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Church
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Church Sonata for Piano and Organ

Myron Roberts
(1912–2004)

Anthony Antolini, editor

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Myron Roberts (1912–2004)

Myron Roberts was born in San Diego, California, and at the age of nine he moved with his family to Palo Alto, California, where he attended public schools. Raised in a musical family, Roberts developed an early passion for piano and organ. His first music teacher was his aunt, Josephine Thorpe, a graduate of Oberlin Conservatory. By the time he was in high school he was studying piano and then organ with Stanford University organist, Warren Allen.

Roberts completed his undergraduate studies in 1935 at the College of the Pacific (now the University of the Pacific) in Stockton, California, where he was an organ student of Allen Bacon. He then went to New York and completed a master's degree in the School of Sacred Music at Union Theological Seminary, where he studied with Clarence Dickinson.

After two years as an organist in the greater New York area and as an interim organist in Richmond, Virginia, Roberts joined the faculty of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln where he taught organ and music theory for 34 years. He also held positions in Lincoln as organist at First-Plymouth Congregational Church, Holy Trinity Episcopal Church and the Roman Catholic Cathedral of the Risen Christ.

Roberts was married to Virginia W. Roberts. The couple had no children. They retired at the same time and moved to Rio del Mar on Monterey Bay in California. After Mrs. Roberts' death in 1975, Mr. Roberts continued to live in California and resumed playing the organ in public recitals. It was during this time that Roberts met and became long-time friends with Anthony Antolini, who was teaching at Cabrillo College in Santa Cruz County, California. When Antolini moved to Maine to take a position in the Music Department at Bowdoin College, Roberts decided to join Antolini's family and moved to Cushing, Maine in 1993, where he continued to teach organ and compose music.

Roberts was nationally known as a composer of works for organ, choral music and pieces for organ and other instruments. Among his 22 published works are *Homage to Perotin* (1956), *Pastorale and Aviary* (1969) and *Fanfare and Tuckets* (1991) for organ. His best known choral compositions include *O Lord, We Beseech Thee* (1965), *Jubilate Deo* (1976) and *Magnificat* (1977). Among his most unusual compositions is *Five for Organ and Marimba* (1975). *

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*For more information about the *Church Sonata for Piano and Organ* and its editor, please see the inside back cover.

Church Sonata for Piano and Organ

The Church Sonata for Piano and Organ was written between February and May 1989 when Roberts was a communicant of the Episcopal Church of St. John Baptist in Capitola, California. It was originally entitled *Centennial Music for the Church of St. John the Baptist*. The *Sonata* takes its title from the Baroque form *sonata da chiesa* that usually featured a fast-slow-fast, three-movement form. The work was composed in celebration of the centennial of the church and was originally performed on the newly installed Visscher Organ, a two-manual instrument with six ranks of pipes. Since its premiere the *Sonata* has been performed in a variety of acoustical environments including large organs with much more extensive tonal capabilities and with concert grand pianos.

The composer's comments about the work include the following: "The *Sonata* makes minimal demands on the performers – themes are short, defined so that a listener can follow the structure easily. The "Prelude" is exuberant and the listener will note that the themes interlock between organ and piano, producing an effect of an organ-piano or piano-organ. The "Communion," more poetic, is reminiscent of French mysticism – free in style and making use of shifting harmonies and tonal centers. In the "Postlude," reference is made to the ancient church melody, *Ite, missa est* (Go, the mass is ended.)

This edition is based on a copyist's version of Roberts' original manuscript. A small number of errors have been corrected by the editor. The composer did not use time signatures. These have been added to the present edition in parentheses.

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Anthony Antolini, editor

Anthony Antolini was born and raised in New York City. He attended Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, where he studied music history with Frederic Earle Thornlay Tillotson and organ, conducting and music theory with Robert Beckwith, a former student of Robert Shaw. After completing his bachelor of arts degree with a major in music and a minor in Russian, Antolini went to Stanford University where he earned two master's degrees – one in Russian and the other in music. He then completed a Ph.D. at Stanford Slavic Studies in 1975. The following year he was awarded an IREX Fellowship to study at Moscow State University in the USSR.

In 1992 Antolini joined the music faculty of Bowdoin College, where he has taught music theory and conducts the Bowdoin Chorus and the Rachmaninoff Choir. In addition, he serves as Artistic Director of Down East Singers, based in Rockport, Maine, and the Lincoln Festival Chorus, based in Boothbay Harbor, Maine. He has been a featured speaker at national and regional conferences of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA), the Mentoring Institute at the University of New Mexico and guest speaker for the Camden Conference in Maine. His writings have appeared in *The Choral Journal* and *The American Organist*.

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I
Prelude

Edited by Anthony Antolini

Myron Roberts
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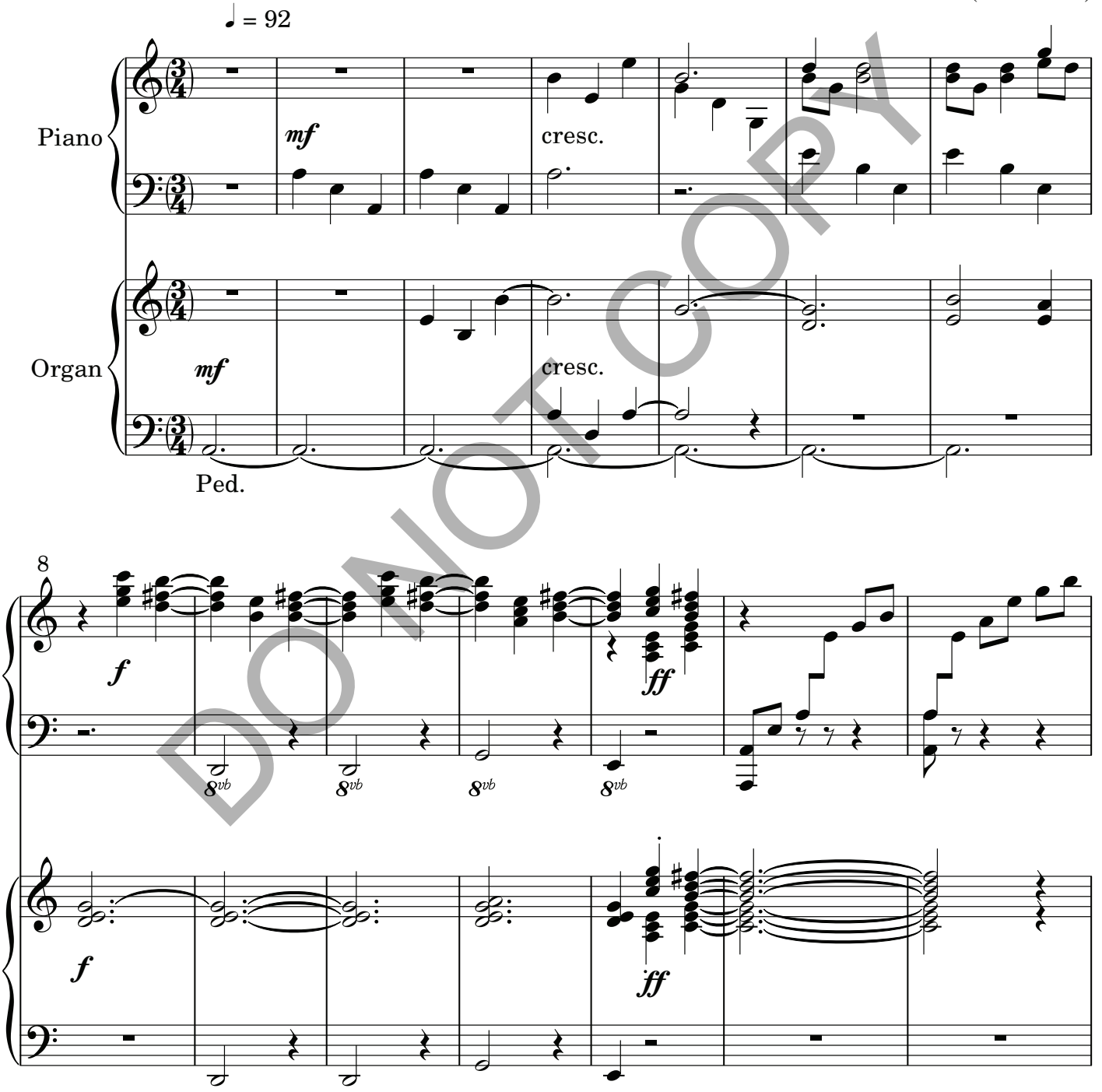

