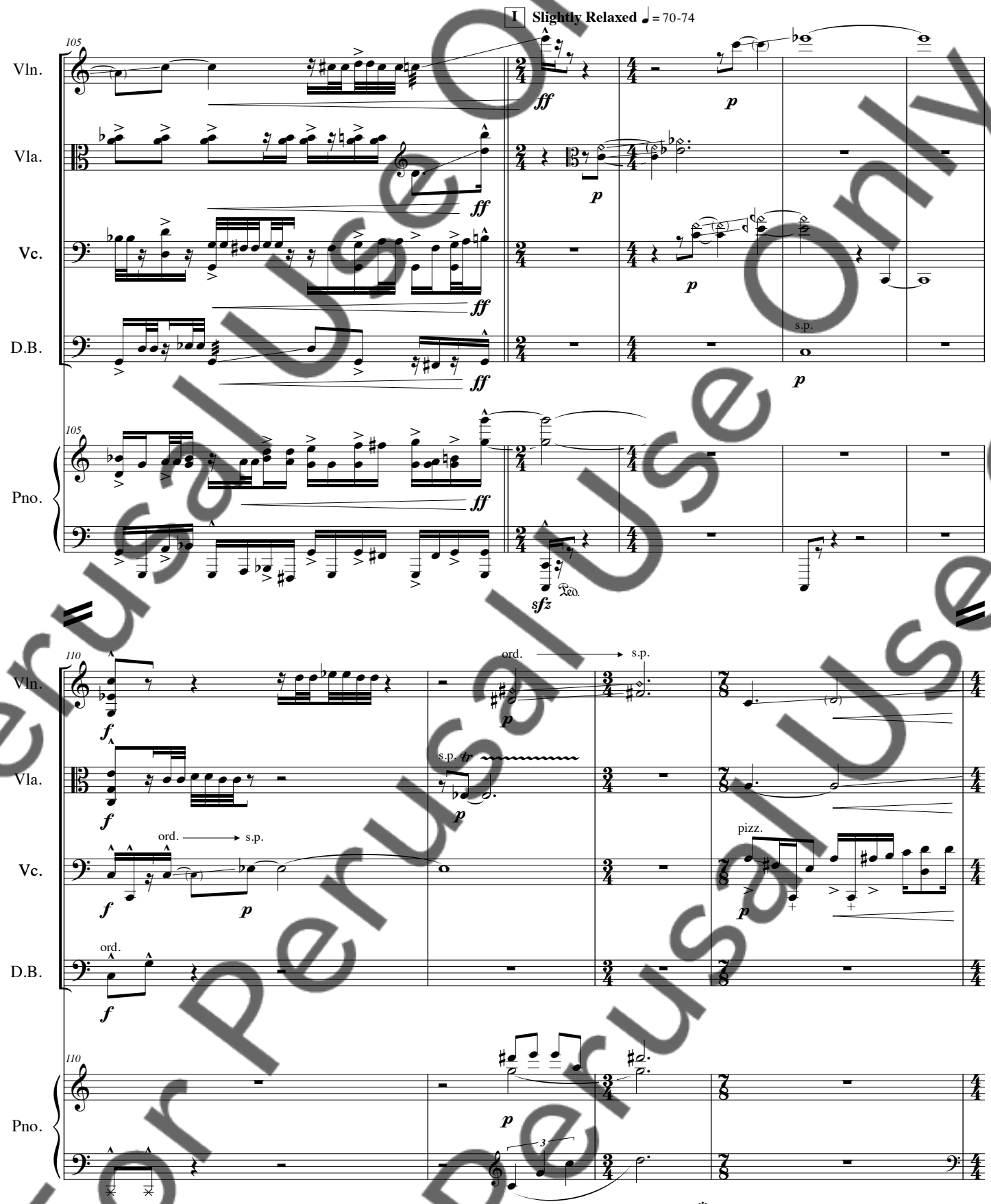

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