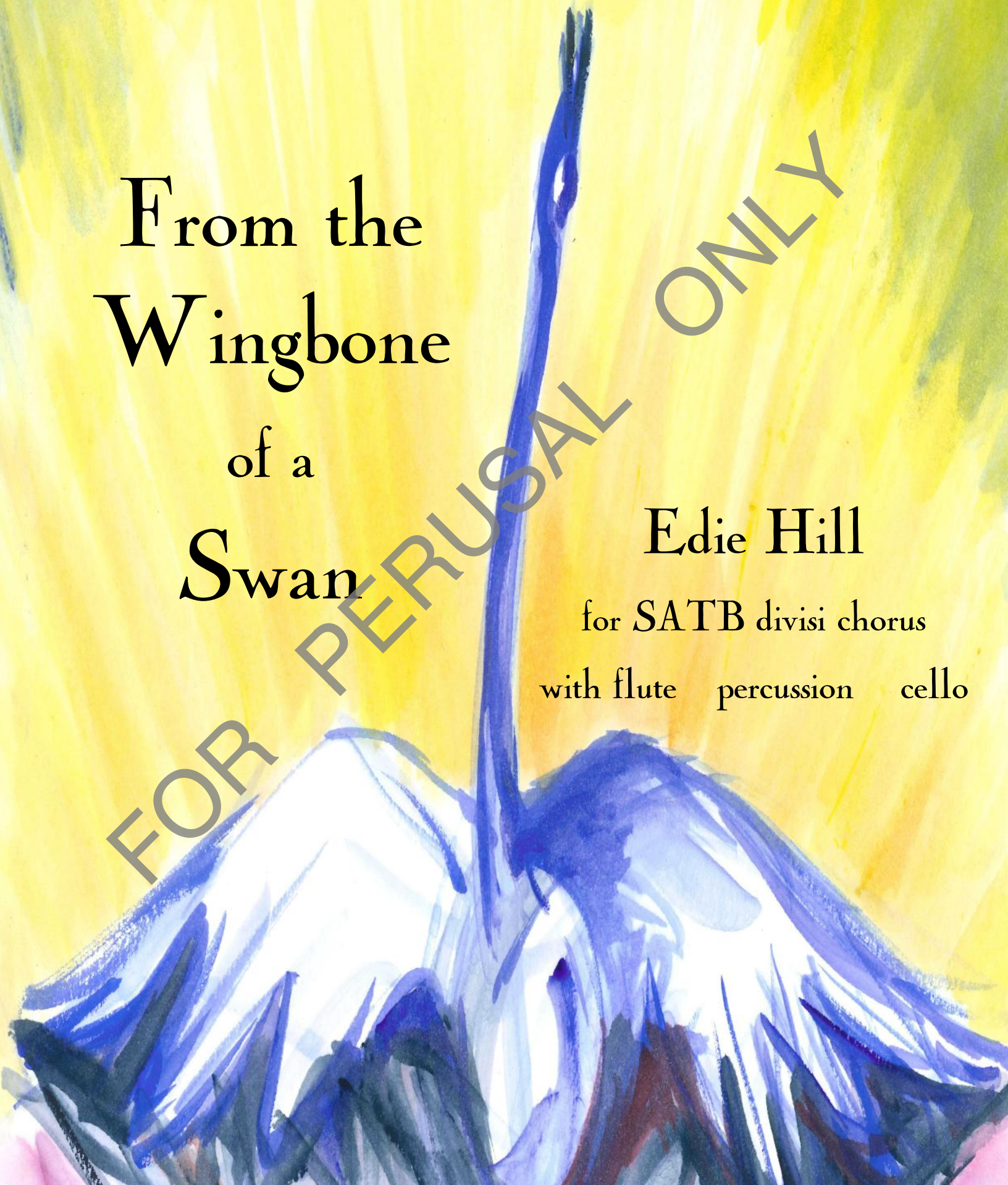
HP04-26

From the Wingbone of a Swan



Edie Hill

for SATB divisi chorus

with flute percussion cello

FOR PERUSAL ONLY

From the Wingbone of a Swan

Synopsis of and ideas behind the text

I believe that possessing a musical sense is inherent to being human, and that human beings, from their very beginnings, were musical before they expressed themselves with formal language. We embody counterpoint in the most basic way by virtue of simultaneous voice and heartbeat.

Thus the first movement: "Prelude to Speech." The poem itself is only a portion of what the listener hears. I use vocalisms and simple "calls" that ultimately lead to the words that are the poem. The cello and drum accompany this movement. I chose the cello because it is the instrument that is most like the human voice. The "shape" of the movement is a gradual transition from pure sound and melody to language – a discovery of speech through music.

Flowing directly out of newly-found speech is "Source." When I gave a lecture about the origins of music at Delft University, I made reference to an "underground river." To me, music is born from this so-called river. The river is the source that is tapped and from it comes music that is as basic as water is to human beings. It IS life blood. And it is always there – now – then. It is a constant that connects us all.

Finally, I believe that instruments (such as a flute) are extensions of the human voice. We make them so that we can "sing" in ways beyond the physical constraints of the human voice – so that we can sing in all manner of timbers, dynamics, and ranges. I was inspired by an article entitled "Magic Flute: Primal Find Sings of Music's Mystery" by Robert Lee Holtz, which appeared in a 2008 edition of the *Wall Street Journal*. The article talks about "the discovery of the world's oldest musical instrument – a 35,000 year-old flute made from a (swan's) wing bone." I thought, *what a beautiful thing* – a flute made from the wingbone of a swan. In this movement, I wanted to conjure imagery of this ancient instrument, and again, draw attention to music as a thread that connects us as human beings in ancient times and in the present moment.

As a way of conveying progression, I add instruments movement by movement. The cello and drum accompany the first. In the second movement, marimba is added. The sound of the marimba adds a texture that conjures water and flow. And in the third, the flute joins the texture. It is the "Breath of Silver," the "Ribbon of Light."

Edie Hill

FOR PERUSAL ONLY

i. Prelude to Speech

say:
I know

say:
I feel

say:
I am

ii. Source

beneath me, a river
unseen
under skin of stone
earth blood
infusion of gold
in body of human
always
and now
gently
persuaded
to sing

iii. Paleolithic Flute

from the wing bone of a swan:
music
breath of silver
ribbon of light

from the wingbone of a swan:
music
ancient as stone
present as living

flesh on bone

-Edie Hill and Tim O'Brien

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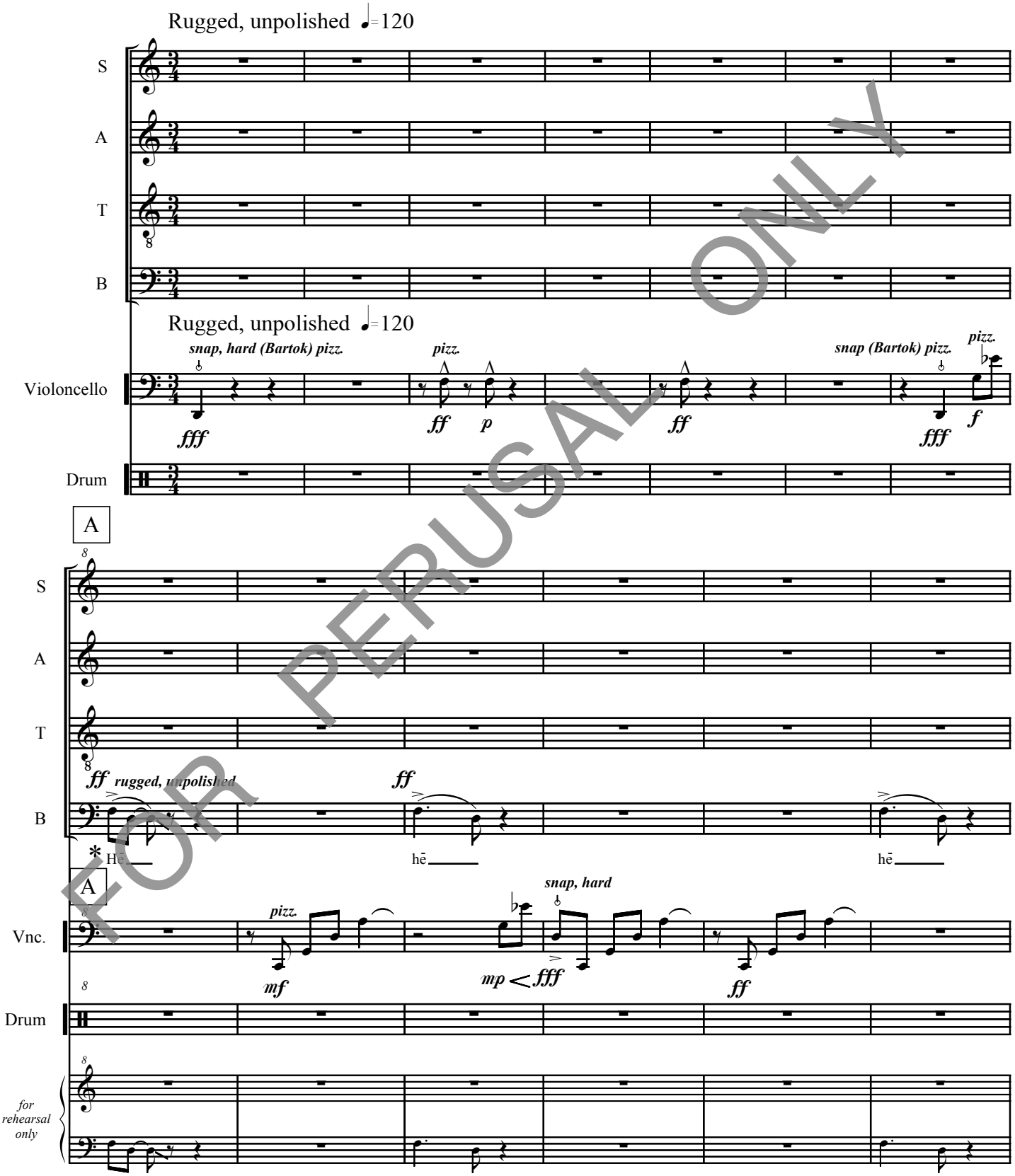
Commissioned by the Valborg Choir, The Netherlands,
on the occasion of its 20th anniversary.

From the Wingbone of a Swan

I. Prelude to Speech

Edie Hill
Tim O'Brien

Edie Hill



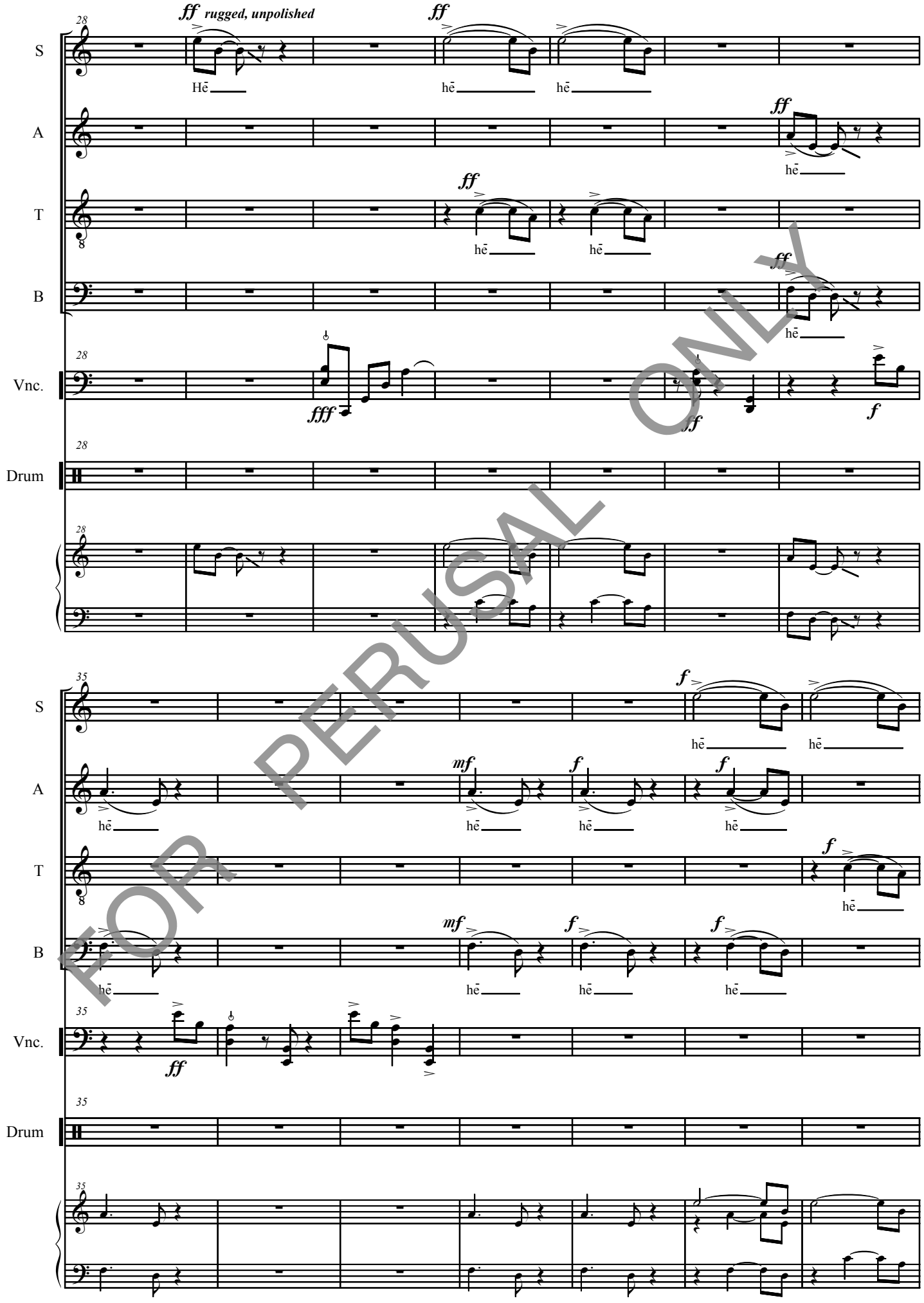
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* The ē in Hē should be pronounced like the first syllable in the German word "leben".

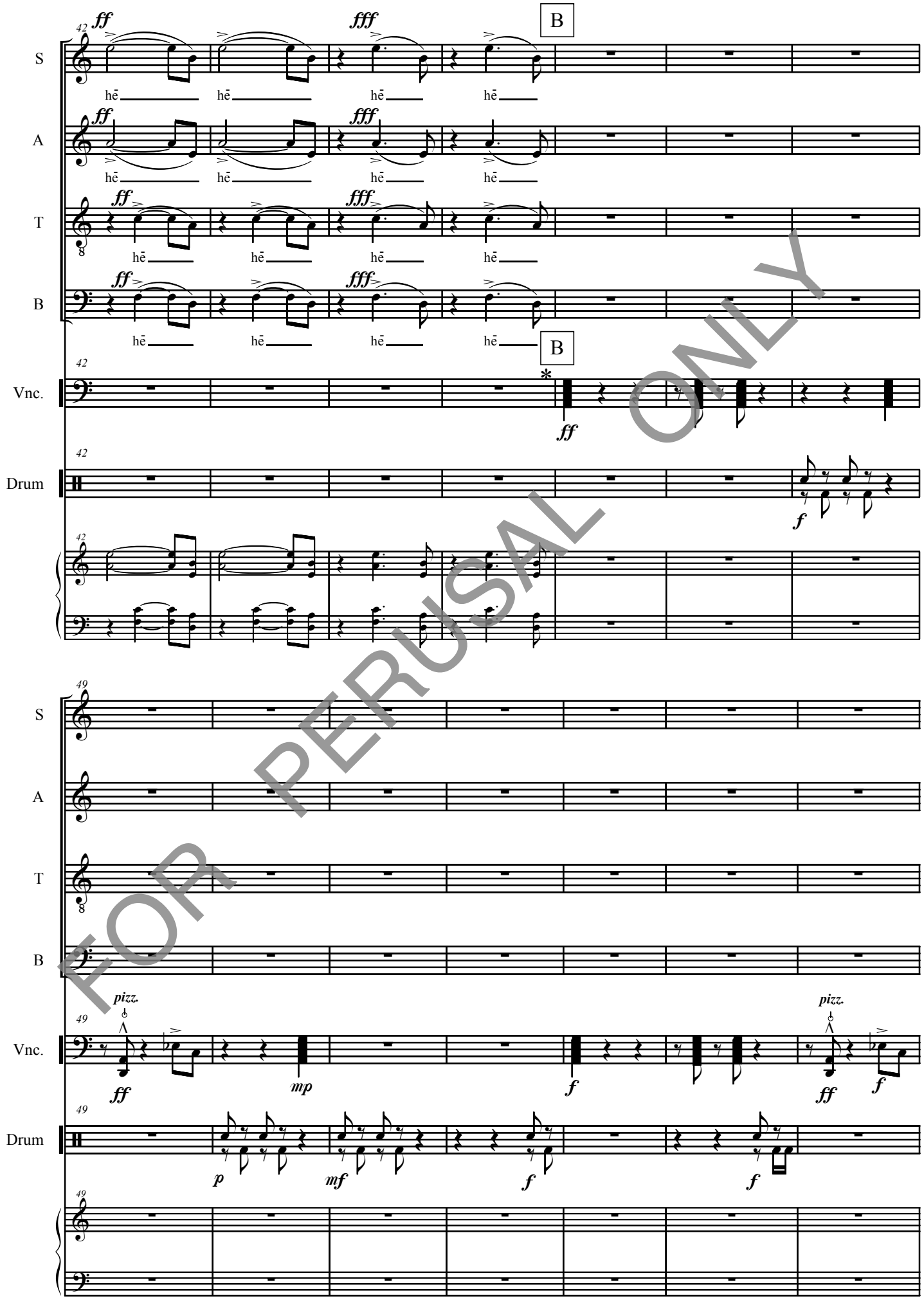
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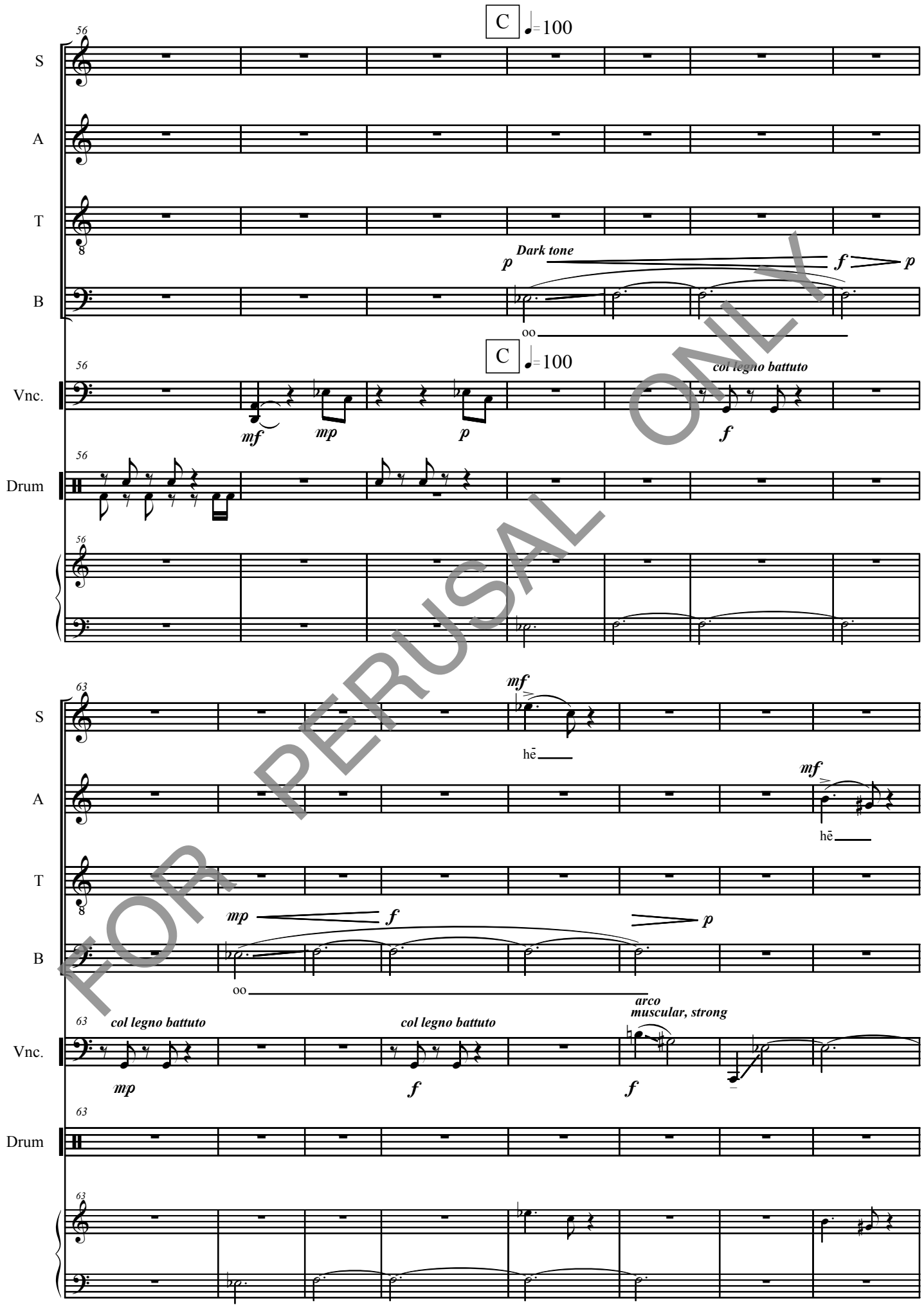


