for Cathedral Bells, St. John's Lutheran Church, Orange, CA

Impression on Totality

from Sturgill Peak, ID; August 21, 2017

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for 3-7 octave handbells

Alex Guebert

Program note:

Have you ever had the lucky opportunity to see a total solar eclipse? If so, you remember the journey to the destination, the anticipation, watching (through special shaded glasses!) the moon begin to block the edge of the sun, the hours-long wait for it to cover the sun completely. Shortly before it happens, alien shadows begin to sweep across the landscape. The period of totality -- when the moon is completely eclipsing the sun -- is only a minute or two long, and is safe to watch with the naked eye. It is an eerie twilit silence. It feels like an instant, and it feels like an eternity. The delicate shimmer of the sun's corona glows behind the disc of the moon. If you're lucky, you might see red-orange flares licking around the sides. Suddenly, a shimmering flash causes you to squint -- it is a point of light where the sun breaks past the shadow, illuminating the circle -- a heavenly diamond ring. You put your shaded glasses back on now -- to see the crescent sun emerging. The rhythm of the spheres continues, and you walk away feeling changed, and privileged to have witnessed the beauty of its convergence.

Rehearsal notes:

--Stems-up treble malleted patterns should always be the softest part of the musical texture. There should be no accents on pulses.

--**Bowed chime instructions:** During m.66, four treble positions (C6-C7) and one bass chime position (B♭2, F3, C4, all on a rack, or set on a padded table with the chimes' sounding ends extended off the side of the table) should play the **bowed chimes**. The four treble positions should use violin bows; the bass chime position should use a cello or bass bow. Tighten the bows and apply rosin as a string player would. Hold the bow almost perpendicular to the chime and set the "frog" (the part of the bow hair closest to your hand) on the wide top brim of the chime (front or back brim; doesn't matter which). Apply pressure, scrape, and lift. You do not need to pull along the full length of the bow. Afterward, the rosin can be wiped off of the chime easily. Use only the specified pitches, but feel free to experiment with creating different, unusual sounds.

--If bows are not available, use the RM (random mallet) technique on the chimes.

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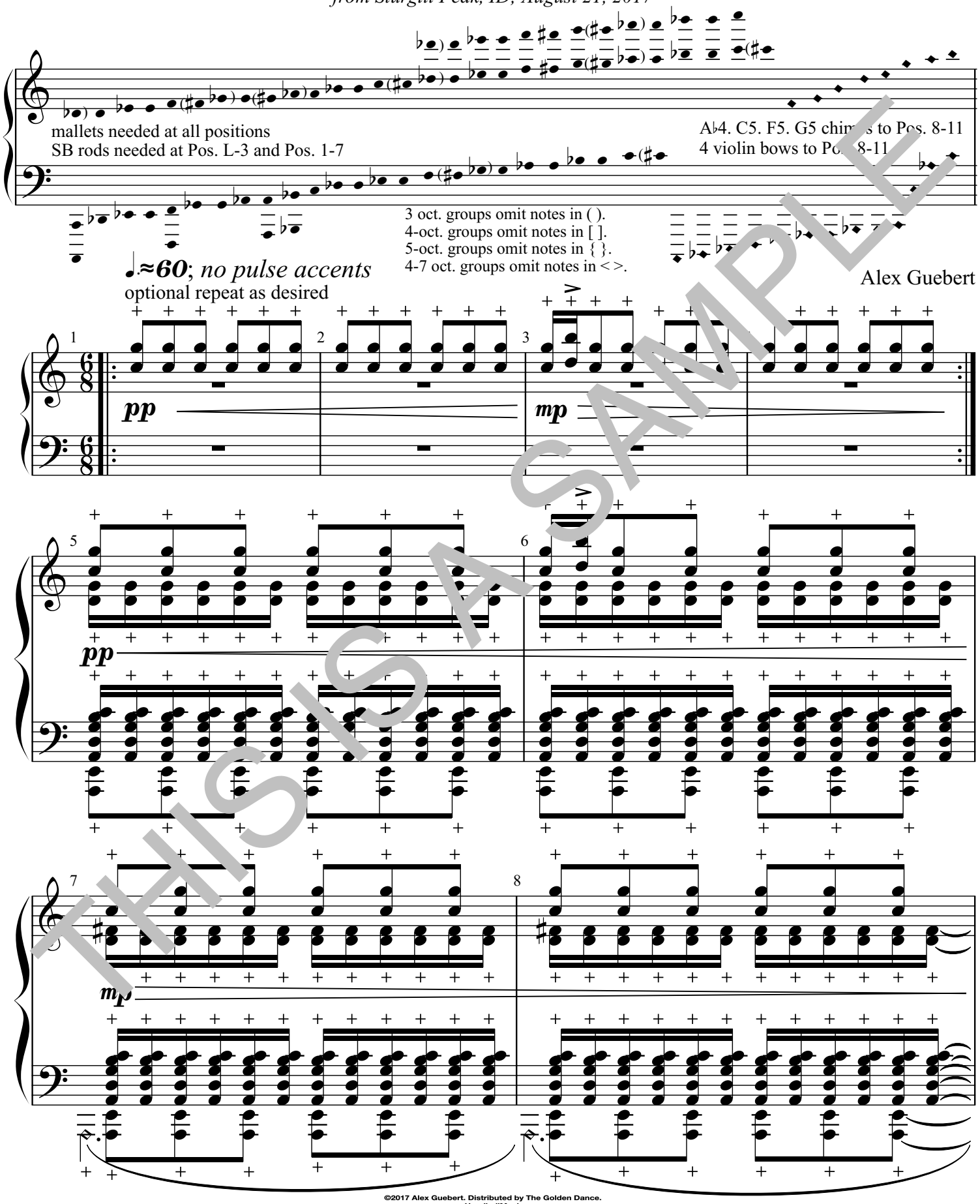

