

Eternity

Soprano, Cello, & Vibraphone

LUKE CARLSON MUSIC

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(2012)

Duration: 14 minutes

Commissioned by Network for New Music

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www.lukecarlsonmusic.com

luke@lukecarlsonmusic.com

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Program Notes

The concept of eternity is unfathomable and inescapable; indwelling and encompassing every facet of our lives. To gaze into the sky or peer through a microscope is to behold a world whose limits we can only imagine.

The poetry of Ashley Chang explores both the inward and outward landscapes of the universe in which we inhabit and ultimately reveals that we cannot fully comprehend the immensity of what lies before us; it is, as she writes, “beyond our imagining.”

The music begins with a flowing ribbon of sound that gradually builds in intensity to usher in the voice. This opening material is fast and somewhat aggressive but gradually gives way to the second section which features a more light-hearted, dance-like feel. After another climactic moment, the music becomes very placid and contemplative as the singer states, “though illiterate in the language of stars,” poignantly expressing the lack of vocabulary to describe such vast and incredible vistas. The music again builds to an intense climax and is juxtaposed with a direct recapitulation of the opening material which leads to the final two sections of the work. As the poem expresses the feeling of being “swooned in the vastness of God” the vibraphone supports the singer in a very simple and repetitive texture. This segues into the final section which I envisioned as a musical mobile, calmly and slowly spinning, being gazed upon in deep contemplation—a dreamlike state of profundity.

The music will hopefully complement the liquidity and ethereal beauty of the text, drawing the listener into their own introspection; their own listening universe.

Text

“Eternity”

Having been illuminated we now find forgotten in a corner of ourselves
the names for our phosphorus freedoms,
and now having these names we have the voices to speak them
and discover in their sound an
incandescence, incanting some imminence.
Enchanted into gravity we only now
awake
to be taught by skin what space is —
to be within the house of time gazing at without
and of course
outside may not be up nor inside down
immanence may be full with the erasure of the directionality
which determines where to find human and divine
it is not given to us to know
but this, what is given to our eyes:
Messier’s catalogue a portrait in the bruised colors of chiffon light,
raw silk the torn feelings of the sky
watching us build towers, latticed days up which to climb
and take it in our arms
but we have not yet arrived at iridescence
though illiterate in the language of stars we intuit from our design
the secret naming of constellations which we turn to
with more than looking
with more than longing
knowing them to be unrecognized and created before the moment
of our wishing for them to spell out our histories of dust
in asterisms, our flesh finitudes for the cosmos writ large beyond our living
we sigh — a form of breathing — we die —
swooned in the vastness of God
the spiral quivers
God moves
God lives
in heaven thousands on thousands of wicks burning
with the heat which animates the heart
words which leapt from You and by beholding took the emptiness upon themselves to be form
being a wholly singular bioluminescence on behalf of mortality
night after night I go to the same place in my galaxied music
I hide
intoxicated on constellations
fevered with the glory of being together
beyond our imagining