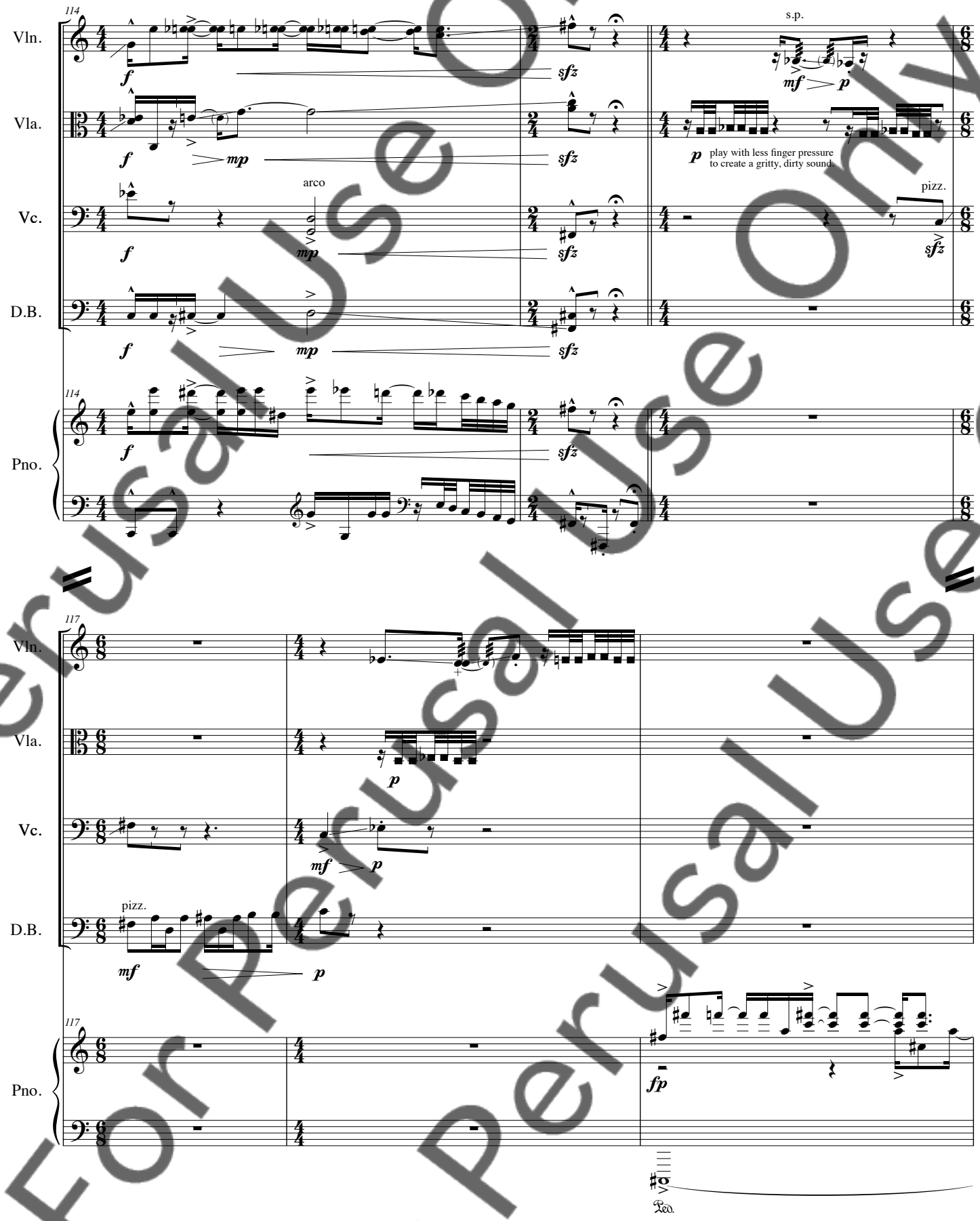

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