MEM154

Martin Ellerby

A SHAKESPEARE SONG SUITE

(Eight Asides for String Orchestra)

for String Orchestra

Duration: c. 16 minutes

MEM Publications
www.martinellerby.com

Composer's programme notes:

This work was composed in the Summer of 2021. It is dedicated to my US conductor friend Matthew J. George and his family: *To Matt, Jen, Gigi and Sam*. It came into being whilst I was reassessing some songs I had written based on texts by William Shakespeare, taken from his plays, and which dated as far back as 1993. It occurred to me that they could be recast as an instrumental composition, essentially that of a string orchestra. There were four extant songs and I soon realised that more were required to form a balanced suite for a string ensemble. In selecting the new contributions all the melodies were designed to fit the texts of further Shakespeare songs even though they were no longer to be sung. Also no Shakespeare play could contribute more than one number, each movement was not to last more than two minutes, the forms were to reflect stage terms and old names for dance or instrumental music, demonstrate a variety of string techniques, textures and friendly keys and, finally, the completed work was to appeal to a broad audience and be capable of performance by good amateur ensembles. Hopefully most of these aims were met! The complete work can be performed in its entirety or as various selected movements.

First Performance: University of St. Thomas String Orchestra conducted by Matthew J. George, St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota, USA, 9 March 2022.

First Overseas Performance: University of St. Thomas String Orchestra conducted by Matthew J. George, Basilique Notre-Dame de l'Assomption, Nice, France, 24 May 2022. The ensemble also included the work in further concerts on their French tour at the Basilique Saint-Pierre, Avignon, 27 May 2022 and the Cathédrale Saint Sauveur, Aix-en-Provence, 29 May 2022.

An understanding of the 'invisible' texts will help both players and listeners follow the journey of the whole piece or concentrate the mind on individual movements. They are:

1. HERALD: 'Sigh No More' (Much Ado About Nothing)

Sigh no more Ladies, sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever,
One foot in Sea, and one on shore,
To one thing constant never,
Then sigh not so, but let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe,
Into hey nonny nonny.

***The opening number acts as a brief overture representing an introduction by a herald in a play.**
The original song setting is dated 1993.
Keys: E minor/E major.

2. PASTORALE: 'Under the Greenwood Tree' (As You Like It)

Under the greenwood tree,
who loves to lie with me,
And turn his merry Note,
unto the sweet Bird's throat
Come hither, come hither, come hither:
Here shall he see no enemy,
But Winter and rough Weather.

***An interlude of two parts: the first warm and open, the second more cool and reflective.**
The original song setting is dated 2009.
Key: G major.

3. GLEE: 'Fear No More the Heat O' th' Sun' (Cymbeline)

Fear no more the heat o' th' Sun,
Nor the furious Winters rages,
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages.
Golden Lads, and Girls all must,
As Chimney-Sweepers come to dust.

***A glee is a type of English part song here represented as independent parts for all the players.**
The original song setting is dated 2008.
Keys: D minor/F major.

4. BALLAD: 'Take, O Take Those Lips Away' (Measure for Measure)

Take, oh take those lips away,
that so sweetly were forsworn,
And those eyes: the break of day
lights that do mislead the Morn;
But my kisses bring again, bring again,
Seals of love, but seal'd in vain, seal'd in vain.

***A solo violin feature utilising some harmonics in the accompanying parts.**
The original song setting is dated 2007.
Key: C major.

5. CATCH: 'Come Kiss Me Kate' (The Taming of the Shrew)

A double forth and a double back,
four single sides: well caper'd Jack!
Pitch and turn each to his mate
and a double round: Come kiss me Kate.

***Based on an adapted 16th Century round, or catch, this movement is played pizzicato throughout.**
Keys: D minor/D major.

6. FANCY & FLIGHT: 'Where the Bee Sucks' (The Tempest)

Where the Bee sucks, there suck I,
in a Cowslip's bell I lie,
There I couch when Owls do cry,
on the Bat's back I do fly
after Summer merrily.
Merrily, merrily, shall I live now,
Under the blossom that hangs on the Bough.

***A fancy is a musical term for something free in form, and flight something fleeting and fast. The first part is played slowly with all parts muted (con sordino) and the second open and flamboyant.**
Keys: G minor/G major.

7. EXCURSION: 'The Ratcatcher' (Romeo and Juliet)

There was a rare Rat-catcher,
did about the country wander,
The soundest blade of all his trade,
or I should him deeply slander:
For still would he cry, a Rat tat tat,
tara rat, ever:
To catch a mouse, or to carouse,
such a Ratter I saw never.

***Featuring various series of dry imitative entries in the verses and crisp togetherness in the choruses this movement is played throughout col legno (with the wood of the bow) concluding with a sting in its tail.**

Key: A minor.

8. CURTAIN: 'Loath to Depart' (Comedy of Errors)

Sing with thy mouth,
sing with thy heart,
Like faithful friends,
sing loath to depart.

Though friends together
may not always remain,
Yet loath to depart,
sing once again.

***The finale is extrovert and demands much dexterity, often divided (divisi) and incorporating effects such as tremolo and rapid single-note repeated figurations (quasi toccata) in most sections.**
Keys: A major/A minor.

Performance Note:

Throughout the score and parts tenuto (-) equals light accent and accent (>) equals heavier, traditional accent.

'If music be the food of love, play on!'
William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

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Duration: circa 16 minutes

Full Score: MEM154
Set of Parts: MEM154A

Exclusively distributed by Cane River Music, USA
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Composer Biography: please visit www.martinellerby.com

Recording Information: RLPO Strings conducted by Matthew J. George, 'Ascent' CD, MEM Recordings MER016, exclusively distributed by Cane River Music, USA

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To Matt, Jen, Gigi and Sam

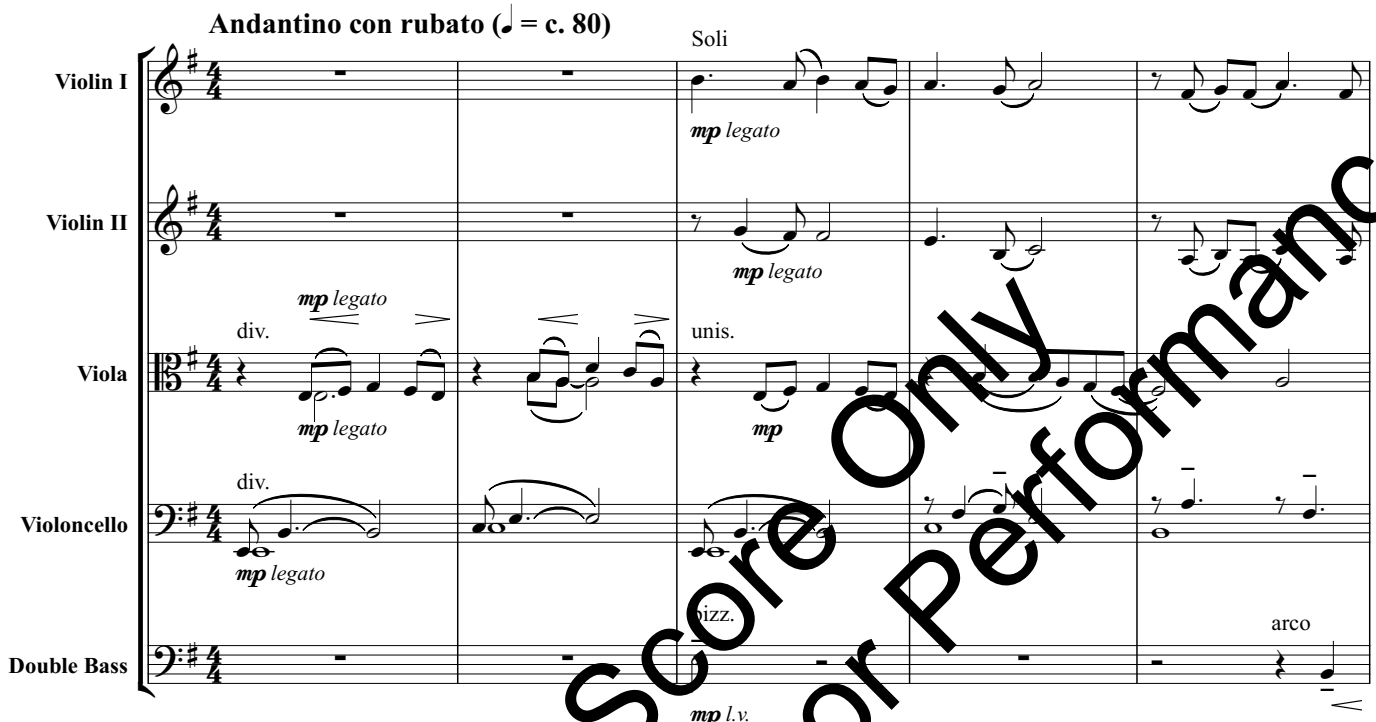
A SHAKESPEARE SONG SUITE

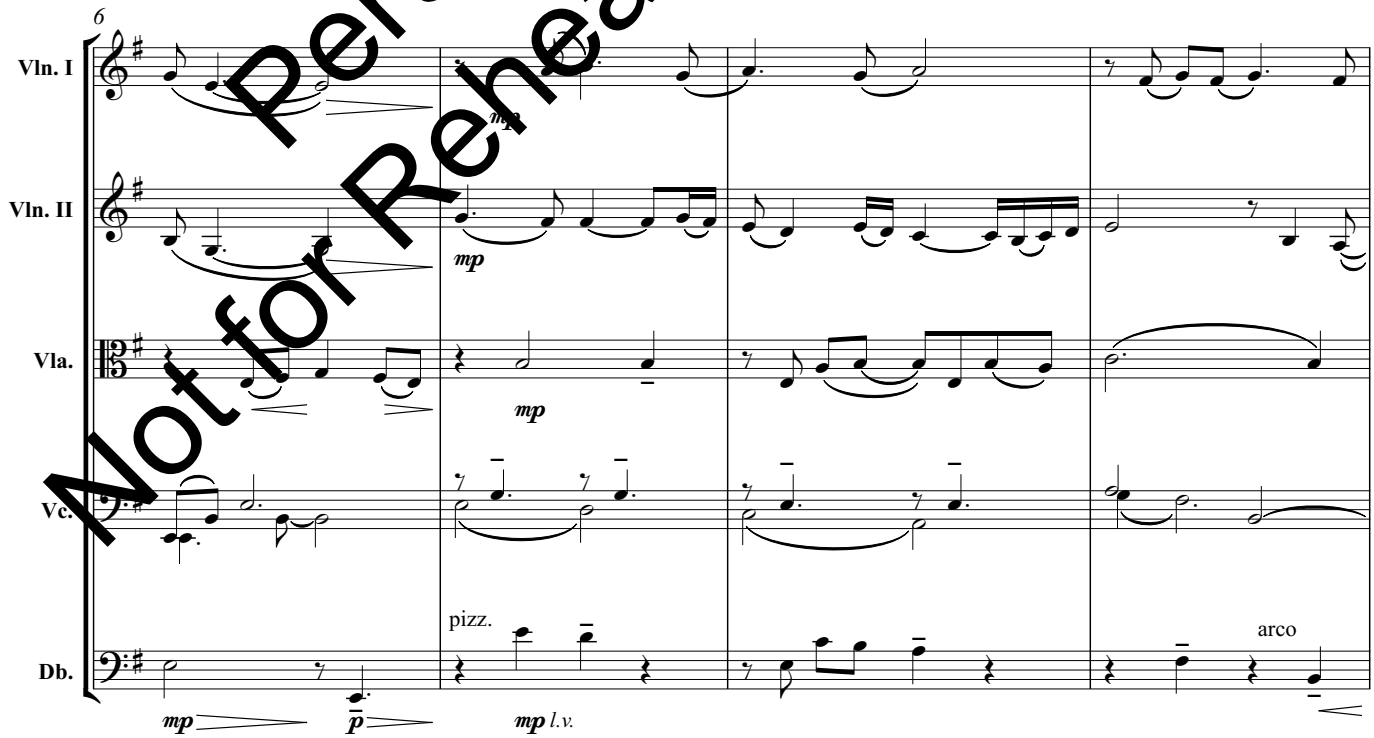
(Eight Asides for String Orchestra)

1. HERALD: 'SIGH NO MORE'

(Much Ado About Nothing)

MARTIN ELLERBY





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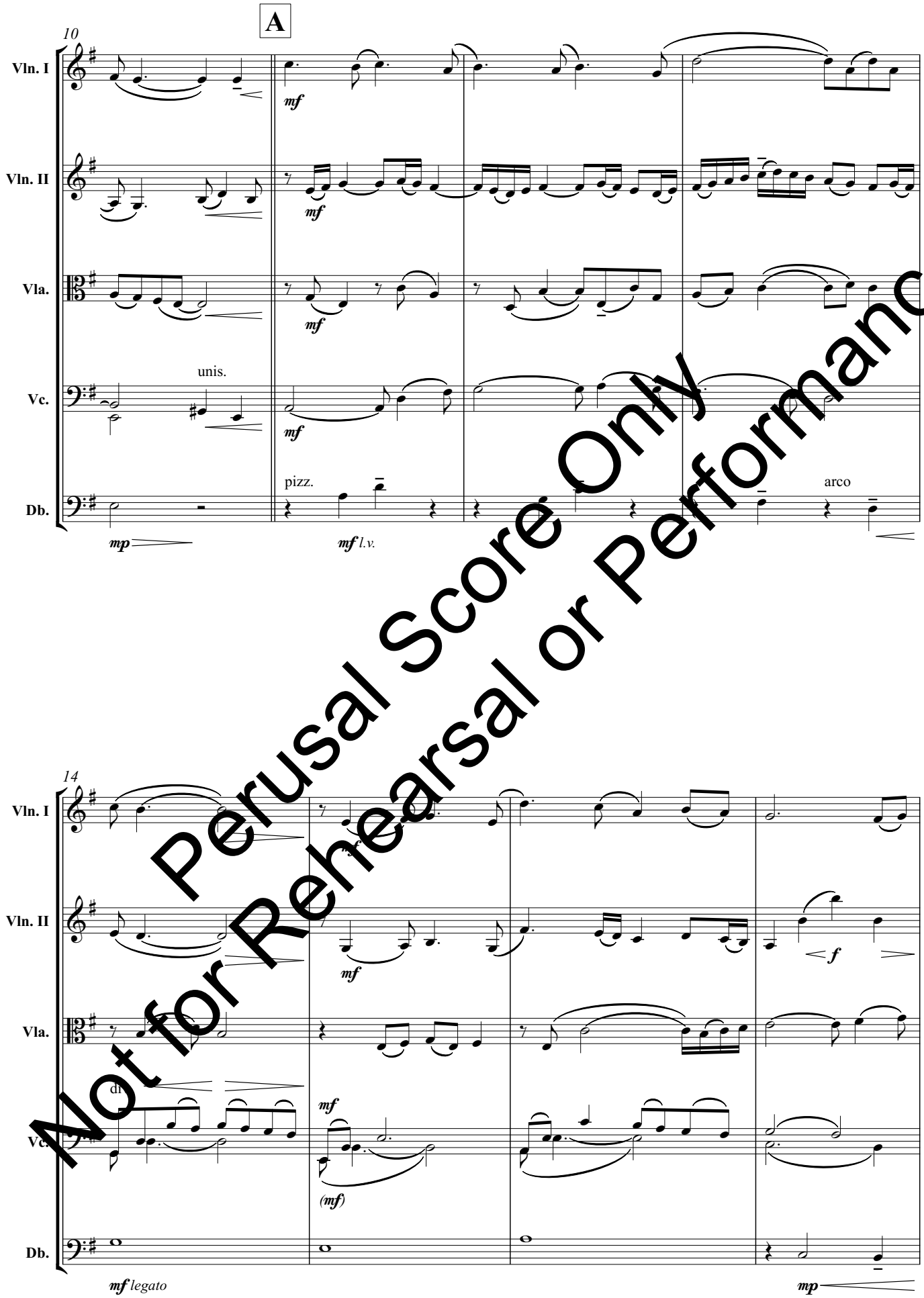

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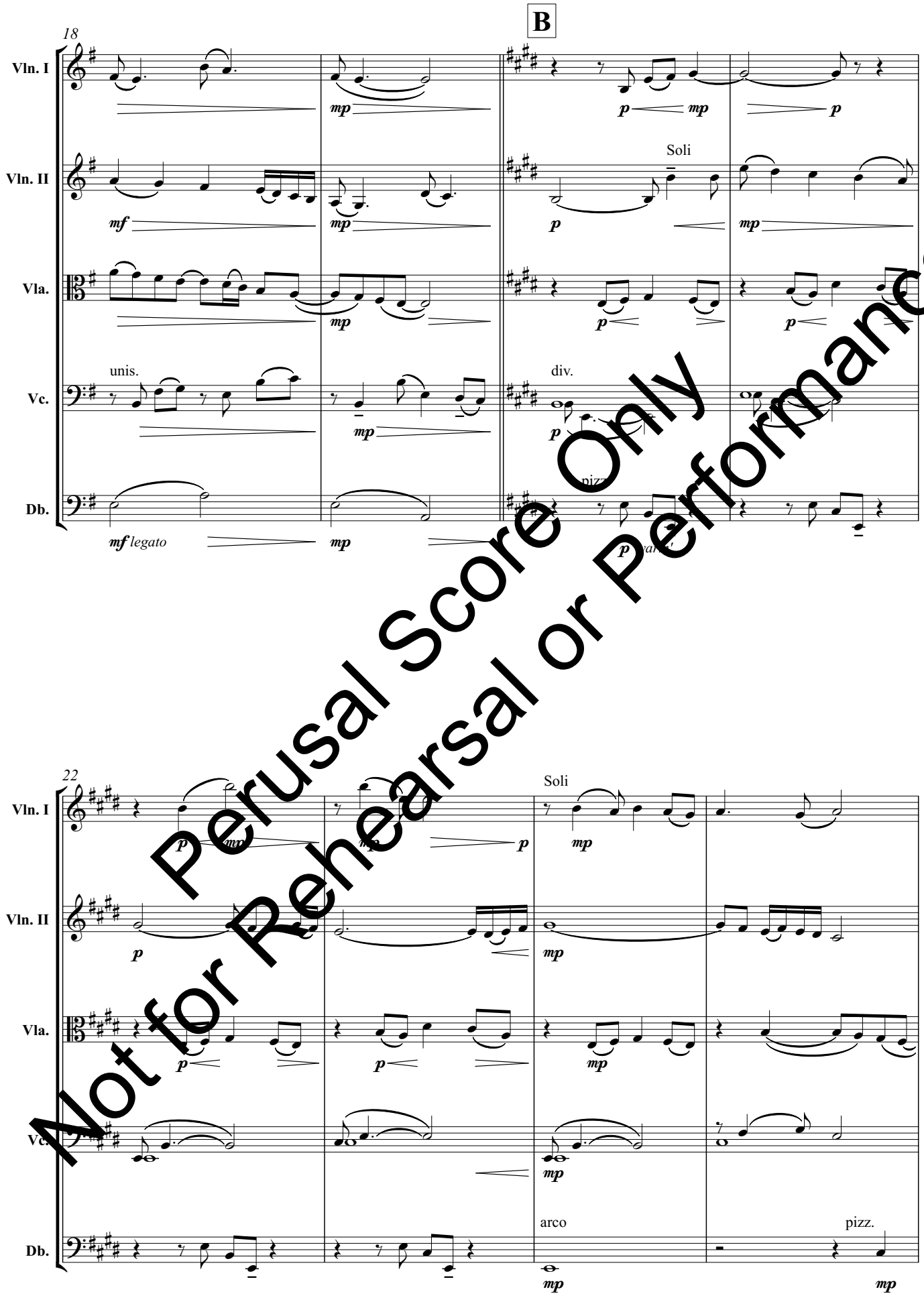

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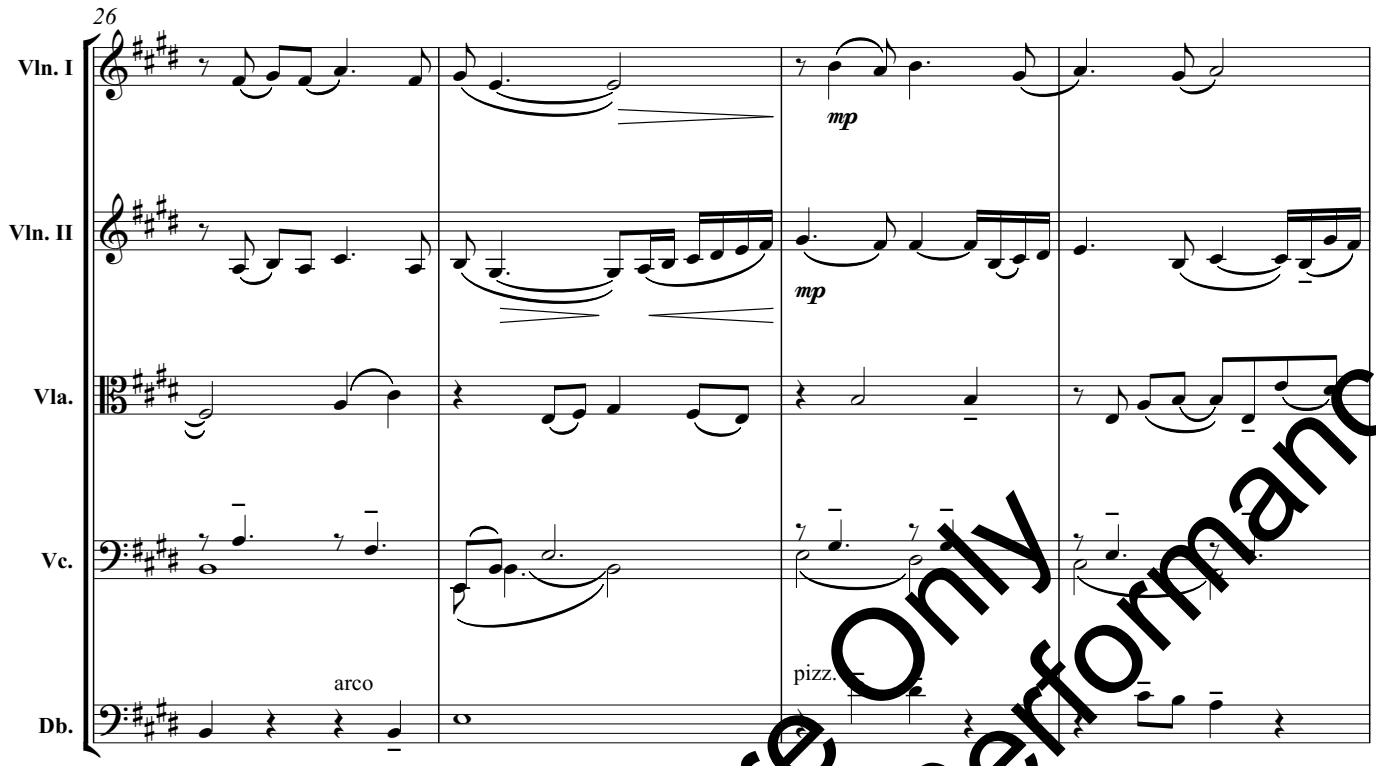

