Commissioned by Retorica Duo, with the support of LICA
& Jersey International Music Festival

Gabriel Prokofiev

Violin Duo No.1

(for Huwke & Charles Zawose)

EXCERPT

Composer's note

With the four movements of this Violin Duo, I was very keen to explore a wide range of sounds that the violin can produce and in particular focus on a more intimate and what I would call a 'dusty' or 'grainy' sound - asking the duo to play *sul tasto* (over the finger board) or to bow very, very softy, or to use harmonics. Also, I was interested in moving away from the florid, scalic, overtly lyrical writing that seems to characterise a lot of Violin Duo writing, and explore more rhythmic terrains, a more textural approach, and look for a broader characterful pallet. Alongside these aims was always a search for original and intersting harmonic movements, and charaterful melodies.

Composing for a duo forces the composer to work in a different way, they need to give much more implied harmony to each line, and often use various tricks to give the impression of their being more than just two voices playing. So an important feature of these duos are the uses of ostinato and hocketing, which can often create the impression of more than two lines, especially when accents and tessatura are used carefully. Interestingly just on the day of the UK premier of the first three movements (the fourth was premiered in Jersey a month later), I had a revelation about an important influence, that had emerged completely subconsciously. About 15 years ago I had worked with Tanzanian duo Hukwe & Charles Zawose (as interpreter, tour manager, and even record producer). The Zawoses performed a uniquely beautiful type of East African classical music rooted in the traditions of the Wagogo people (of central Tanzania). They played ilimba (thumb pianos) and izeze (East African Violins), and in fact were the first musical duo I had extended exposure too. A central feature of their music was slowly changing ostinato figures and hocketing patterns: without any conscious realisation at the time of composing those two features turned out to be quite prominent in my duos.The Zawose's used a particular Wagogo mode which is based on the natural harmonic series, and I as haven't used that in this piece so the connection with their music is not immediately obvious (though the slow movement does have an extended section that only uses harmonics), but the fundamental approach to composing for violin duo is the same.Both Charles & Hukwe died over 10 years ago, and though this work was not consciously composed for them, their influence found it's way in in a particularly natural way, and that's why the duos are dedicated to them.

The four movements have traditional classical italian tempo markings, but I also gave them quick nicknames when I was sketching ideas for the duo. As, in what seems to be becoming a bad habit, those nicknames have stuck, and though I was keen to remove them Retorica thought I should leave them in.

I 'ijumaa'*Andante, molto leggero (like viols)*
A pensive, intimate reflective recollection, ending with a hopeful dream.

II 'nakumbuka'*Adagio*
An almost 'bluesy' and at times nostalgic, melancholic song in 7/4.

III 'Repenier'*Scherzo delicato*
Playful, sometimes teasing, flirtatious, irritable, unpredictable, crazy, and quite tricky to play.

IV 'Pass it over'*Allegro*
An angular motif is introduced by passing seemingly random notes back and forth between the violins, this develops into a groove. A mechanical ('techno'-influenced, pulsing corrupted major chord sequence follows.

NOTE:'ijumaa' means Friday in Swahili, noting the day I started composing that movement, 'nakumbuka' means I remember in Swahili.

Gabriel Prokofiev (2014)

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Commissioned by Retorica Duo,
with LICA & Jersy International Music Festival.

The first performance was given by LCA
in Lancaster, UK, on 6th March 2014.

Duration: 21 minutes

Full score & parts available to buy or hire from
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Ijumaa

Gabriel Prokofiev

Adagio ♩ = 96

molto leggiero, non vibrato (like Viols)

poco rit.

