DANIEL DORFF

Sonata
(Spirit of the Hudson)
for Bass Flute and Piano

I. Sprawling, burbling
II. Sparkling, glistening
III. Under Winter
IV. Spring Spirits

THEODORE PRESSER COMPANY

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sample

Program Note by the Composer

When Peter Sheridan commissioned me to write a piece for bass flute and piano, his only requests were a sonata-like multi-movement work, and some kind of reference to New York, where we both grew up. Just the thought of a bass flute, with its broad and mighty airstream, already reminded me of the mighty Hudson River: from the dense woods of upstate New York, through the beautiful landscapes of New Paltz and Poughkeepsie, down through the celebrated Manhattan waterway.

As I daydreamed how to build a sonata inspired by the Hudson, I thought of its deep primal nature carved by the Ice Age, and the life within the river and on its shores long before humans arrived. I thought of how the river's magnetism drew Native Americans who honored and built their lives around it. I thought of beautiful trees and wildlife, the annual cycles of ecosystems, and the natural symbiosis between the river itself, the life within, and the life on land spawned by the river's resources.

I wondered what if Thoreau had sat by the Hudson rather than by Walden Pond; I wondered what if Hesse had set Siddhartha in the Hudson Valley with this river as his metaphor for the flow of life and time.

I wondered whether the sonata should flow from north to south, or have chronological references. I wondered if I should allude to the many poets and painters who have drawn inspiration from the mighty Hudson. Every thought led to the river's essence, its own spirit and life — flowing through raw nature, from skinny trickles to mightiness spawning cities; supporting subtle life, and becoming a central commons for human societies.

The subtitle *Spirit of the Hudson* brings it all together.

* * *

The sonata is built in 4 movements, with formal inspiration from the Baroque: A slow Mvt. 1 "Sprawling, burbling" leads directly to the rapid Mvt. 2 "Sparkling, glistening," followed by another slow-fast pair: Mvt. 3 "Under Winter" which leads directly into Mvt. 4 "Spring Spirits." In addition to performances of the complete sonata, either pair of movements may be performed on its own for a shorter concert segment.

SONATA (SPIRIT OF THE HUDSON) was premiered at the International Low Flutes Festival in April 2018 by its commissioner, bass flutist Peter Sheridan, with Hyeeun Hahm as pianist.

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commissioned by and dedicated to Peter Sheridan

Sonata
(Spirit of the Hudson)
for Bass Flute and Piano

Duration: c. 14'

