Pete Meechan

James Webb's Pillars (From A Starry Night)

for chamber ensemble

2023

Commissioned by a consortium led by:
Prof. Luke D. Johnson
MidAmerica Nazarene University

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For Chamber Ensemble

2023

Commissioned by Luke D. Johnson and MidAmerica Nazarene University Concert Band

And the following commissioning consortium members:

Benedictine College – Tom Davoren
California Polytechnic State University – Nicholas P. Waldron
Cal Poly Pomona University – Rickey Badua
Concordia University Ann Arbor Wind Ensemble – William M. Perrine
Georgia State University – Robert J. Ambrose
Indiana University of Pennsylvania – Timothy A. Paul
Lawrence University – Andrew Mast
McLennan College – Jon Conrad
New Mexico State University – Michael Mapp
Point Loma Nazarene University – Bruce Mansfield
University of Central Florida Bands – Dave Schreier, Scott Lubaroff, and Tremon Kizer
University of Georgia – Nicholas Enrico Williams
University of Kansas Wind Ensemble – Paul Popiel
University of Kansas Symphonic Band – Matthew O. Smith
University of Missouri - Kansas City – Steven Davis
University of West Georgia – Josh Byrd
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse – Martin I. Gaines
Virginia Commonwealth University – Duane Coston
Wake Forest University – Tim Heath
Wilfrid Laurier University – Cynthia Johnston Turner
William Jewell College – Langston Hemenway
Winona State University Symphonic Wind Ensemble – Melanie Brooks

Instrumentation (optional alternate parts in brackets)

2 Flutes, 2 Clarinets, Bass Clarinet (or Bassoon), 2 Alto Saxophones
2 Trumpets, Horn (or Euphonium 1), Trombone (or Euphonium 2)
Double Bass (or Tuba)
Piano
2 Percussion (Glockenspiel, Vibraphone)

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Program note

"It's not what Van Gogh saw that night, it's what he felt" – Neil deGrasse Tyson

At the heart of Neil deGrasse Tyson's words about Vincent van Gogh's painting "*The Starry Night*" is the very essence of what I believe the arts to be when at their most powerful: something intangible, brought to life by a beautiful mind and with wonderful craft, that exists and inspires way beyond the scope of the artist's imagination.

Written at a time where the creative arts are being threatened by the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology, **James Webb's Pillars** takes its inspiration from the juxtaposition of the van Gogh painting and this image of the Pillars of Creation - my favourite image captured by the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) – and how technology played a role in the existence of both.

The invention of the camera, and its rise to prominence in the mid-1800's, made a significant impact on art and artists. Vincent van Gogh's dislike for portrait photography is well documented, believing that the resulting picture lacked life and expression of the subject's character. The new camera technology also led to many artists, whose principal income was generated from painting portraits of wealthy subjects, moving their careers away from painting and into photography in order to continue earning a living.

For the artists who didn't turn to photography and continued to paint (often in poverty), the resultant lack of portrait work sparked a new sense of freedom that would become the creative catalyst for works of great imagination and invention. Perhaps the most famous example of this is Van Gogh's work "The Starry Night" – a painting full of incredible life, energy, and movement.

Whilst many forms of technology continue to be an enemy of the arts and artists, technology has also been at the heart of the most incredible innovation and has the power to inspire imaginations. The JWST, launched in December 2021, now beams data back to earth that produces the most stunning images of the stars and galaxies that formed the universe following the Big Bang.

The Pillars of Creation image – taken of a region within the Eagle Nebula, which lies 6500 light-years away – and "The Starry Night" are both full of the life and energy that Van Gogh desired – the lines and movement in his own masterwork, and the JWST image capturing stars being born, dust forming vast pillars reaching out into space, and young stars shining bright as older stars wane.

James Webb's Pillars draws on many aspects of the life contained within the JWST image; the joy and beauty of the stars, the silence that the stars and dust exist in, and the new life and violent collisions that create the beauty of the photograph.

James Webb's Pillars is dedicated to my friend, Luke Johnson.

