Peter Knell

Blues

for violin and piano

SAMPLE

Duration: ca. 7 minutes

Peter Knell

www.peterknell.com

Biography

Praised for being “gratefully idiomatic” (*Los Angeles Times*) and for its “subtle virtuosity” (*MusicWeb International*), Peter’s music is meticulously crafted for both instruments and voices, making full use of their expressive and coloristic potential. He is deeply invested in musical structure as a crucible to intensify the affective experience of the listener, and he has consistently been rewarded by the enthusiastic reception of his work by audiences and performers.

Peter’s music has received awards in numerous national and international competitions, including First Prizes in the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra's 10th New Music Festival International Composers Competition, the Indiana State University Contemporary Music Festival/Louisville Orchestra Prize, and the Omaha Symphony Guild International New Music Competition, as well as Second Prizes in the Fourth International Witold Lutoslawski Composers Competition, the First International Composers' Competition "In Memoriam Zoltán Kodály", and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra's Young Composers Competition. Peter was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship, a BMI Student Composer Award, two ASCAP Foundation Morton Gould Young Composers Awards, grants from the Paloheimo Foundation and Meet the Composer, and commissions from the Fromm Music Foundation/Ying Quartet, Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, Barlow Endowment for Music Composition, Utah Arts Festival, Lyris Quartet, Oakland East Bay Symphony, and Dale Warland Singers, among others.

Peter’s music has been performed by ensembles such as the Hungarian Radio Orchestra, Louisville Orchestra, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Kremlin Chamber Orchestra, Filharmonia de Stat “Transilvania”, the Winnipeg, Omaha, Richmond, Memphis, and Oakland East Bay Symphony Orchestras, the Doric String Quartet, Ying Quartet, Lyris Quartet, Onyx String Quartet, Verdi Quartett, Jacaranda, Southwest Chamber Music, Volti Chamber Chorus, counter)induction, by soloists including James Dunham, Martin Chalifour, Peabody Southwell, Vijay Gupta, Markus Pawlick, and Ingeborg Danz, and at numerous music festivals. It has been broadcast in Russia, Canada, Hungary and Finland, as well as in several American cities. His orchestral work *LINES/ANGLES* was the American selection for the ISCM World Music Days 2009 and was performed in September 2009 by the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Peter’s solo violin work *Seven Last Words*, based on paintings of German artist Rolf Stein, is available in a book/CD format from Valve-Hearts, Cologne. A CD featuring his orchestral work, *"...the weakening eye of day"* in a live performance by the Budapest Symphony Orchestra is available on the Artisjus label, a CD featuring German pianist Susanne Kessel performing two of his *Four Snapshots* is available on OehmsClassics, a CD of Peter’s complete piano music performed by German pianist Markus Pawlik was released by Sono Luminus in 2013, and a CD of the Lyris Quartet performing his *Intimate Voices* was released in the summer of 2016 on the ARS Produktion label. A new CD featuring his *Canciones de Agua*, *String Quartet No. 2* and *Seven Last Words* is planned for released in early 2022.

Peter holds degrees from Princeton University (BA), the Juilliard School (MM), and the University of Texas at Austin (DMA), and he was a Fulbright Fellow at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, Finland. His principal composition teachers have included Dan Welcher, Donald Grantham, and David Diamond. He is currently based in Los Angeles.

Program Note

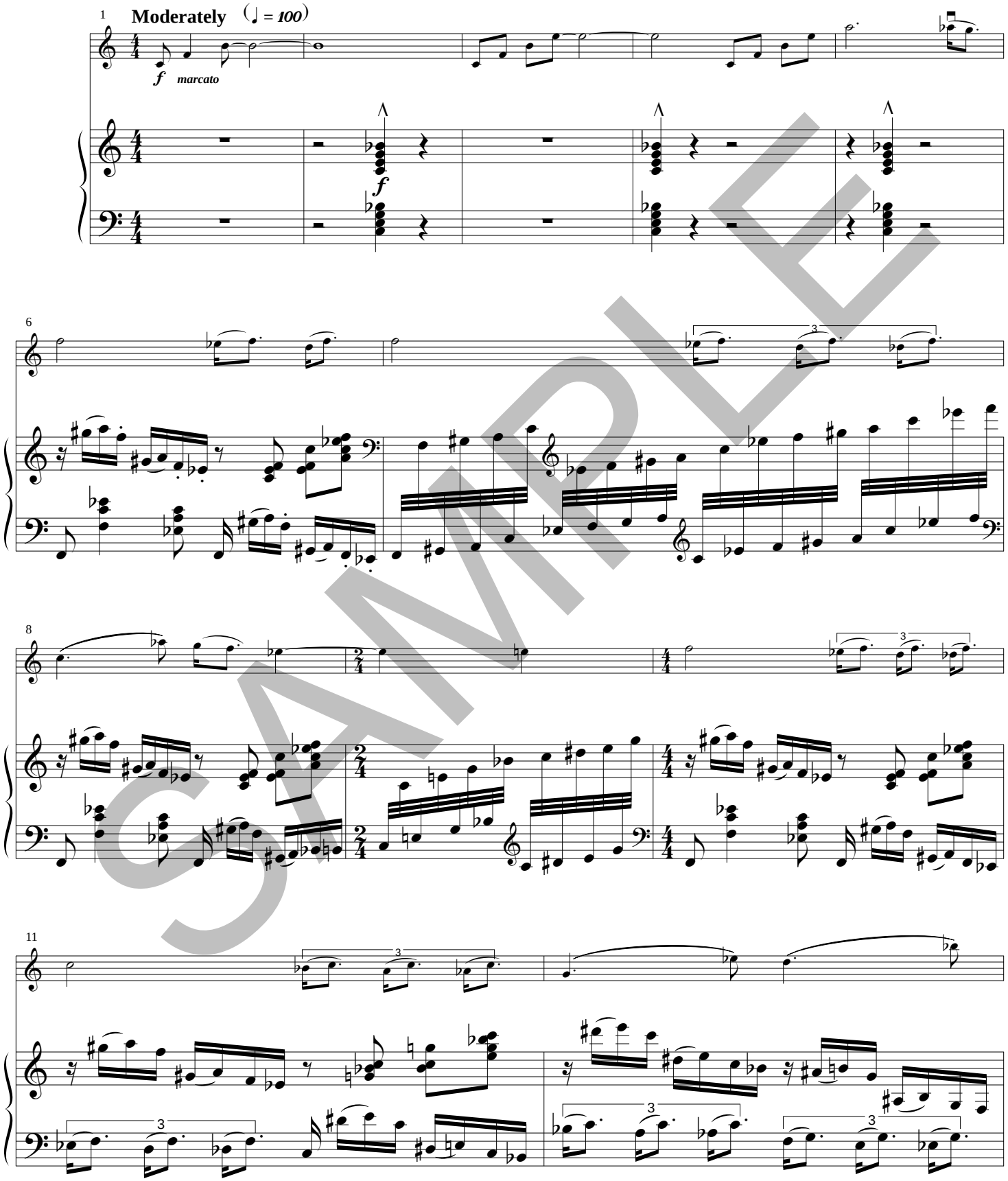
Blues was composed in August of 1993 and was first performed in Arcosanti, AZ that same month. Cast in a single movement, *Blues* freely invokes the jazz idiom. However, these materials are submitted to classical formal treatment. The piece opens with the violin playing a generic Twentieth-Century motive, a stack of fourths. Against this, the piano introduces a dominant seventh chord, saying in effect "forget this, let's play!". The violin quickly complies, introducing the first of three melodies. This melody is answered by the piano, while the violin plays figuration. The second melody is introduced in the piano and answered by the violin in multiple-stops. The third melody is likewise introduced by the piano, and, during the violin's answer, the piano introduces increasingly active figuration that brings back the accompaniment to the first melody, albeit in a transformed, virtuosic form. Against this, the violin restates the first melody, but, before it can conclude, it is abruptly cut off by a walking bass line. This marks the beginning of the second section of the piece, which is essentially a passacaglia (a piece based on a repeating bass line). Over this bass line, the piano plays an improvisatory (though not improvised) solo. When the violin enters, its solo begins to allude to the materials from the first section of the piece. The piano then repeats its solo in dialogue with the violin, bringing the section to a close. The third section brings back the materials from the first section, but in a new context. It begins with a fugue based on the third melody. This fugue contains many of the traditional fugal devices, including inversion, canon, and stretto. At the end of the fugue, the walking bass returns. This time, however, the musical device of quod libet is used, as each of the three main themes is simultaneously recapitulated above it. This climactic juxtaposition of the four main materials from the piece brings the third section to a close and launches into a restatement of the opening and into a virtuosic coda.

