David Arbury

FOUR SNARES

A percussion quartet for four snare drums

Four Snares is an exploration of the often-overlooked timbral possibilities of the snare drum. Although all four drums are snare drums, they are of different size or make including one “altered” snare drum that can be any non-concert-quality drum of the performer’s choice (such as a drum with a broken tuning peg or a toy drum). With four different drums and ten different types of hits, this piece is a celebration of the wealth of sound available to the snare drum.

David Arbury (b. 1973)

David Arbury grew up in Washington, D. C. where he sang as a boy treble at Washington National Cathedral in the Cathedral Choir of Men and Boys. He remained with the choir for eighteen years and in that time sang with every voice part. He has worked at the Music Division of the Library of Congress, co-founded an independent record label, conducted small ensembles, and performed extensively as a bass and percussion player. He has acted as composer-in-residence and received commissions and grants from numerous ensembles and organizations including the American Composers Forum, the Arizona Commission on the Arts, and the Phoenix Arts Commission. His compositions for concert hall, church, dance, and theater have been performed throughout the United States, as well as in Denmark, France, and Italy.

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N.B: Please report any performances by email to www.davidarbury.com. This allows the composer to update his performance records, helping him to find grants to write more music. Also, he likes hearing from you.

Notes for the Performers

Four Snares is scored for four snare drums and four performers. The four drums should be of different depths and timbres, but the exact drum size is left to the performers' discretion, with the exception of the highest drum, which must be a piccolo snare. Likewise, the pitch of the drums is left to the performers' so long as an effect of highest to lowest tone color is achieved. The four snare drums are as follows:

Top drum – if at all possible, this should be a piccolo snare drum
2nd drum – any snare drum of lower tone quality. A 4" deep snare is suggested.
3rd drum – any snare drum of still deeper tone. A 6" deep snare is suggested.
Altered drum – an "altered" snare drum. For this drum, the performers should use any drum that is still functional but no longer viable for concert performance. Examples include a drum with a broken tuning peg, a toy drum, and a drum with a small hole in the head. This drum should definitely still have a functioning (though not necessarily well) snare chain, but beyond that the performer is encouraged to be imaginative with the choice for this drum.

For all drums, excepting where brushes are noted, the stick choice is left to the performers' preference.

Four Snares uses a numbering system in its notation to indicate different types of strokes. These numbers will appear above the first note for the given change of stroke and always hold through until the next number (i.e. a "6" above the note means that all notes will be played as a rim strike until further notice). In addition, the performers will see notes that appear on, above, and below the staff. This positioning is only a visual aid to help remind the player whether they are playing on the rim, on the head, or elsewhere and has no special significance beyond this; at all points, the numbering system will tell the player all that he or she needs to know. The numbering system is as follows:

1 – strike the head as normal
2 – strike the head near the edge
3 – strike the head and rim simultaneously with one stroke
4 – bracing the stick on the head at the rim, strike rim with the same stick's base
5 – lay one stick across the rim; strike it with the other stick
6 – strike the rim regularly
7 – strike the side of the drum
8 – scrape the head with the stick (or brush as indicated)
9 – audibly release (or tighten) snare
10 – sweep snare chain with stick (parallel to the chain length). If this sound is too quiet on a given drum, use a metal triangle beater instead of a stick.

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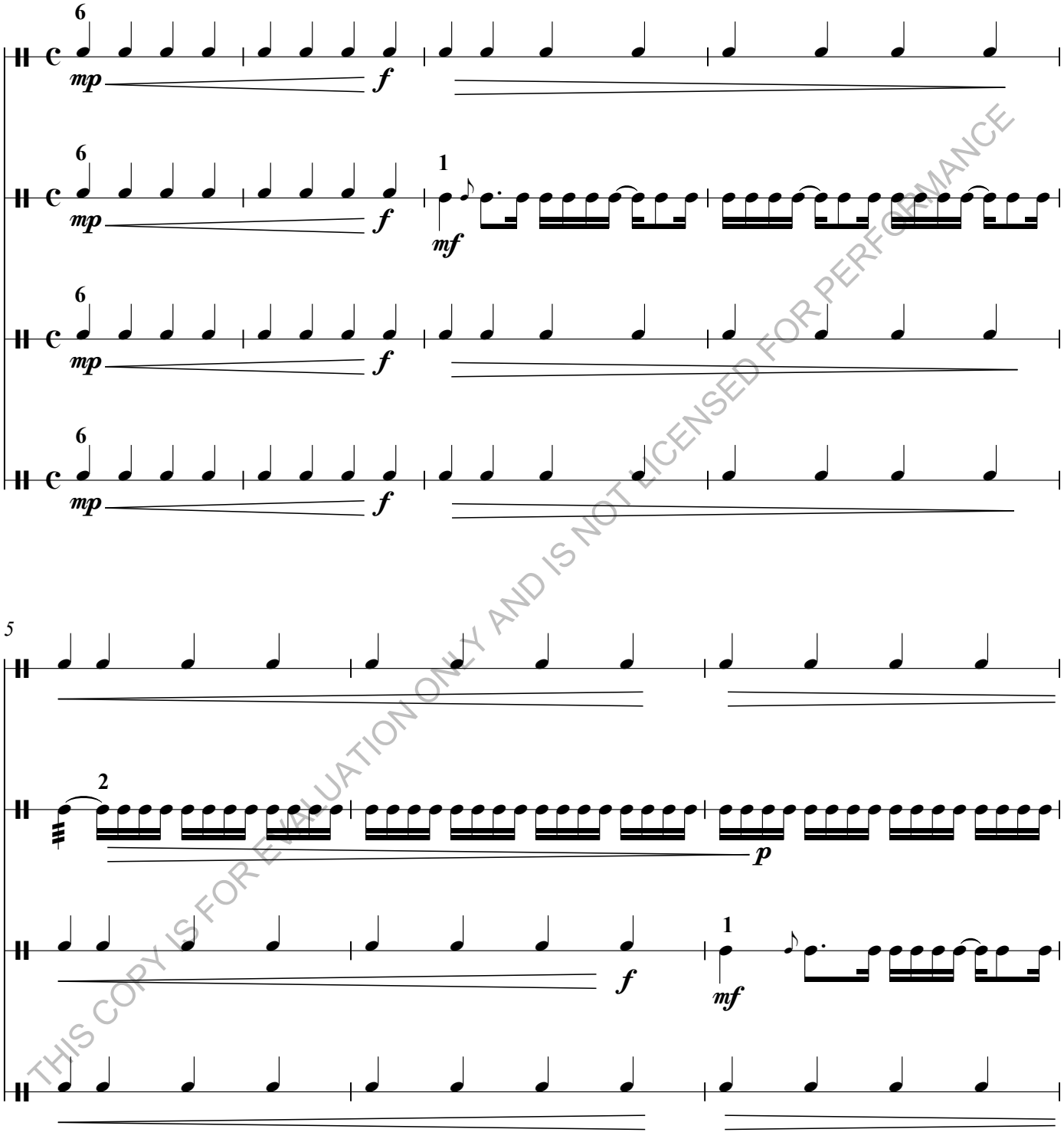
Four Snares

DAVID ARBURY

♩=96-120



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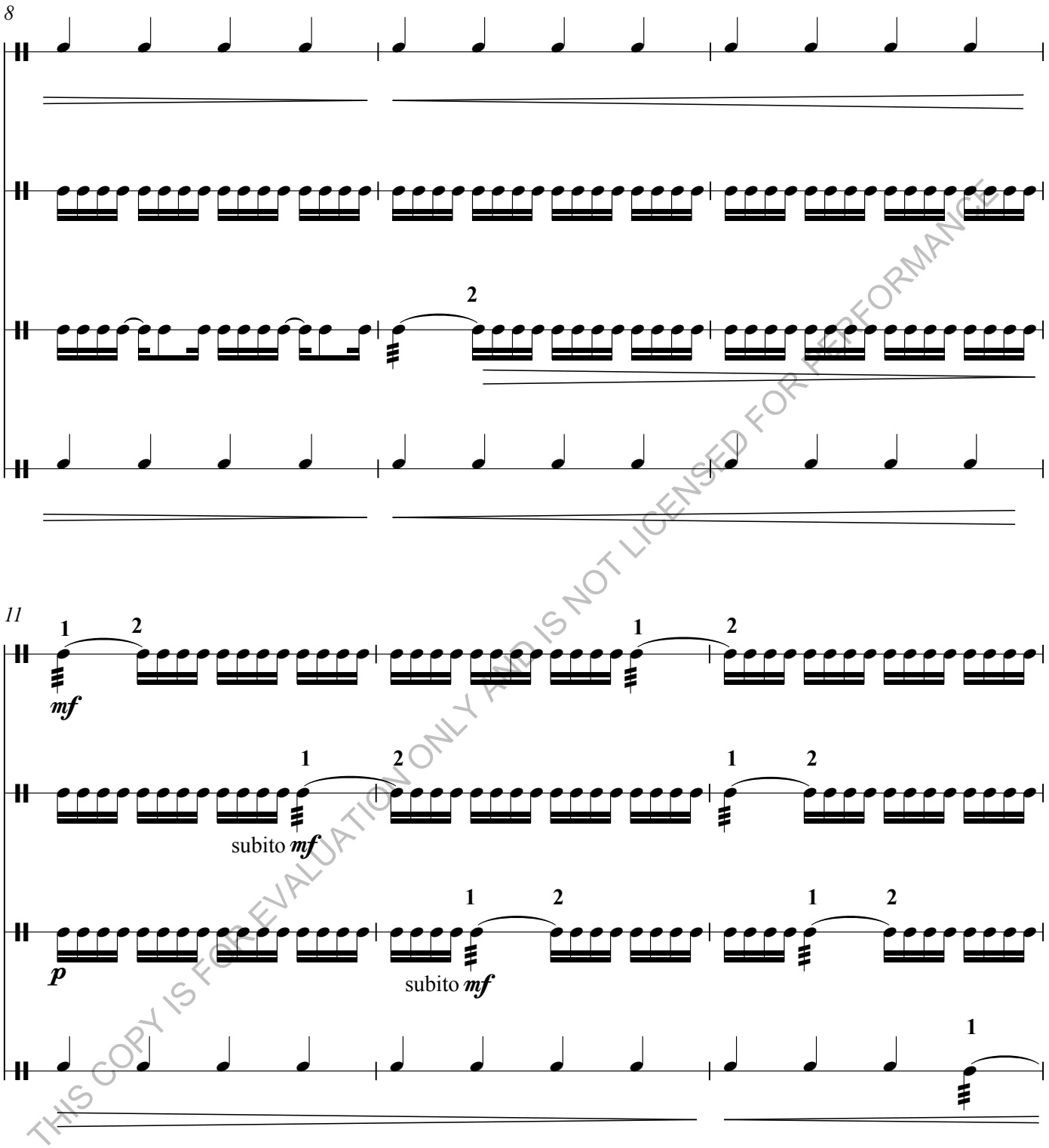

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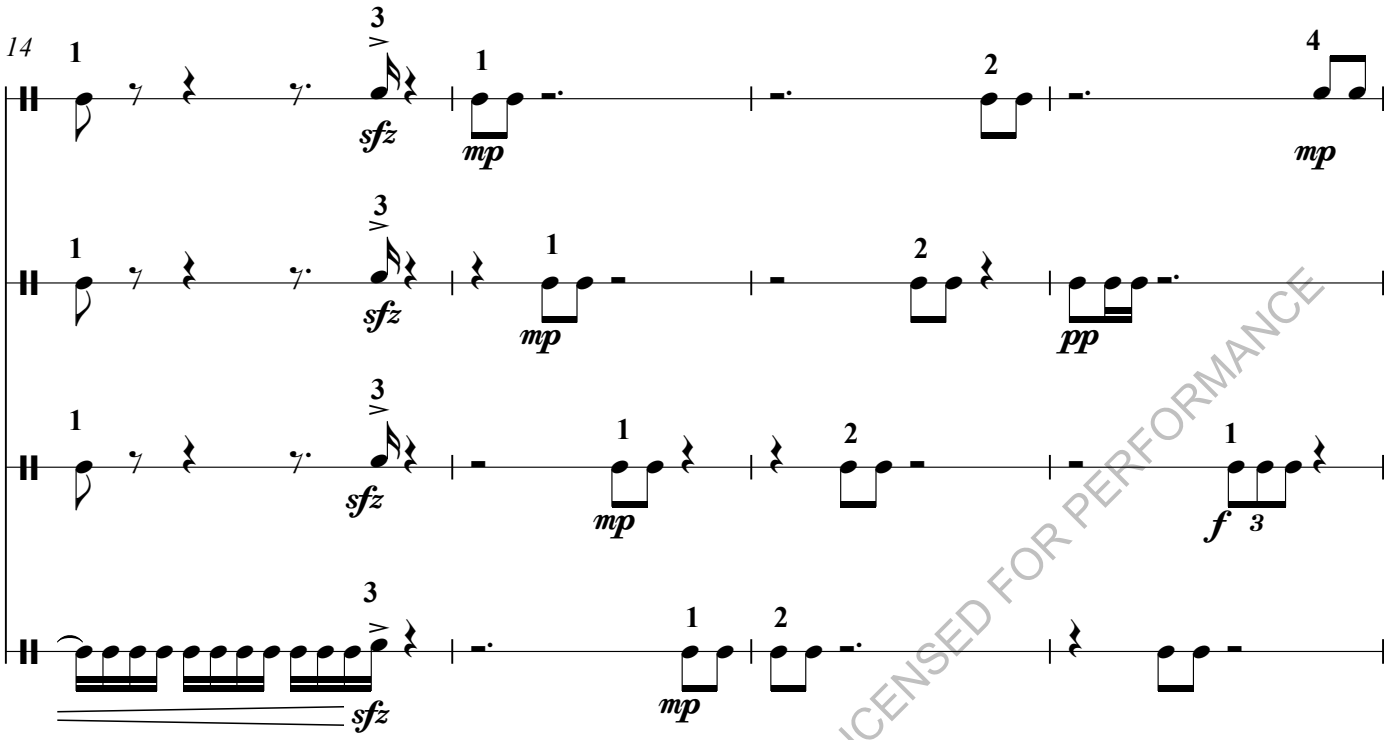

