Firmament Etudes

I. Horizon's Edge

II. Colors from a Changing Sky (1994)

III. Moonsprites

Perusal Score Only

Timothy Kramer

1997

FIRMAMENT ETUDES

I. *Horizon's Edge*
II. *Colors from a Changing Sky*
III. *Moonsprites*

The first and last etude in this triptych were written in response to the second etude, Colors from a Changing Sky, a work completed in 1994 for the *San Antonio International Keyboard Competition.* Horizon's Edge and Moonsprites were completed in 1997 and written for pianists Audrey Andrist, Rafael Guerra, John Krebs, Max Lifchitz, and Carolyn True. These works draw on material from the central movement, and elaborate on the programmatic theme. The etudes may be performed as a triptych, or the second etude, Colors from a Changing Sky, may be performed separately. The program notes follow below:

Horizon's Edge

> ... the break of dawn, with growing intensity, then the sun pierces the firmament. All the colors of the spectrum appear in a searing light. This work presents a slow moving crescendo which introduces gestures and harmonic color.

Colors from a Changing Sky (1994) - commissioned by the *San Antonio International Piano Competition.*

> This work, inspired by the vivid images of a Texas sky, began under the working title Etude gris (Grey Etude). I was initially interested in how black and white keys could interlock to generate passages which would sound difficult but were very pianistic and fairly easy to learn. I was also interested in designing a competition piece that would challenge each pianist with different aspects of playing. Hence, the opening section presents questions about phrasing and quick dynamic contrasts, the central section demands sheer athletic strength, and the closing passage calls for a sensitivity to both color and line. In order to tie the sections together, a melodic "spine" runs entirely through the piece. Initially present in two and three note cells, it expands in the central section to five notes and eventually blooms against very slow harmonic movement in the ending section. Seemingly disparate elements soon coalesce into an overwhelming force and then slowly dissipate, a drama often played out in sudden changes of weather.

Moonsprites

> This etude was initially inspired by this poem:
>
> At midnight, in the month of June,
> I stand beneath the mystic moon.
> An opiate vapour, dewy, dim,
> Exhales from out her golden rim,
> And, softly dripping, drop by drop,
> Upon the quiet mountain top,
> Steals drowsily and musically,
> Into the universal valley.
>
> - Edgar Allan Poe, "The Sleeper" (1831)
>
> The piece introduces reflections of musical characters that were associated with light in the previous etudes. It follows a quasi-rondo format and presents a number of light, capricious figures with obvious programmatic connections to the title.

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PERFORMANCE NOTES

1. Accidentals carry through the measure. Some are added for ease of reading.

2. Pedaling may be slightly altered in order to accommodate different pianos and halls.

3. While all the tempi are given with metronome markings, those marked circa(ca.) are - within reason - open to some interpretation.

4. For Colors...

   If the work is performed on a smaller piano, the opening gesture may require partial use of the damper pedal (1/4 Ped.) in order to achieve the proper effect. If this is done, release the pedal slowly into the third beat of the first measure.

   The expanding ligatures on page 7 represent accelerations in rhythm (not tempo) across the broader pulse of a dotted half-note or a dotted whole-note.

5. For Moonsprites

   The strumming inside the piano should be elegant and not distracting. The only exception to this is near the end of the work where the player may be both bold and dramatic.

6. Durations:

Horizon's Edge	4'08"
Colors from a Changing Sky	7'12"
Moonsprites	5'10"
Total	16'30"

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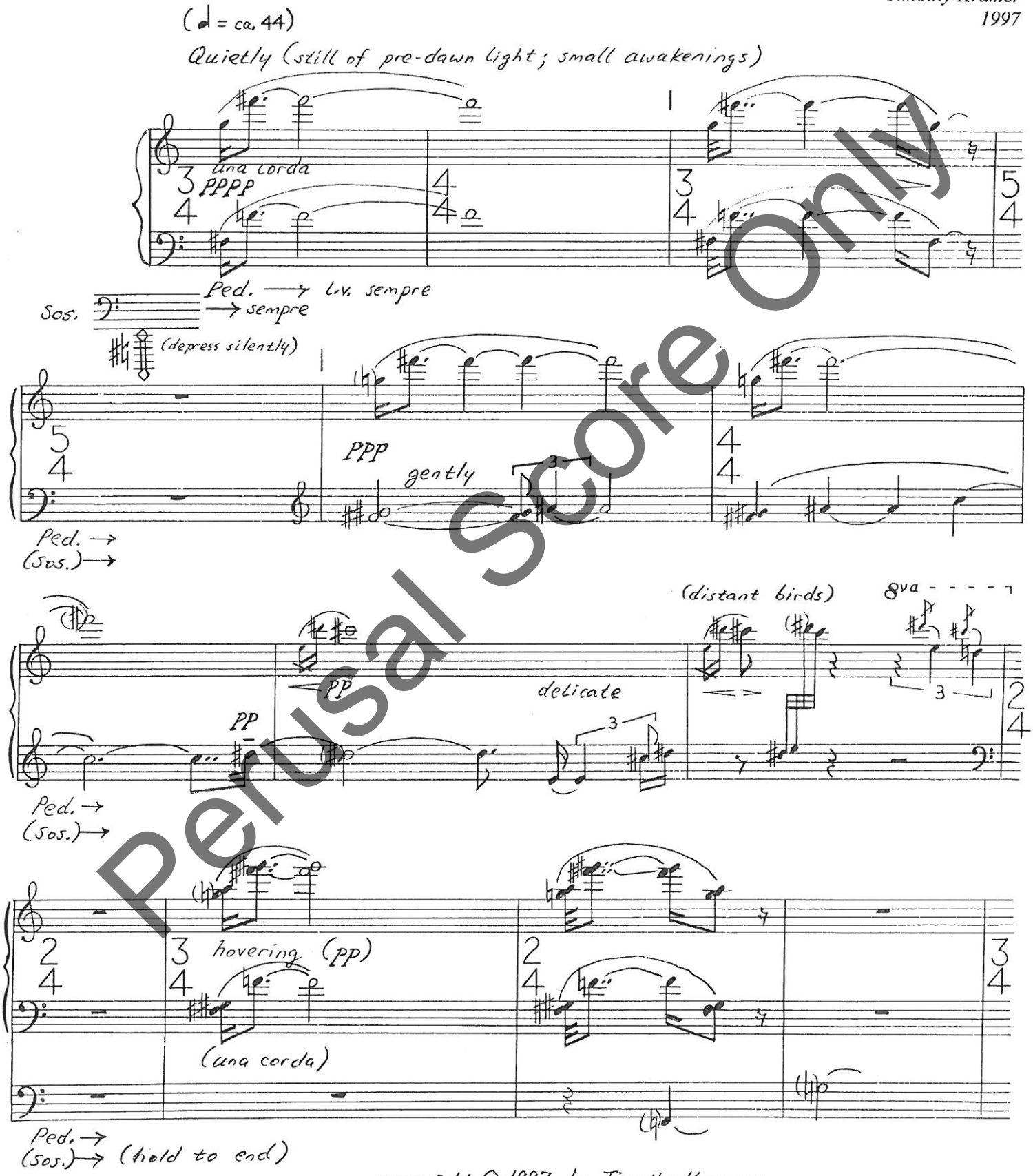
Horizon's Edge

Timothy Kramer
1997



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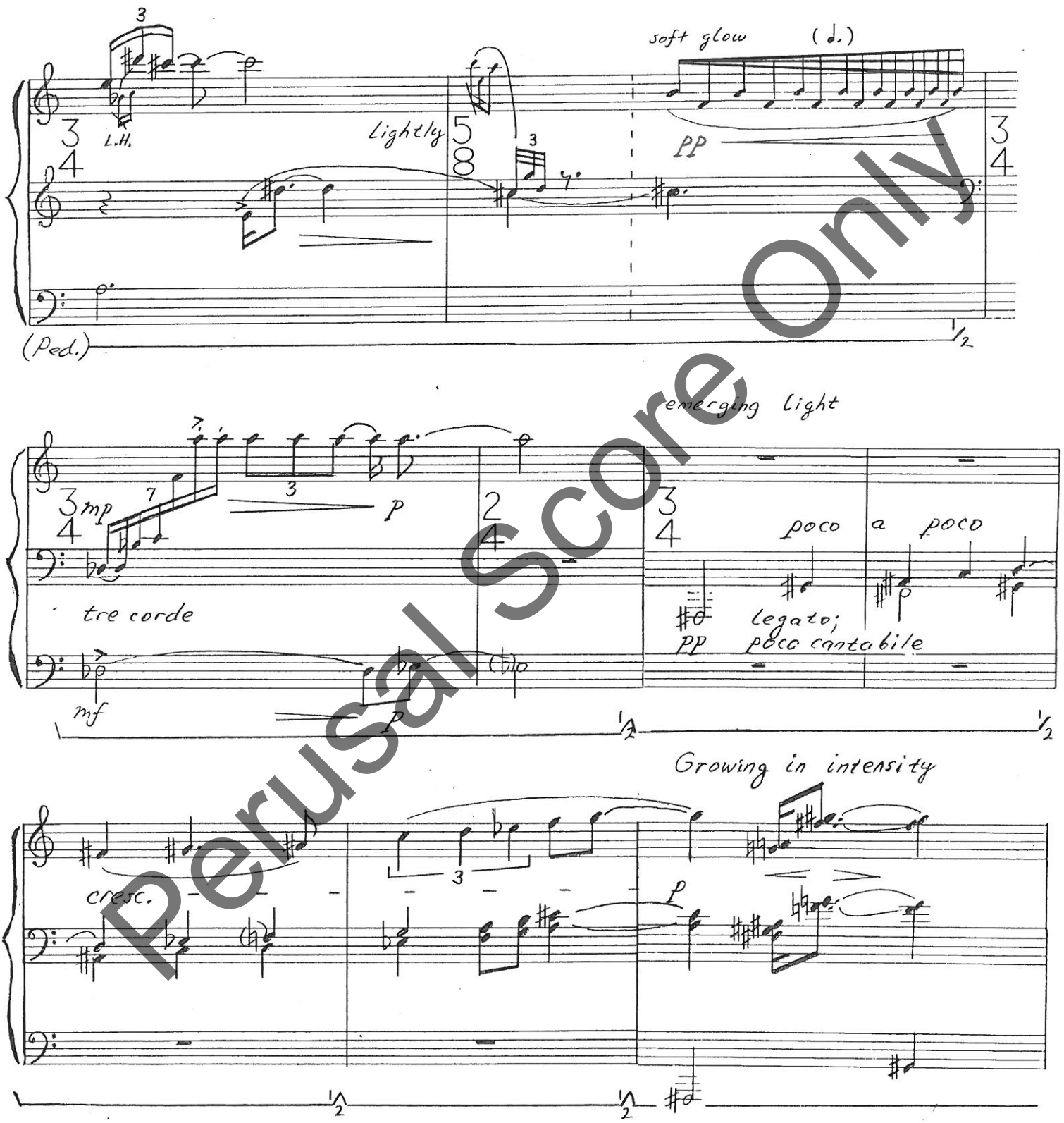