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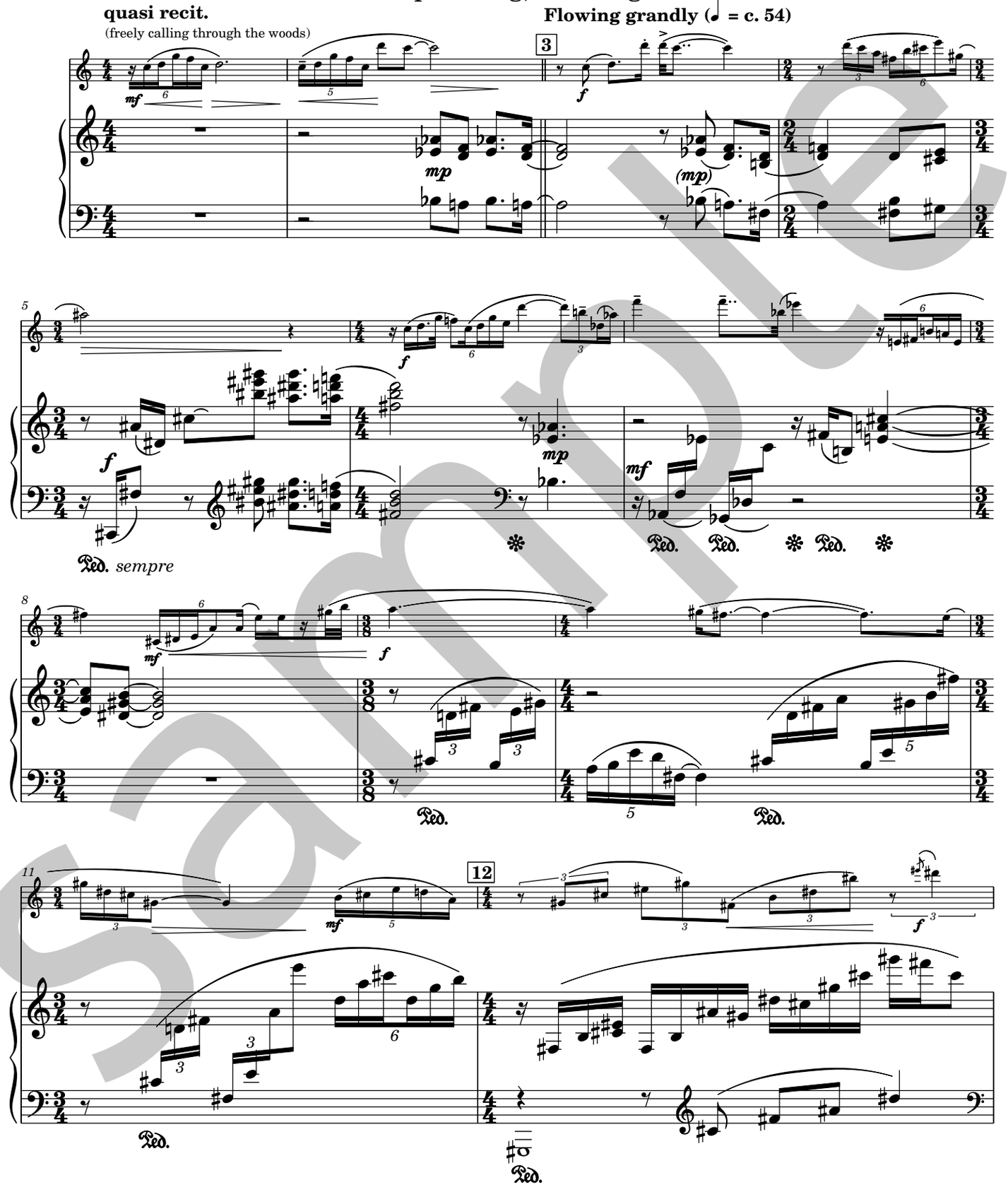
I. Sprawling, burbling



