Please note that not all pages are included. This is purposely done in order to protect our property and the work of our esteemed composers.

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ROBERT WARD

BATH COUNTY RHAPSODY

for

String Quartet and Piano

Commissioned by the people of Bath County for its 200th Anniversary
and dedicated to Luca and Arlene Di Cecco of the Garth Newel Music Center

A one-movement musical history of Bath County with sub-sections depicting:

1. Mist-shrouded mountains and warm springs
2. Indian discovery of the healing waters
3. Coming of white settlers with their hopes and hymns
4. Agony of Civil War and lament for the slain
5. War's end and thanksgiving
6. Partyin', fiddlin' and dancin'
7. Peace again on the mist-shrouded mountain

SCORE

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Program Note

Though chamber music concerts are one of my favorite forms of recreation, I have often wished that the standard repertory for quartets and quintets was more diversified. Their literature contains an abundance of superb works in the usual three or four movement format of 1. Sonata-form, 2. A slow reflective movement, 3. A lively dance and finally, a jolly or triumphant finale. Almost entirely lacking, however, are the splendid overtures, colorful ballet suites, brilliant concerti or tone poems which enrich the orchestral repertory.

Until last April when Bath County, Virginia commissioned me to write a work celebrating its 200th Anniversary the above reflections on the chamber music repertory were but random thoughts. Now I had a chance to do something about it. Happily Luca Di Cecco who had contacted me about the commission was thinking along the same lines, In our first conversation I was somewhat surprised when he asked if my wife and I might visit Warm Springs, "just to breathe some of the mountain air and meet a few people and maybe get some inspiration for my work". Since I am never one to turn down an excursion to the mountains and to spend time with old friends such as Luca and Arlene, I accepted immediately.

The day of our visit turned out to be a perfect, sunny spring day, and we were exhilerated by the drive into the mountains. It was also fine to observe the developments at the Garth Newel Music Center, but the part of the day which was perhaps most stimulating was a meeting with Mr. Hugh Gwin whose relation of a concise history of Bath County set the wheels of my imagination spinning. We then did a short tour of The Homestead which is certainly the ShangriLa of America.

The next day as we drove home it became clear to me that Luca has a very shrewd perception of what stimulates the creative process for on the way the ideas for a Rhapsody based on principal events in the past of Bath County began to flow. It was to be a kind of musical chronicle.

The opening which is an evocation of the mountains and the health-giving waters wrote itself quickly. The thought of the pre-colonial period Indians brought to mind a scene from my light opera, LADY FROM COLORADO, which had been cut in a revision of the score after the premiere. My "Indian" music makes no claim to authenticity, but it is probably as authentic as Mozart's "Turkish" music or Verdi's music for the Egyptian Priests and Priestesses in AIDA.

In contemplating the Civil War section I remembered the grand old hymn "Kedron" from SOUTHERN HARMONY, the most popular hymnal in the South. There are four variations on the tune. The first two use the "lining out" technique so common to Appalachian hymn singing. The second pair are transposed to the major mode to evoke the feeling of thanksgiving at war's end. The remainder of the work is all derived from the opening "mountain" music as it might be whistled or "jazzed Up".

In conclusion I can but hope that my unconventional addition to the chamber music repertory will fall on sympathetic ears and that it may be a fitting musical celebration of this proud moment in the history of Bath County.

R. W.

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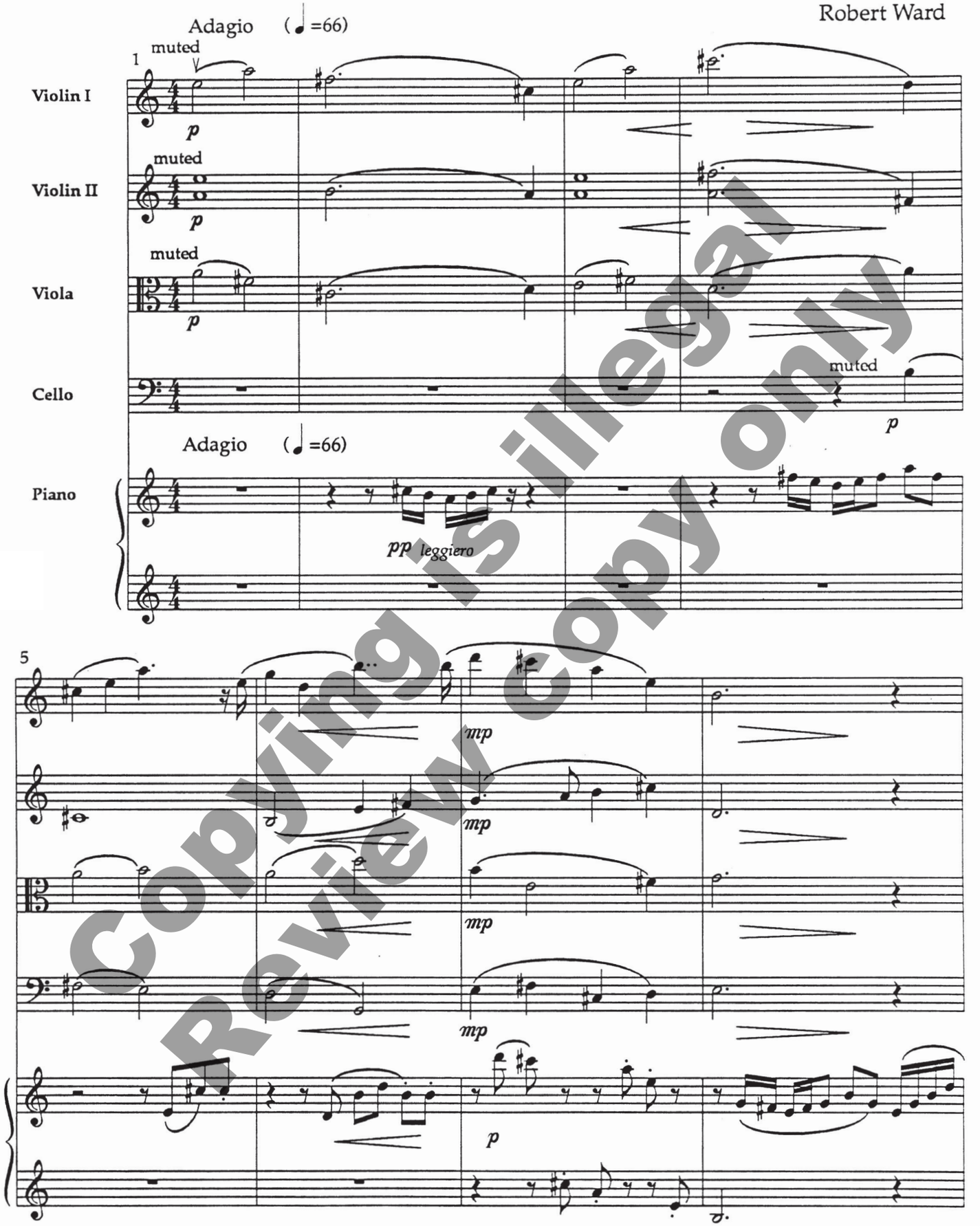
Bath County Rhapsody

