Jim Casella

Meanwhile in a Parallel Universe Redux

for marimba and percussion ensemble

Meanwhile in a Parallel Universe Redux by Jim Casella
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TSPCE-62

Program Notes

Meanwhile in a Parallel Universe is based on the idea that our brief time on this earth can have any number of outcomes depending on the relationships we build, how present we are, and the decisions we make. As our stories evolve, infinite possibilities are created. The result is an adventure filled with both uncertainty and wonder.

This episodic journey is constructed in three movements featuring a solo marimbist and eight percussionists. Each movement has its own identity, though their melodic and harmonic DNA keep them rooted in the same story. Harmonically, the countless decisions of a lifetime are represented as restated ideas in mediant relationships. The consistency of Self is maintained through these harmonic twists by thematic familiarity.

The first movement uses a rhythmic pattern of fifteen beats, revealed clearly when the syncopated bass ostinato enters after the enigmatic introduction. The main theme is then introduced by the soloist, which is restated by the ensemble in fuller orchestration. The movement culminates in a whirlwind fight for survival through the virtuosic acrobatics by the soloist.

The second movement begins with a series of anxious flourishes built on less stable chords using diminished seconds and augmented fifths. A distant and reflective period follows as the soloist arpeggiates the left hand ostinato while the right hand sustains melancholy one-handed rolls. These build into ferocious layers of conviction, and eventually achieve a new intense clarity through an accelerating unison.

Unlike the first two movements' fifteen-beat motive, the meter in the third switches to a more comfortable 12/8. The melody is based on the same DNA as before, but proceeds with a newfound sense of conviction. This adventure moves through blazing displays of technique from the soloist and culminates in a courageous march into the unknown.

Meanwhile in a Parallel Universe was commissioned by Bloomsburg University (Bloomsburg, PA) under the direction of Dr. Gifford Howarth, and the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music (Singapore), under the direction of Jonathan Fox and was premiered in Singapore in 2012 featuring Dr. Howarth (soloist) and the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory percussion ensemble.

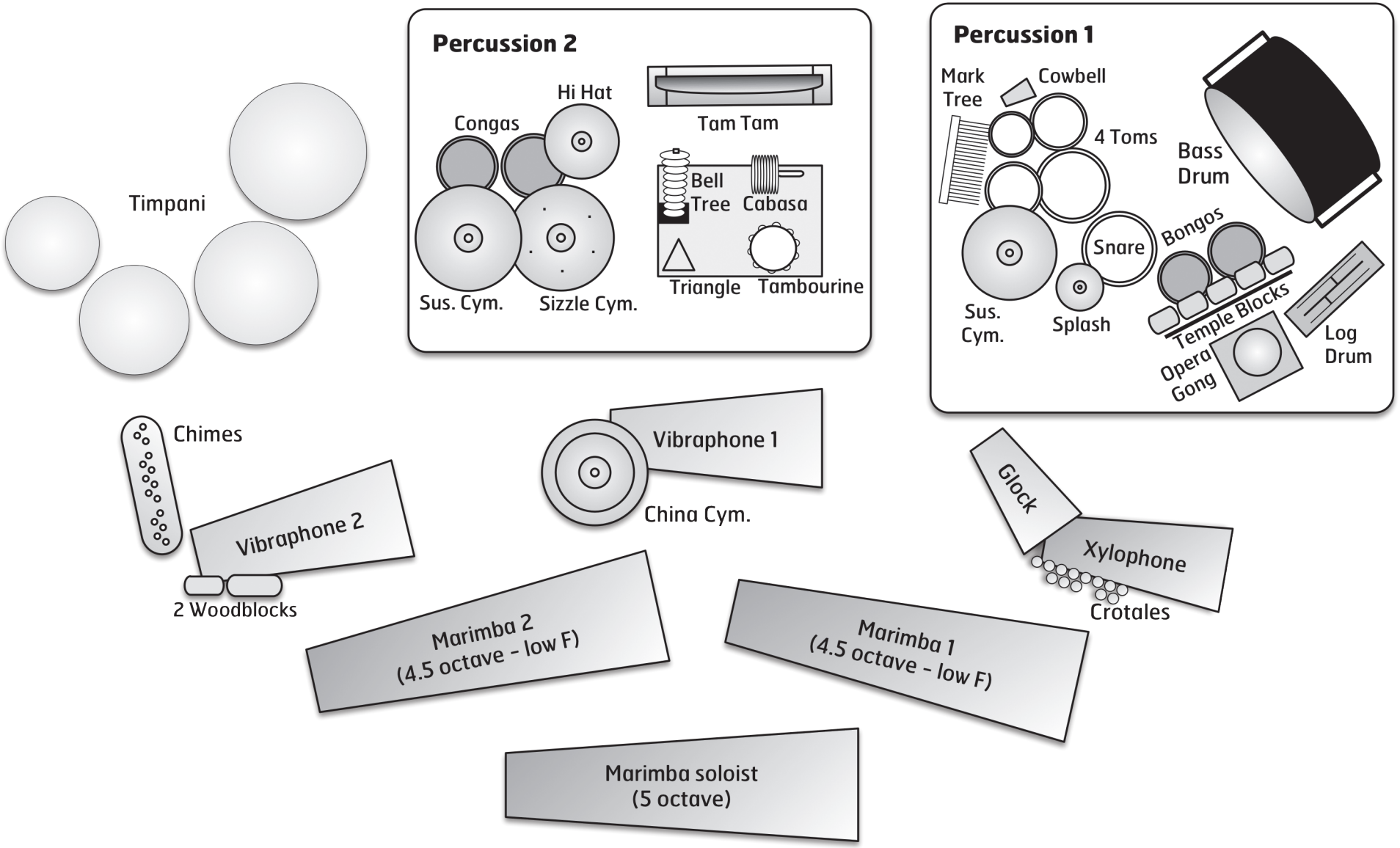
Meanwhile in a Parallel Universe Redux is an updated version of the piece which revises it in ways that will help the soloist shine both technically and balance-wise while also reducing the equipment requirements. It also includes an optional, shortened version which significanly reduces the duration of the piece for cases when shorter program or rehearsal timing is required. The redux version was completed in 2014 and premiered at the Midwest Clinic in Chicago, IL by the Dickerson Middle School percussion ensemble (Scott Brown, director) with She-e Wu as the soloist.

Players and Instrumentation

Meanwhile in a Parallel Universe Redux requires **9 players** with the following instrumentation:

Featured Marimba: Marimba (5-octave)
Marimba 1: Marimba (4.5-octave - low F)
Marimba 2: Marimba (4.5-octave - low F)
Glockenspiel/Xylophone: Xylophone, glockenspiel, crotales (1 octave)
Vibraphone 1: Vibraphone, china cymbal
Vibraphone 2: Vibraphone, chimes, 2 woodblocks
Timpani: Timpani (4 drums) (gauges recommended)
Percussion 1: Temple blocks, bongos, suspended cymbal, cowbell, 4 concert toms, snare drum, opera gong, concert bass drum, log drum, splash cym, mark tree
Percussion 2: Sizzle cymbal, triangle, bell tree, tam tam, congas, cabasa, suspended cymbal, hi-hat, tambourine

Suggested Setup



Performance Notes

- *Meanwhile in a Parallel Universe* features a virtuosic marimba soloist among an ensemble of a medium-advanced level. It's been designed so that the ensemble can effectively rehearse the piece, even if the featured soloist is absent. Note, however, that the soloist is outnumbered (volume-wise) in relation to the percussion ensemble - especially during more densely orchestrated parts. As such, care must be taken by the ensemble not to become too aggressive with louder volumes. Keep louder dynamics modest so as not to bury the soloist, particularly with large drums and cymbal instruments. Feel free to experiment with amplifying the soloist to help keep him/her in the forefront dynamically.

- The featured marimba part covers the full range of the marimba without time for mallet changes. This poses a challenge in terms of mallet selection. Ideally, a harder mallet would be used so faster passages in the high register will remain pronounced. With this being the case, use a mallet that is capable of warmer sounds but will still be articulate. Care should be taken not to overplay parts that occur in the lower register, as they'll be in danger of becoming harsh if using a mallet that's too hard. Aggressive phrases in the range should be performed with power and precision so the instrument speaks clearly.

- The featured marimba part makes frequent use of triple-lateral stroke types (2-1-2, 3-4-3, etc) and fivelet groupings of 1-2-3-4-3. For an effective performance, the soloist must be proficient at executing these figures with rhythmic precision.

- Notes in parenthesis should be deemphasized in volume.

- Notes with tenuto markings (—) indicate slight emphasis, but not quite accents.

- Notes with a 'plus' sign (+) over them indicate crossovers. These are designed to add a little extra flair and showmanship for the soloist.

- Instruments with longer decay times (cymbals, crotales, vibes, etc) often use the "let vibrate" marking (l.v.) meaning the instrument should decay naturally, even if the note duration is short.

- Vibraphone parts use a combination of staccato markings and text markings (i.e. "no pedal") to indicate phrases that should be drier. Ultimately, vibe pedaling is left to the discretion of the performer, however specific staccato/pedal up notations should be followed.

- The Percussion 1 and 2 players must quickly switch between felt mallets and sticks. It's recommended to use a combo-style stick (felt on one end, drumstick tip on the other) for quick changes.

About the Short Version

This folio includes two scores. The first score is the full *Meanwhile in a Parallel Universe Redux* which times out at about 8'40". You'll find the second score on page 45. This is the short version which has a performance time of roughly 4'40".

Since the material in the short version comes from the same material of the full version (with the exception of a few transitional edits), the rehearsal marks are consistent between the corresponding phrases of both versions. So rehearsal T in the short version is the same musical phrase as rehearsal T in the full version. As such, you'll notice that certain rehearsal letters will be skipped over (for example, there's no rehearsal S in the short version). This is intentional so that rehearsal mark language is consistent between both versions. This will be useful if using each version for different occasions.

Individual parts for the short version are also contained within the included disc.

Level: Med-Advanced
Approx. playing time: 8'40"

Commissioned by Bloomsburg University, Bloomsburg, PA (Dr. Gifford Howarth, director) and the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, Singapore (Jonathan Fox, director).

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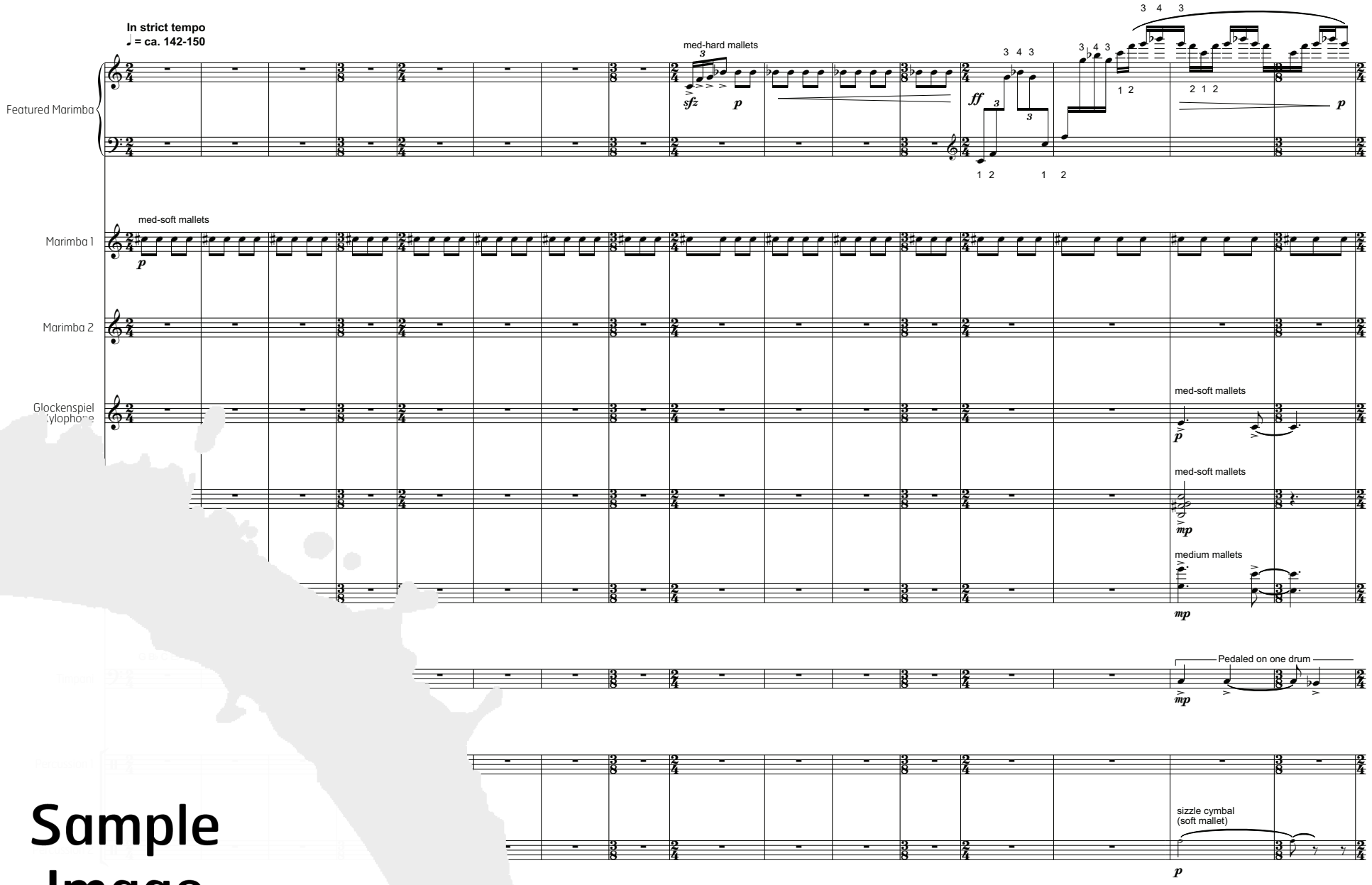

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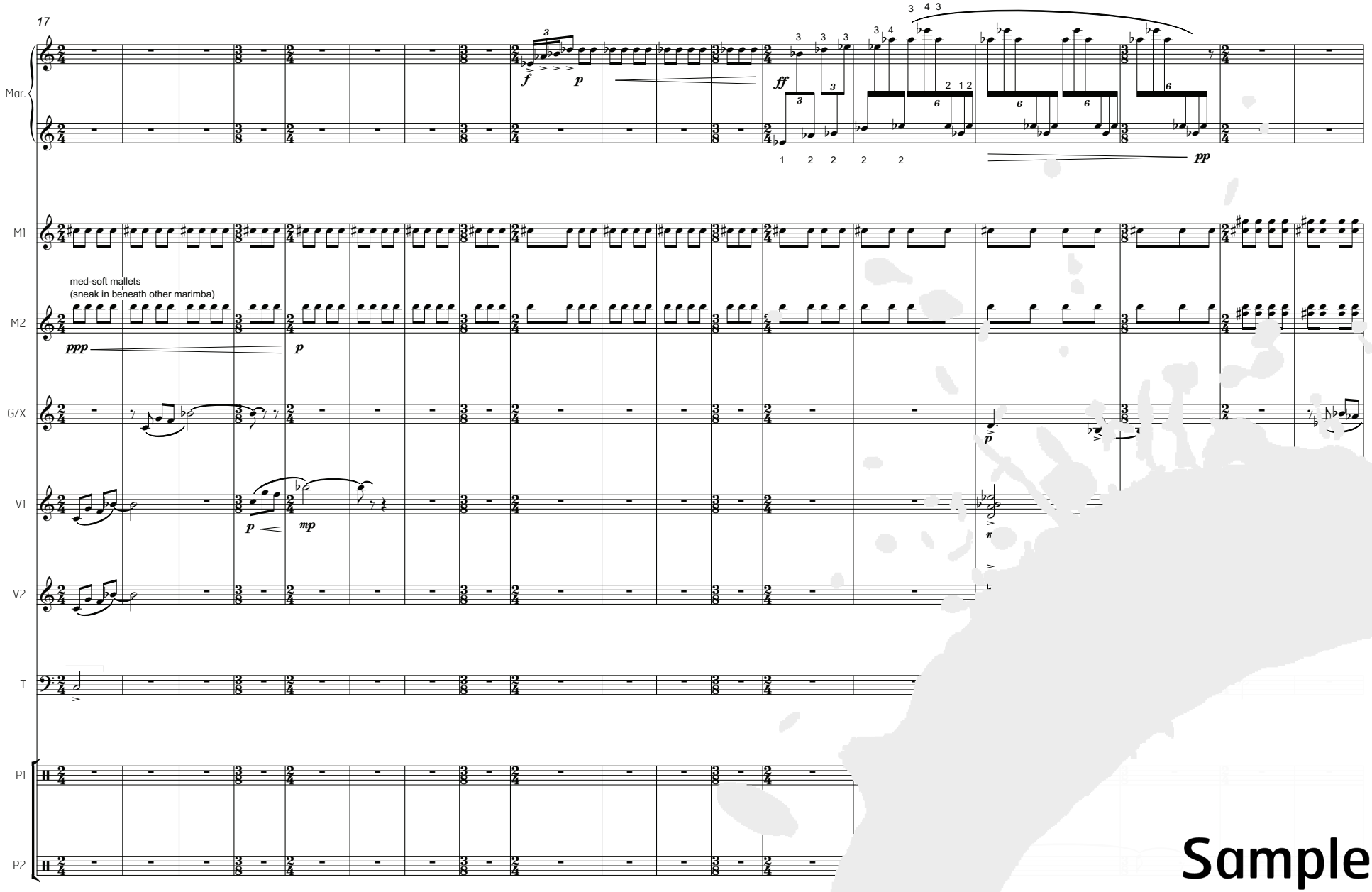

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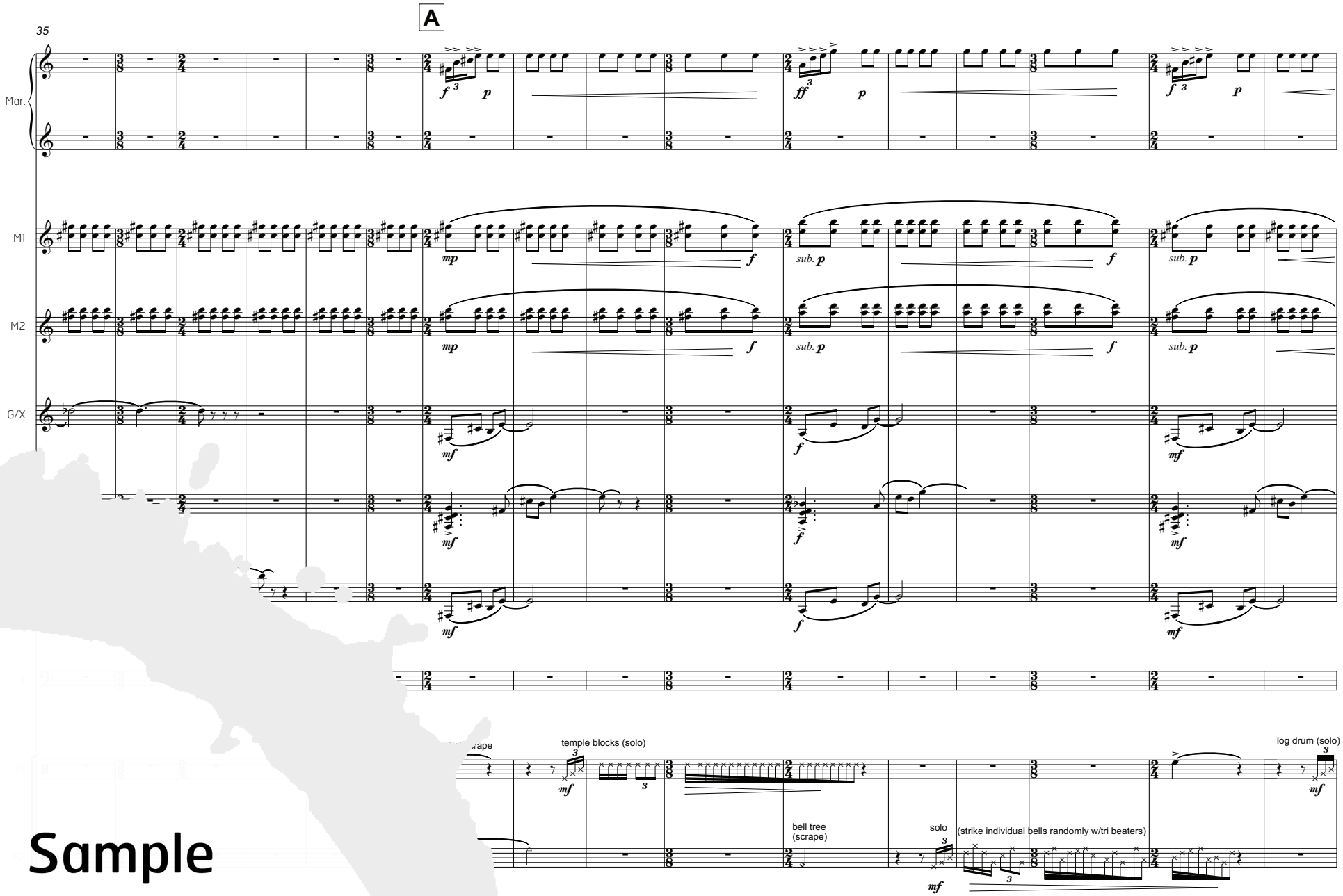

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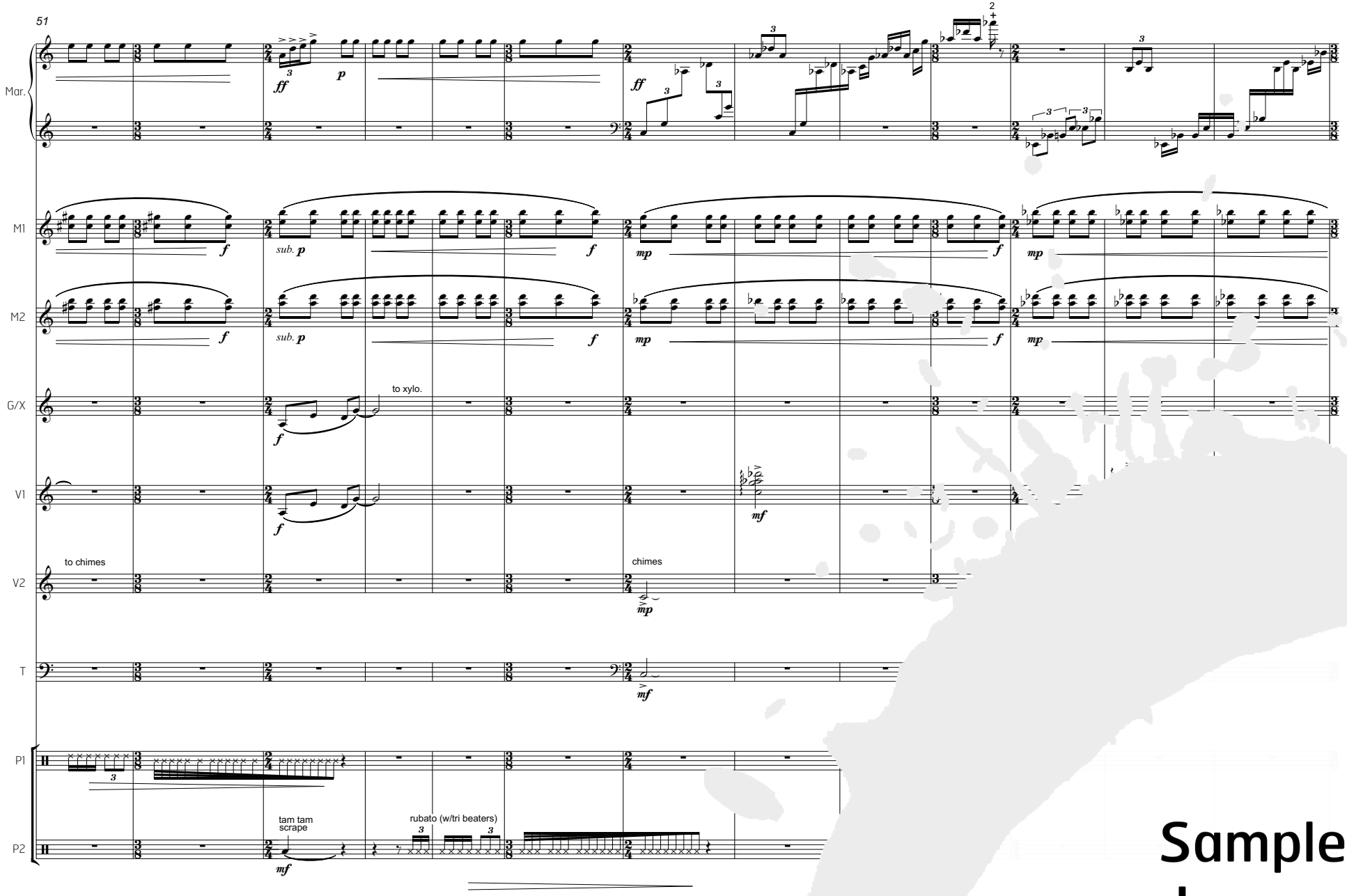

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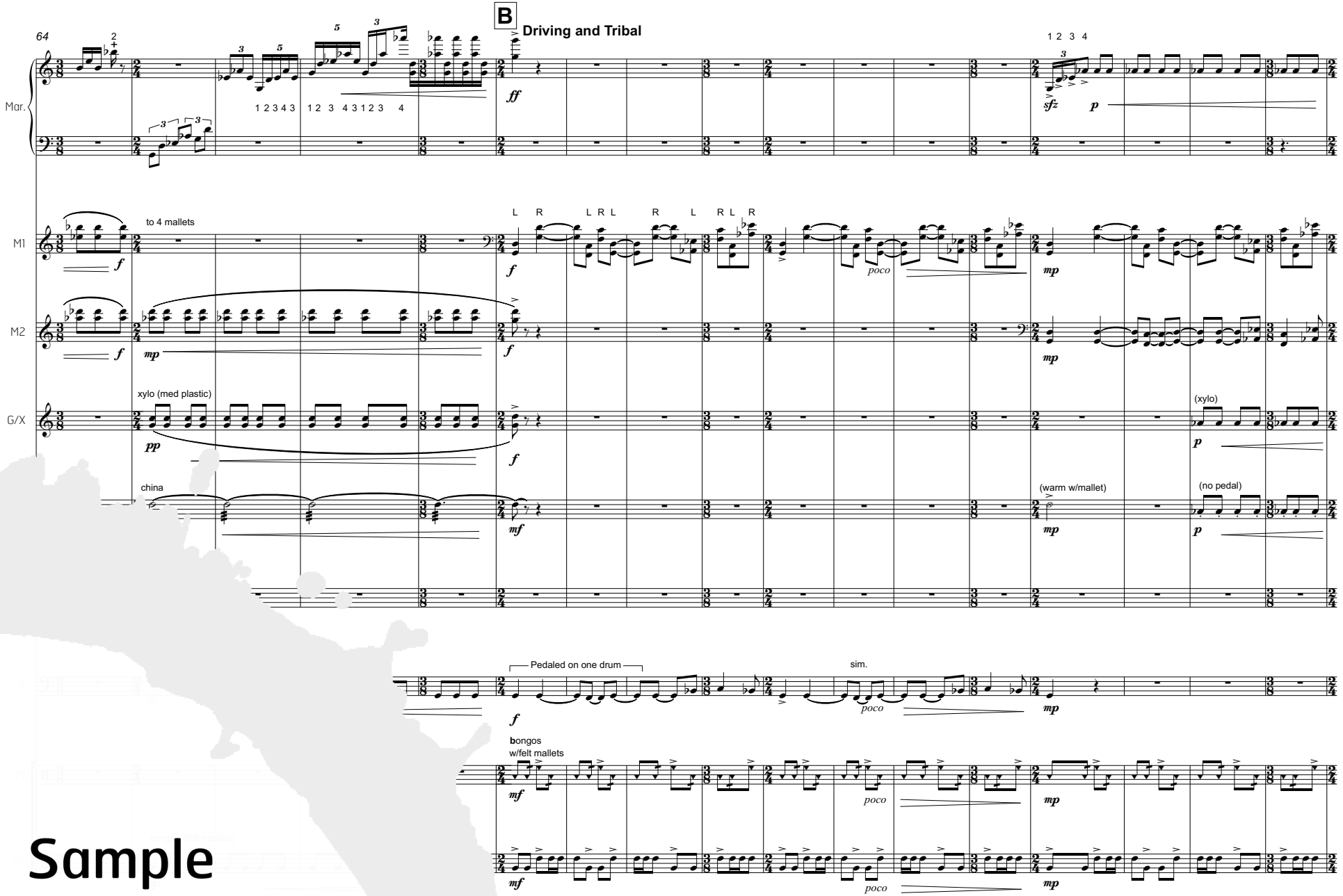

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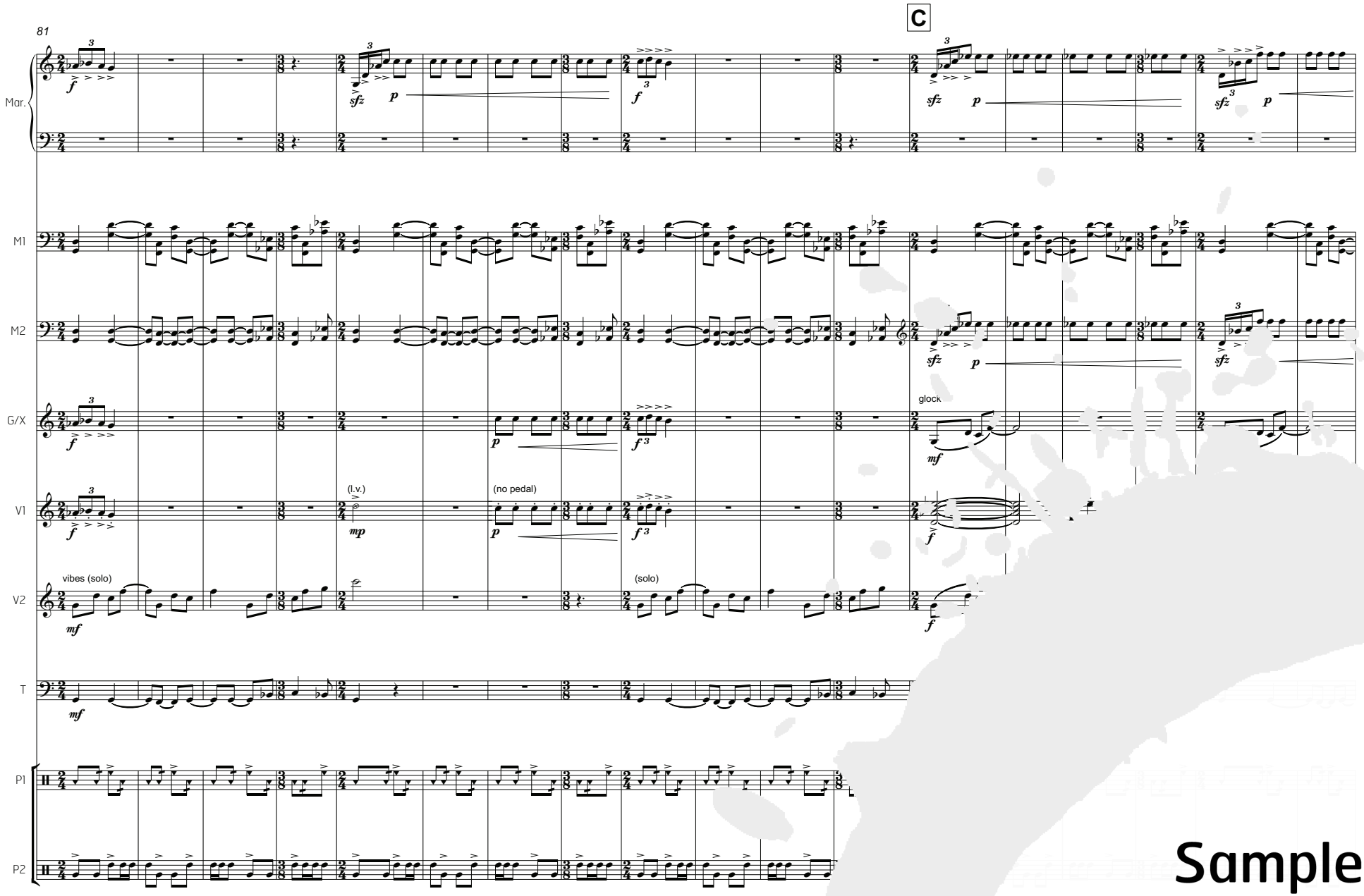