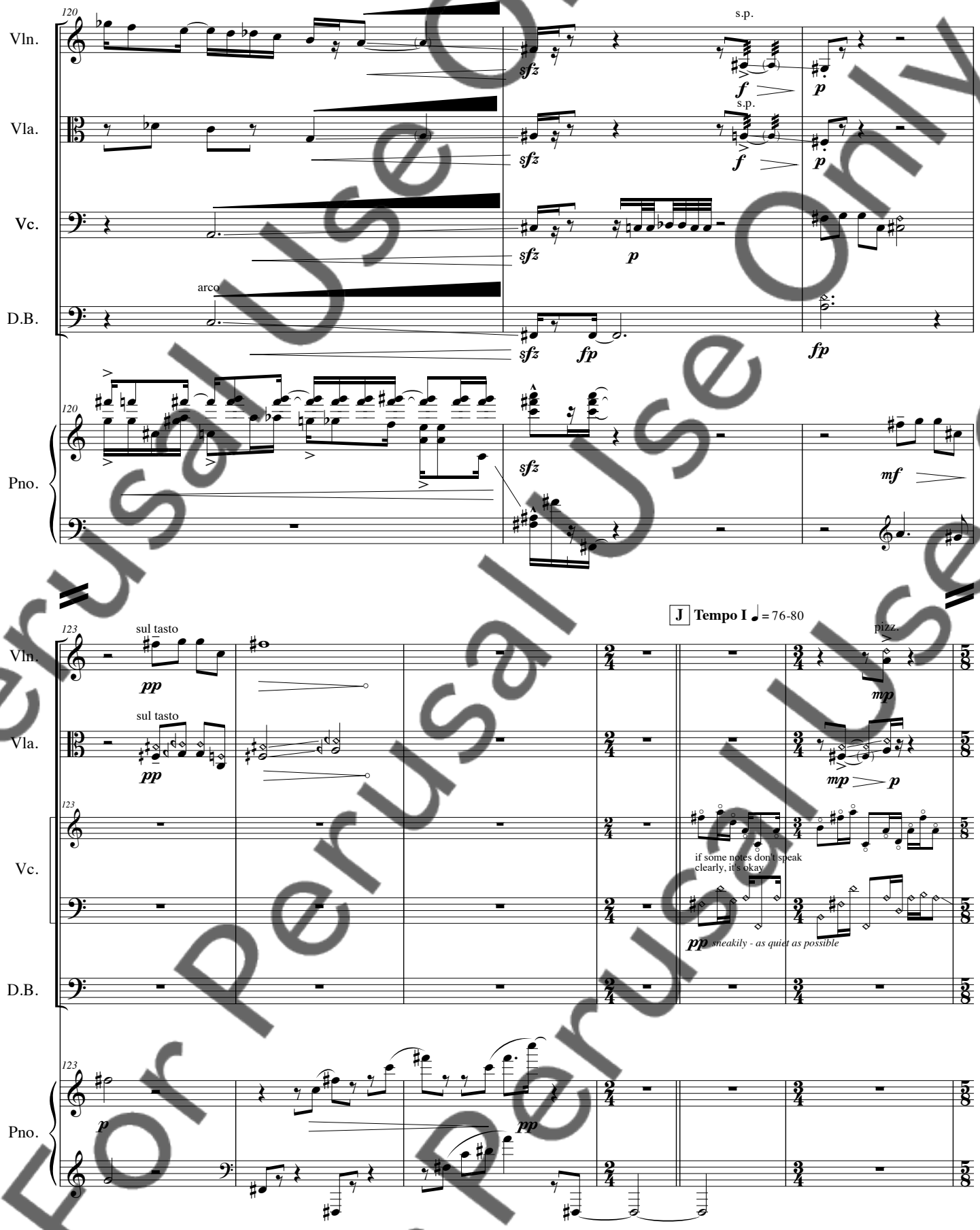

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