Robert Ward



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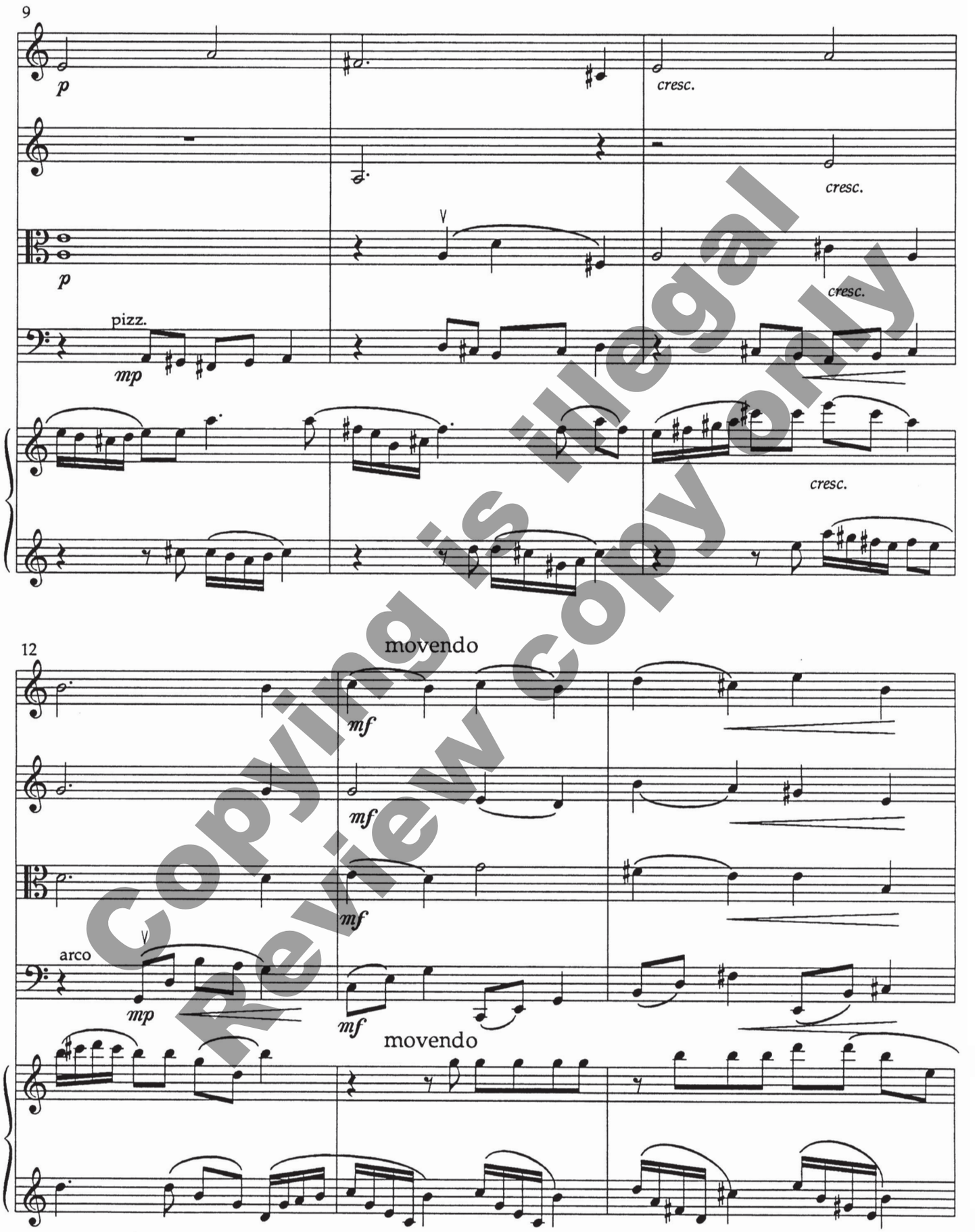

