Matthew Whittall

To break the winter cold

for piano

2001

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Music Finland

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Program note

Some of my most vivid childhood memories are those associated with the winters in Québec's Eastern Townships region, where I grew up. Skiing across snow-muted landscapes, the play of snowfall, and the profound, echoing stillness of winter nights are images which I still carry. There was also the intensely cold wind, tearing across the farming plains, making it painful to draw a breath, yet somehow a bracing reminder of being alive. I was always struck by how the outer world was reflected in the people around me by a gradual drawing inward, a state broken only by the comforting presence of others and, later in the season, the booming sound of ice breaking on lakes and rivers, and the pale rays of the sun finally bringing warmth.

It is this narrative which informs *To break the winter cold*, a rhapsodic work in which the piano becomes both the landscape and the viewer, where constantly whirling figures and buffeting windlike gestures slowly coalesce into a serene meditation, and are then transformed in the final section into an aural change of seasons.

Performance notes

-Except where specifically indicated in the score, pedal markings are left to the discretion of the performer.

-Although many of the sounds and dynamic markings are very forceful, the overall sound desired is one that is full and round, never percussive.

-The repetitive, small-note patterns in mm. 80-105, 107-117 and 201-213 are purely guidelines, and should not necessarily be adhered to literally. Once the basic textural effect has been mastered, the performer should feel free to improvise on the given notes in like fashion, the only caveat being that the the resulting patterns should be devoid of periodicity (i.e. constant, regular repetition of pitch order and rhythm).

Performance time: ca. 13 min.

To break the winter cold

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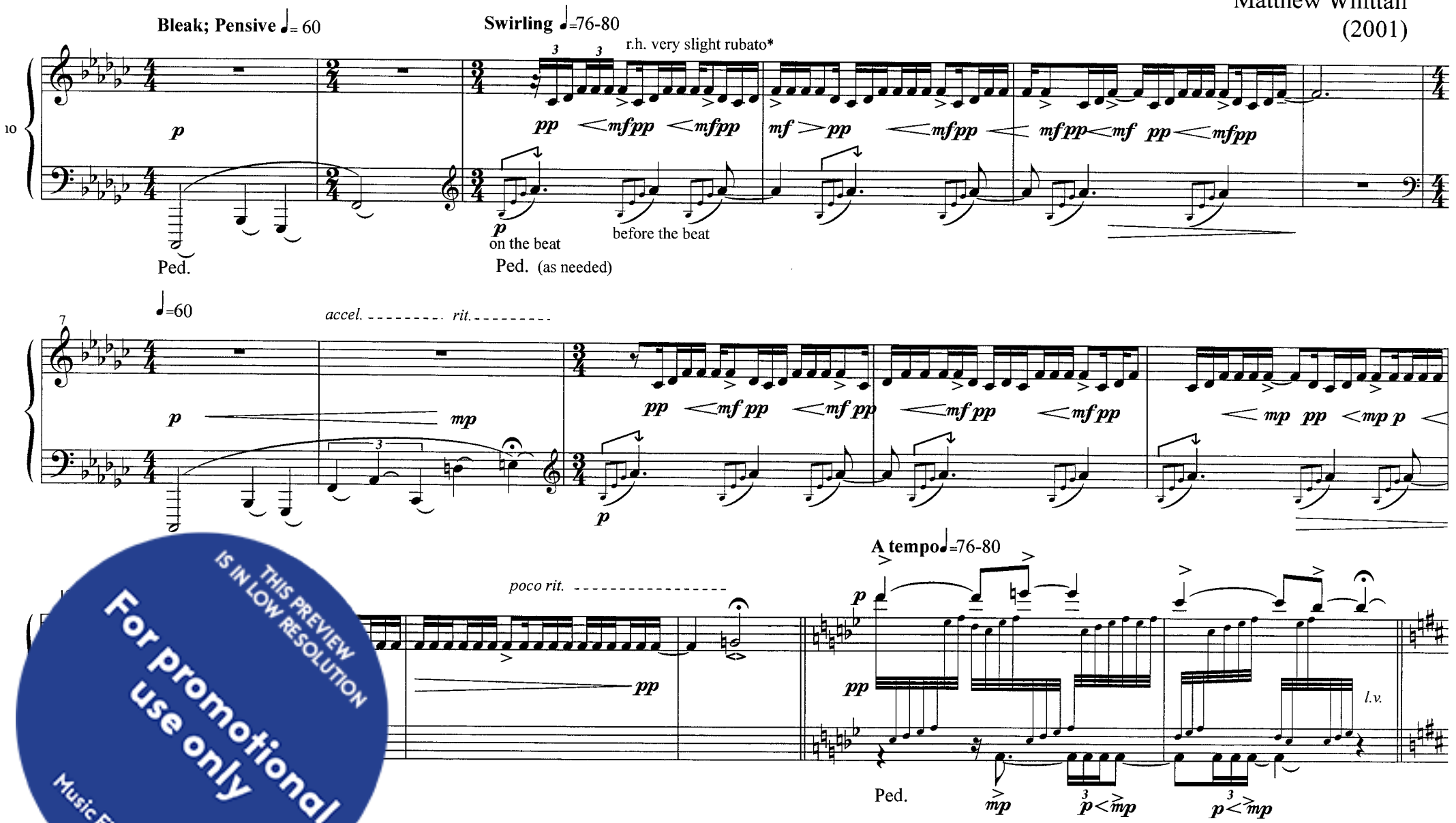
(2001)



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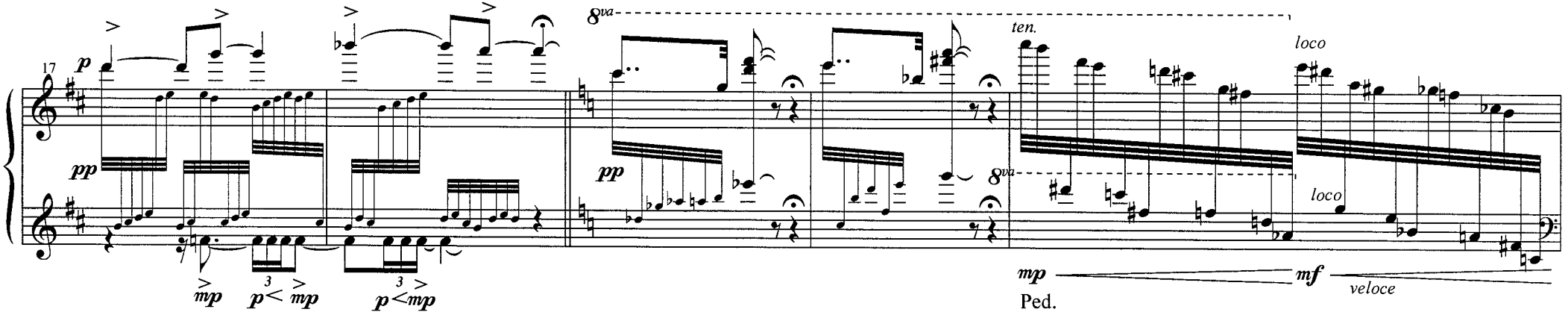