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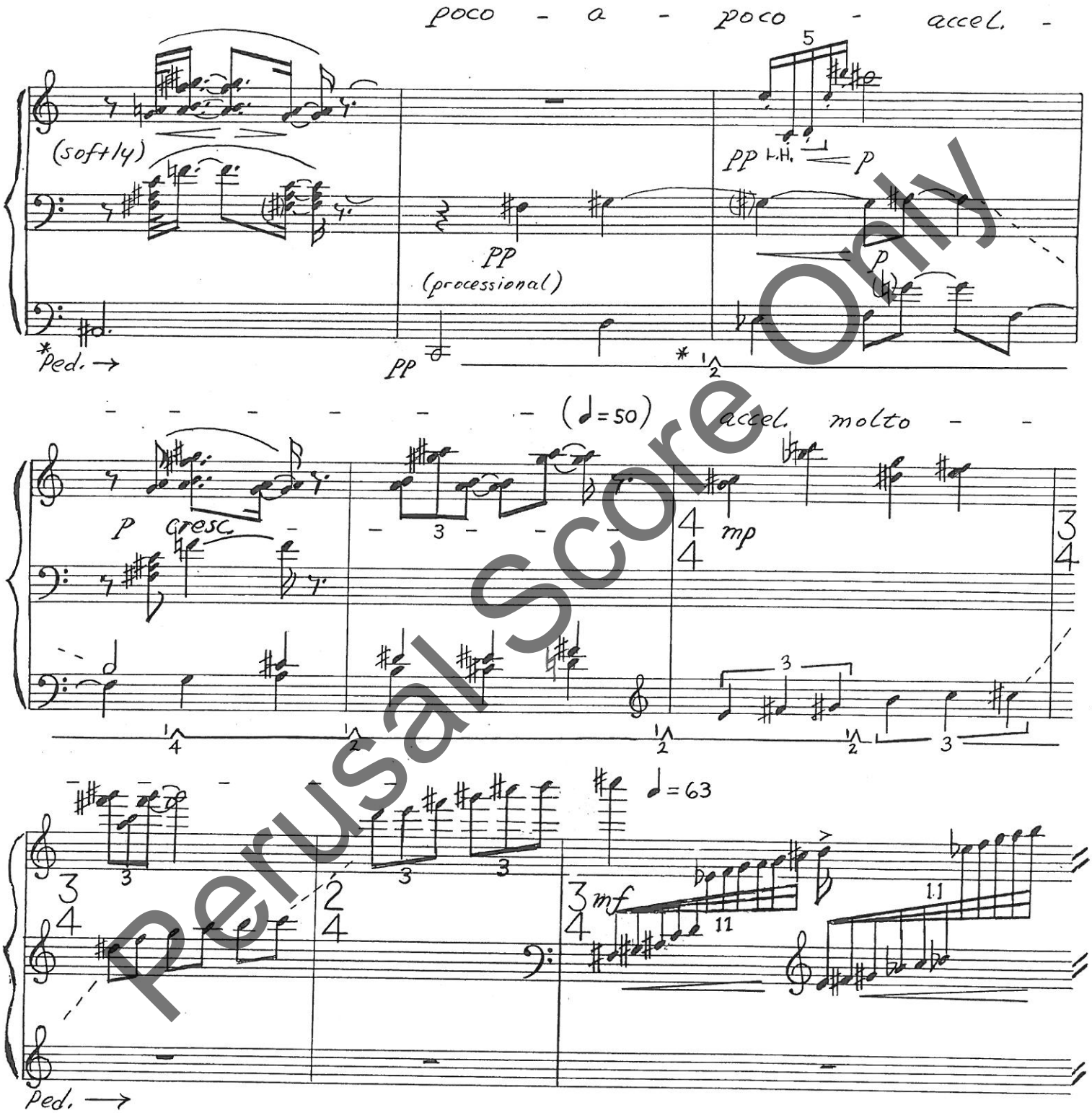

* always leave some strings ringing. Only partially clear damper.

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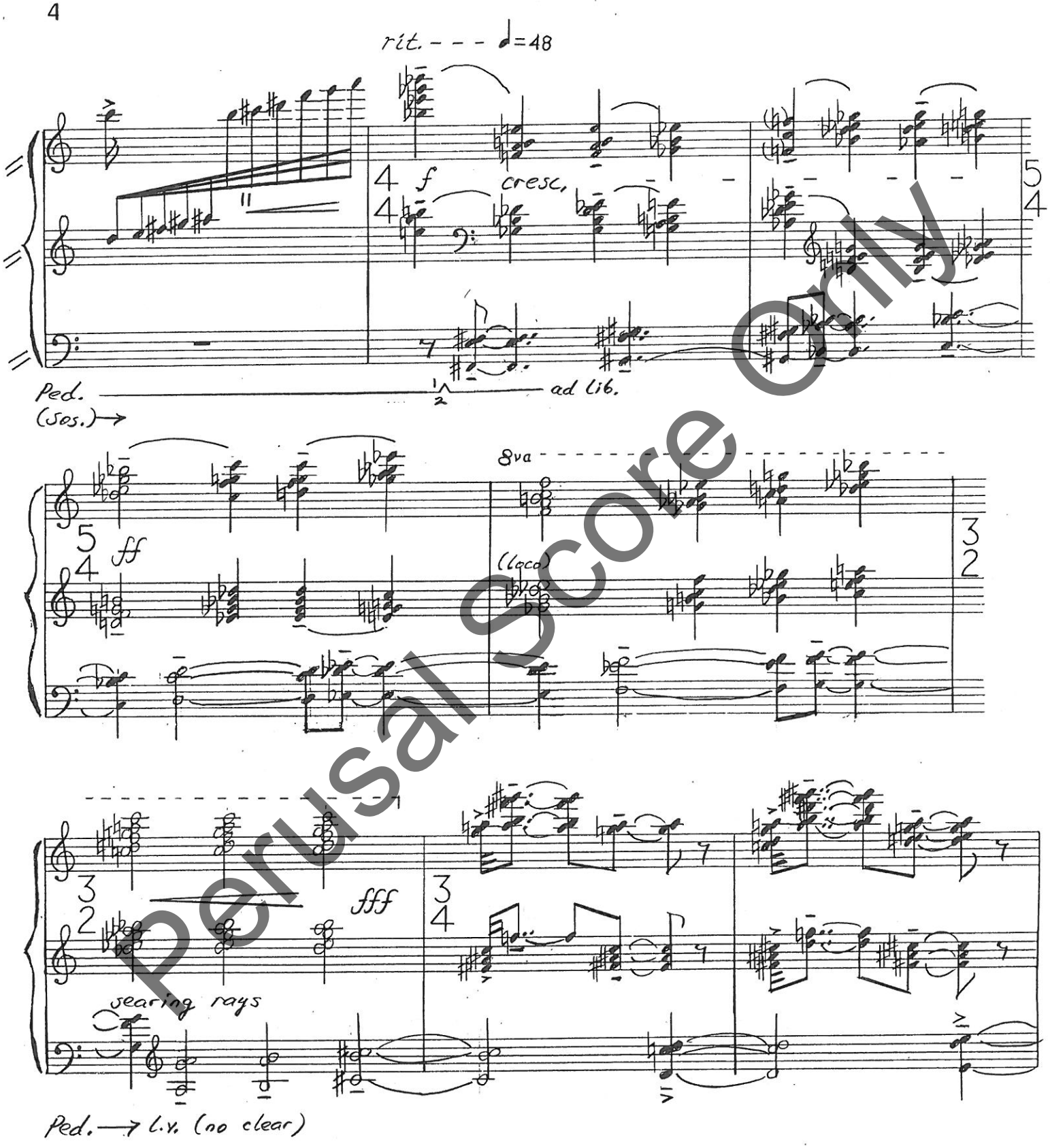

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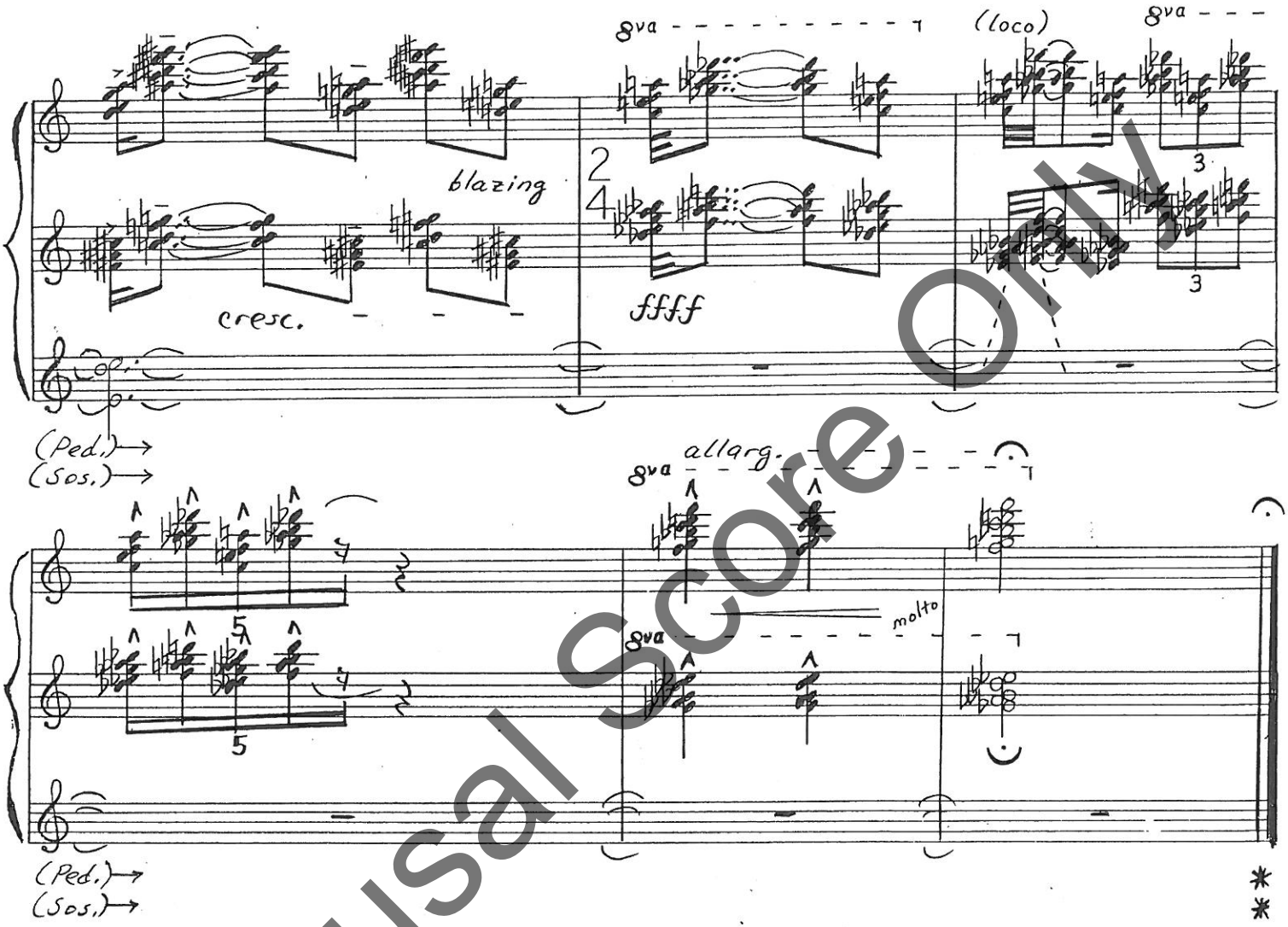