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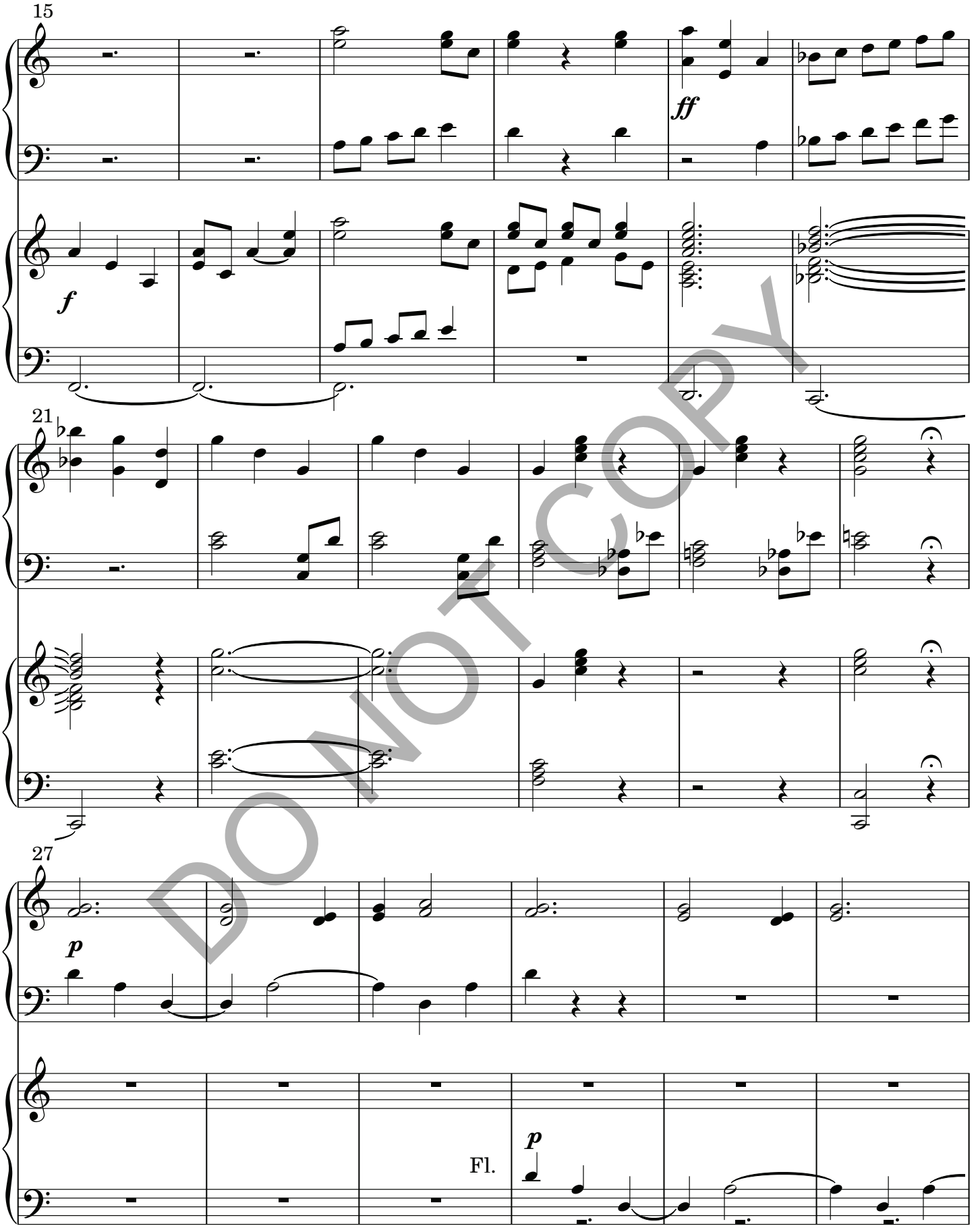

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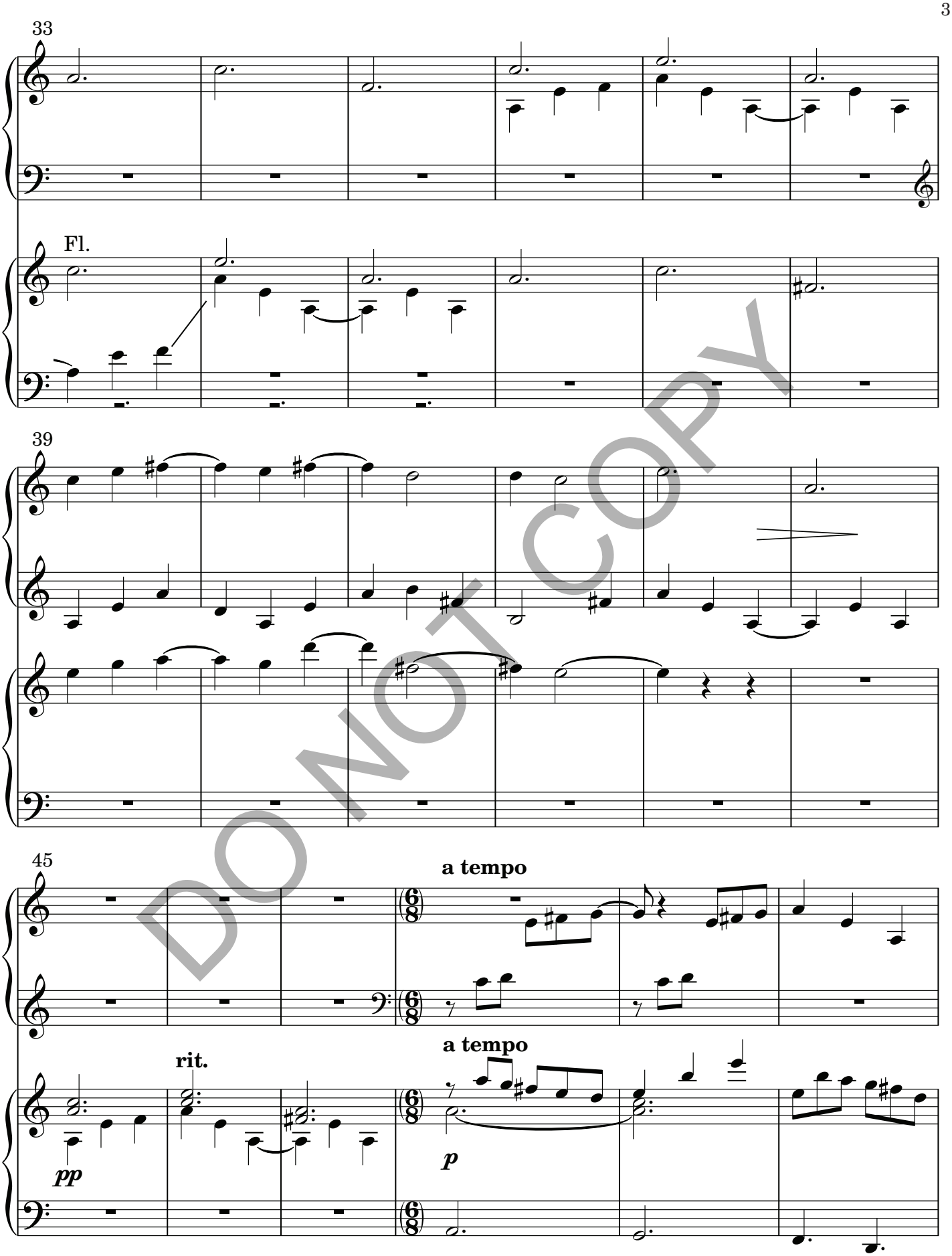

