Scratch Card Number Opera

Act Two

Workshop version

December 11th, 1999

Dramatis Personae

Bradley Huddlestone

(Ambitious young presenter of the TV lottery show, LIFE'S LOTTERY)

Linda Jones

(Production assistant for LIFE'S LOTTERY)

Jenny Strong

(The woman forced to become the heroine of this story through the fame of her Lotters ticket)

Paparazzo 1 (doubles Cameraman 1)

(Takes photographs for THE WORLD and other newspapers)

Paparazzo 2 (doubles Cameraman 2)

(Takes photographs for THE WORLD and other newspapers)

Samantha Chivers

(Journalist for THE WORLD newspaper, best friend of Jenny Strong)

Milton Valentine

(Proprietor of THE WORLD newspaper and THE WORLD ON SUNDAY)

Cameraman 1

(Works every week for the LIFE'S LOTTERY production company)

Cameraman 2

(Works every week for the LIFE'S LOTTERY production company)

Producer

(The deviser of the LIFE'S LOTTERY show)

High Baritone

Lyric Soprano

Mezzo soprano

Counter Tenor 1

Counter Tenor 2

Dramatic Soprano

Tenor

Counter Tenor 1

Counter Tenor 2

Speaking Voice (amplified over PA)

Saturday, 6.00 pm. Linda Jones, the production assistant for Life's Lottery, shows Jenny Strong her dressing room. Jenny has agreed to start the lottery draw this evening, but now regrets it. She has gone along with Samantha's article because she hoped public interest would force the government to take an interest in her husband's disappearance. Now she feels that Tom has been lost in the furore created by the lottery ticket.

Linda apologises for the commotion outside the studio. The two women discuss Jenny's situation and we learn that Linda also has a man who she is keeping faith with. "He's somehow trapped in himself. Soon he'll return to me. I'm sure". Jenny finds Linda sympathetic but asks to have time on her own, to commune with herself.

Alone in the dressing room, Jenny opens Tom's letter and reads it once more through. She is frightened to believe the ticket will win, in case it loses. Jenny expresses her sense of helplessness and her anger at her husband, who she feels has deserted her. Little beknownst to her Jenny is being watched by two men (terrace, back of auditorium). At first they watch her intently. Then they produce their cameras and take pictures of her when Jenny starts to cry.

Samantha enters to find Jenny in tears. Jenny tells Samantha how her story about the ticket has made her life a misery. Samantha reminds her that they were trying to create interest in Tom's situation and they were surely successful in doing this. According to Samantha the reason why Jenny's so upset is because Tom has placed her in such an impossible position, insisting that she keep the ticket when the odds against it winning are so great. Surely she would be more sensible to sell it to avoid disappointment.

Samantha announces she knows someone who would do more than pay her off all debts, someone who is fanatical about the ticket. She chooses this moment to let in Milton Valentine, who has been waiting outside the door. Valentine is the proprieter of her newspaper, the World. Valentine makes offer of £50,000 for the ticket. Jenny is dumbstruck, but shakes her head. She can't let Tom down.

At this moment Linda knocks at the door and enters. She is shocked to find that two people have evaded security. Even though Jenny reassures her that she knows Samantha, Linda sees that something is wrong and asks them to leave Jenny alone. Then Valentine makes his final offer of £100,000 for the ticket.

Everyone freezes. There is the sound of a lift door closing and the lift ascending. They turn and look backstage towards the wall. The four people express their feeling that they have just experienced a <u>déja vu</u>.

This is the situation to which the opera continually returns. In Acts One and Three Jenny decides to keep the ticket and go through with the lottery show. Act Two is the only 'outcome' in which Jenny decides to accept Valentine's offer of £100,000 for the ticket!

Scratch Card Number Opera Synopsis for Score-held performance

Preface

The opera's three acts do not follow a standard narrative pattern but show the three possible outcomes when the main character, Jenny Strong, is confronted with the dilemma of whether or not to sell the ottery ticket sent to her by her absent husband, Tom. Nevertheless, the scenes also succeed one another in such a way as to suggest a line of development in several of the characters, in particular Bradley Huddlestone, Jenny Strong and Samantha Chivers. The following scenes are part of Act II, which presents one of the possible outcomes. To avoid confusion, I am not providing a complete overview of the whole opera, but have concentrated on the information relevant to this particular story line! (If you feel you want to know everything a complete synopsis is available from the Broomhill office.)

An account of the events leading up to the situation at the beginning of Act II

Everyone in Britain knows Jenny Strong's story already ever since it was broken by her journalist friend, Samantha Chivers, in the "World" newspaper two weeks ago. Everyone has heard how her husband, Tom, now missing for six months, sent her a letter shortly before he disappeared, containing a lottery ticket that he is convinced will win if she keeps her faith in him. It is a 'secure' lottery ticket – that is to say, a ticket bought for £50 that prevents every other punter from choosing its particular combination of numbers for that day. Tom must have apparently bought this 'secure' ticket six months in advance before he travelled on his business trip to Russia and went missing.

Every one now knows the numbers 8 15 22 33 41 47 from the World article, but in the event of this combination coming up only this ticket will win. As a result of the mystique that has built up around the lottery ticket, Jenny Strong has received offers of up to £10,000 for the ticket. Up-to-now she has refused, but she does have large debts, accrued as a result of Tom's disappearance, especially through her efforts to find out what has become of him. She doesn't know well whether to trust her husband's word and keep the ticket; or to sell the ticket for certain money. Of course if the ticket loses it will be worthless.

A Short Synopsis of the Act 2 excerpt to be performed

Act 2, Prelude

On Video, we see another one of Bradley Huddlestone's trails for the coming Life's Lottery show. This one is more general and could be used for any show. It is cast in the form of an information film, explaining how Life's Lottery makes huge efforts to be fair.

Act 2 Scene 1 (Sale)

The group of four people are discovered as at the beginning of Act 1 Scene 4. This time Jenny, half laughing, half crying, agrees to sell the ticket (Ensemble 1). Linda asks if she really means what she says. Milton and Samantha congratulate her on her decision, saying that they are sure she will never regret it. She must simply sign a document confirming Milton's ownership of the ticket.

While this document is being discussed, Bradley appears at the coor and beckons to Linda, who explains what has happened (Ensemble 2). Bradley is beside himself with anger. He persuades Linda to go back to Jenny and confront her with the statement, "do you realise what a disappointment this will be to millions of viewers in this country?"

The question sounds ridiculous when Linda says it aloud. Mitton and Samantha try to laugh it off as they produce the document for Jenny to sign. Then, as Jenny signs the document, Bradley timself tries to intervene, but is too late. Milton and Samantha leave for the studio, saying that they expect to see Bradley there soon.

Bradley takes Jenny to task for having sold the ticket (Ensemble 3), because he convinced the ticket would have won and made TV history. Linda protests at Bradley's insensitivity and a row ensues between the two of them that is too personal to be purely reflective of their respective positions in the TV company (Love Duet).

In the end, Linda resigns, saying "You go down even further in my estimation every time you smile at the camera." Huddlestone replies, "You can't reject me. Your feelings mean nothing to me." Linda asks "What do you know of feelings, Bradley?" before he leaves, saying that he is a show to present.

Act 2 Scene 2

Linda bursts into tears inconsolably and has to be calmed down by Jenny. In the background we hear the preparations for the TV show taking place over the tannoy (Trio). Linda explains that she and Bradley are childhood sweethearts who have never got it together. He asked her to marry him when she was seventeen and she turned him down because she wasn't ready to contemplate such a big step. Now Linda knows that she loves Bradley, but fame has changed him.

At this moment Samantha tiptoes in. She can't bear to sit in the studio. Too much hangs on it. Suddenly, we hear live on air (and see on video) Bradley explain how the secure lottery ticket has been sold. Then we hear Milton saying, "Her story moved me to tears when it was published in the World. We decided that Jenny should not be allowed to suffer in this way any longer. For us it's not a question of winning, it's the privilege of knowing that justice is being done." When Jenny hears this, Jenny realises that she has let Tom down and that she will probably never be able to forgive herself for it.

Bradley and Linda

An important aspect of Act Two is the way it develops the characters of Bradley and Linda. In the first act, we have seen both characters separately but there is no hint of their intensity of their relationship. Their quarrel should come as a complete surprise to the audience.

Their story is as follows:

Bradley and Linda grew up together in Rochdale. Bradley was teased badly at school and has ended up with a chip on his shoulder about it. He fell madly in love with Linda when he was seventeen but she always rejected his advances. He has never forgiven her for it. His spectacular career as a chat-show host could be put down to him compensating for his lack of self-esteem during this time. His fame means he has no problems seducing women now. Yet, having been hurt so badly the first time by Linda, he still tends to avoid permanent relationships.

Linda only realised how much she loved Bradley when he left Rochdale. He never returned her phone calls, so when he became the TV host for "Life's Lottery", she moved to London and joined the production company as a runner. Their relationship there has not been easy for Linda. Bradley likes punishing her for having rejected him all those years ago by being remote and by appearing in public with glamourous women. Equally frustratingly, he does deign to spend time with her when he's feeling down. As a result, Linda still believes that Bradley loves her – only he doesn't know it!

Milton and Samantha

Milton Valentine is the extravagant proprietor of "The World" and "The World on Sunday". However, what nobody knows is that his media empire is crumbling away (the newspaper's pension funds have already been raided!). His attempts to buy the ticket are a last desperate attempt to save his business by winning the £18 million jackpot. He is by nature a gambler and the mystique of Jenny's ticket has convinced that it must win. He has one distinctive physical characteristic – a horrific skin growth on his face. At key moments in the opera he has a compulsive urge to scratch it even though he knows that it will make it itch even worse. Otherwise, Milton is shrewd and can be said to be a sympathetic character.

Samantha works as a journalist for "The World". She comes from a strict Catholic family but has rebelled against her upbringing. She is incredibly ambitious and driven, but also feels hard done by life. A sign of this is that she has known Jenny since they were at convent school together, but she has no hesitation in taking advantage of her friend, especially as, underneath, she has always been jealous of Jenny's good looks and affable nature. So when she hears about Jenny's lottery ticket, she writes an exclusive for "The World" and the media sensation has made Jenny's life a misery. However, Samantha is easily manipulated, too. She enjoys the intimacy of scheming with Milton and has started a relationship with her proprietor. But when Valentine approached Samantha about buying the lottery ticket from Jenny, Samantha came away with the impression that Milton would marry her and share the money with her. She doesn't know that Milton is using her and, worse, that if he doesn't win the £18 million jackpot tonight, she will be out of a job on Monday.

Jenny

Jenny does not feature so strongly in Act Two than in the other two acts, especially the opening act, which she dominates. Jenny is a lovely person. It's easy to understand why Samantha might be jealous of her. Up-to-now Jenny seems to have had everything her own way: good lucks, a happy disposition, an early marriage to a dashing husband who ensures that she doesn't have to work for a living.

As a result, she is completely unprepared for the awful situation in which she finds herself and feels completely overwhelmed. Her husband has been missing for six months now in Russia. She is in debt because no money is coming in. She has made strenuous efforts to trace Tom but has only ended up spending even more beyond her means. And now she has received this "mystical" last letter from Tom, in which he claims her lottery ticket is guaranteed to win the lottery on Saturday. She is genuinely in two minds as to whether to trust her husband's assurances or to heed the more down-to-earth advice of her best friend, Samantha.

There is a general feeling that Jenny is altogether too trusting. Tom (who never appears in the opera) is a reckless adventurer who is regularly away from home, travelling on business. Jenny is completely in awe of him. She doesn't see his limitations. In fact, he treats her pretty badly. Tom's decision to send her the lottery ticket could be understood as the action of a manipulative and controlling husband.

Yet Jenny is not a weak character herself. In Act Three, she eventually learns to assert herself and determine her own fate.

TV Studio

All the events take place in the TV studio where the "Life's Lottery" show is being recorded. The two counter-tenors (Chorus I and Chorus 2) are the cameramen filming the national Lottery show in Acts 1 and 3. At various times we hear the spoken instructions of the Producer over the PA as he supervises the live broadcast. Two scenes in Act Two belong to this world:

- 1) Prelude, Act II a "Life's Lottery" information film, narrated by Bradley Huddlestone, sung by Chorus I and 2.
- 2) The Trio for Jenny, Linda and Samantha here the Producer's instructions are overlaid over the singing. Both scenes feature spoken text and require a microphone and PA system.

Instrumentation

FLUTE - doubling Piccolo, Alto Flute [and Electric Razor on Suspended Sizzle Cymbal]

CLARINET in Bb - doubling Bass Clarinet

TRUMPET

ACCORDION

PERCUSSION – Vibraphone, Five Octave Marimba, Glockenspiel, Low Tubular Bells (D², G#², A#²), [also provide Electric Razor and Suspended Sizzle Cymbal for FLUTE]

ELECTRIC GUITAR – doubling Acoustic Guitar [needs Fuzz box and dedicated Loudspeaker]

