SDM607

THE ARCTIC VIOLIN

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Not for Performance

Seán Doherty
2020
String Quartet

Seán Doherty Music
seandohertymusic.com

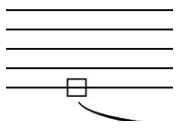
PROGRAMME NOTE

Sir William Edward Parry (1790–1855) was an English explorer of the Arctic known for his expeditions to find the Northwest Passage. He and his crew were ice-bound for long periods of these expeditions, during which time Parry became acquainted with the indigenous Inuit people and their music. An adept violinist, he published an account of their music with his own transcriptions: 'I wrote down from their singing, I can only promise that the notes are correctly given, and that I have done my best to put them into the time in which they are sung.'[1]

Parry found the local Inuit to be a musical people, as he remarked that 'they have most of them so far good ears, that in whatever key a song is commenced by one of them, the others join in perfect unison.' The concept of fixed pitch was clearly as foreign to the Inuits as was Parry himself. Though effortless for the locals, it proved challenging for the foreigner who found the lack of a fixed pitch '…made it difficult with most of them to complete the writing of the notes, for if they once left off they were sure to re-commence in some other key, though a flute or violin was playing at the same time.'

The Arctic Violin follows Parry's journey among the vast ice sheets, where he hears traditional Inuit song for the first time. One of his transcriptions serves as the theme. Despite his musical skill, Parry struggles to learn the song: he pieces motifs together from different keys and is unable to locate the right key in which the Inuit are currently singing, changing as it does with each performance. Later, he plucks the song quietly while making his transcription, then plays it through to make sure that he has notated the song correctly. Parry's violin is displayed at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

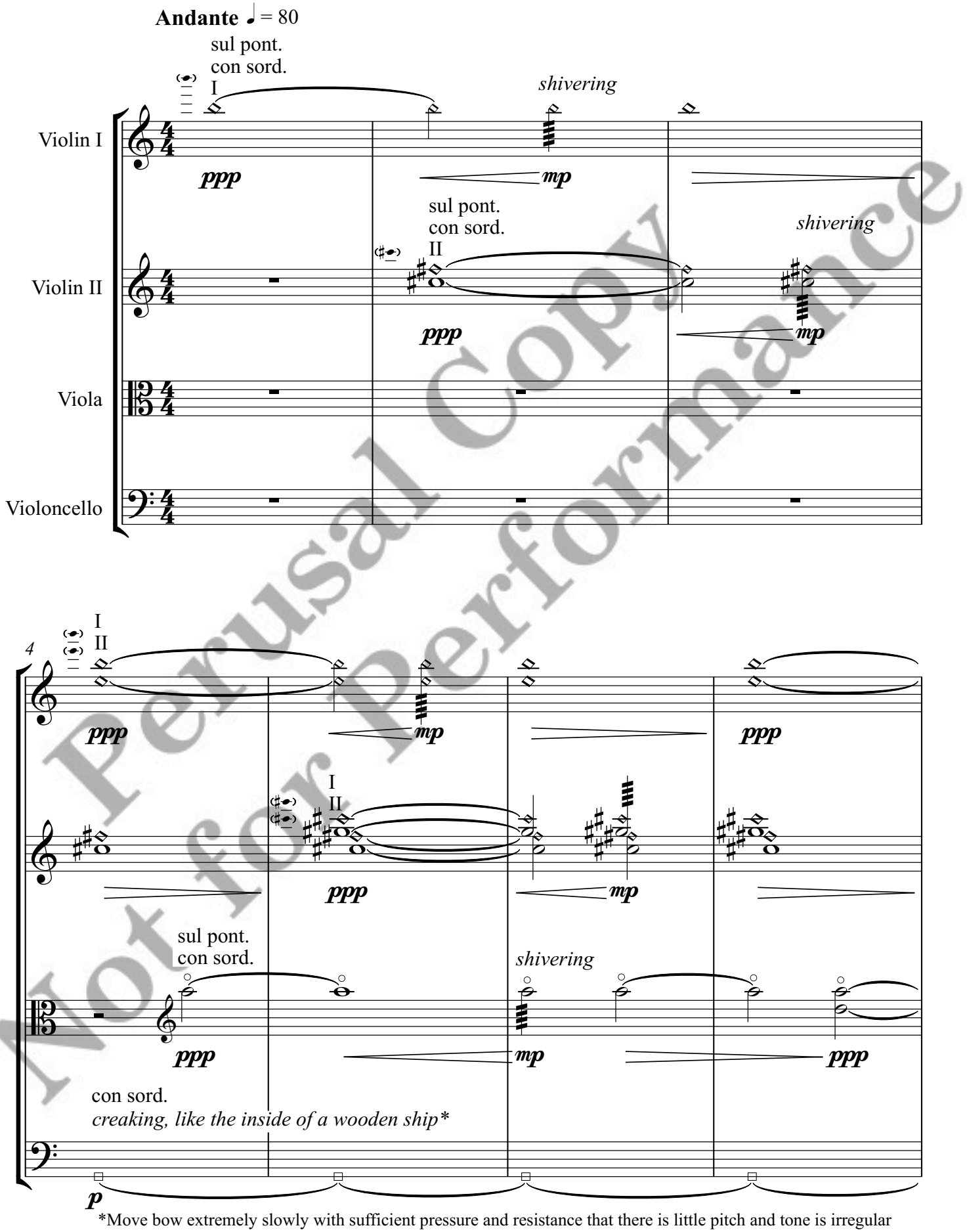
I, II, III, IV	Roman numerals indicate string numbers
	Excessive pressure on bow to create creaking noise. Move bow extremely slowly with sufficient pressure and resistance that there is little pitch and tone is irregular
	a gradual change from one technique to another
	an unmeasured tremelo

[1] William Parry, 'Captain Parry on the Music of the Esquimaux, with Copies of the Airs collected during the late Voyage to the Arctic Regions', *The Harmonicon* (1824), pp. 61–62.

Commissioned by Frederick Jones for Q-Quartets, Liverpool

The Arctic Violin

SEÁN DOHERTY (b.1987)



*Move bow extremely slowly with sufficient pressure and resistance that there is little pitch and tone is irregular

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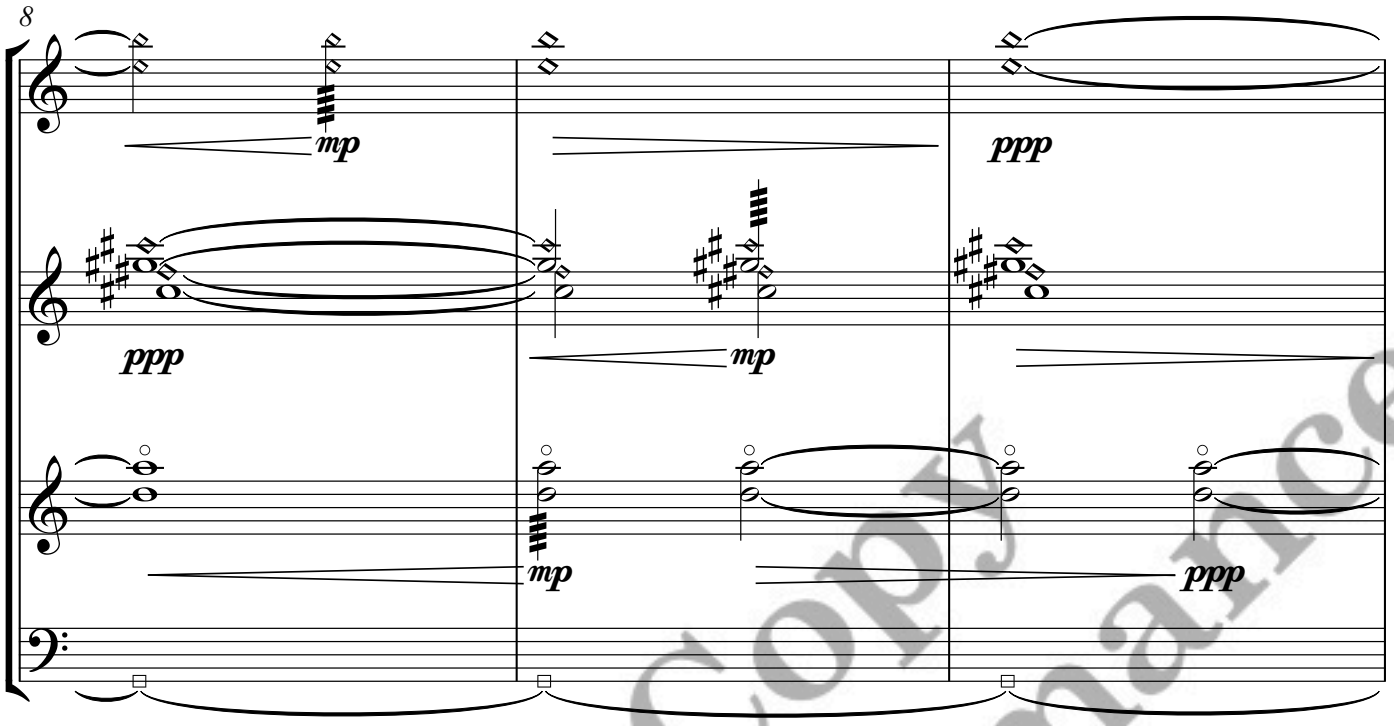

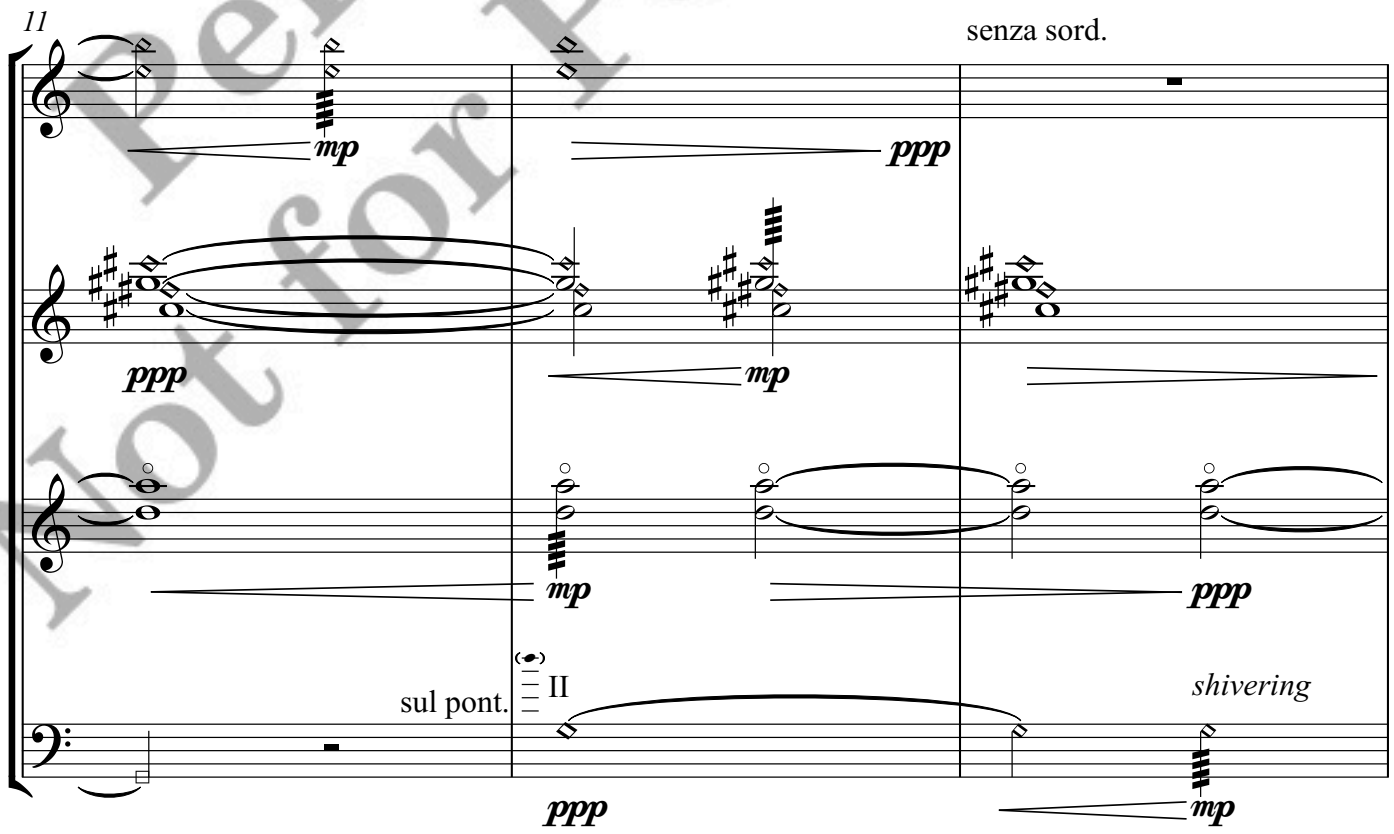

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A ord.
dolce

14

ppp mp

mp ppp

II
III

ppp mp

17

mp f

I
II

ppp mp

II
III

mp ppp

8va I
II

ppp mp

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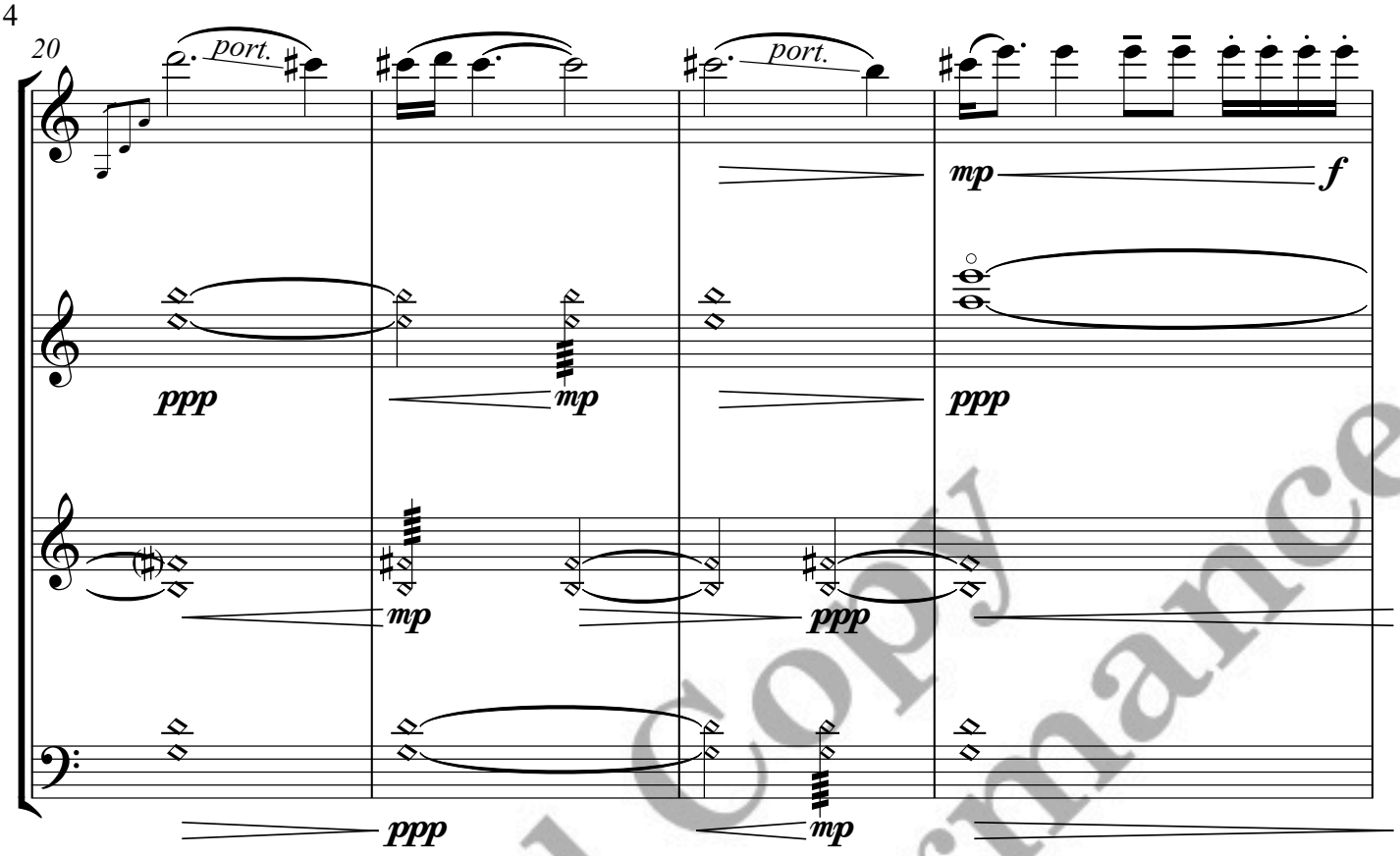