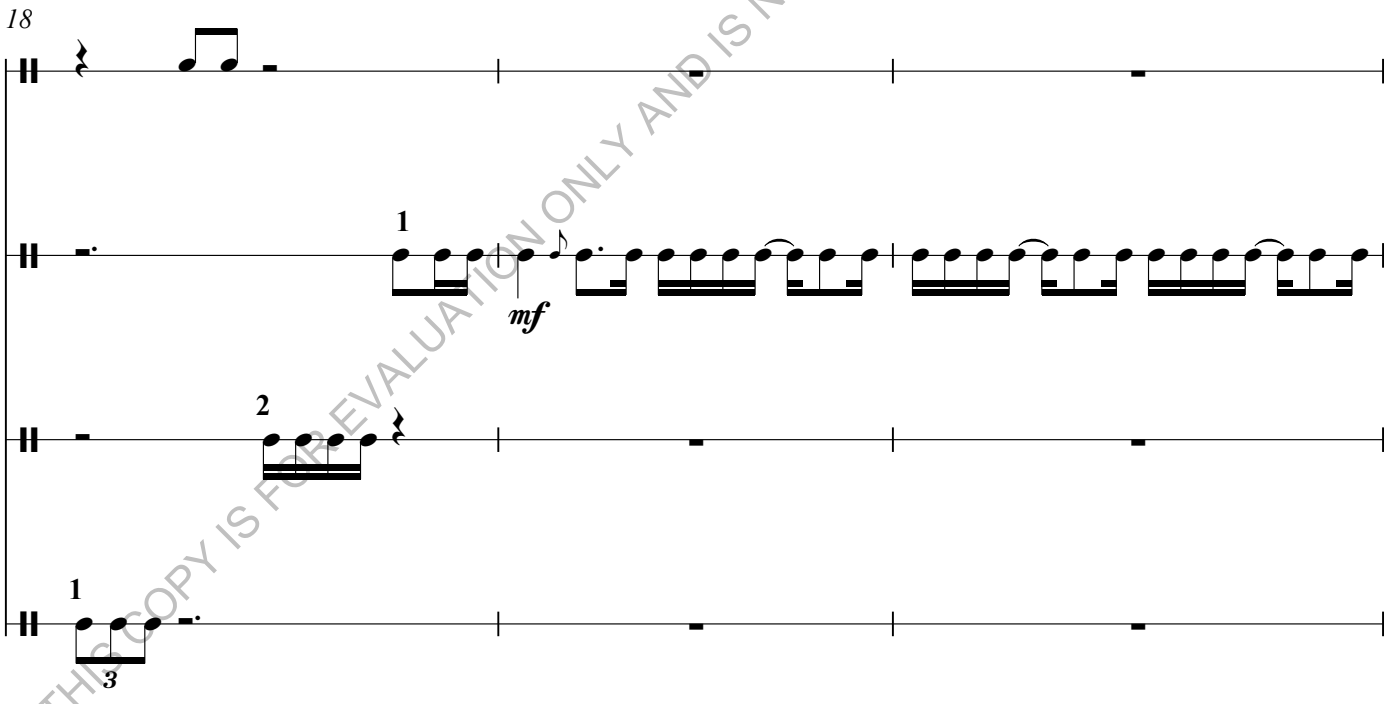

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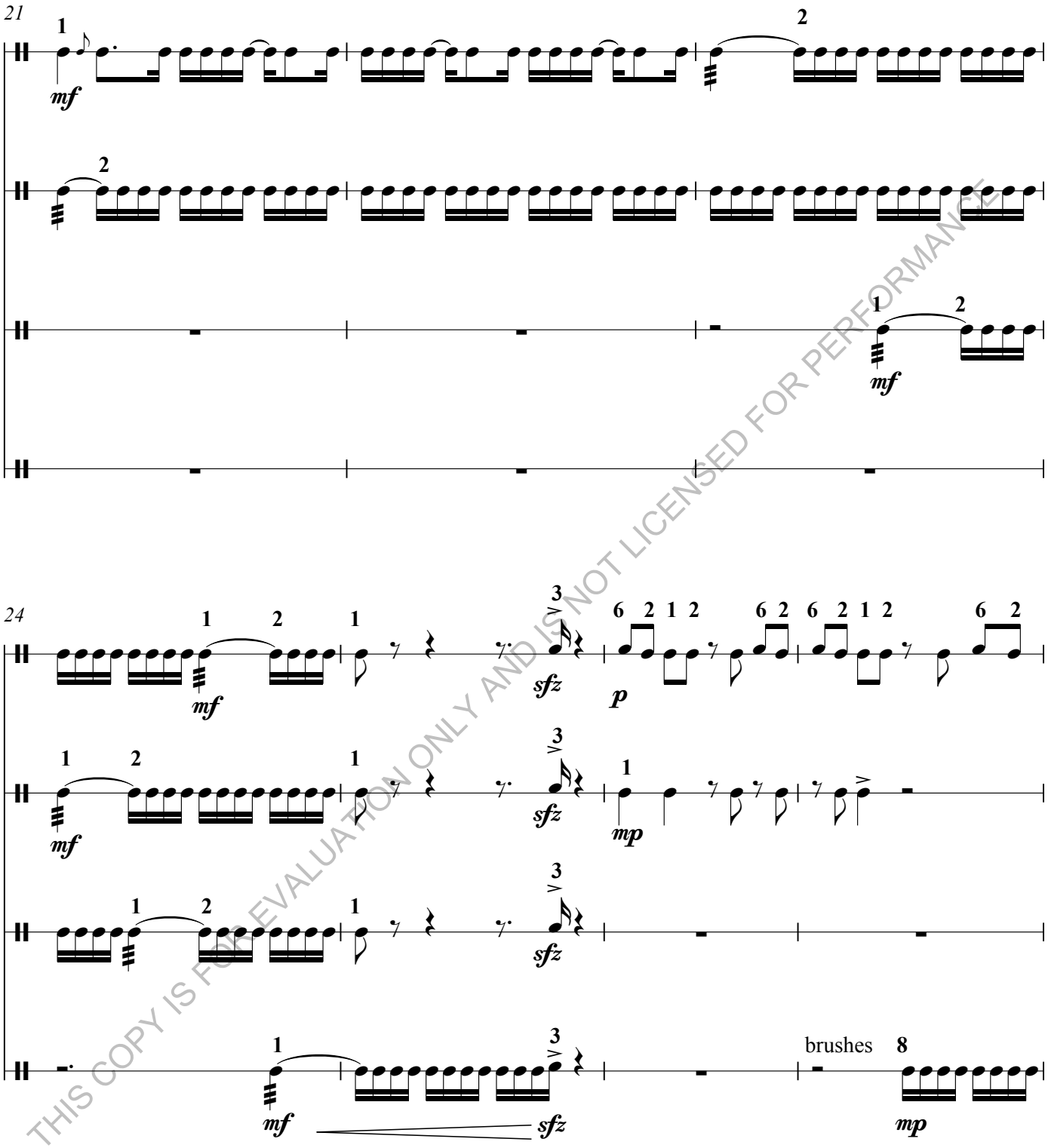

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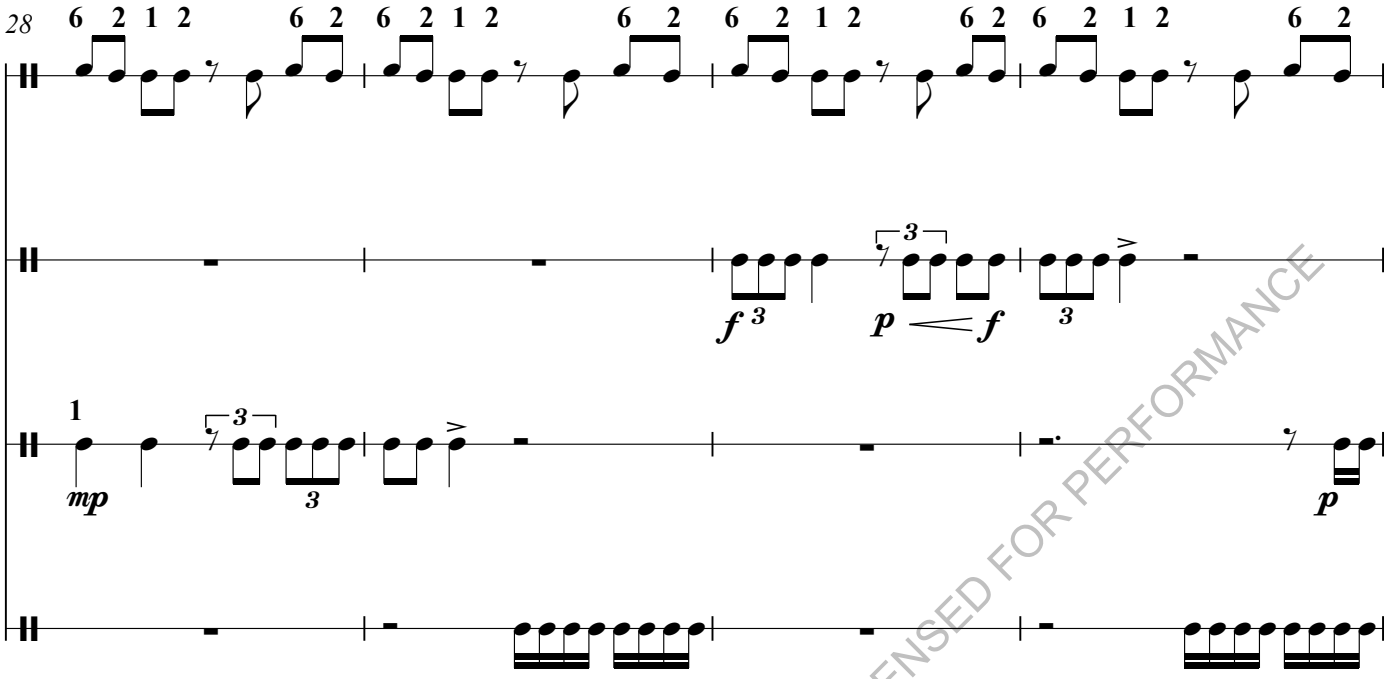

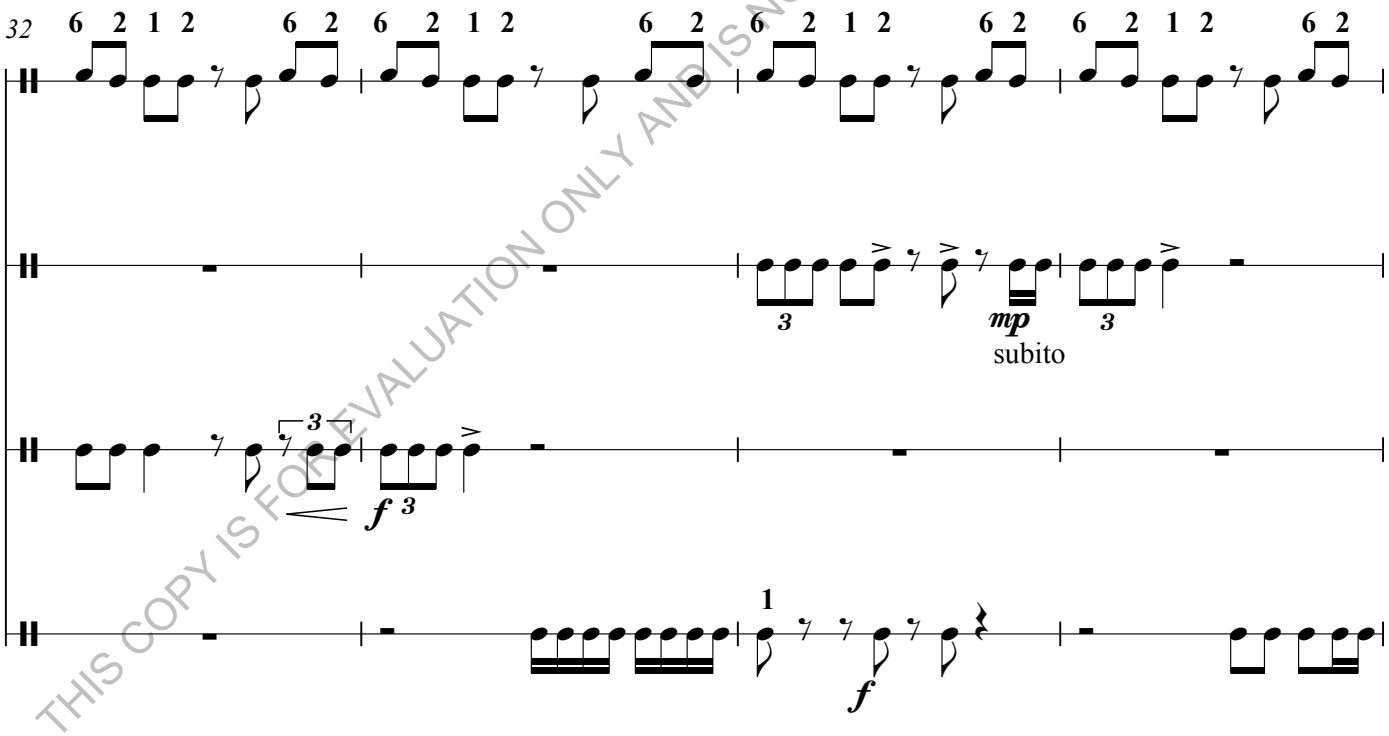

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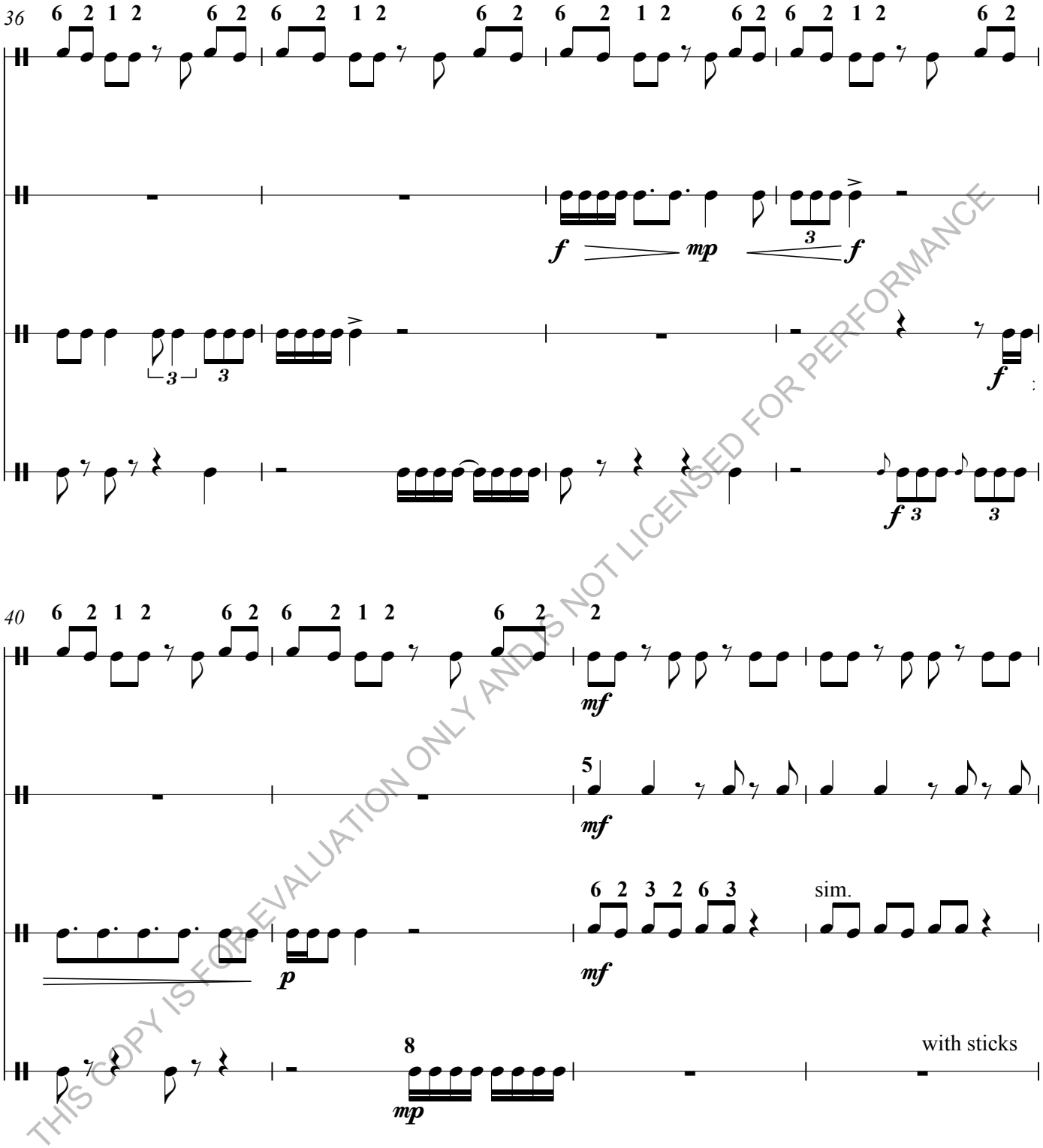

