DAVID MATTHEWS

Symphony No. 4

Op.51

for chamber orchestra

(1989-90)

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FABER MUSIC

The *Fourth Symphony* was commissioned by the English Chamber Orchestra with funds provided by the Arts Council of Great Britain

The first performance was given by the English Chamber Orchestra conducted by Mark Wigglesworth in the Barbican Hall, London, on 28 May 1991

The *Fourth Symphony* is recorded by the East of England Orchestra conducted by Malcolm Nabarro on Collins Classics CD single 20082

Duration: c. 25 minutes

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First published in 1996 by Faber Music Ltd
3 Queen Square London WC1N 3AU
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ISBN 0571 51602 5

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ORCHESTRA

1 Flute (= Piccolo)
2 Oboes (2= Cor anglais)
2 Bassoons

2 Horns

6 Violins I
5 Violins II*
4 Viola
3 Cellos
2 Basses (both with C extension)

* When Violins II are marked div, players 1 & 2 take the upper part, 3-5 the lower part.

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PROGRAMME NOTE

In my first three symphonies I explored different ways of fusing the traditional movements of the classical sonata into one. My *Fourth Symphony* is in some ways closer to the classical archetype: it is divided into movements, and scored for a small orchestra of flute, two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, and strings – one that Haydn often used. There are, however, five movements not four, and two of them at least are somewhat unusual.

The first movement's unorthodox plan can be traced back to my experience several years ago of hearing a historical reconstruction of the first performance of Machaut's *Messe de Notre Dame*. The movements of the Mass appeared as islands of polyphony surrounded by plainsong: there were at least 20 minutes of plainsong before the Kyrie of the Mass began, so that the first chords had an astonishing impact, as if harmony had been discovered at that moment. I wondered if it might be possible to write a corresponding piece which was only a single melodic line until the end, when it would flower into harmony. My first movement doesn't exactly do that, as it proved impracticable within an orchestral texture; nonetheless, true harmony does not appear until the end of the movement. There are seven sections: numbers 1, 3 and 5 develop a melodic line, which is passed between the strings, and becomes more elaborate and toccata-like. Only in section 1 is it totally unaccompanied; in sections 3 and 5 there is a drone in the bass. Sections 2, 4 and 6 present a mechanical polyphony of wind solos over a wide-spread pedal, which moves up from C through C sharp to E flat. These pedal notes persist into the following sections: C and C sharp become the drones for sections 3 and 5 respectively; while in the final, seventh section the opening melodic phrase of the Symphony is harmonized in E flat major. This theme appears in various guises in all the other movements.

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The second movement is a short, energetic scherzo, which is based on a movement from my *String Trio* of 1989, and was the first movement to be written. Then comes a slow movement in song form, scored for the strings alone plus the 1st horn which enters towards the end to restate the main melody. This is initially presented by solo violin over a repeating bass derived from the first movement's opening phrase, and taken up at the end of the first section by solo viola. The middle section is a hushed fugato. The fourth movement replaces the classical minuet with a tango: it is disrupted by occasional extra beats, and at the end the predominant solo violin skitters off on a wild cadenza. There is a central trio, featuring the oboes. The finale is the most classical in feeling: it is a sonata allegro with a slow introduction (based on the opening of the Symphony) which recurs after the development. The main material of the Allegro, with its prominent horn calls, is deliberately Haydnesque, and the tricks played with the conventions of sonata form are perhaps in his spirit: for example, a triple-bluff repeat of the exposition (it will repeat – no it won't – yes it will – but it isn't exact!). The recapitulation is dispensed with in favour of a coda, whose lusher harmonic textures complement the end of the first movement.

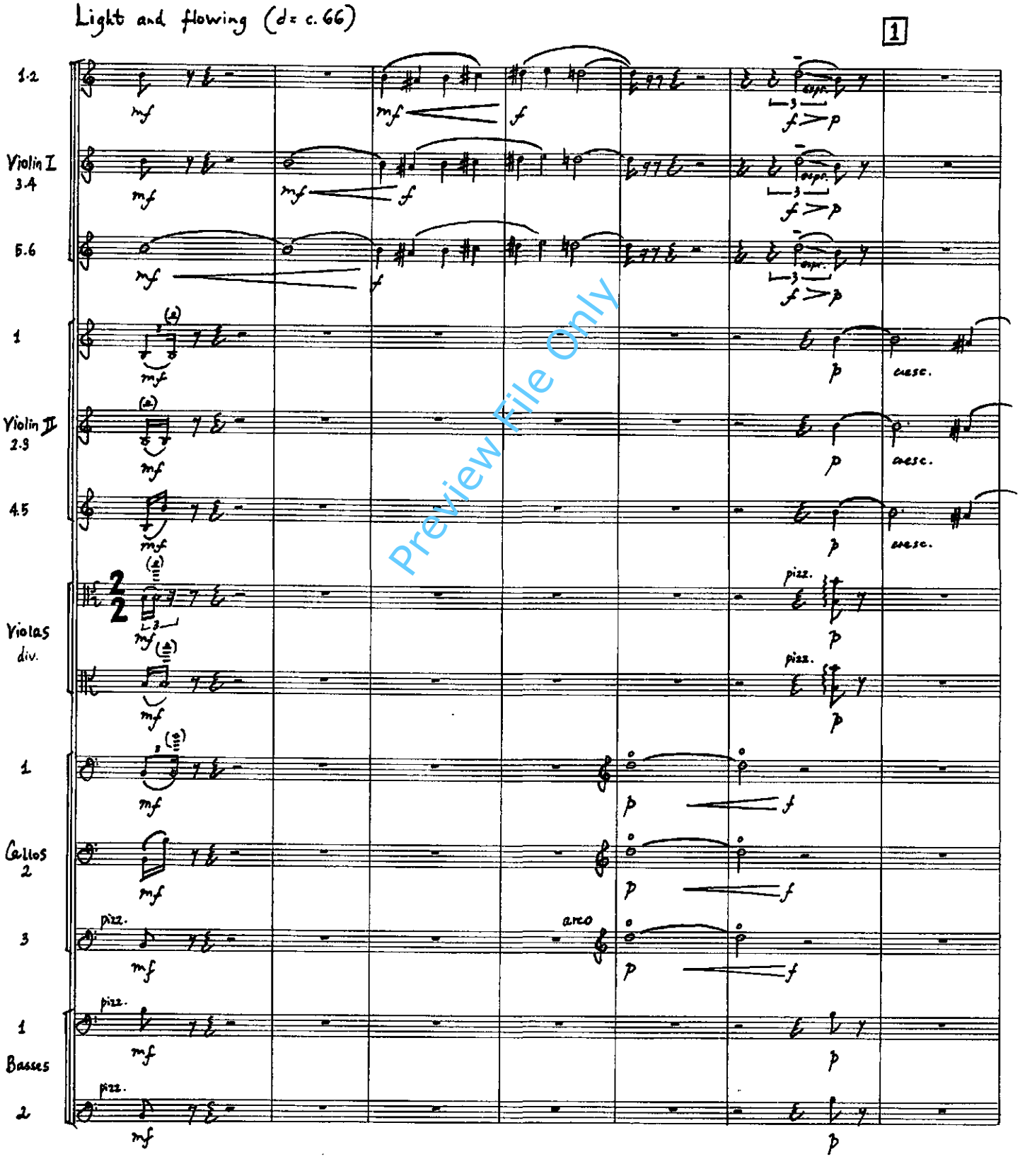
D.M.

to Quintin Ballardie

SYMPHONY No. 4

David Matthews, op. 51

I



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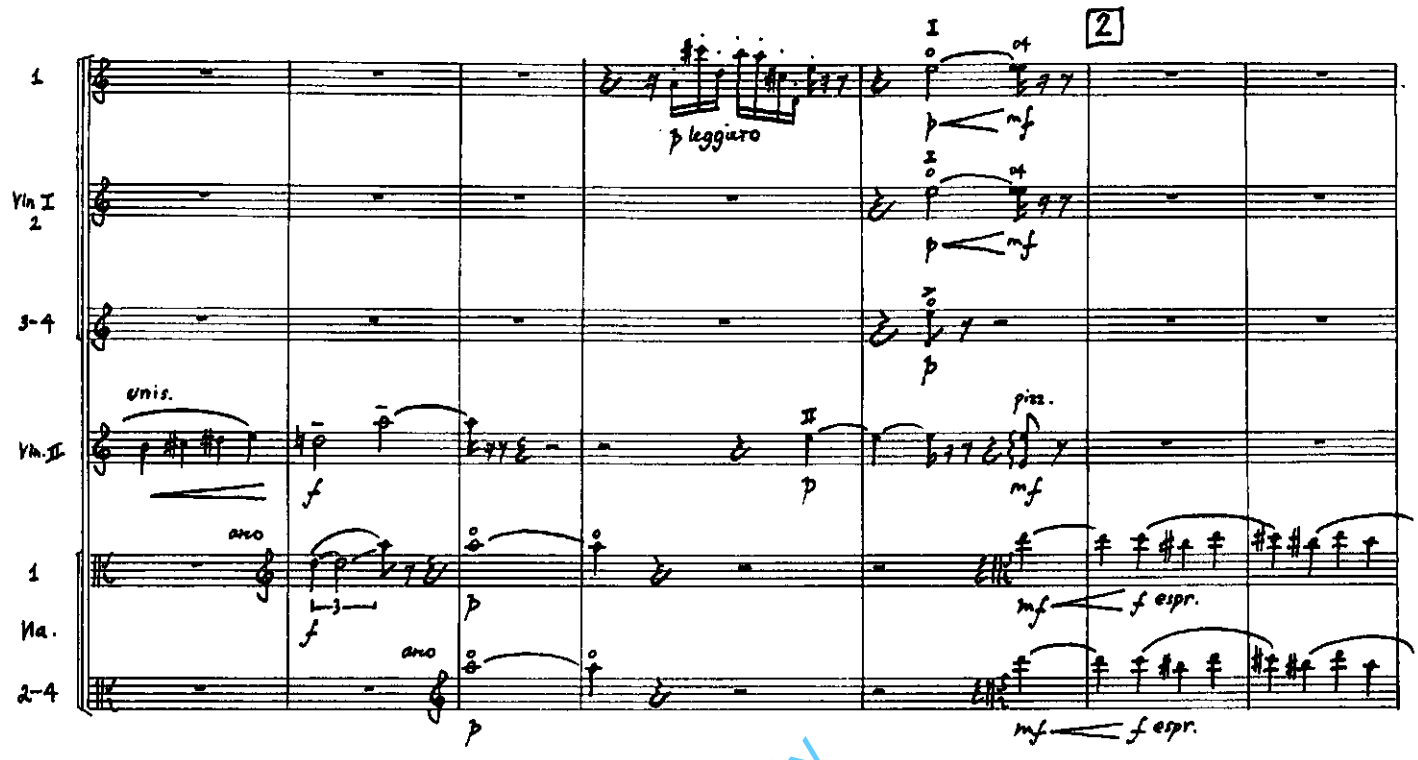

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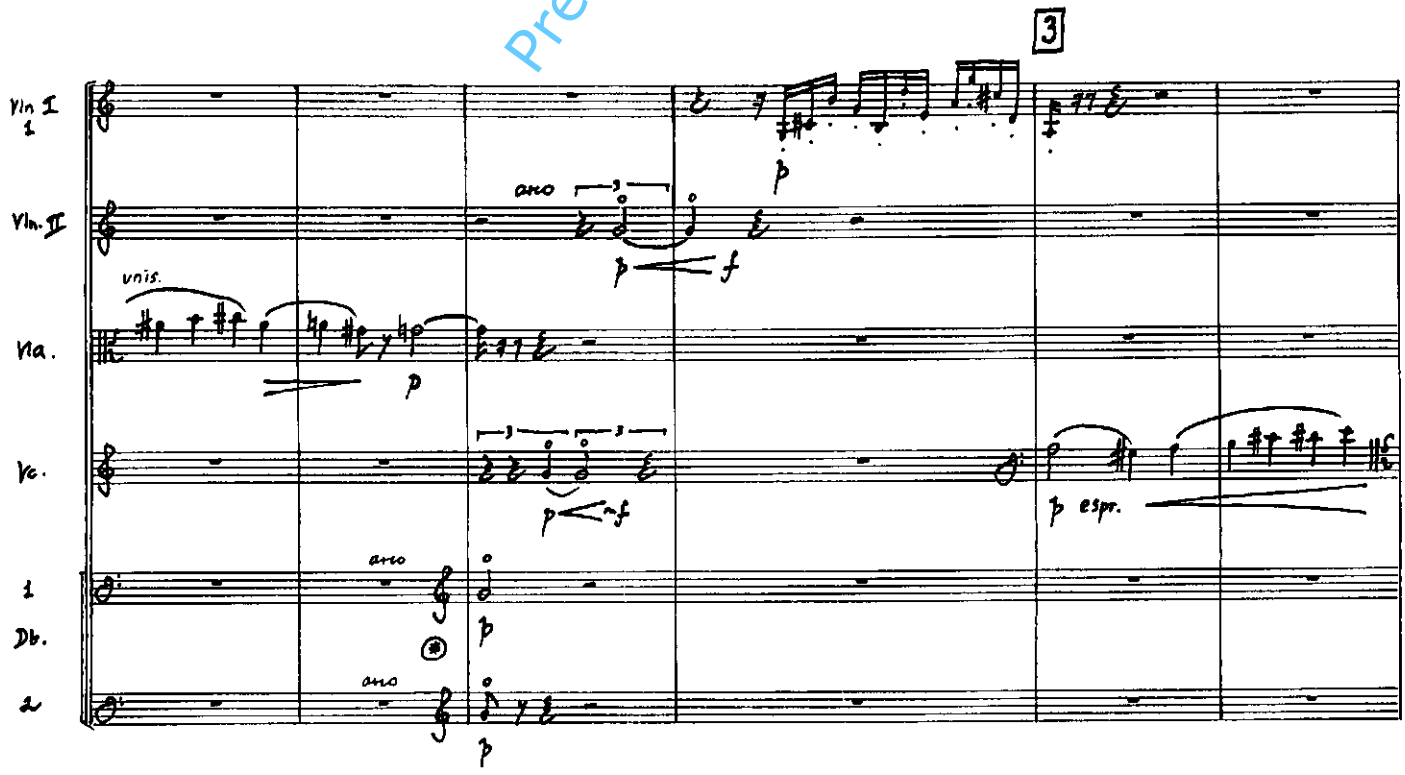
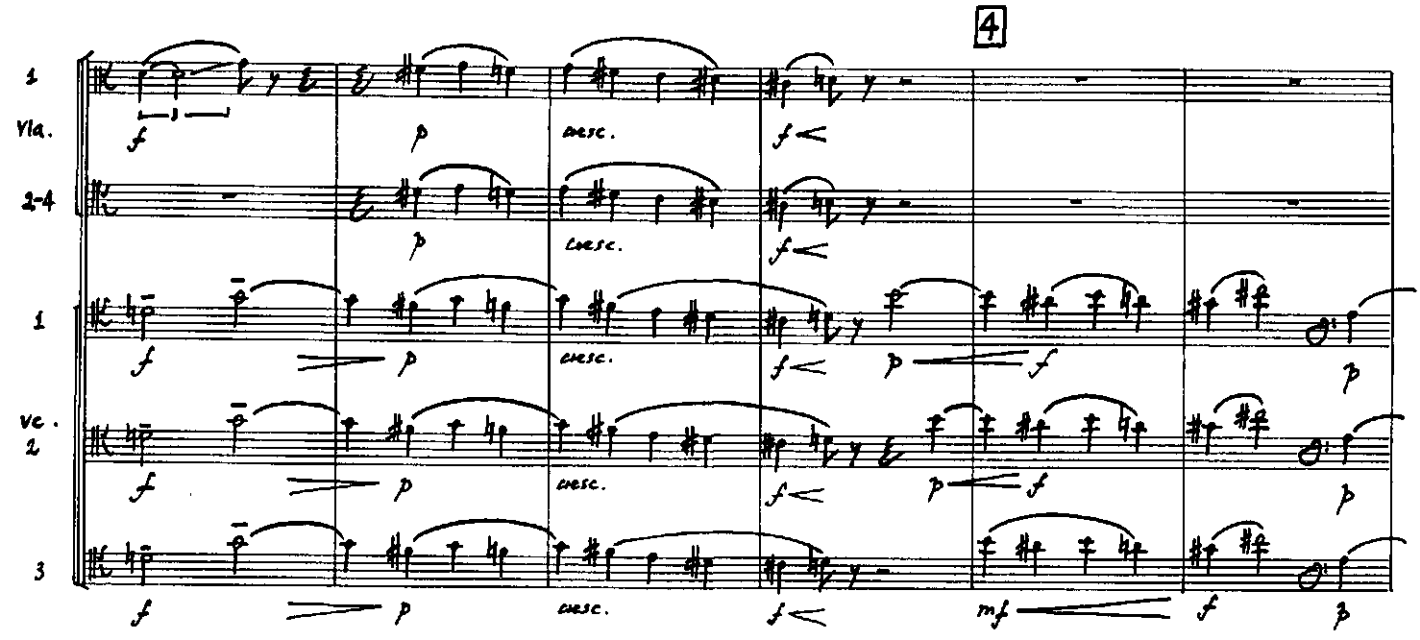
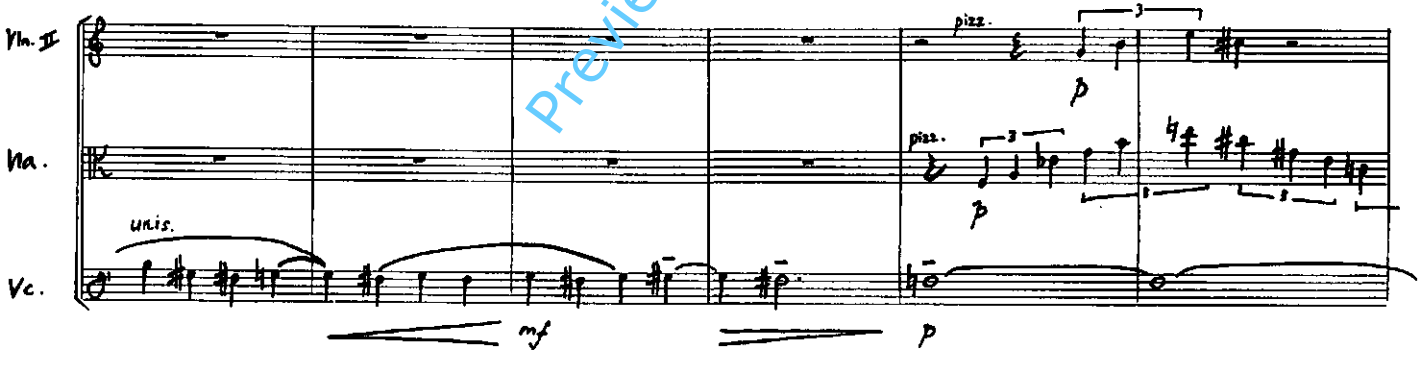