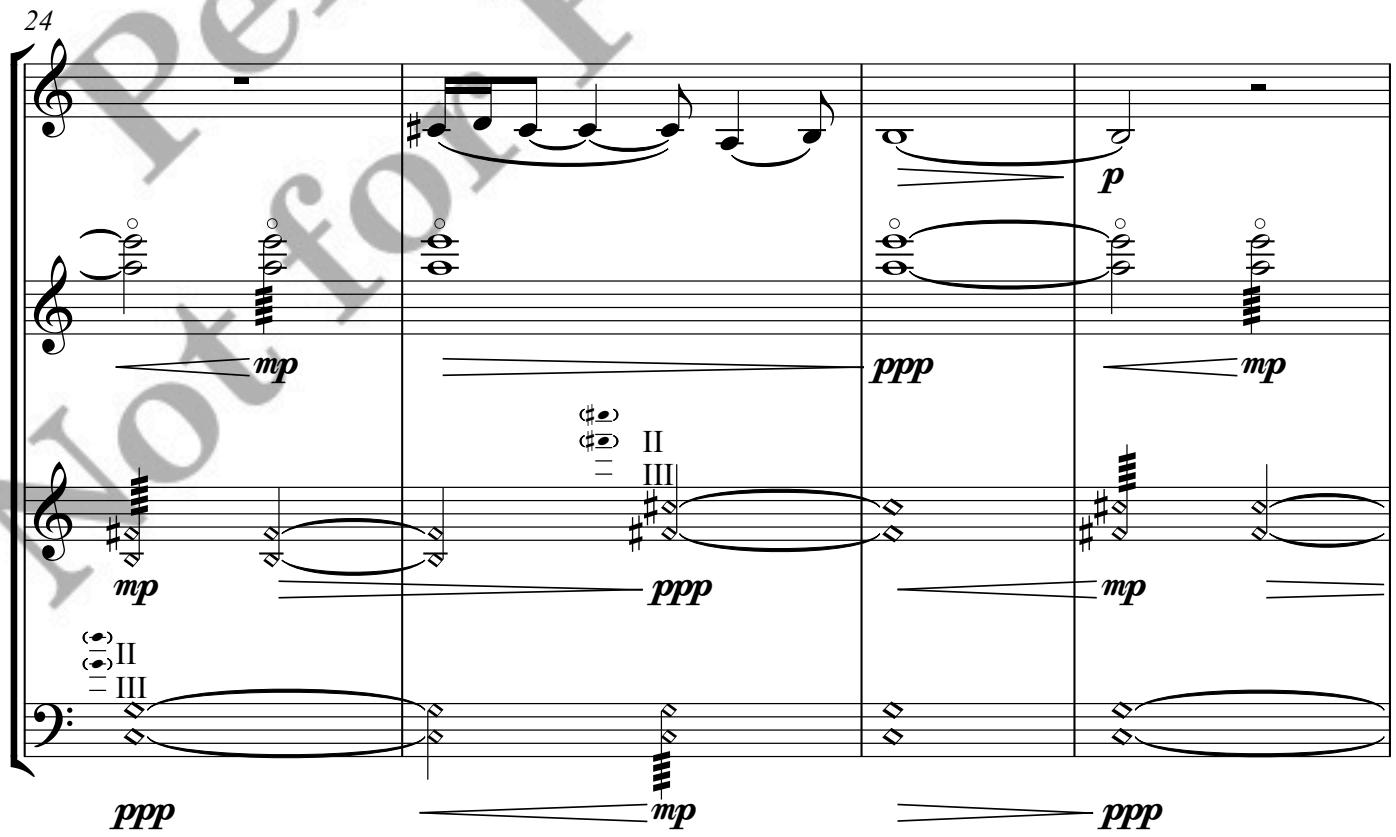

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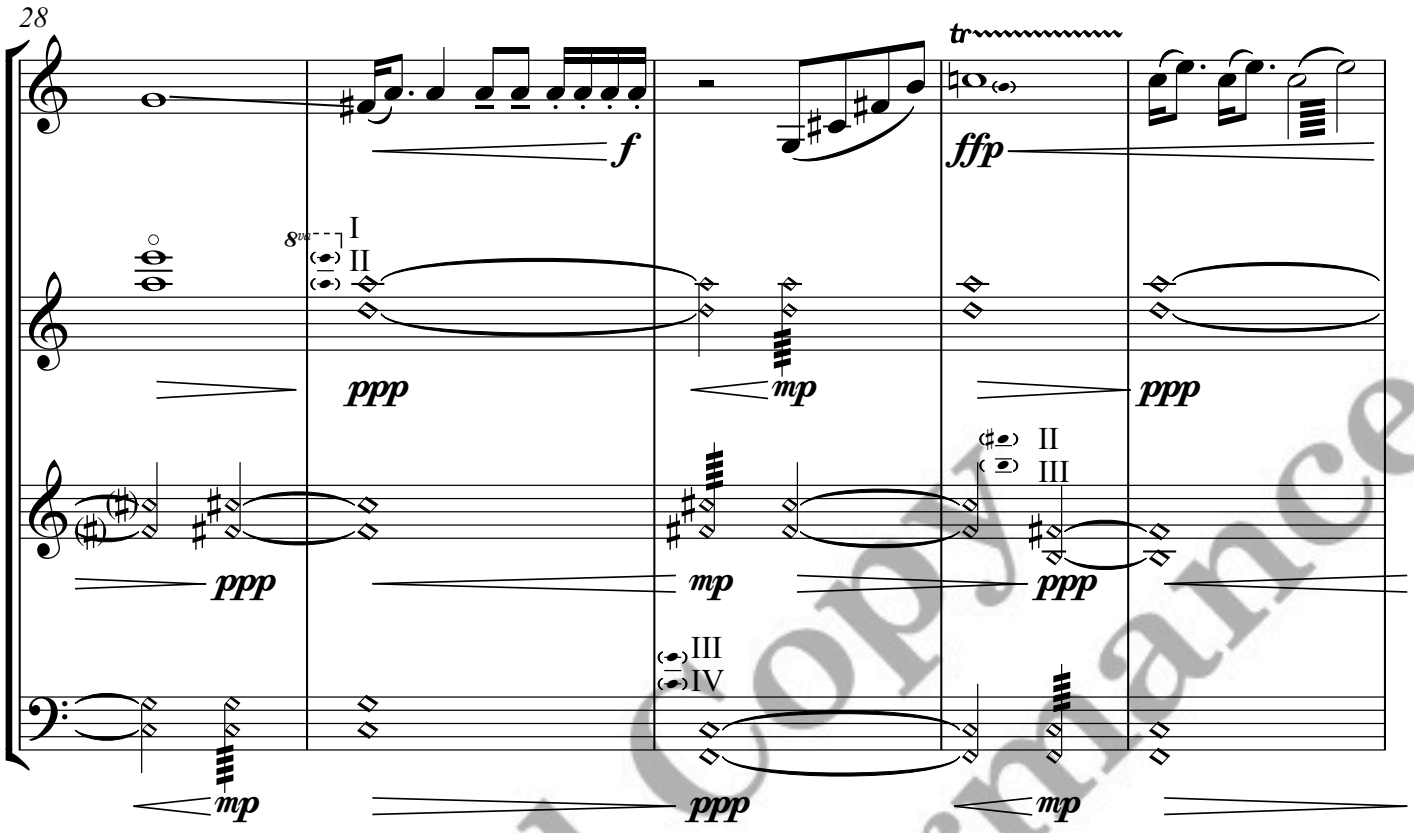