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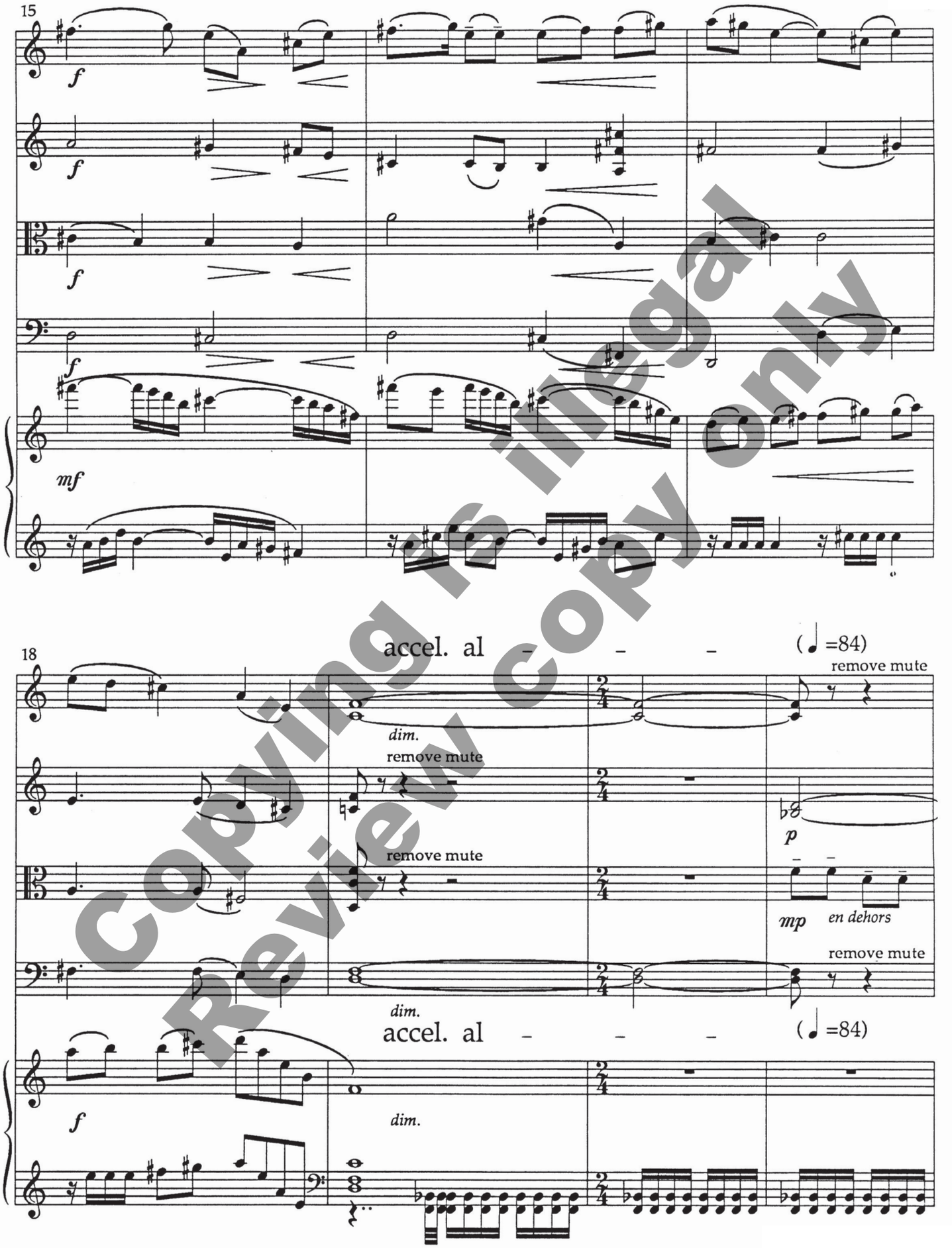

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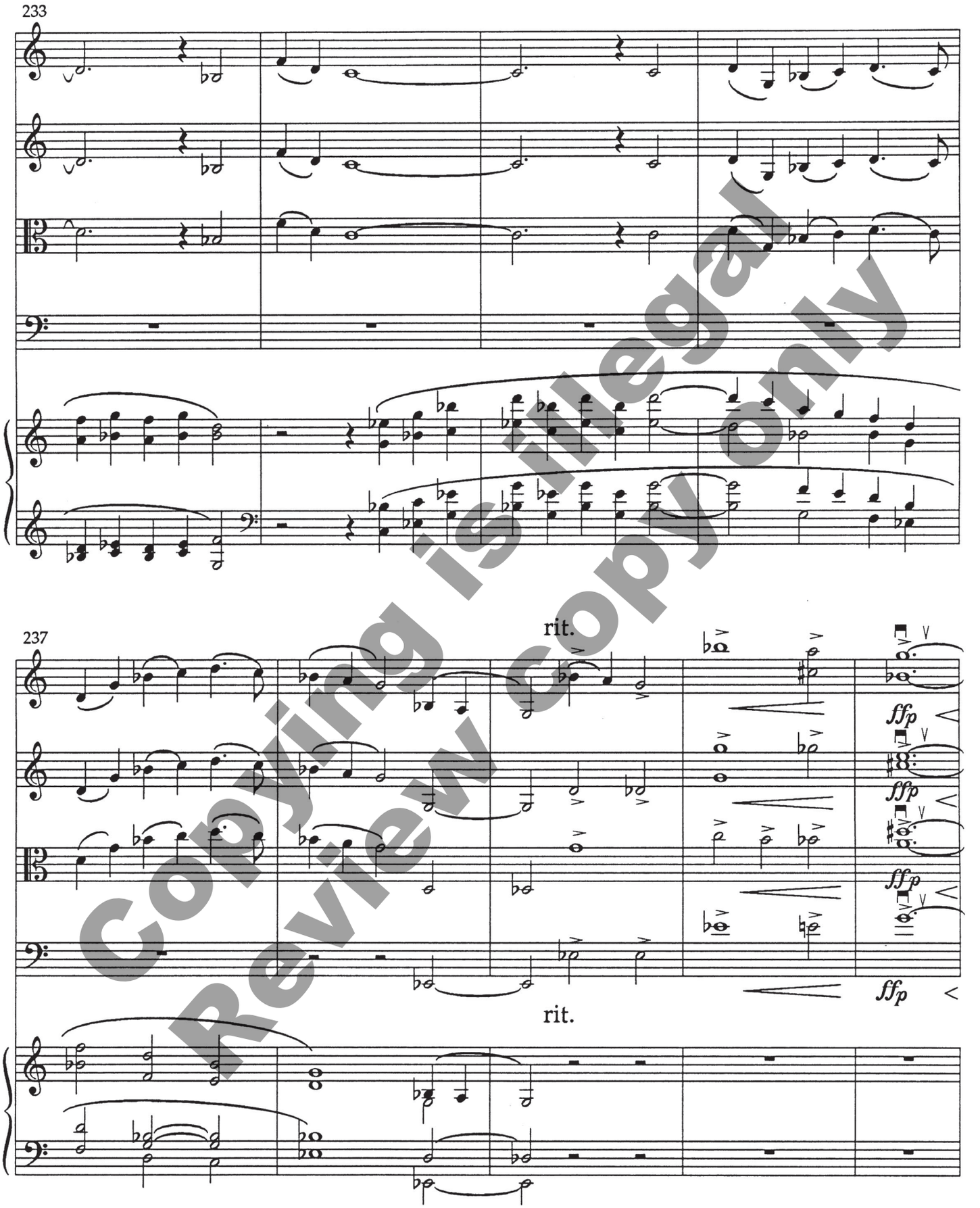

