Full Score- Transposing

on a smog-engulfed highway

for brass quintet

Excerpted Sample Score

Maya Miro Johnson

2018

Program Notes

I wrote this piece for brass quintet, *on a smog-engulfed highway*, in the winter of 2017/18 in Salt Lake City, Utah, a place known for its sickening air quality compounded in the hibernal months by a natural air pressure system ("the inversion") which traps fumes in the valley for days at a time. In the early stages of writing this piece, an enormous cloud of smog descended upon the city, the likes of which I had never before encountered. Though ultimately disturbing, there was also a certain delicate beauty in the blue-gray stasis which the smog possessed. On this December day, the valley was entirely enmeshed in its inescapable presence; it embraced the highways and the towers and the people and the cars. The very air had a palpably altered, thicker, heavier, soggier quality. However, what struck me most about this *dies irae,* if you will, was that the citizens of Salt Lake (myself included) went about their business with an astounding level of normalcy, despite the dismal menace that had descended upon their city.

With these observations as my basis, I developed a structure centered on a series of thick, disquieting pitch collections disintegrating and congealing through different extended techniques. The jagged skeleton of the piece is intertwined with hints of chaotic, particulate material in both contemplative and emboldened forms. The brash, guttural, didgeridoo-like material you hear at the beginning and the cyclic chords of the ending serve as bookends to a vague, unsettling dream.

I encourage the listener to think about the use- the human use- of air: how we take it for granted, how we manipulate it, how we change it, how we destroy it, how we harness it, how we purify it, how we defile it. The potential of the brass family to convey this concept is limitless. I enjoyed working within an instrumentation that was new to me, and with the players who brought the work to life and gave it breath. As they will show you in the piece, there is a precious allotment of breath we all receive in life. Let's not waste it.

-Maya Miro Johnson
April 4th, 2018

Excerpted sample score

Performance Notes

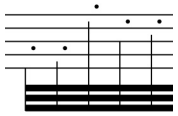
breath attack, mostly air; a subdued yet clear "thhp" sound

breath attack, mostly pitch; still with the same attack, but now with more definite pitch

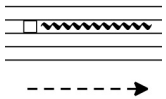
air tone, both with rhythmic duration and without; produced by blowing air through the instrument; should be thick and controlled

flutter tongue, often with continuous hairpin crescendi/diminuendi

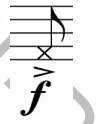
multiphonic; the upper diamond note is sung at equivalent or slightly louder volume to the lower drone



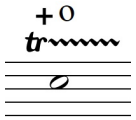
key clicks, ad libitum; rapid and in different characters



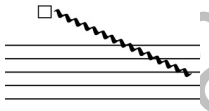
either whispering indistinctly into the mouthpiece or buzzing into the mouthpiece of the tuba, removed and placed against the bell. Notated with verbal instruction to continue ad libitum until arrow stops



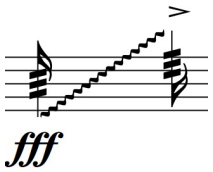
mouthpiece slap (tuba only); a heavy, wet sound produced by hitting the mouthpiece with the palm of the hand, causing suction



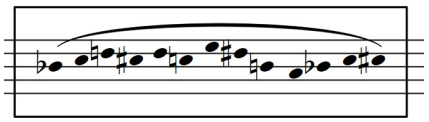
a trill between open and stopped hand position (trumpets and horn); this may be executed at a medium tempo



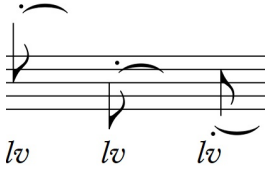
slowly releasing air while trilling at half valve



a chaotic glissando upward to an indefinite pitch with the lips, broken by flutter tongue



any note from within the box may be repeated; imprecise and buzzing; the player may execute essentially as a rapid, alternating glissando



remove the mouthpiece or other accessible hardware and gently tap the instrument, preferably at three distinct frequencies (high, medium, and low); alternately, simple and resonant percussion such as hand bells or singing bowls may be used

Excerpted Sample Score

Instrumentation:
1st Trumpet in Bb
2nd Trumpet in Bb
Horn in F
Trombone
Tuba

Duration: ca. 10'
Commissioned by Luna Composition Lab and Face the Music

Premiered June 4th and 6th, 2018, at Roulette and National Sawdust in Brooklyn, New York, performed by student musicians of Face the Music:

Austin Celestin & Graeme Buehrer, trumpets
Nick Filanovsky, horn
Owen Carter, trombone
Thatcher Pitkoff, tuba

Maya Miro Johnson, conductor

Excerpted Sample Score

N.B.

The players may choose to perform this piece with conductor or unconducted, depending on their comfortability with playing off a full score.

That said, the piece's relationship to time is defined in three distinct ways:
1. Traditional meters that are completely in tempo, as notated.
2. Large numbers representing a less strict but still defined sense of meter (if conducted, these measures would be shown in clear patterns at 60 BPM).
3. Timings suggested in seconds. These measures are gestural and function in reaction to sonic provocations rather than within a beat hierarchy. However, please be careful to maintain flow and line in these sections, which can easily become hesitant or jagged.

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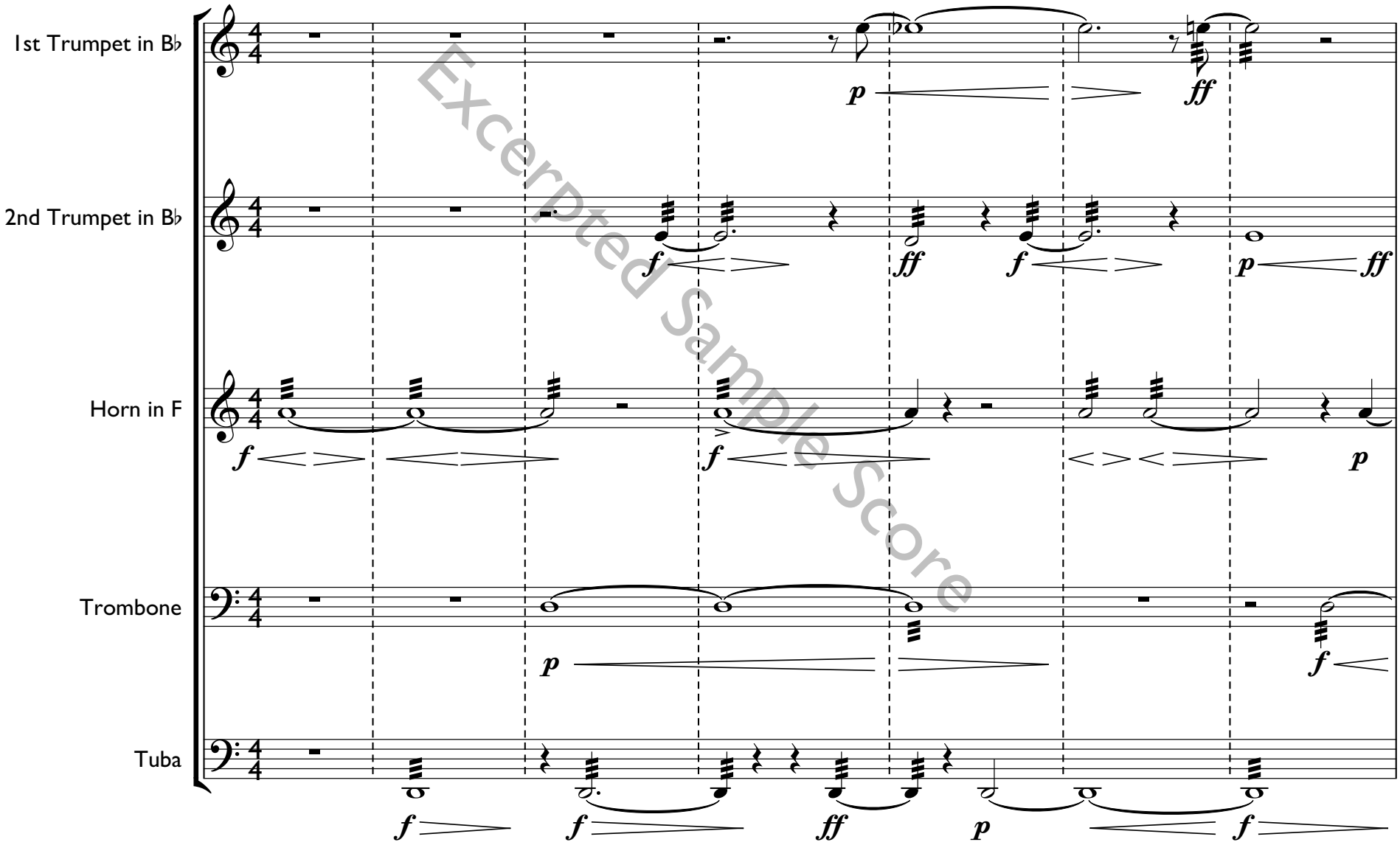
For brass quintet

