Coming in Thirds

piano solo

(2009)

for perusal only

Mark Zuckerman

American Composers Alliance (BMI)

www.composers.com

info@composers.com

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About the Composer

Mark Zuckerman (b. 1948) has written extensively for virtuoso soloists, chamber ensembles, a cappella choir (including an internationally-recognized collection of Yiddish choral arrangements), wind ensemble, and string orchestra, with work acclaimed as “intriguing music of deceptive simplicity ... subtle, persuasive and, quite simply, beautiful” and “highly accessible … quite moving.”

A Princeton Ph.D. in composition and a New Jersey State Council on the Arts Fellow, he taught at Princeton, Columbia, and Rutgers and published numerous articles and a book drawn from his popular jazz survey course. He also played saxophone in stage bands; clarinet, sax and keyboards in rock bands; washtub bass in bluegrass and jug bands; and sang in several Yiddish choirs.

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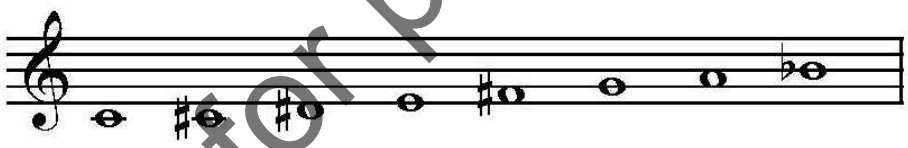
About "Coming in Thirds"

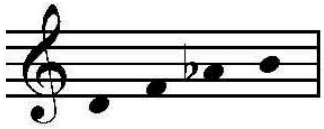
Coming in Thirds was commissioned for the Elementary/Middle School Division of the 2010 Renée B. Fisher Piano Competition. Accordingly, it provides opportunities to demonstrate pianistic ability, both technical (dexterity, touch, and control) and musical (clarity and expressivity), while having fun.

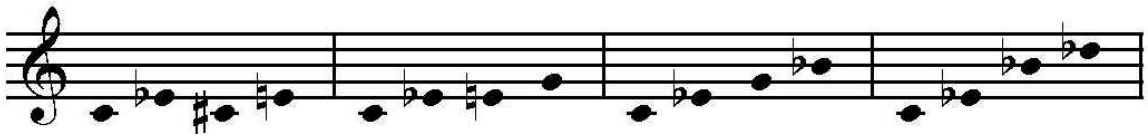
The "fun" part is really important to the music: taking a cue from the opening impertinent, jazzy lick – which bounces through a series of transforming adventures as the piece unfolds – a sassy attitude throughout will lead to the most convincing performances. The result should be gracefully "in your face" rather than heavy-handedly awesome, adroit rather than muscular, clever rather than slapstick. To this end, subtlety should govern the use of the damper pedal.

All this should be done while paying close attention to what's in the score. It's important that performers observe all dynamic indications and articulation marks. Except for the *rallentando* near the end and *stringendo* in the final measures, the tempo should be consistent throughout at a comfortable pace, which can be slightly below (or above) the indicated metronome marking (88).

The title refers not to the relative order of finish in the competition – where the object is to come in first, after all – but to the melodic and harmonic structure of the music, which is based on minor thirds. Underlying **Coming in Thirds** is this group of 8 notes (an octatonic scale):



(The remaining 4 notes,  , are "wrong notes" and never occur in the piece). Melodic and harmonic figures come from pairs of minor thirds:



This vocabulary is evocative of harmonies in some forms of jazz, a fact that flavors some of the gestures in **Coming in Thirds**.

