Idyll:
In the Gardens of Burdwan

Sonata for Oboe and Piano

by

Andrew Downes

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LYNWOOD MUSIC
2, Church Street, West Hagley, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY9 0NA England
telephone & fax: +44 (0)1562 886626 email: dowtdyn@globalnet.co.uk
website: www.uscrs.globalnet.co.uk/~downlyn

IN THE GARDENS OF BURDWAN - SONATA FOR OBOE & PIANO Opus 55 (1994) Duration 20'

This Sonata for Oboe and Piano was composed for George Caird, for first performance with his accompanist, Malcolm Wilson, at the Birmingham and Midland Institute on 20th October 1995.

The work was composed during the months following the composers' visit to the beautiful gardens of the University of Burdwan in Bengal, India, and represents the composers' emotional response to this part of India. George Caird and Malcolm Wilson recorded the sonata for CD in January 1999 (Classical Recording Company: CRC 1009-2). Many performances of this work have taken place, in the UK and Holland.

'... a substantial 4 movement Idyll, its sounds, as in all this approachable composers' output, genuinely imagined. Its combination of Indian inspiration and ecclesiastical modality proved magical.'
THE BIRMINGHAM POST

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2 Church Street, West Hagley, Stourbridge, W.Mids. DY9 0NA England
telephone & fax: +44 (0)1562 886625 email: downlyn@globalnet.co.uk
website: www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~downlyn

ISMNs (M) 57019 100 0 (piano score)
(M) 57019 101 7 (oboe part)

IDYLL: "IN THE GARDENS OF BURDWAN" (Sonata for Oboe and Piano)
by ANDREW DOWNES

This work was written during the months following a visit by the composer to the exquisite grounds and campus of the University of Burdwan, Bengal, India during February 1994. The climate at that time of year is mild, and full of Spring-like expectation, and the colours of the landscape, particularly of the flowers around the lake, are incredibly vivid, varied and very memorable. The people of that part of India seemed friendly, generous and warm, and the whole experience was, for the composer, of optimism and joy, tinged with certain sadnesses to do with material poverty, and a sense of great wonder and depth of experience in a culture of such uniqueness and wholesomeness.

The Sonata, which was requested by George Caird, represents the composer's emotional response to Burdwan, hence the title. It does not use particular raga structures, but is nevertheless influenced by a wide range of Indian melody and rhythmic patterns. It also makes use of some rhythmic developmental techniques to be found in Indian music such as the continual subdivision of the metre to create more and more excitement.

This rhythmic development is particularly evident in the First Movement. It opens with a slow rising figure in the Piano which is soon joined by a decorated inversion of the figure in the Oboe. The Oboe then takes up the original theme in a much diminished and decorated manner, and these embellishments, both melodic and rhythmic, form the basis of an animated development.
The second subject is a much simplified, almost choral, development of the rising and falling nature of the first, and contains elements of Renaissance-like polyphony. This is then joined by a dreamy, minimalist accompaniment figure in the Piano, which itself evolves into a rhythmically transformed recapitulation of the first subject. The coda, which is derived from aspects of the development, is full of energy and rising passion.

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The Sitar flourish which usually introduces a raga is suggested by the Piano at the beginning of the Second Movement. This is answered poignantly by the Oboe, joined immediately by a Piano counterpoint. This idea then evolves into a dialogue between Oboe and Piano, accompanied by a repetitive dream-like figure, which then itself evolves into an important thematic idea.
An intimate passage reminiscent of the Renaissance-like passage from the first movement heralds the re-introduction of the opening raga-like flourish. The sad Oboe idea from the beginning of the movement is then developed into a full-blown trance-like melody, accompanied by the rising dream-like figure. Both melody and accompaniment are embellished towards the climax of the movement, and a plainsong-like figure dominates the remainder of the movement until the Sitar-like flourish, this time played by the Oboe, ends it.

The Third Movement is in the form of a Scherzo and Trio. It opens on the Piano with an aggressive development of the rising figure which introduced the first movement, but now the music is full of jagged intervals and rhythmic drive. The second idea of the Scherzo, though derived from the first, is much lighter and more serene. The brief but poignant Trio is full of mystery and uncertainty, but after a reiteration of part of the uncompromising Scherzo material, the Trio returns in a more optimistic and vibrant tone. The Scherzo returns, and the movement ends "wildly"!

The opening of the Finale reminisces on the rising figure which introduced the whole work, but here it is more resolved, warm and complete, evolving, however, into music which yearns for beauty and serenity. The second subject is a choral chant-like idea, starting with quiet reflection, but developing towards considerable passion. The opening returns, and is developed through a minimalist dream-like accompaniment figure. The music then accelerates towards an animated and bouncy development, but after a short cadenza-like passage played by the Oboe, the Piano sets the scene for a sustained and ethereal coda.

ANDREW DOWNES 31/8/95

for my friend George Caird

Idyll : In the Gardens of Burdwan

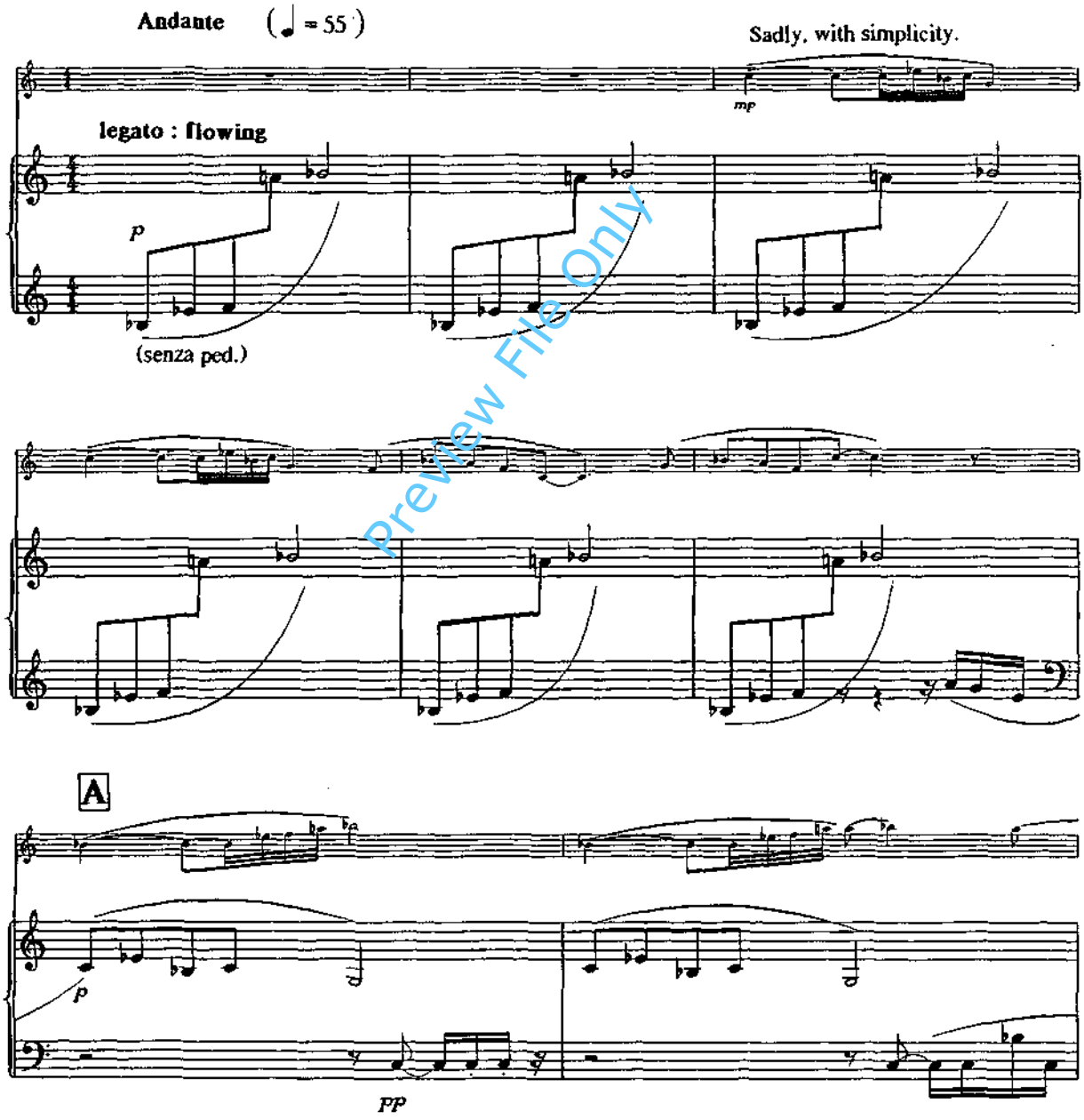
(Sonata for Oboe and Piano)

Composed for the birthday of my darling wife,
Cynthia, October 3rd 1994

Total Length 17 mins

Andrew Downes

I



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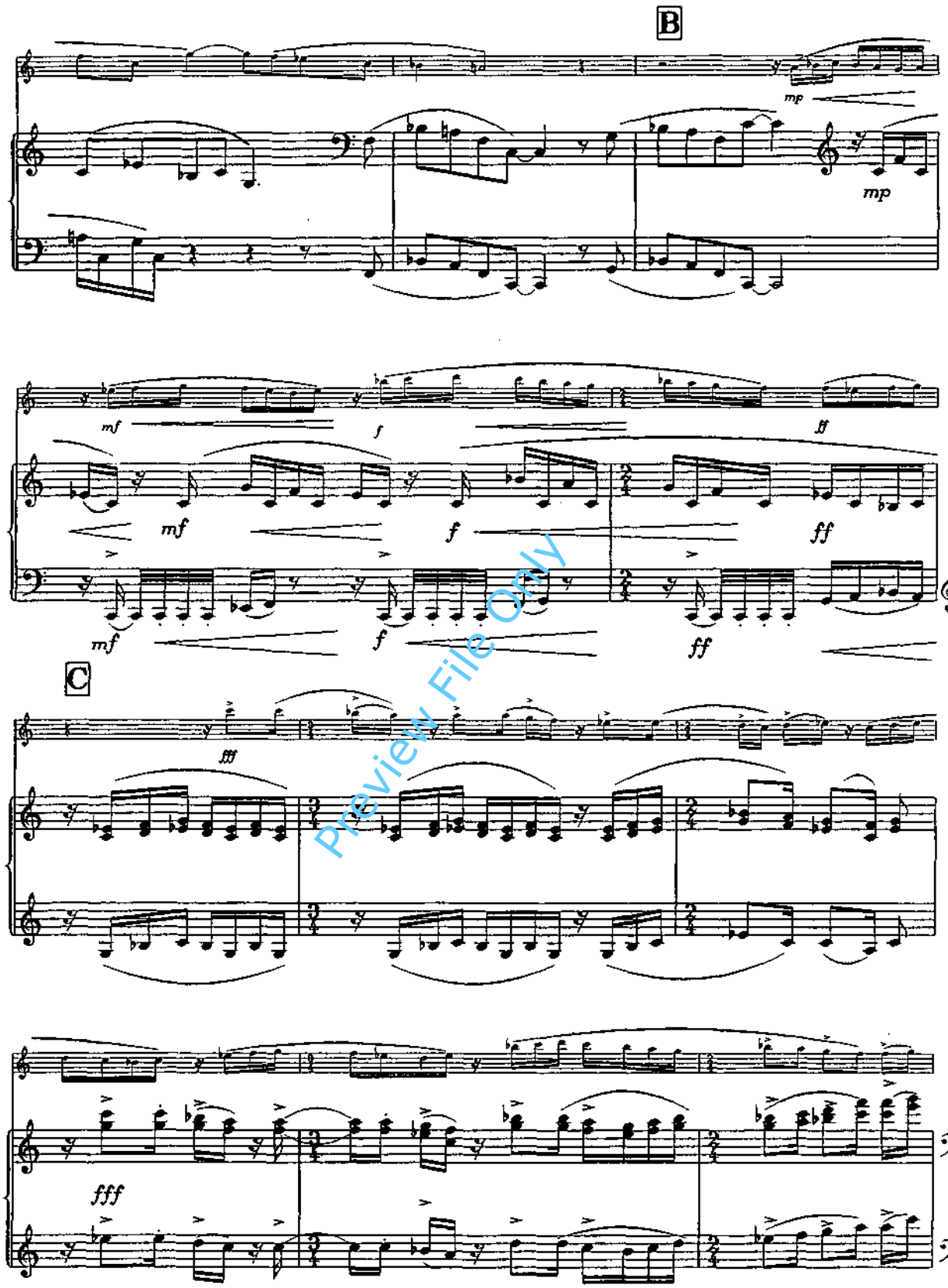

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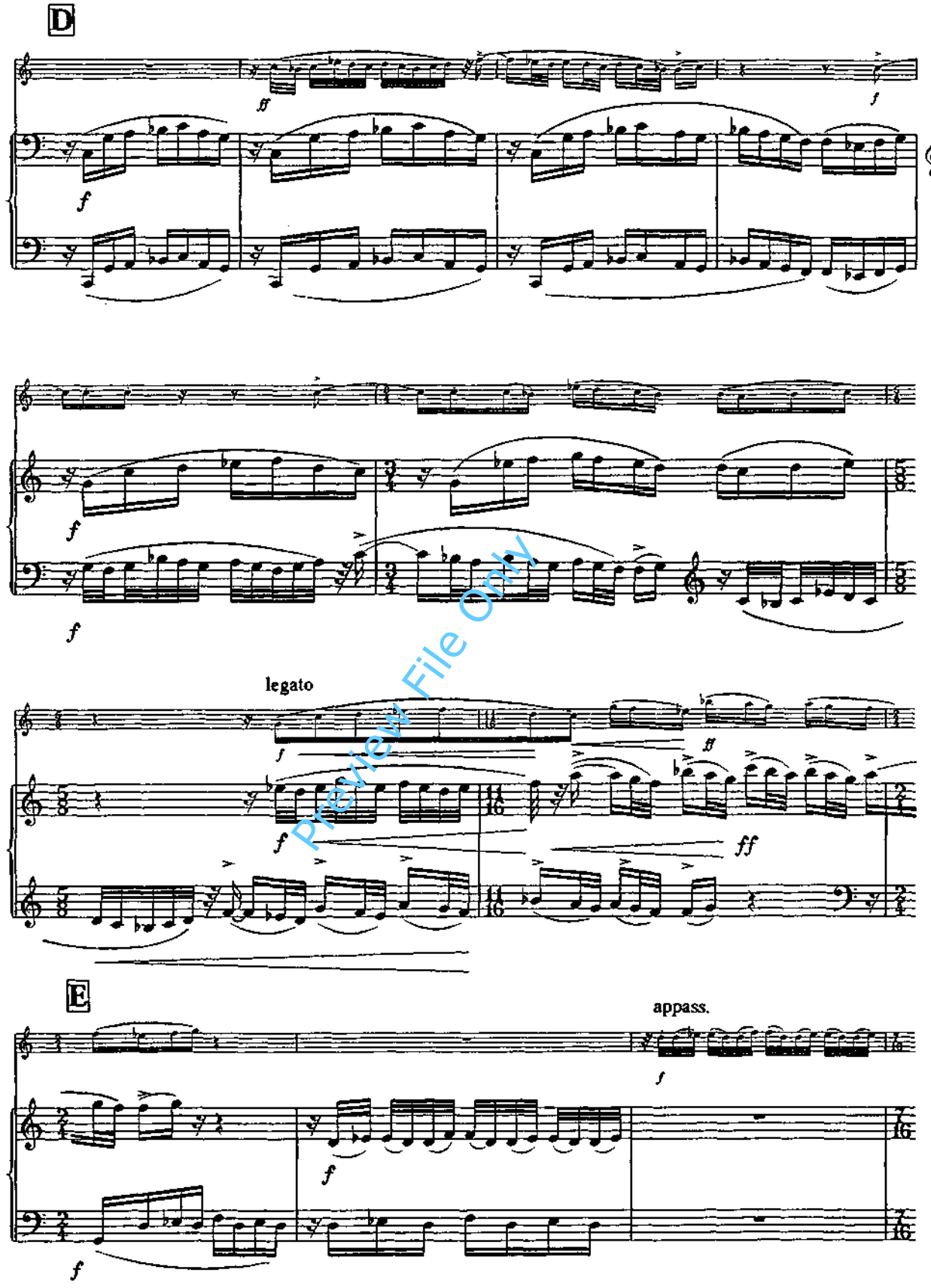