Maya Miro Johnson
2018

Guttural
♩=86 (+/-)



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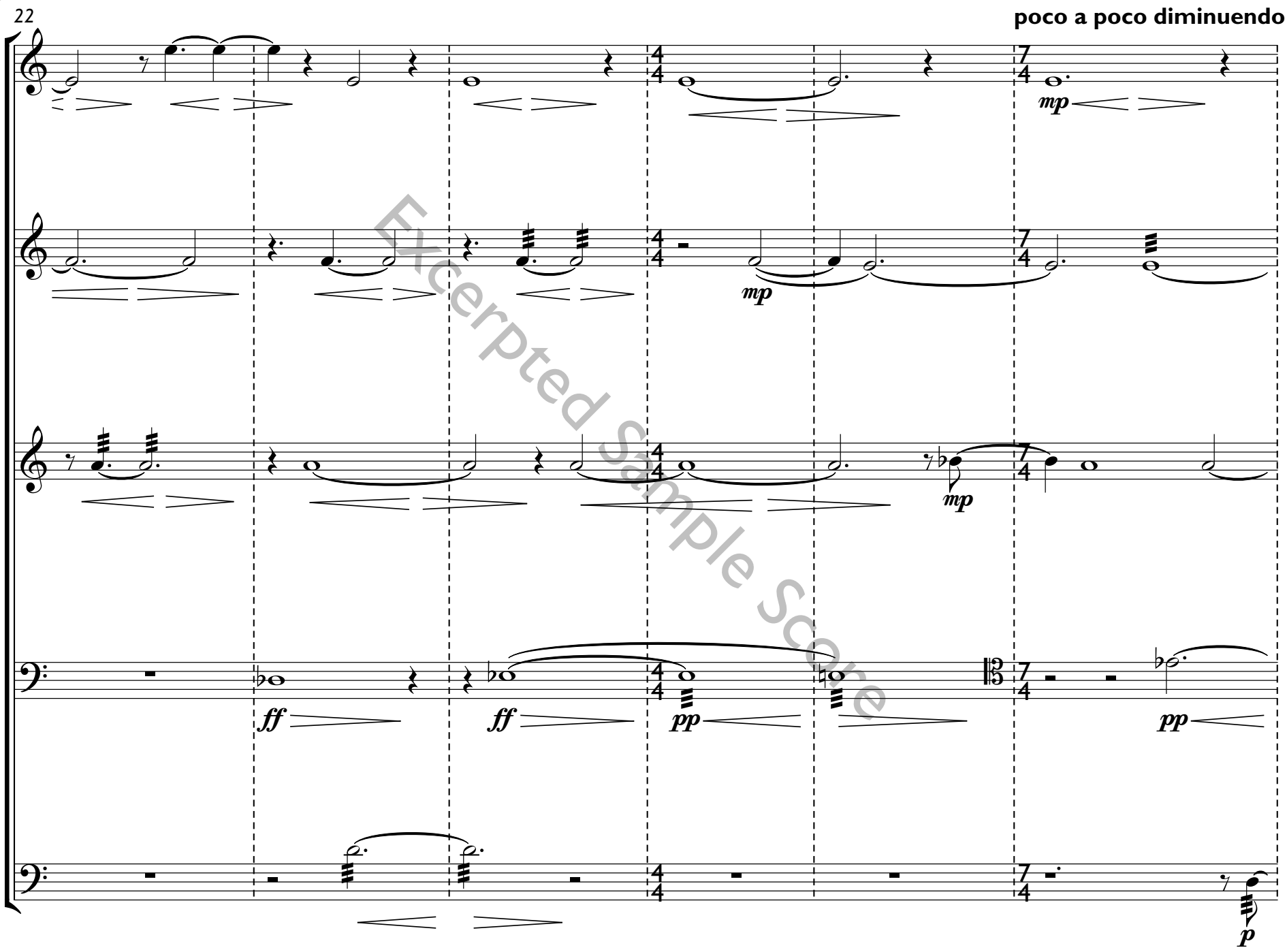

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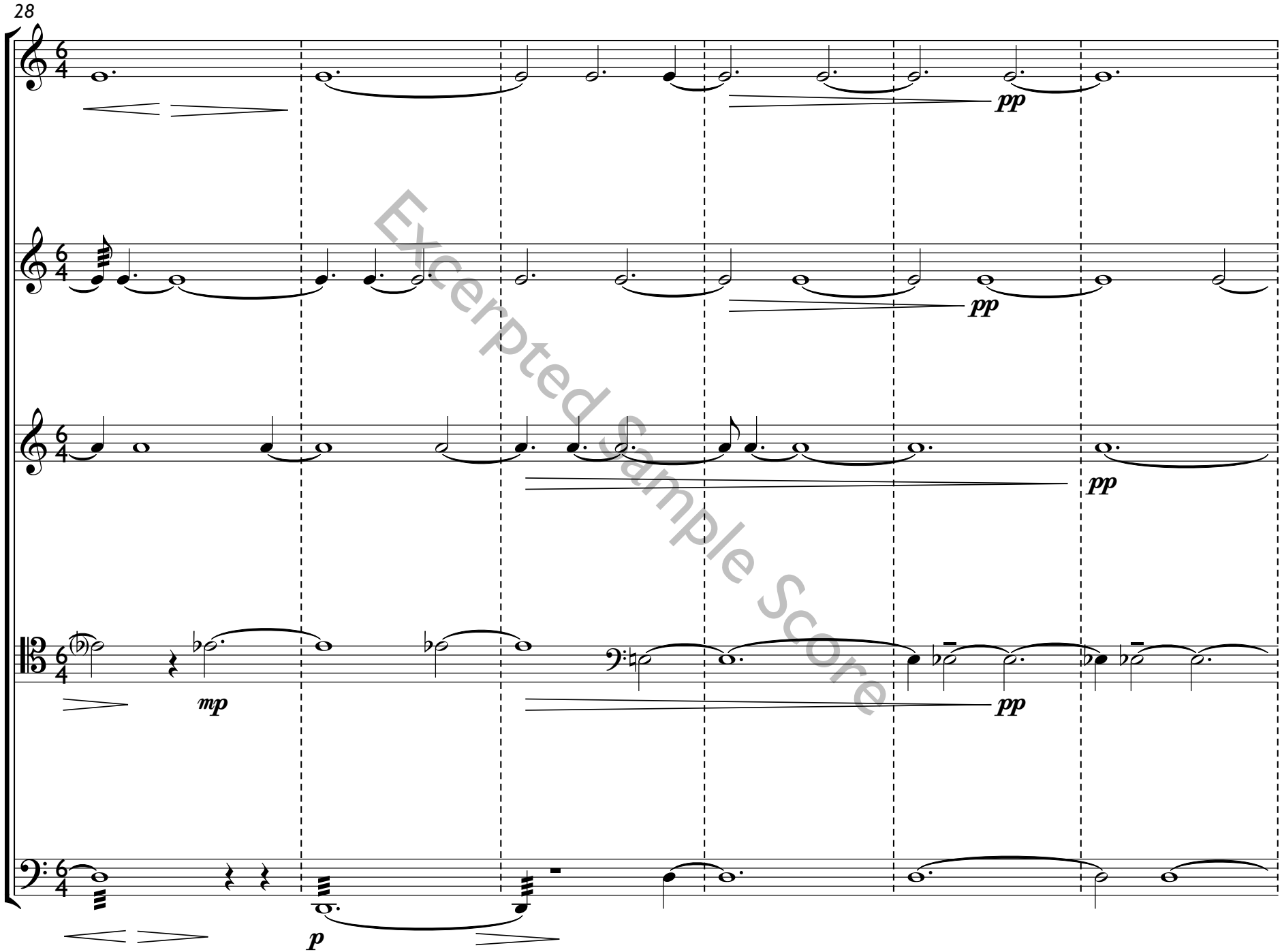

