Three Brunel Crossings

for string orchestra

by

F L Dunkin Wedd

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Three Brunel Crossings

Programme note © F L Dunkin Wedd

Rotherhithe begins in F#minor with an introduction for second violins and violas, a spiky falling figure which characterises the whole movement. This figure then undergoes variations, especially in rhythm. The violas and second violins duet for the first two minutes of the piece, a device which serves to heighten the drama of the entry of first fiddles, cellos and basses, by which time diminished seventh harmony has established itself. The end of this section is marked by a rising legato figure, of which we shall see more later.

When the full strings join in, they develop the spiky idea, with an ostinato bass rhythm - triplet triplet duplet. Soon the cellos introduce a broad romantic melody in G (ambivalently in the major or minor) which contrasts with the itching spiky rhythms of second violins playing in octaves with their bottom G strings and a pizzicato cross-rhythm in the firsts. The cellos feature the arching rising legato figure of earlier.

A solo violin section returns us to the introduction, followed by ten grandiloquent bars of chorale. The opening figure returns, now tutti. The basses and cellos introduce a contrapuntal variation in which the theme is thrown around from section to section. The arching figure takes us to a denouement in which the cellos return to their romantic melody over the spiccato rhythm in seconds ,violas and basses.

Saltash begins in C minor with a triplet figure for the cellos which might be the sound of the sea. Violas join in. Seconds and firsts take up the rhythm, while basses and cellos set up a plodding bass. This bass becomes a marching sidedrum figure while the triplets start to fragment. A snatch of triumphant melody for firsts and cellos is swept away away by the triplets and their plodding bass, first loud, then receding into the distance.

Clifton begins with a portal of five notes. In A minor another side drum rhythmic figure is set up, this time by cellos and firsts, but soon tutti and modulating . A melody based on the rhythm establishes itself over a rising bass (bar 22). Violins vary it over a thin bass from the violas (bar 30). The rhythm breaks down, and cannot re-establish itself (34-37). Finally it does so, tutti, building to a climax. The portal returns to close the movement.

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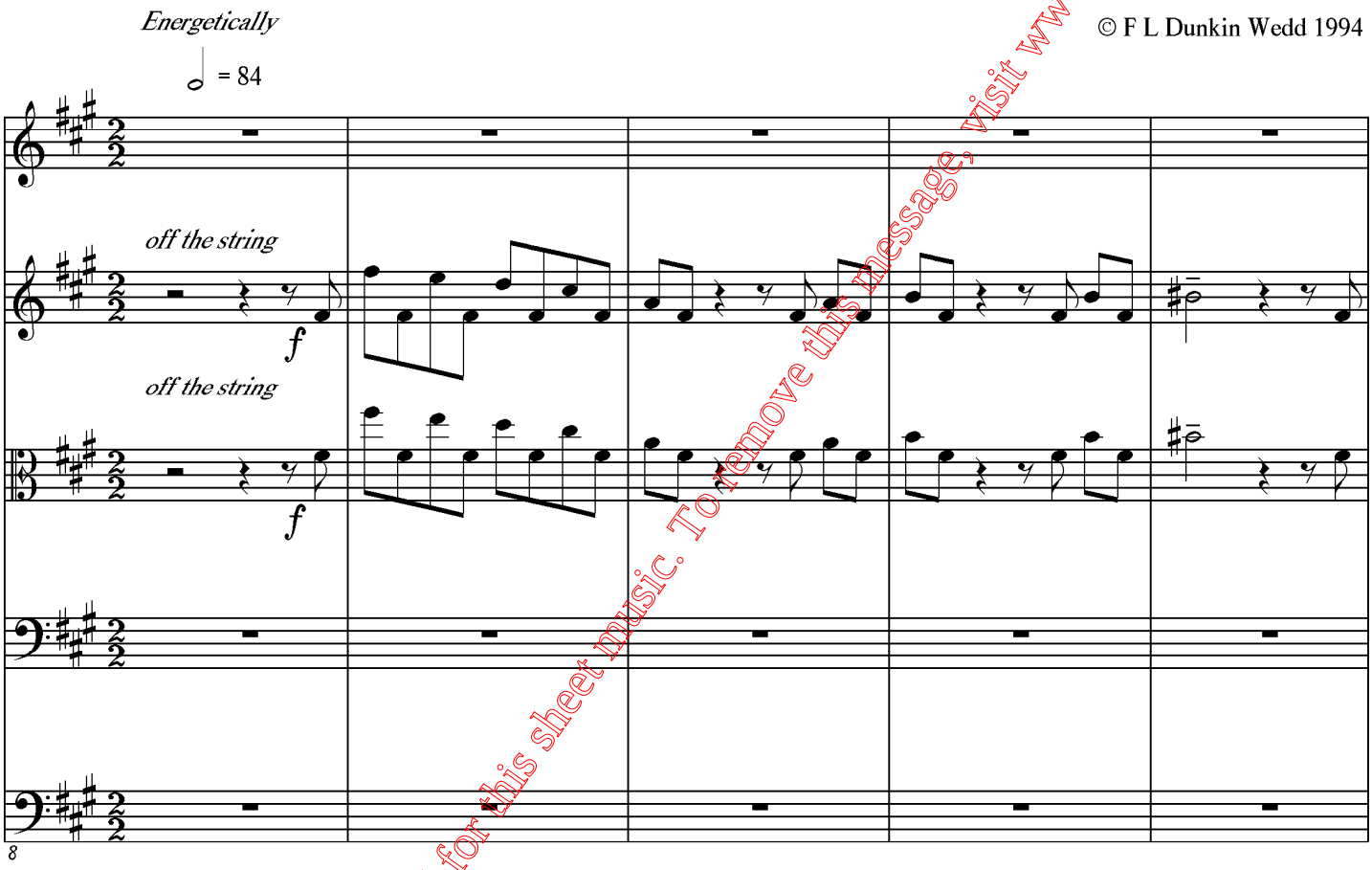
Three Brunel Crossings

I - Rotherhithe



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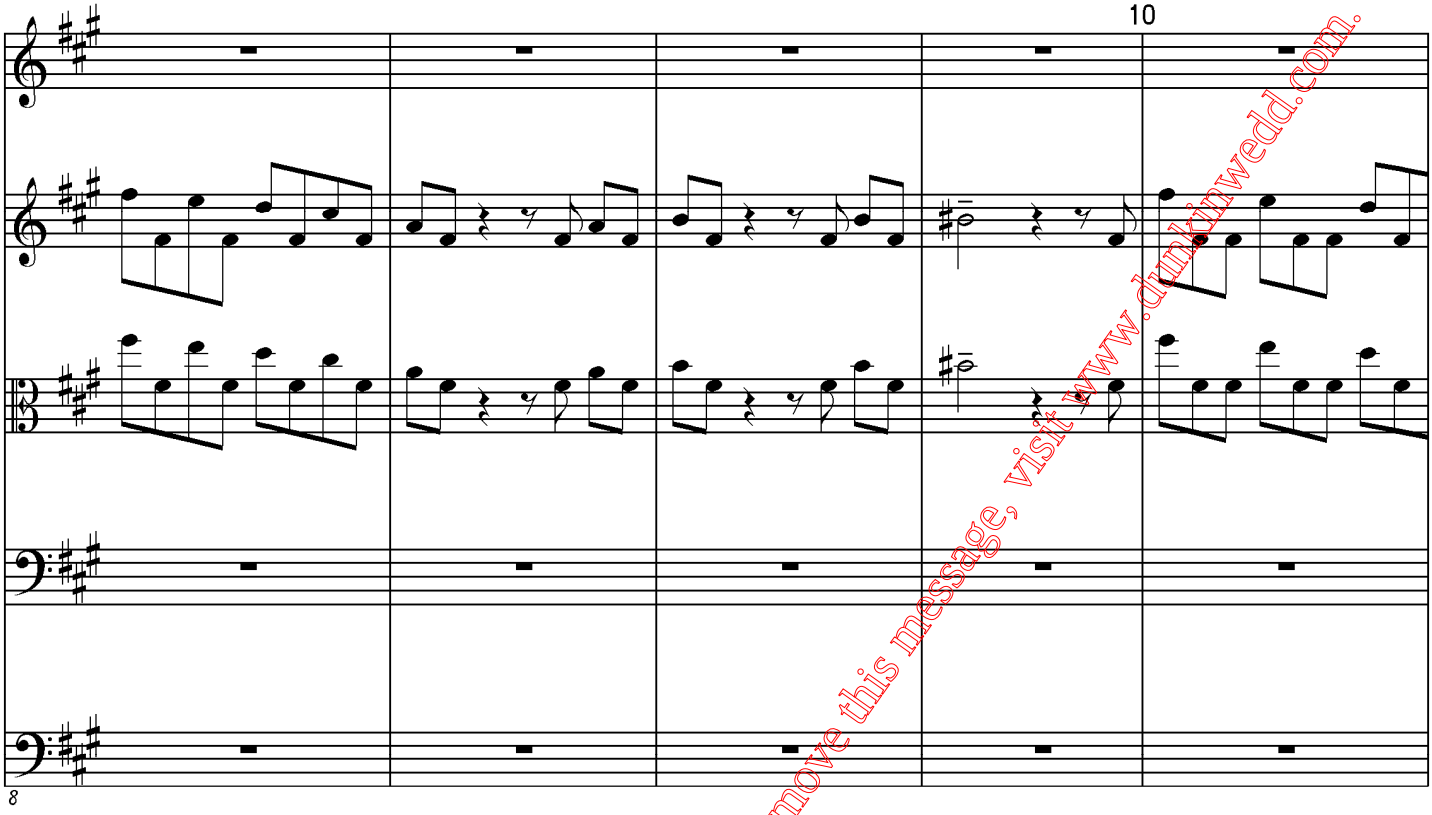

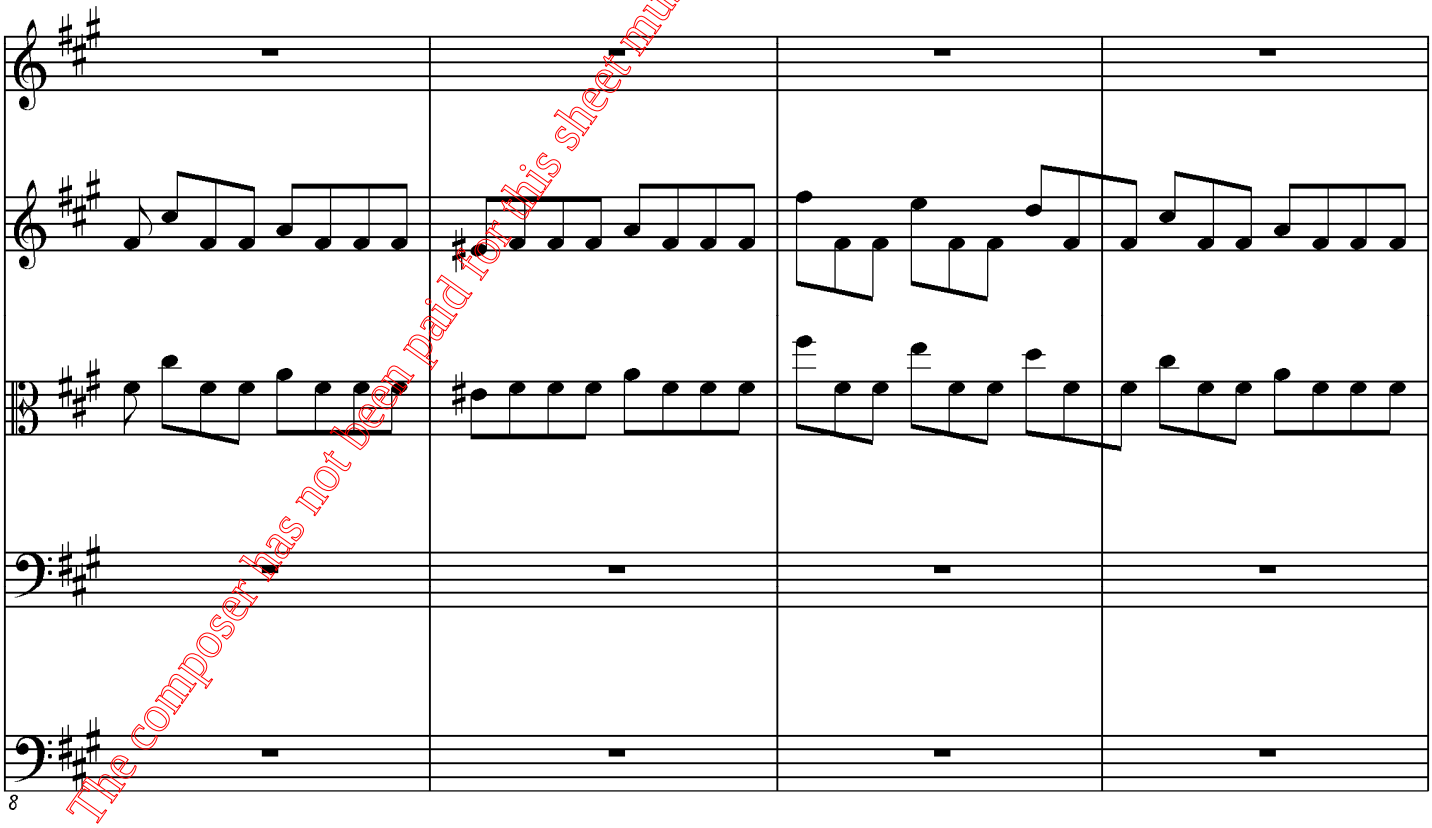

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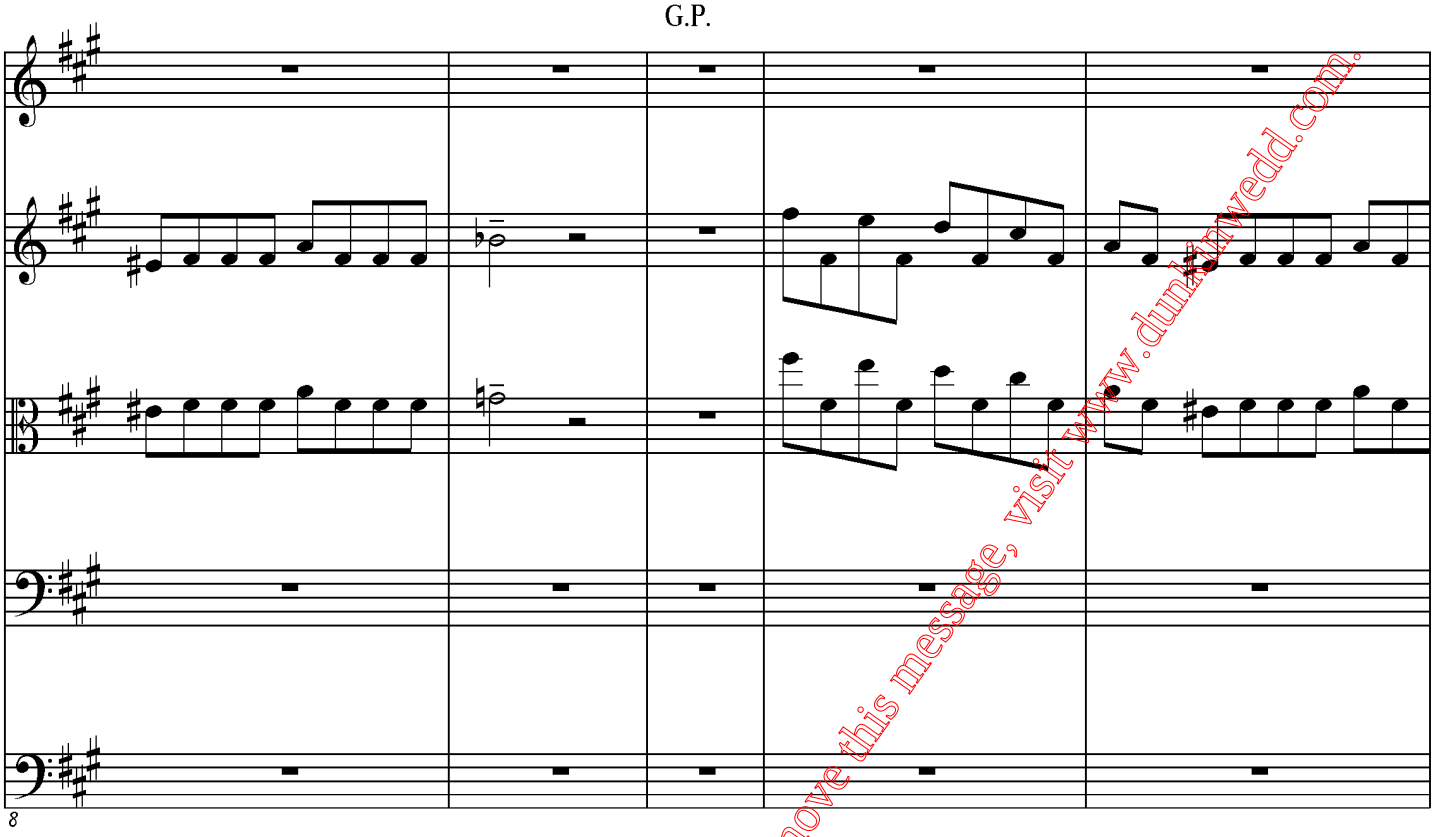
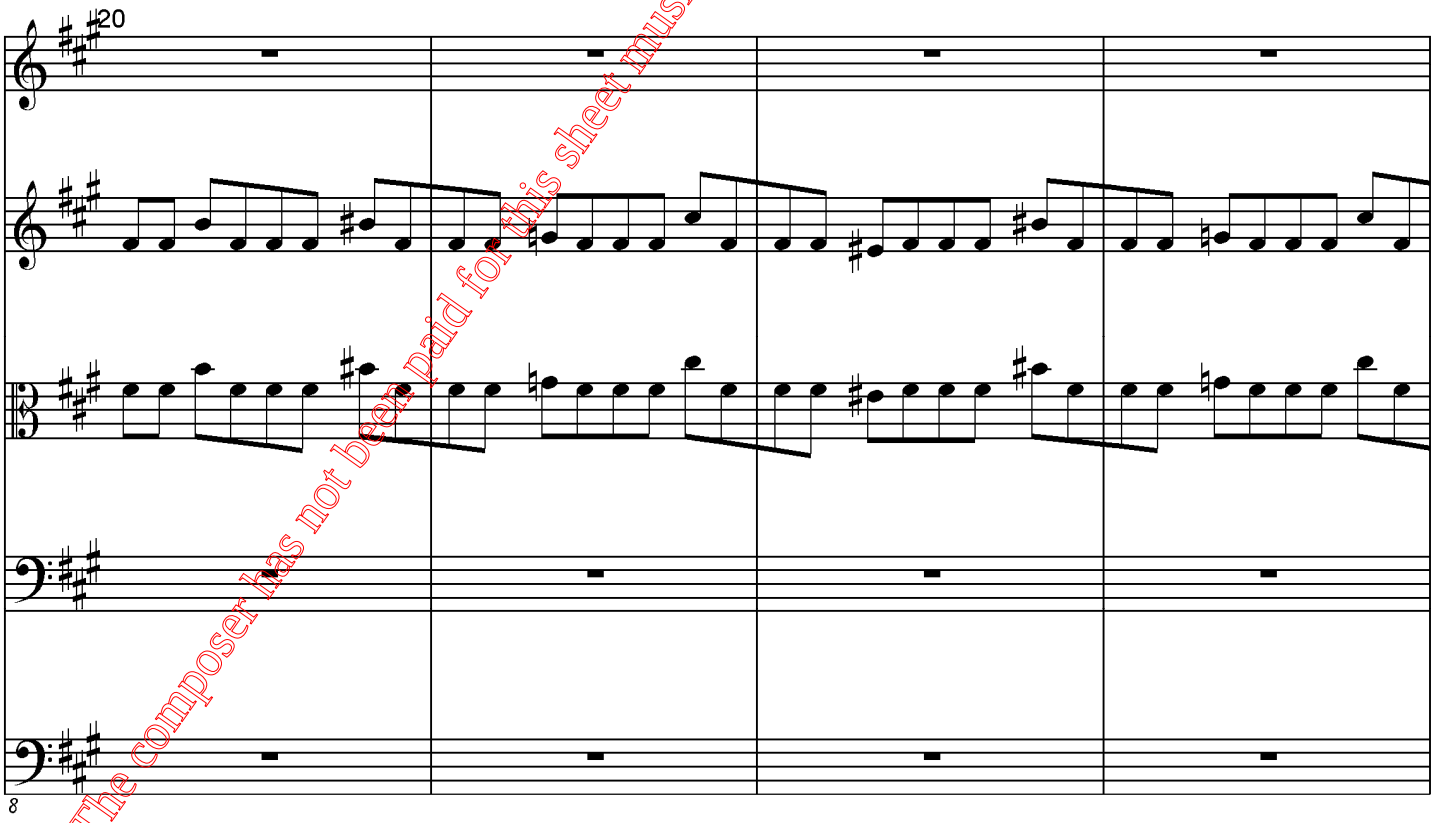
G.P.





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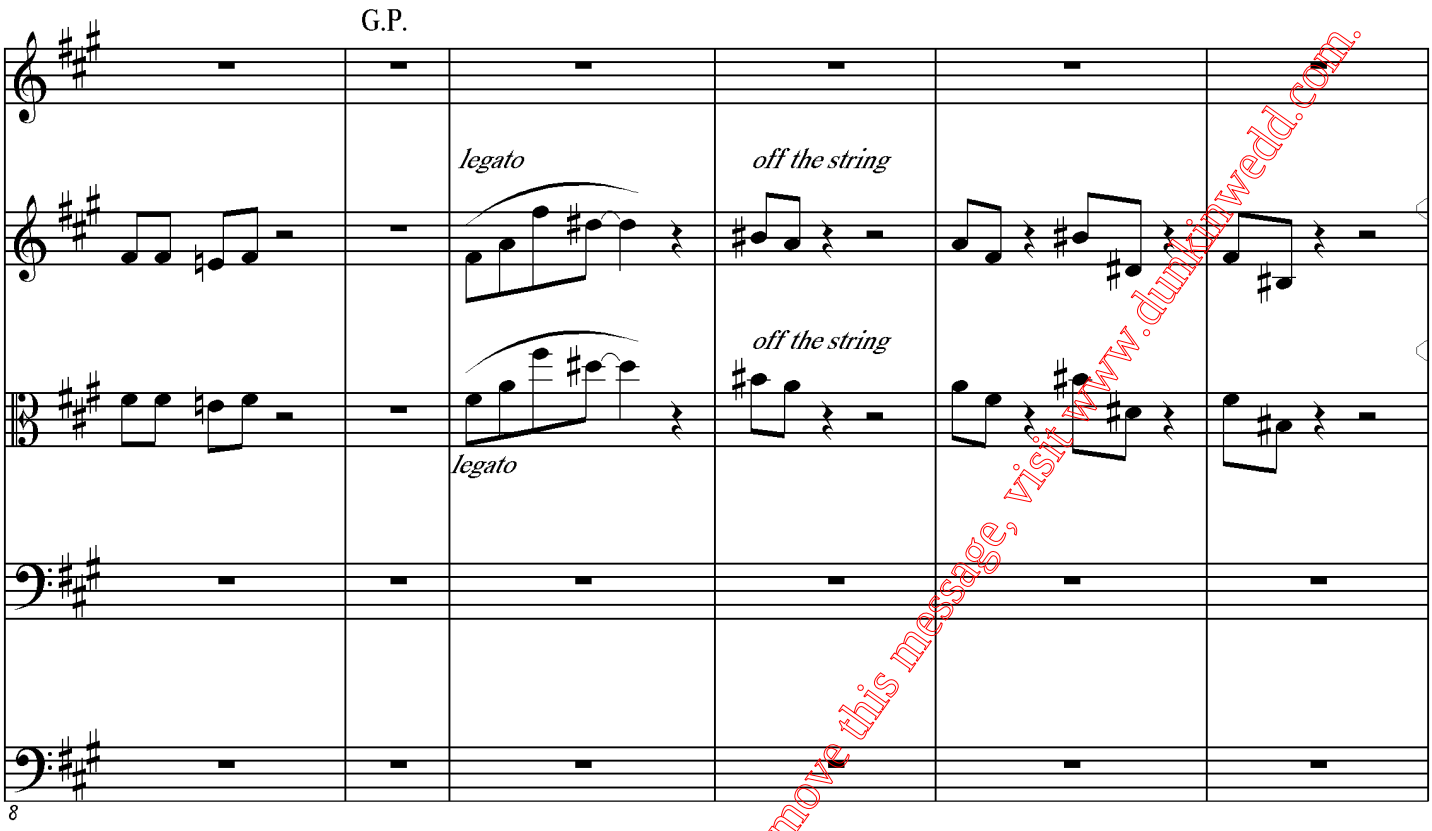