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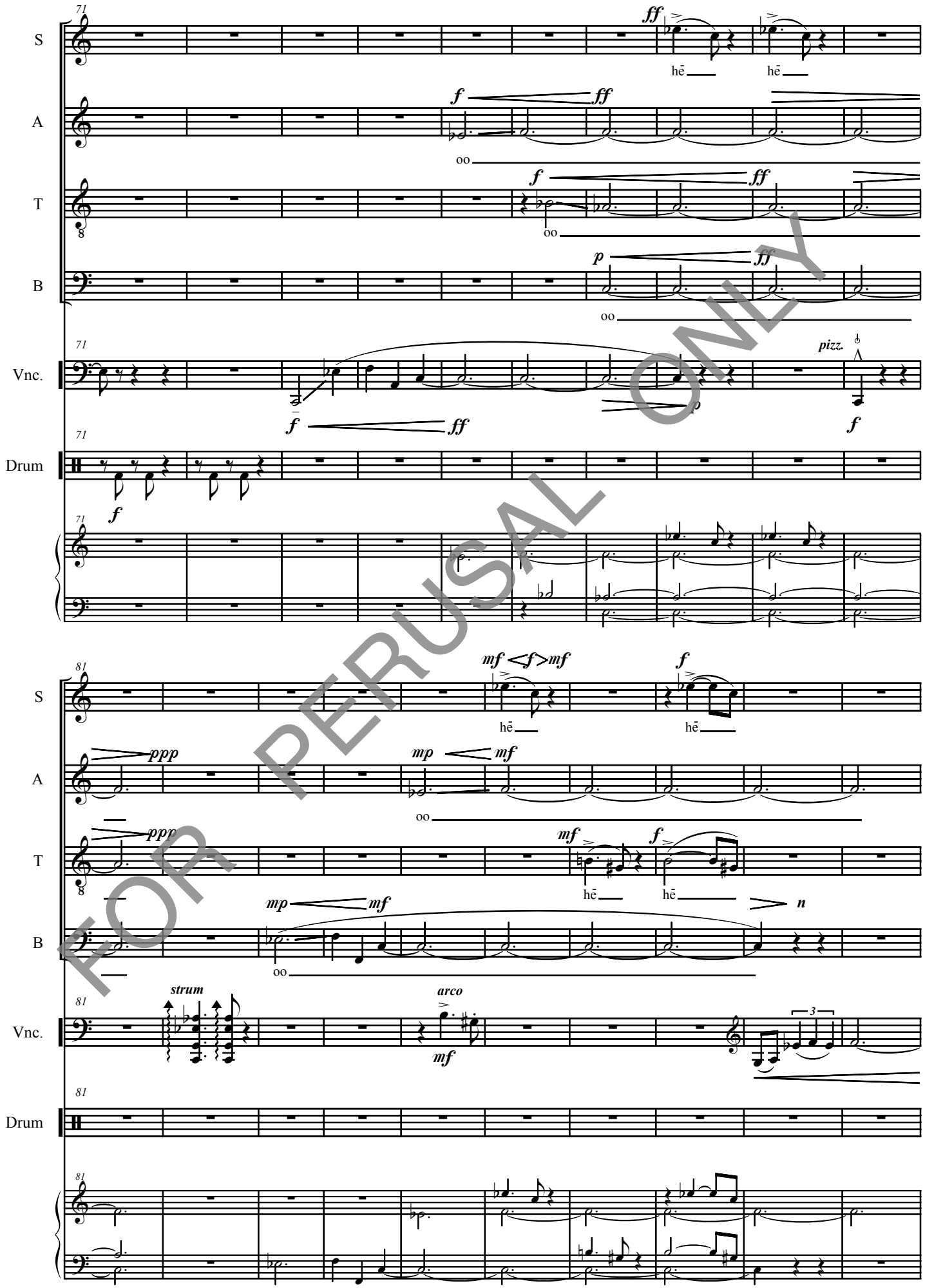


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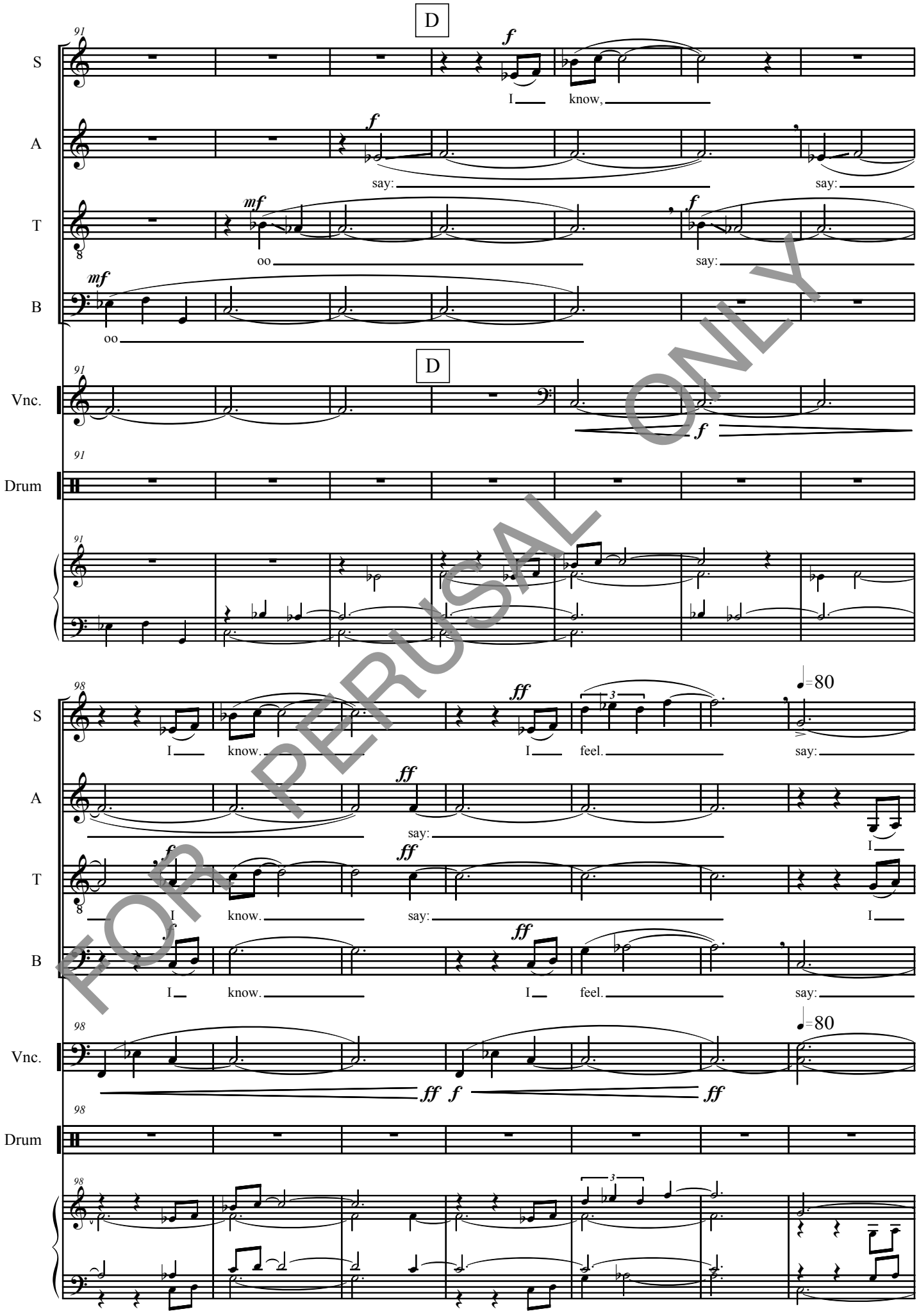
* strike finger board with hand



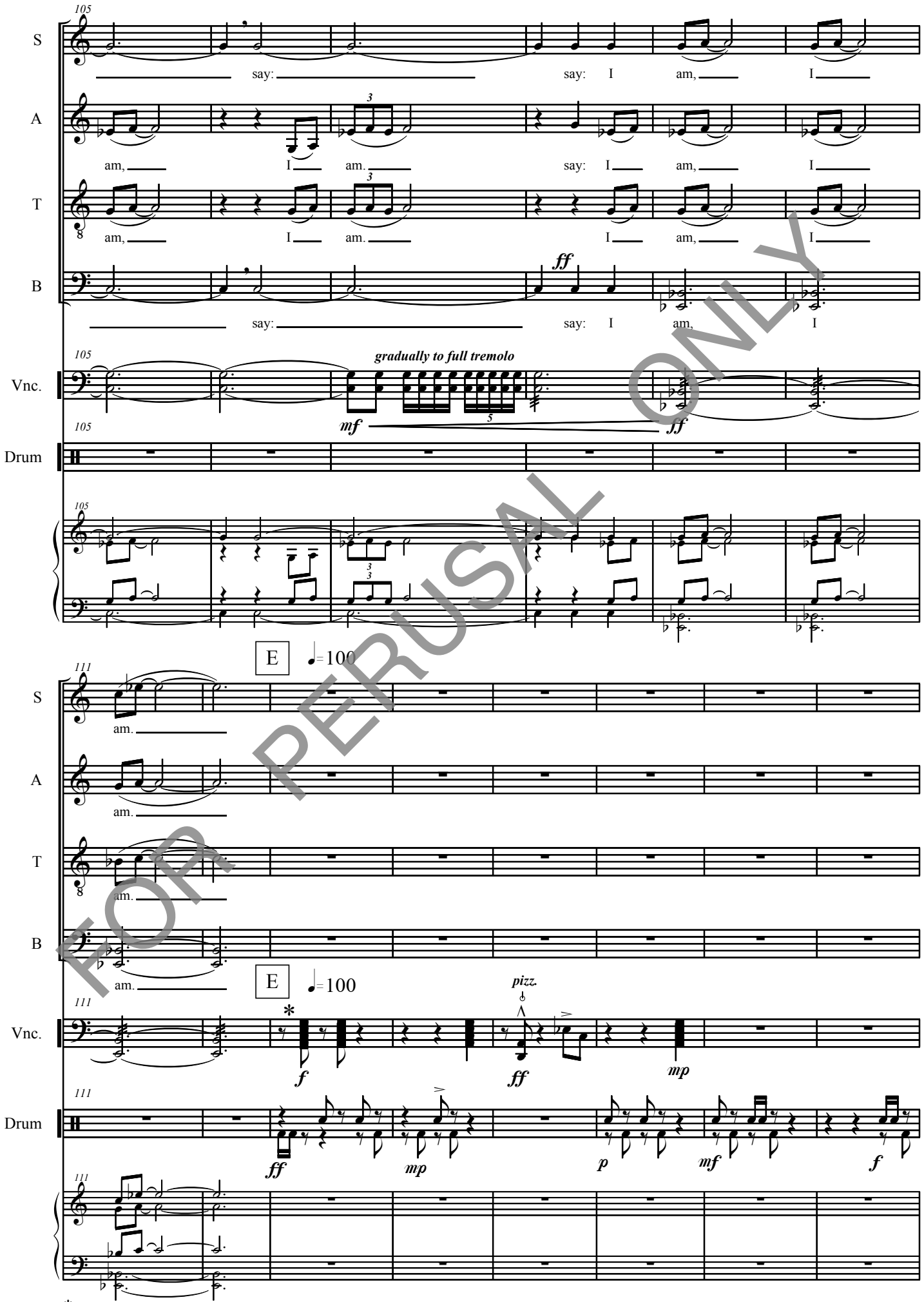
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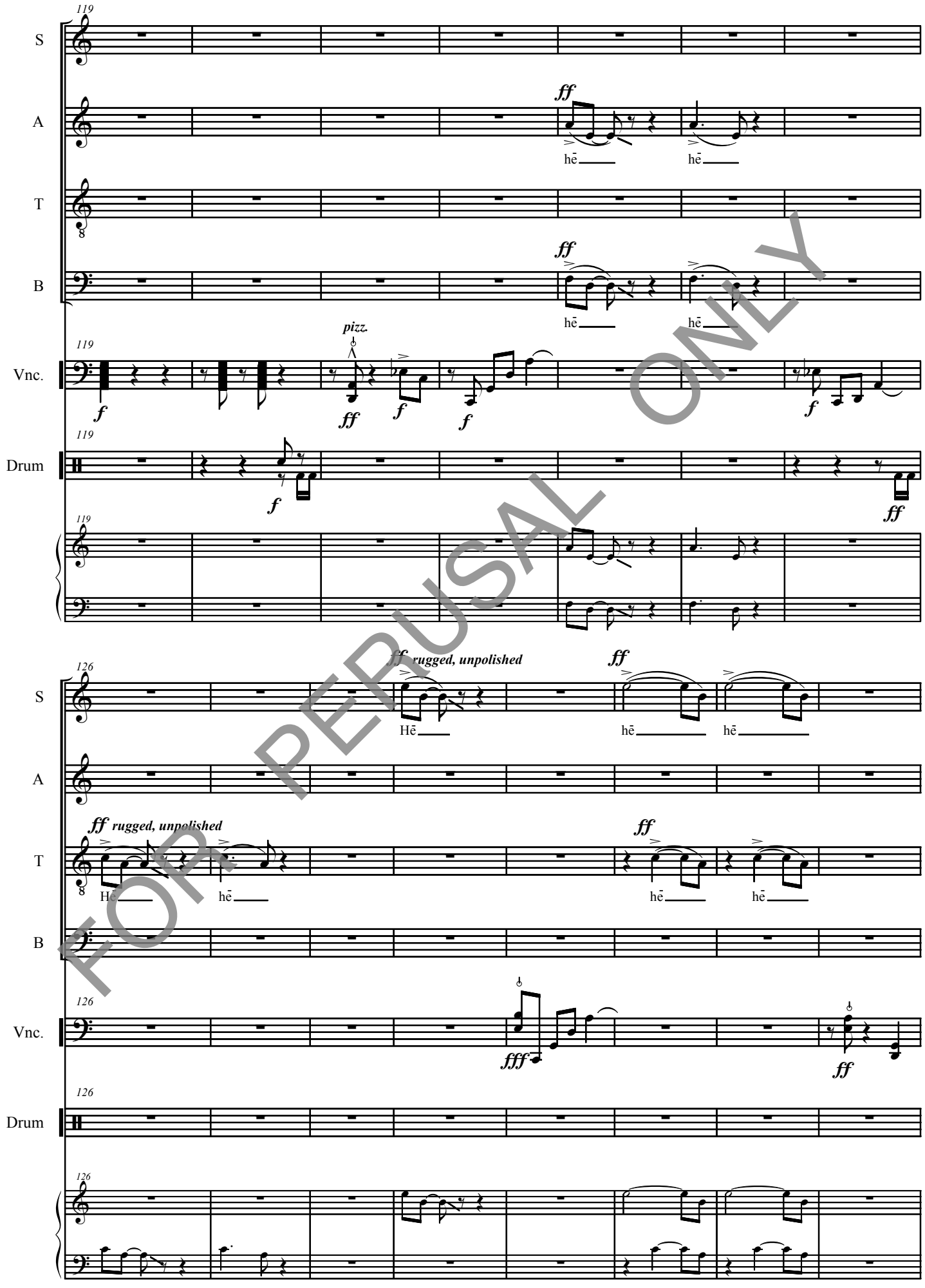
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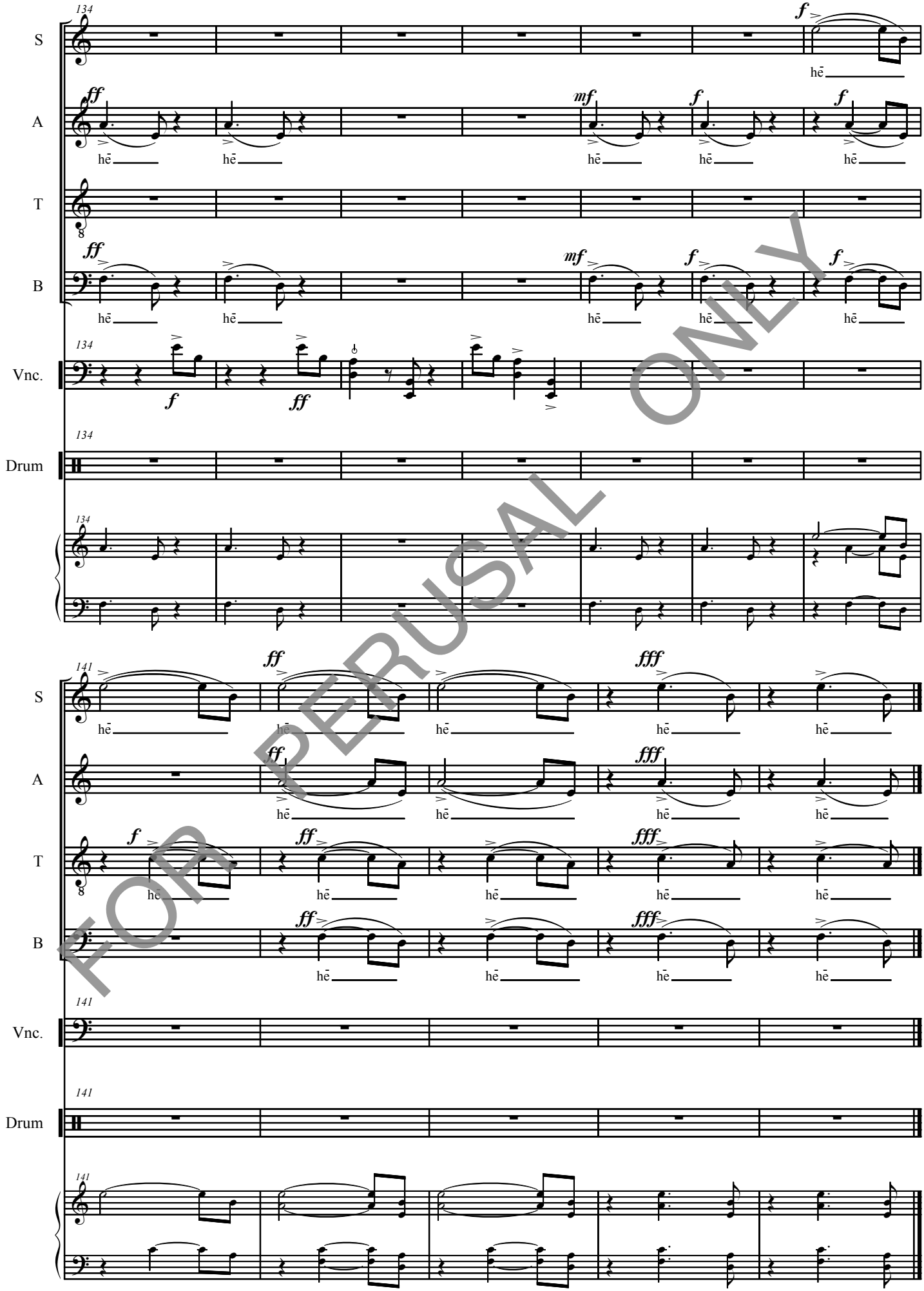
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134
S
A
T
B
Vnc.
Drum
hē
141
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II. Source