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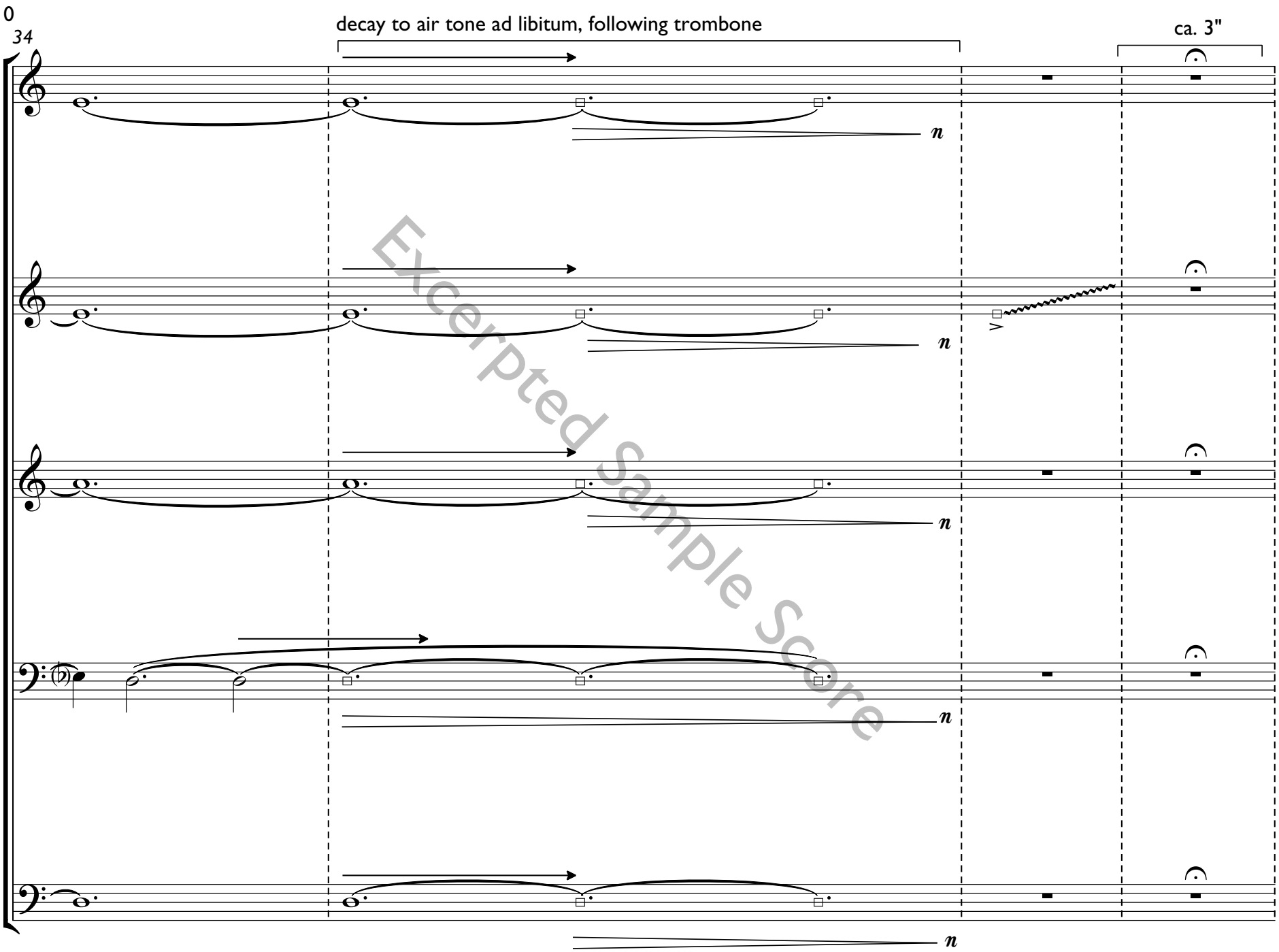

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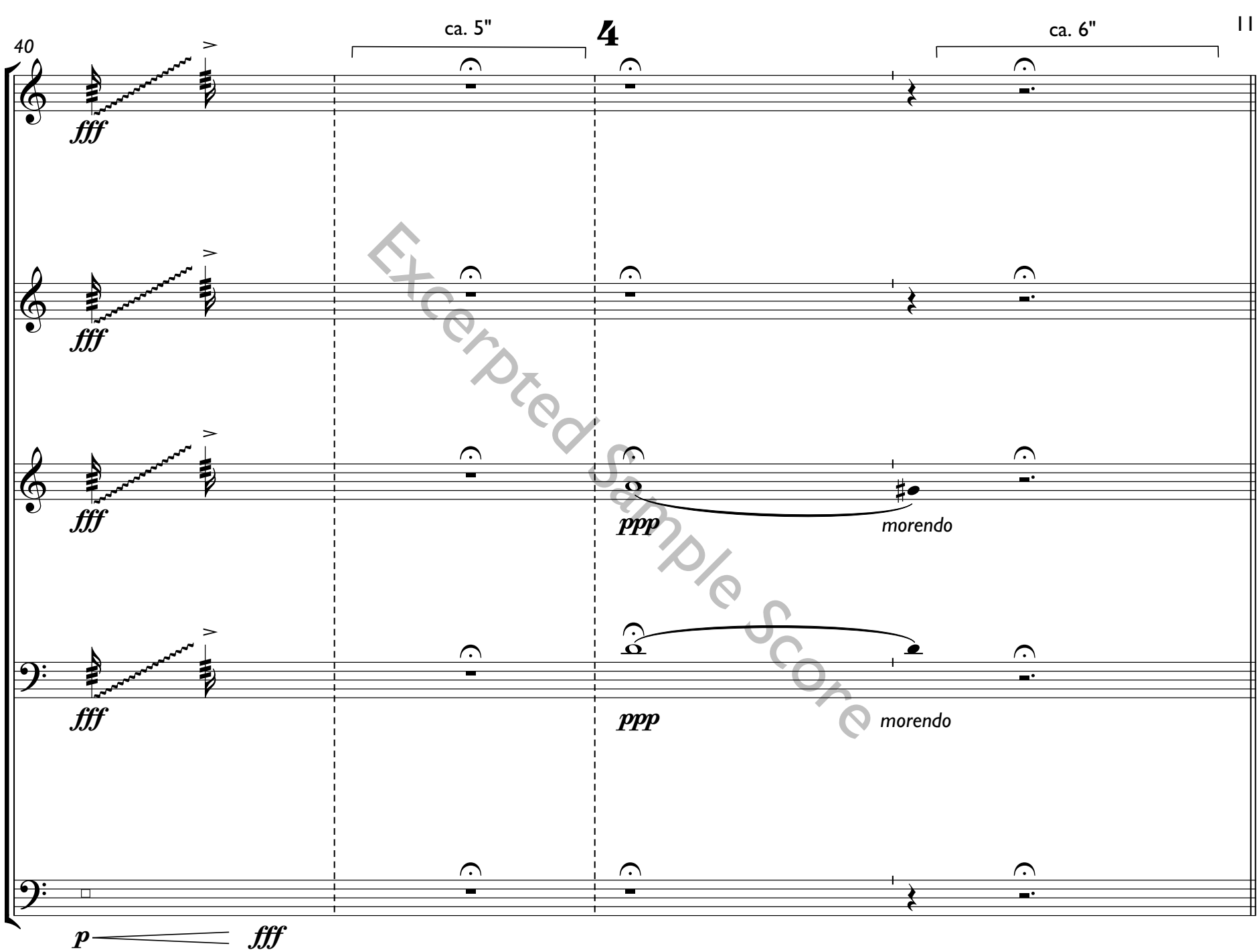
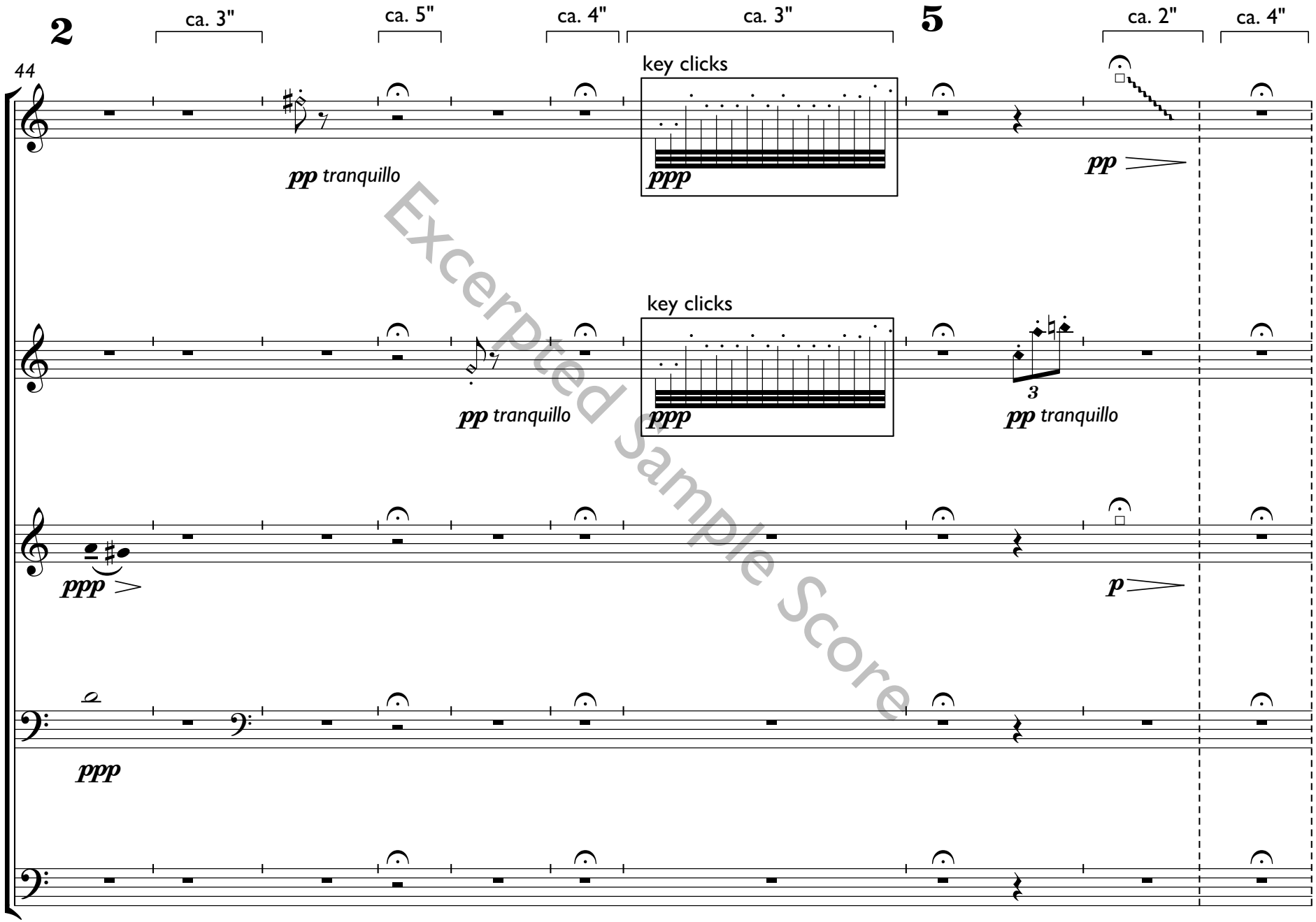