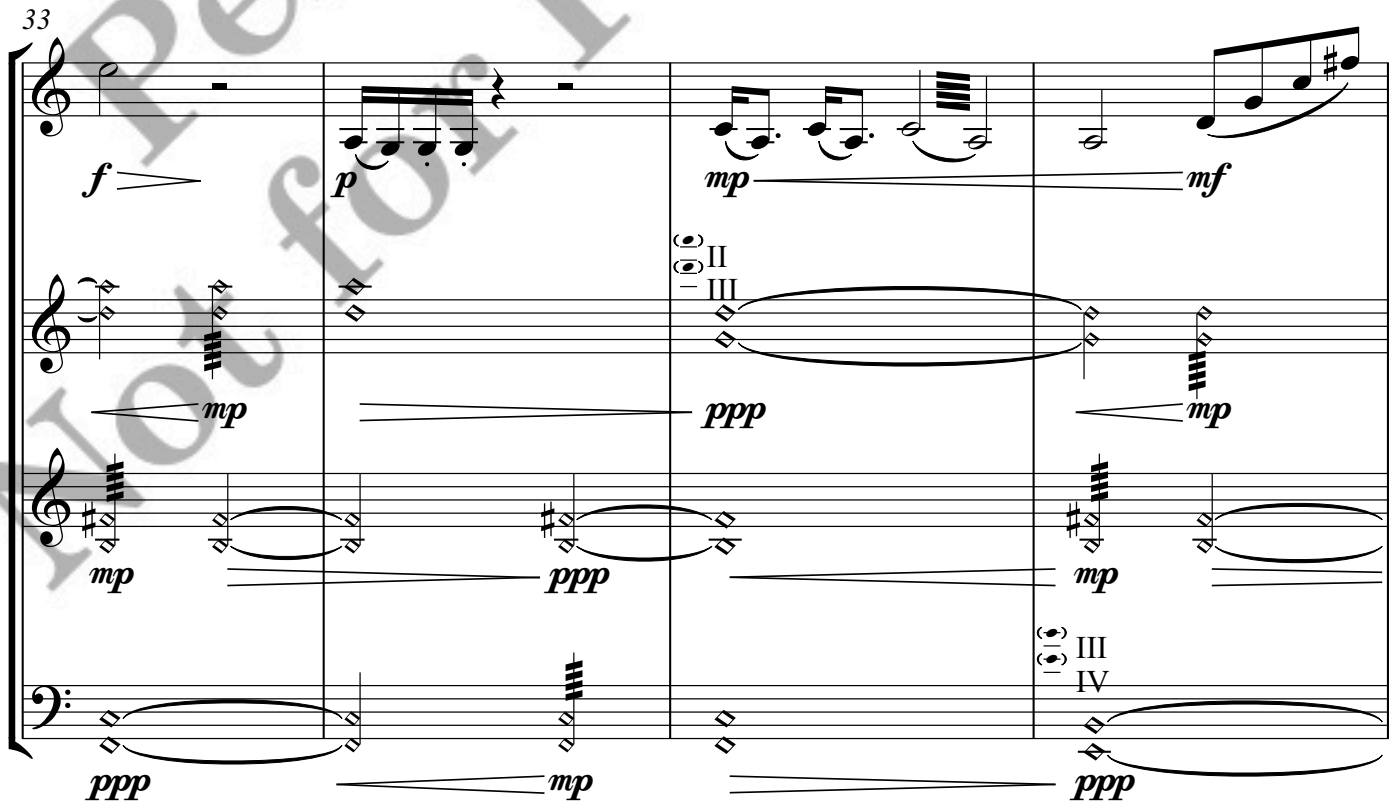

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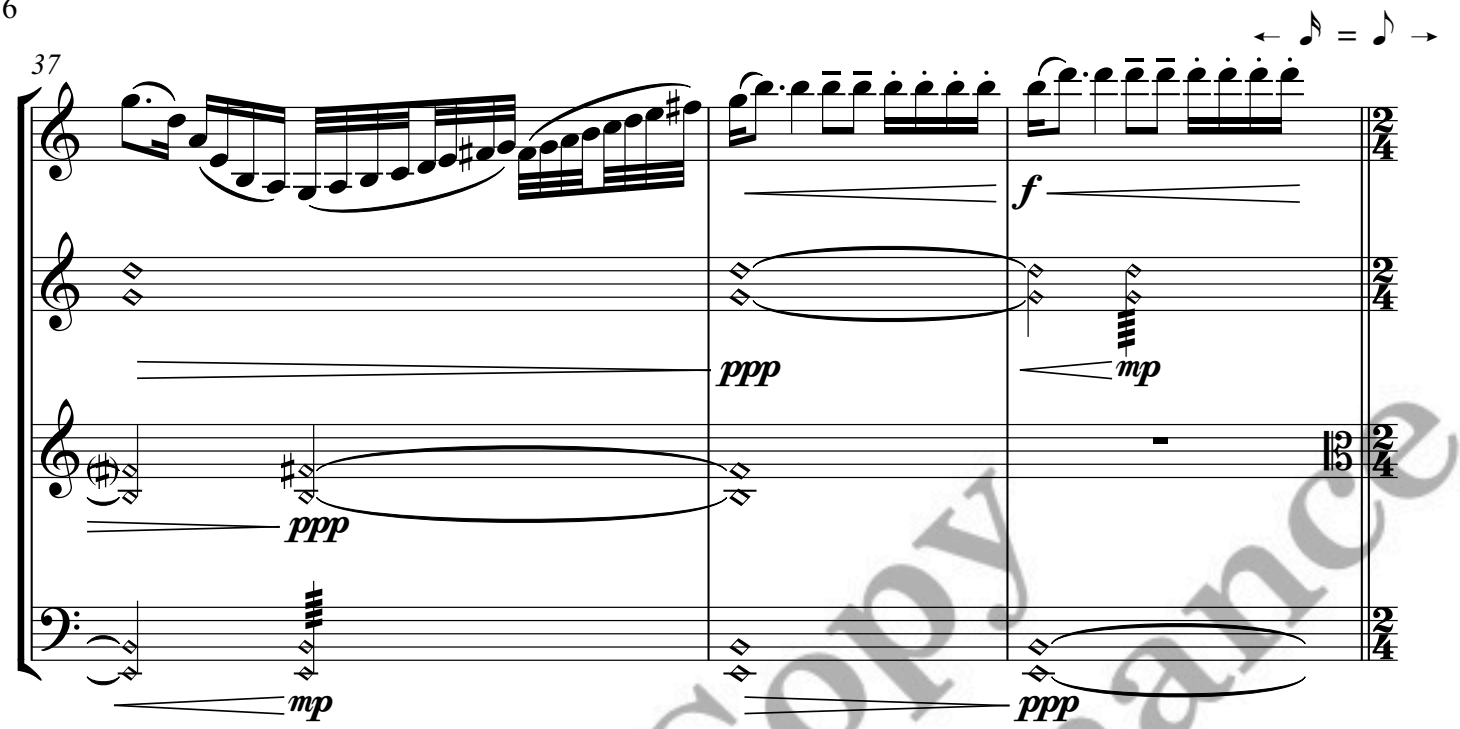
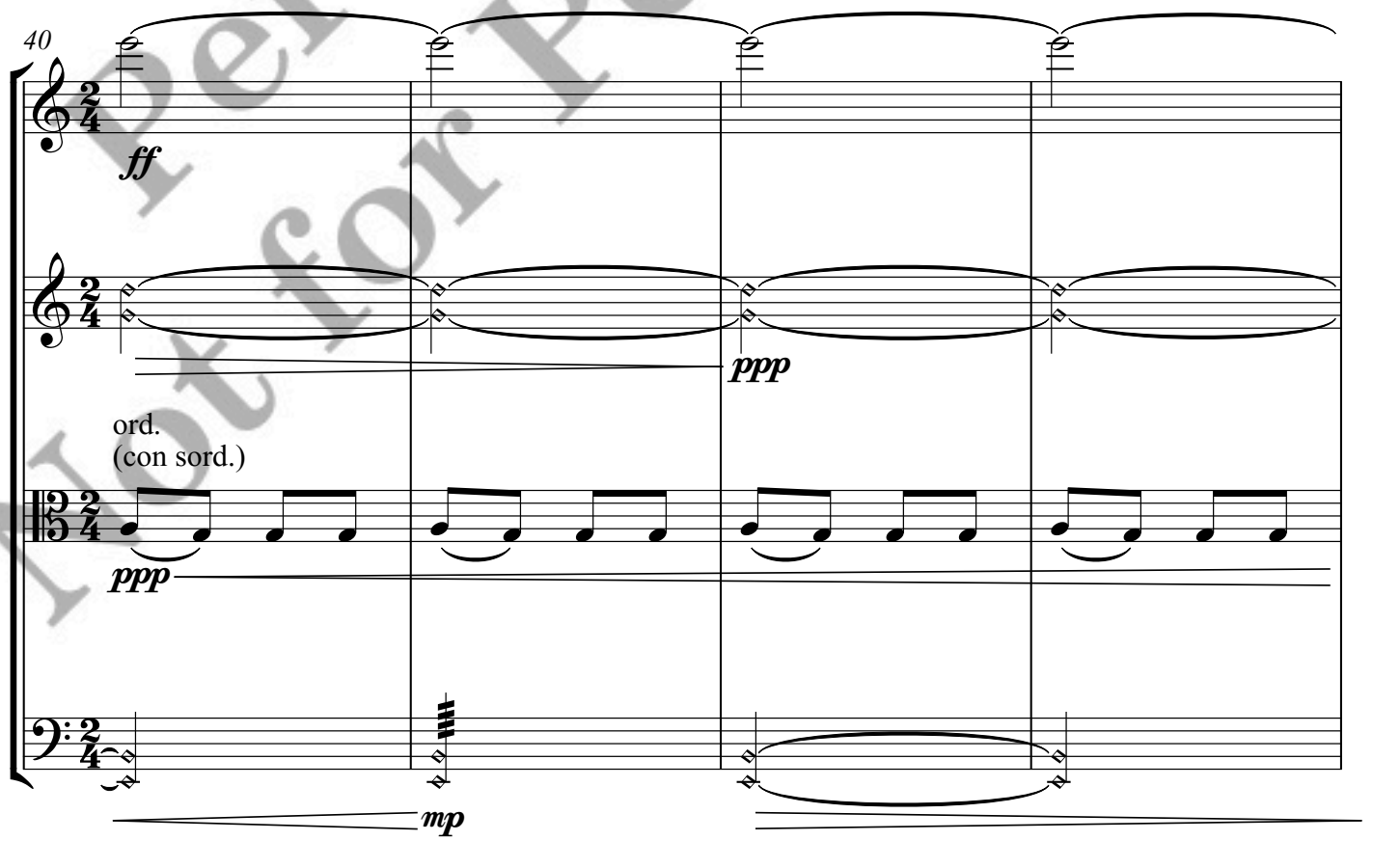


B **Presto**



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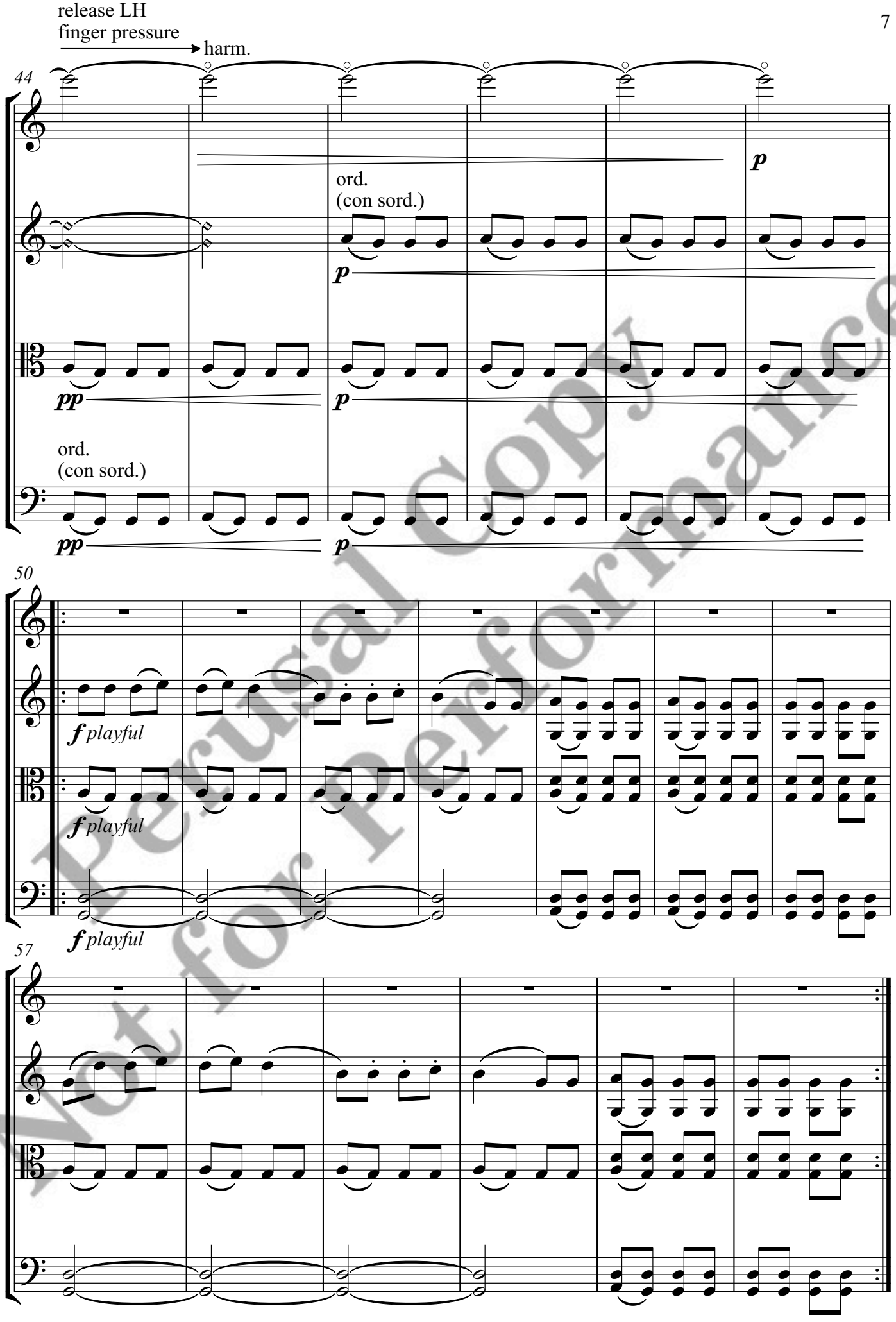

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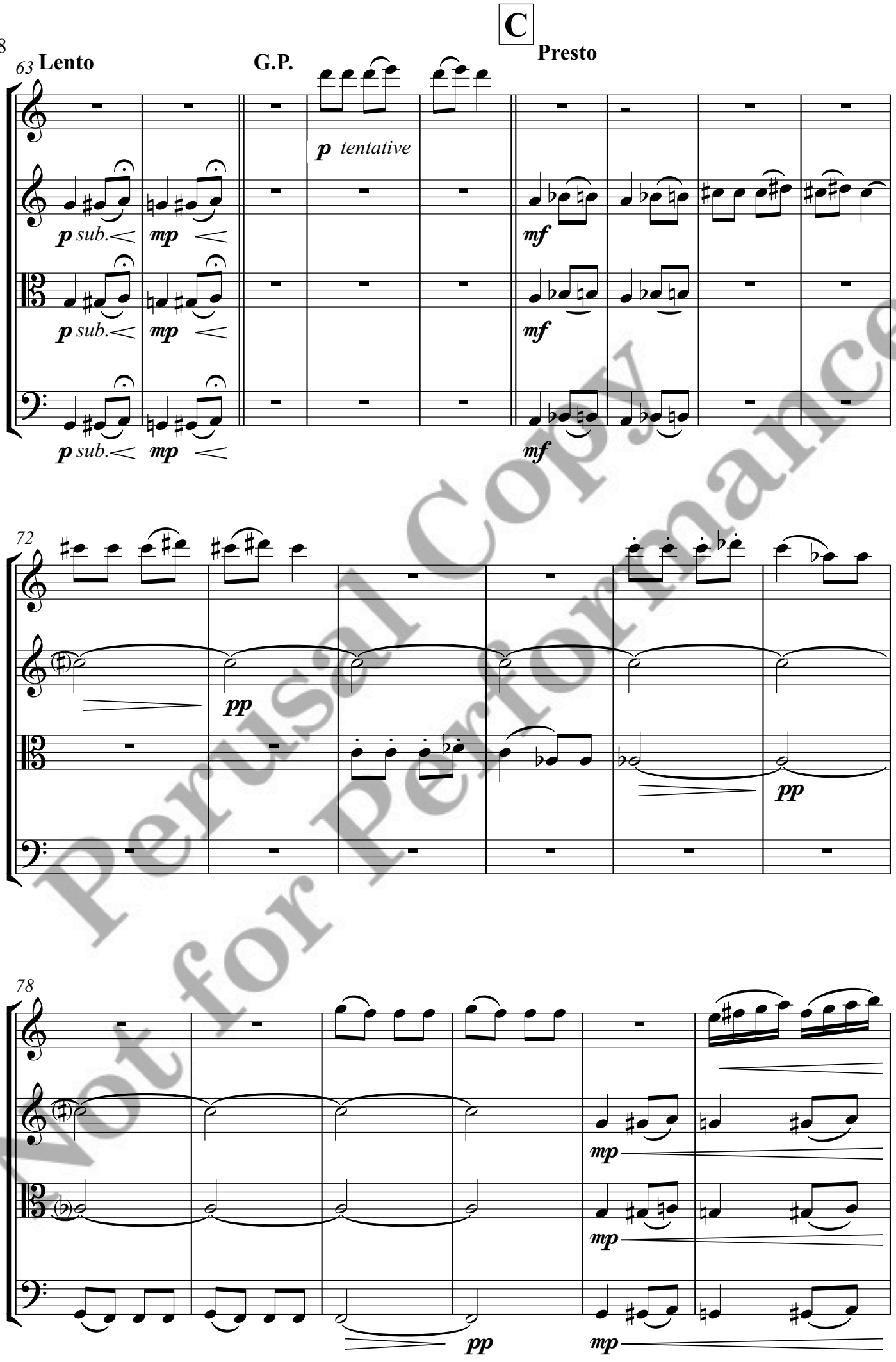

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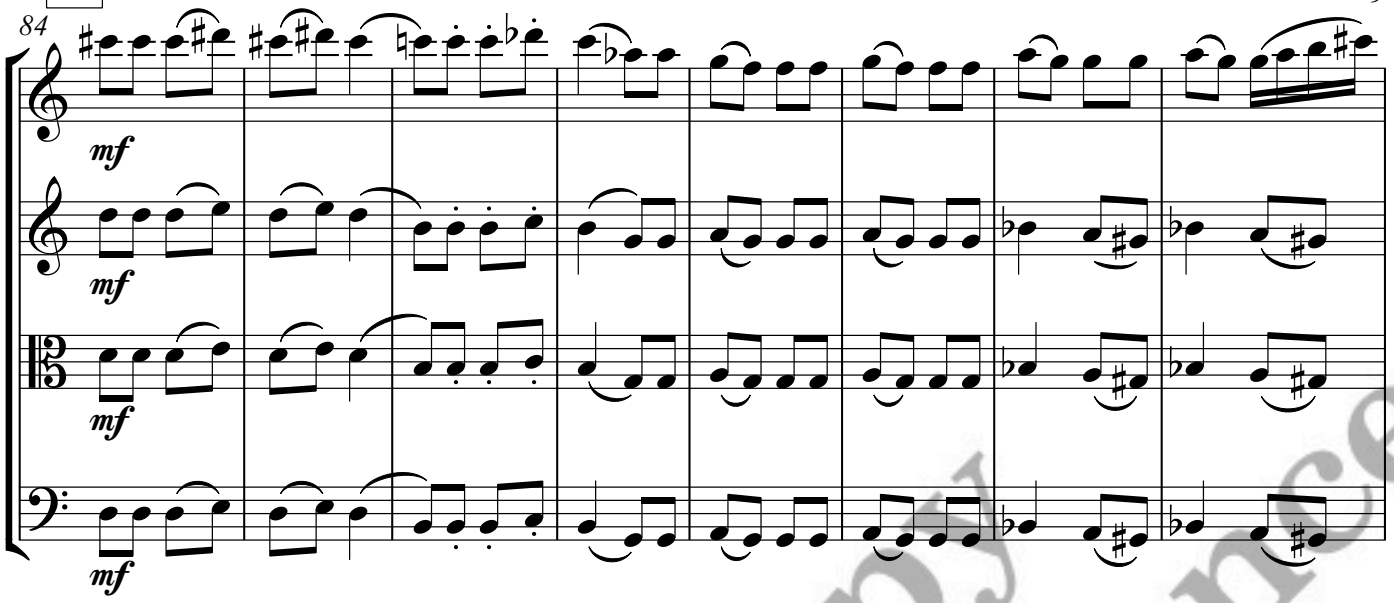
D