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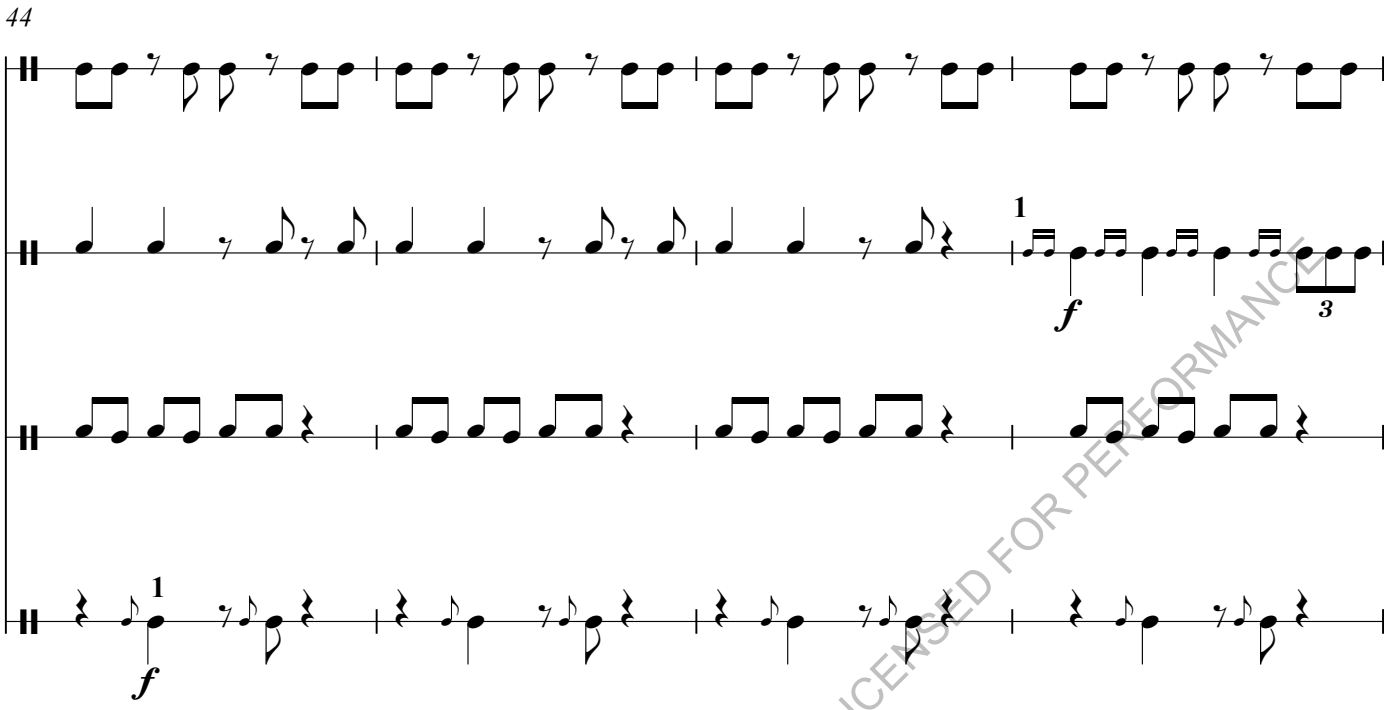

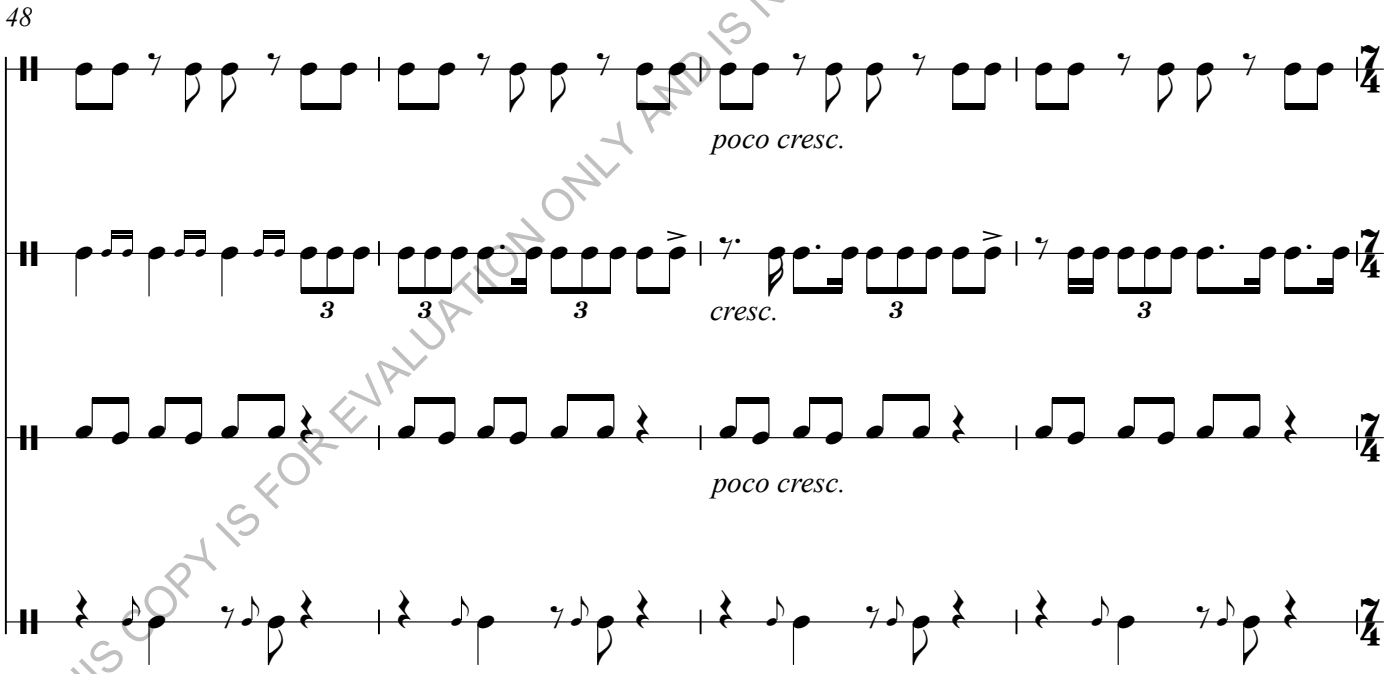

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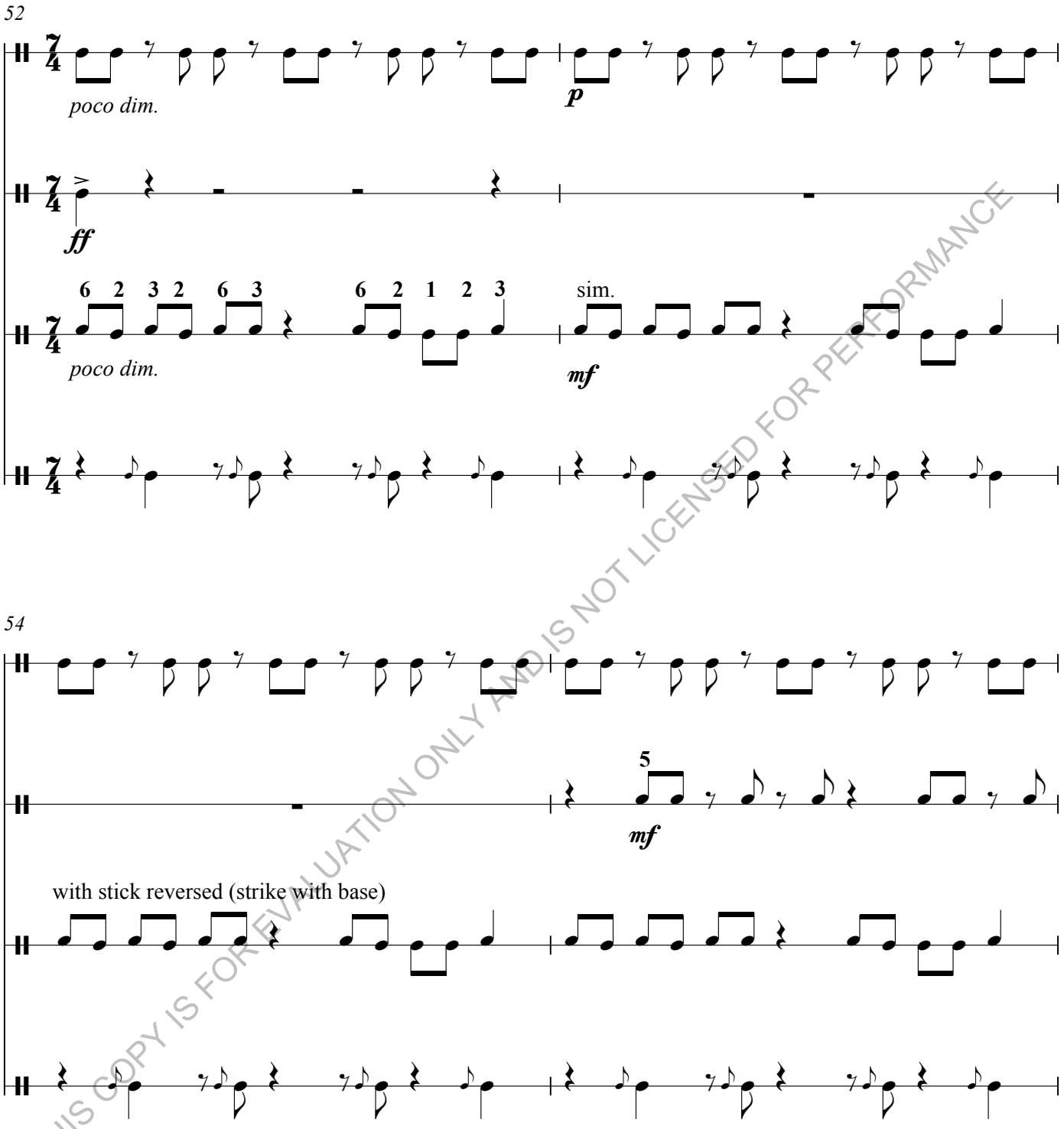

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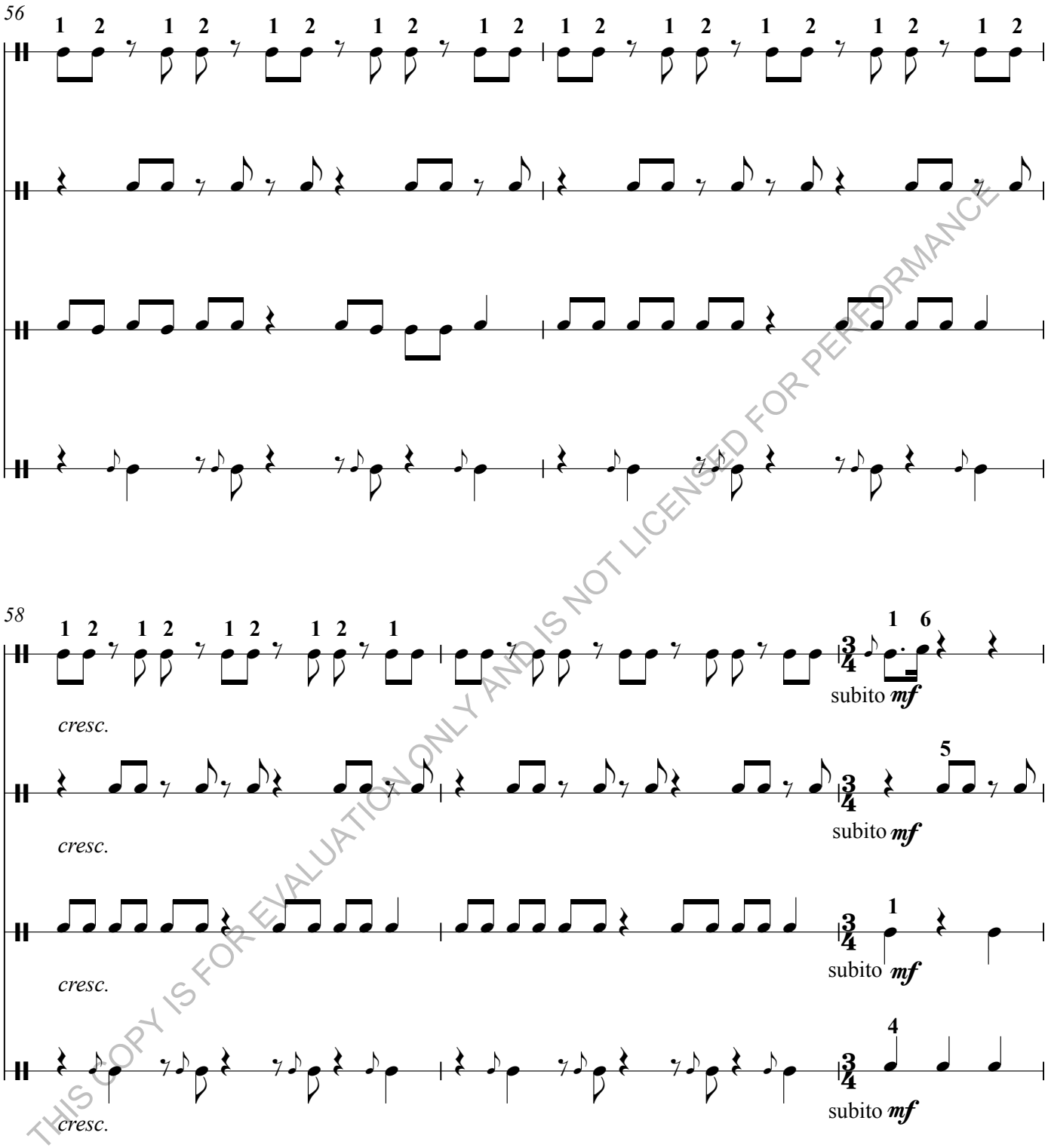