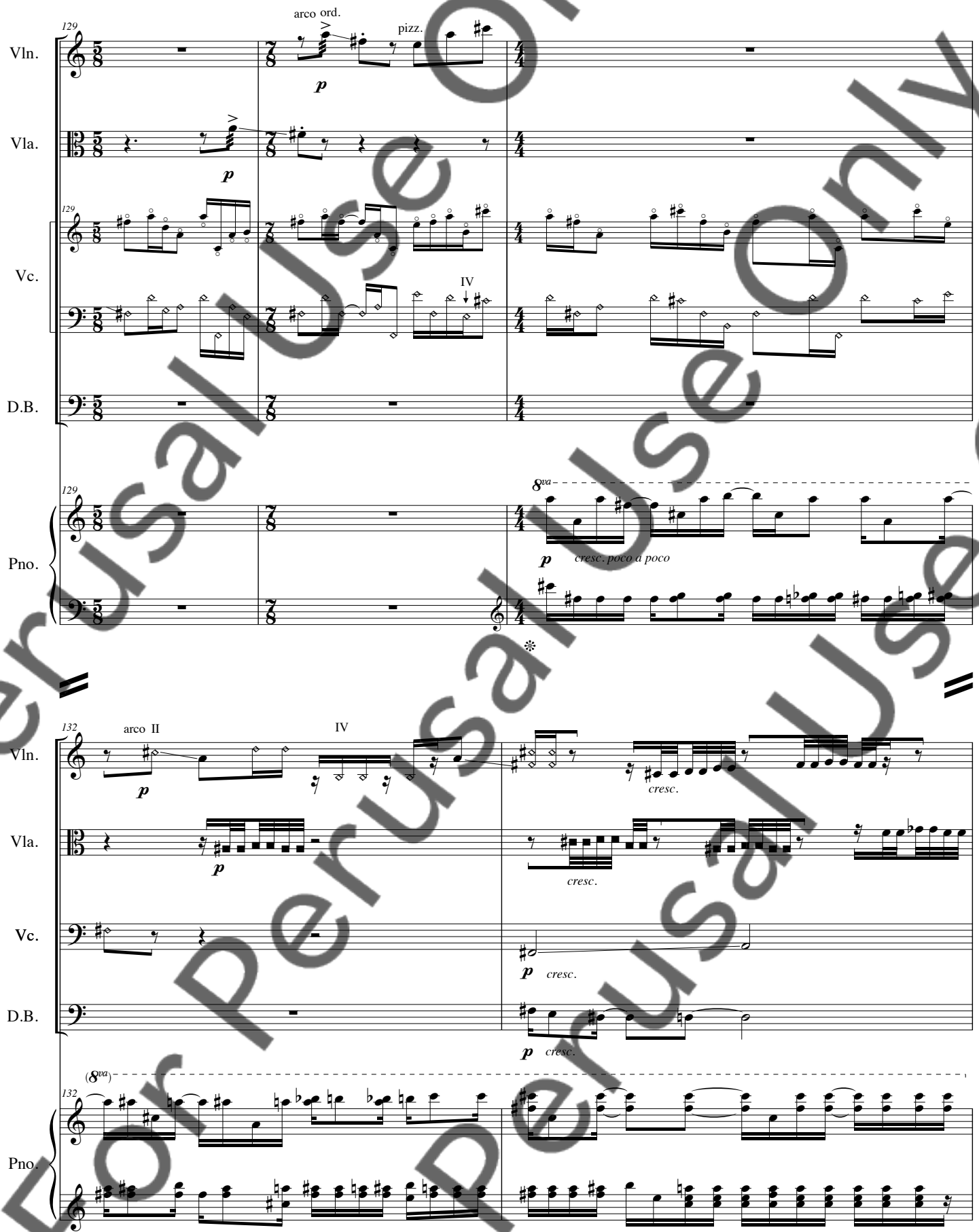

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