FIRST YEAR CHARTS

FOR JAZZ ENSEMBLE

Uptown Throwdown

By Zachary Smith

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INSTRUMENTATION

Conductor
1st E♭ Alto Saxophone
2nd E♭ Alto Saxophone
1st B♭ Tenor Saxophone
2nd B♭ Tenor Saxophone (Optional)
E♭ Baritone Saxophone (Optional)
1st B♭ Trumpet
2nd B♭ Trumpet
3rd B♭ Trumpet (Optional)
1st Trombone
2nd Trombone (Optional)
3rd Trombone (Optional)
Guitar Chords
Guitar (Optional)
Piano
Bass
Drums

Optional/Alternate Parts

C Flute
B♭ Clarinet
Vibraphone
Tuba (Doubles Bass)
Horn in F (Doubles 1st Trombone)
Baritone Horn T.C./B♭ Tenor Saxophone (Doubles 1st Trombone)

NOTES TO THE CONDUCTOR

This chart is written around one of my favorite grooves, the swing-shuffle. As notated in the chart, for the shuffle feel, the drummer should strive to play a pattern of the first and third note of a triplet on the ride cymbal (or hi-hat) throughout most of the arrangement. Practice this slowly then up to tempo as needed. Next add a heavy back beat on 2 and 4 on the snare as notated.

Also important to the success of the groove is the bass line, which is doubled in the left hand of the piano. If the bassist is very strong the piano may omit the left-hand bass line. The bass needs to strive for long, smooth, and connected quarter notes; this is usually achieved by holding down the strings firmly through the duration of the note. Many young bass players like to pick up their fingers early, which can make the sound too short and chopped. Also, pay particular attention to the rhythm pattern in m. 8 and elsewhere. This lick occurs in the fourth measure of the repeated bass pattern. I wrote it this way so the bass will play the first eighth note short, which is a common device used by bassists to add some pop and brightness to a walking bass line. Check out the demo track at ***alfred.com*** to hear how the bass player executes this rhythm pattern.

The saxophones are alone for the opening four-bar statement, with a bend on the first note. I started it this way as an homage to one of my favorite Thad Jones arrangements, "Big Dipper." Bending a note might be a new idea for your young reed players. Have them start by loosening their embouchure to begin the note under pitch, then tightening it to bring the pitch up. Even if only a couple of your reed players can master this, it will have the desired effect.

Regarding articulation, the brass and saxes have some hits marked with a marcato, or rooftop accent, (𝅘𝅥) and others with a staccato. A big band rooftop is an accented and detached "fat" note which ends with a tongue, think "daht." Big band staccato is short, think "dit." When there are two eighth notes followed by a rest, the articulation is legato-staccato, think "doo-dit." One of the keys to making a jazz ensemble sound tight is having everyone agree on how to play all the articulations. Dynamics are a key to making the band sound well-rehearsed and mature. At m. 61 and m. 85 the background figure should start very softly and rise to a solid 𝆑 before the fall. Remind your players that they need to blow twice as much air on a fall, so it can be heard. Make sure that your players blow all the way through the mini crescendos at m. 101, m. 105, and m. 109. Direct the players not to take a breath between beats 3 and 4!

Take note of the trombone solo with a plunger. The plunger is held in the left hand with the pad of the hand resting on the bottom of the bell and manipulated by bending the wrist out and in to cover or open the bell of the horn. The markings indicate if the bell should be closed (+) or open (○). Either way, your trombonist needs to blow a lot of air to get the right sound. This provides an excellent opportunity to explain to the band how we often try to imitate the human voice with our instruments.

Speaking of the human voice, many of the figures in this chart are approximations of vocal shouts and phrases, which is a common practice in old-school big band music. To drive this home, it is suggested that the band actually sing or better yet shout at m. 117. The short jabs they have been playing now become actual words: "Hey," "What," "Come On," and "Ain't Noth-in'!". This shout technique can be a lot of fun! For this to work, the band has to embrace the idea and sing or shout with confidence. If they have fun with it, the audience will too. And one last suggestion for your performance: from m. 122 to the end of the chart, have the trombone and alto sax soloists stand as they trade and do battle. It will be exciting from an audience perspective and will give your players a chance to stand out. Good luck and have fun with this one!

—Zachary Smith

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Zachary Smith

Zachary Smith is a noted composer, arranger, and professional trumpet player and has led the New Orleans music ensemble Dixie Power Trio for the past twenty-five years. He earned a BS in jazz performance at the University of North Texas and has maintained a busy performing, writing, and teaching schedule in the Washington, D.C. area. Zack has a garnered a large following as an arranger for his brass ensemble writing and won the 2012 Humboldt State University Brass Chamber Music competition.