Excerpted Sample Score

B **subdued and out of time: events develop slowly and with resonance**
♩=60 for all conducted measures



Excerpted Sample Score

Excerpted Sample Score

E

73

4 **2** ca. 4" **3**

f *sf* *f* *pp* as an echo

f *sf* *f* *pp* as an echo

pp *sf* *f*

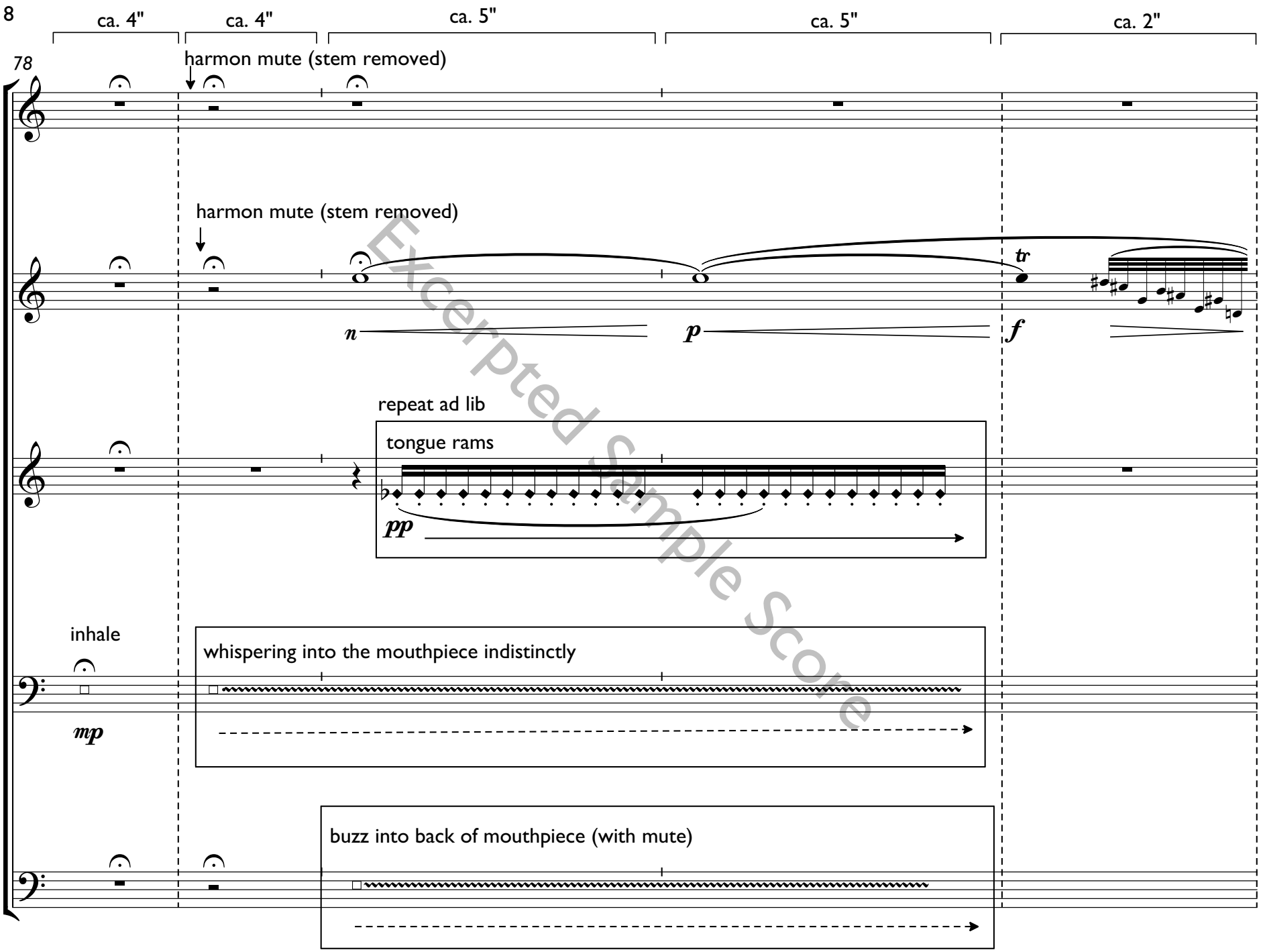
pp *sf* *f*

repeat ad lib