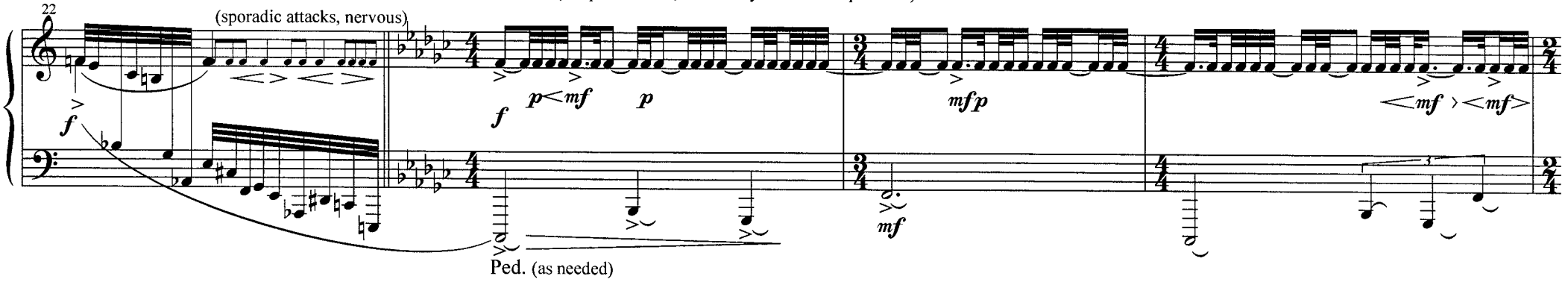

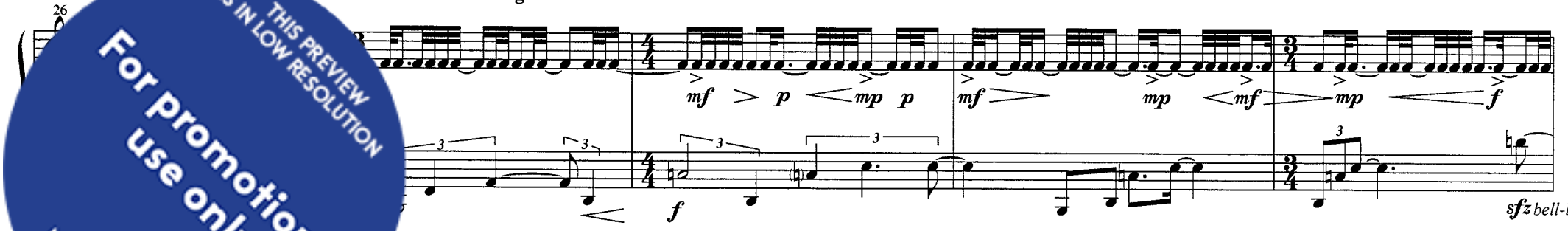

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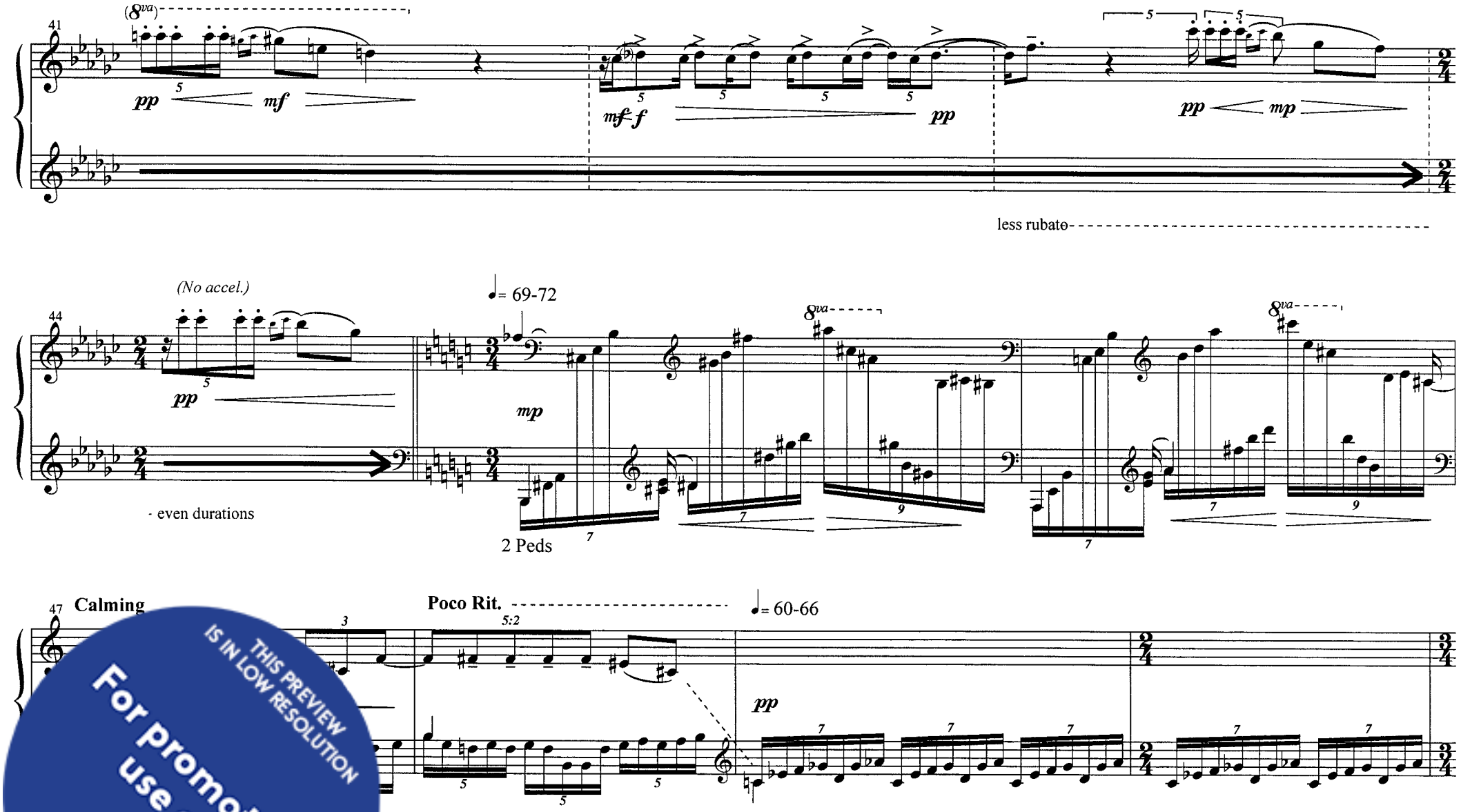

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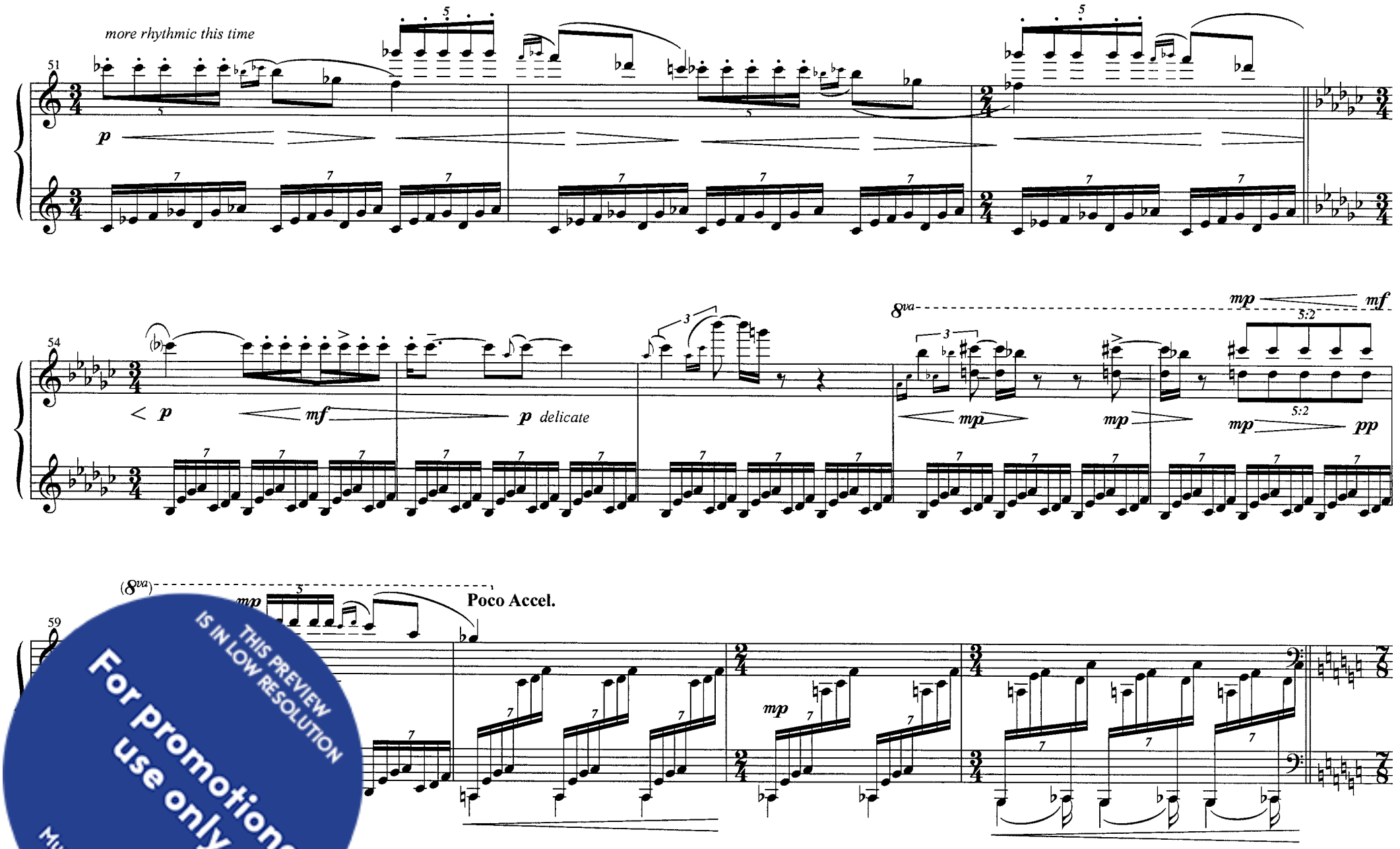

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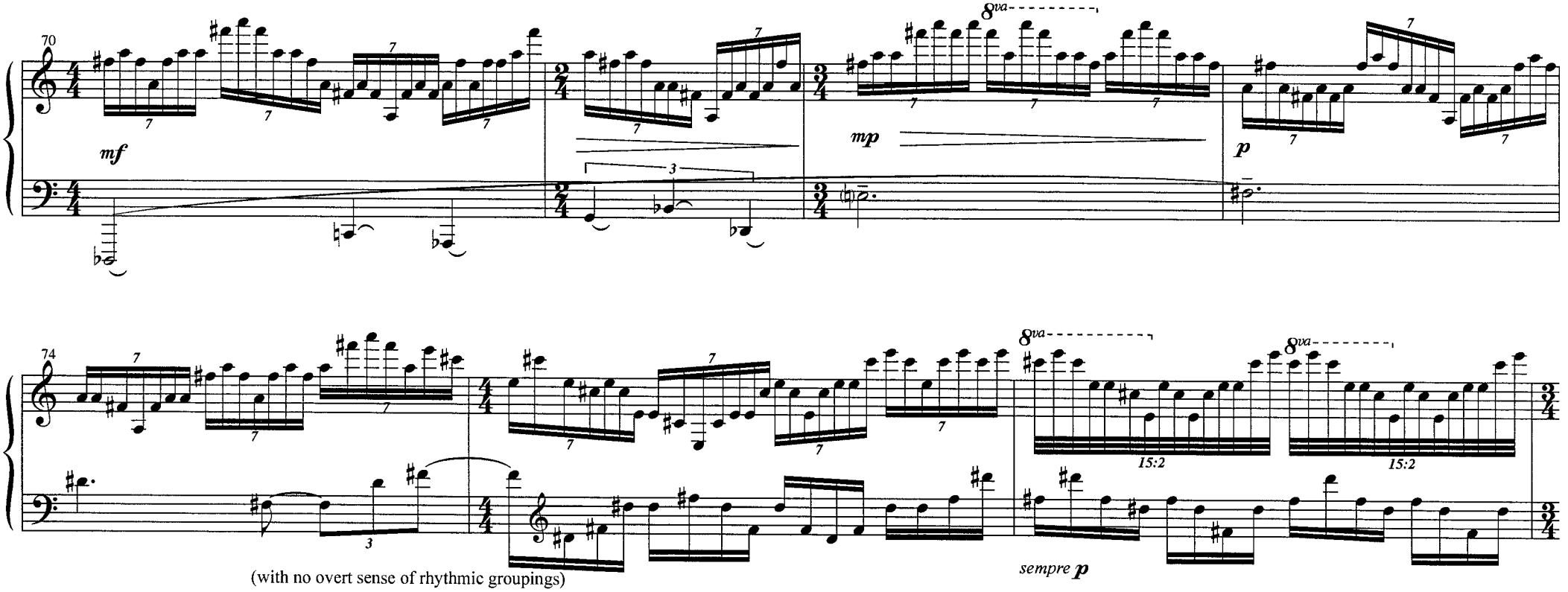