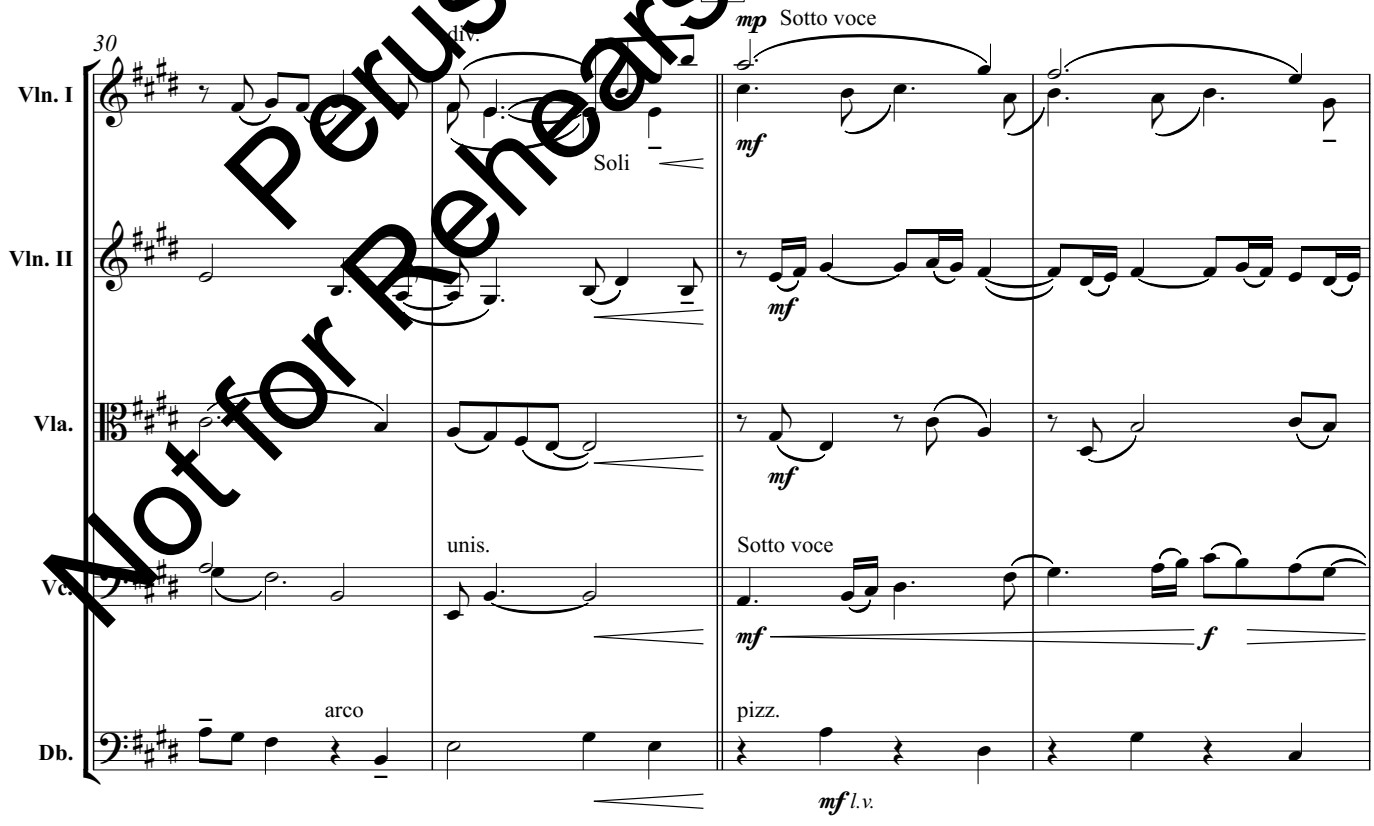

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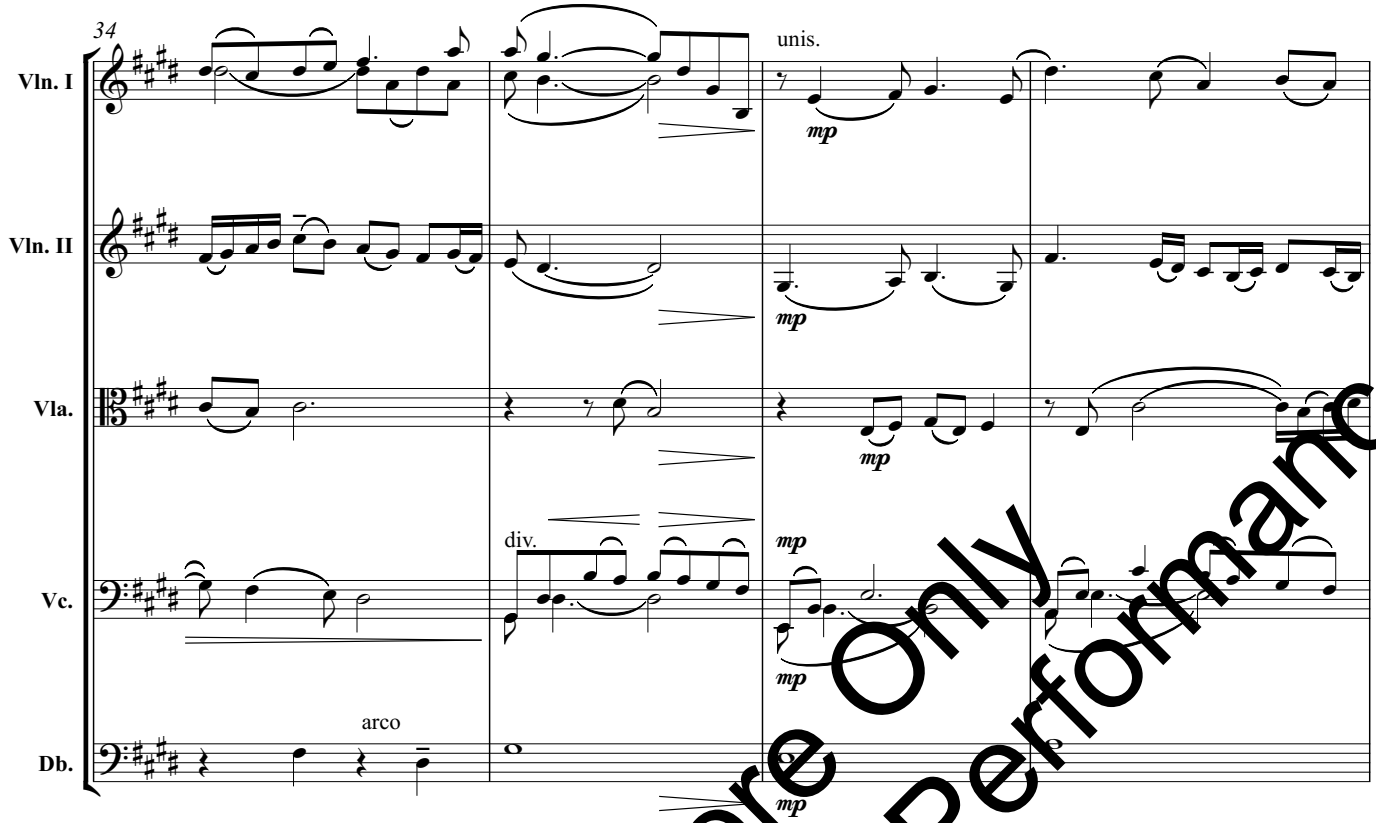

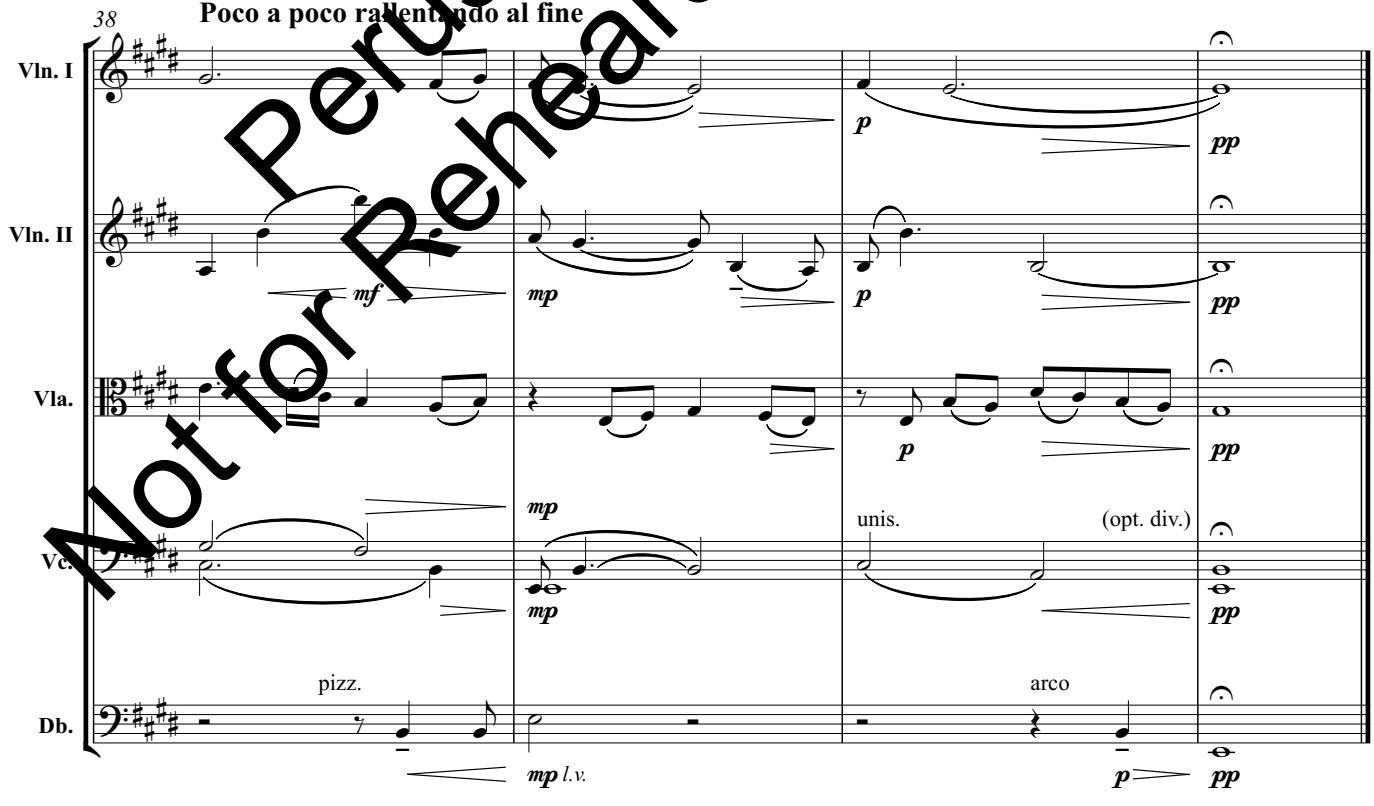

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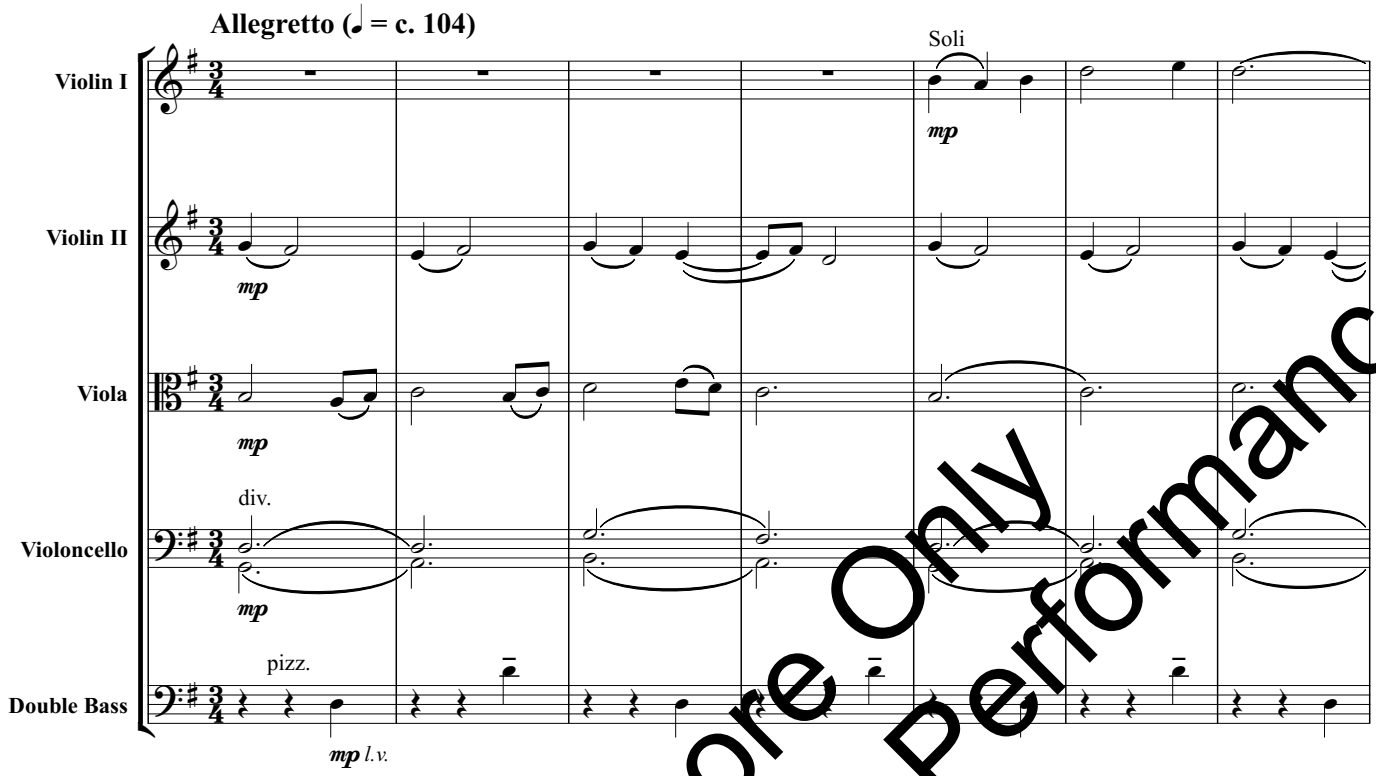
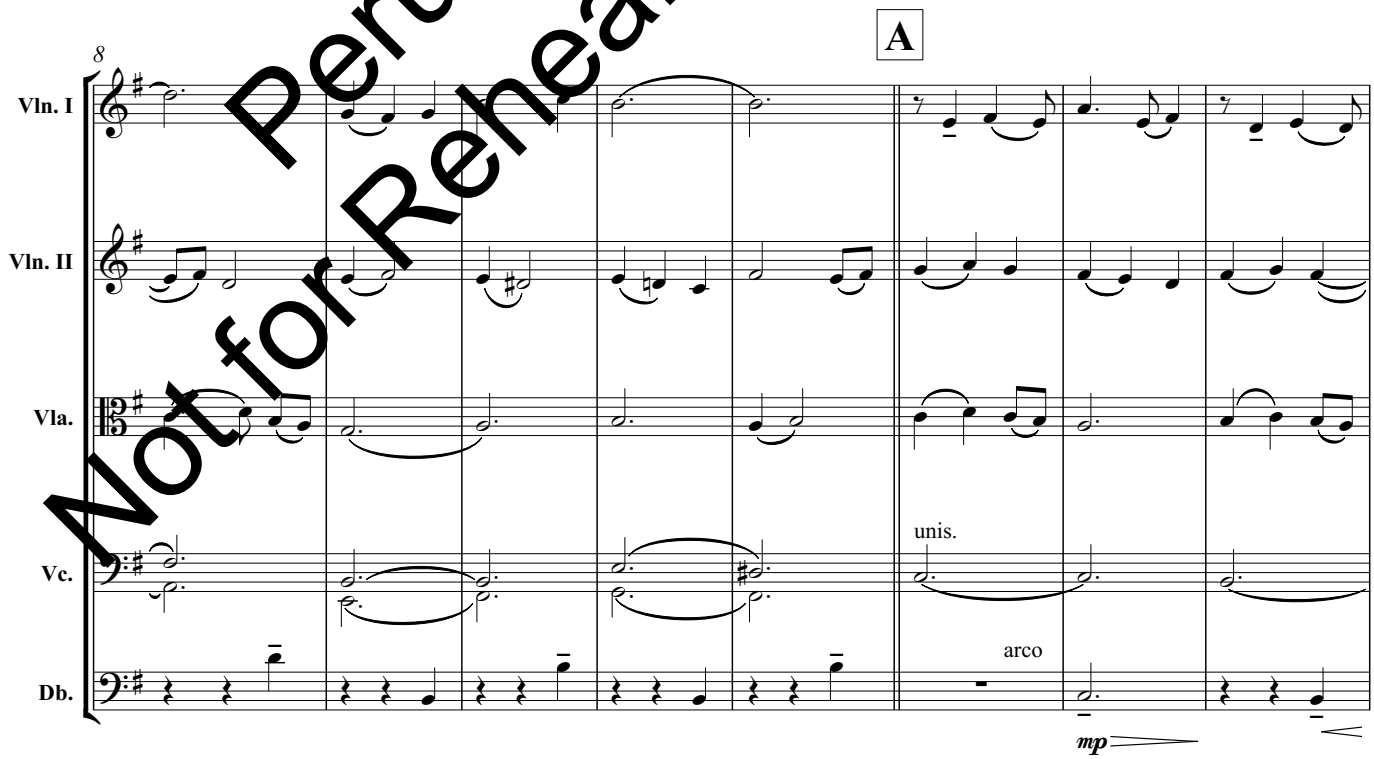
2. PASTORALE: 'UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE'
(As You Like It)





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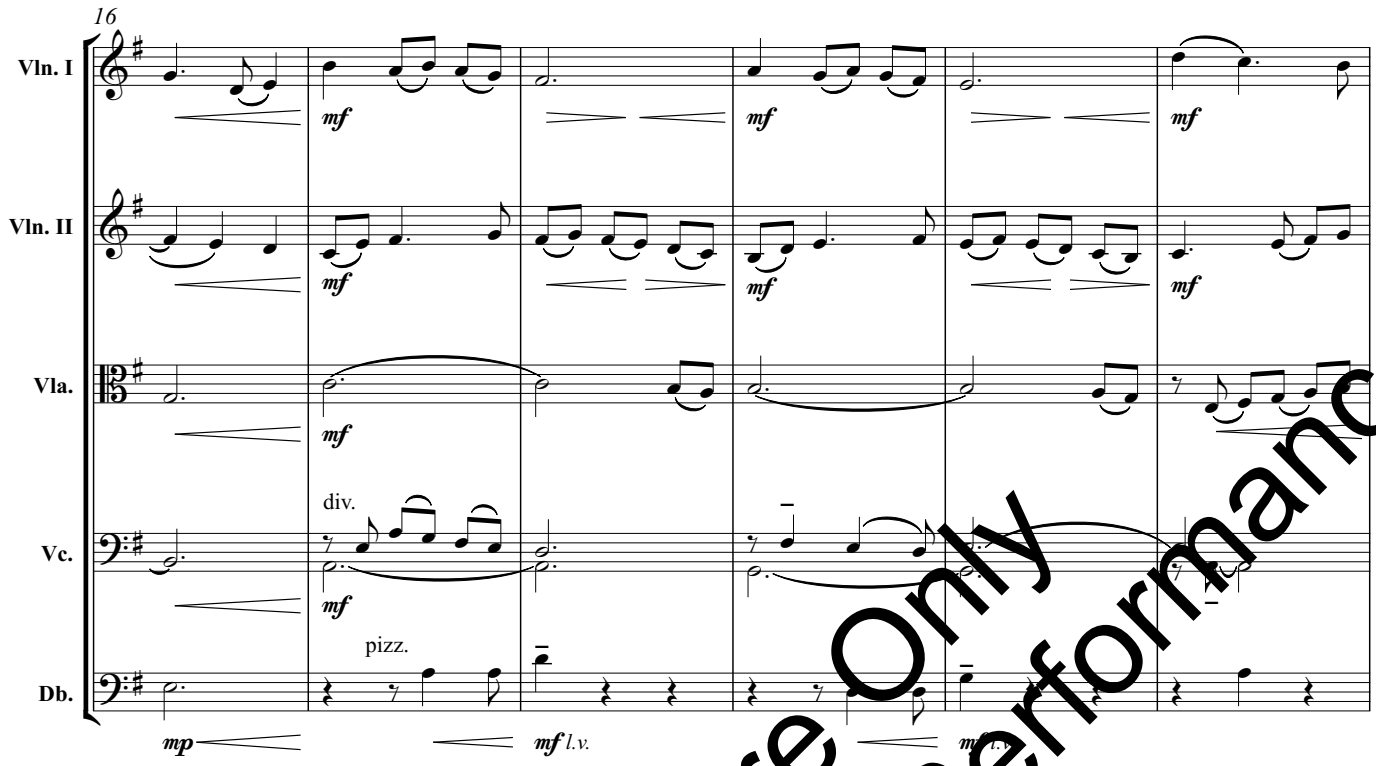

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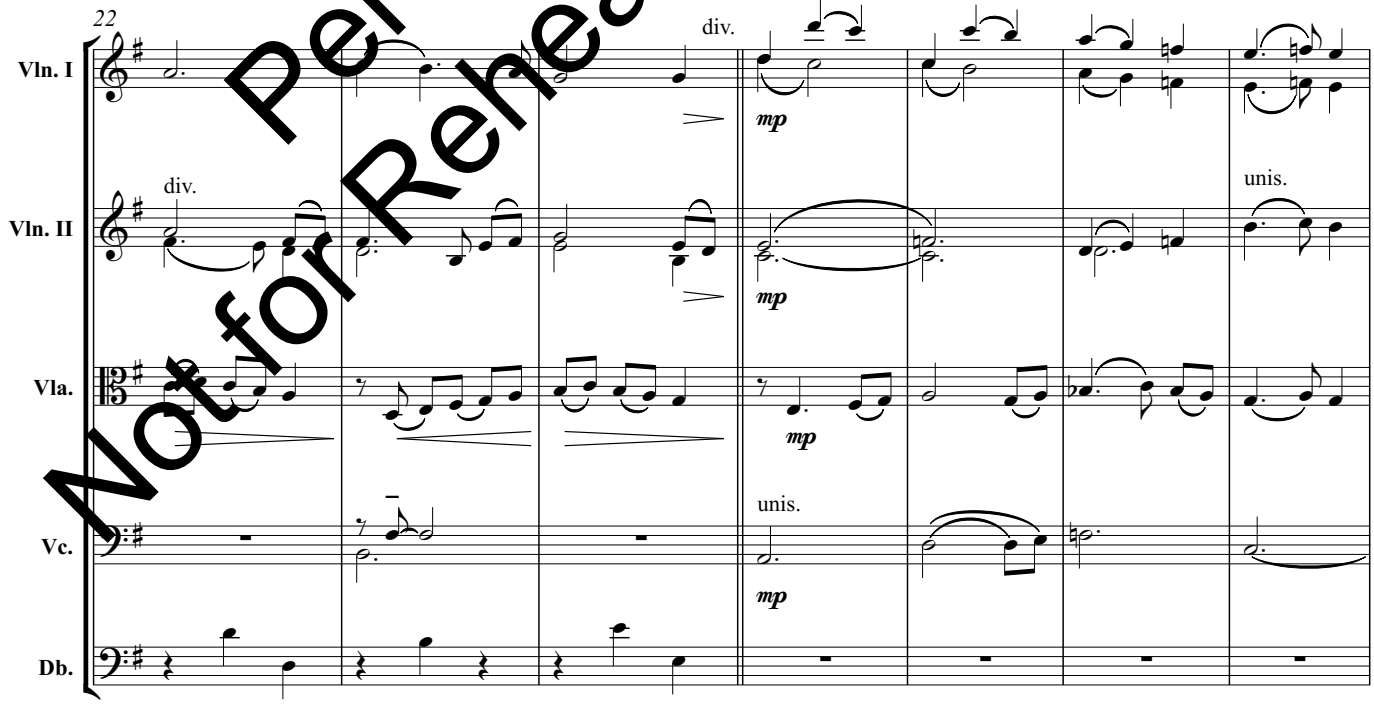
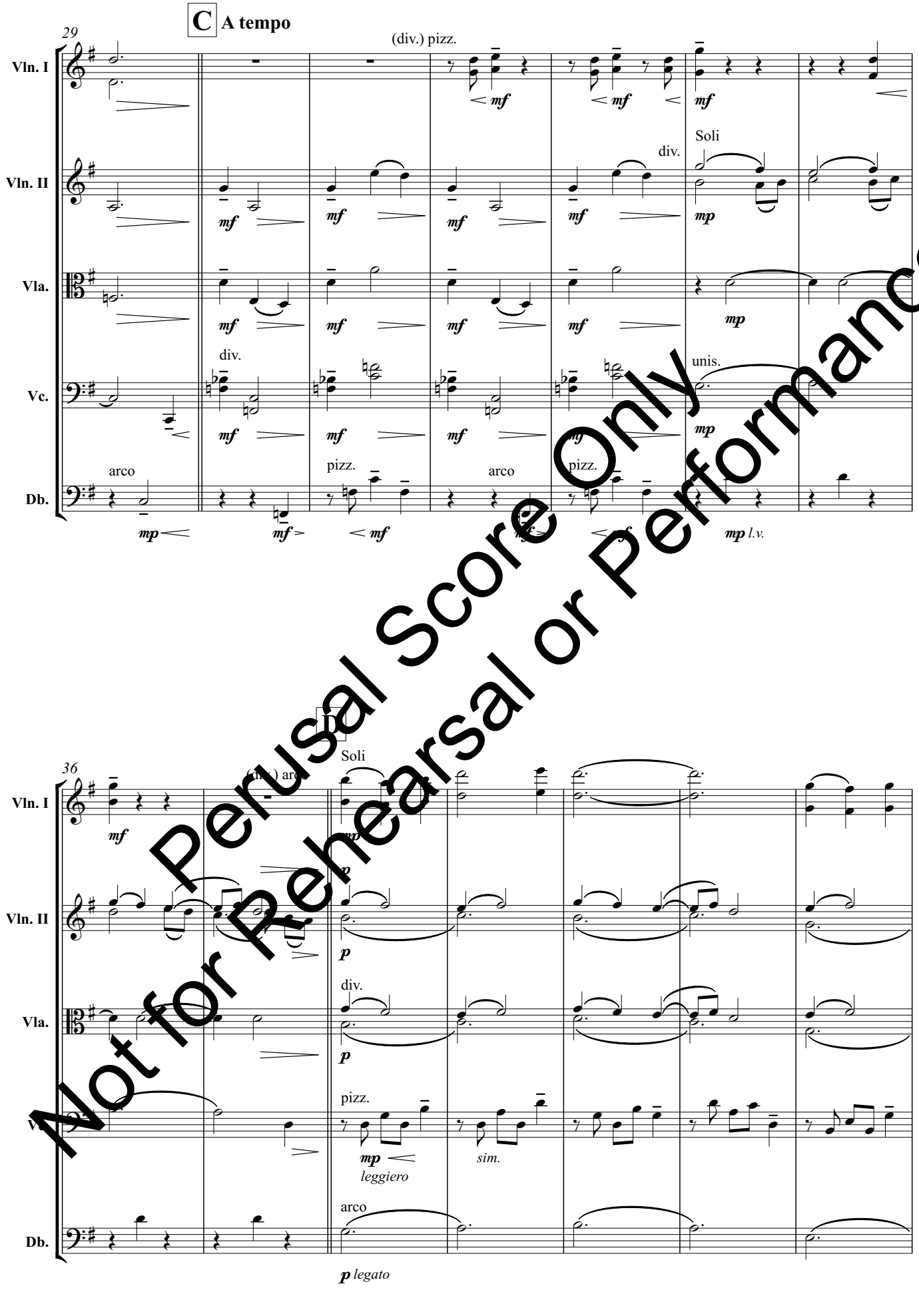
B **Poco a poco rallentando**