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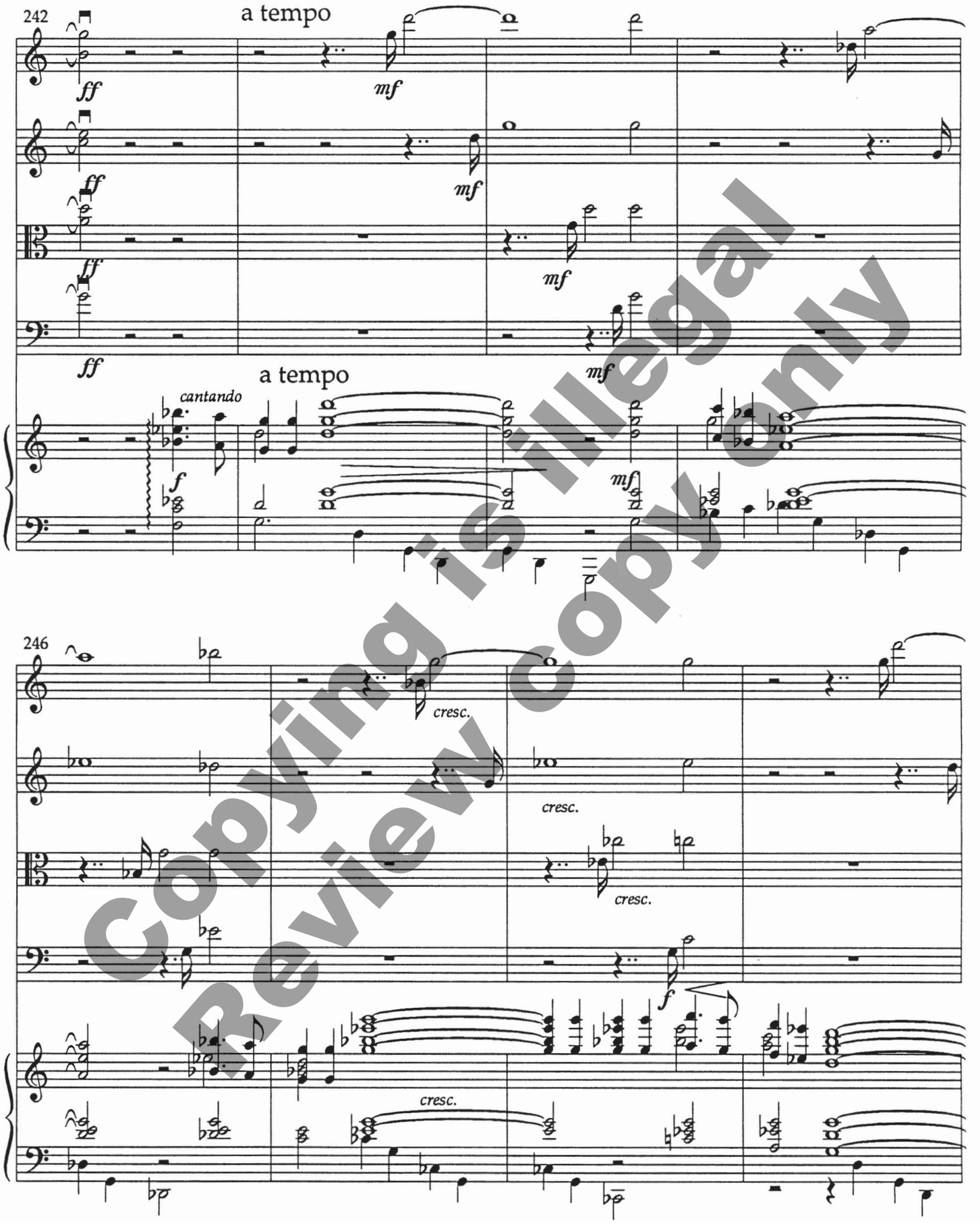

