David Biedenbender

Sacred Geometry

for brass quintet

PERUSAL SCORE

bent space music

Commissioned by and dedicated to Fritz Kaenzig,
Arthur F. Thurnau Professor of Music Emeritus, University of Michigan.

Premiered by the American Brass Quintet
at the Chamber Music Society of Wichita, Kansas on
February 6, 2022.

PERUSAL SCORE

Performance materials available from Bent Space Music (Publisher):
www.davidbiedenbender.com

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INSTRUMENTATION

2 Trumpets in C (or B♭)
Horn in F
Tenor Trombone
Tuba or Bass Trombone

Mutes:
Trumpet 1 – harmon, plunger
Trumpet 2 – harmon, cup

PERUSAL SCORE

Total duration: ***ca.*** **17:30**

I. Ripples	*ca.* 3:15
II. Gaudí	*ca.* 4:30
III. Nautilus	*ca.* 7:00
IV. Helix	*ca.* 2:45

Transposed Score

PROGRAM NOTE

Sacred Geometry is inspired by the work of Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí (1852–1926). Gaudí is best known for creating la Basílica de la Sagrada Família, a cathedral in Barcelona, Spain, which has been under construction since 1882. Gaudí integrated symbols of his faith into every detail of the Basílica, weaving them into complex geometric forms he studied in the natural world, like hyperbolic paraboloids, hyperboloids, helicoids, and cones. He also utilized *Trencadís*, a form of mosaic art made by cementing together recycled shards of tile and chinaware, fashioning beautiful new things out of the broken and discarded. The inside of the cathedral mimics a forest, with tree-like columns and branches supporting hyperboloid vaults in spectacular fractals, evoking the infinite—connecting God and Creation. I think of this piece like a strange liturgy—or ritual—to meditate on this striking space, to contemplate Gaudí's way of seeing the world, and, hopefully, to discover a similar sense of awe and wonder.

The first movement, *Ripples*, is quite simple—a chanted invocation in the trumpets with orchestrated reverberations evoking the large spaces inside the cathedral. There are also distant echoes of William Byrd's setting of *Ave Verum Corpus* (1605) in this movement. My favorite moment of Byrd's work is this surprising, fleeting dissonance, the result of a major chord in the upper voices against a weeping, descending minor melody in the bass, coinciding with the text *Miserere*—have mercy. It is bittersweet and broken.

The second movement, *Gaudí*, is playful and whimsical, even irreverent. The Latin root of Gaudí is *gaudere*, which means "to rejoice" or "to take pleasure in." Gaudí threaded the seemingly fantastical aspects of our world into dream-like designs and surreal structures that seem unnaturally natural, or naturally unnatural. Imagine stopping to marvel at some small, unusual flower like *Orchis italica* or hearing the peculiar call of a Brown Sicklebill or a Black-throated Loon. I think of this movement as a walk through a garden of strange delights.

A nautilus is a marine mollusk with a shell in the shape of a logarithmic spiral. As the nautilus grows, it lives in the outermost chamber of the shell, sealing off the previous chamber with a wall that prevents it from returning to its old home. As a symbol, it has many meanings and connections, but, for me, I find it to be a powerful metaphor: building anew while always leaving behind an artifact of the past—a stunningly beautiful one, in fact. The third movement, *Nautilus*, is built on a small, simple phrase that spins and rotates into longer and longer threads and swirling, circular harmonic progressions.

The final movement is called *Helix*. The helix also has many connections and connotations, appearing in everything from spiral staircases to seashells, forming the structure for the molecules from which life is built, and lying at the center of mathematical formulas that describe both infinitesimally small subatomic particles as well as the mechanics of the entire universe.

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1. Ripples

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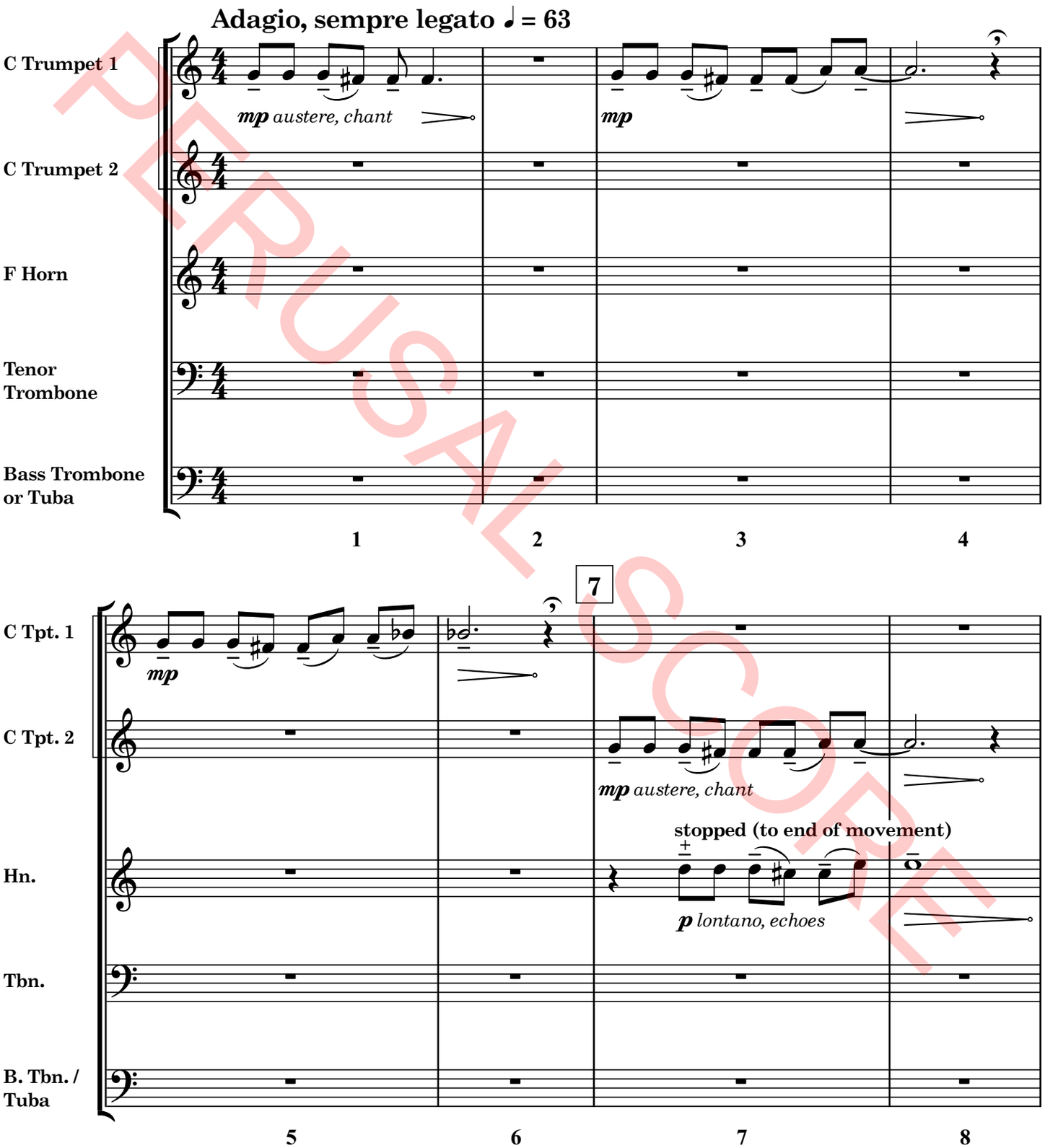

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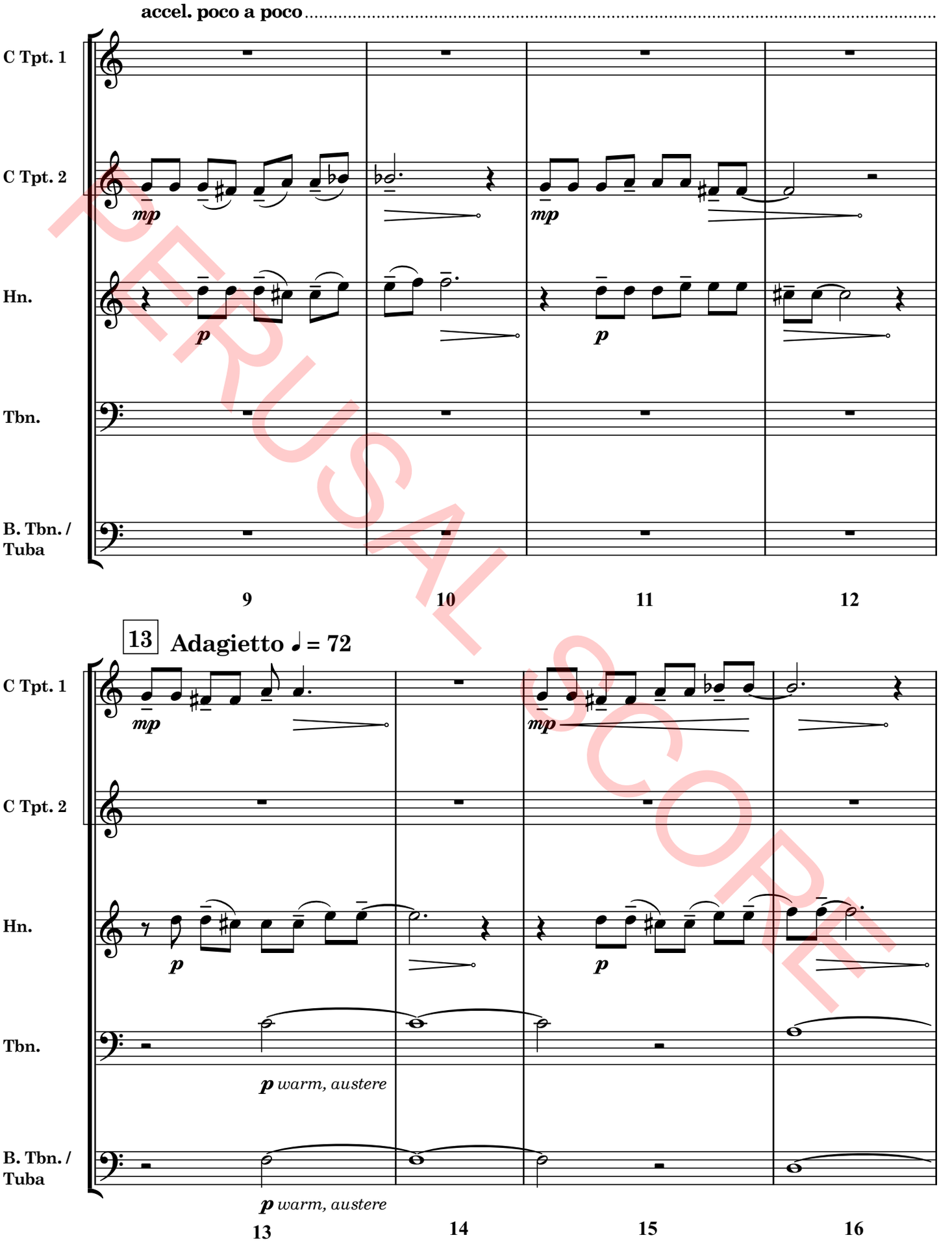

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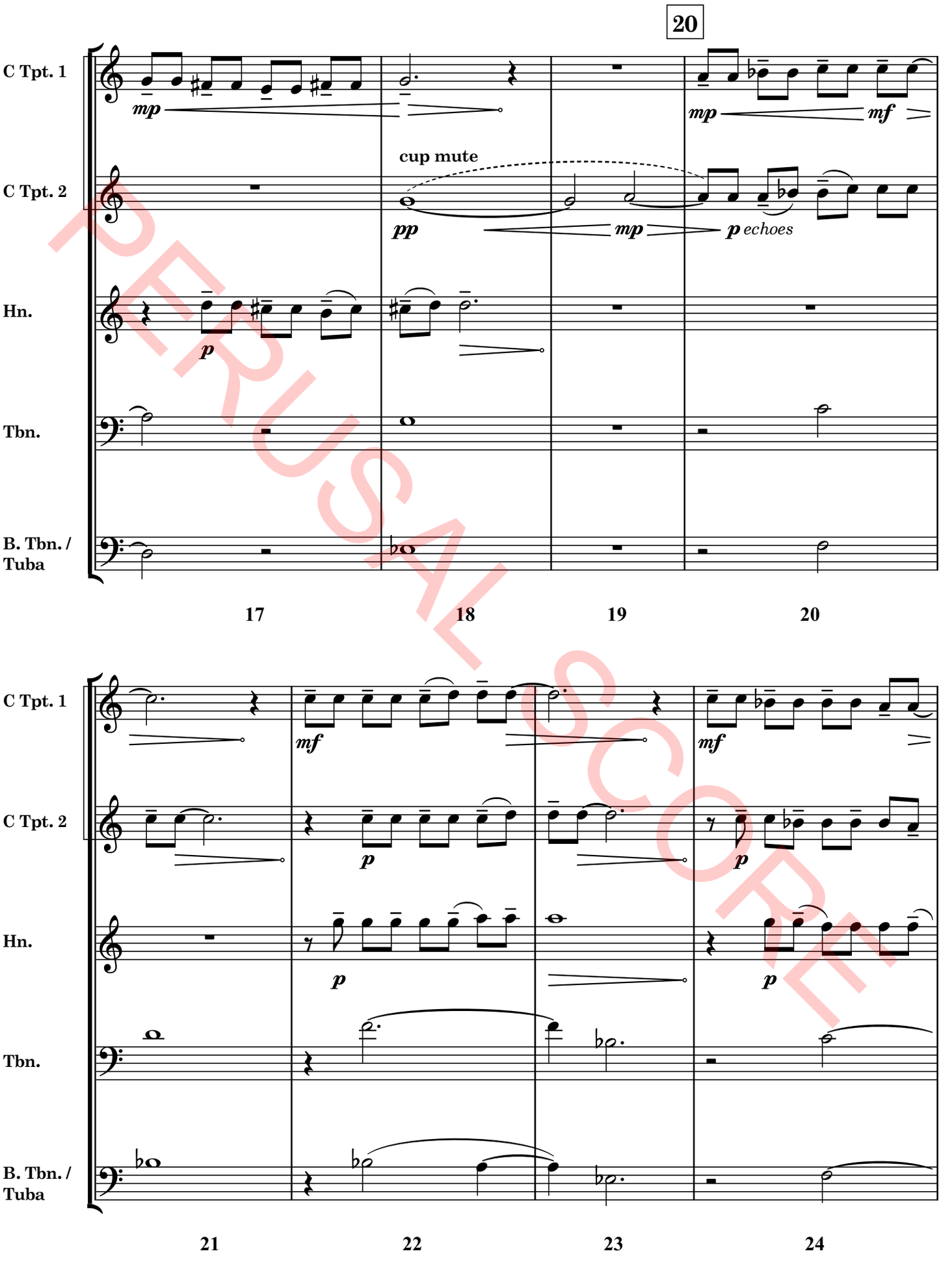

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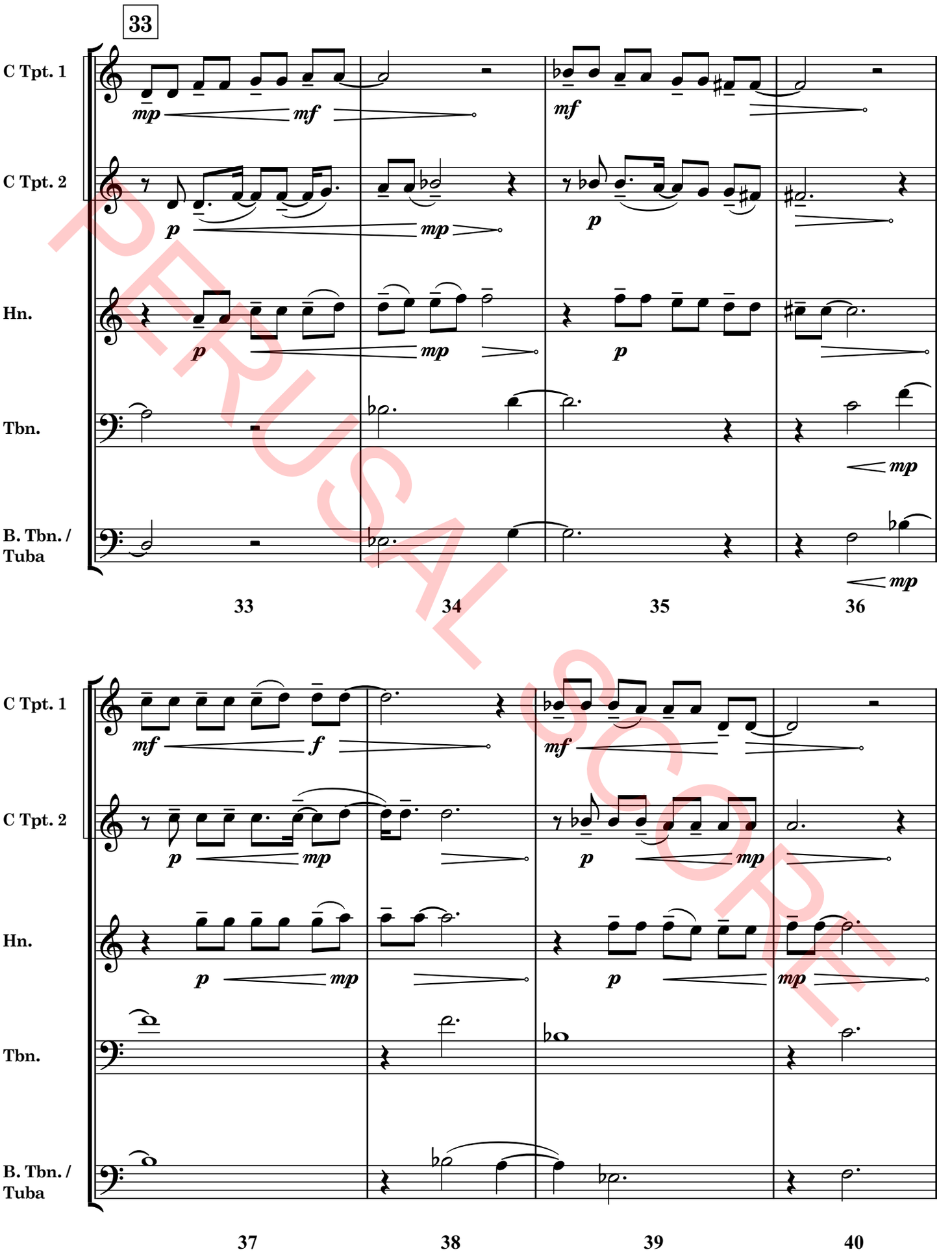

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2. Gaudí

Playful ♩ = 100

C Trumpet 1

C Trumpet 2

tune down a quarter tone

F Horn

open
a roar: rip up followed by a fast, downward gesture

sffz *an interruption*

straight mute

Tenor Trombone

p *muttering*

Bass Trombone or Tuba

mp *staccatissimo*

1 2

C Tpt. 1

C Tpt. 2

harmon mute (stem out)

p *muttering*

Hn.

sffz

Tbn.

(p)

(p)

B. Tbn. / Tuba

mf

3 4 5

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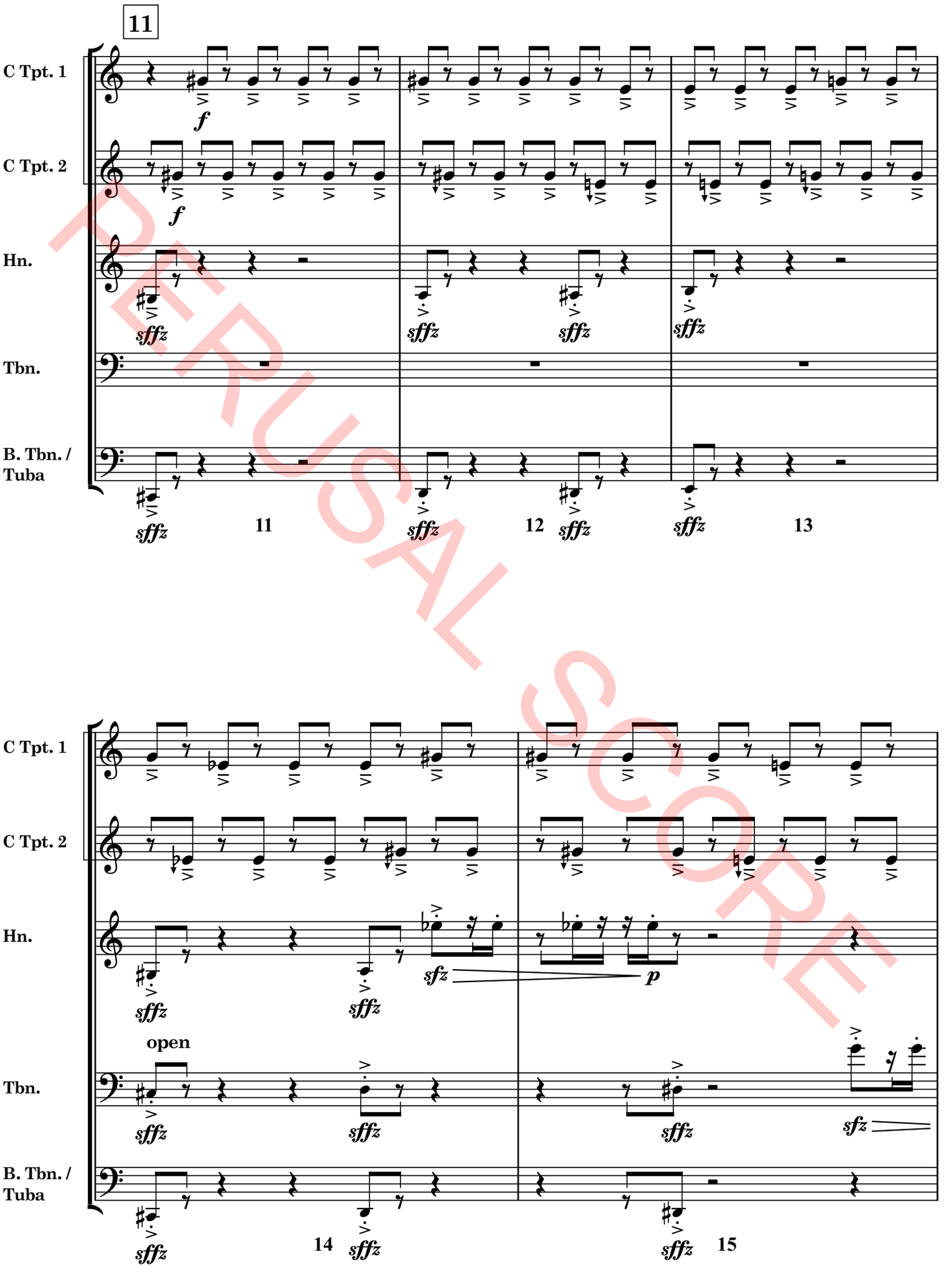

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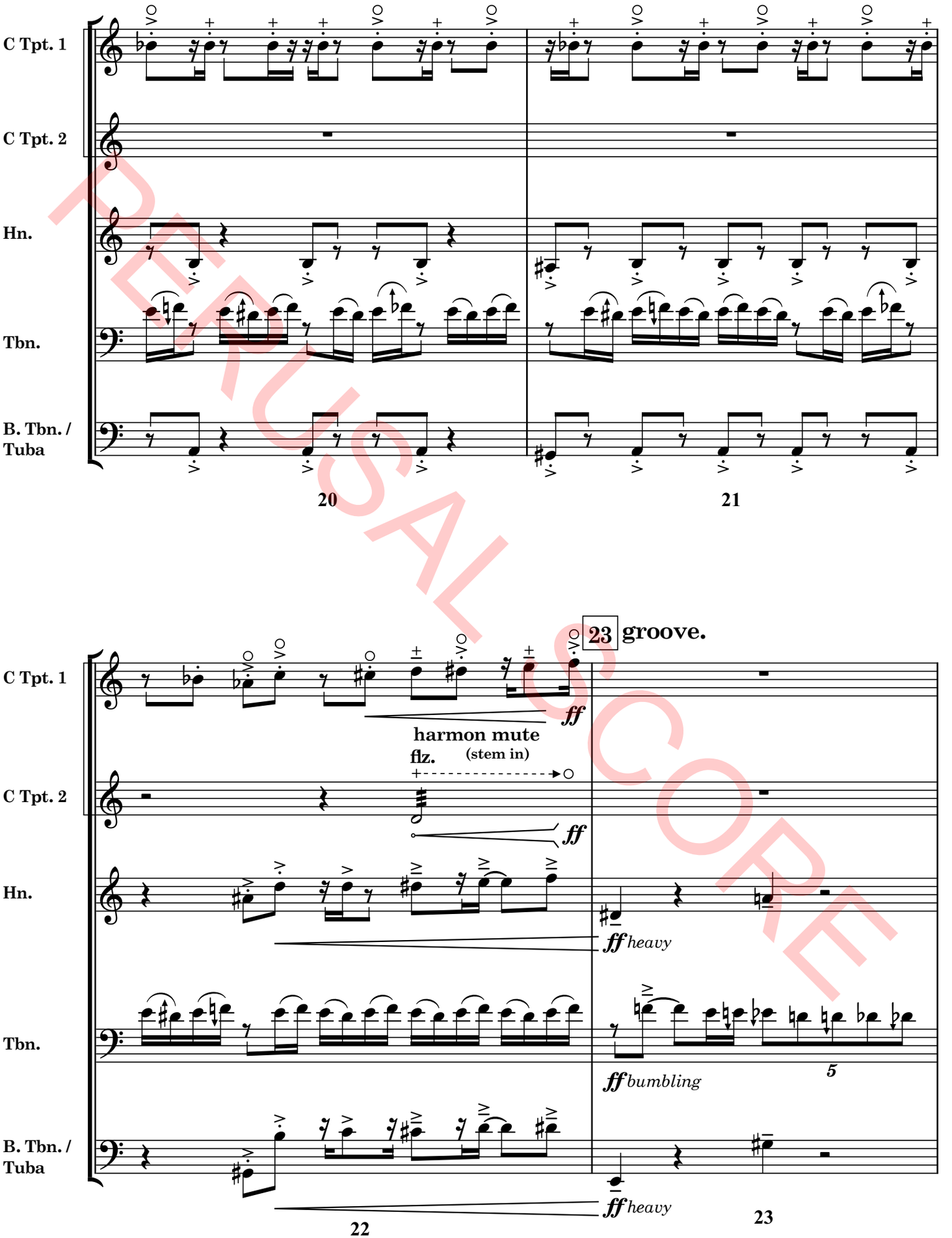

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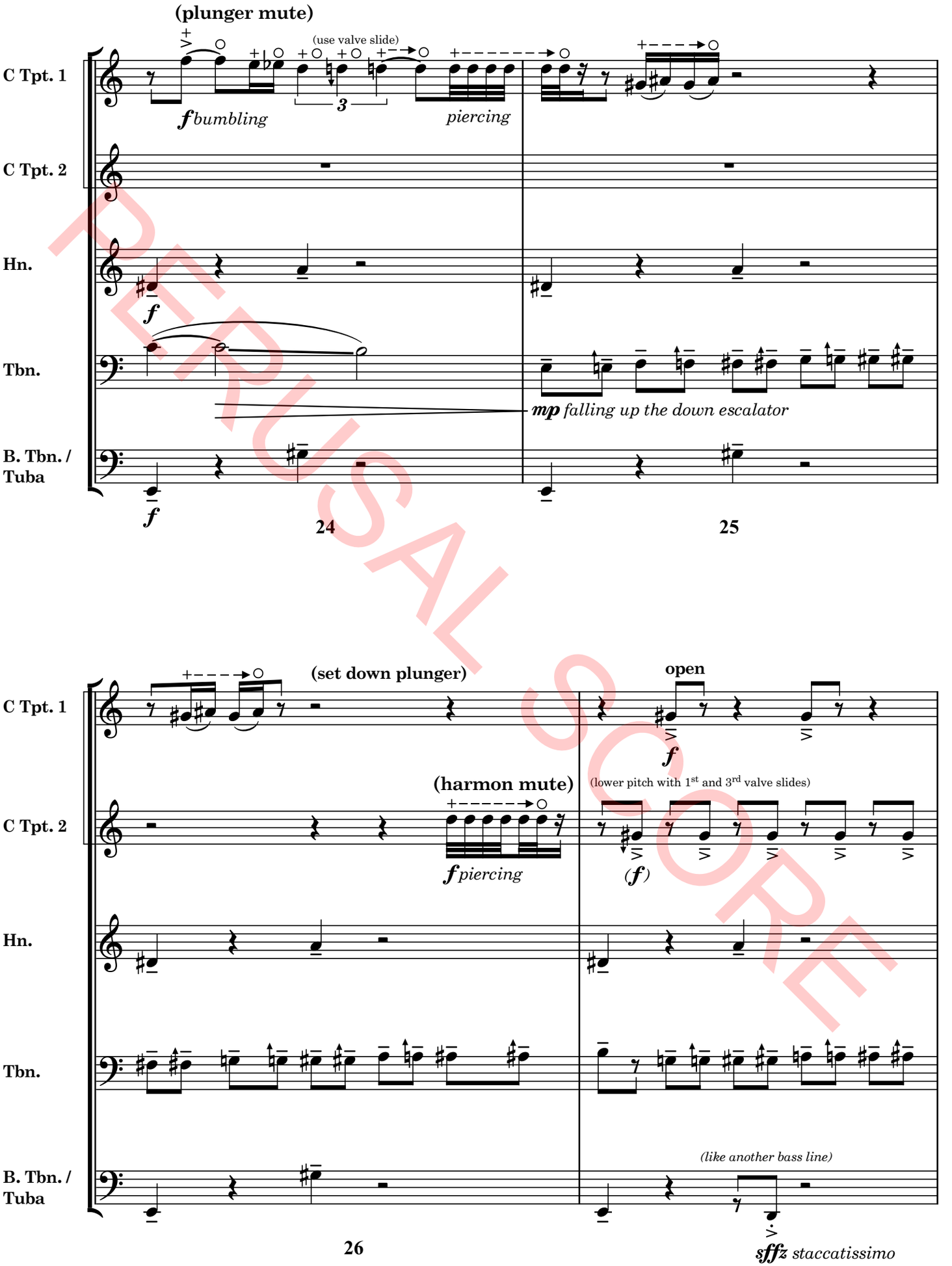

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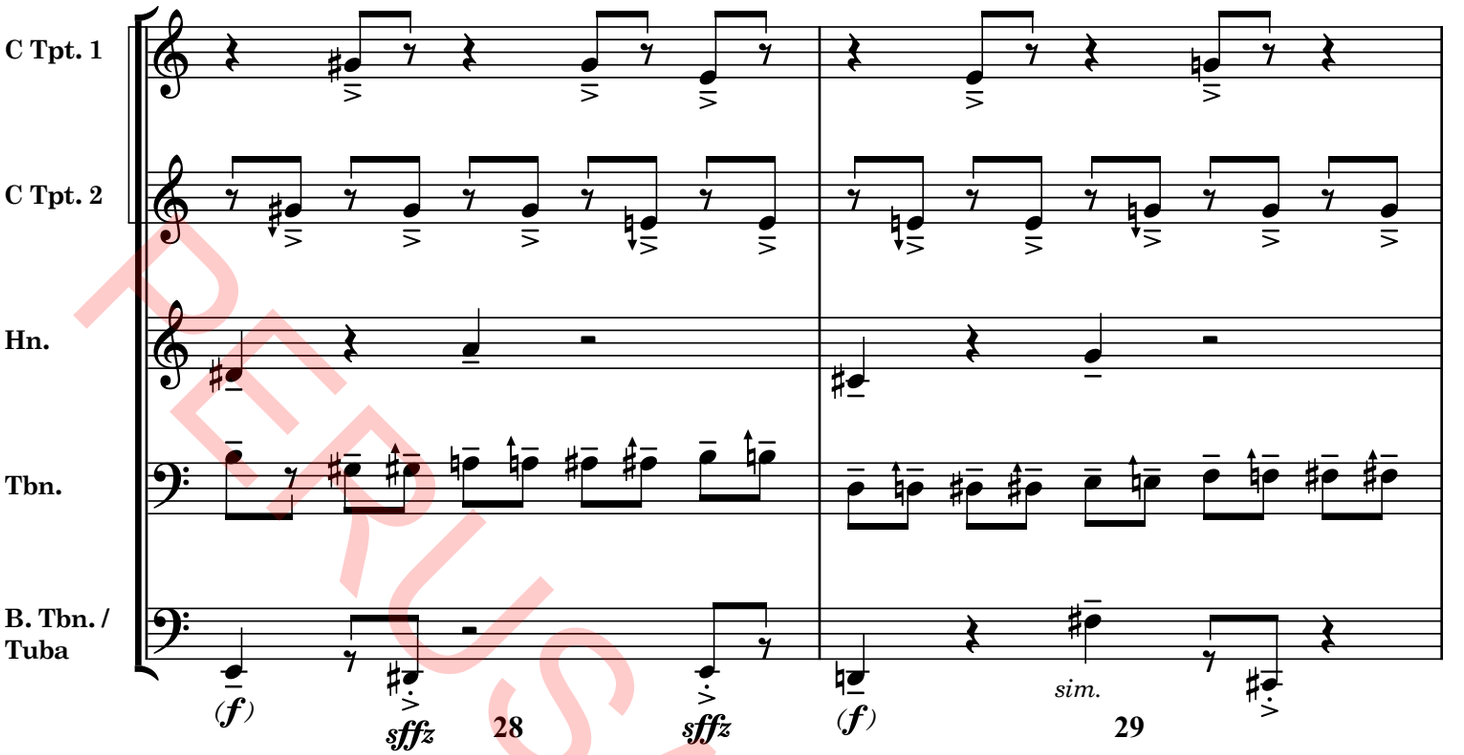

