Izgrejala

for clarinet, cello, and bassoon

Full Score

PERUSAL ONLY

Jens Ibsen

Program Notes:

This piece was written for the second annual European Literature Night at the Czech Center in New York City. The work was to be played as a commentary on the book *Dancing Bears* by Polish author Witold Szabłowski. The first ten chapters of the book talk about the tradition of training dancing bears in Bulgaria and Eastern Europe. This section culminates in an abrupt ban on the practice brought about by Bulgaria's admission to the EU, forcing trainers to part with their bears. Upon release the animals are rehabilitated, with very mixed results. A few are able to be retrained and released into the wild. Many bears get by well enough but when distressed, they begin dancing, attempting to appease masters who have long left them, desperately longing for the lulling peace of servitude. Others never learn to cope with their newfound freedom and must live out their days in captivity.

The second half of the book devotes each of its nine chapters to a different country, each of which has undergone major economic adjustments from socialism or communism to capitalism. The story of the bears' struggle to cope with freedom is used as a stark allegory for individuals in these countries who are struggling to come to terms with their own freedom from despotic regimes. Like the bears, there is great variety: some welcome change with open arms, while others still feel that the ways of their old masters were best. No matter each individual's stance, the cost of these socio-political upheavals on the populace is clear, and each person profiled is adopting the values they deem best in a world which seems to be leaving them behind.

Given the inherent difficulty in writing a brief piece commenting on such complex socio-political issues, I thought reducing the book's message into a simple musico-rhetorical narrative would be the best approach. I have taken a Bulgarian folk song and transformed it into a battle of lugubrious lyricism versus rigid rhythm. The lyrical melody represents the bears'/people's desire for freedom, while the dance ostinato represents the encroaching temptation of a comforting captivity. The original song has a simple AB form, with the A section consisting of a melismatic refrain, reminiscent of an exhortation, while the B section is a jaunty dance in 7/8. I have merely expanded the A section, which builds to a biting climax, after which the 7/8 ostinato is introduced. In this new B section, the A theme and the B ostinato are in conflict, with the dance eventually taking the upper hand and bringing the piece to its raucous conclusion in the dance-like C section. I sincerely hope that this musical struggle is a wholly enjoyable one for performer and listener.

