Clapping Music Variations

(For Percussion Ensemble)

By Glenn Kotche and Steve Reich

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Instrumentation (Number of Players: 11–13)

1 Conductor Score
2 Player 1 (Hi-Hat, Snare Drum, Tenor Drum, Bass Drum [with pedal], Sizzle Cymbal)
2 Player 2 (Hi-Hat, Snare Drum, Bass Drum [with pedal], Tenor Drum)
1 Player 3 (Vibraphone 1)
1 Player 4 (Vibraphone 2)
1 Player 5 (High-Pitched Bell [with clapper], Marimba 1 [high])
1 Player 6 (Low-Pitched Bell [with clapper], Marimba 1 [low])
1 Player 7 (Hand Claps, Crotales [two octaves])
1 Player 8 (Hand Claps, Orchestra Bells)
1 Player 9 (Marimba 2 [high])
1 Player 10 (Marimba 2 [low])
1 Player 11 (Xylophone, Gong)
1 Player 12 (Hammered Dulcimer [optional] or Cimbalom)

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Performance Notes

Players 1 and 2: Ideally, the brushes should be synthetic or a brush substitute such as webs, rods or split sticks for volume purposes. The goal is to produce a brittle and sharp sound when played on the hi-hat. These two players should perform seated at a type of drum kit consisting of a bass drum with pedal, one or two snare drums, a hi-hat and a tenor drum or tom-tom. Player 1 will also use a sizzle cymbal.

For Player 1, the tenor drum (or tom-tom) should be dampened so there is no sustain. For Player 2, the tenor drum should not be dampened and should be tuned similarly to the other tenor drum, but with a completely open sound. Both players can just flip their brushes over so that the tenor-drum section, measures 26–38, are played with the back end or handle of the brushes. Sticking is at the performer's discression unless otherwise notated. For Player 1, the sticking written in measures 26 and 27 is simply to illustrate the flipping of the brushes.

The snare drums should be on a stand upside down so the wire snares will be on the playing surface (facing up). Two snare drums can be used or the drums can be turned over during measures 78–90 so the batter head is facing up. Player 2 should adjust the snare tension from measures 90–103 so it "fuzzes" out as that section progresses. To accomplish this, simply play the pattern with one hand while gradually loosening the snare tension adjustment screw, or turning the snares toward the off position (without ever fully turning the snares off). Measures 90–103, and the tenor drum parts at measures 139–142, should be played with sticks. Ideally, the bass drums should be relatively open with little or no dampening. Any type of sizzle cymbal or cymbal with a sizzler attachment is fine. Rhythmic precision is the priority for Players 1 and 2.

Players 3 and 4: Both vibraphone players can use medium to medium-hard mallets. All pedaling is written in the parts and should be strictly adhered to, with the exception of measure 103 to the end. For this section, Player 3 can pedal at the end of each measure or even at the end of each three-measure pattern. The sticking for this section is at the performer's discretion. Player 4 can let the entire section sustain with no pedaling. Rhythmic precision is the priority for Players 3 and 4.

Players 5 and 6: The first few sections require high- and low-pitched bells with clappers. Larger bells are preferable and elephant, sheep or camel bells are ideal. Due to the nature of these types of bells, rhythmic precision is not as crucial as the relaxed mood that the bells evoke.

At measure 39, both players switch to brushes "cutting air" or sliding back and forth on a metal music stand. If "cutting air," any type of brushes will work as long as they get audible air resistance. I suggest a back and forth motion (about chest level), with the brushes being parallel to the floor. The motion should be several feet in length and should be played with one hand holding both brushes. If played on a music stand, the stand should be horizontal and a back and forth sliding motion should be used. It will take some time to achieve precise and even sixteenth notes consistently. When both players switch to marimba at measure 103, Player 5 can use either medium rubber or hard-yarn mallets, and Player 6 can use medium-soft yarn mallets. These parts can also be played or doubled on an almglocken, if available, or on gongs of indefinite pitch. It is important to follow the rough melodic contour of the pitches.

Players 7 and 8: Both of these players start with hand claps, with Player 8 gradually moving out of phase (rhythmically) with Player 7. At measure 39, both players switch to brushes either "cutting air" or sliding back and forth on a music stand. For this section, follow the same instructions as Players 5 and 6. At measure 103, both players can use a hard xylophone or bell mallet when switching to crotales and orchestra bells respectively.

Players 9 and 10: Both of these players start with brushes "cutting air" or sliding back and forth on a music stand. For this section, both players should follow the same instructions as Players 5 and 6. When both players switch to marimba at measure 103, Player 9 can use either medium rubber or hard-yarn mallets, and Player 10 can use medium-soft yarn mallets. These two players are doubling Players 5 and 6 from 103 until the end.

Player 11: This player begins on xylophone with medium-hard rubber mallets or any mallets that get the most sustain out of the instrument. Player 11 should then switch to hard xylophone mallets before measure 102, which they can also use on the gong. Although a large gong is preferable, any thick gong will work just fine. After playing the gong crescendo from edge to center, go immediately to the xylophone for the remainder of the piece. Measure 103 to the end can also be played or doubled on either chimes or tuned gongs.

Player 12: This is an optional part for hammered dulcimer or cimbalom (or both). If available, this part may be doubled and/or tripled as well. Hammer and mallet types are at the discretion of the performer. If these instruments aren't available, a piano may be substituted.

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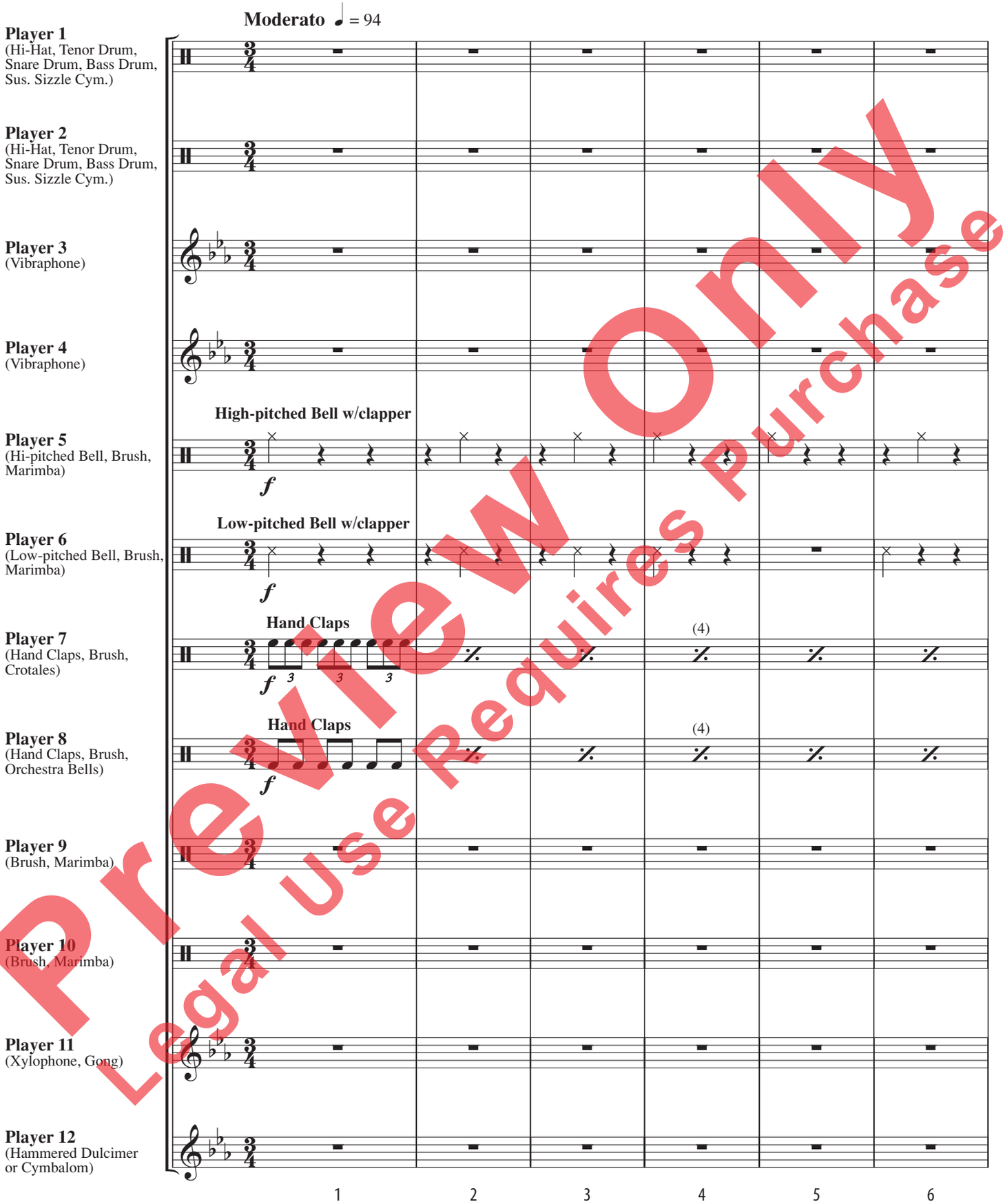
CONDUCTOR SCORE
Duration - 4:35

Glenn Kotche/Steve Reich



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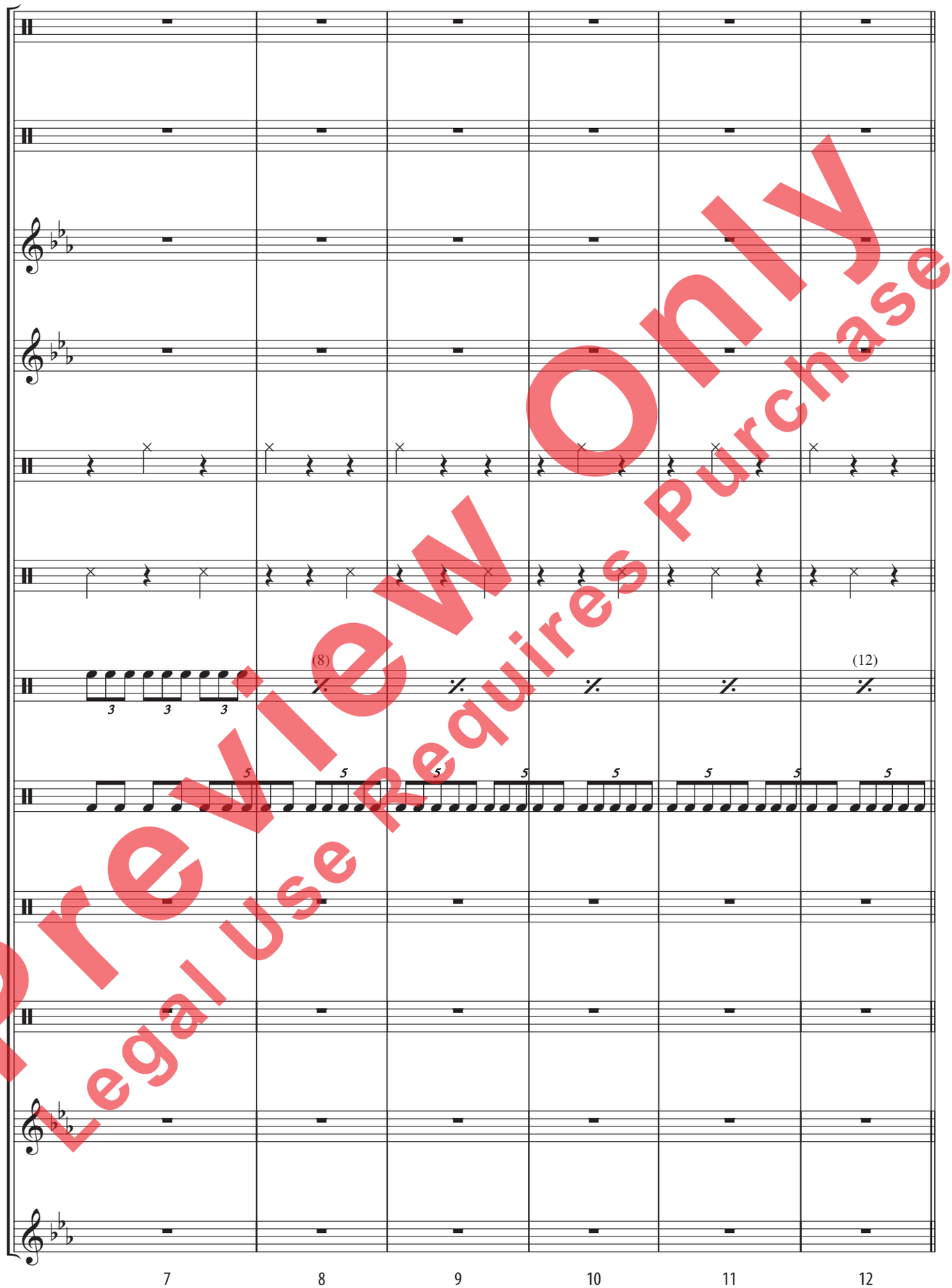