Edie Hill
Tim O'Brien

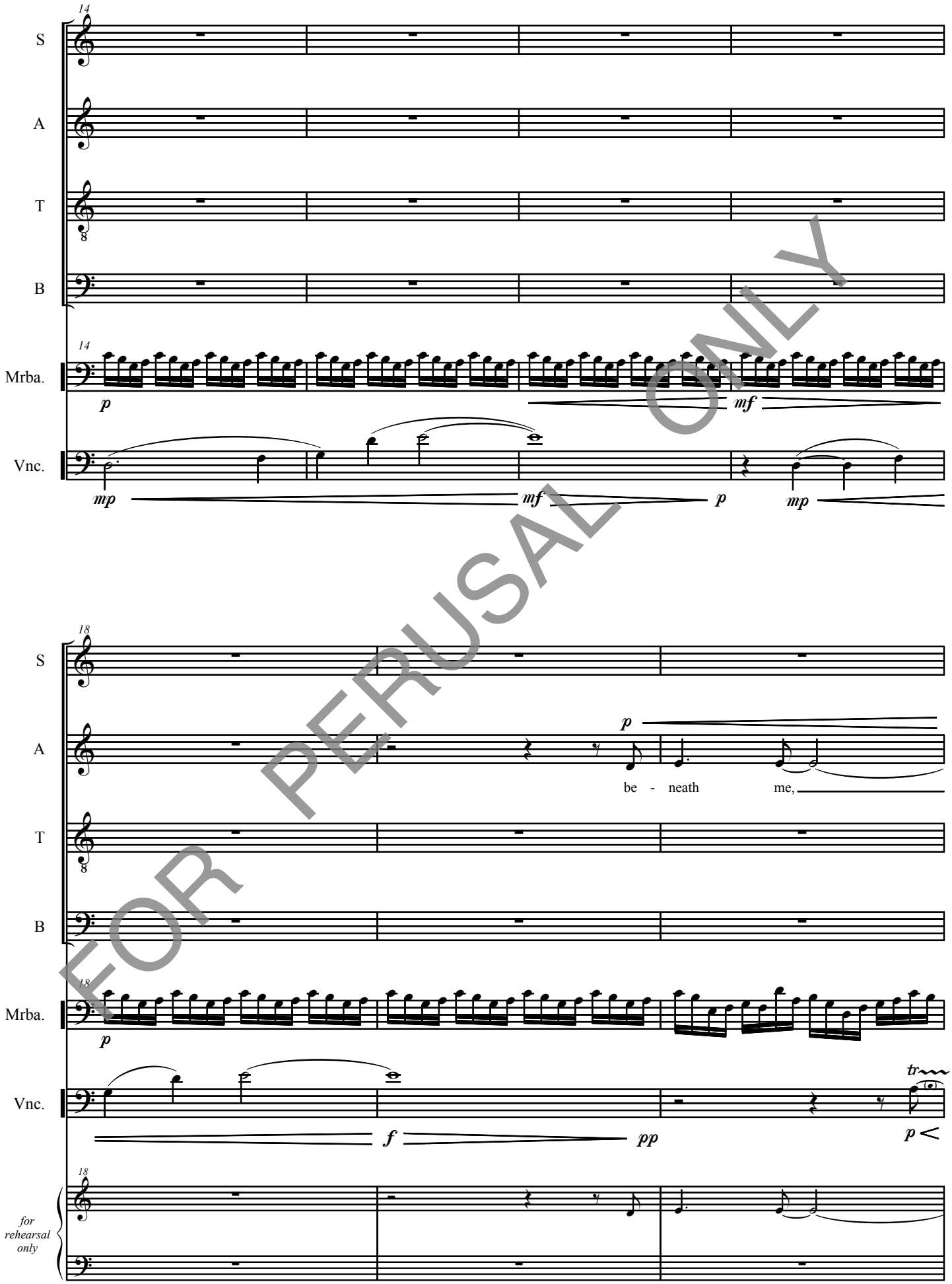
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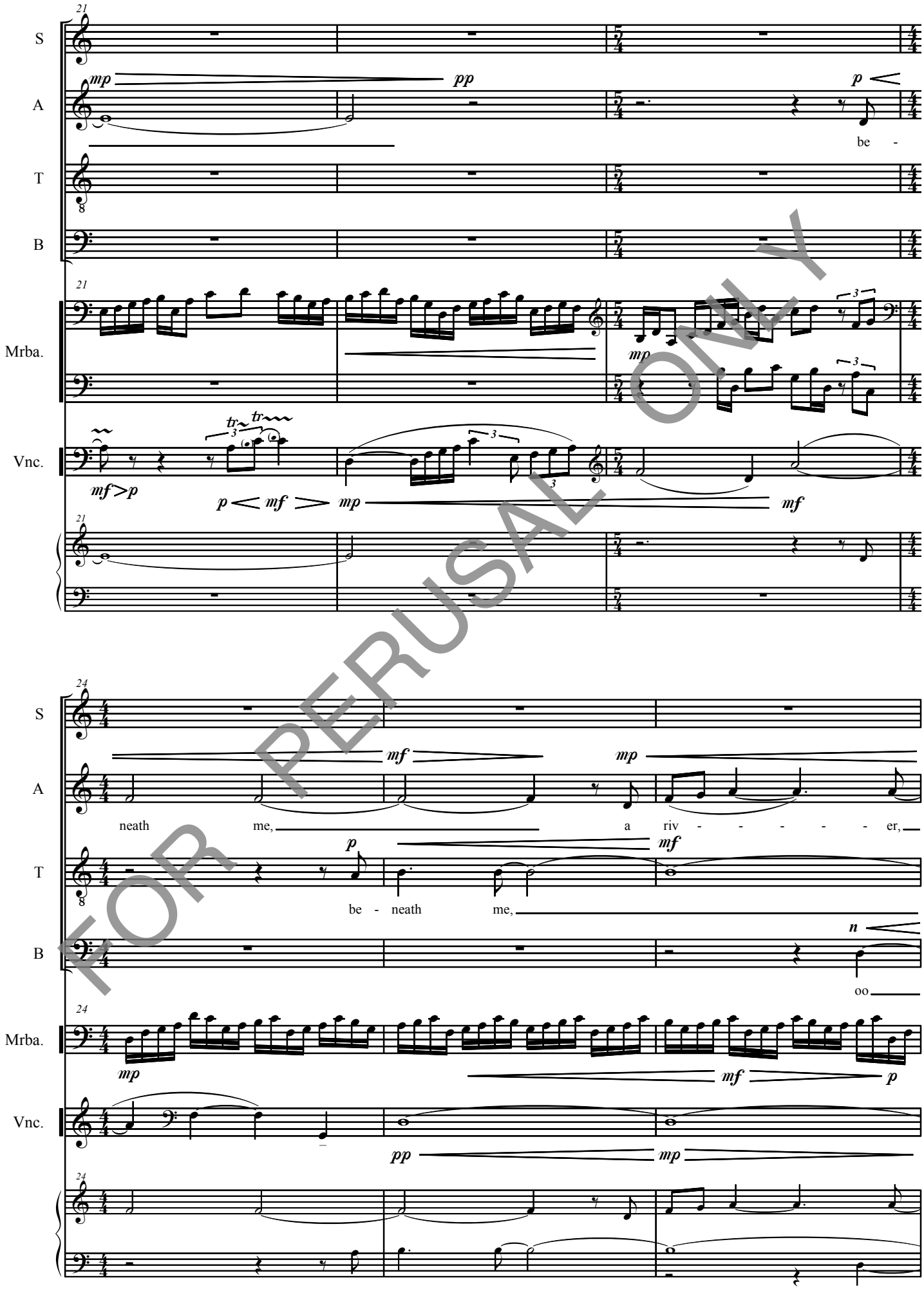
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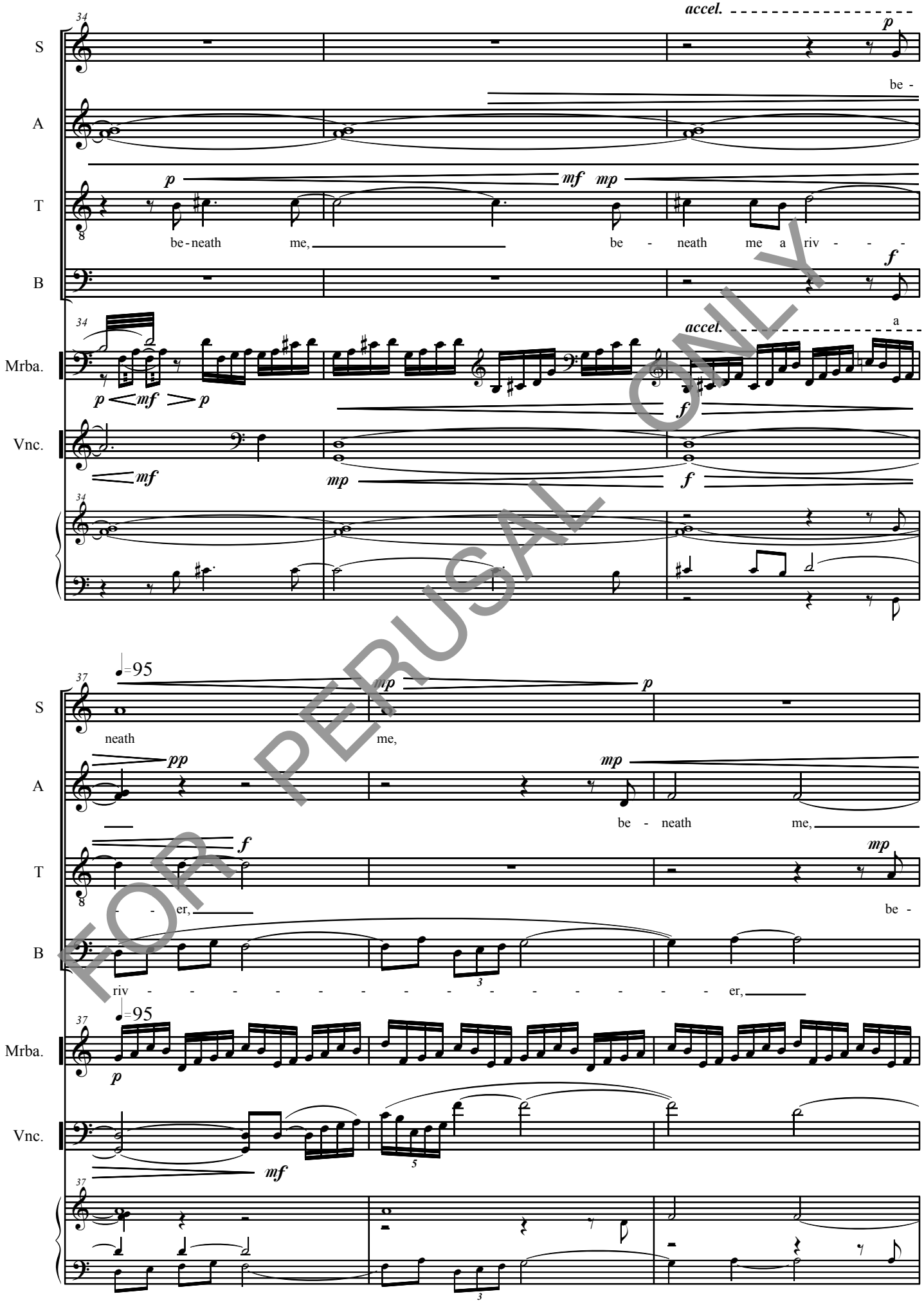


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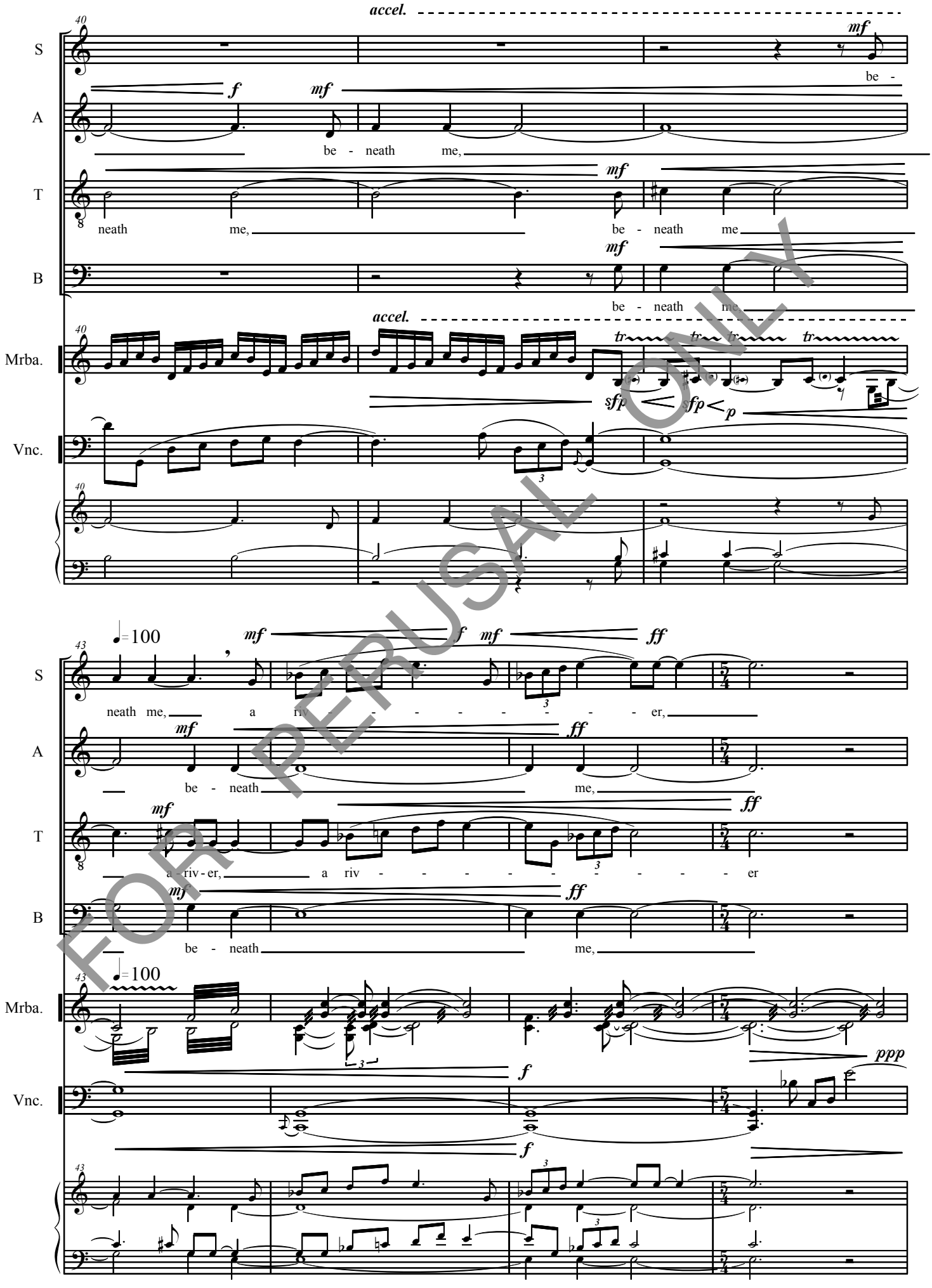


