Raúl Parra

Byzantium

Commissioned by Alejandro Valdivia

For Saxophone Quartet

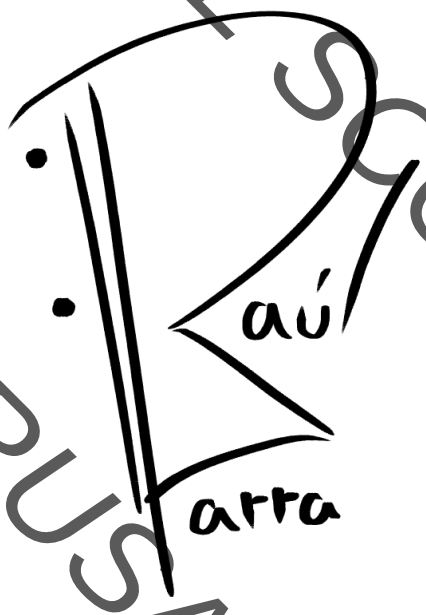


PERUSAL SCORE

Byzantium

For Saxophone Quartet
(2022)

I. Renovatio imperii
II. Porphyrogénnētos
III. Nova Roma



Raúl Parra

Commissioned by Alejandro Valdivia

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Special Thanks to:

My Parents and Brother

Brett Dawson
Alexander Burtzos

Alejandro Valdivia
Ryan Lutwin
Mateo Nader
Adrien Ozanne

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Instrumentation:

Soprano Sax
Alto Sax
Tenor Sax
Baritone Sax

Duration: 10-11~ Minutes

Performance Notes:

The Tremolo marks seen in the third movement during "Cedin Dedden" indicate flutter tonguing; a growl can be used instead.

The last fermata of the Song should decrescendo to as niente as possible

Program Notes:

The Piece Byzantium was conceived as a commission from a dear close friend and Saxophonist of mine out of his fascination with the Byzantine Empire's rich history, culture, and worldwide influence.

The Byzantine Empire, also known as the Eastern Roman Empire, was the continuation of the Roman Empire and its provinces during Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, when its capital city was Constantinople. It survived the fragmentation and fall of the Western Roman Empire in the year 5 AD and existed all the way until the Fall of Constantinople under the hands of the Ottoman Empire in the year 1453 AD (Wikipedia contributors, 2022).

This sax quartet aims to retell and summarize the vast history of this empire through three different movements, all focused on specific moments and eras which the empire went through till the end.

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Movement one, “Renovatio imperii” (Renewal of the empire), aims to depict the birth of the Byzantine Empire out of the fall of the Western Roman empire under the leadership of Constantine I, and the reconquests of the west under the ruling of Justinian I, using and rearranging the orthodox chant “Only Begotten Son” also known as “Justinian’s Hymn” with the purpose of illustrating said narrative.

Movement two, “Porphyrogénnētos” (Born in the purple), retells of the Islamic conquests which the empire faced after the unification of the Arabian world under the influence of the prophet Muhammad, where the Byzantines would lose all of their major provinces, from Egypt to North Africa and Constantinople would be besieged, with the Byzantines barely able to win the battle through the use of Greek Fire, Represented through the use of an approximation of the Arabic Maqam scale system in the first section. The Empire would be left greatly wounded and reduced after the truly brutal conquests by the Muslim world, leading it into a dark age that’s retold through imitation of Byzantine chants and a recalling of “Justinian’s Hymn” that transitions into the second golden age of the Byzantines under the leadership of Basil II, represented through a rearrangement of the chant “Phos Hilaron” with a slightly bitter but mostly hopeful outlook for the future.

Movement Three “Nova Roma” (New Rome), tells of the rise of the Ottoman empire through the use of the famous march “Cedin Dedden” and focuses on the siege and fall of Constantinople during the year 1453 AD, with a quick battle cry from the byzantines, the third movement combines multiple previous tunes and melodies from the previous movements and pitches them against each other, from the chants of “Only Begotten Son” and “Phos Hilaron” to the eastern tunes of the second movement and the imminent domination of “Cedin Dedden”, ultimately recalling the intro of the first movement to parallel the fall of the Western Roman Empire and announce the birth of a new dominating empire and the tragic fall of the Byzantines, with its last ever emperor Constantine XI leading his people into battle to disappear forever in the battlefield under hands of history. A last sour and melancholic recalling of a now-gone nation is cried one more time, and with it, a legacy that would impact human culture to this very day.
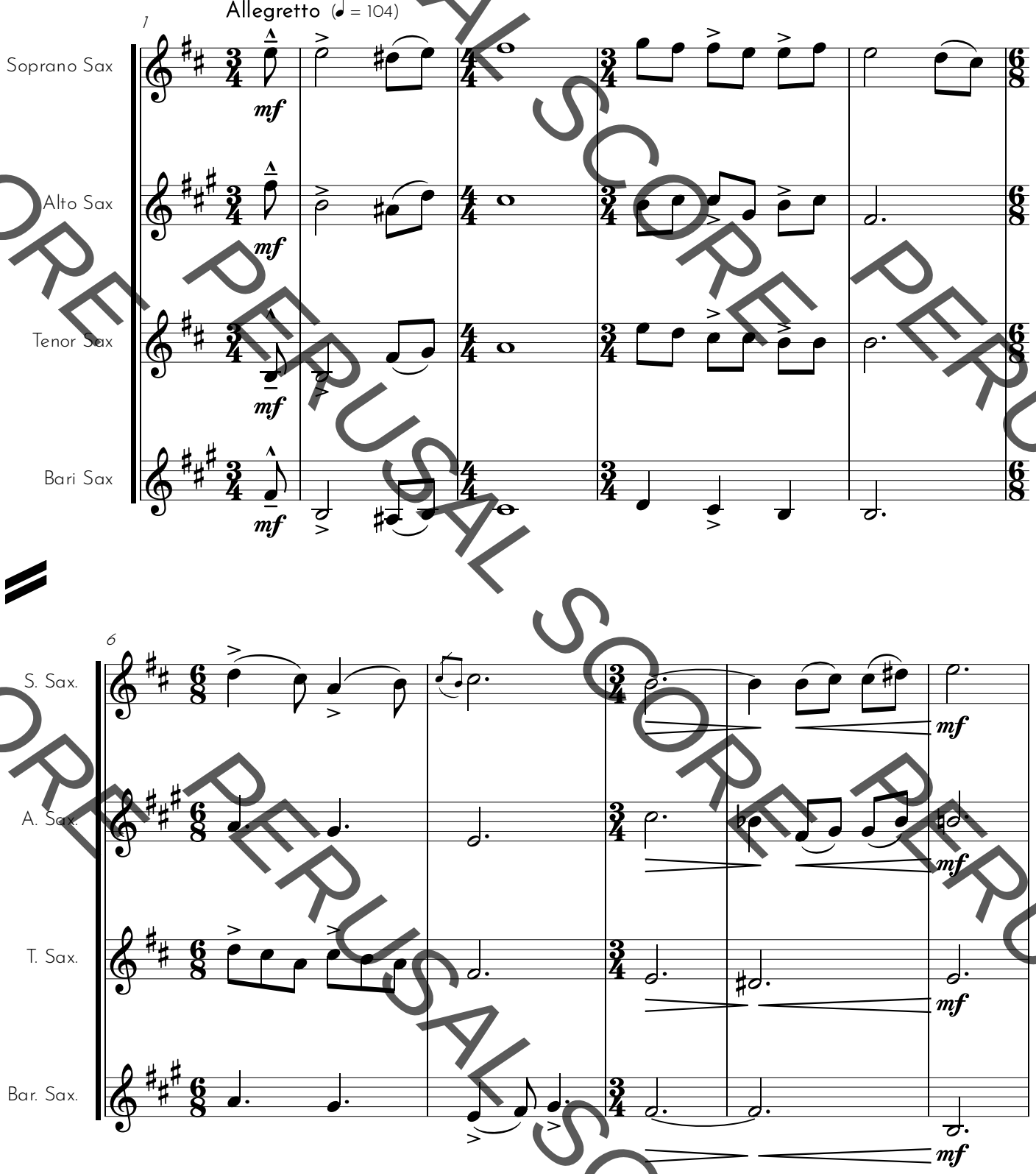
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Full score

Byzantium
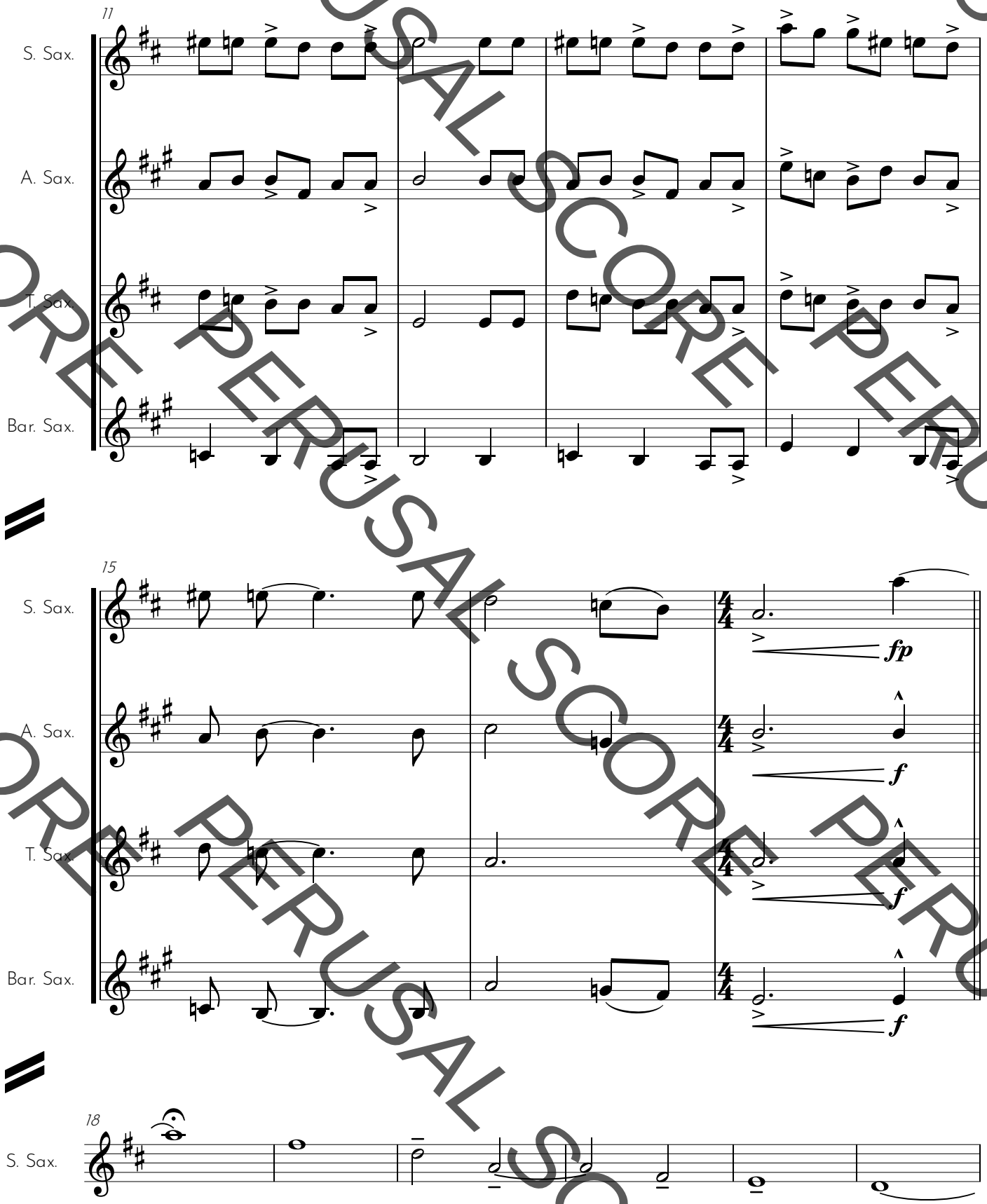
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I. Renovatio imperii

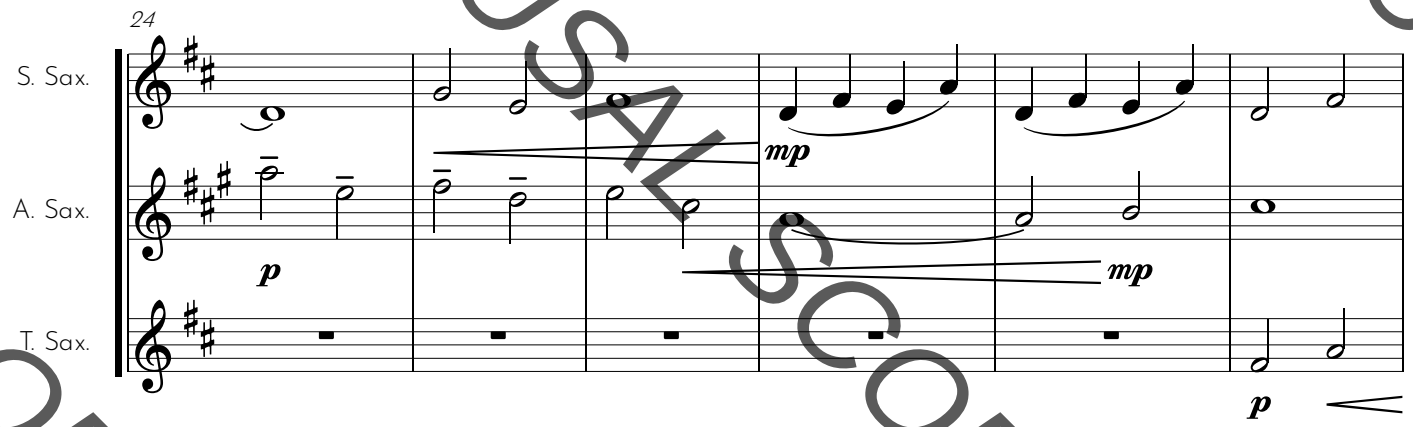


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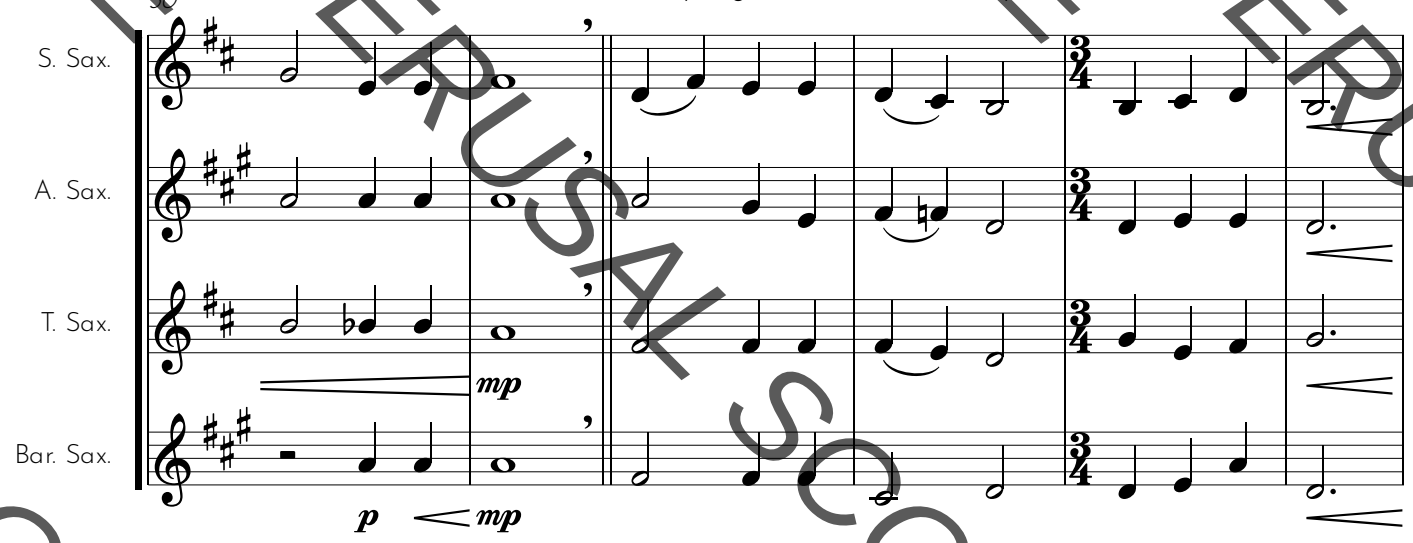
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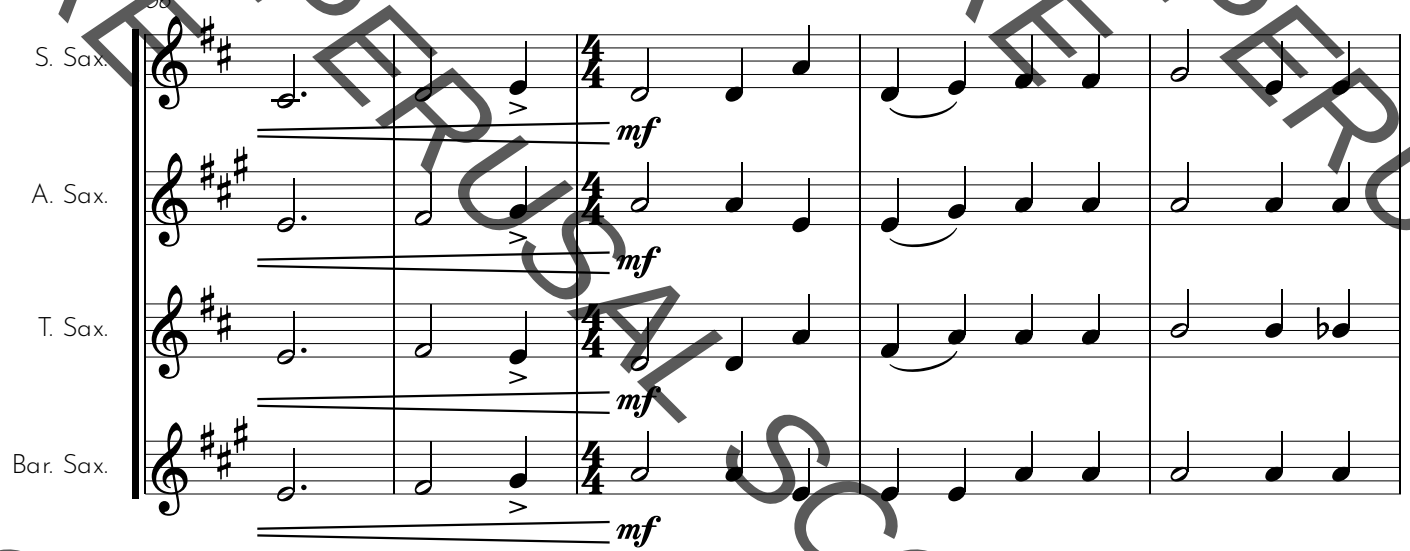


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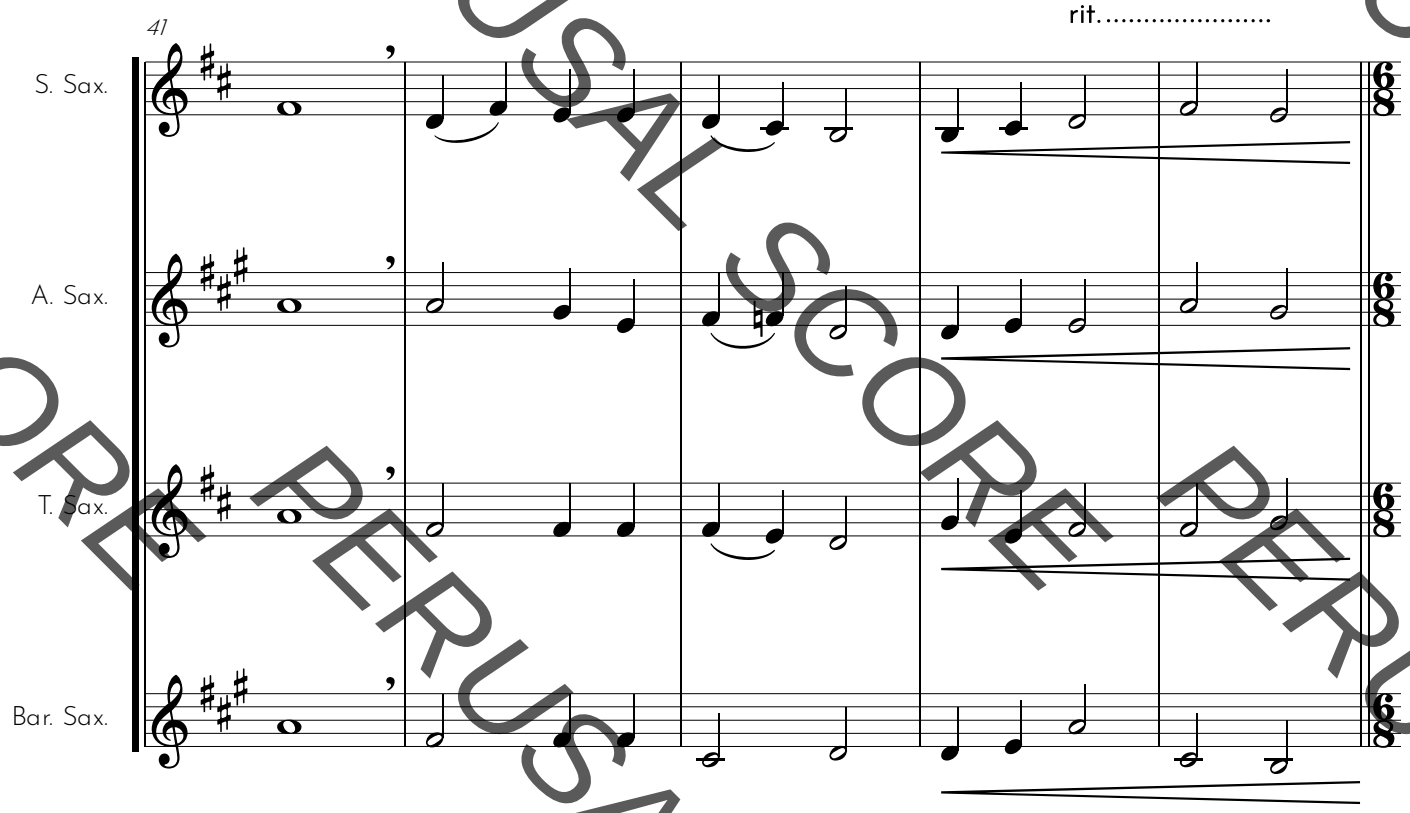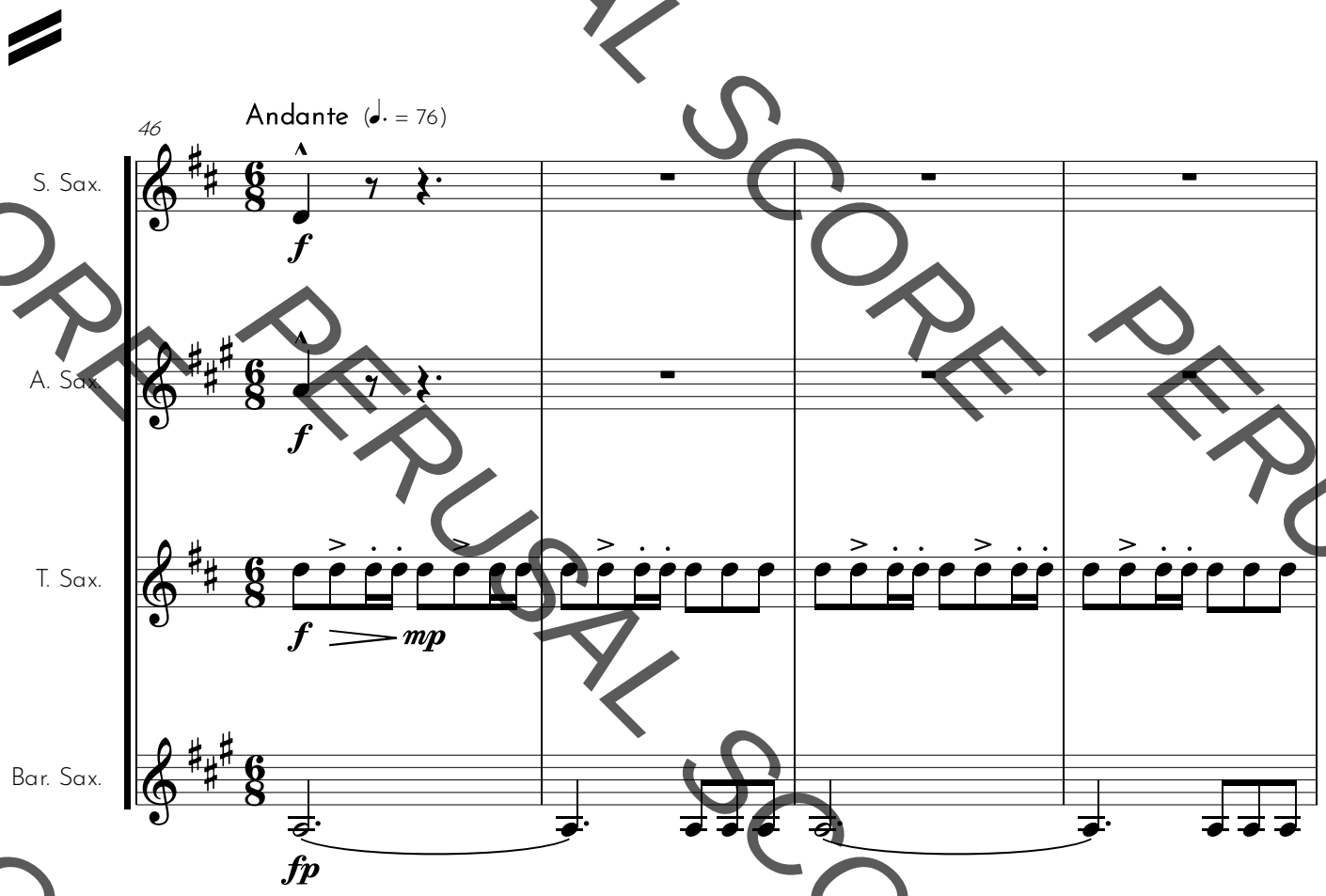