Pete Meechan, May 2024

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for Chamber Winds

Peter Meechan
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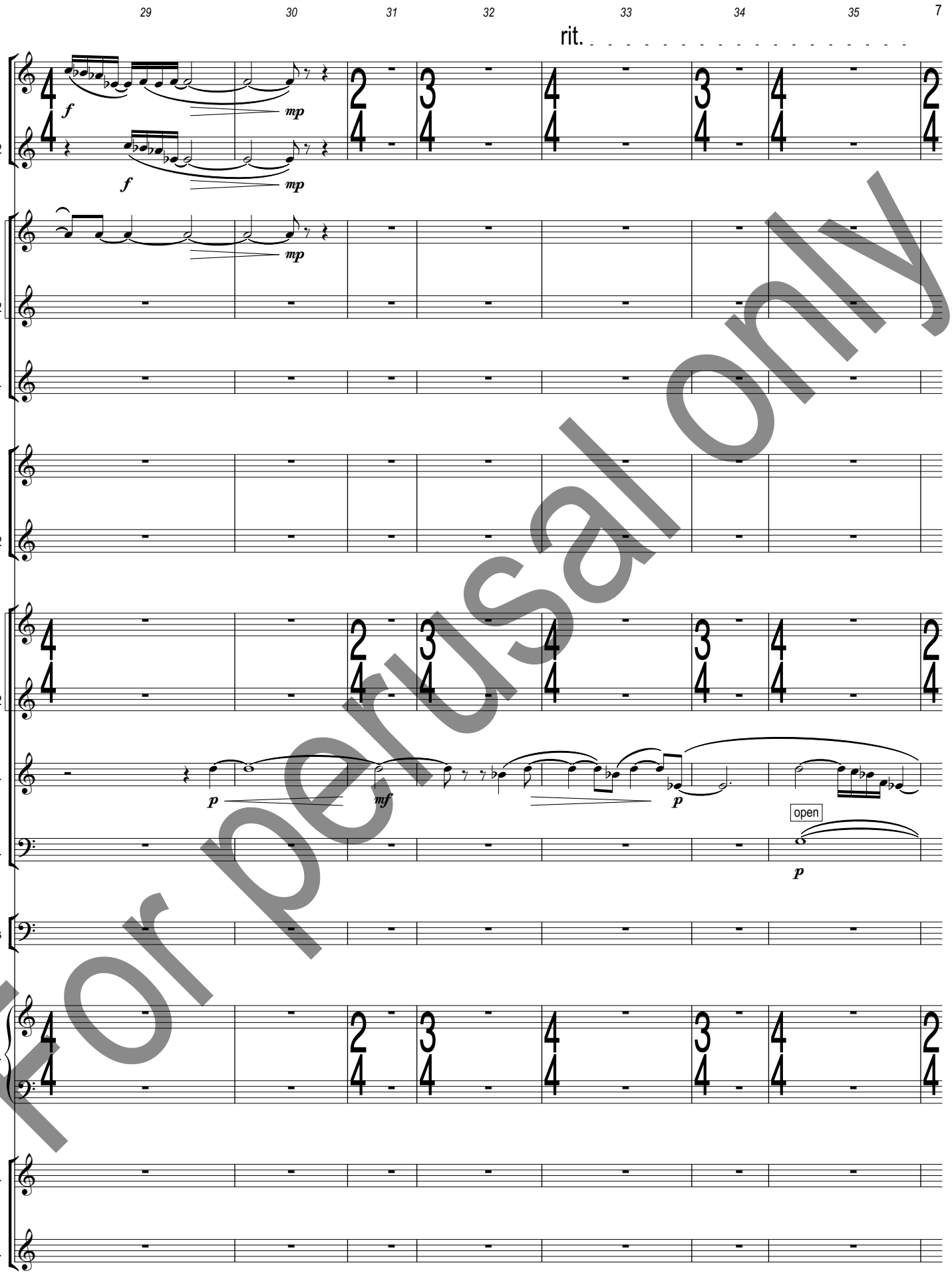
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For perusal only