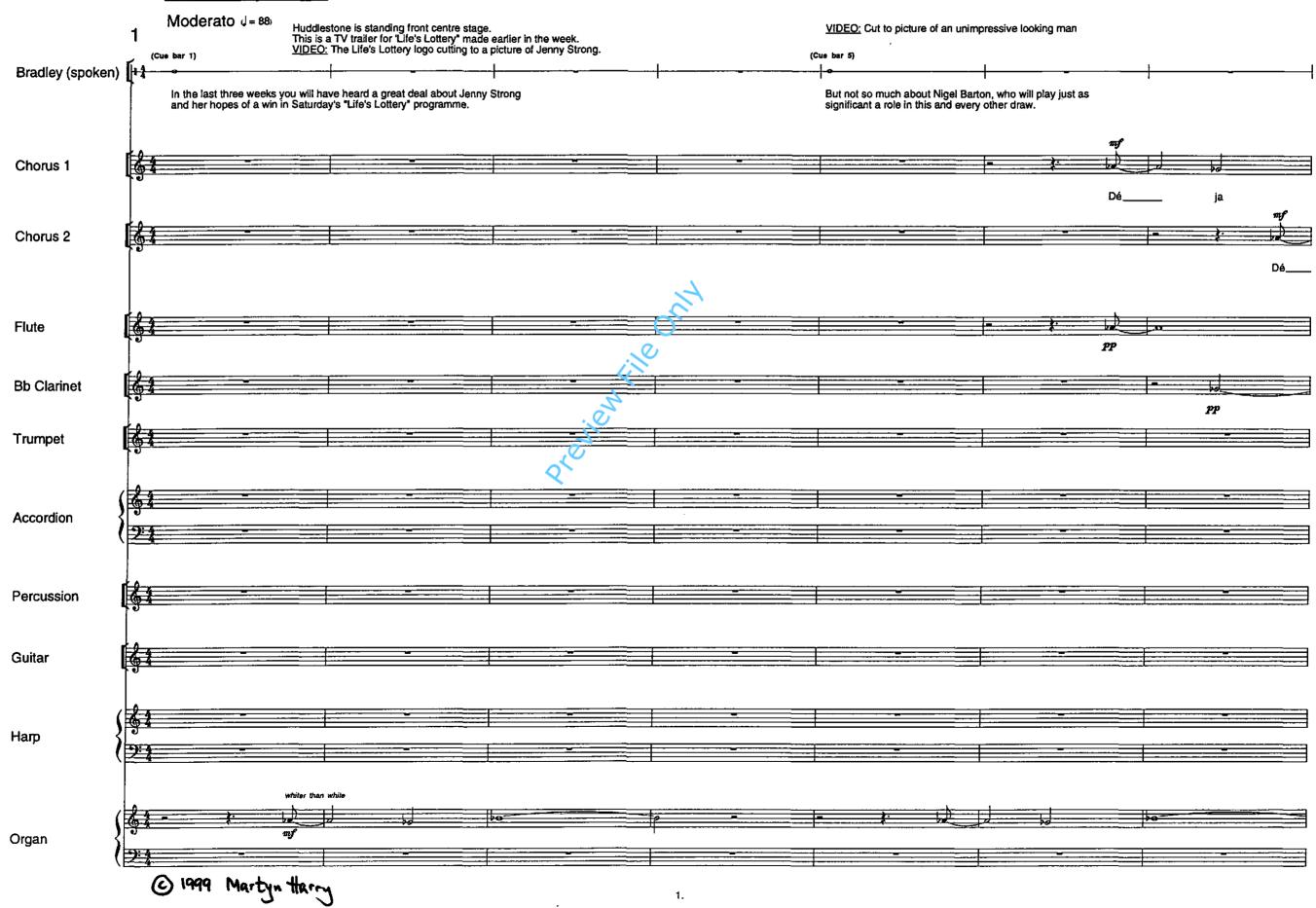
HARP

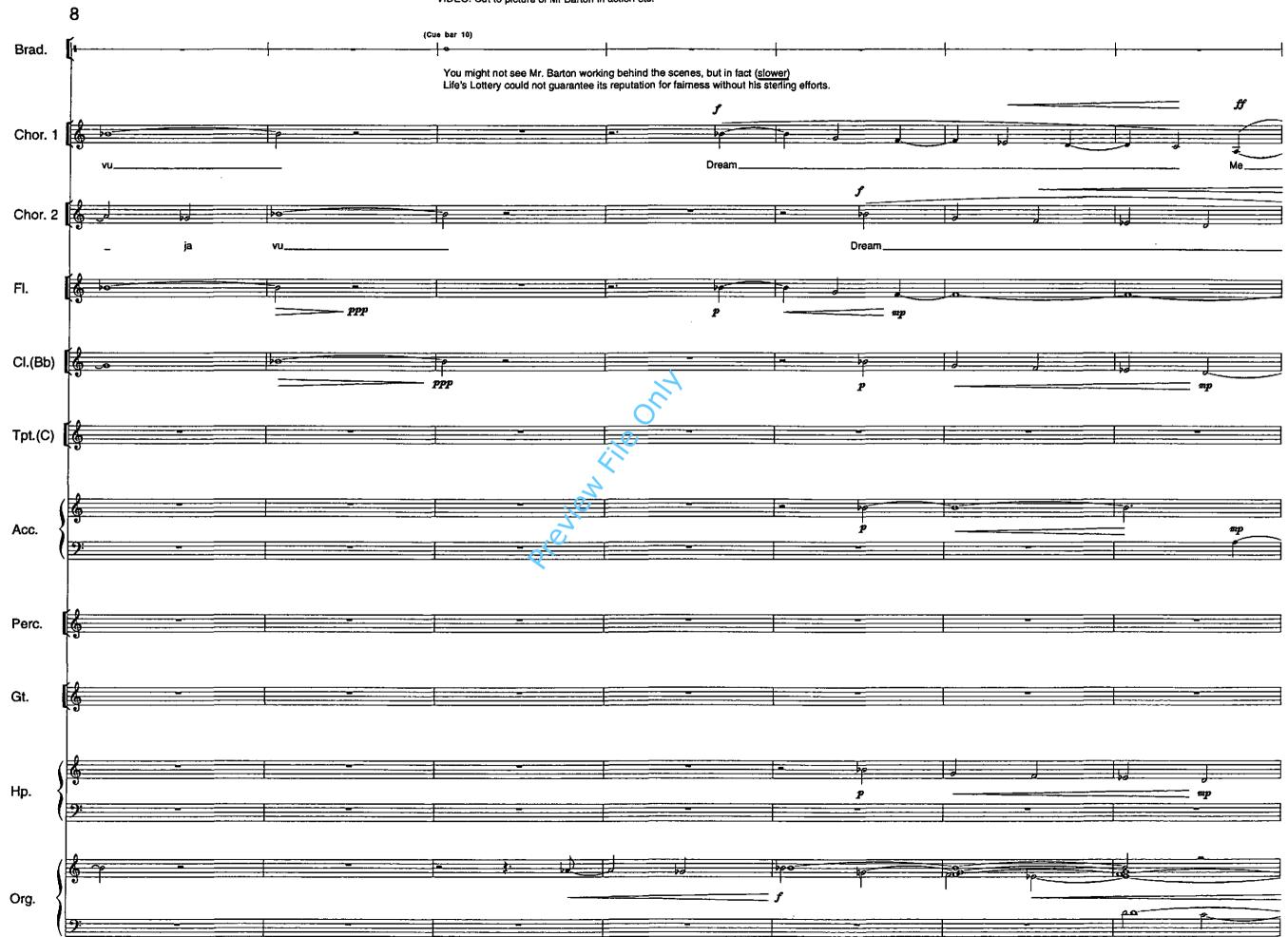
ELECTRONIC ORGAN [new Roland synthesiser with pedals and dedicated Loudspeaker]

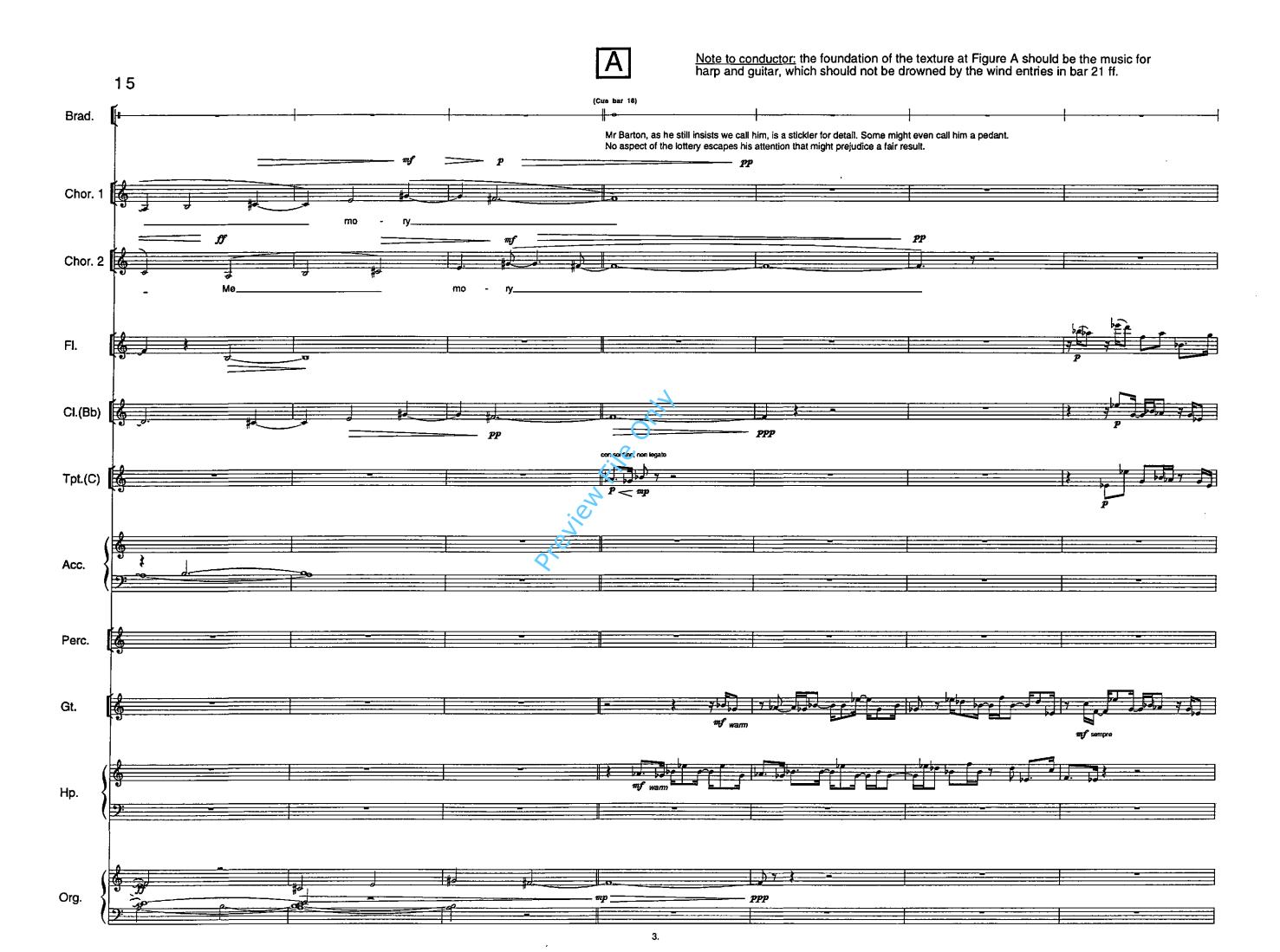
MICROPHONE AND PA SYSTEM [used by Bradley, Milton and Producer]