(#) Harmonics in treble clef sound as written.





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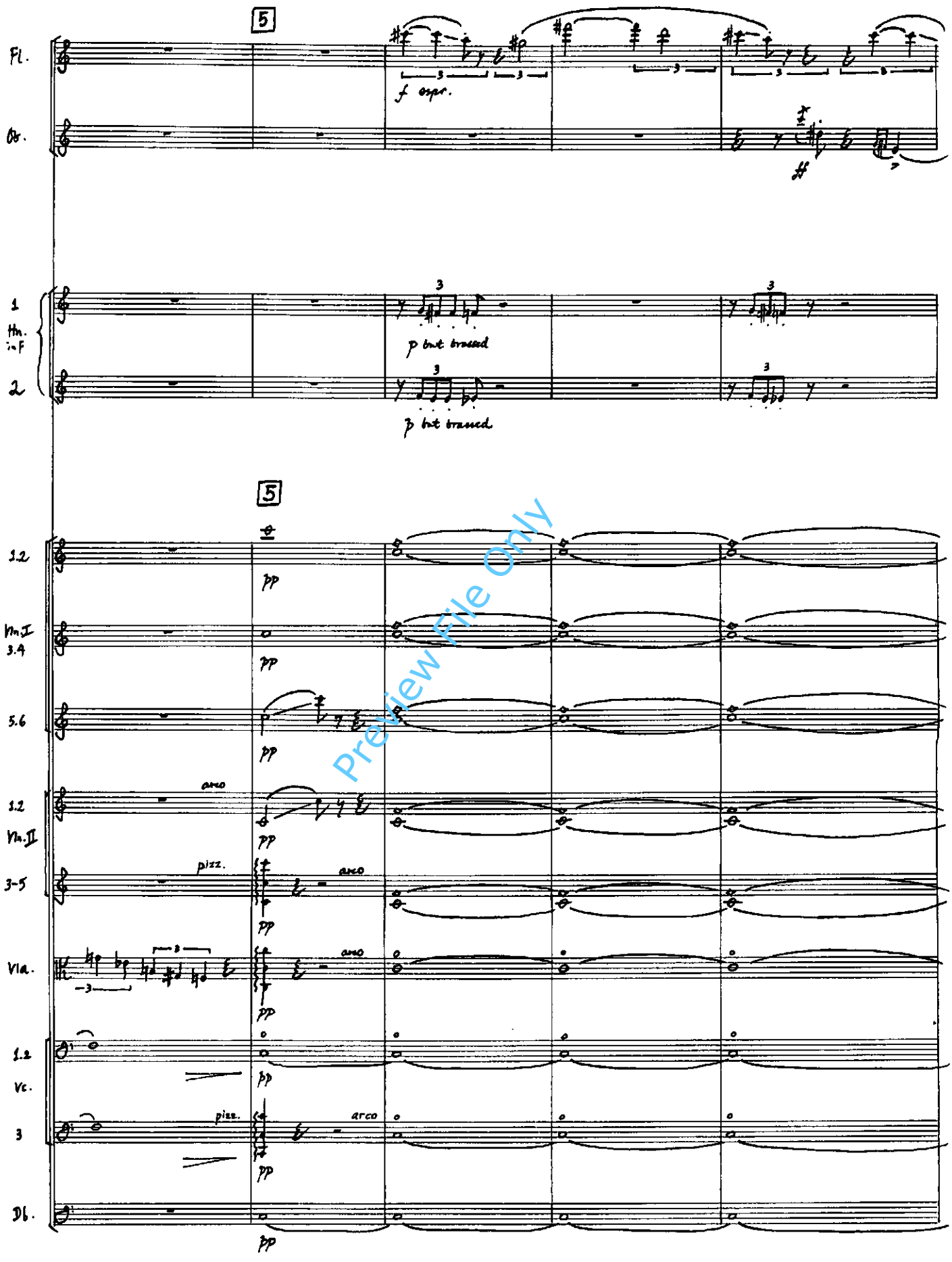

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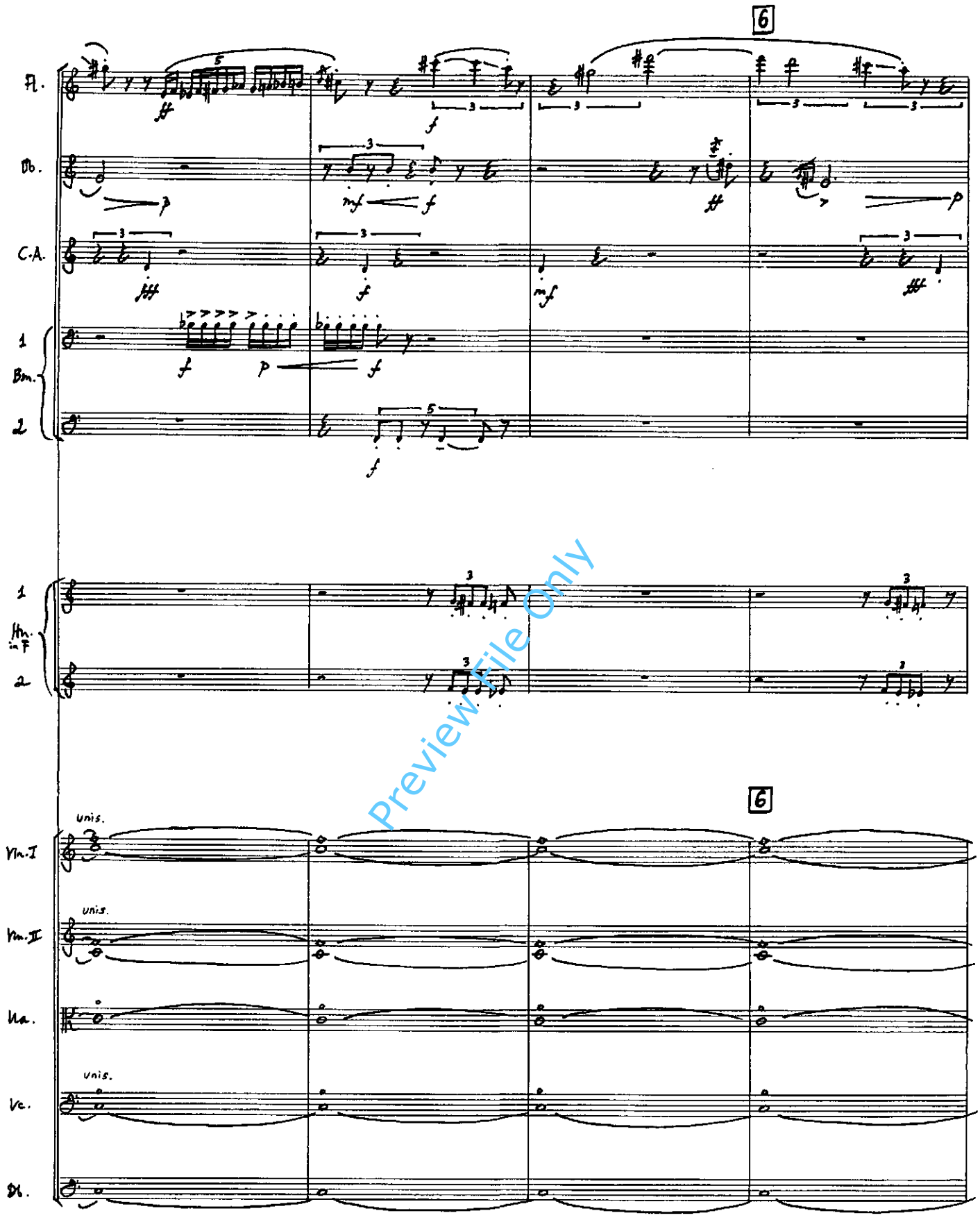

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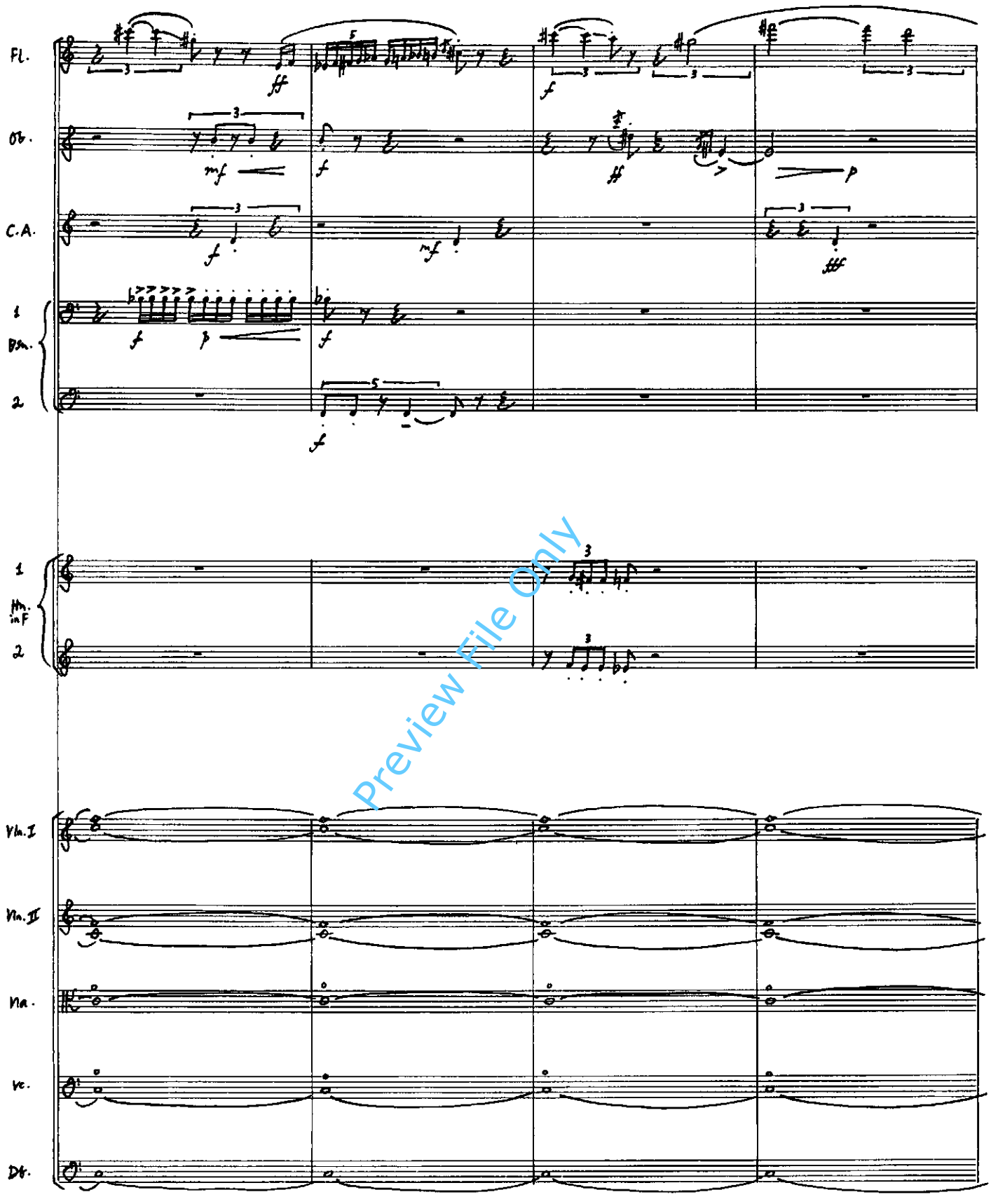

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II

Hard driving and rhythmic (dsc. 152)

Picc.

1
Ob.
2

1
Bsn.
2

1
Hn. in F
2

Hard driving and rhythmic (♩ = c. 152)

1

2
Vln. I

3.4.