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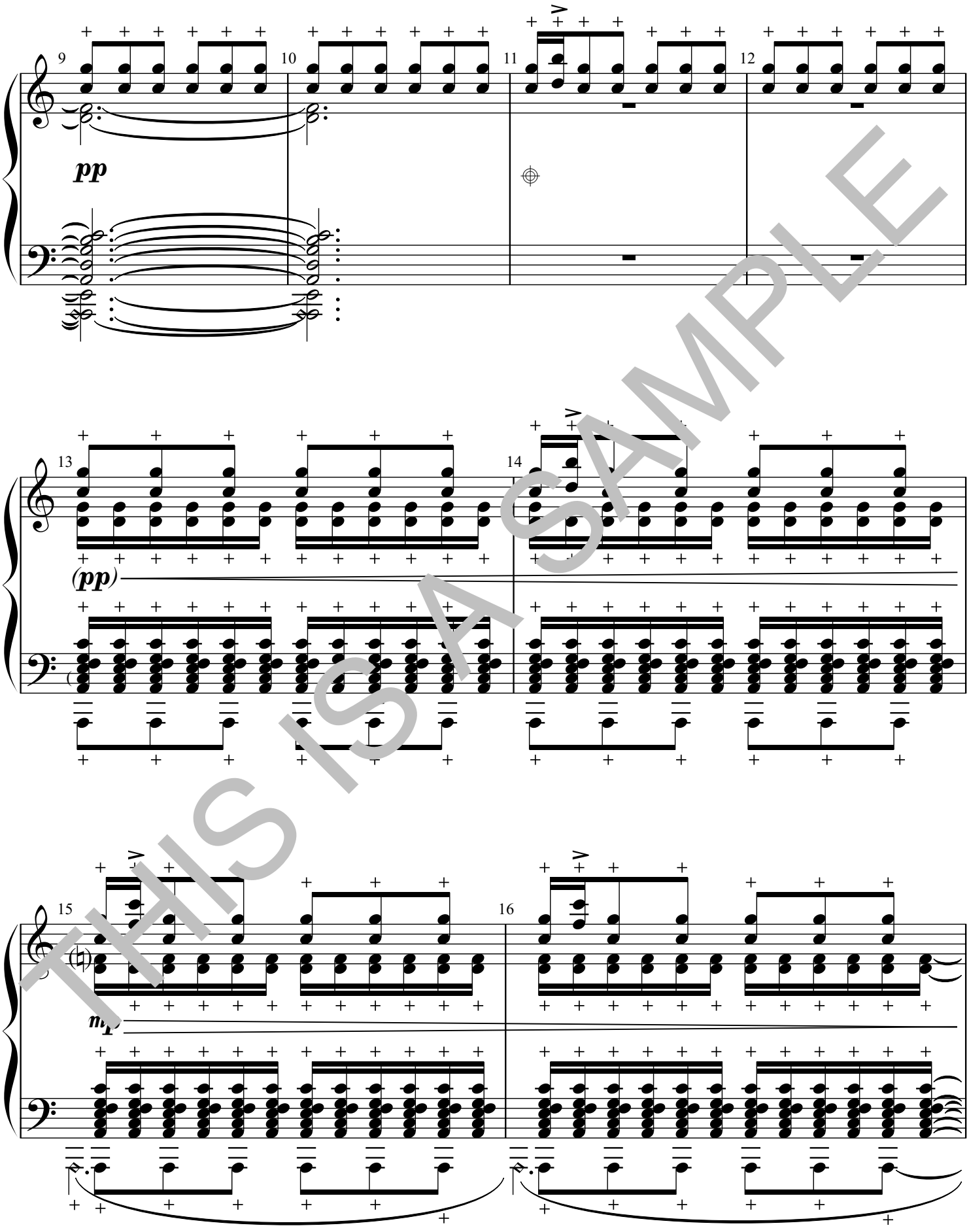

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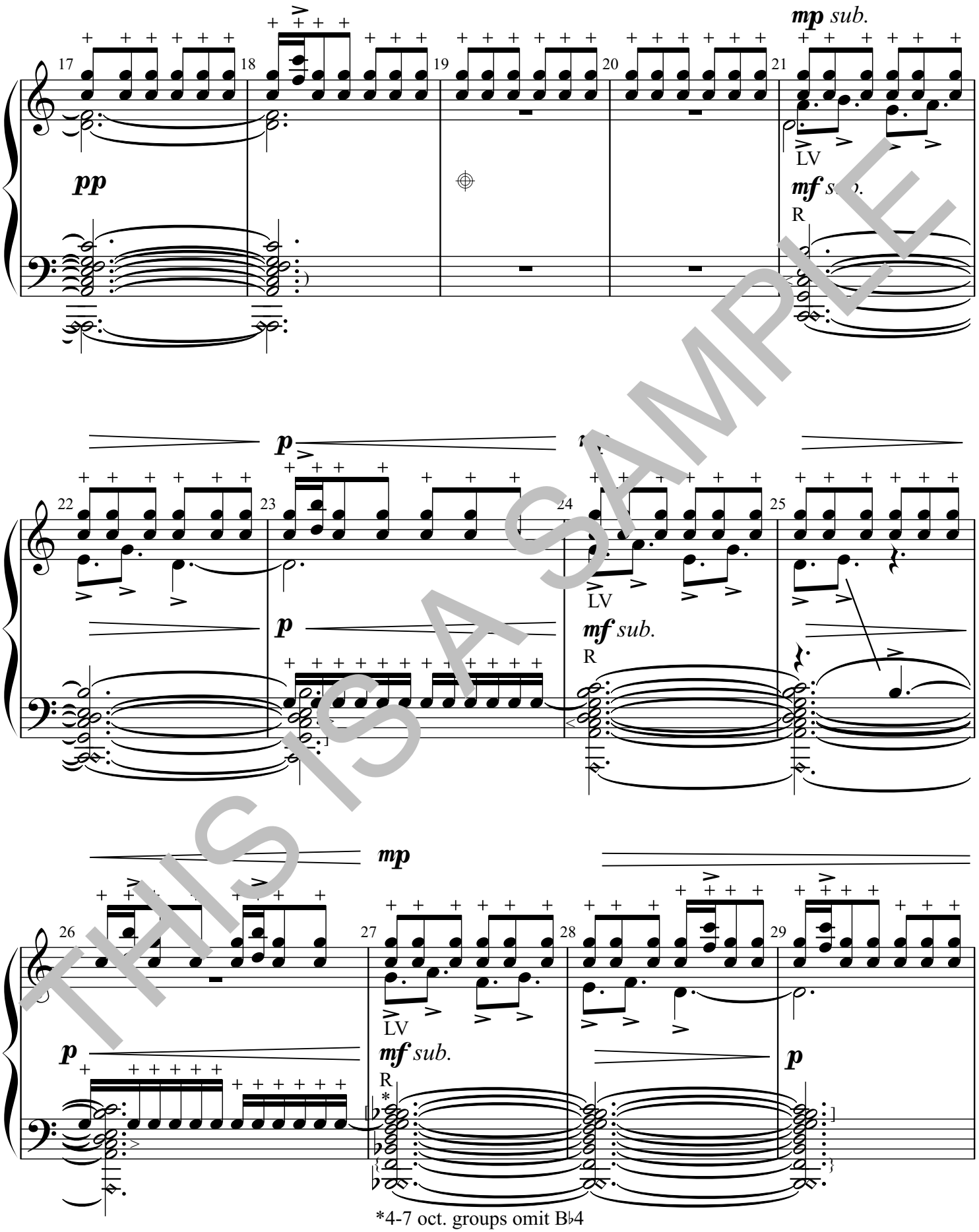

