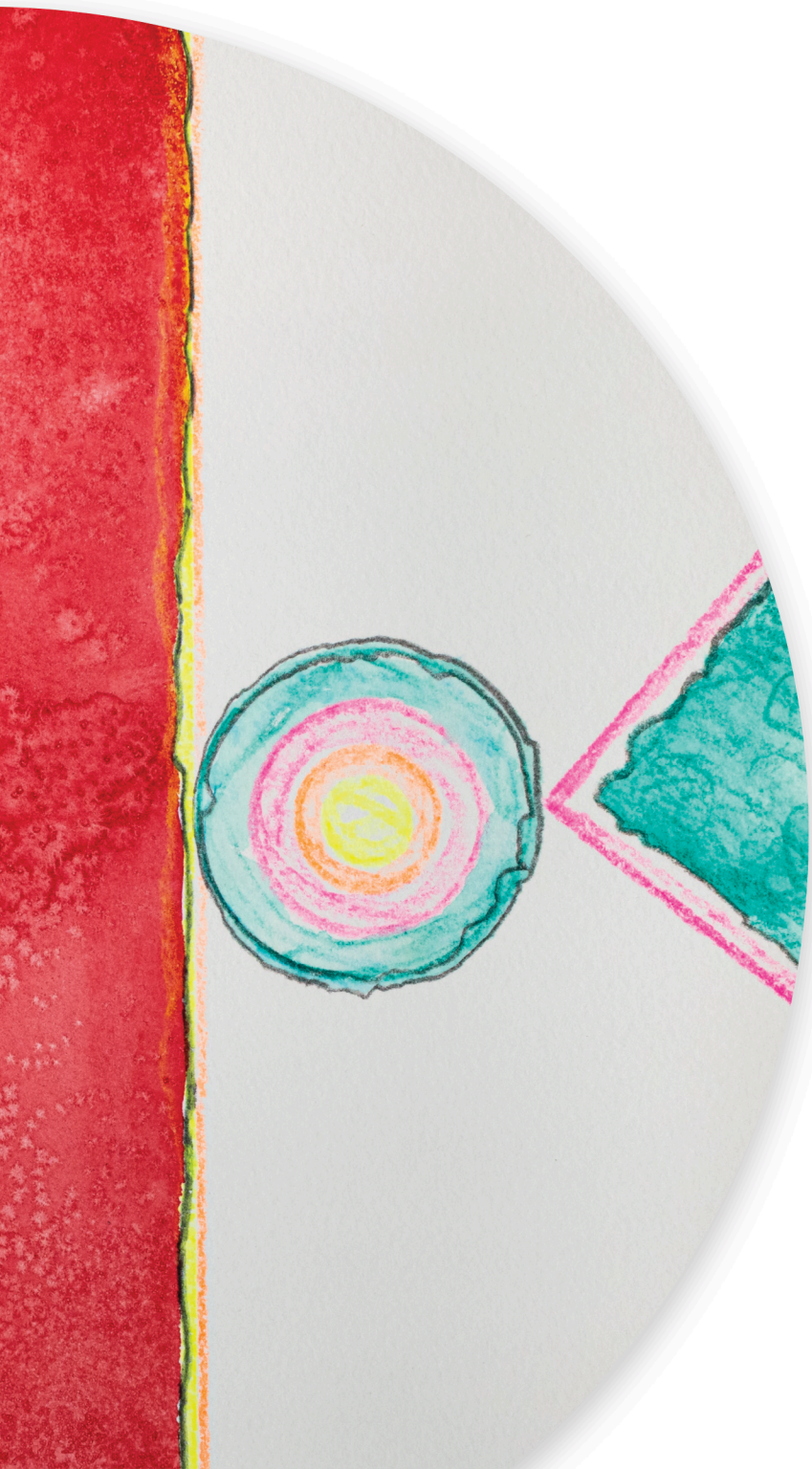


Measure

Piano Quintet

LUKE CARLSON MUSIC

Measure

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Measure

Piano Quintet

(2023)

Duration: 21 minutes

Matthew Bengtson, piano

Min-Young Kim, violin

Matilda Kaul, violin

Jessica Thompson, viola

Thomas Kraines, cello



www.lukecarlsonmusic.com

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Program Notes

Composing music consists of marking time, constructing sonorities, delineating form, and contemplating proportions. In this sense, the "measure" of a piece is the way in which it exhibits craftsmanship. The four movements, detailed below, focus on complementary aspects of the compositional craft.