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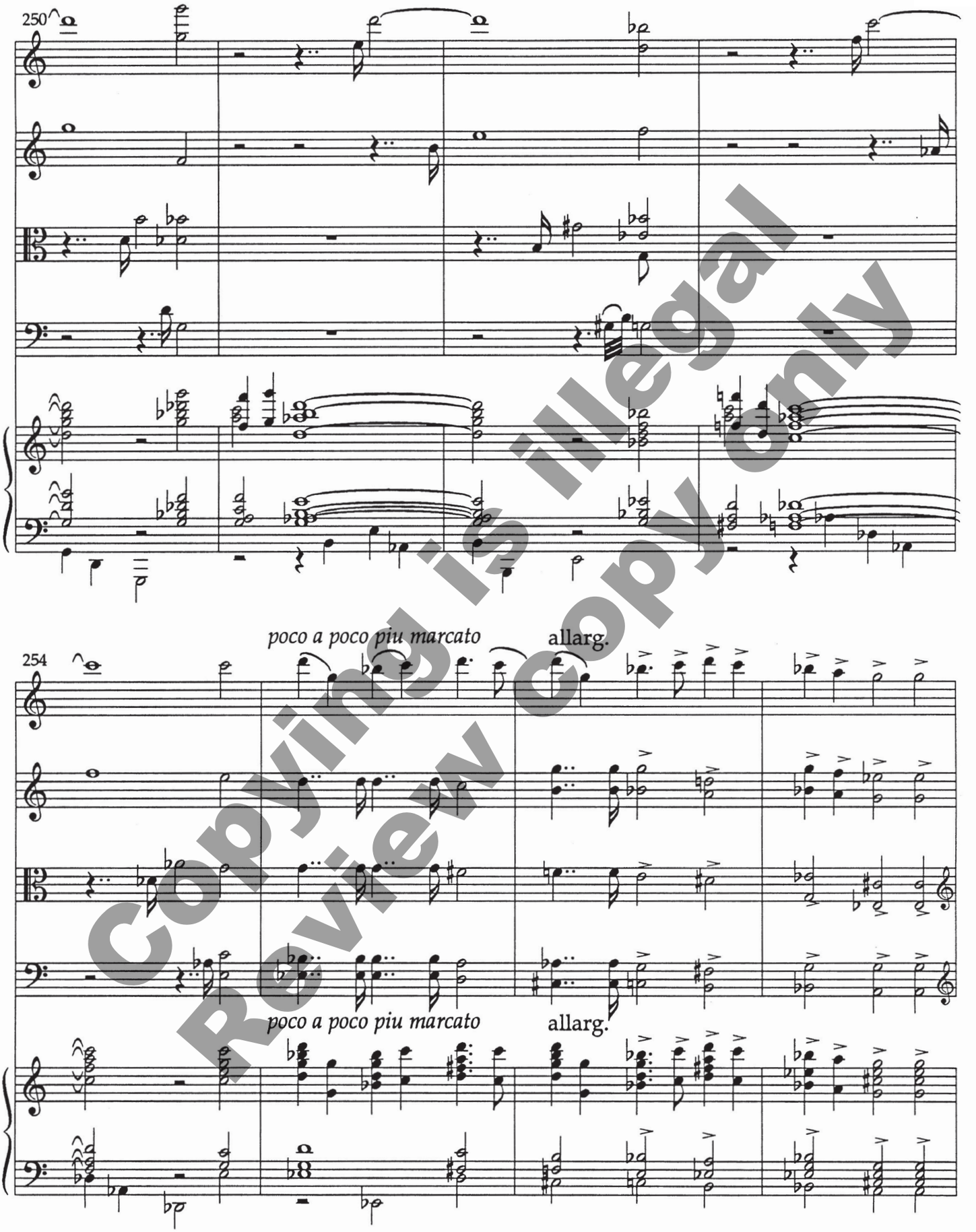

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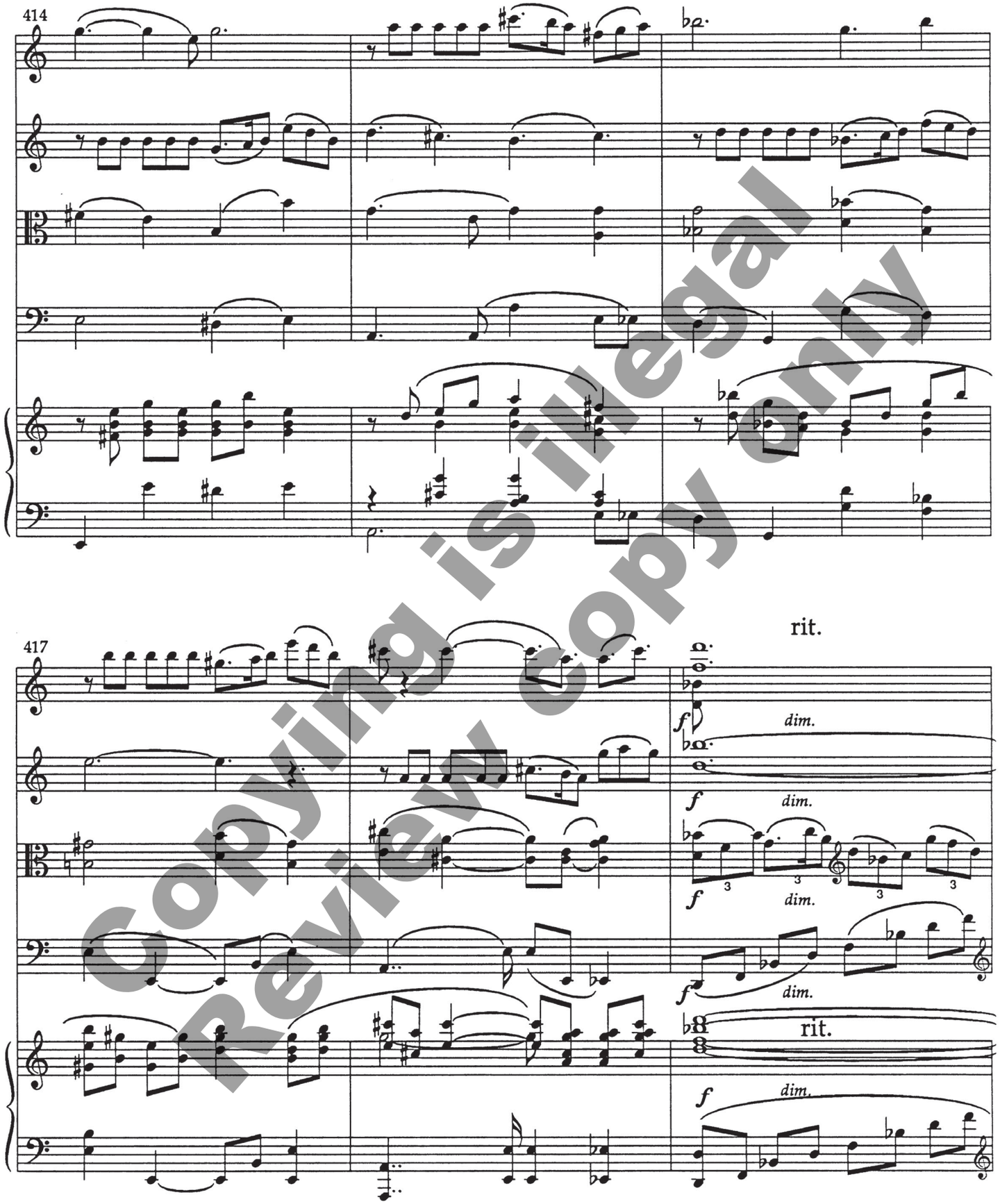

