Contractions

(1999)

for orchestra

Anne-Marie O'Farrell

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CONTRACTIONS

(1999)

ANNE-MARIE O'FARRELL

PROGRAMME NOTE

Contractions for large symphony orchestra is in a type of double variation form. Its structure is based on the shifting balance between proportions of time, and on the contrast between opposing states of being as experienced in labour prior to giving birth: the state of pain initially lasts a very short time and is interpolated by spells without pain, during which one is free to reflect or to summon energy for the next contraction. With the passage of time the balance between these two states shifts to its opposite, whereby contractions become longer and more intense, while resting periods become shorter and offer less opportunity for introspection. This is reflected not only in the proportional lengths of sections within the work, but it is also used to determine harmonic and rhythmic movement within sections. Timbral features, balances and contrasts are also based on the principle of shifting proportions between opposites. At a climactic point in the piece, clear reference is made to a phrase from Seoirse Bodley's song cycle, *A Girl*, which alludes to the strangeness of familiar things. This is an expression of the otherness of the world one briefly inhabits when circumstances such as giving birth cause a total shift in one's consciousness.

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Instrumentation:

3 flutes, all doubling on alto flutes and 1 doubling on piccolo
3 oboes, 1 doubling on cor anglais
3 clarinets in A, 1 doubling on bass clarinet in A
3 bassoons, 1 doubling on contrabassoon
4 horns in F
3 trumpets in D
3 trombones
1 tuba
2 sets of timpani
5 tom-toms
snare drum
bass drum
suspended cymbal
tambourine
whip
gong
3 woodblocks
anvil
chimes
marimba
xylophone
glockenspiel
celeste
2 harps, with lowest C string tuned to B flat, wool mallets and paper required
strings

