ALLA BORZOVA

MOON'S MOURNING

from the music-telling fairy tale

based on William Stafford's eponymous poem

THE ANIMAL THAT DRANK UP SOUND

for alto flute and bodhran

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"Moon's Mourning"
from The Animal That Drank Up Sound

Music by Alla Borzova
Poem by William Stafford
Choreography by Nusha Martynuk
Performed by Tales & Scales

Program Notes

"Moon's Mourning", for alto flute and bodhran, stands in the center of a 30-minute "music-telling" fairy tale ***The Animal That Drank Up Sound***. Praised as "a masterpiece of musical imagination in motion...the sheer enchantment…an enthrallingly visual and acoustic joy, "mesmerizing, visually and musically", the piece was commissioned by Tales & Scales, a "music-telling" ensemble from Evansville, Indiana; premiered in 2000, and toured all over the US. Among the New York City's notable performances are those at the Manhattan School of Music, Merkin Hall of Lincoln Center, and off-Broadway's ArtsConnection. The entire piece combines music, narration, and choreography and is scored for four musicians: flute/alto flute, clarinet, trombone/euphonium, and various percussion instruments. Although the entire composition does not have any music quotations, it was inspired by the Native Americans' music and imagery (including music of Inuit: Alaskan indigenous people). I used some unusual instruments in the piece, like bird's whistle, gong, immersed in the water, rocks and logs, flute's head joint, clarinet's mouthpiece; bamboo, filled with water. Sometimes the traditional classical instruments of the Tales and Scales' ensemble sound like Native American instruments. There are many unusual sounds in the piece, which imitate the sounds of nature. All instruments employ sometimes extended techniques.

The Animal That Drank Up Sound is a story about a sound-thirsty creature that drains life from the world without giving or making any sound of its own until the earth is almost silent. After all the sounds of the world have been devoured, the animal begins to starve and dies. When the small voice of a cricket begins the rebirth of music and life on the earth, we are reminded that the voice of the meek is often the voice we should strain to hear.

"Moon's Mourning" is the dramatic climax of the entire piece, in which the Moon mourns over the dead Animal. Flute part was inspired by the indigenous flutists' playing (such as R. Carlos Nakai and others.) The flutist can play in a Native American way: freely and with sliding and bending of the sound. Bodhran, which accompanies the flute, belongs to the family of frame drums. Frame drum is a favorite instrument of Inuit shaman or "medicine man." However in Inuit tradition a frame drum is played by a stick, but in the "Moon's mourning" it is played by hands, like in the Middle East.

-Alla Borzova

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Praise for *THE ANIMAL THAT DRANK UP SOUND*

Several hundred men, women and children listened with rapt attention, raucous laughter, delighted squeals and a few howls…

-Roger McBain, Evansville Courier & Press, September 13, 2000

Ms. Lawler<flutist> was joined by her "Tales & Scales" partners for Alla Borzova's "Moon Mourning" from "The Animal That Drank Up Sound." Based on William Stafford's poem about a world drained of sound but saved by a brave cricket that escaped, the music calls for alto flute and a hand-held drum, both played in an improvisatory style; the clarinetist and trombonist did not play, but added some narration and miming. The total effect was quite mesmerizing, visually and musically.

-Edith Eisler,New York Concert Review Vol. 8, No. 2, Summer 2001

(Zarah Lawler, flutist of Tales & Scales', performed "Moon's Mourning", the excerpt from The Animal That Drank Up Sound in her solo recital at Merkin Hall, New York City, on June 3, 2001)

...a masterpiece of musical imagination in motion...the sheer enchantment…an enthrallingly visual and acoustic joy...an ideal vehicle for conveying the vitality and relevance of new music today to young audiences and their families and thereby cultivating a climate of receptivity to the cause of contemporary music.