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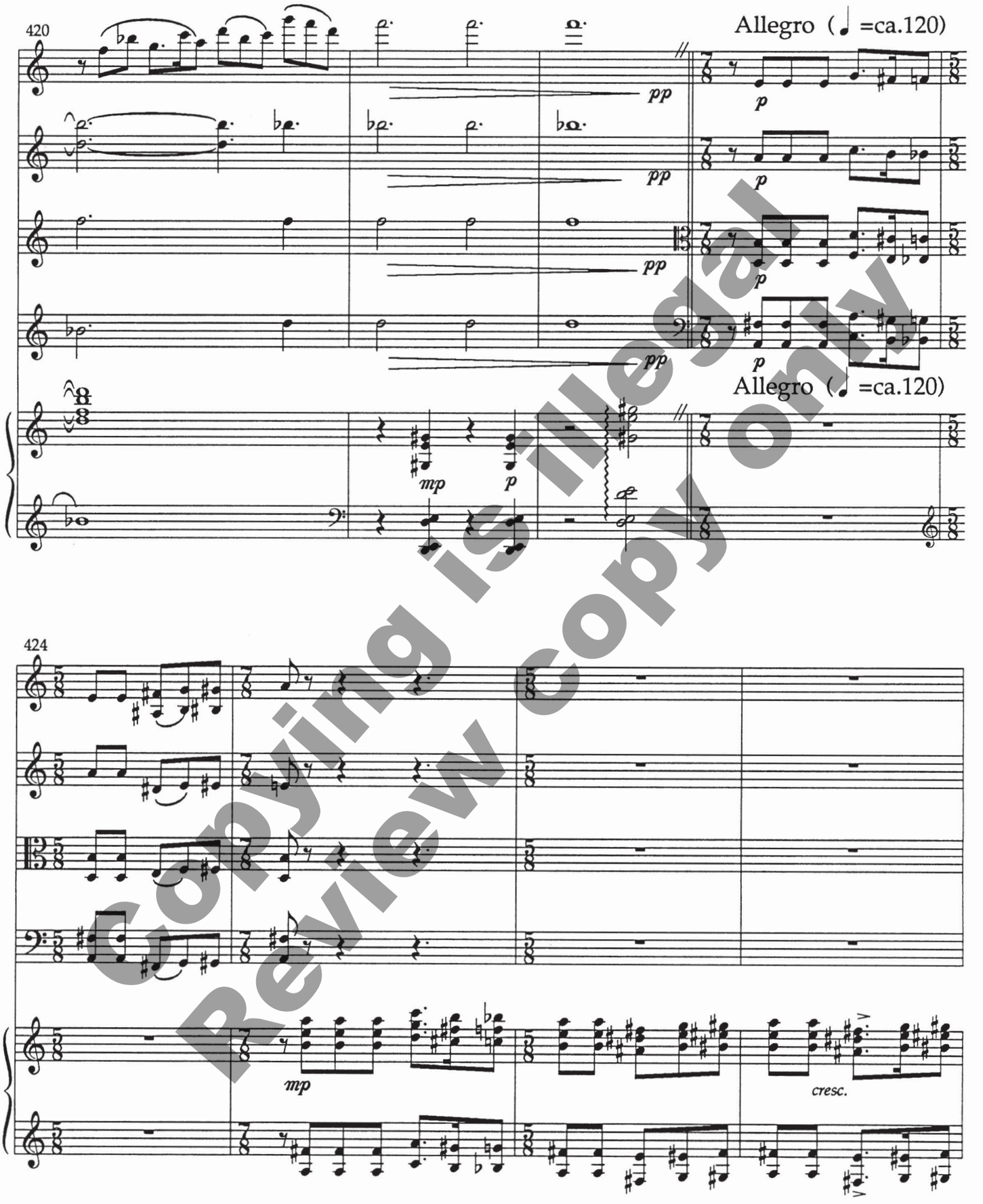