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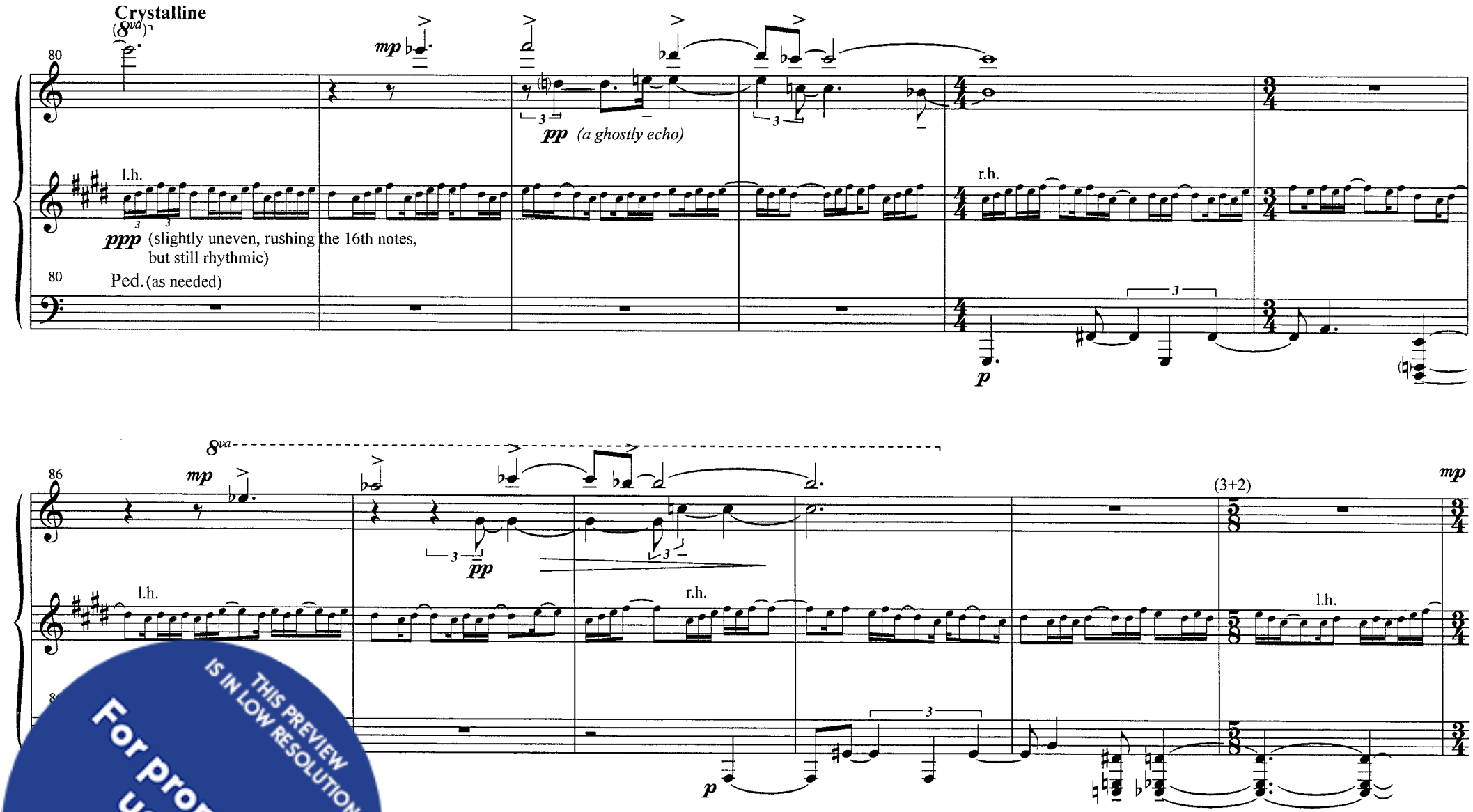

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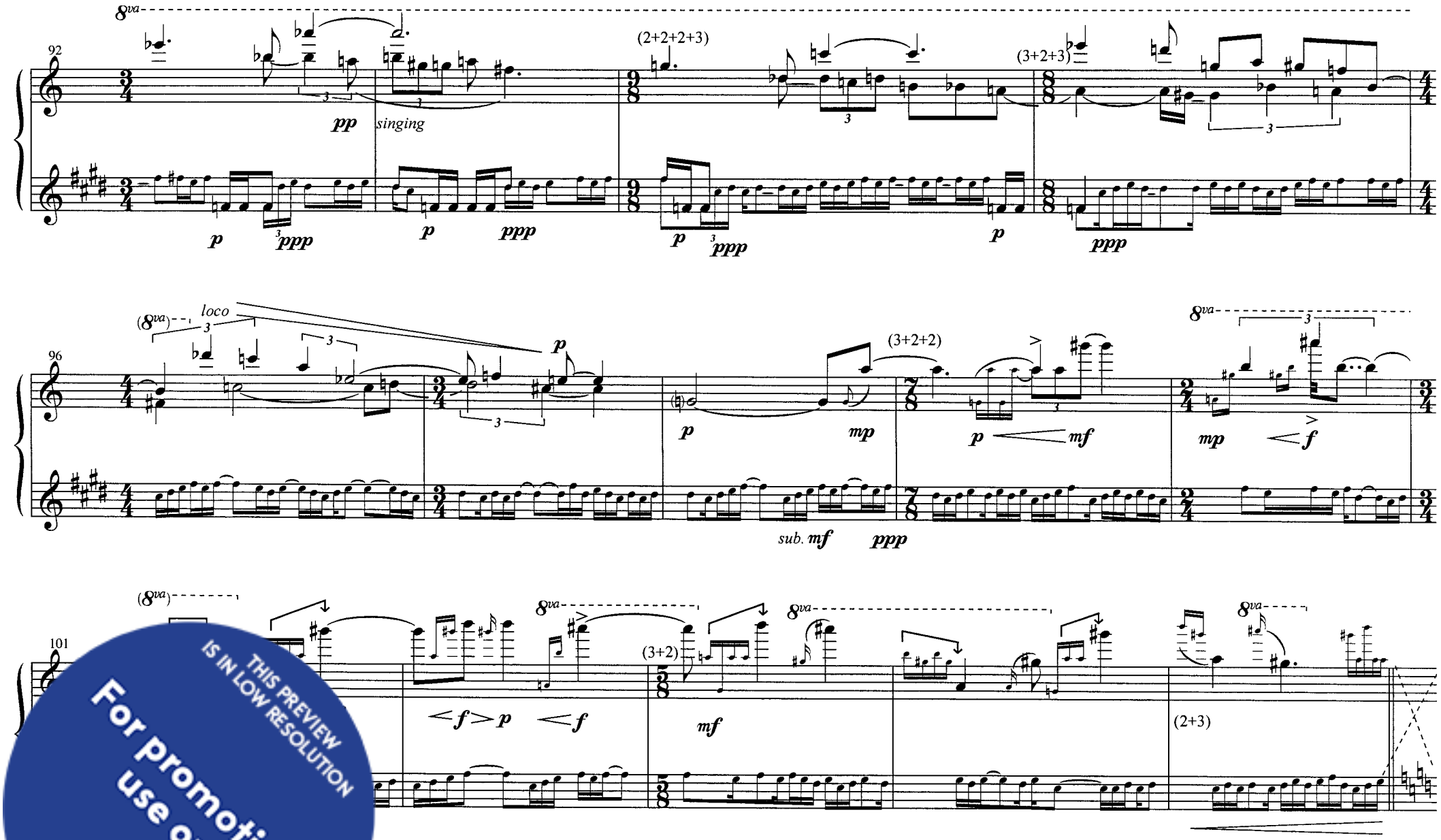