SAMPLE

Blues

For Violin and Piano

Peter Knell (1993)



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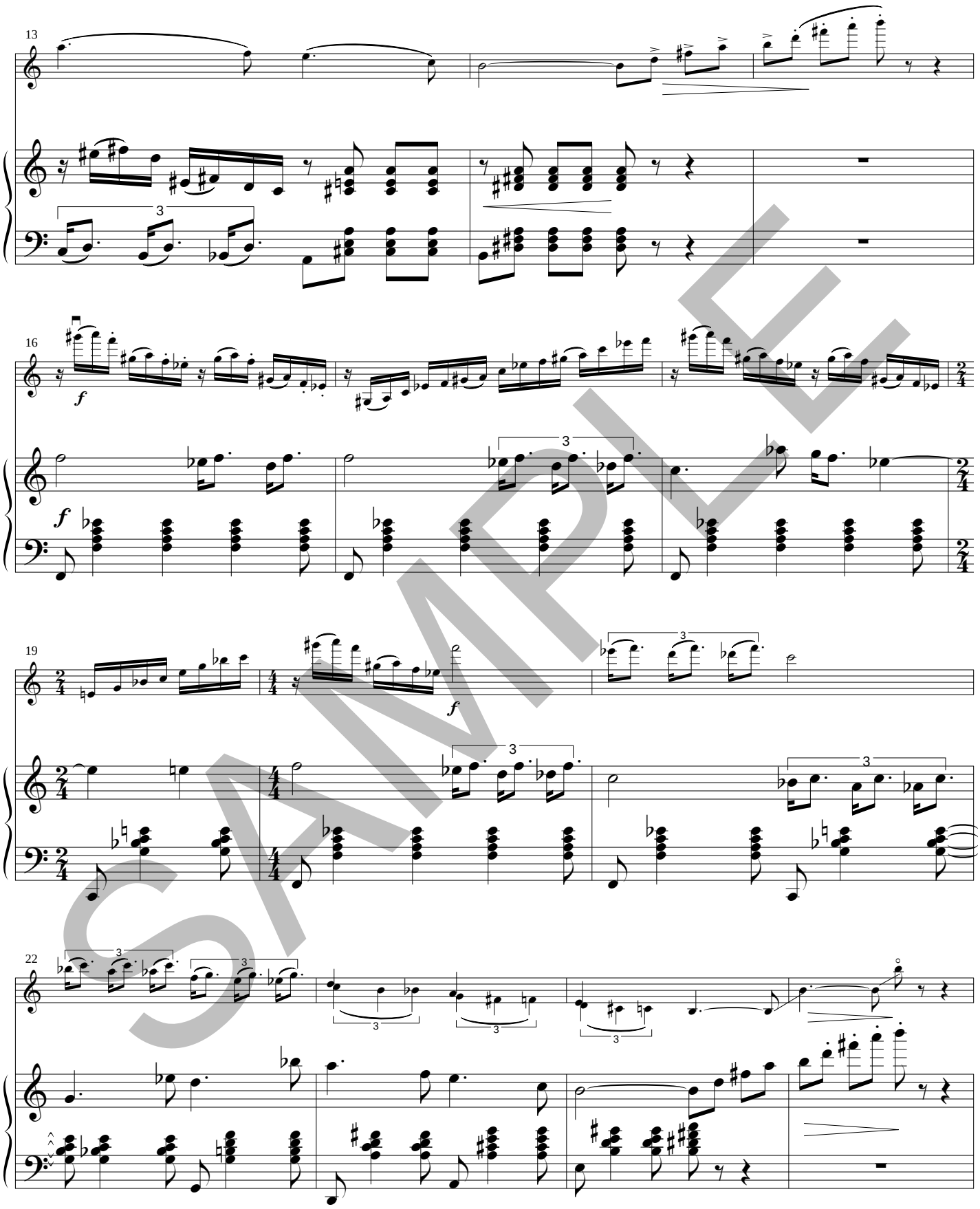
© 1993 by Peter Knell



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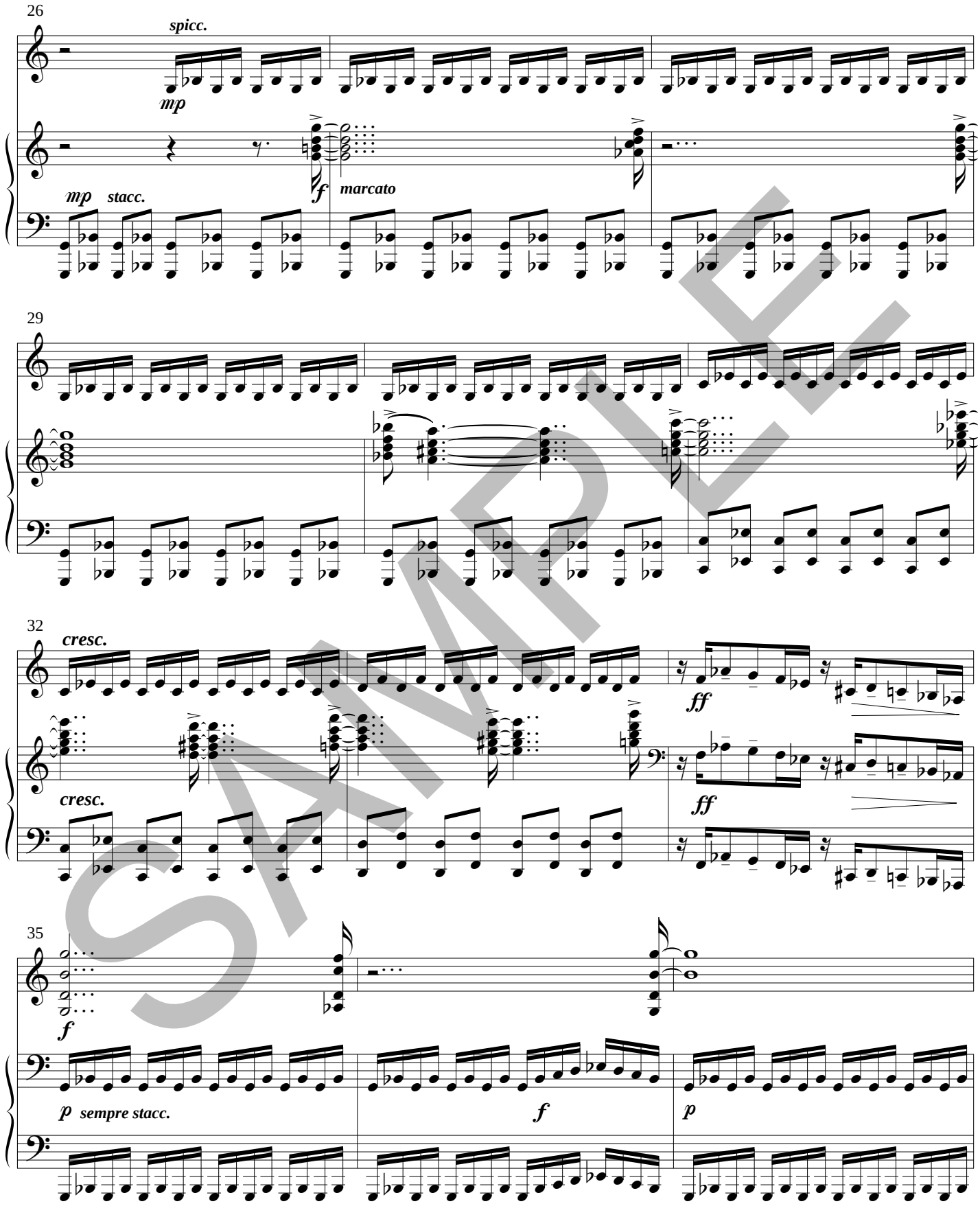
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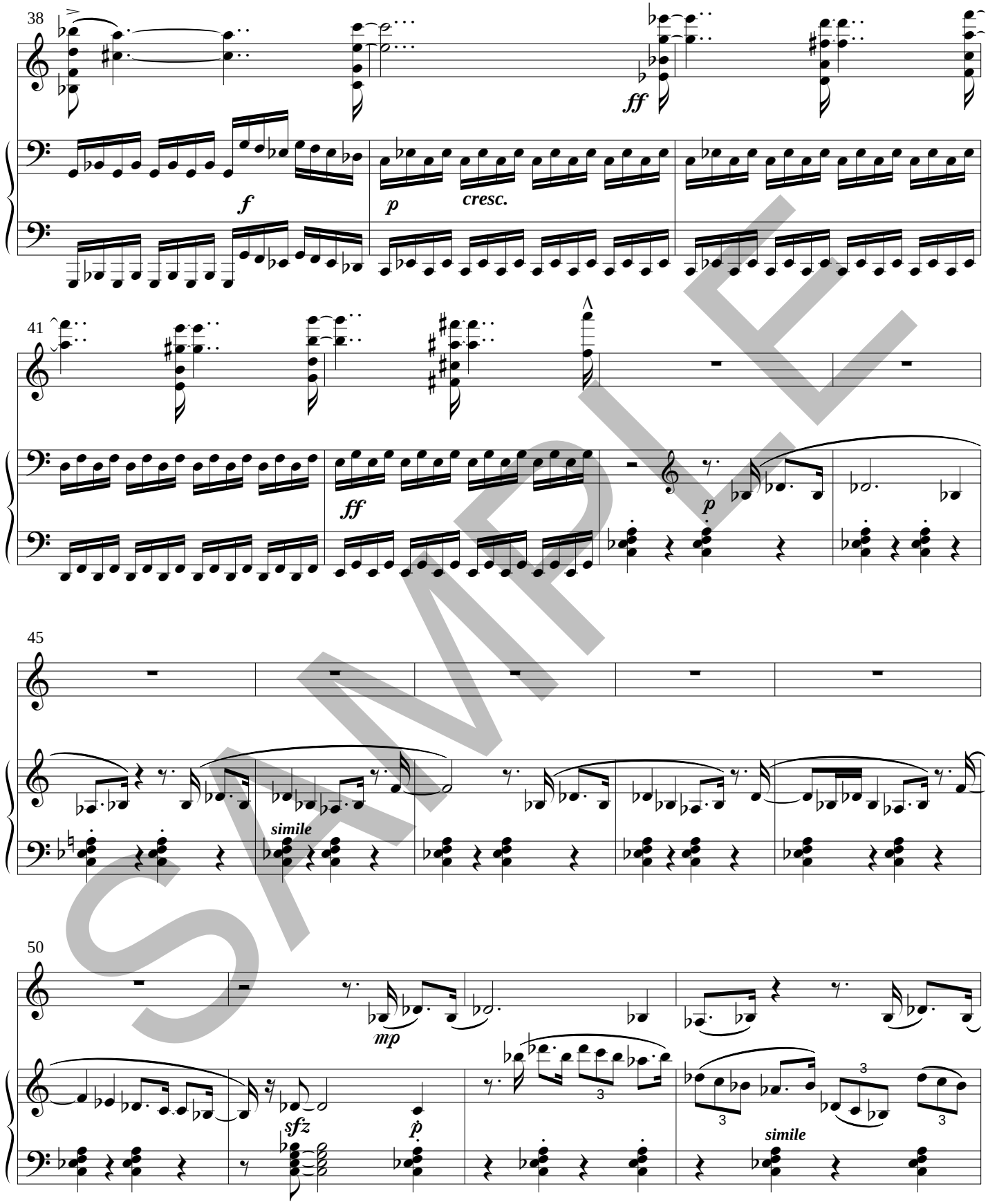