"Only Begotten Son/Justinian's Hymn"
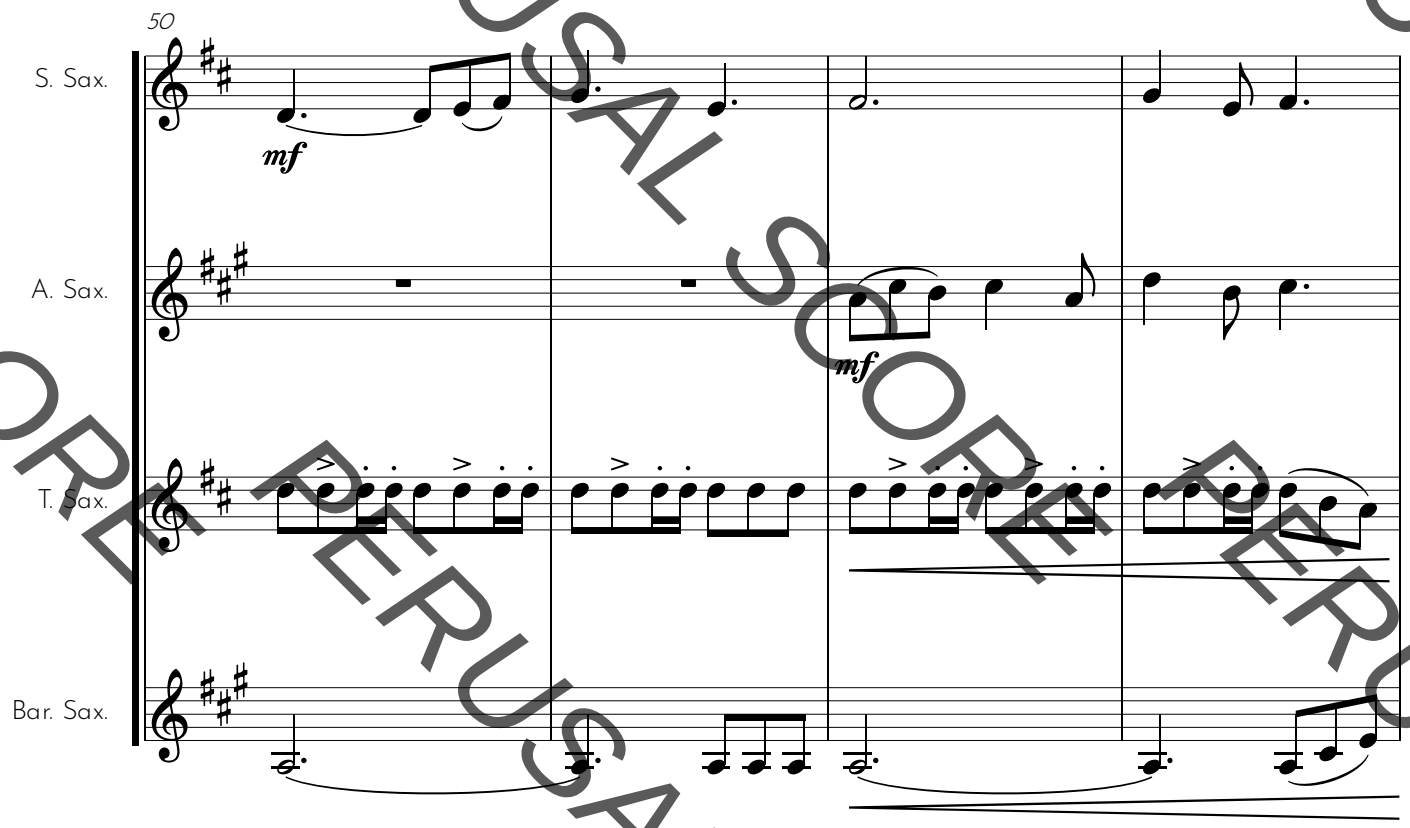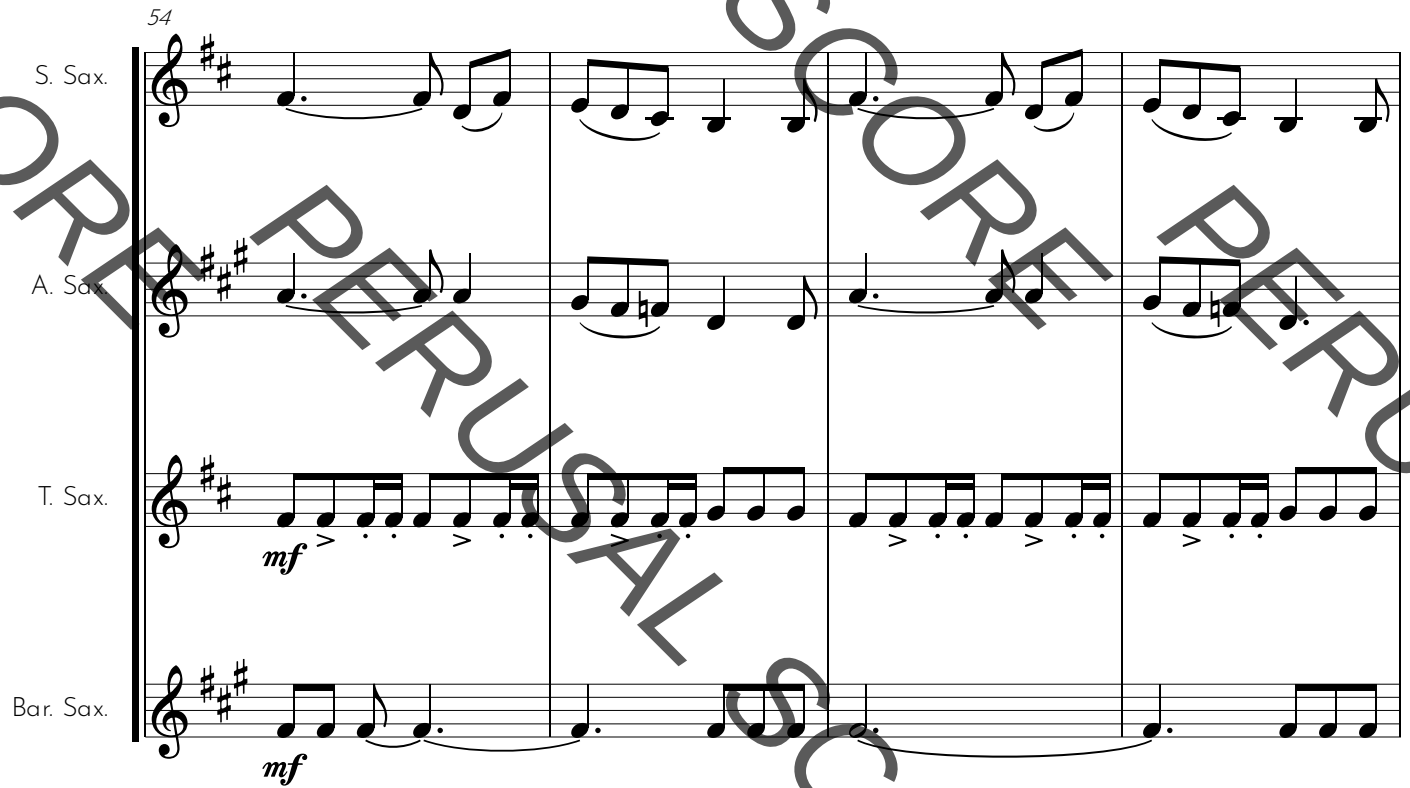




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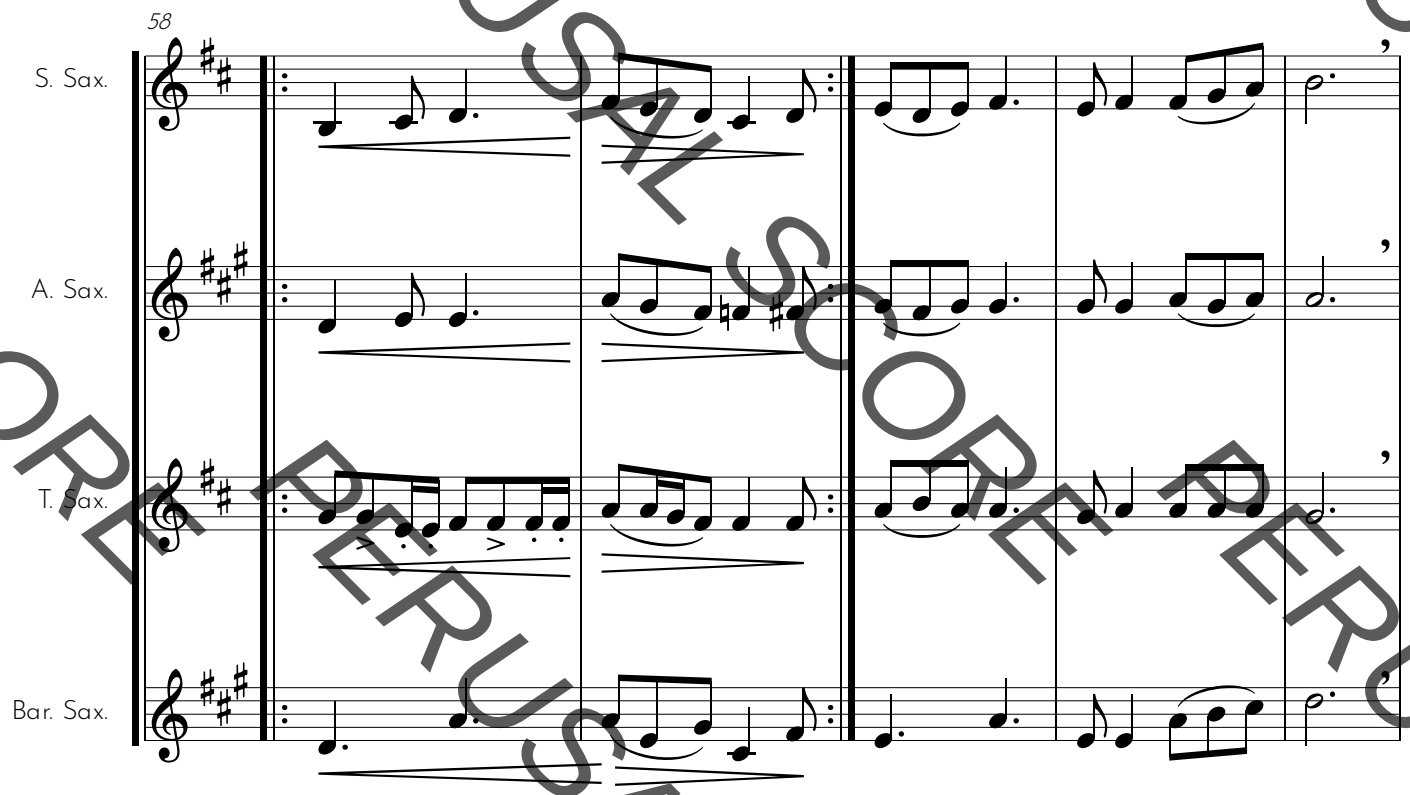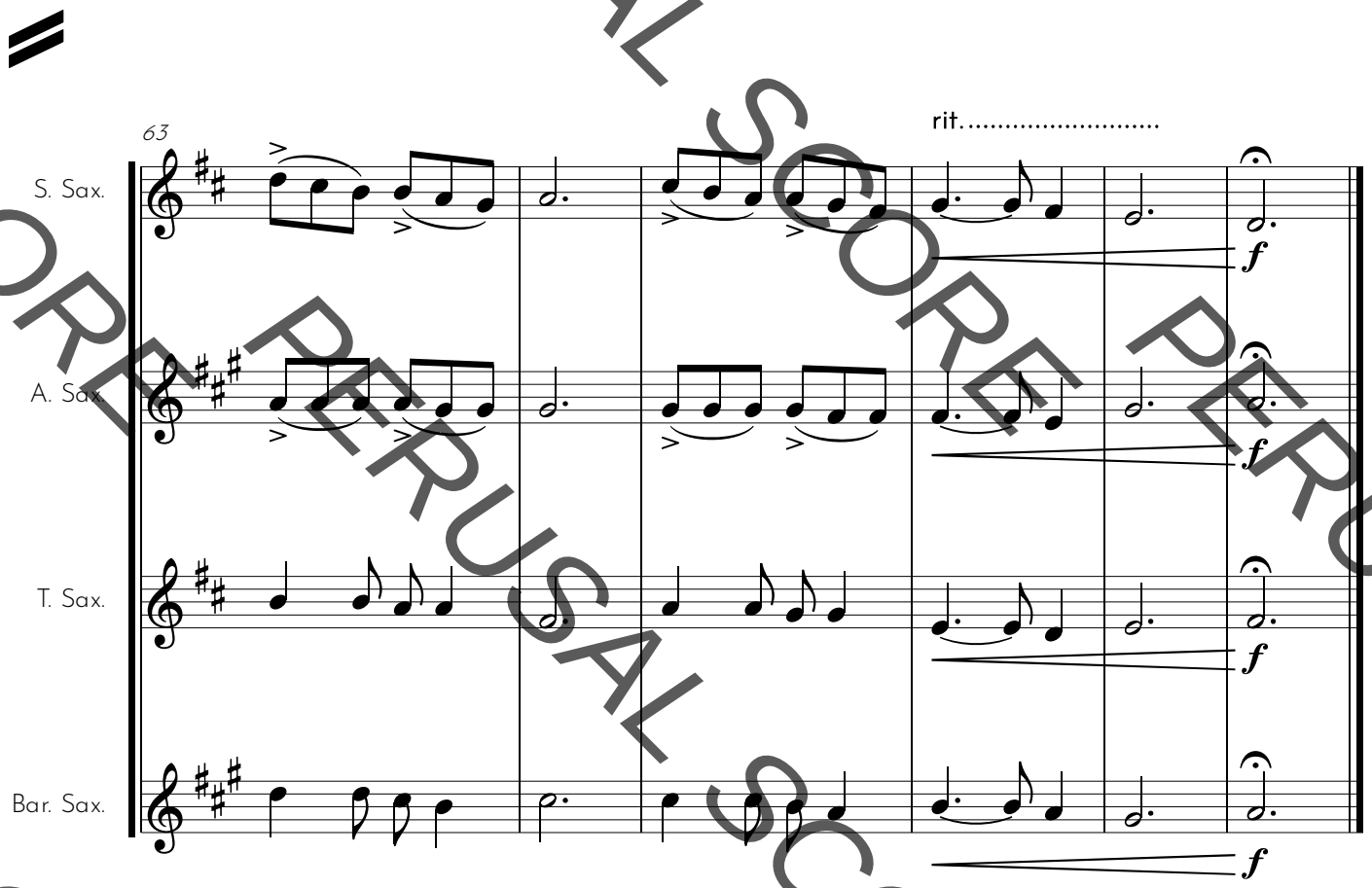




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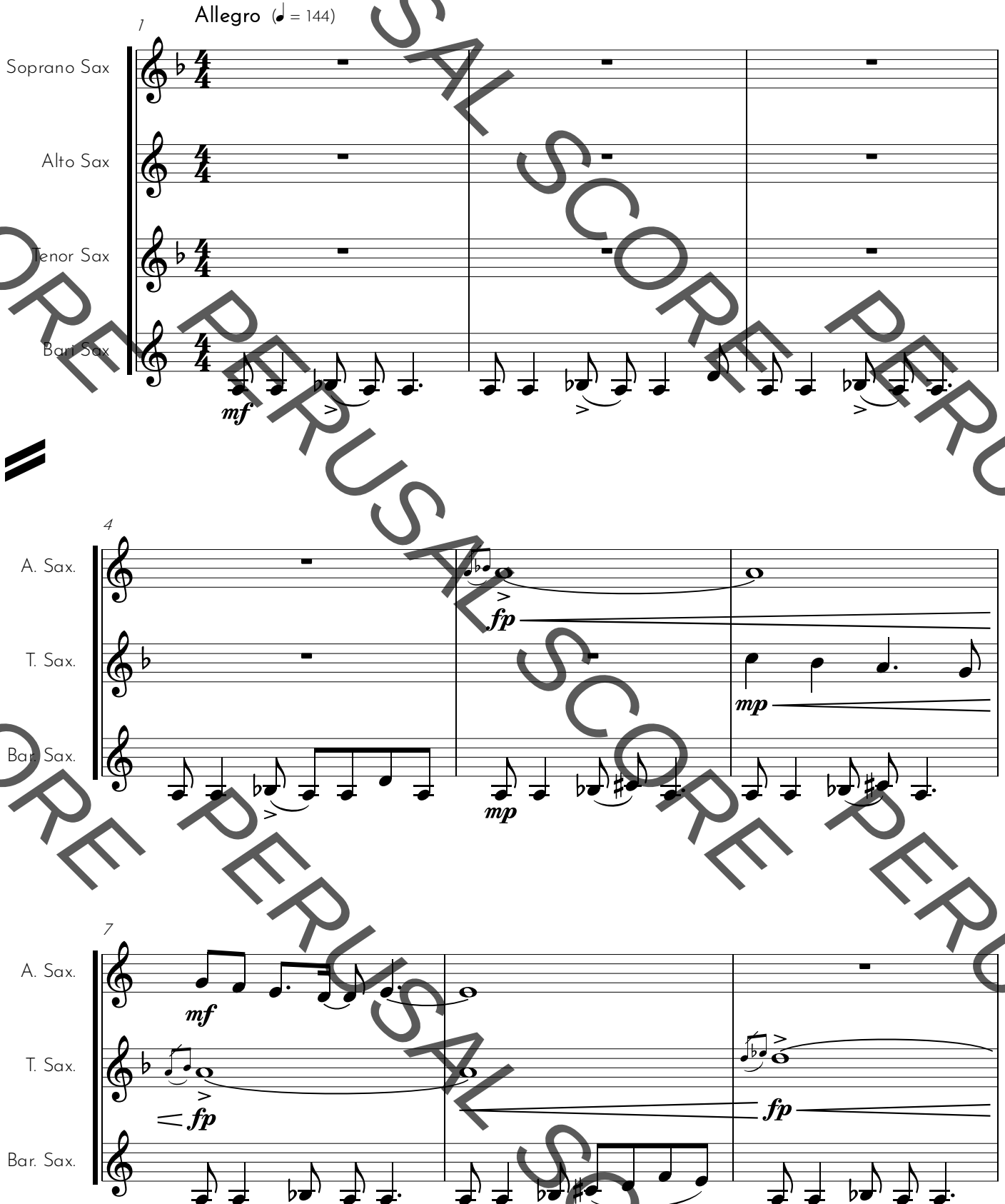




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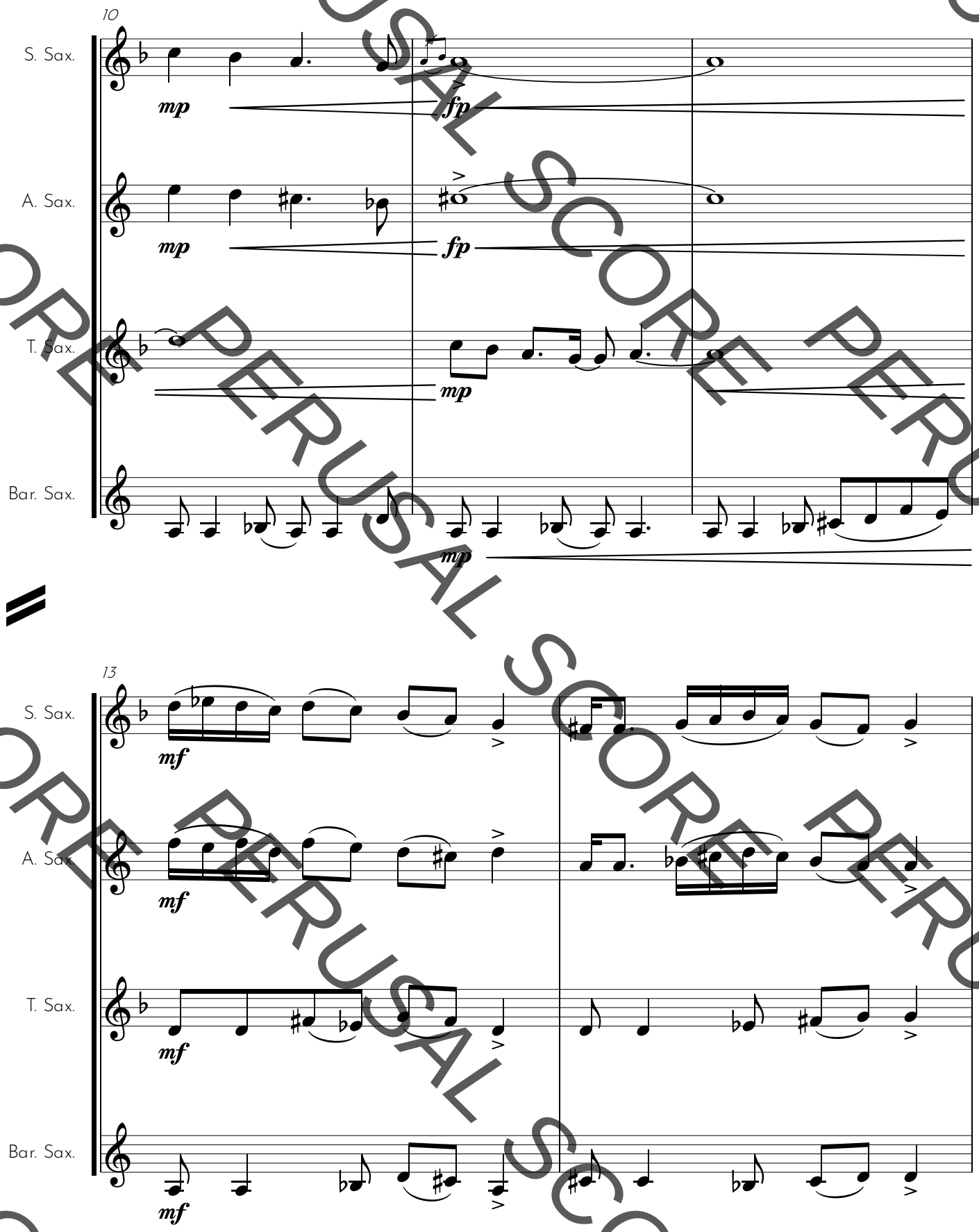