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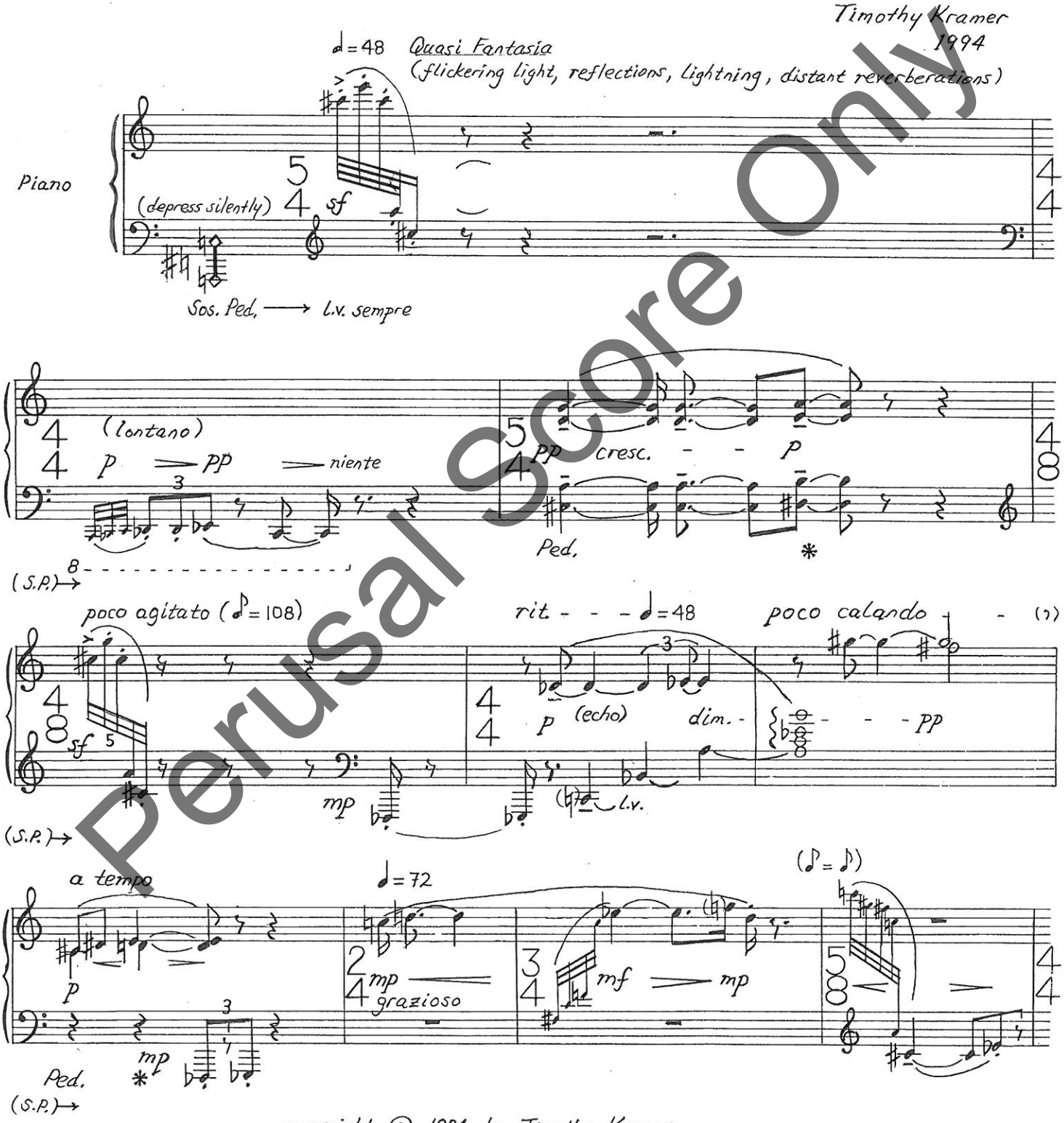
Colors from a Changing Sky

COMMISSIONED FOR THE SAN ANTONIO
INTERNATIONAL KEYBOARD COMPETITION
In Memory of Andrew Russell Gurwitz



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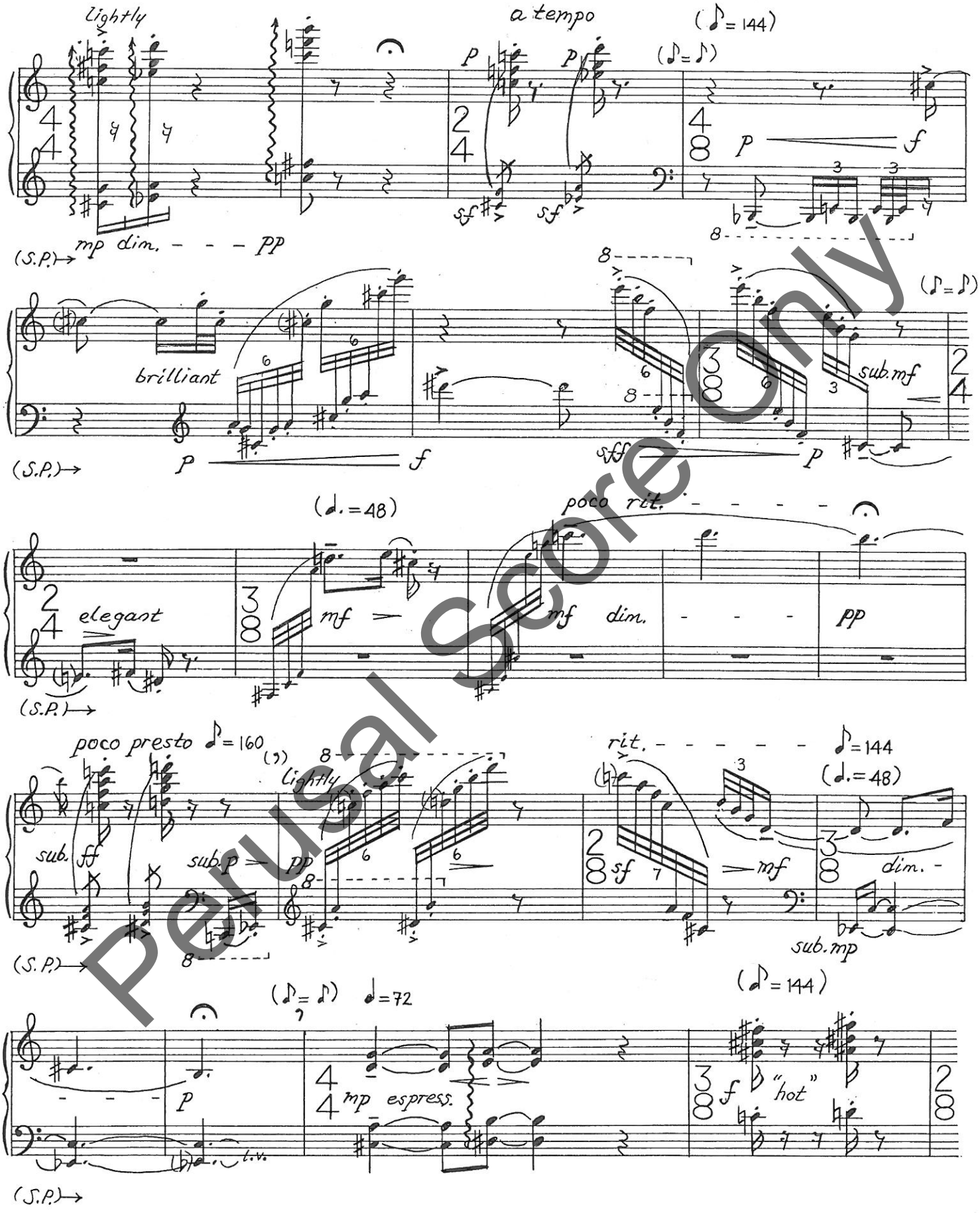

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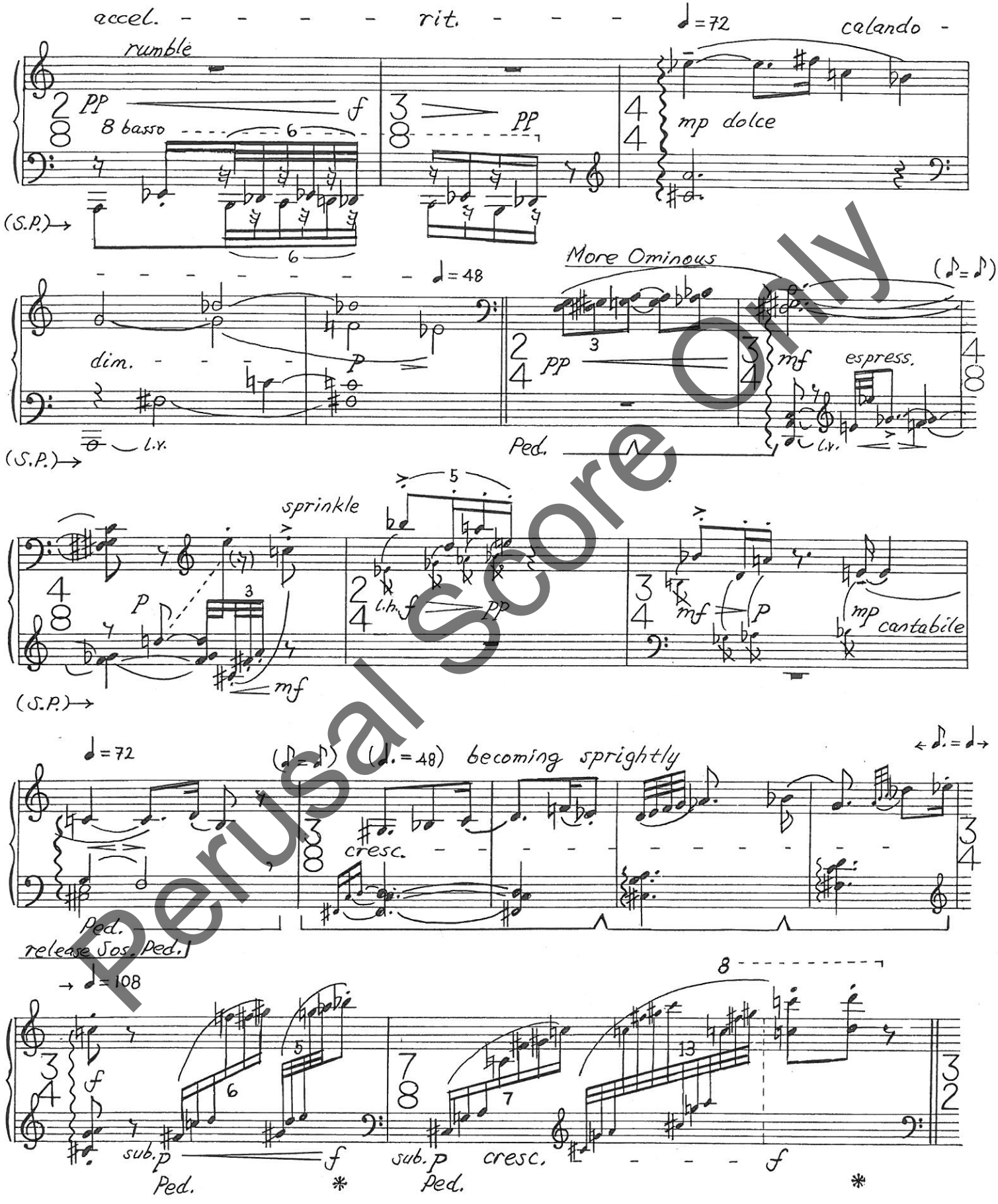

