STRING ALTERNATIVES SERIES

# Creaking Tree

Darol Anger

**Arranged by Bob Phillips**

## INSTRUMENTATION

| | |
|---|---|
| Conductor Score | 1 |
| Violin I | 8 |
| Violin II | 8 |
| Viola | 5 |
| Cello | 5 |
| String Bass | 5 |
| Harp or Piano | 1 |

### Creaking Tree

An original fiddle tune for string orchestra by the legendary fiddler Darol Anger, as arranged by Bob Phillips. *Creaking Tree* is an attempt to capture the spirit and sound of many of the wonderful 'modal' sounding fiddle tunes that populate the American musical landscape, alternating bluesy sections with minimalist-sounding sequences. This piece epitomizes the sound of the many new string bands of our era, as educated players delve into and interpret anew our great traditional music.

### Notes to the Conductor (and to the players)

*Creaking Tree* is an original fiddle tune. This tune is an attempt to capture the spirit and sound of many of the wonderful 'modal' and bluesy-sounding tunes that populate the American fiddle landscape, combining the Scotch-Irish traditions with the African-American sounds that have made North American music a favorite throughout the world. Some of the qualities that characterize these tunes, and *Creaking Tree*, are:

1. A flat 7th in the scale (in this case, a G natural in the key of A major). This gives the tune a dominant 7th or Mixolydian sound, the root sound of rock and roll.
2. Alternating major and minor feeling, often a 'bluesy' 3rd scale degree, which adds the quintessentially African-American blues sound.
3. Odd phrase lengths.
4. Rhythmic melodies that encourage dancing.

The introduction uses frequent string-crossing as a rhythmic device. Try to imagine people dancing to this, or balls bouncing around, and strive to keep this 'bouncing' motion as you play. Pay special attention to the use of the 'blues 3rd.' Generally in this tune, the left-hand finger slides. Whenever you have a C or a C♯ (the third degree of the A major scale – as in the Vln 1 part, mm. 36 & 39) that is longer than an 8th note, assume that there will be a little slide into that note. Not too much, but enough to give a bluesy feeling. This effect can also be applied to the F♯ that happens at the very beginning of the third section (Vln 1, m. 48), when the tune hits a D chord. That F♯ is the bluesy third degree of the D scale. There are long E notes in the second section (mm. 34 & 37) that should be played by the violins in a fiddling style; this means playing an E on the A string with the 4th finger (fiddle players use the 4th finger frequently) together with the open E string to get a calling-out, lonesome sound. This technique effectively doubles a violin's sound, and, before the use of electrical amplification, enabled fiddlers to be heard without microphones at dances.

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## "Chop" Technique

*Creaking Tree* incorporates the infamous "chop" technique, notated with 'x' noteheads (Ex. Violin 2, Viola and Cello, m. 33).

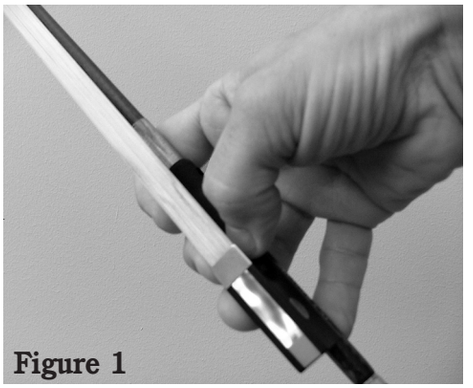

Figure 1

To "chop," first grip the bow normally, then "roll" the thumb out to opposite bend position. (Figures 1 and 2)

Figure 2

Figure 3

The bow is brought straight down on the string using mostly wrist motion, making a no-note percussive sound. The elbow is slightly down, arm relaxed. Let the bow rest on the string; don't pick up! (Figure 3)

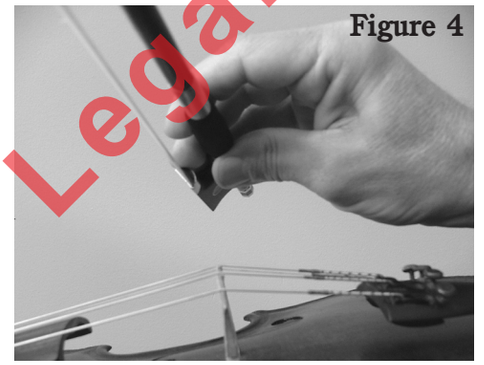

Figure 4

For the upbows immediately following the "chop" notes, the bow is "popped" off the string. (Figure 4)

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Further explanation can be found in a PDF download available from **www.darolanger.com/edu** and on a full-length instructional video that can be purchased from the Homespun Tapes website and **www.darolanger.com/store**.

*Dedicated to the Alpharetta High School Orchestra and their director, Sheldon Fisher for their performance at the Midwest Clinic, December 2006 with soloist Darol Anger.*

# Creaking Tree

CONDUCTOR SCORE
Duration - 4:00

Darol Anger
*Arr. by Bob Phillips*

**Moderately funky** ♩ = 90

Violins I: solo — *mf slightly swing eighth notes*
Violins II: *slightly swing eighth notes*
Viola: *slightly swing eighth notes*
Cello: *slightly swing eighth notes* — *f*
String Bass: solo — *p slightly swing eighth notes*
Harp or Piano: *mf slightly swing eighth notes*

* Muffle the C string with your left hand. Slowly slide the bow (at a 45º angle to the bridge) while pressing heavily into the string. Start the bow at the bridge and move towards the fingerboard making a creaking tree sound.

9

Vlns. I: (V) — sul E
Vlns. II: *p*
Vla.
Cello: solo — *p*
Str. Bass: *f* (V)
Harp or Piano

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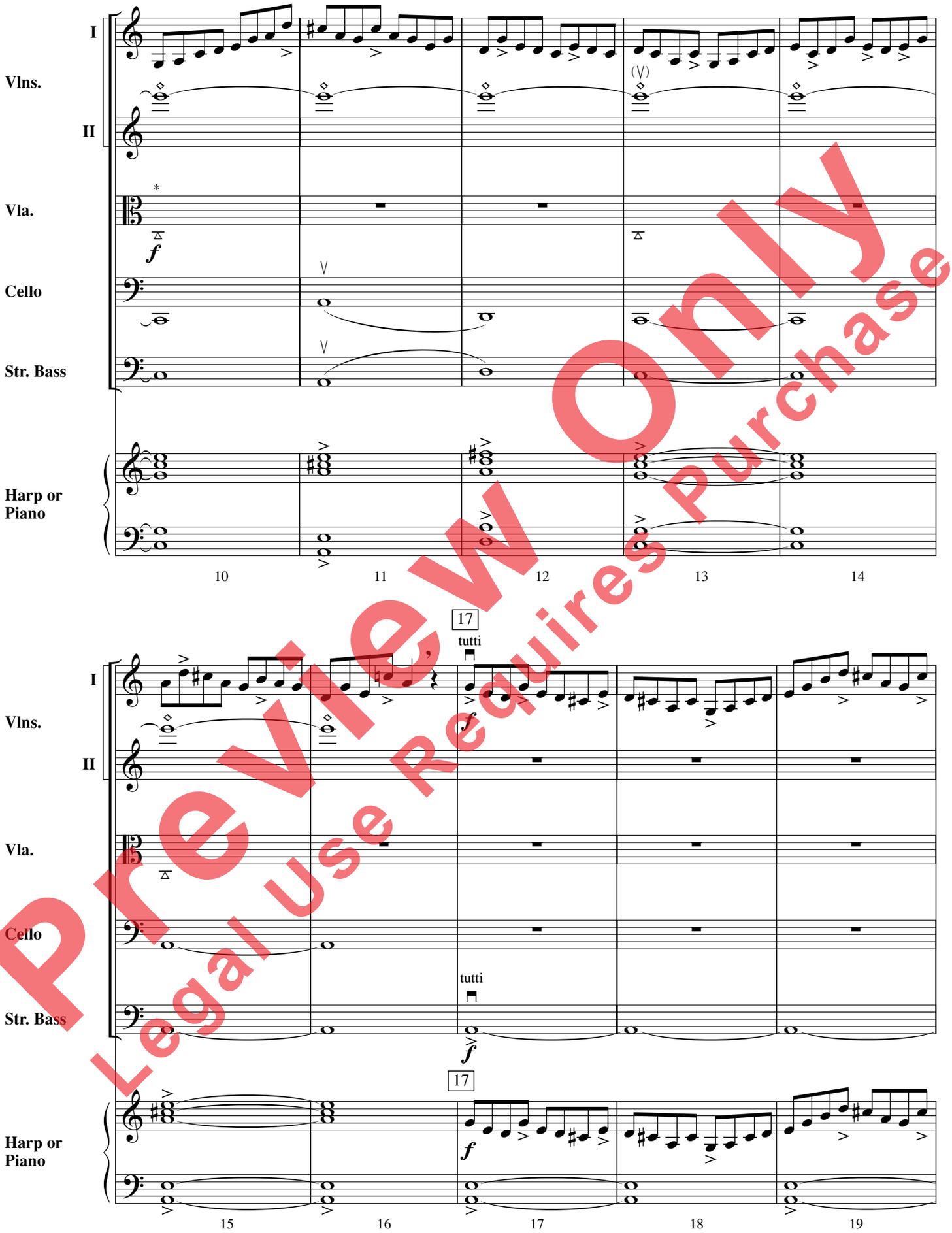


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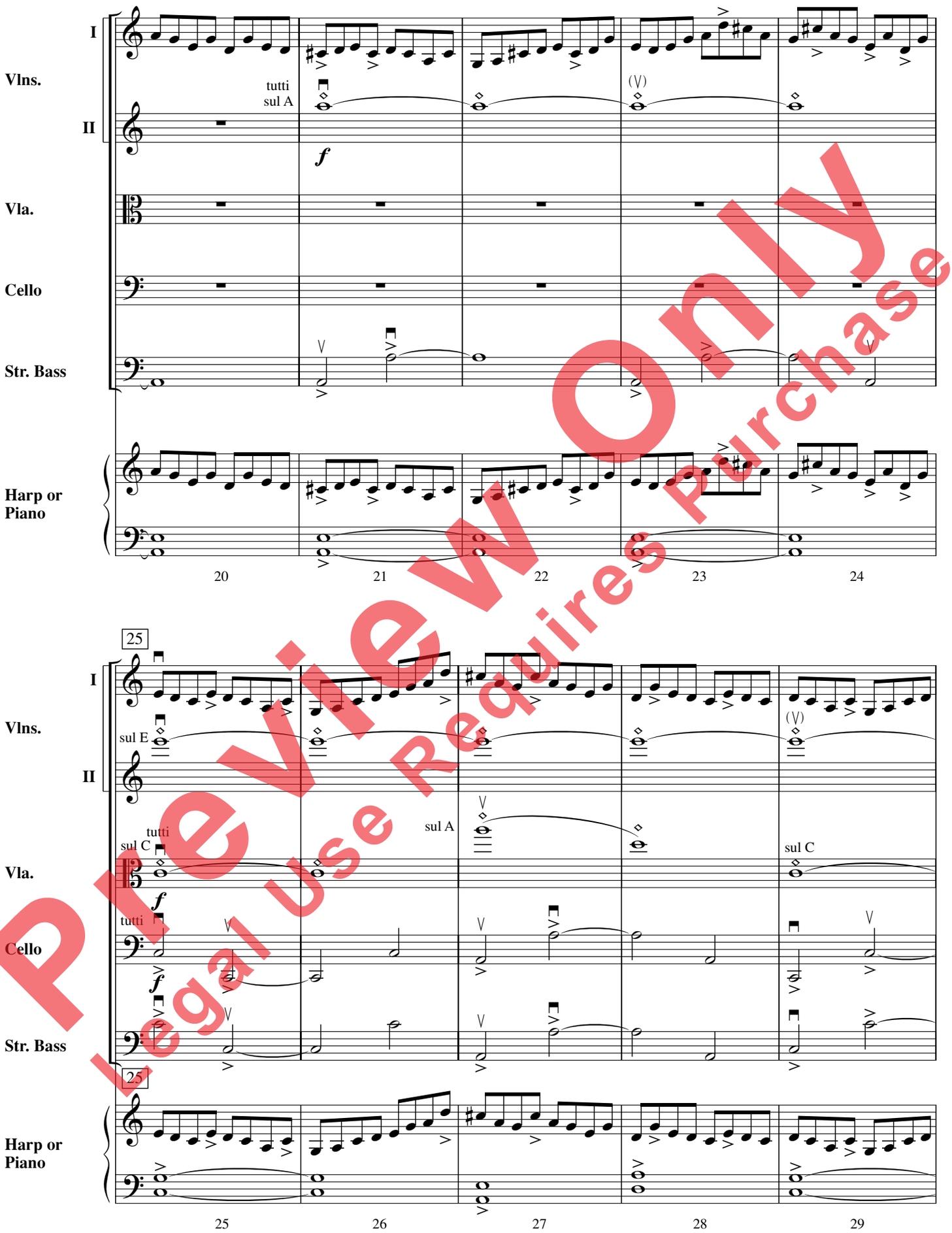