-John de Clef Pineiro, The New Music Connoseur, February, 2002

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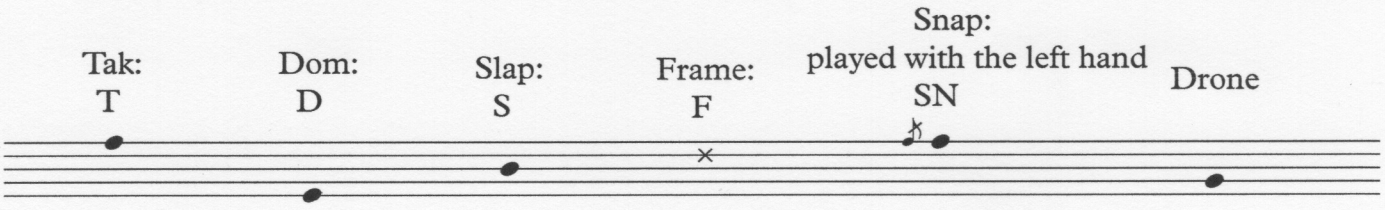
Performance Notes

Below are two excerpts from William Stafford's poem that can be read before the music is performed. In the entire performance of the fairy tale the second excerpt is performed. However, the first excerpt could be performed instead, depending on the performers' preference:

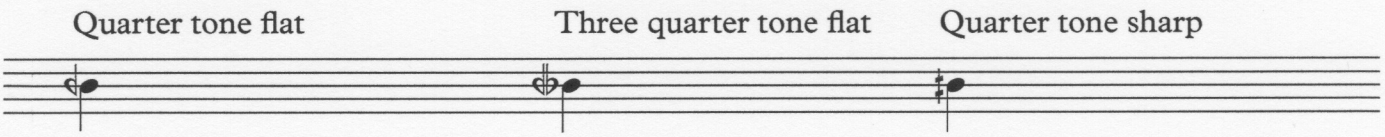
(1) It was finally tall and still,
and he stopped on the highest ridge,
just where the cold sky fell away
like a perpetual curve,
and from there he walked on silently,
and began to starve...

(2) When the moon drifted over that night
the whole world lay just like a moon,
shining back that still silver,
and the moon saw its own Animal dead on the snow,
its dark absorbent paws and quiet muzzle
and thick, velvet, deep fur...

Notation symbols for Bodhran:



Notation symbols for the microtones:



Duration: circa 4,5 minutes

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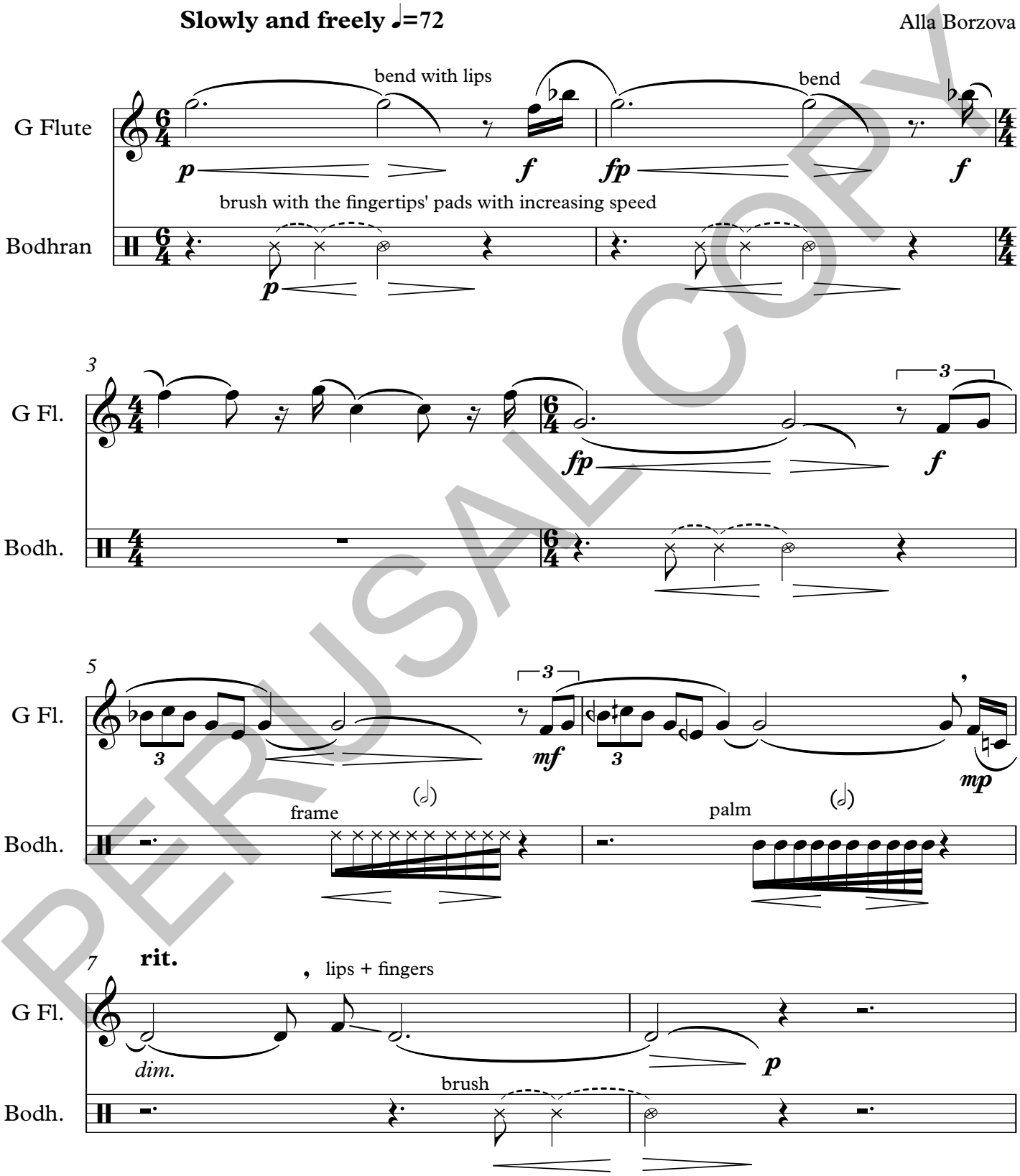
from the music-telling fairy tale