CONDUCTOR
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UPTOWN THROWDOWN

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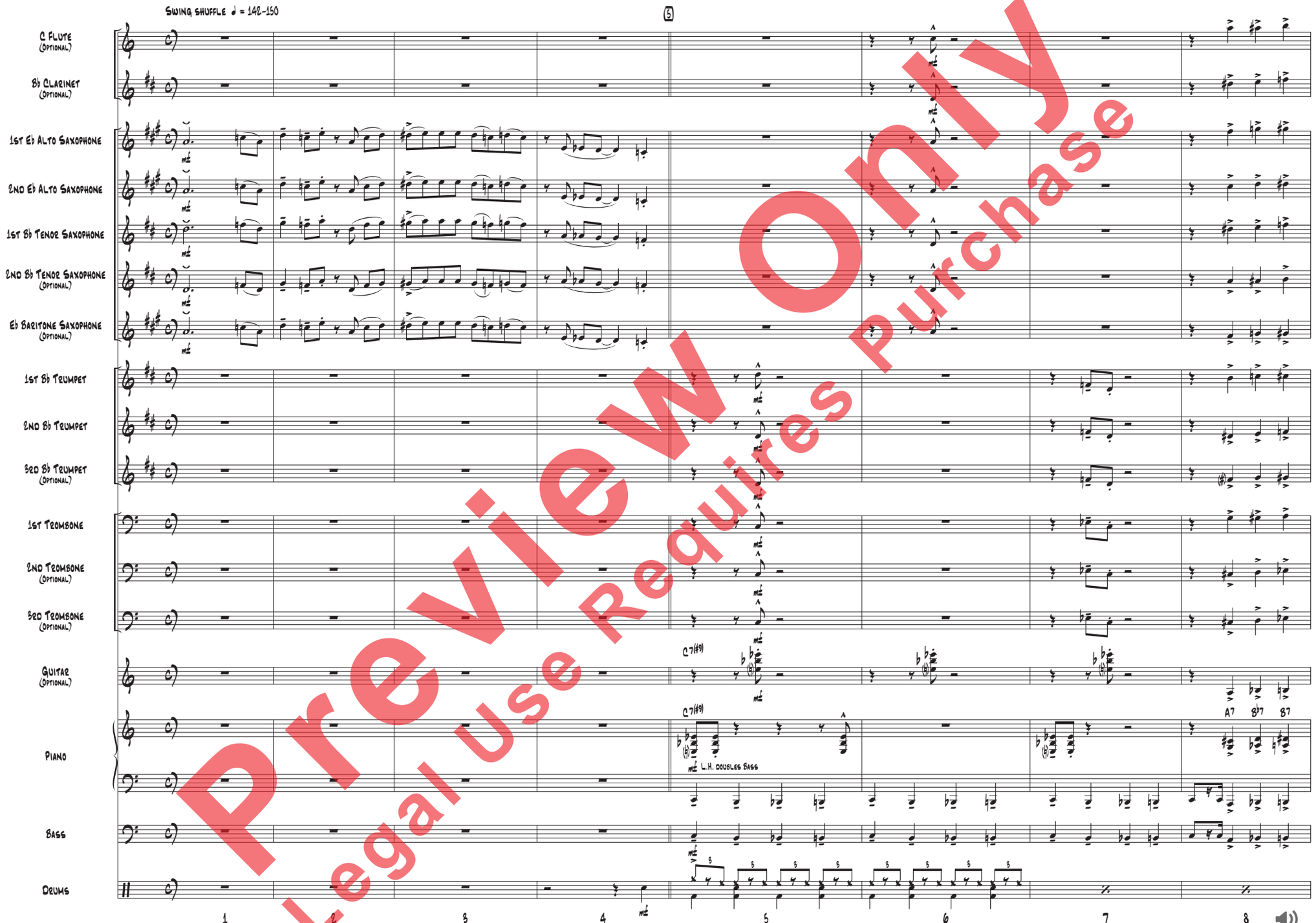

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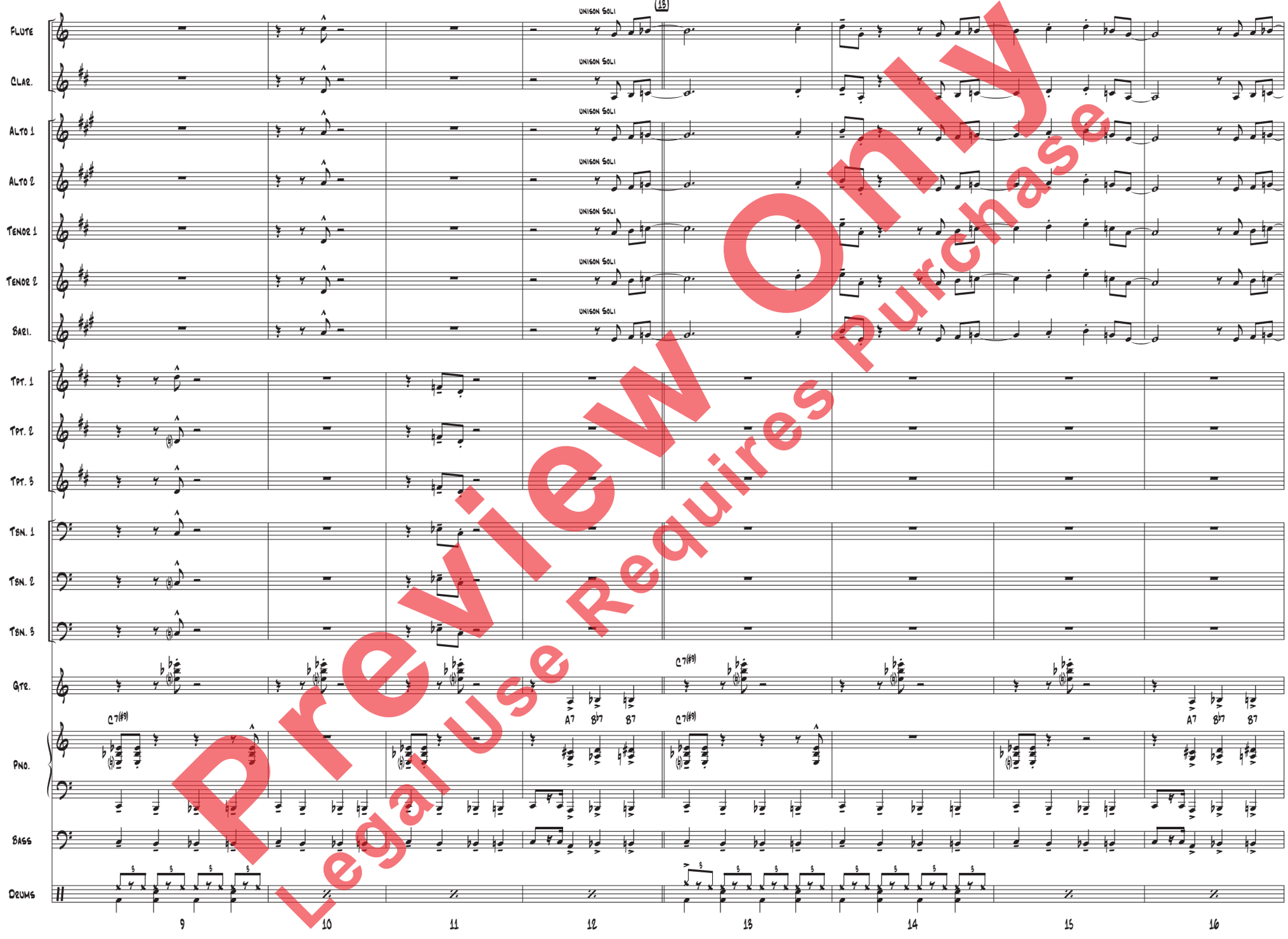