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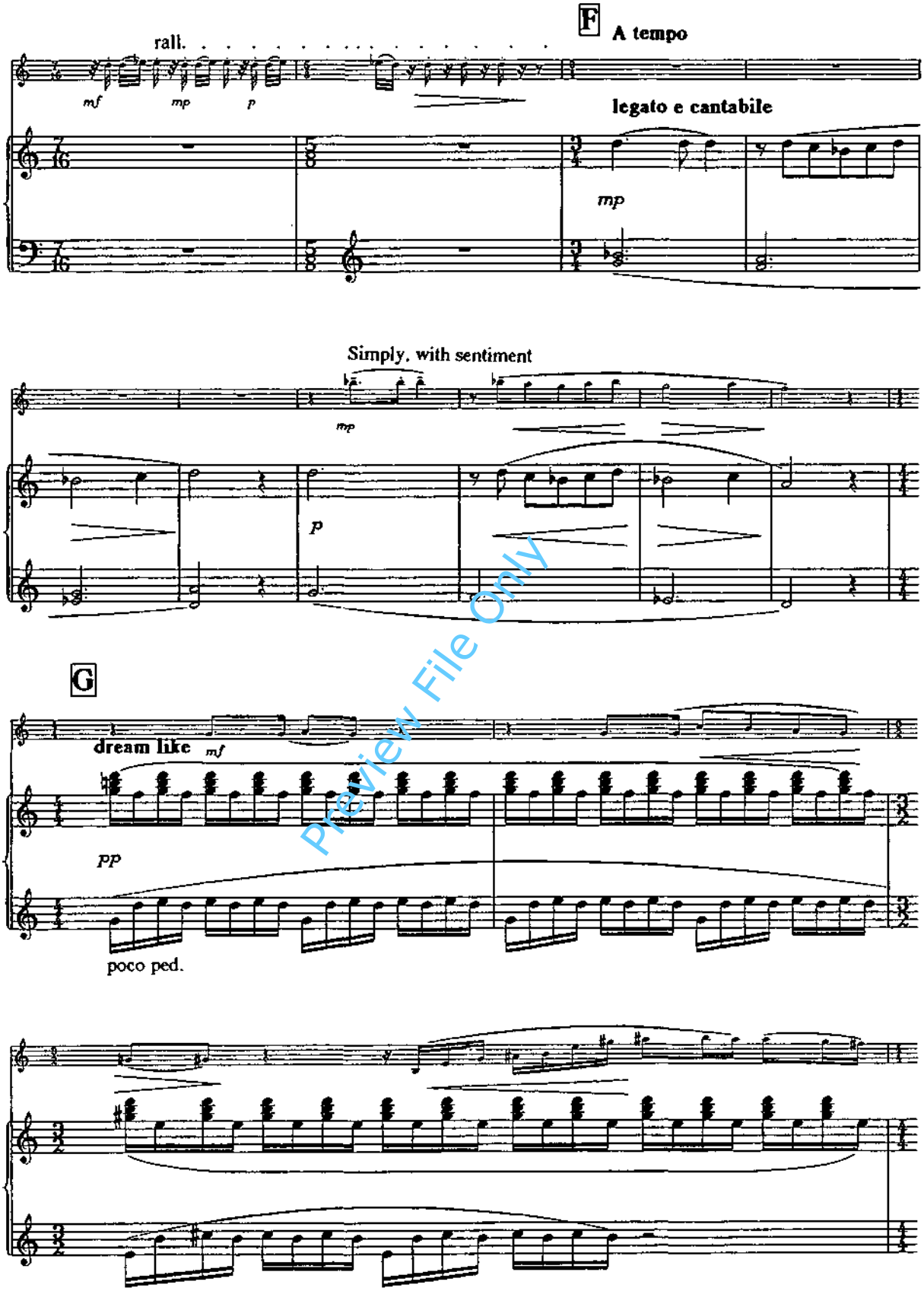

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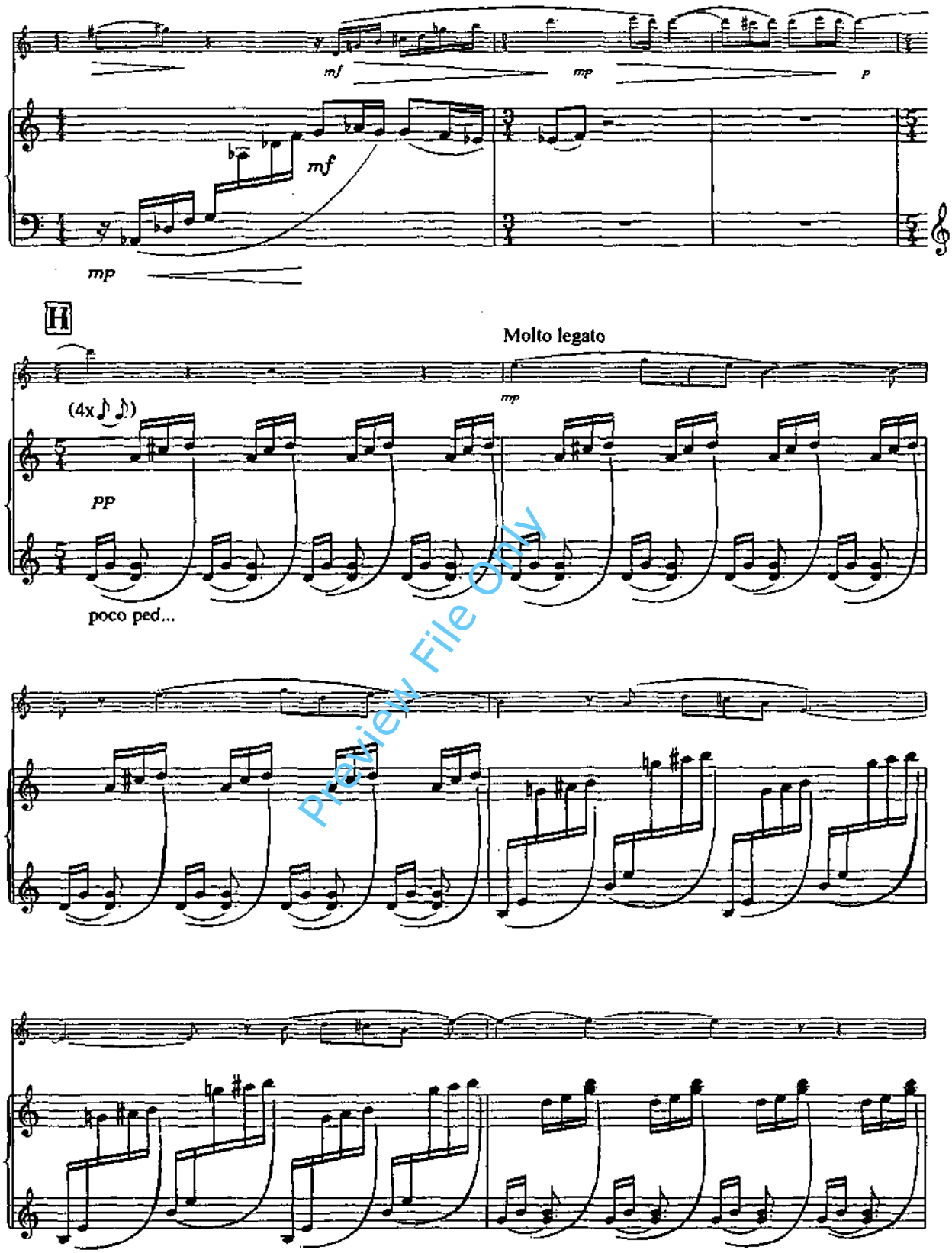

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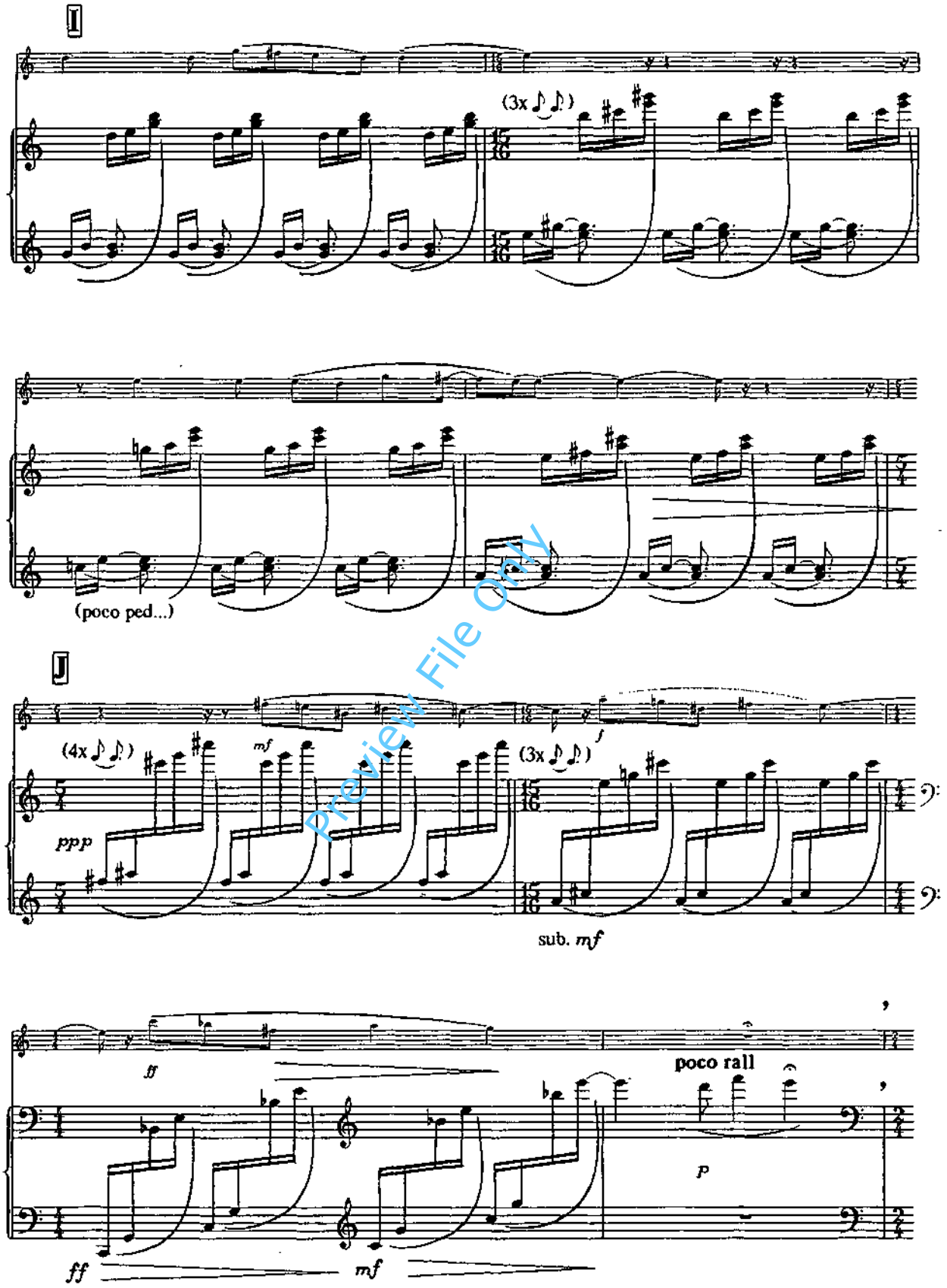

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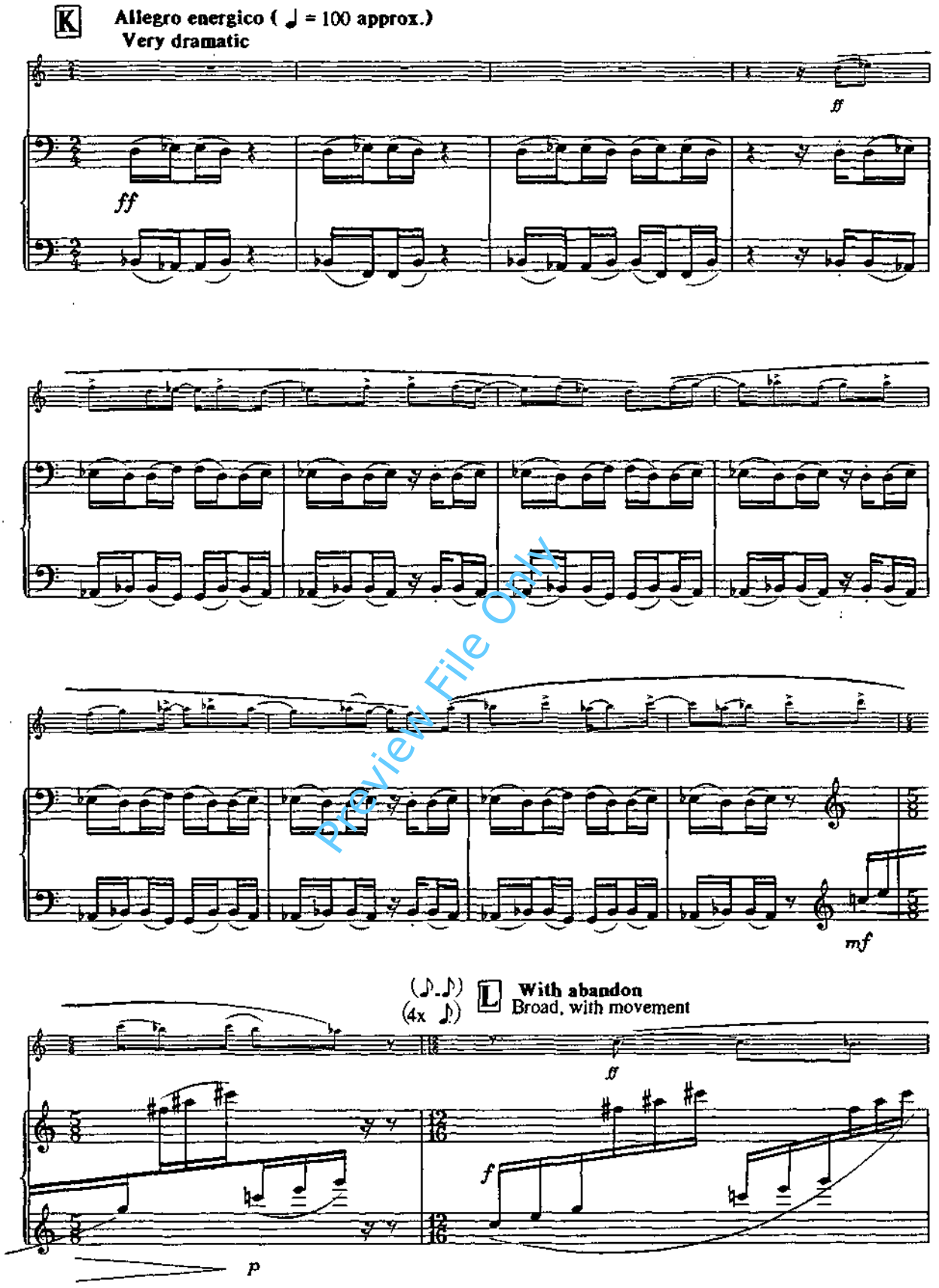

