Grade Level: 2½

THE HIGHLAND/ETLING STRING ORCHESTRA SERIES

THE "RAINDROP" PRELUDE

Frederic Chopin
Arranged Ryan E. Ellefsen

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INSTRUMENTATION

Conductor Score	1
Violin I	8
Violin II	8
Viola	5
Cello	5
String Bass	5

Chopin traveled to Spain to escape the damp Paris climate, but instead encountered persistent rain, which is reflected in this title and is heard in the repetition of the eighth notes that are passed from section to section. An intense work that features a string quartet at both the beginning and the end, as well as strong tutti sections that provide opportunities for controlled dissonances, the piece has been transposed into the key of D for greater accessibility. A great introduction to the piano literature of the Romantic Era, as well as an opportunity for deep emotional reflection for both younger and mature ensembles!

HIGHLAND/ETLING
A DIVISION OF Alfred

Please note: Our band and orchestra music is now being collated by an automatic high-speed system. The enclosed parts are now sorted by page count, rather than score order.

Program Notes

Inspired by Bach's "Well Tempered Clavier," Chopin wrote a series of 24 preludes for piano, one in each key, published in 1839. Composed in large part in Spain, Chopin's preludes vary in length and demeanor. With the shortest prelude a mere twelve measures, "The 'Raindrop' Prelude in D♭ Major" is one of the longest and has become the most famous. Upon doctor's orders, Chopin had traveled to Majorca, Spain to escape the damp Paris climate, but instead encountered persistent rain. Throughout this work, the listener hears the rain as a relentless assault of eighth notes, in various ranges, instruments, and combinations around which Chopin composed the piece. His frustration with the weather is felt when the piece switches to D minor, but throughout the work, Chopin's intensity and emotion are easily transferred to a string ensemble.

Notes to the Conductor

The idea for this arrangement came to me when I was sitting in my office, listening to a student practice the piece on a daily basis. After a few days, I started to hear the piece in my head as played by a string orchestra, rather than the piano. Still, there are some uniquely pianistic qualities to this work that need careful attention. The beginning should start as a true string quartet, without any doubling, and without any conducting by the director. When the rest of the ensemble enters, the lightness provided by the string quartet must be maintained. Of special note are the "quasi-cadenzas" which occur throughout the piece. They should be played as if by a piano player—not necessarily in time; freely, but not at the expense of the momentum of the work. They are brief pauses of sunlight in a cloud-filled sky. It would be best for the soloist to listen to a variety of piano performances of this work to accurately perform these challenging bridges. There are some great opportunities for the students to become comfortable with controlled dissonance in the minor section. The divisi dissonances in the violins must be equal in volume and the performers cannot shy away from this opportunity. The F♯ in measure 55 is incredibly important because it foreshadows the eventual return to D major. Finally, if you have enough players, I found it to be a nice addition to allow half of the cellos and basses to play pizzicato in measures 28 to 43 and the other half to play those measures arco. Of course, all basses should play pizzicato from 40 to the repeat sign. Transposed to D for greater accessibility, the piece works very well for strings. I hope you enjoy this work!

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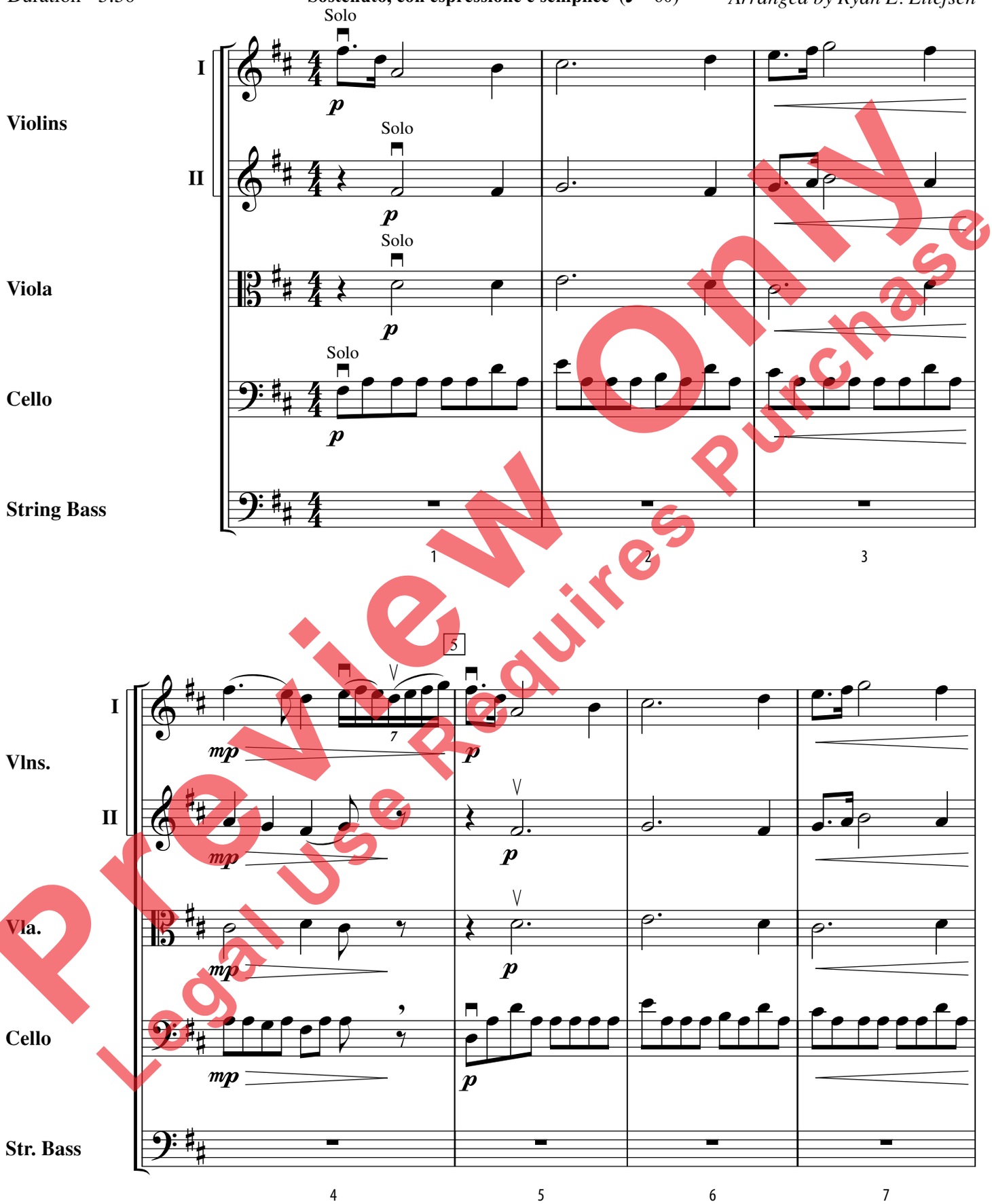
Dedicated to Glen and Terry Ellefsen for their incredible love and support.

