Castell y Barri
Programme notes

Dan Dennis:

MMus, BMus (Hons), ARSM, AGST, MISM:

Dan is a young musician living in South Wales. Raised in County Durham, Dan moved to Cardiff to study at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in 2017, graduating with a Bachelor's Degree in 2021 and Master's Degree in Brass Band Conducting in 2024 – the latter under the tutelage of Dr Robert Childs.

He has played trombone in brass bands at all levels, including the *Fishburn Band, National Children's Brass Band of Great Britain, RWCMD Brass Band,* and *Tongwynlais Temperance Band* and is looking forward to many more years contributing to the band movement. Having developed an affinity to Wales and its culture (particularly its brass bands), Dan has enjoyed working with several music services around Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan as well as pursuing his career as a Musical Director and a Composer.

Since taking up the baton with the *Vale of Glamorgan Brass Band* in 2019, Dan has led the band through many milestones and has helped the band to increase membership to over double the size it was when he first took over. Examples of Dan's successes with the VOG Band include the *Barry Bands Together Project* (2022), which drew £100,000 in funding and involved three music services working together to teach hundreds of young people brass and percussion instruments. Following the completion of BBT, Dan then worked with the VOG Band to set up *the Vale Associated Training Band* which has developed greatly under his guidance. He is also fortunate enough to hold the MD position with the *Dulais Valley Silver Band* which has made significant progress since his appointment in March 2024.

During his undergraduate studies, Dan displayed a keen interest in arranging and writing music. Since 2018, he has built up a good working relationship with SuperBrass Publishing, who have published several of his arrangements for orchestral brass dectet. *Castell y Barri* is his first commission, and hopefully the first of many.

Castell y Barri:

Castell y Barri was commissioned by the Vale of Glamorgan Brass Band as part of its Post-Covid-19 rejuvenation as well as with the hope of putting Dan firmly on the road to becoming an influential composer in Wales, the UK and more widely.

Thomas John (T.J.) Powell was often referred to as the 'Welsh March King' and produced numerous quality Brass Band marches, a number of which still remain popular in brass band circles including: *Castell Caerdydd*, *Castell Caerffili* and *Castell Coch*. Local bands have adopted these marches as their own. Titling the march *Castell y Barri* whilst providing a nod to TJ Powell's legacy also plays on the fact that VOG is an inclusive community band that emphasises having fun whilst making good music. Indeed, you can draw a parallel with the Band and *Castell y Barri*: Barry Castle is a small Grade II listed ruined two-storey gatehouse in the Romilly district of Barry, cloaked in heritage, and is admired by the community.

This commission acknowledges the near 50 years of music making the band has given to the Vale (the band was established in the 1970s to lead the Barry Carnival) alongside the creation of a new march in tribute to the 'Welsh March King' - history in the making.

The march itself features both modal and atonal harmony to create an, at times, comedic Shtick - reminiscent of the band's carnival-leading conception.

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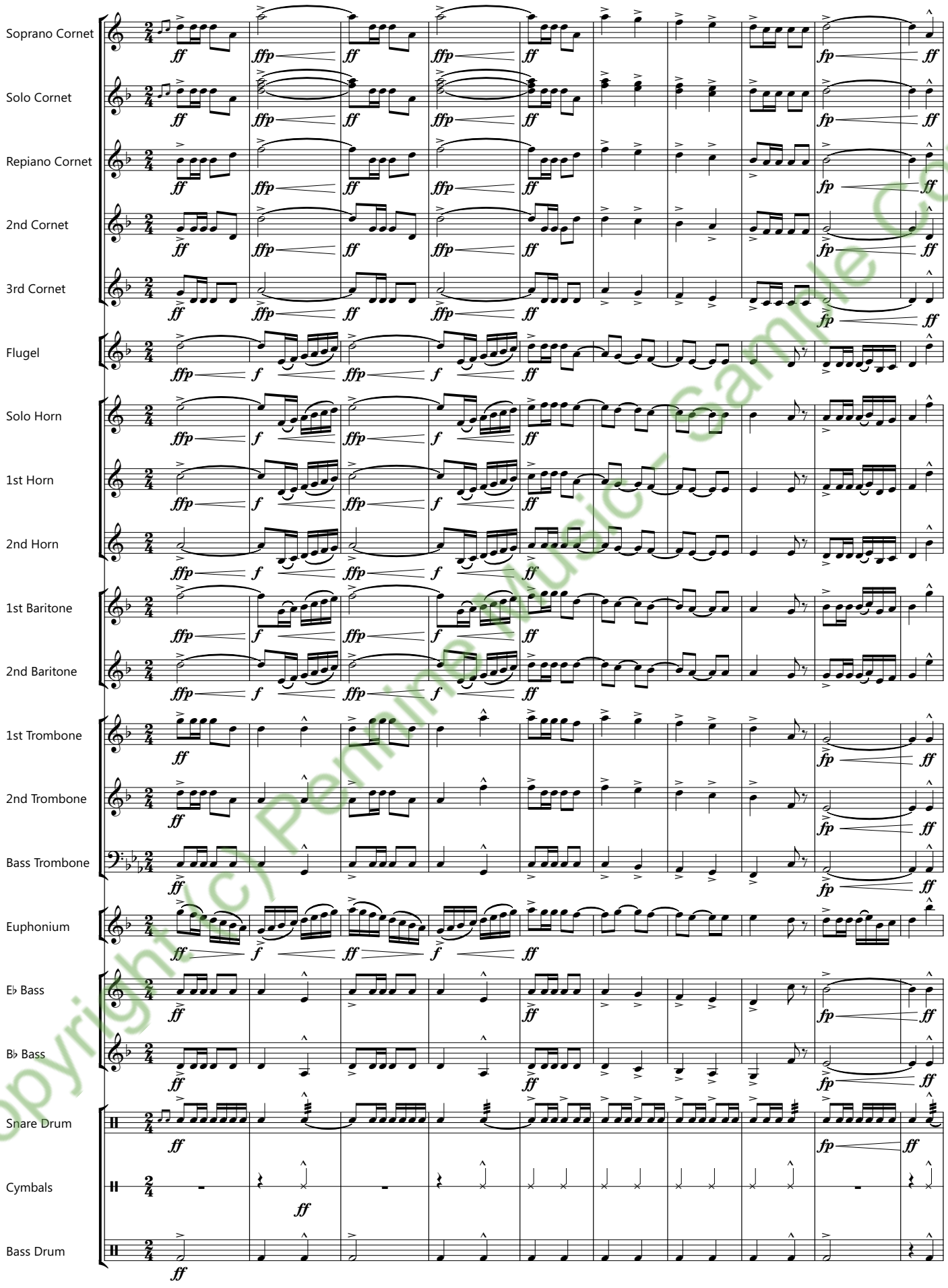
Castell y Barri