I. Dimensions—Line

The delicate gestures of the beginning are derived from a descending, four-note motif: D–C–B–A. This diatonic line or tetrachord serves as foundational material for the entire piece. The piano initiates the gesture with four, unassuming whole notes; the strings echo, each entrance offset by a quarter note. With each repetition of the figure, the rhythm contracts, causing the music to accumulate energy and forward momentum. Midway through the movement, the building tension is dramatically released and the instruments surge around each other in ebullient scales and chords before eventually fading away, like gossamer threads in the wind.

II. Mechanics—Object

The piano features prominently as the quirky protagonist in this machine-like movement. The percussive, metallic, and brightly sparkling sounds are meant to mimic a contraption that is sometimes running smoothly, sometimes malfunctioning. The textural intricacies of the music are like miniature gears in a complicated clockwork; grinding, meshing, stopping, and starting.

III. Geometries—Secret

The title pays homage to my late teacher, James Primosch, who passed away in 2021. As I was working on the piece, the eminent composer George Crumb, a teacher and colleague of Dr. Primosch, also passed away. This movement is dedicated to them. While reflecting on their influence on my own music, I realized how fortunate I am to be a part of their compositional lineage. My musical tribute secretly references some of their motifs, ideas, techniques, and aesthetics.

IV. Tessellations—Shape

A tessellation is a pattern that covers a surface, often comprised of repeating geometric shapes. The musical material, derived from the four-note tetrachord of the first movement, serves as the basic shape; the tightly spaced voicing and frenetic rhythm provide the patterning. For much of the movement, the piano punctuates the scintillating strings with thick, luminous chords. A calm middle section is followed by a reprise of the scalar ideas from the first movement, this time more unified and focused. The accumulated energy spills over, shimmering to an explosive finish.

Performance Notes

Strings

 = One quarter-tone flat

= One quarter-tone flat

= Three quarter-tones flat

= Snap pizzicato

= Sustain pitch

Piano

 = Mute string inside piano with finger (as close to the end of the string as possible, near the pins)

 = Insert a brass wedge or smooth brass object between two of the three strings of the indicated pitch approximately two inches from the pins

pizz. (f.n.) = Pluck the string with the fingernail (as close to the end of the string as possible, near the pins)

on keys = Normal playing on the keyboard

 = Long fermata

 = Six seconds (approximately)

 = Seven seconds (approximately)

This work was begun while in residence at Copland House, Cortlandt Manor, New York, as a recipient of the Copland House Residency Award.