THE ANIMAL THAT DRANK UP SOUND



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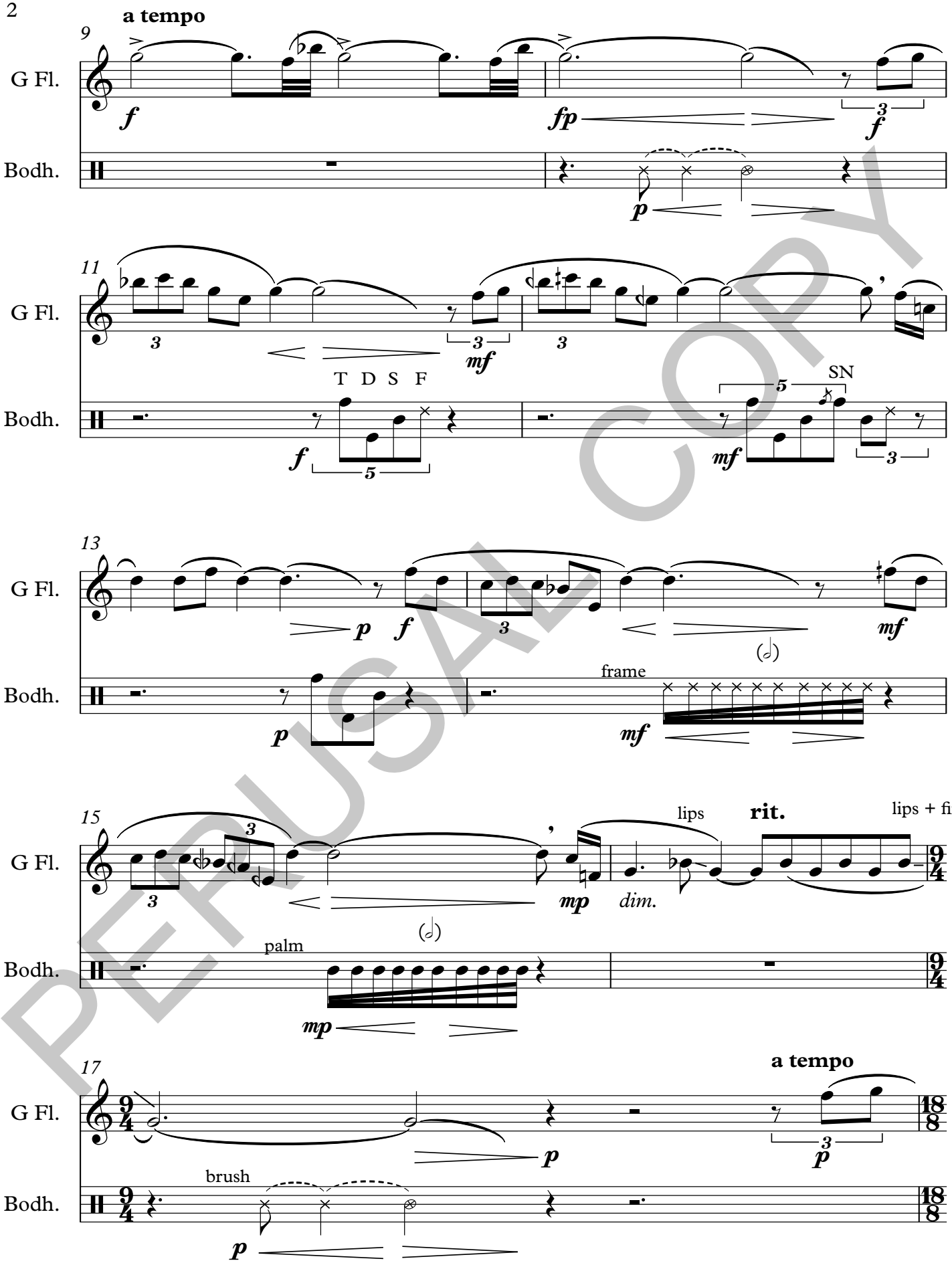