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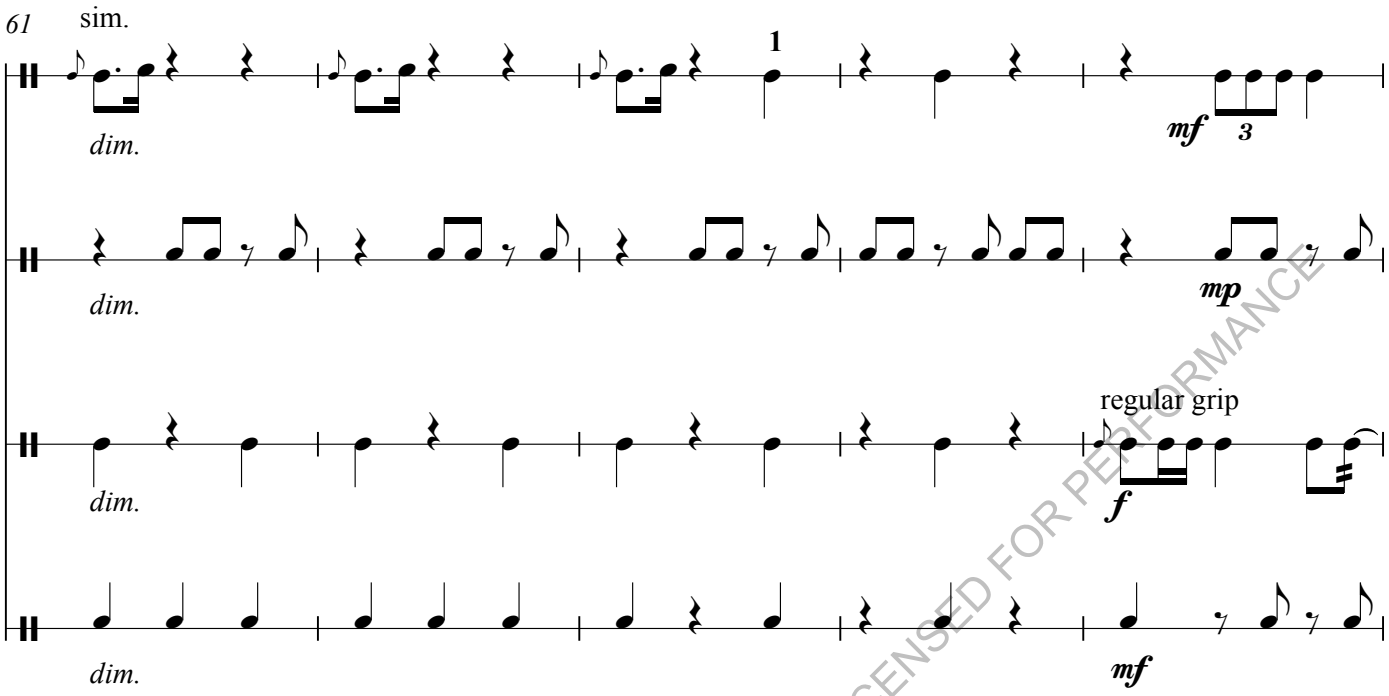

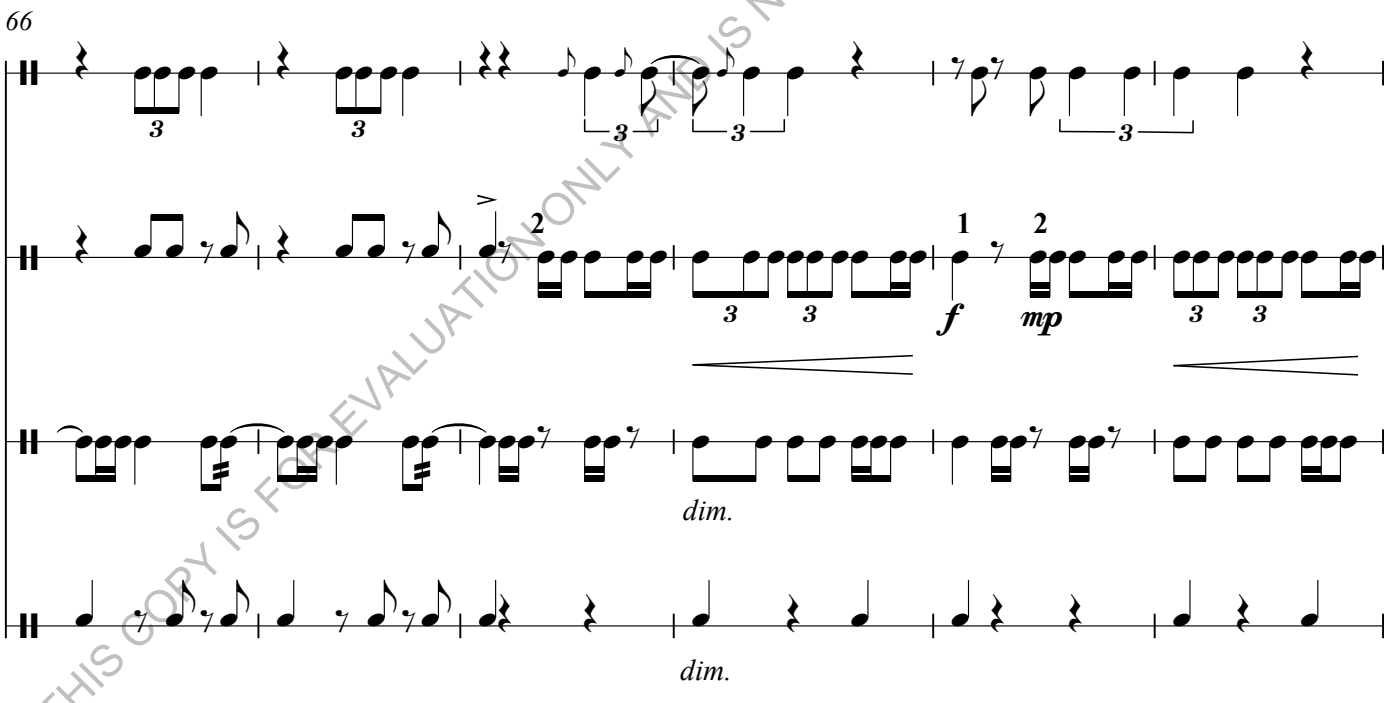

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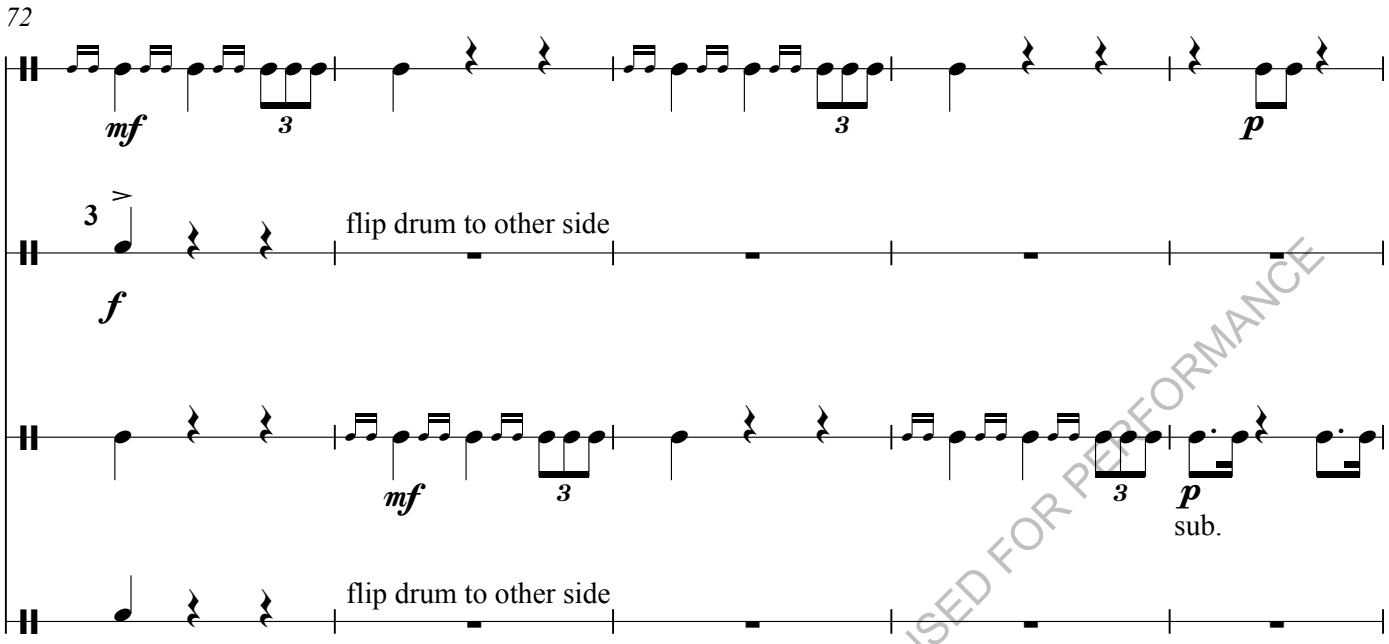

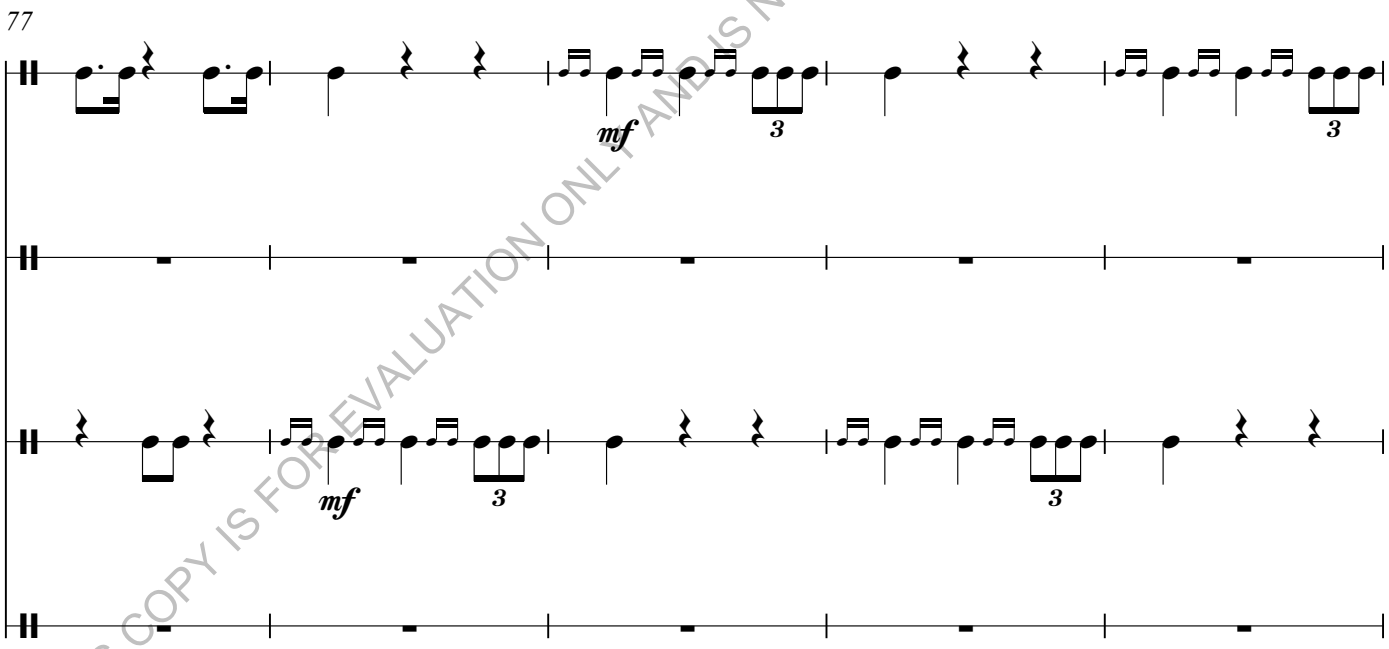

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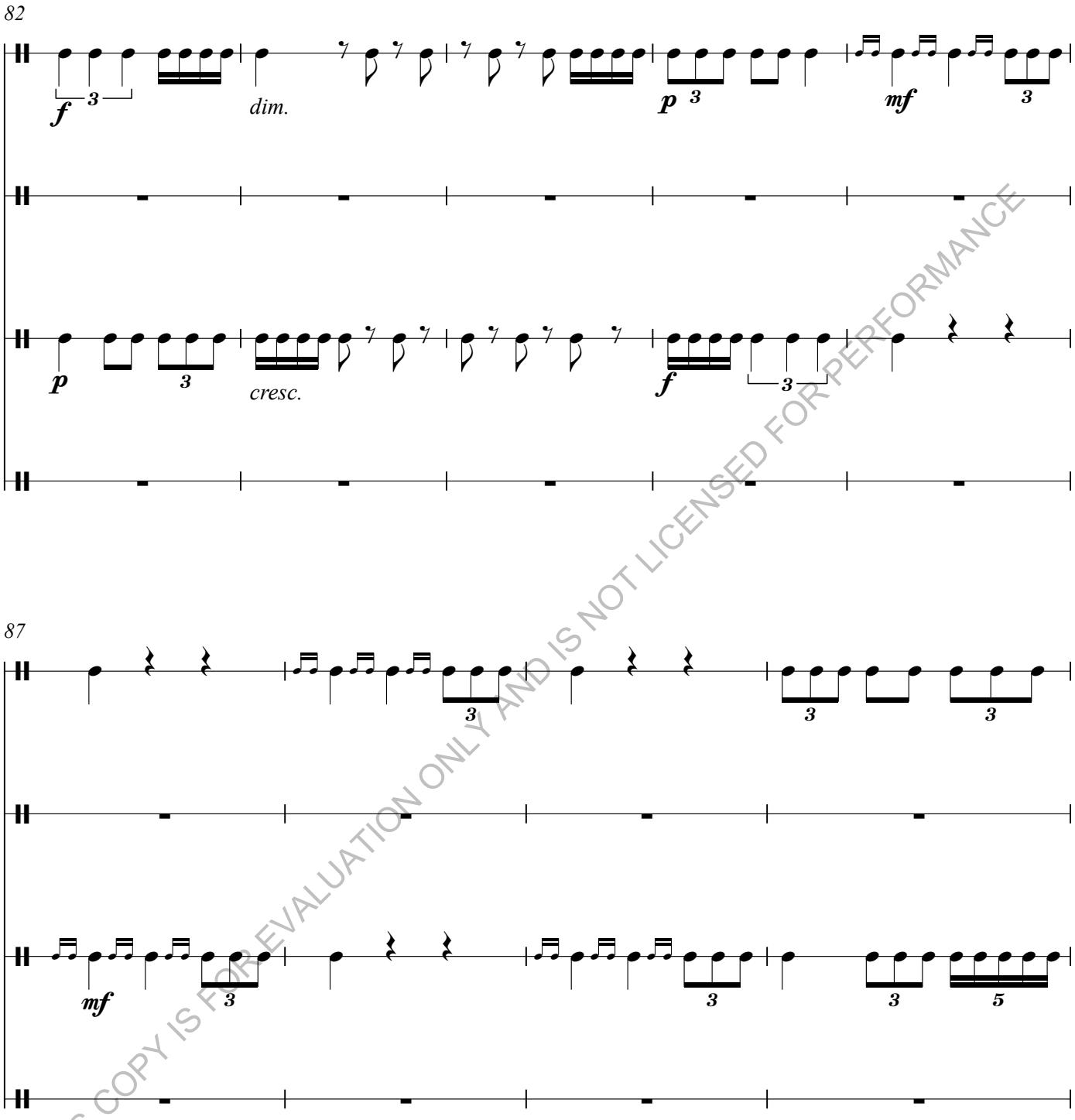