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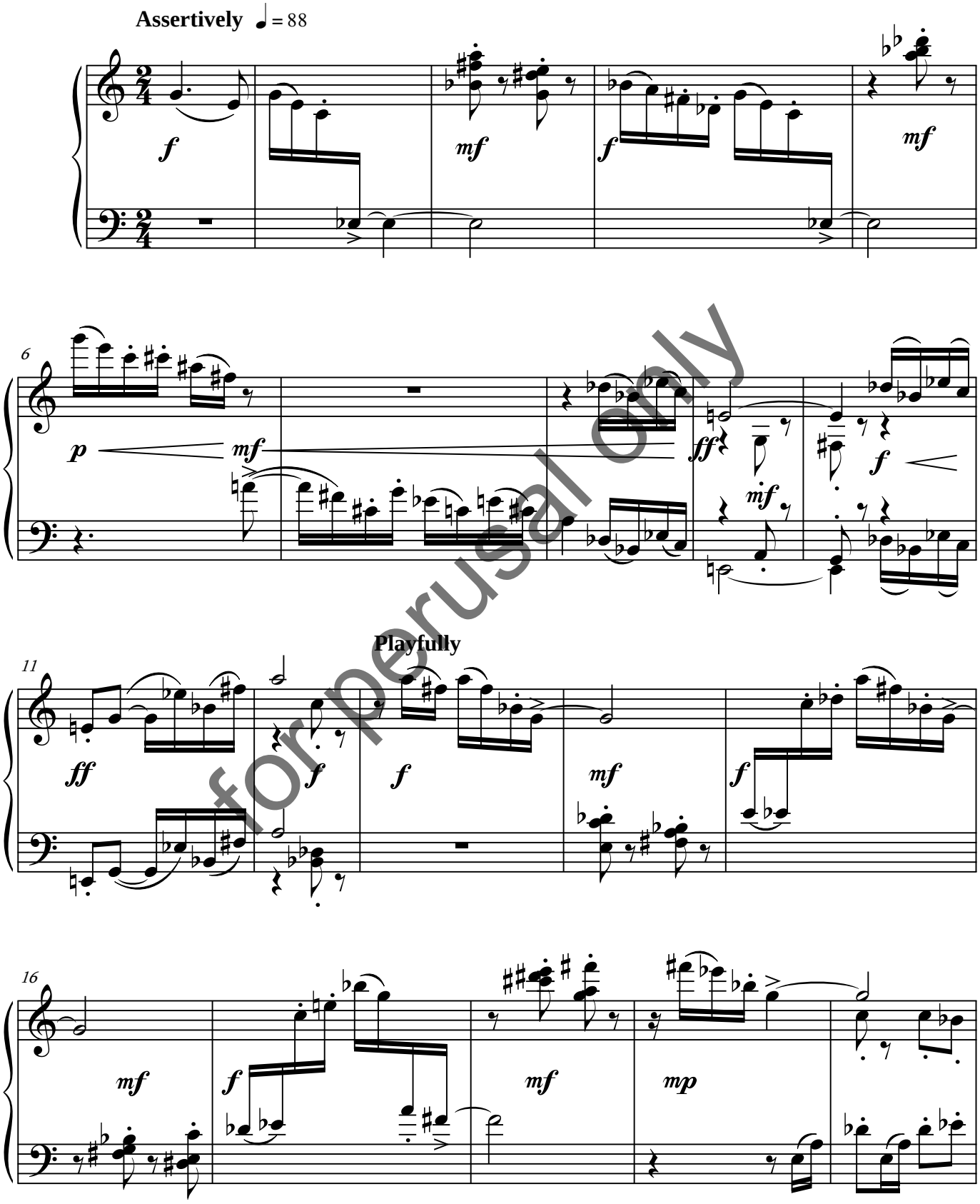
2010 Renée B. Fisher commission, Elementary/Middle School Division

Coming in Thirds

Duration: ca. 4'10"

Mark Zuckerman



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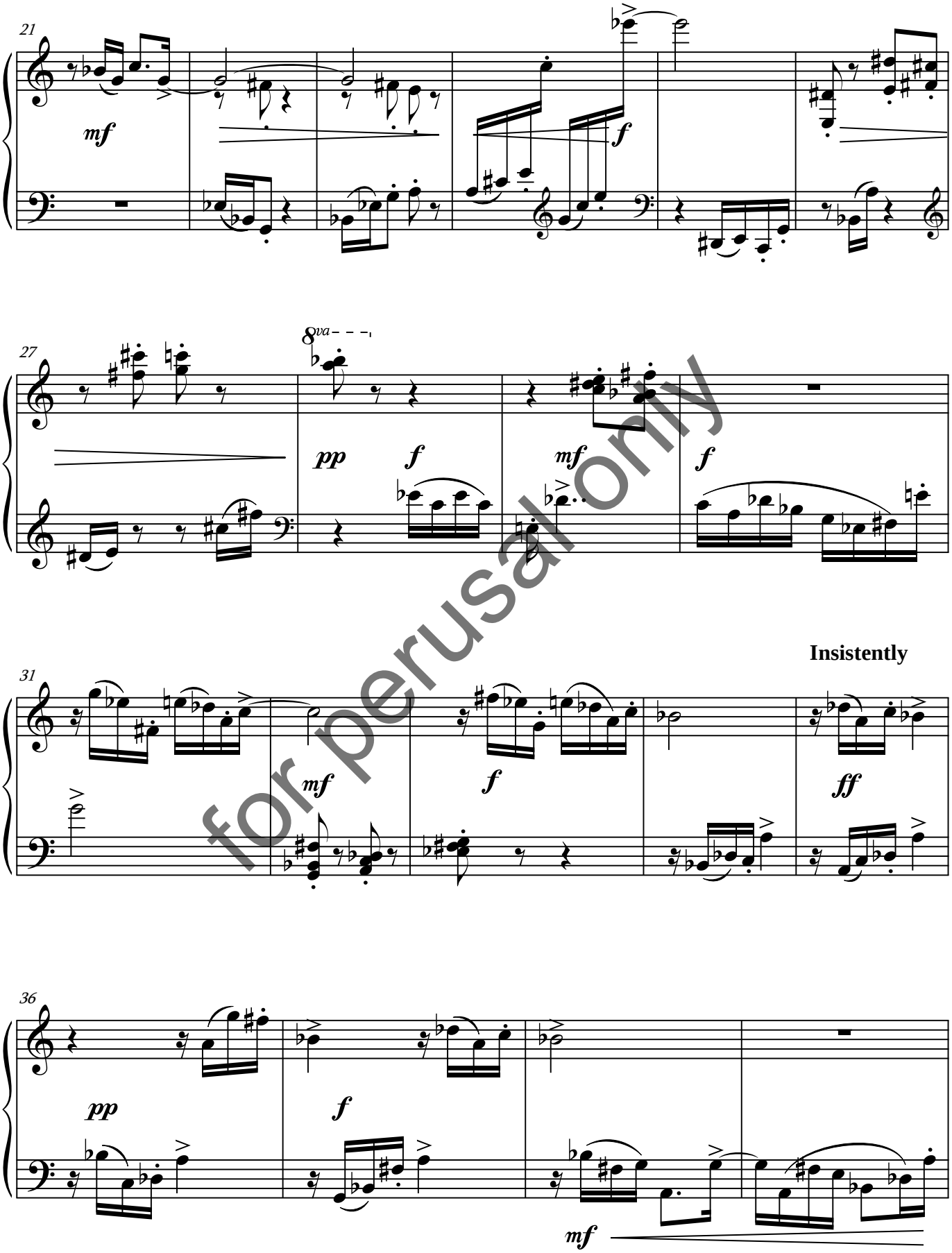