tongue rams, thick and dull

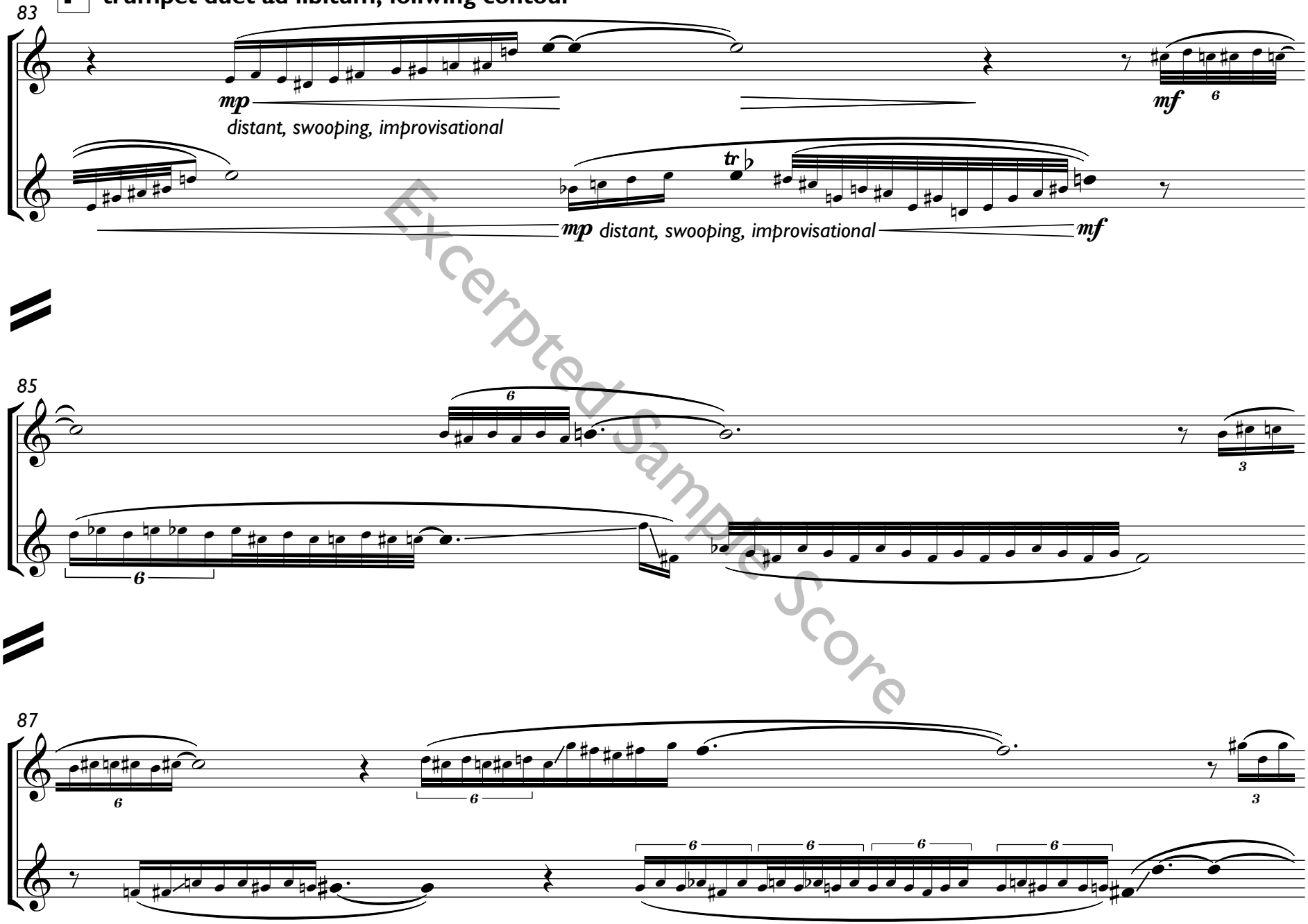
p

Excerpted sample score



Excerpted sample score

F **trumpet duet ad libitum, follwing contour**



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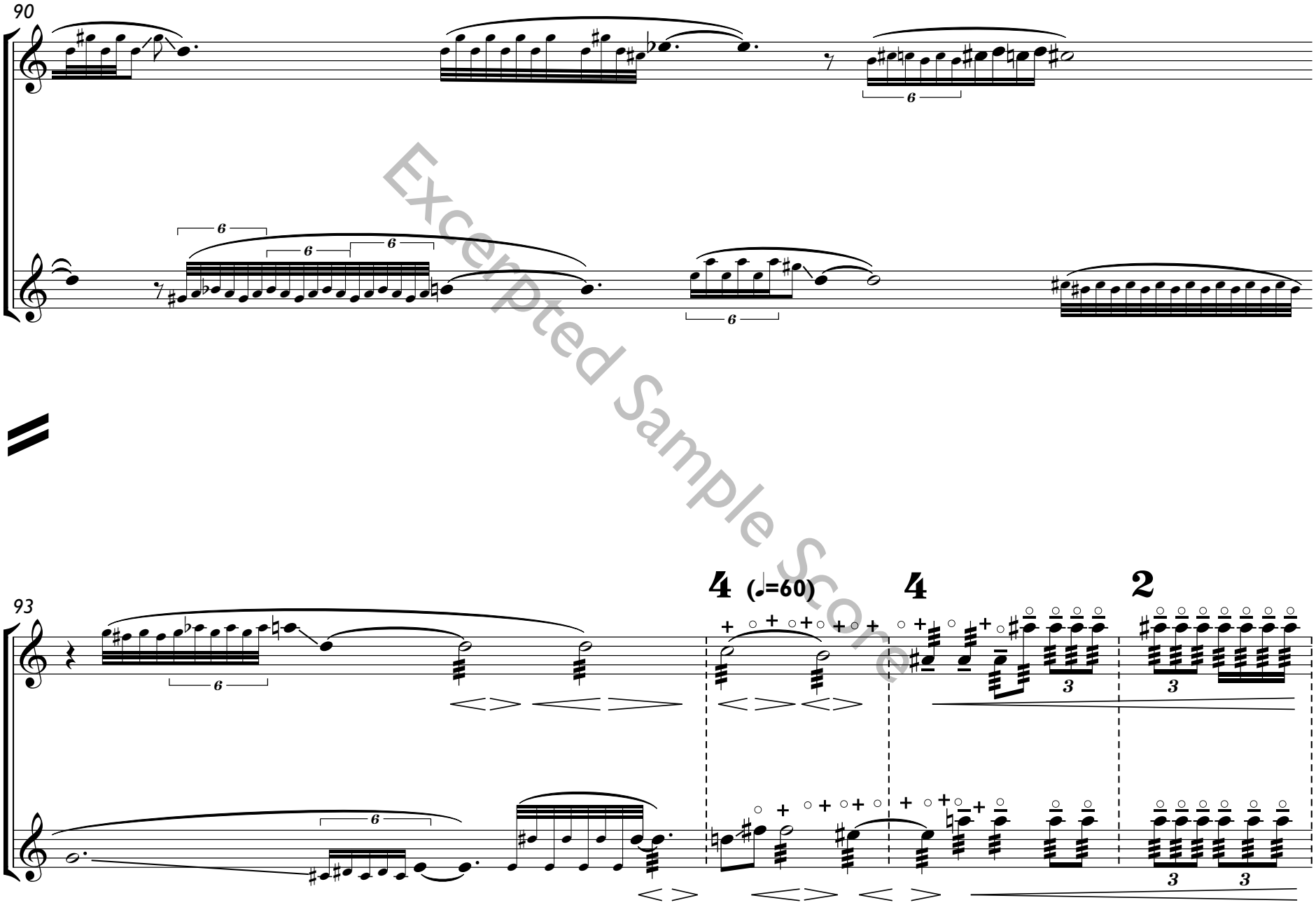

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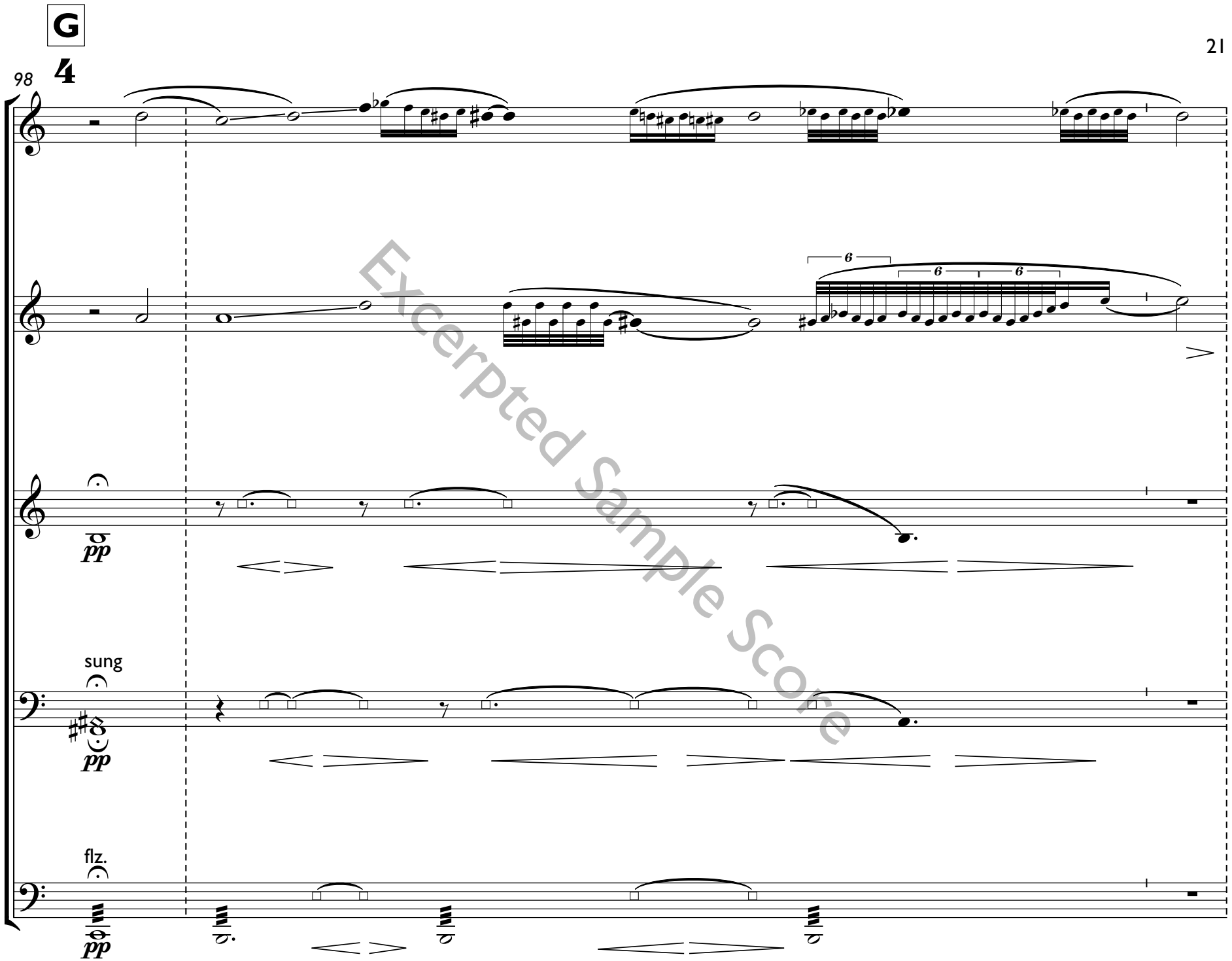