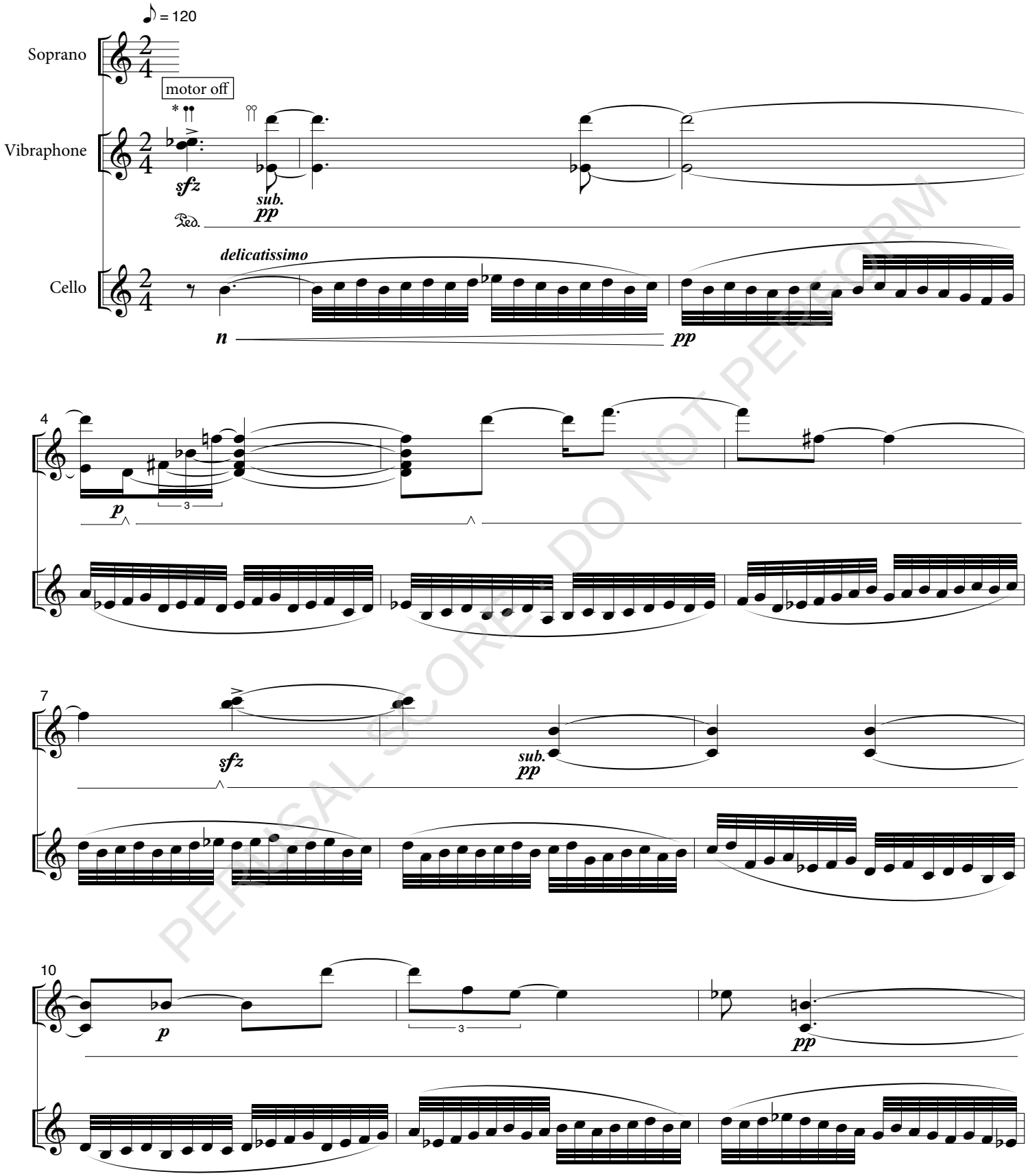
—Ashley Chang

Eternity

for Soprano, Vibraphone and Cello

Ashley Chang

Luke Carlson



PERUSAL SCORE - DO NOT PERFORM

* Use hard mallets for loud, accented attacks.
Use soft mallets for all other notes.