5.6

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

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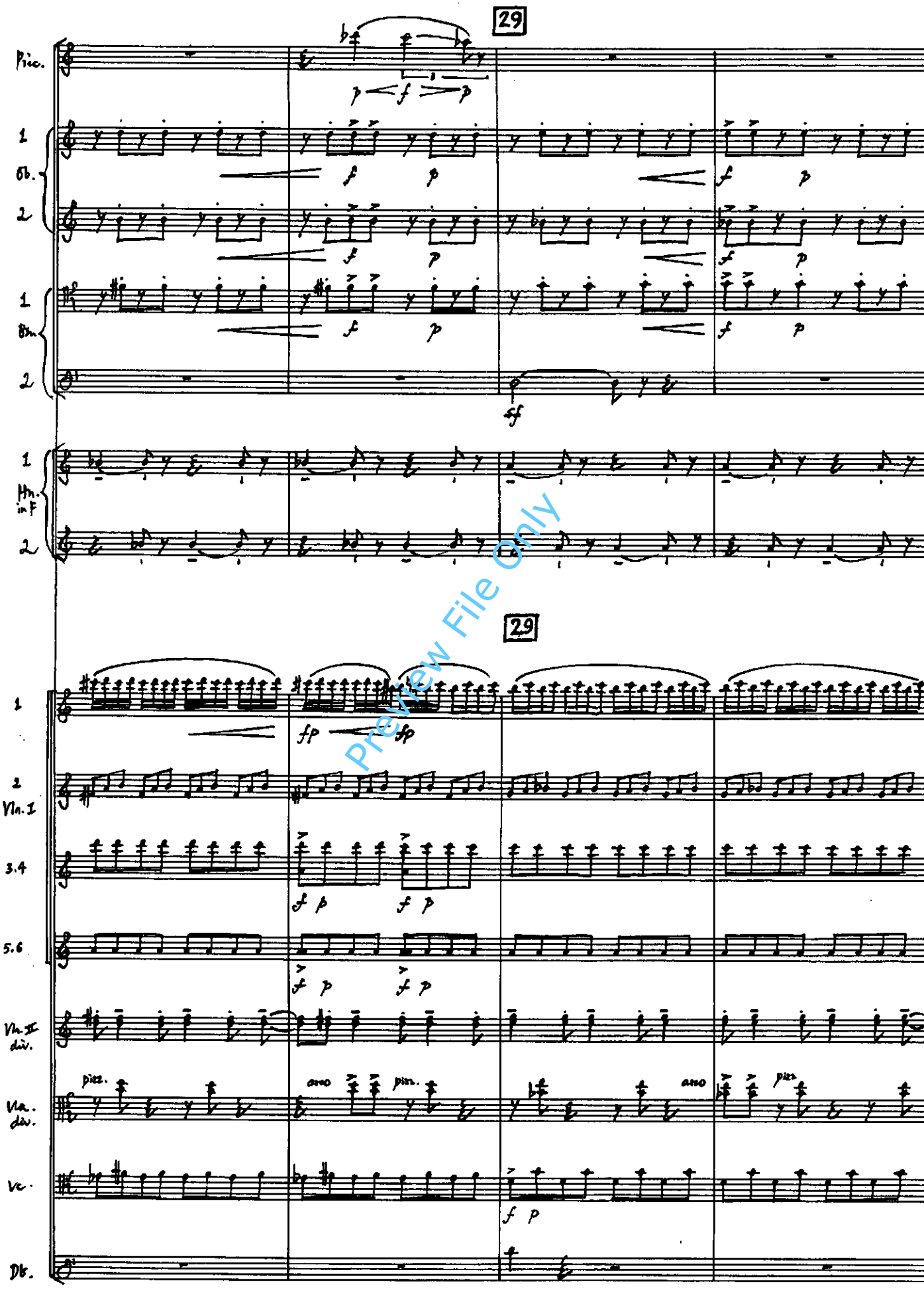

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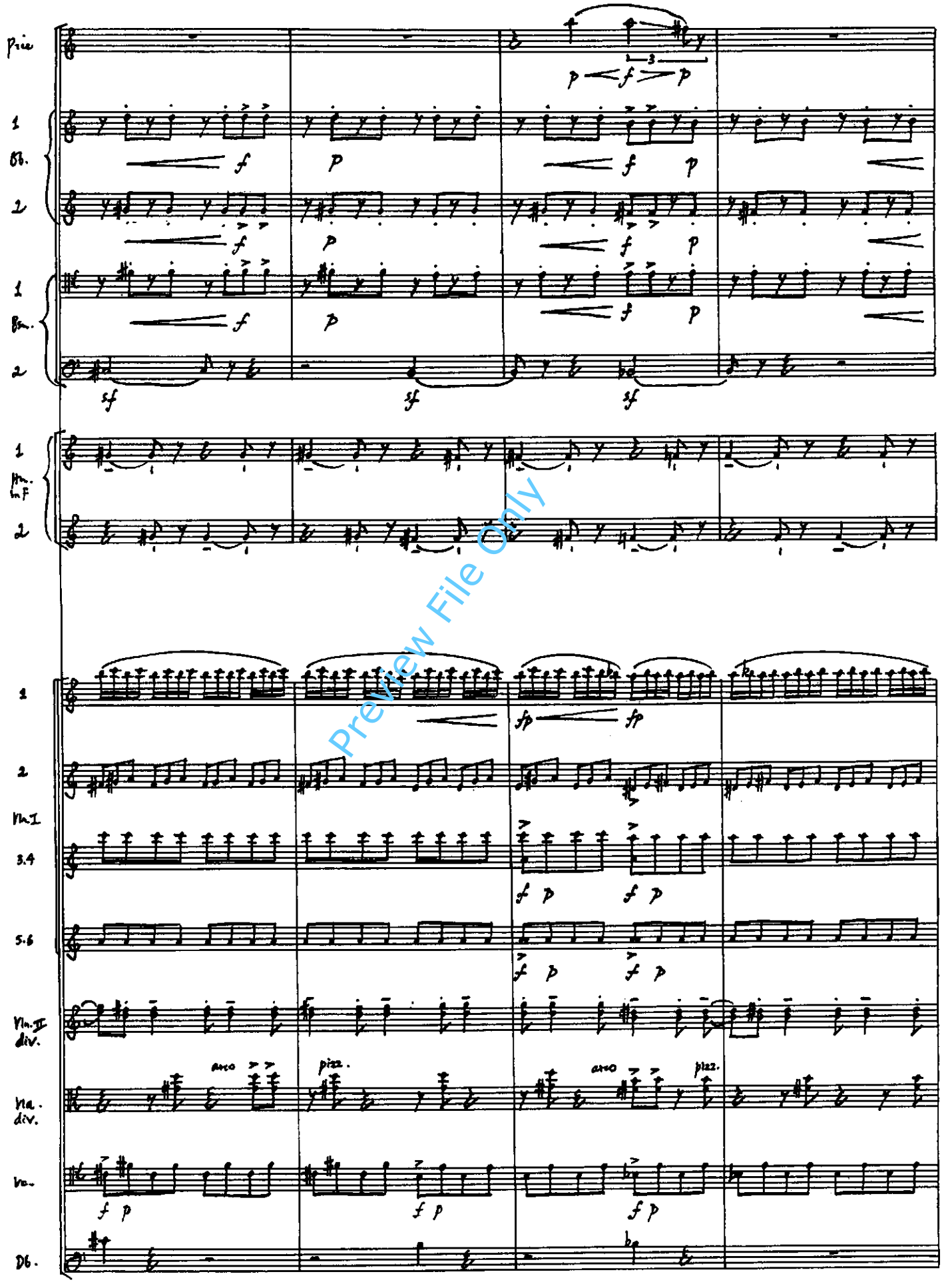

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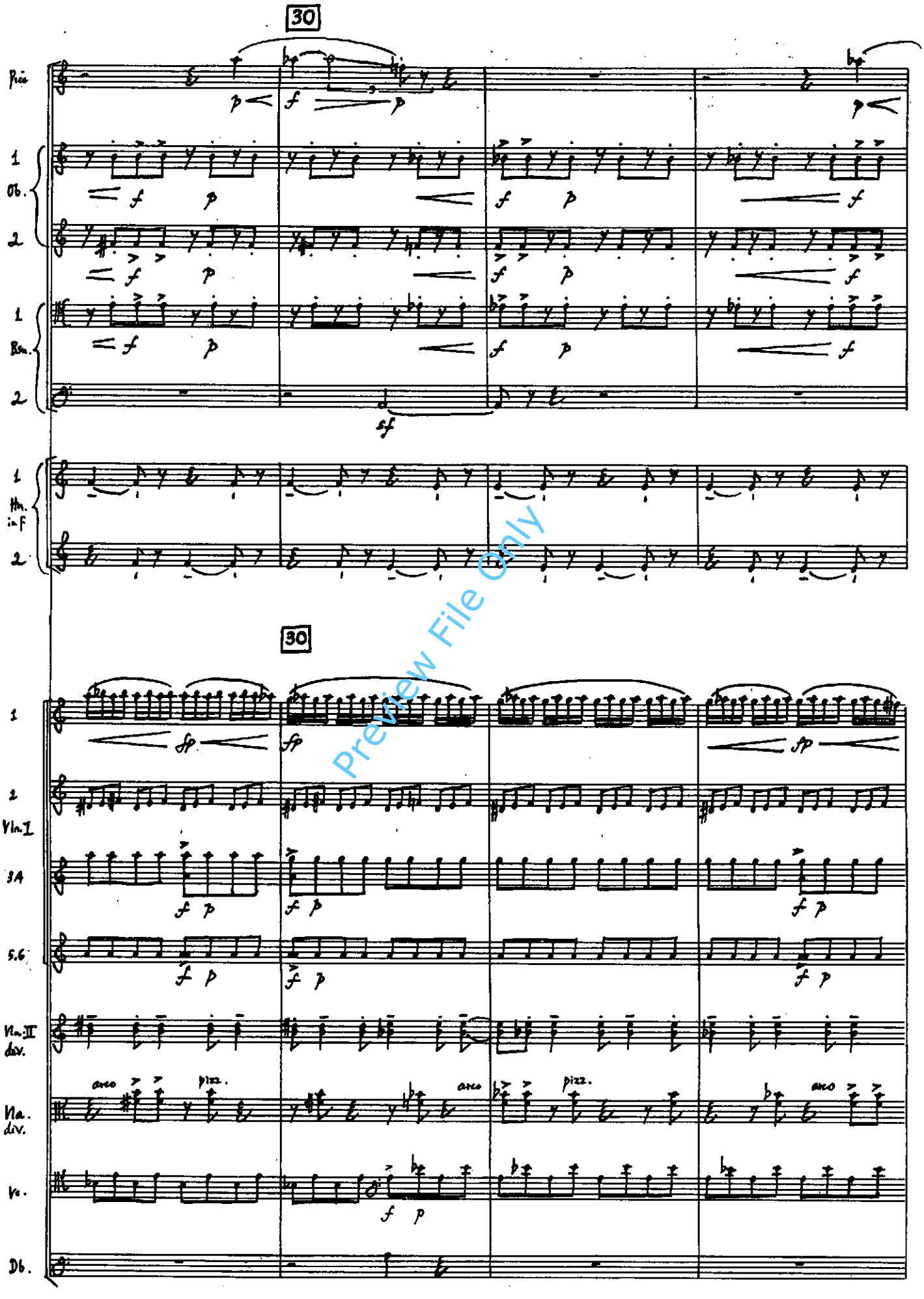

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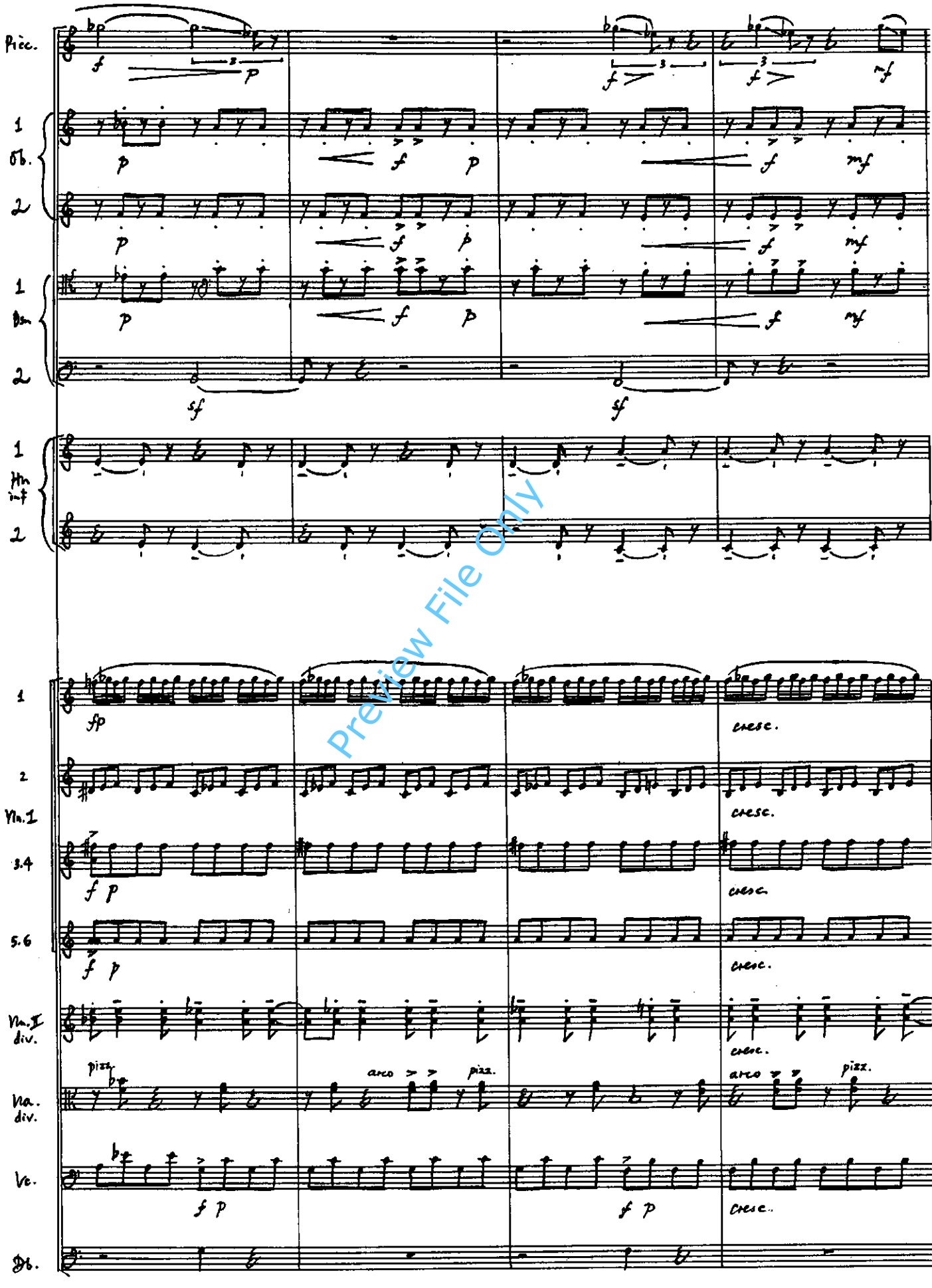