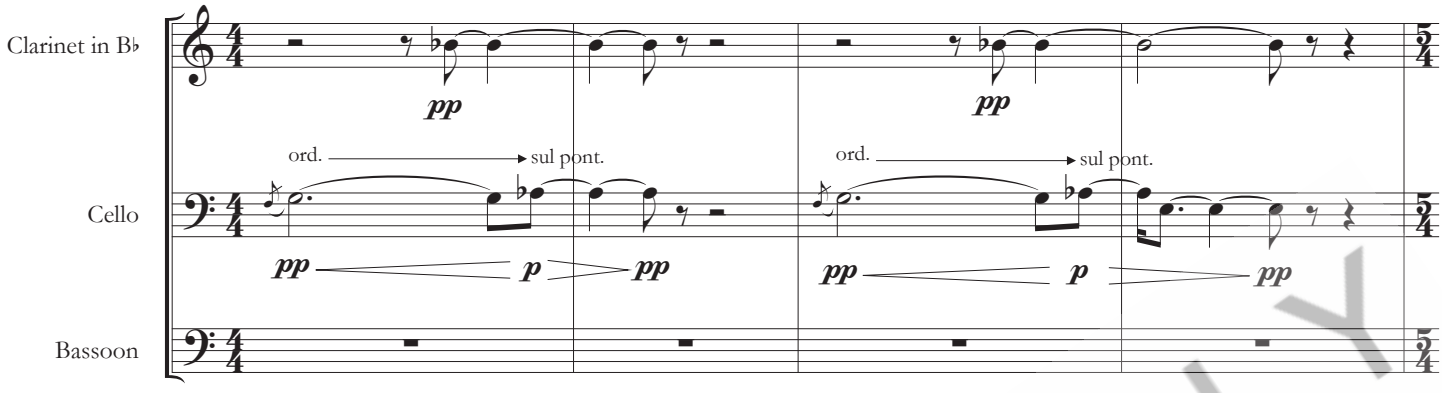
PERUSAL ONLY

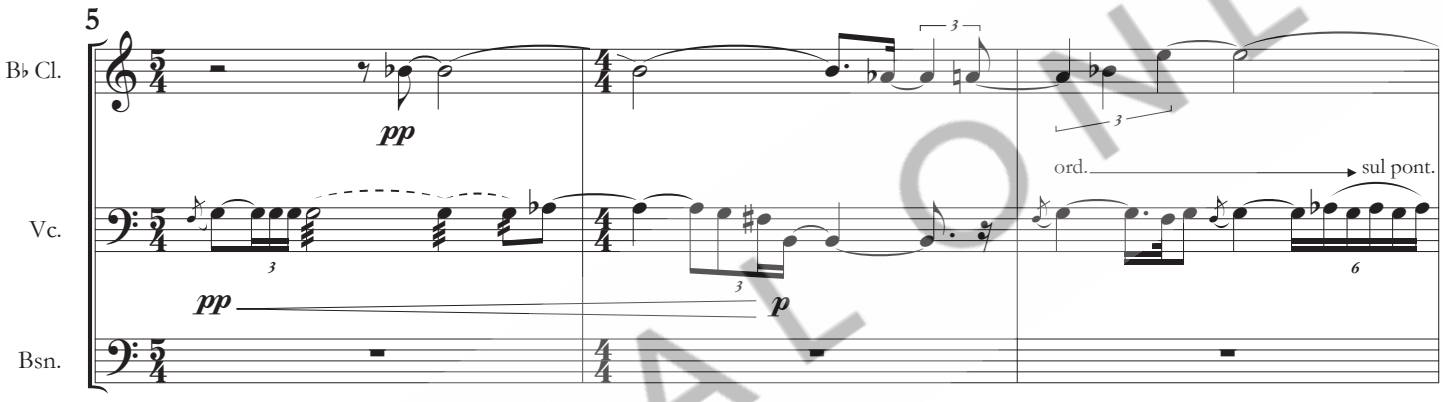
C Score

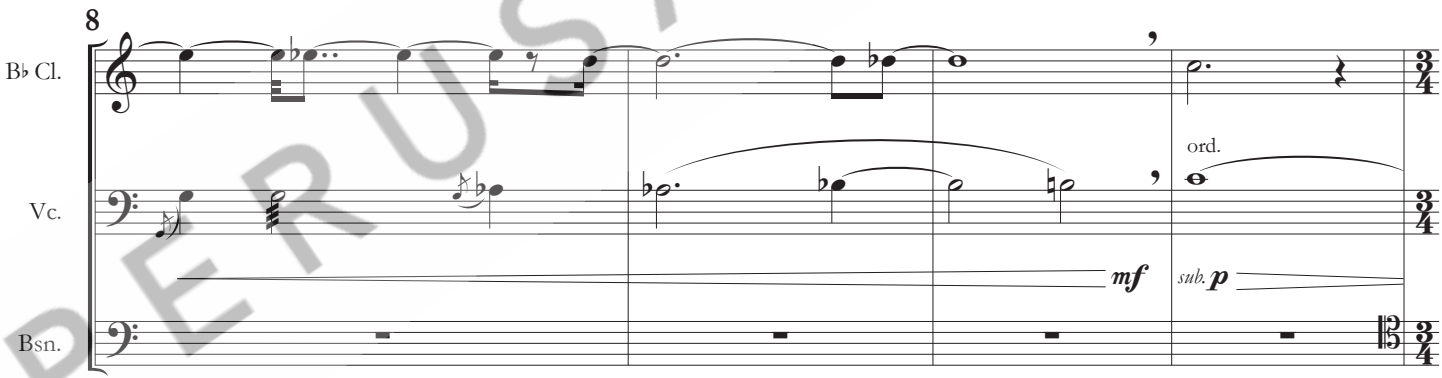
Izgrejala

Jens Ibsen (2018)

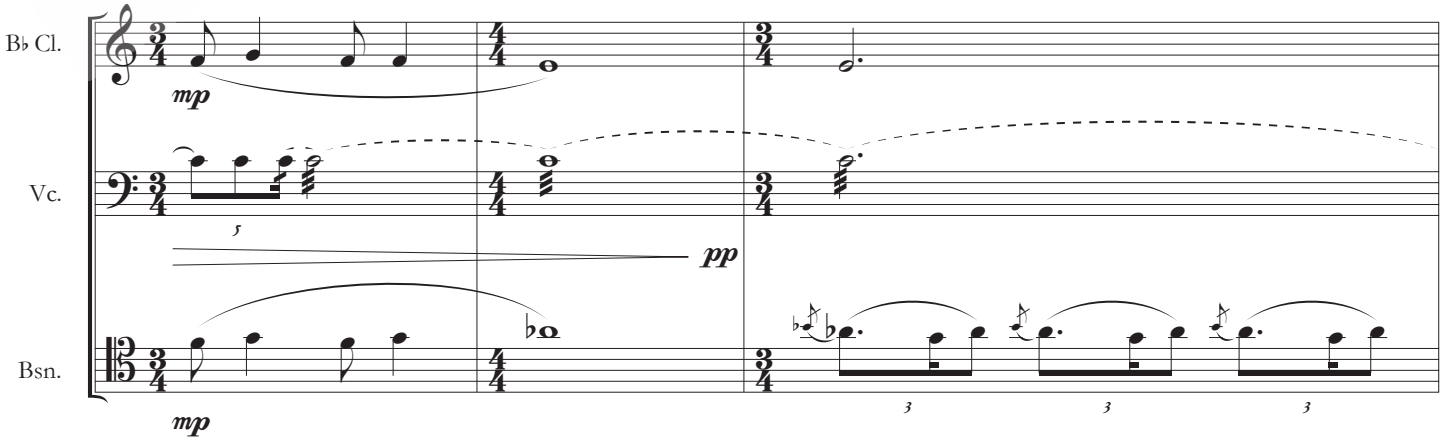
Pulses in the darkness... ♩ = 46







A **With raw emotion,** ♩ = 92



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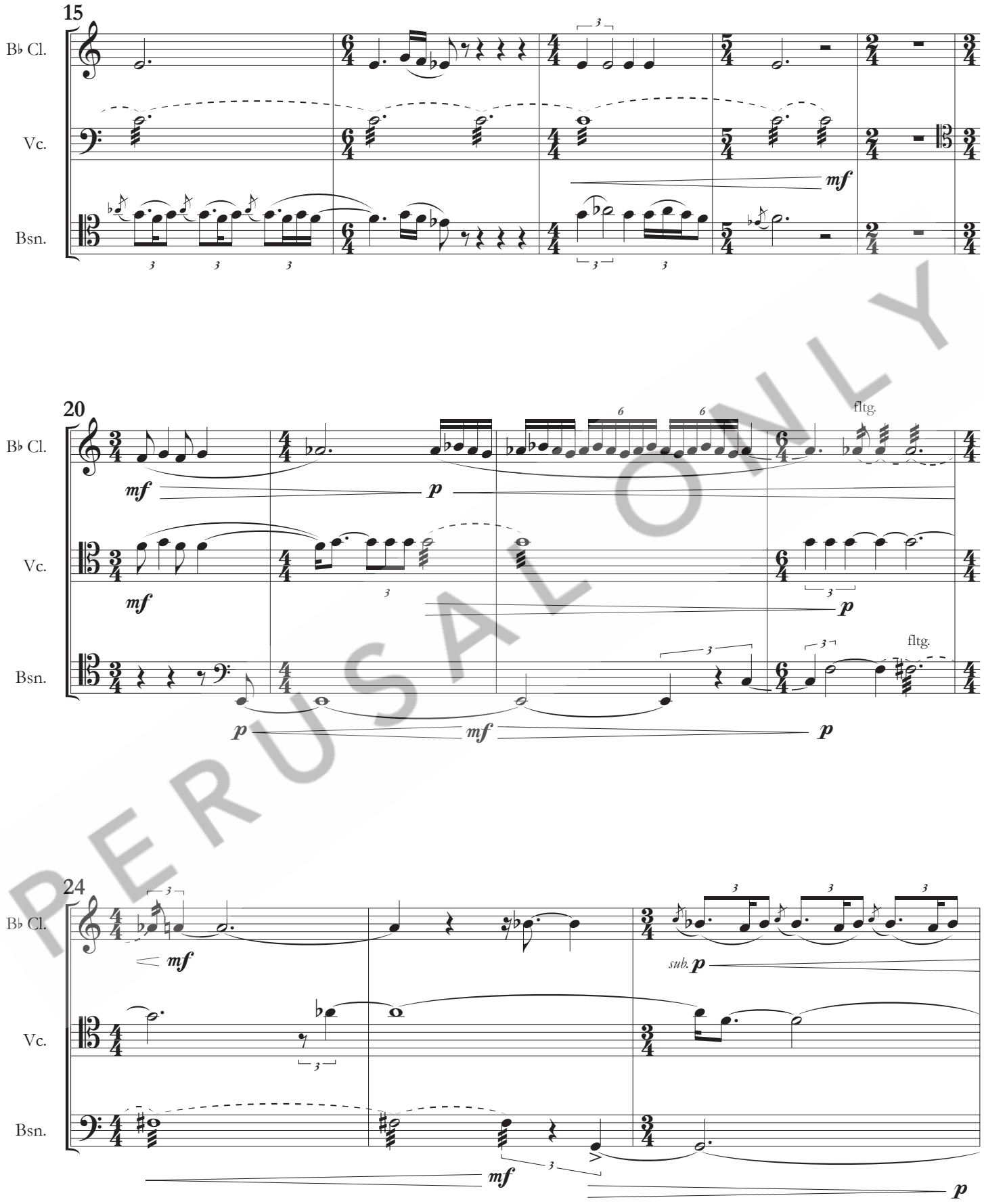