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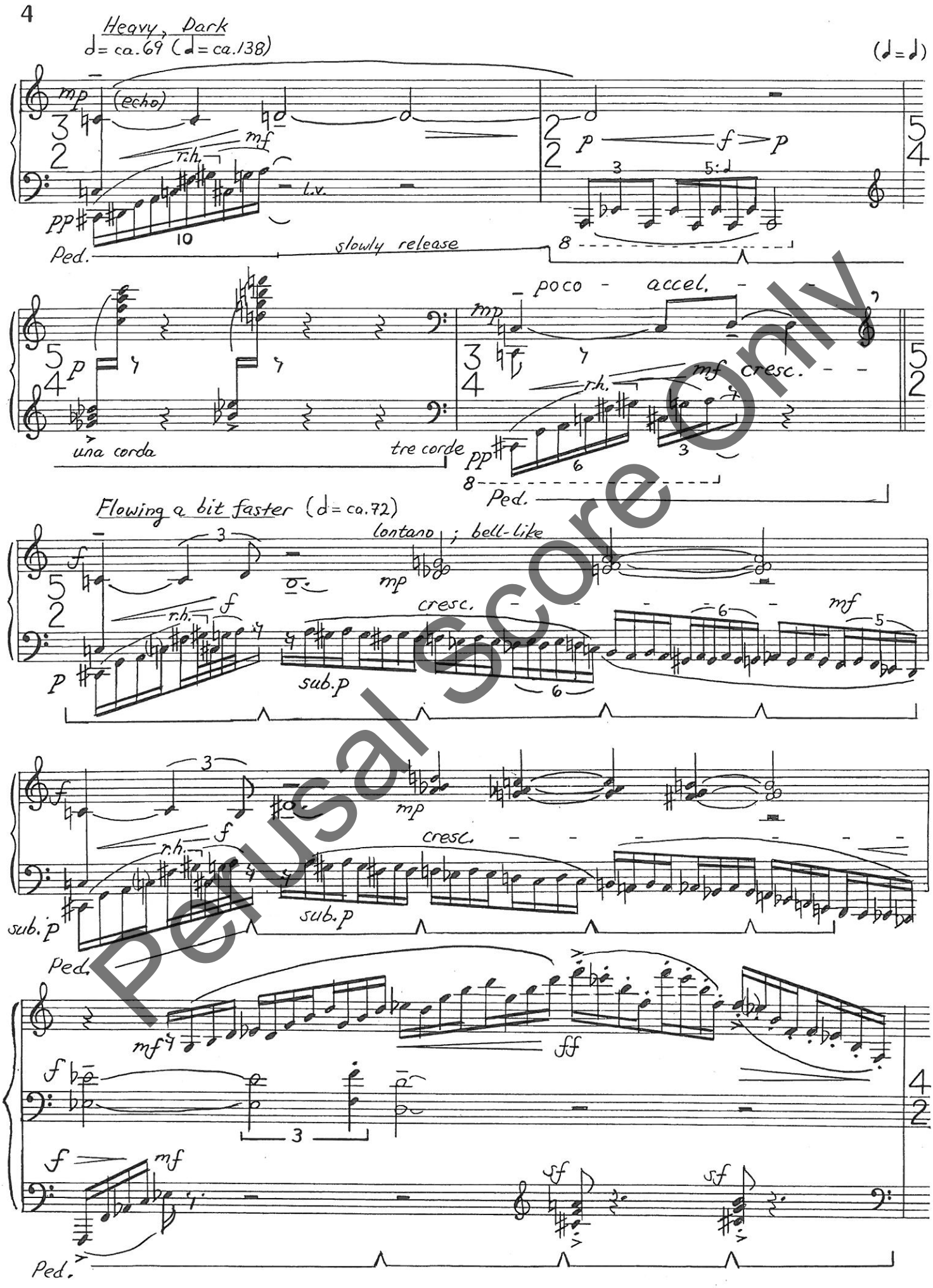

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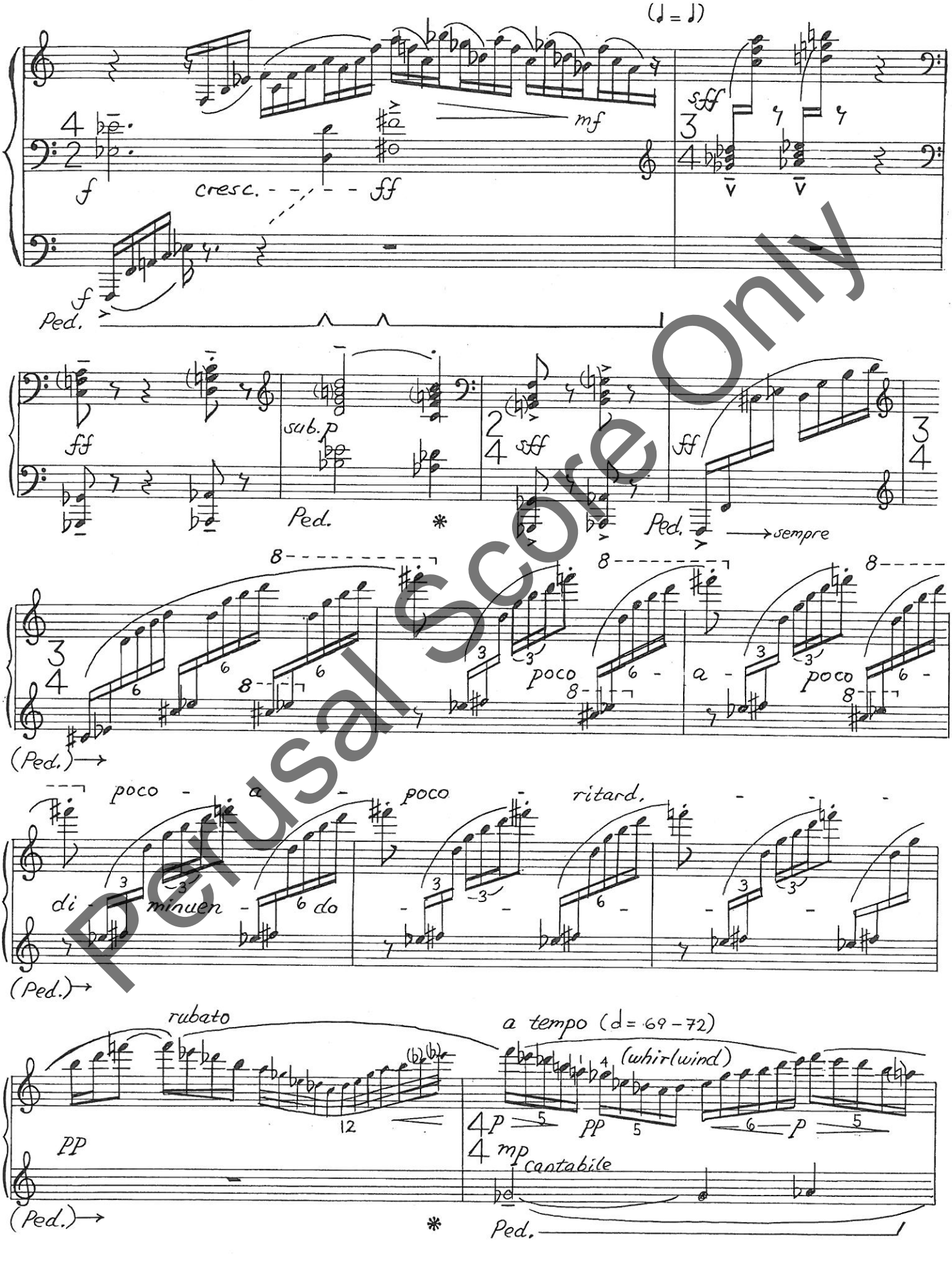

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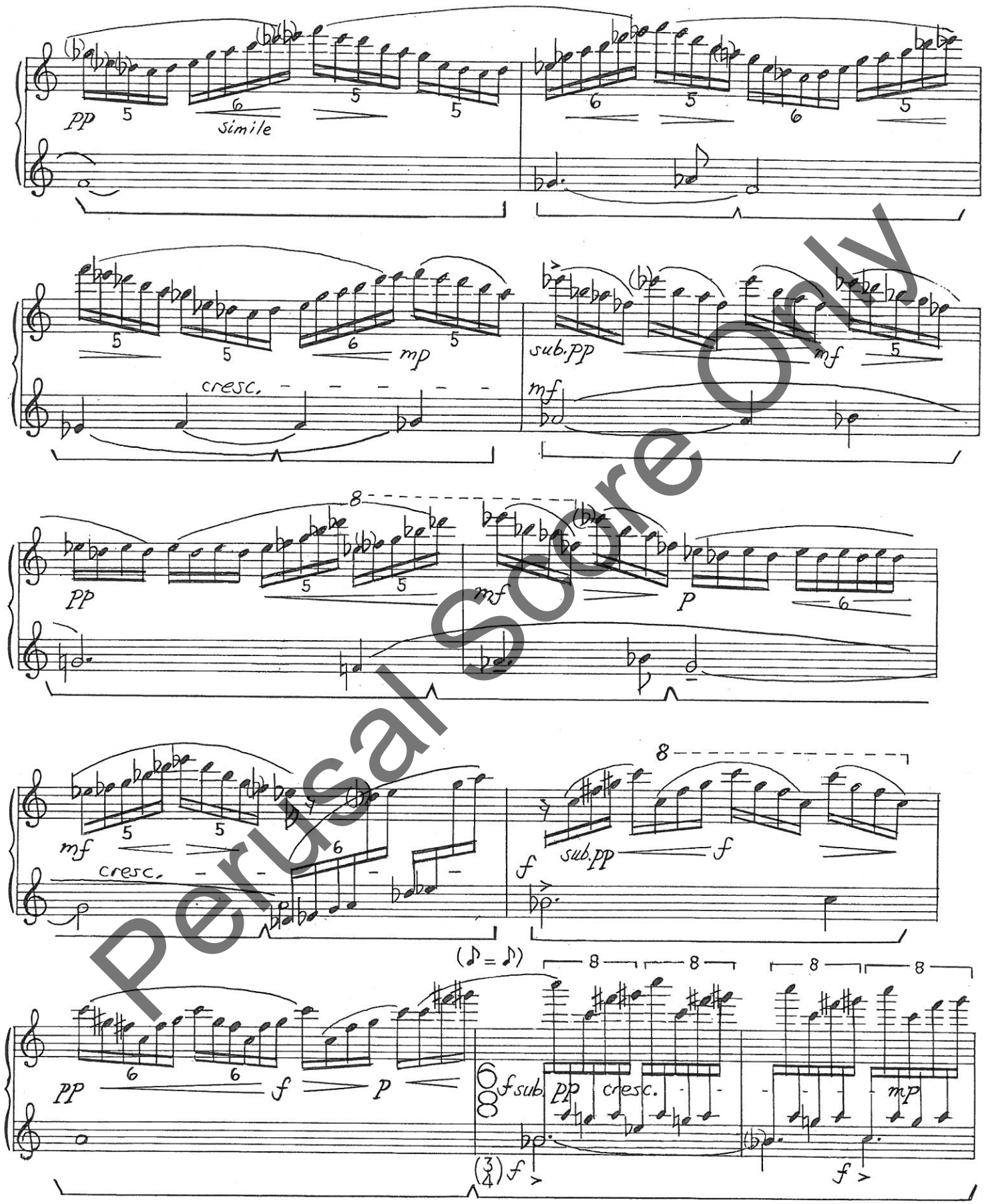