Commissioned by the Vale of Glamorgan Brass Band

Quick March ♩ = 116

Dan Dennis



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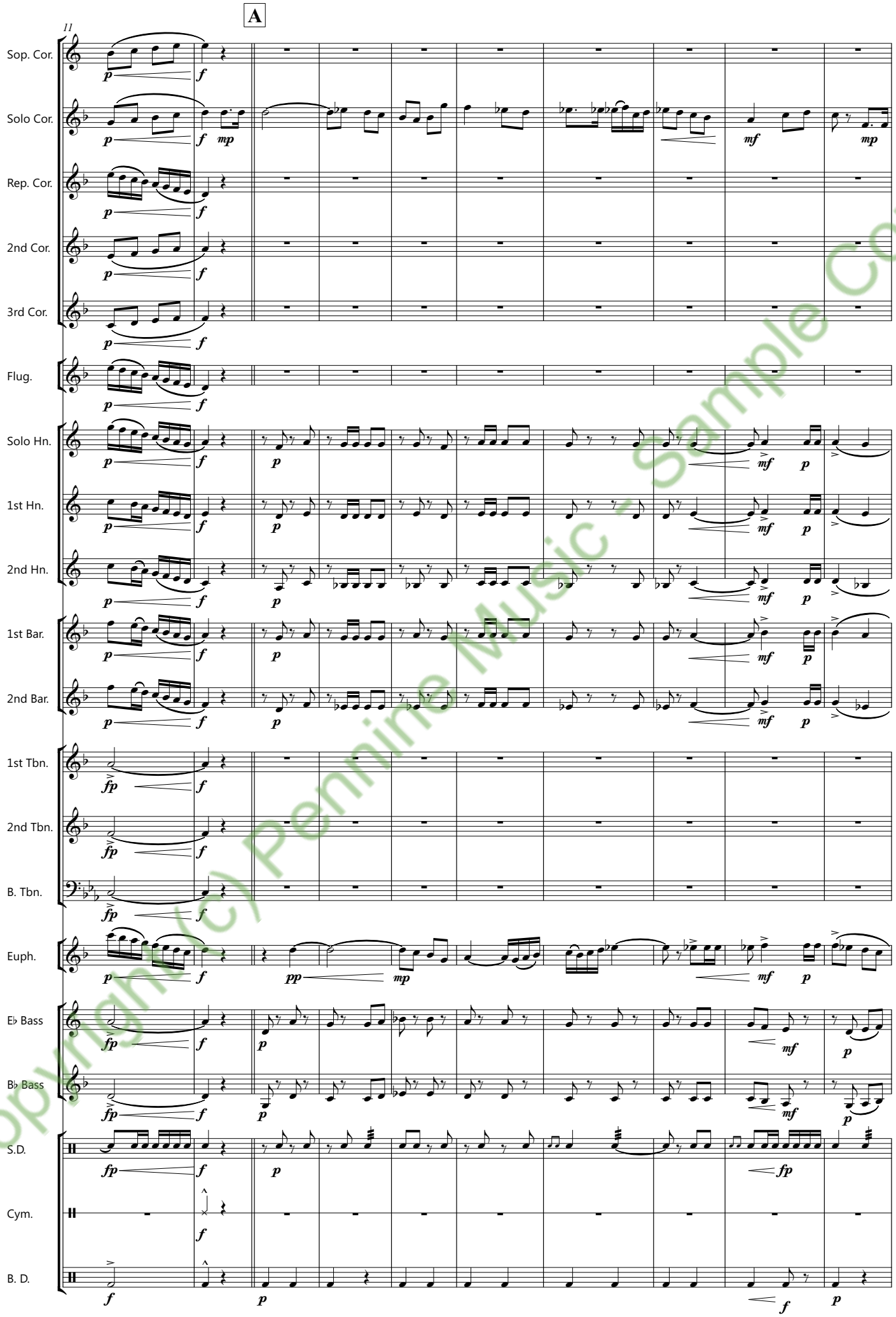