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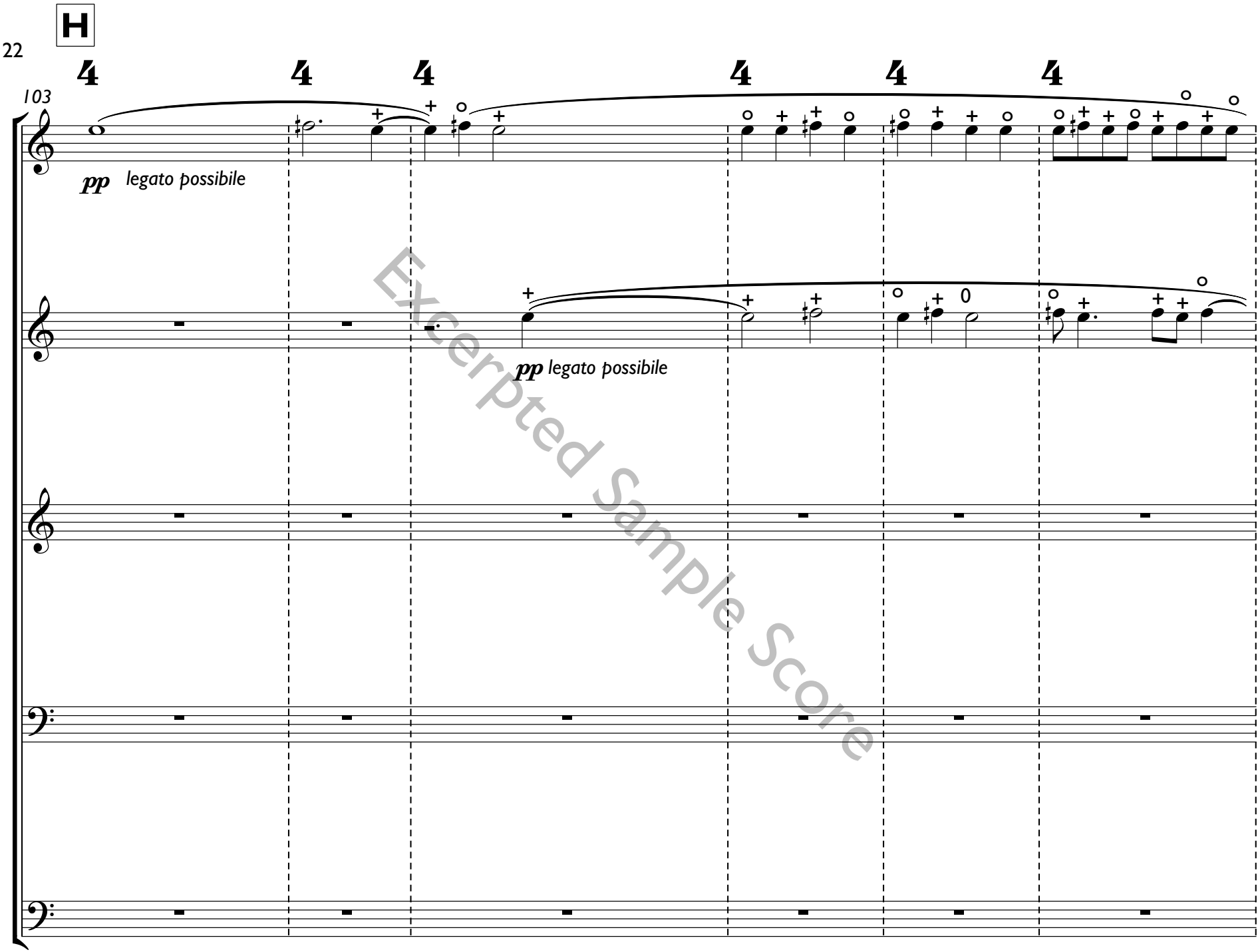
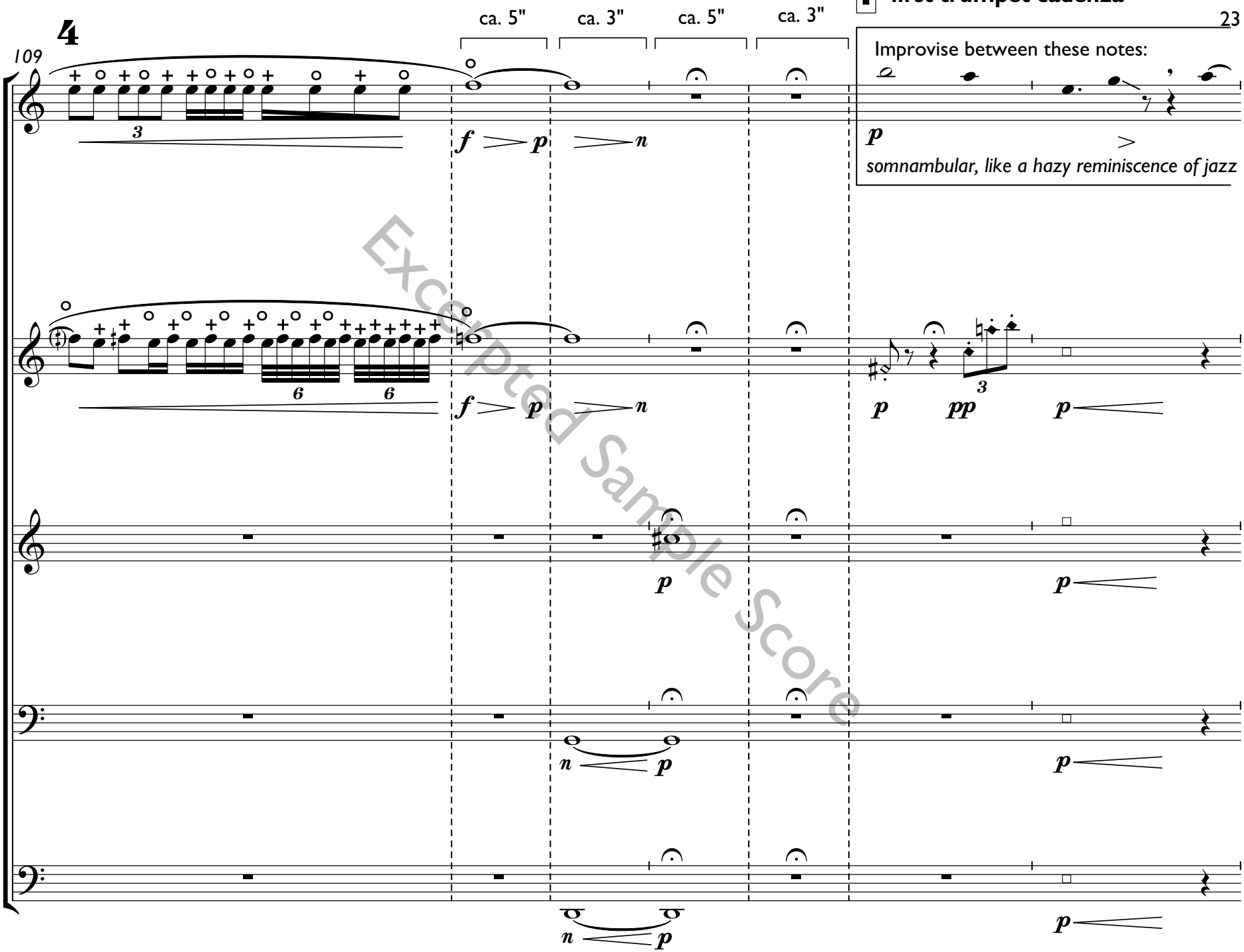