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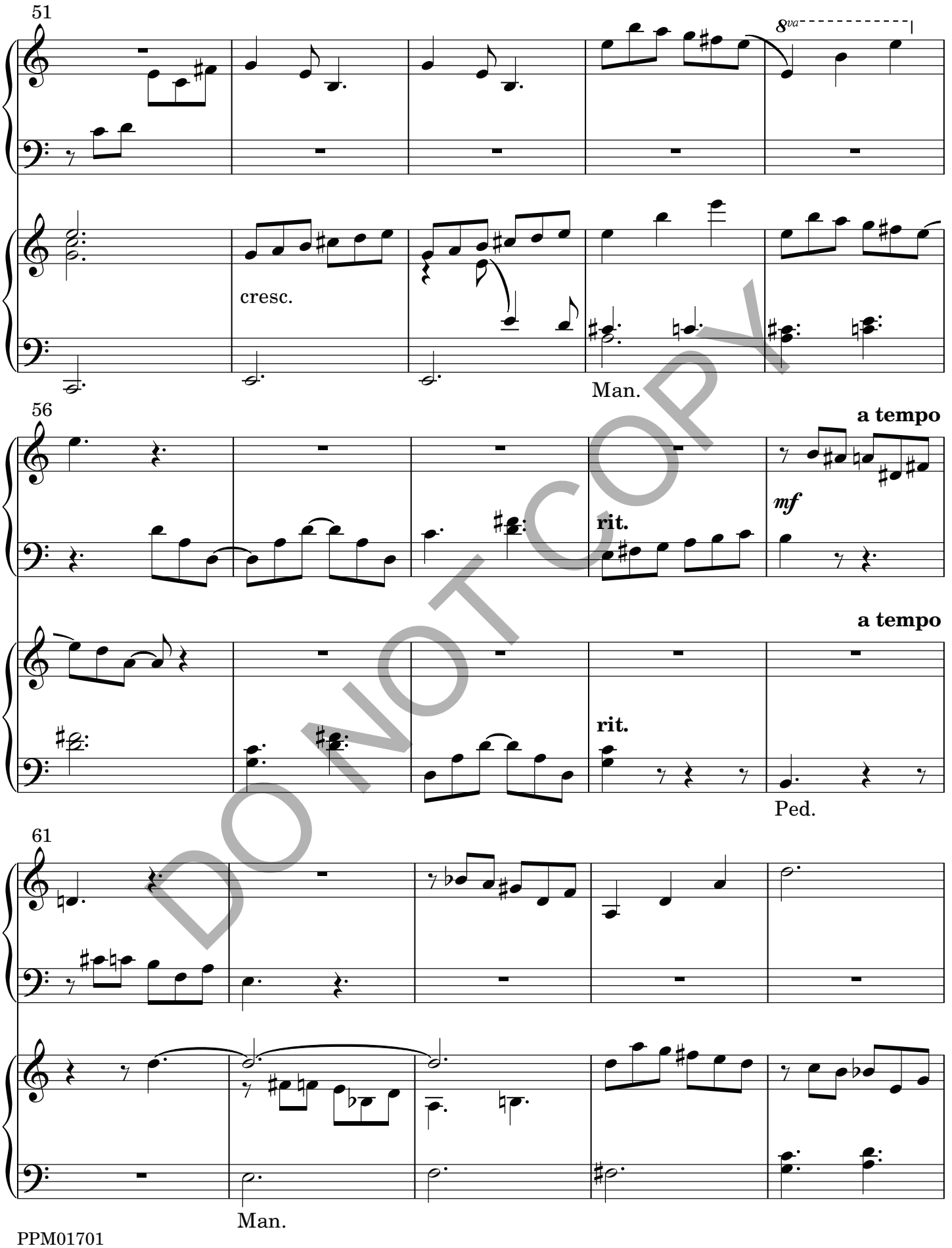

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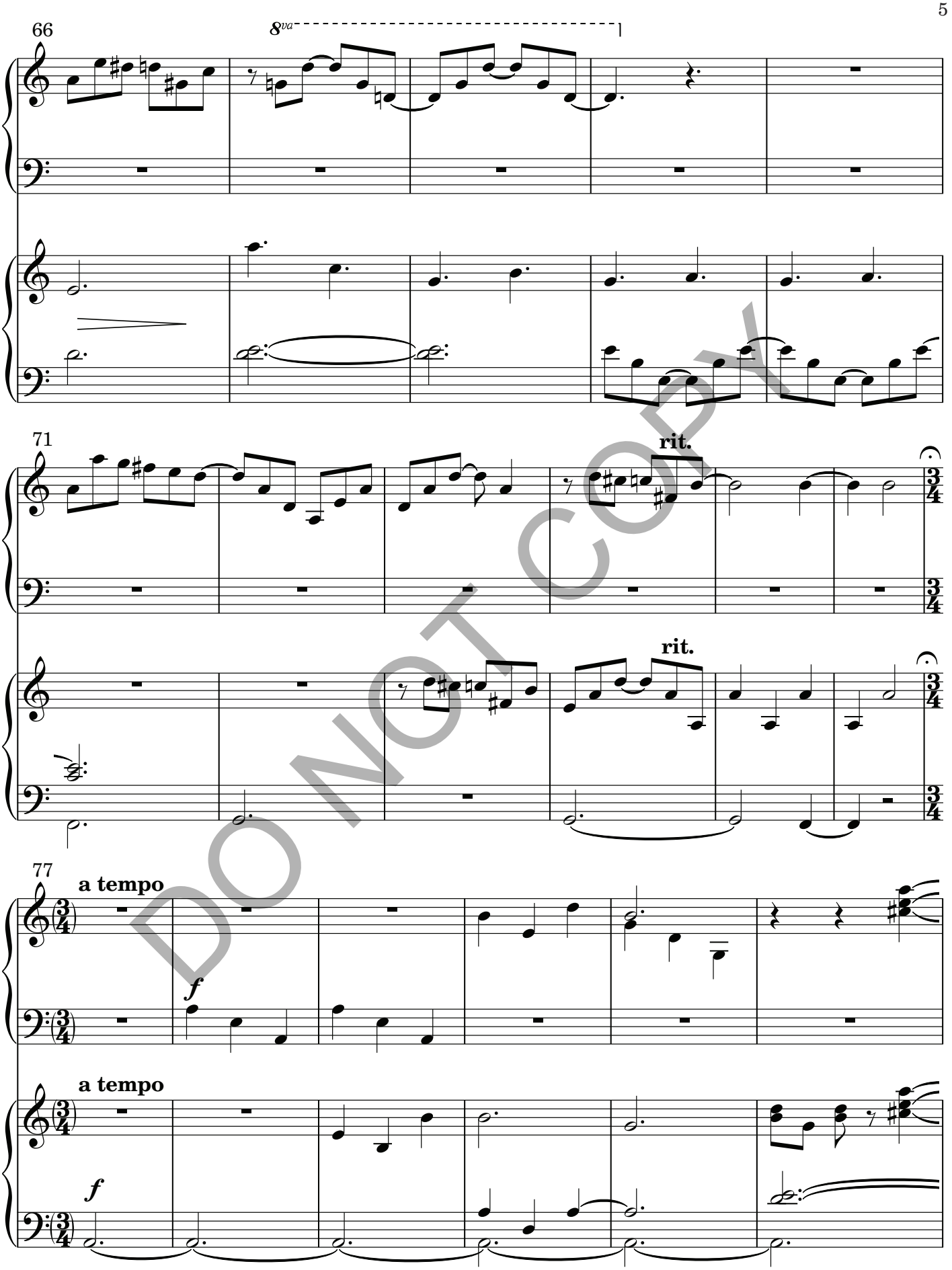

