Sonata

for Clarinet and Piano

Movement I	3
Movement II	22
Movement III	32

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David Conte (b. 1955)

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PROGRAM NOTES

Sonata for Clarinet and Piano was composed especially for Franklin Cohen, former Principal Clarinetist of the Cleveland Orchestra. Having grown up in Cleveland, I have long admired Mr. Cohen's playing. The Sonata was commissioned in 2015 for the 25th anniversary of the Arts Renaissance Tremont Chamber Music Concert Series, Chris Haff-Paluck, Founder and Artistic Director. Mr. Cohen premiered the first movement of the work on October 25th, 2015. The complete work was premiered at Trinity Cathedral on April 5th, 2017, with Mr. Cohen and Todd Wilson, pianist. The final revised version of the piece was performed by Jerome Simas, clarinetist, and Eric Zivian, pianist, presented by the Left Coast Ensemble, on March 4, 2019.

The Sonata's first movement marked *Allegro moderato, appassionato,* begins with a brief introduction in the manner of a solo recitative for the piano, featuring a motive built on successive perfect fifths which is the basis for much of the musical ideas in this movement. The piece is in a quite straightforward *Sonata-allegro* form. The first theme is a broadly sung lyrical melody, unabashedly romantic in character, supported by an undulating accompaniment in the piano. This gives way suddenly to an agitated variation of this first theme, which transitions into a second theme, marked *Moderato cantabile,* accompanied by stately quarter-note chords in the piano. As the theme progresses, the clarinet and piano trade the melody back and forth, finally culminating in a canon between the two instruments. This gives way to a more relaxed closing theme in the Clarinet, marked *Slower, mysterious, spacious,* supported in the piano by many ringing perfect fifths, sounding somewhat like chiming bells. A brief development follows, leading to a climax, and followed by an affirmative return to the first theme. The movement unfolds with a restatement of all three themes, ending with a quietly solemn coda.

The second movement begins in a *Largamente* tempo, with an expressive, declamatory recitative motive in the clarinet, leading to a *Lento molto* tempo, which introduces a syncopated ostinato in the bass register of the piano. The entire movement is built on these two ideas. There is a contrasting middle section which is more playful, and slightly jazzy in character, with humorous interplay between the clarinet and piano. The opening ideas return, leading to a climax, and the work ends with a final statement of the recitative motive, accompanied by mysterious rising chords in the piano.

The third movement is a spirited Allegro in compound meter. After an introductory fanfare-like section, alternating statements from the clarinet and the piano, the clarinet announces a perky and cheerful theme with steady 8th notes in the piano. This leads to a transition featuring block chords in the piano, transitioning to a very lyrical second theme, traded back and forth between the two instruments. The first theme returns, and the second theme is briefly restated, leading to a brisk, virtuosic coda.

I wish to thank several clarinetists and pianists who have contributed richly to the evolution of this work since its completion in 2017: pianists Javier Gonzalez, John Churchwell, Todd Wilson, and clarinetist José Gonzalez Granero. A superb studio recording was made in 2019 with clarinetist Jerome Simas of the San Francisco Symphony, a former student of Franklin Cohen, and pianist Eric Zivian.

—David Conte

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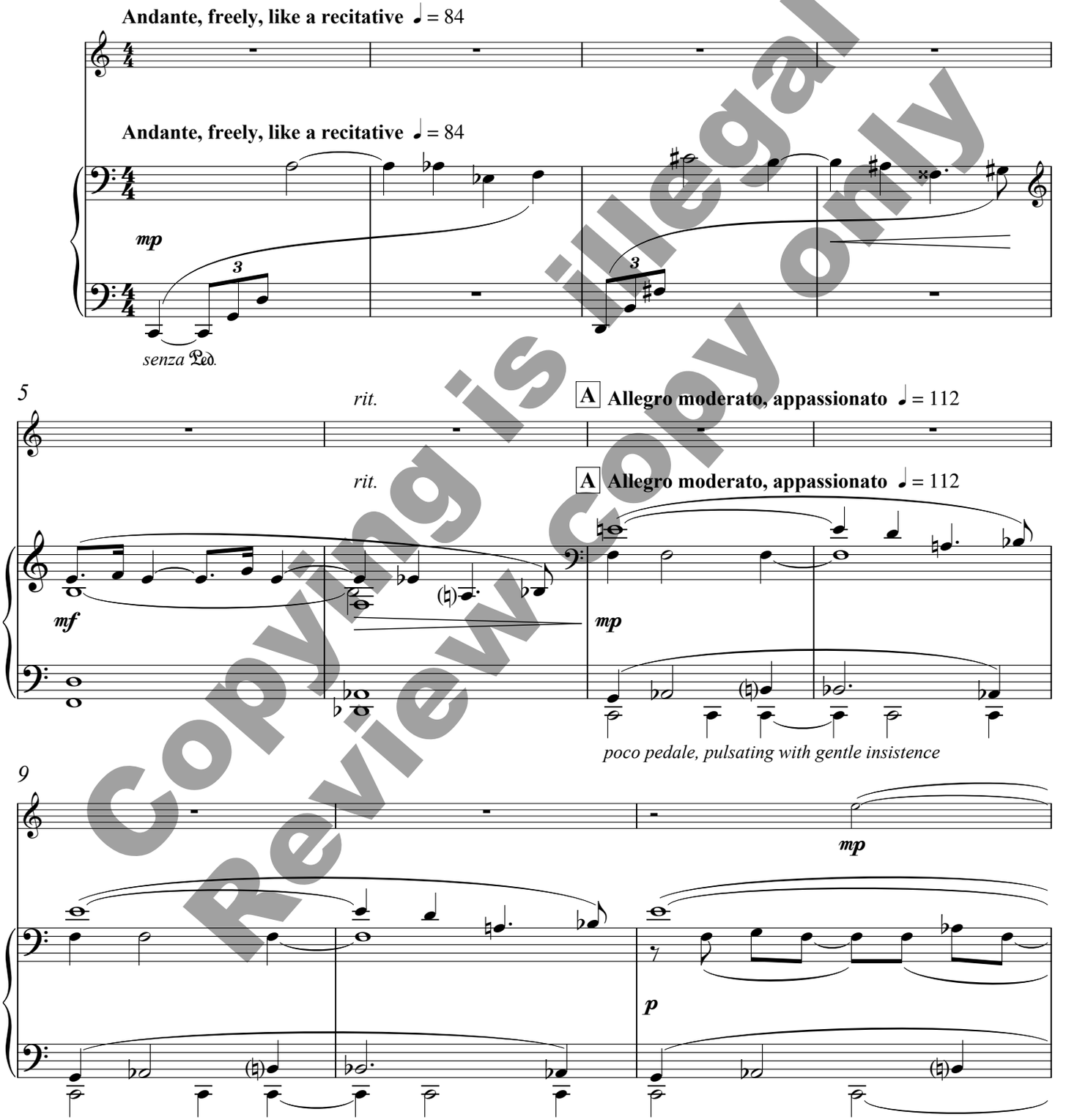
Commissioned for Franklin Cohen by the Arts Renaissance Tremont Chamber Music Concert Series, Cleveland, Ohio in celebration of their 25th anniversary.

