SKETCHES OF WONDERLAND

by Clifton Taylor

Perusal Score Only
Not for Rehearsal or Performance

maroon tune
PUBLICATIONS

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Referred to as “Wonderland” even before its official creation in 1872, the land within the borders of Yellowstone National Park is replete with features that are in turn fascinating, inspiring, and astonishing. Located largely in northwest Wyoming, its nearly 3,500 square miles sit atop a currently dormant volcano and contain nearly half of the world’s hydrothermal features. The area is also home to abundant free ranging wildlife, including the largest public bison herd in the United States. I had the good fortune to visit Yellowstone in May of 2021, and my overall impression was one of other-worldliness. This composition for wind band consists of five musical impressions bookended by a theme whose echoes are heard throughout the work.

Mammoth Hot Springs
These astounding rock formations have been described as an “inside-out cave.” Super-heated water rises, dissolving large quantities of the surrounding limestone and depositing a chalky white mineral on the surface. It looked to me the way I imagined the surface of another planet might. The music for this section combines tonal clusters based on the whole tone scale (the massive, stark structures) and meandering sequences consisting principally of alternatively descending and ascending minor thirds (the countless rivulets of hot water running down the sides).

Bison Jam
The aforementioned free-ranging bison herd does not hesitate to use the public park roads. One of the highlights of my family’s visit came when we stopped while driving northbound on a park road to allow the passage of a group of around 25 bison who were moving down the road directly at us at a steady but unhurried pace. These iconic animals, which can grow to nearly seven feet in height and over 800 pounds, passed within a few feet of us as we marveled and took pictures. When they had safely passed, we drove on, thankful for the short delay. It was then that we realized the line of southbound vehicles creeping at bison speed stretched back a full two miles…

Grand Prismatic Spring
The most photographed thermal feature in Yellowstone, Grand Prismatic is bigger than a football field and gets its rainbow-colored rings from heat-loving bacteria that live in different temperature zones (getting progressively cooler moving outward from the center). The music of this section is colored with rich wind harmonies and highlighted with shimmering percussion sounds.

Canyon Waterfalls
The Upper and Lower Falls within the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone River are powerful and breathtakingly beautiful. At 308 feet, the Lower Falls are twice the height of Niagara falls. In 1870, visitor Nathanial Langford recorded, ““A grander scene than the lower cataract of the Yellowstone was never witnessed by mortal eyes.” Overlapping woodwind figures evoke the perpetual motion of the cascading water, ultimately calming as it moves downriver.

Old Faithful Geyser
Yellowstone’s most famous geyser (of over 500) shoots thousands of gallons of steaming water up to 180 feet in the air around twenty times a day. The times between eruptions vary from an hour to nearly two hours, and although eruptions are fairly predictable, they are not always on time. Before the actual eruption, Old Faithful teases those waiting with small bursts of vapor, adding to the anticipation. My musical impression depicts both this waiting period and the impressive spectacle of the actual eruption.

Clifton Taylor,
Starkville, Mississippi,
February 2022

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Clifton Taylor (b. 1968) has served as Associate Director of Bands at Mississippi State University since 2005. At MSU, he co-directs the Famous Maroon Band, conducts the Symphonic Band and Jazz Ensemble, and teaches courses in the Department of Music. A native of Mississippi, he holds two music education degrees from the University of Southern Mississippi and a DMA in wind conducting from the University of South Carolina. A veteran teacher, Dr. Taylor has taught instrumental music at every level, from the elementary school to the community college, and currently directs a band program for homeschooled students in his community. He is regularly engaged in composing and arranging for the concert band, marching band, and other media, and maintains a steady schedule as a performing trombonist.

Score

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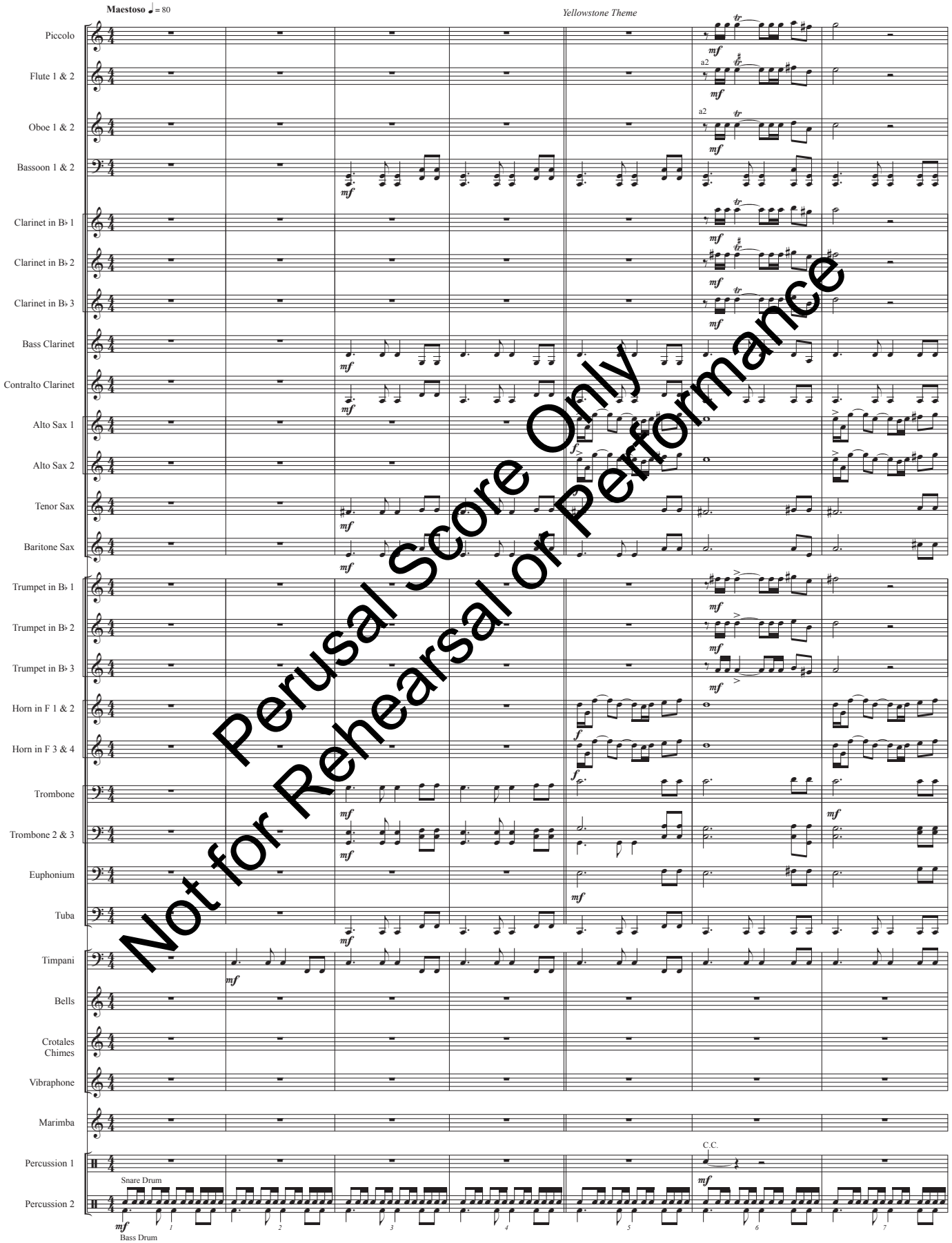
Commissioned by Travis Coakley and the Biloxi High School Band to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the establishment of Yellowstone National Park.

Clifton Taylor (ASCAP)



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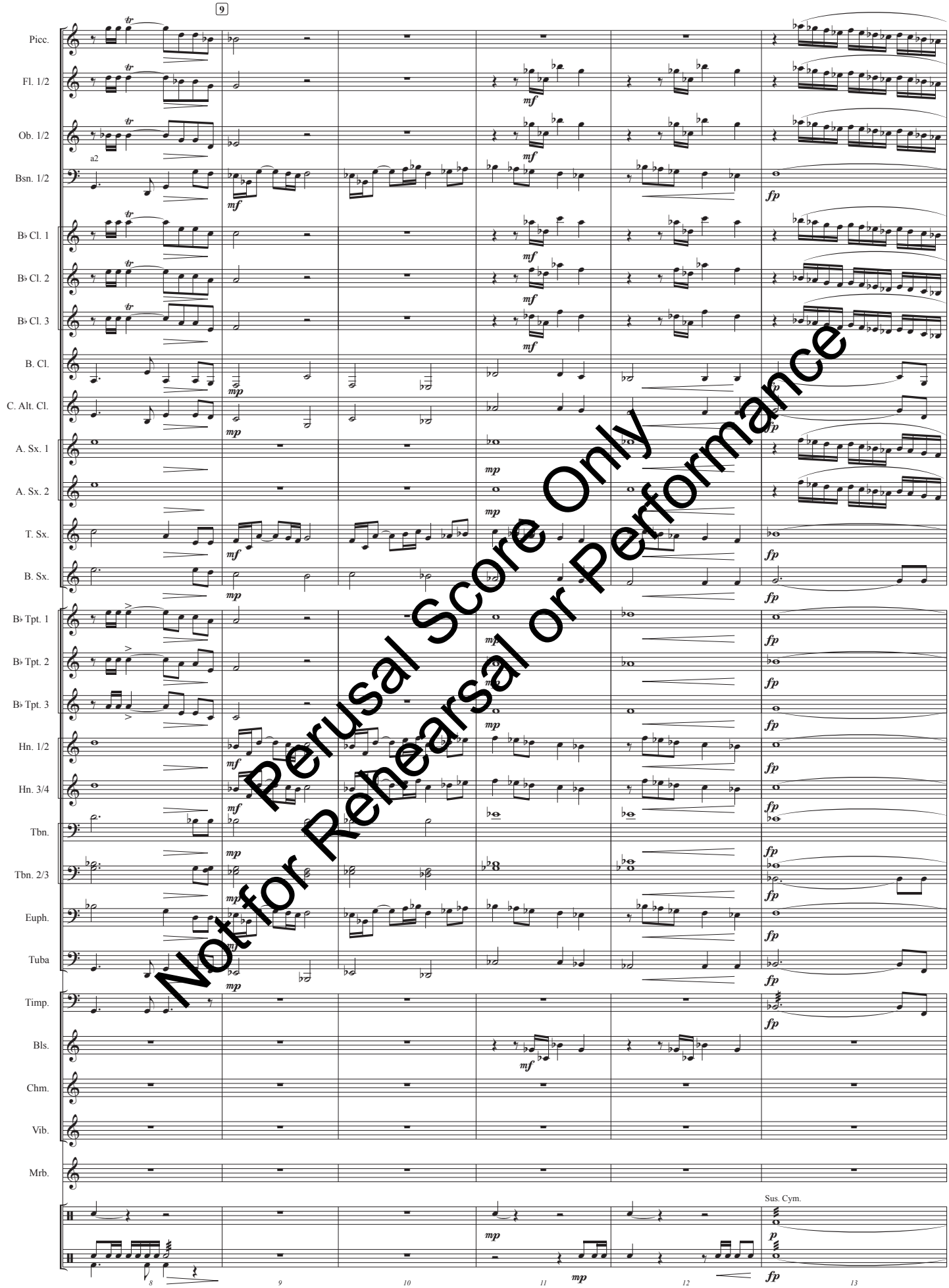

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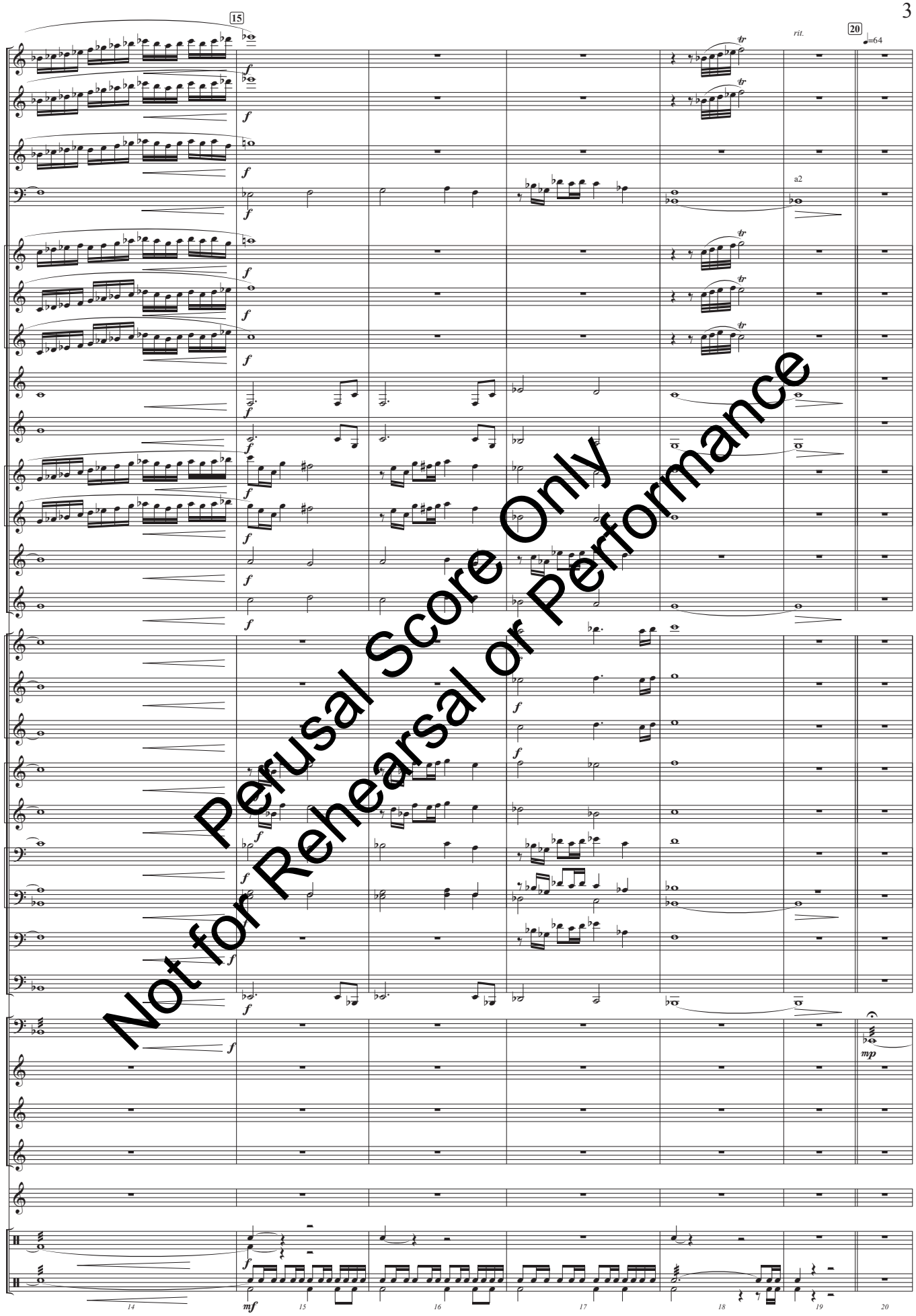