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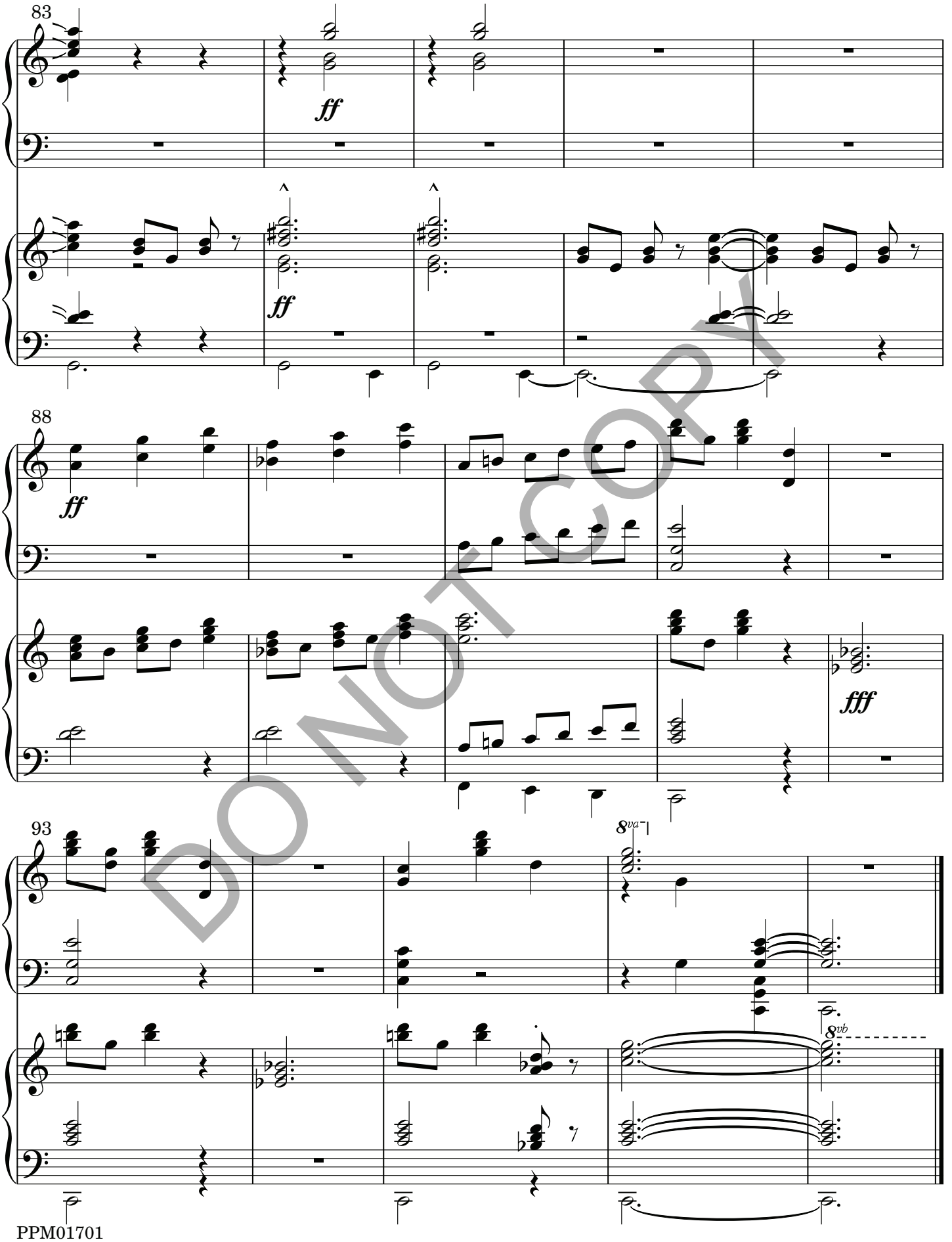

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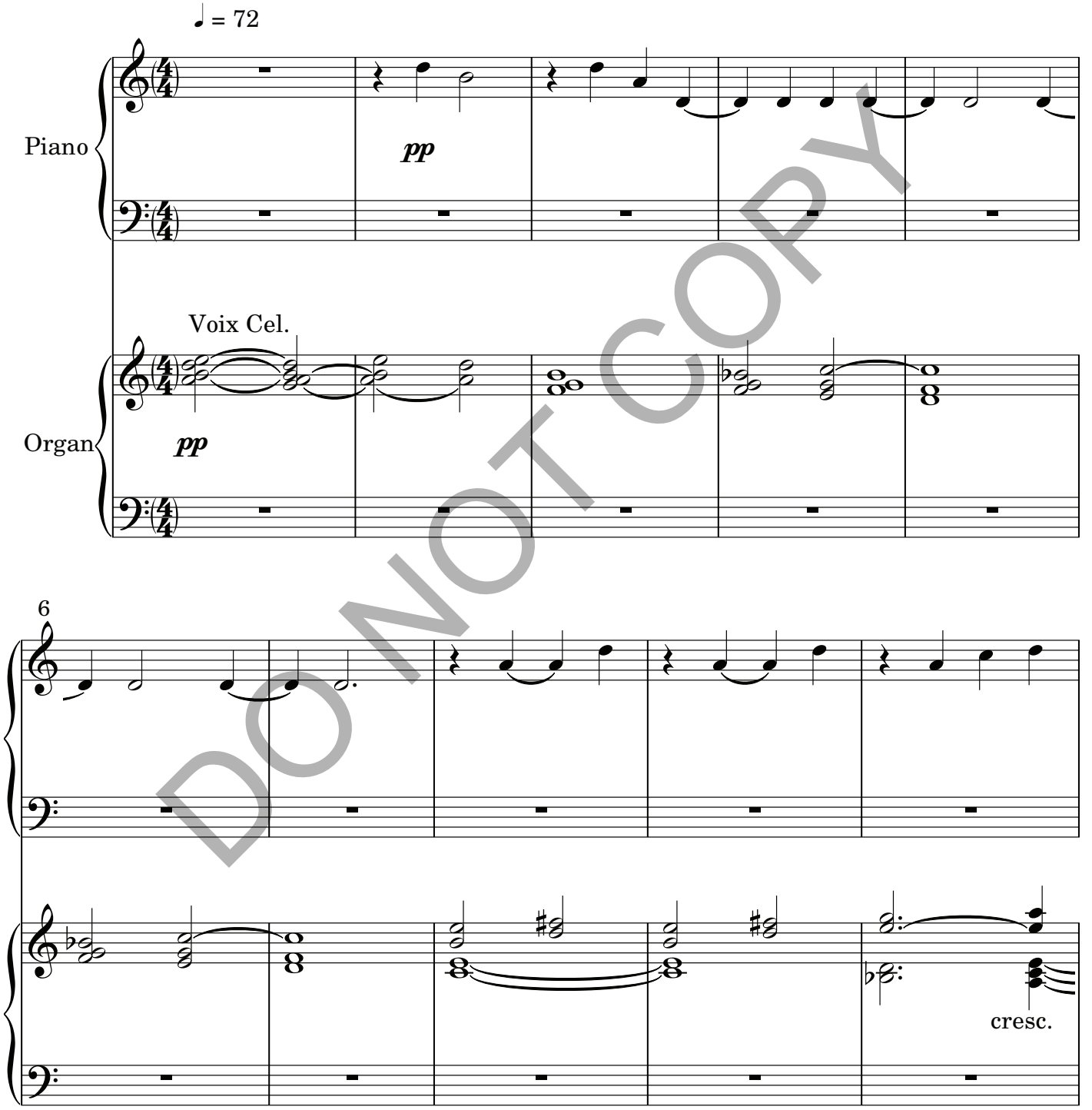
Communion



