Mark Berry

Mare Tranquillitatis

for amplified steelpan, crotales, digital delay and pitch shifter

creativity in percussion™

TSPCS-10

Program Notes

Mare Tranquillitatis *(Sea of Tranquility)* is one of the nineteen major lunar maria. A large basin on the northern hemisphere of the moon, it is where humans first set foot. The piece loosely depicts a journey to this place, either physically or in one's imagination.

For the advanced musician in recital, *Mare Tranquillitatis* explores rhythmic and harmonic counterpoint with the player's own echo. The effects are easily accessible. Any effects unit, synthesizer workstation, or even guitar pedal effects could be used to perform the piece. The digital delay creates a rhythmic echo; the pitch shifter regenerates each note two octaves lower, sounding very much like a bass steelpan. To achieve the best sound, quality microphones, mixer board, and powered speakers should be used. Also, if crotales are unavailable, orchestra bells (glockenspiel) may be substituted.

Over ten minutes long, the piece is performed completely in real-time; there are no sequences or pre-recorded sections. Control of tempo and rhythmic accuracy through mixed-meter passages is essential. The performer must be able to play rhythmically and expressively, with control of steelpan tone quality.

Mare Tranquillitatis was conceived using my Korg Triton Music Workstation and my Ellie Mannette Signature Series steelpan.

- Mark Berry

About the Composer

Dr. Mark Berry currently serves as principal timpanist with Orchestra Kentucky, a position he has held since 2002. As timpanist and percussionist, he has performed with the Fort Wayne Philharmonic, the Cleveland Baroque Orchestra, and the Evansville Philharmonic Orchestra. In a chamber music setting, Dr. Berry's percussion playing can be heard on the Equilibrium and Centaur labels as well as self-produced projects. His debut solo compact disc is entitled "DIMENSION" and is also on the Equilibrium label.

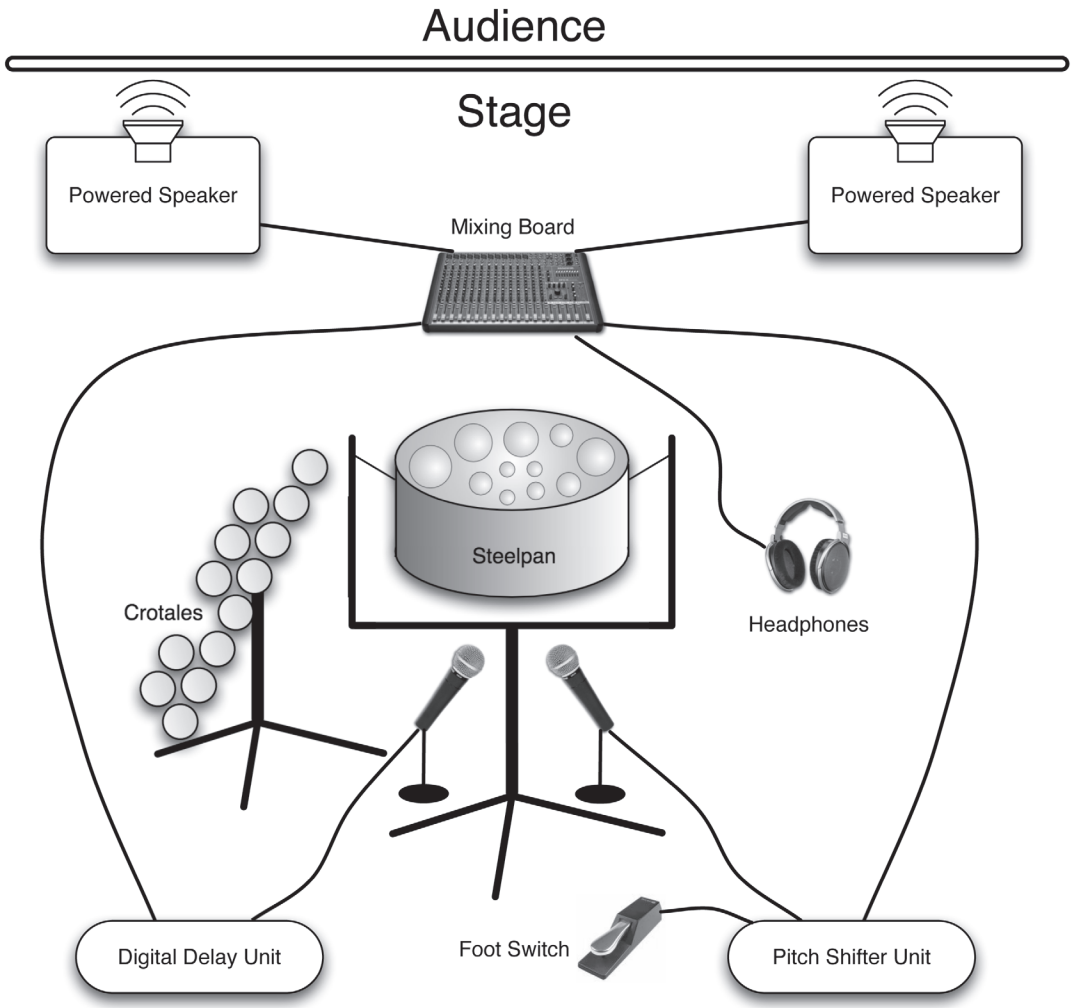
Dr. Berry has commissioned new works for flute and percussion and is a founding member of the percussion/cello duo, "Col Legno." His article "Thirteen Drums: interpreting in concurrence with Maki Ishii's space-time concept" will appear in the Percussive Arts Society's journal, "Percussive Notes."

Dr. Berry's performance interests lie not only in symphonic genres, but in other genres as well. His steel band arrangements have been premiered at The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. He actively performs on both drumset and steelpan in small combo settings. He has also served as percussion writer, arranger, instructor, adjudicator, and consultant with marching band programs throughout the Midwest.

Dr. Berry has received grant awards from the Kentucky Arts Council, the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, and Western Kentucky University. He has earned degrees from the University of Michigan (DMA Performance, MM Performance as well as The Ohio State University (BME). He is currently Assistant Professor of Percussion at Western Kentucky University where he teaches applied lessons and directs the percussion ensemble. He has also taught percussion at West Virginia University and the University of Michigan, Flint.

Equipment & Setup

- 'C-Lead' steelpan
- Crotales
- Digital delay effect processor set to a delay time of 300 milliseconds (ms)
- Pitch shifter effect processor with foot pedal (used as on/off switch) *
- Two microphones with stands
- Mixing board
- Powered speakers or amplifier/speakers



* see specifications on next page

Place two microphones under the steelpan a few inches from the center of the belly of the steelpan. A third microphone, routed through the digital delay, is optional for the crotales. This microphone is often not necessary because the crotale sound is adequately captured by the steelpan microphones.

One of the steelpan microphones is routed through the pitch shifter and then on to the mixer. At the mixer, the bass EQ of that channel should be boosted.

The other steelpan microphone is routed through the digital delay unit and then on to the mixer board.

The performer is free to tastefully add other optional effects (such as reverb) as is appropriate for the performance venue.

Settings

Digital delay settings

- Delay time: 300 milliseconds

- The amount of "source" or "original" sound will need to be balanced with the amount of "echoed" sound. This balance will change depending on the performance environment. In small performance spaces, it is not uncommon to perform with very little "source" sound coming through the mix because it is already quite prominent before amplification. Most digital delay units have a "Wet/Dry" setting to adjust this balance. If you desire more "echo" effect, experiement with increasing the "wet" setting and/or decreasing the "dry" setting on your delay unit.

Pitch shifter settings

- The pitch shifter must be capable of regenerating two octaves lower and also delaying 900 milliseconds.