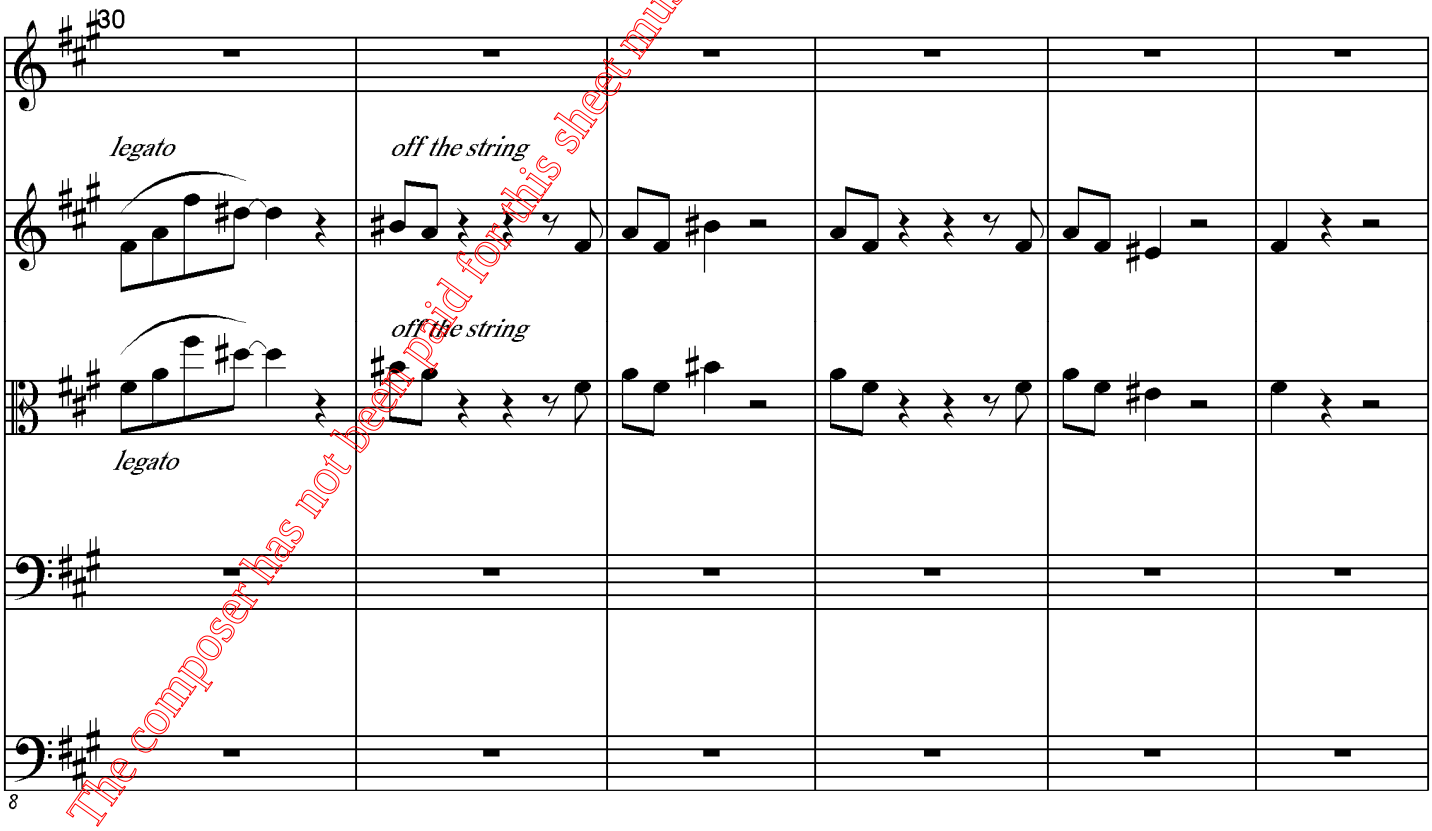

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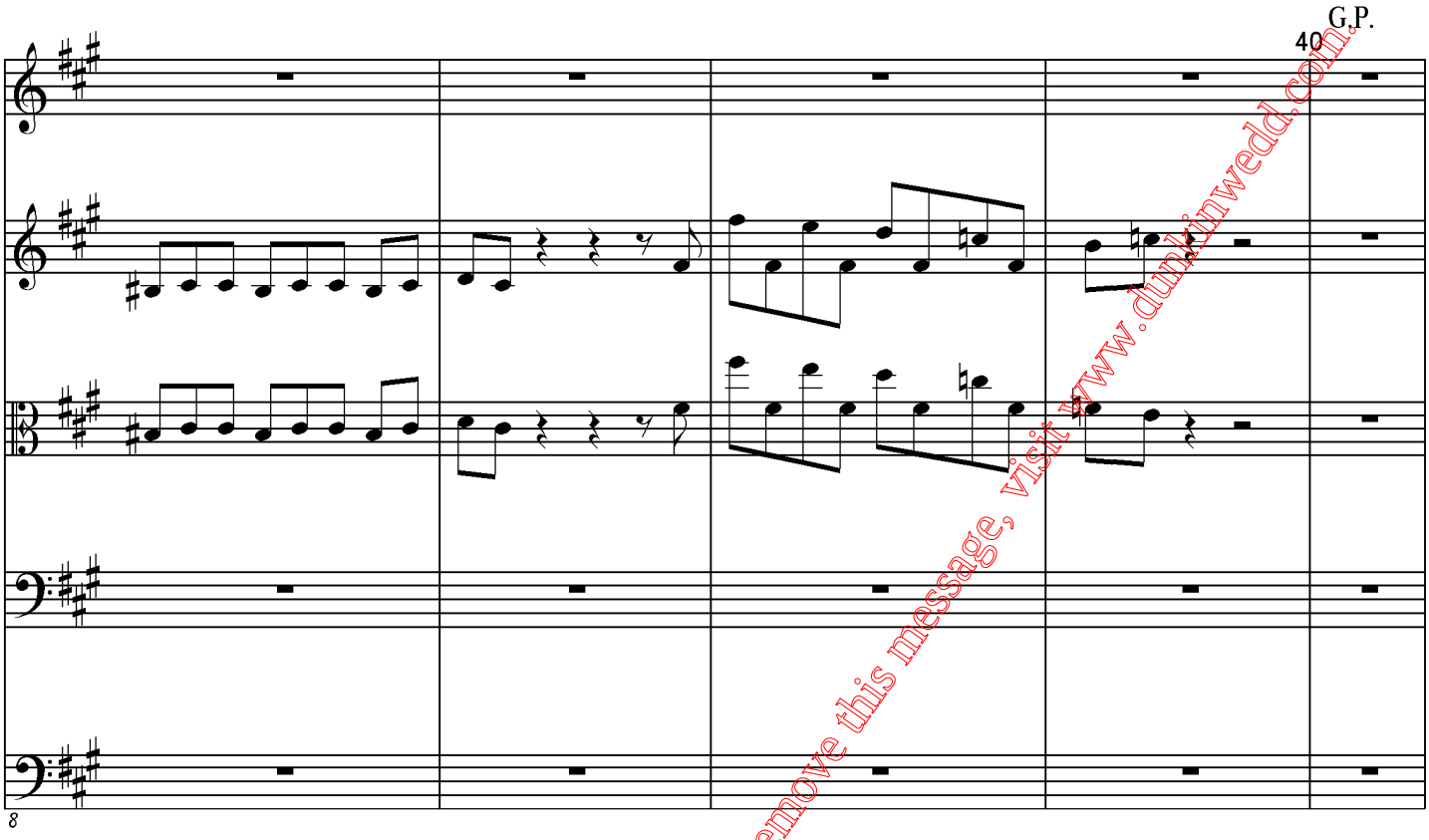

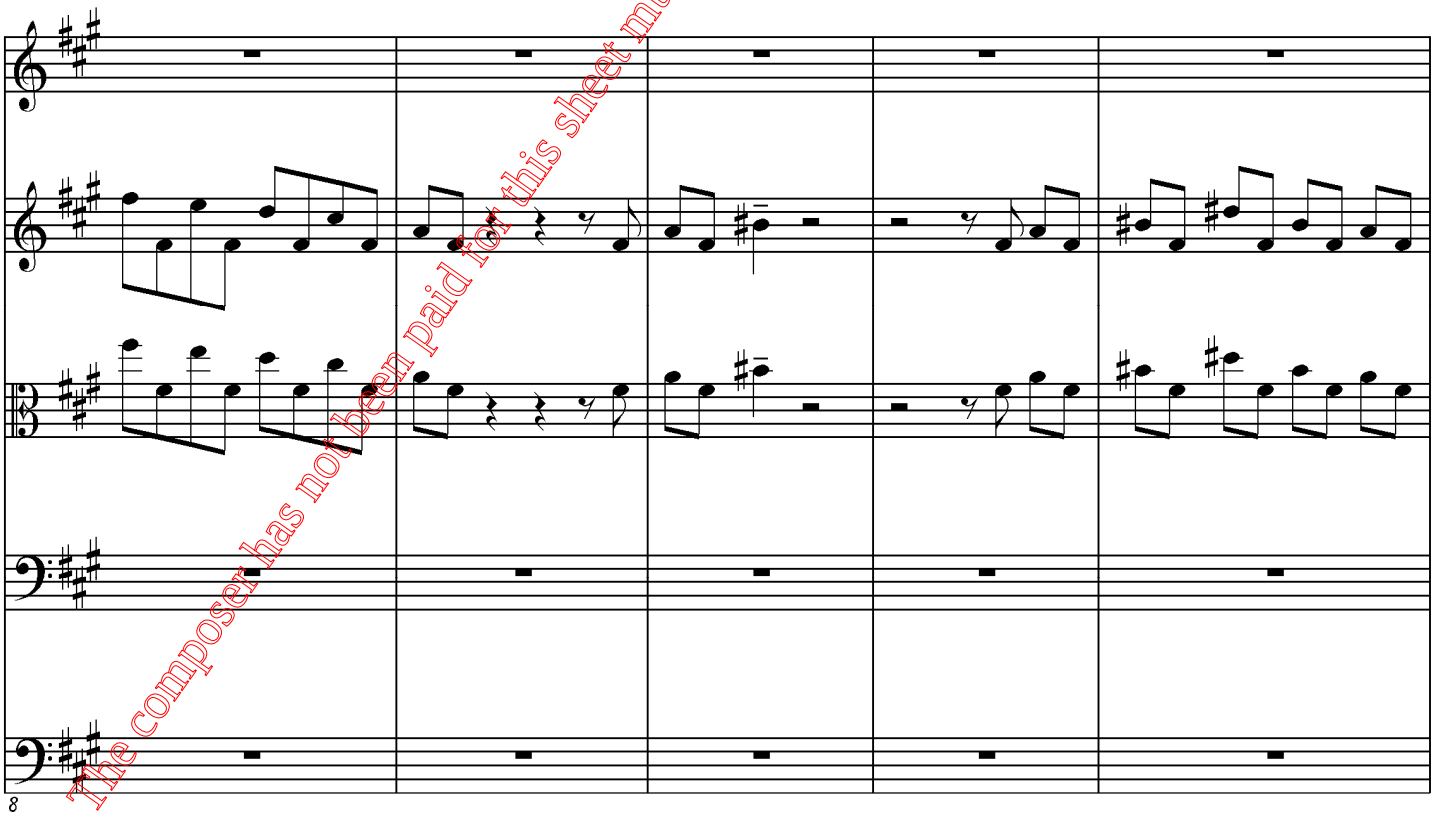

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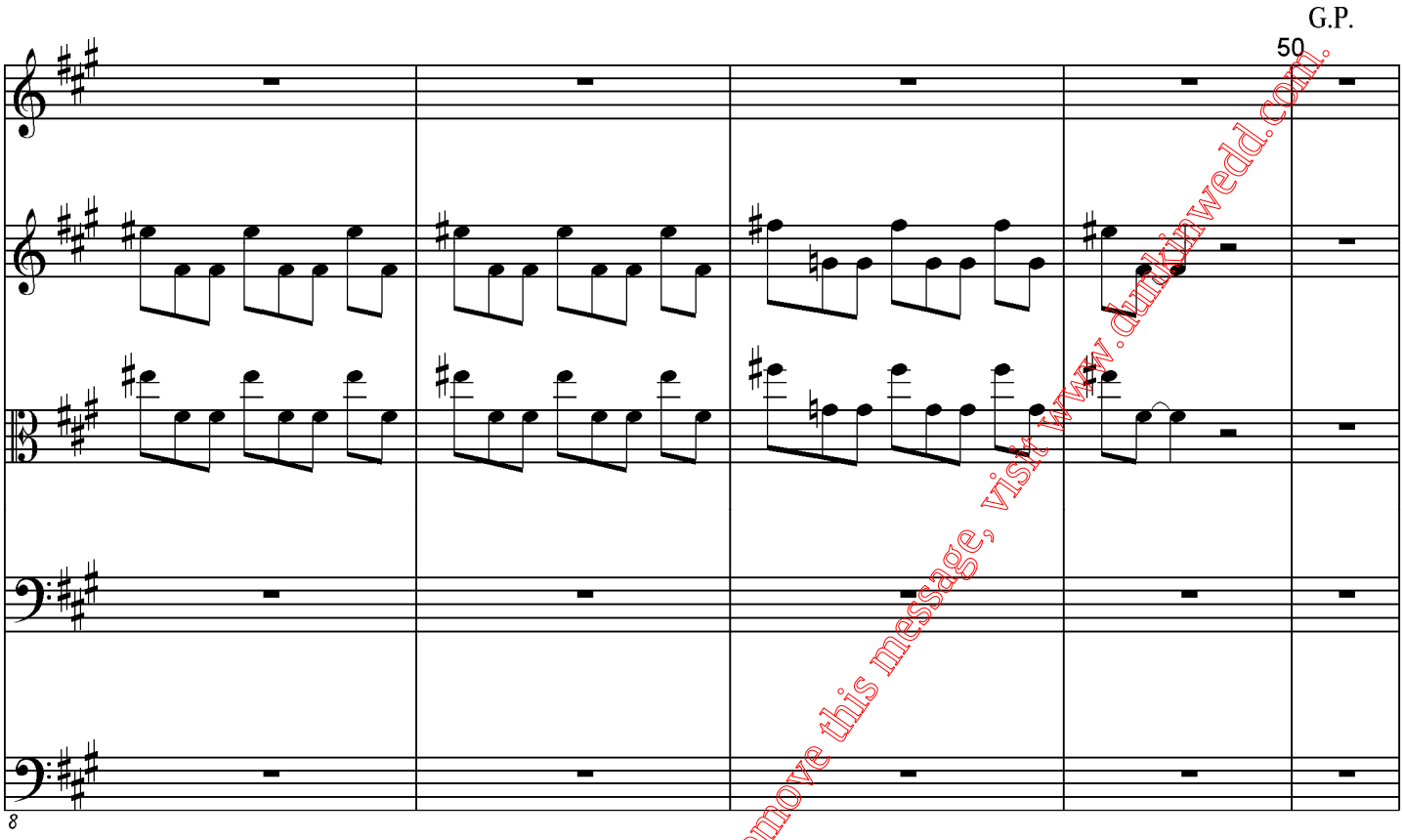

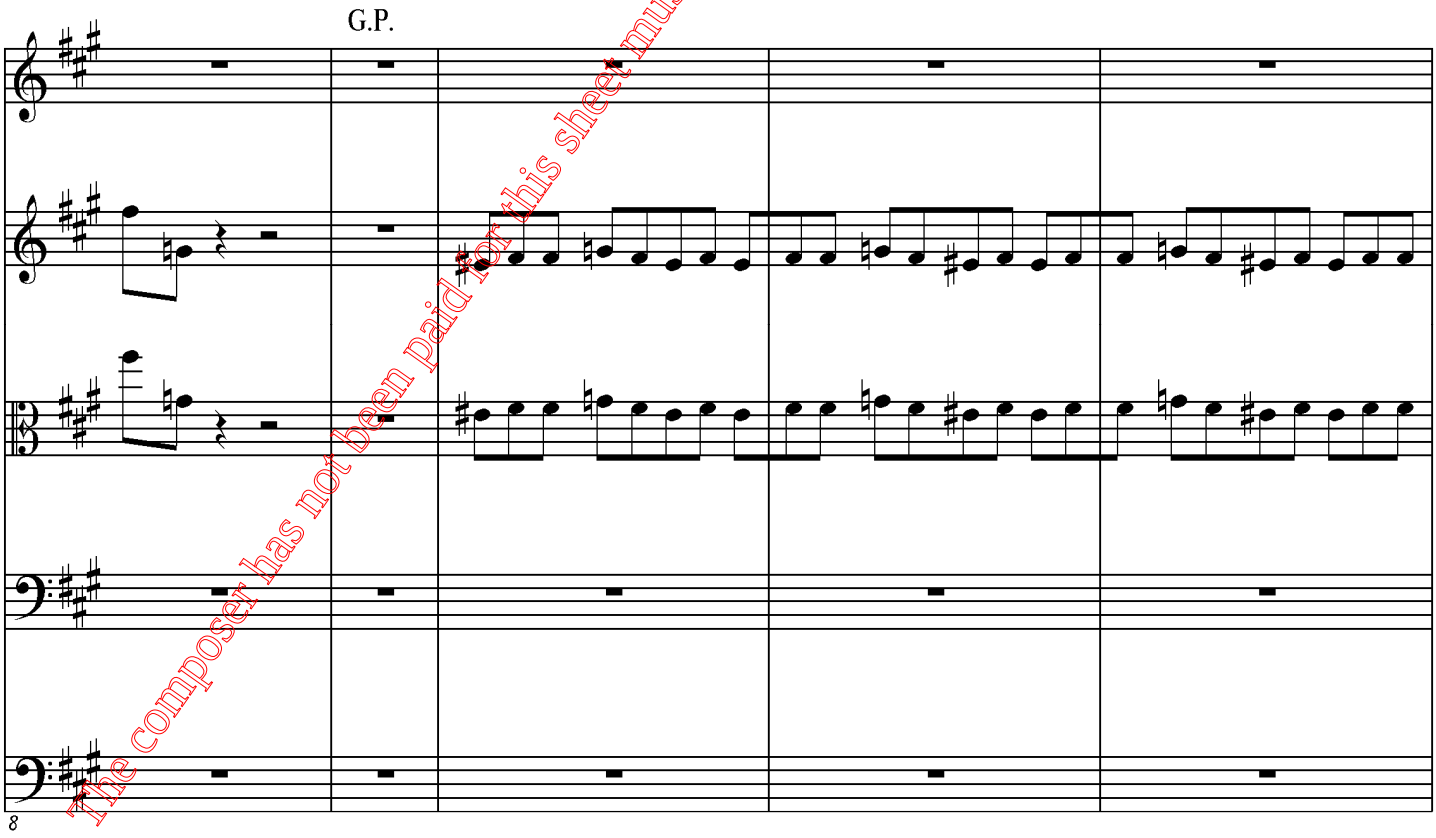

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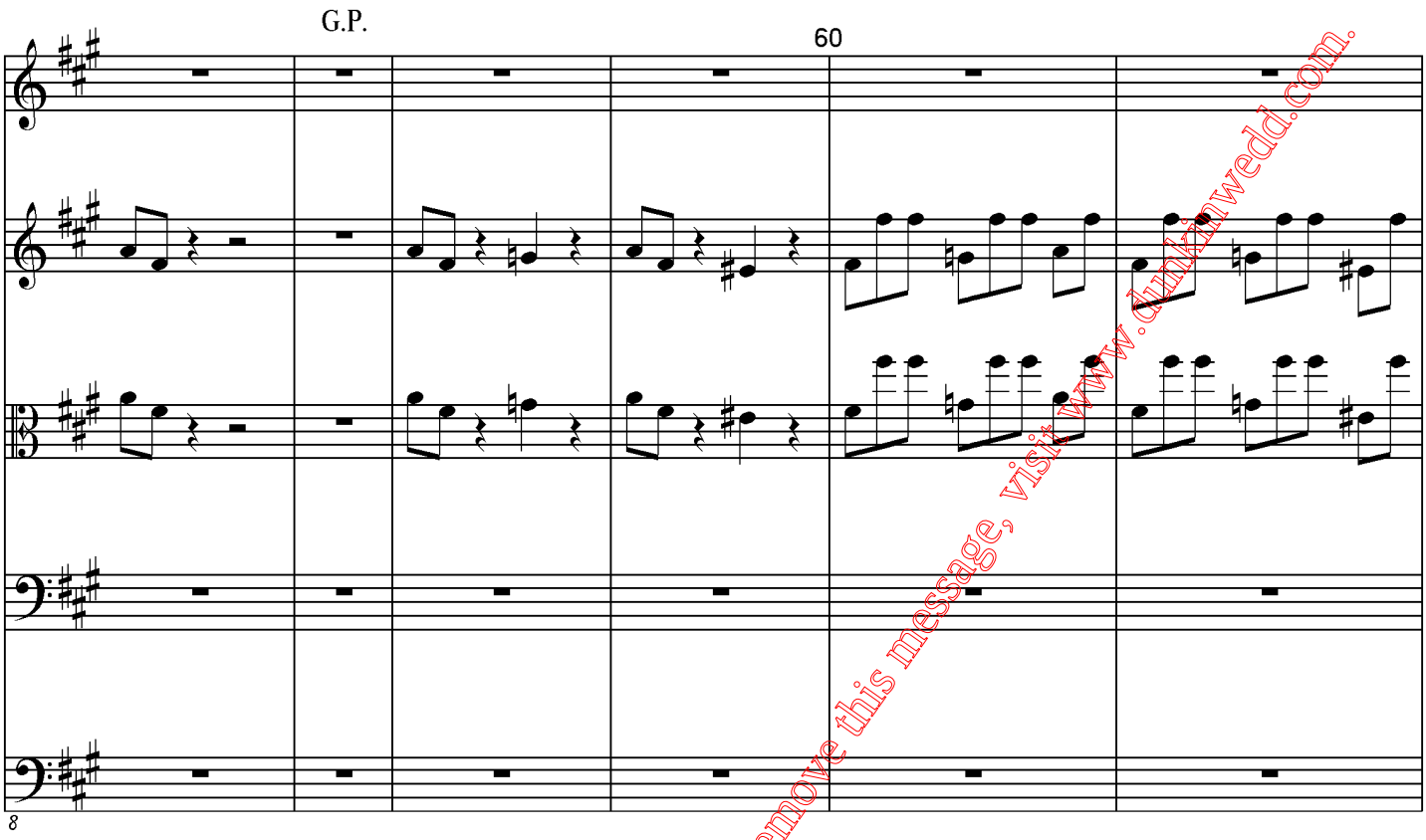

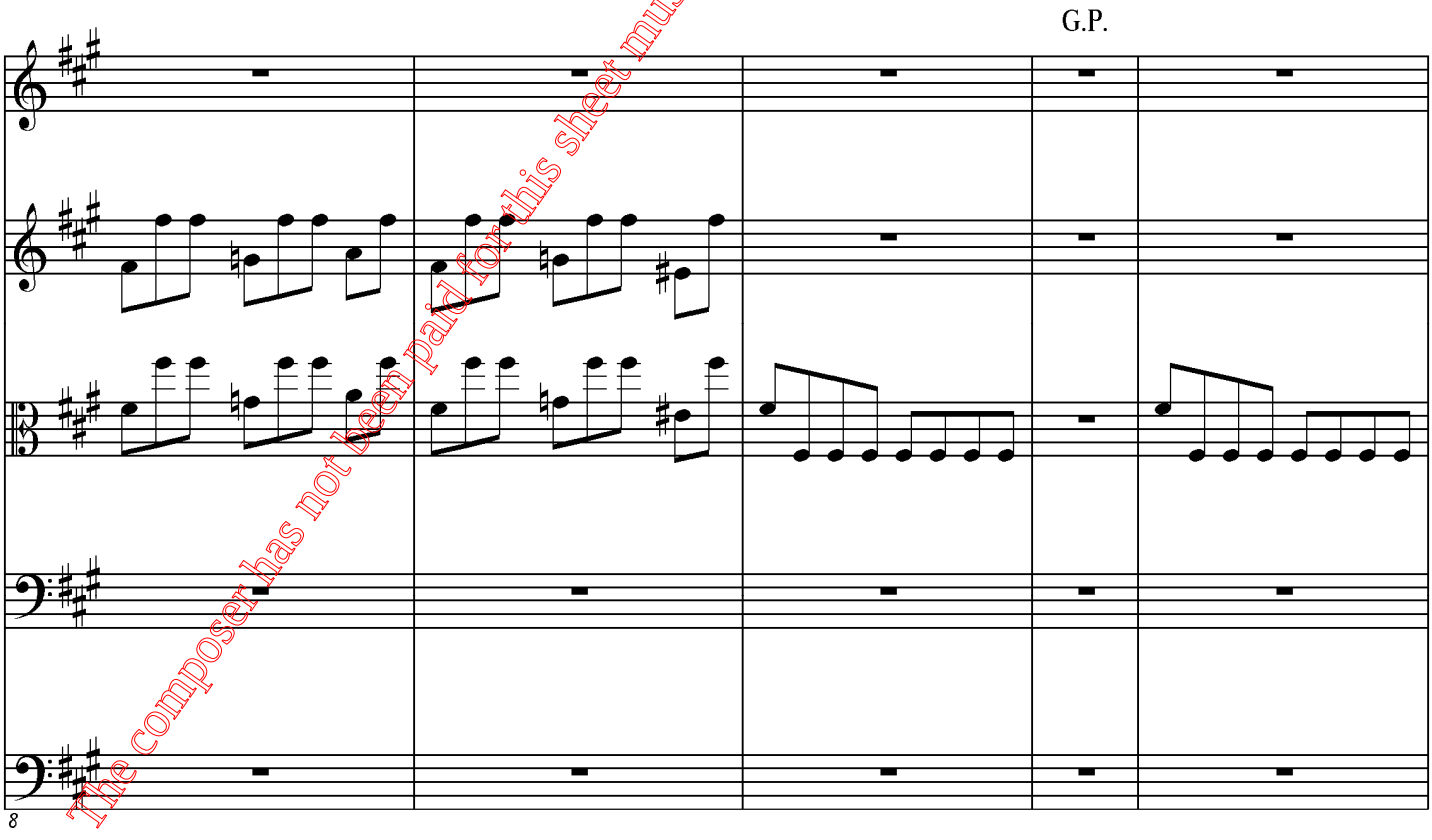

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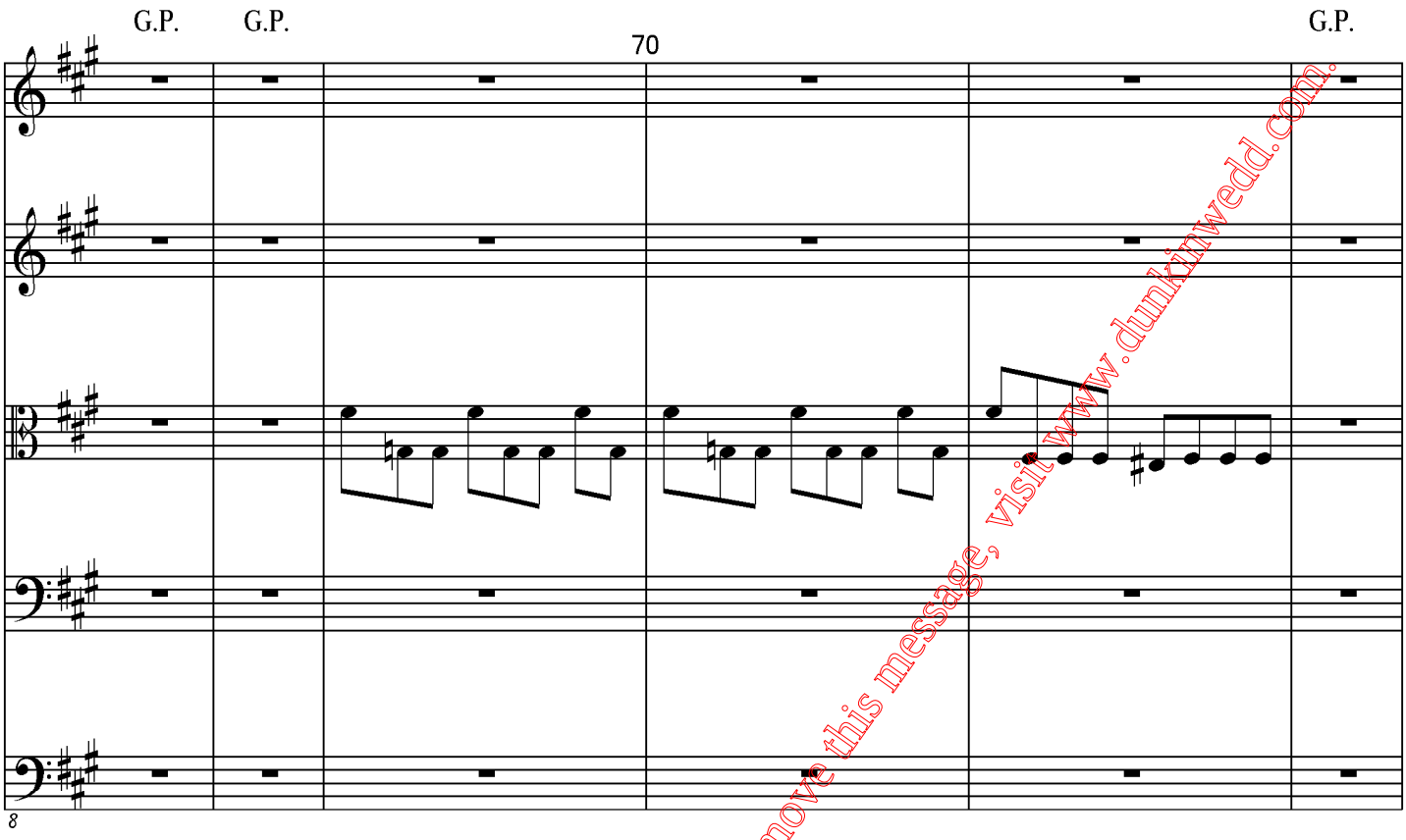