The "Raindrop" Prelude

CONDUCTOR SCORE
Duration - 5:50

Frédéric Chopin
Arranged by Ryan E. Ellefsen

Sostenuto, con espressione e semplice (♩ = 60)



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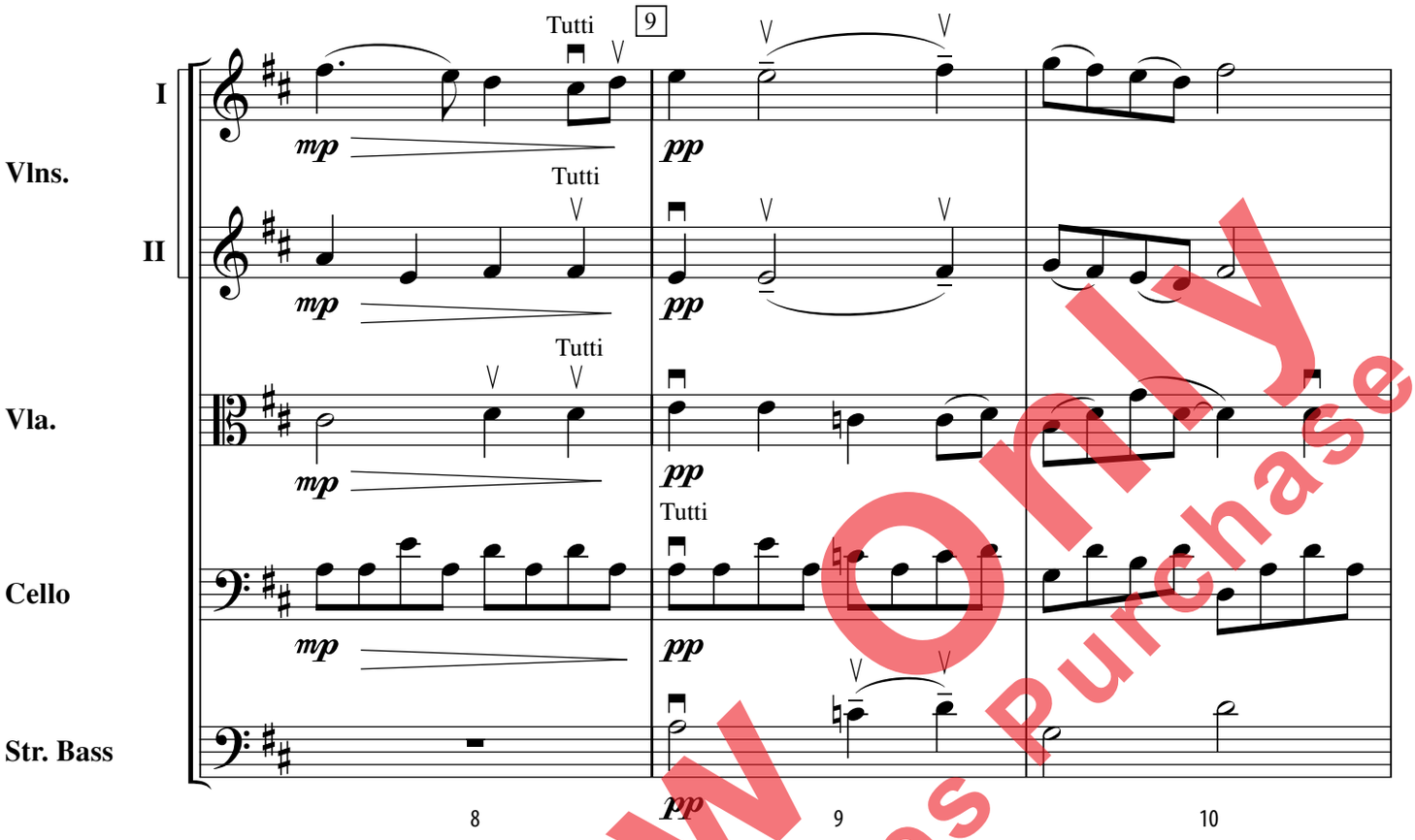