Sonata for Clarinet and Piano

David Conte (ASCAP)

I



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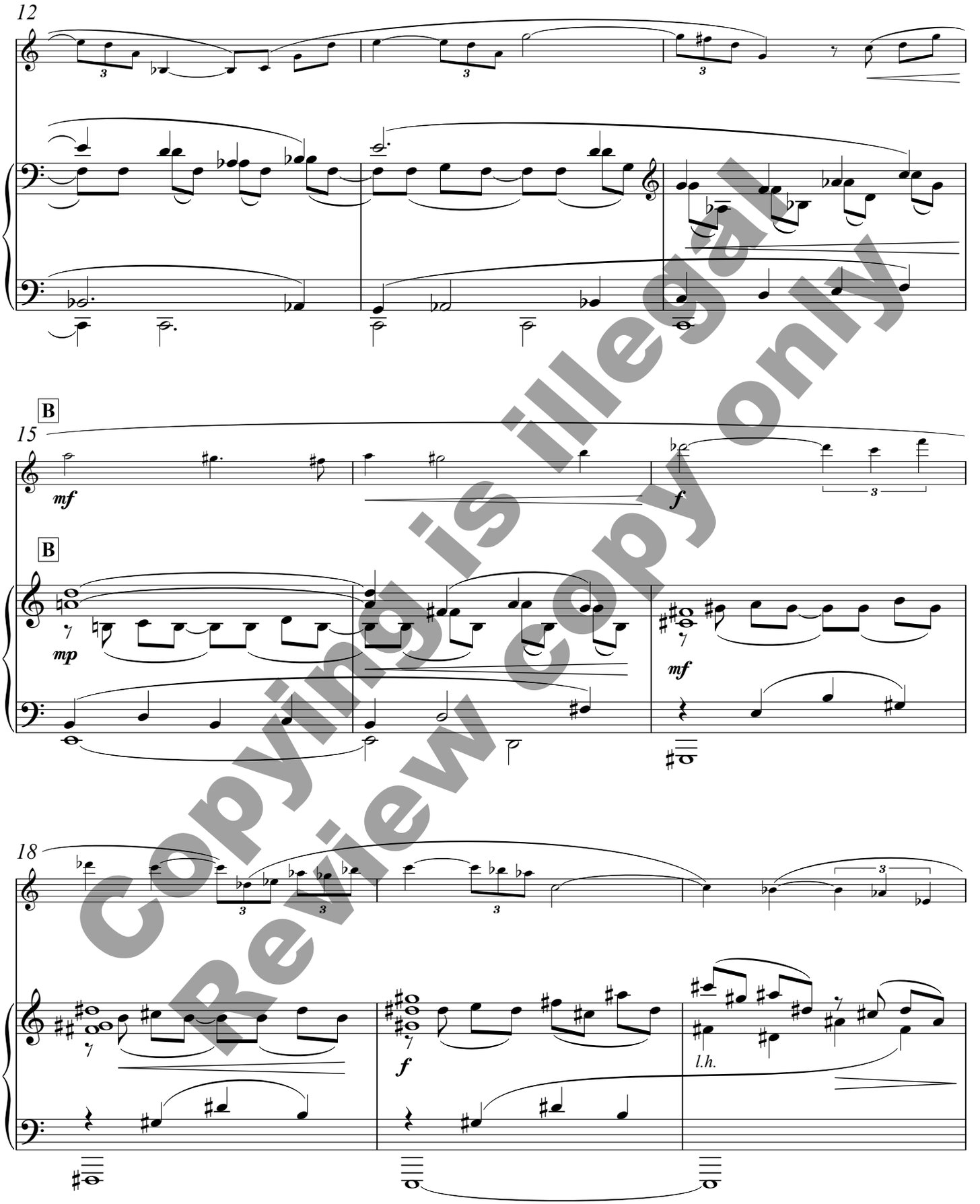

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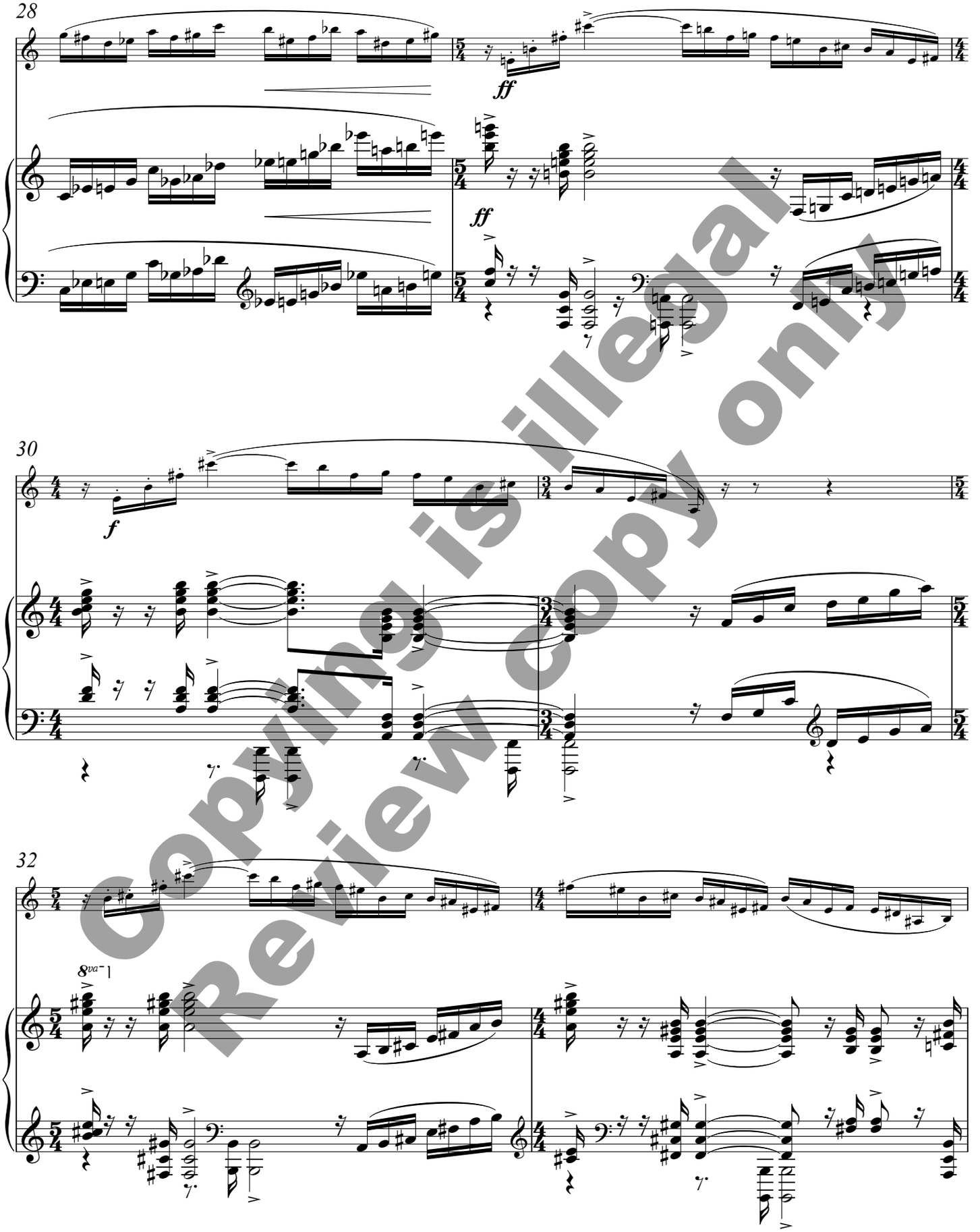