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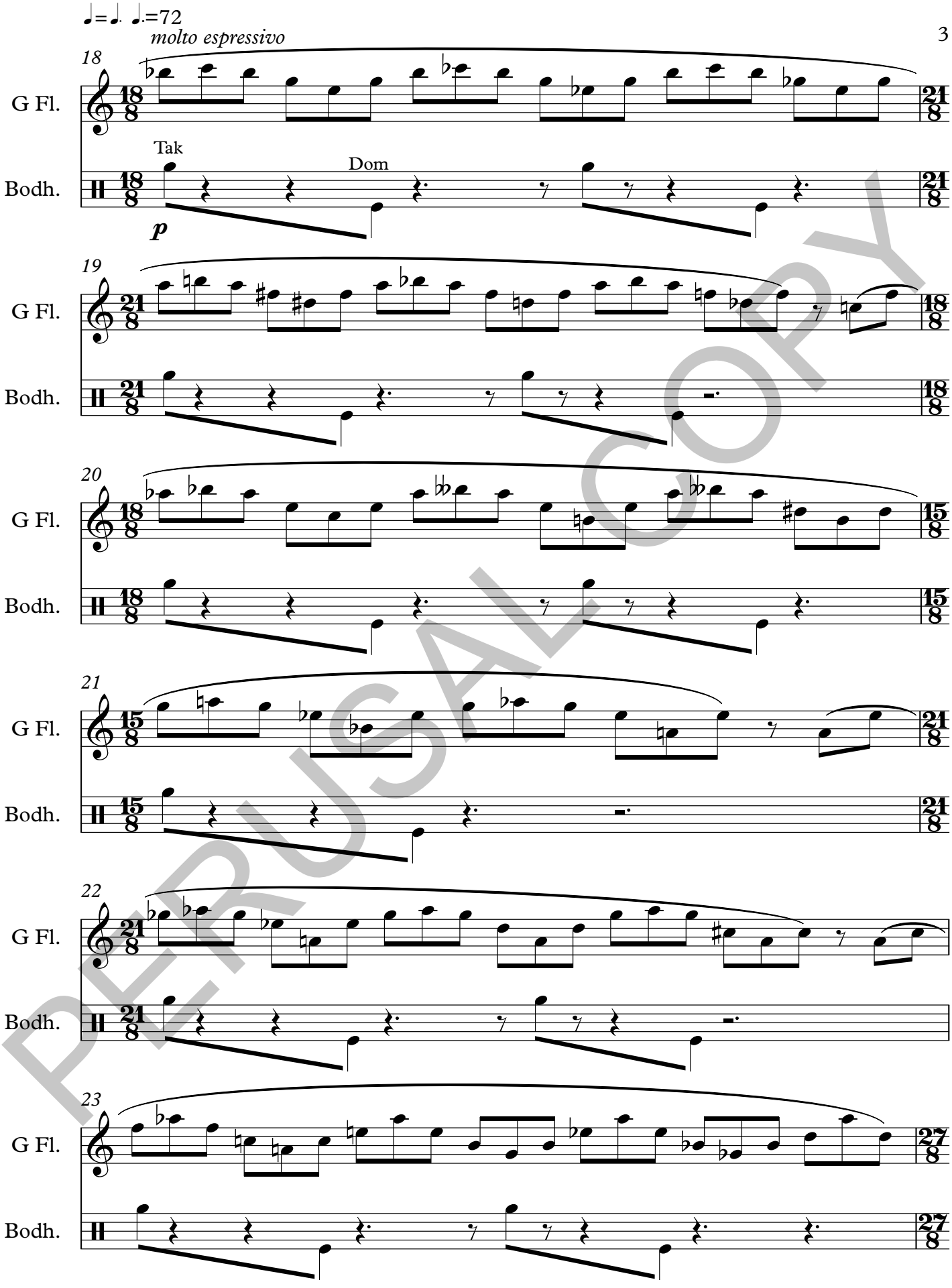