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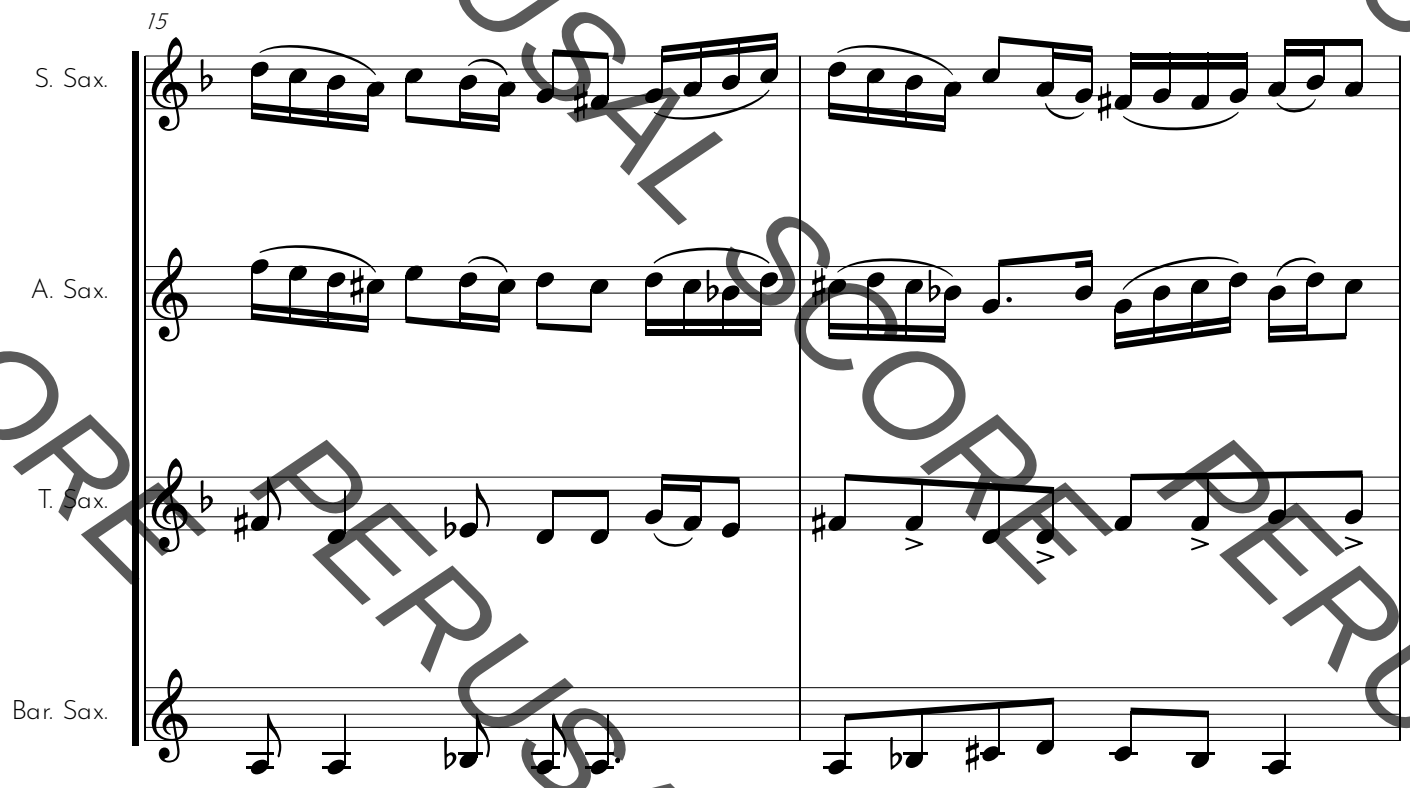
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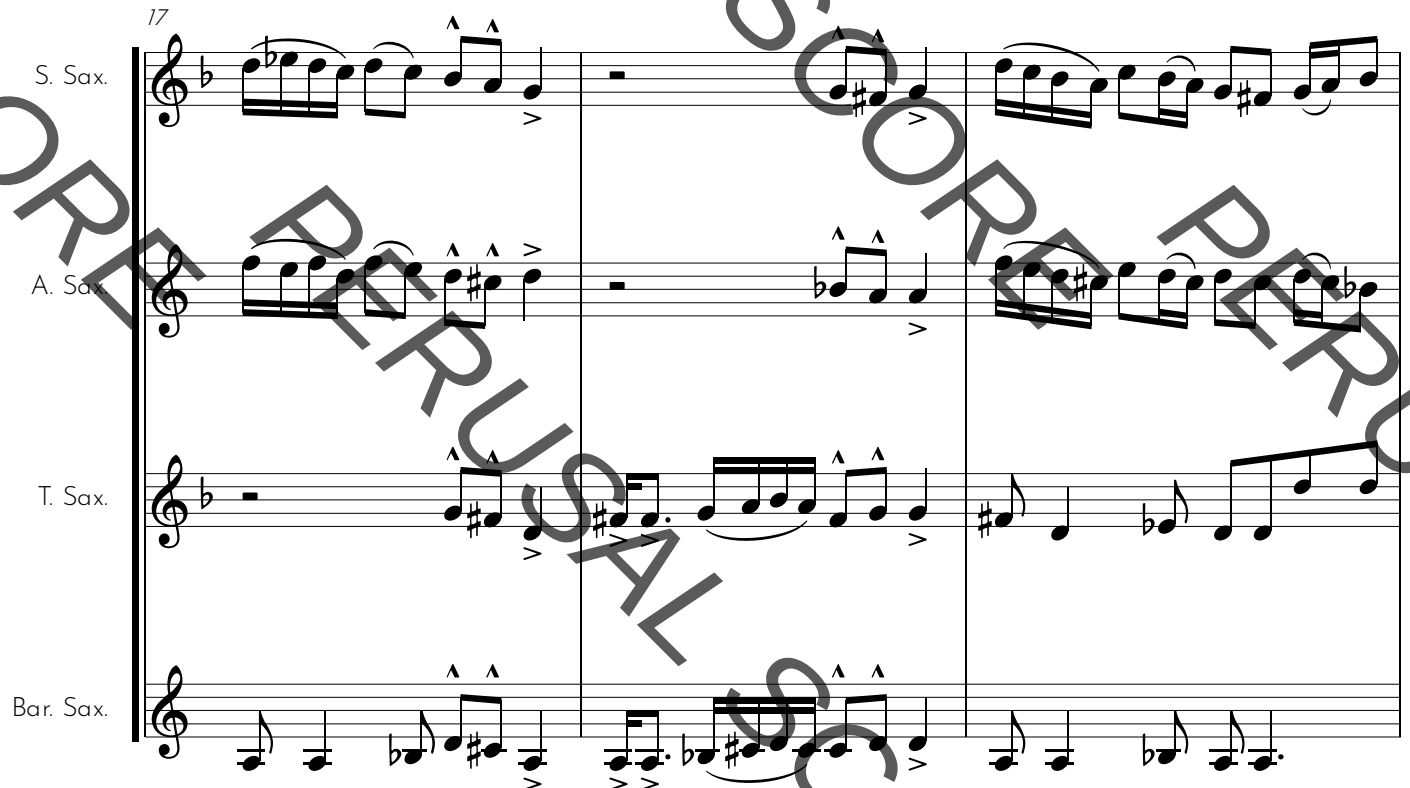


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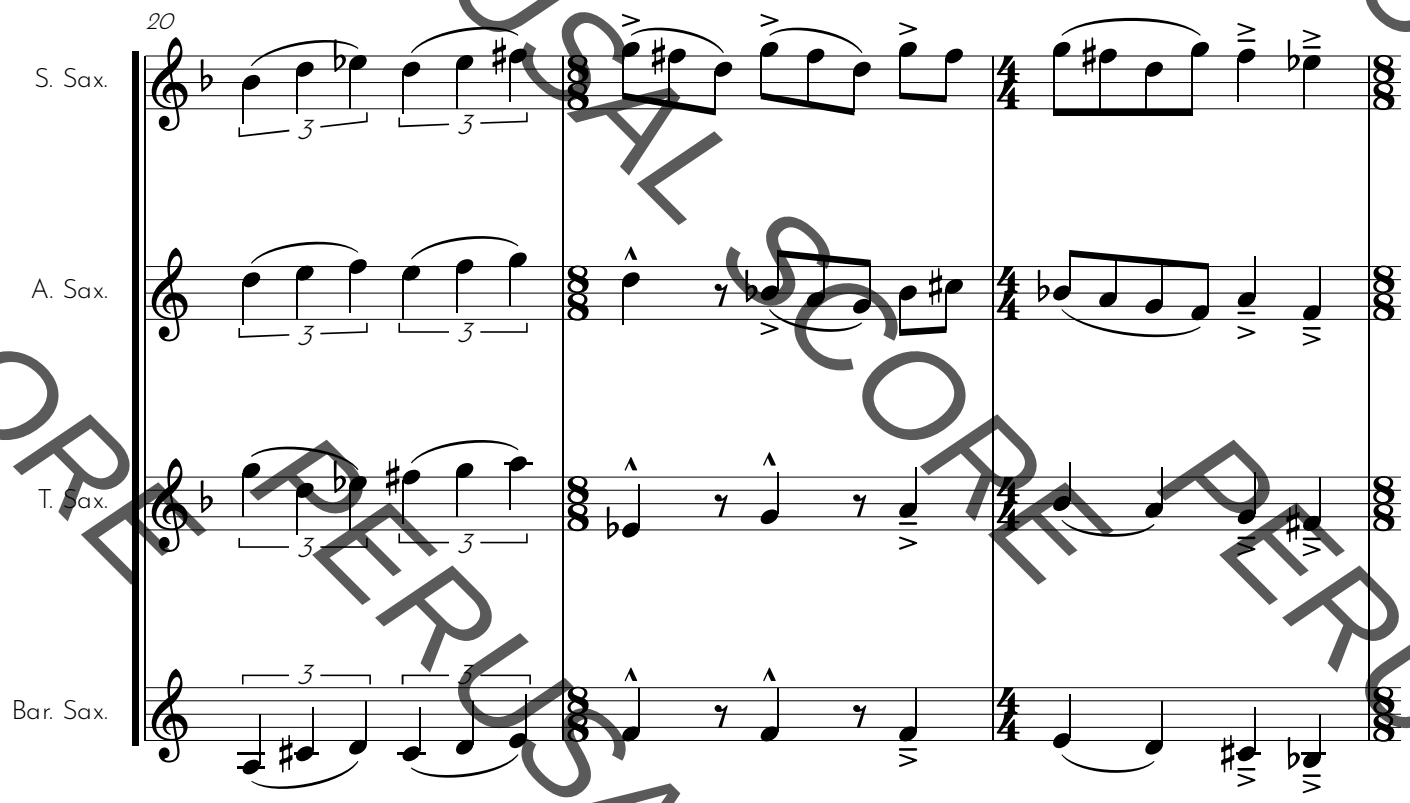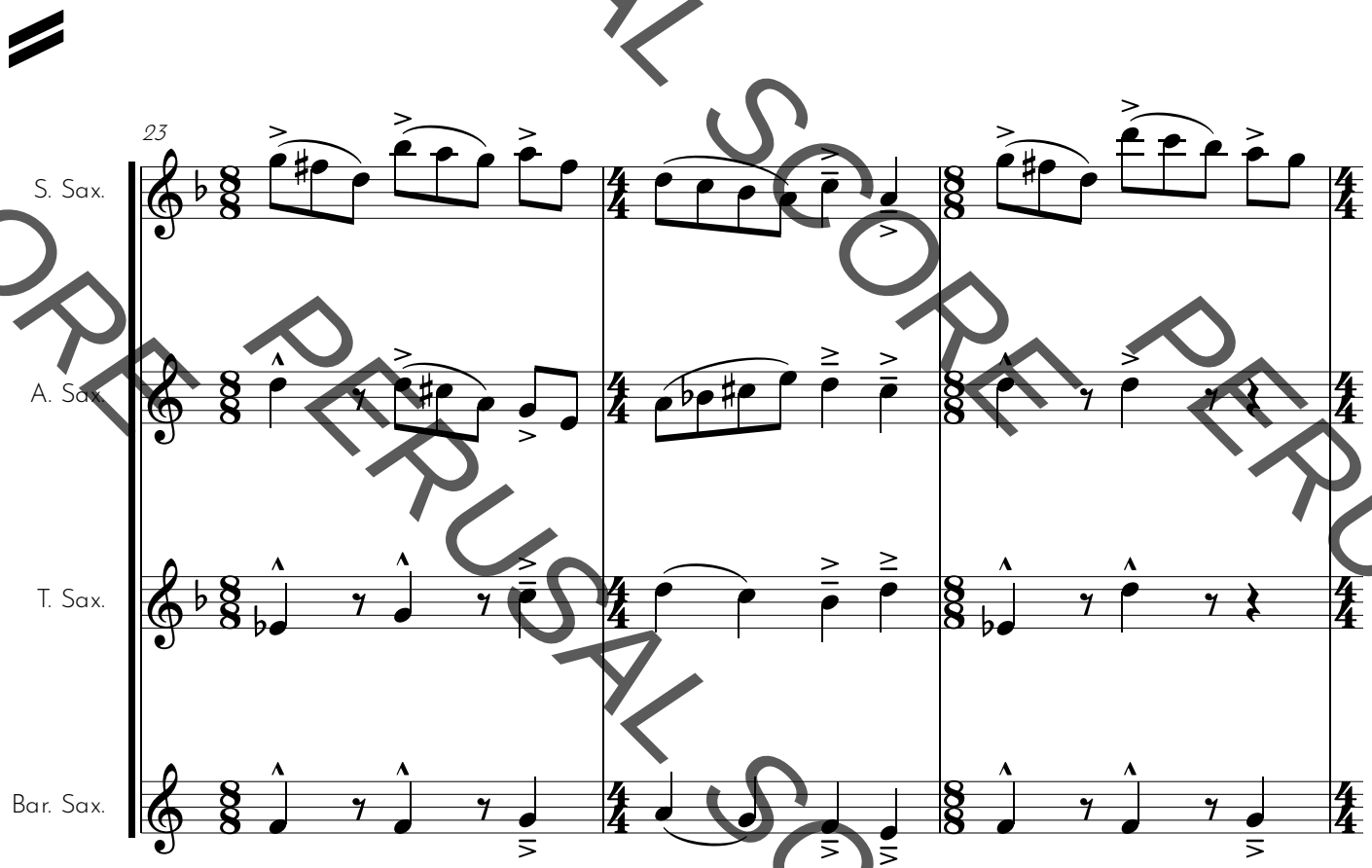


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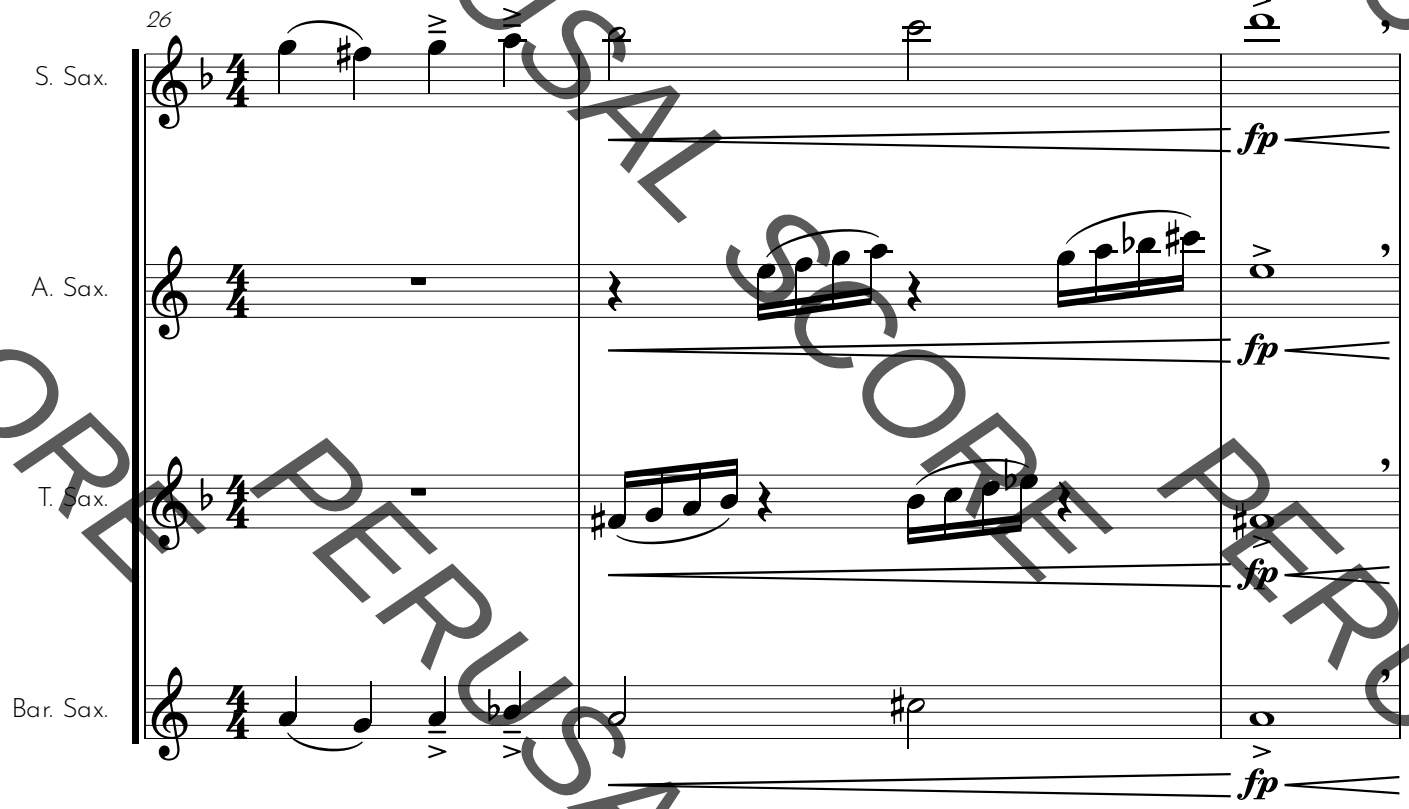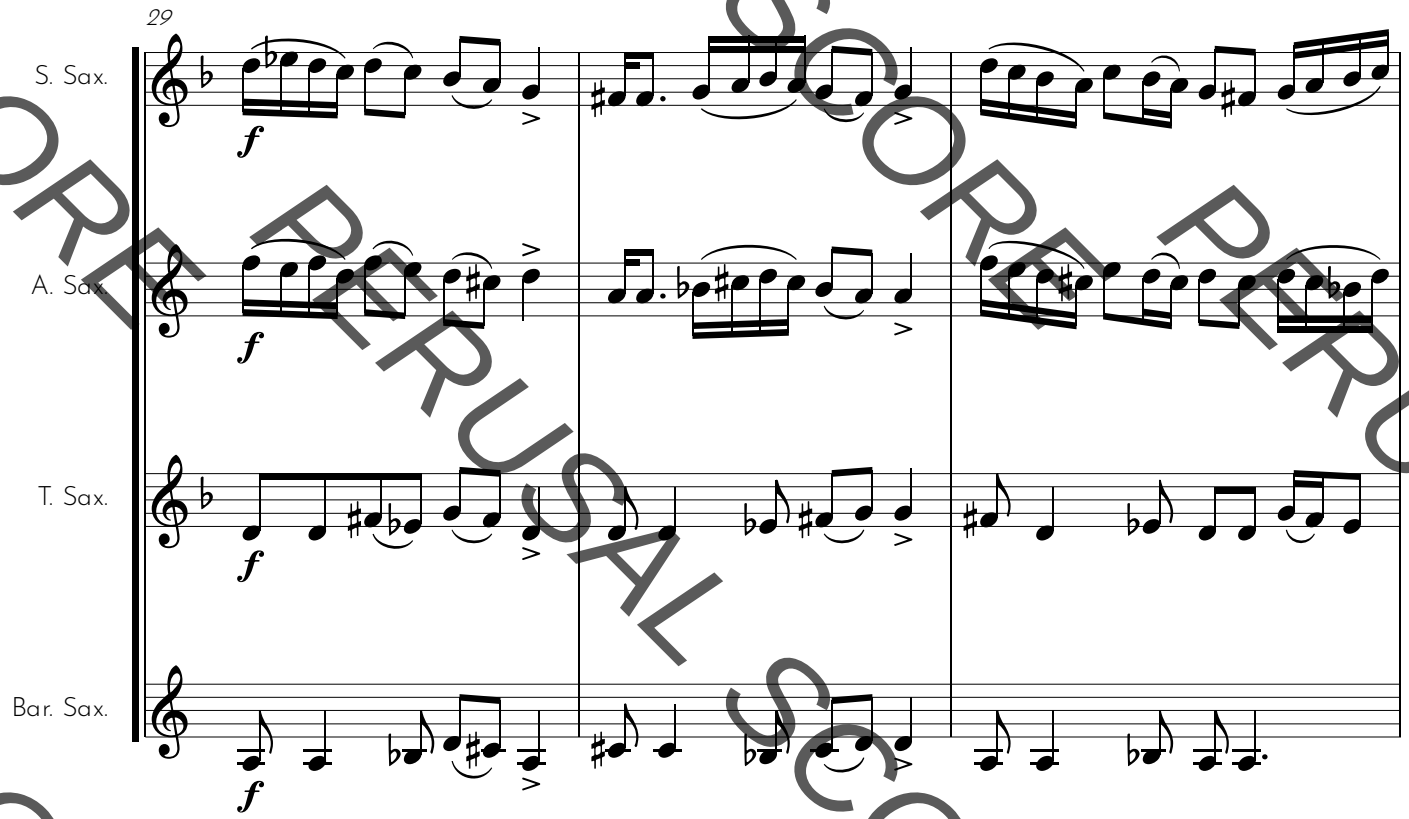




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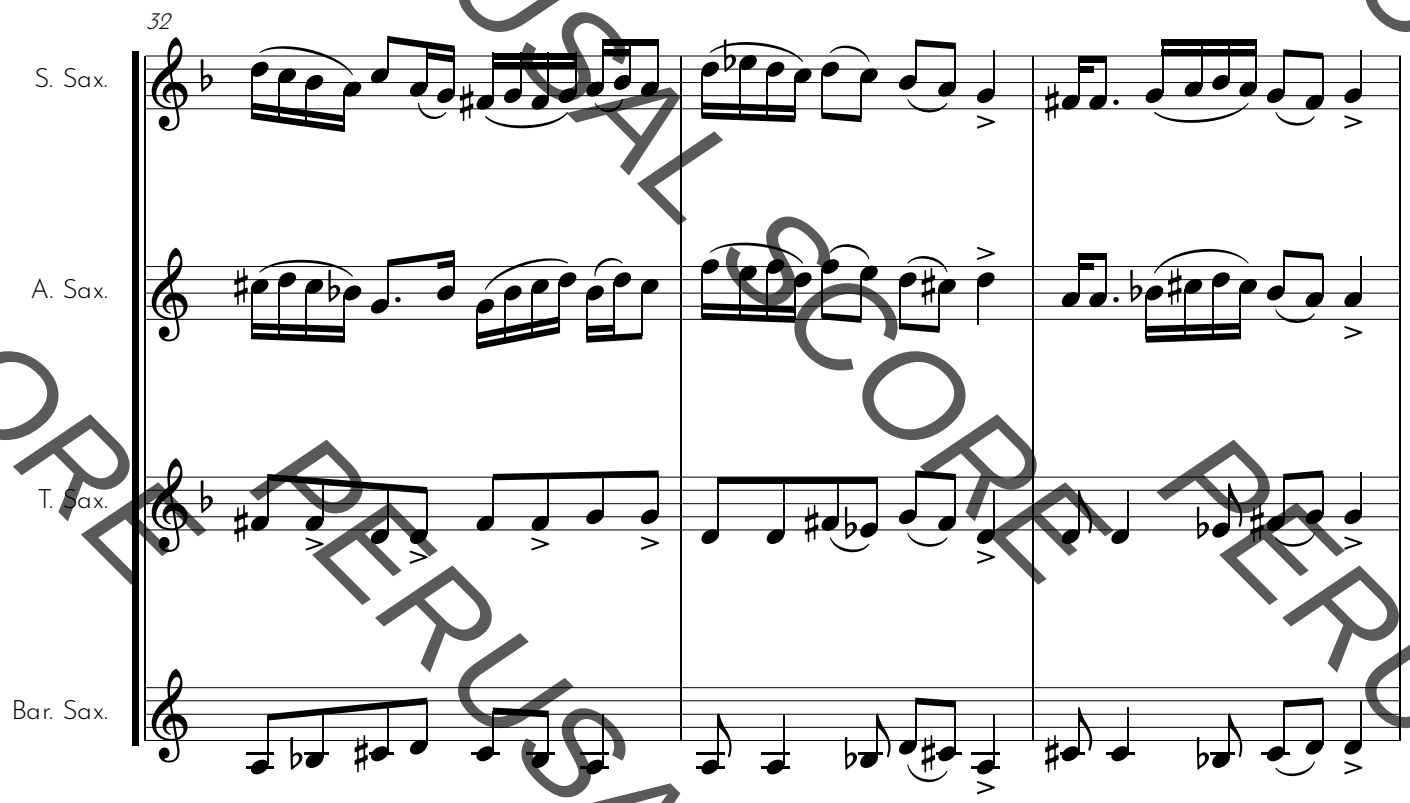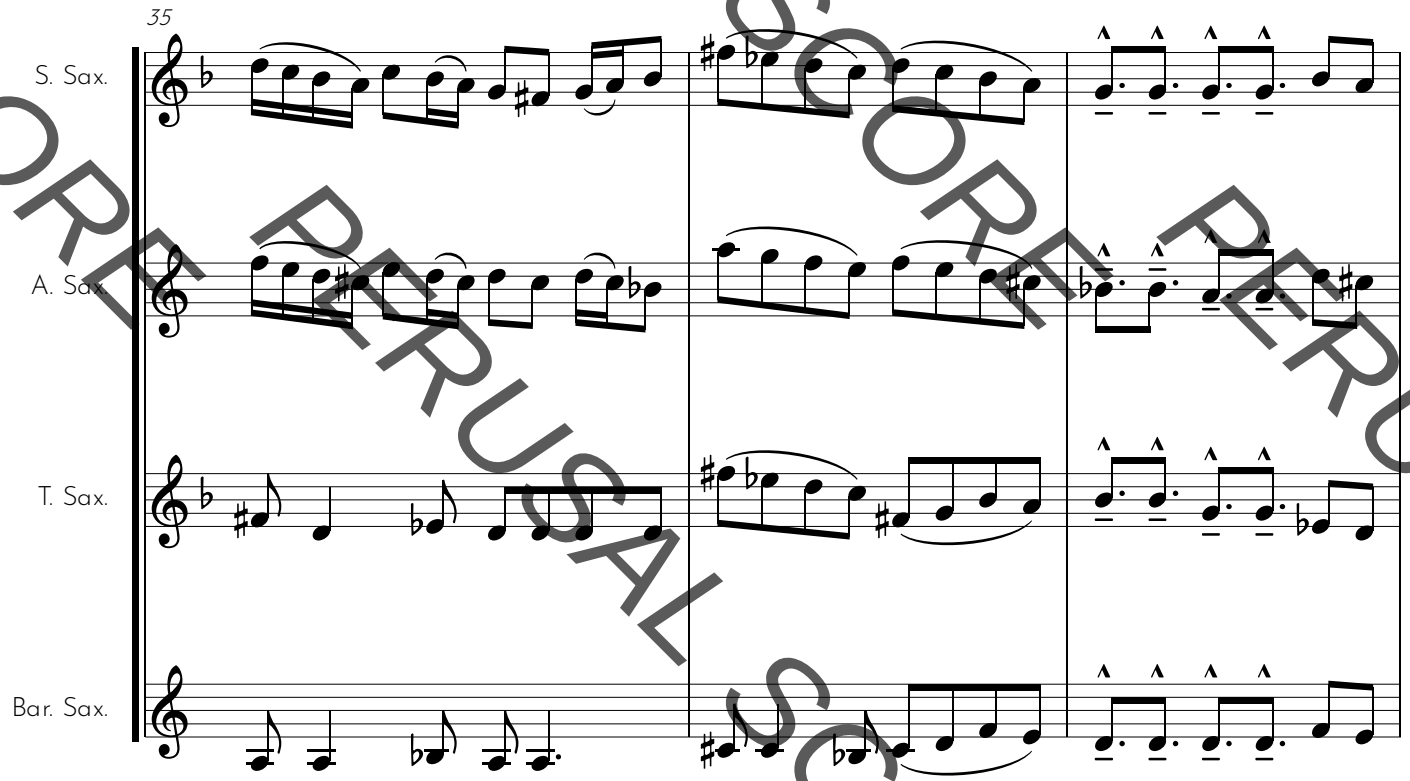