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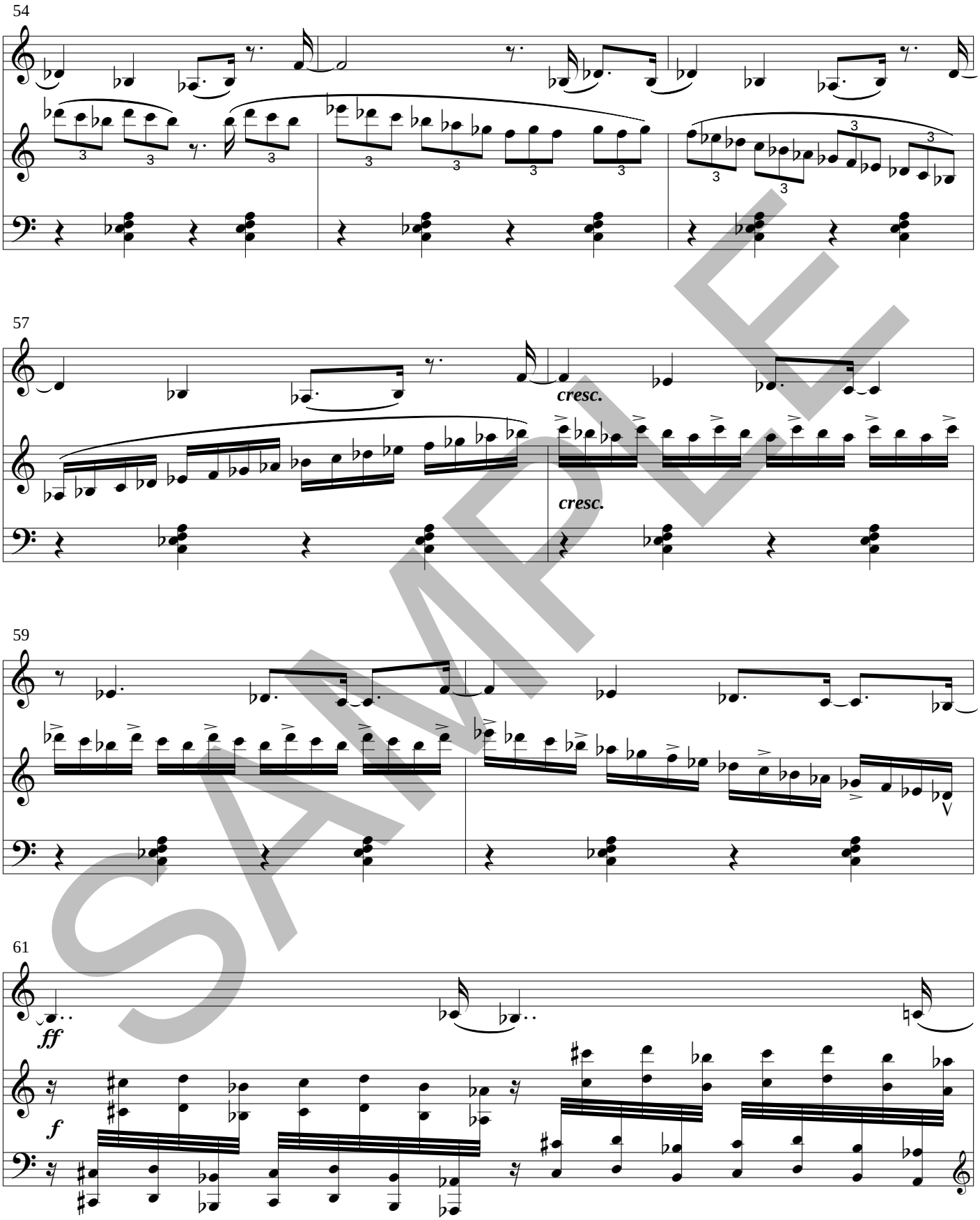

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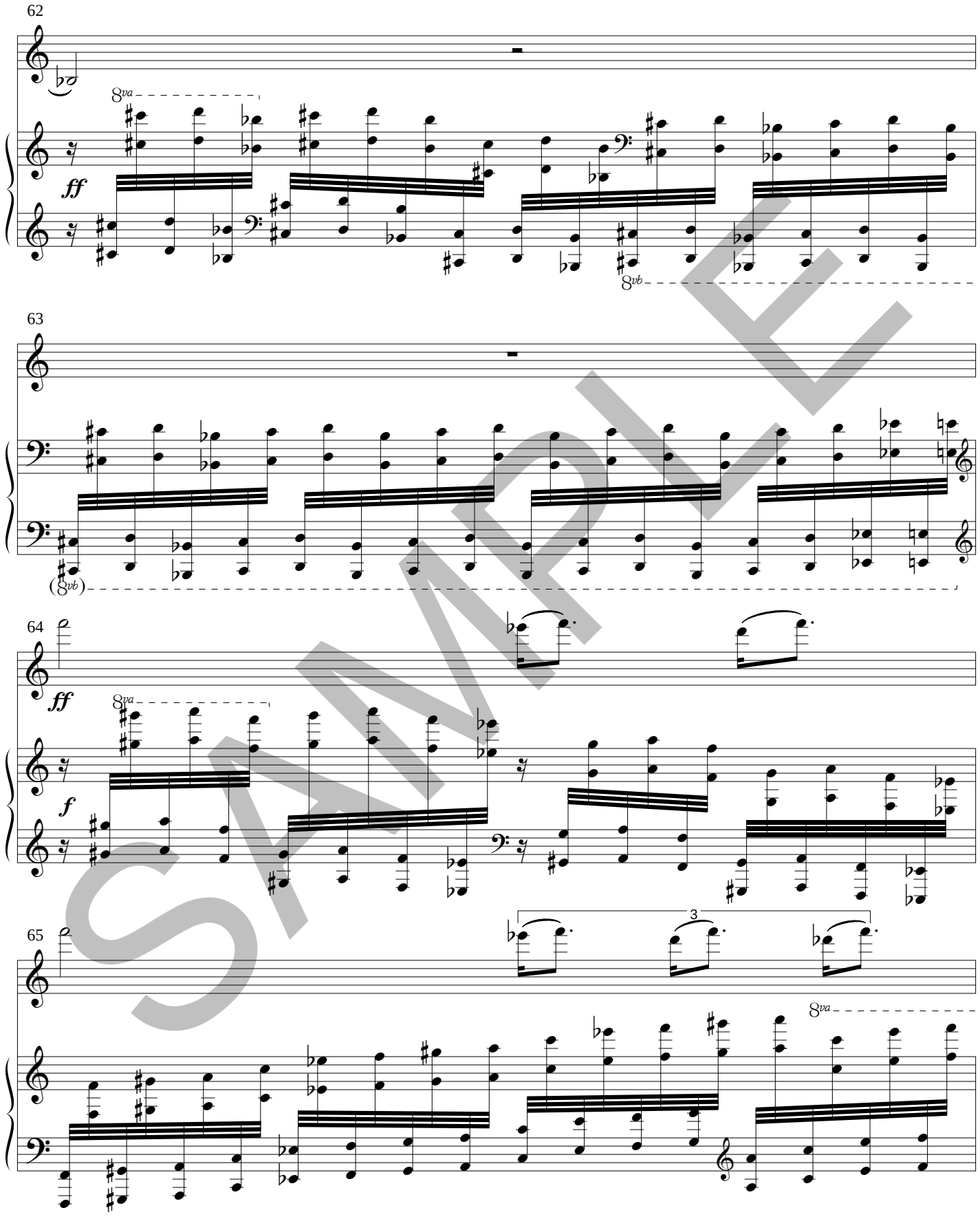