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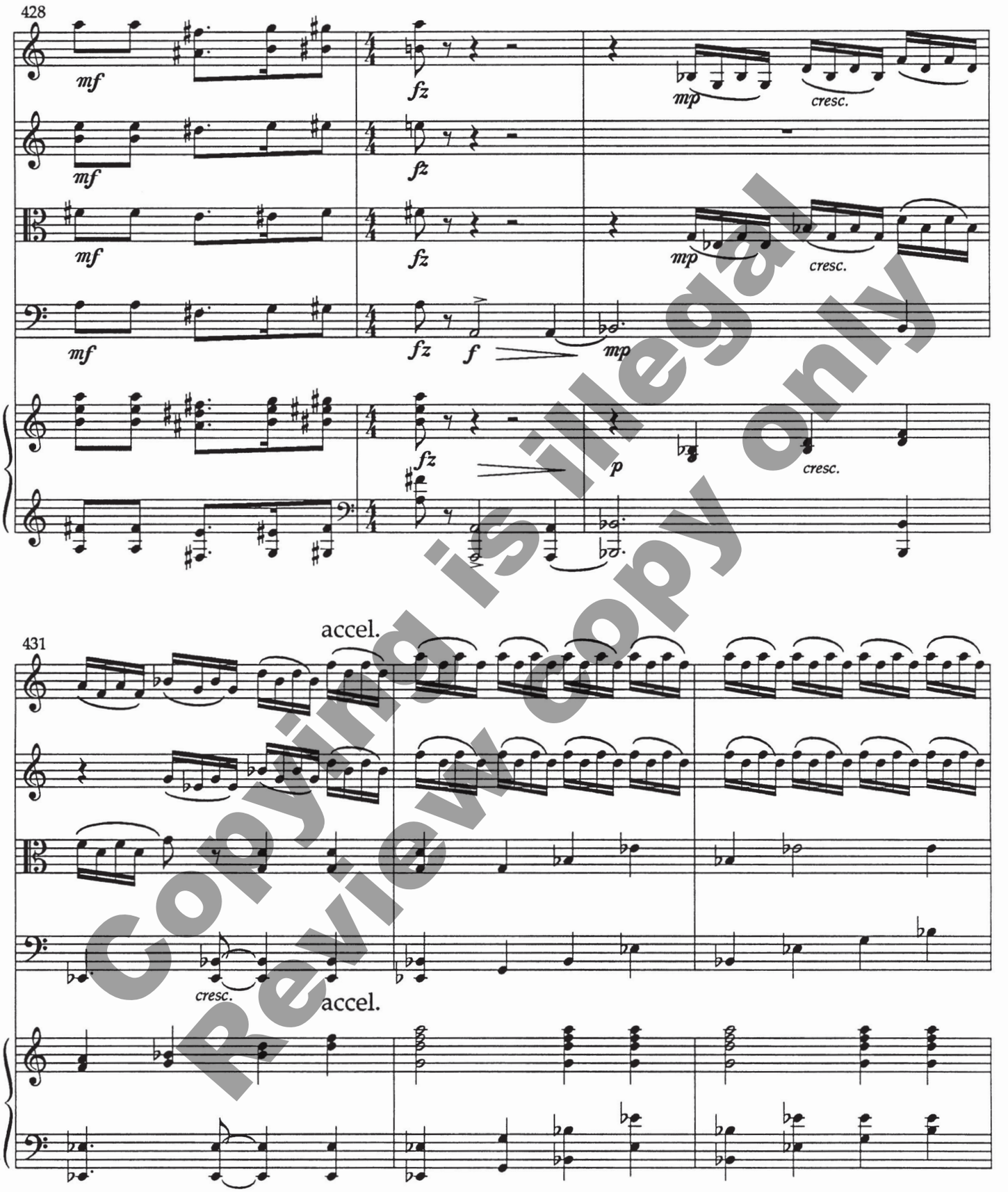

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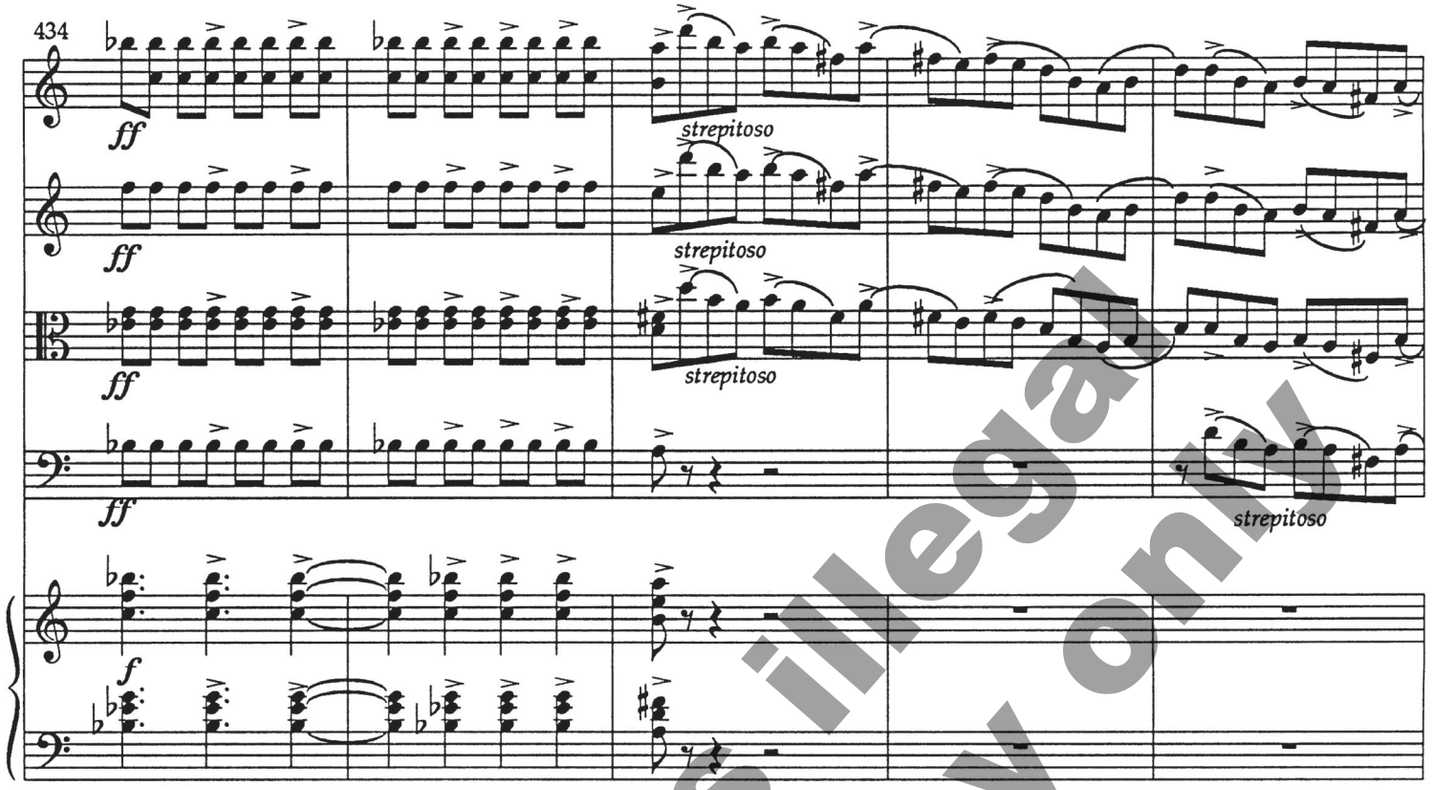