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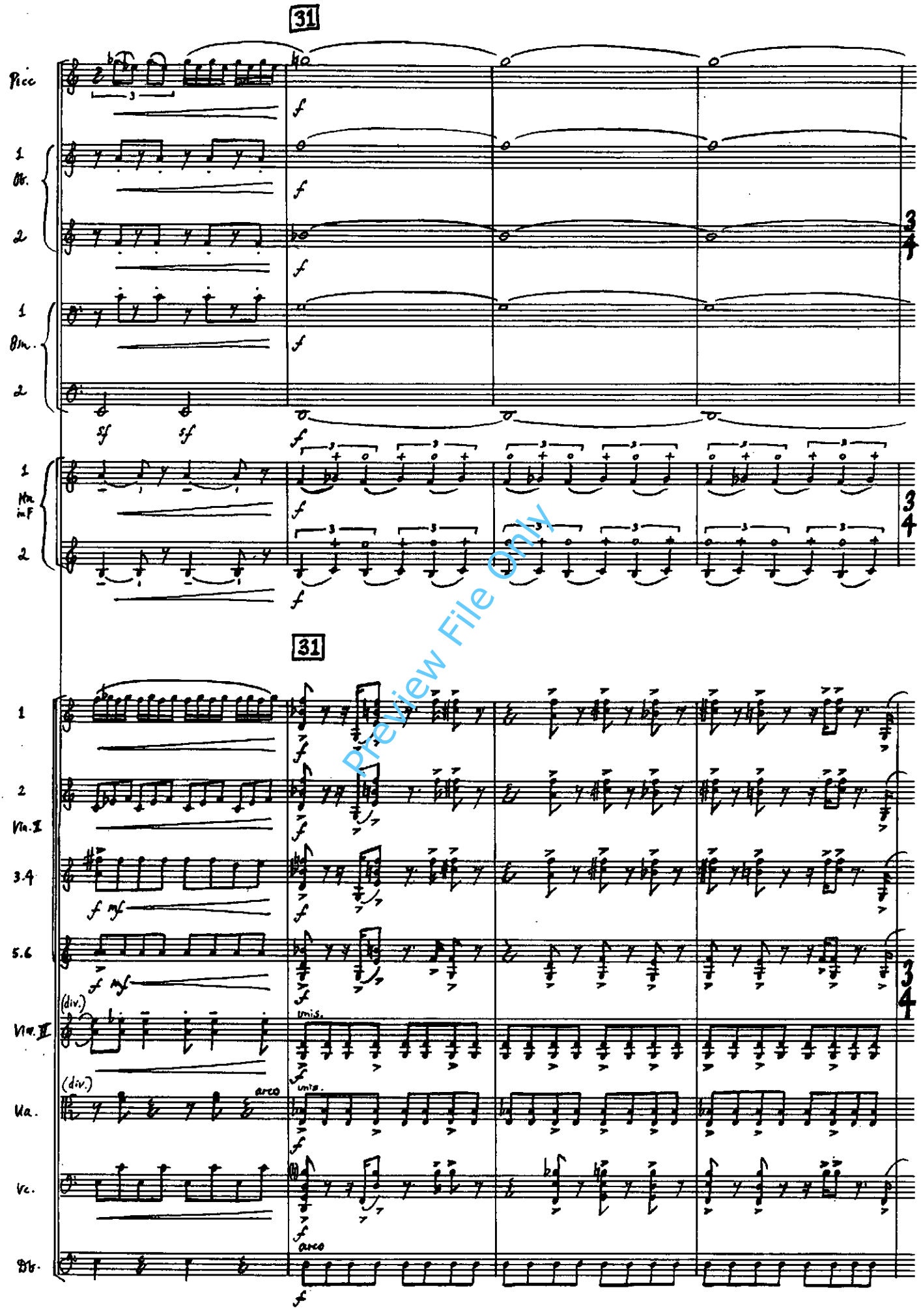

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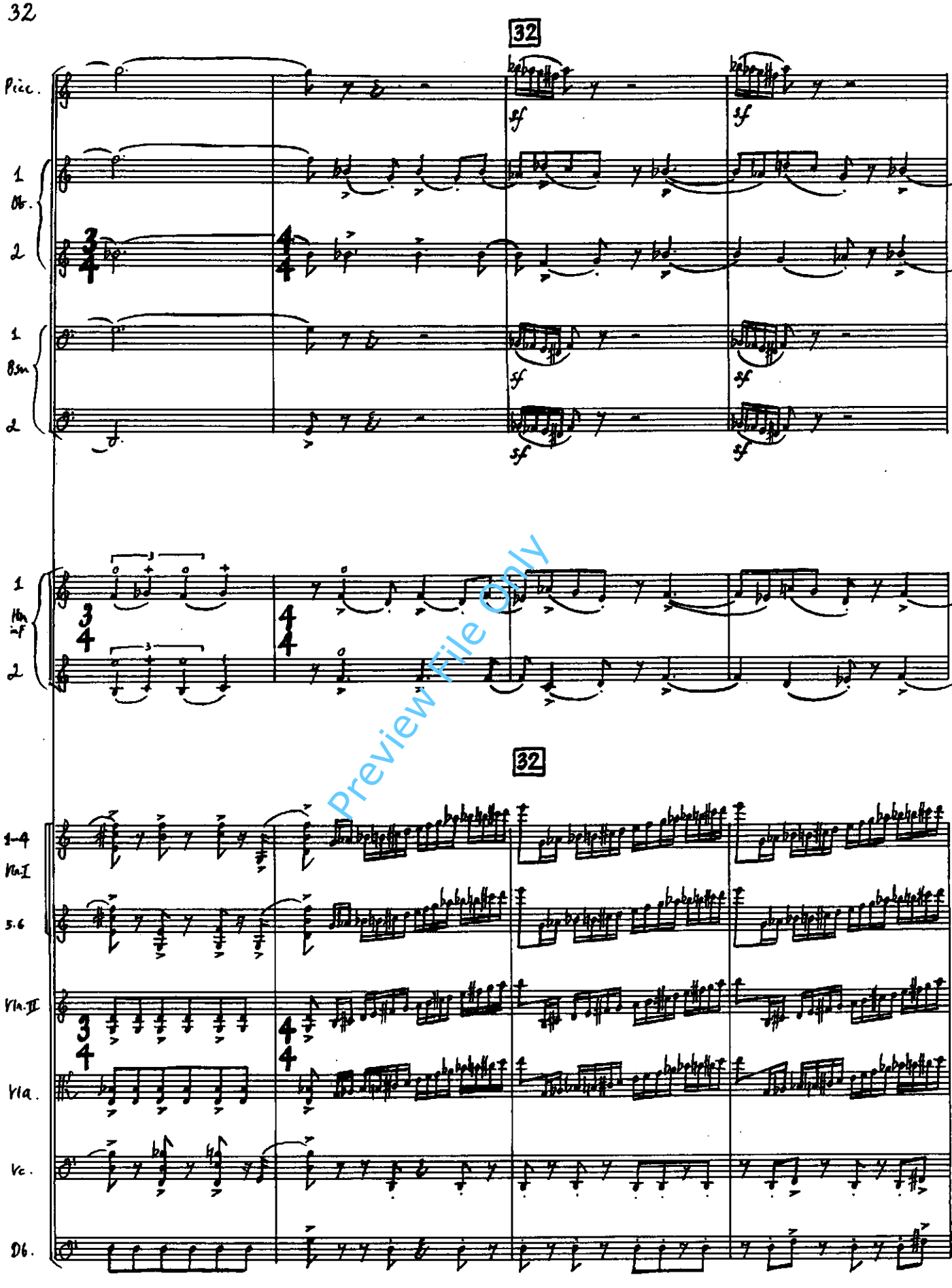

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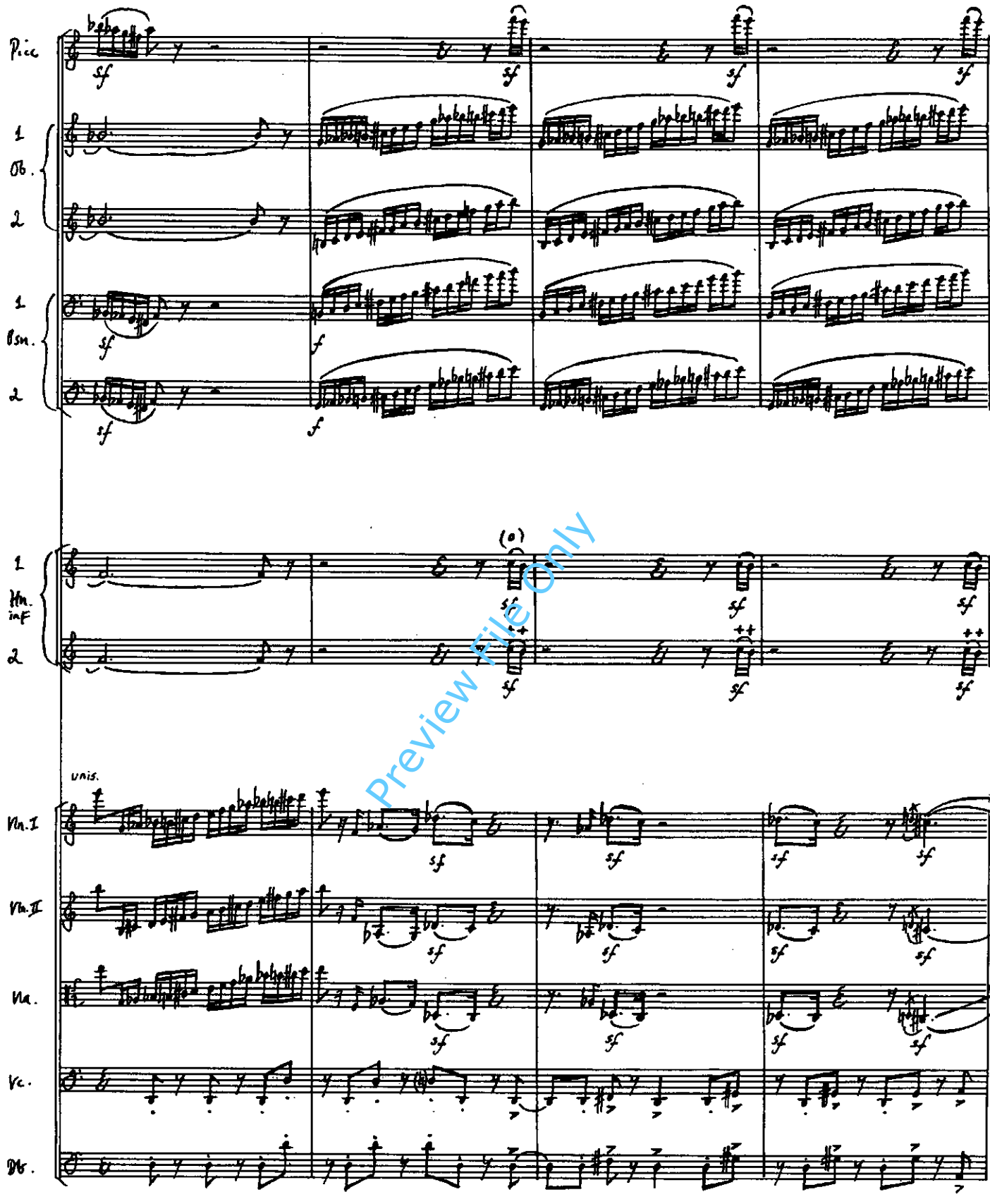

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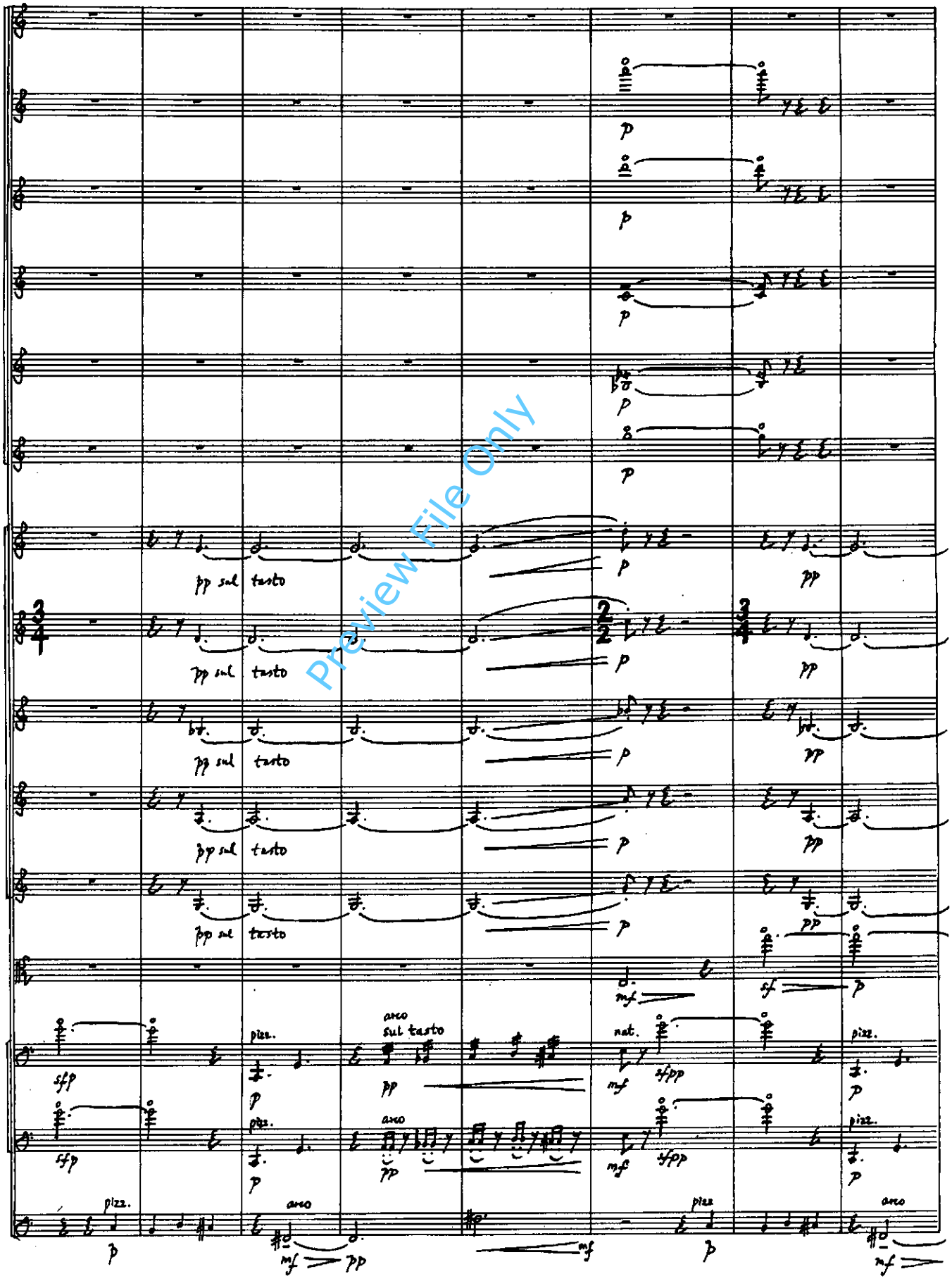
III

Andante con moto (♩. = c.44)