- The pitch shifter must also be capable of being turned on and off via a foot switch or pedal. If using guitarists' foot-pedal effects, this is built in. If using rack-mounted effects, any on/off foot switch can work but it is preferable to have one that does not produce an audible click. If using a synthesizer workstation, it is usually possible to reassign the sustain pedal as an on/off foot switch.

- Turning the pitch shifter on and off in precise rhythm is essential. In performance, when activated, the pitch shifter regenerates each note that is played, two octaves lower and 900 milliseconds later. The resultant effect is that of a bass steelpan playing an independent musical line which harmonizes the lead steelpan.

Other

- The standard octave of crotales should be used; the mallet should be one that creates a rich, full tone with a clear pitch. If crotales are unavailable, orchestra bells (glockenspiel) may be substituted. Steelpan mallets should be hard enough to allow the upper notes to speak clearly without the low notes sounding thin. Headphones are necessary when playing so as to better hear and play precisely with the rhythm of the digital delay. Though the piece is quite rhythmic, it should be played expressively with attention to the subtlety and nuance of stroke, phrasing, and dynamics. Dimmed lights and/or other lighting effects can help enhance the celestial mood of the music

Level: Difficult
Approximate playing time: 10:30

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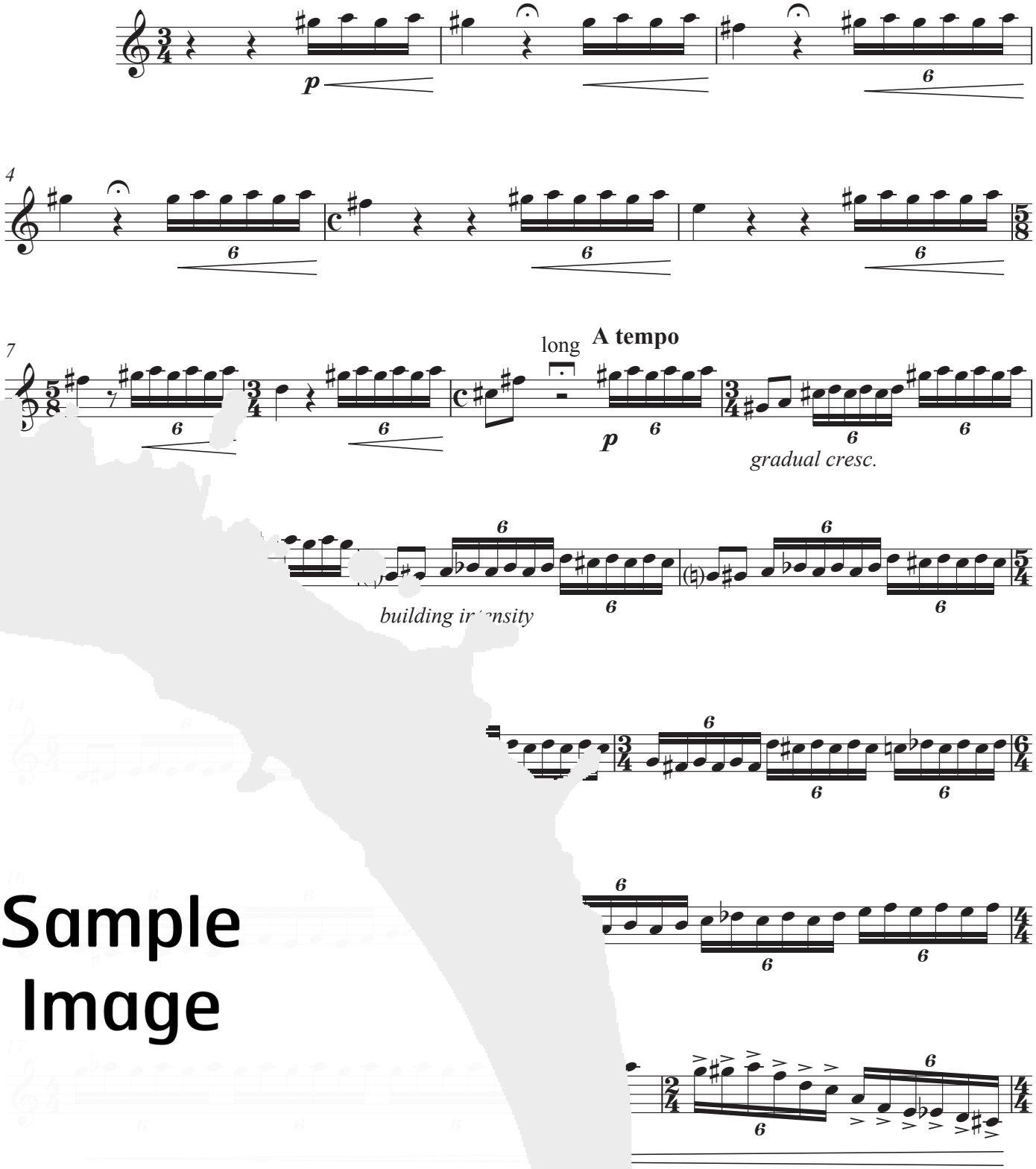
escaping the atmosphere

Molto espressivo ♩ = 98



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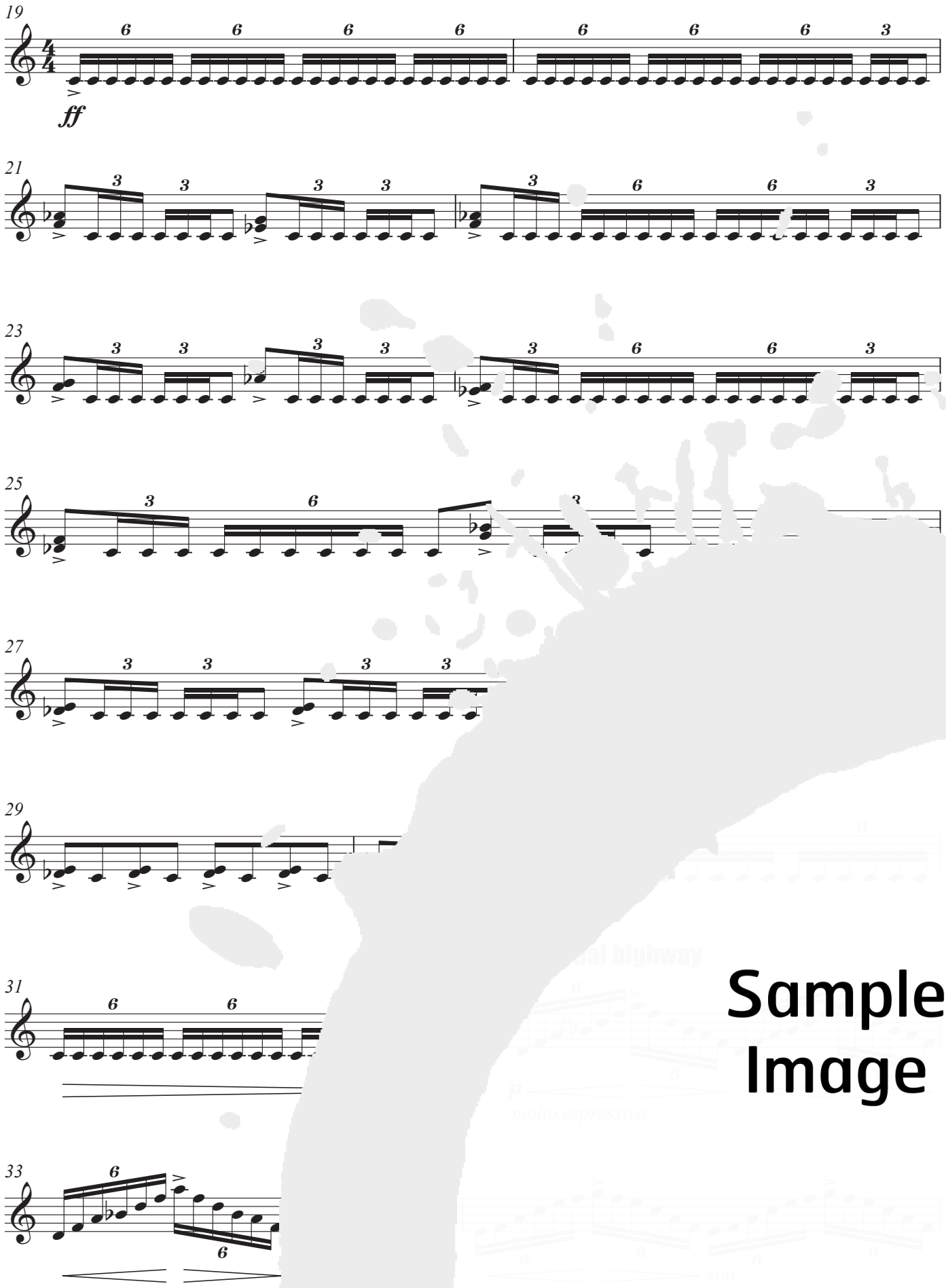