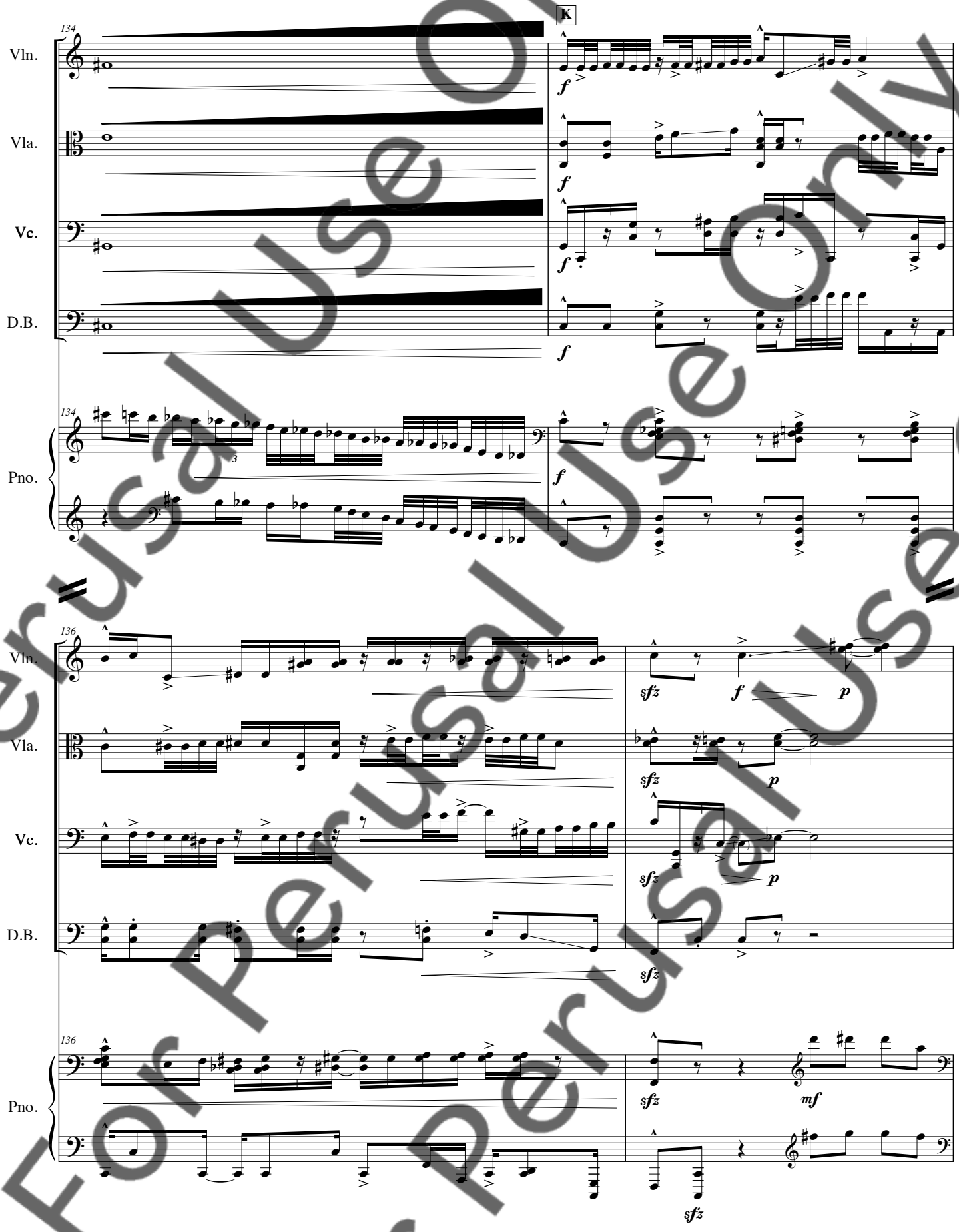

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