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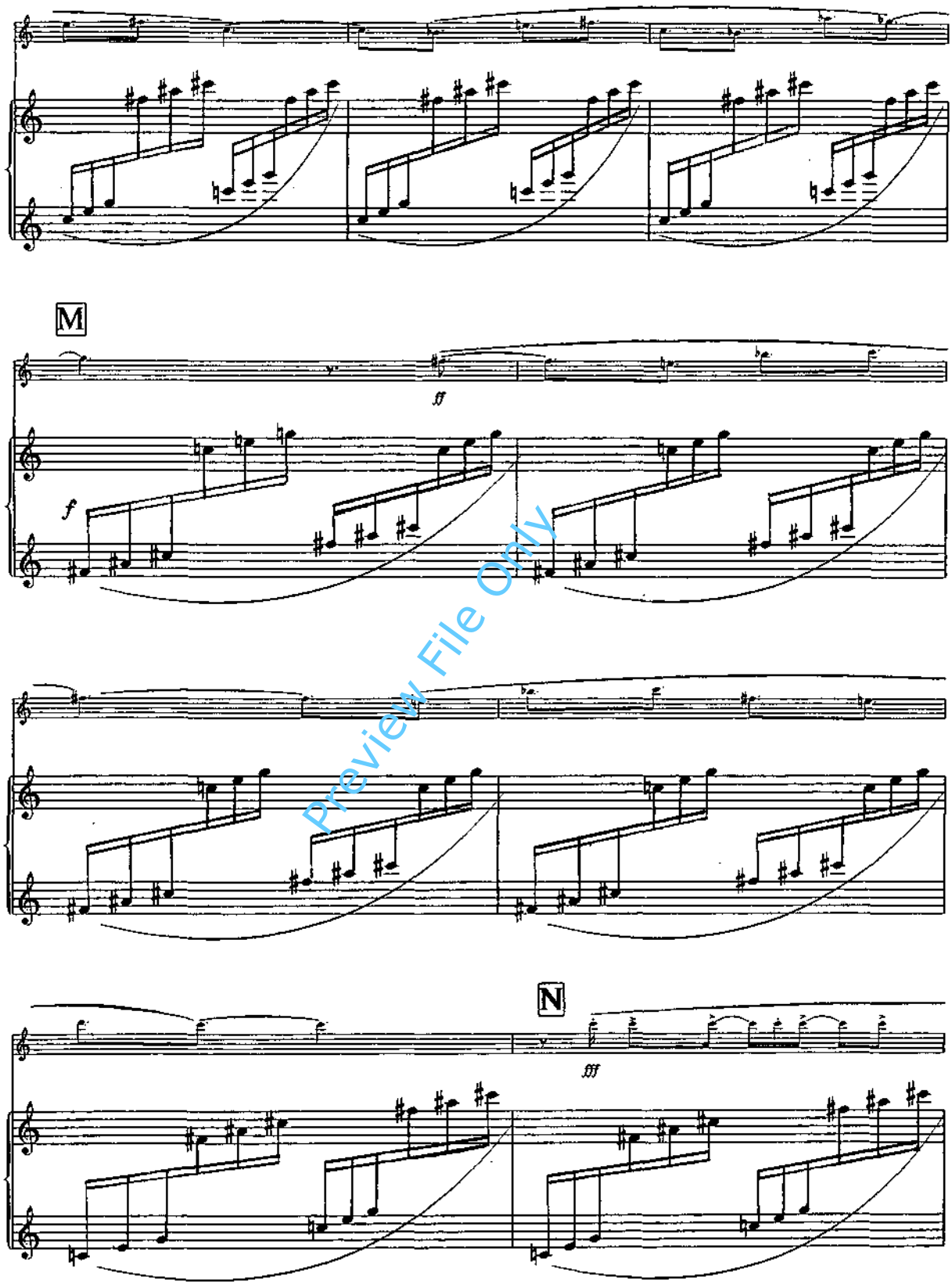

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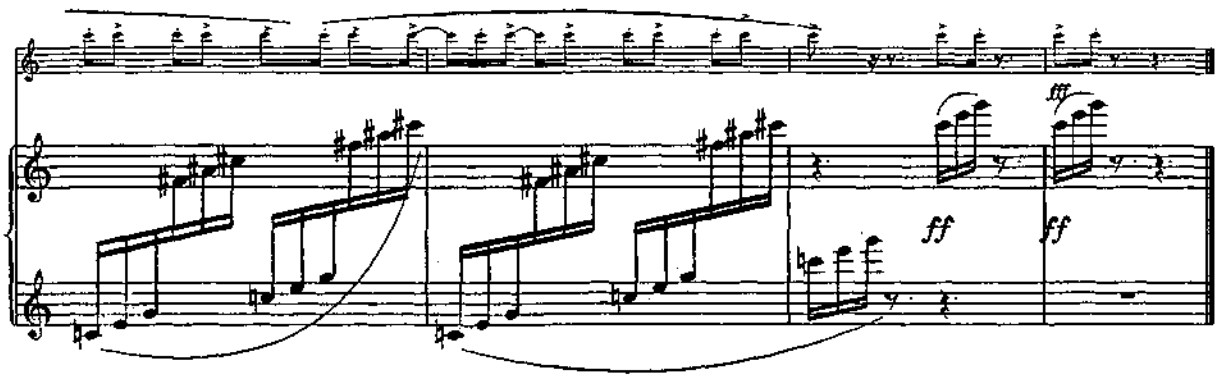

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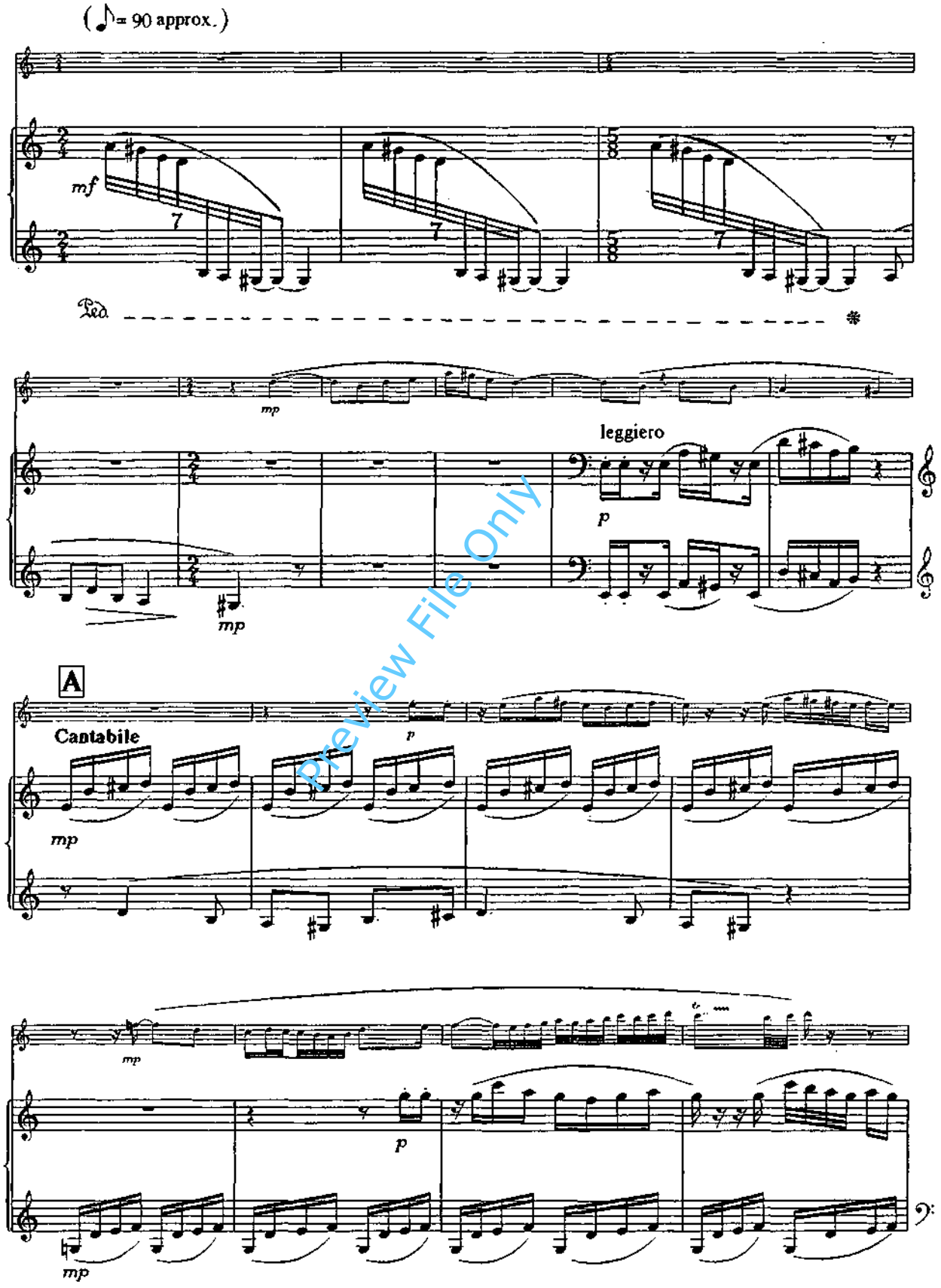

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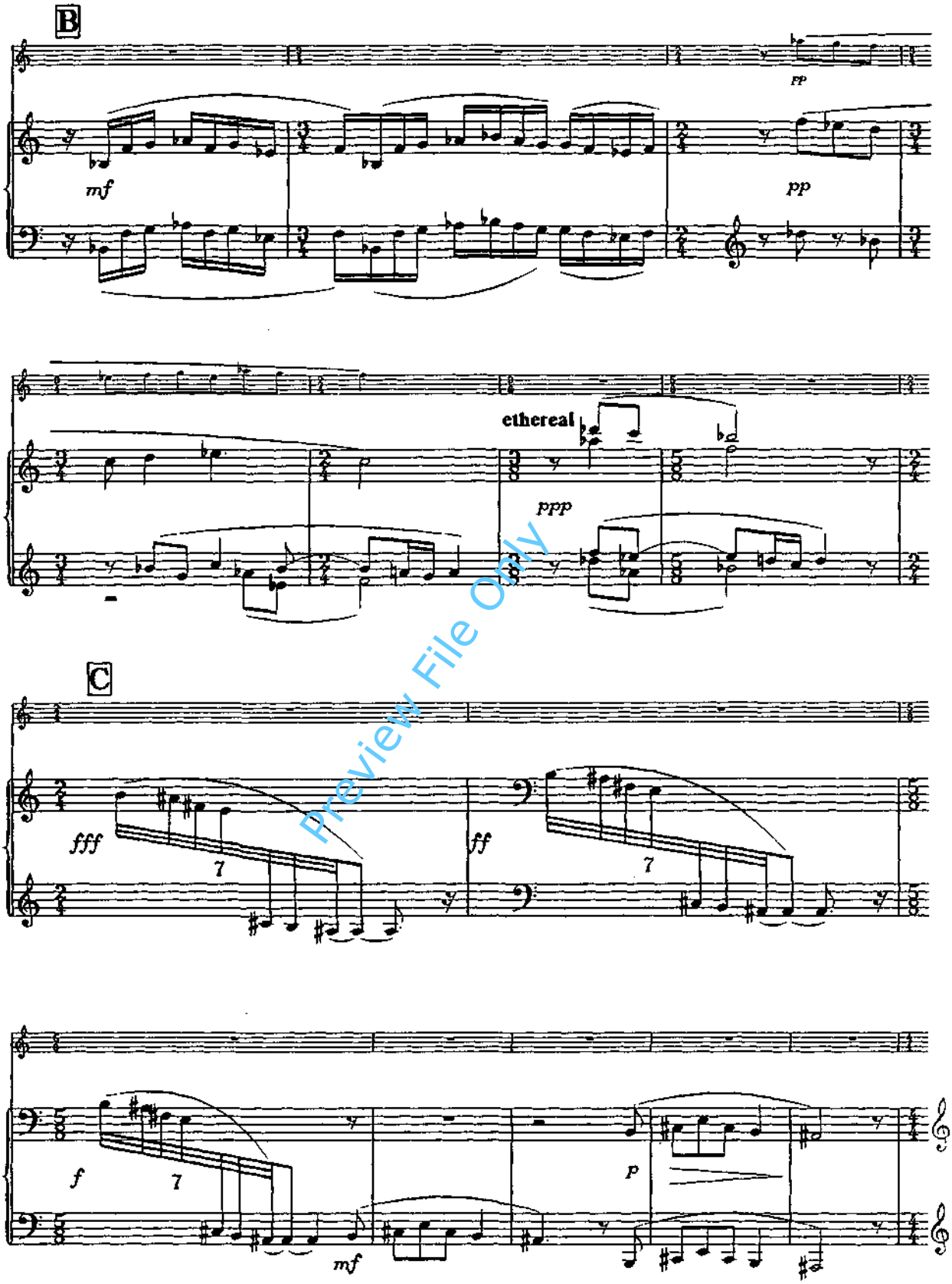

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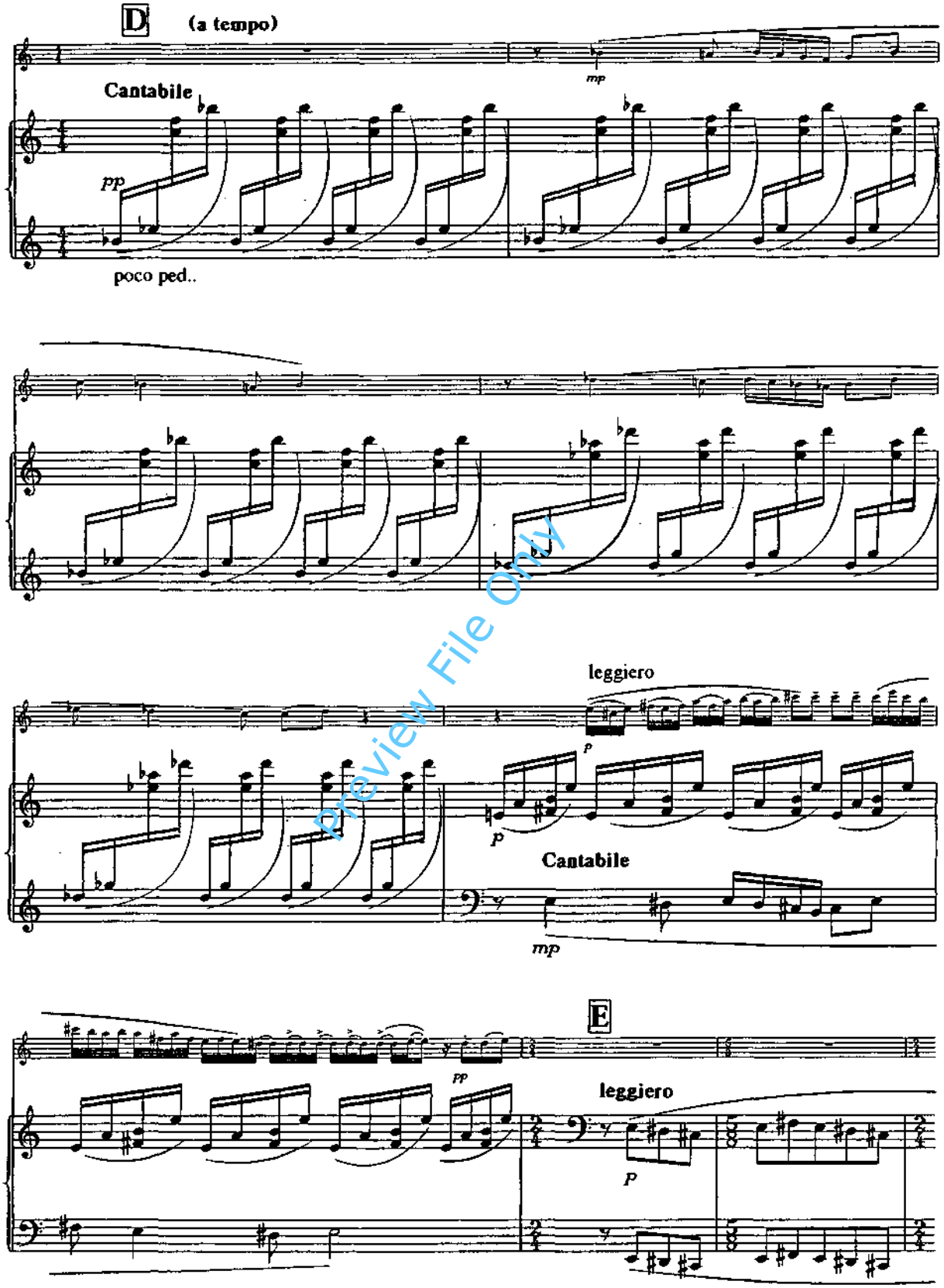