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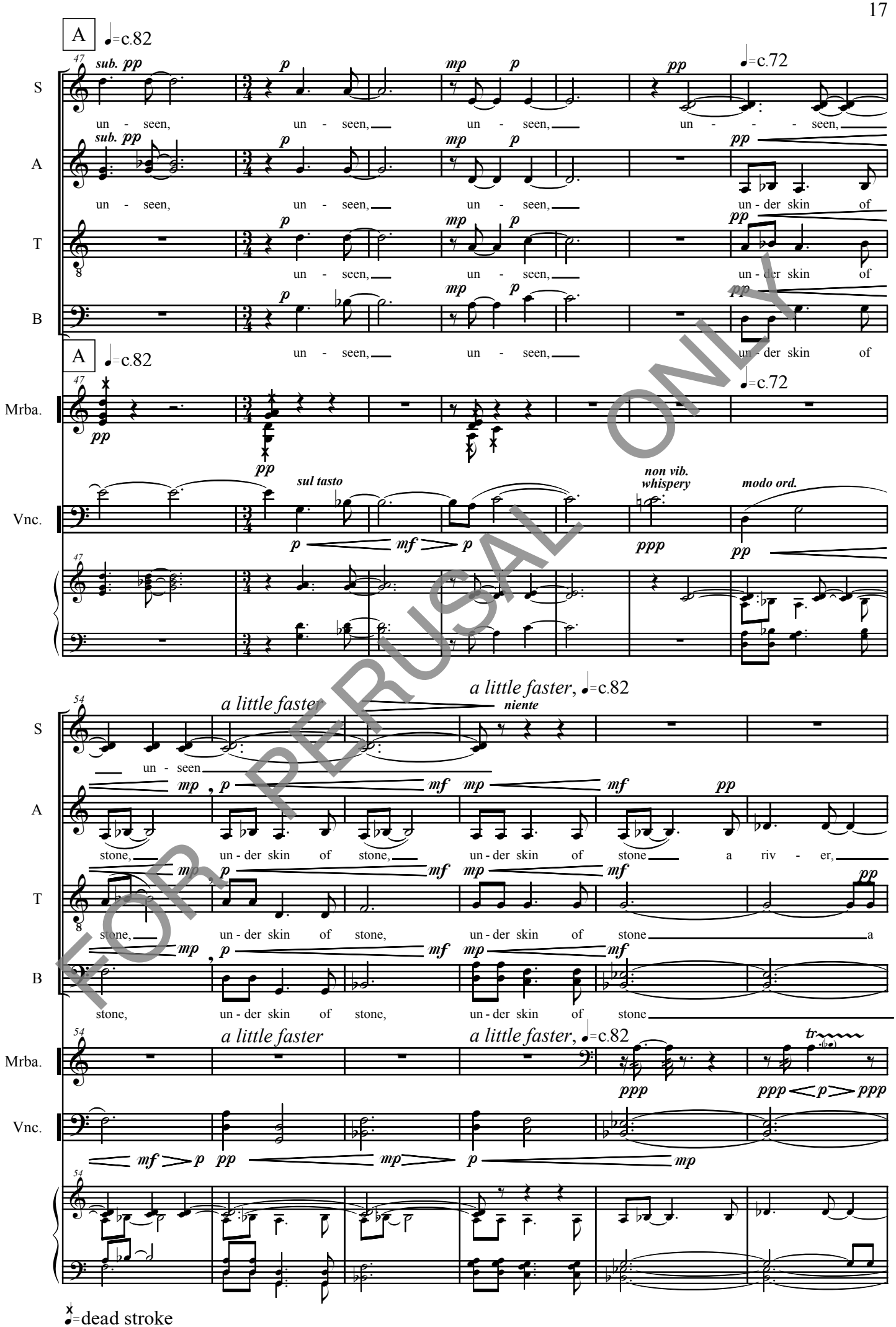
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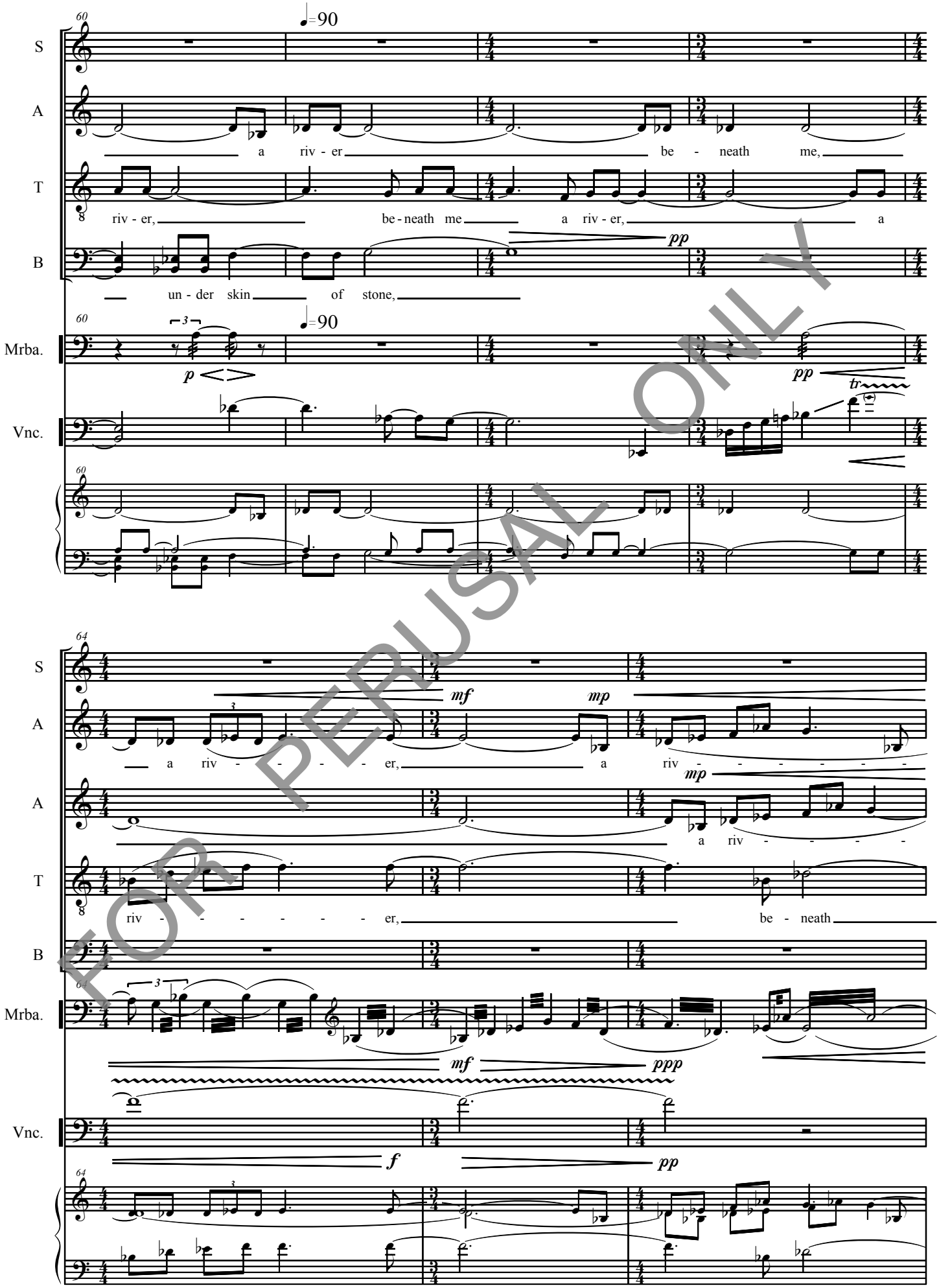
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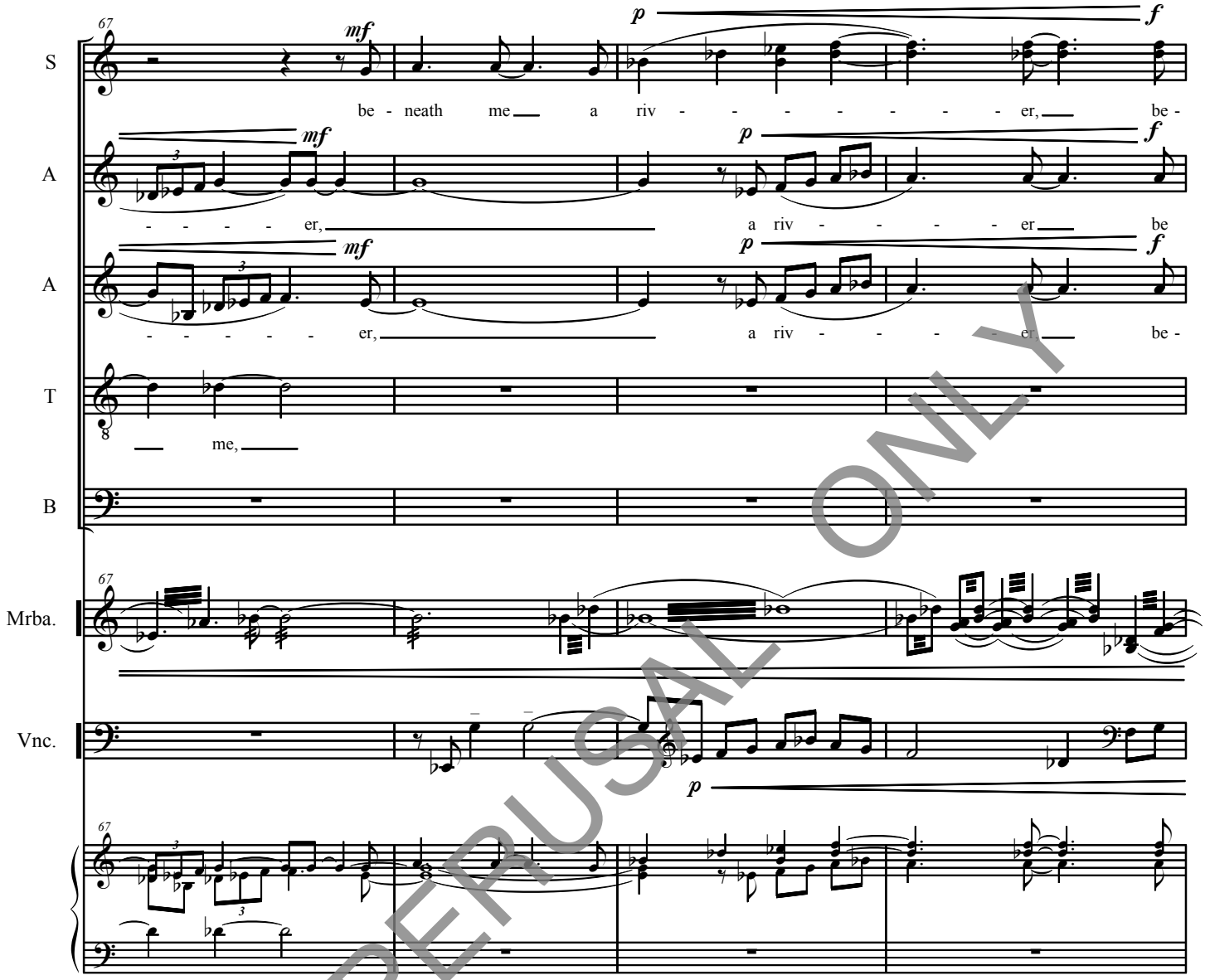
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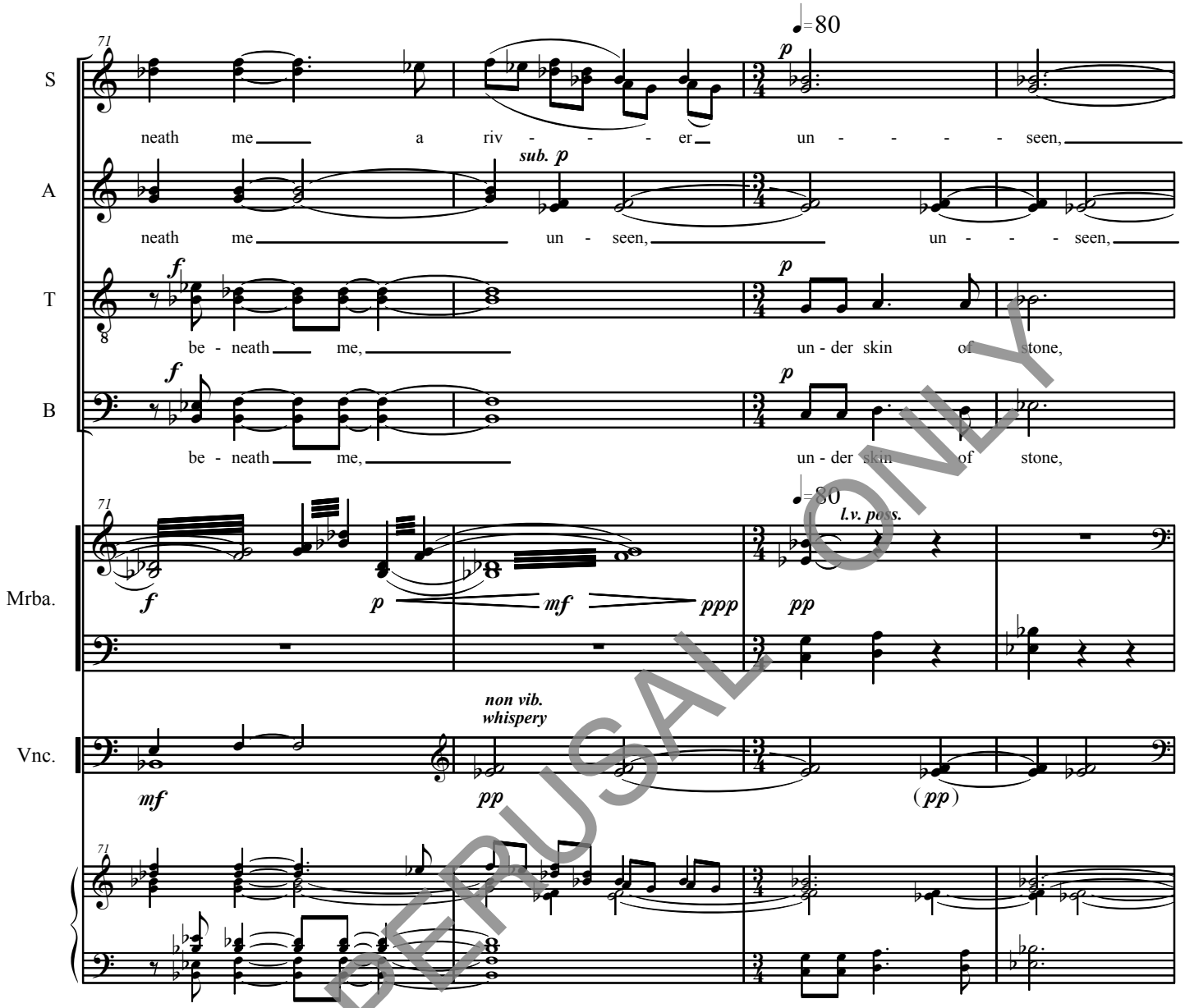
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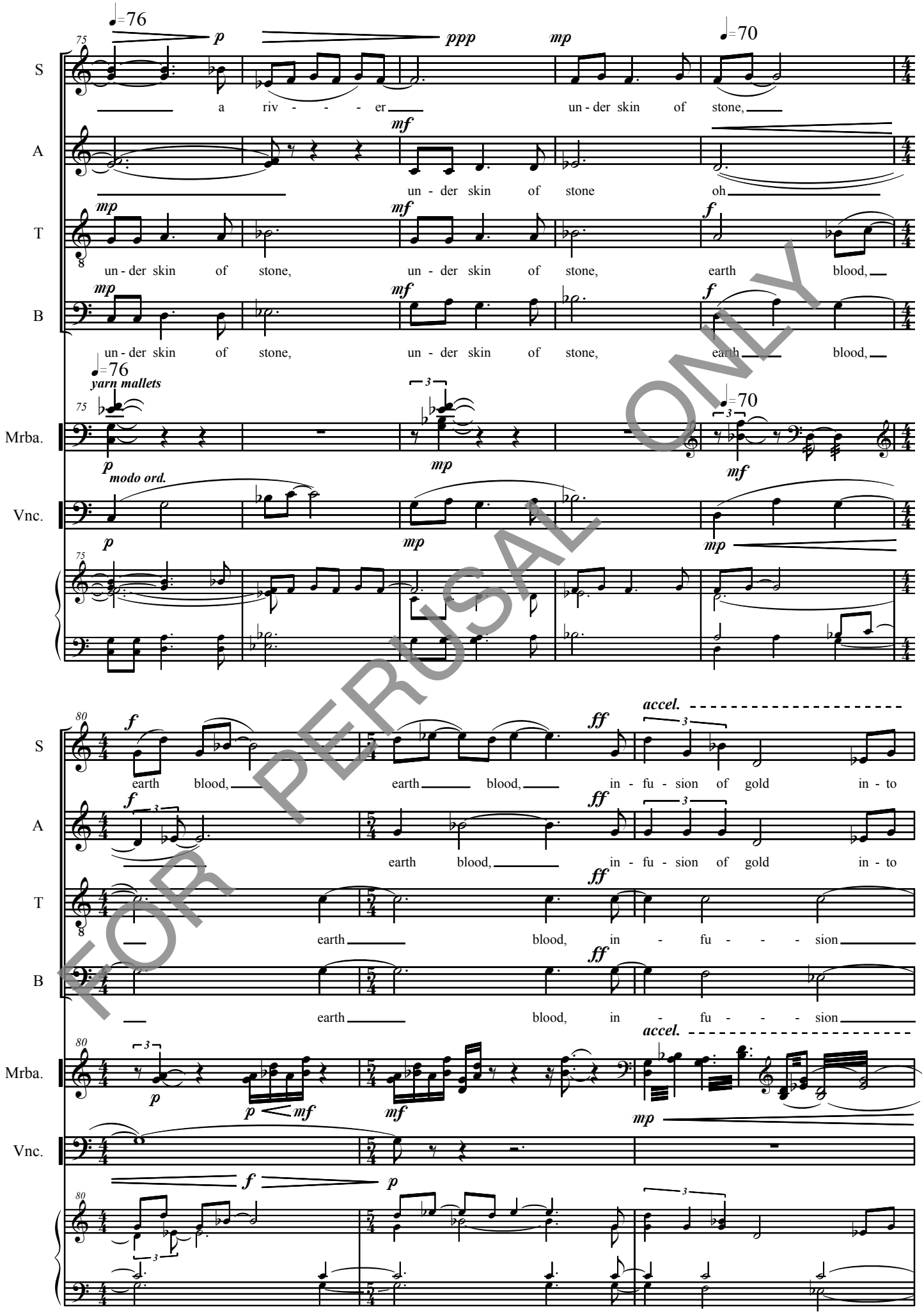
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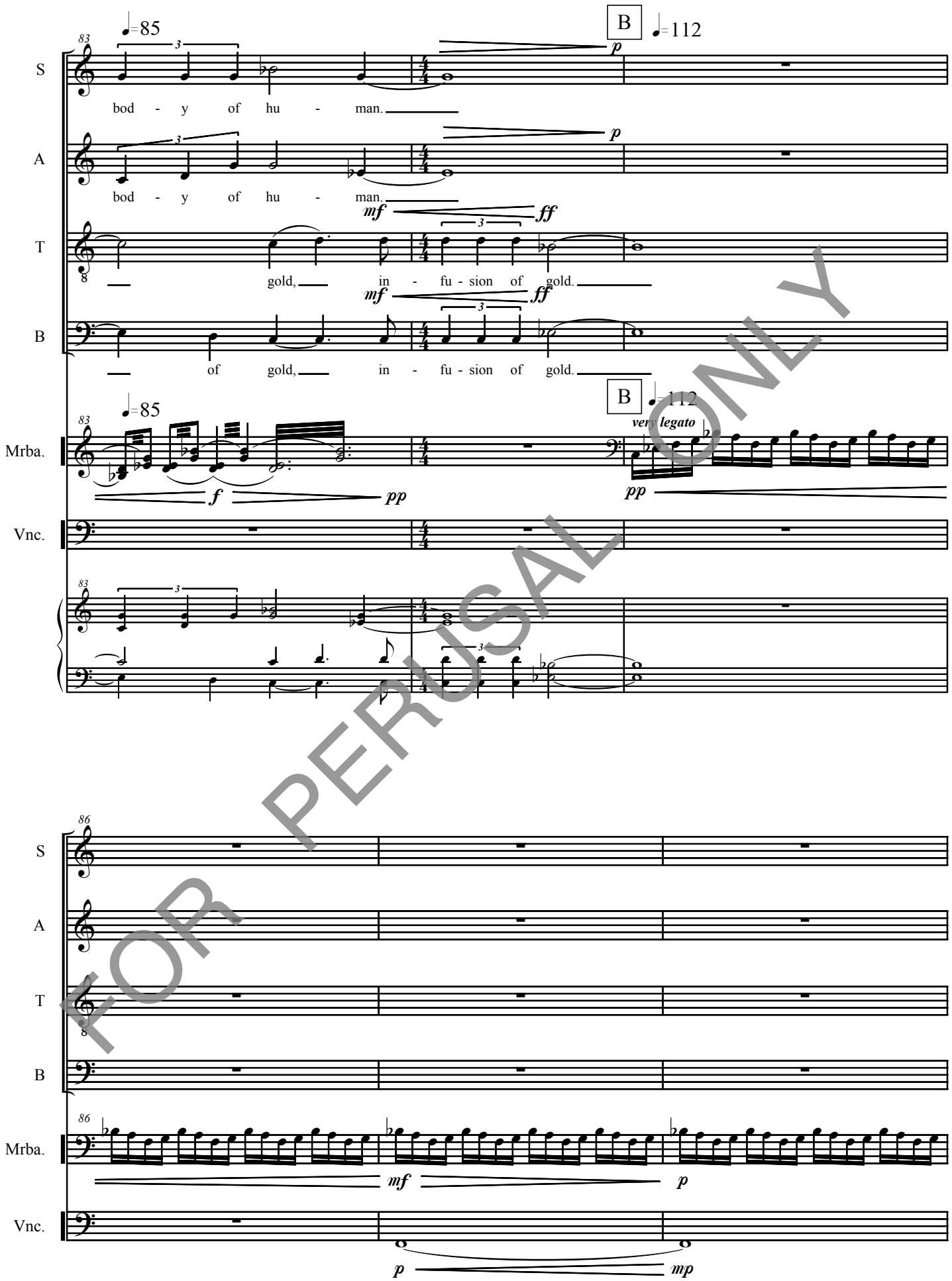
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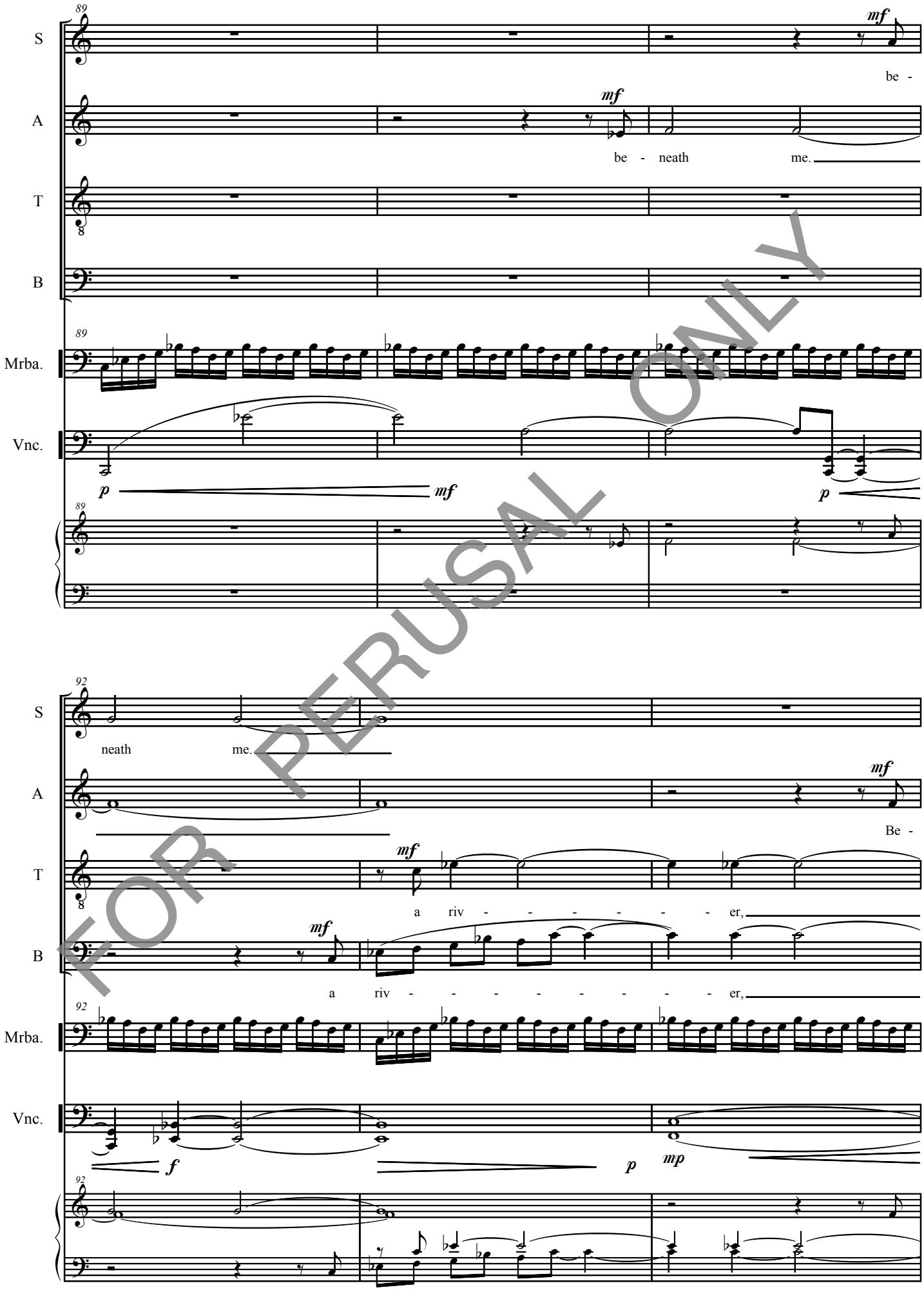