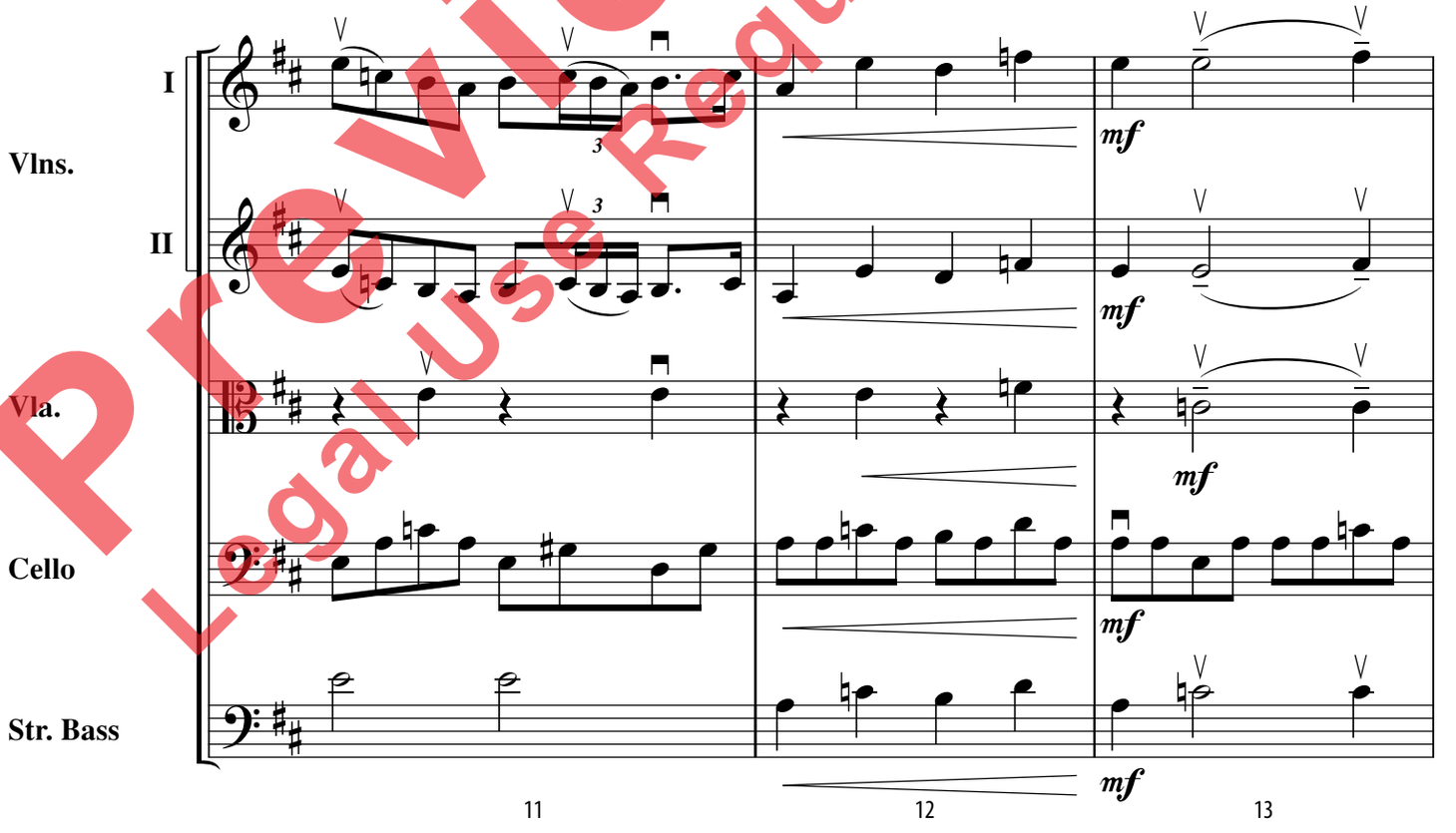

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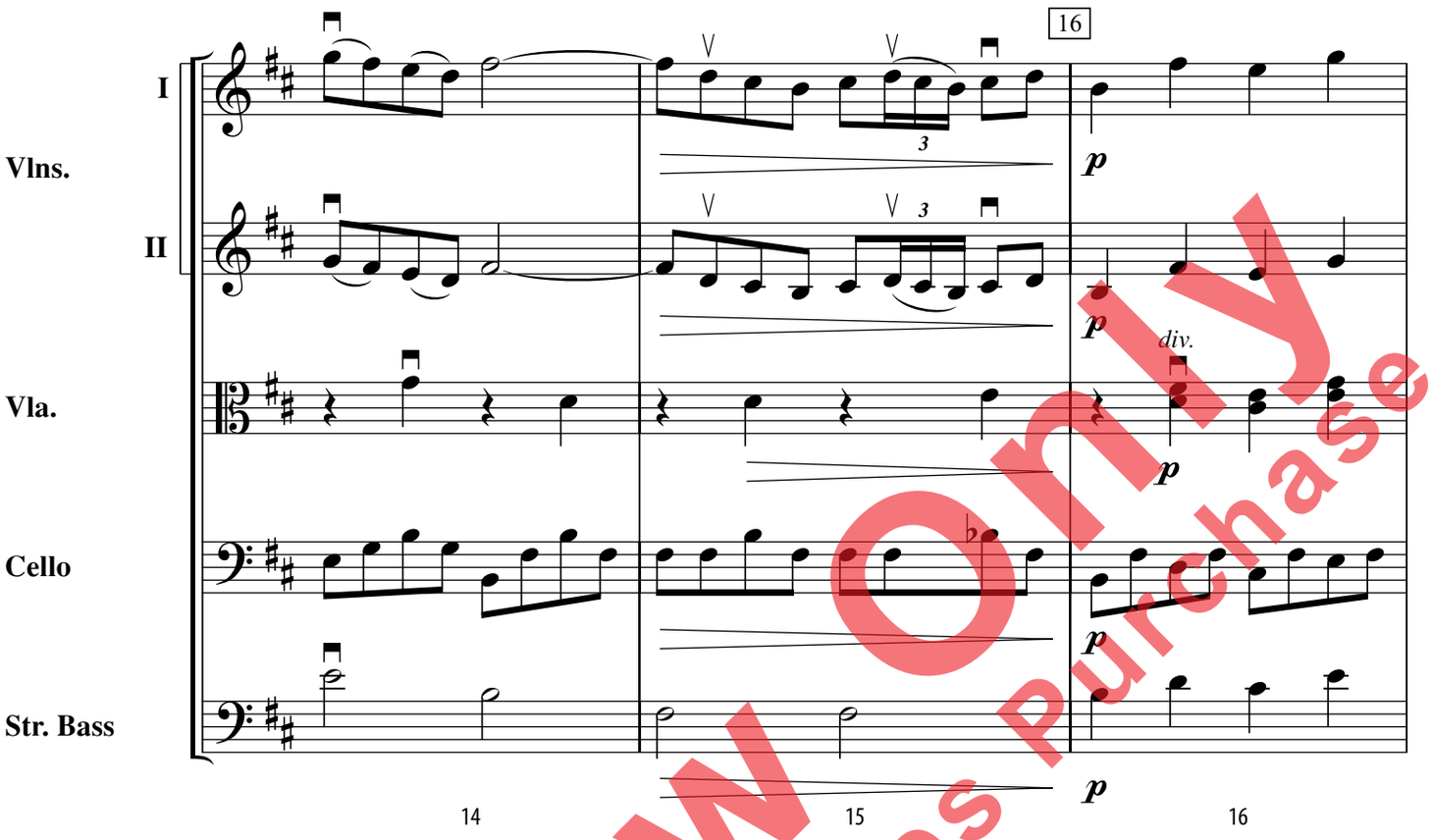