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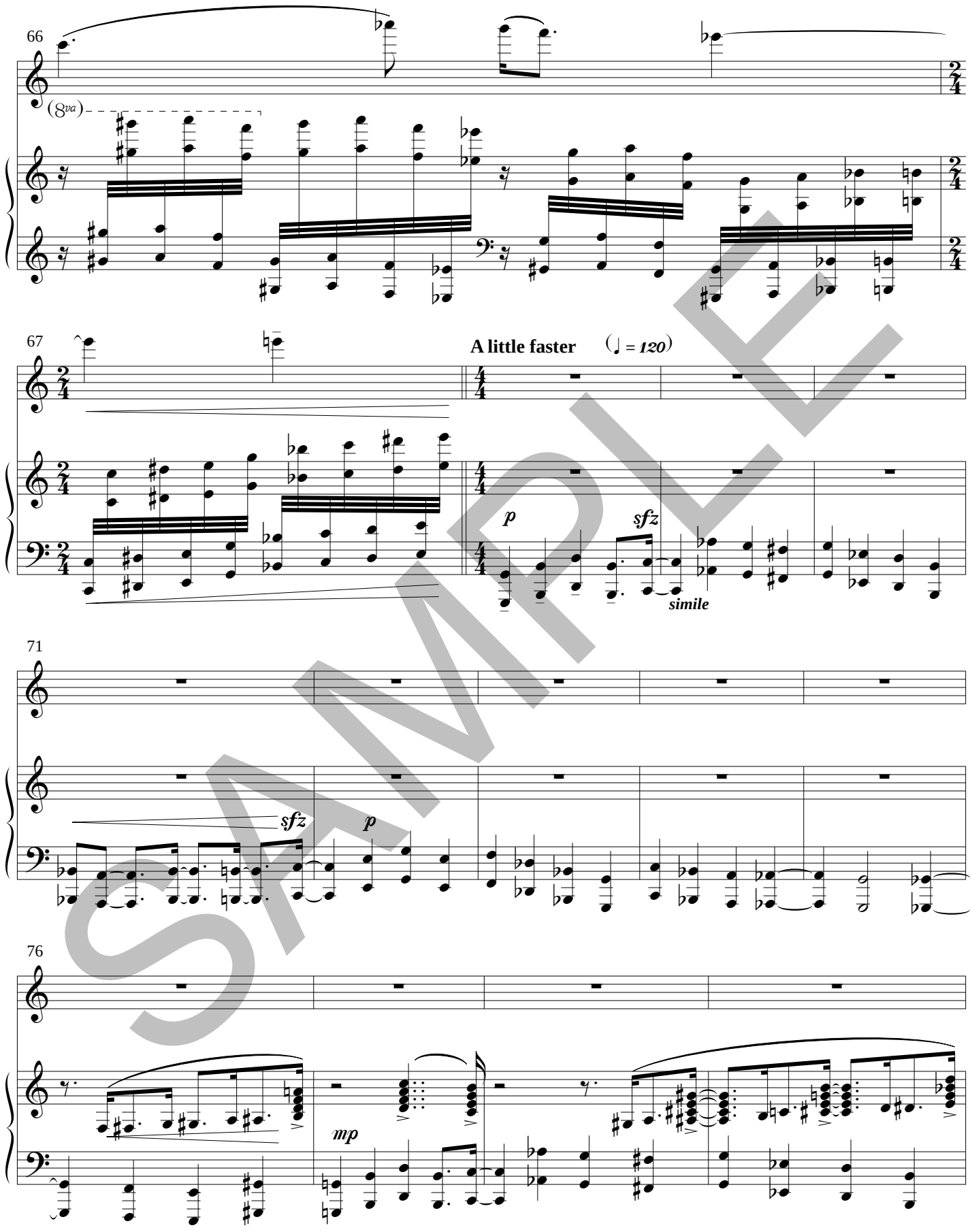

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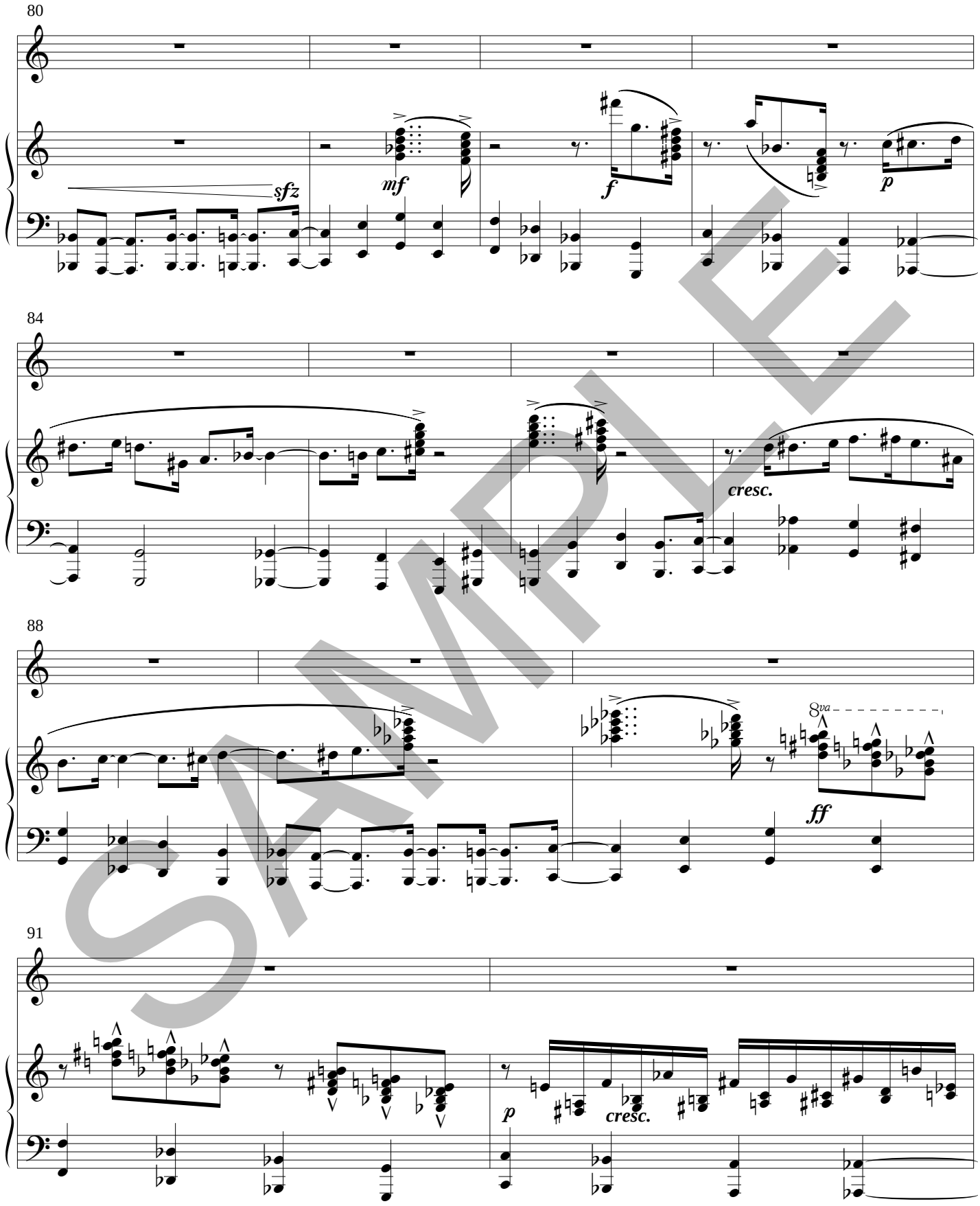