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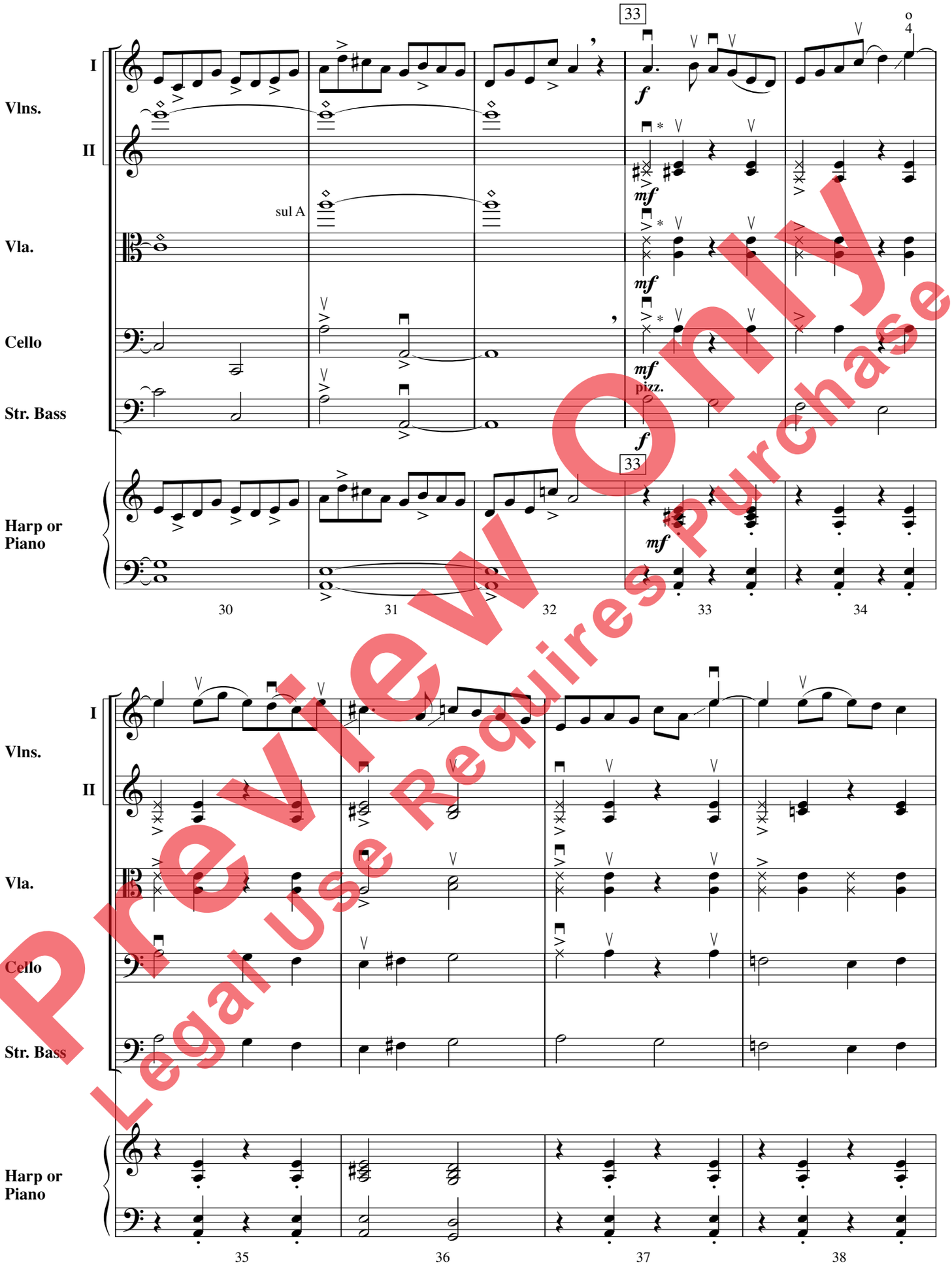


* X indicates a chop. Stick the bow firmly on the string, creating a percussive sound.



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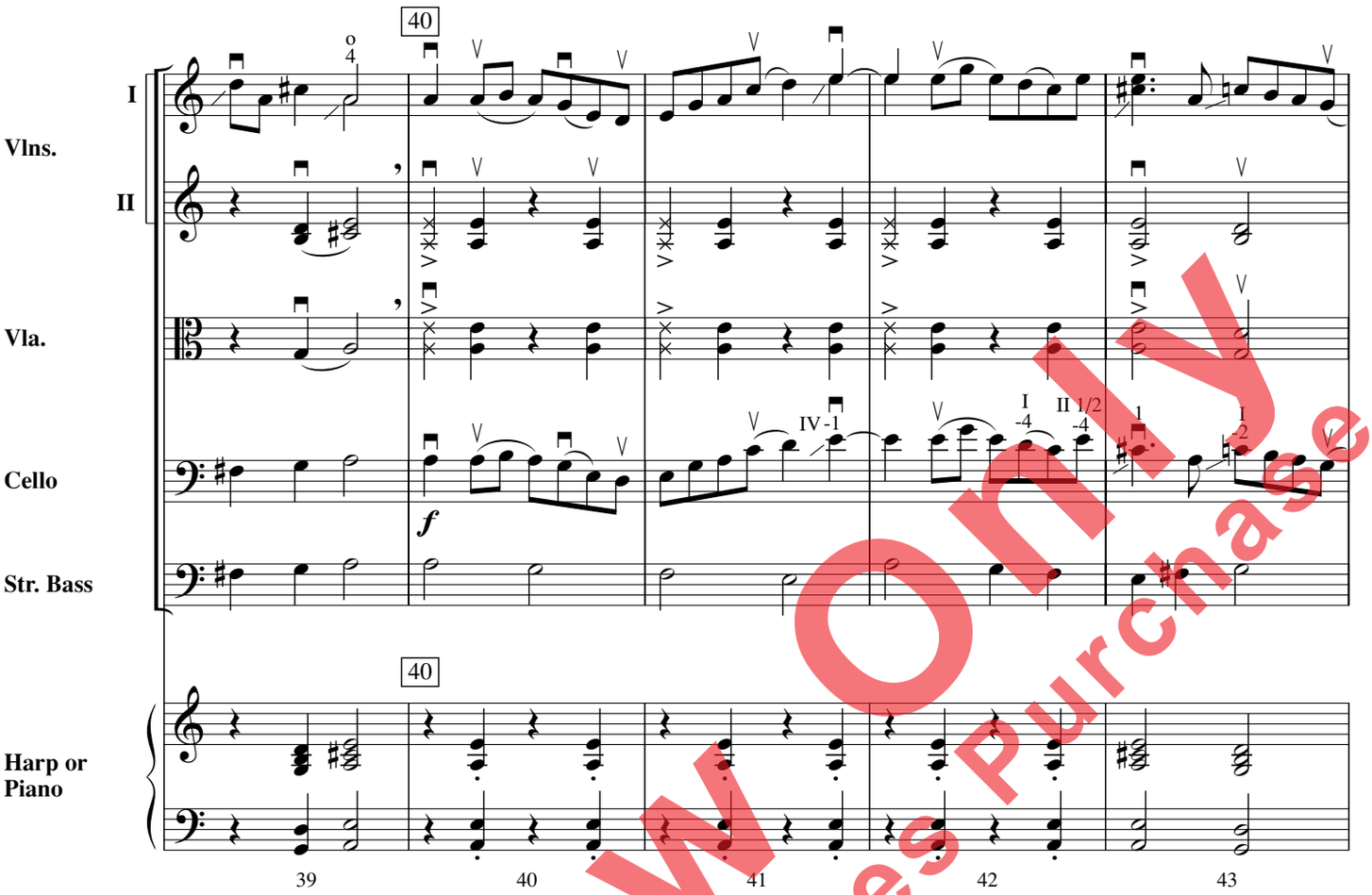


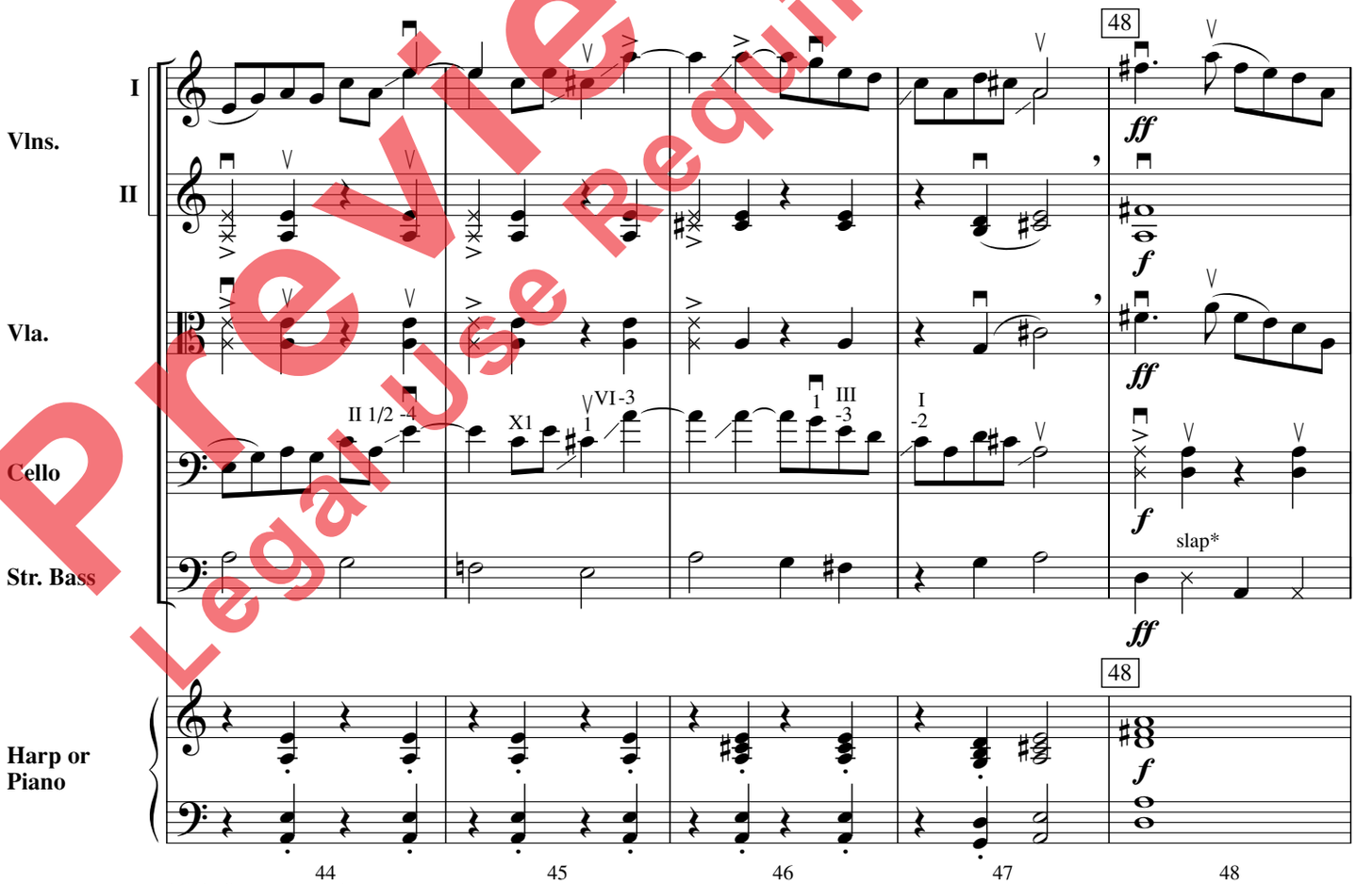


* X indicates slap strings.