for Matthew Bengtson and the Daedalus String Quartet

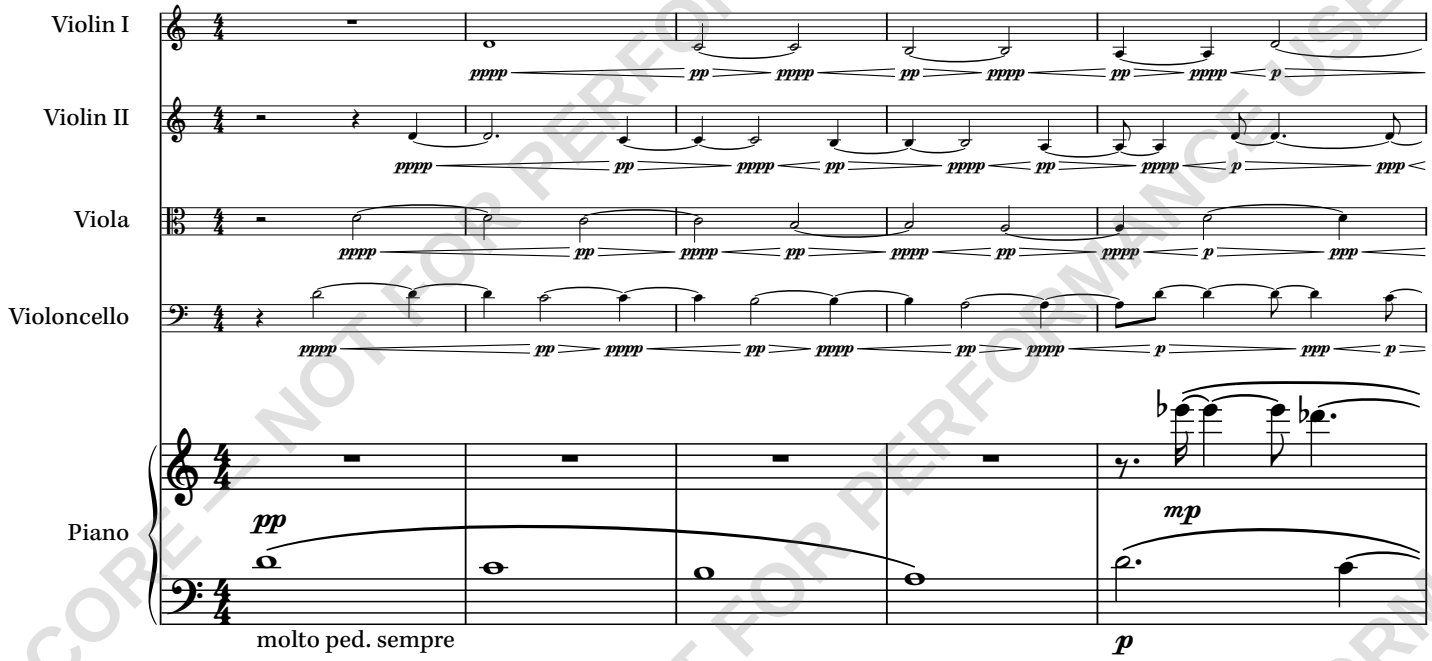
Measure