*4-7 oct. groups omit B♭4

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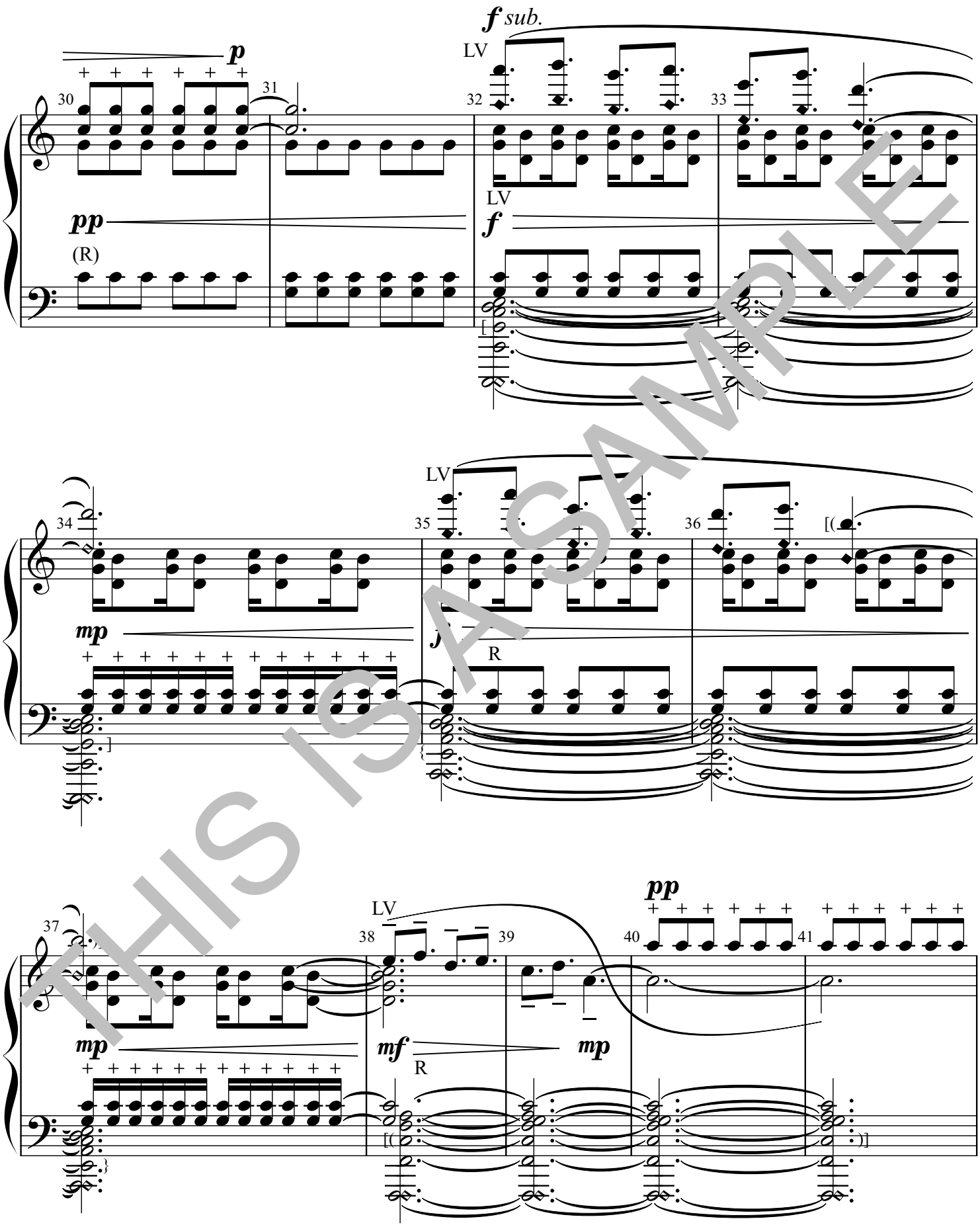