I

82 83 84

Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Cl. 1
Cl. 2
B. Cl.
A. Sax. 1
A. Sax. 2
Tpt. 1
Tpt. 2
Hn.
Tbn.
D. Bass
Pno.
Glock.
Vib.

mf

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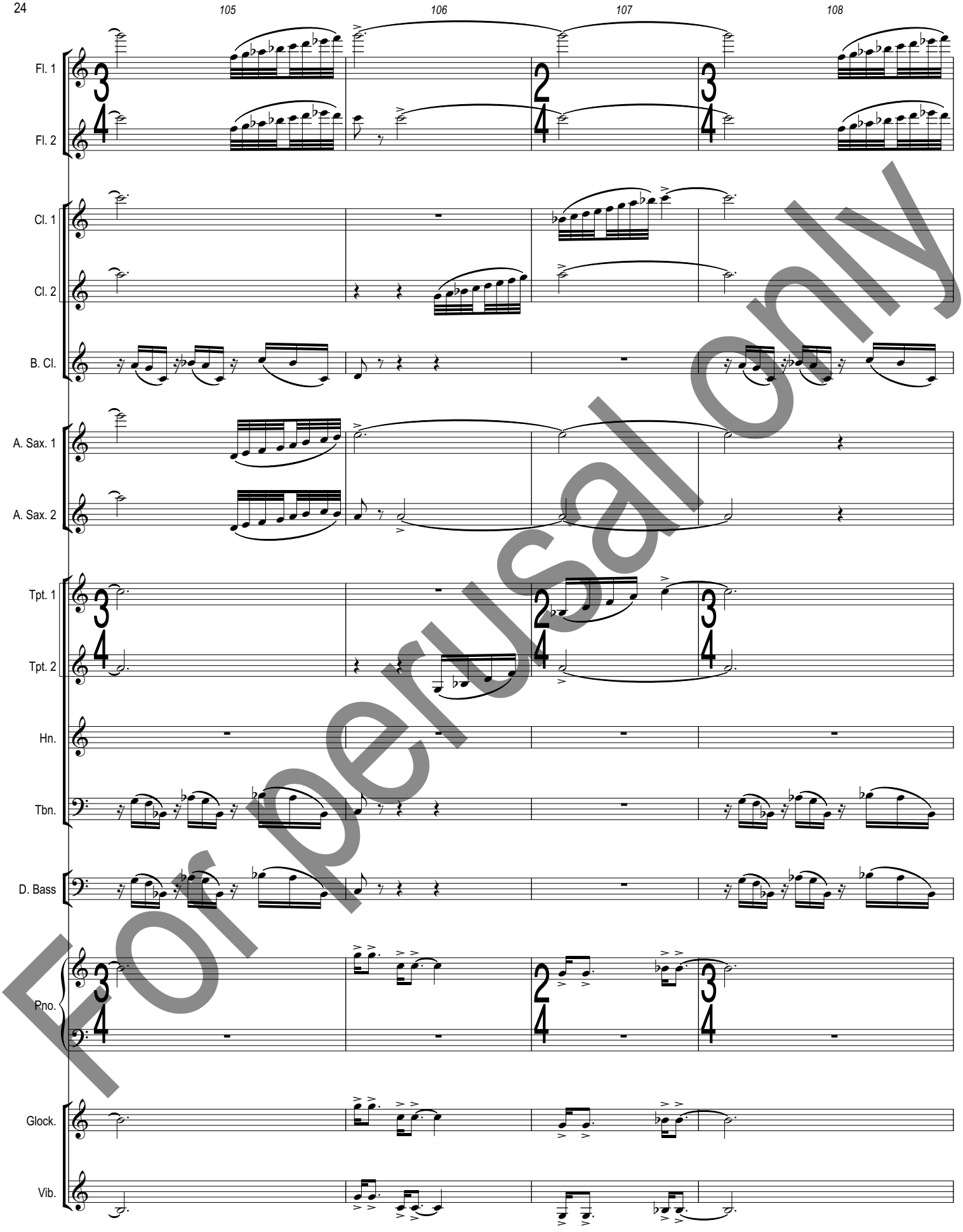
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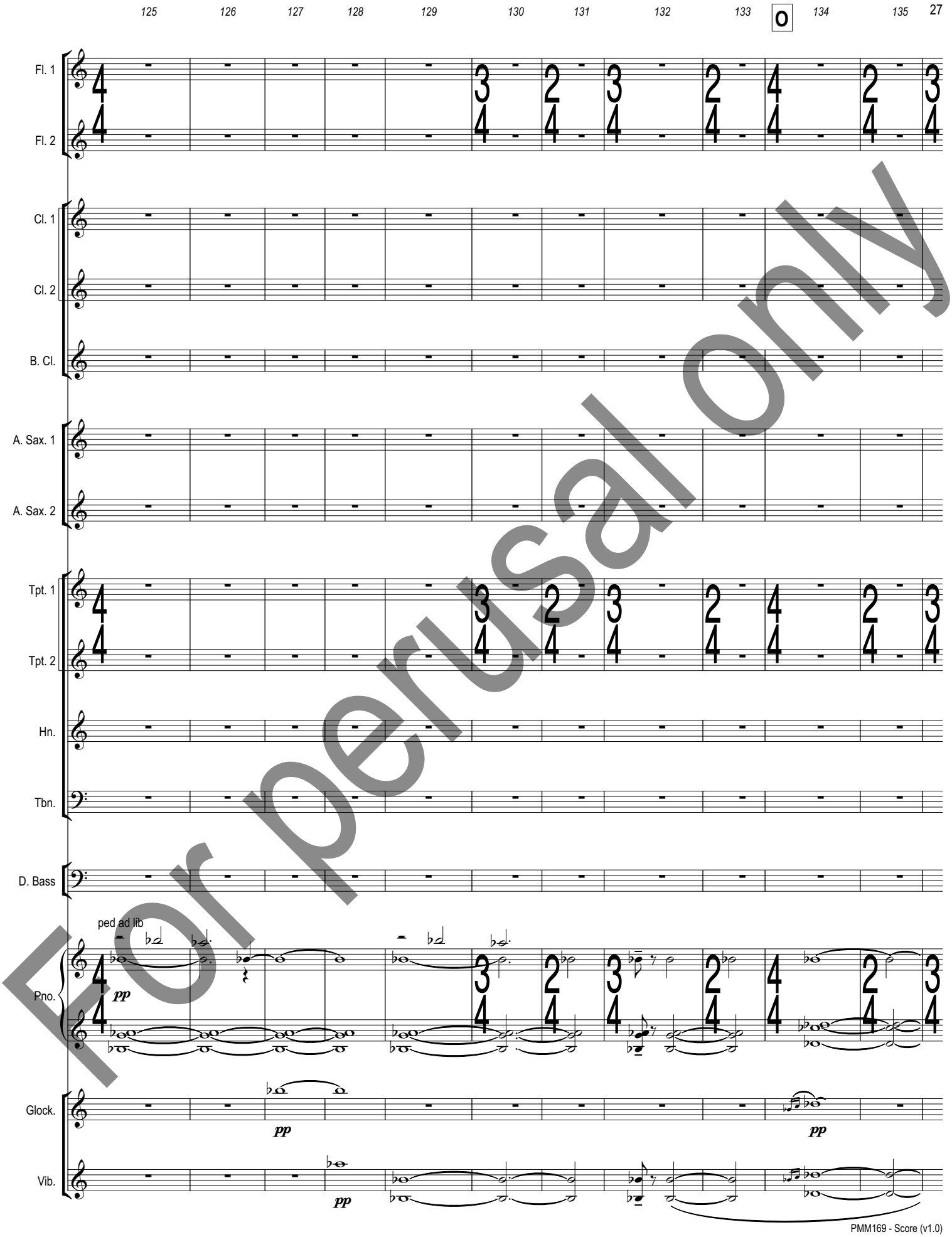
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