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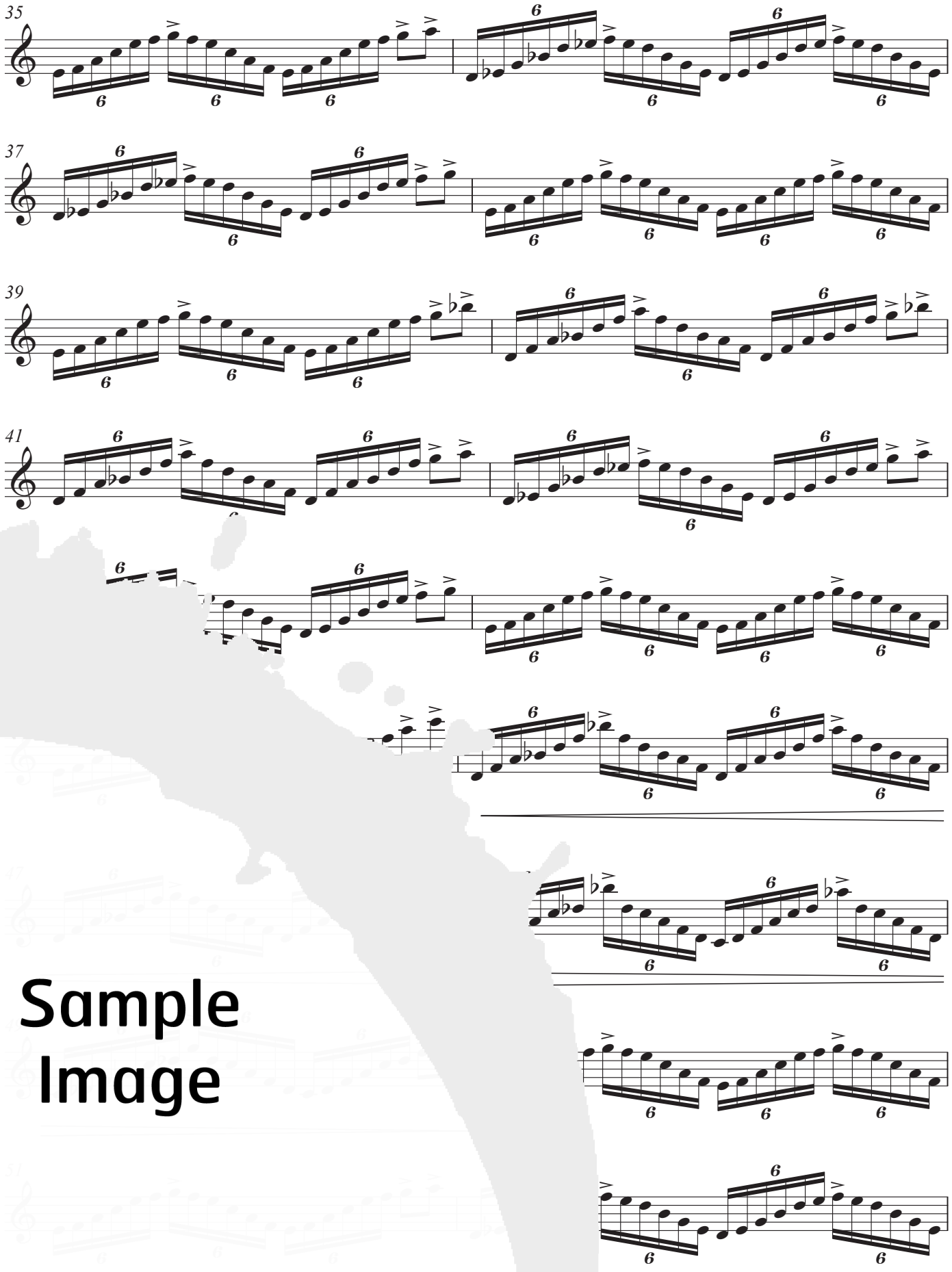

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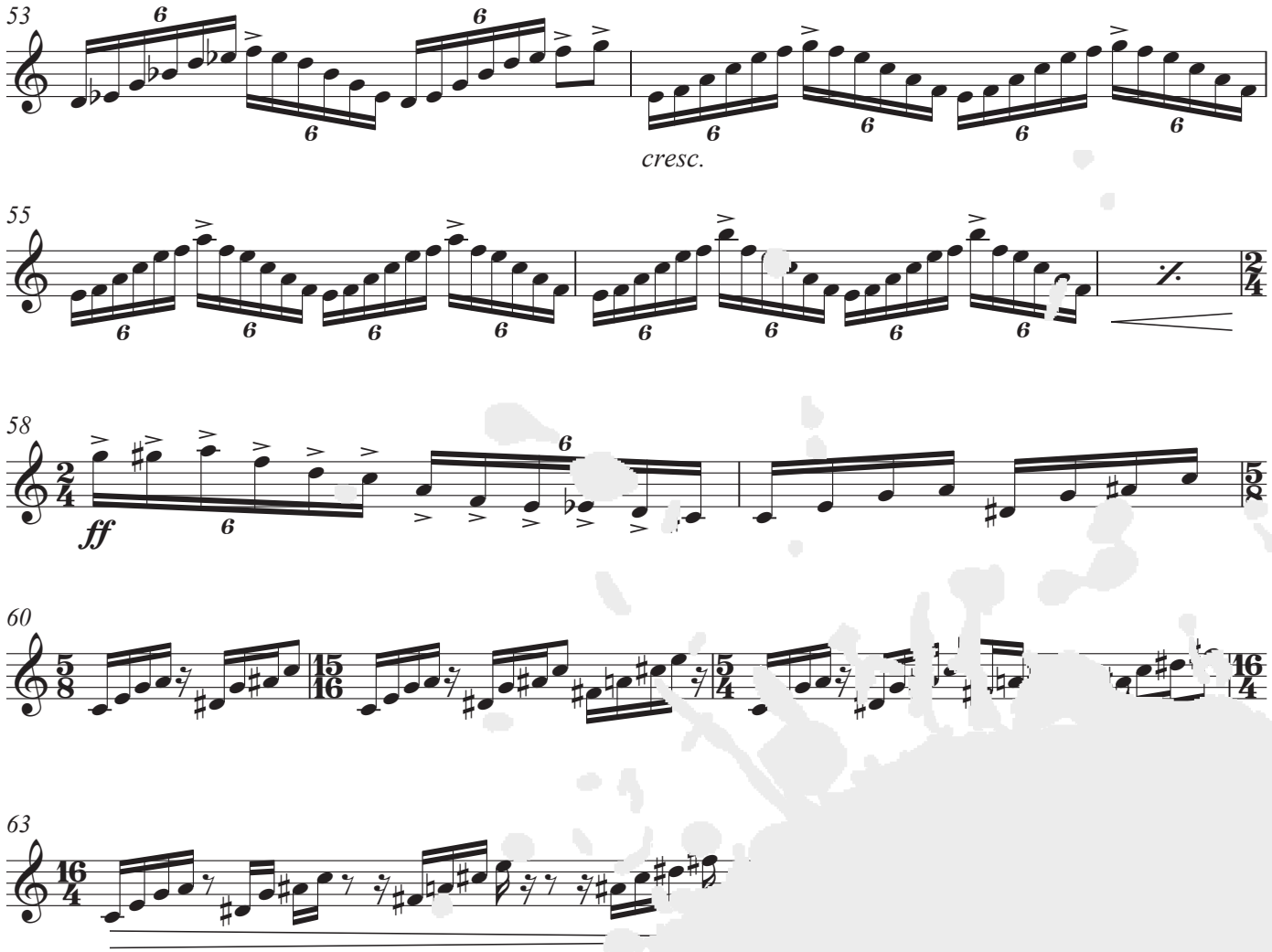