Transposing instruments are written at concert pitch in the full score.

Duration 11’

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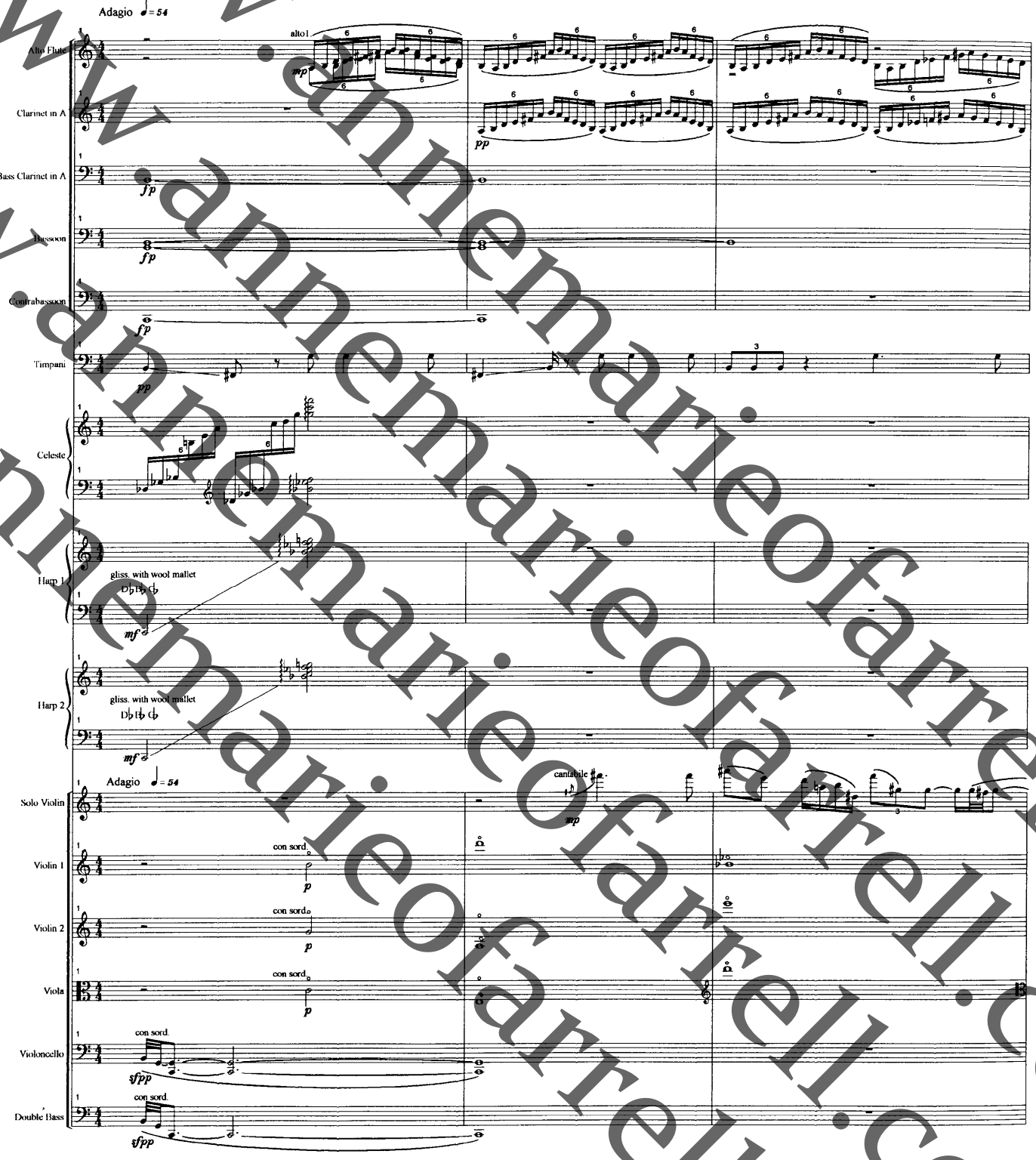
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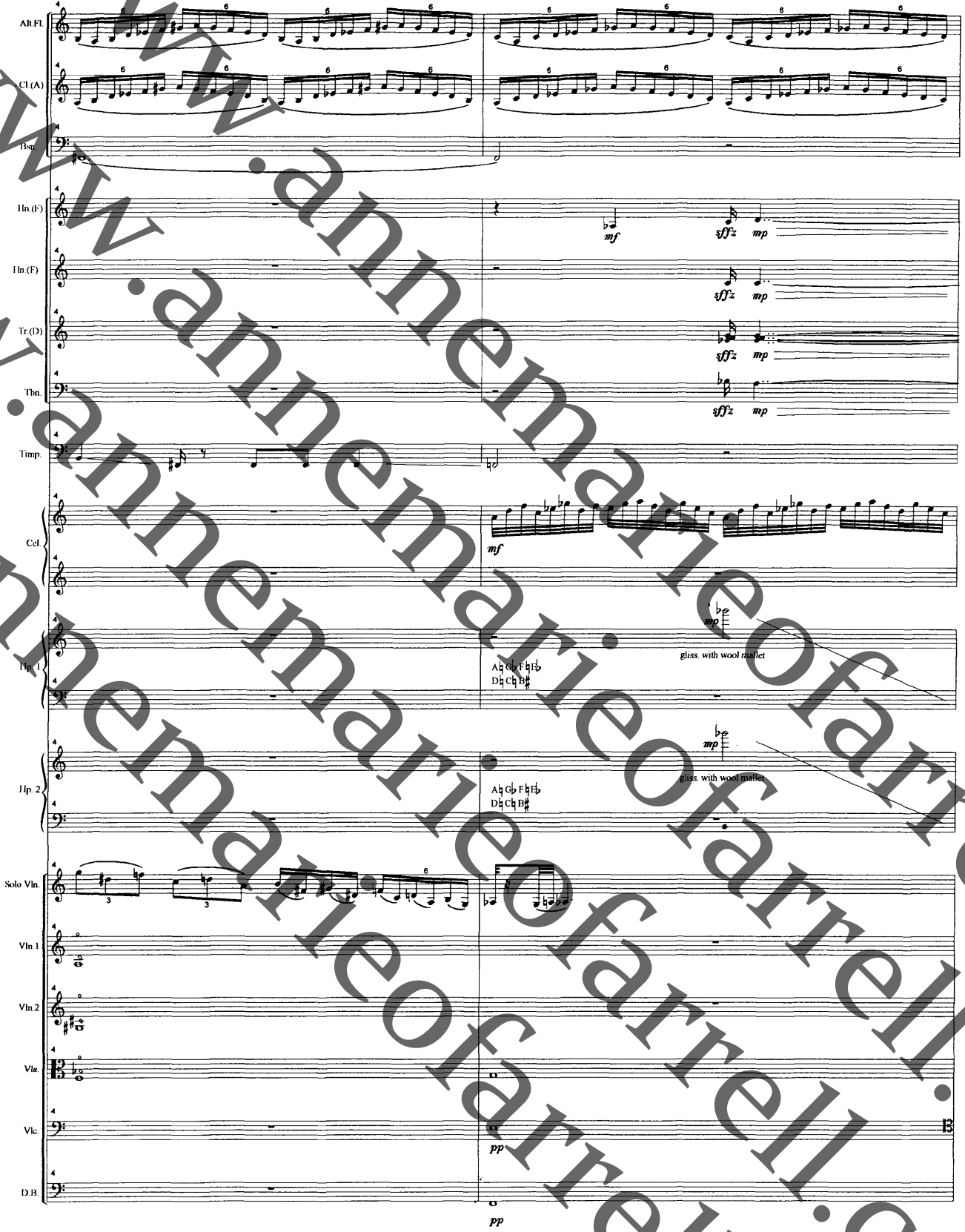
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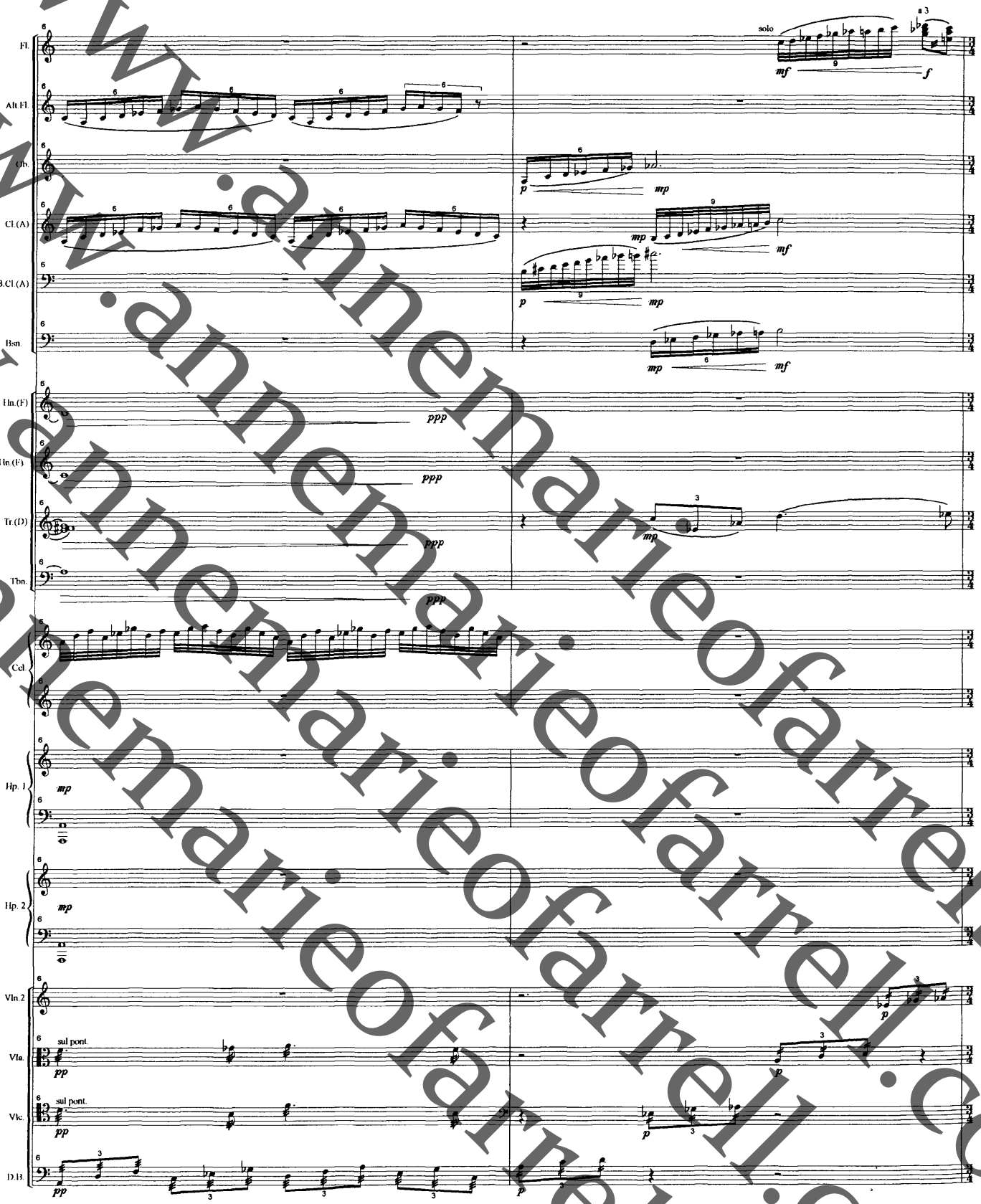
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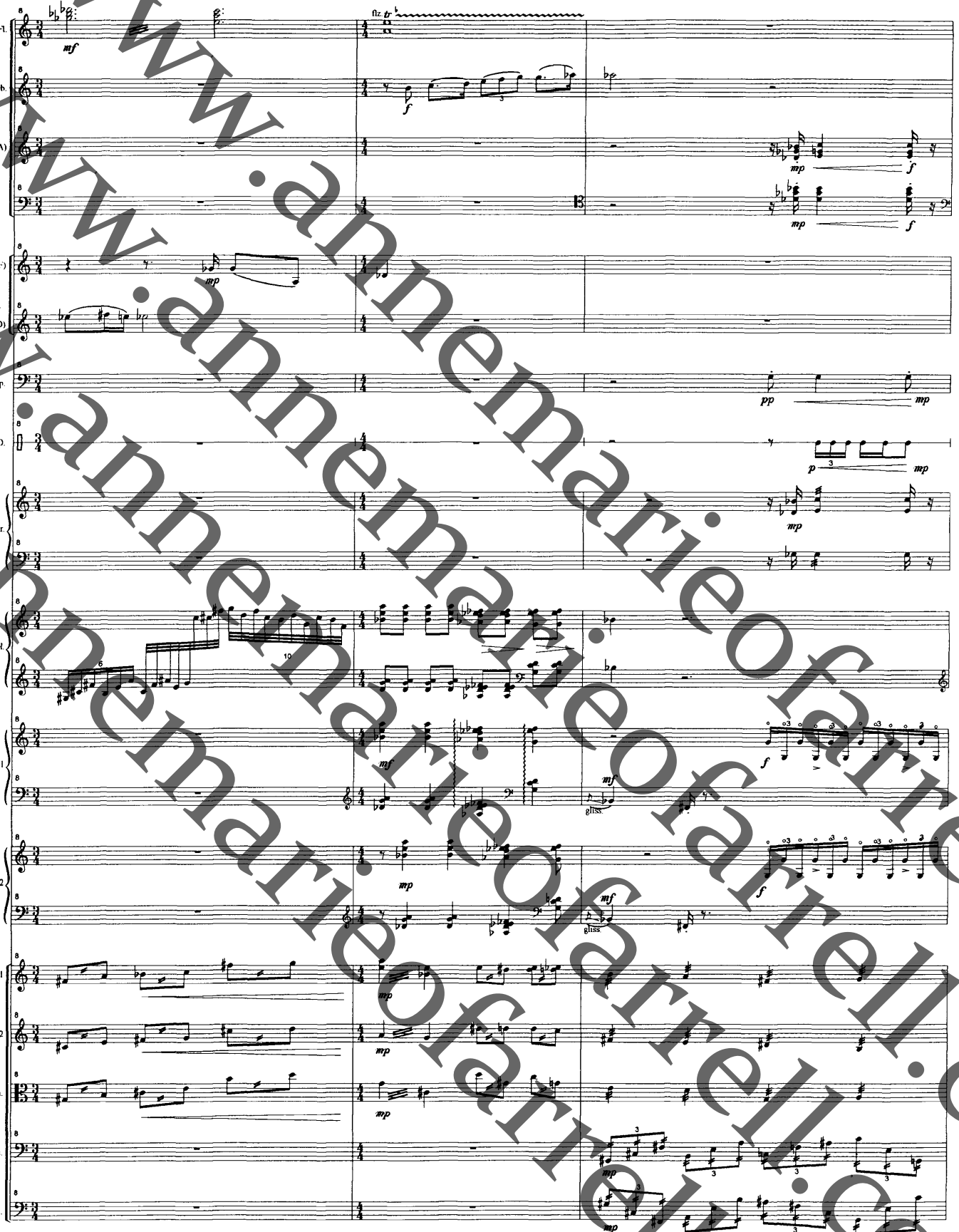
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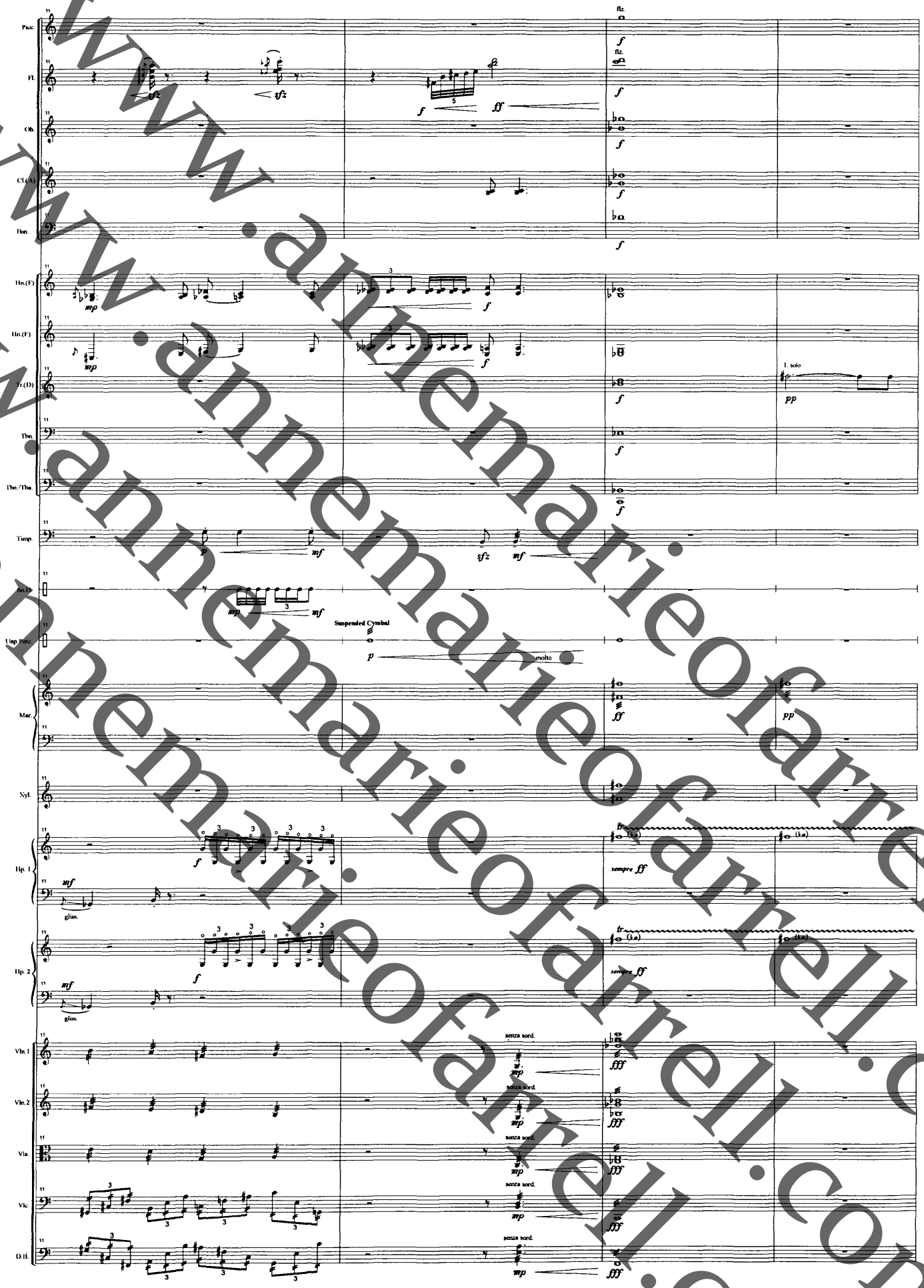
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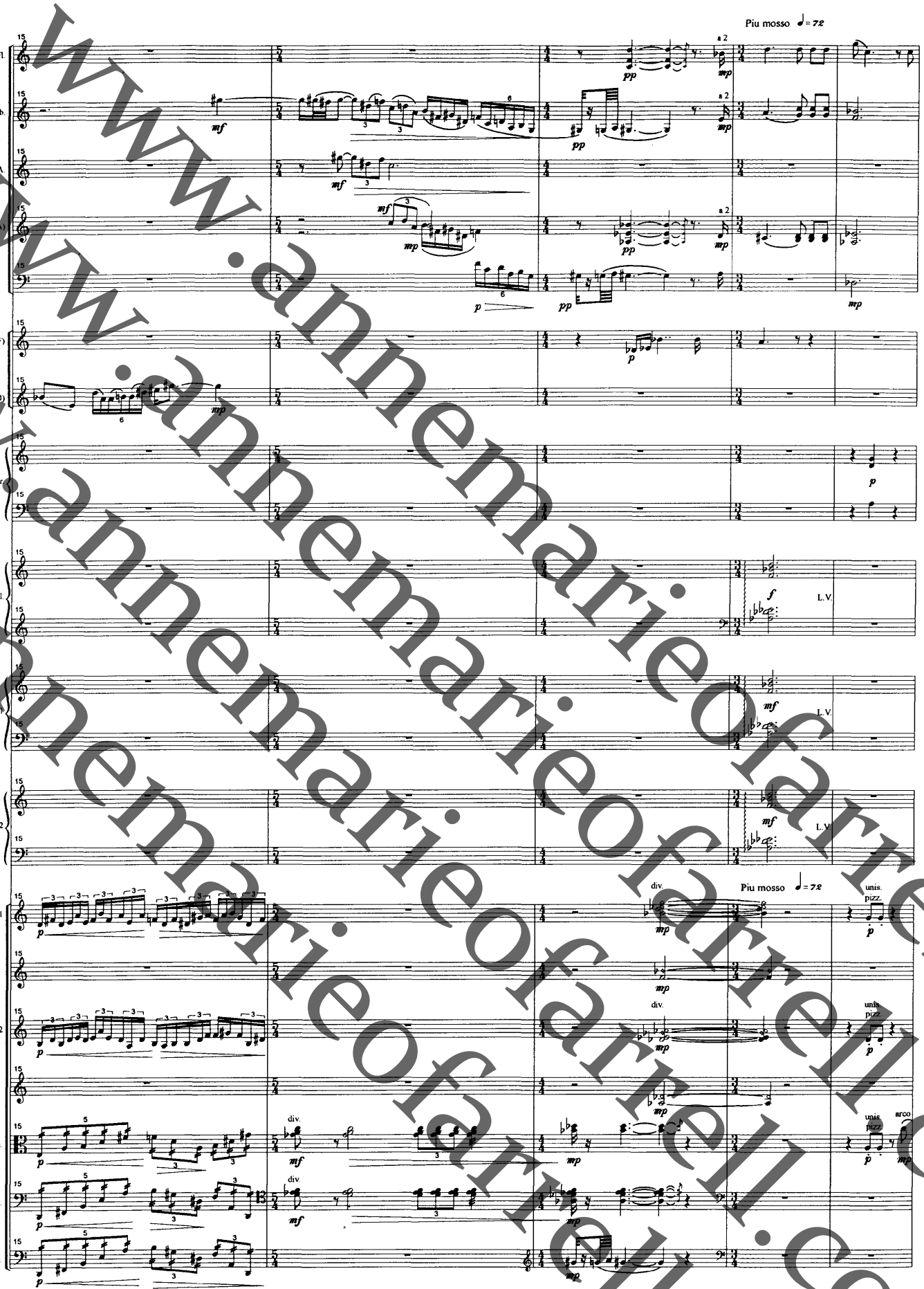