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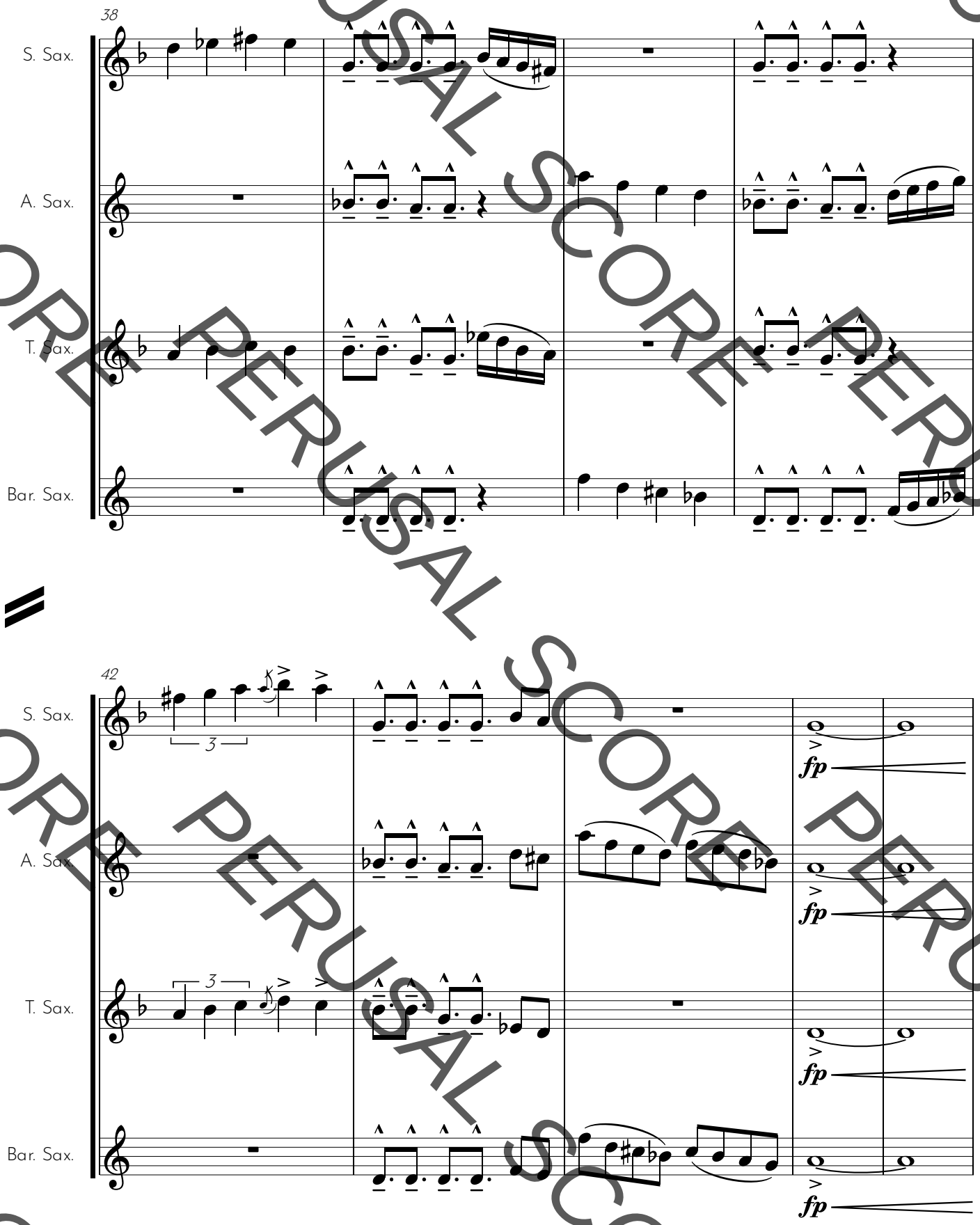




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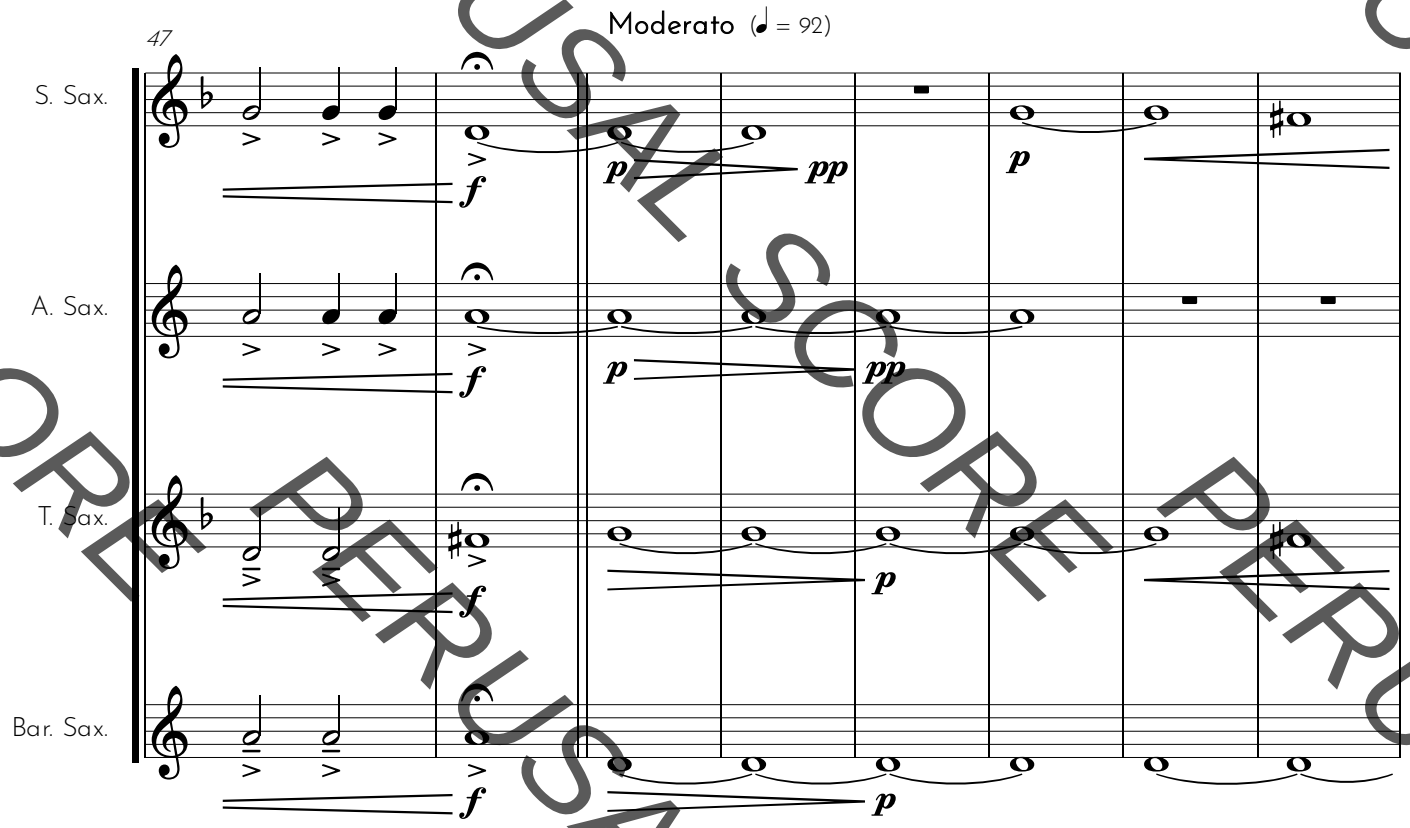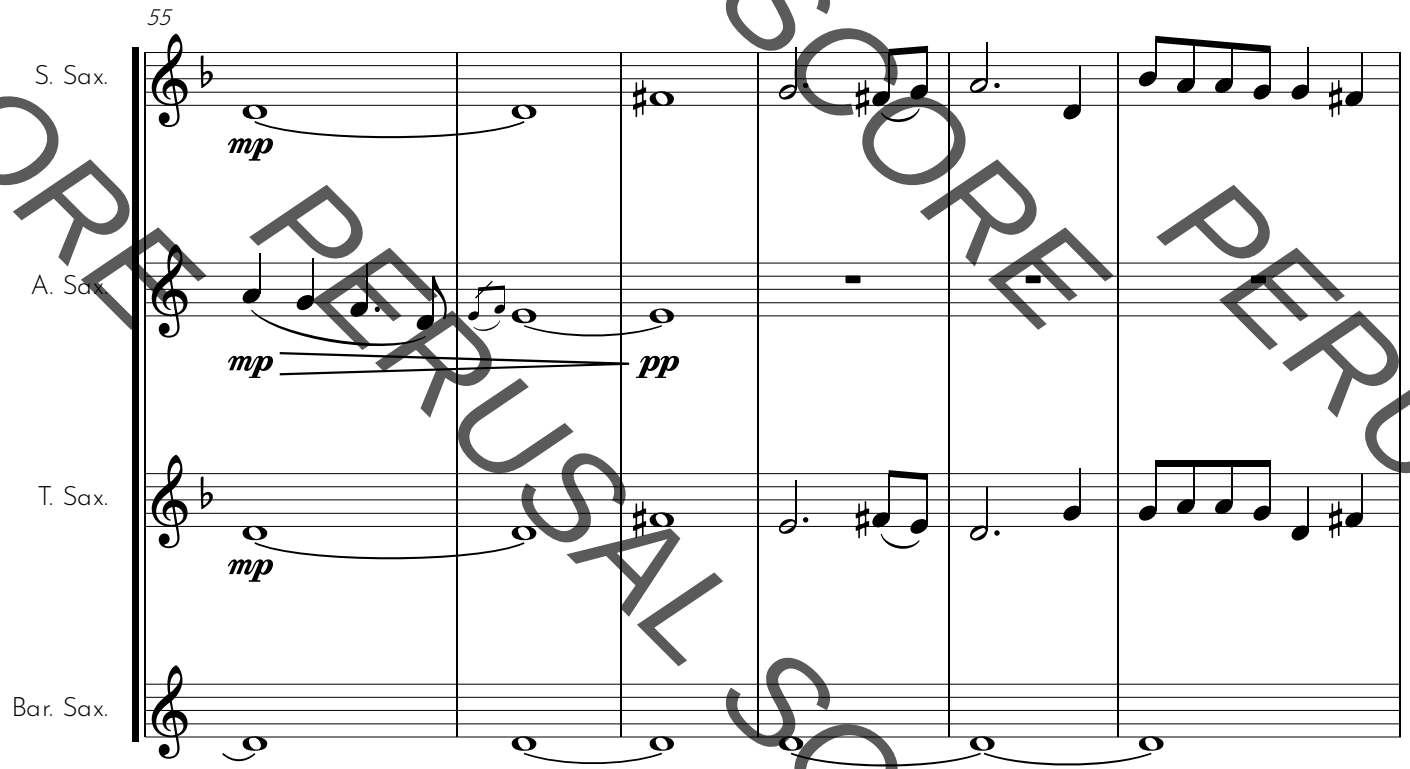




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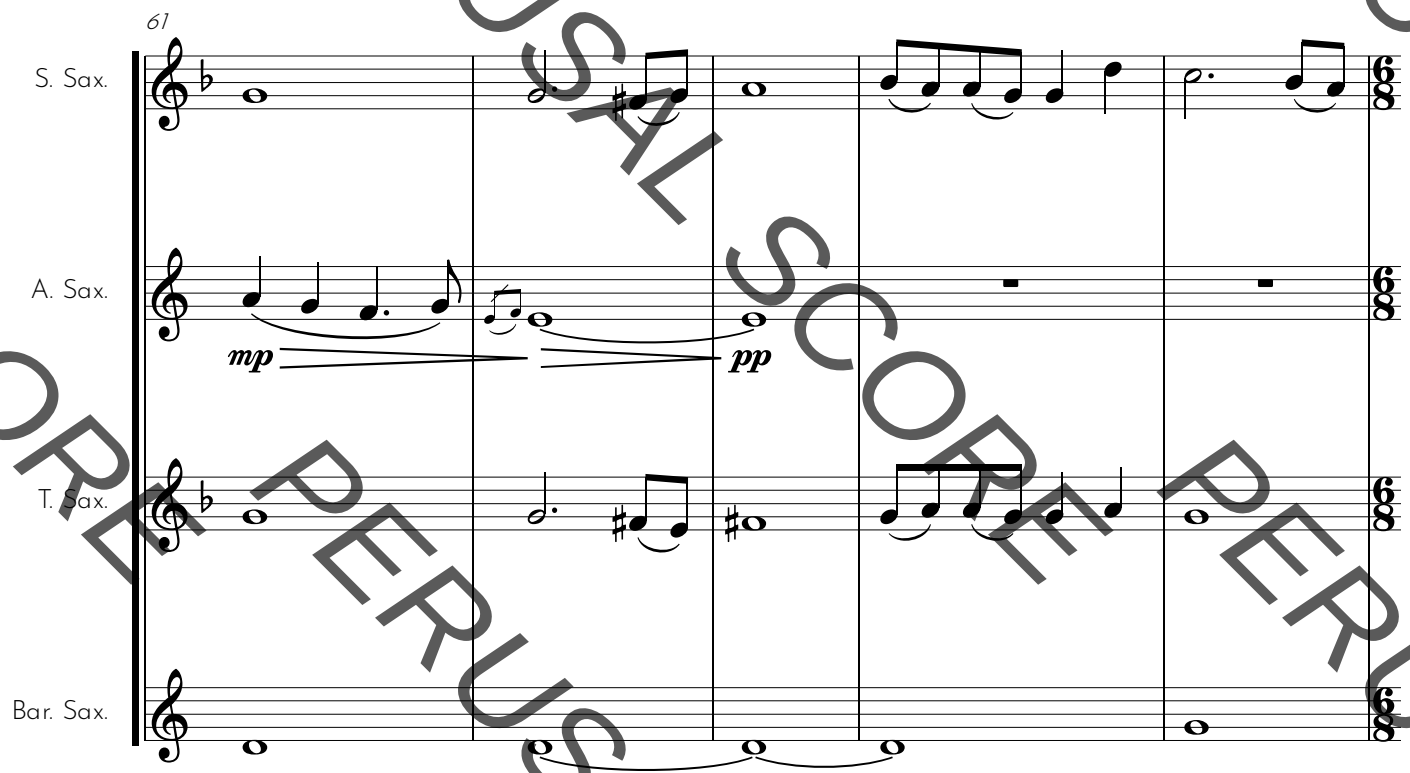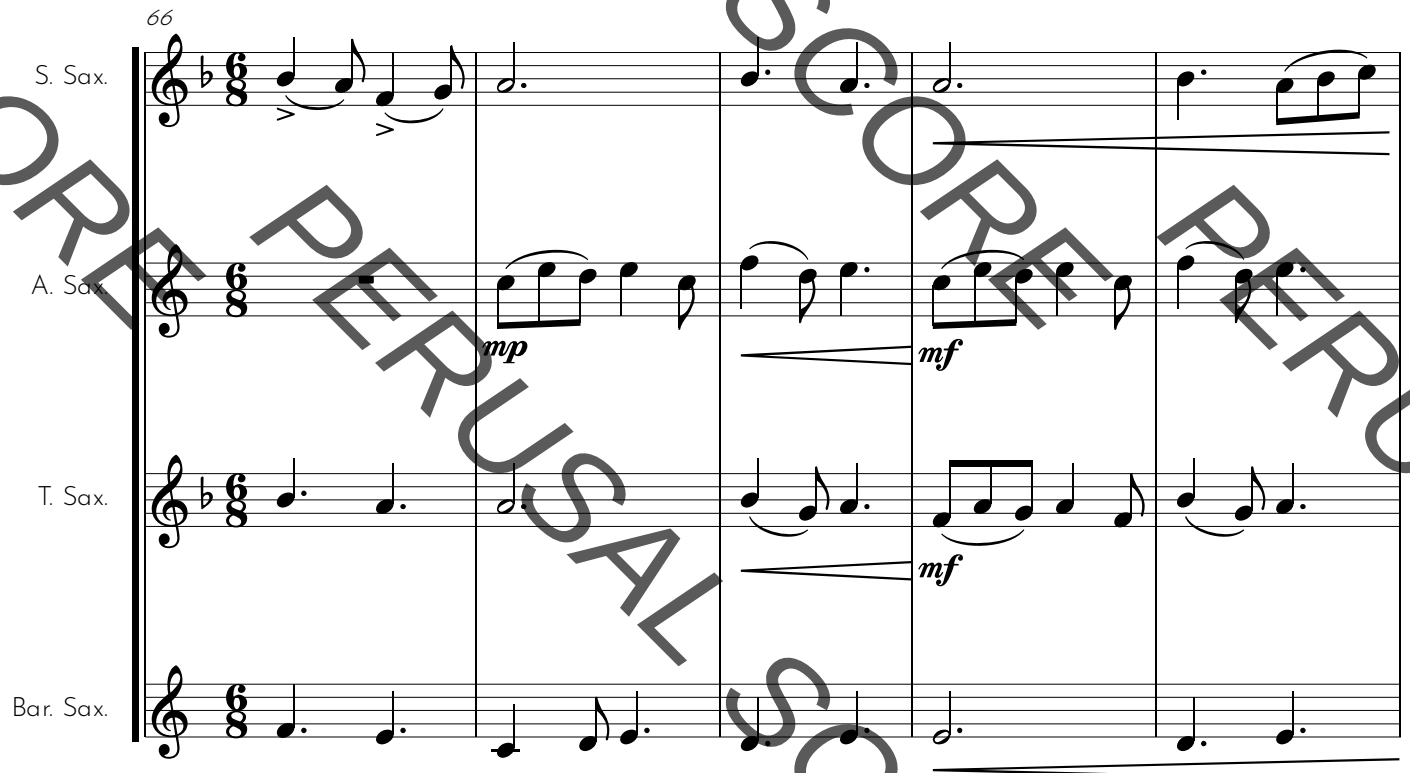


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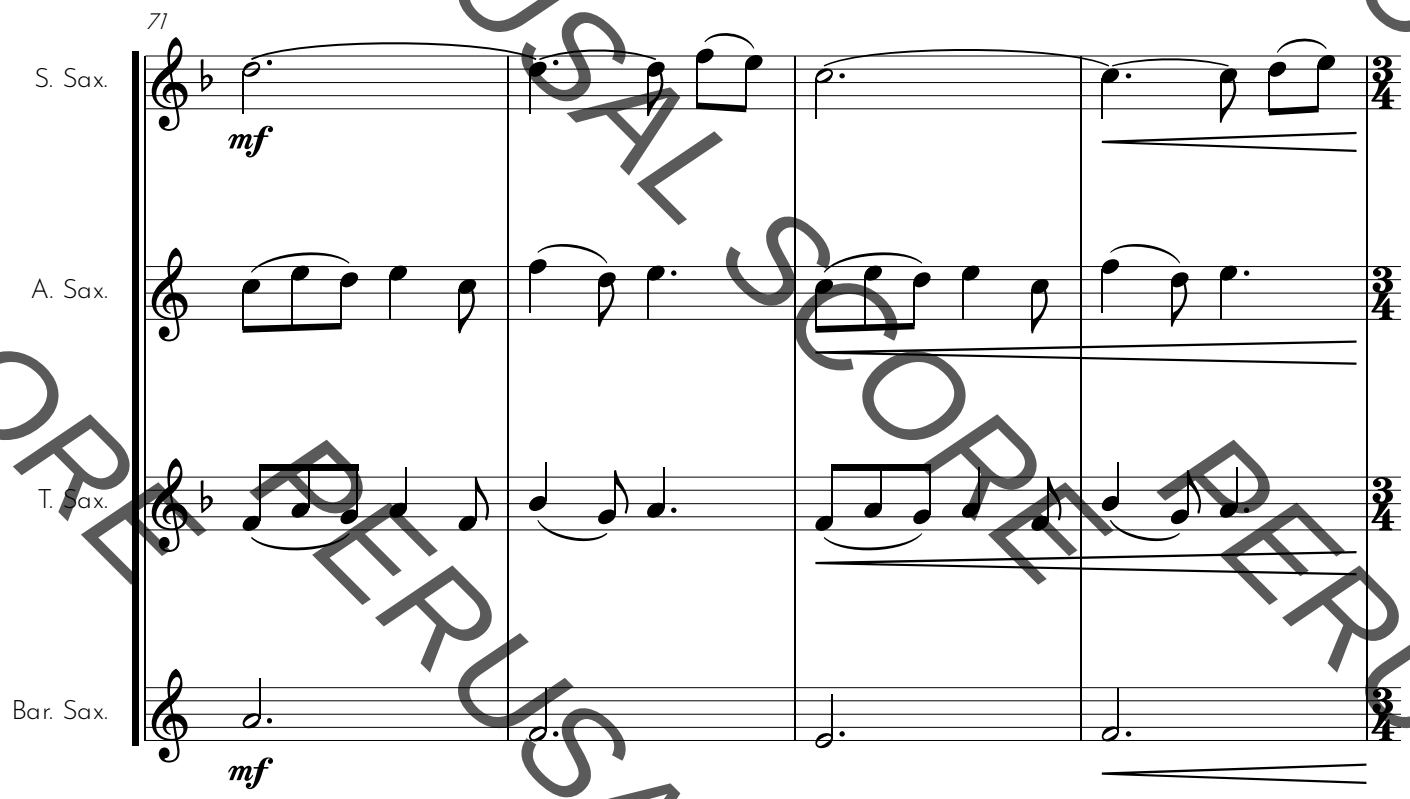