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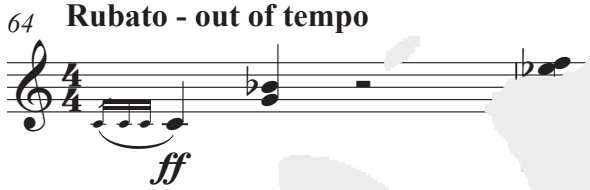

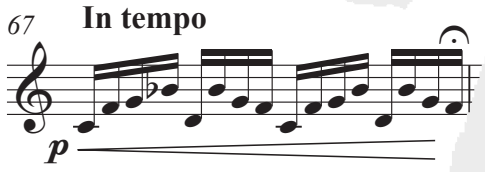

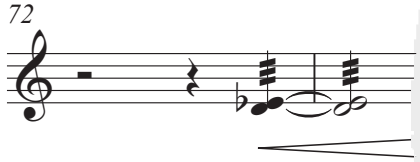

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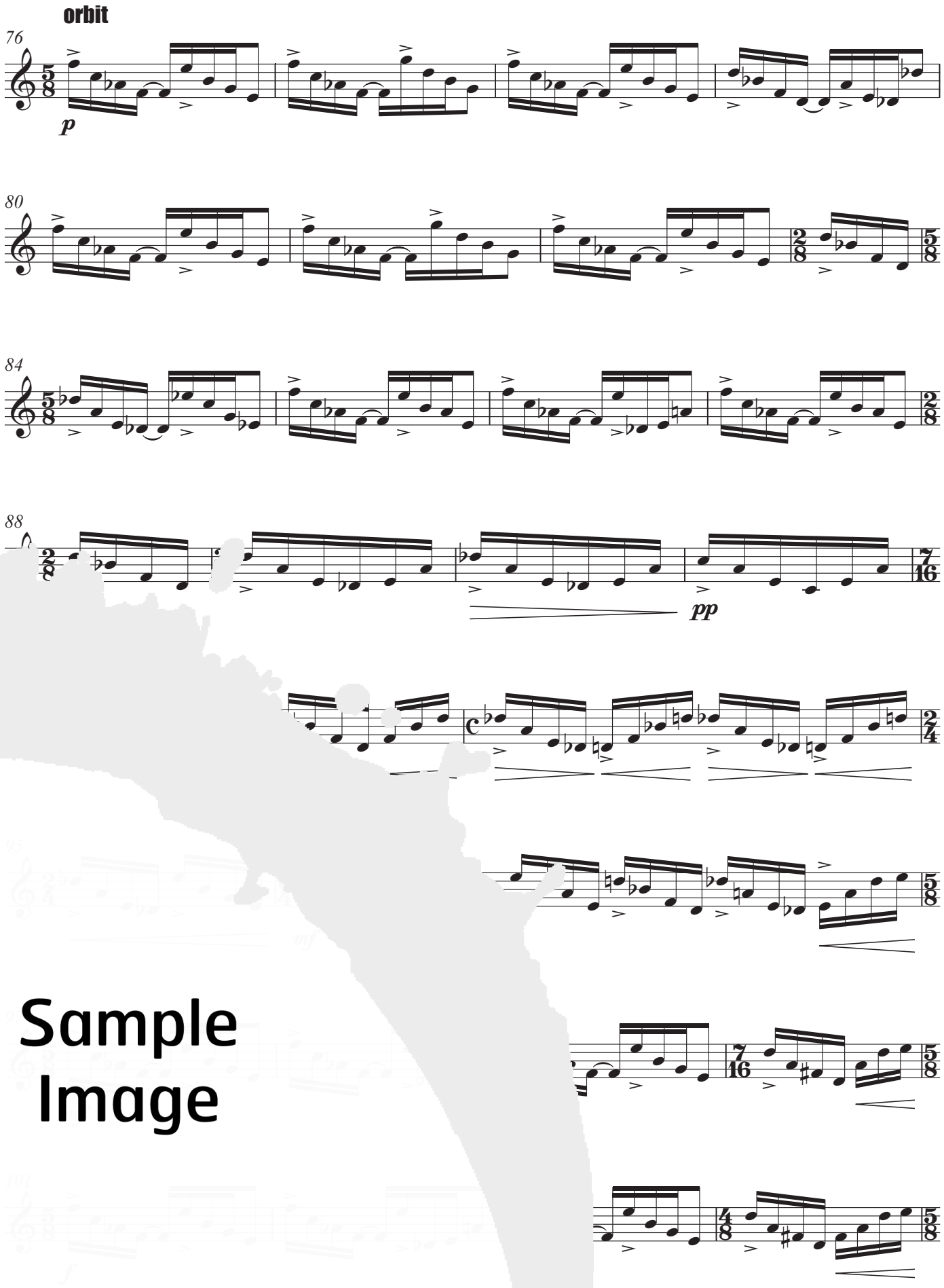