84



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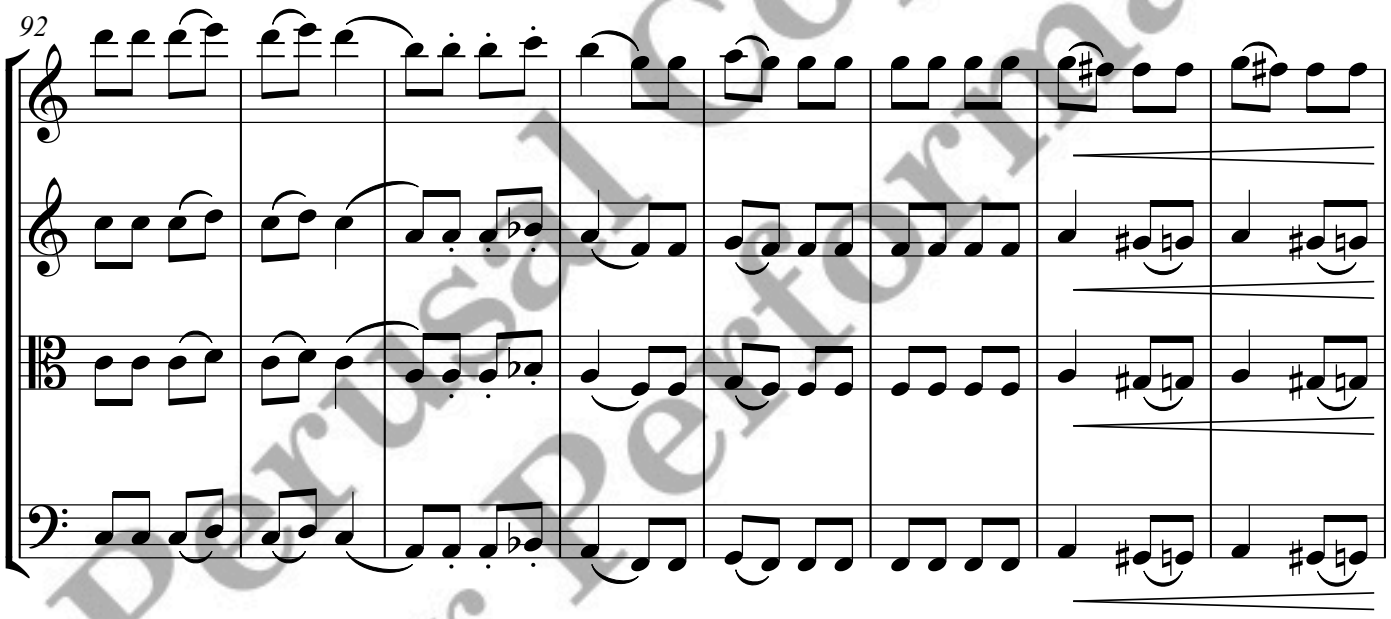
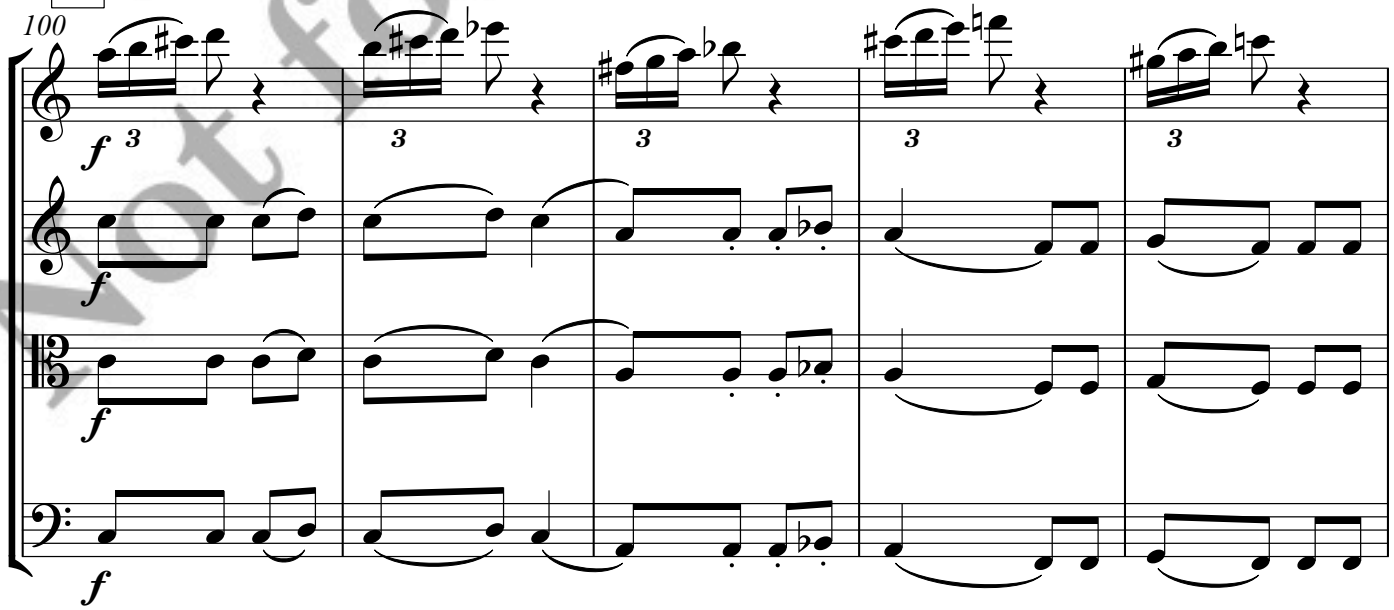


E

100



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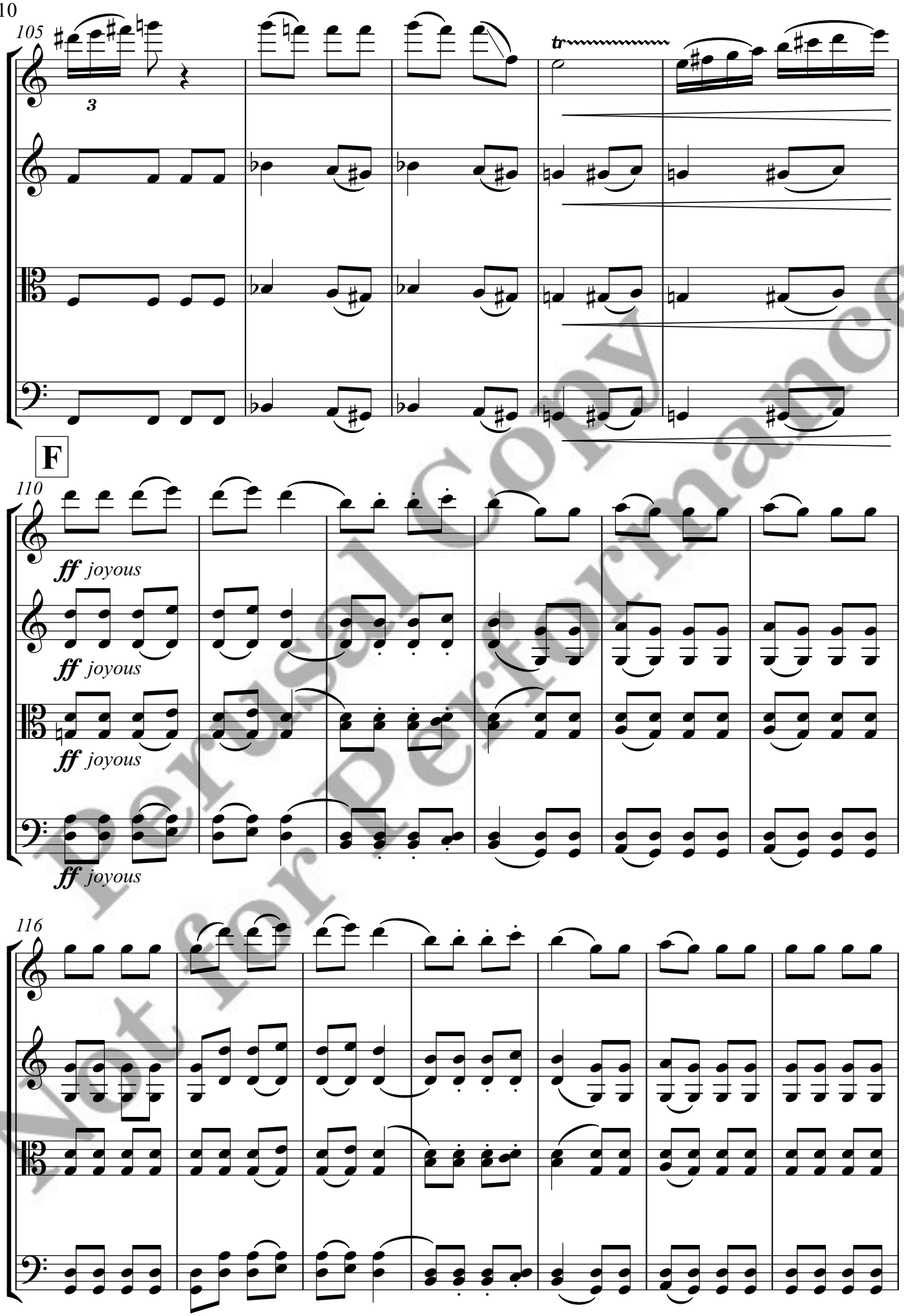

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123

131

139

molto rit.

fp

pp

mf

mf

mf

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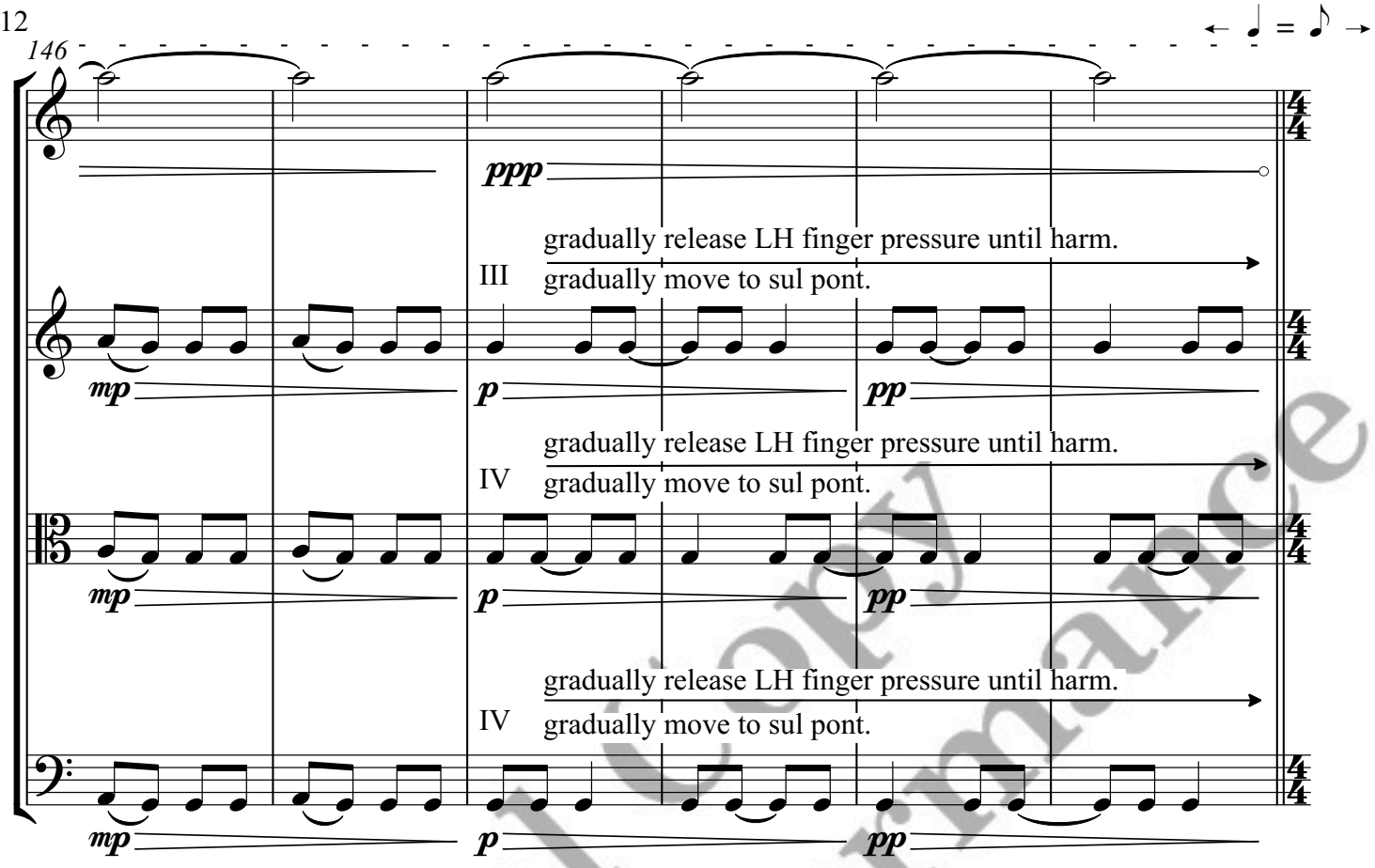
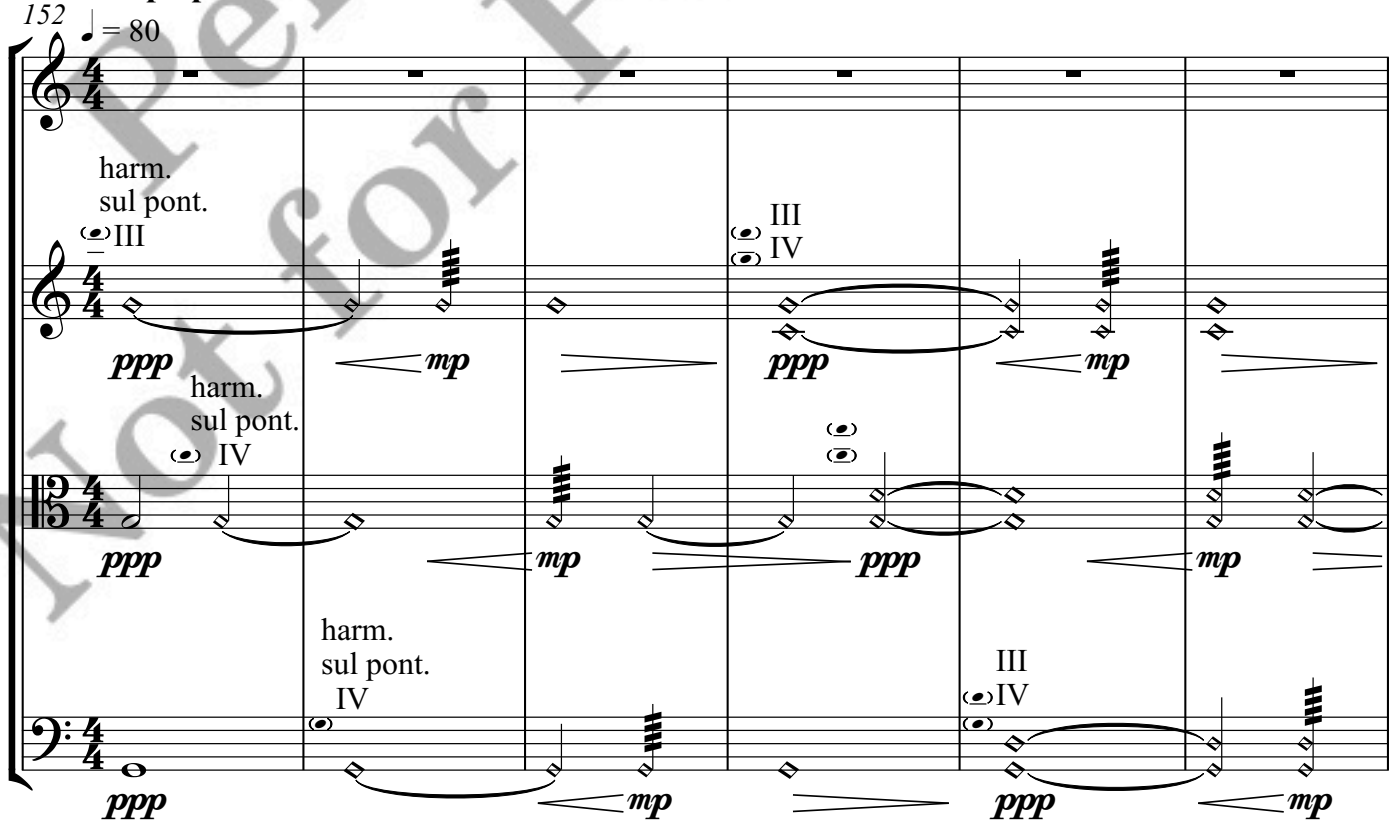