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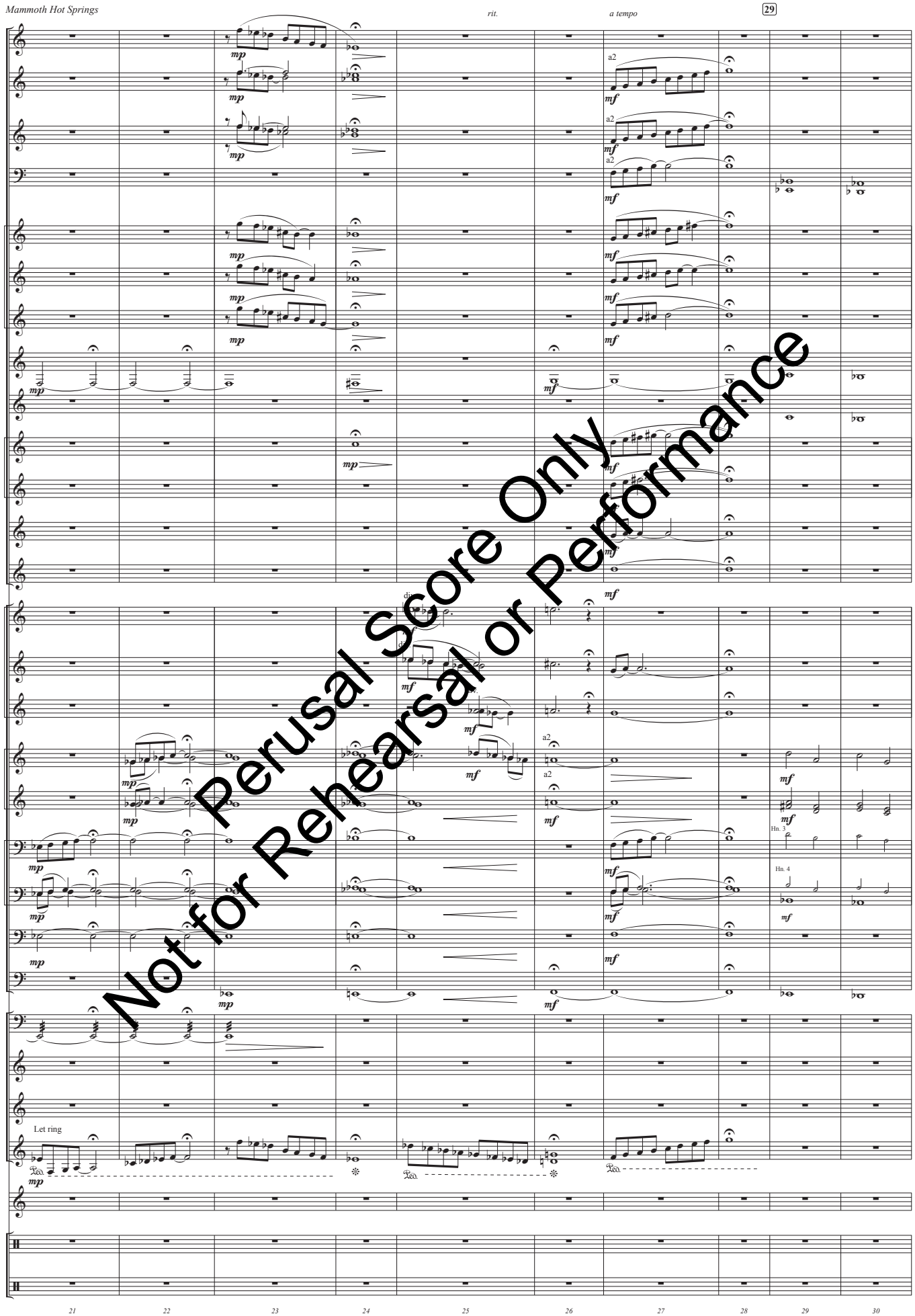

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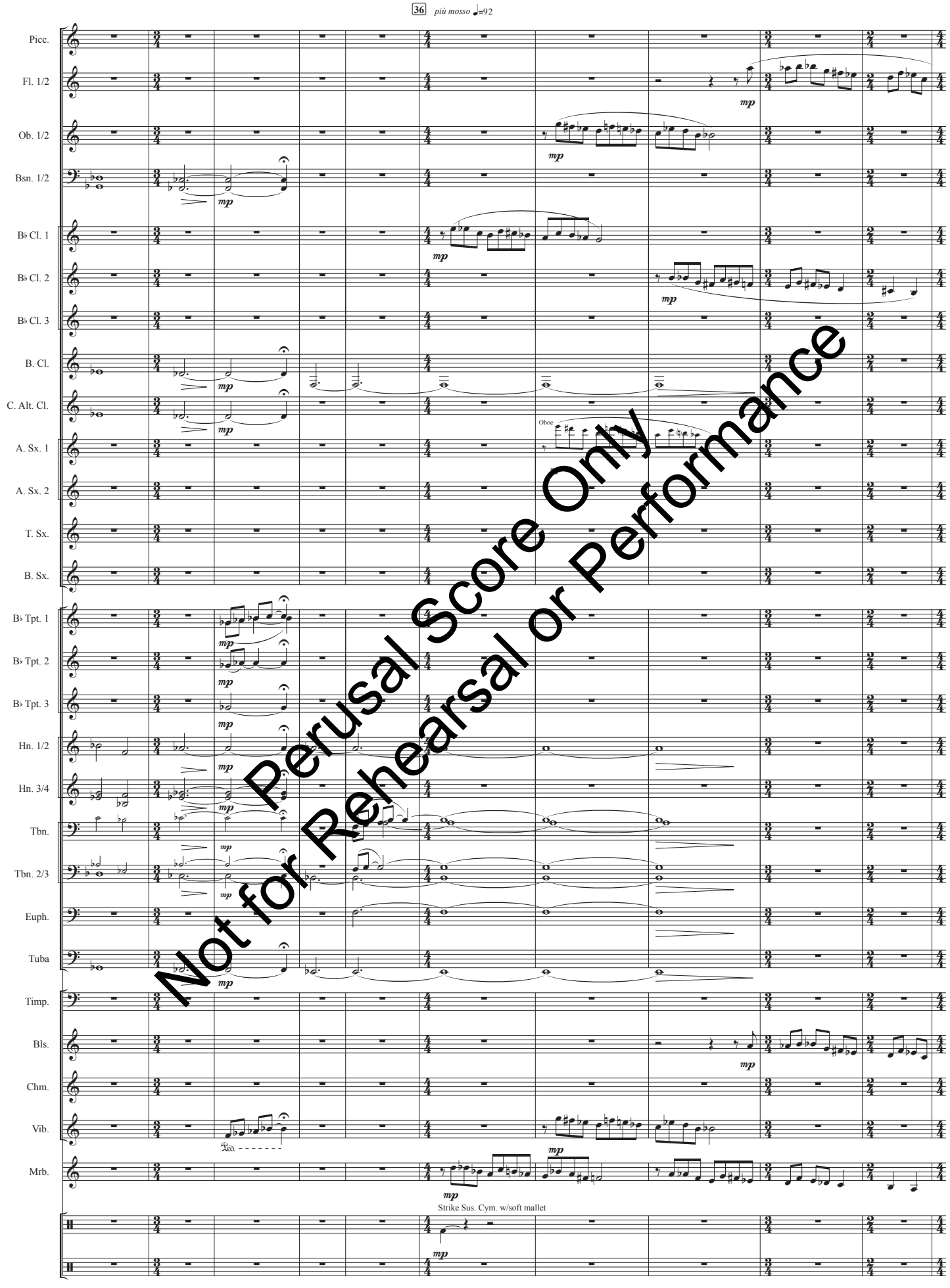

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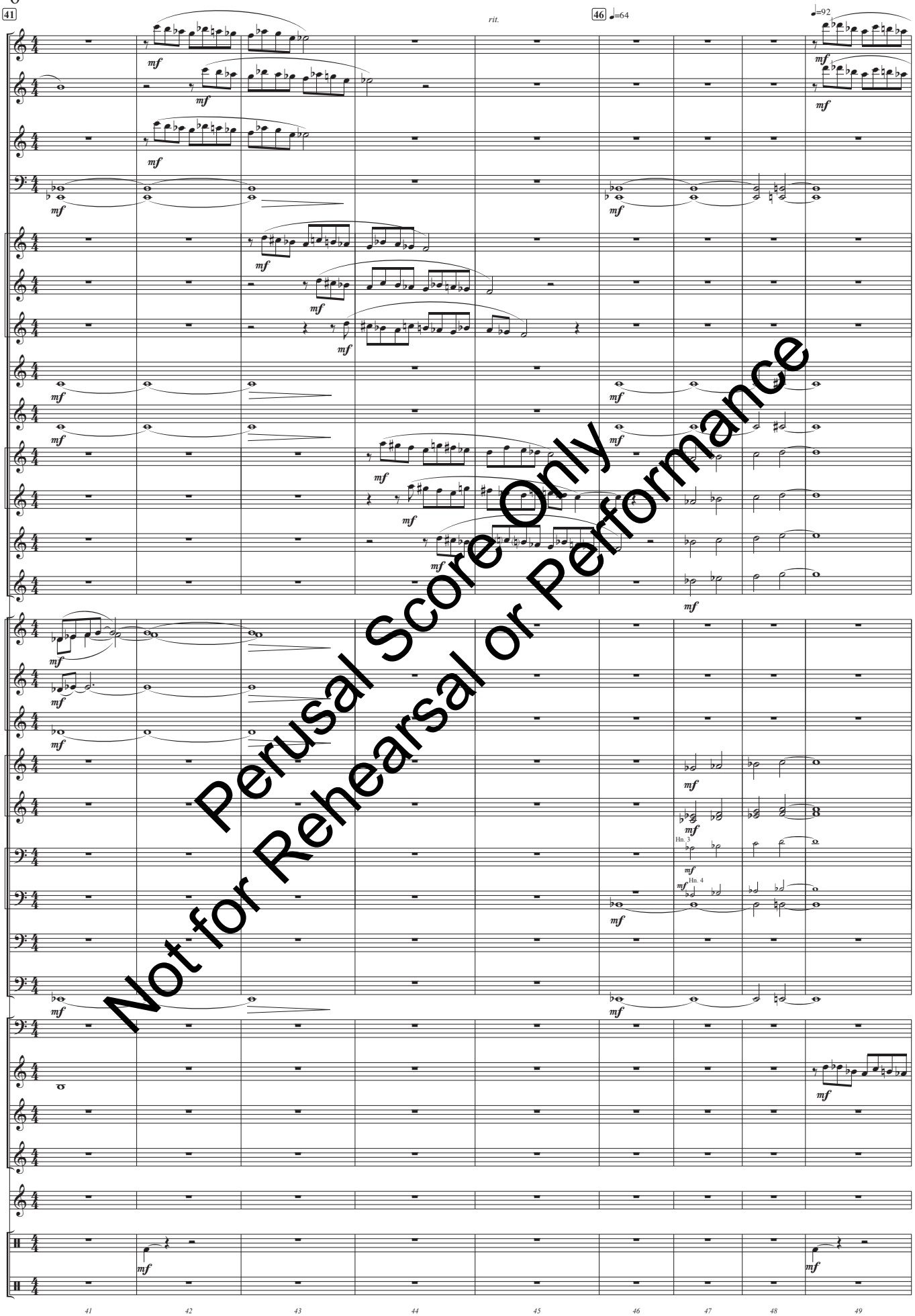

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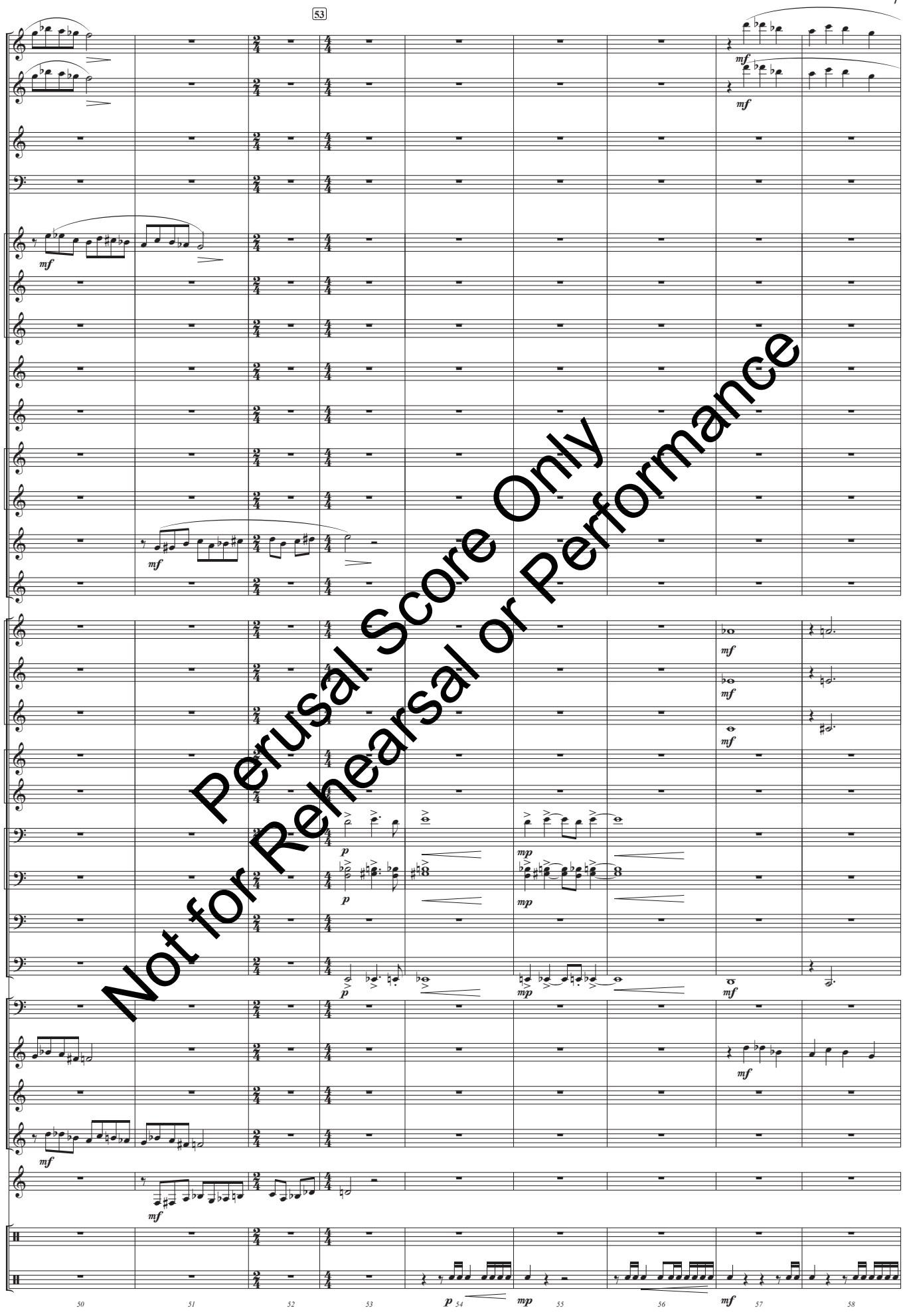

