Grade 1

Music for String Orchestra

Treasure Hunt

Dión Morales

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INSTRUMENTATION

Violin I 8
Violin II 8
Viola 5
Cello 5
Bass 5
Piano (Opt.) 1

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Notes

This piece was part of the "Free Commission Project." The goal of this project was to provide school orchestra programs with a composition that meets the needs of each program, as well as the opportunity to work with a professional composer. With input from each program's director, I created custom pieces to fit into each orchestra's curriculum. Treasure Hunt was written for the beginning orchestra students at Autumn Creek Elementary School and Yorkville Intermediate School in Yorkville, IL, under the direction of Allison Buettner. Her commission request focused on the need for beginning level music that reinforces skips.

Steps and Skips: This piece of music uses both steps and skips throughout. The challenge of performing skips can usually come down to either note reading or the physical execution of the notes. For students struggling with reading I suggest that as you reteach it, take time to show them that the music staff is in alphabetical order. I've had so many students have a light bulb moment when they figure out that the letters on the staff are not random!

For students who struggle with getting their fingers down in time, I suggest having them focus on keeping all their fingers close to the string even when they are not being used. The phrase I use with my students is, "one centimeter fingers."

High Strings vs Low Strings: I wrote this piece to represent two different groups of treasure hunters who are in a race to find a long lost treasure! The piece reflects that by including a call and response motif between upper and lower string sections for most of the piece.