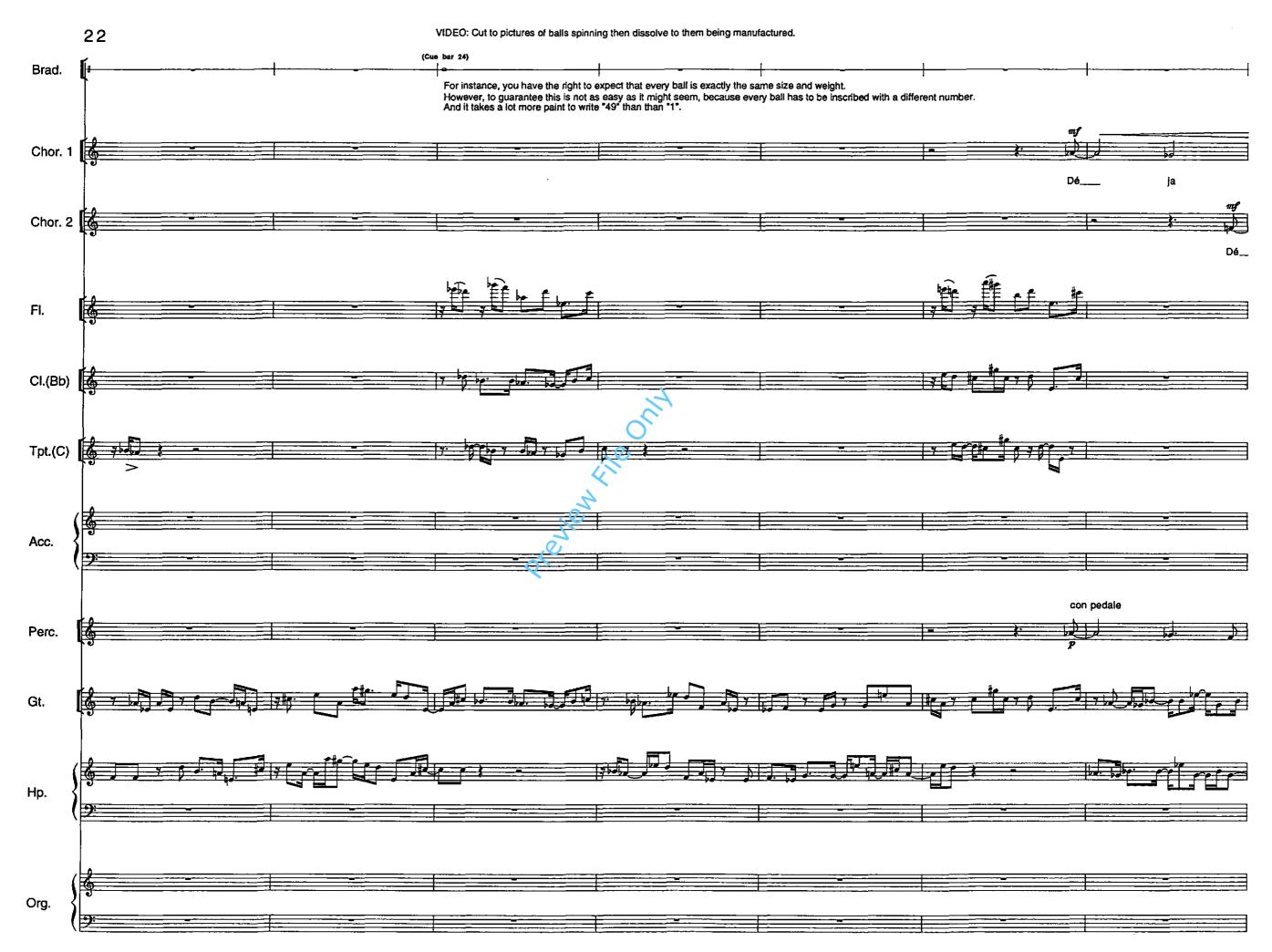
Scratch Card Number Opera Act II

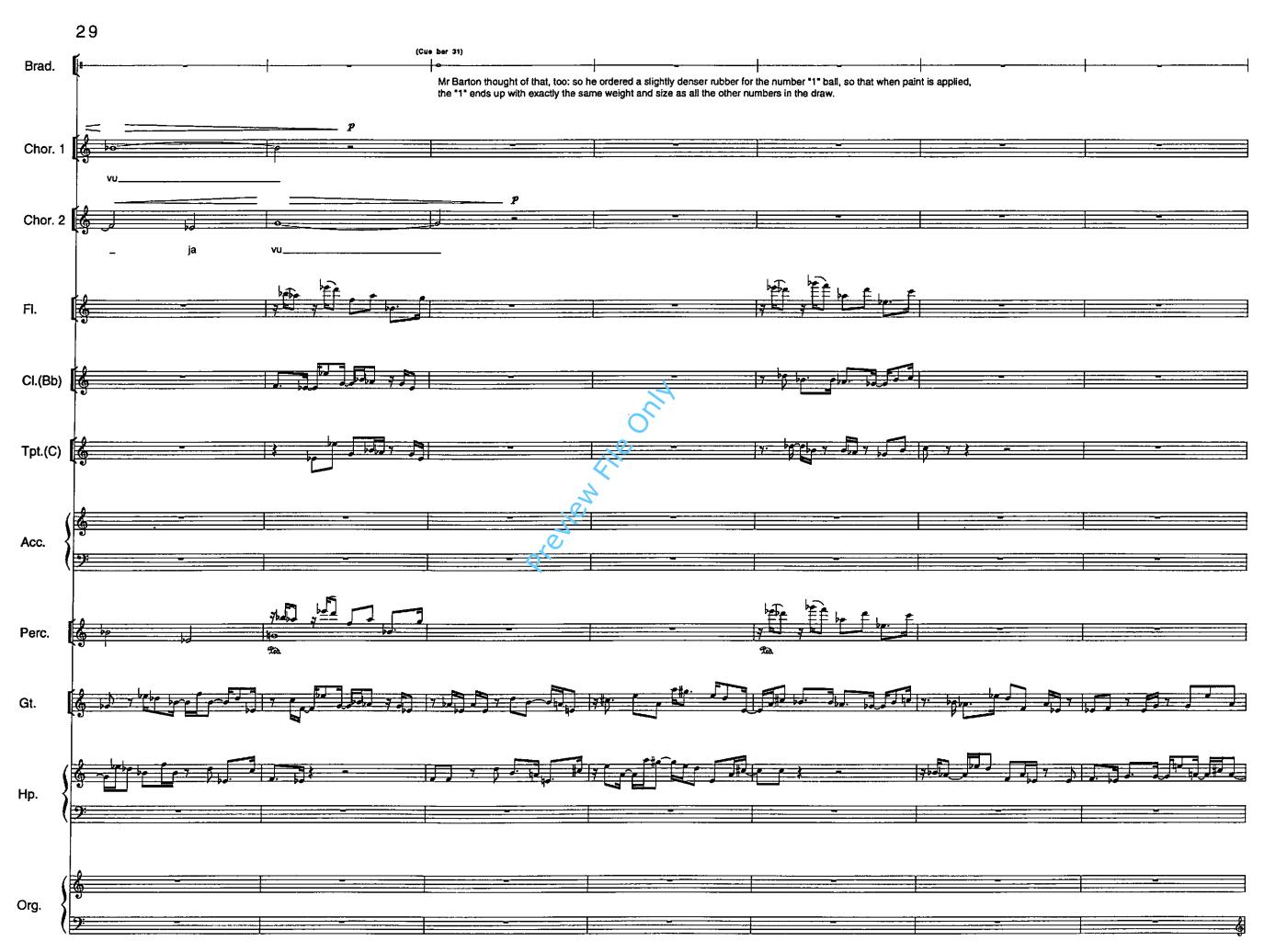
Prelude, Act II



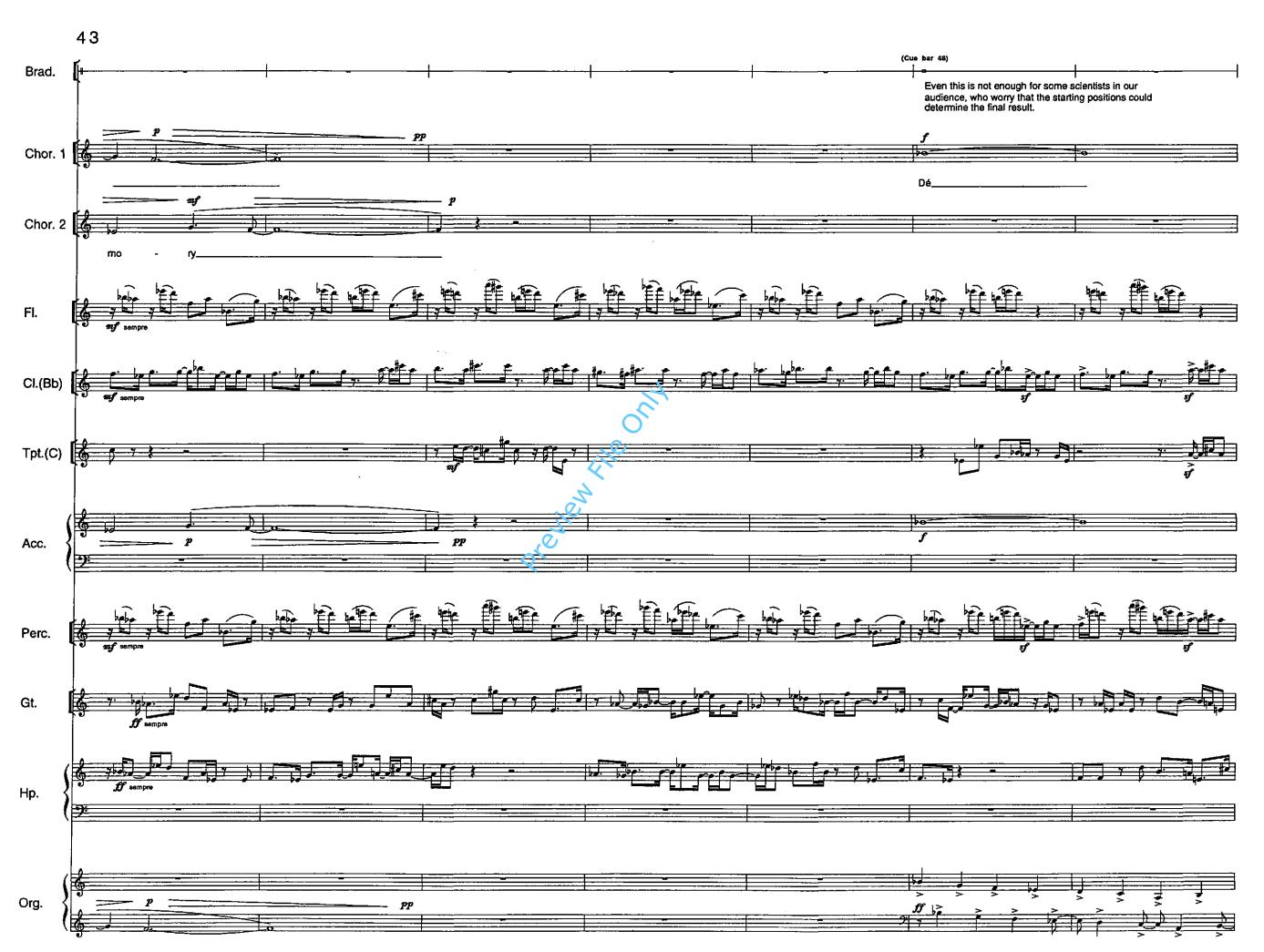


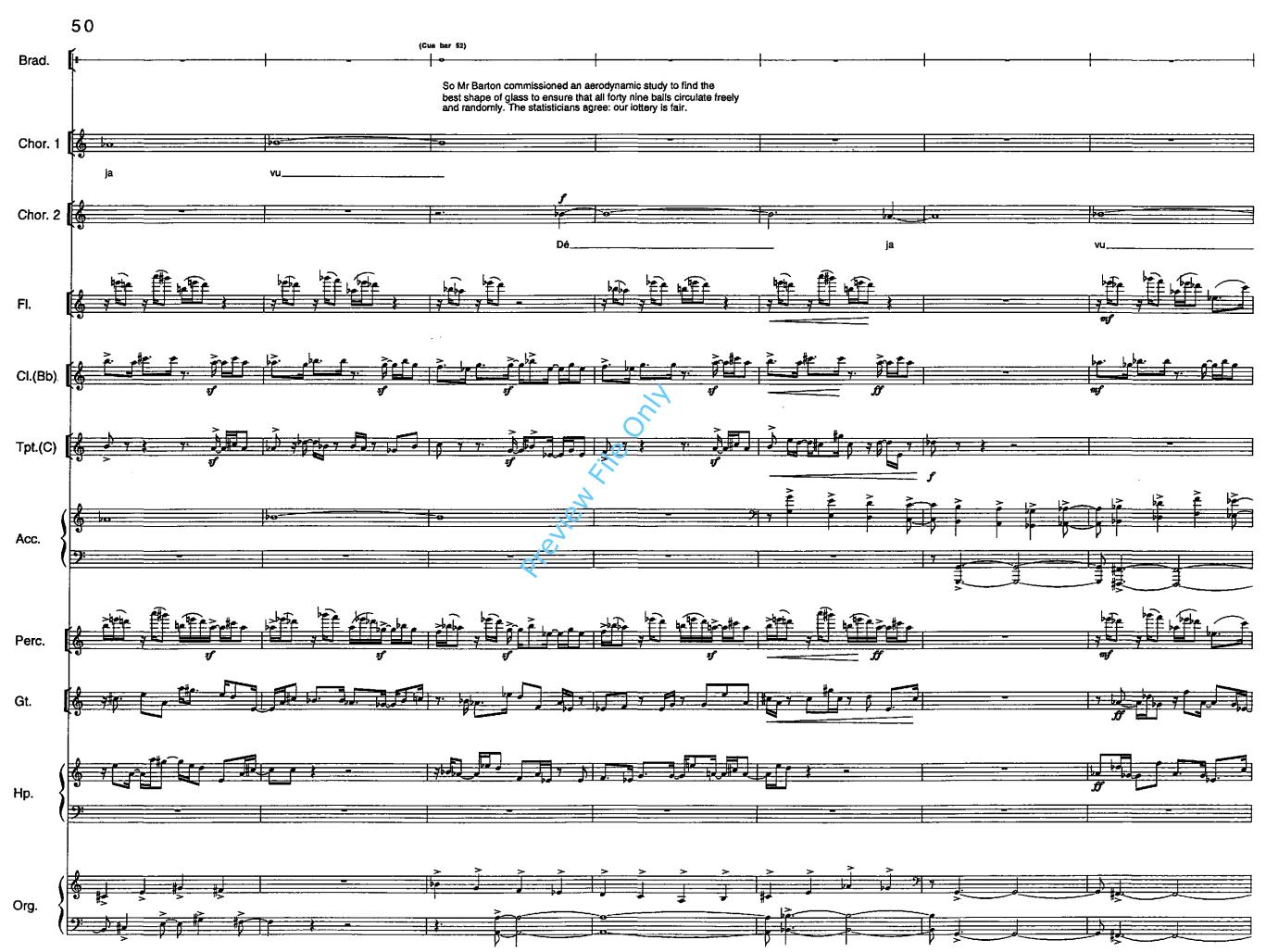


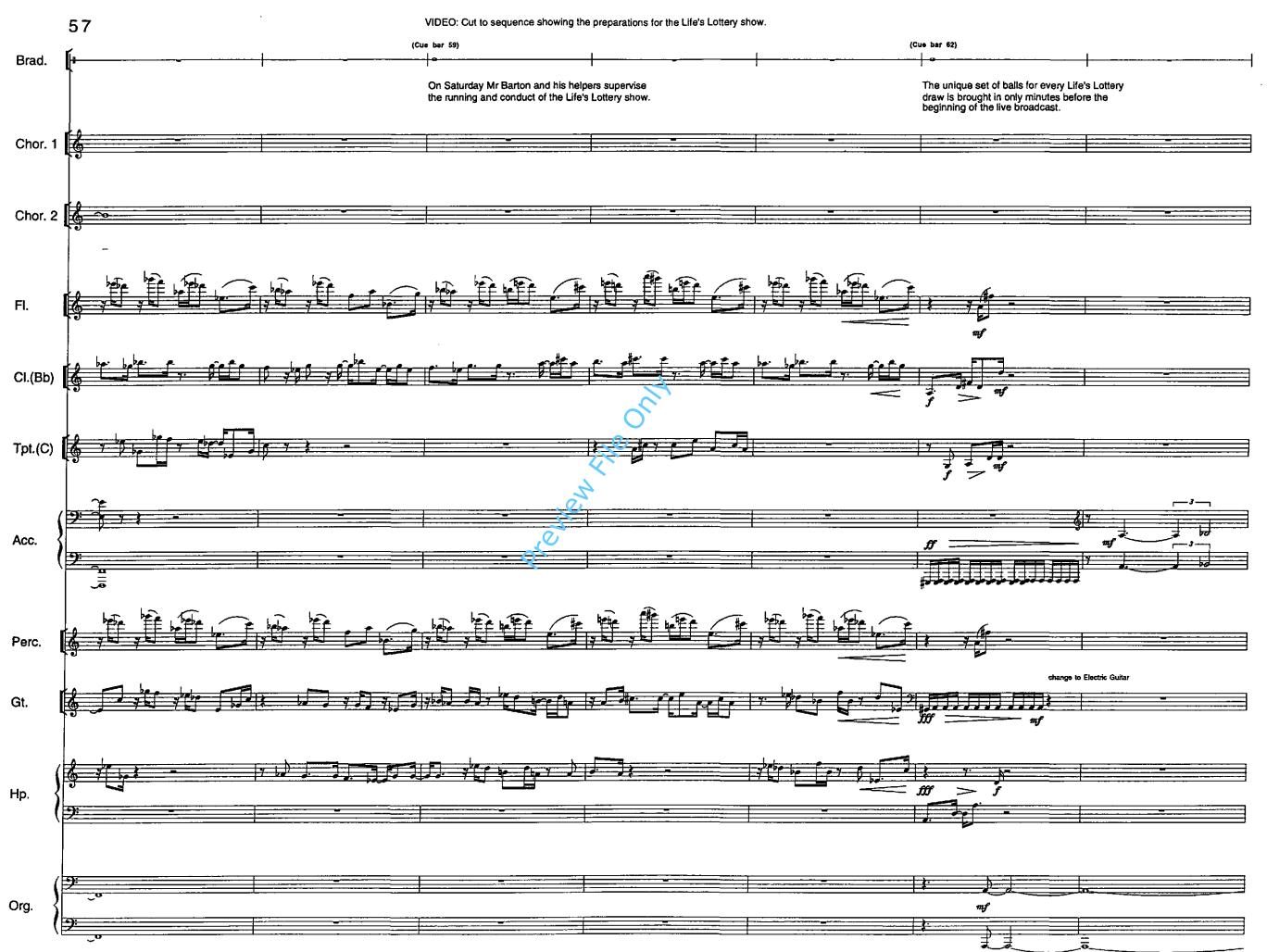




