# Lament of the Lusignans

Peter Gilbert

# Lament of the Lusignans

*transcribed from traditional Janusian performance by* Ian Stewart Winterbury
*year of origin unknown*
*prepared for performance by* Peter Gilbert

Clarinet in Bb

Violin

Viola

Cello

Piano

© 2010

http://petergilbert

Perusal copy

# Lament of the Lusignans

## Preface

## I

First, I should say that I am not a musicological scholar, nor a scholar of any kind, so it is with humility that I come forward with a dramatic, if admittedly minor, addition to the history of musicology. But it arrives through no great effort on my part, however. The credit goes to an unknown Englishman, calling himself Ian Stewart Winterbury, who had been exiled from the island of his birth only to find refuge with a friend from the musical days of his youth, notable composer Henry Hugo Pierson. Pierson was an English ex-patriot in Leipzig, Germany and it was through Pierson that he made contact with the great pianist Ignaz Moscheles, head of the conservatory in Leipzig. In 1873, now as a friend of Moscheles' illustrious family, Winterbury gained the confidence of a five-year old Jelka Rosen, a precocious and unusually artistically sensitive child. Winterbury had finally found in the five-year old from Belgrade, a receptive audience to his somewhat unbelievable rants about her birthplace. He secretly gave her the totality of his papers and soon after disappeared. His disappearance coincides, perhaps not coincidently with the passing of his friend and landlord, the aforementioned Henry Pierson, in 1873 and beyond that date I can find no further records of the so-called Winterbury's existence or lack thereof.

The young Jelka Rosen would grow up to a competent painter in Paris and the wife of another composer, Frederick Delius. But she apparently lost faith in Winterbury's tales because she let his voluminous scratchings pass on with other family documents in total disregard and anonymity. As his documents were passed down through generations as heirlooms to lesser-known relatives they became no more than dusty old relics they devoid of meaning. And so, by simply marrying into a modestly connected German family I unwittingly positioned myself to become Winterbury's heir.

But upon receipt of Winterbury's volume of papers, I did what no one else had yet done: I actually read them stem to stern. And I believed what perhaps none, other than a young Jelka Rosen, had ever believed: that Winterbury was neither a madman nor a consummate liar. I believe to this day that he was, in fact, a Columbus of musical scholarship.

Ian Stewart Winterbury, as he would later name himself, graduated Trinity College (under a name his papers do not contain) as a talented musician and composer, but he soon abandoned a musical career after his rather radical compositions were rejected, sparingly performed and never published. He started life over as a scholar of the Ottoman Empire and became interested (in his own morbid way) in the extinctions of different cultural populations. The remarkable story of one such group that he spent 12 arduous years uncovering, would change the course of his life.

Personal Copy

## II

In 1458 John the Second of the Lusignan Dynasty, King of Cyprus and Armenia, and son of the great King Janus, died without a legitimate male heir. His 22-year-old daughter Charlotte ascended despite whisperings that shortly before his death, the deceased king had decided to make his illegitimate son, James, his heir instead. James pleaded his case to the more powerful Sultan of Egypt and returned to Cyprus's shores with 80 armed Egyptian galleys behind him. A majority of the populace took James's side and Charlotte and the royal family were blockaded into the castle for three long years. Eventually Charlotte fled, deposed from her throne, and made her way in exile to Rome, where she died under the protection of the Pope.

This much, at least, is commonly known to history. What Winterbury did was to follow the discredited loyalists, who had been blockaded with Queen Charlotte, as they left Cyprus in shame. These outcast Cypriots identified themselves as Janusians, in honor of Charlotte's grandfather, Janus, who's reign was, for them, a Golden Age of culture. It was particularly through their music that they felt their bonds to the past could continue on unbroken. So as they made their way west, through the Ottoman Empire, misunderstood and persecuted by other sects, they clung to their musical heritage. Ongoing strife with their communities led them from being insular to increasingly secretive over the years. Winterbury doggedly followed the Janusians along what was left of an elusive historical trail. Repeated references to "the strange music of the lost tribe" in Albania preoccupied him for a time, but only real success he had was following a group of descendents that settled in Belgrade in the early 1600s, by which time they had become a completely secret society. Winterbury was able to deduce that their clan had literally gone underground in that their musical evenings would be held in the deeply dug basements of the Čubura district so as to not be heard.

It was in this way that a small Cypriotic diaspora perpetuated their musical culture into the 1800s (even during the transition into Serbian independence): with a code of silence the masons would have envied. Incredibly, Winterbury eventually discovered to his utter disbelief, that the ritualistic concerts were still going on in clandestine burrows. Winterbury, who as you remember had been a highly gifted (if misunderstood) musician himself, developed a kind of mania for this cult of Janus and would not be kept from his goal of penetrating their ranks. Sometime in the 1850s, after years of persistence, he obtained entrance into their hallowed halls and was finally able to hear the music that had inspired his exhaustive efforts.

Winterbury was enthralled. He discovered that their art had developed almost in complete isolation from the rest of the Western musical world. He would have had no access to the original codex of music from King Janus's court and thus could not have seen the music he heard as the offspring of that vibrant 15$^{th}$ century polyphony. But he was sensitive to the unique nature of what was before him. They had developed, over centuries in hiding, a highly visual musical theater that we would probably call ballet, but which Winterbury described as a form of opera, though it was without singing as such. He speculated that the element of underground secrecy kept their musical theater away from exuberant vocal practice the same way that it prohibited fortissmo climaxes. Indeed, the music that Winterbury heard was all kept within a rather subdued dynamic for obvious reasons.

Proof Copy

Winterbury undertook study of their musical tradition. Several things, such as the Janusian sense of time and rhythm, were unfamiliar to him. The music was all performed from memory and any written form was strictly forbidden, so it was in complete secret that he, and at some point having mastered the more novel aspects of their tradition, began to notate the great heretofore unwritten musical texts in Western form.

Winterbury was clearly a talent, as the transcriptions he began were clearly both a mammoth undertaking and a work of consummately skilled ears. As their music was frequently very unlike Western music in many respects, he was forced to append his standard notation with descriptive information about the mode and style of performance. His efforts along these lines are painstaking, including various affective gestures typical of their style and occasional pitches that are notated as "detuned". Accounting for the limitations of his given time and circumstance, it seems sure that his rendition is as faithful as humanly possible.

He was, alas, ultimately only able to complete work on a small amount of Janusian music. Though he took the precaution to never write a note while in view of others, these efforts were eventually uncovered and he was banished from Janusian society. It was impossible to regain their confidence, and worse, he quickly realized that his very life was in danger. He returned to England with tales of his findings only to be rejected as a charlatan. He fled the country, assumed the name Ian Stewart Winterbury, and went on to the sullen retirement in Germany that I have already described. My own feeling is that he left Leipzig in 1873 to return to the streets of Belgrade once more, where perhaps the Janusians got eventual justice for his treacherous trespass. But it could also be that such justice had already travelled to Germany to find him.

I can only now assume that that the ravages of two World Wars and the disastrous events of Milosevic era have finally brought an end to this Lost World of music. So it has fallen to me, now, to rescue the efforts of Winterbury to bring this remarkable lost musical tradition to light.

## III

I present to you my best effort to translate some of Winterbury's work into a performable form, played on modern instruments. This piece is a brief excerpt from the evening-length work *Charlotte of Lusignan*. According to Winterbury, this particular opera (of unknown authorship, as was their tradition) was renowned for its innovations to the Janusian tradition. The music of *Charlotte* apparently introduced the idea of emancipating melody from the ensemble's central pulse. Different instruments play known tunes (or inventions based upon fragments of known tunes) simultaneously at different speeds and with free timing, each player in an effort to out-emote the others. This produces the parallel, rhythmically asynchronous melodic lines and striking dissonances that eventually became characteristic of what Winterbury's companions called "modern" Janusian music. It is only supposition on my part, but one can easily imagine that the striking occurrences of the "secundus" must have felt extraordinarily emotive at the time this music was first conceived. It is also likely that the emphasis on individualistic linear expressiveness led to the slowing down of the tunes to an elastic, elongated sense of time. While being a forerunner of Janusian Modernism, *Charlotte of Lusignan* retains characteristics of traditional Janusian music, most noticeably in the cadences, which retain their medieval flavor.

Perusal Copy

This Lament is one of the more famous "arias" in Janusian music and as such was performed in many forms. In this version, the five part ensemble was comprised of what Winterbury described as, "a melancholy reed instrument sounding much like a clarinet, three handheld instruments similar to our modern string instruments (though tuned slightly higher), and a large metallic instrument played by up to four people with multiple hammers that, through its peculiar boat-like resonating structure, could sustain pitches that were not dampened by hand." I have taken the liberty of using a prepared piano to efficiently reproduce the part of that alluringly suggestive percussive instrument unknown to us. I have also transposed the original down three semitones to better suit the nature of our string instruments, given that such a scordattura retuning of the strings presents several difficulties.

It is left, then, only to describe the theatrical circumstances for this particular musical excerpt. Like much Janusian 'opera', the storyline is essentially historical. It takes place in the blockaded castle of Queen Charlotte. A complex plot weaves together political intrigue and deadly affairs of passion. It also, inaccurately, depicts the poisoning of Charlotte's first husband and the death of her infant son as having happened during this period. In what Winterbury refers to as the third act, the Queen suffers under tremendous pressure from her mother, guilt for her husband's death, fear for her unborn child and anger over her half-brother's treachery. The sorrow of her voice is mirrored and echoed in the music by her handmaidens, who surround and comfort her. It is unclear from his notes whether any one instrument is supposed to signify Charlotte specifically, but it is my feeling that this is likely not the case, and that each instrument is depicting both her suffering and the comforting words

- Peter Gilbert
Eberstadt, Germany. 2010

Perusal Copy

## Notes for performance

Ian Stewart Winterbury's sketches include several original methods of annotation that I have attempted to faithfully inscribe. The most unfamiliar aspect of this score regards the timing and rhythm. As Winterbury describes it, Janusian music has very slow beats (for this piece he marks them at 30 per minute) and has no metric structure. The score that follows uses hashmarks to indicate each beat, within which the music's rhythms are not specifically fixed. Winterbury has also marked occasional barlines, which I have included in the score as well, though is not clear whether they were related to an aspect of Janusian performance or whether Winterbury used them only for himself to approximate a metric structure. Measure numbers as well as beat numbers ( "/2" for the second beat, for example)

### Clarinet, Violin, Viola, Cello:

• Liberal use of portamento throughout is encouraged. From what I gather, Janusian musicians used it frequently for expressive transitions in soloistic melodic lines such as these.

• I would also encourage an "early music" approach to vibrato, by which I mean playing primarily without vibrato and using it occasionally as an accentuating devise. Slurs are Winterbury's originals and should be taken as indicating phrasing and not strict indications of either breathing or bowing.

• I have given a mark of *quasi sul pont.* to indicate what Winterbury calls a "thinning of tone". This should be near the bridge but not completely on.

### Piano:

• Left and Right hands function independent of one another for the most part.

• Crescendo and decrescendo markings are Winterbury's but I believe they function almost like phrase-markings.

### All Players:

• As alluded to in the Preface, the Lament has several tunes played with independent senses of timing. Each player should emphasize melody in her part and play her line soloistically throughout, though mindful of overall balance and shape.

• I believe that it is of great use to the performer to have all of the specificity, which Winterbury has marked down almost ethnographically, to grasp the musical style. However, I would offer that my understanding is that this "transcription" represents but one possible rendering of these melodic lines and the players in the tradition would likely improvise a good deal of the shaping and dynamic. I advise, therefore, that performers should feel free to experiment with spontaneous ornamentations, elastic timings, expressive intonations, and impulsive dynamics.

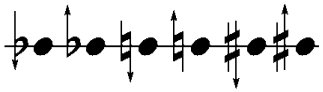
Perusal Copy

## Legend

 An increase in timbral intensity AND a slight raising of pitch. This kind of mark always indicates a timbral intensification, though the direction of the "pitch accent" may be up, down or one followed by the other, as indicated visually by the figure.

 A wavering in pitch, like a slower, slightly exaggerated vibrato. This occurs primarily as an element of decrescendos but sometimes also as an intensification of beating in minor seconds.

These are for the piano part and to be performed like typical keyboard rolls. Arrowheads indicate direction. If there is no arrowhead given, the roll should have a "circular" motion, with the outer pitches played before the inner pitches. The specific order can be improvised.



According to Winterbury, Janusian microtones varied (following expressive needs), generally deviating from the standard accidental by something between an eighth and a quarter-tone sharp or flat, as indicated by the arrow. Winterbury suggests they are almost more like an articulation marking than a strict indication of pitch.

***n*** (or "*niente*") indicates a dynamic just above inaudible (or more precisely, it should be very quiet with the kind of noisy sound quality that comes when ones plays too softly and the instrument doesn't quite respond.