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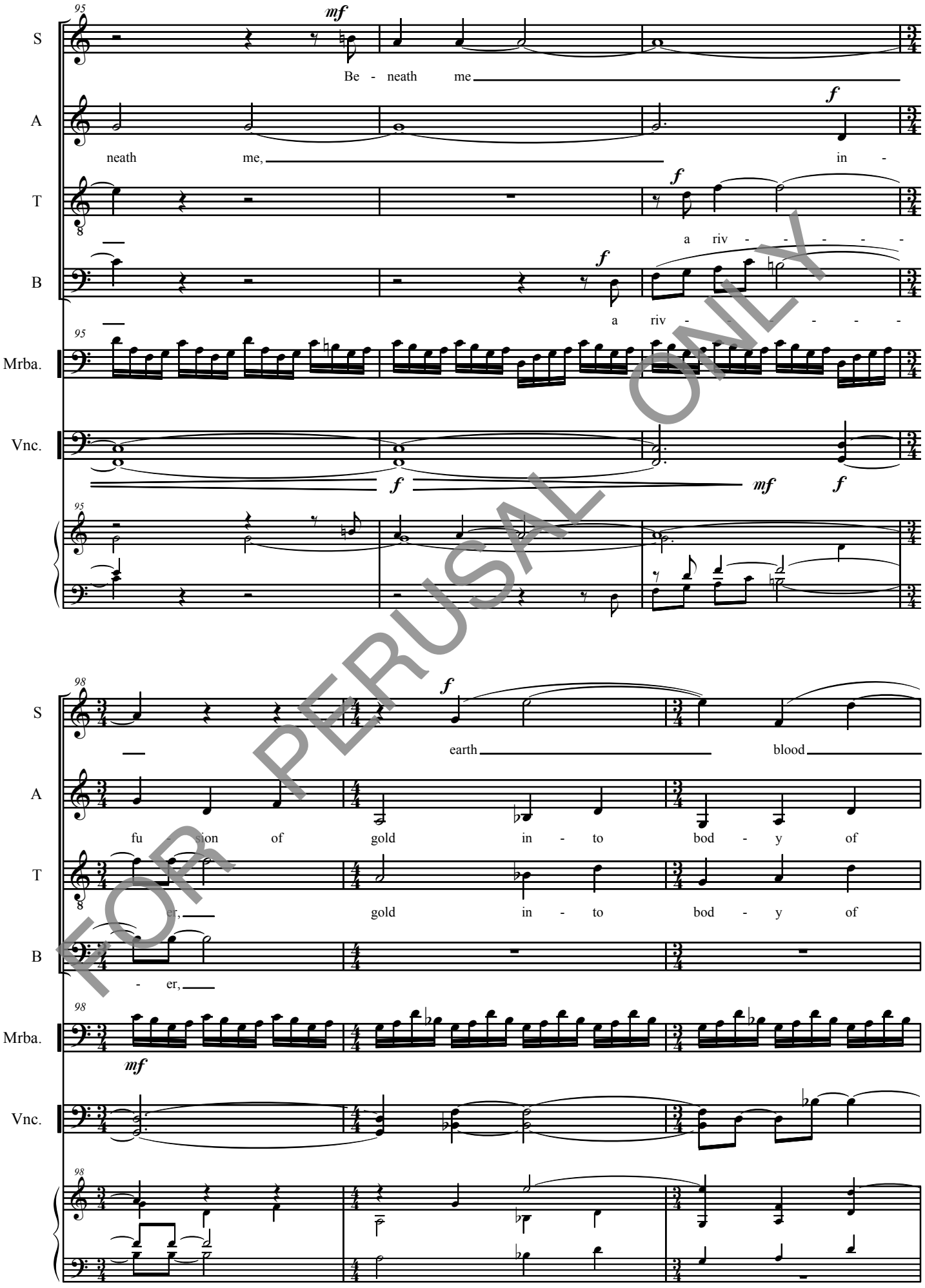
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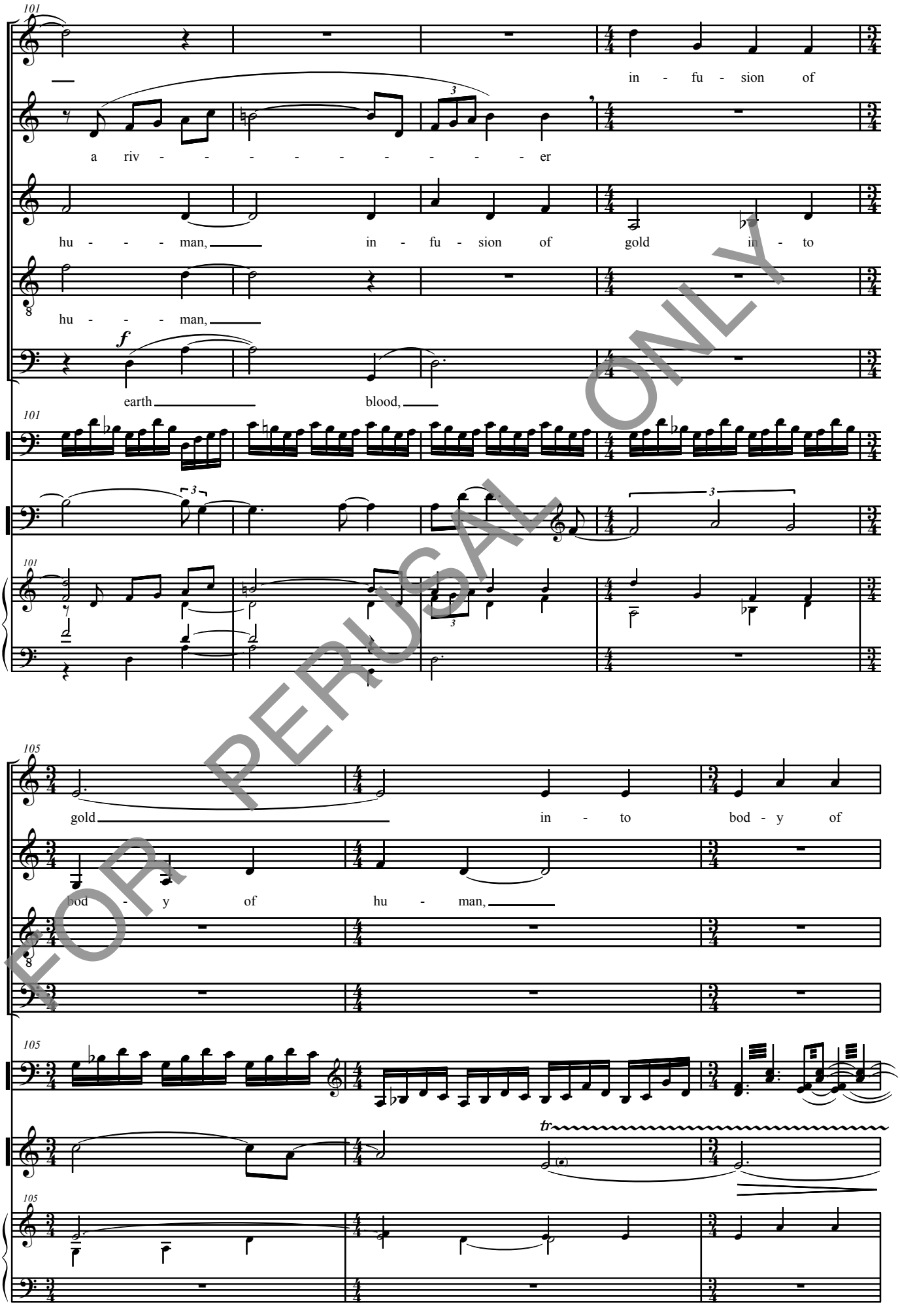
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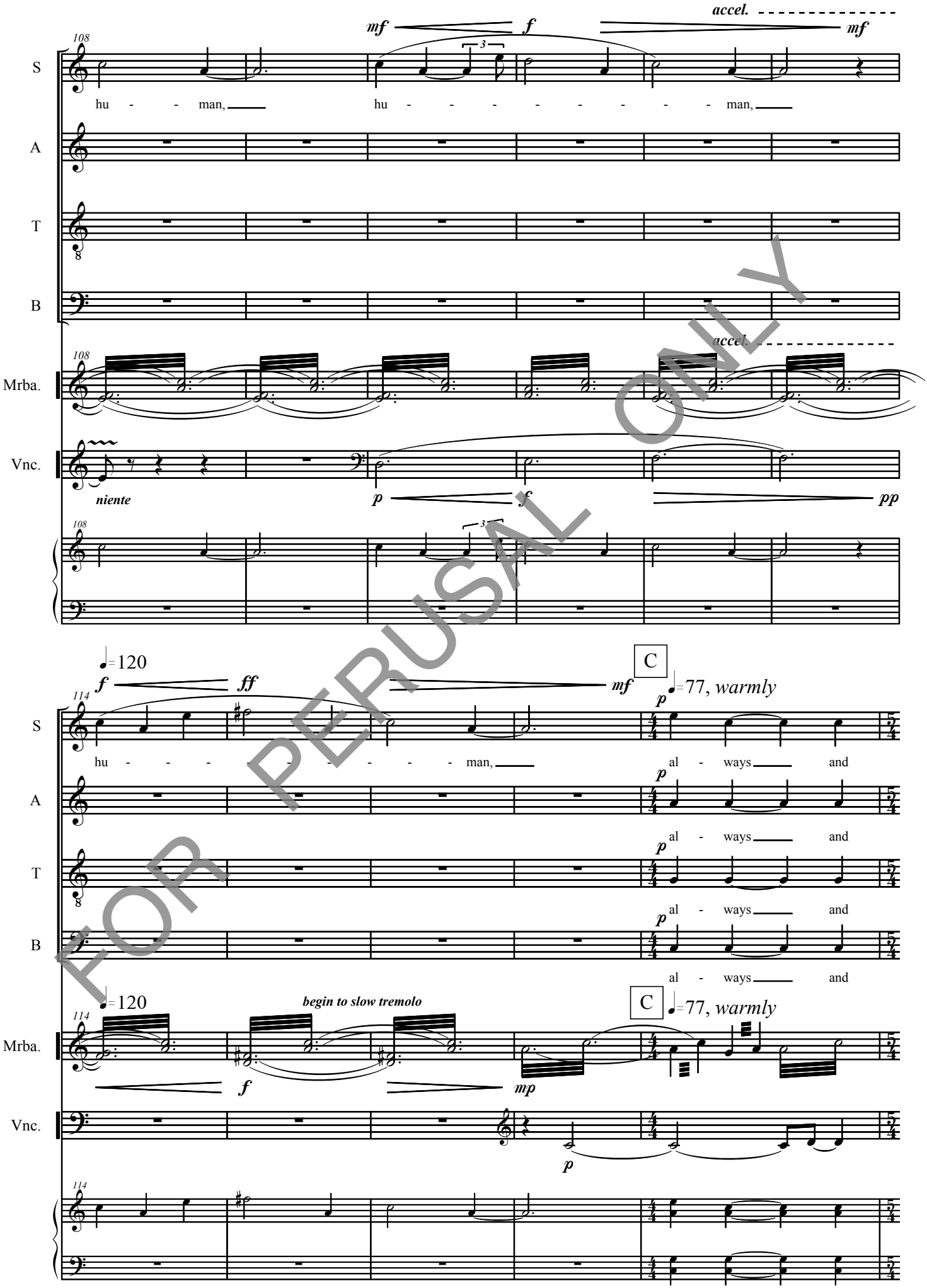
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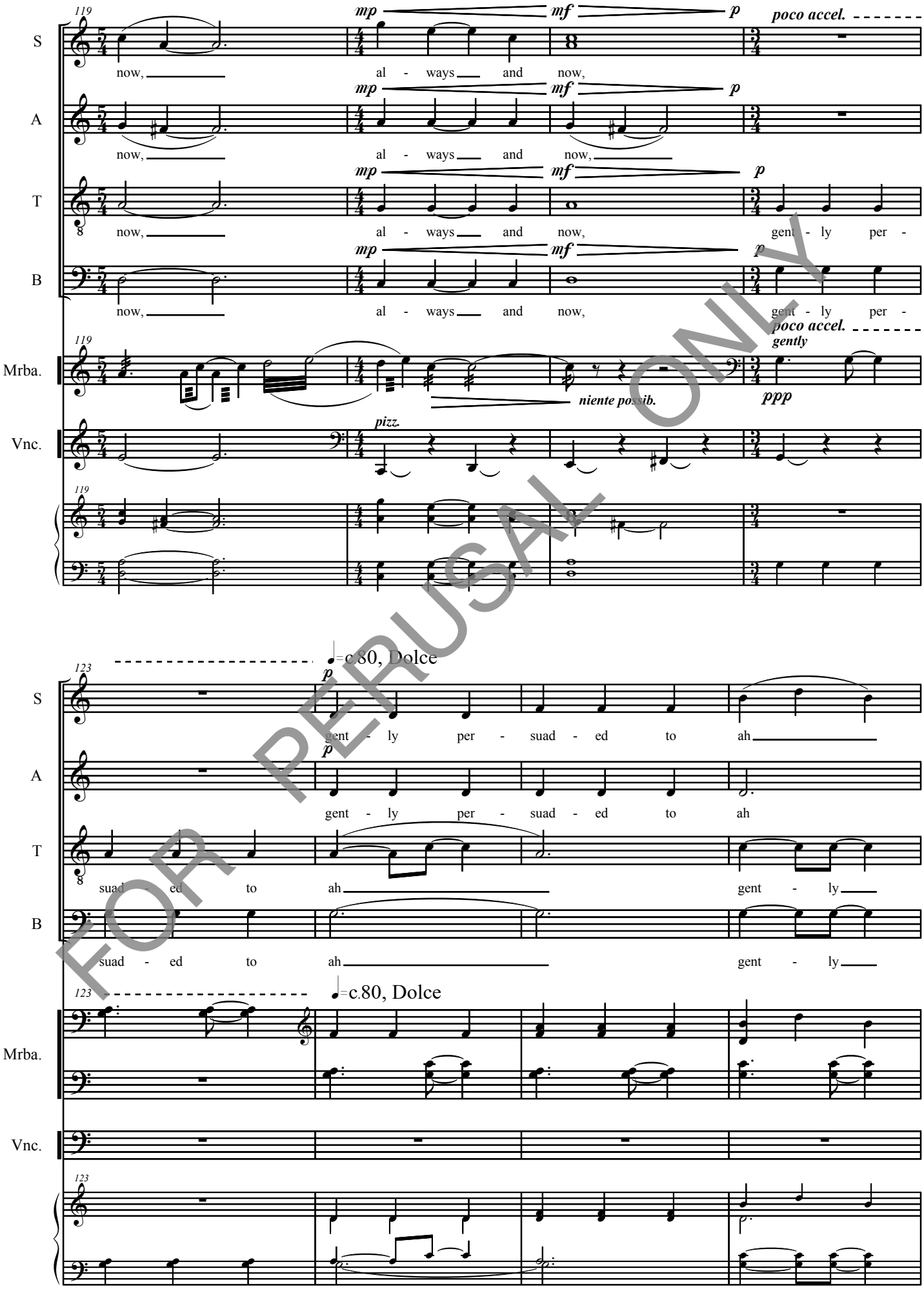
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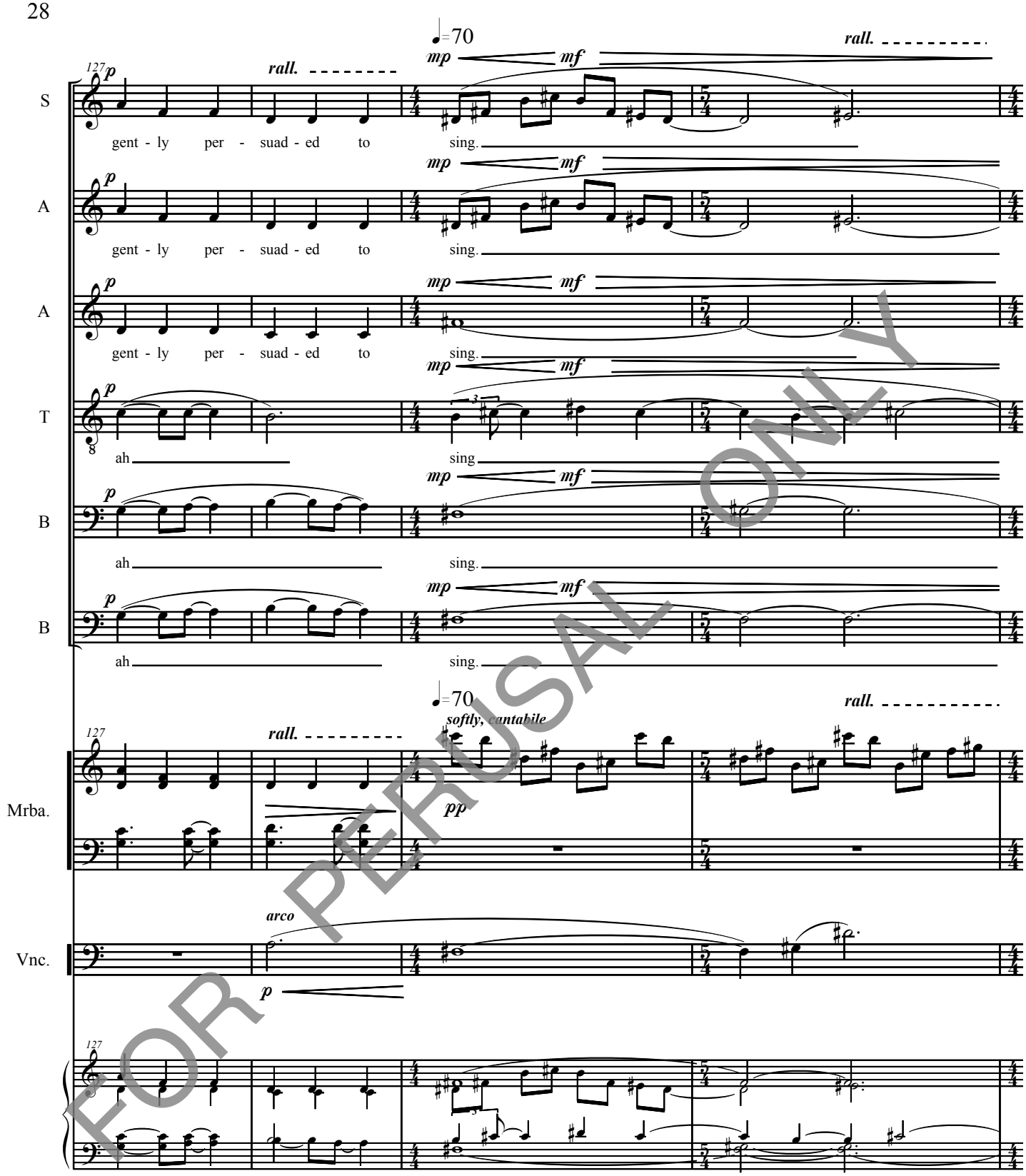
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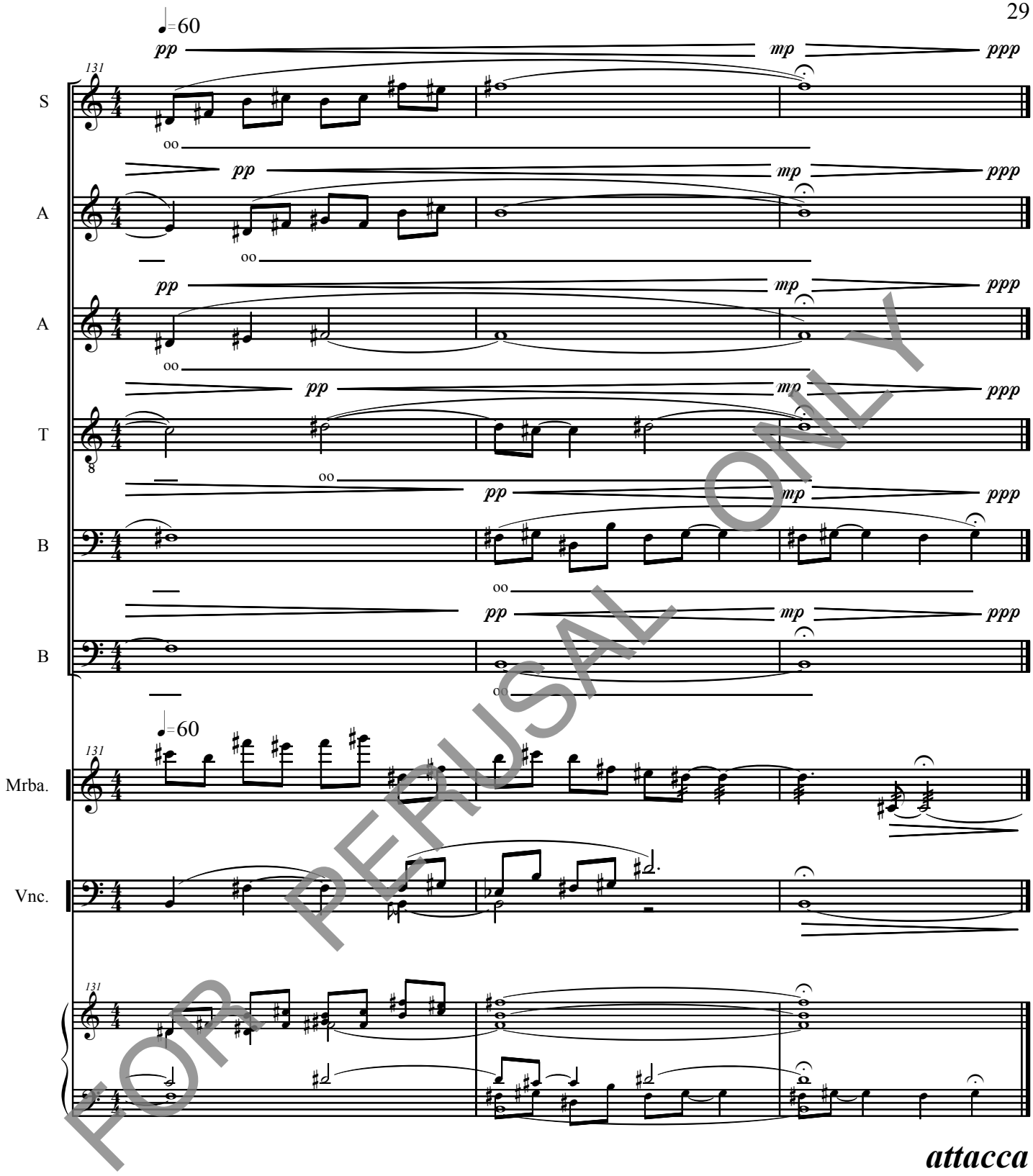
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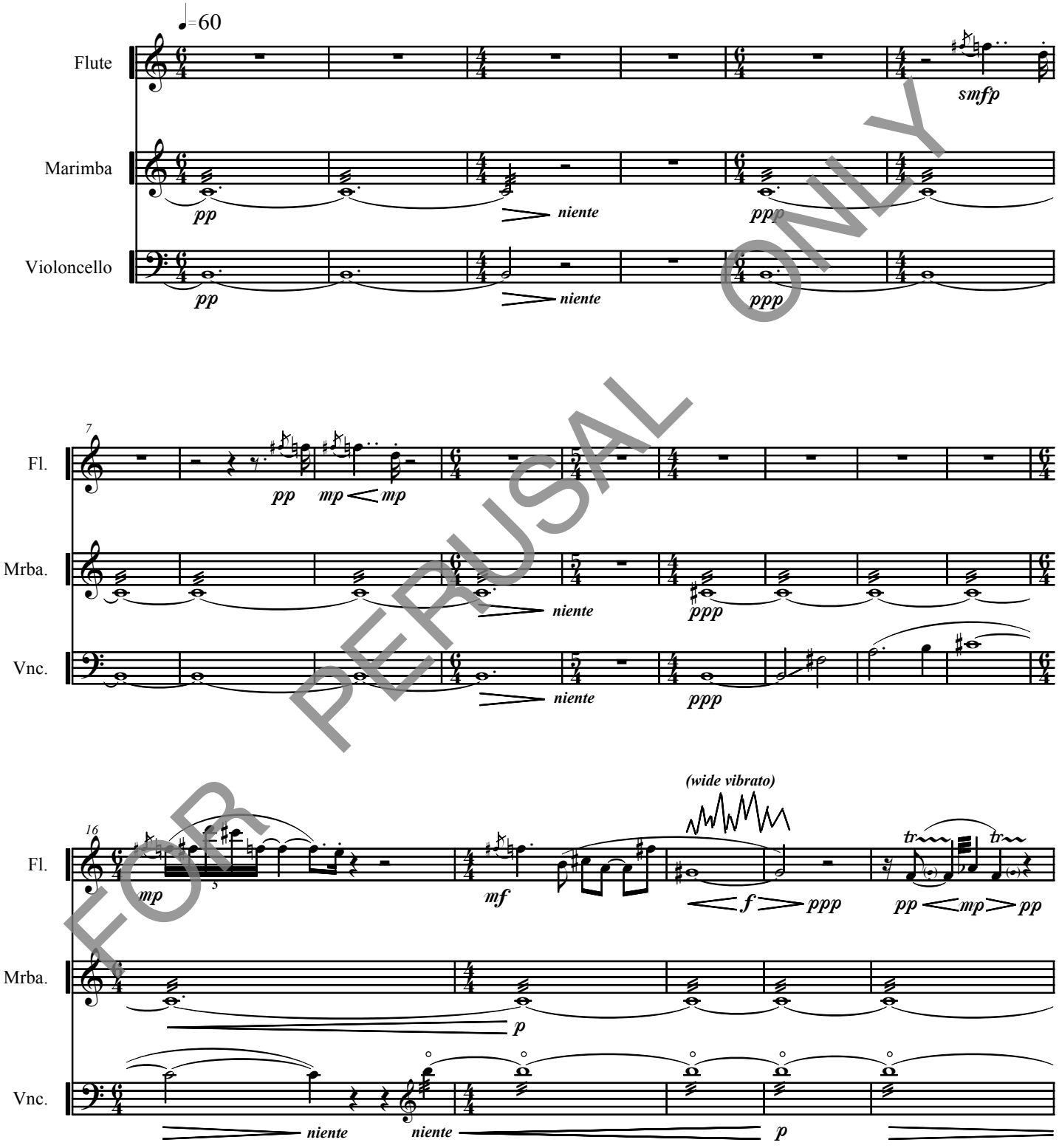