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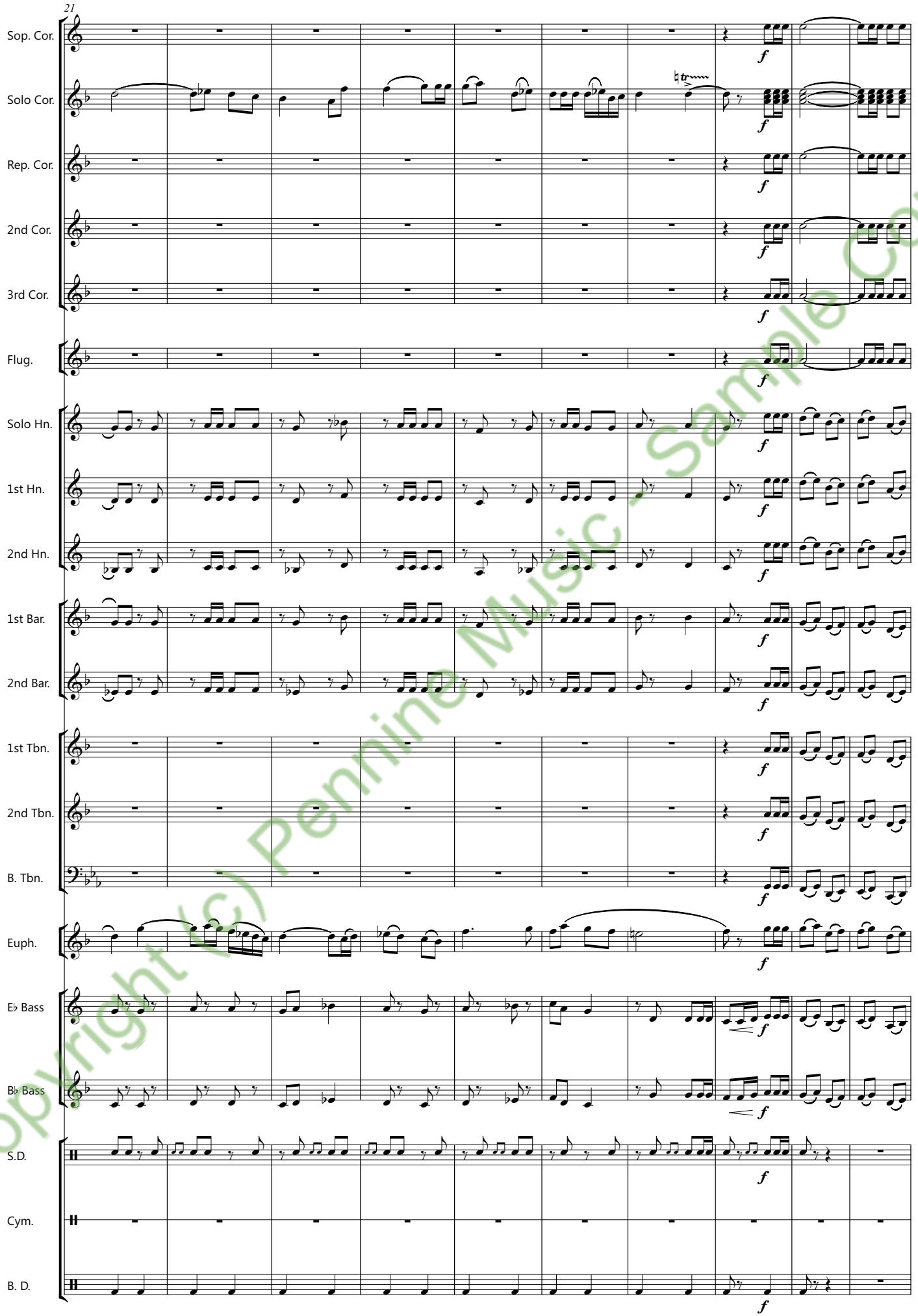