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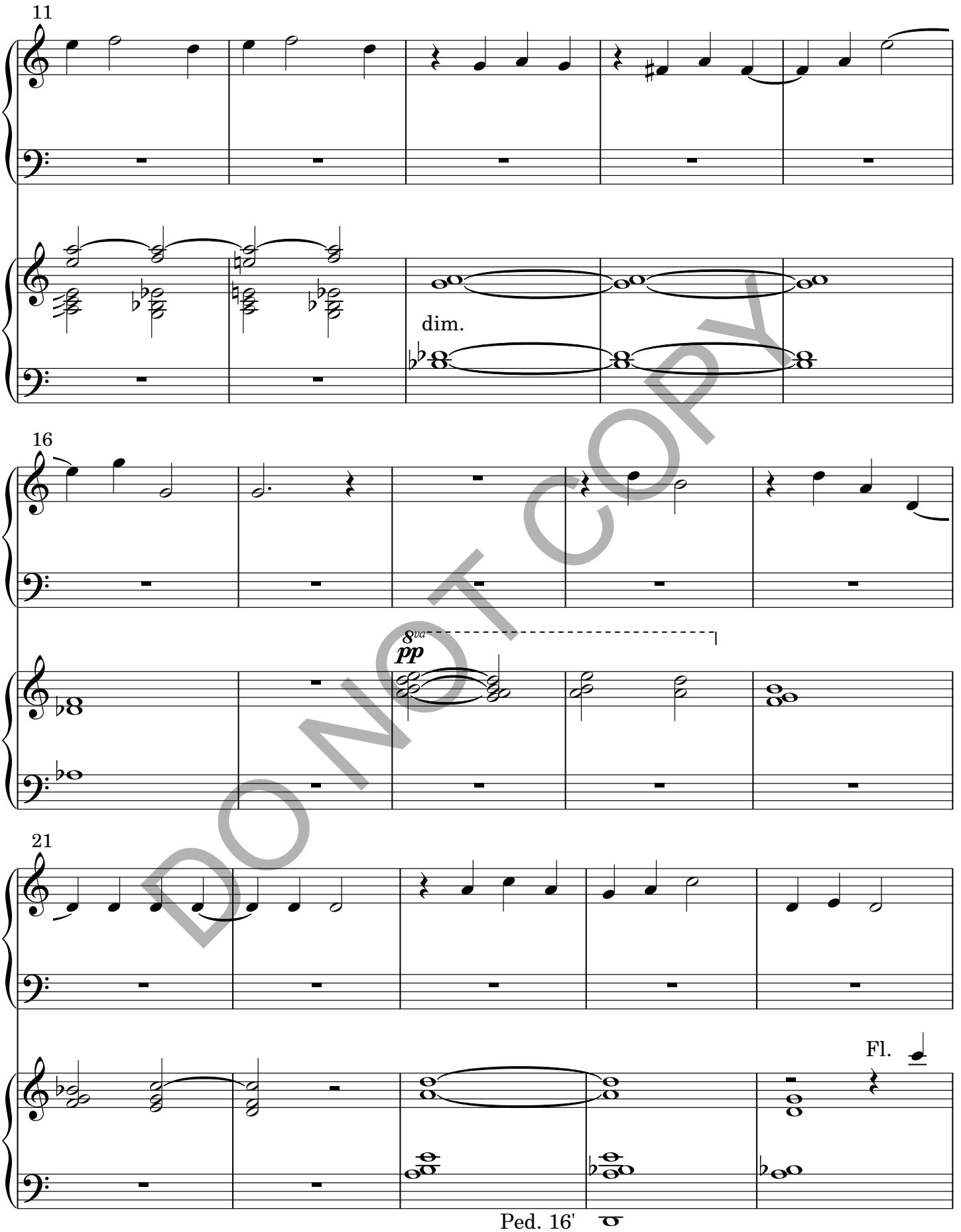

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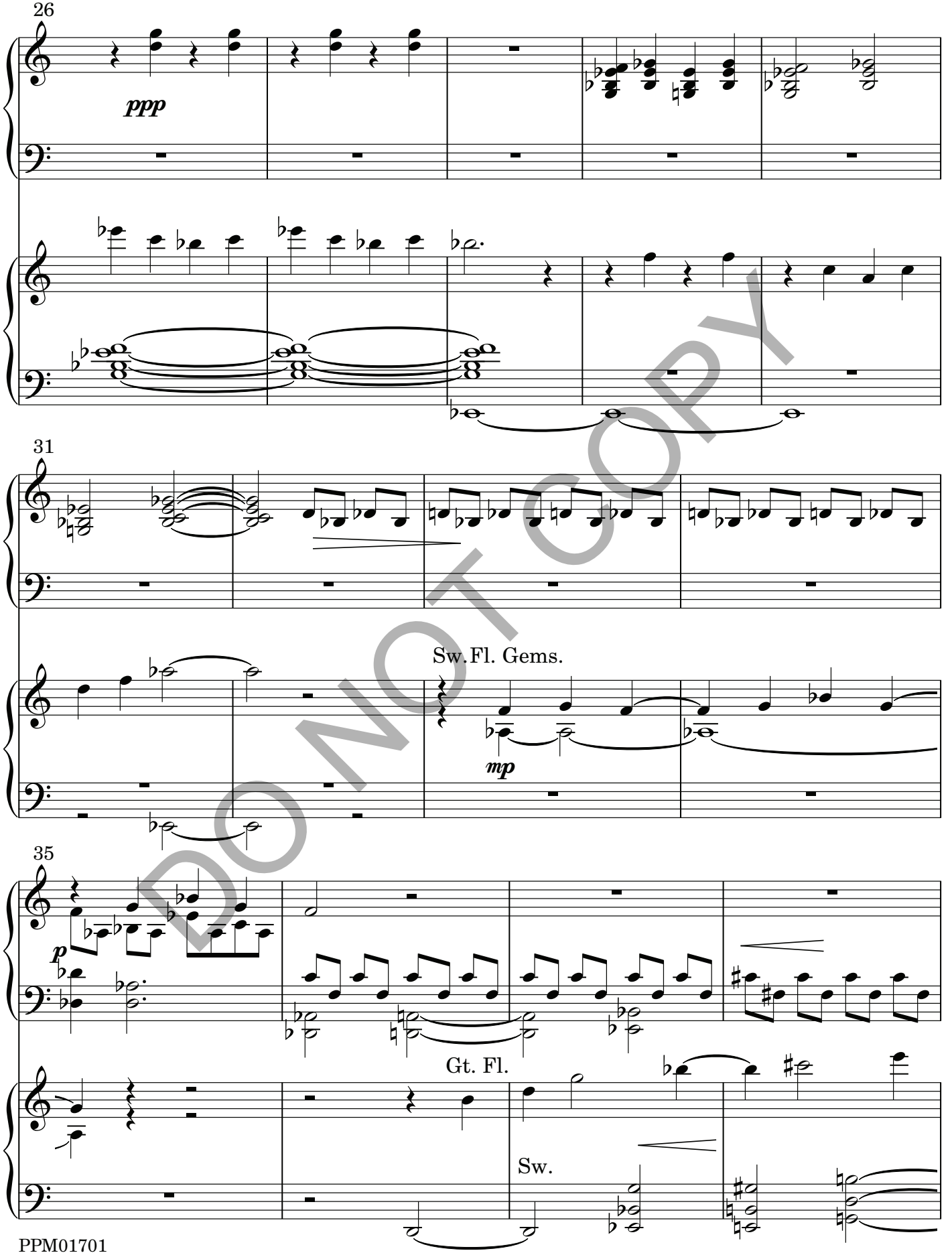

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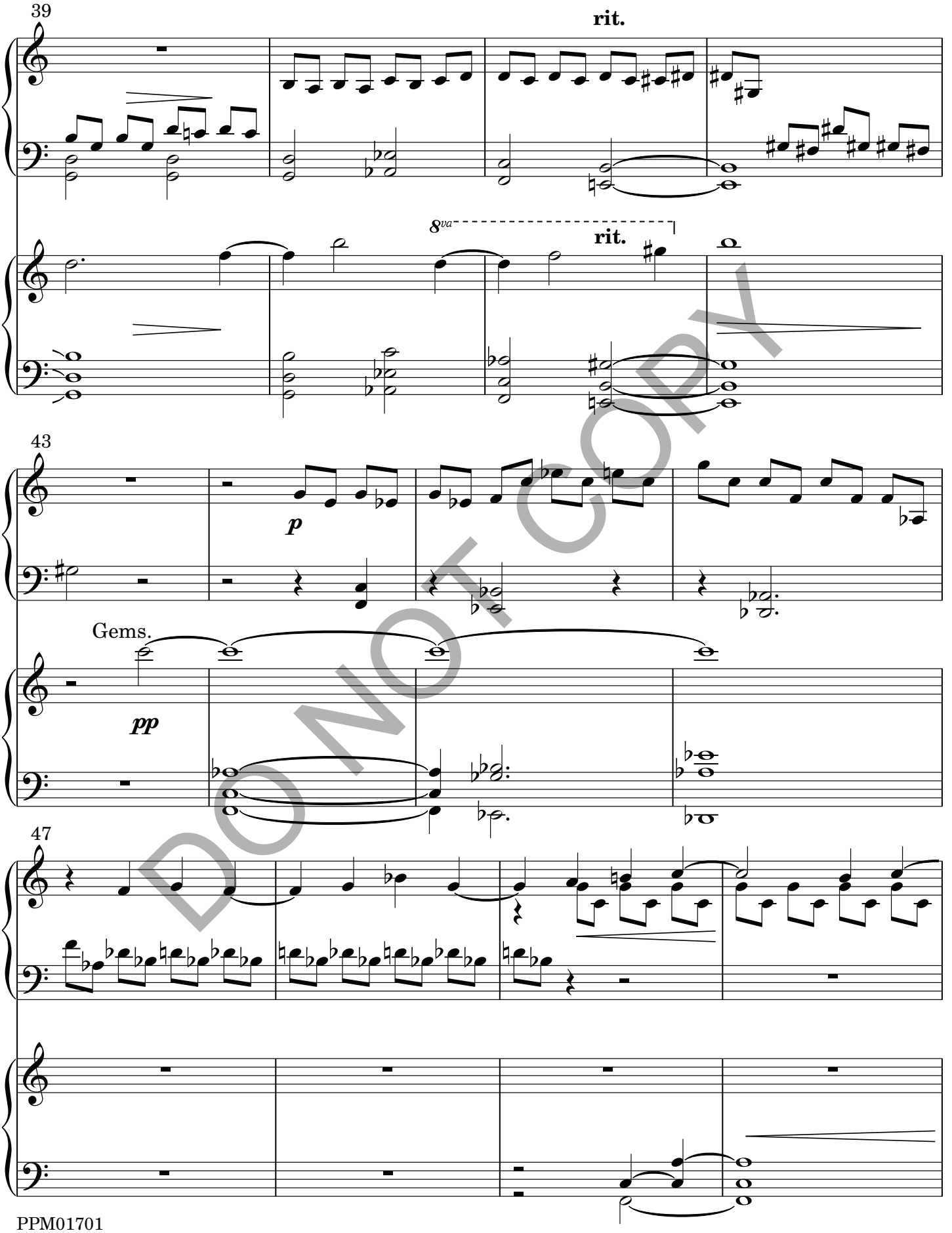