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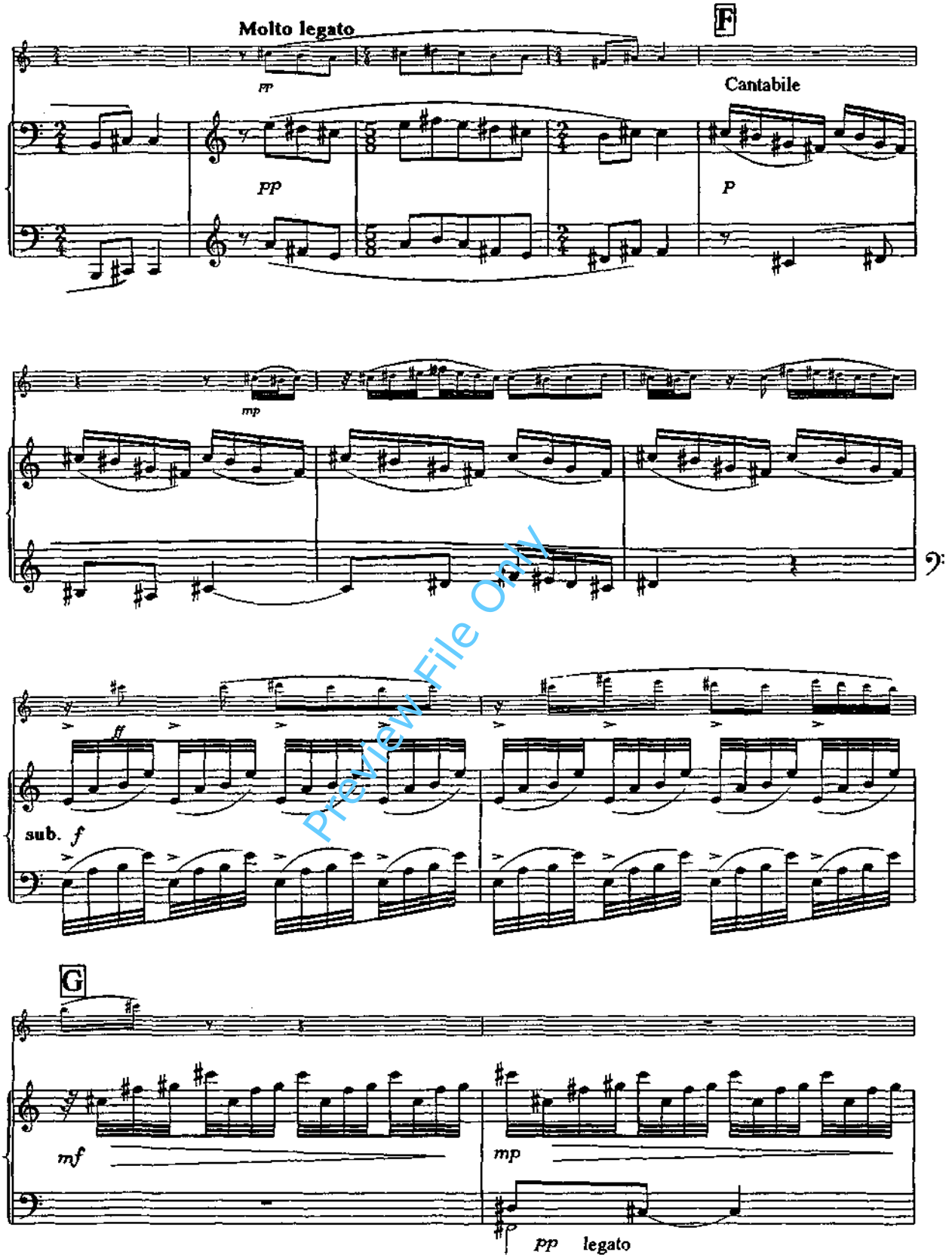

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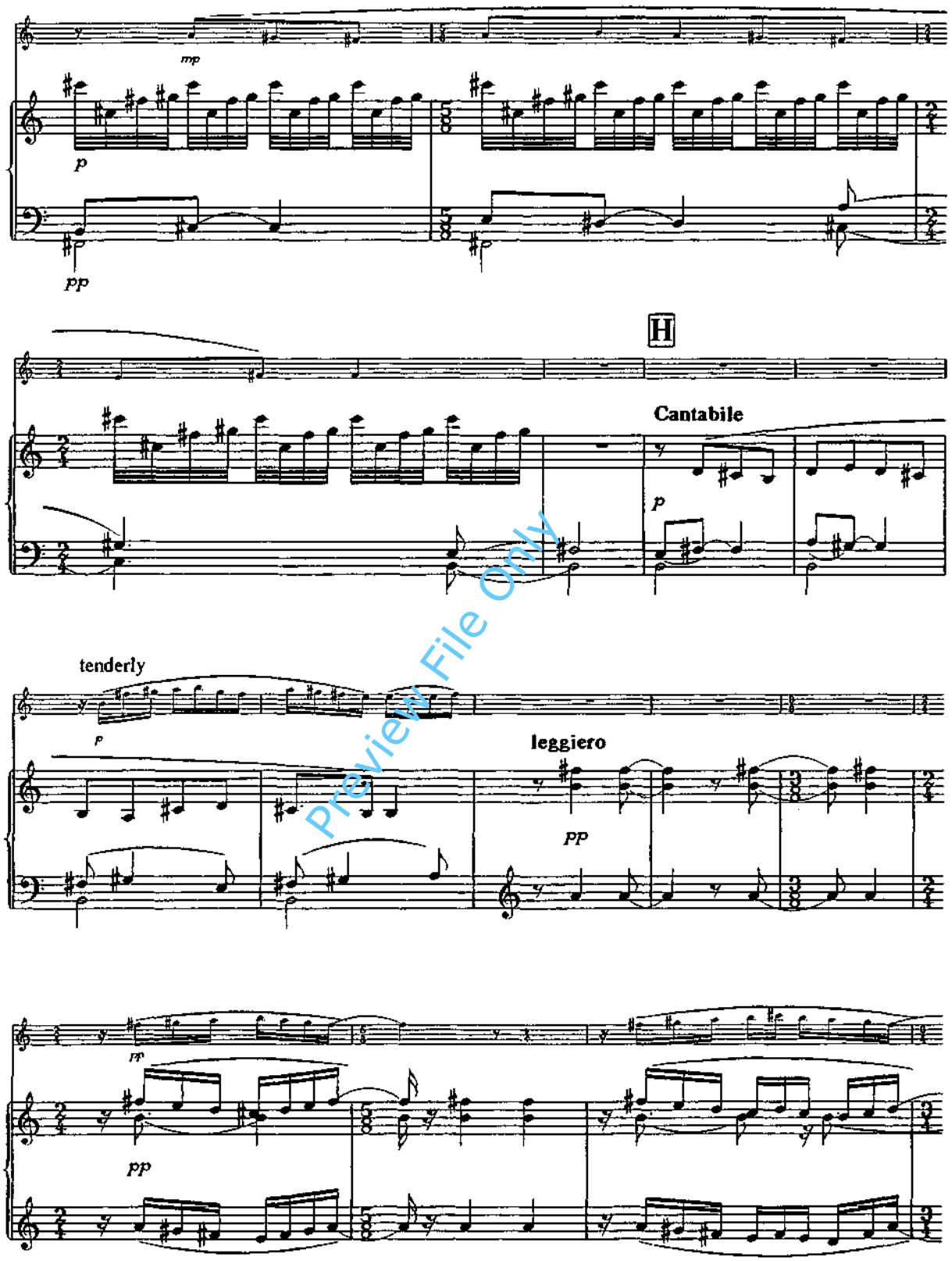

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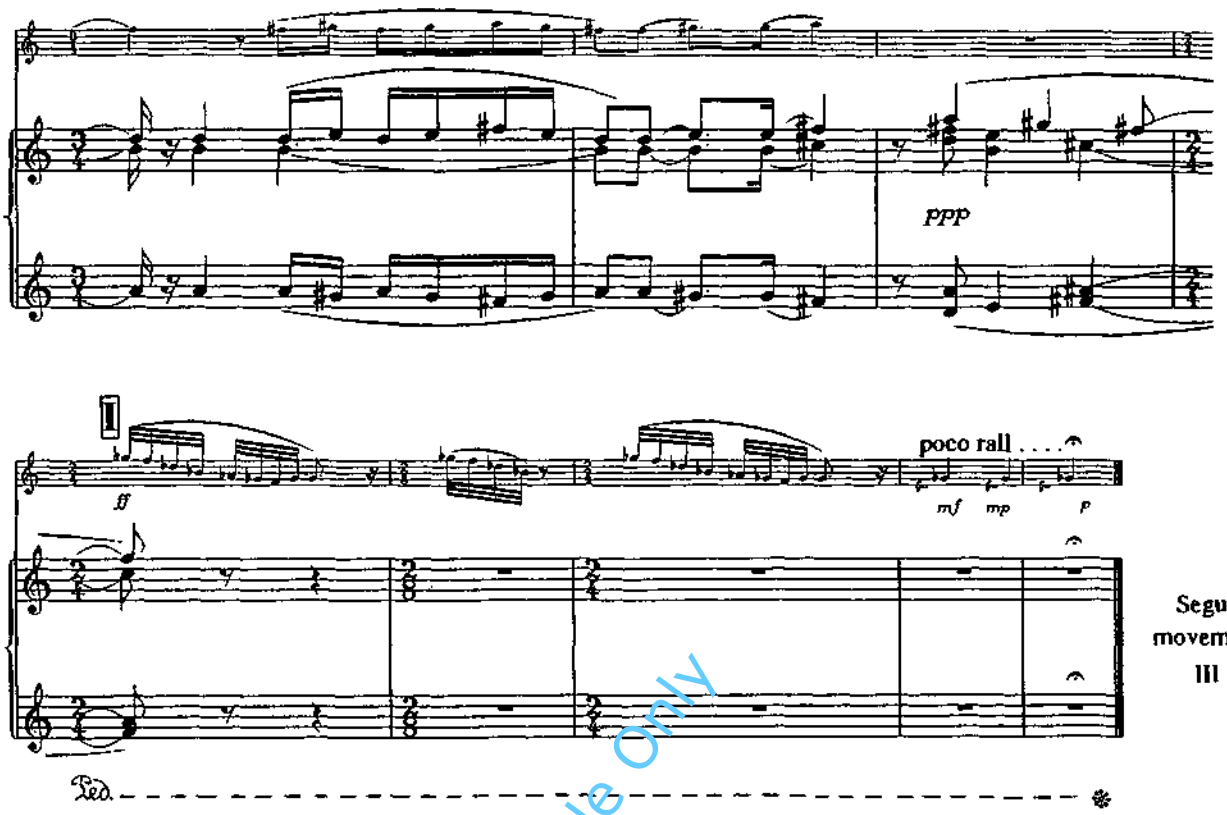

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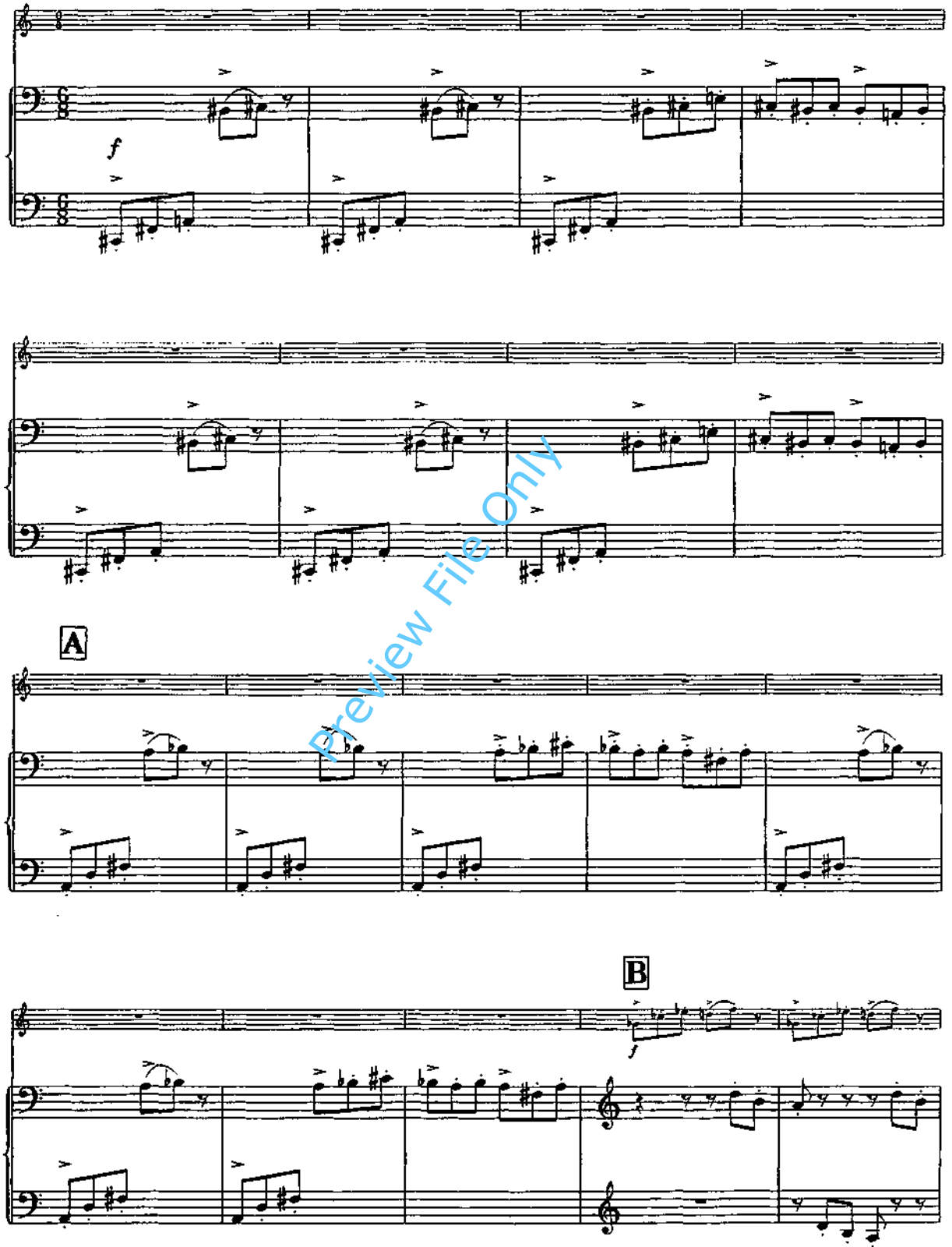
III

Allegro Vivace
With great urgency (♩. = 130 approx.)