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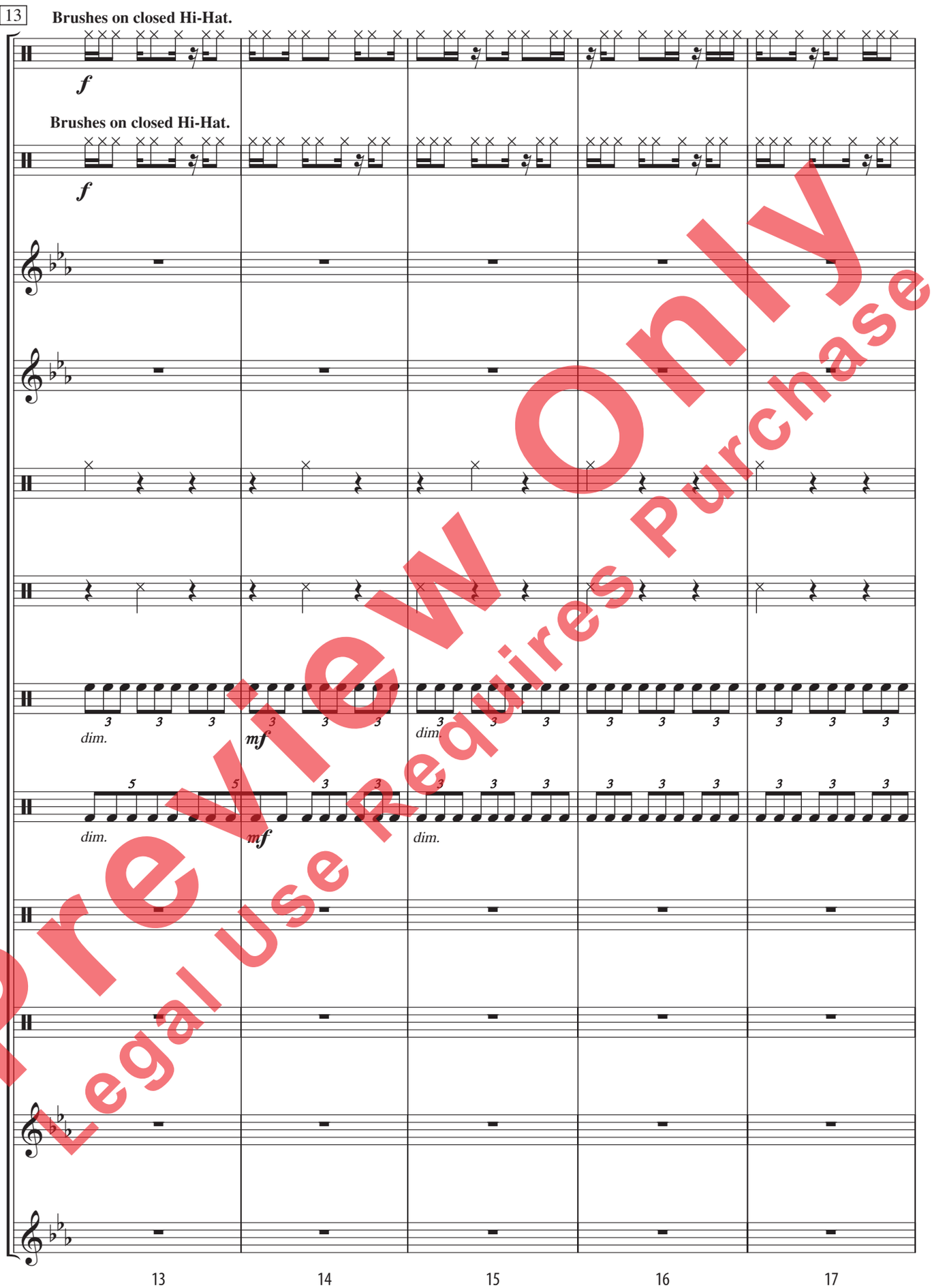

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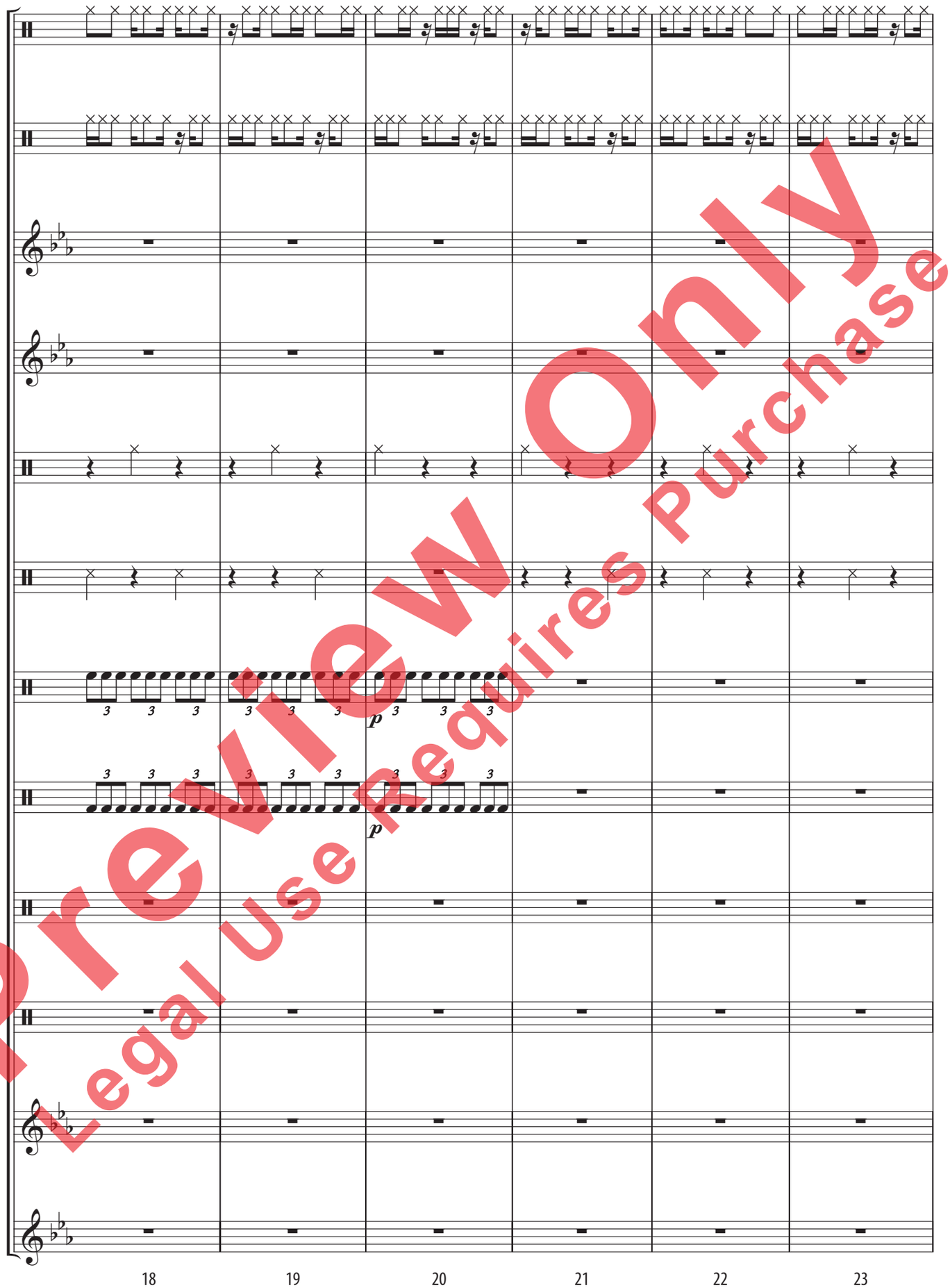

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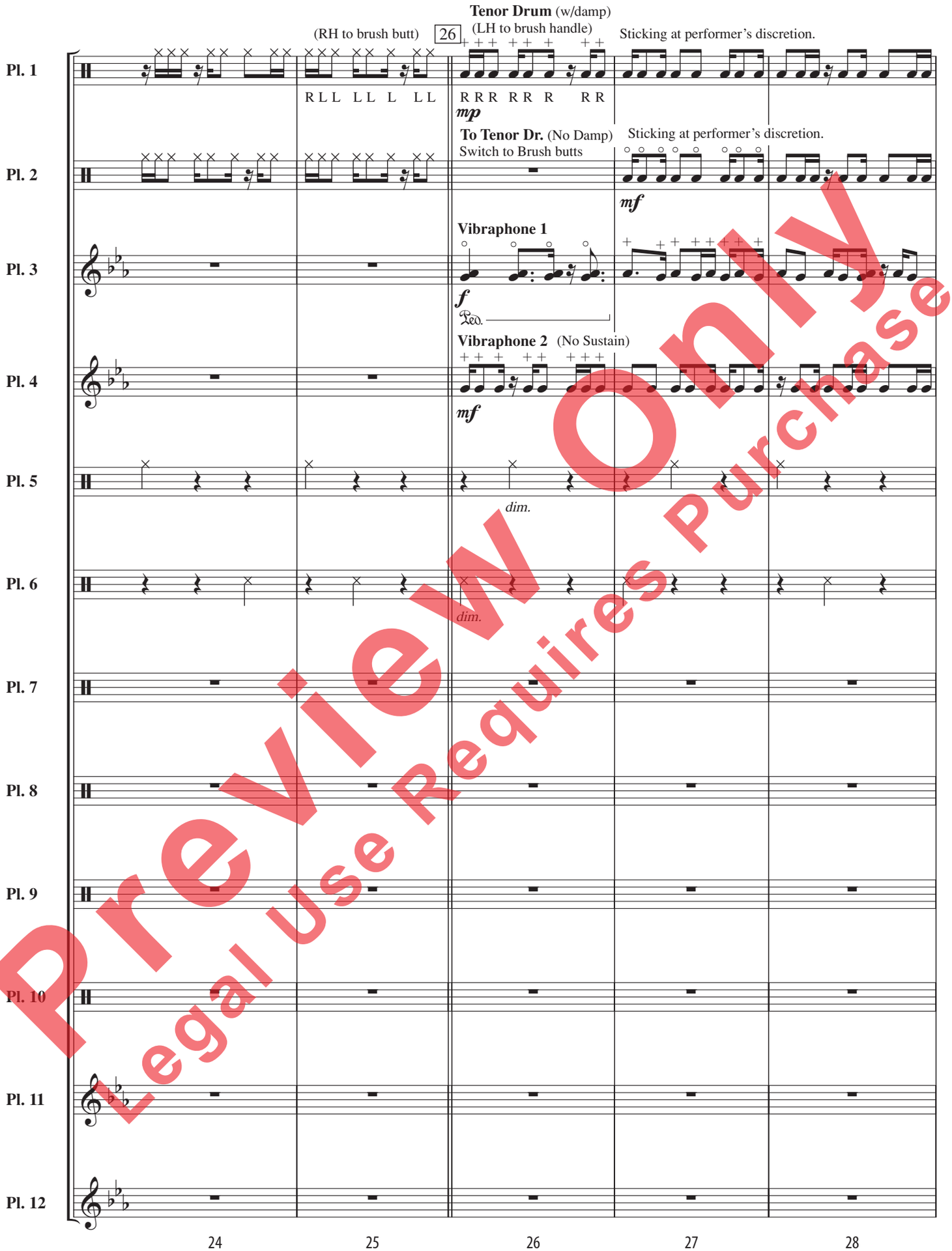

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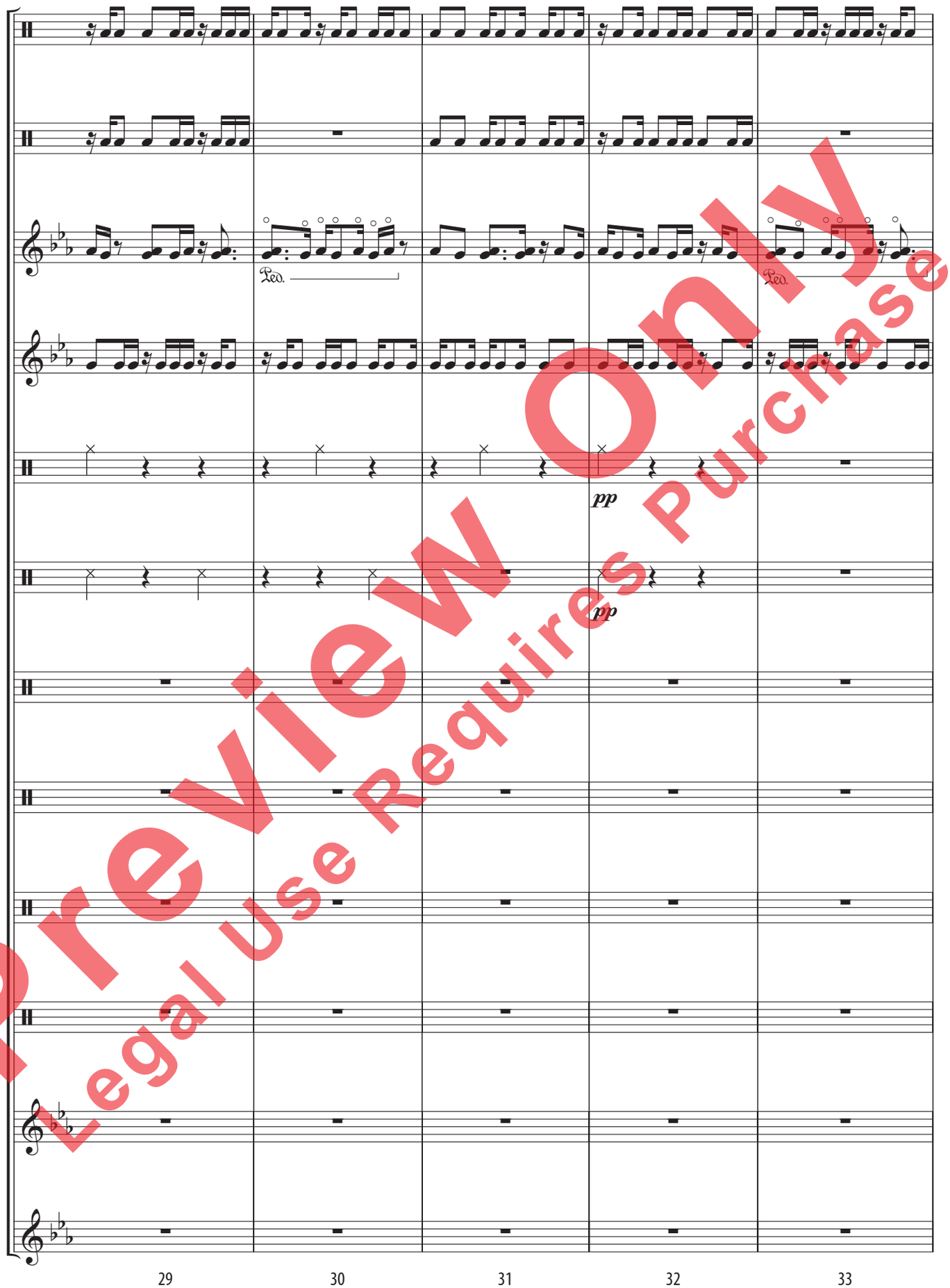