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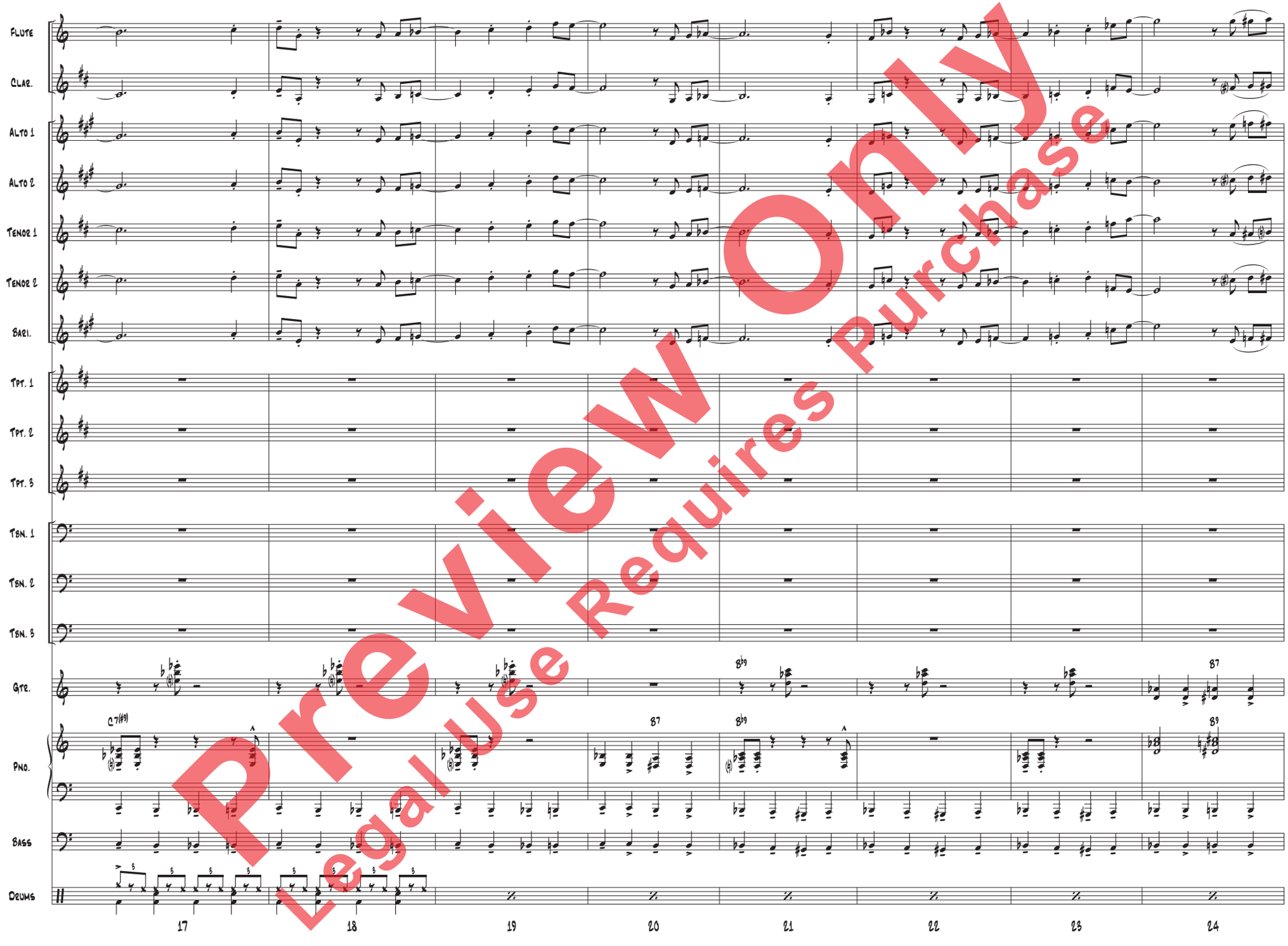

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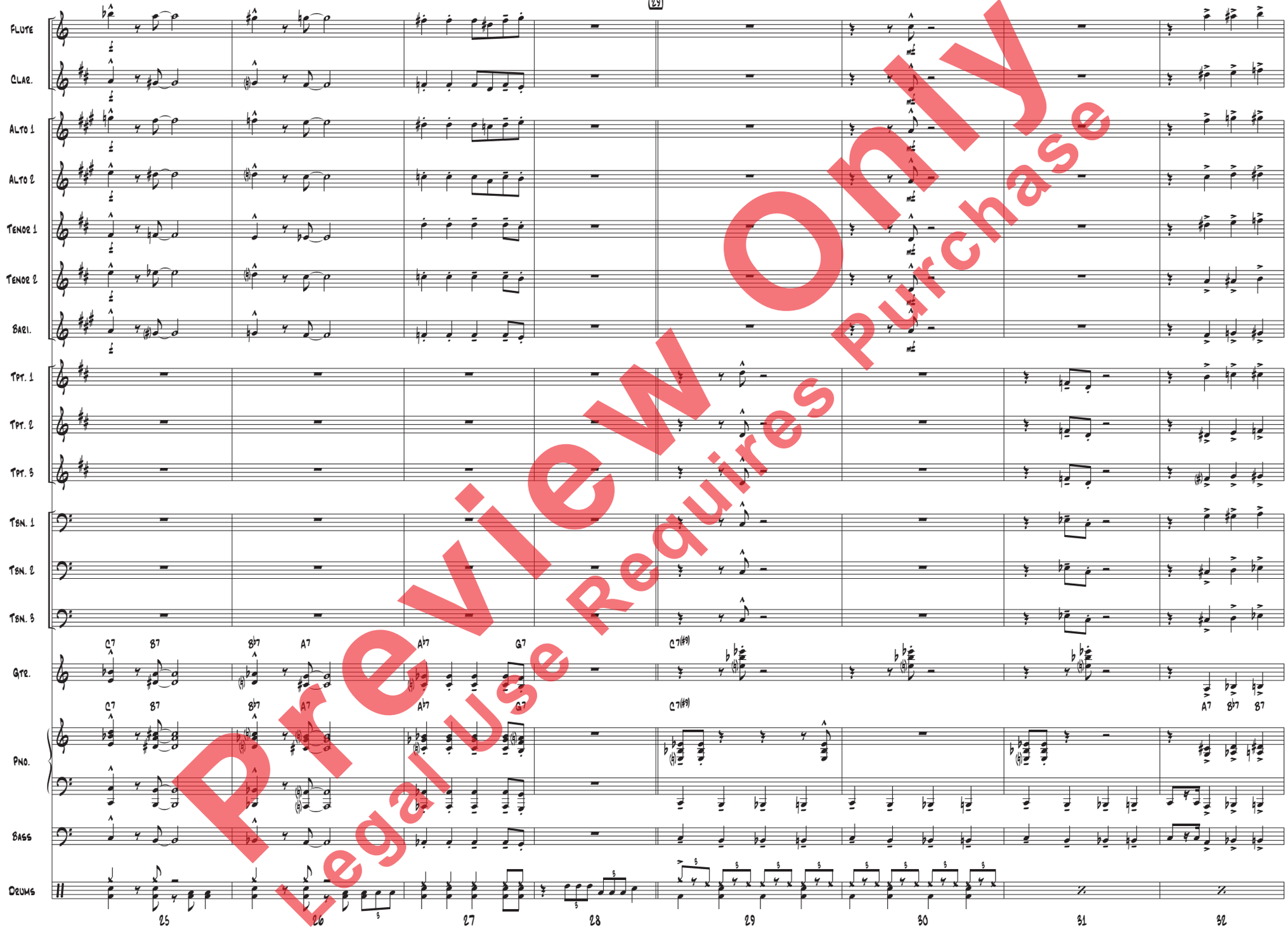