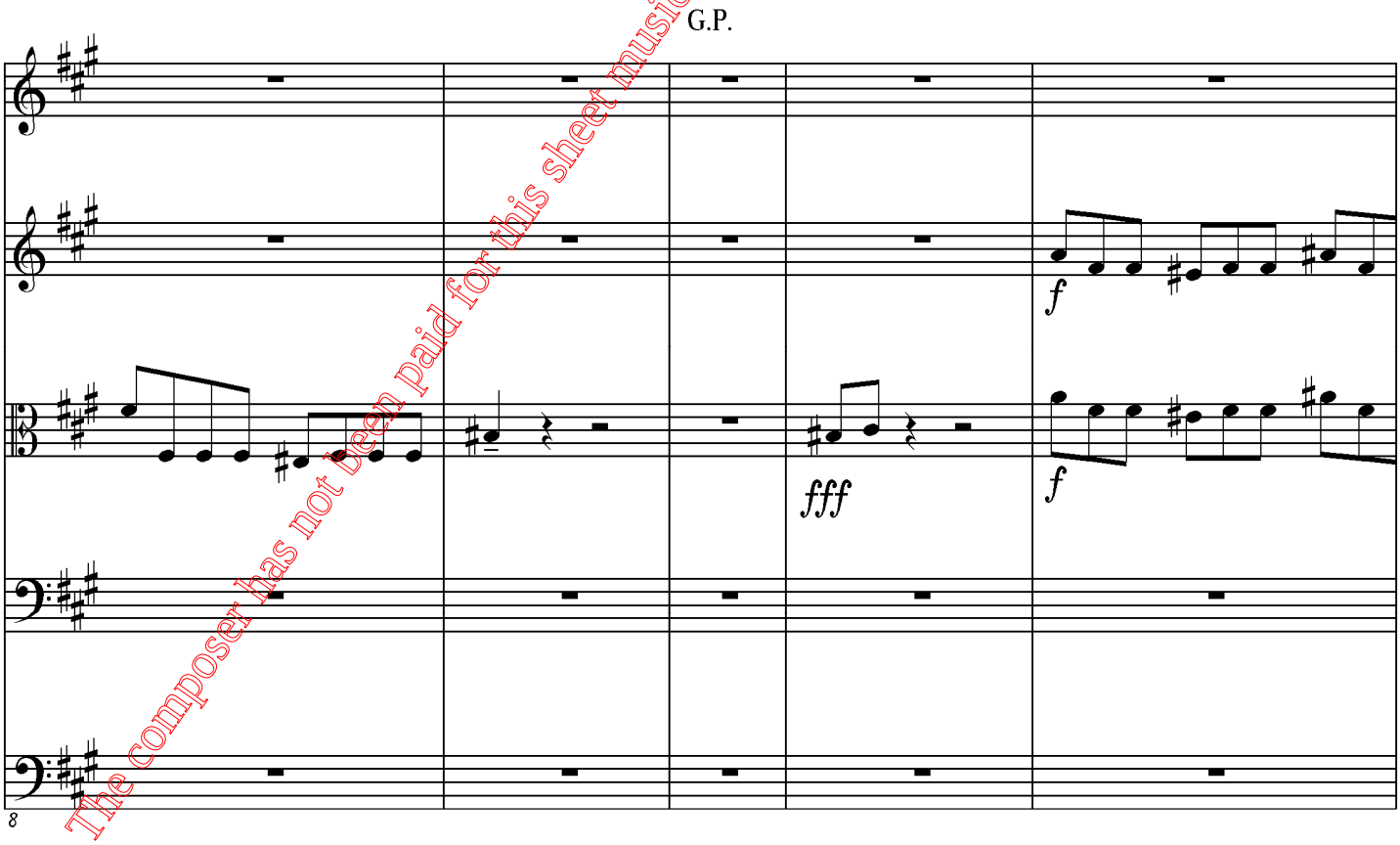

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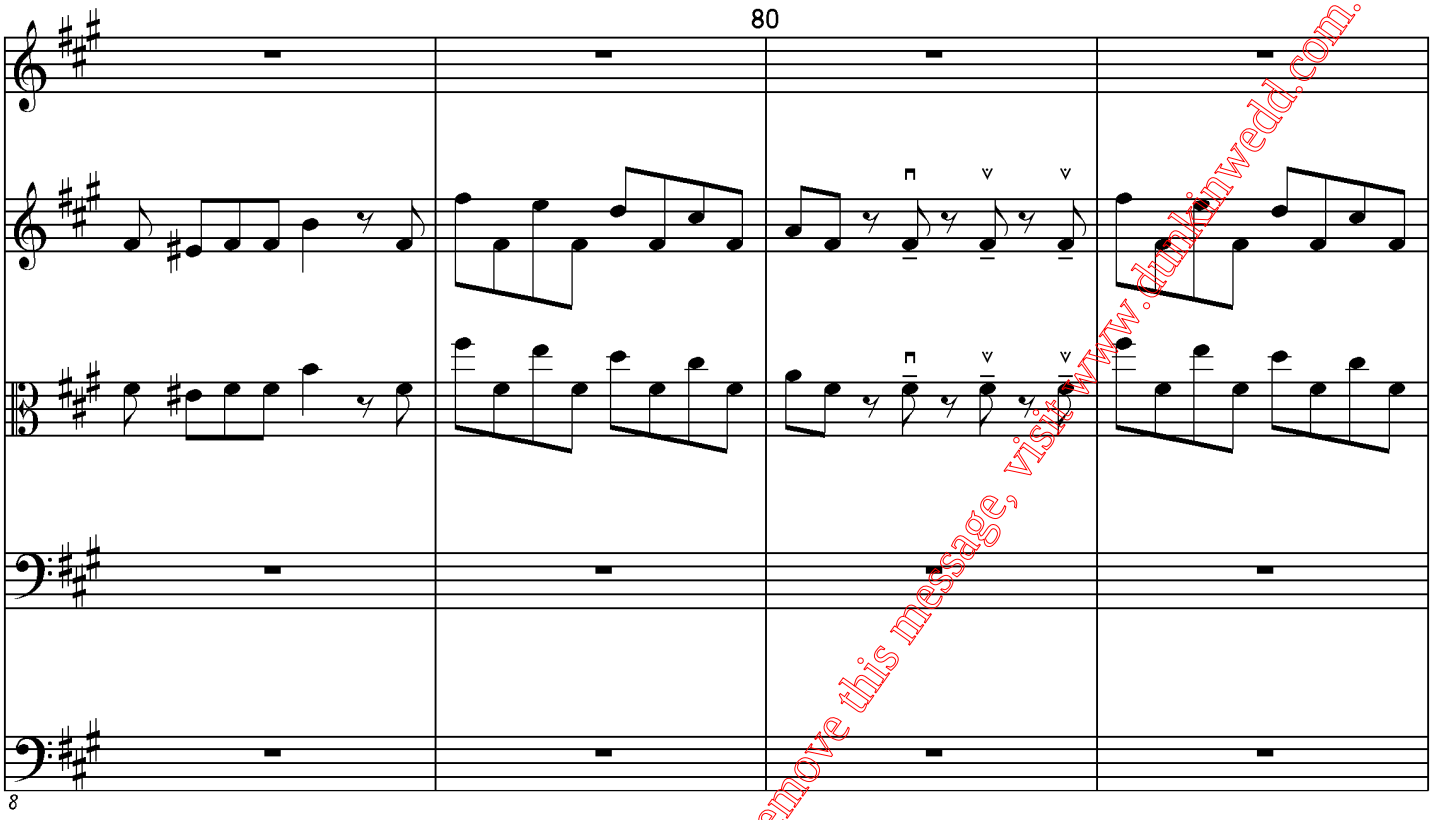

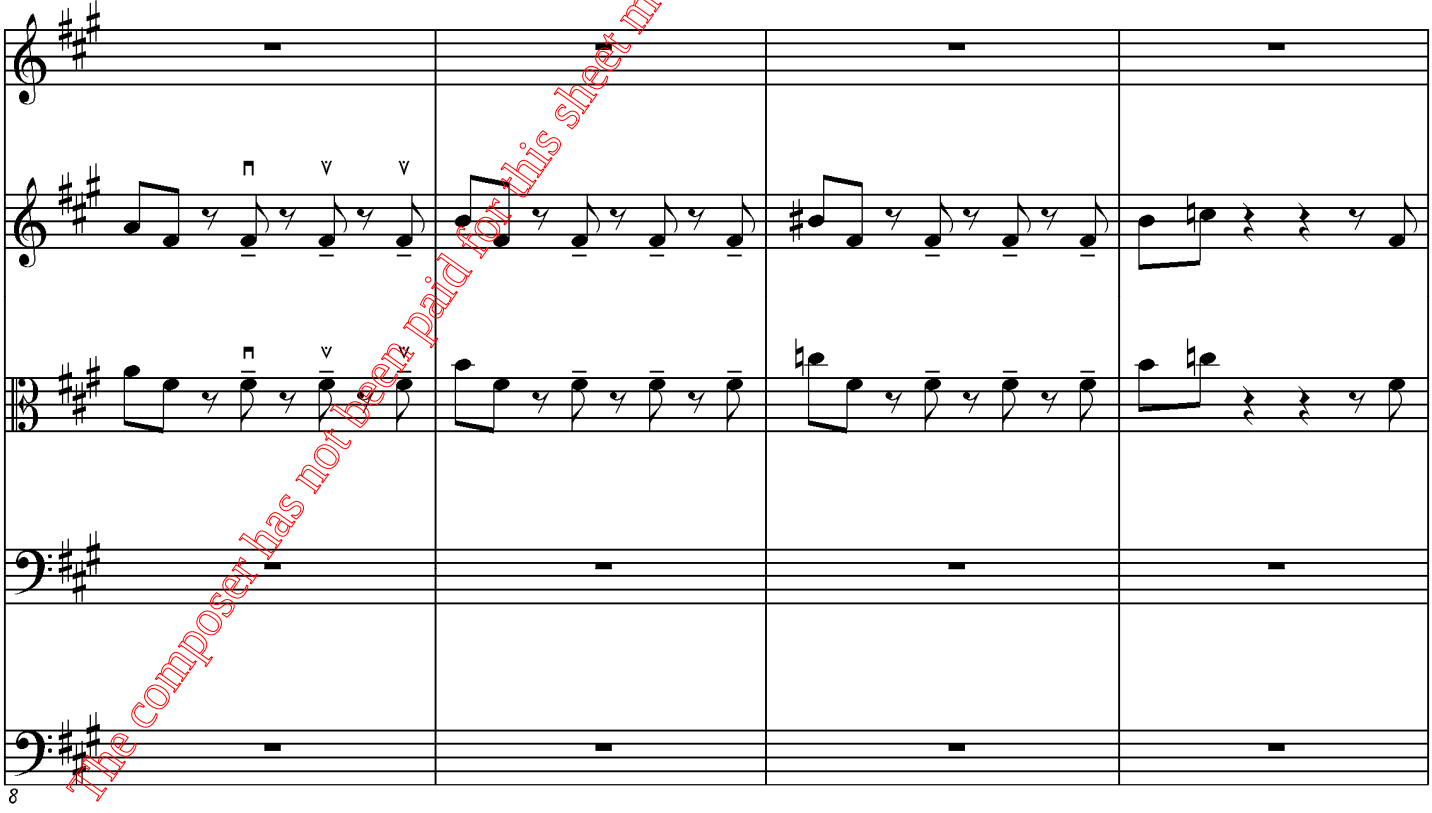

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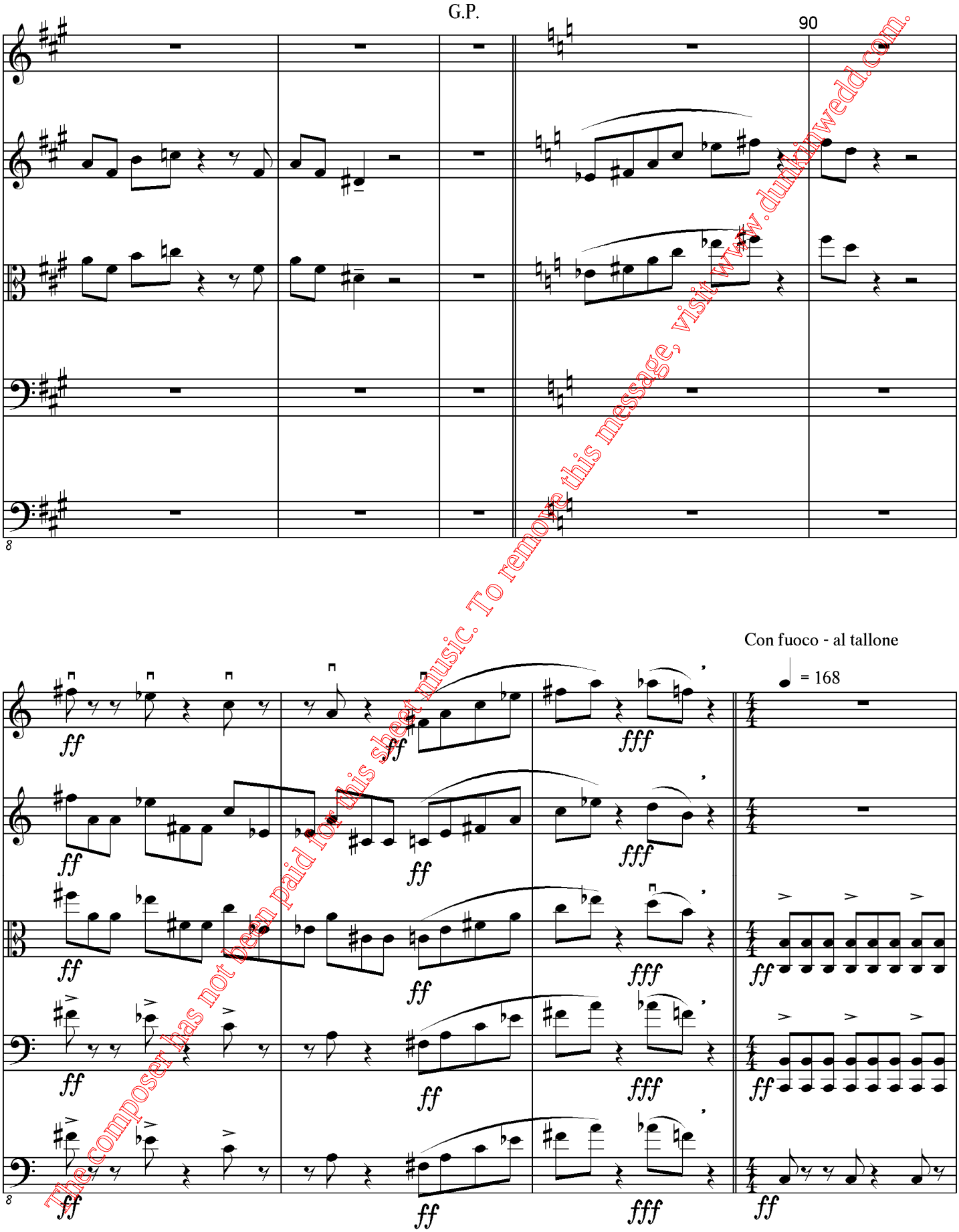

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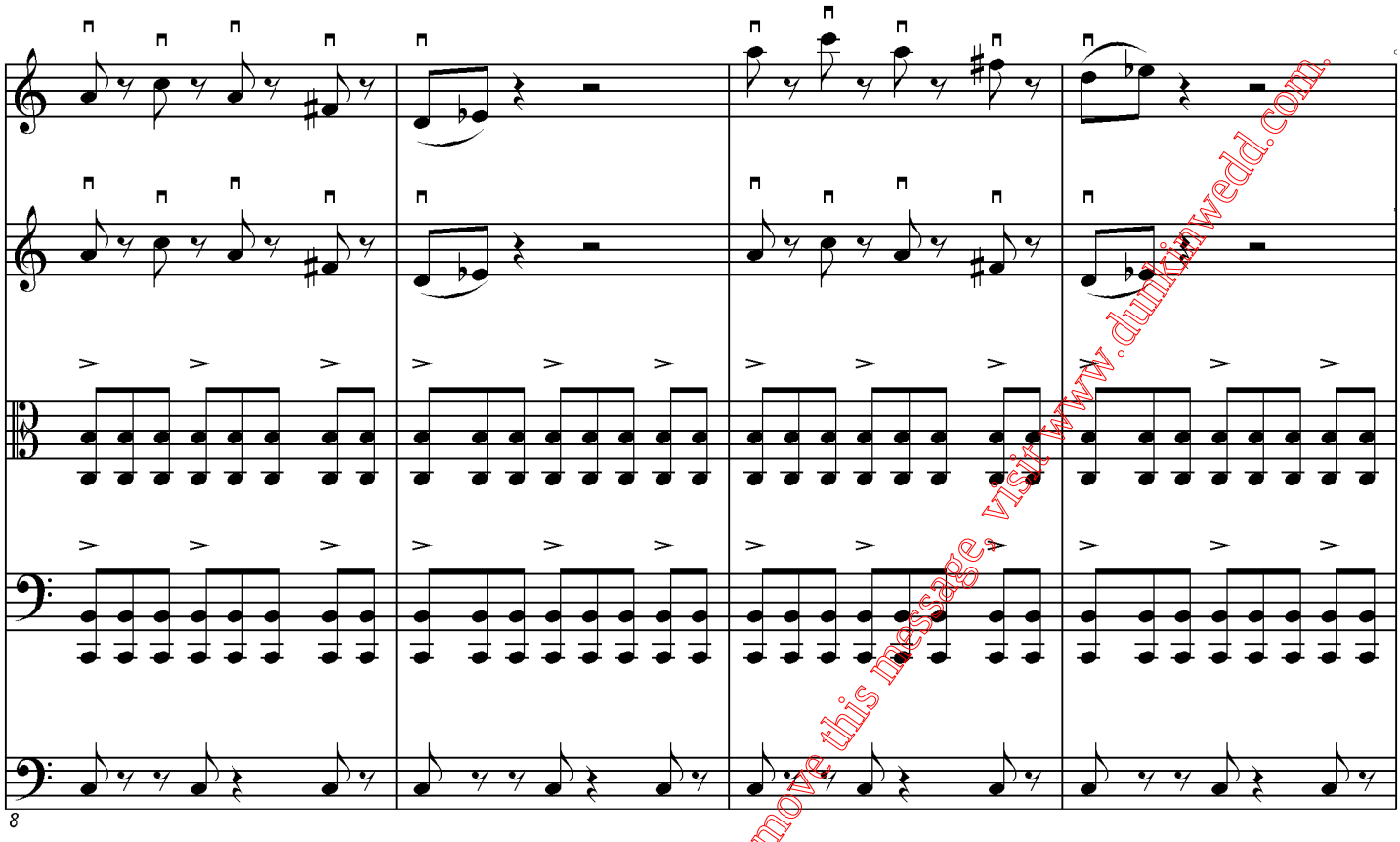