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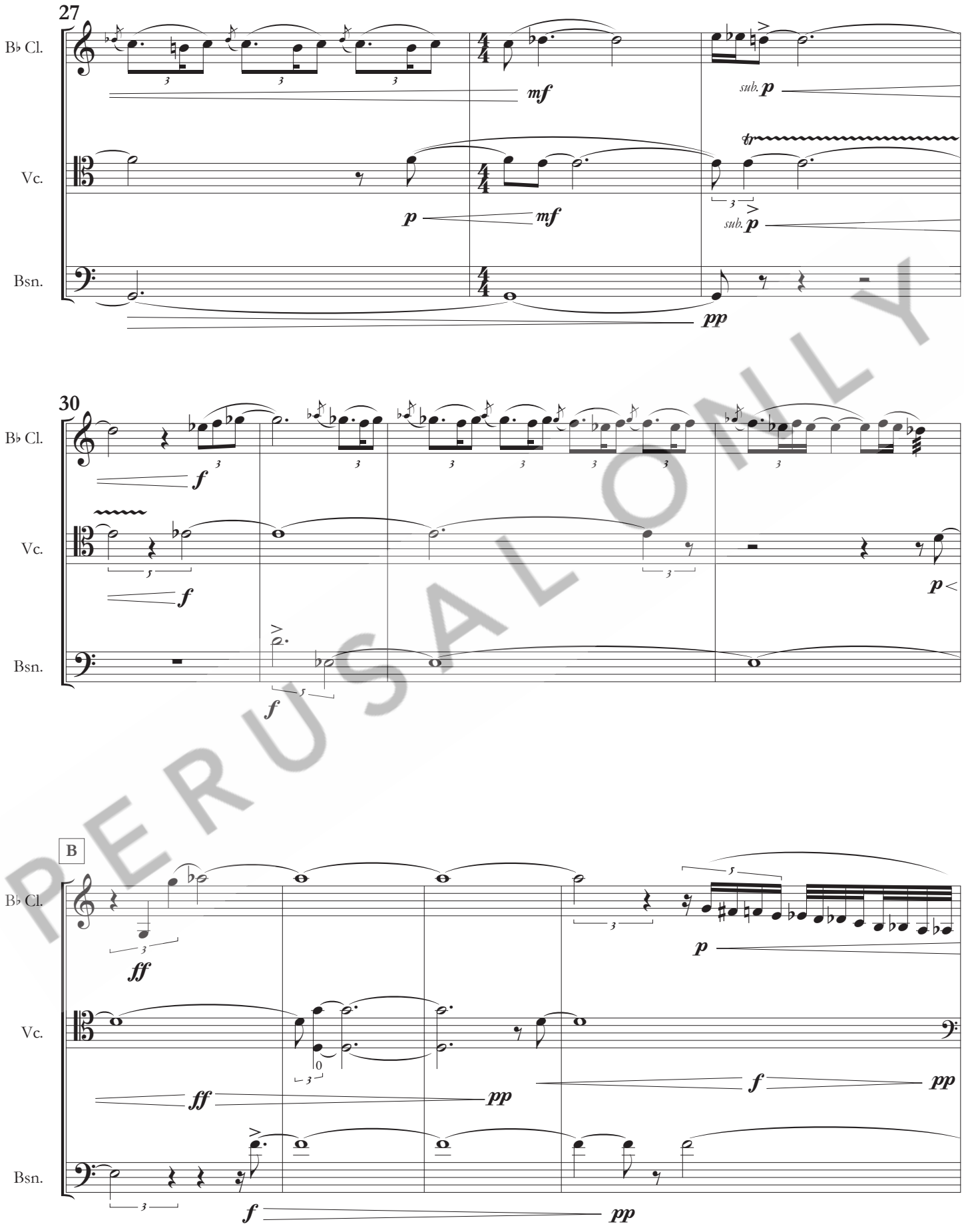