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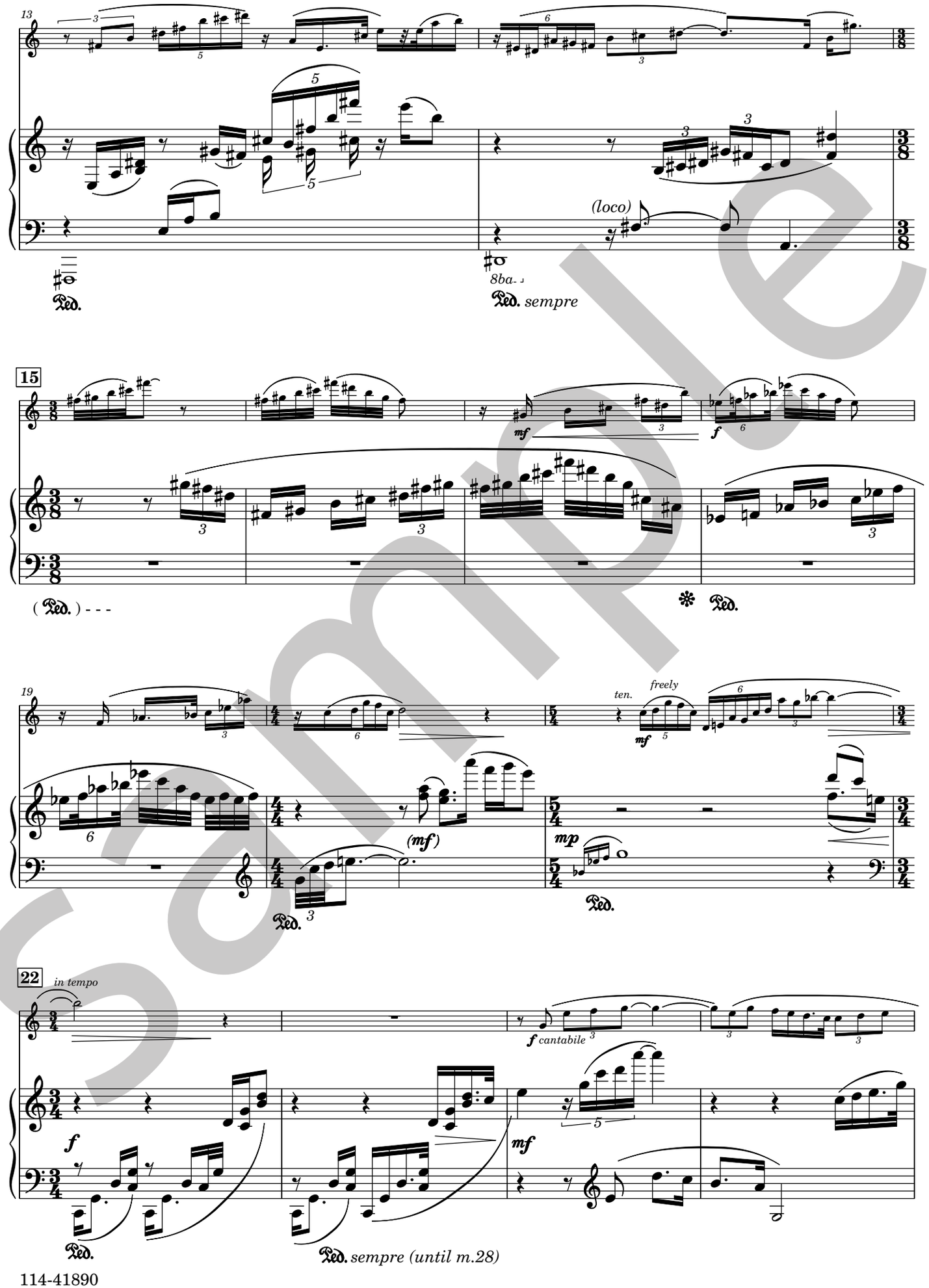
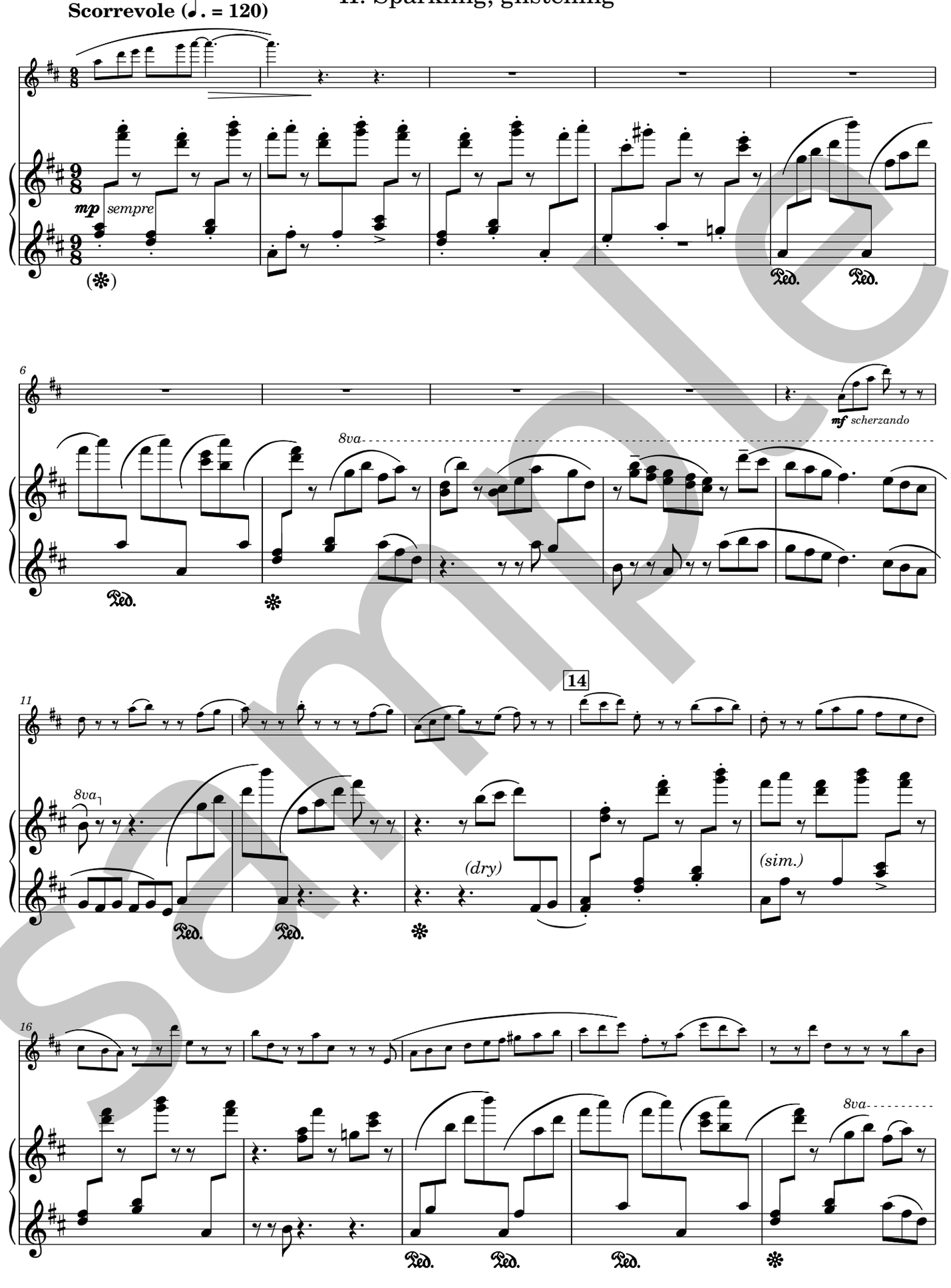
sample