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III. Paleolithic Flute

Edie Hill
Tim O'Brien

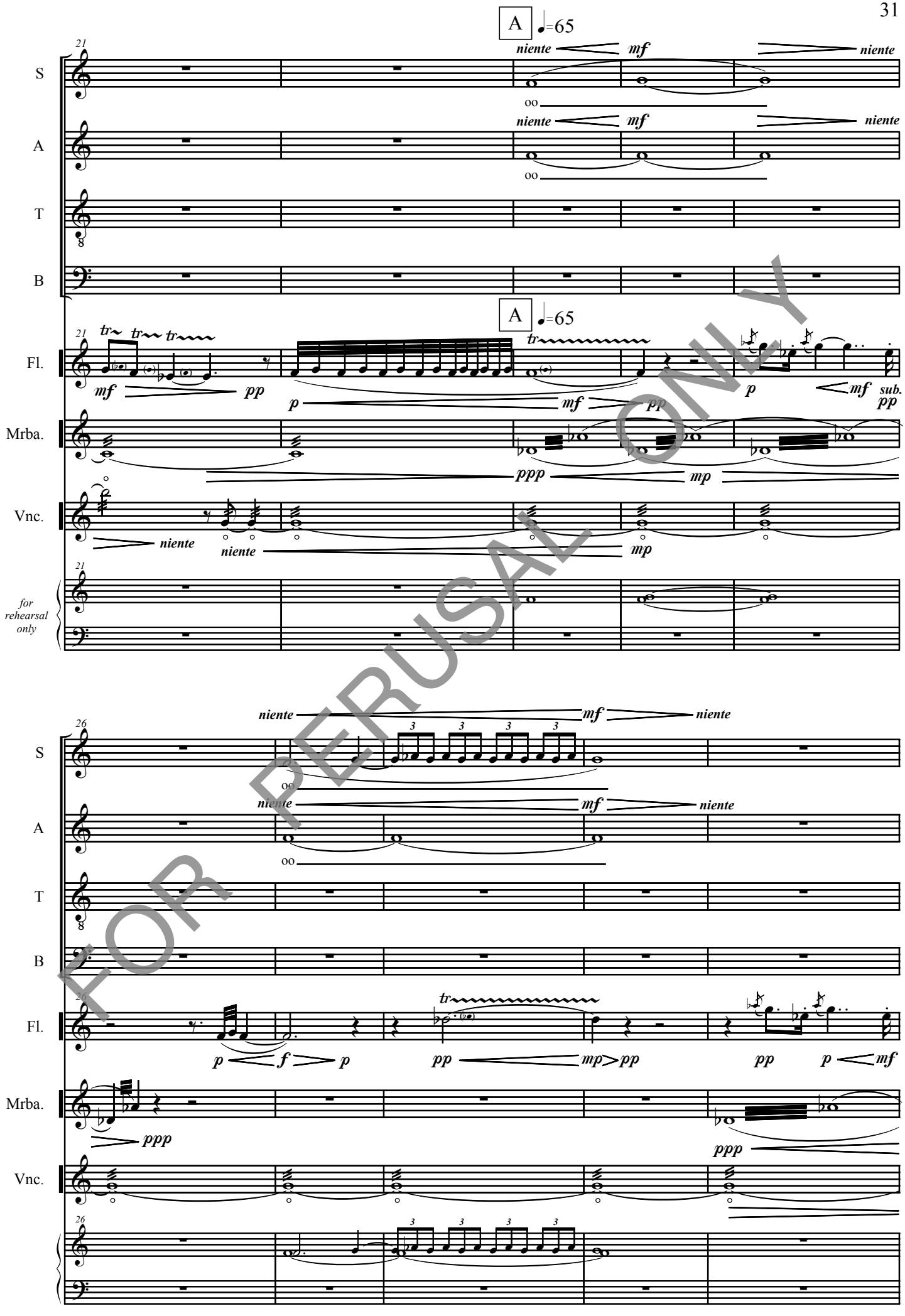
Edie Hill



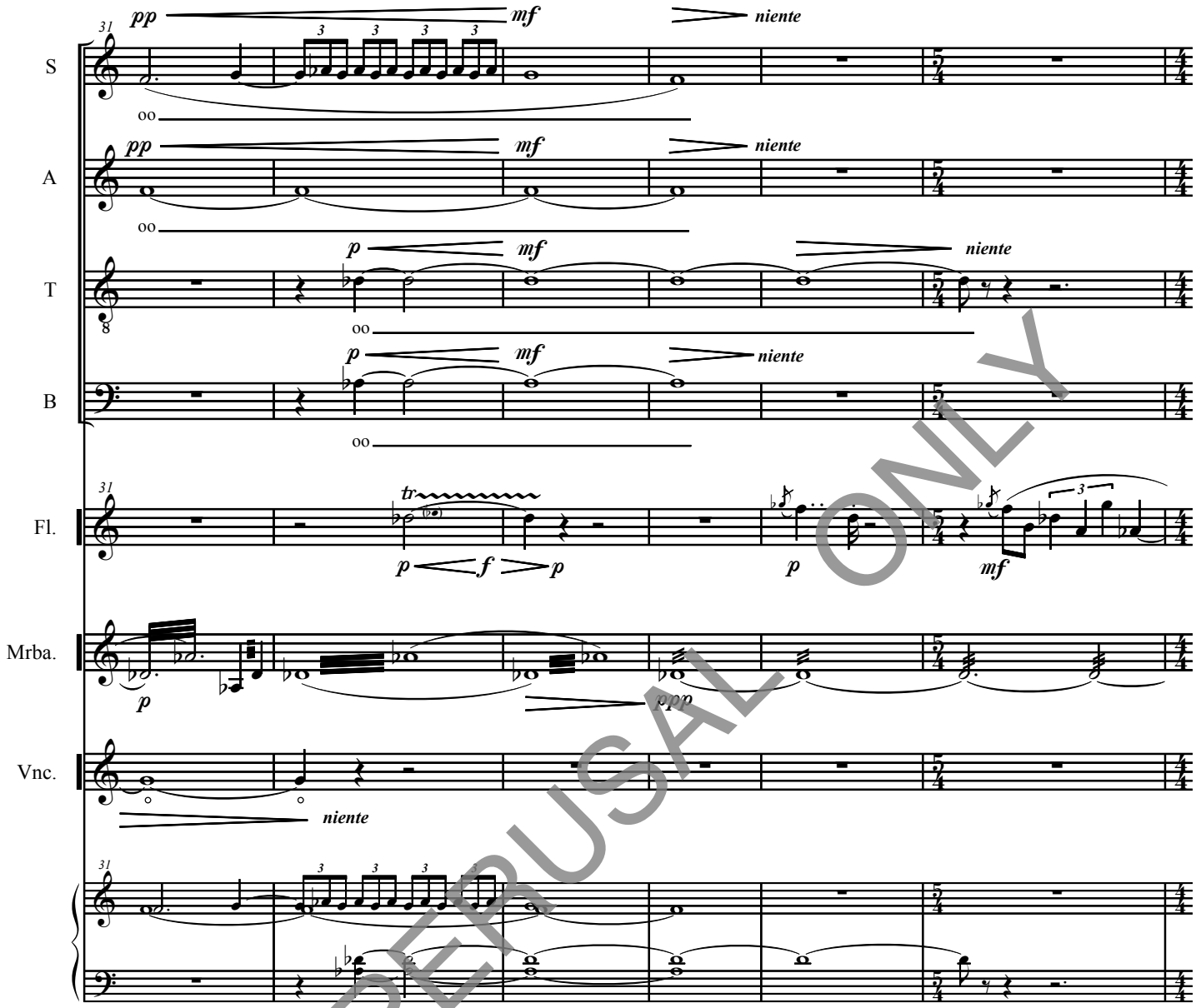
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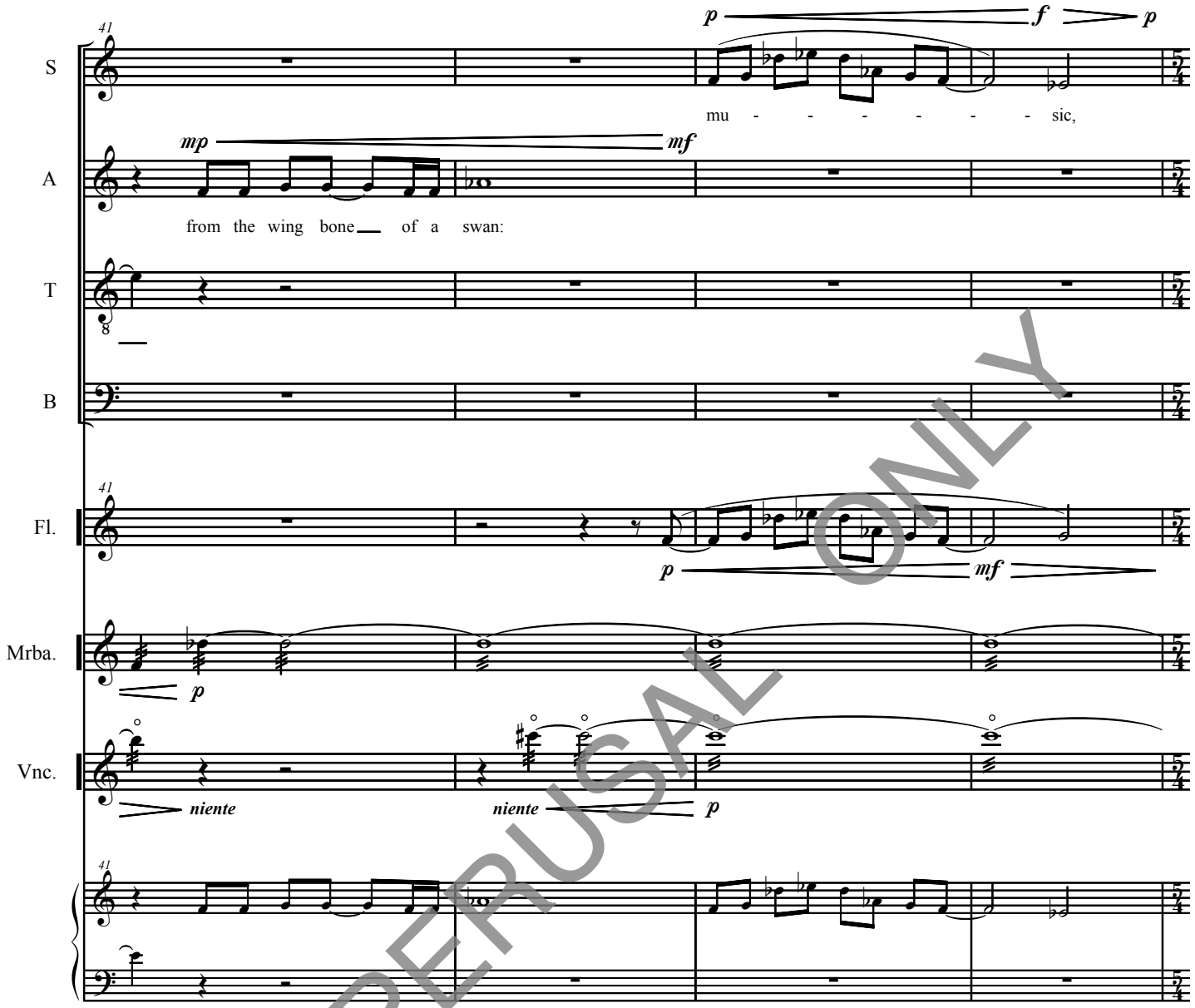


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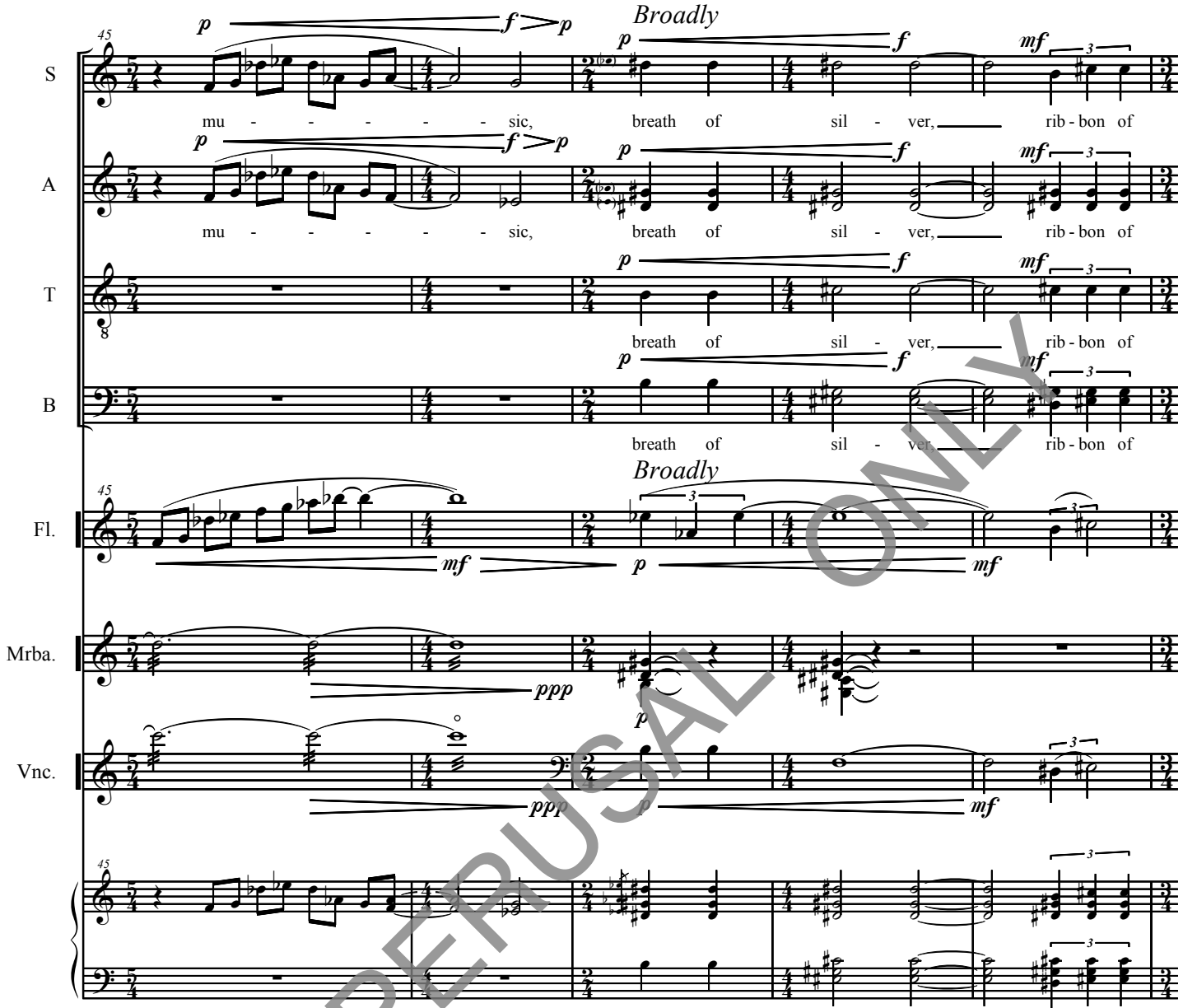