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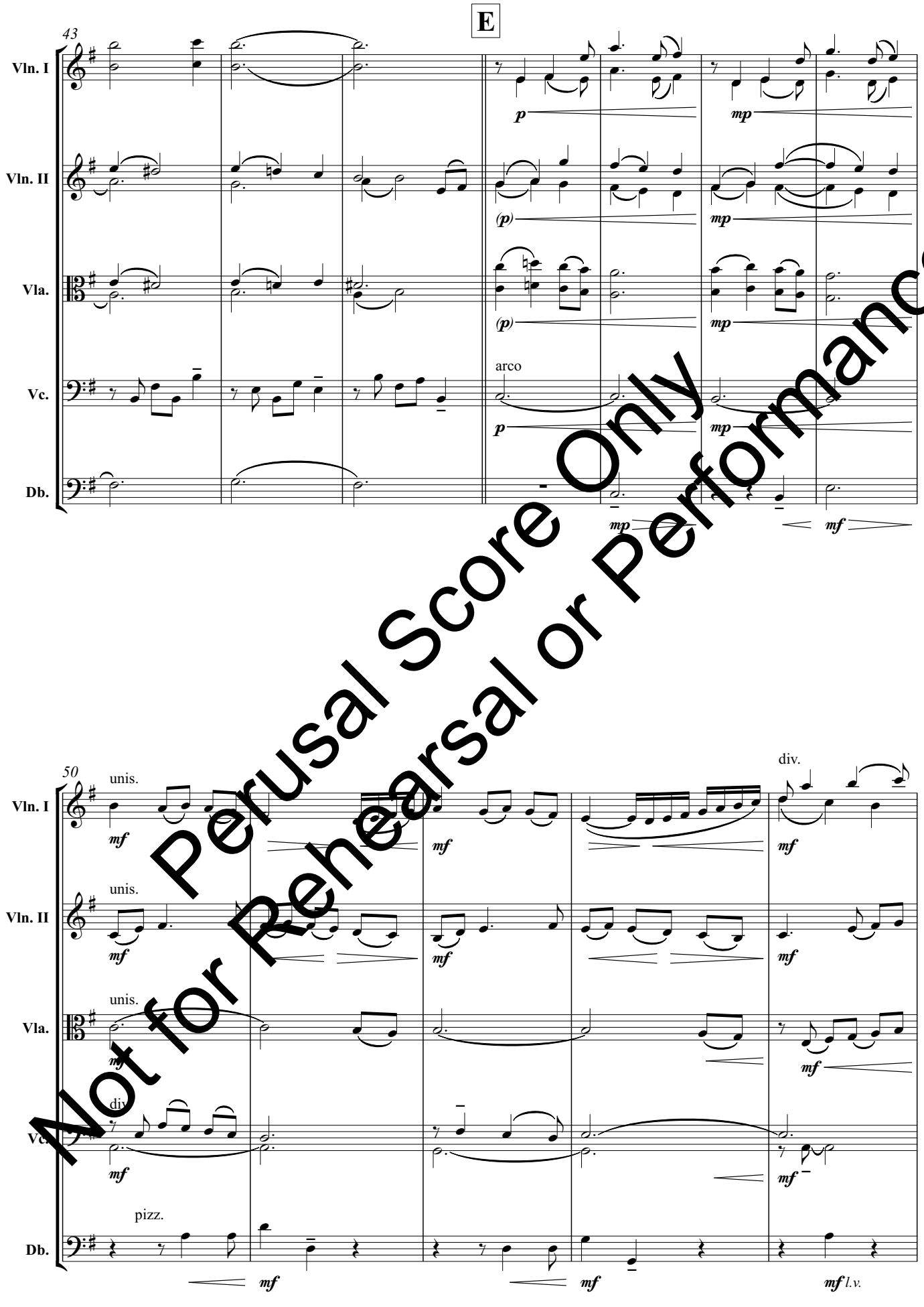

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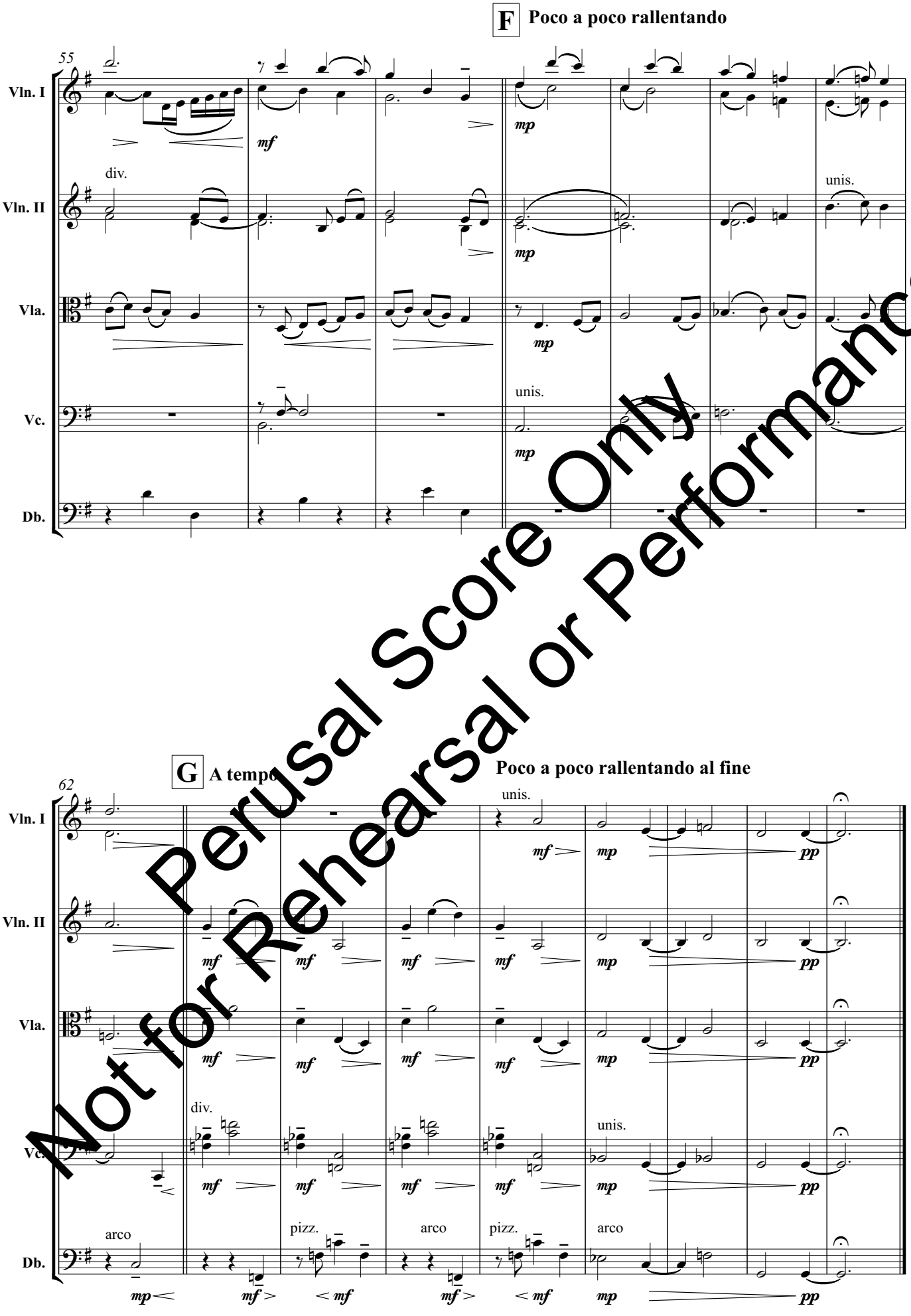

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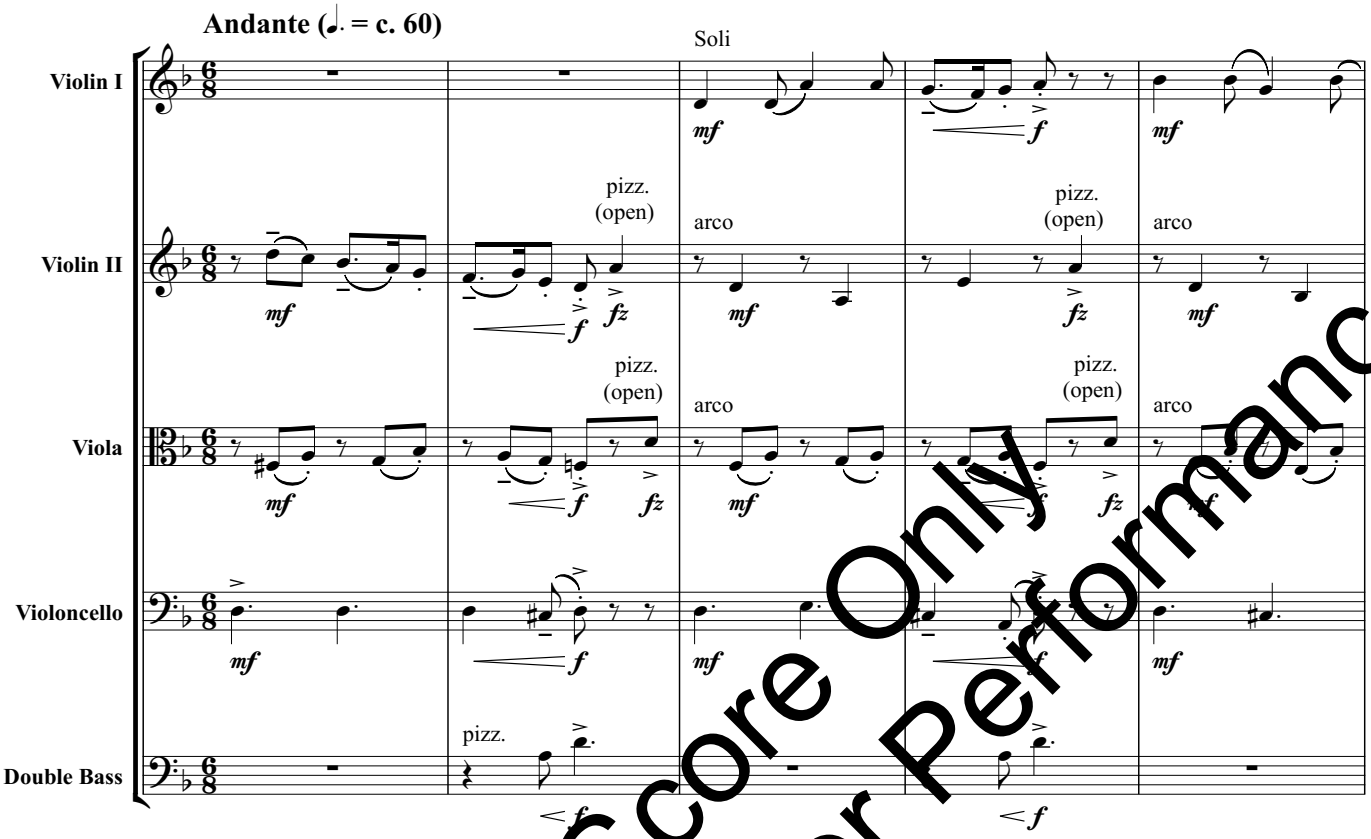
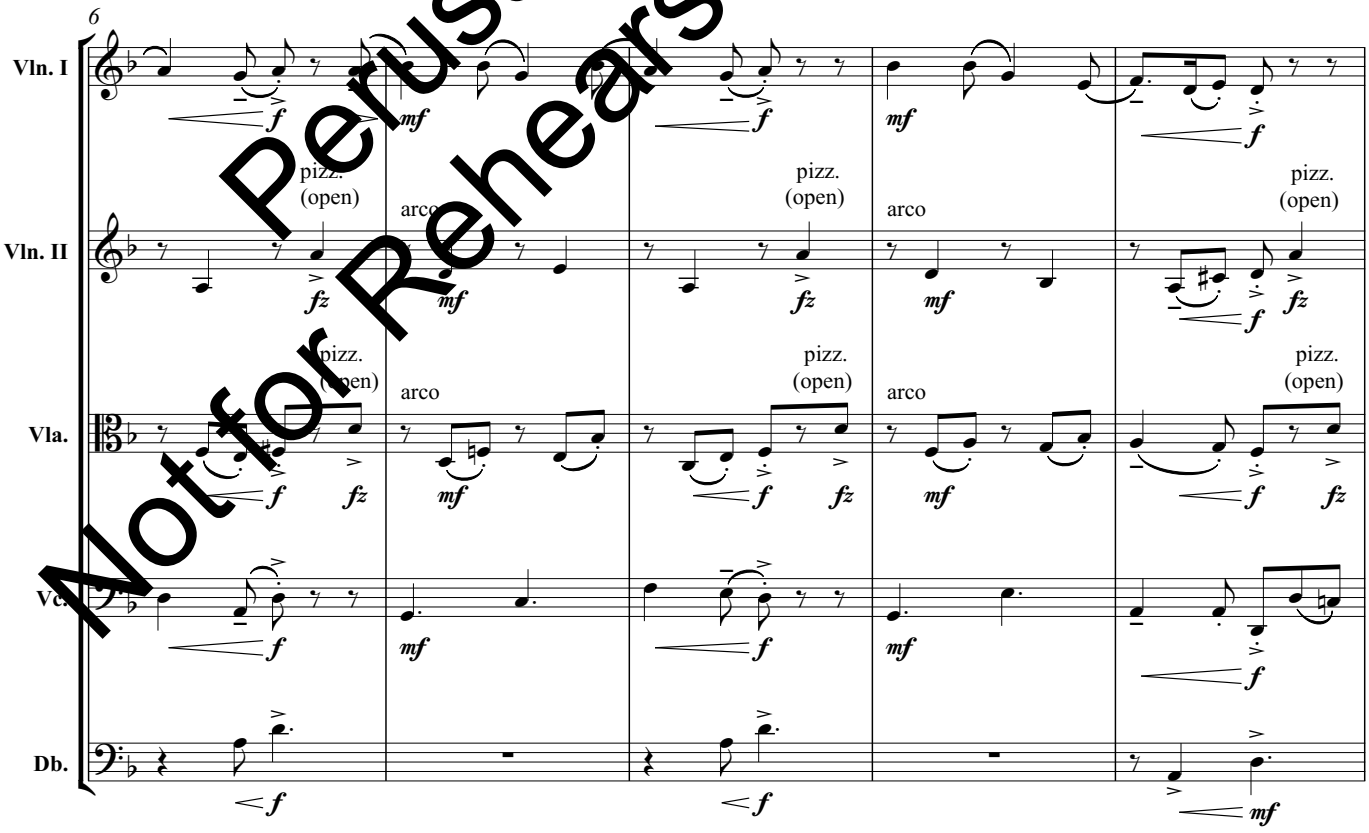
3. GLEE: 'FEAR NO MORE THE HEAT O' TH' SUN'
(Cymbeline)





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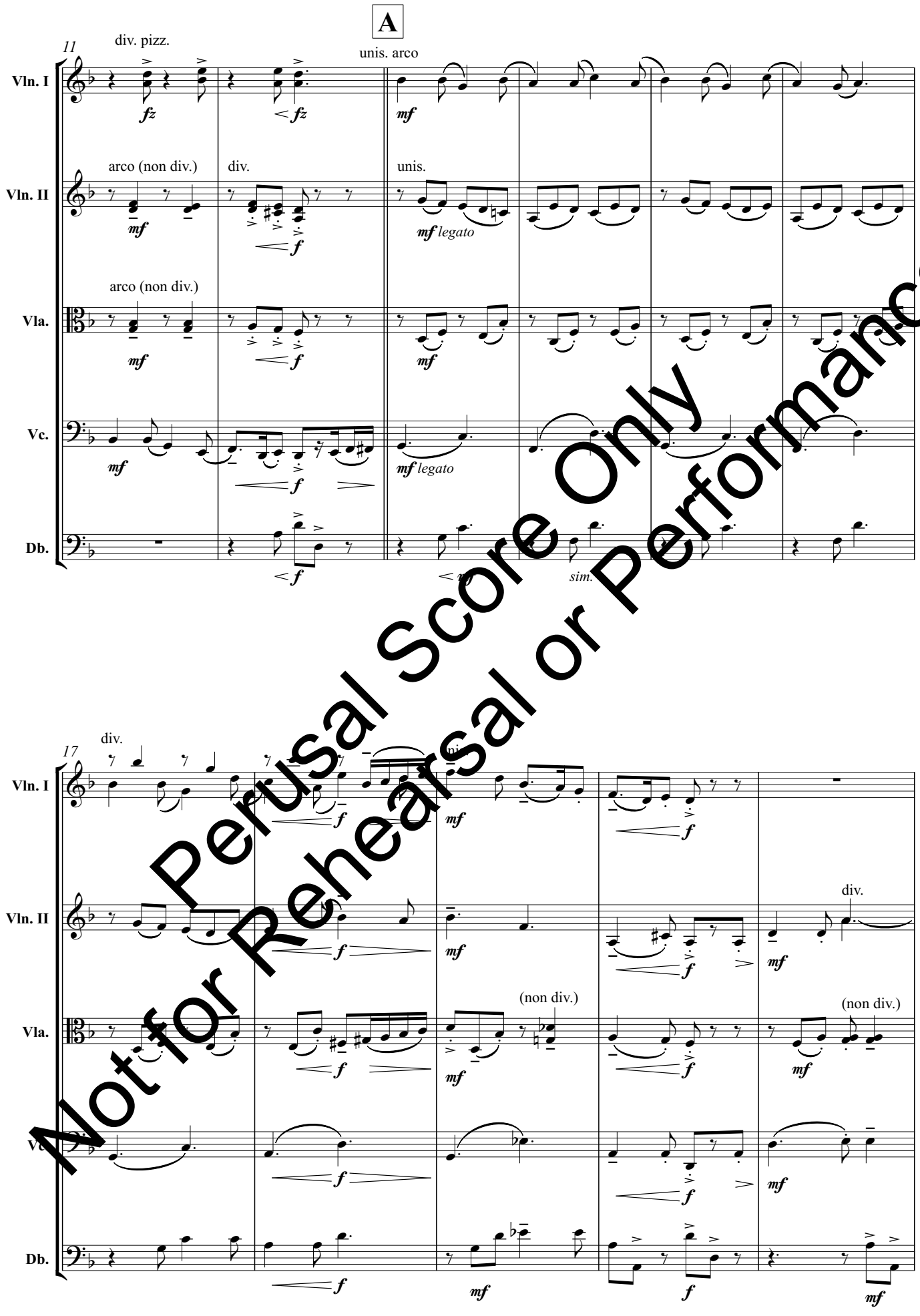

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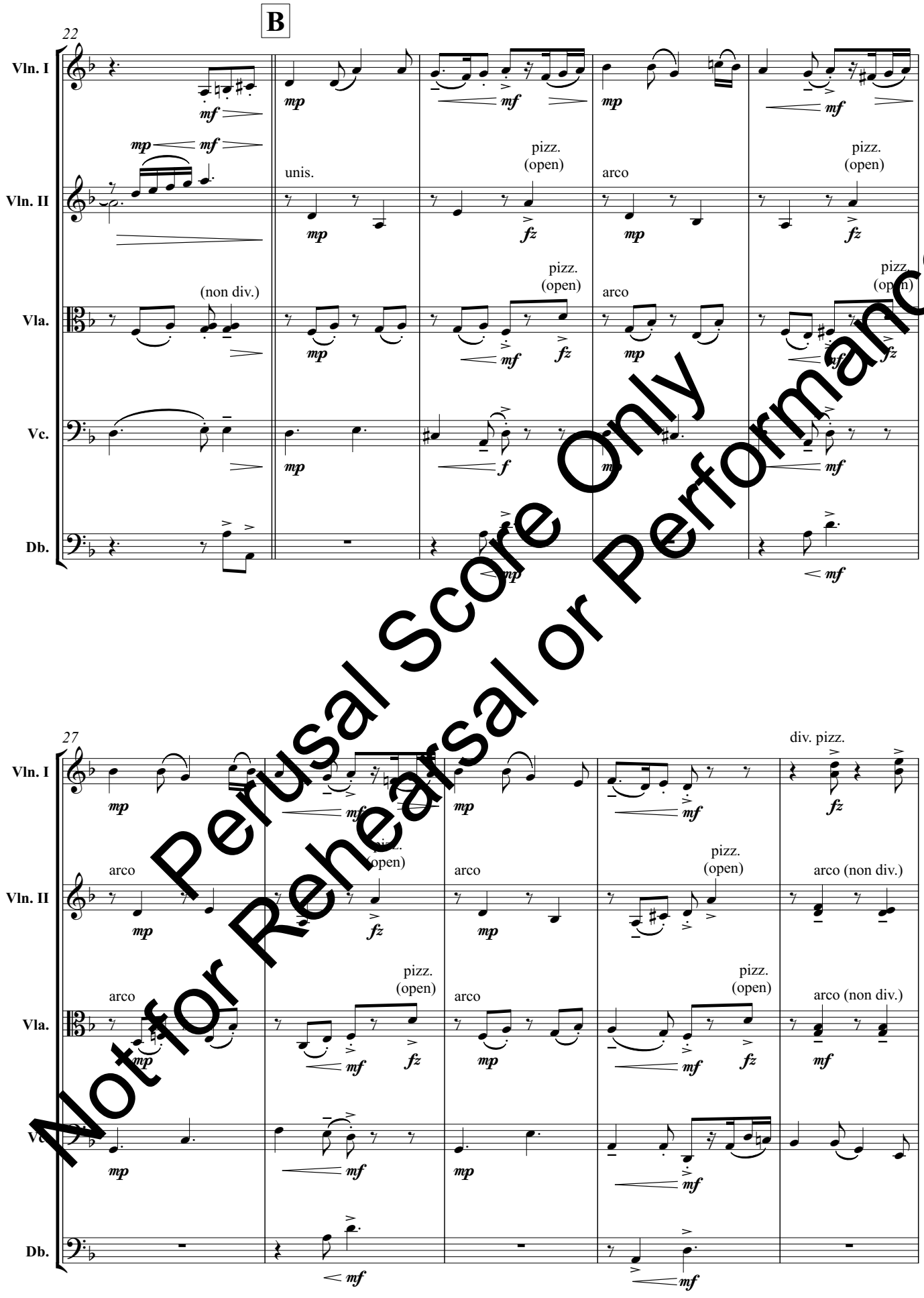

