DAVID BIEDENBENDER

KAIROS

for reed quintet

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BENT SPACE MUSIC

Commissioned by the Maryland Chamber Winds, Tyler Austin, Artistic Director.

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Performance materials available from Bent Space Music (Publisher):
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INSTRUMENTATION

Oboe
B♭ Clarinet
E♭ Alto Saxophone
Bassoon
B♭ Bass Clarinet

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Total duration: ***ca.*** **4:45**

Score in C

PROGRAM NOTE

2020 has been a strange and difficult year. The loneliness of time in quarantine is unlike anything I have experienced. Time seems to travel differently, perhaps more slowly at times and at other times more quickly—its arrow seems jagged, bent, and off course. *Kairos* is an Ancient Greek word meaning the right, critical, or opportune moment. It is a different kind of time than *Chronos*, which is our more conscious and common understanding of time, measured in seconds, minutes, hours, days, and so forth. In the Eastern Orthodox Divine Liturgy *Kairos* describes the intersection of the Liturgy with the Infinite—with God. An integral aesthetic principle of cathedrals is an attempt to sonically connect with something massive, something larger than ourselves—the Infinite. Bissera Pentcheva, an art historian at Stanford University, writing about the Hagia Sophia (built in 537 as the largest Christian Church in the Byzantine Empire), translates a 6th-century description of the building by Paul the Silentiary in this way: "human action…brings into presence the divine reaction, the divine voice…in a sense that is the reverberation of the space: After the human voice stops singing, the building continues."[1]

Many concert halls share a similar sonic aesthetic principle. I miss these spaces. I miss the resonance of concert halls and churches. I miss the energy and excitement when people gather together and can not only hear but also feel the air molecules moving around them, and they can see how and why and by whom these sounds are made. I miss the way in which these spaces activate sound waves, sending them bouncing frenetically from wall to wall, arch to edge, and then gently dissolve—each molecule hitting another, each collision becoming slightly less energized than the last until only a shadow of the sound remains. Then, even the shadow disappears, and profound silence inevitably crawls out of the cracks and crevices of these cavernous spaces and becomes a fast and fizzy flood, a cool, fresh bedsheet of air molecules draped over us. We feel the heaviness of sound in its sudden absence. Its weight in the silence. And then we remember the silence *before* sound. It was a different silence. It *felt* different. Or maybe we felt different?

I miss simply sharing these spaces—these experiences—with other people. With friends. With family. With acquaintances. With strangers. There is something very special about sharing sound in a particular time and place. This piece is my humble attempt to weave the threads of these ideas and of our disconnected realities into a single strand—a shared moment—and to sing a space—*our* time and space—into resonance.

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[1] New York Times, August 6, 2020, "How a Historian Stuffed Hagia Sophia's Sound Into a Studio"

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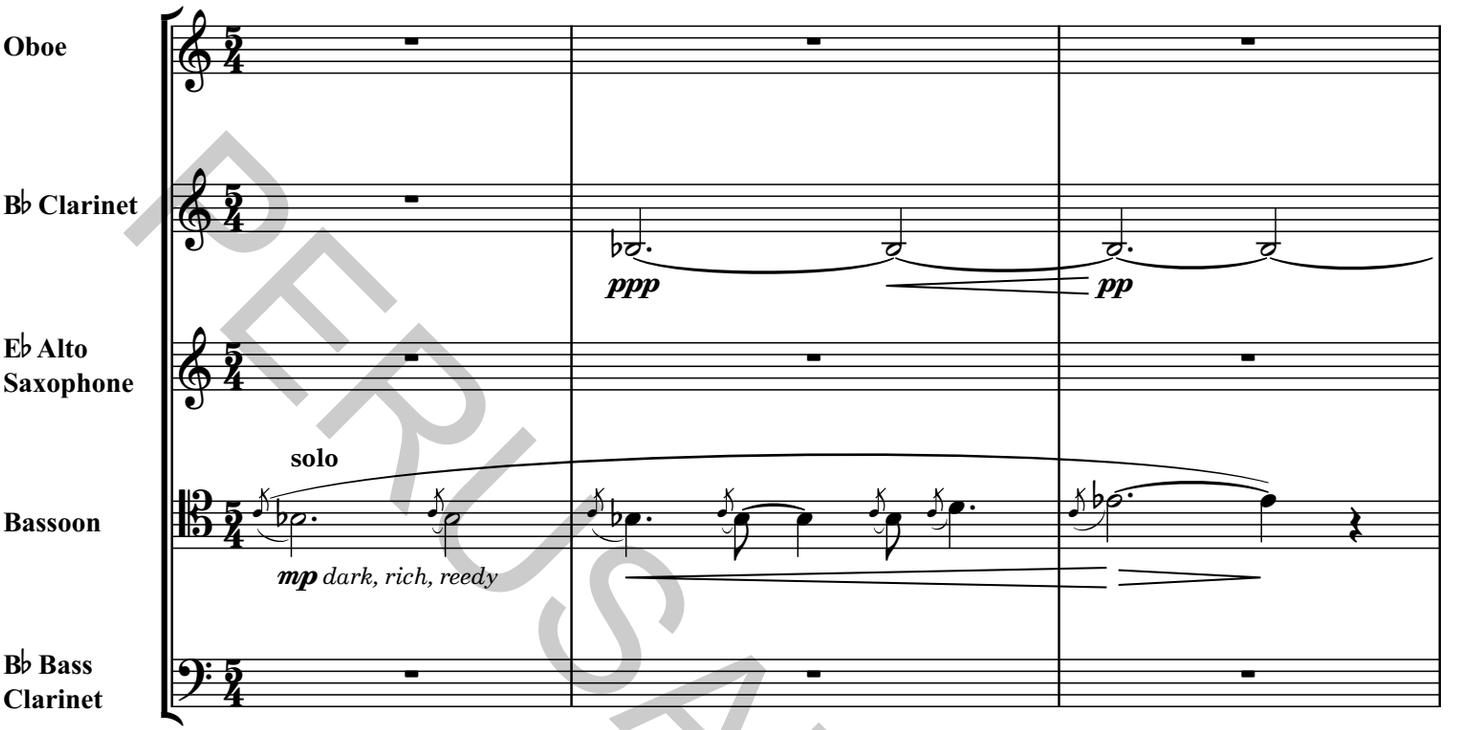
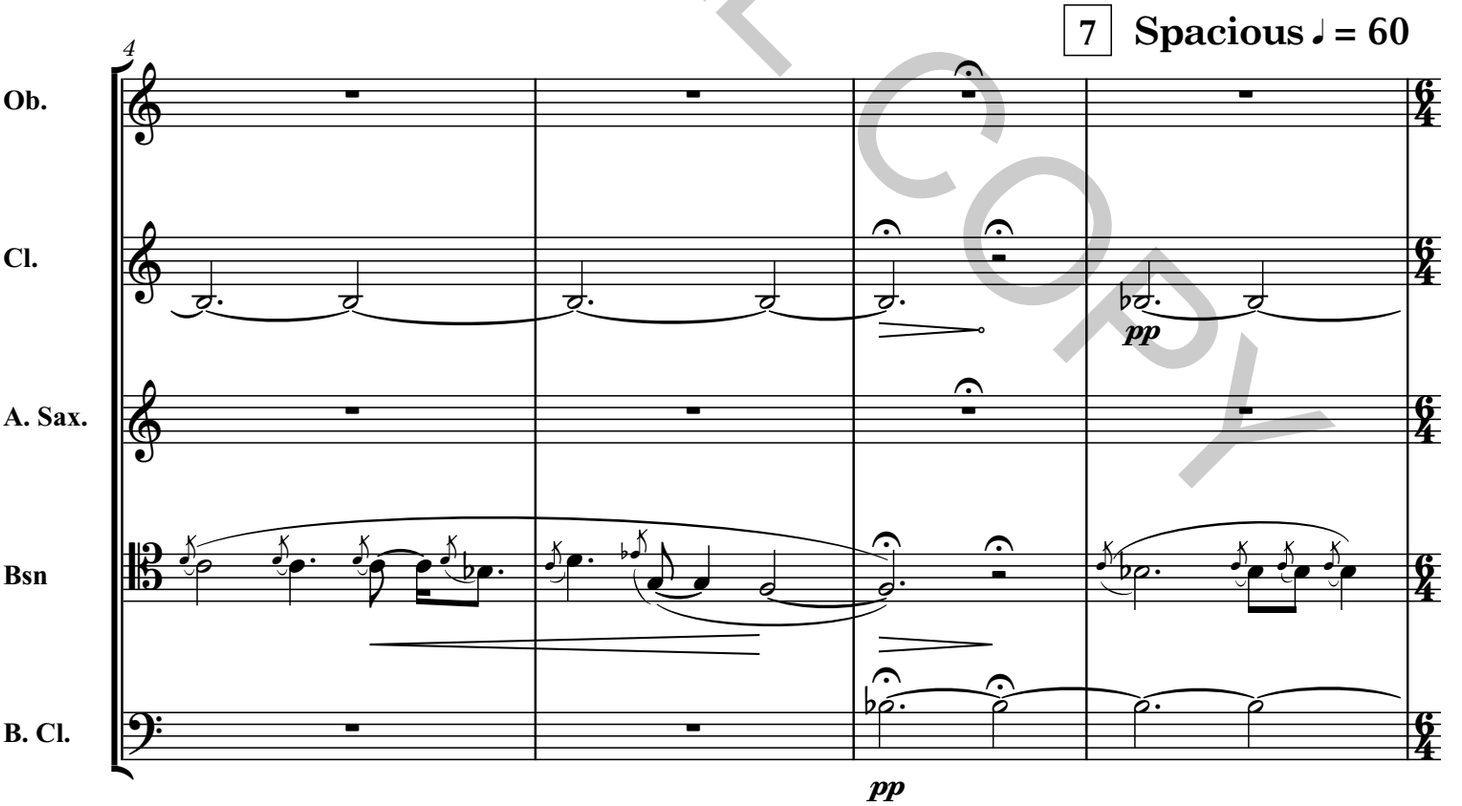
Ecstatic, freely ♩ = 56