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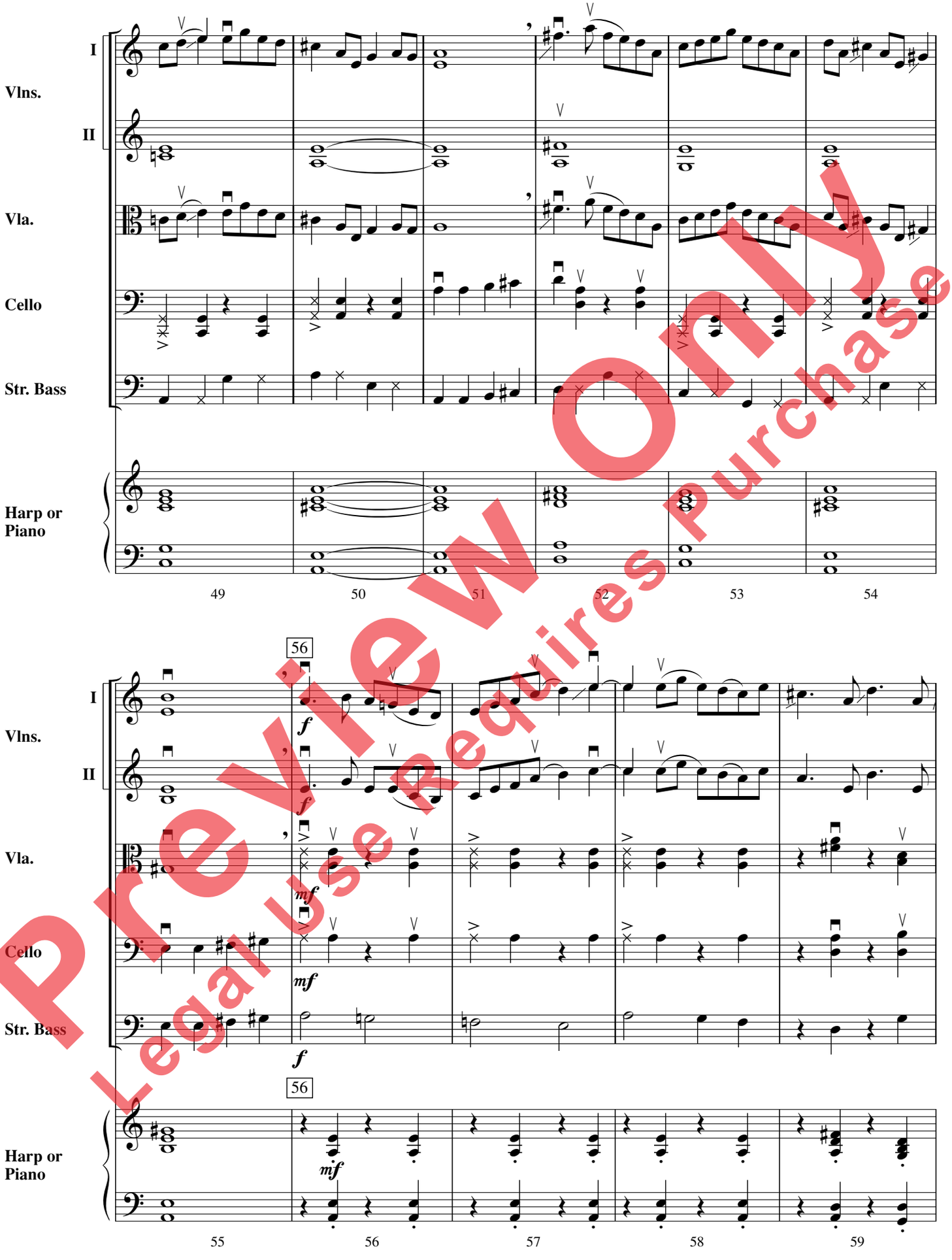


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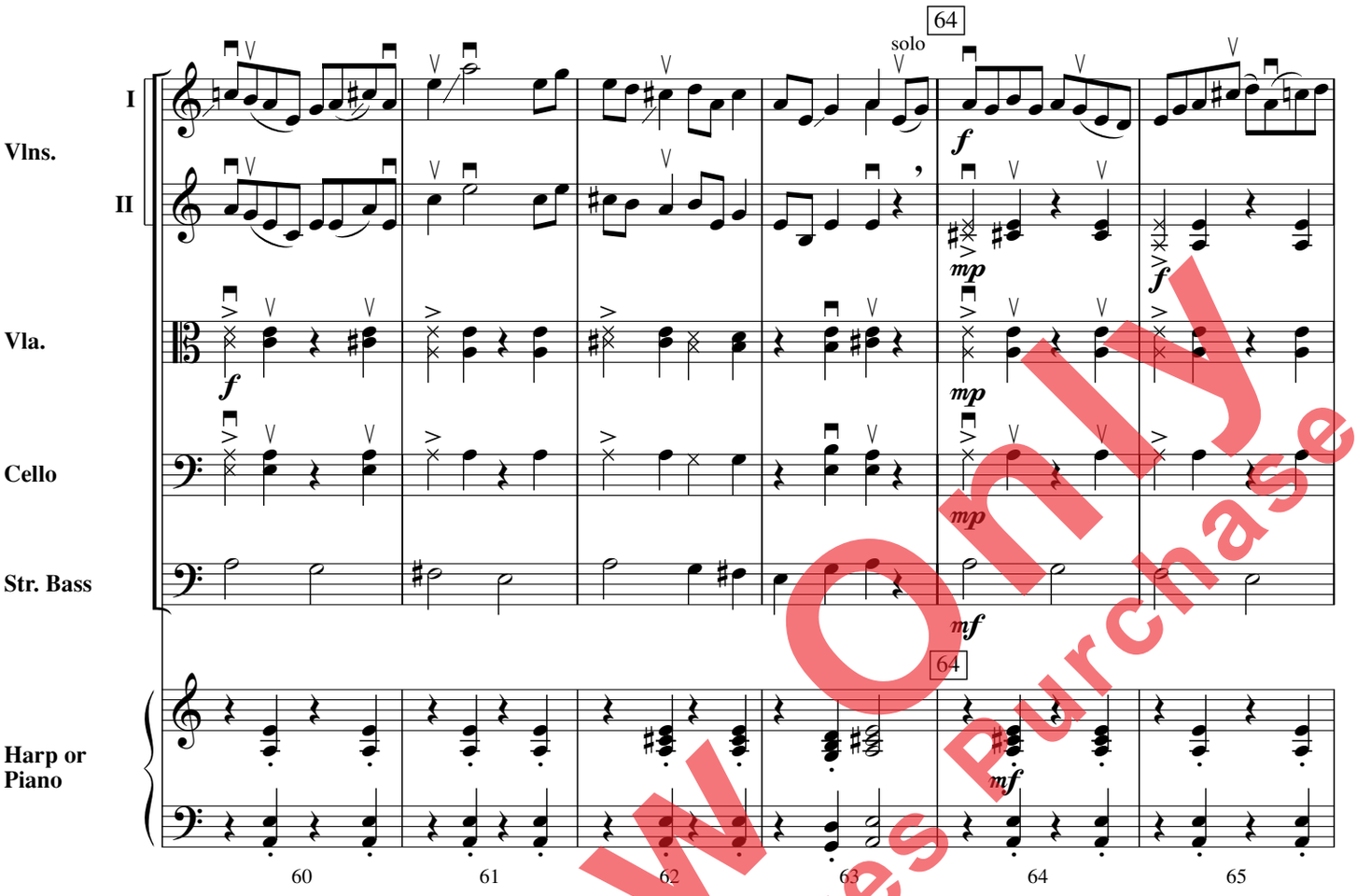