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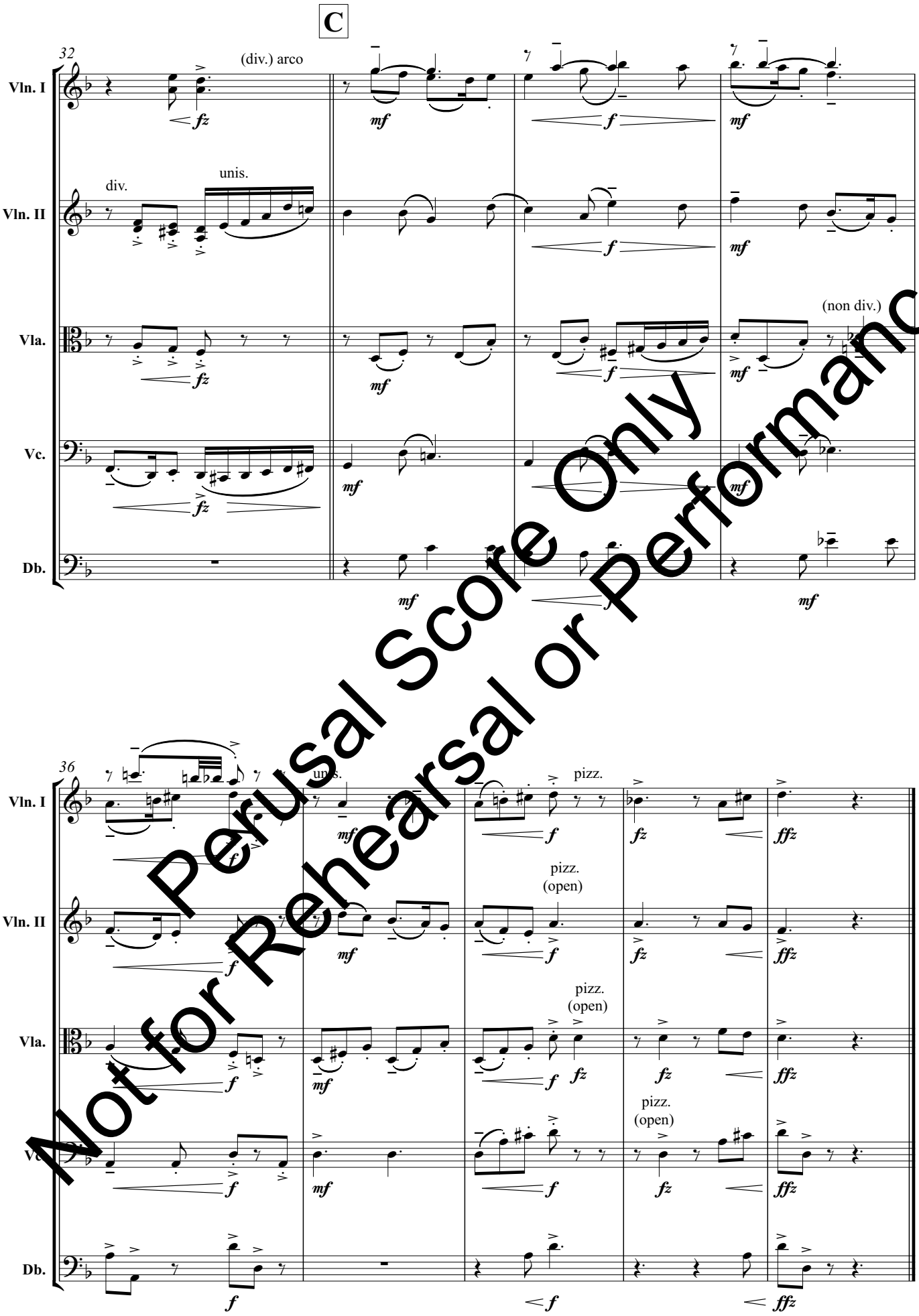

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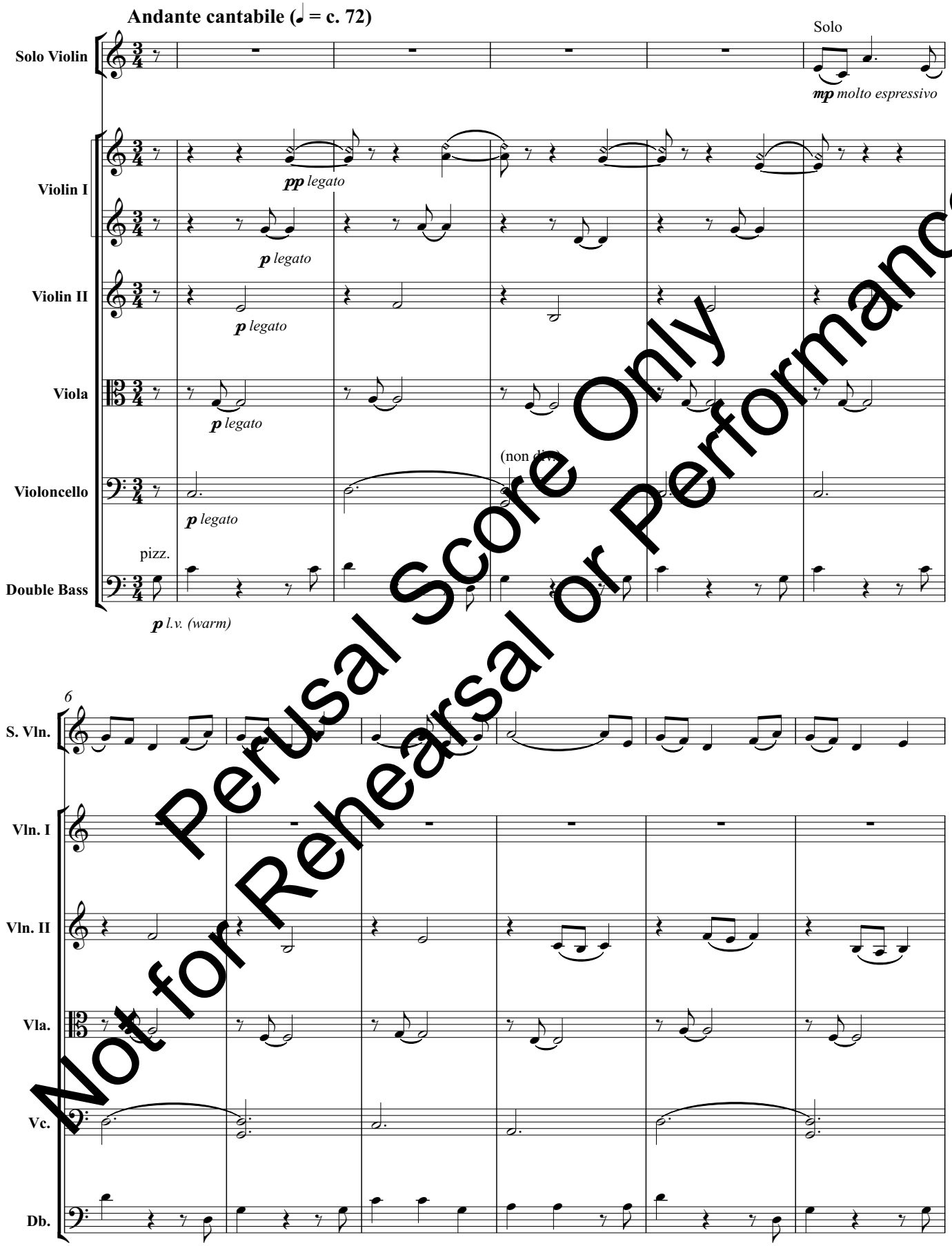
4. BALLAD: 'TAKE, O TAKE THOSE LIPS AWAY'
(Measure for Measure)



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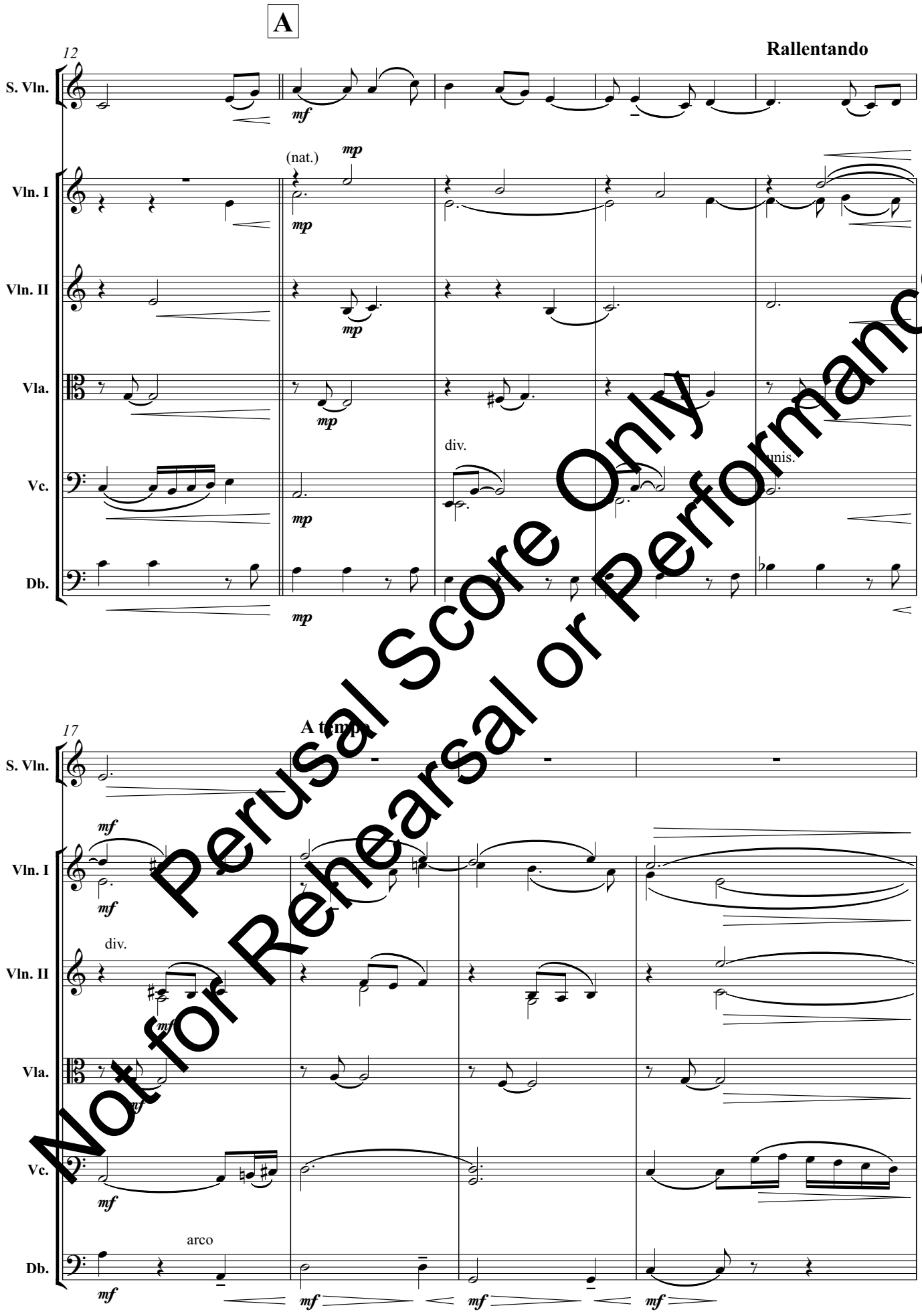

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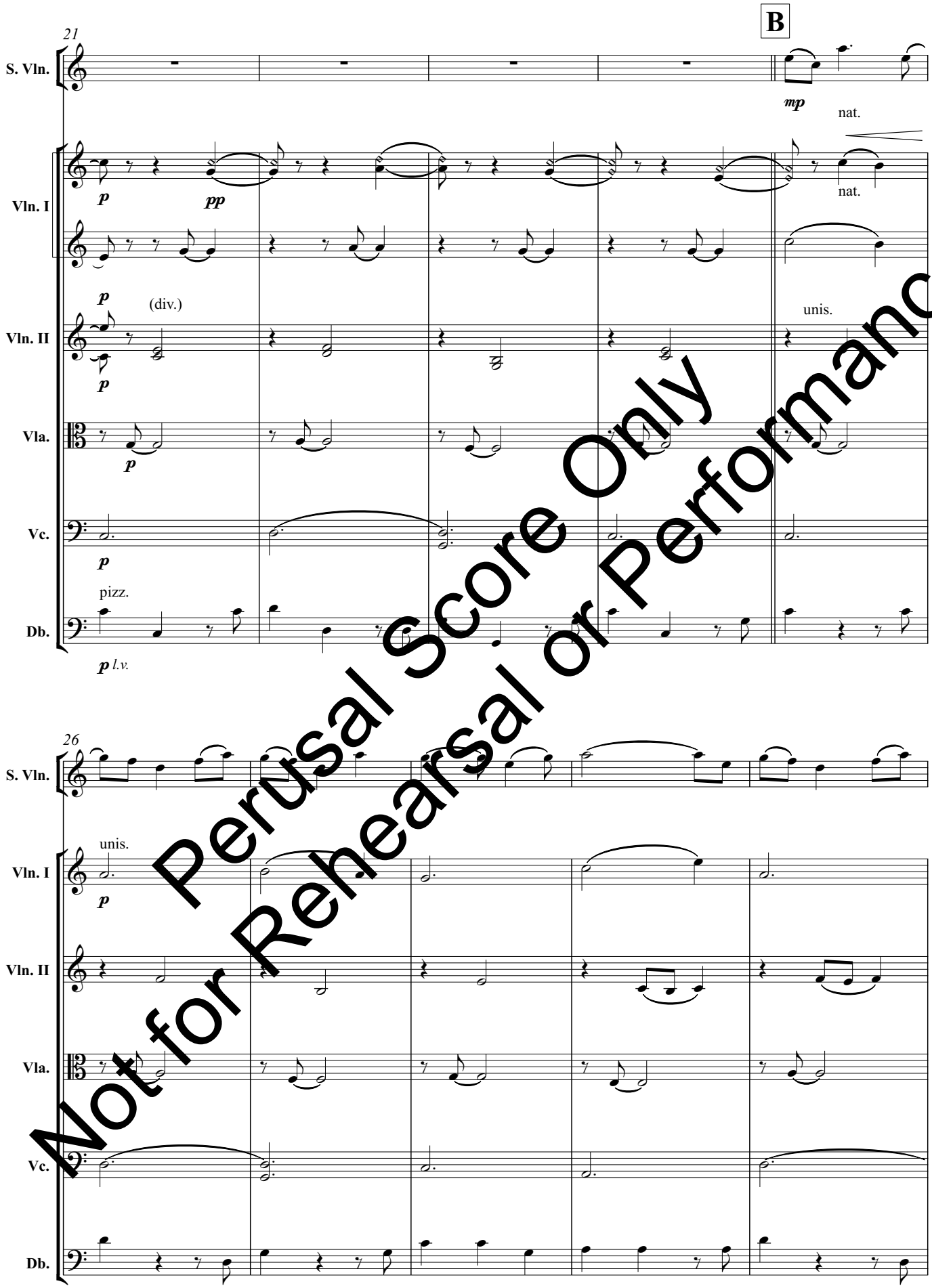

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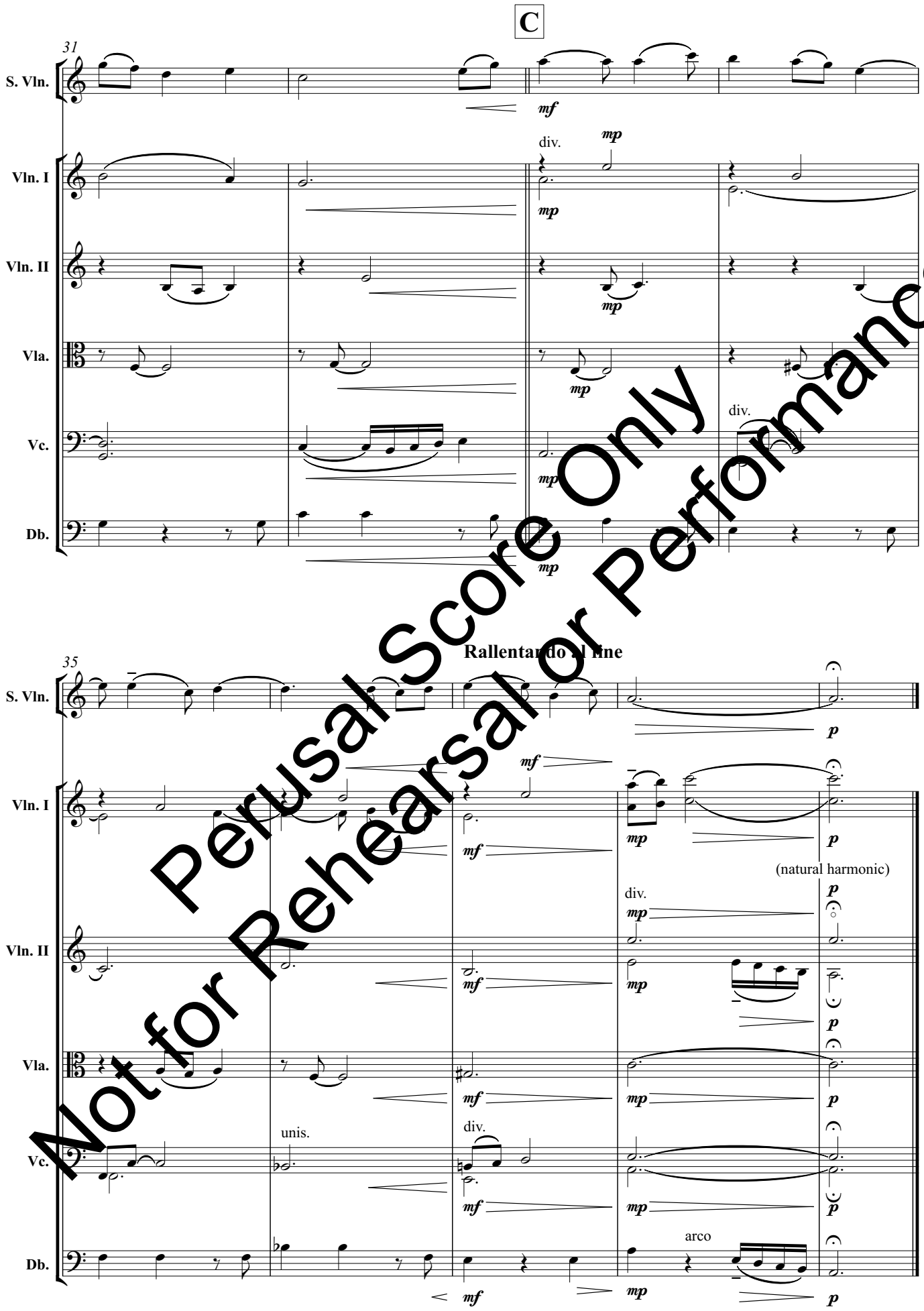

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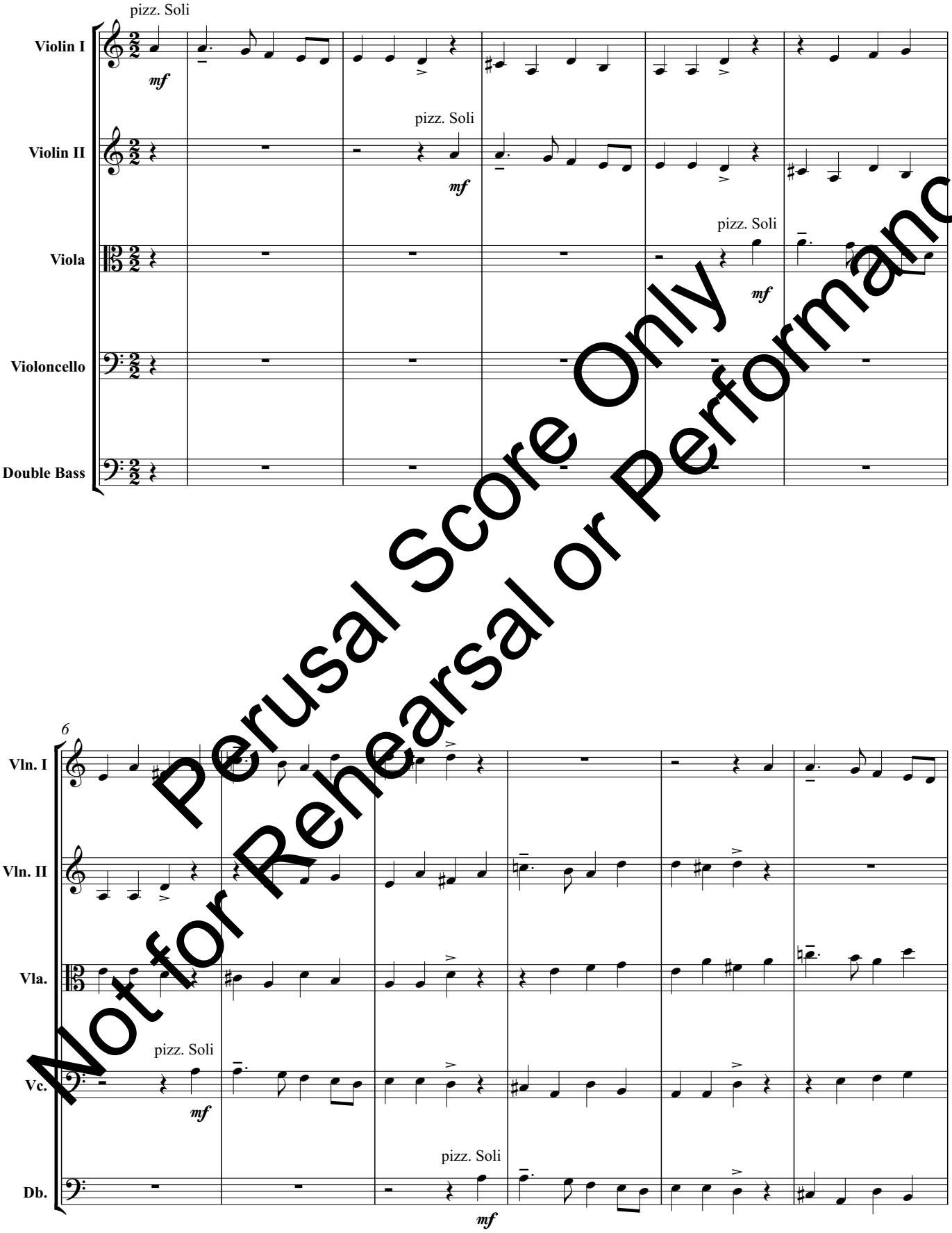
5. CATCH: 'COME KISS ME KATE'
(The Taming of the Shrew)

Con brio (𝅗𝅥 = c. 84)

[Original Round: Anon. adapted by M.E.]