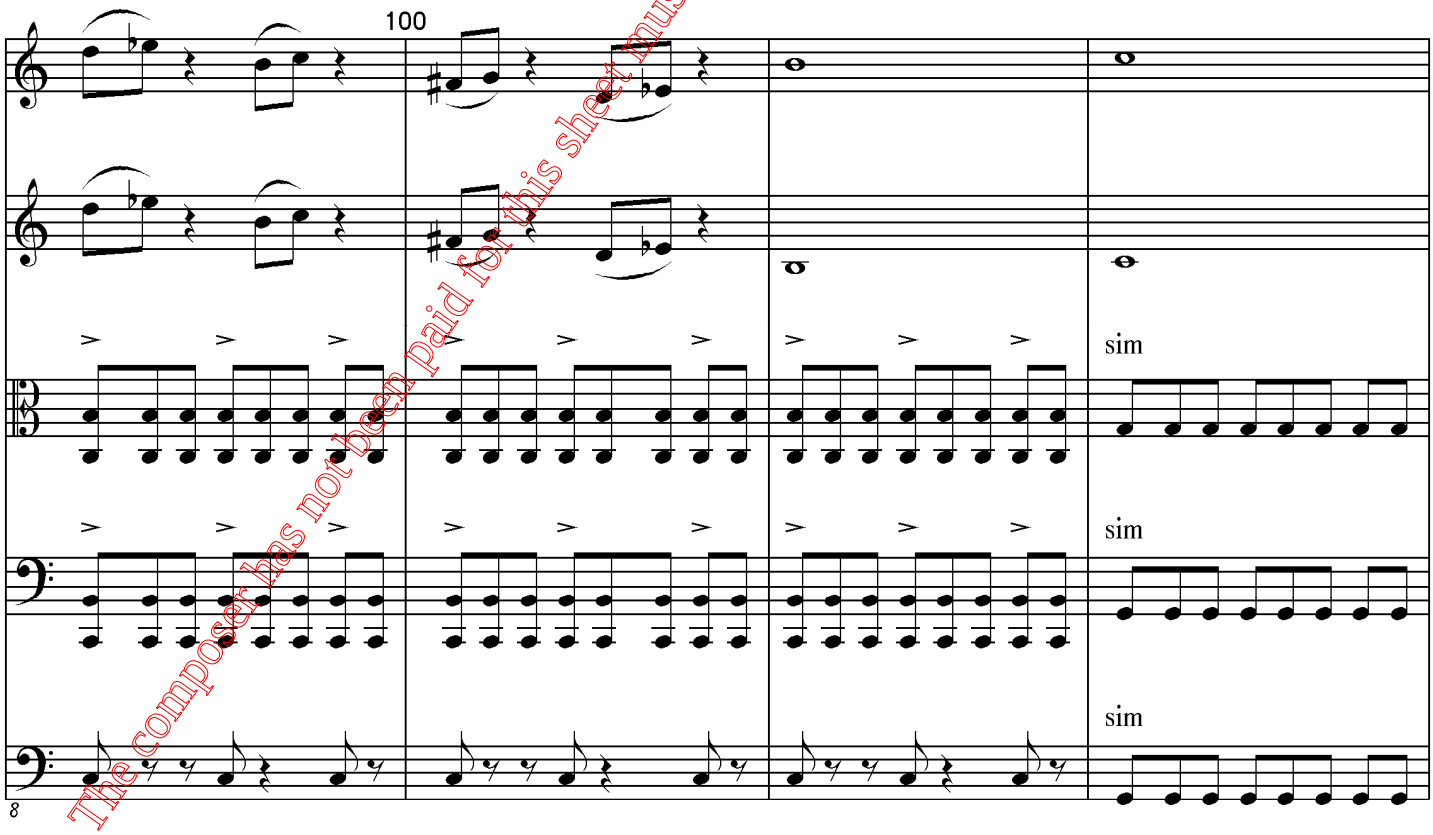

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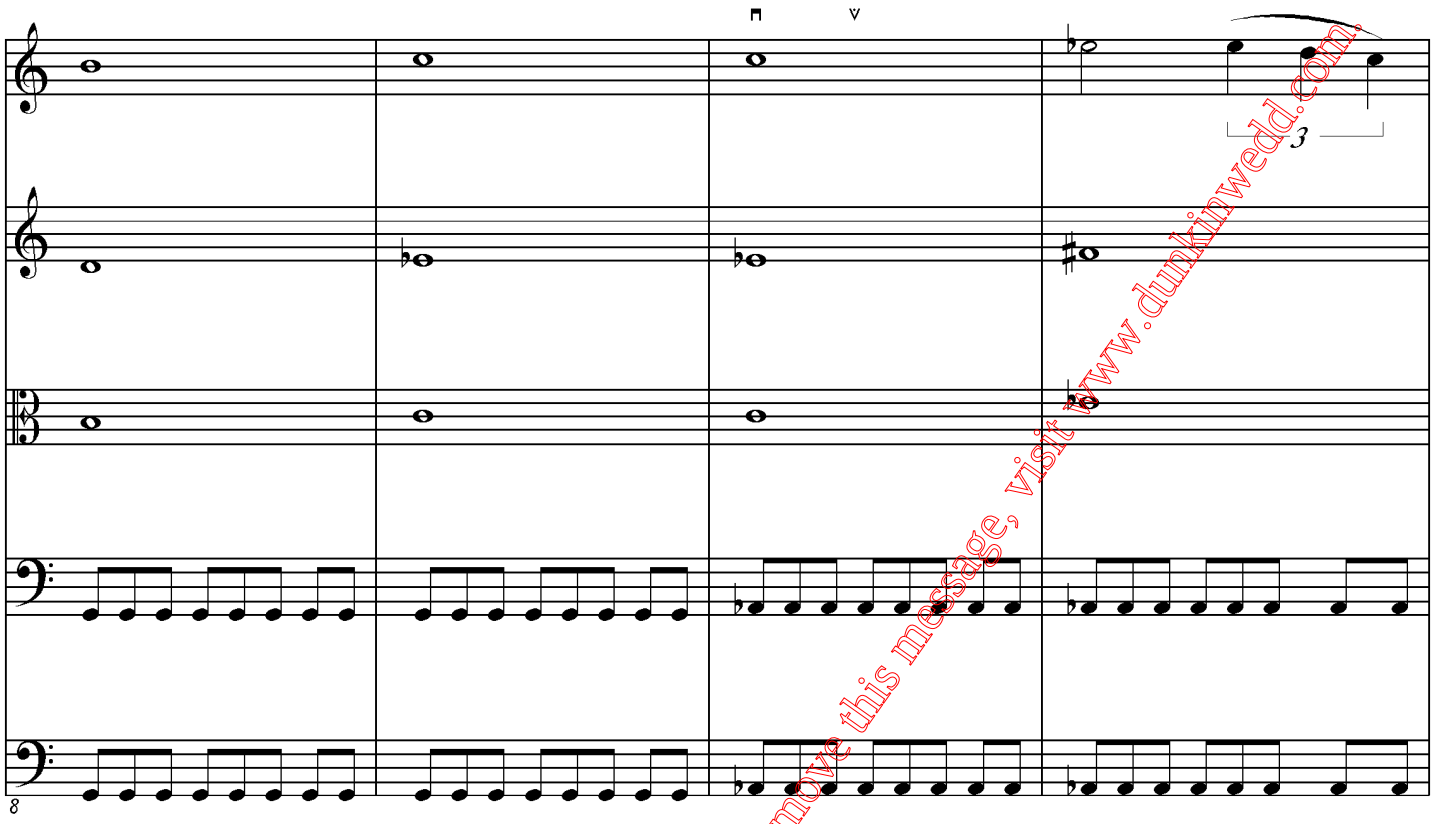

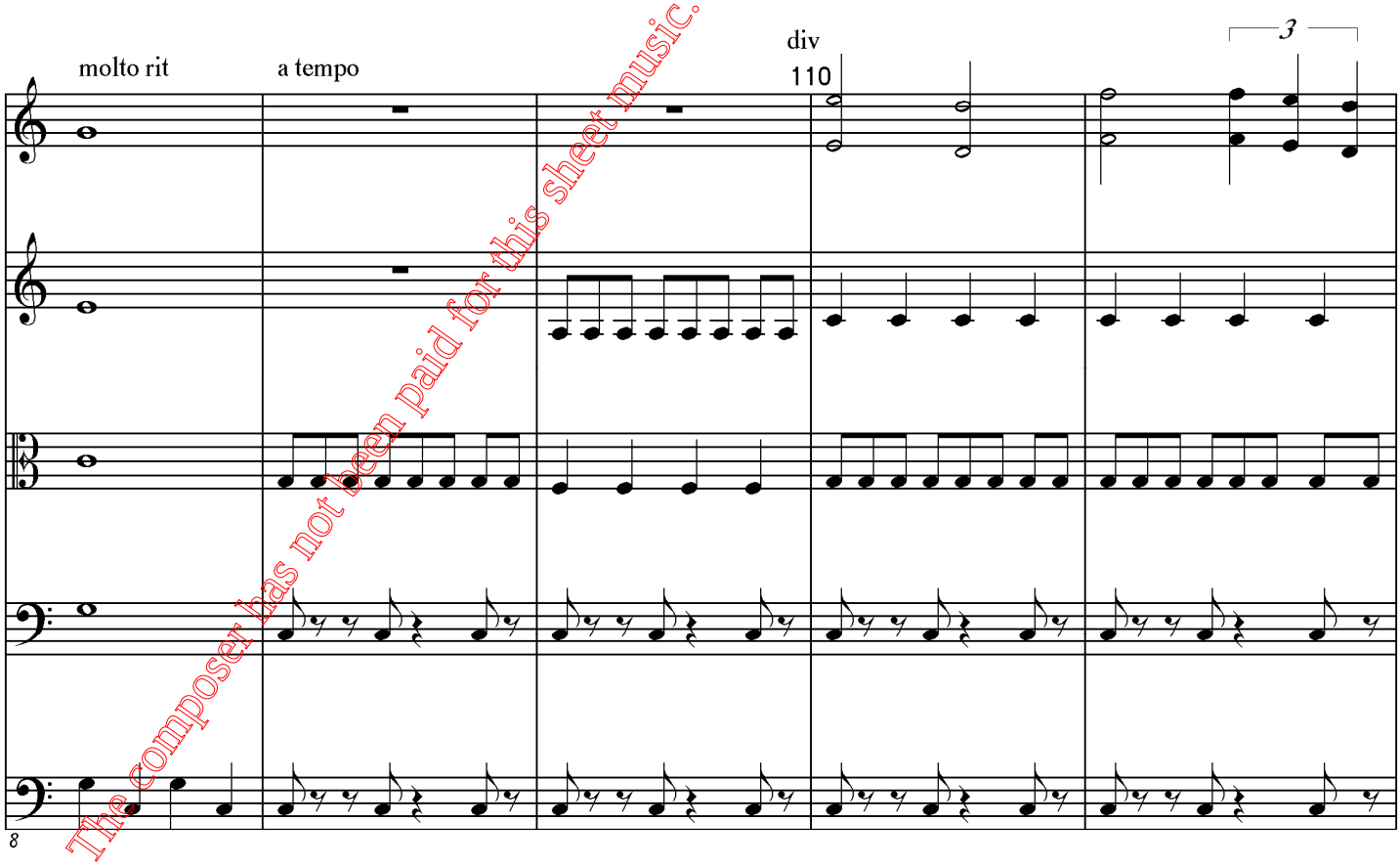

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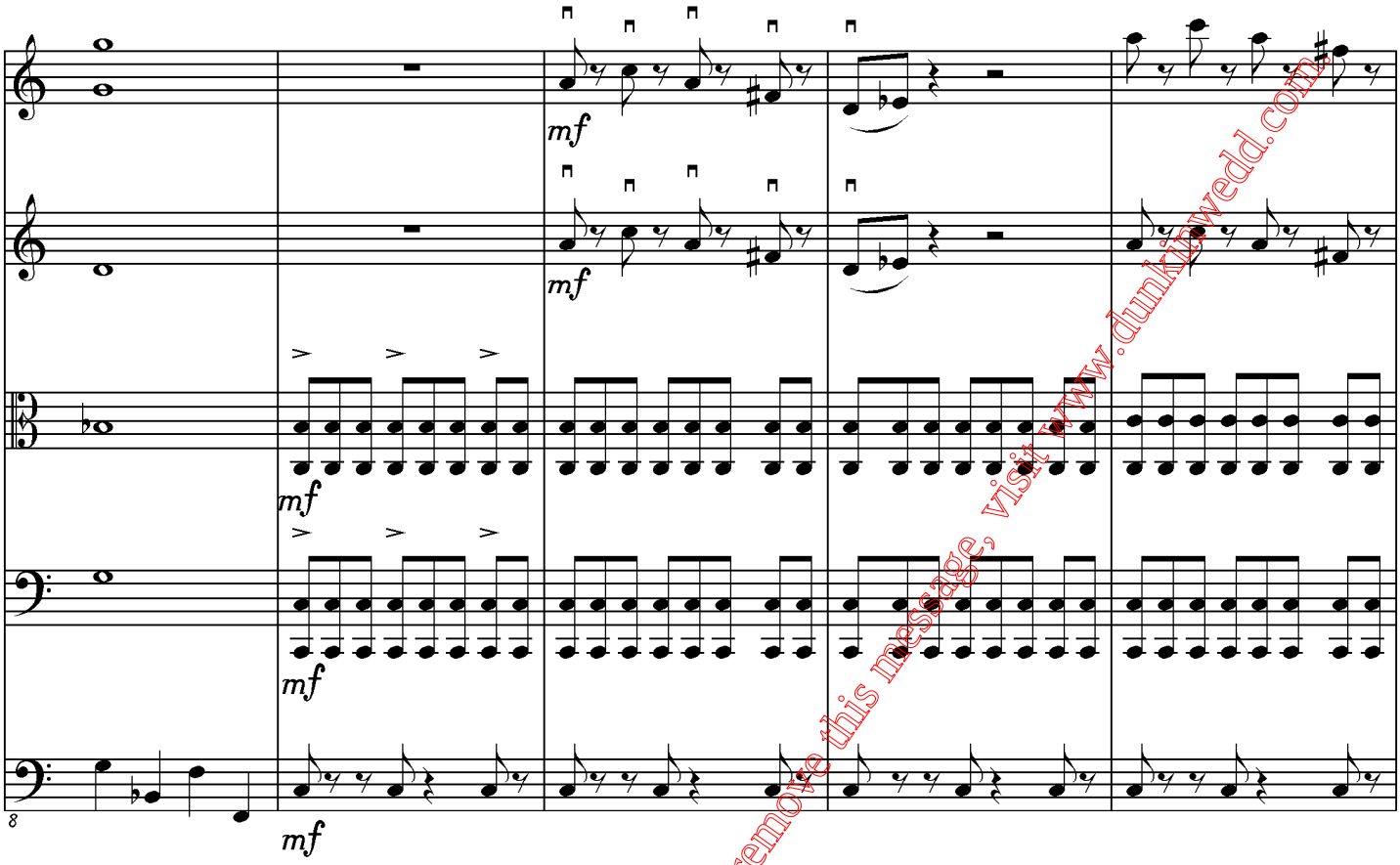

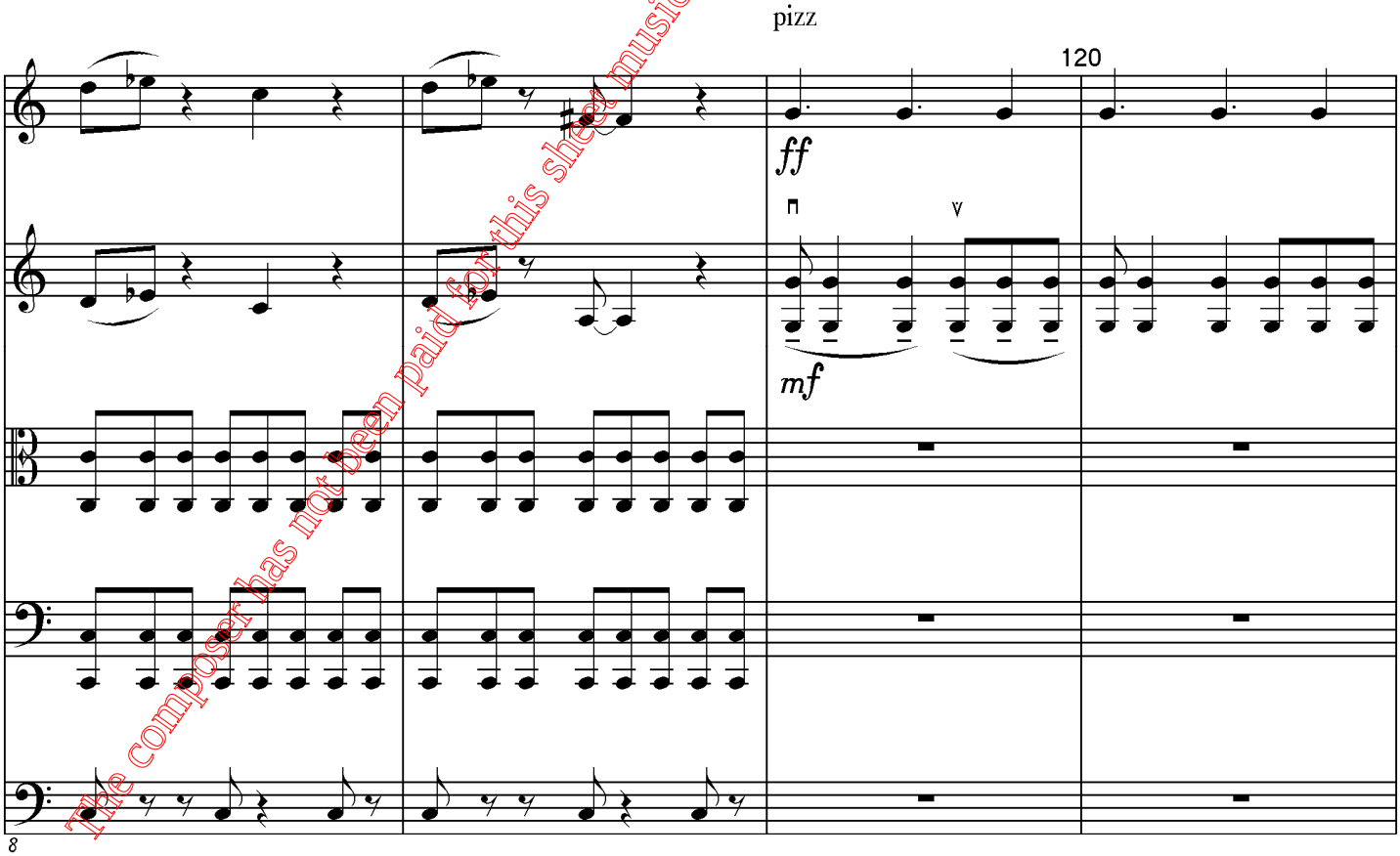

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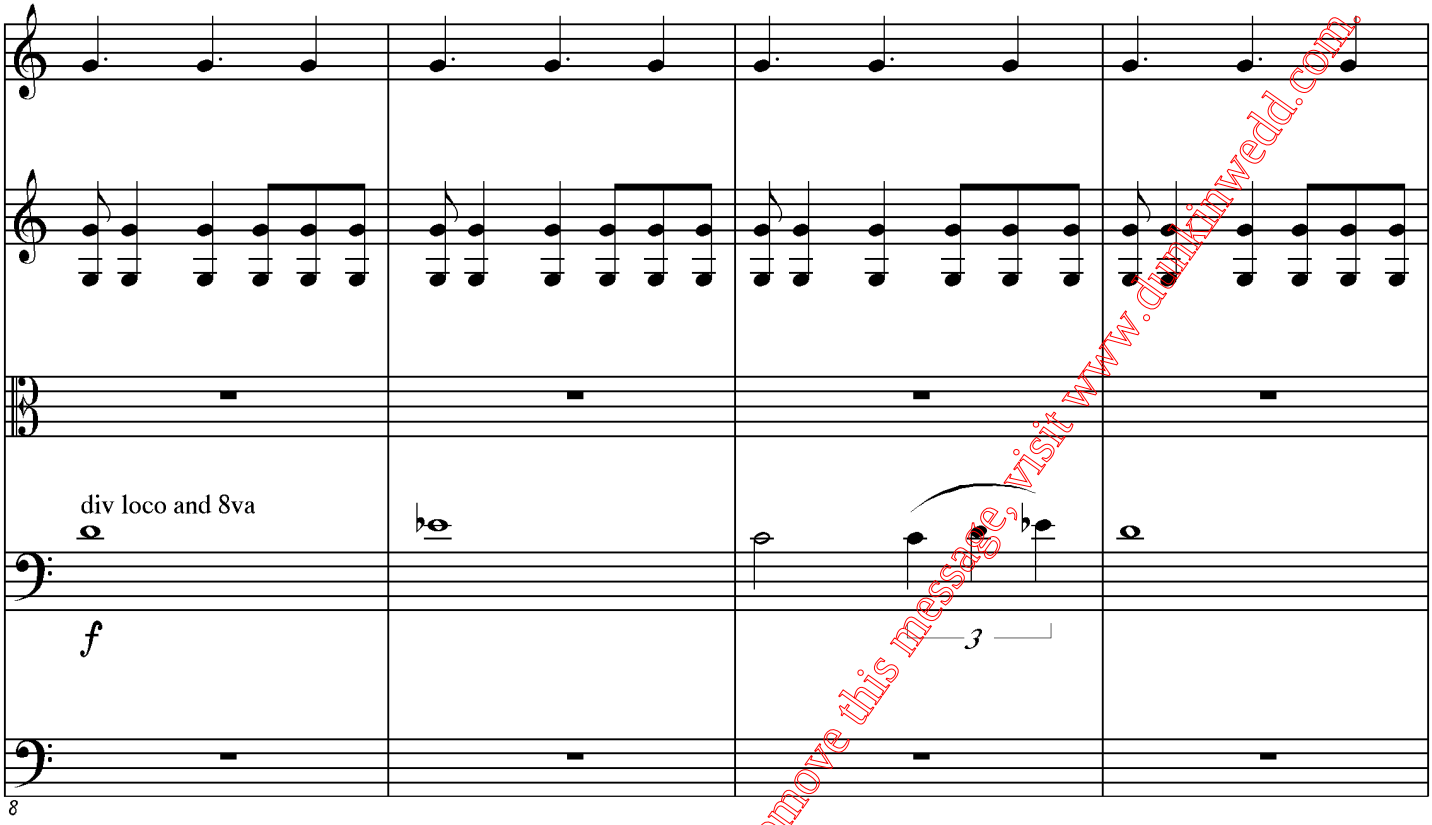

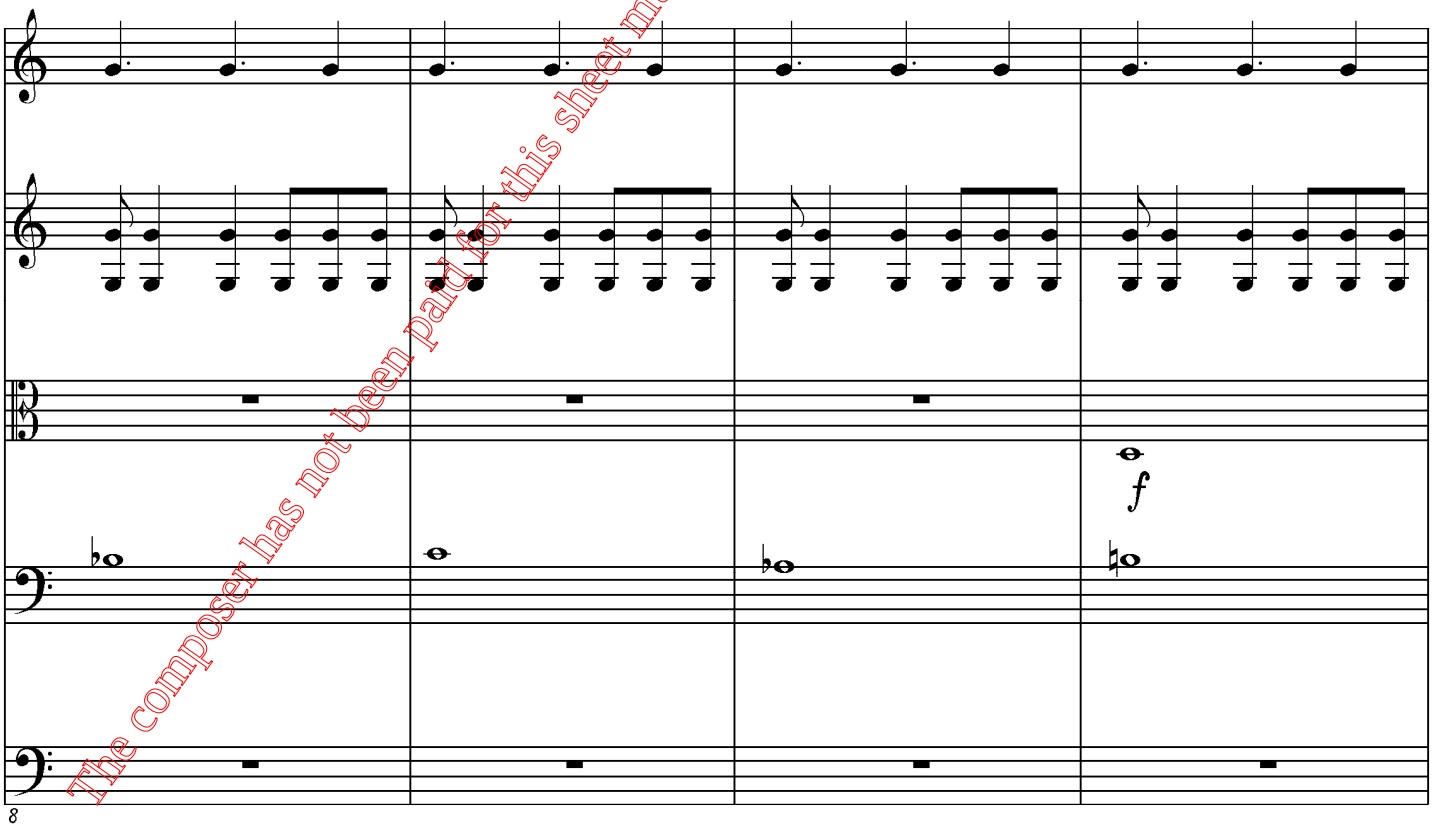

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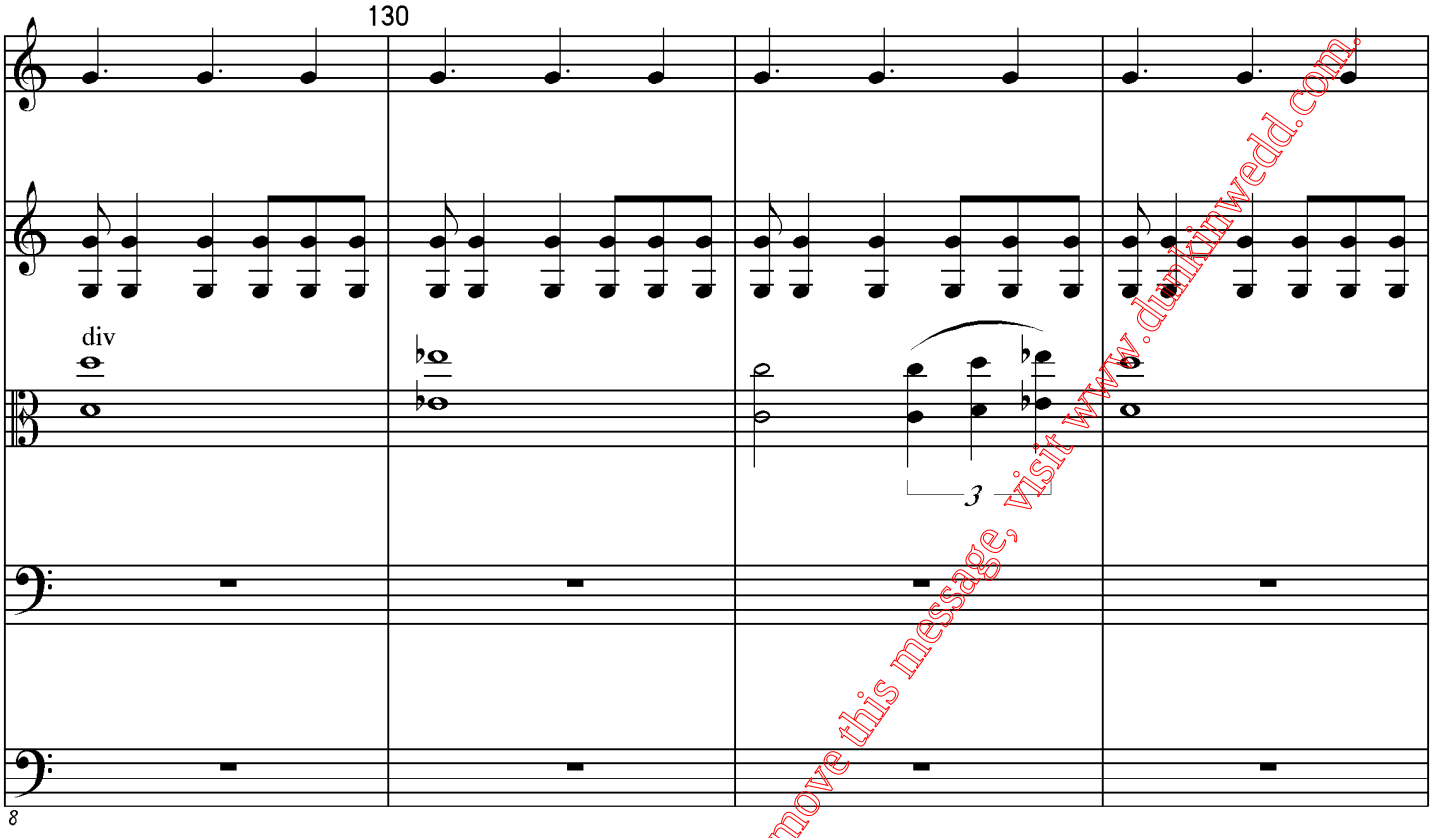