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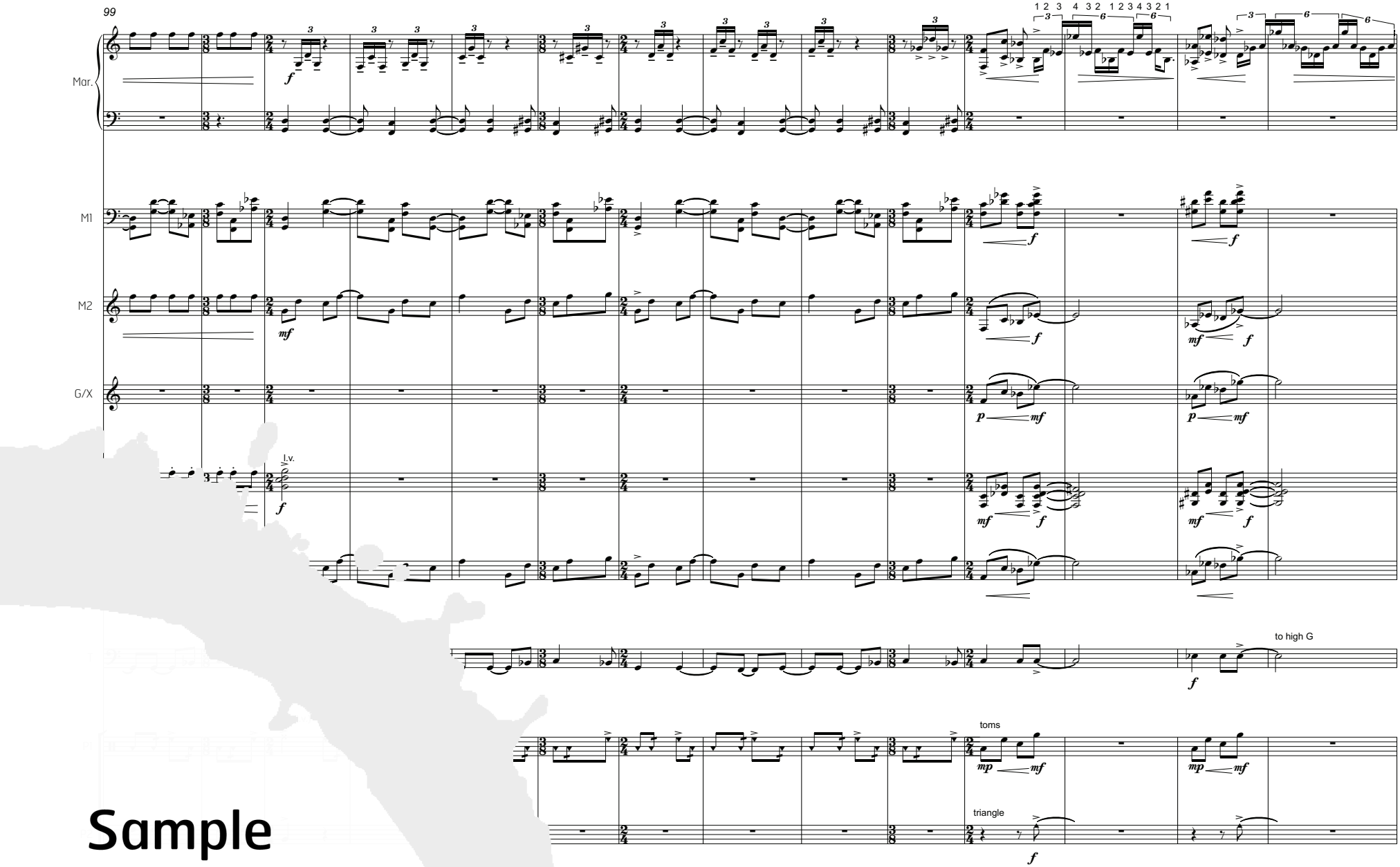

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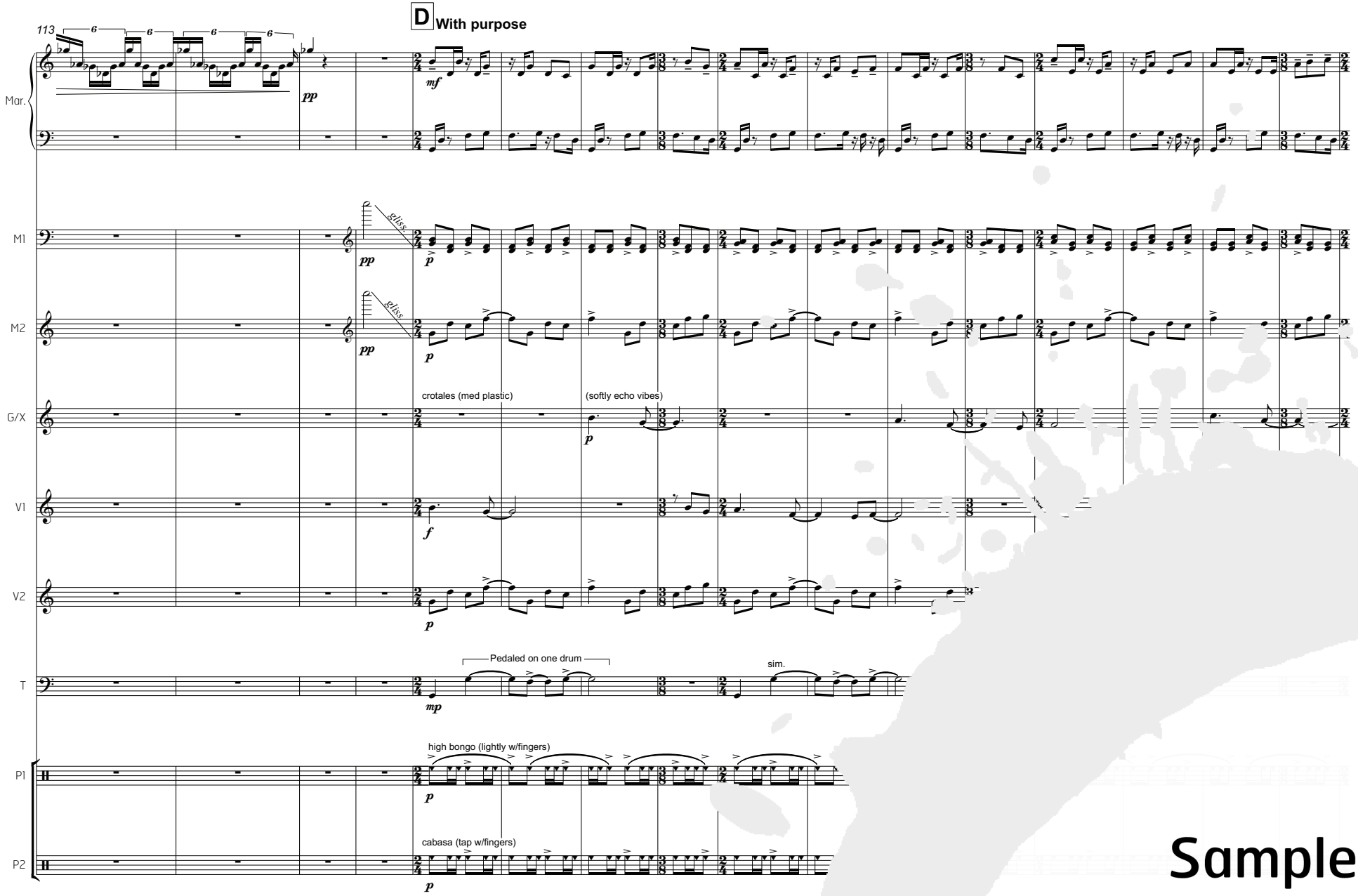

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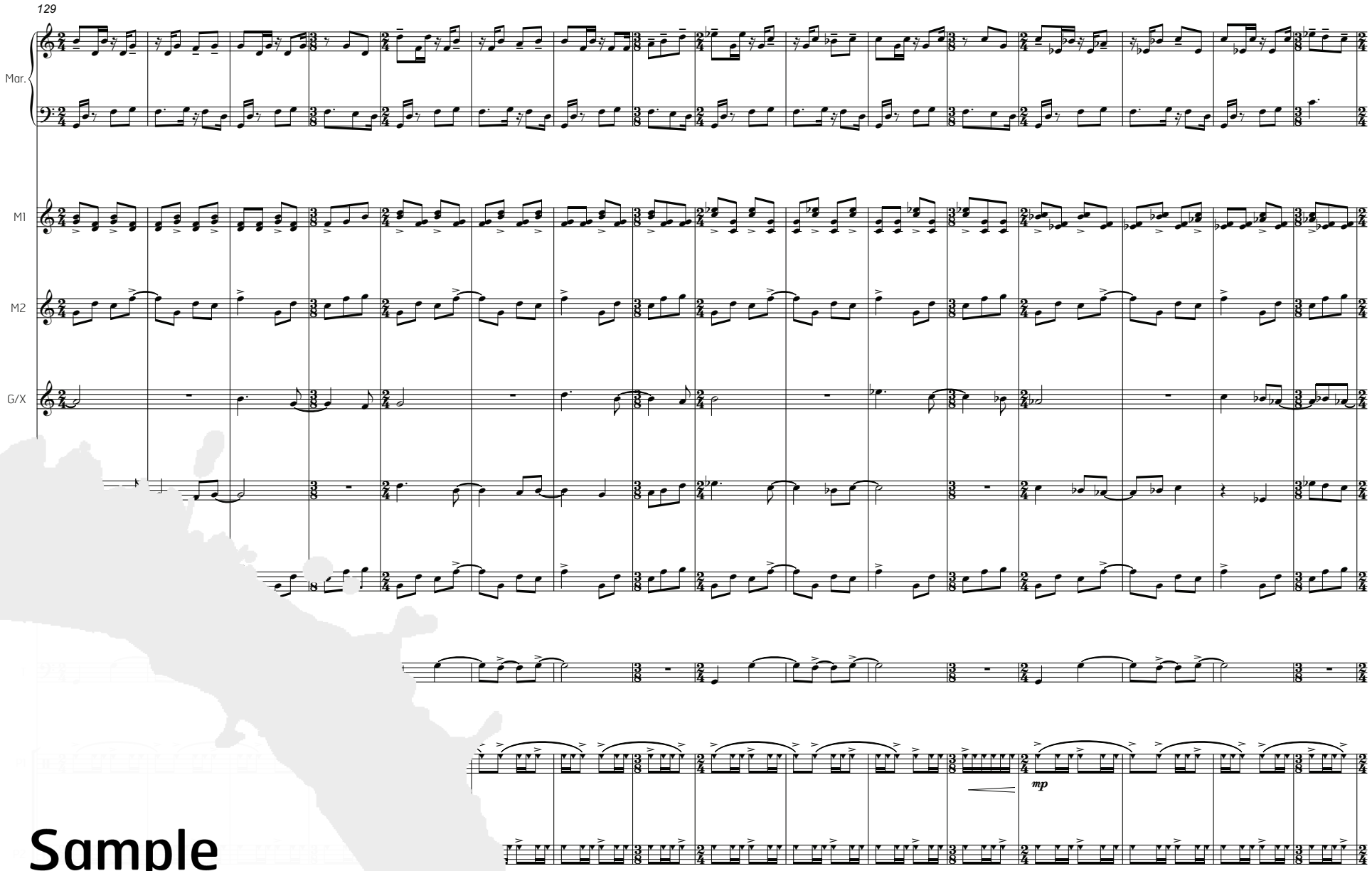

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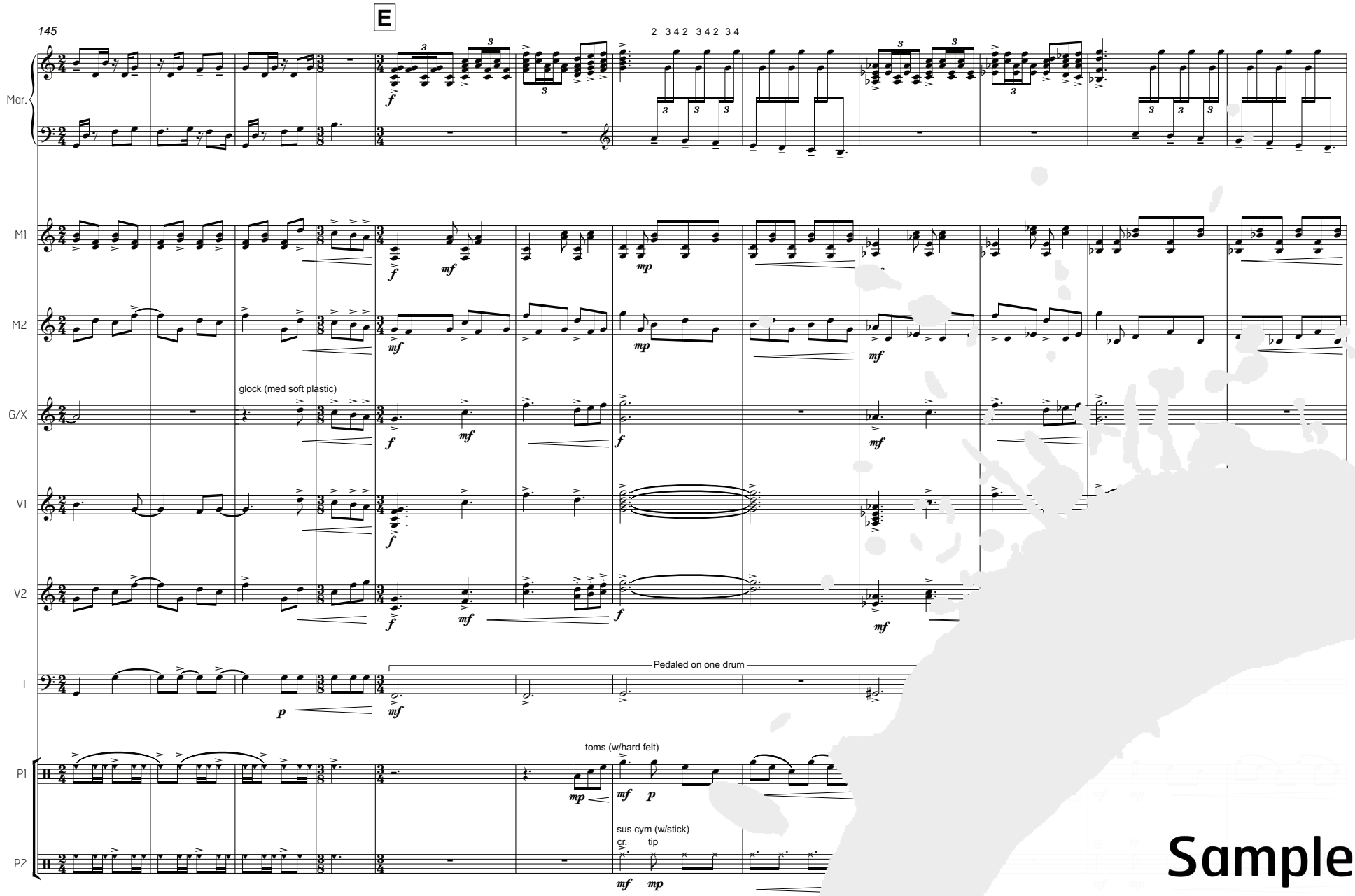

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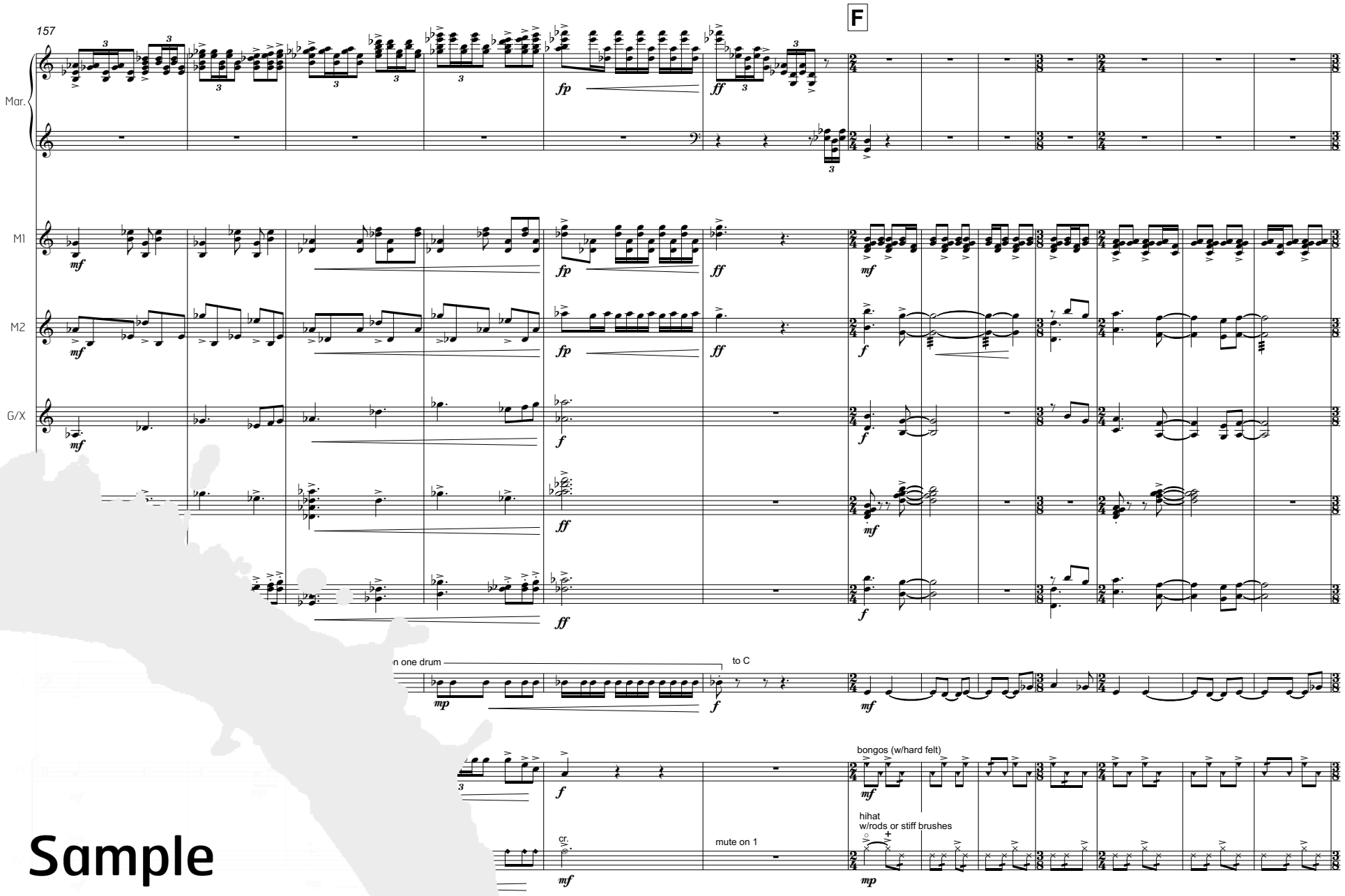

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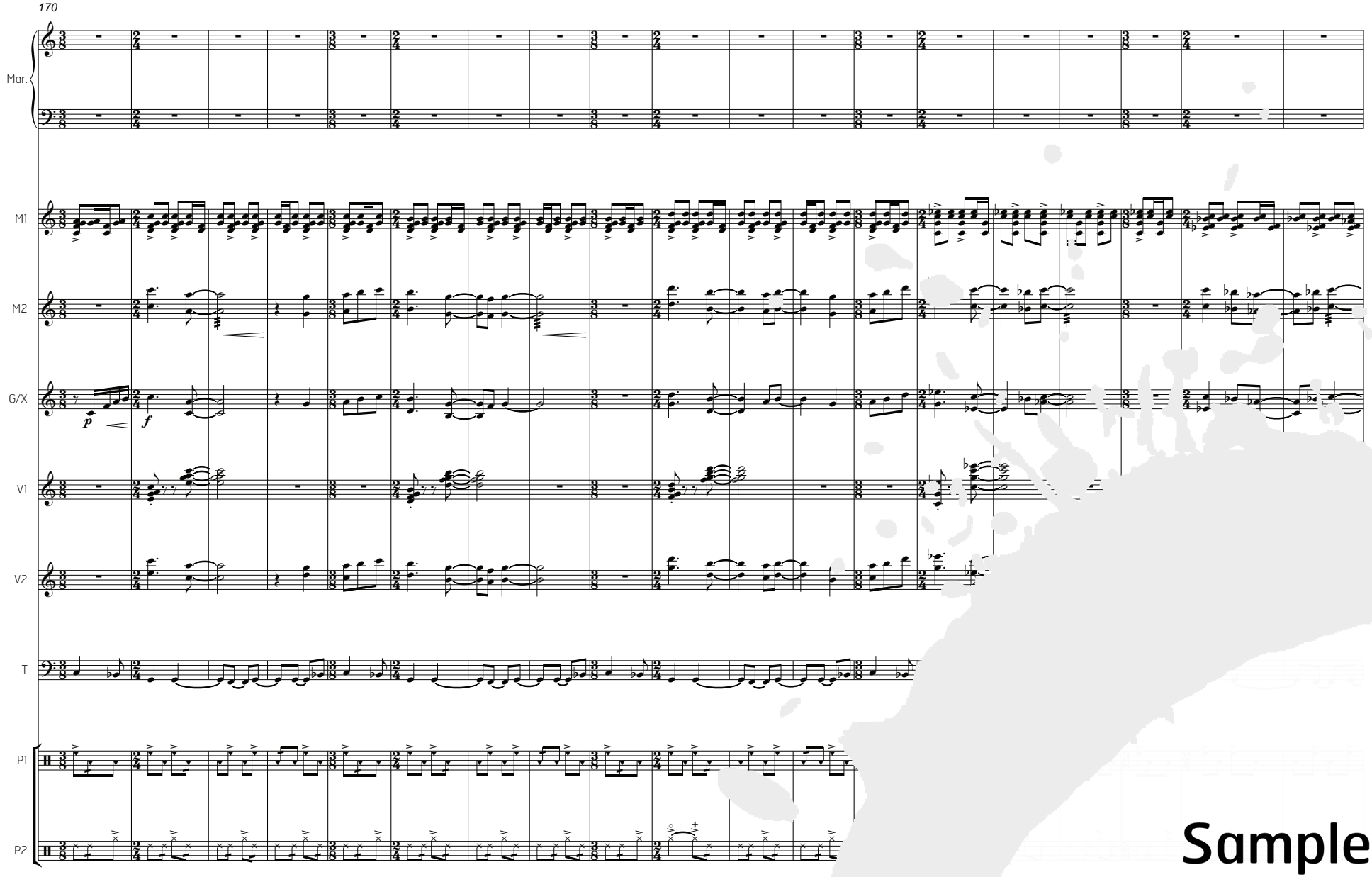

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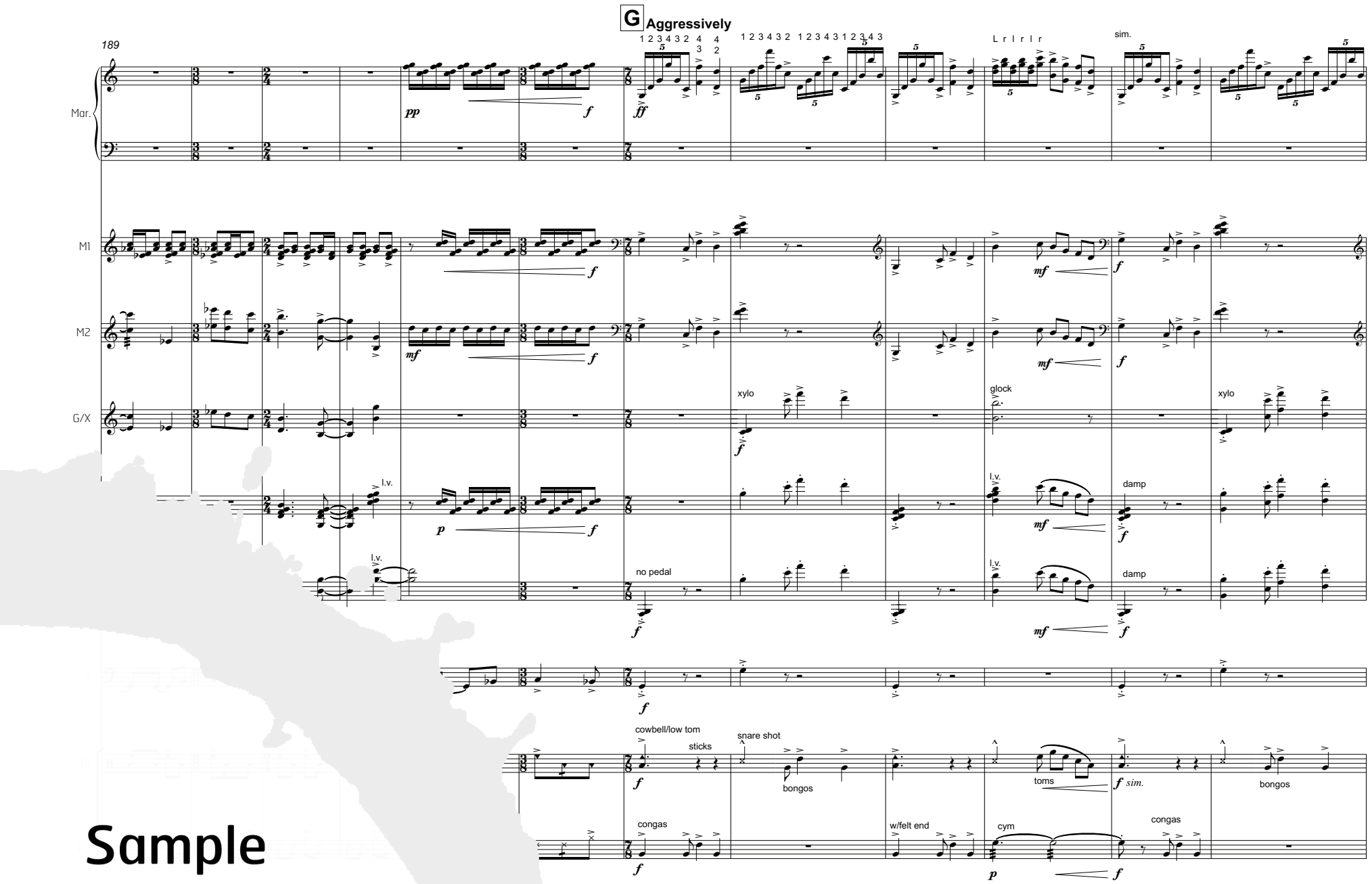

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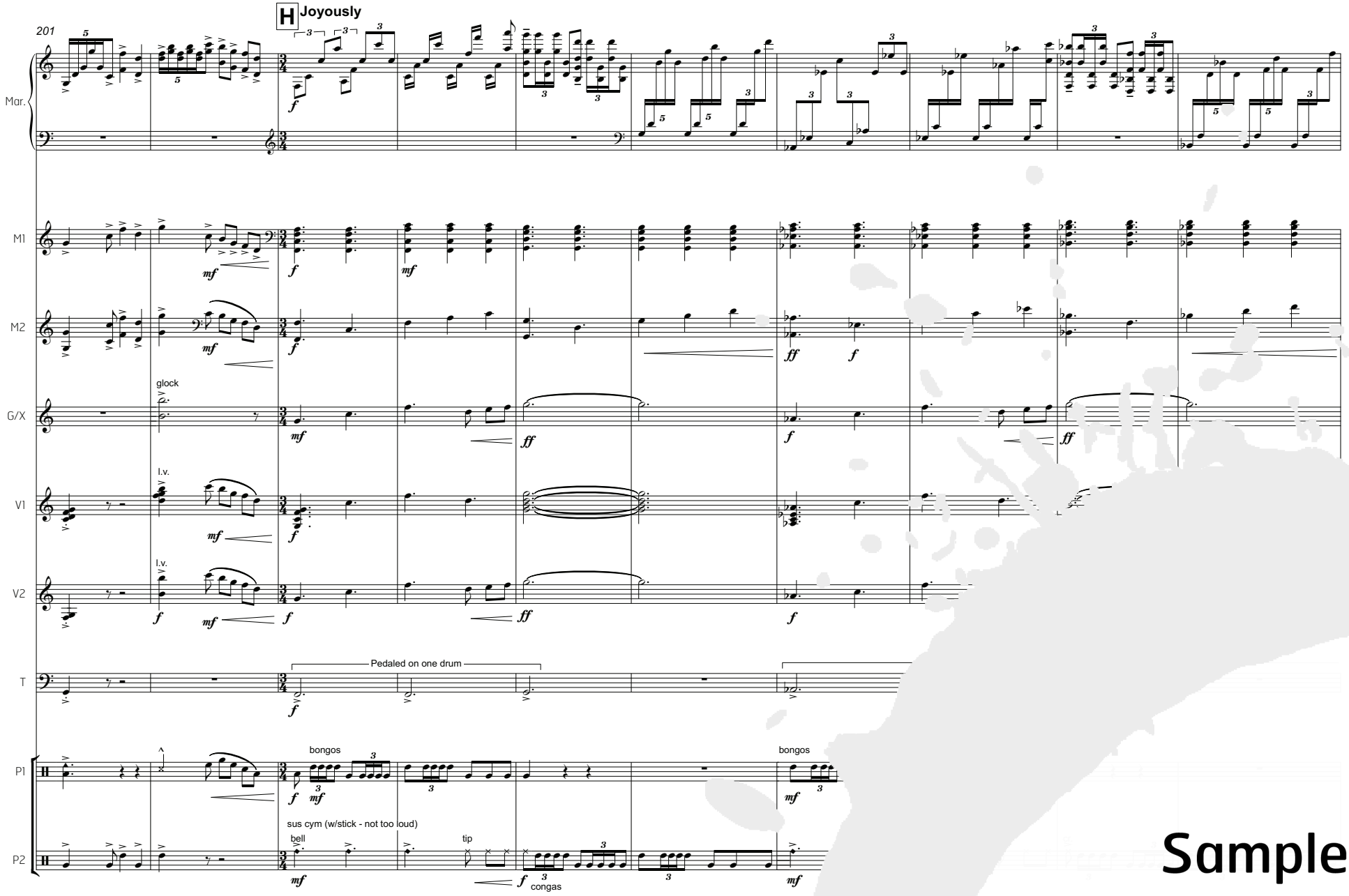

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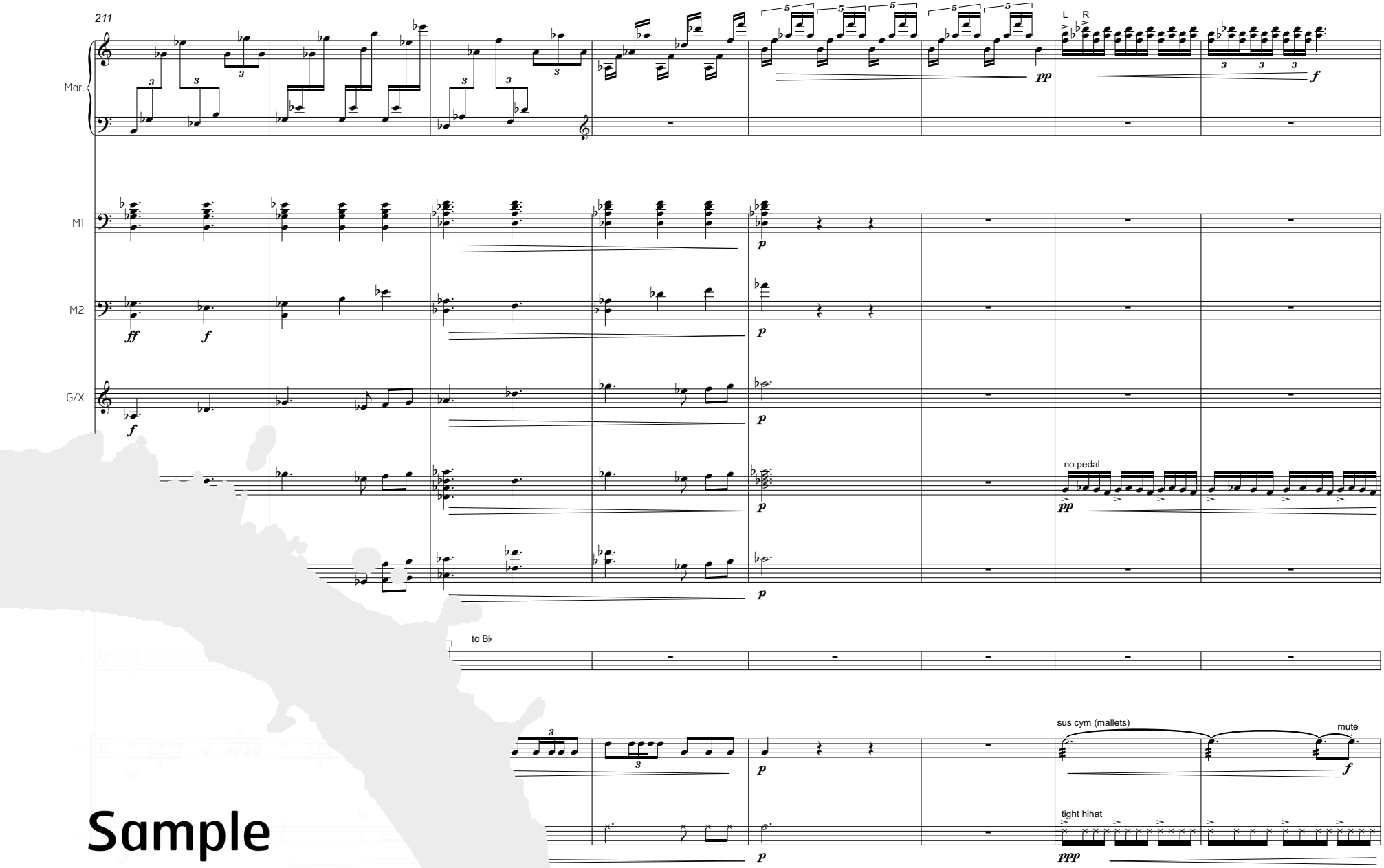