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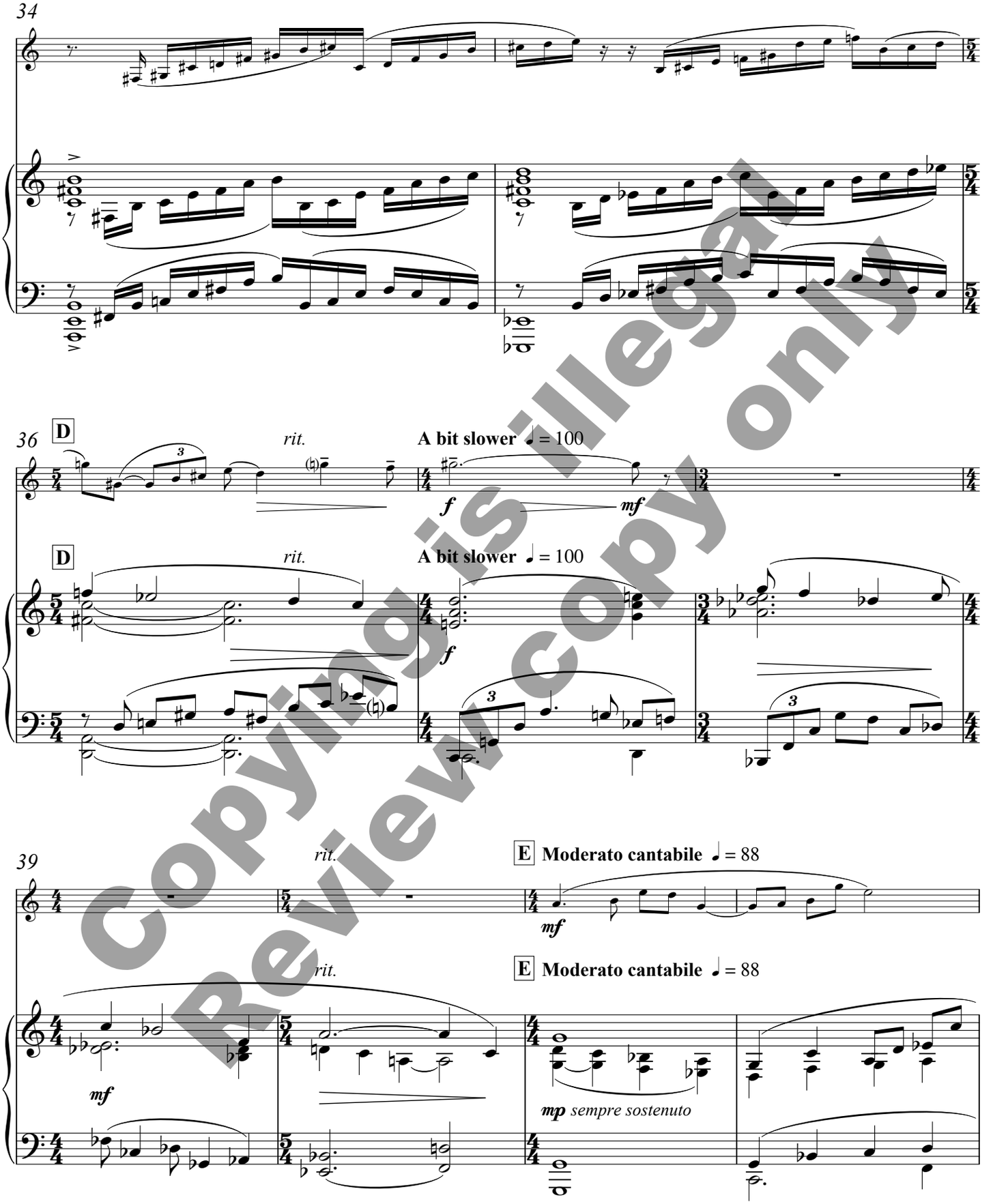

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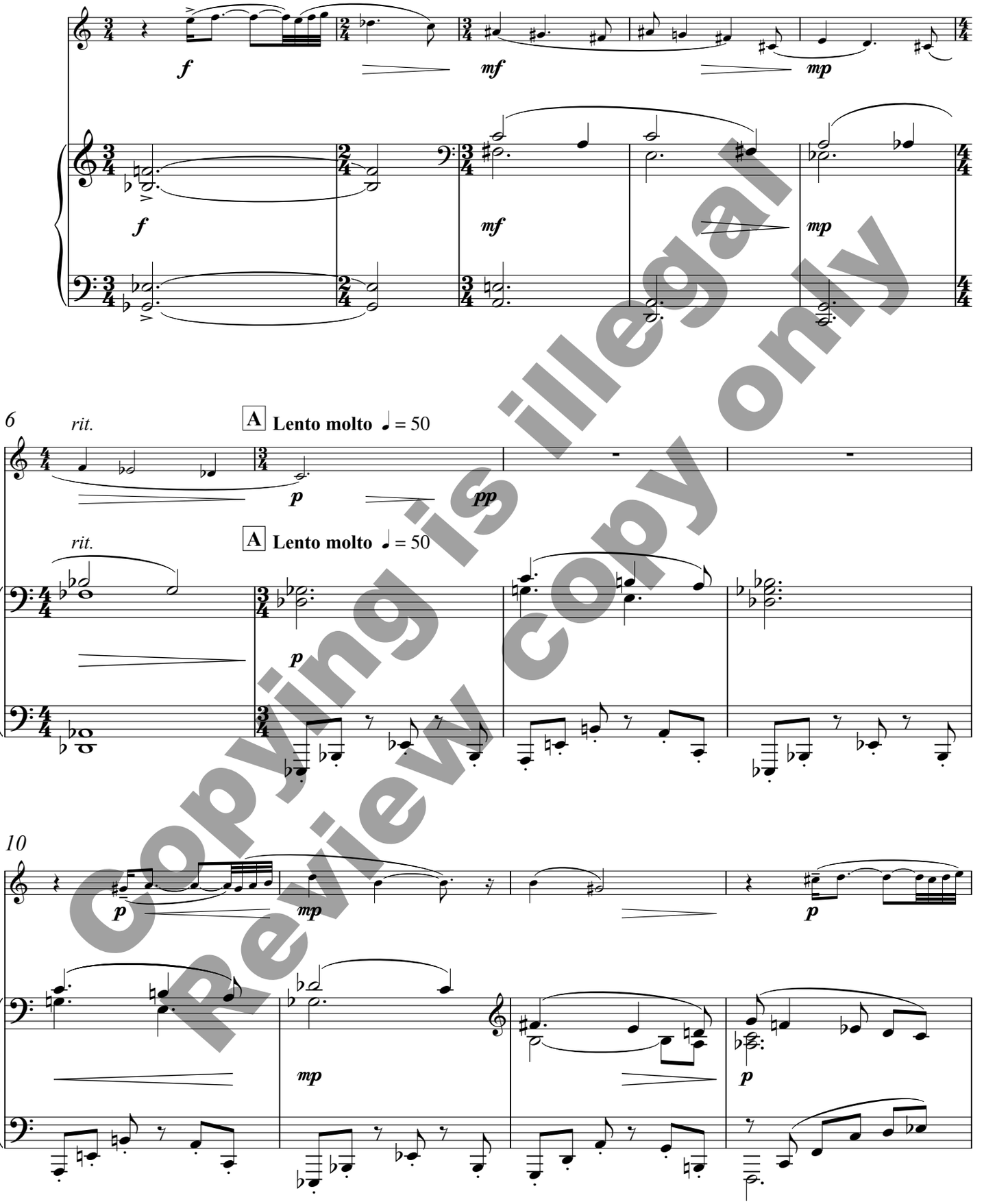