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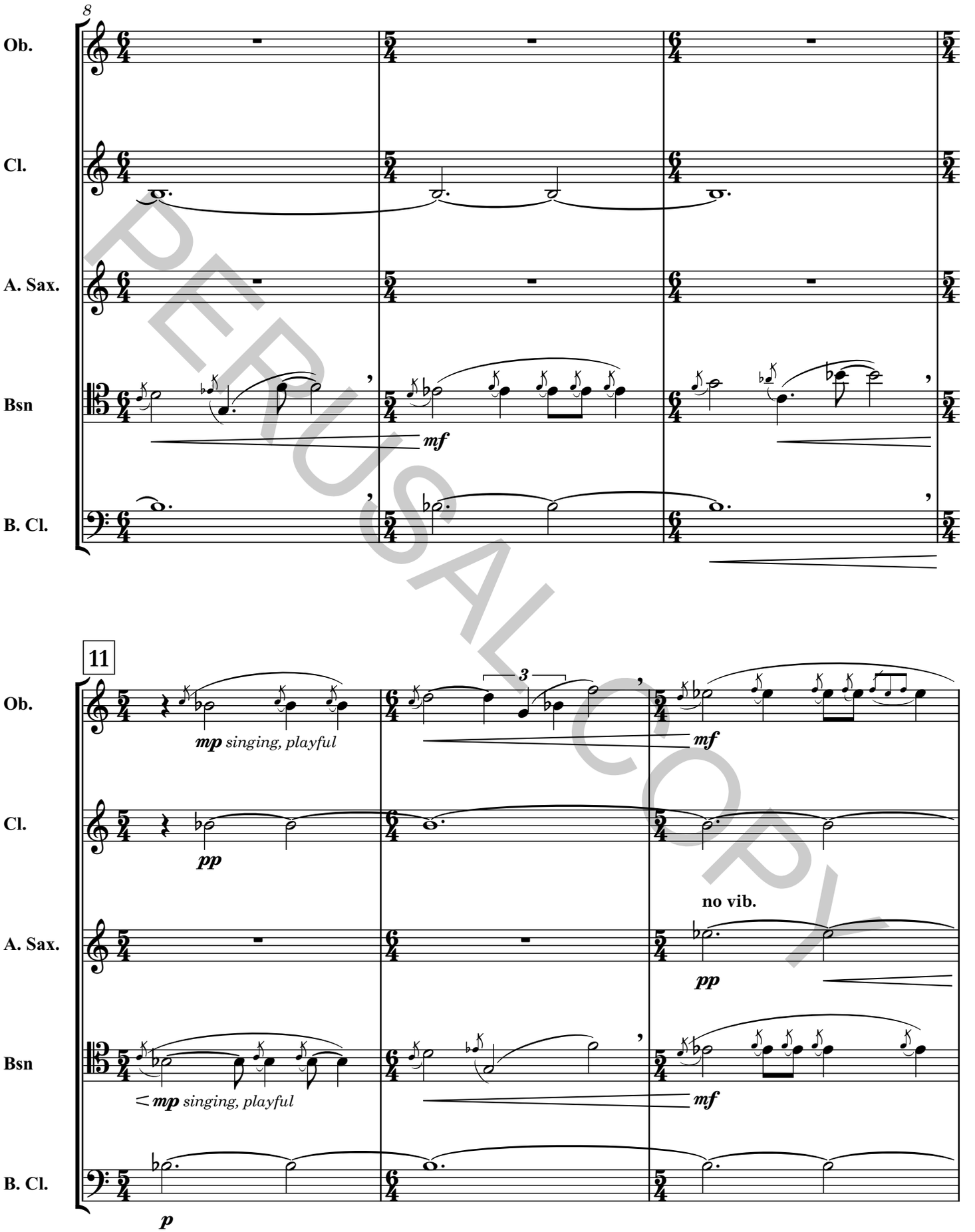