Perusal Copy

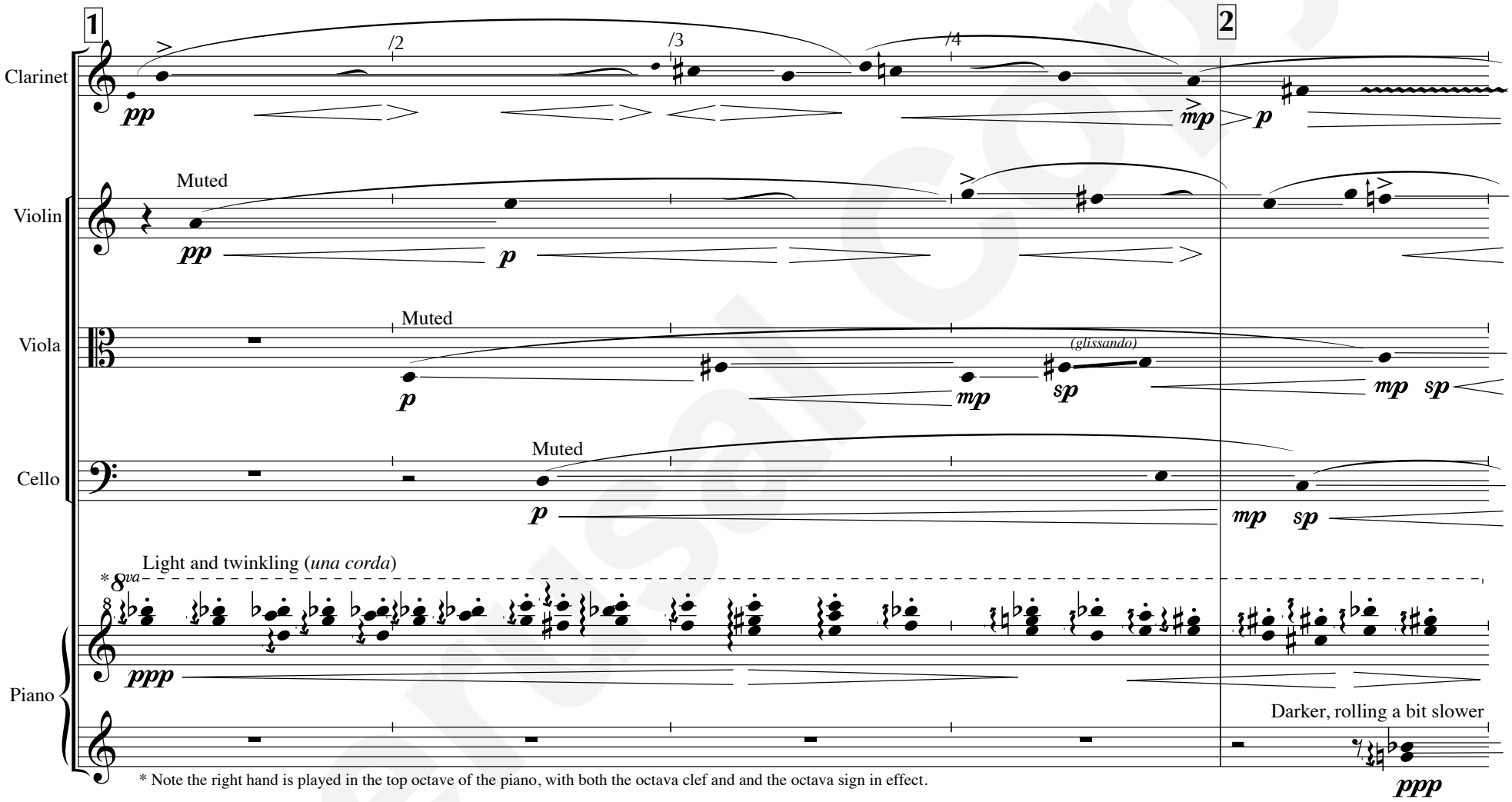
# Lament of the Lusignans

transcribed from Janusian performance by Ian Stewart Winterbury (c.1857-8)
prepared for performance by Peter Gilbert (2010)

Transposed Score

## Momentarily Ranging from Anguished to Consoling (*30* b.p.m.)

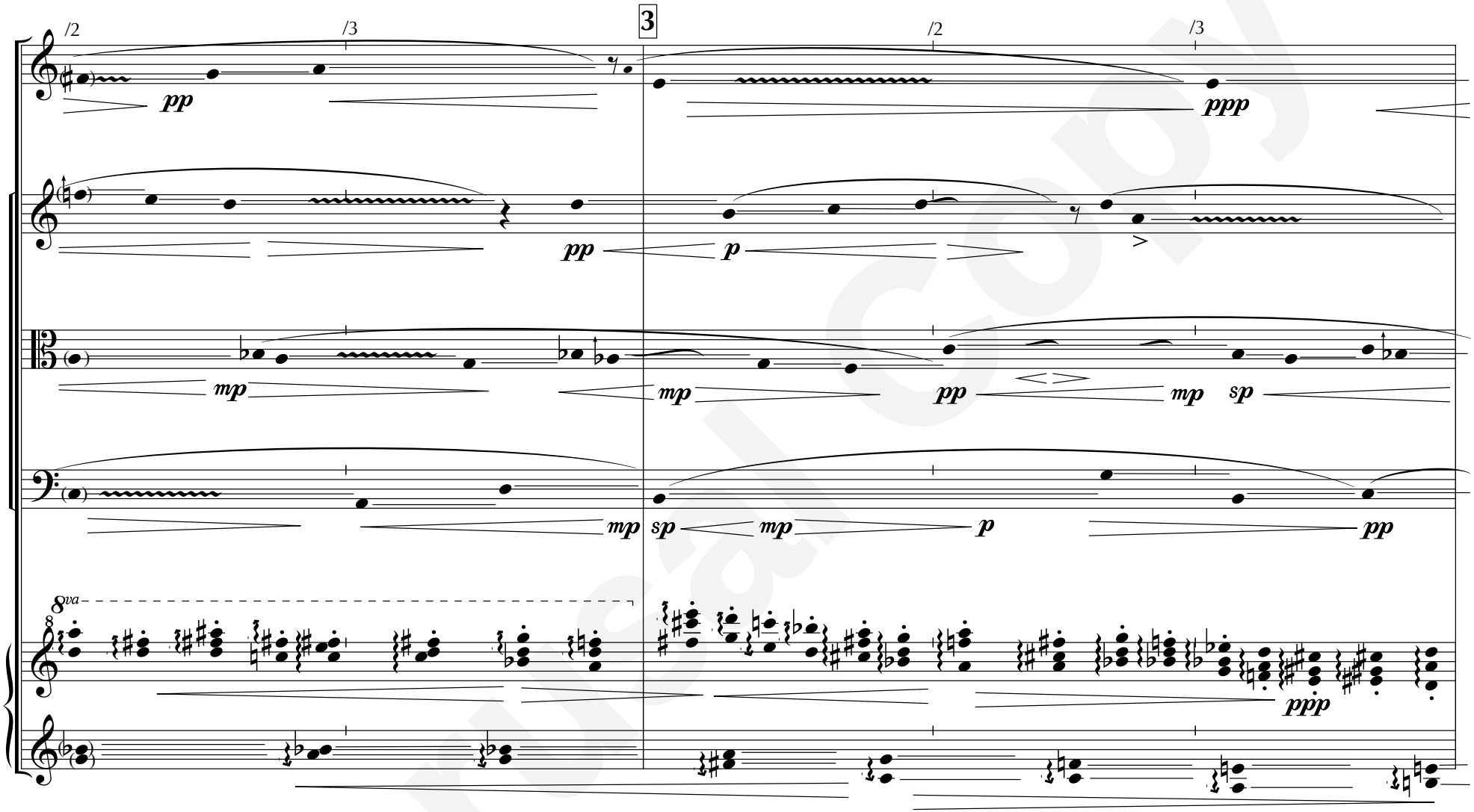
Affected, with a sense of spontaneous improvisation and independent line



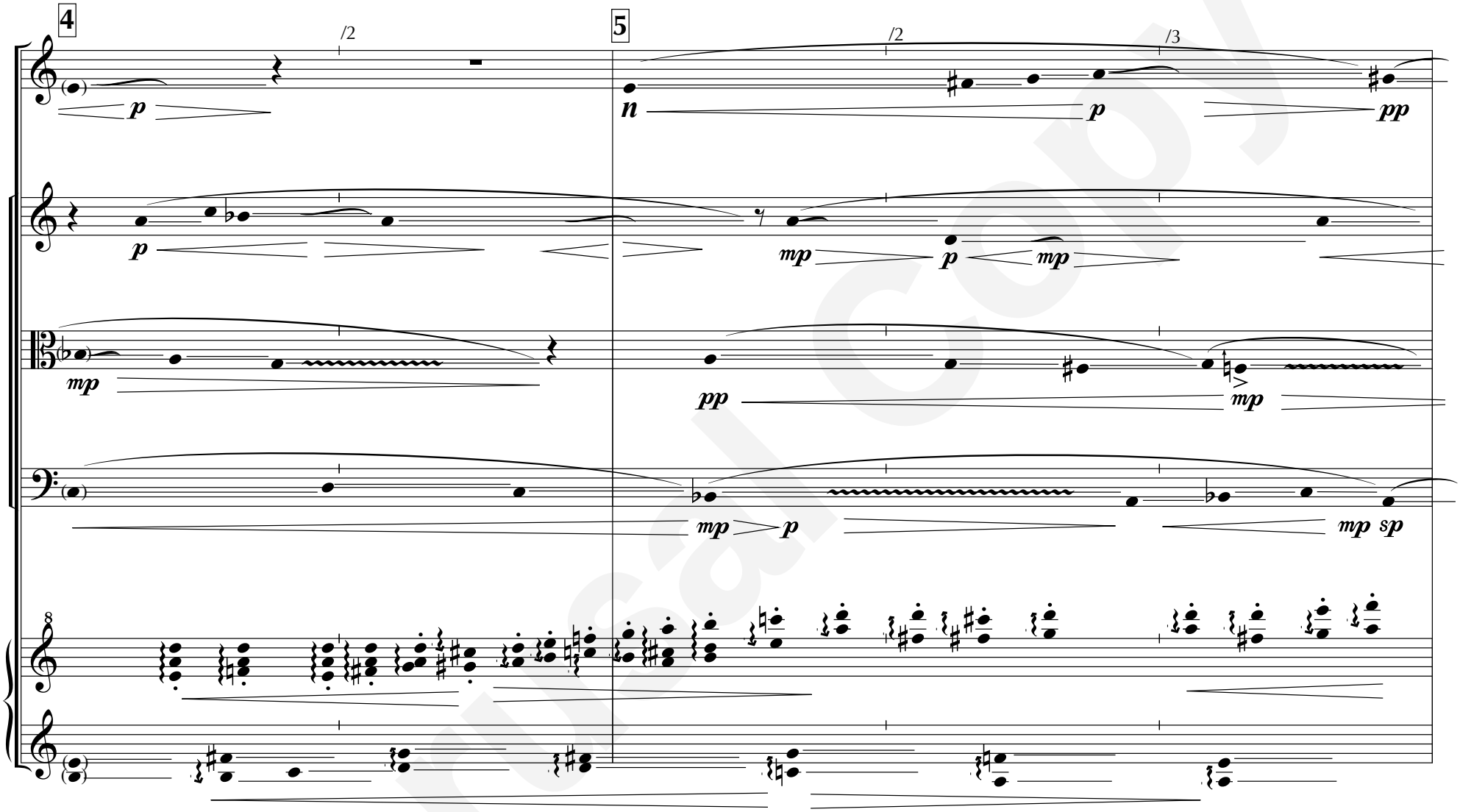

* Note the right hand is played in the top octave of the piano, with both the octava clef and and the octava sign in effect.