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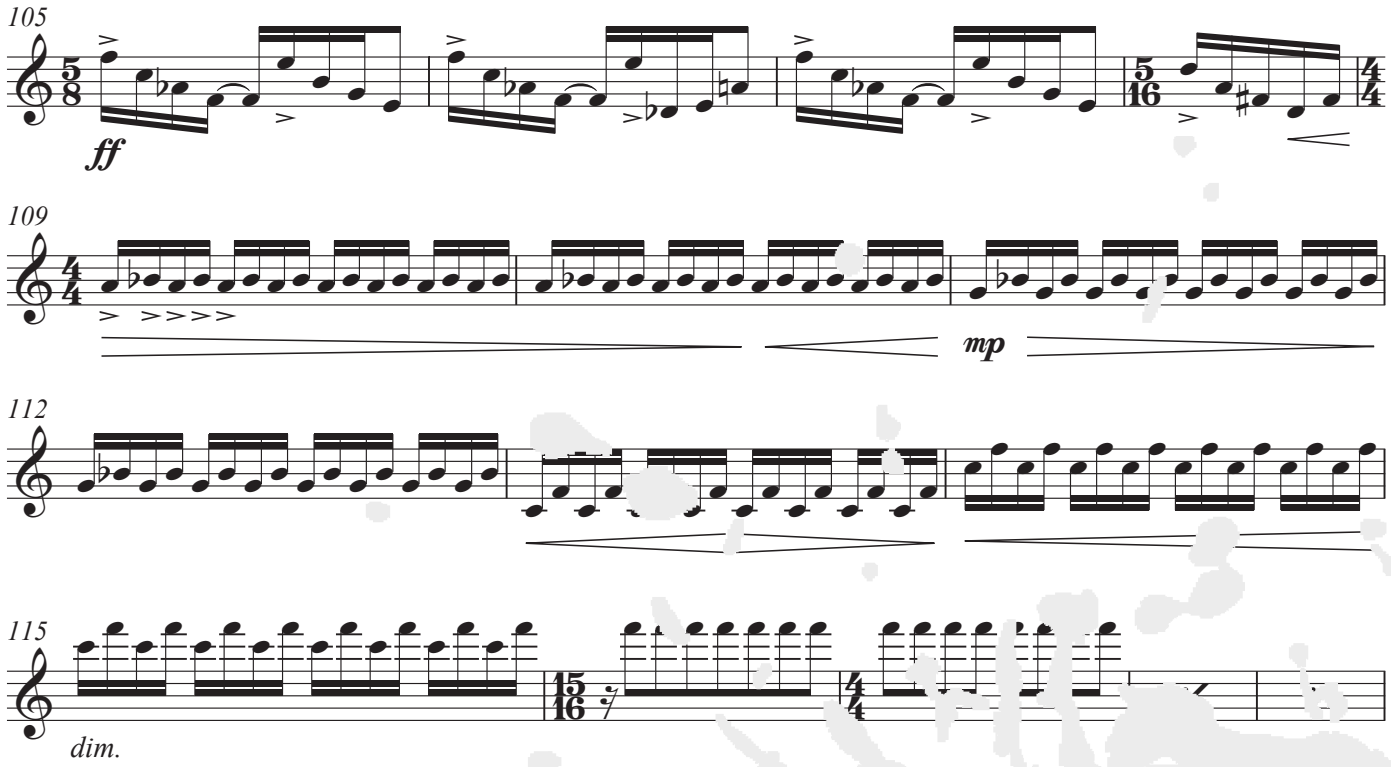