Violin

Violin

poco sul tasto

pp

poco sul tasto

pp

6

8va

A **a tempo**

p *pulsing effect*

p

10

15

19

23

poco rit.

pp

pp

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B **sensibile (a tempo)**

27

mp

p

31

35

mp

LH pizz.

mf

39

43

poco rit.

p

mp

pp

48

C **a tempo con poco rubato**

espressivo con vib.

pp

p (ordinario)

p *espressivo con vib.*

(ordinario)

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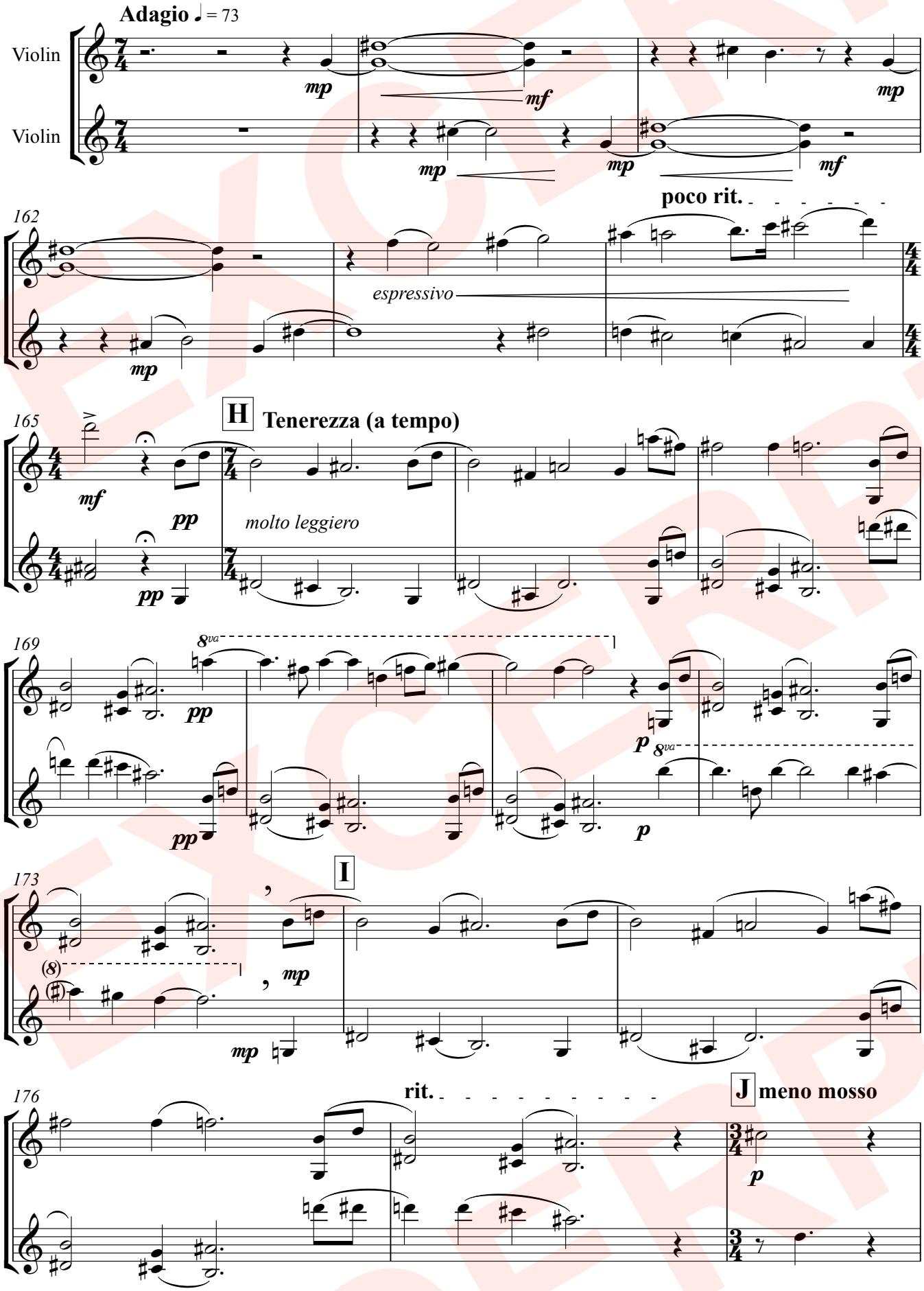
II
Nakumbuka



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III

Repenier

Scherzo delicato ♩ = 110

Violin I

Violin II

pp

pp

215

rall.