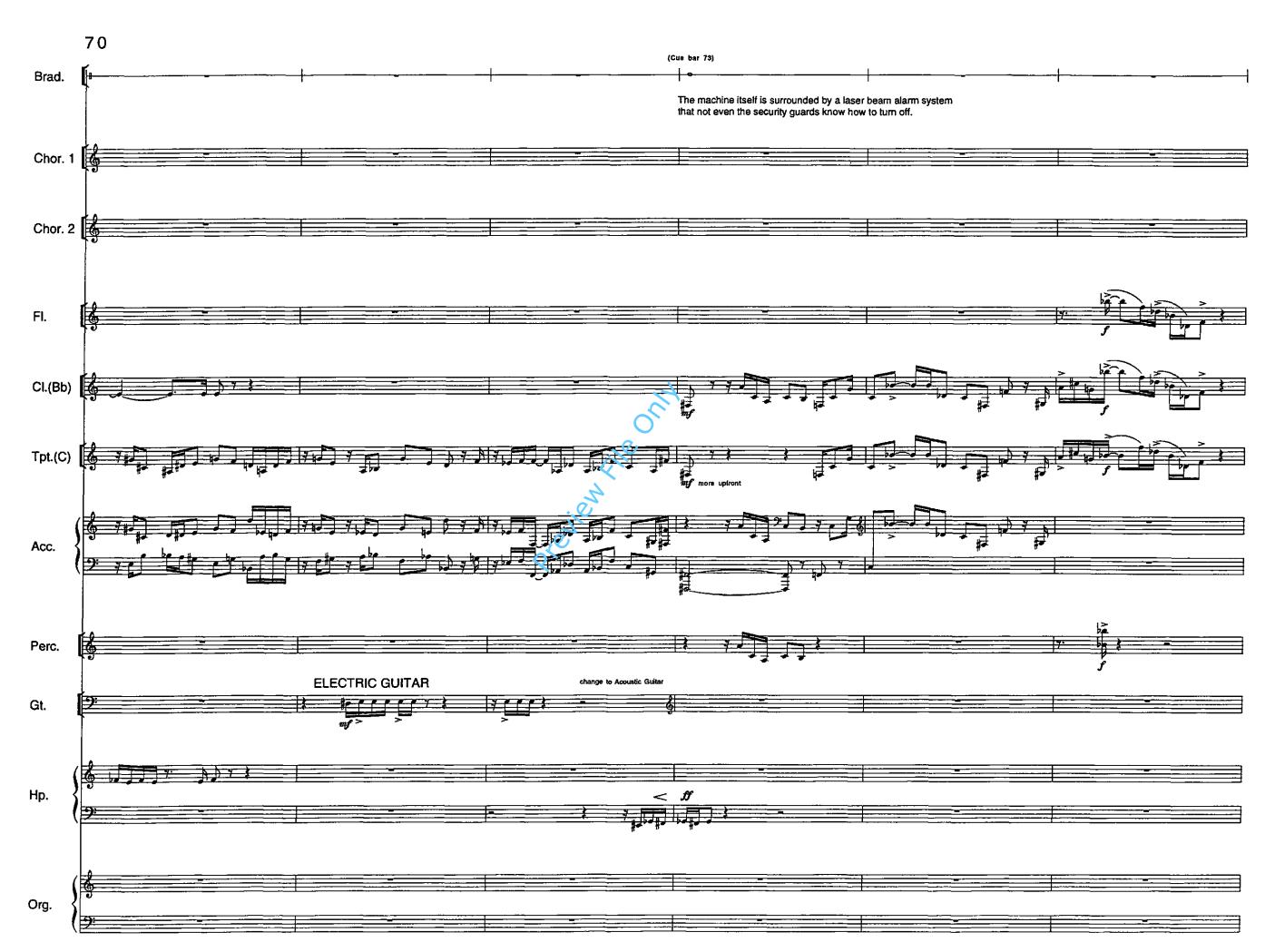


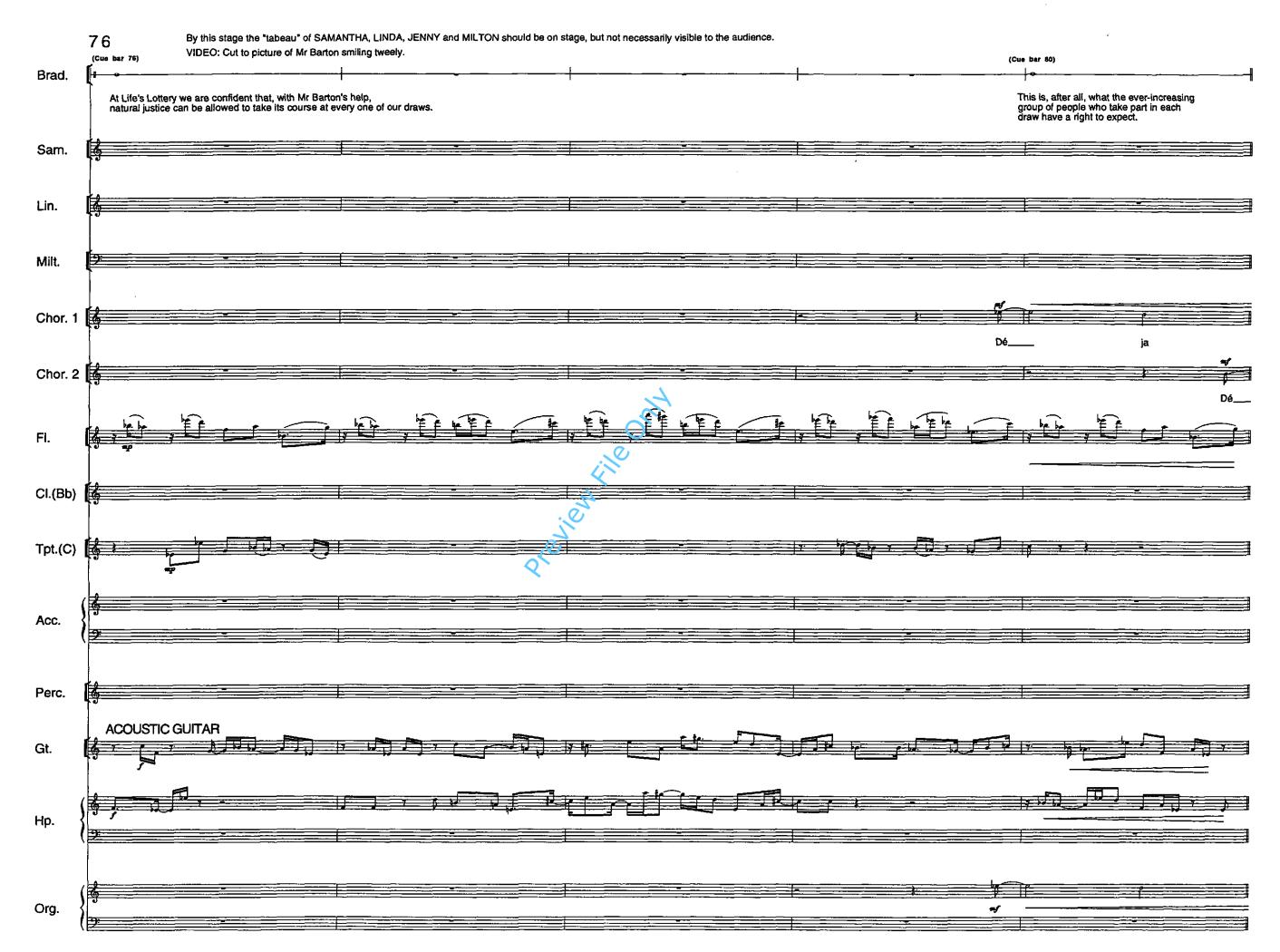


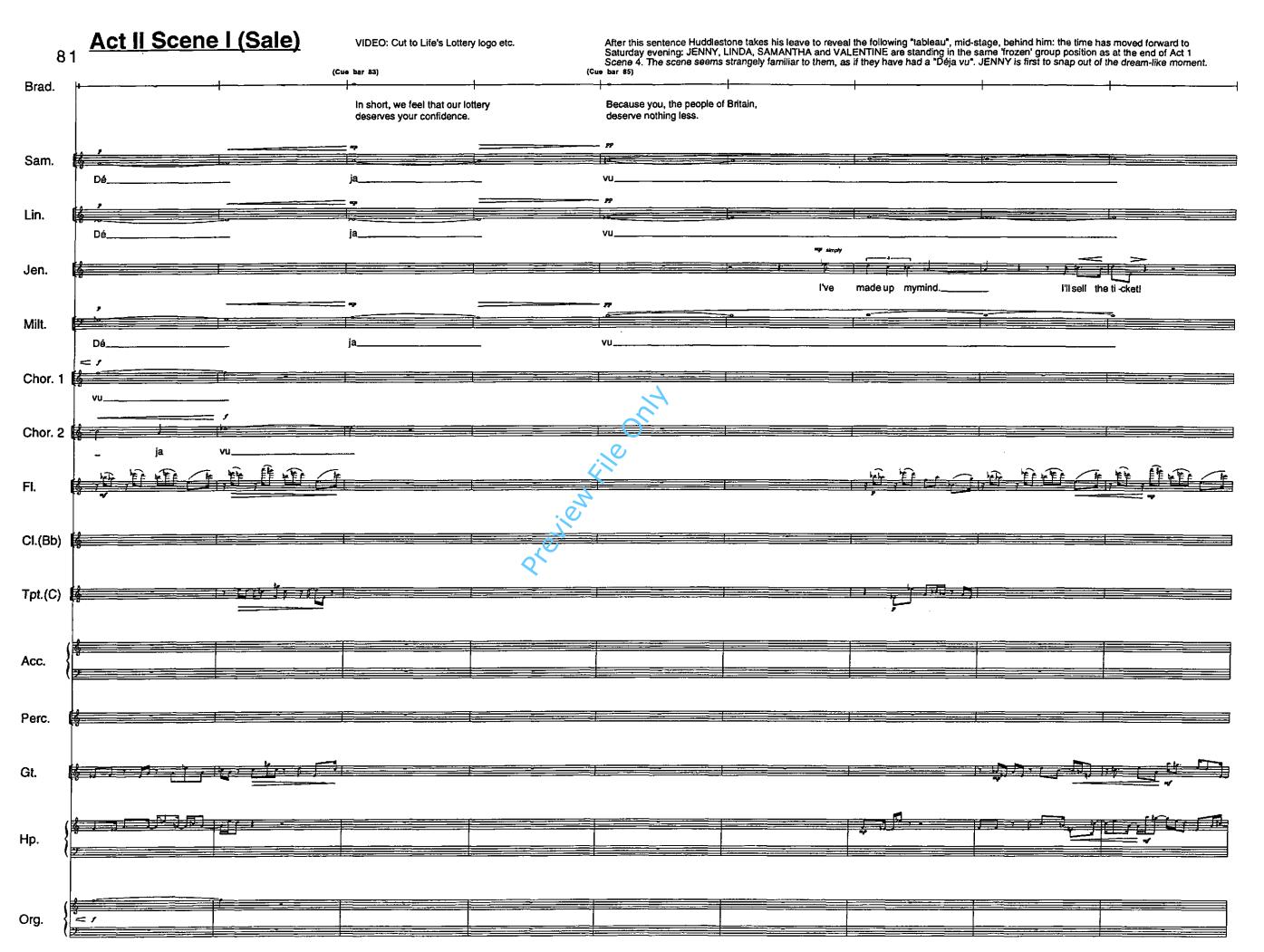


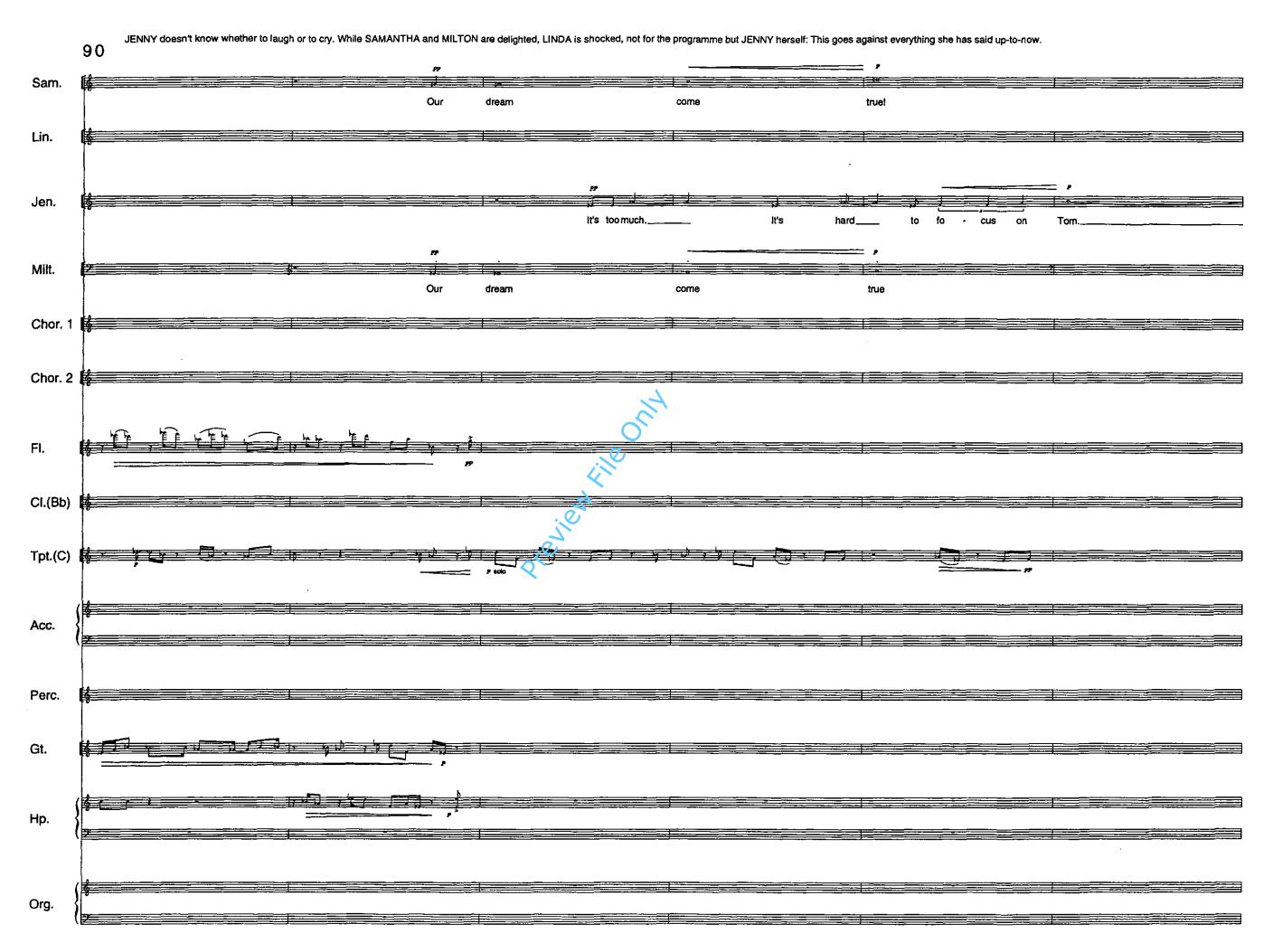




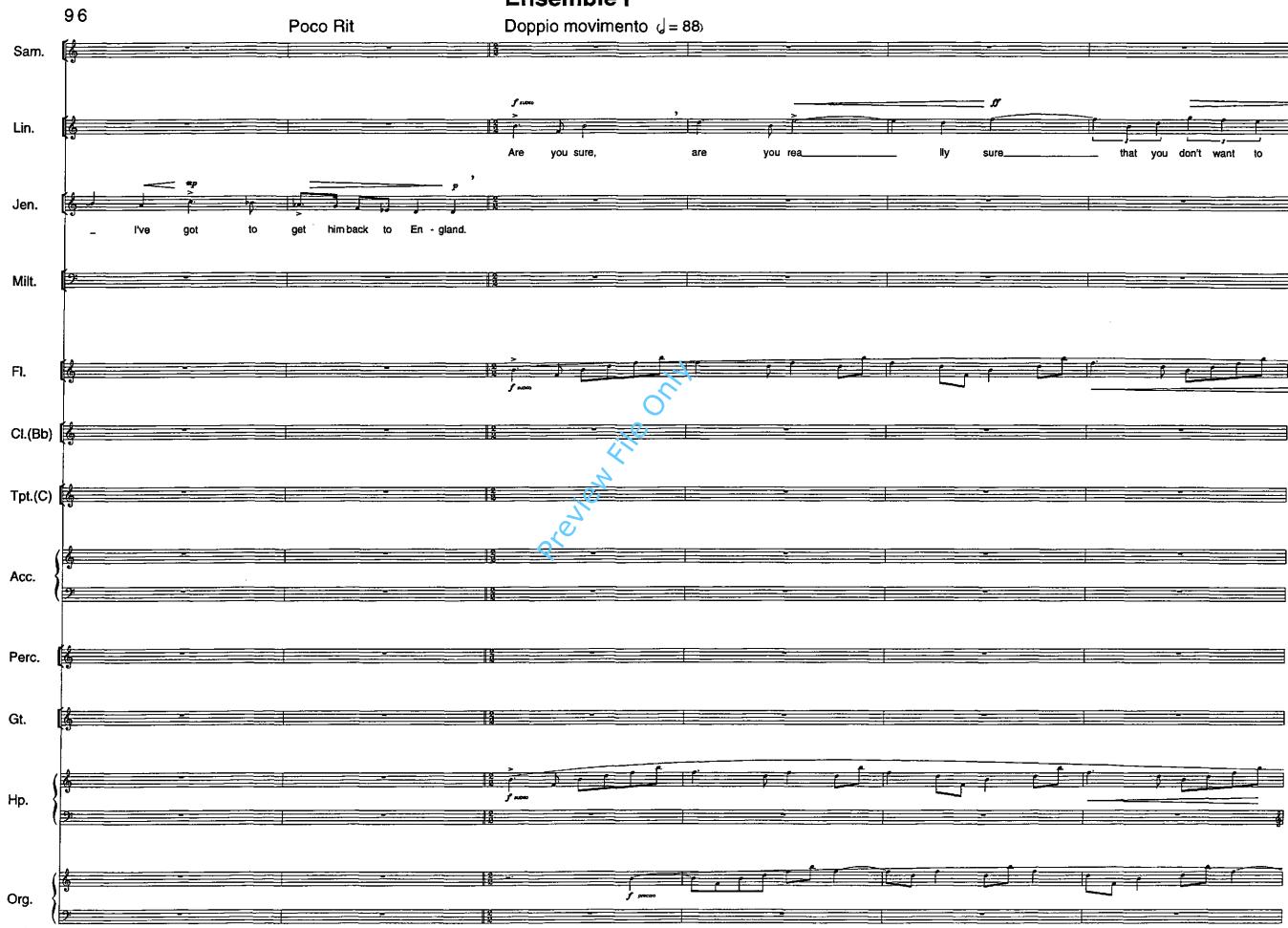




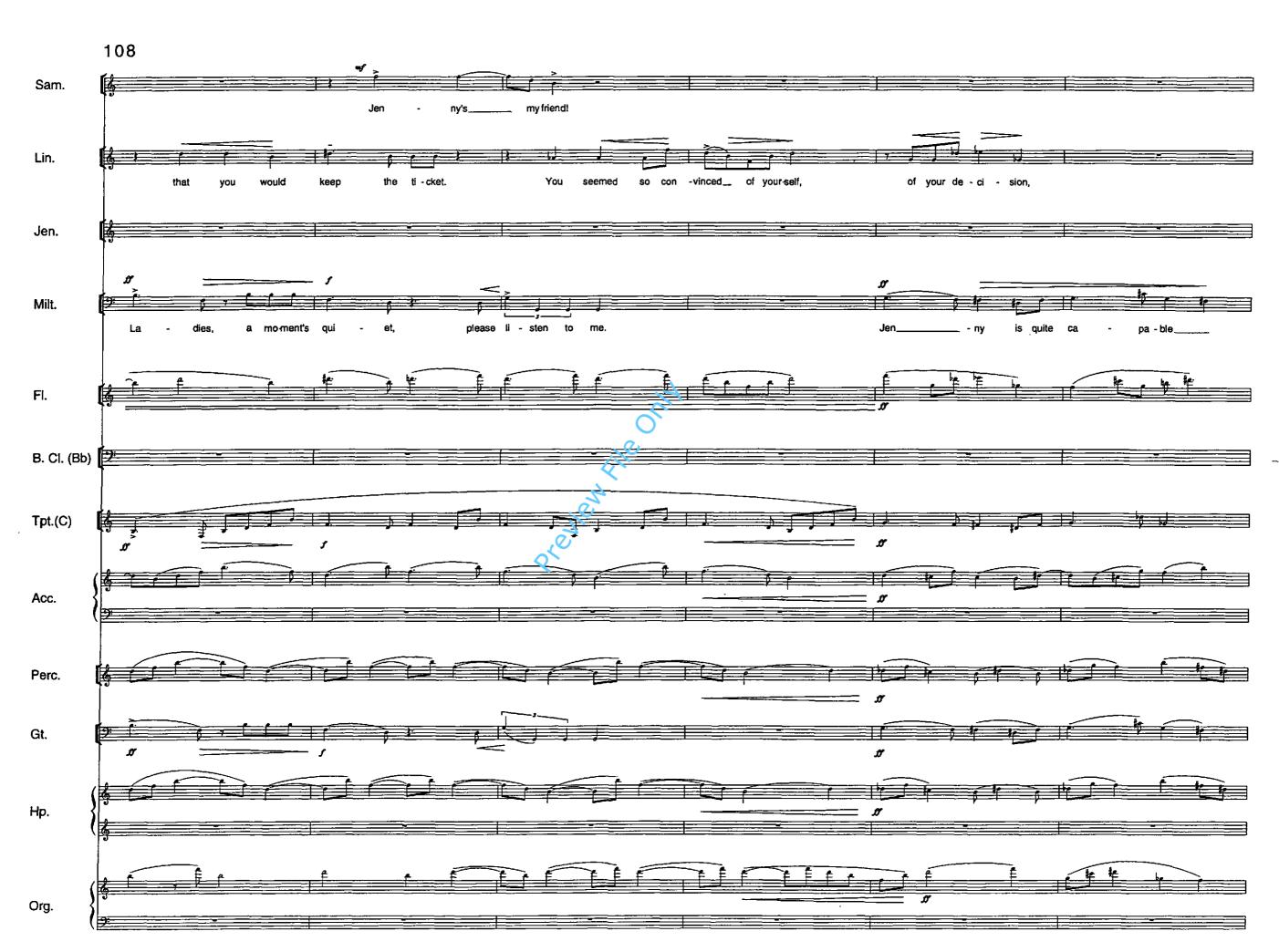




Ensemble I