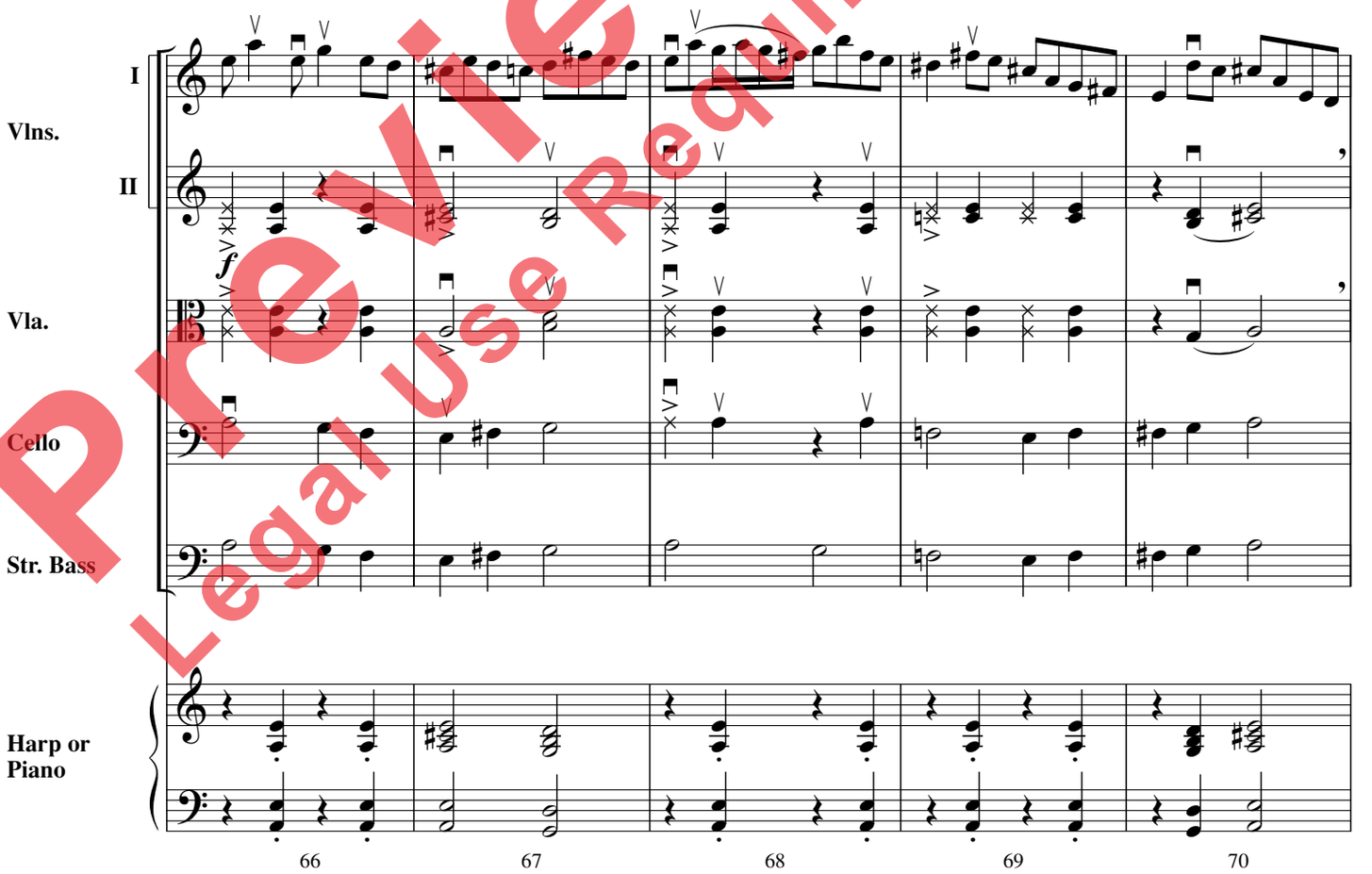


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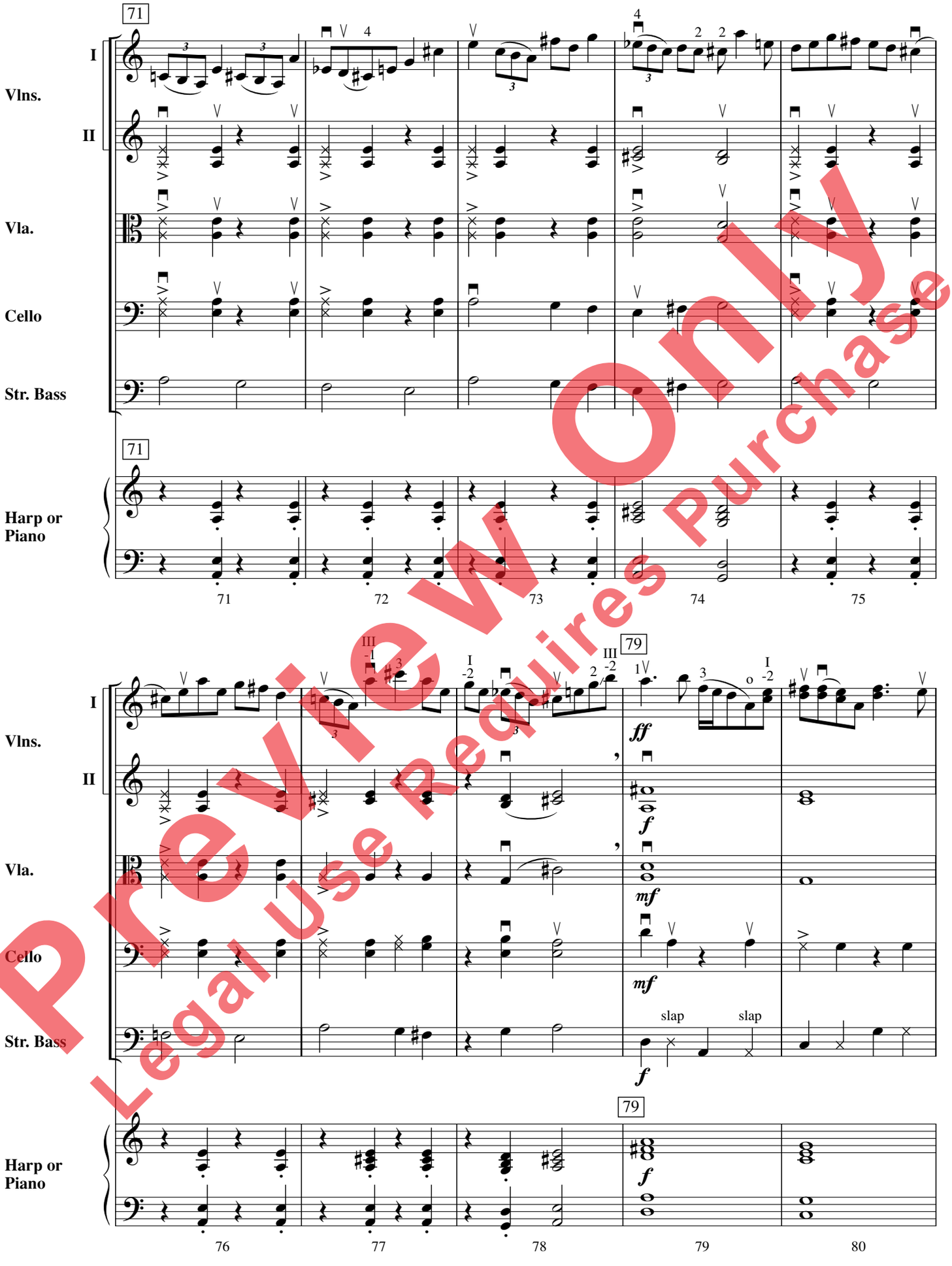


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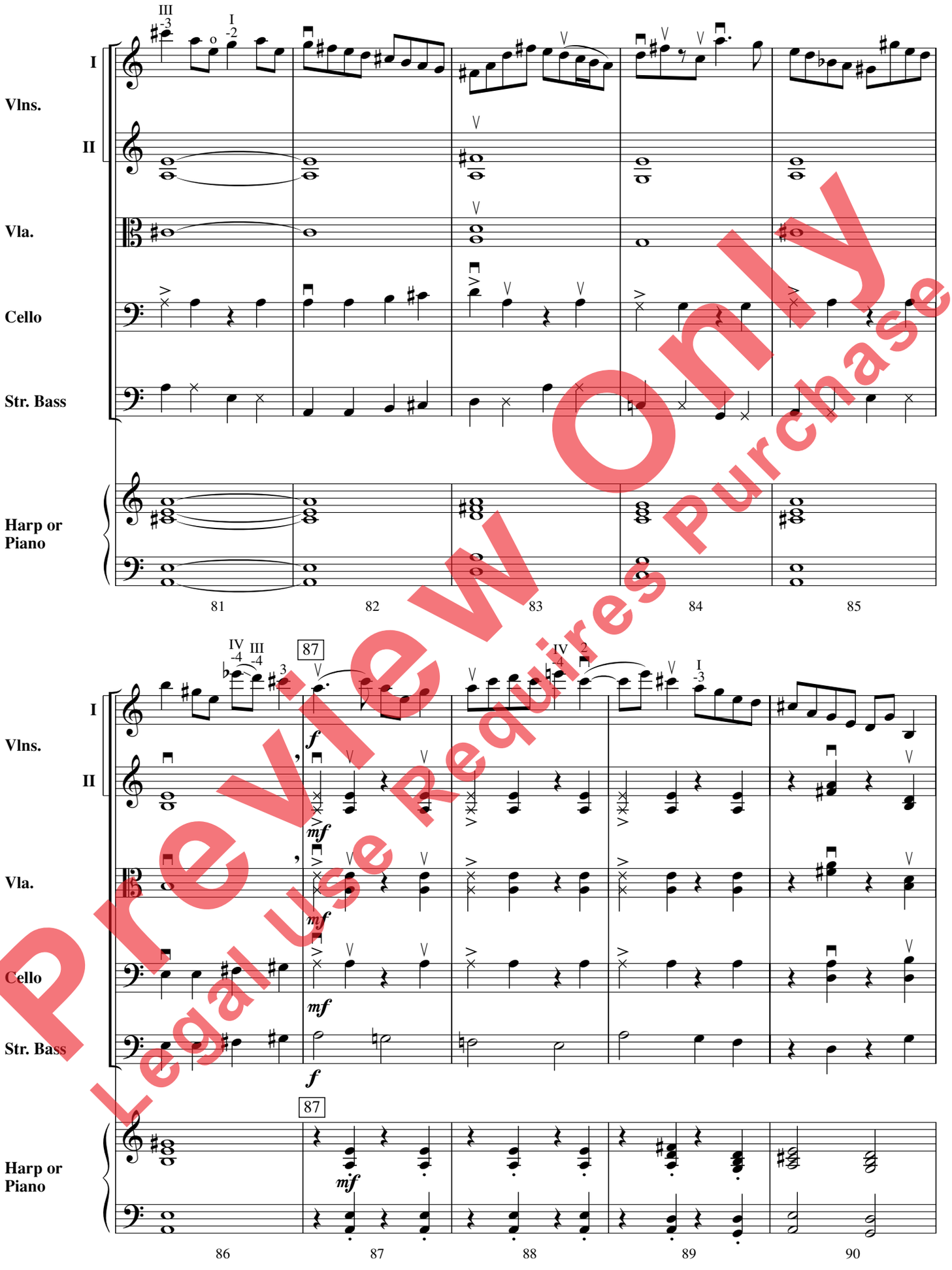


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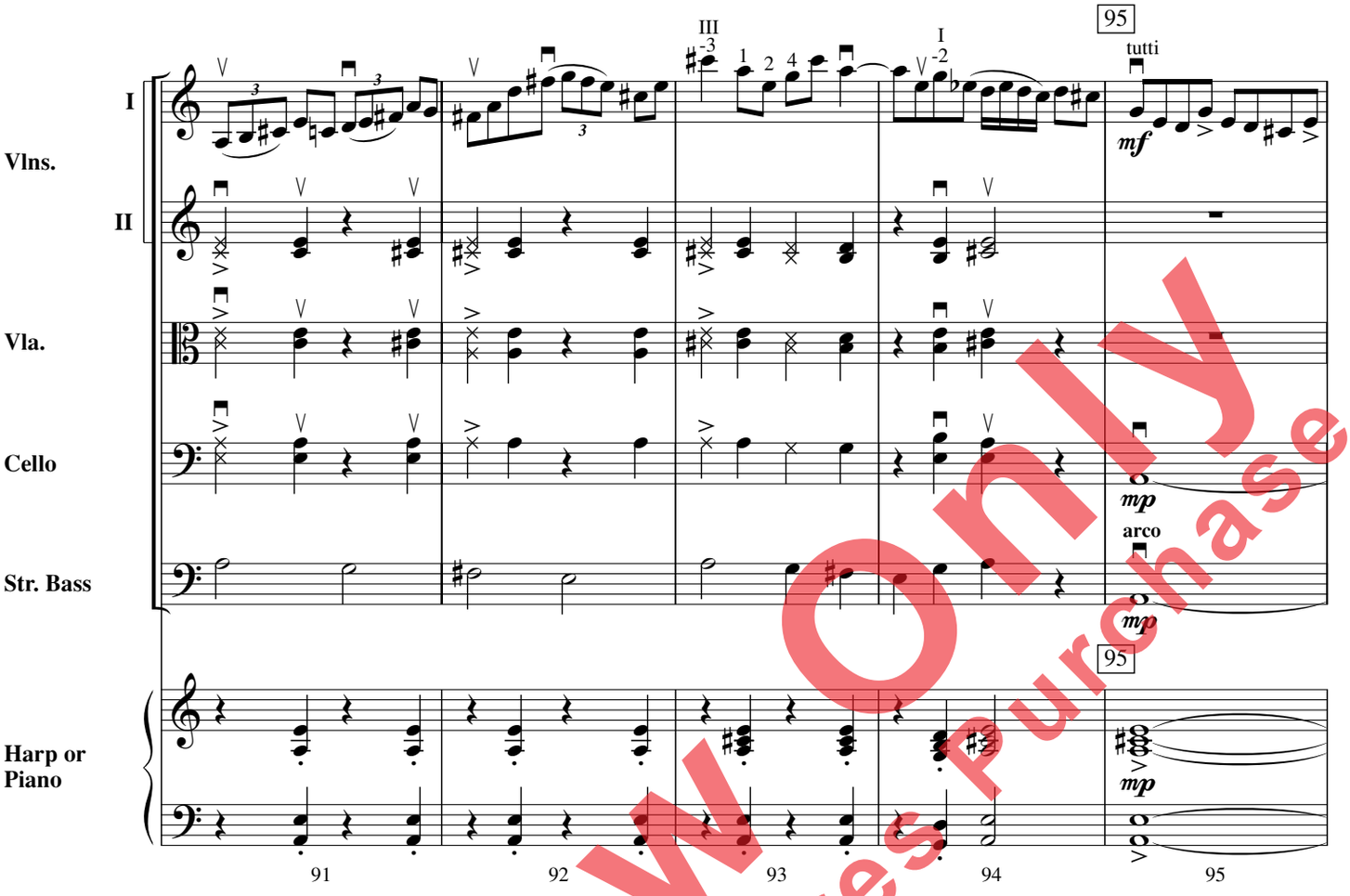