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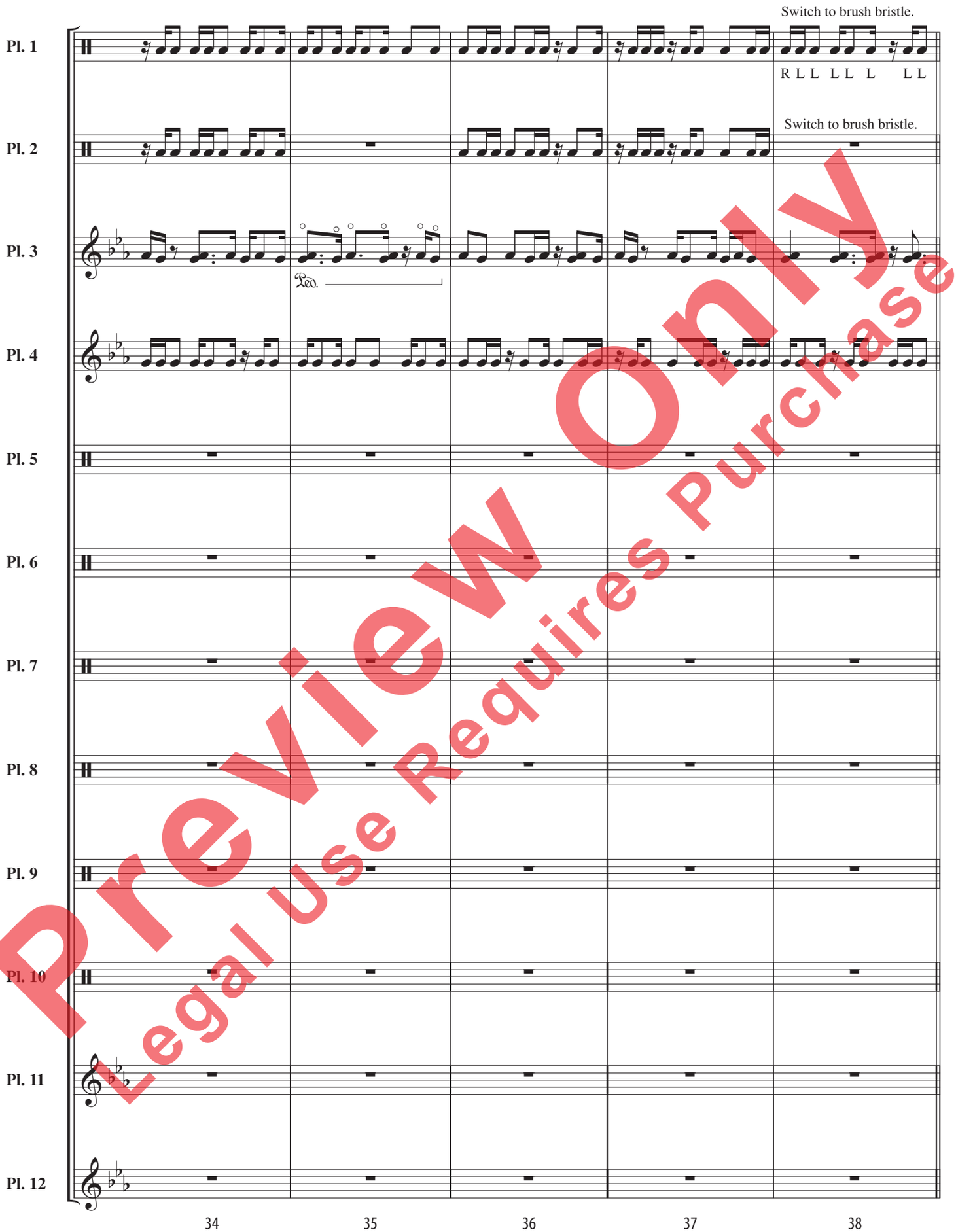

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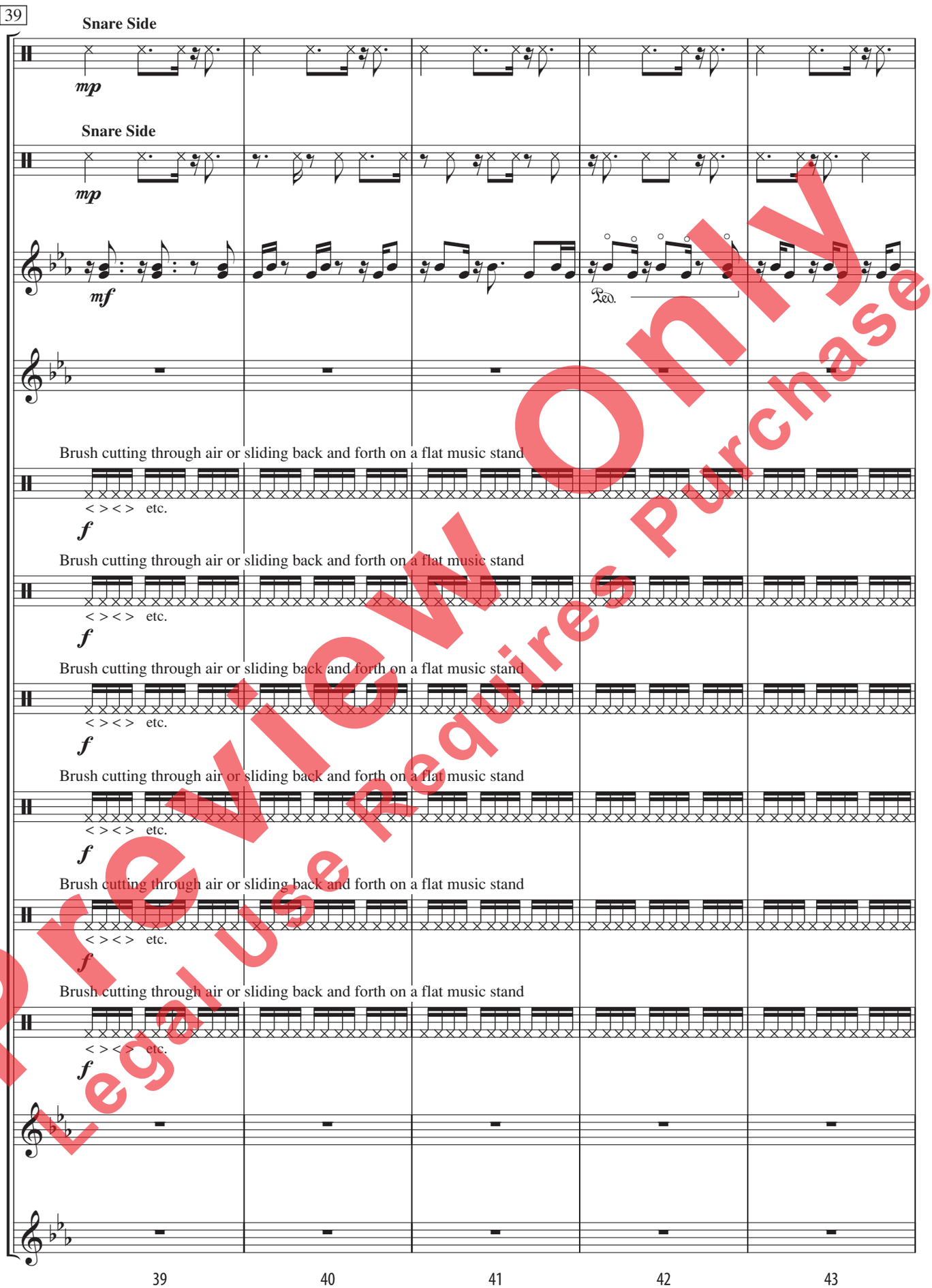

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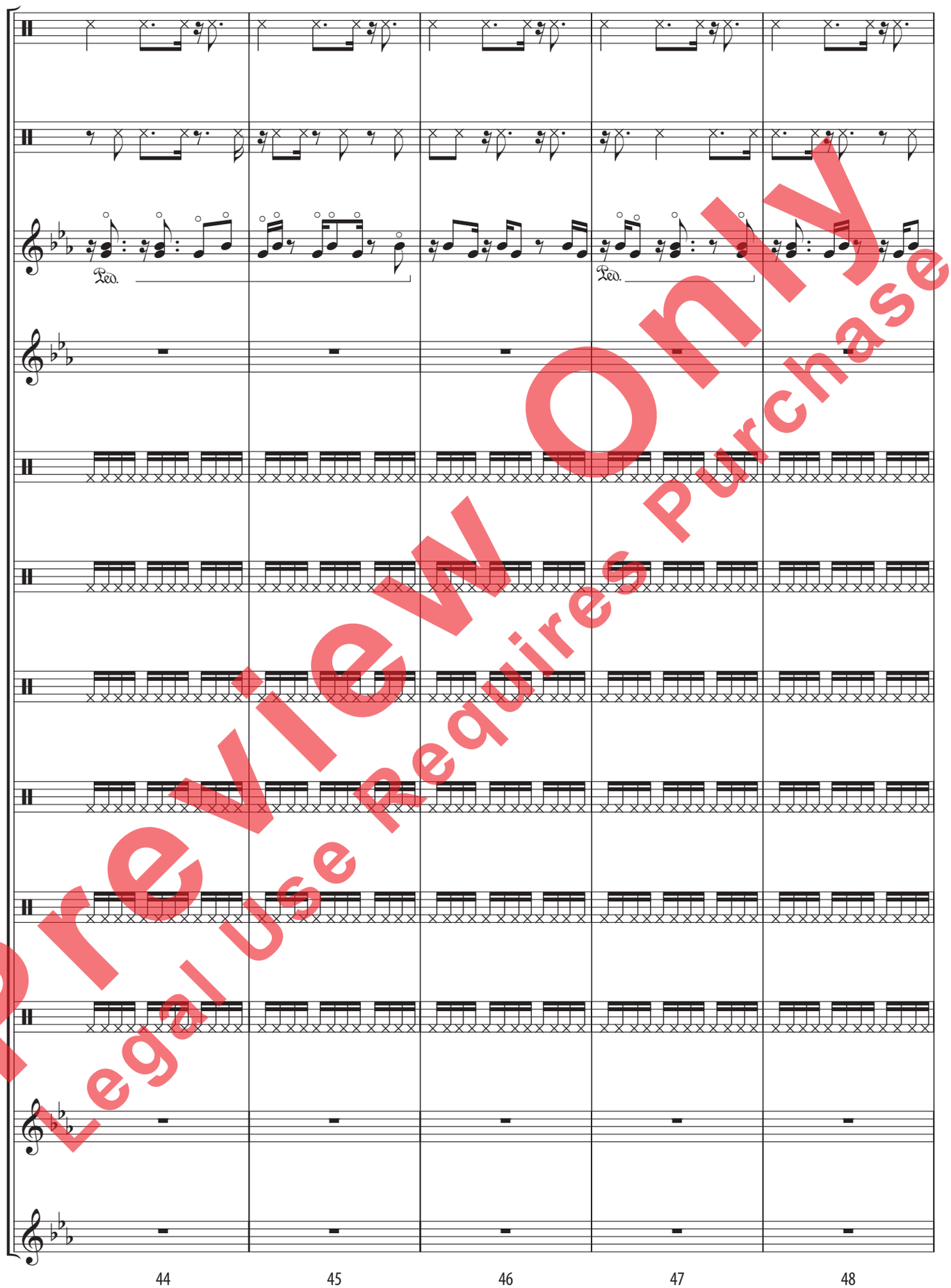

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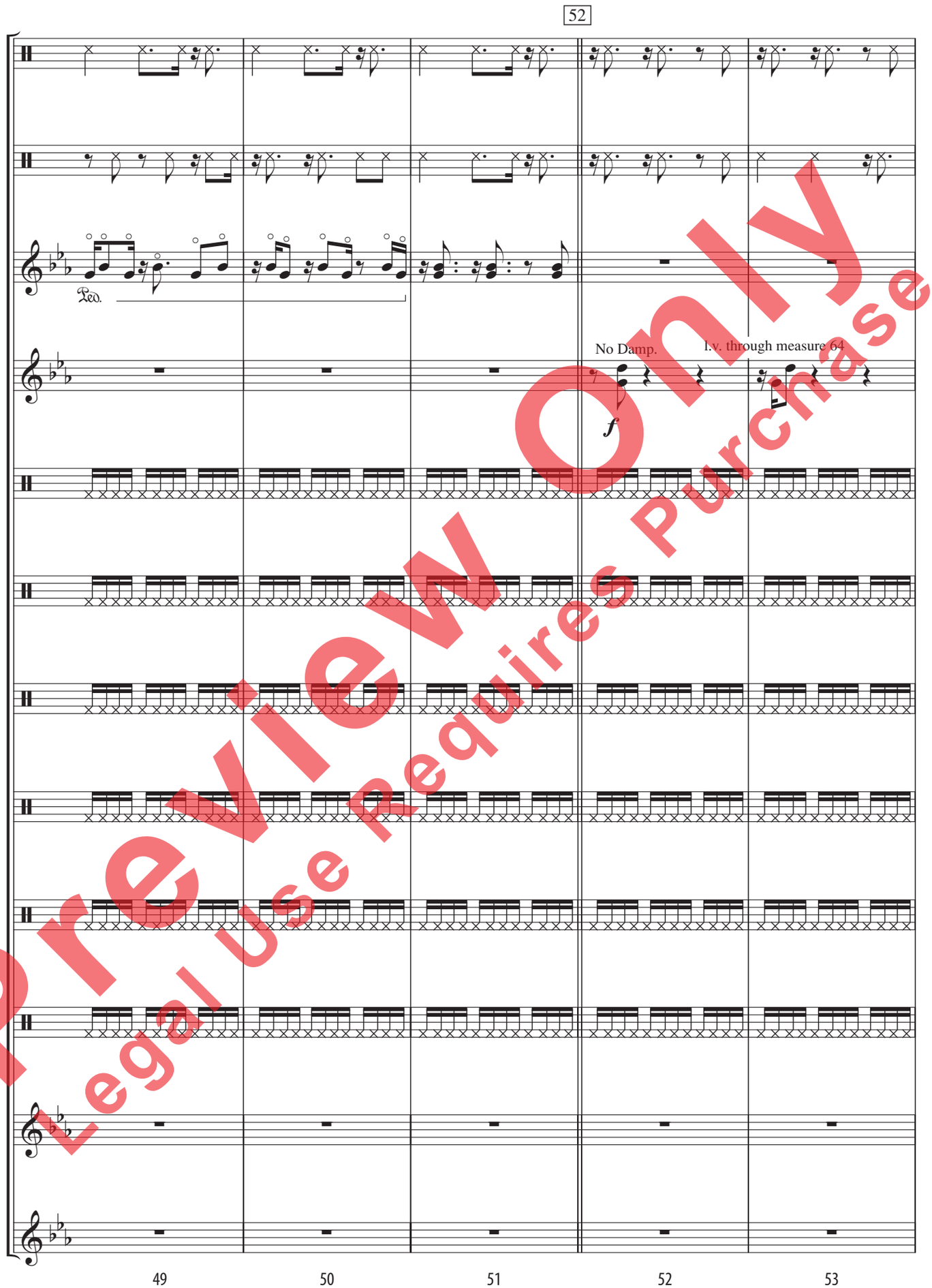