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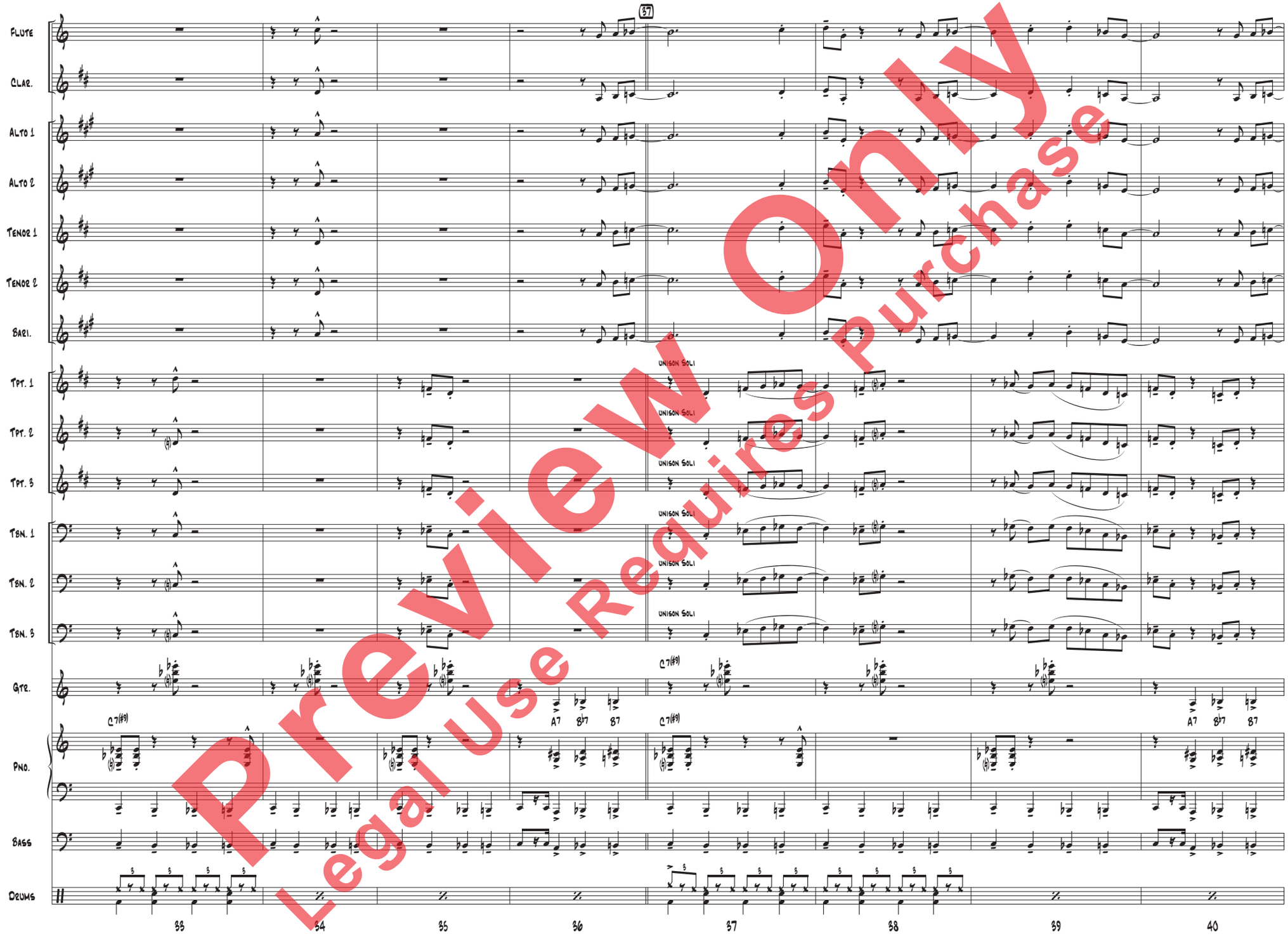