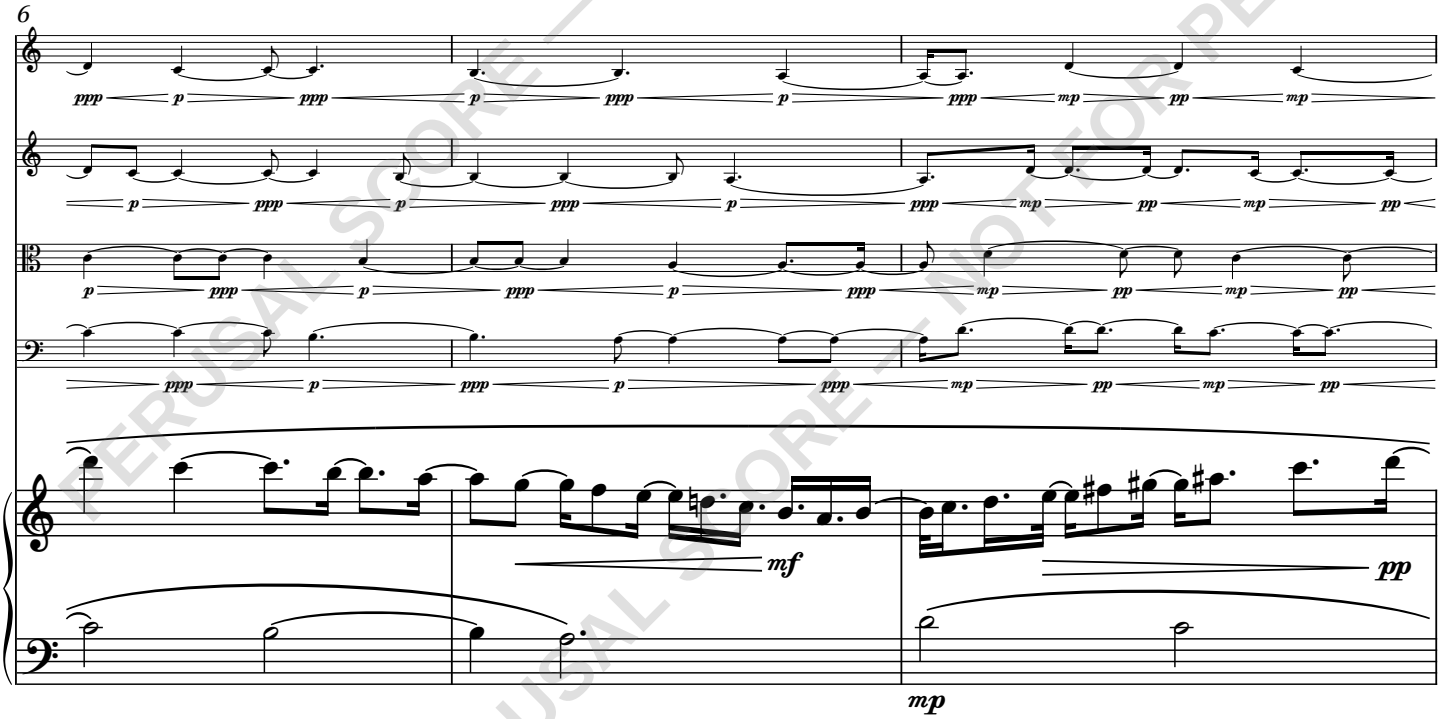
Piano Quintet

I. Dimensions – Line

Luminous; diaphanous ♩ = 48

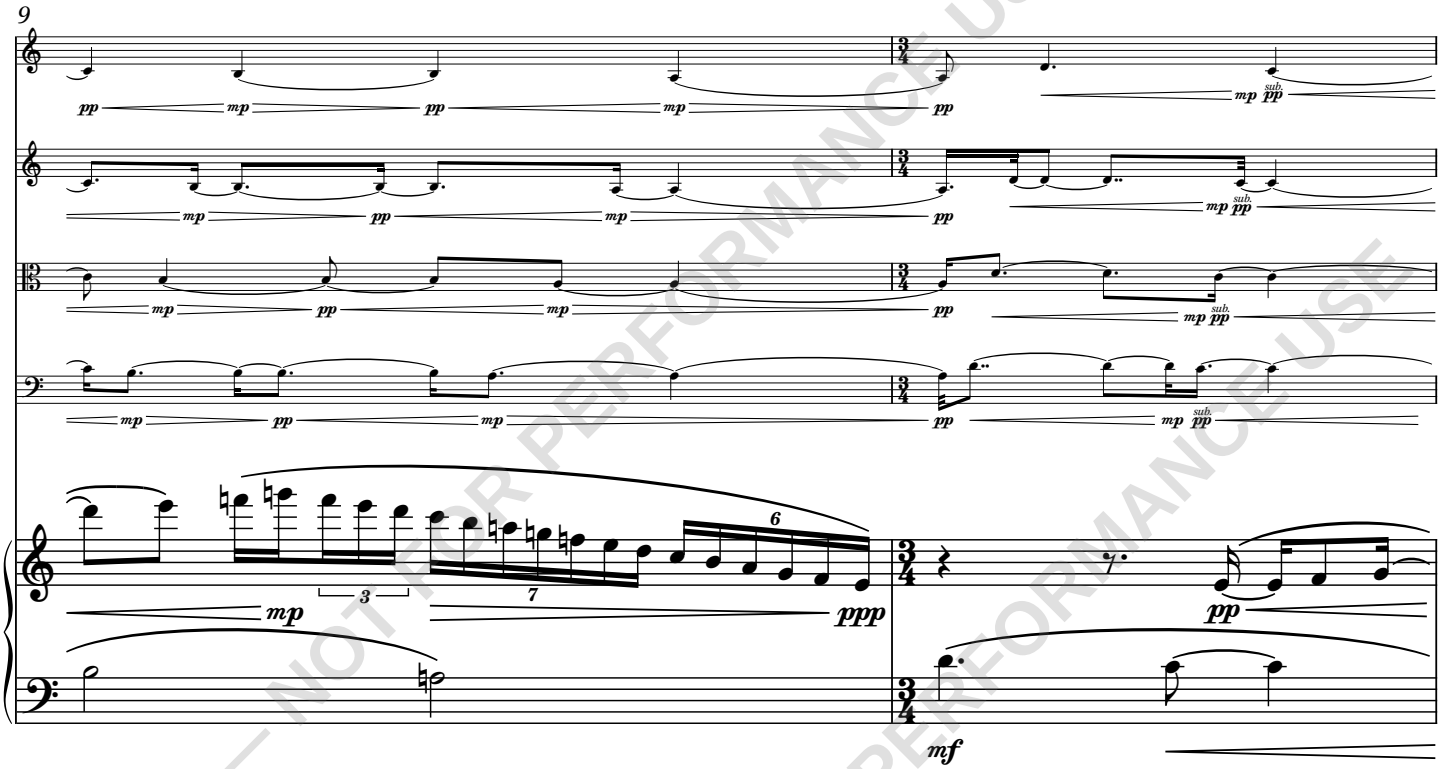