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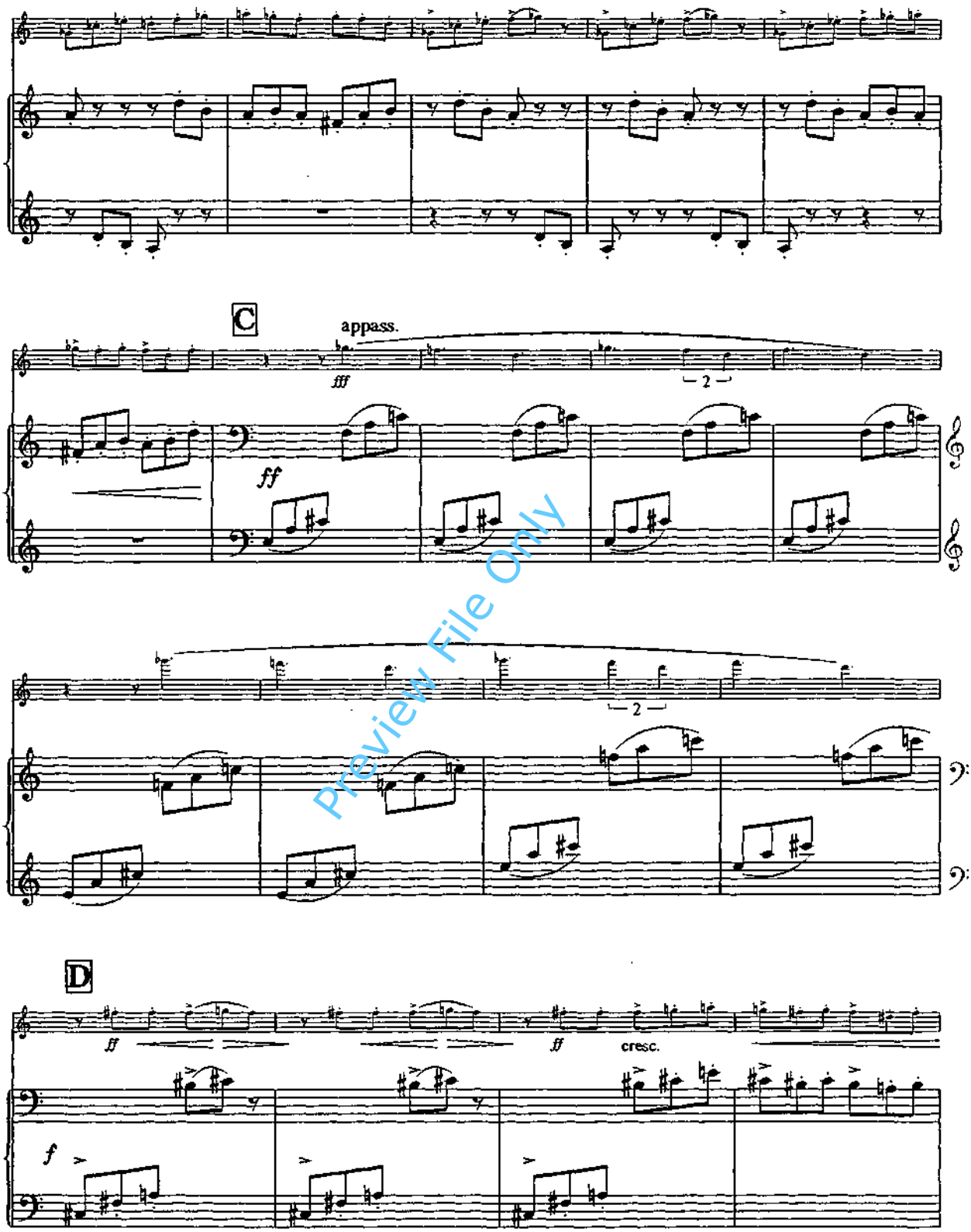

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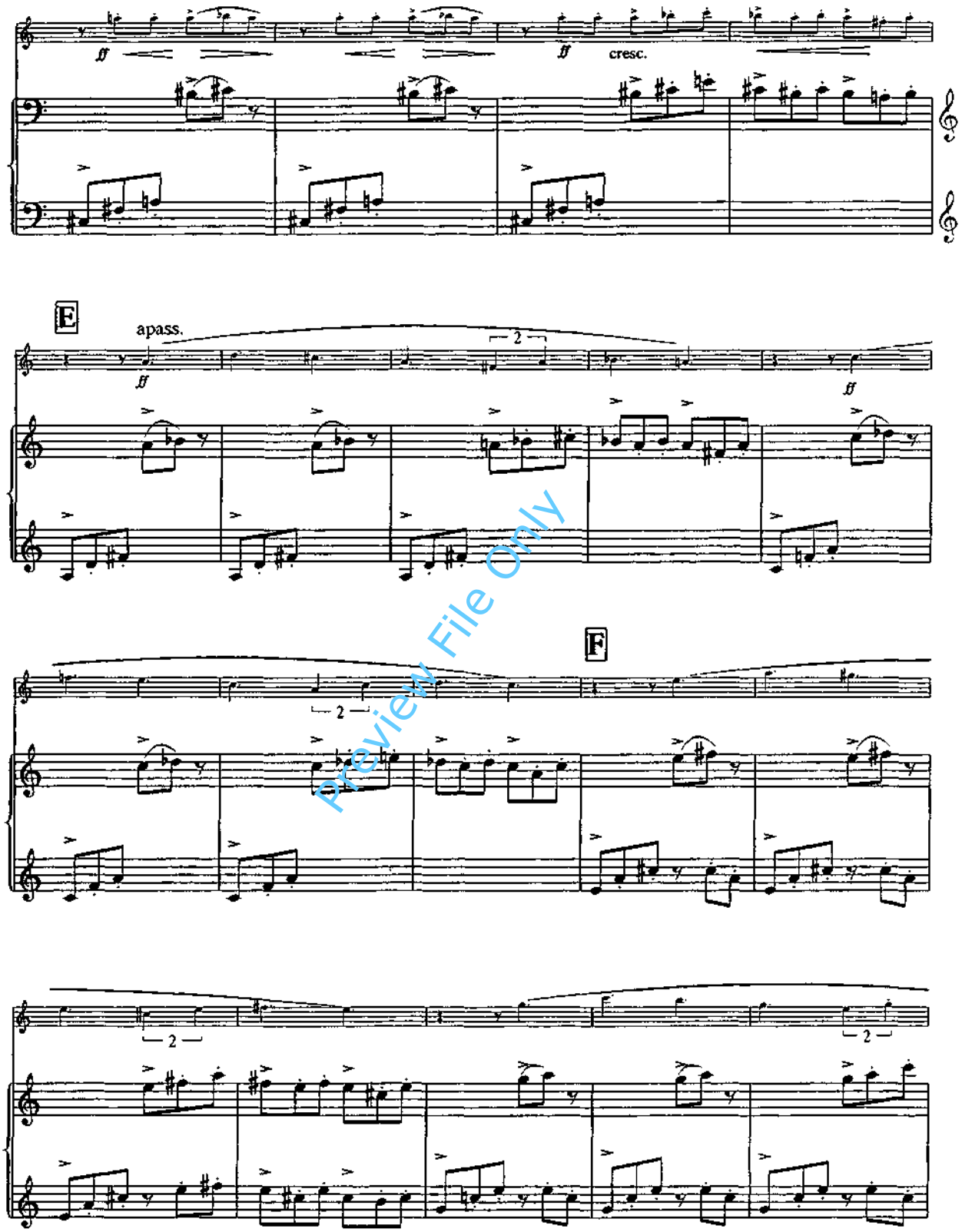

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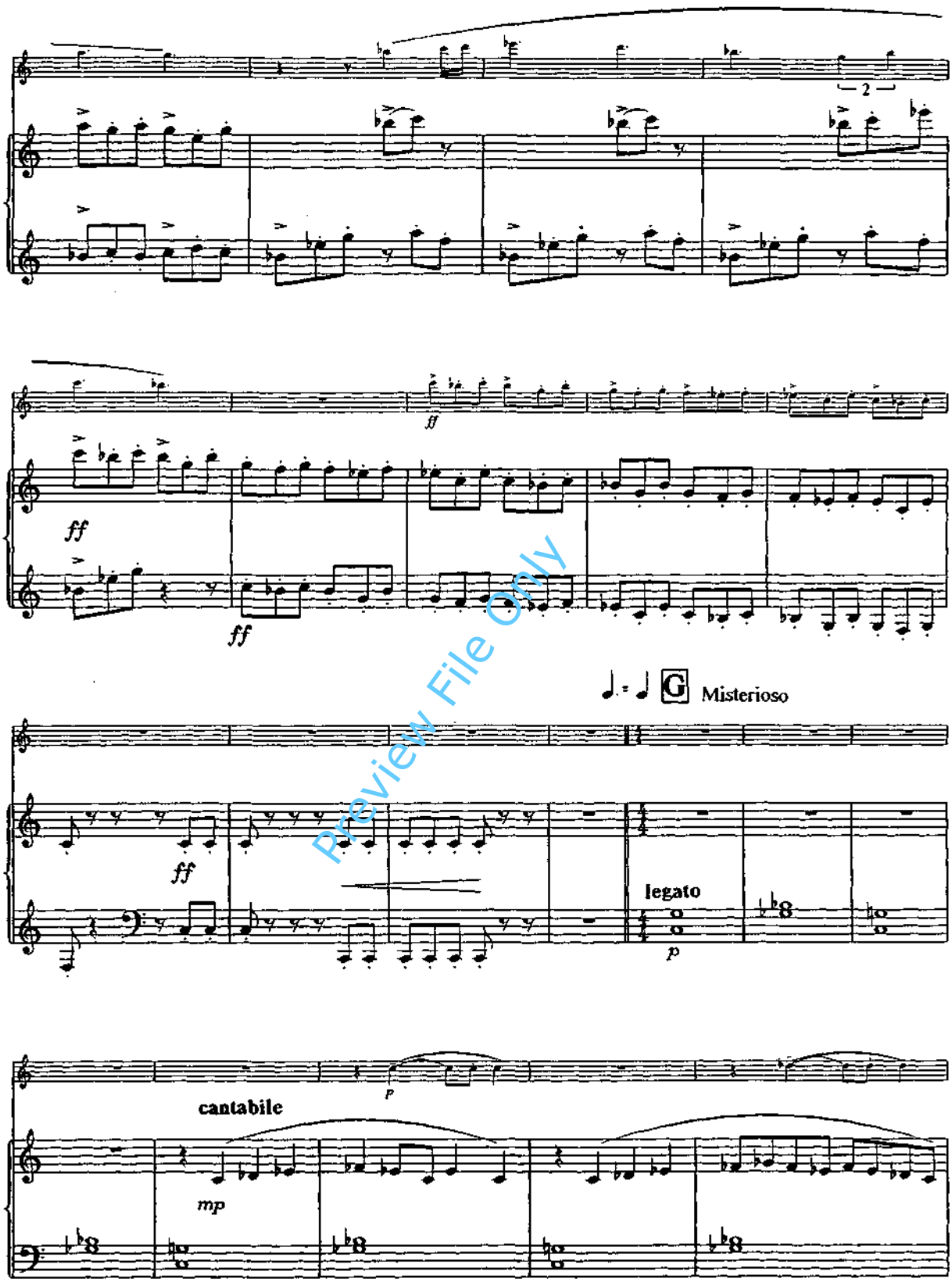

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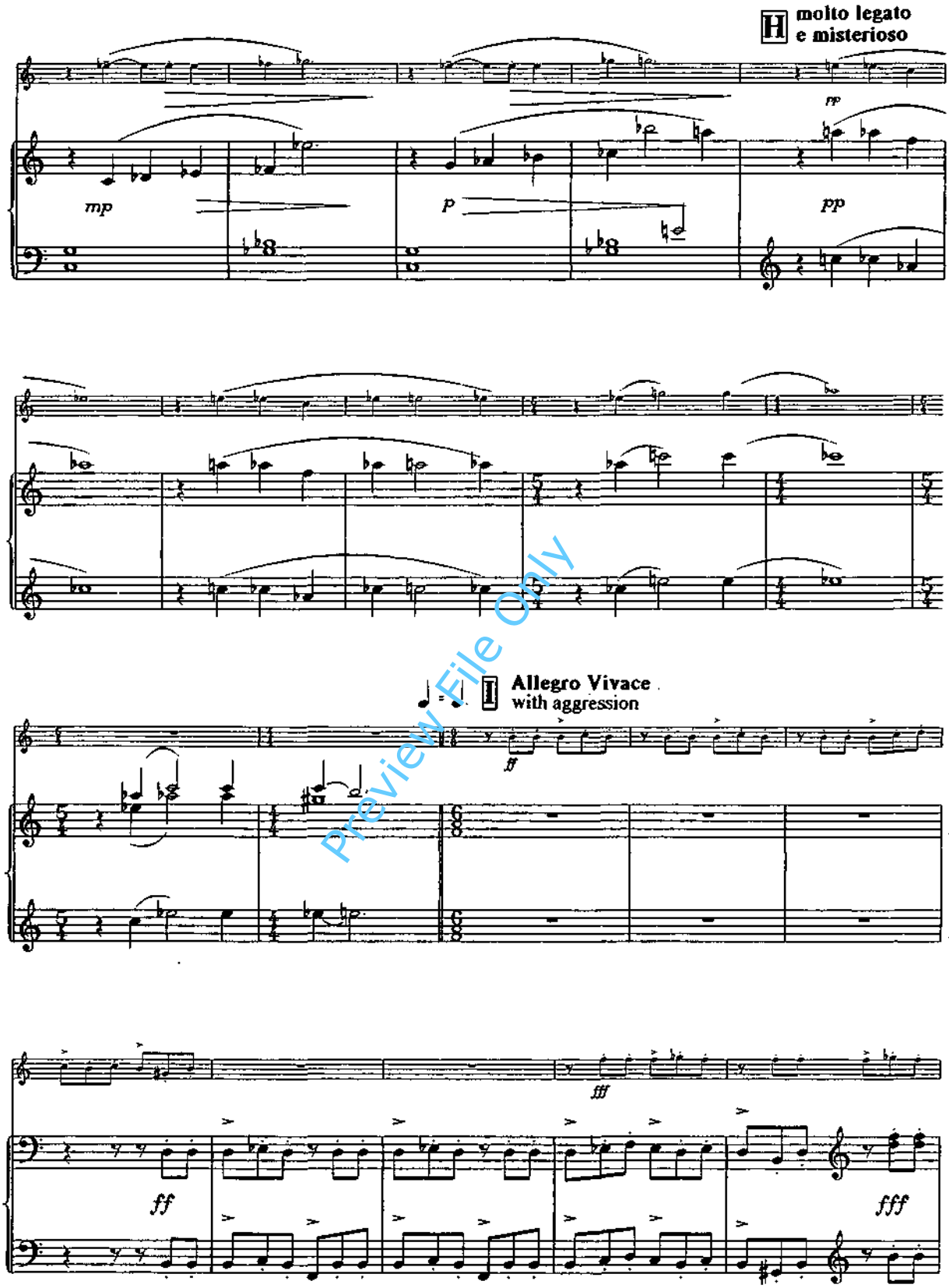