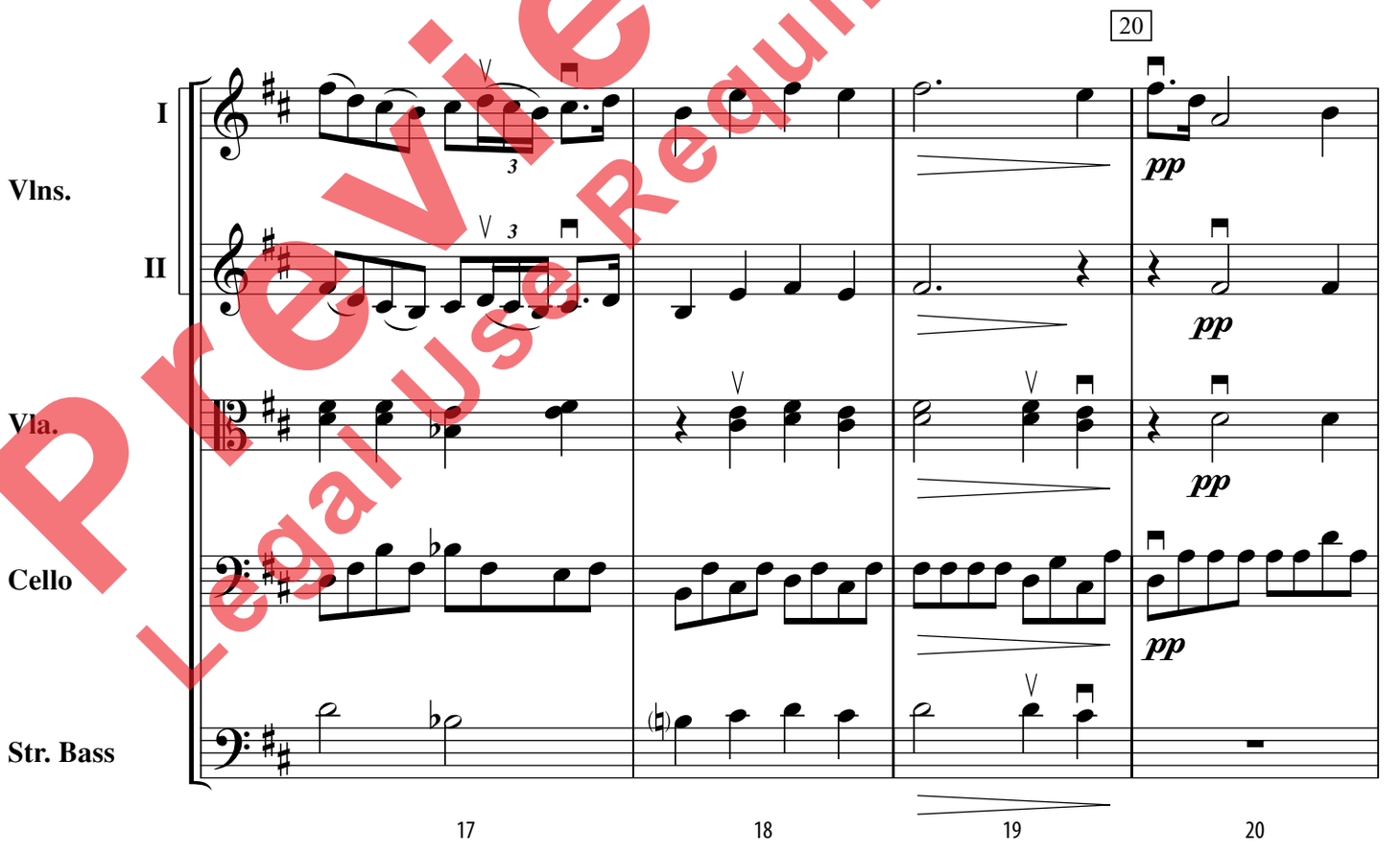

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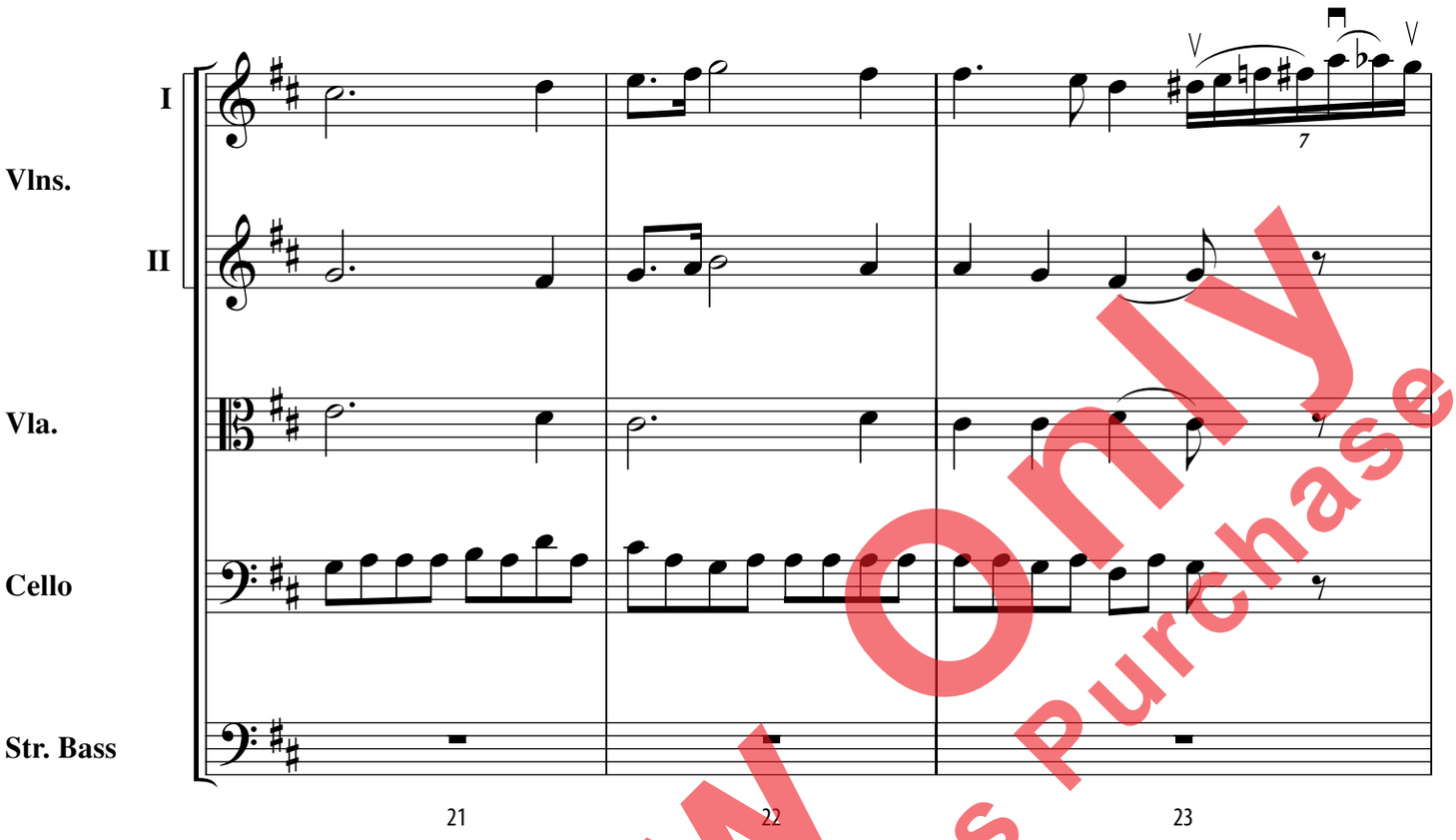