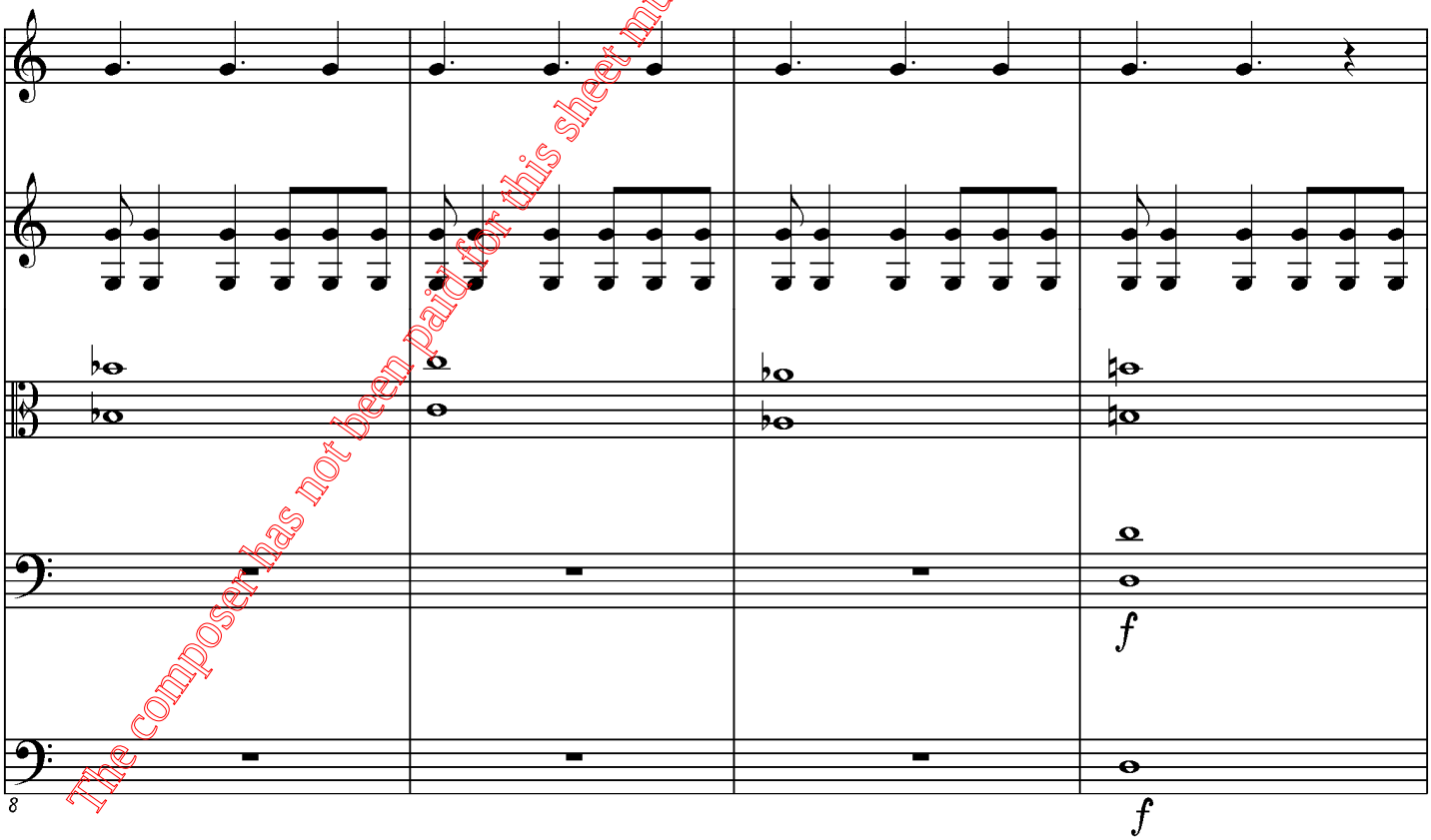

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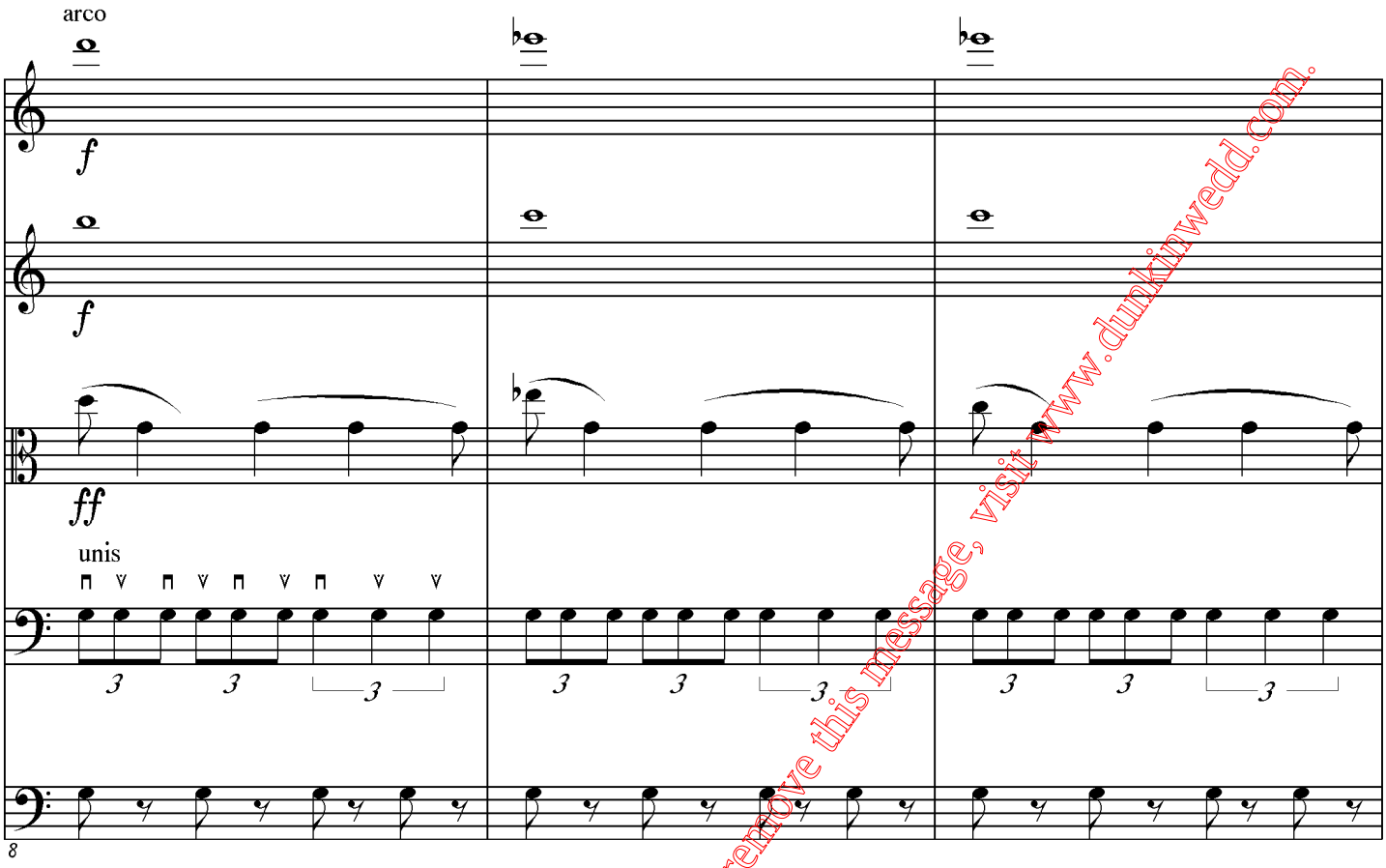

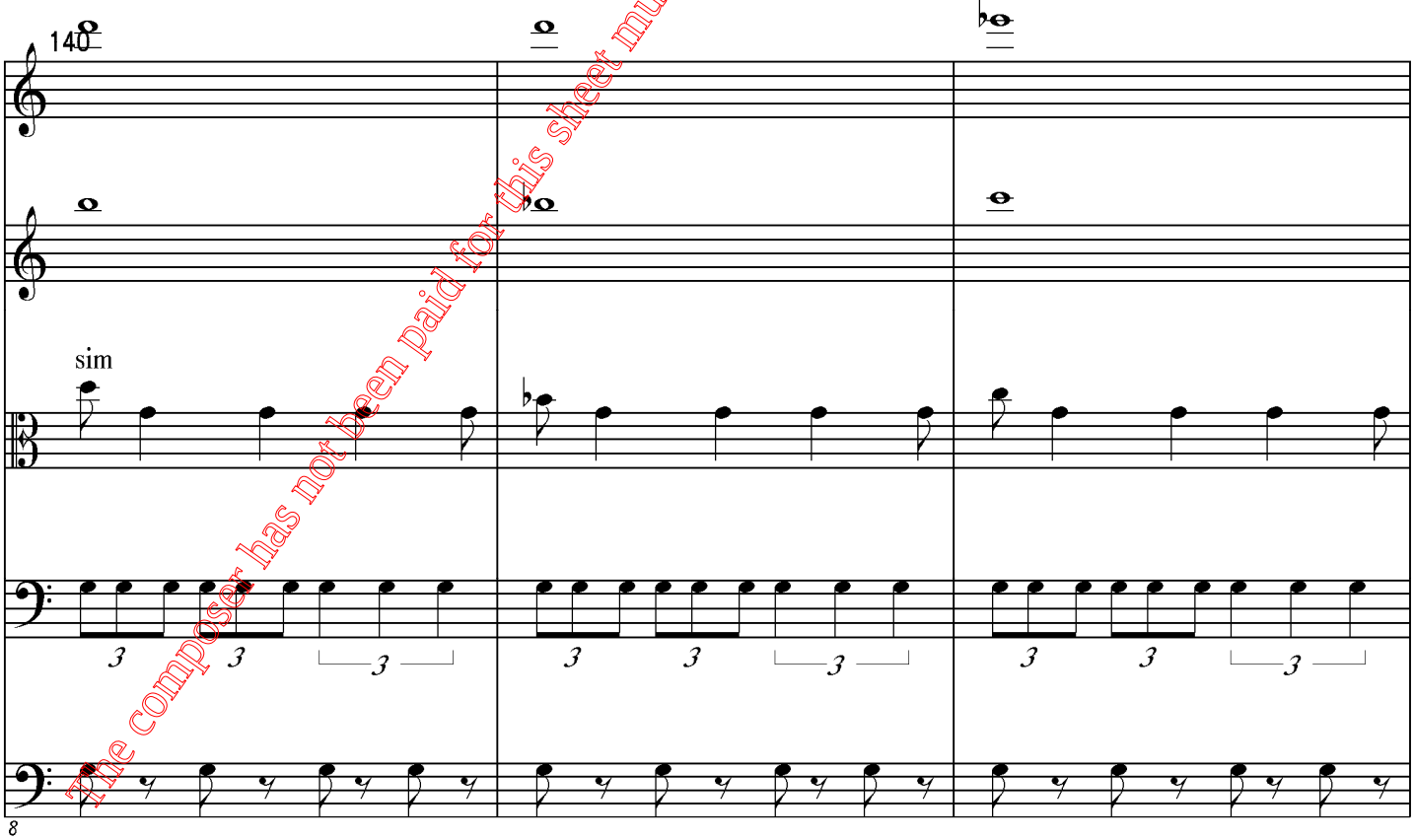

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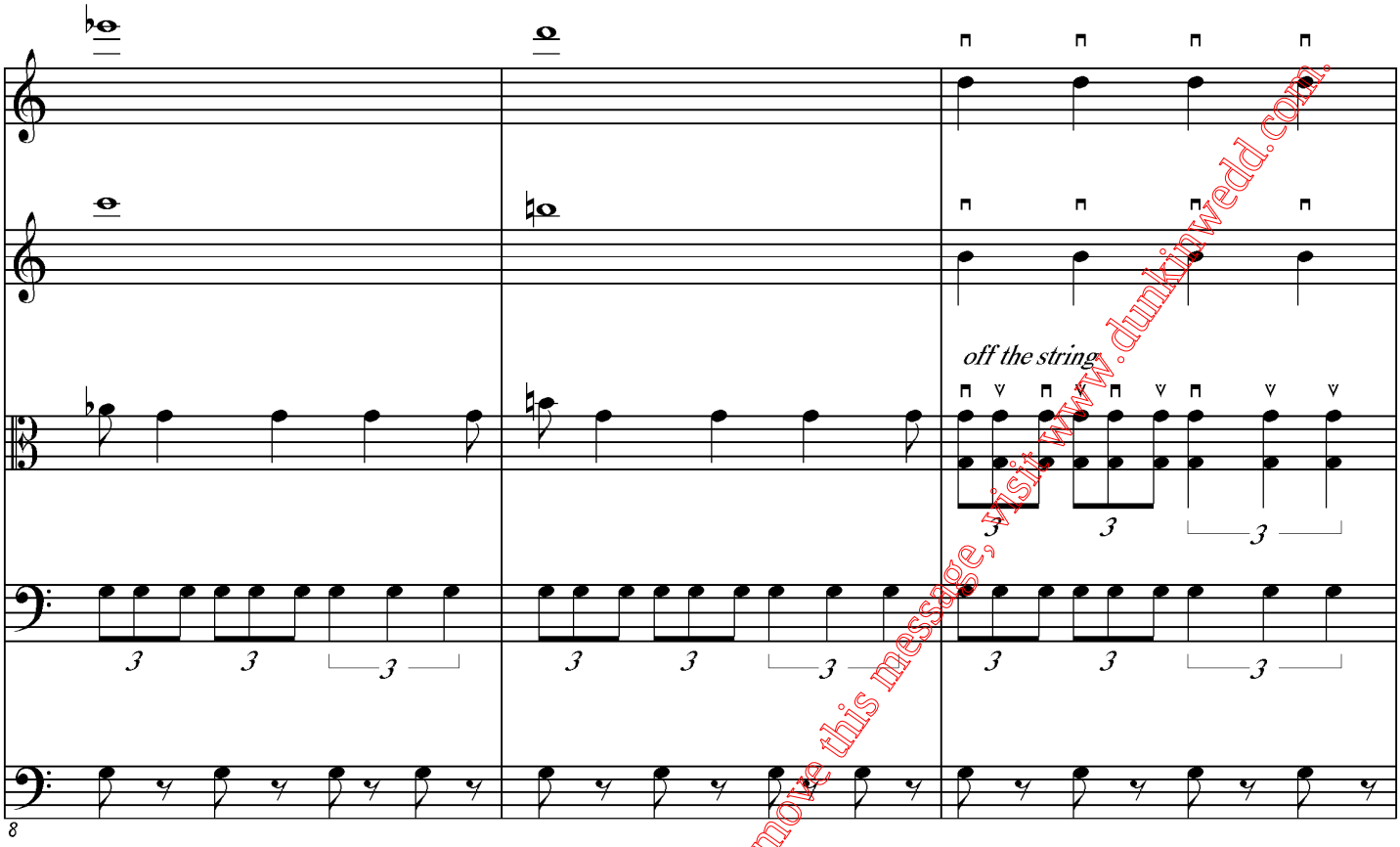

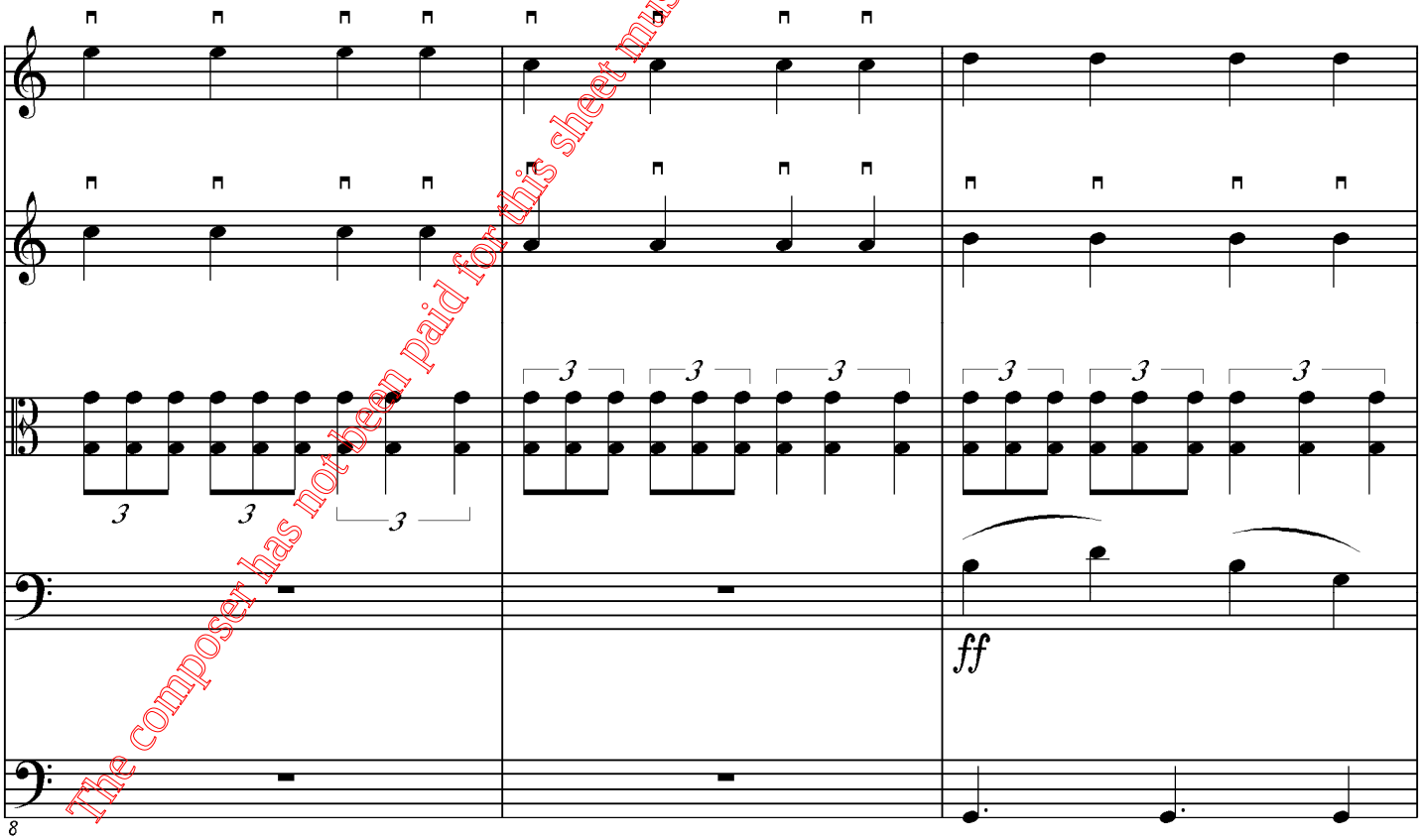

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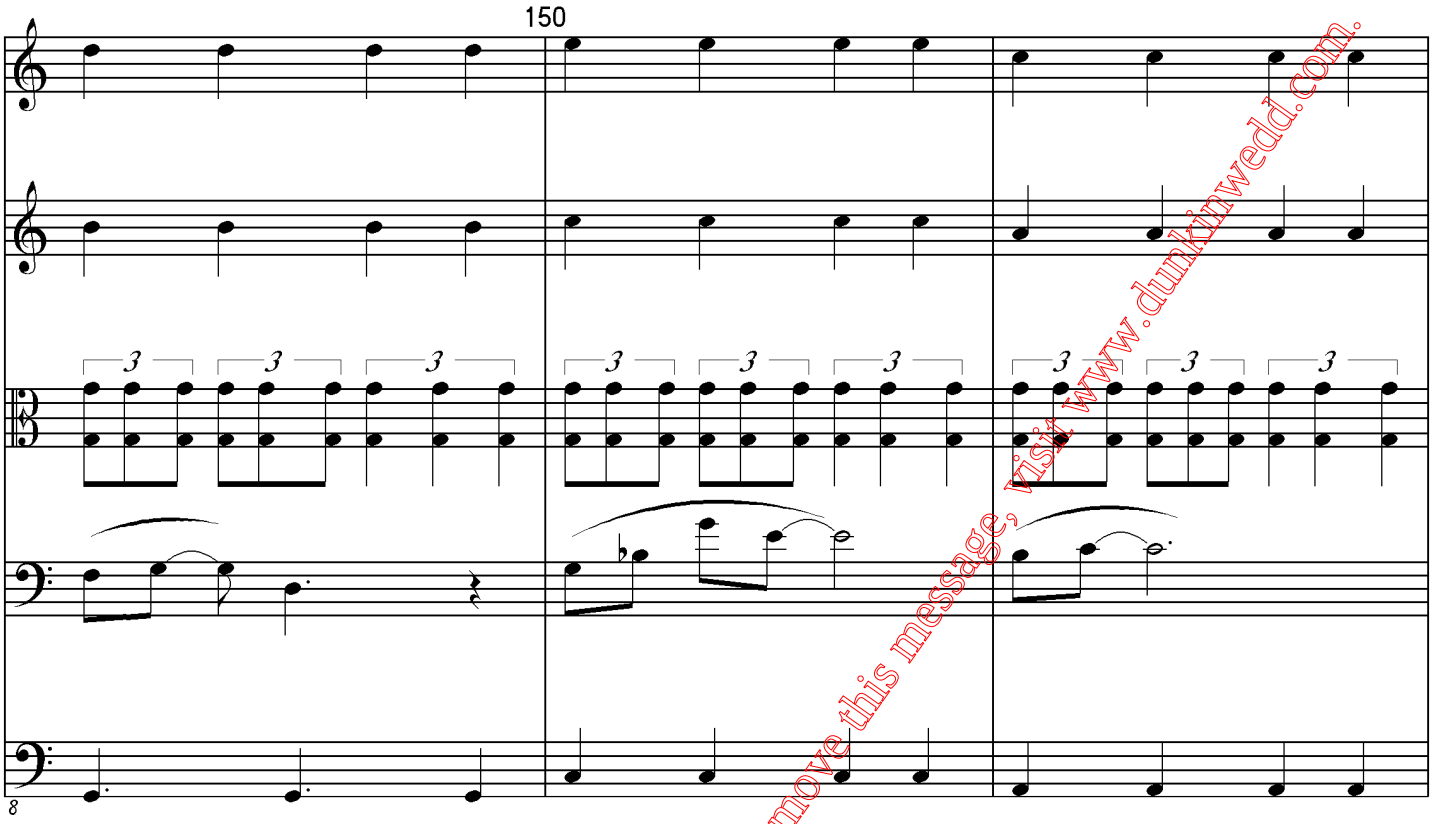