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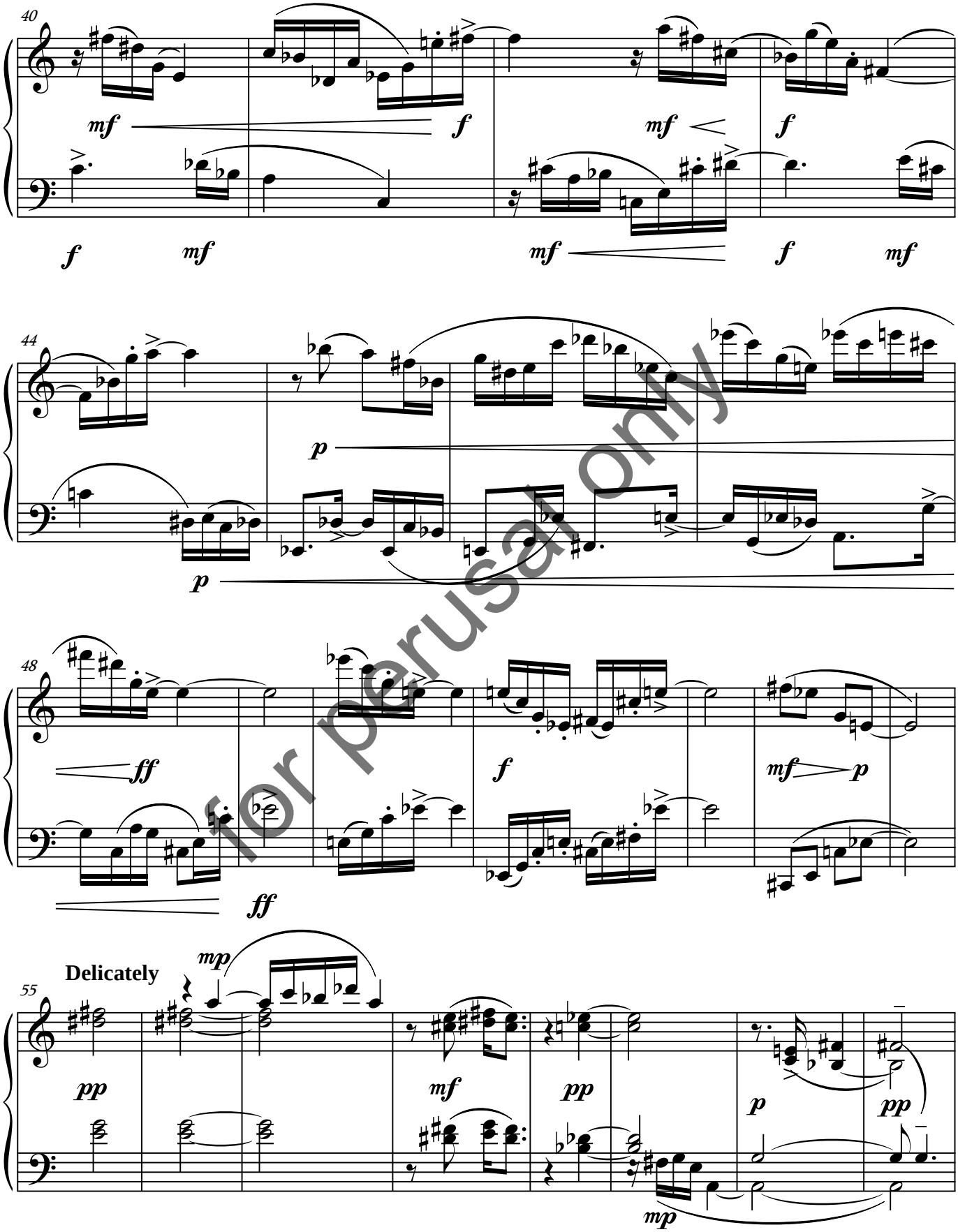