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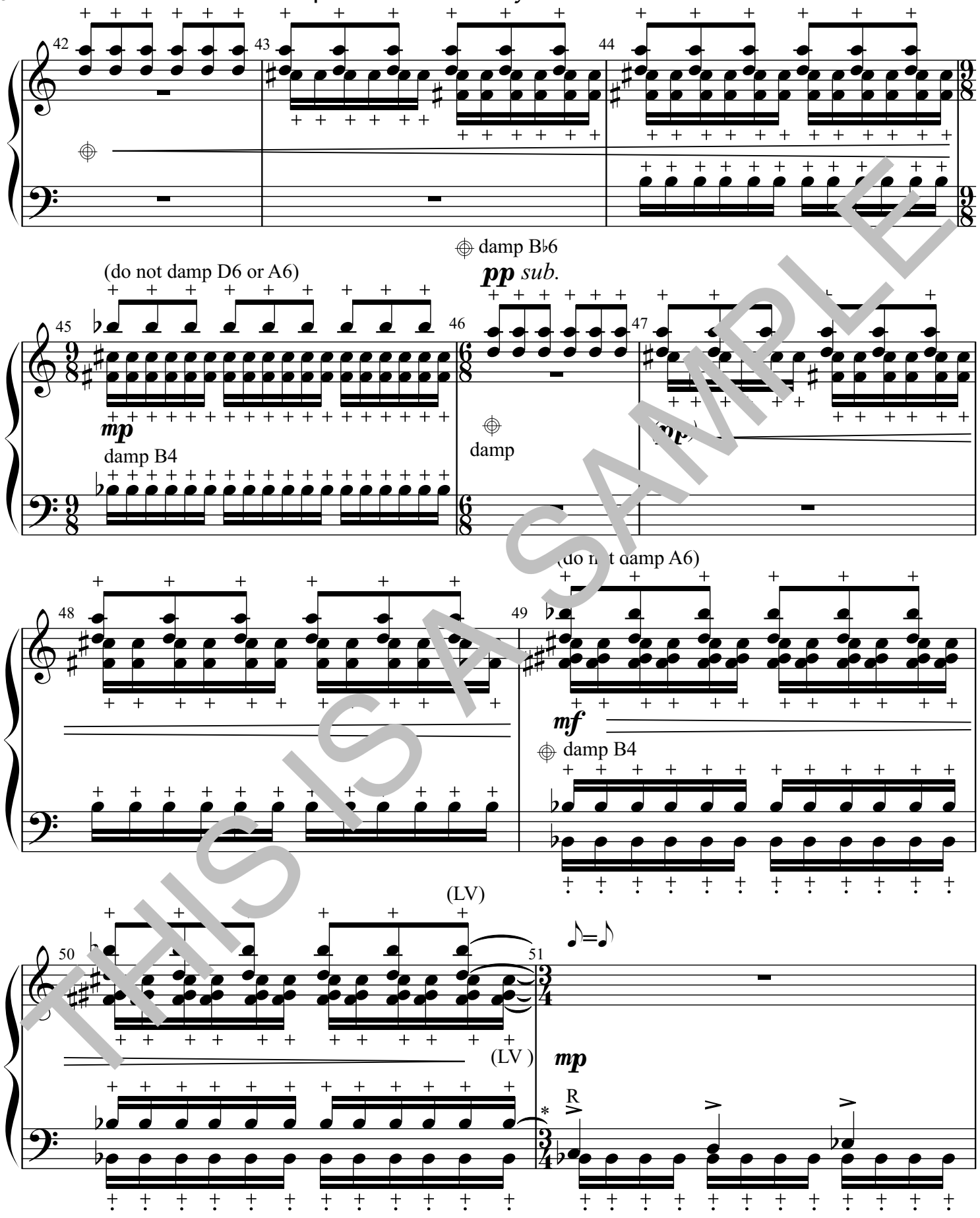

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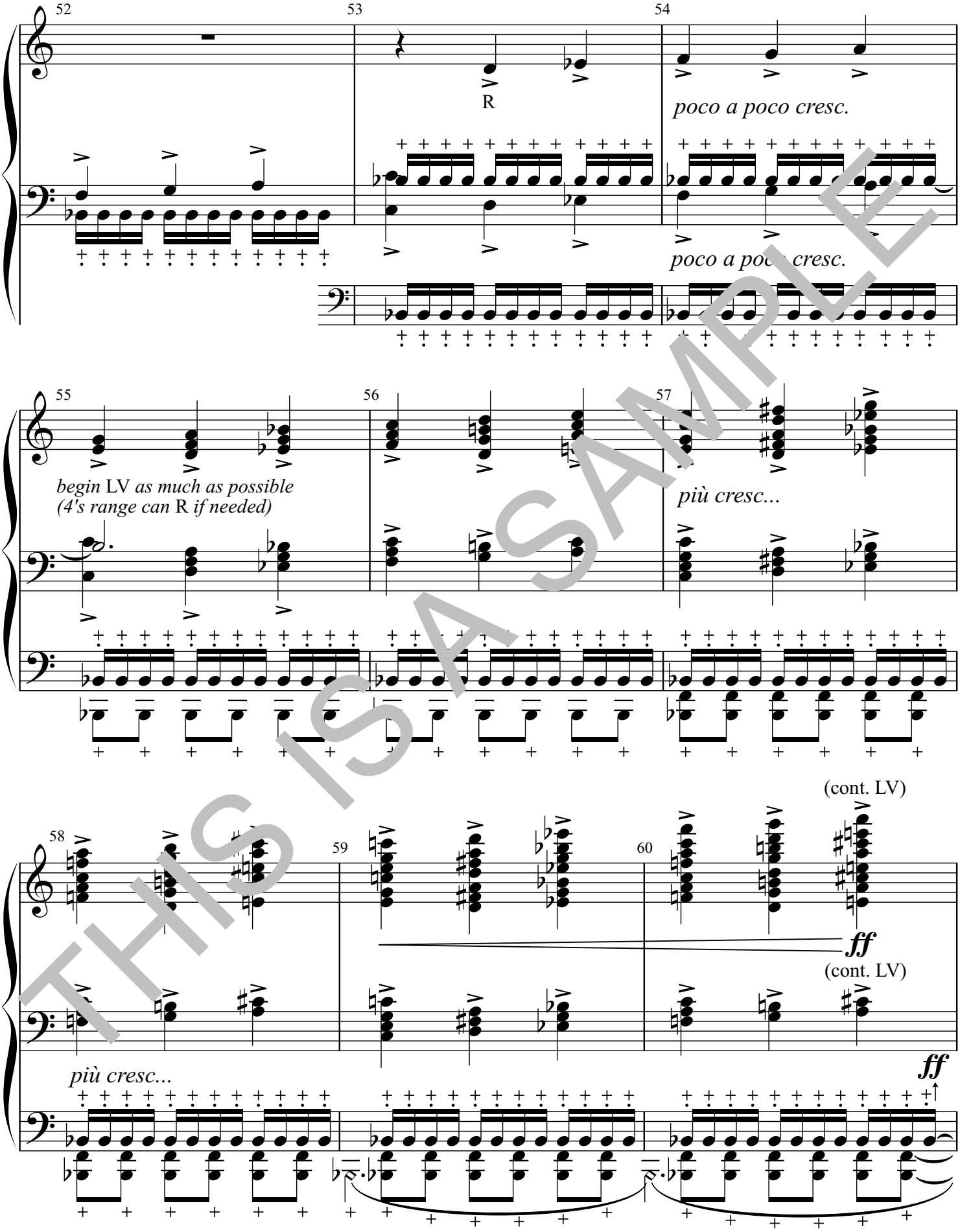