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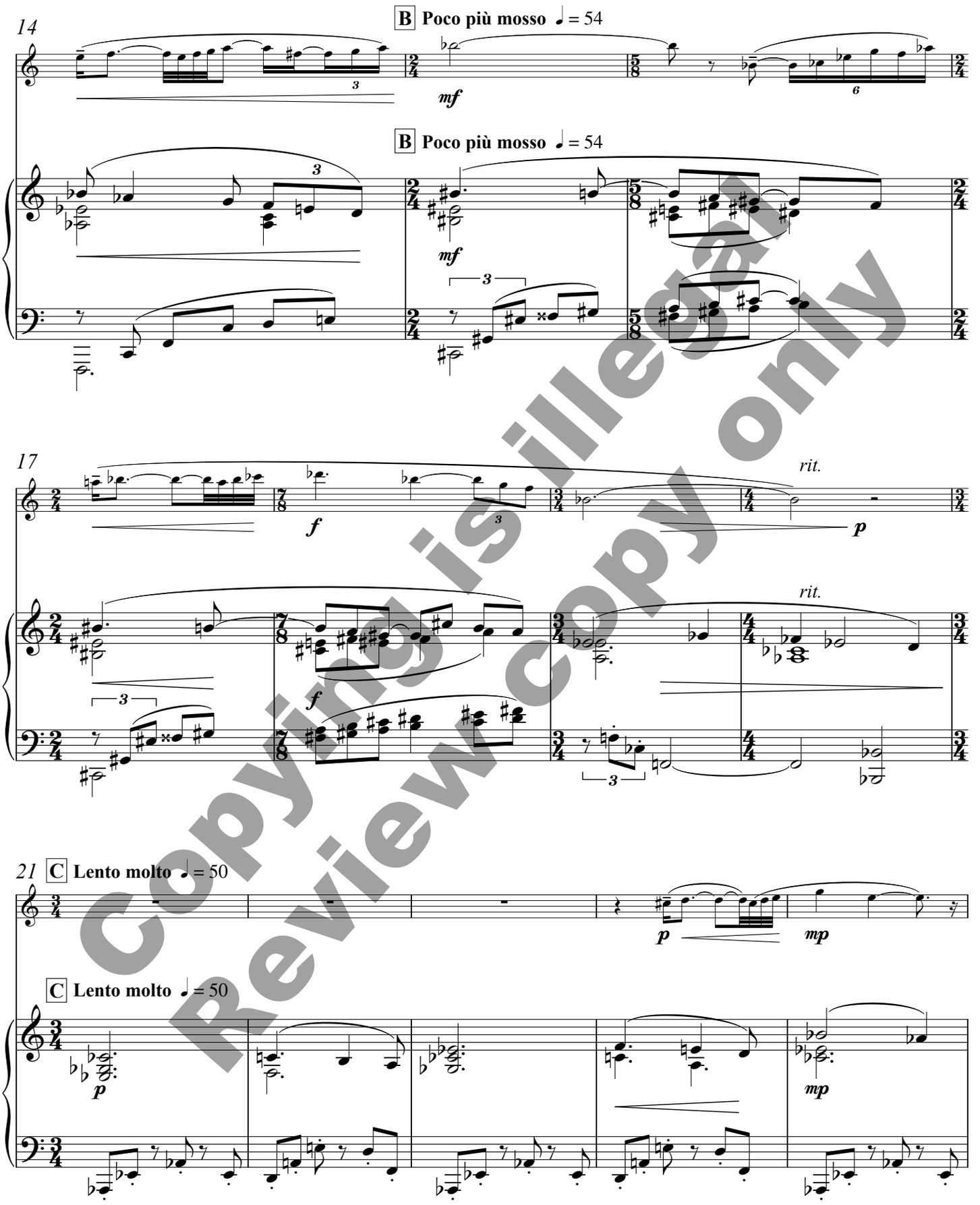

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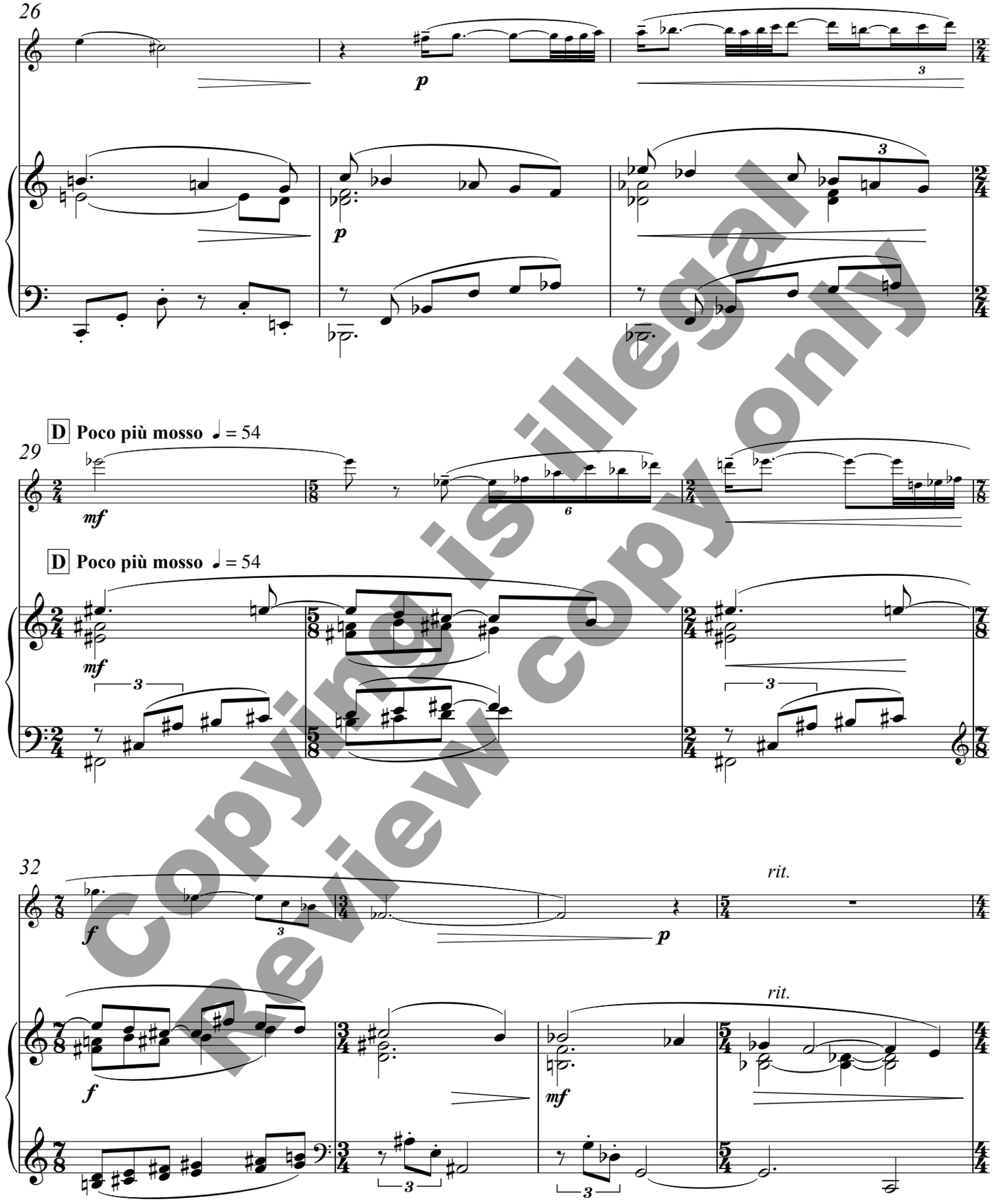