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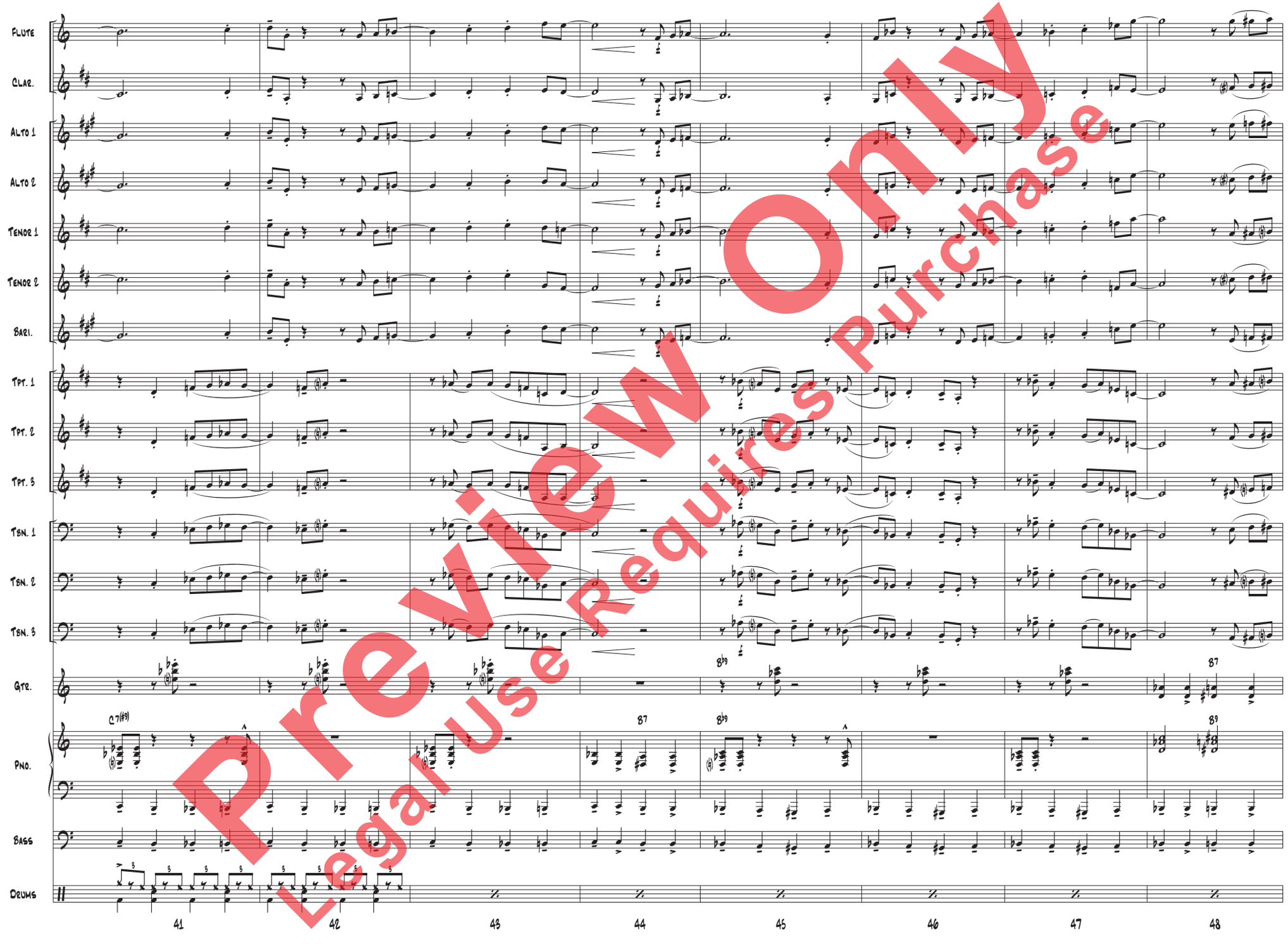

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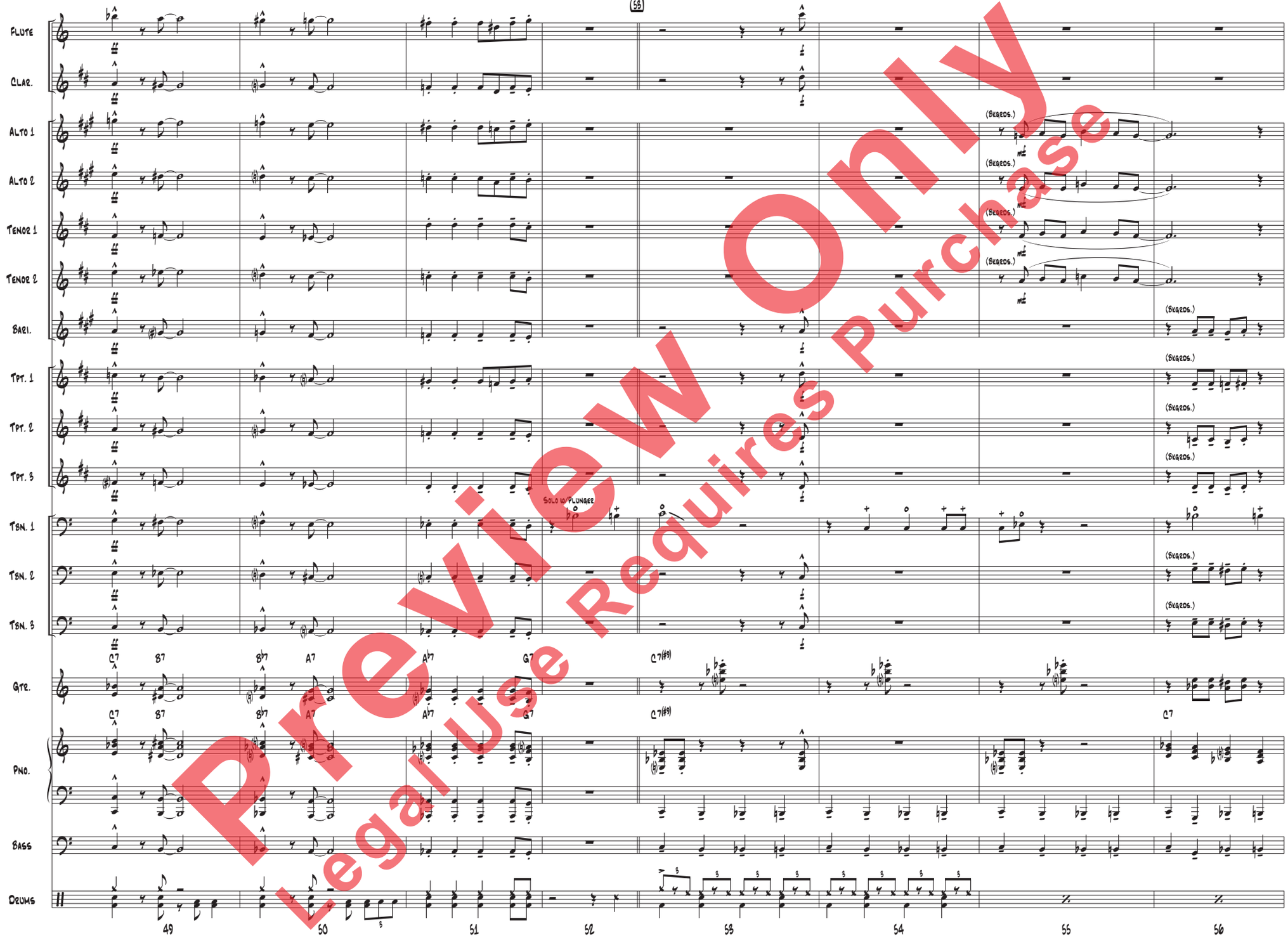