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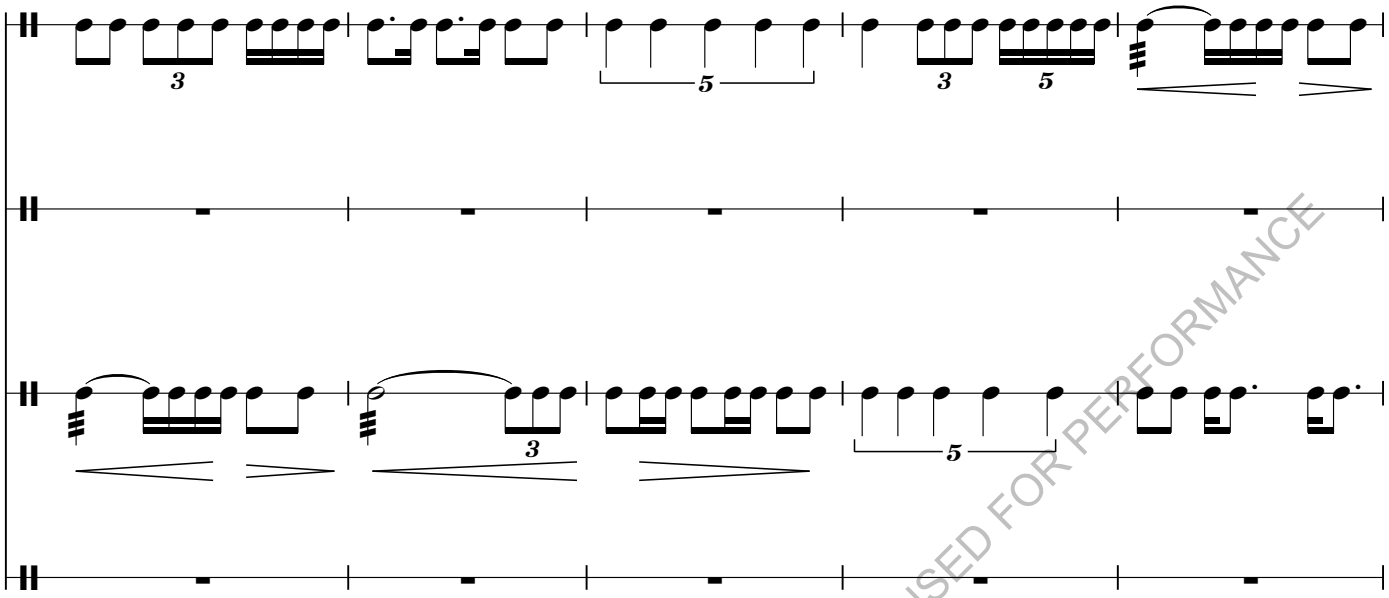

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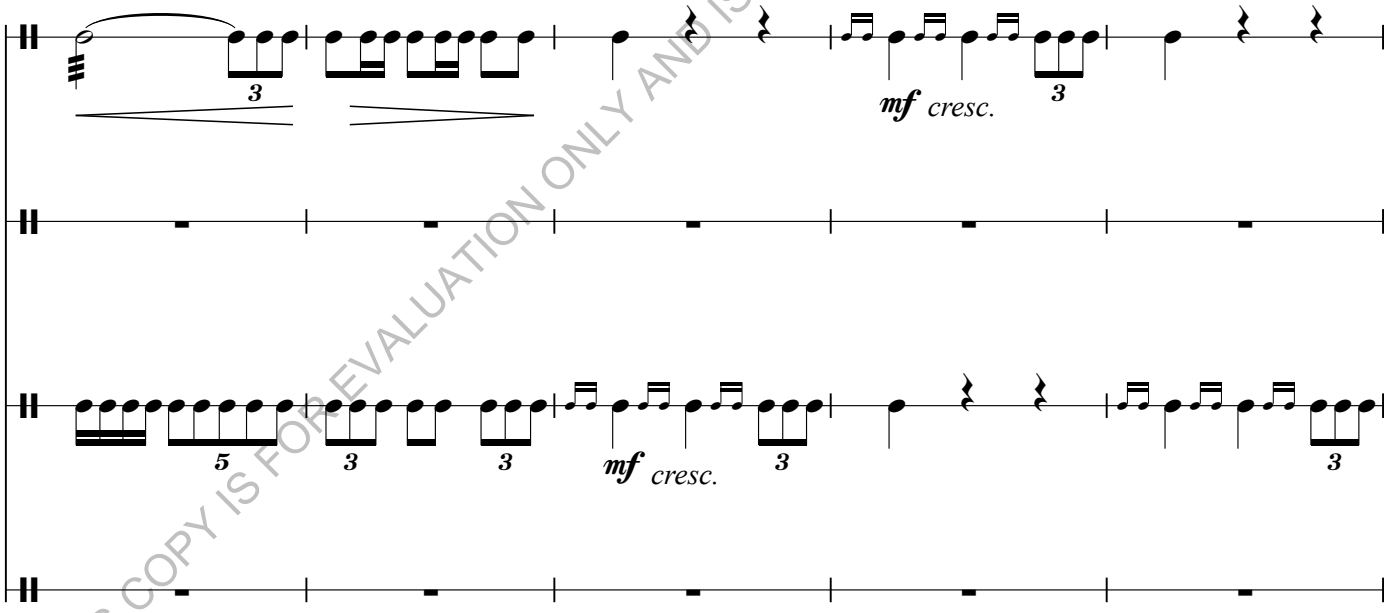

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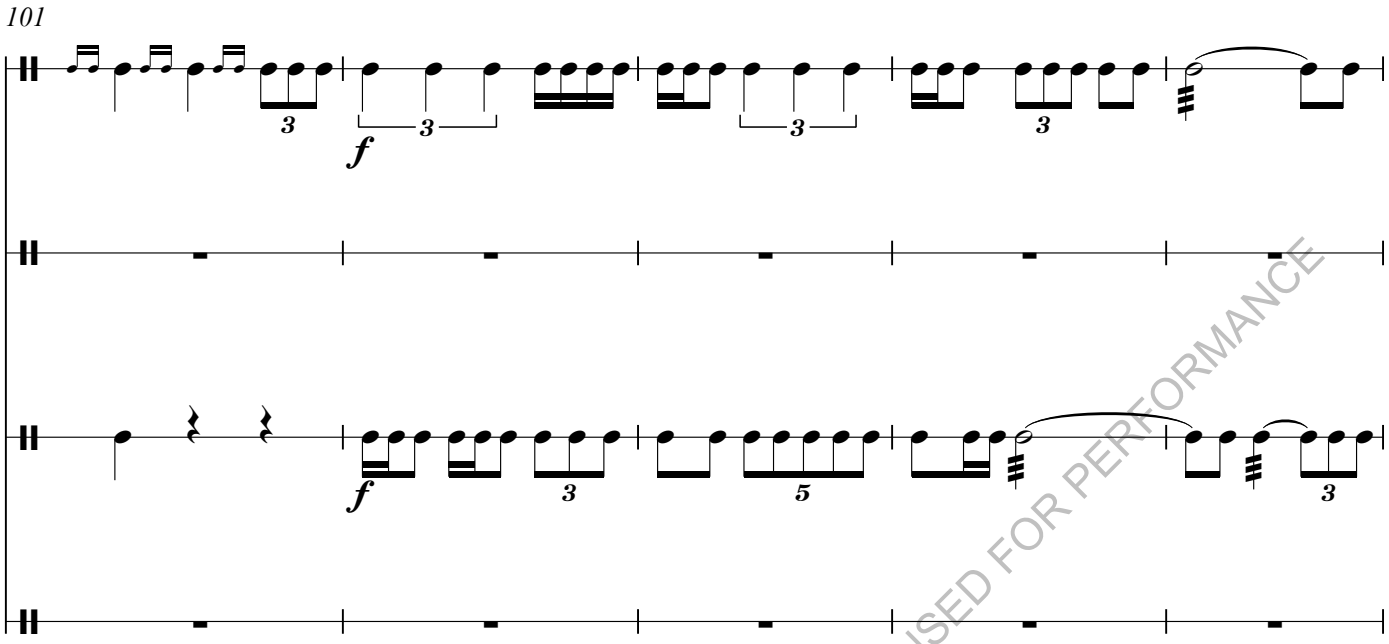

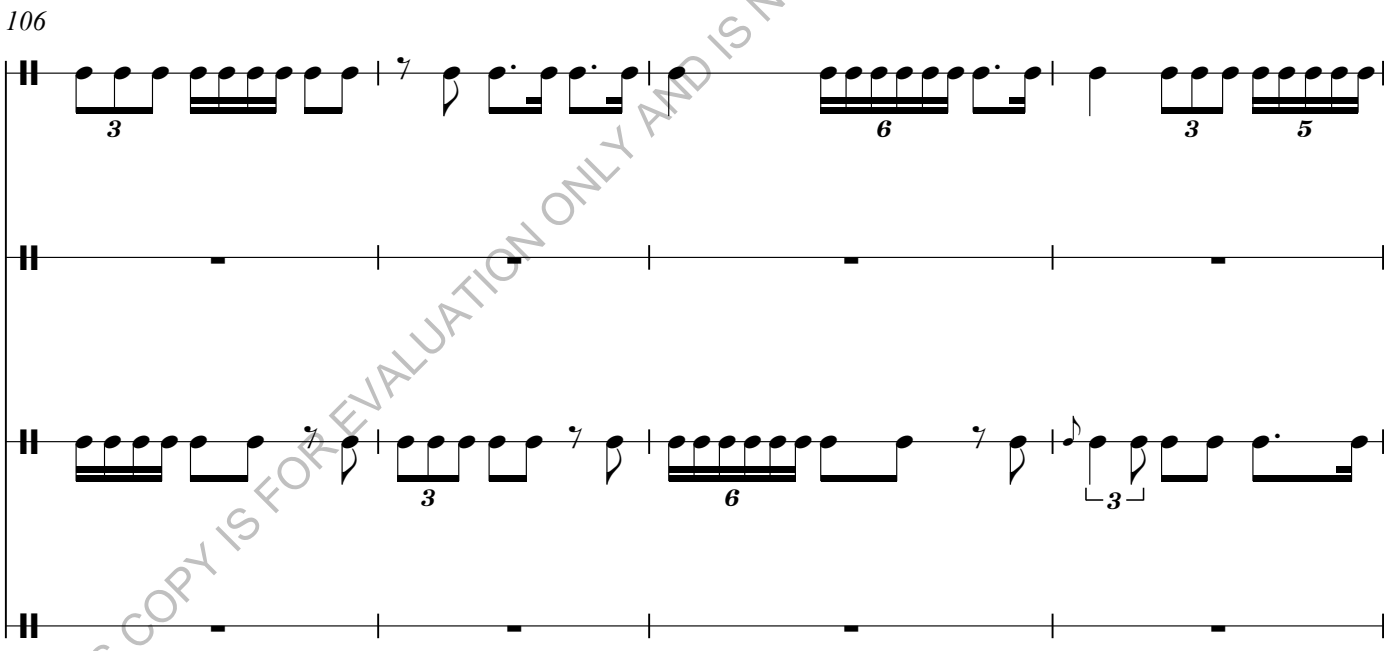

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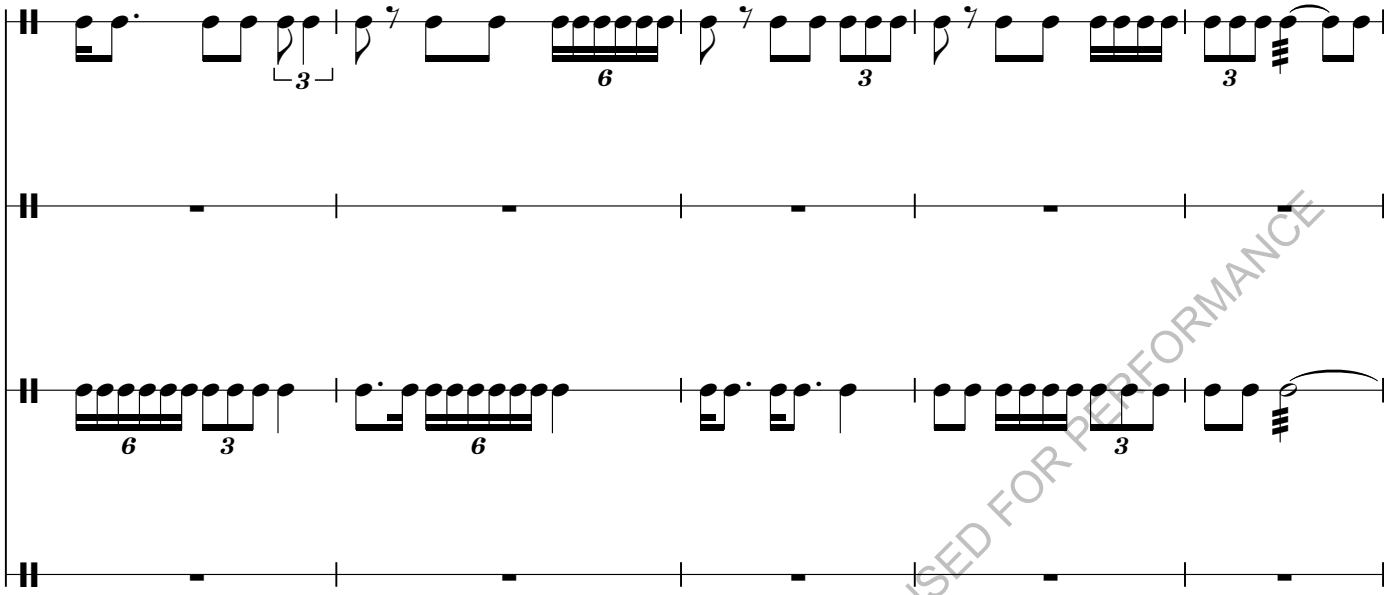

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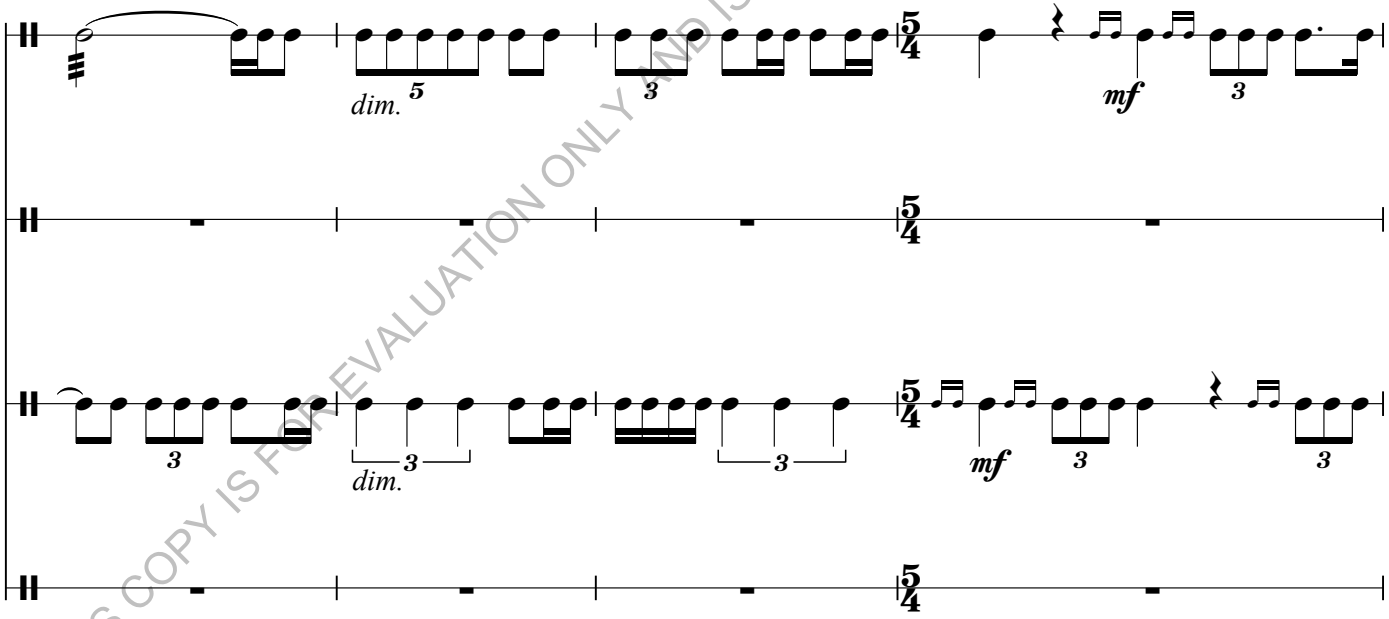