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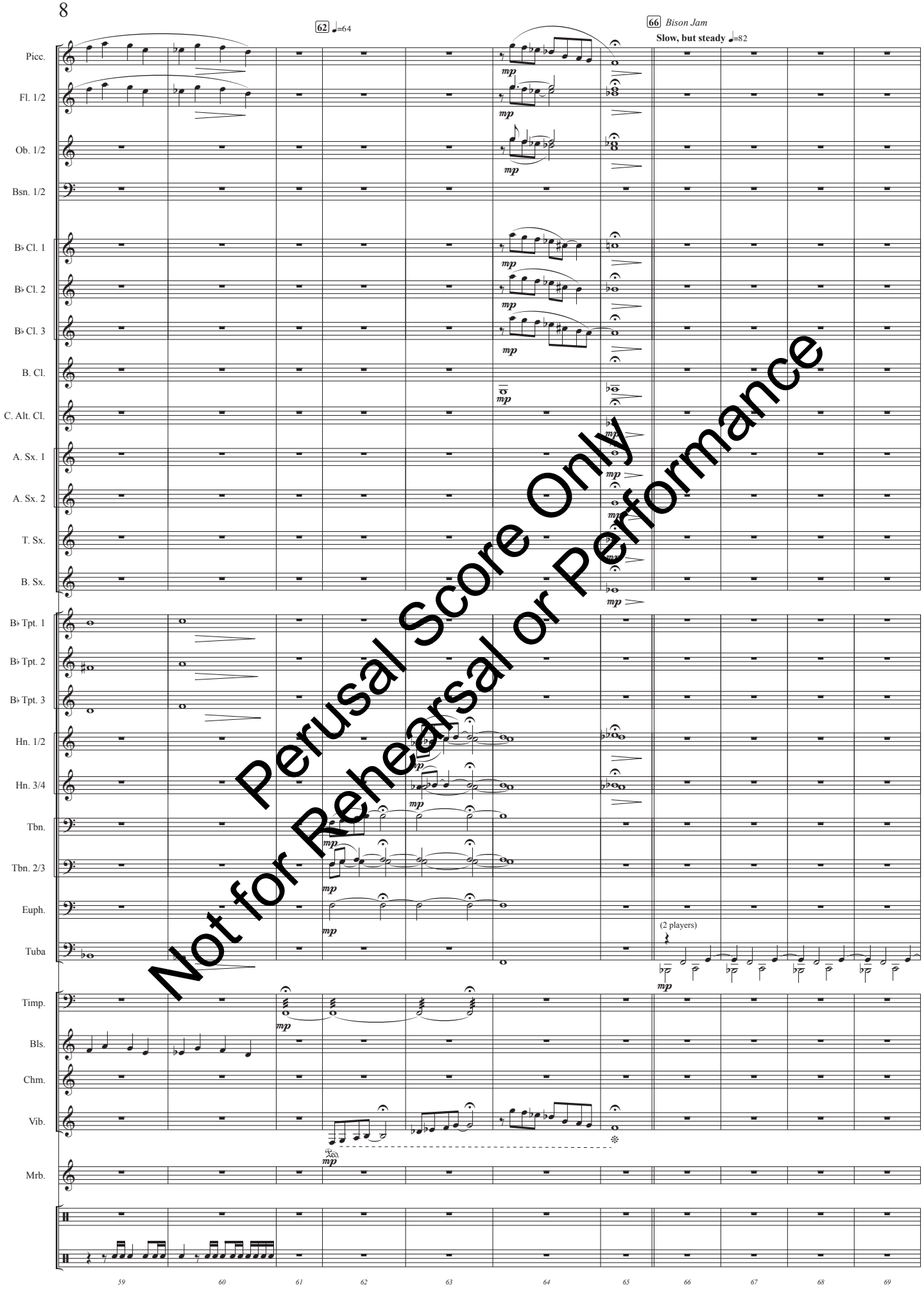

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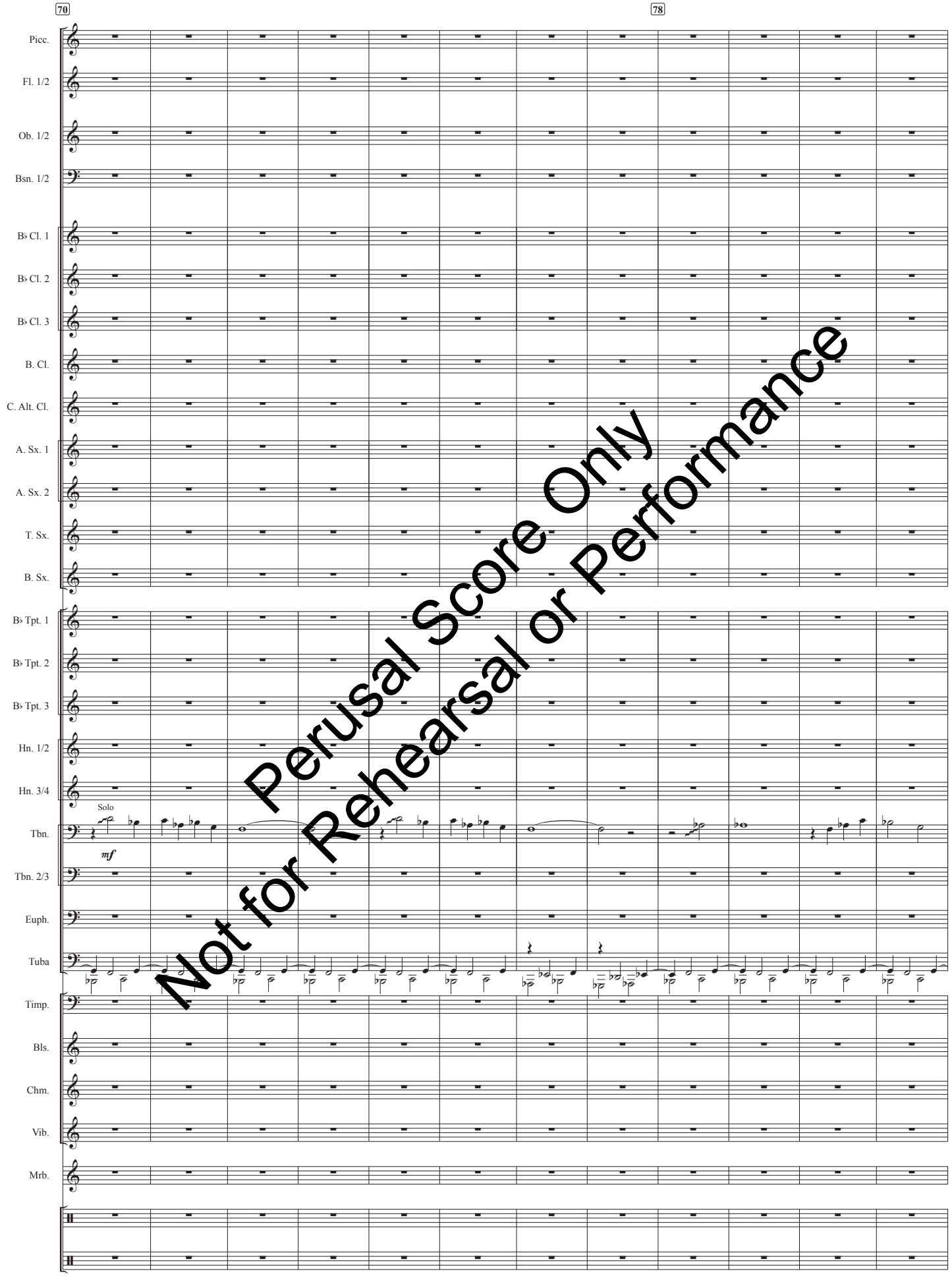

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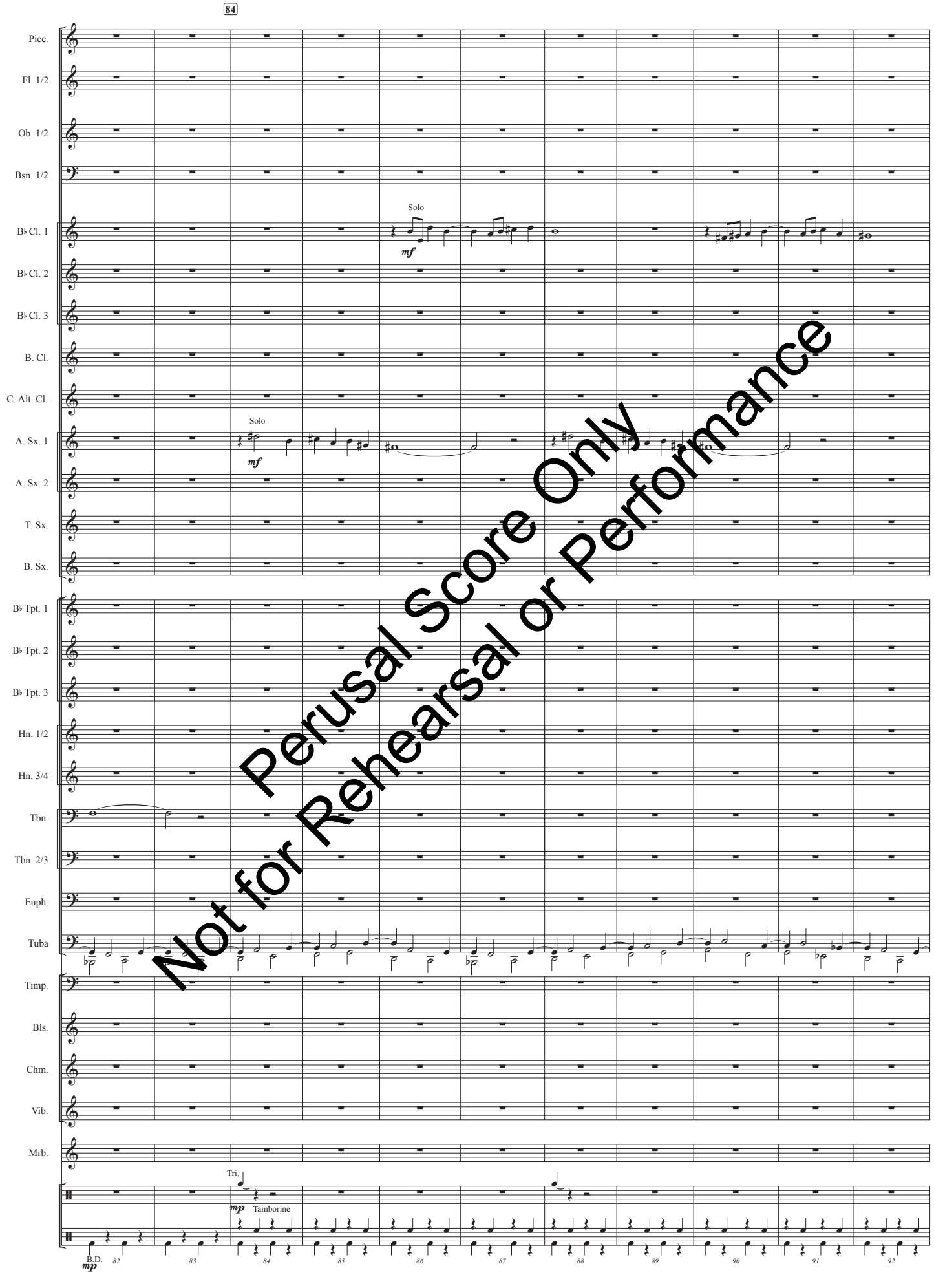

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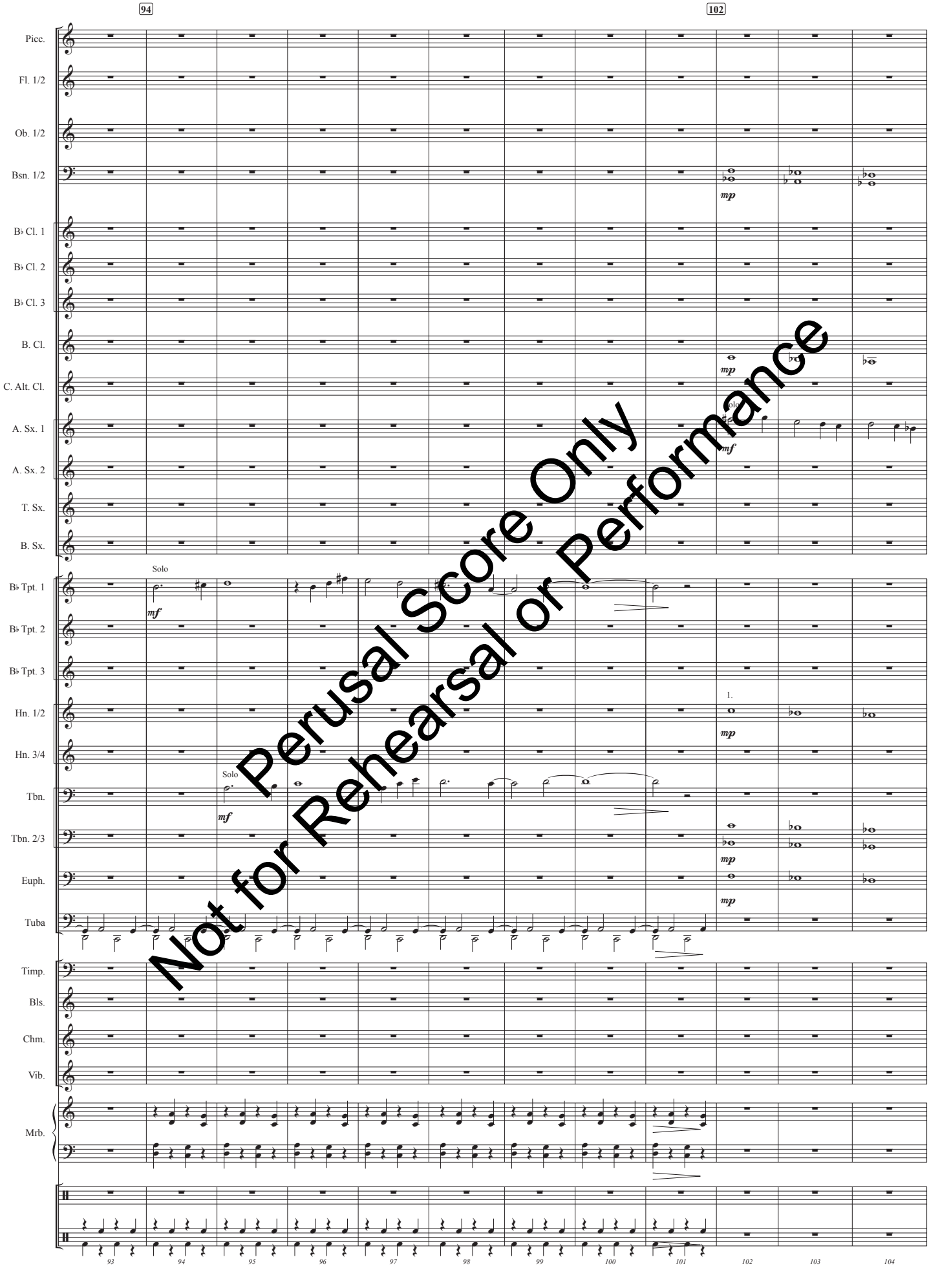