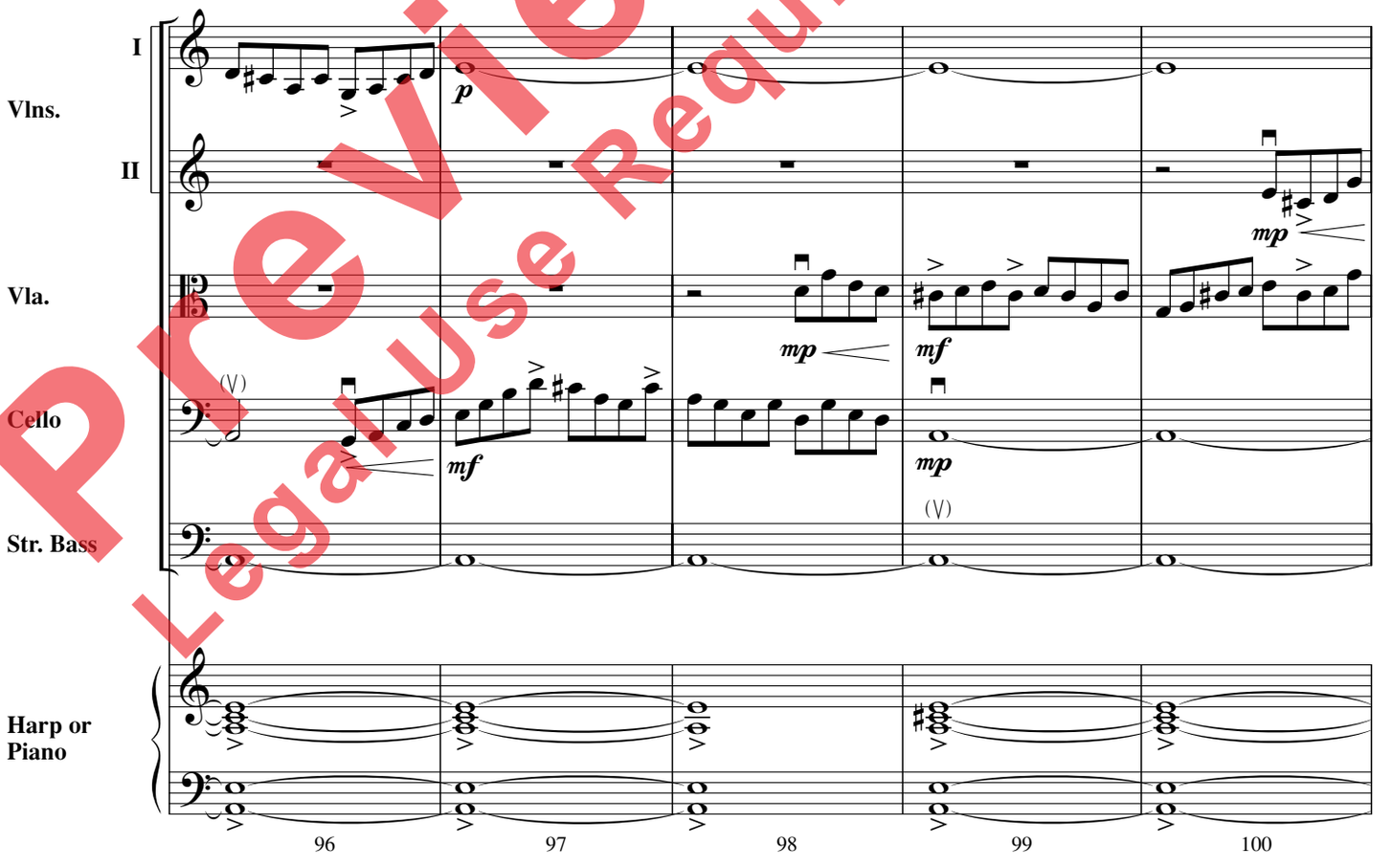


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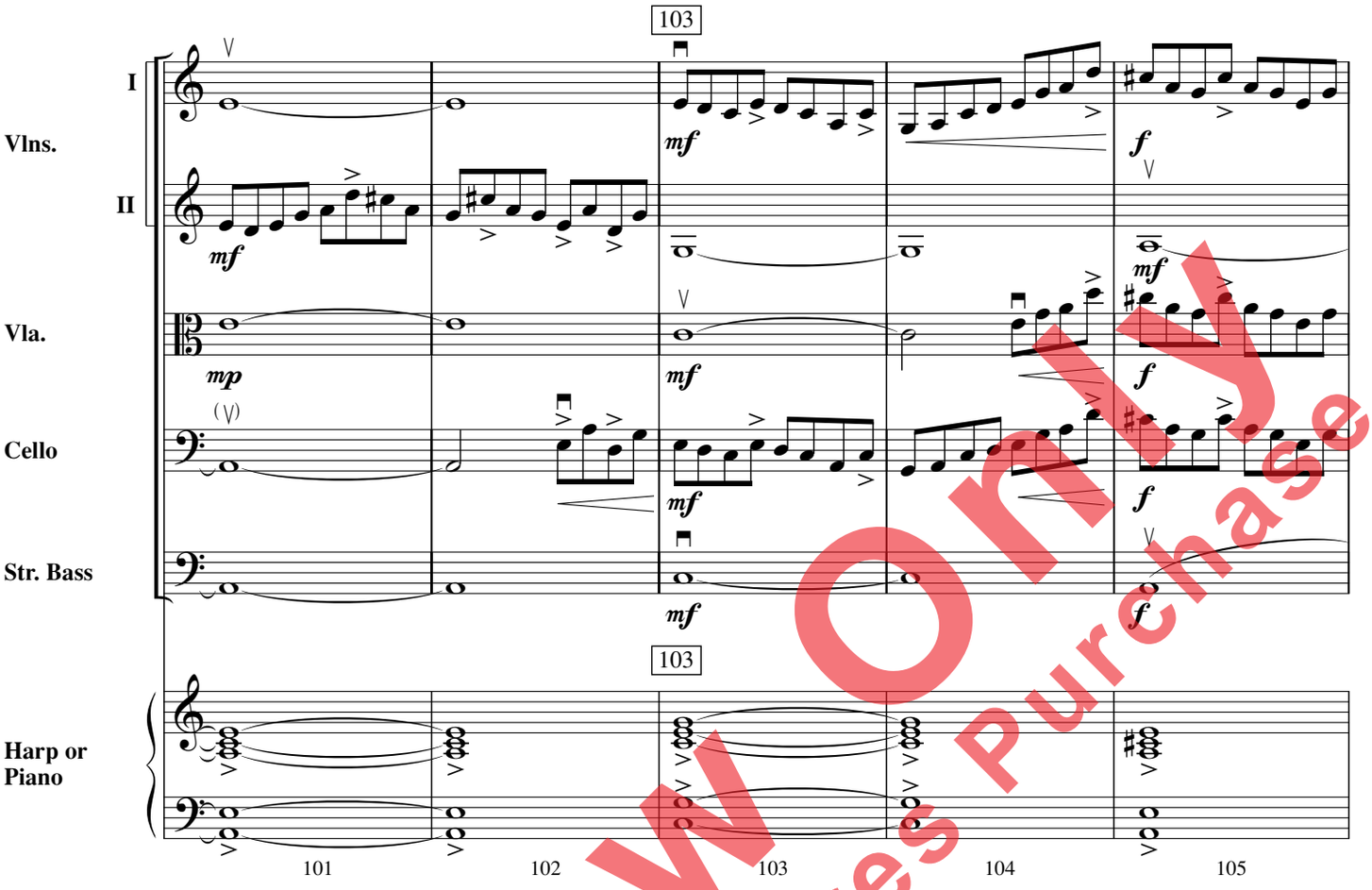