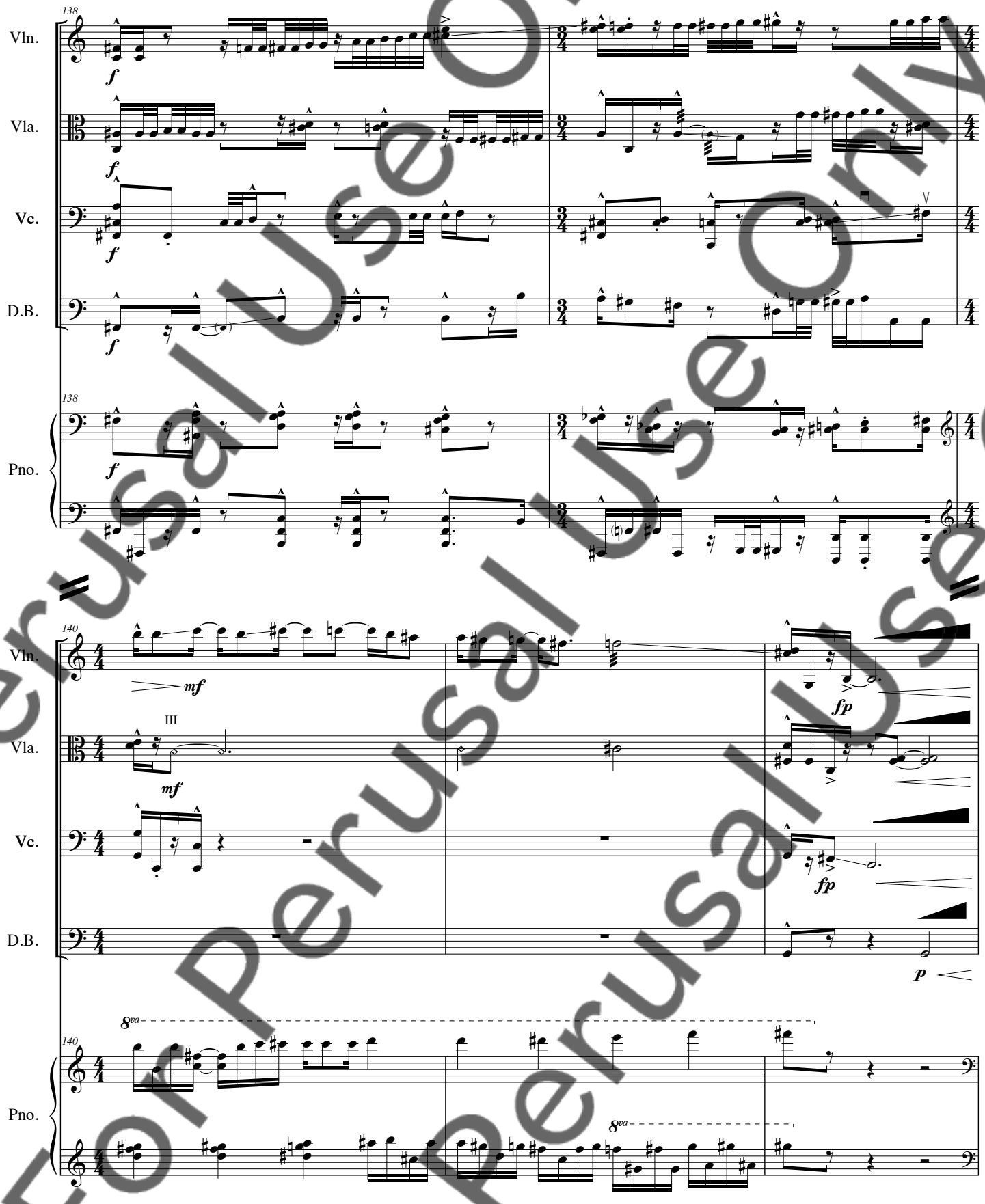

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