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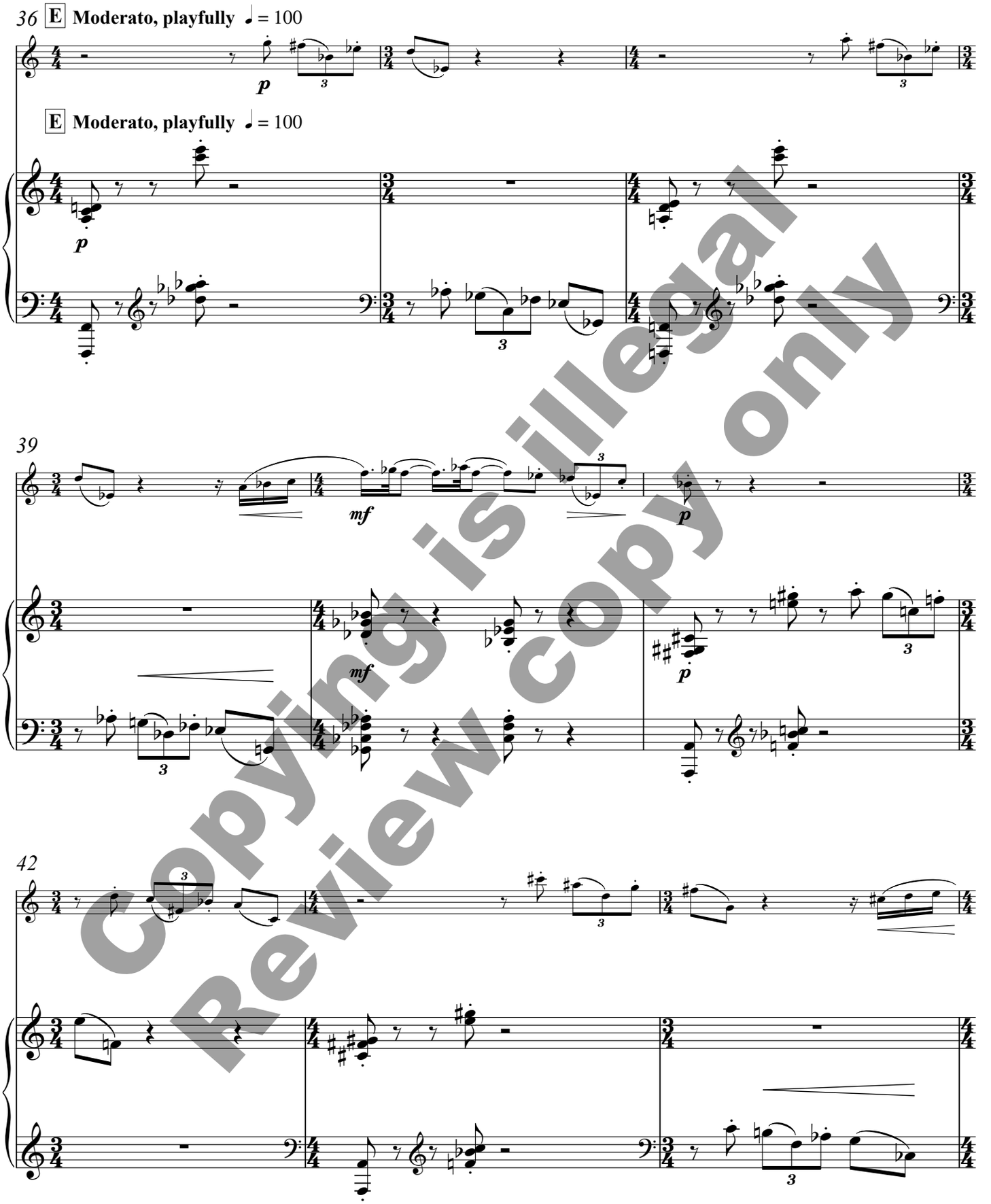