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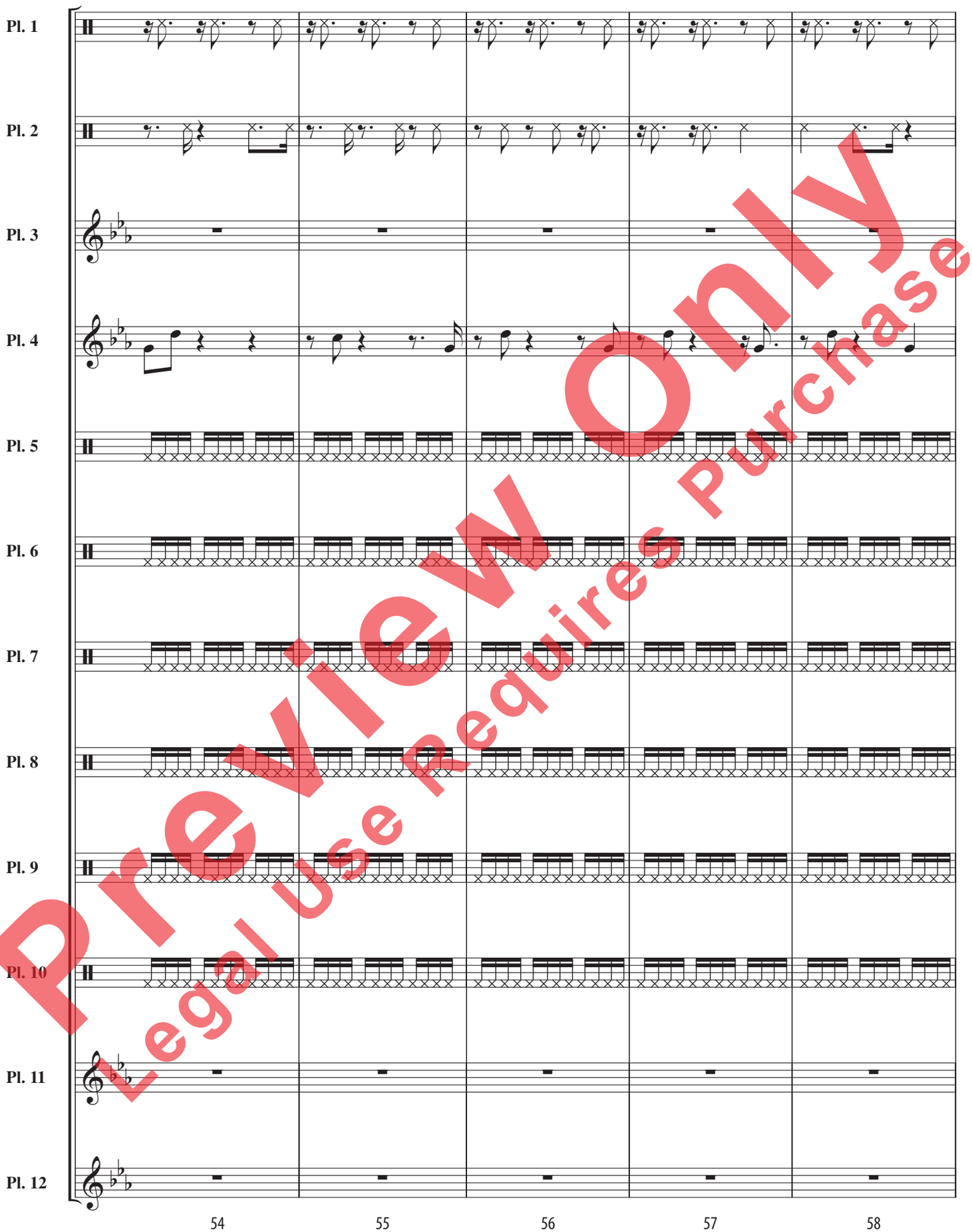

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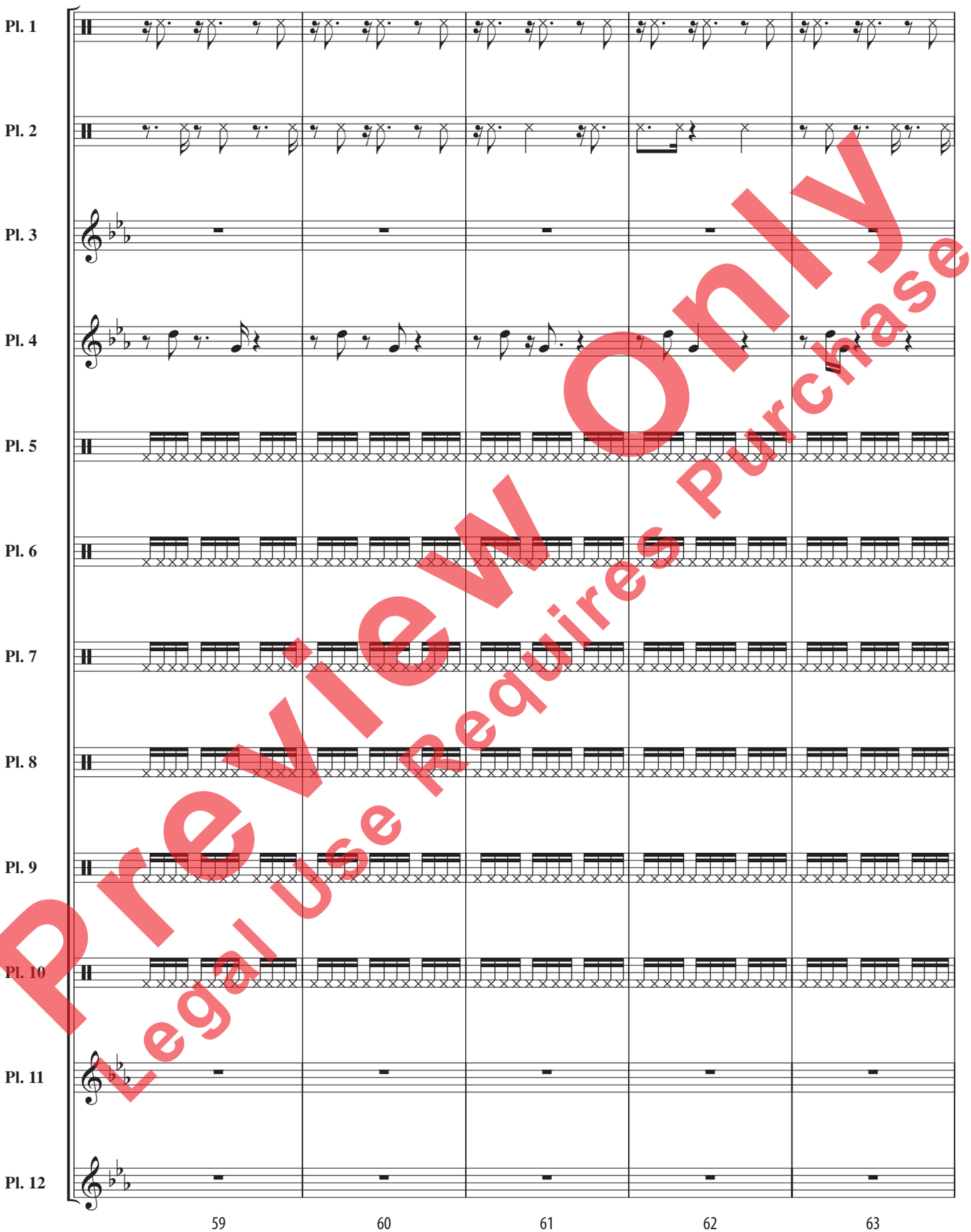

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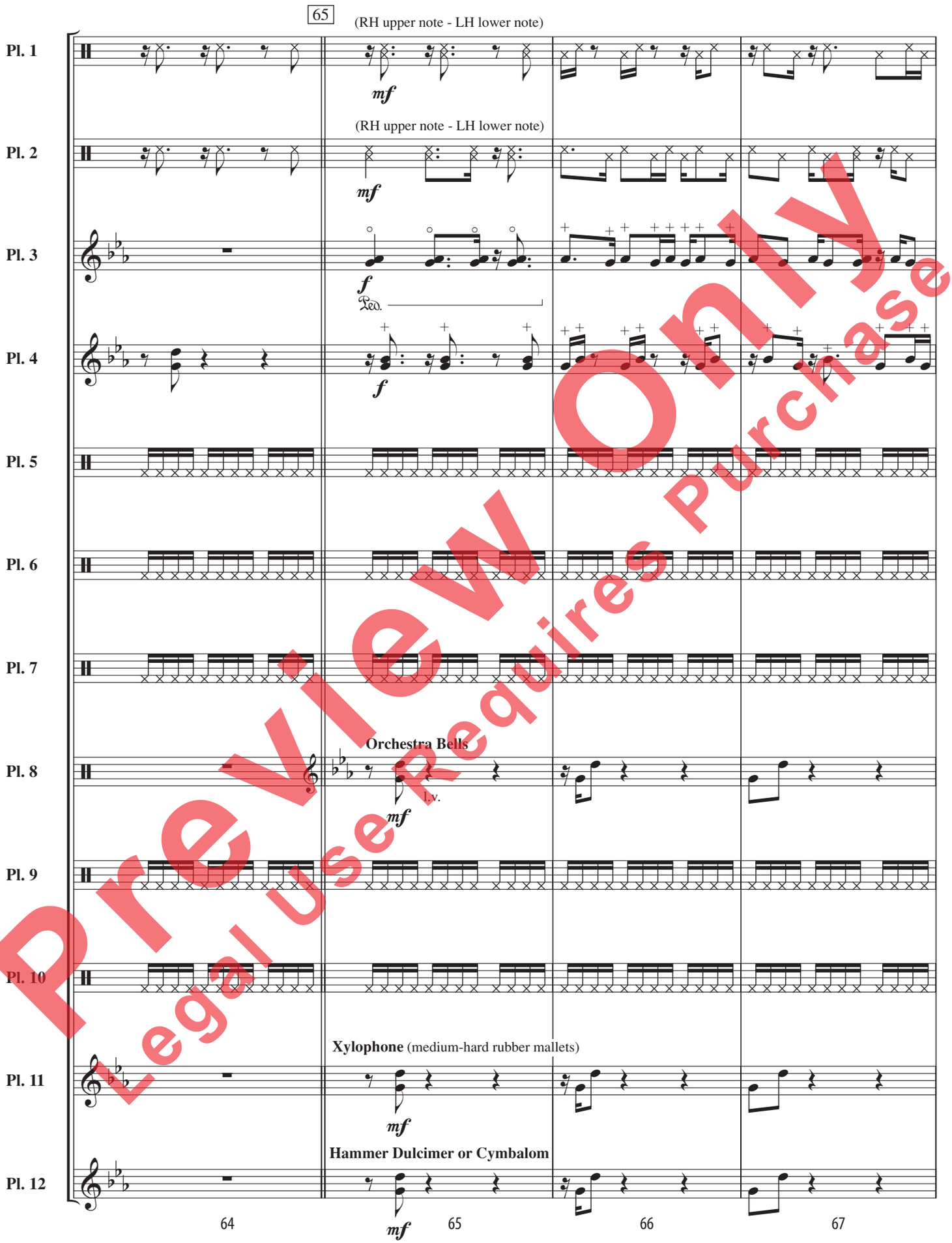

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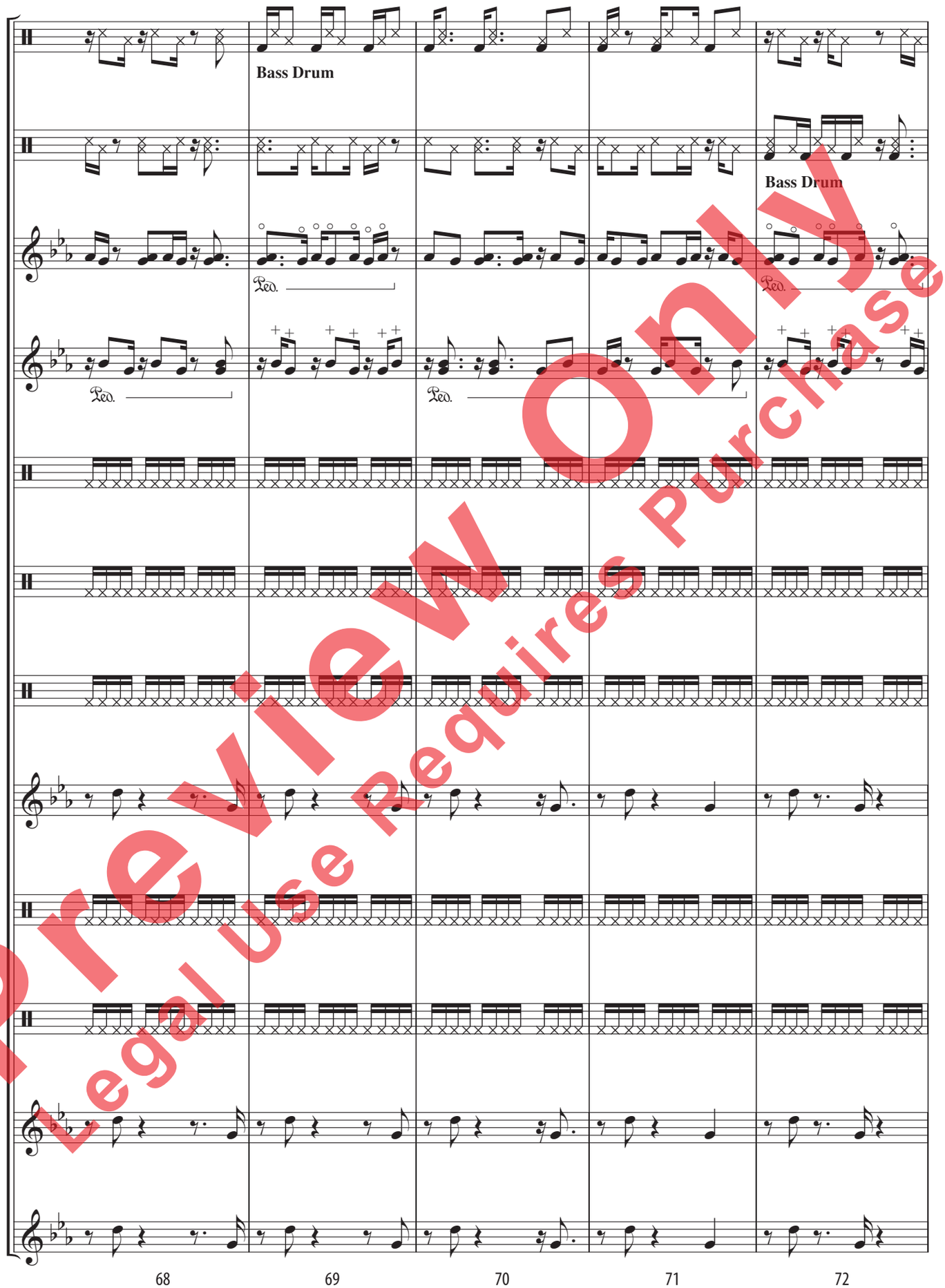