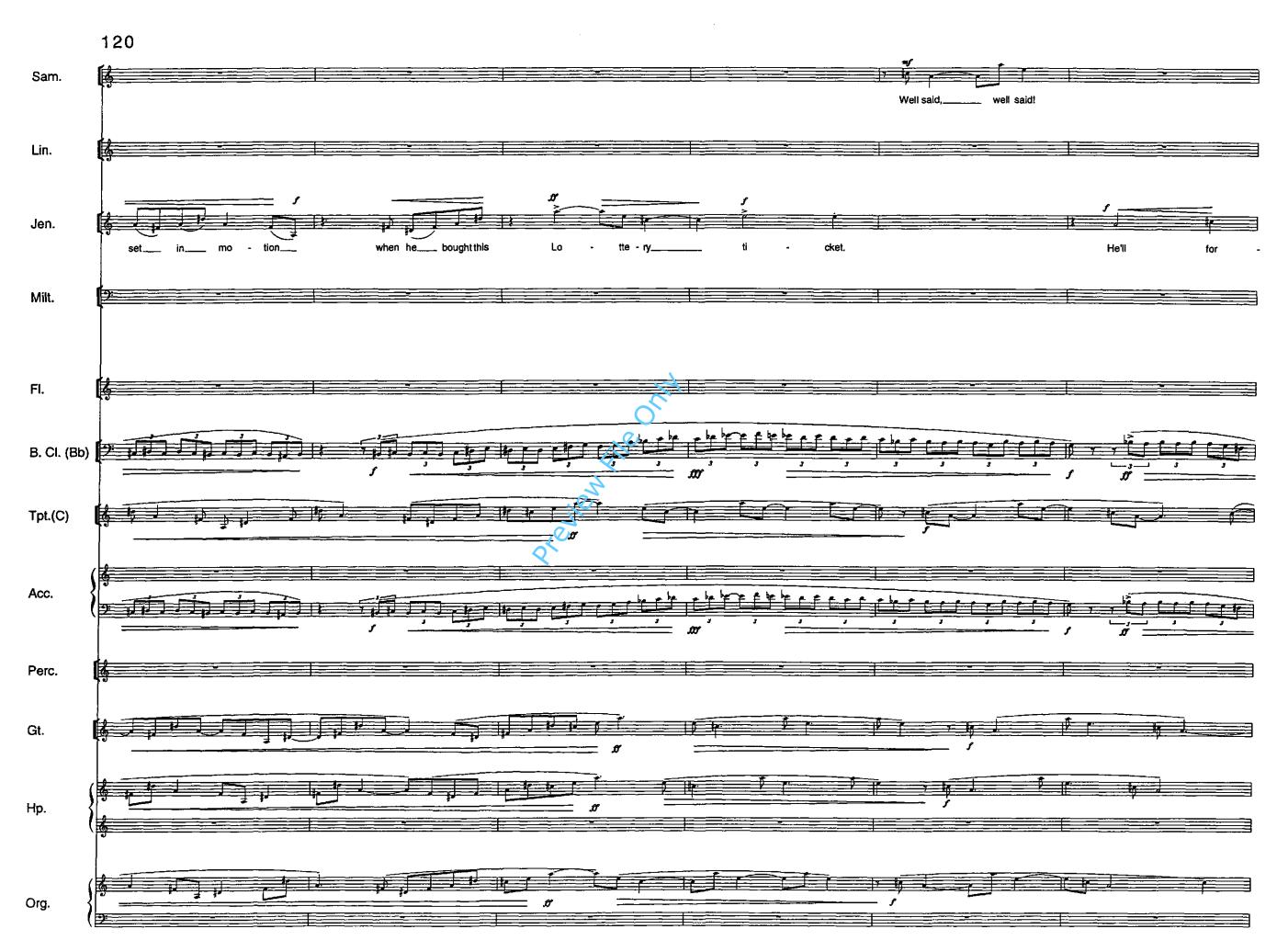


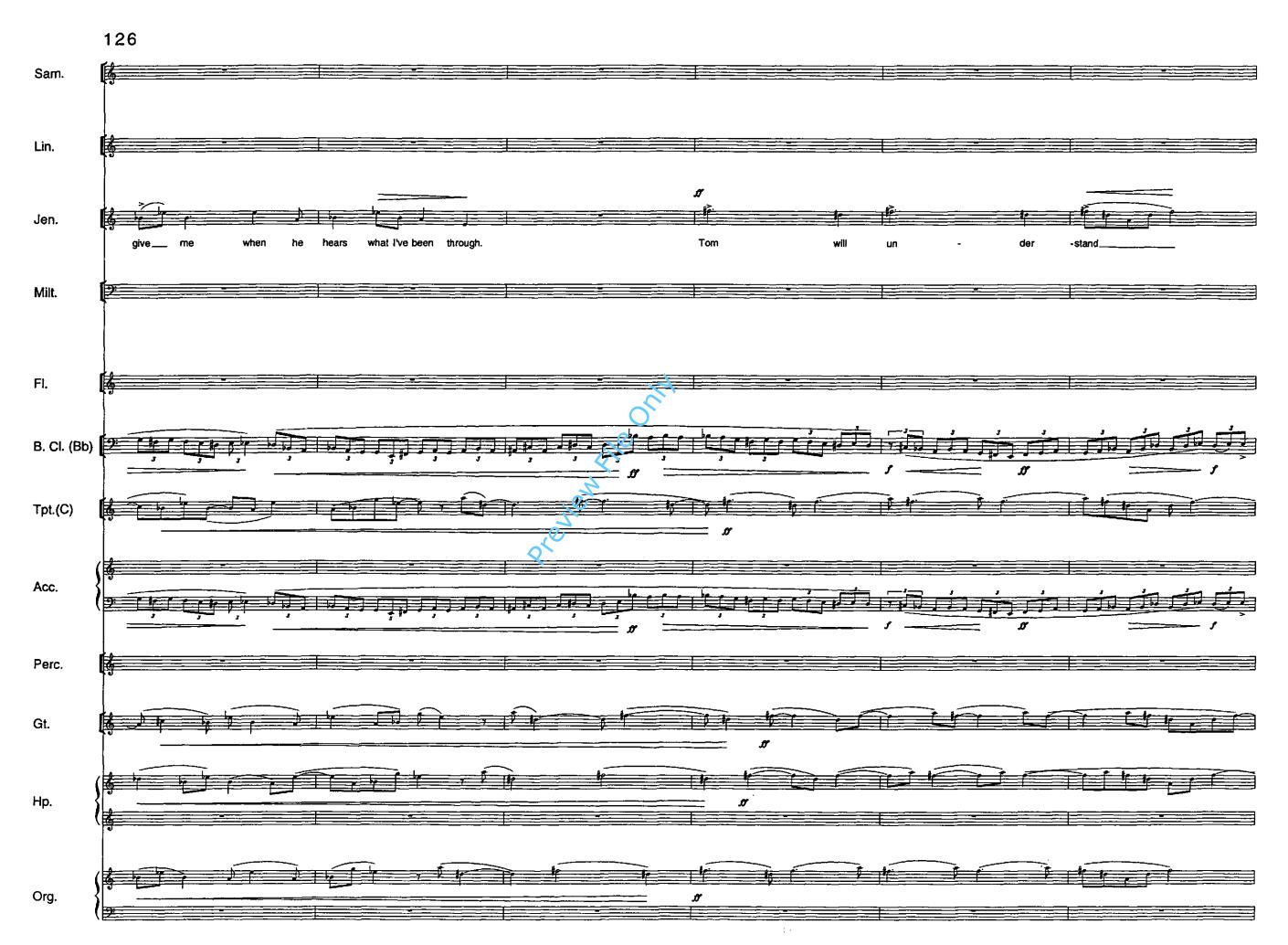
SAMANTHA tries to place herself physically between LINDA and JENNY. 102 Sam. made up She won't Lin. a -head?_ It seems strange You seemed Jen. Milt. FI. Cl.(Bb) [藤 Tpt.(C) Acc. Perc. Gt. Нр. Org.