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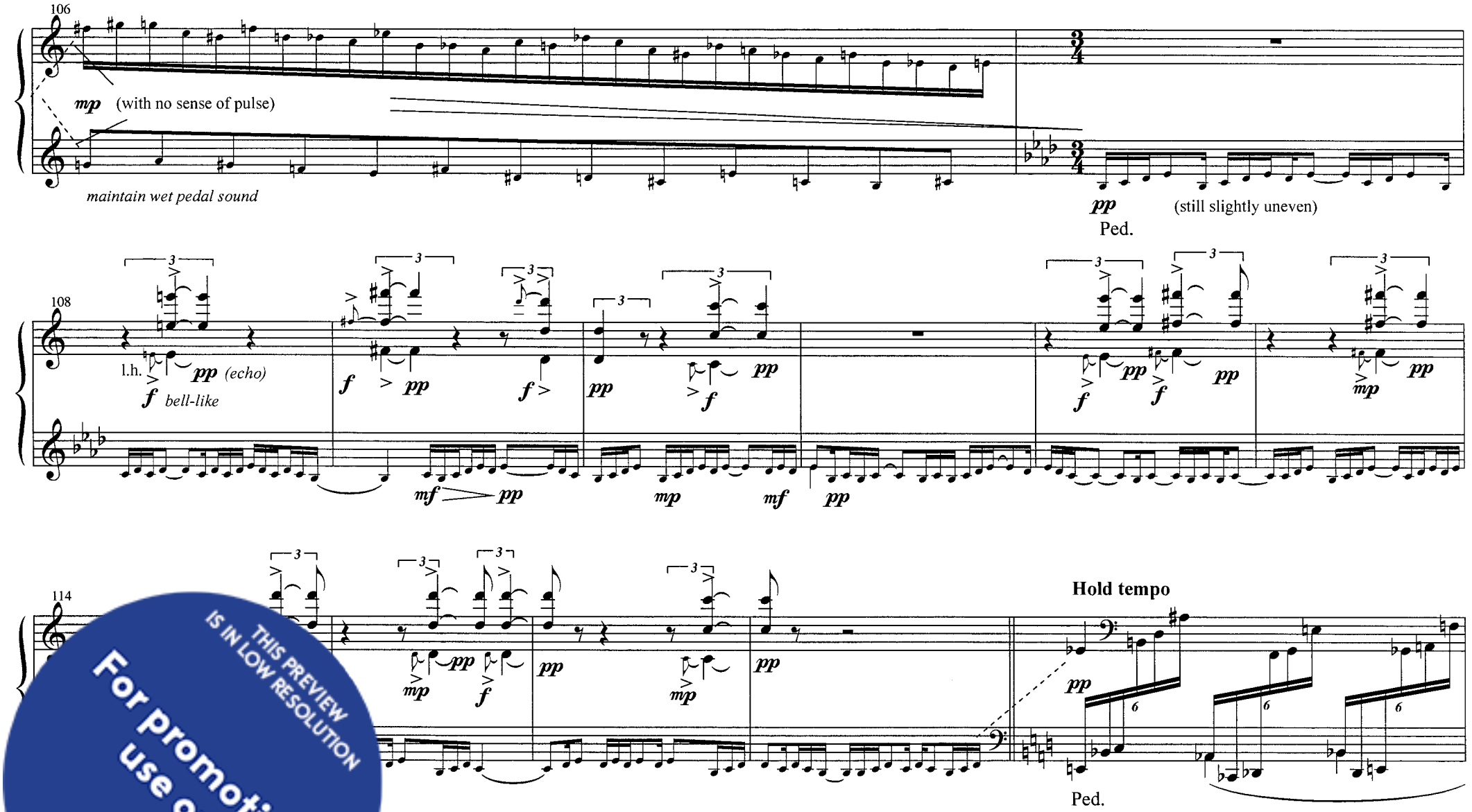
Smooth; Dissolving



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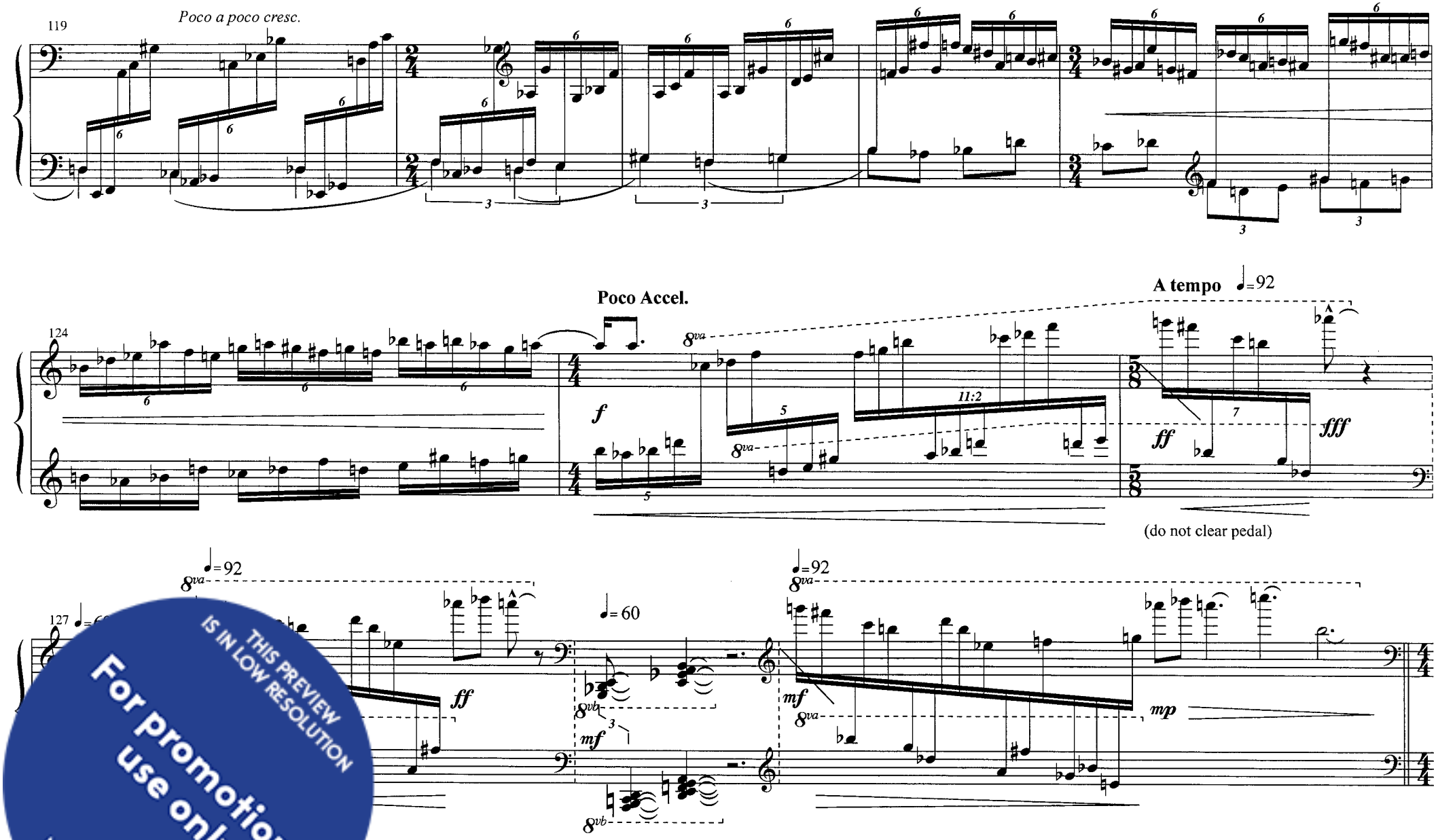

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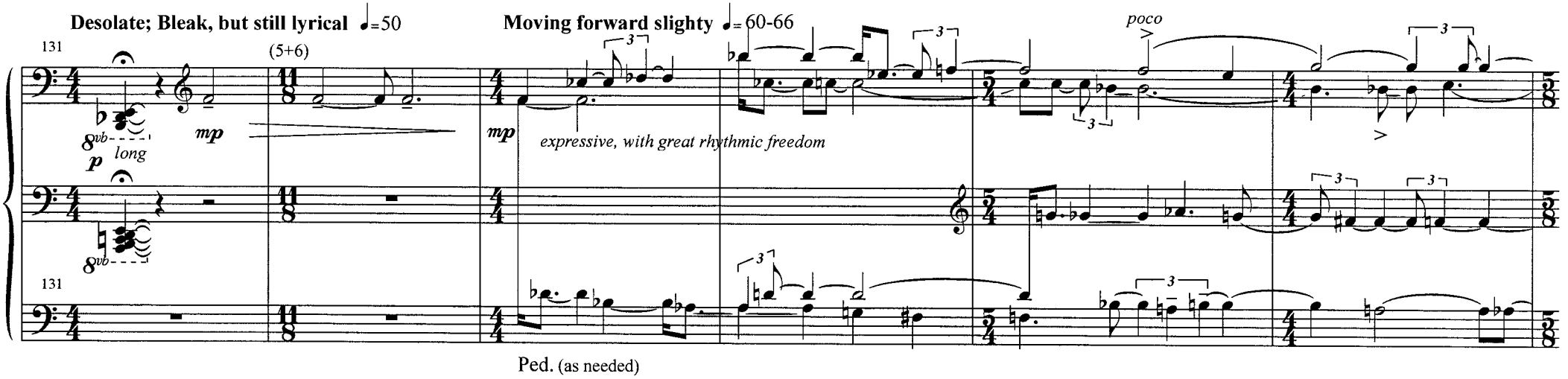