8va

220 **O** **dolce (a tempo)**

pp

(8)

p

225

(8)

228

mp

p

(8)

mf

p

233

(8)

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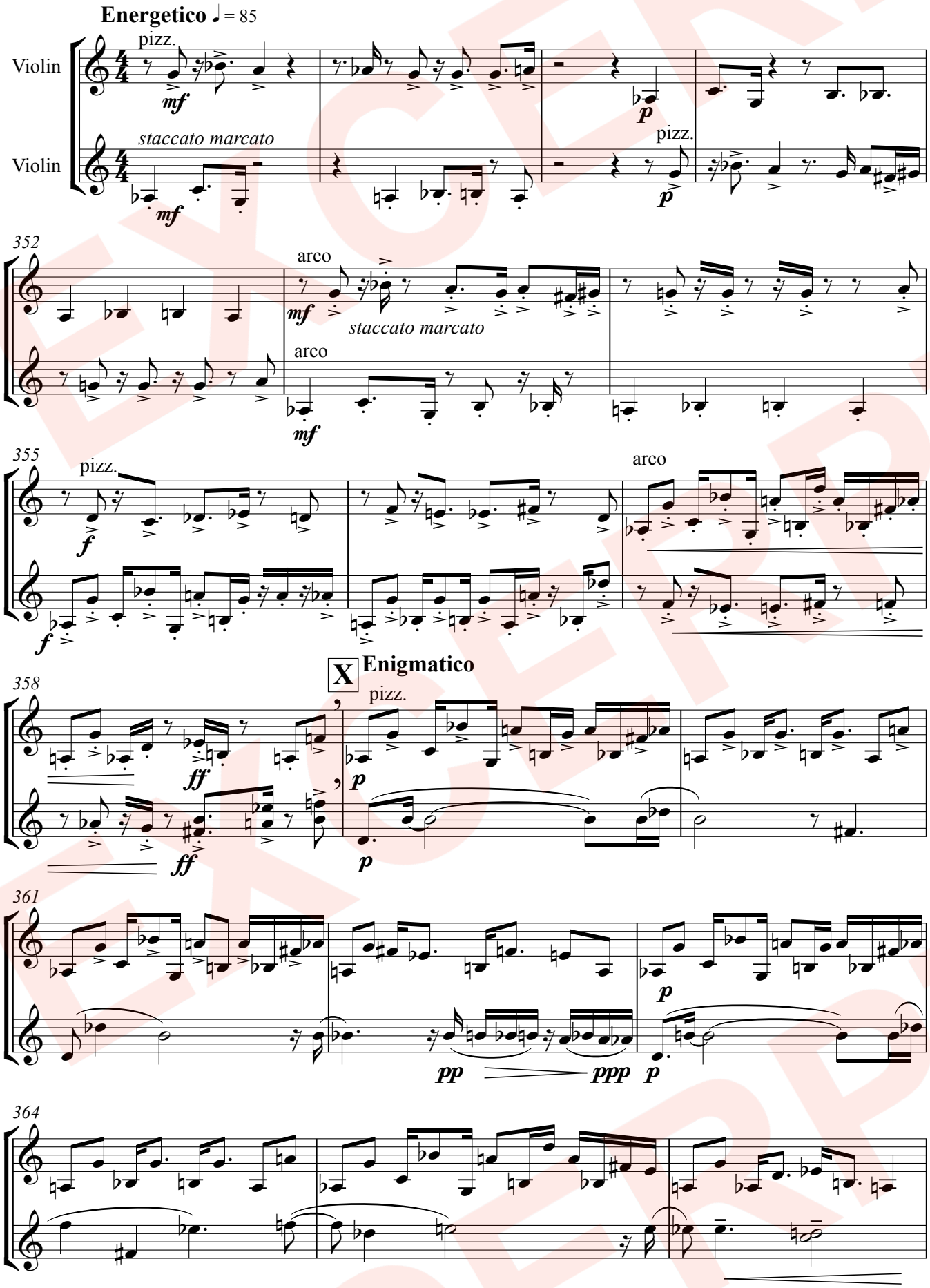
IV
Pass It Over