53



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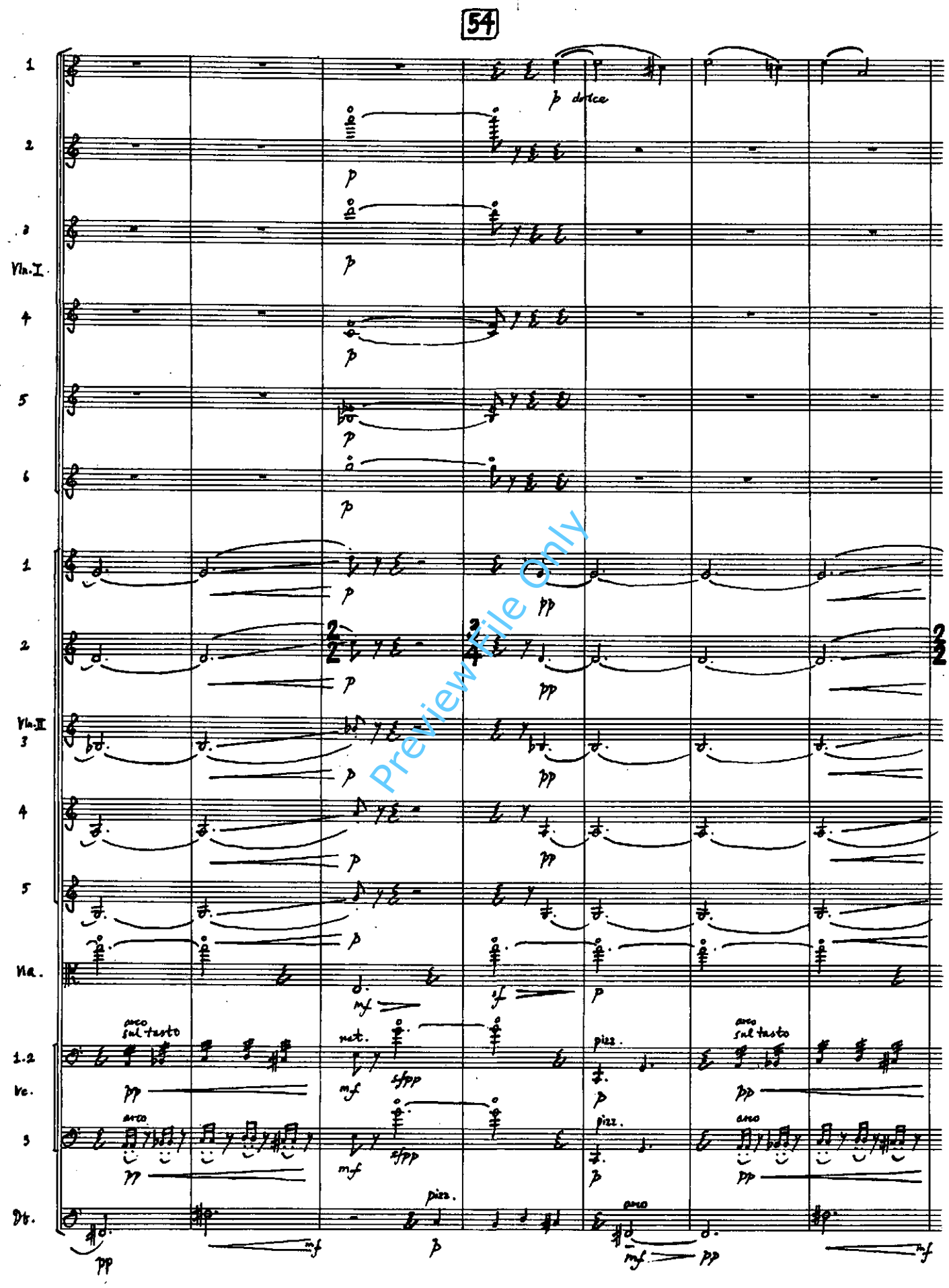

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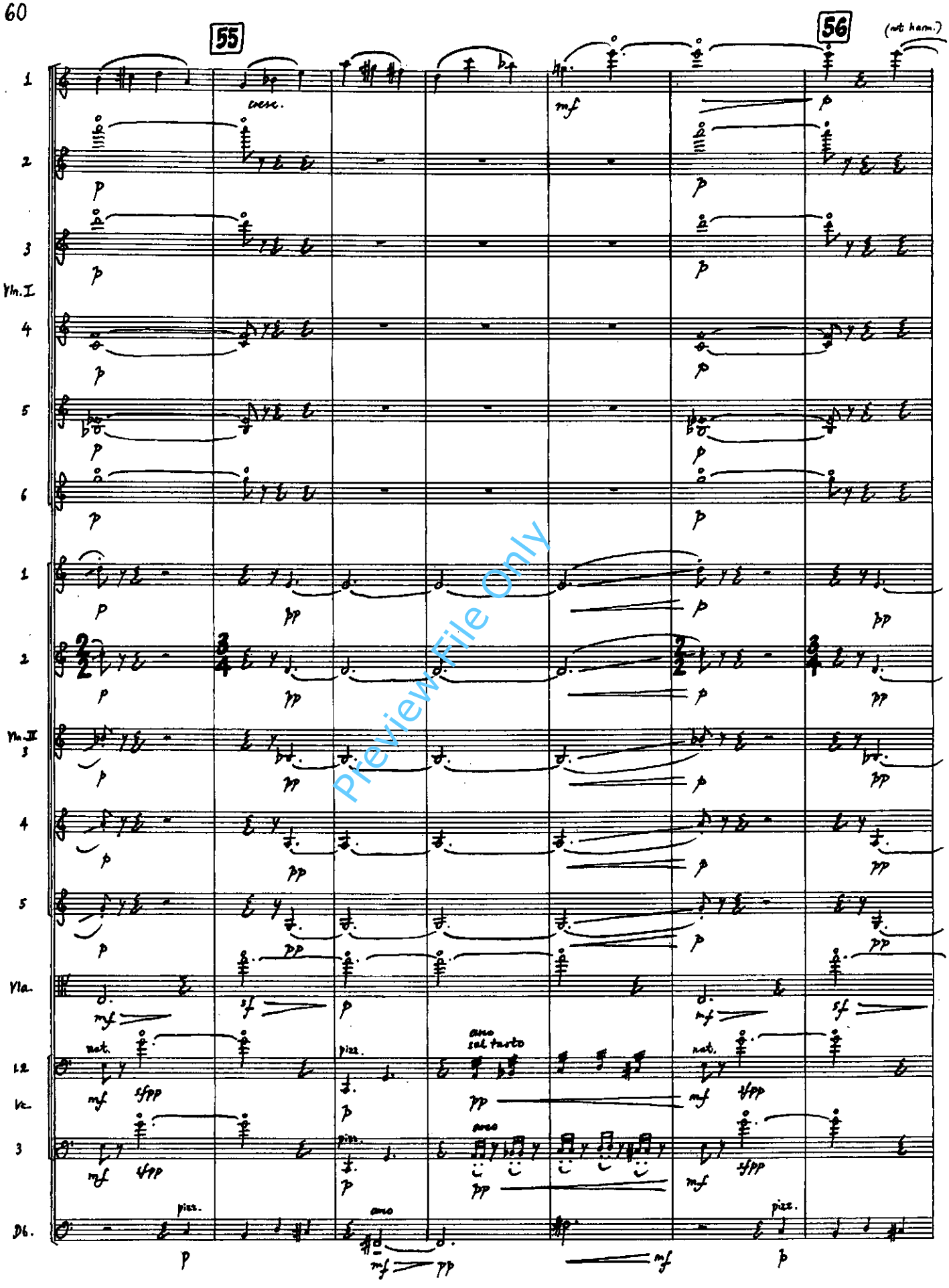

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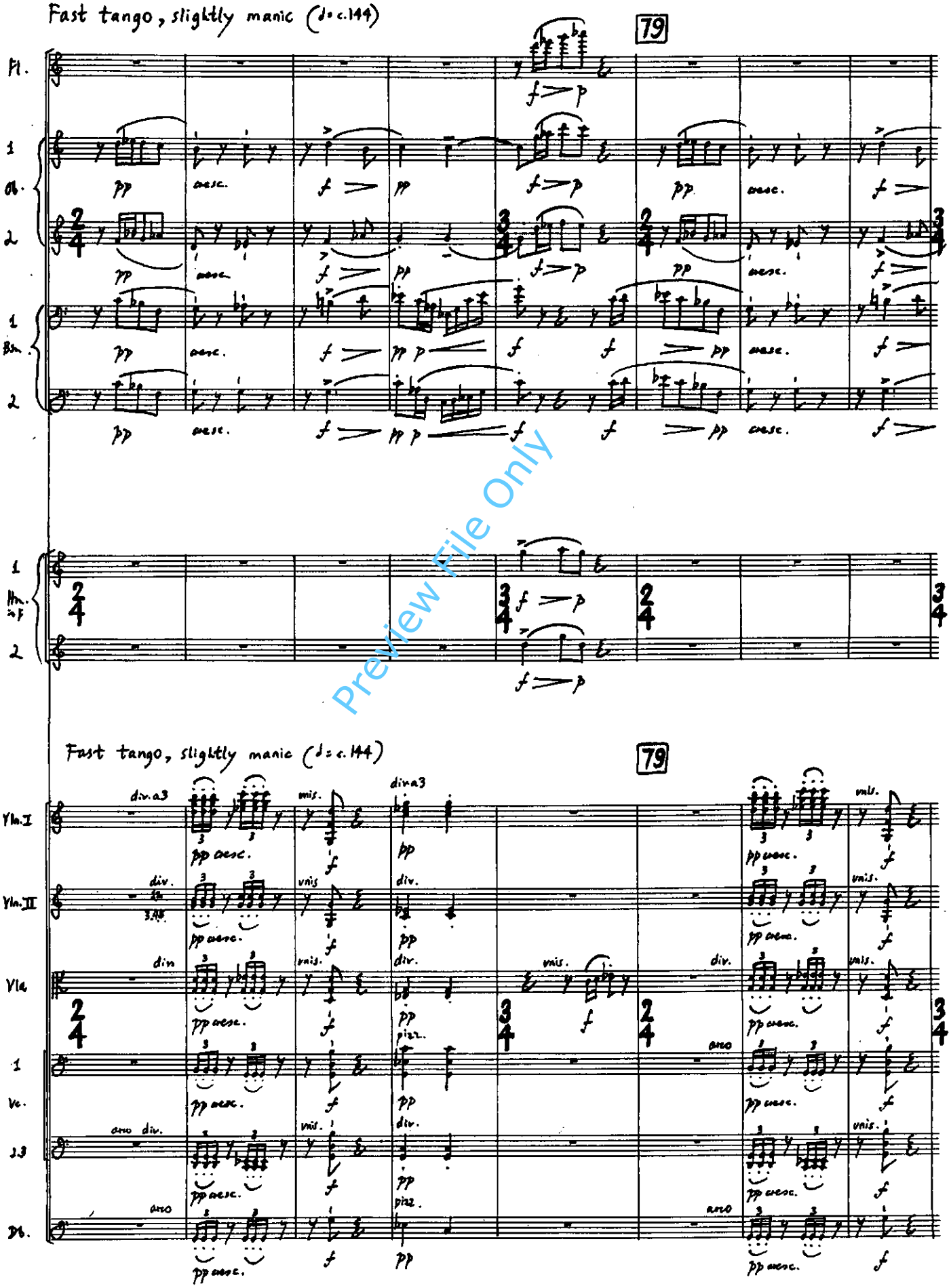
IV

Fast tango, slightly manic (♩ = c.144)

79



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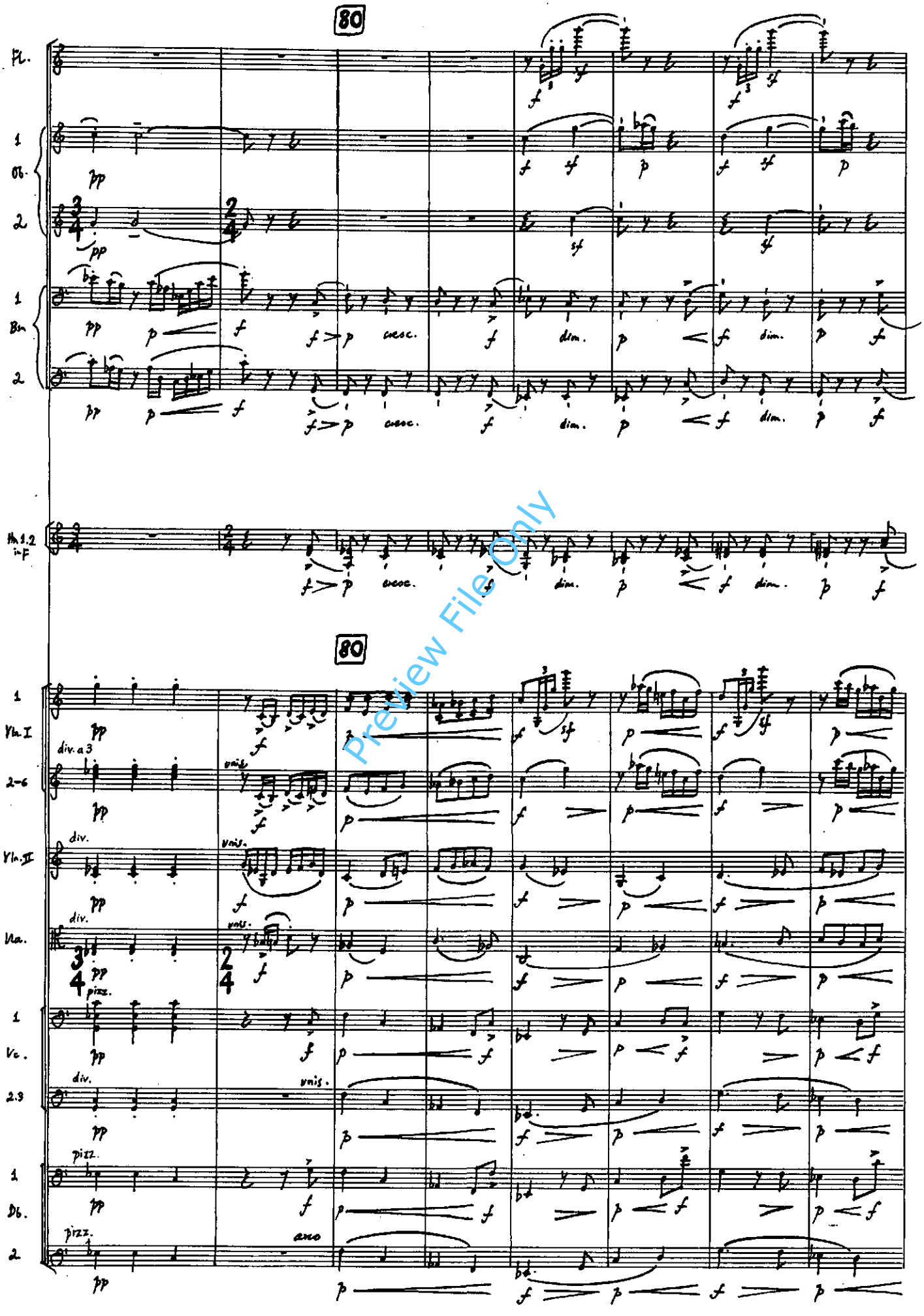

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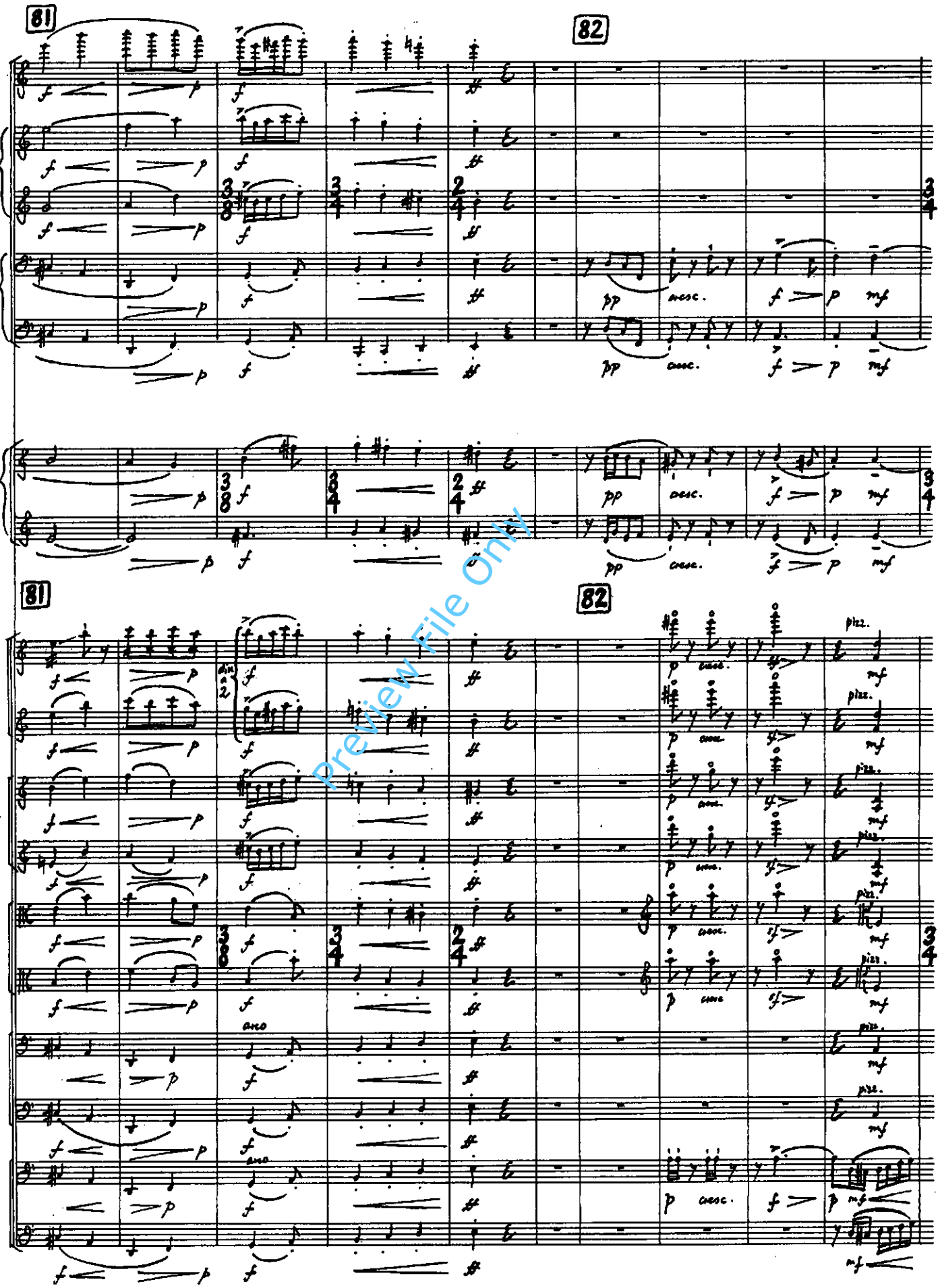