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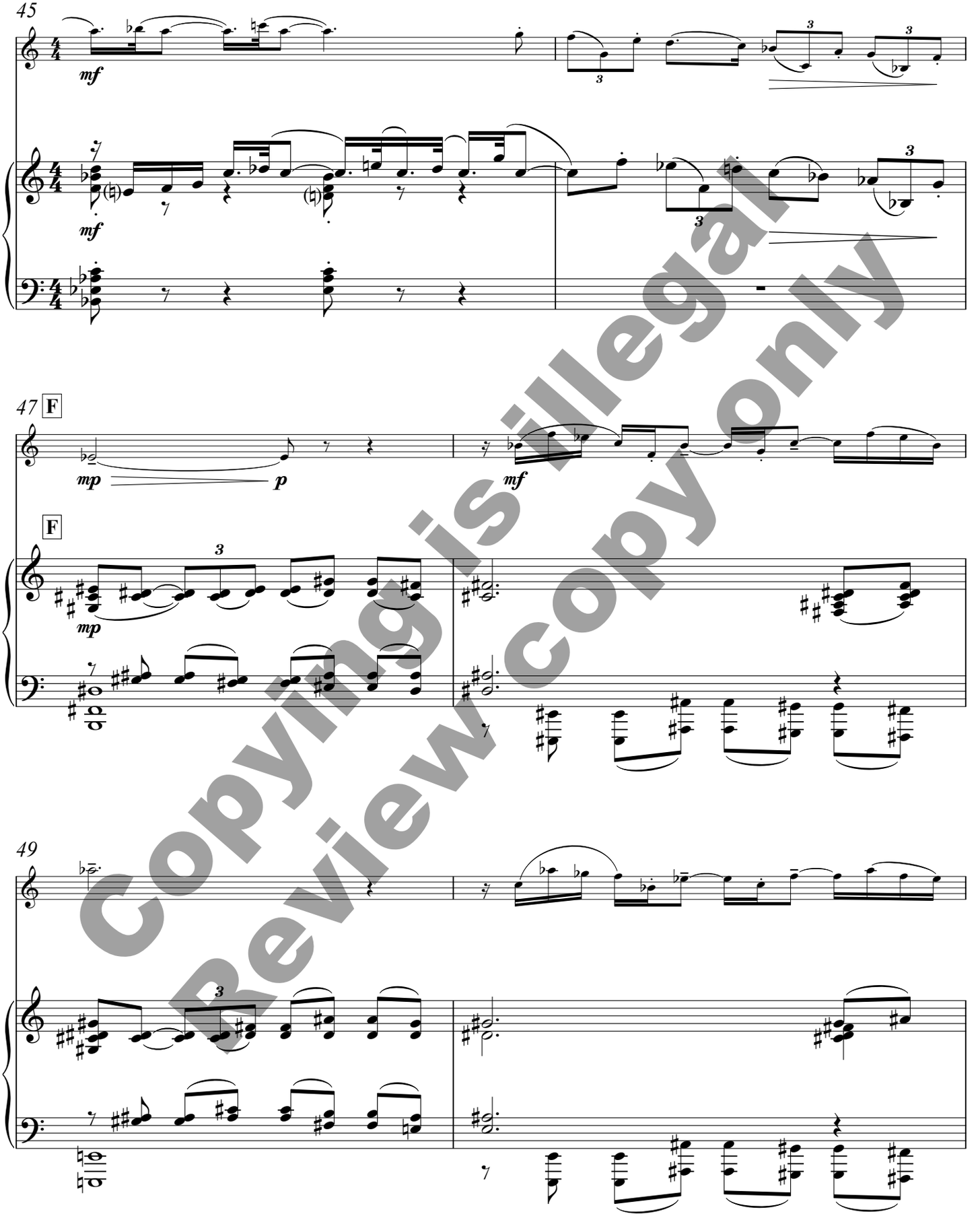

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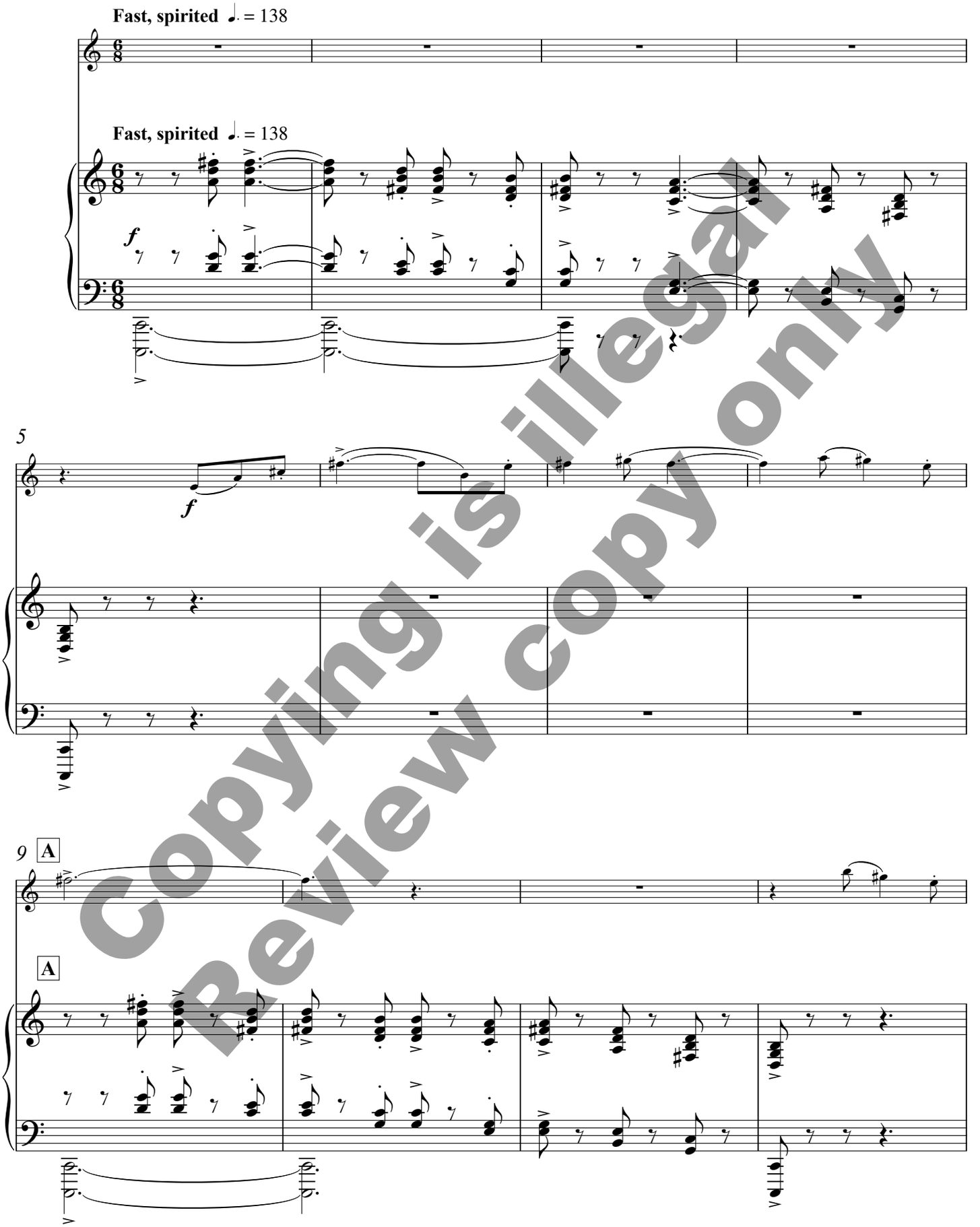