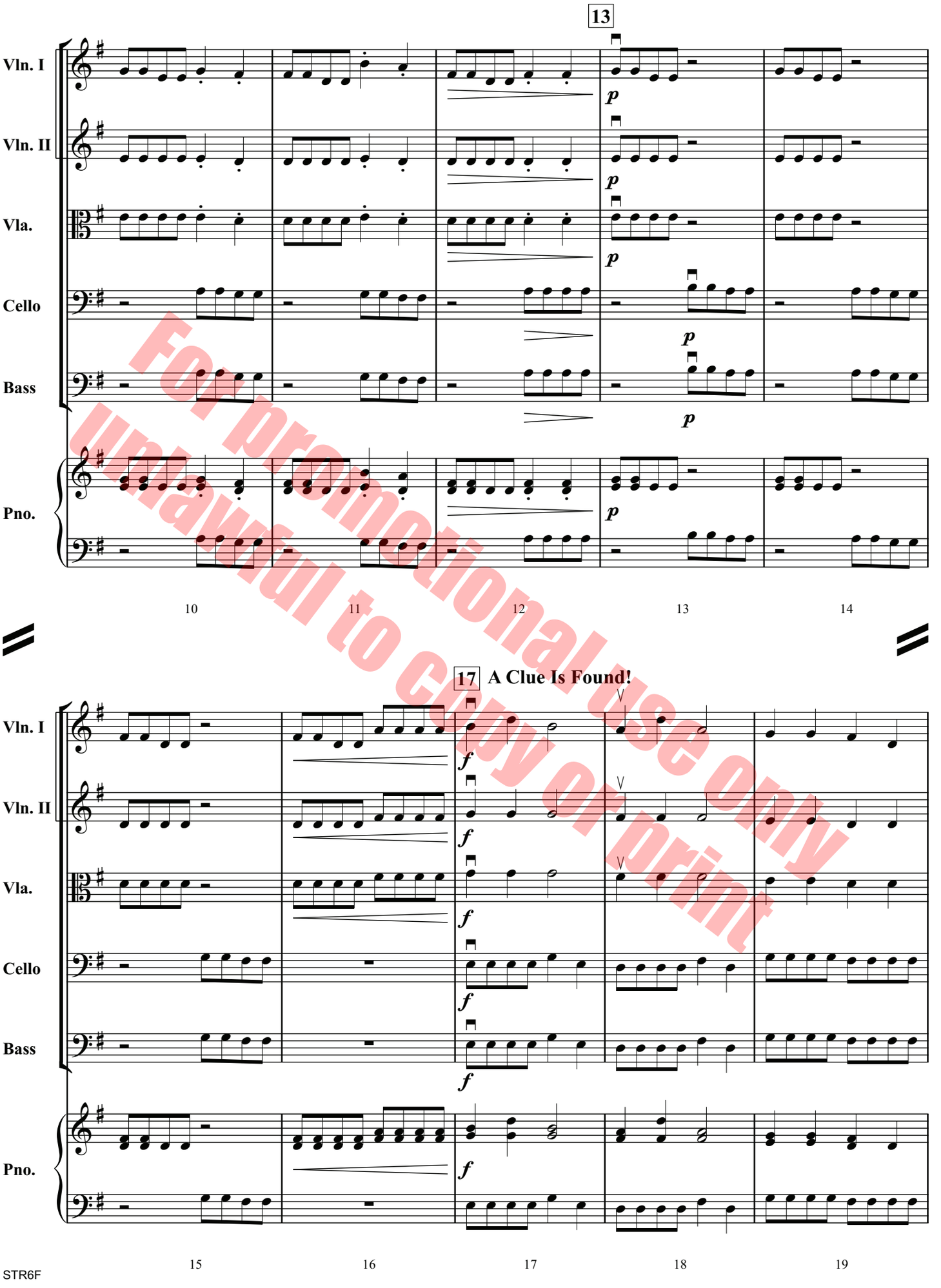
—Dión Morales

About the Composer
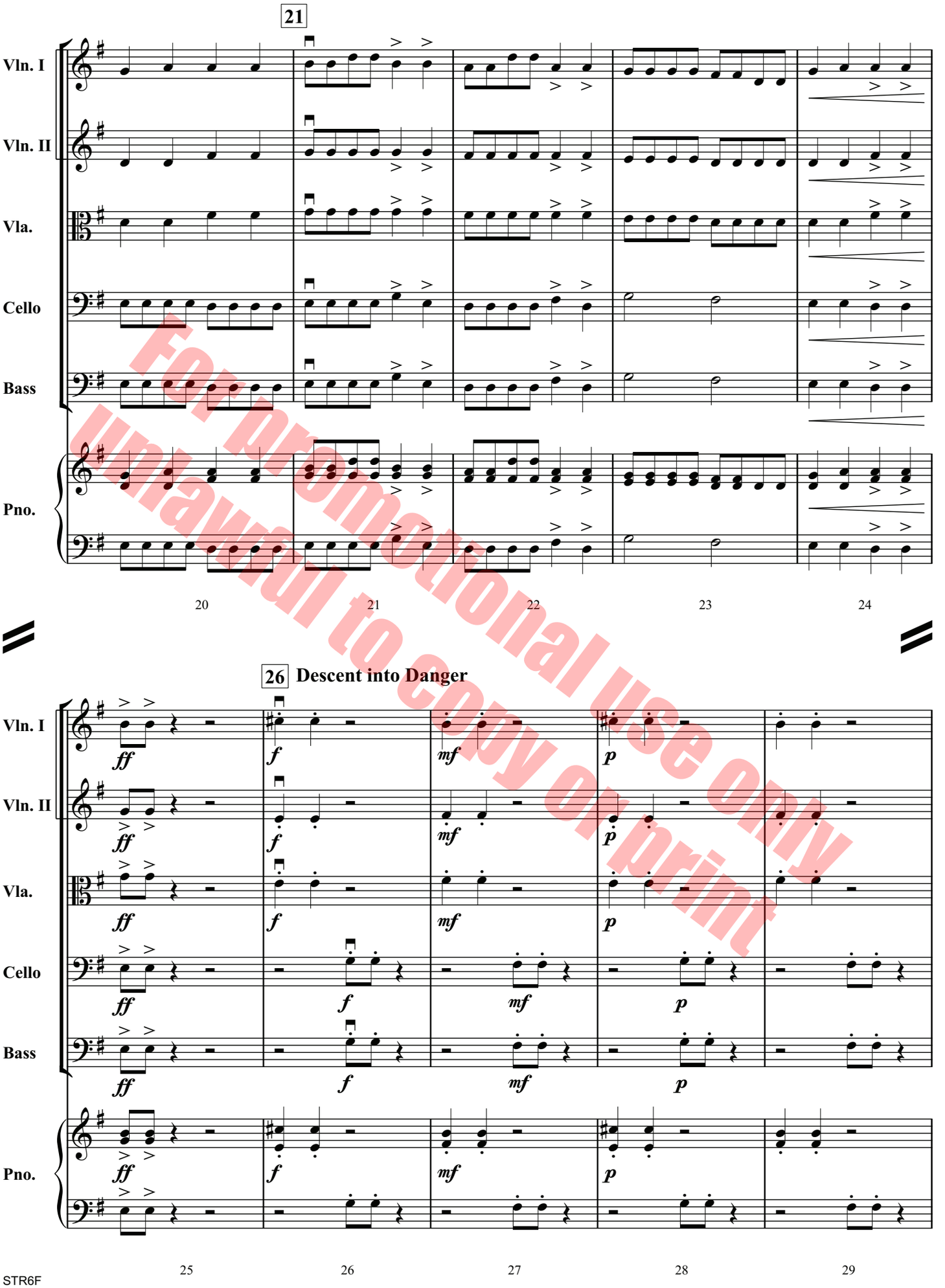
Dión Morales (pronounced: dee-own) was born, raised, and lives in Chicago, Illinois, with his wife and two daughters. He began his orchestral studies as a high school student at Lane Tech College Prep High School in the Chicago Public School system. Dión received his undergraduate degree in music education from VanderCook College of Music in 2010 and returned to VanderCook for his Master's degree, which he completed in 2021. He has taught elementary and middle school orchestra in Des Plaines District 62 since 2010. Additionally, as of 2024 he is an adjunct professor of String Arranging and String Music Education at VanderCook College of Music. His journey as a composer and arranger started with the development of the "Composers of Color Project," through which he arranged for school orchestra programs, music written by minority composers. The publication of the works from this project led to opportunities to add his own musical ideas to the orchestral repertoire, including original educational compositions and music for various media projects.