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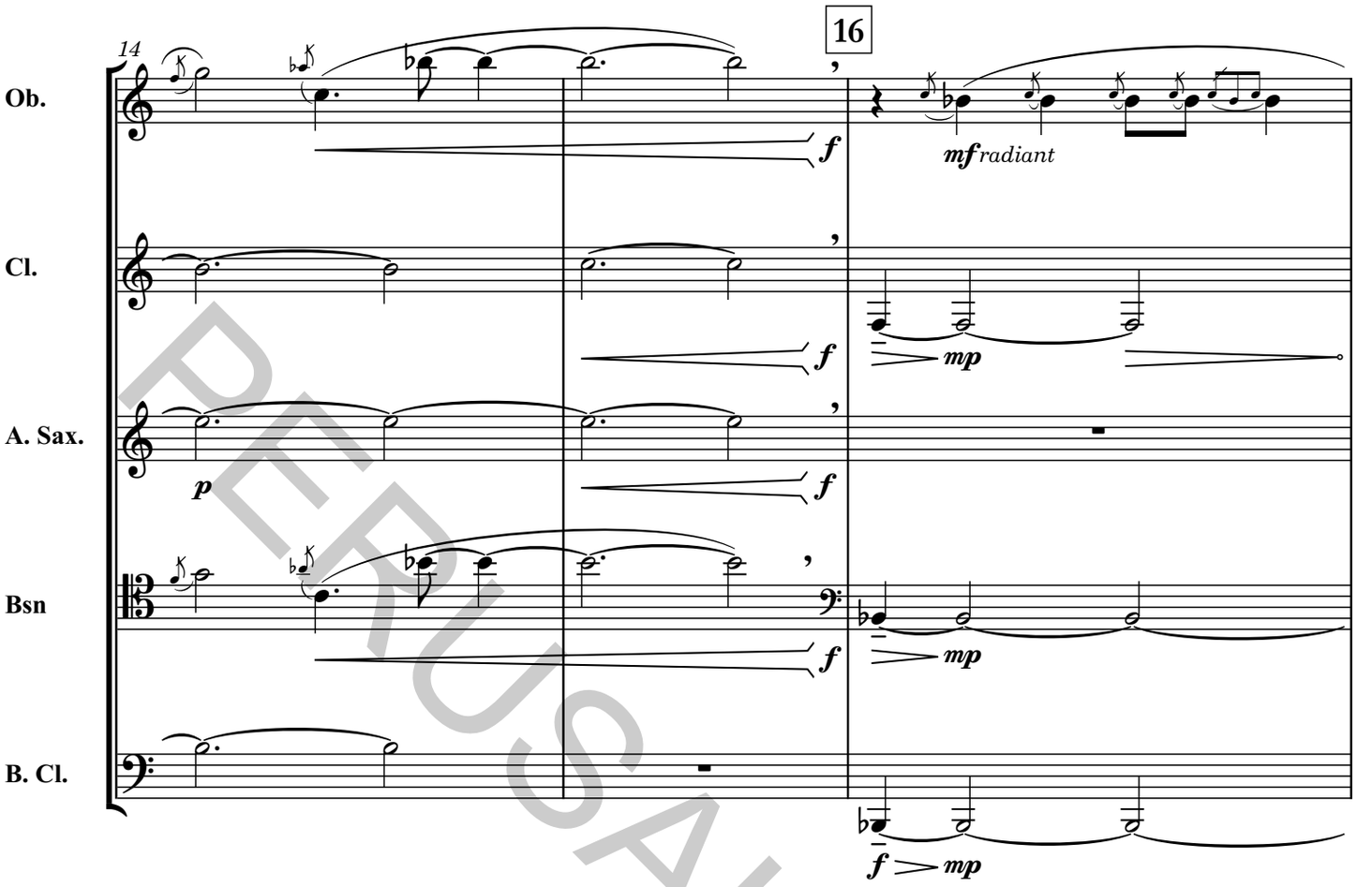