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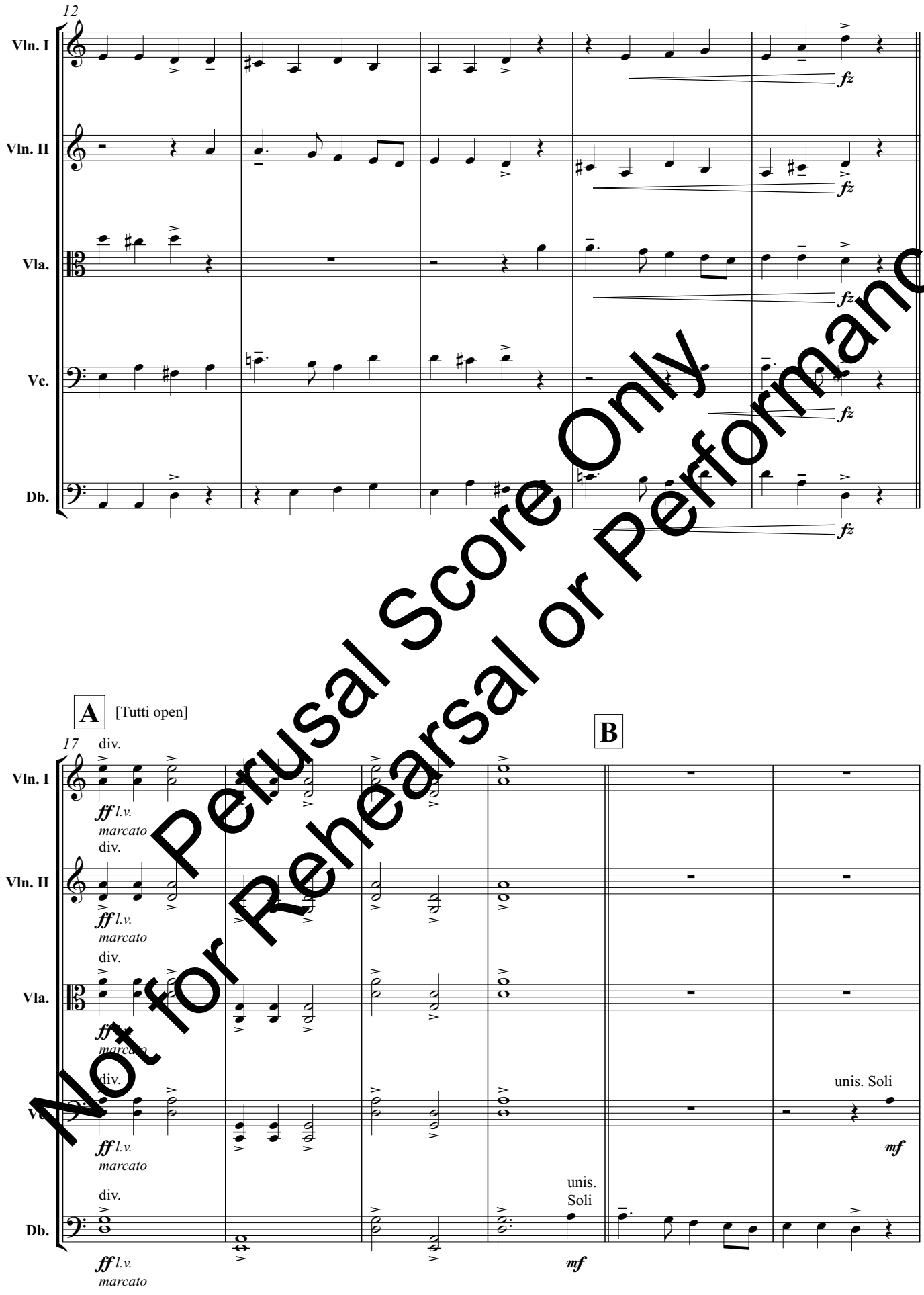

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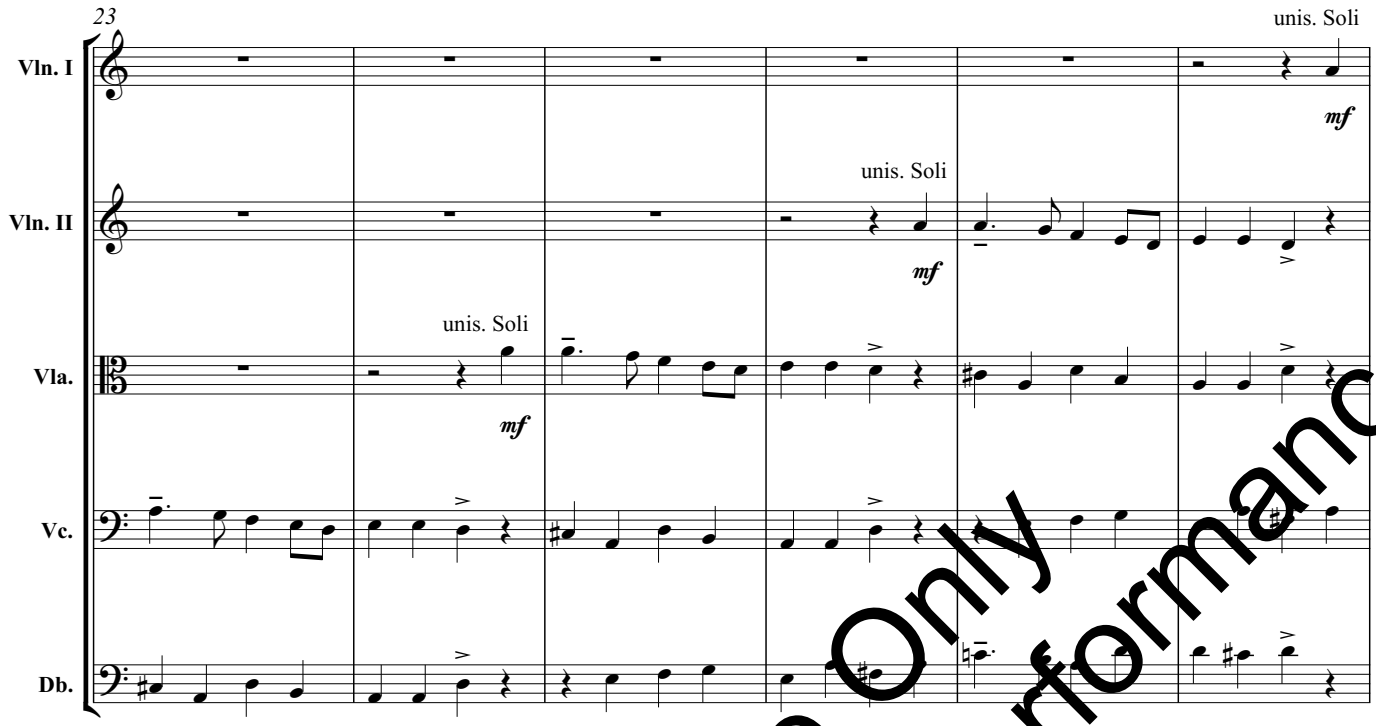

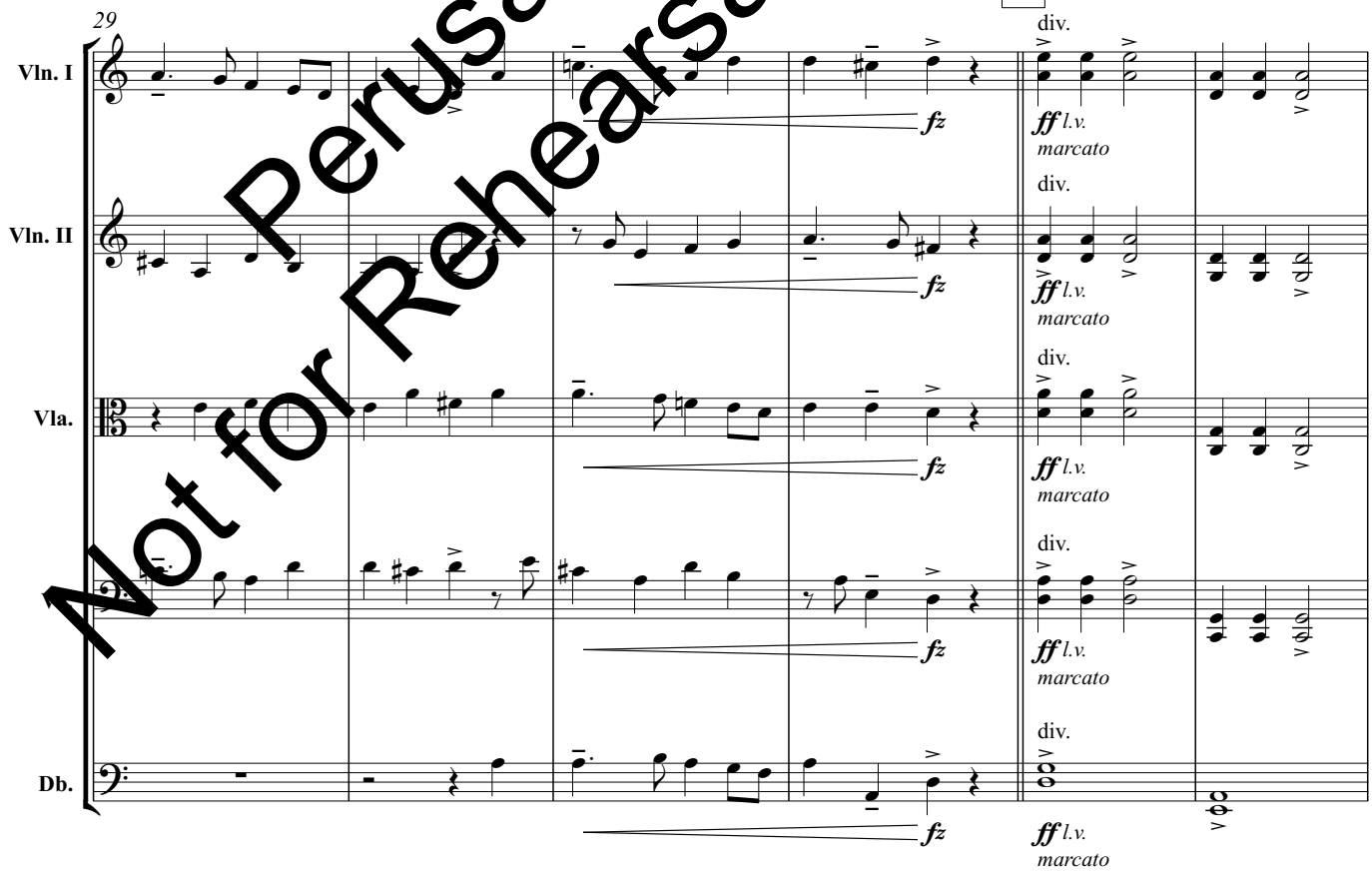

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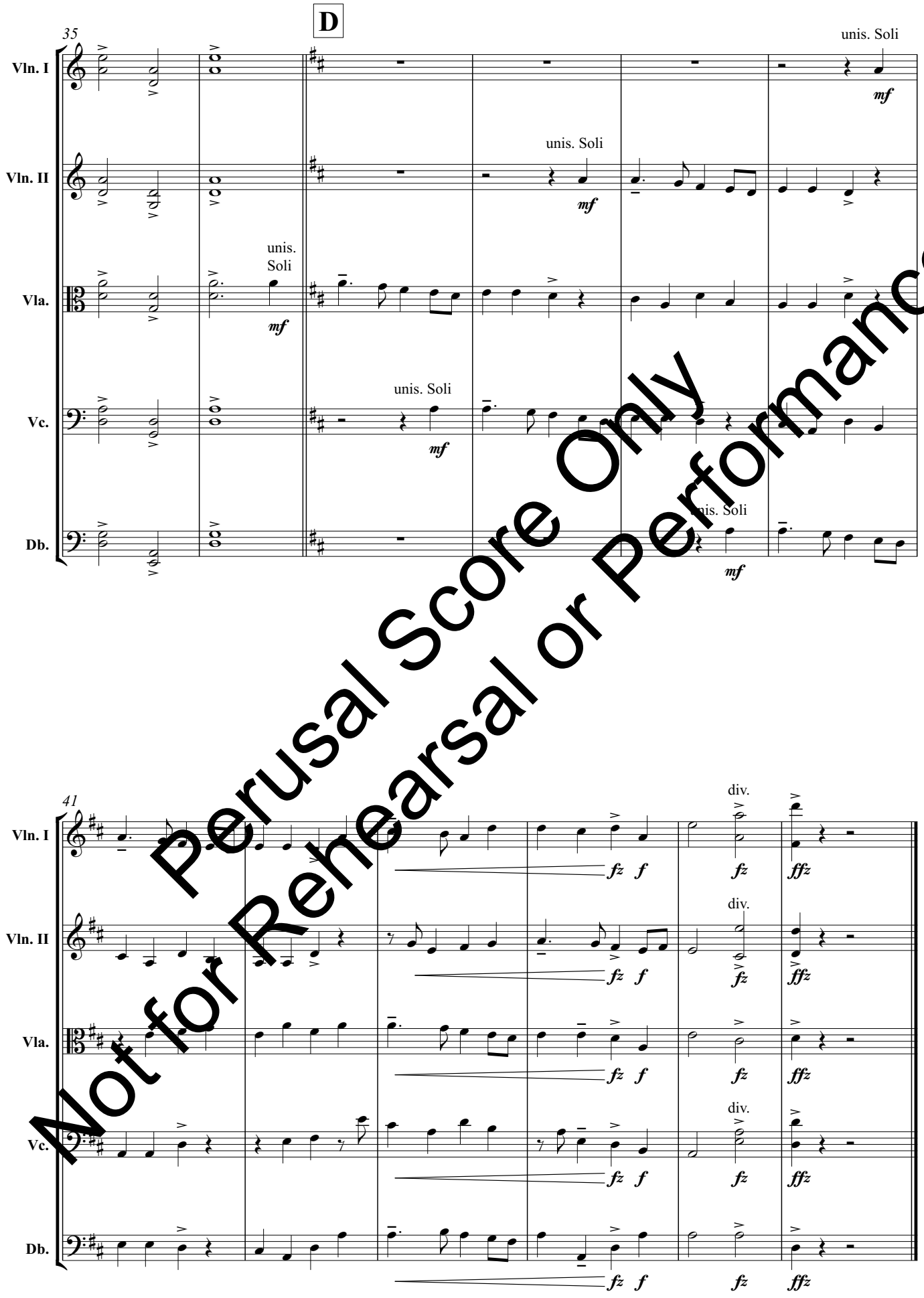

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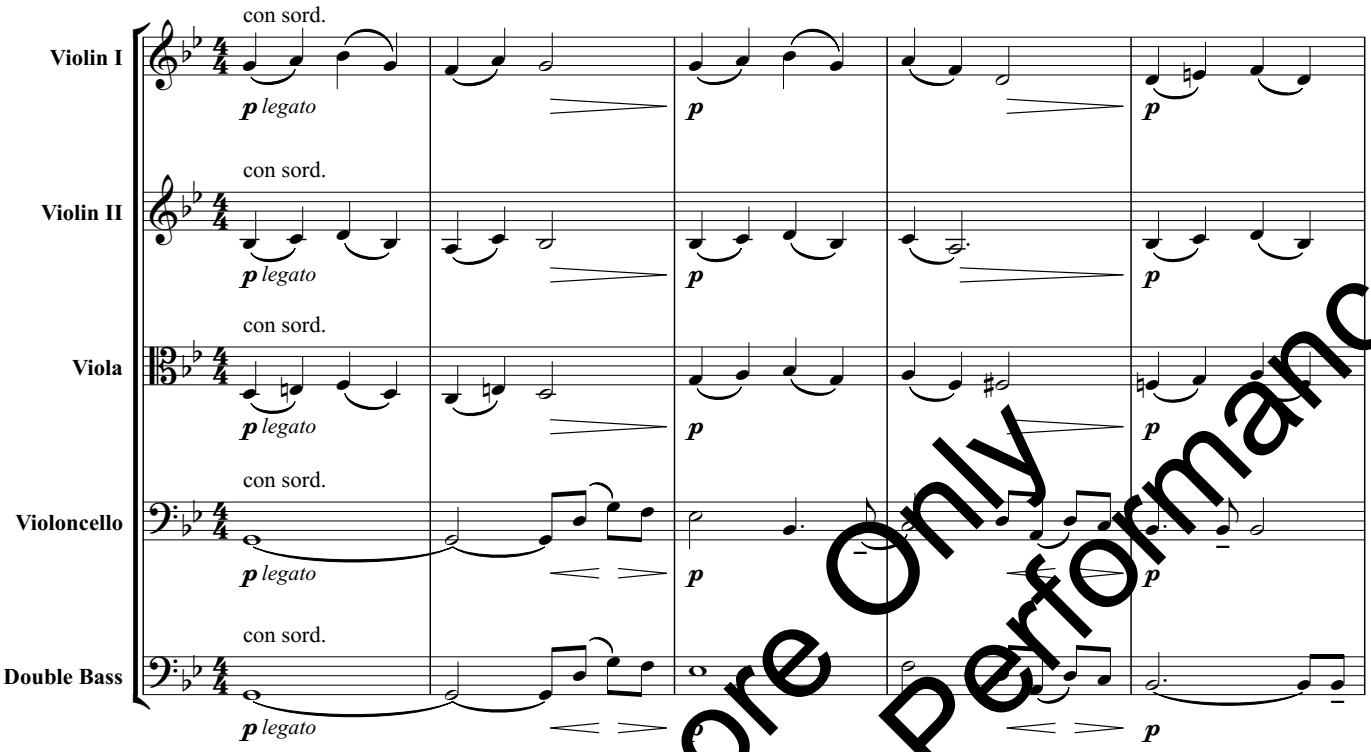
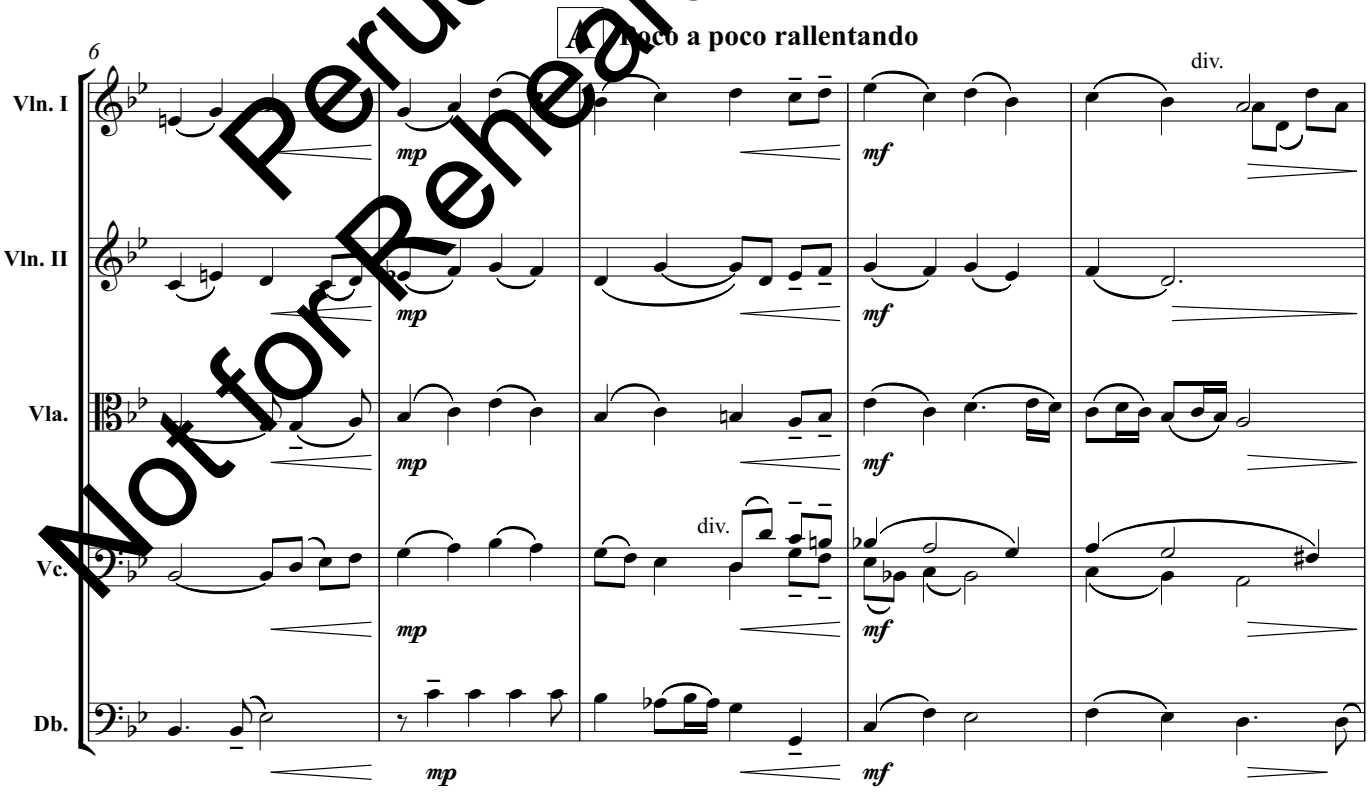
6. FANCY & FLIGHT: 'WHERE THE BEE SUCKS'
(The Tempest)

Lento (♩ = c. 50)





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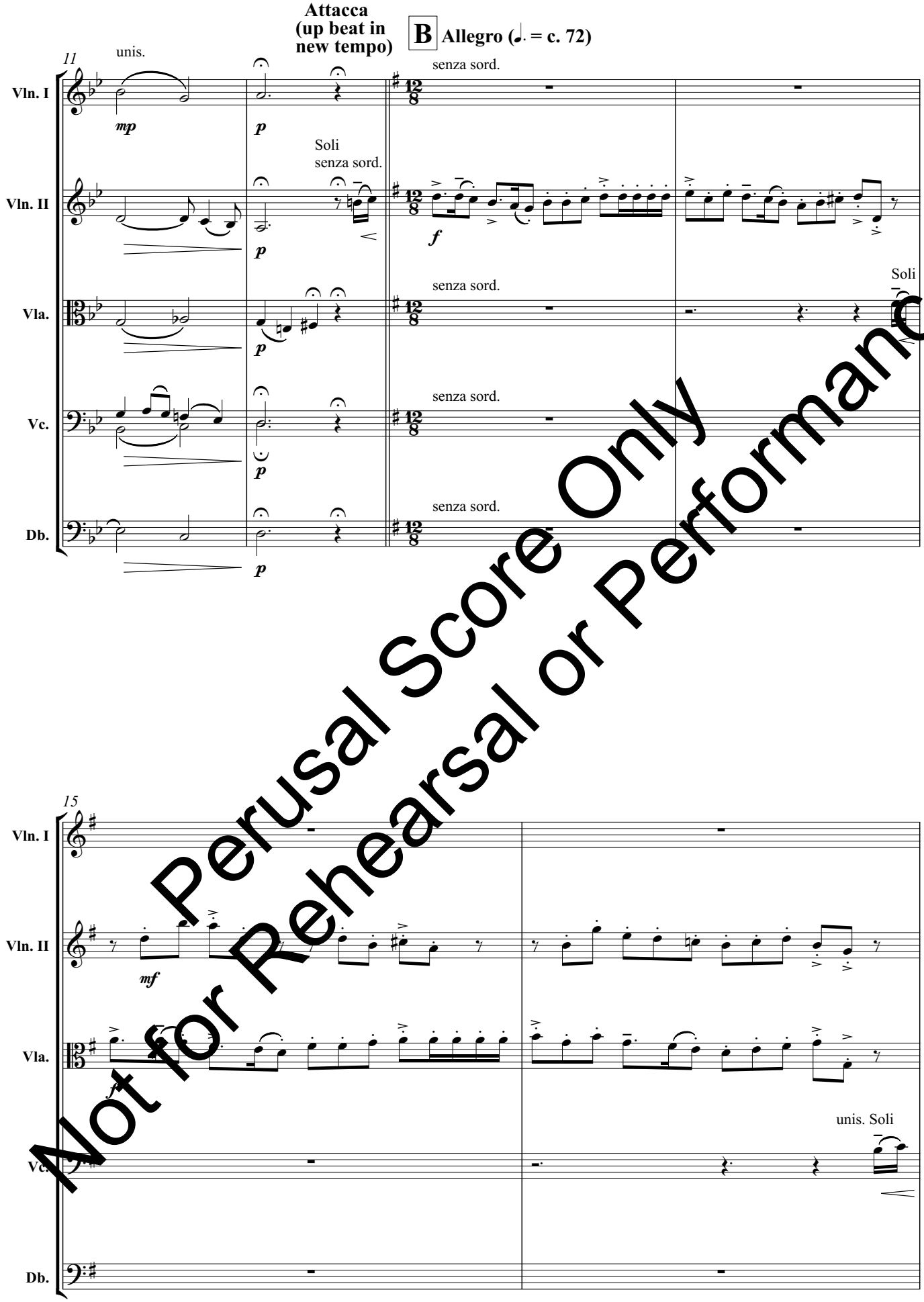