Perusal Copy

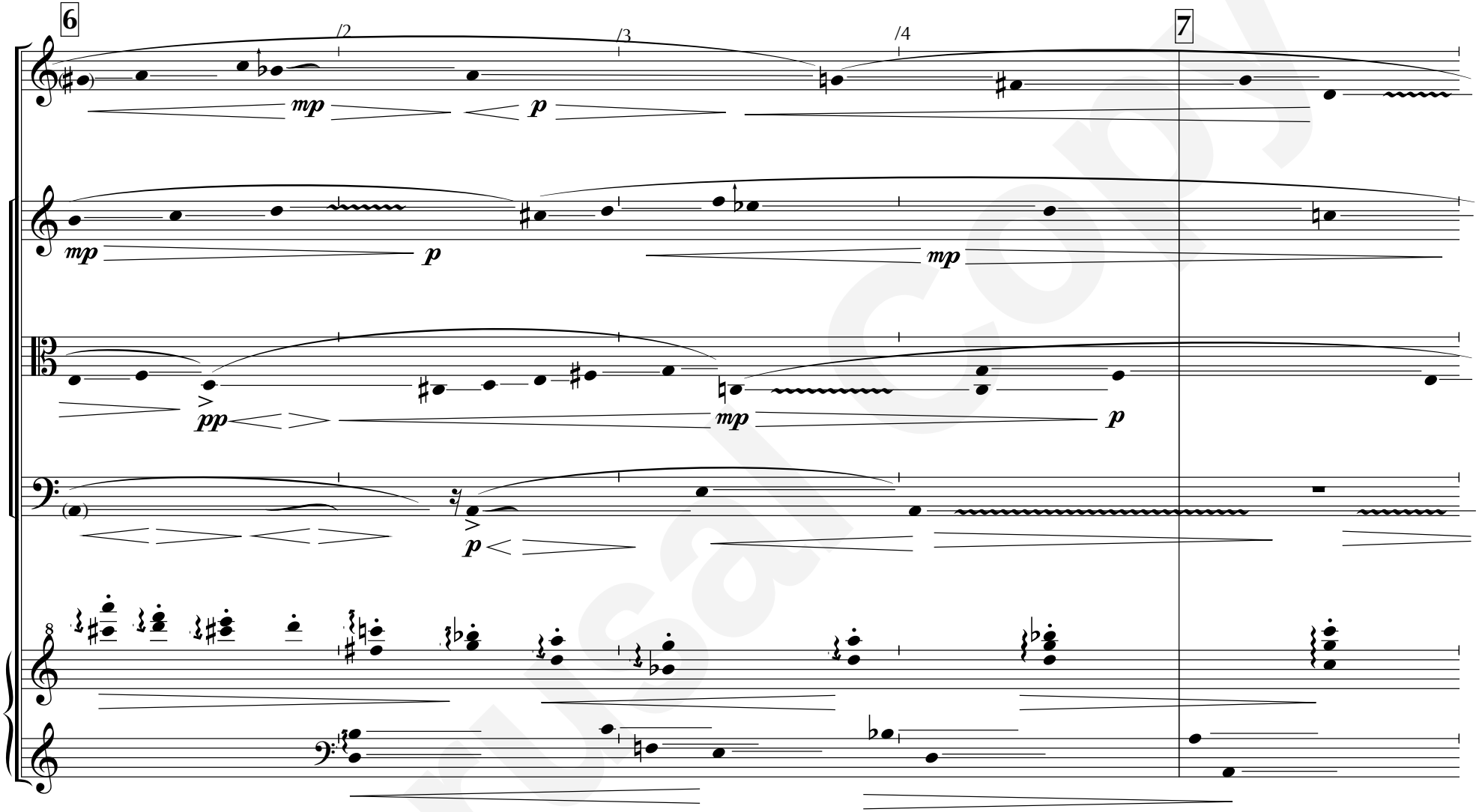
©2010



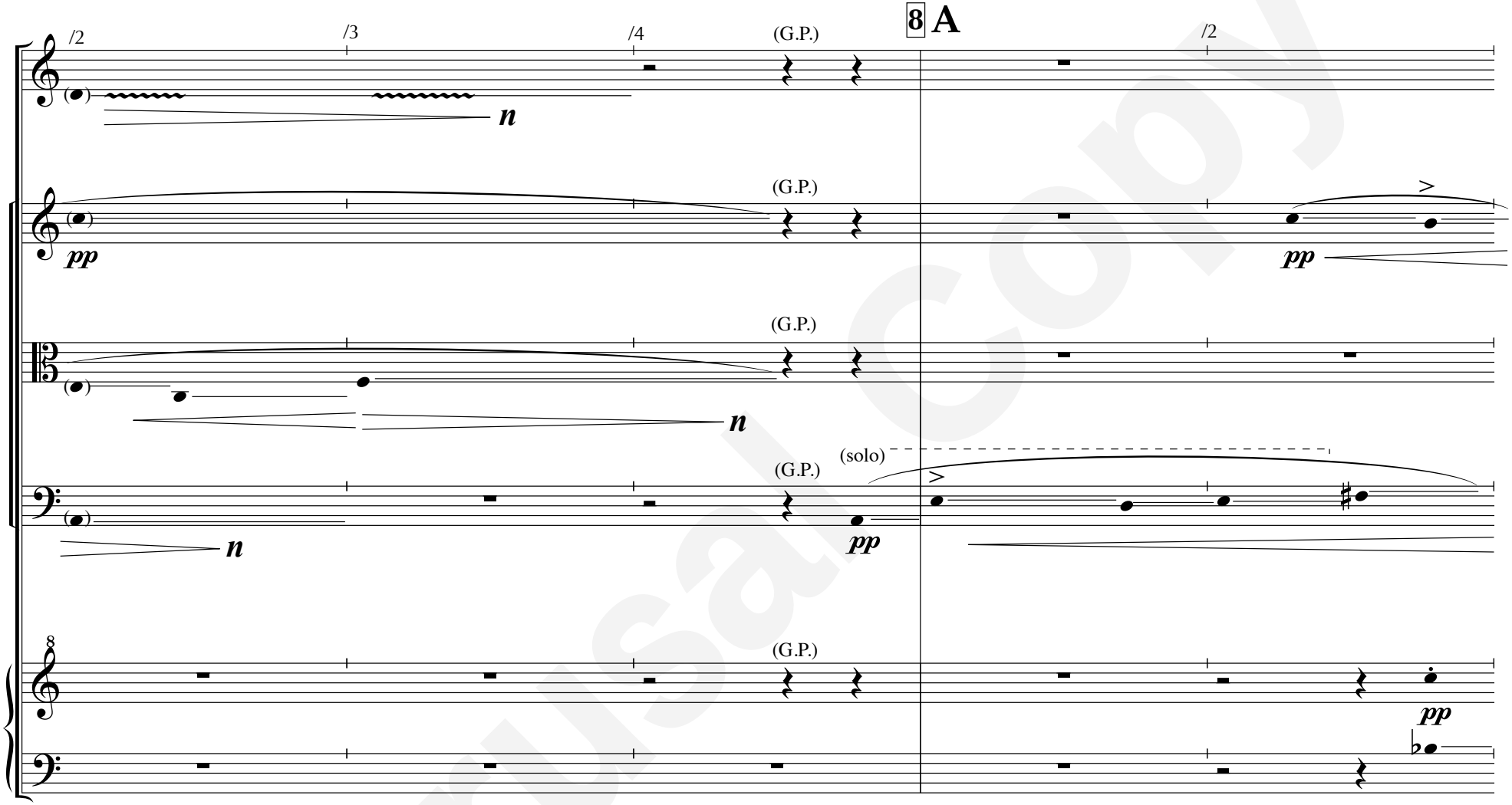

Personal Copy



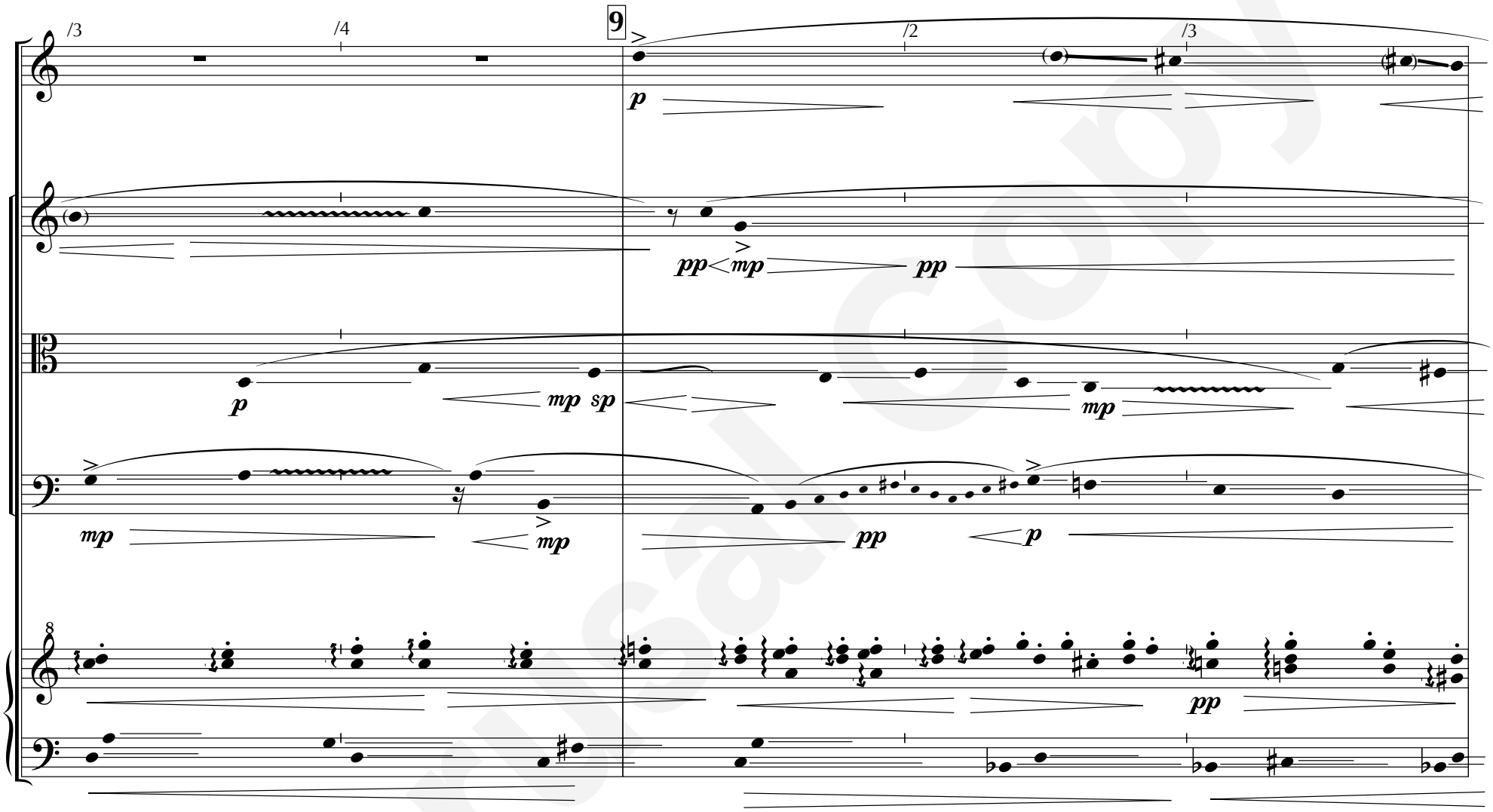

Perusal Copy



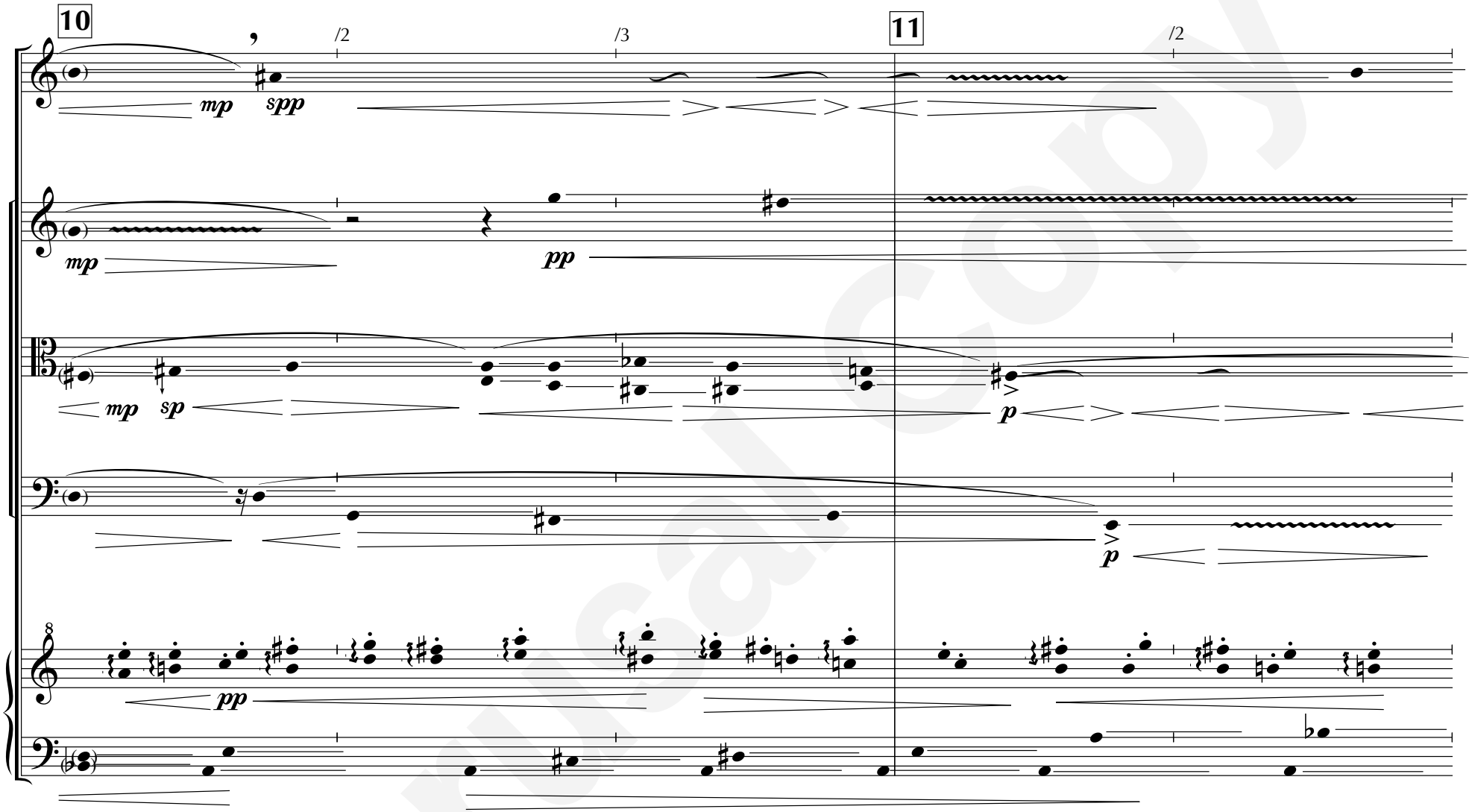

Perusal Copy



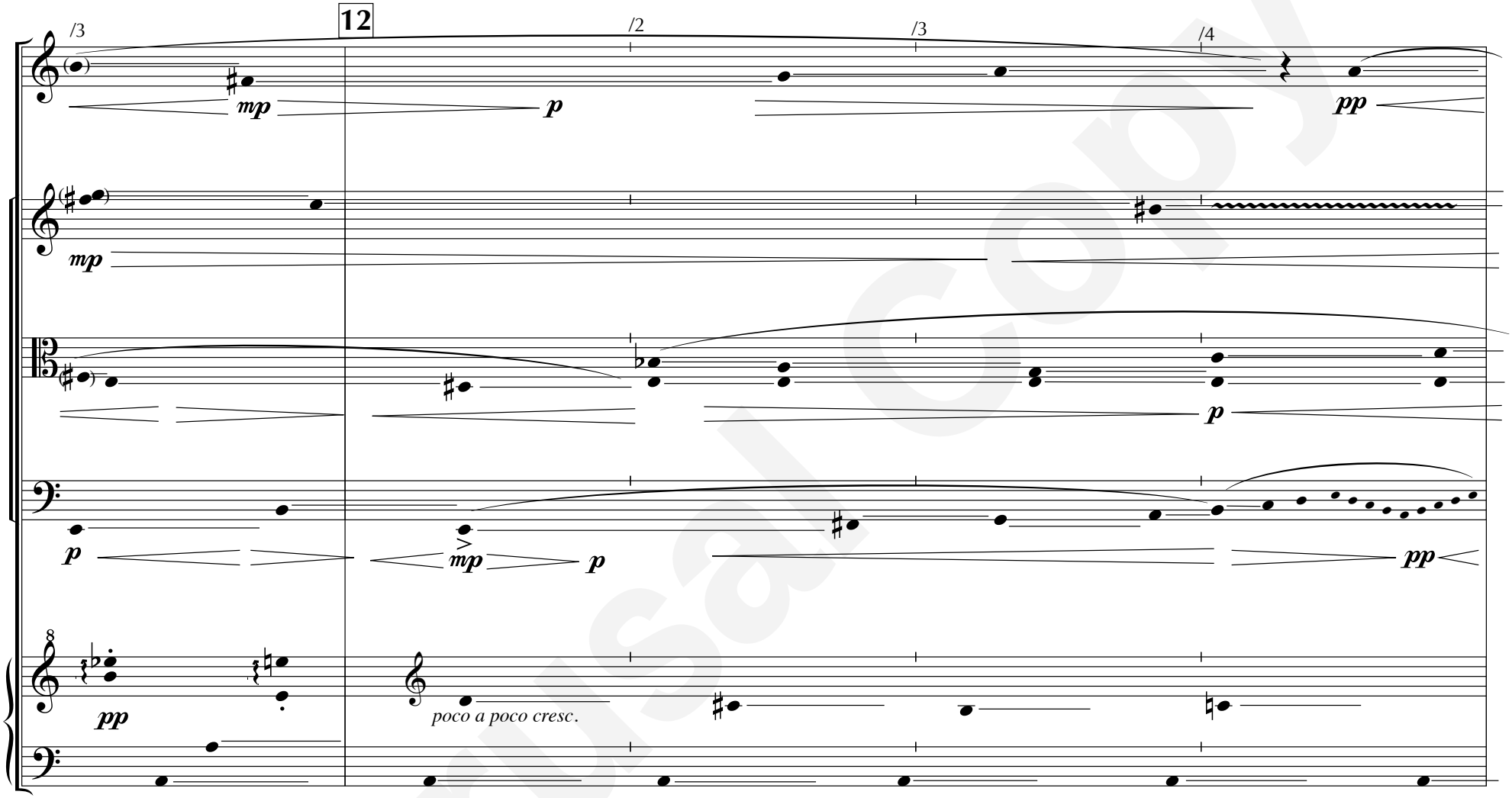