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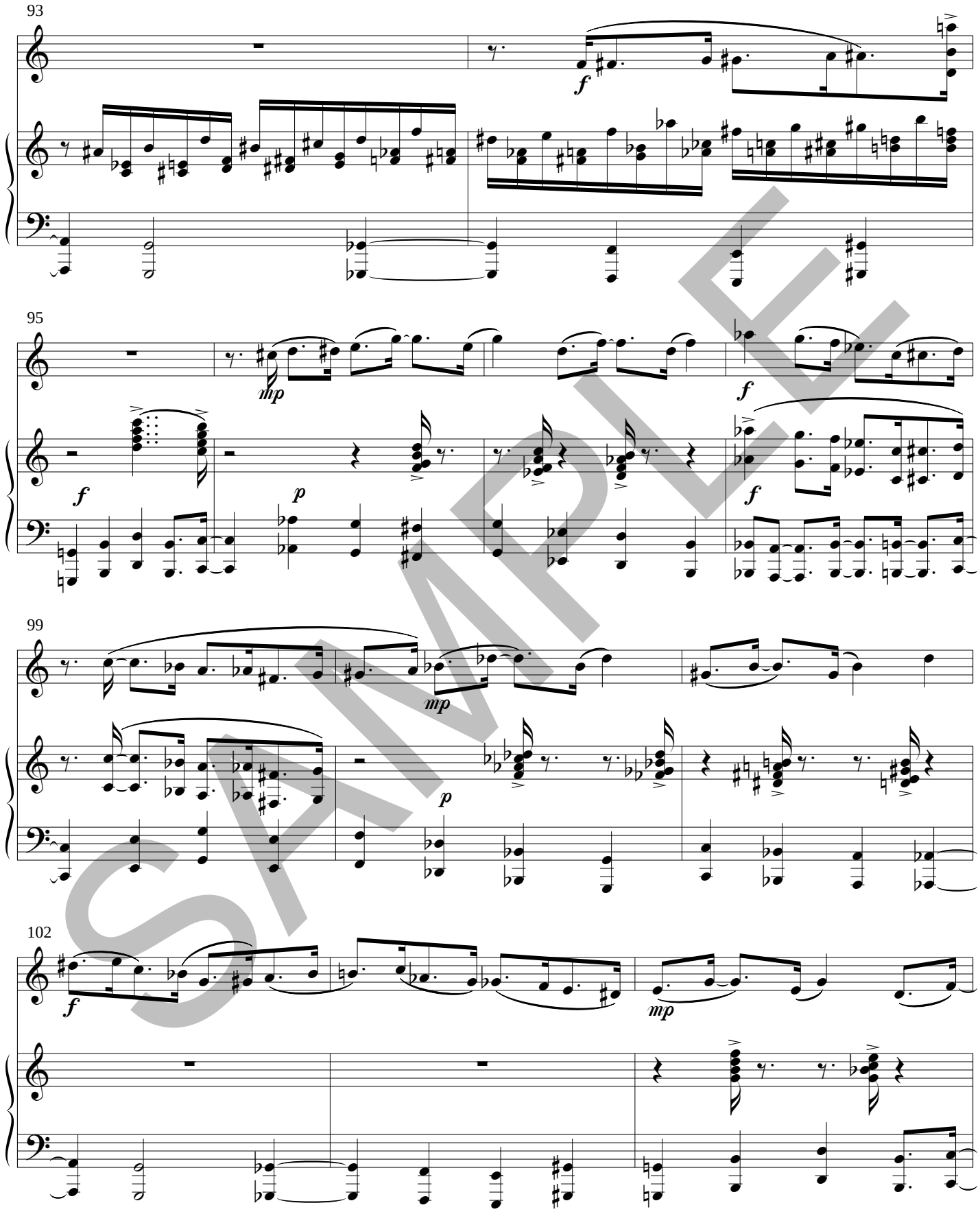

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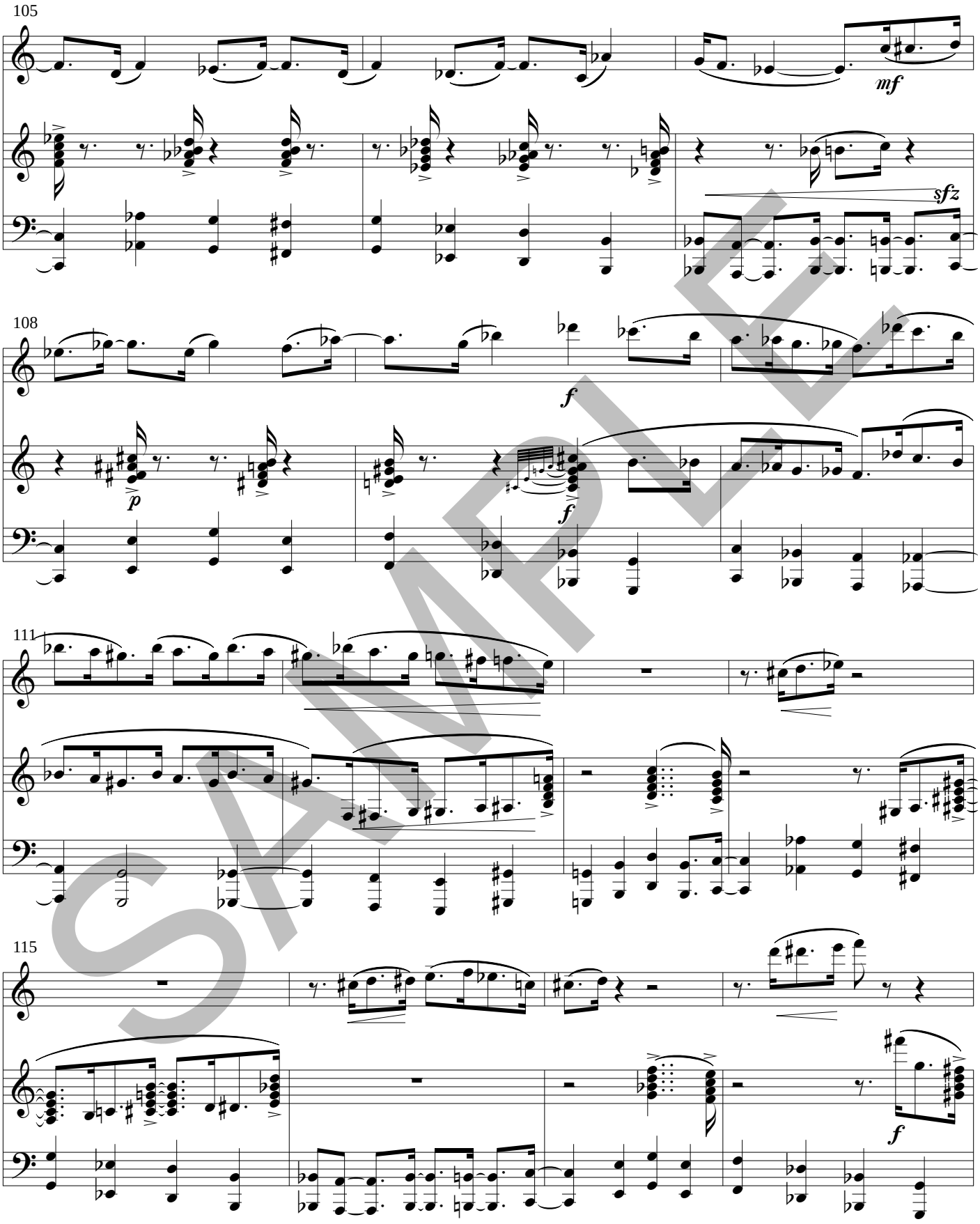