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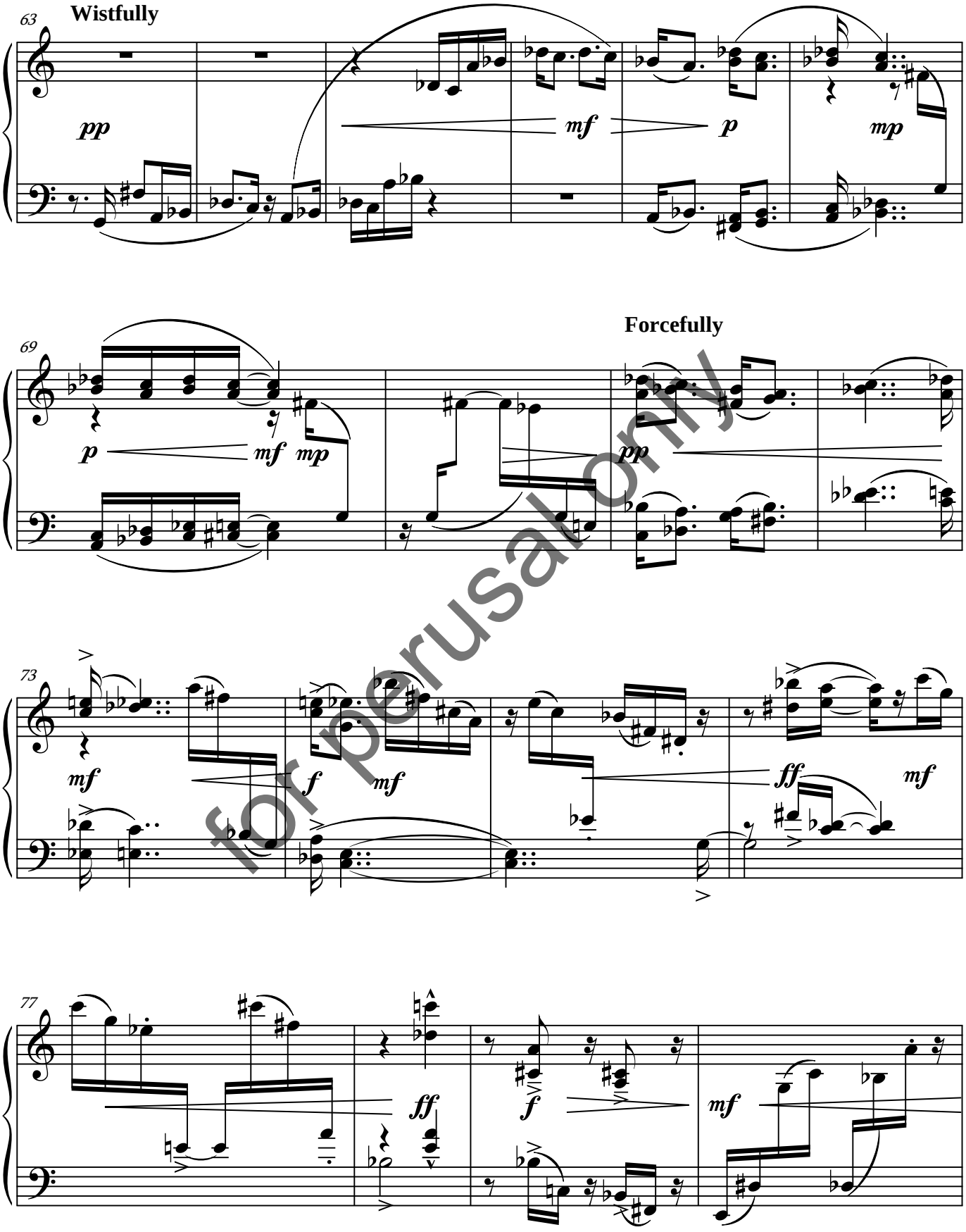

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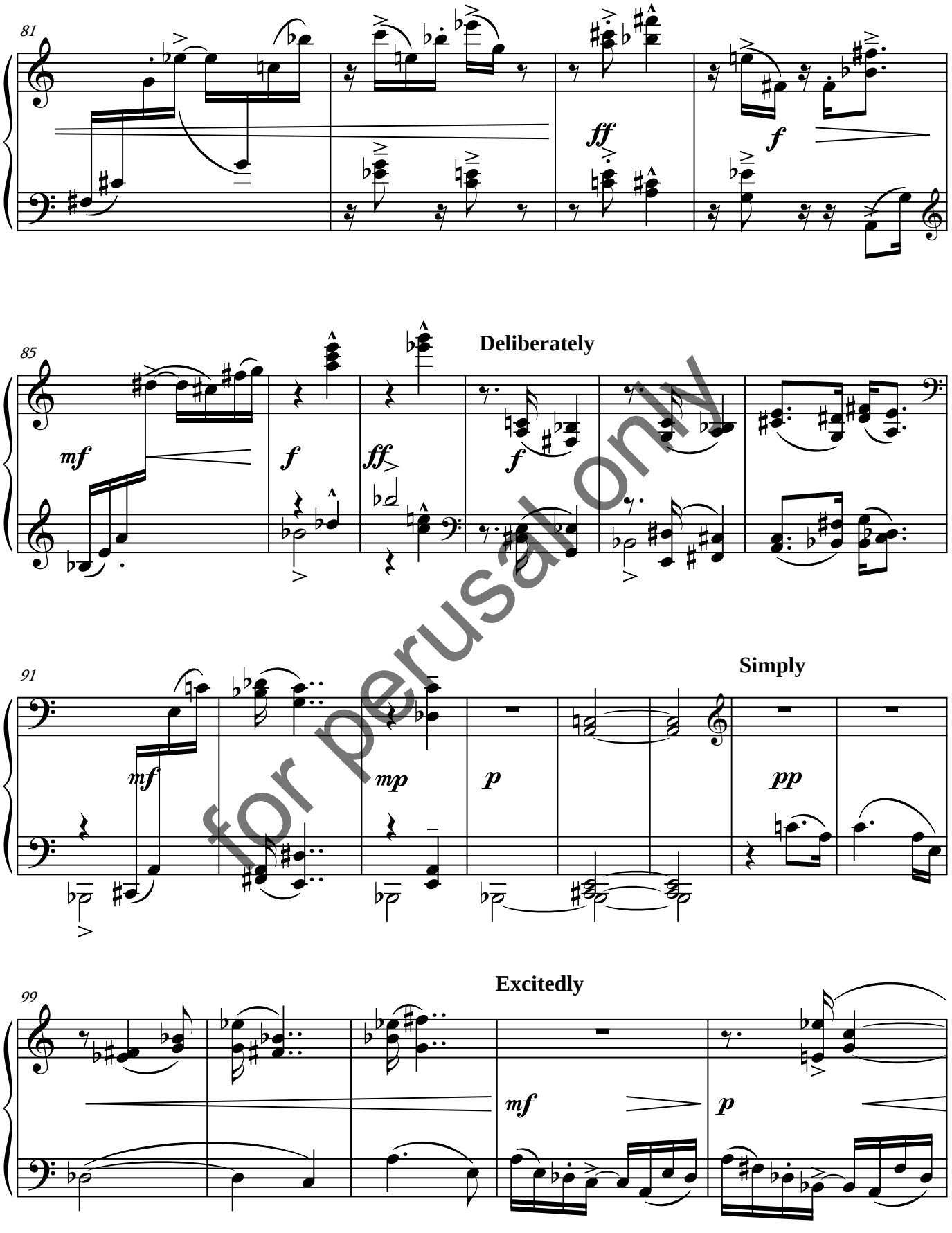