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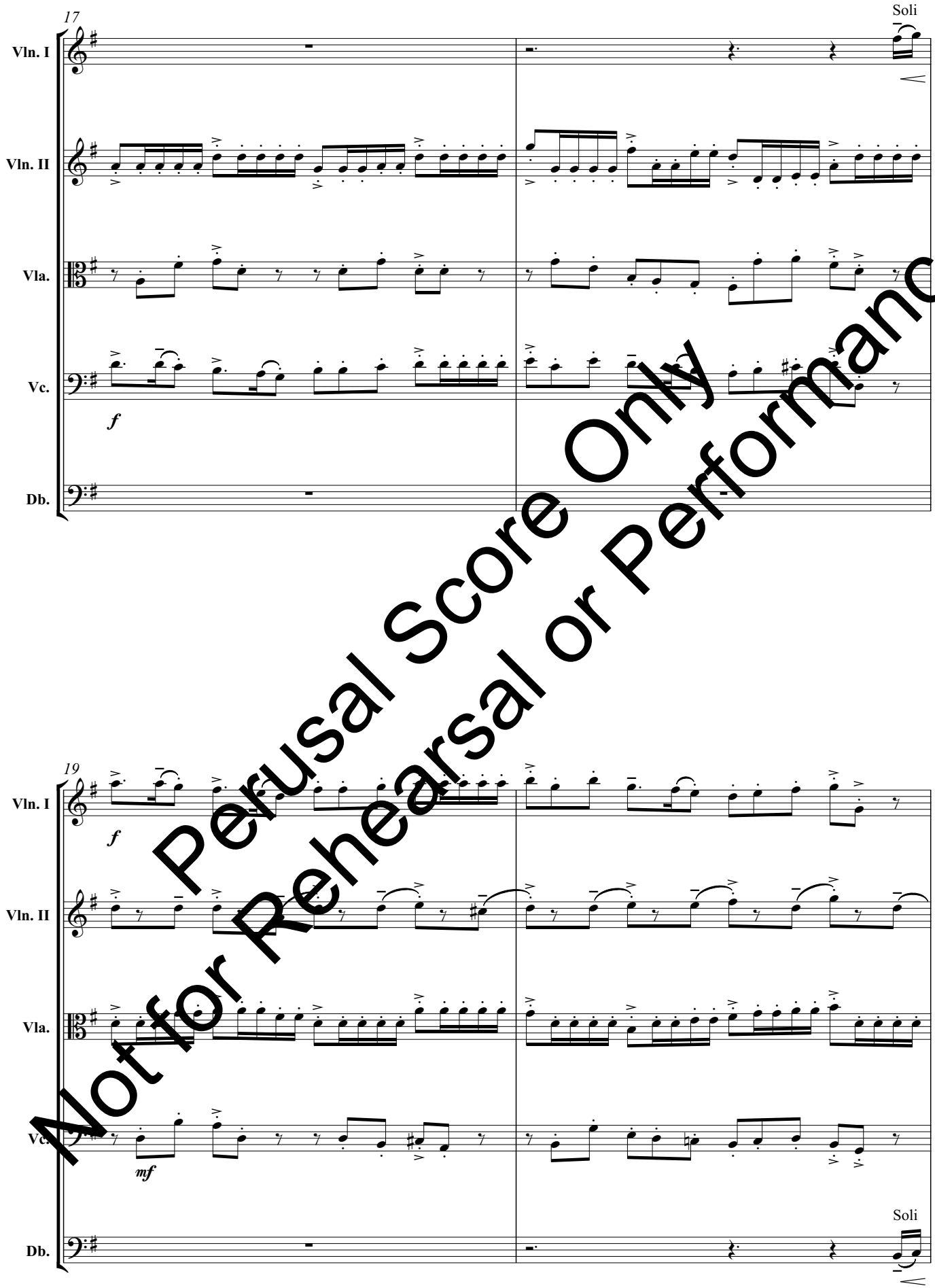

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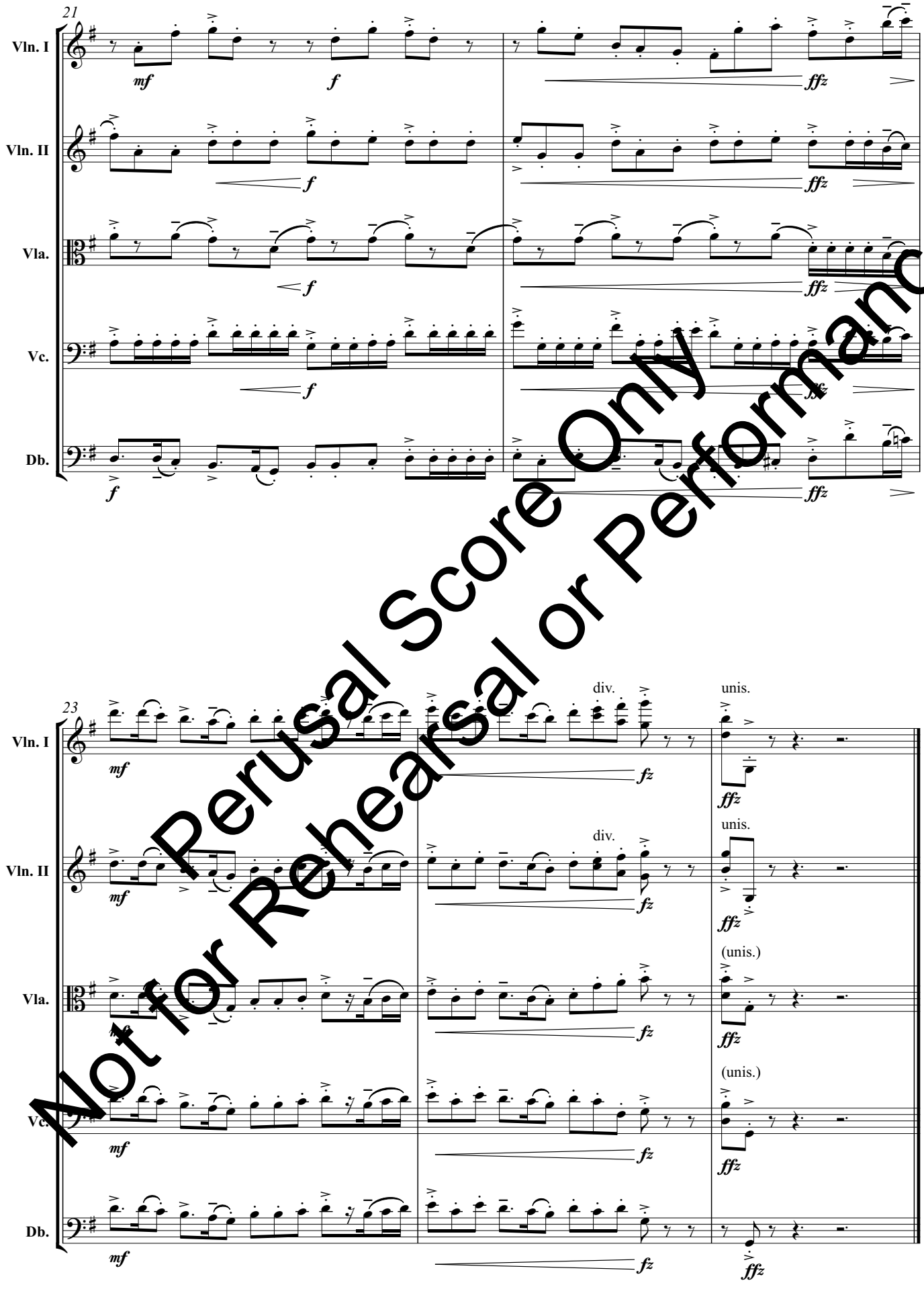

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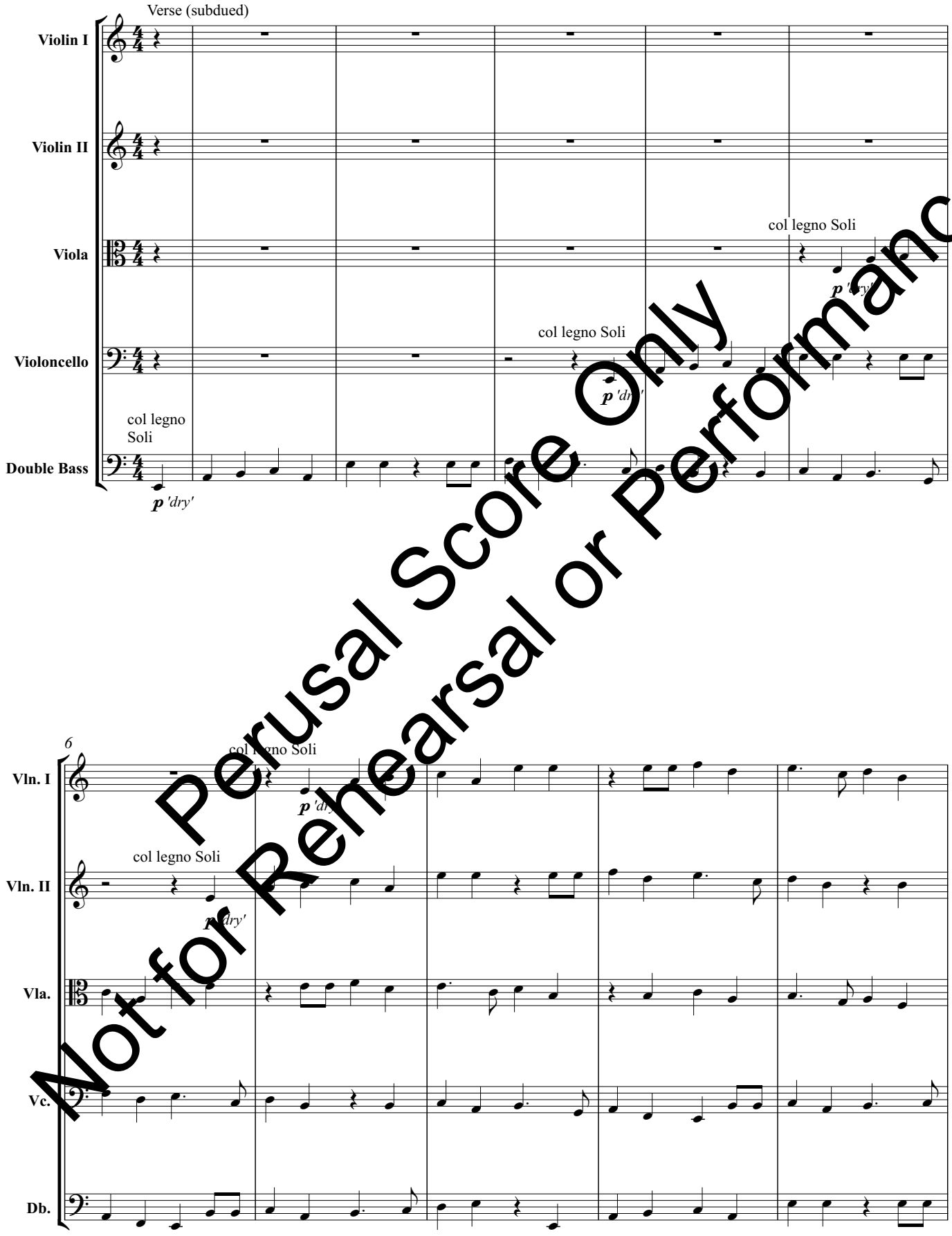
7: EXCURSION - 'THE RATCATCHER'
(Romeo And Juliet)

Allegro ma non troppo (♩ = c. 124)



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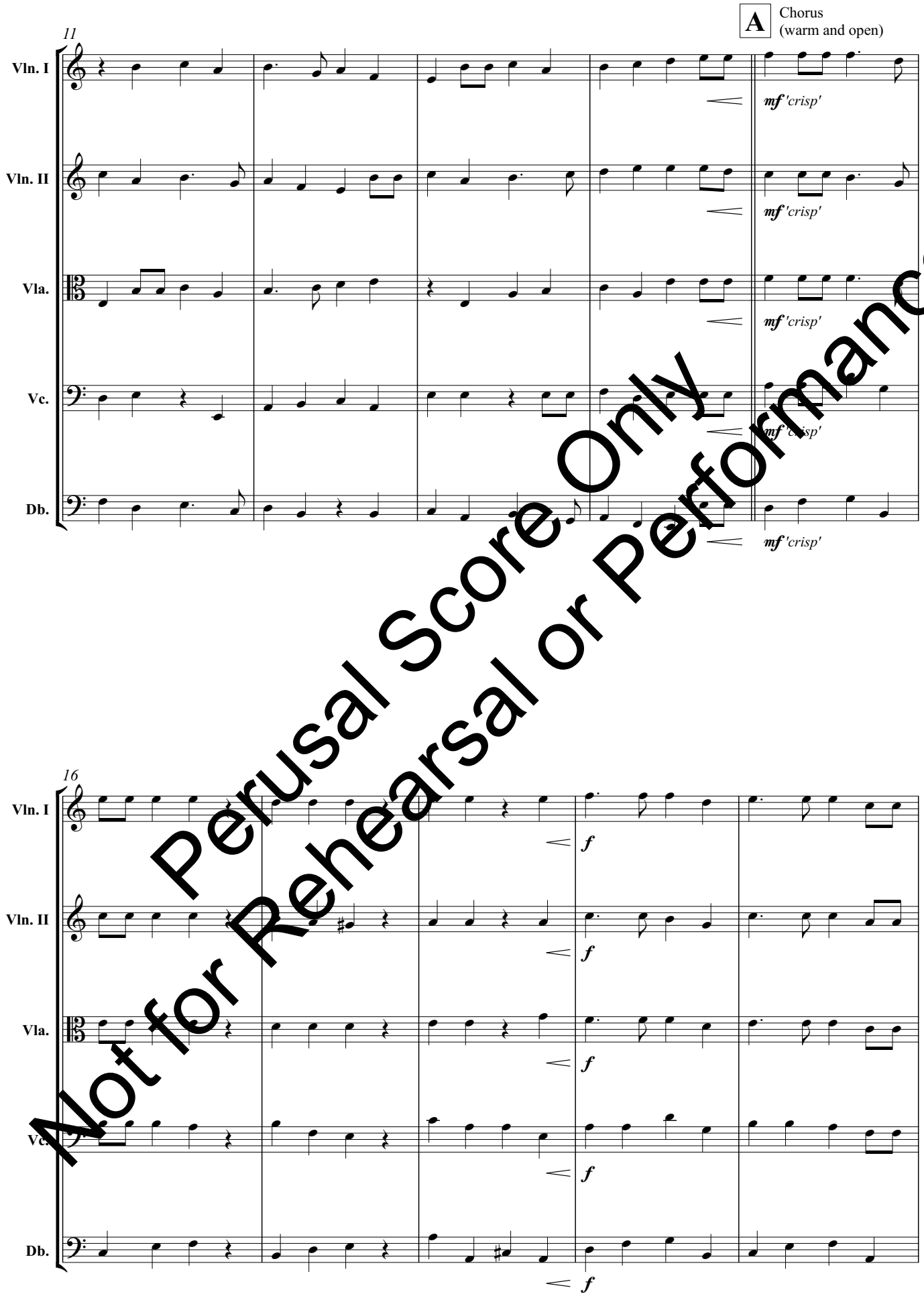

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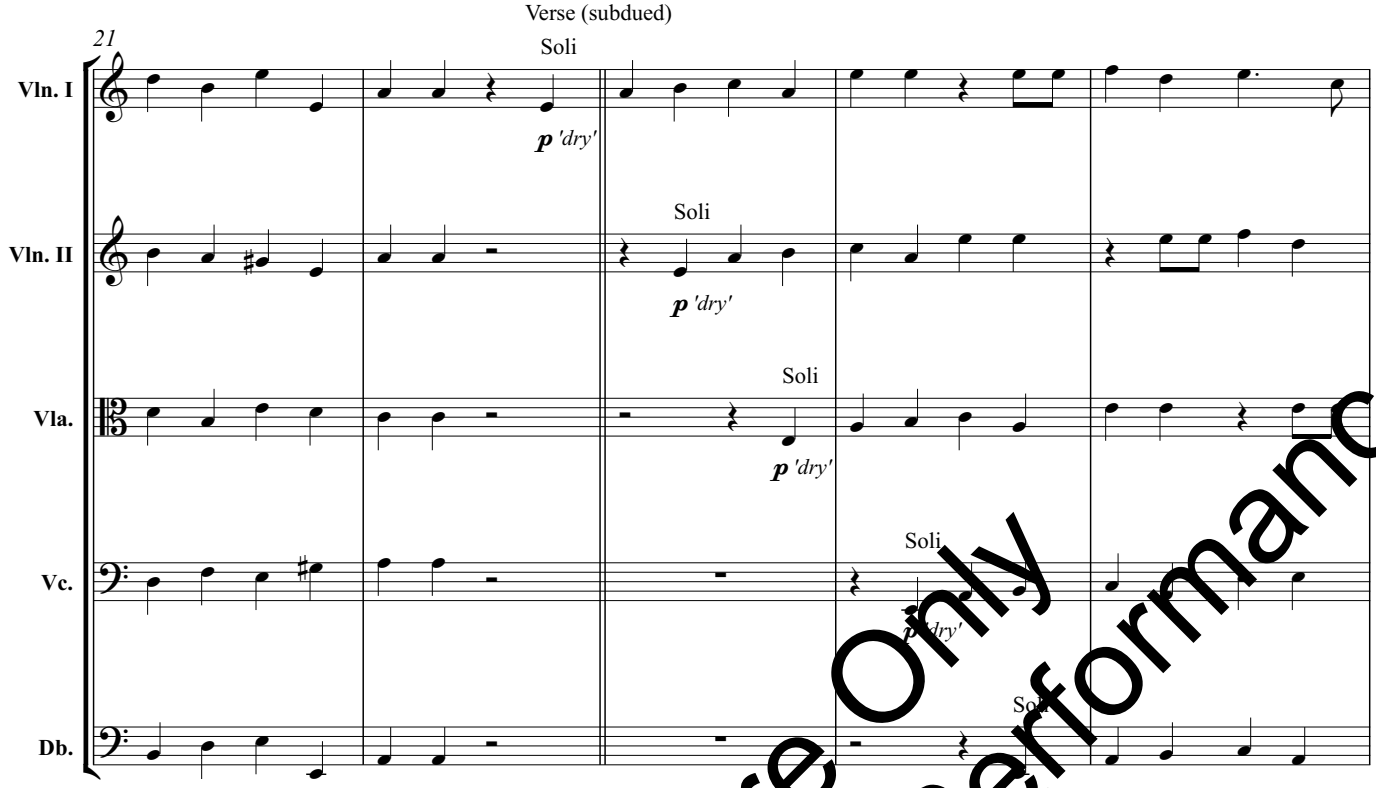
B

Verse (subdued)



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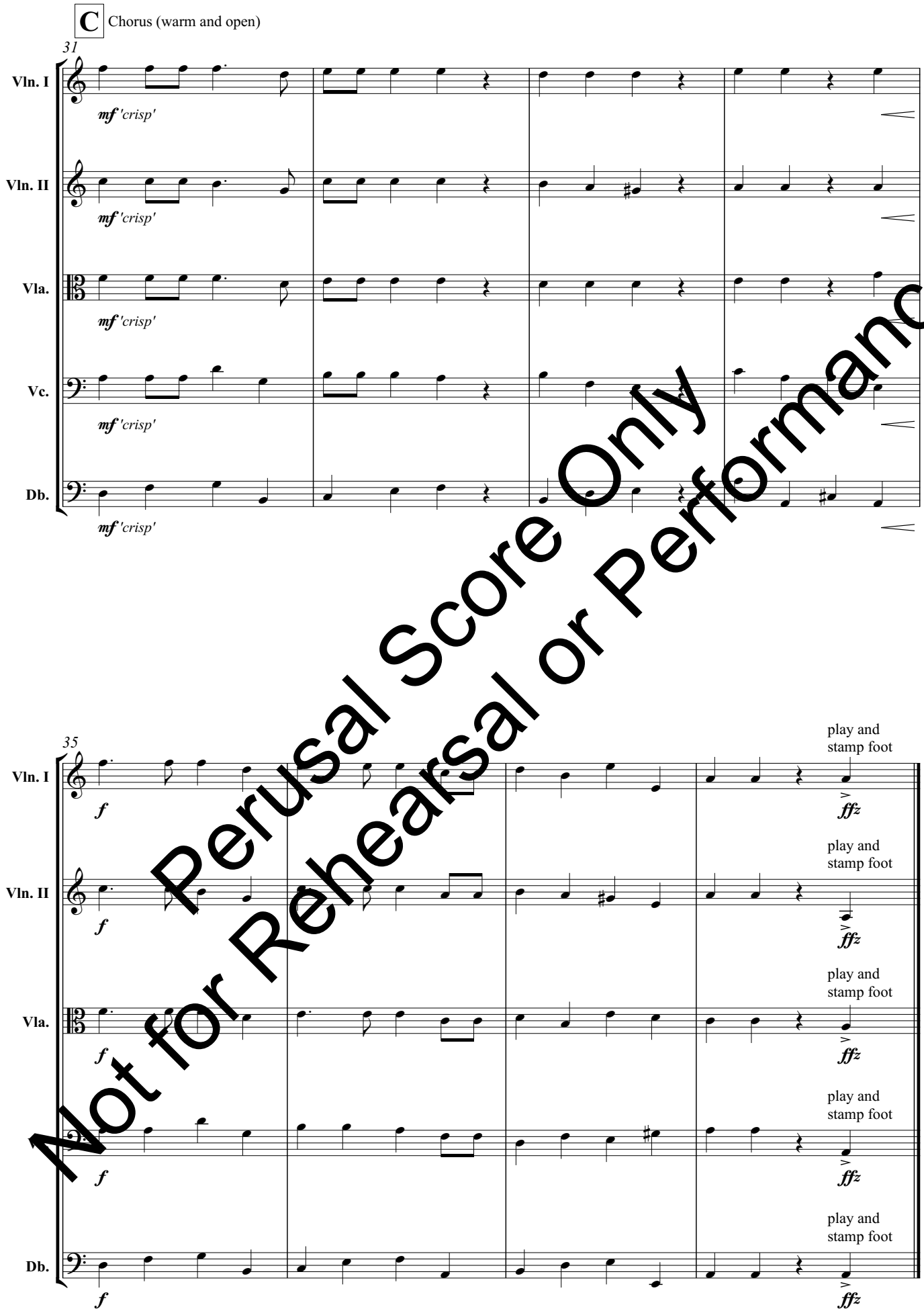