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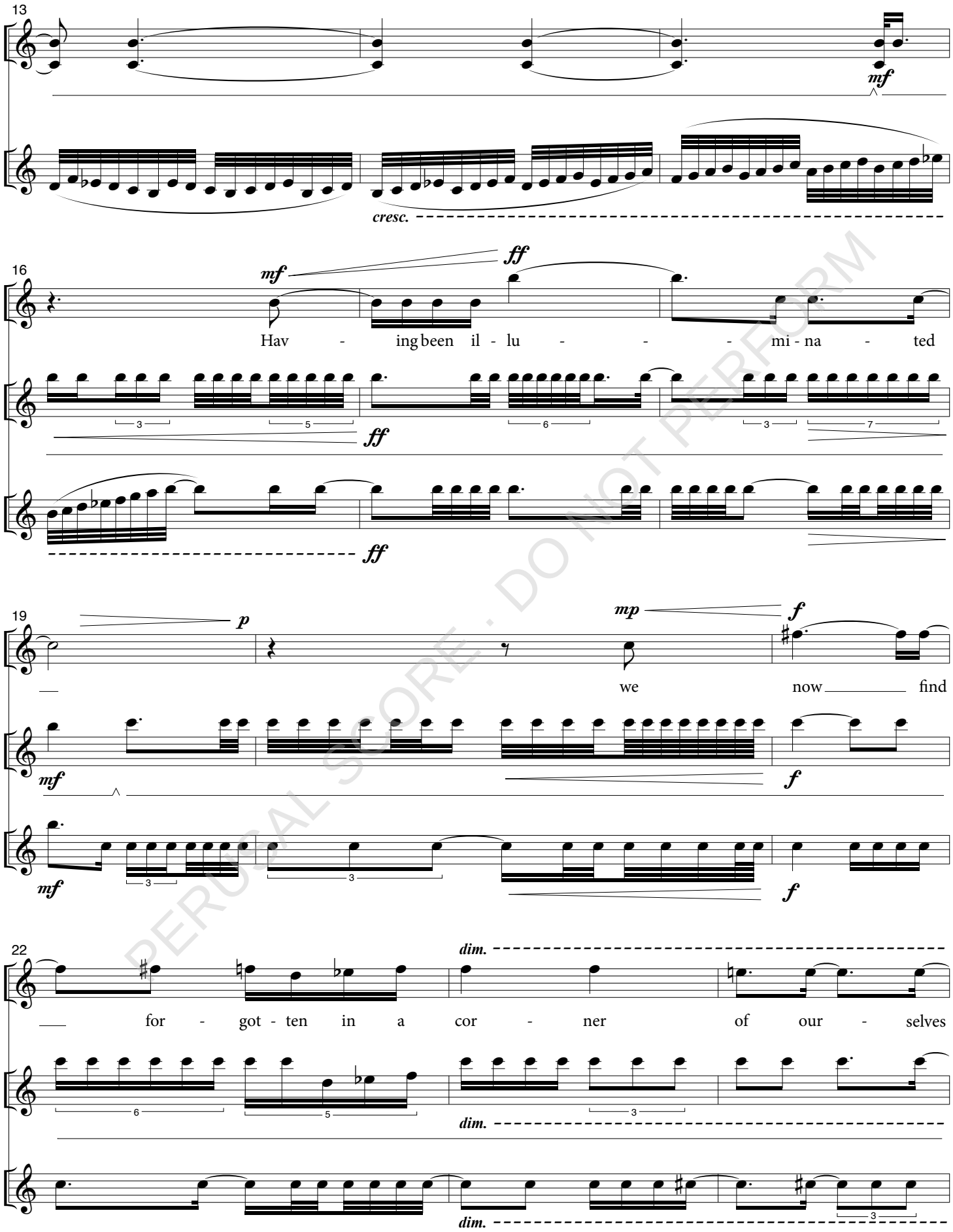

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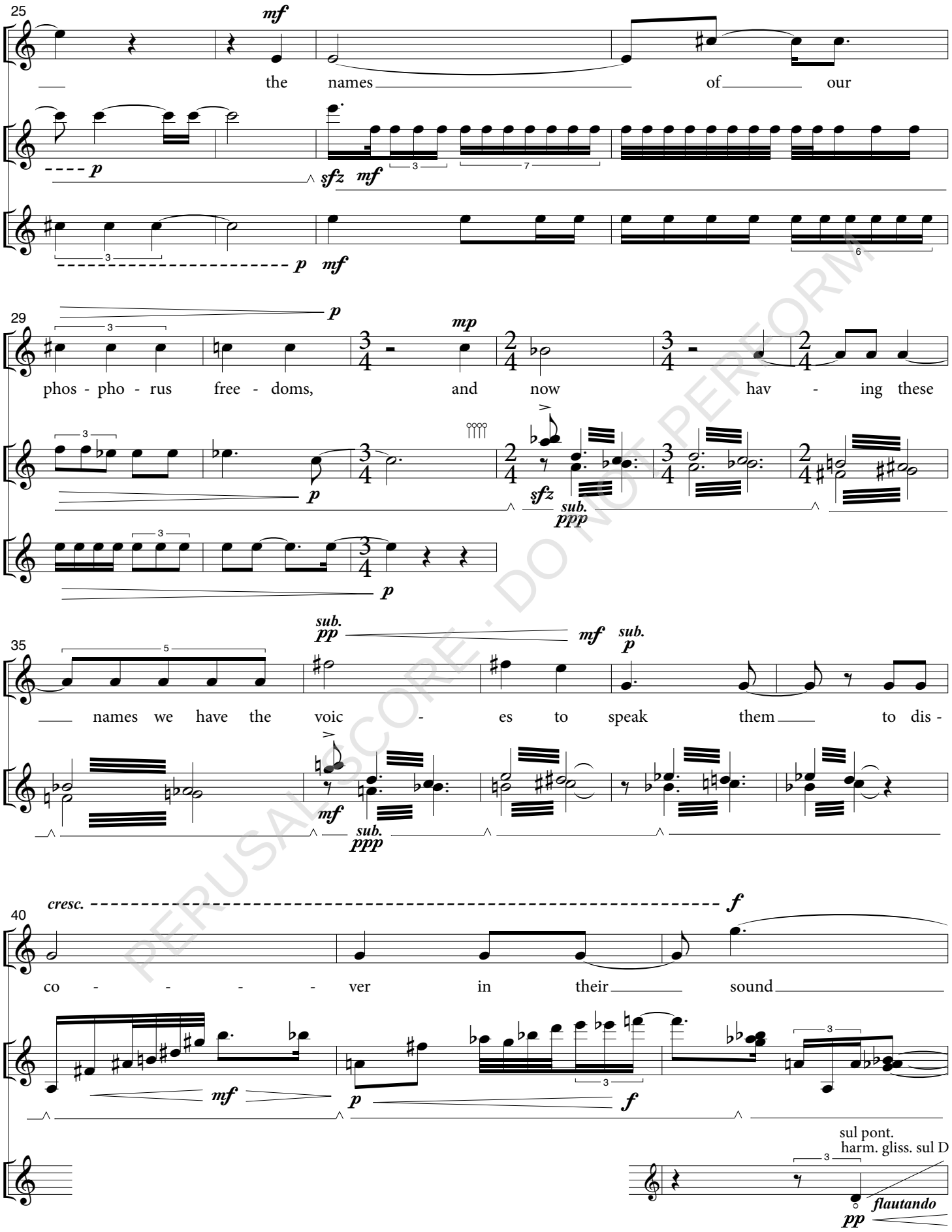