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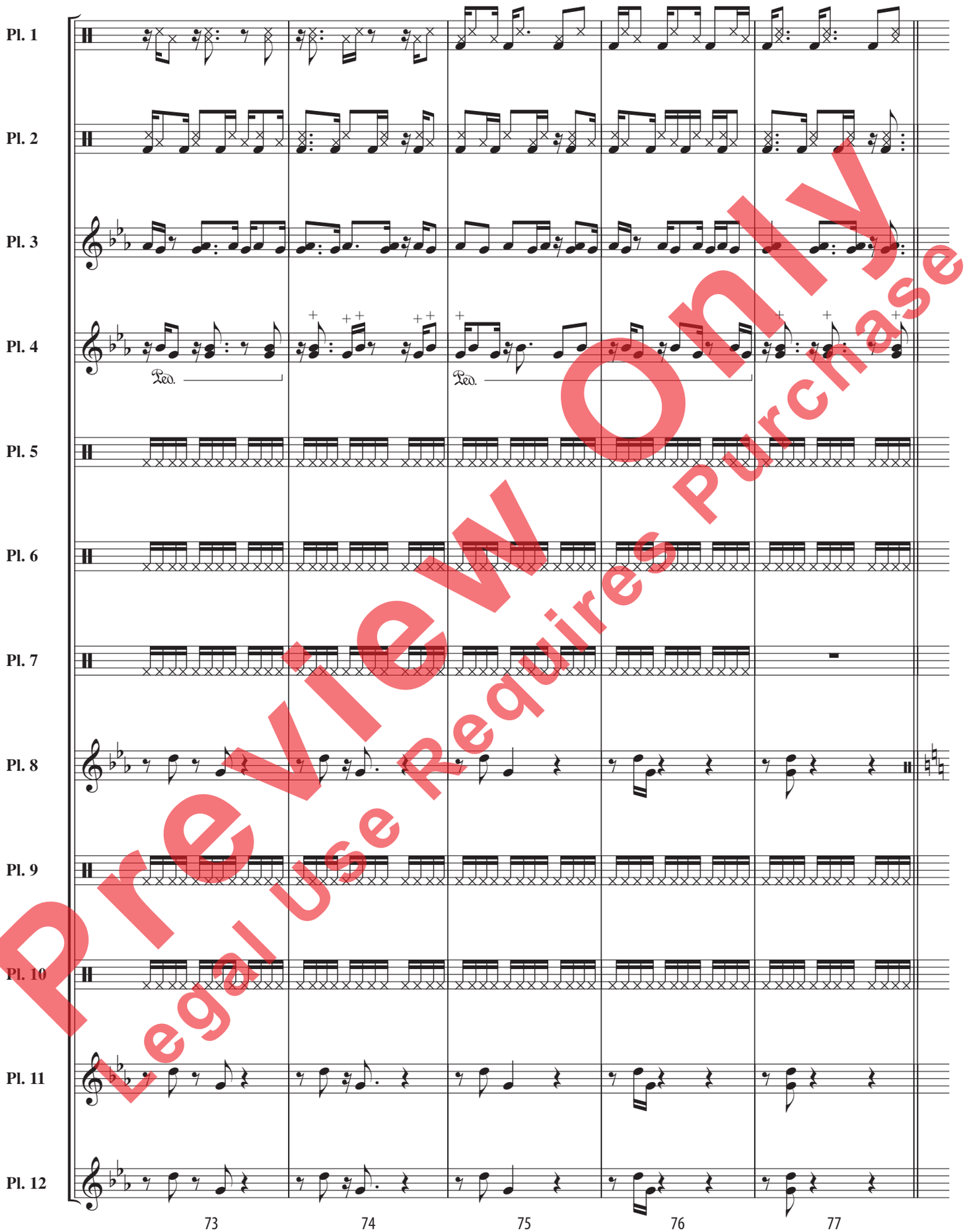

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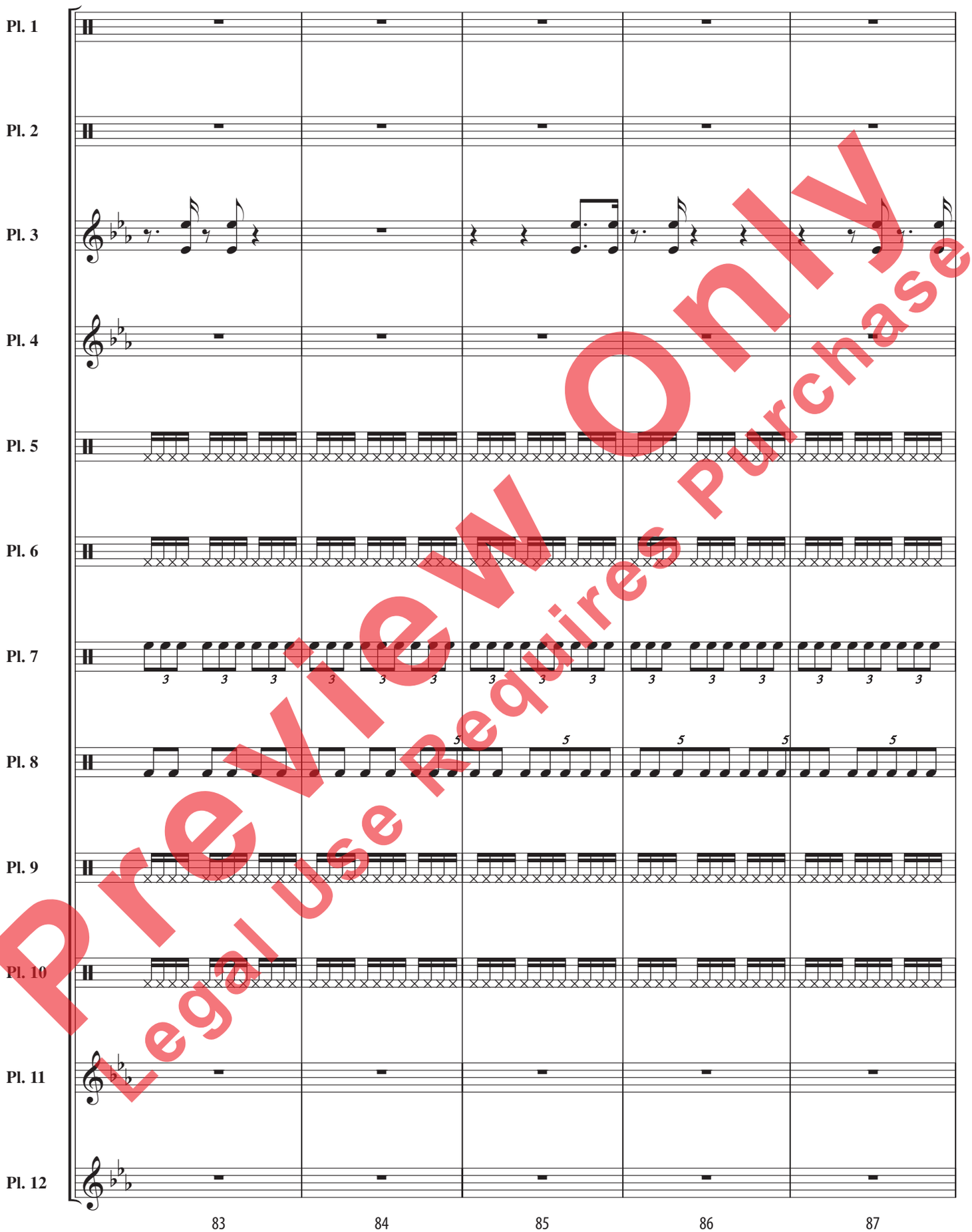

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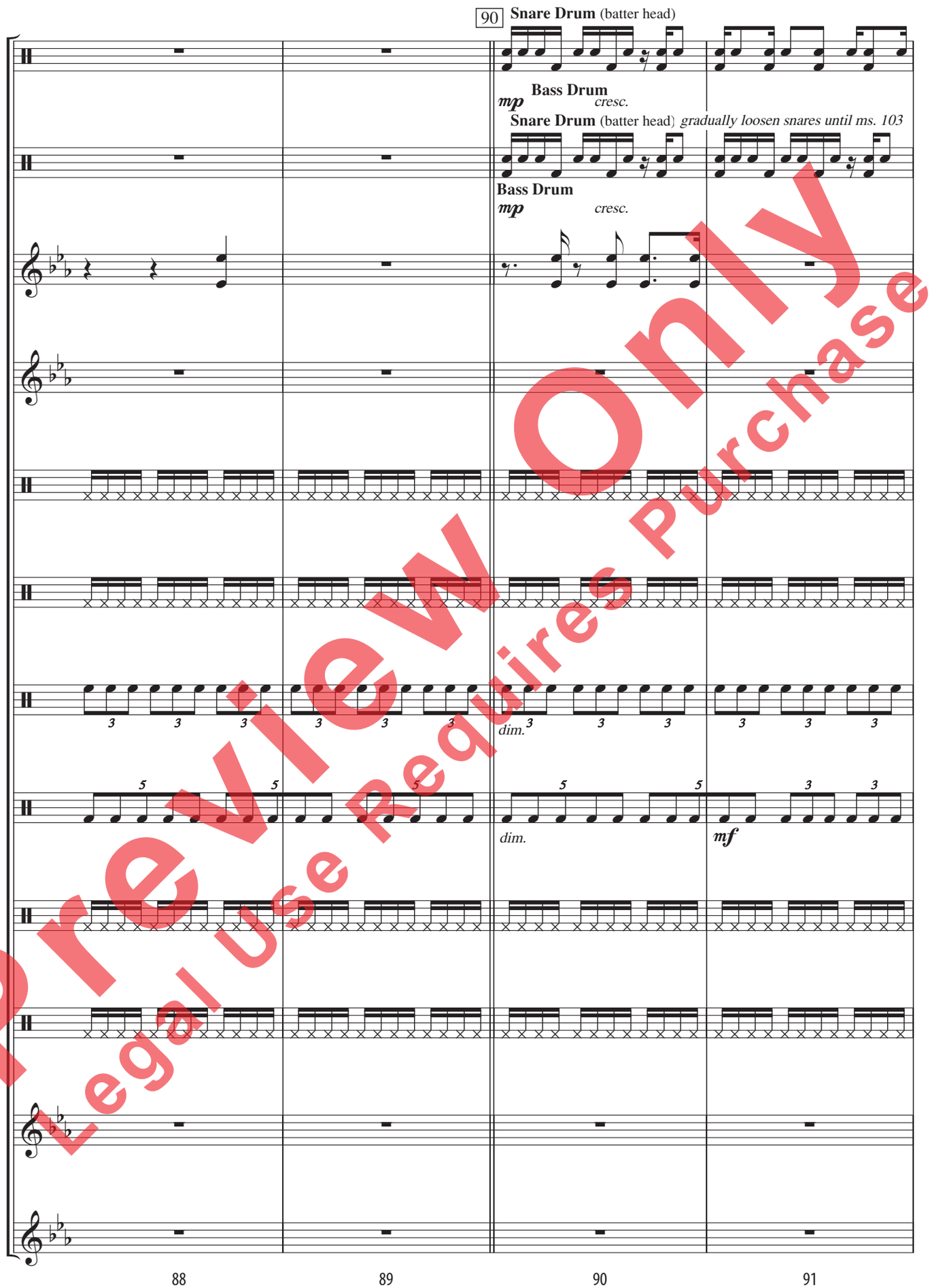

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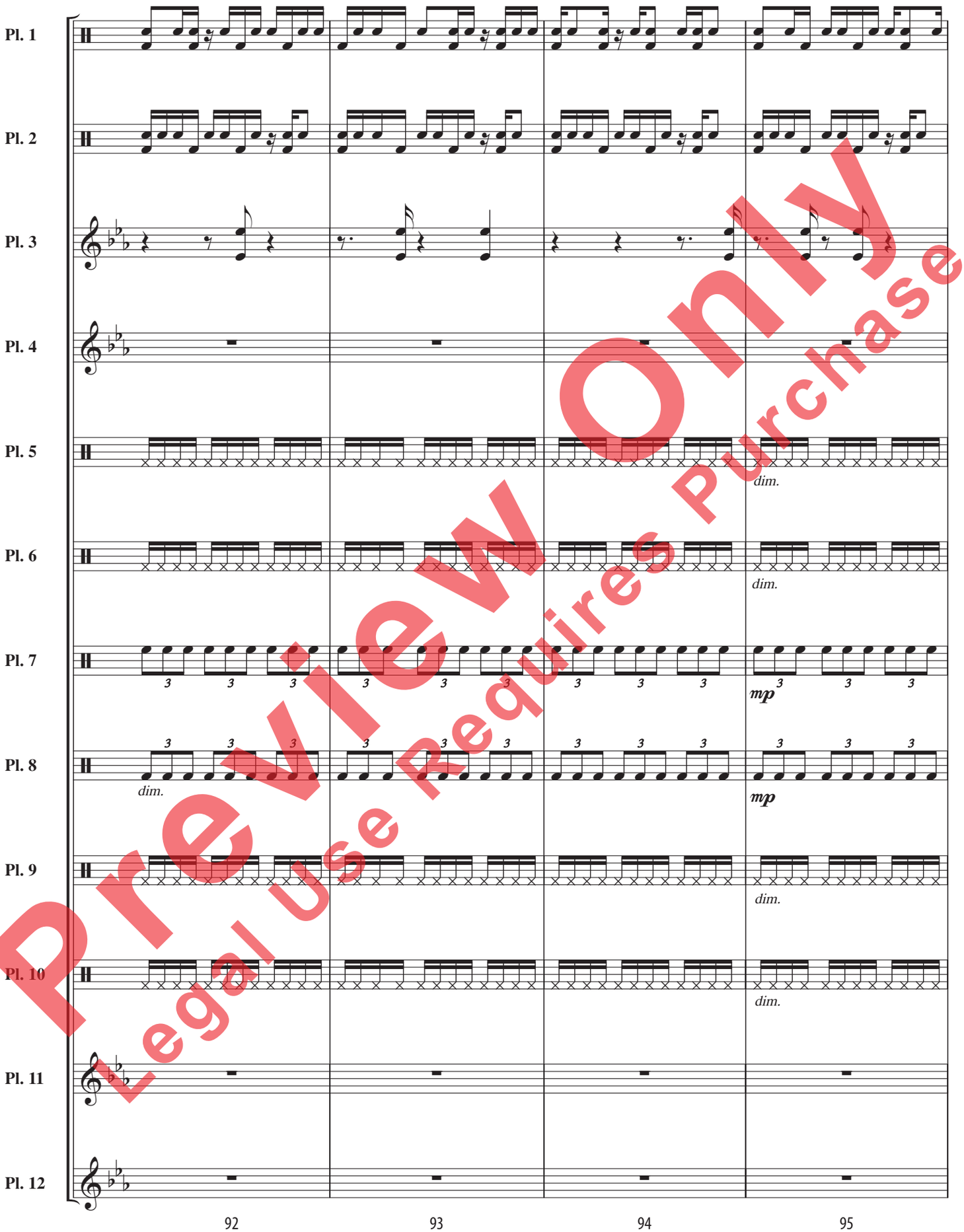