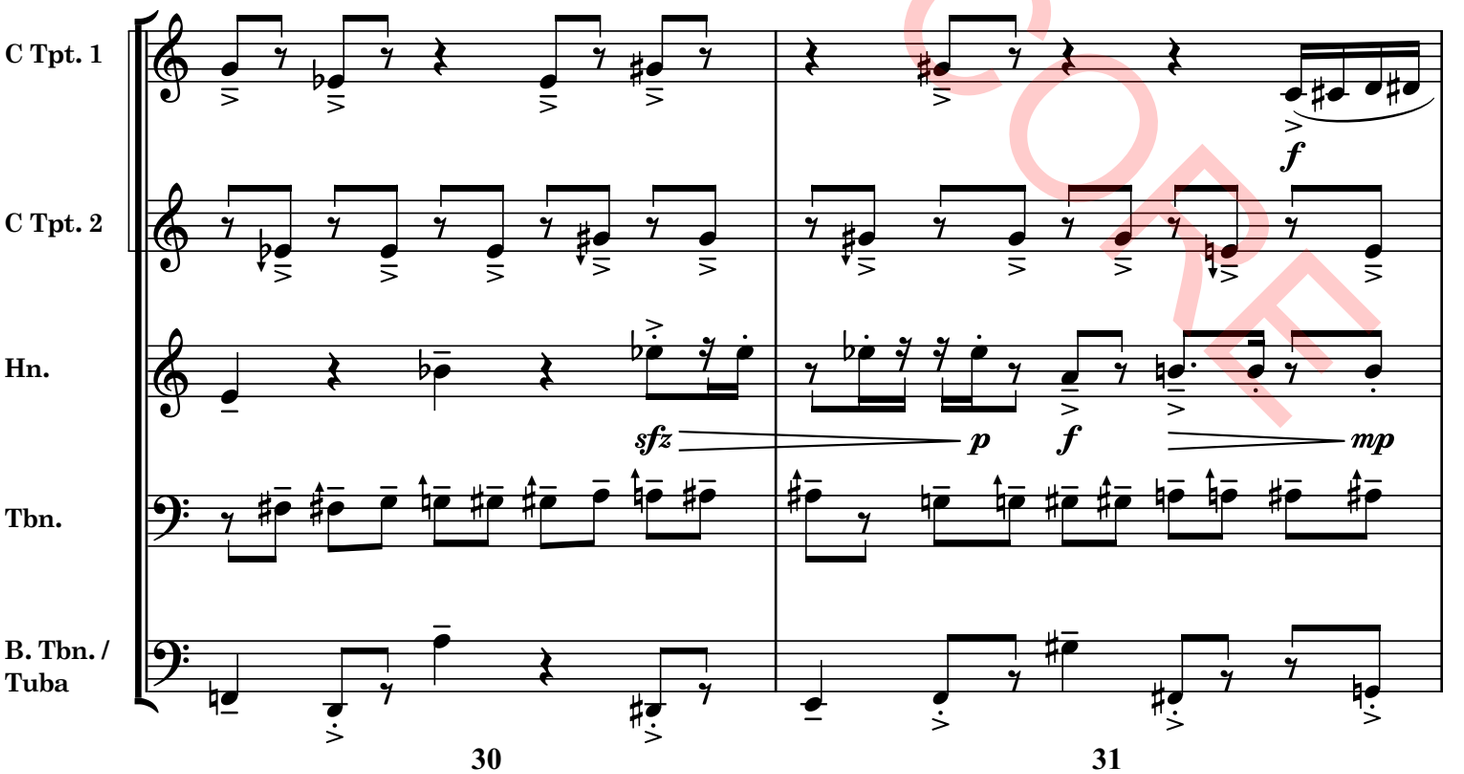

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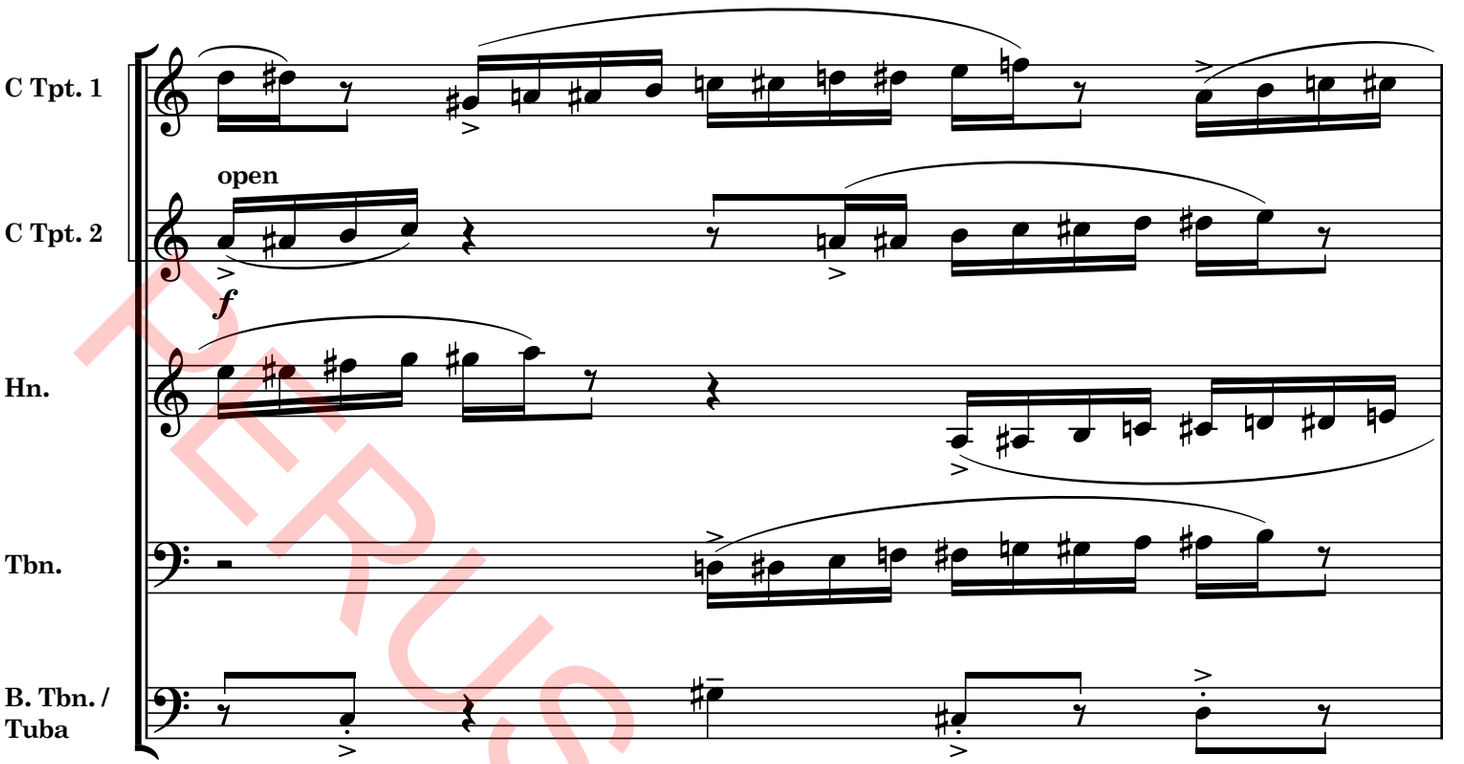

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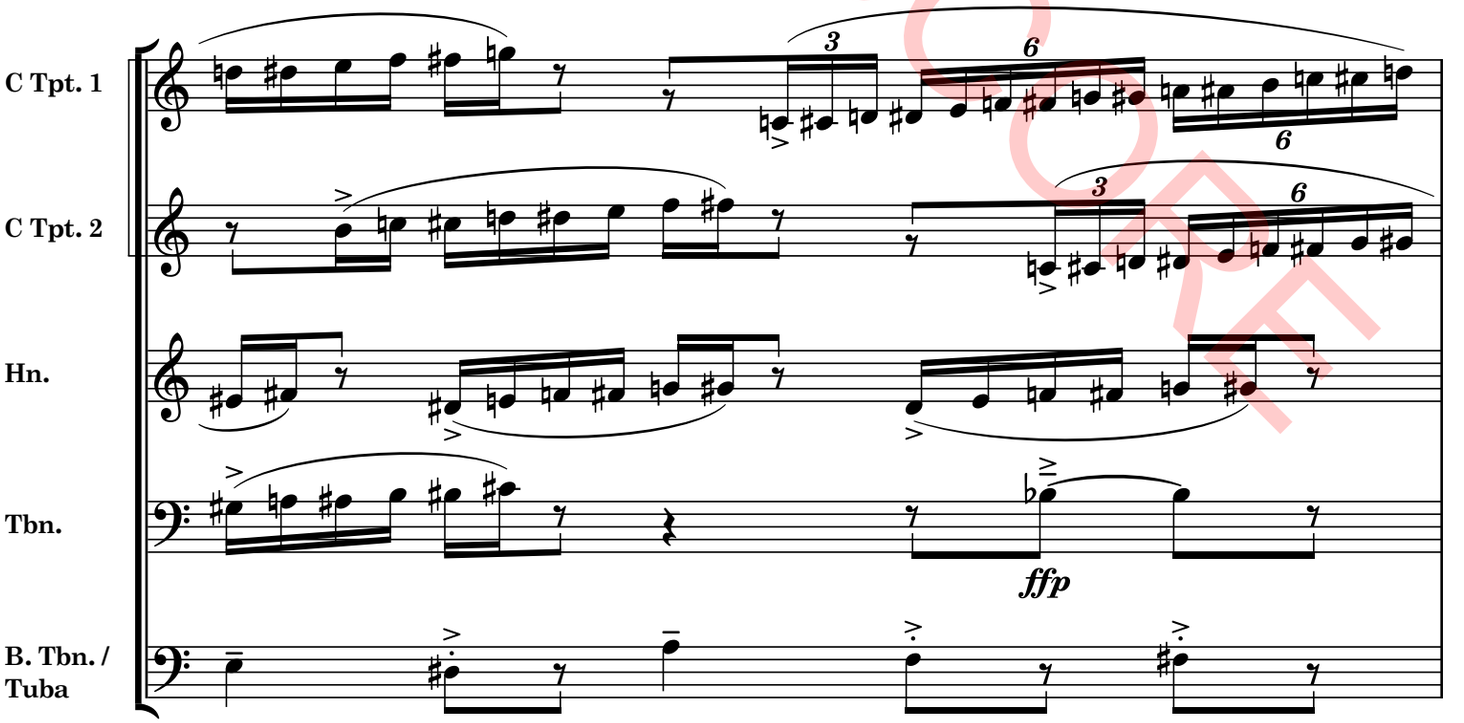

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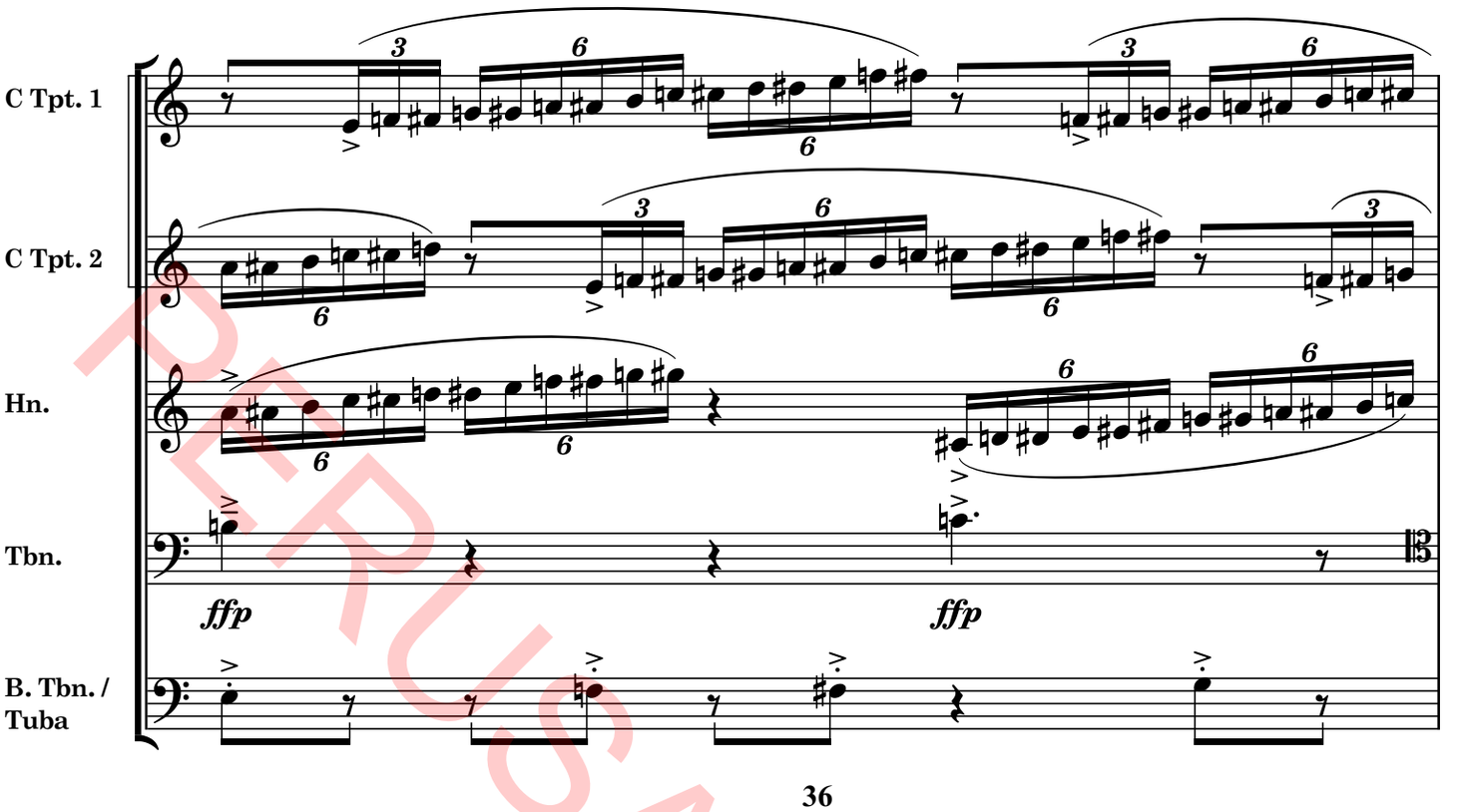

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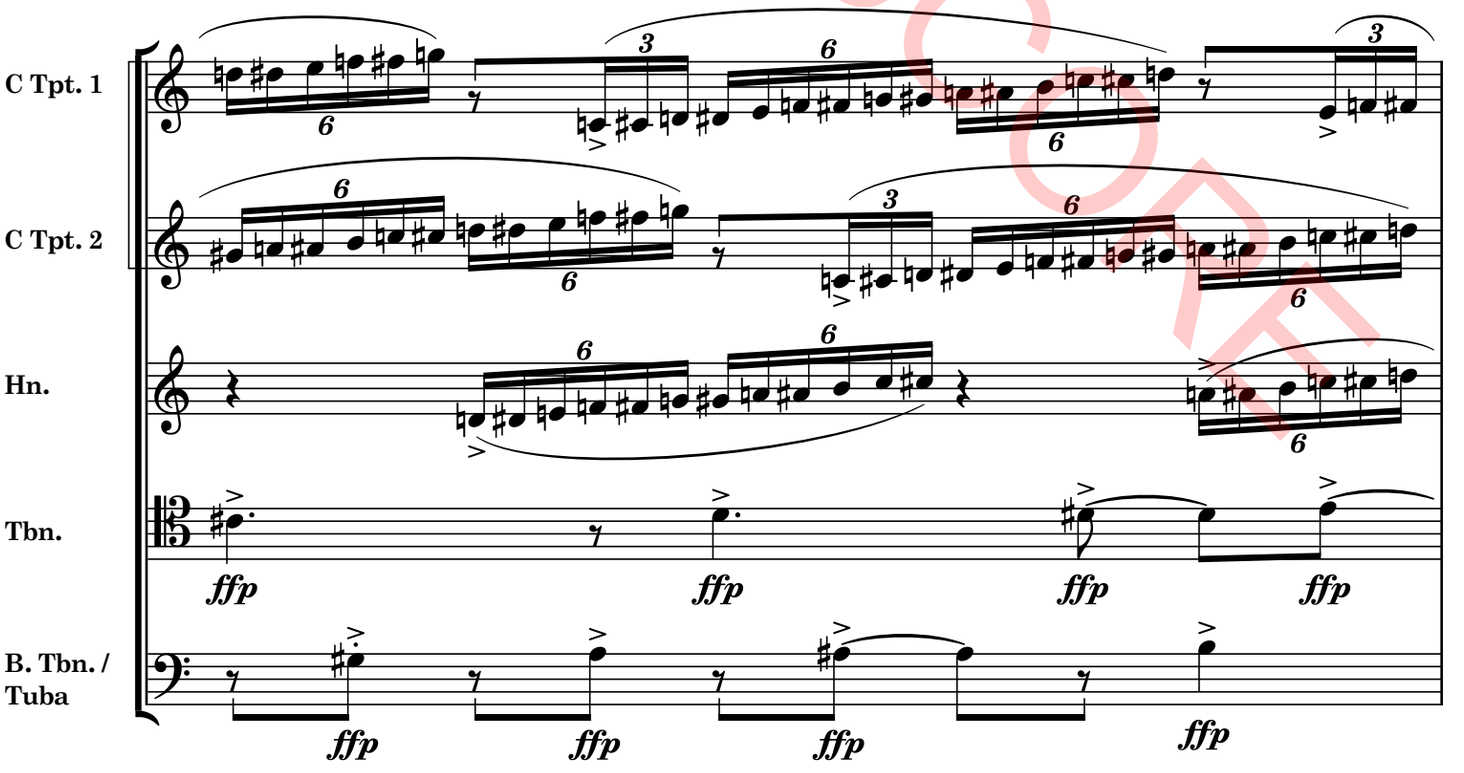

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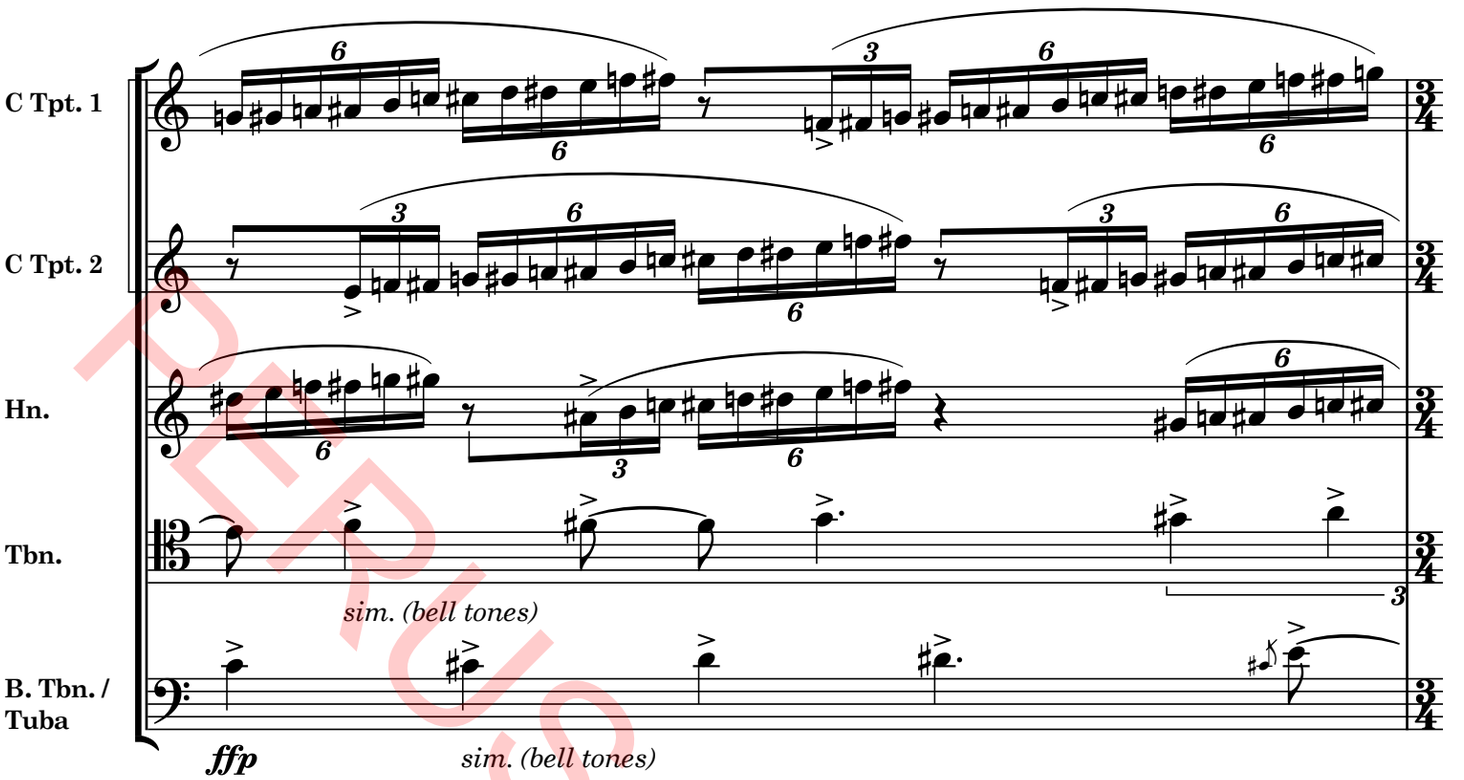

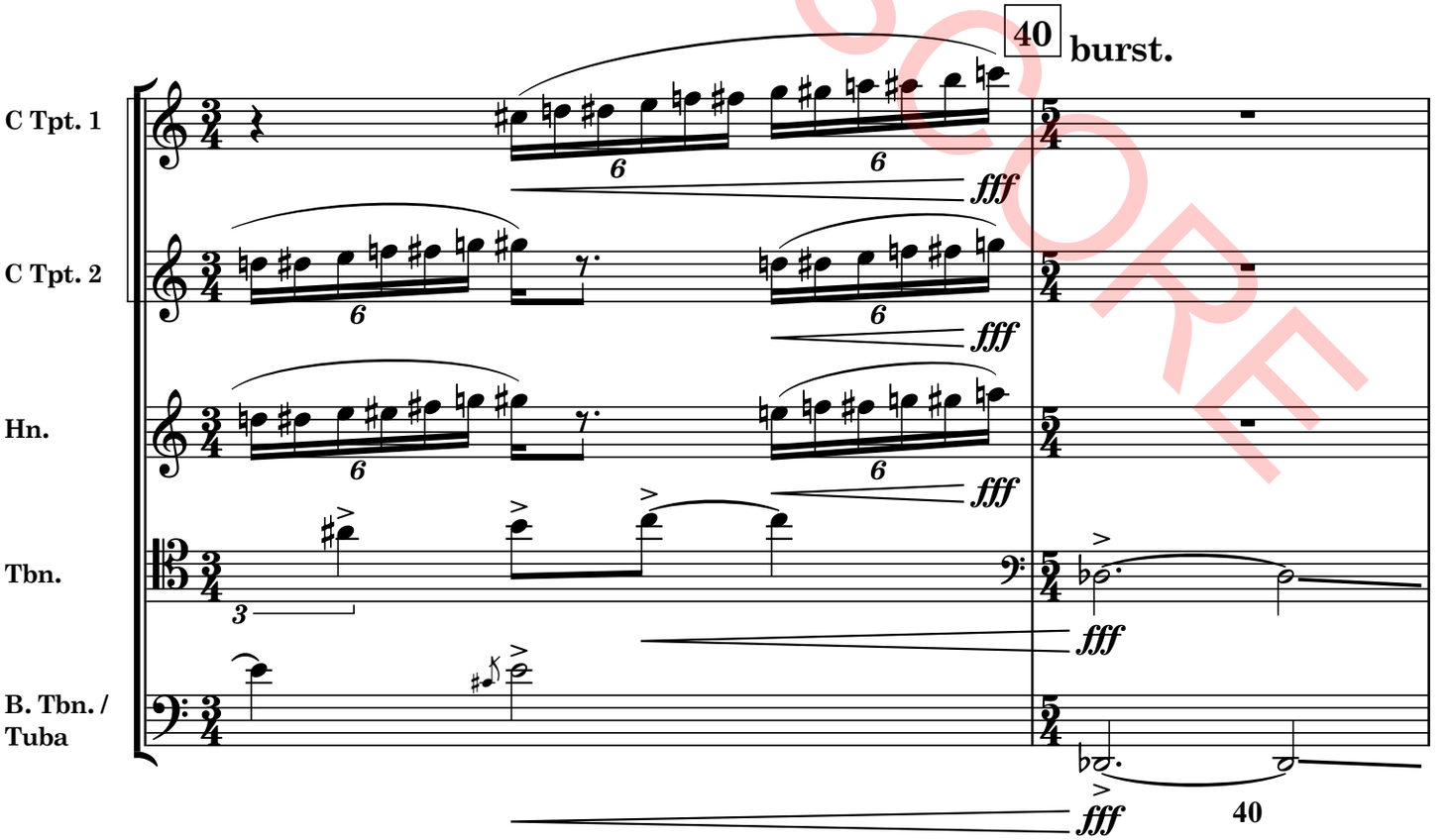

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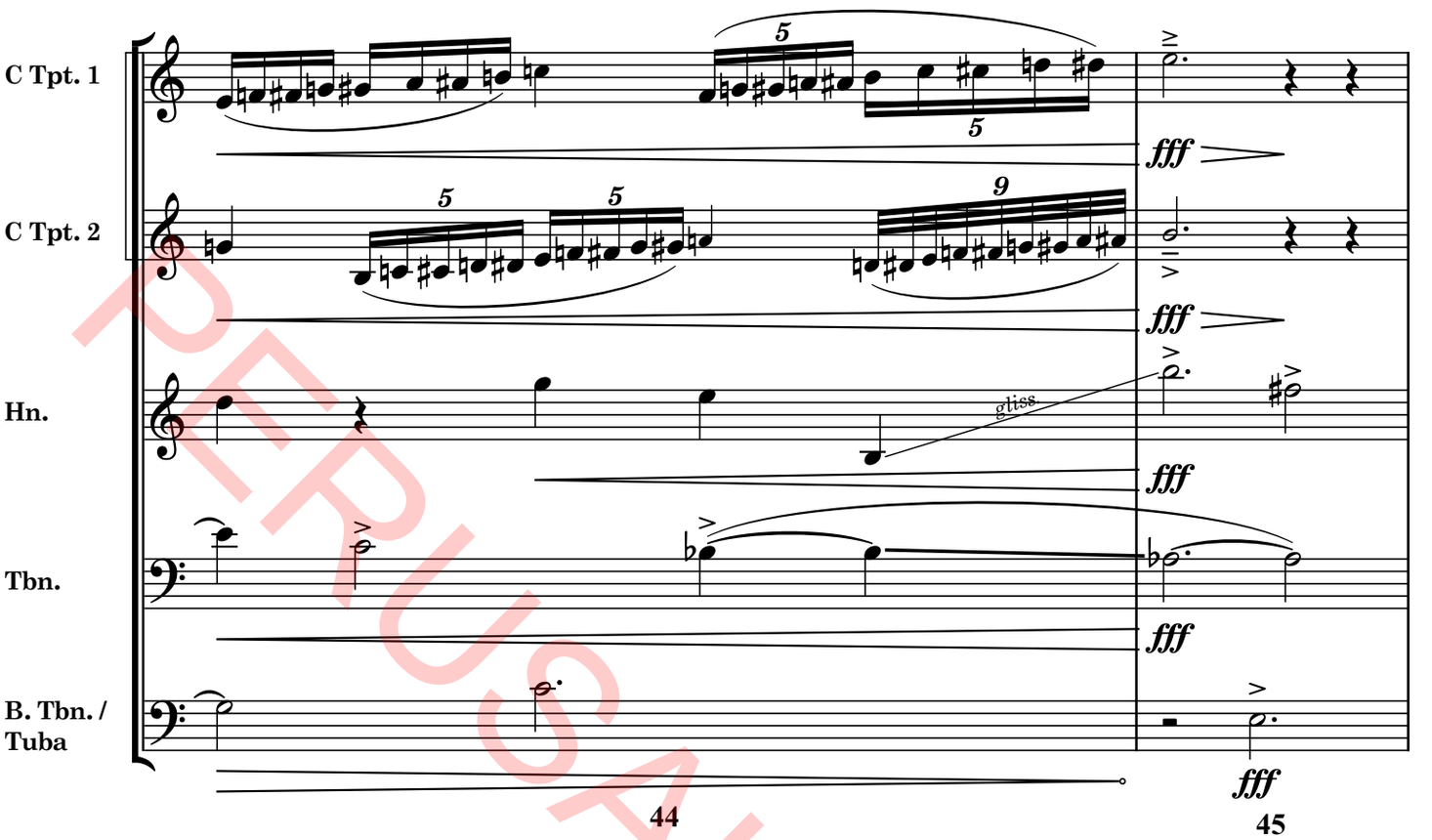

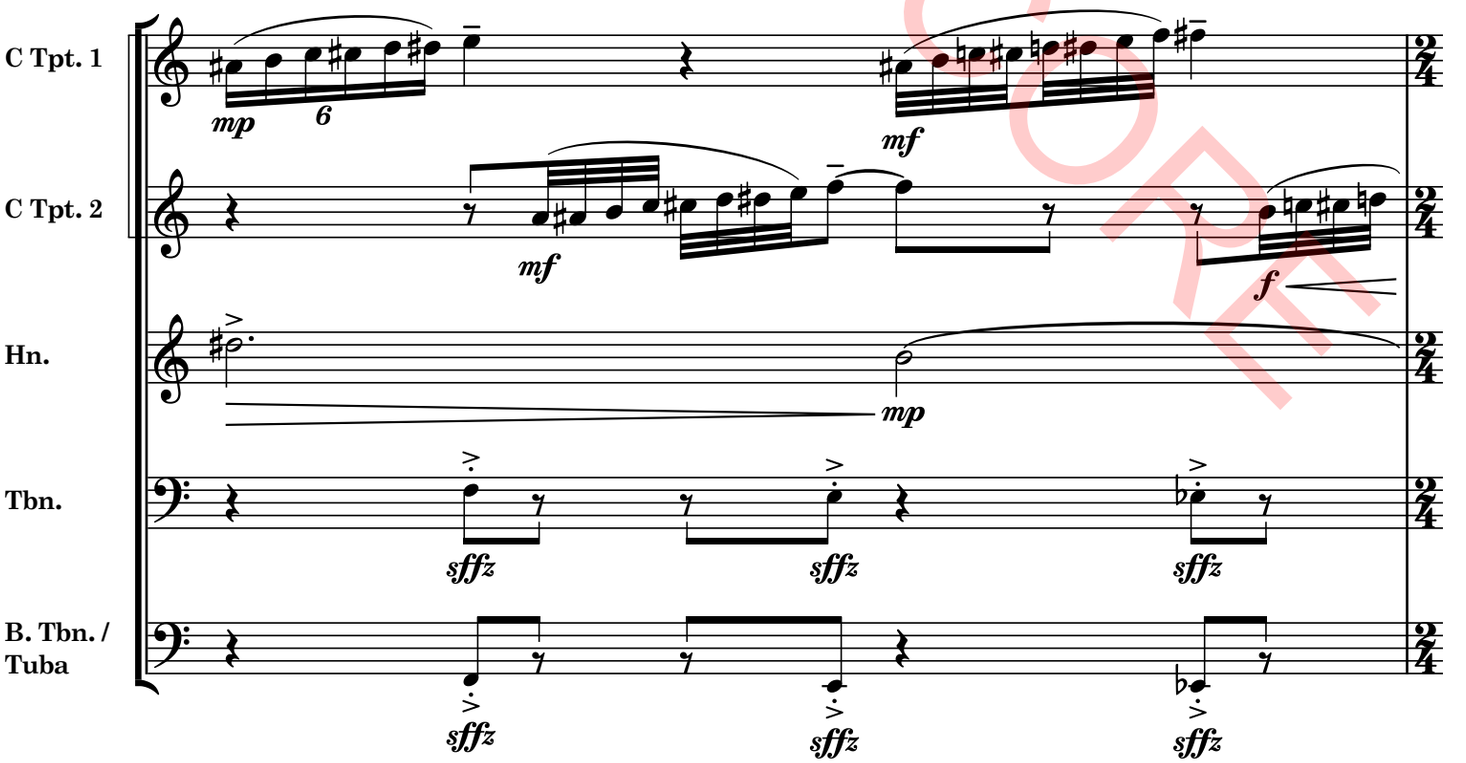

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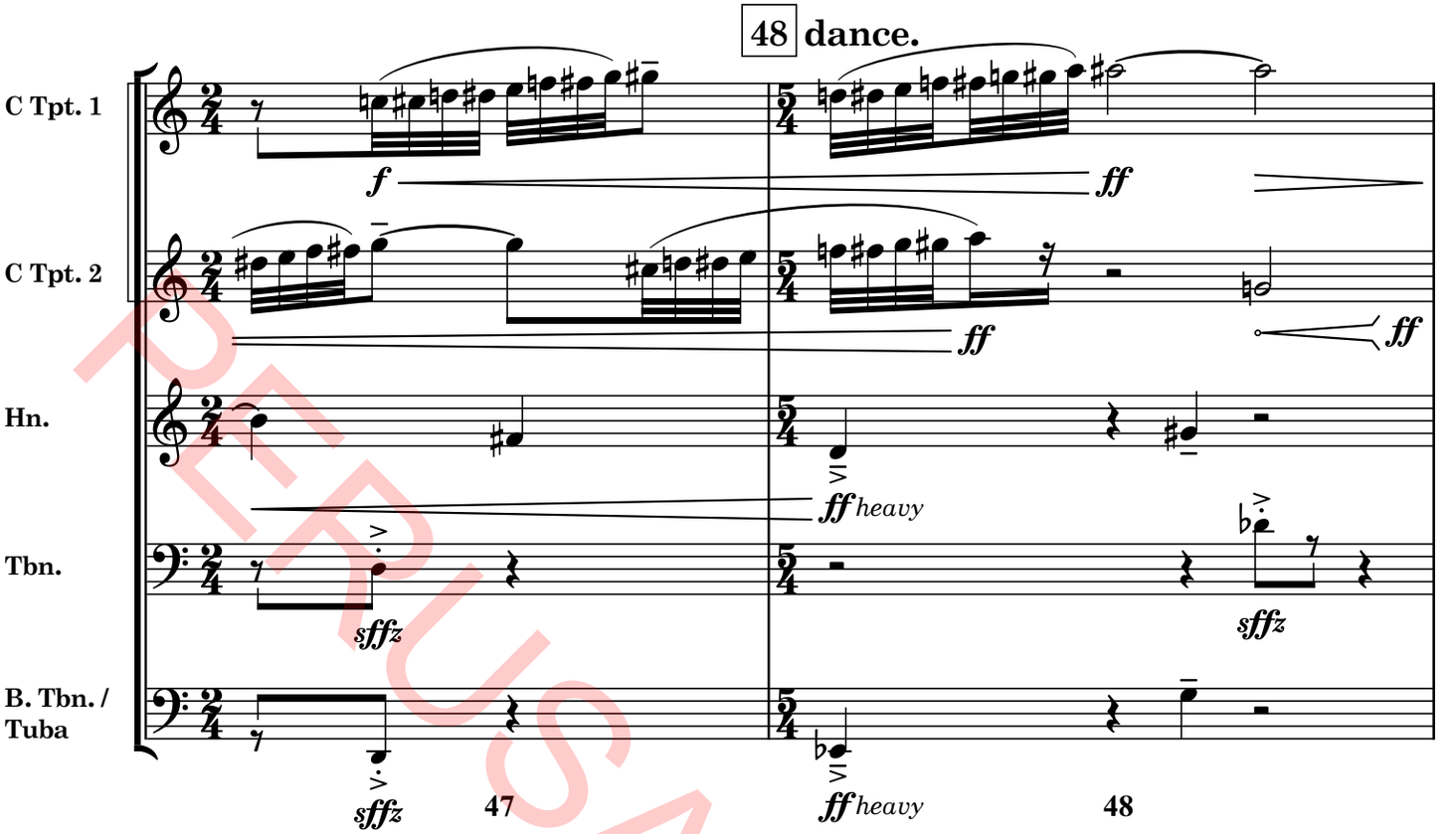