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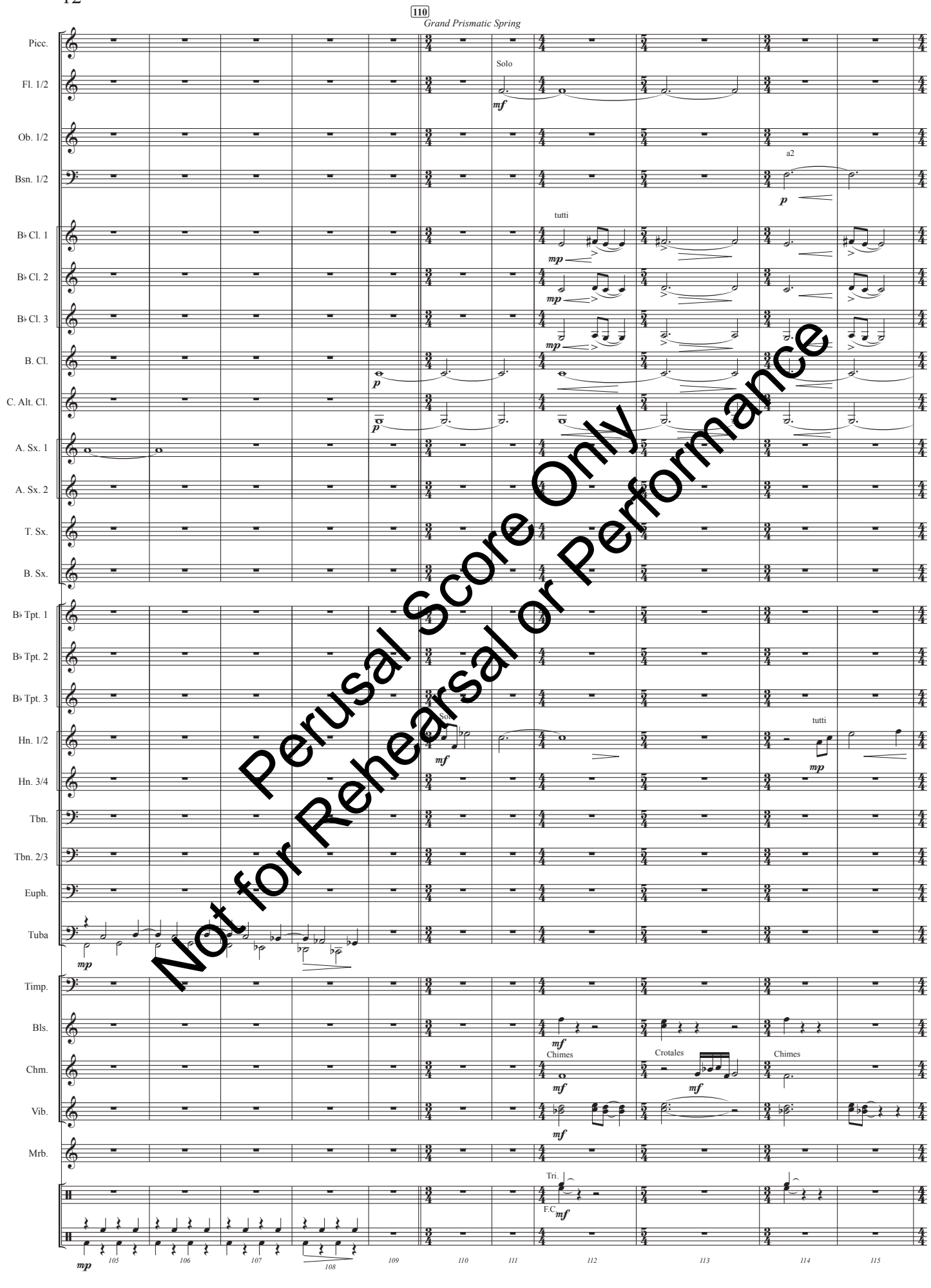

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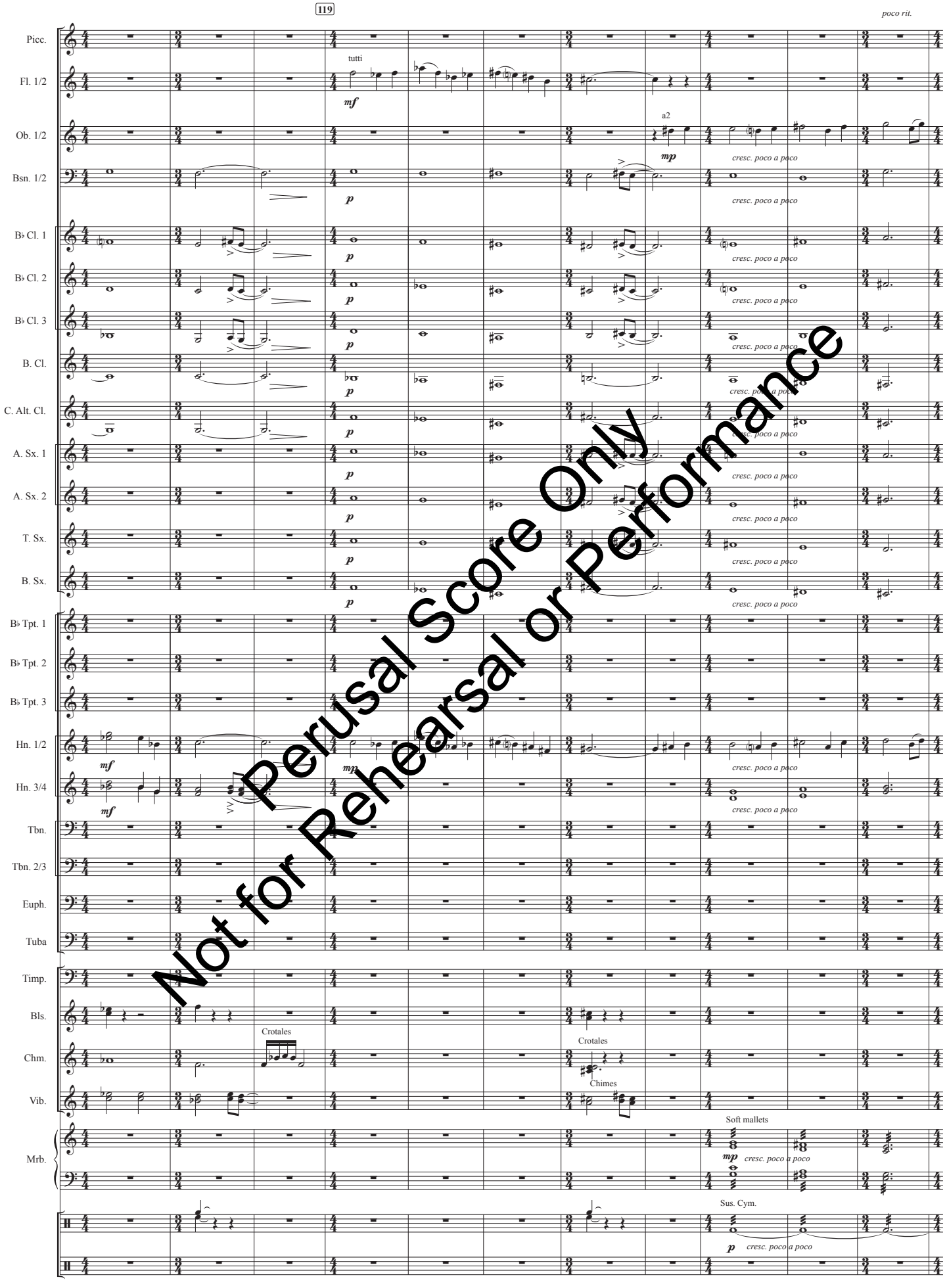

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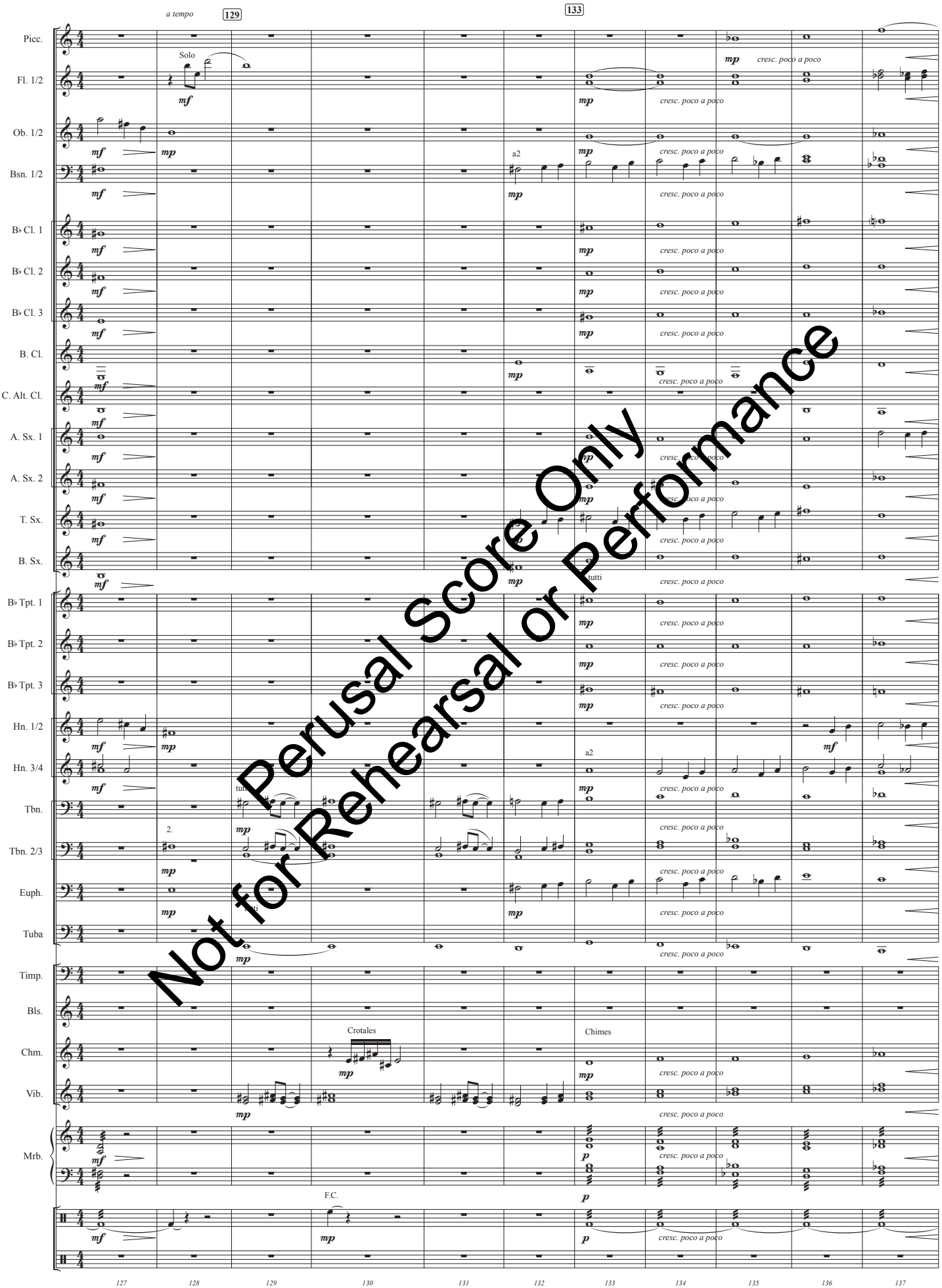

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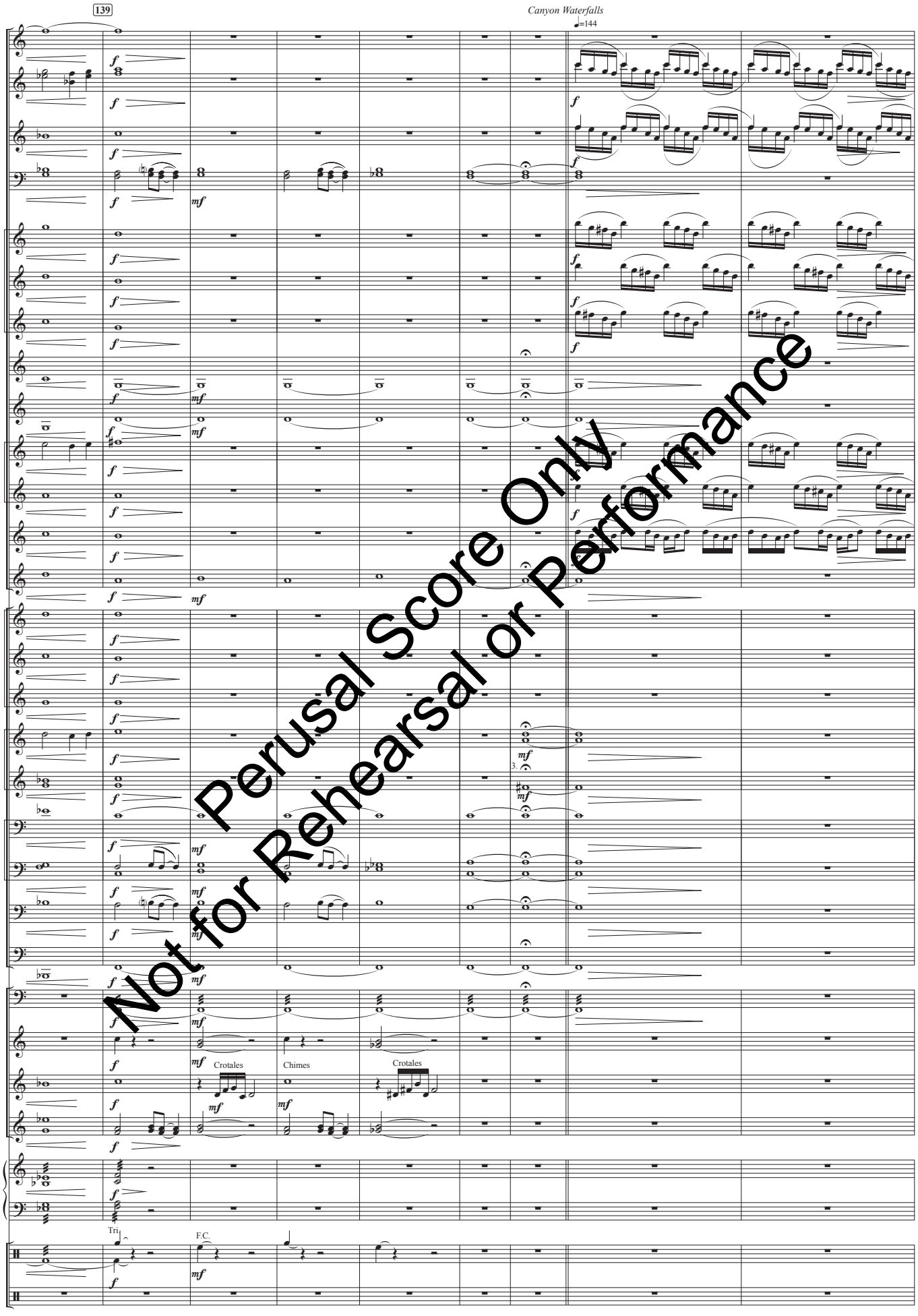