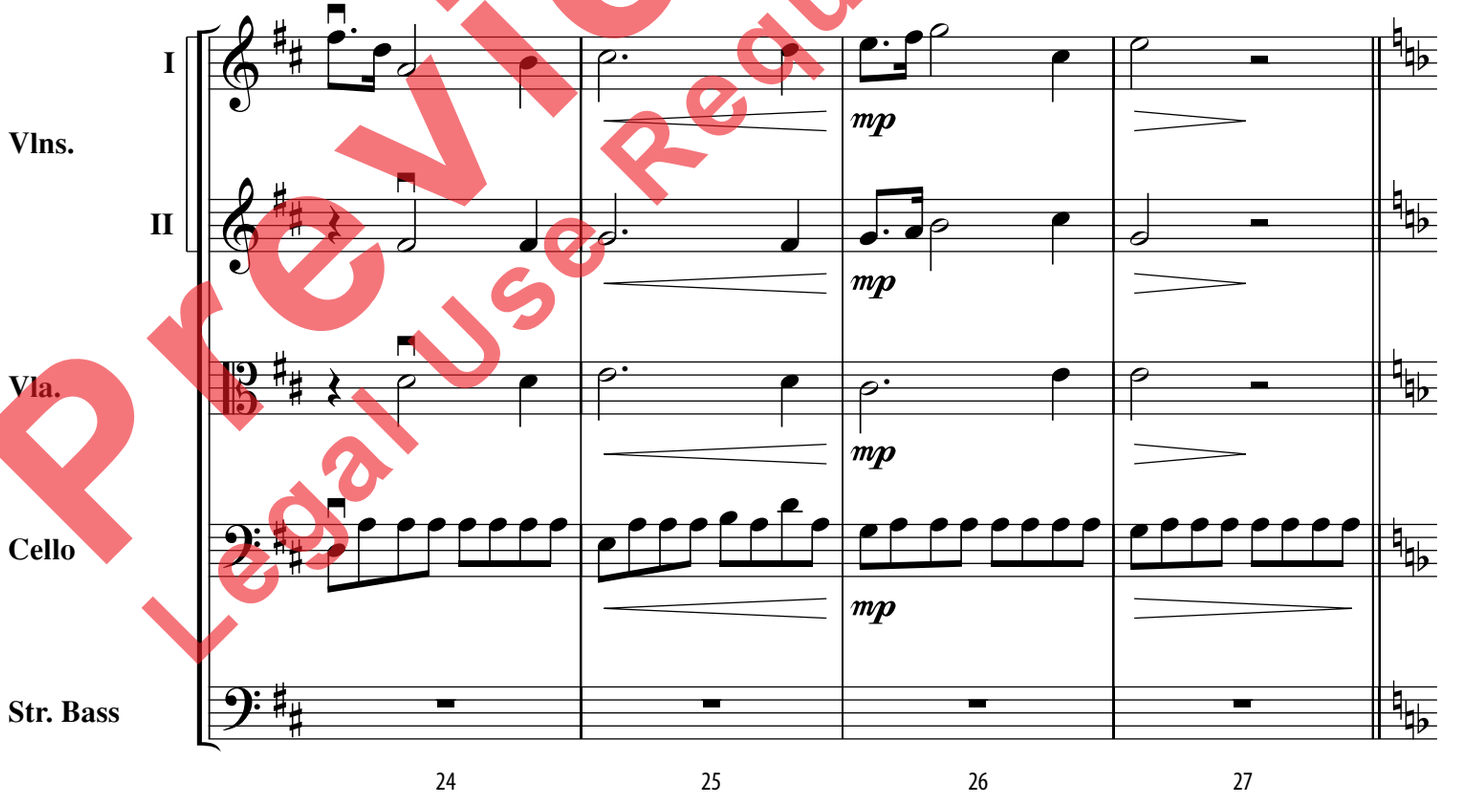

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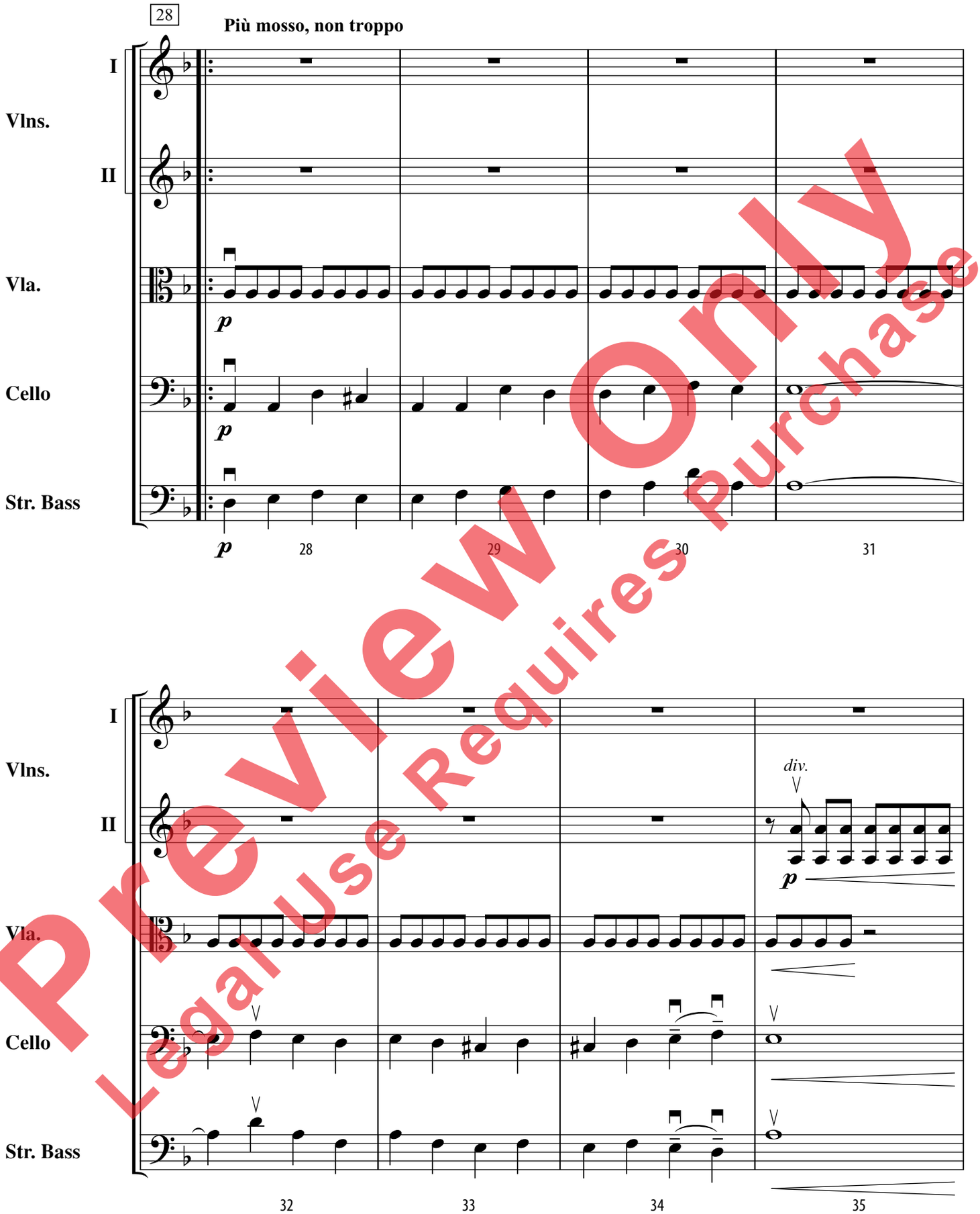

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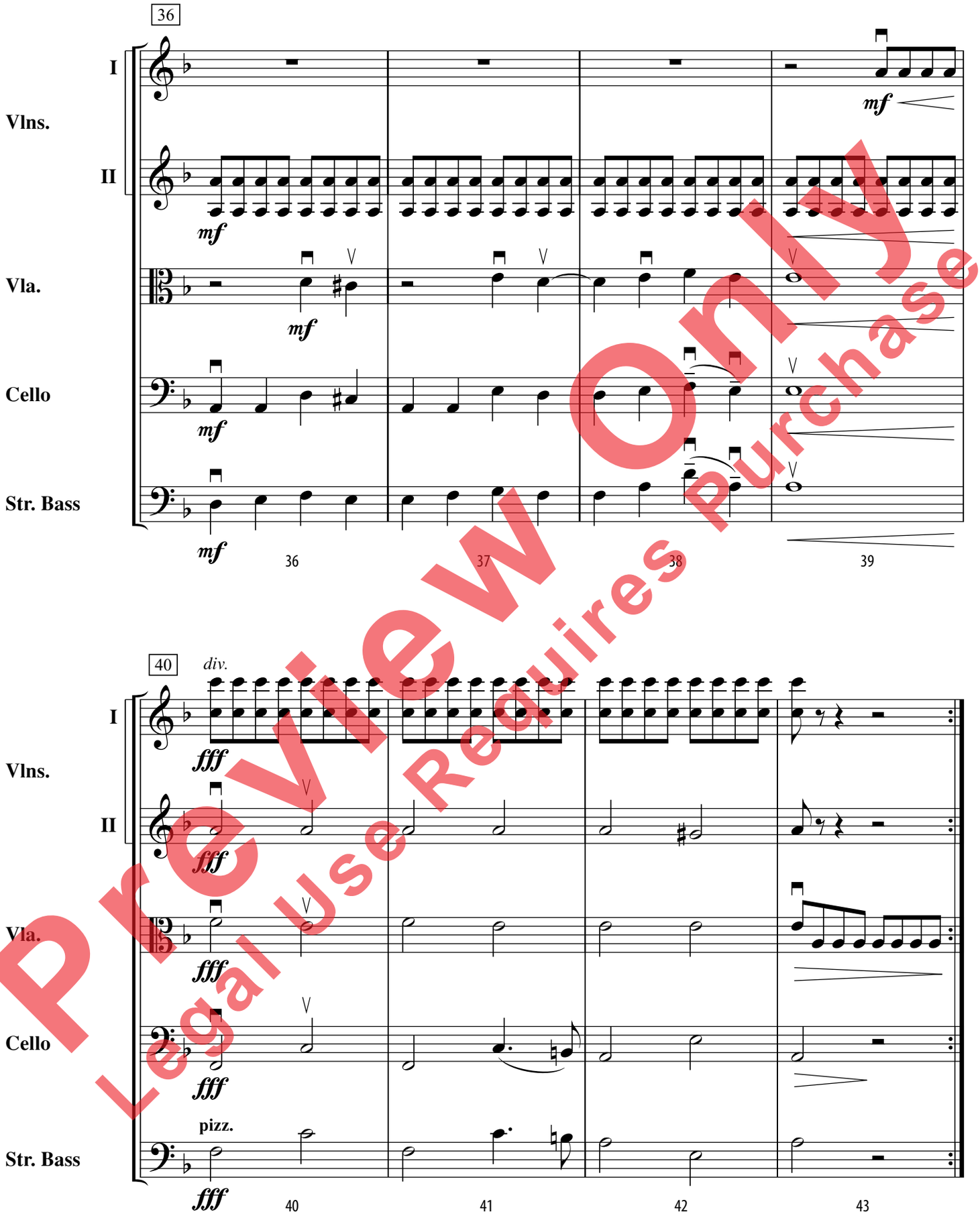