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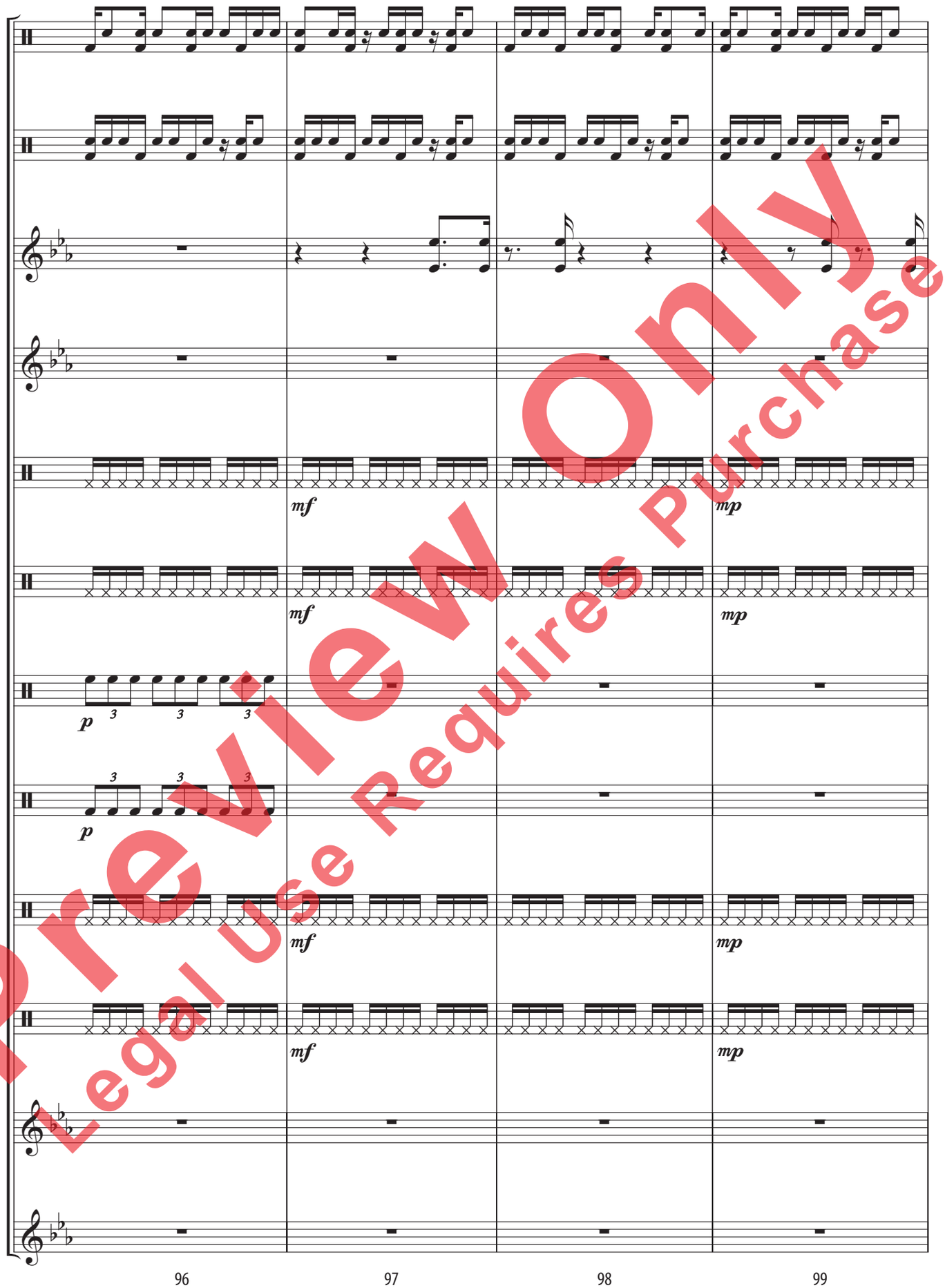

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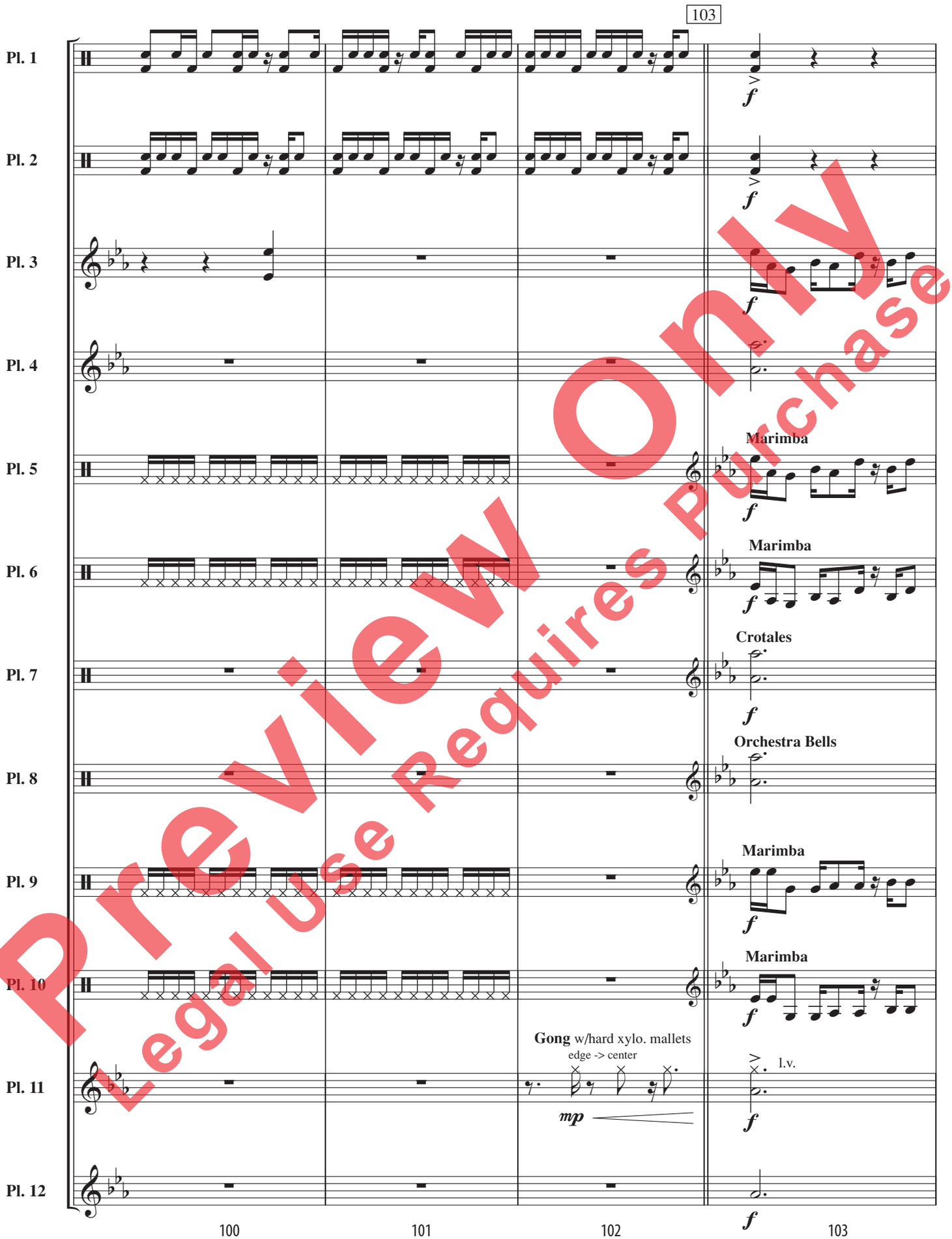

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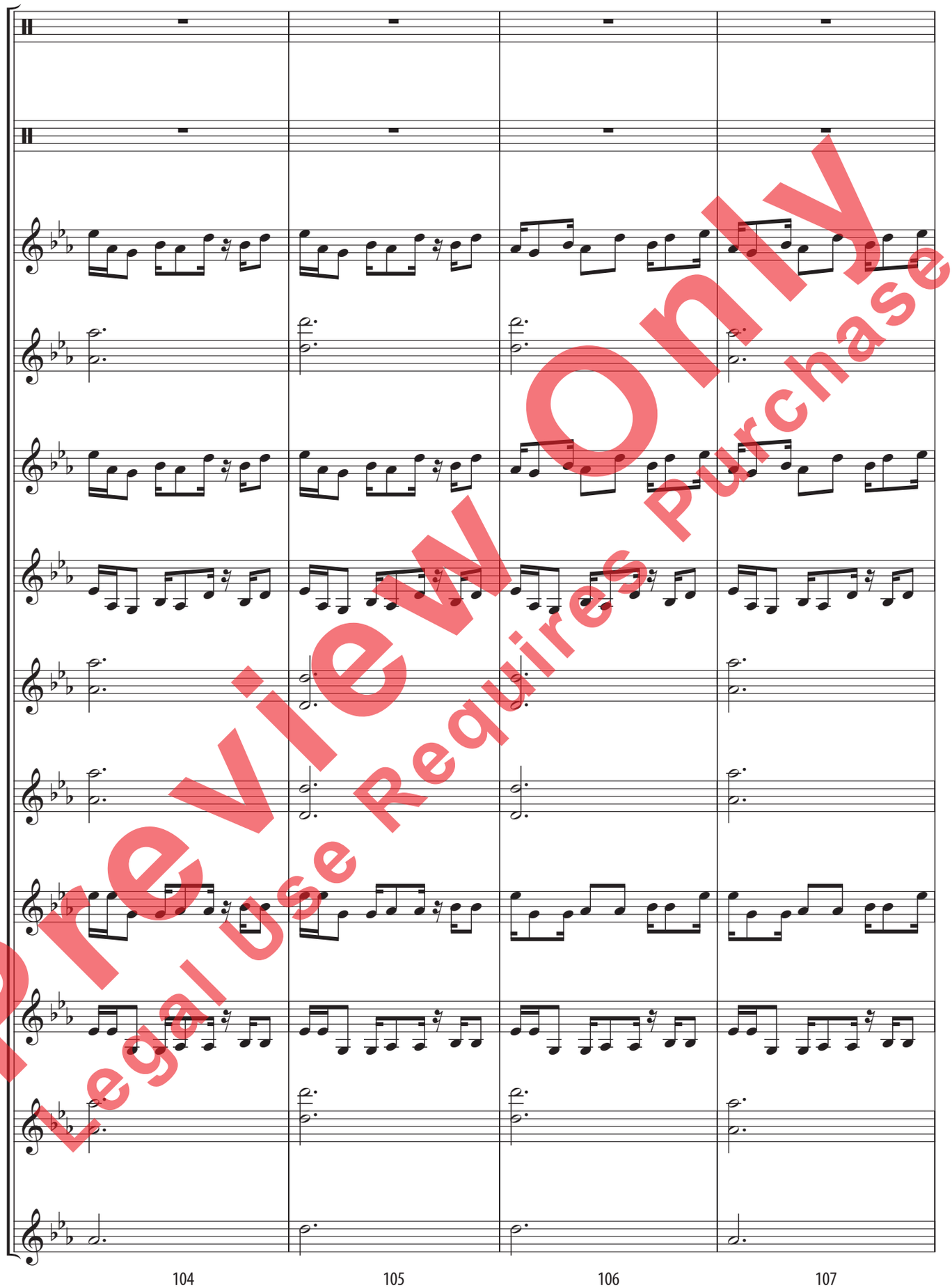