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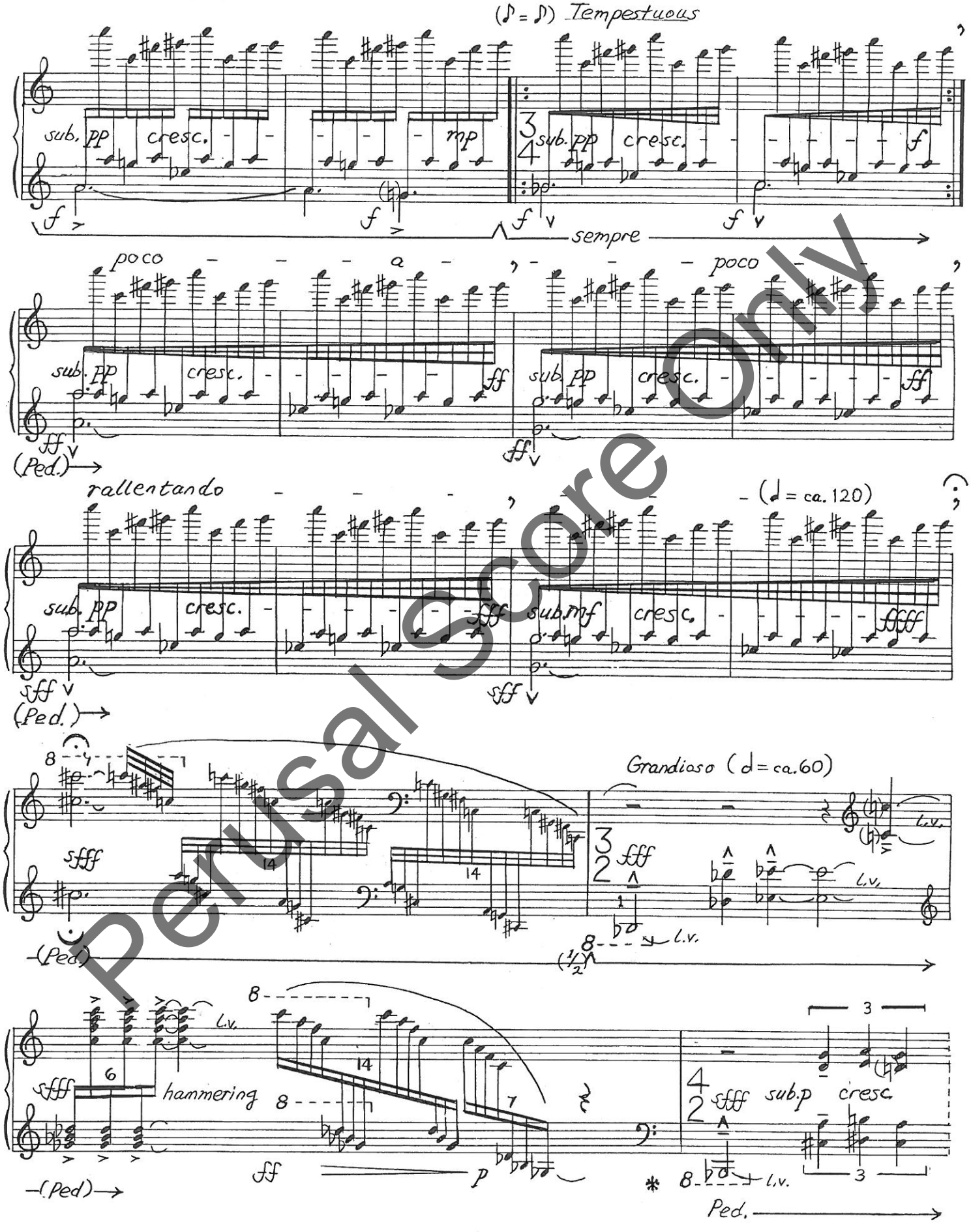

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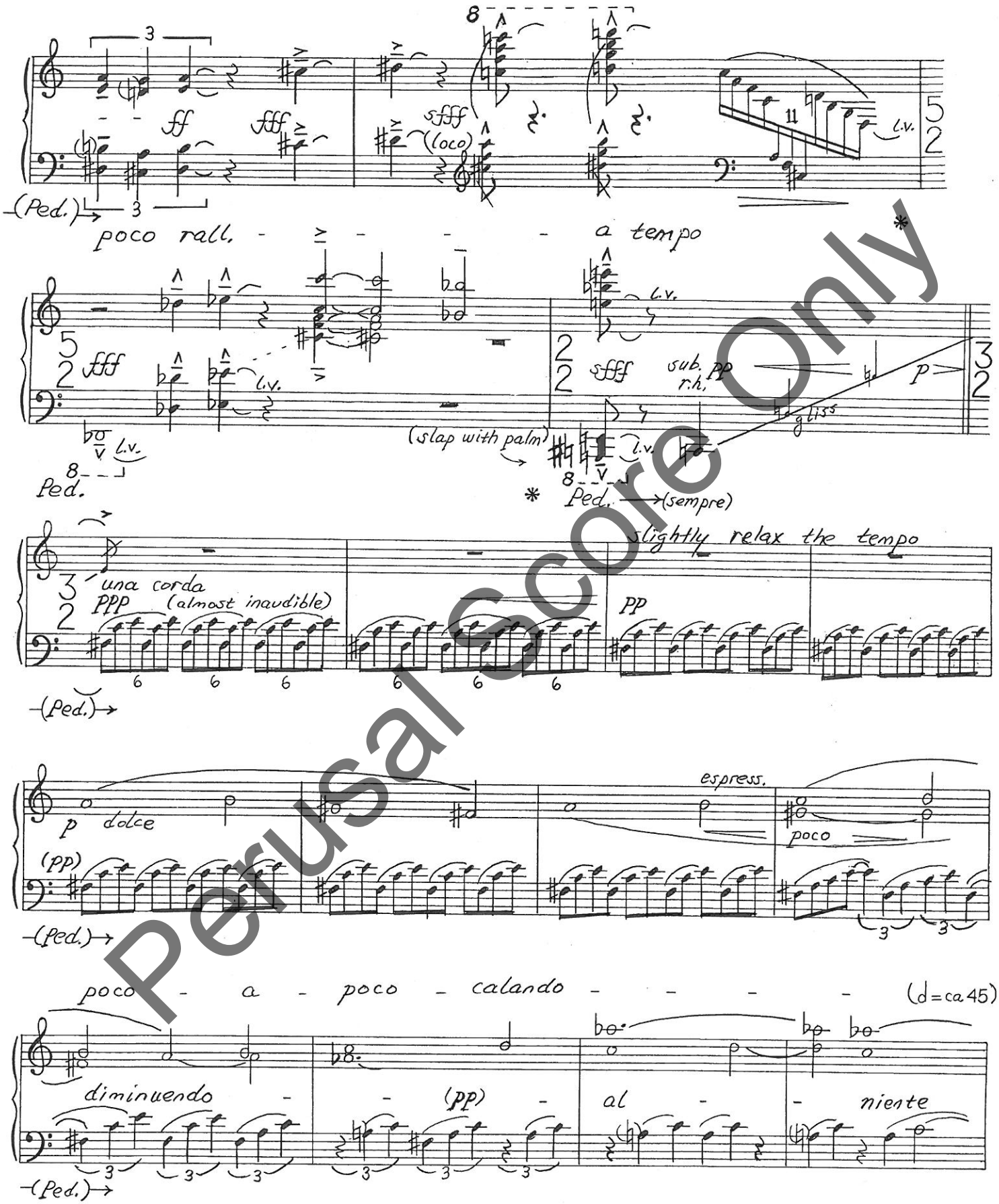

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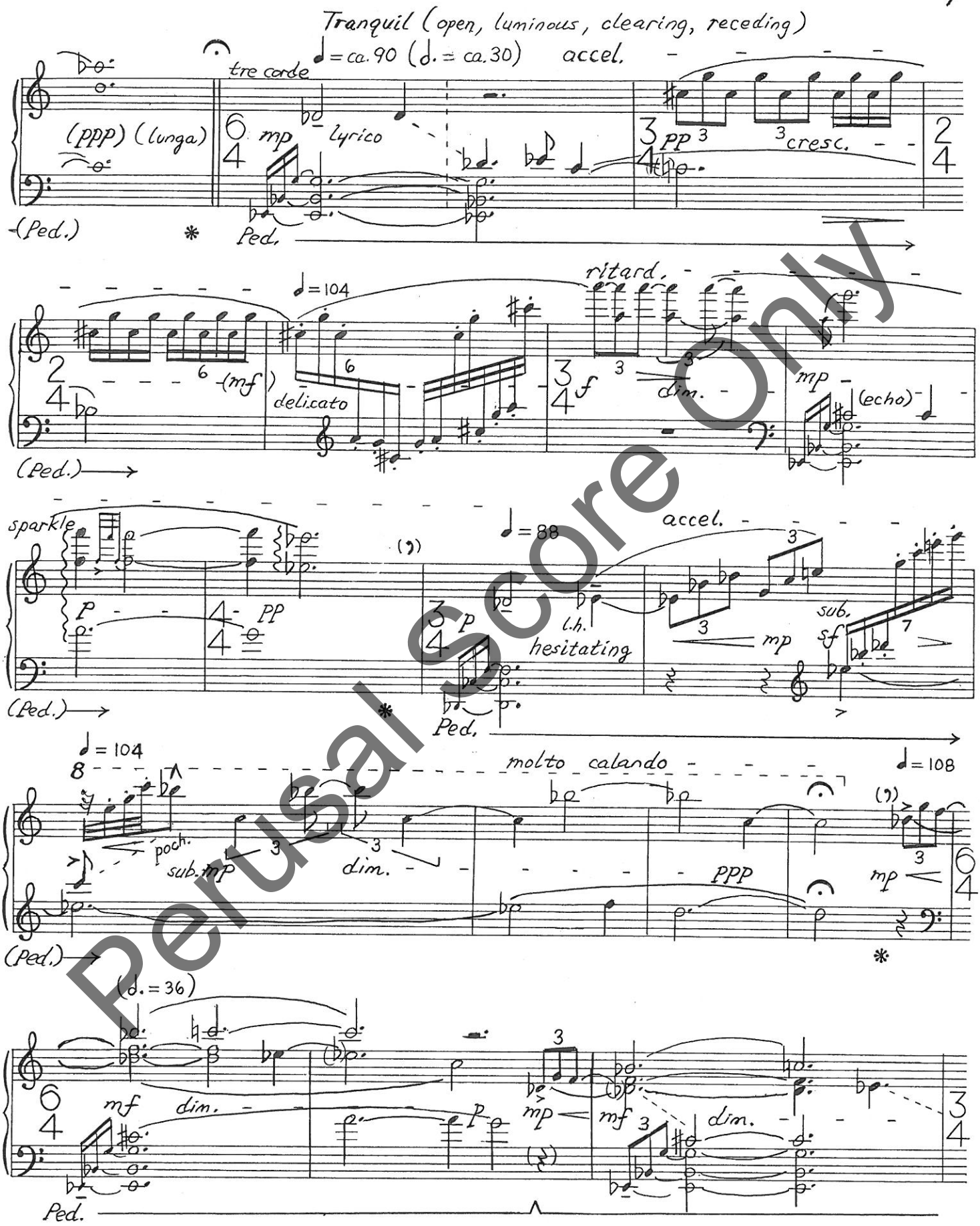