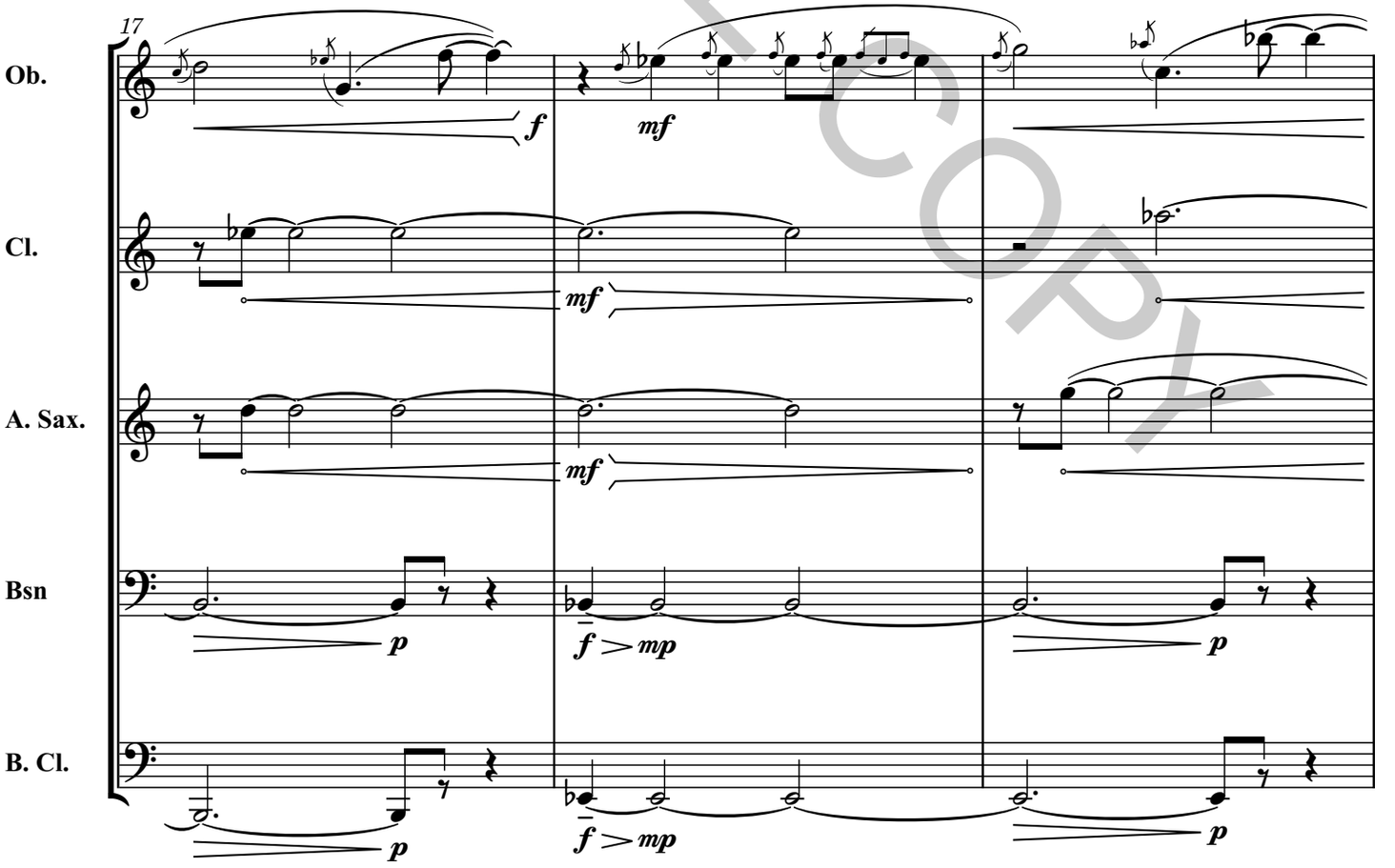

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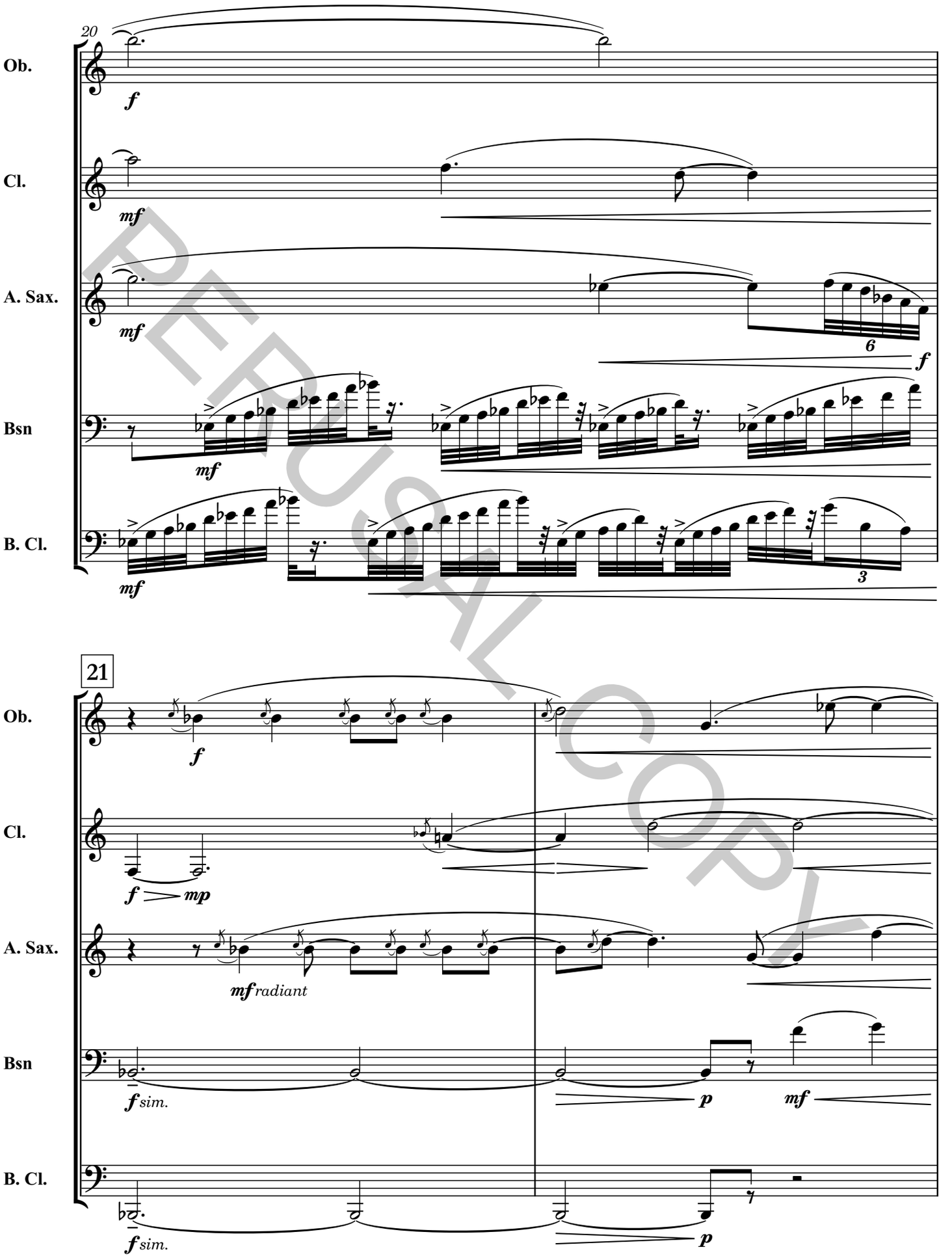