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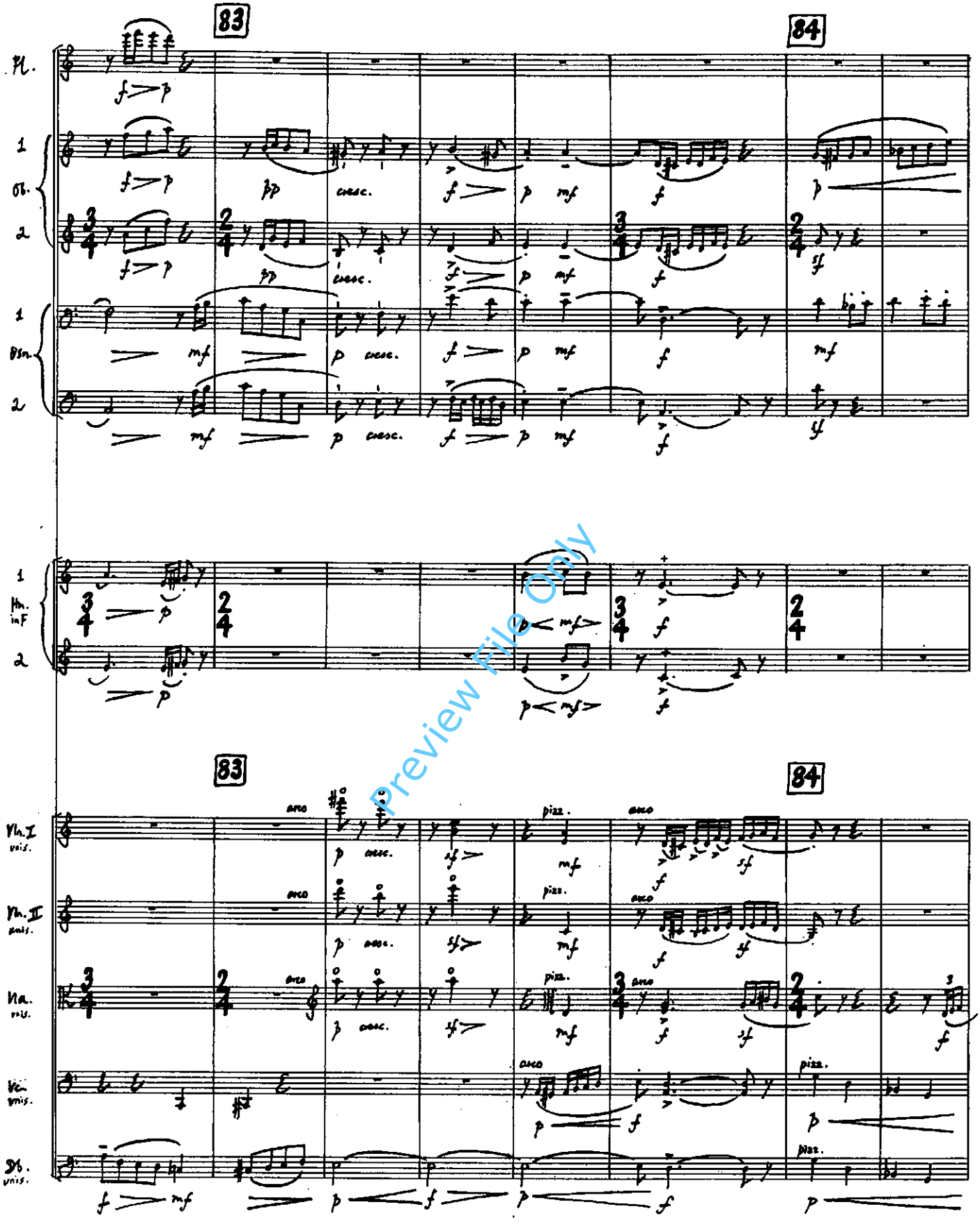

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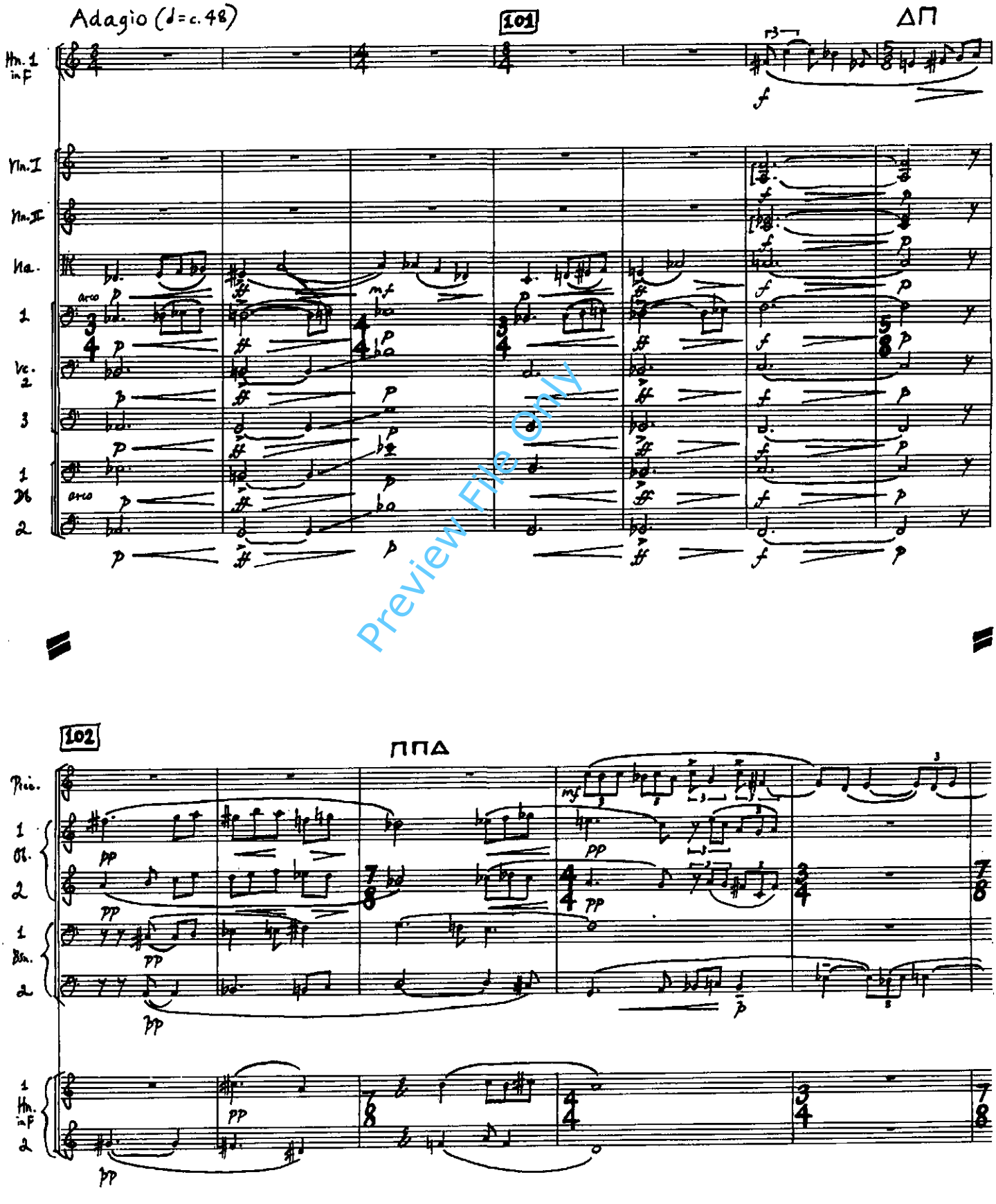
V



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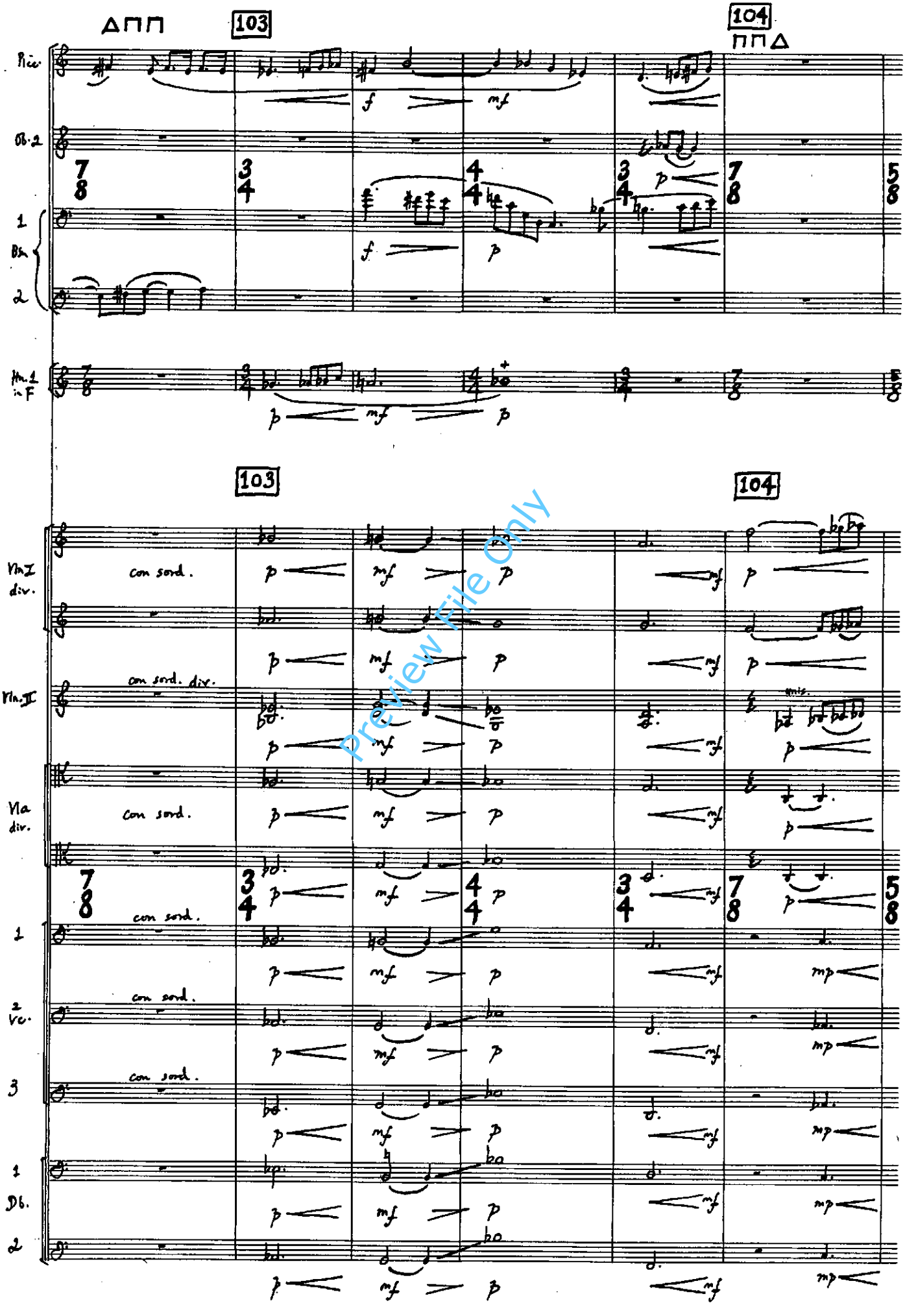

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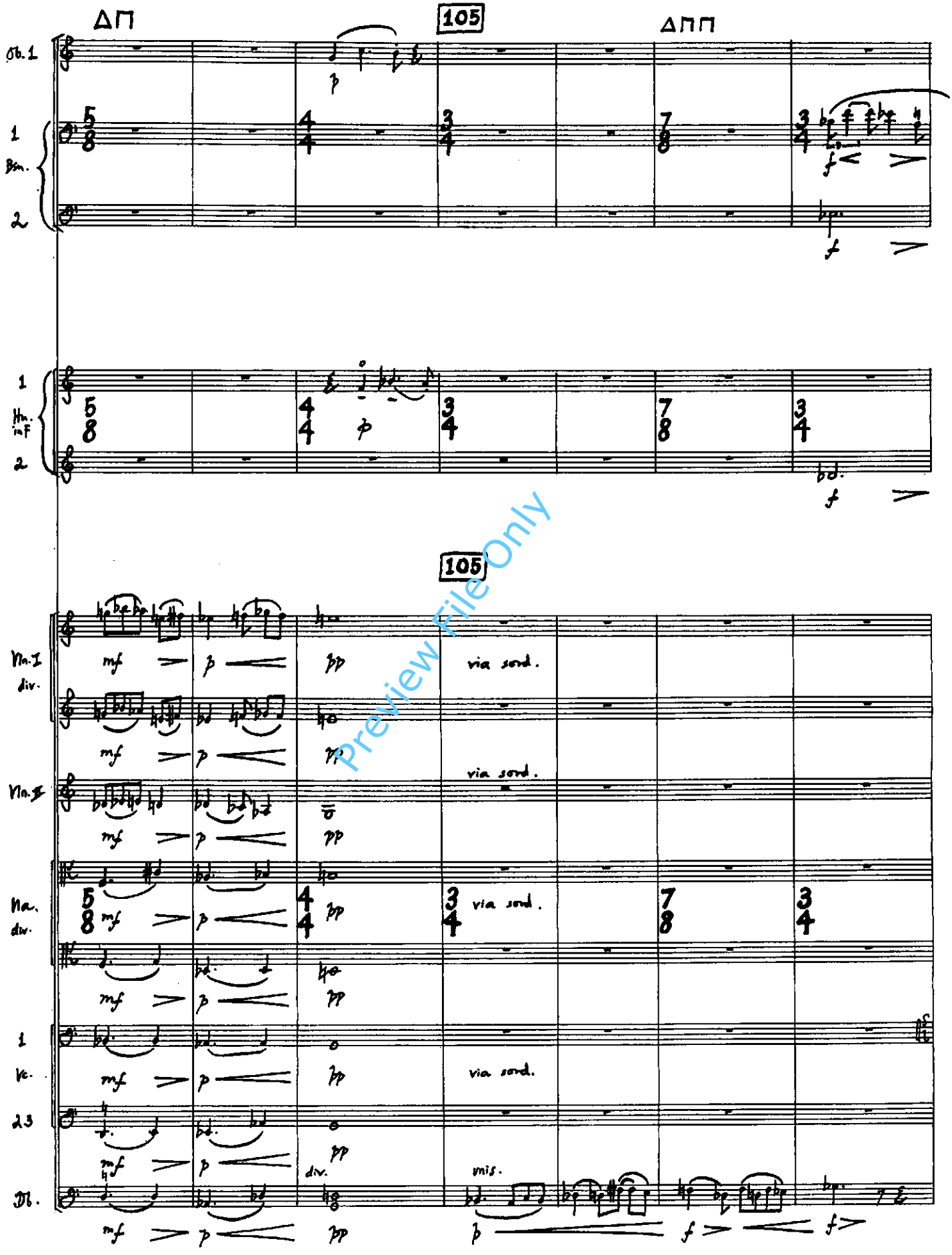