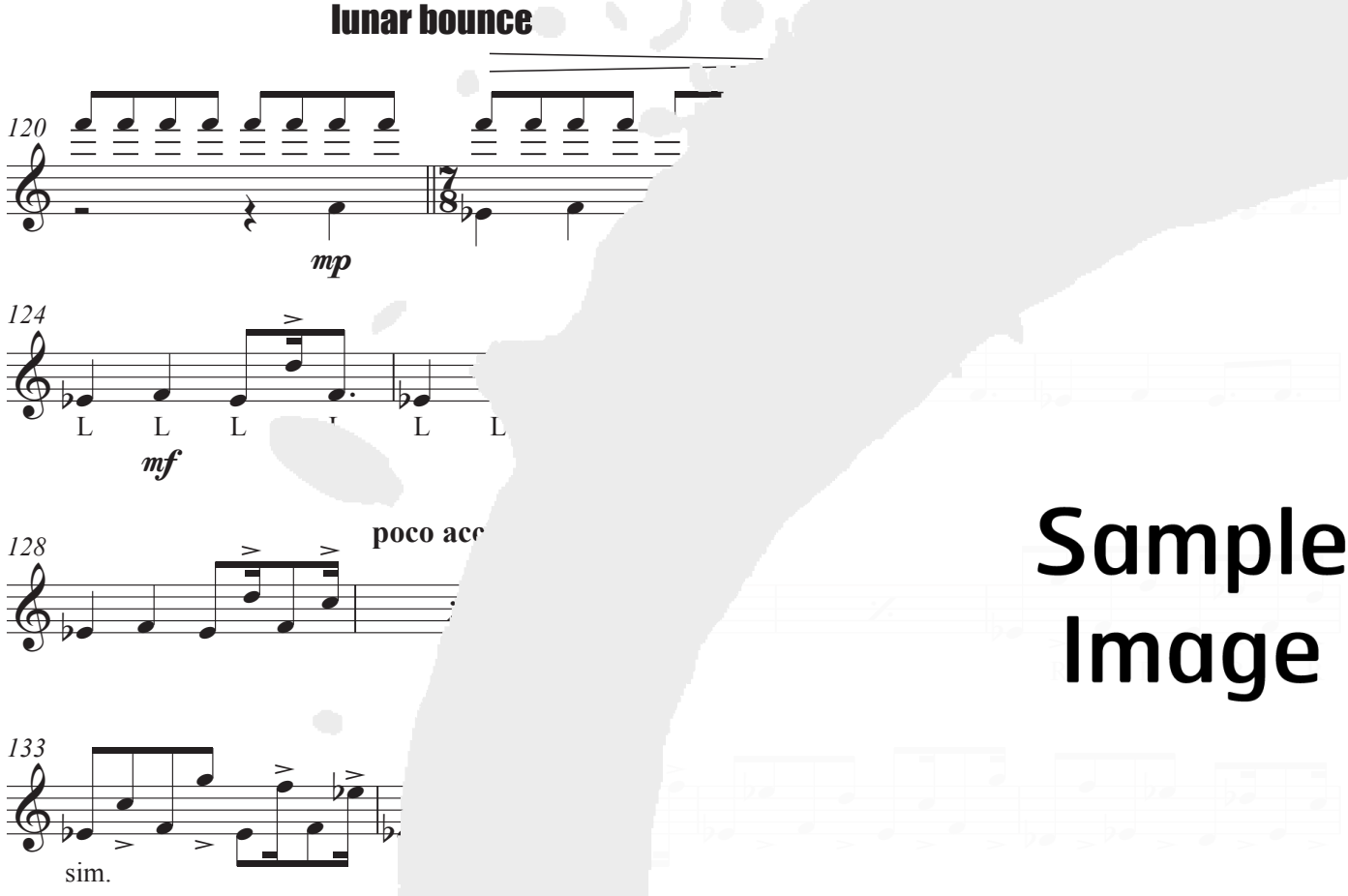

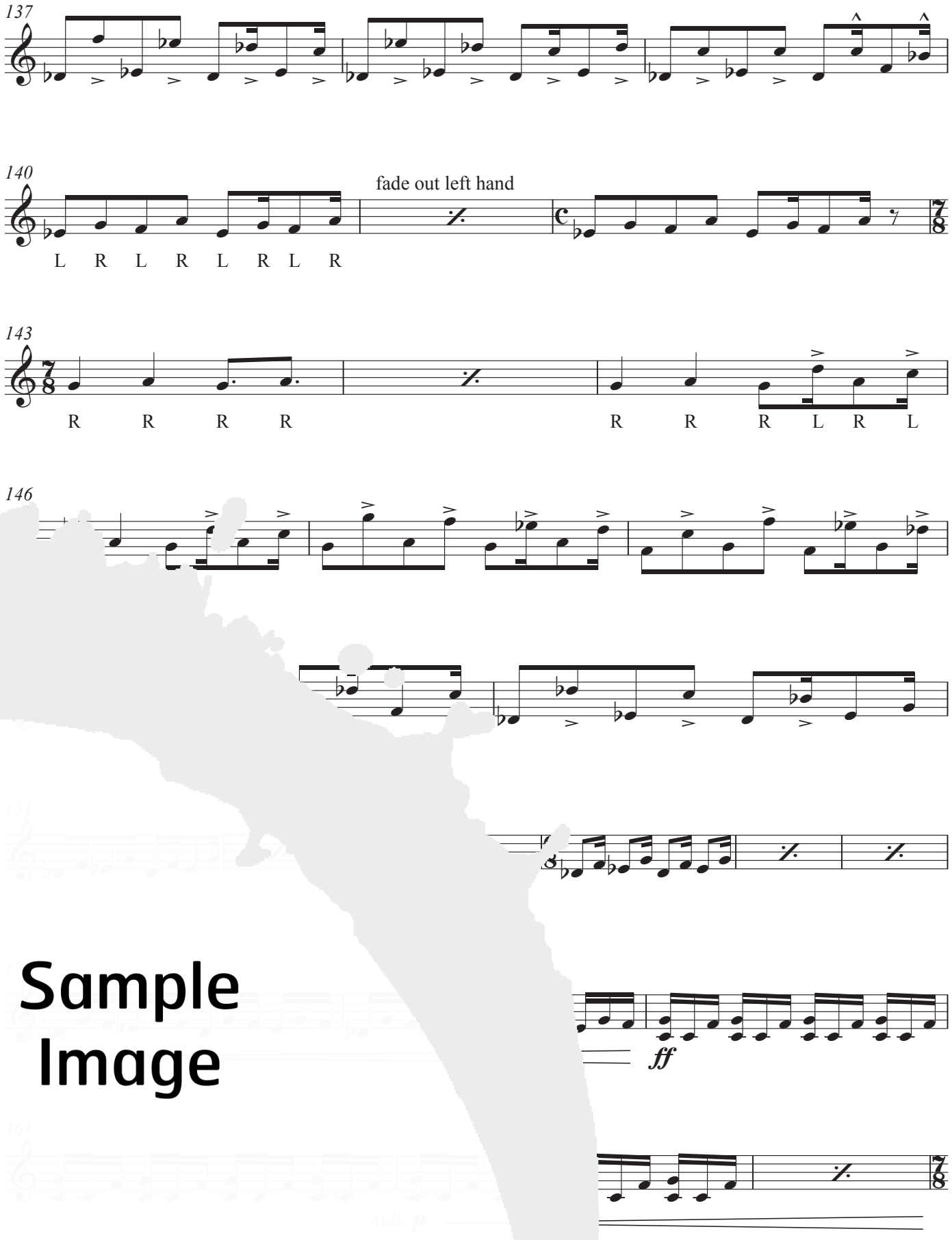

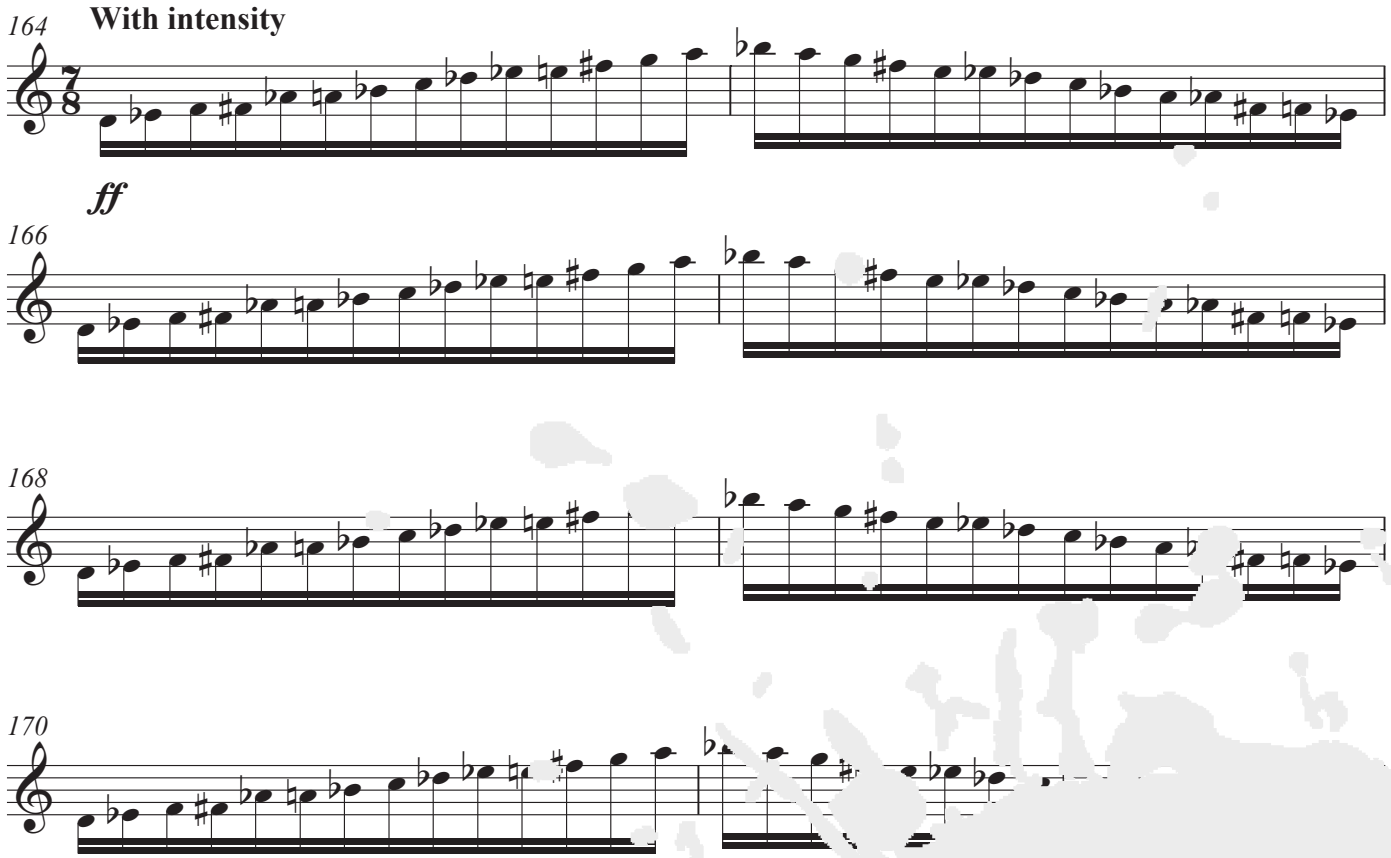