G

Tempo primo



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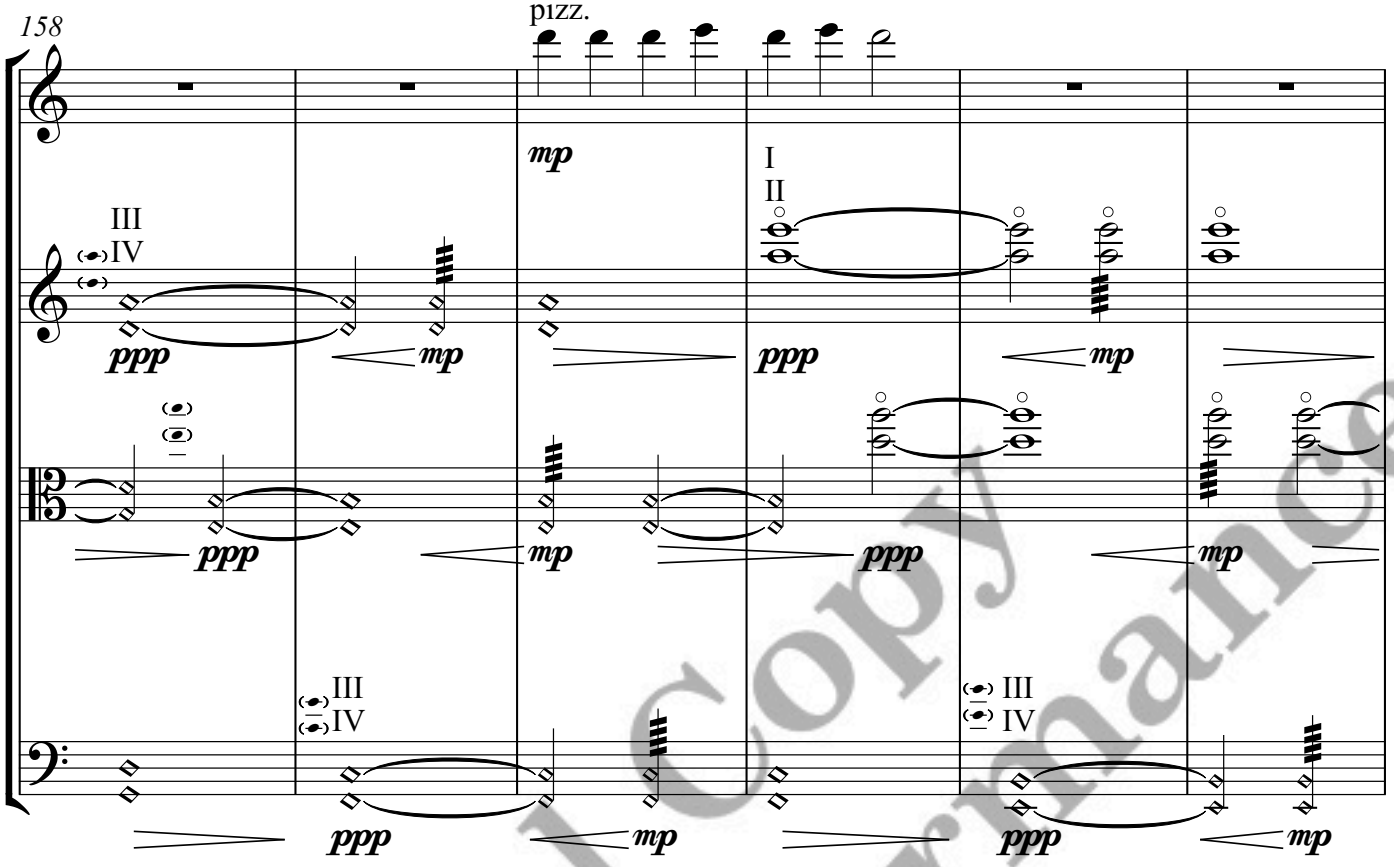
Not for Performance

H

158

pizz.



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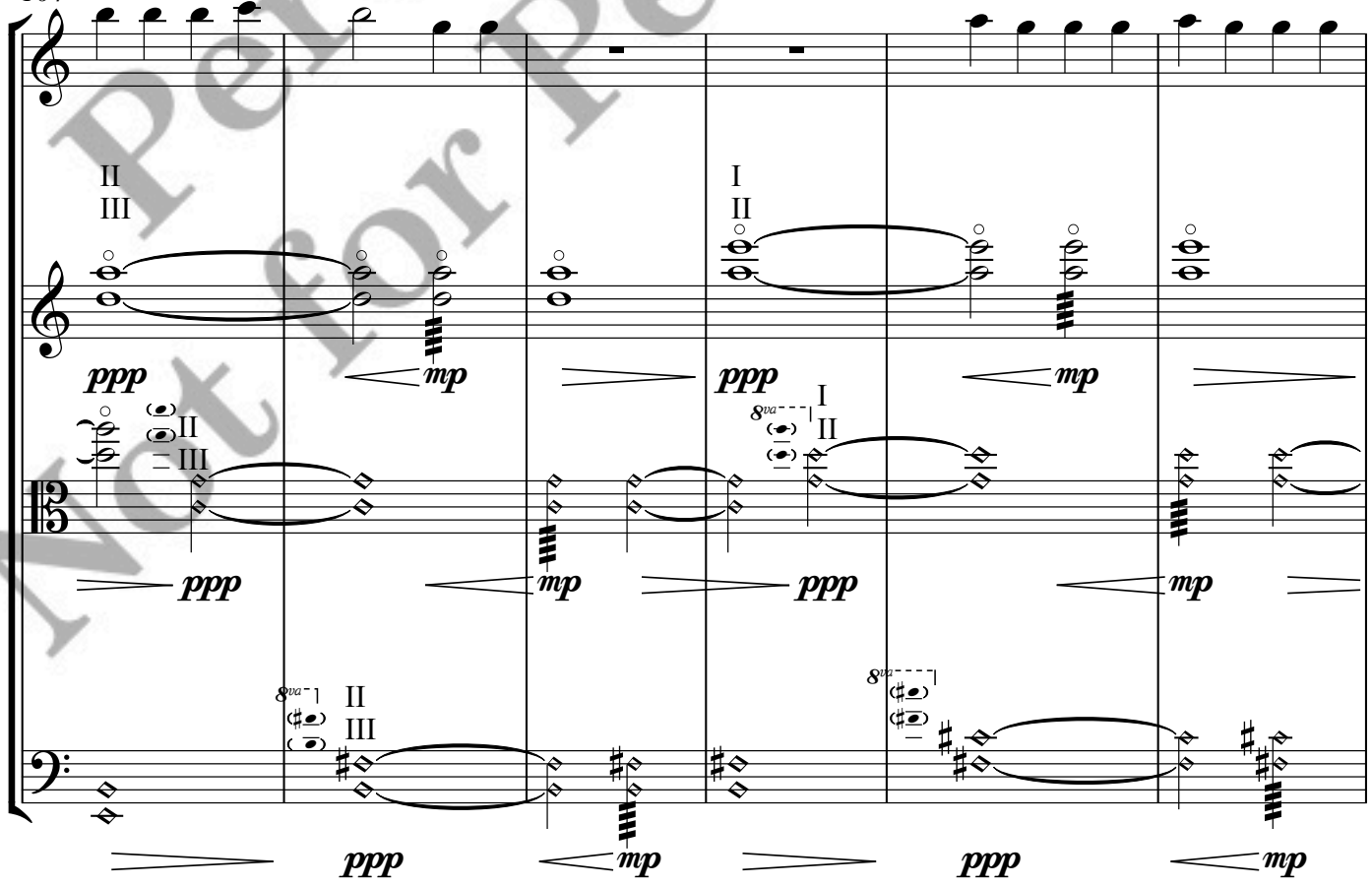

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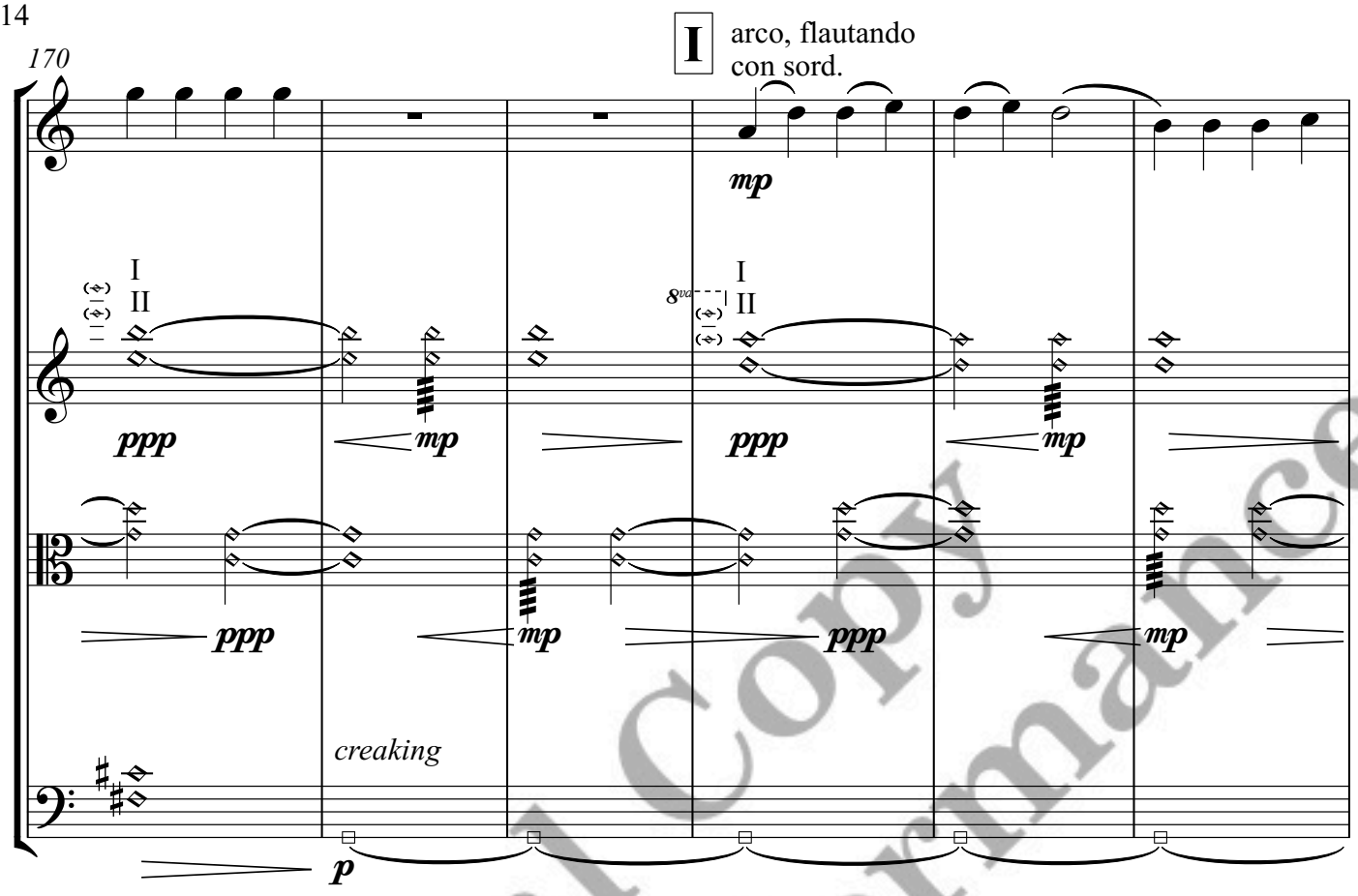
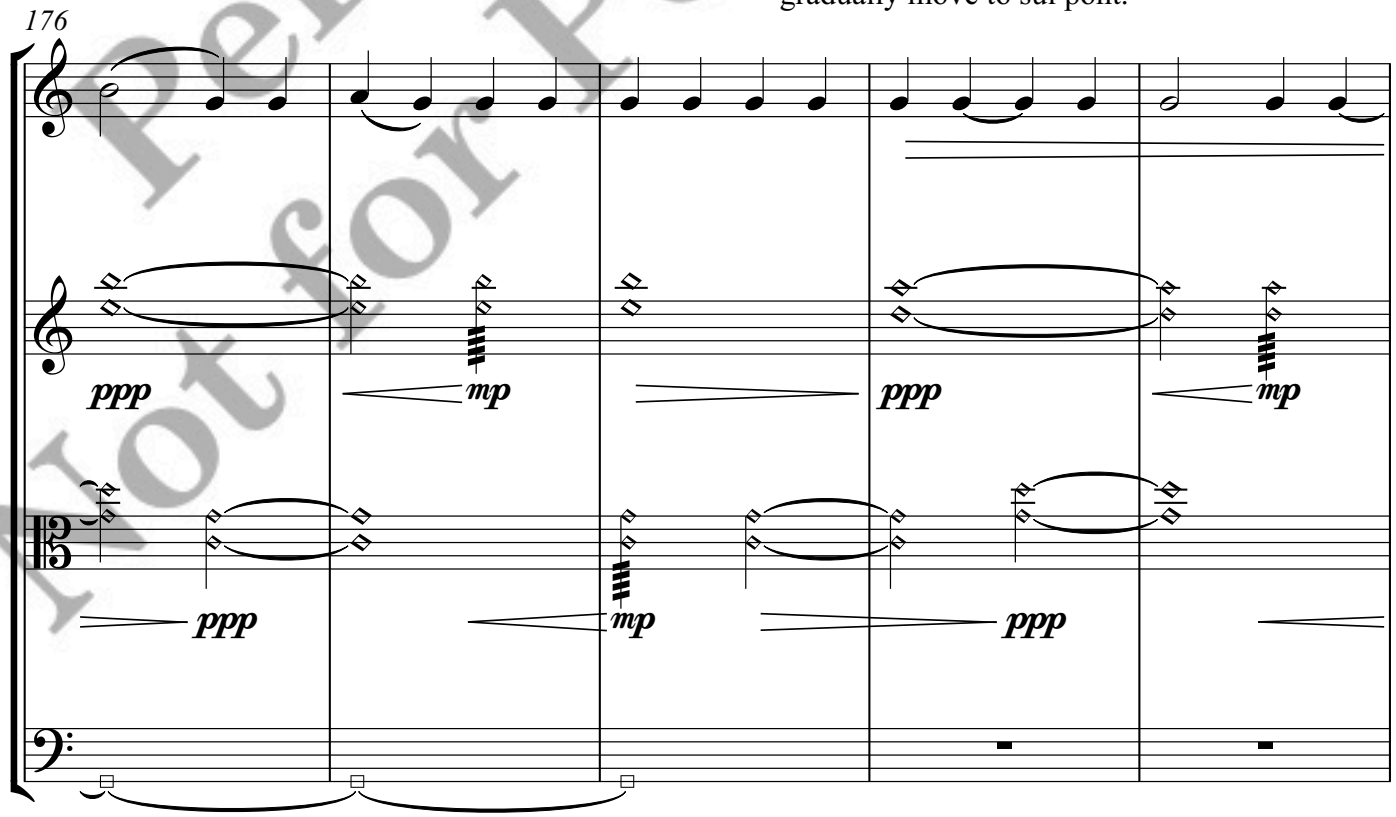


gradually release LH finger pressure until harm.
gradually move to sul pont.