Excerpted Sample Score

I first trumpet cadenza



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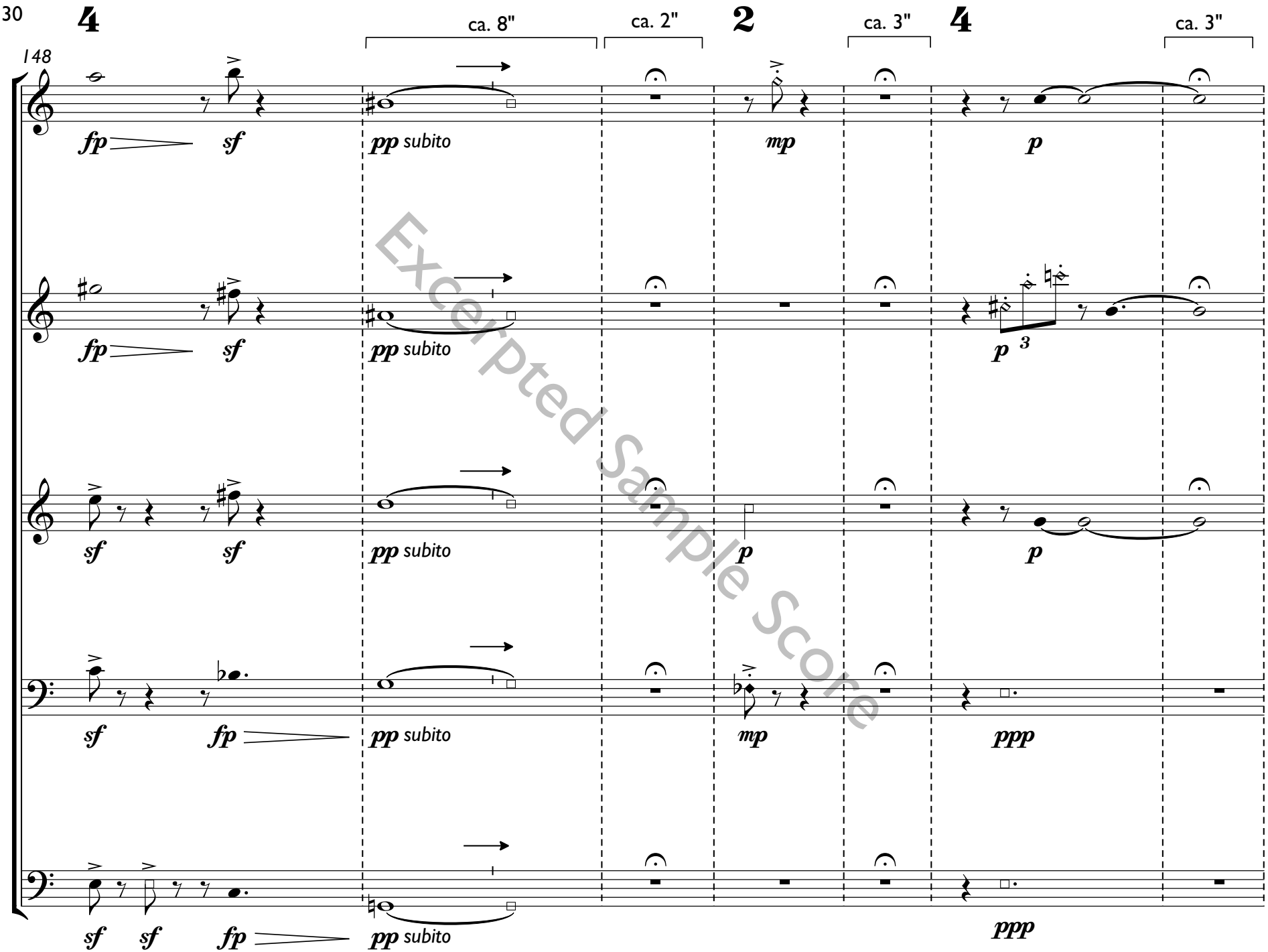

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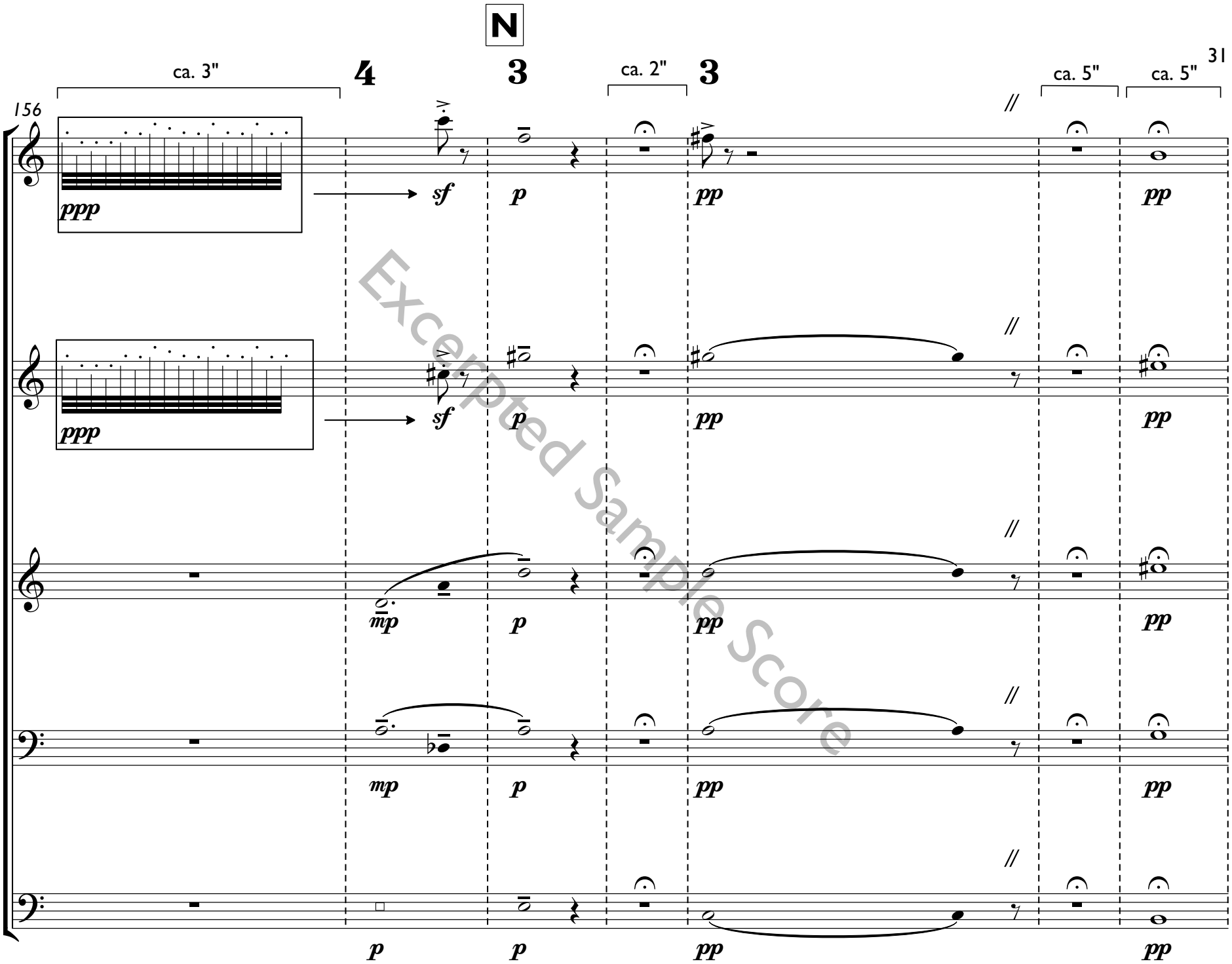
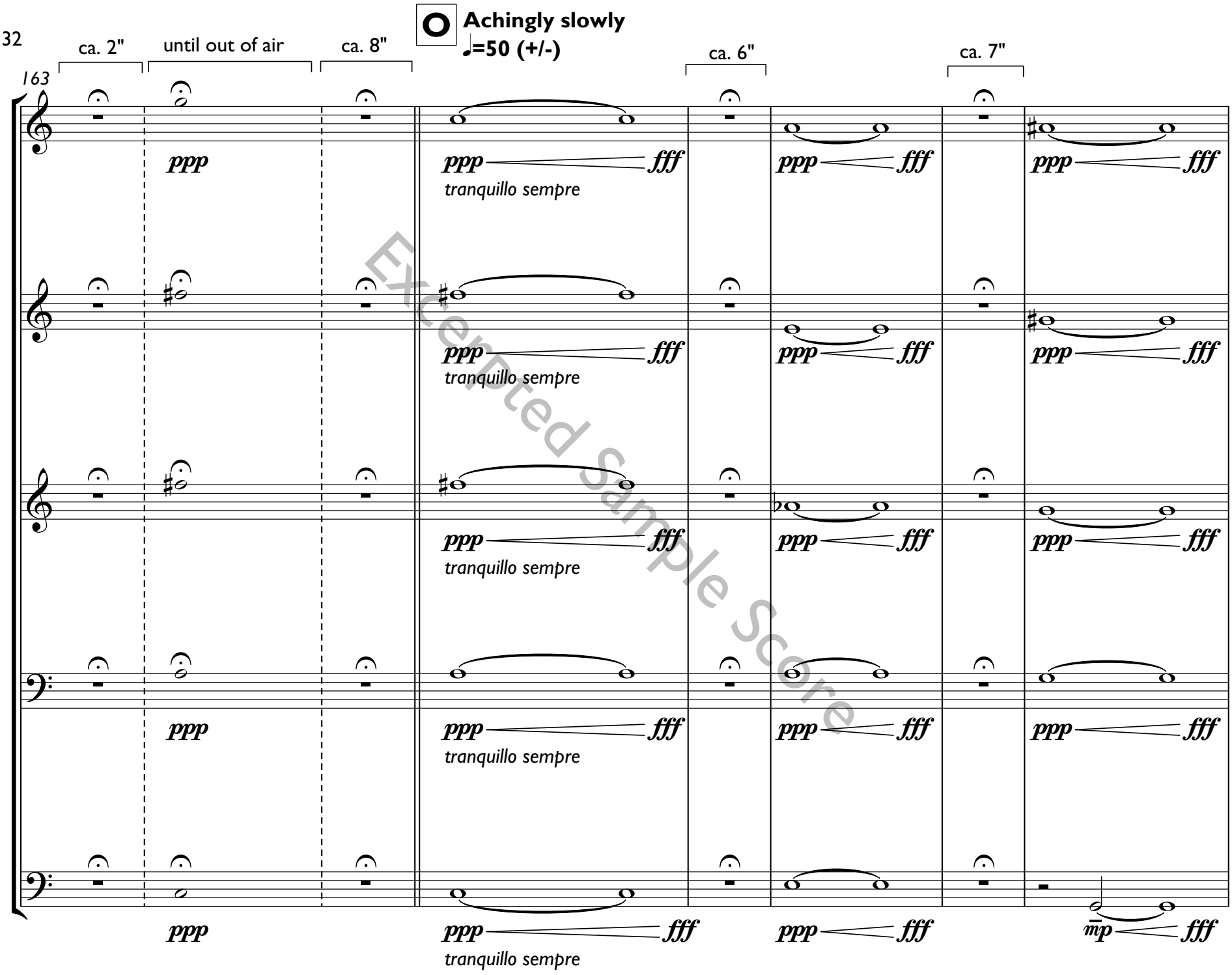