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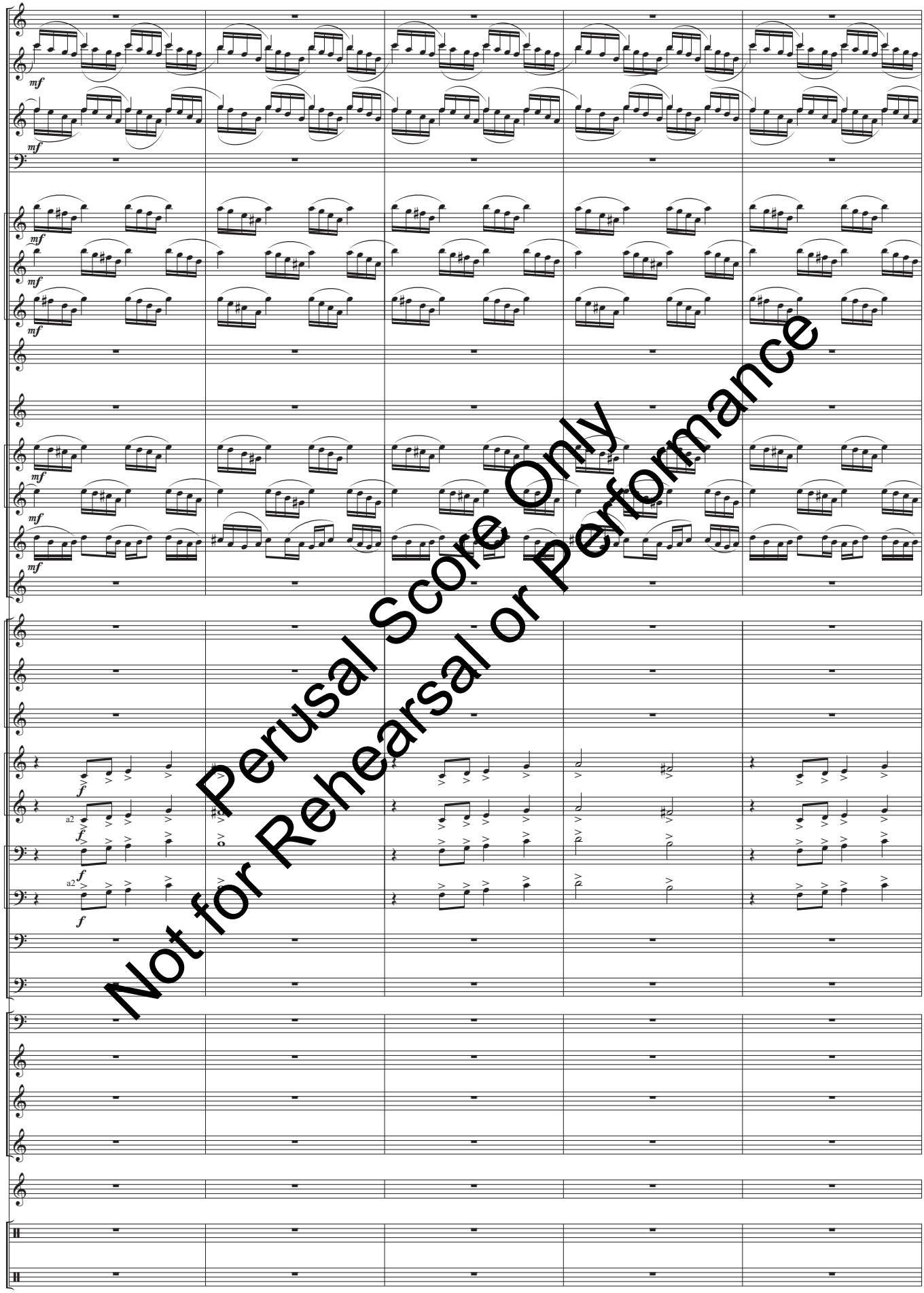

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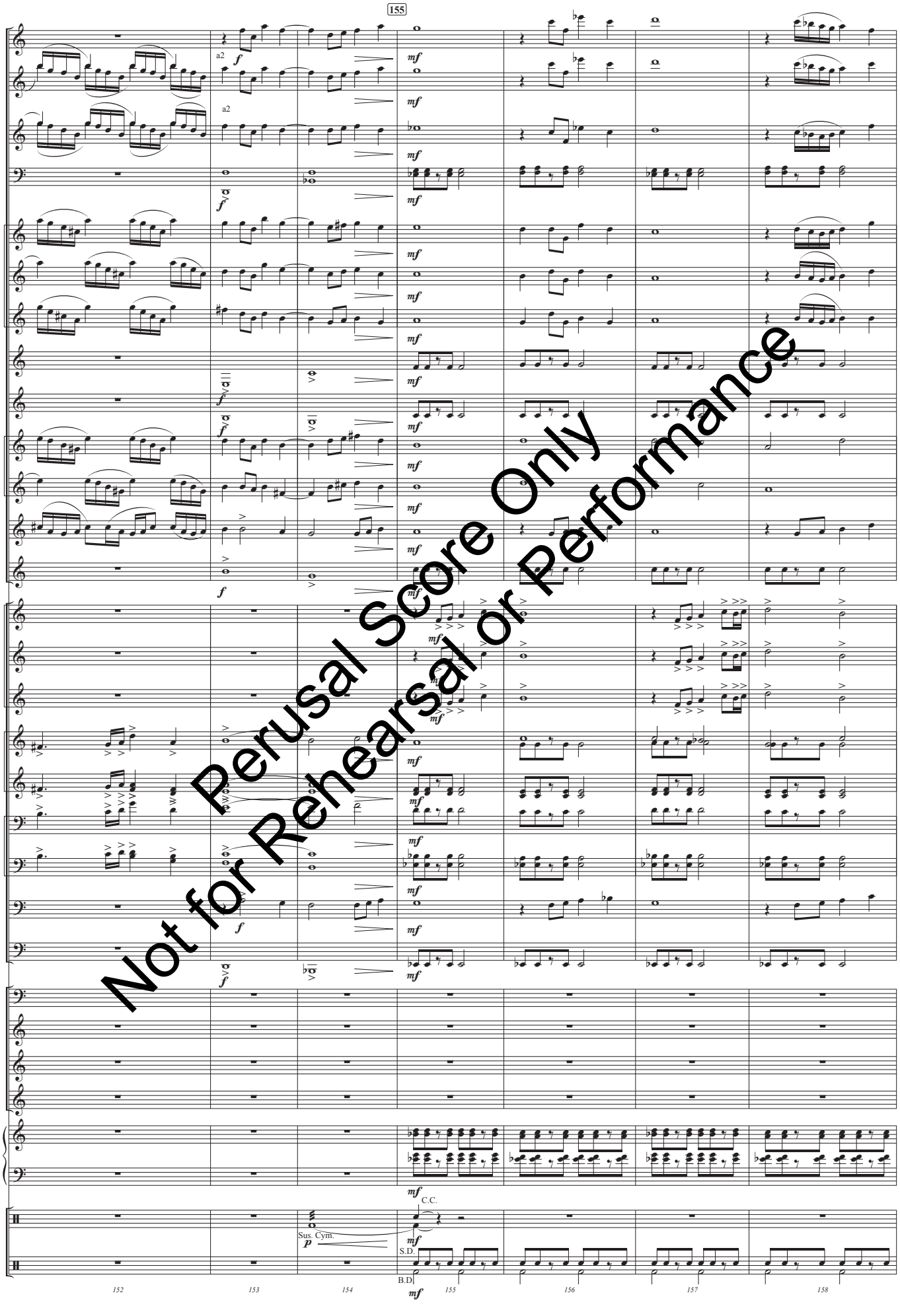

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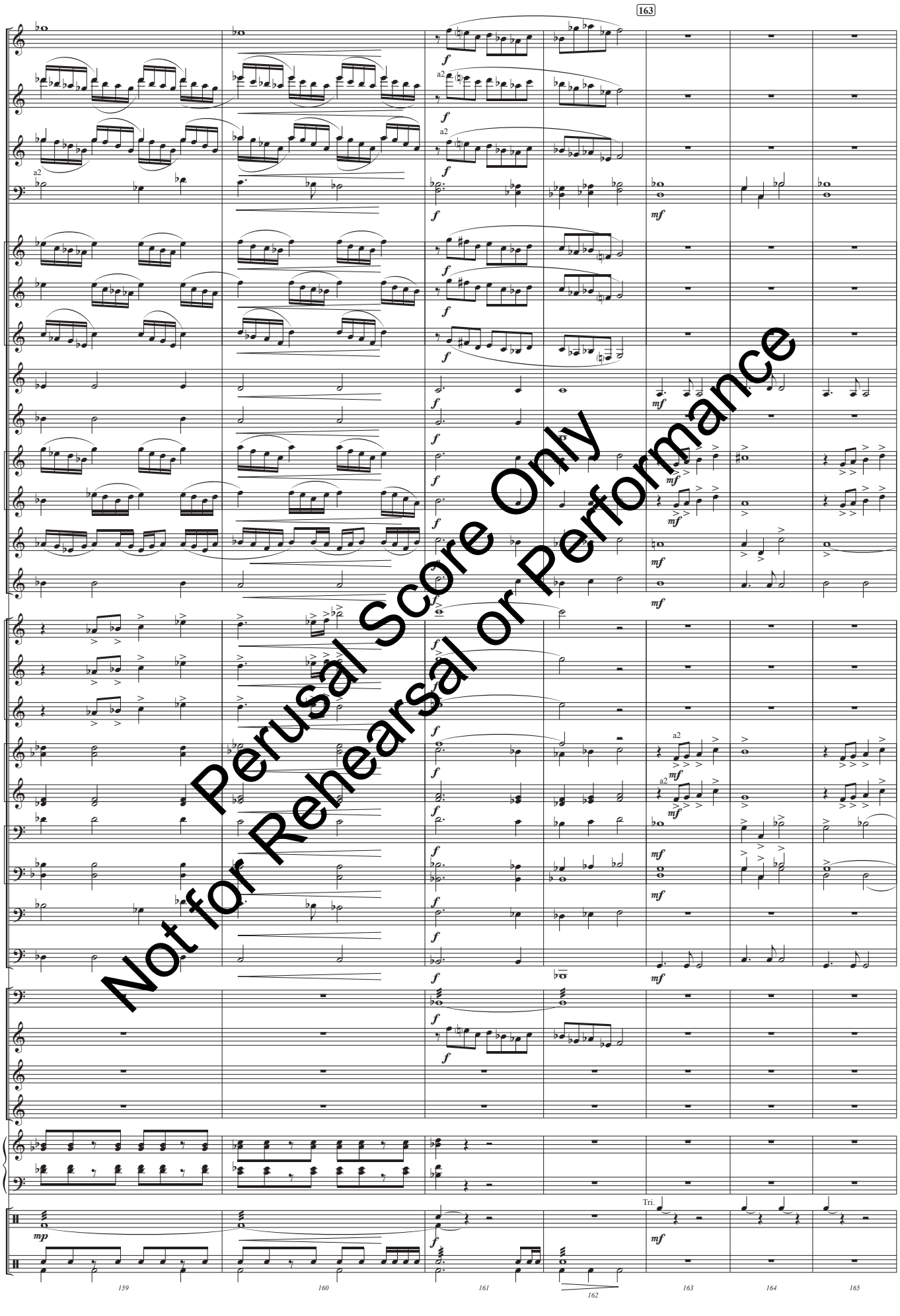