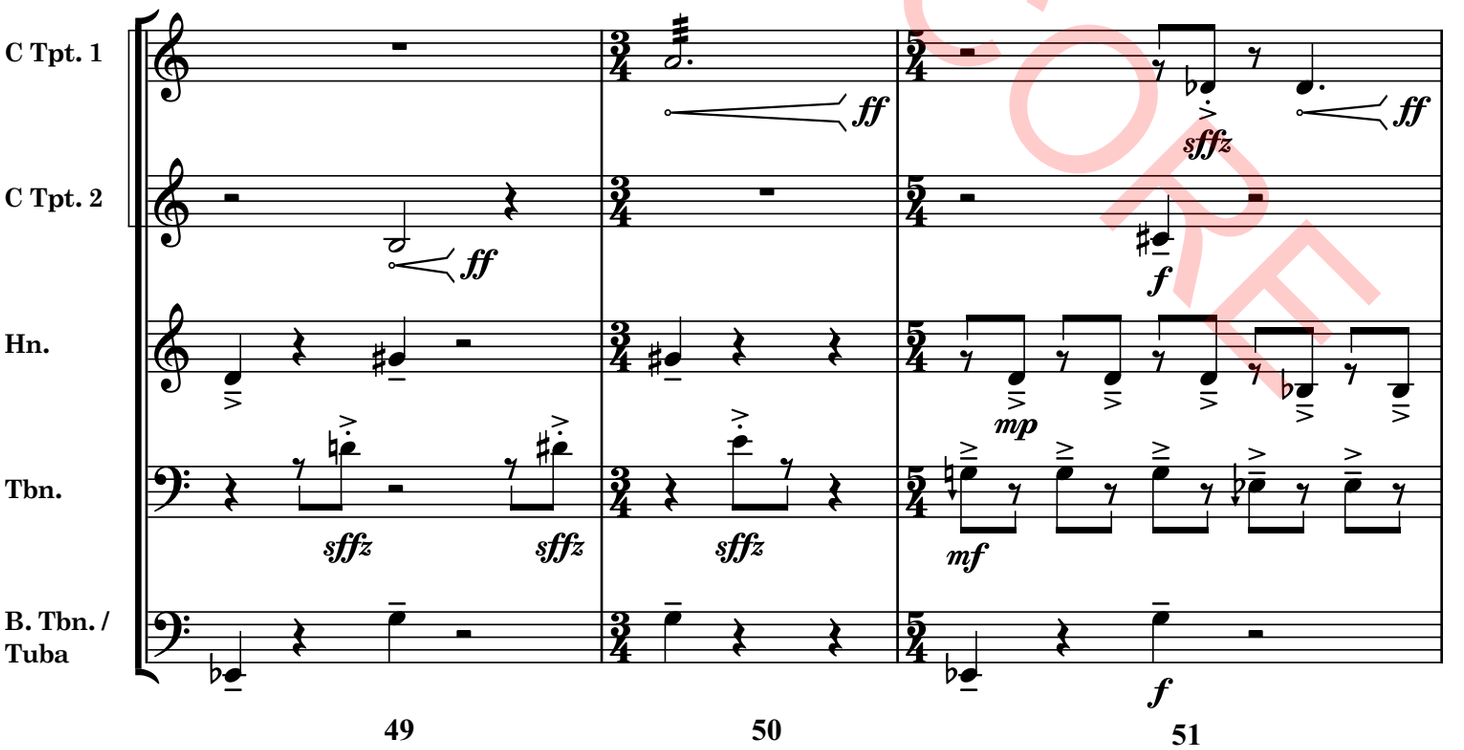

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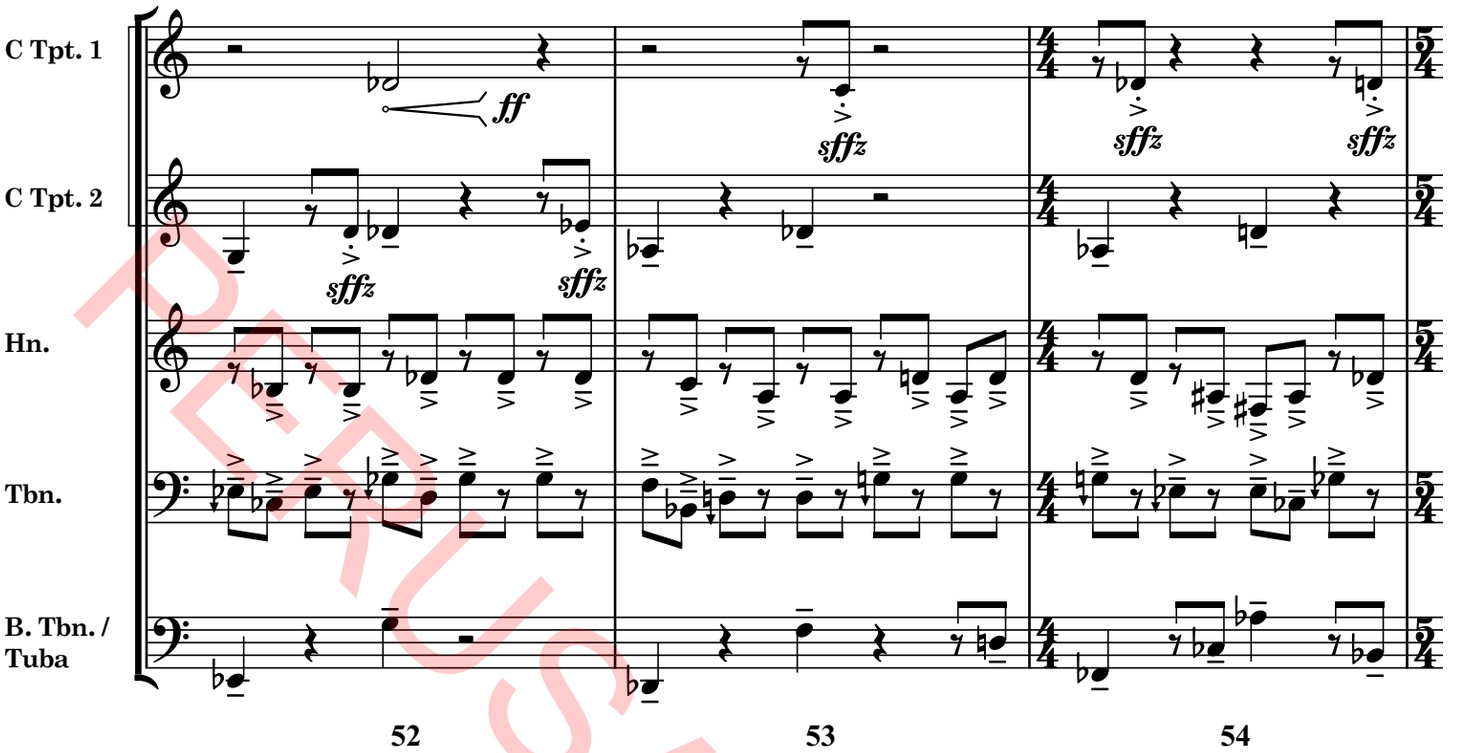

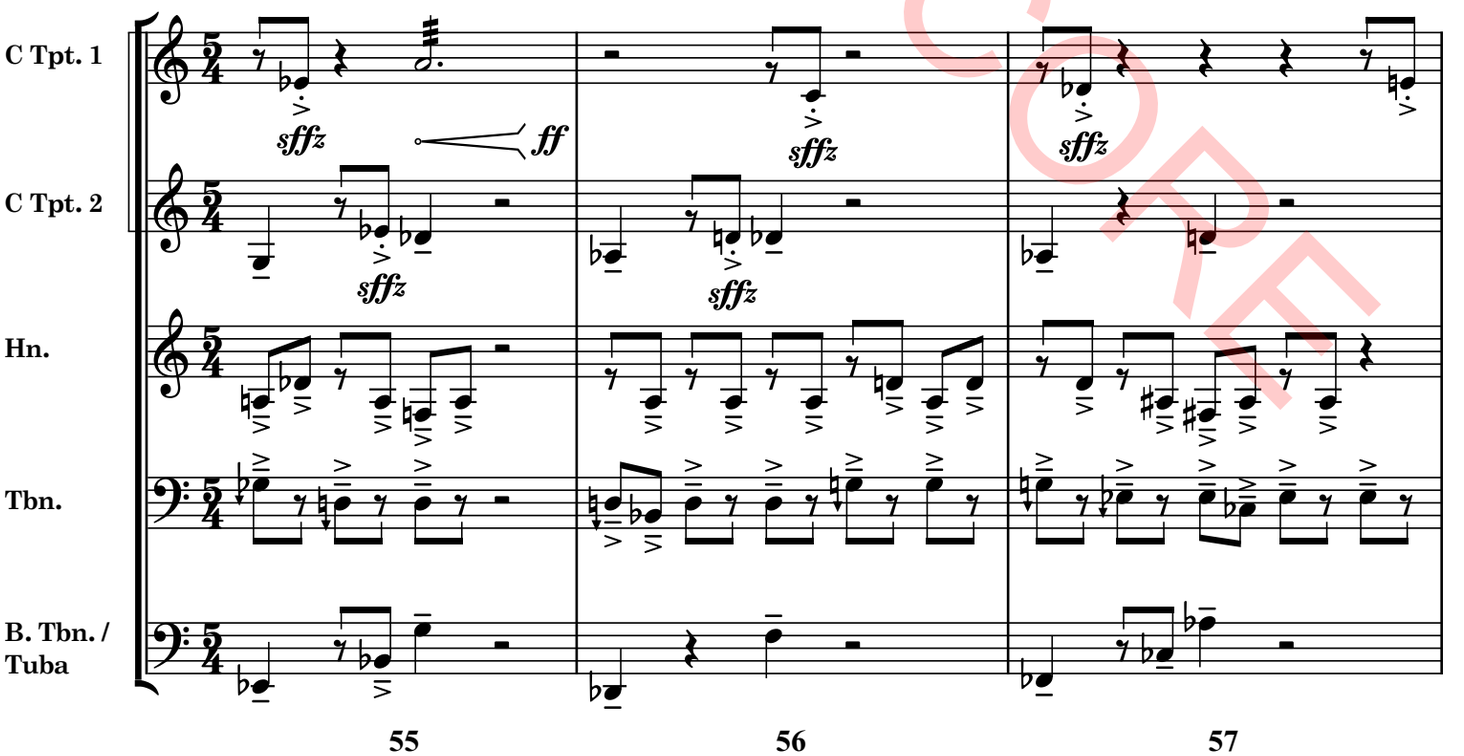

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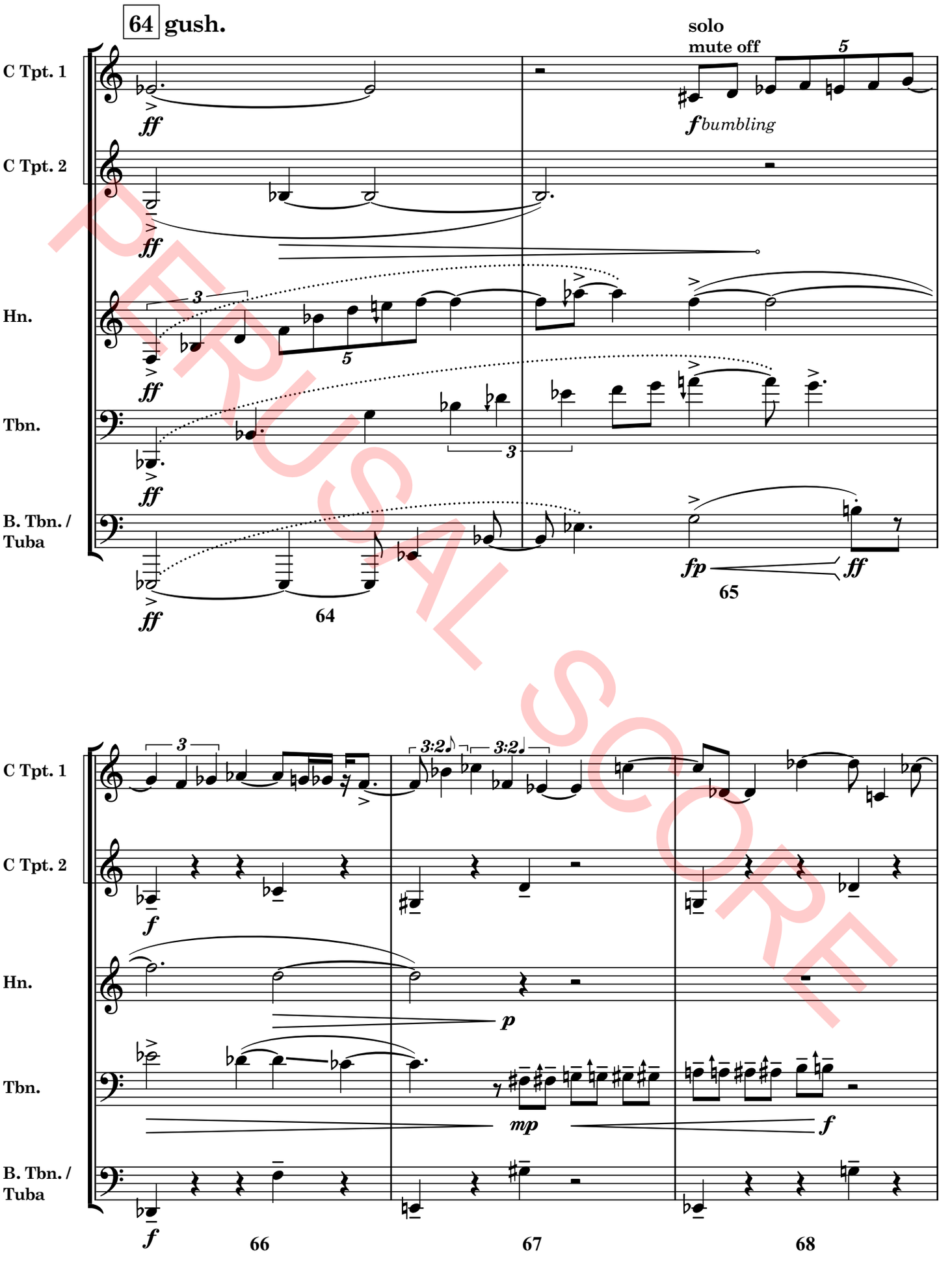

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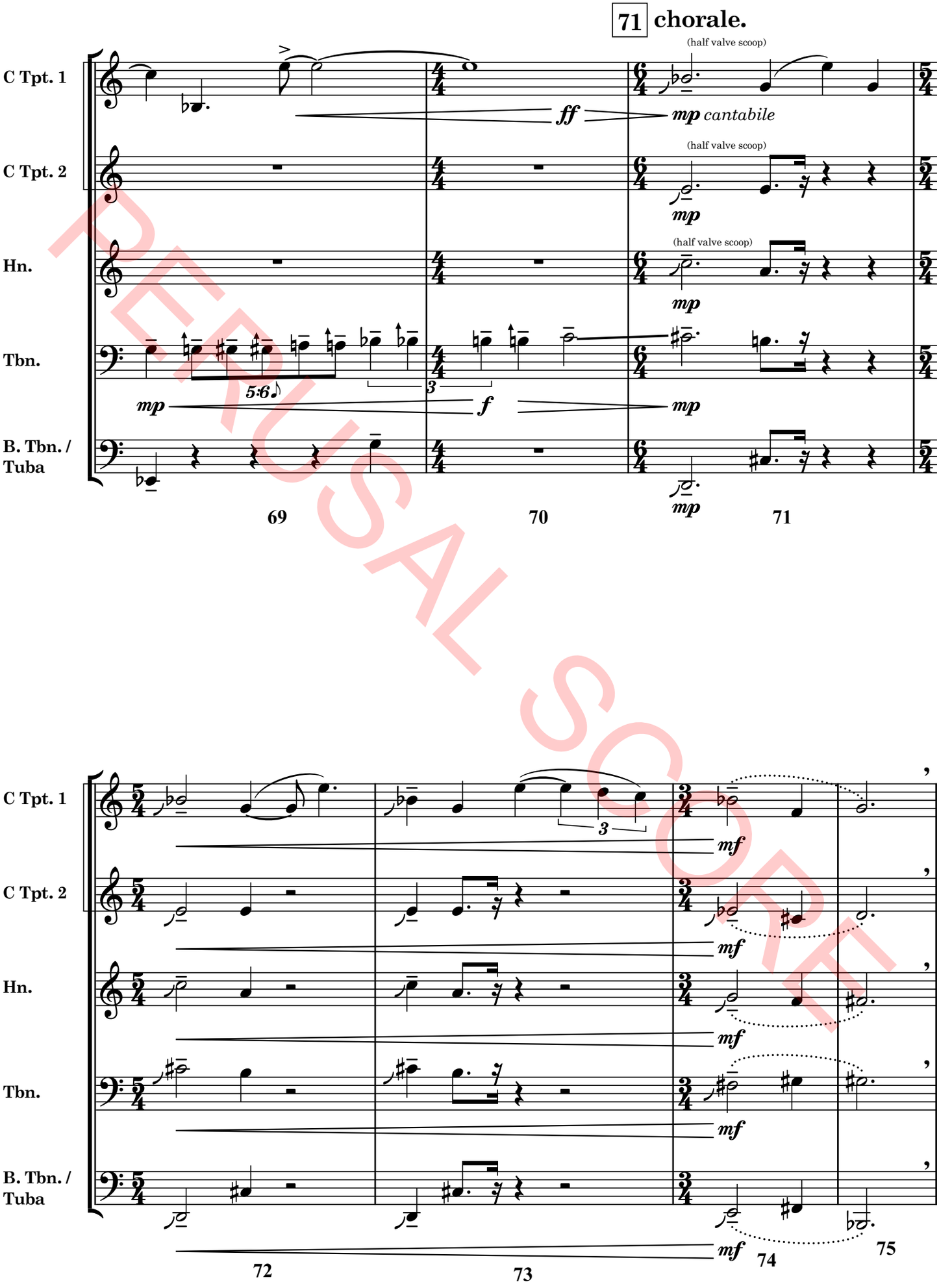

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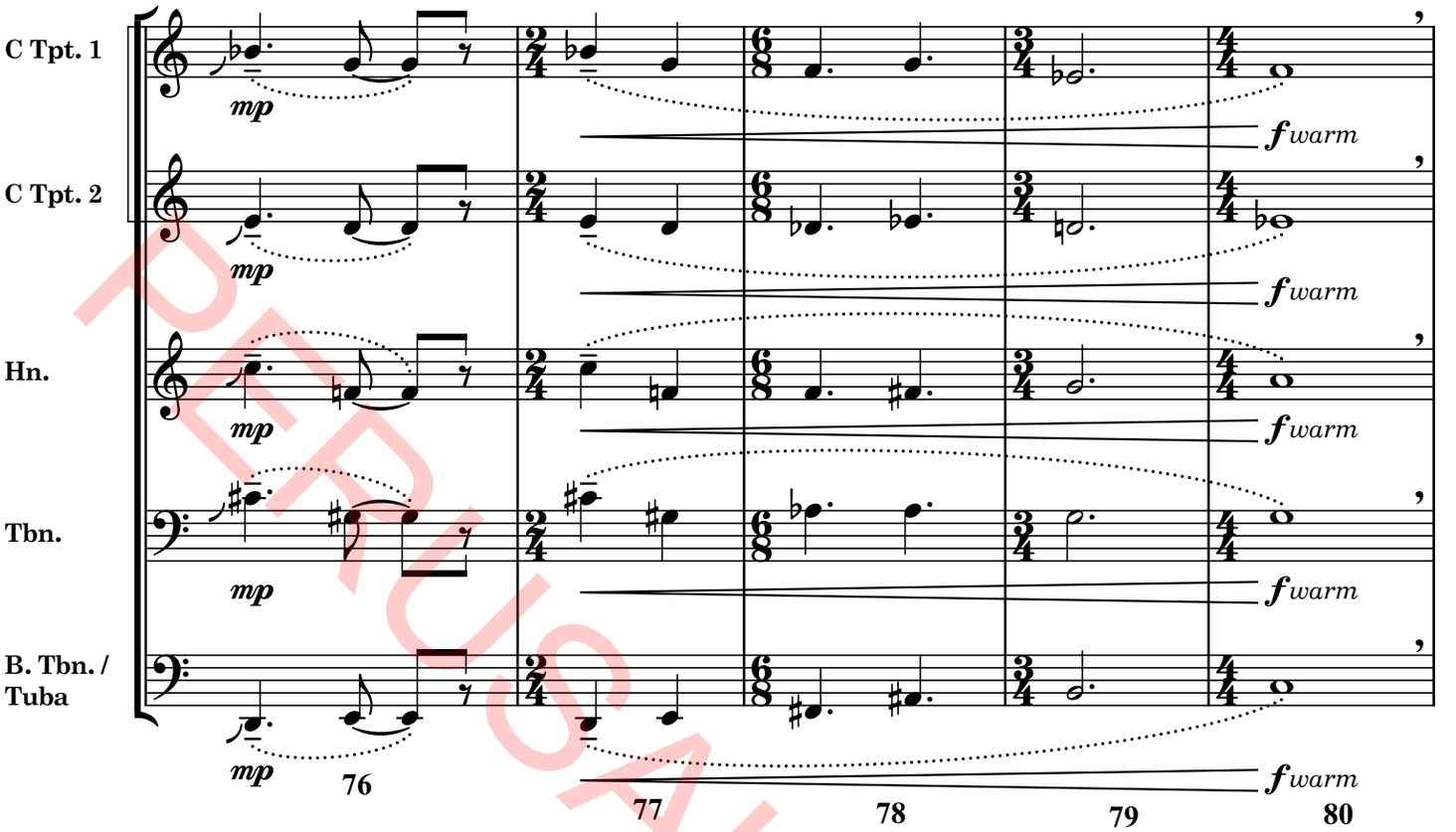

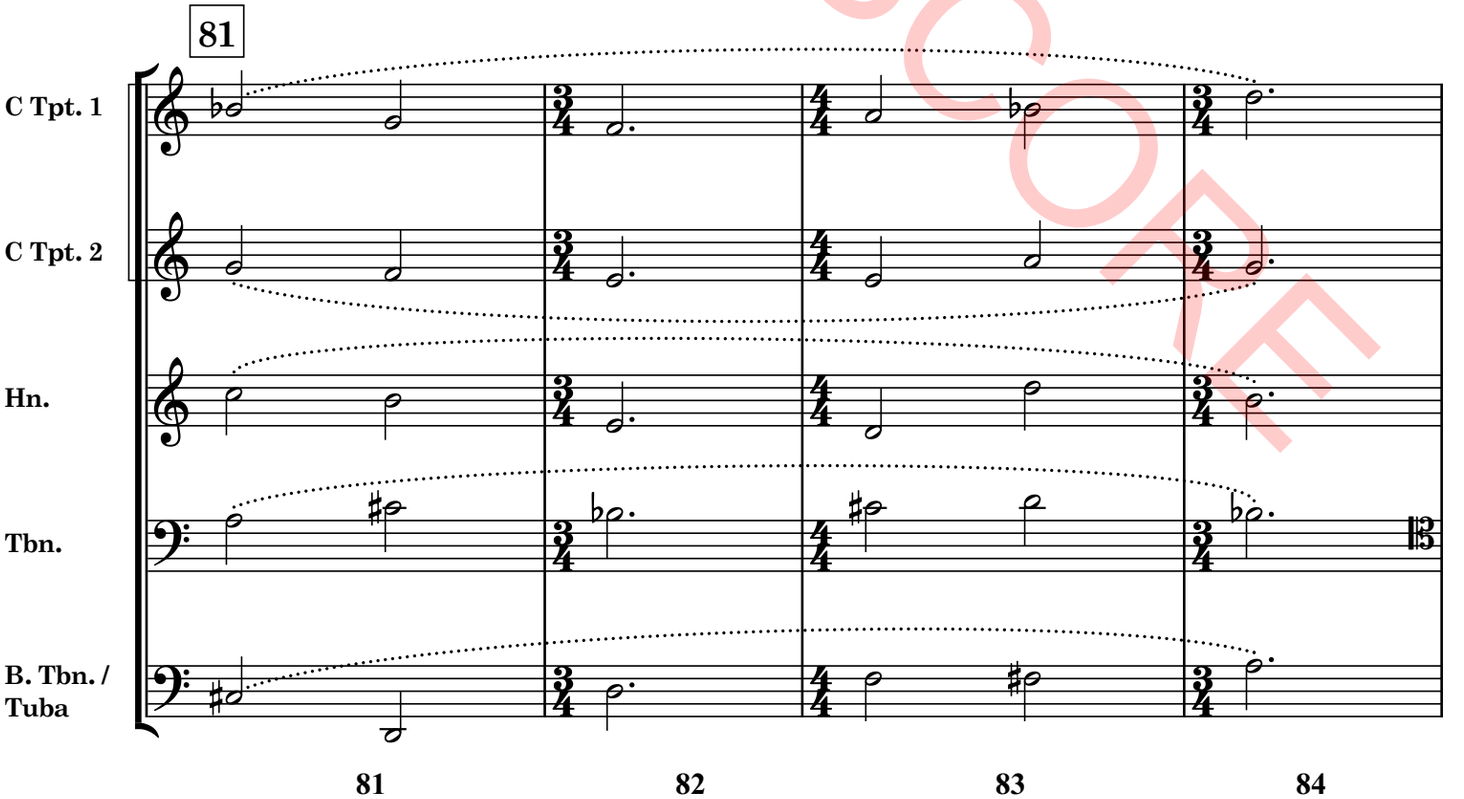

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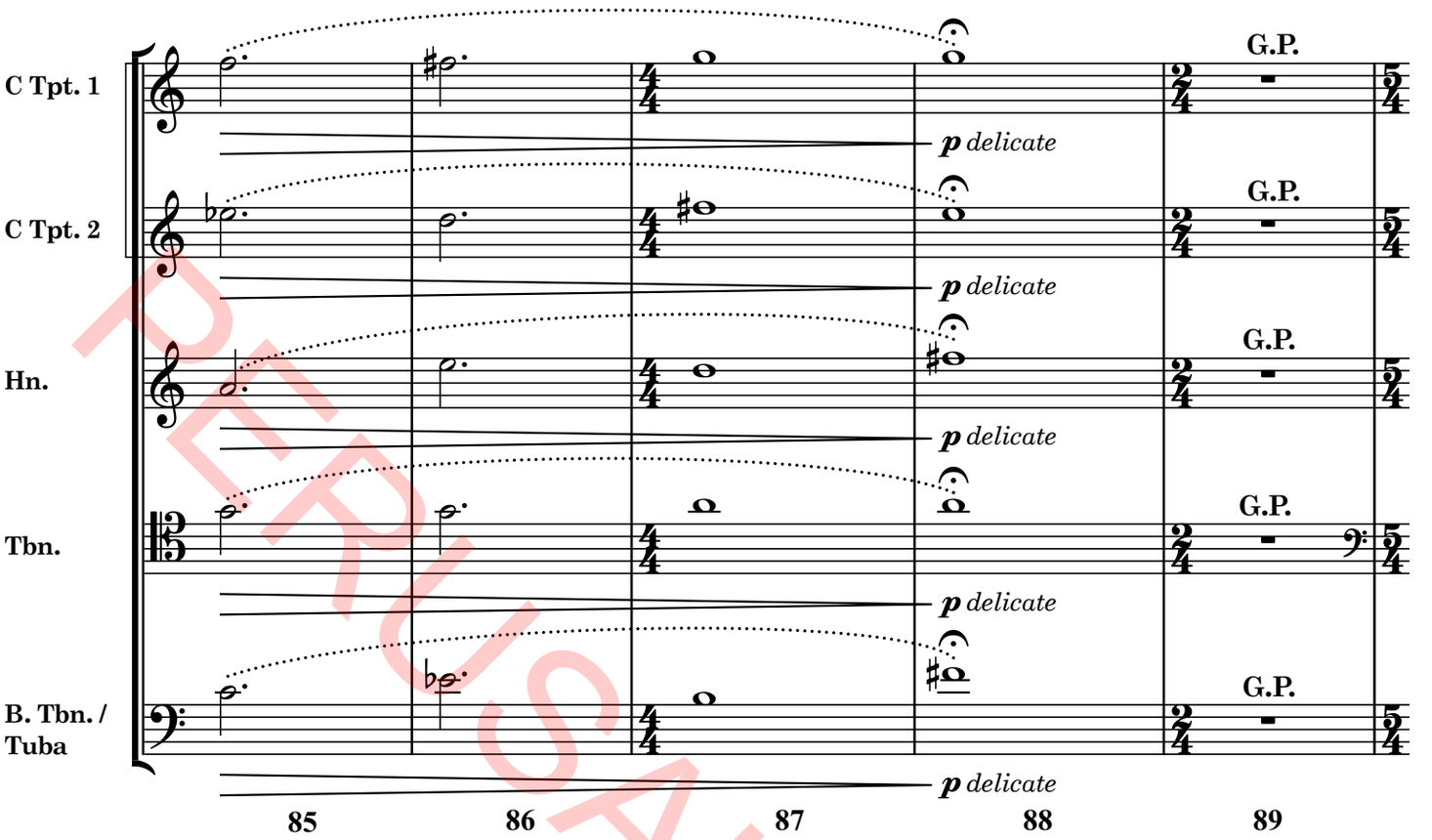