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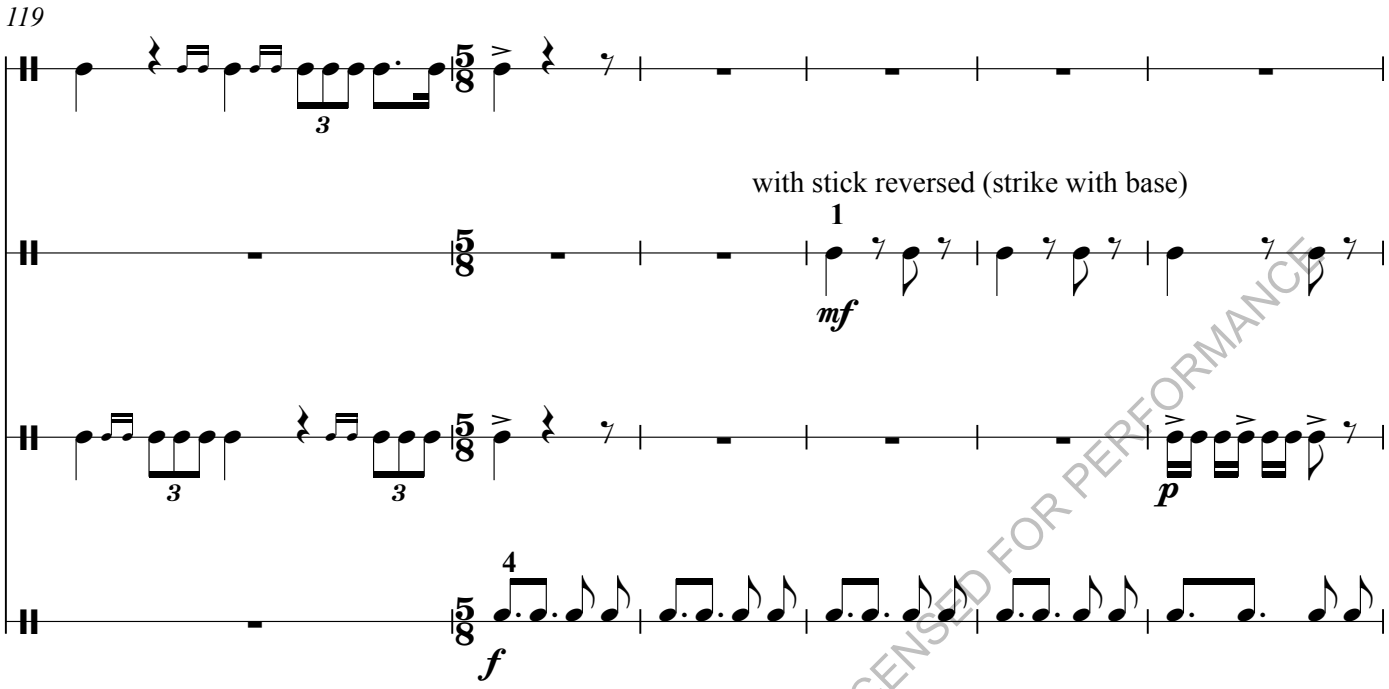

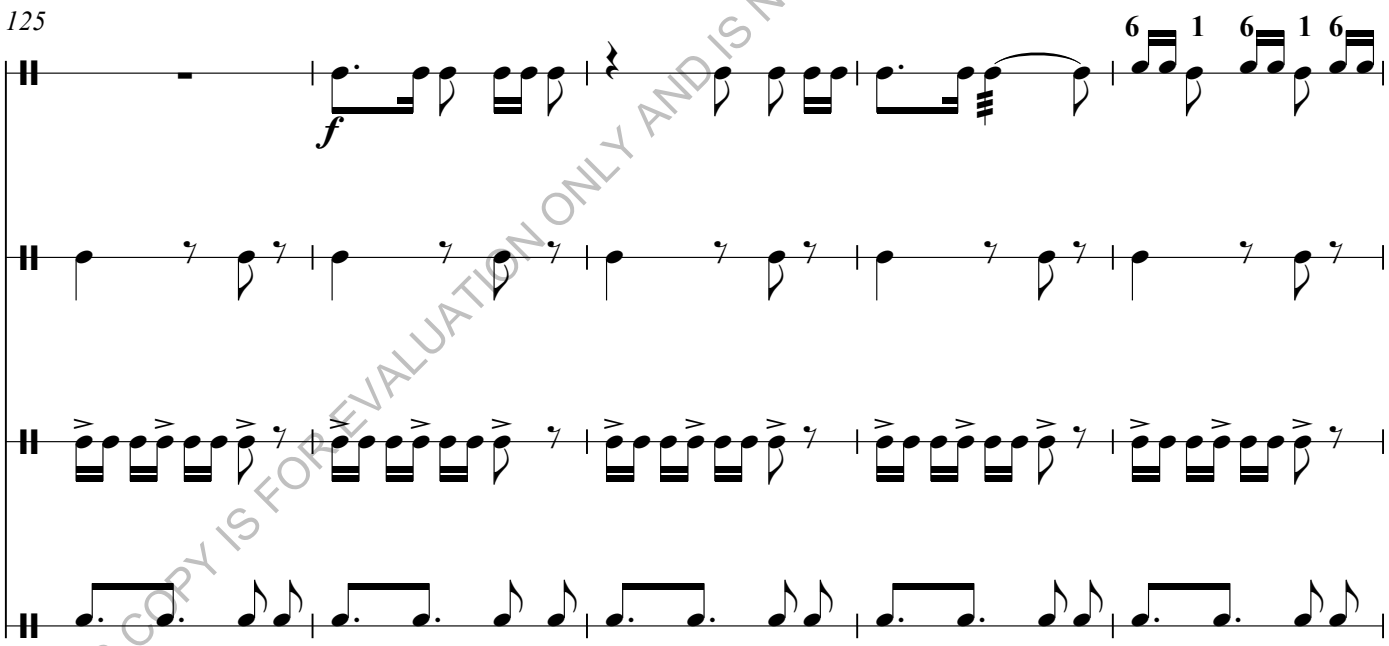

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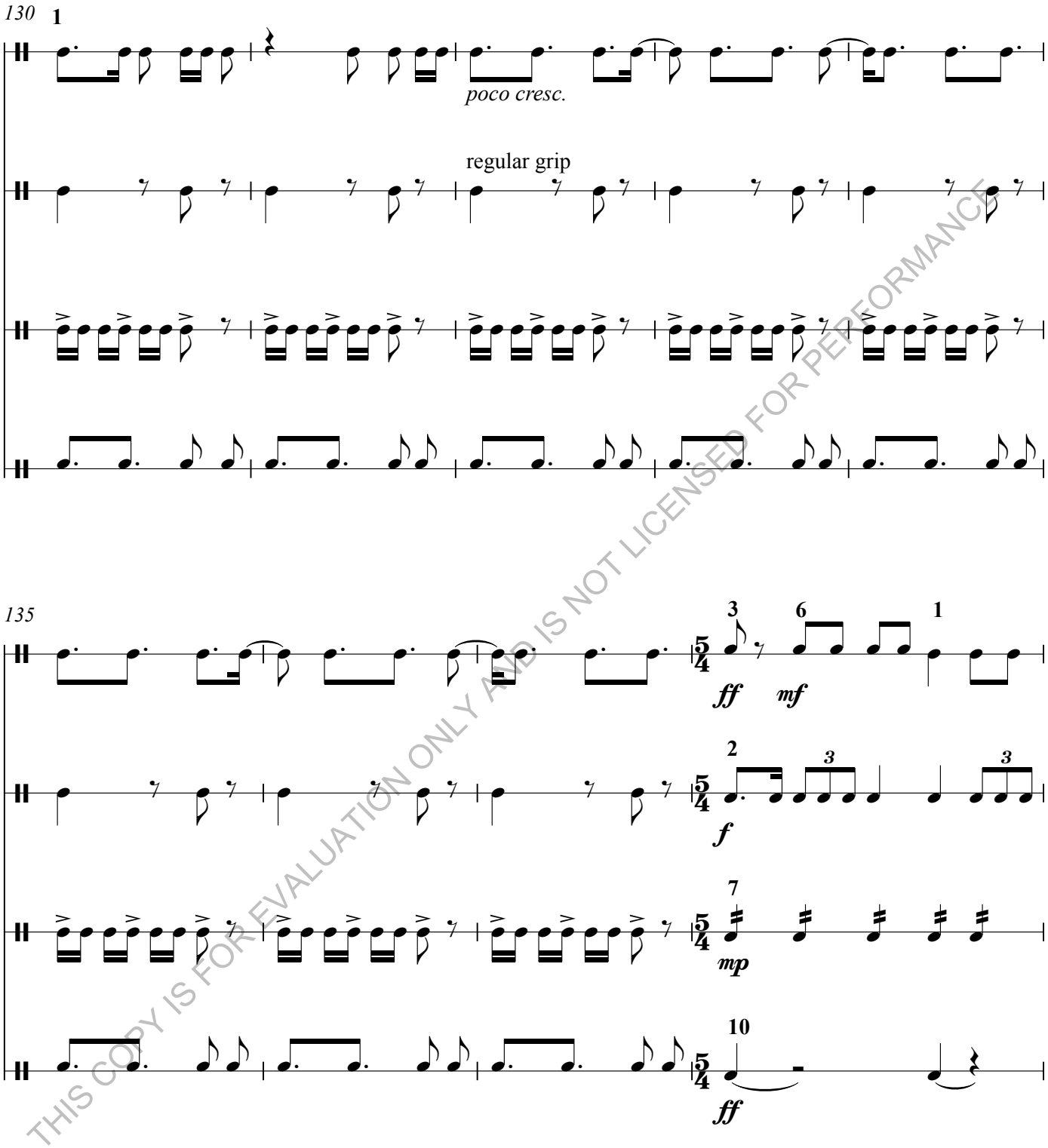

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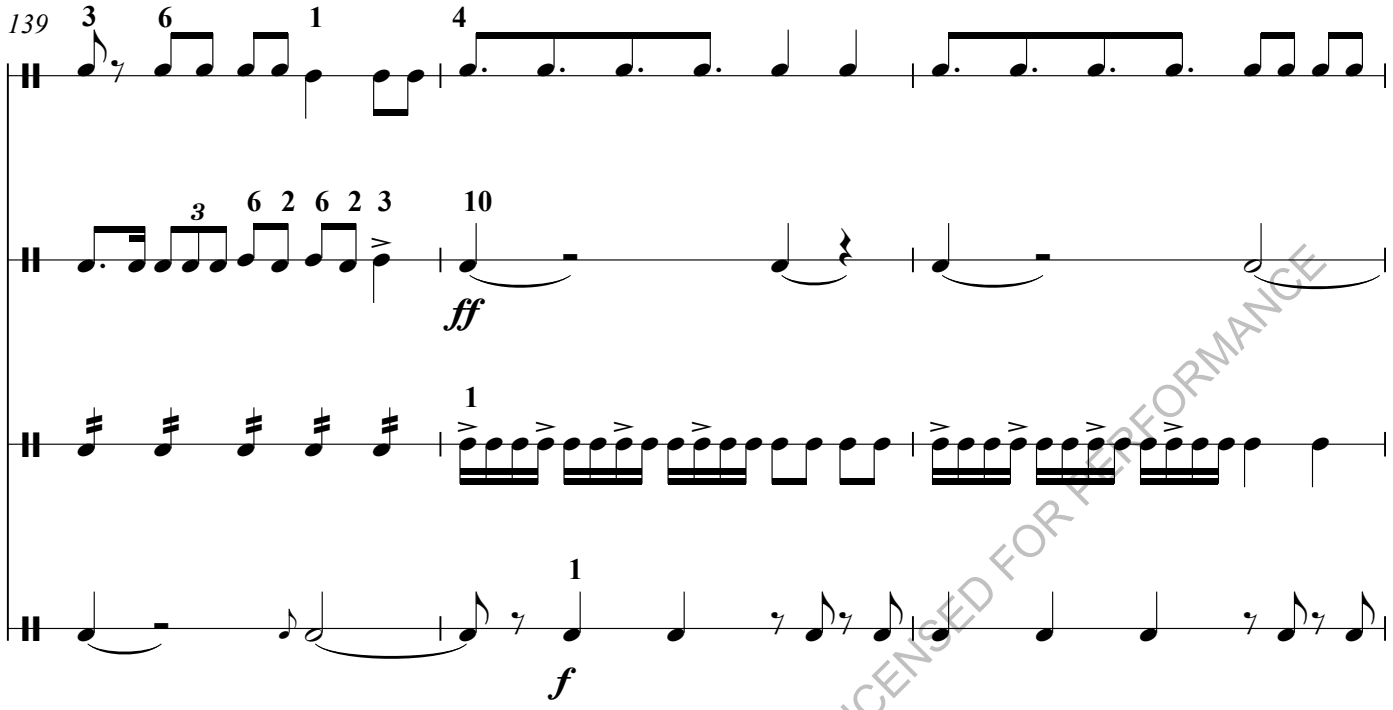