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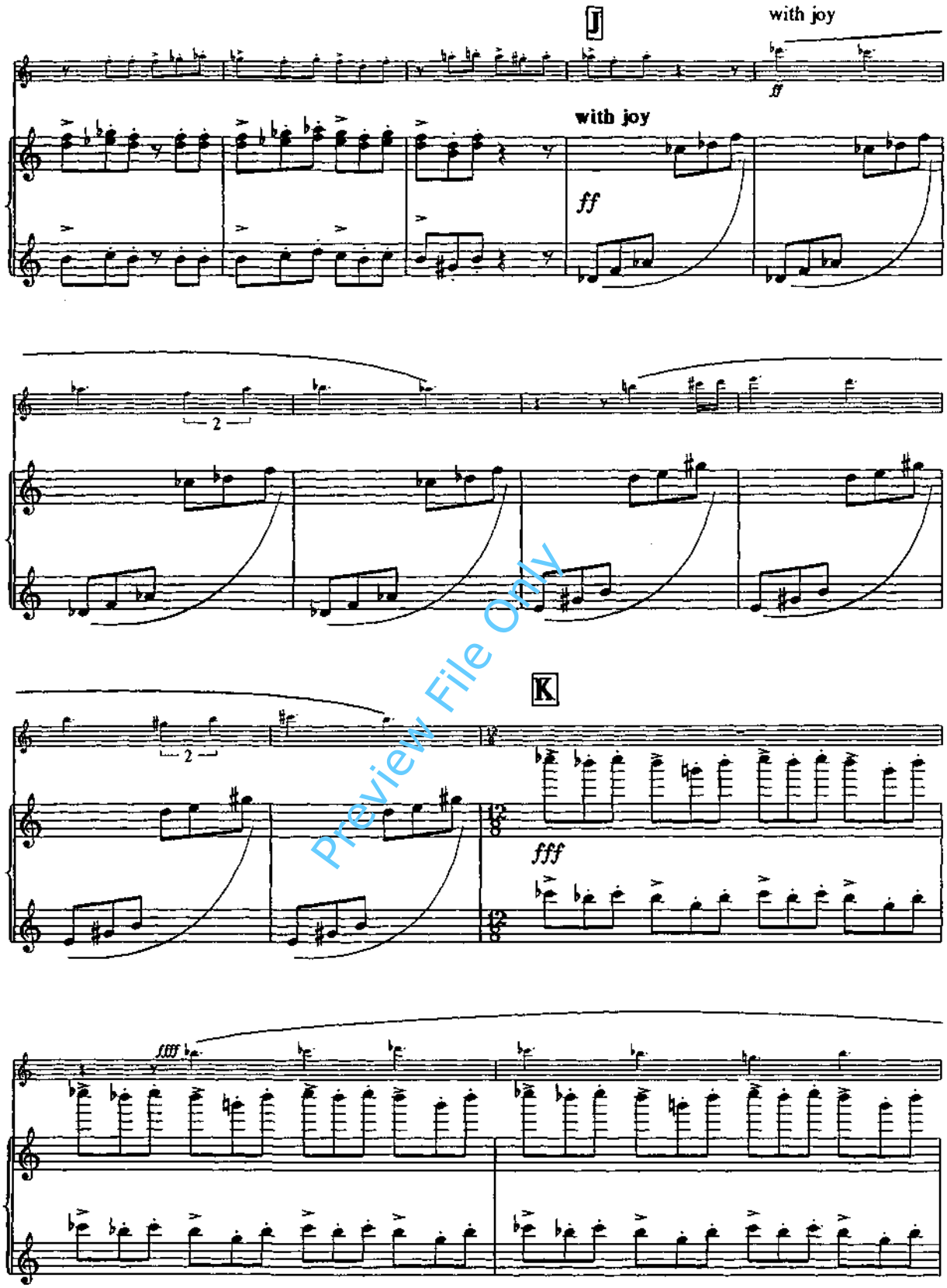

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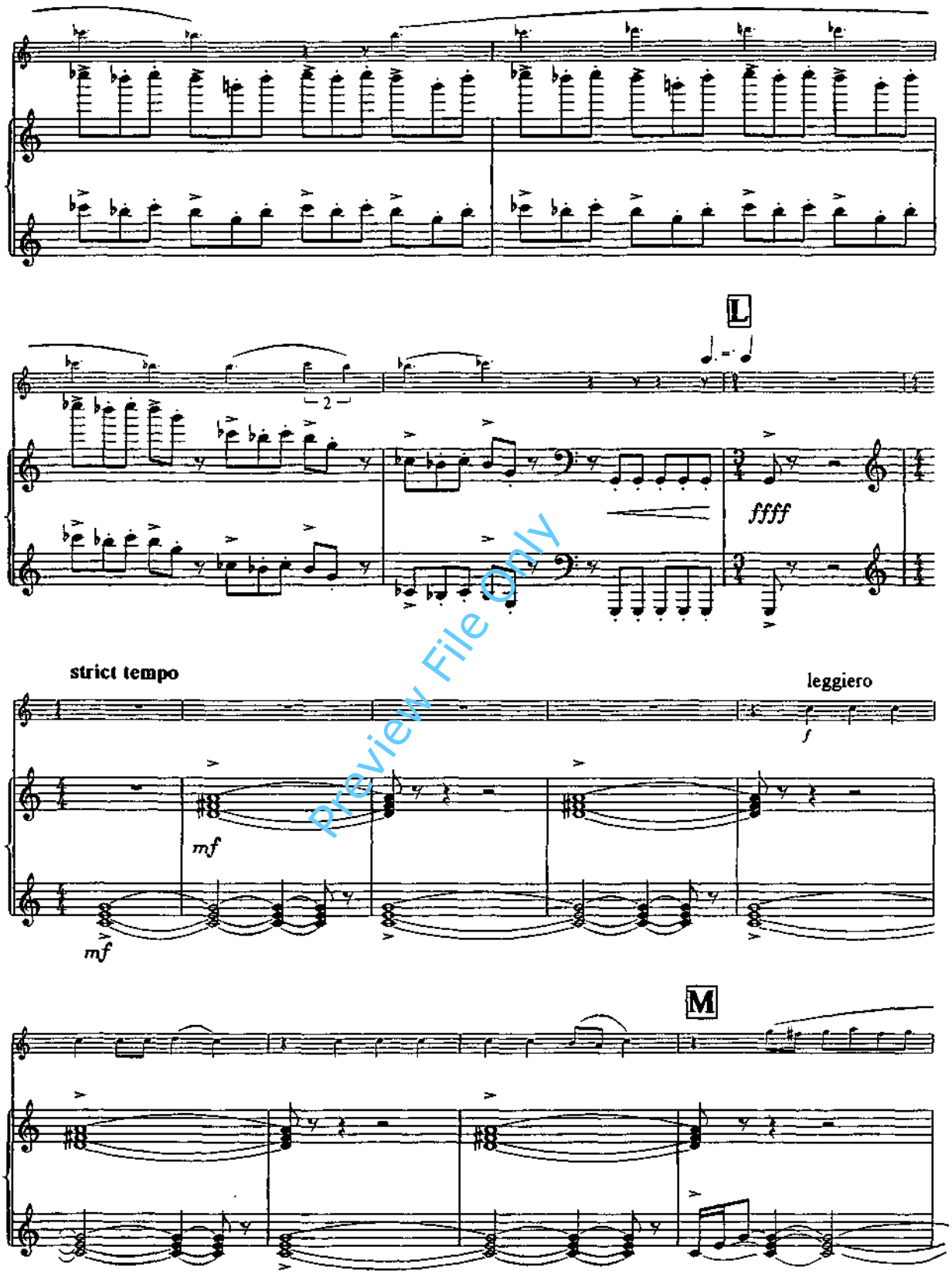

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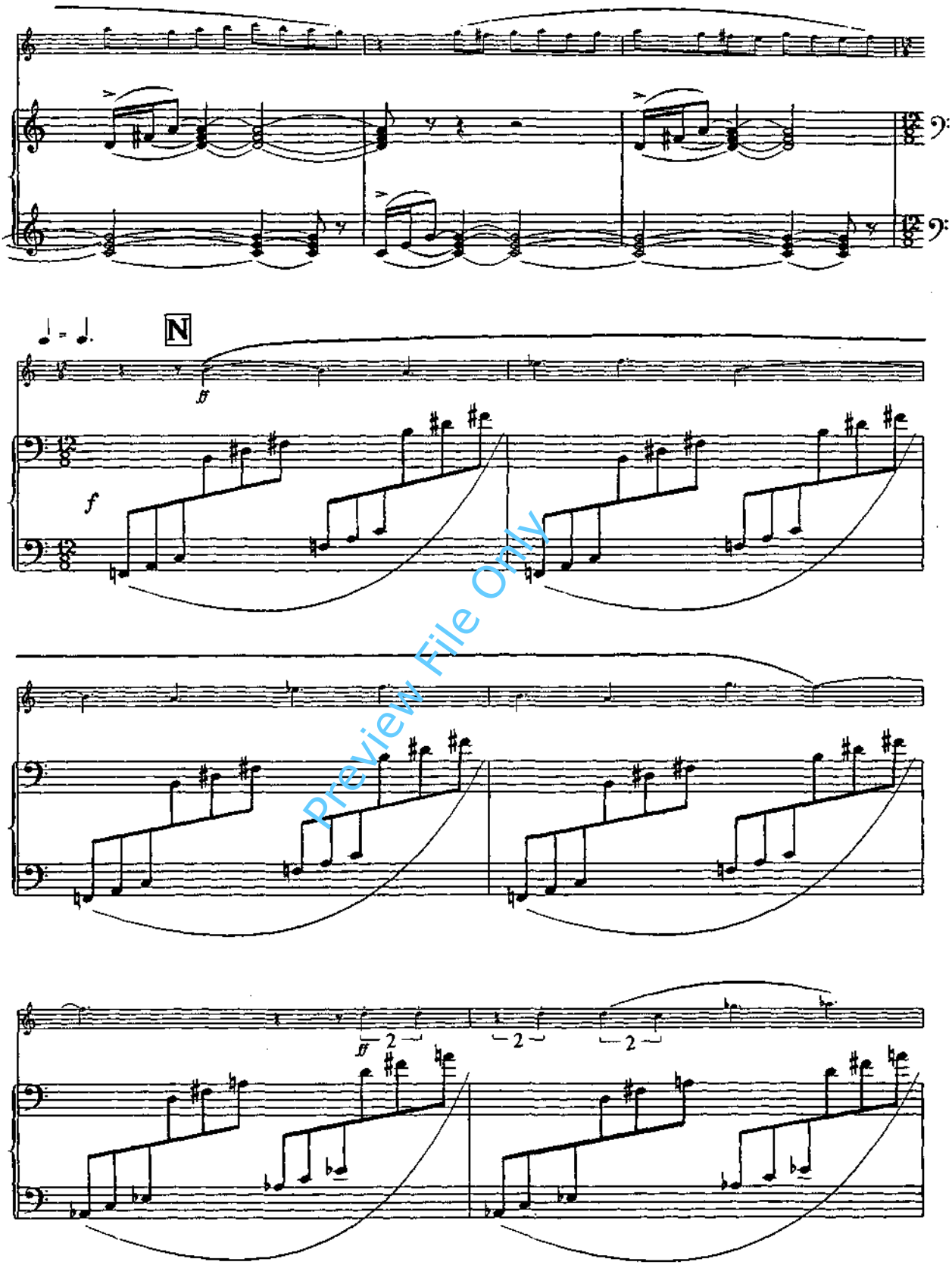

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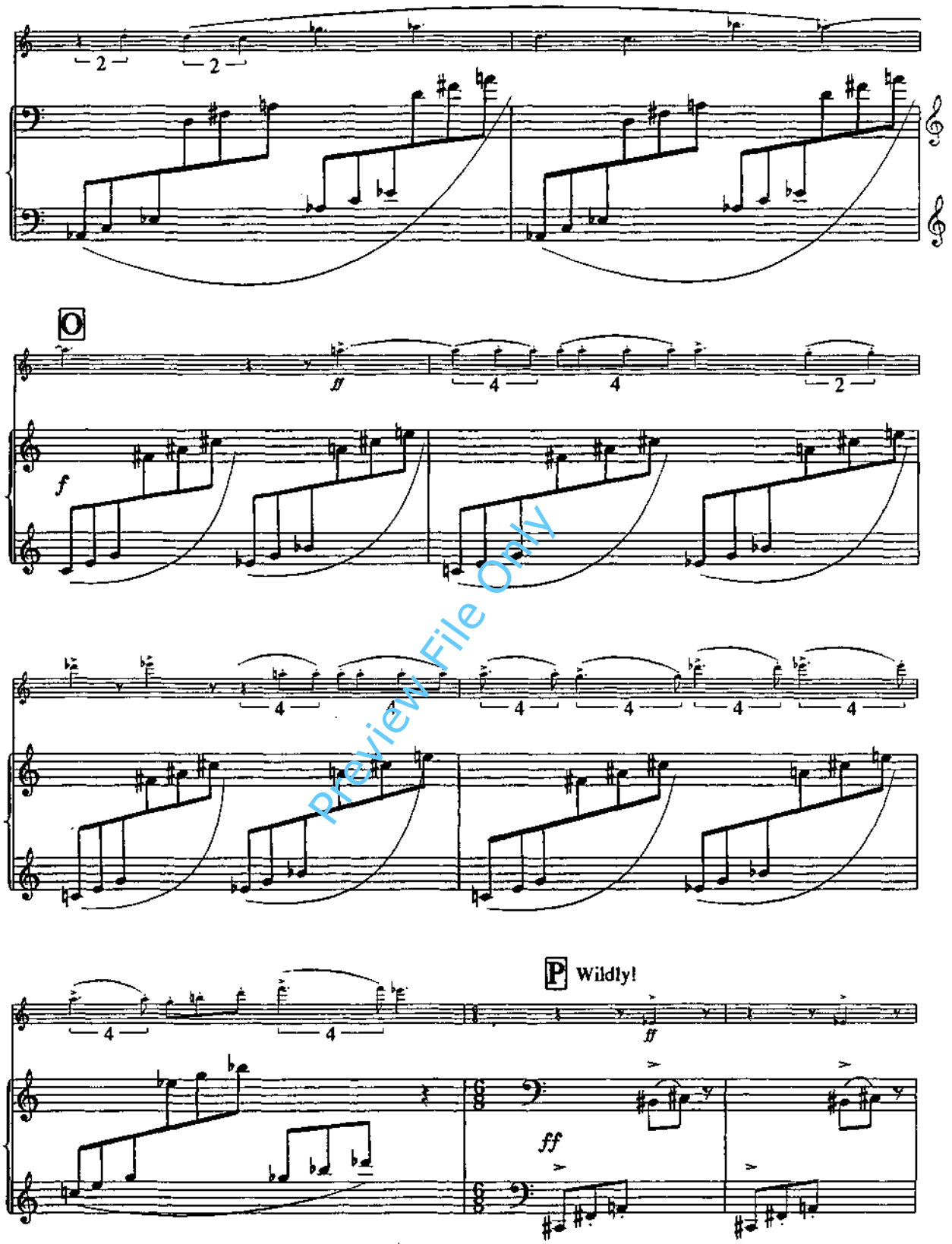