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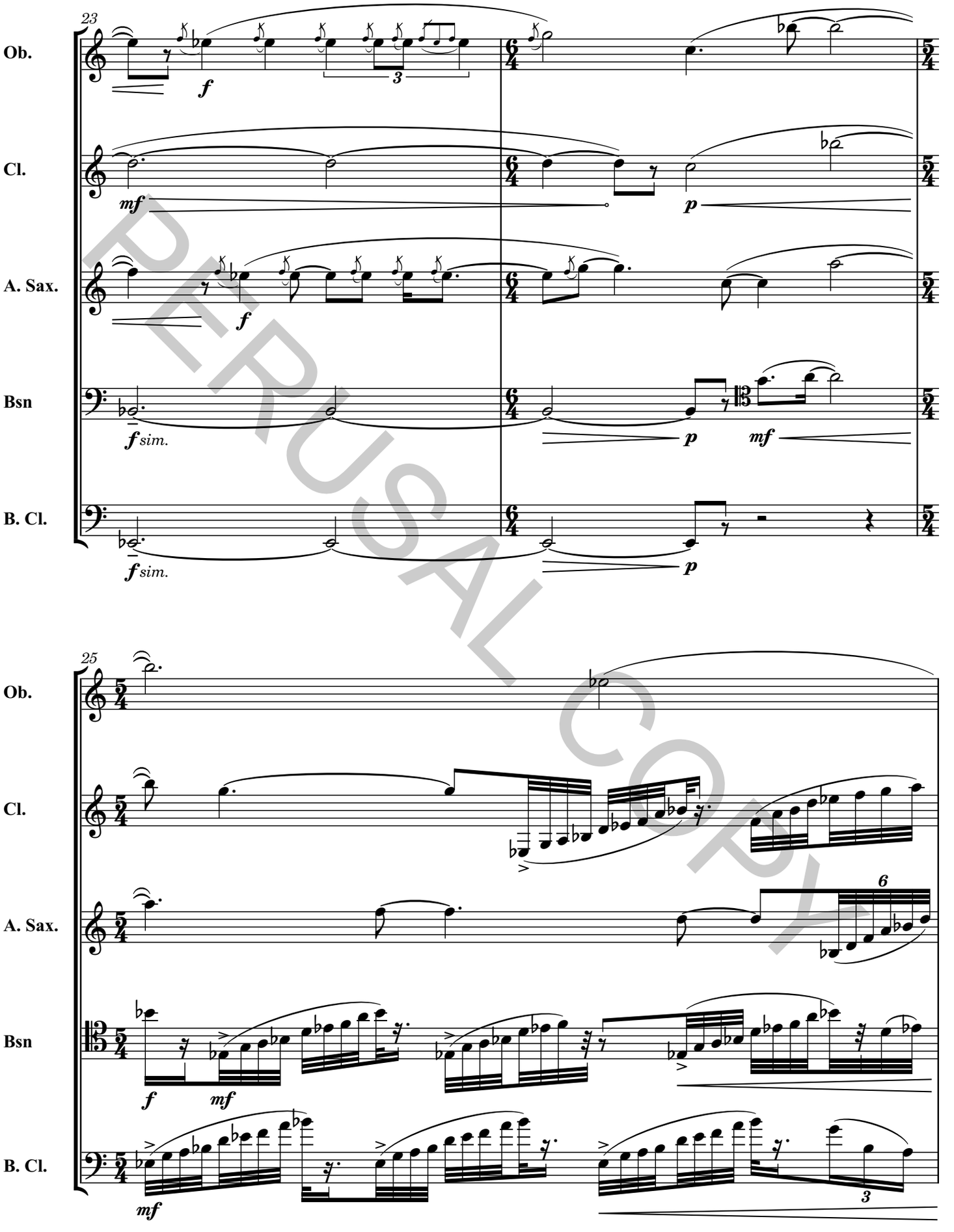

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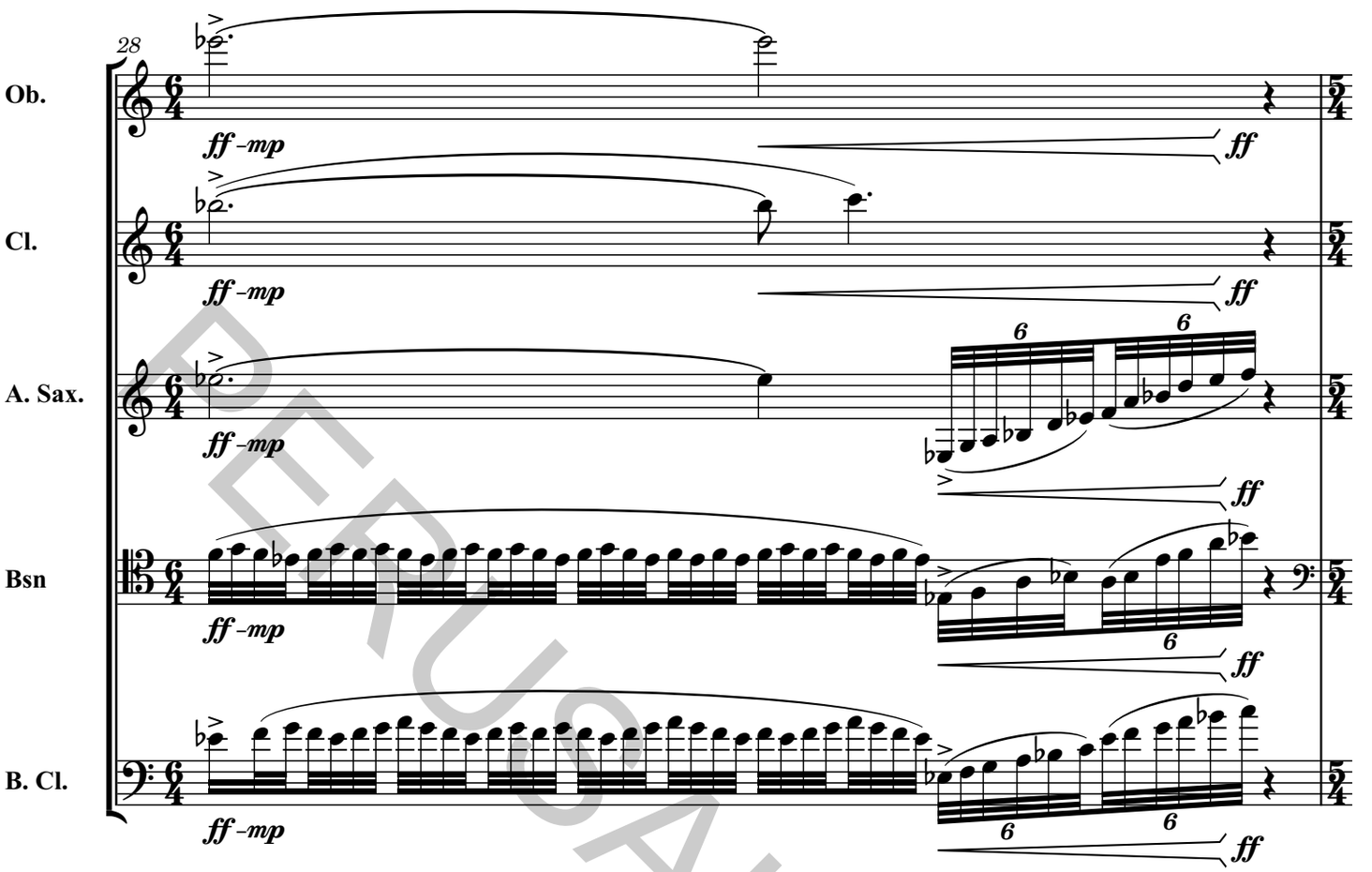