N
ca. 3"
4
3
ca. 2"
3
ca. 5"
ca. 5"
156
ppp
sf
p
pp
mp
Excerpted Sample Score



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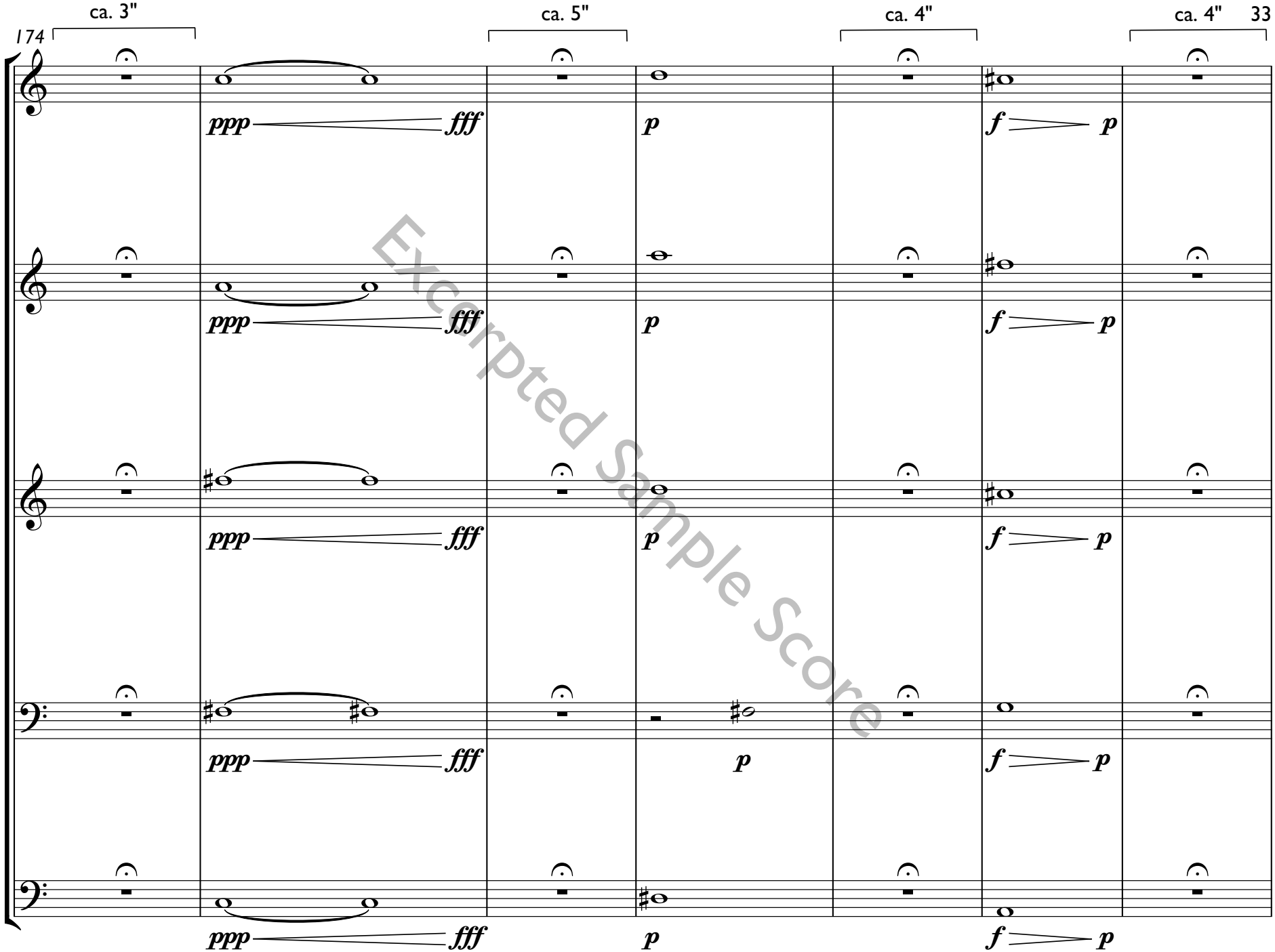

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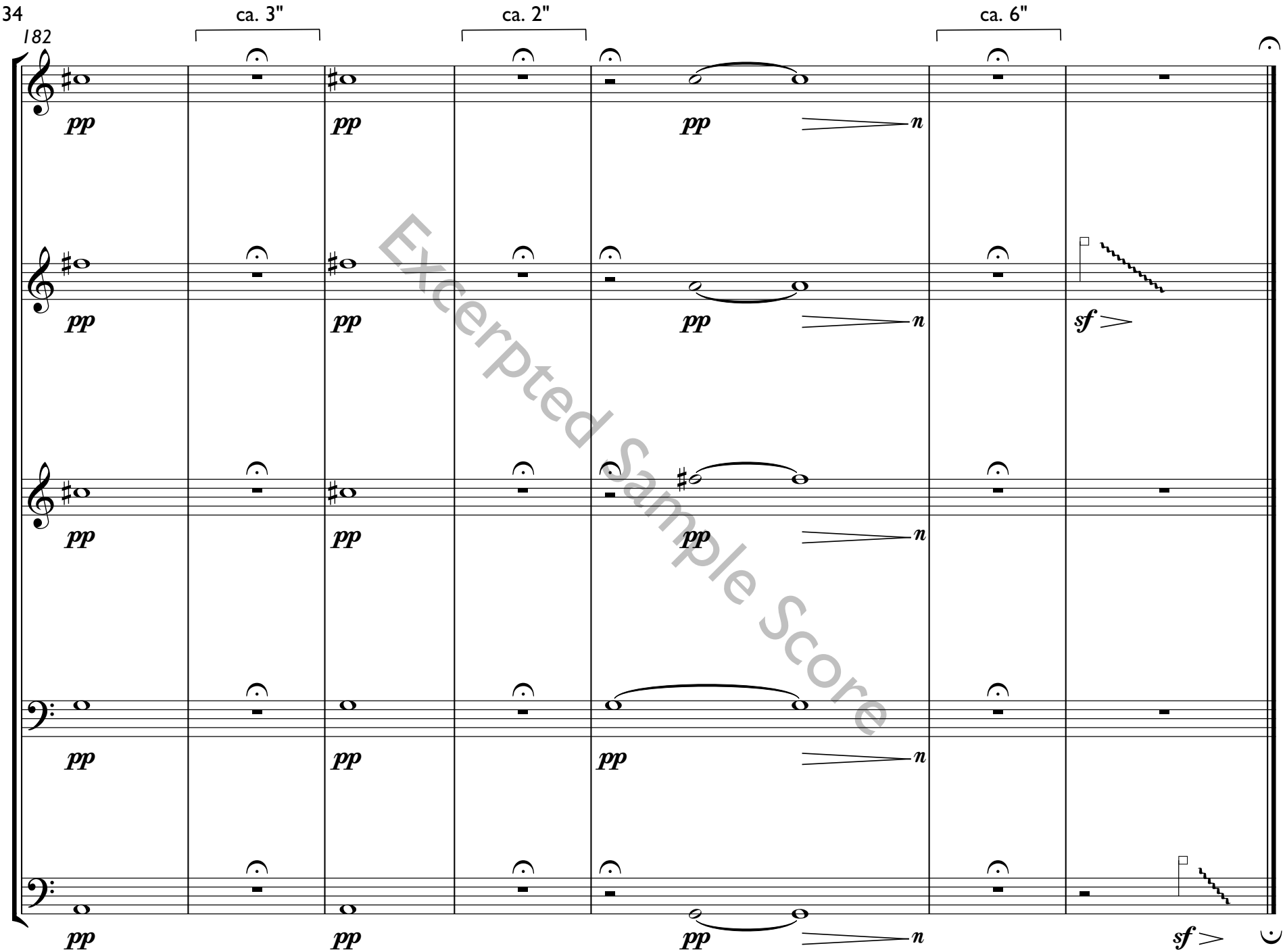

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