Perusal Copy



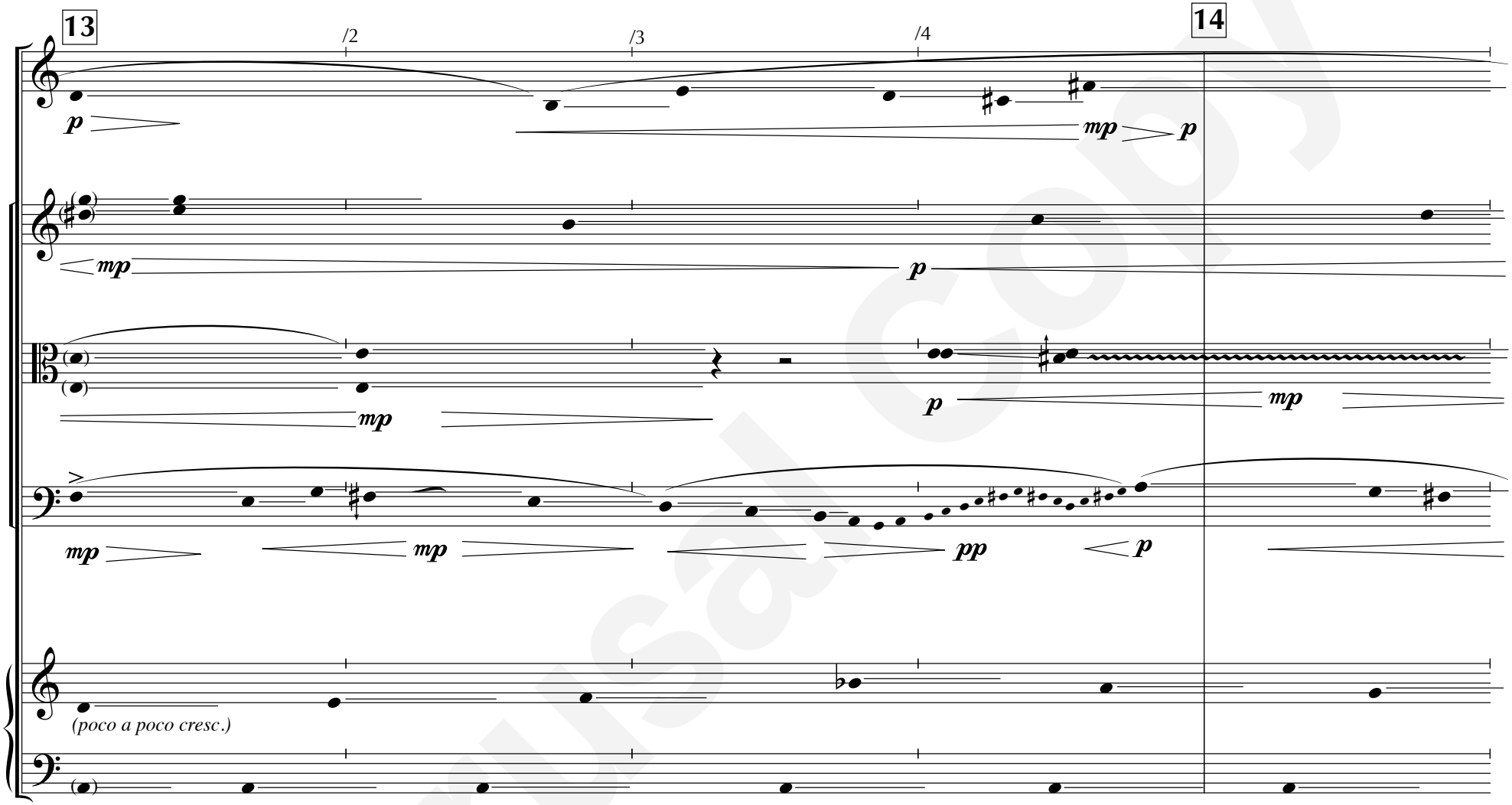

Perusal Copy



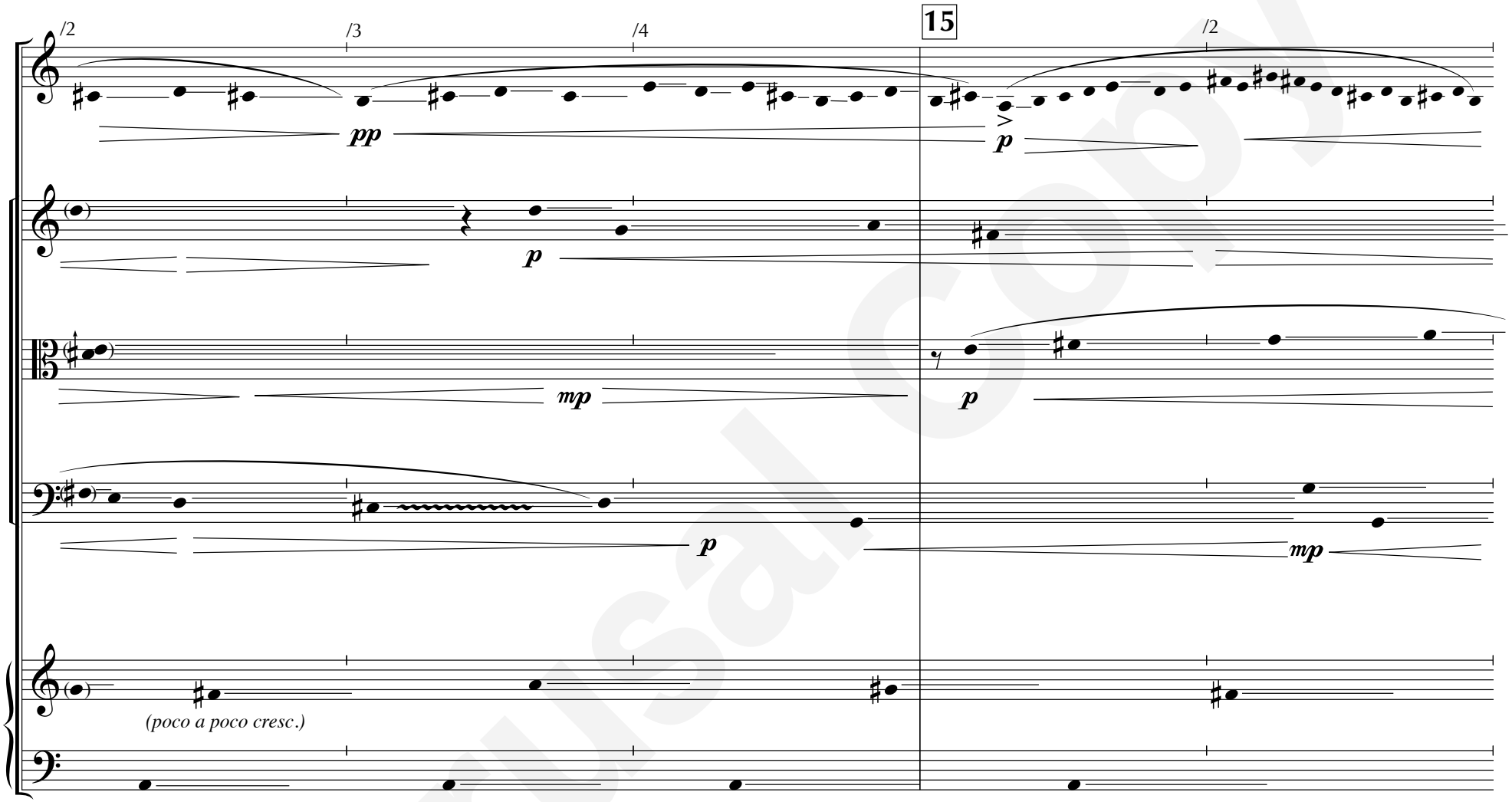

Perusal Copy



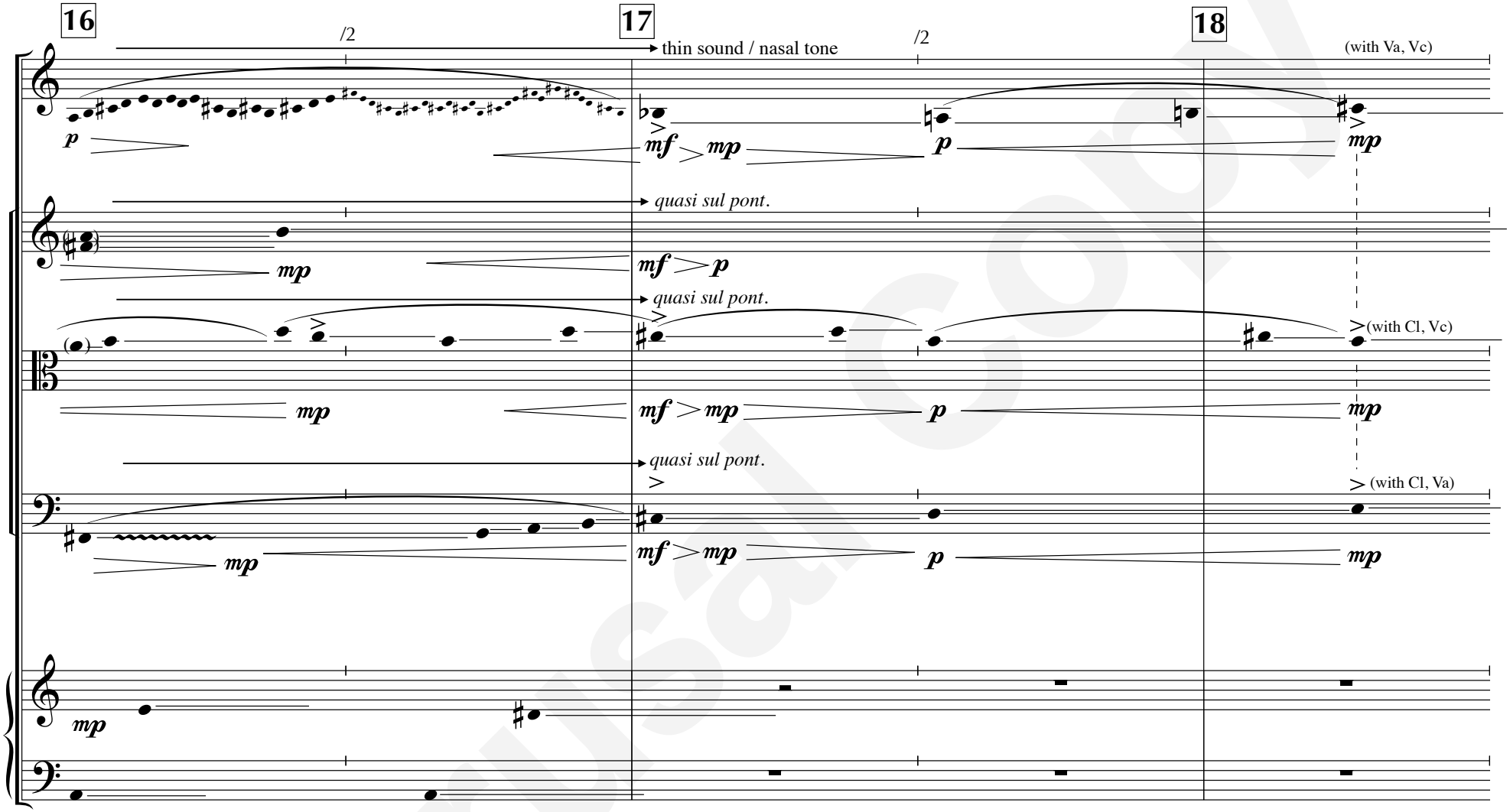

Perusal Copy



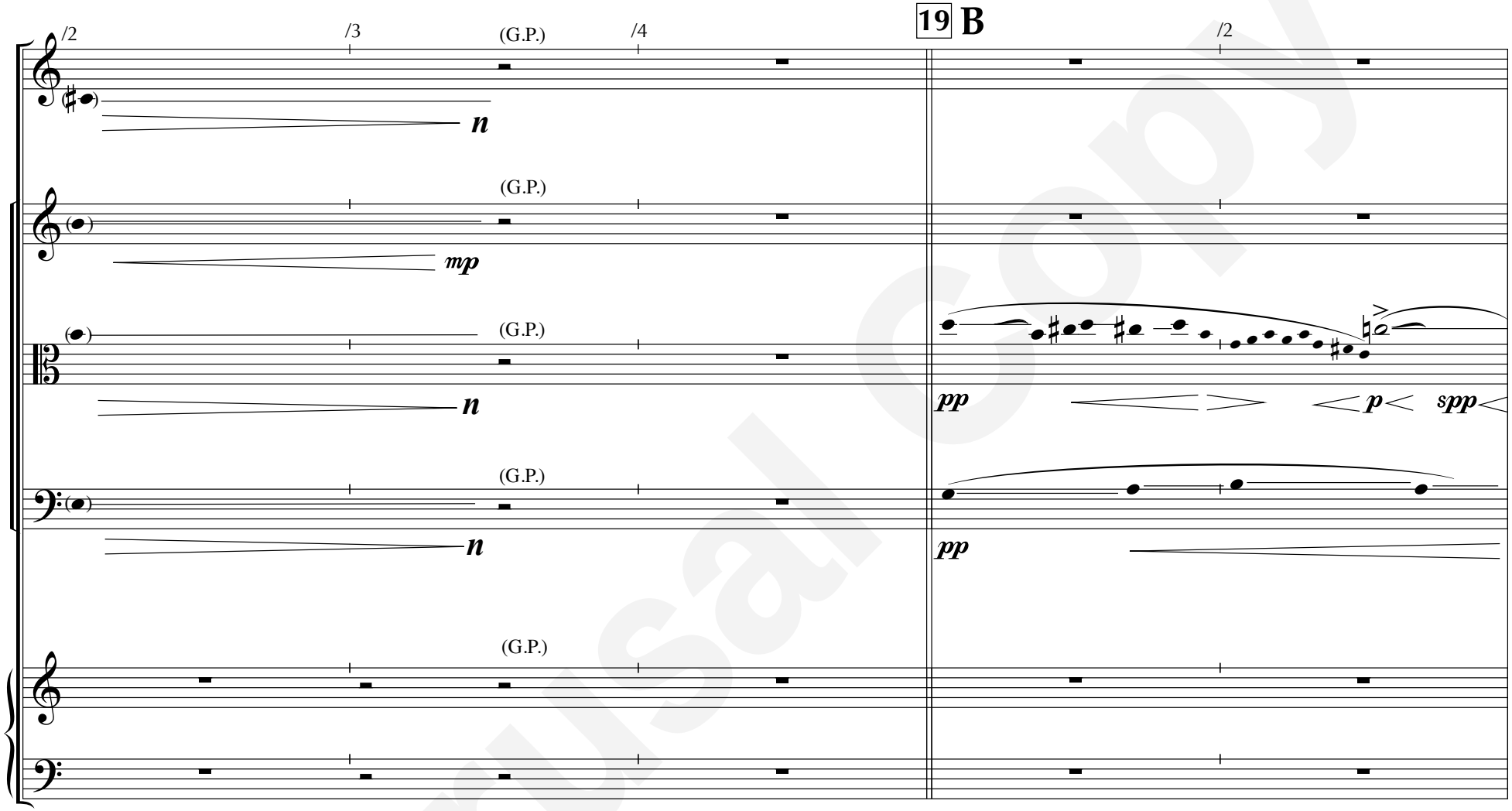

Perusal Copy



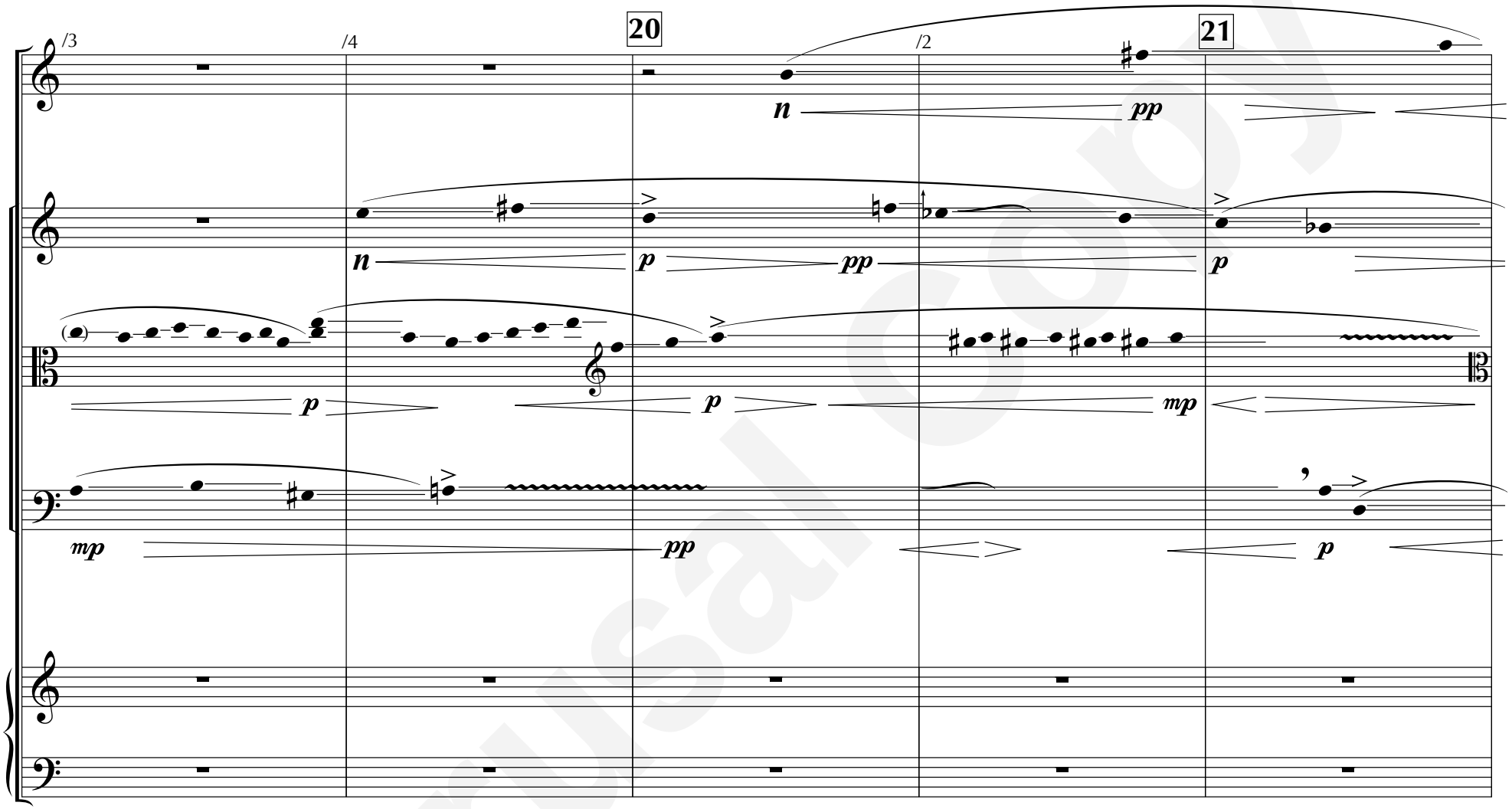