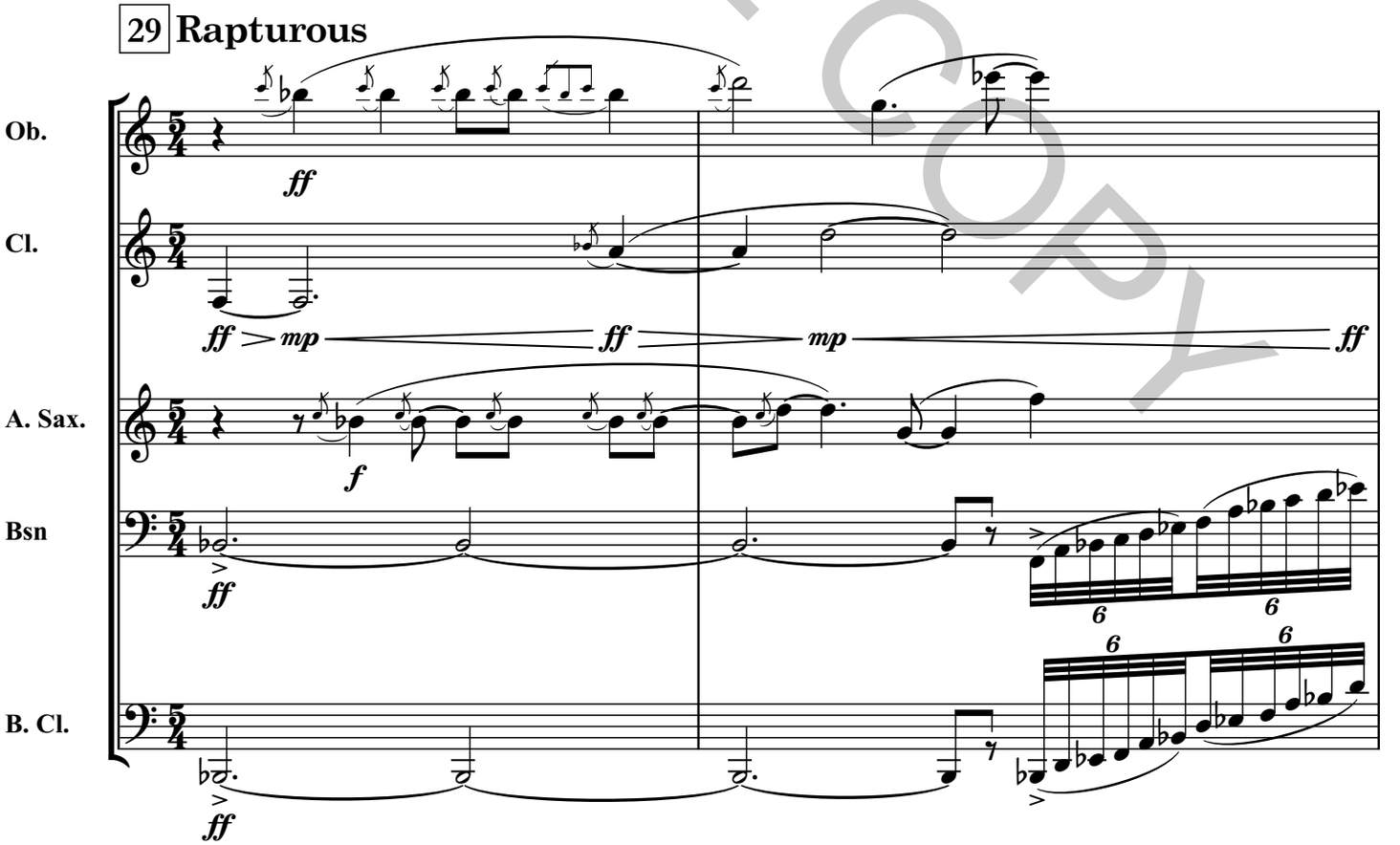

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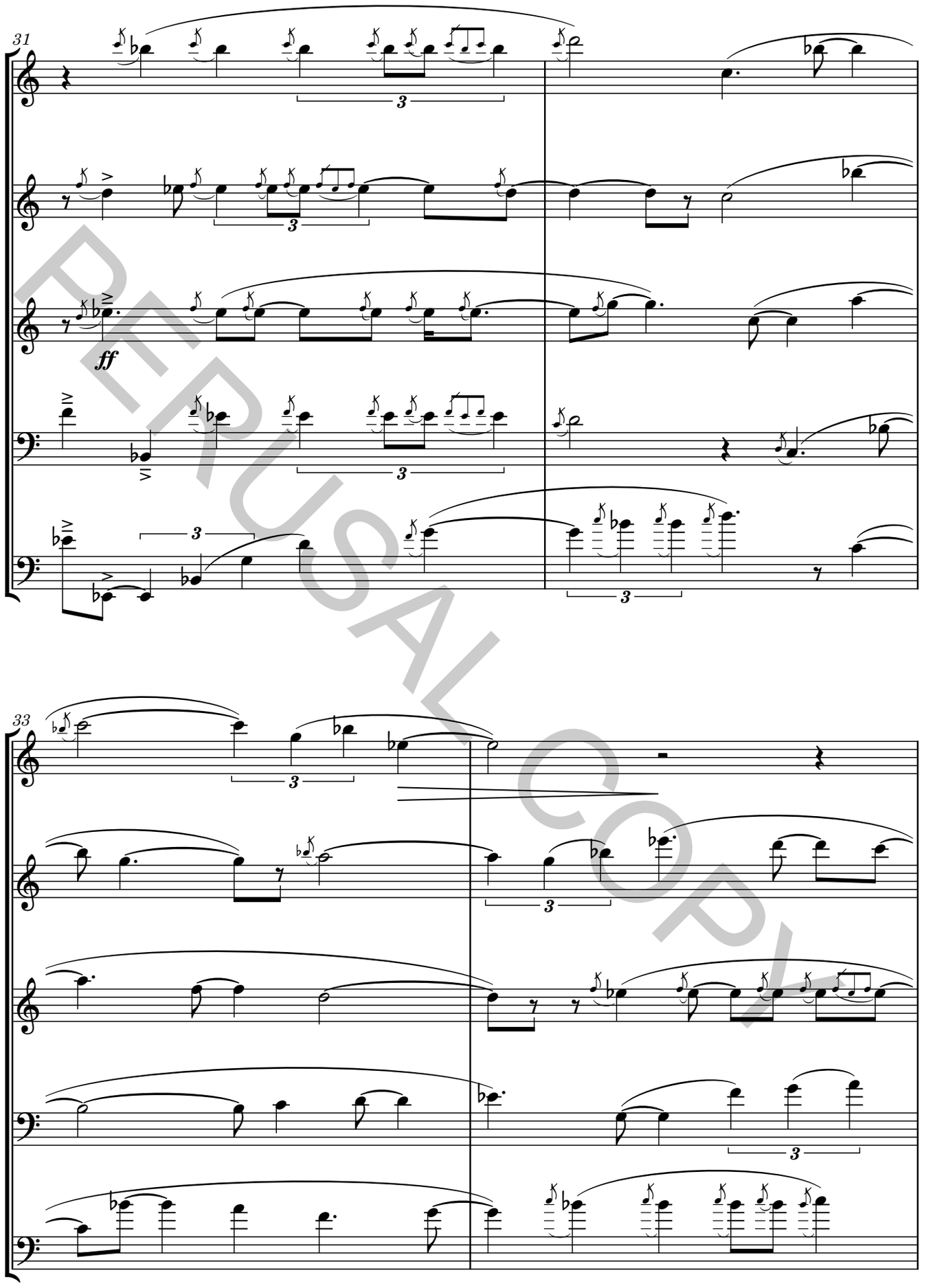