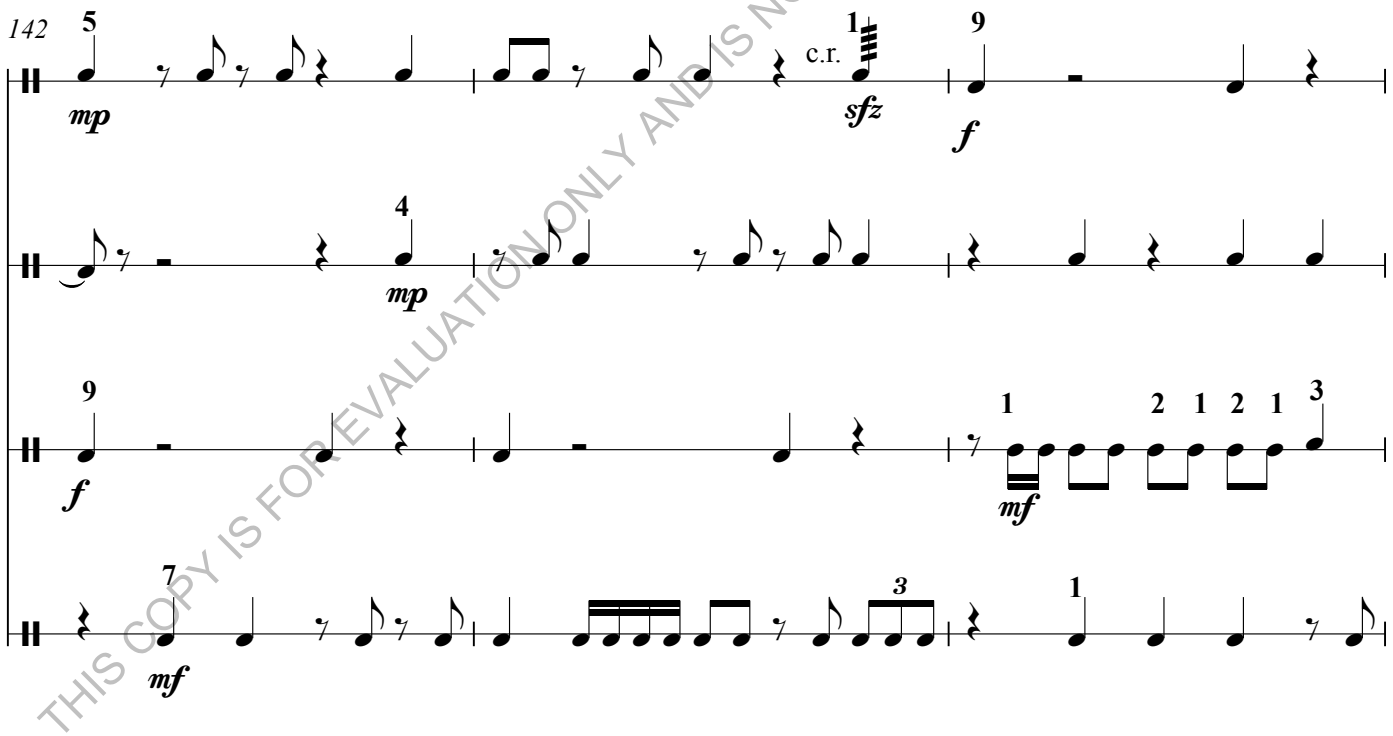

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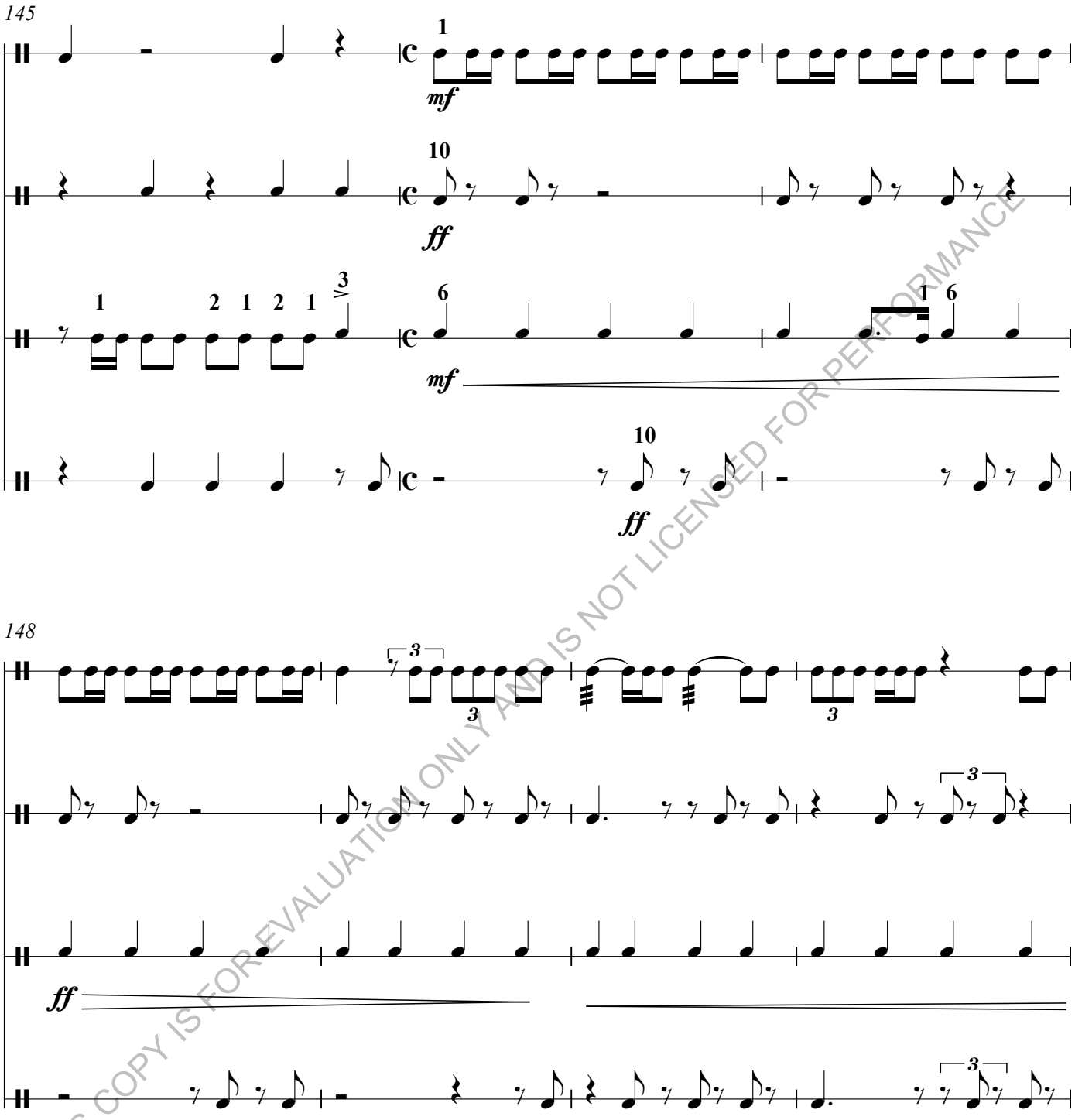

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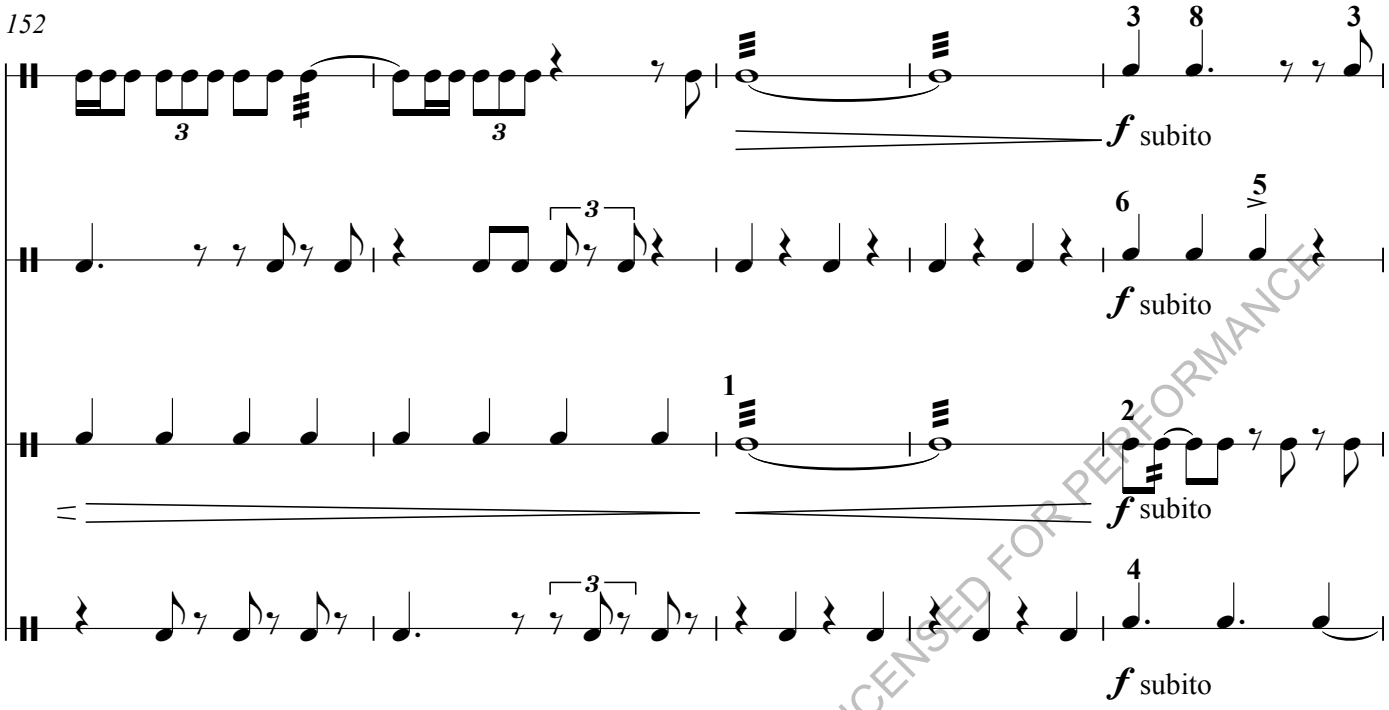

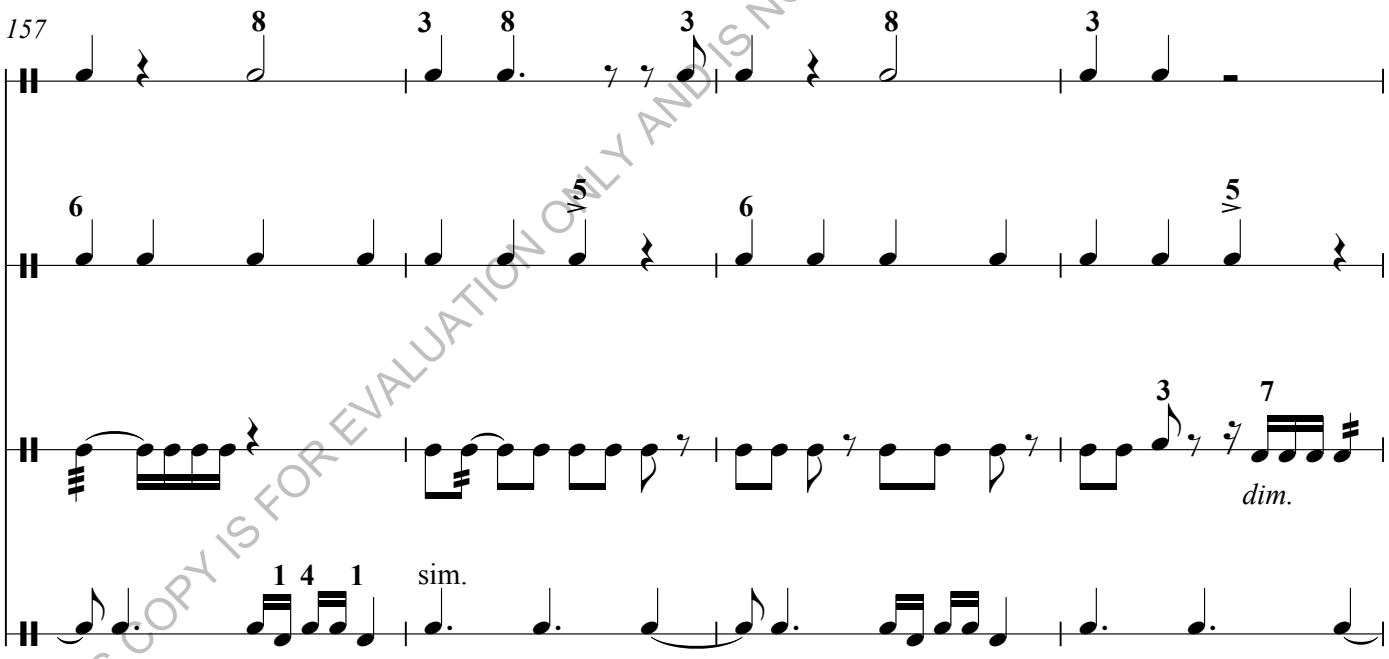

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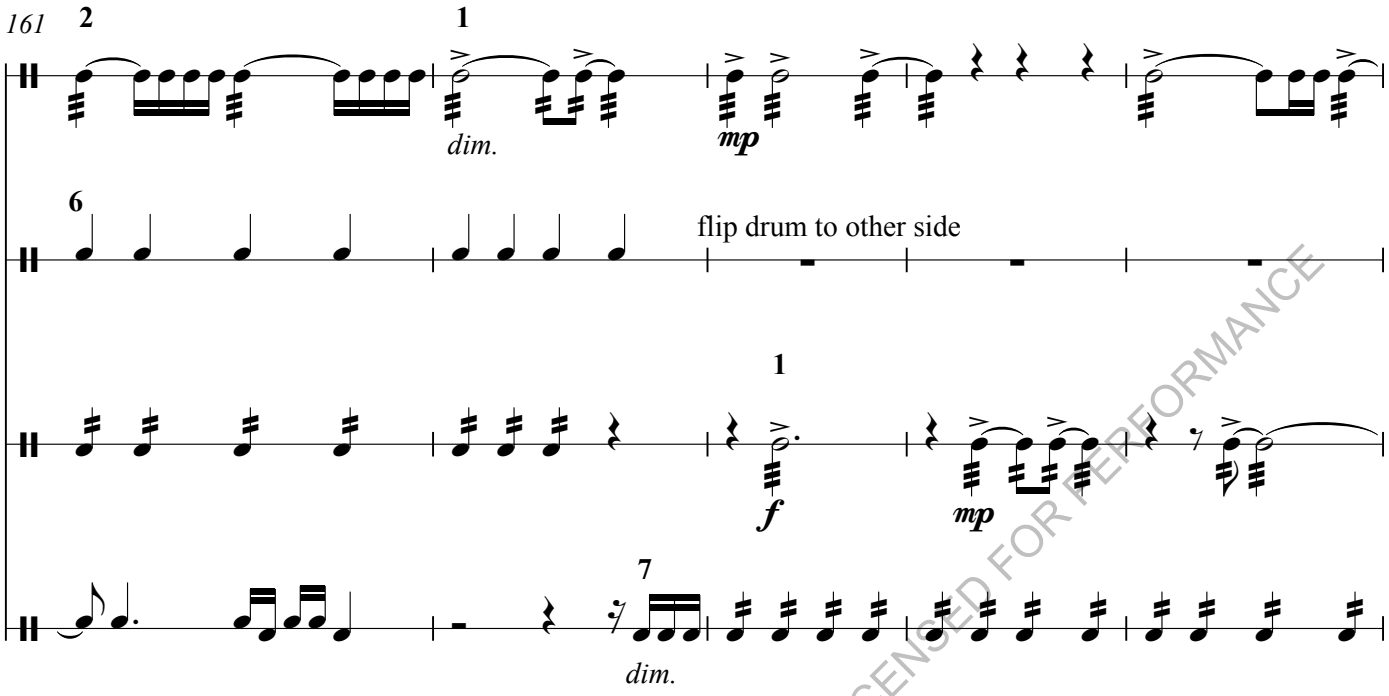

