

Toccata–Fantasy on "Aura Lee"

Violin & Piano

LUKE CARLSON MUSIC

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(2014)

Duration: 4 minutes

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Program Notes

Composing a toccata—music designed to exhibit the performer's "touch and technique"—was not my initial intent. The warm and affectionate tone of "Aura Lee" seemed to call for a more robust, hymn-like setting. But as I started working, the material led me in a new direction—which is frequently the case while composing—and the texture and feel of a toccata coupled with a free-form fantasy started to reveal itself; so I "ran" with it.

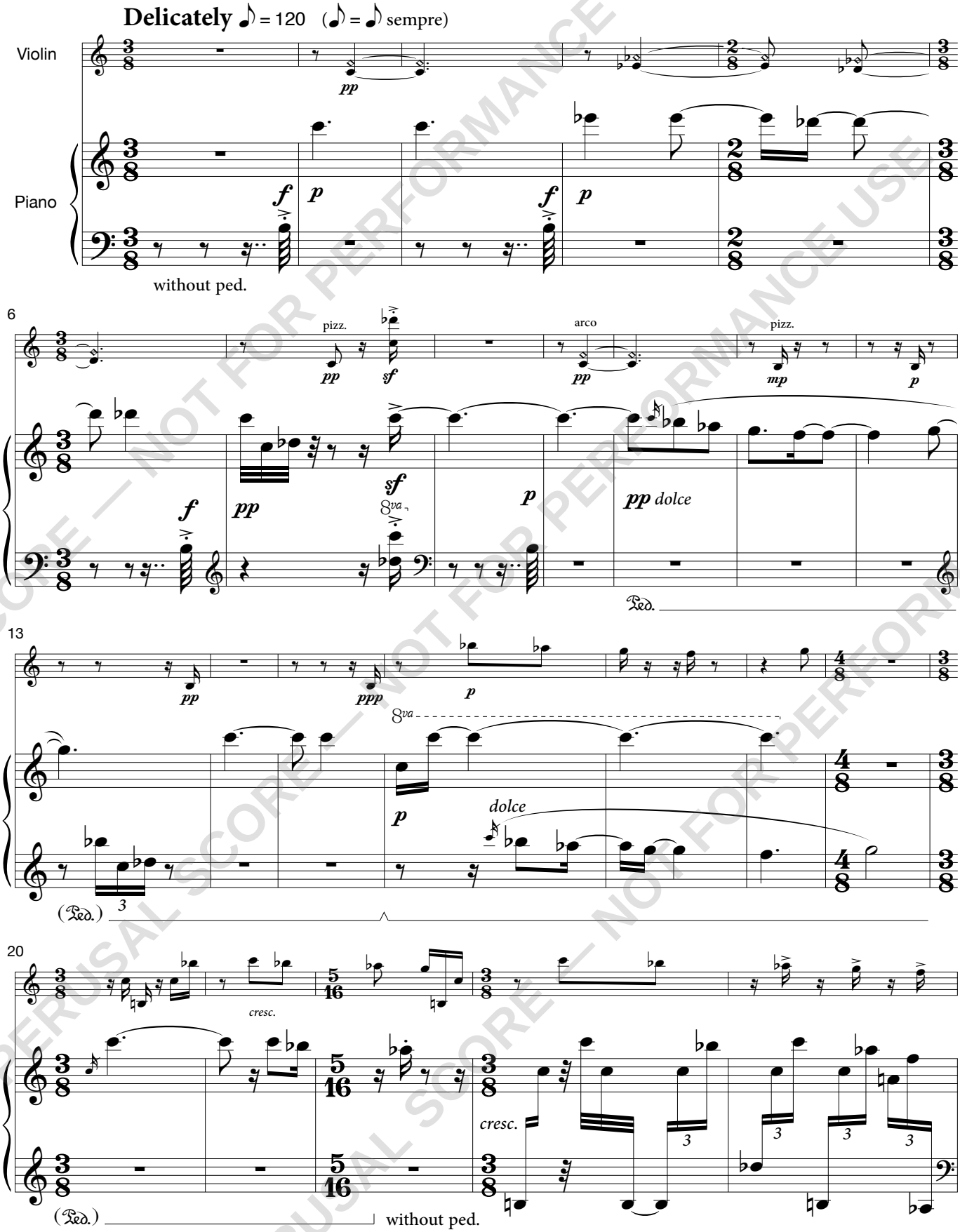
The toccata material—marked "scherzando" in the score—is a dialogue between the piano and plucked violin. This texture grows in intensity until the violin reverts to being bowed, playing the melody high in its register, while the piano supports it with sweeping rising and falling gestures and punctuating chords; this section is labeled "rhapsodic." To set these animated sections in relief, the piece opens and closes with delicate settings of the melody and at the central dividing point, the piano has loud, pointed harmonies while the violin glows above in repeating harmonics. This middle section is labeled "scintillating" and the harmonies (C major and F minor) in the piano—though mildly embellished—are taken directly from the folk song's setting of the words "Aura Lee! Aura Lee!"