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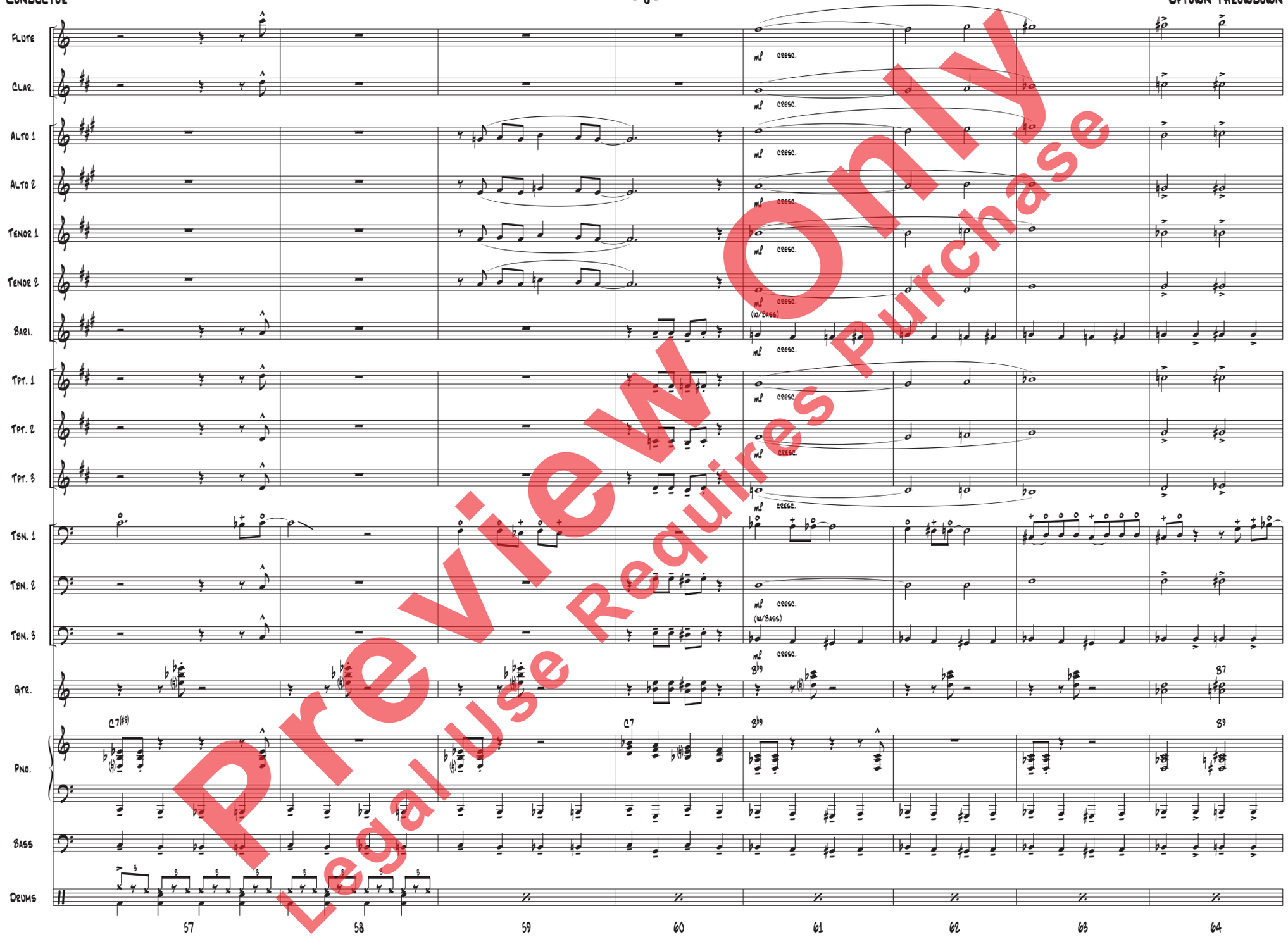

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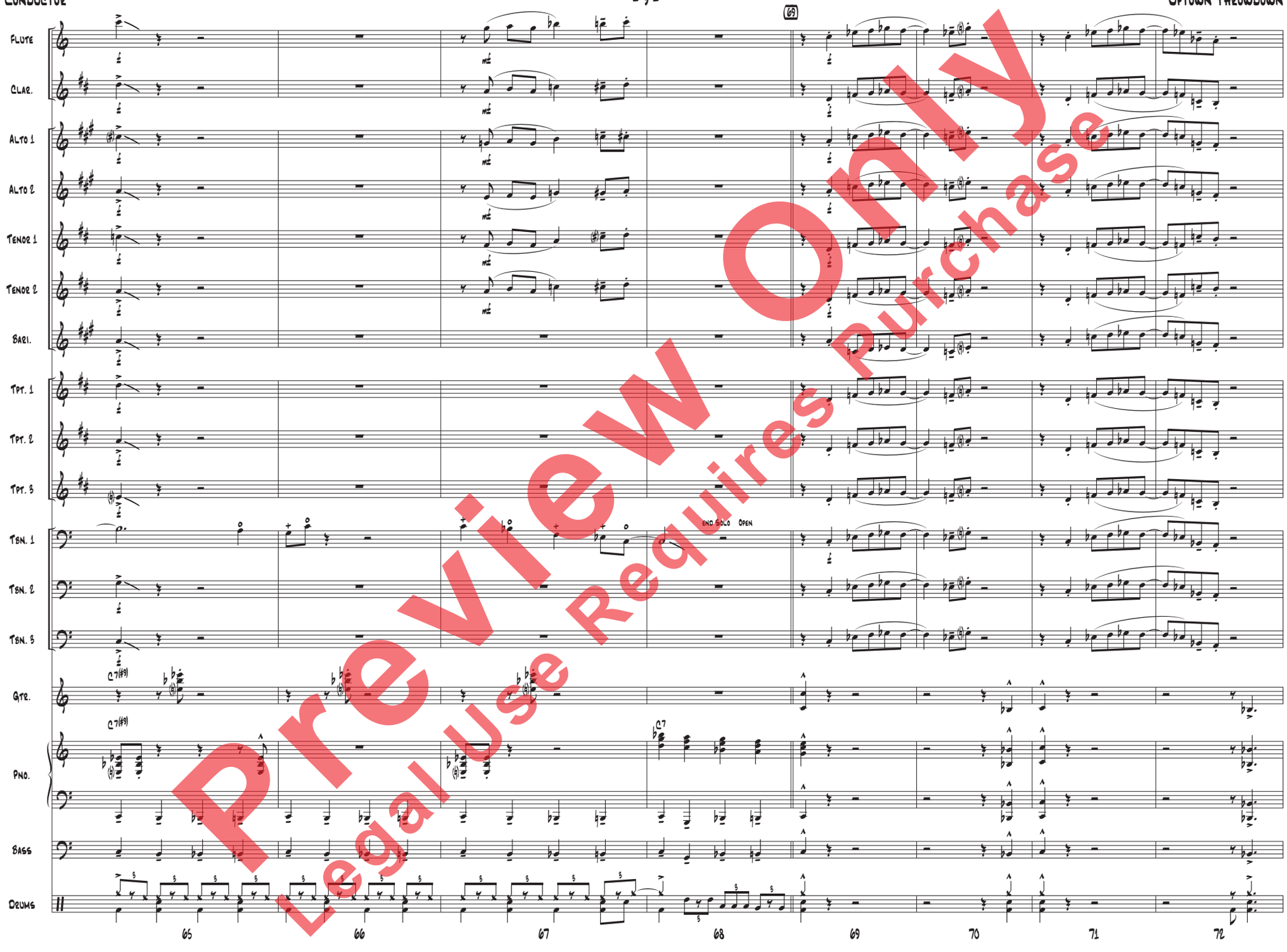