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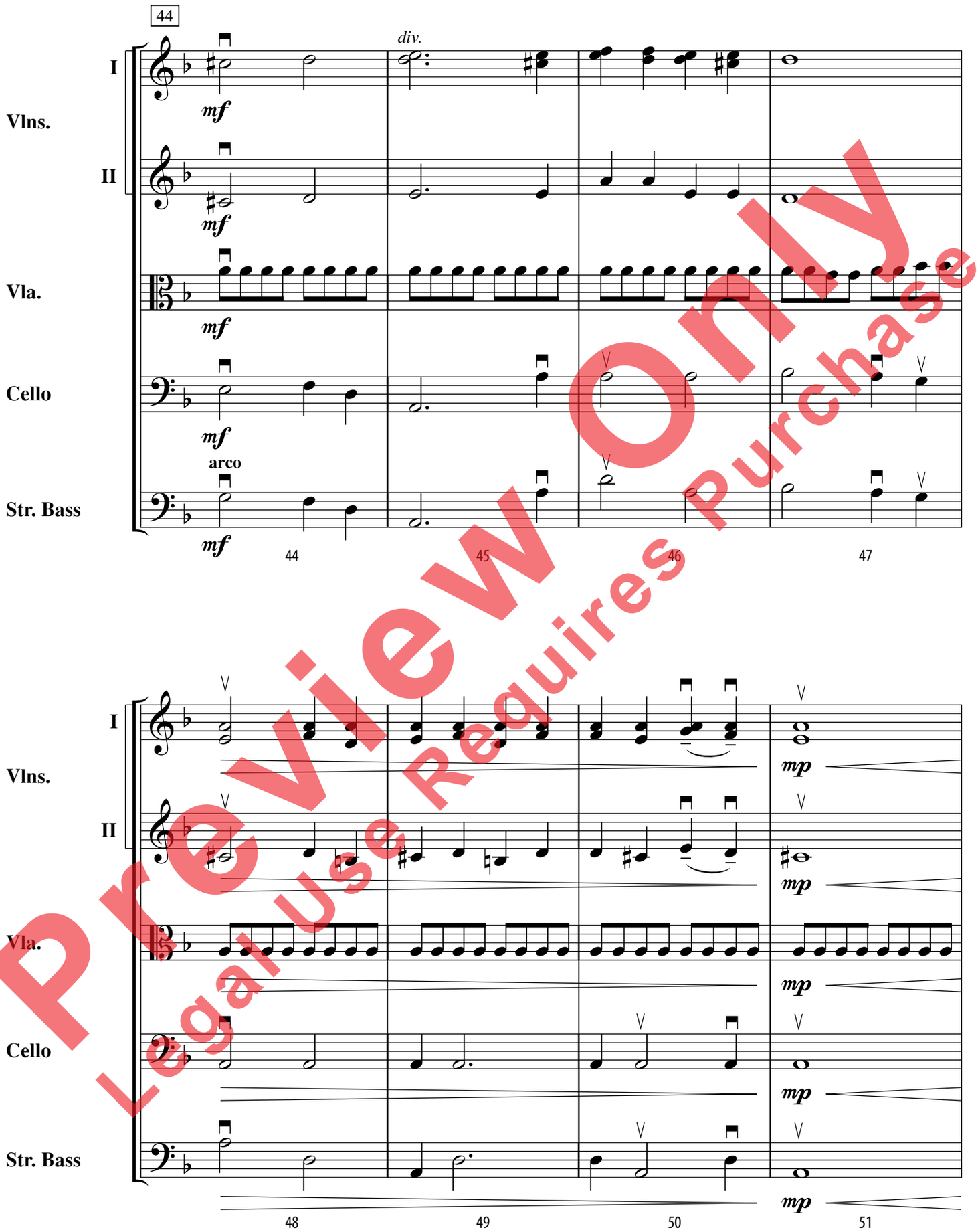

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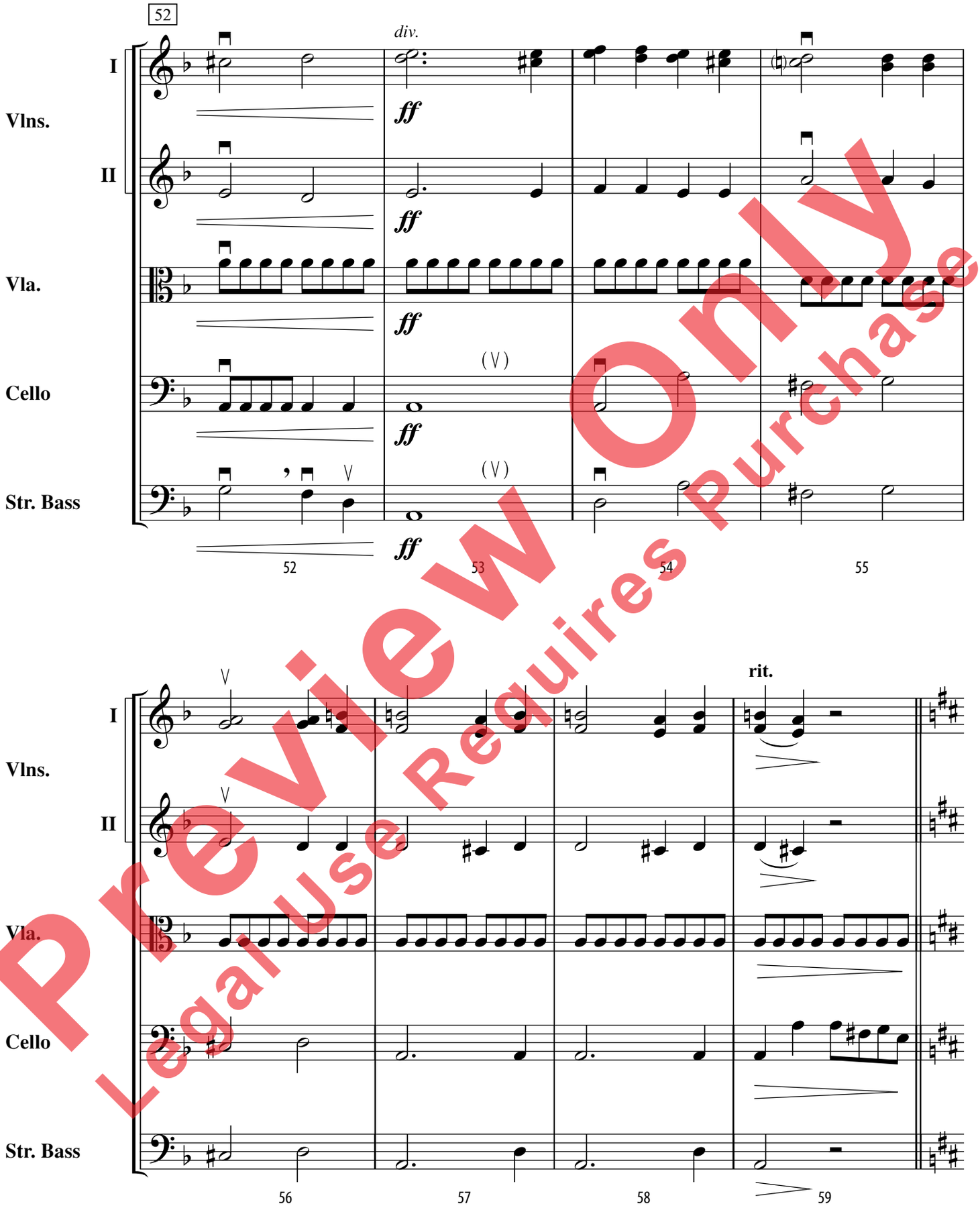