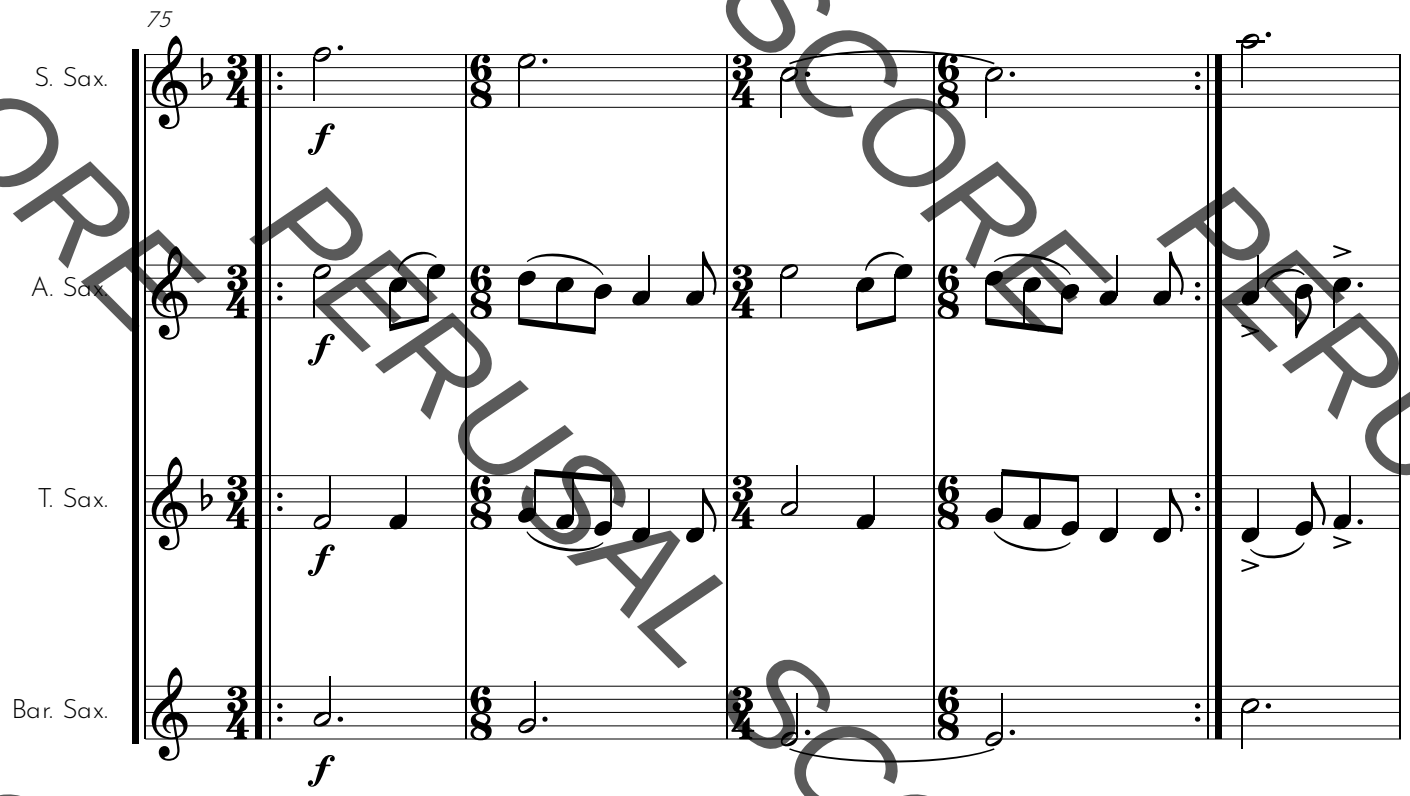
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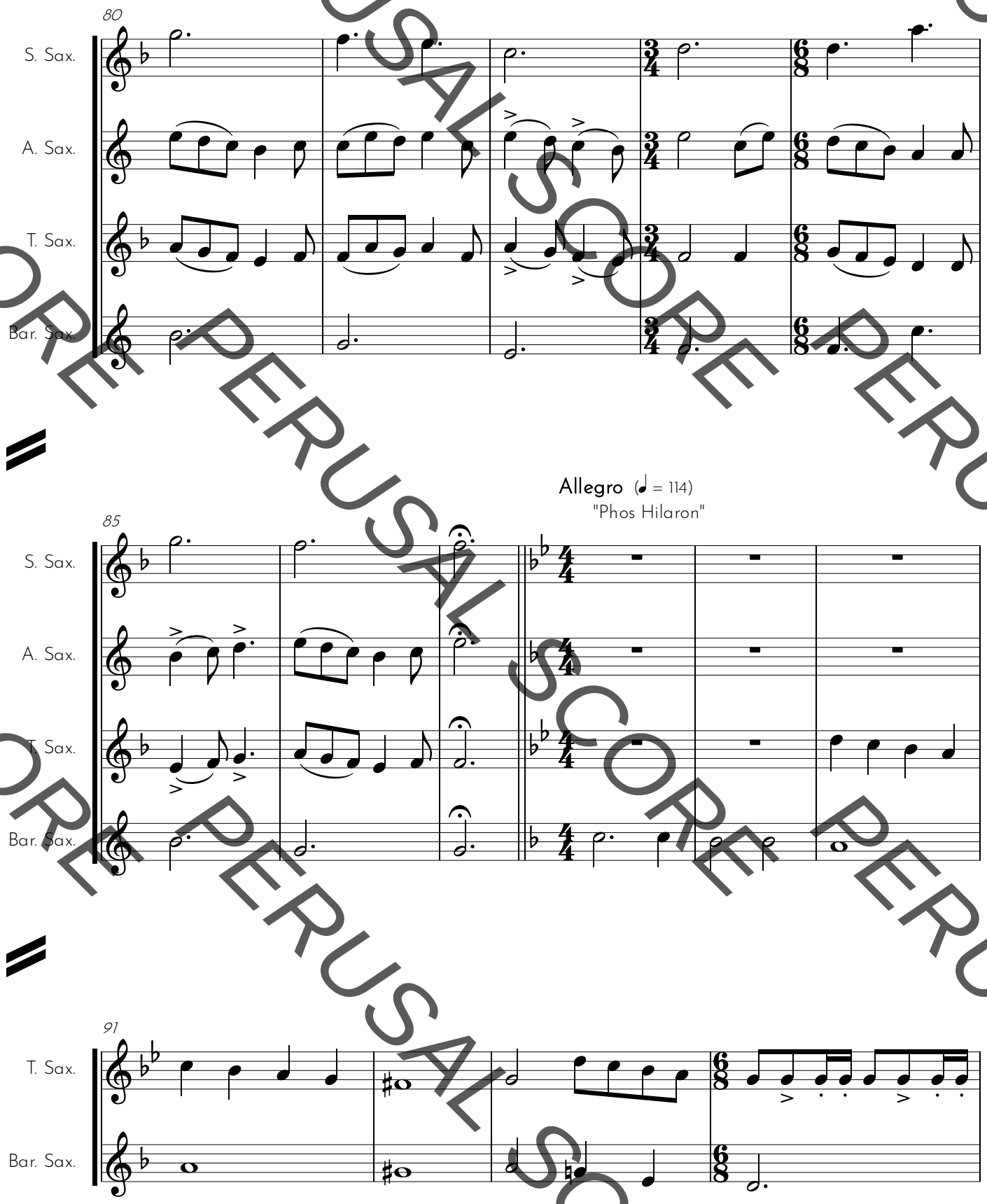




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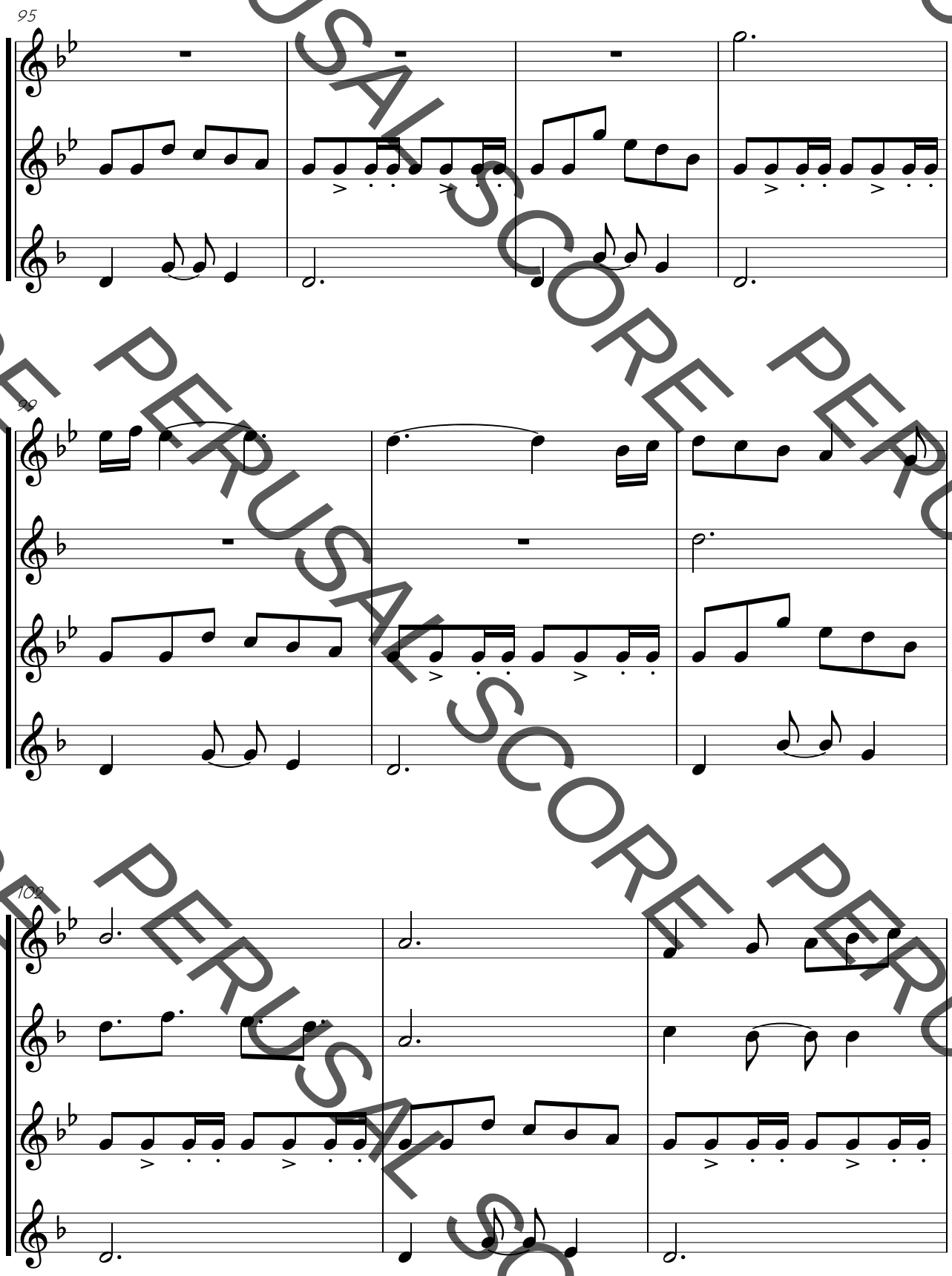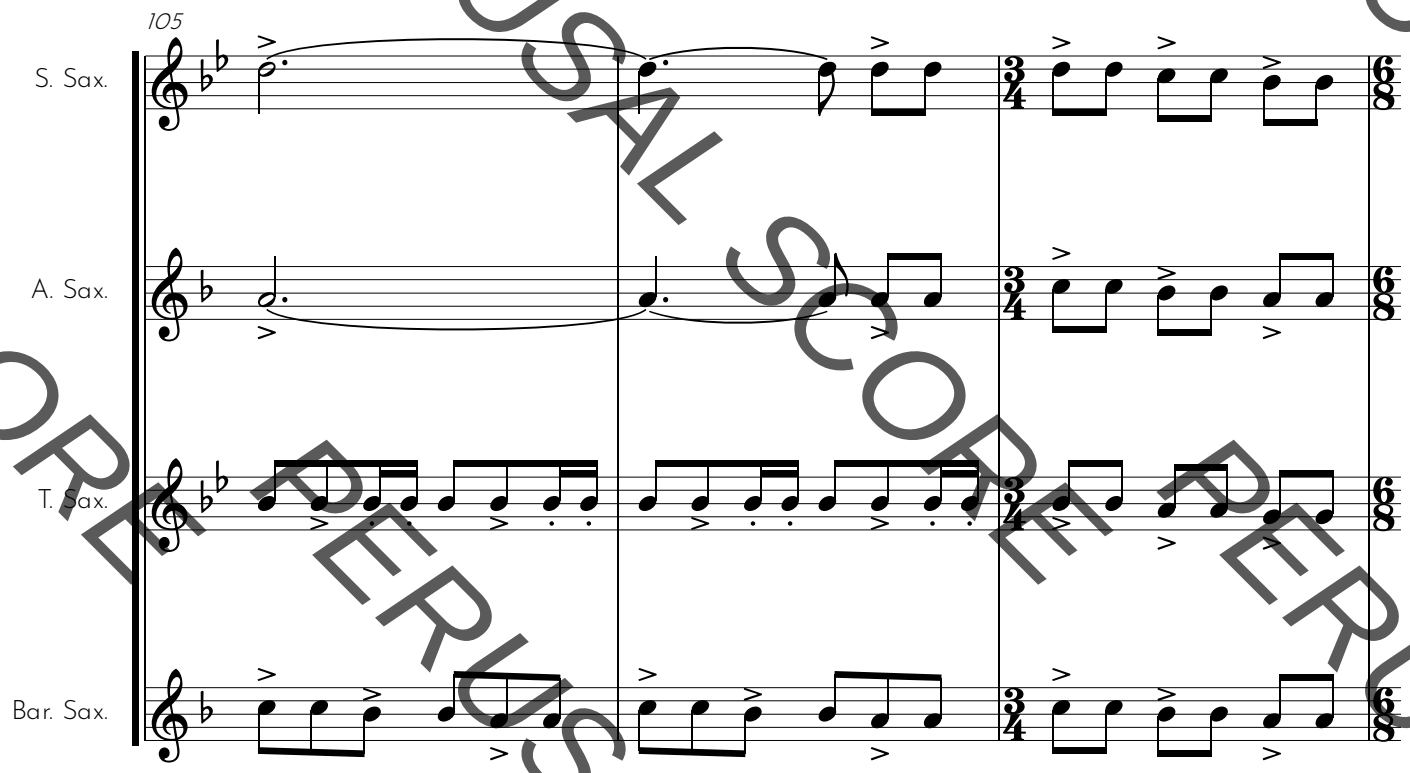




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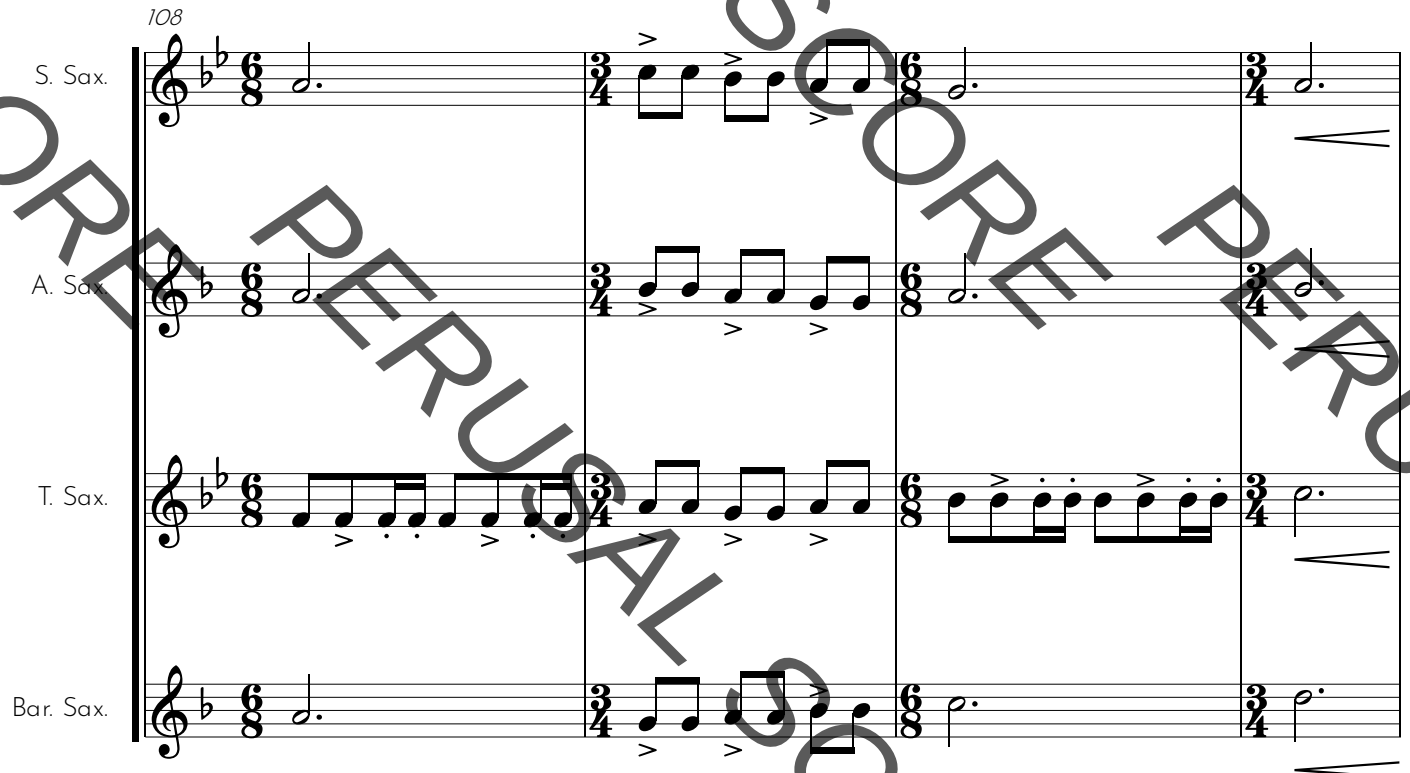


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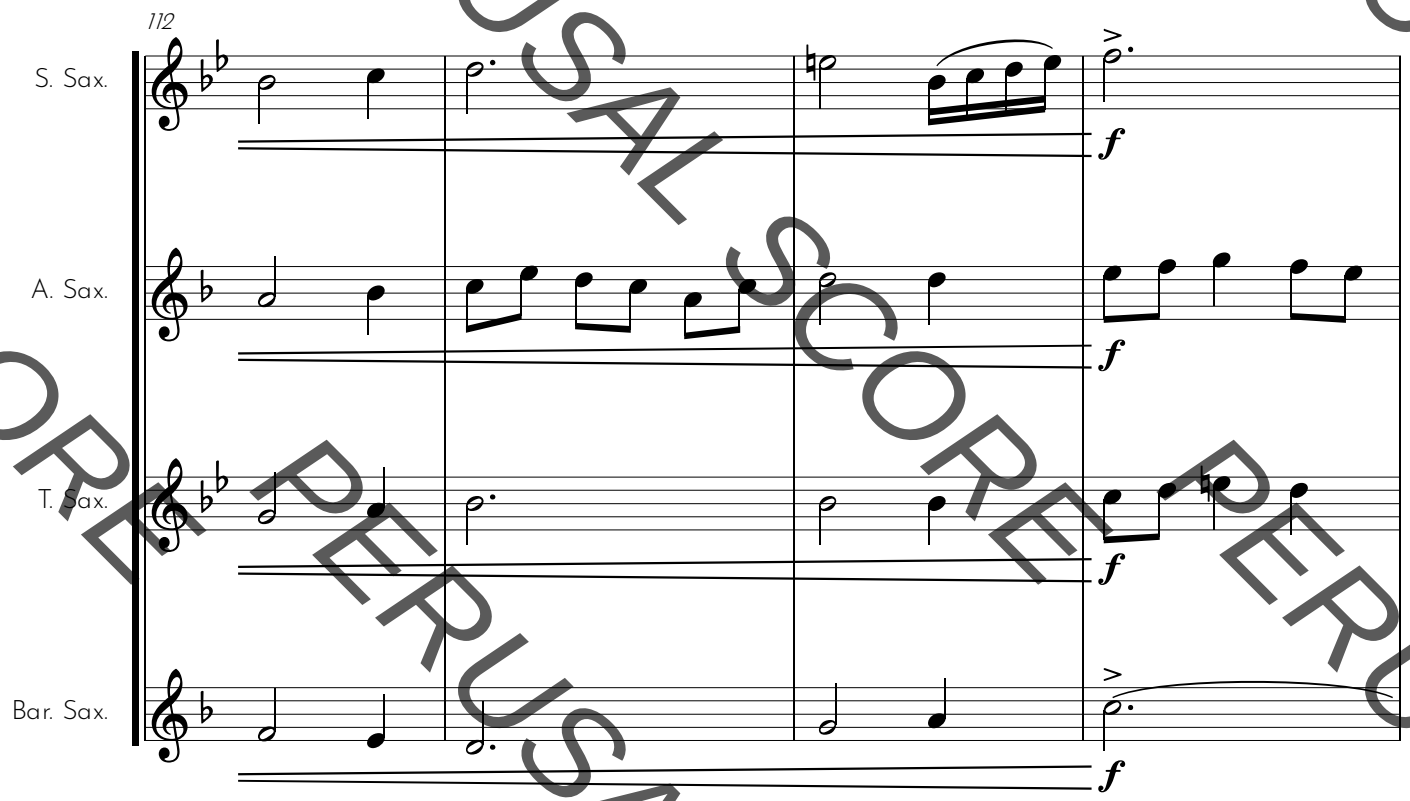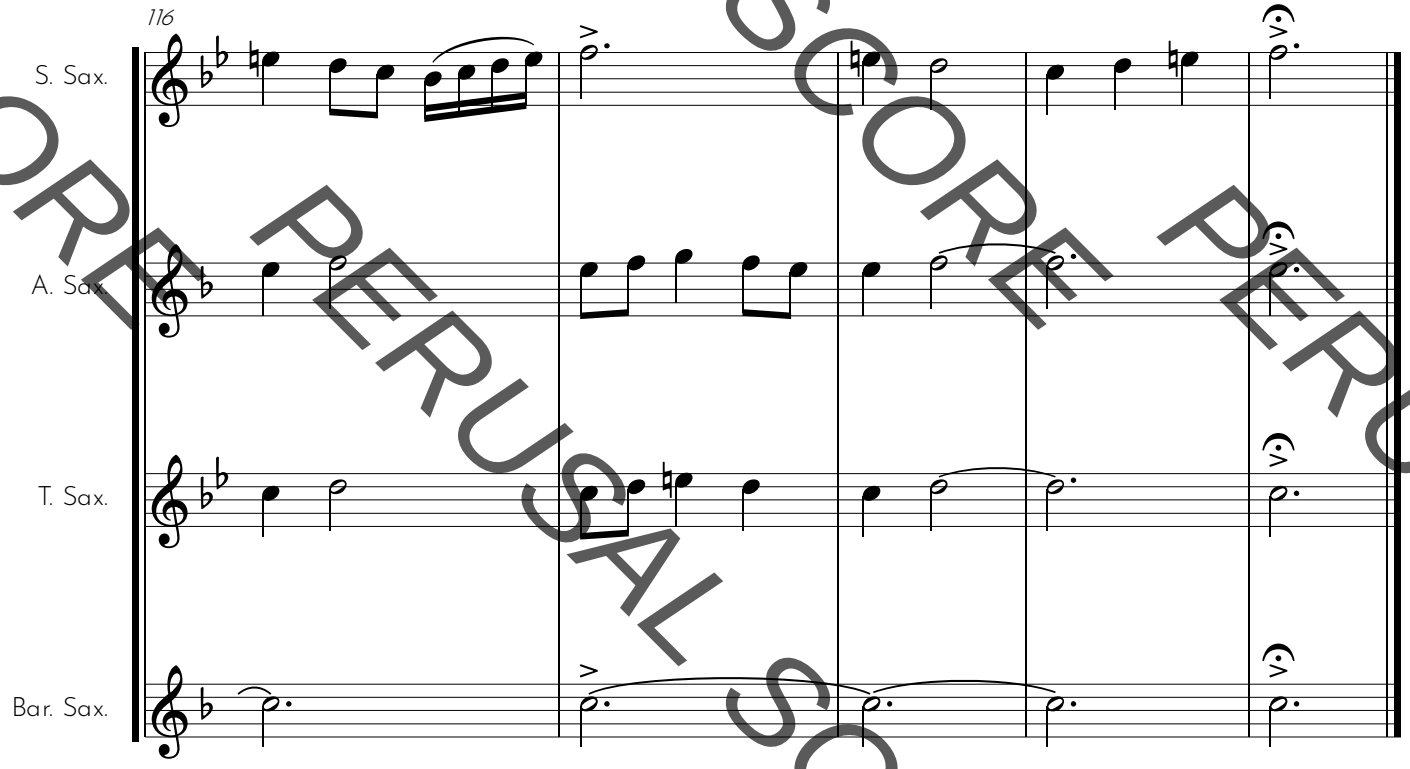