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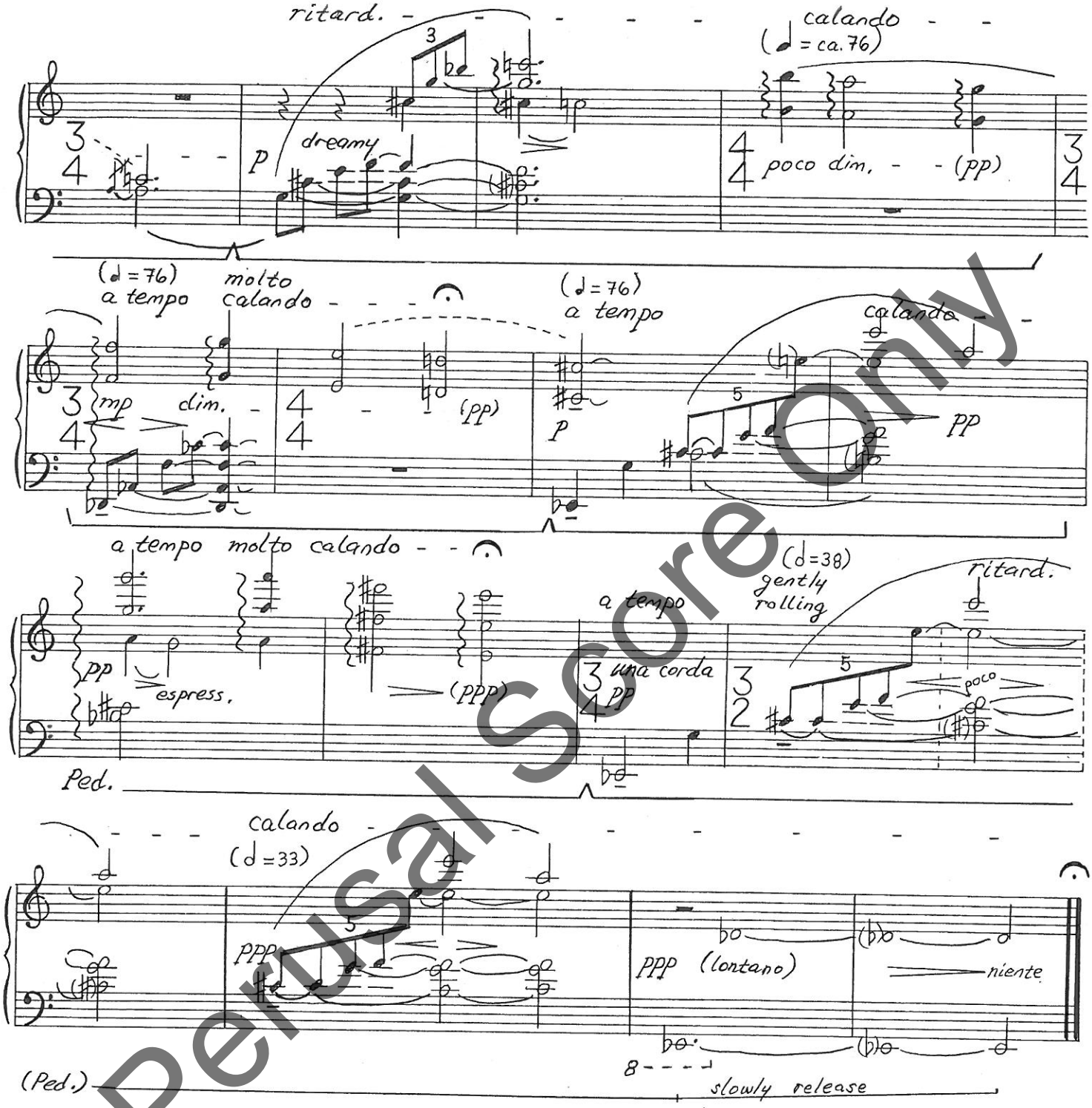

San Antonio
July 25, 1994

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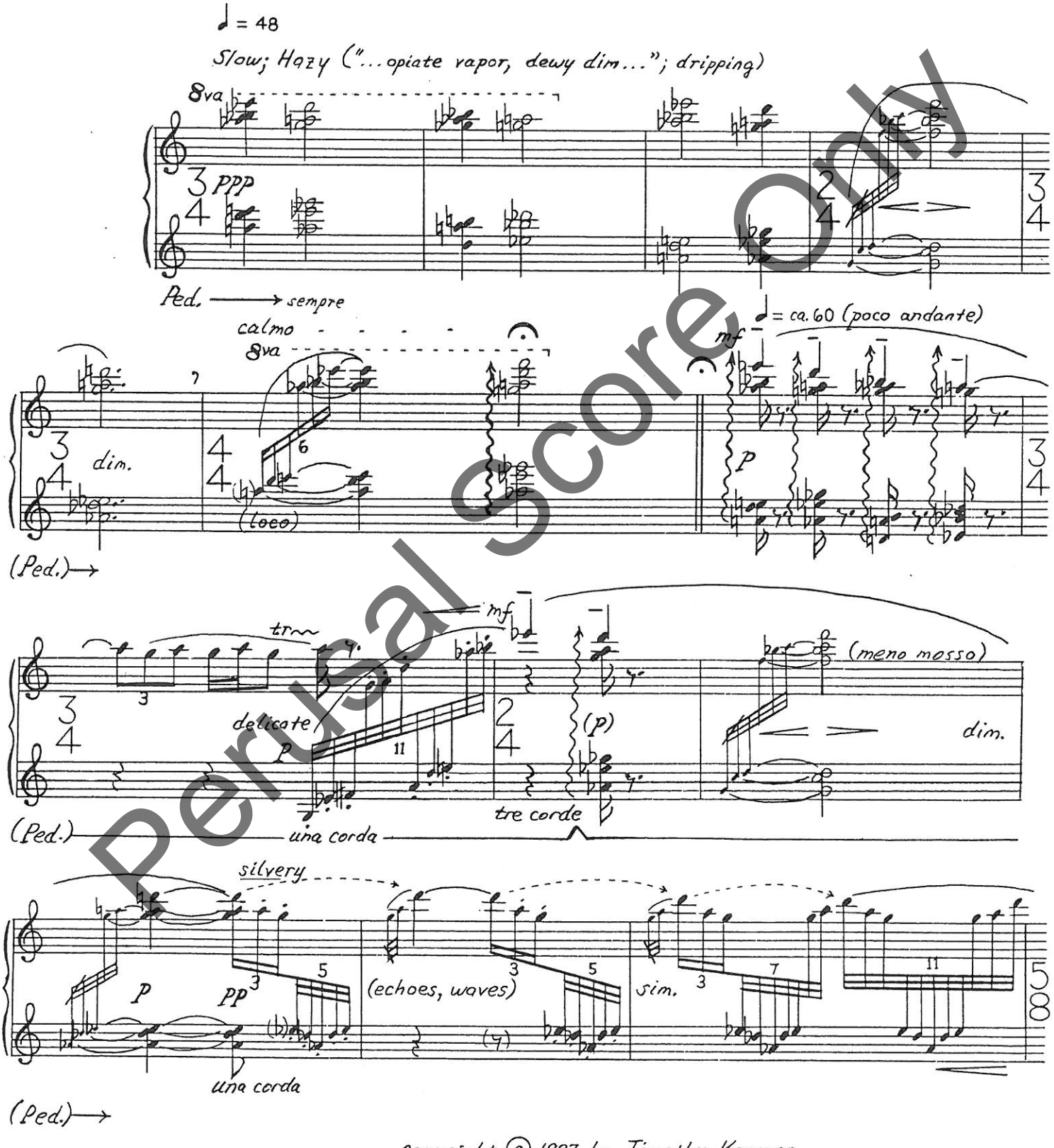
Moonsprites

Timothy Kramer
1997



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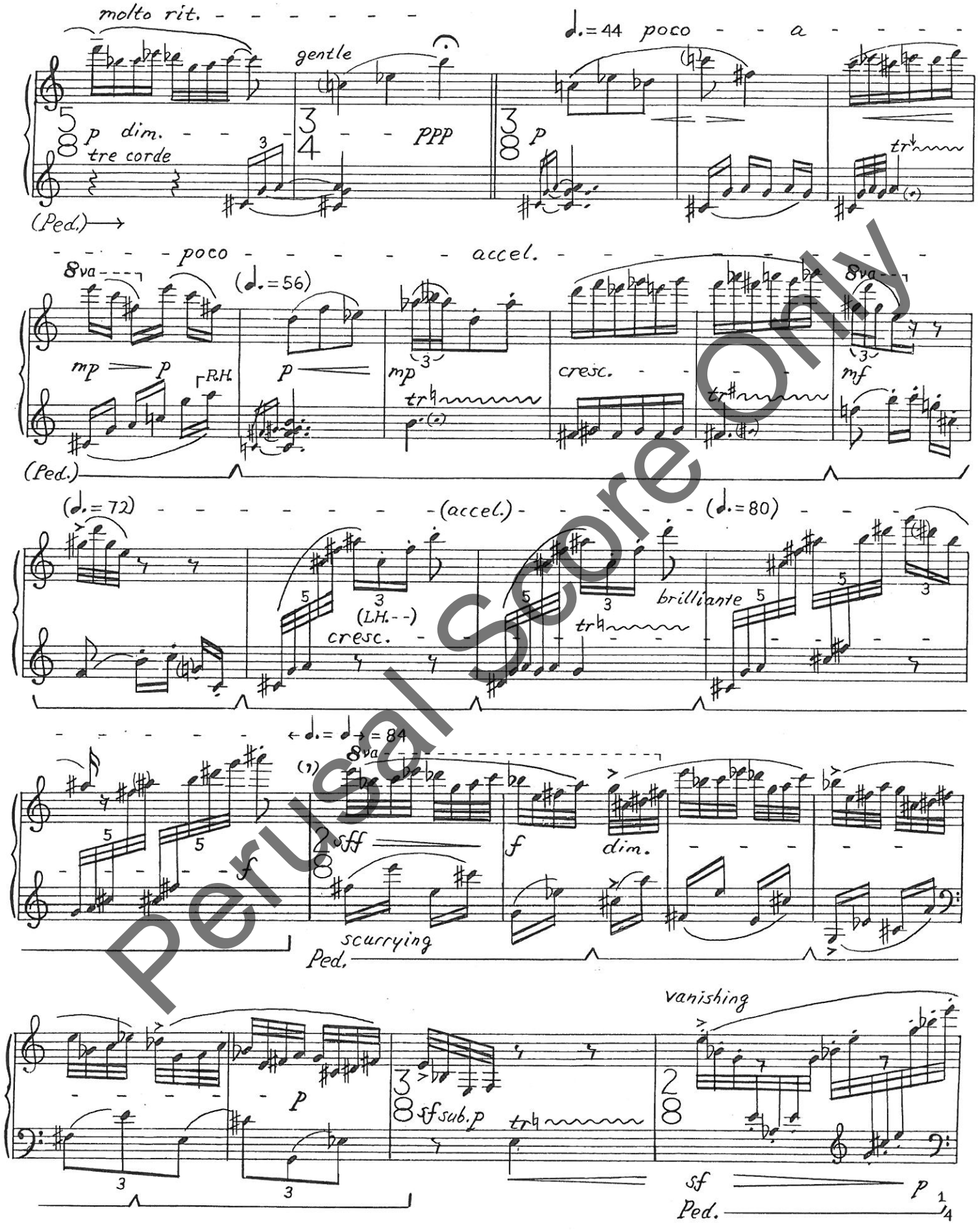