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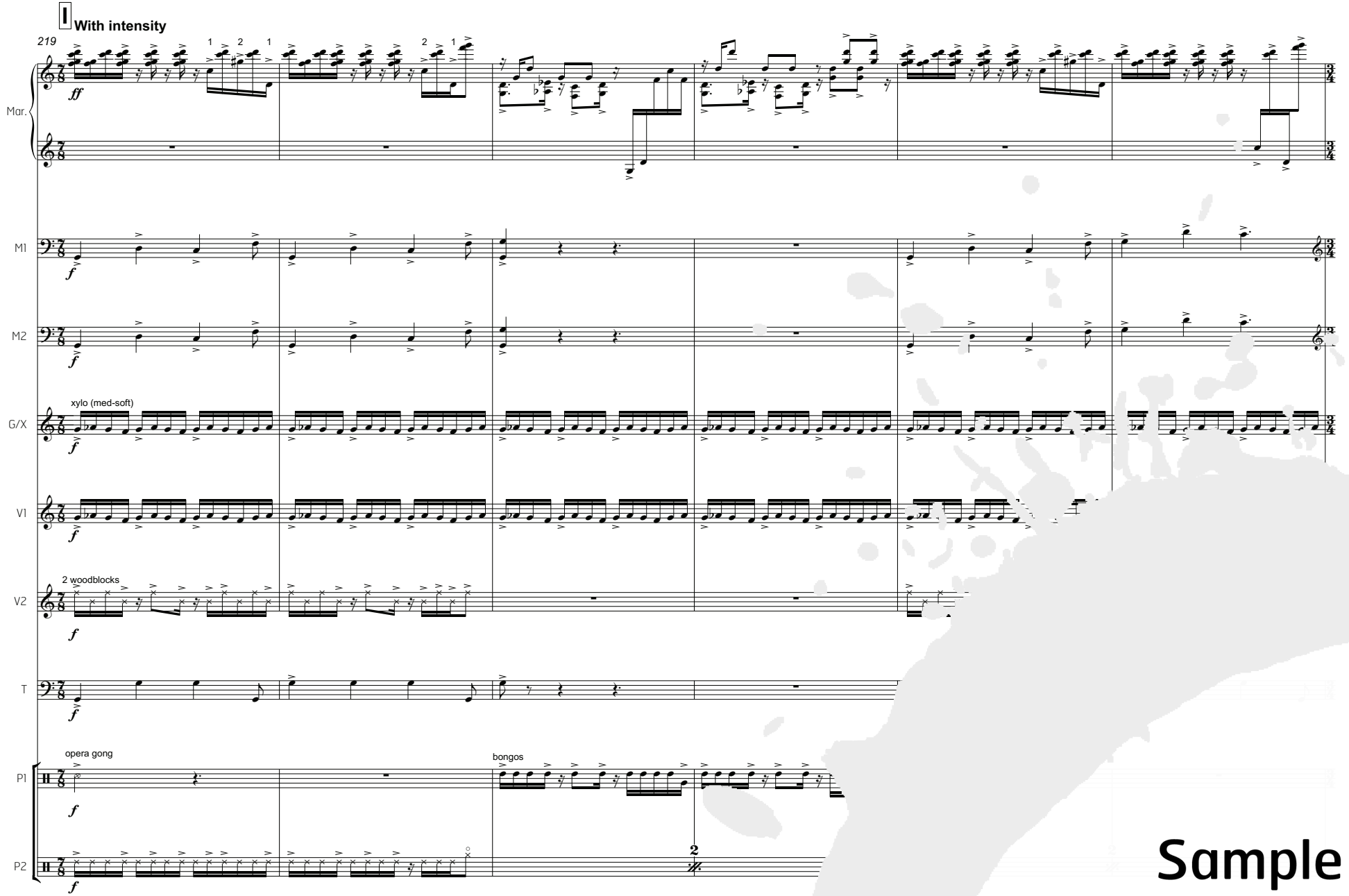

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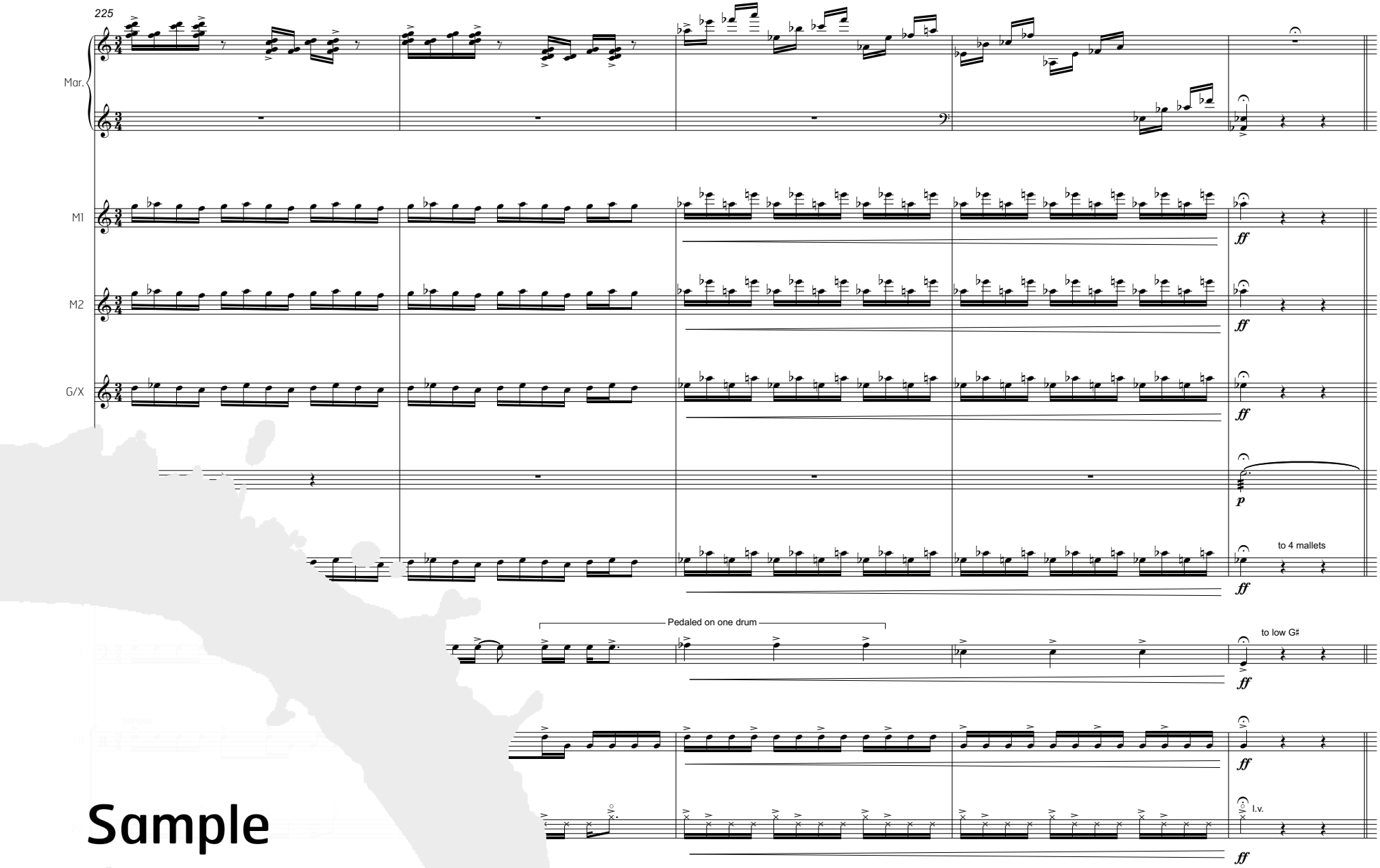

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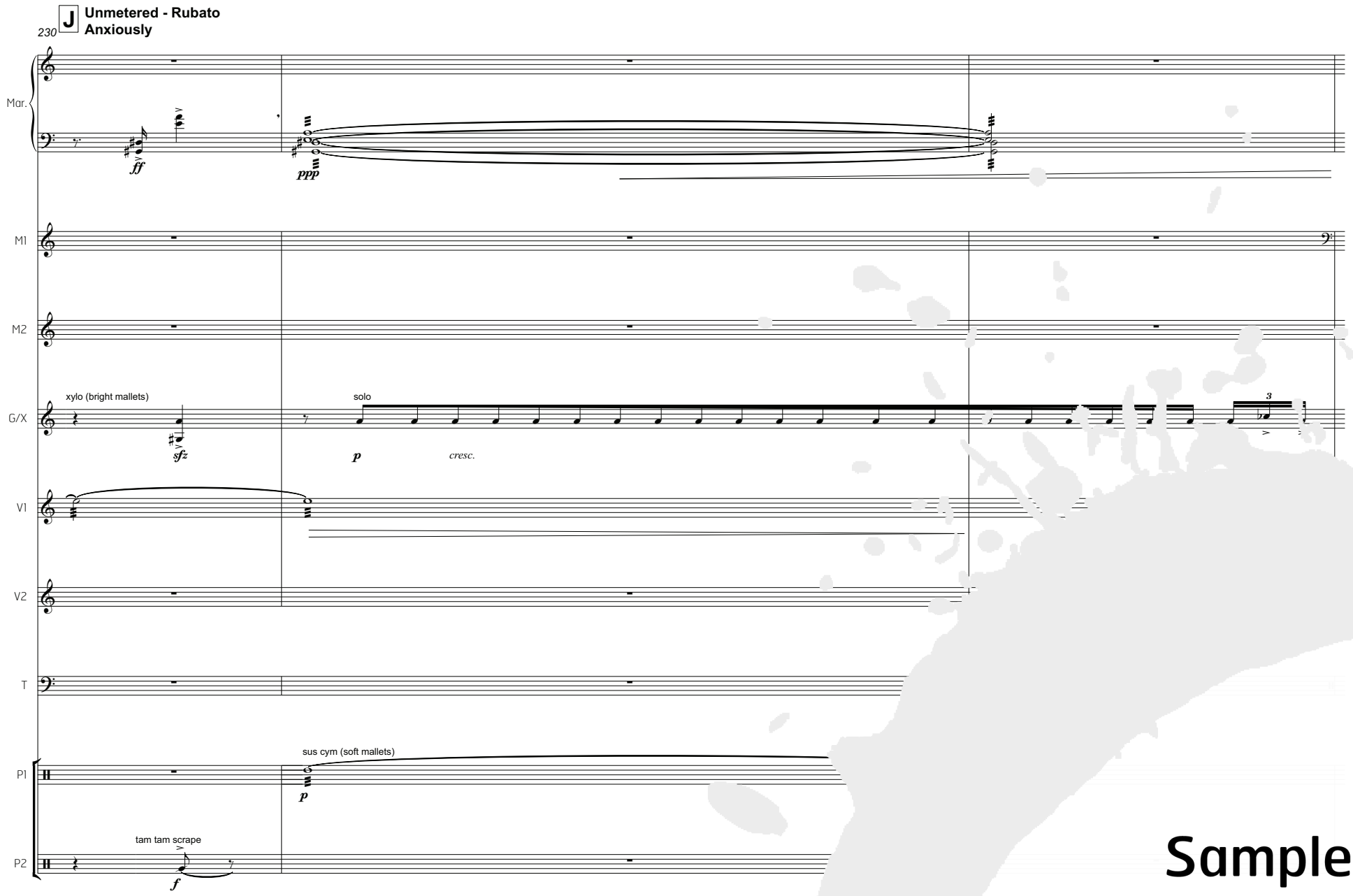

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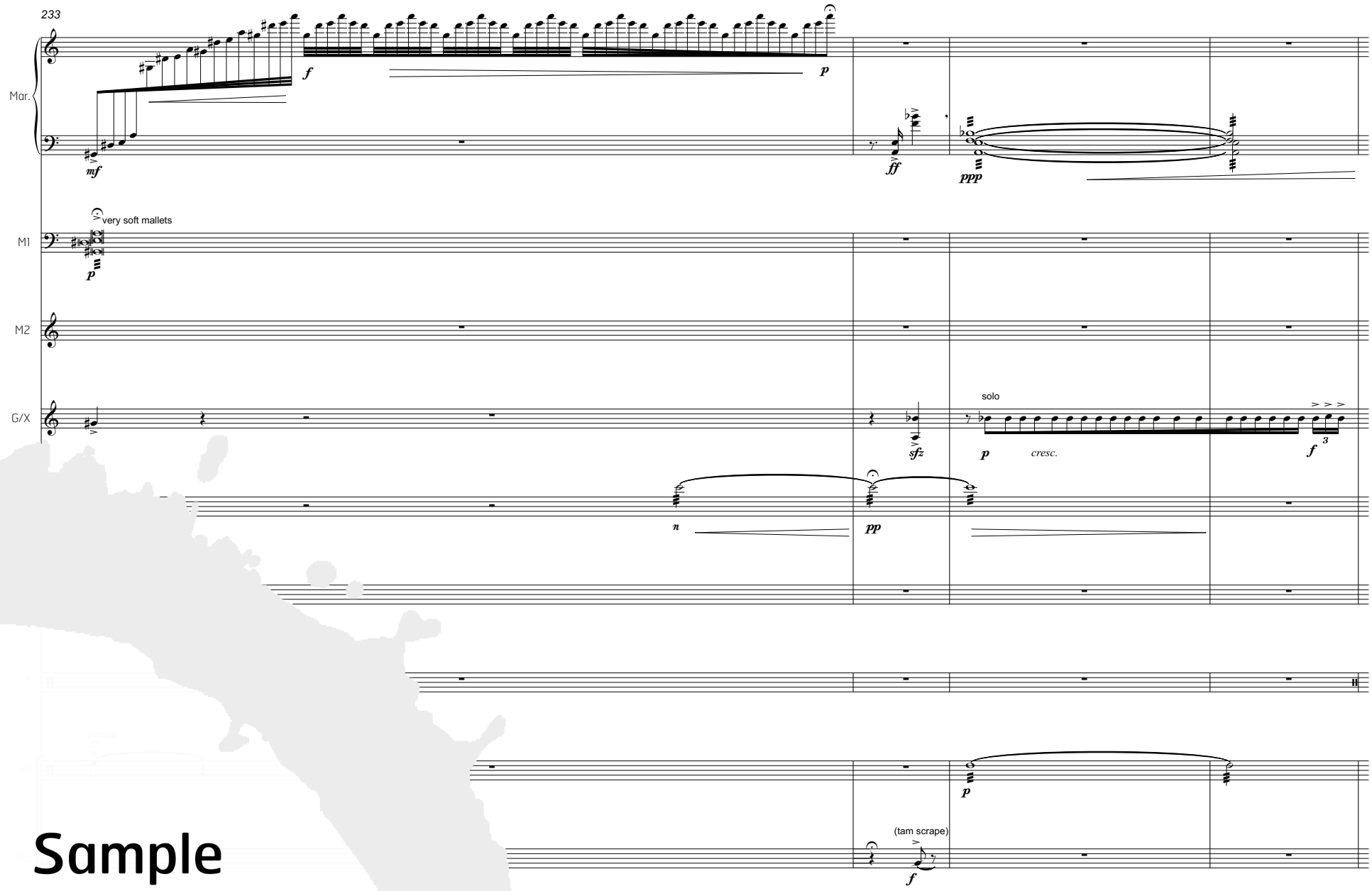

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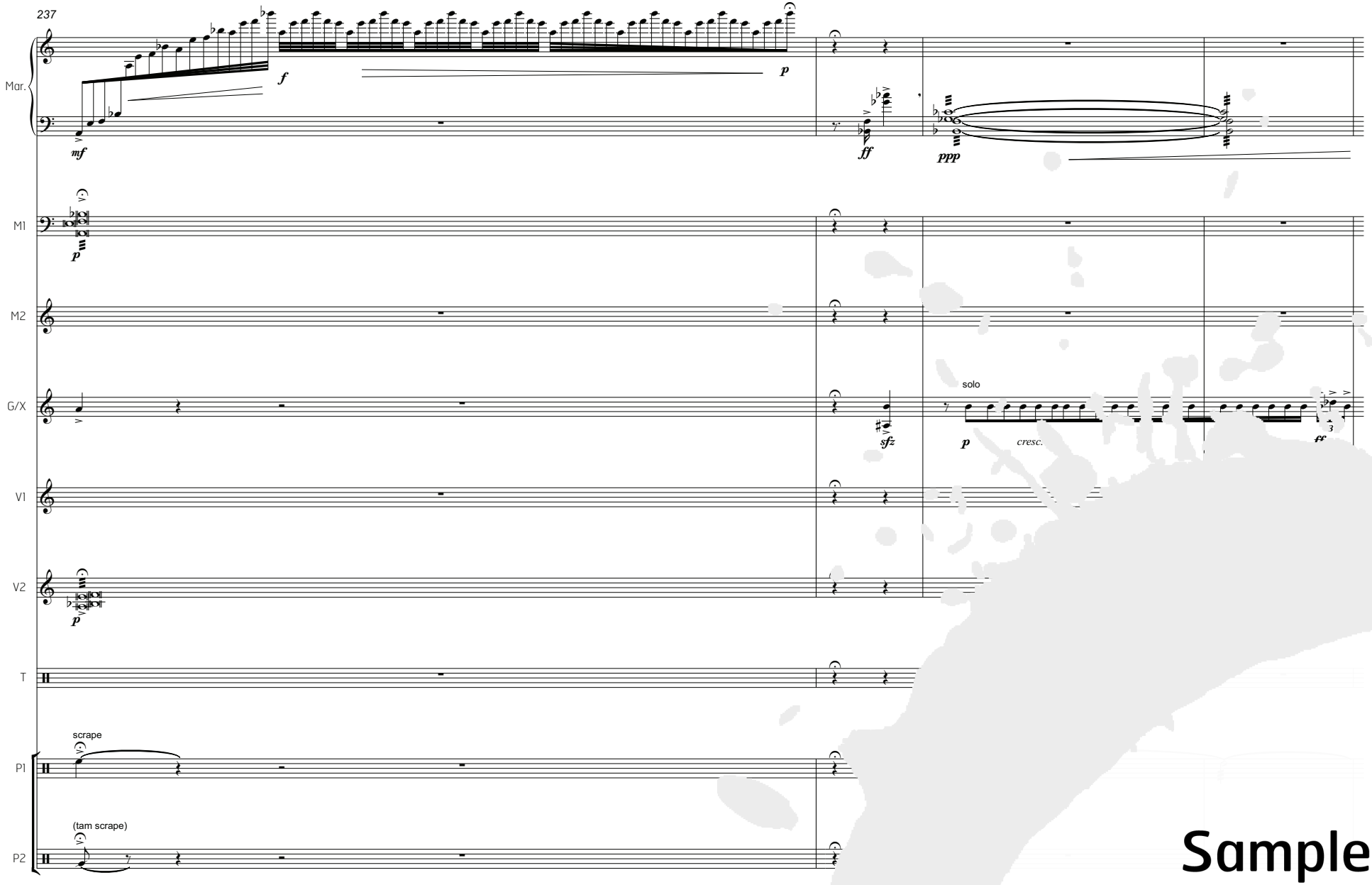

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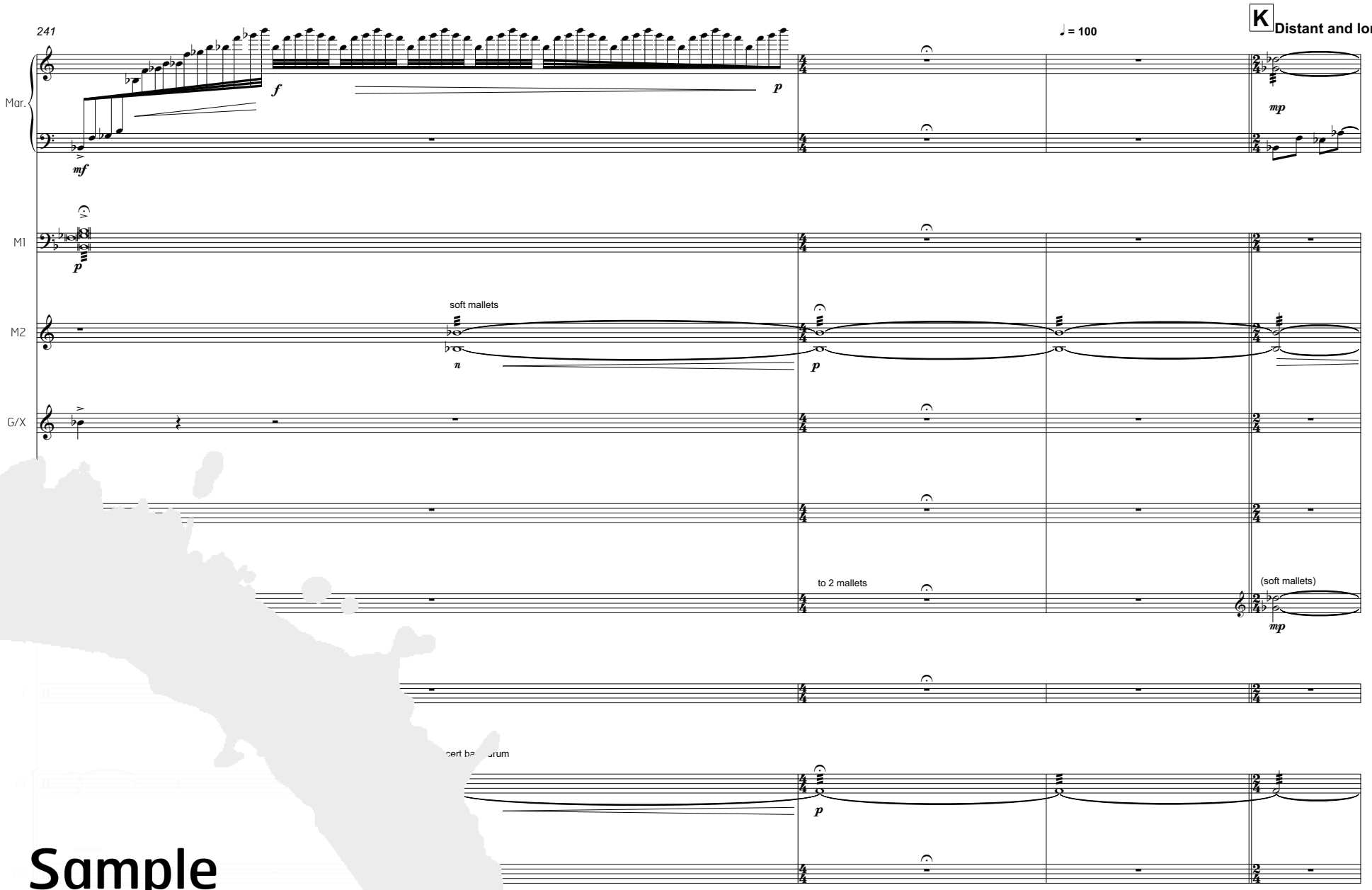

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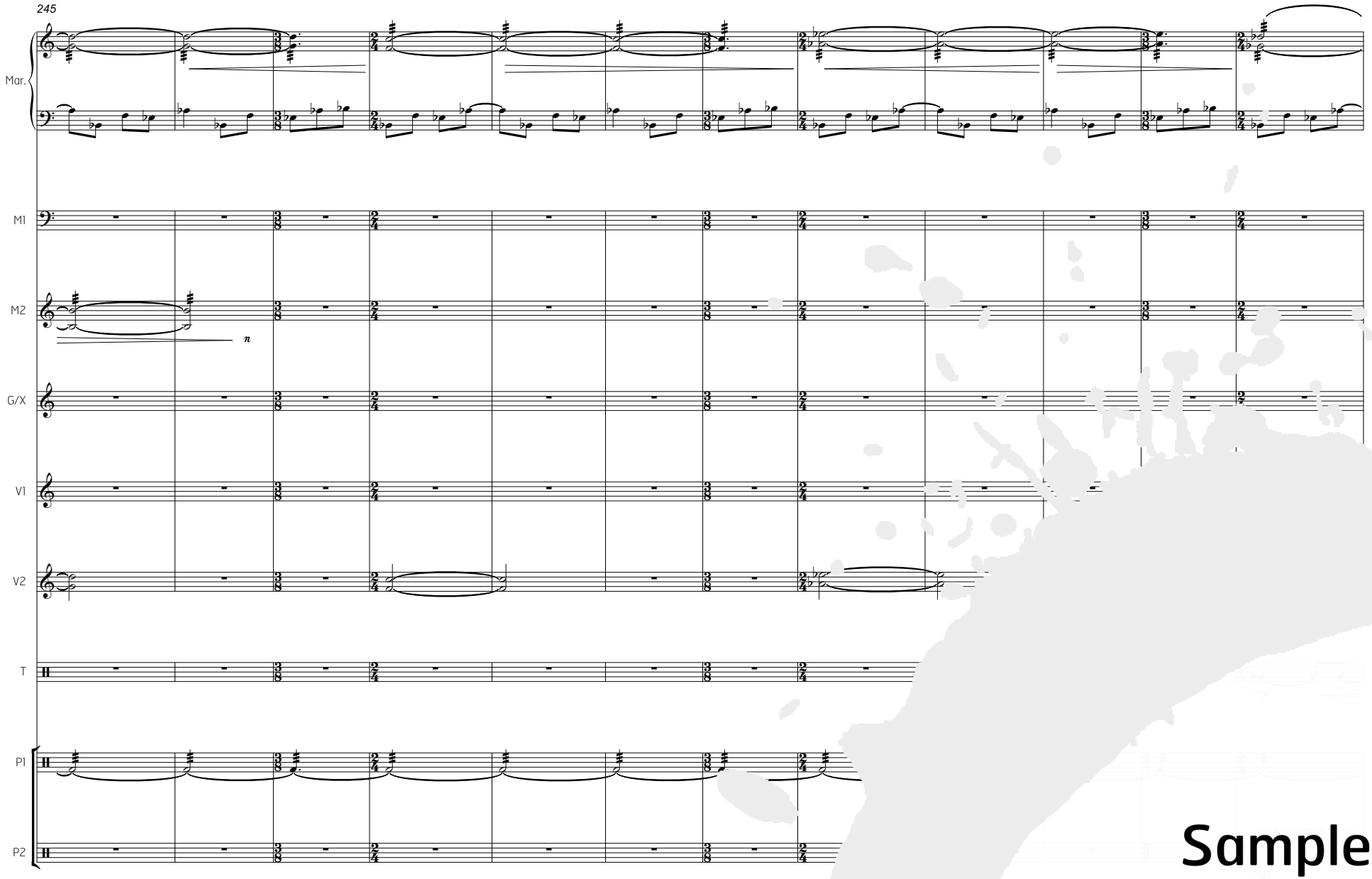

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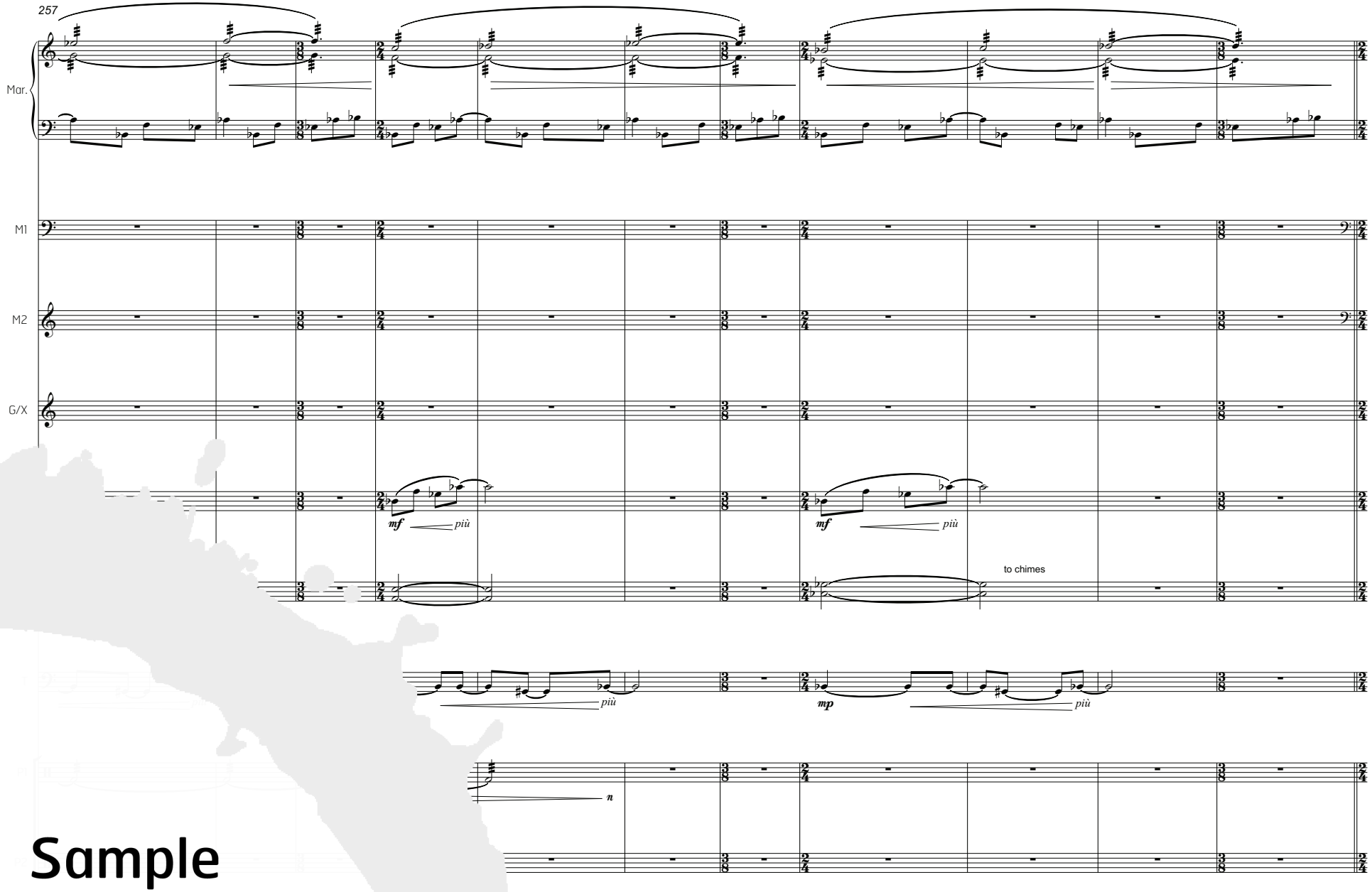

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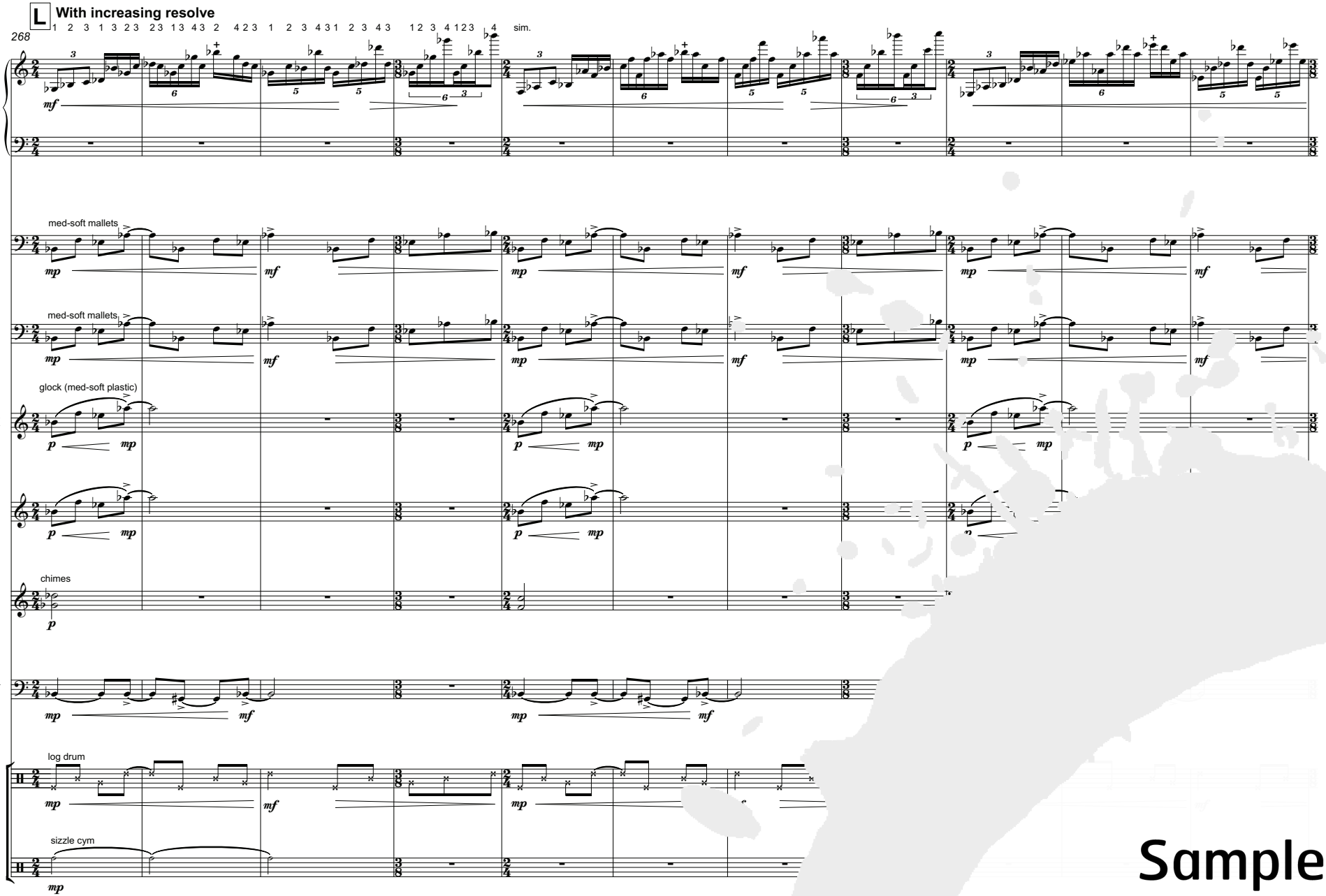