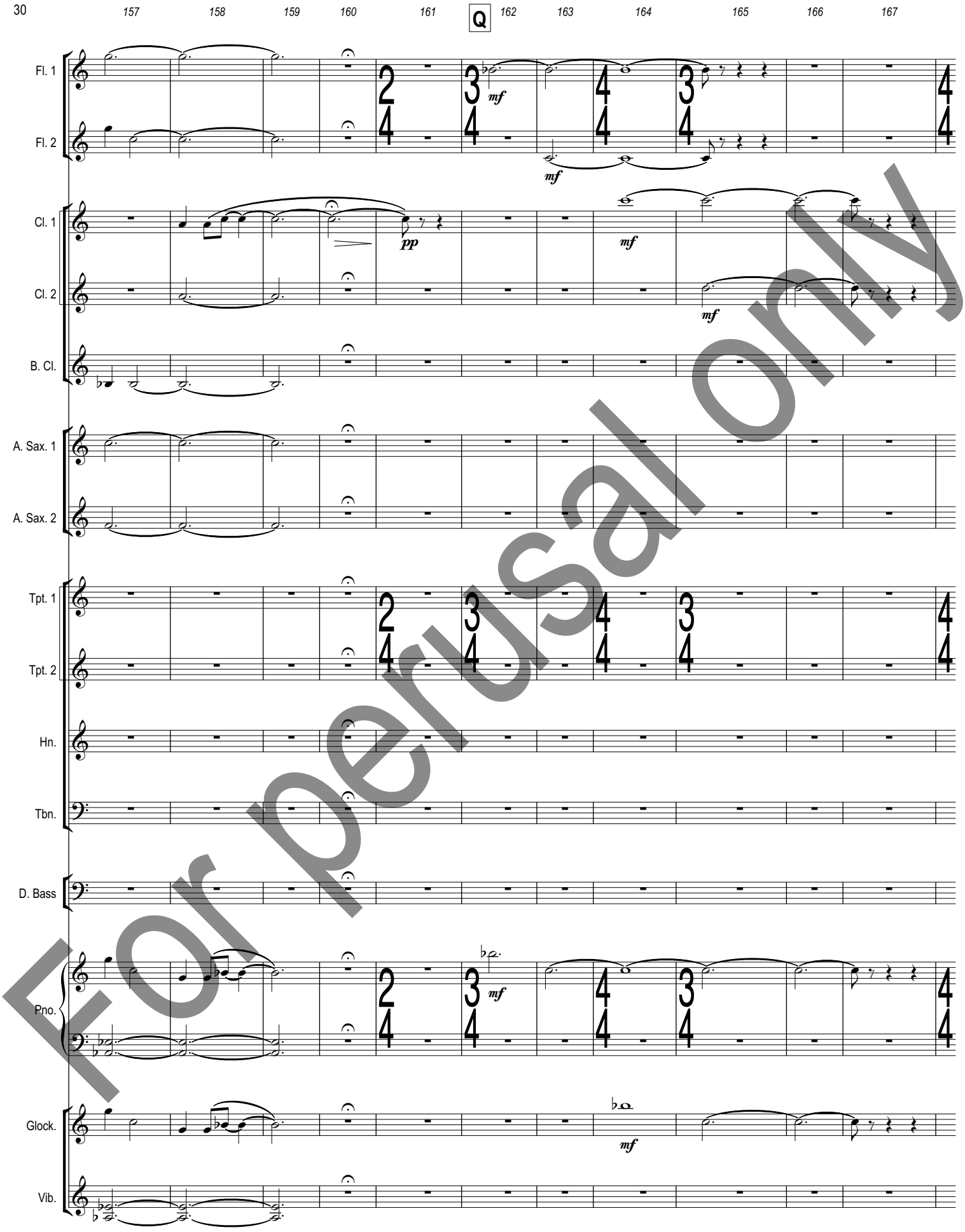
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
Cl. 1
Cl. 2
B. Cl.
A. Sax. 1
A. Sax. 2
Tpt. 1
Tpt. 2
Hn.
Tbn.
D. Bass
Pno.
Glock.
Vib.