Perusal Copy



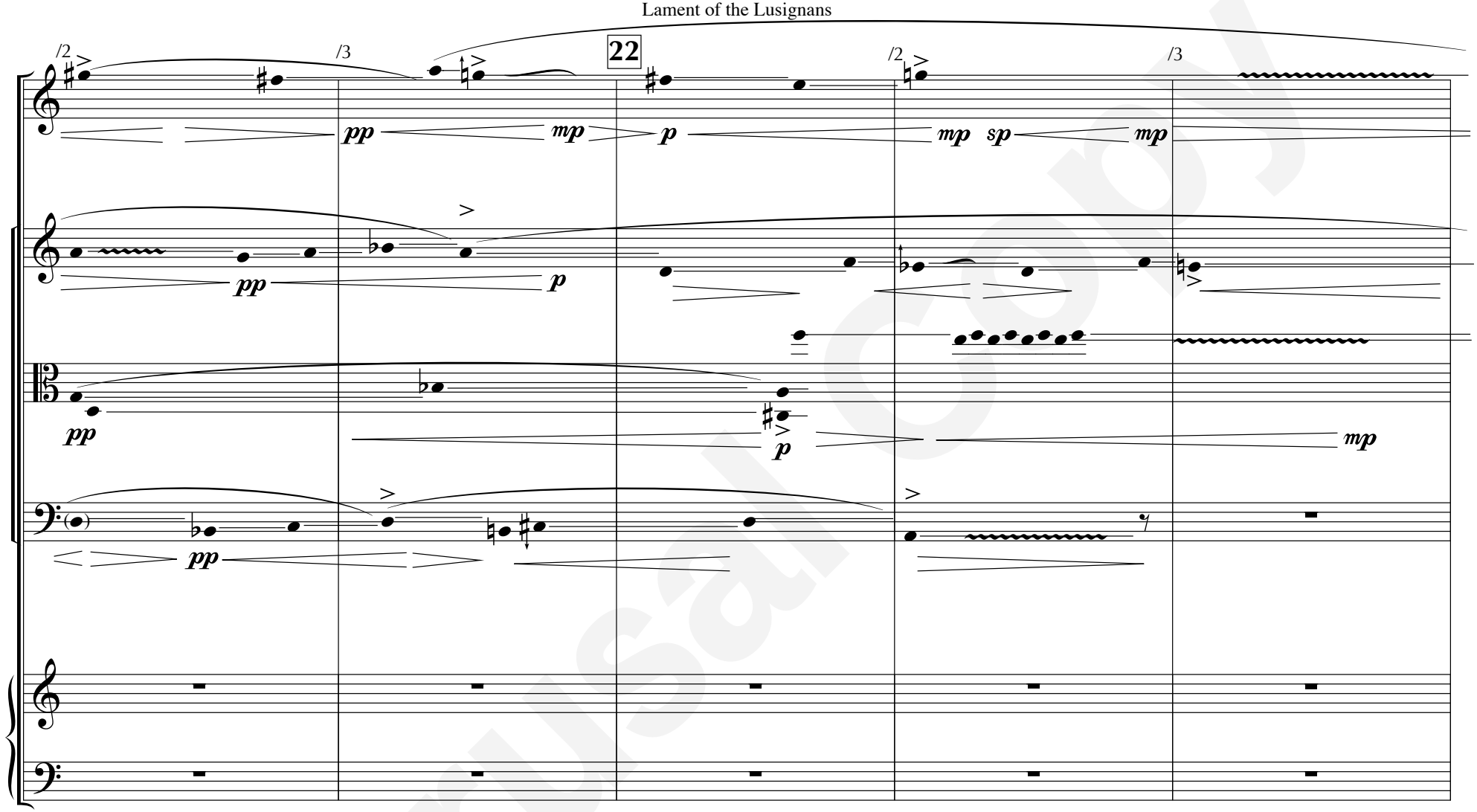

Perusal Copy



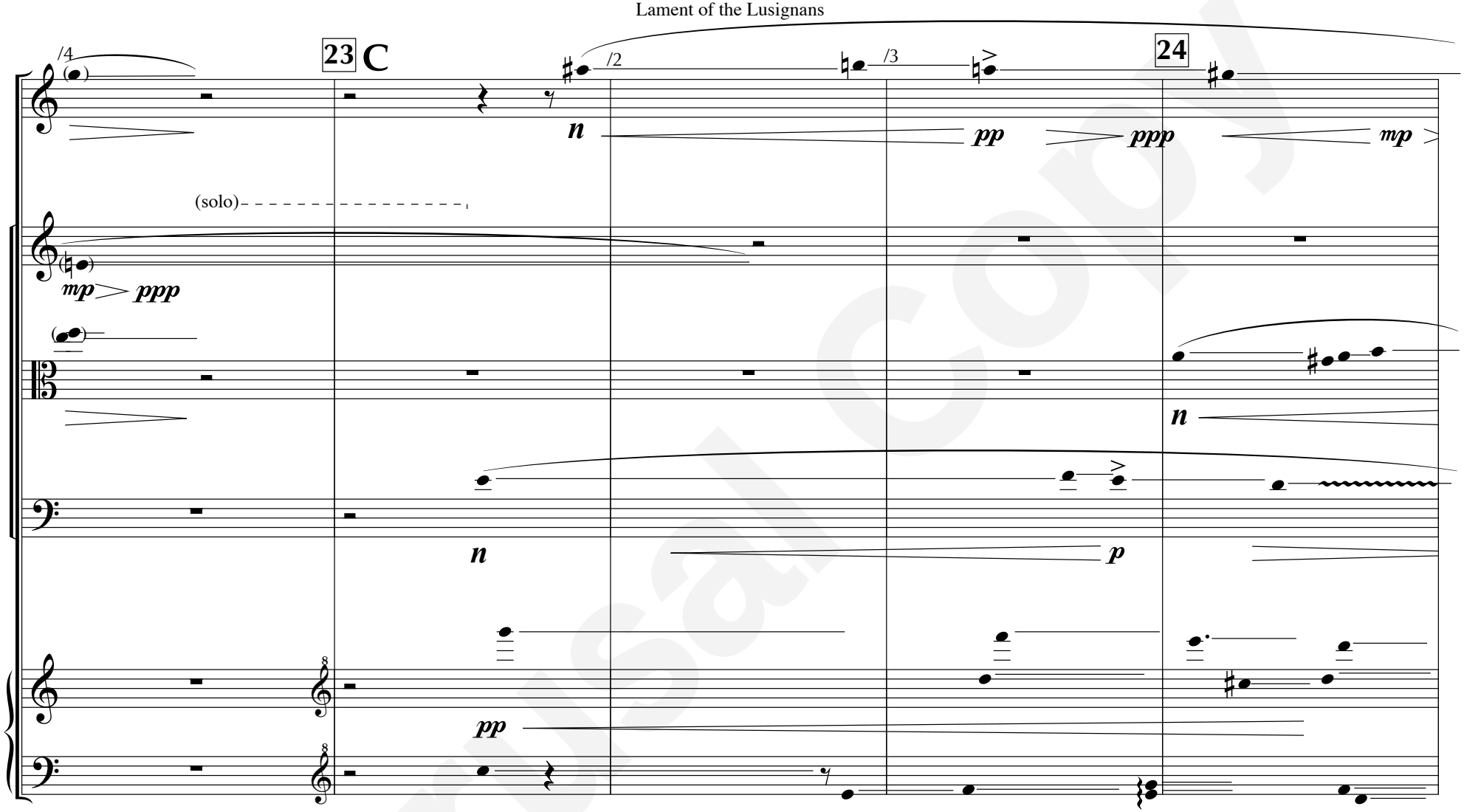

Perusal Copy




Perusal Copy

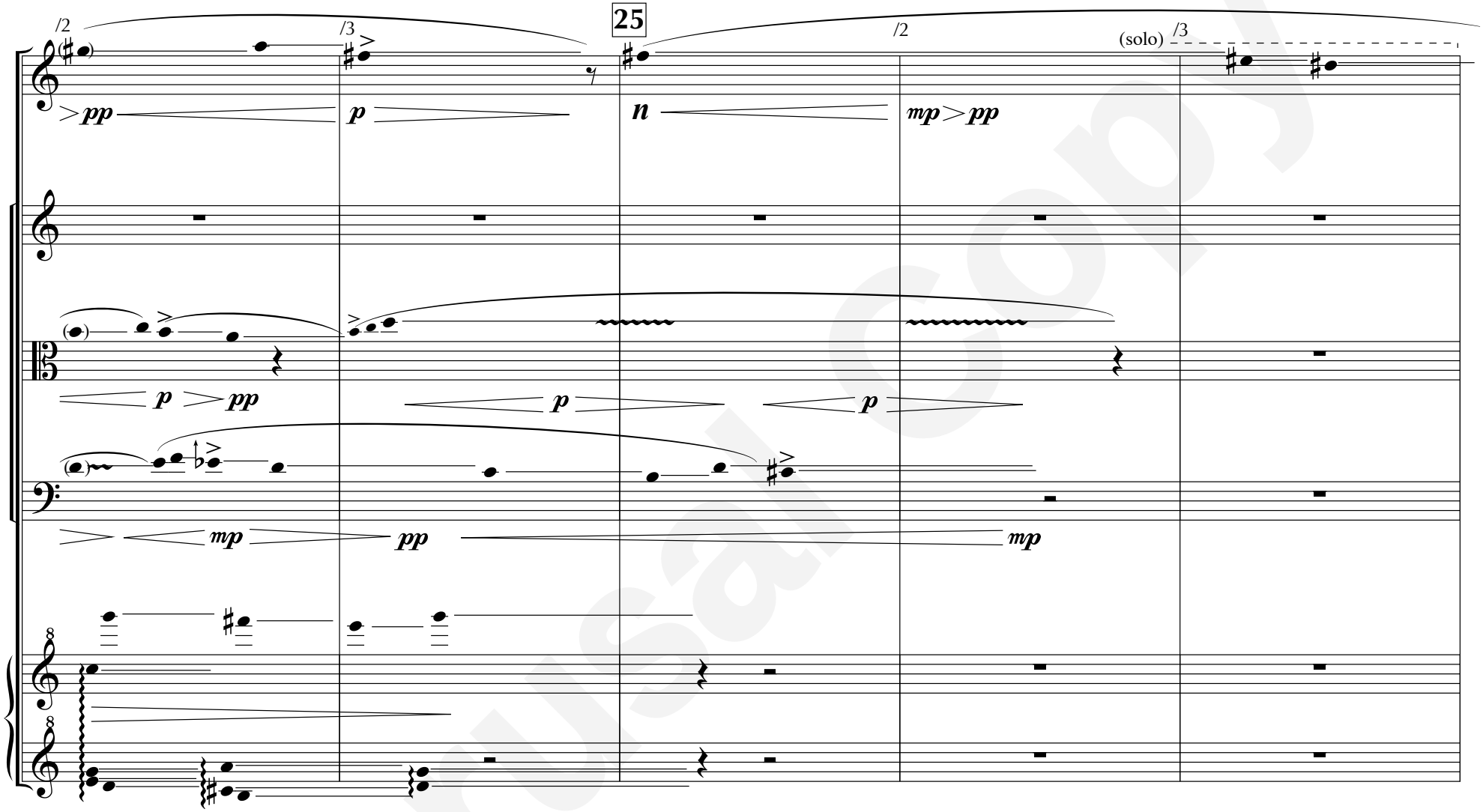



Perusal Copy

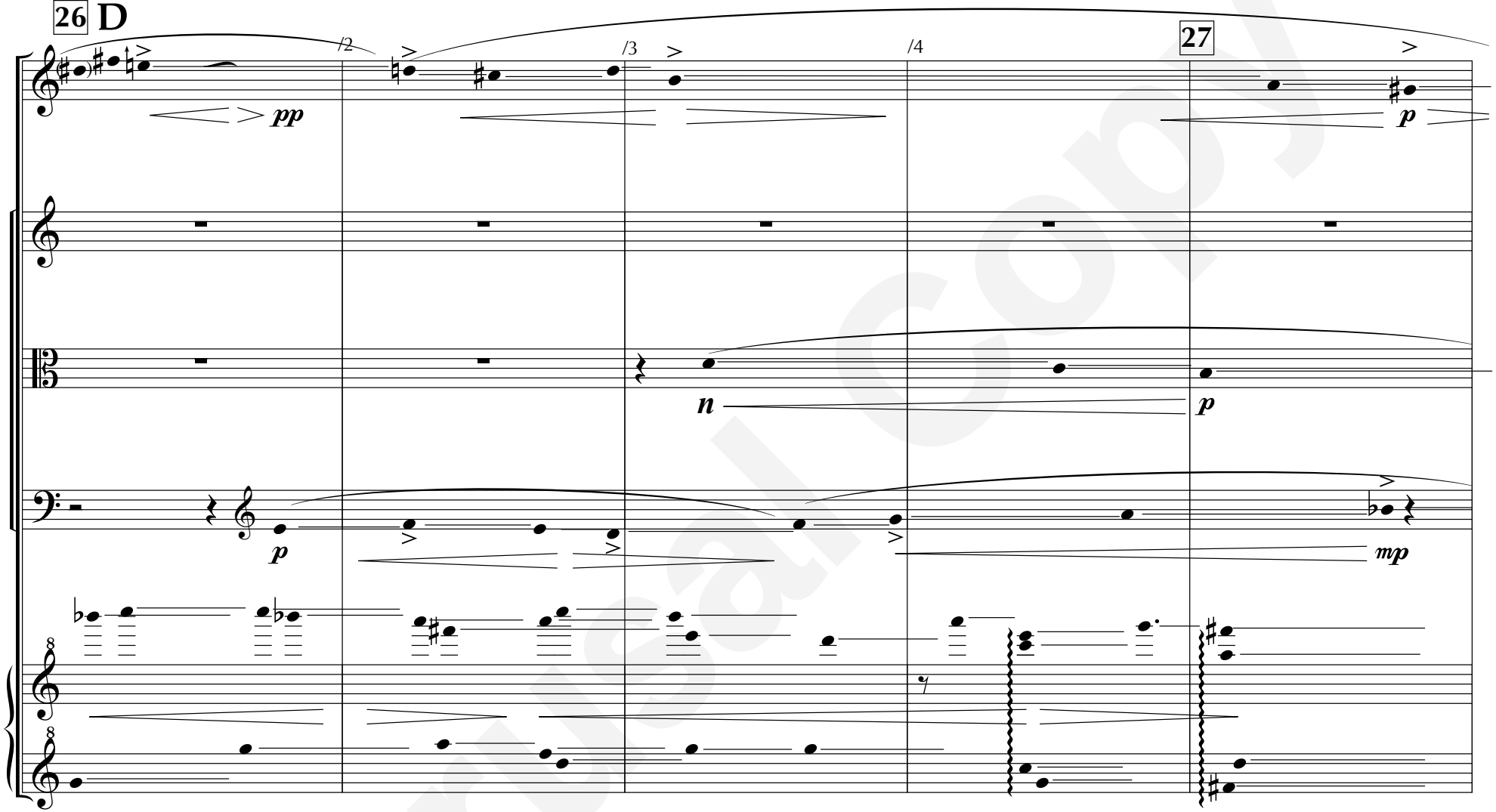



Hands play together.