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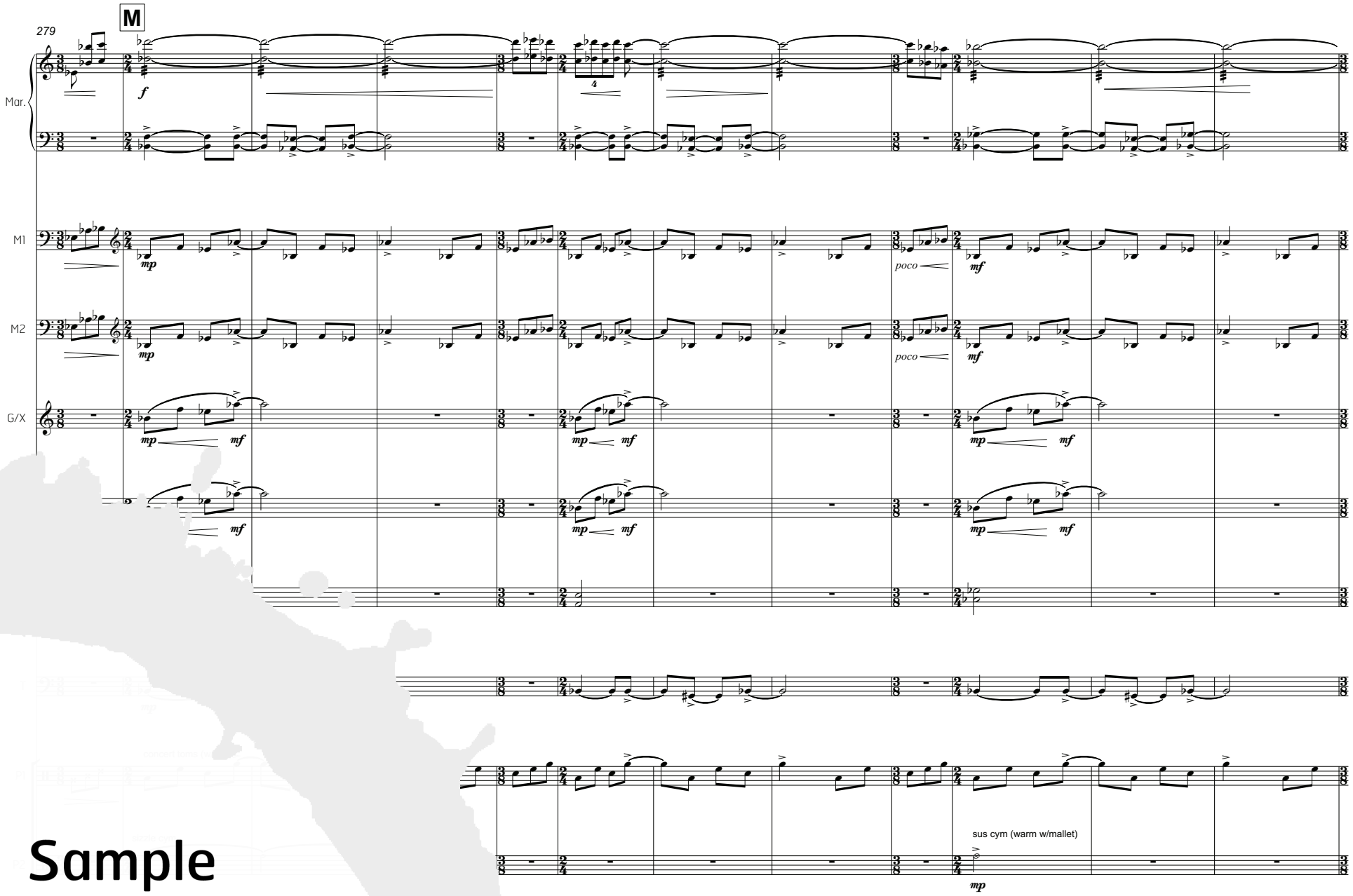

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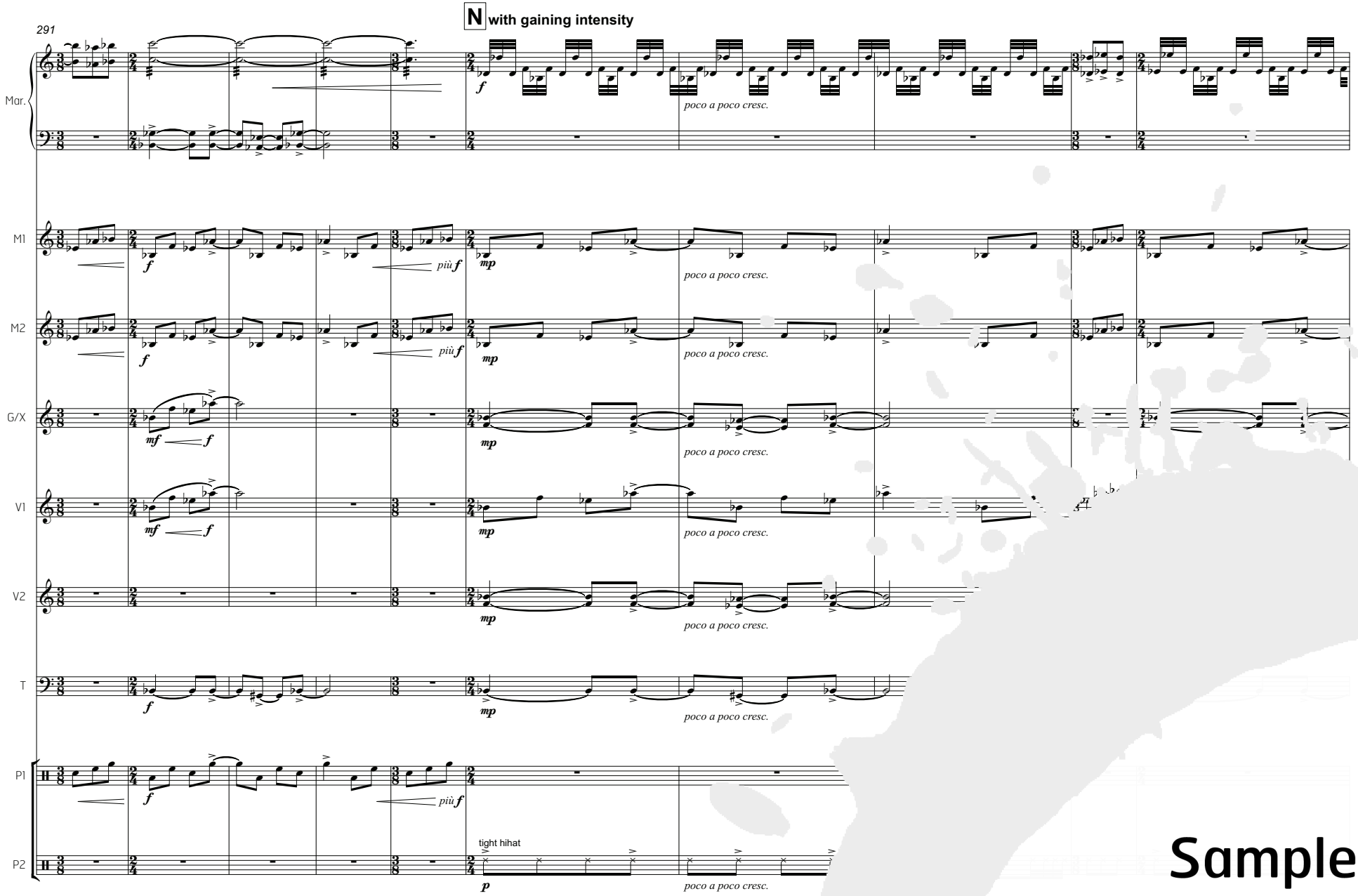

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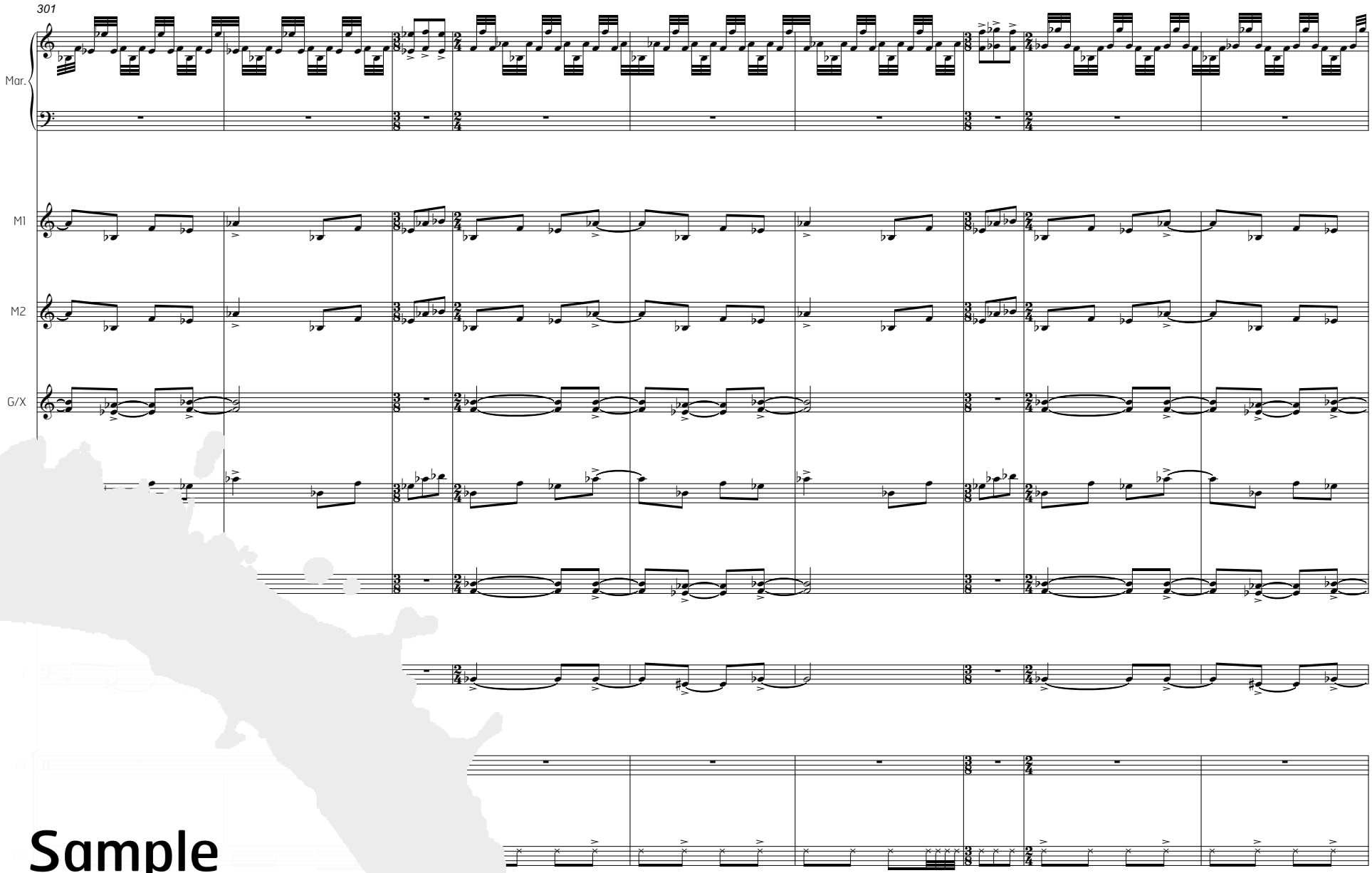

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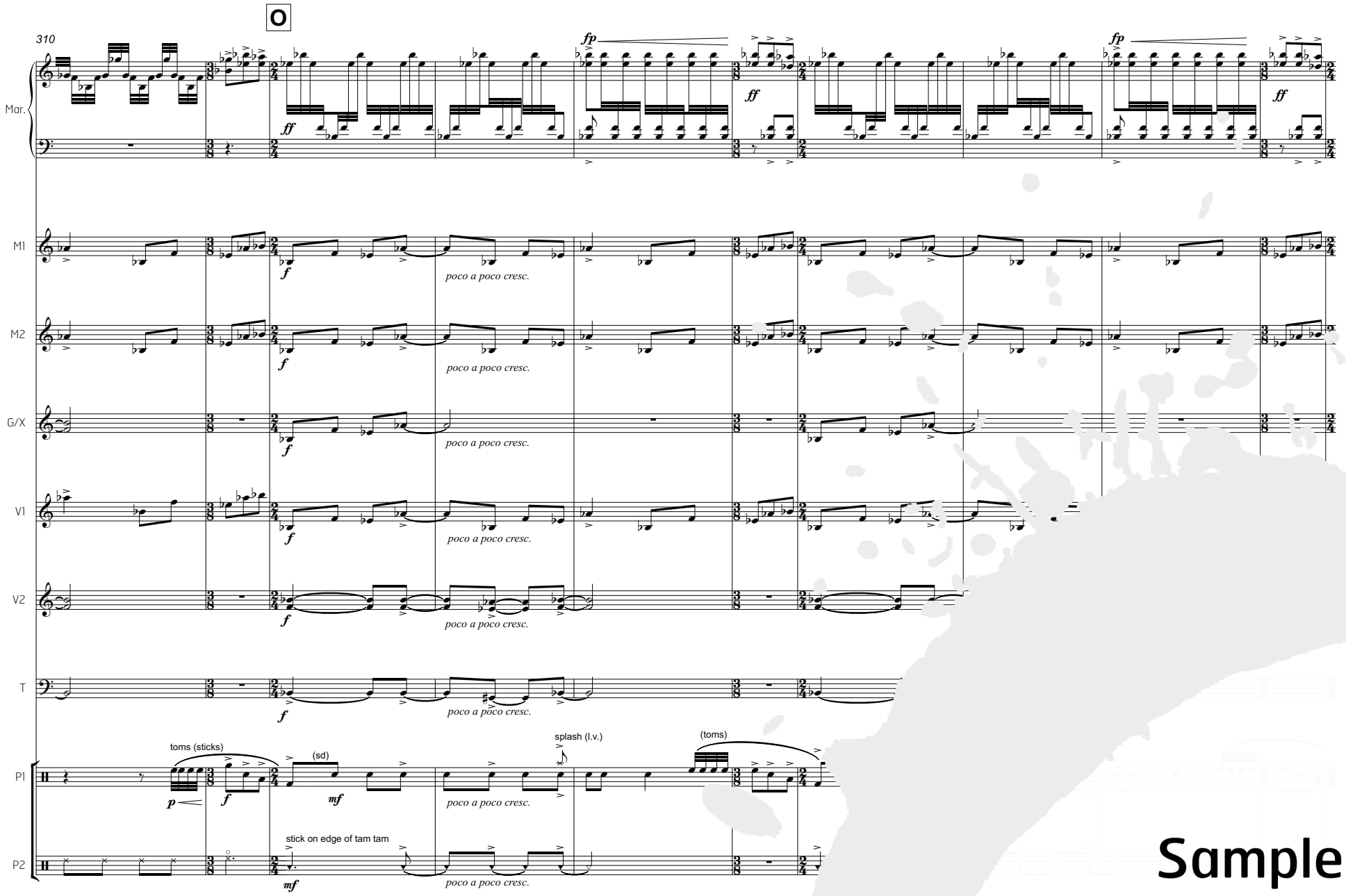

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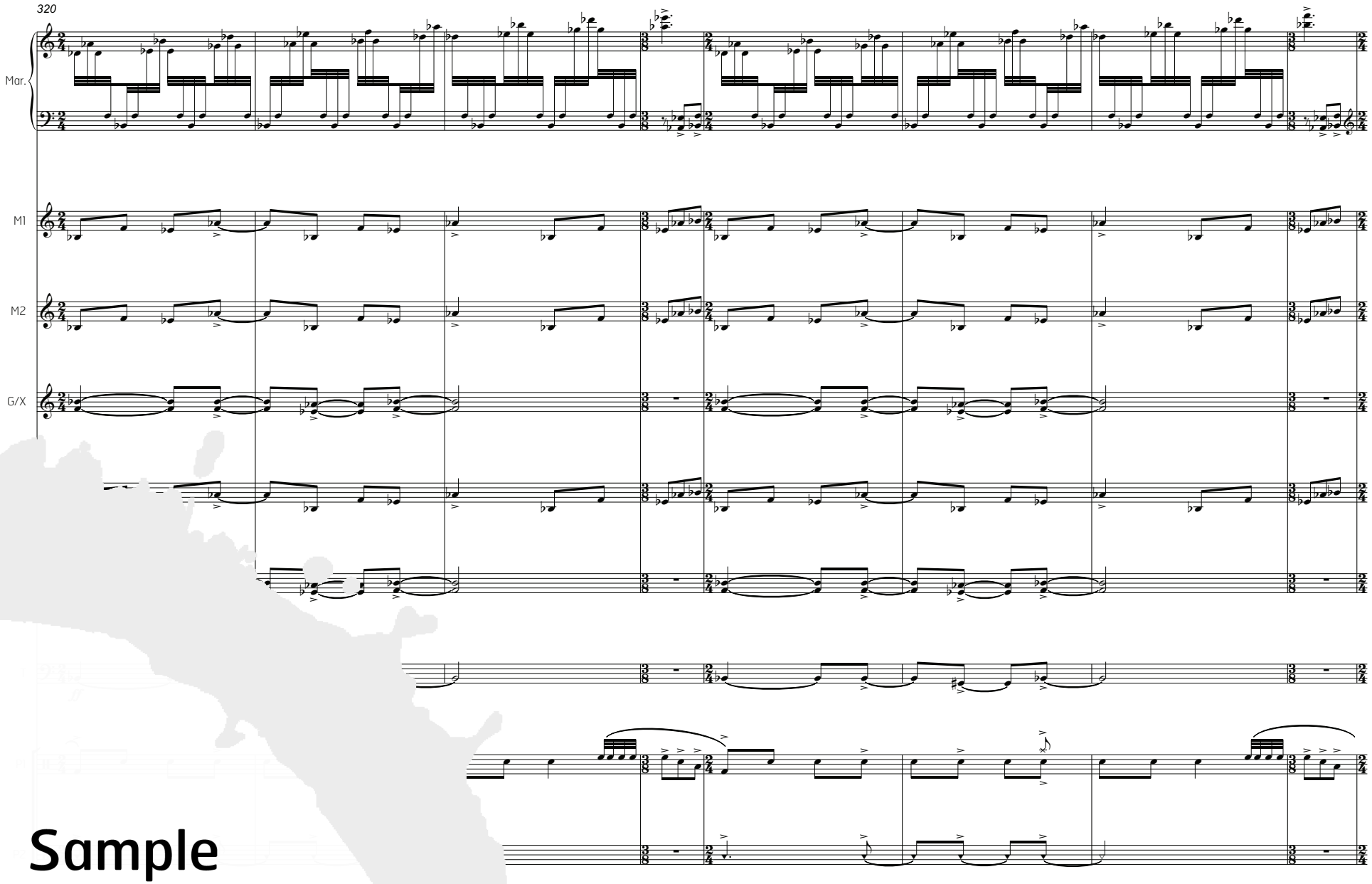

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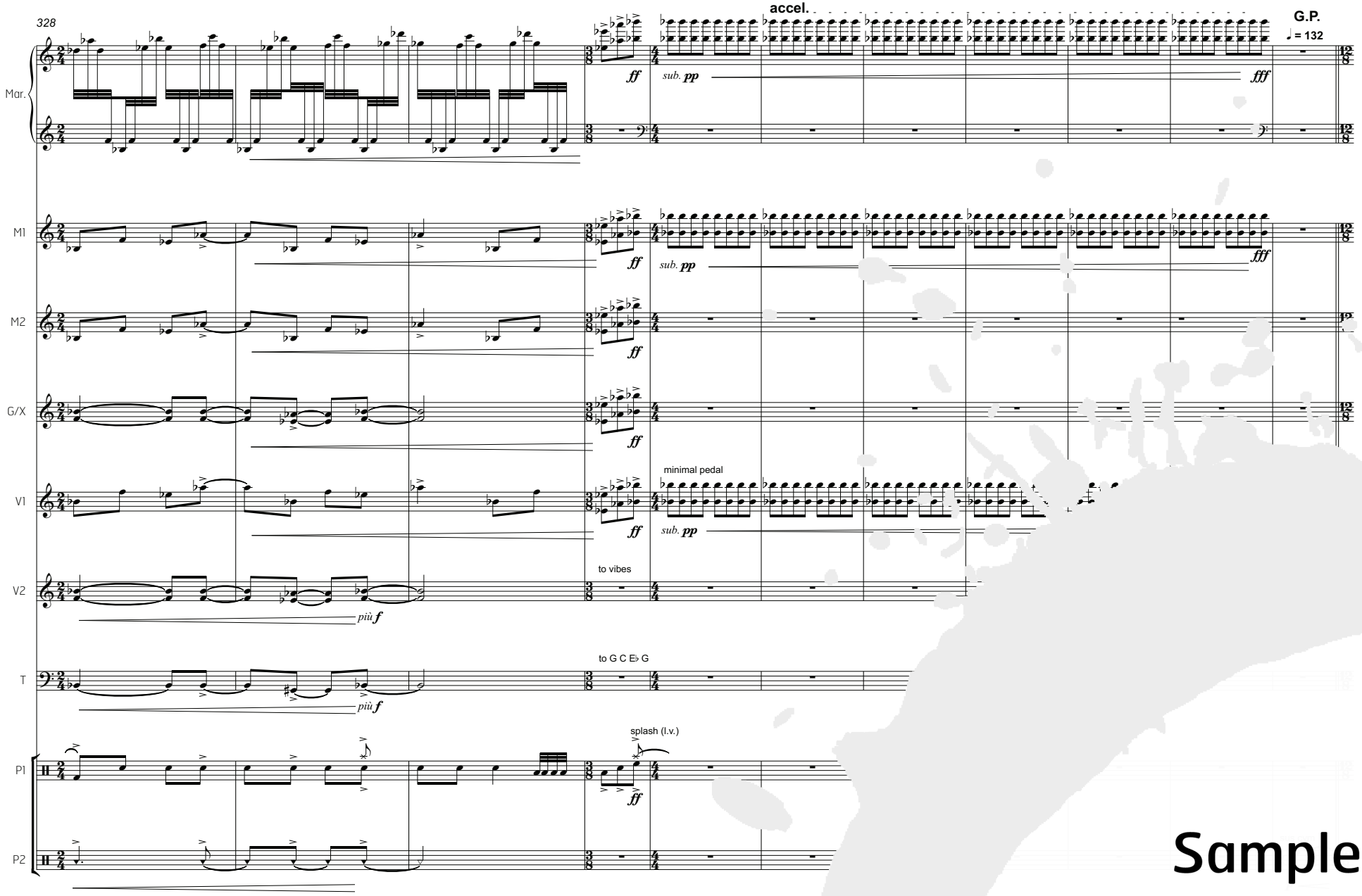

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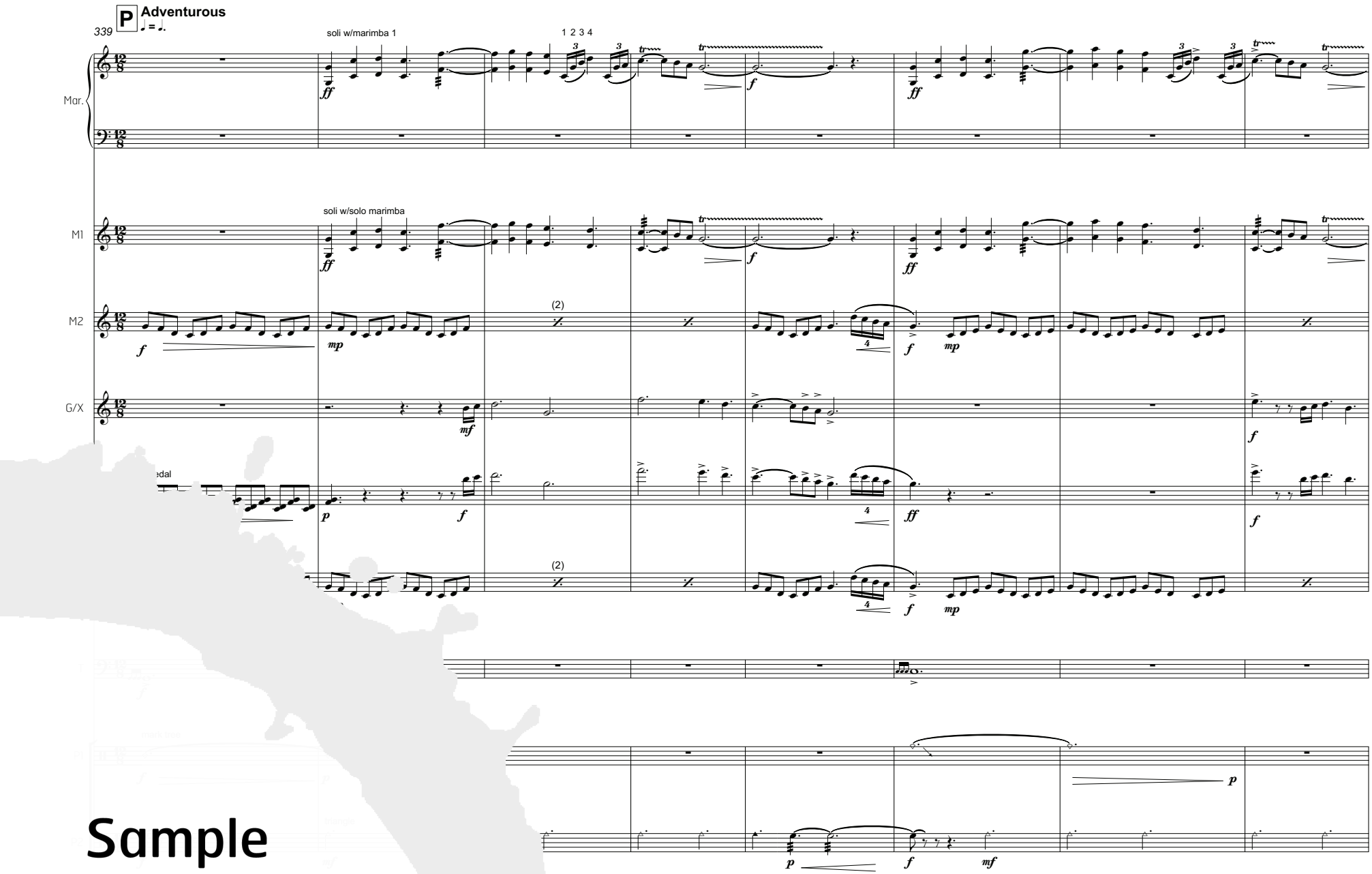

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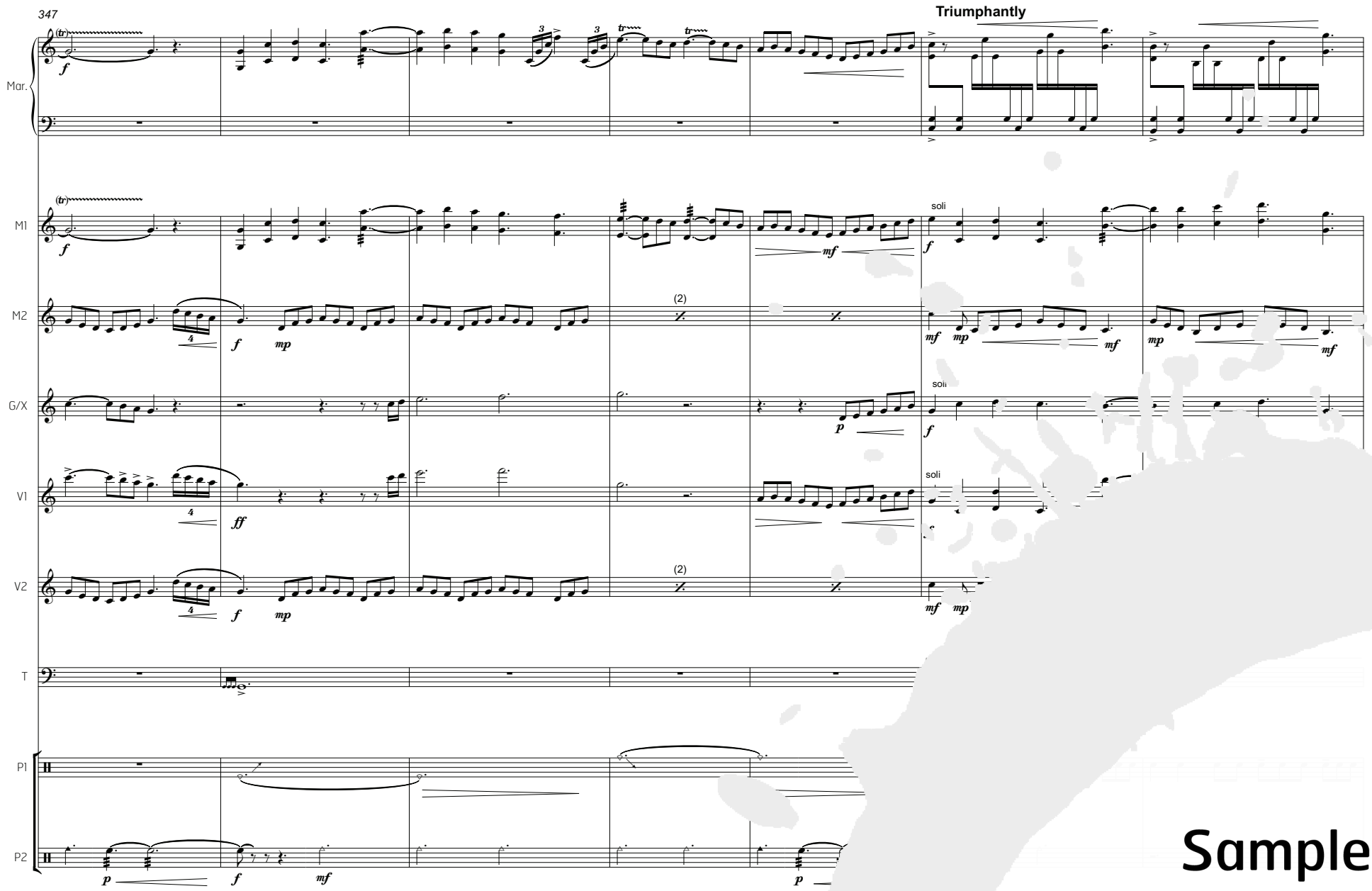

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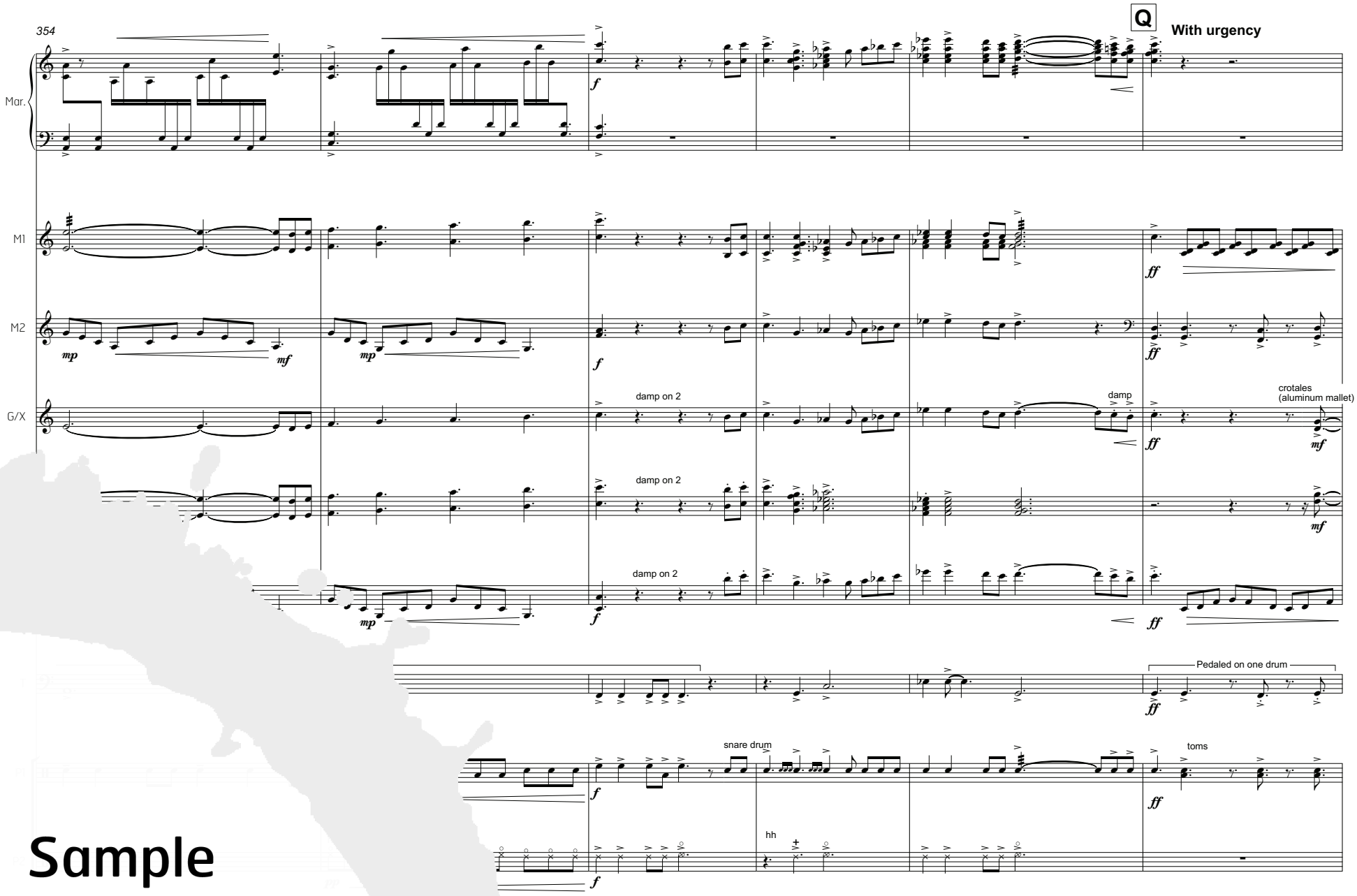