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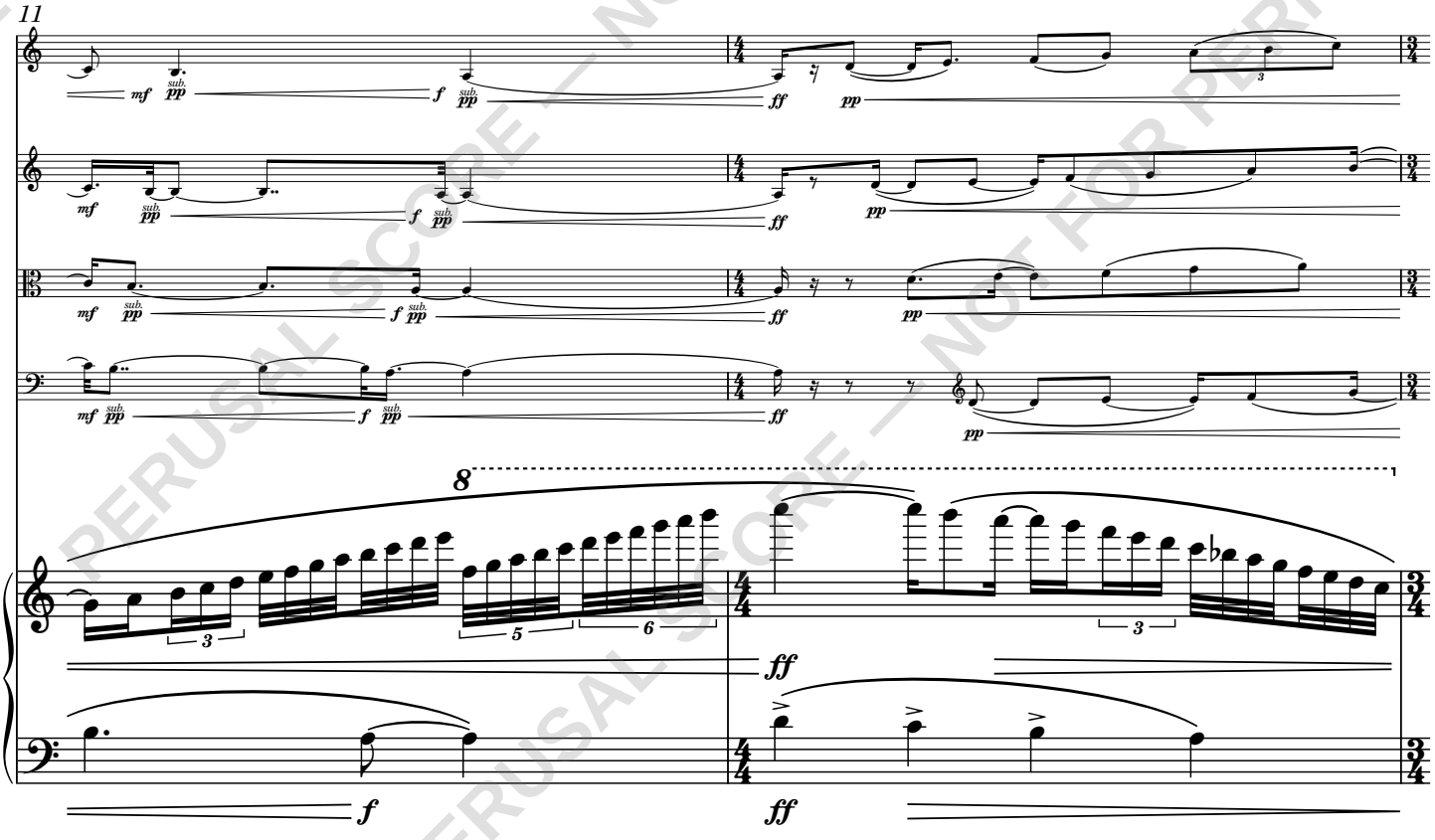