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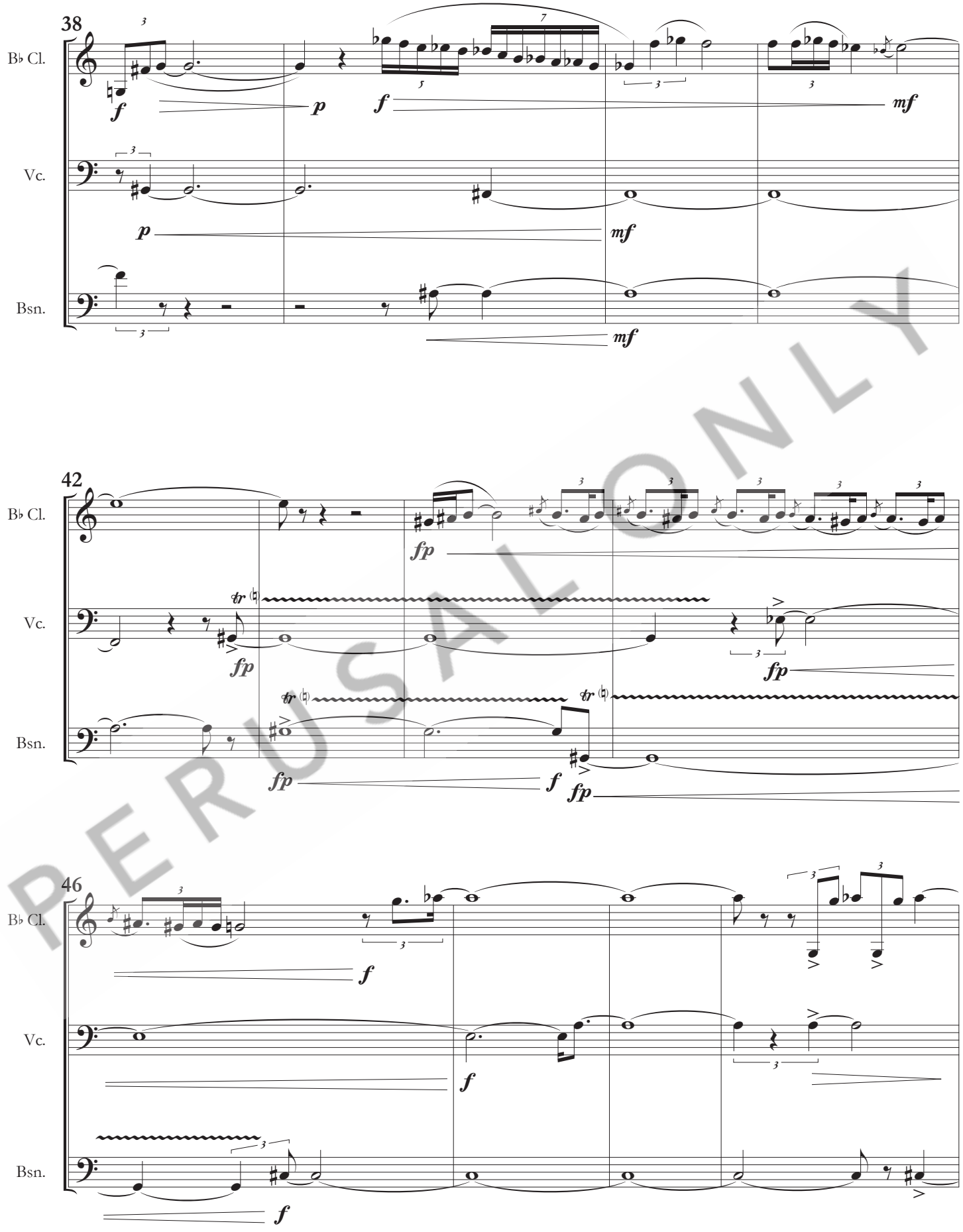

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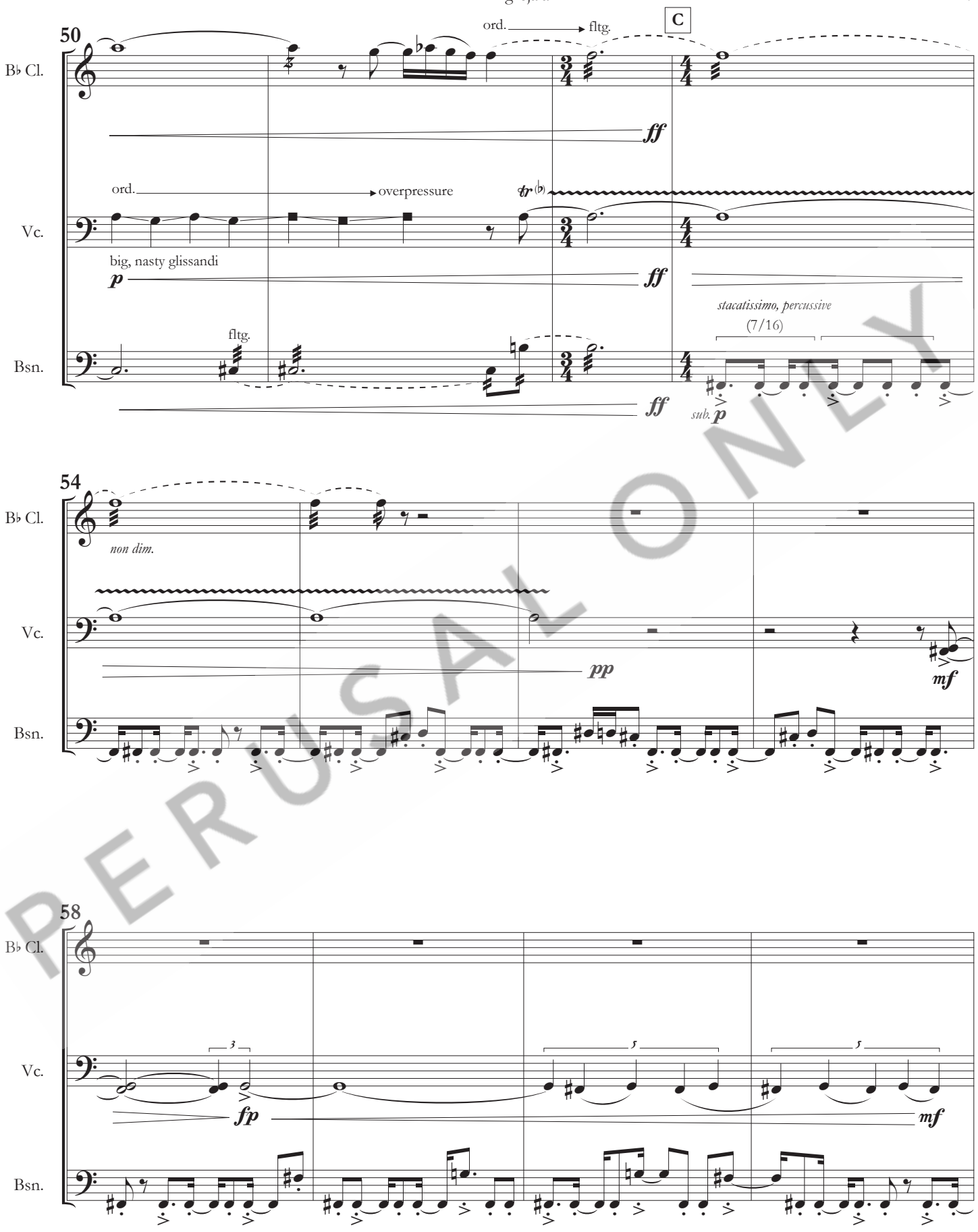