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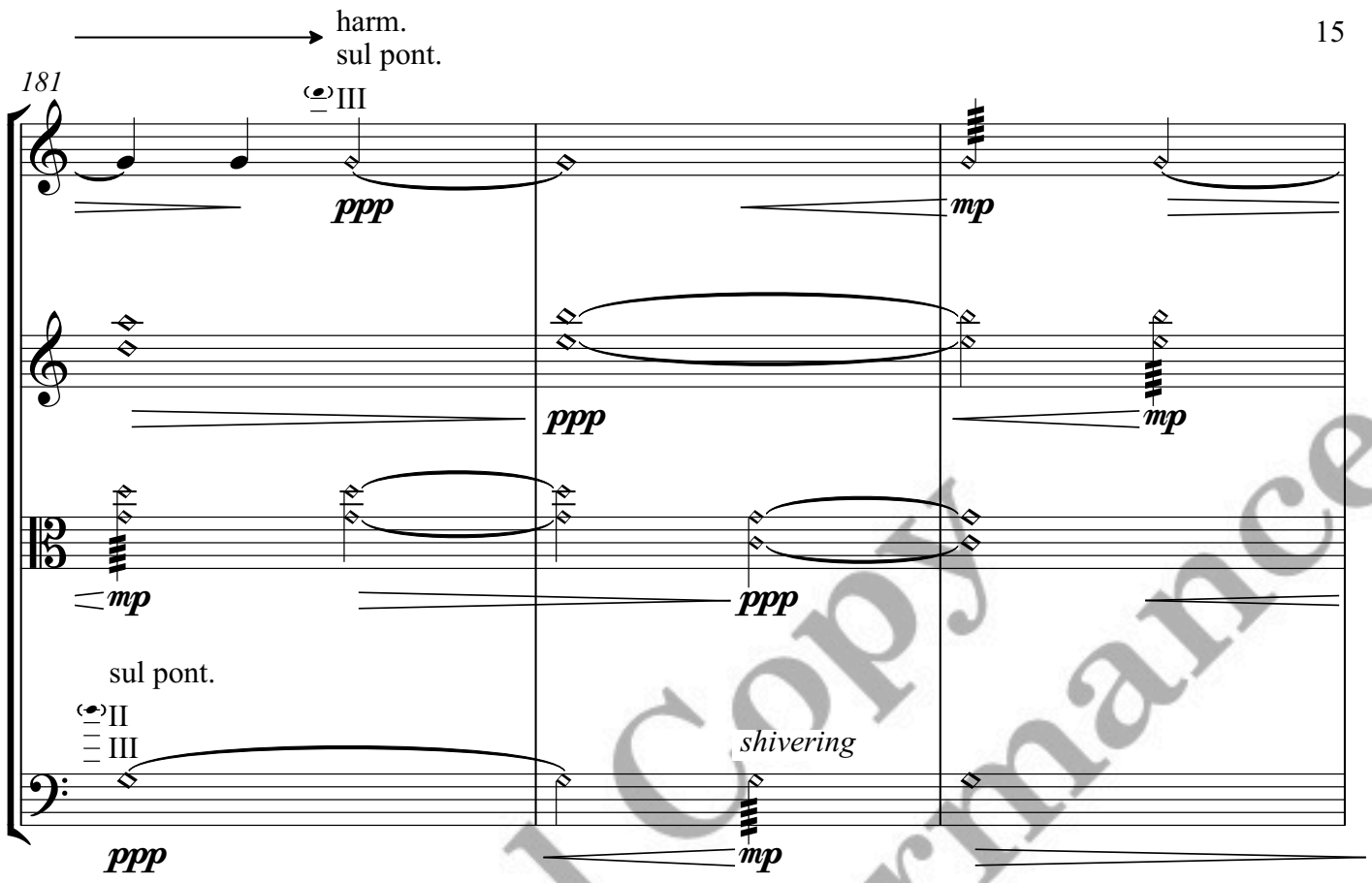

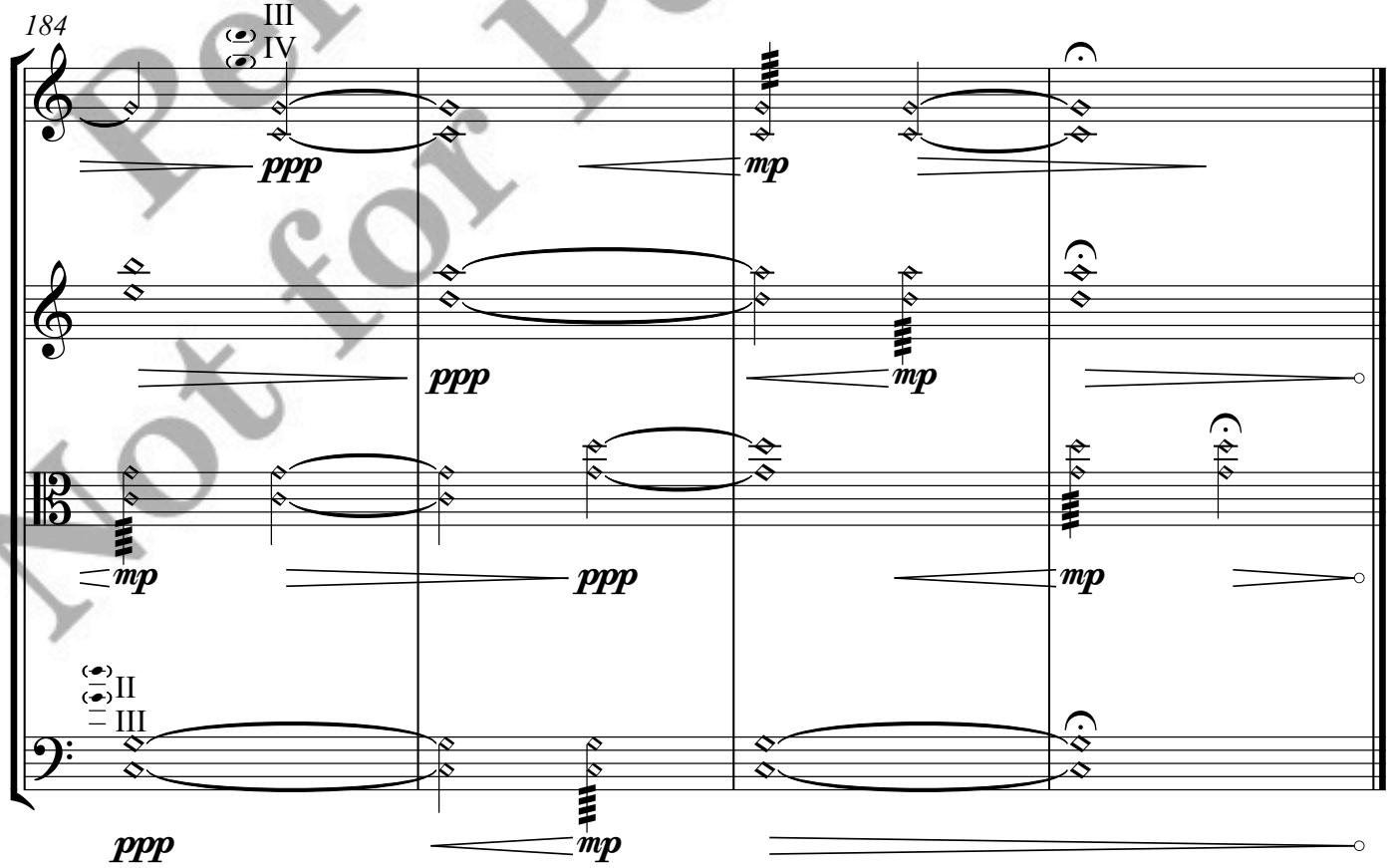

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The Arctic Violin

Violin I

Andante ♩ = 80

SEÁN DOHERTY (b.1987)

sul pont.
con sord.
I

shivering

I
II

ppp *mp* *ppp* *mp*

7

senza sord.

ppp *mp* *ppp* *mp* *ppp*

A

ord.
dolce

15

mp *f*

20

port.

mp *f*

25

p *f*

31

tr

ffp *f* *p* *mp*

36

mf

B **Presto**

39

f *ff*

release LH
finger pressure
harm.

44

p

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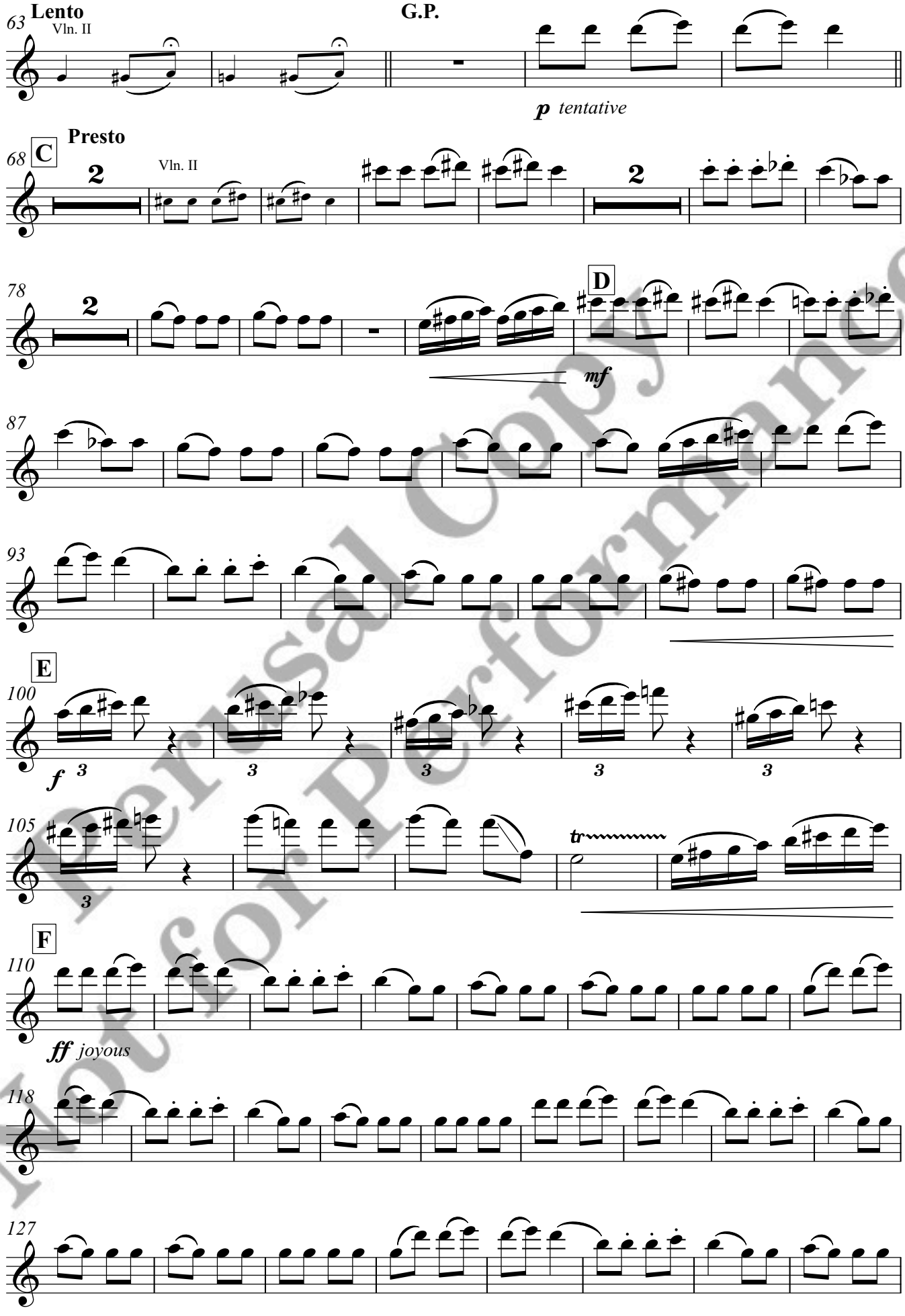

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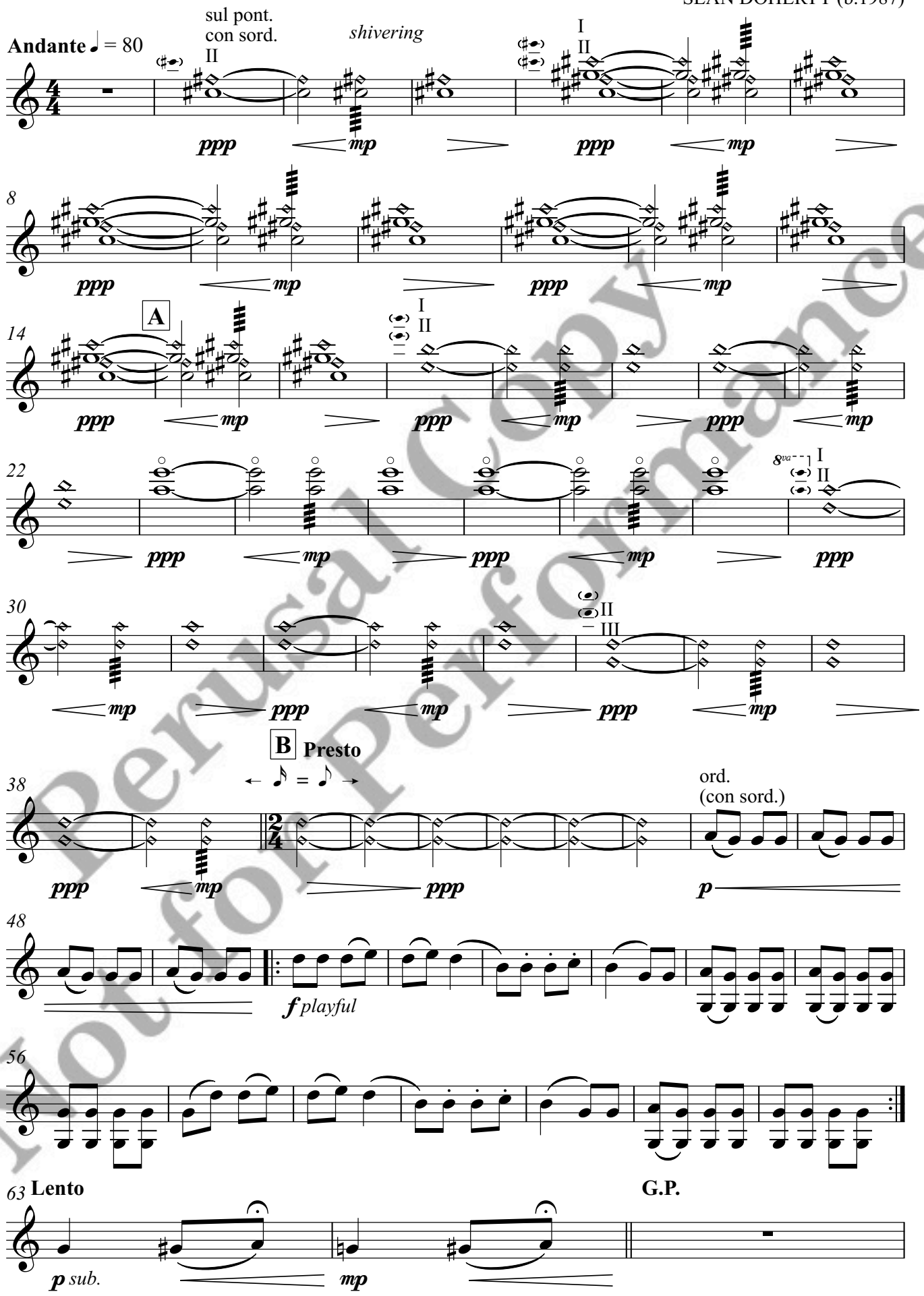
The Arctic Violin