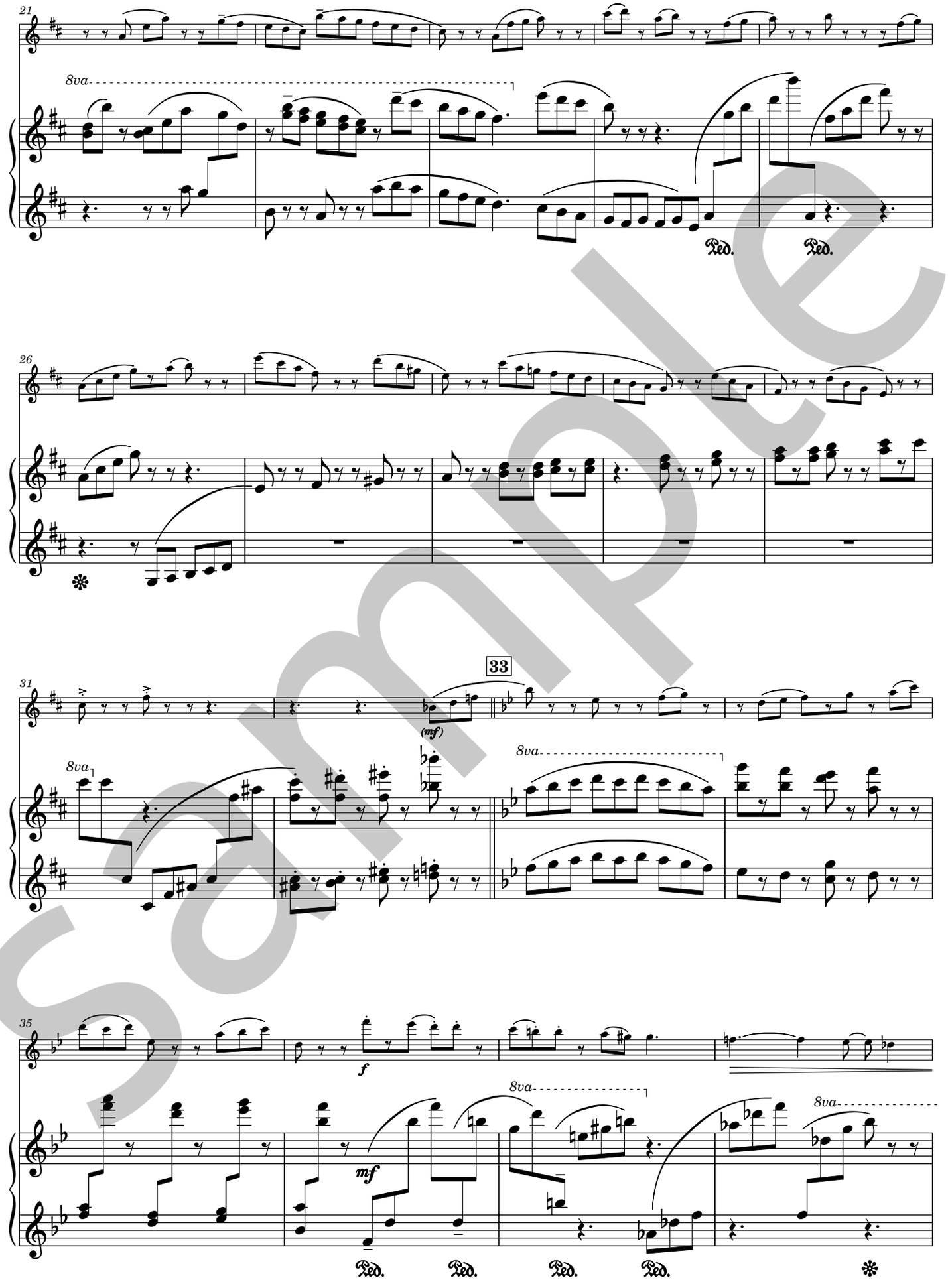

13
(loco)
8ba.
Ped. sempre
15
mf
f
(Ped.) - - -
Ped.
19
ten.
freely
mf
(mf)
mp
Ped.
Ped.
22
in tempo
f cantabile
f
mf
Ped.
Ped. sempre (until m.28)