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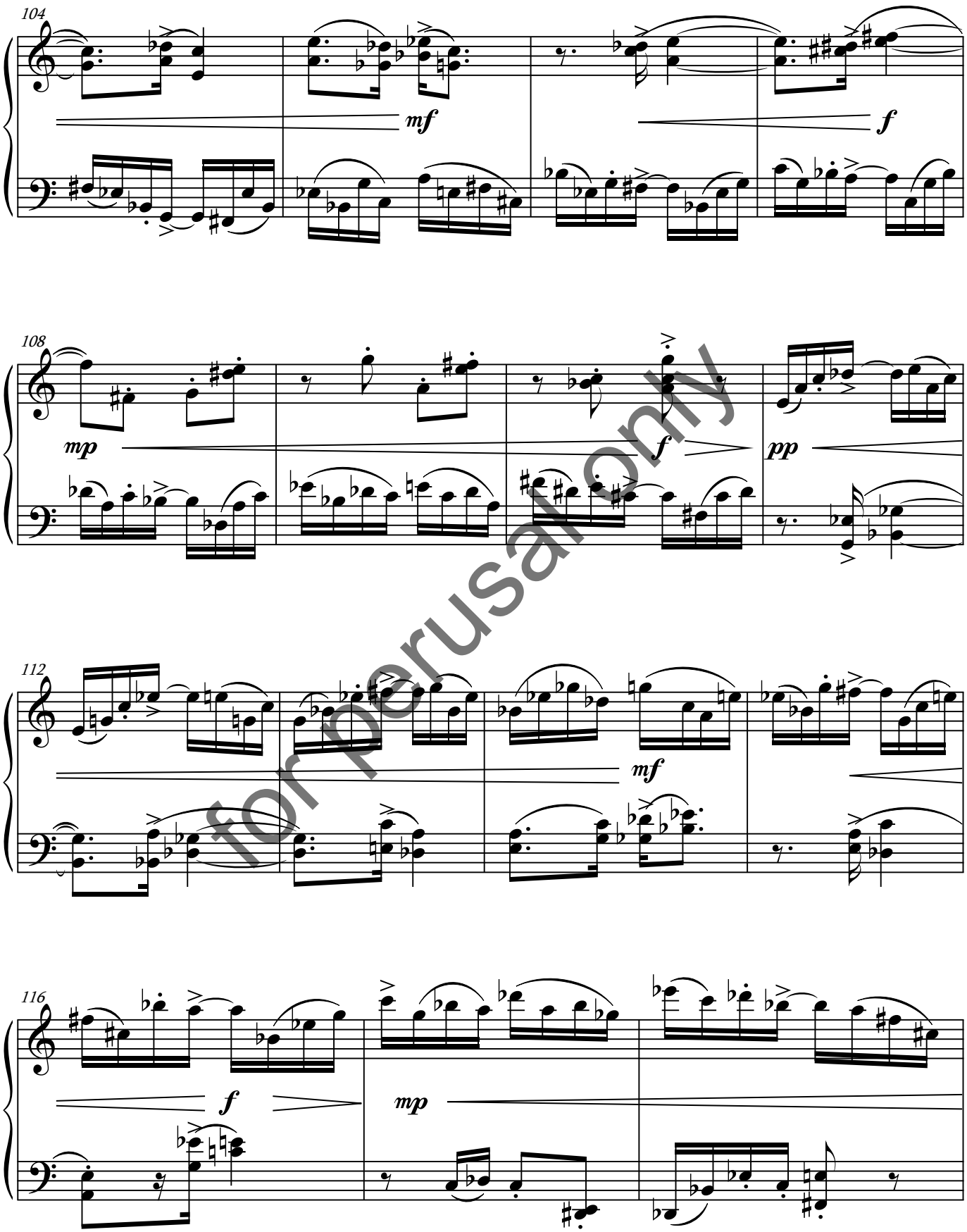