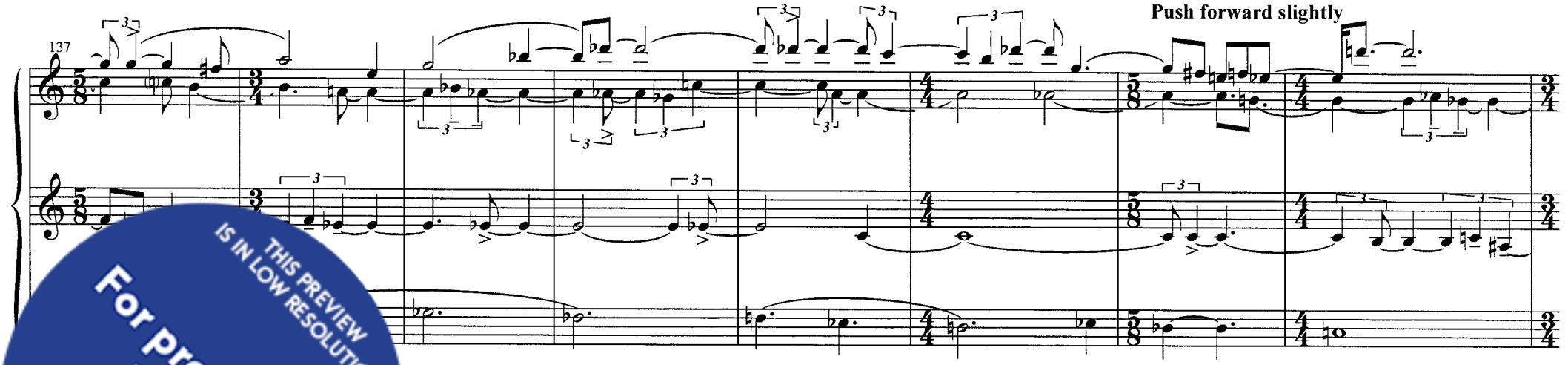

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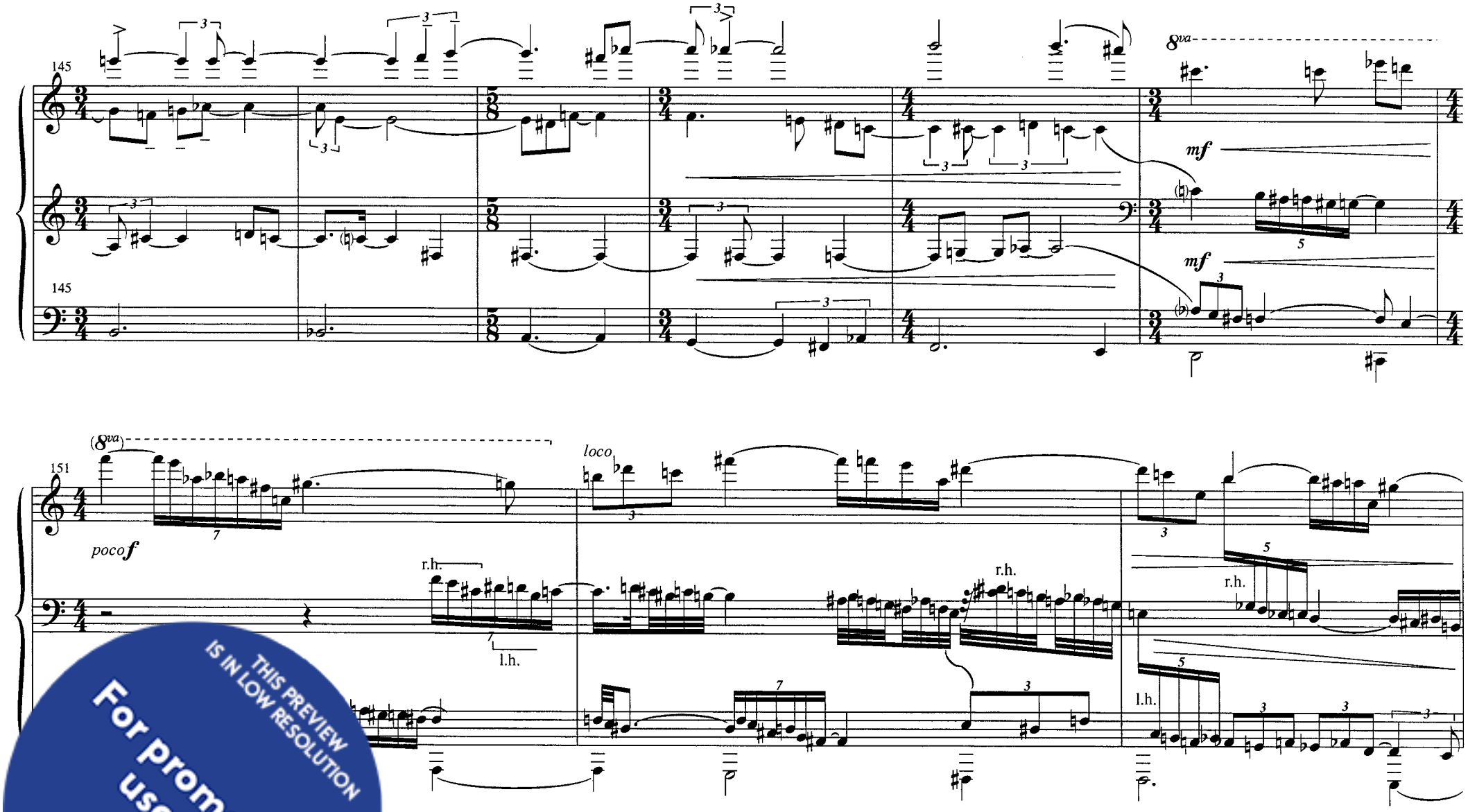

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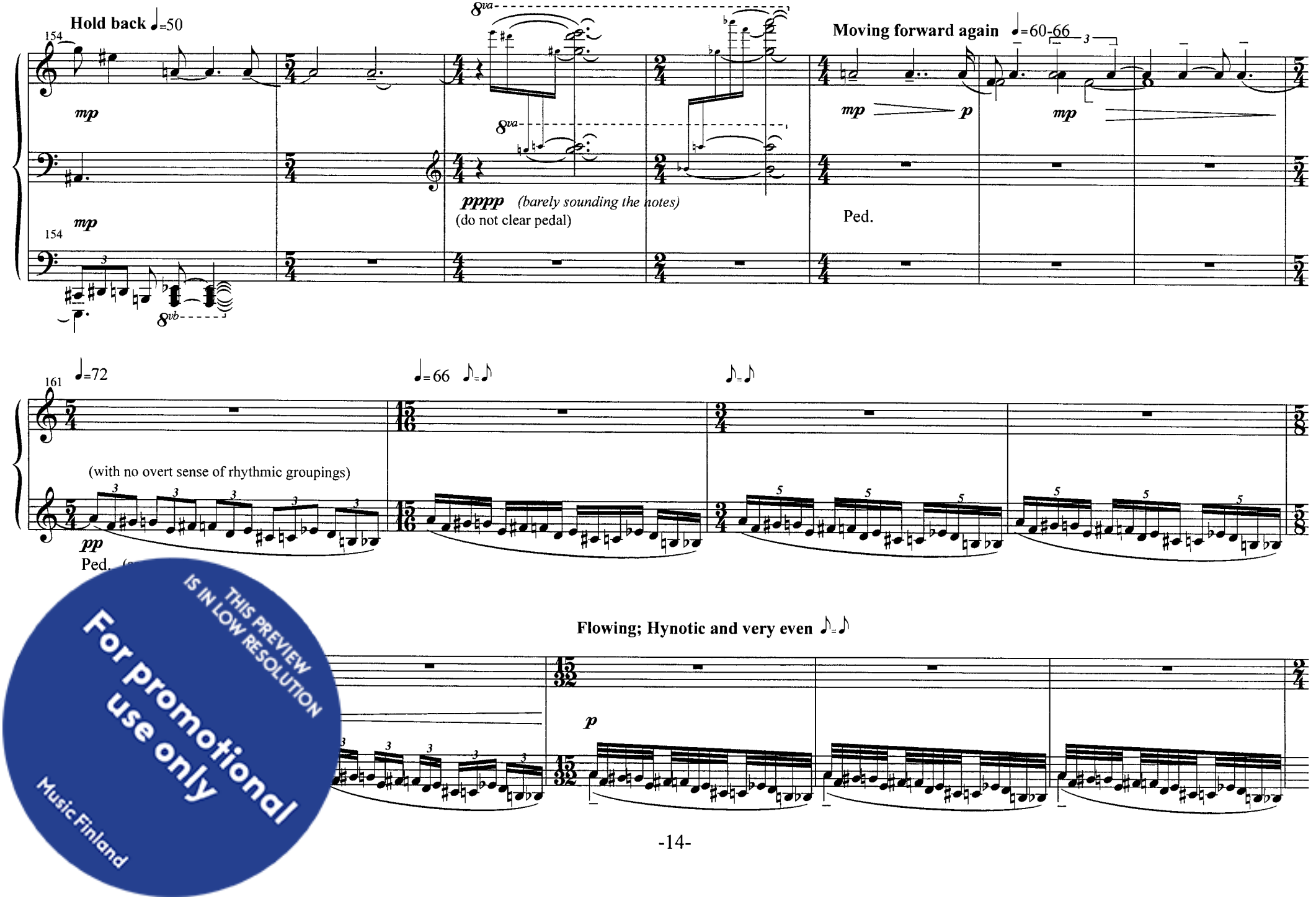