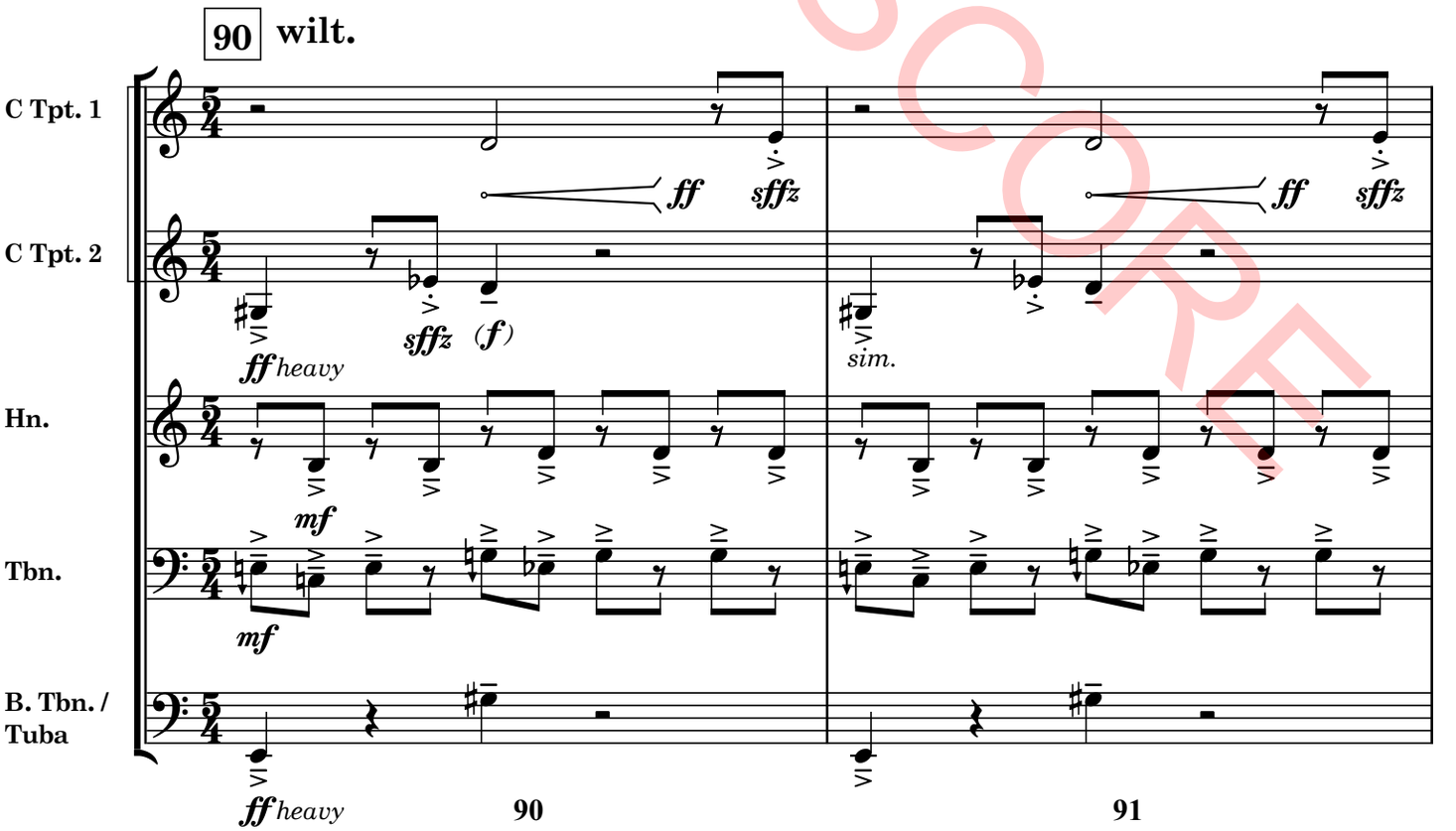

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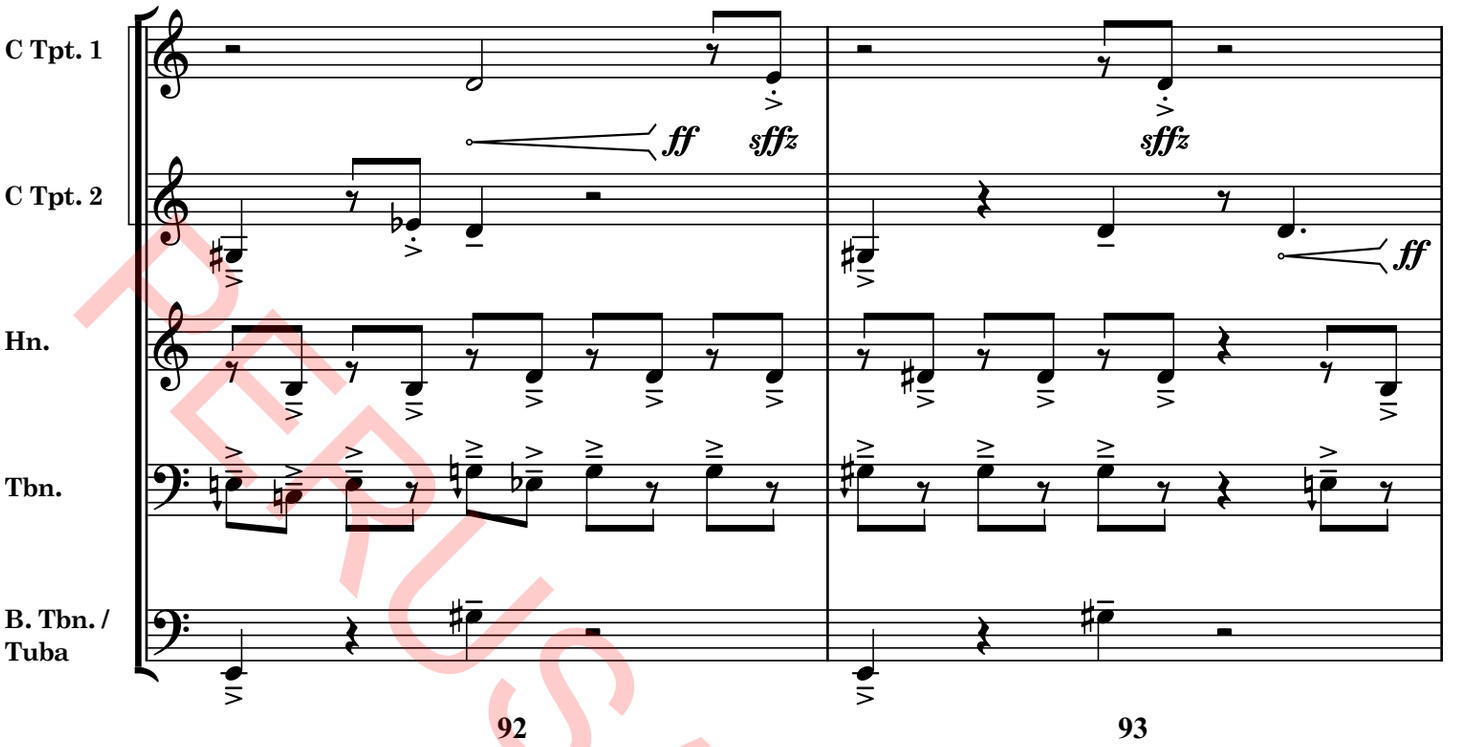

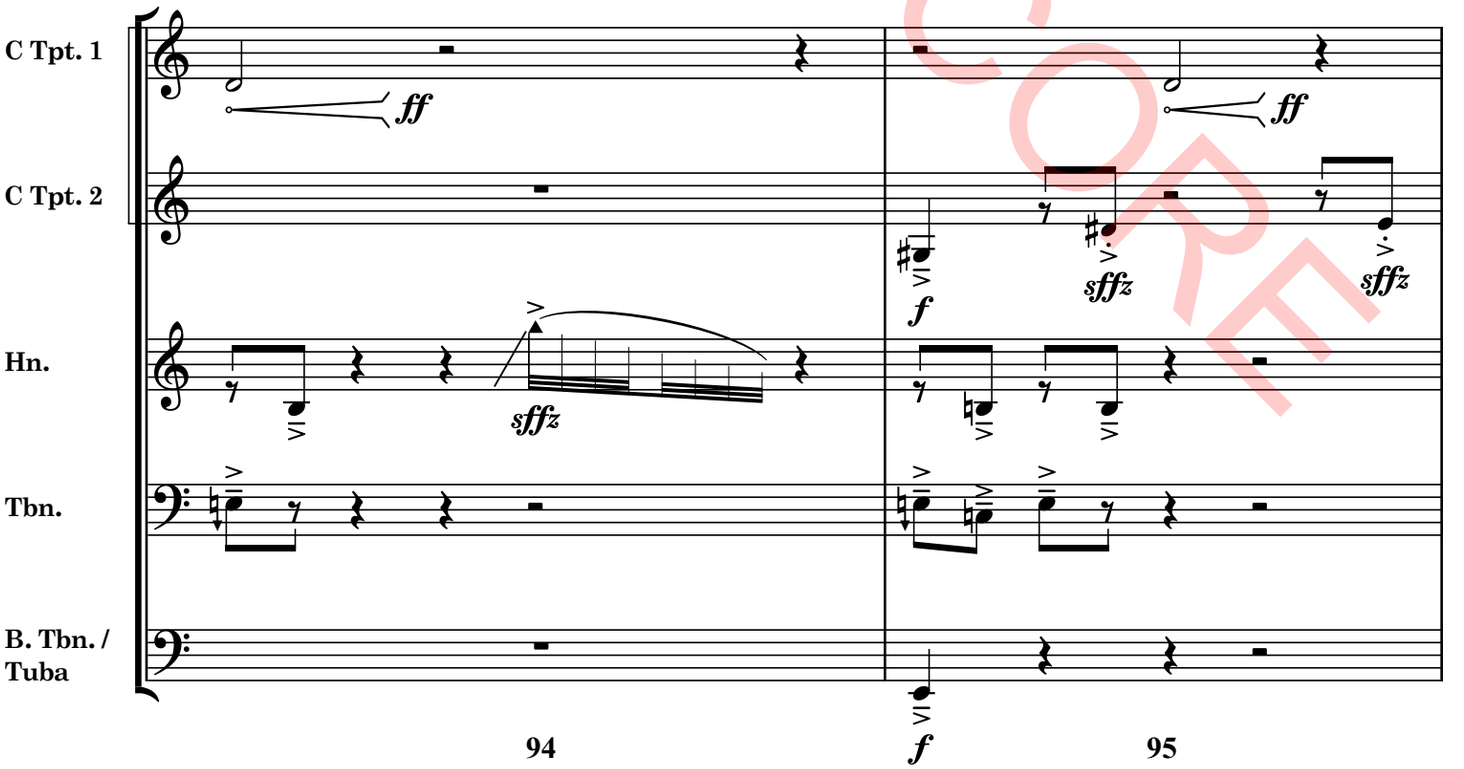

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3. Nautilus

Slowly, sempre legato ♩ = 63

(♪ = ♪)

C Trumpet 1

C Trumpet 2

F Horn

warm, sighing

Tenor Trombone

warm, sighing

Bass Trombone or Tuba

warm, sighing

mp > *p*

1 2 3 4 5

C Tpt. 1

C Tpt. 2

Hn.

Tbn.

B. Tbn. / Tuba

mf–*p* *sim.*

6 7 8 9

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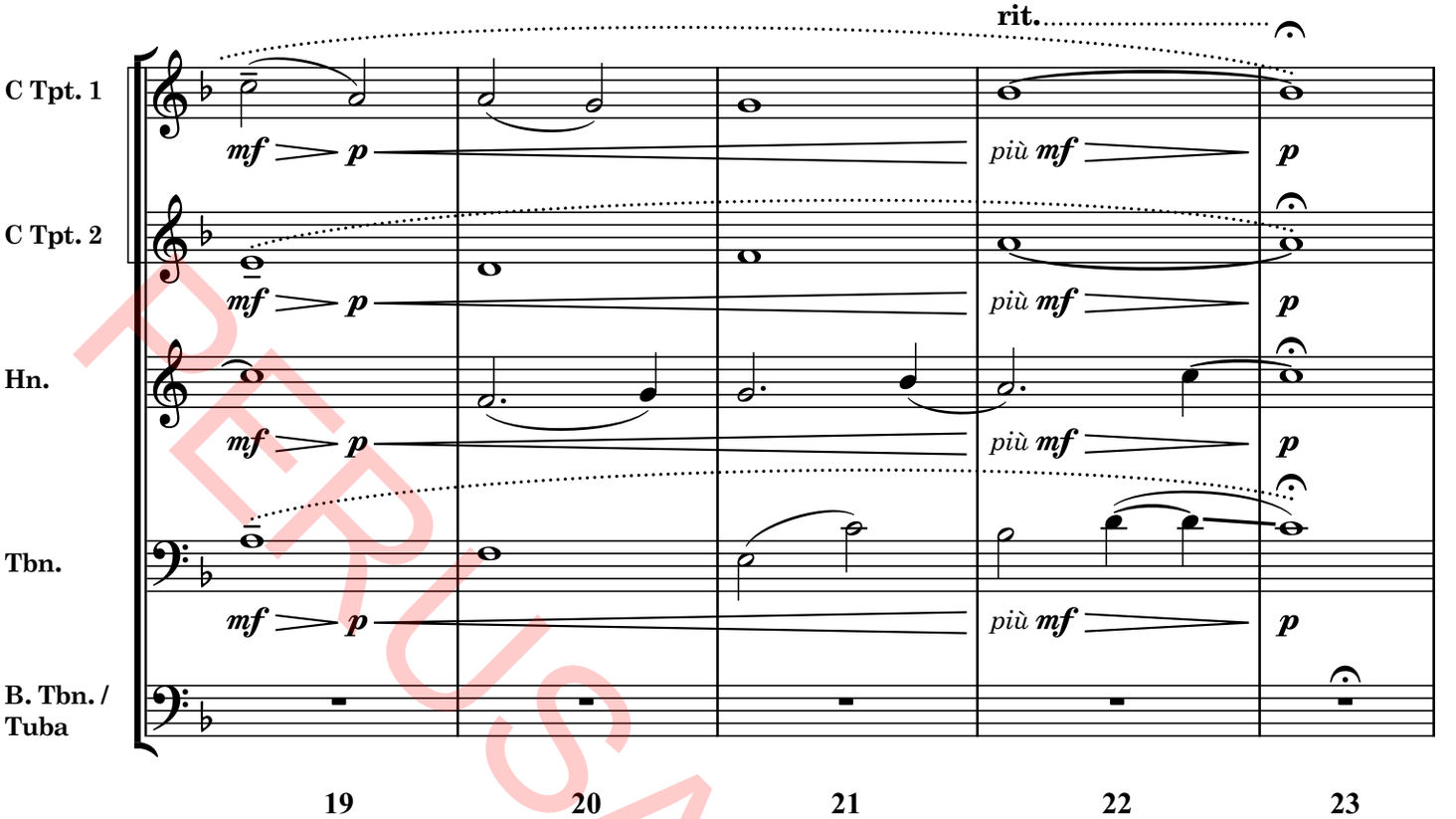

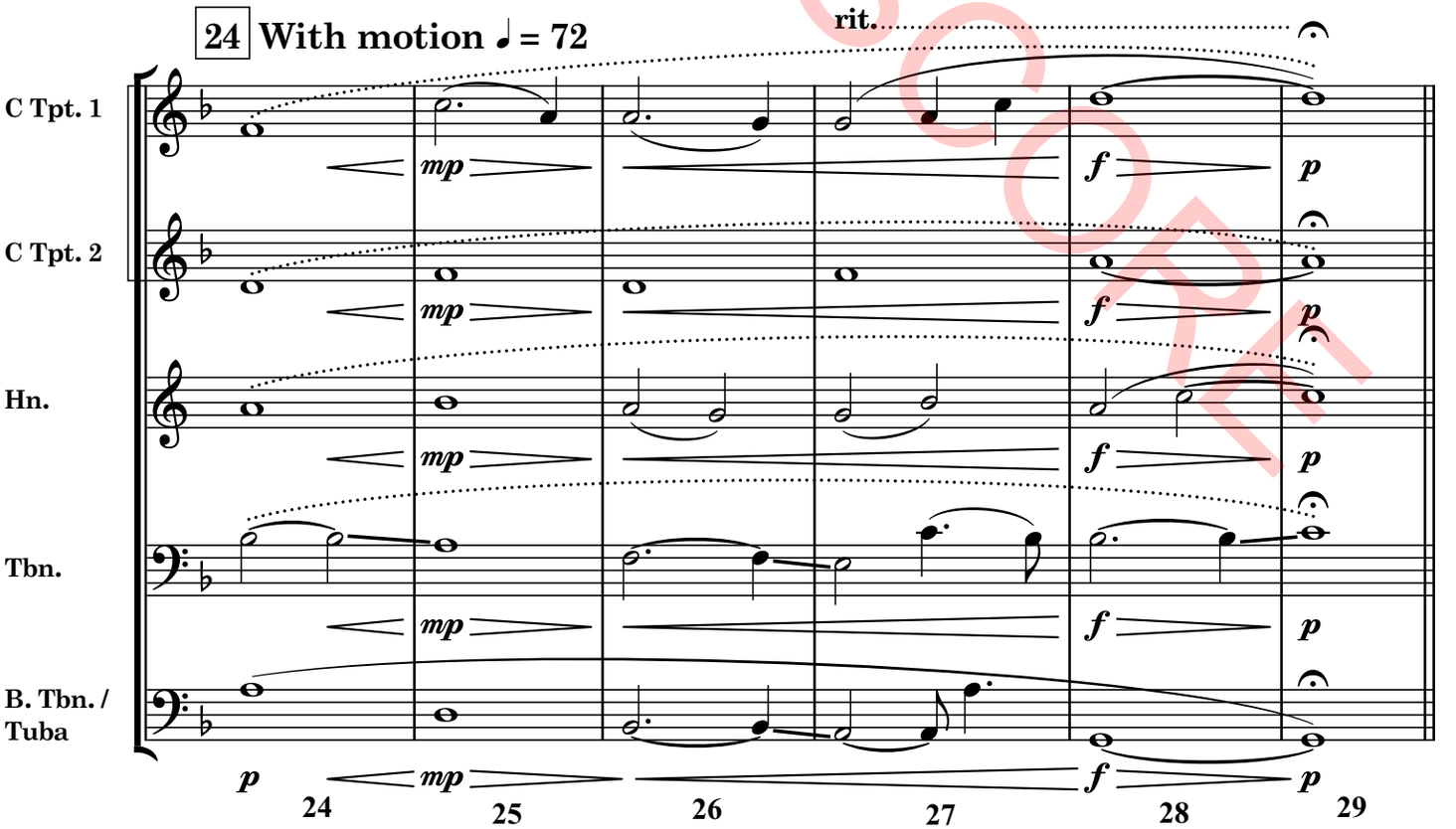

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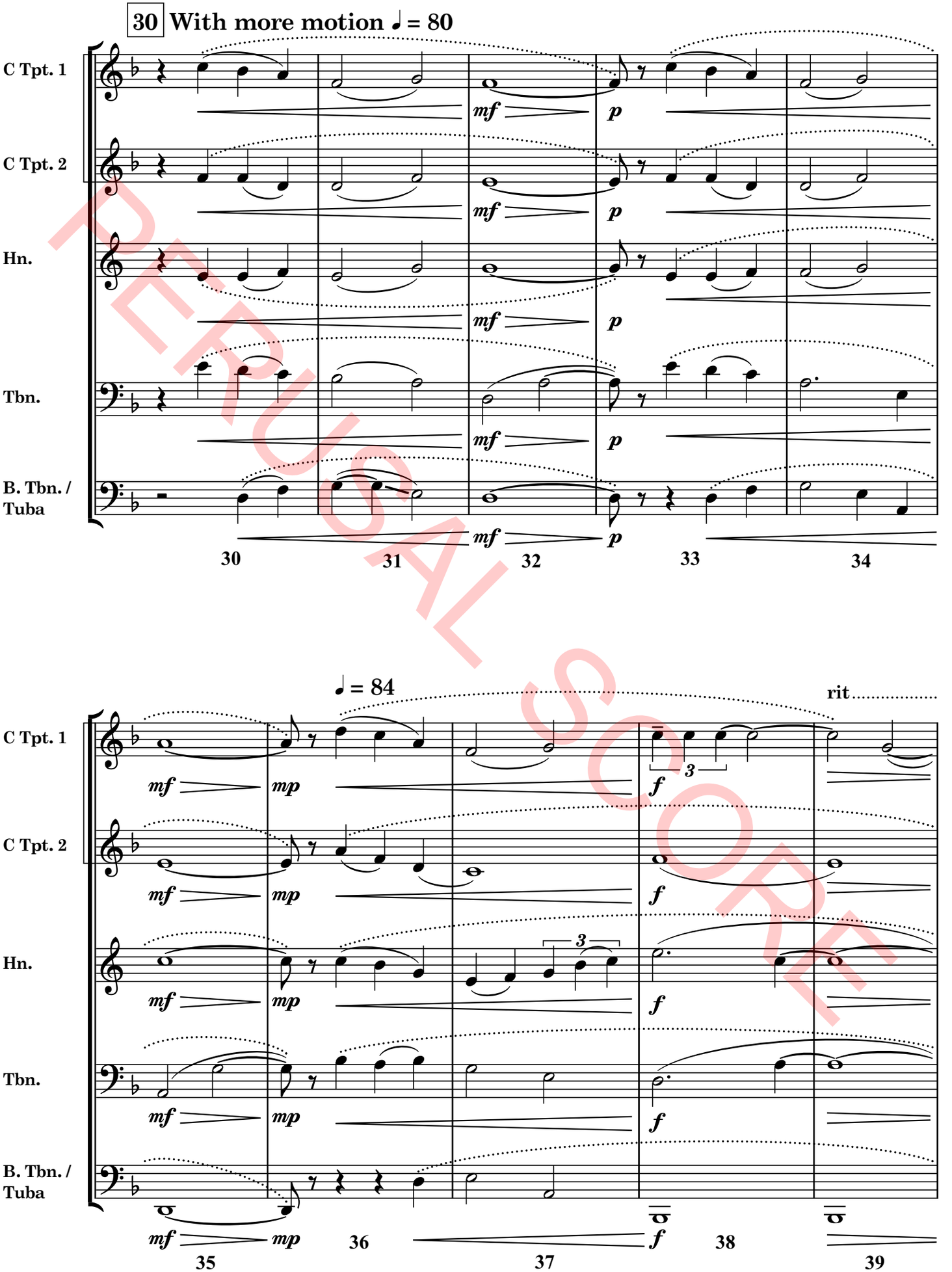

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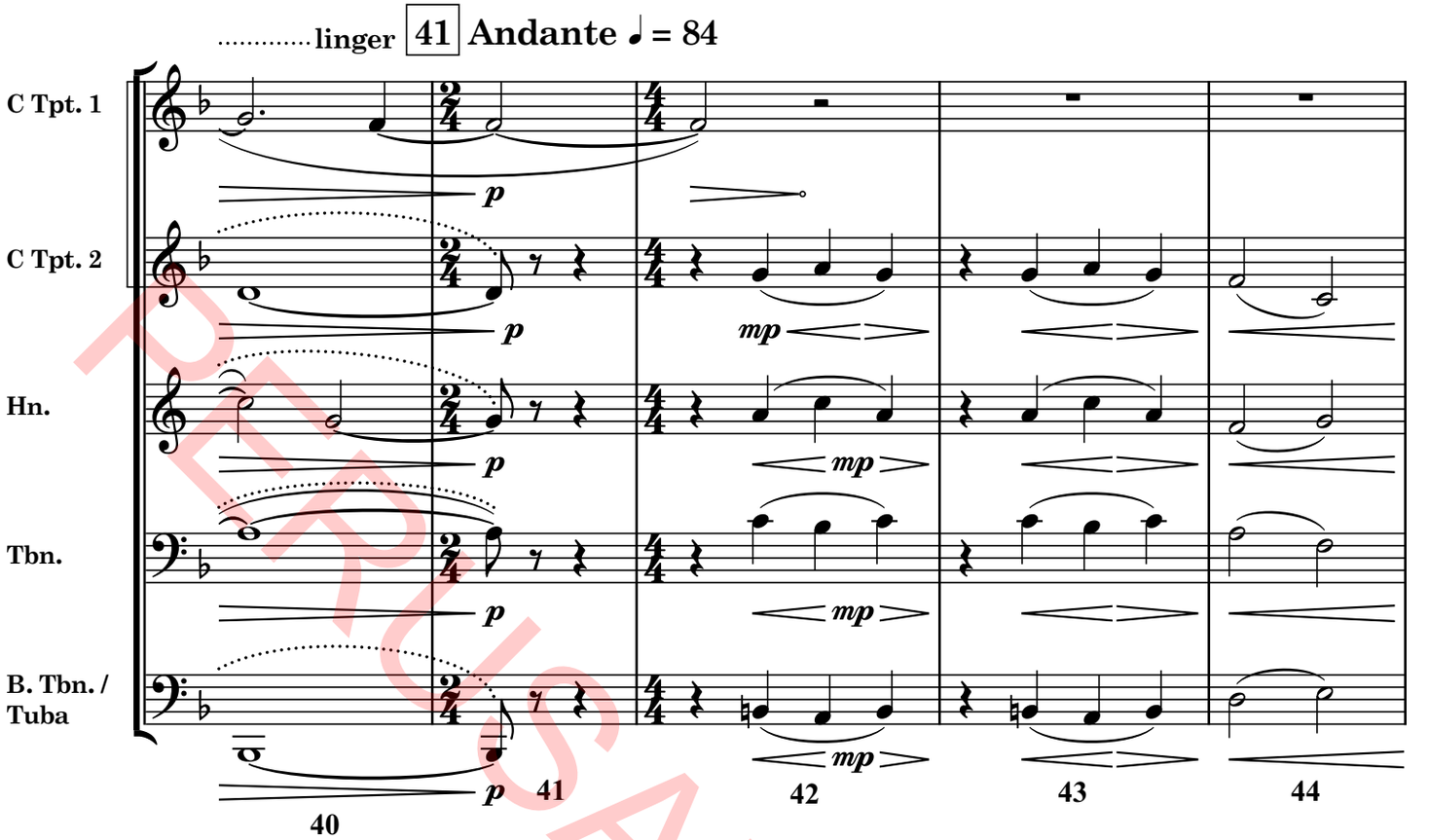

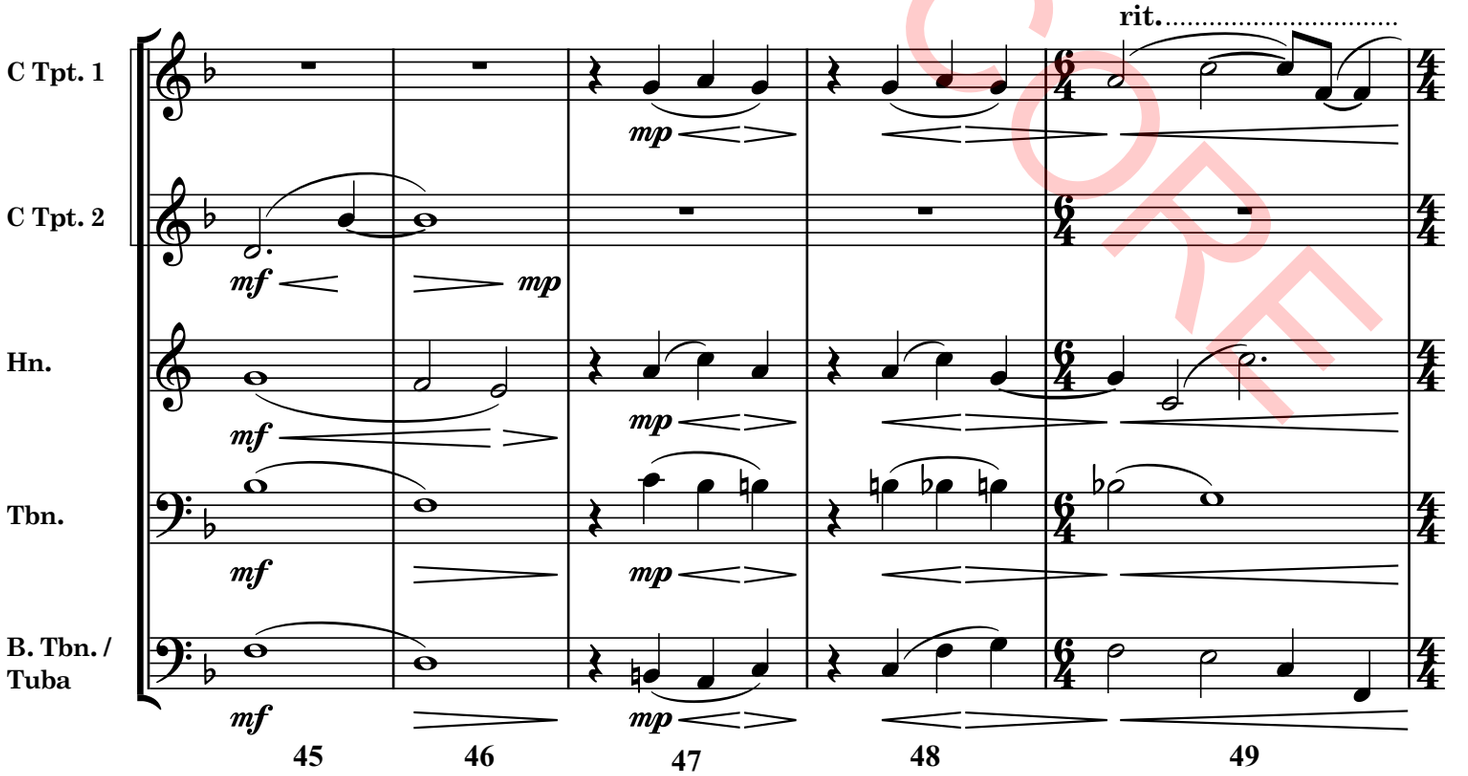

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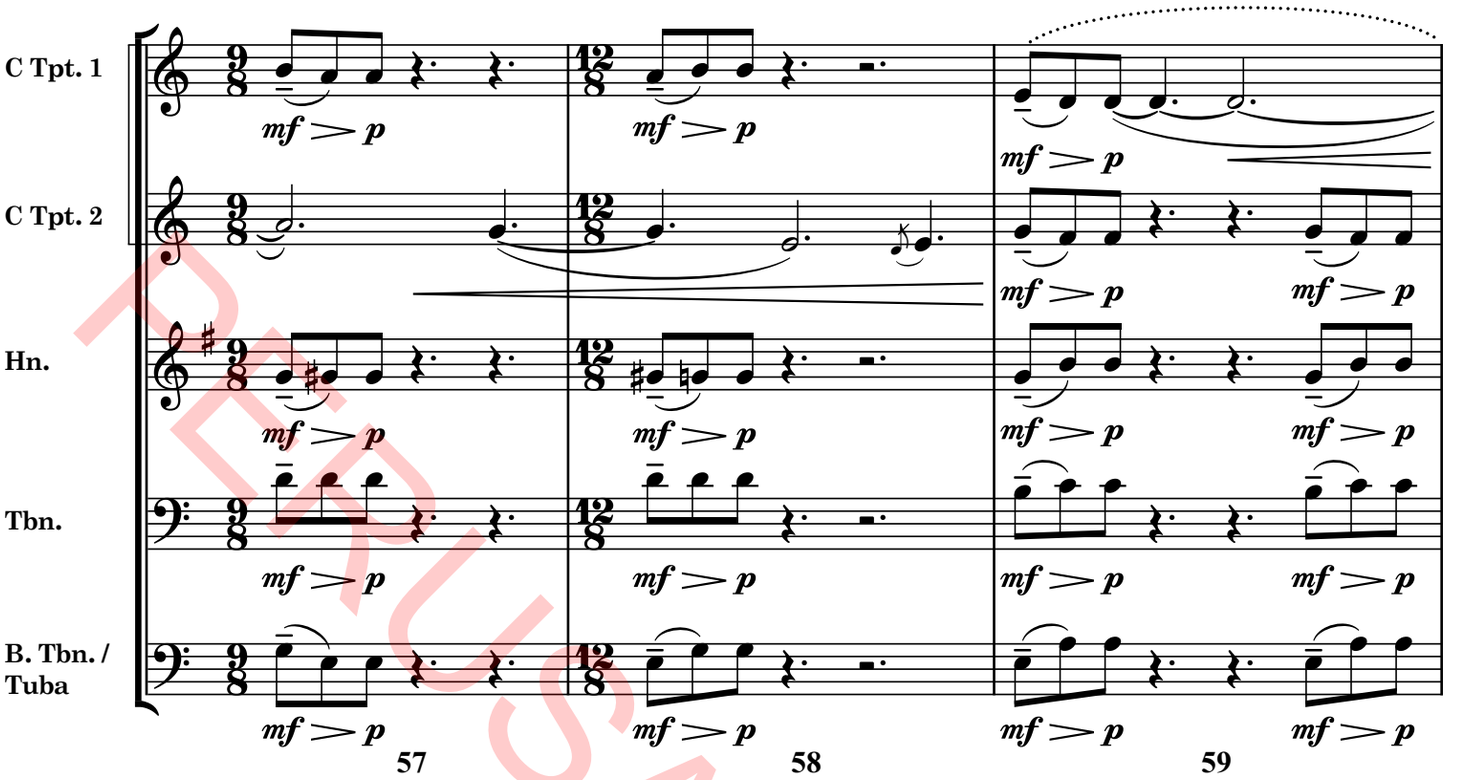

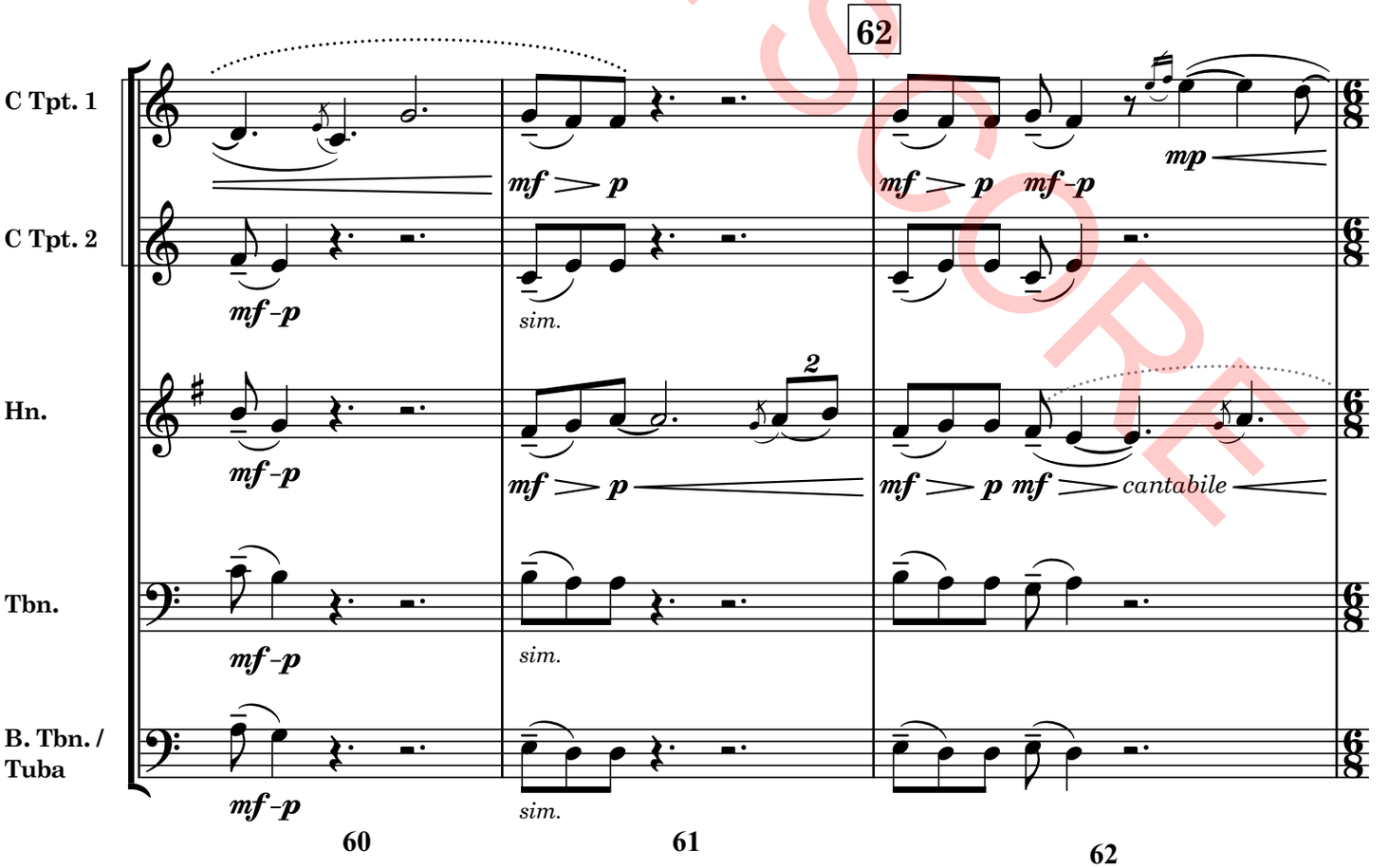

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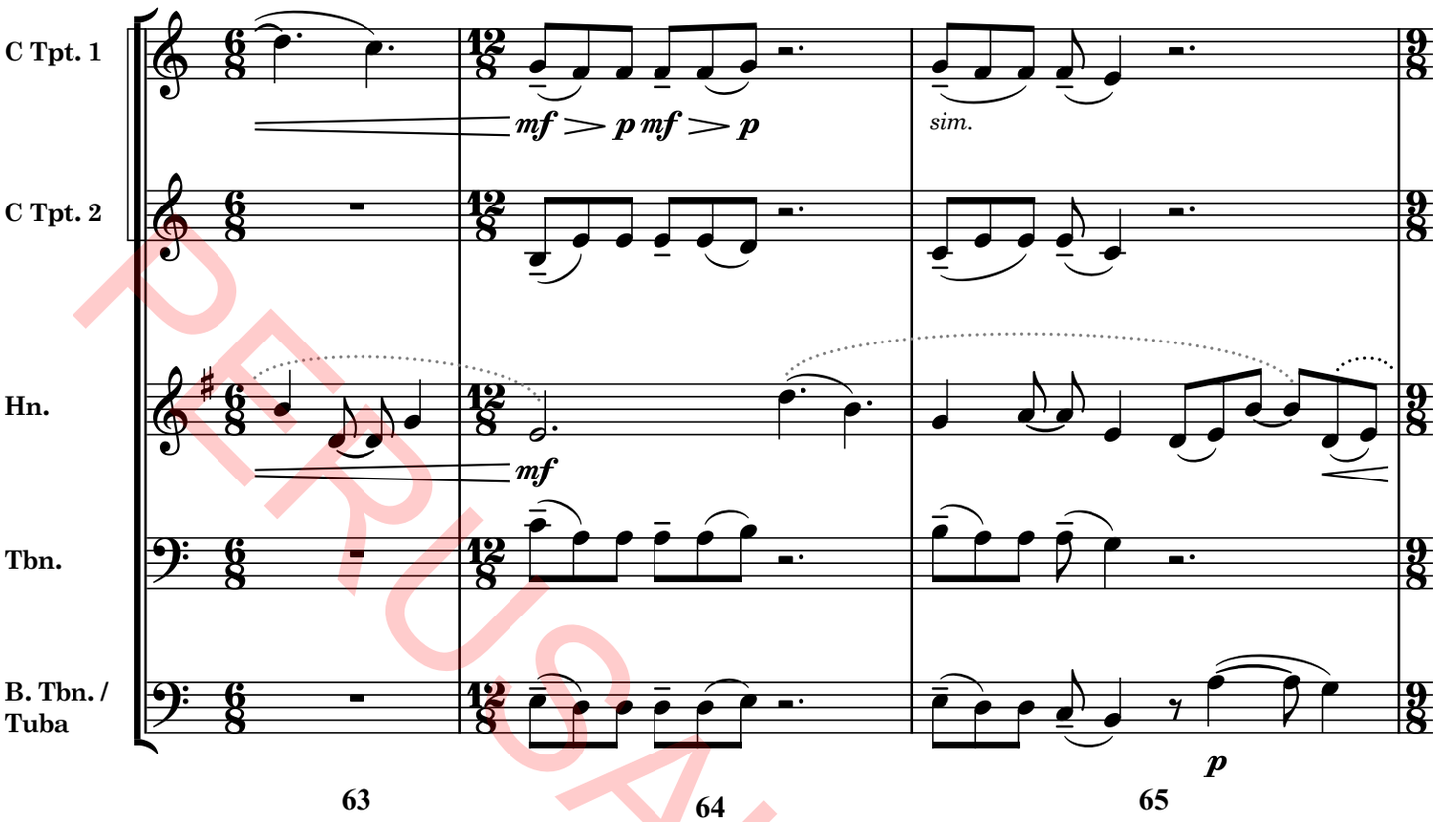