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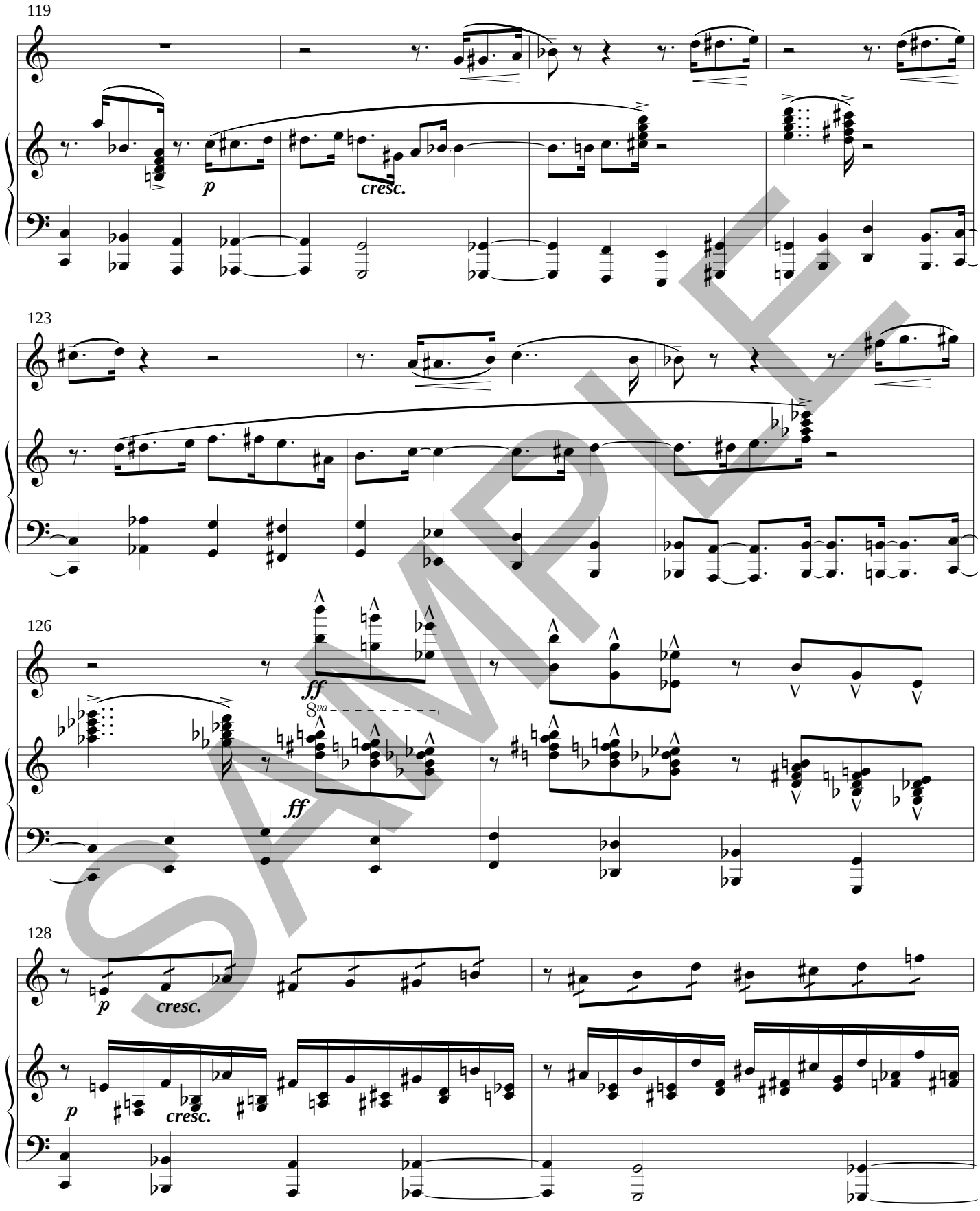

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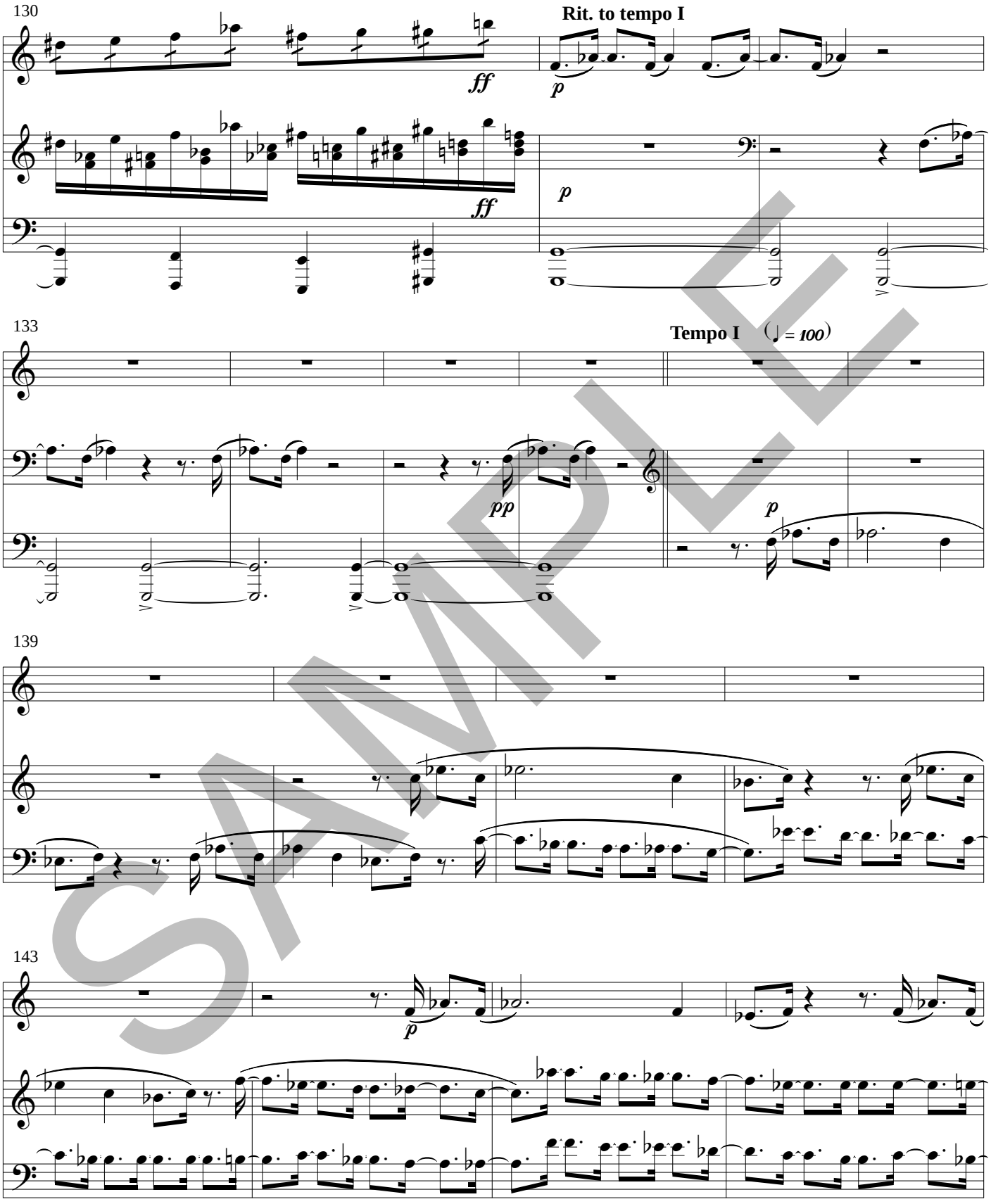