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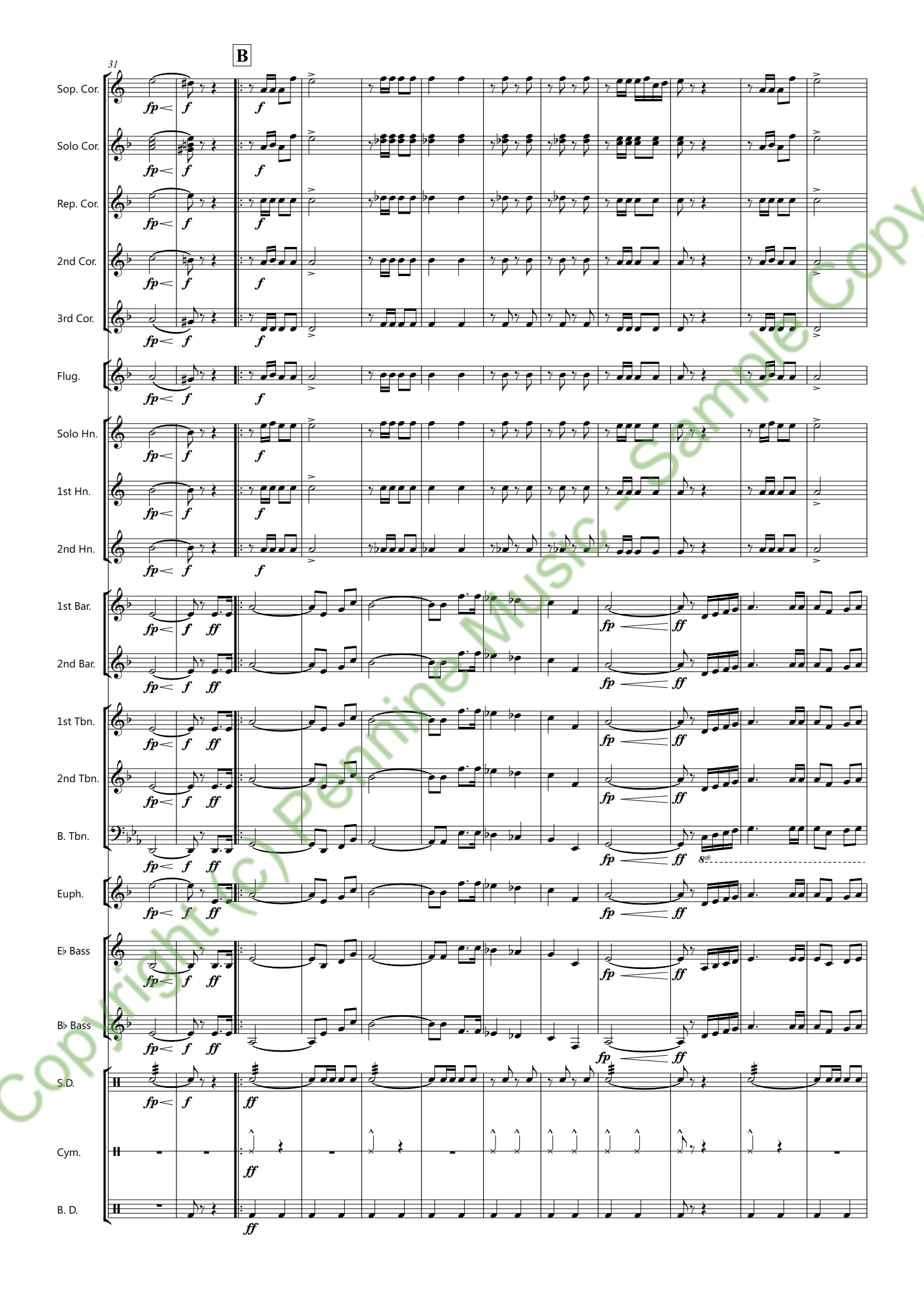

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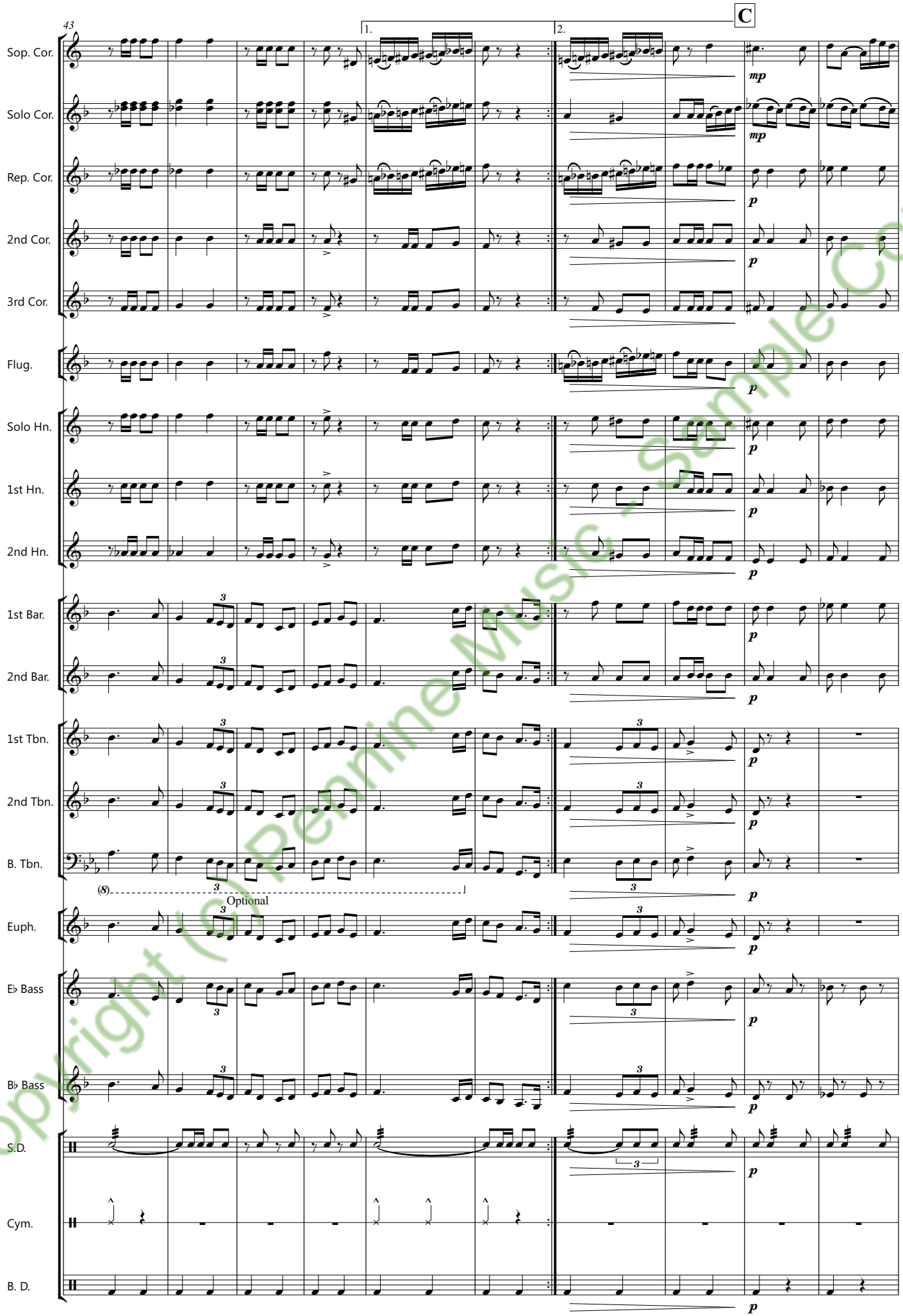