In addition to writing for his own students, Dión has also been commissioned by multiple schools and districts to compose pieces for special events and performances. Dión has had the honor of being a judge, guest conductor, and clinician across the United States, where he uses his experience as an educator to give students a positive and memorable experience. His full catalog, resume, and contact information can be found on his website, dionmorales.com.
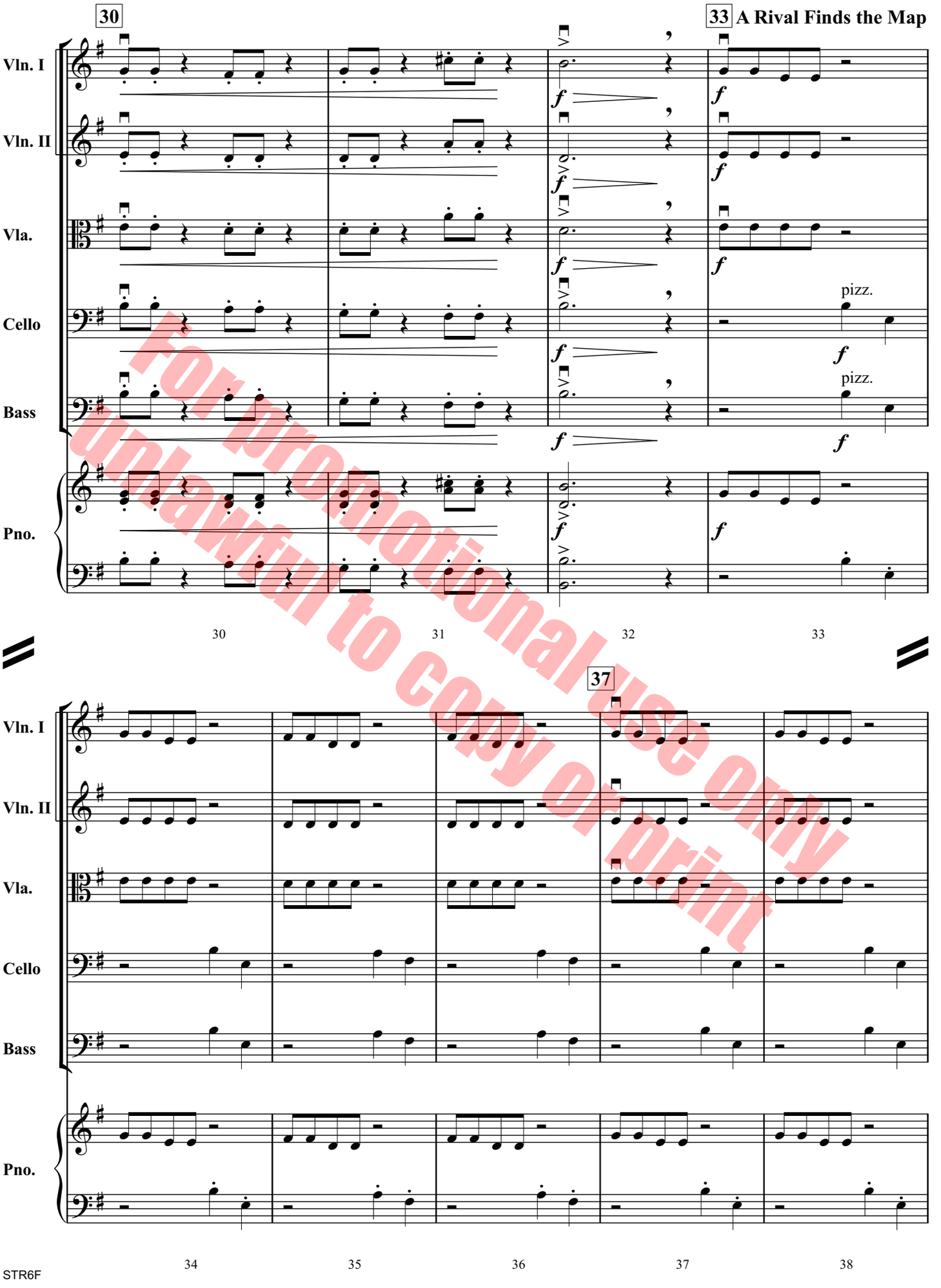
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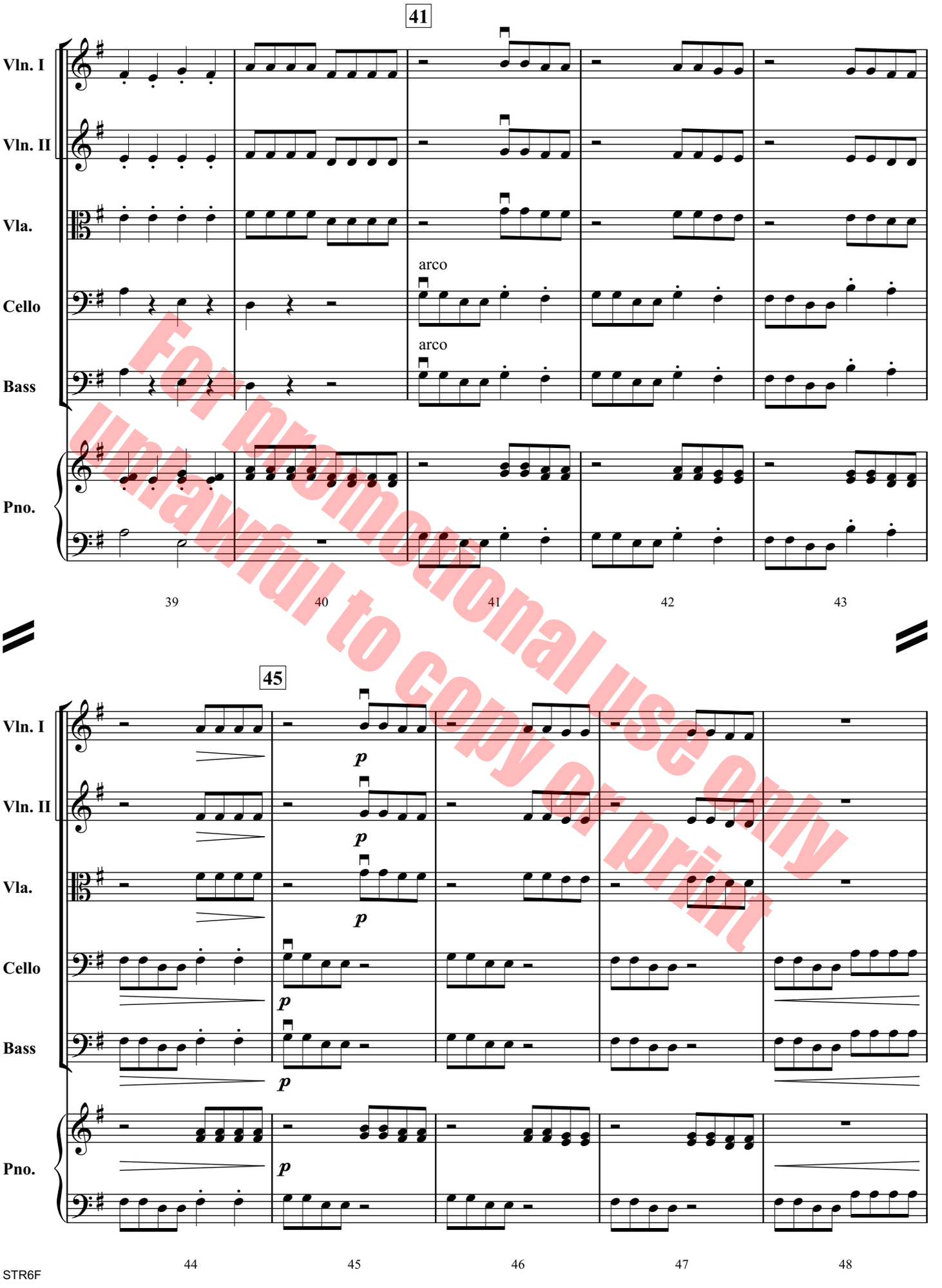