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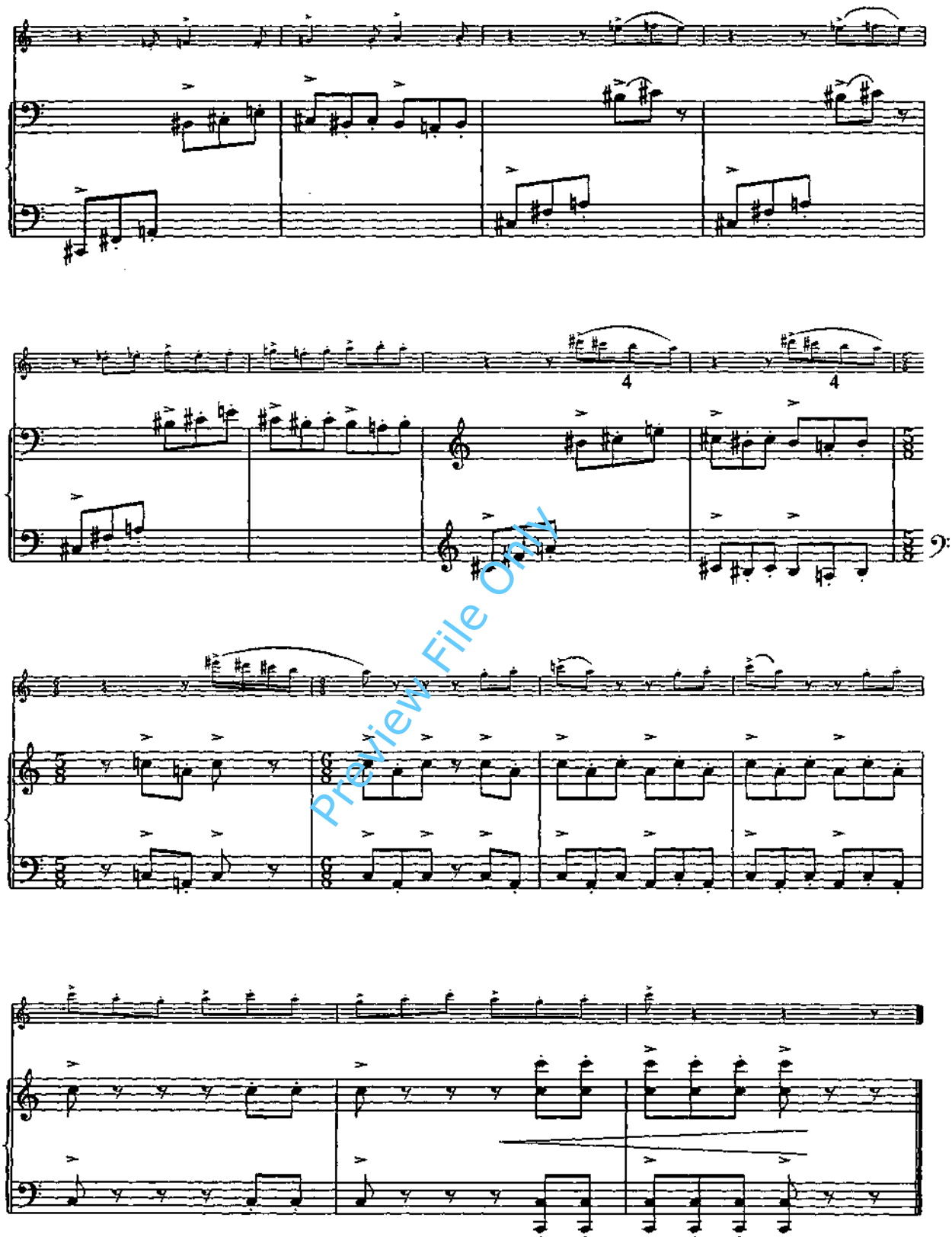

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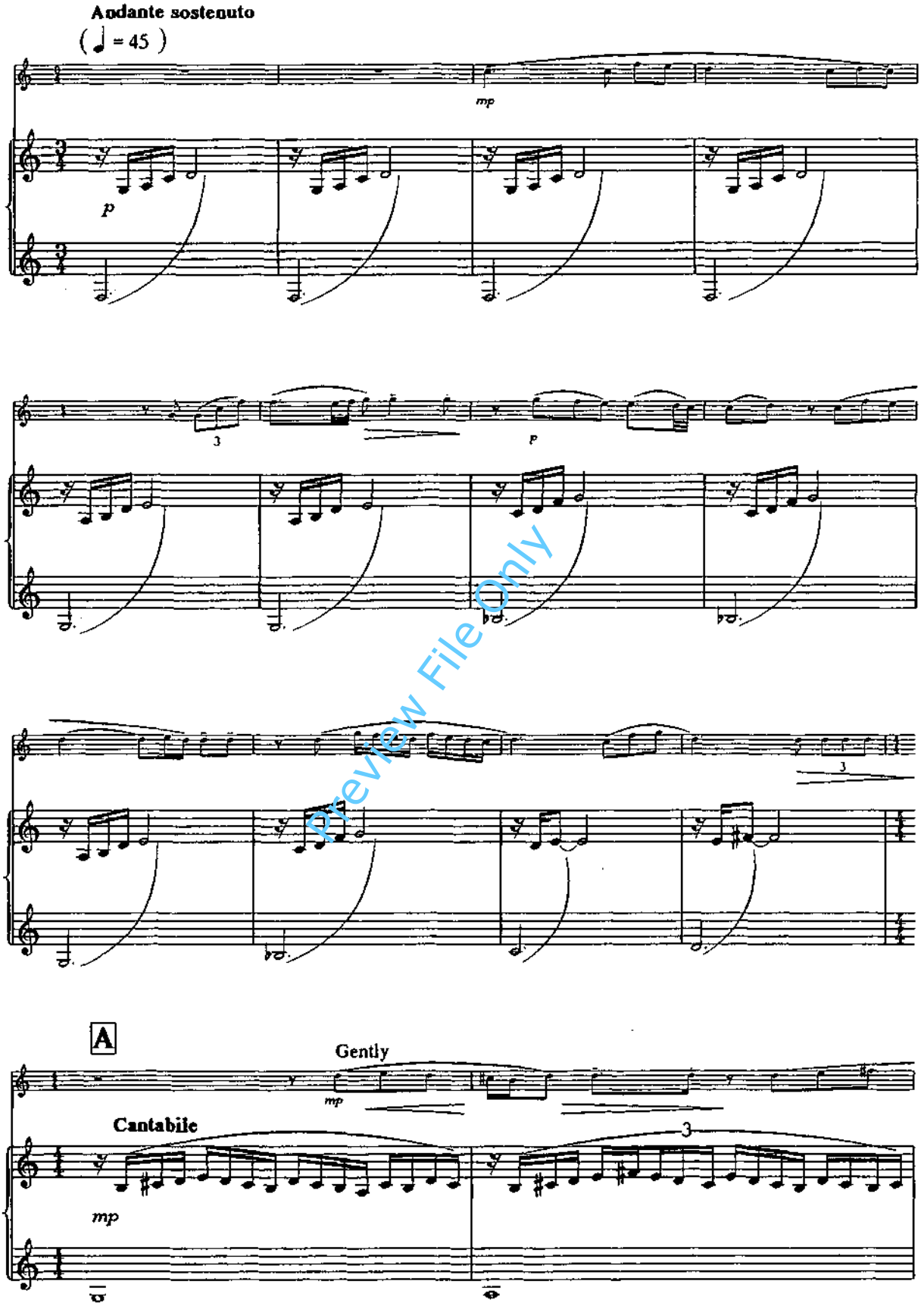
IV



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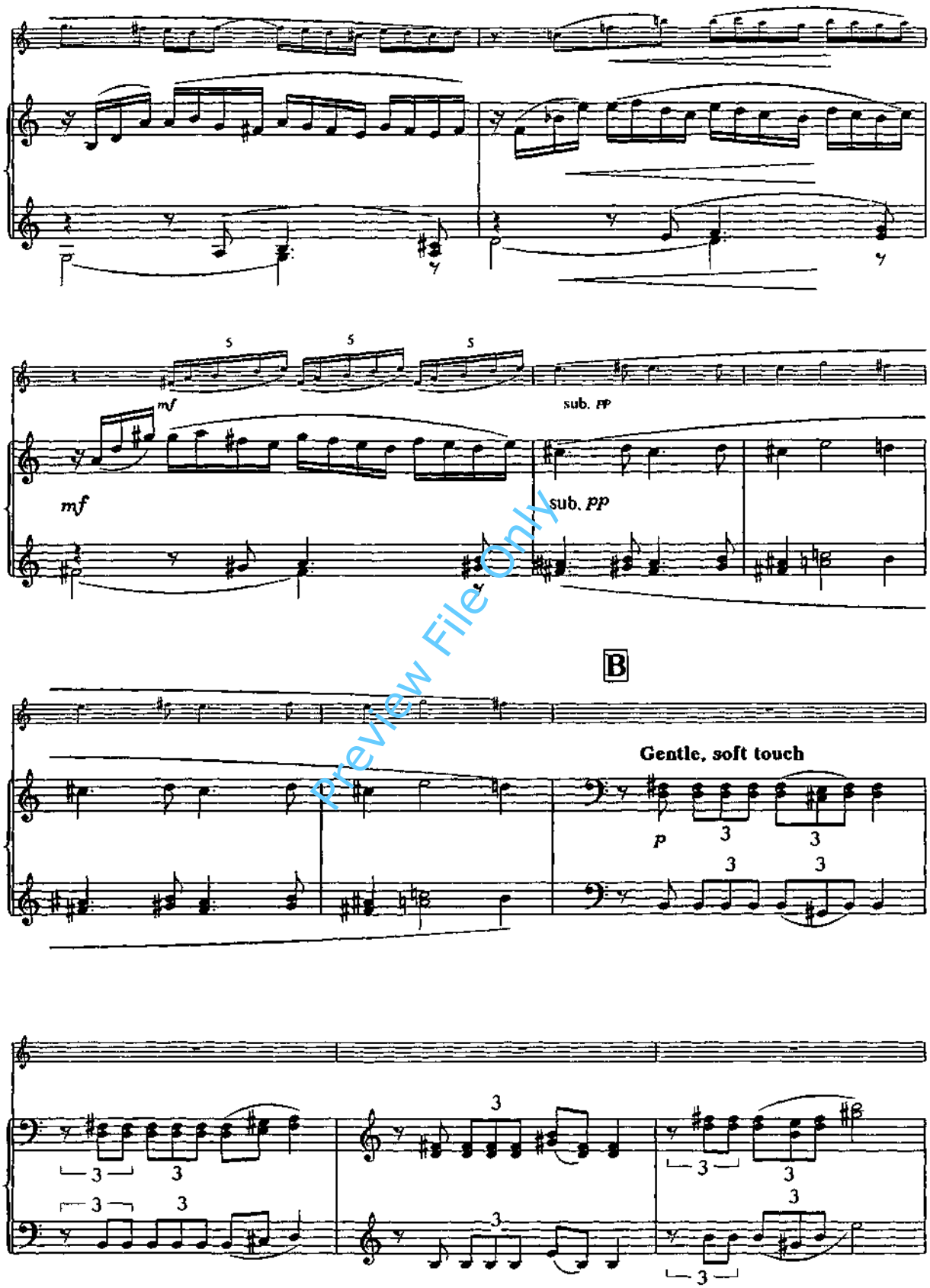

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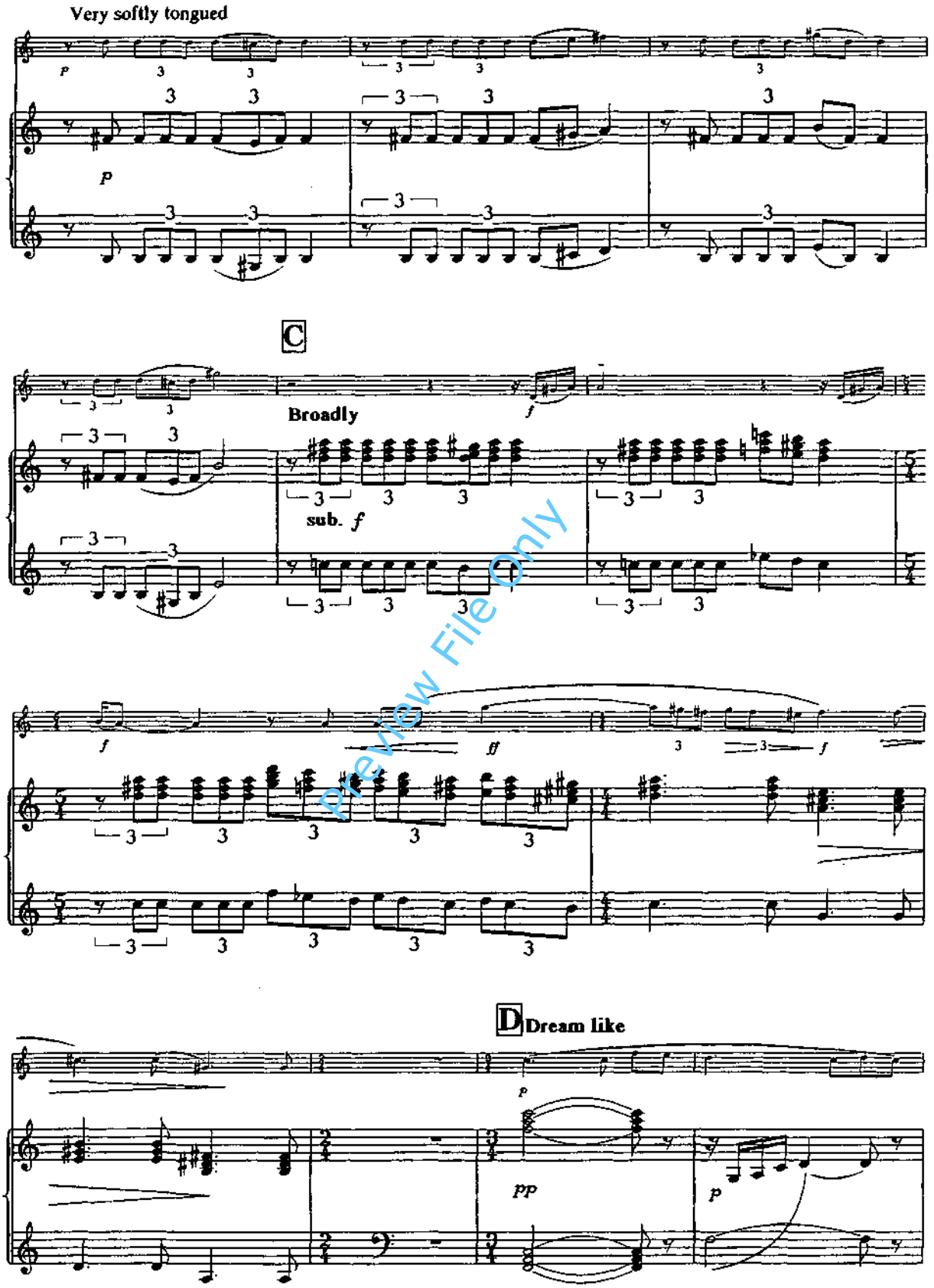