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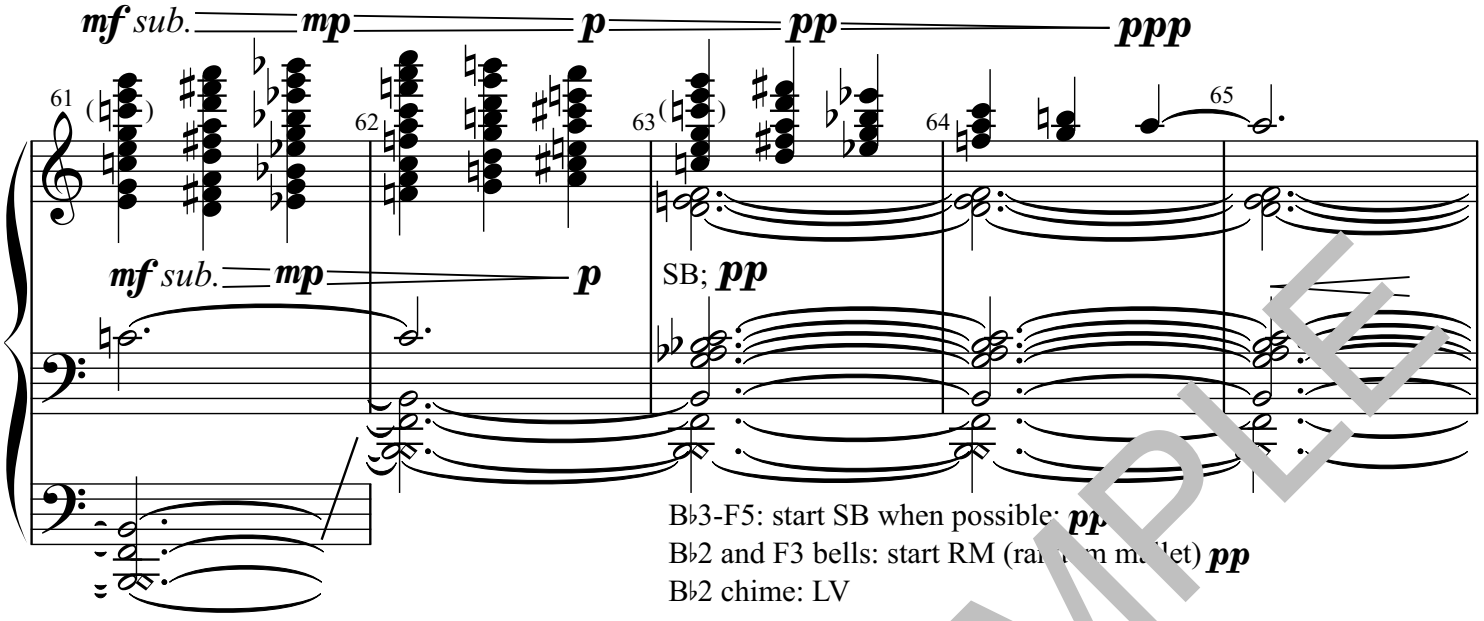