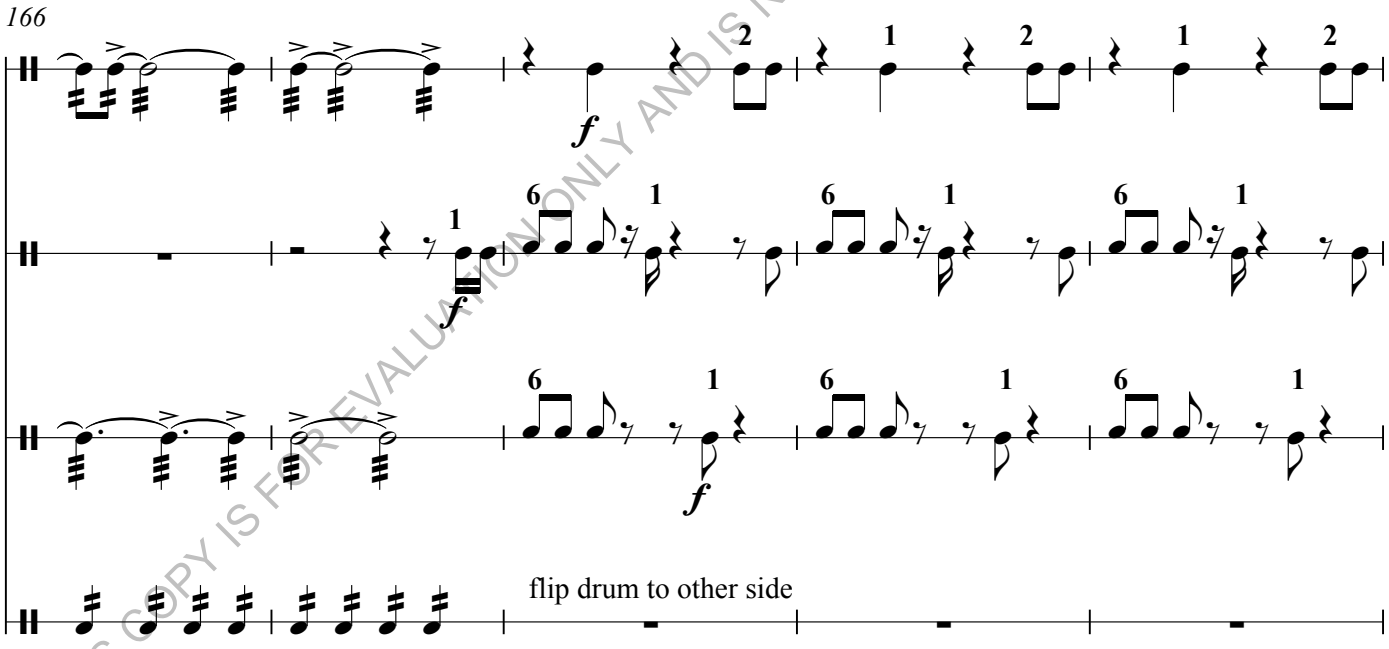

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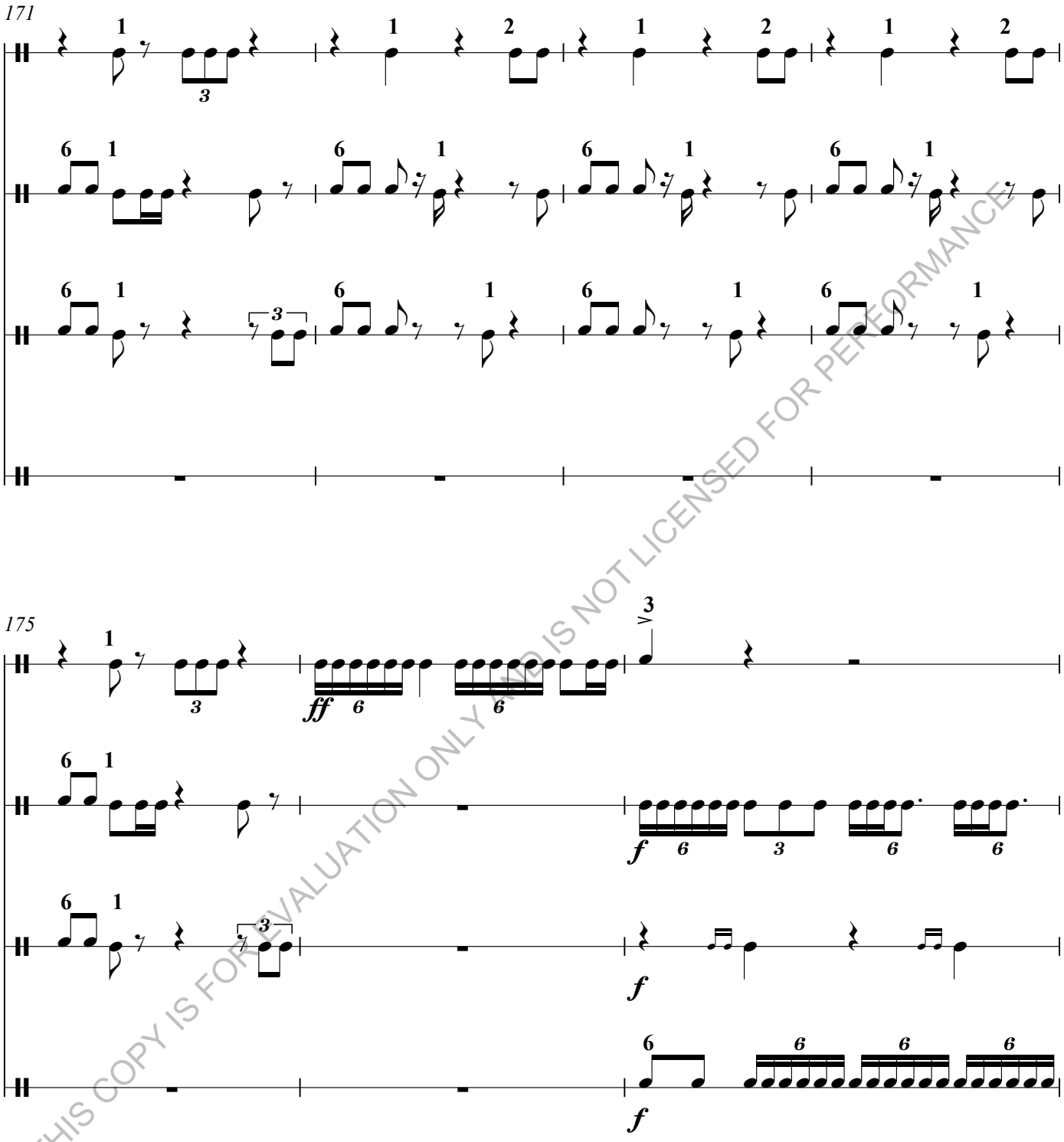

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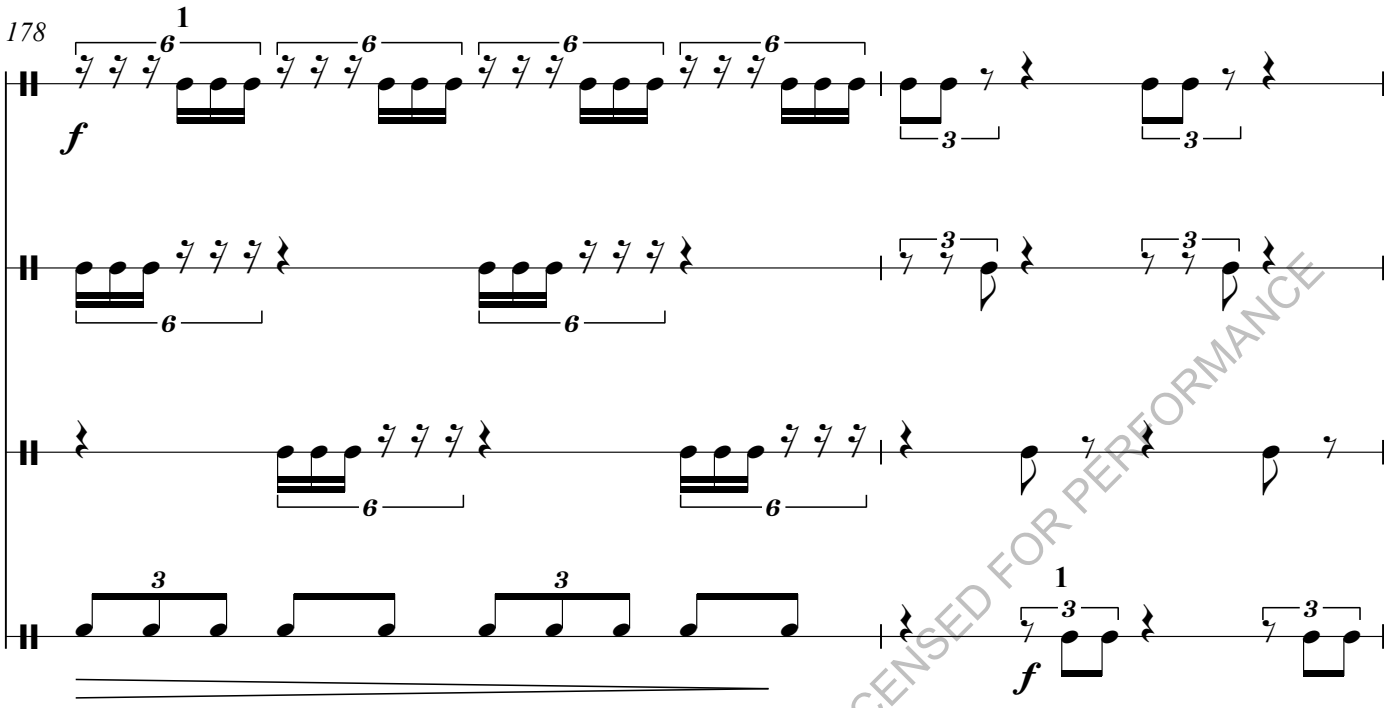

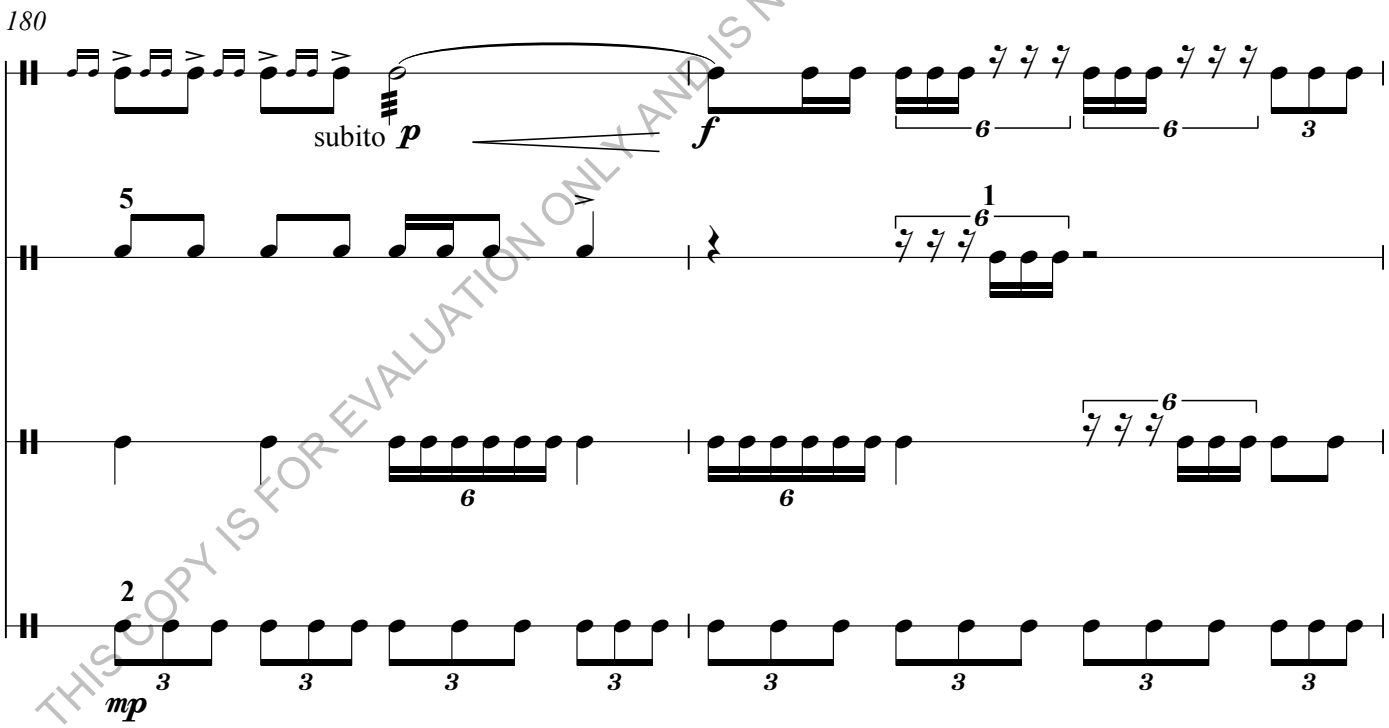

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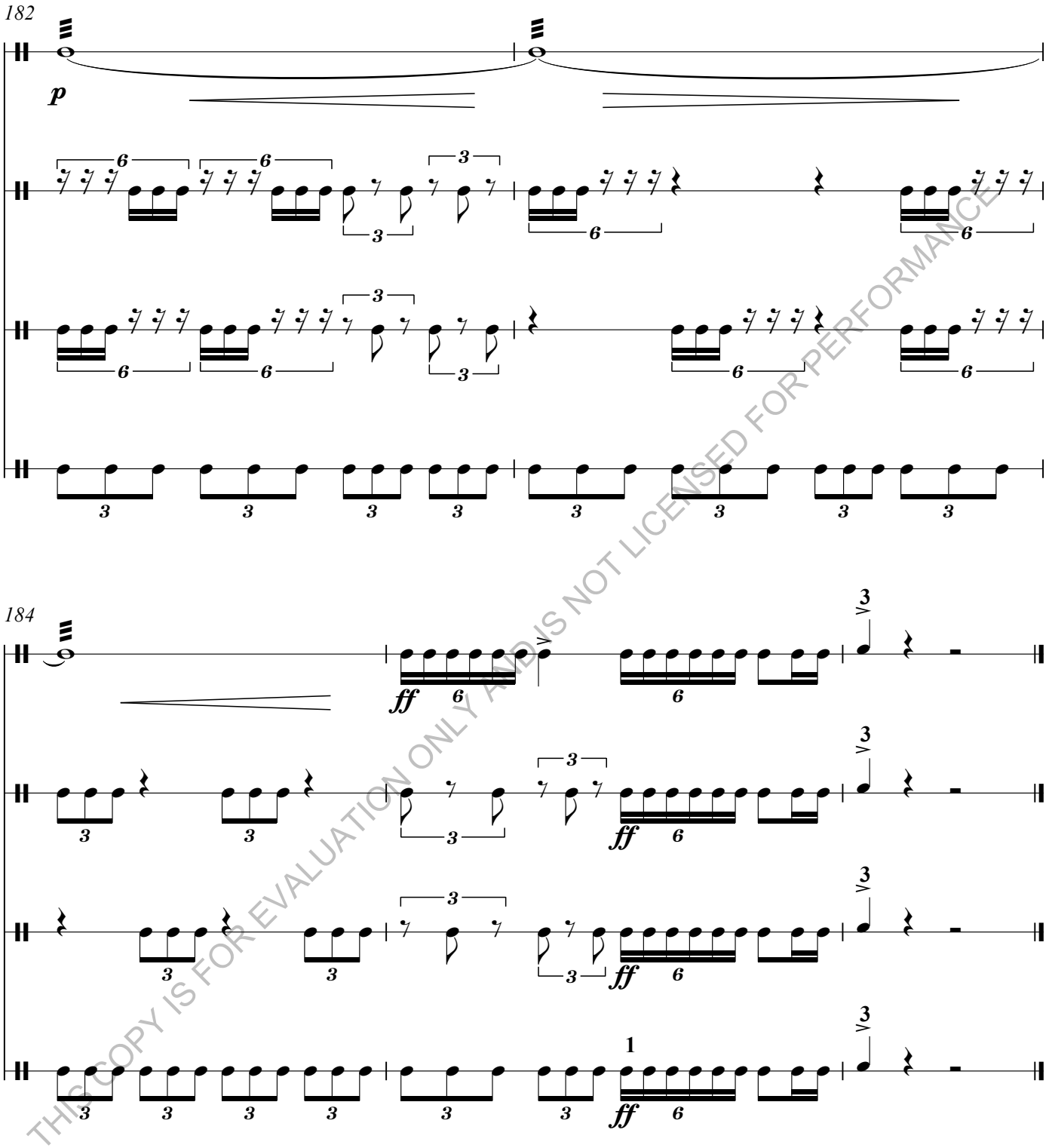

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October 2000

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