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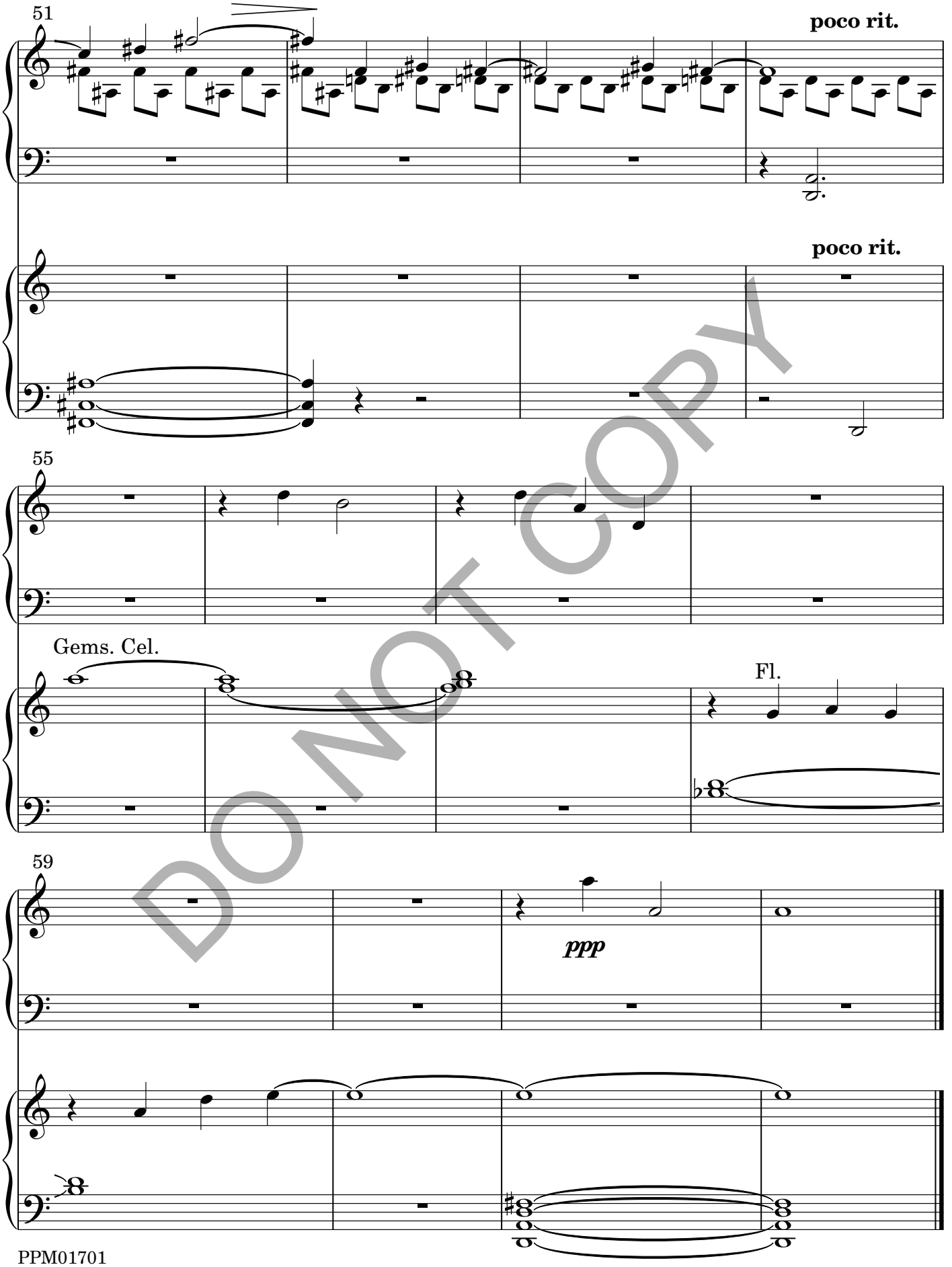

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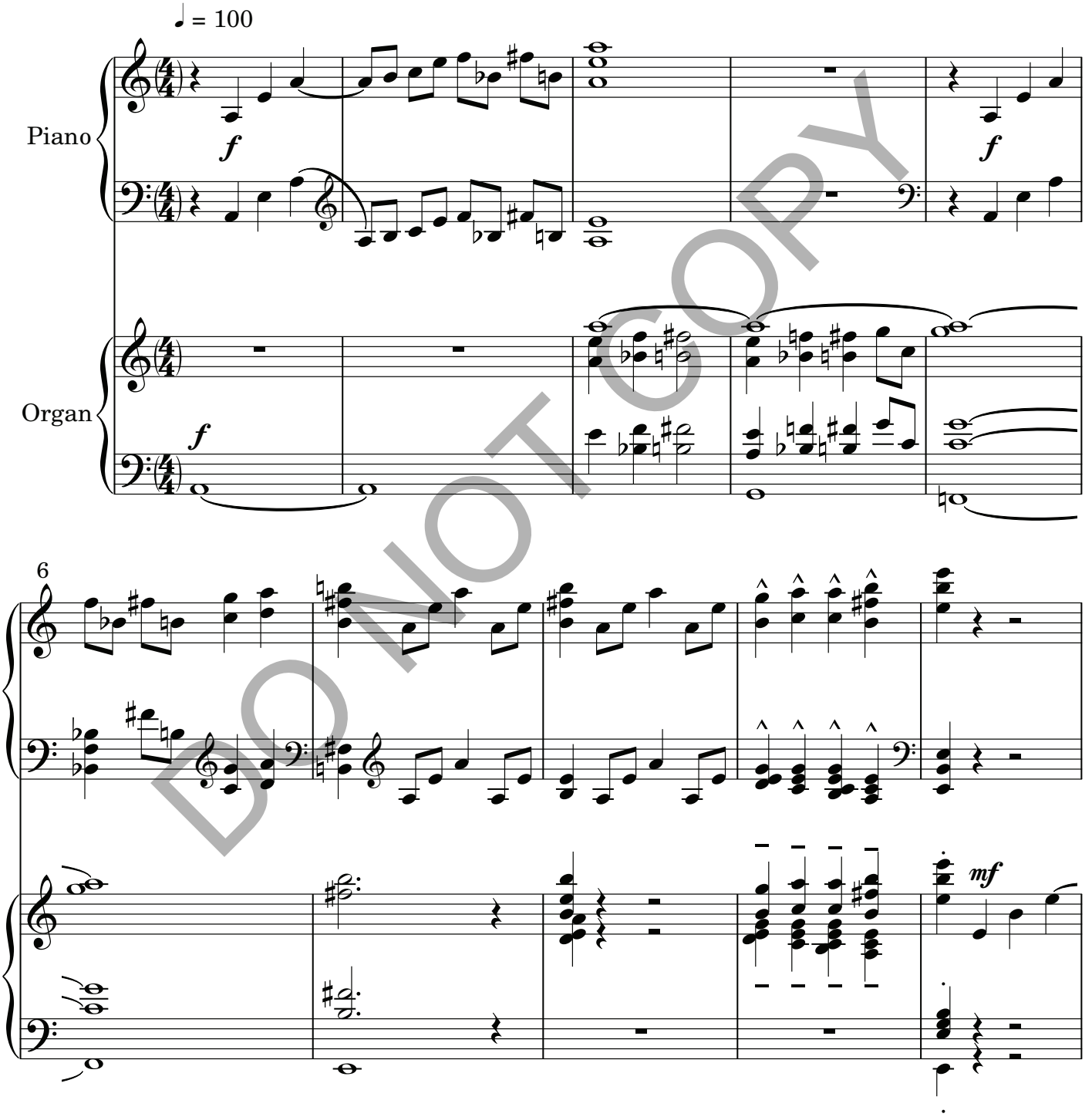
Postlude