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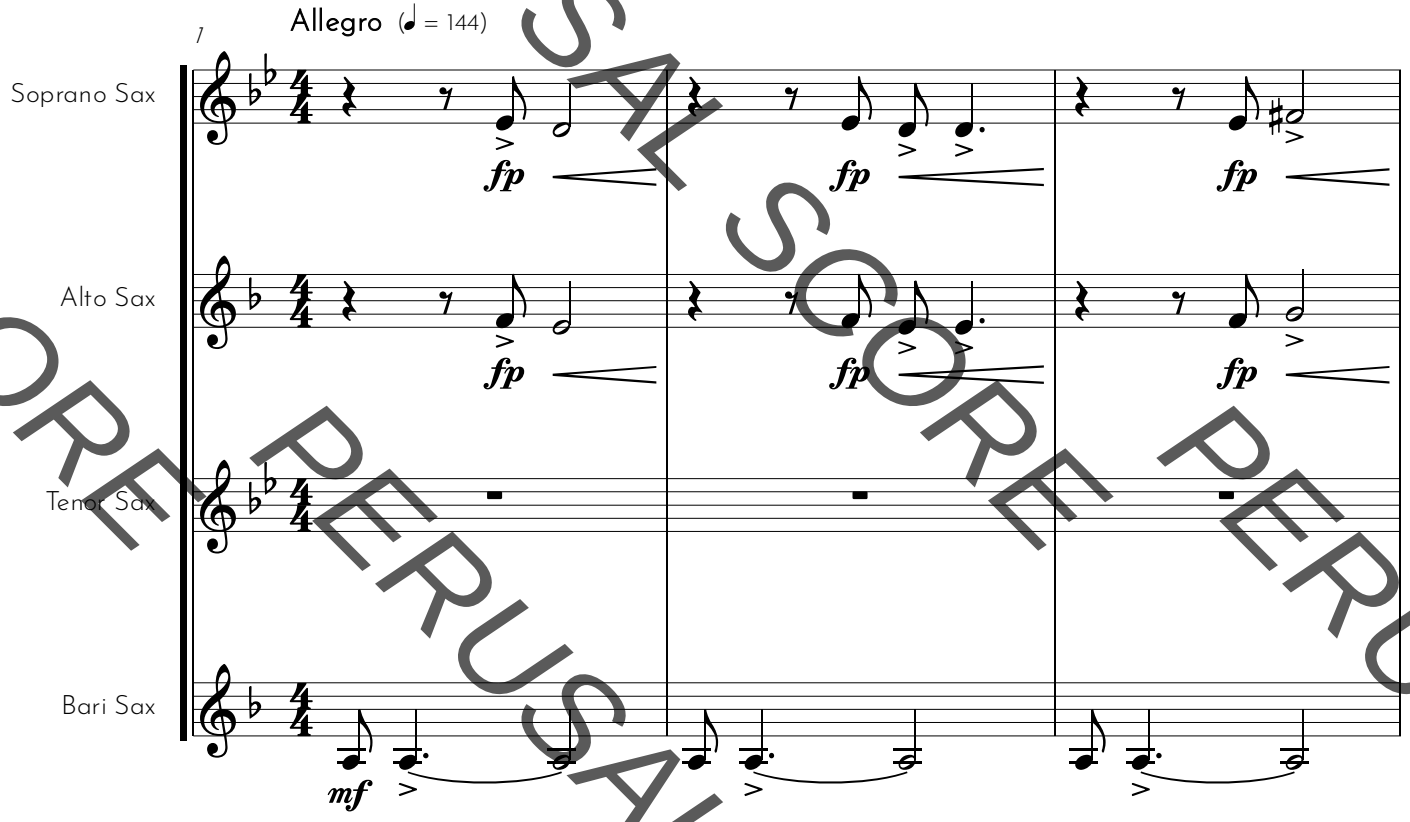




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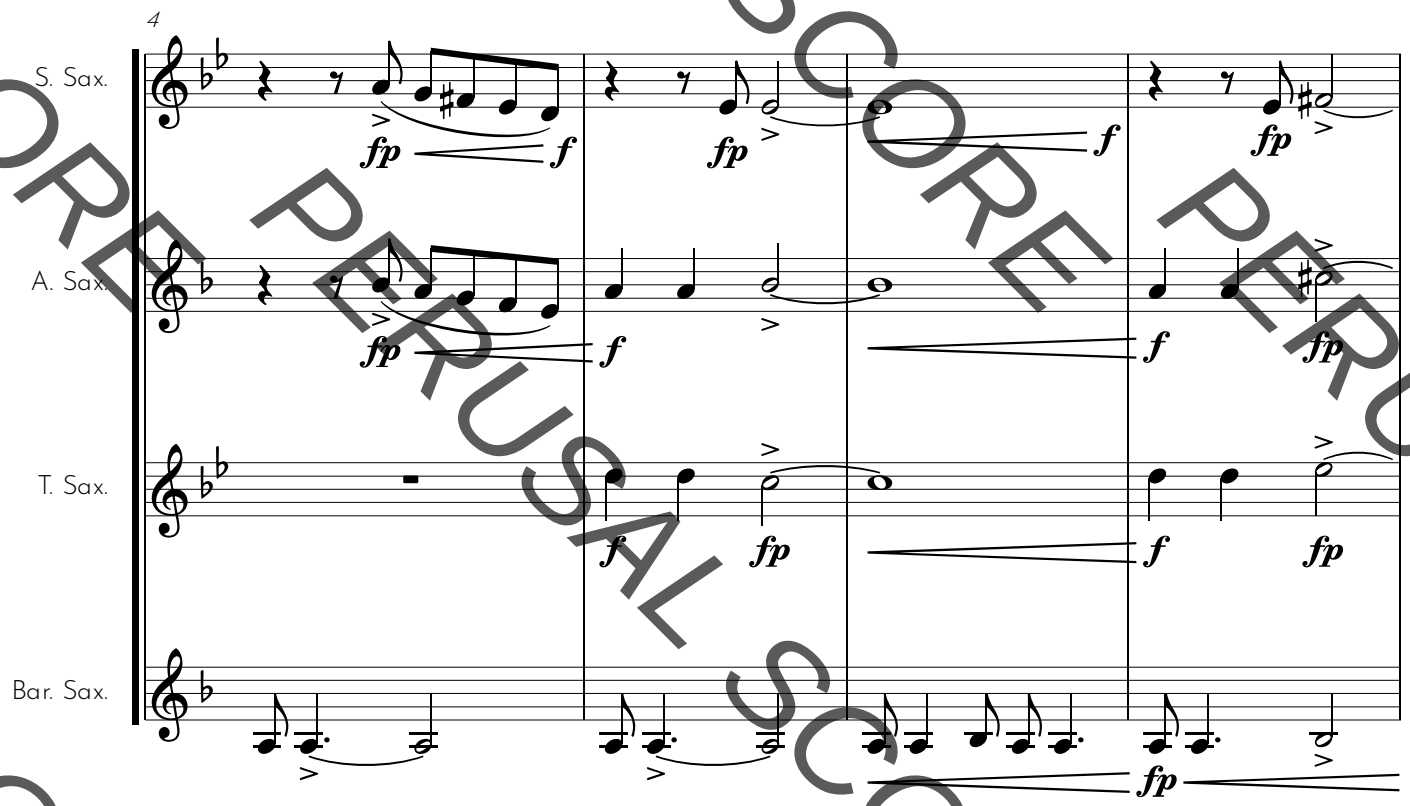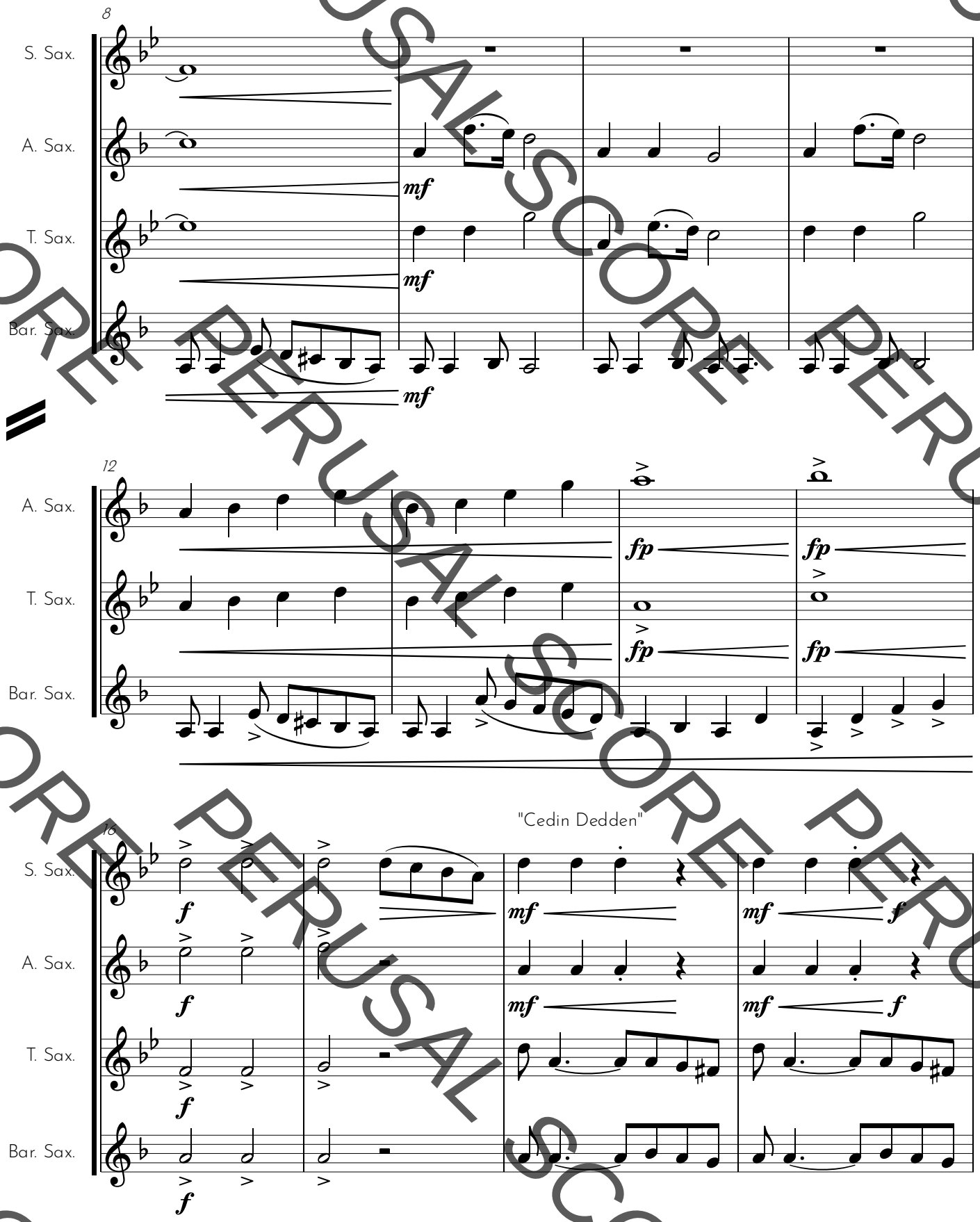




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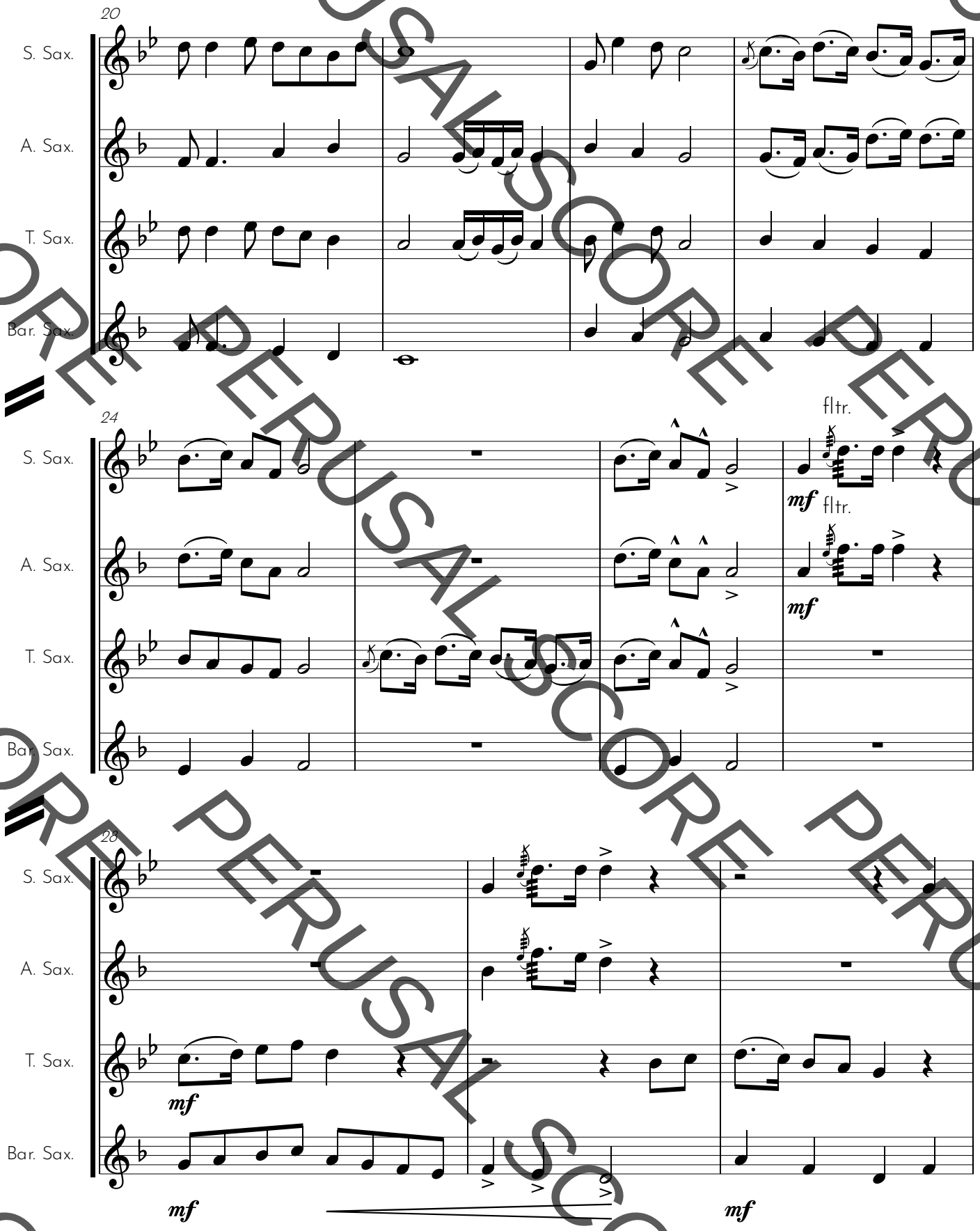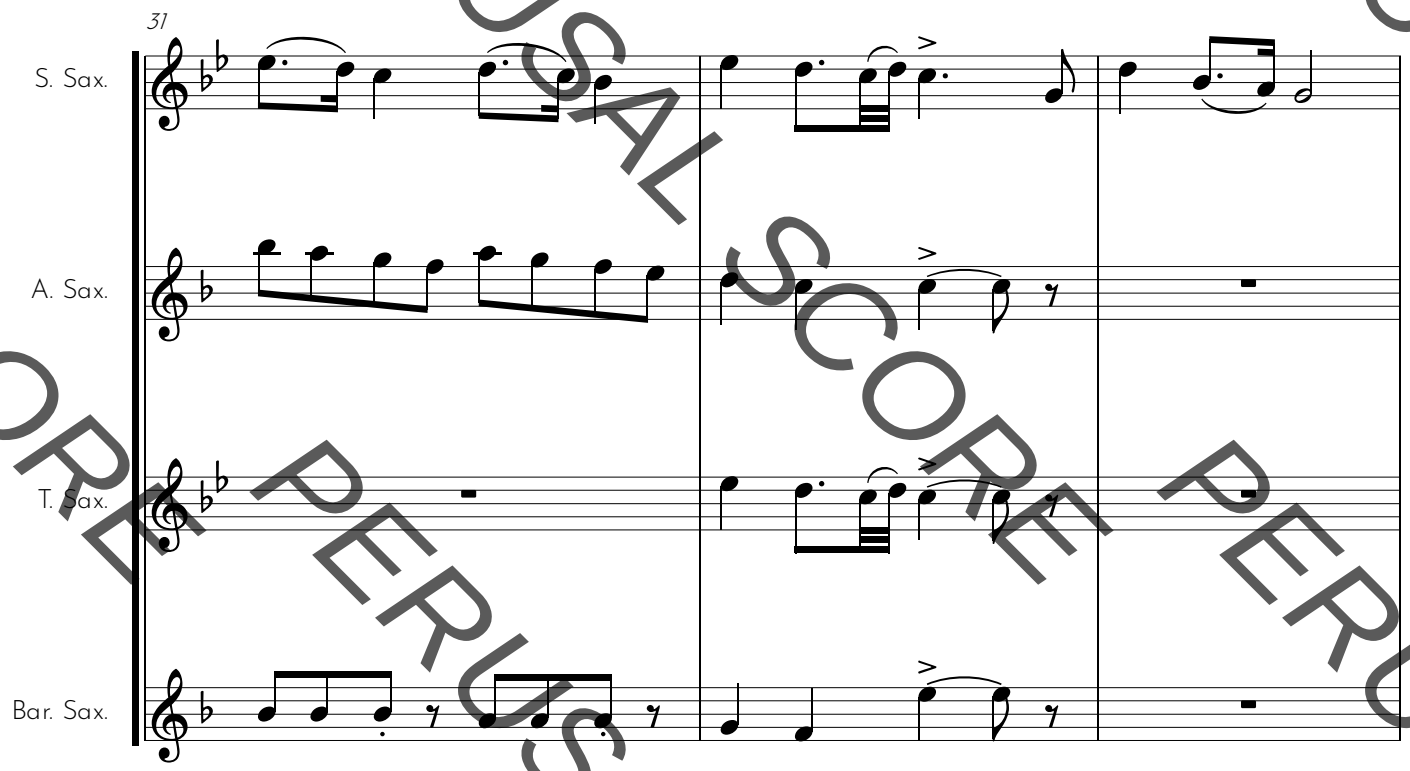




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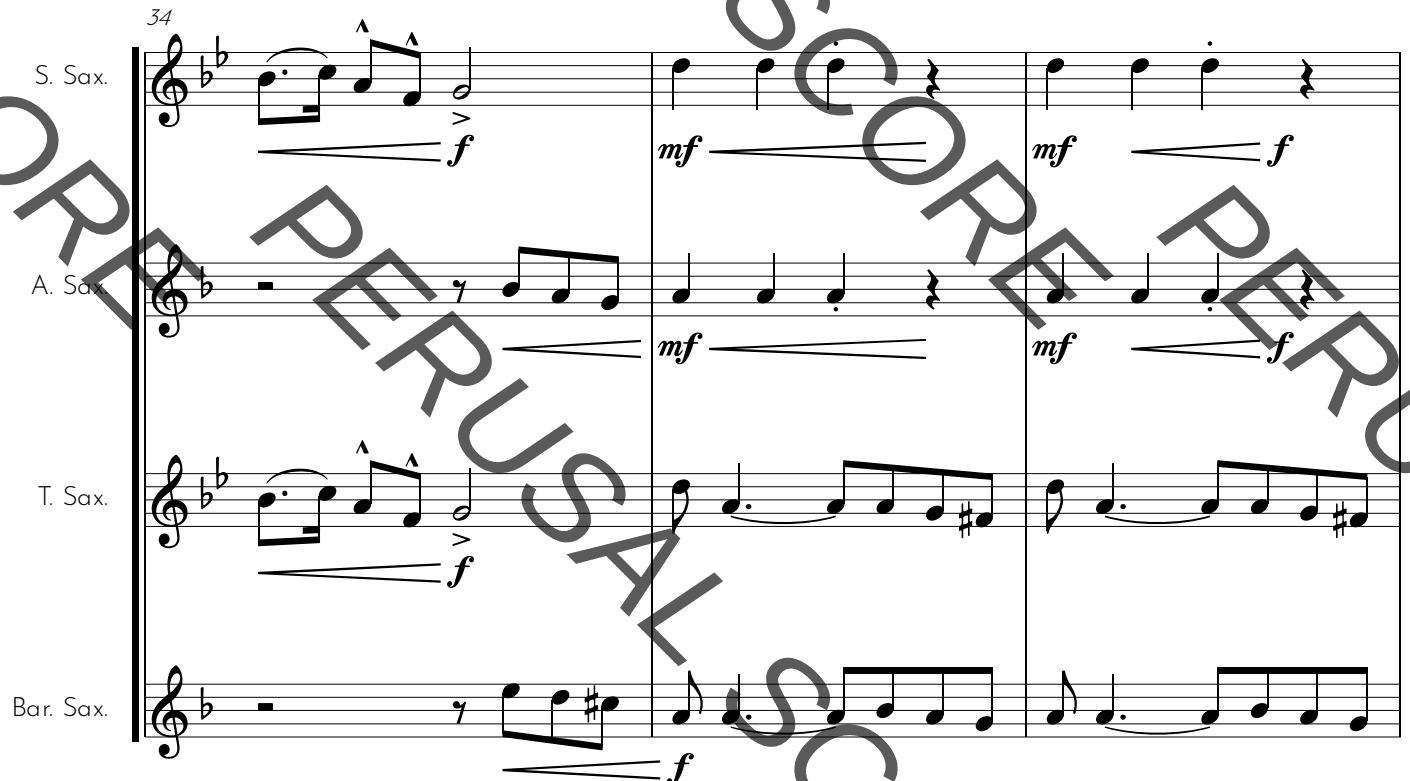


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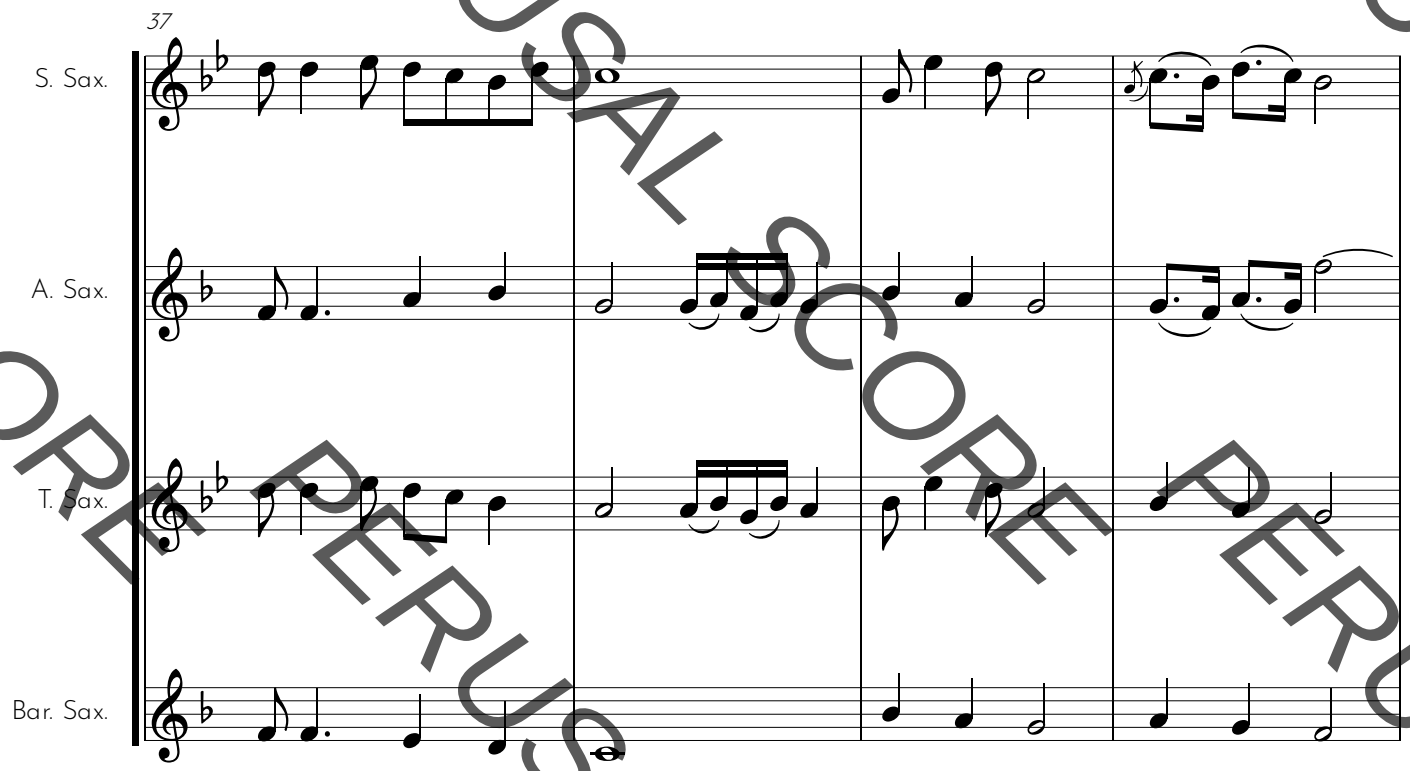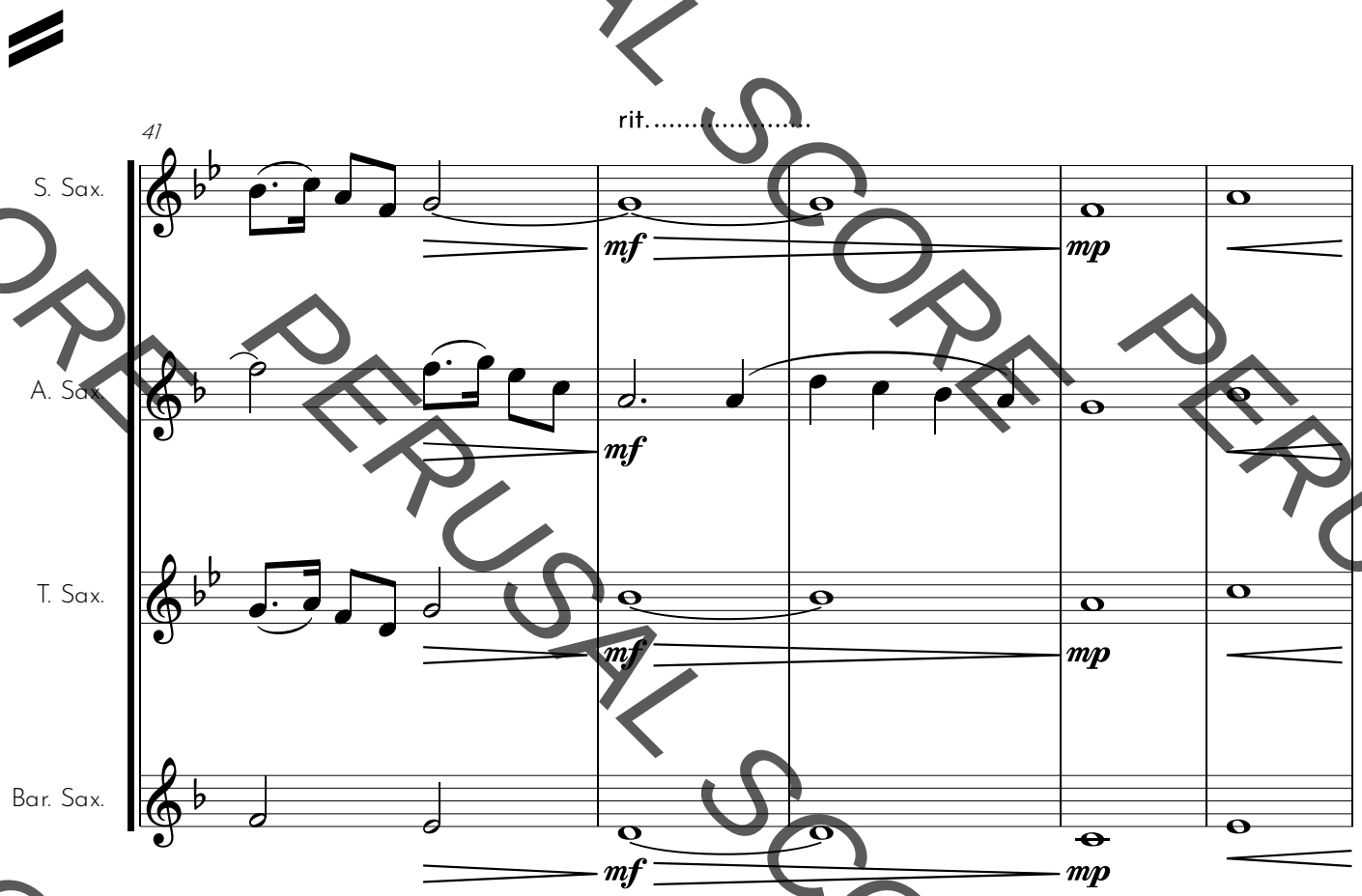