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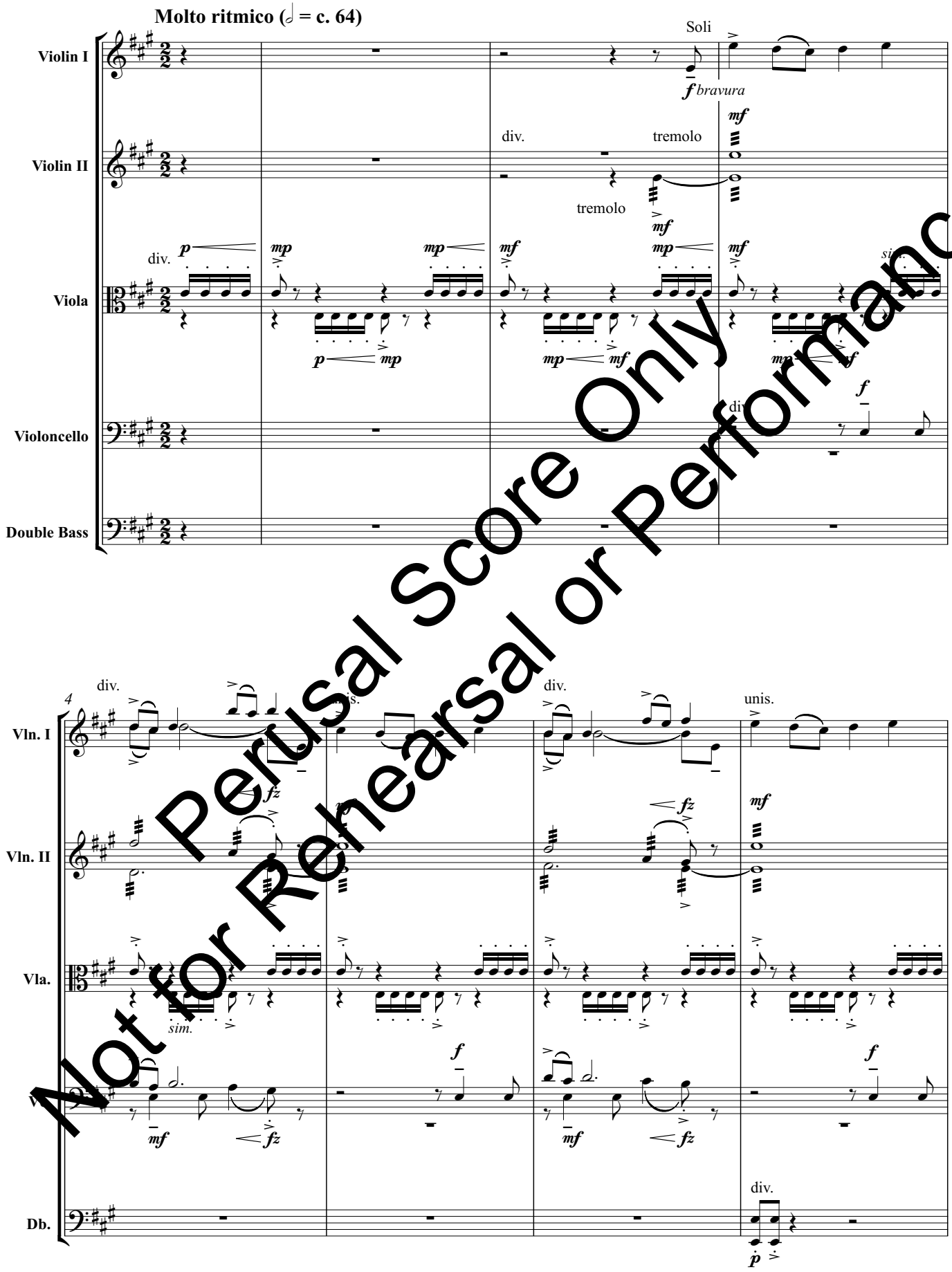
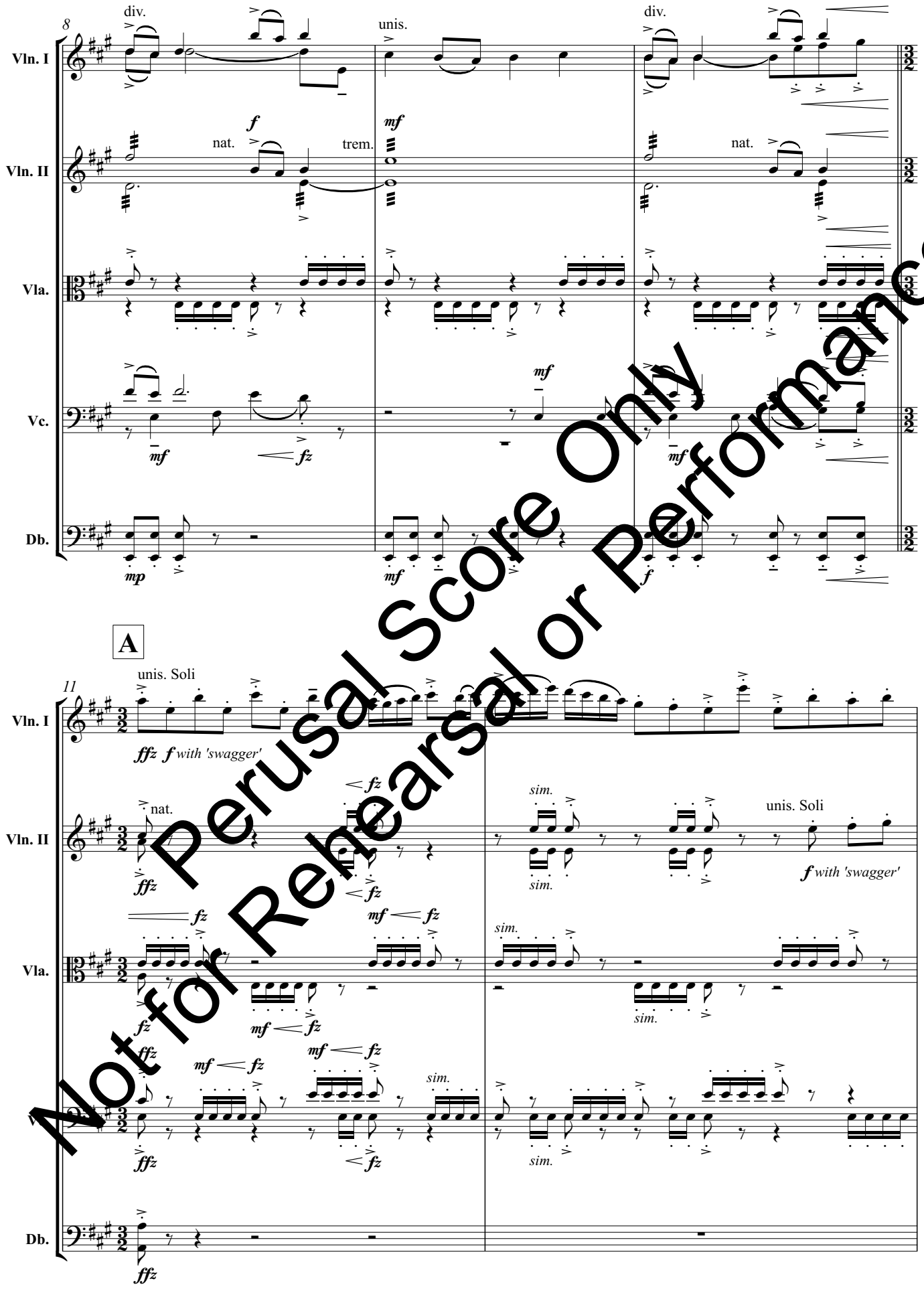
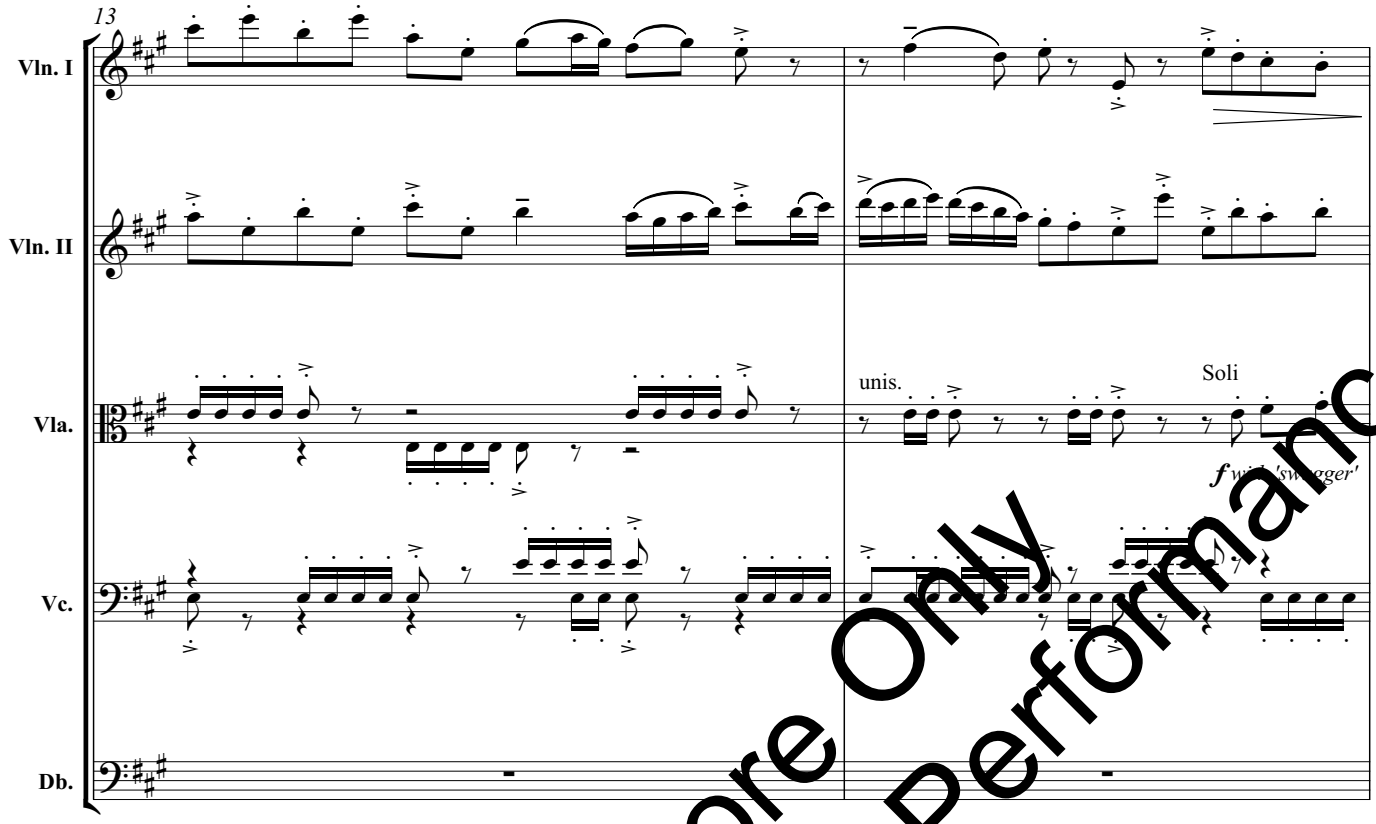
8. CURTAIN - 'LOATH TO DEPART'
(A Comedy of Errors)

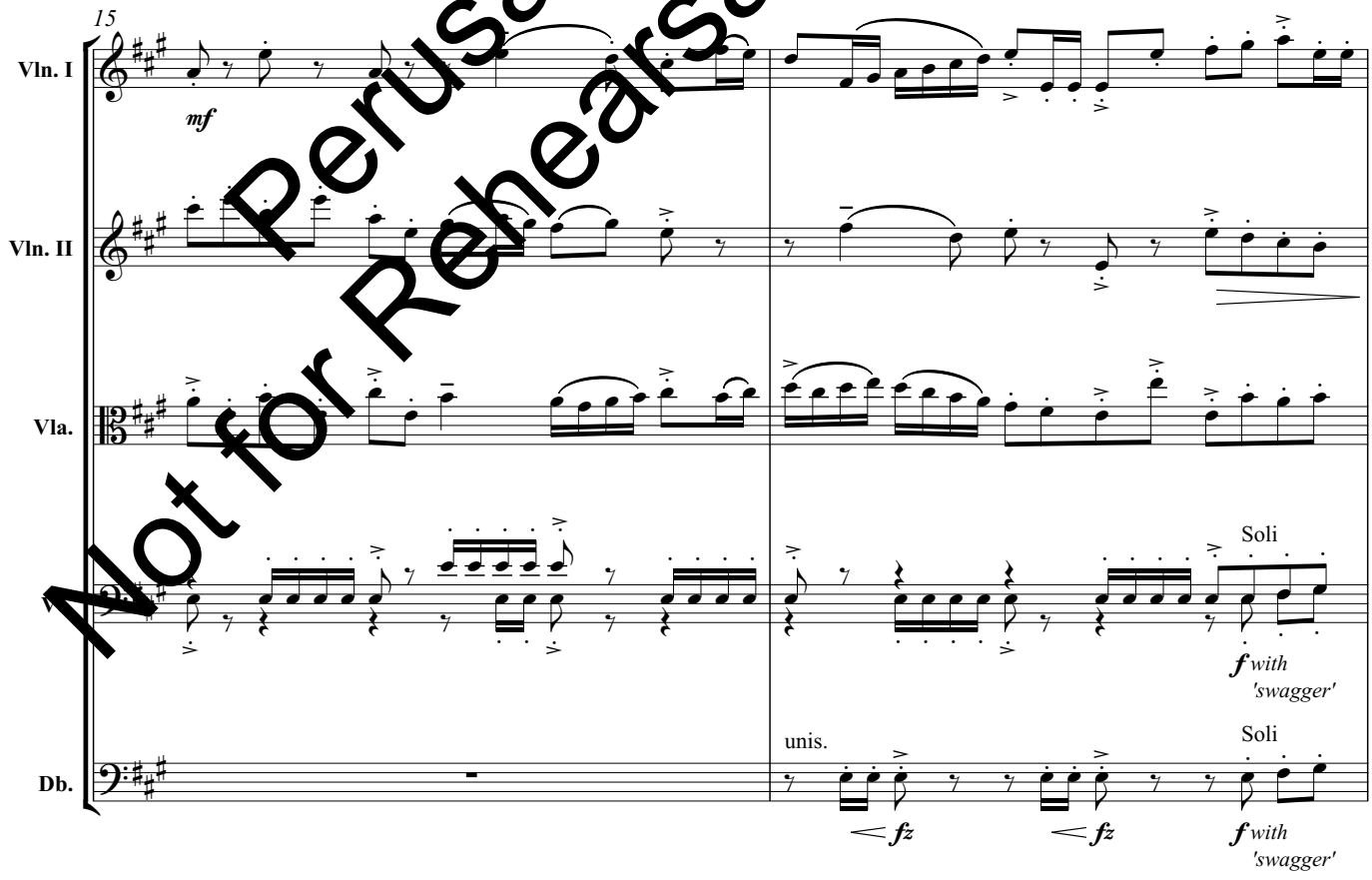


Not for Rehearsal or Performance
Perusal Score Only



Not for Rehearsal or Performance
Perusal Score Only





Perusal Score Only
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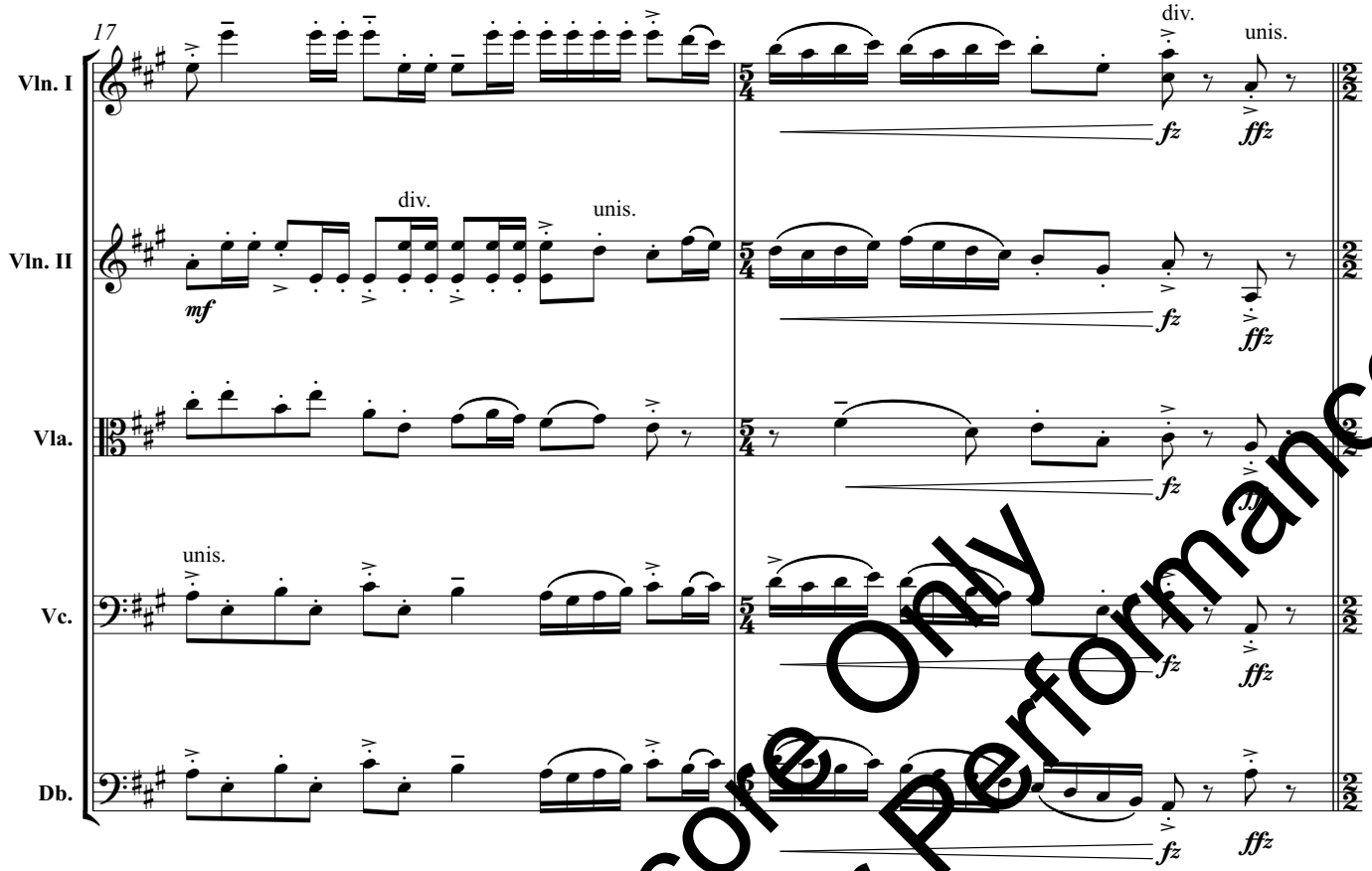
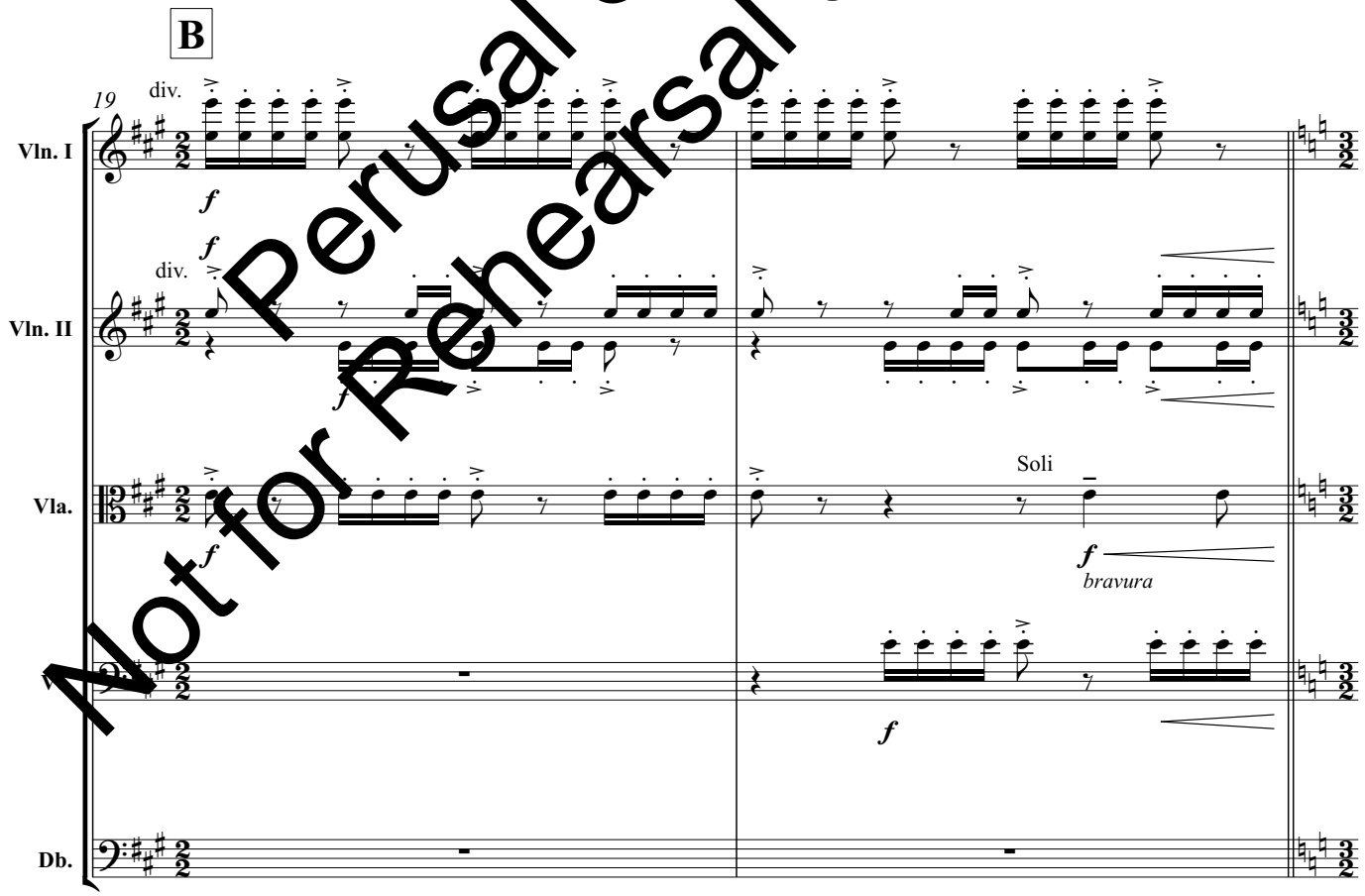
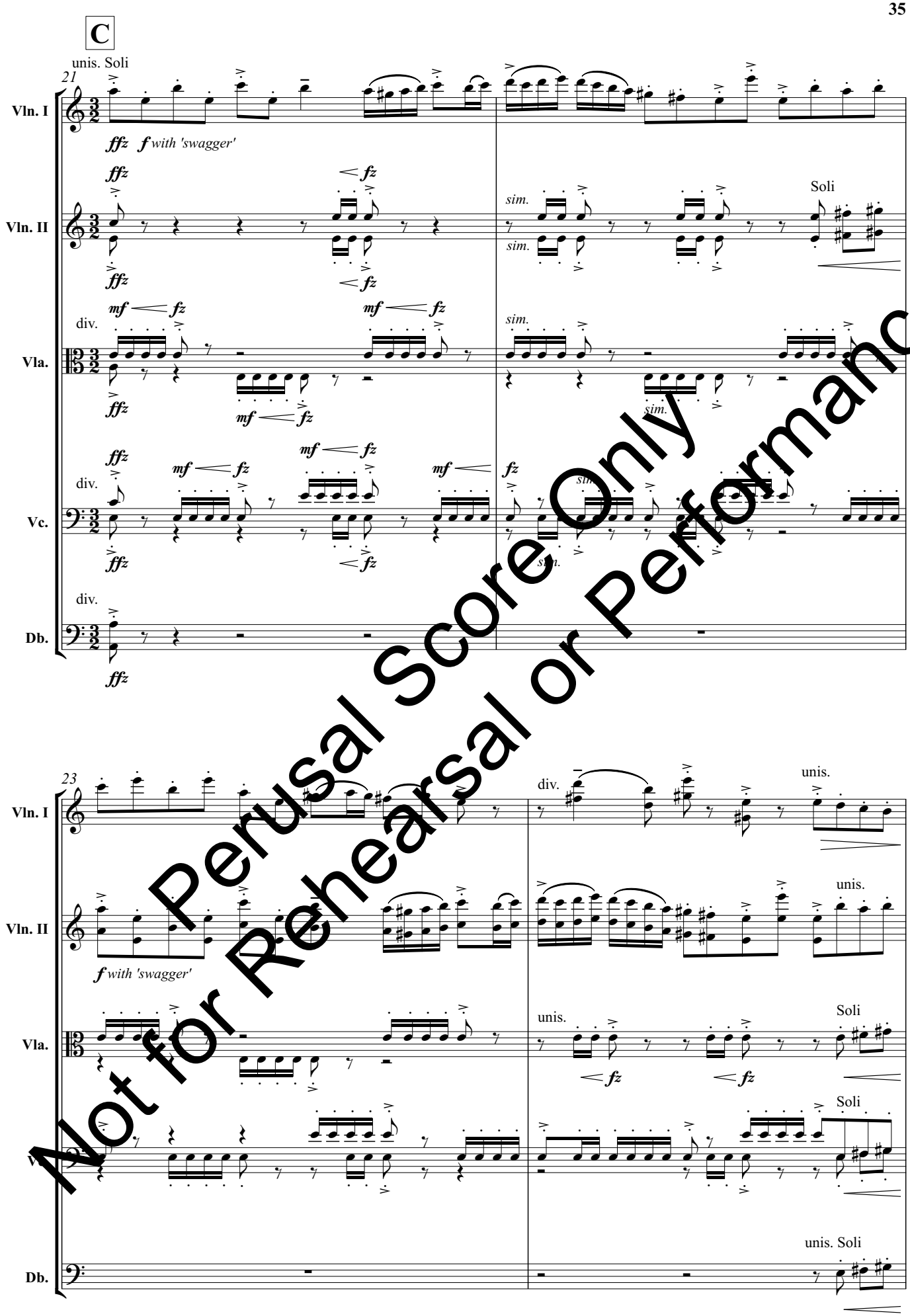
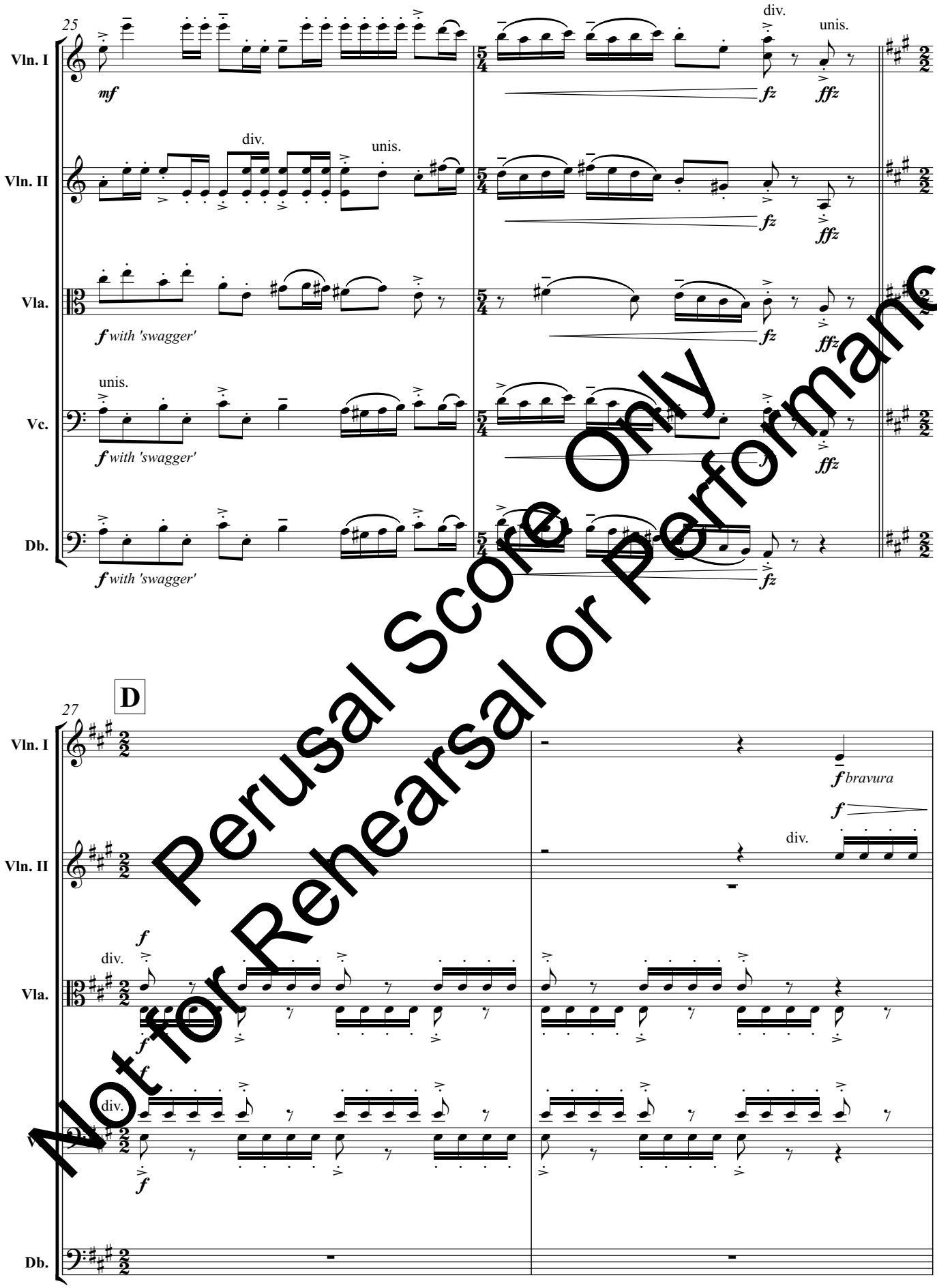