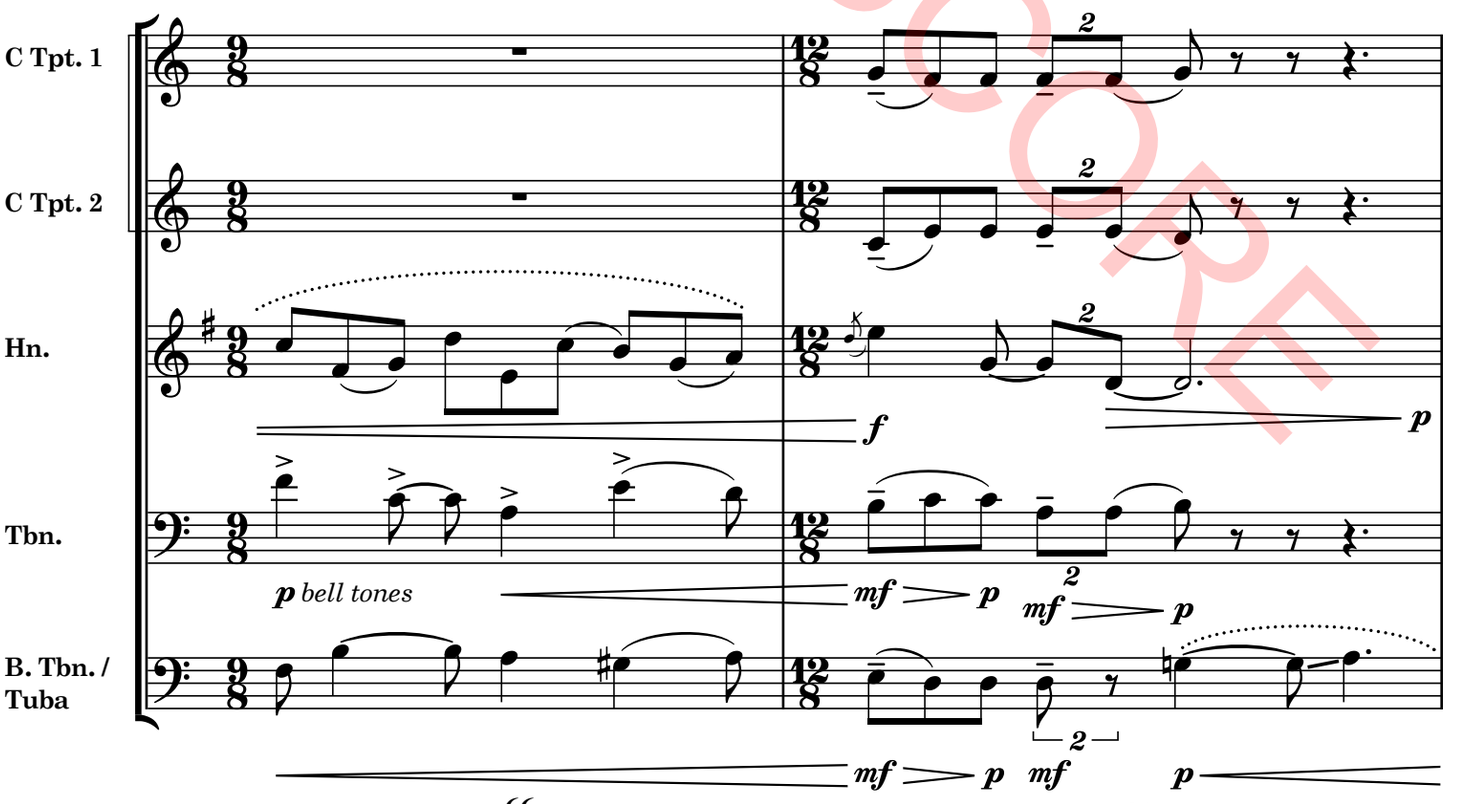

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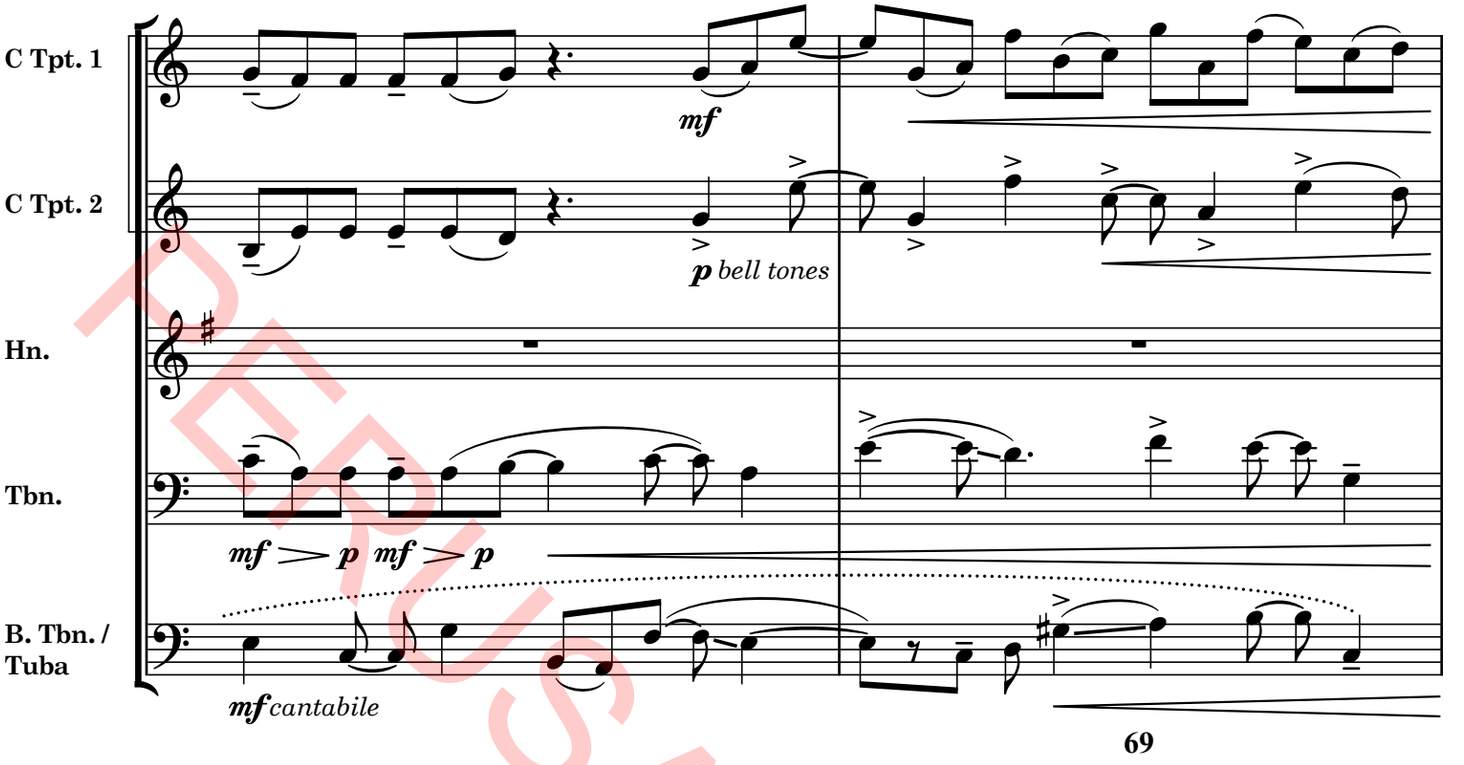

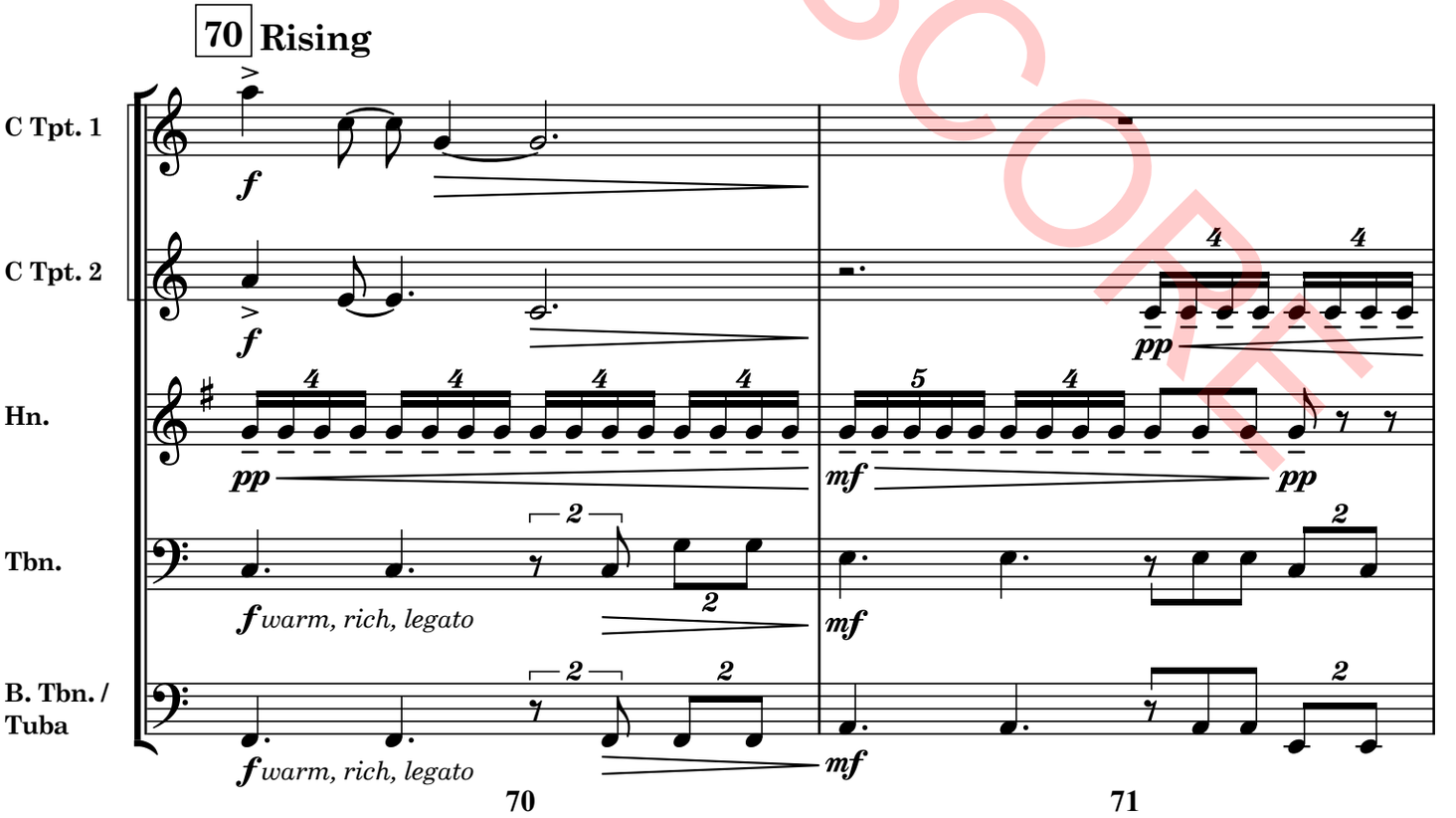

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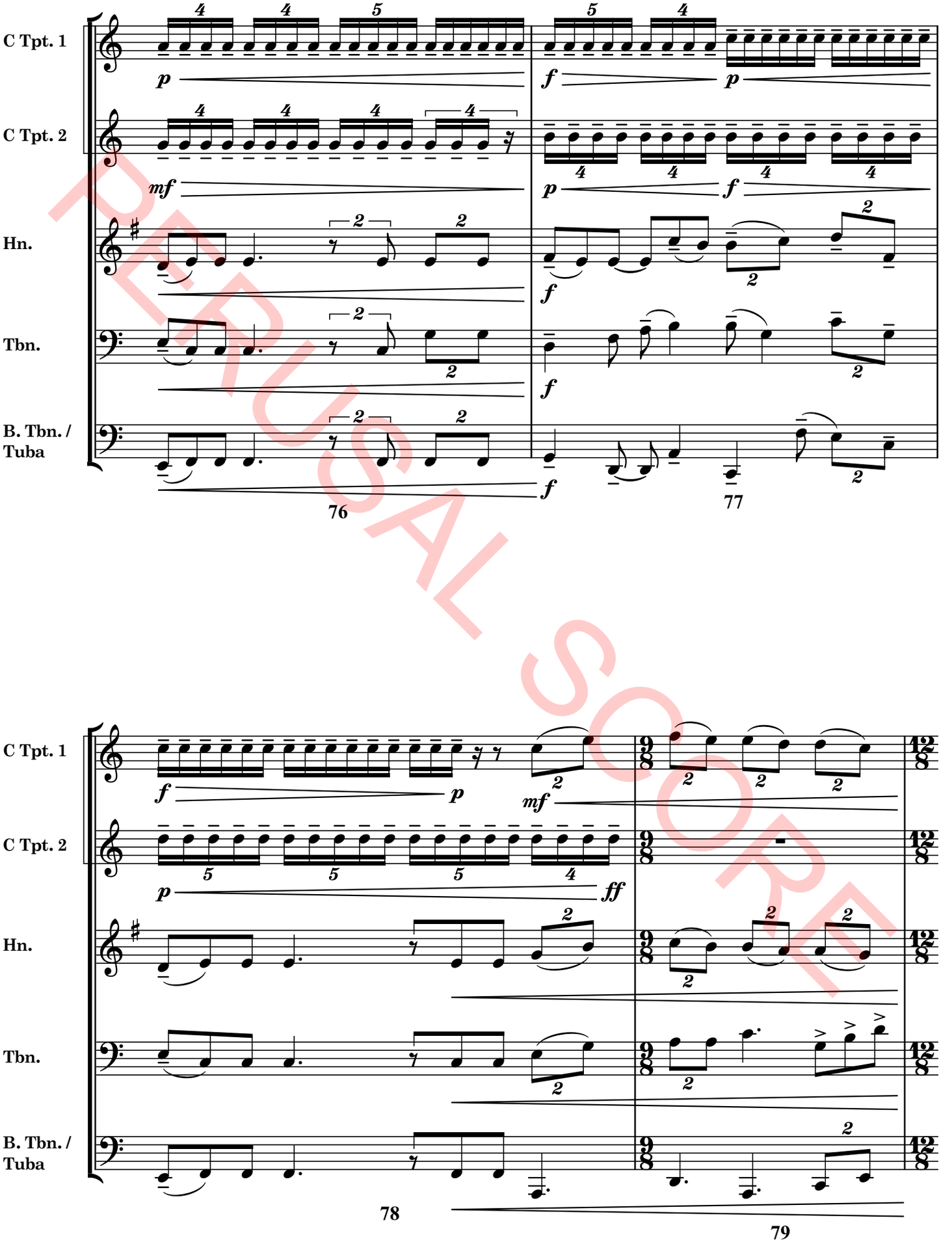

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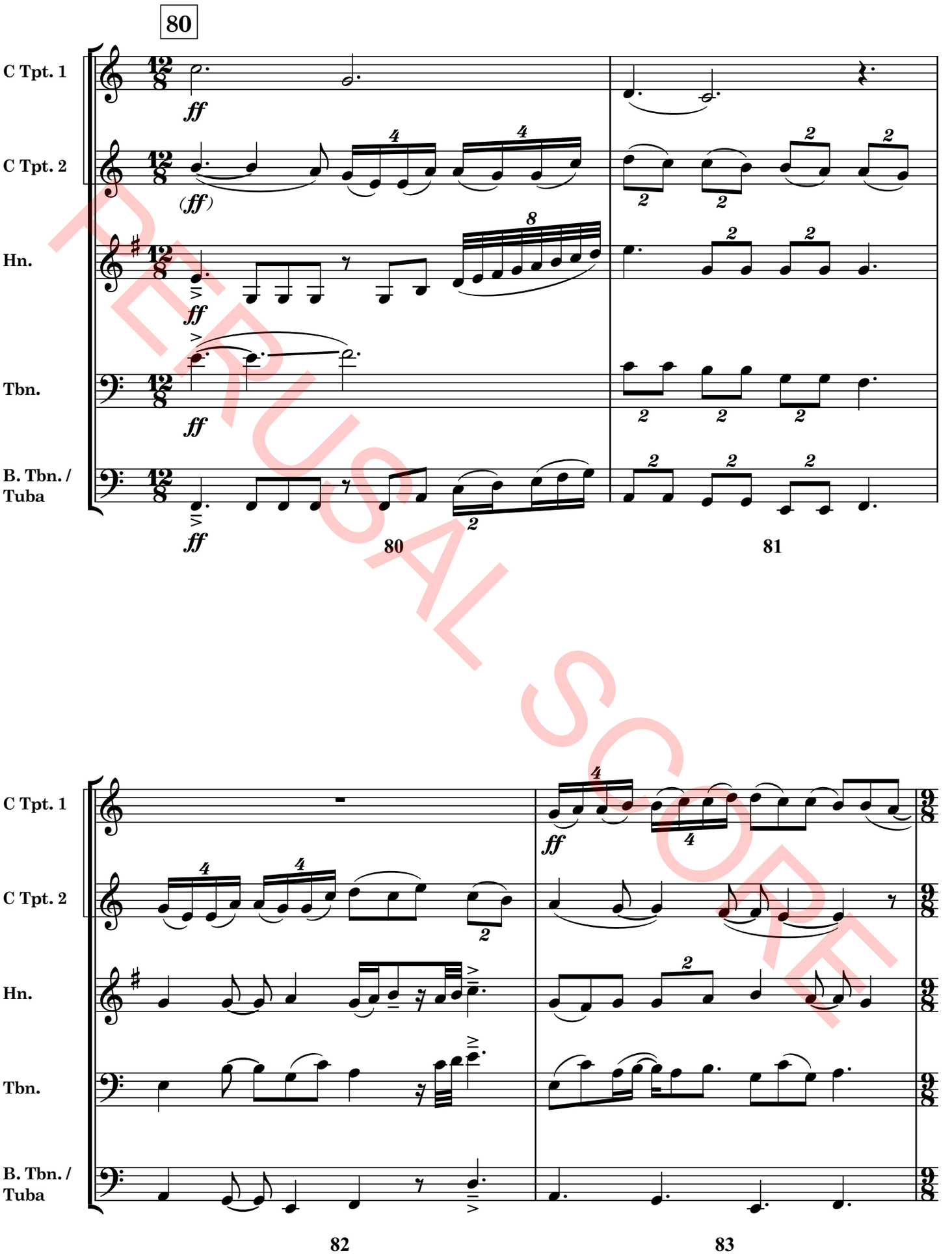

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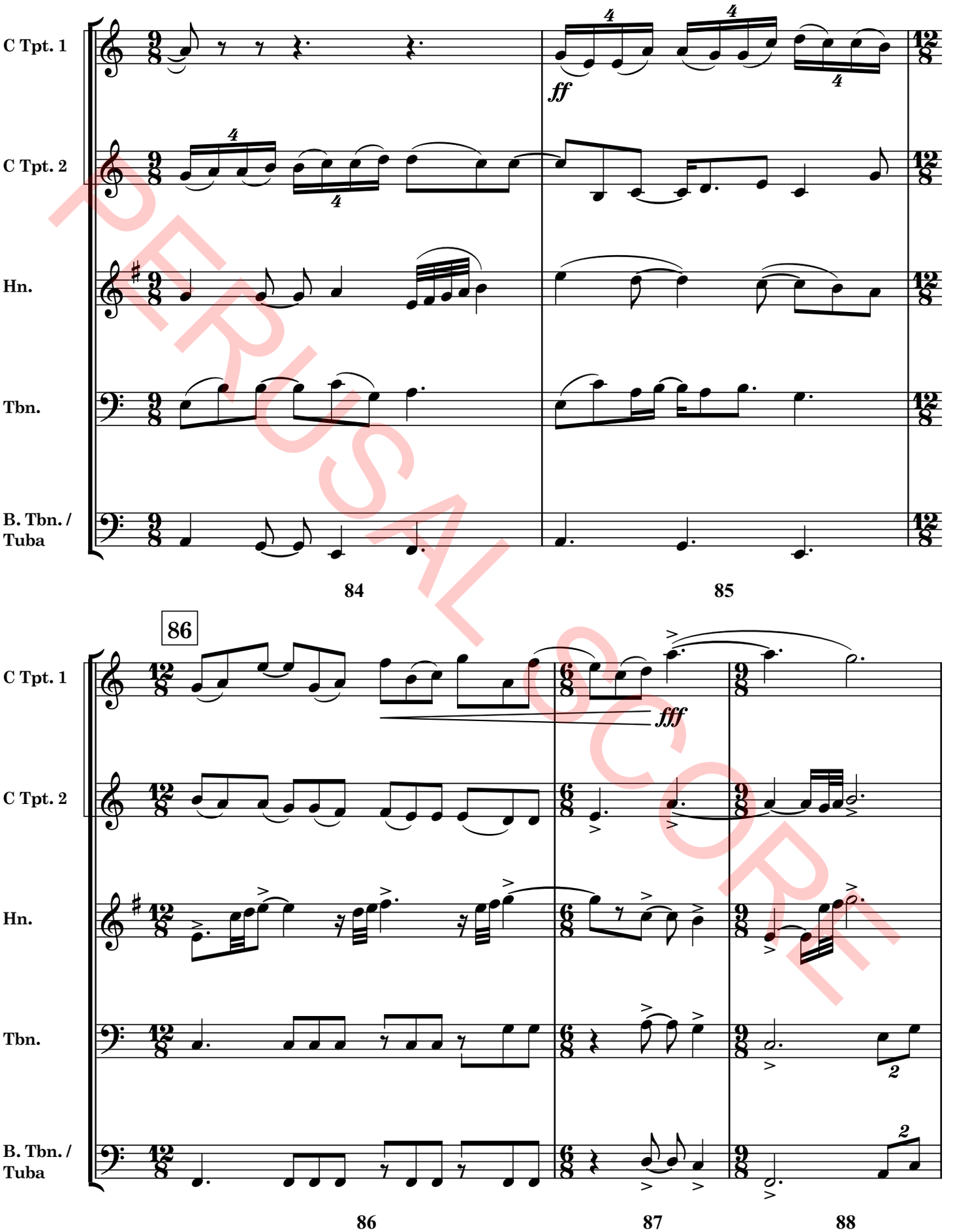

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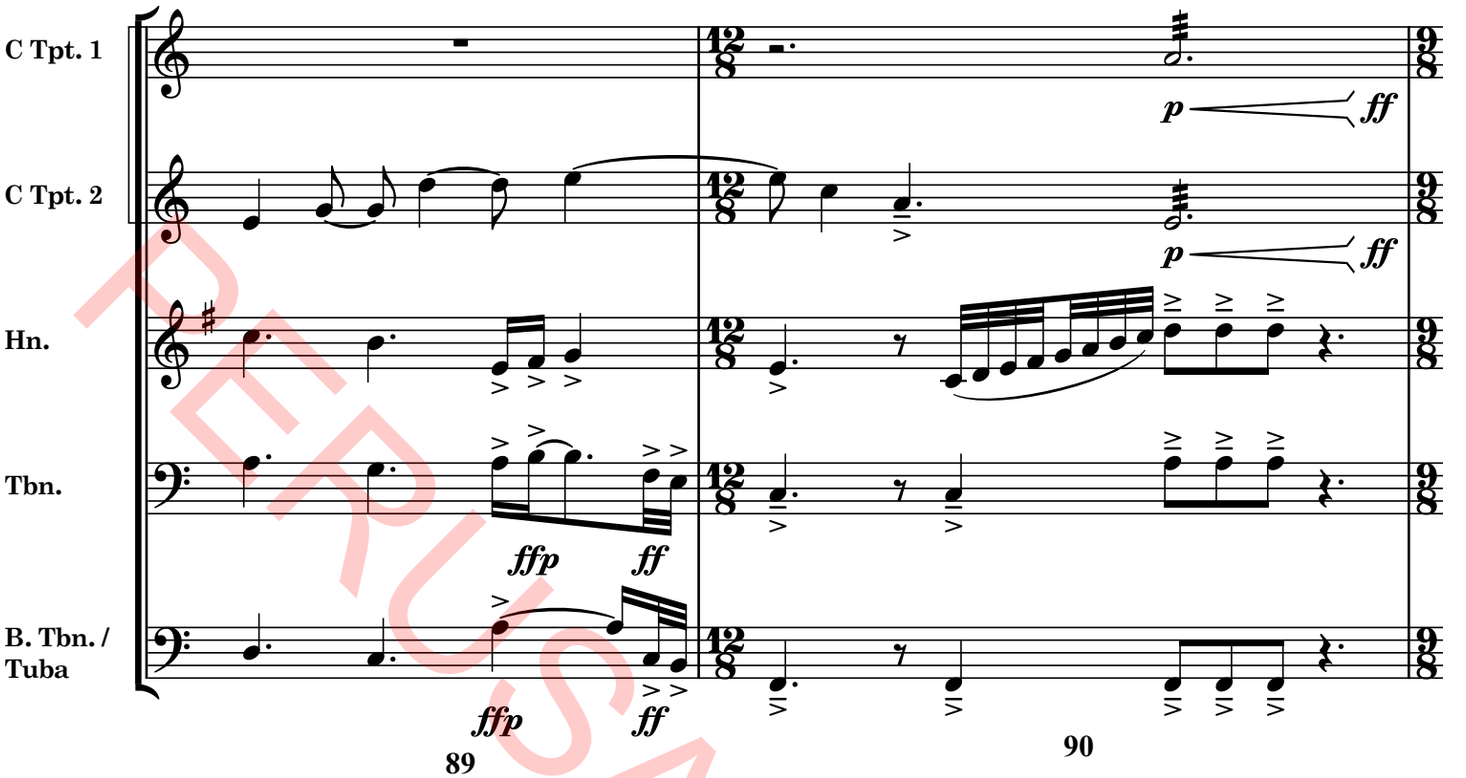

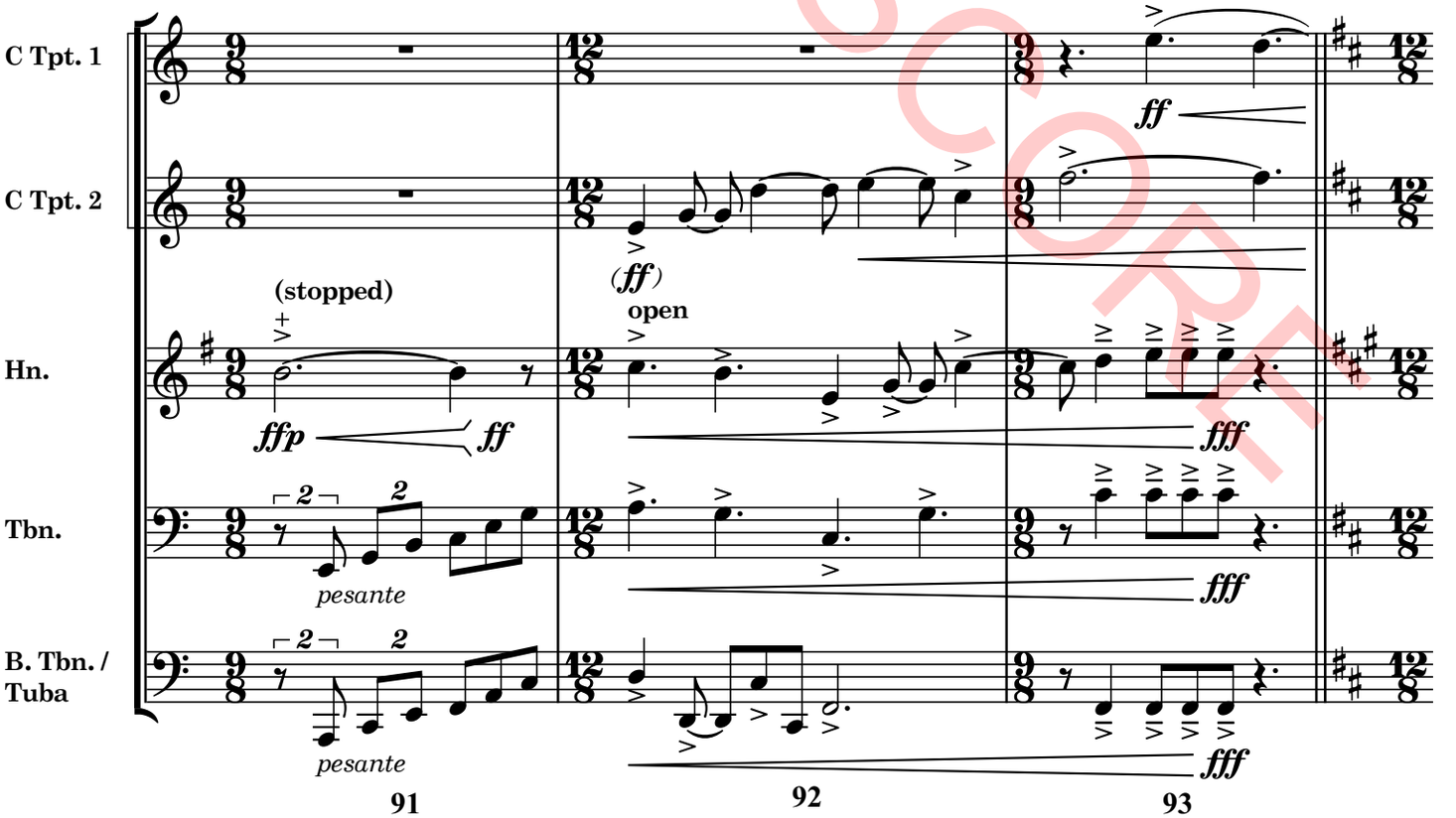

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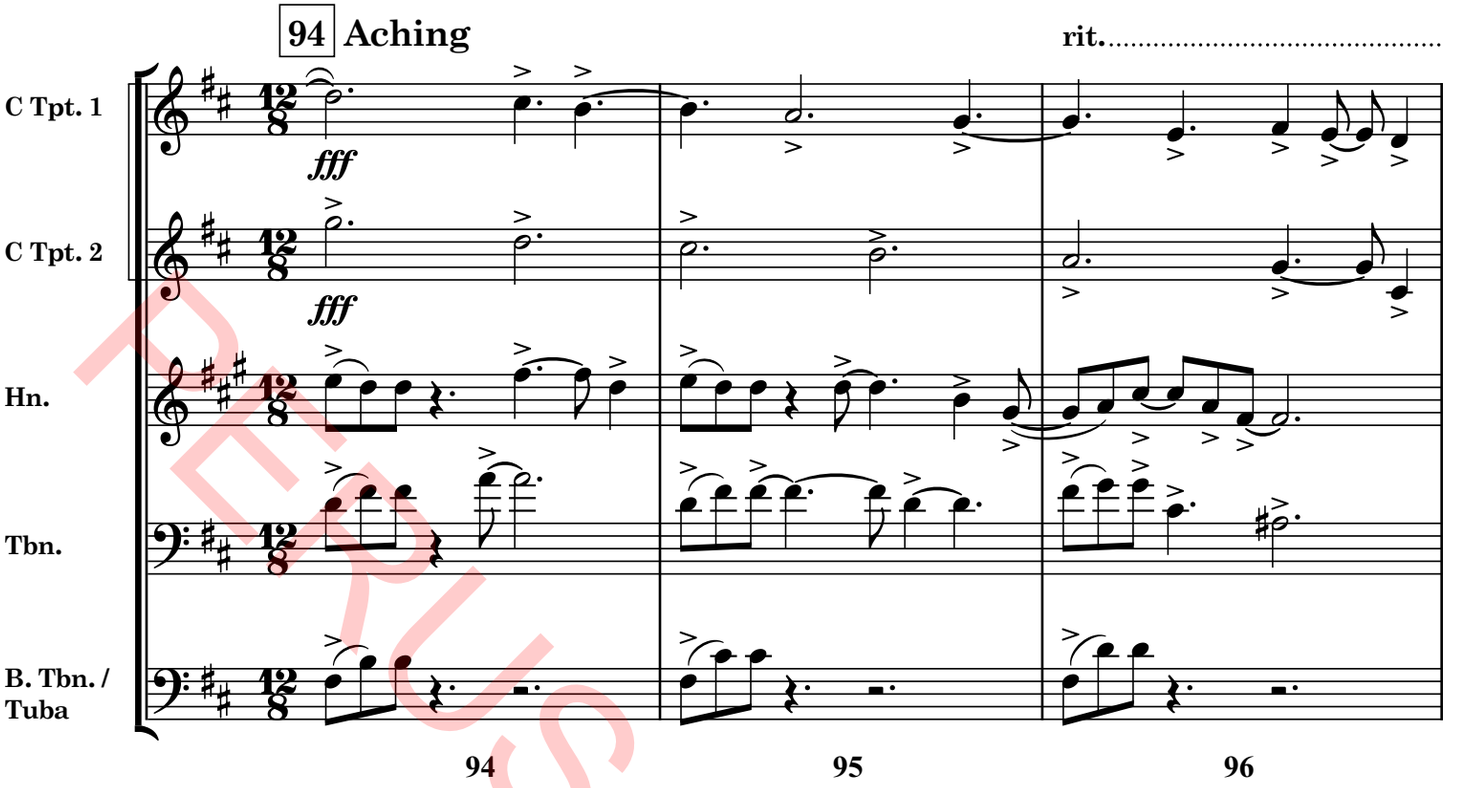