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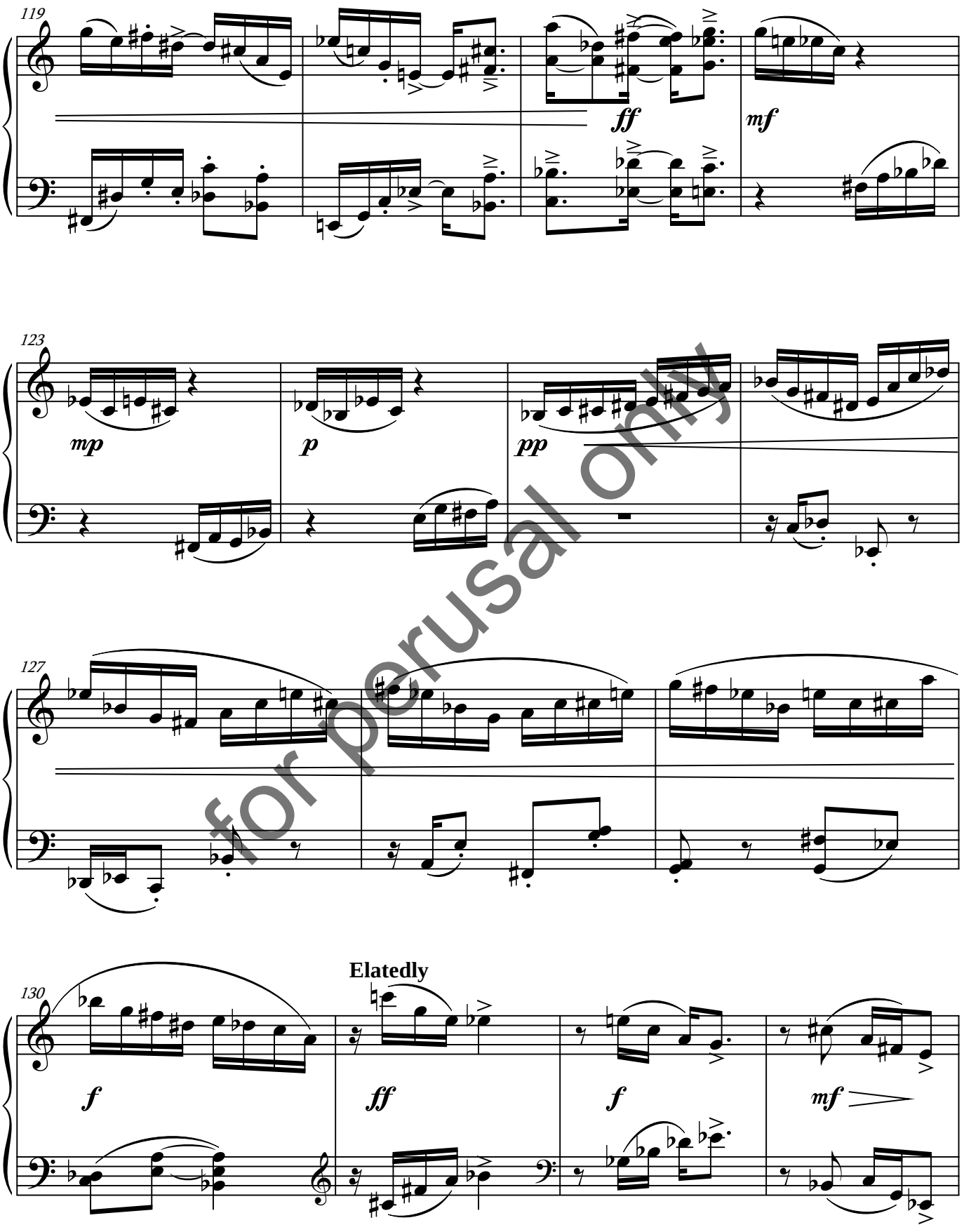