Not for Rehearsal or Performance
Perusal Score Only



Not for Rehearsal or Performance
Perusal Score Only



Perusal Score Only
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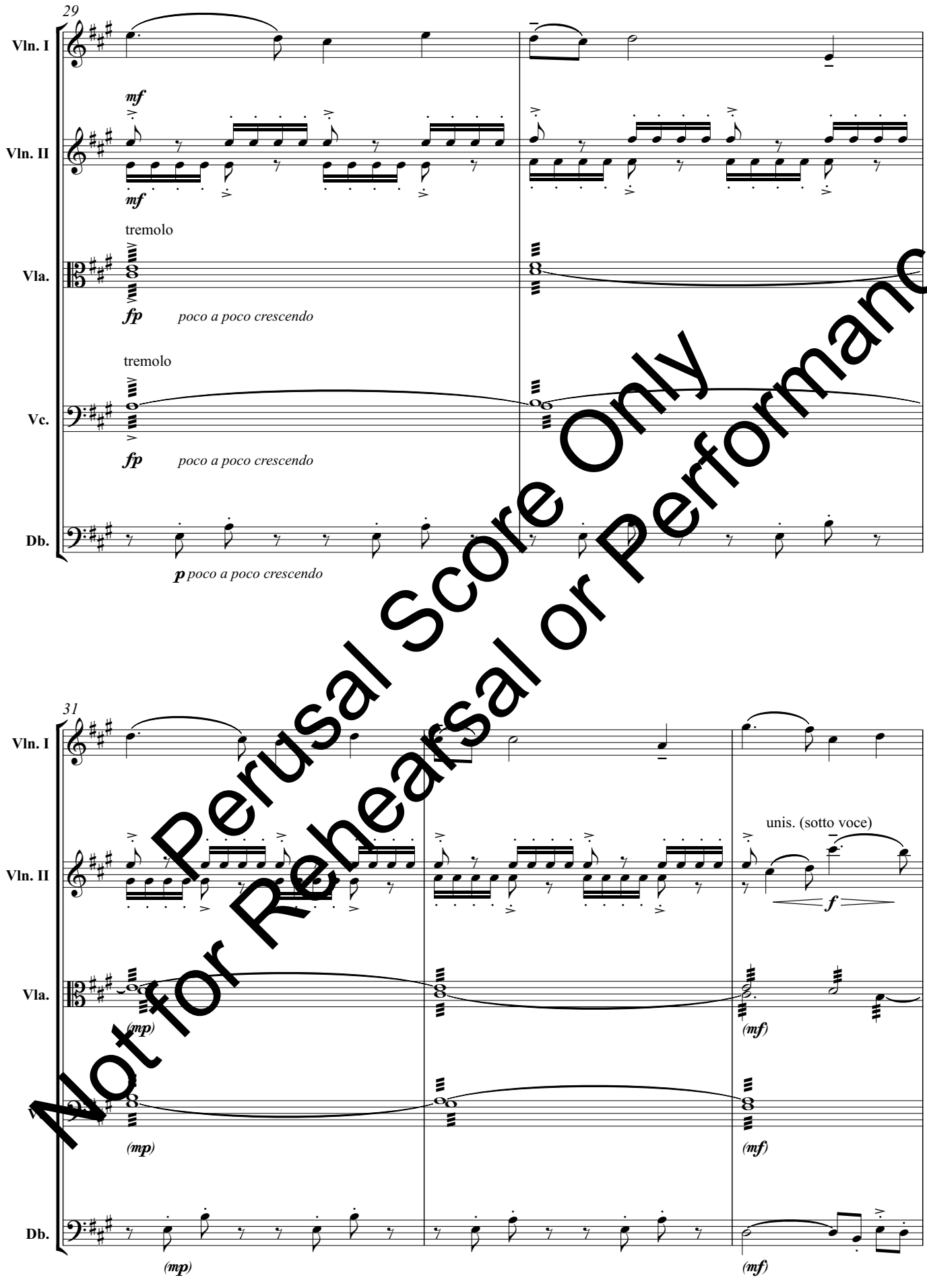
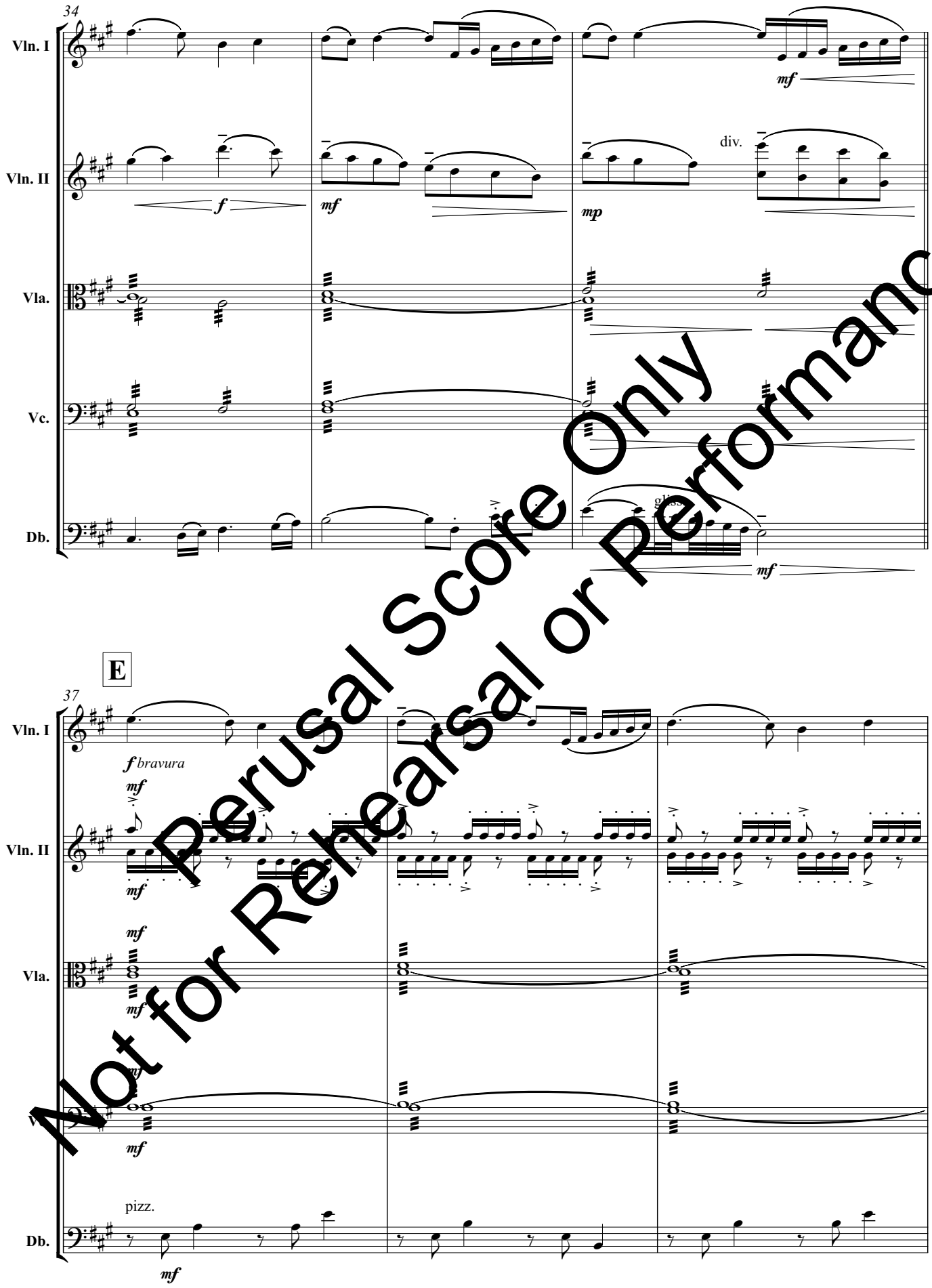


Not for Perusal Score Only
Rehearsal or Performance



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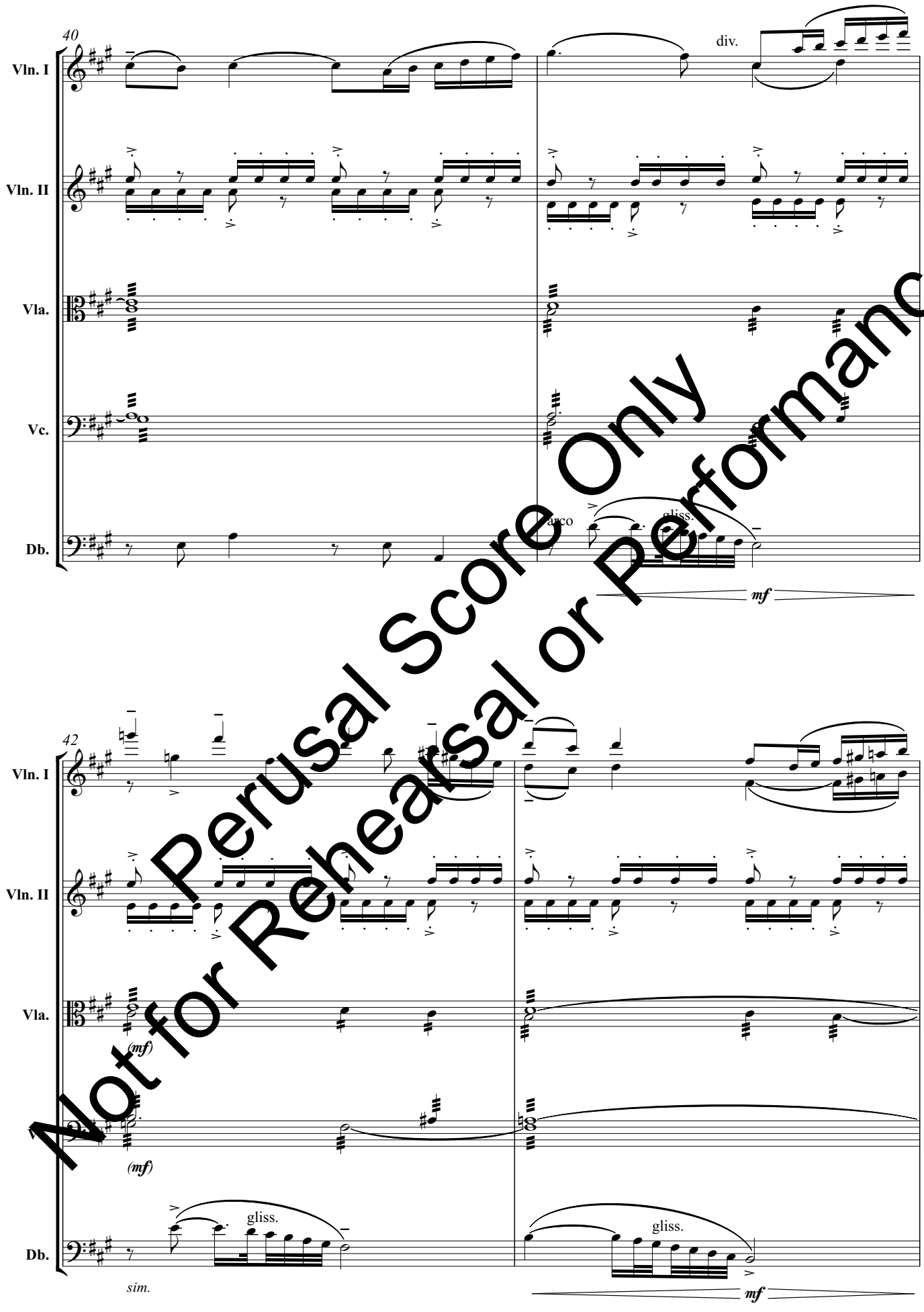

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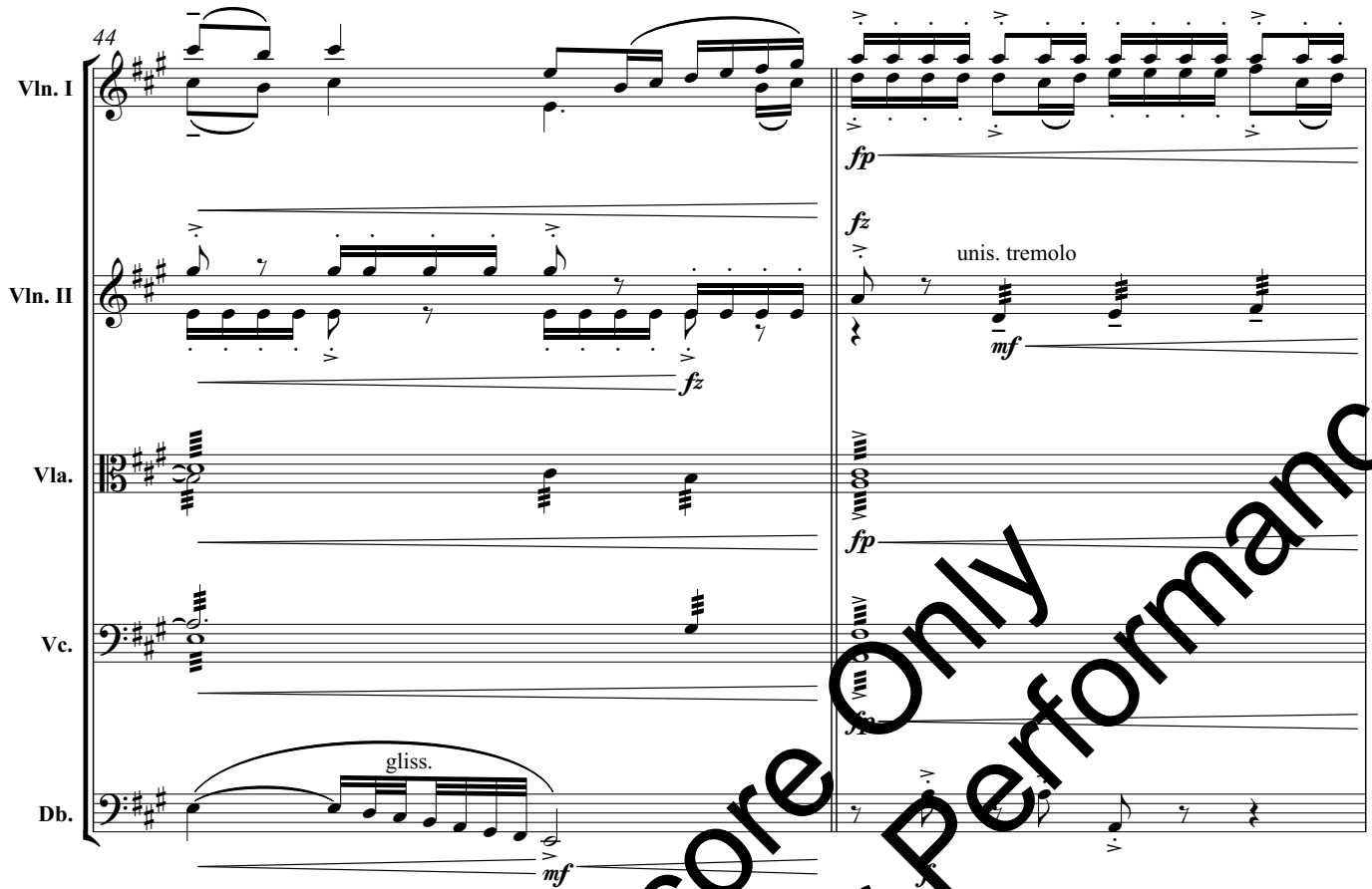
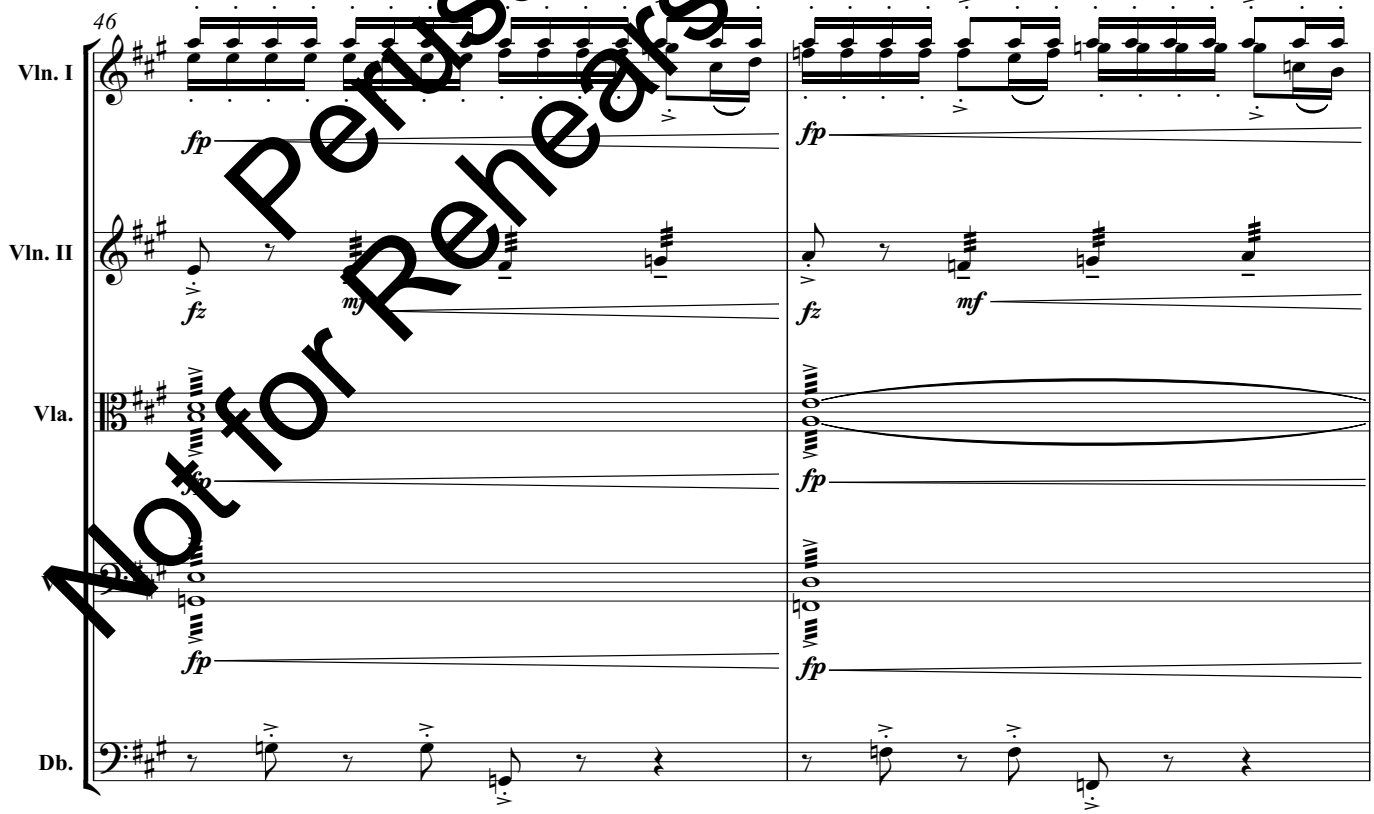
Perusal Score Only

F **Coda**





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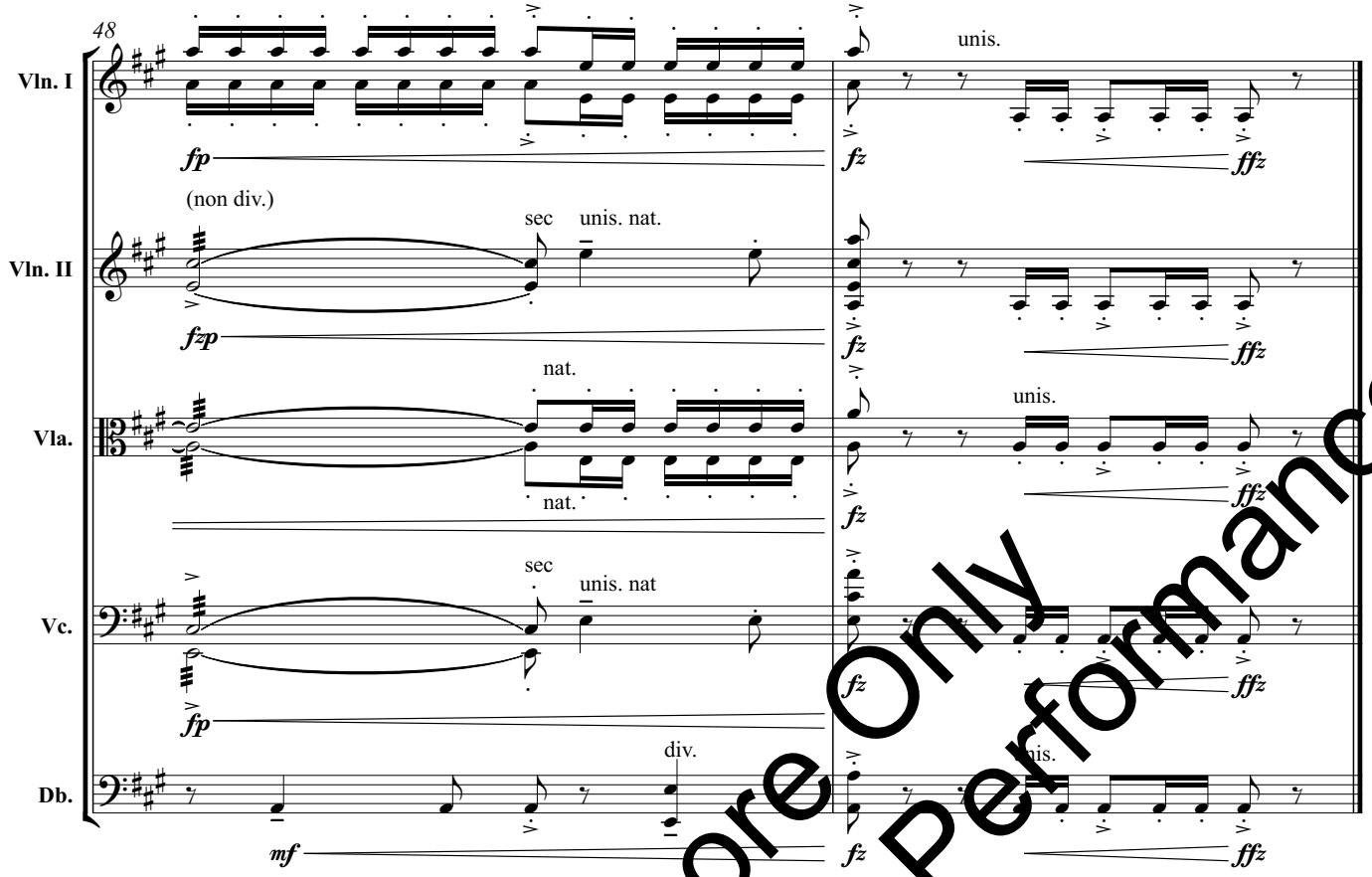

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