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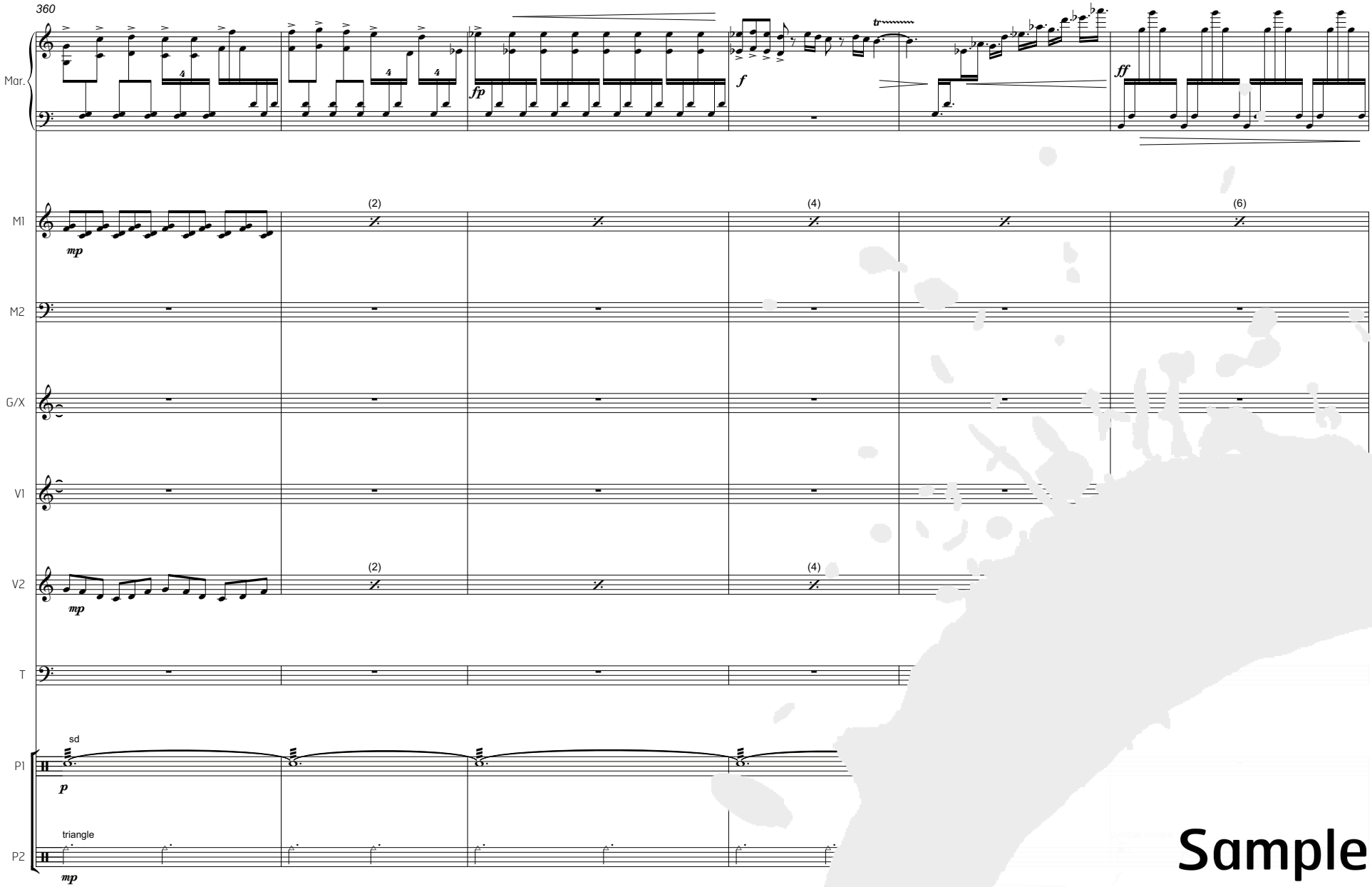

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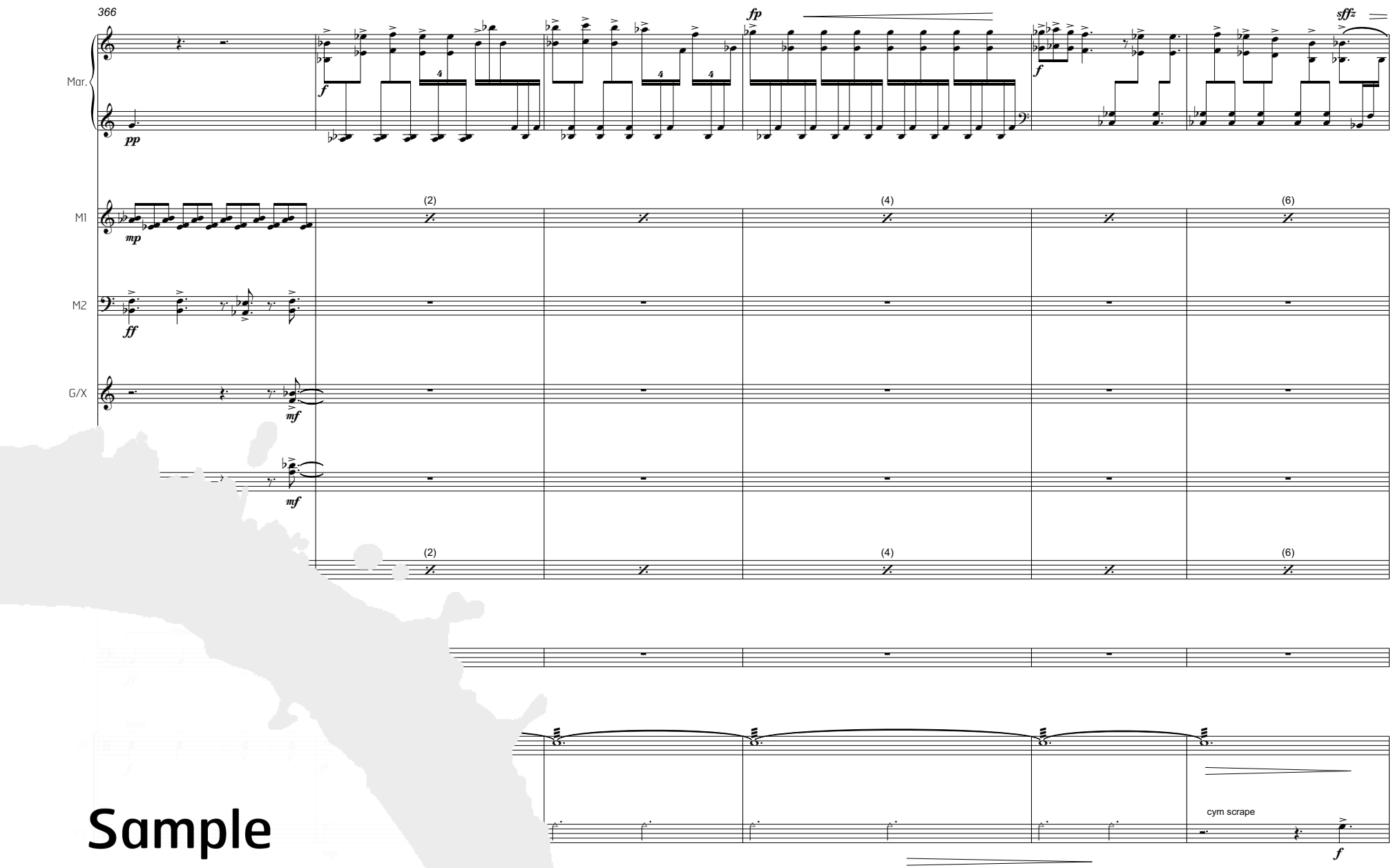

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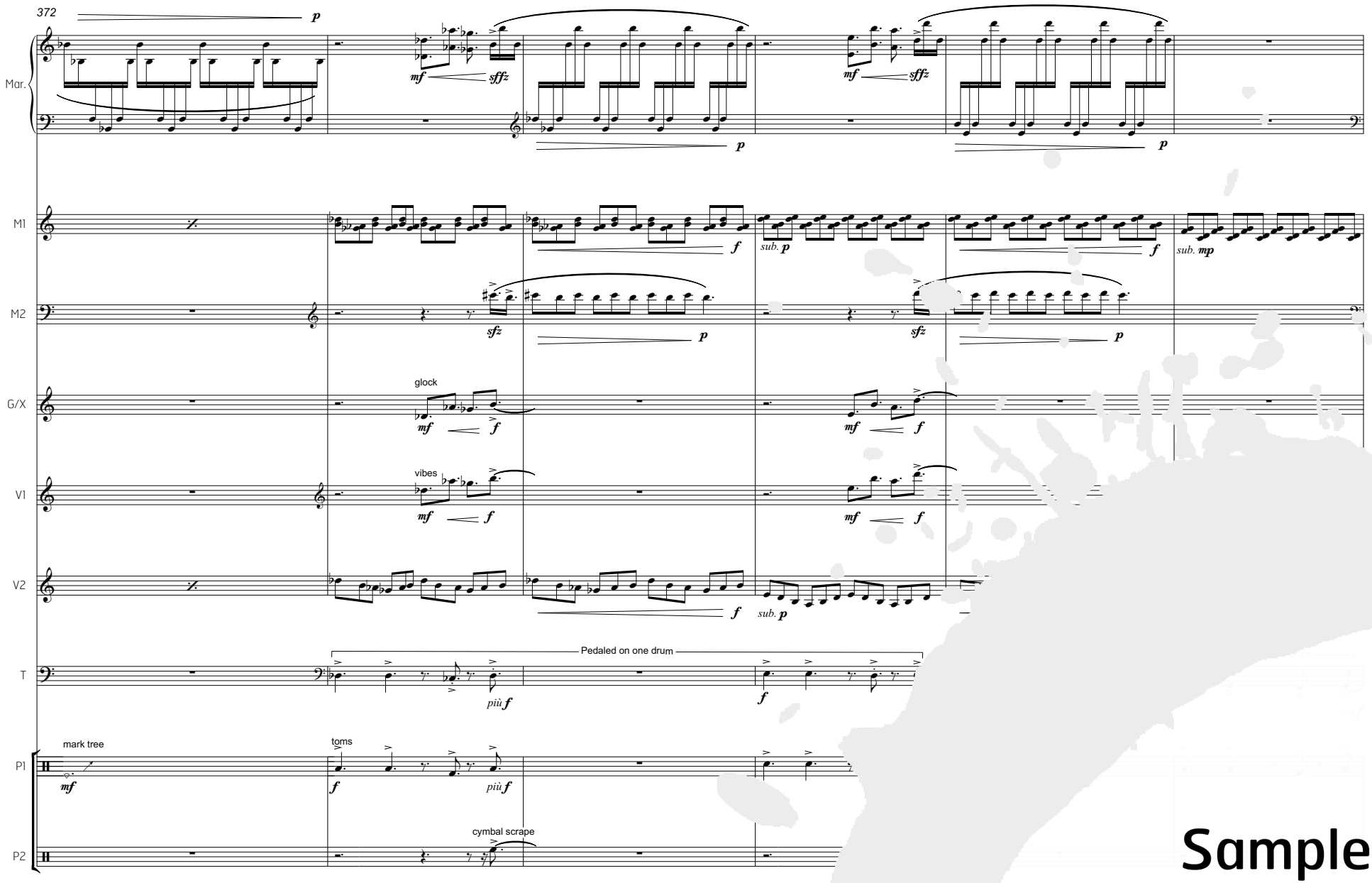

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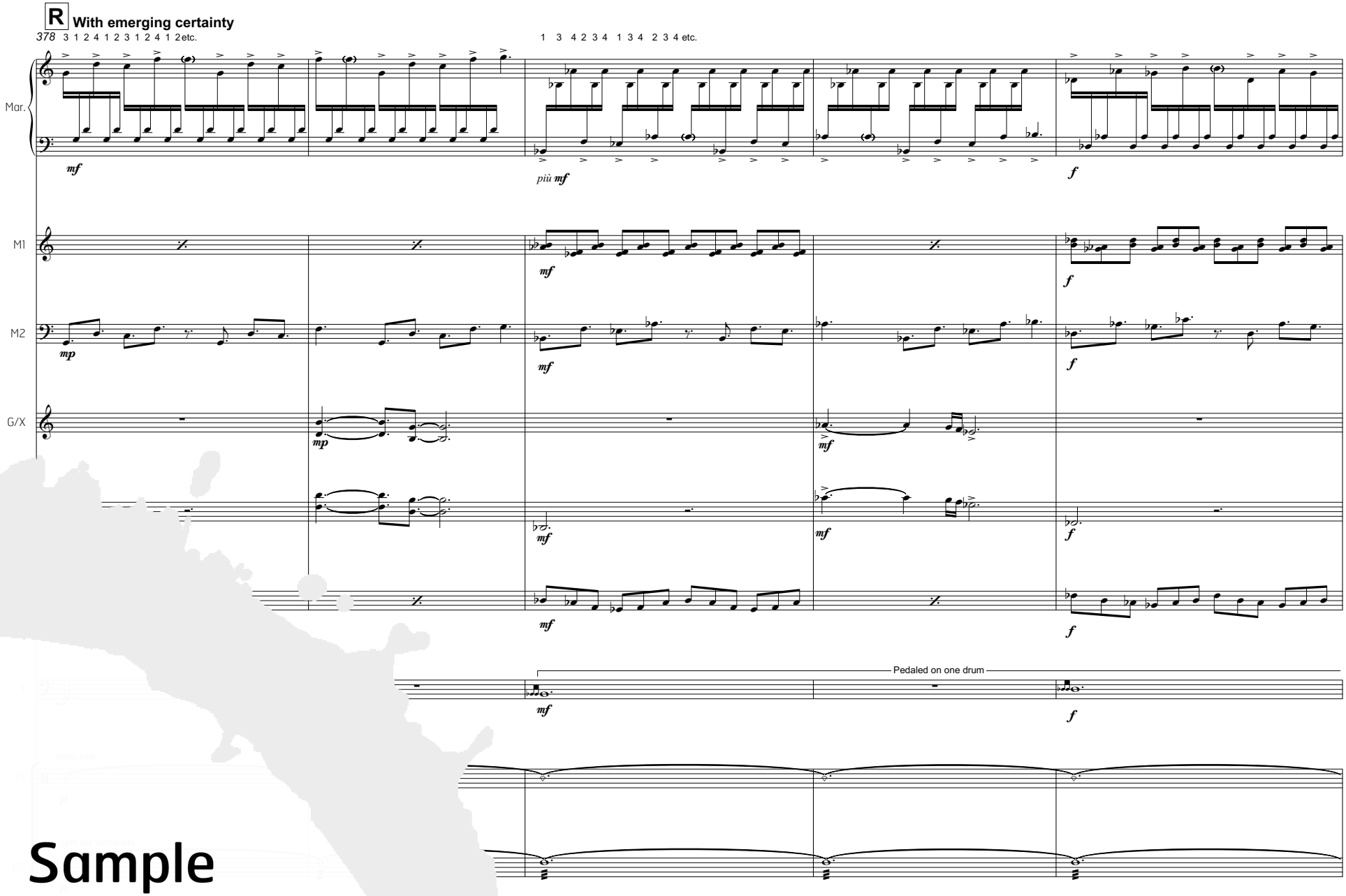

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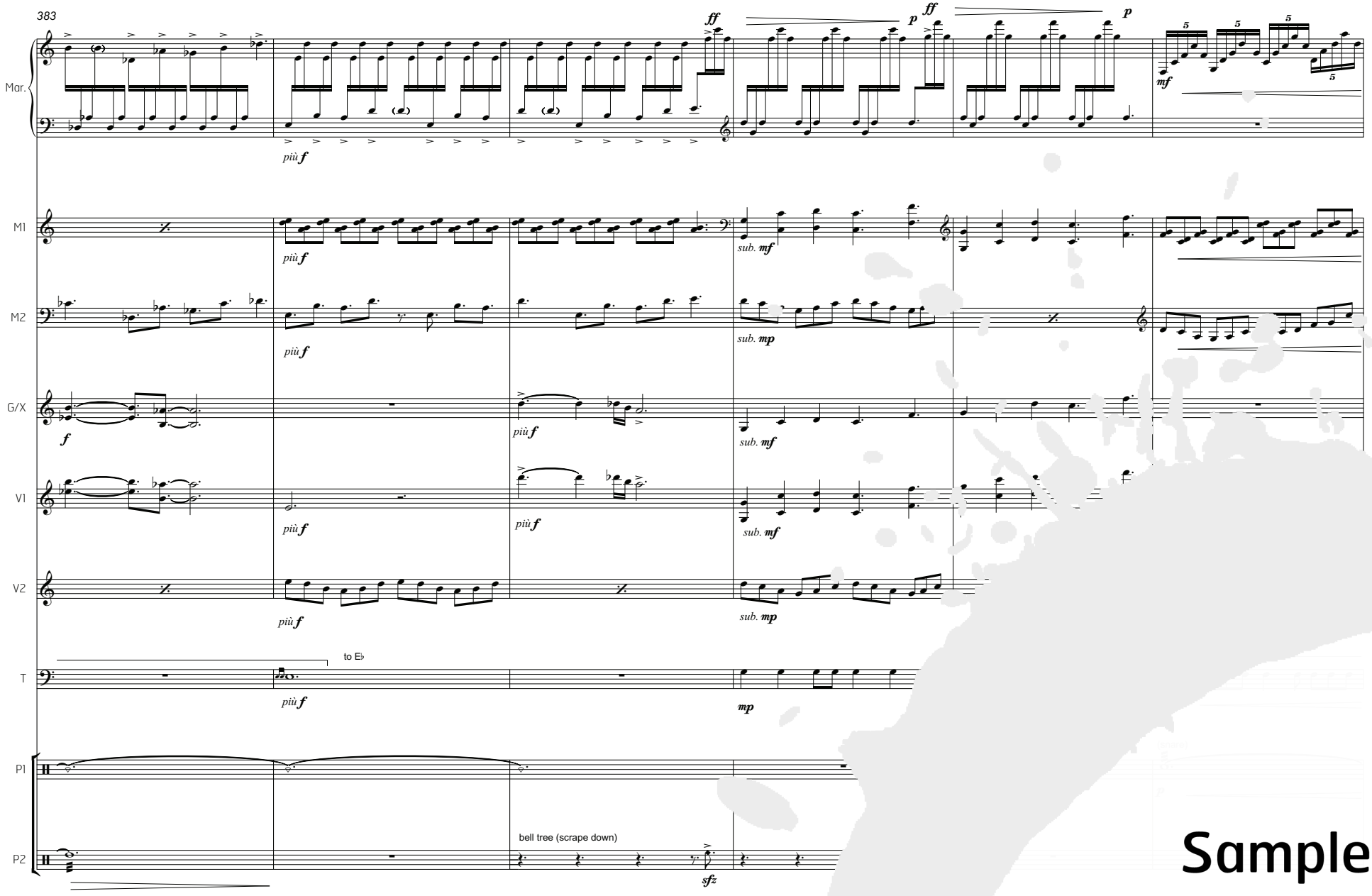

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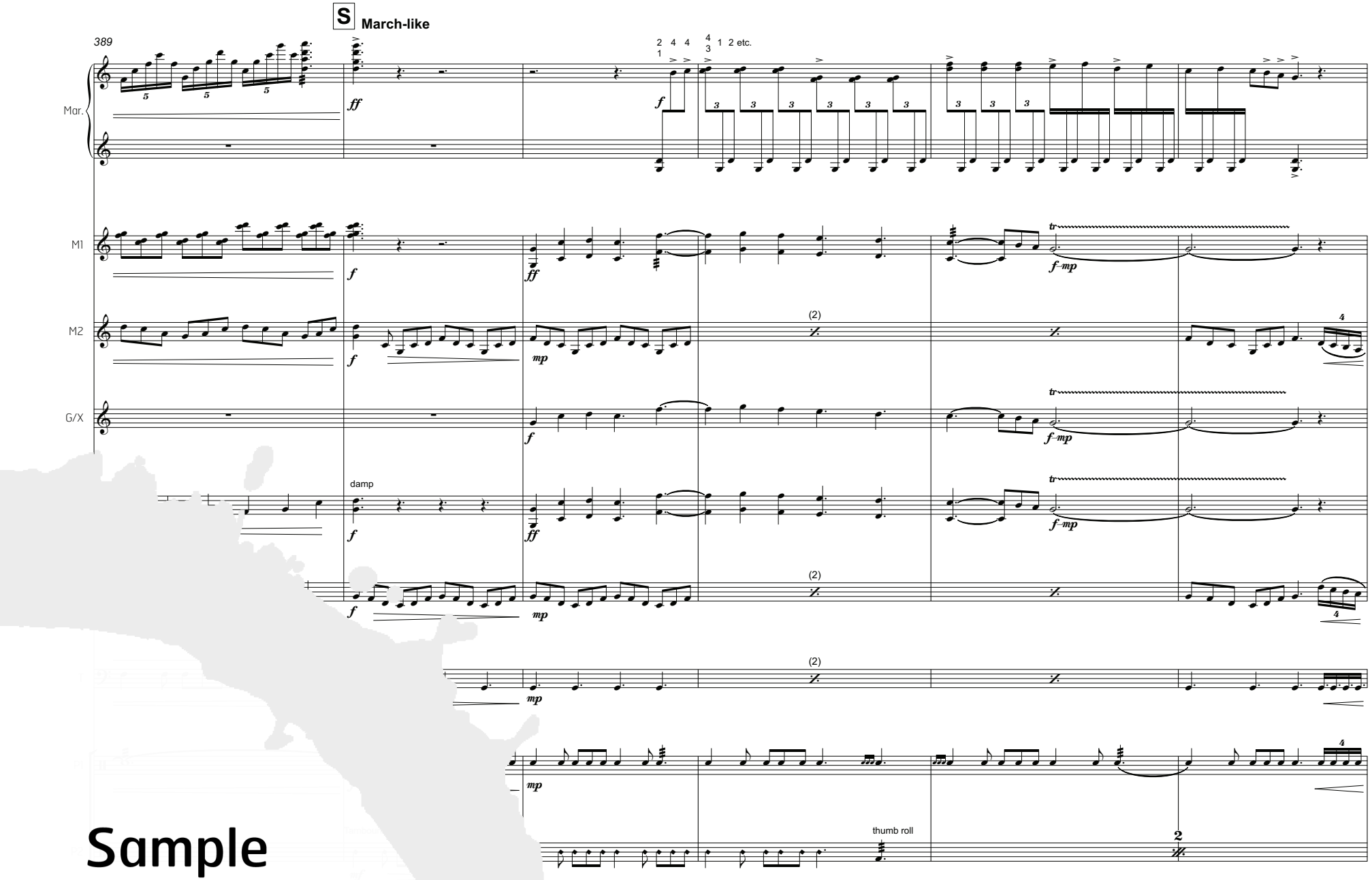

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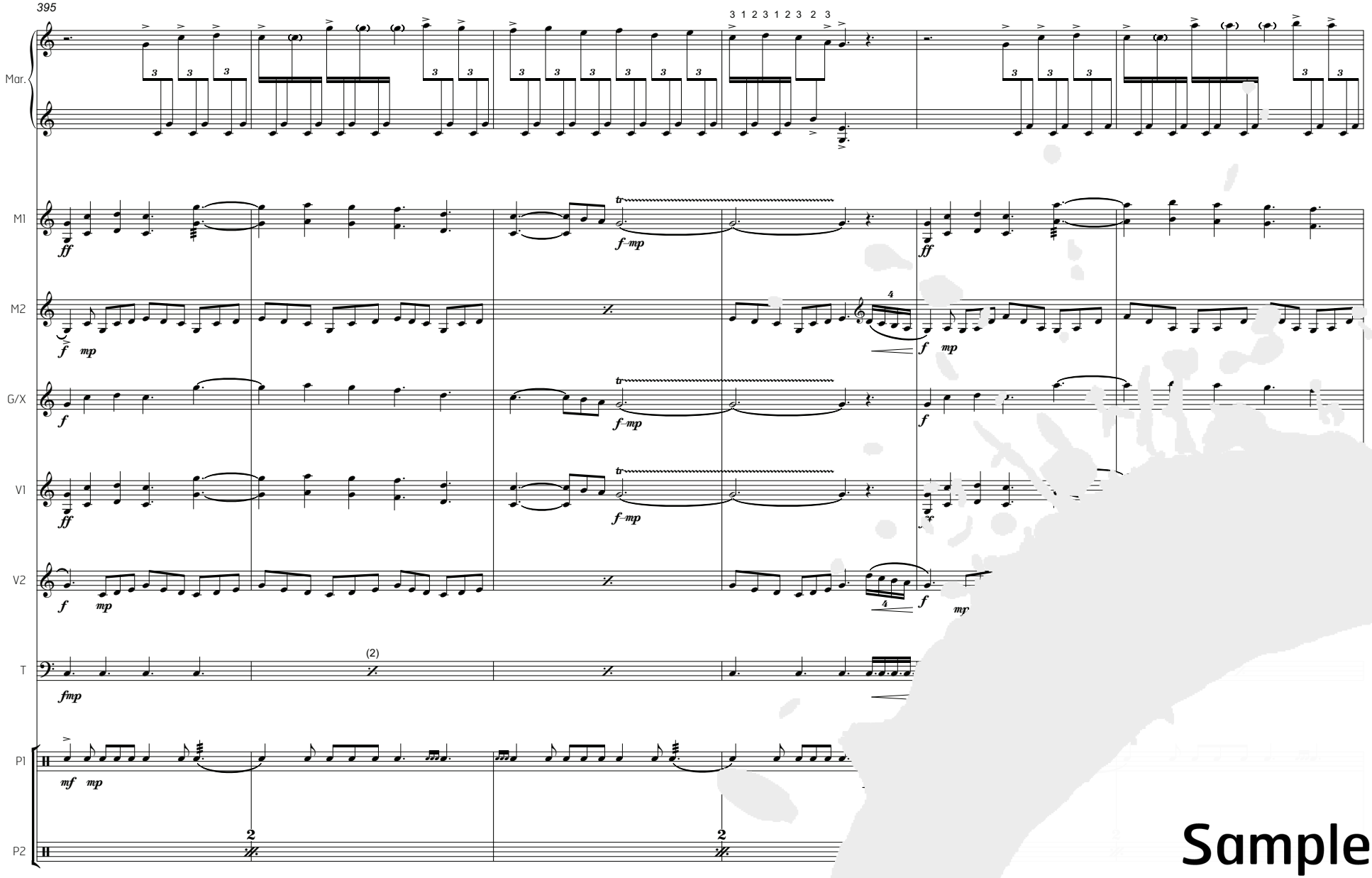

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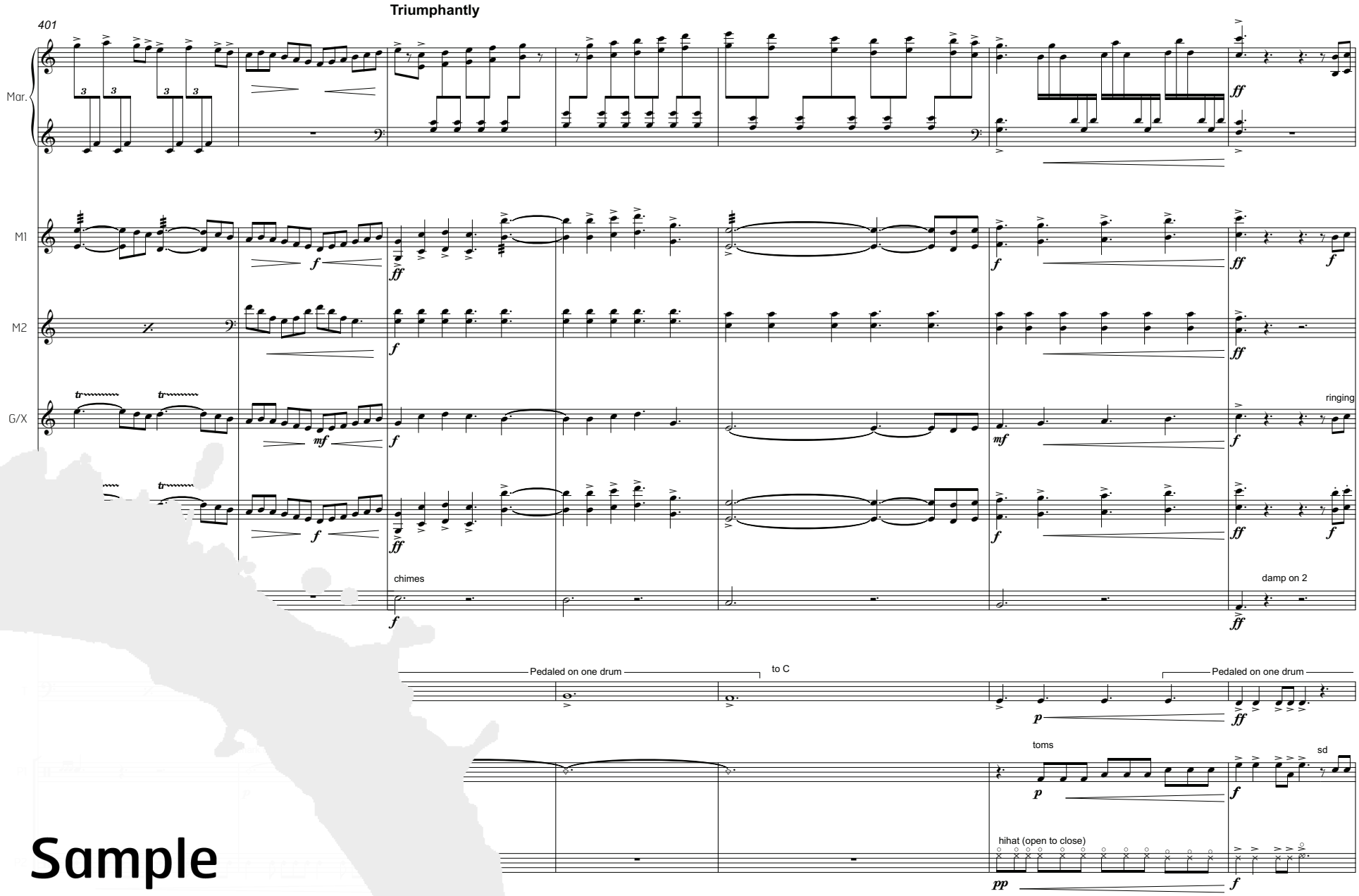

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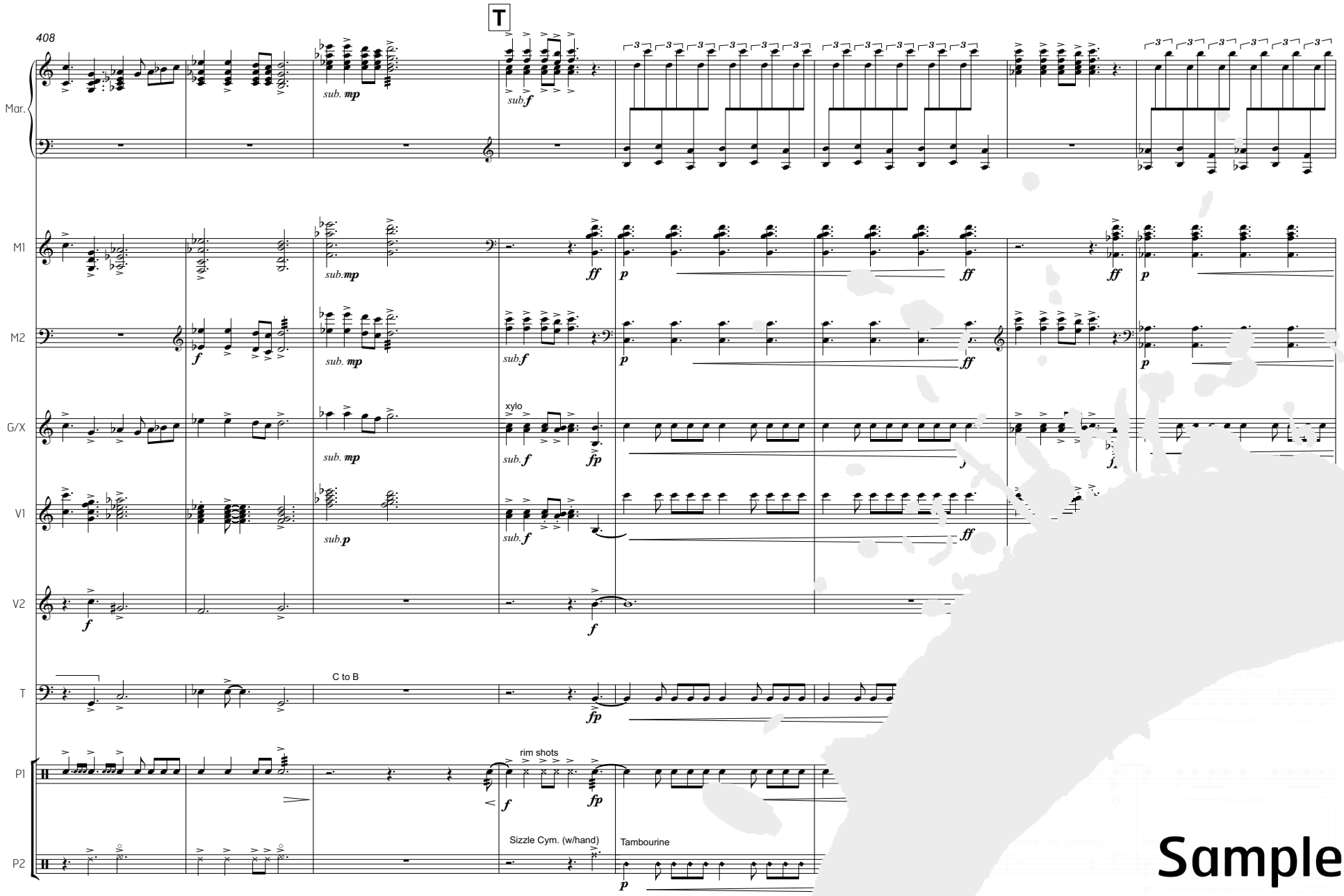