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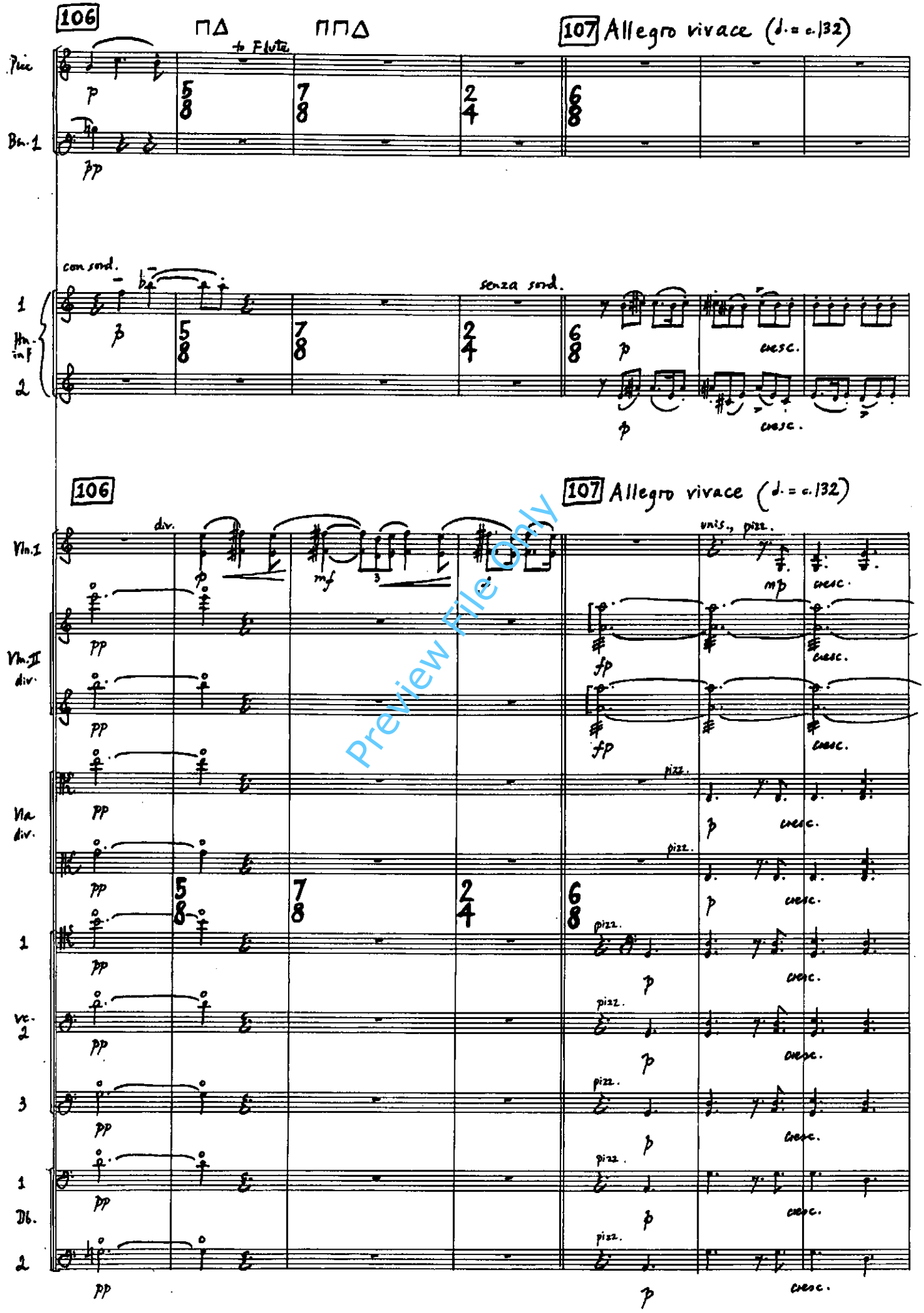

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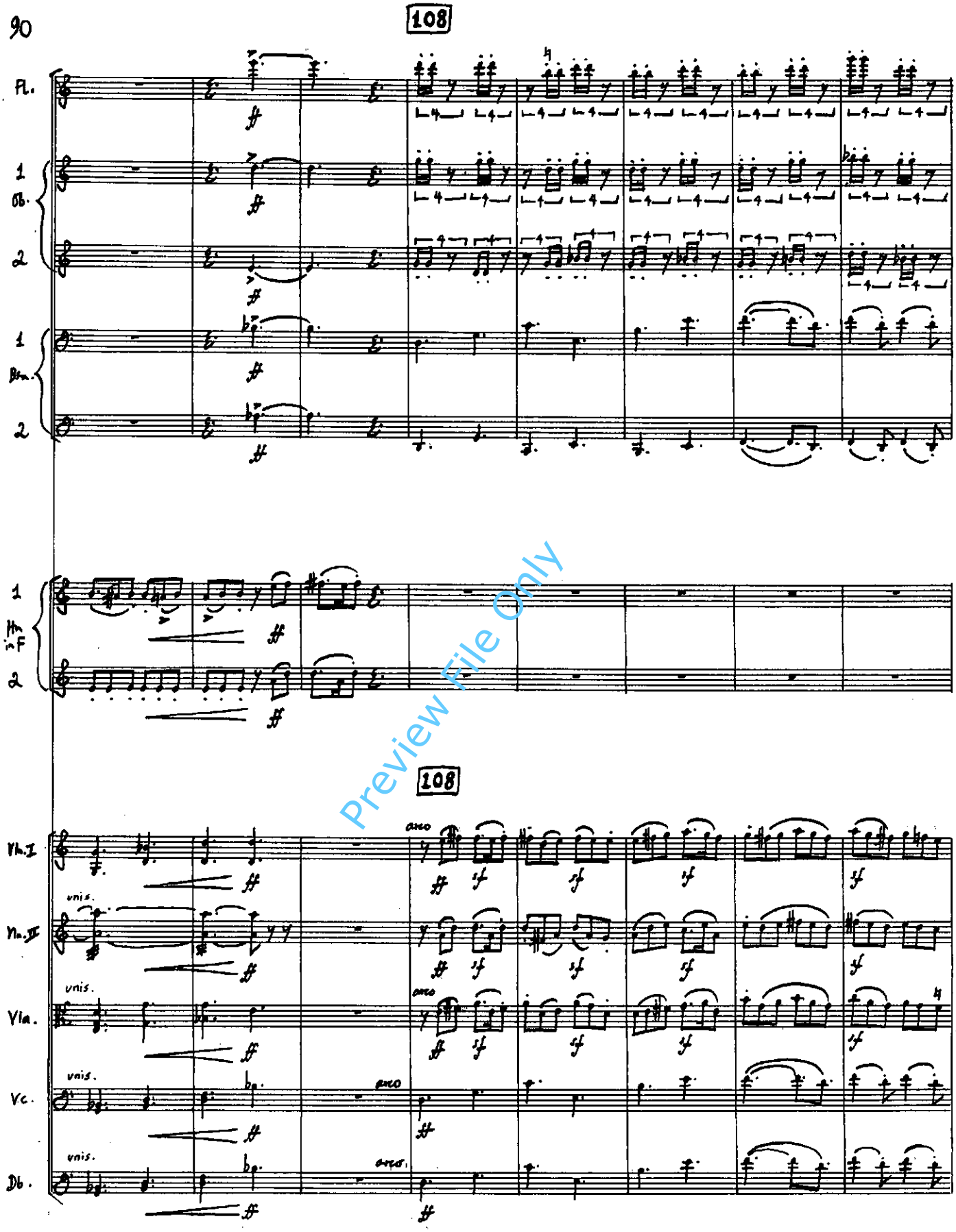

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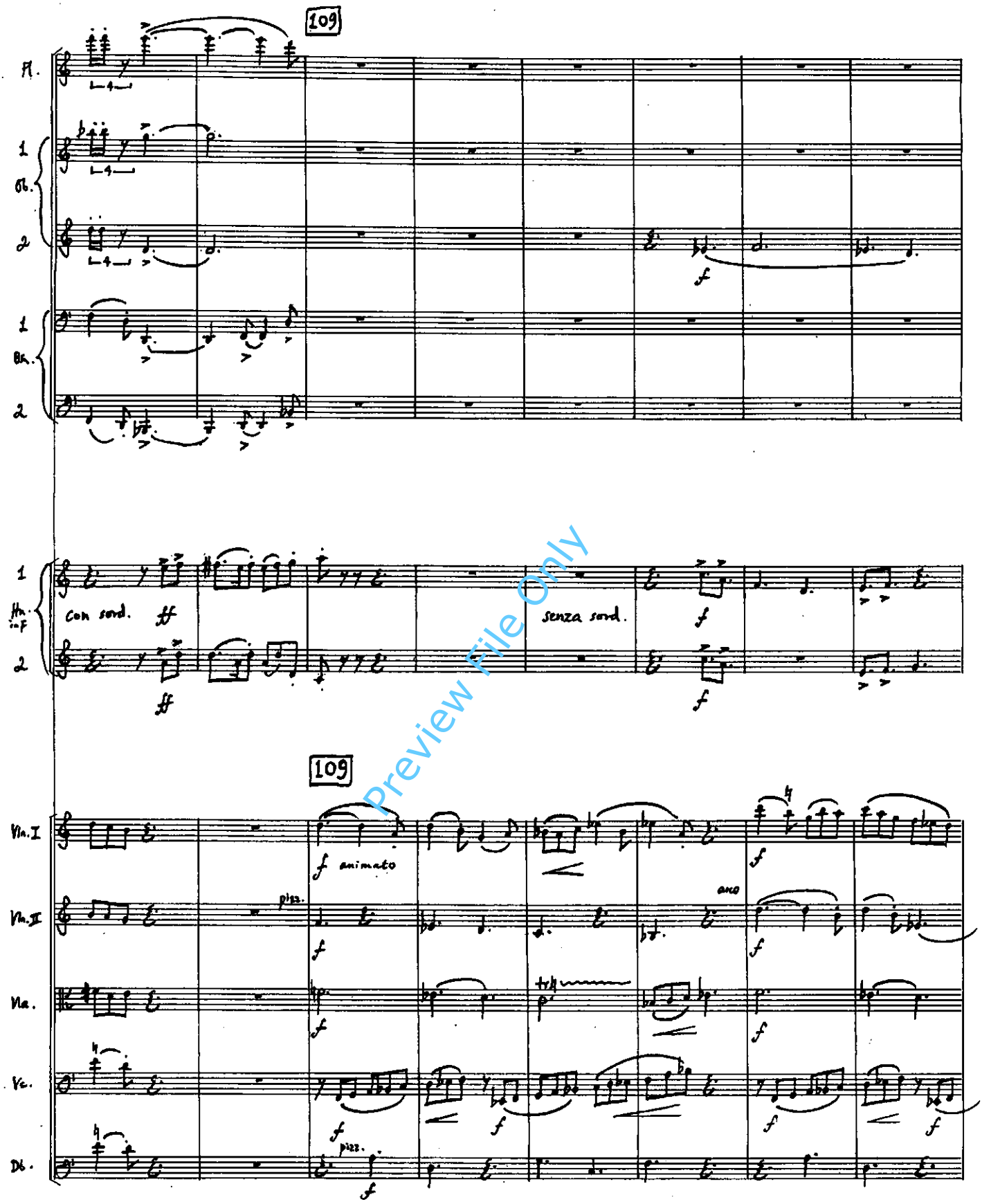

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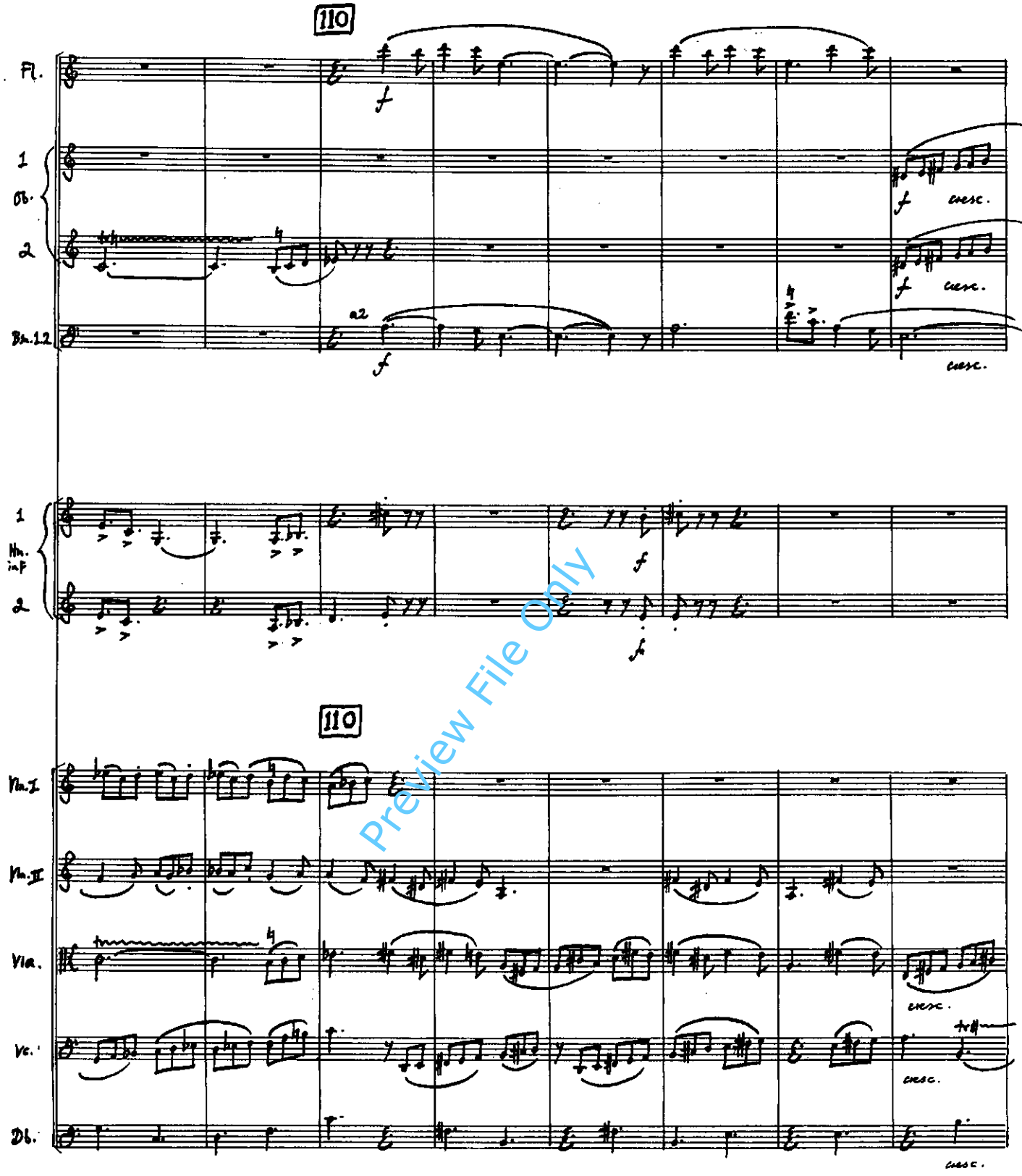