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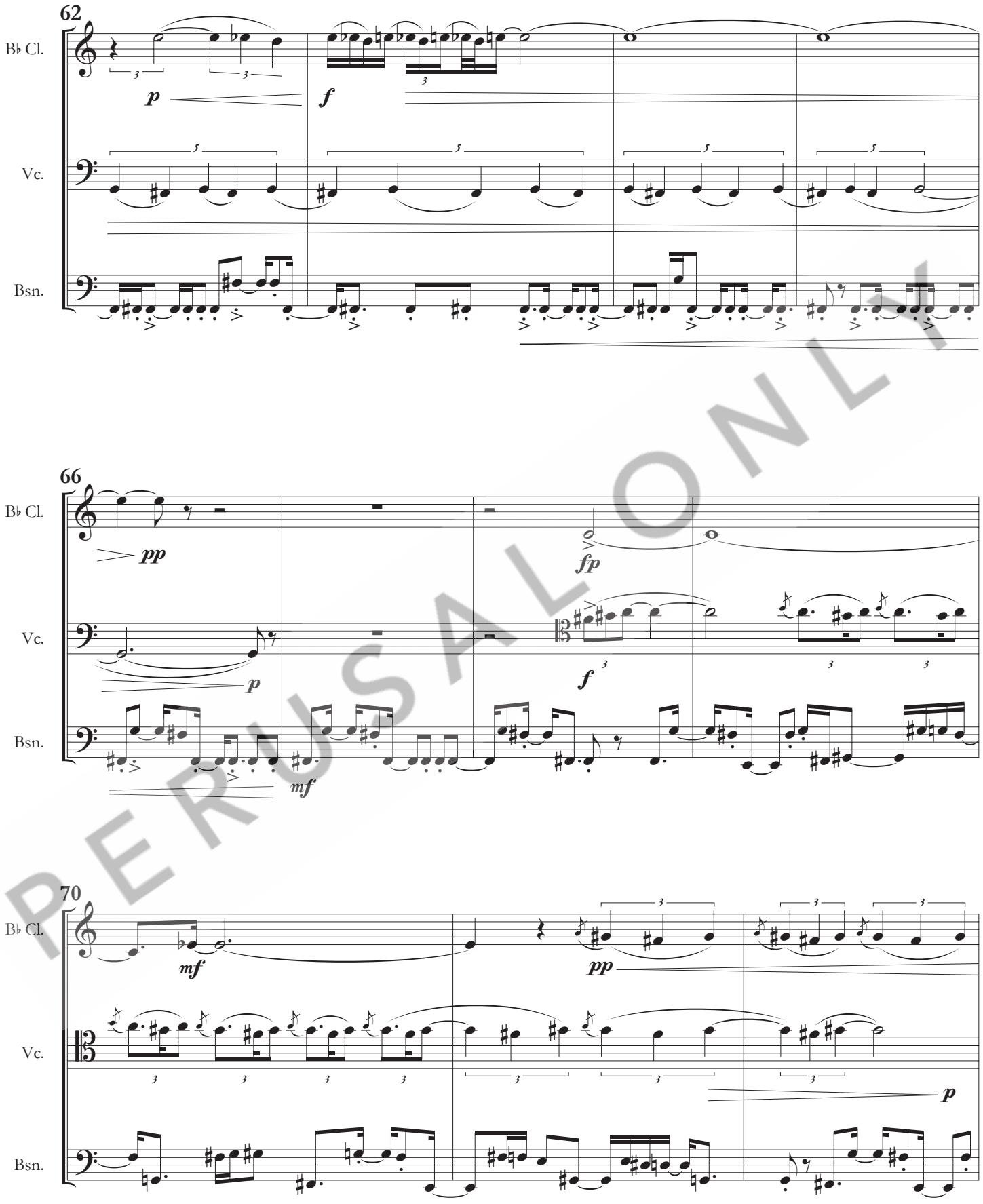

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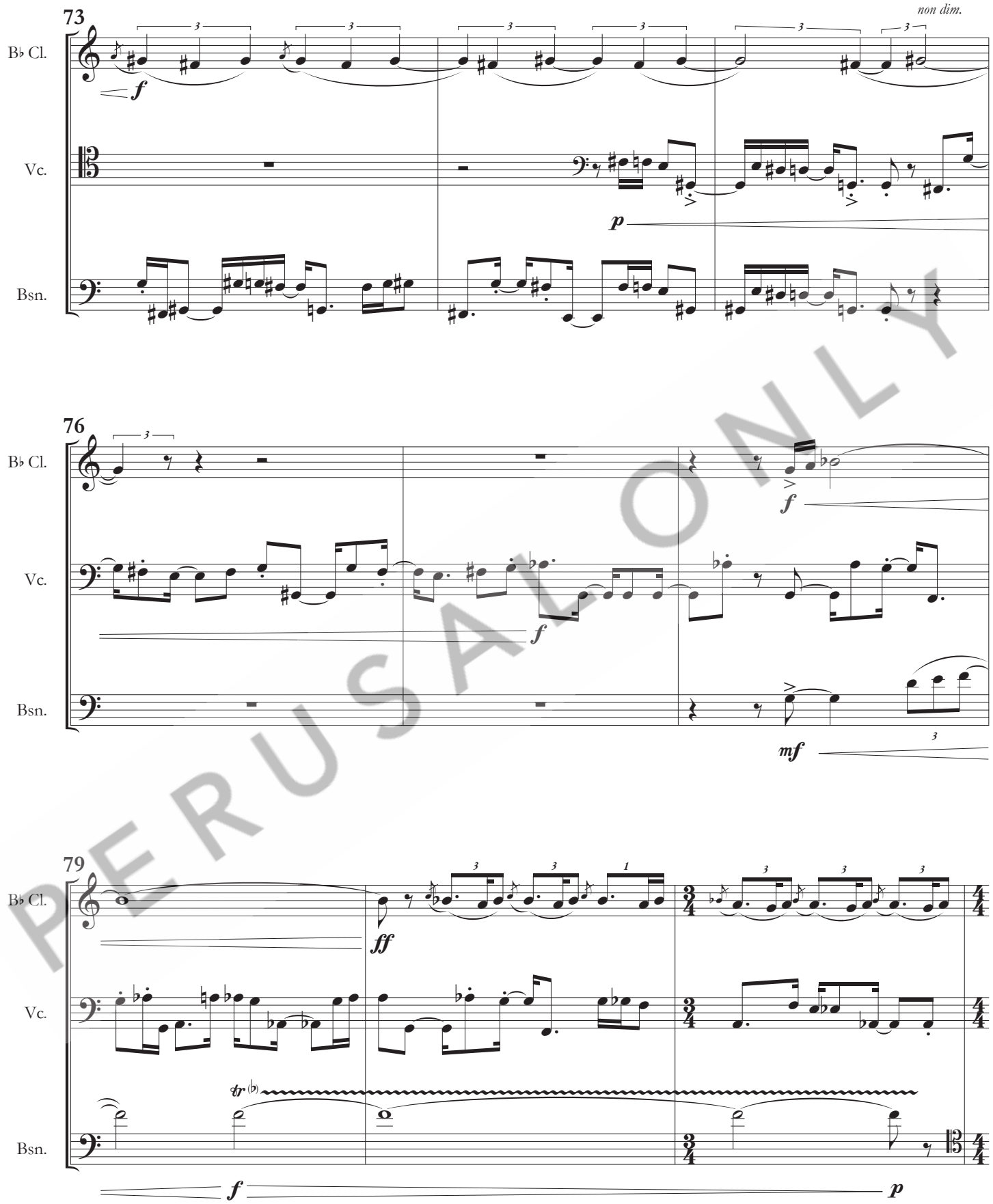