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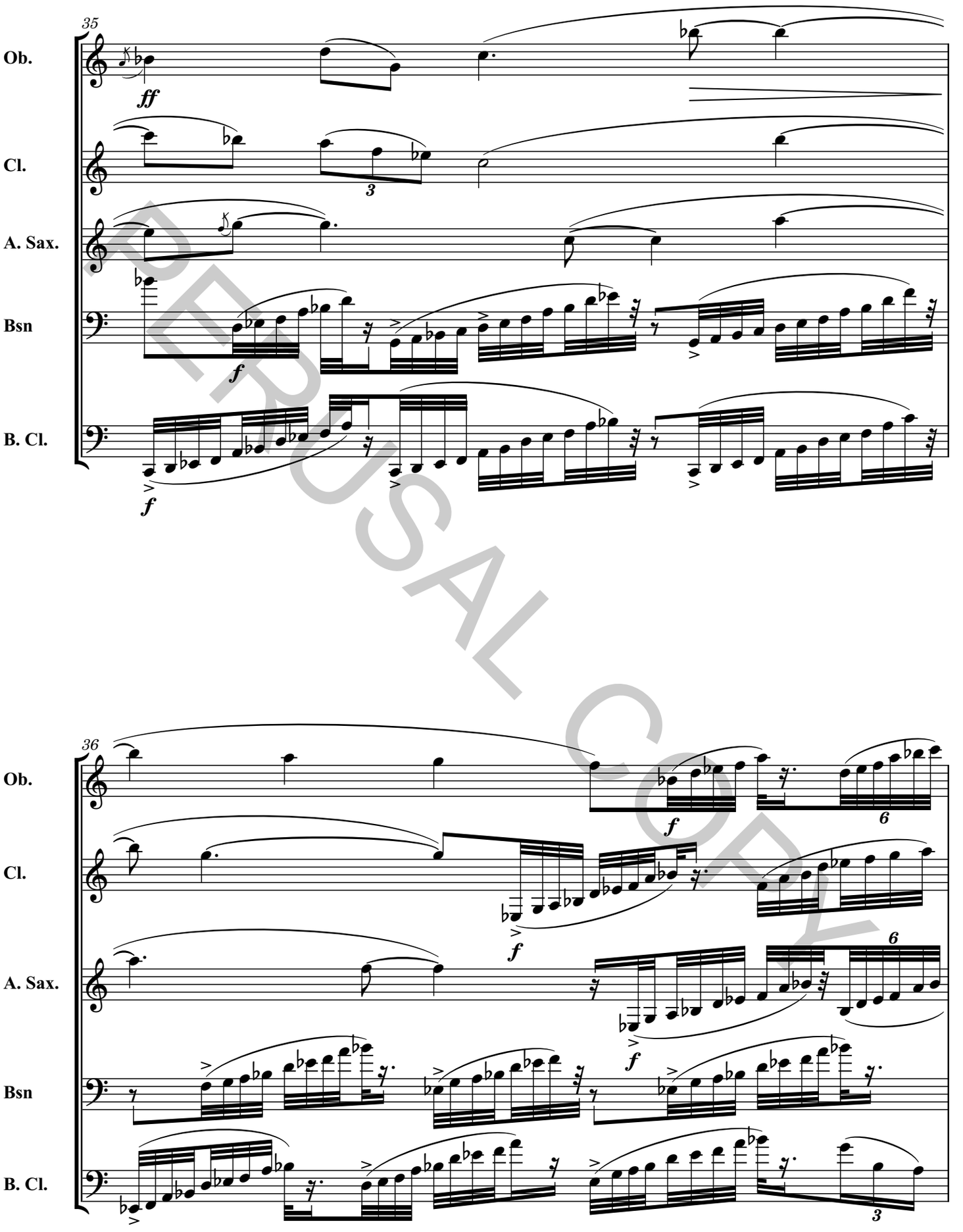