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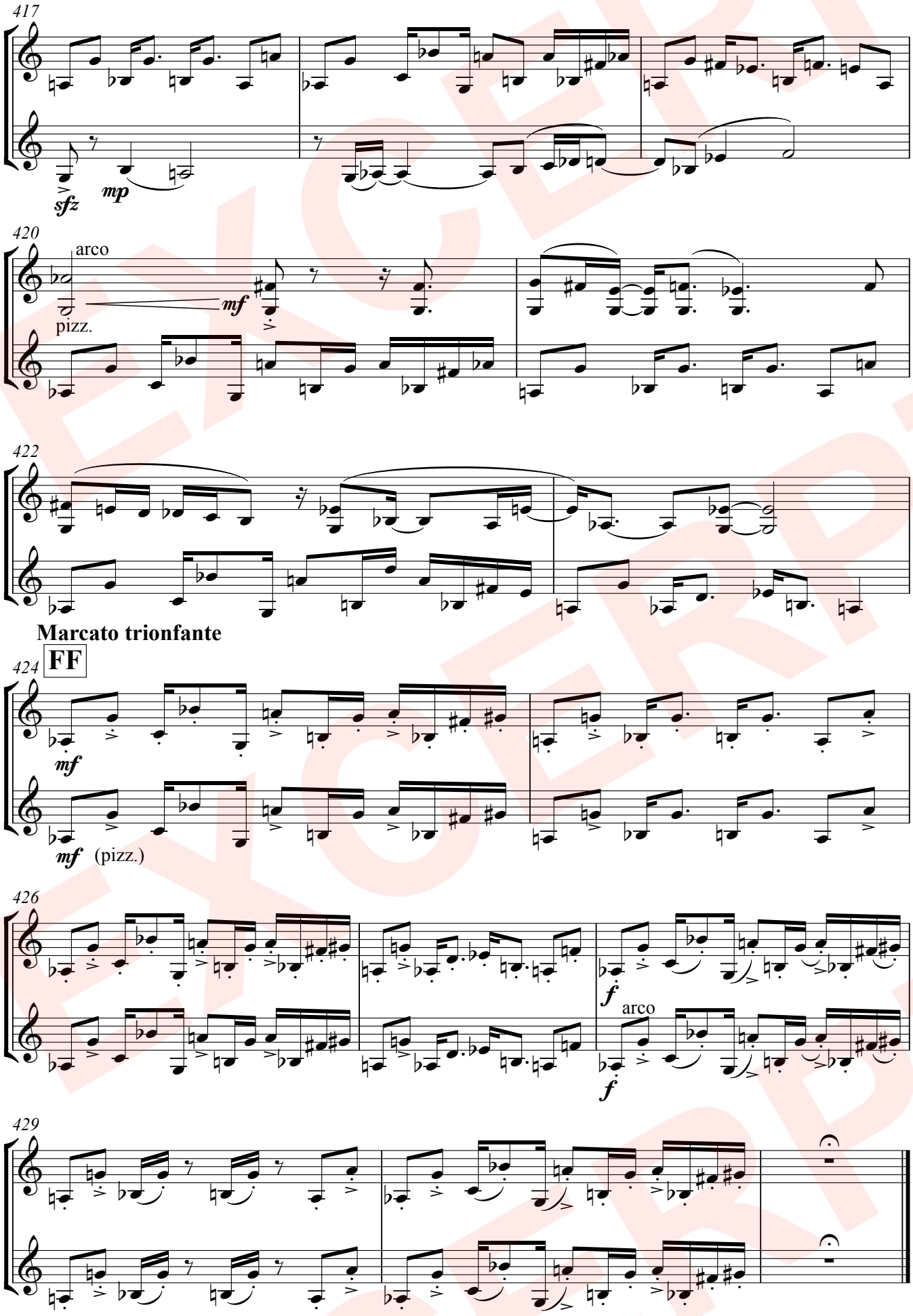

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