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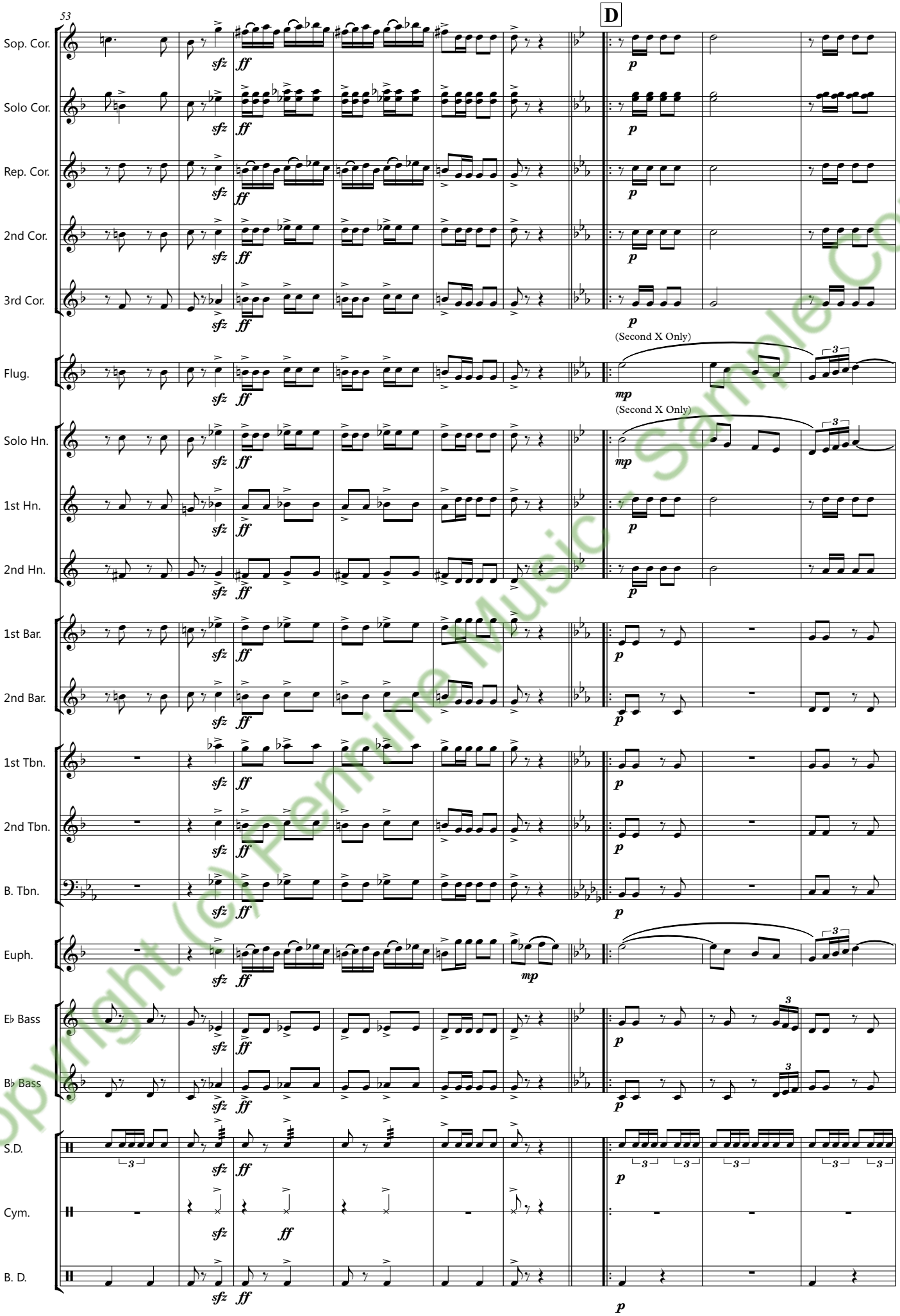