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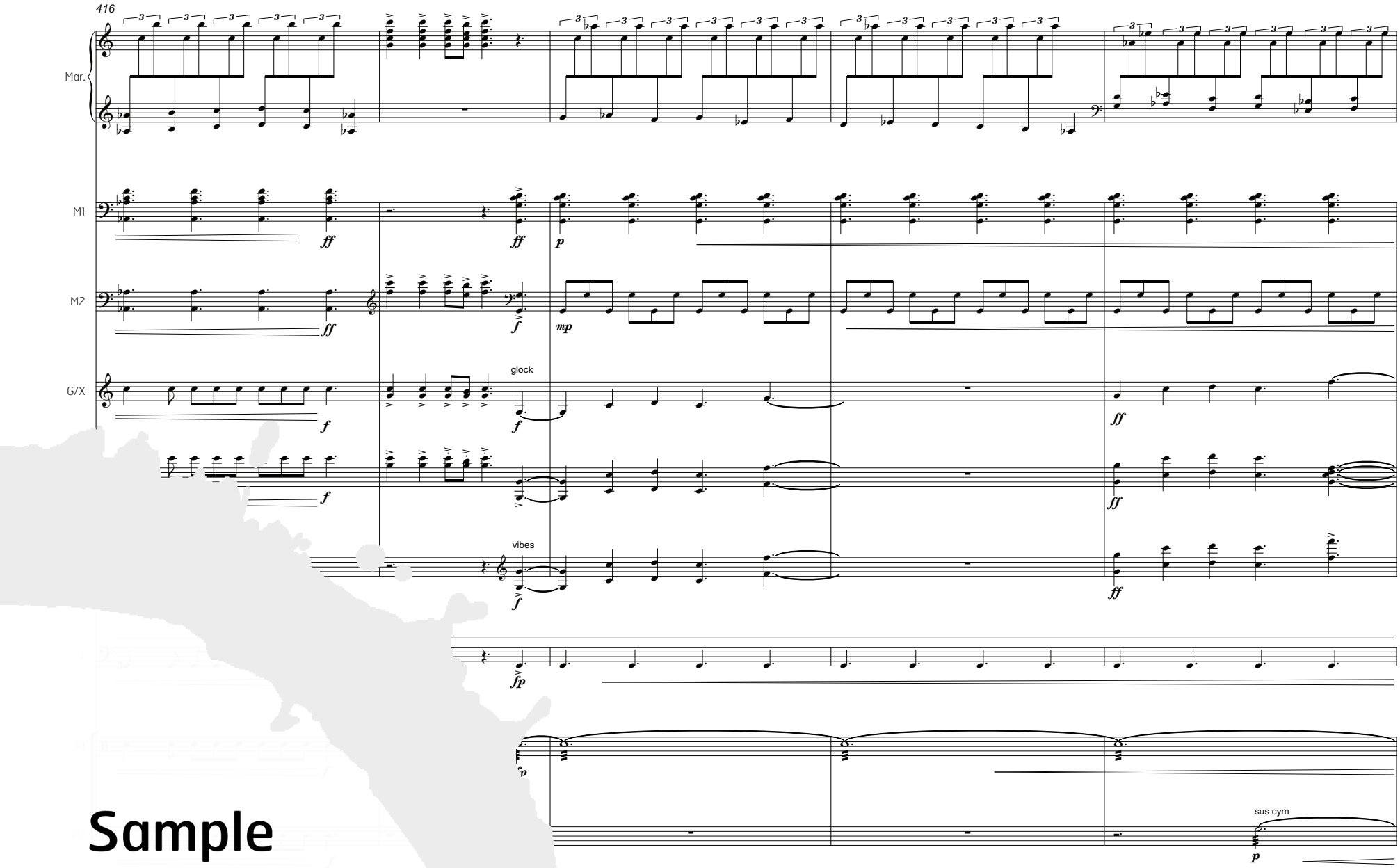

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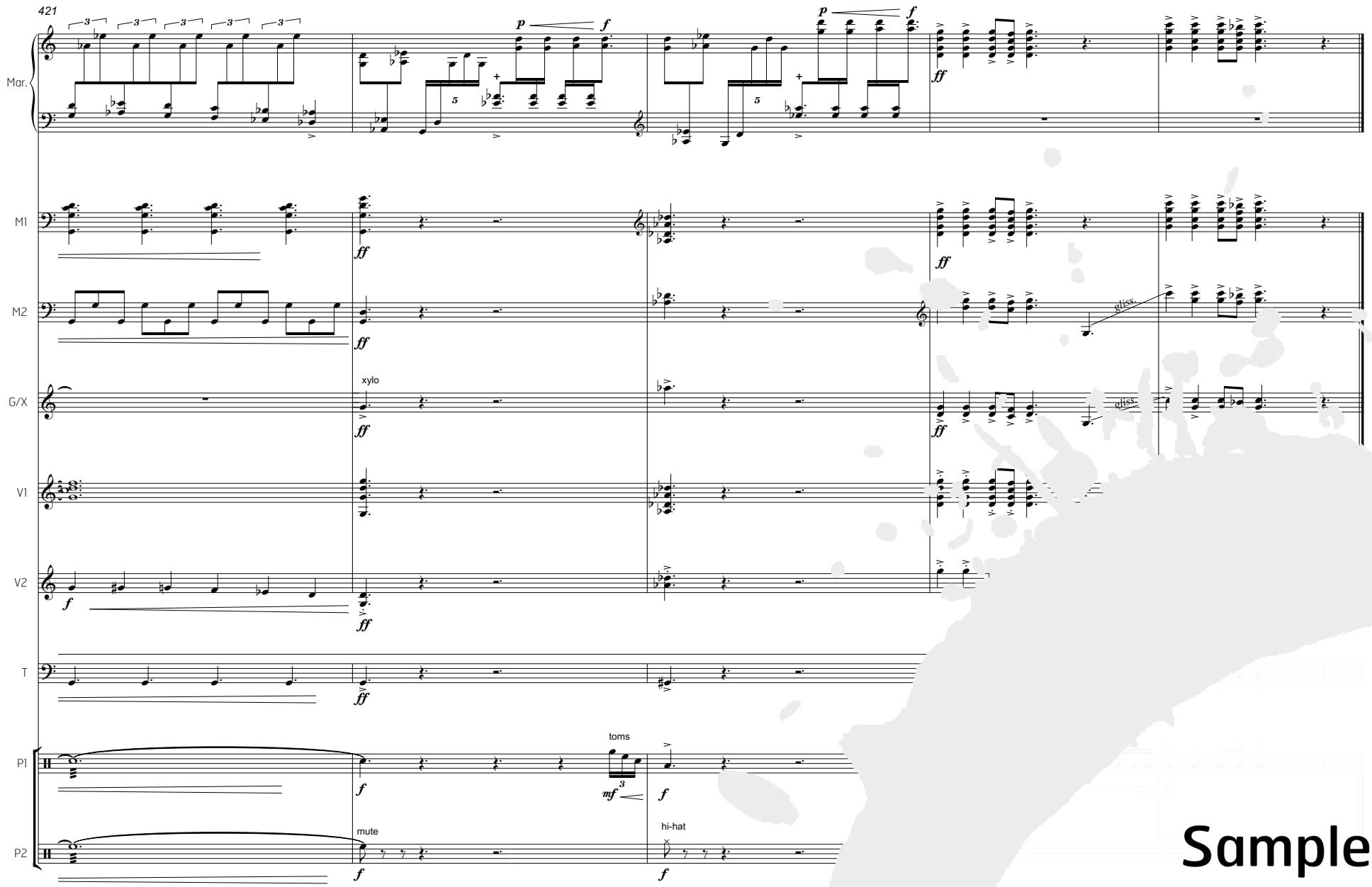

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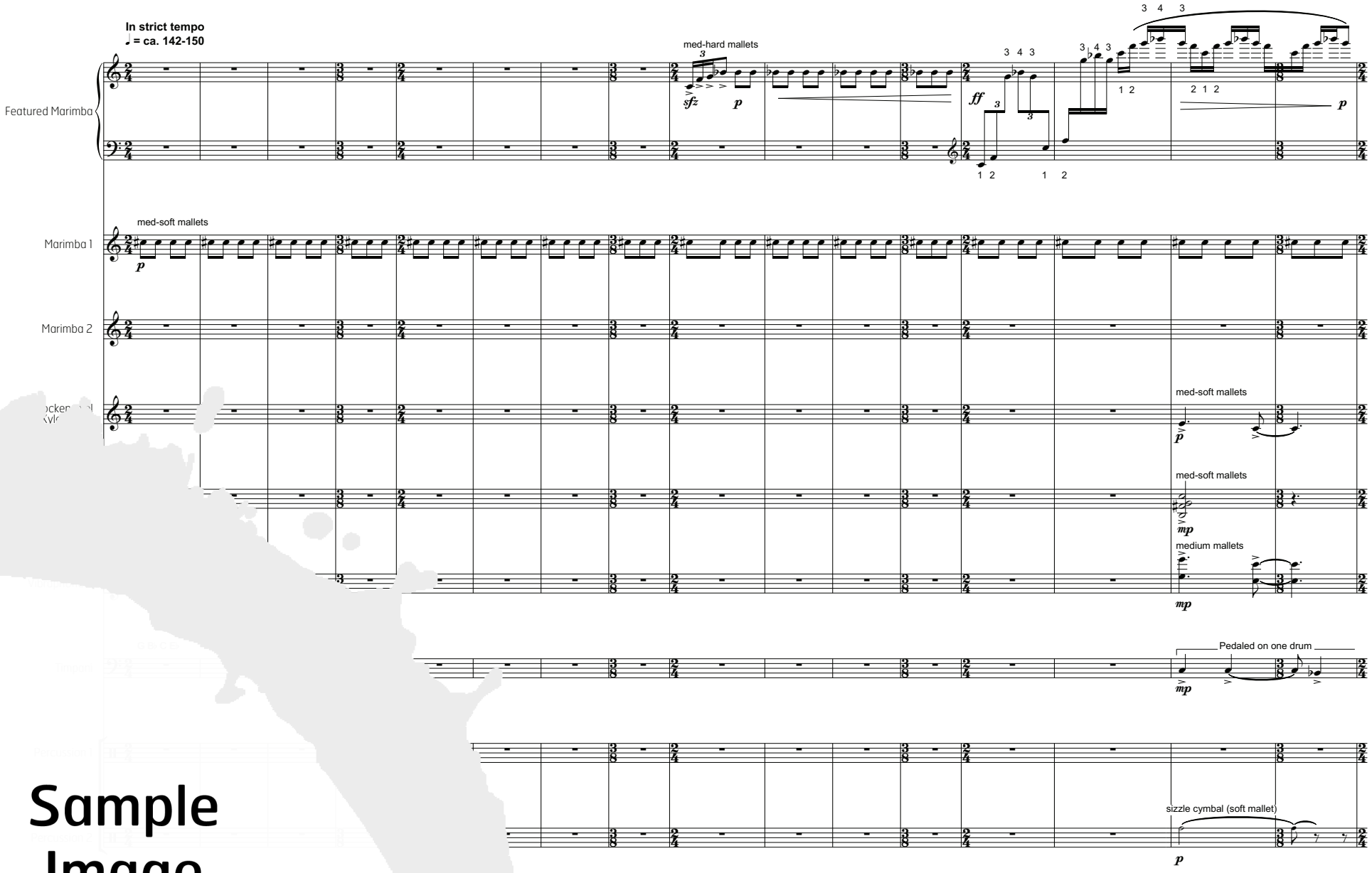
Level: Med-Advanced
Approx. playing time: 4'40"

Commissioned by Bloomsburg University, Bloomsburg, PA (Dr. Gifford Howarth, director) and the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, Singapore (Jonathan Fox, director).

Meanwhile in a Parallel Universe Redux (short version)

for marimba and percussion ensemble

Jim Casella



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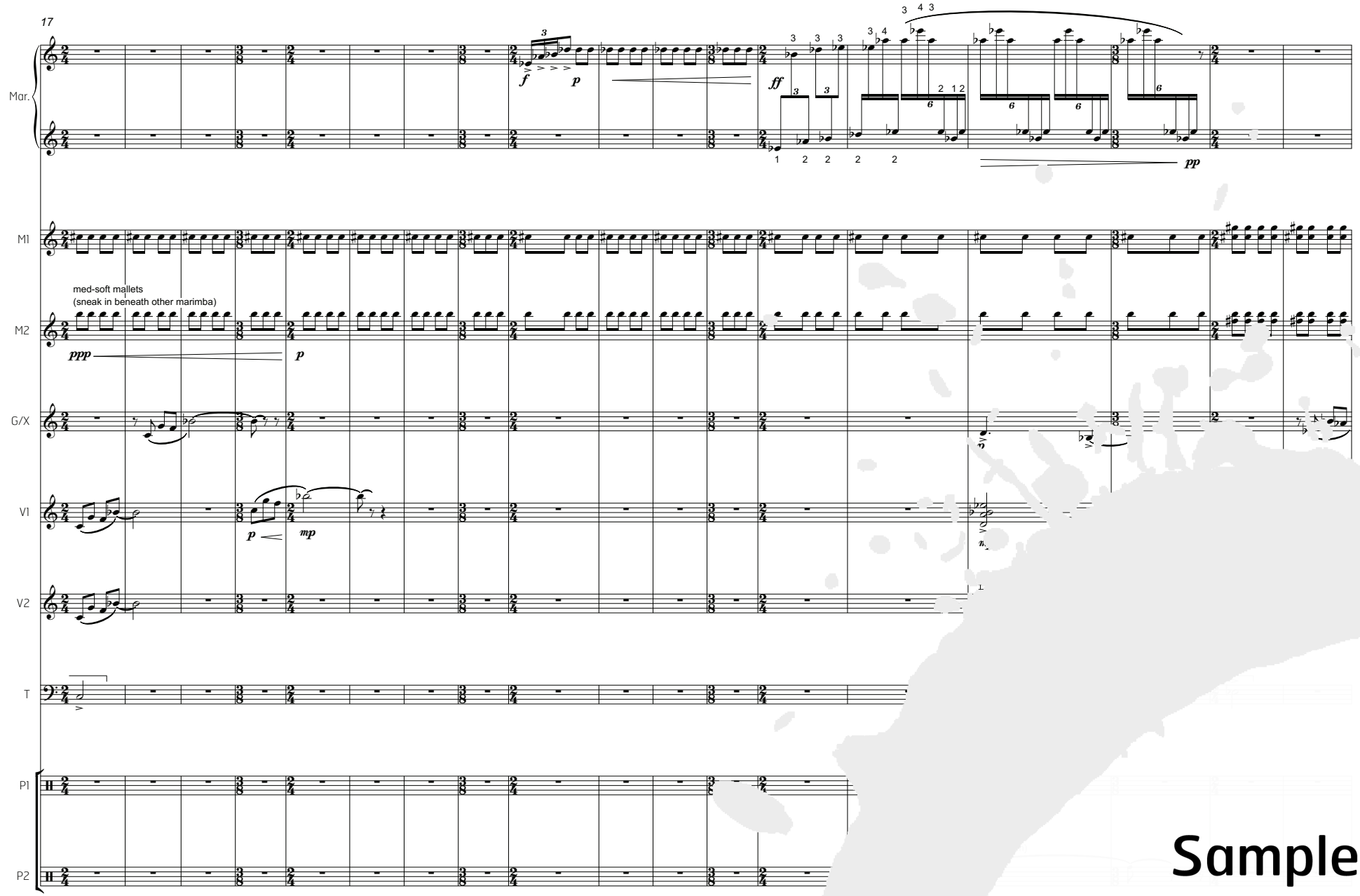

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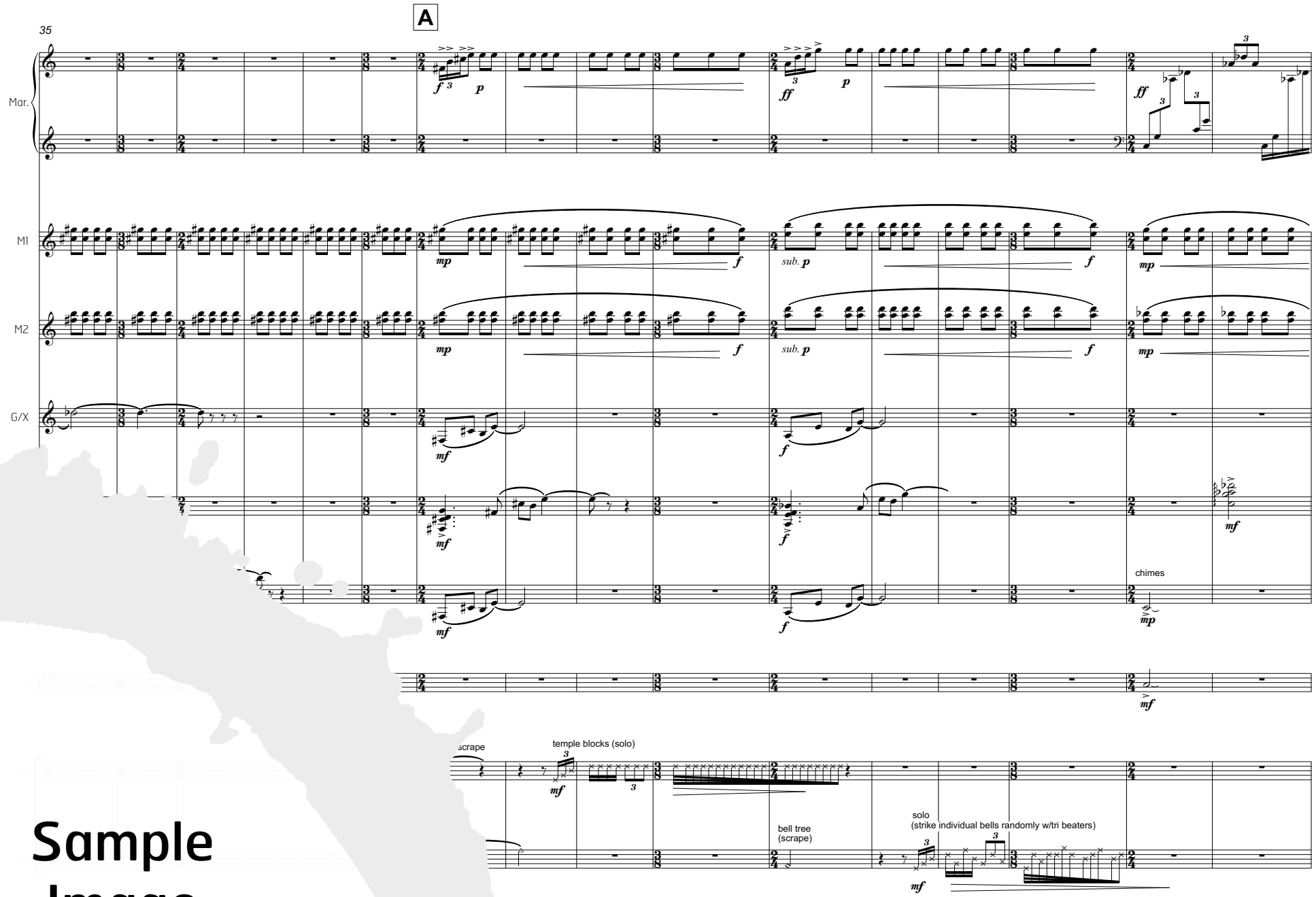

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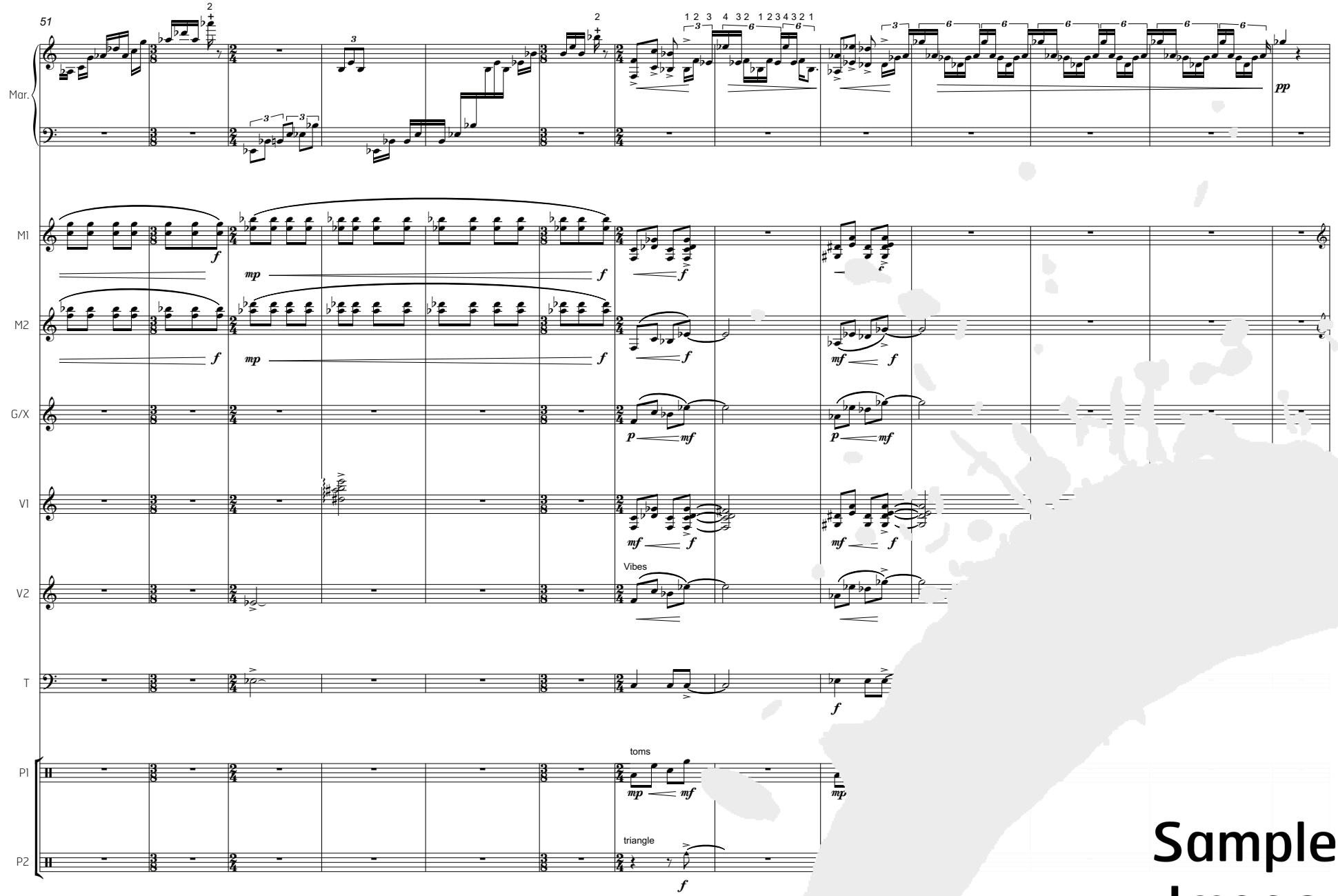

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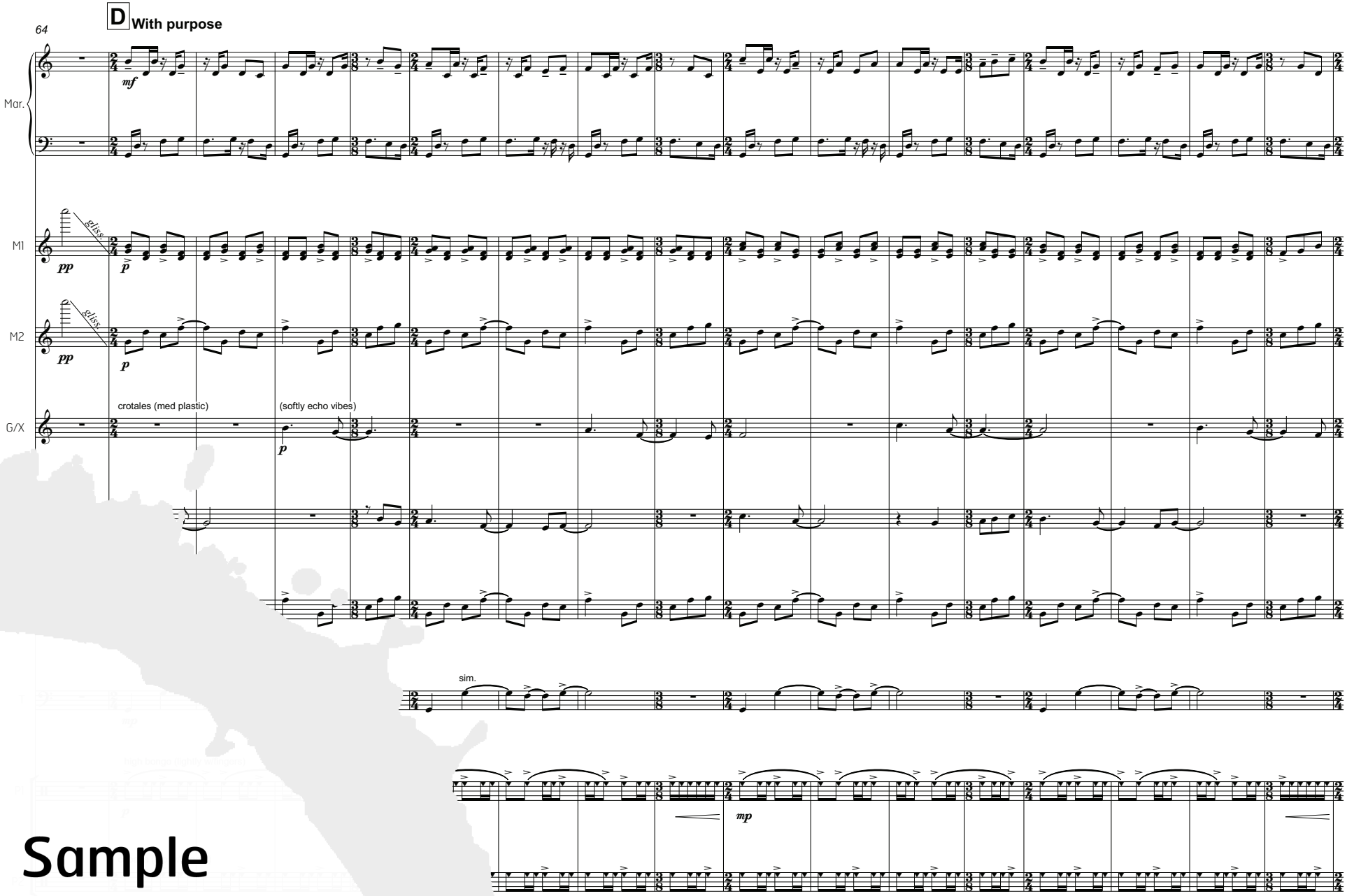
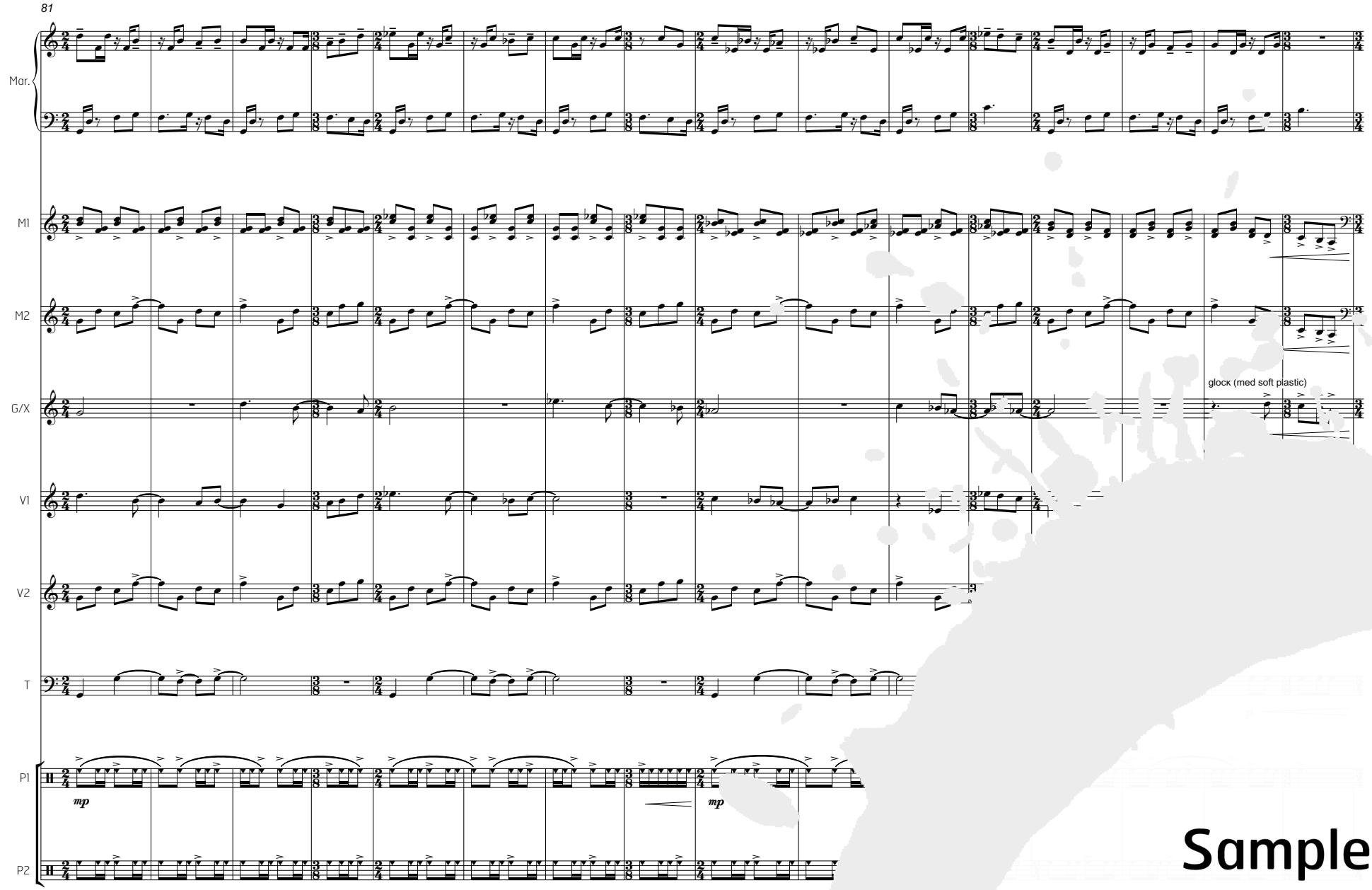


Sample Image

Meanwhile in a Parallel Universe Redux – Casella
(short version)