JENNY is defensive about her volte-face and is unreasonably angry at LINDA for questioning her decision.

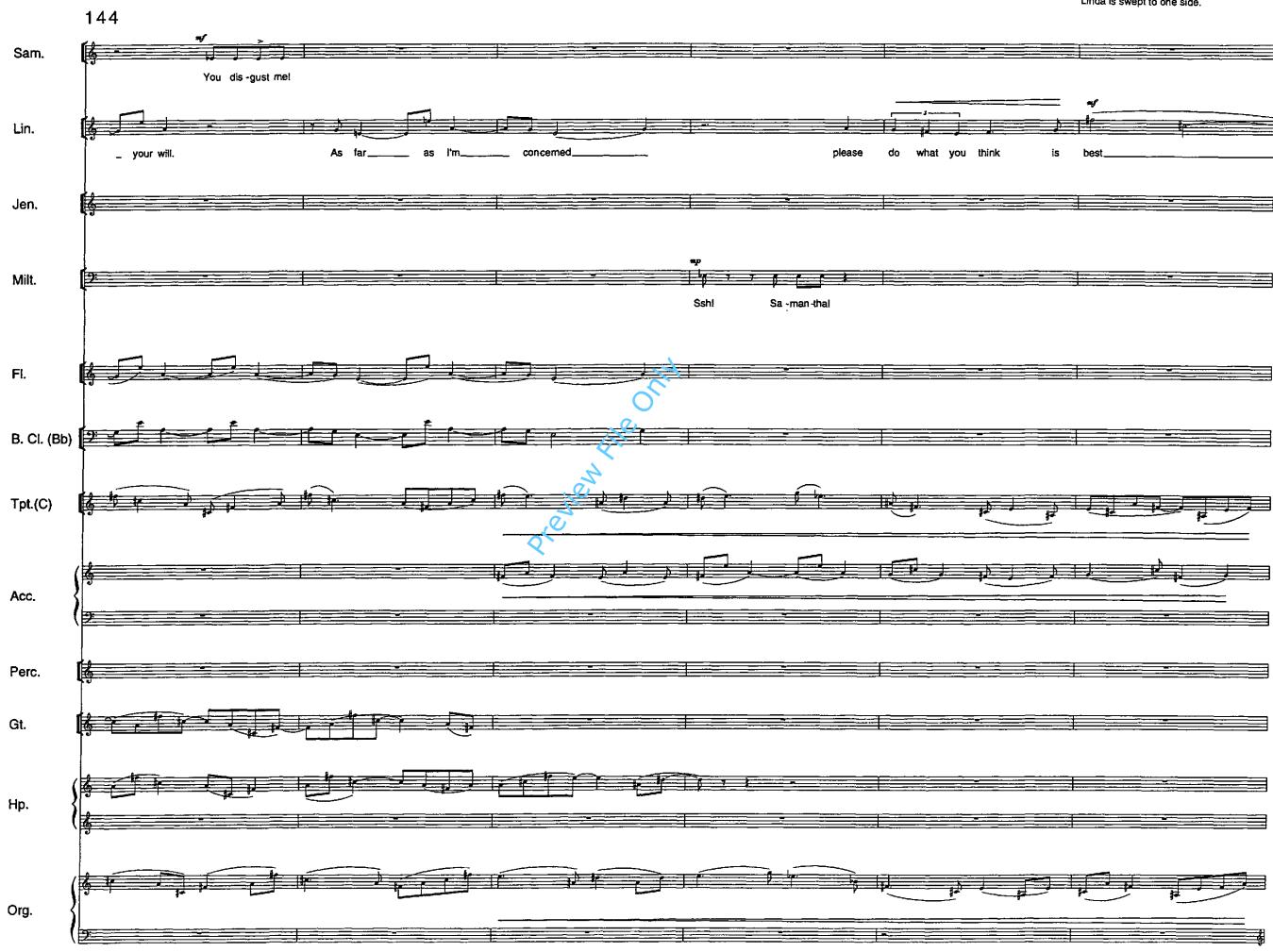


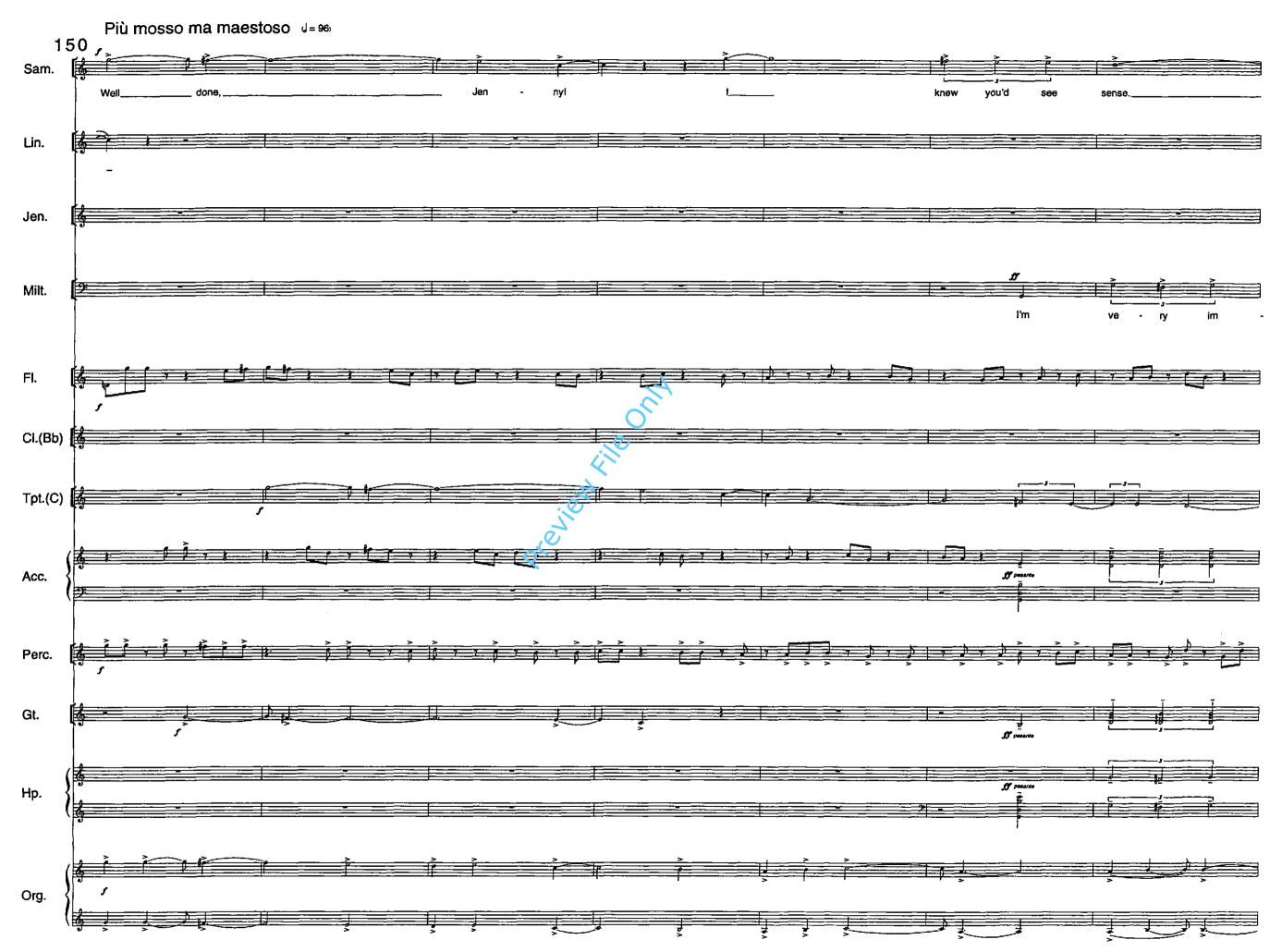


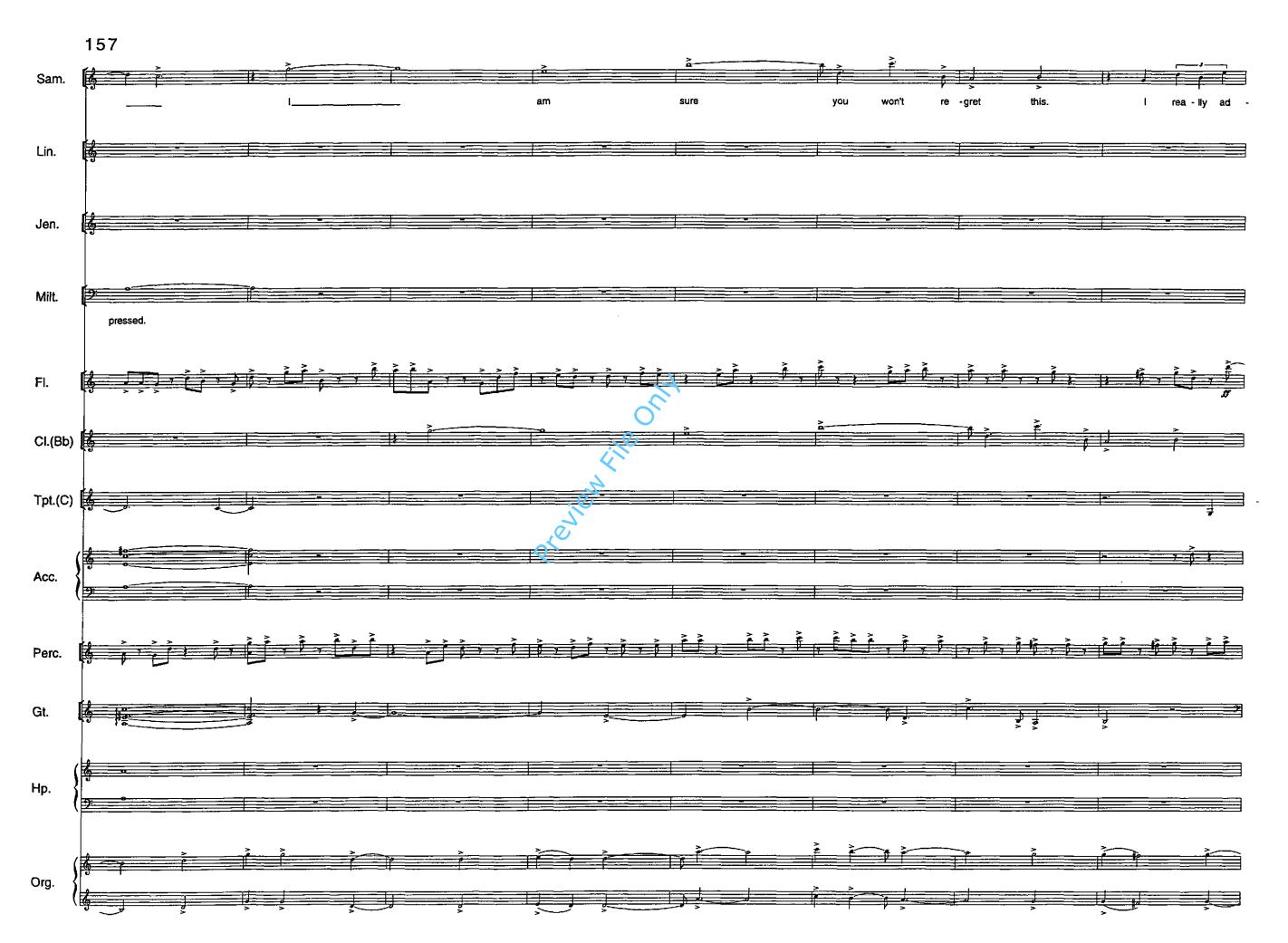


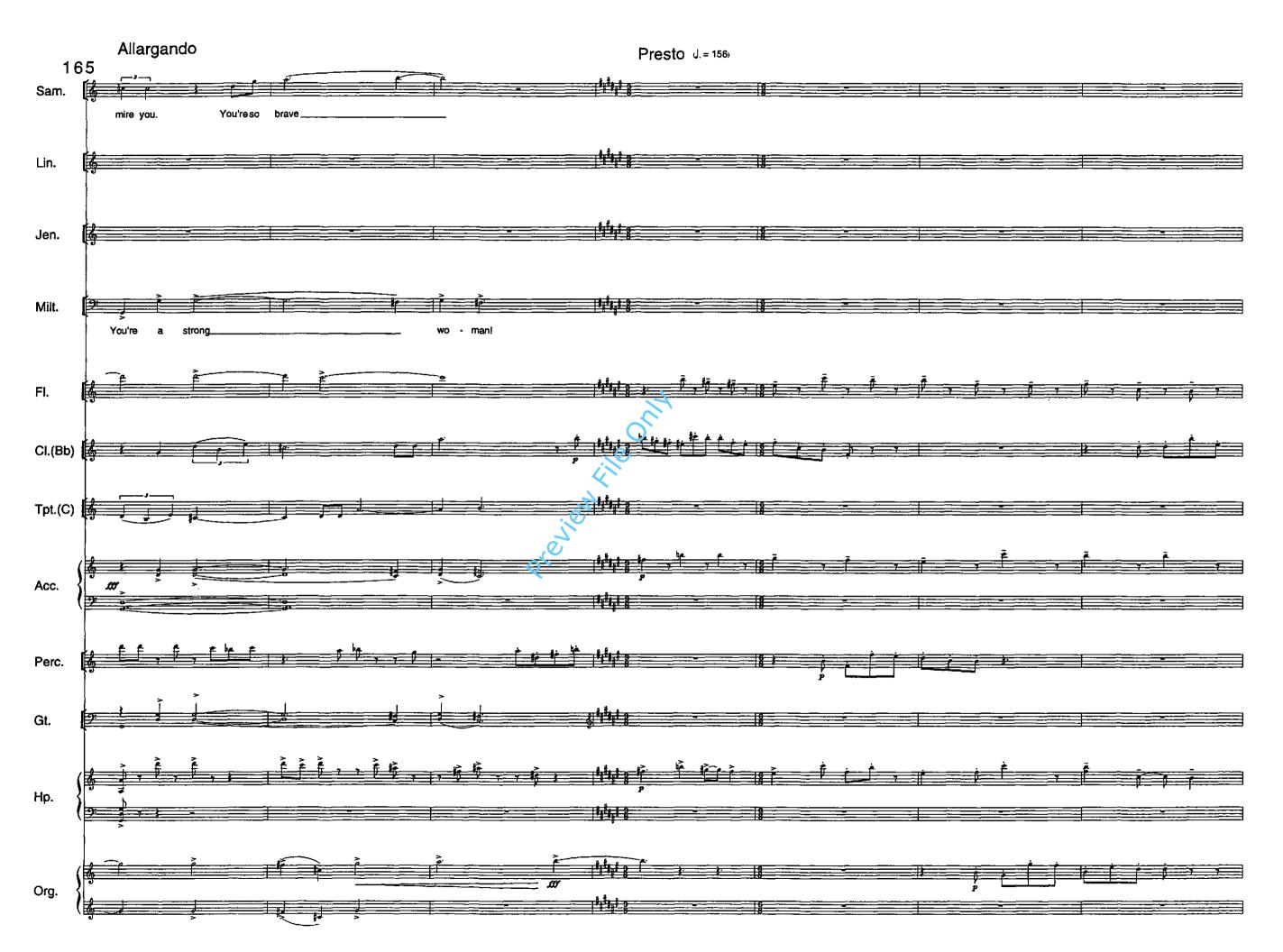


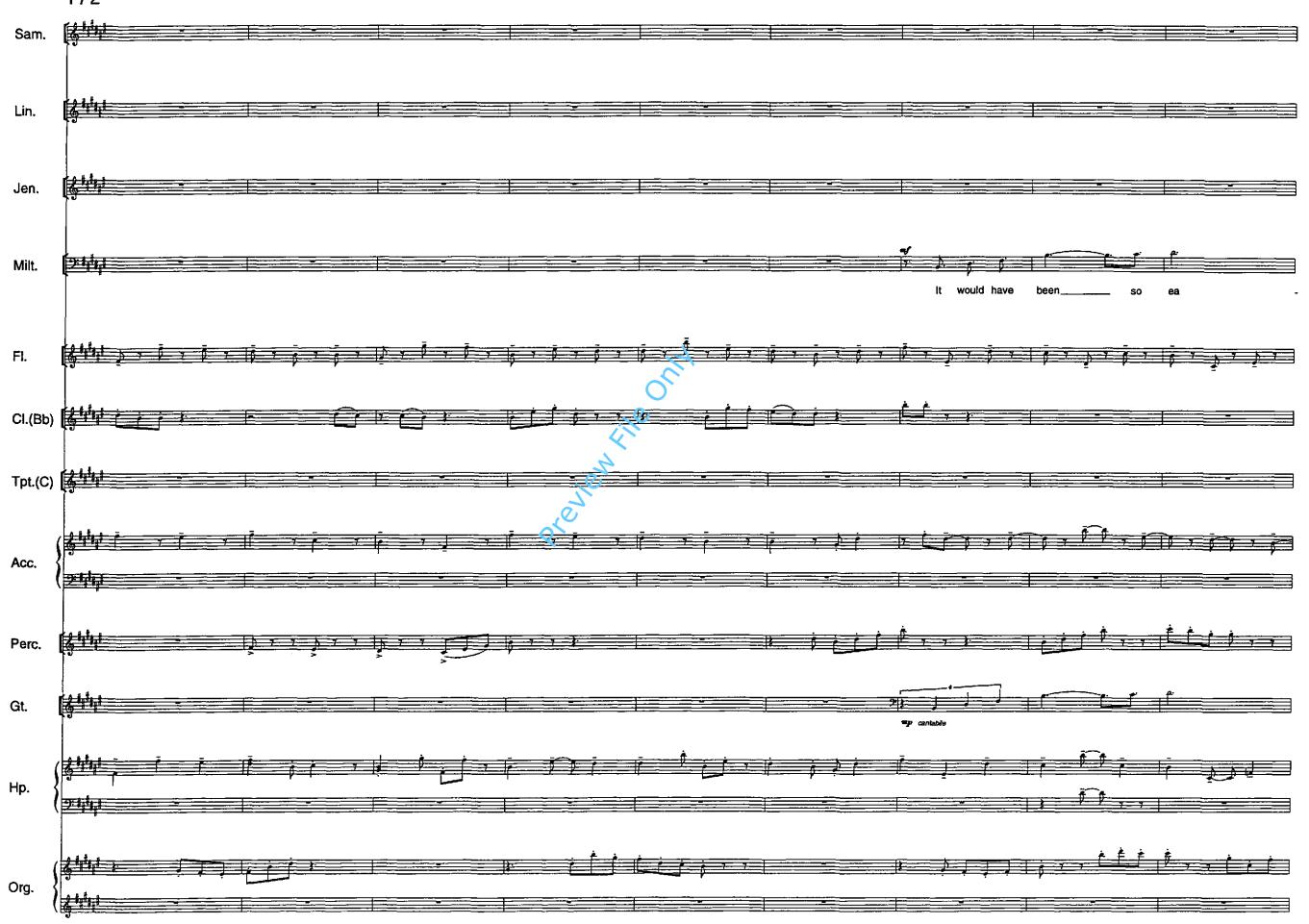
Here JENNY indicates that she's ready to go ahead with the sale. 138 Poco a poco stringendo Sam. Lin. per-suade___ you a -gainst__ Jen. be -fore! Milt. Now, set -tled. FI. B. Cl. (Bb) Tpt.(C) Acc. Perc. Gt. Hp. Org.