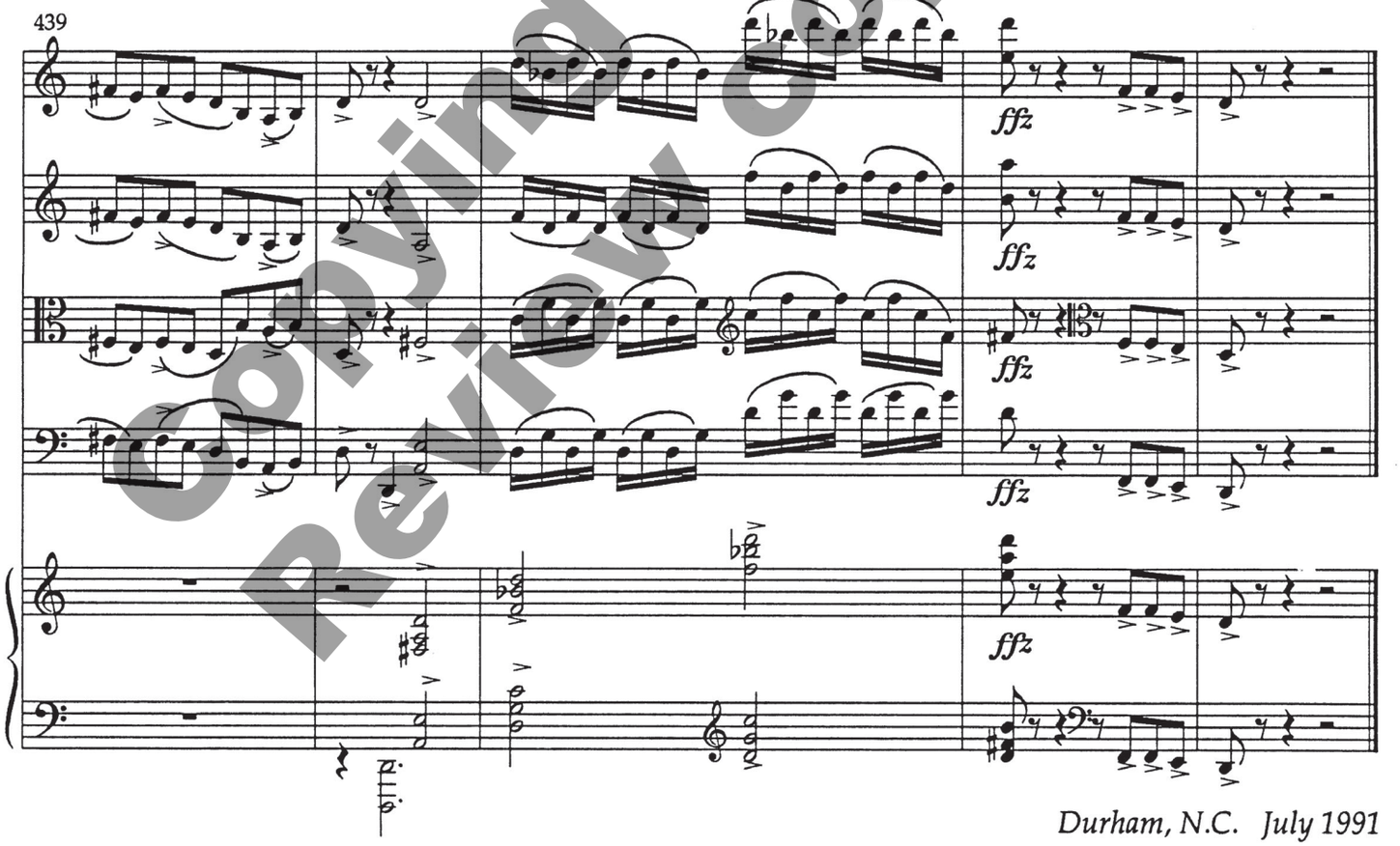

Durham, N.C. July 1991

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