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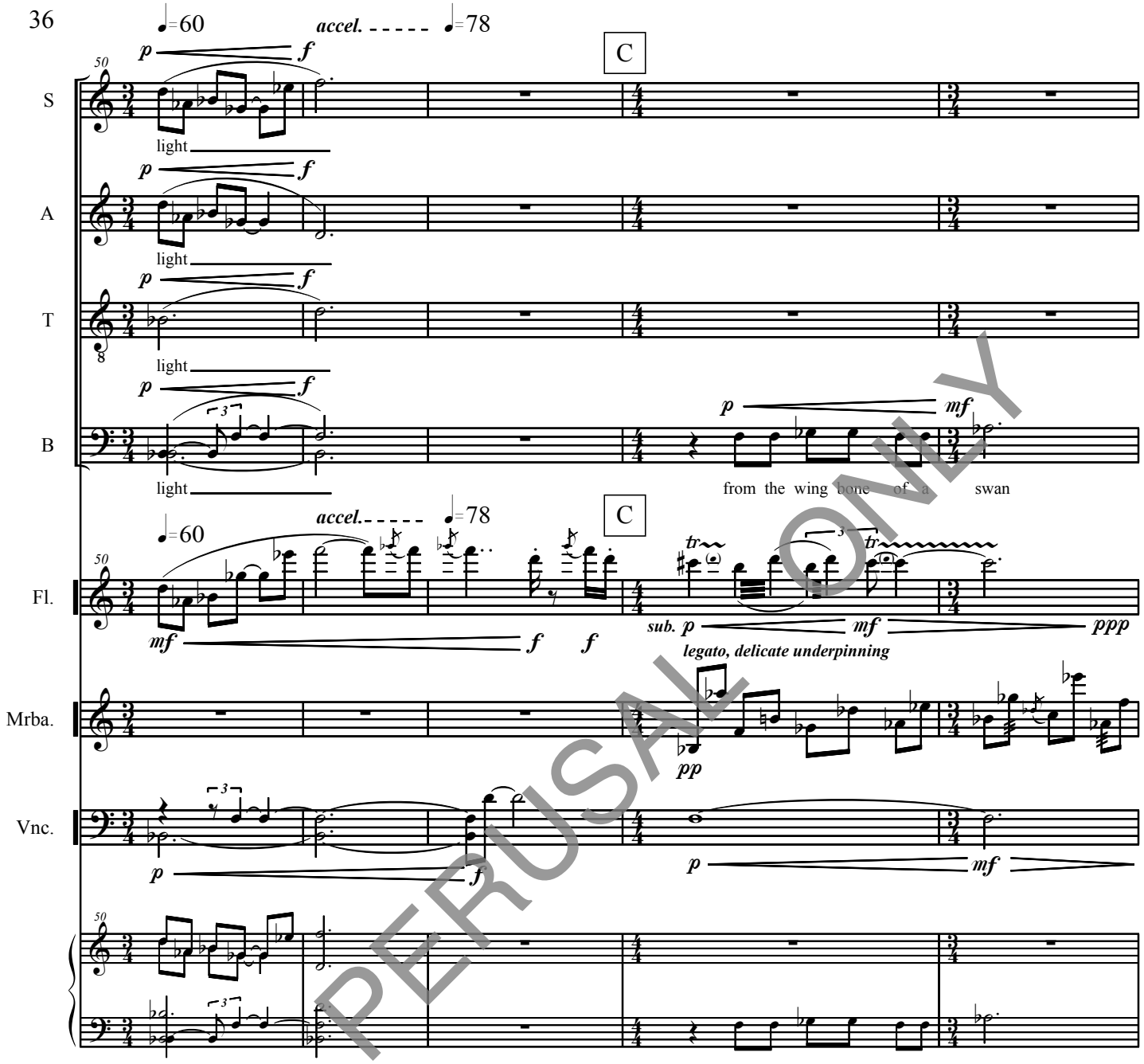
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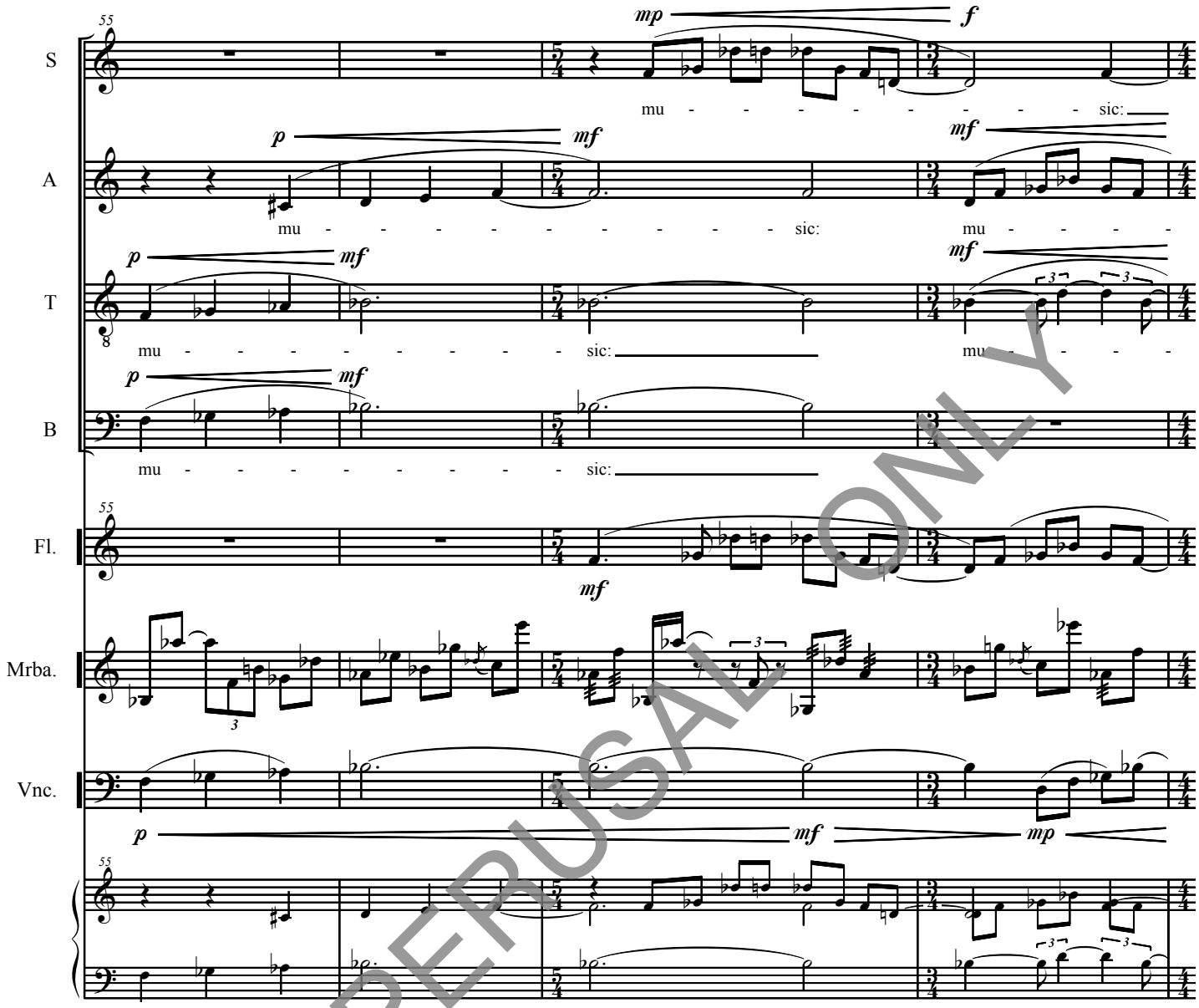
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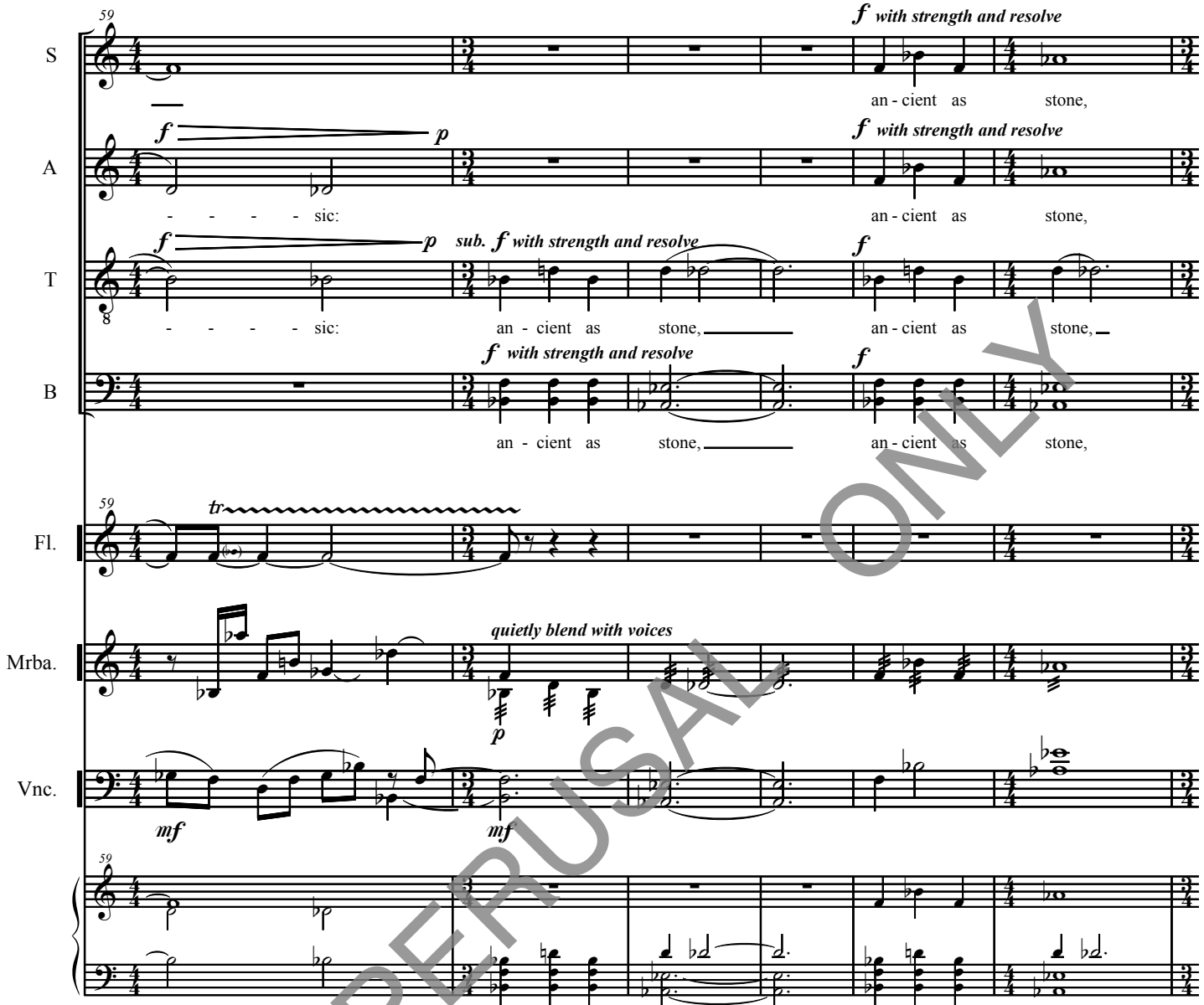
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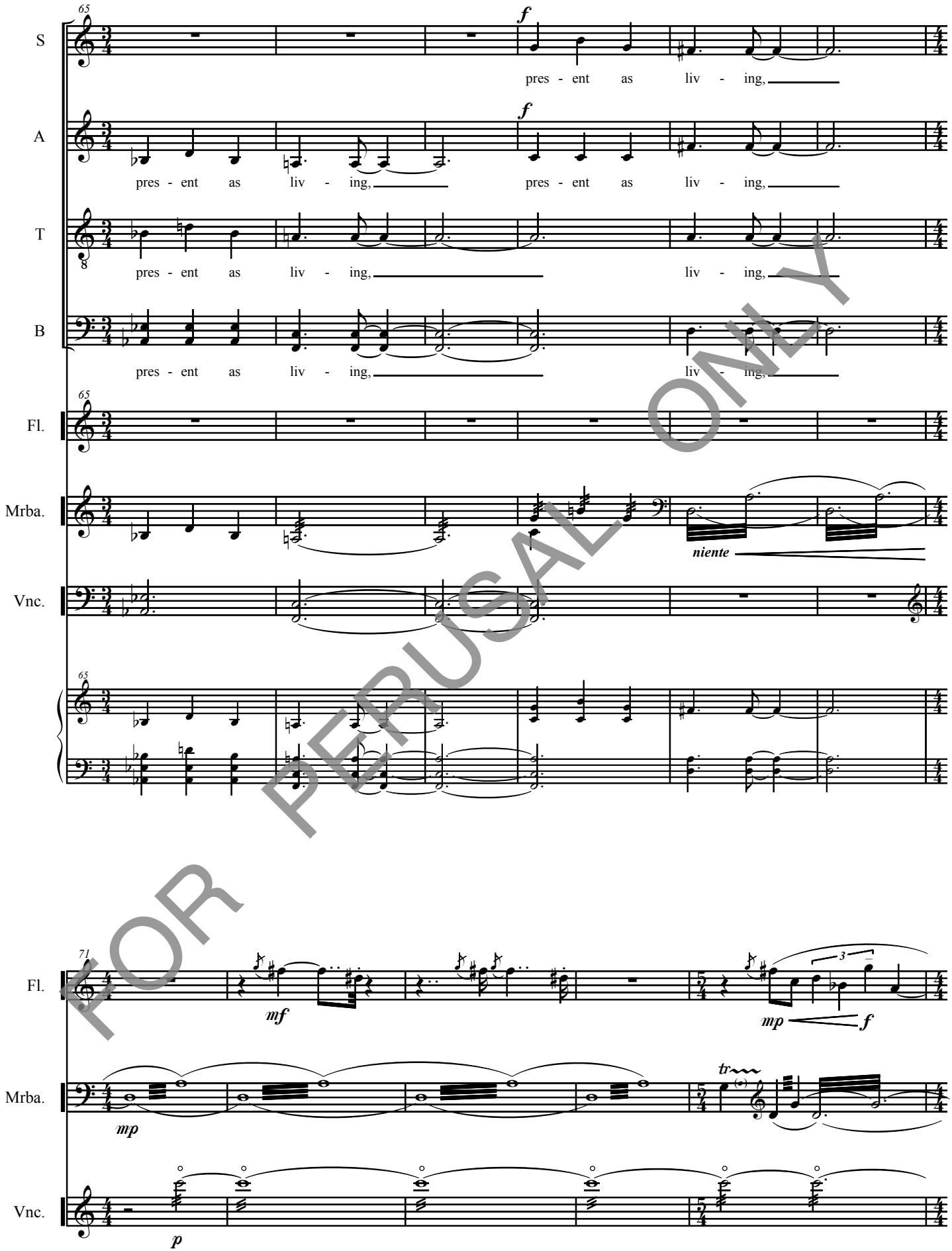
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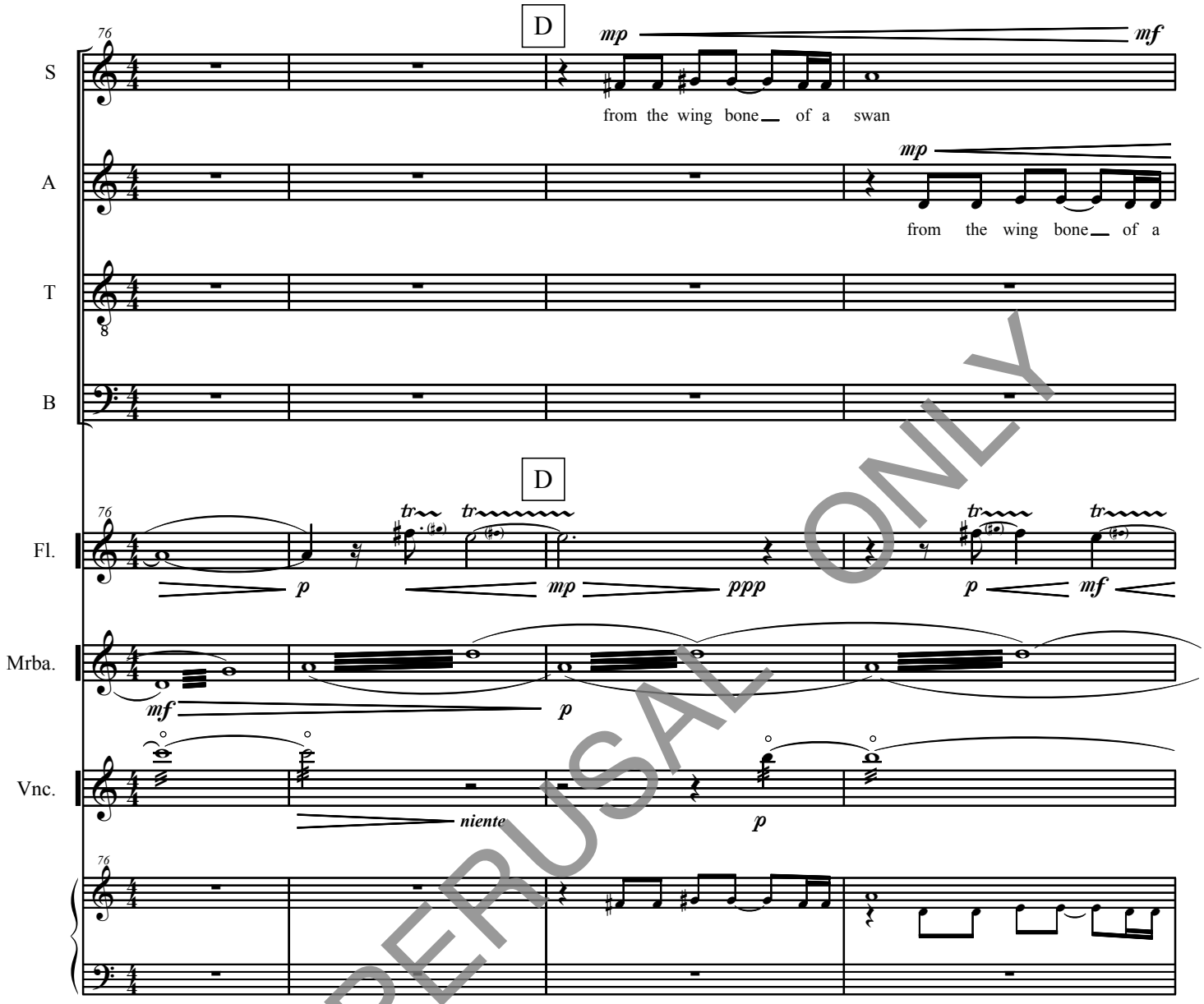
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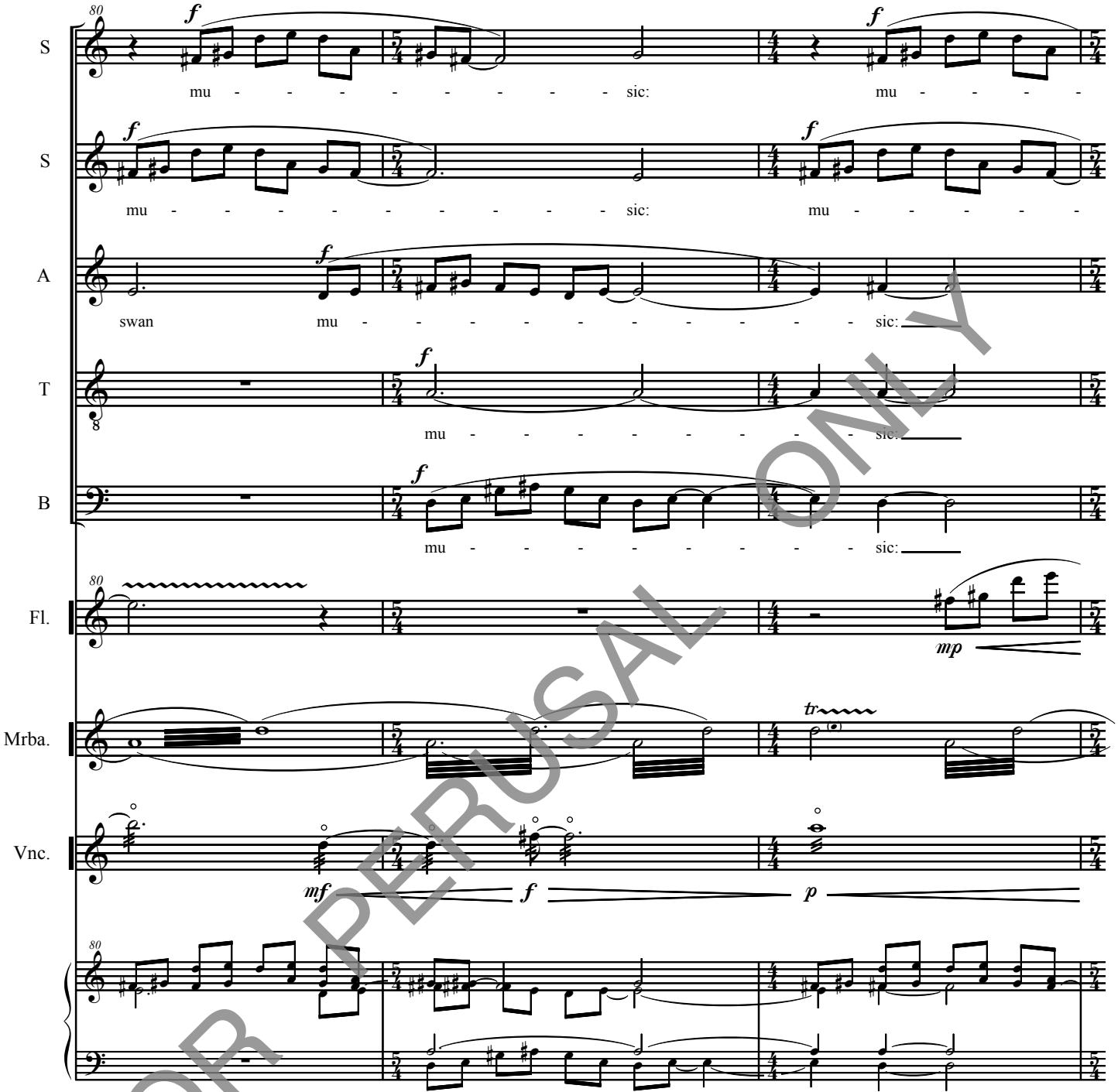
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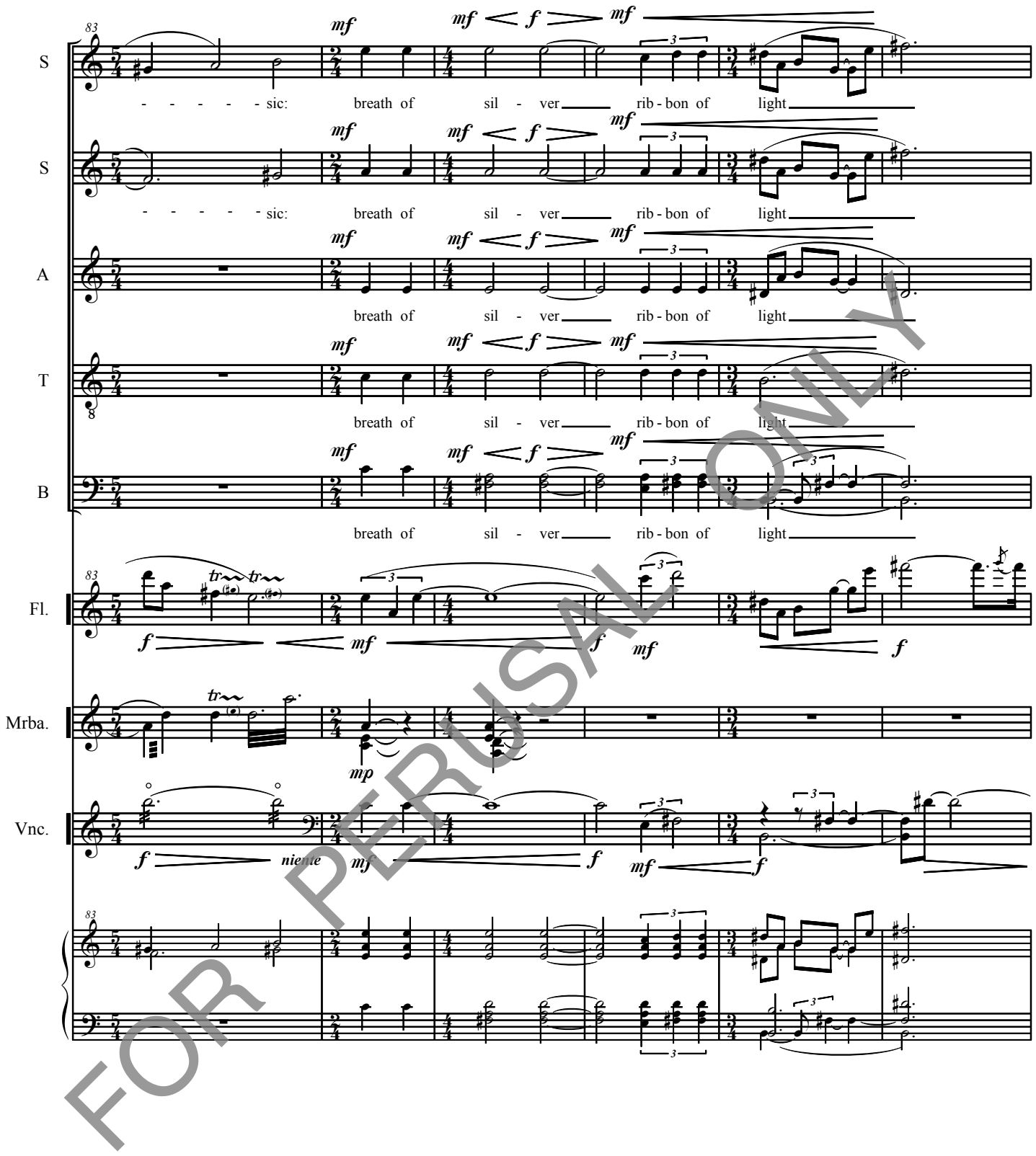
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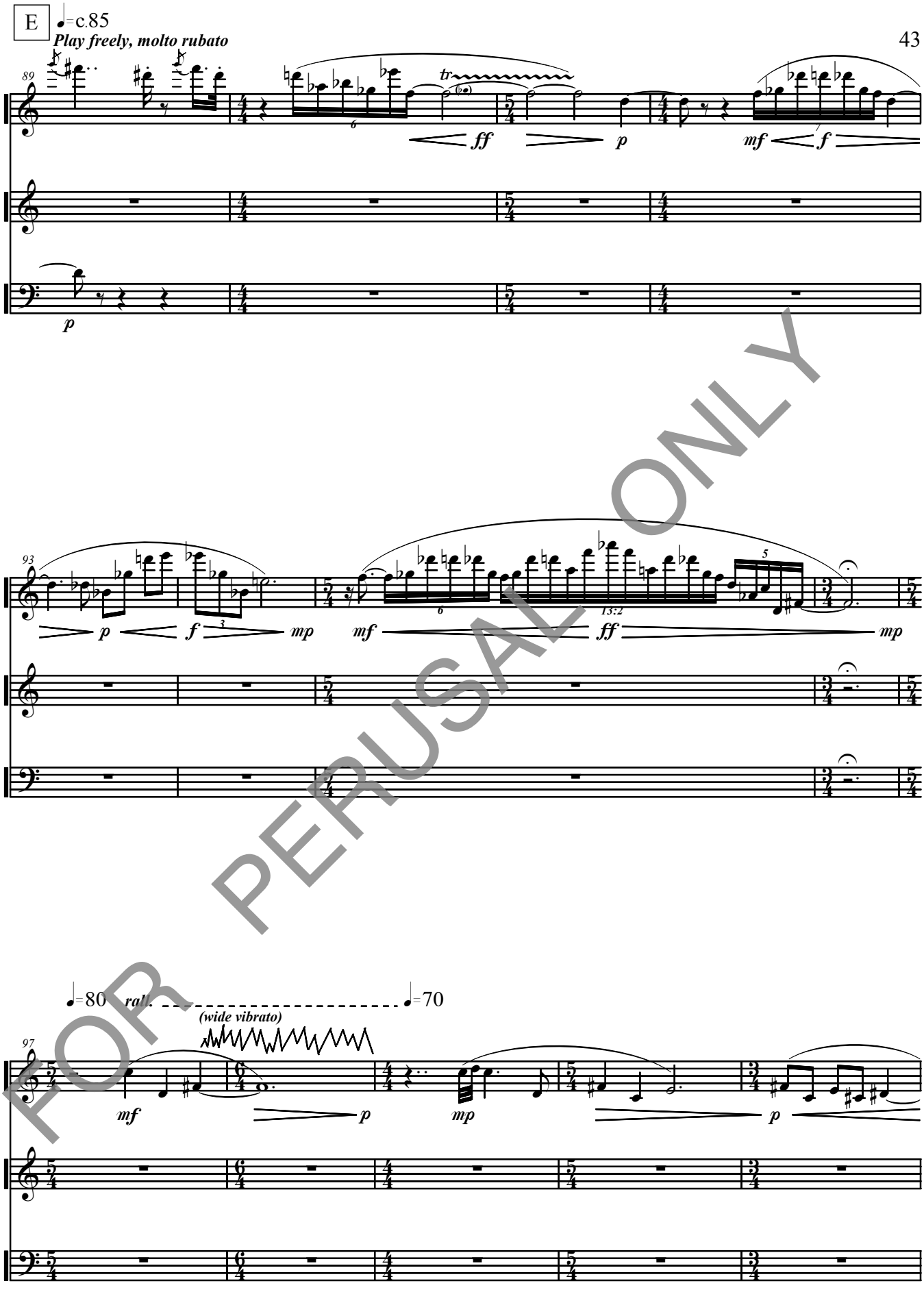
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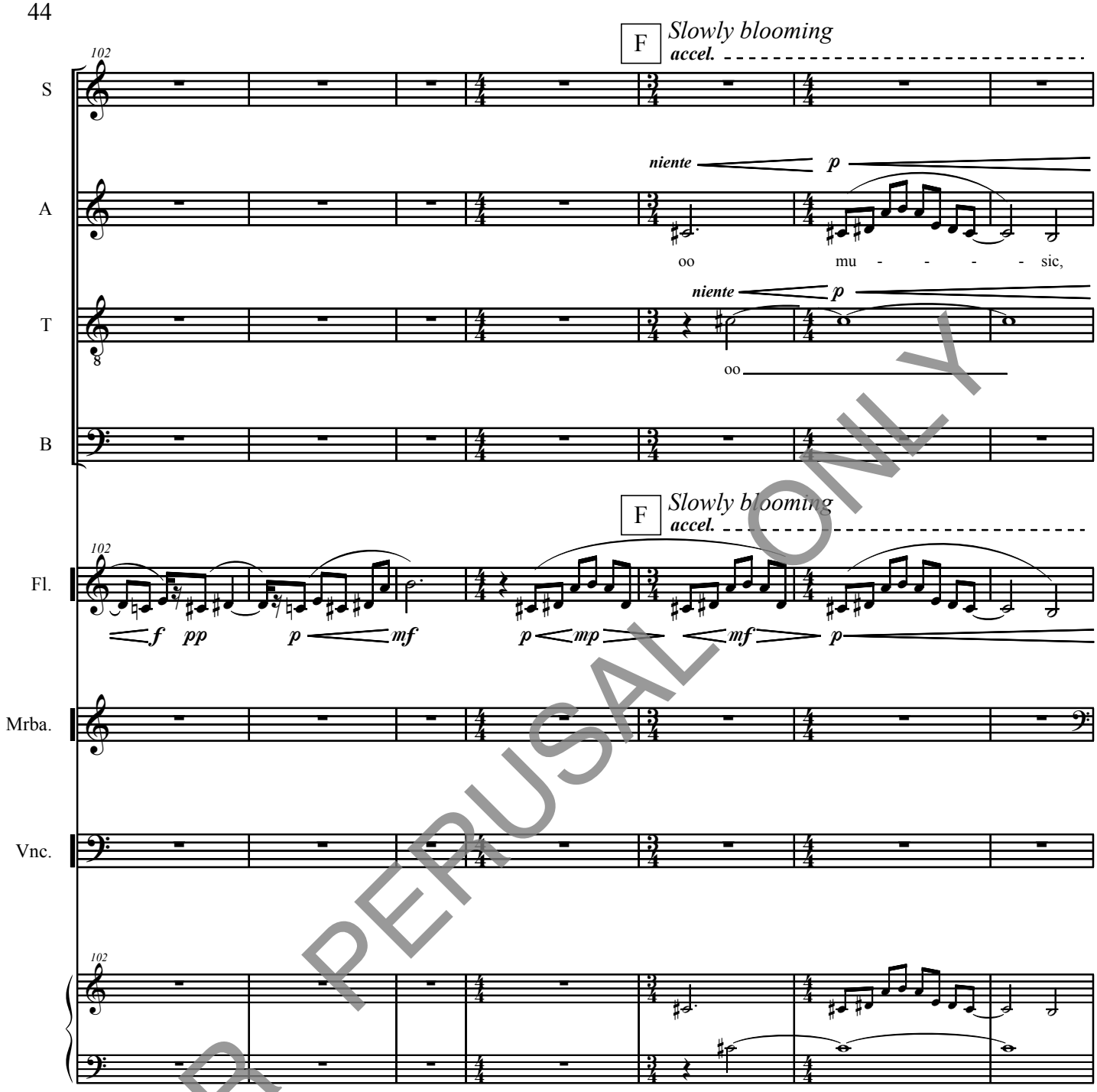
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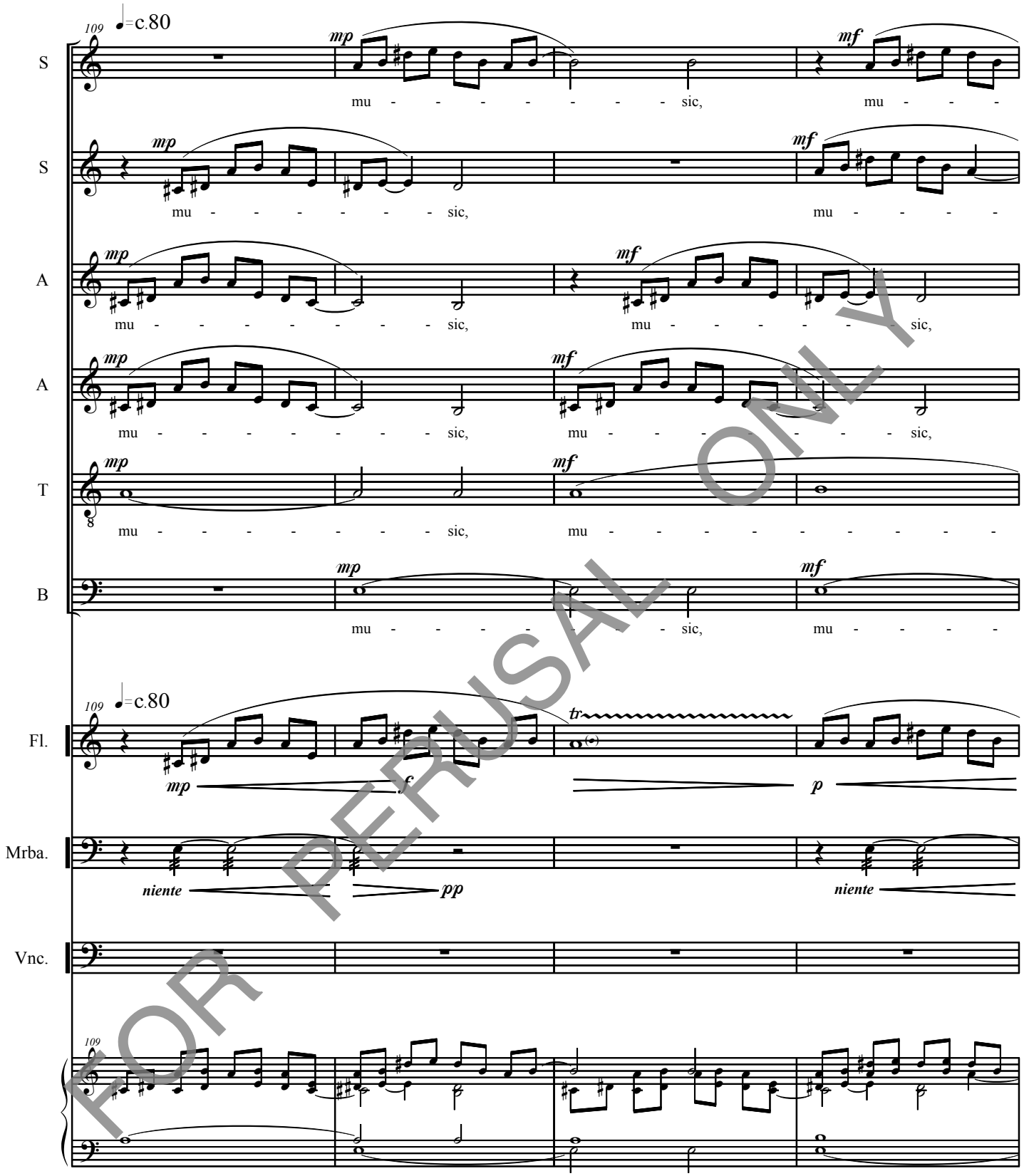
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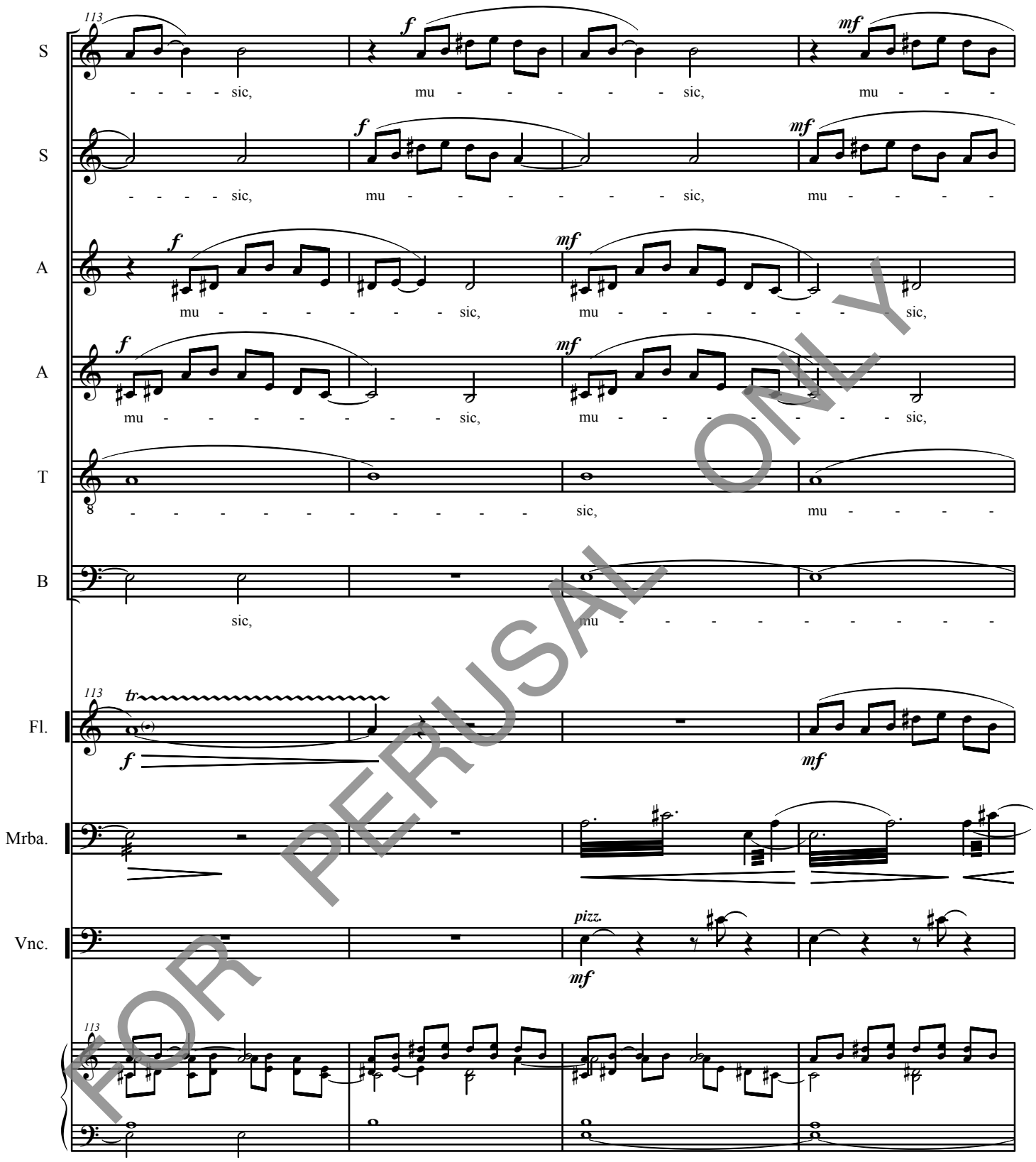
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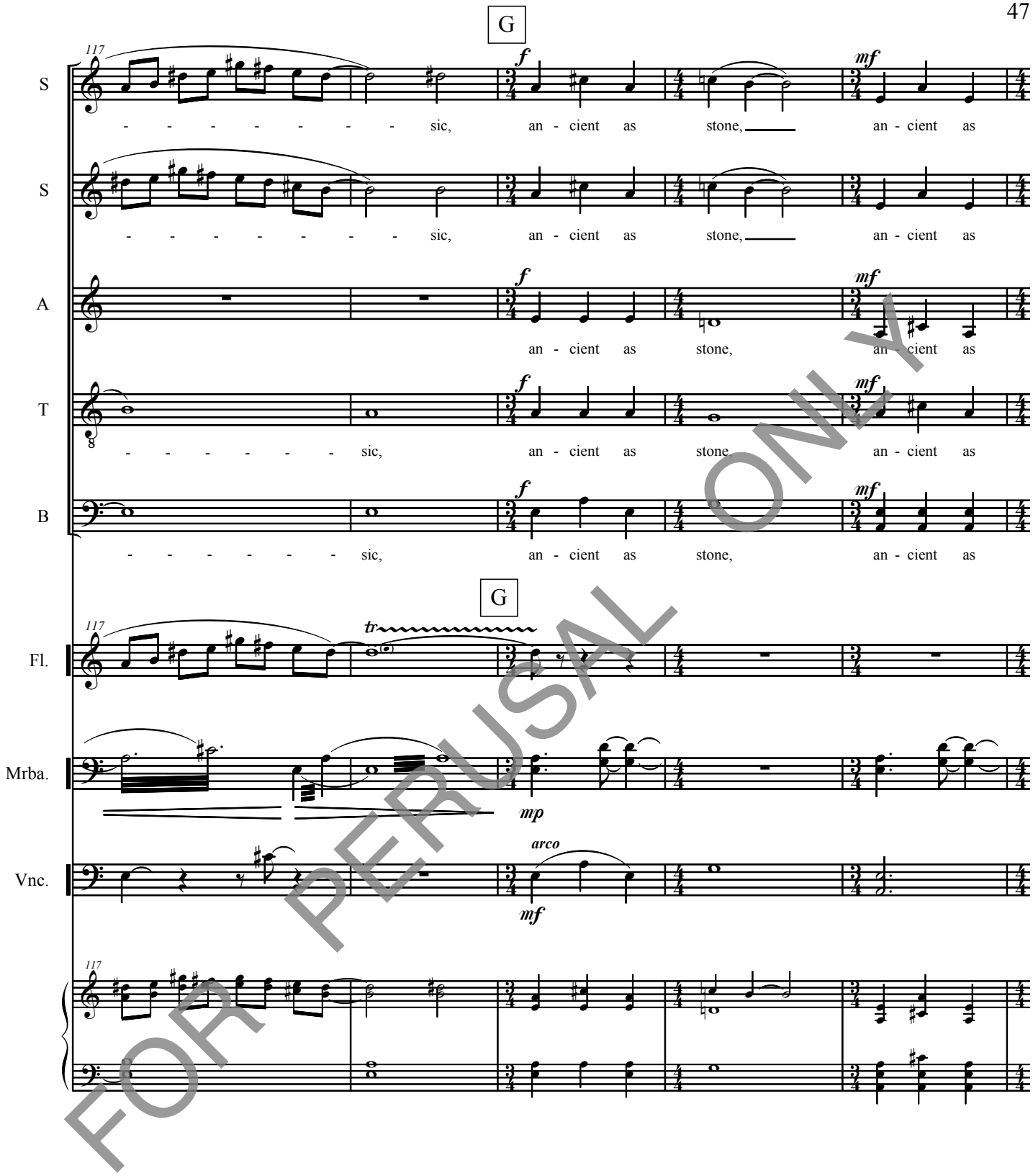
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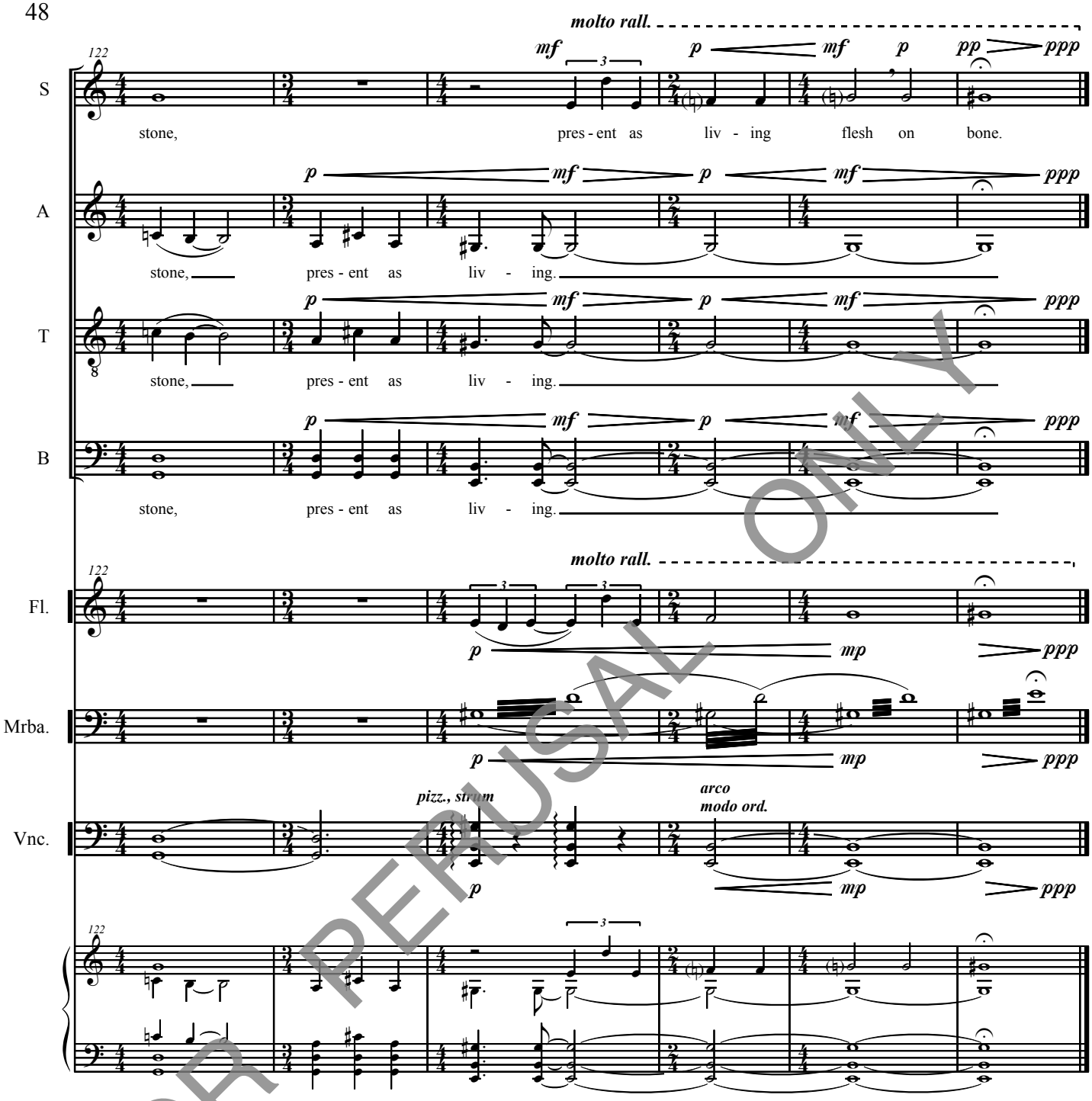
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Described as "...bold...radiant, deftly crafted..." (Musical America), Edie Hill's music is performed all over the world. Venues have included Lincoln Center, Met Cloisters (NYC), Carnergie's Weill Recital Hall (NYC), Musis Sacrum in Arnhem, Holland, LA County Museum of Art, Library of Congress, Minneapolis' Walker Arts Center, St. Paul's Schubert Club, Berwald Hall (Stockholm Sweden), Liviu Cultural Center (Romania), Feszek Müvészklub (Budapest), St. Peter's Basilica (Vatican City).

A three-time McKnight Artist Fellow and a two-time Bush Artist Fellow, Hill has received grants from the Jerome Foundation, ASCAP, New Music USA, Meet The Composer, Minnesota State Arts Board, Chamber Music America, and was awarded a Doctor of Humane Letters from Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota. The album, *Born: music of Edie Hill and Michael Gilbertson* won the 2023 GRAMMY® for "Best Choral Performance" for The Crossing (Donald Nally, conductor). She has a B.A. from Bennington College and earned her M.A. and Ph.D. degrees at the University of Minnesota.

Composer in Residence at Schubert Club from 2005-2017, she ran and grew the Mentorship Program for high school composers. She was Composer Mentor for MN Varsity for composers 14-18 years of age co-sponsored by The American Composers Forum and Classical Minnesota Public Radio. She has lectured at colleges, universities and various institutions in the States and abroad.

For Hill, writing music is an opportunity to research, learn, muse, reach down deep, and allow inspiration to come from the stuff of life. Her compositions are fueled by her experiences, passions and curiosities.

for complete biography as well as works for perusal and sale, visit ediehill.com

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