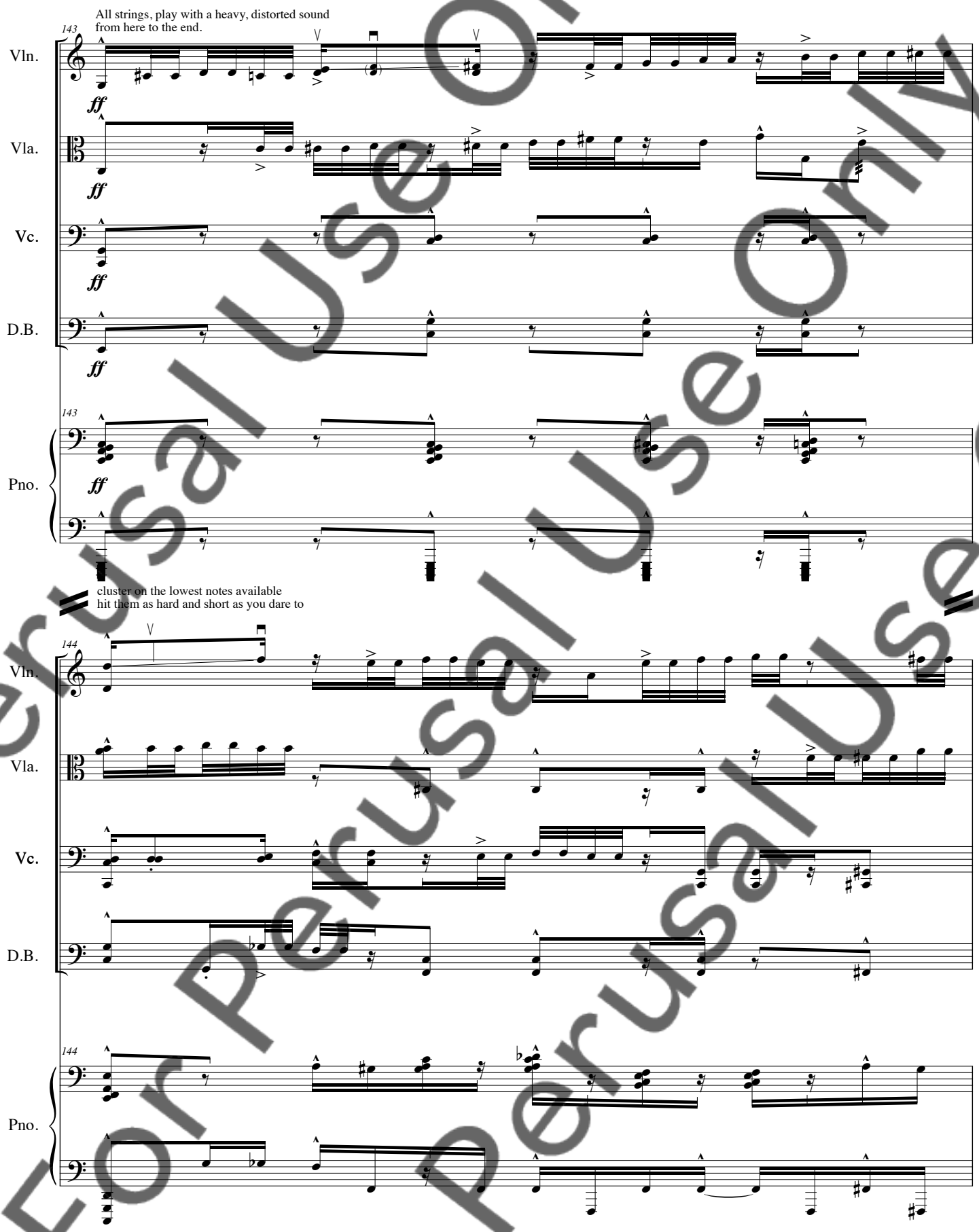

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