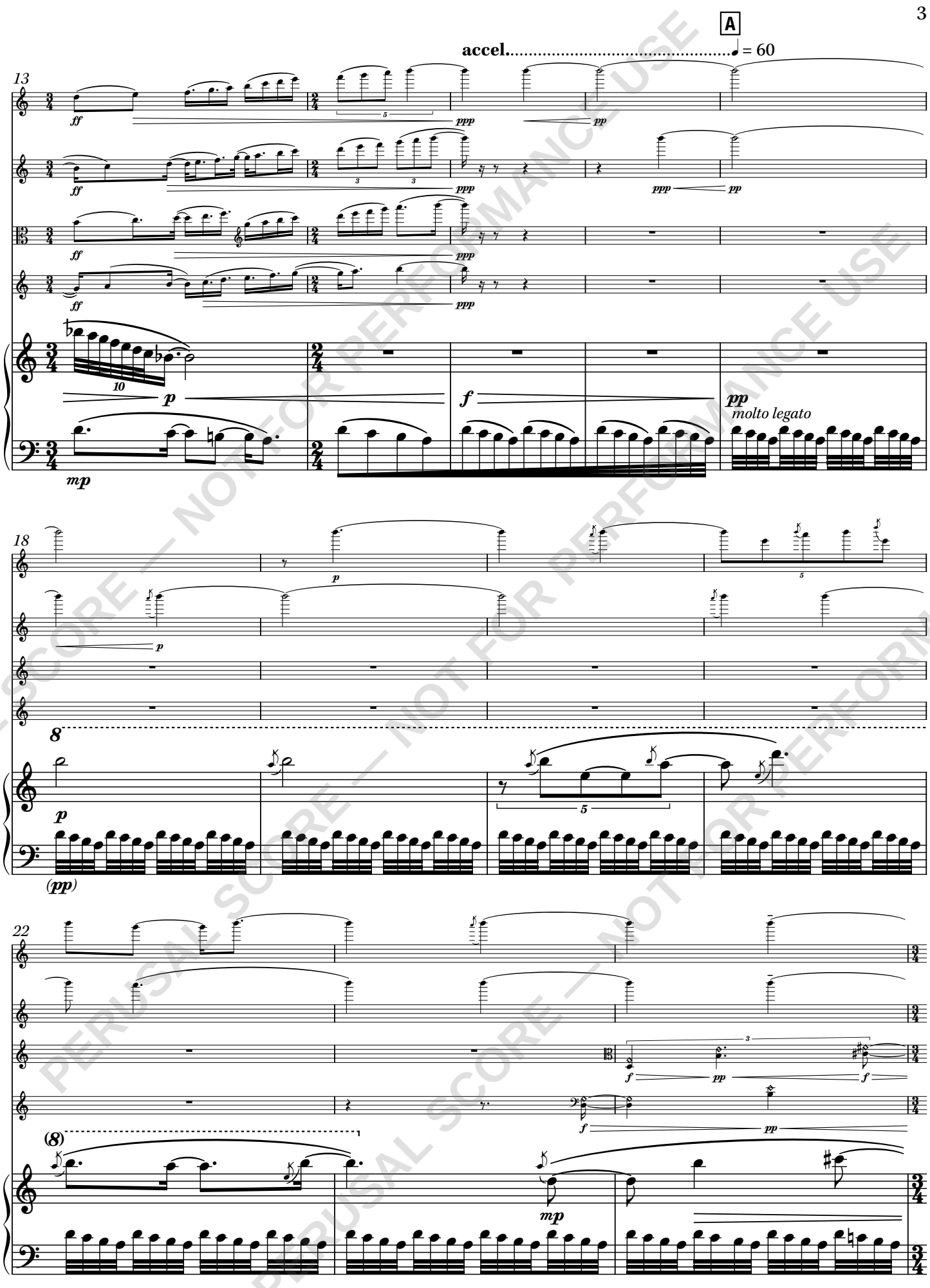
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