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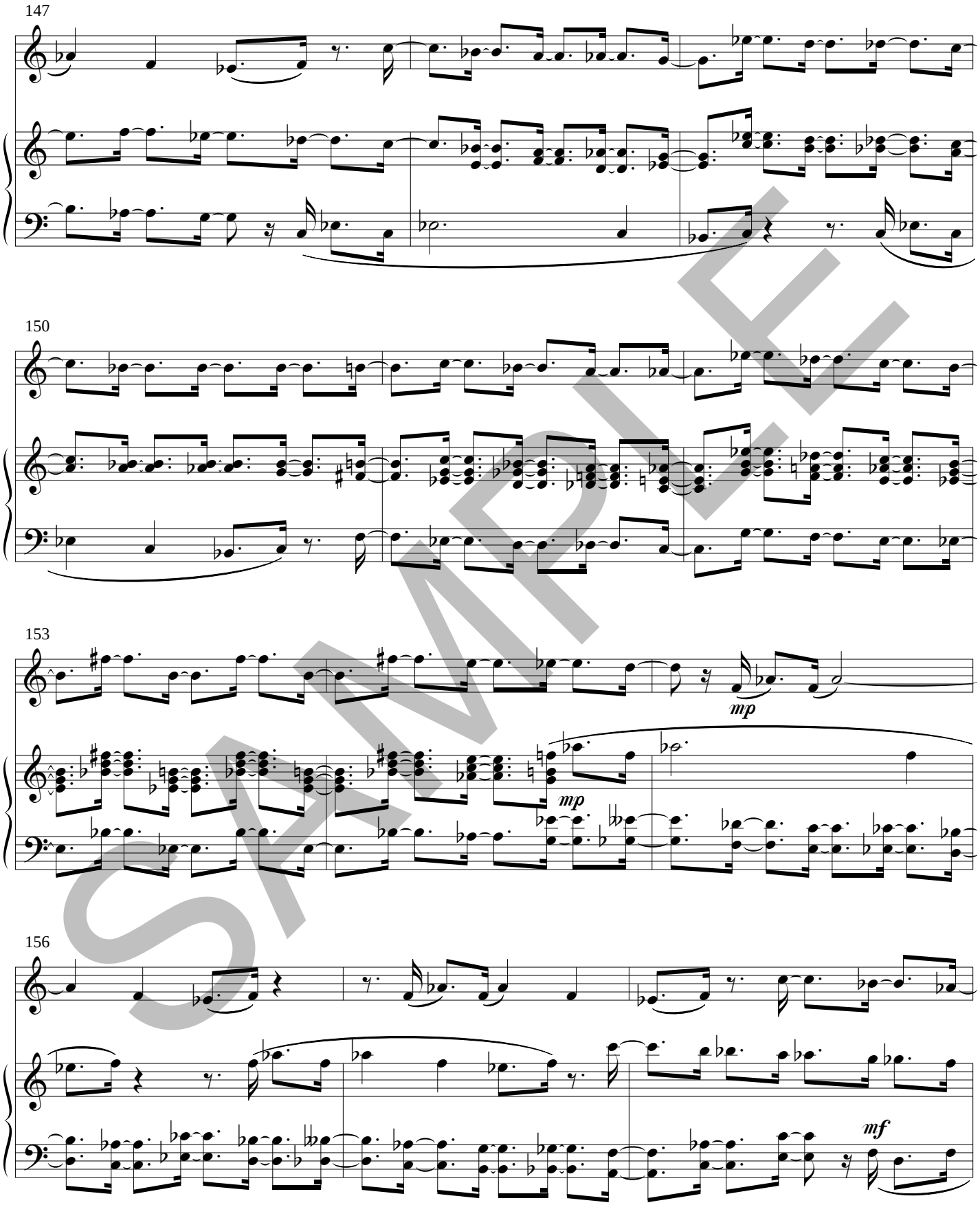

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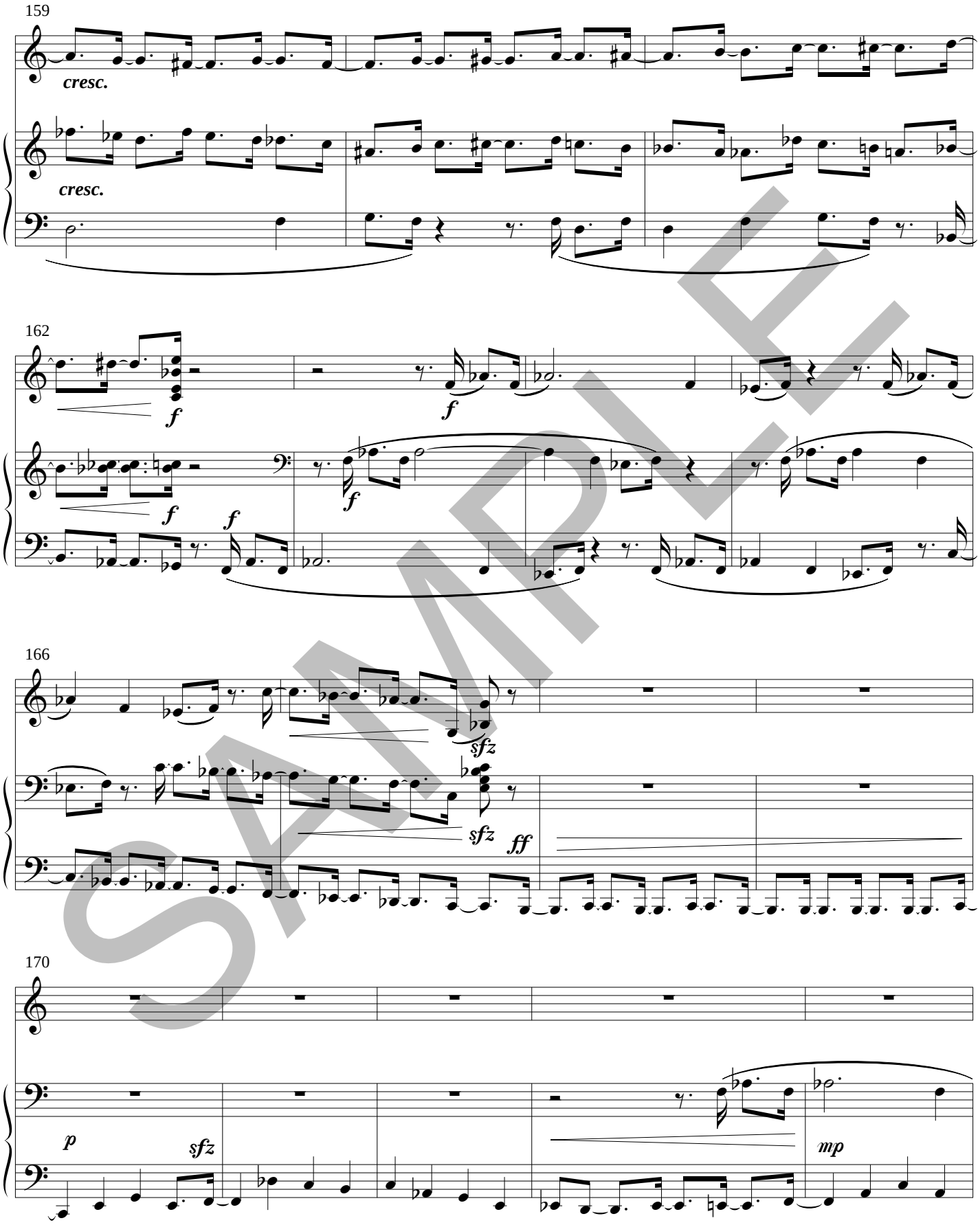

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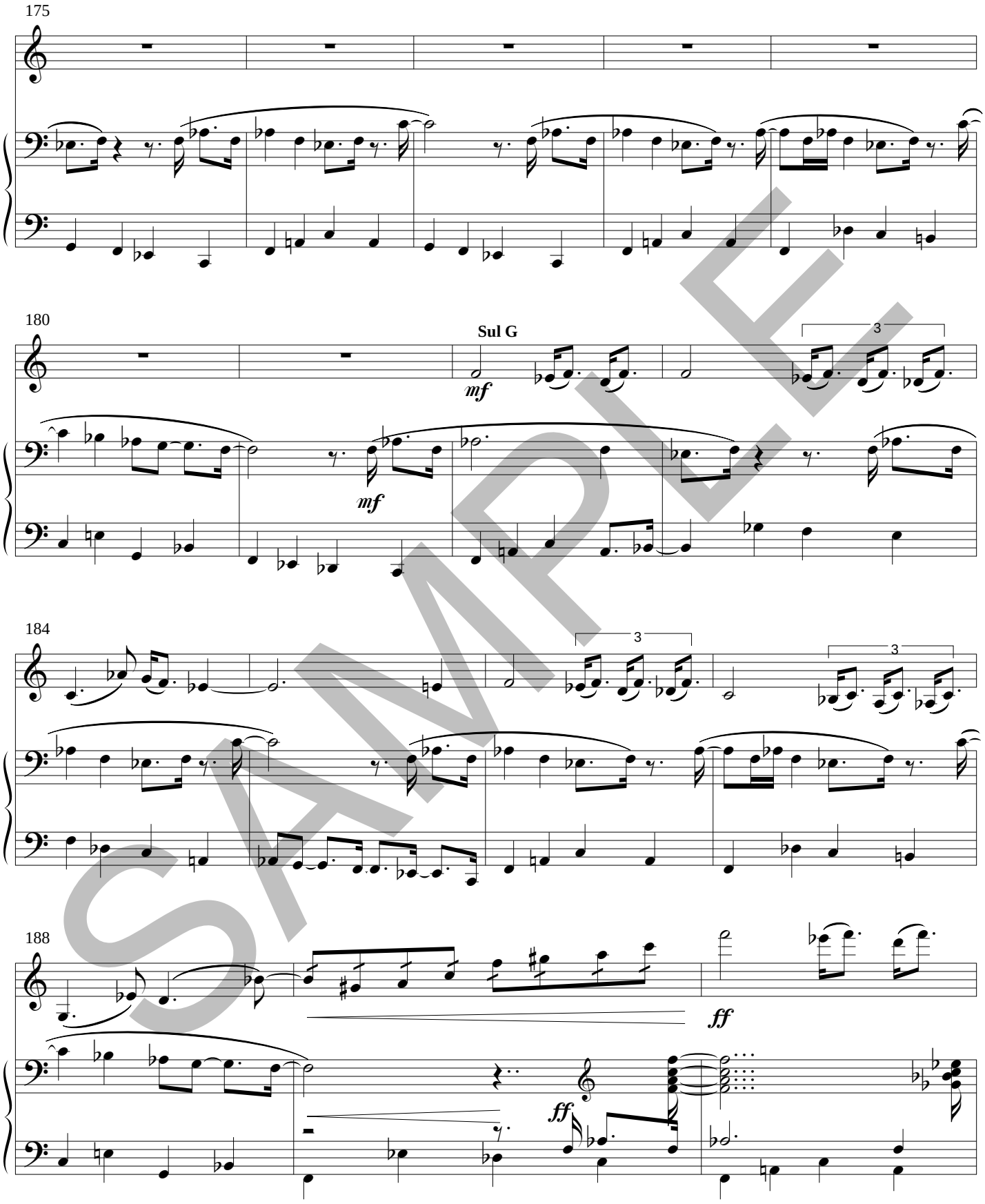