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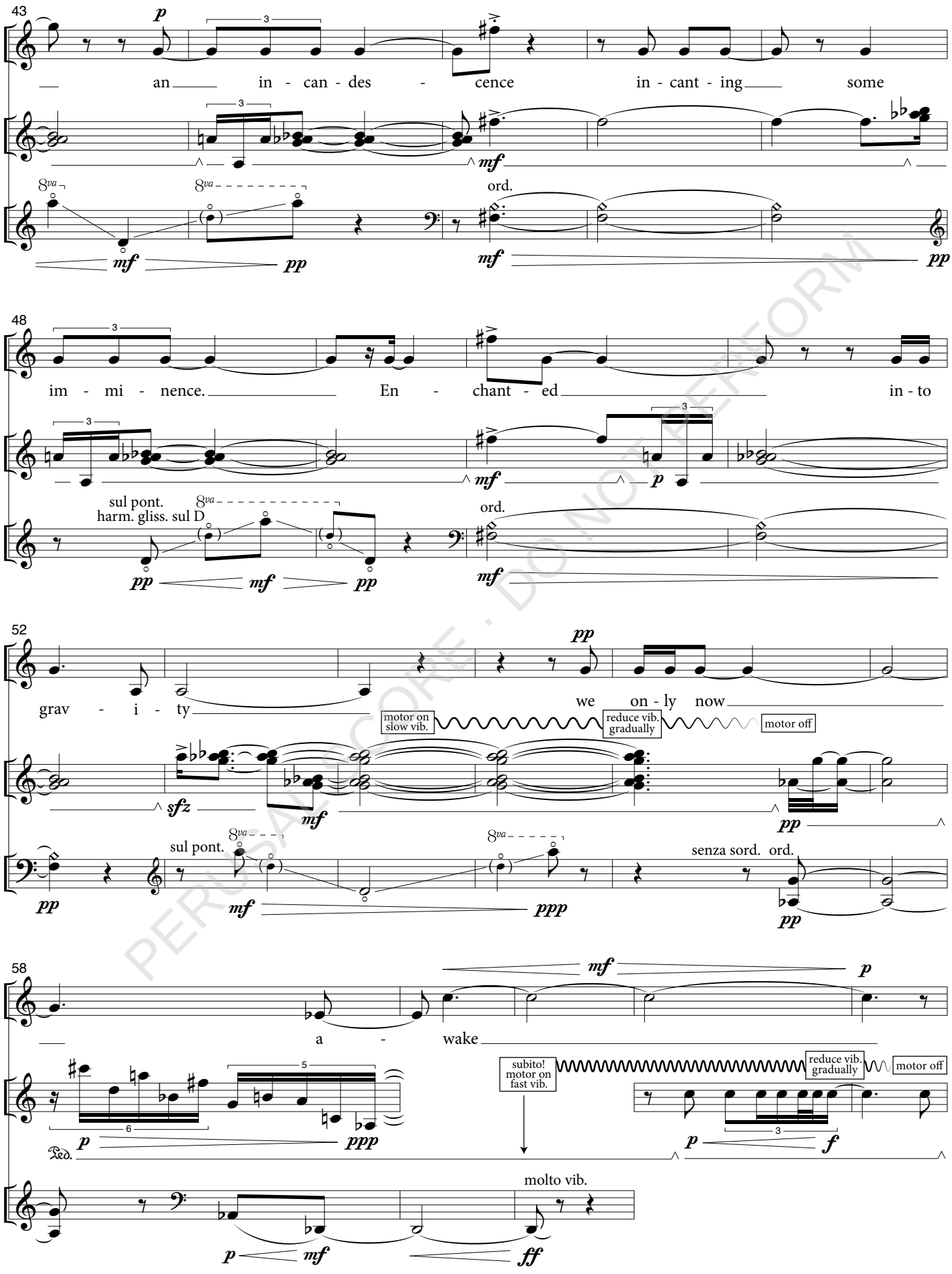