Toccata Fantasy on "Aura Lee" was selected winner of the 2014 "Caffeinated Composer Competition" hosted by Network for New Music. The competition stipulated that the piece be based on one of three folk songs and be composed within a span of 48 hours. The premiere was programmed as part of the "How Sweet The Sound" concert event featuring special guest, John Harbison.

Toccata-Fantasy on "Aura Lee"

for violin and piano

Luke Carlson



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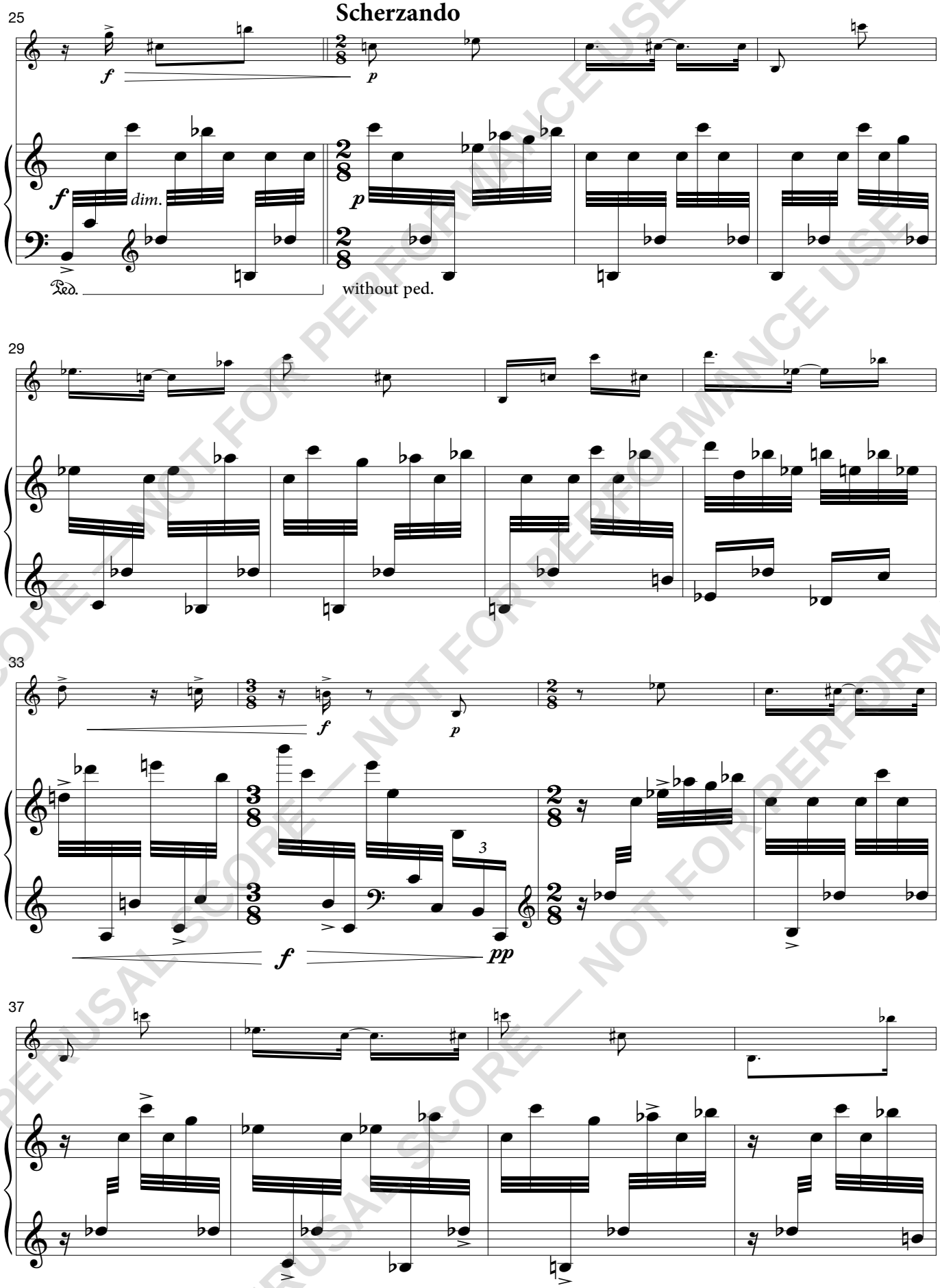
Scherzando