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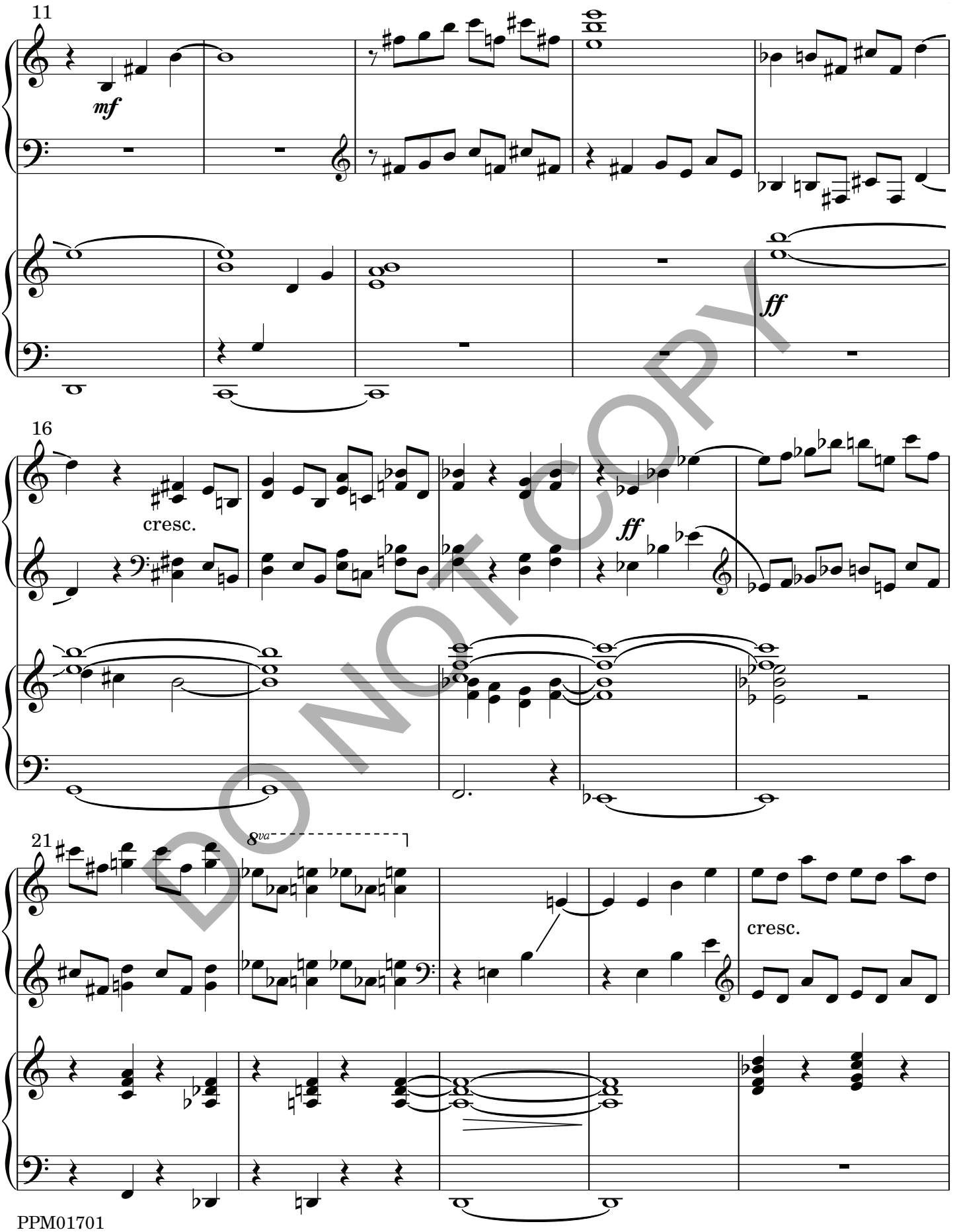

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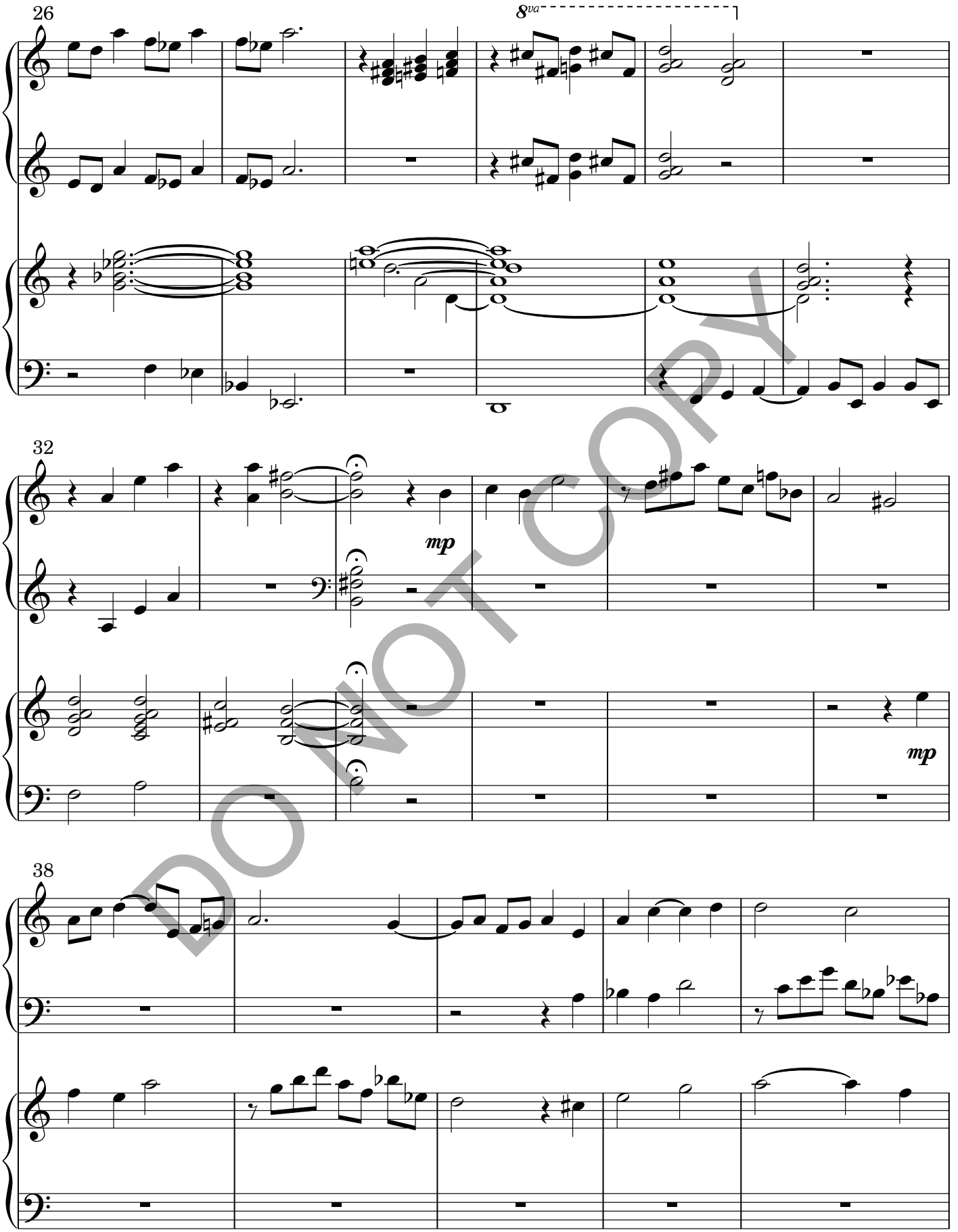