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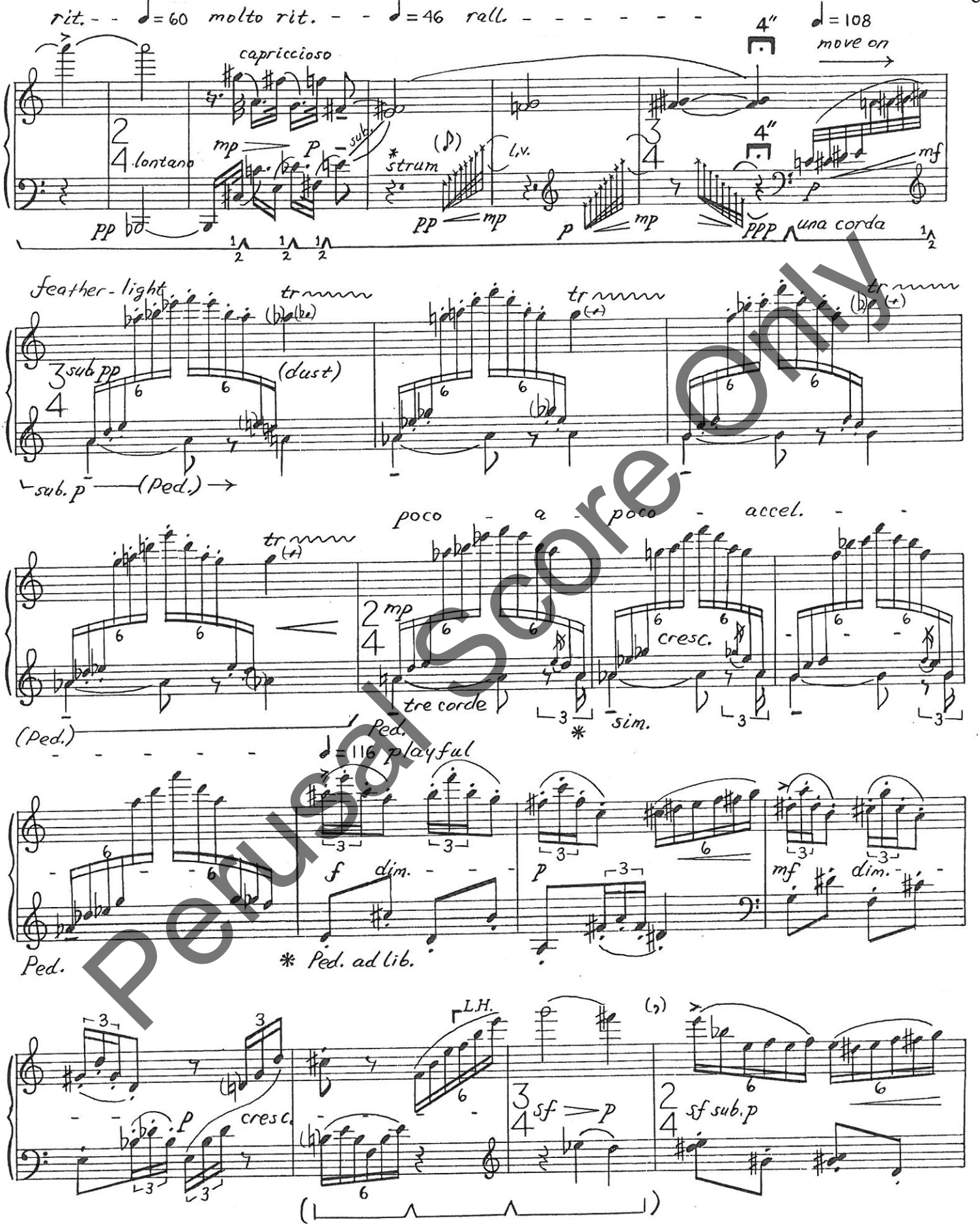

* strum strings inside piano with flesh of fingertip; approximate pitch

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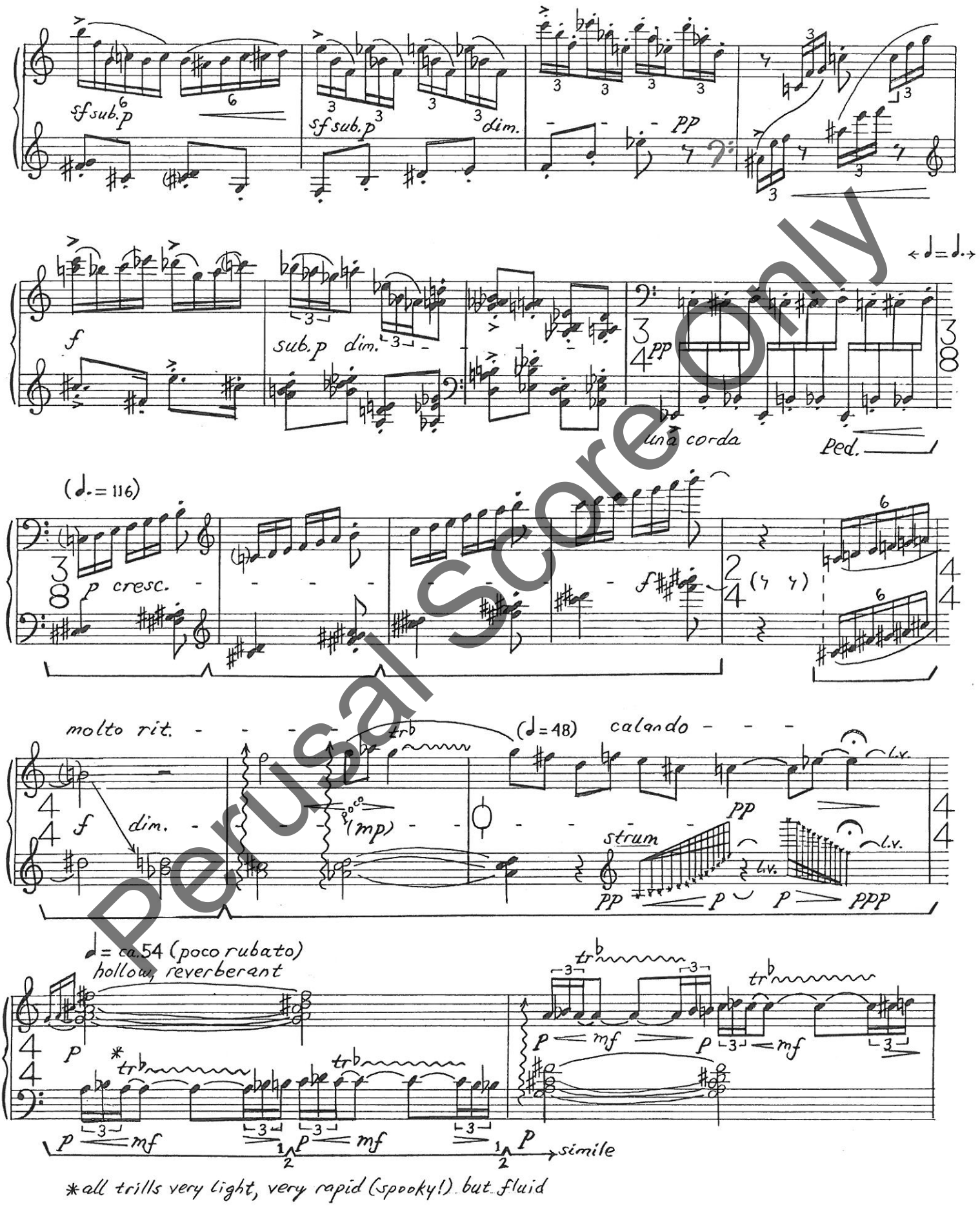

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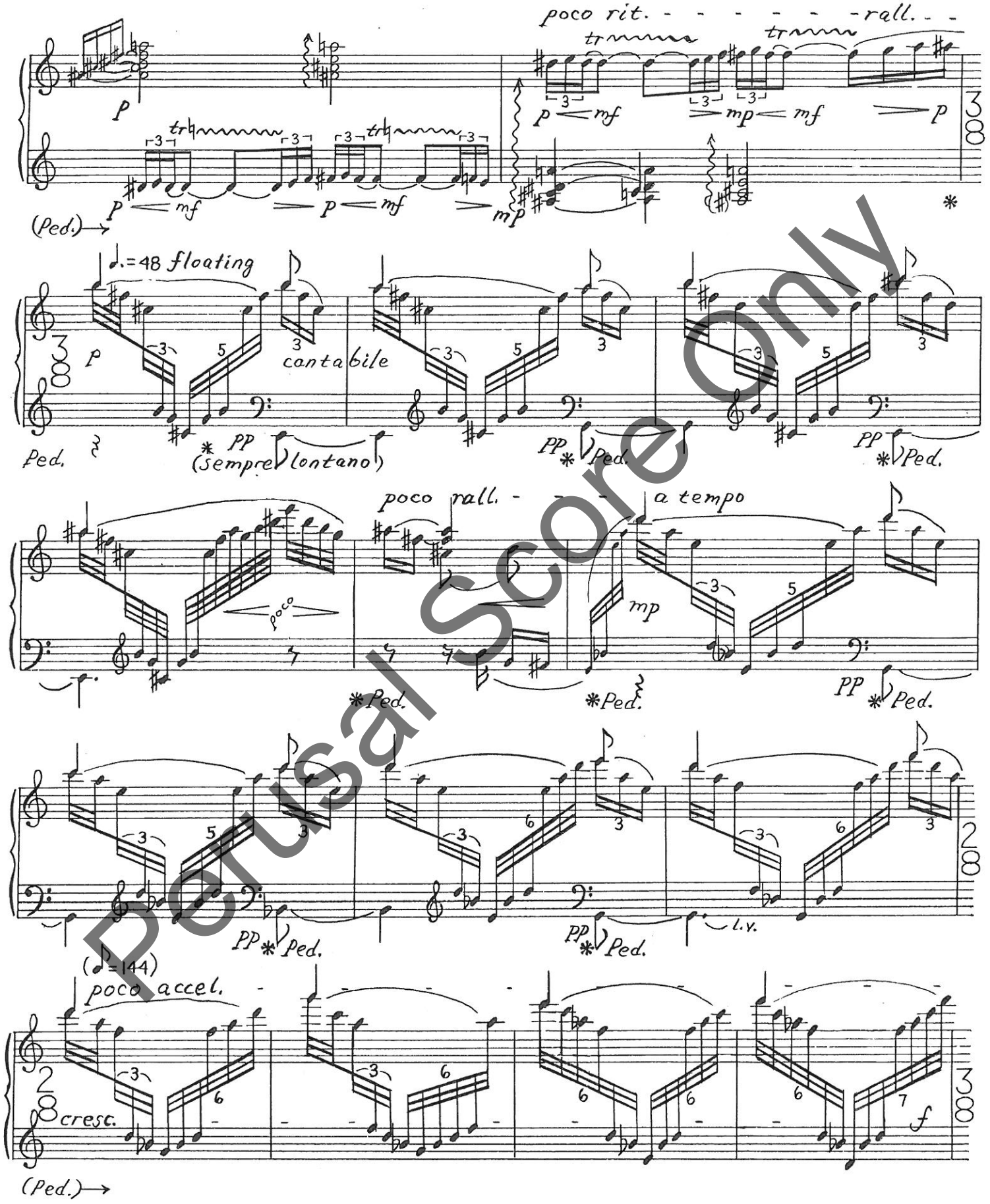