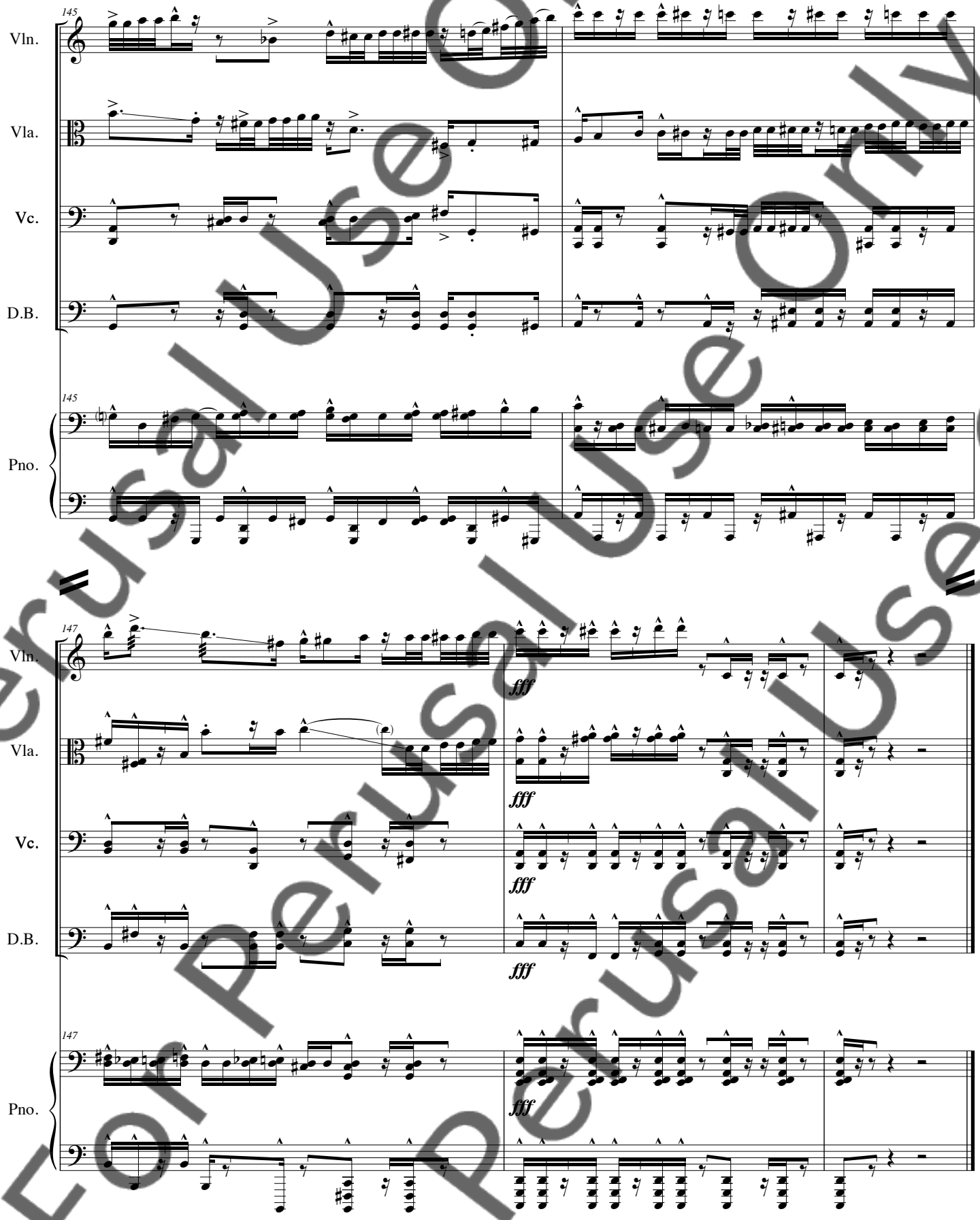

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