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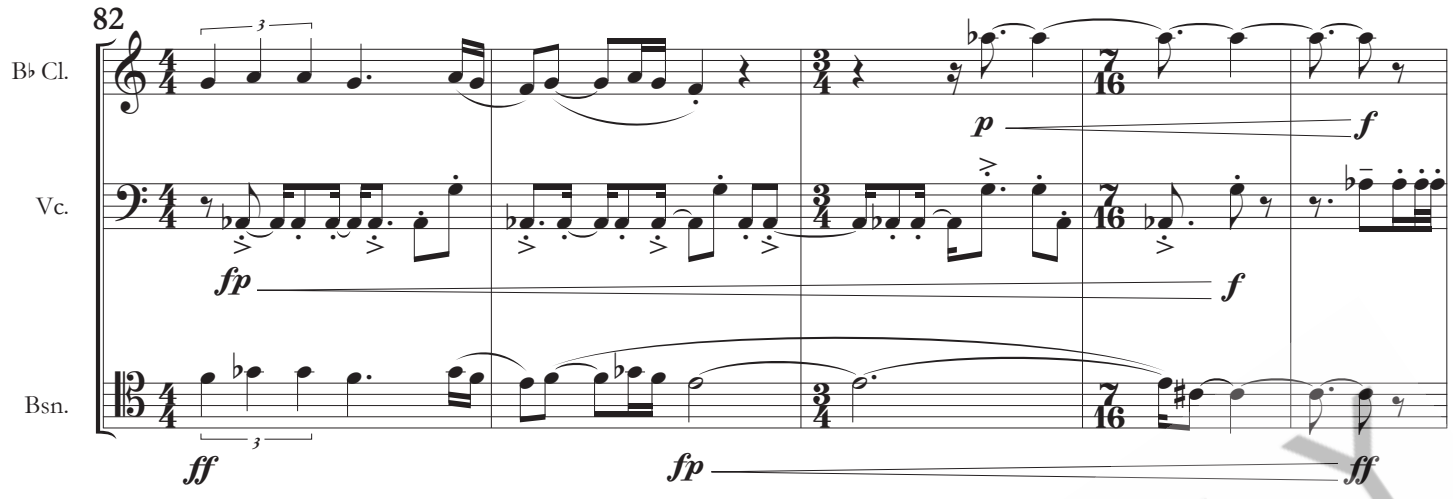