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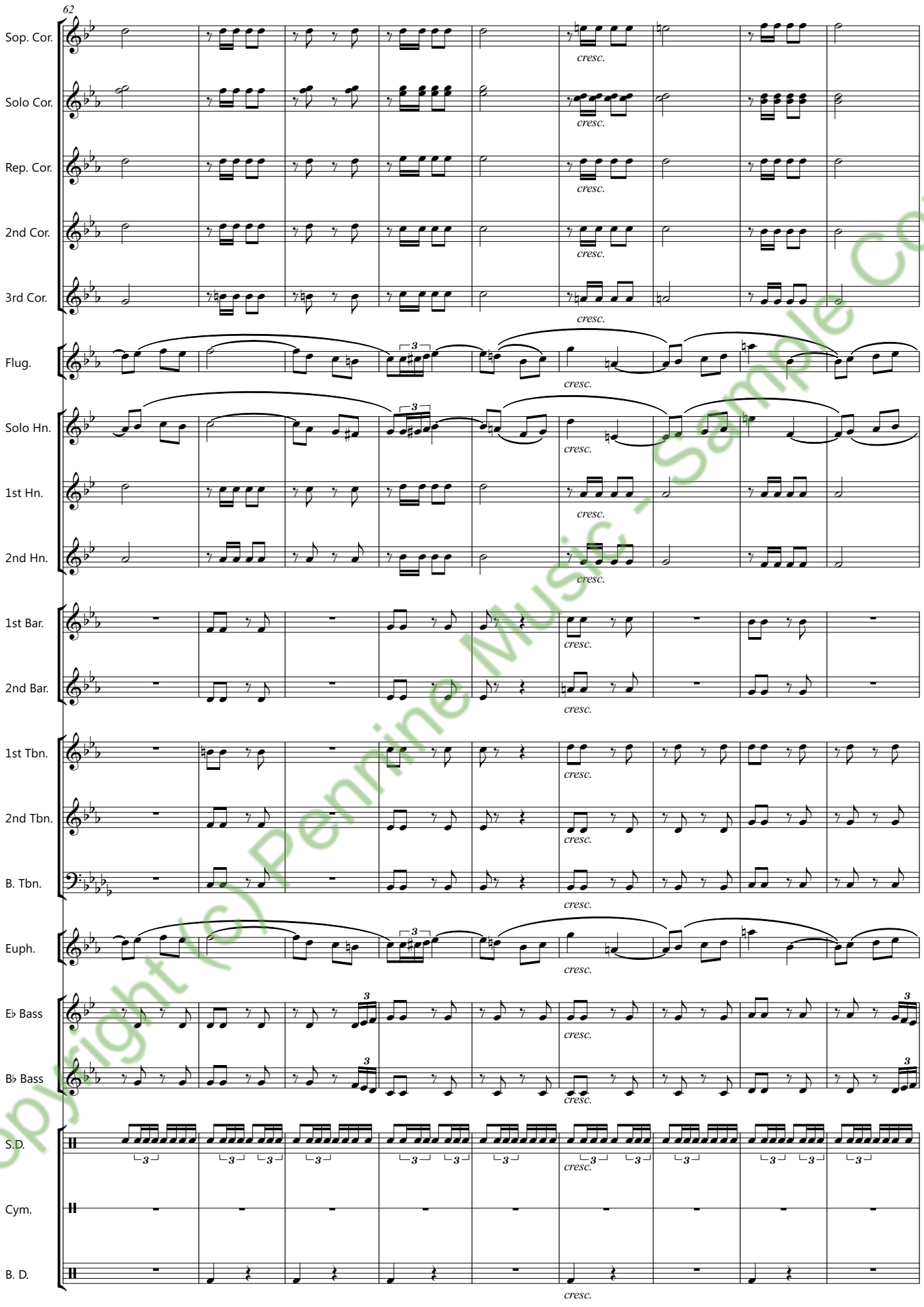