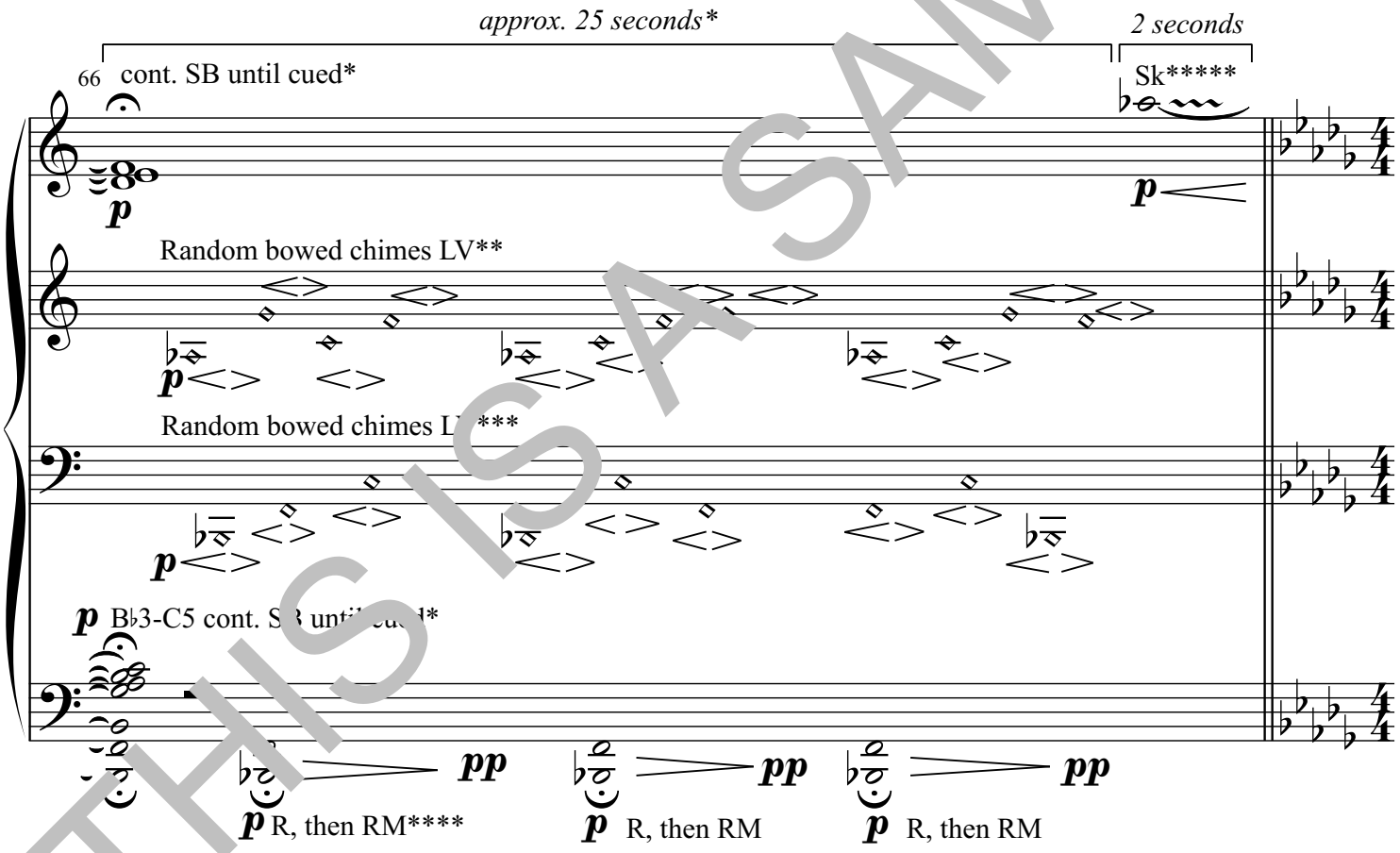

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*SB continues as other elements (bowed chimes, R and RM in bass) are initiated by the players. After about 25 seconds, the conductor cues the A♭6 shake -- this is also the cue for SB to stop and become LV -- then, after 2 seconds, the conductor cues m.67. (Damp bells when necessary to prepare for m.67.)

**Chimes held and played with violin bows.
4 bows and 4 players needed.
Positions C6D6, E6F6, G6A6, and B6C7 are available.
Players may approximate the order of pitches shown.
If bows are not available, RM (random mallet) chimes.

***Chimes on rack or on table played with a cello bow.
Optional; play any number of these chimes available.
These 3 pitches can be covered by one player.
That player may approximate the order of pitches shown.
If bows are not available, RM (random mallet) chimes.

****Ring Bb2 and F3 together, then RM (random mallet).
Do this three times over the 25 seconds. One player can initiate each of the three rung strikes, or they can be cued by the conductor.

*****Conductor cues this shake, then cues the downbeat of m.67.

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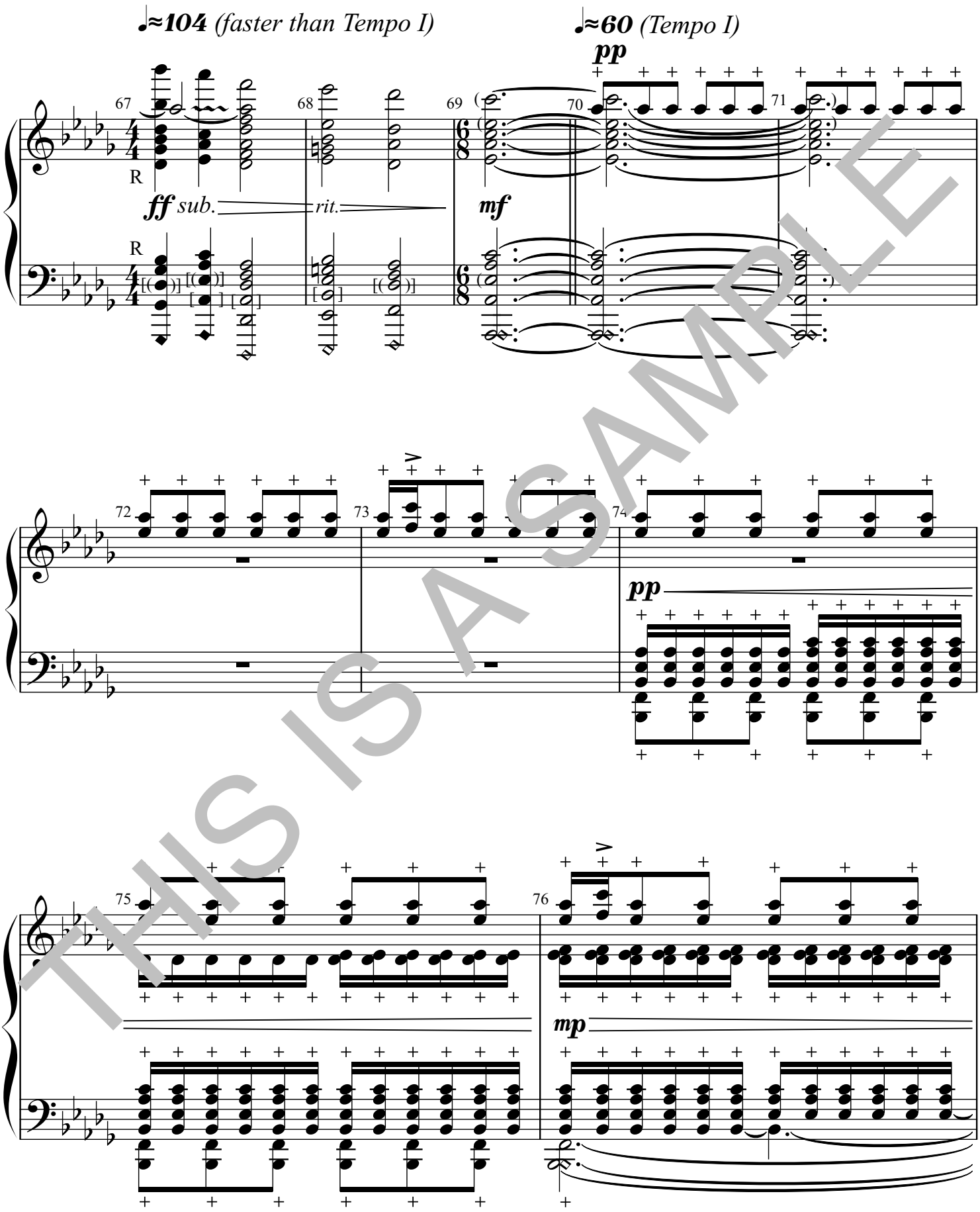