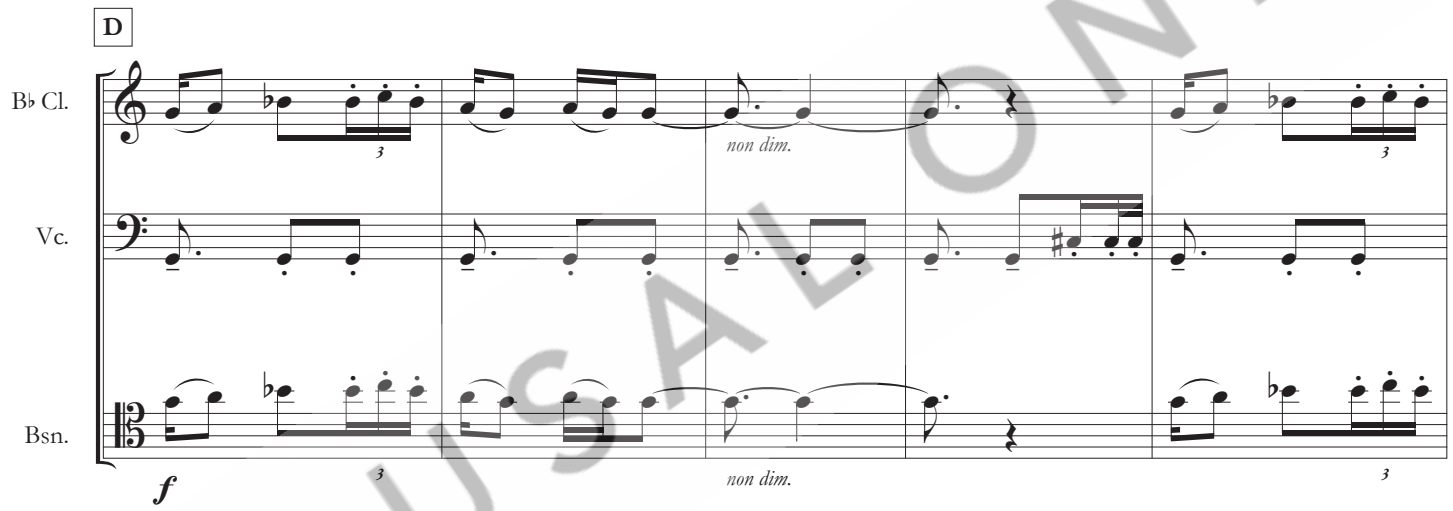

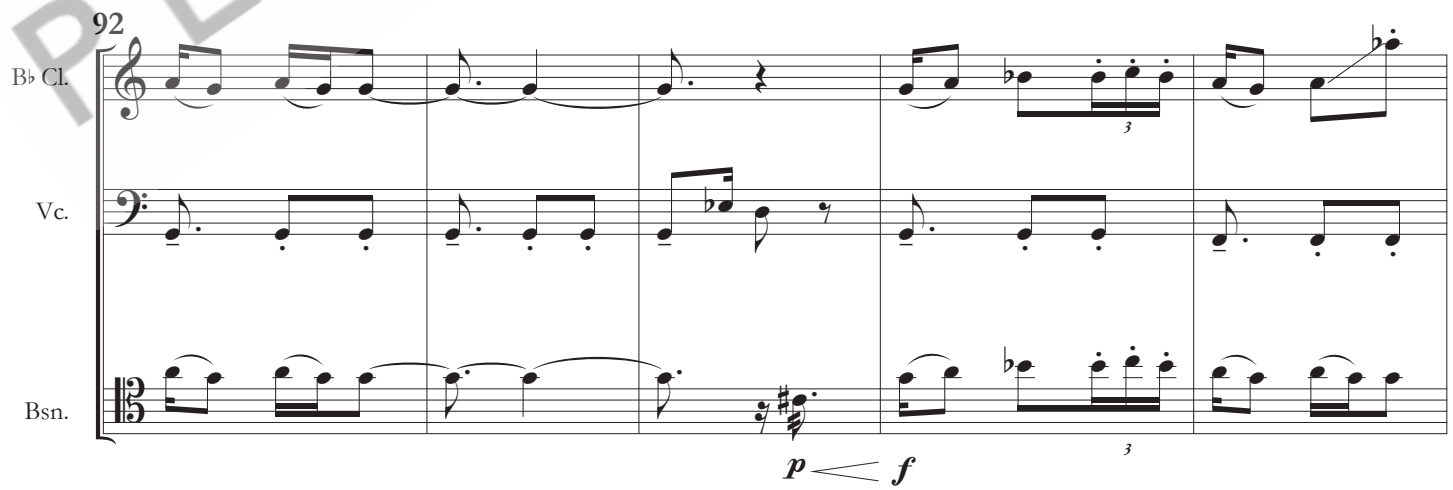

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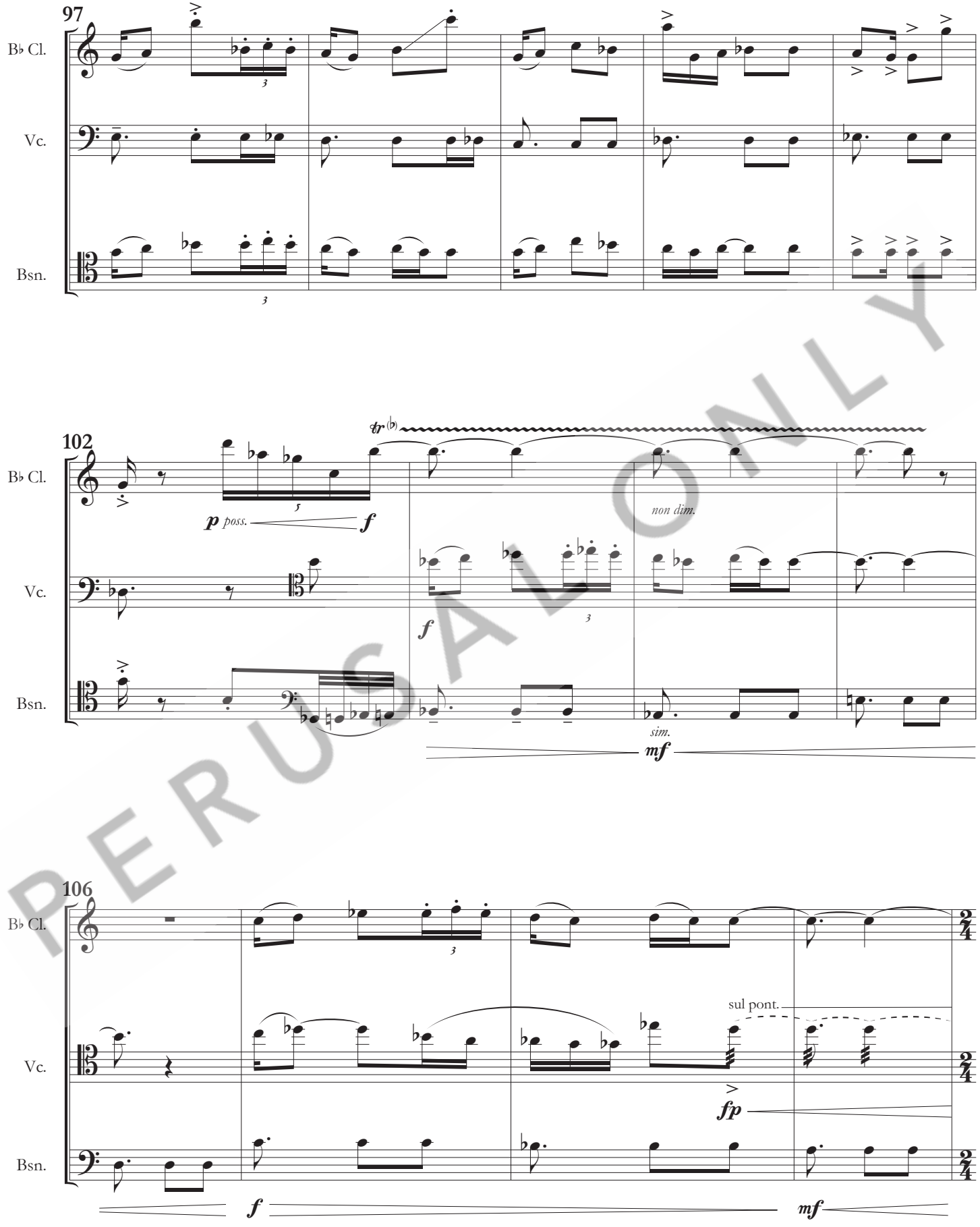