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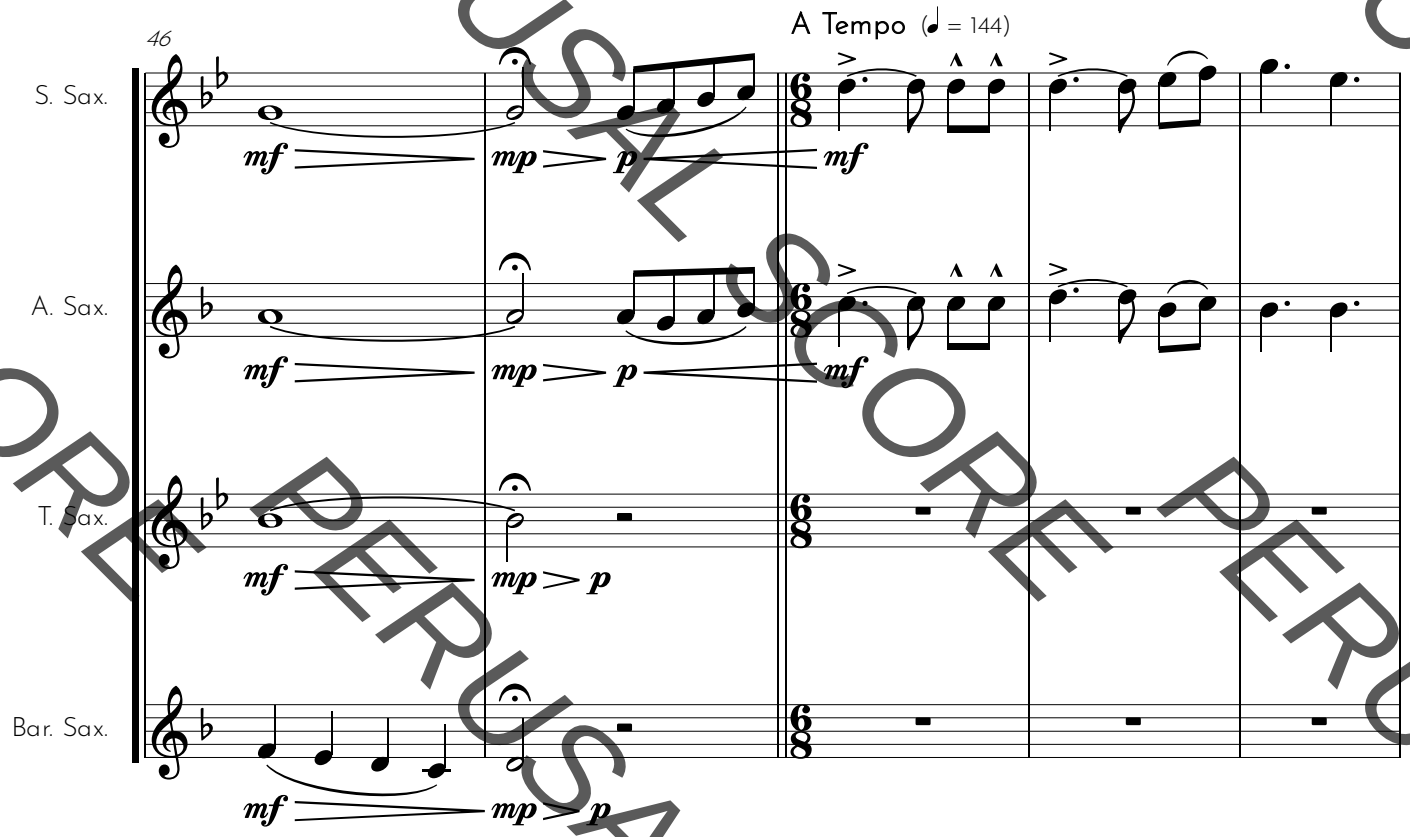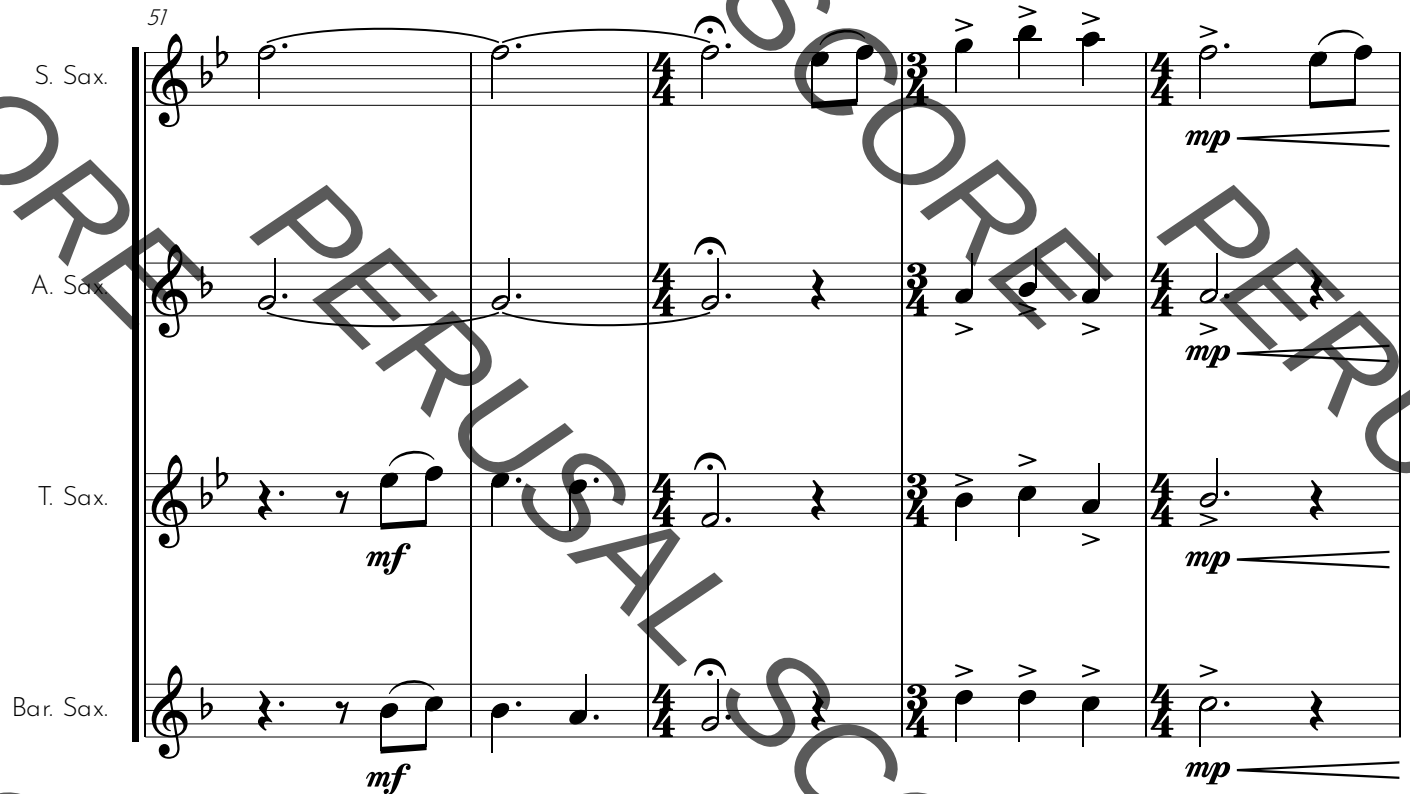




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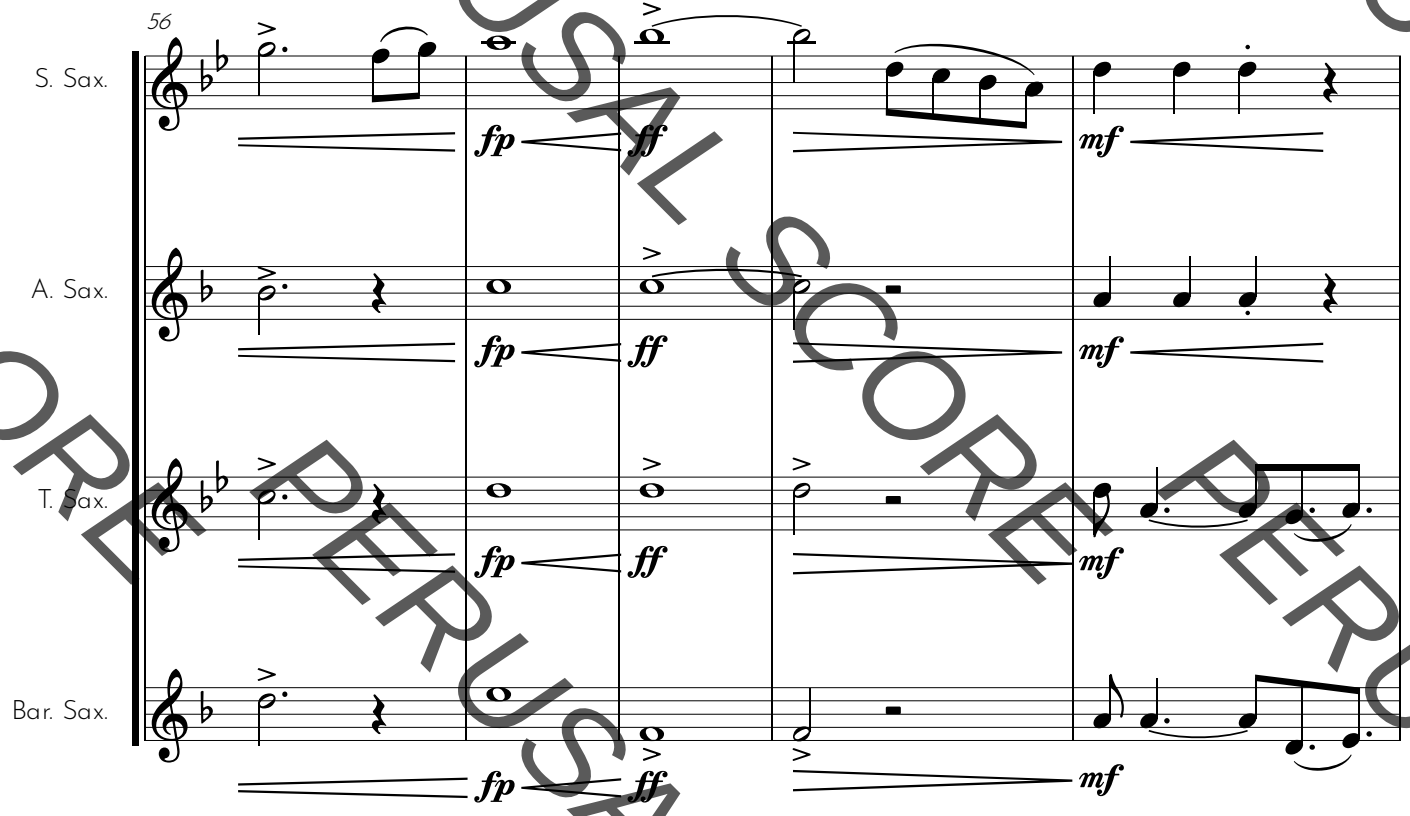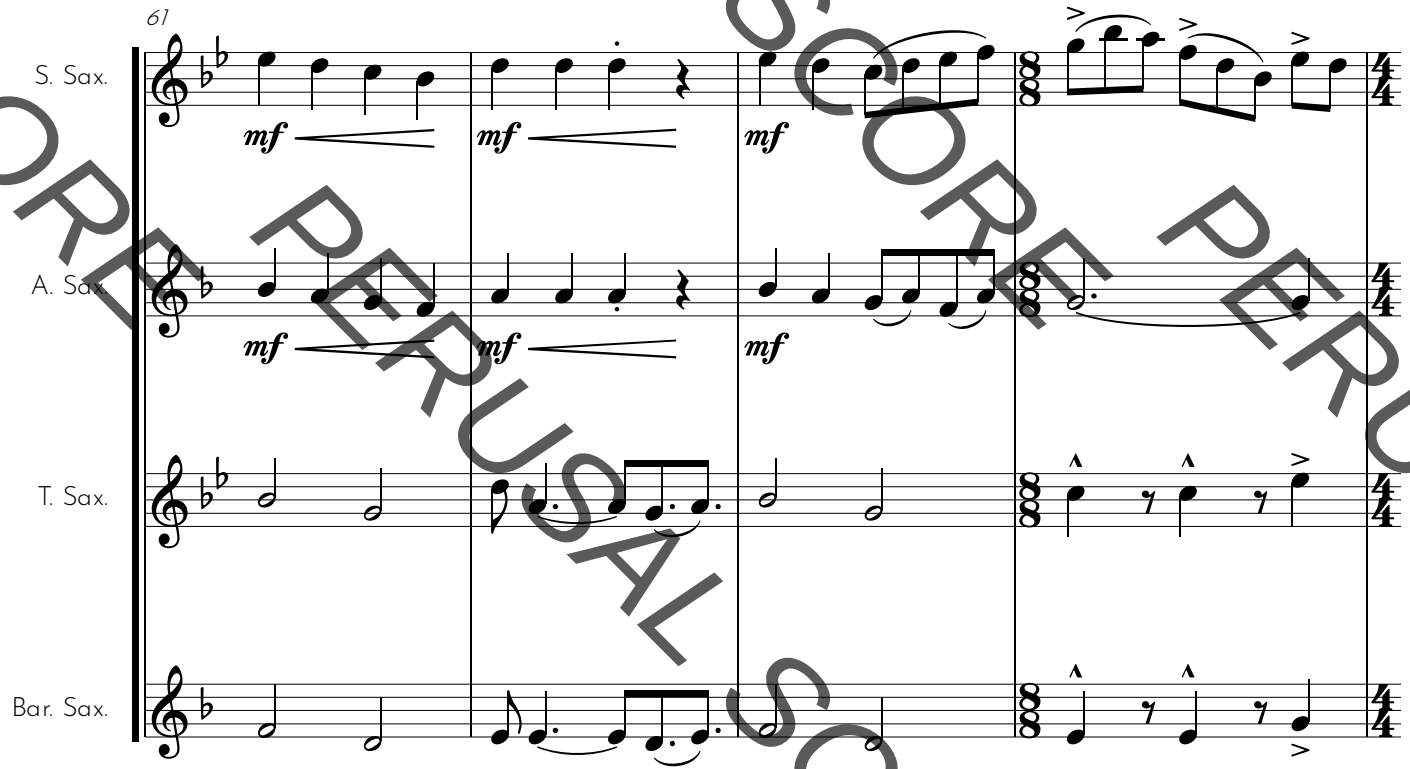




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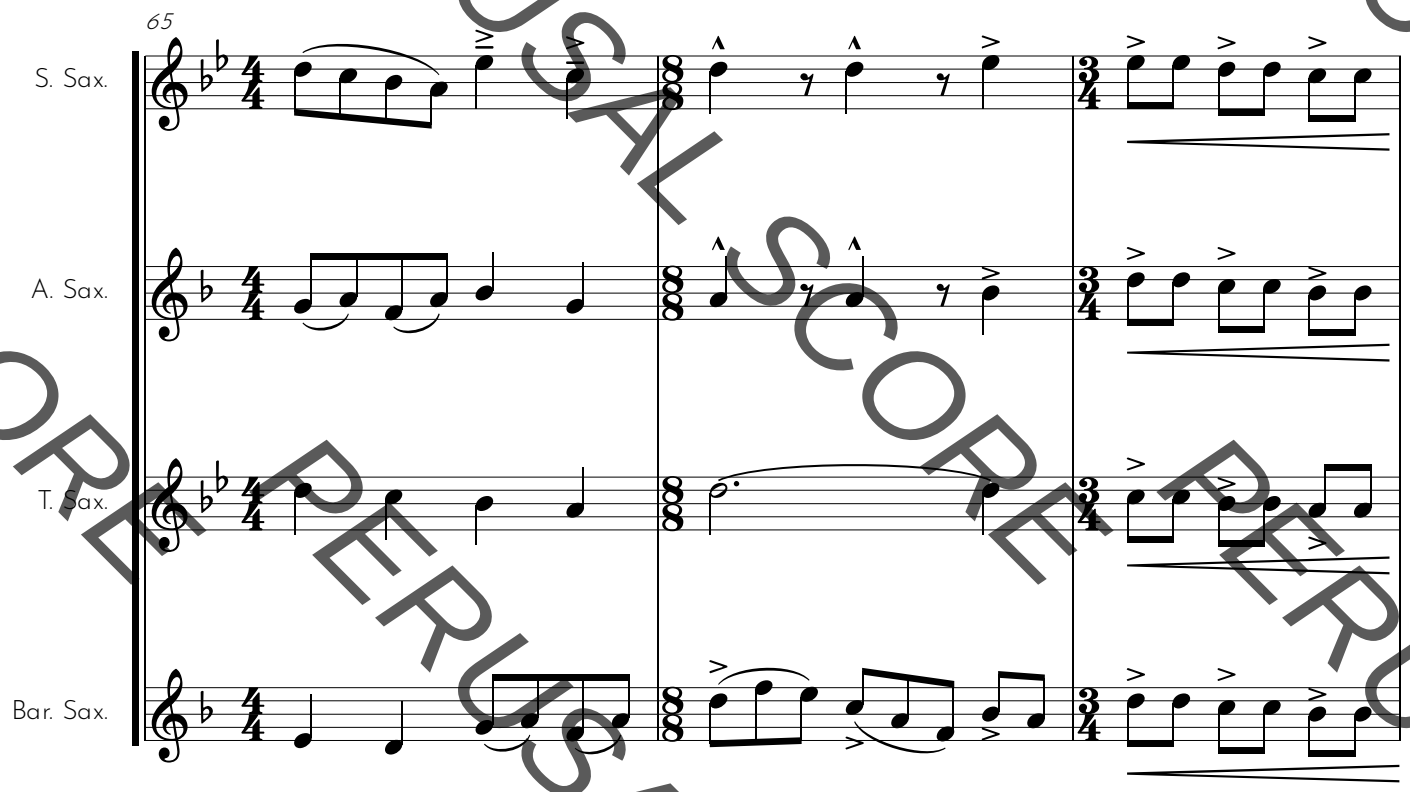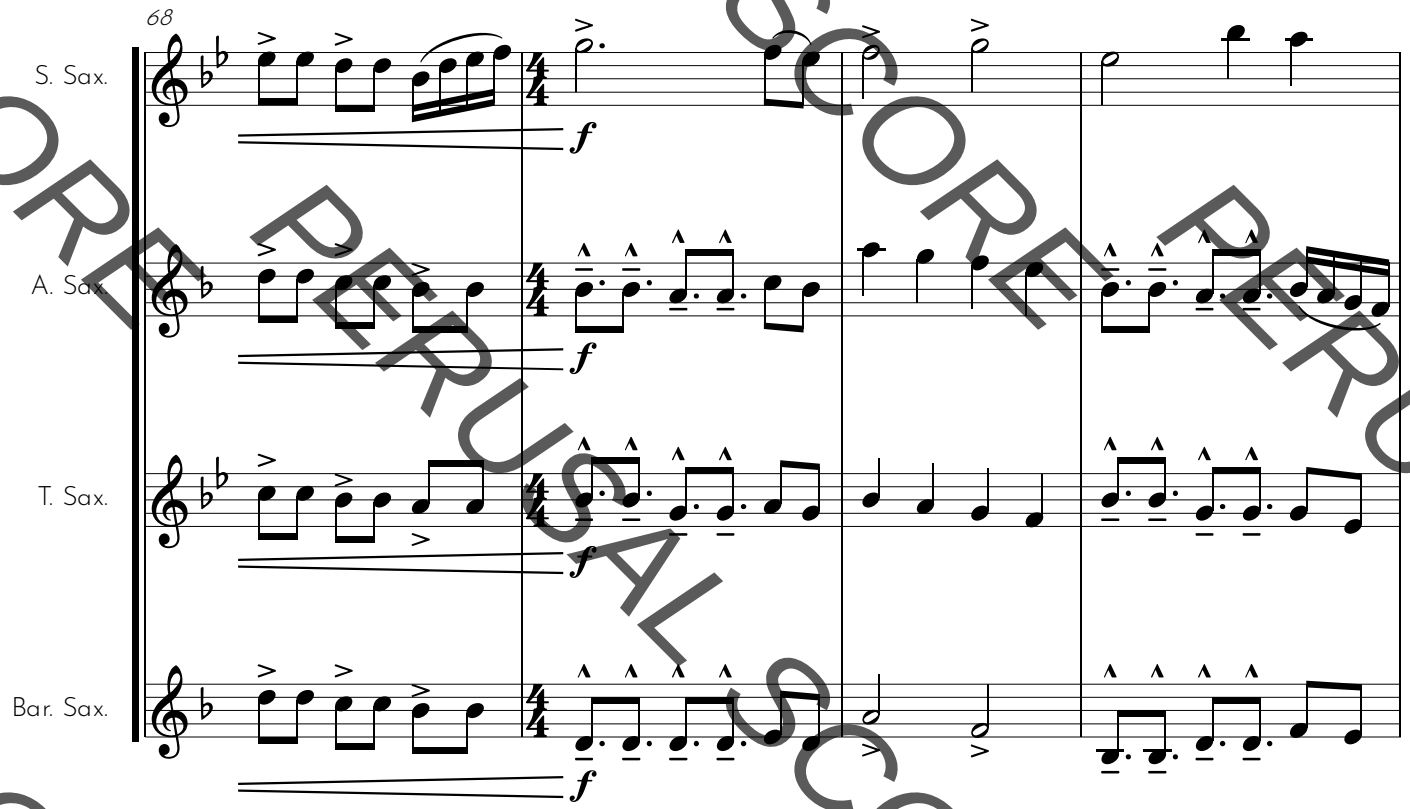