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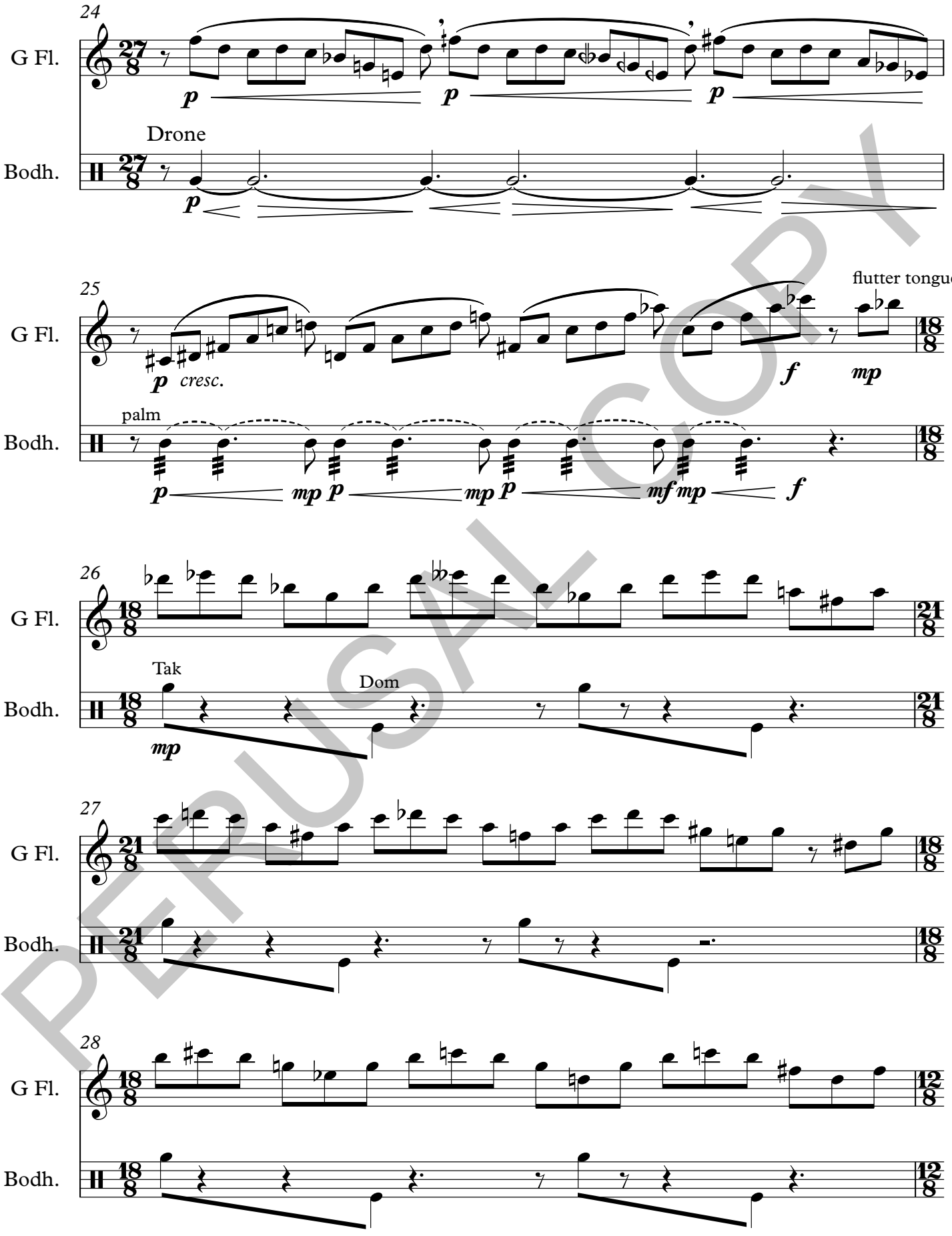