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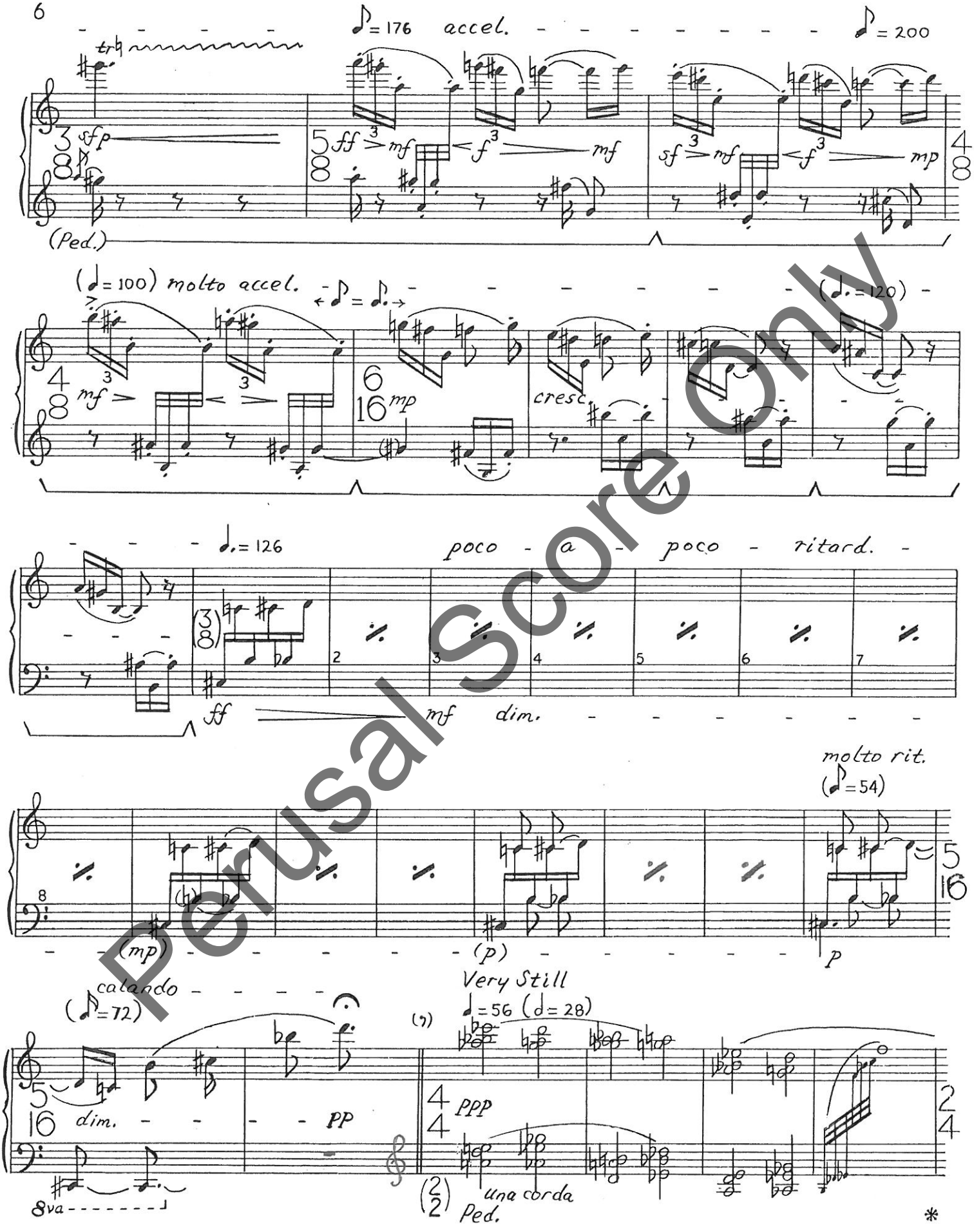
* very muted (sub-tone); use una corda if necessary



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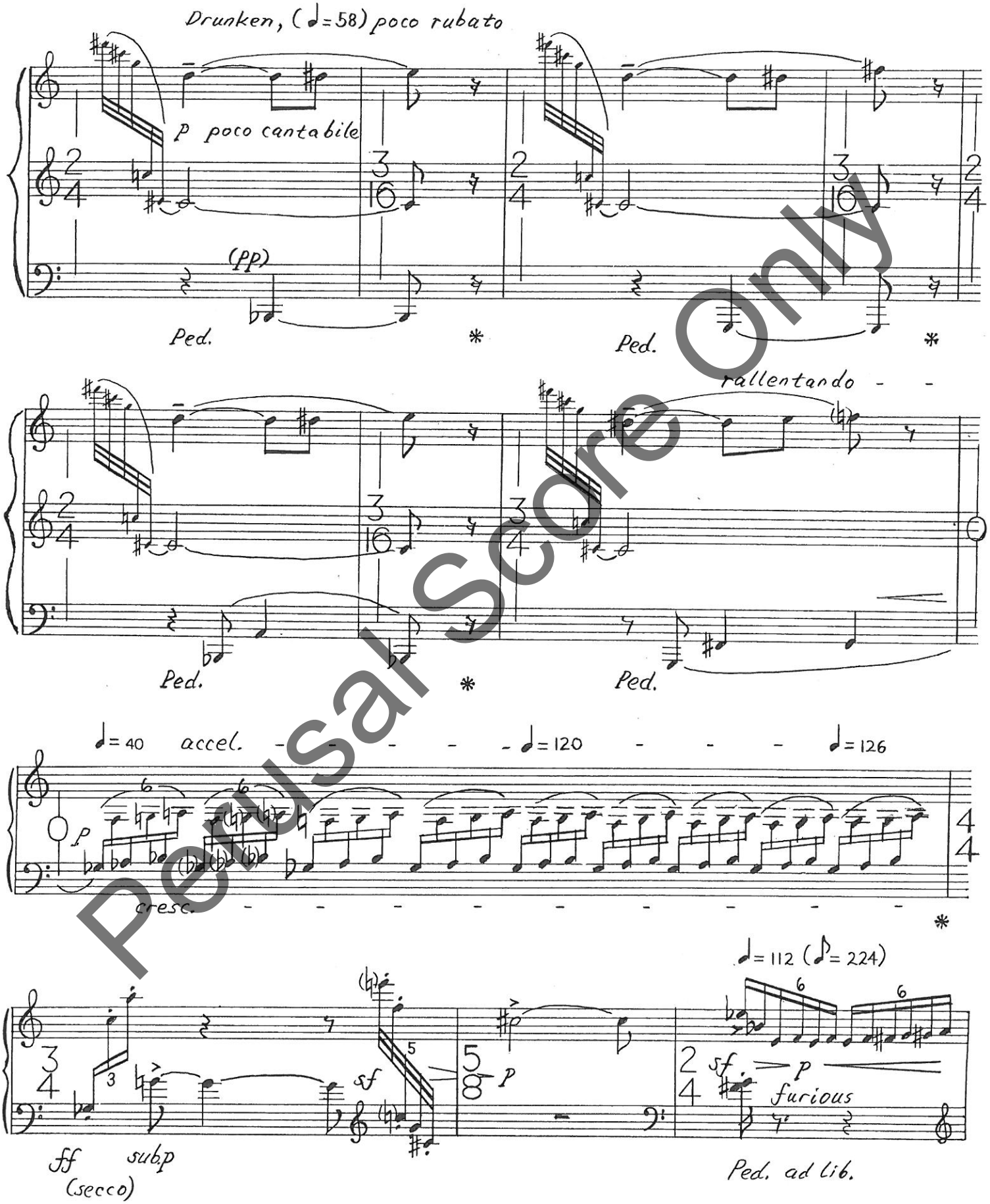

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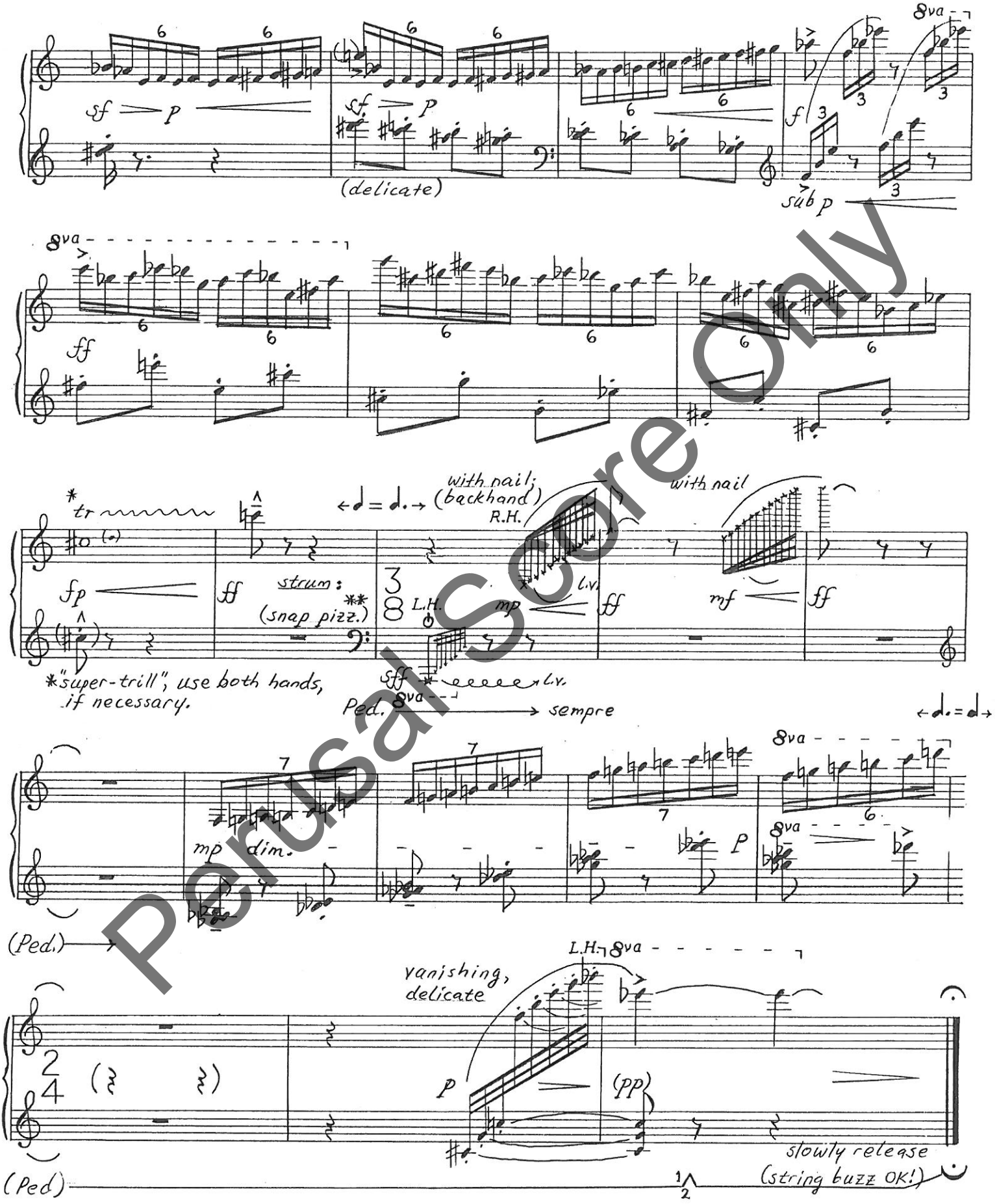

** snap pizz. - pull lowest string to right and let it buzz. all other pitches are approximate.

San Antonio
Sept., 1997

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