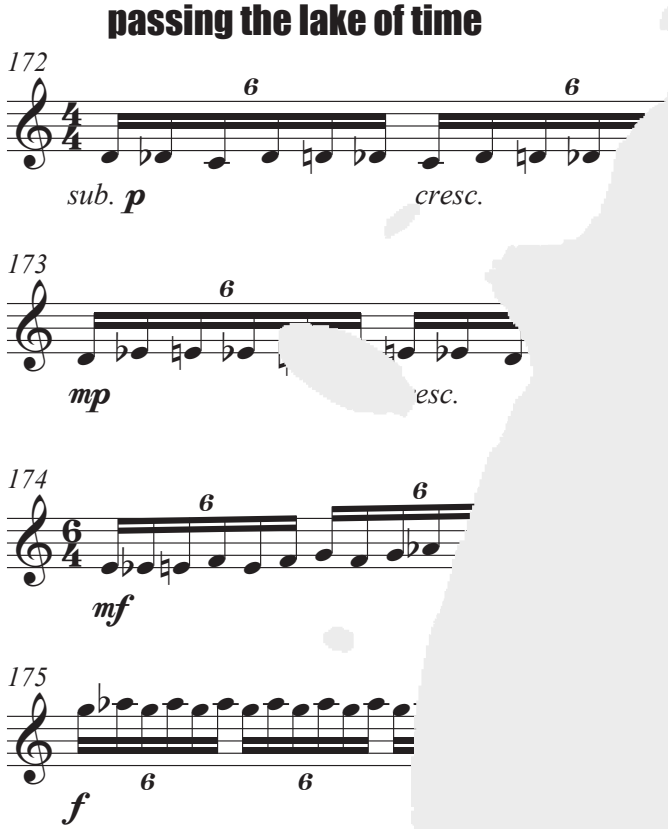

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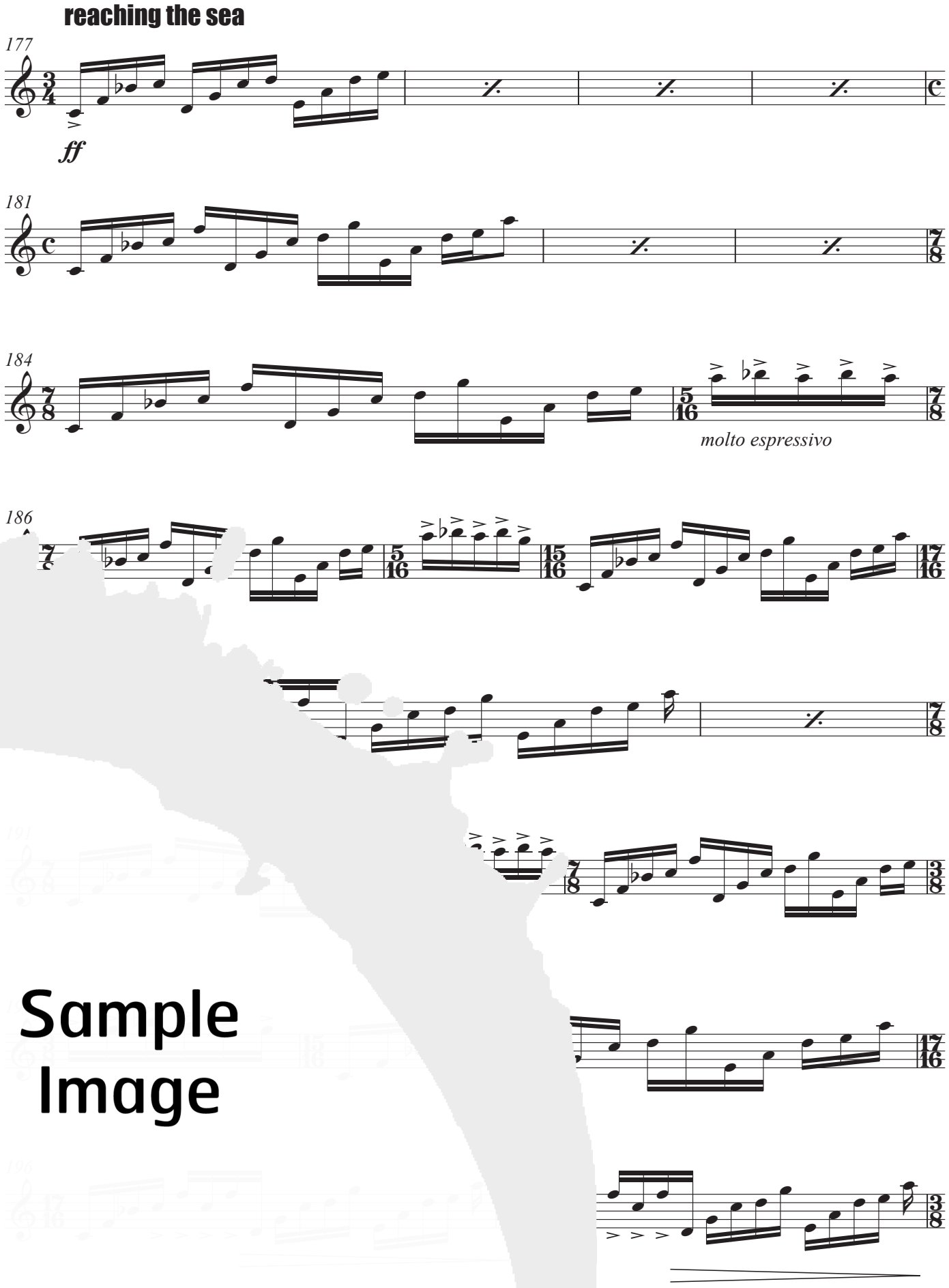