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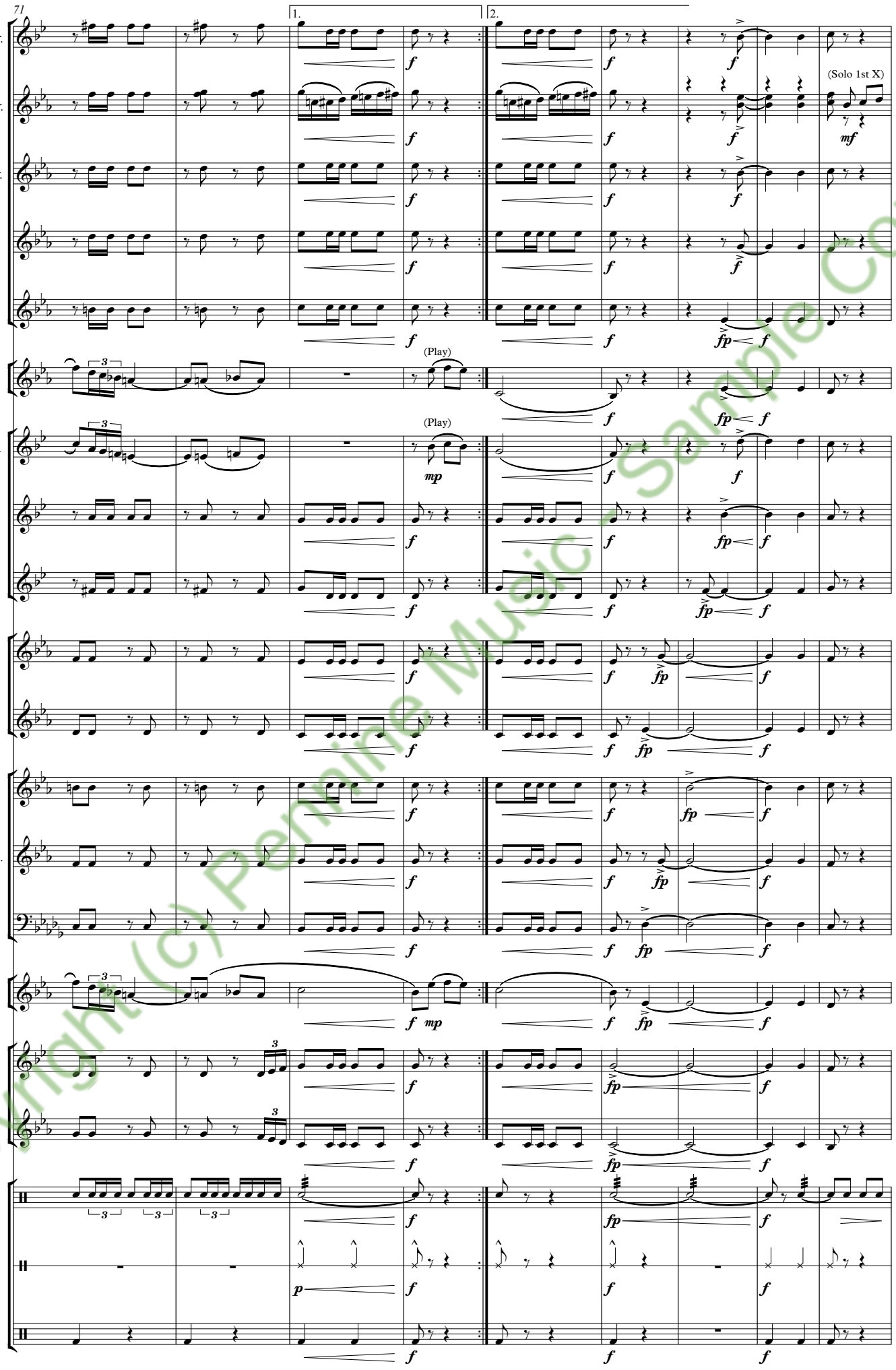

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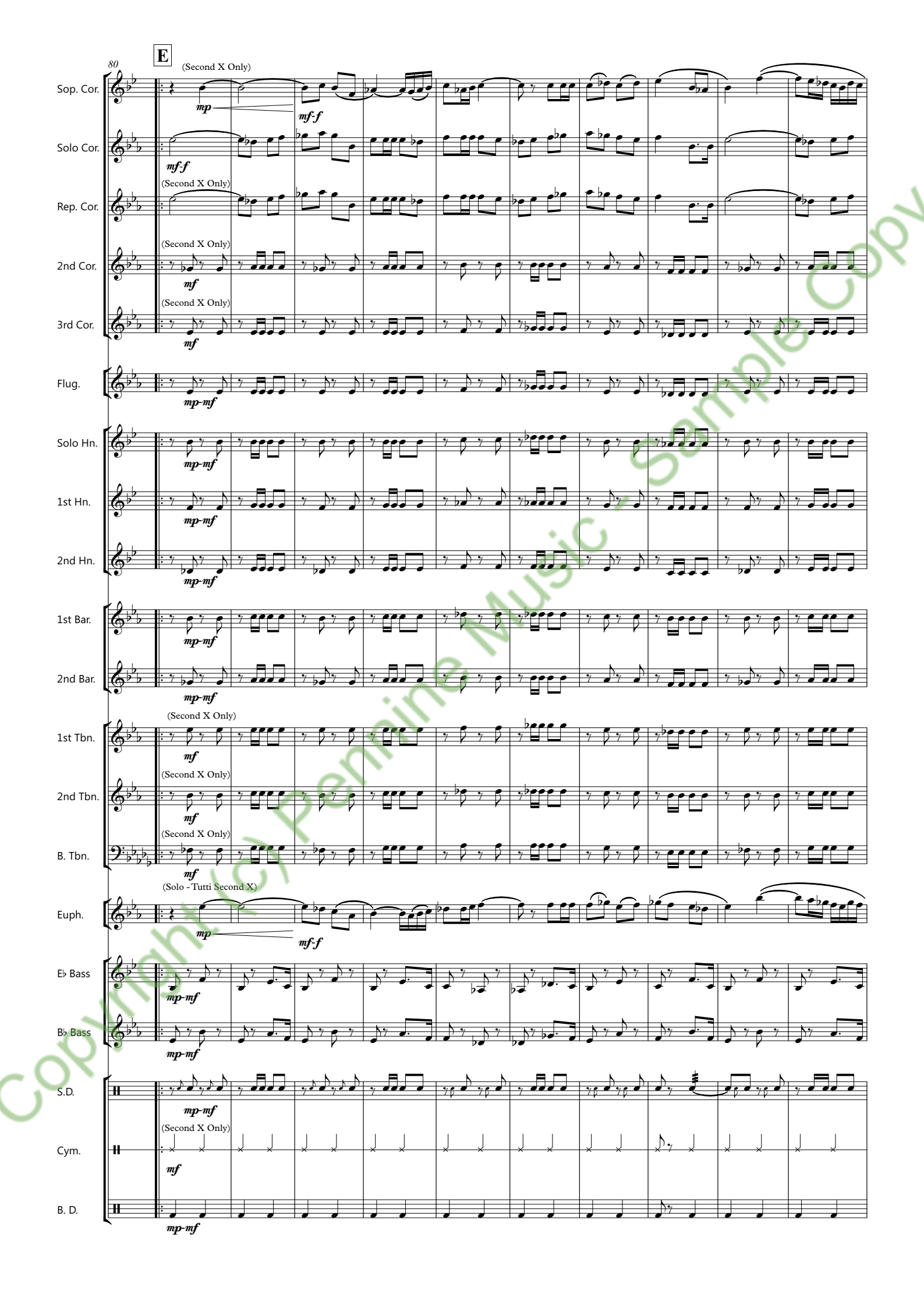