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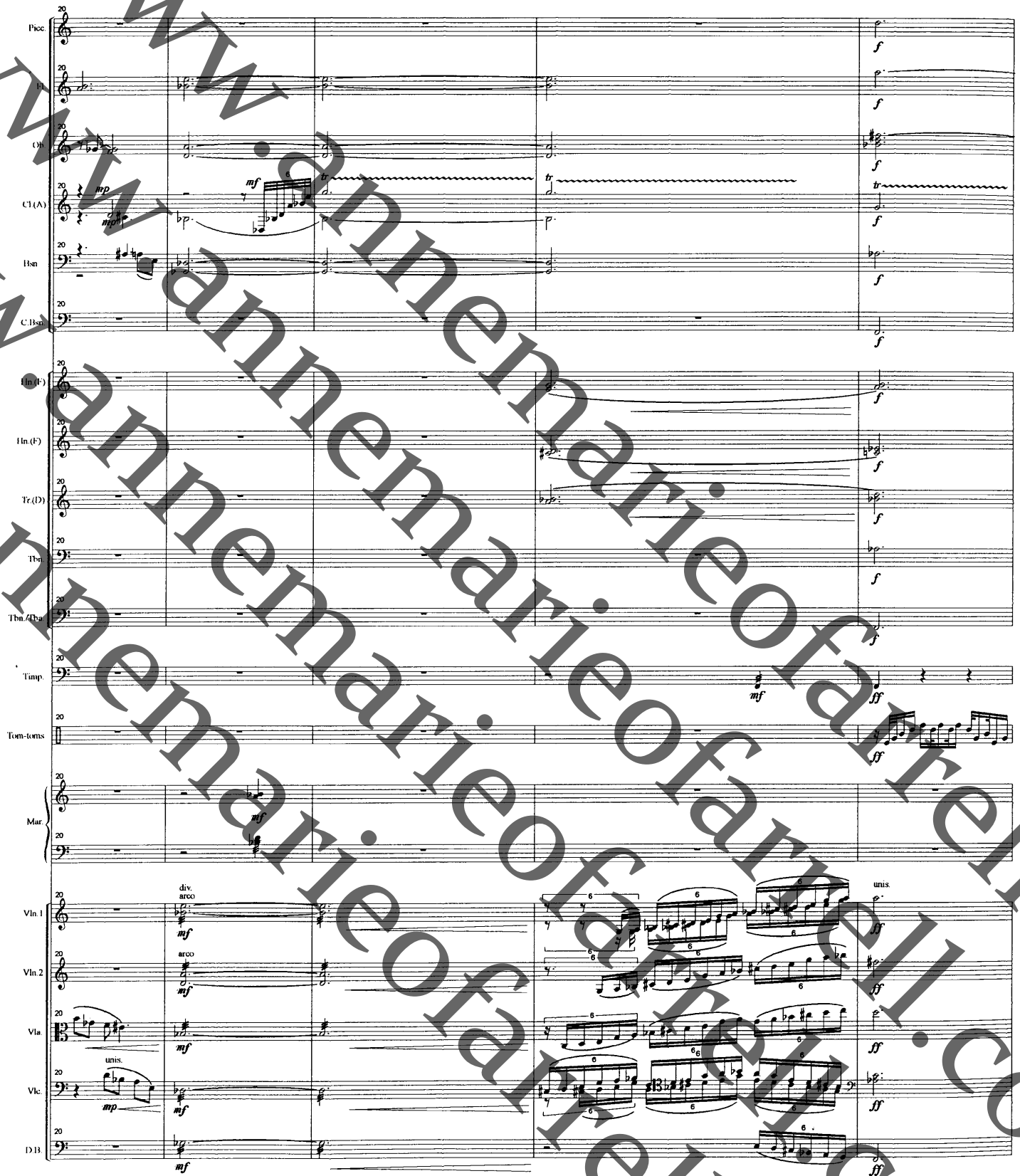
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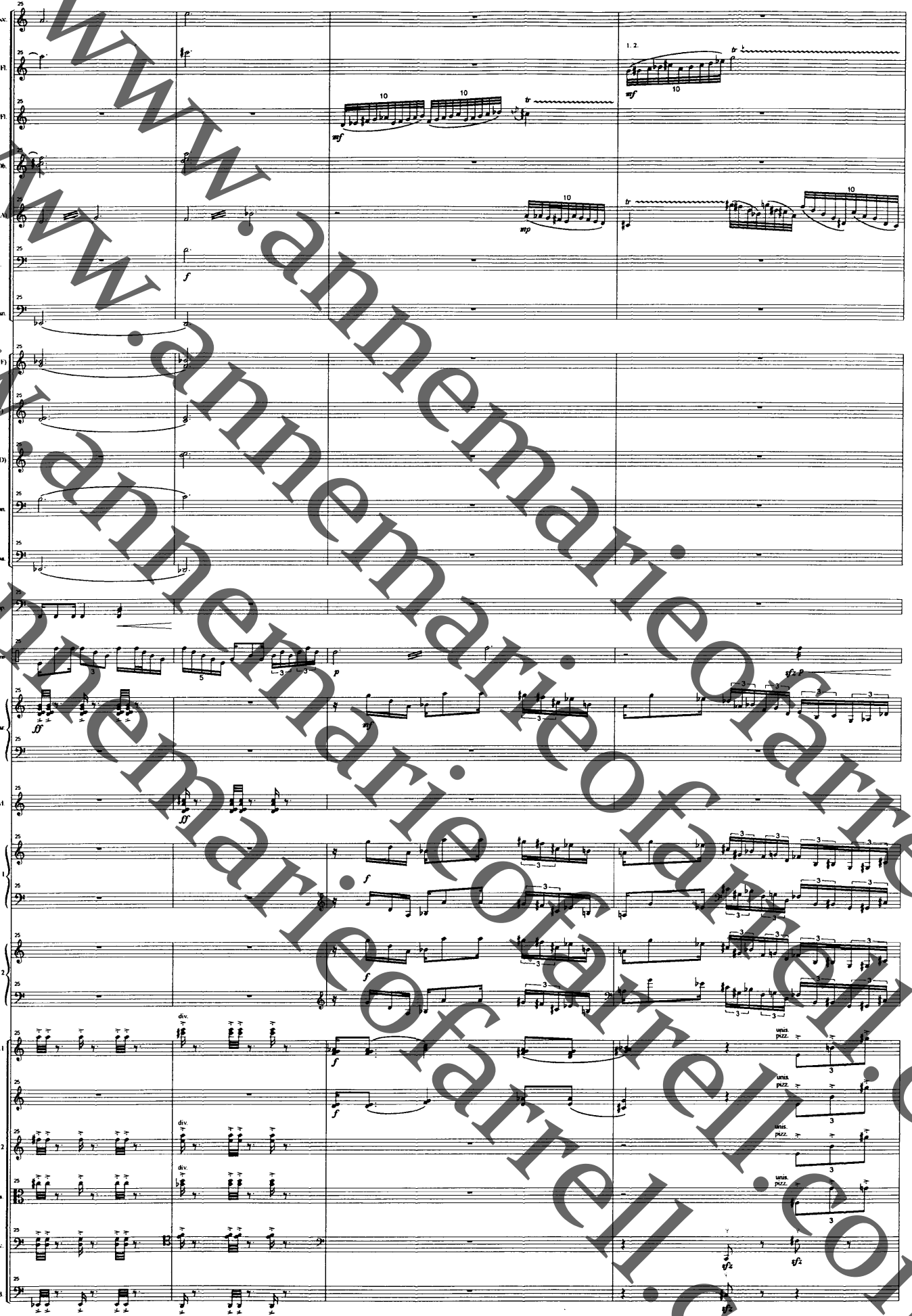
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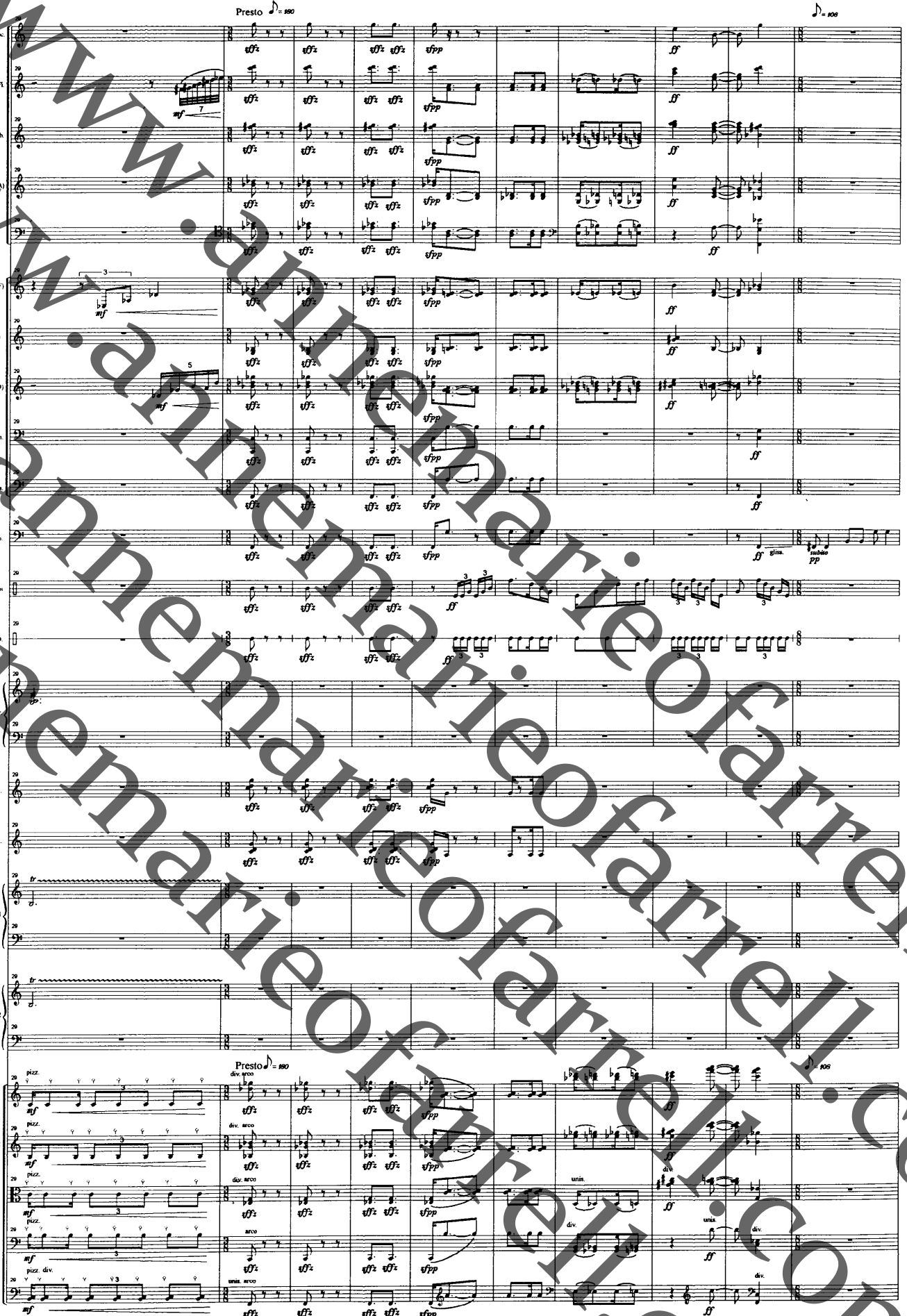
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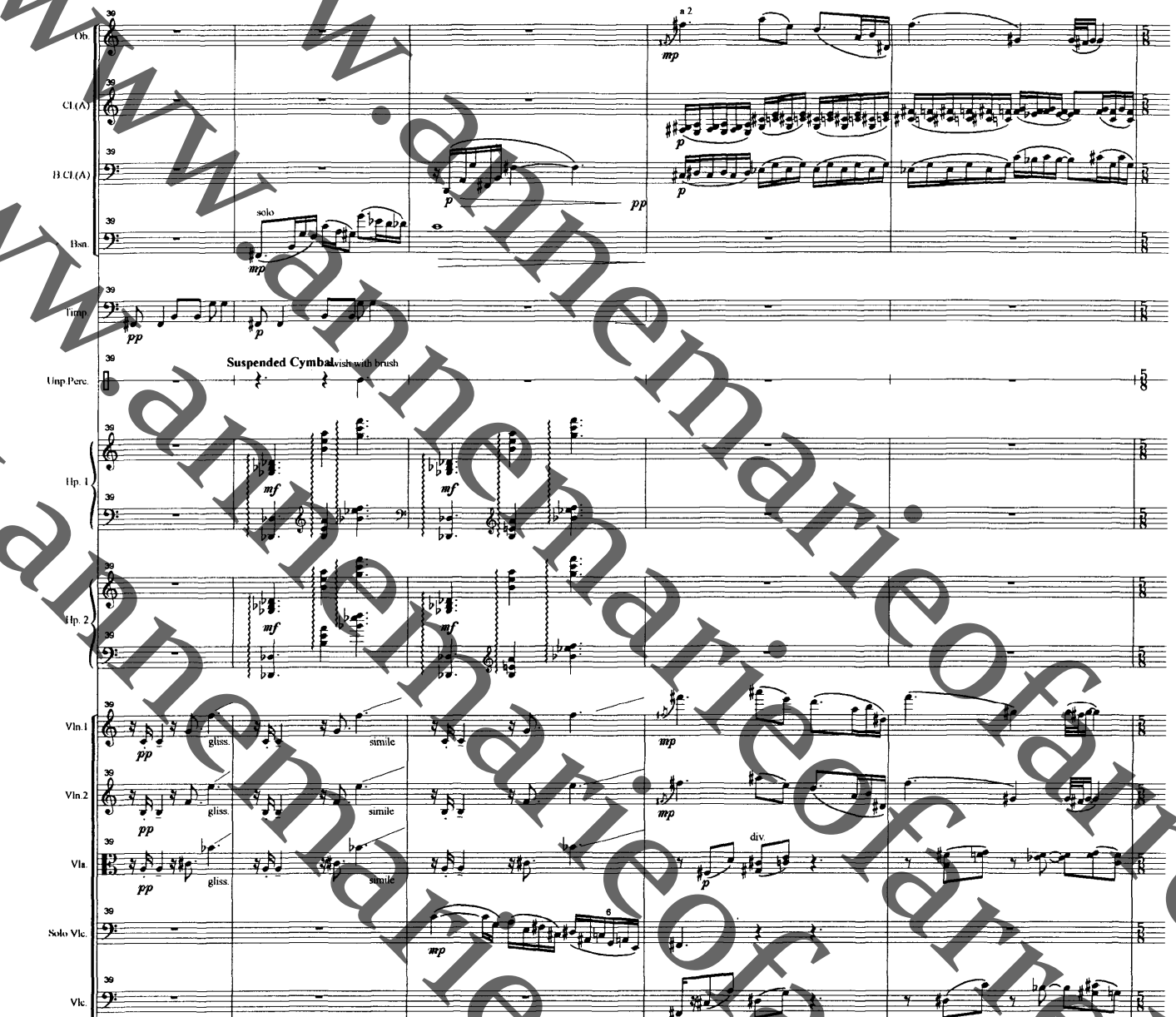
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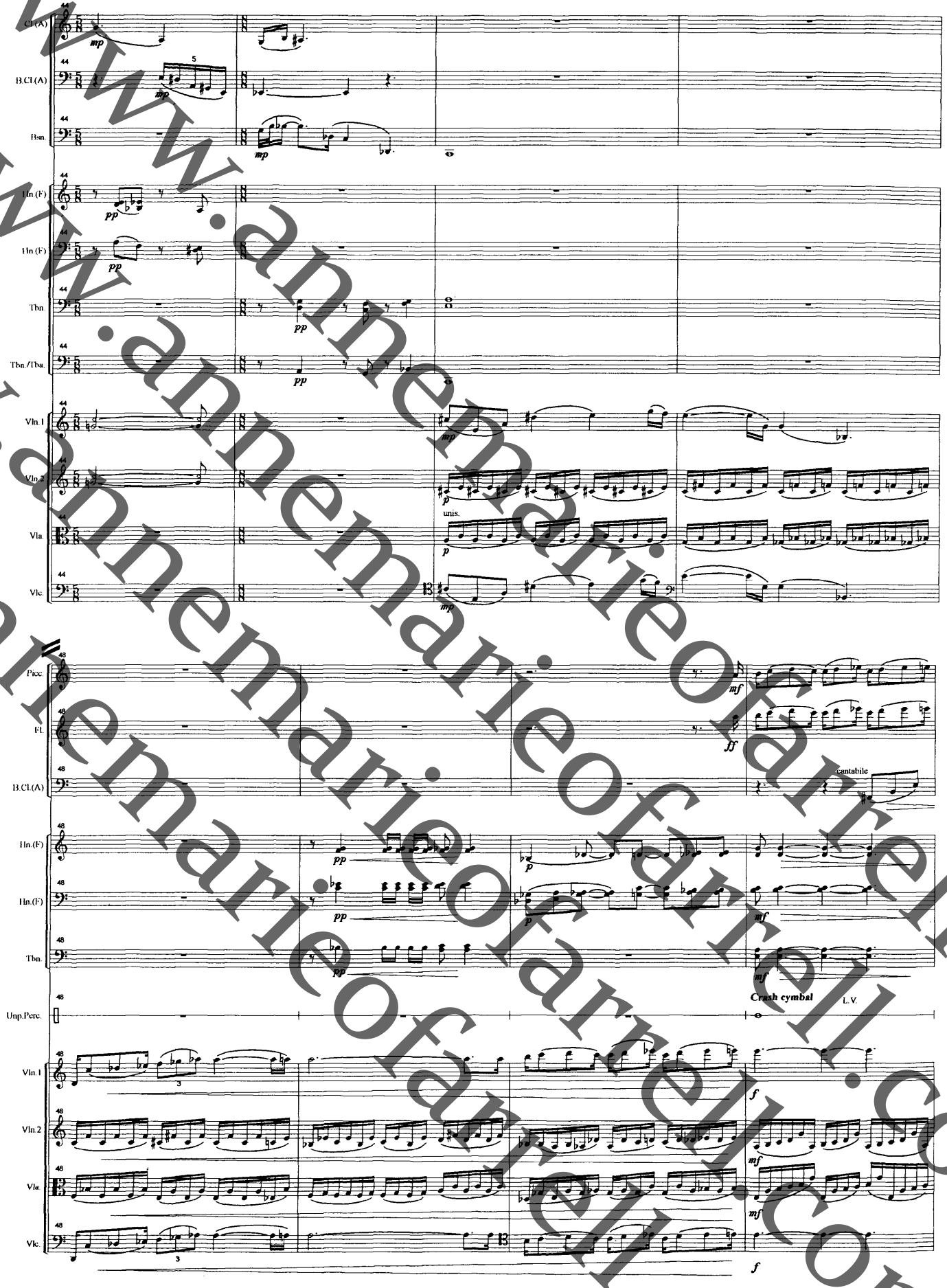
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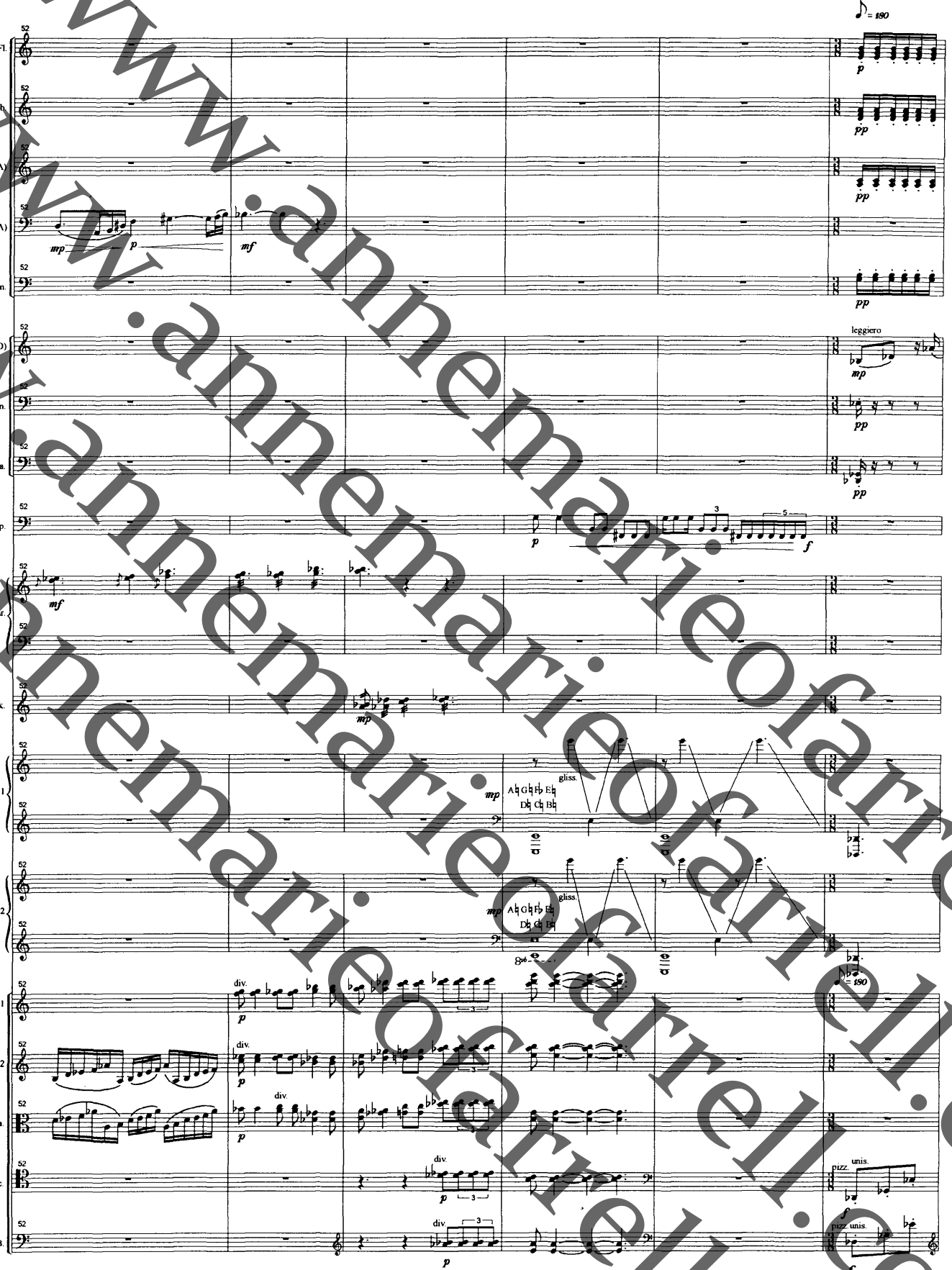
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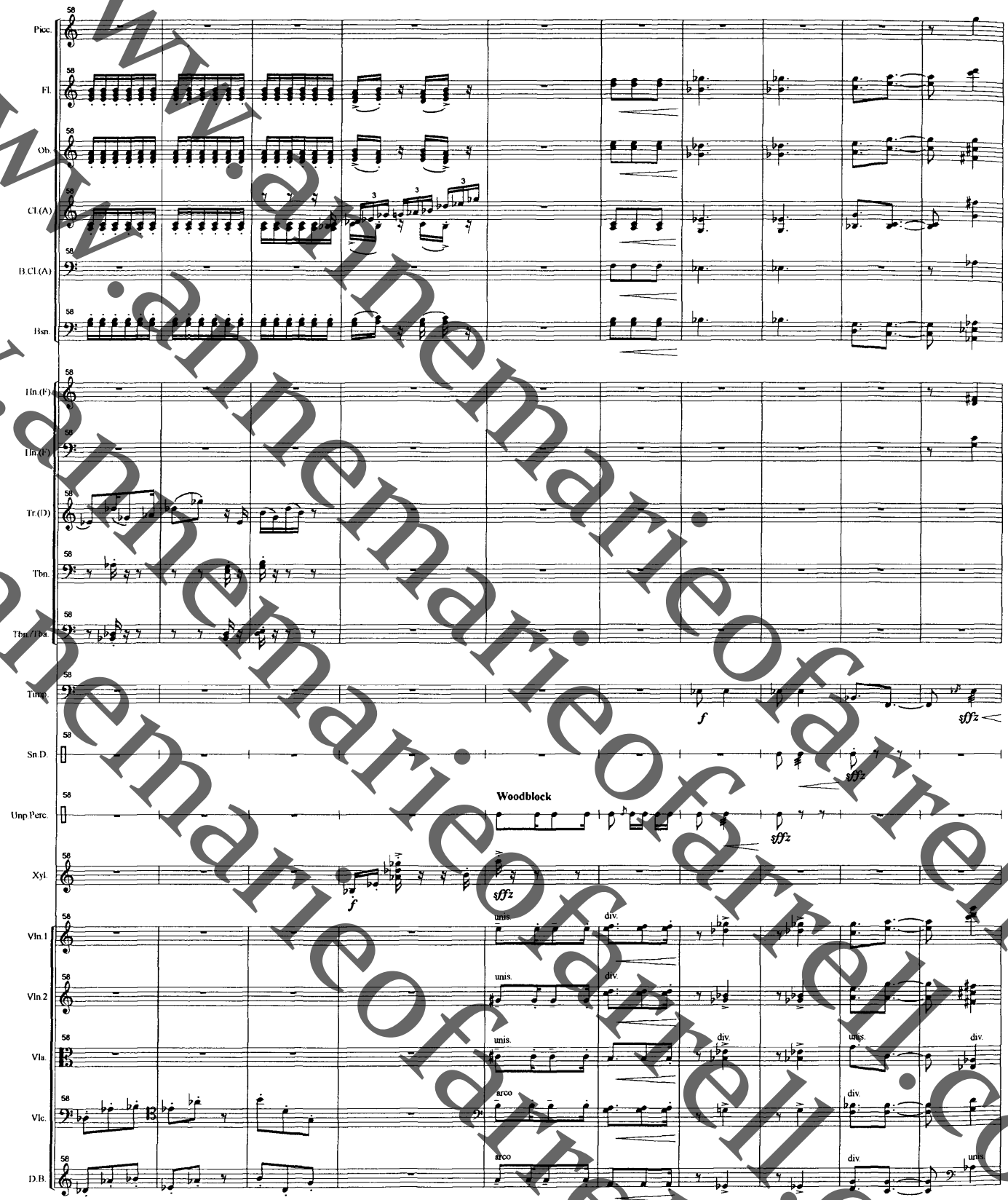