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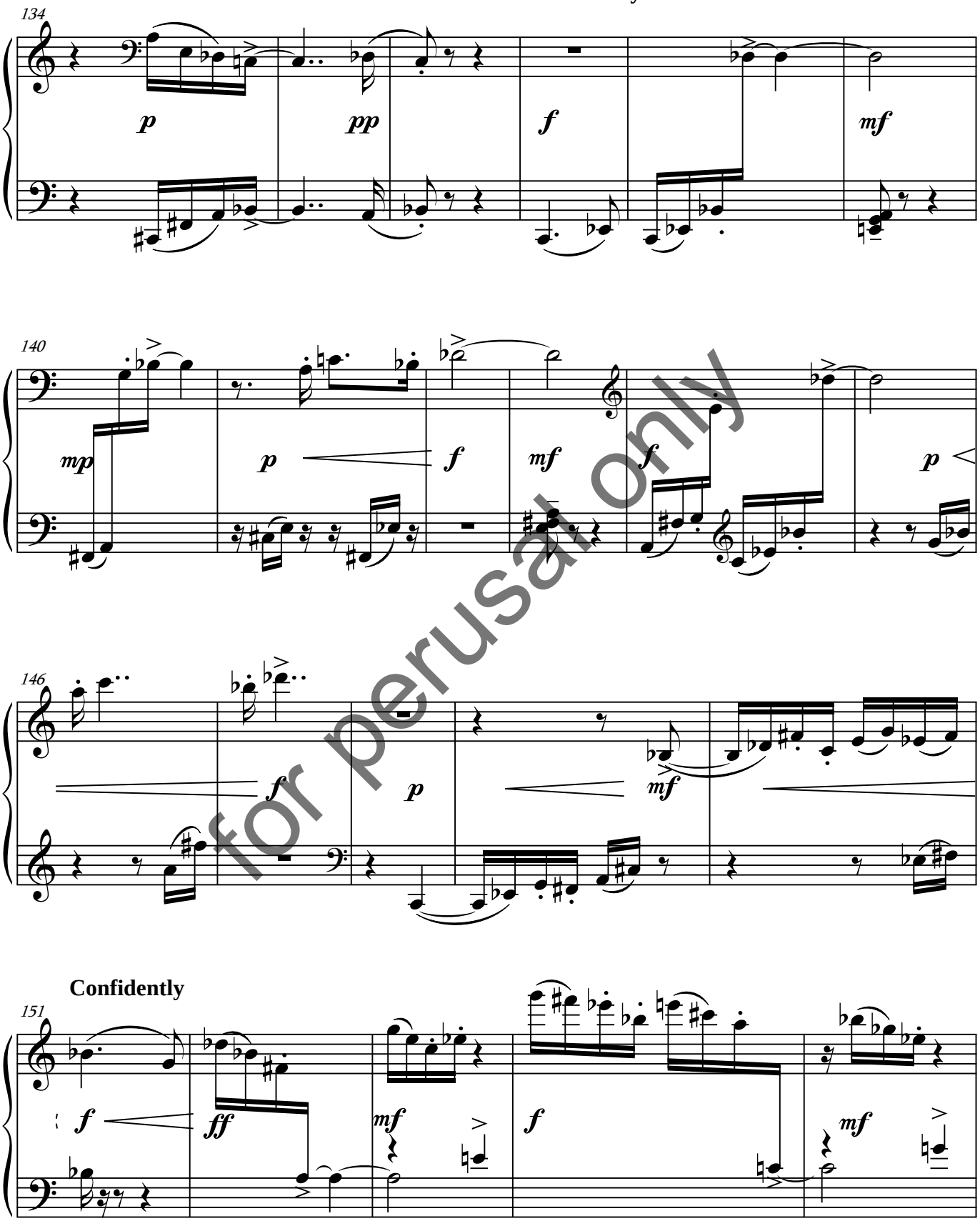
Refectively



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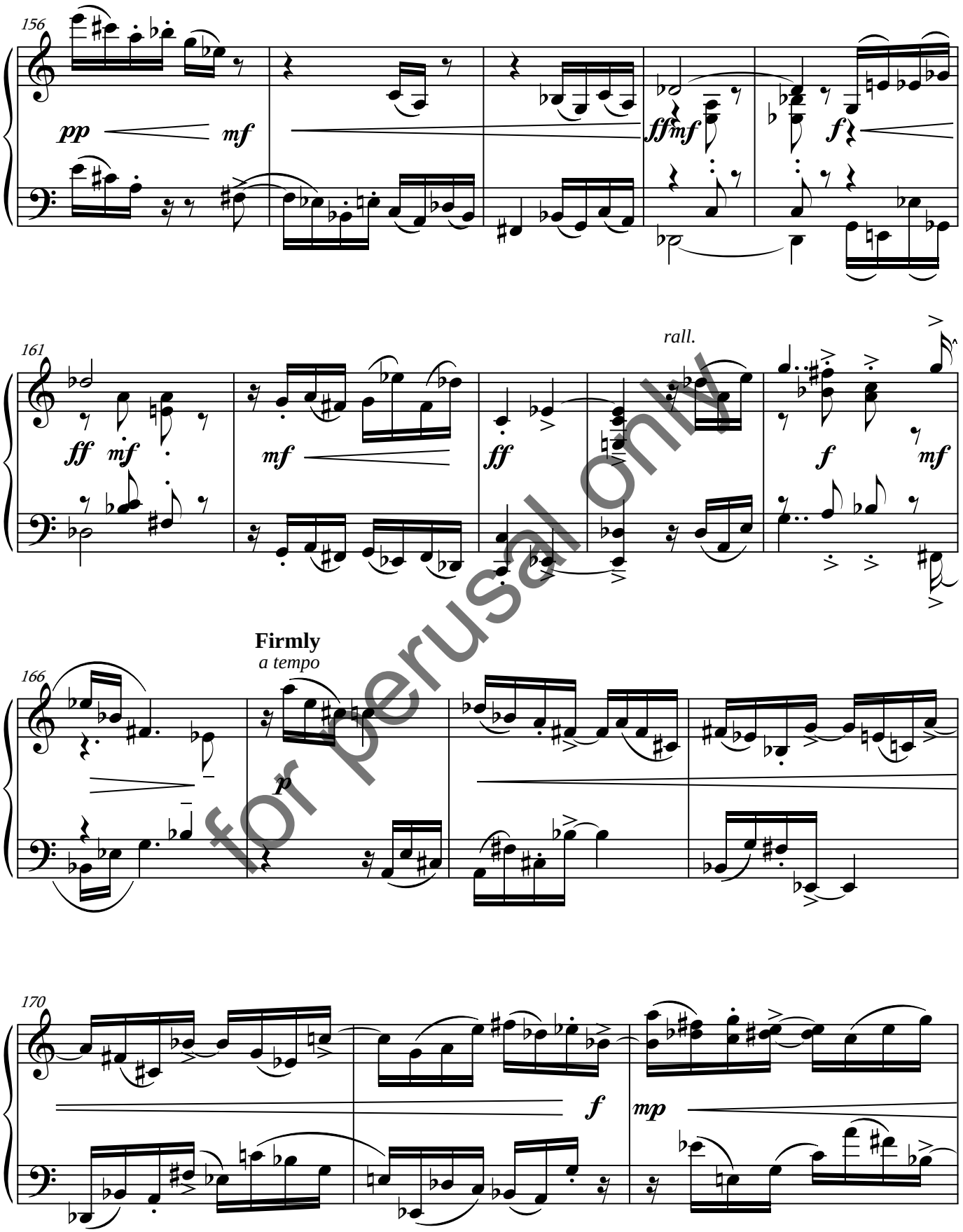