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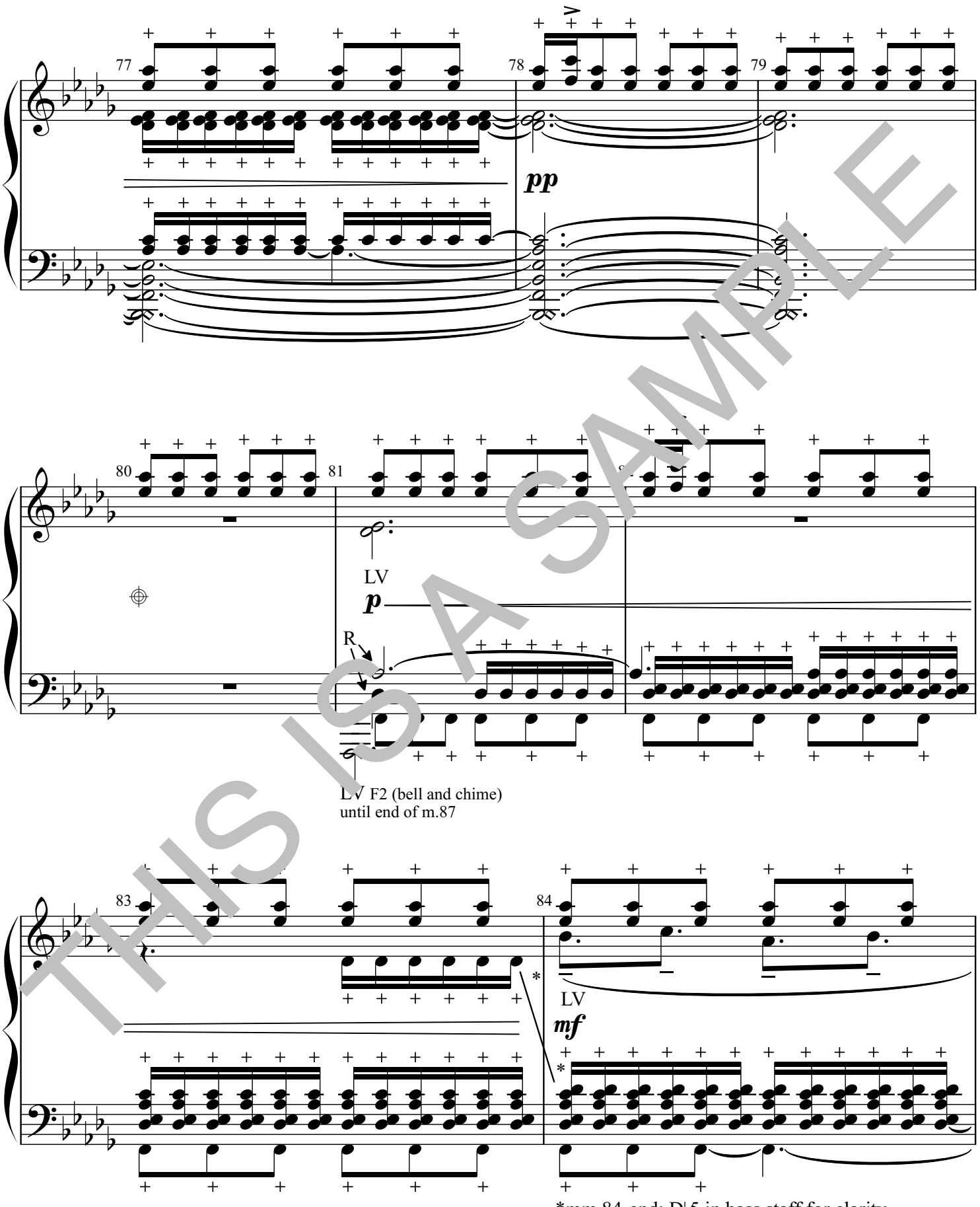

*mm.84-end: D♭5 in bass staff for clarity.