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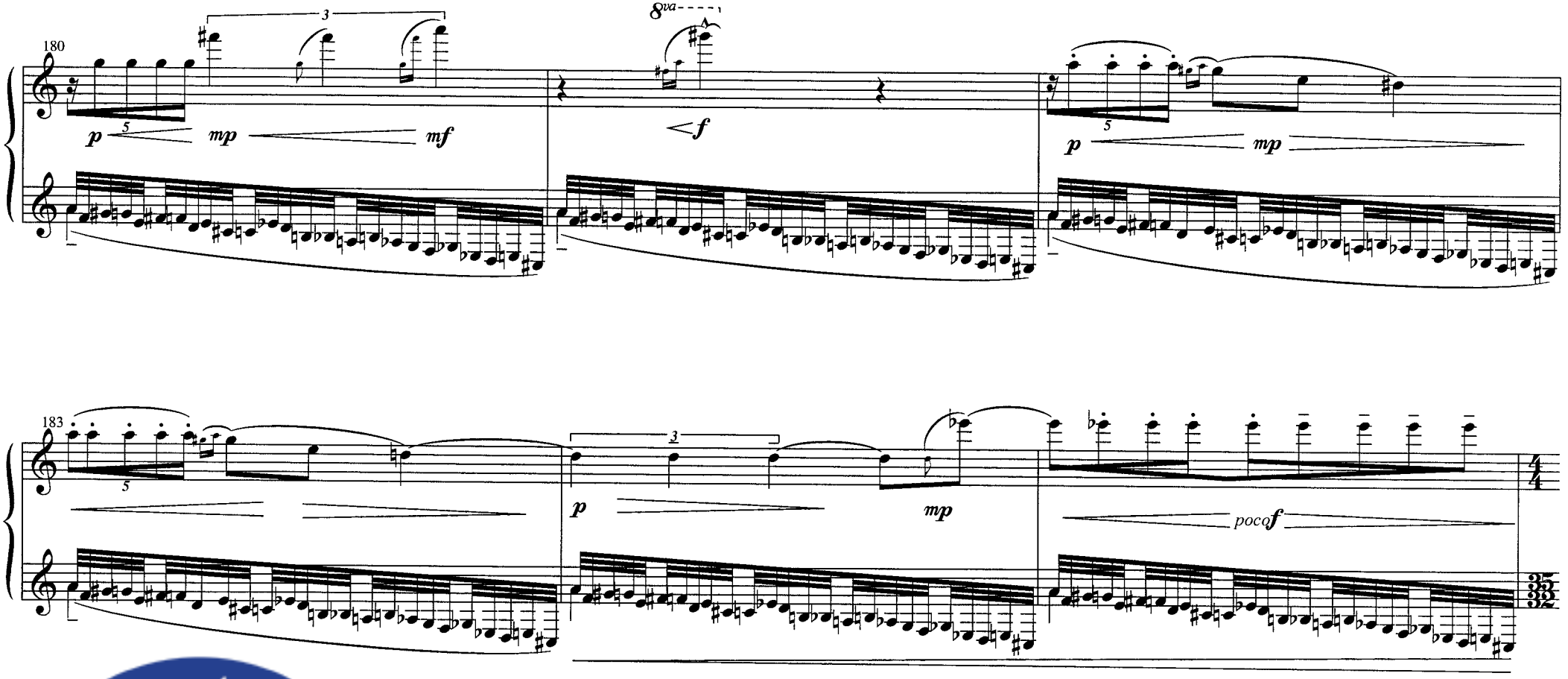

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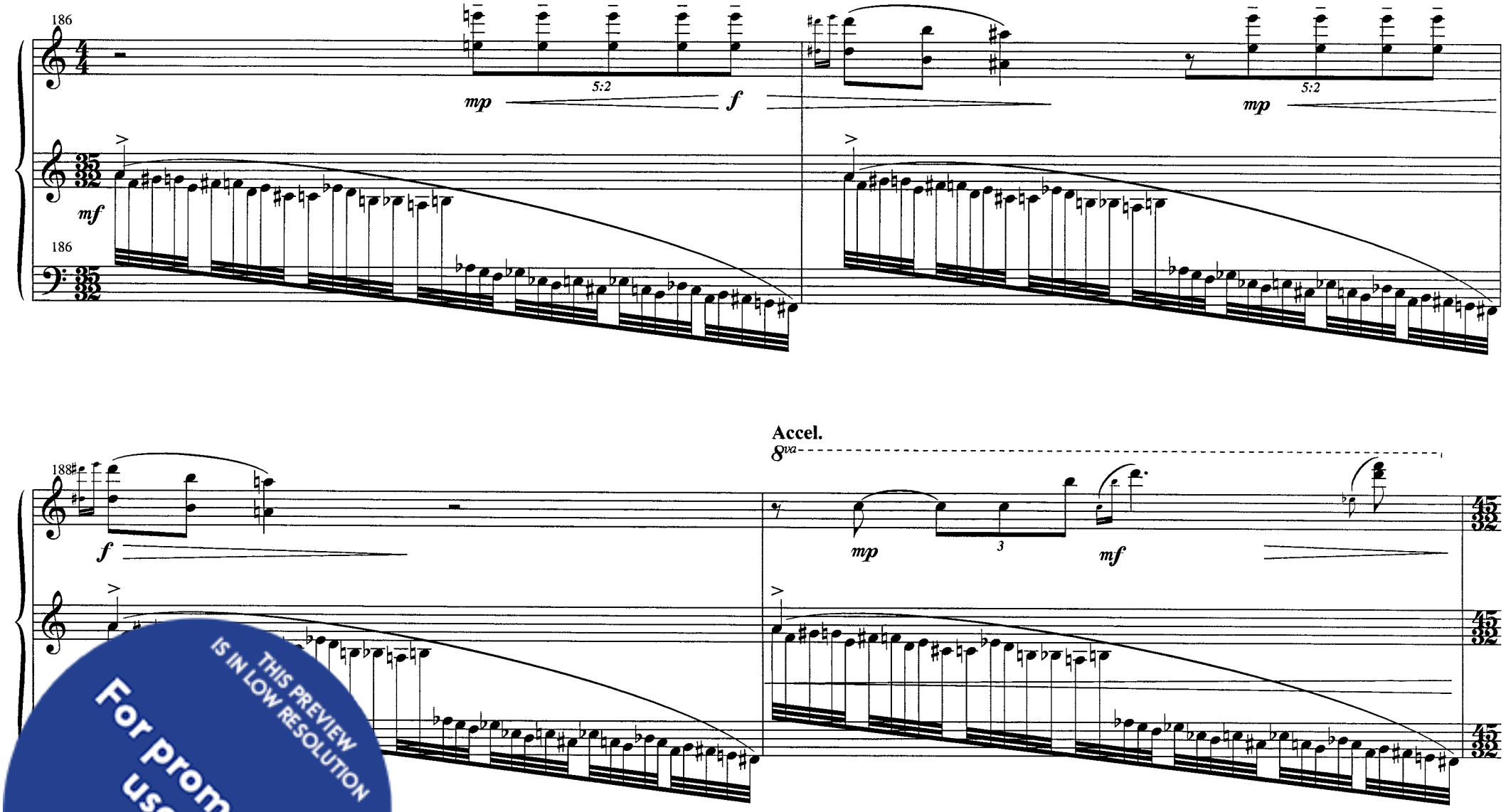

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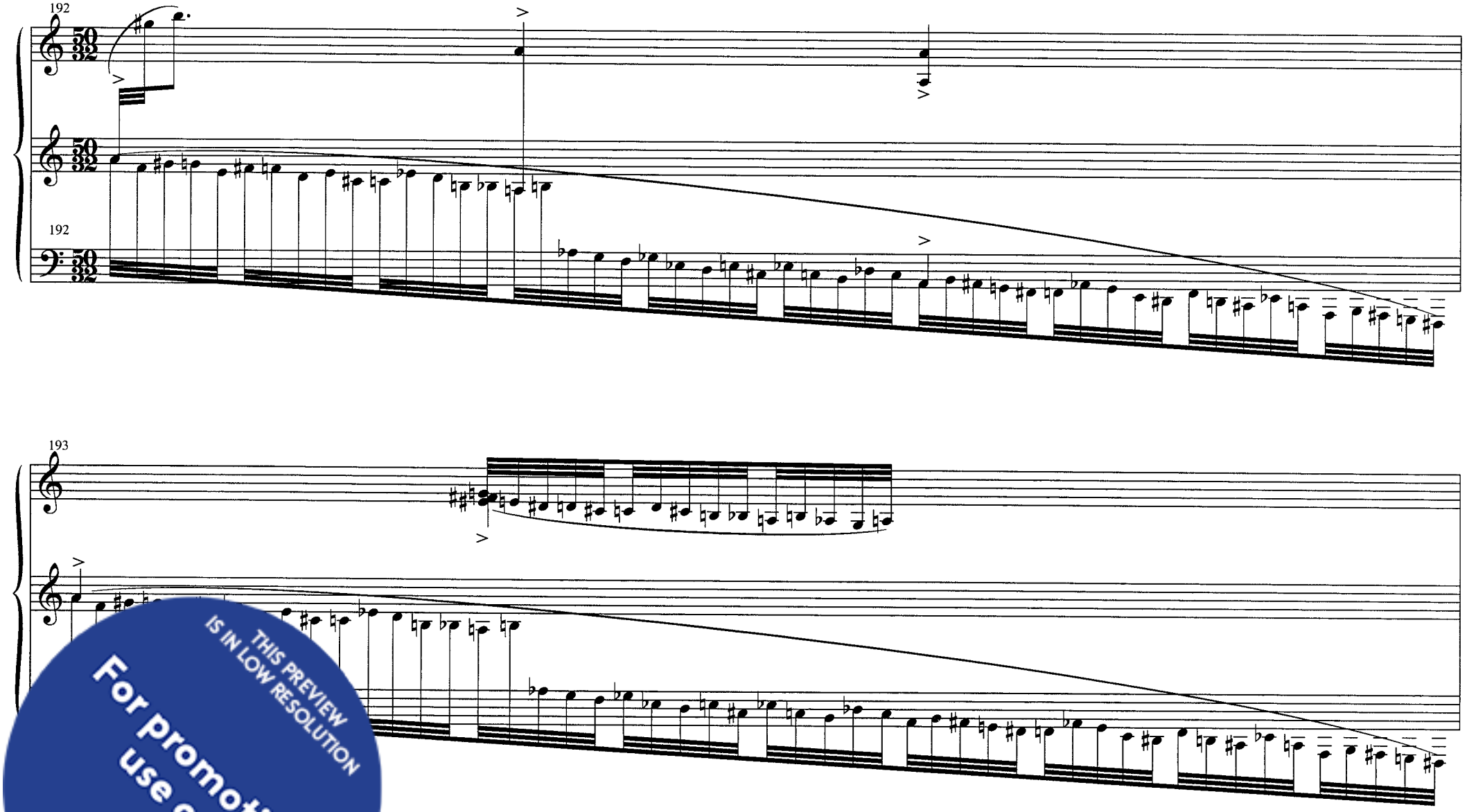