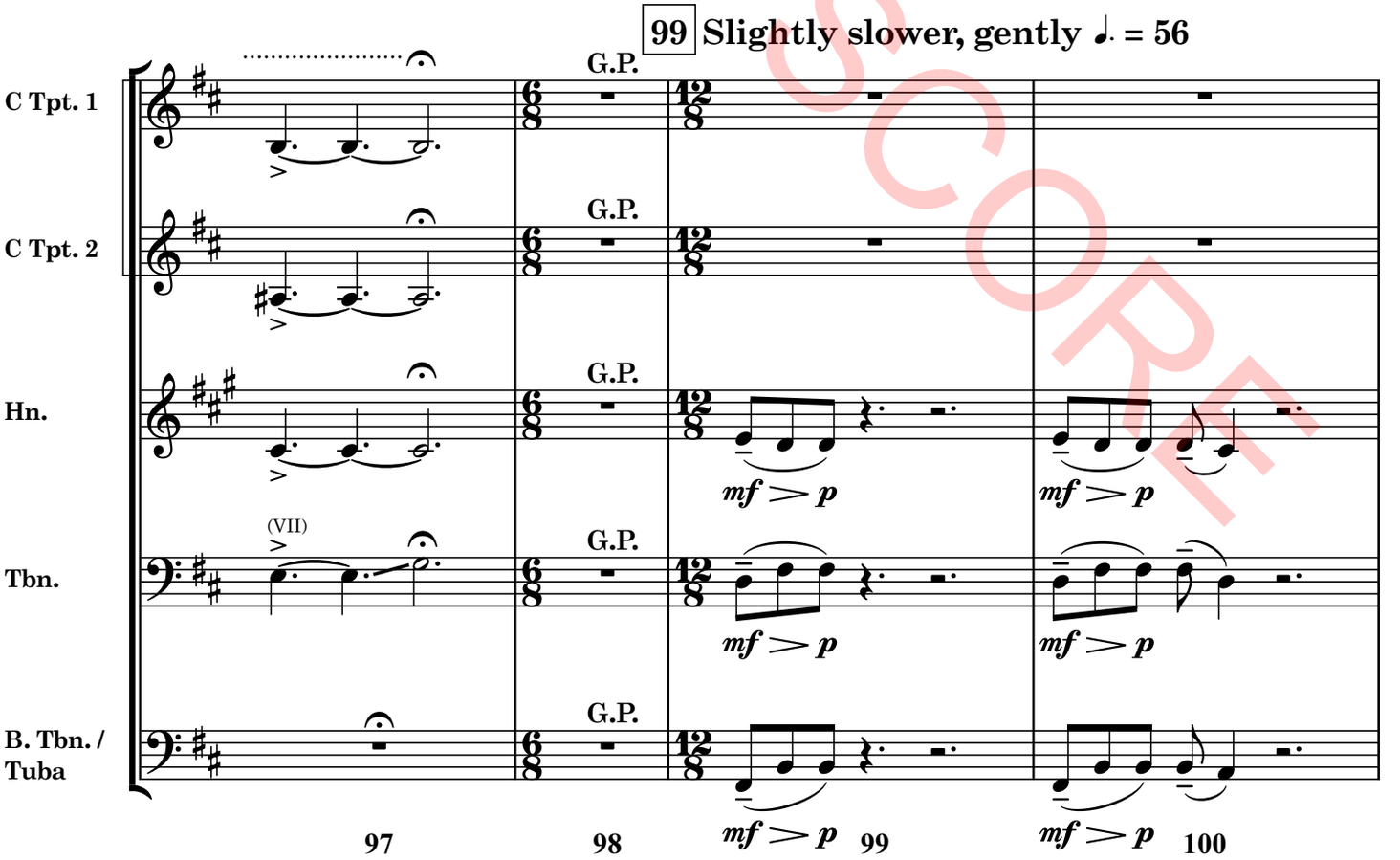

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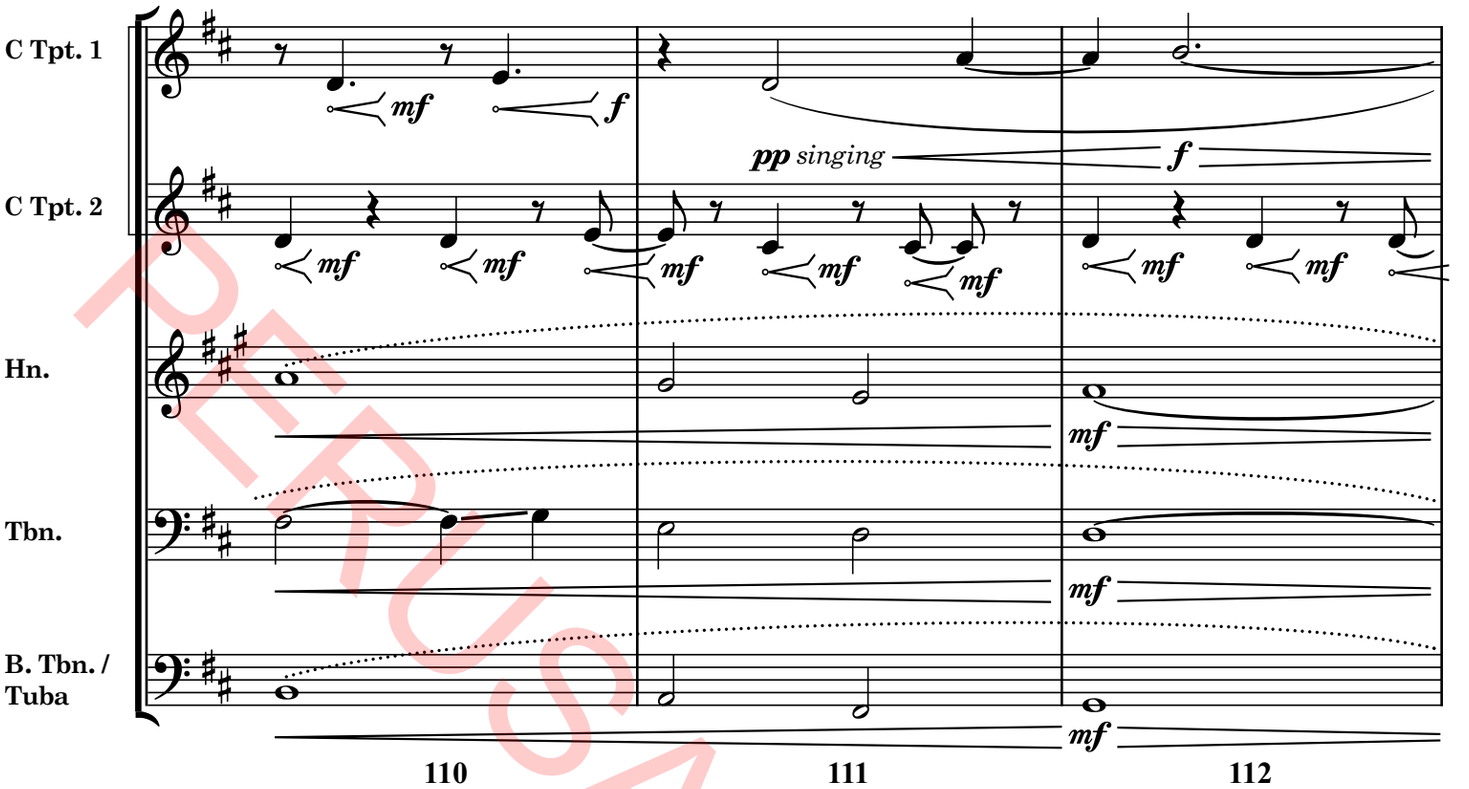

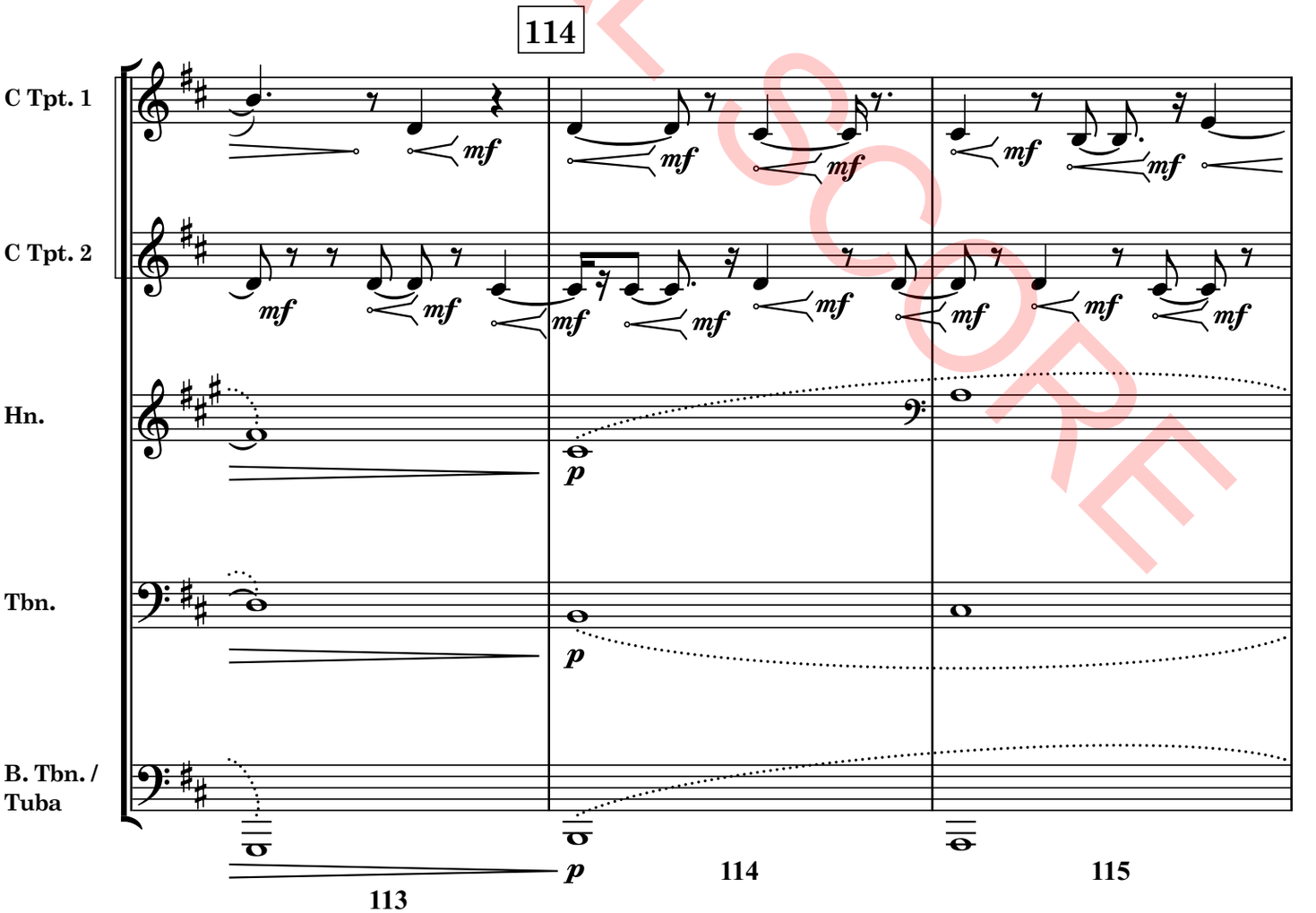

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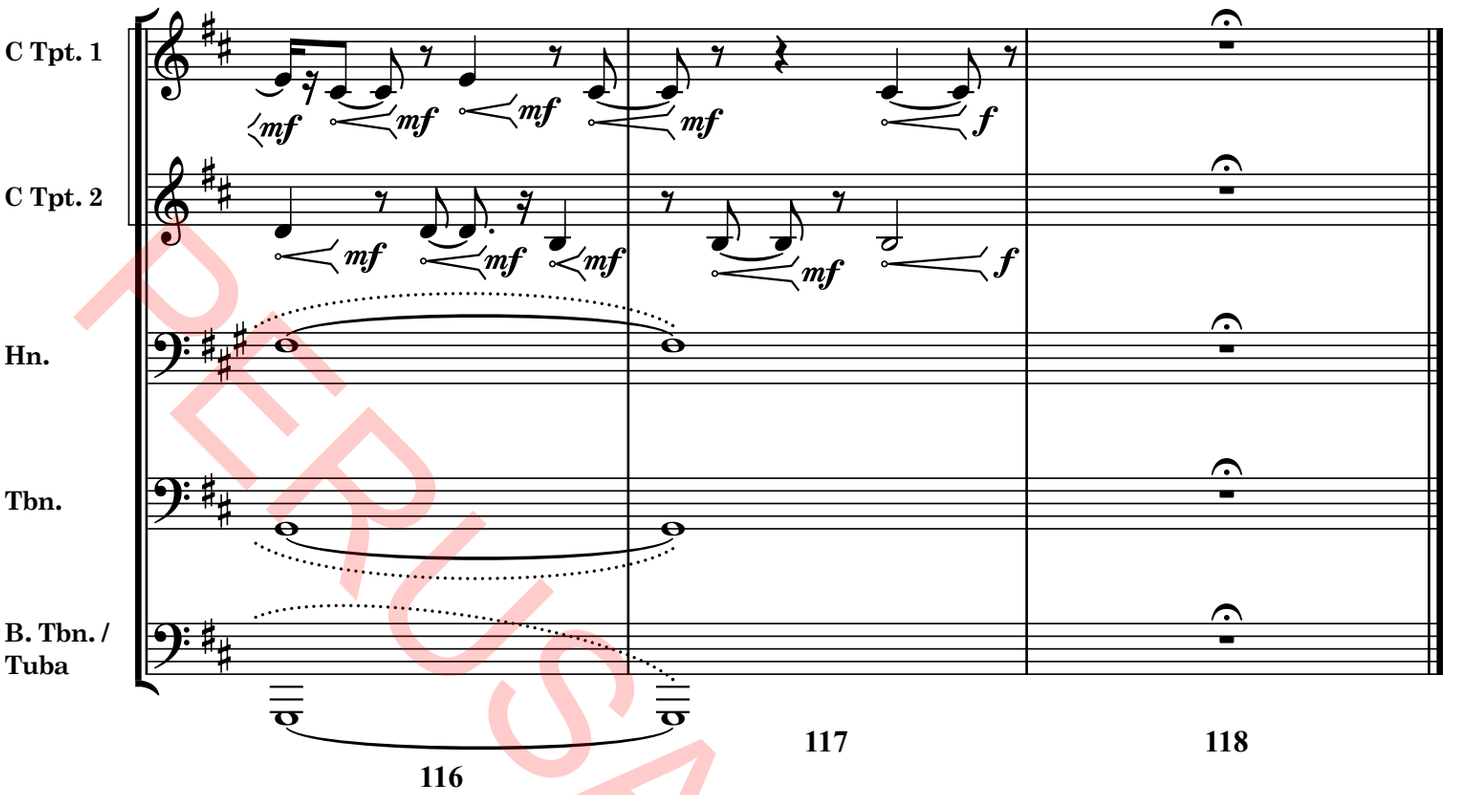

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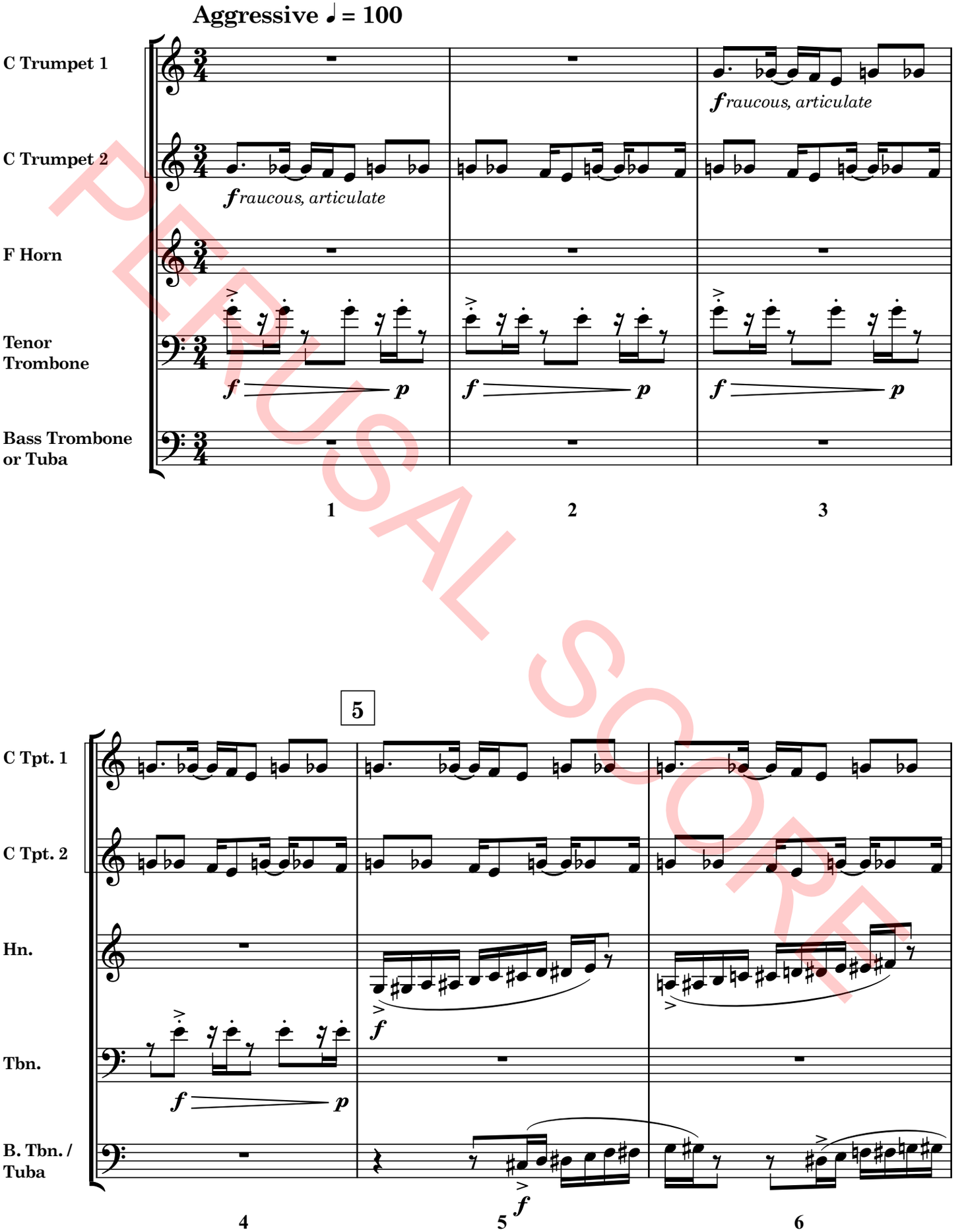
4. Helix



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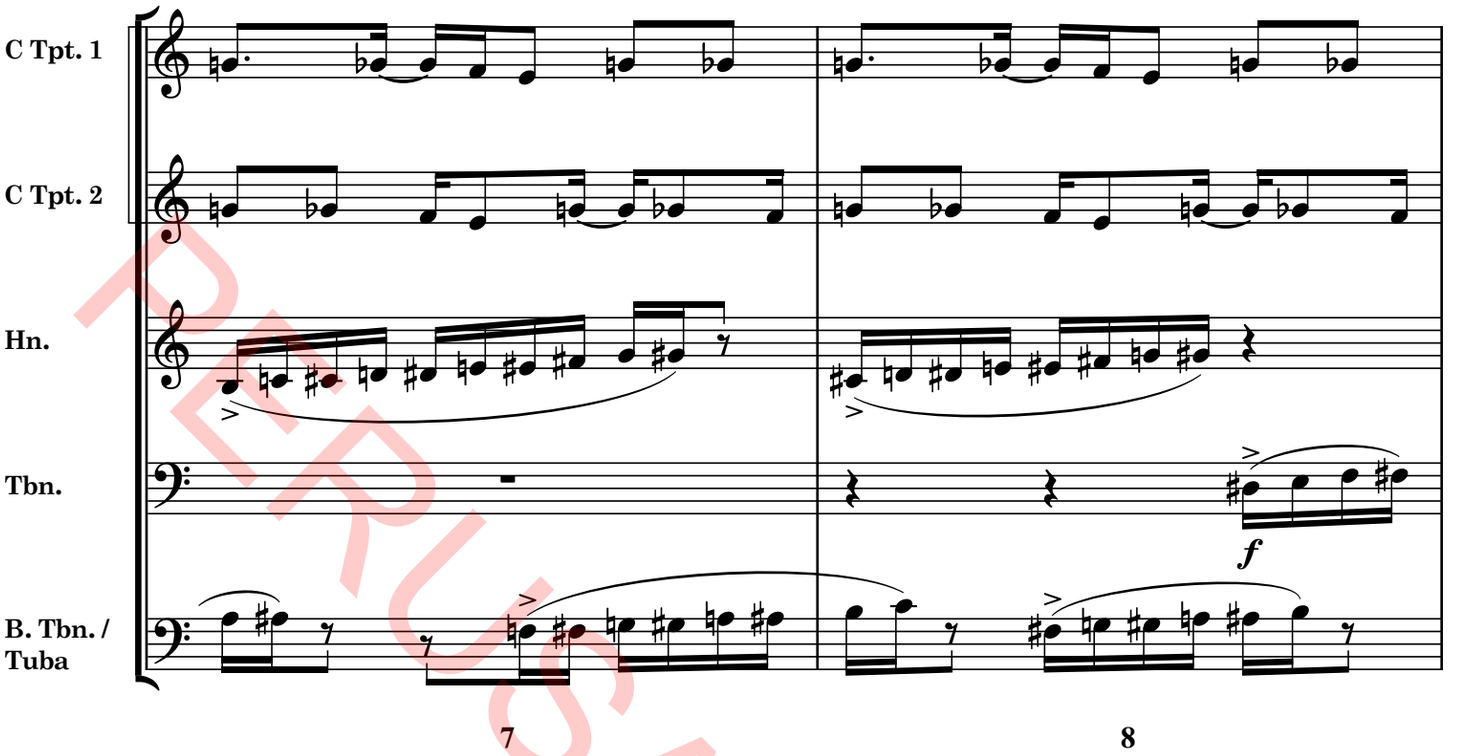

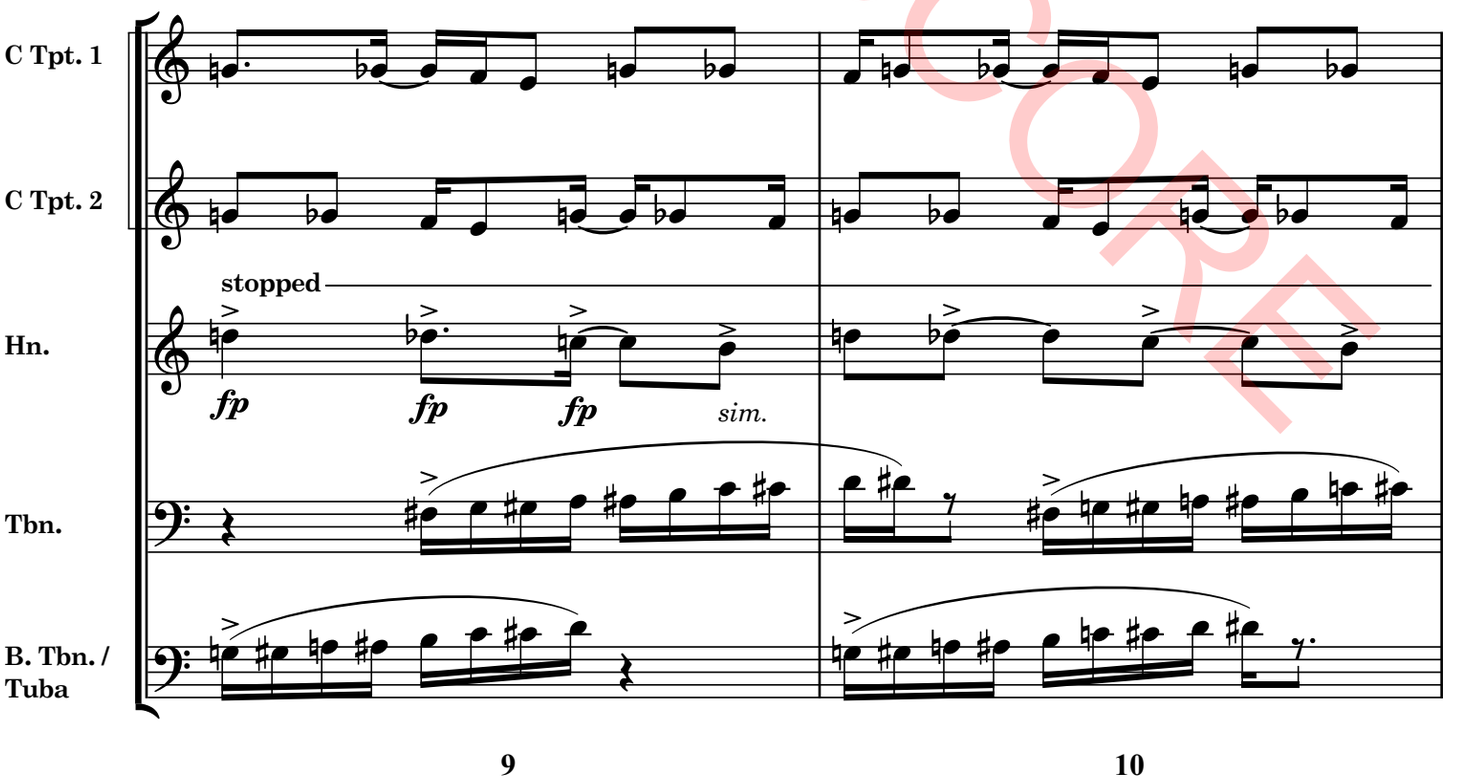

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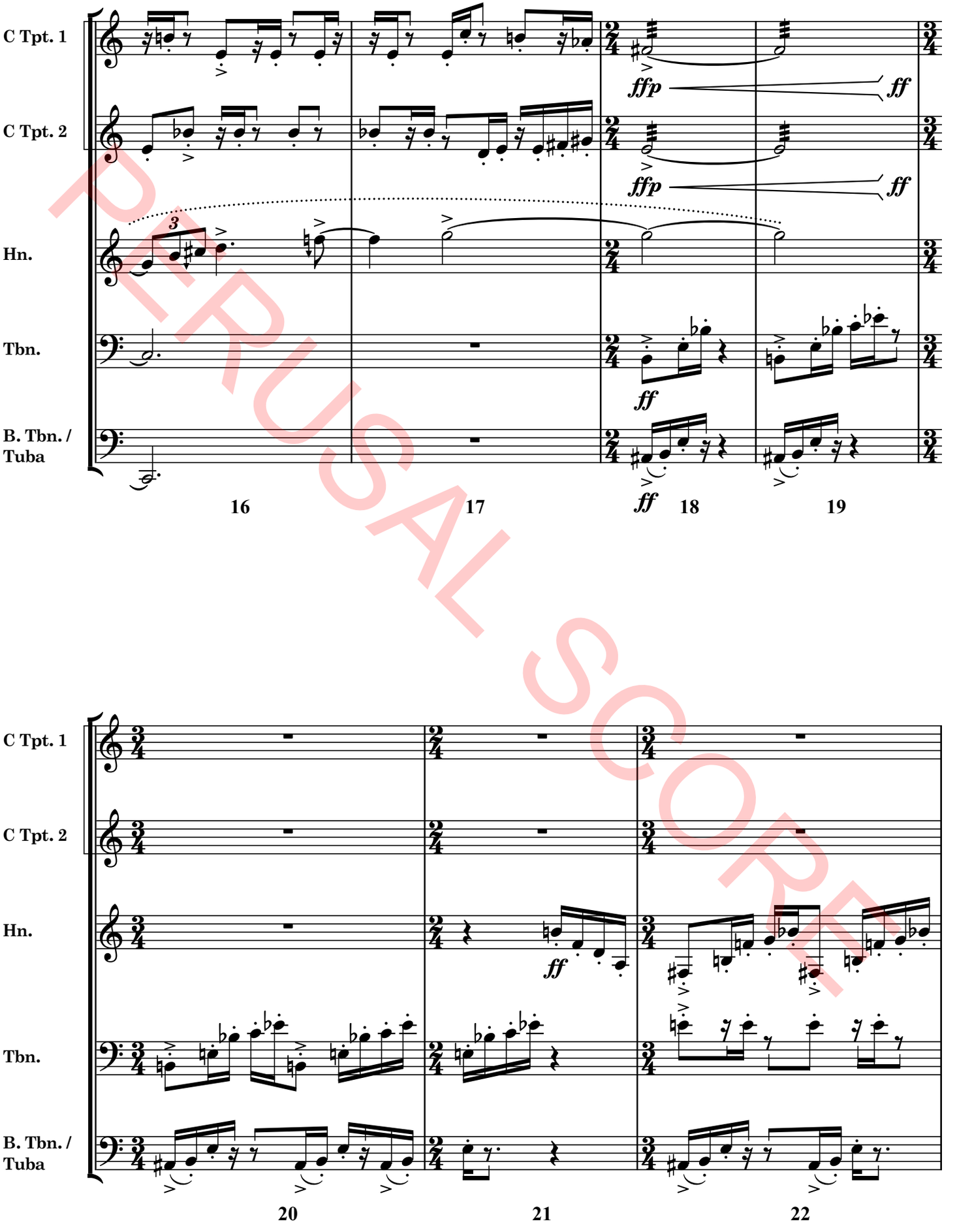

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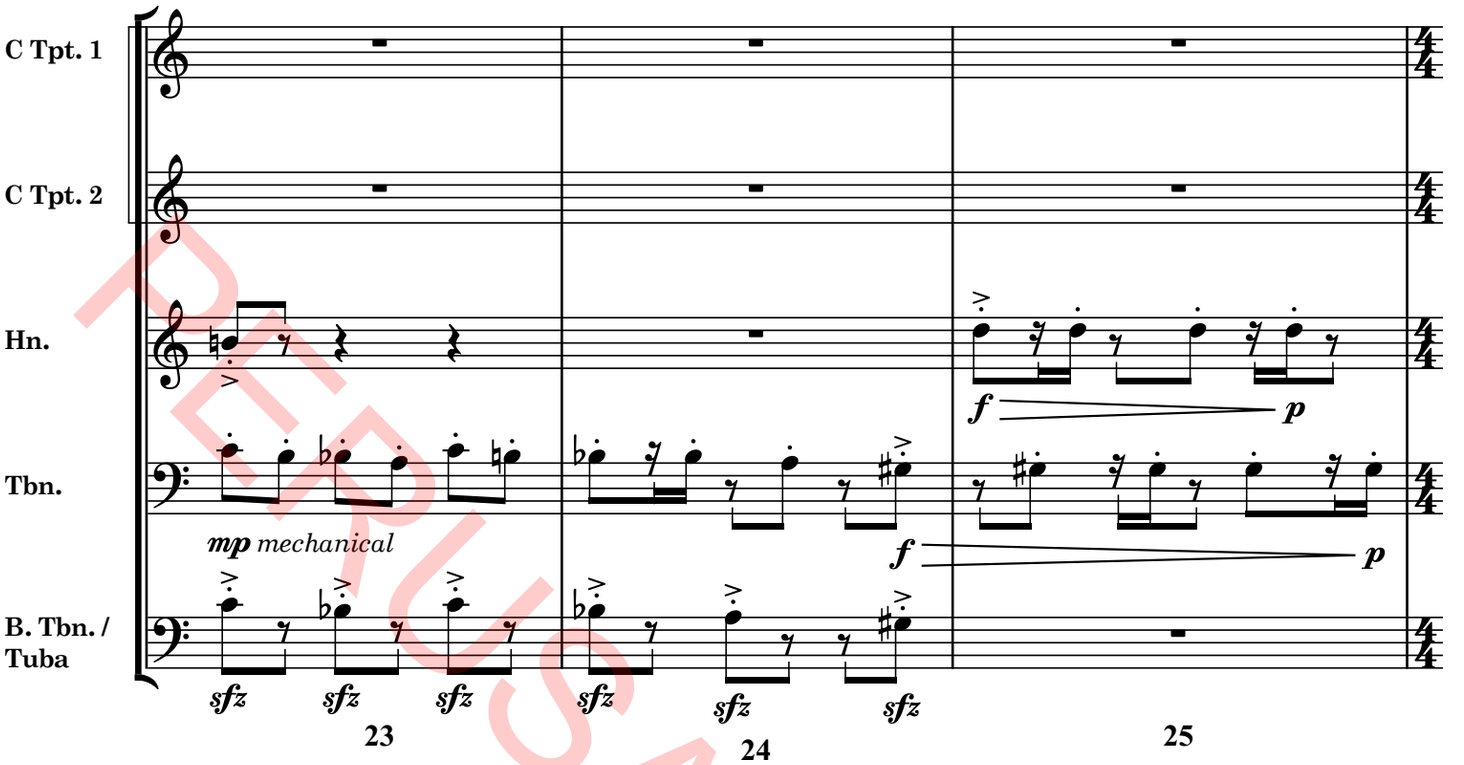