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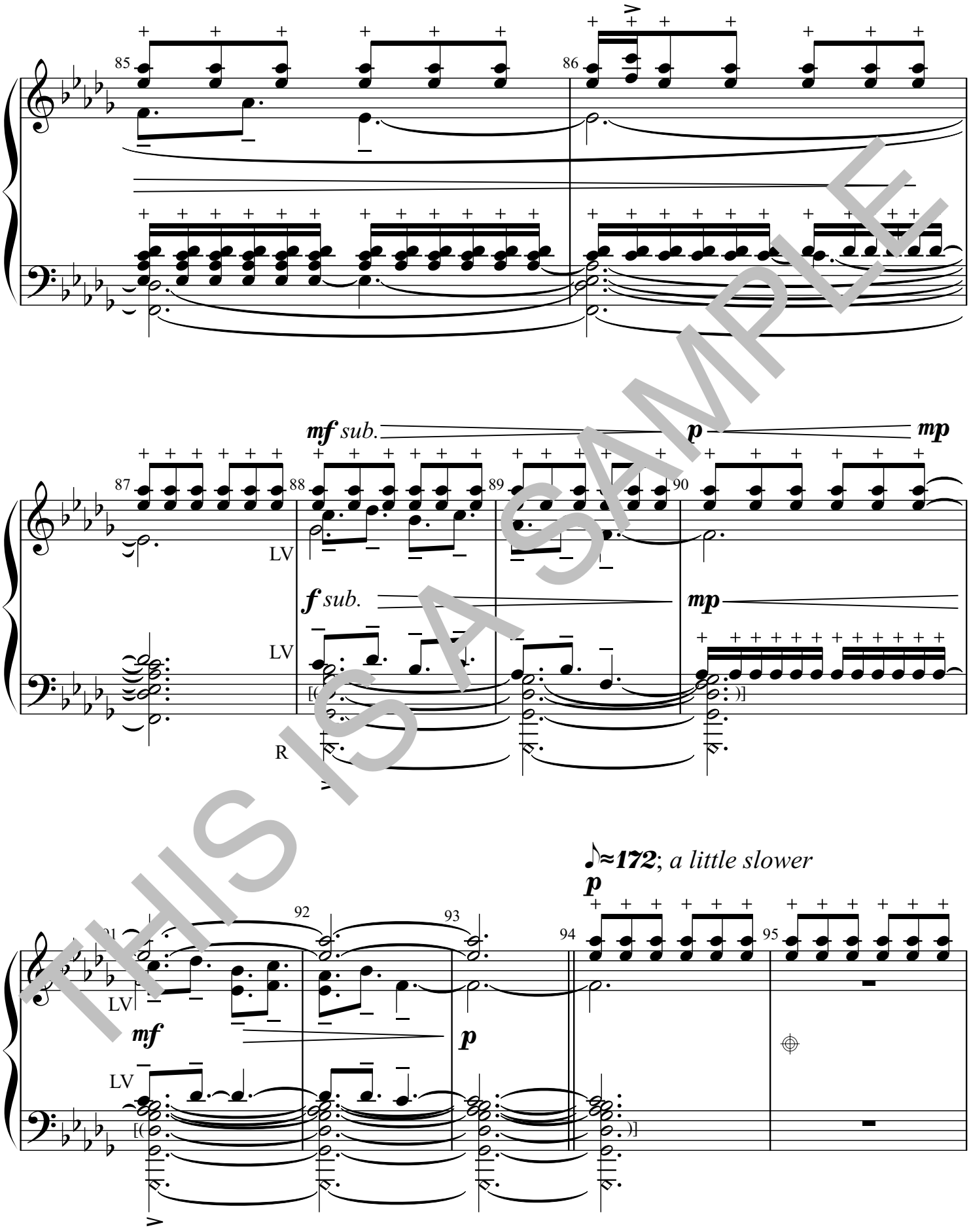

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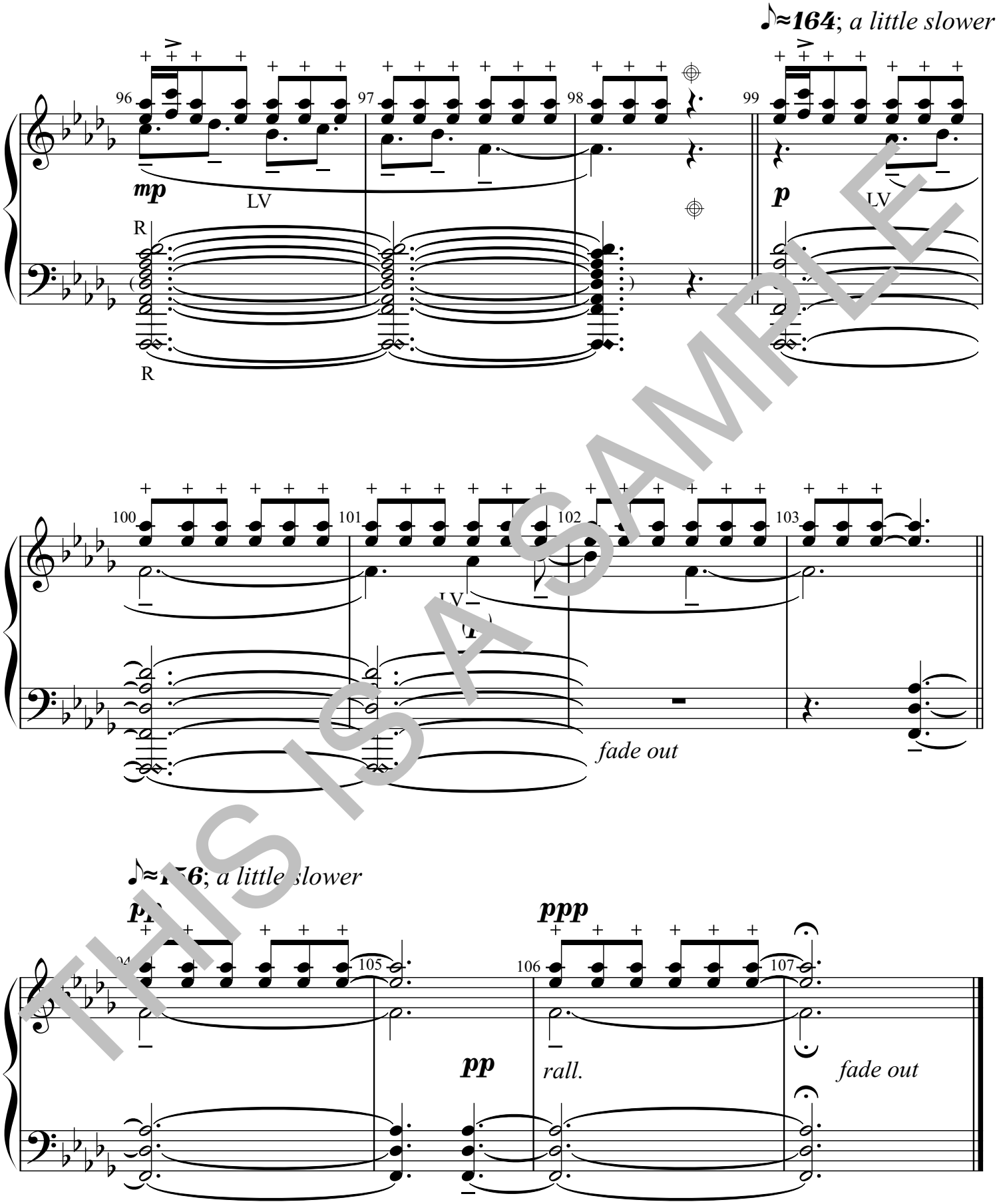

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