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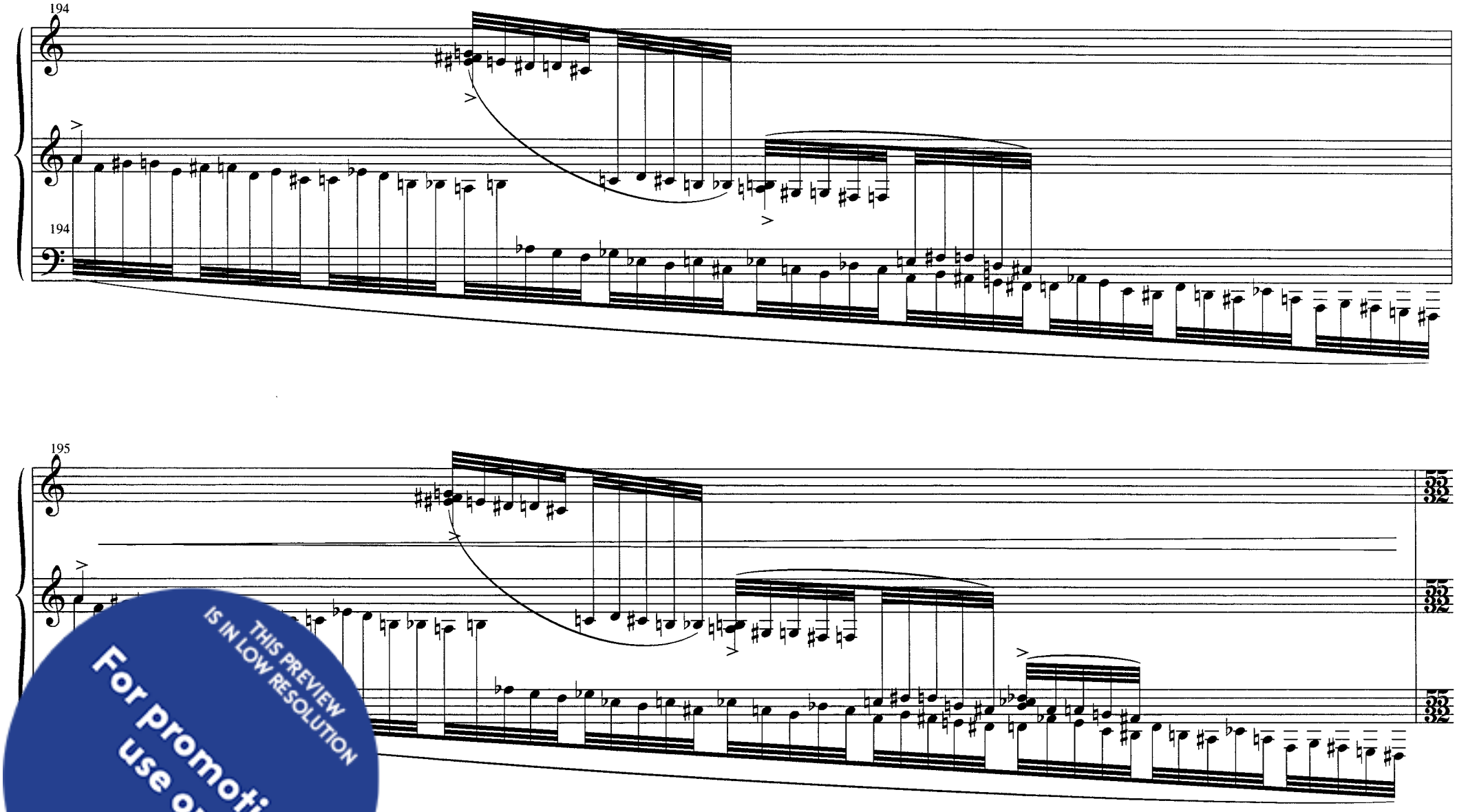

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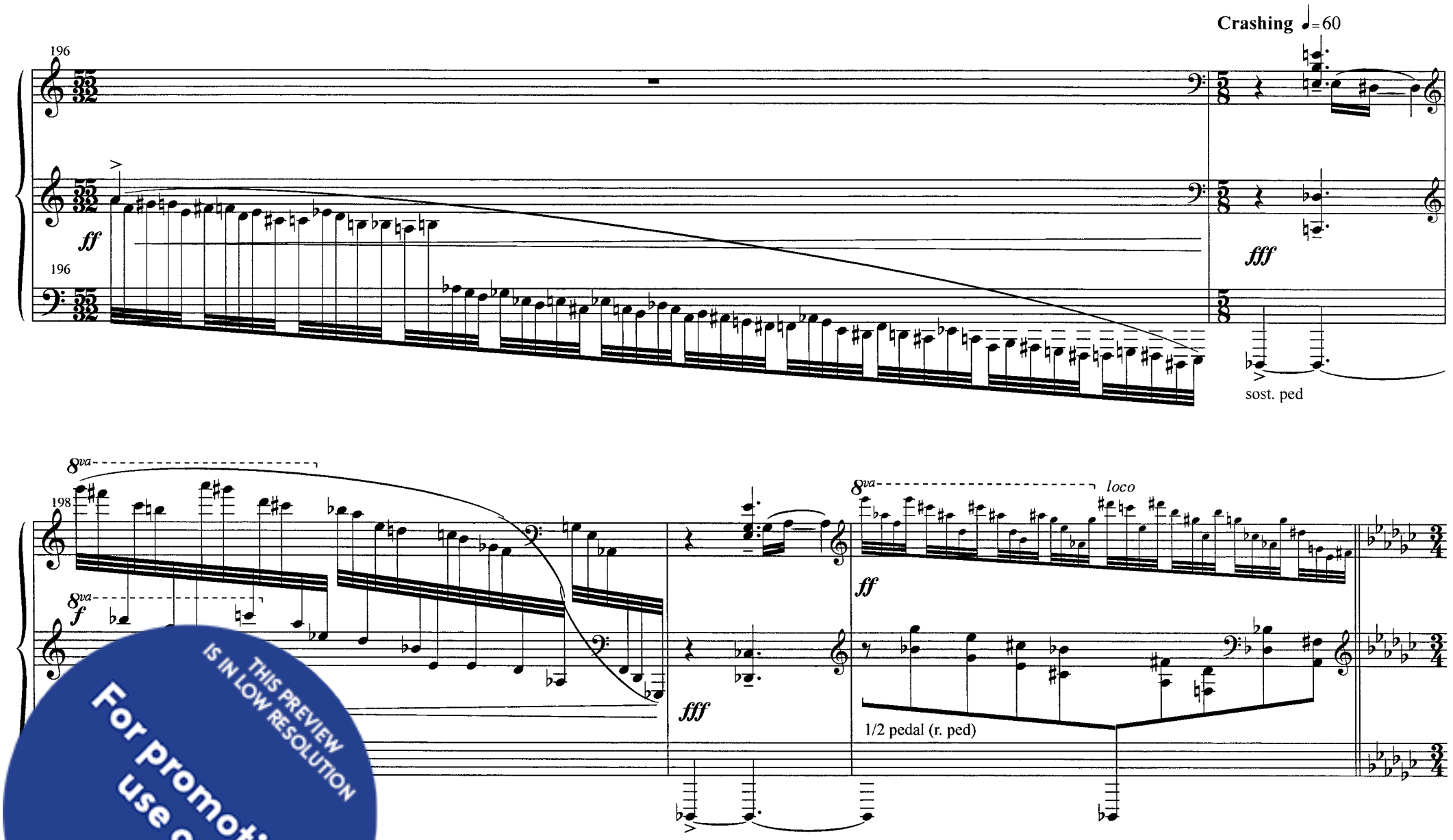