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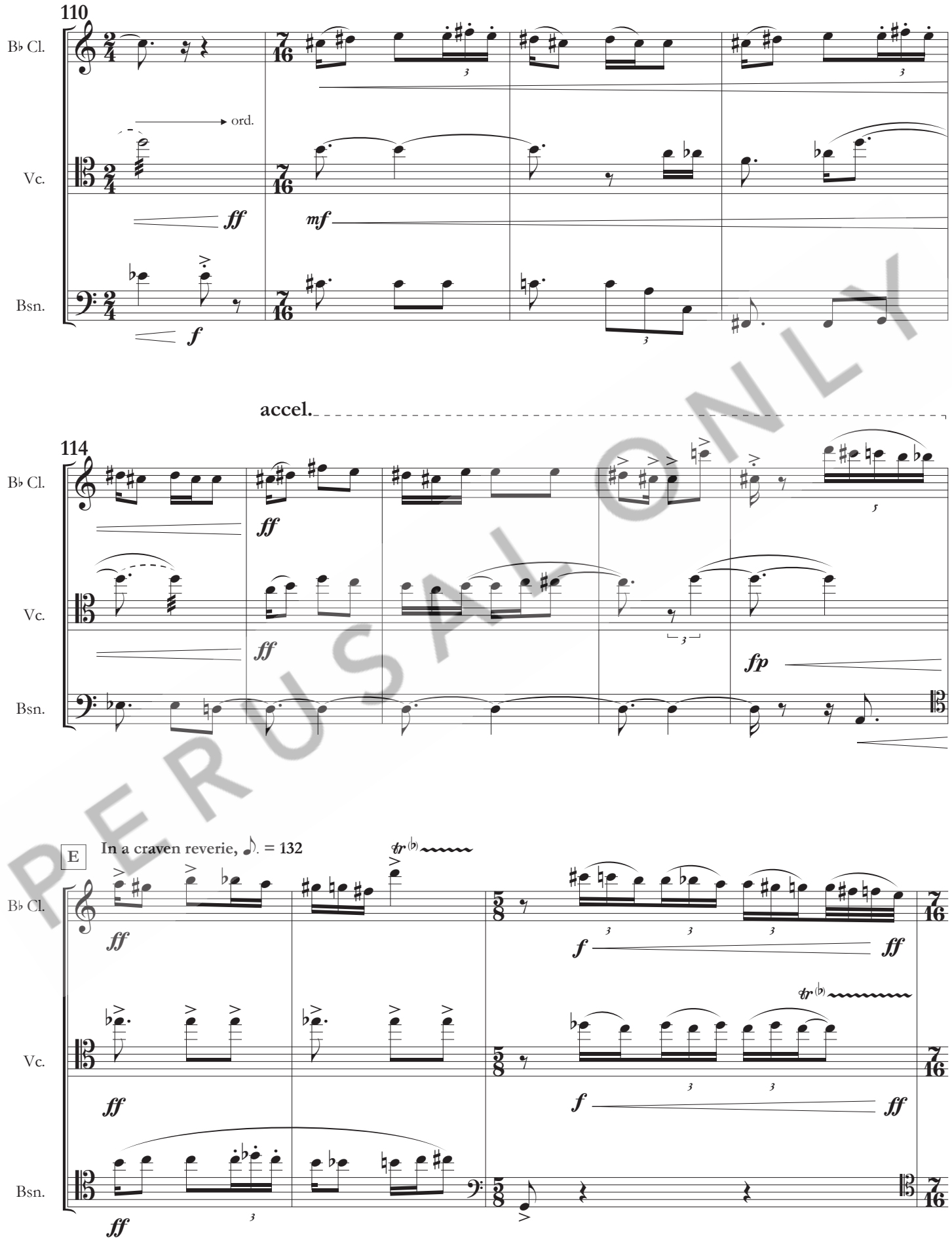

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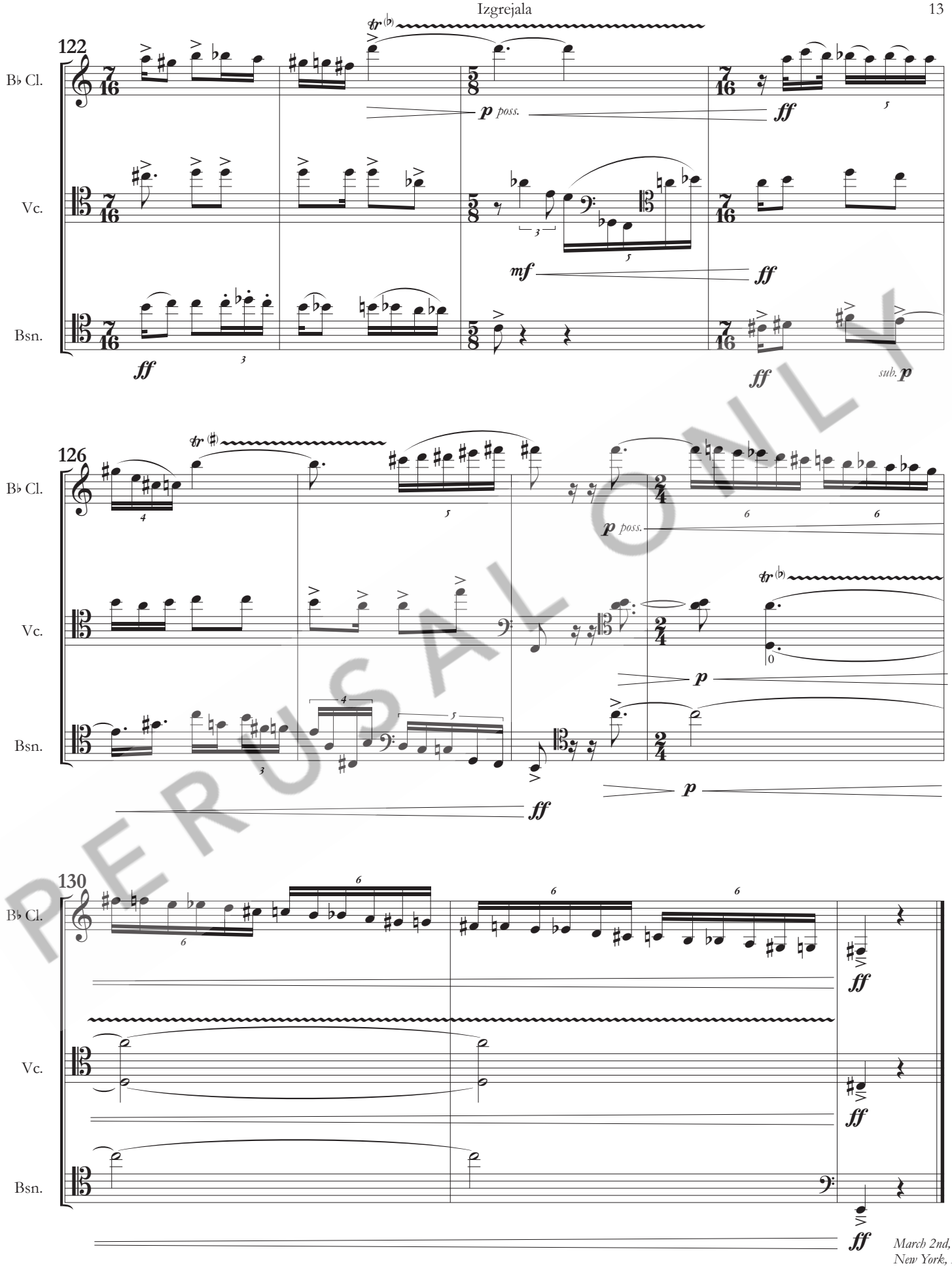

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