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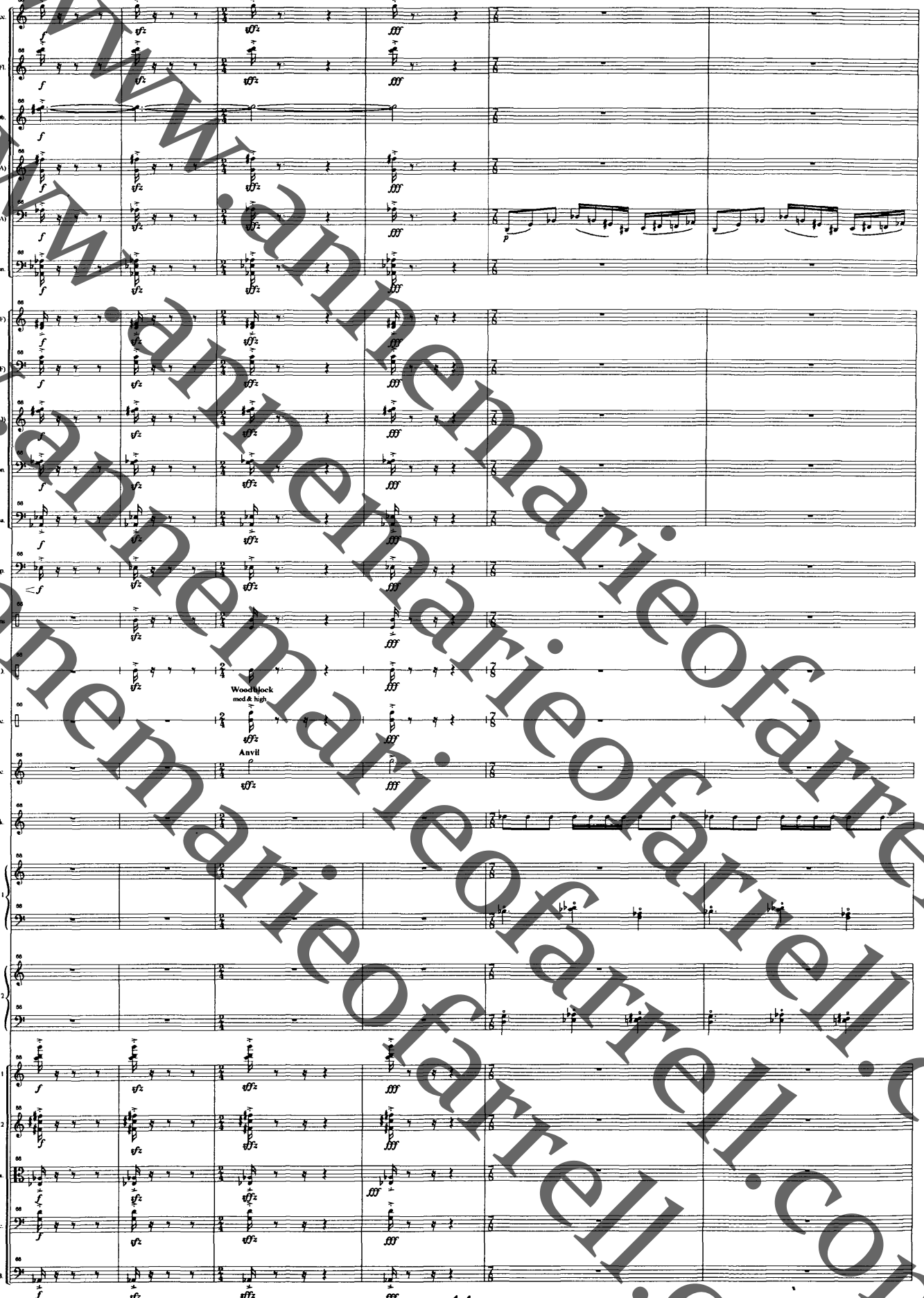
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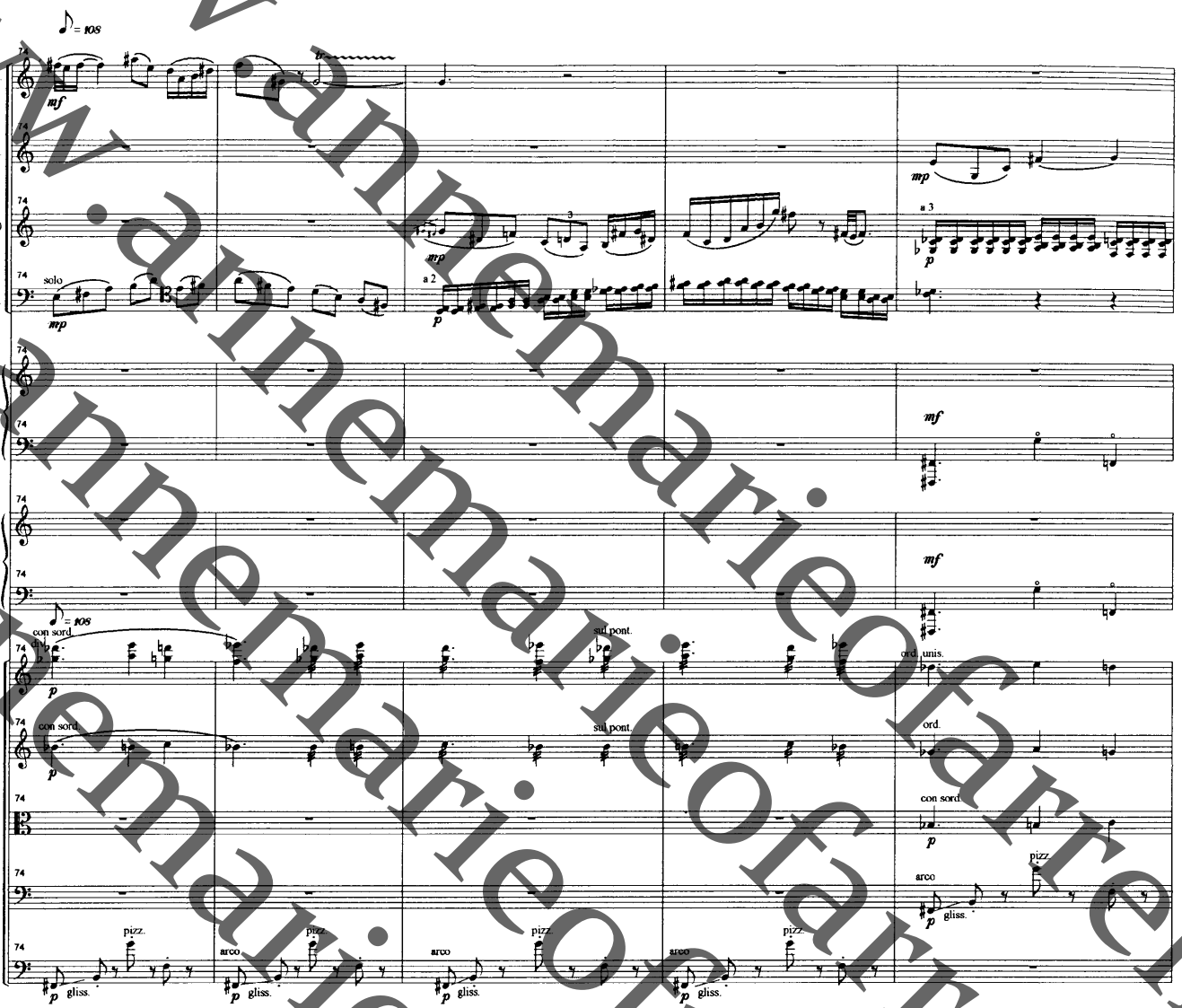
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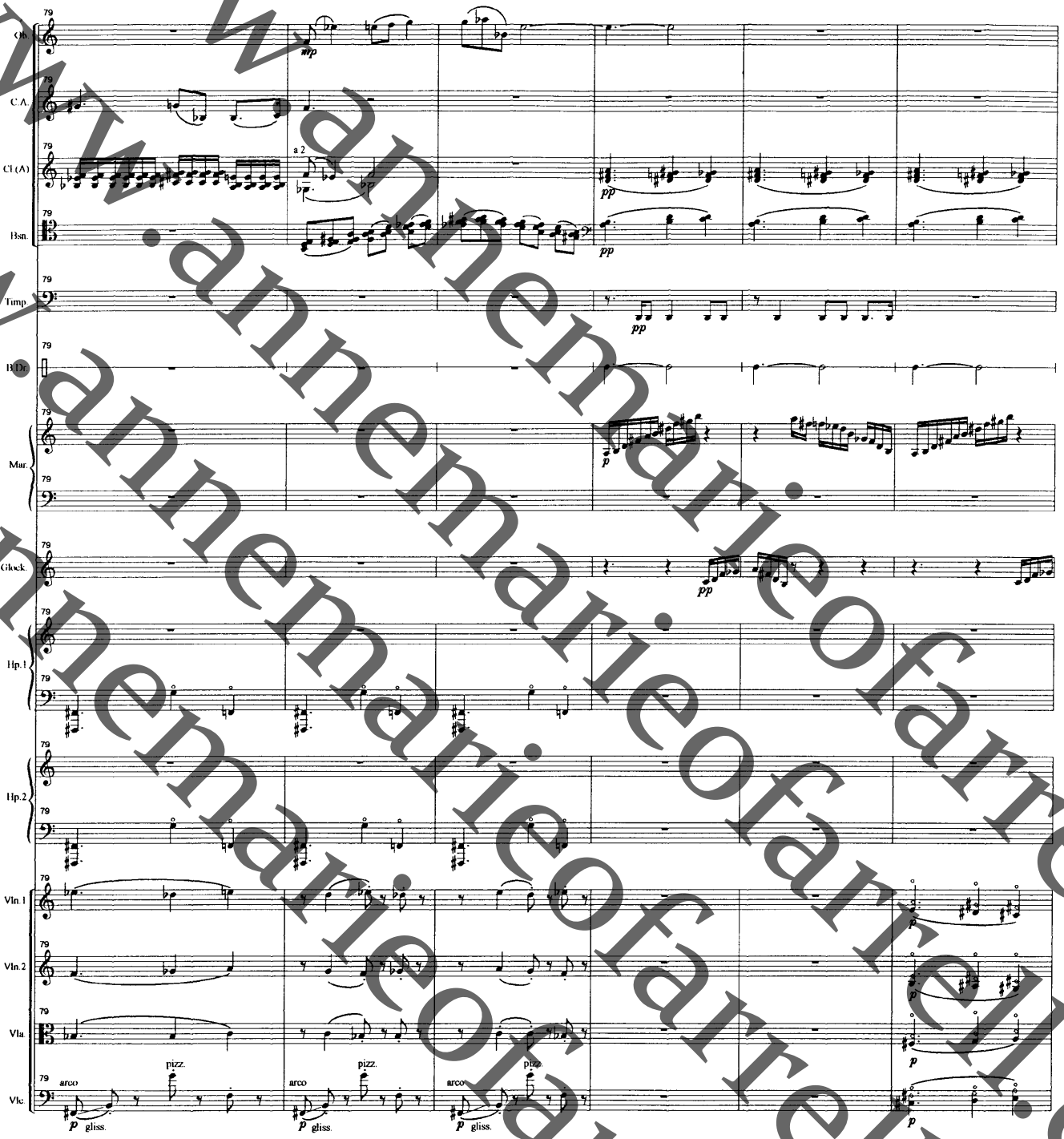
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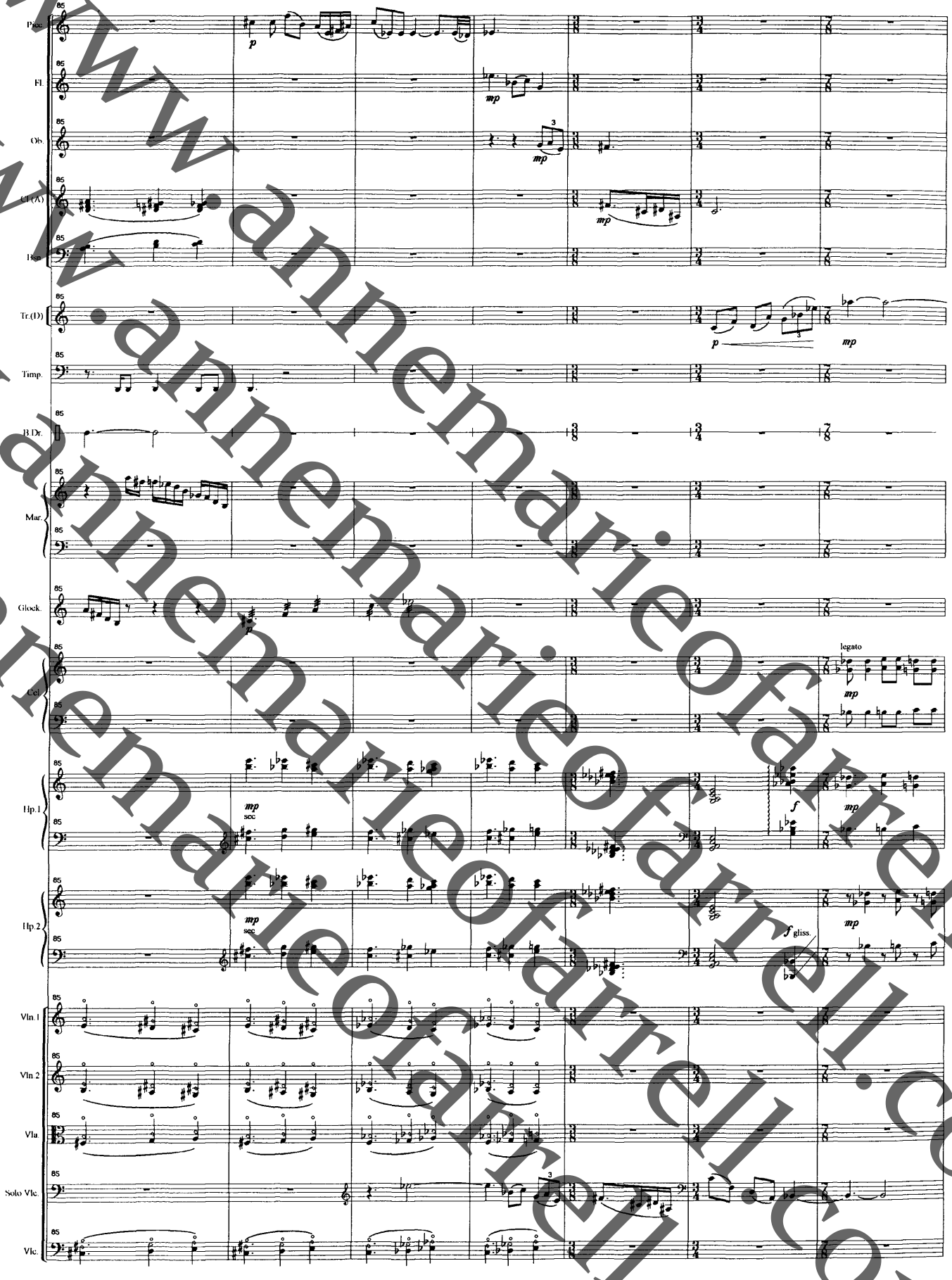
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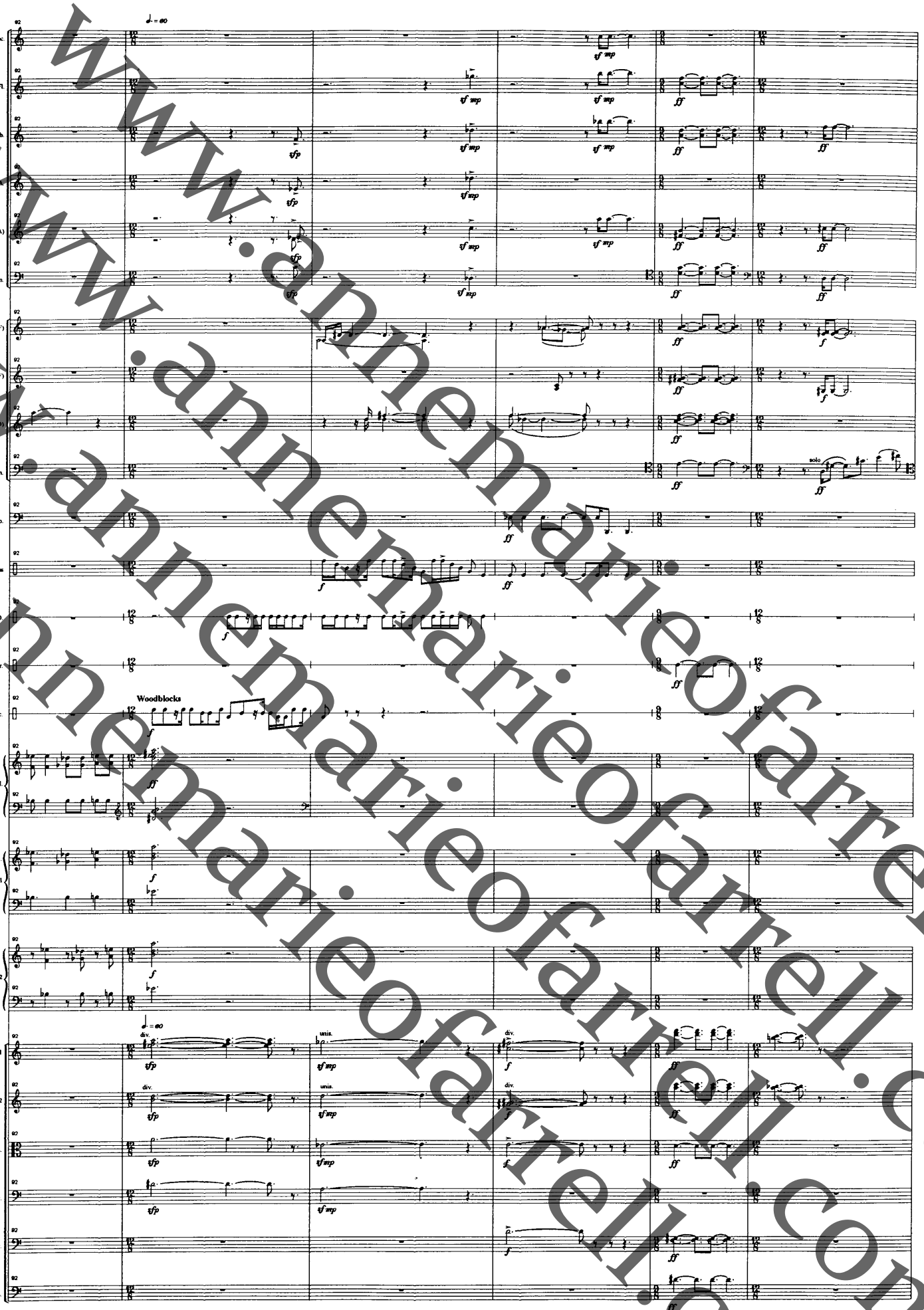
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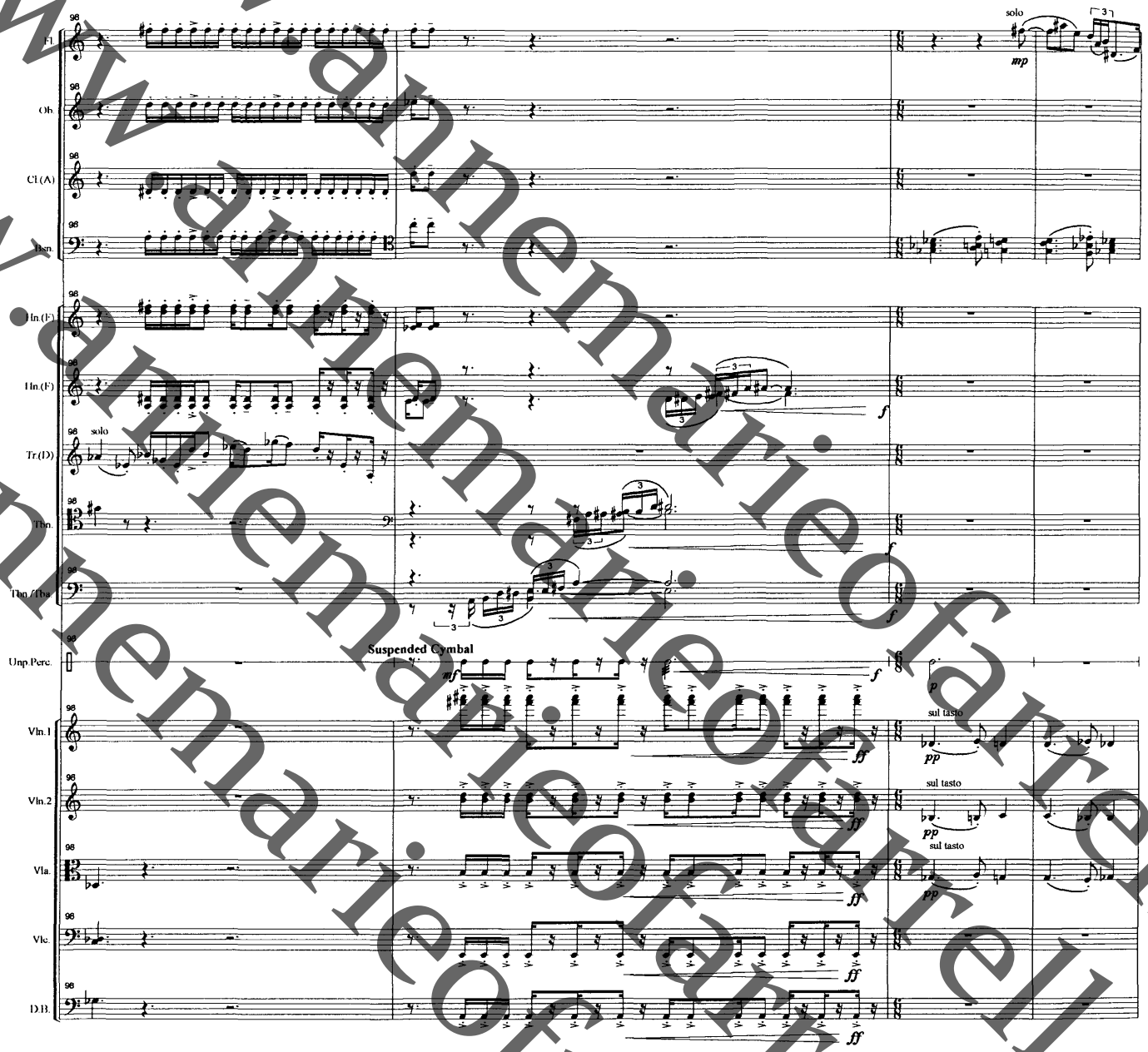
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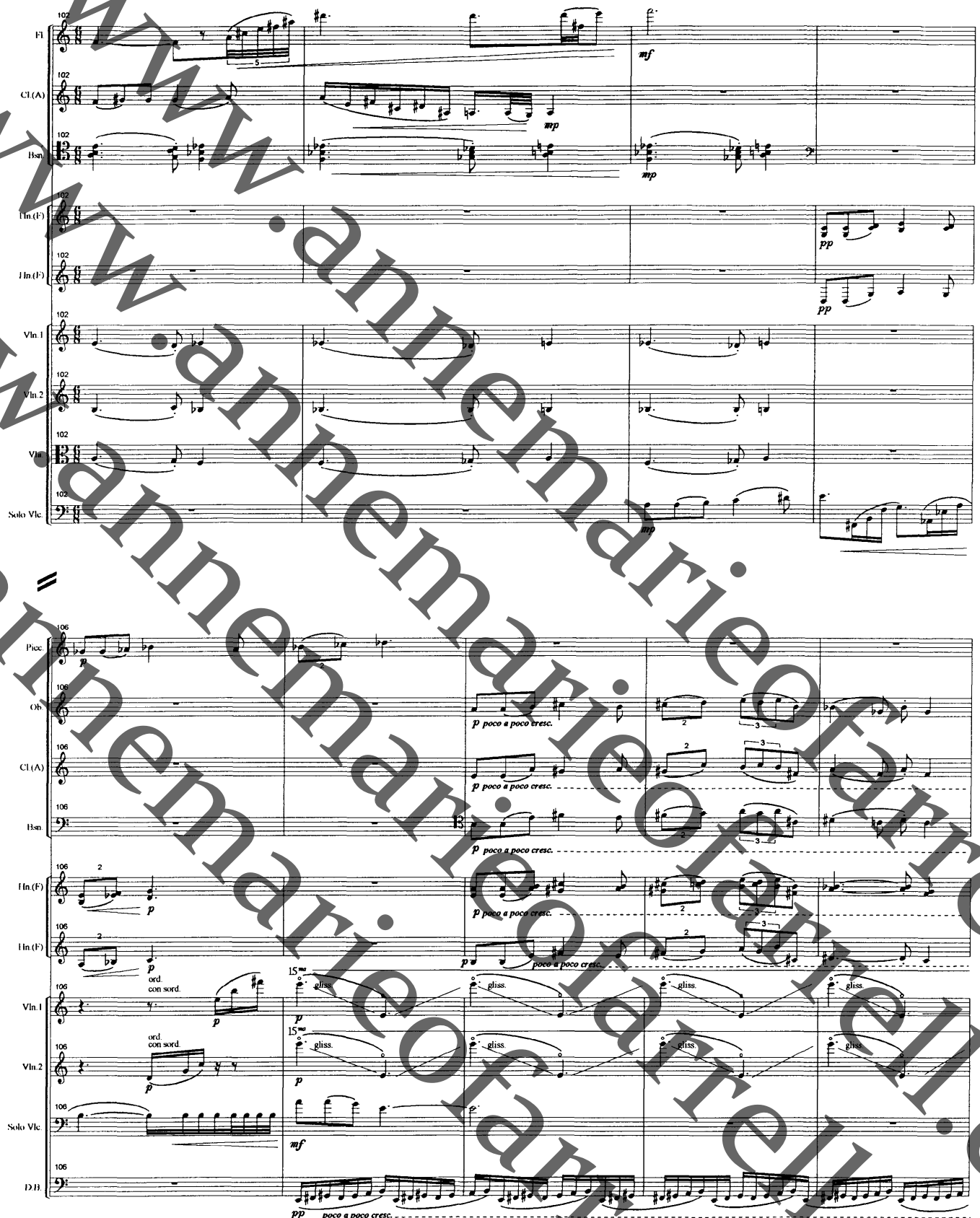