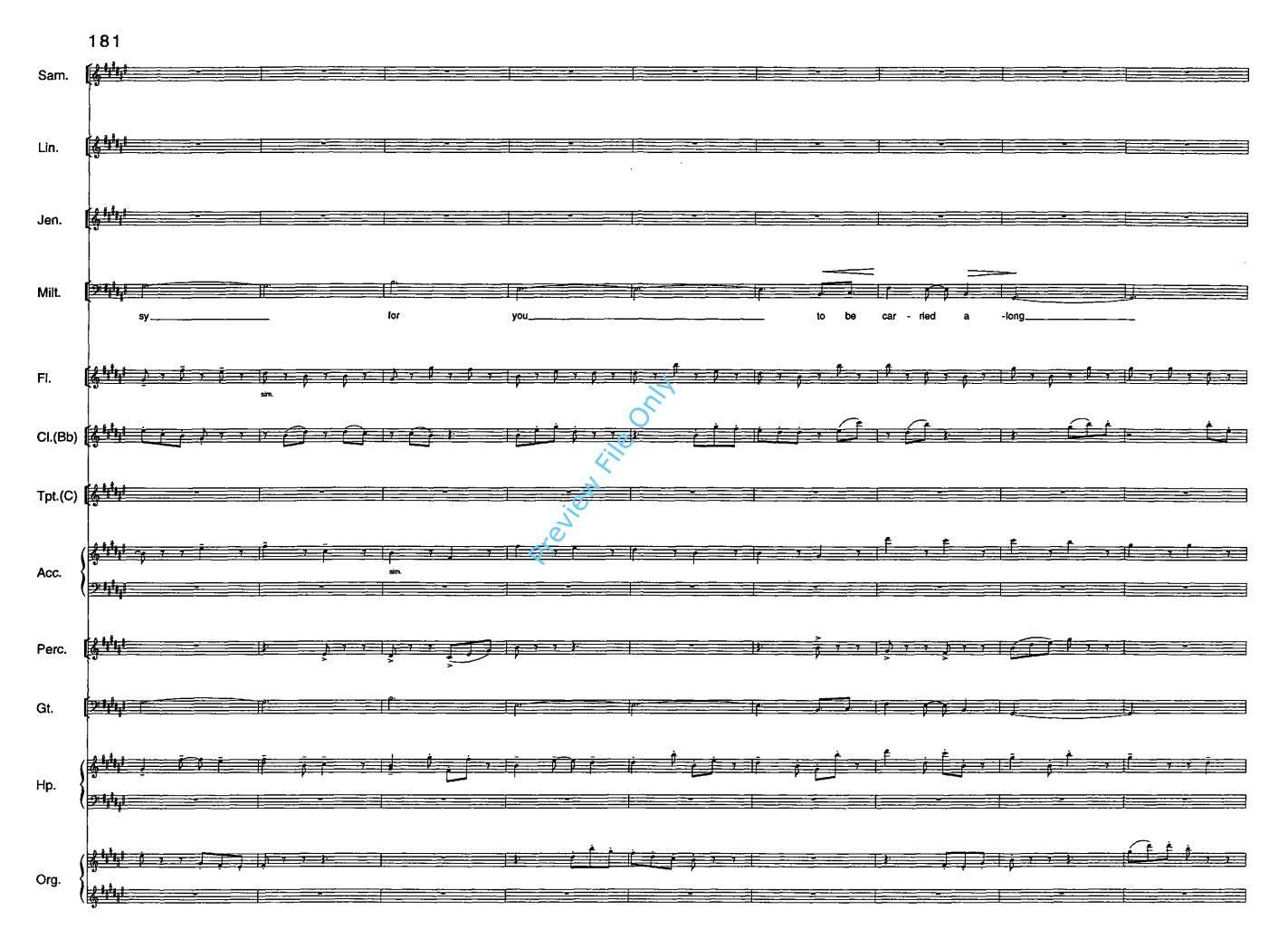




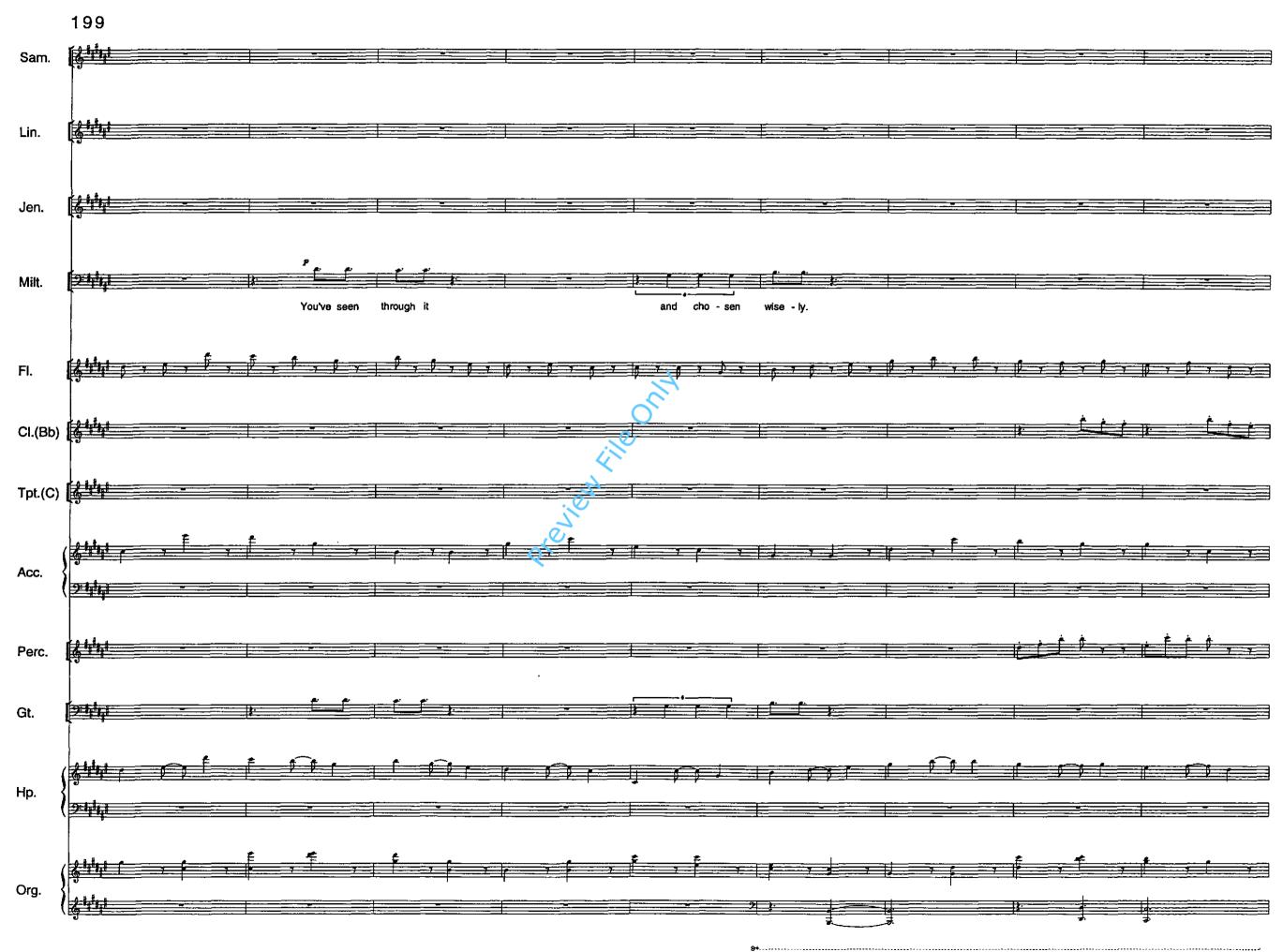


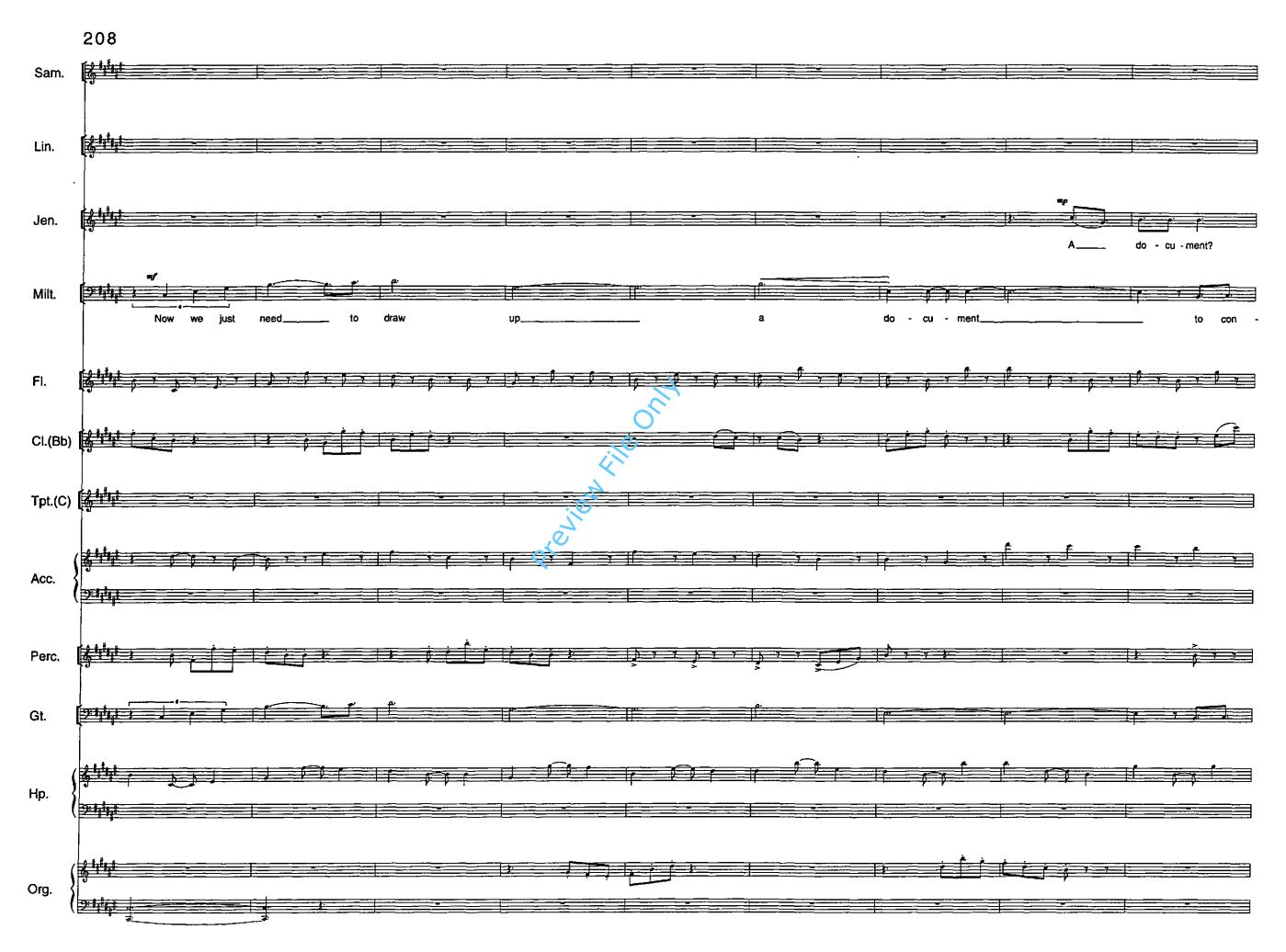


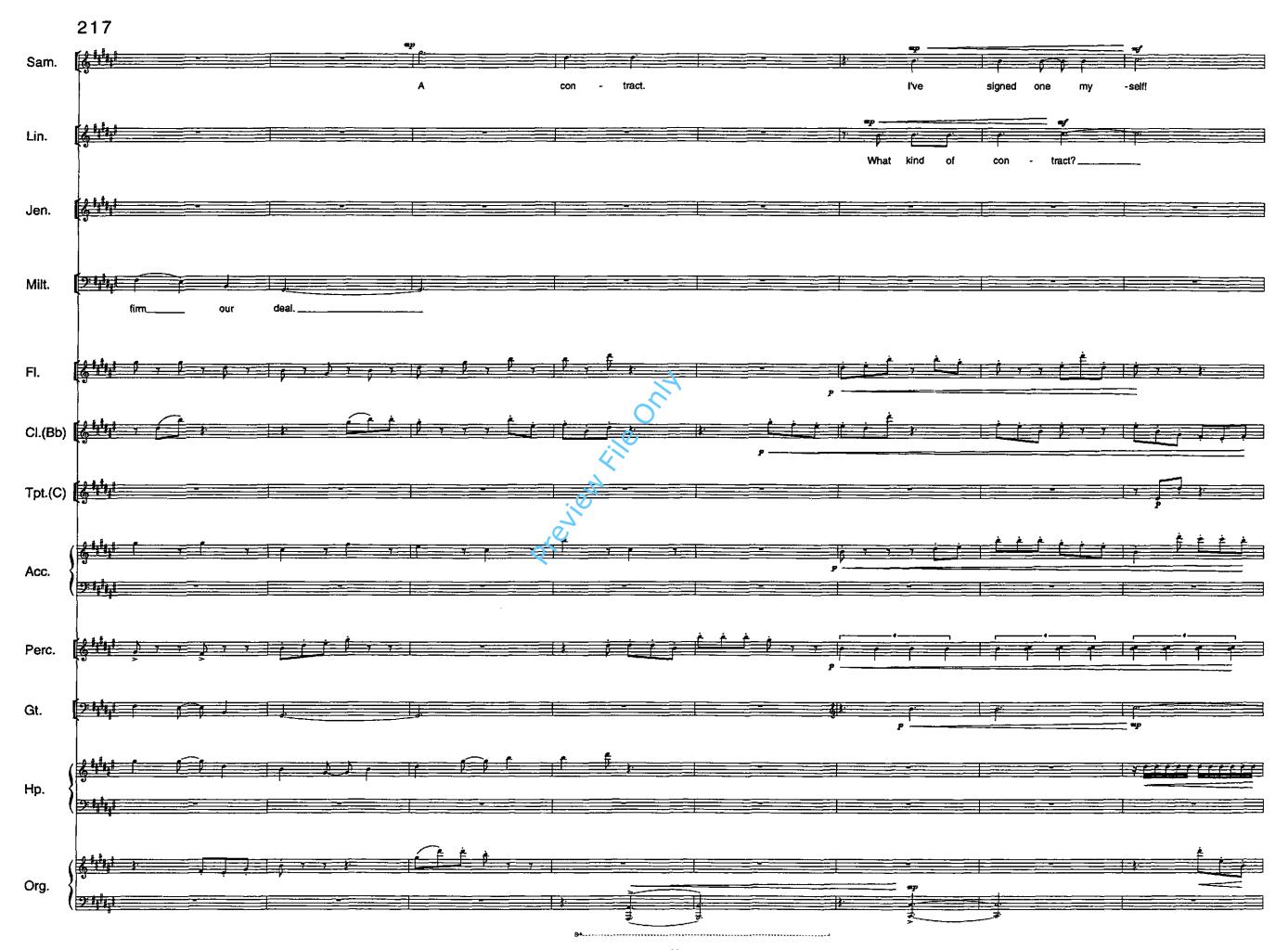


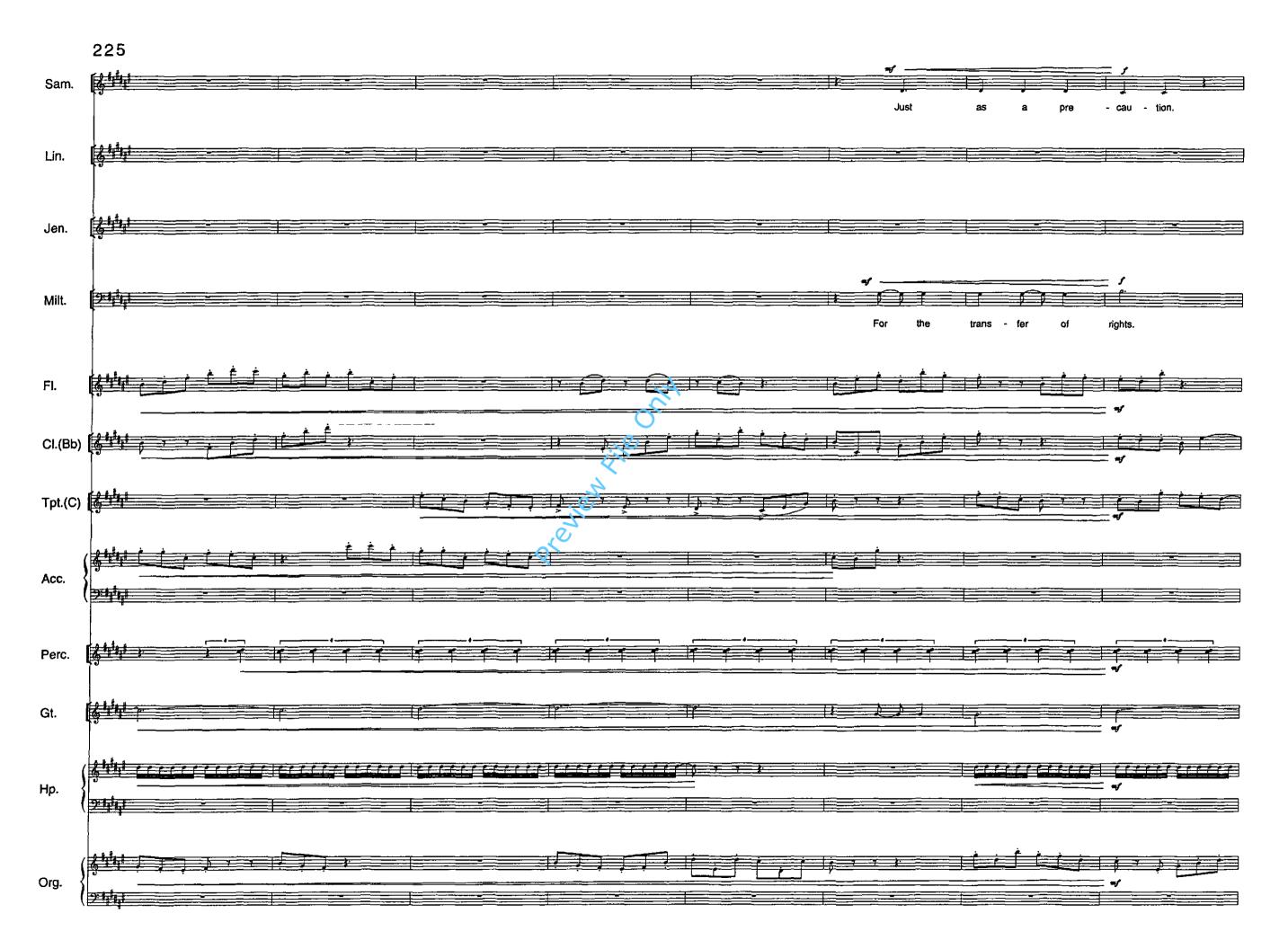