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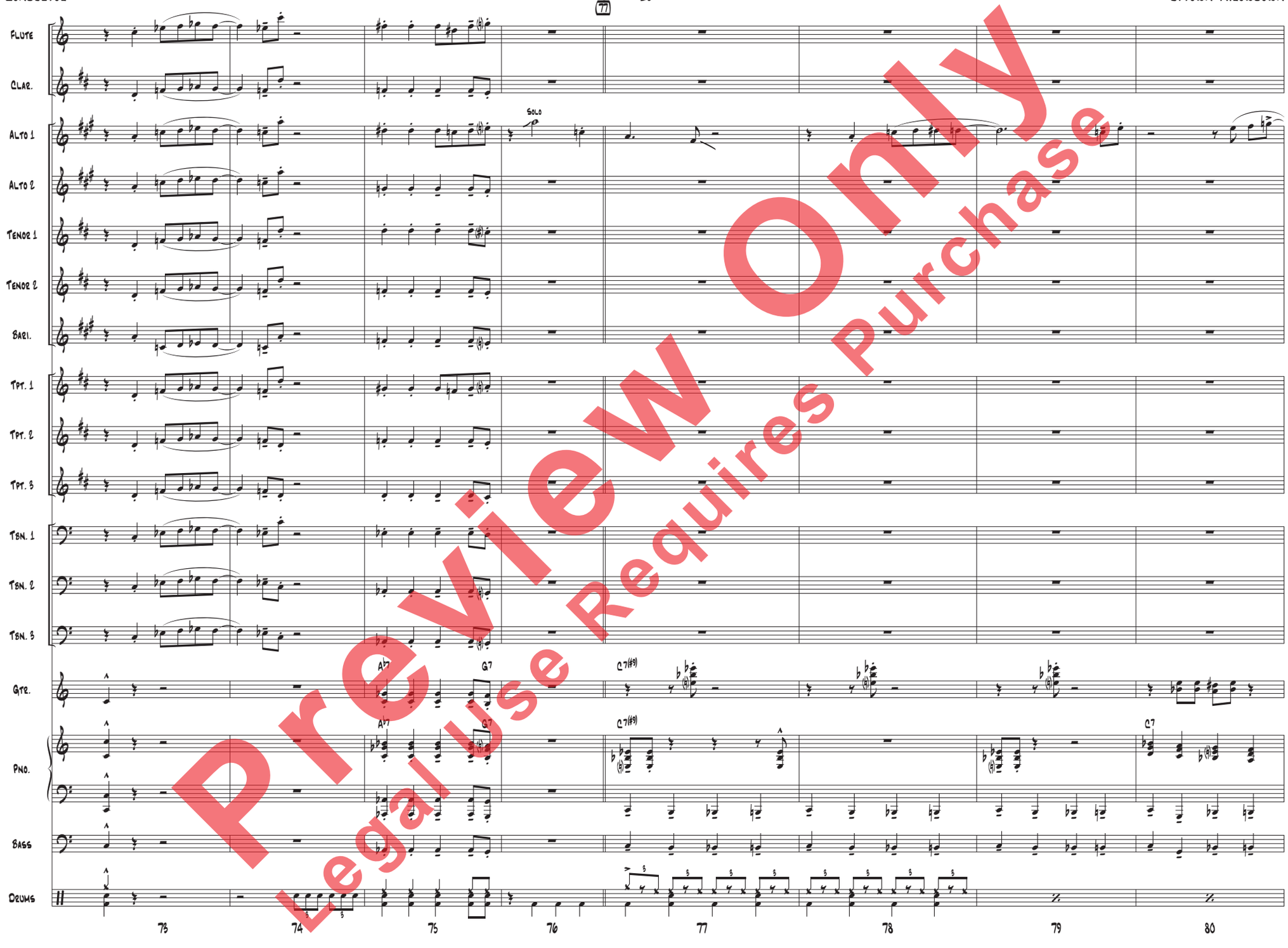