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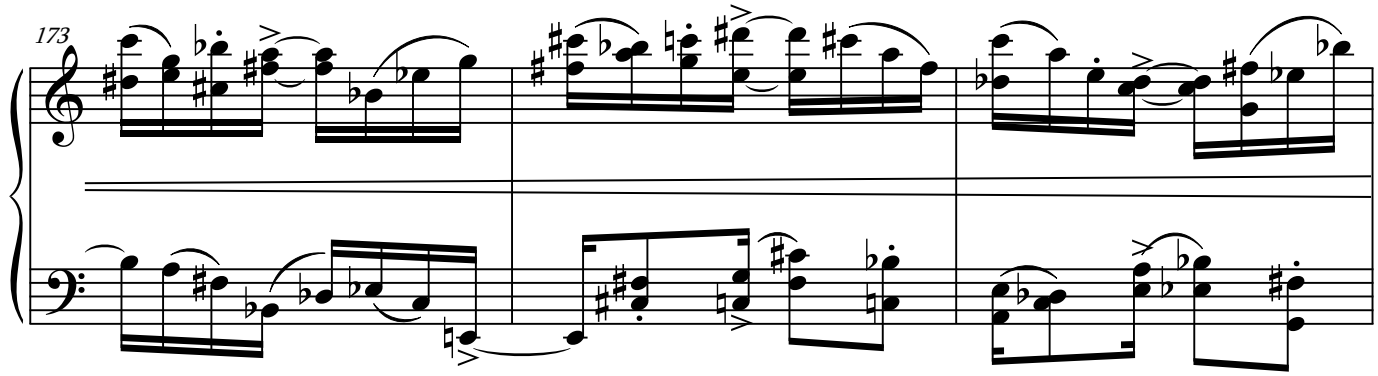
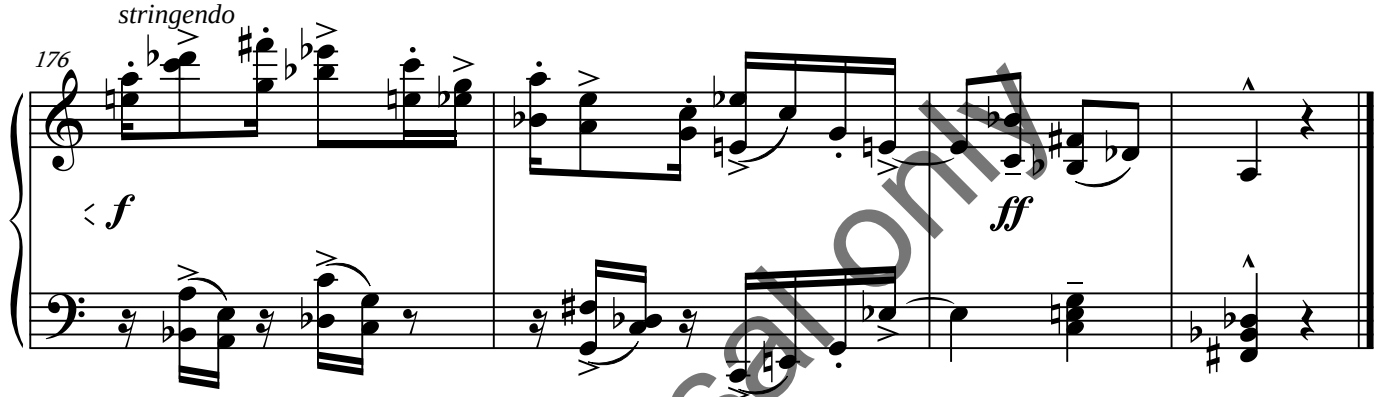


Letting Loose



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