sample

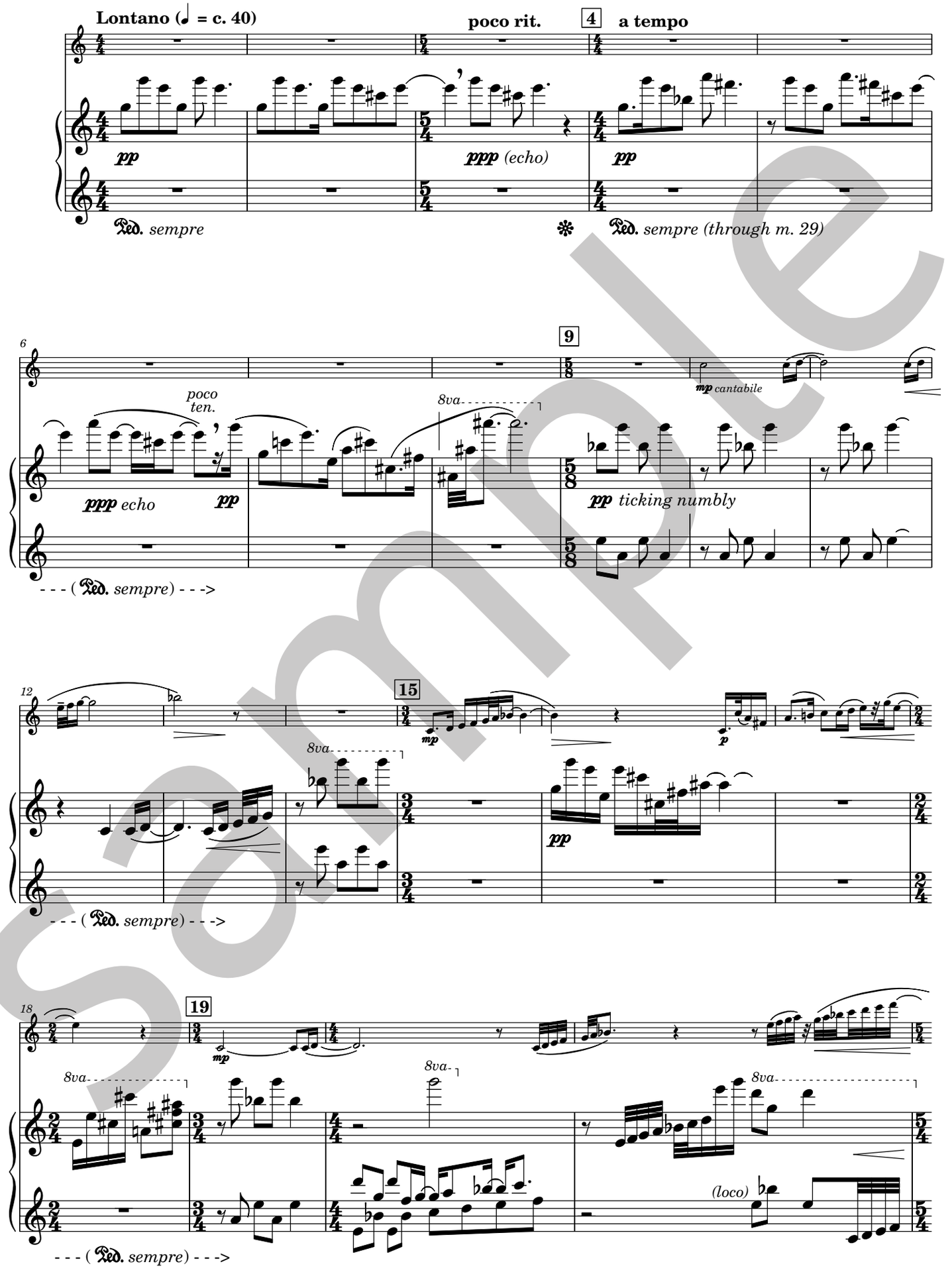
II. Sparkling, glistening



Sample

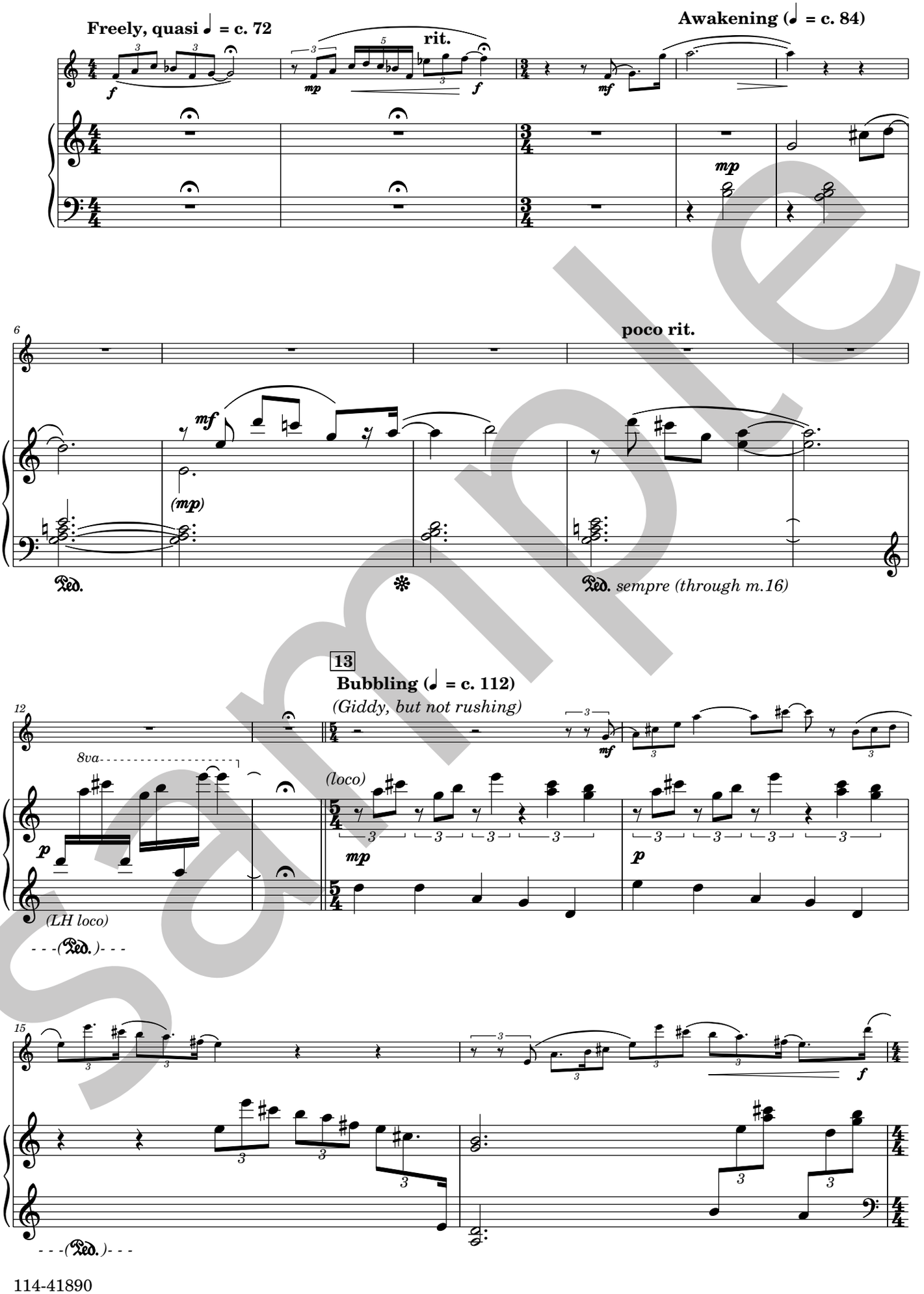


Sample

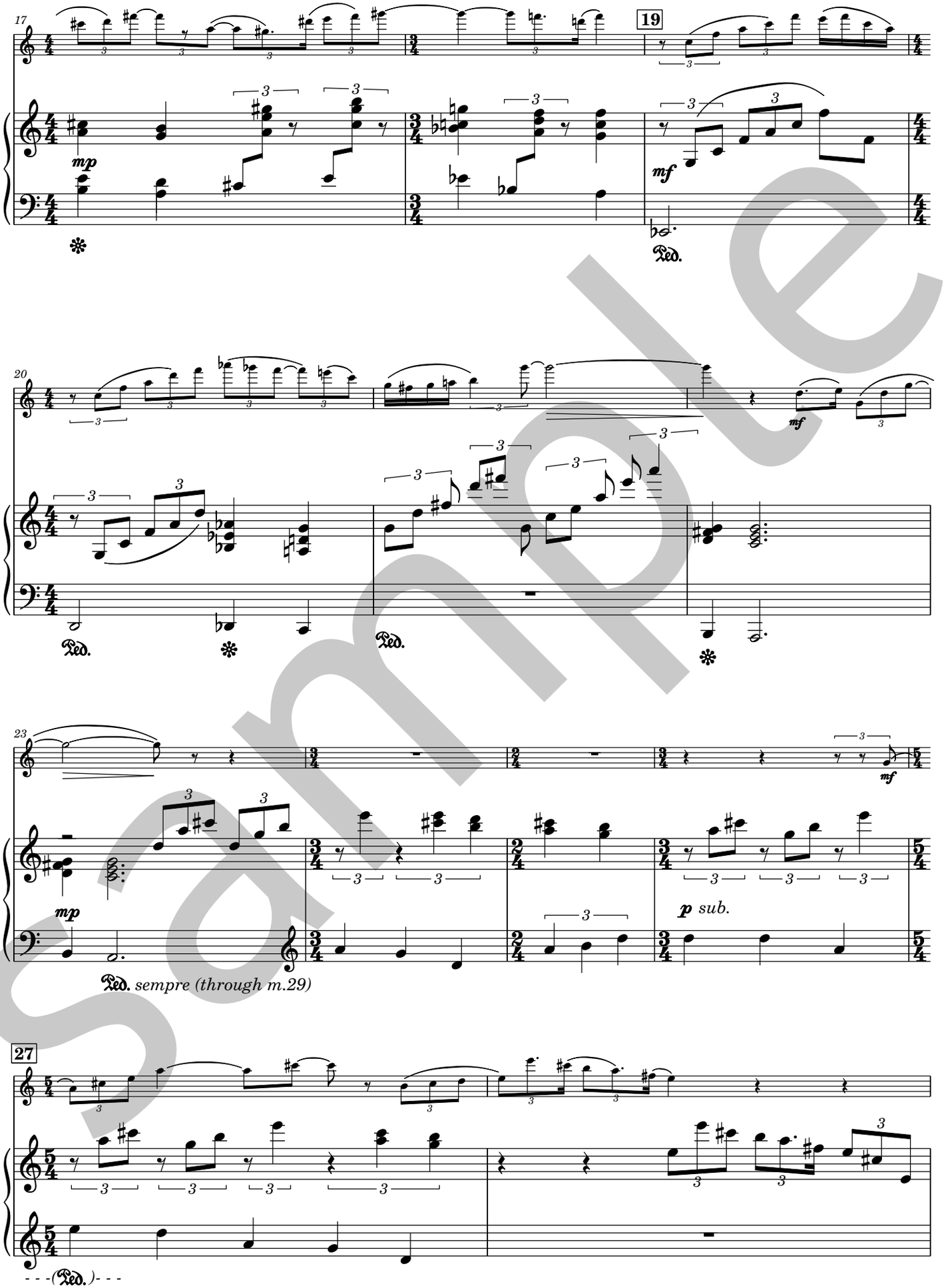

Lontano (♩ = c. 40)
poco rit.
4
a tempo
pp
ppp (echo)
pp
Ped. sempre
Ped. sempre (through m. 29)
6
9
poco ten.
8va
mp cantabile
ppp echo
pp
pp ticking numbly
- - - (Ped. sempre) - - ->
12
15
8va
mp
p
pp
- - - (Ped. sempre) - - ->
18
19
mp
8va
8va
8va
(loco)
- - - (Ped. sempre) - - ->
114-41890