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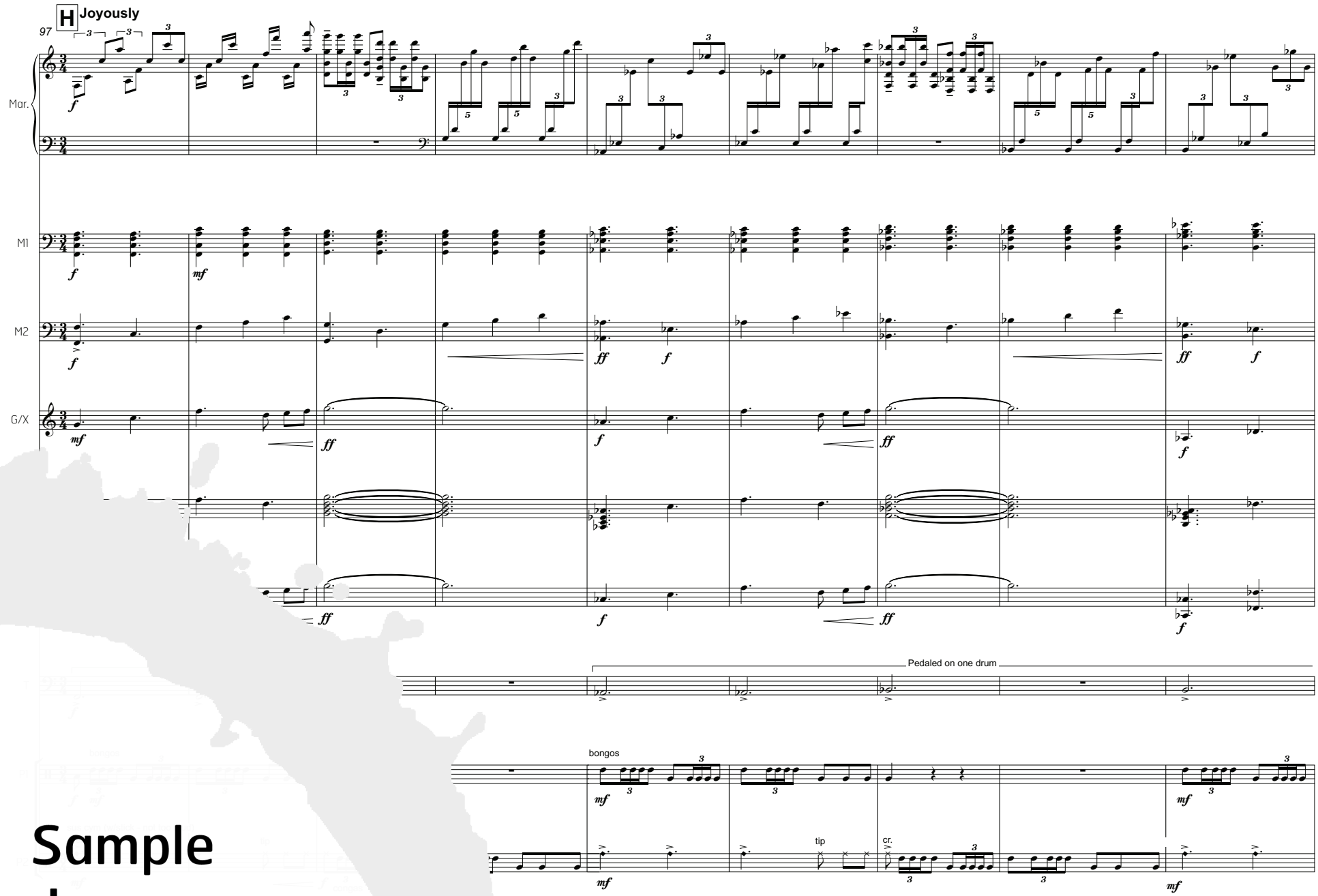

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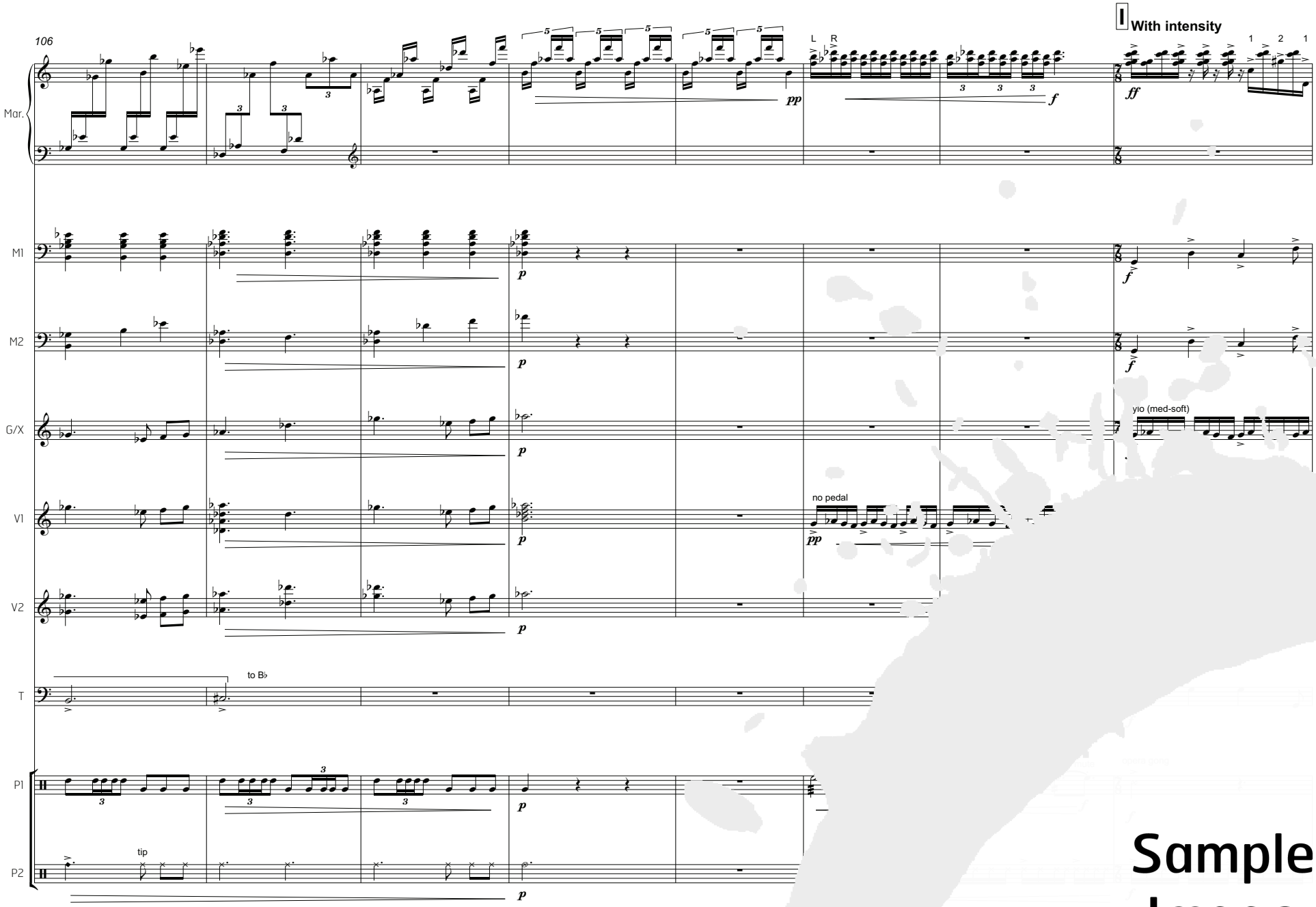

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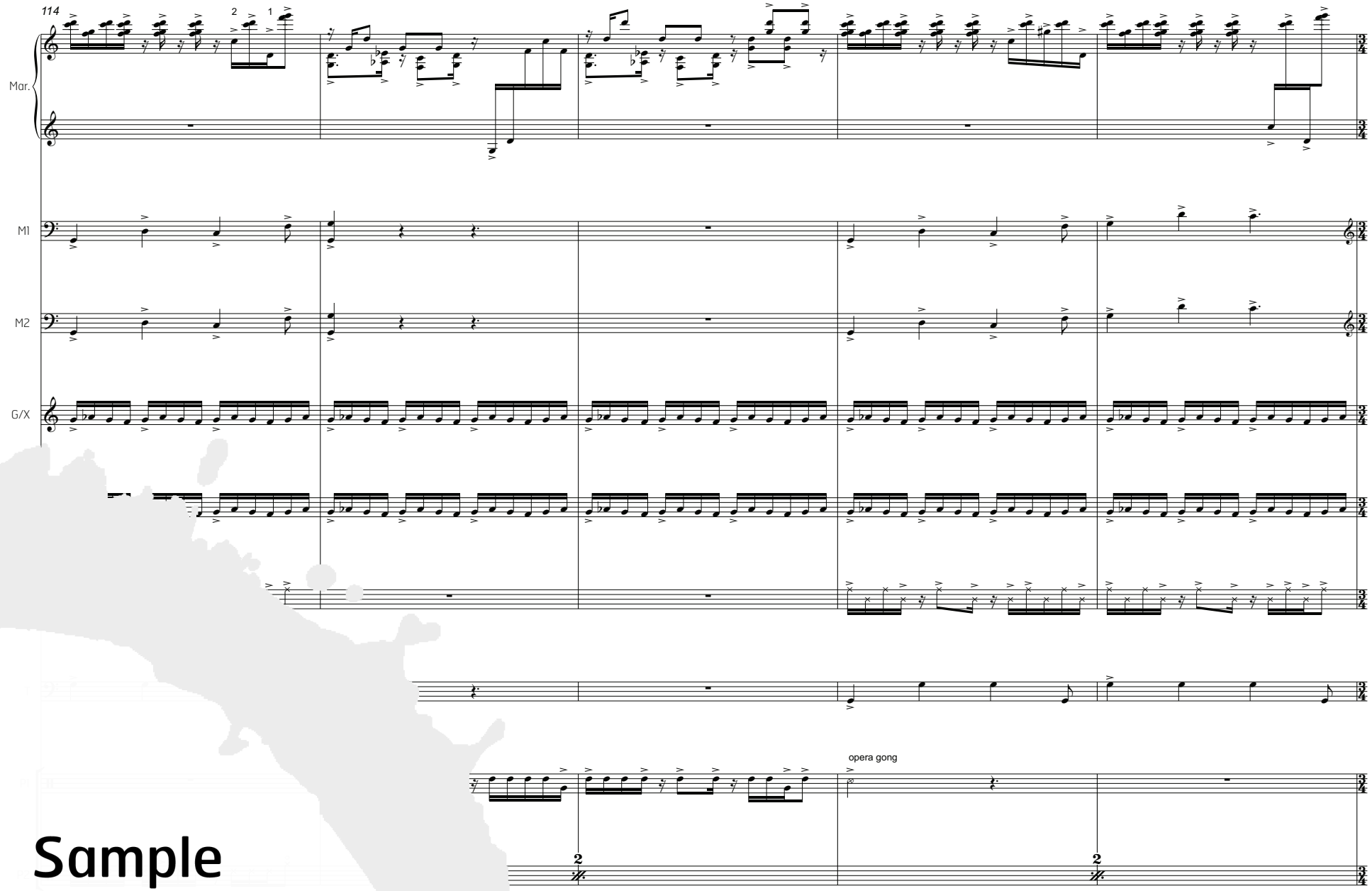

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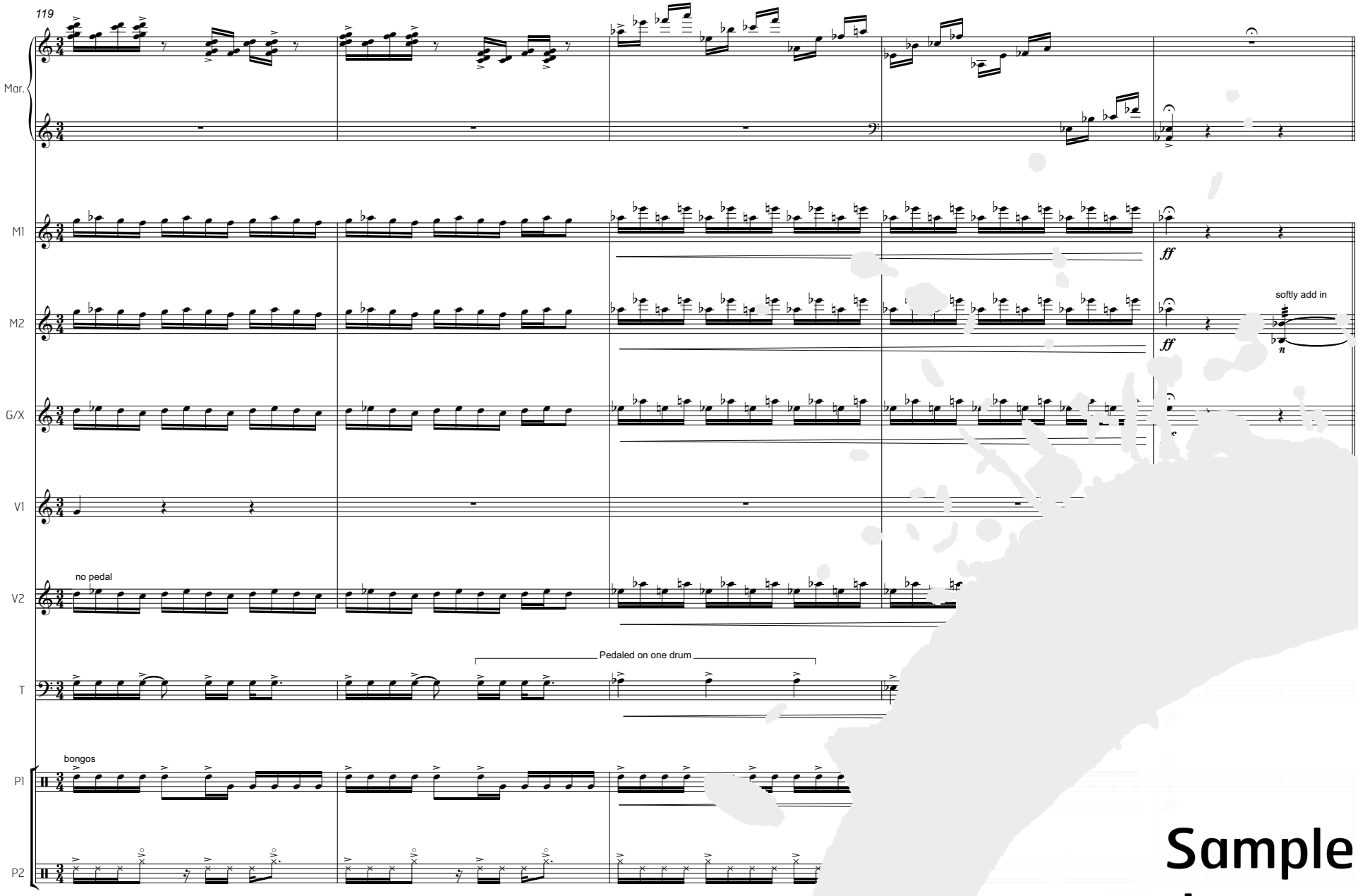
(short version)



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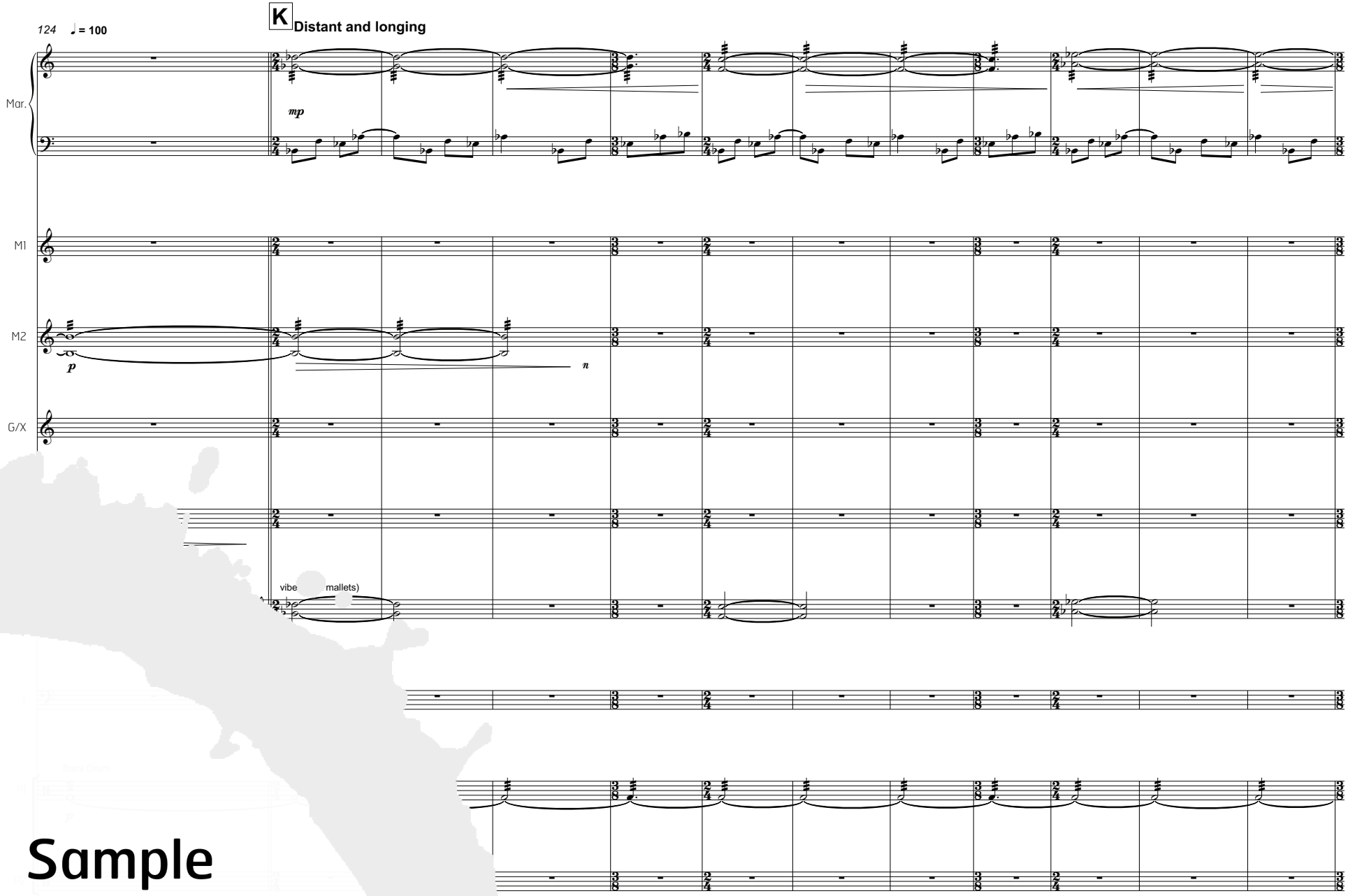

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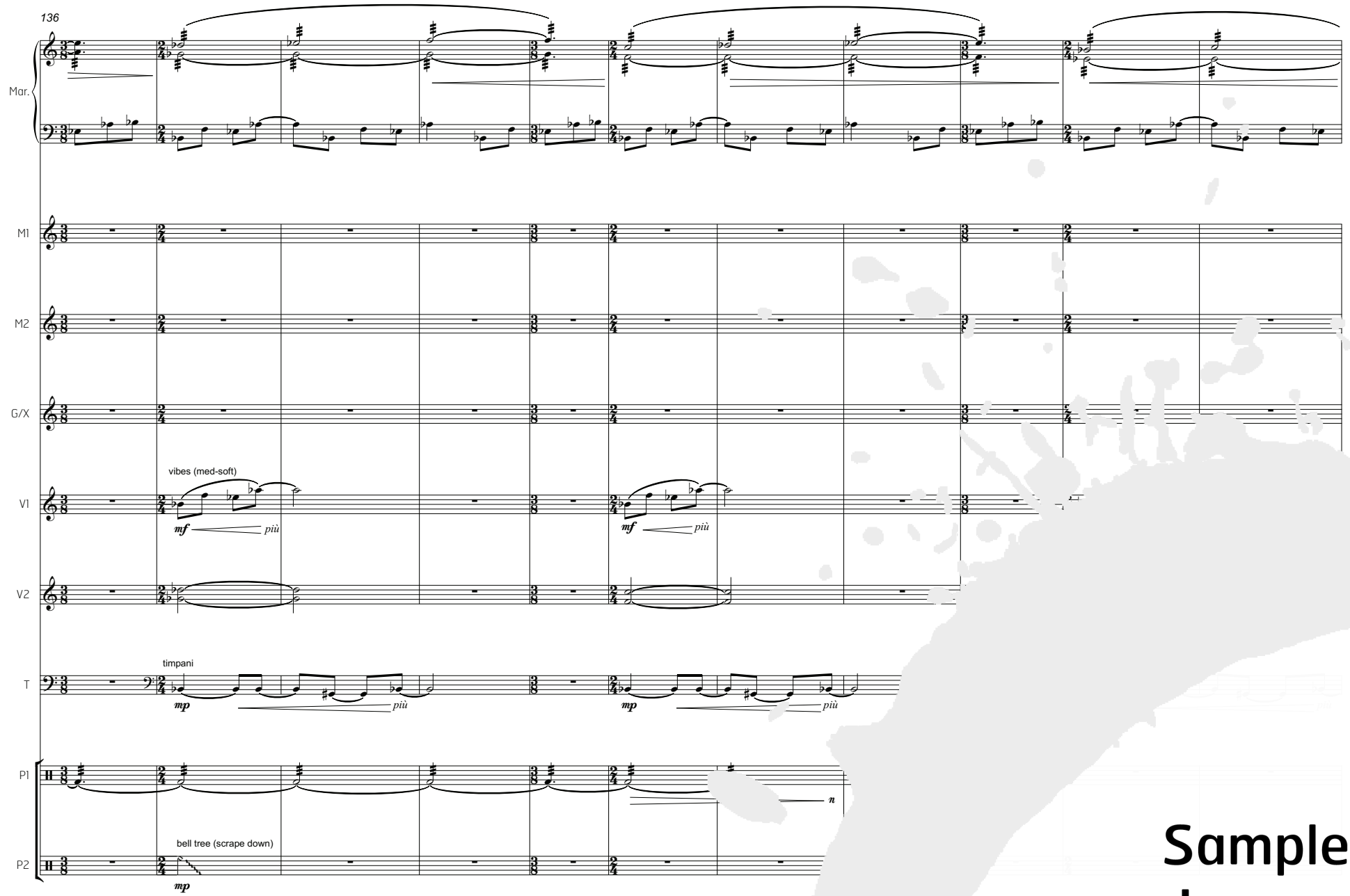

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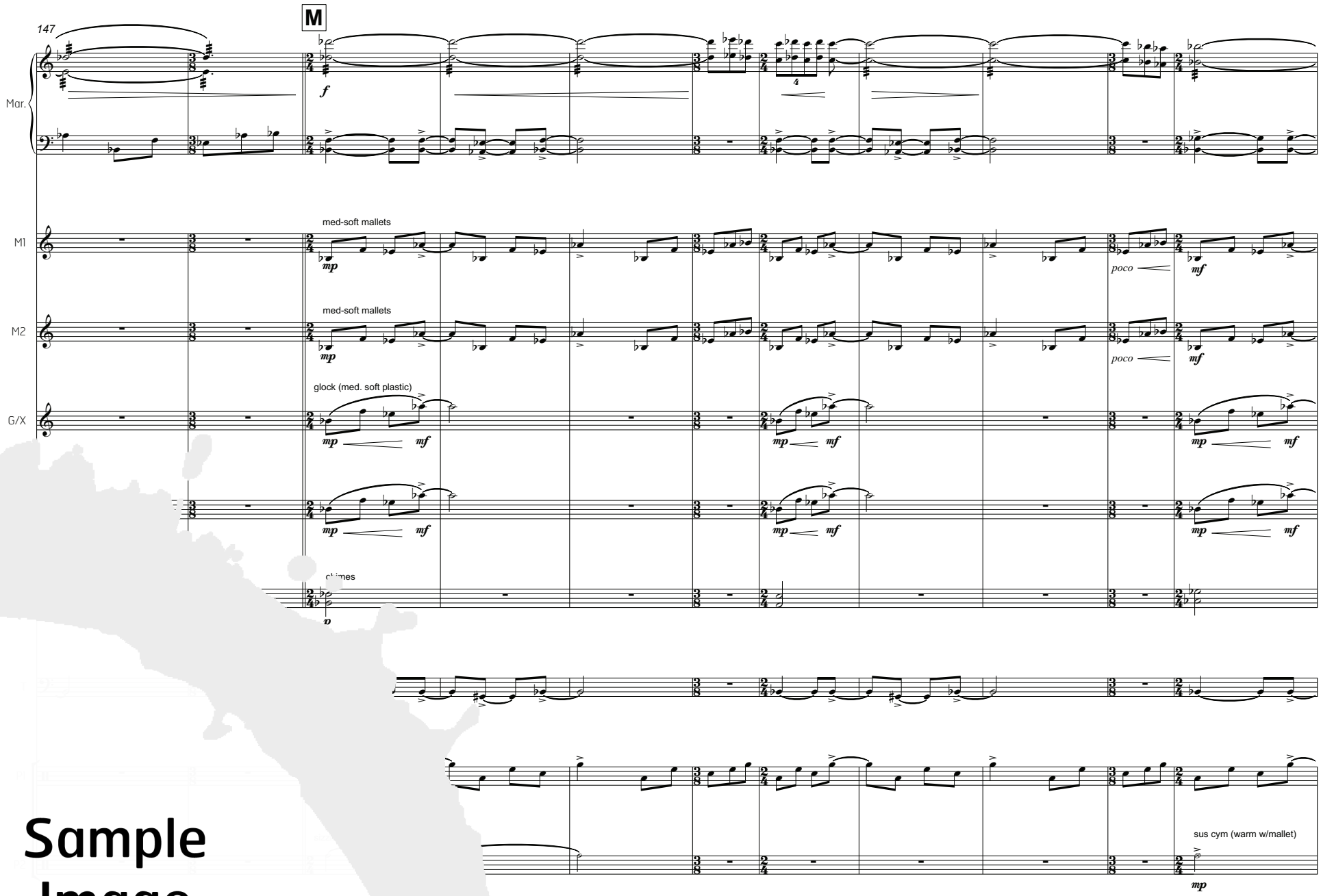

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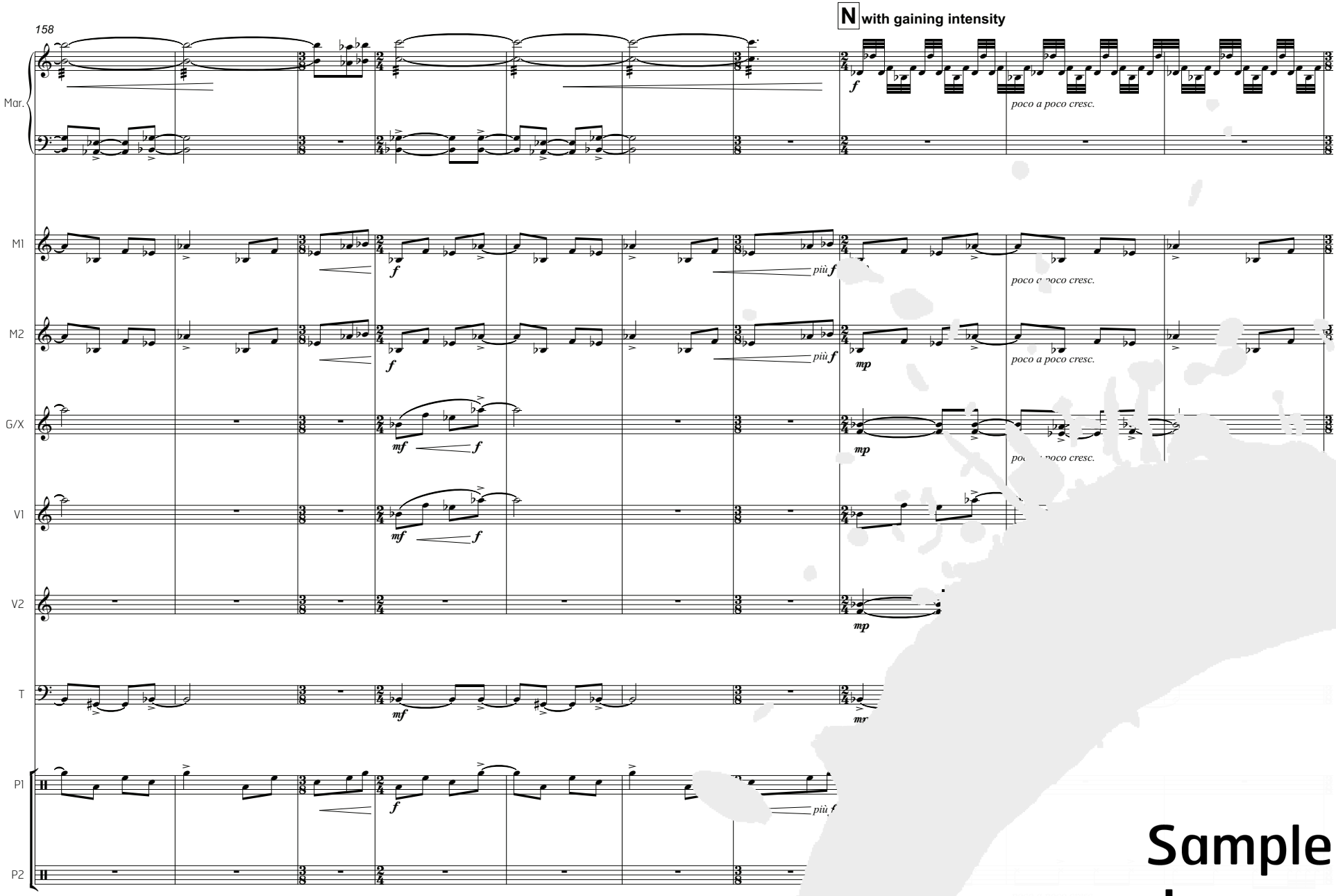

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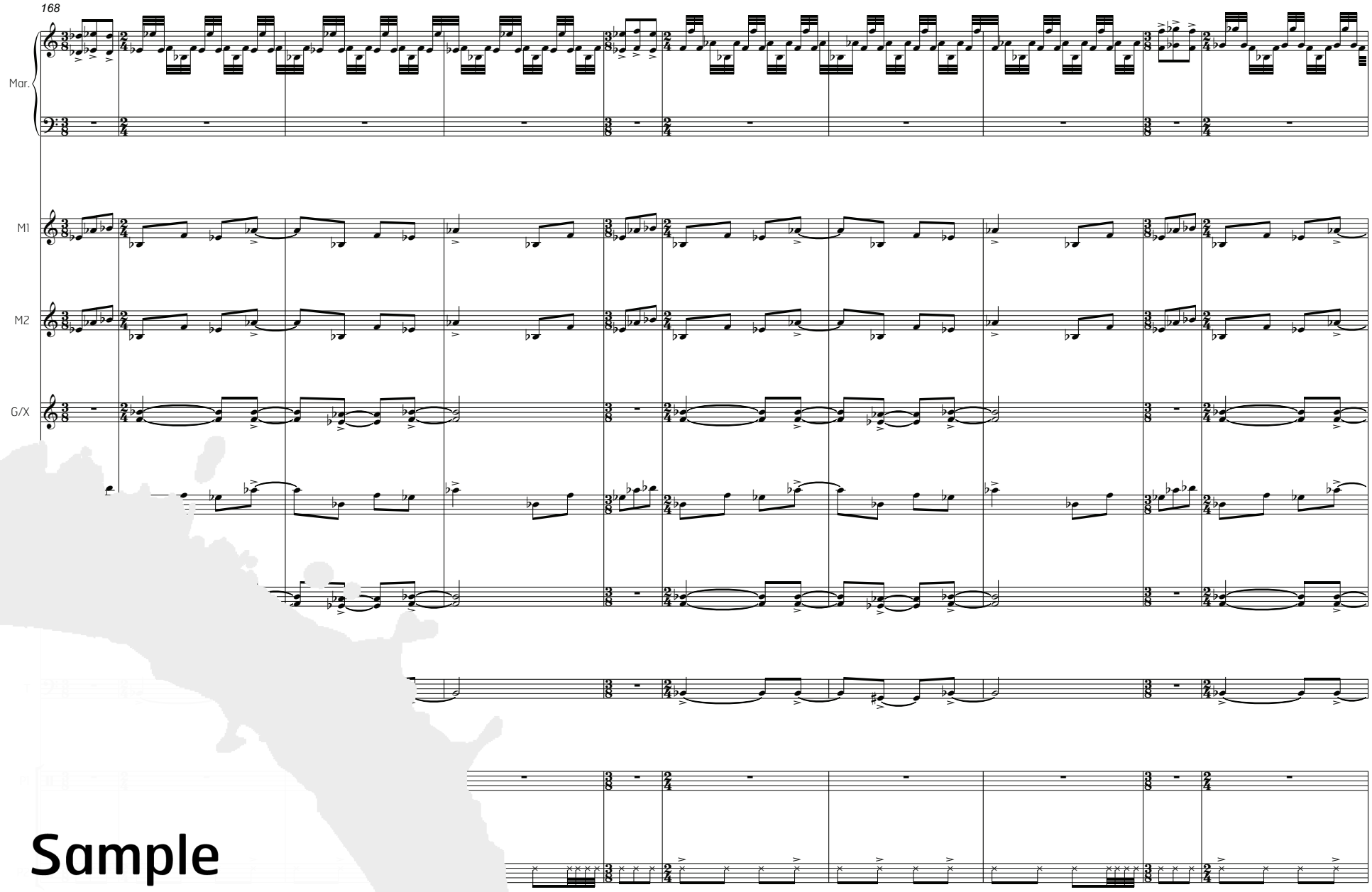