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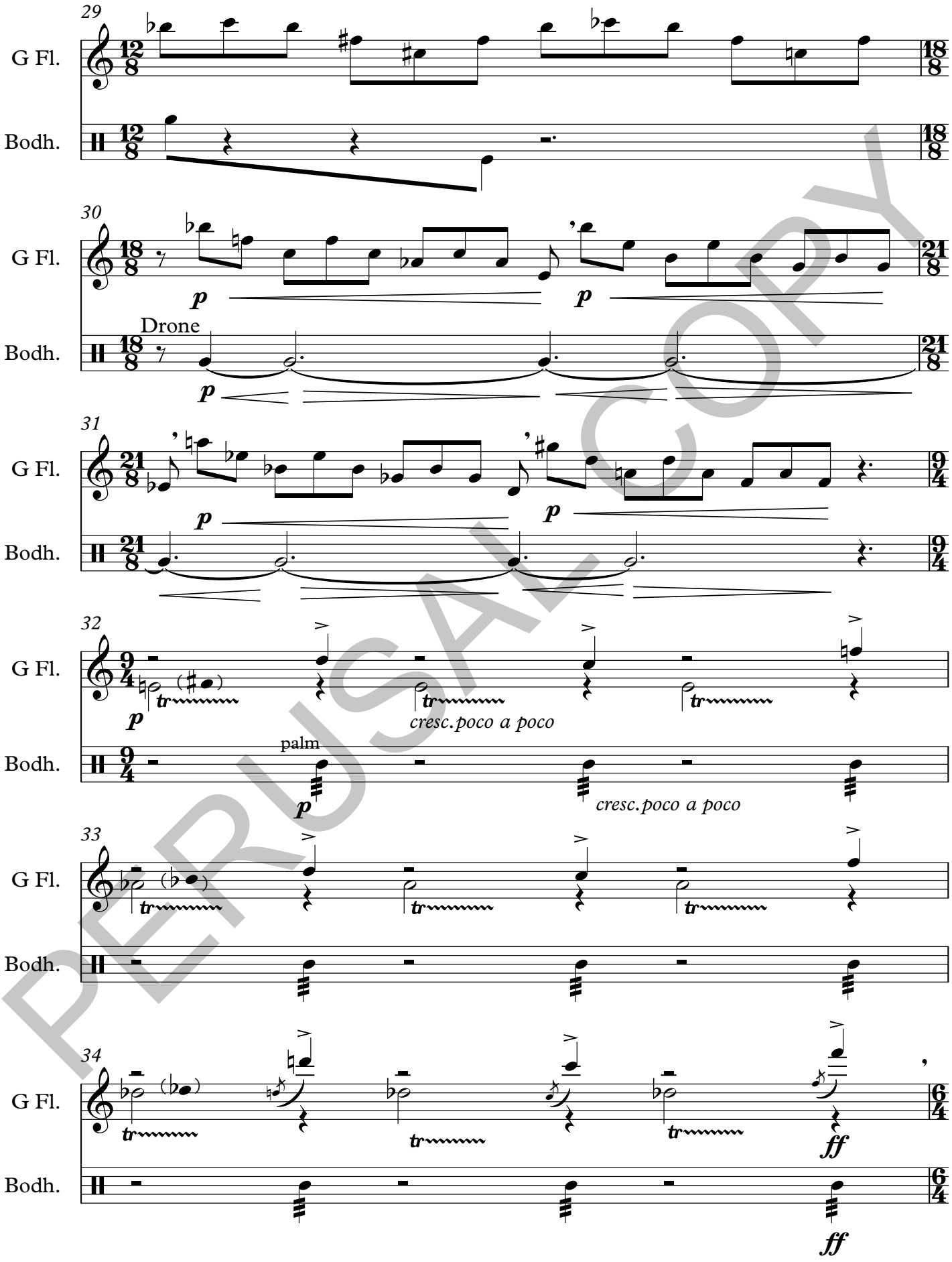