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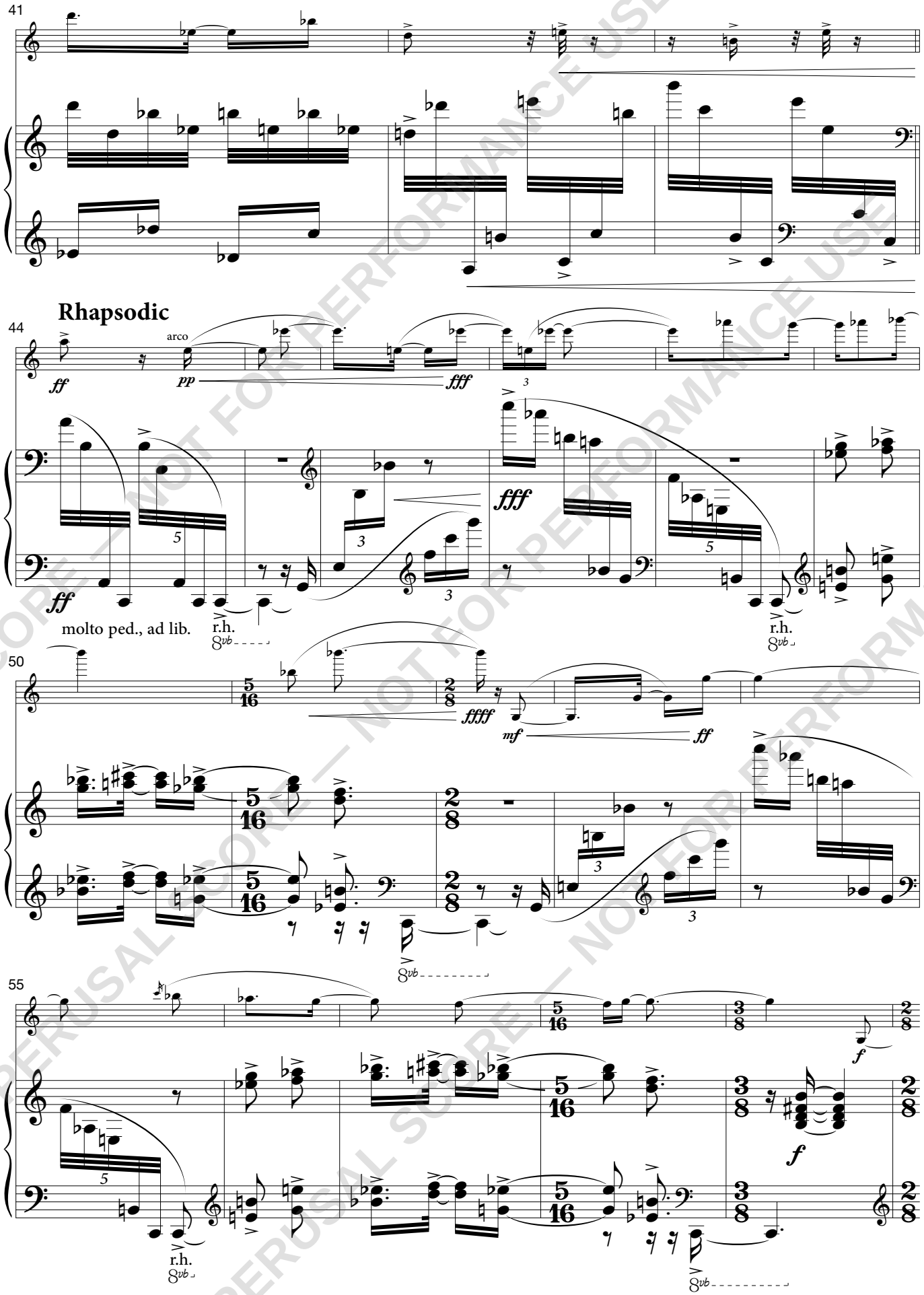