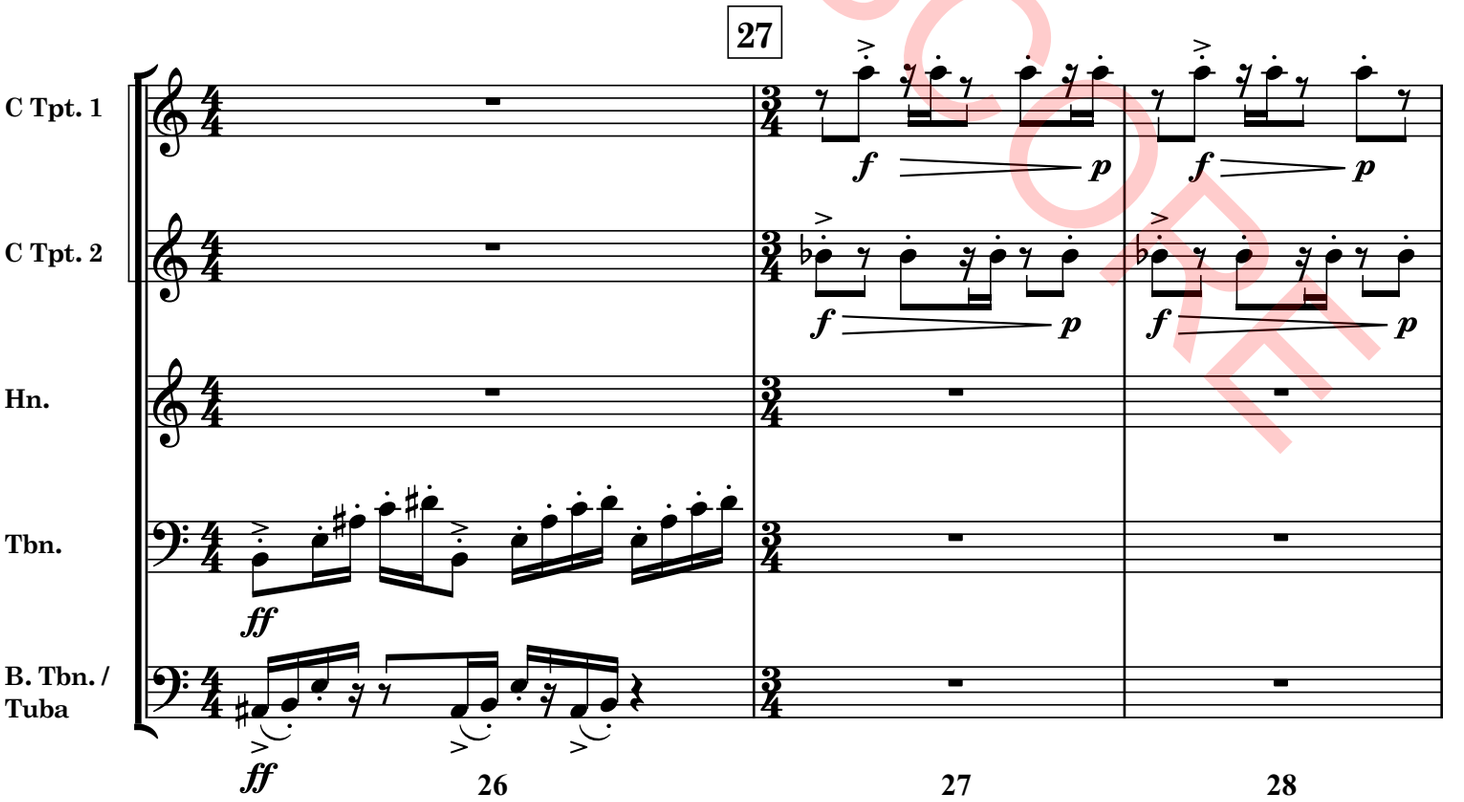

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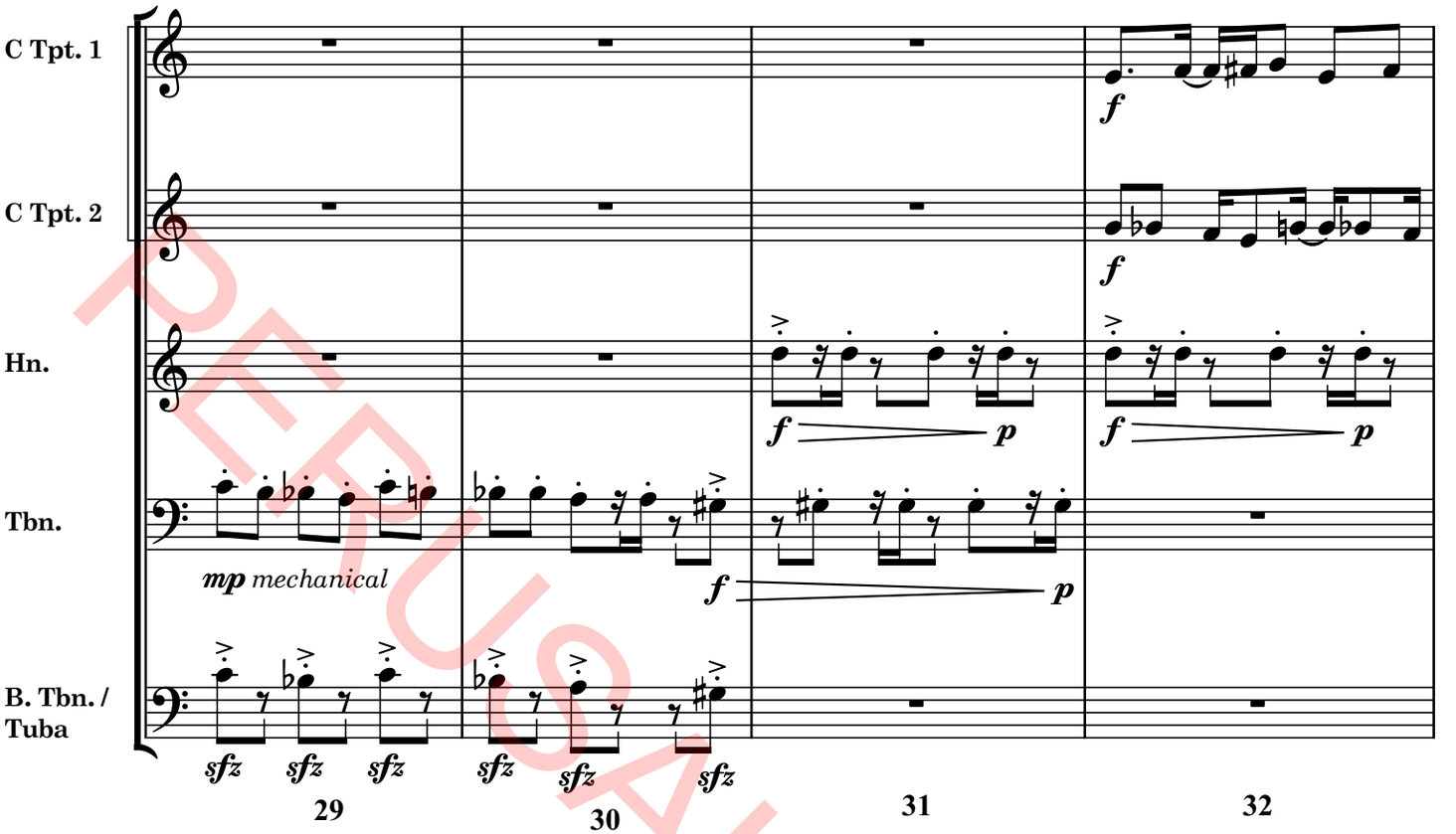

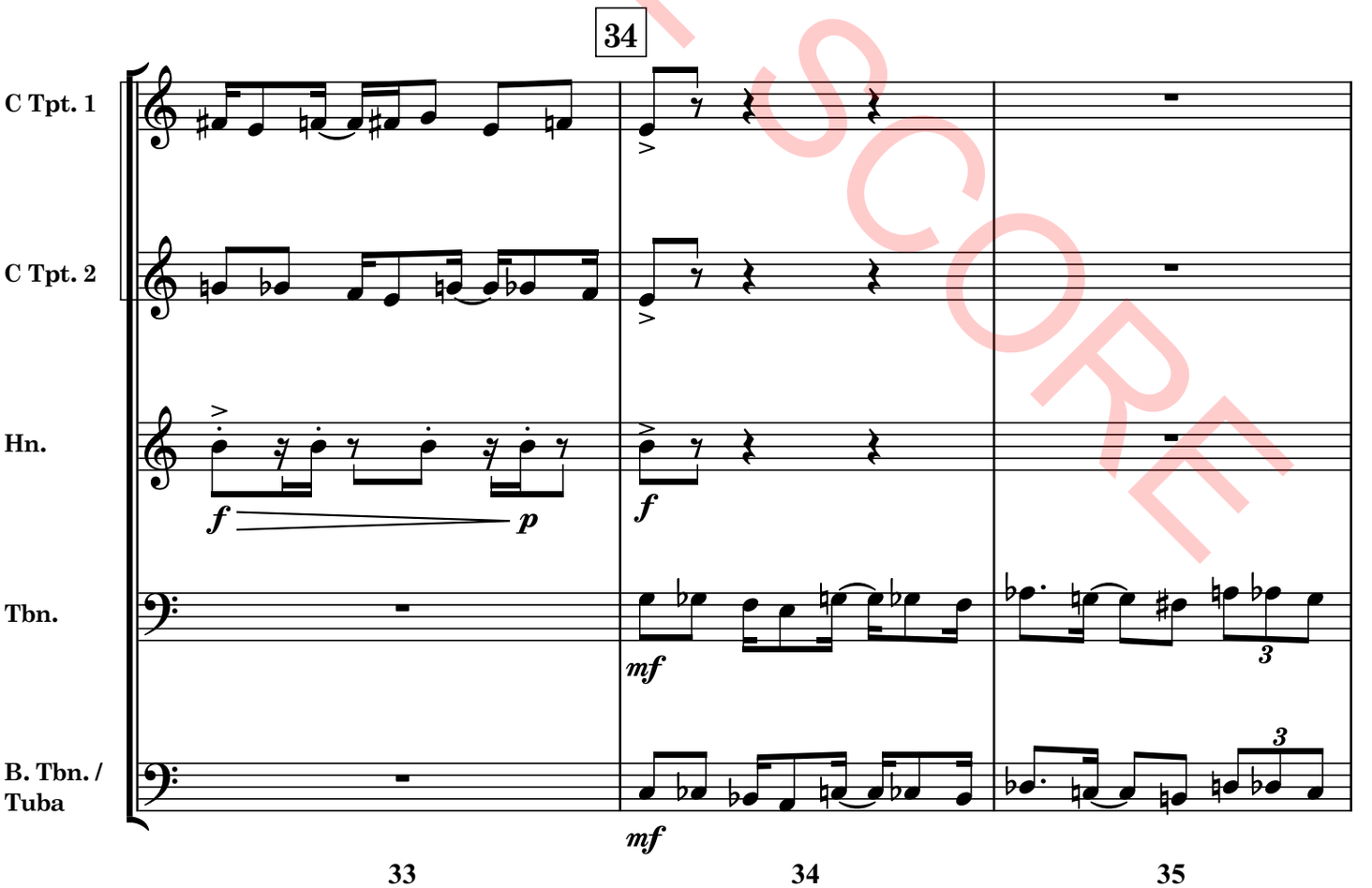

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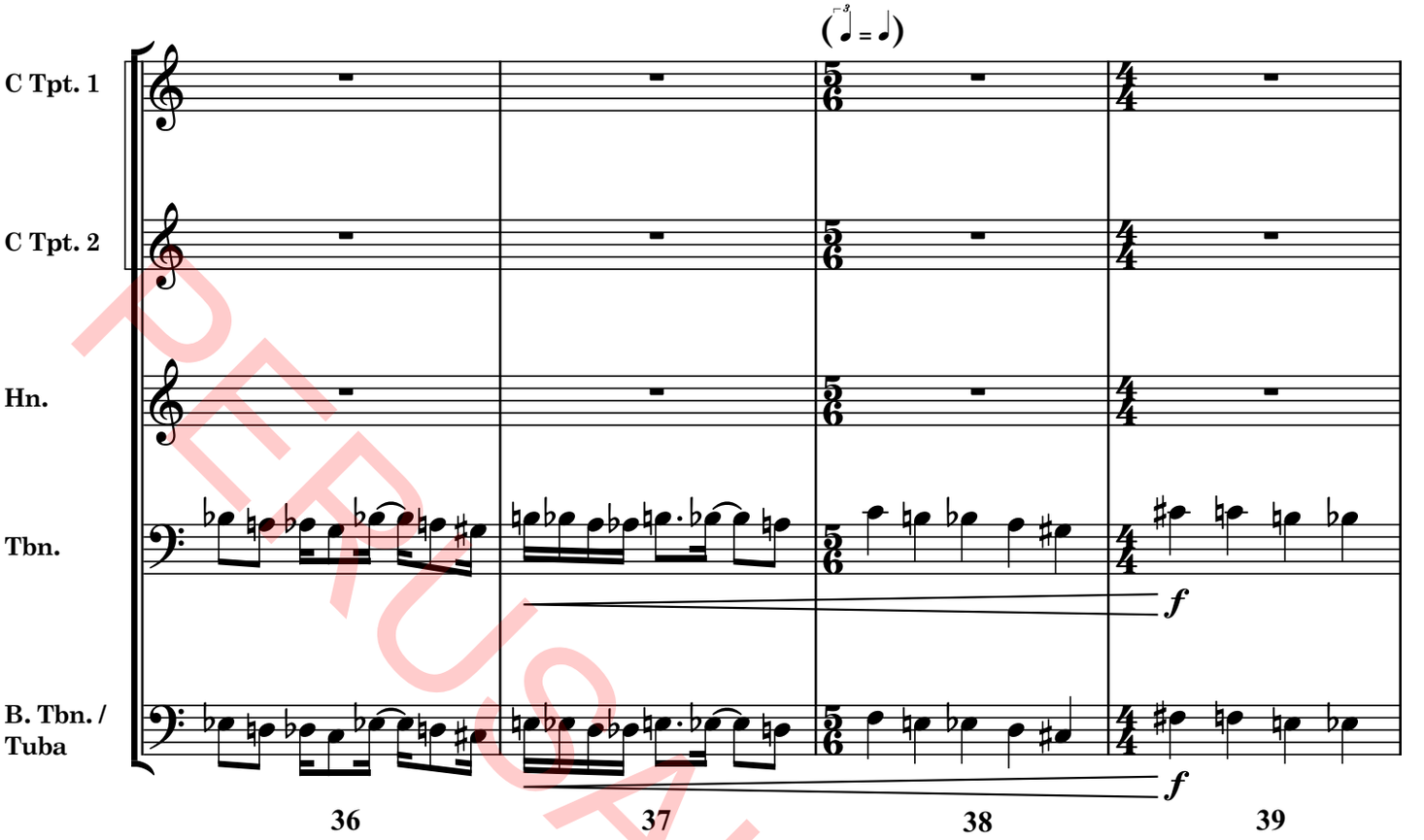

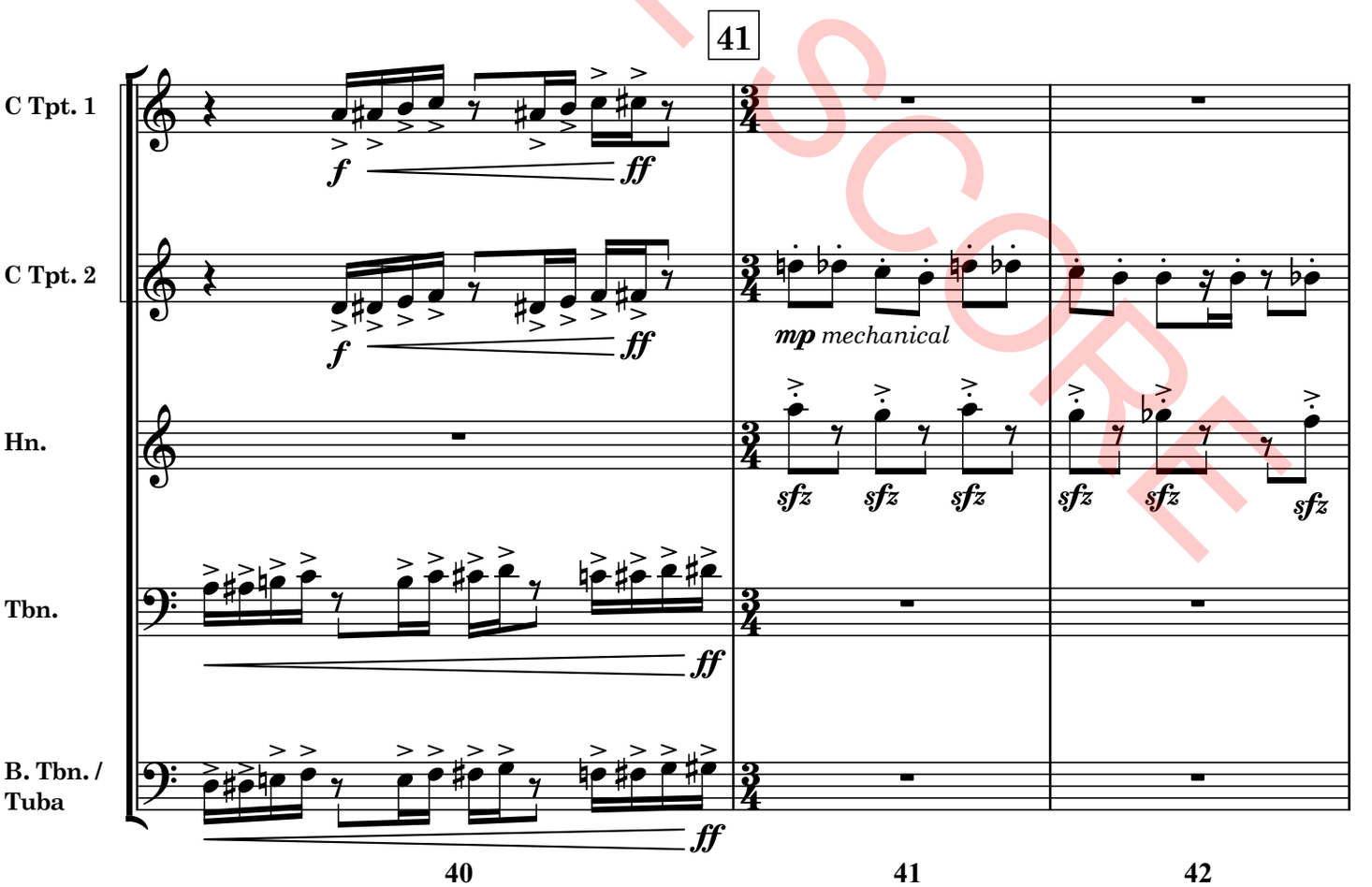

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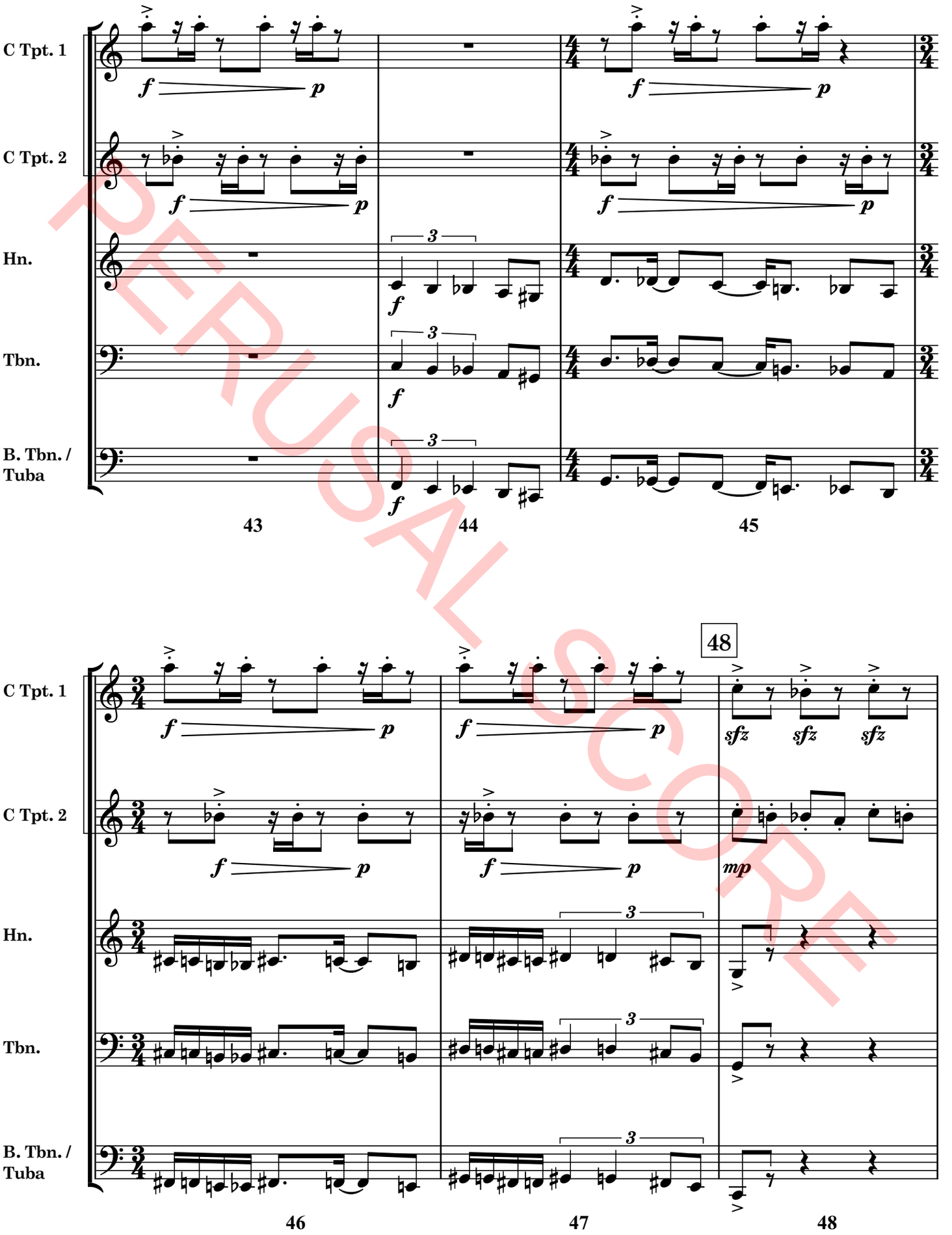

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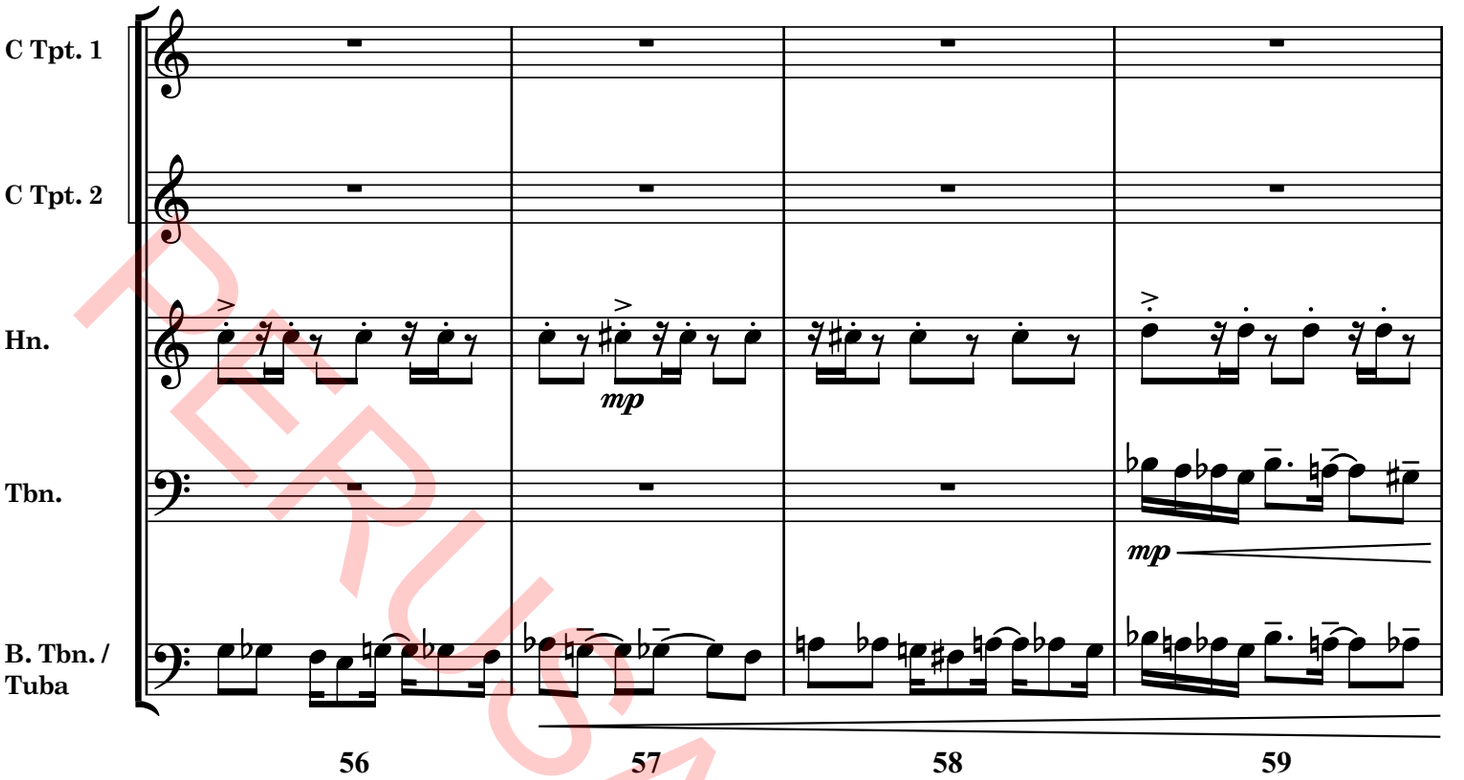

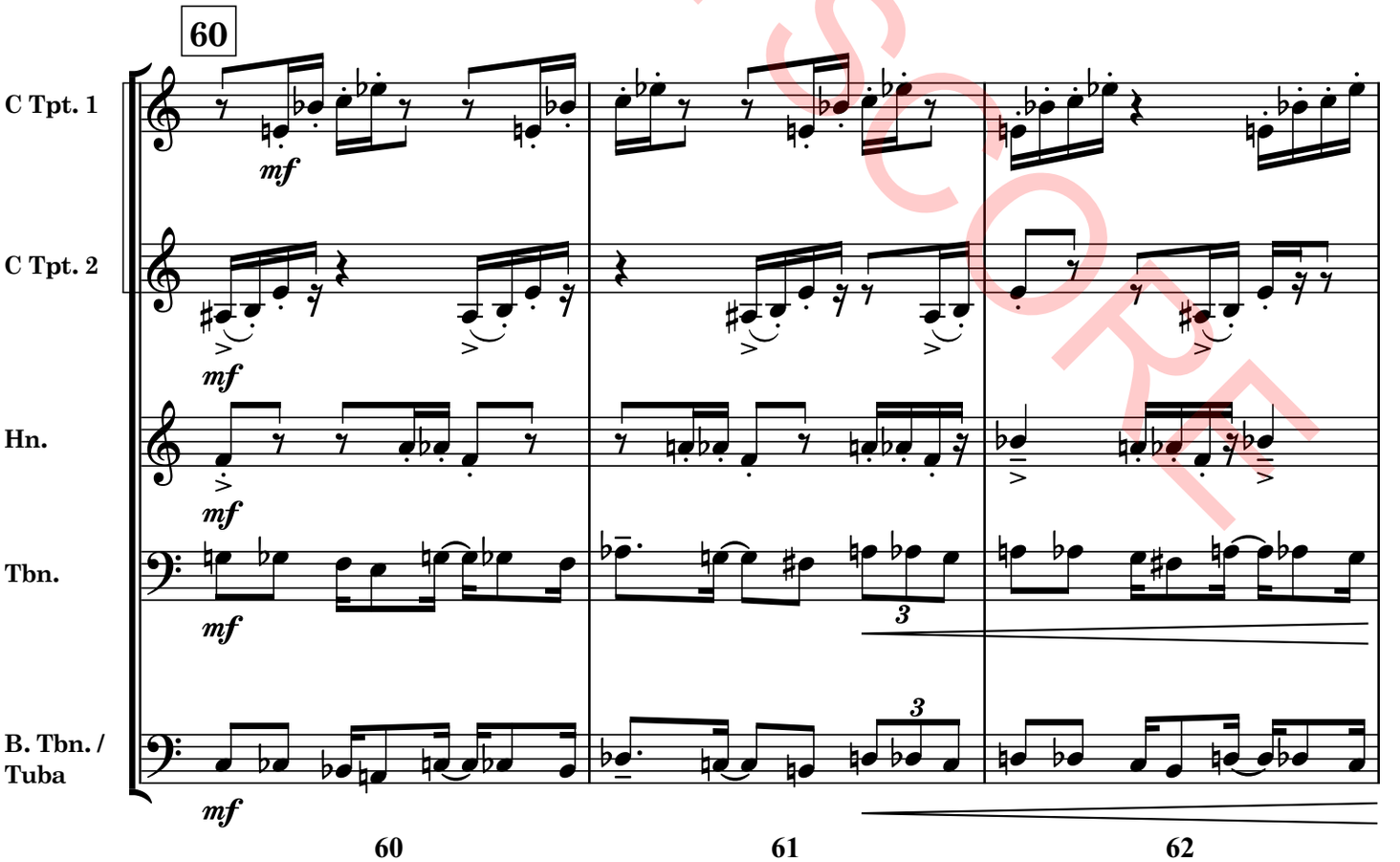

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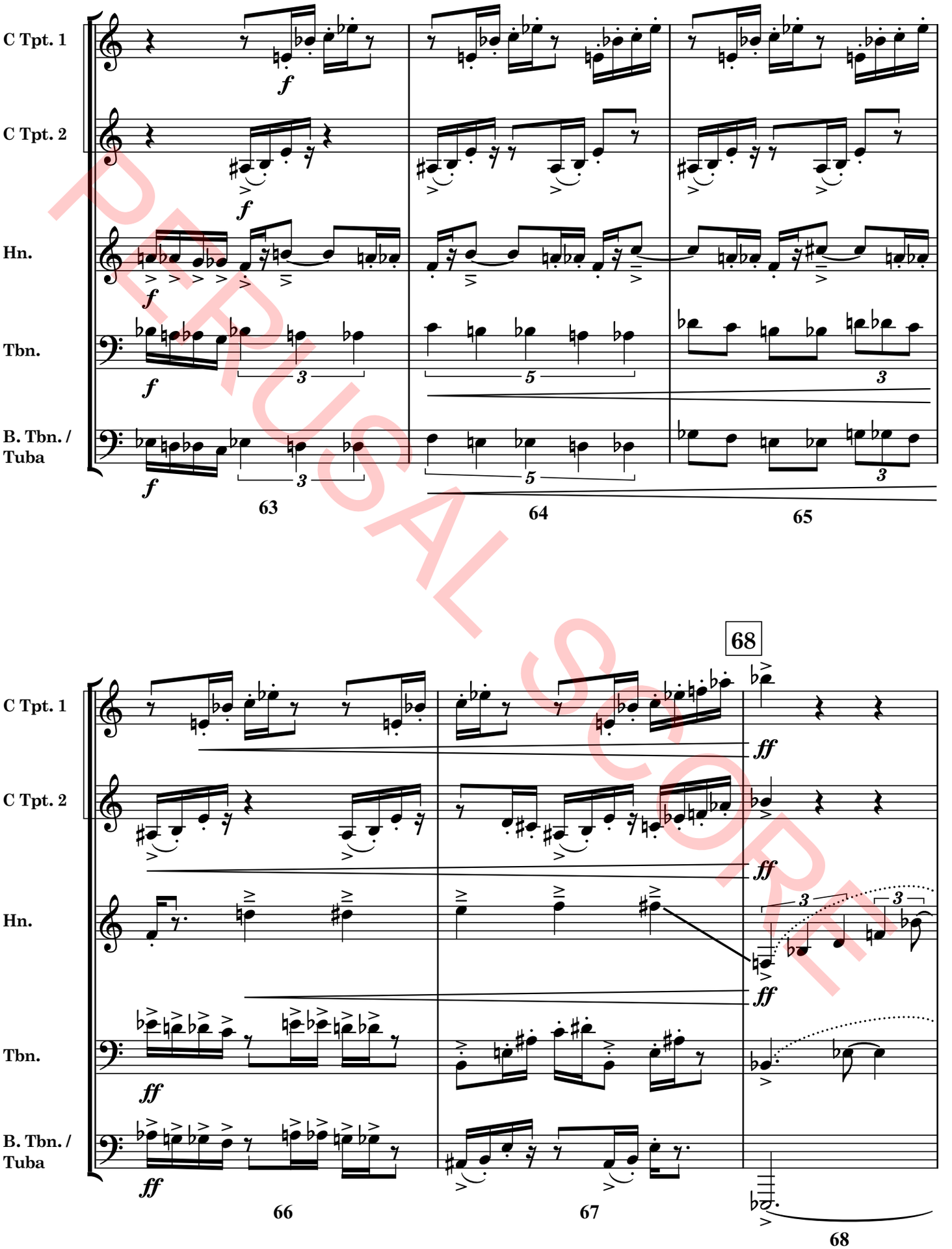