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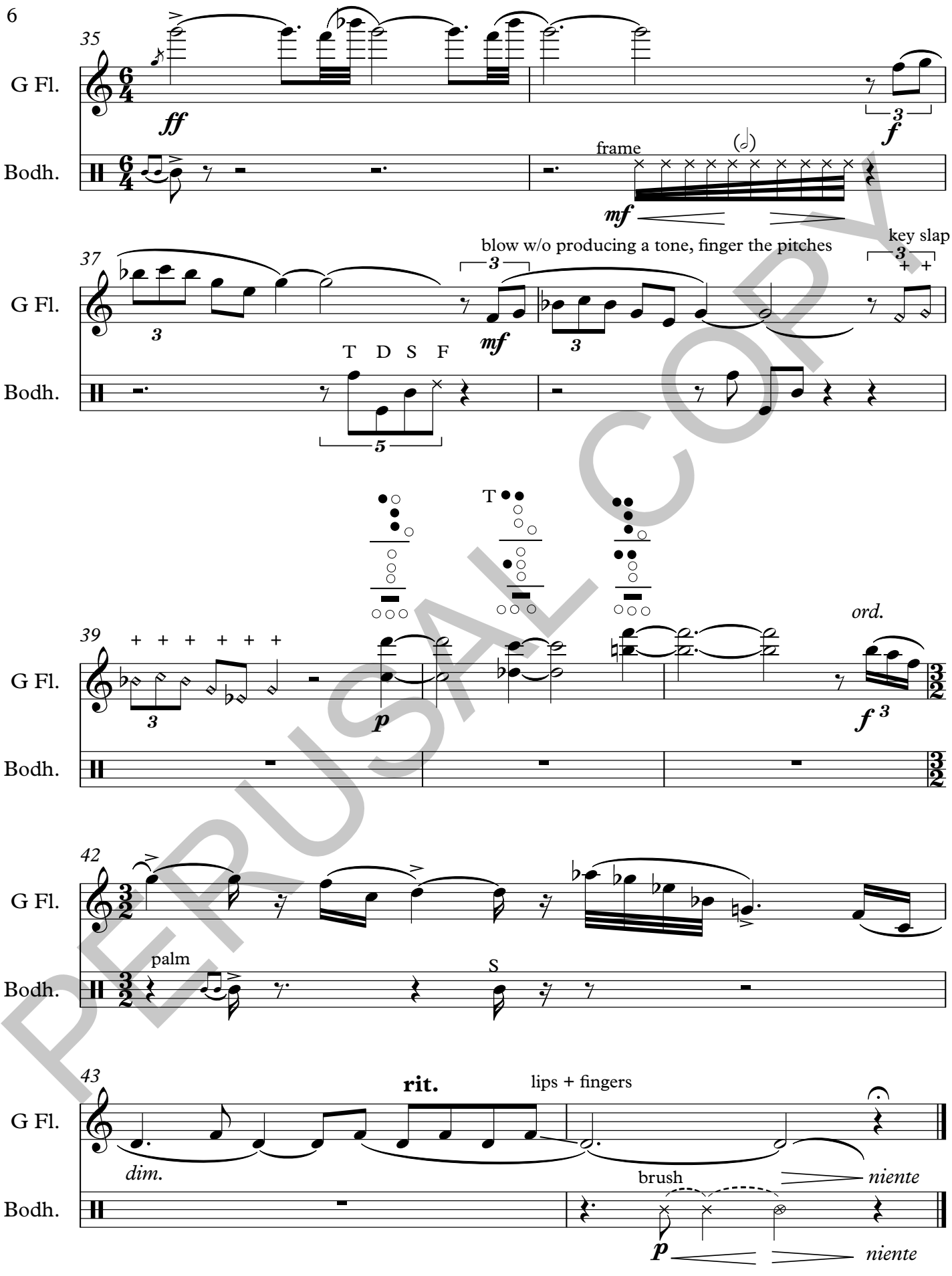

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