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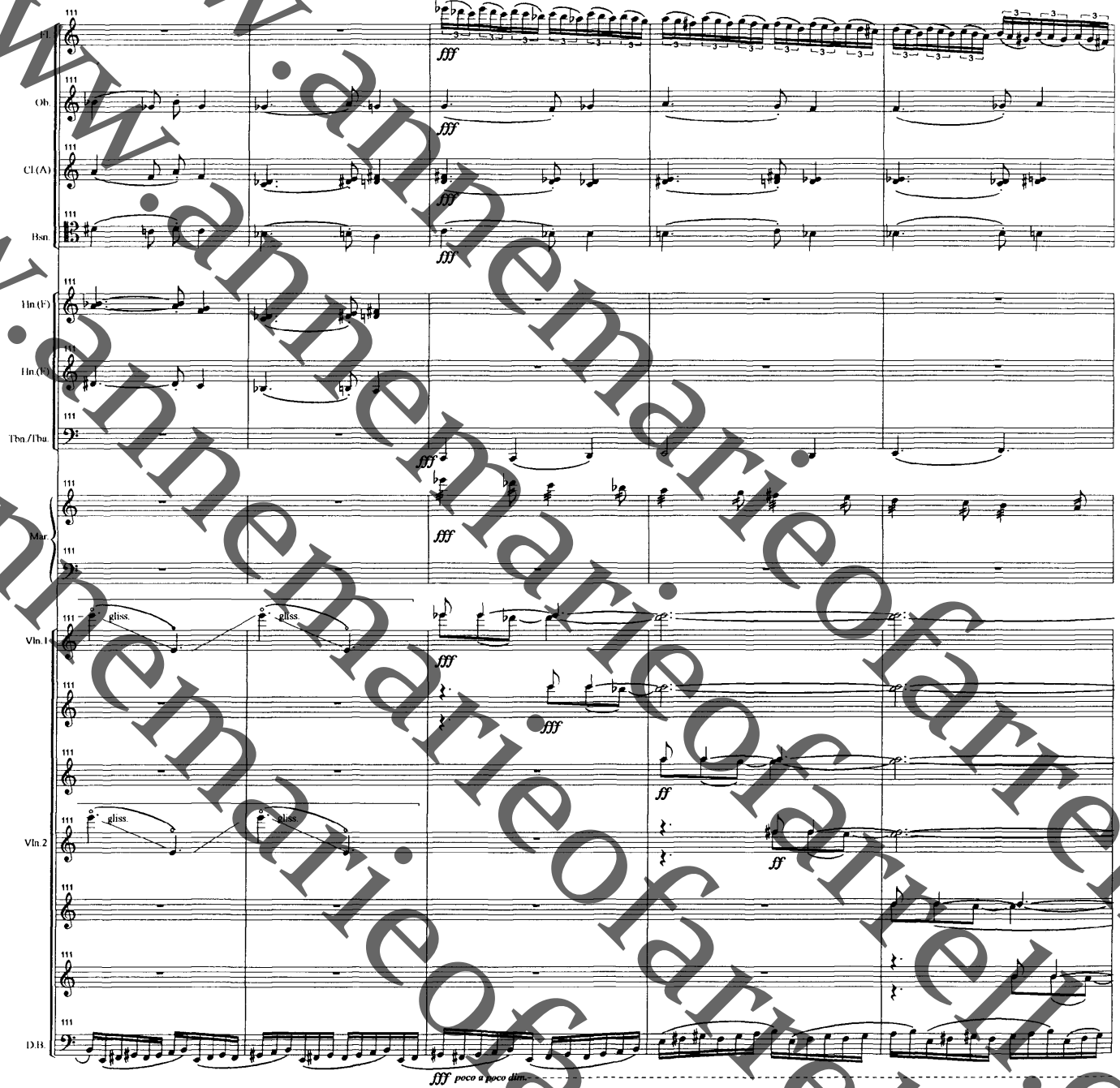
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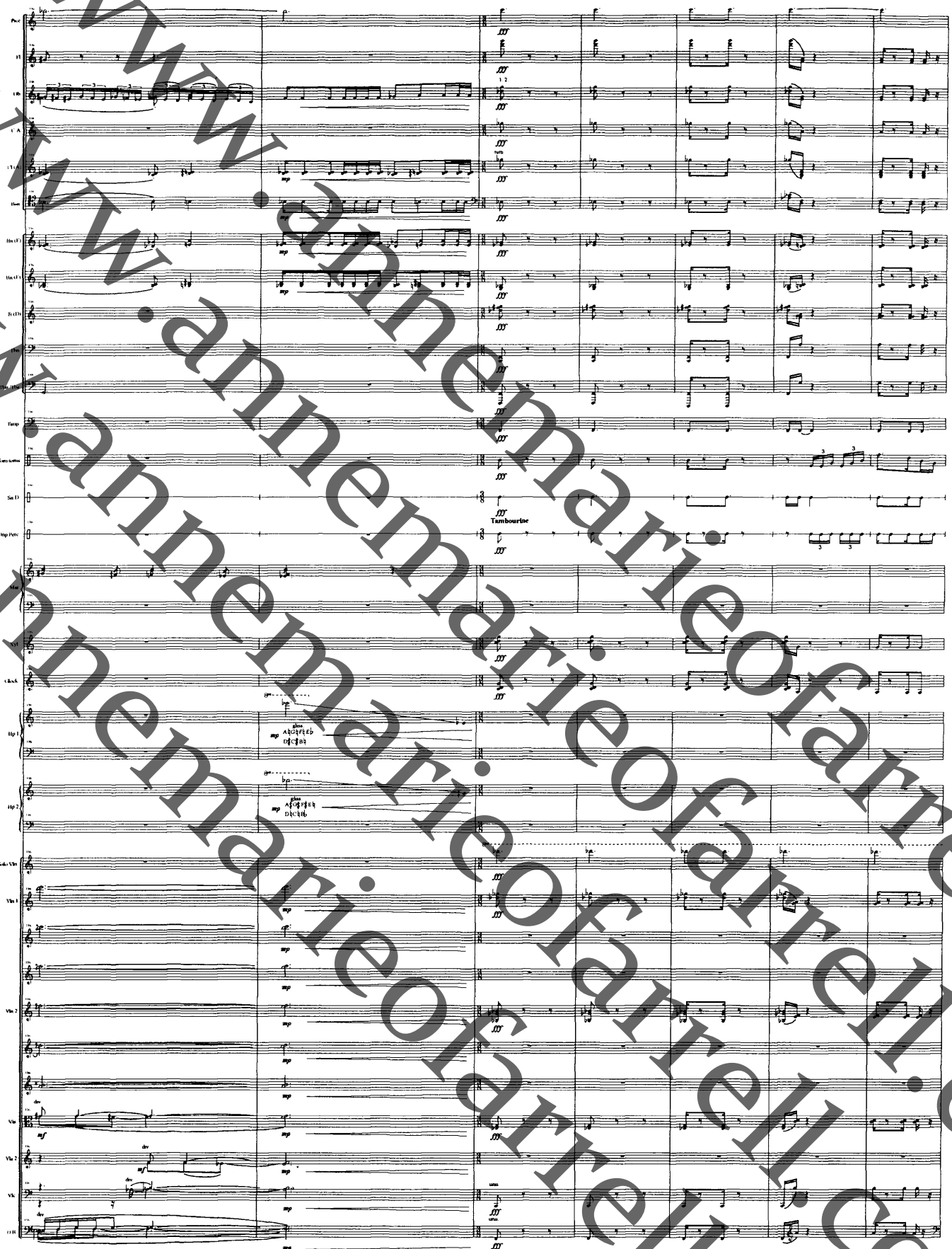
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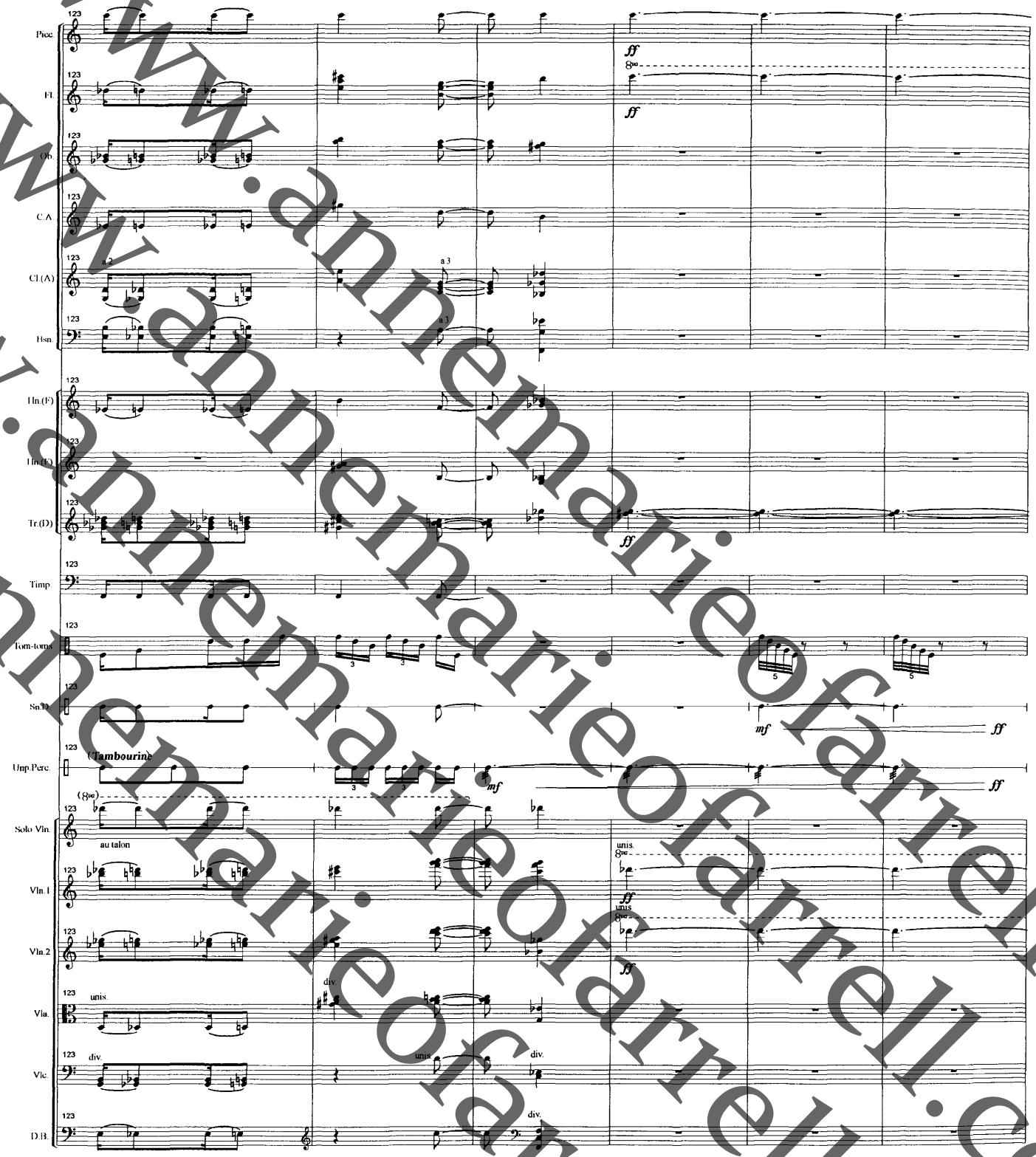
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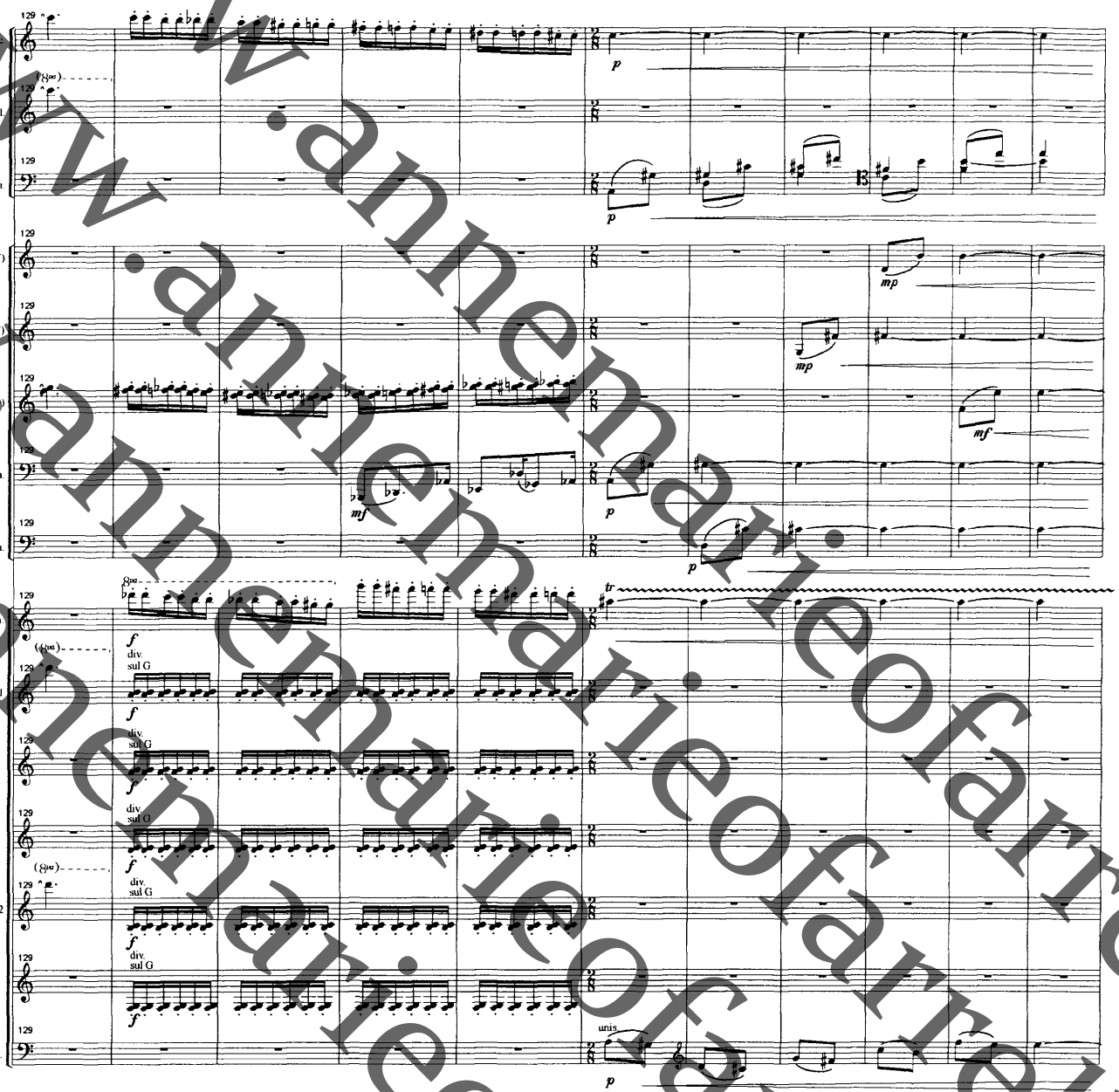
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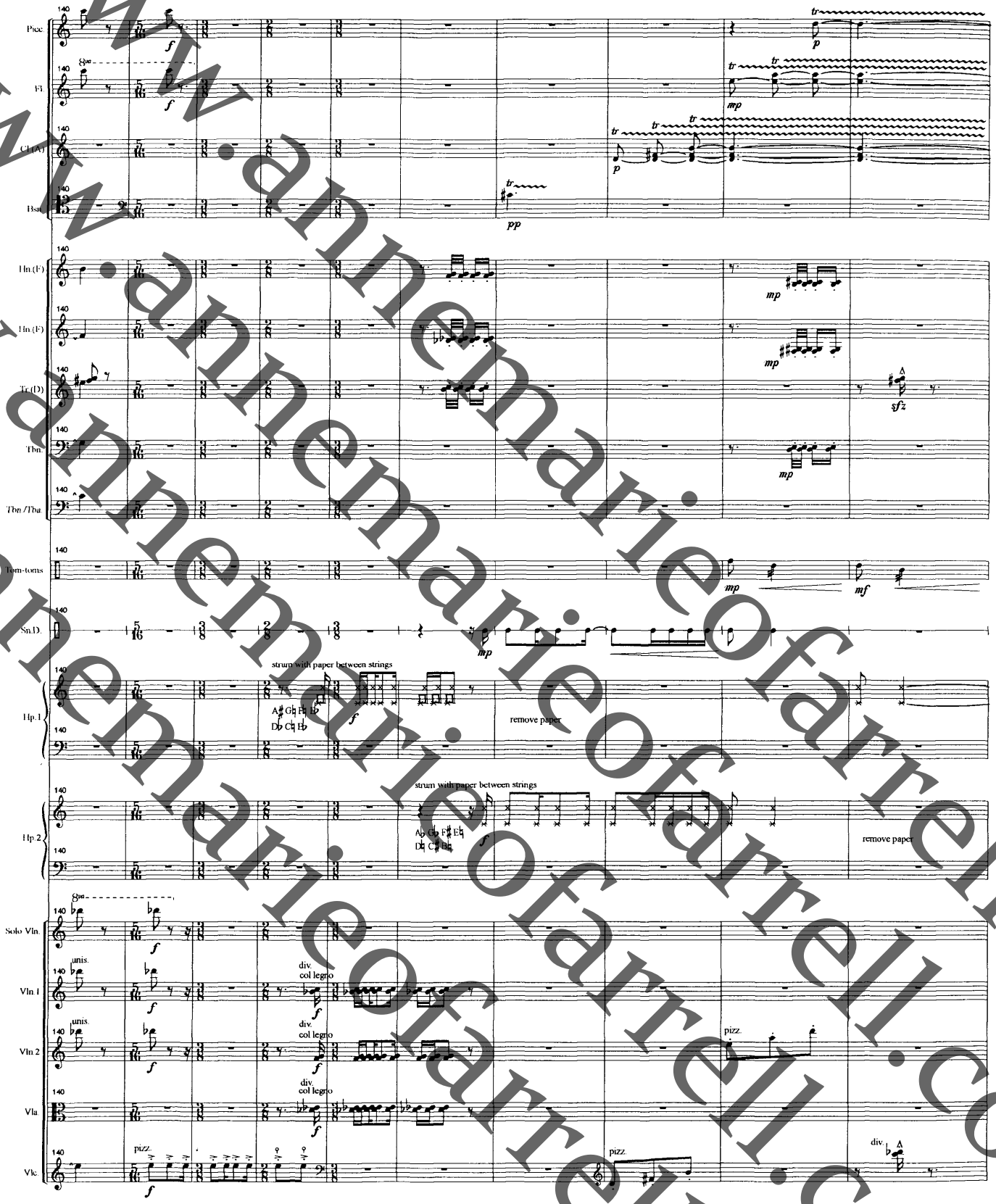
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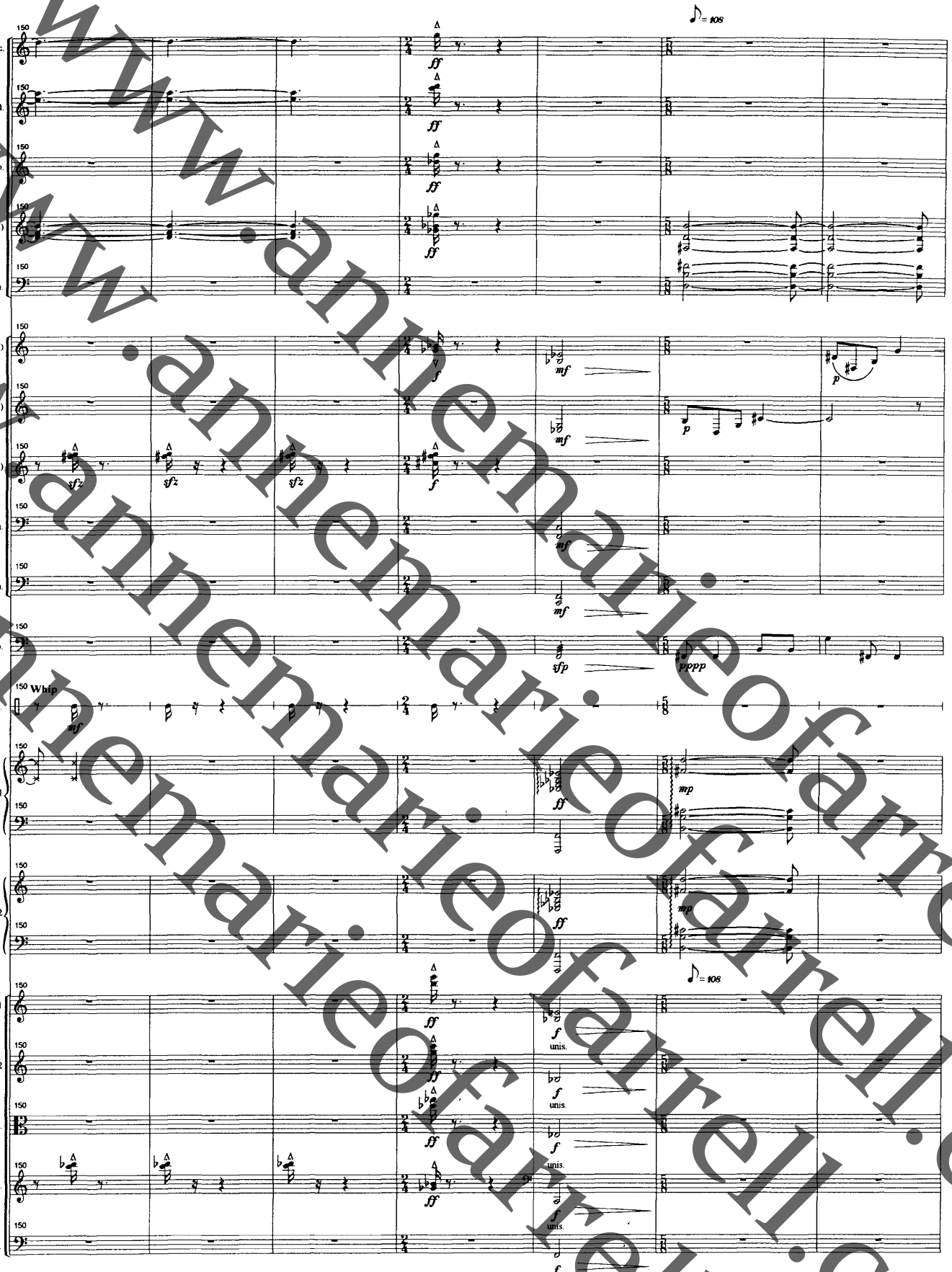
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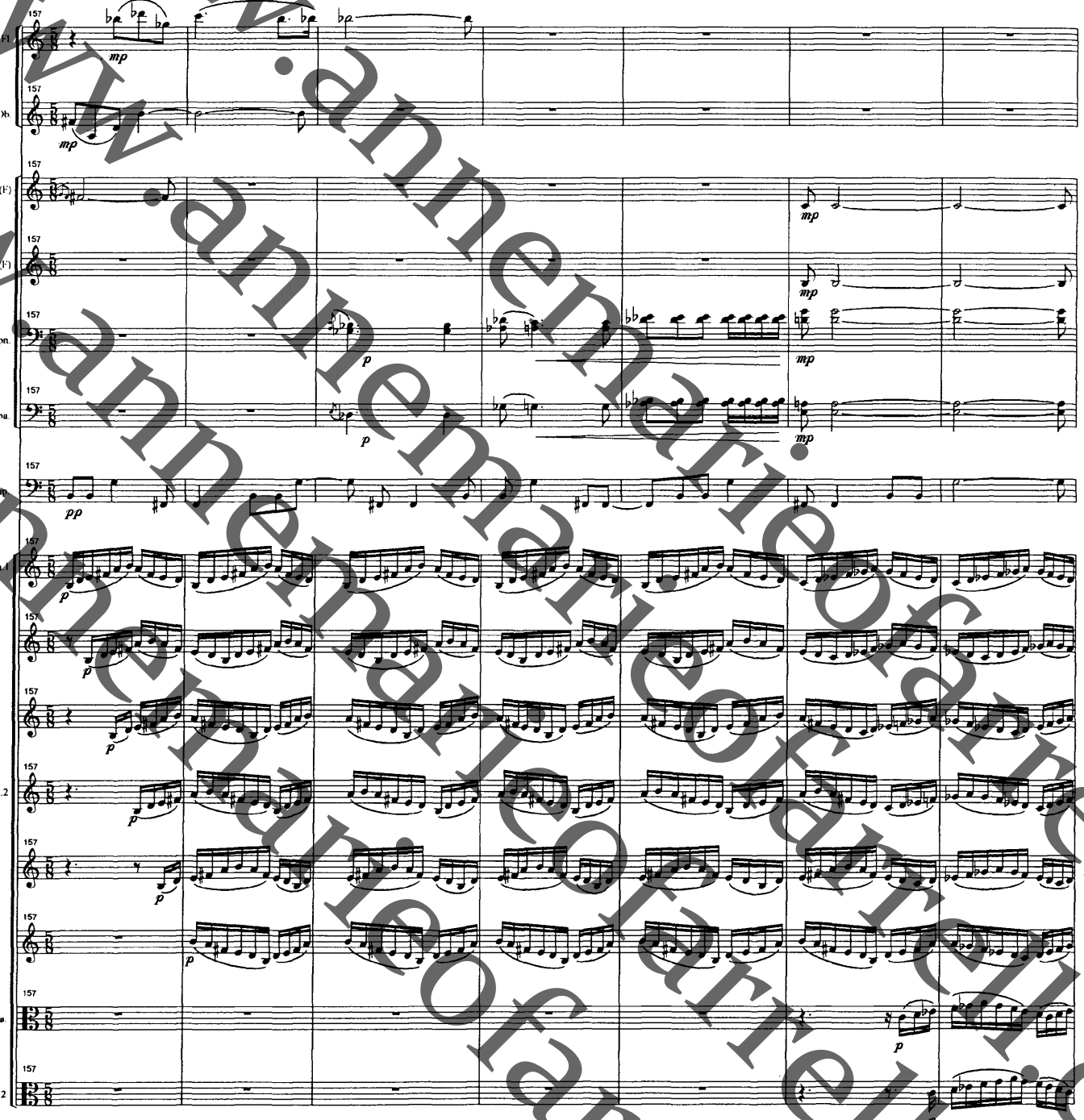