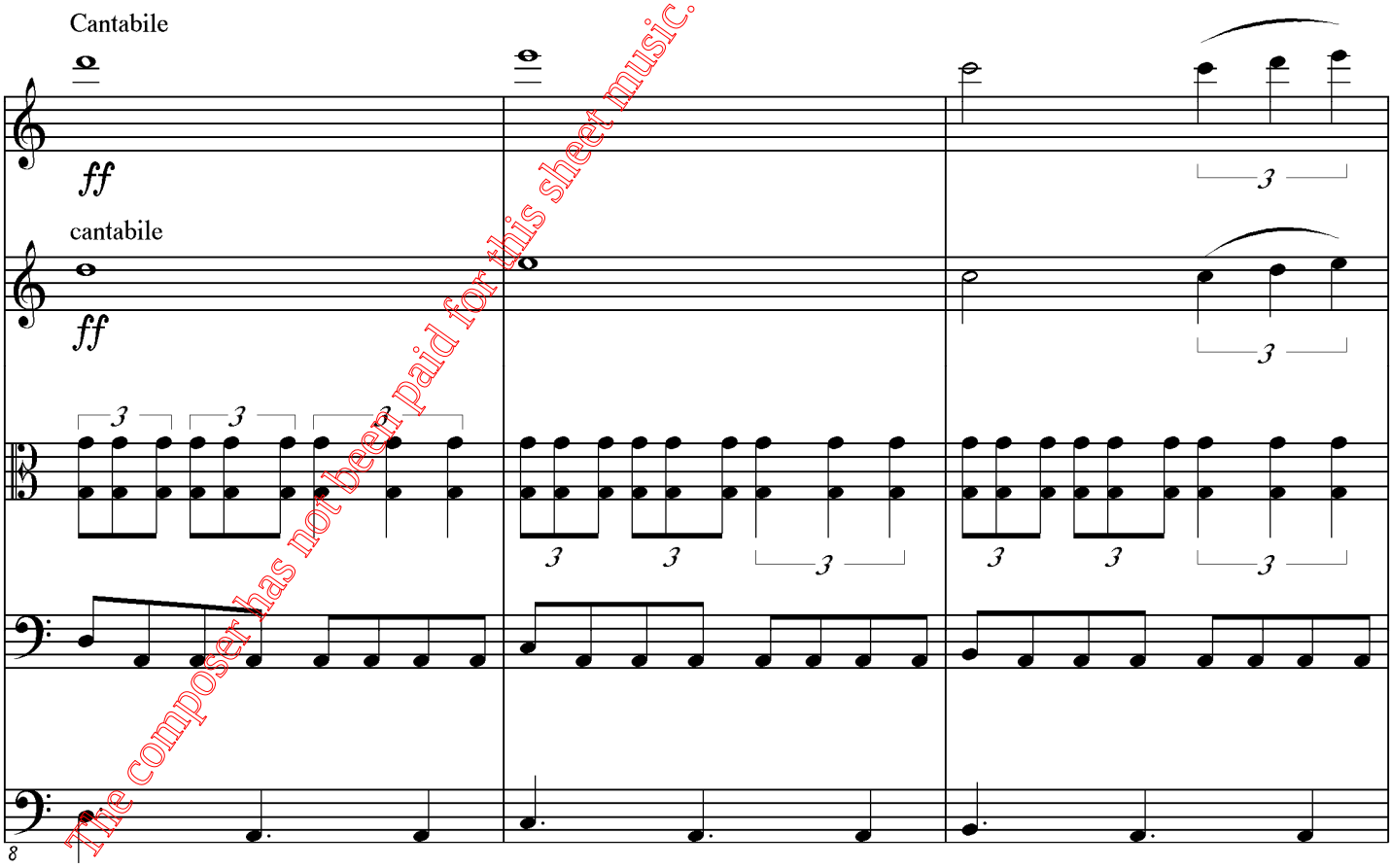

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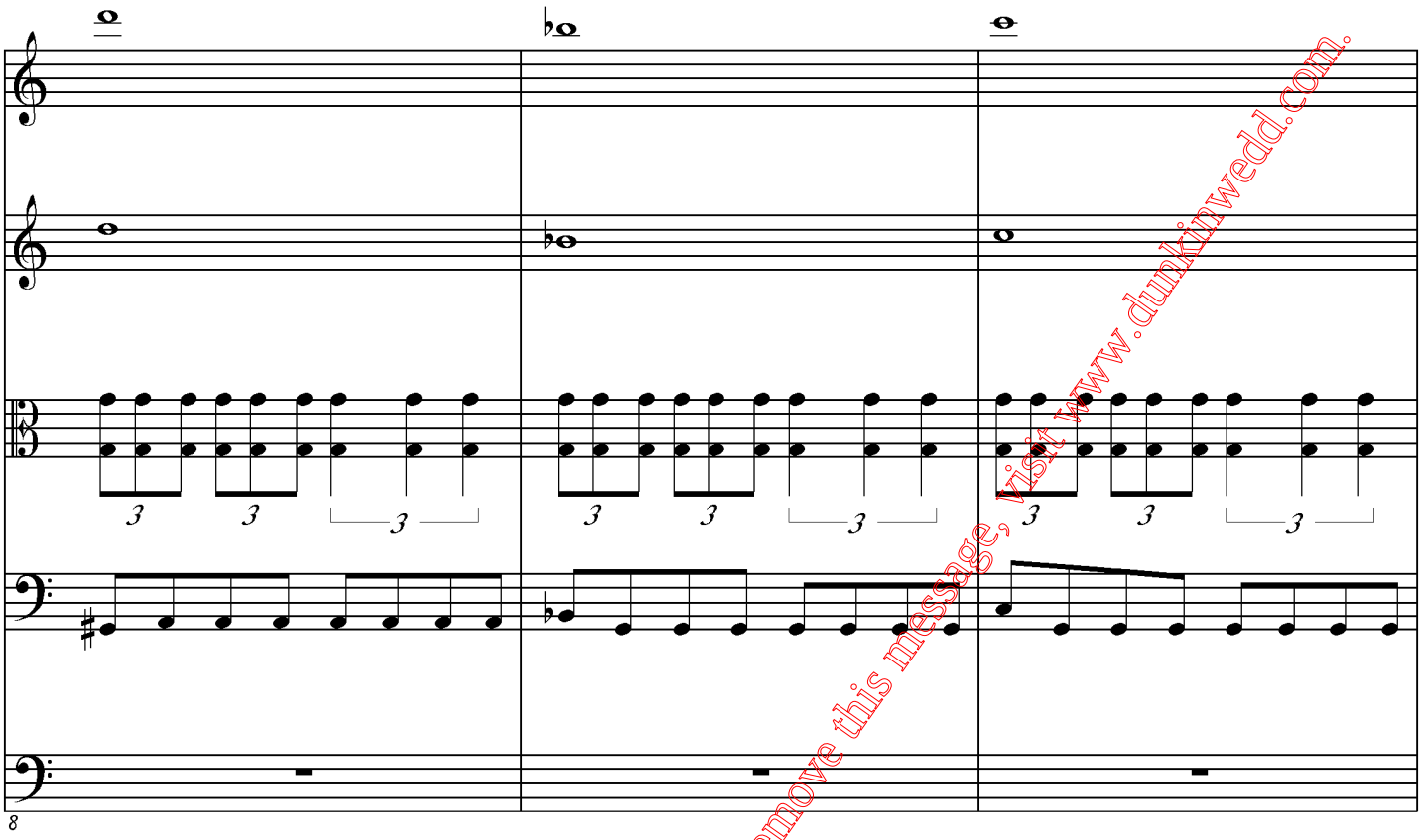

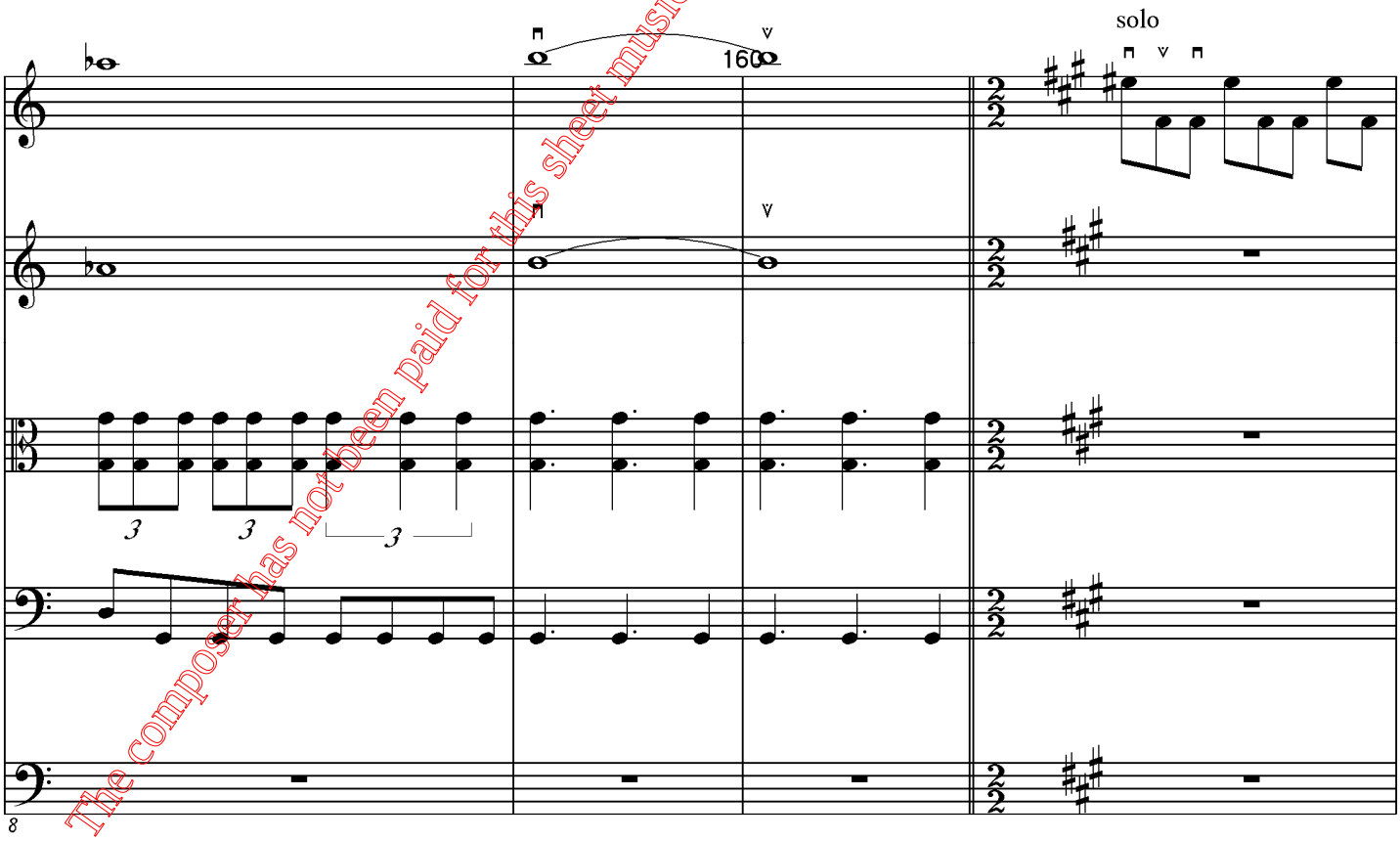

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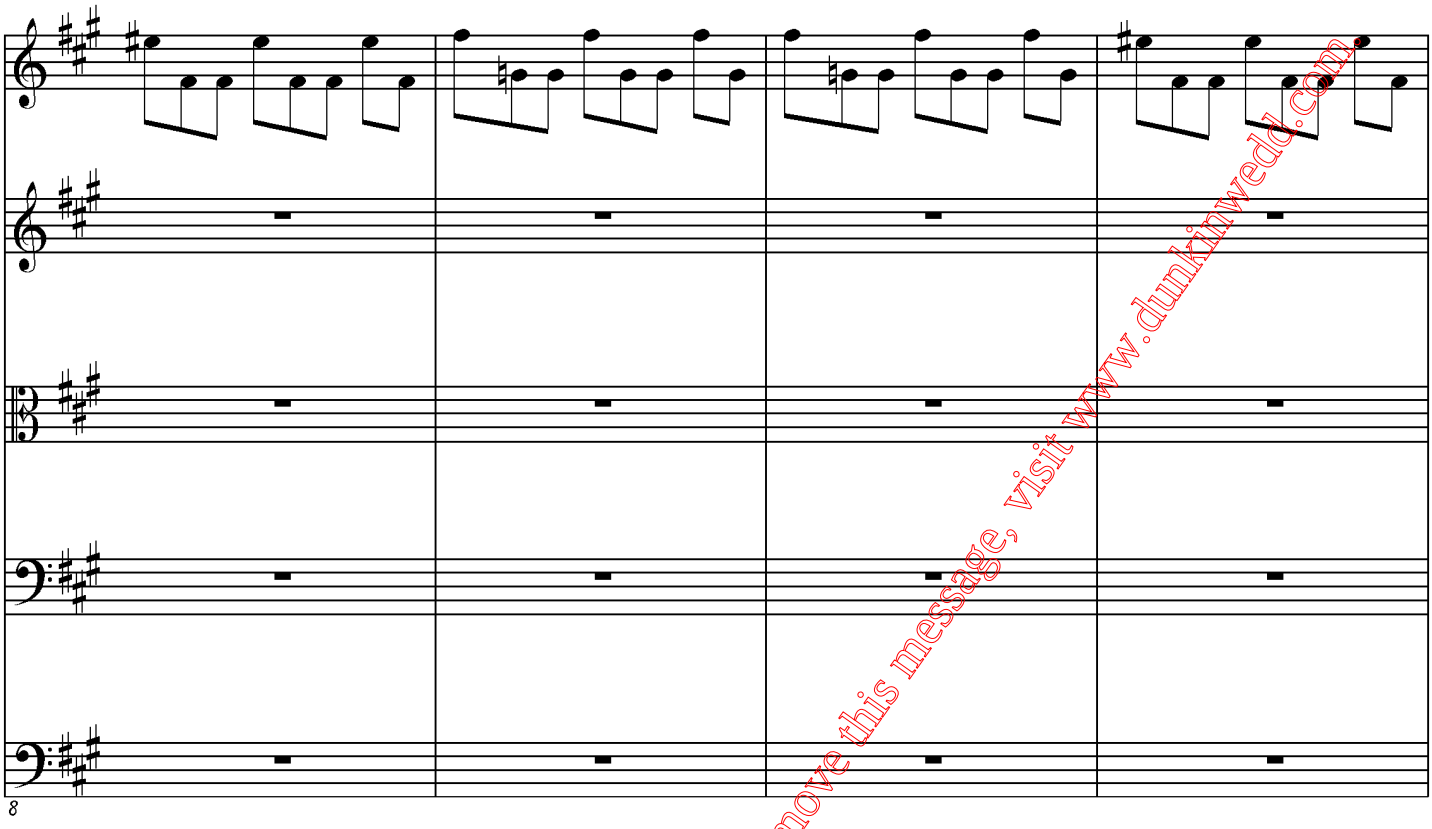

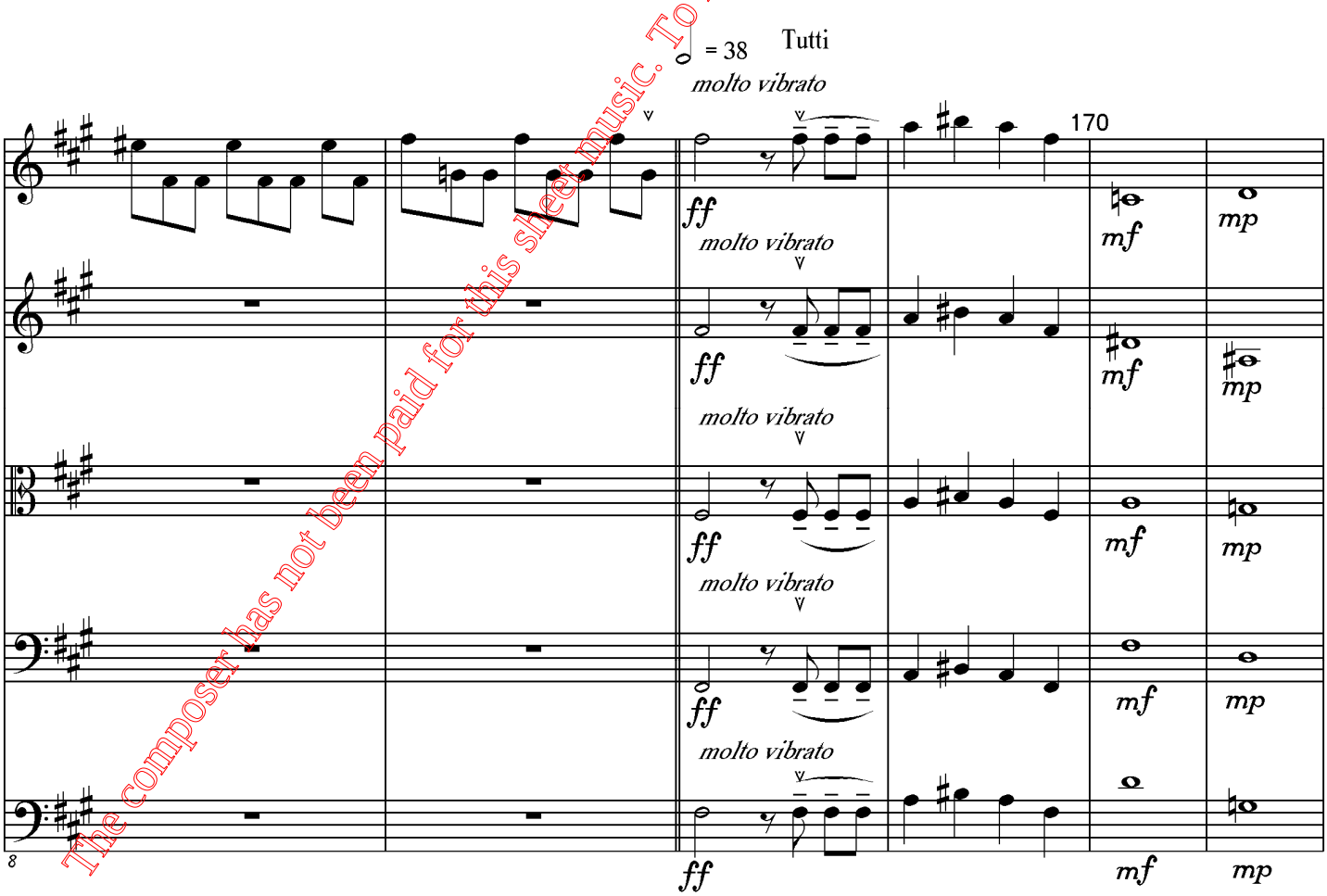

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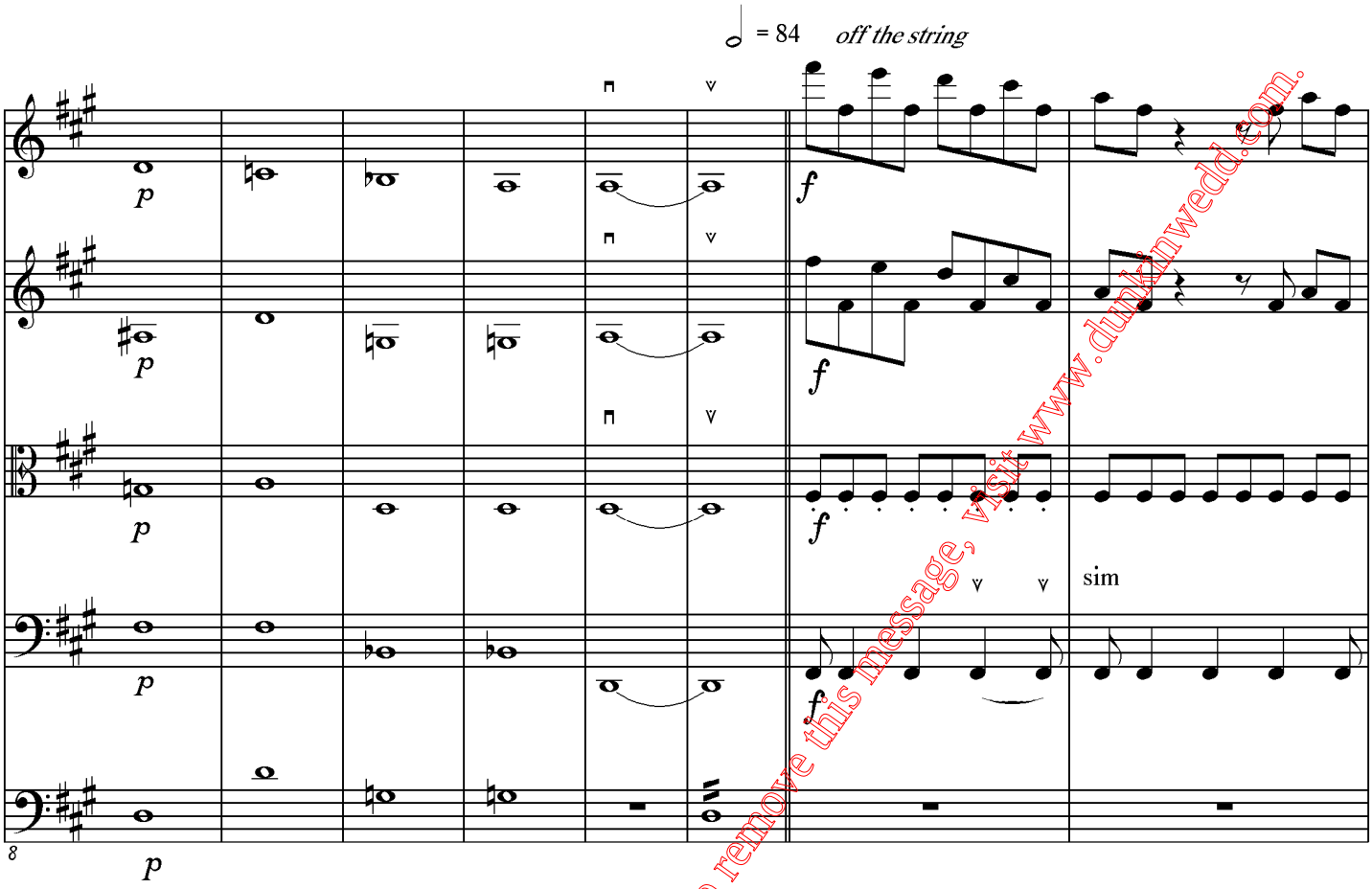

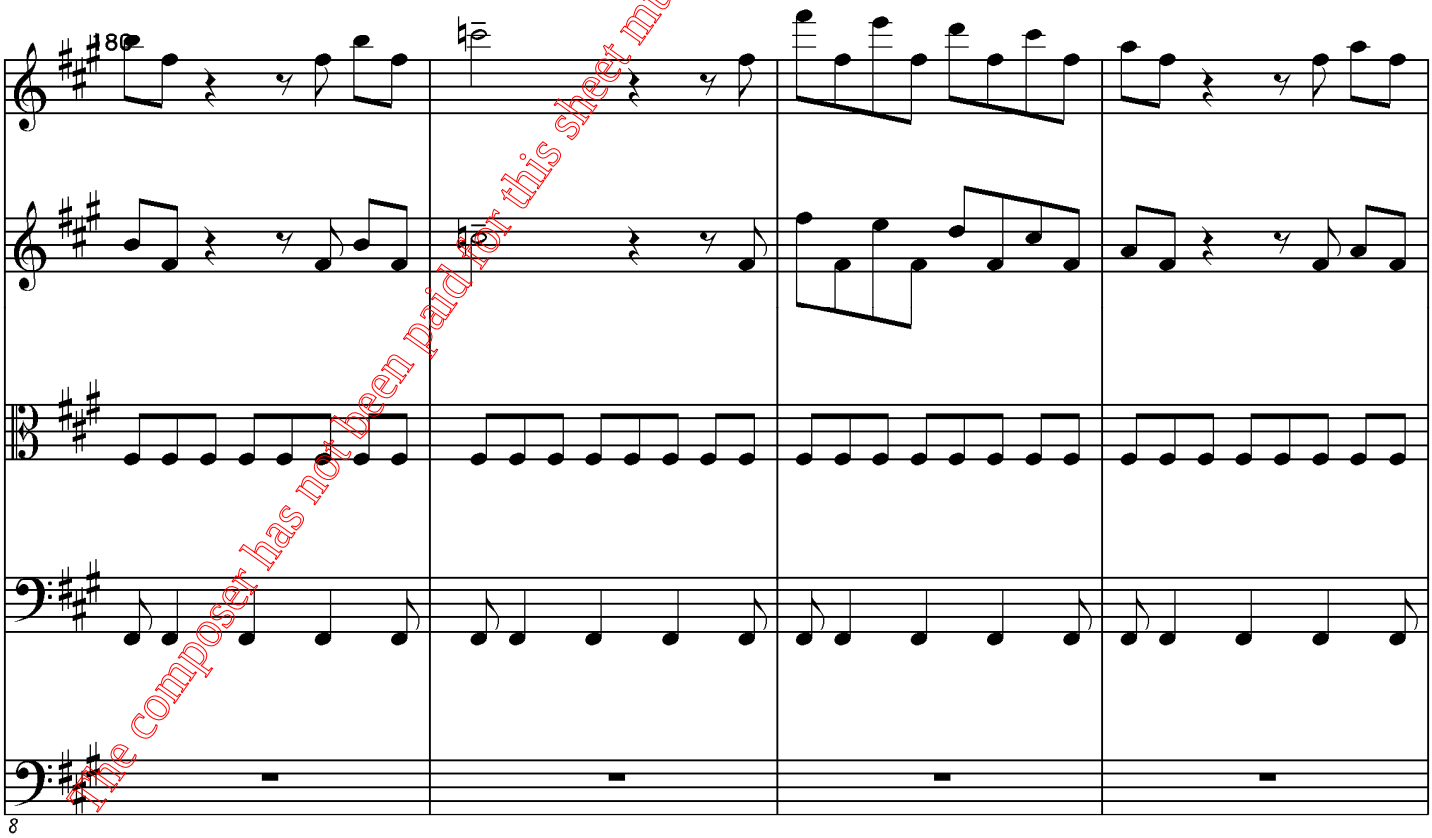

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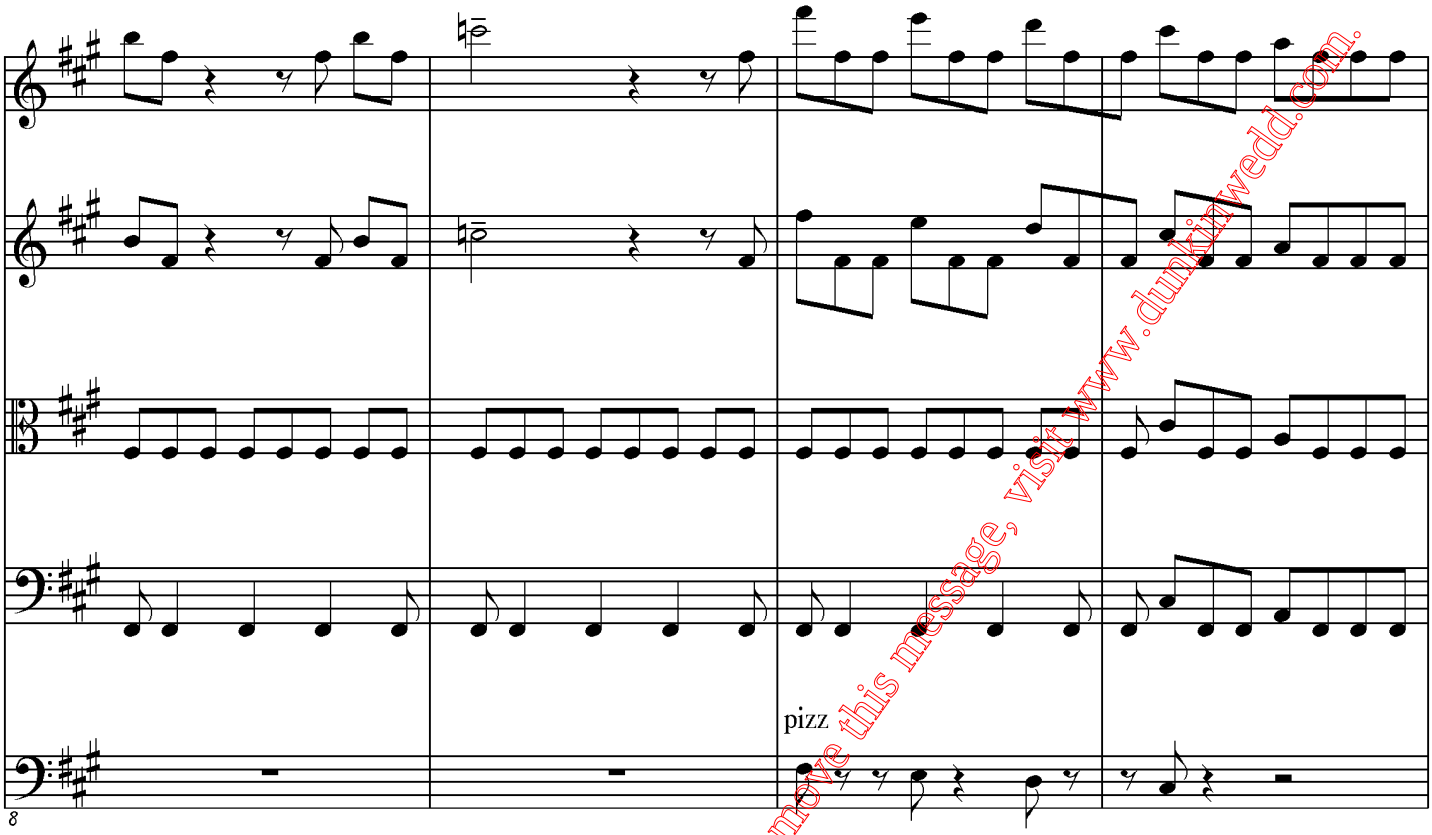