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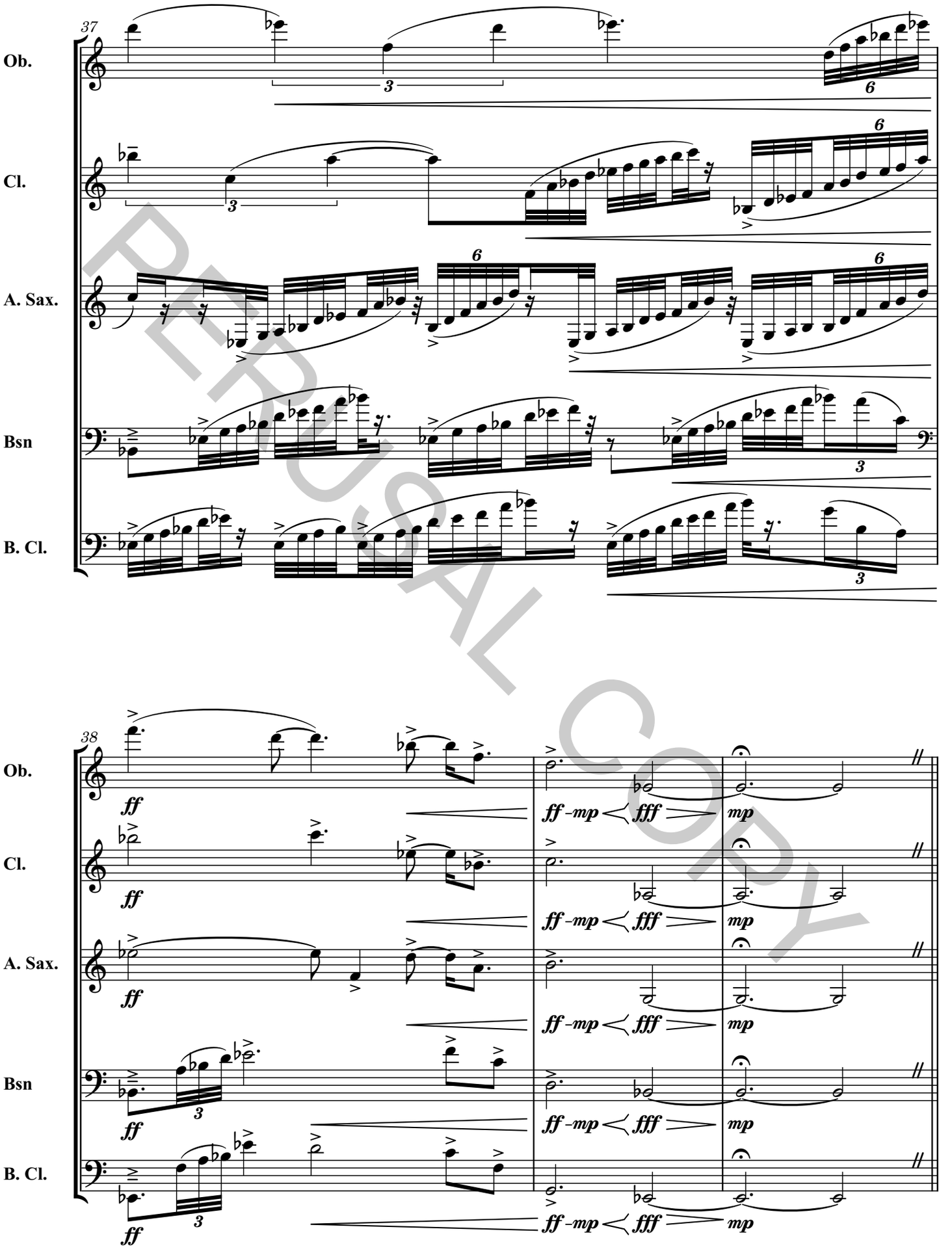

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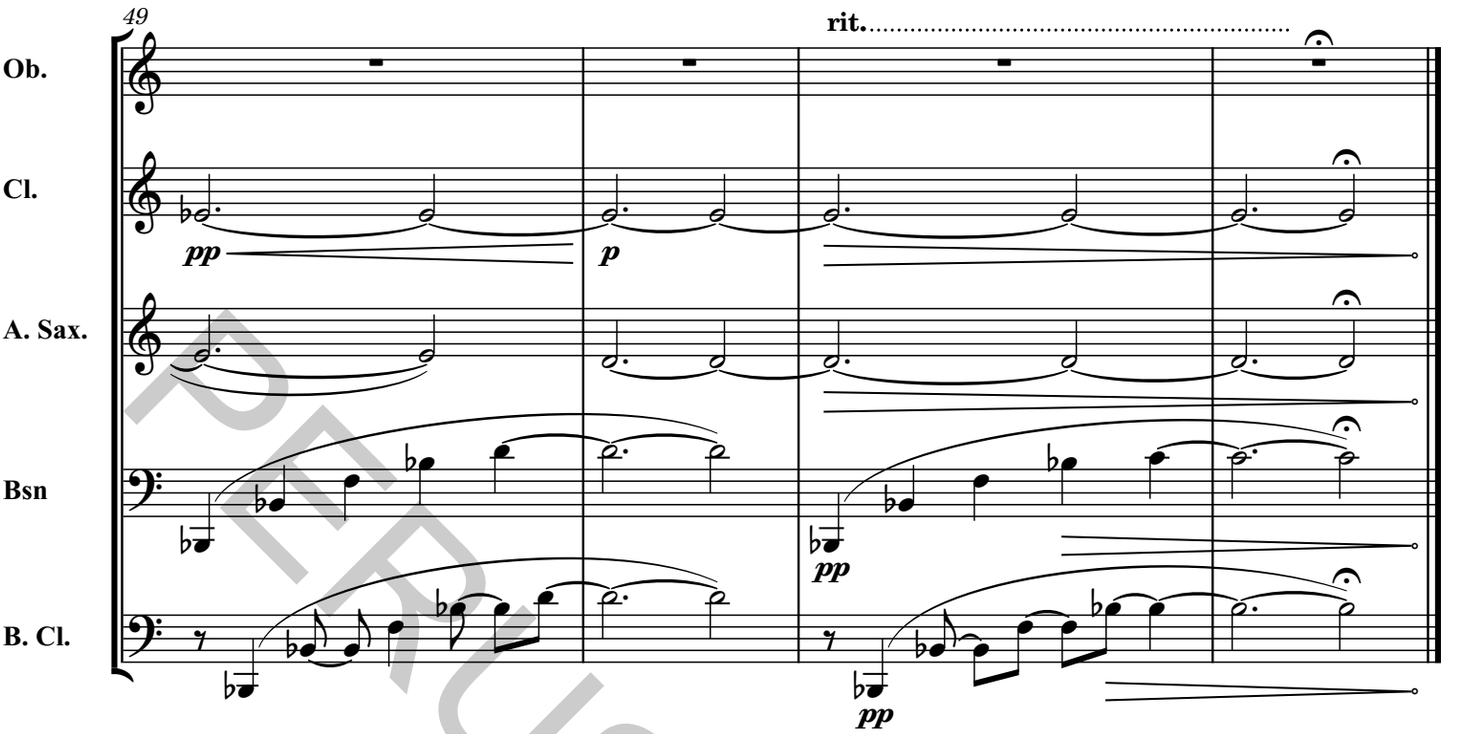

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