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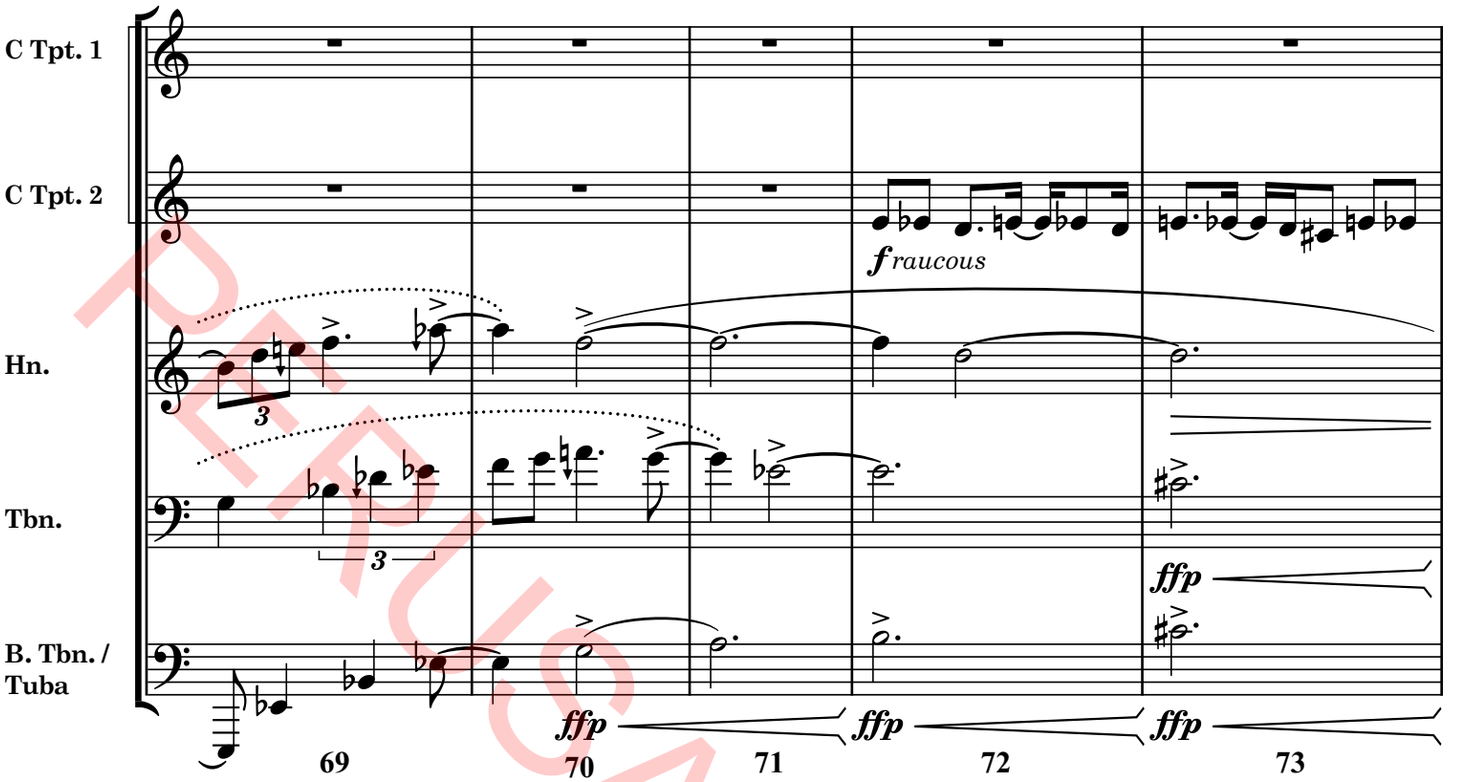

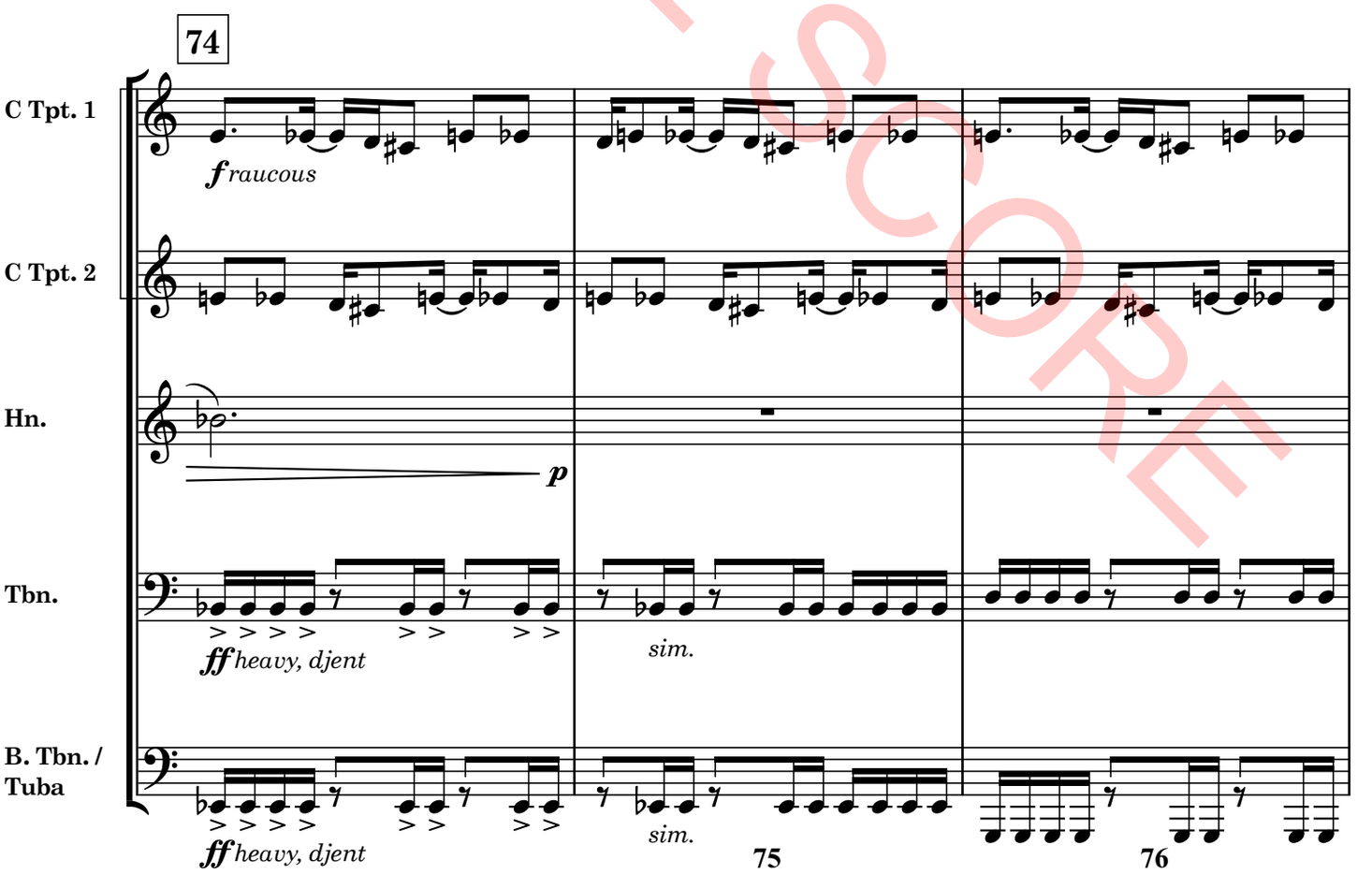

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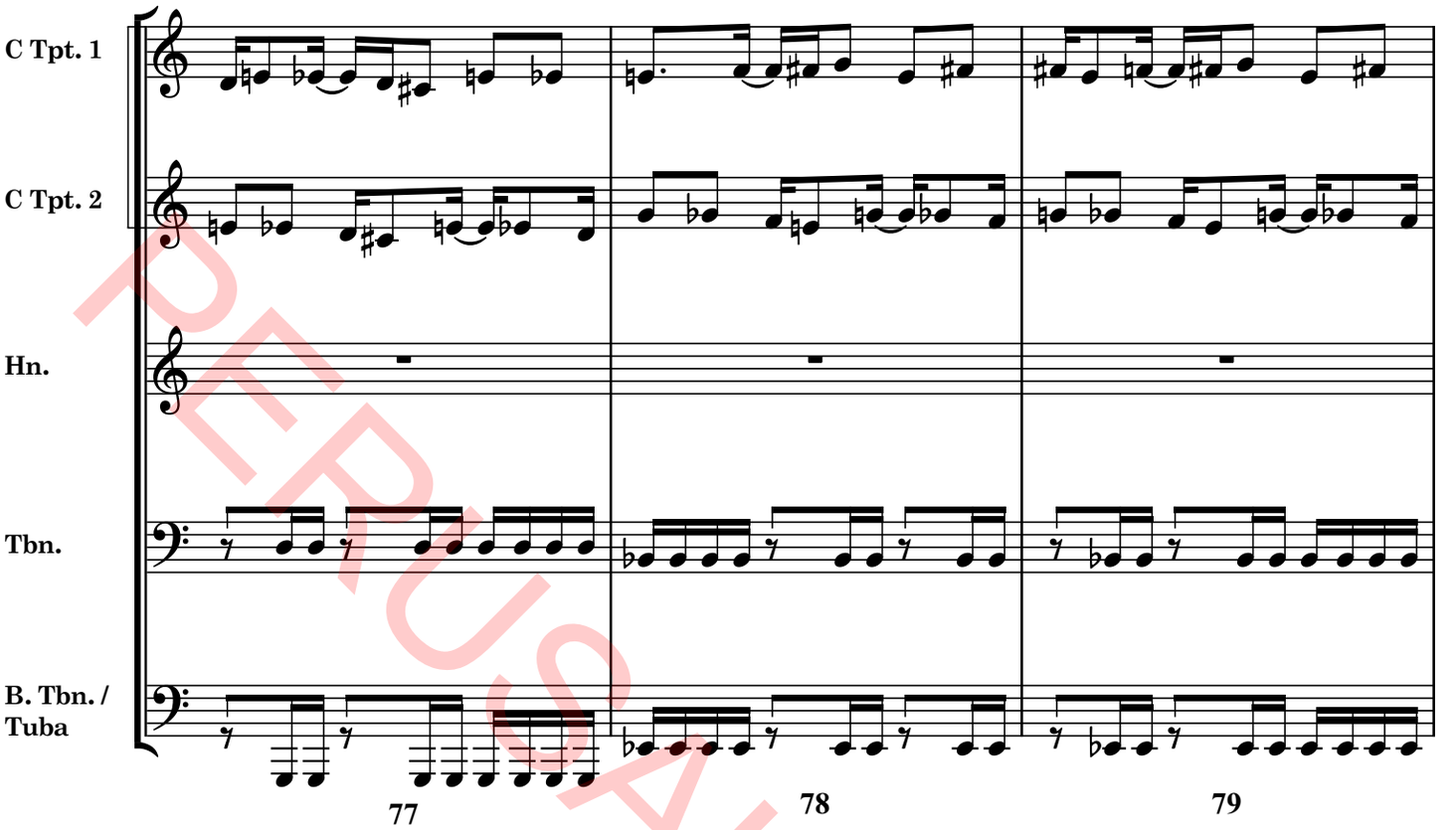

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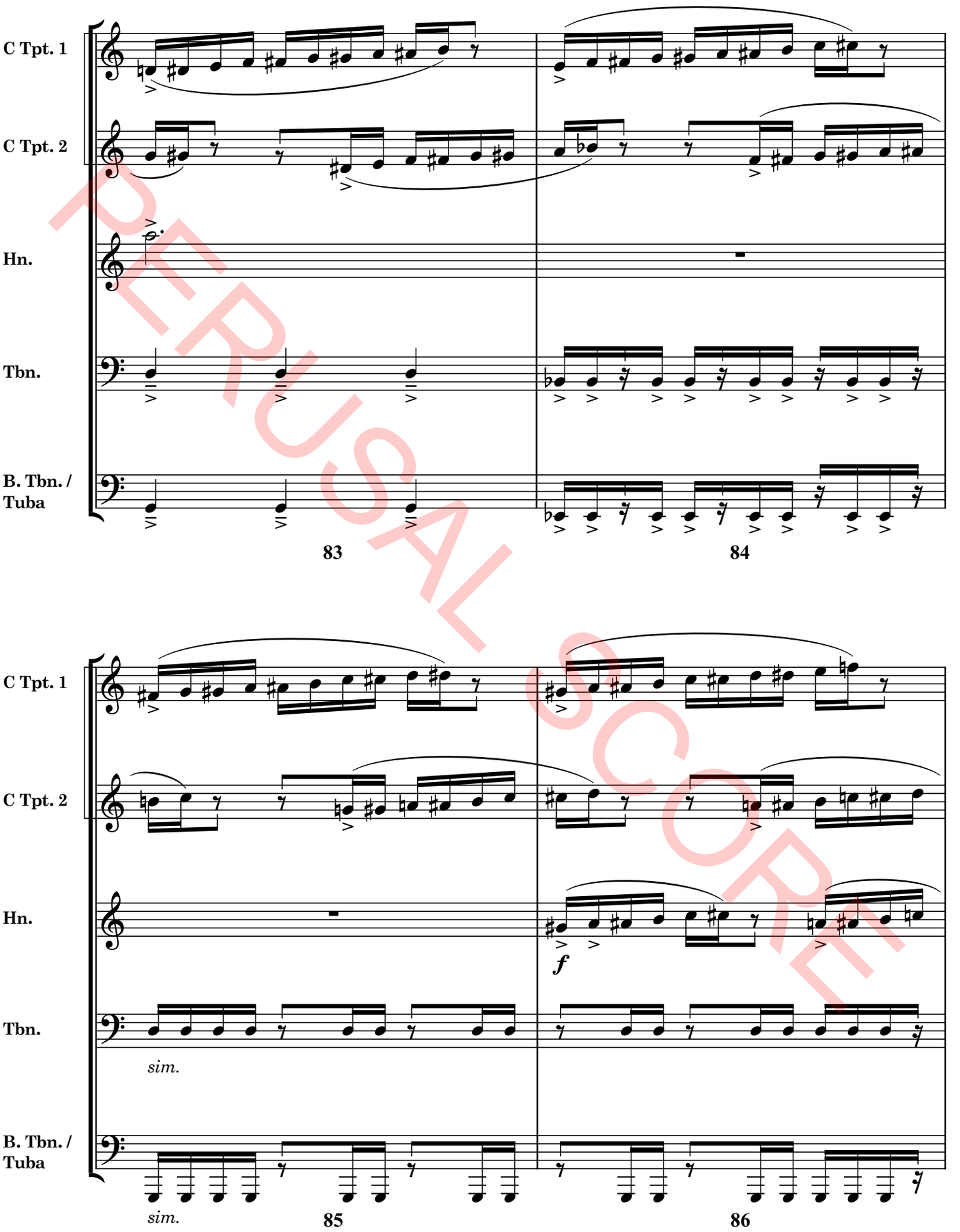

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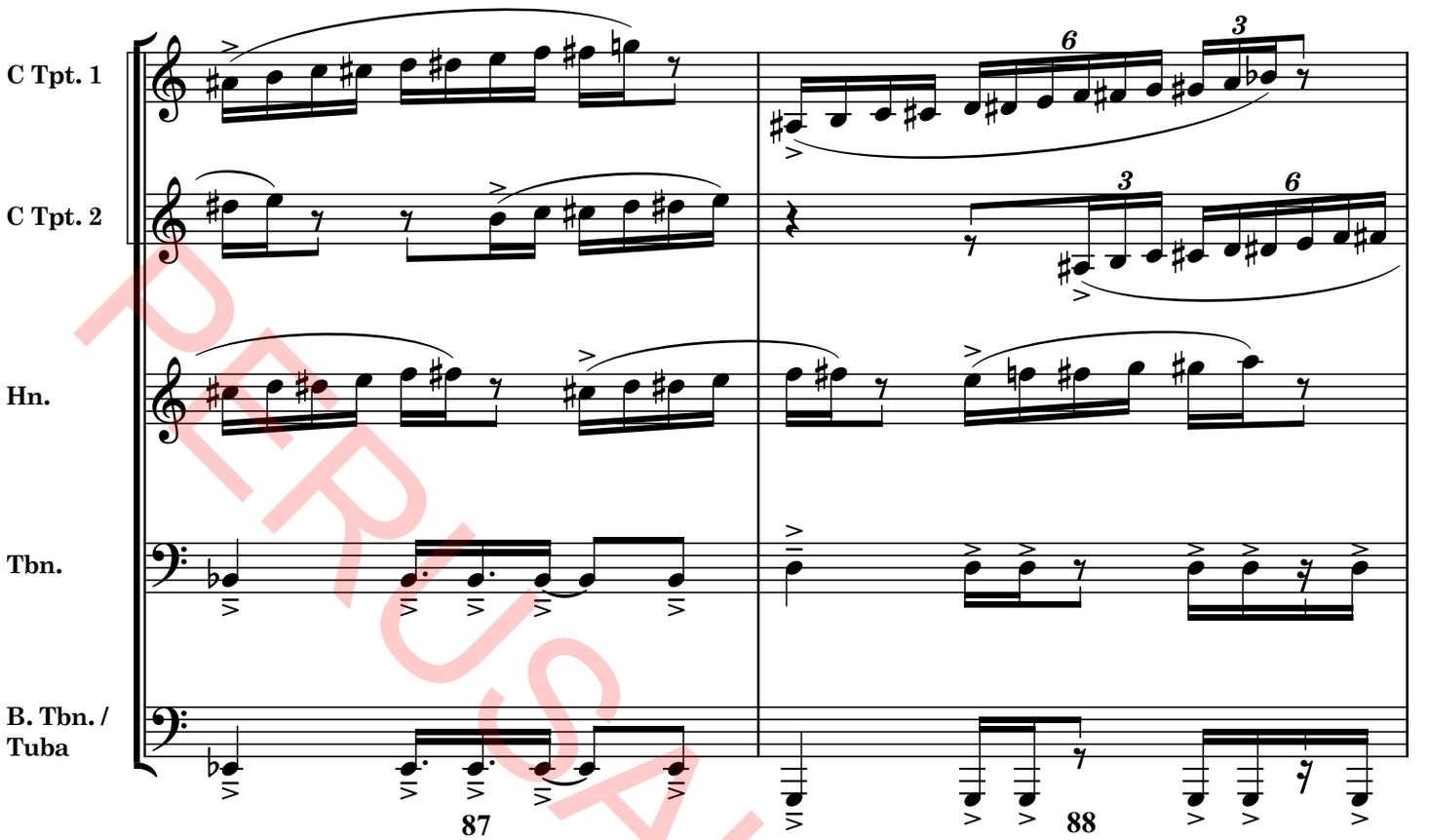

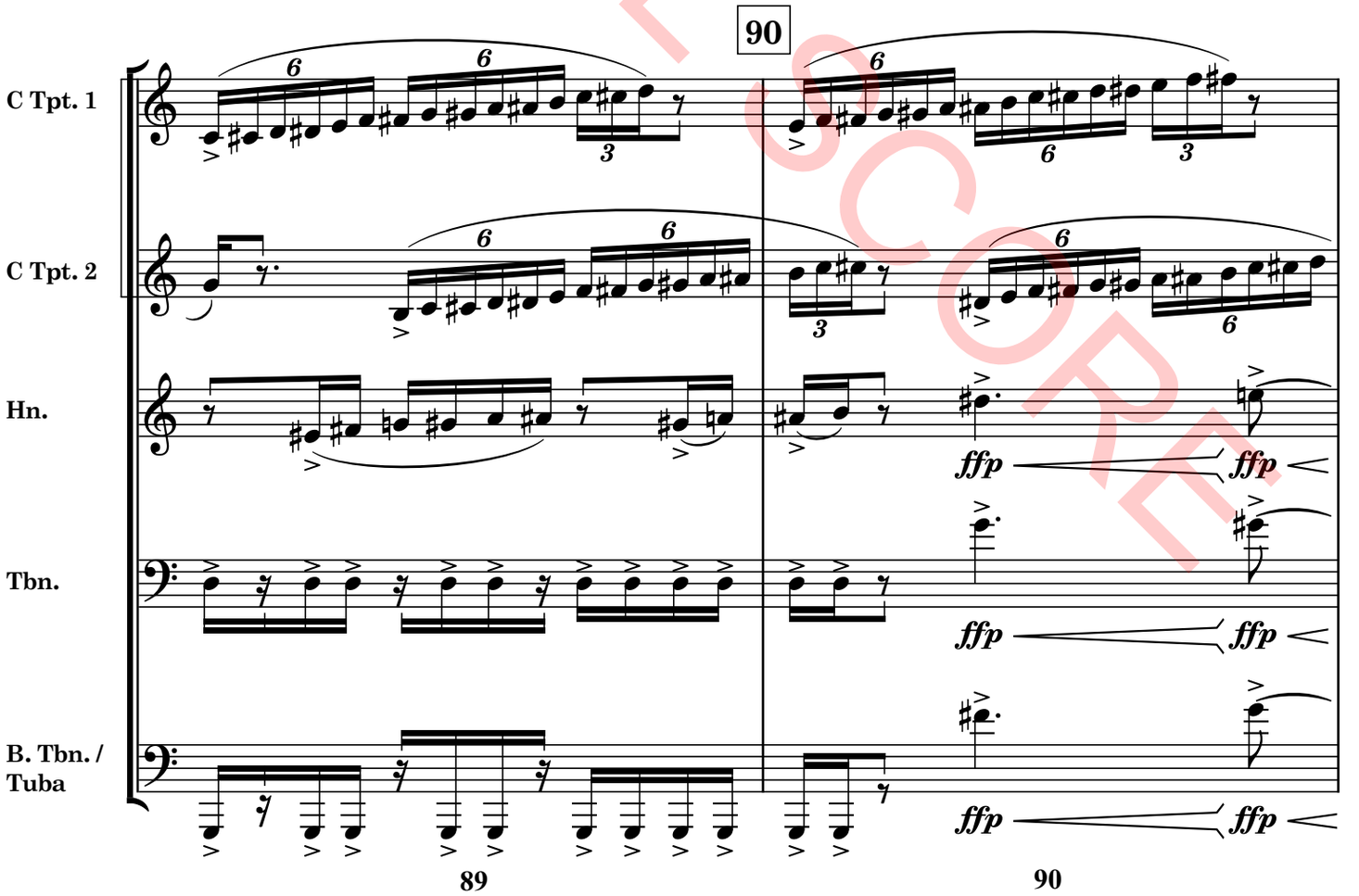

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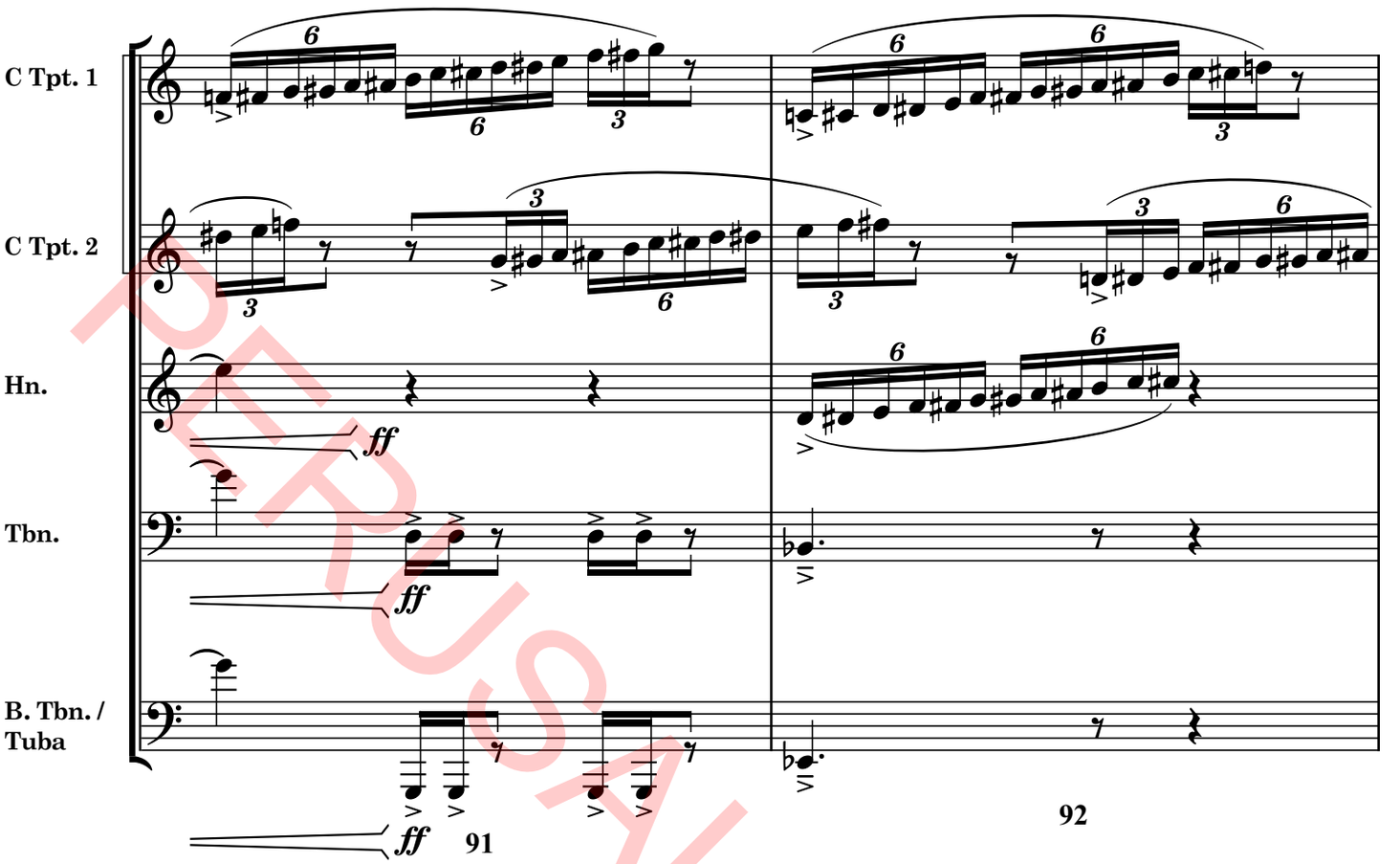

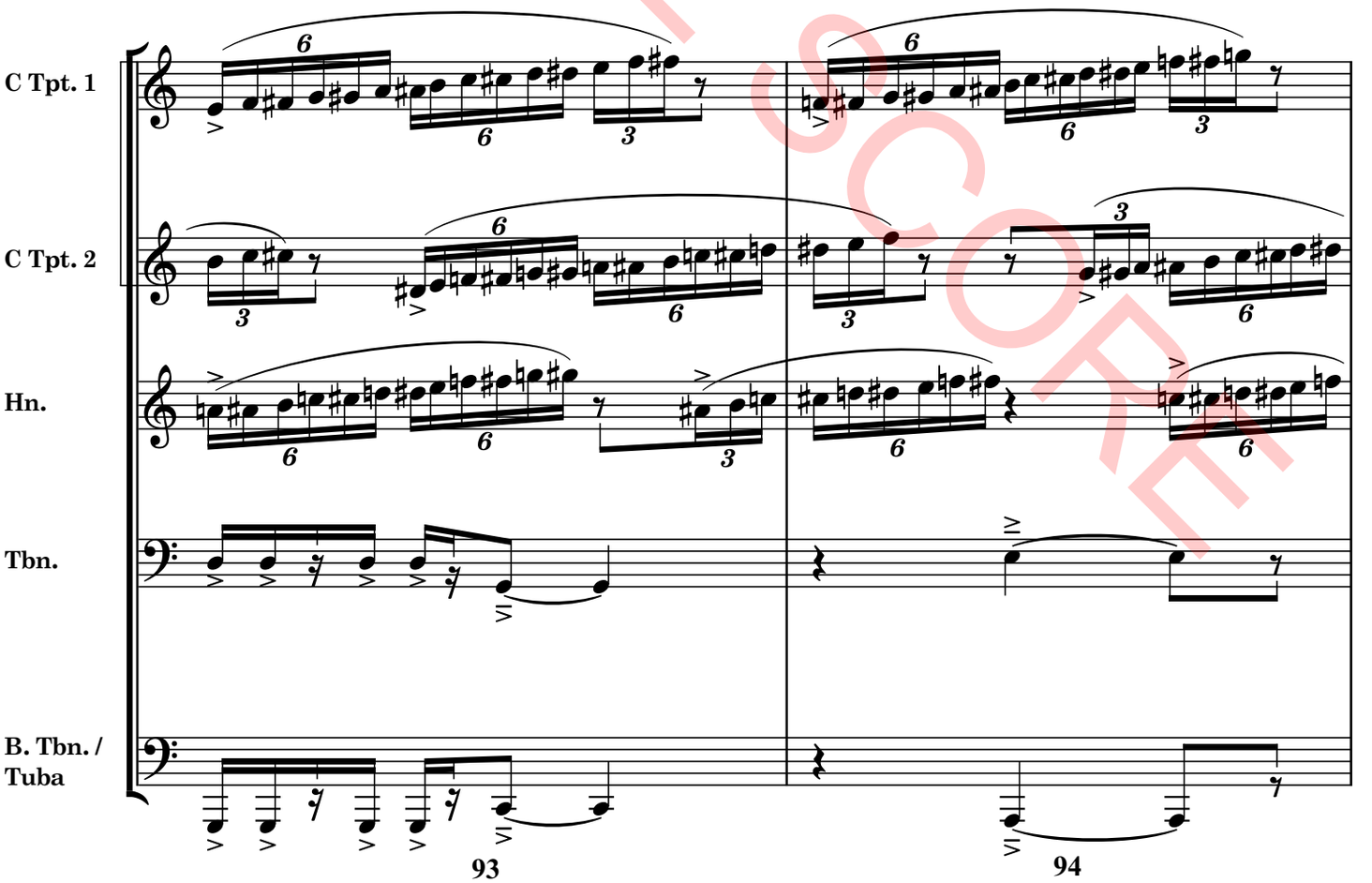

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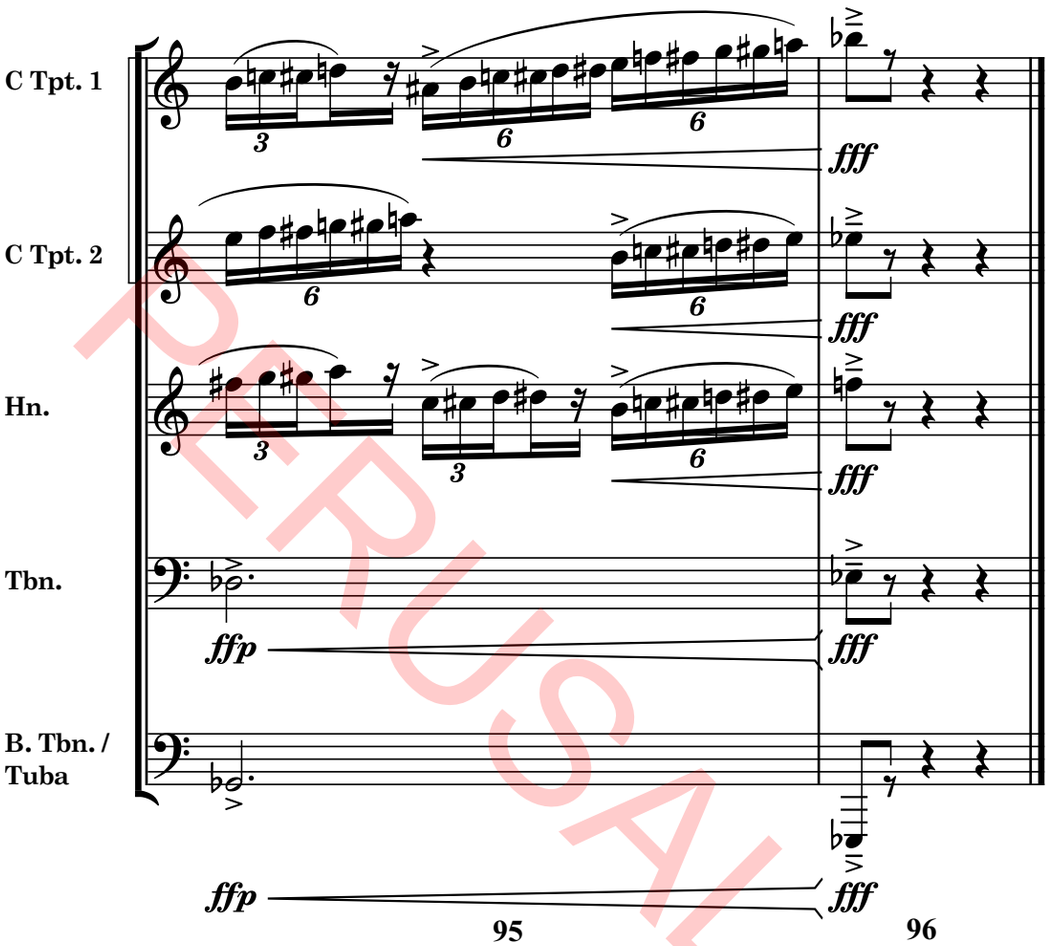

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