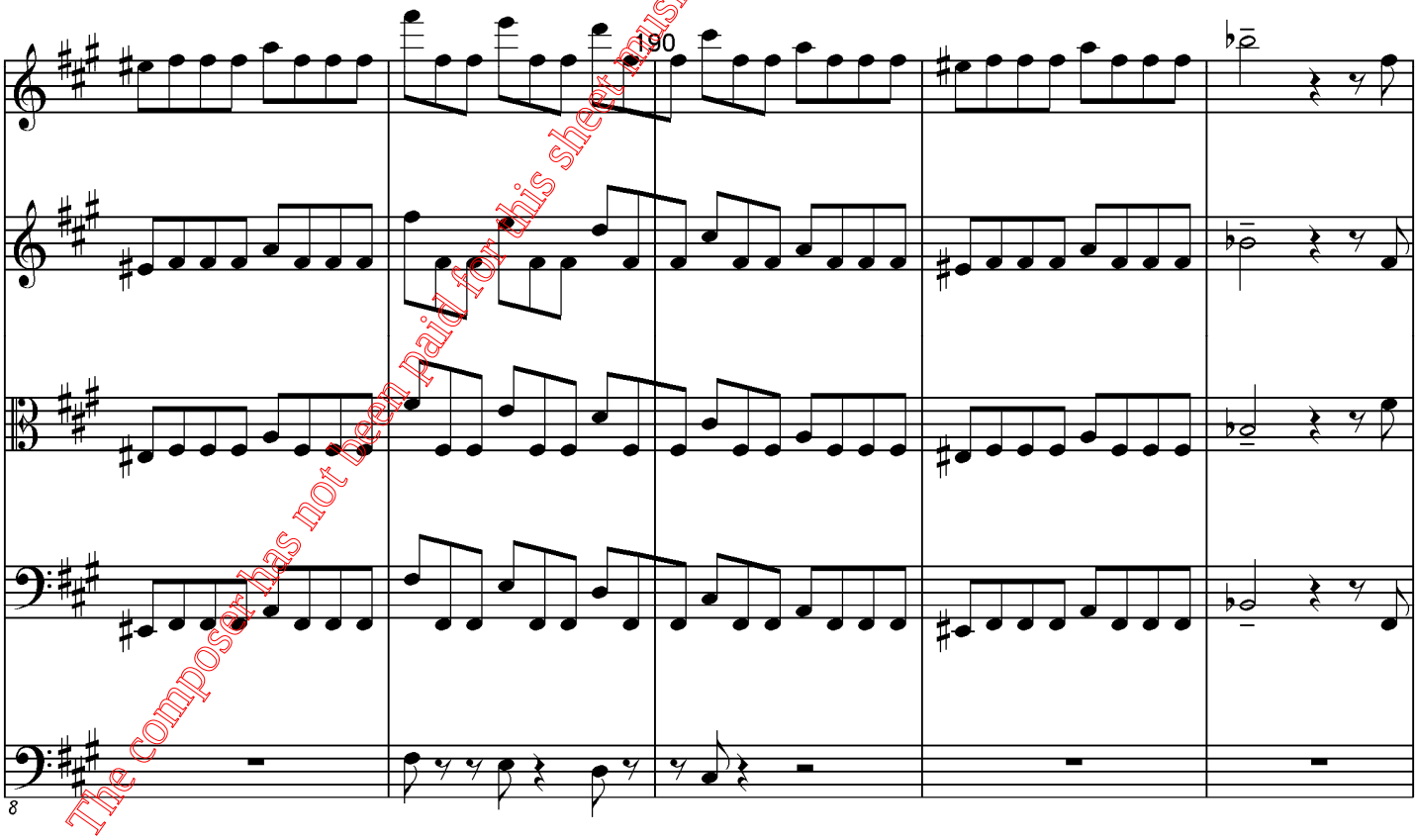

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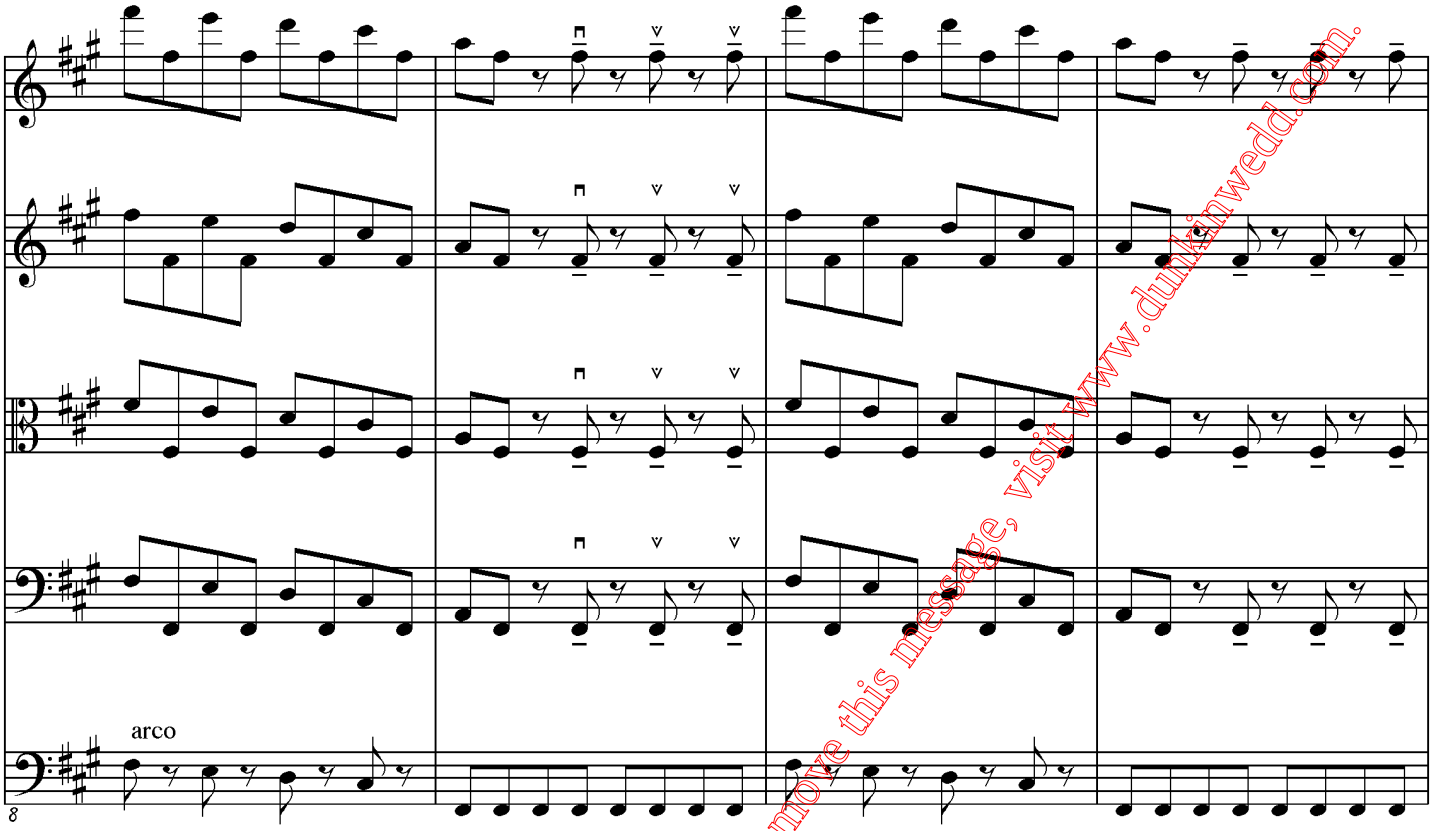

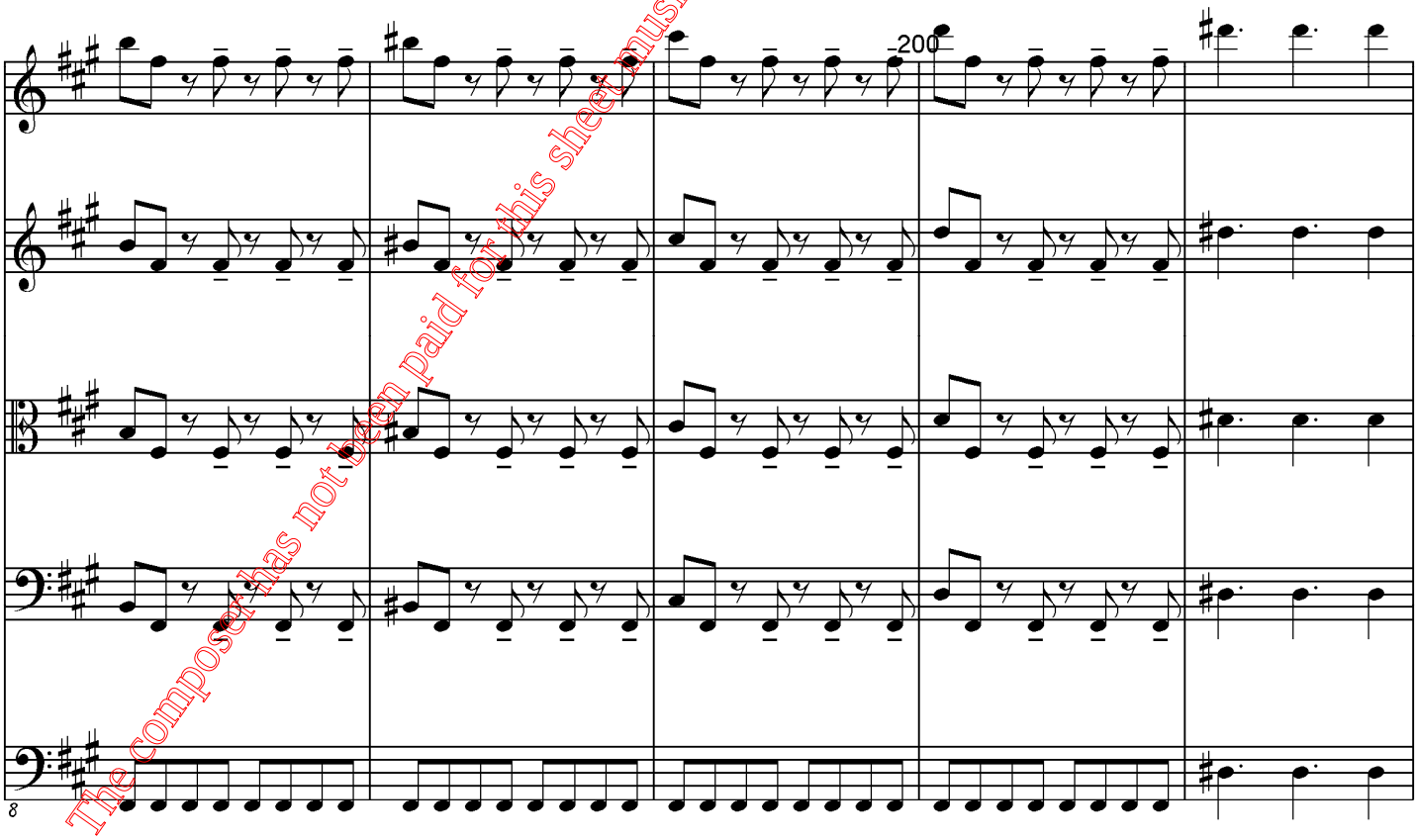

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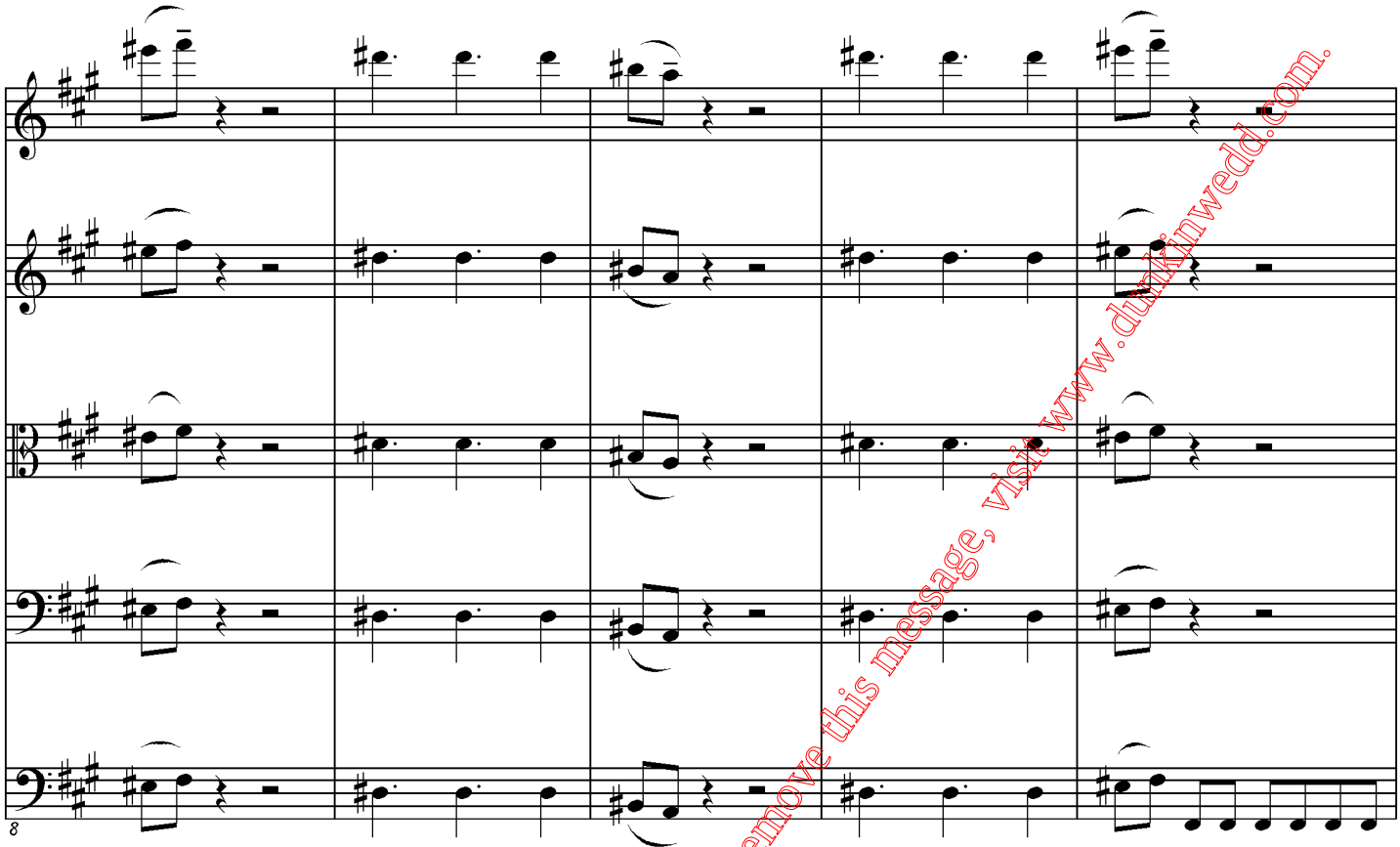

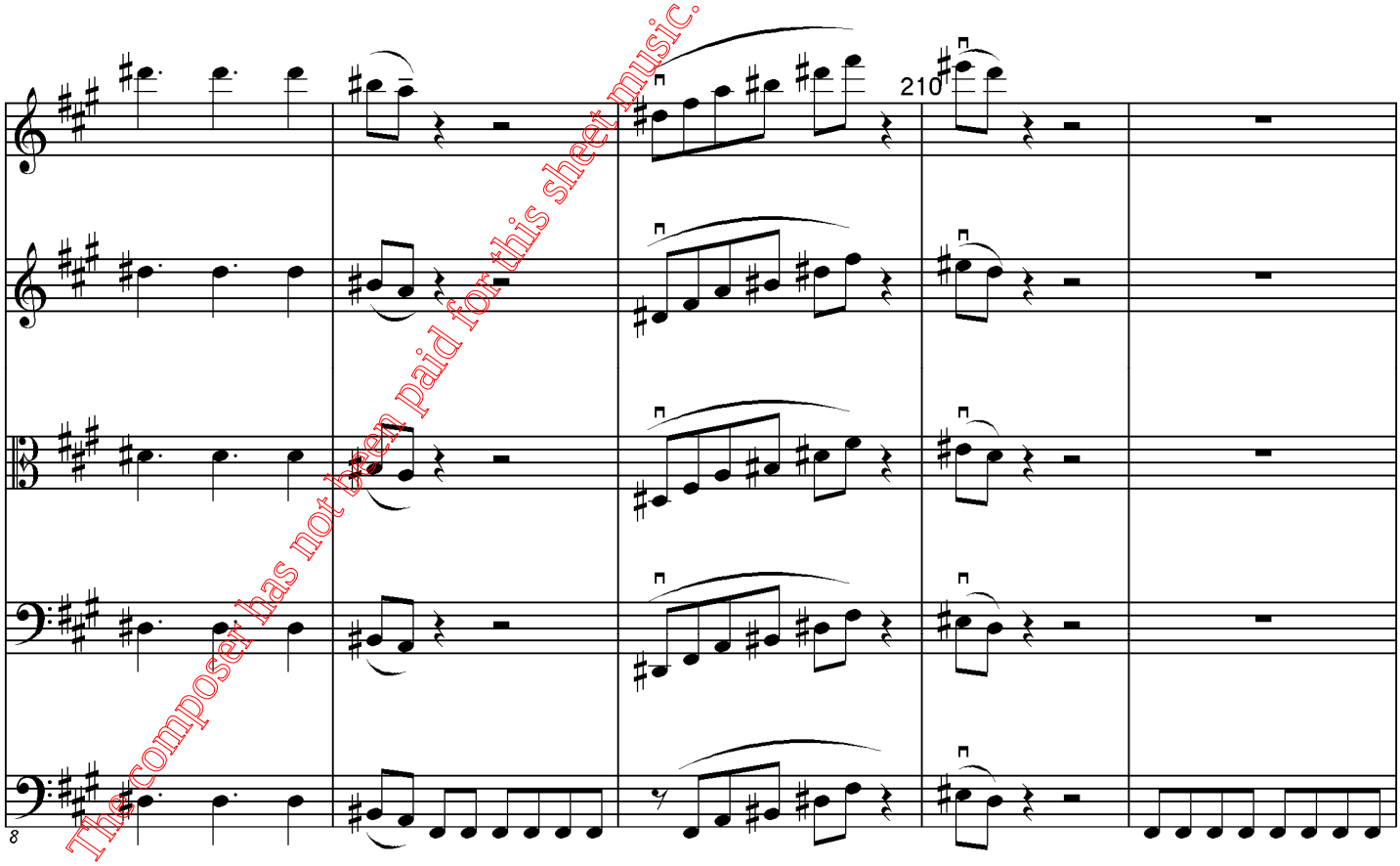

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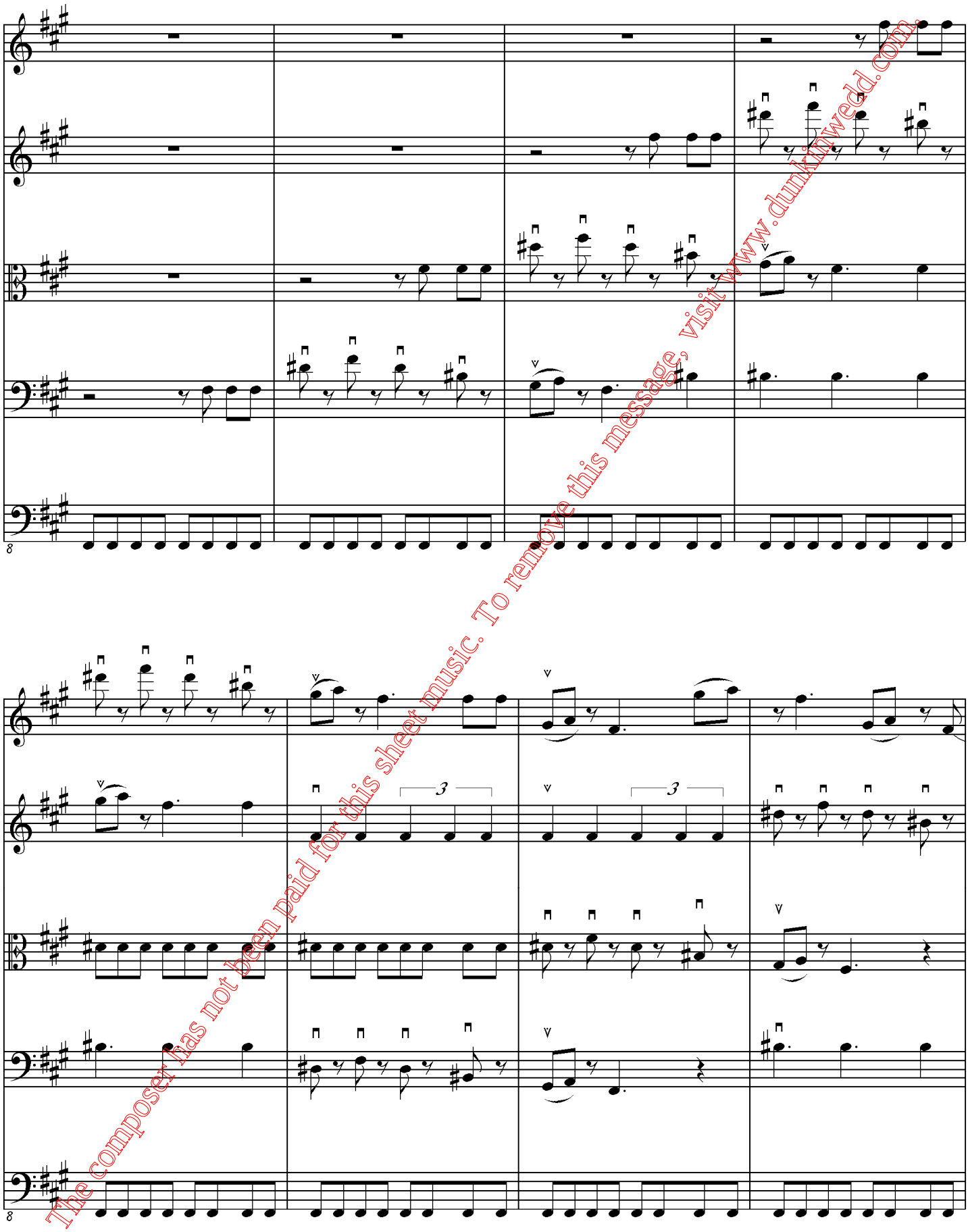