Violin II

SEÁN DOHERTY (b.1987)



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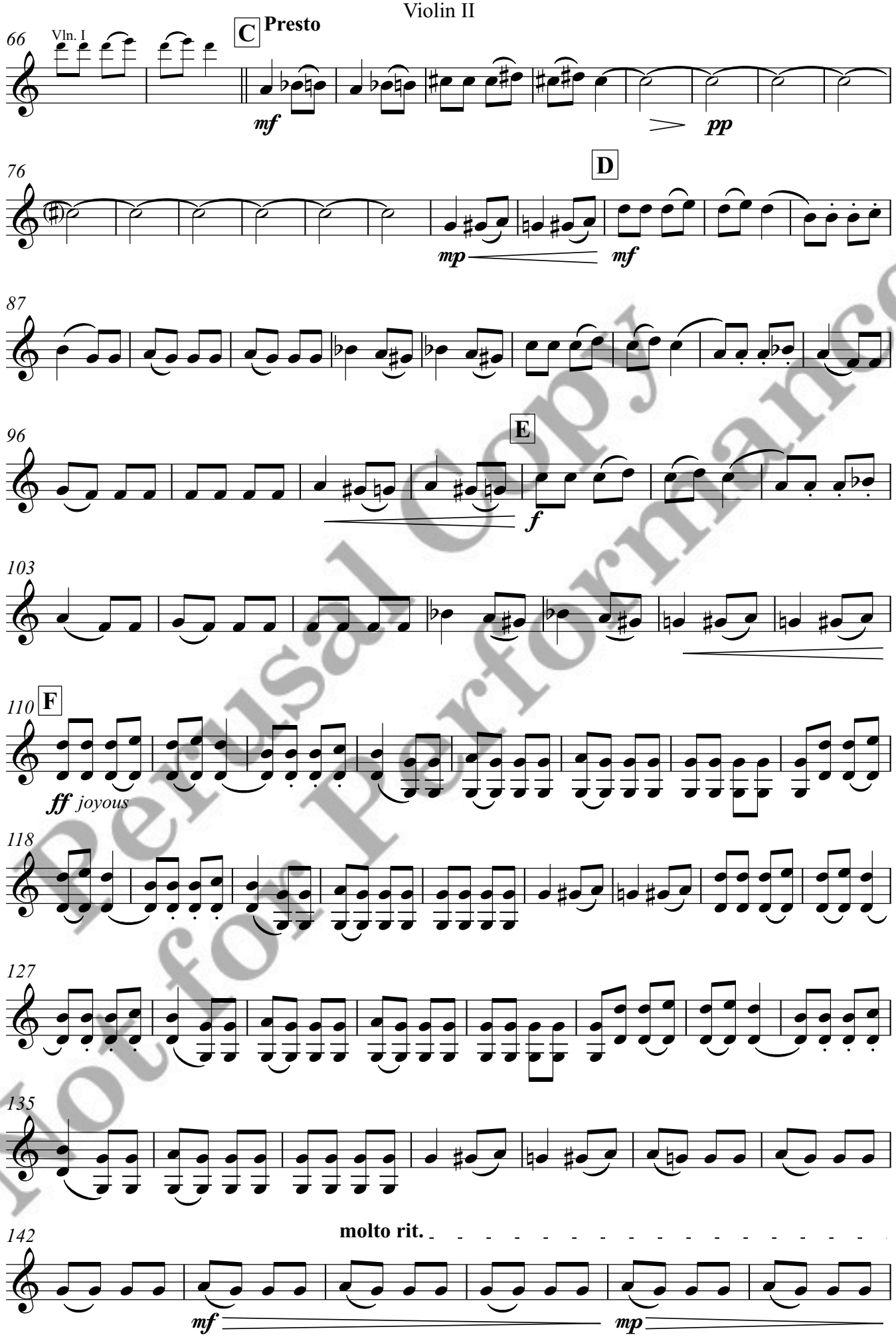

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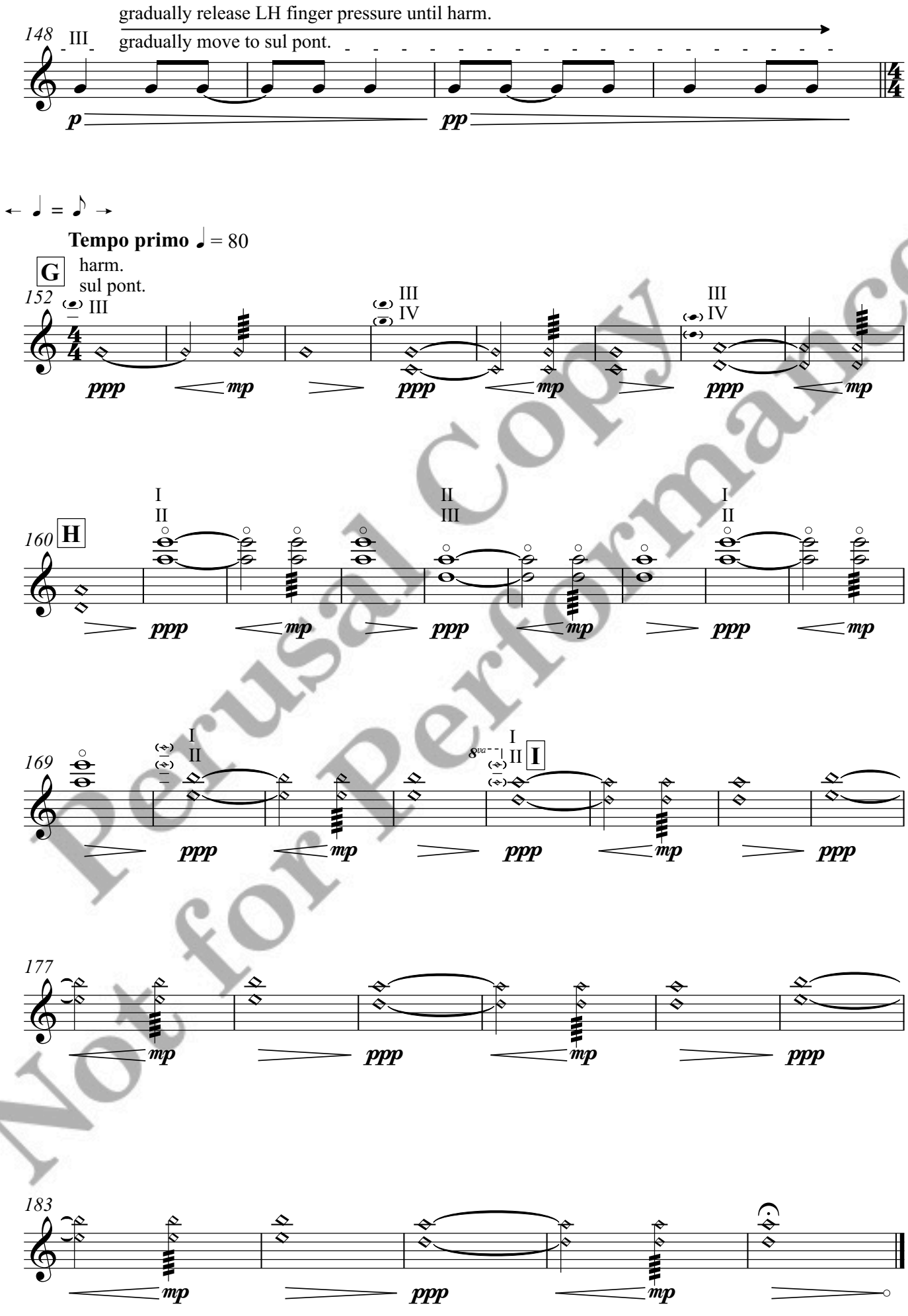

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The Arctic Violin

Viola

♩ = 80

SEÁN DOHERTY (b.1987)

Andante

sul pont.
con sord.

shivering

3

ppp *mp* *ppp*

9

mp *ppp* *mp* *ppp*

15 **A**

II
III

mp *ppp* *mp* *ppp* *mp*

22

II
III

ppp *mp* *ppp* *mp* *ppp*

29

II
III

mp *ppp* *mp*

34

ppp *mp* *ppp*

B **Presto**

← ♪ = ♪ →

ord.
(con sord.)

39

ppp *pp* *p*

47

f playful

55

63 **Lento**

G.P.

p sub. *mp*

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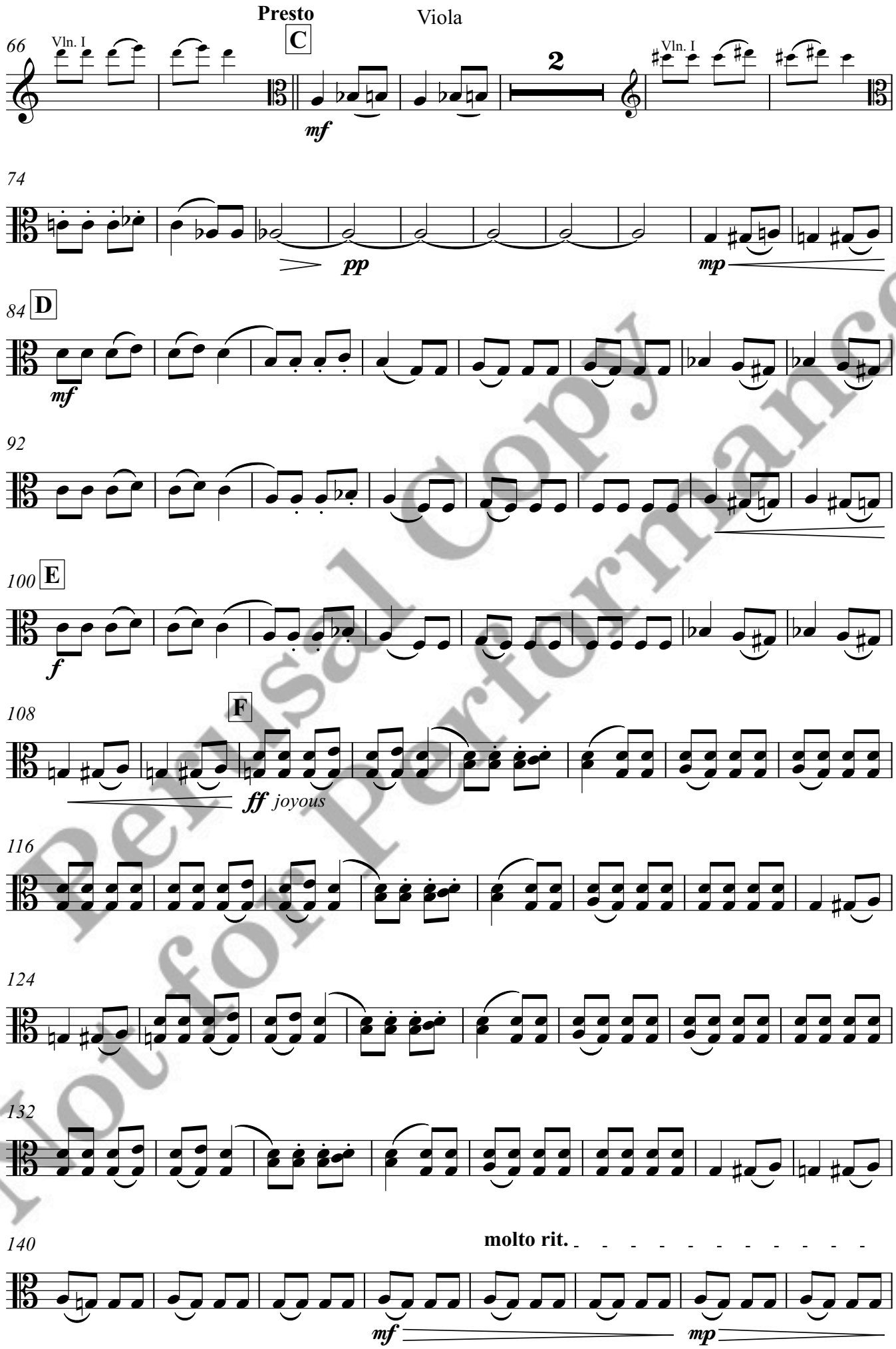

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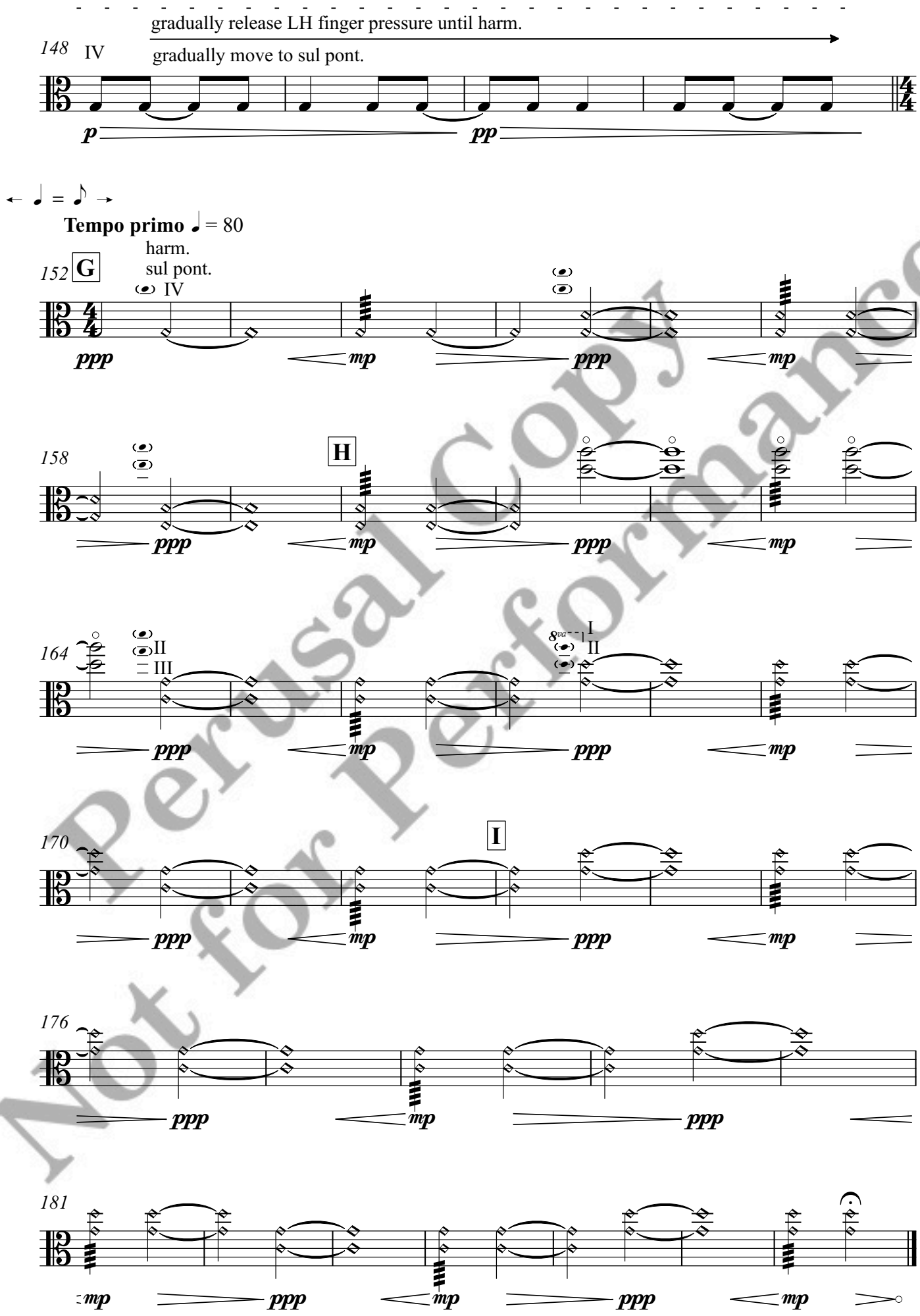