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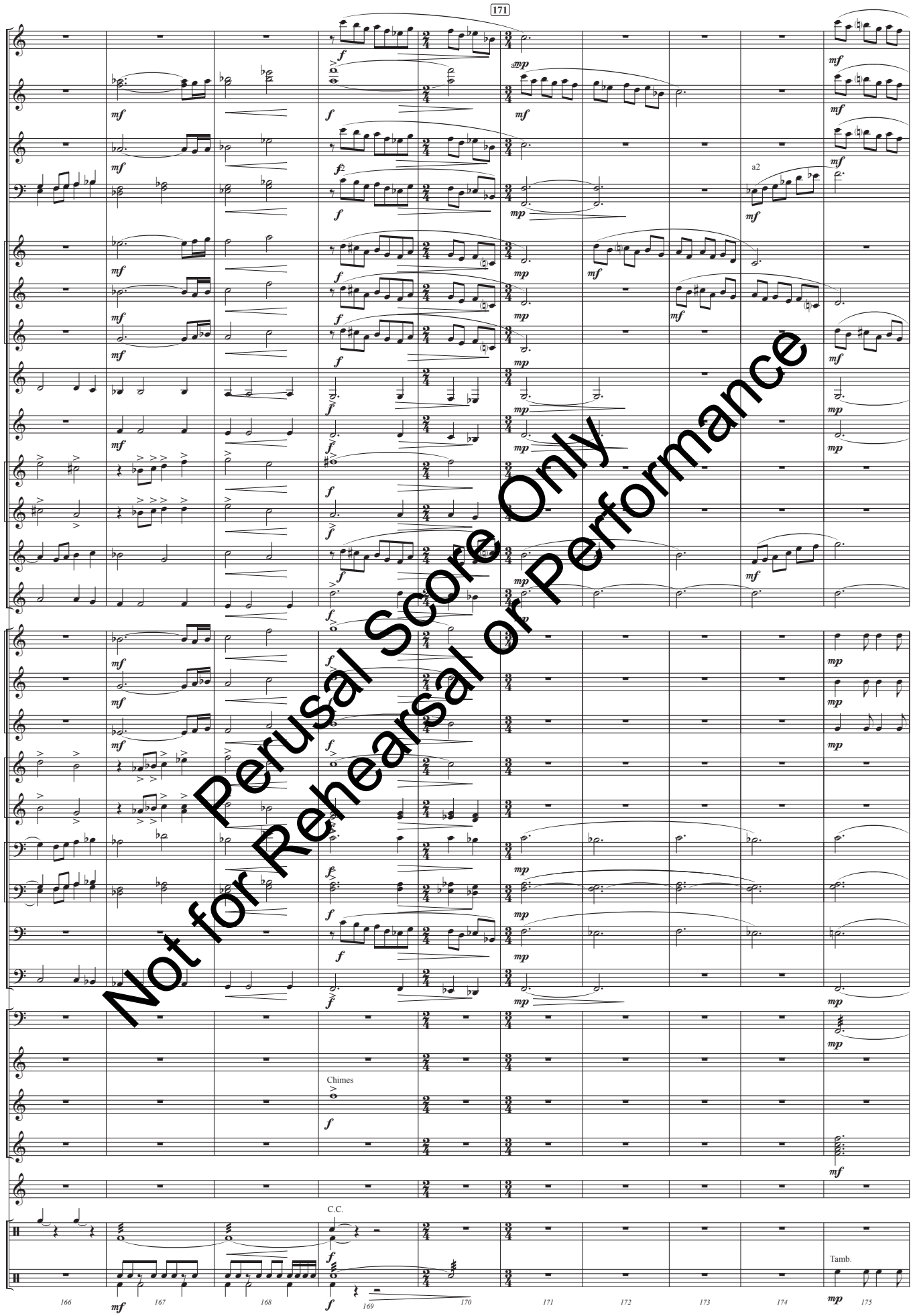

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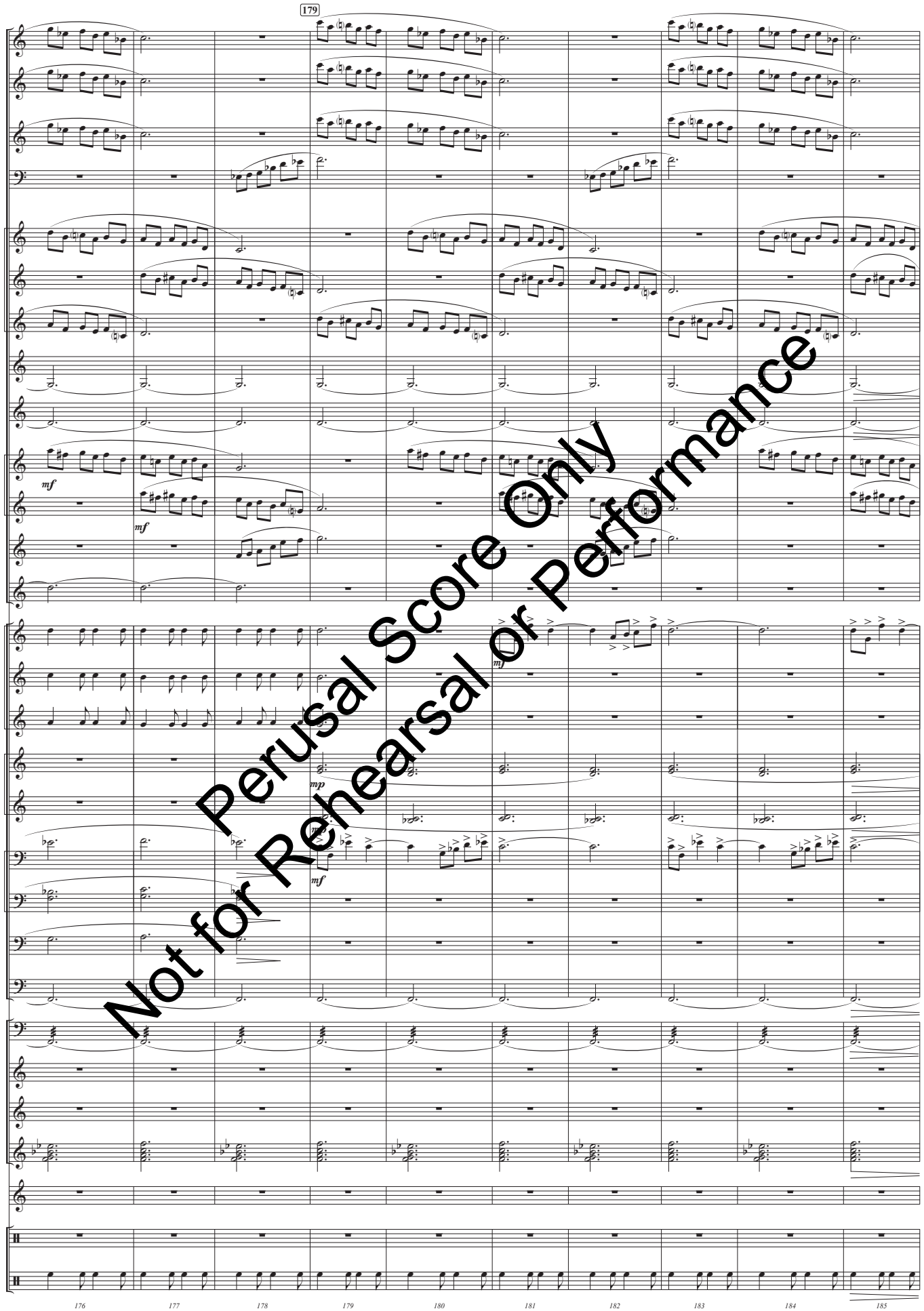

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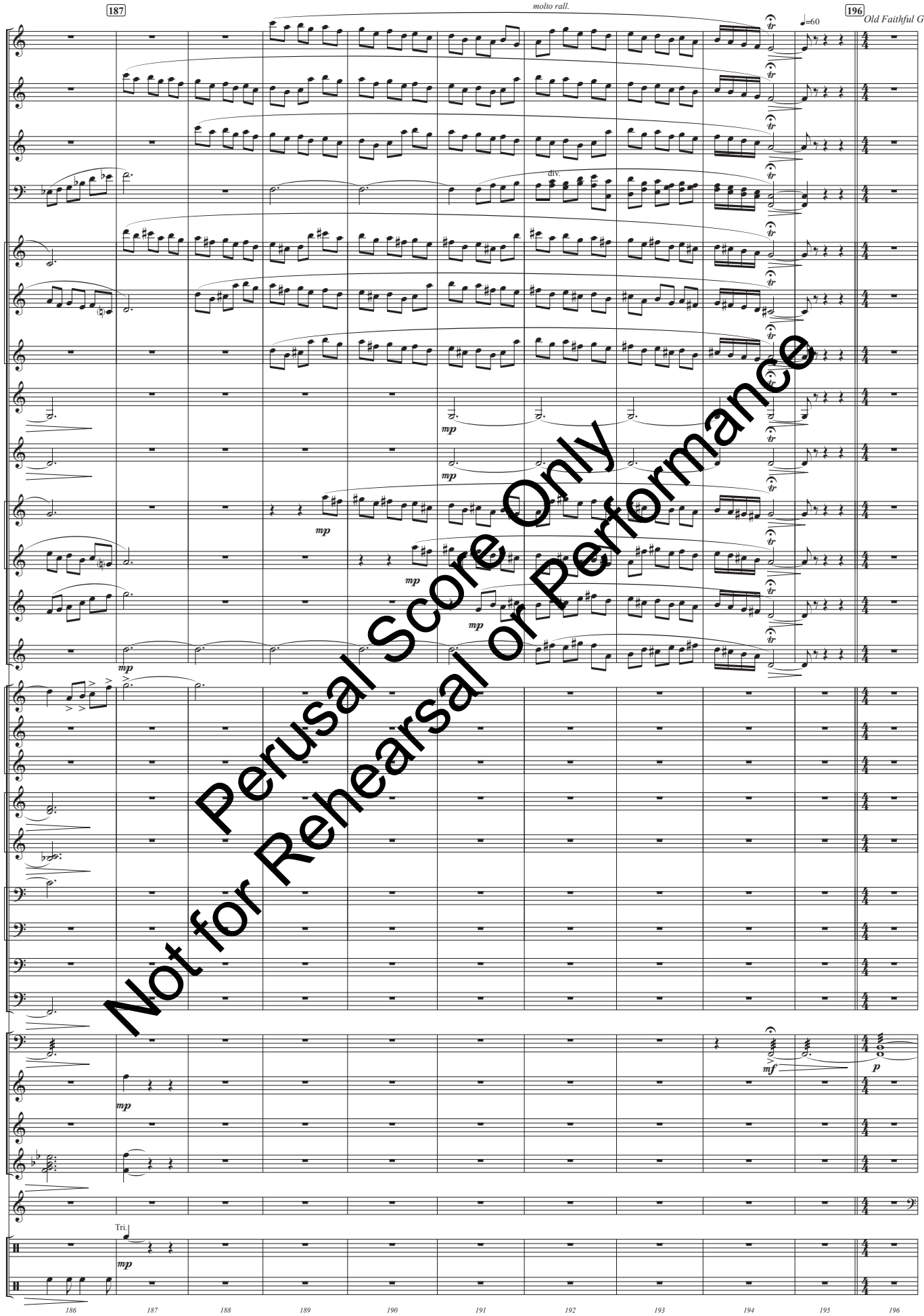

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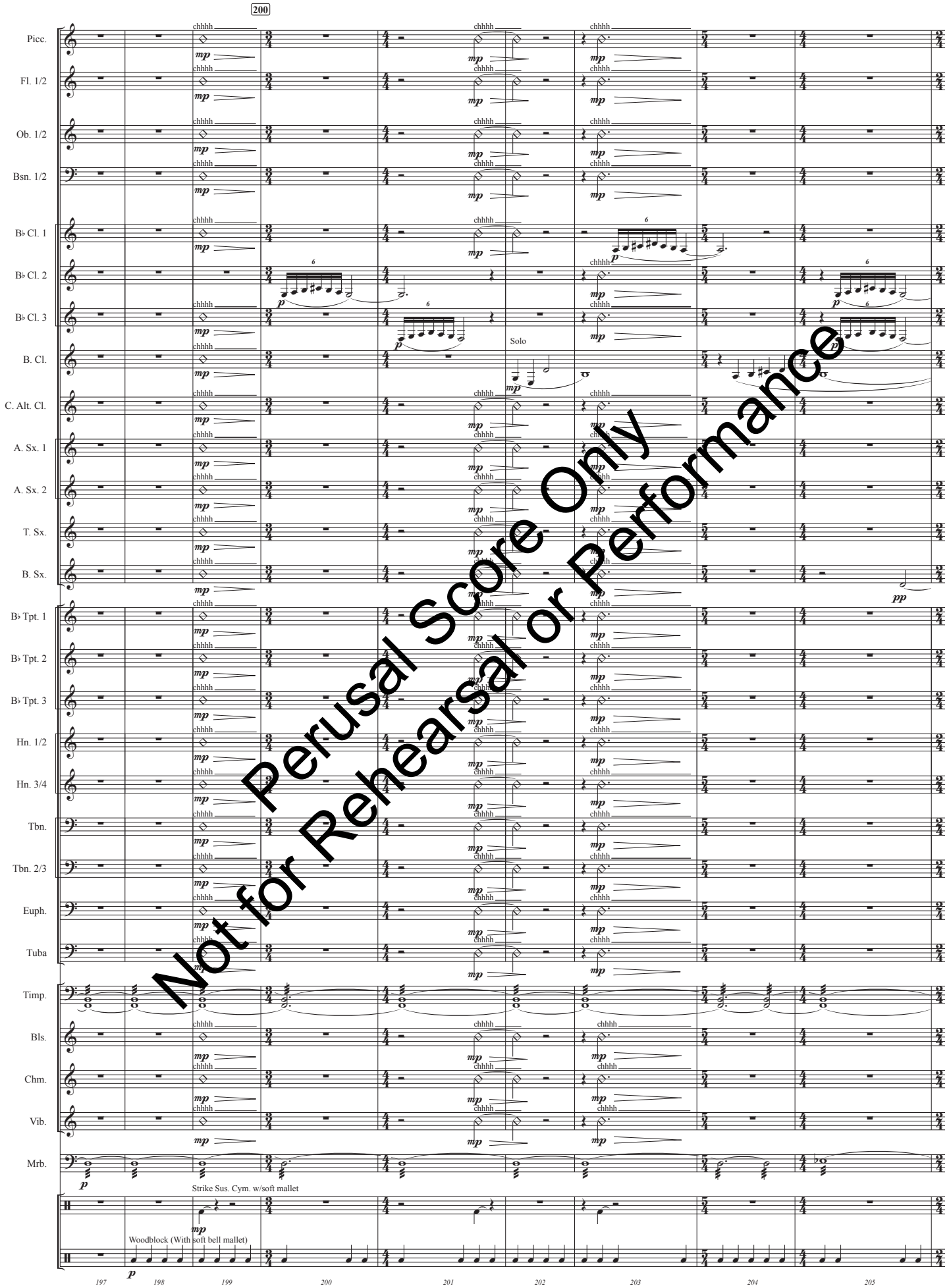