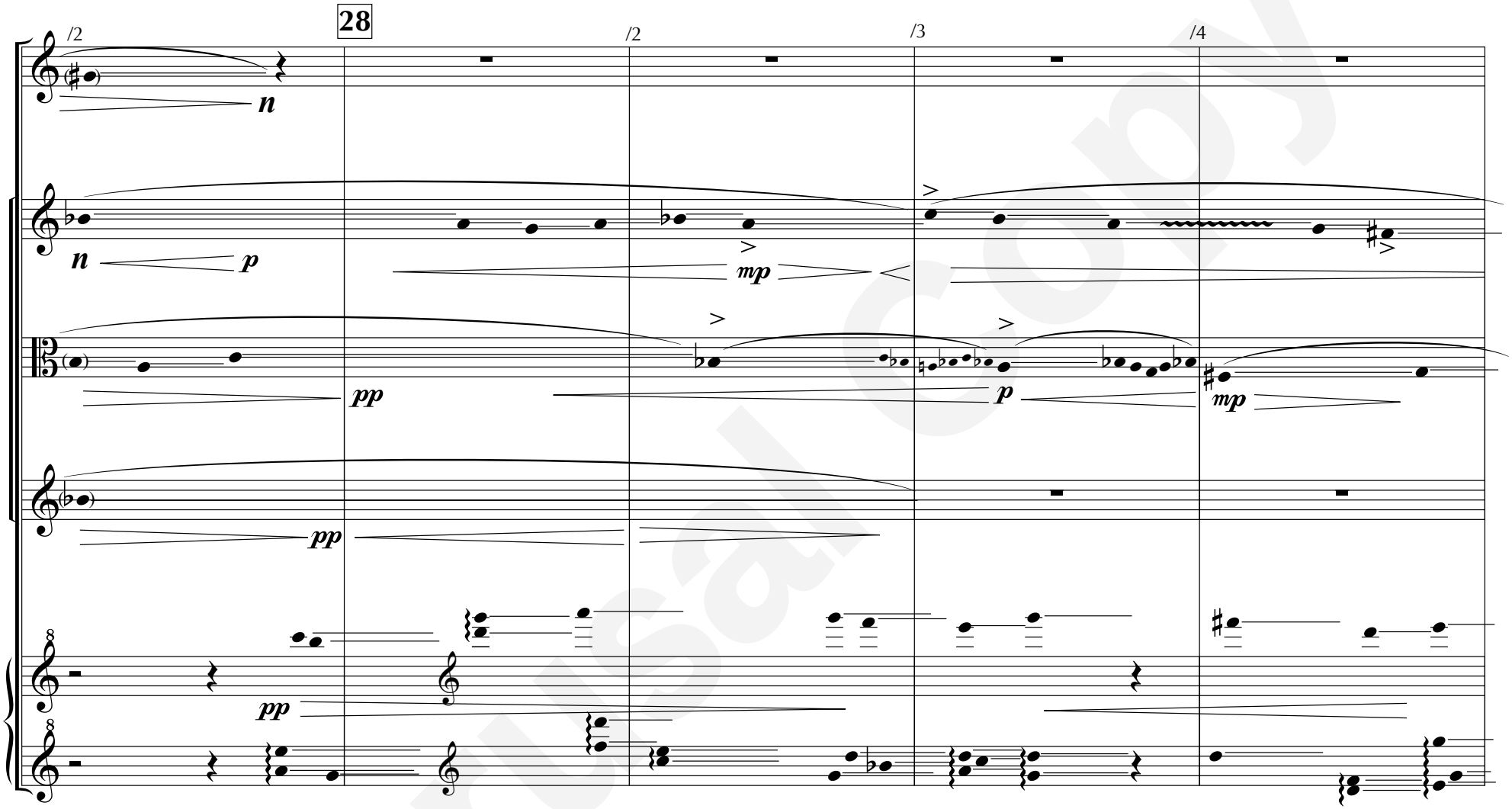
Perusal Copy



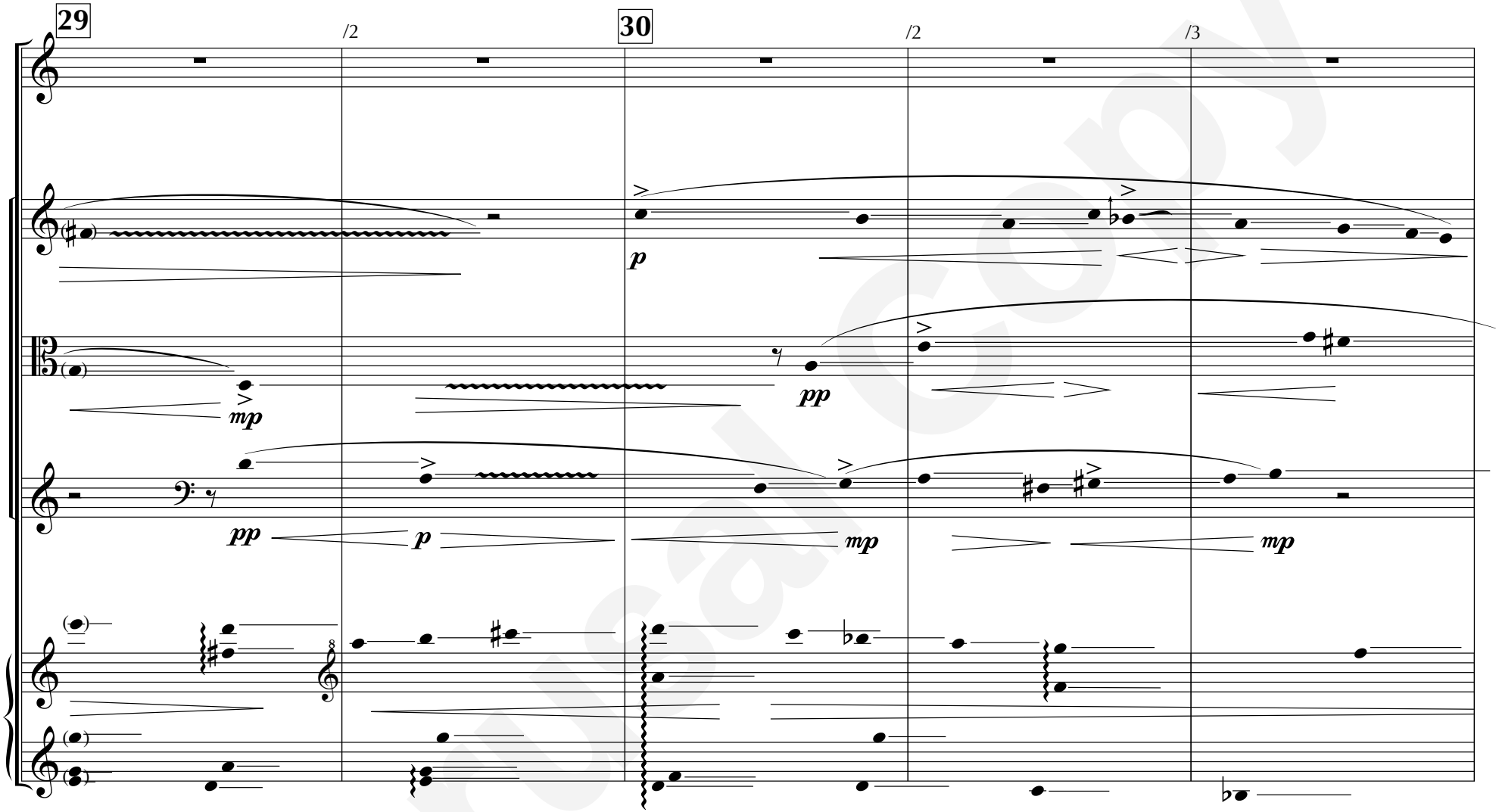

Perusal Copy



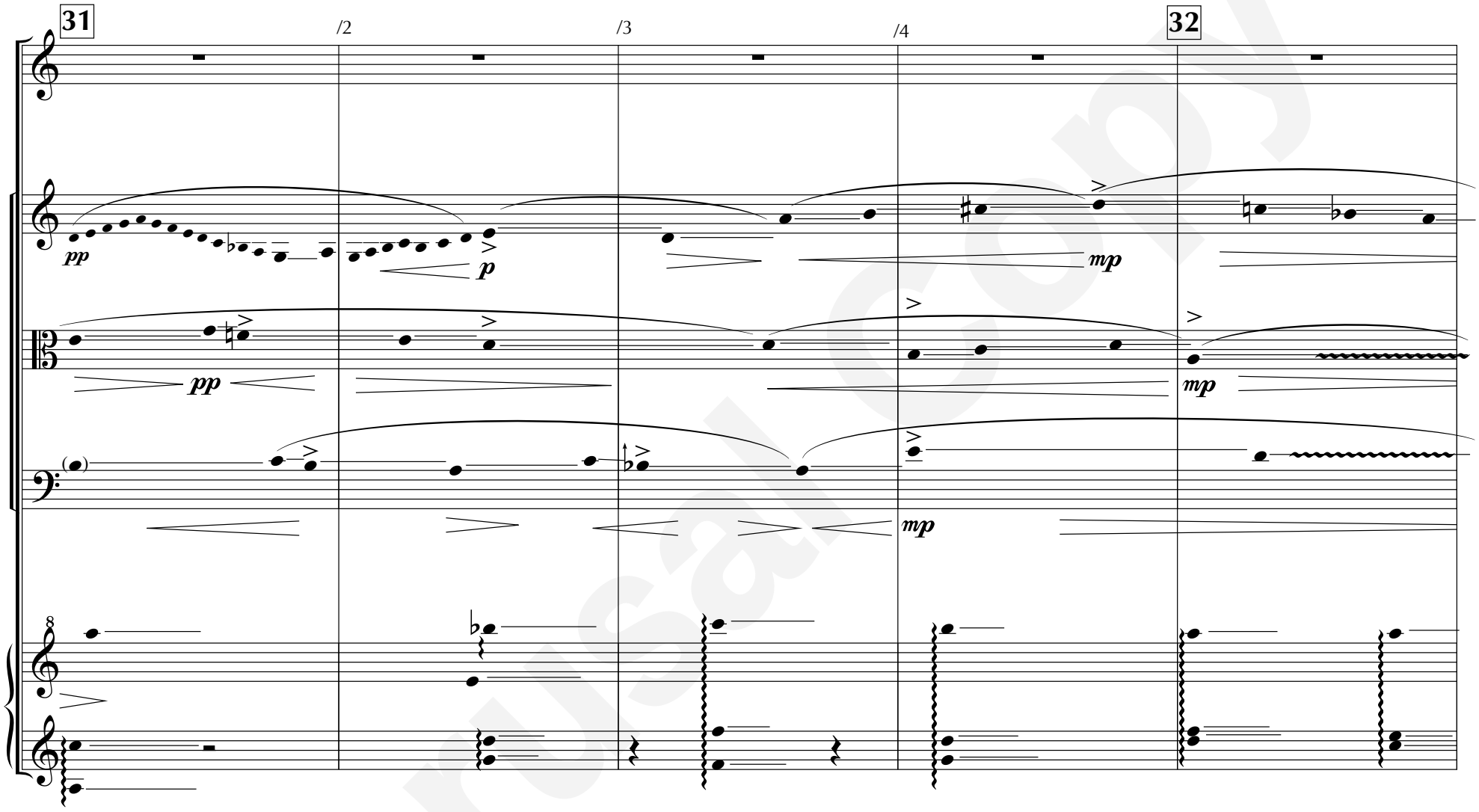

Personal Copy



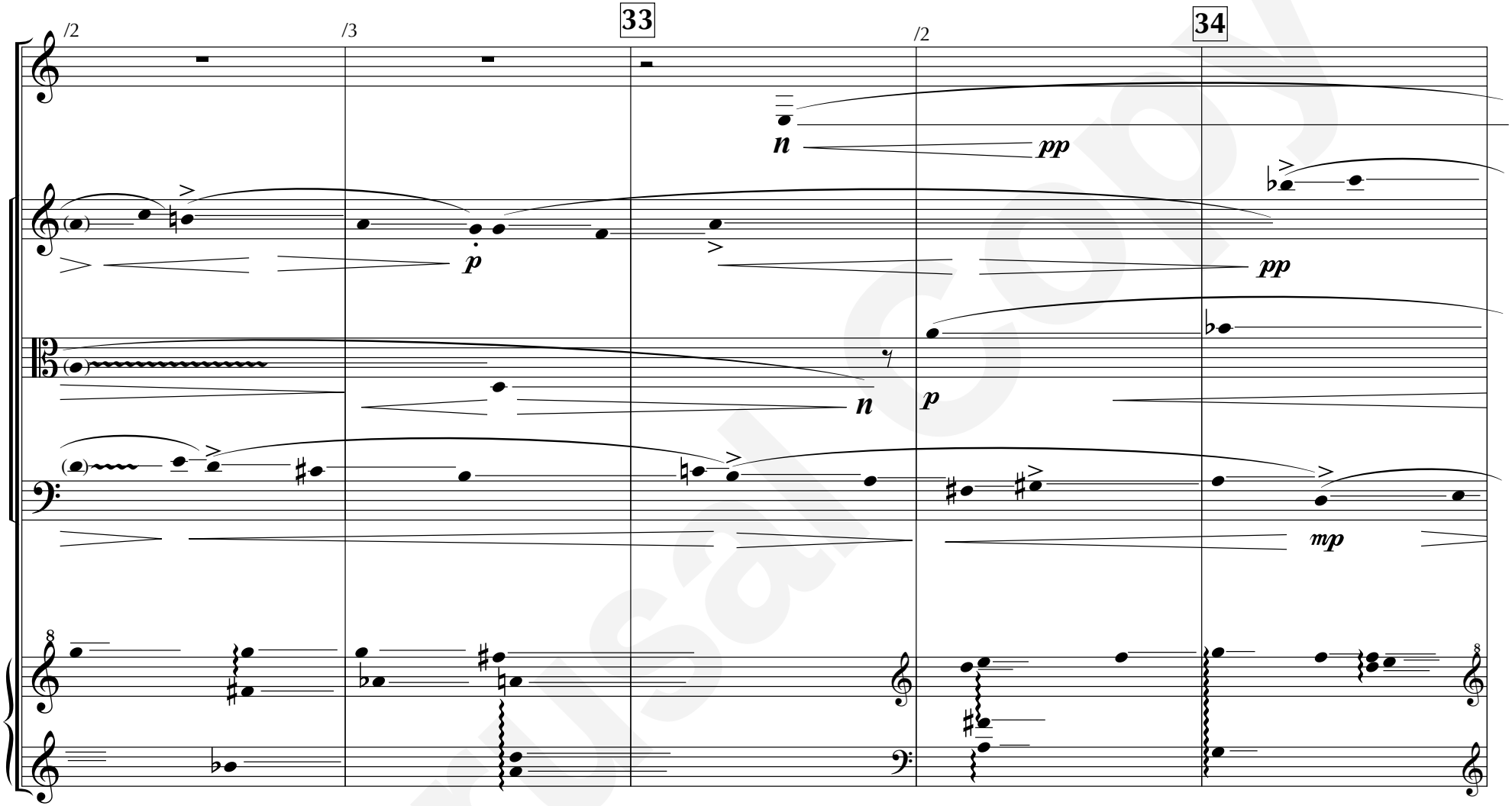

Perusal Copy