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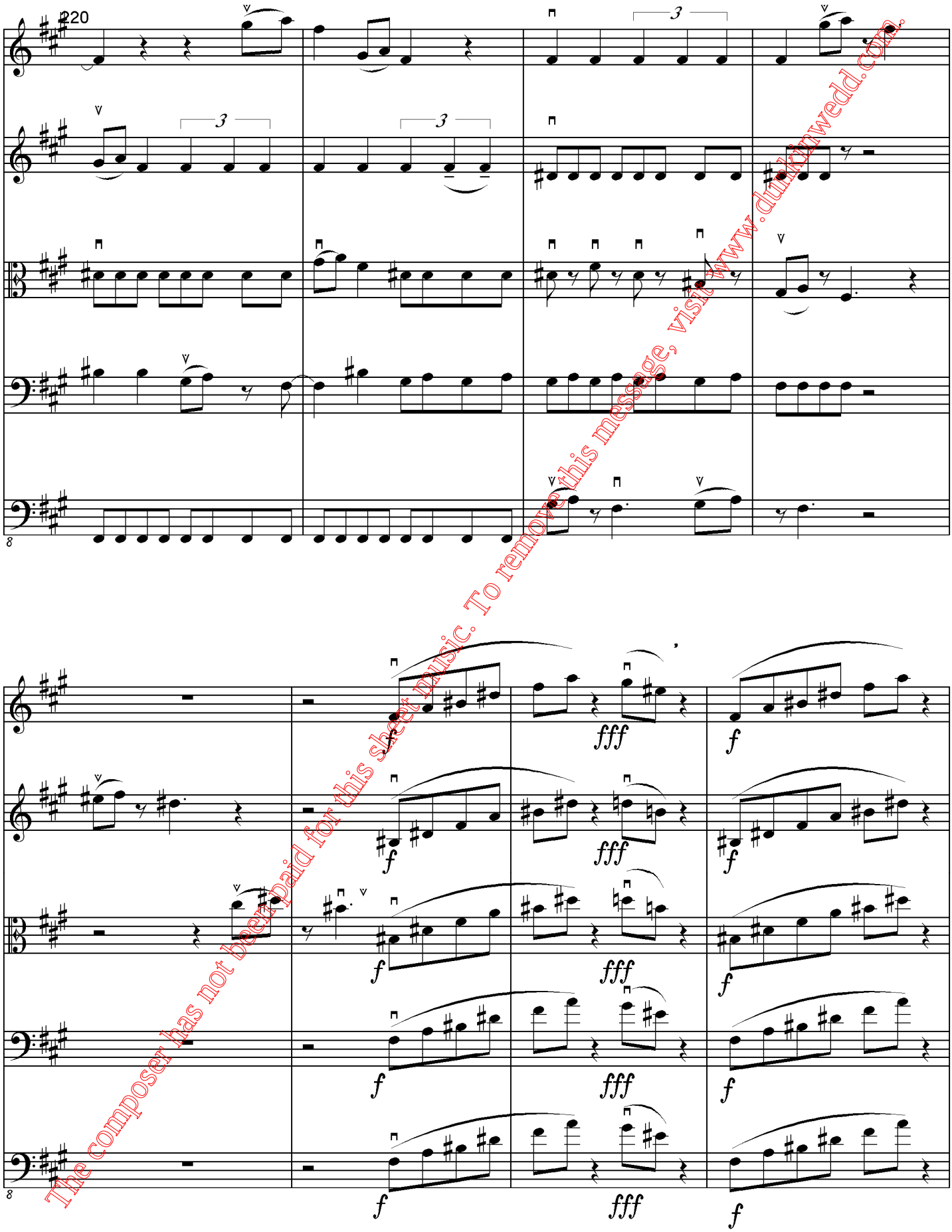

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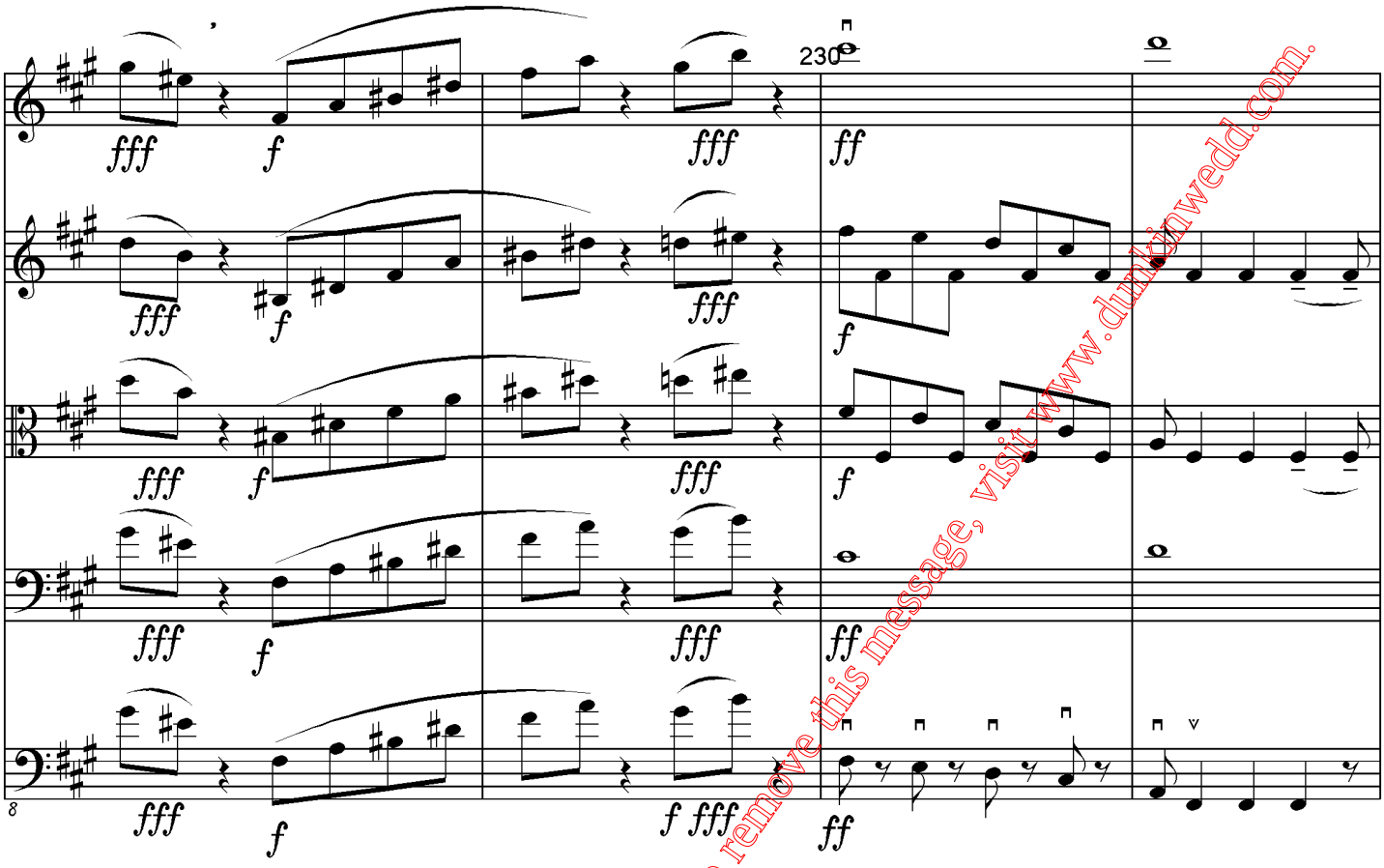

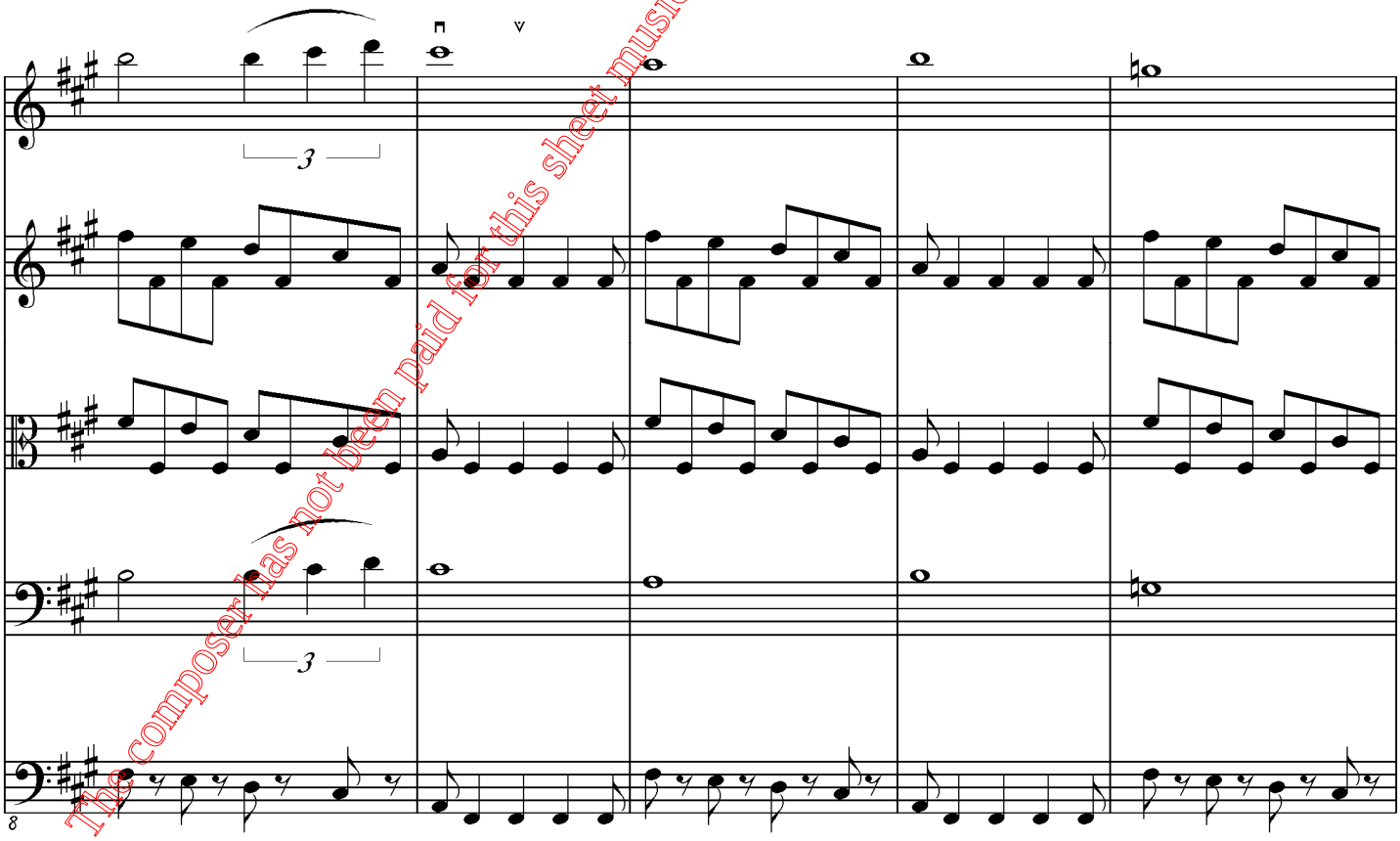

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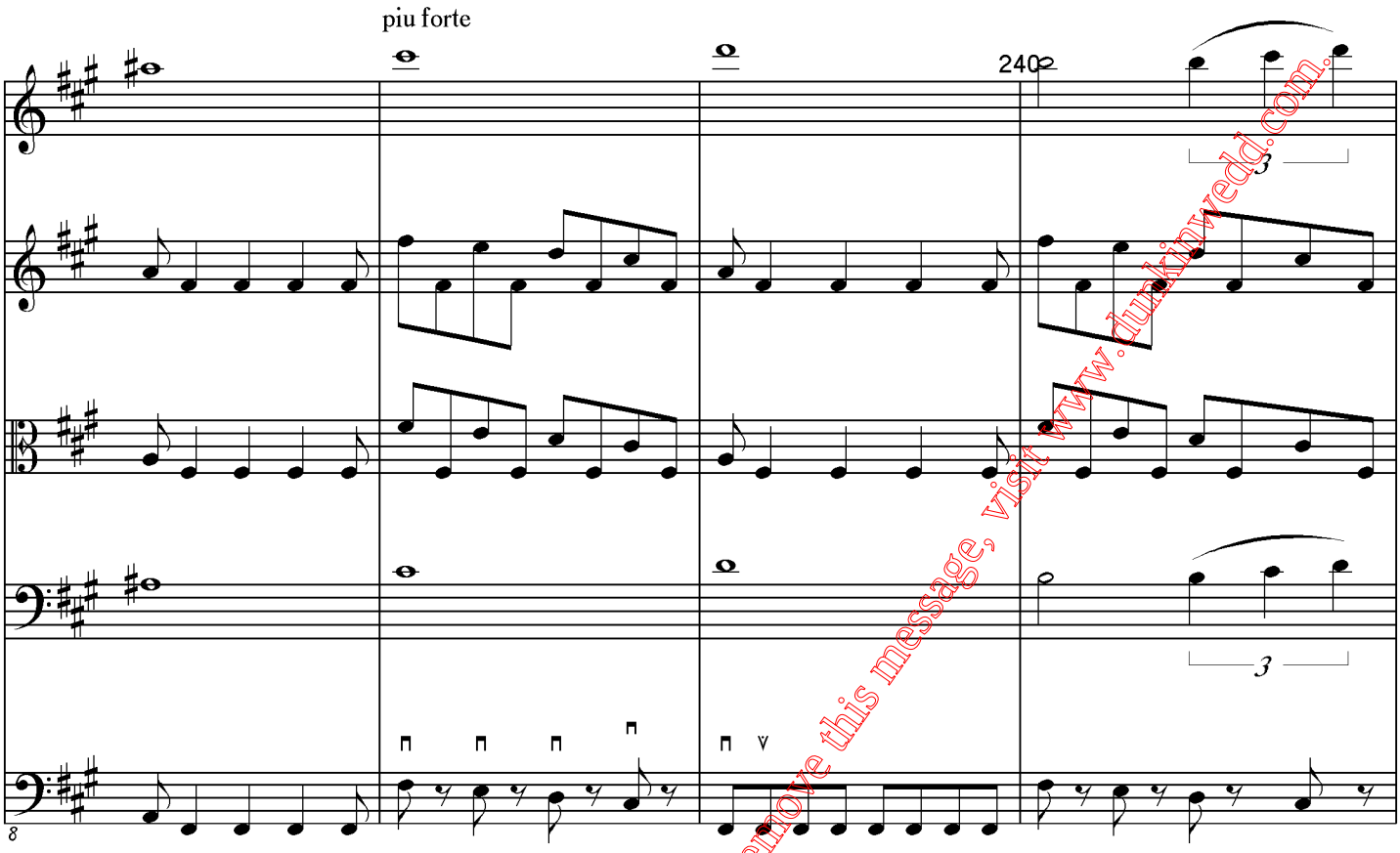

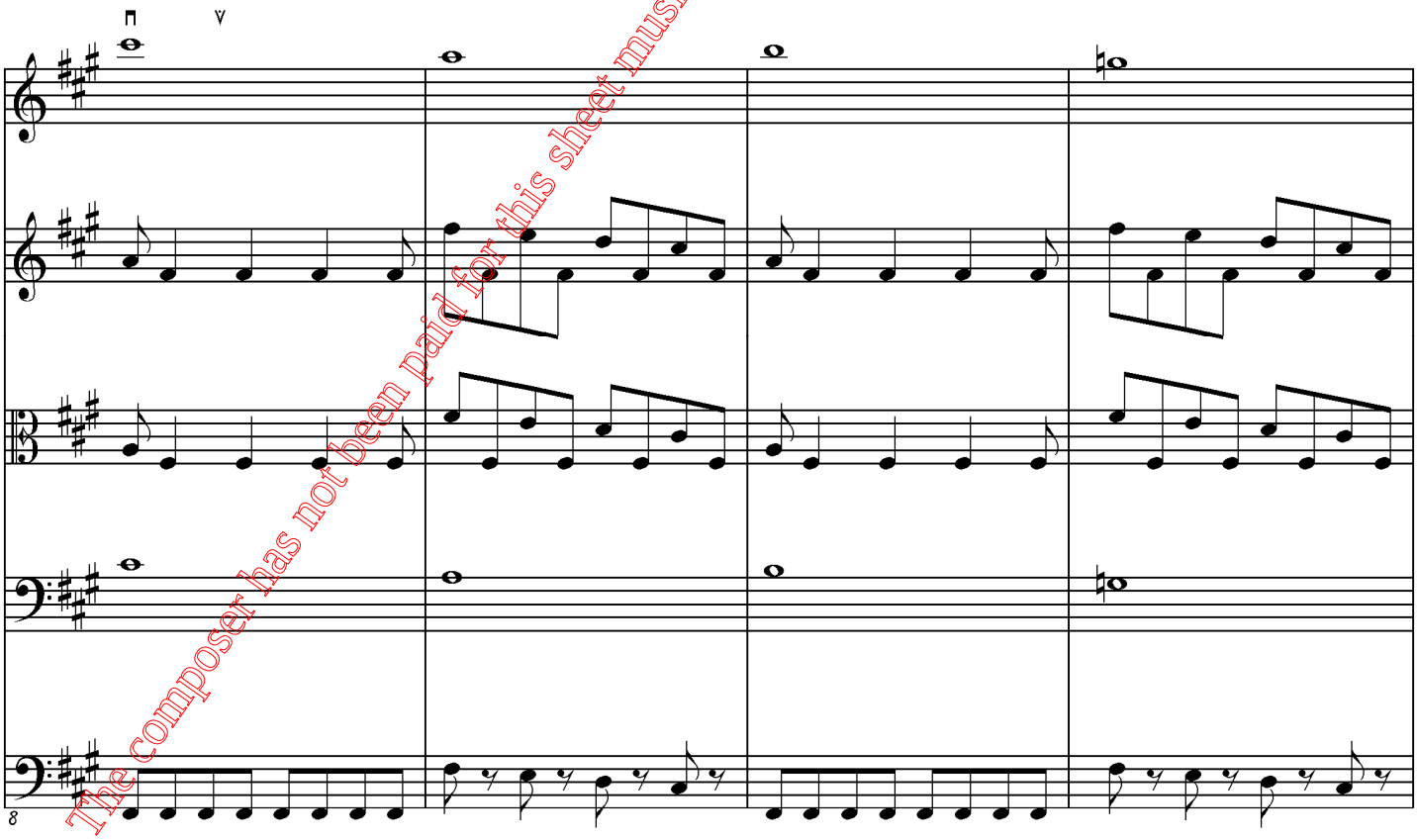

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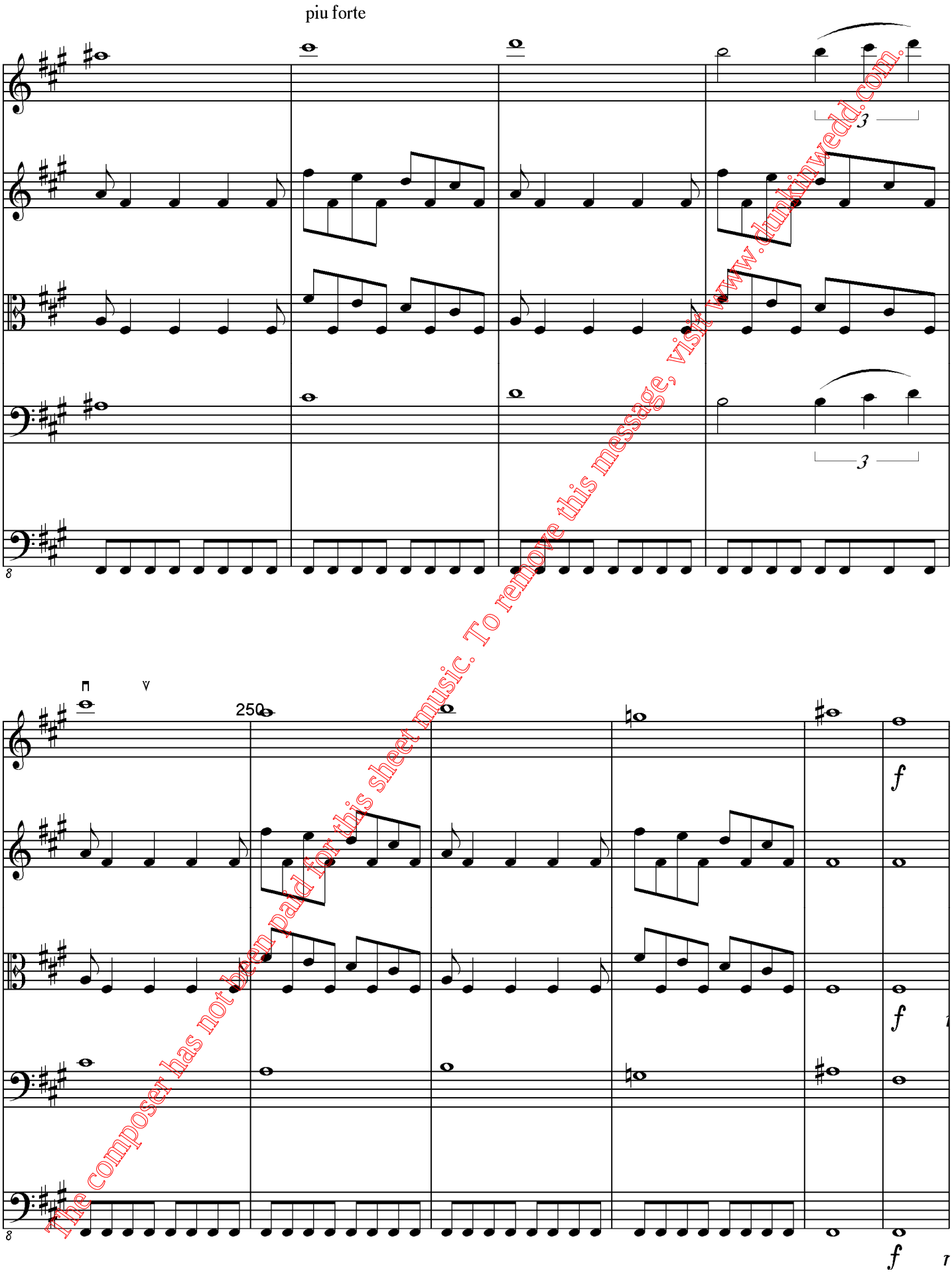

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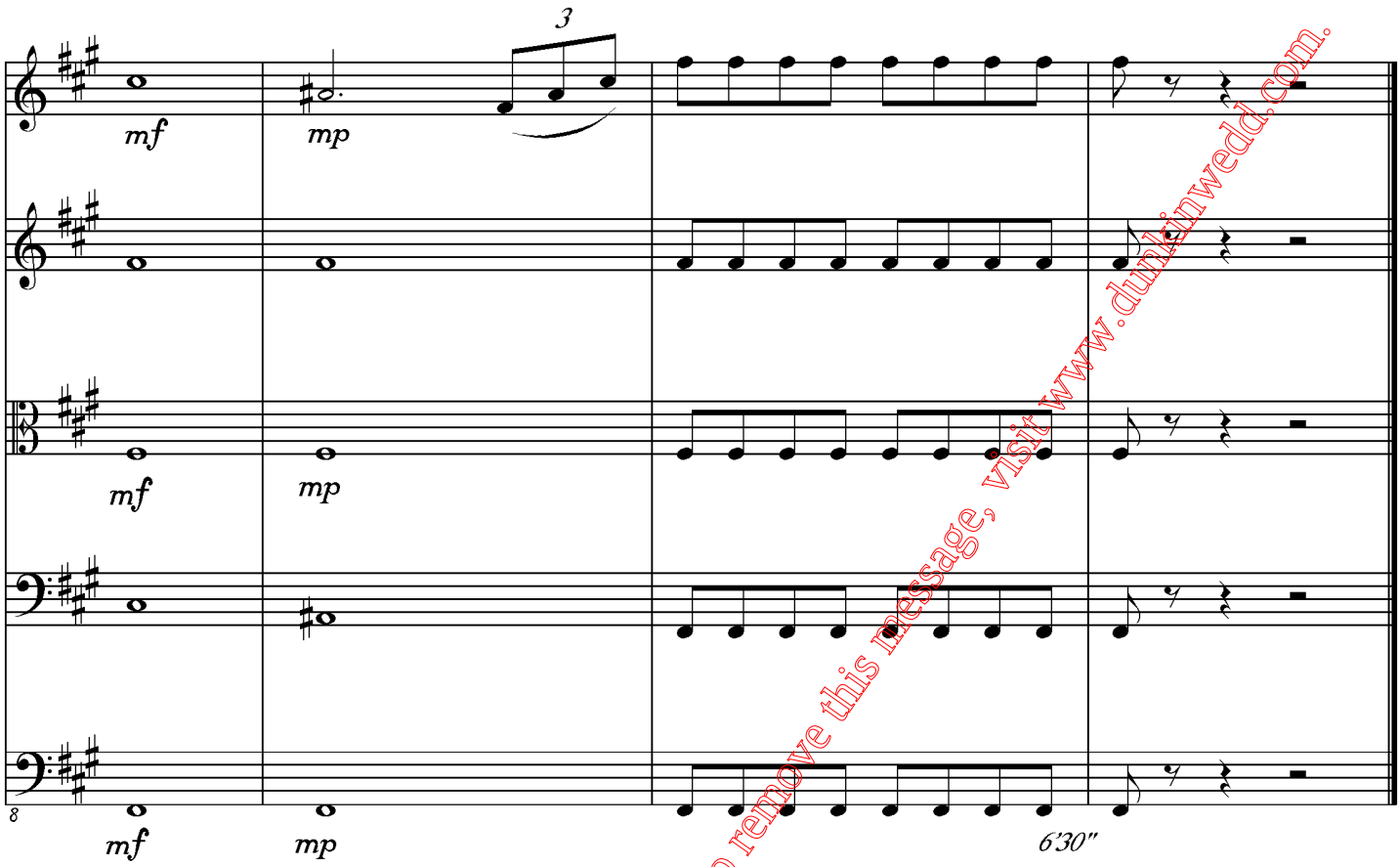

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