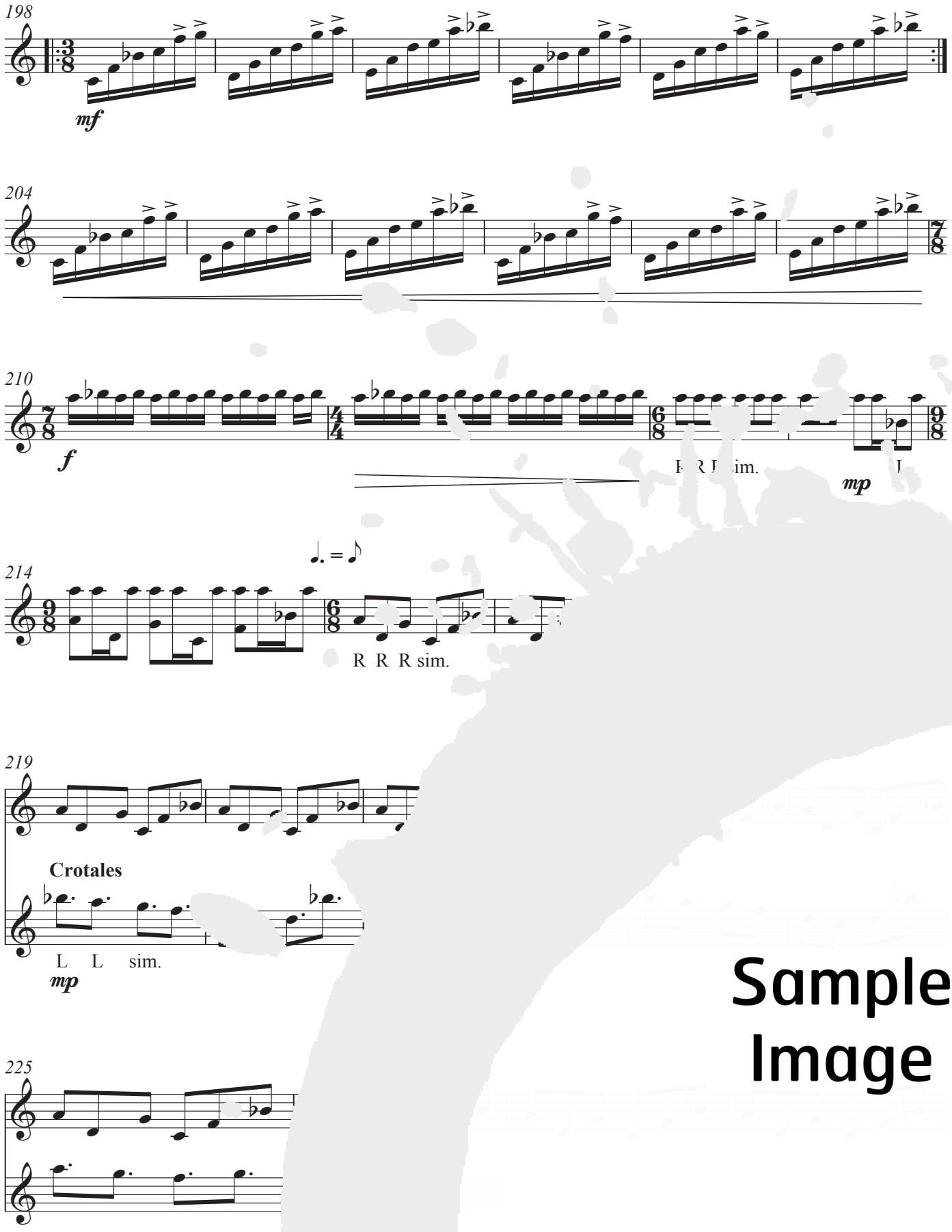

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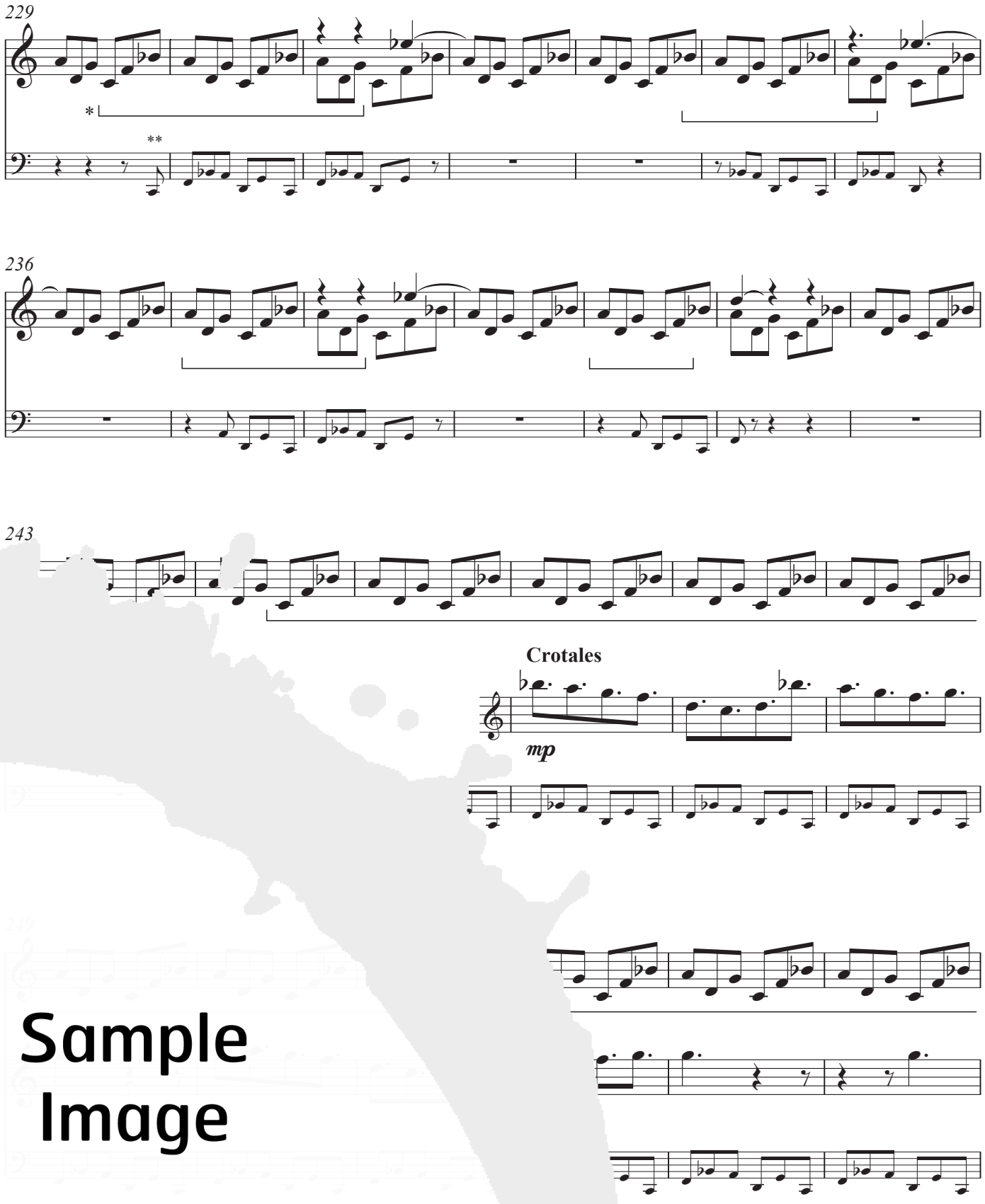

*Hold down and release pitch shifter foot switch as in
**Small staff indicates the resulting "bass echo" create
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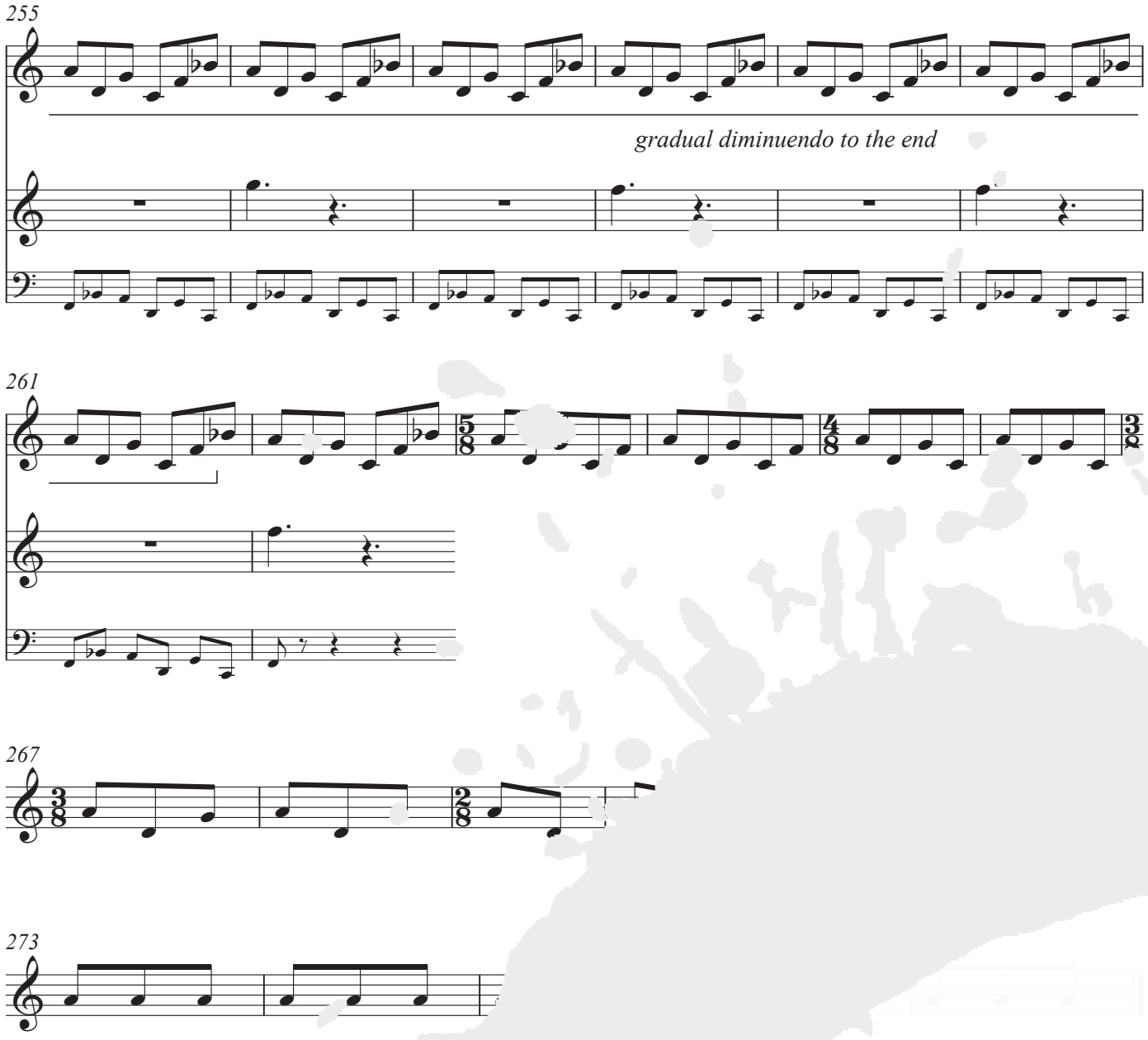

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