Sample

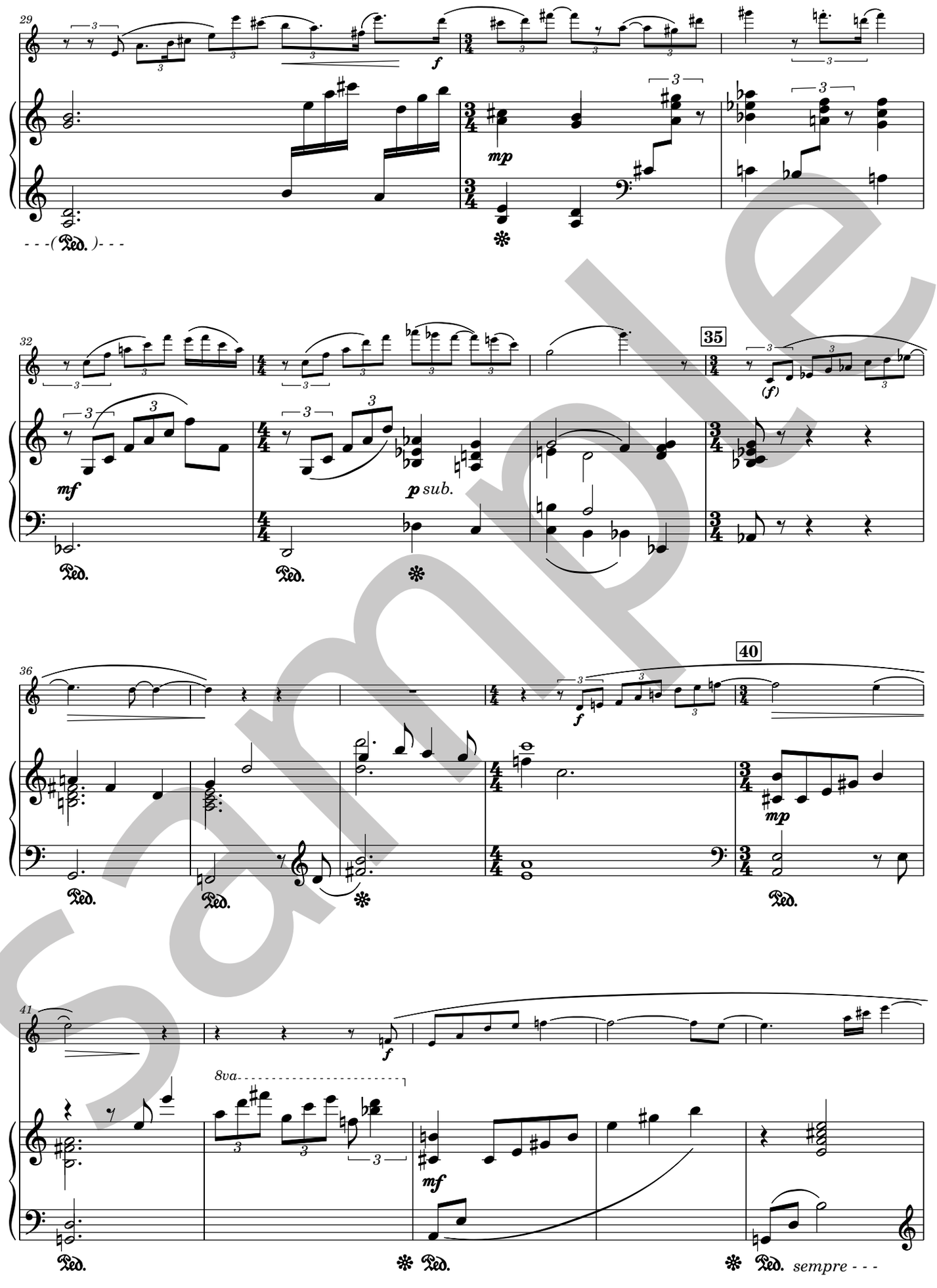
IV. Spring Spirits



sample


17
19
mp
mf
Ped.
20
mf
Ped.
23
mf
mp
p sub.
Ped. sempre (through m.29)
27
- - -(Ped.)- - -

sample



Sample