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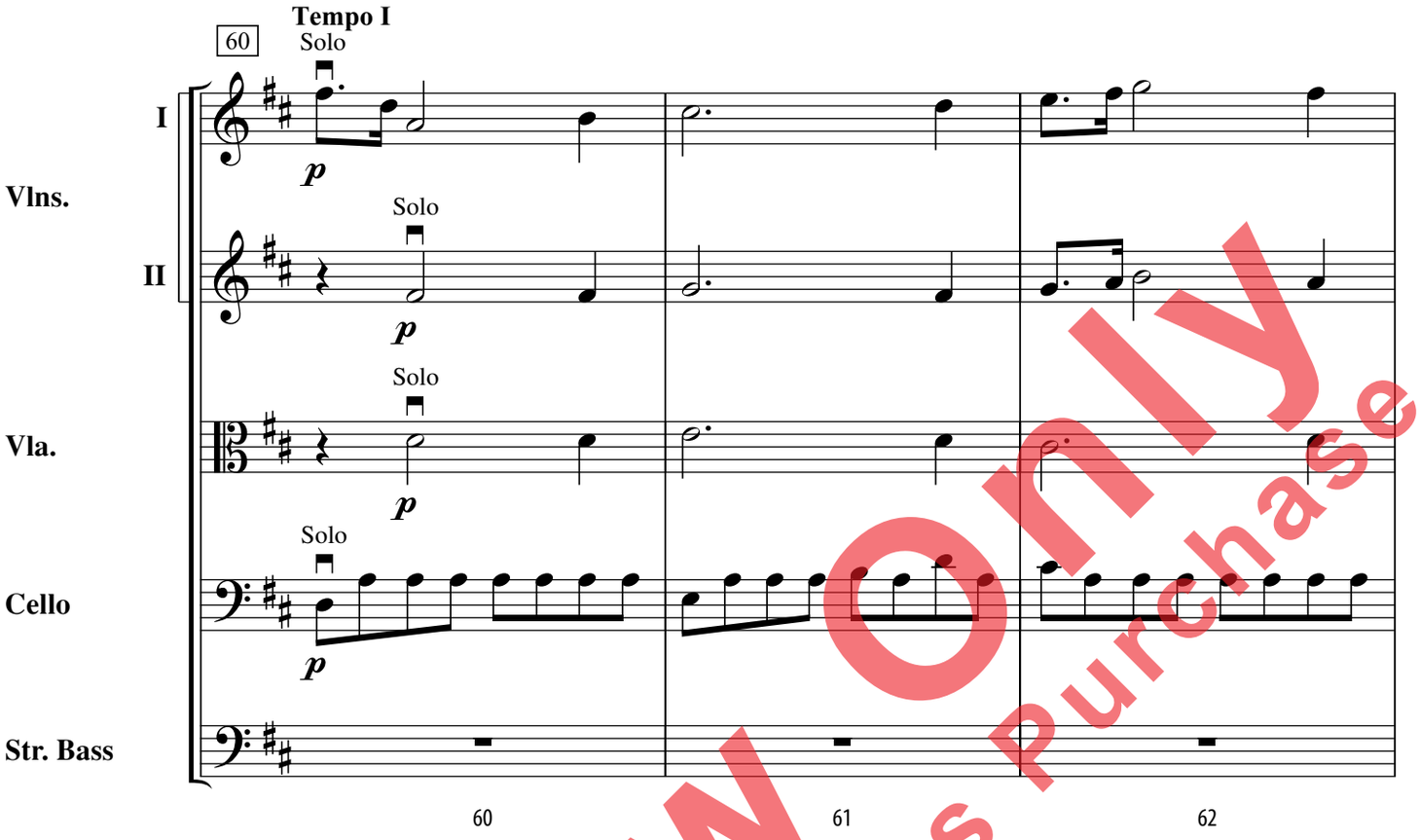