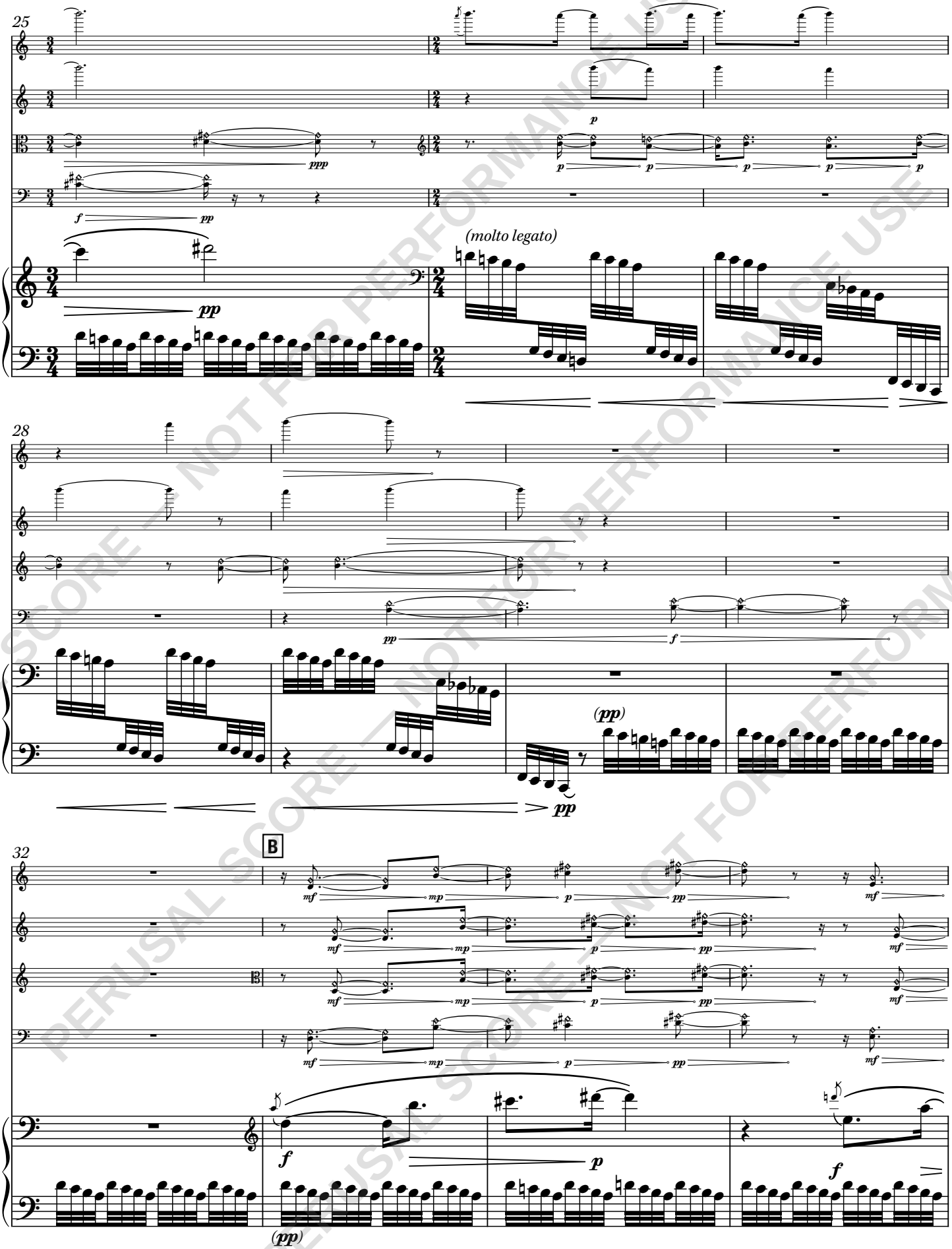




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