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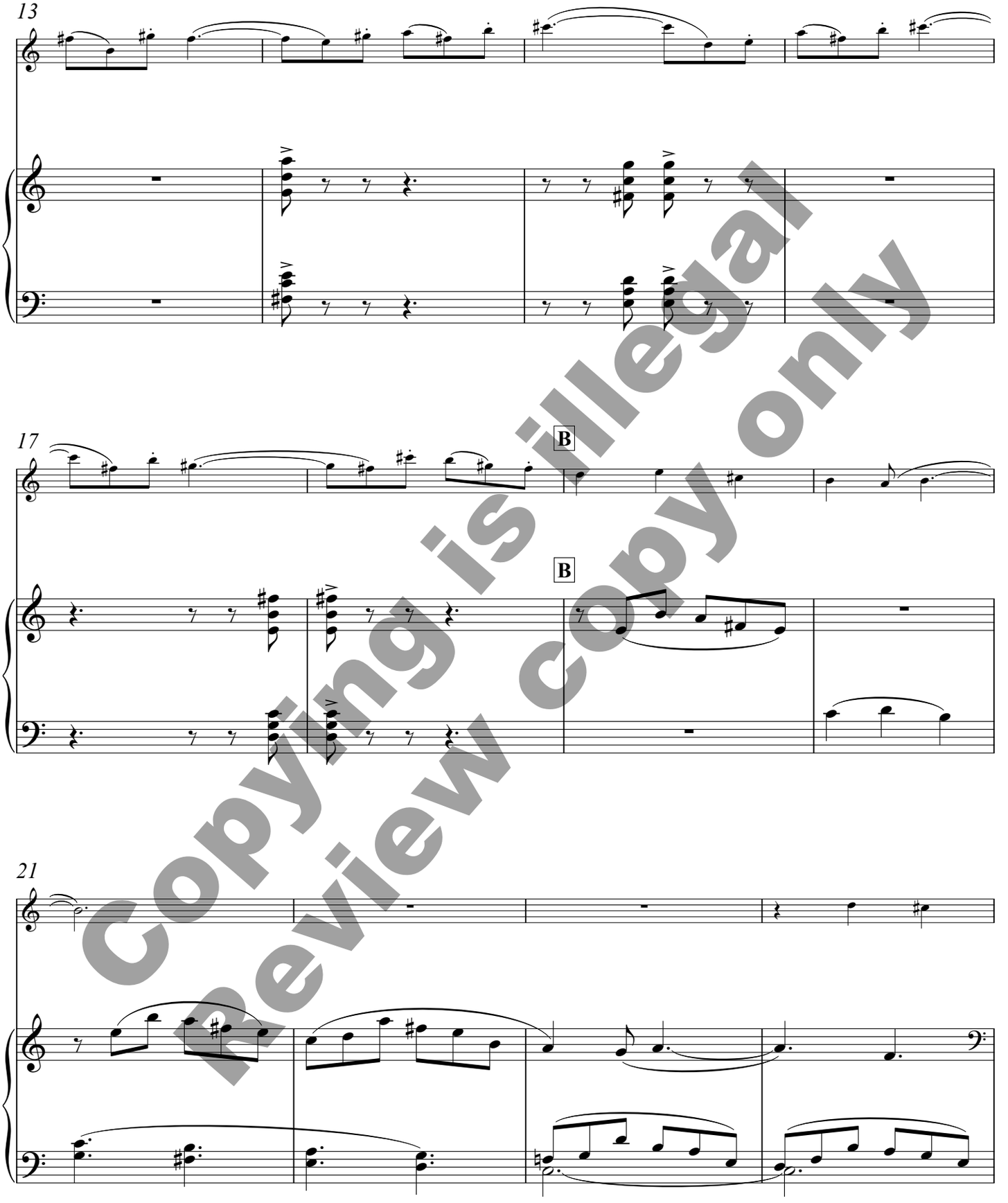

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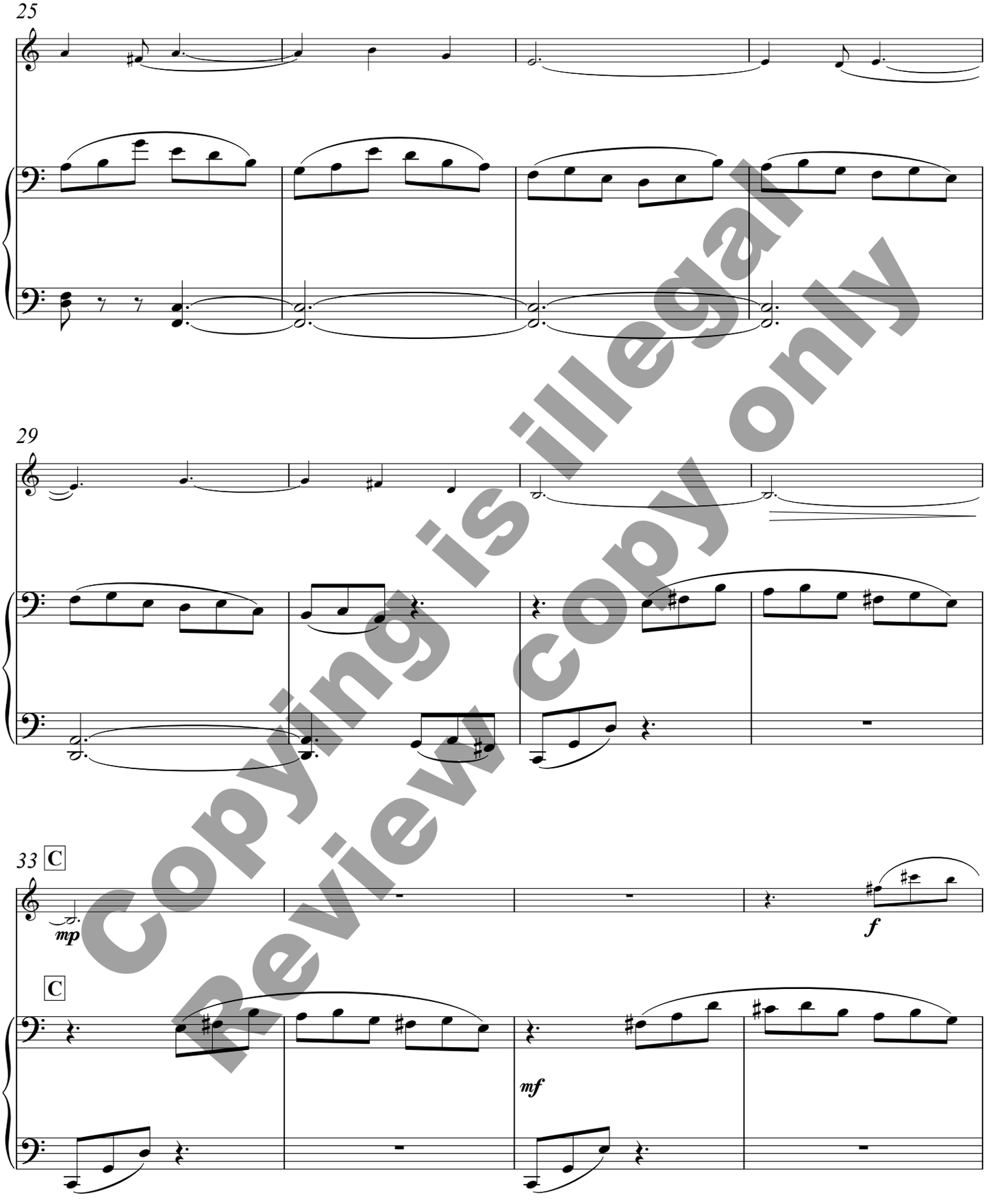