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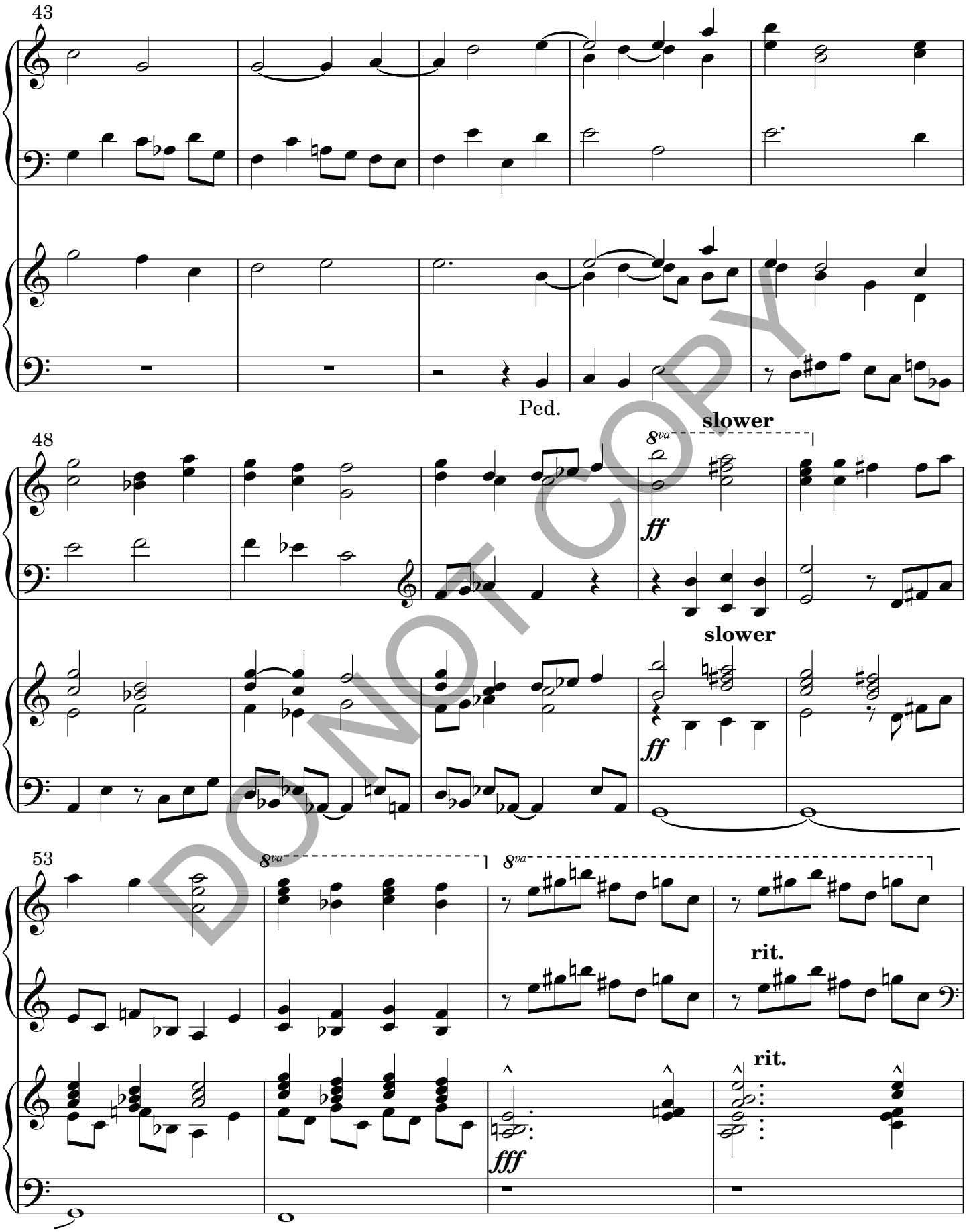

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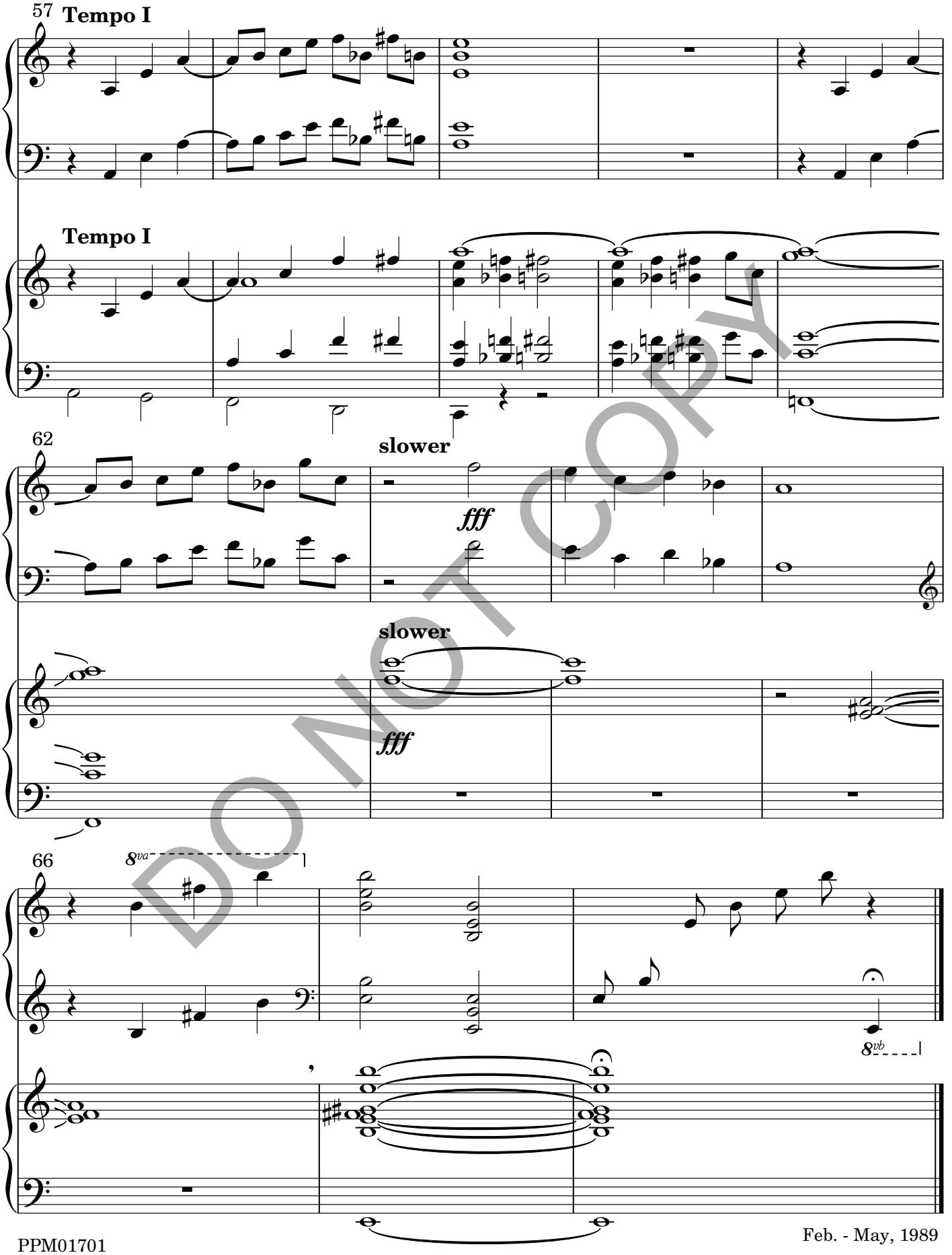

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