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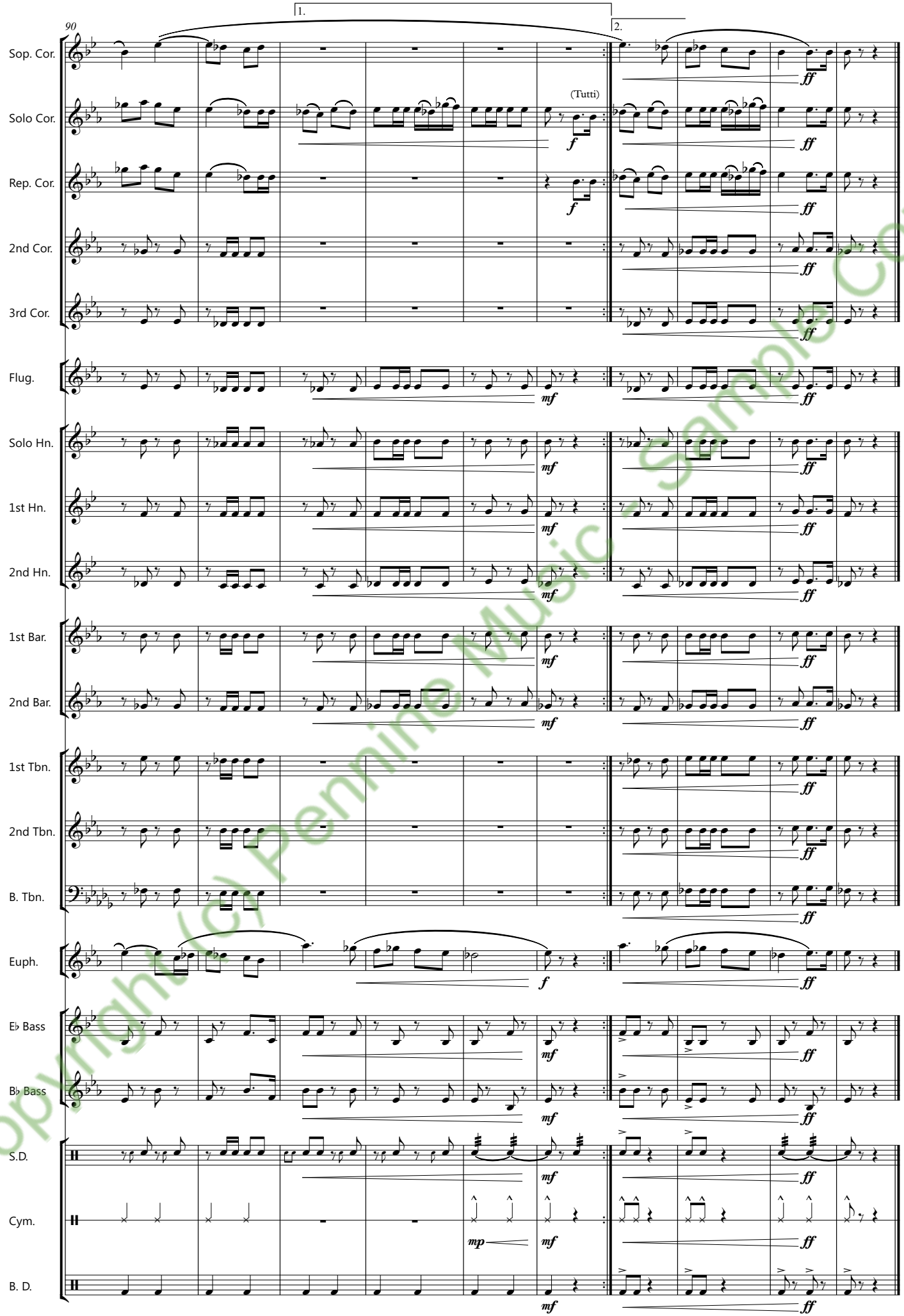

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