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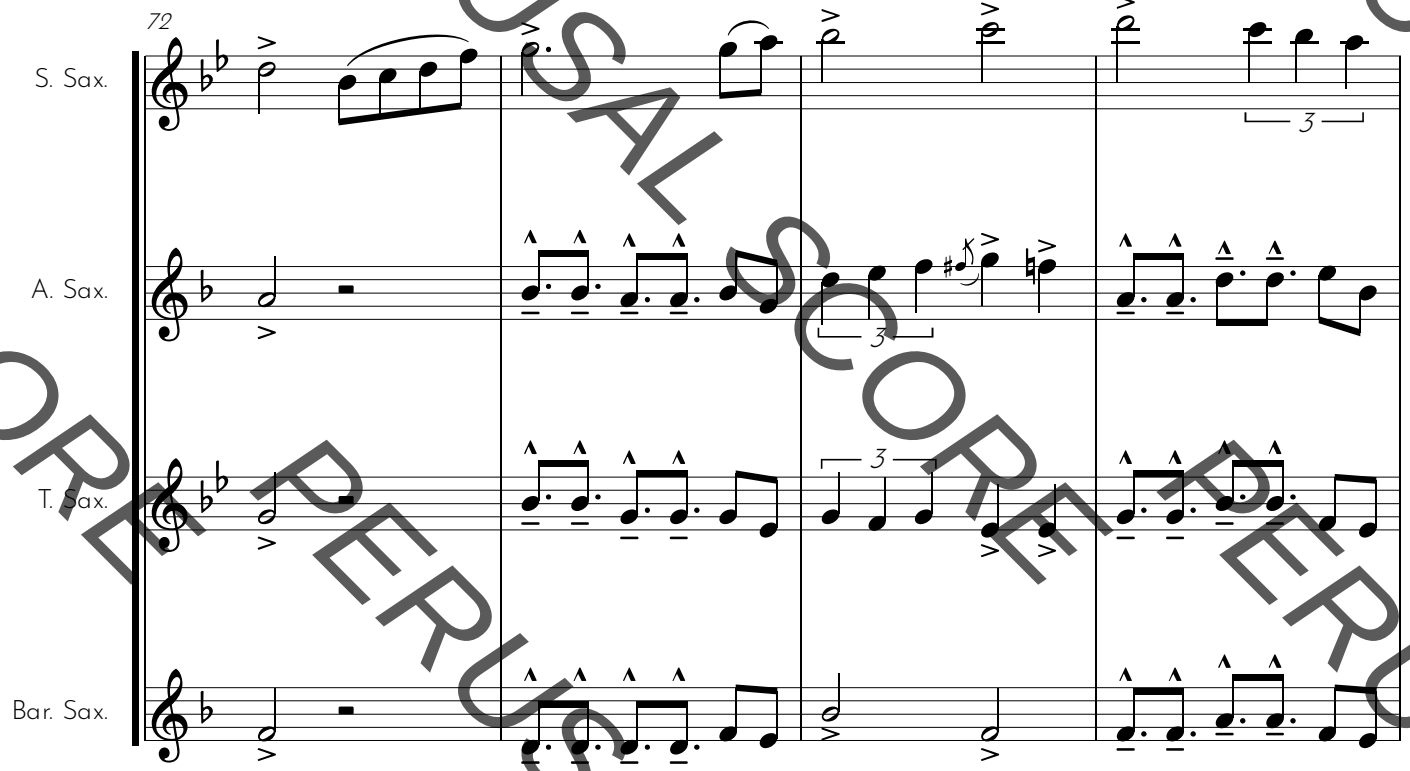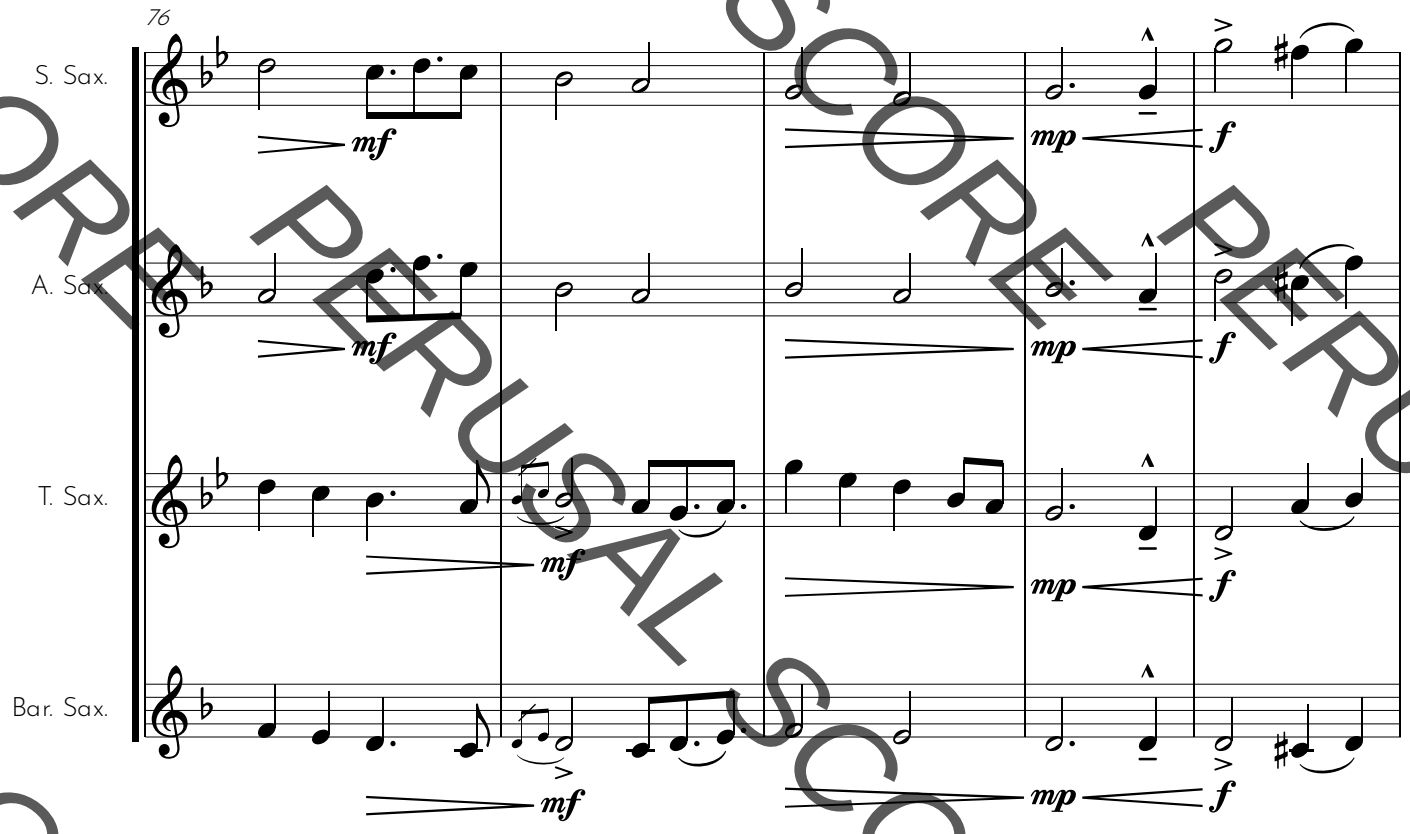




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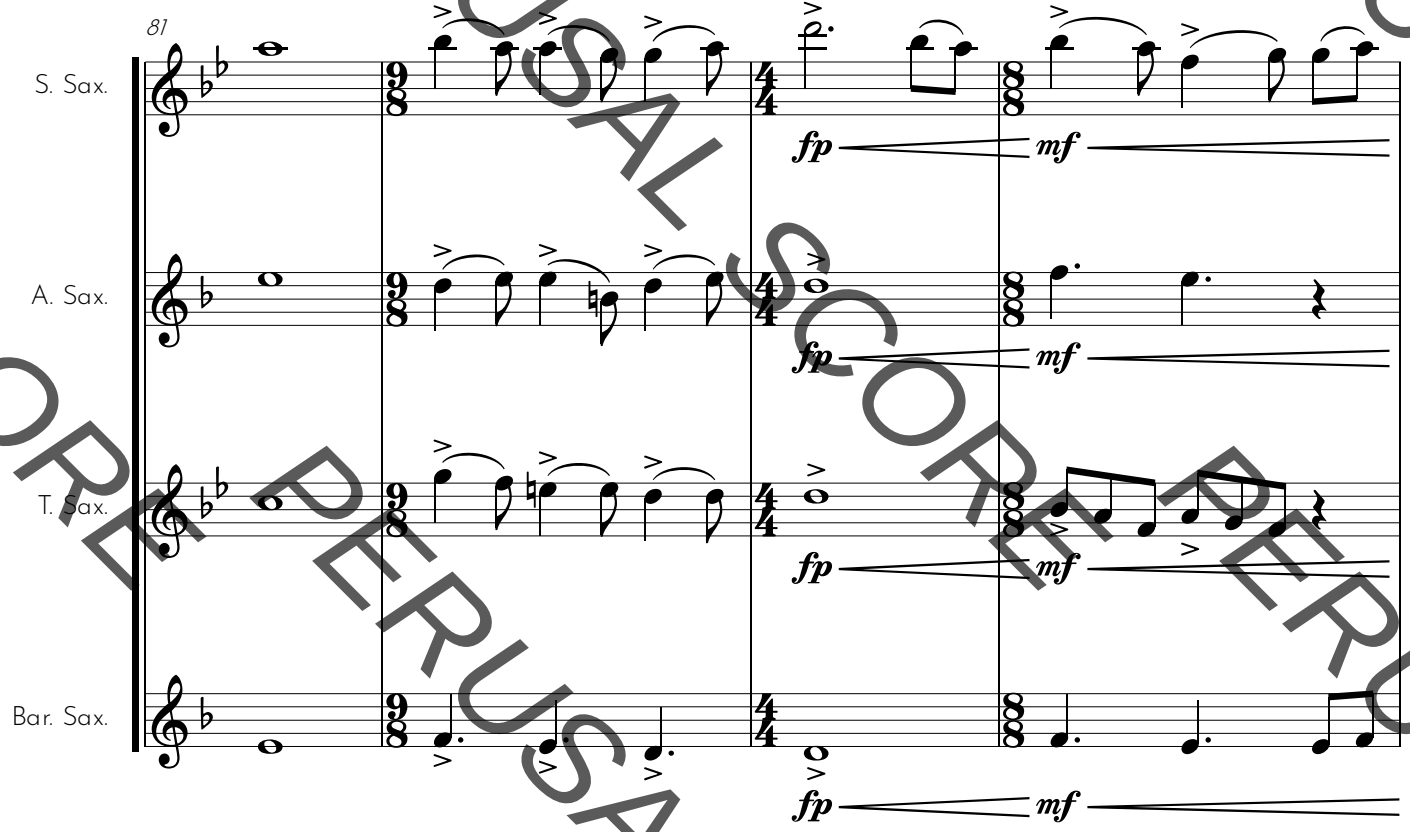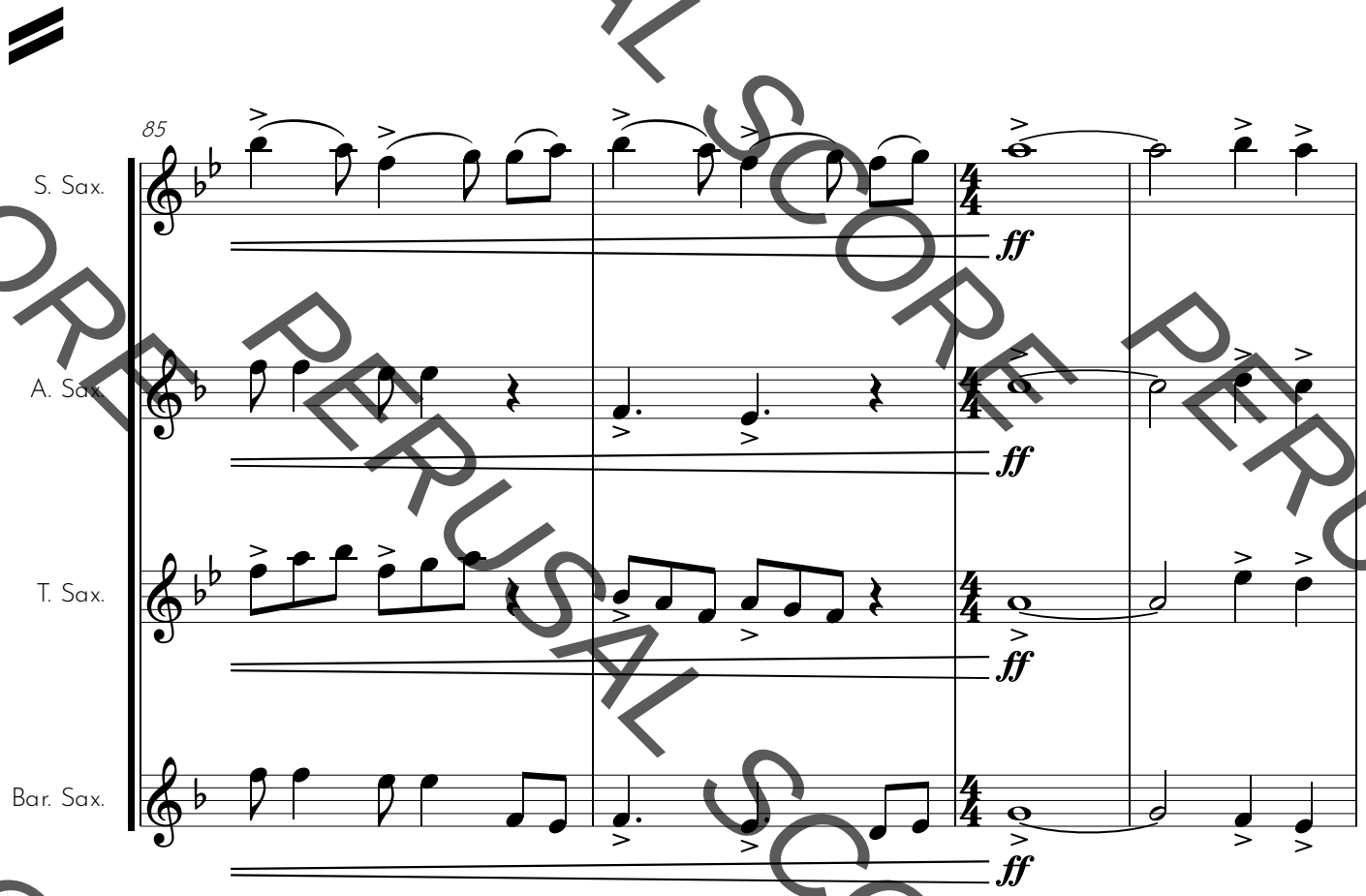




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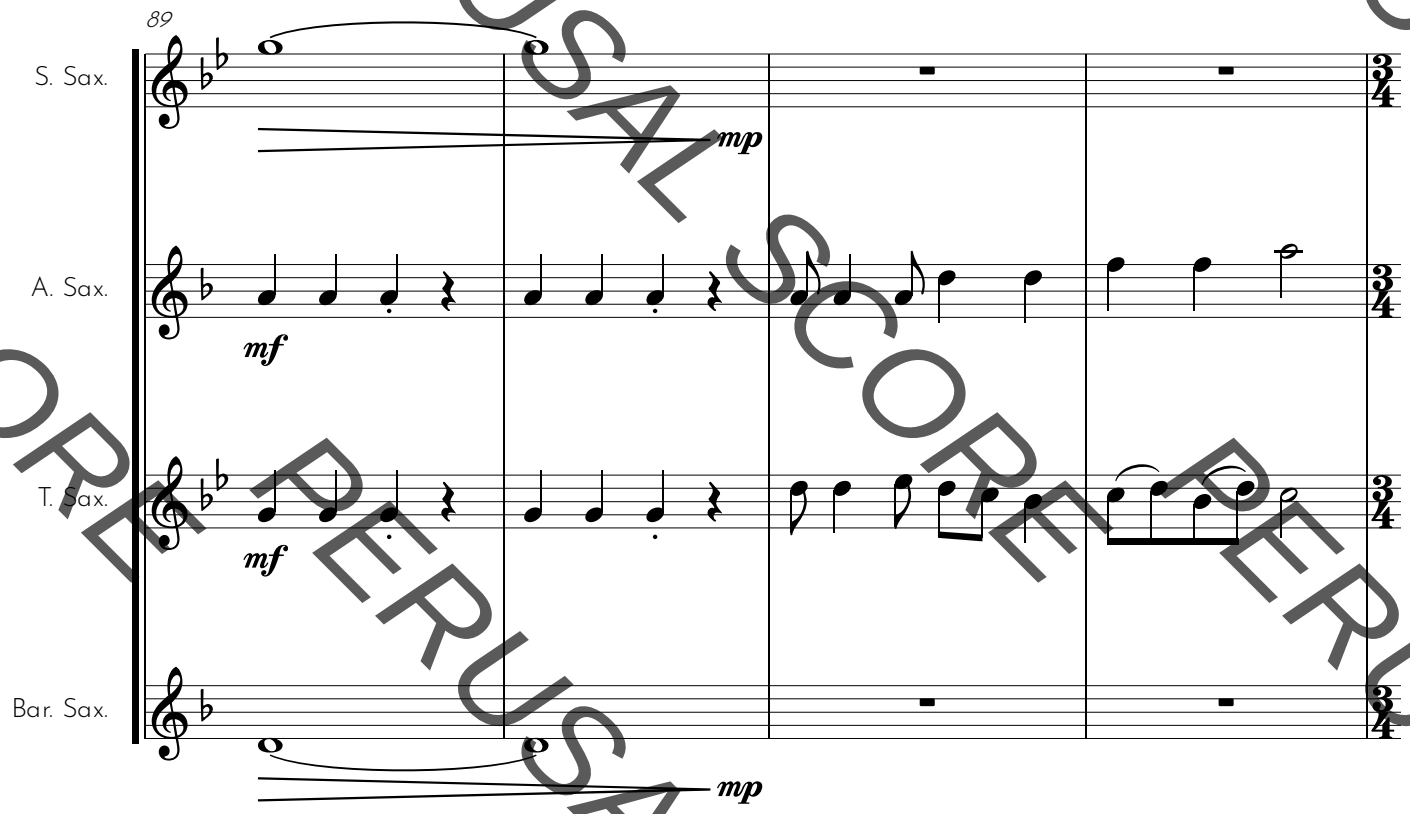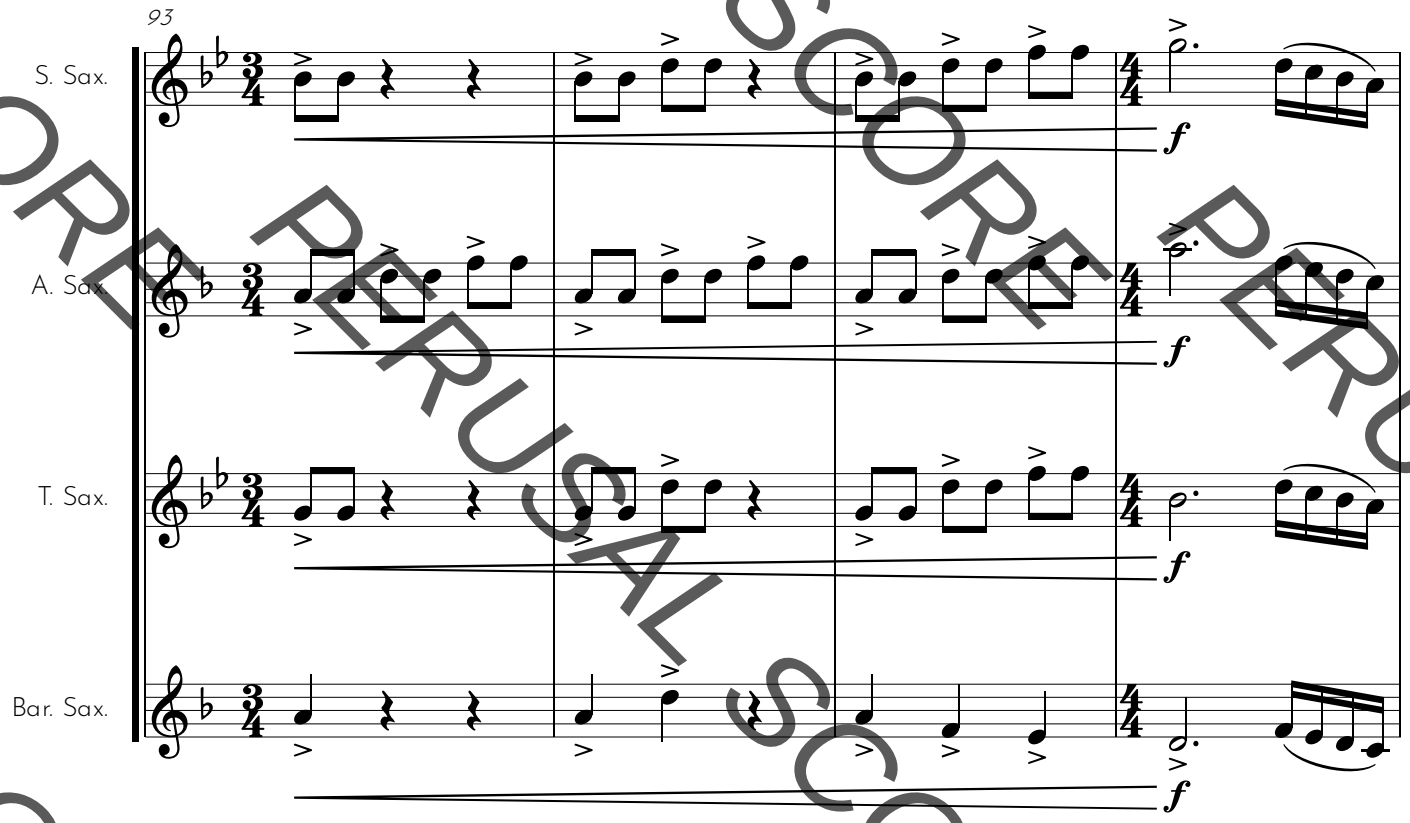




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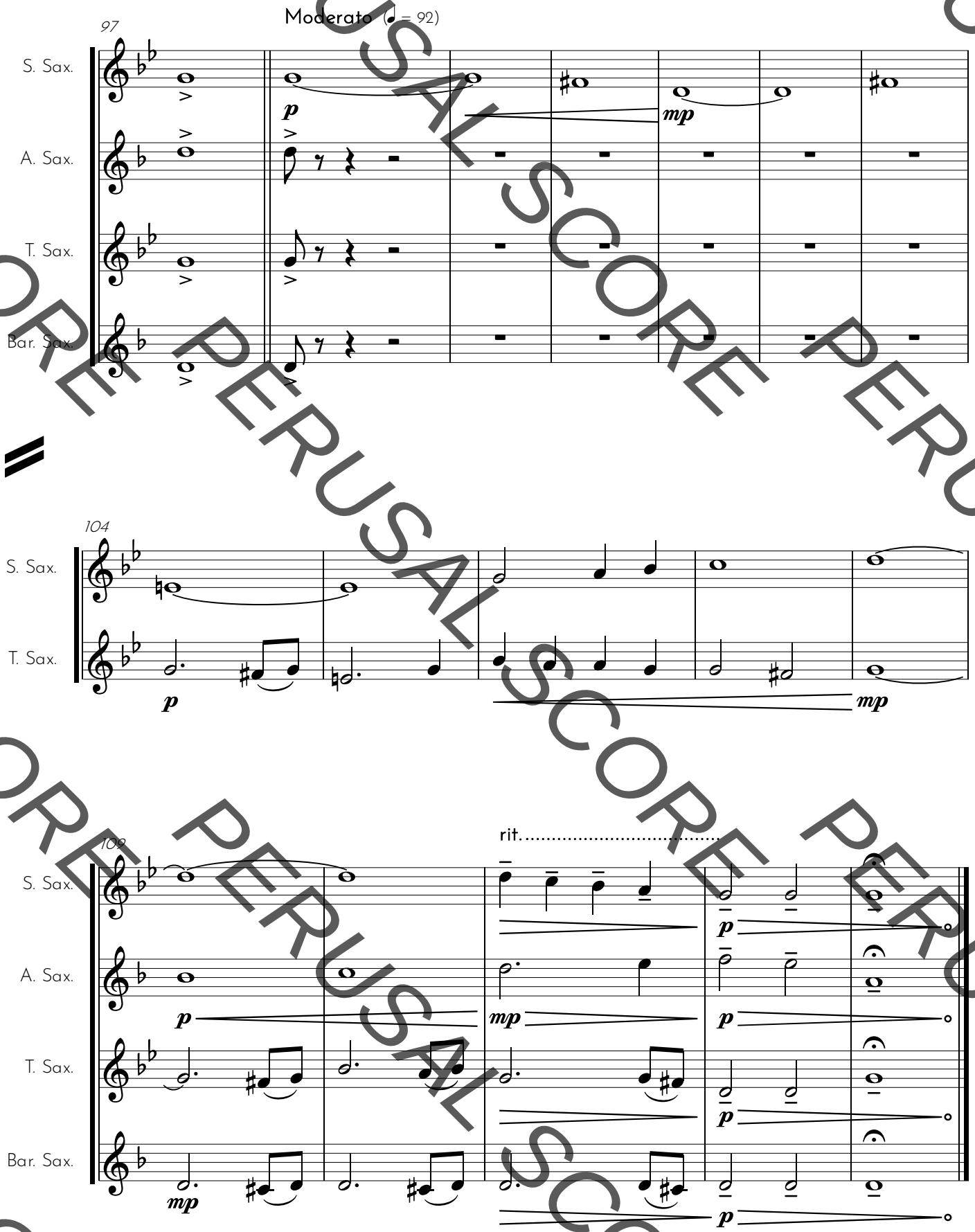




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