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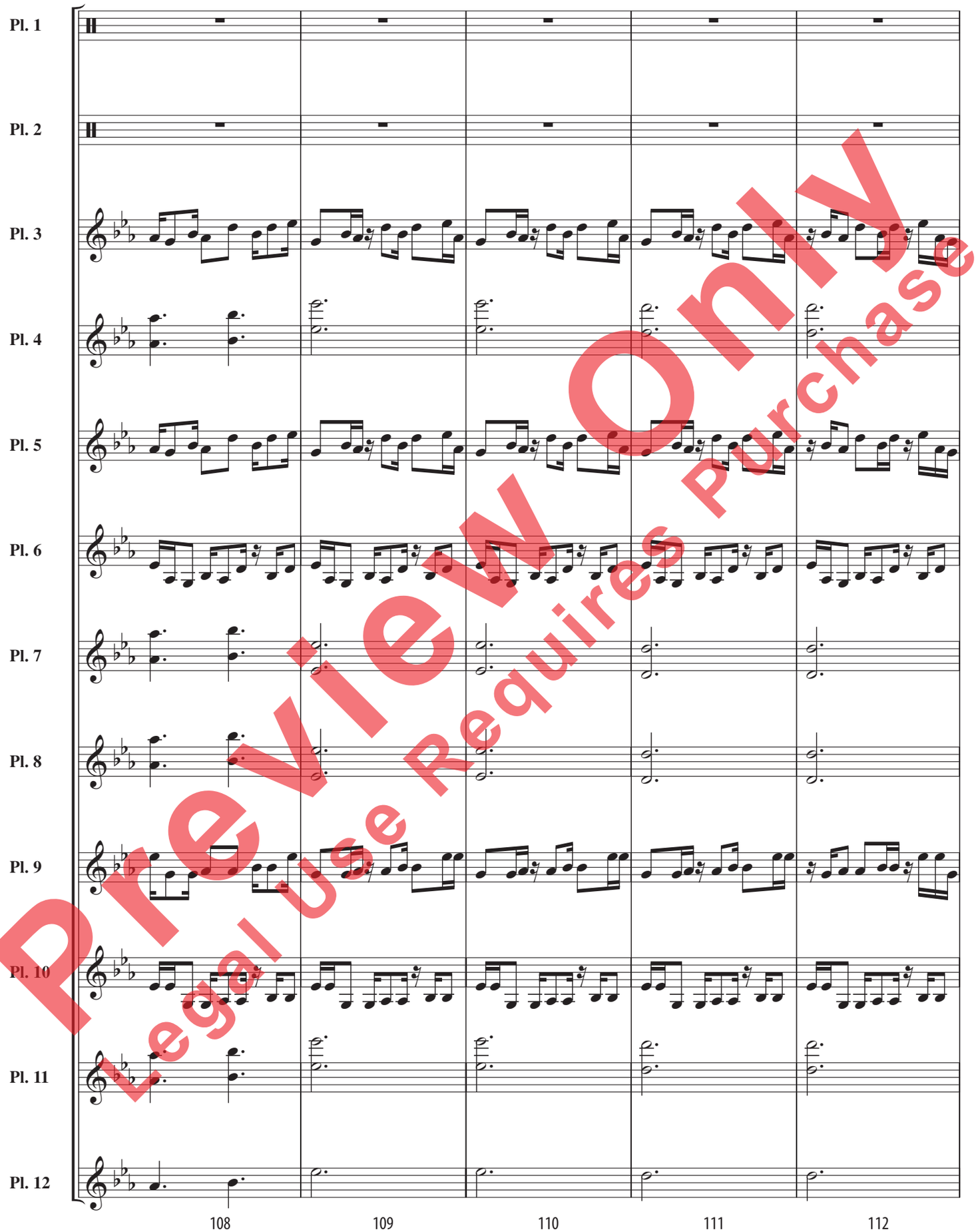

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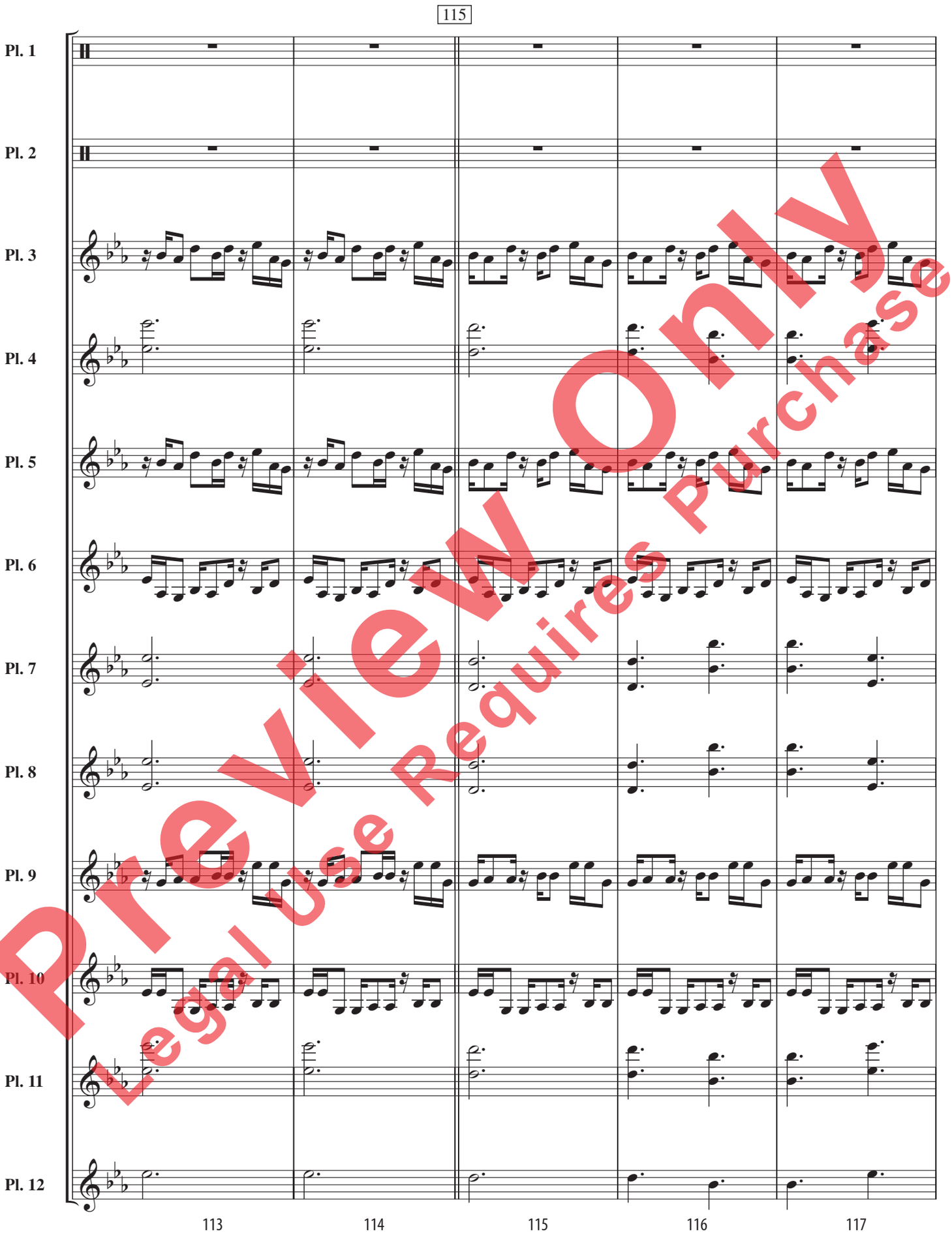

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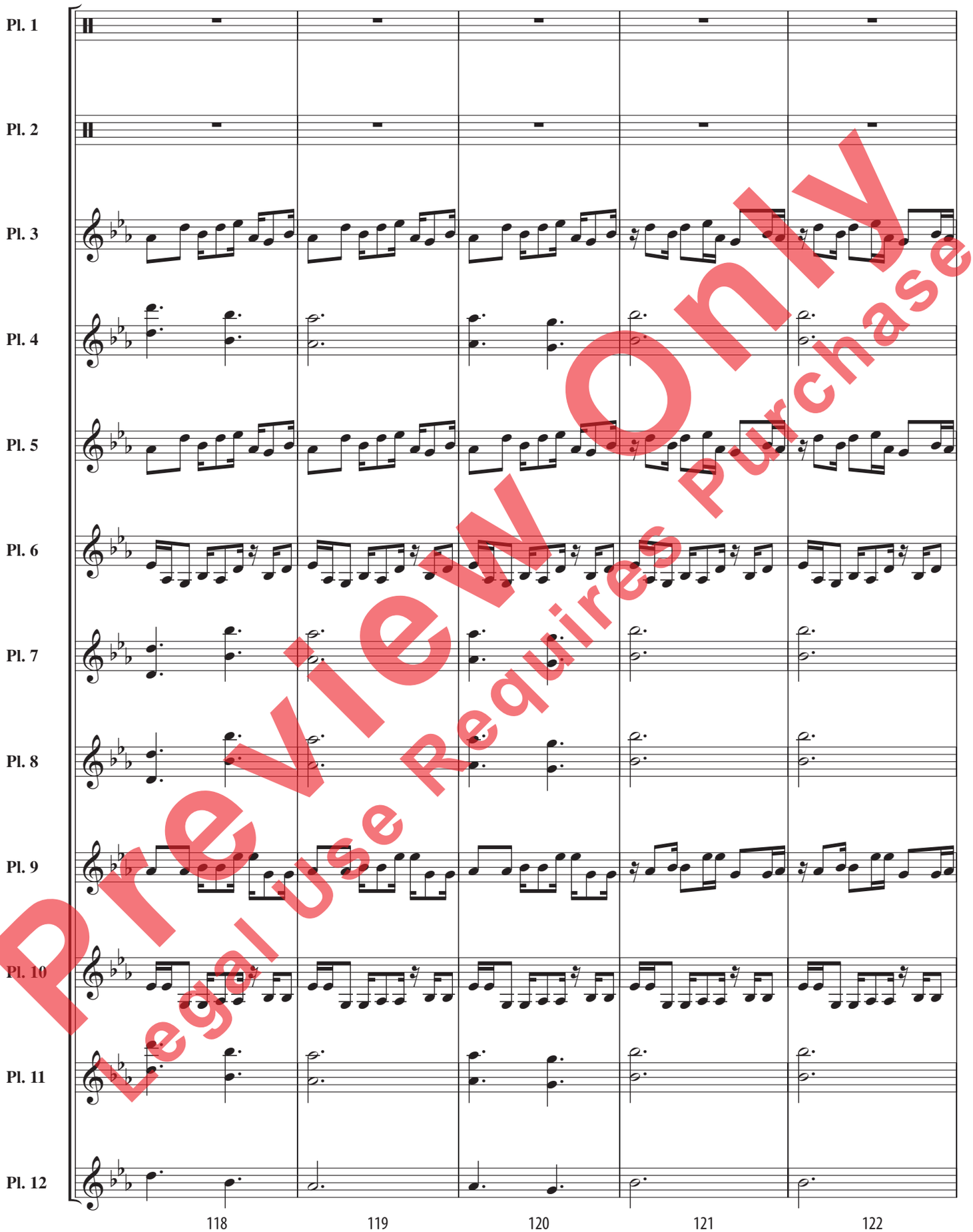

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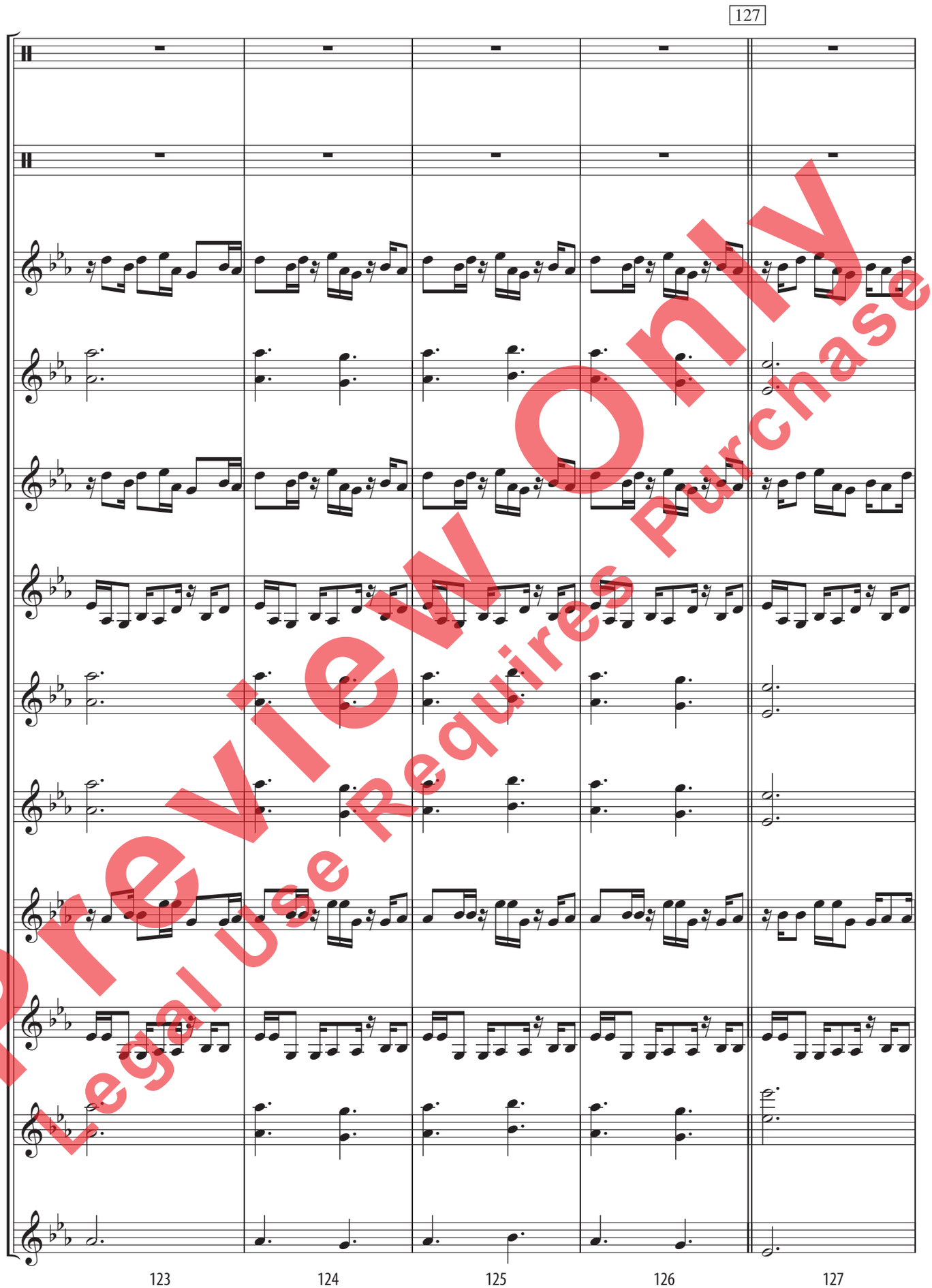