pp

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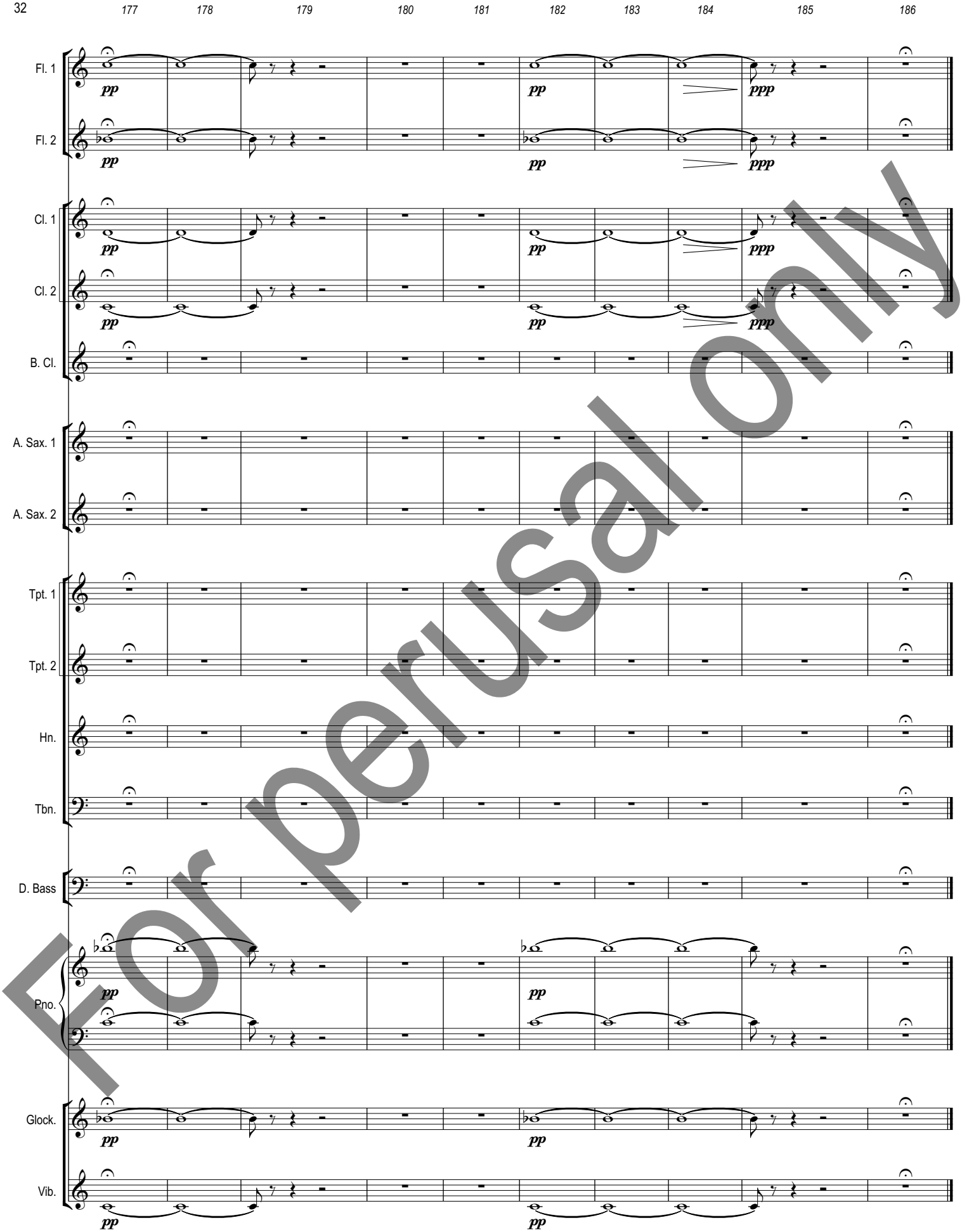
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