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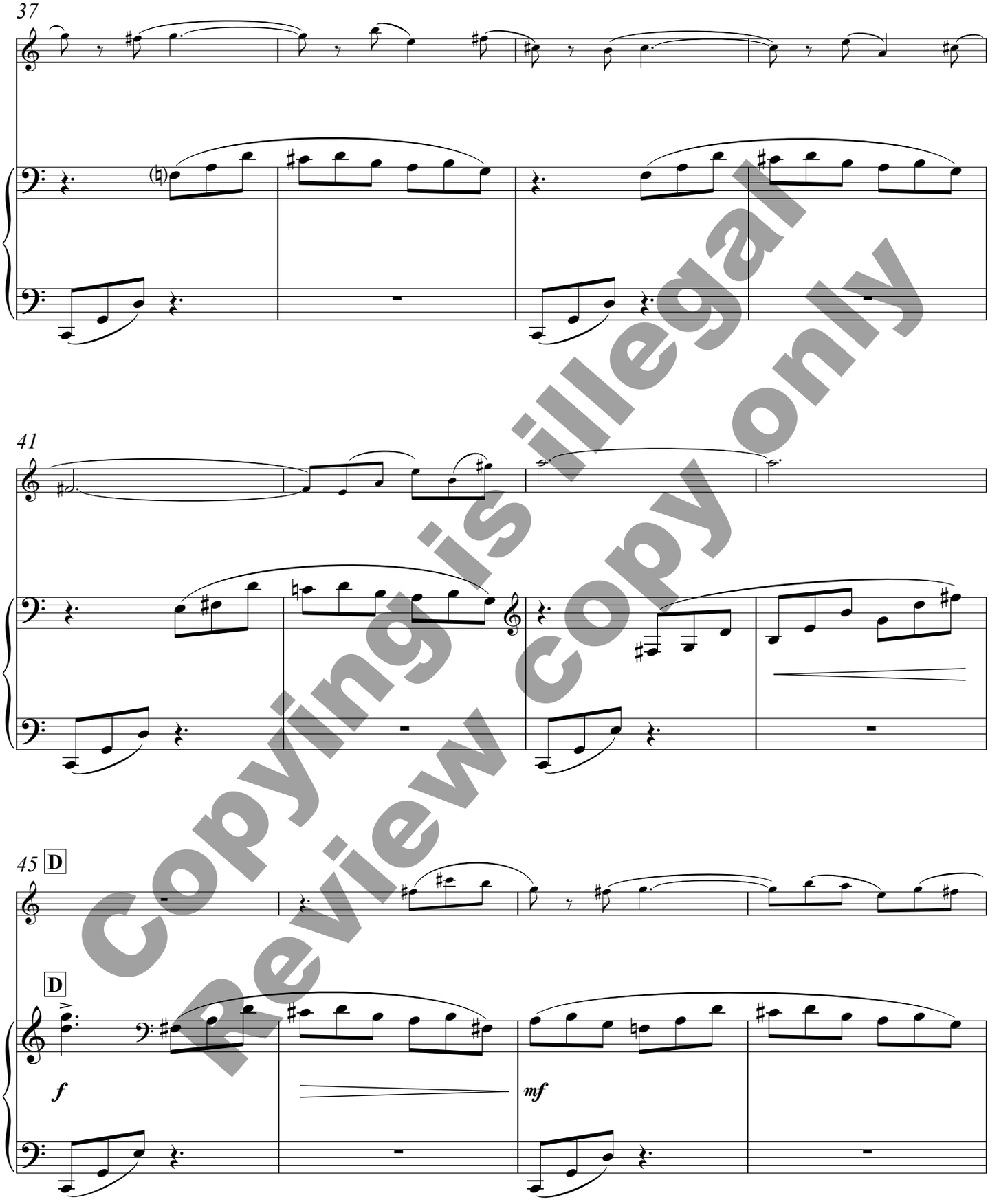

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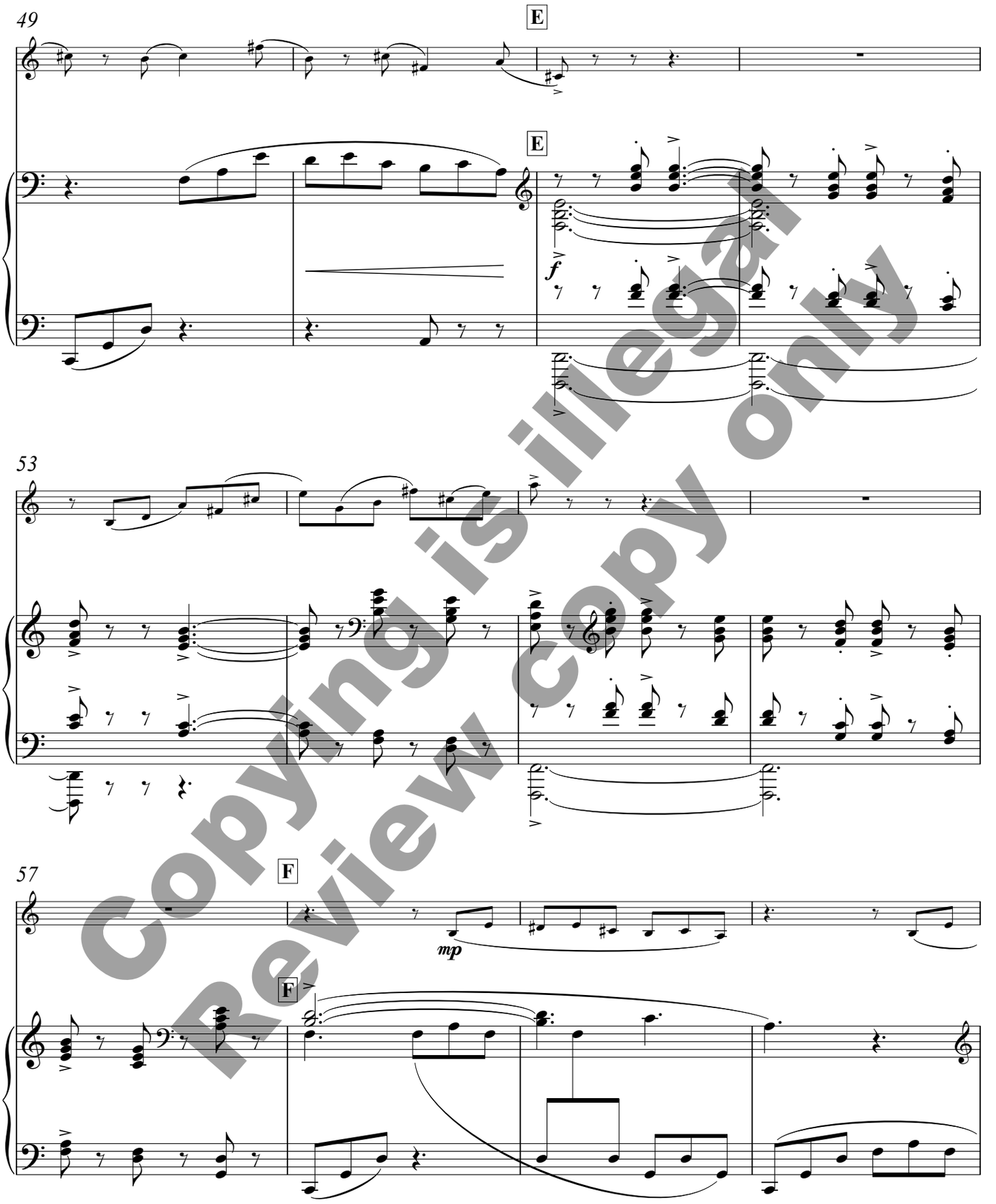

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