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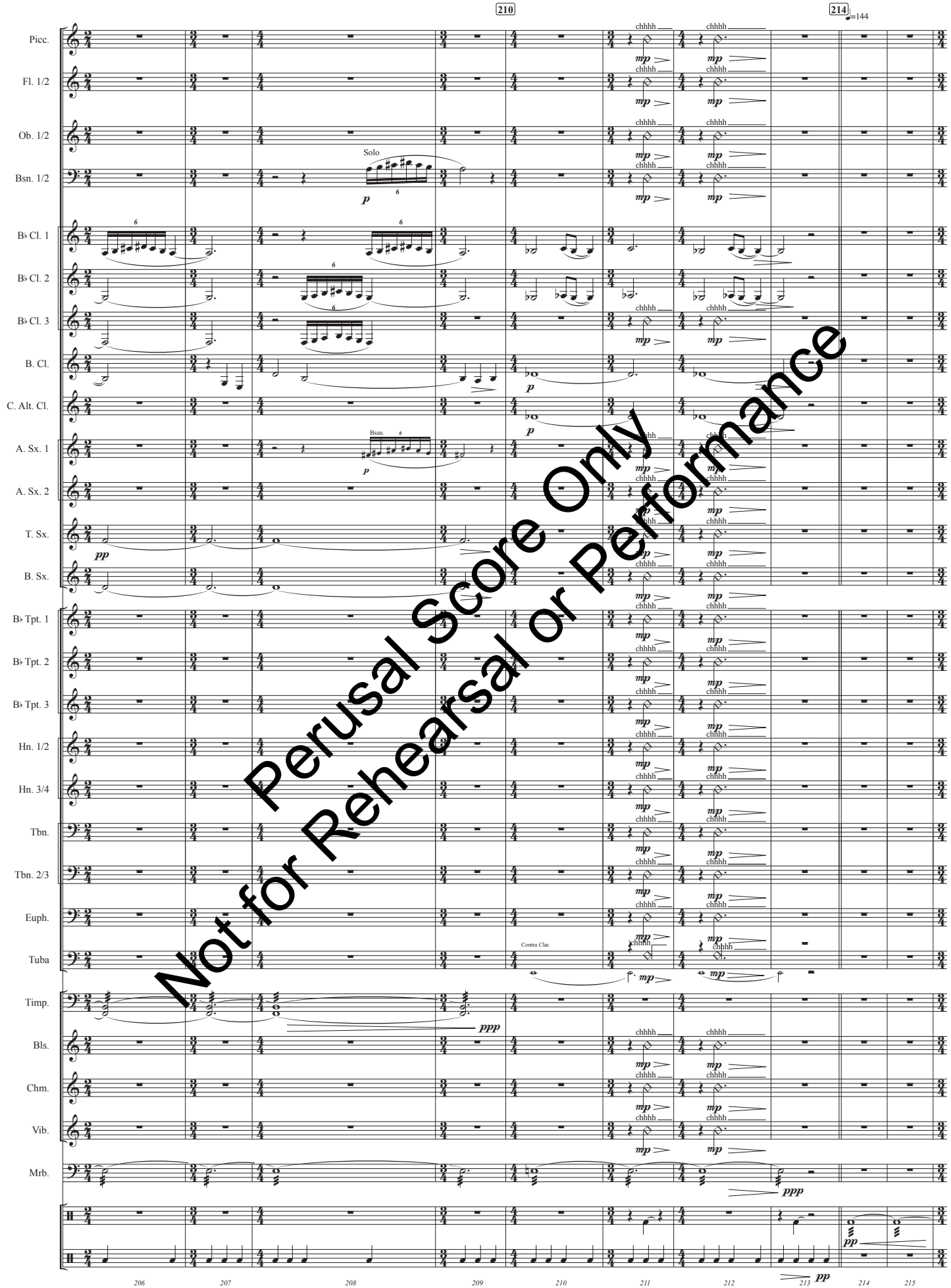

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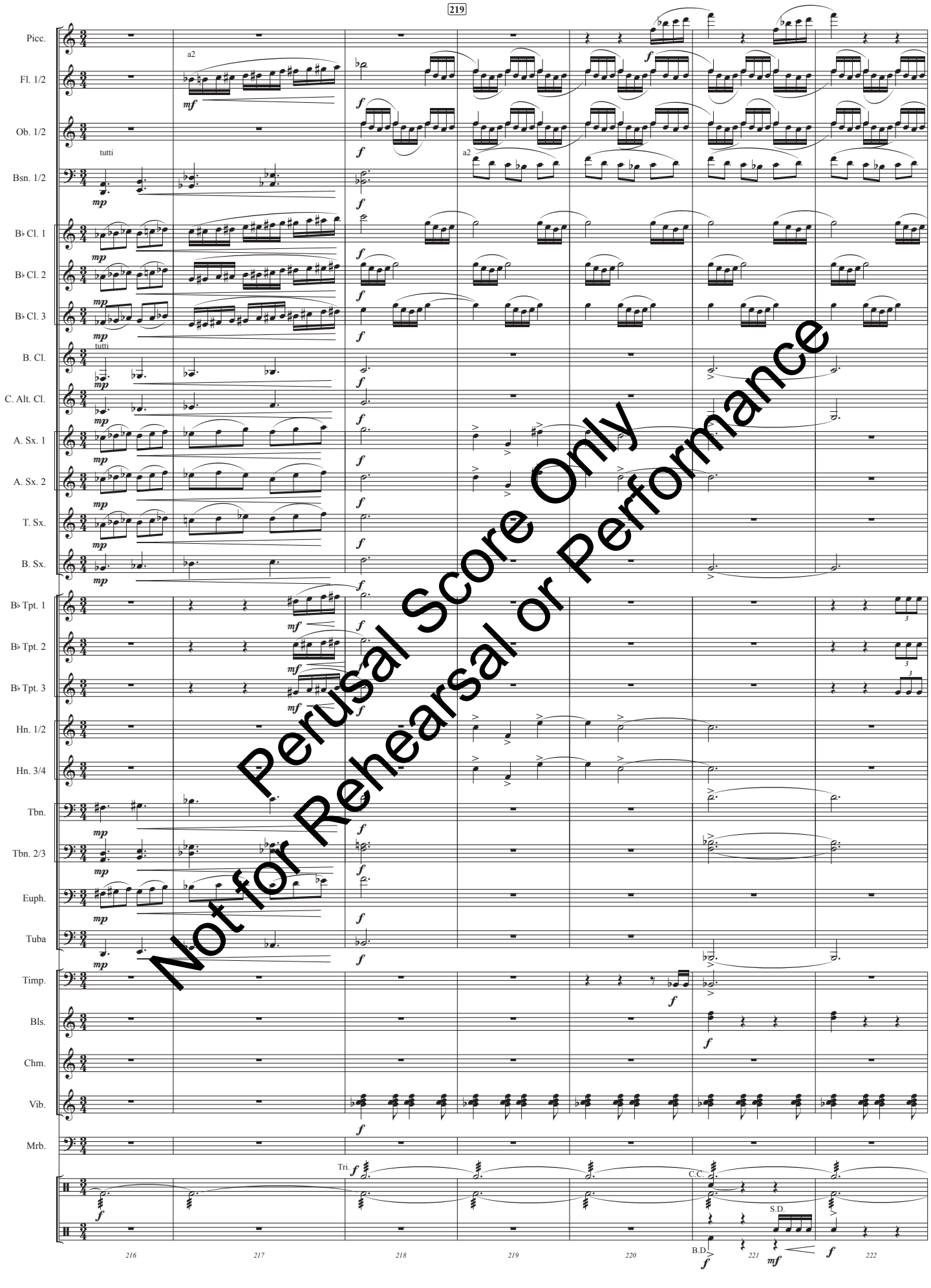

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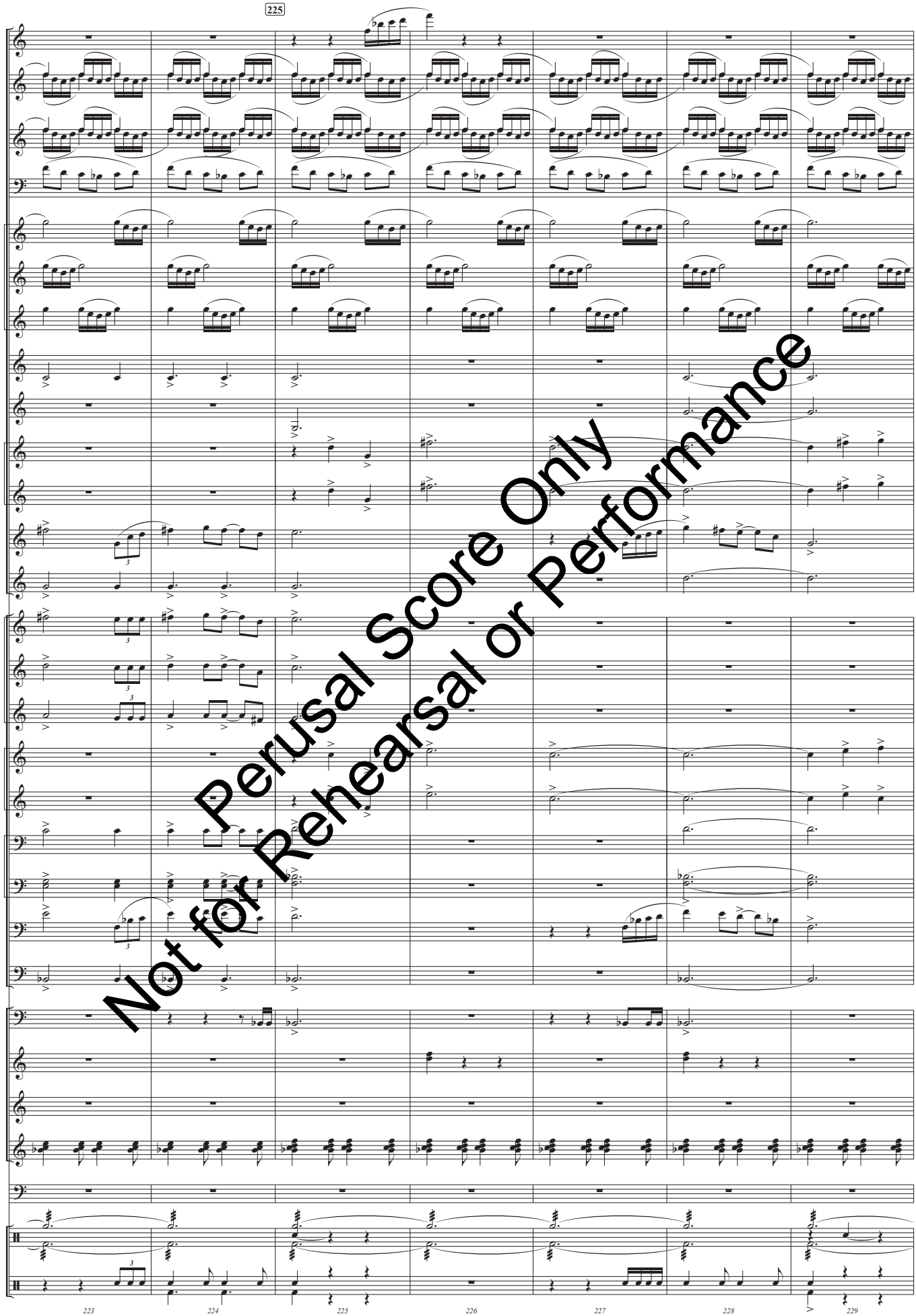

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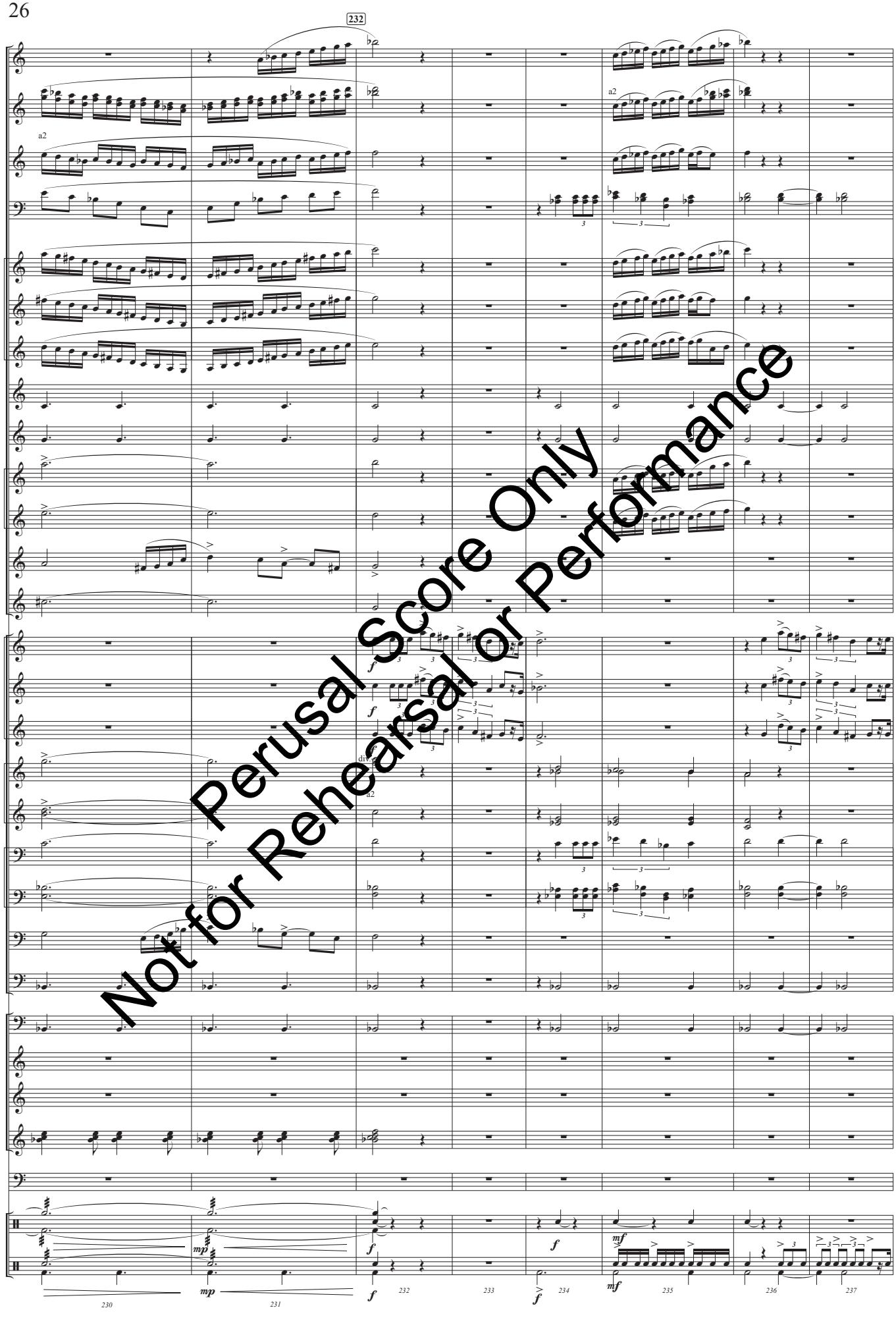