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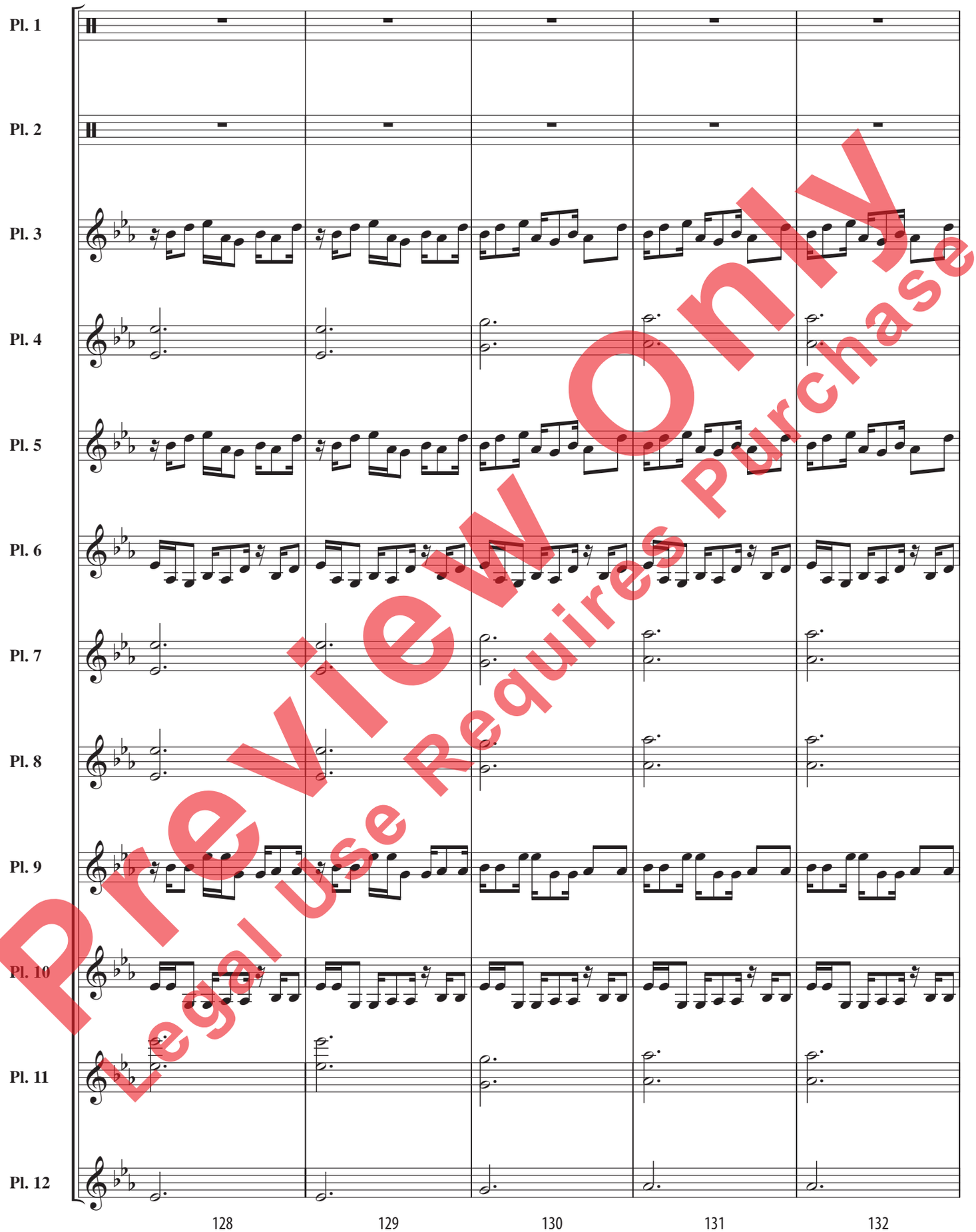

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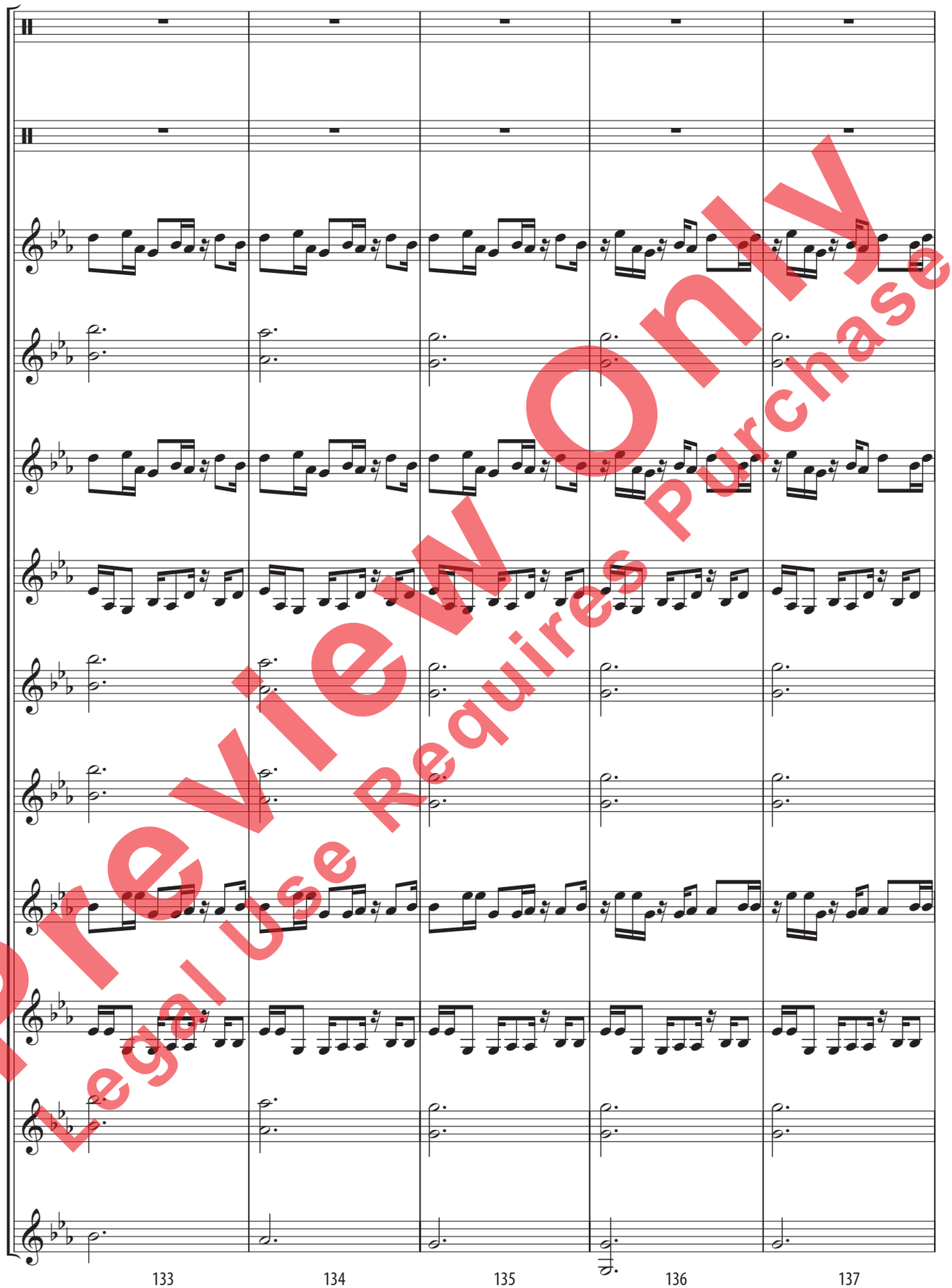

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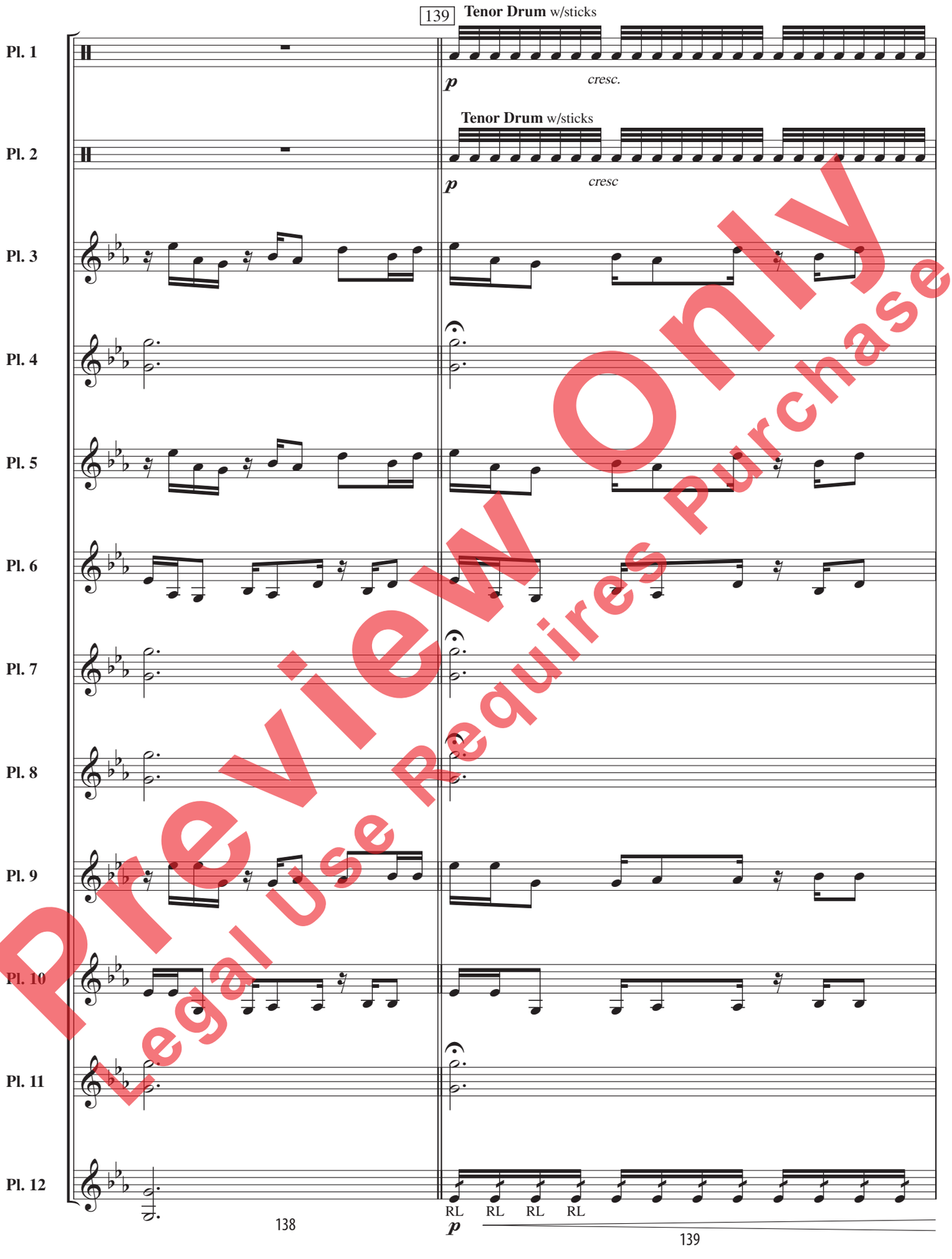

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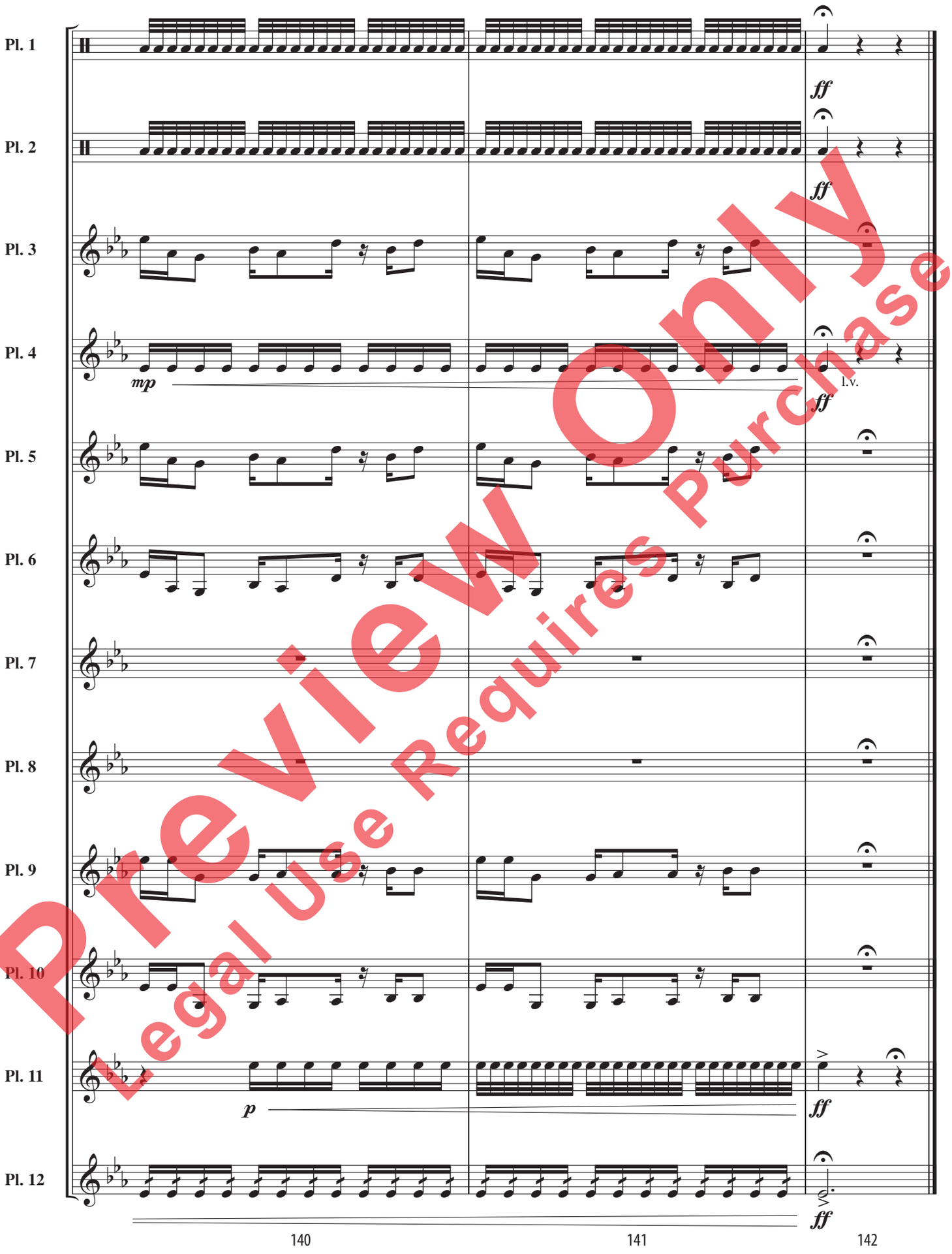

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