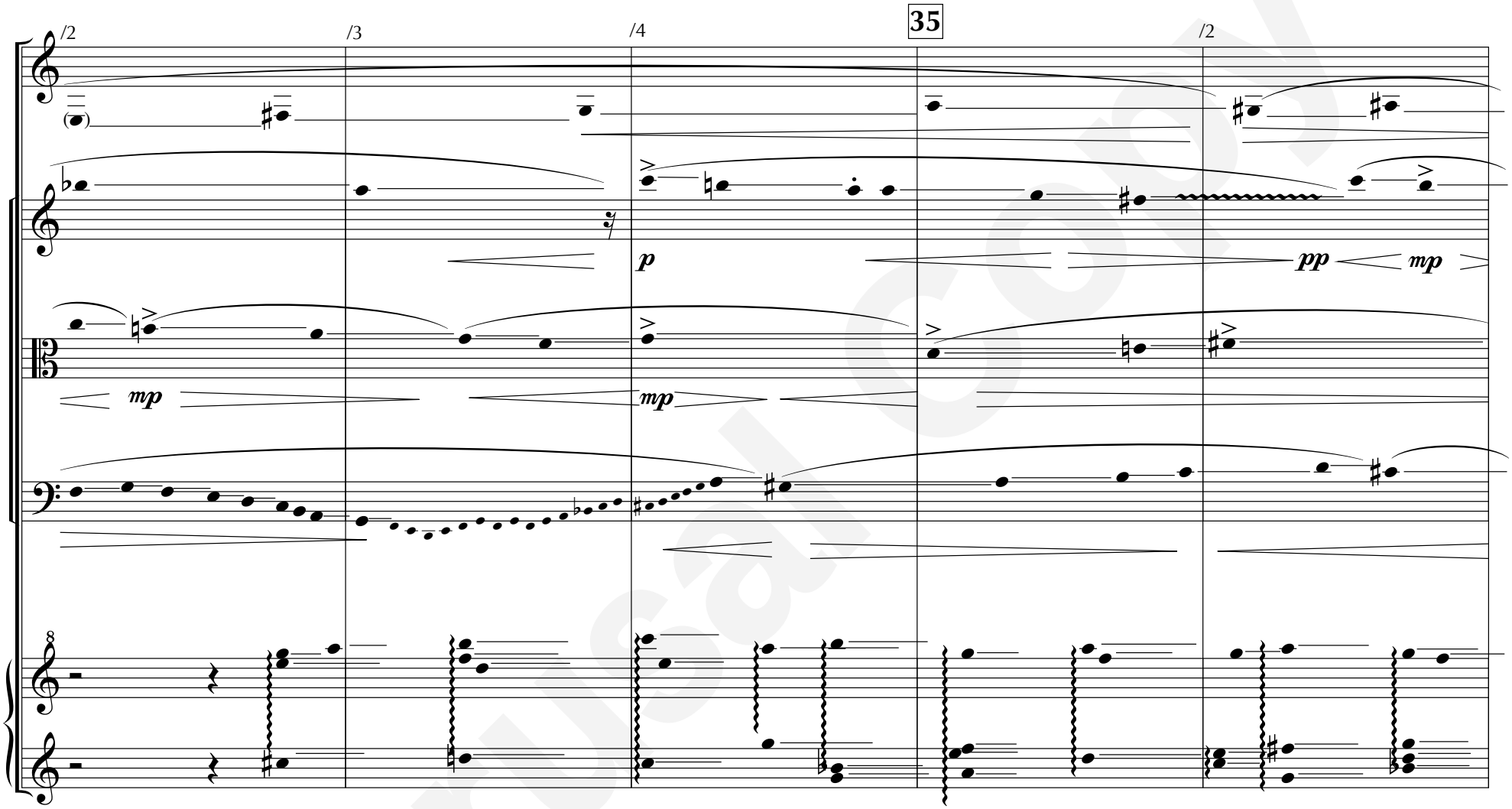

Perusal Copy



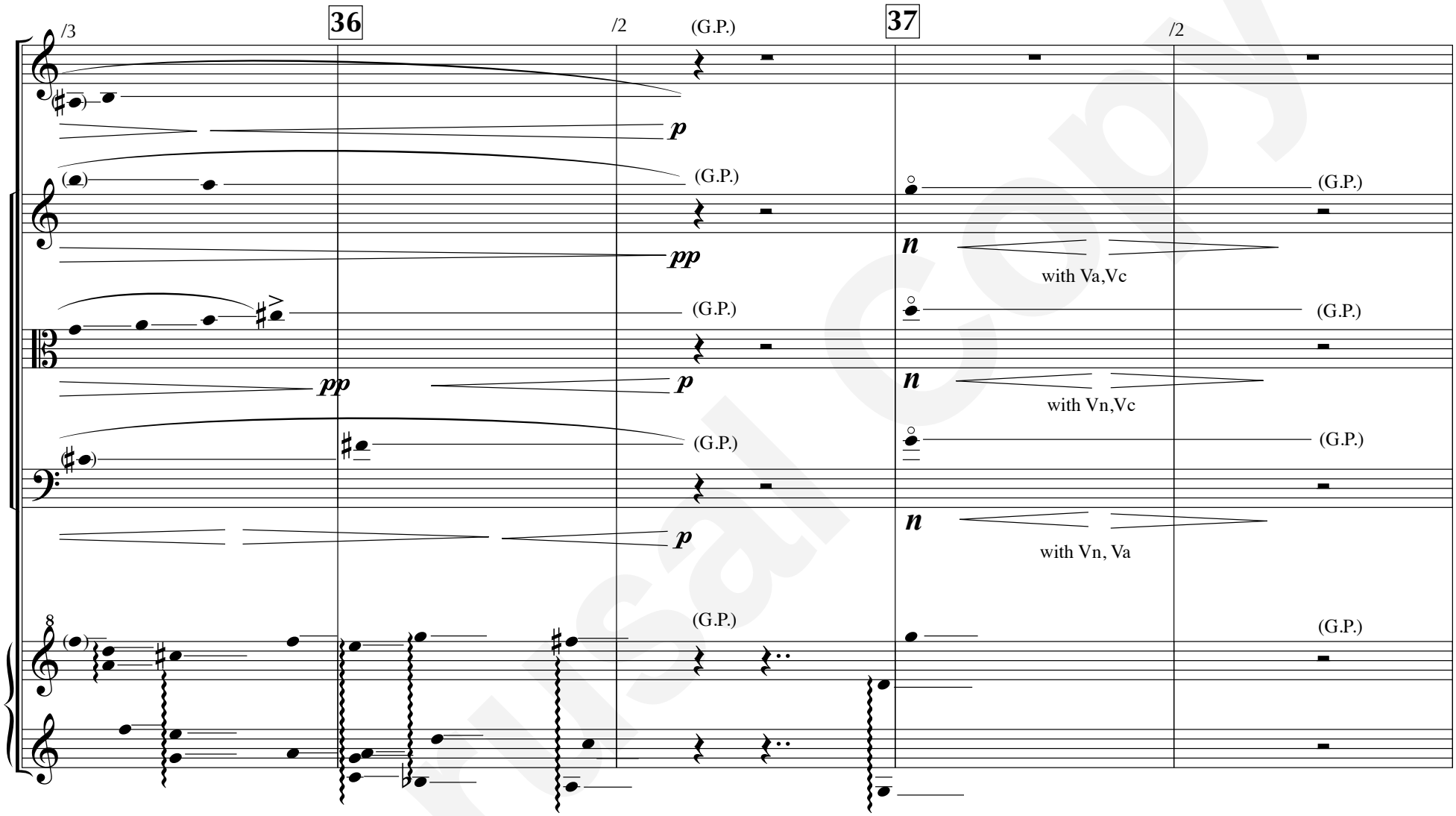

Perusal Copy



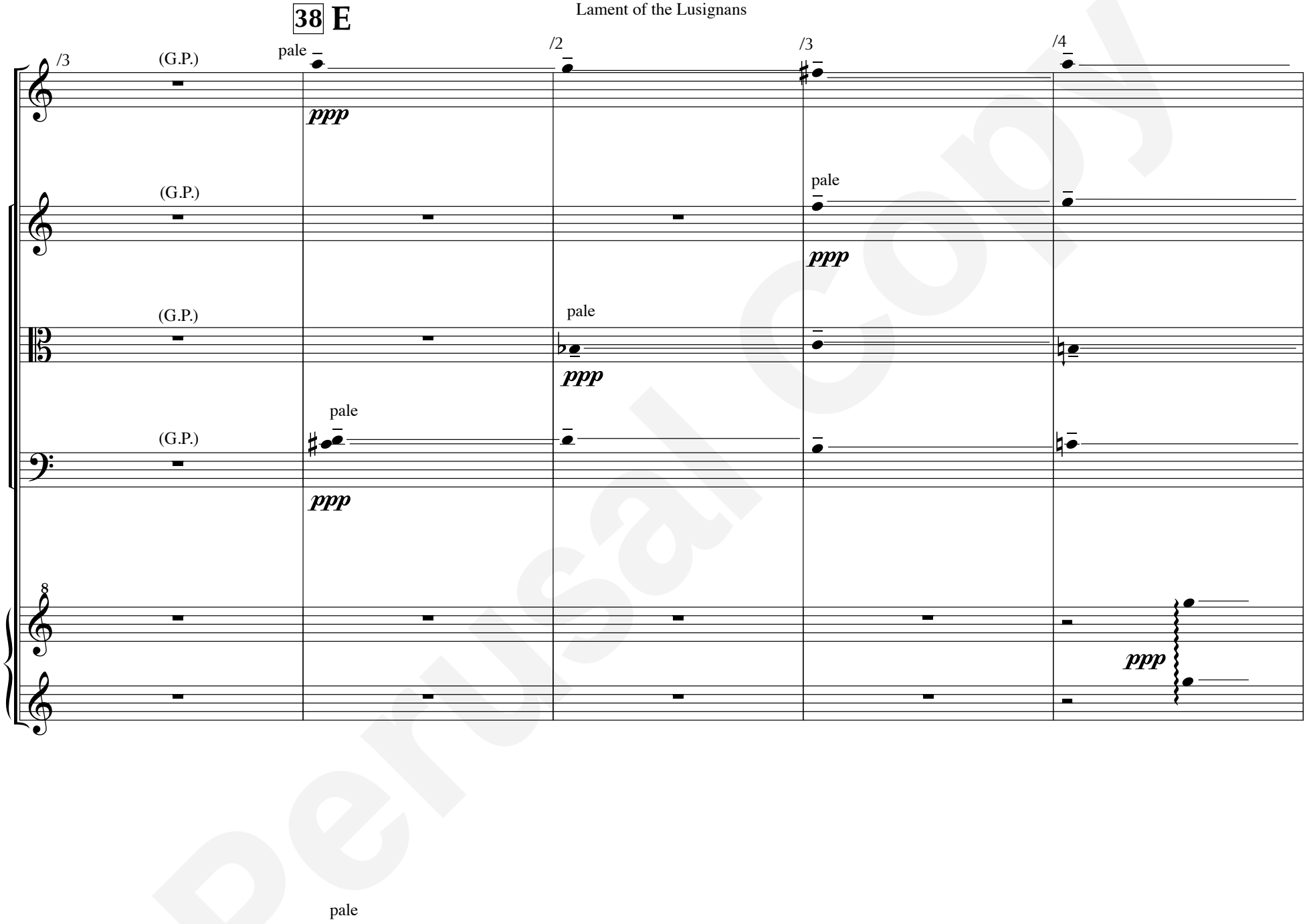

Perusal Copy



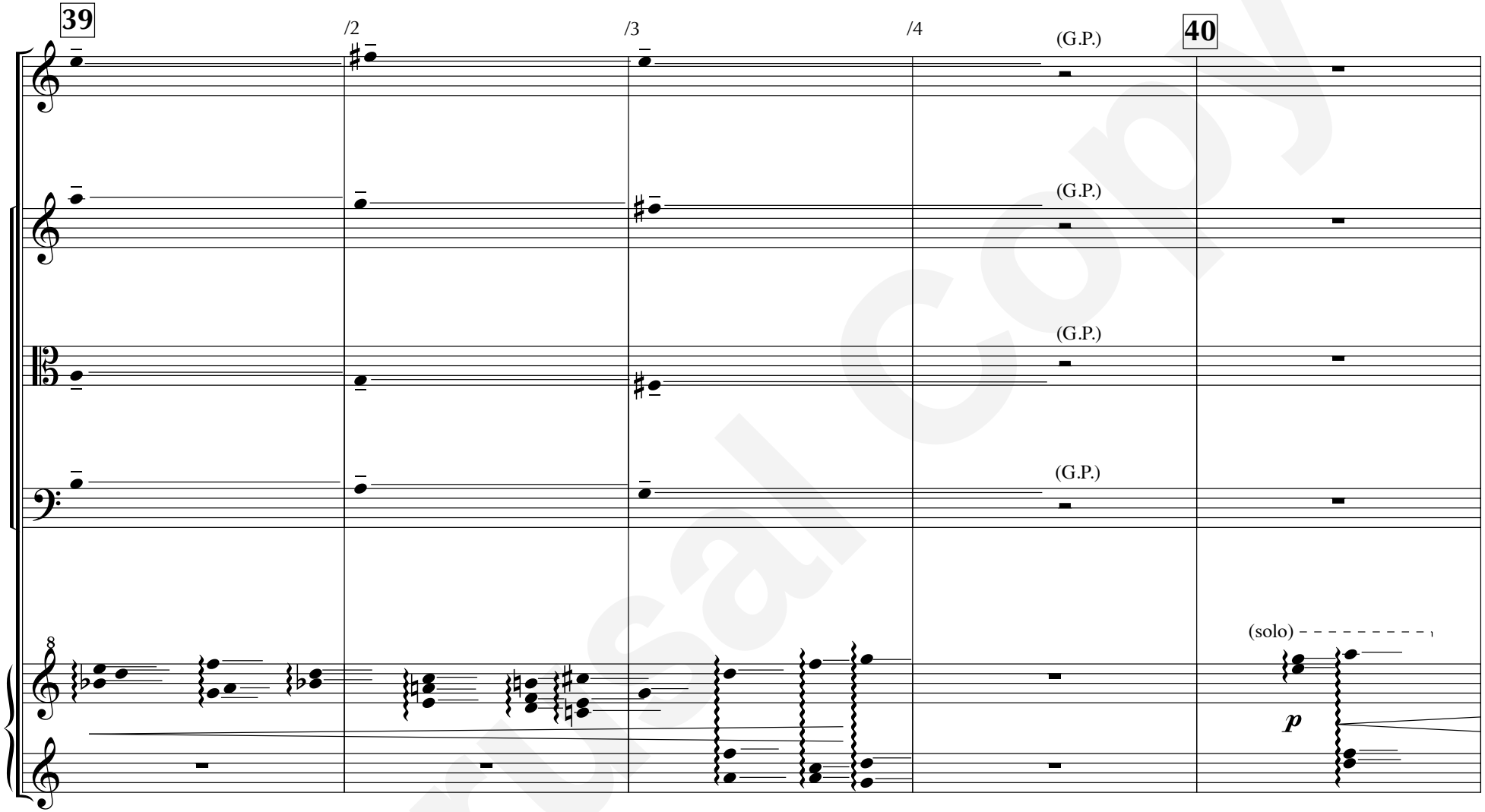

Perusal Copy