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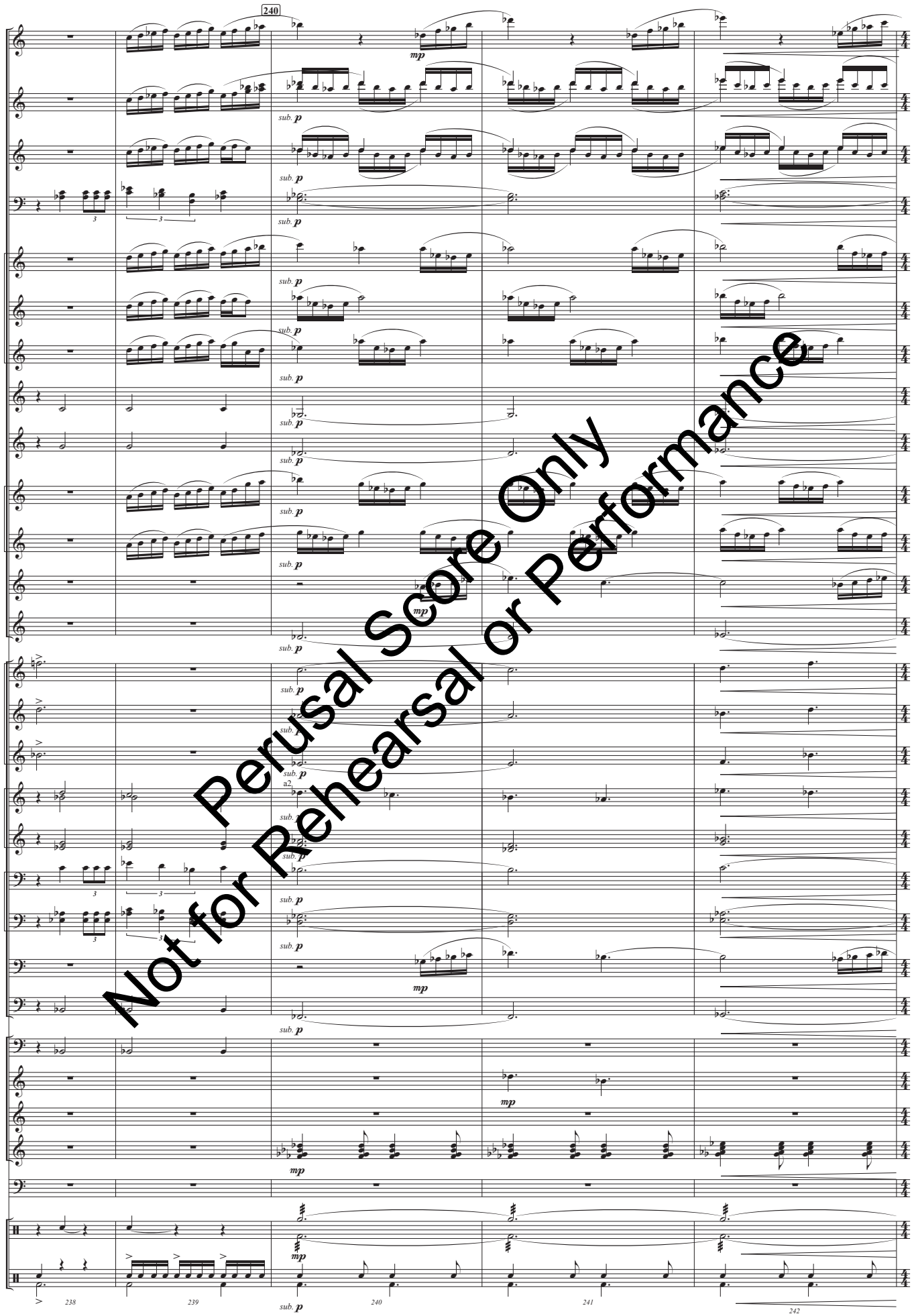

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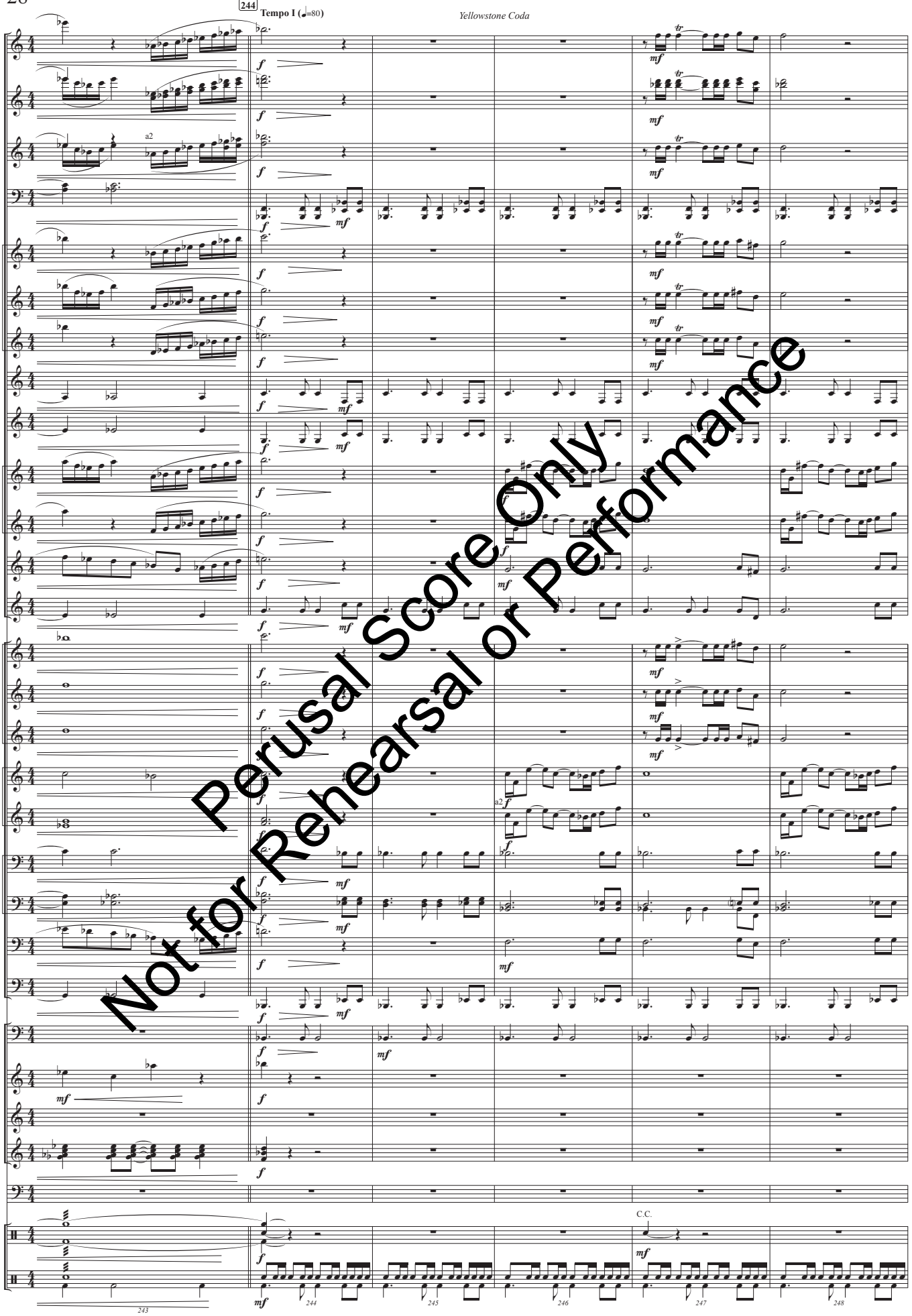

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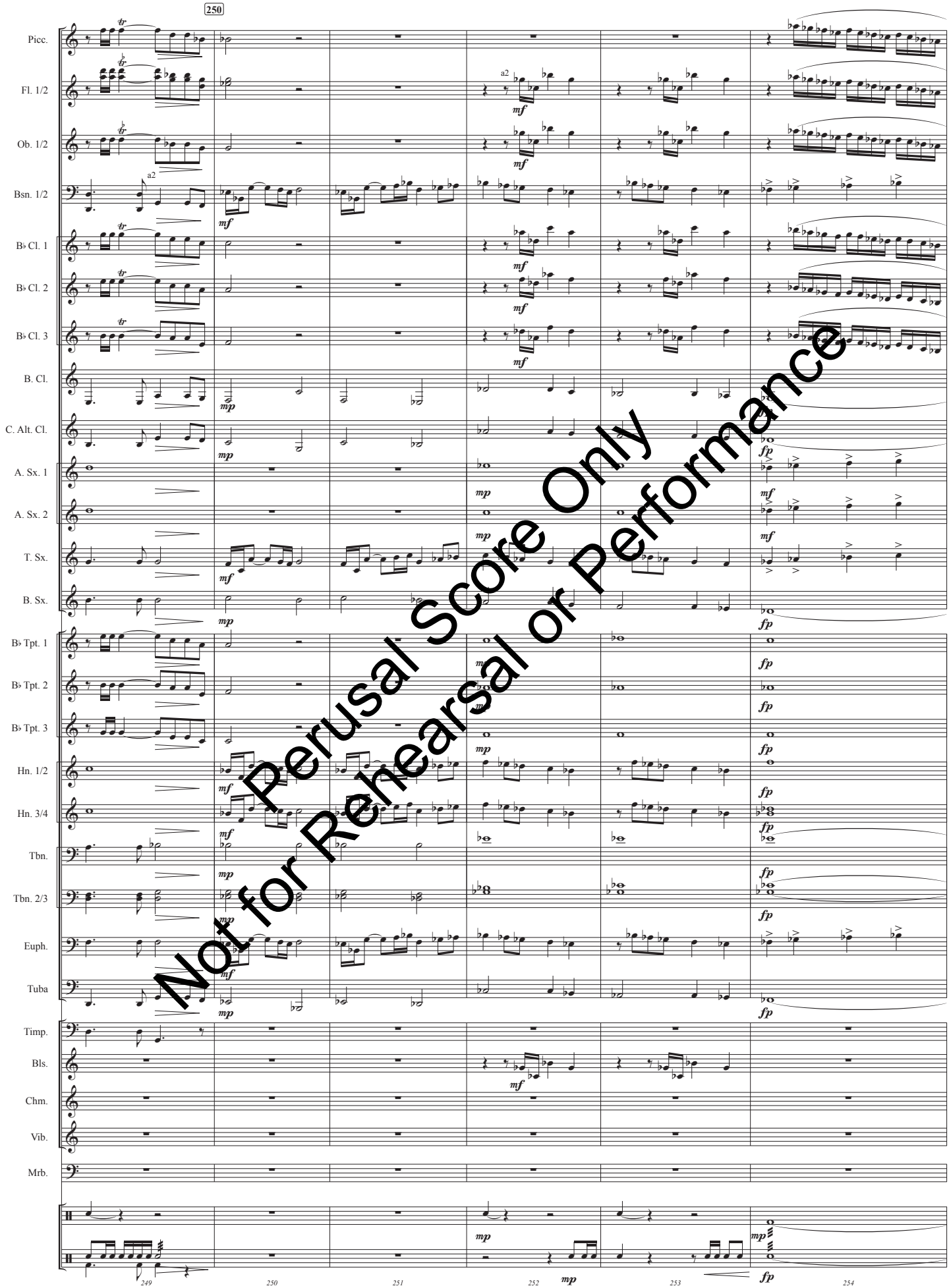
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Ob. 1/2
Bsn. 1/2
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B♭ Cl. 3
B. Cl.
C. Alt. Cl.
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A. Sx. 2
T. Sx.
B. Sx.
B♭ Tpt. 1
B♭ Tpt. 2
B♭ Tpt. 3
Hn. 1/2
Hn. 3/4
Tbn.
Tbn. 2/3
Euph.
Tuba
Timp.
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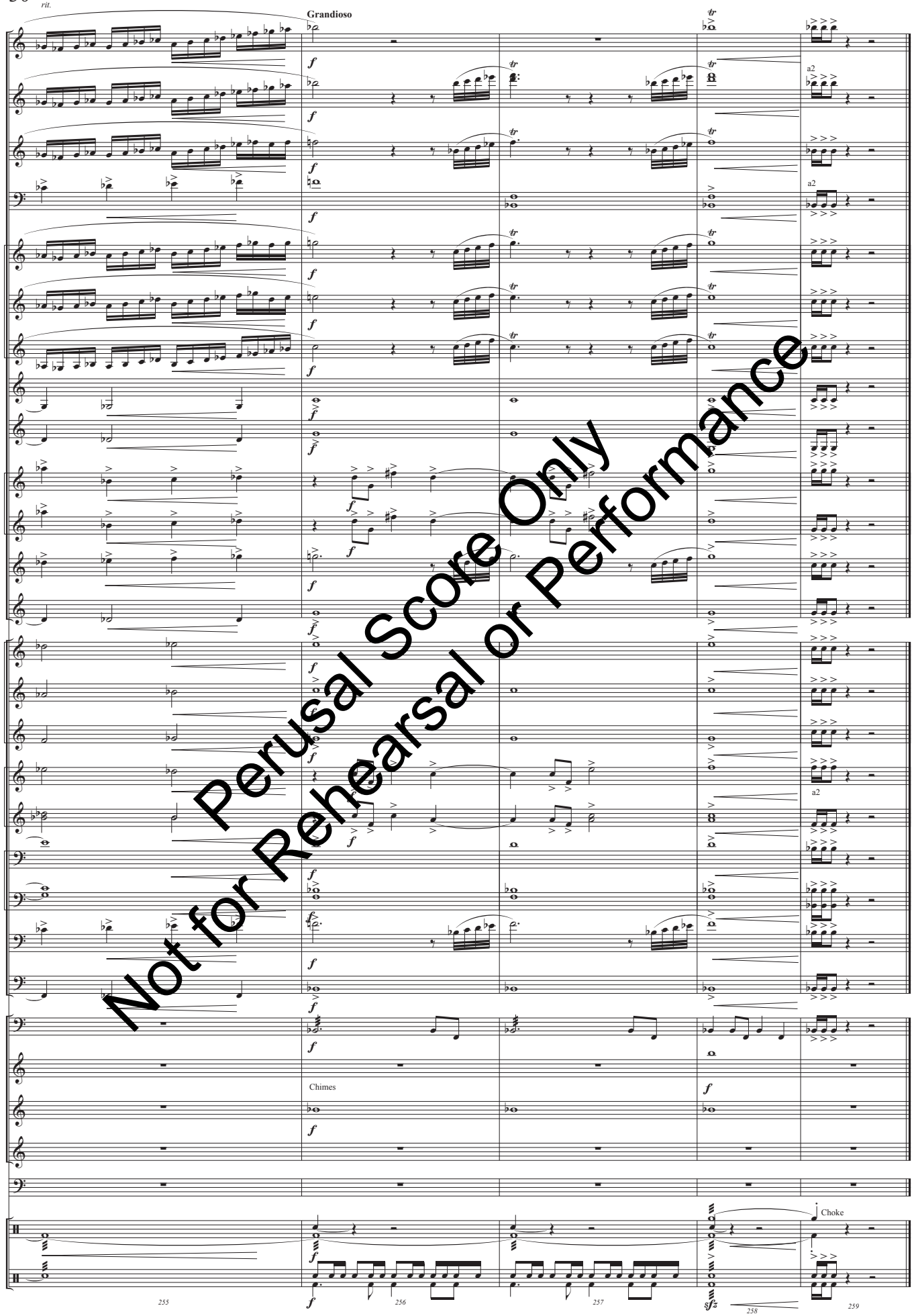

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