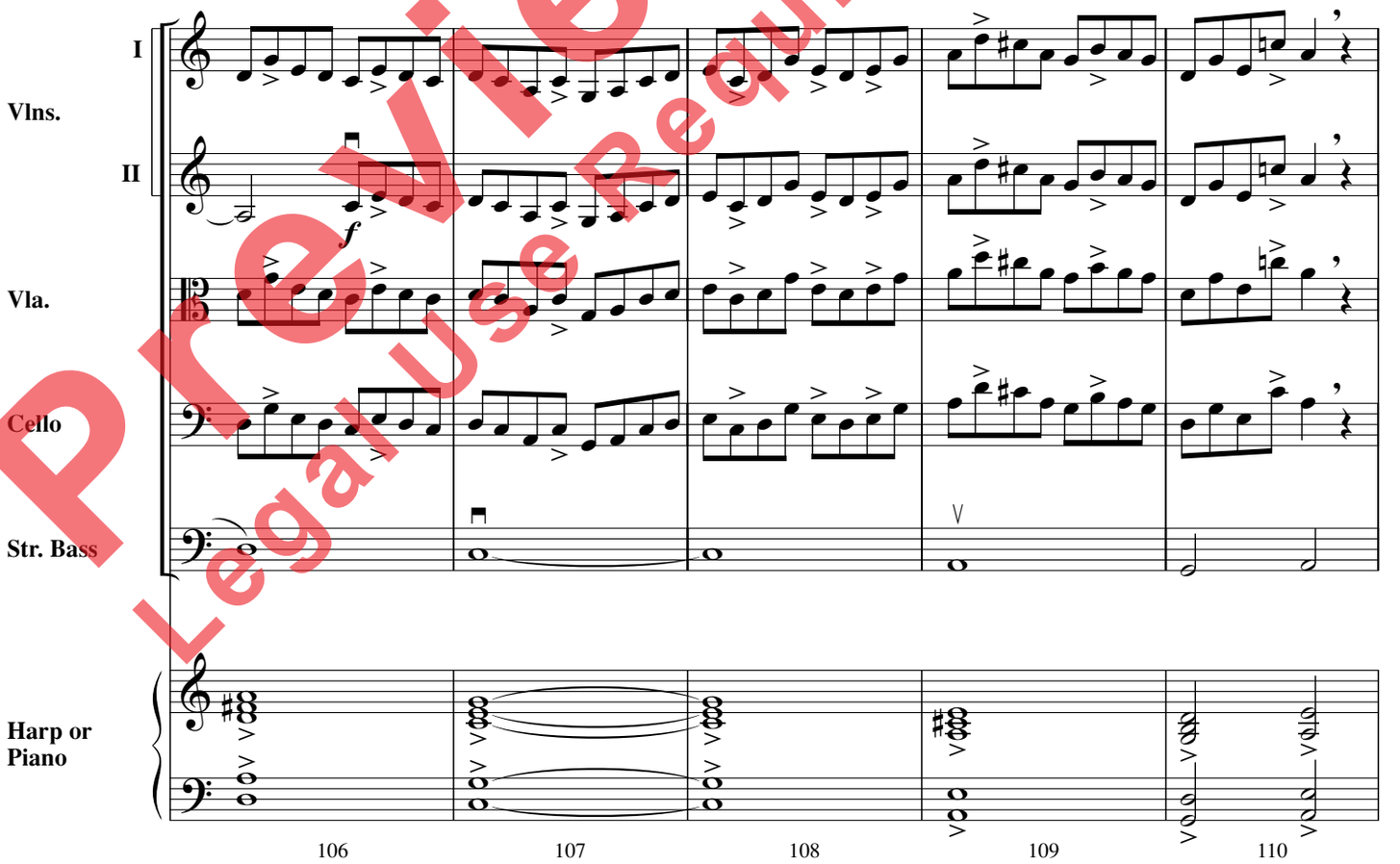


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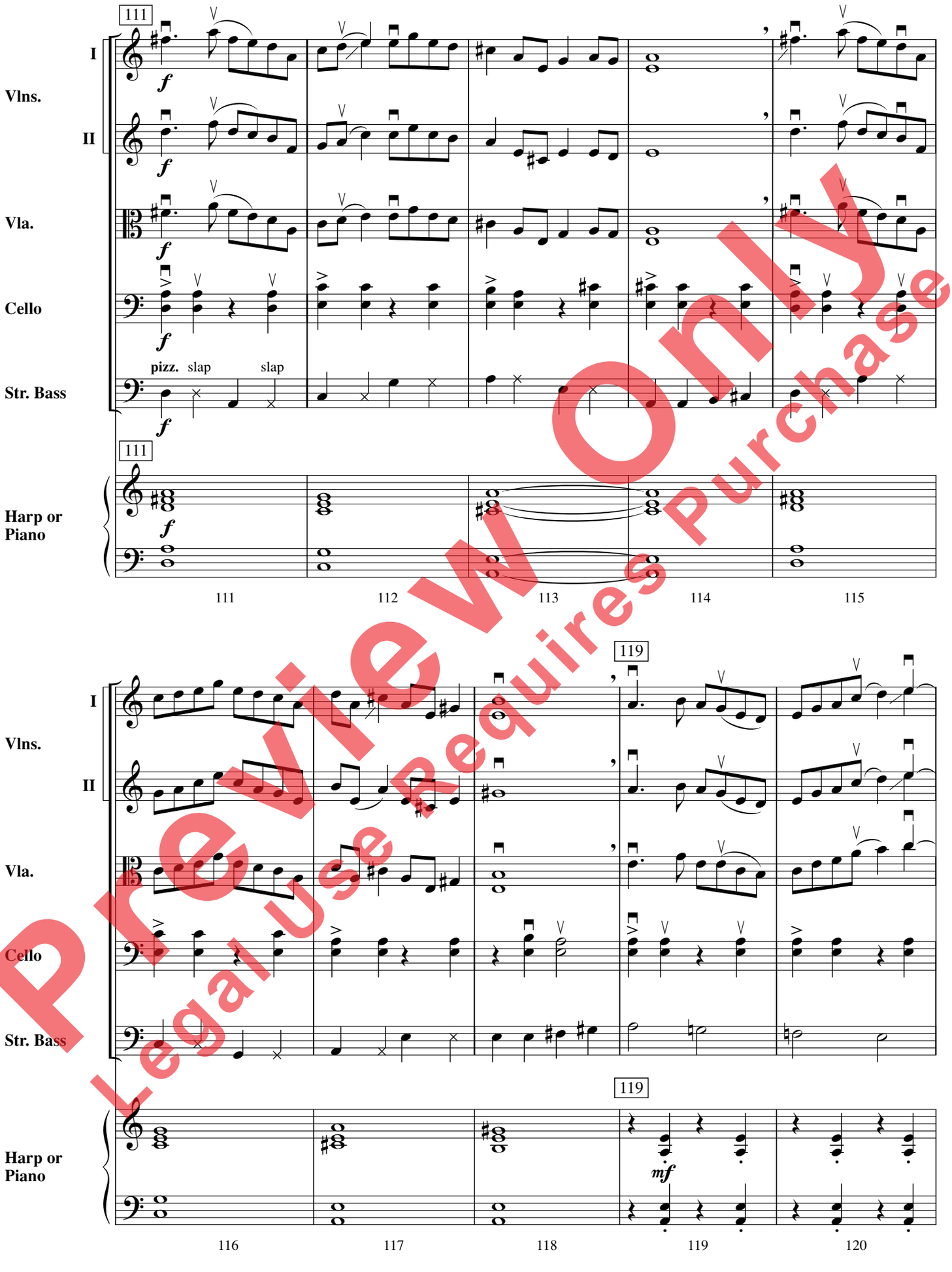


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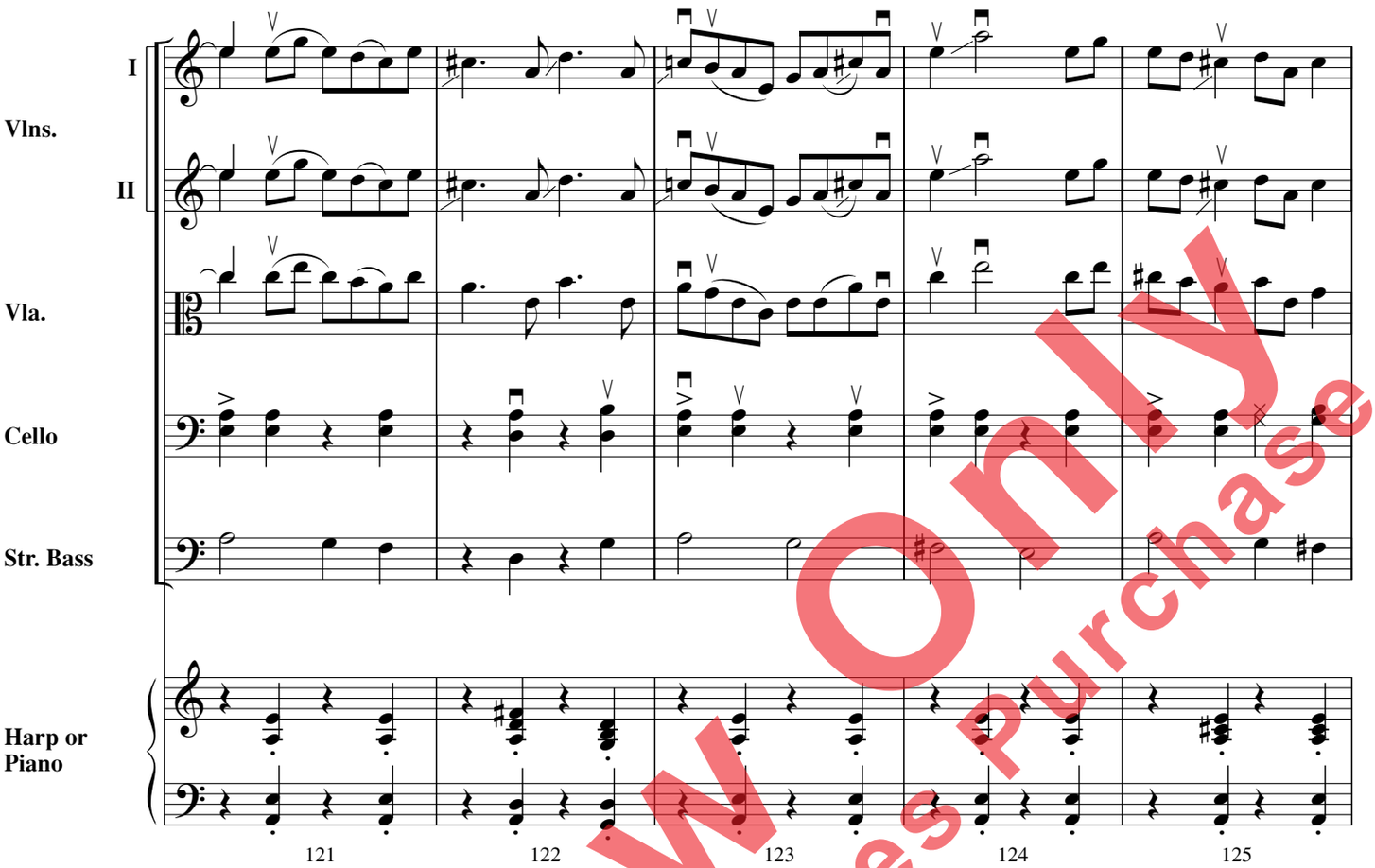