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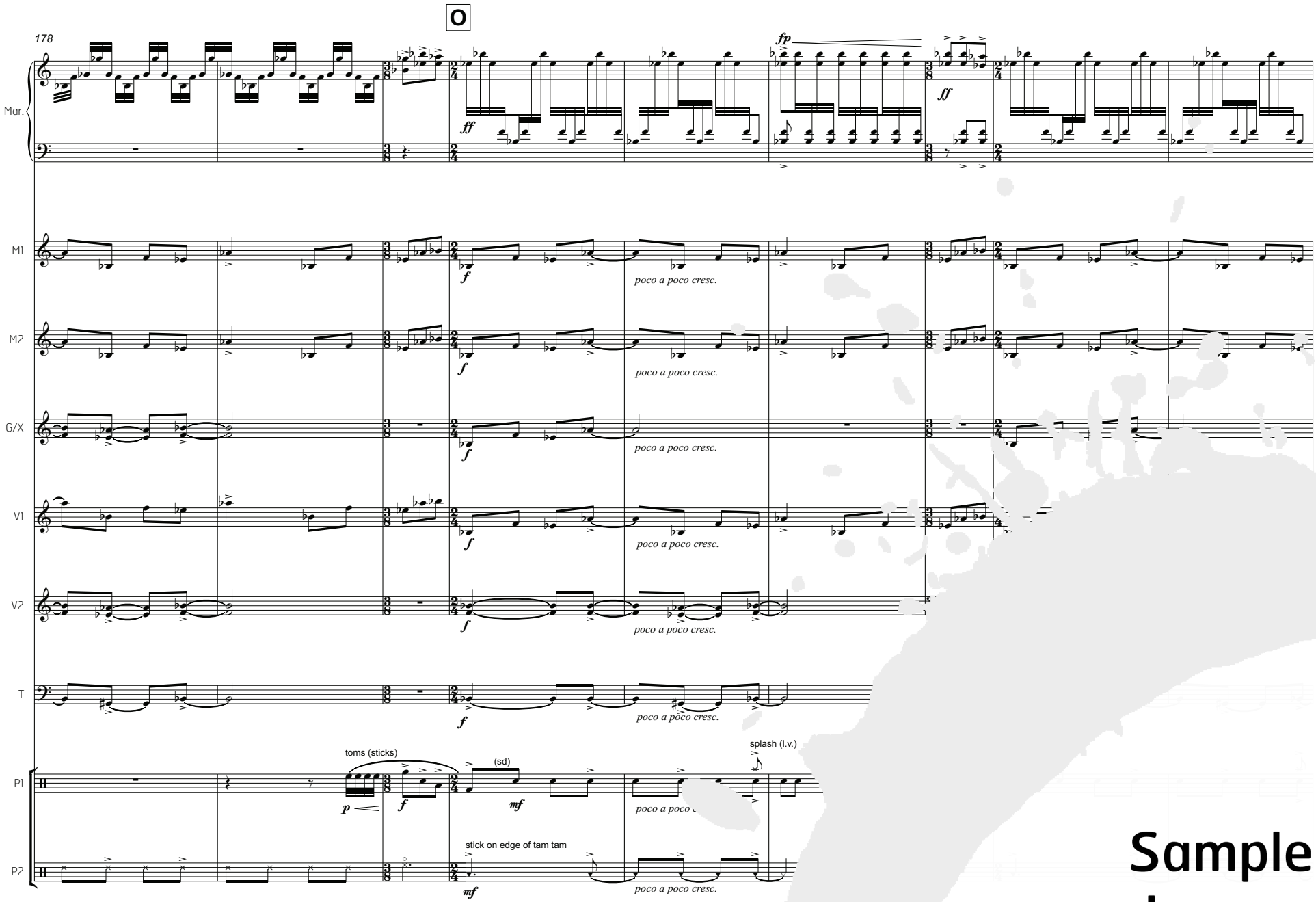
(short version)



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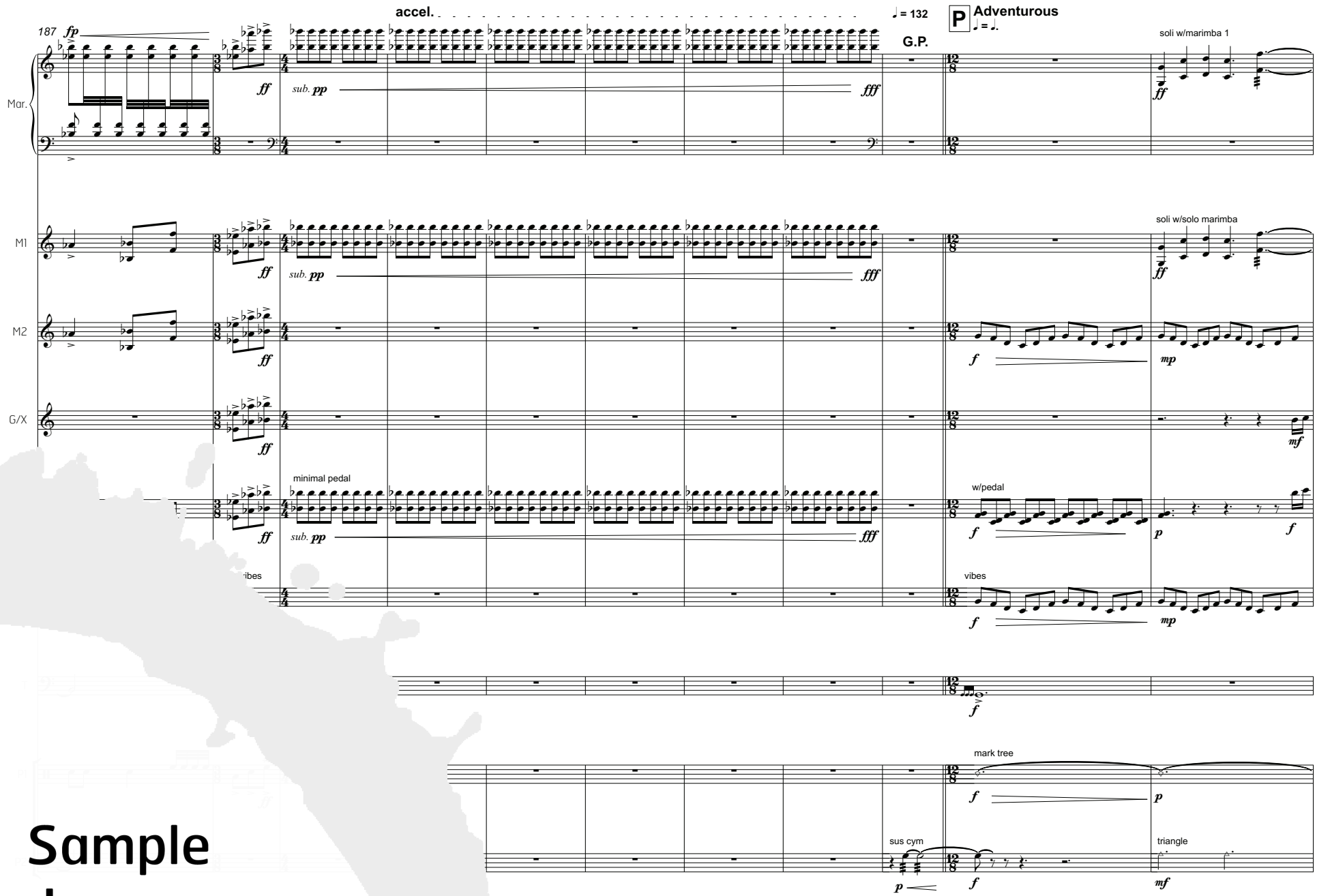

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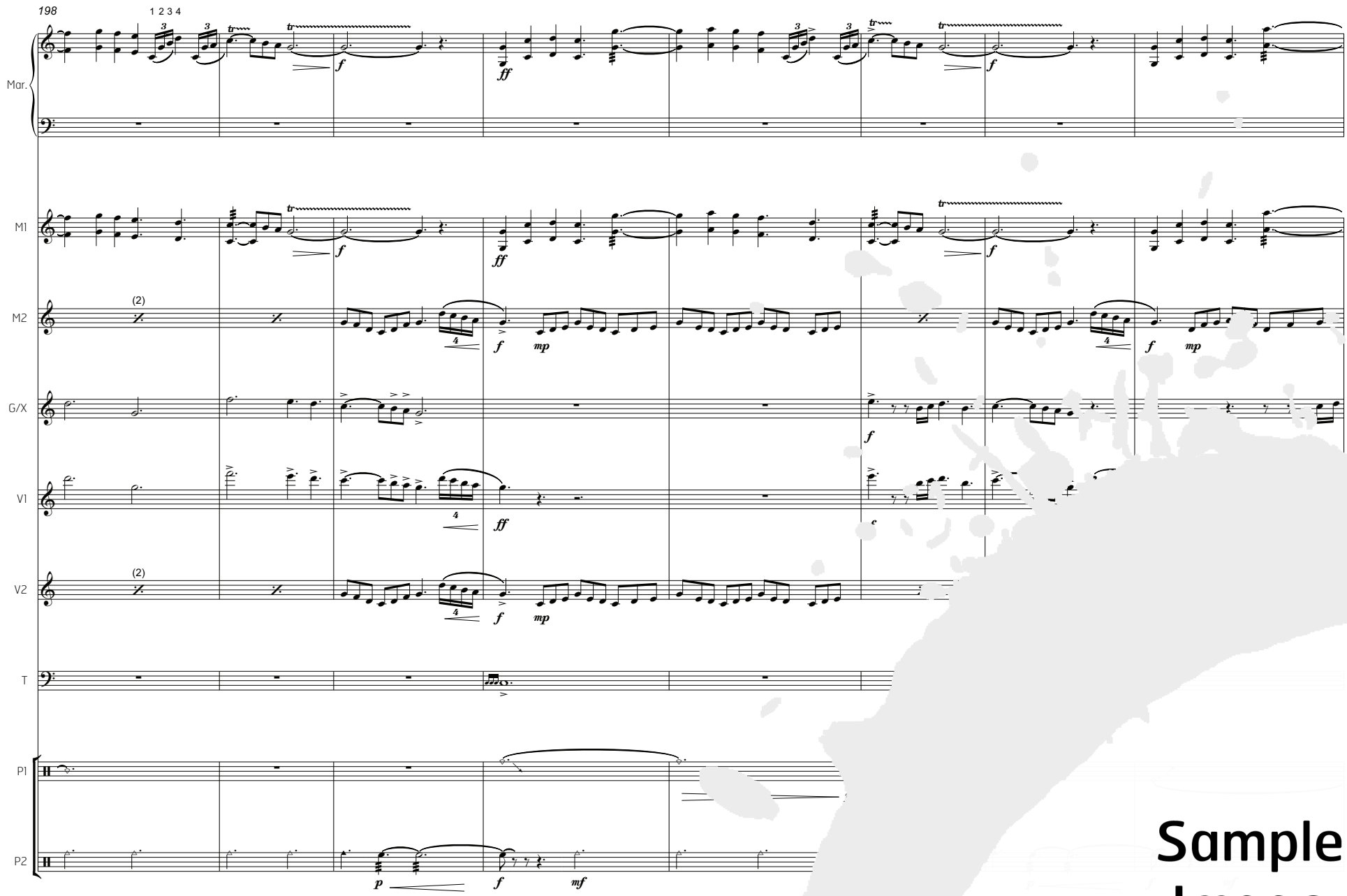

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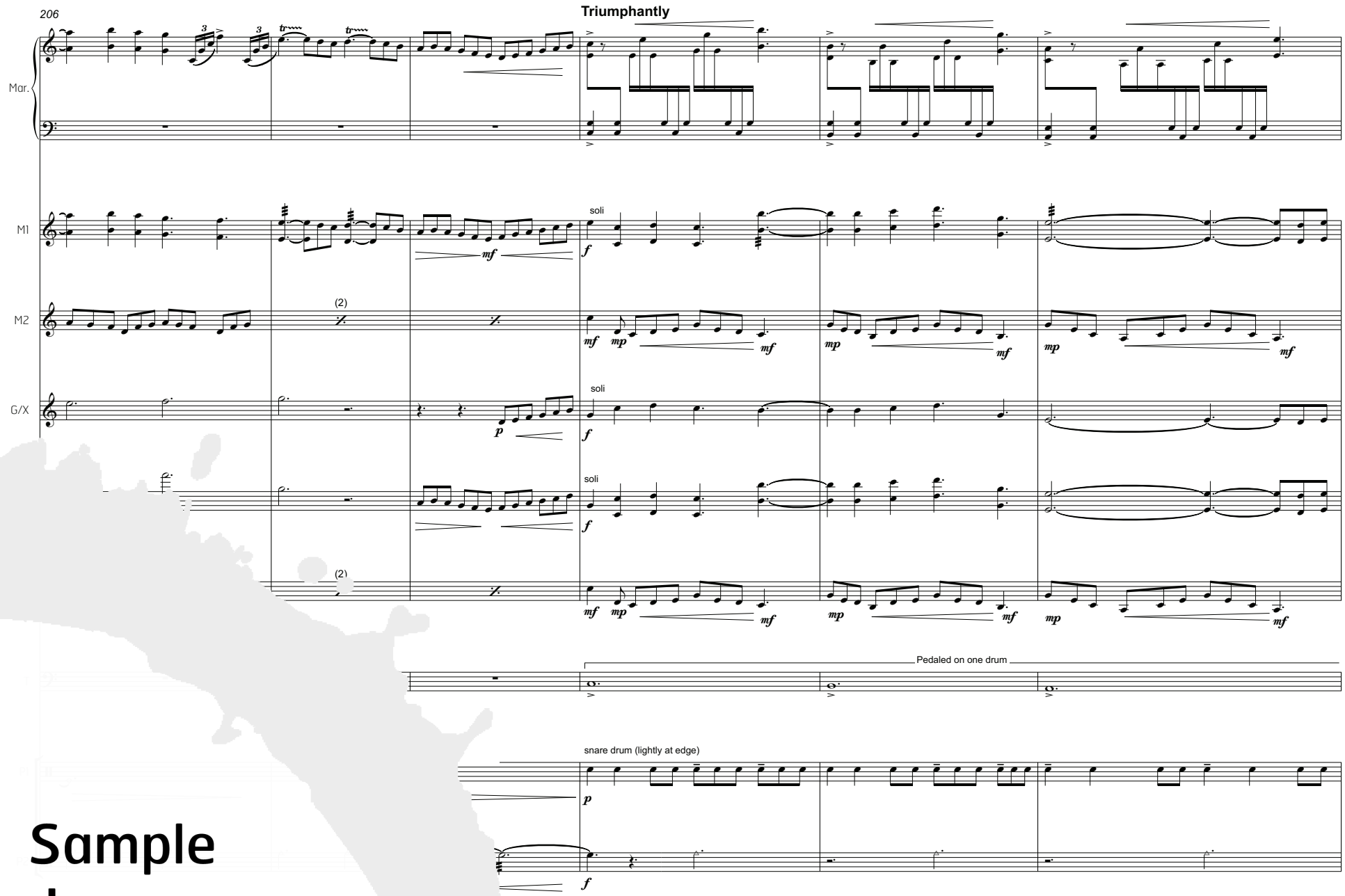

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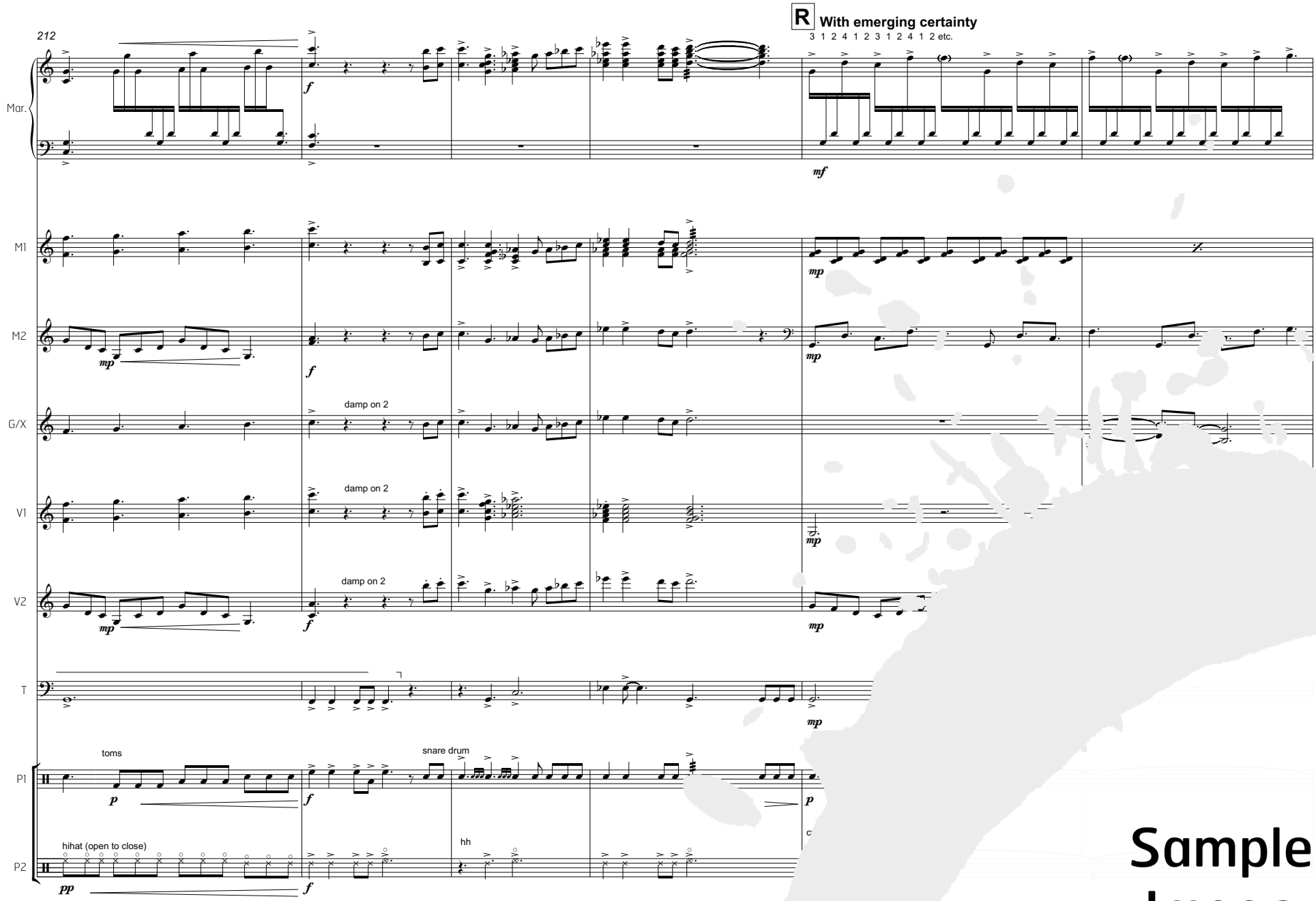

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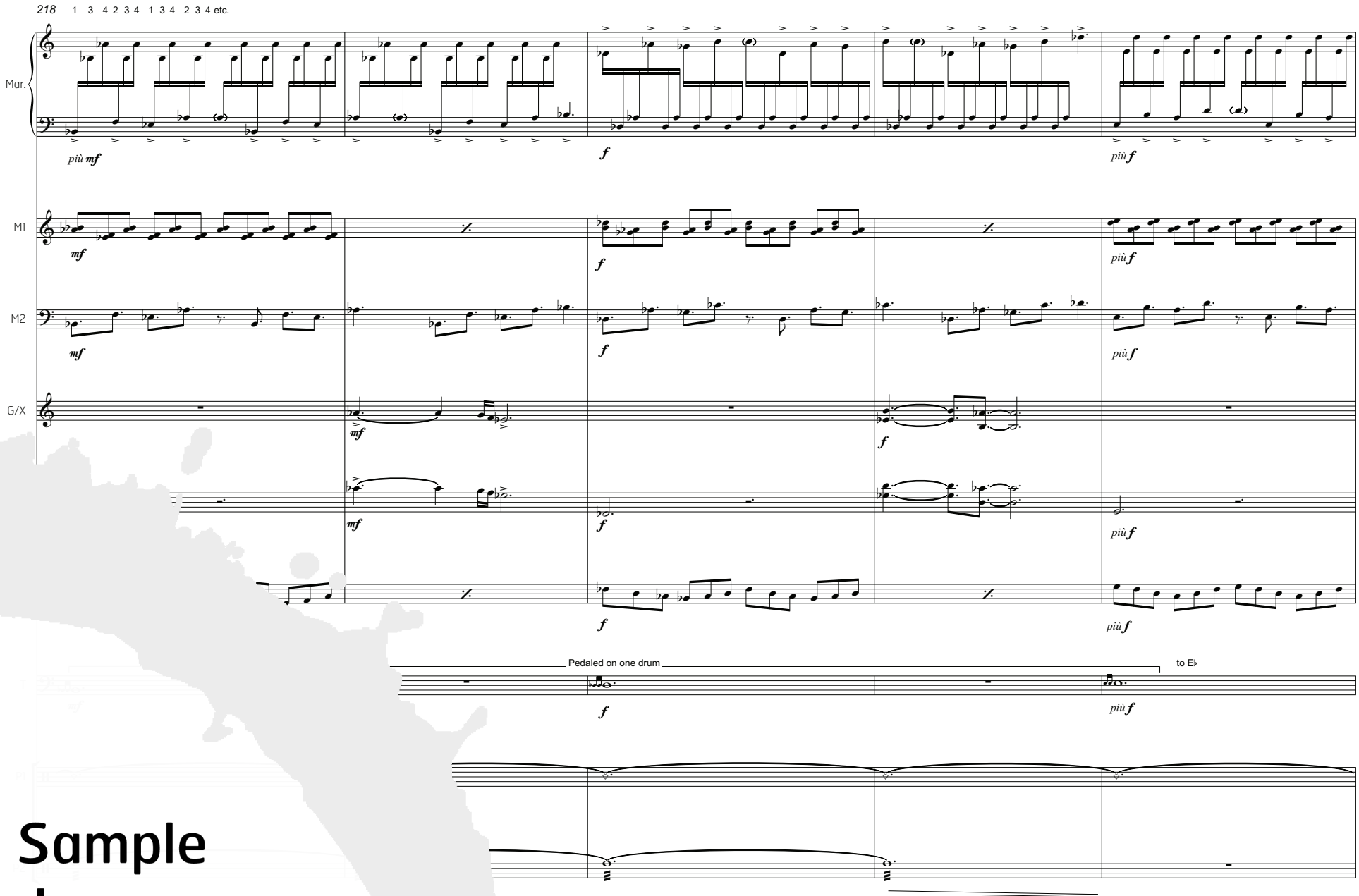

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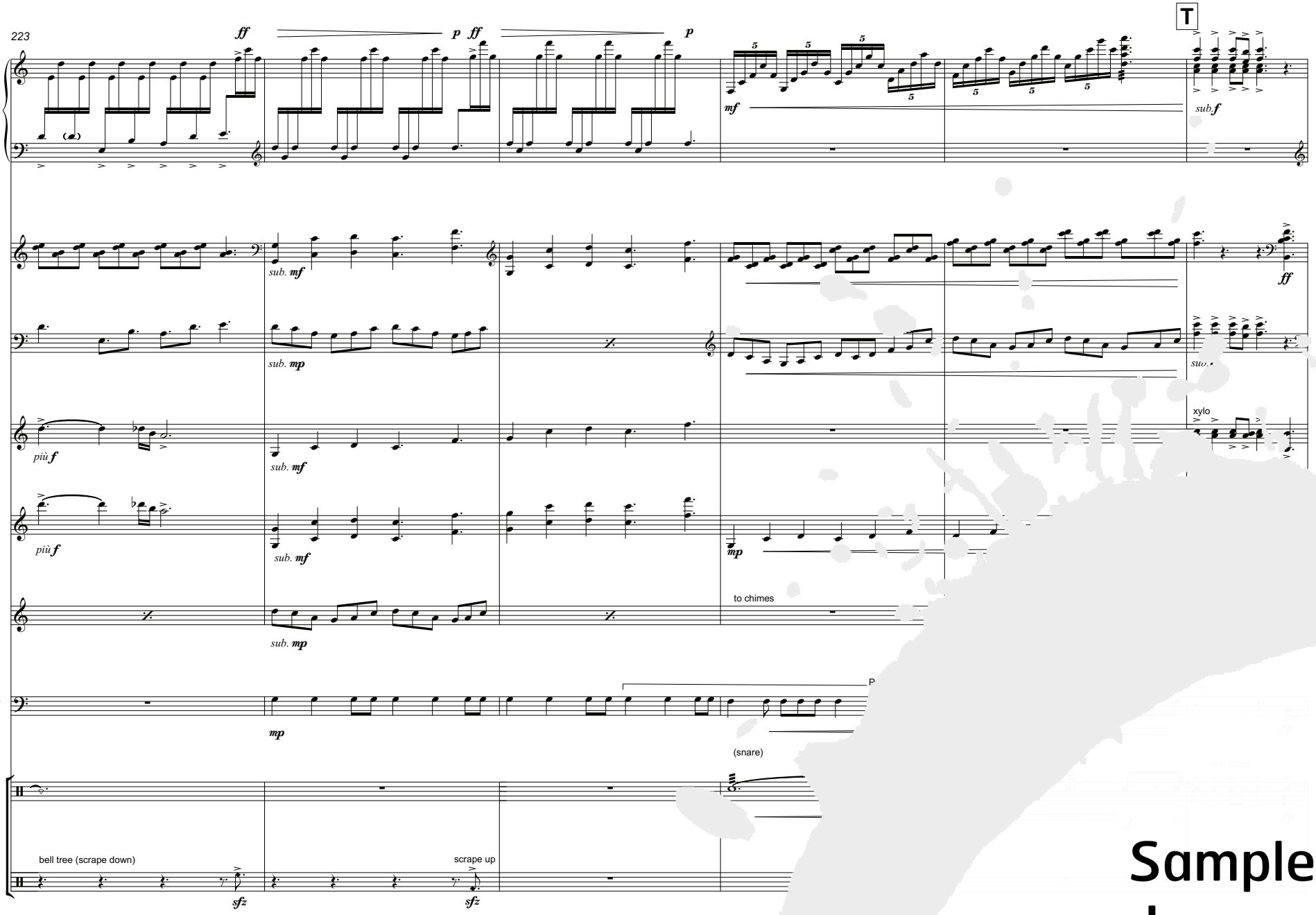

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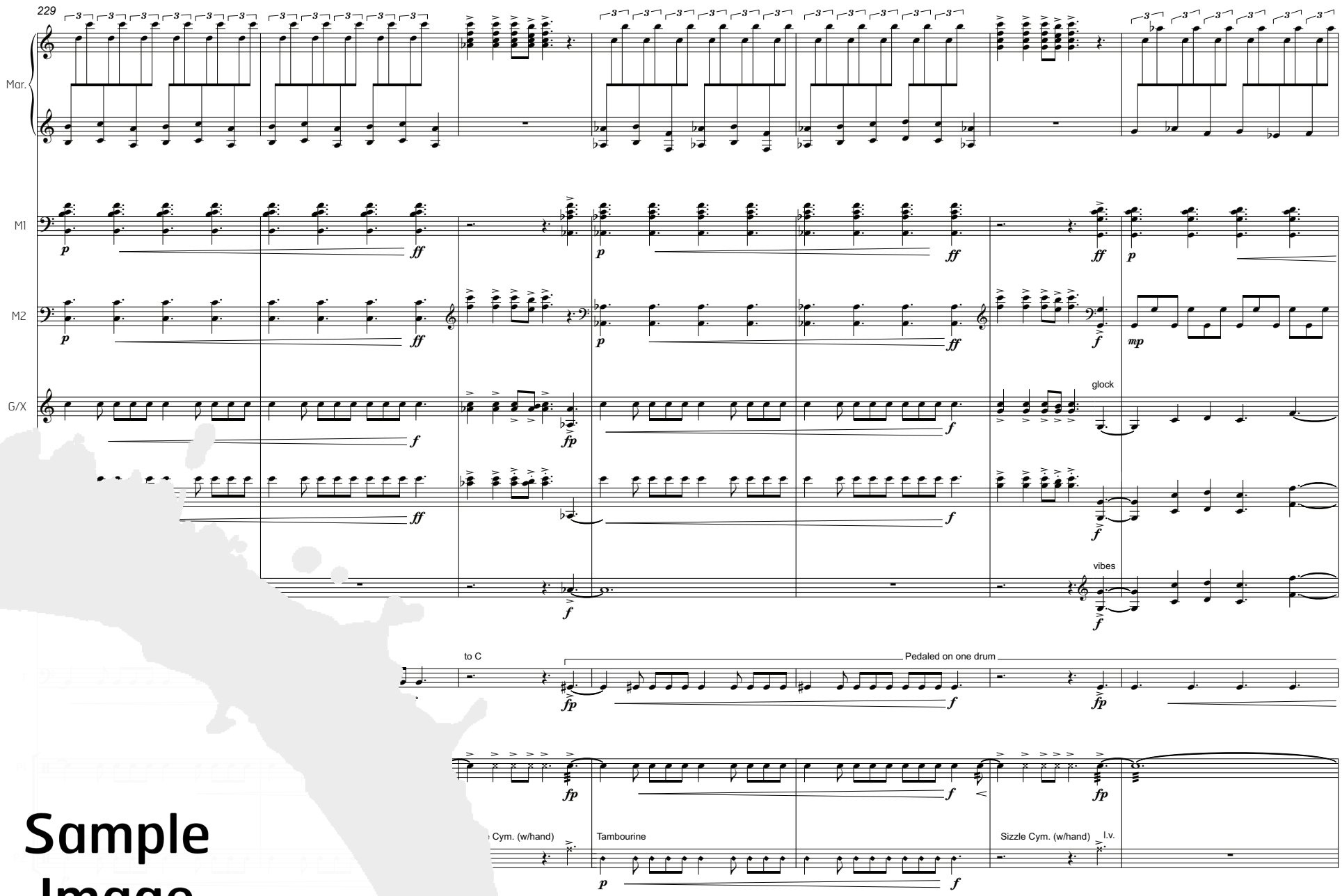

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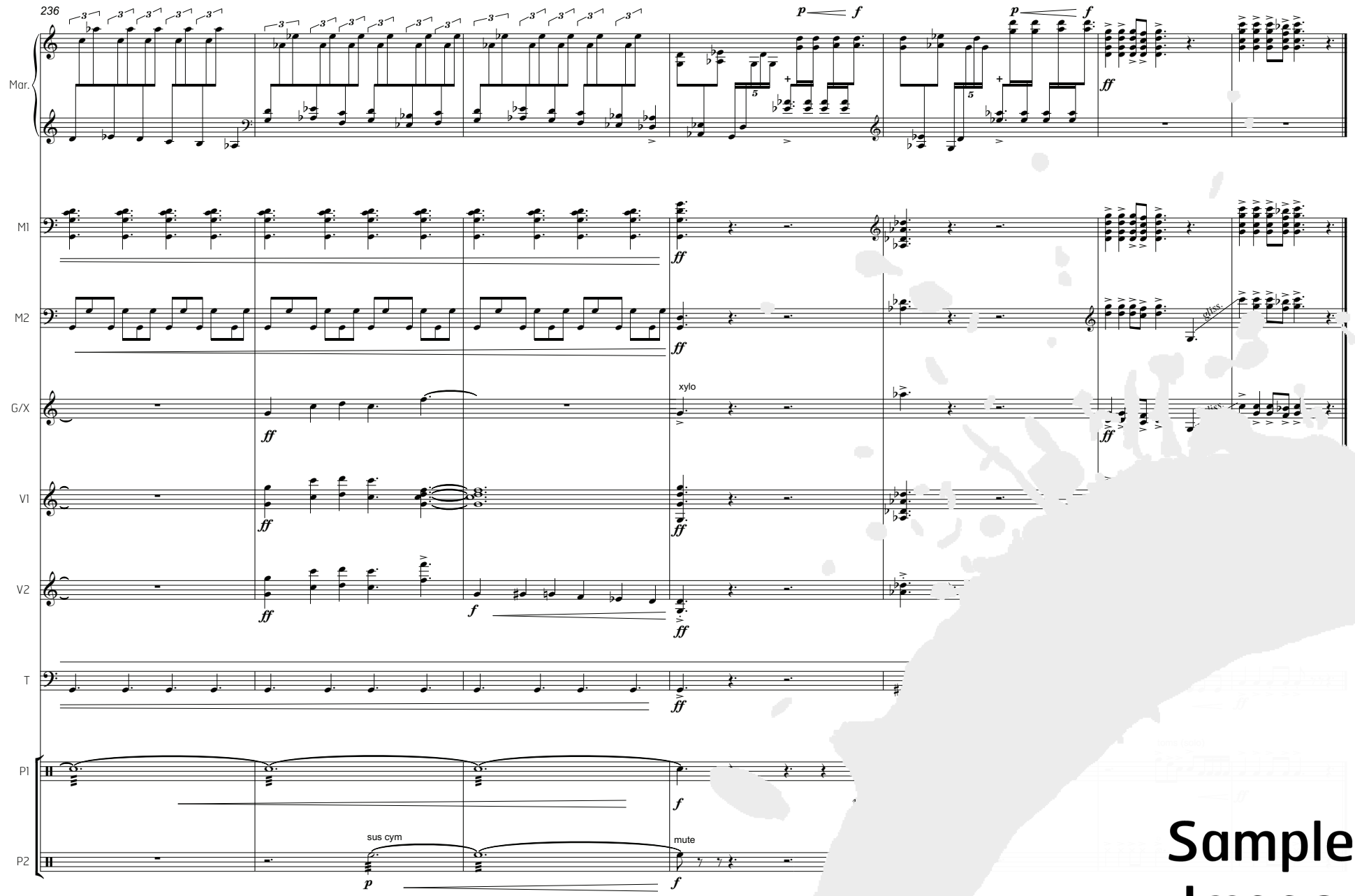

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