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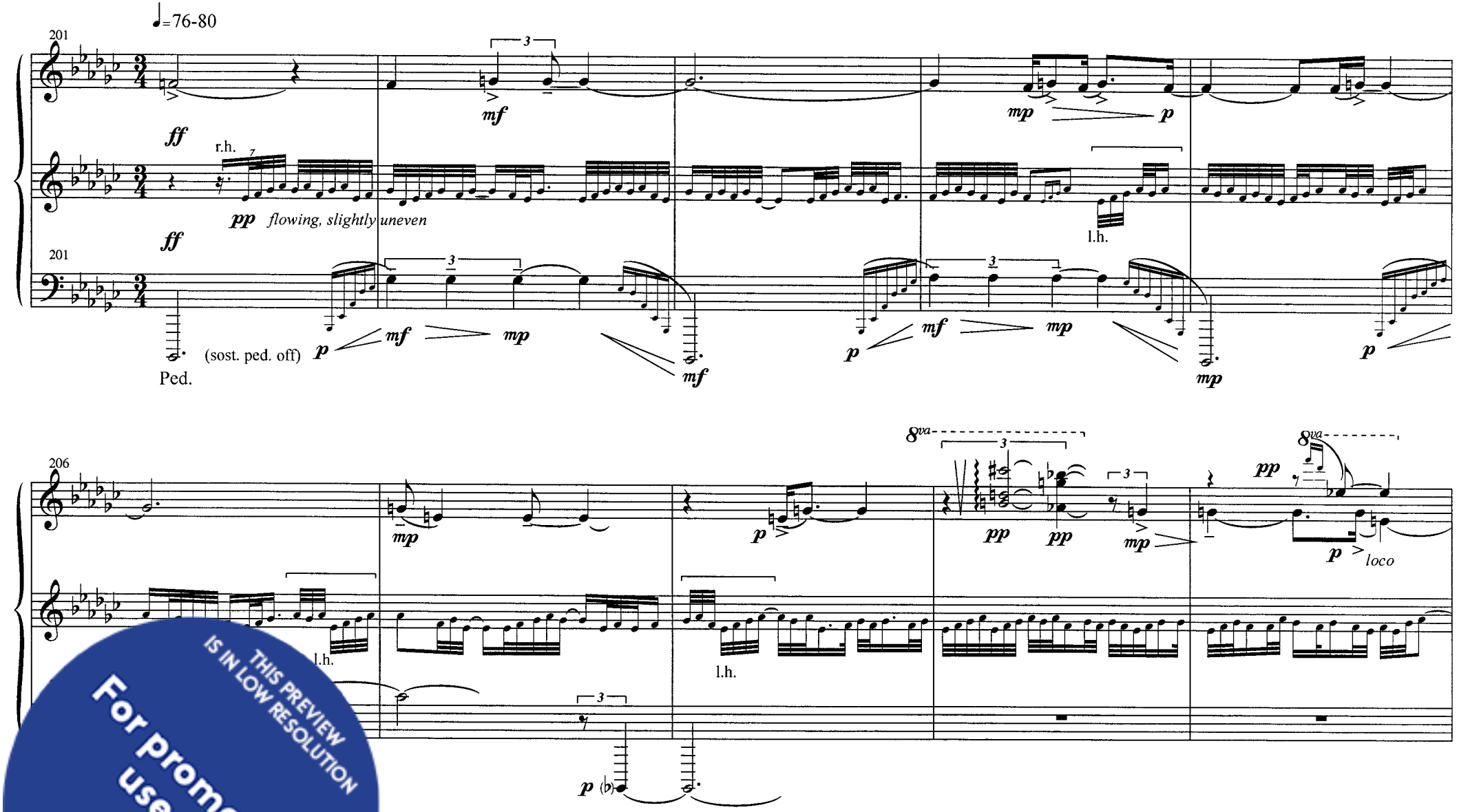

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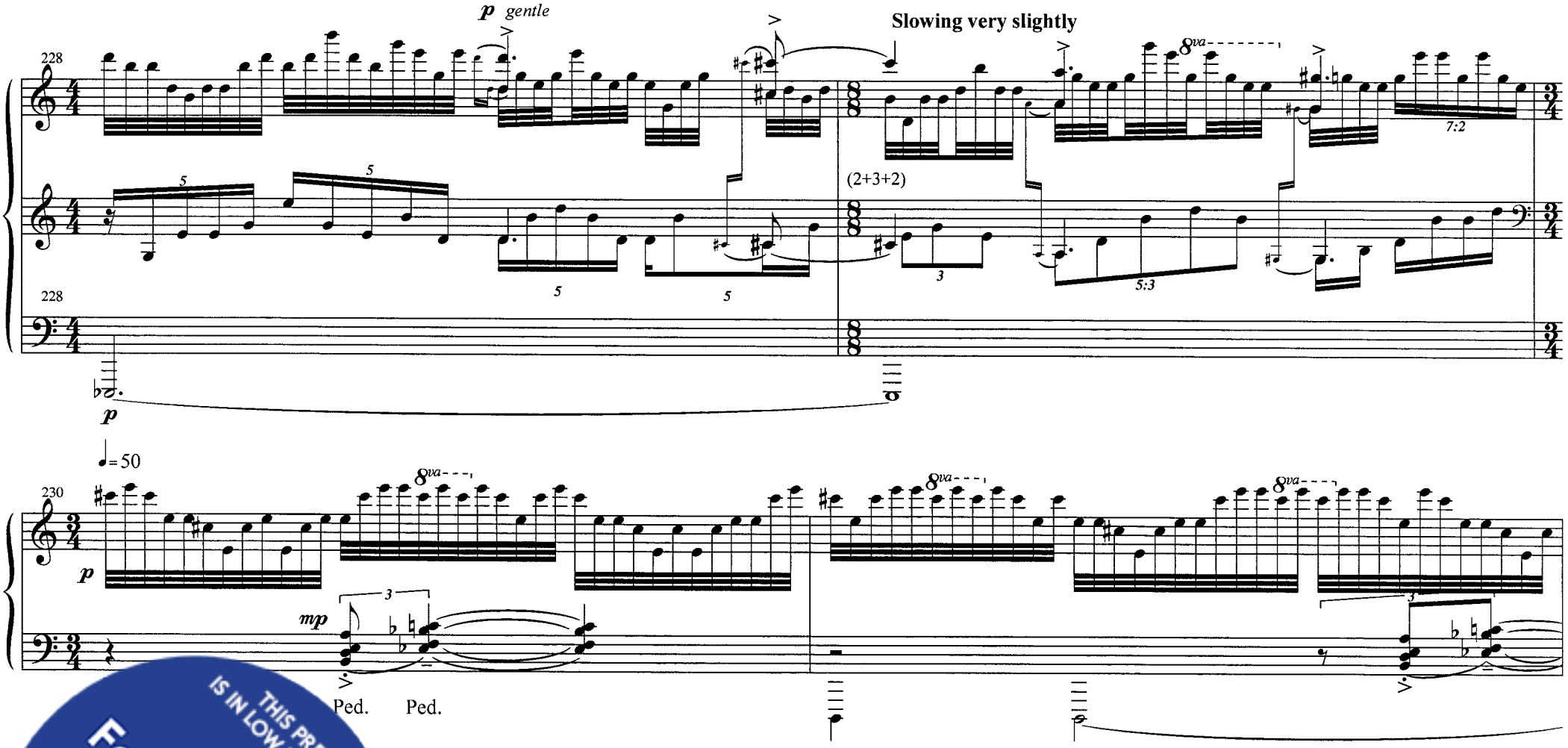

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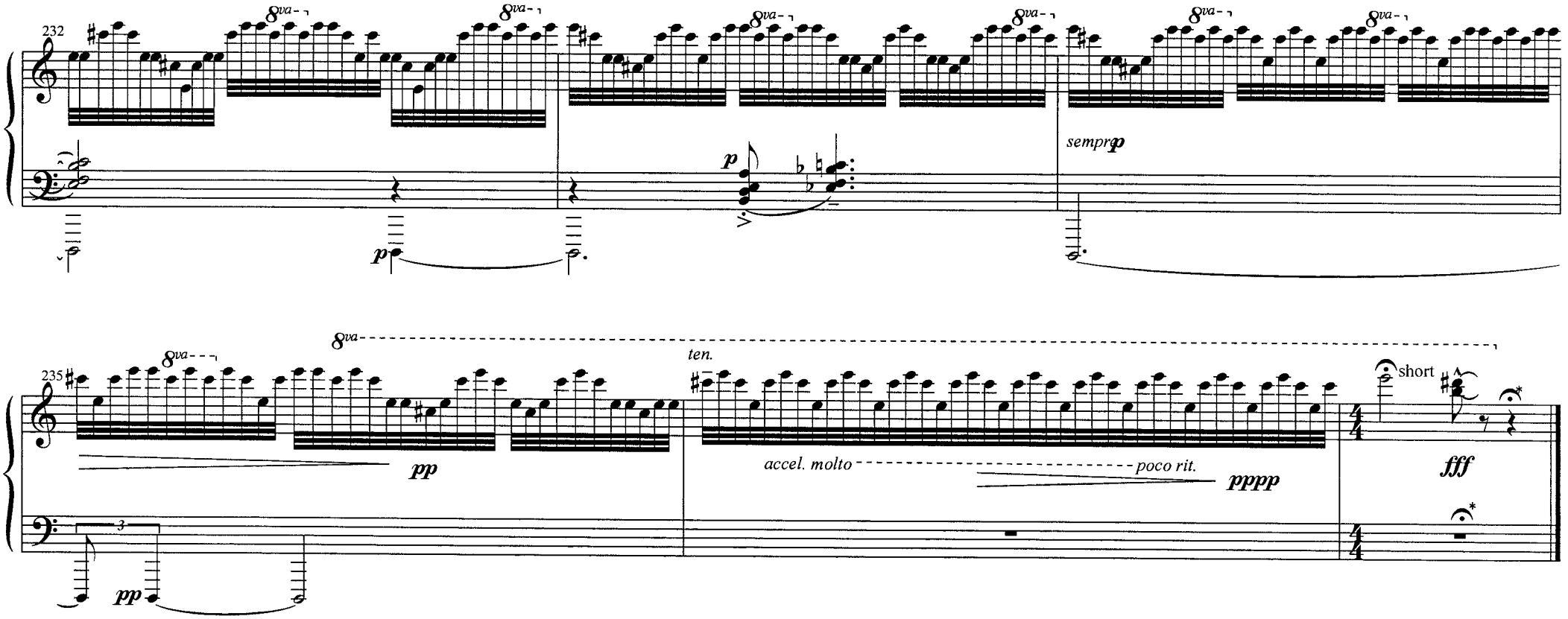

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