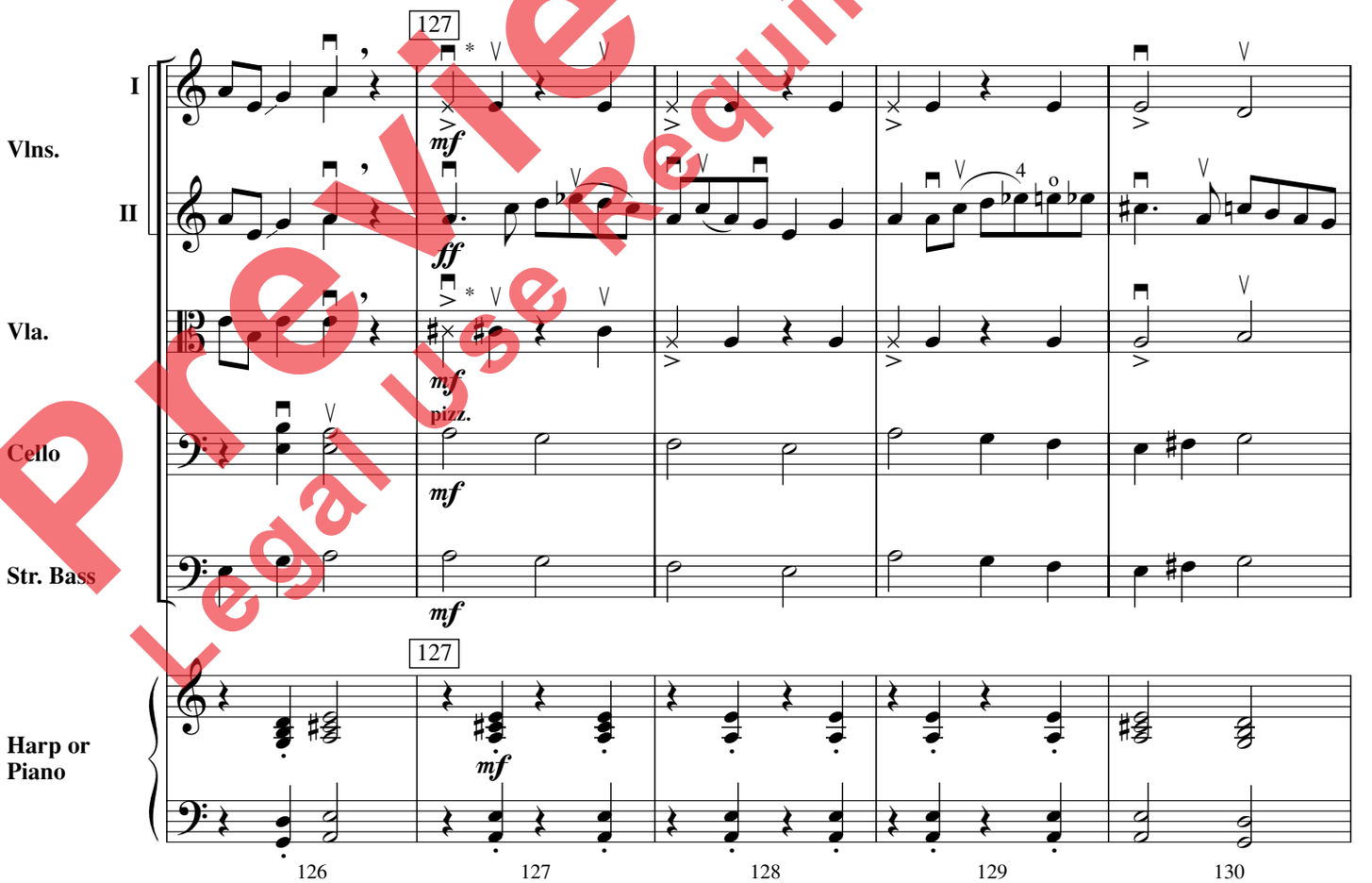


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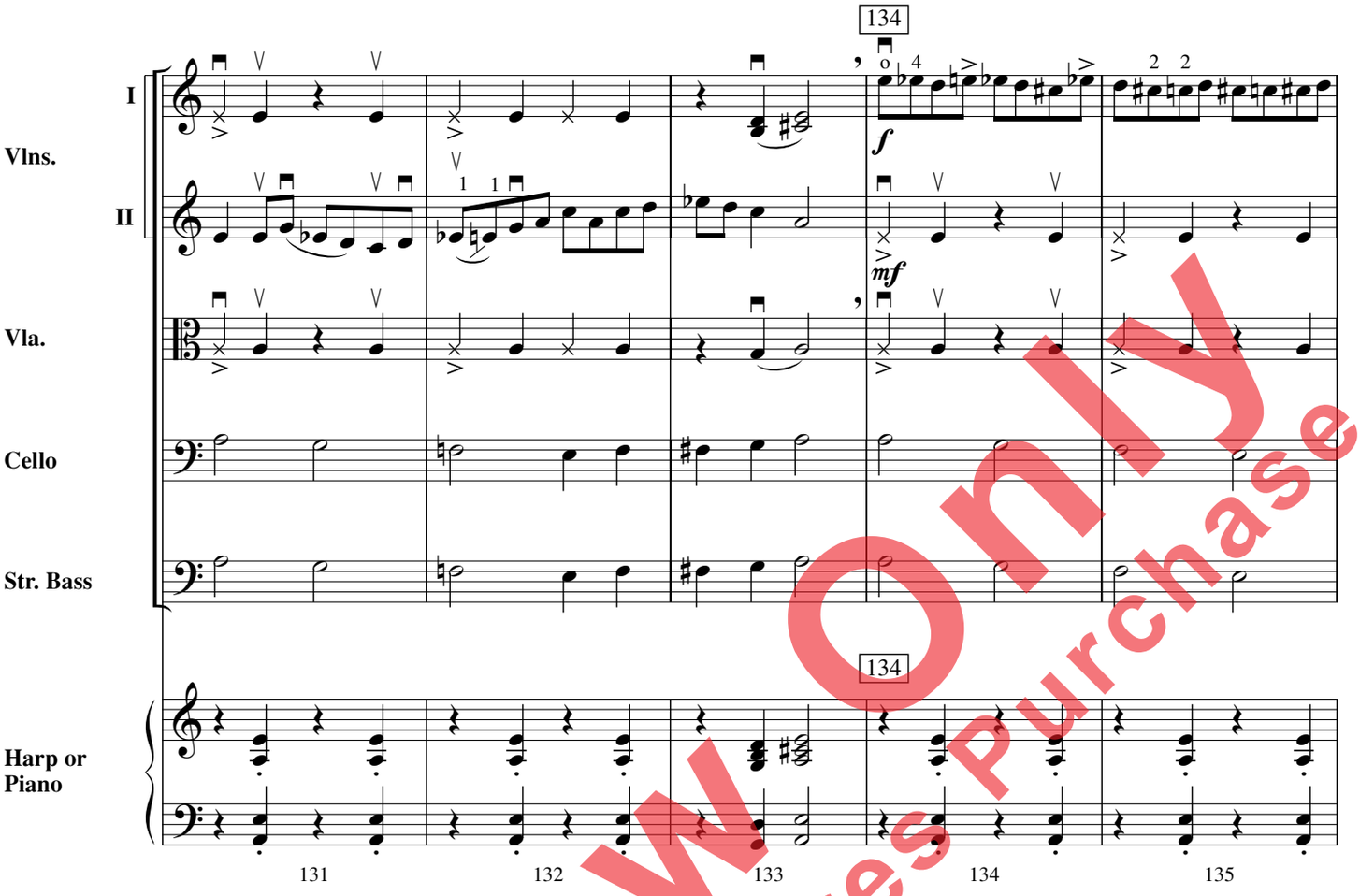

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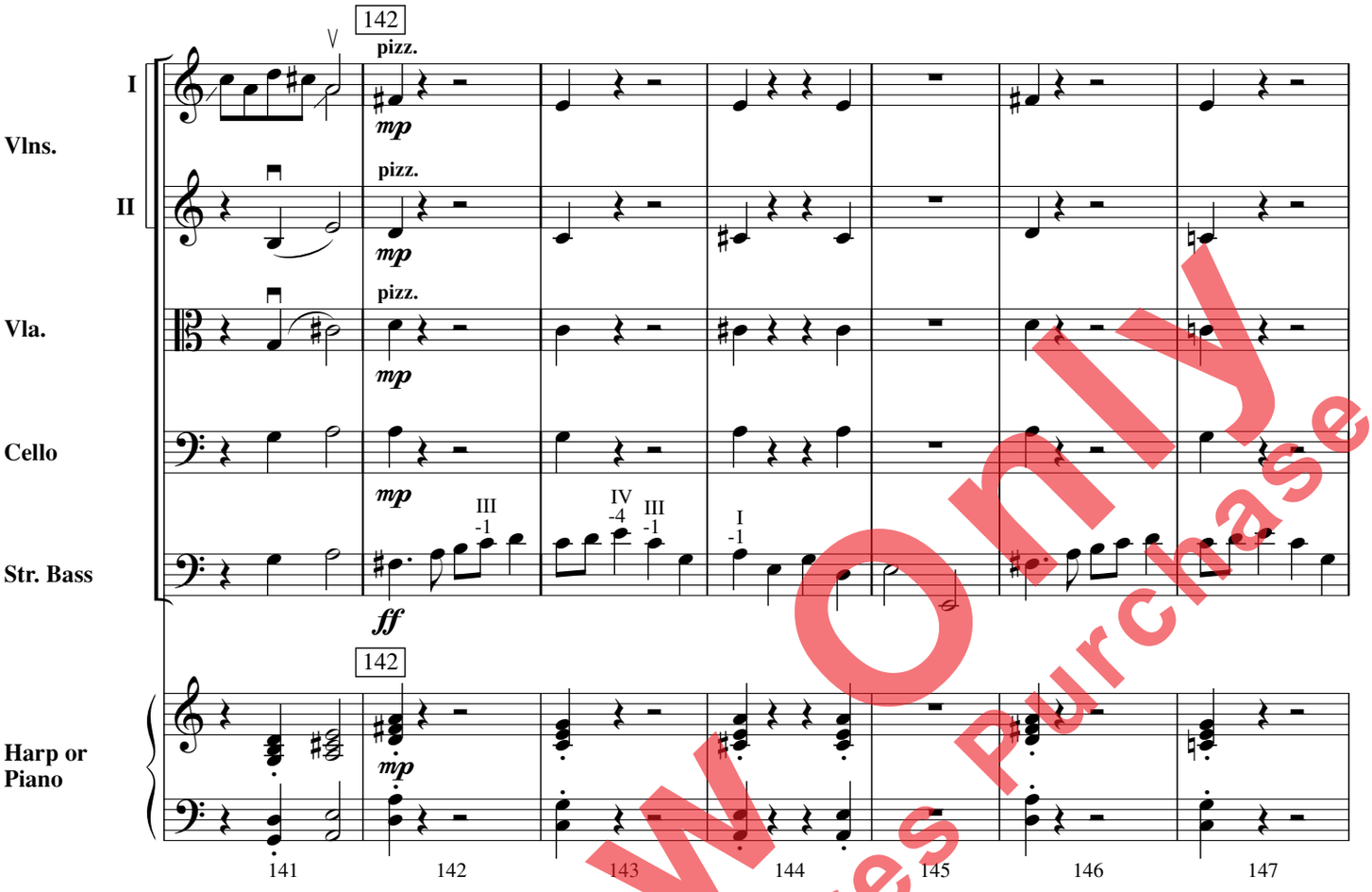