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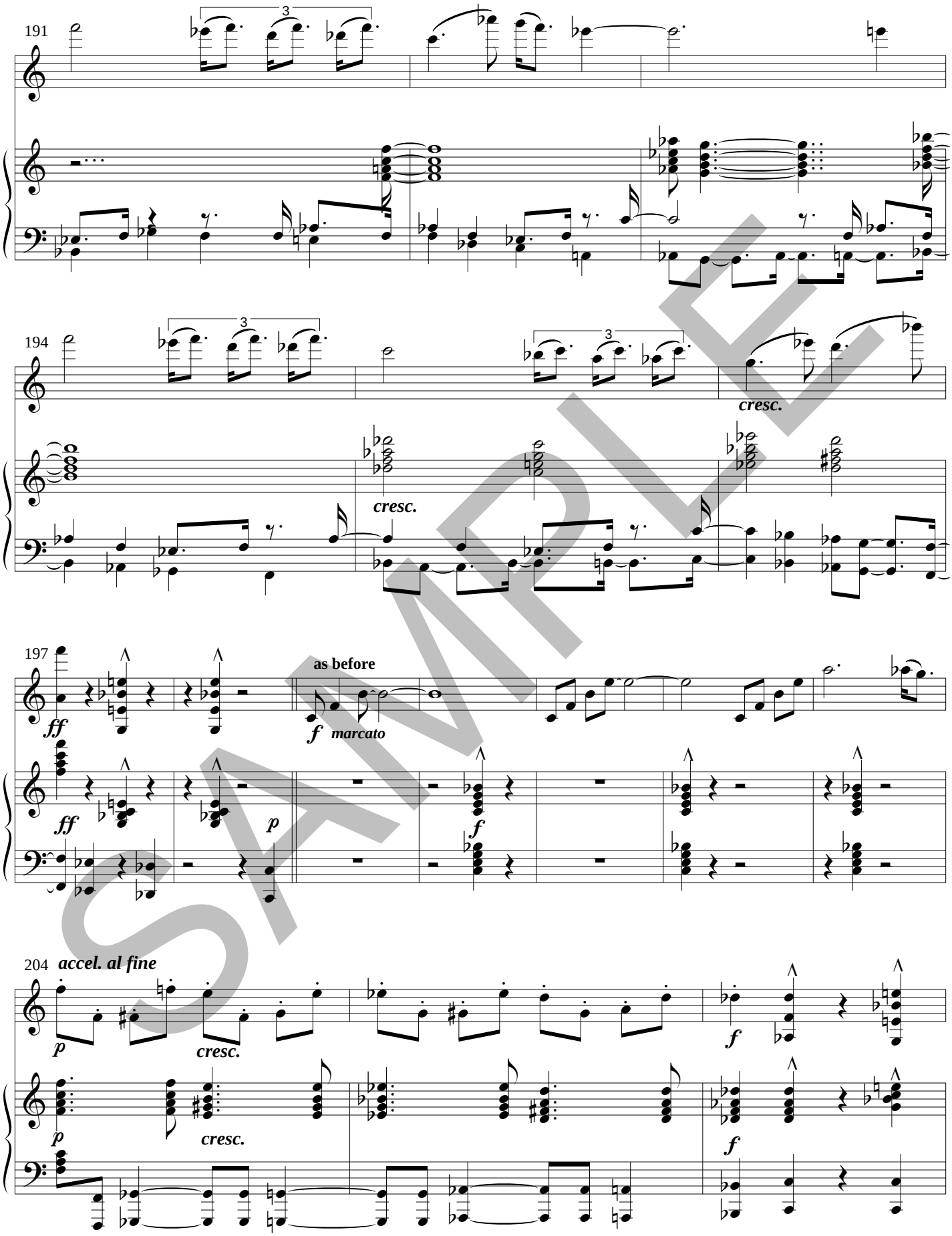
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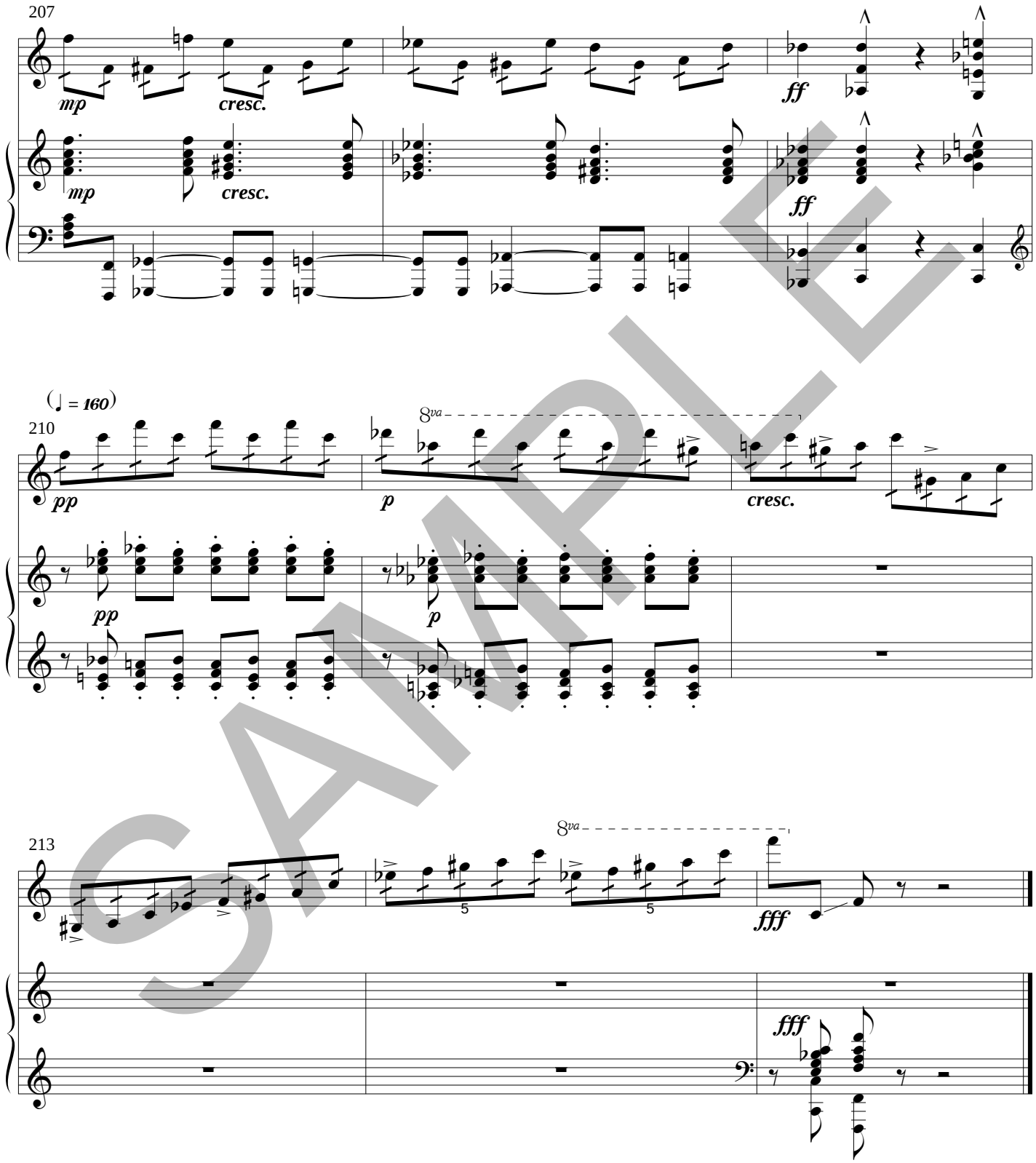

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