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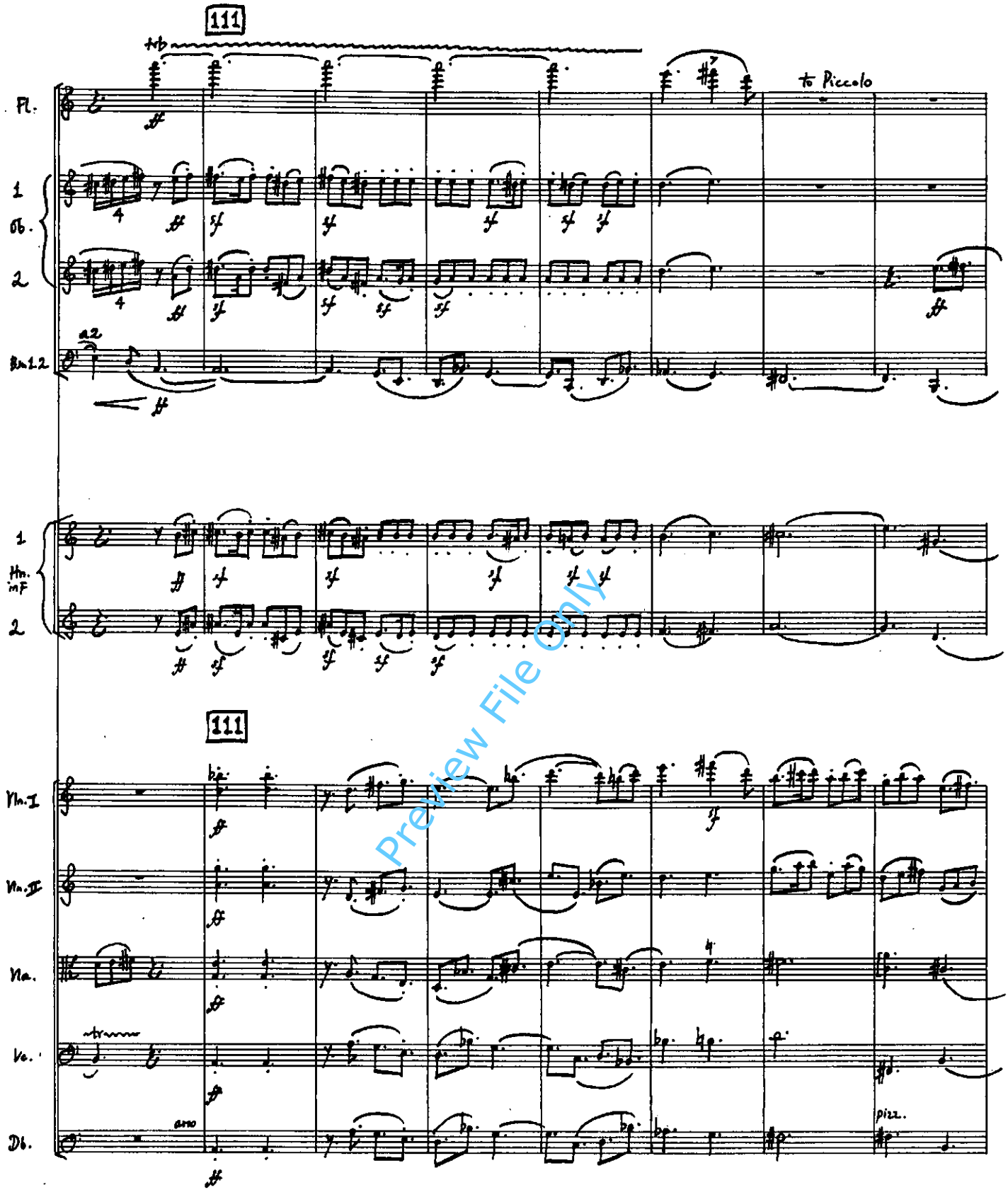

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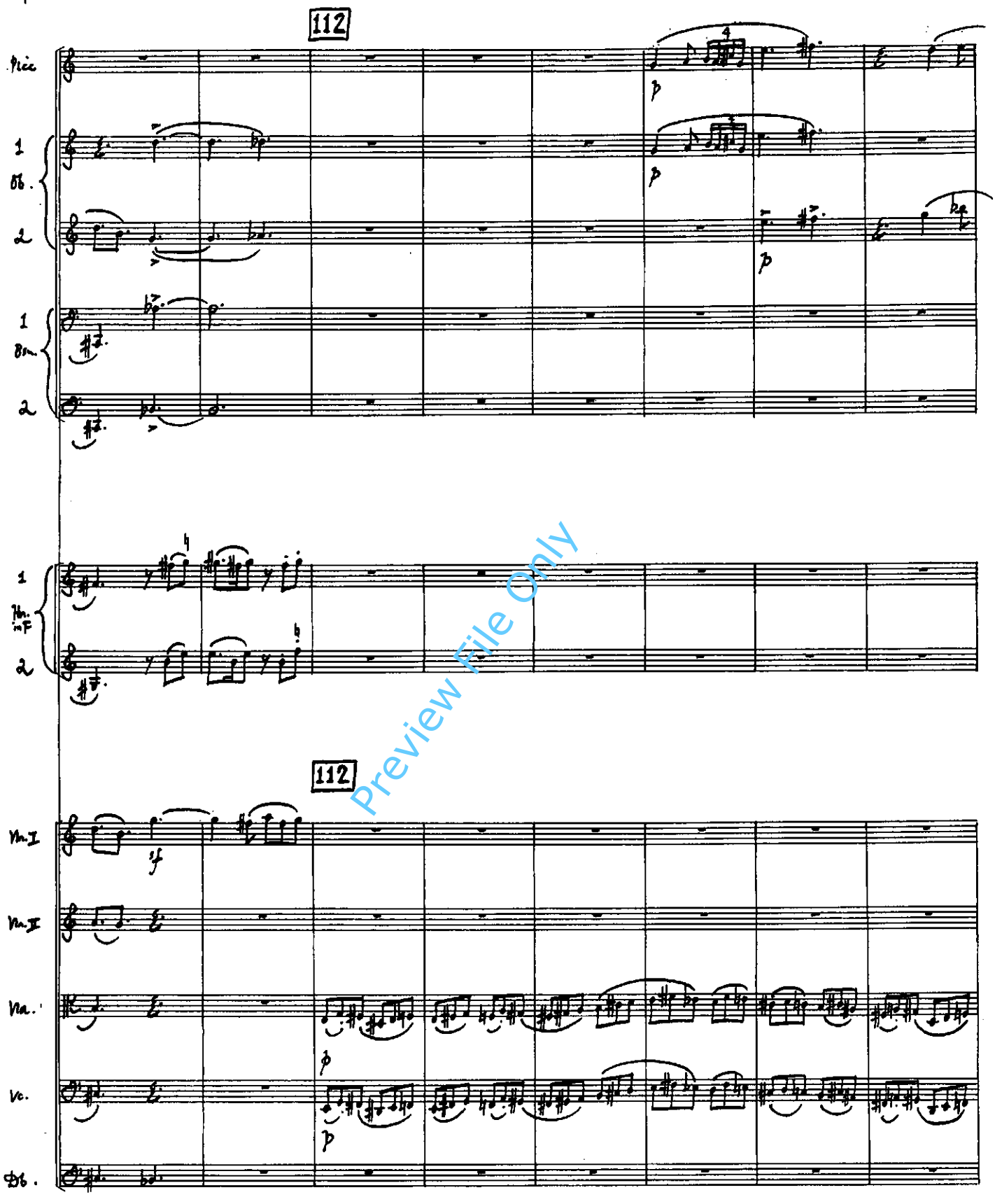

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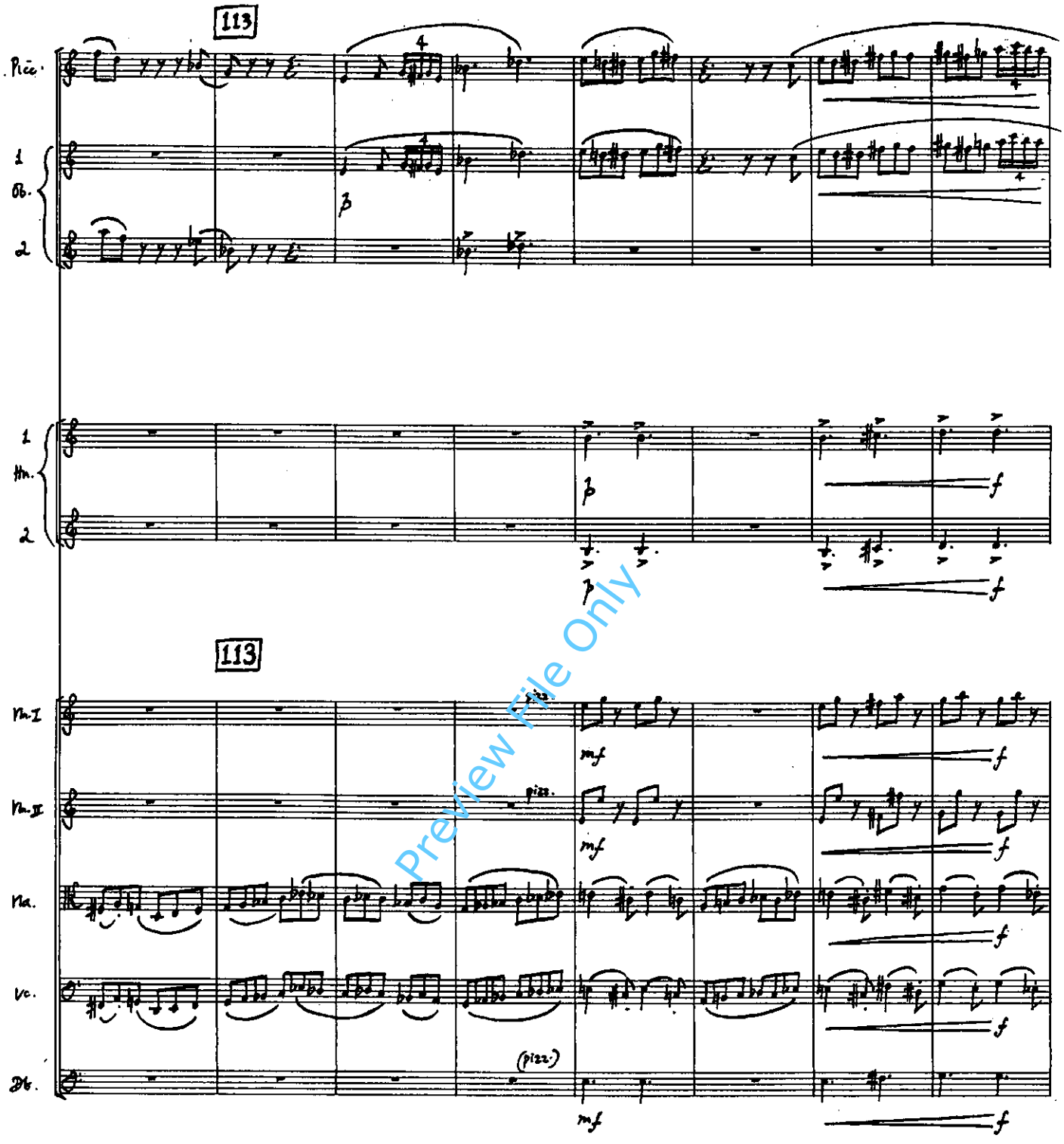

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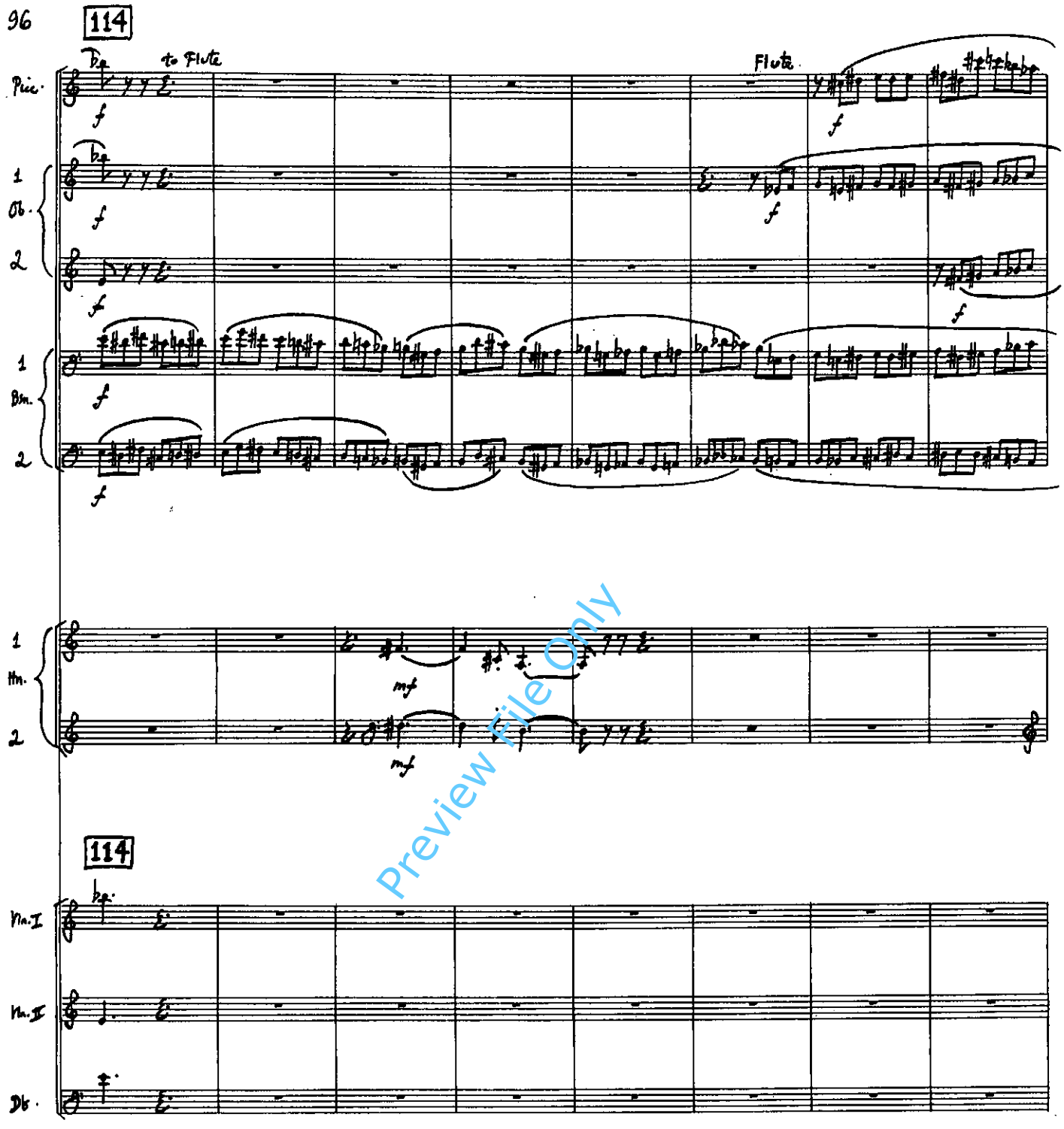

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