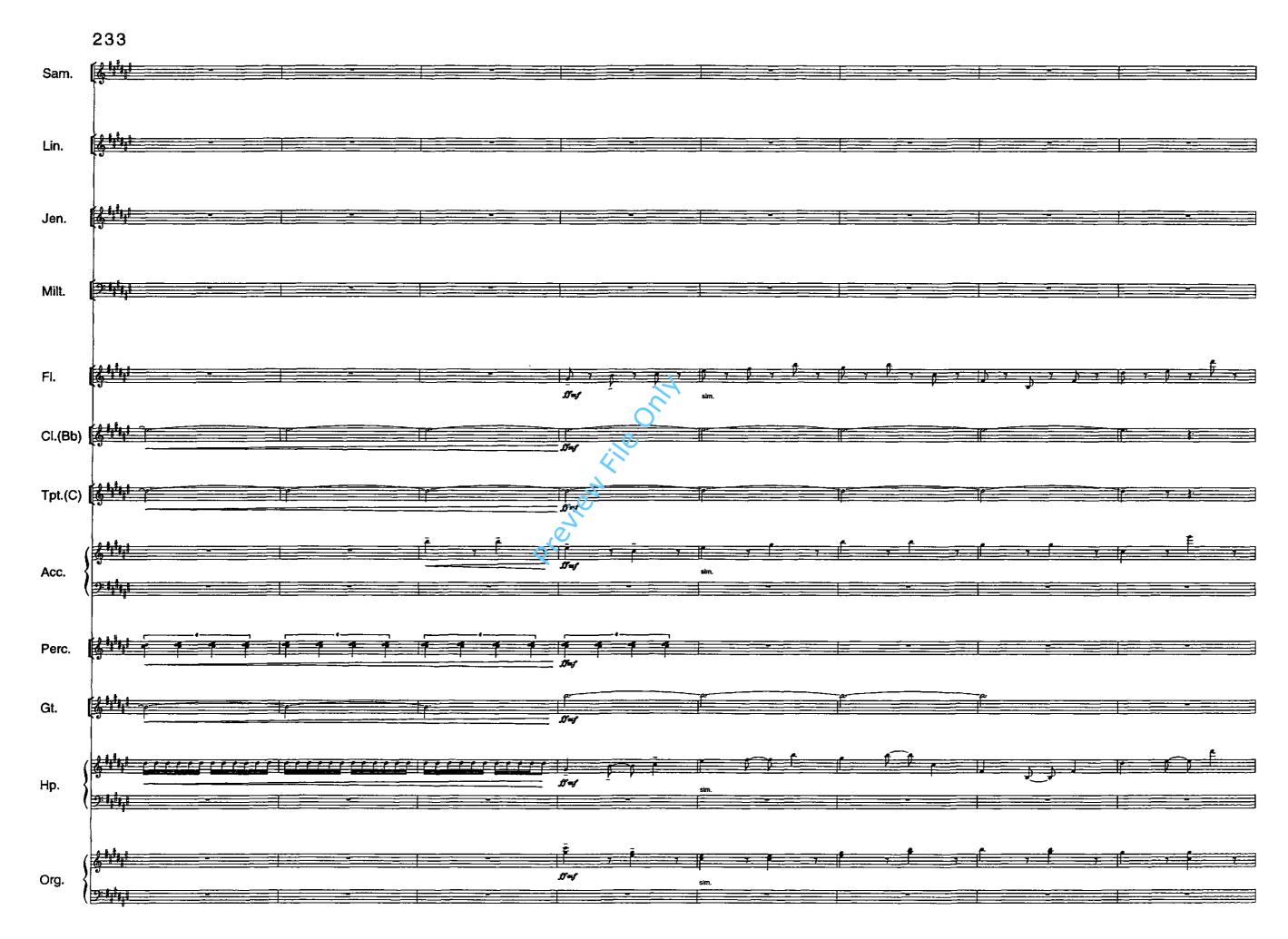












JENNY wouldn't have agreed to sell the ticket if she'd known she had to sign a legal document. Now she feels unpleasantly committed and ever more uncomfortable with her decision.