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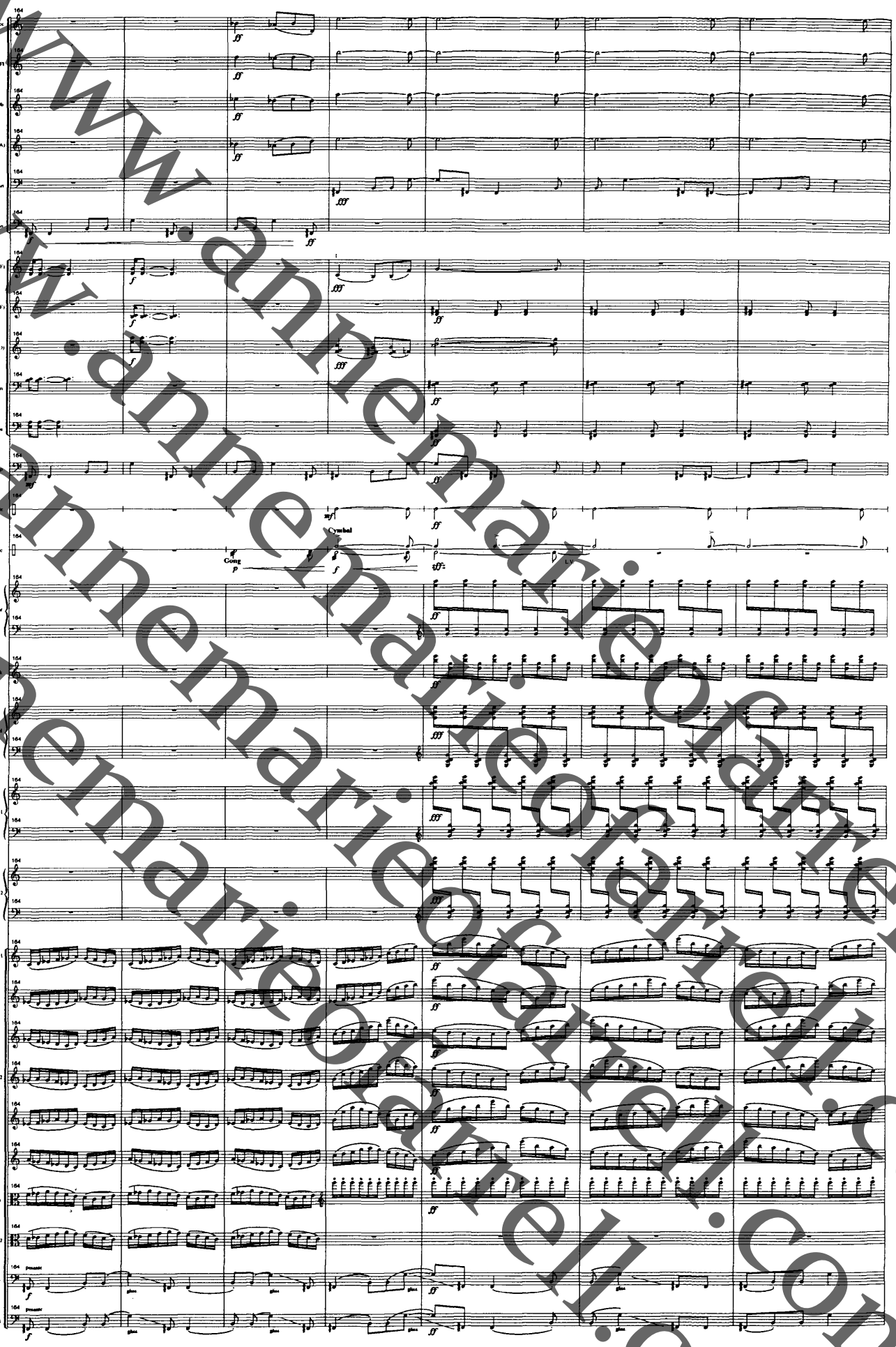
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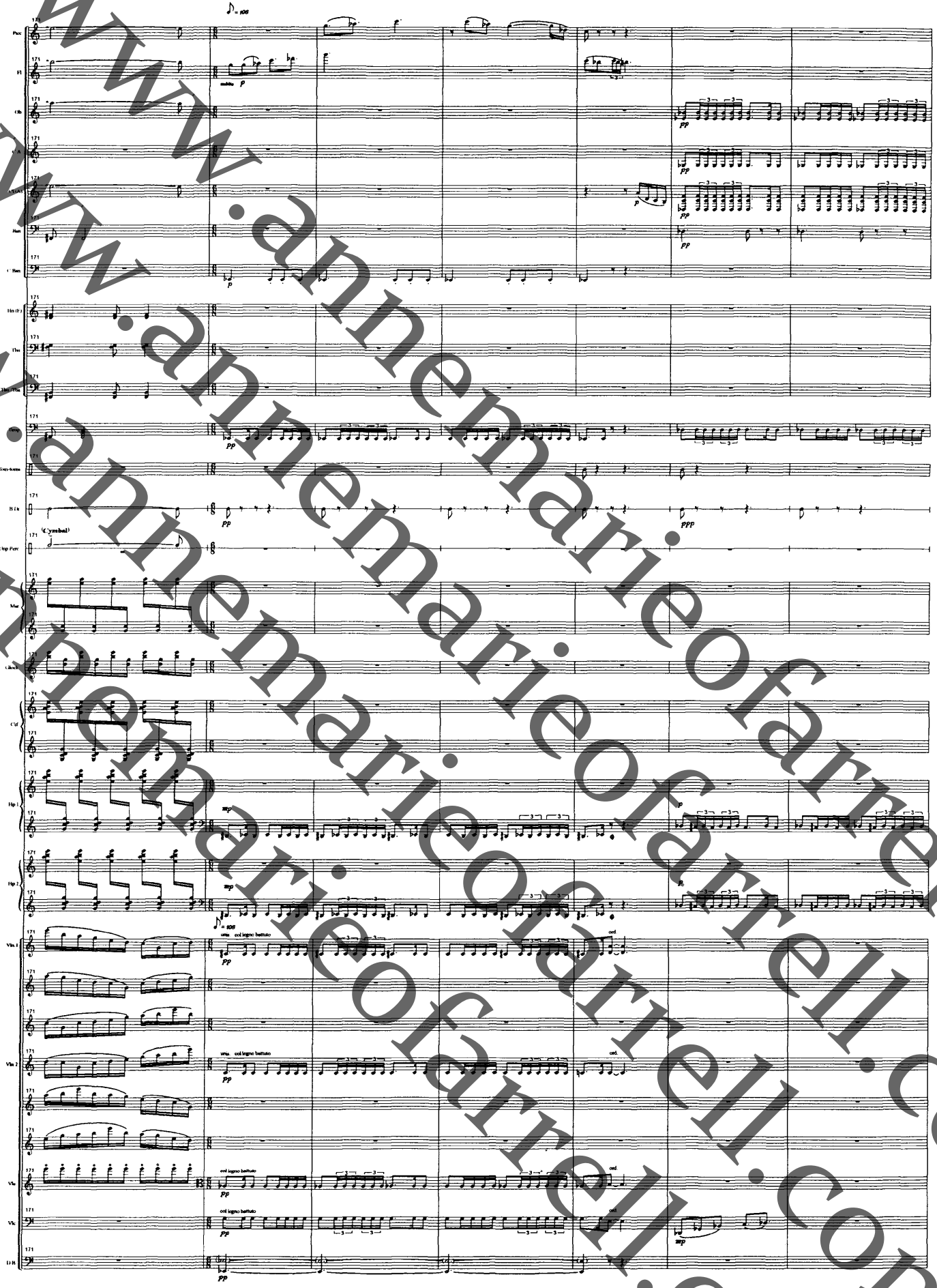

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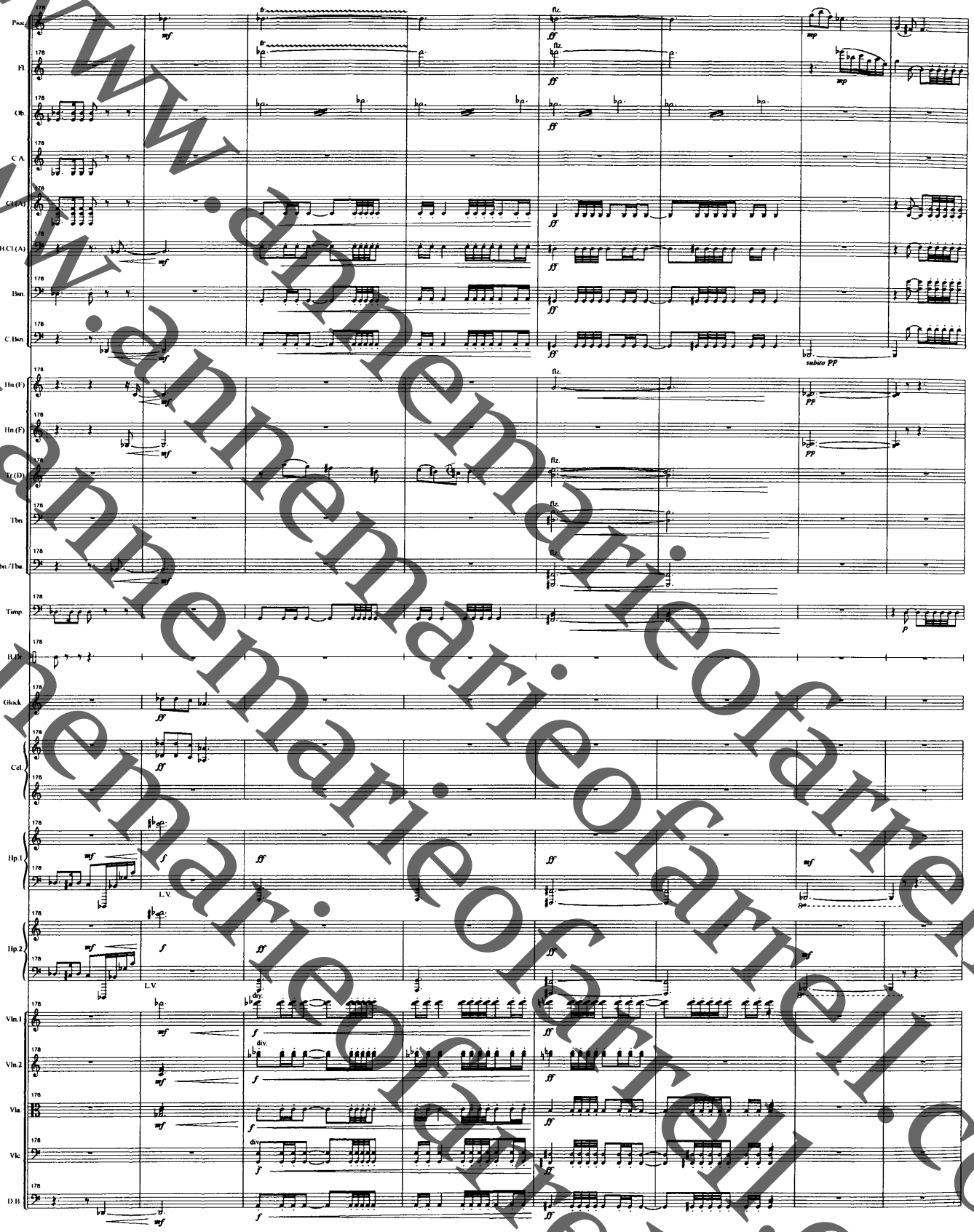
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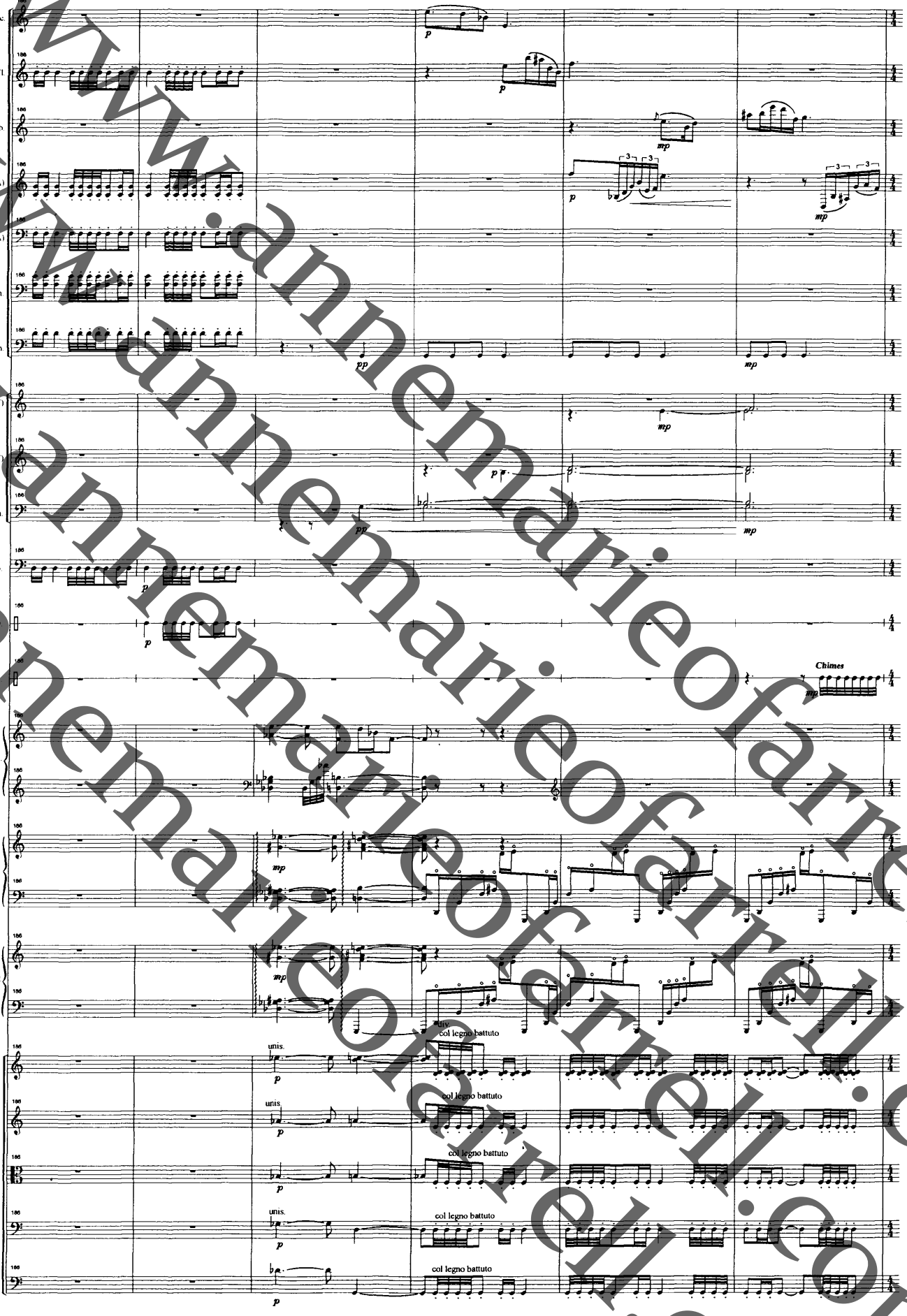
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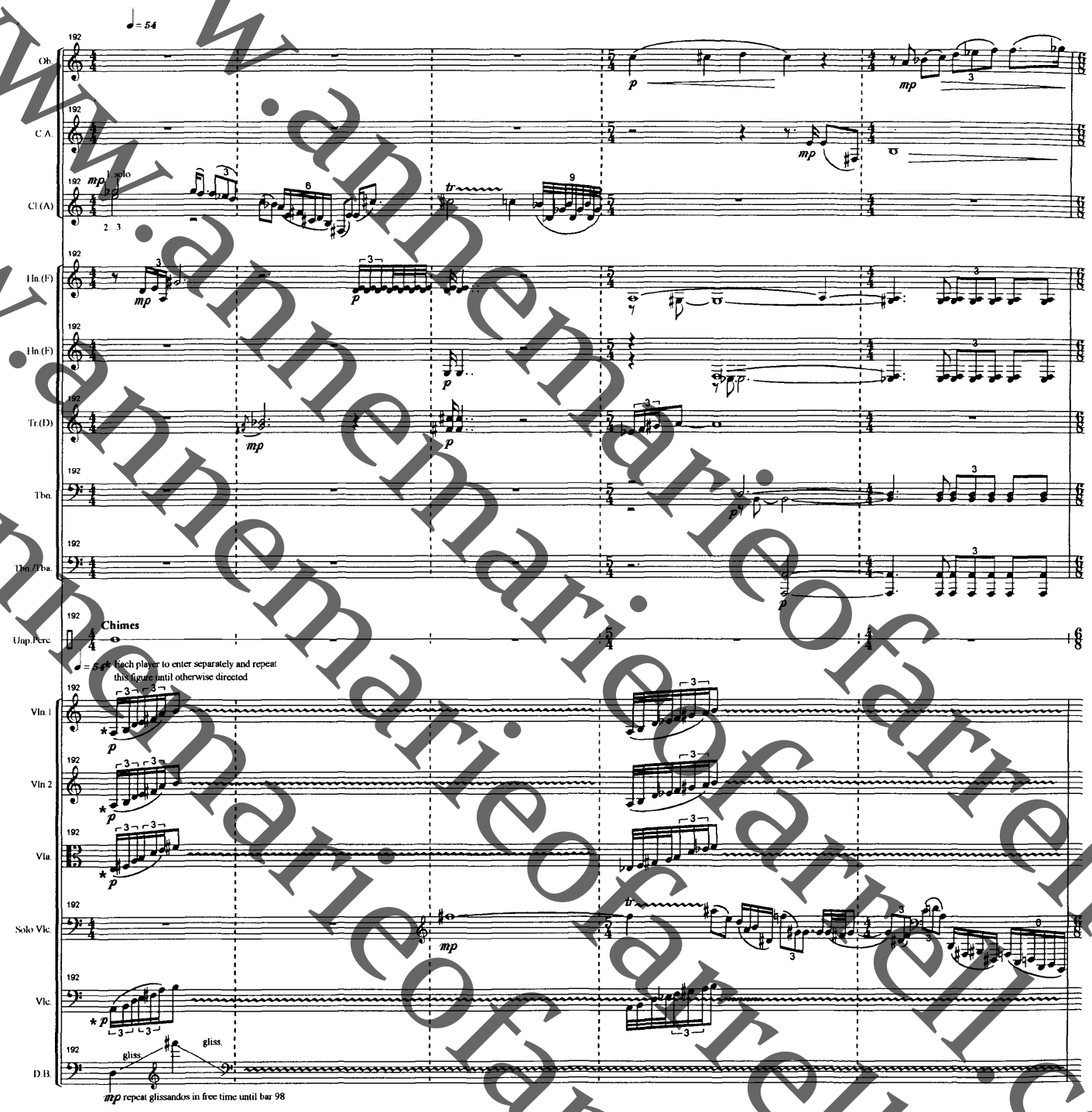
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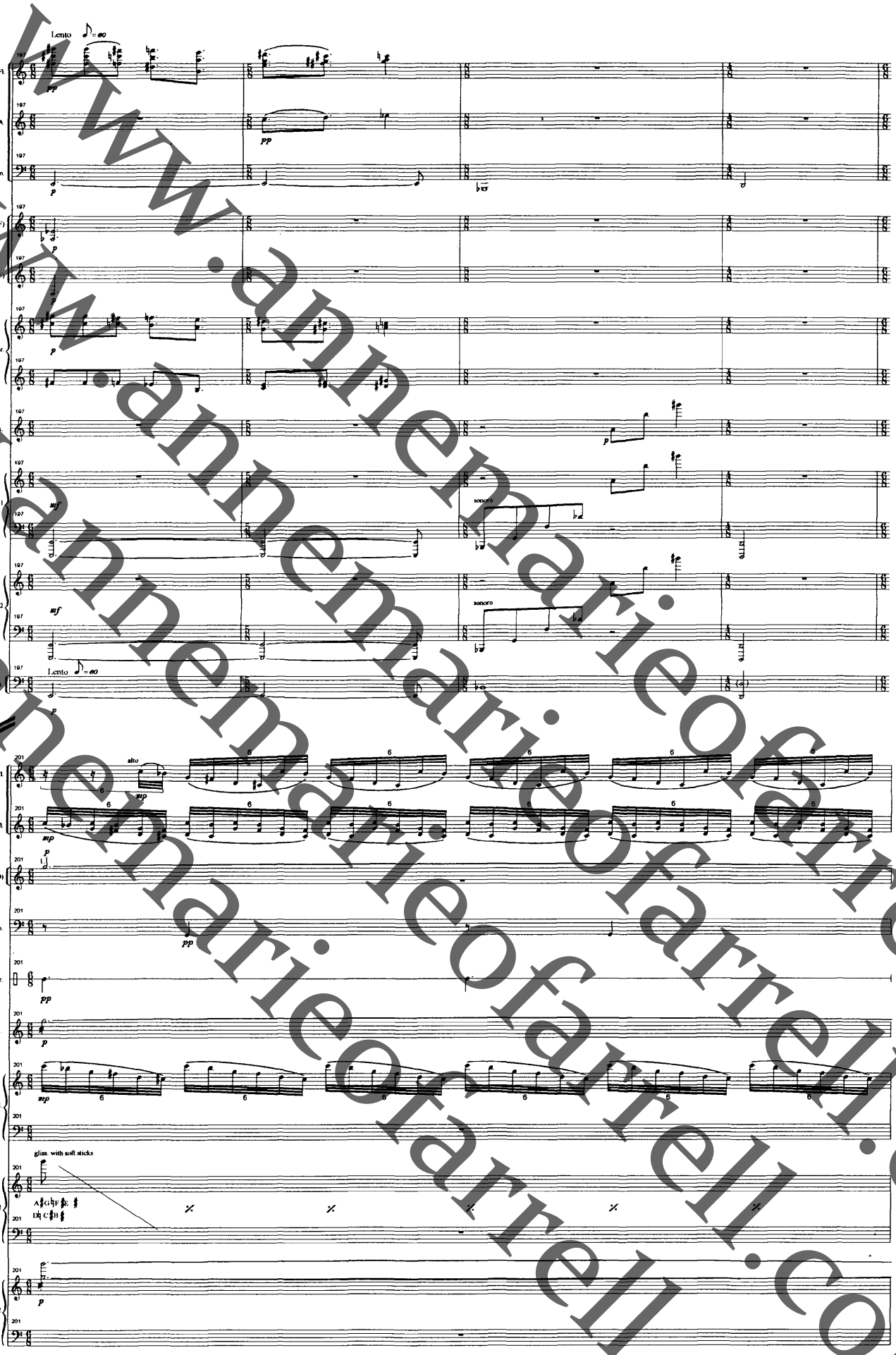
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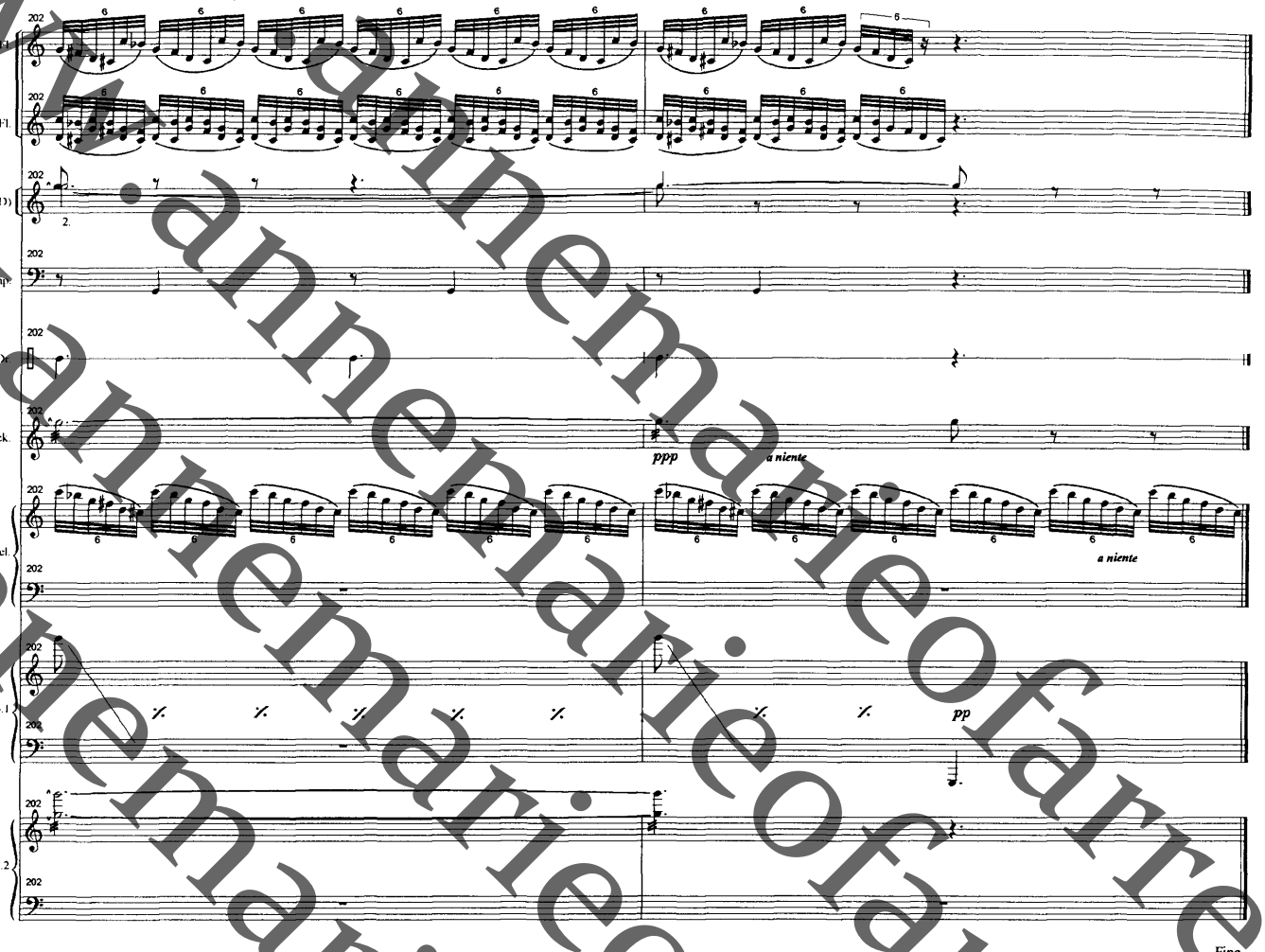
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