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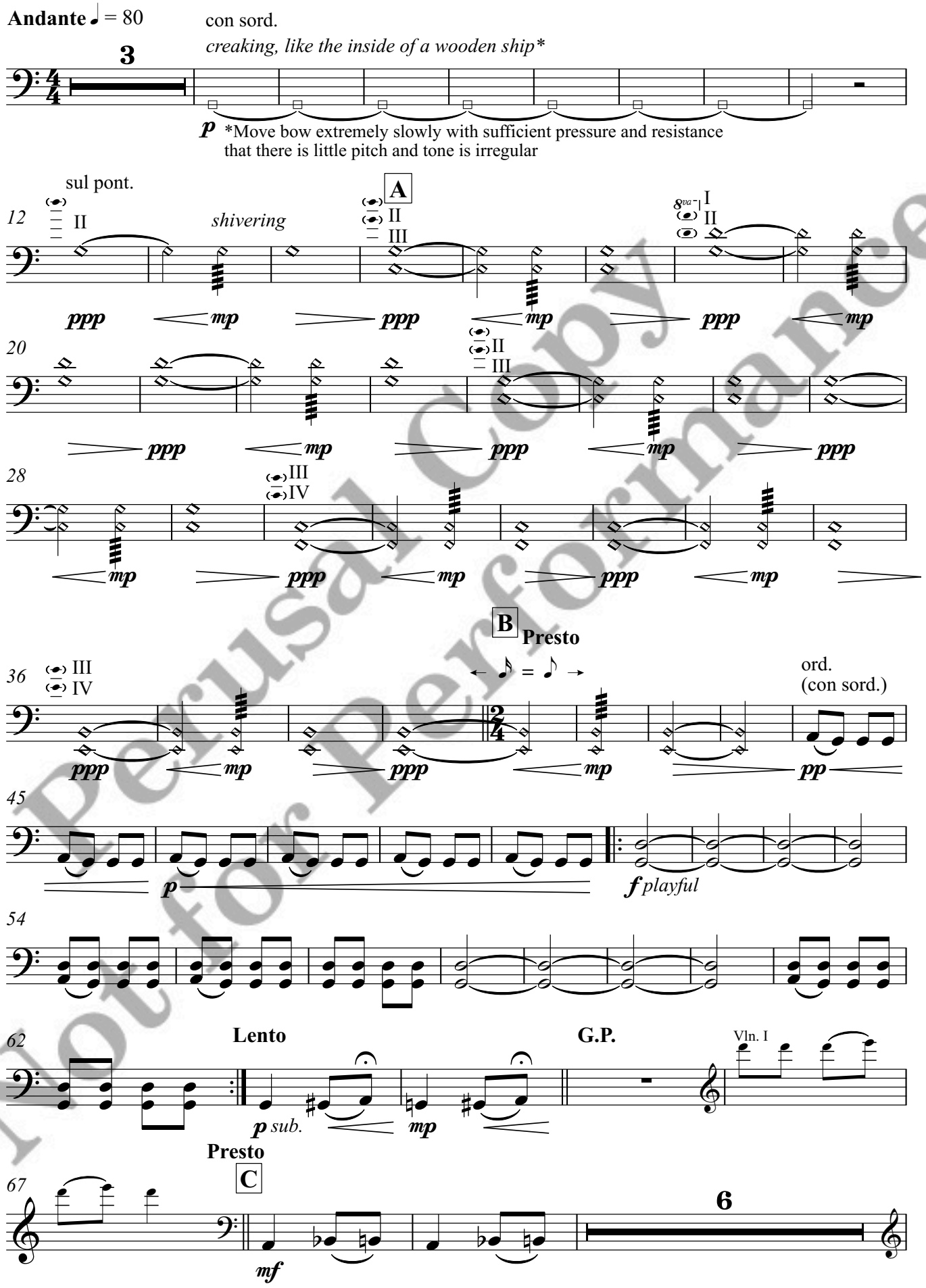
The Arctic Violin

Violoncello

SEÁN DOHERTY (b.1987)



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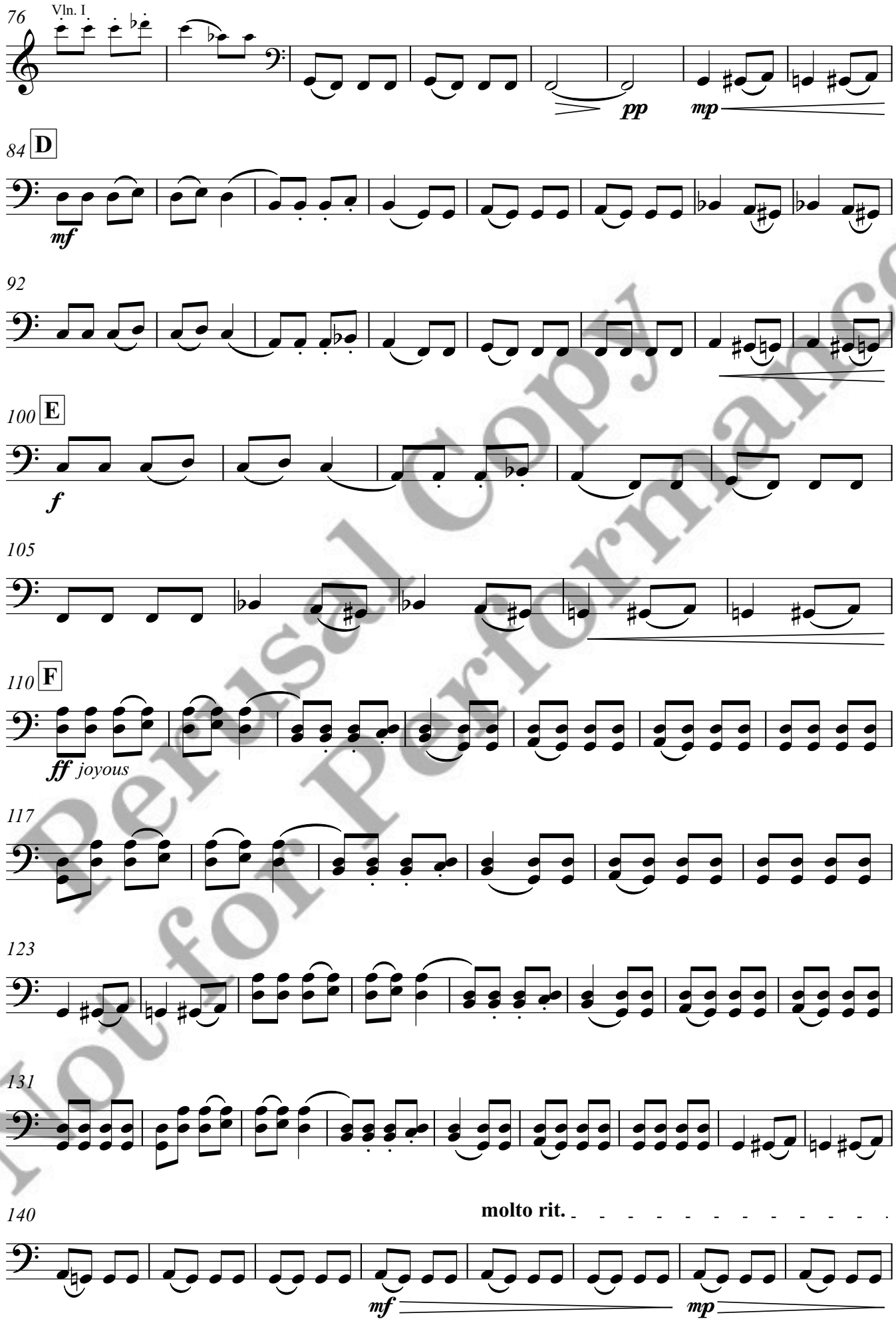

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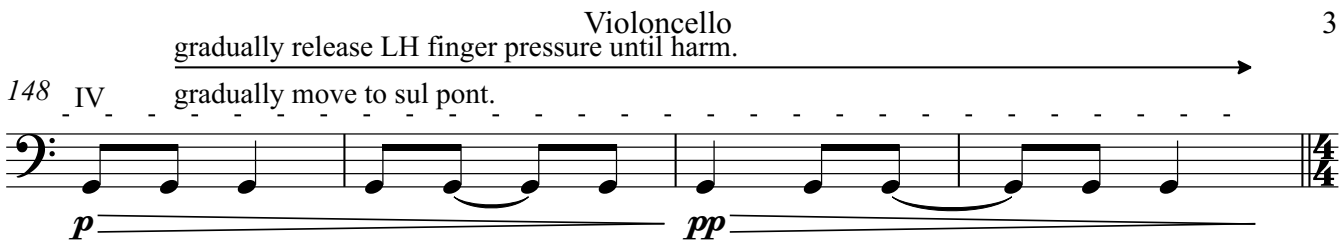

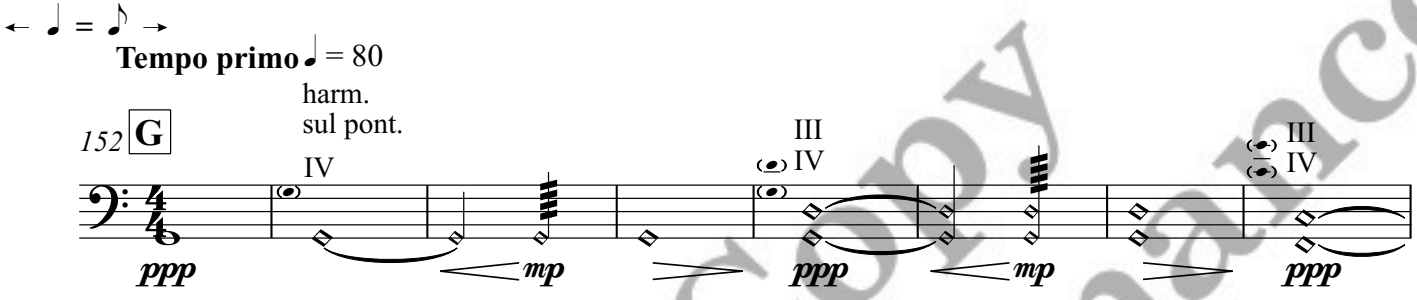

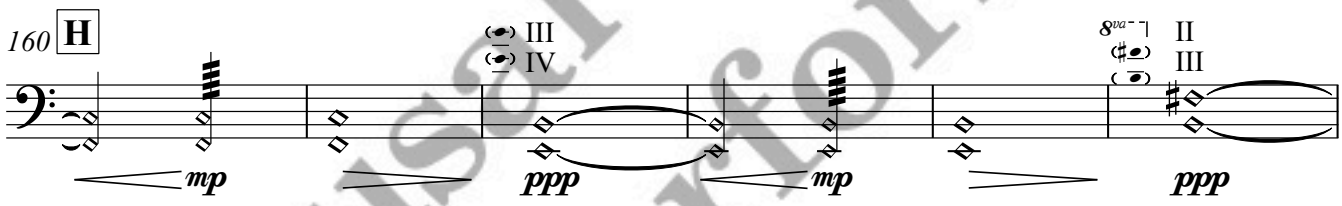

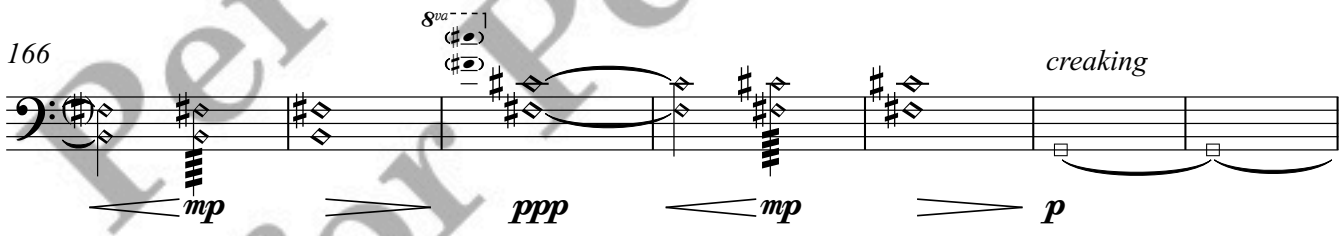

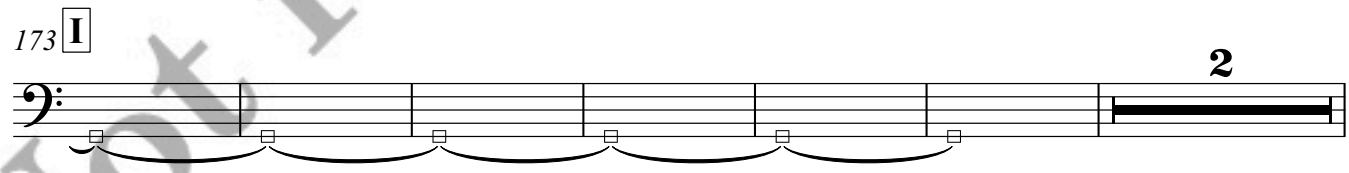

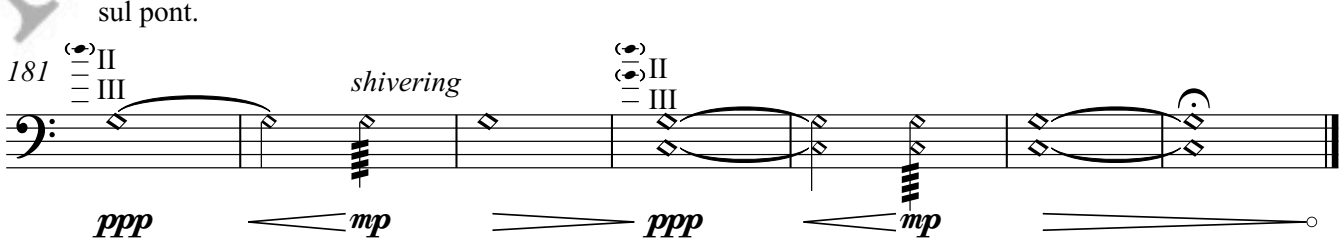

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