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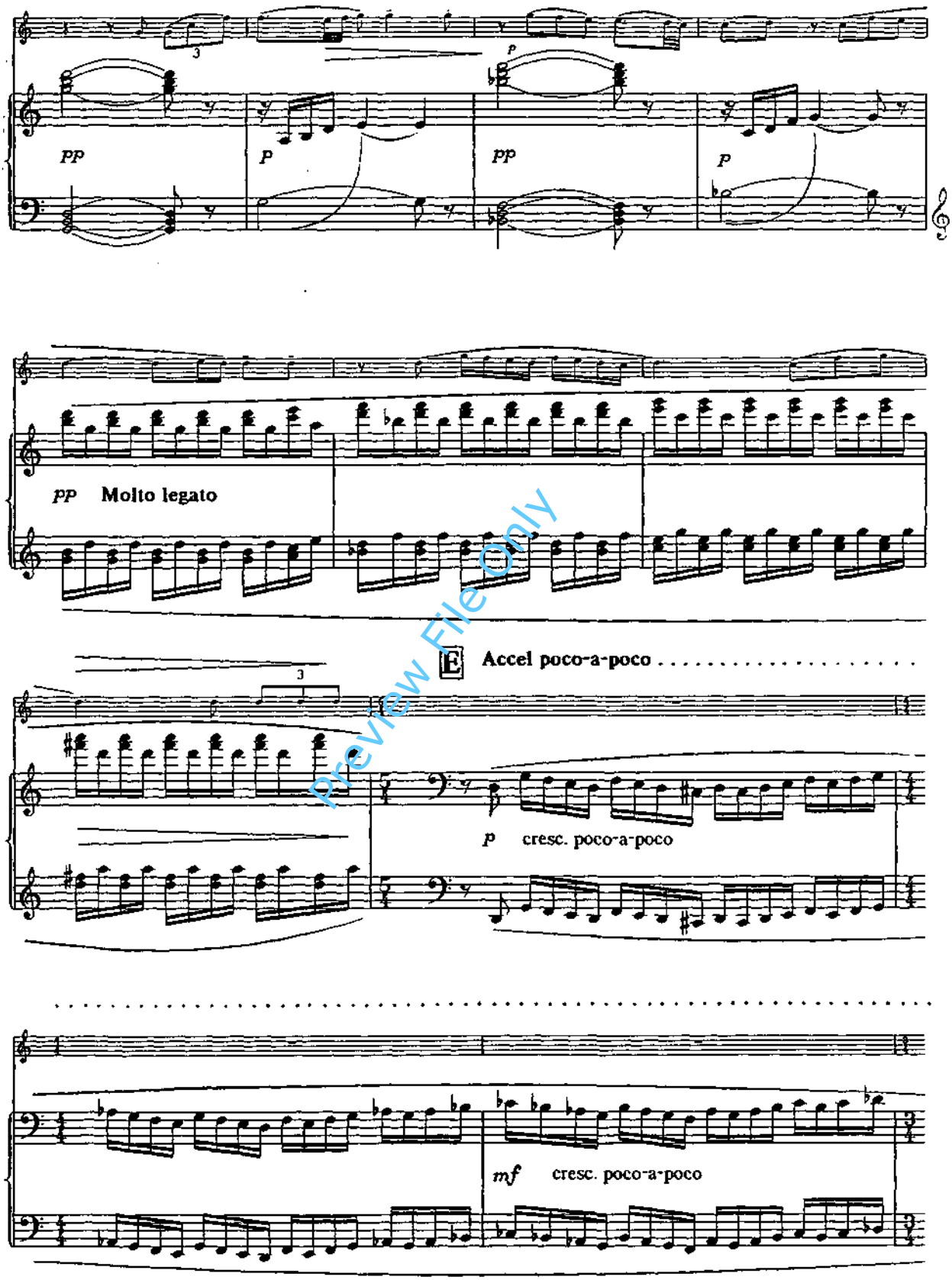

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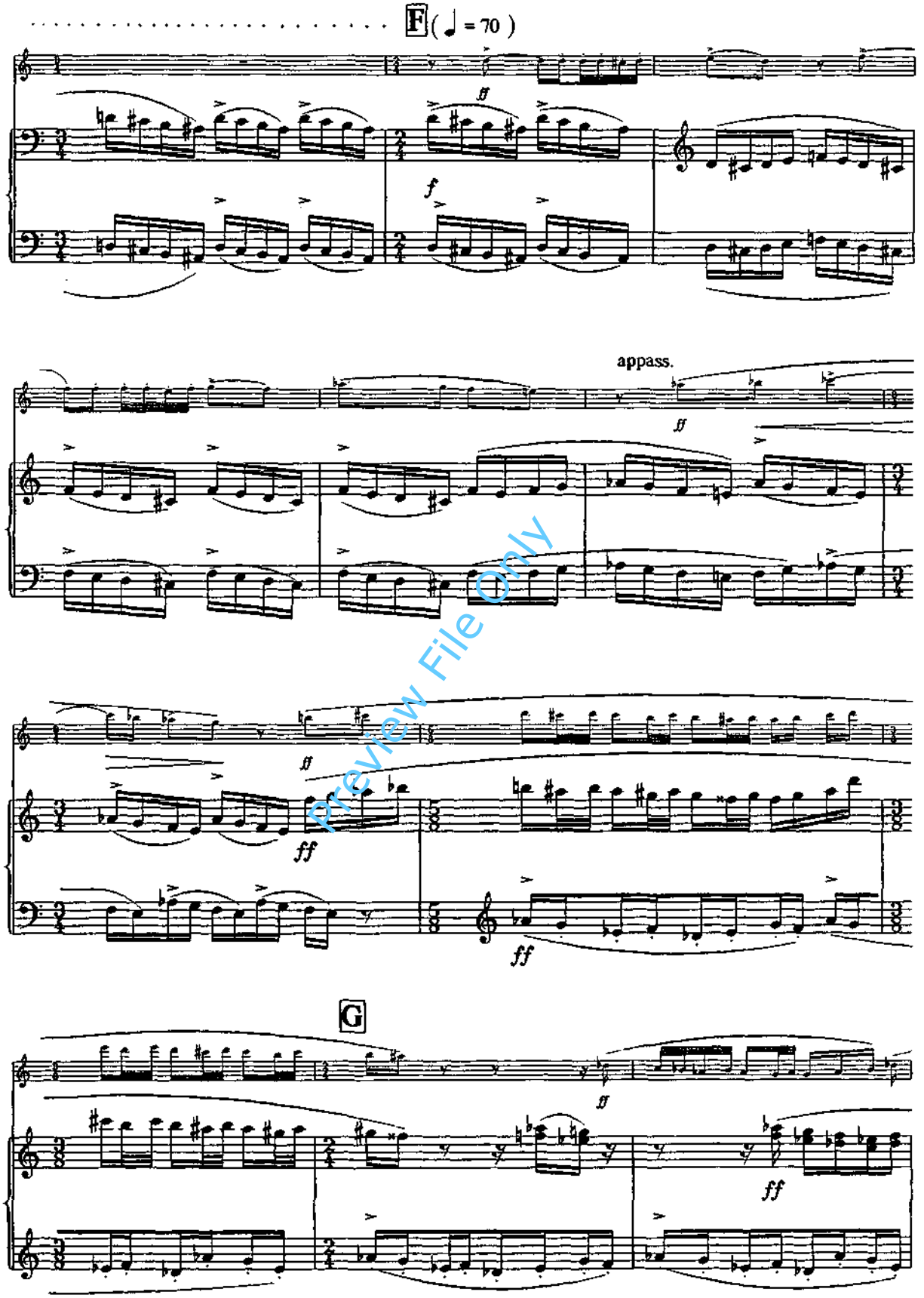

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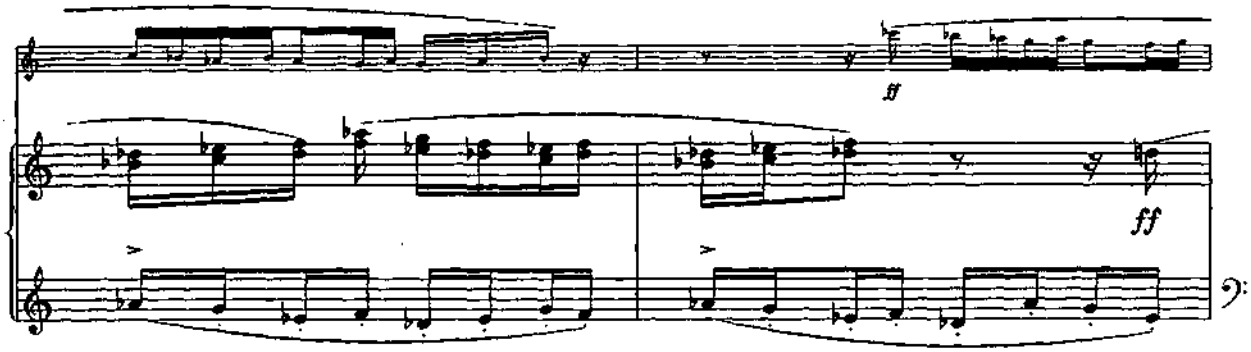

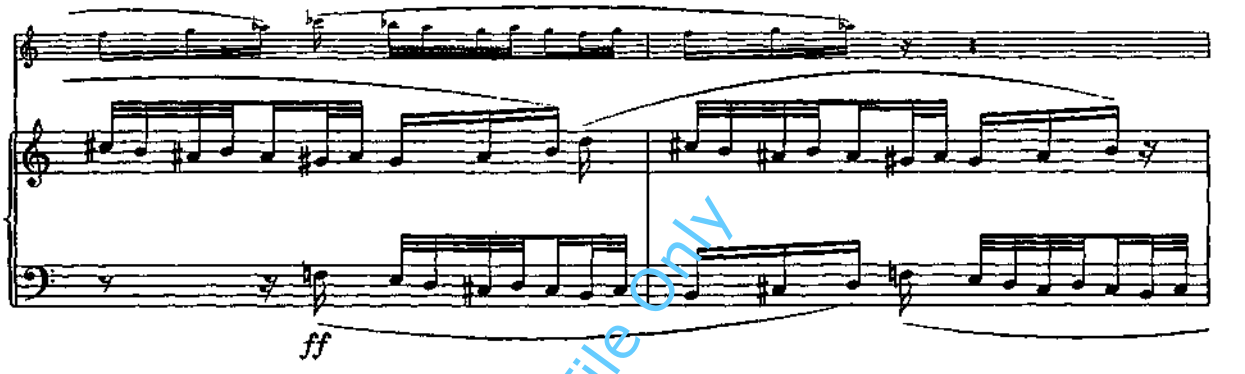

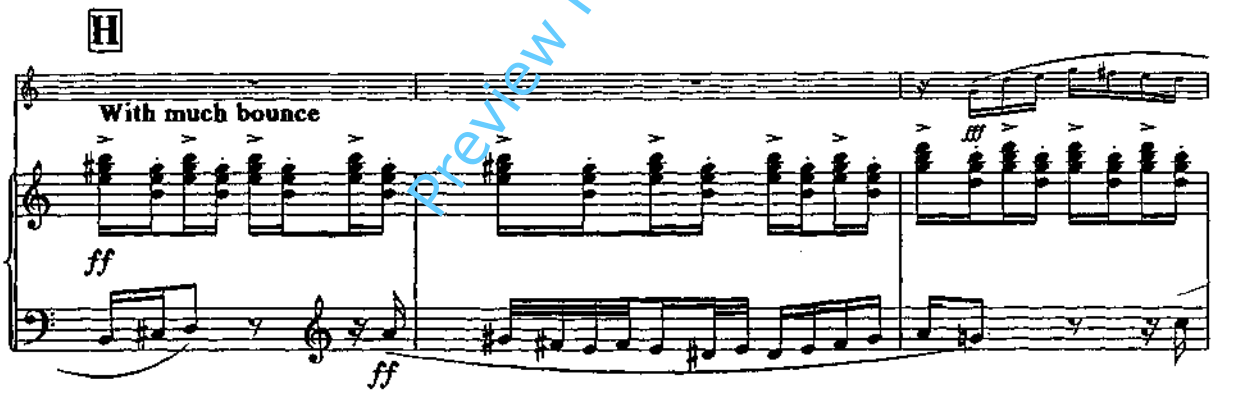

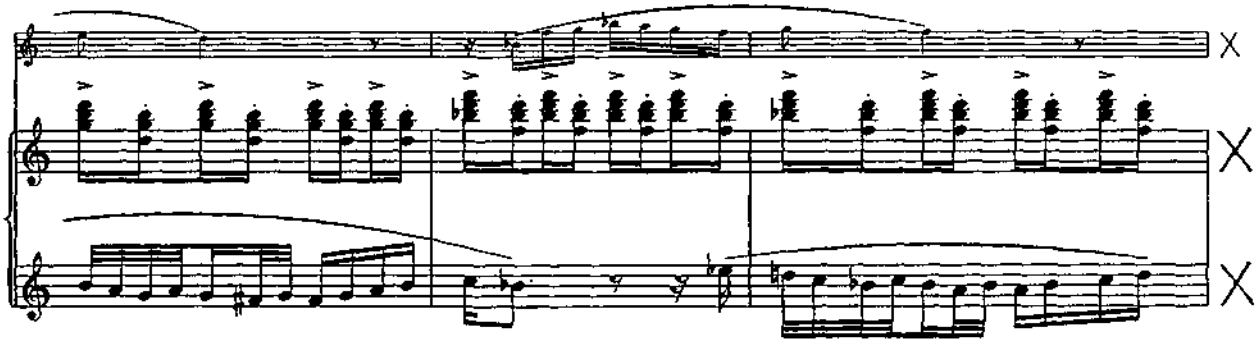

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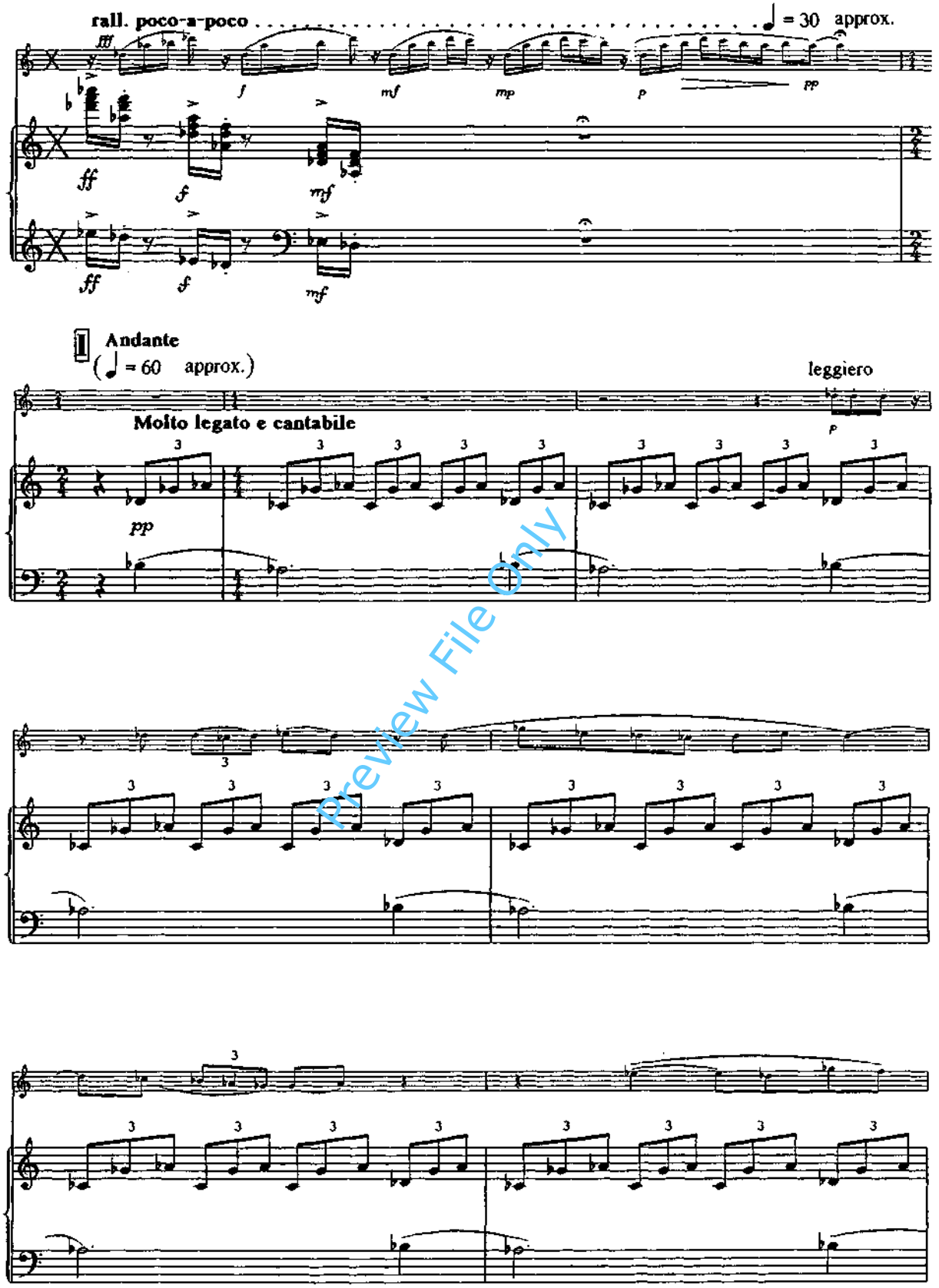

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telephone & fax: +44 (0)1562 886625 email: downlyn@globalnet.co.uk
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