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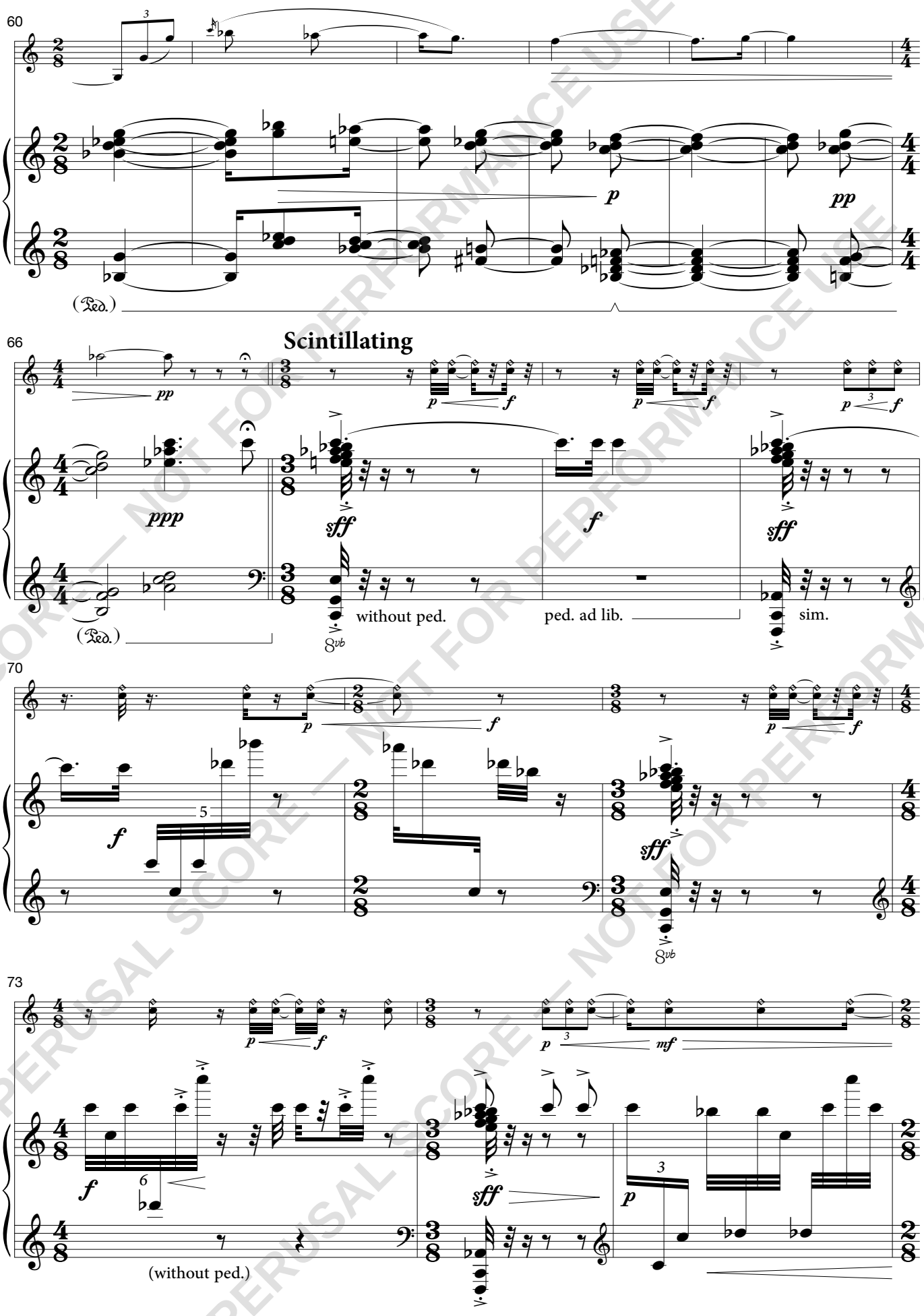

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