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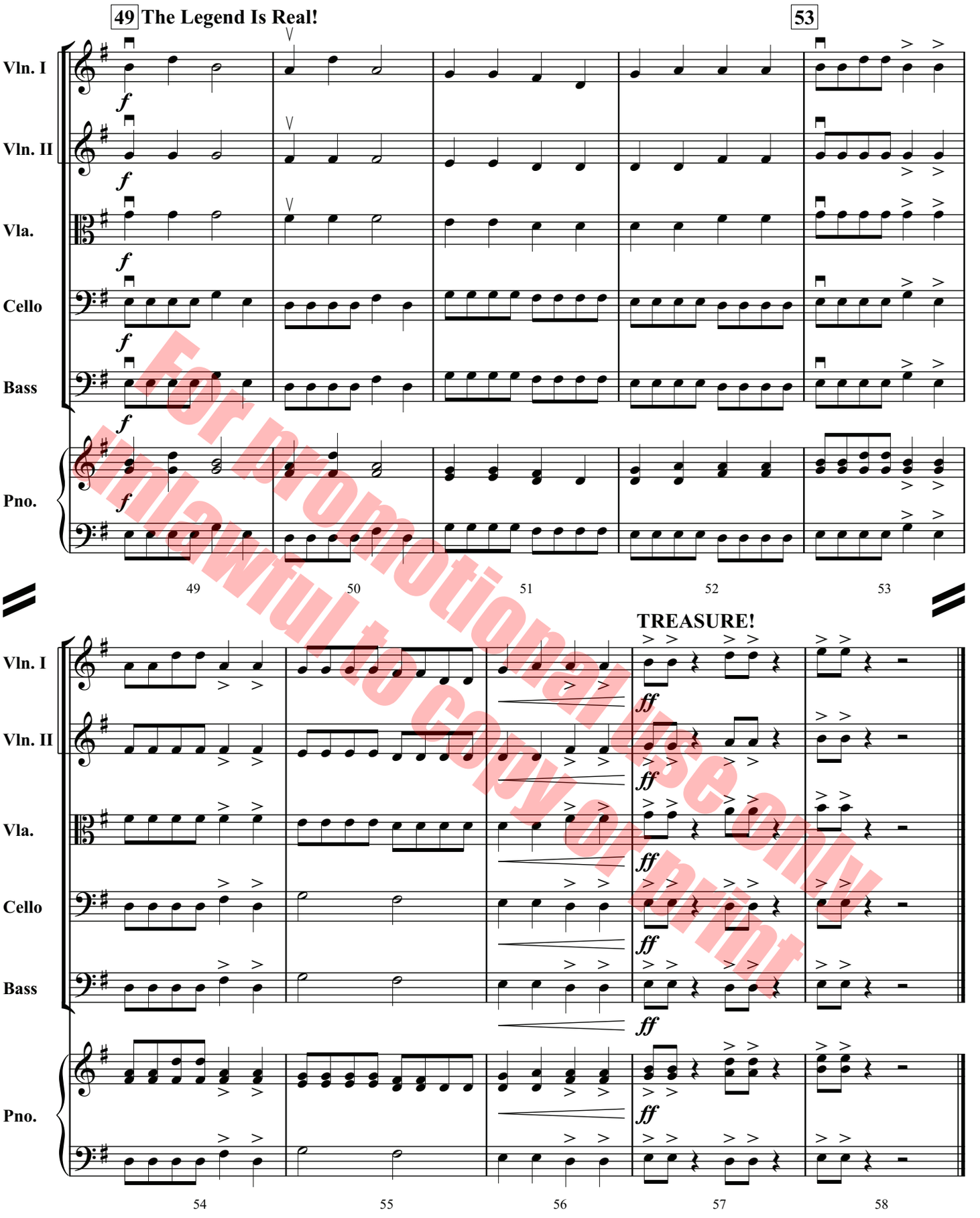


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