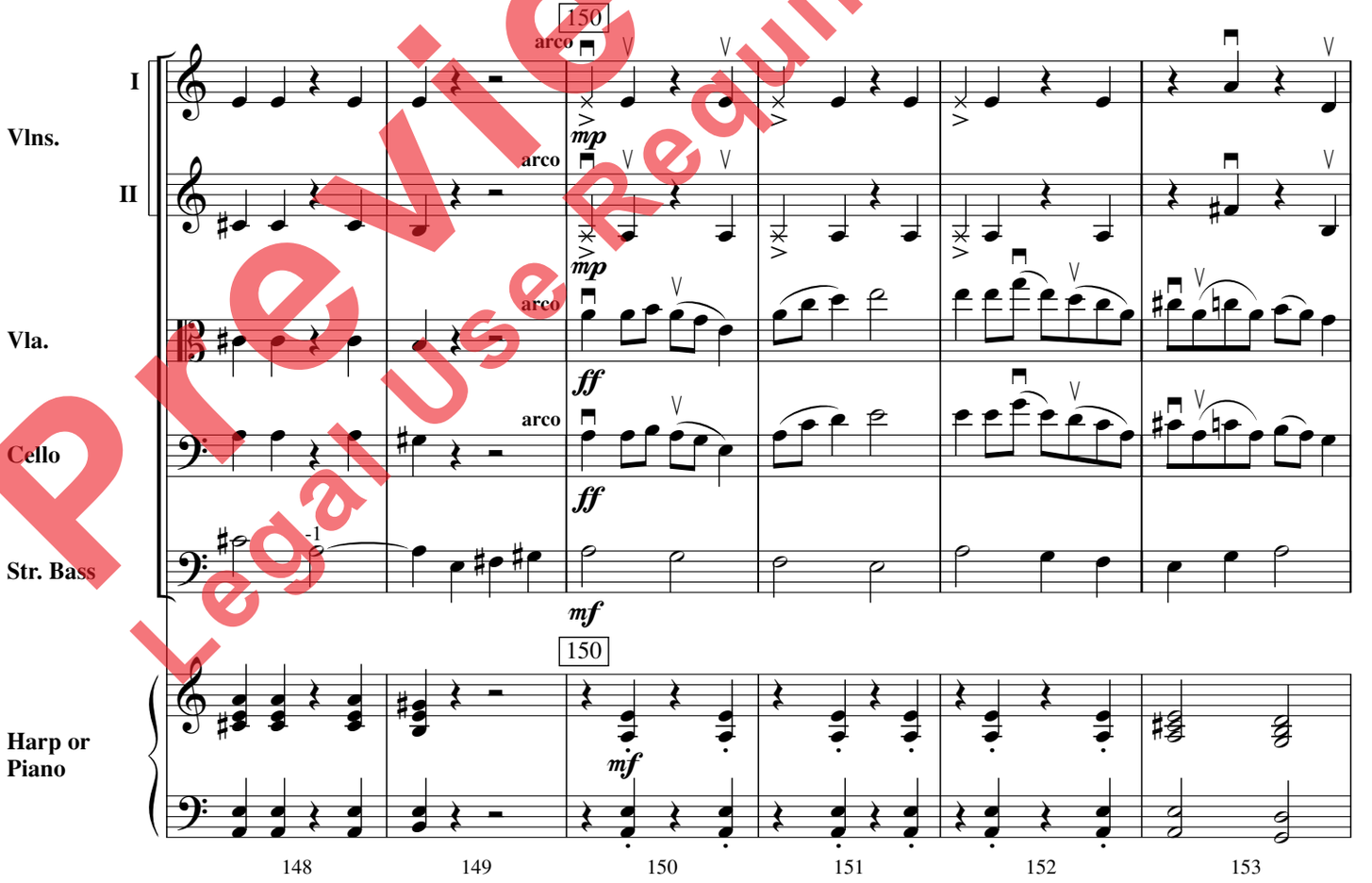


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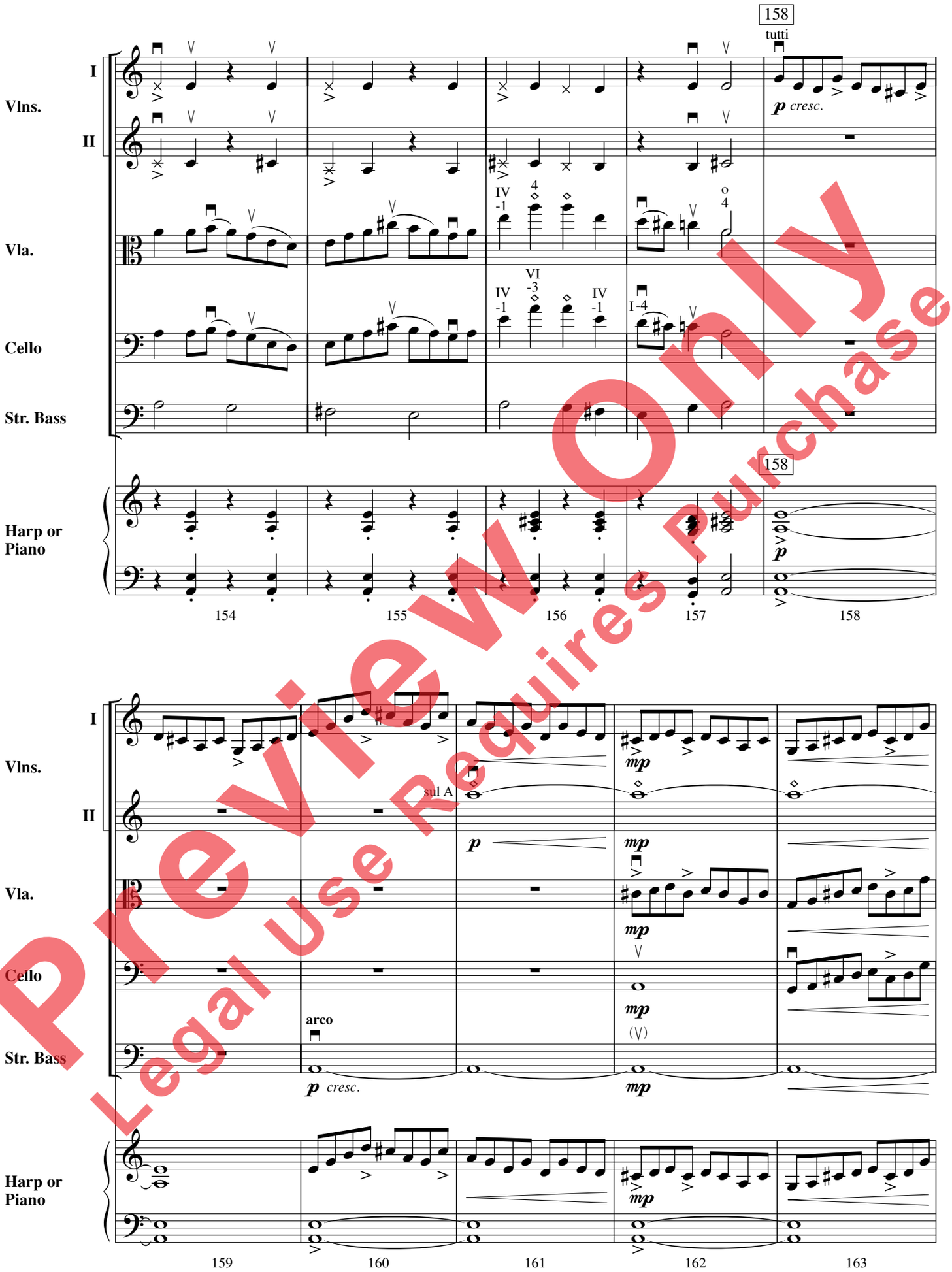


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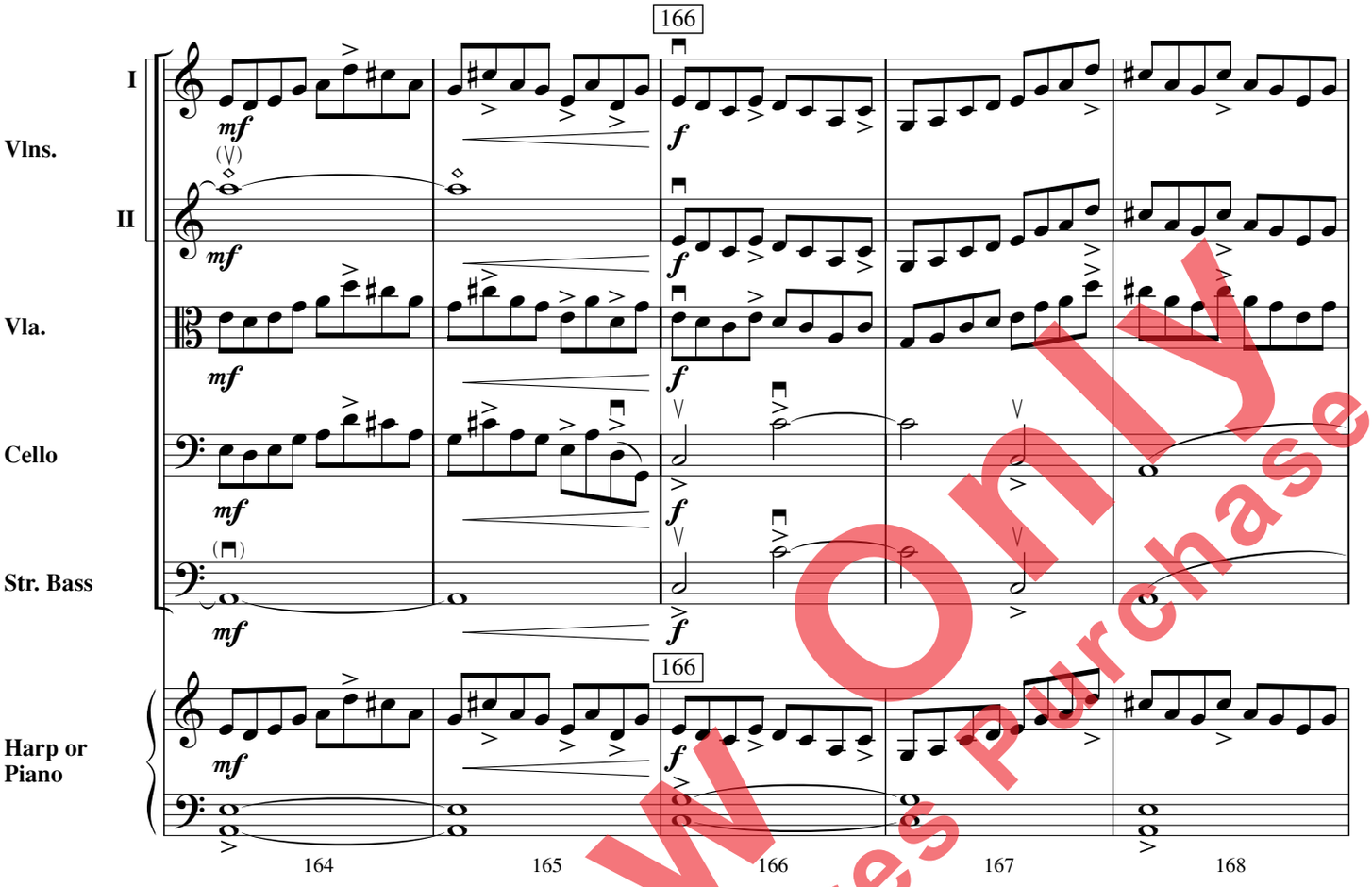


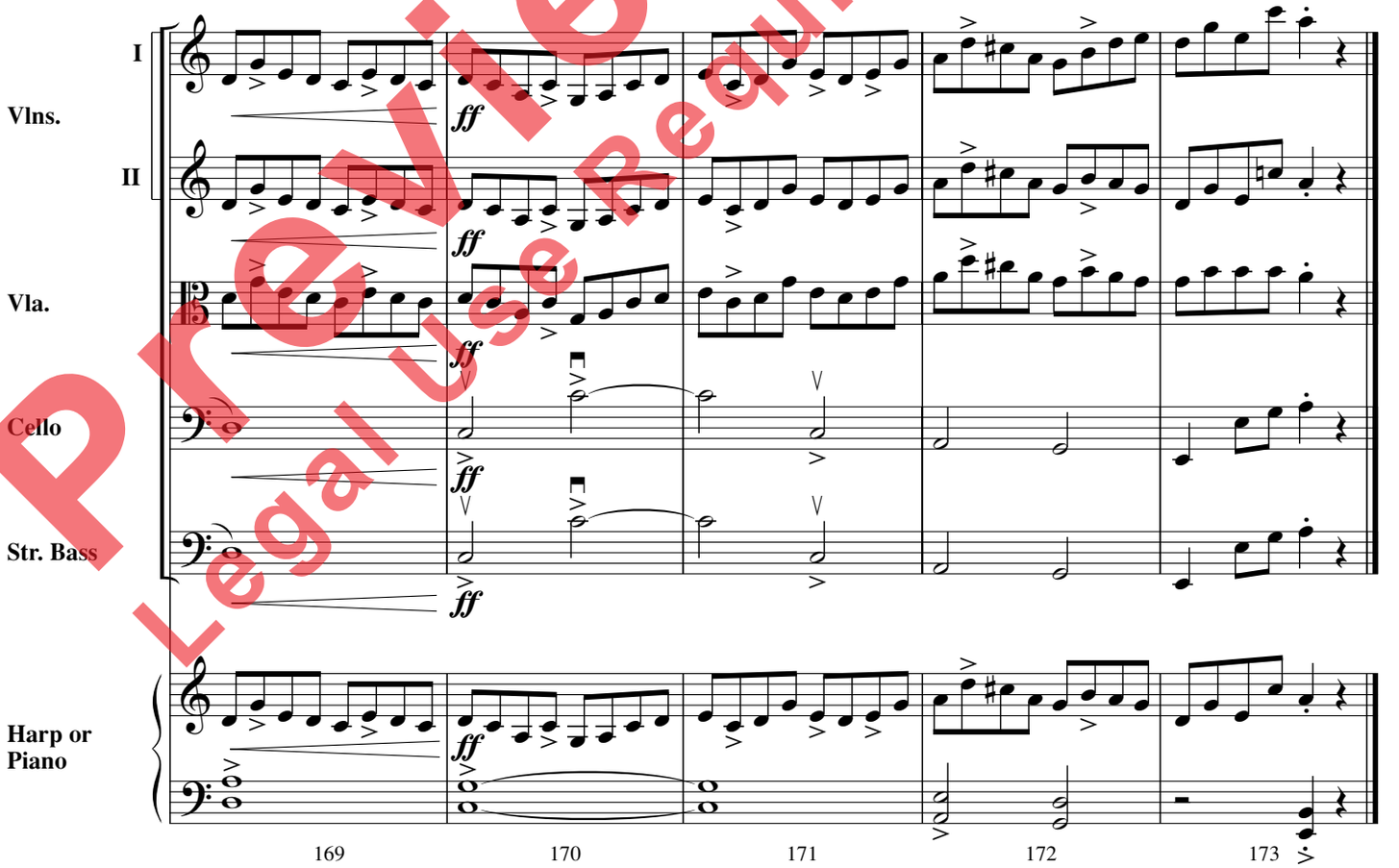


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