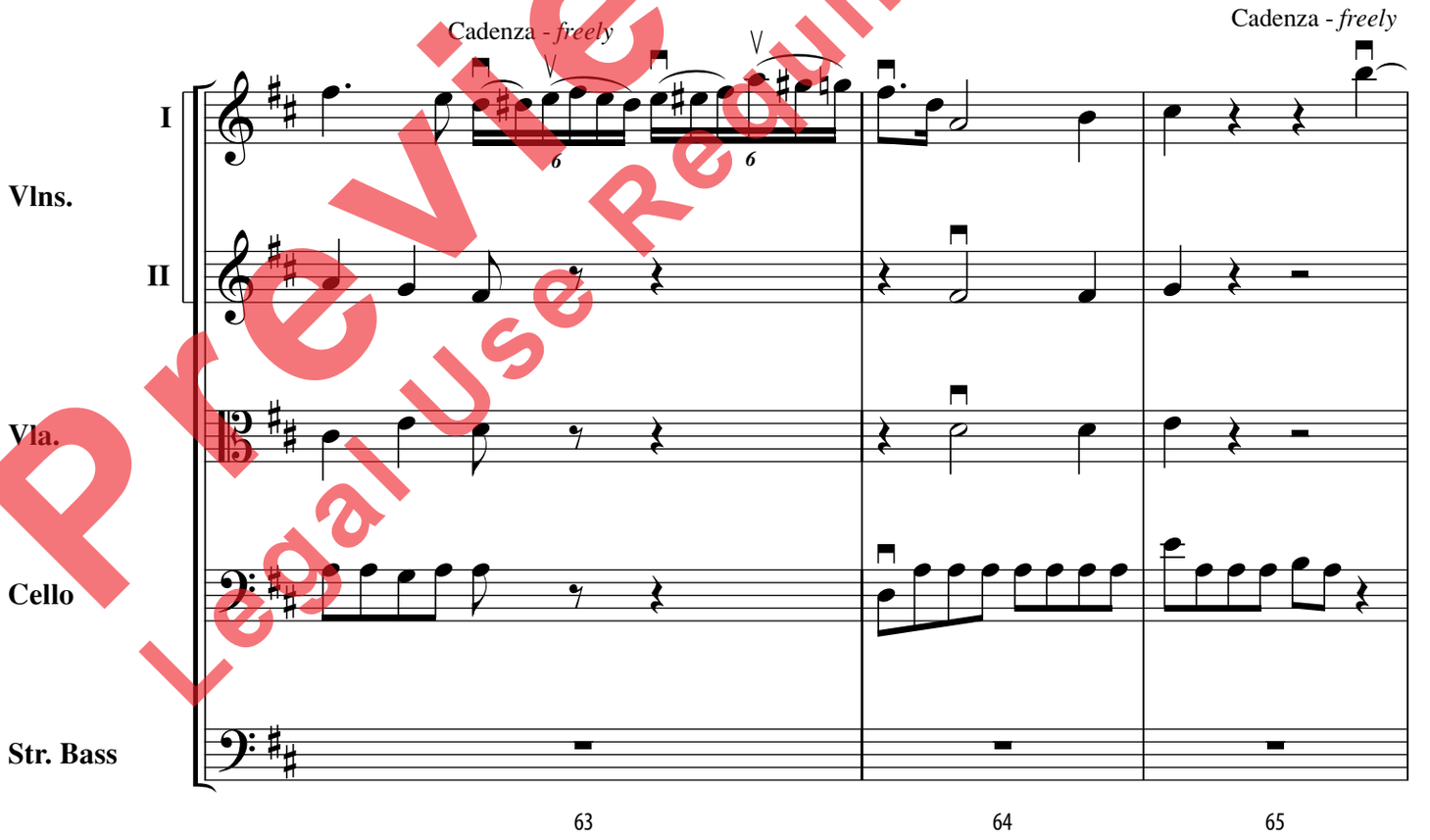

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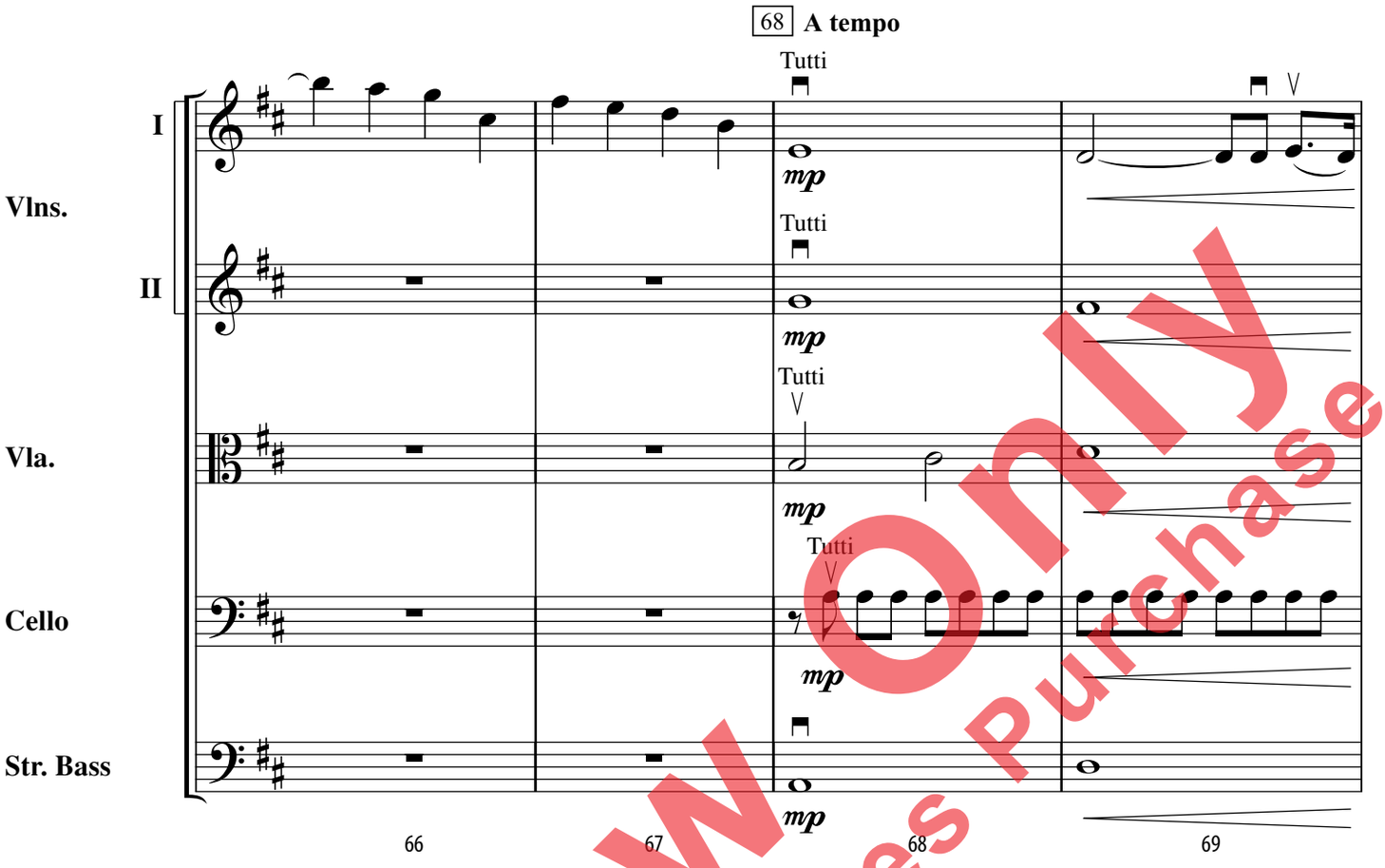

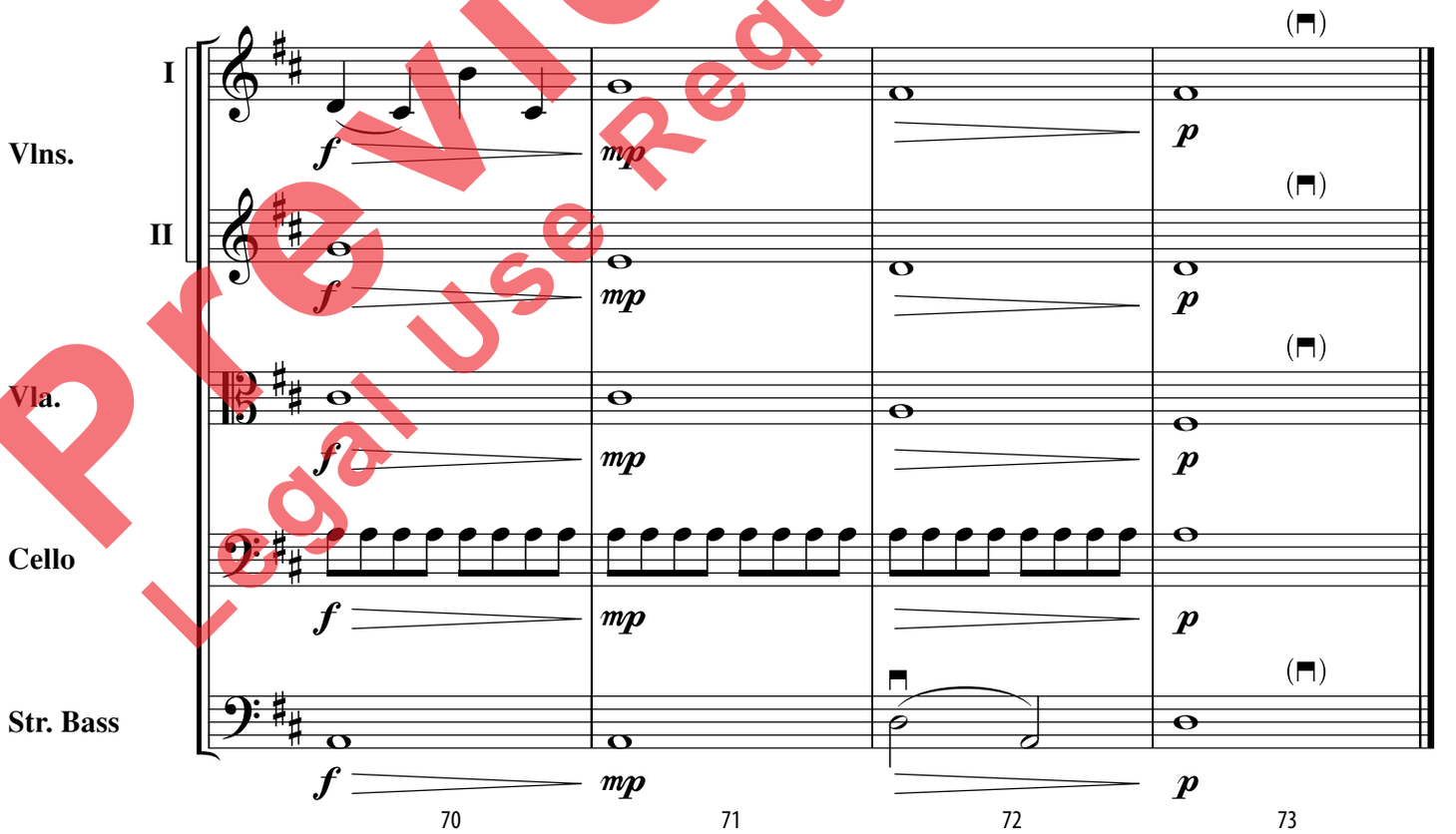

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