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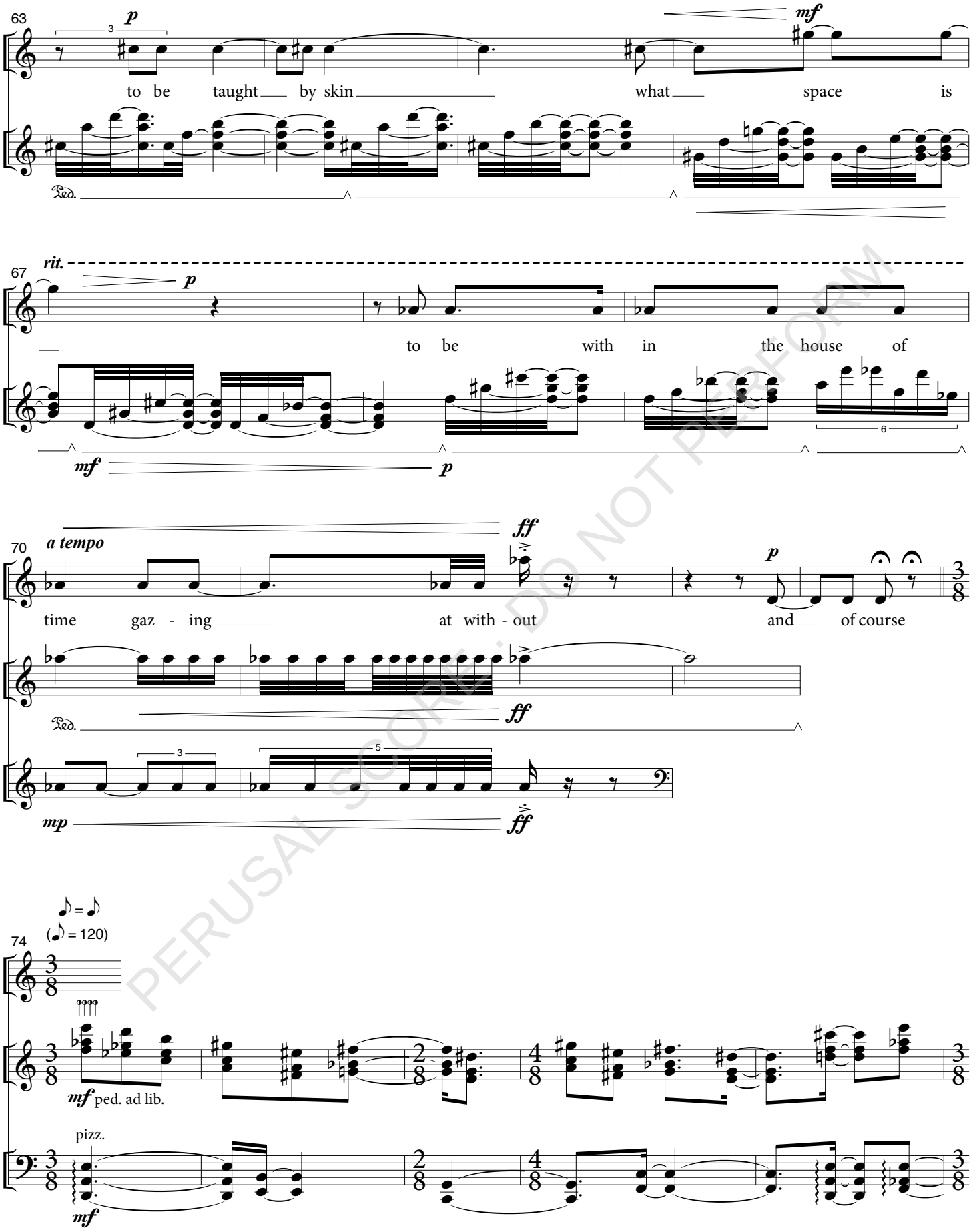

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