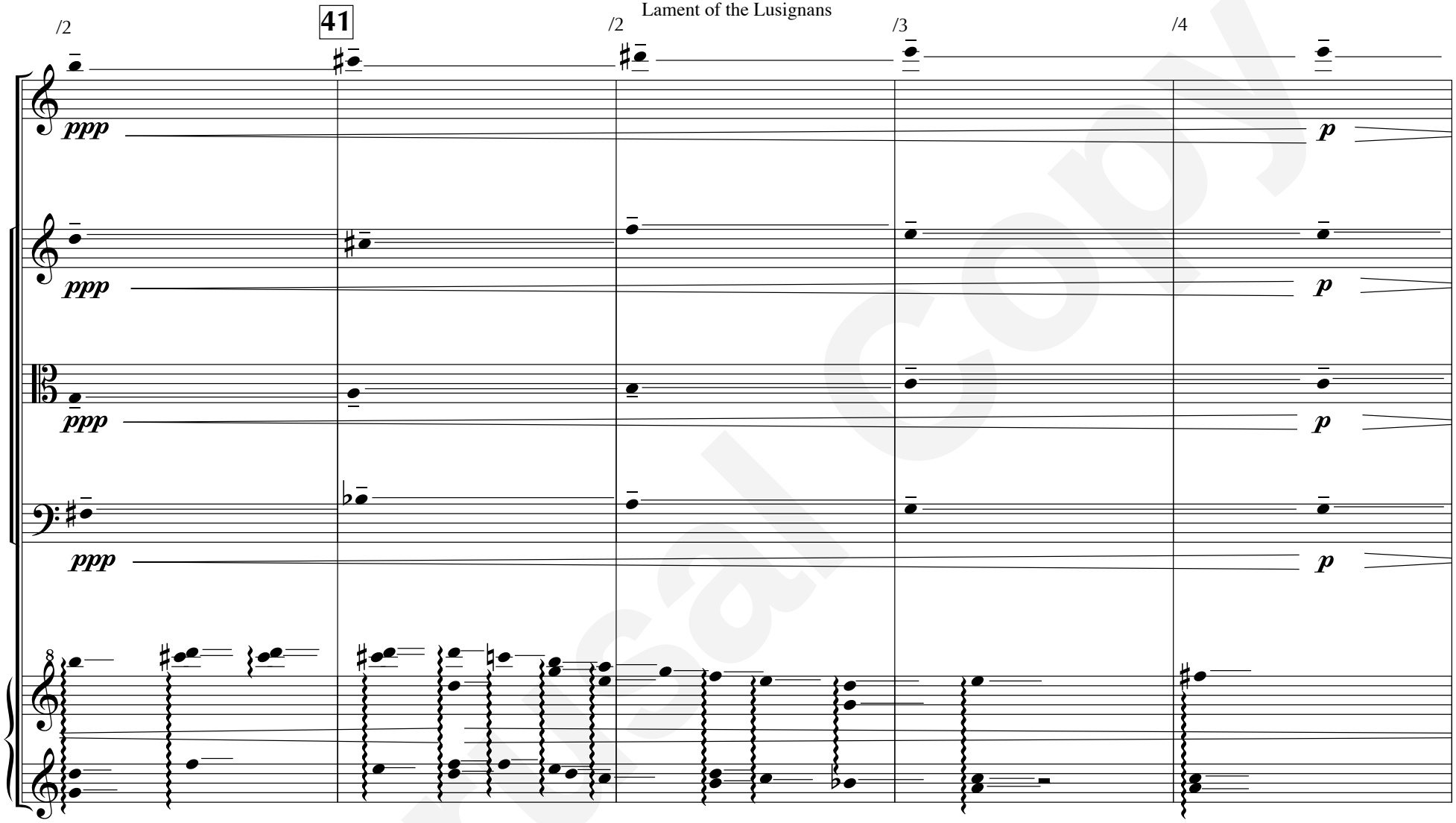

Perusal Copy



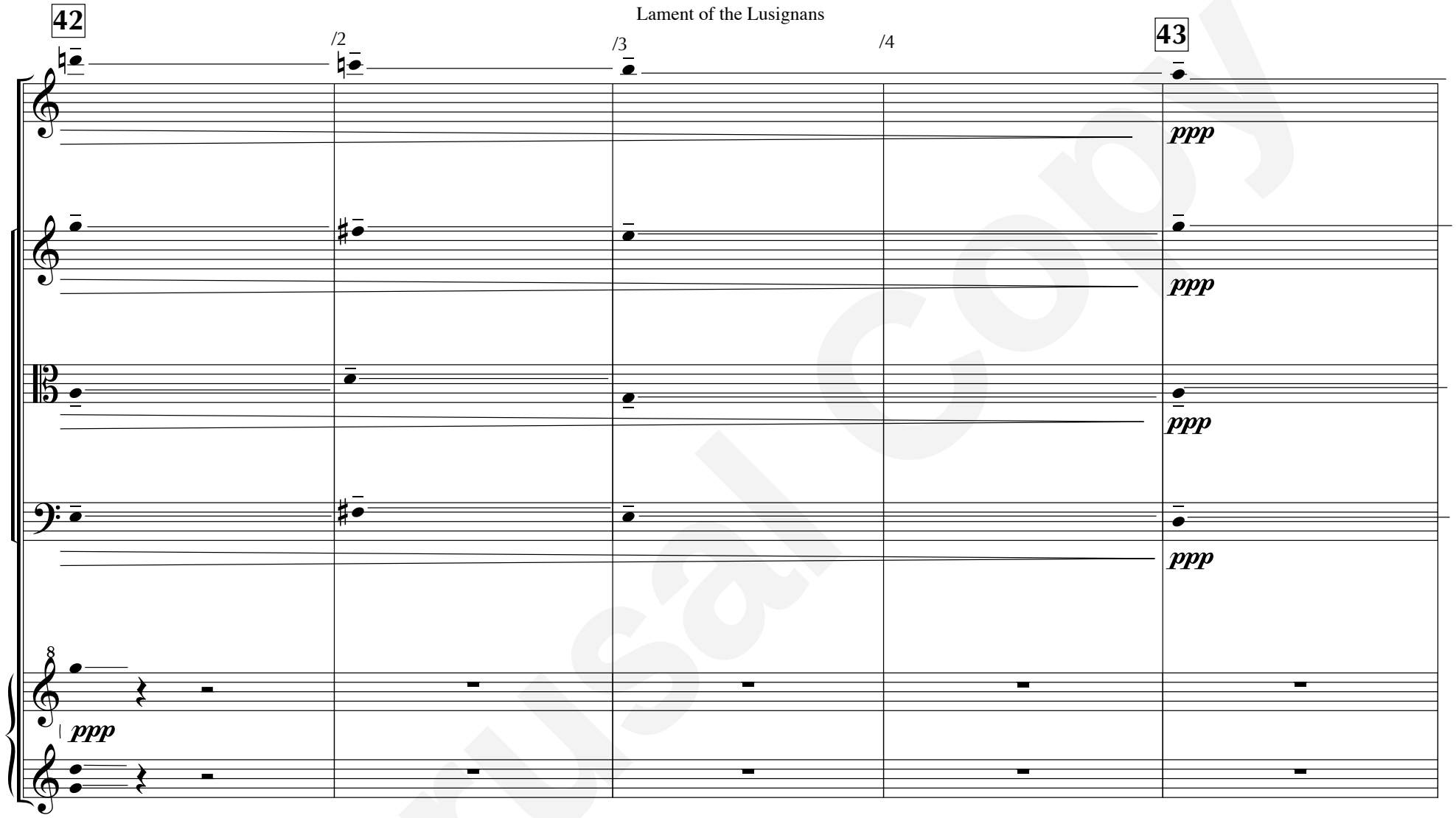

Perusal Copy



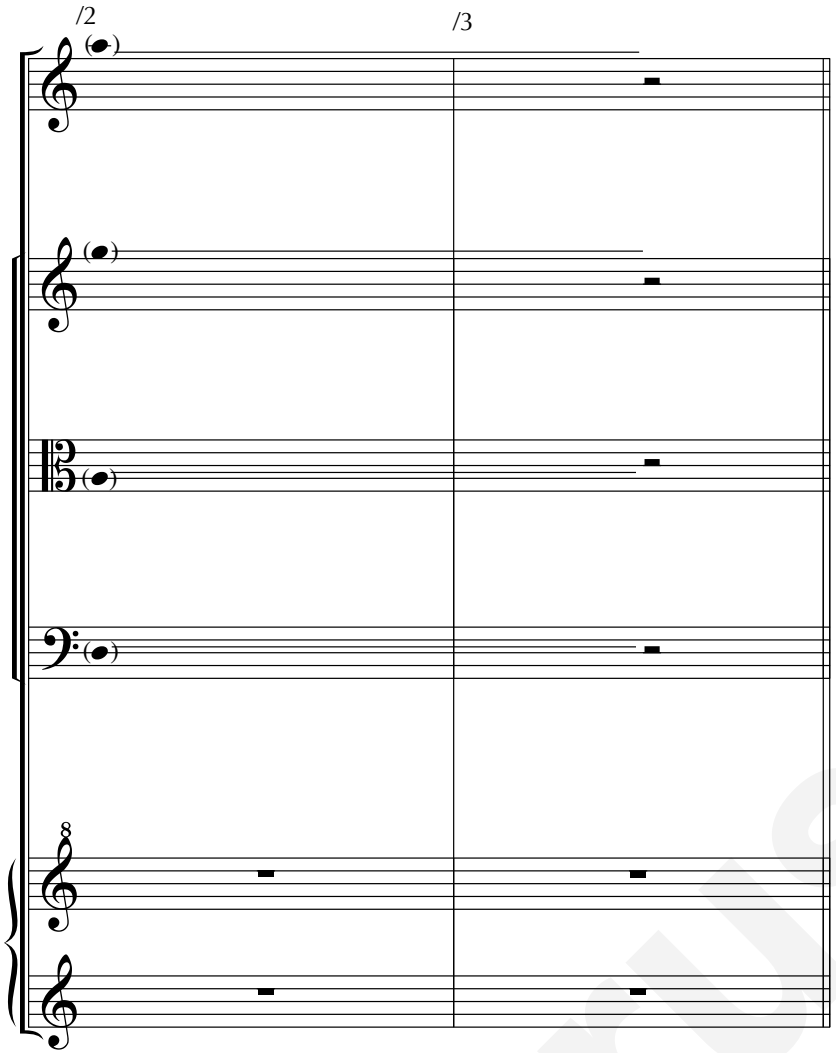

Perusal Copy




Perusal Copy




Perusal Copy




Perusal copy