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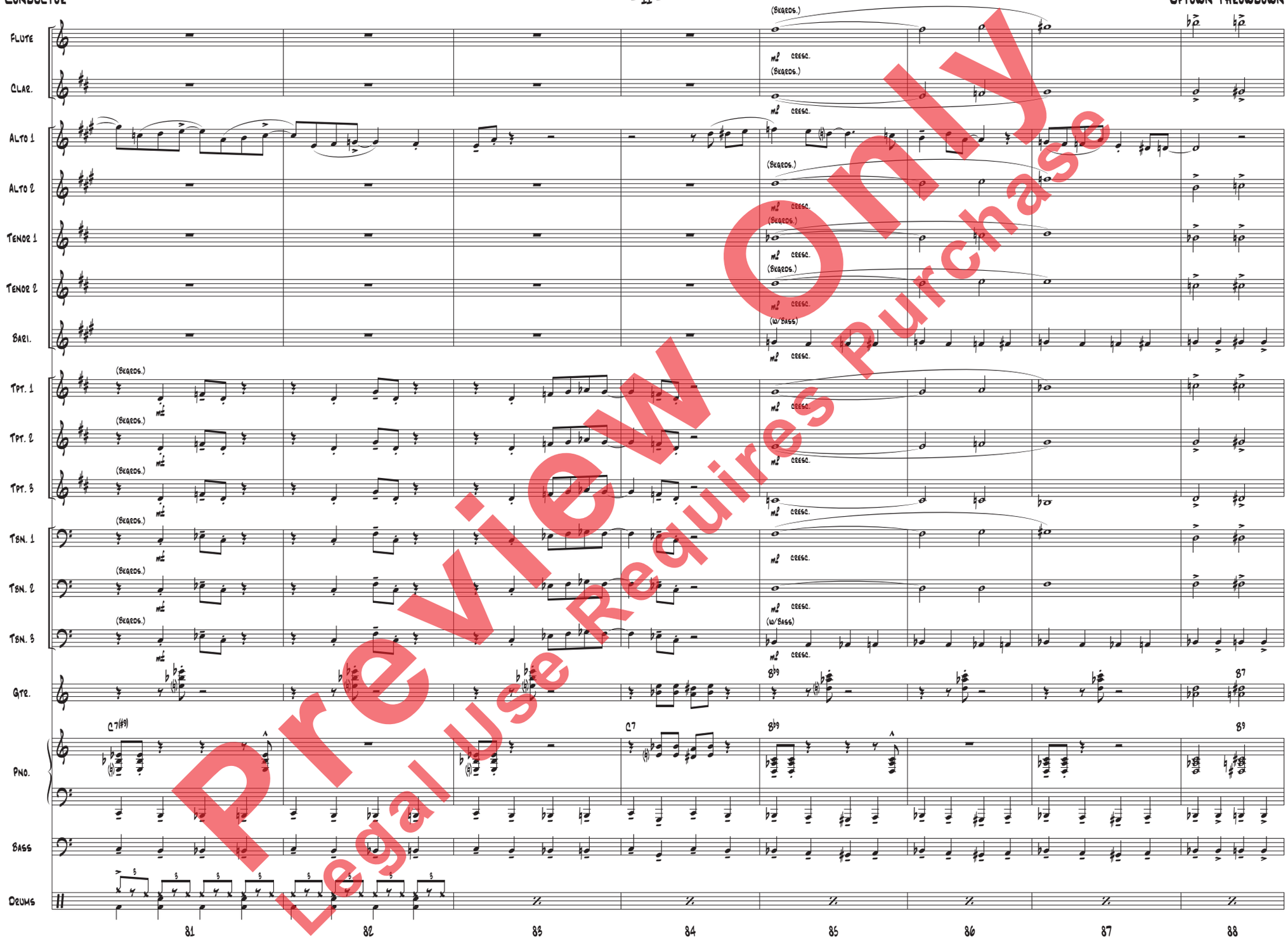

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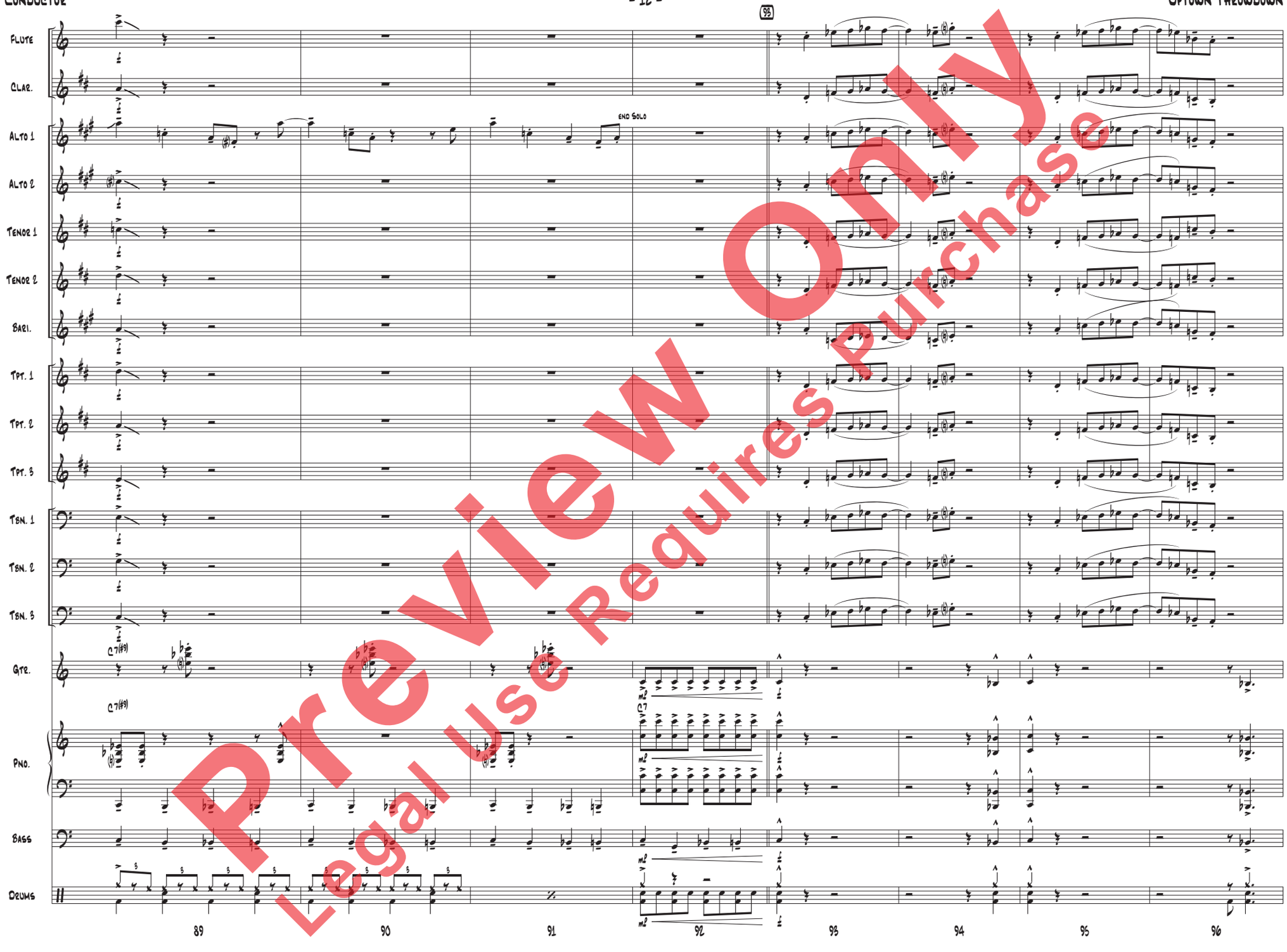

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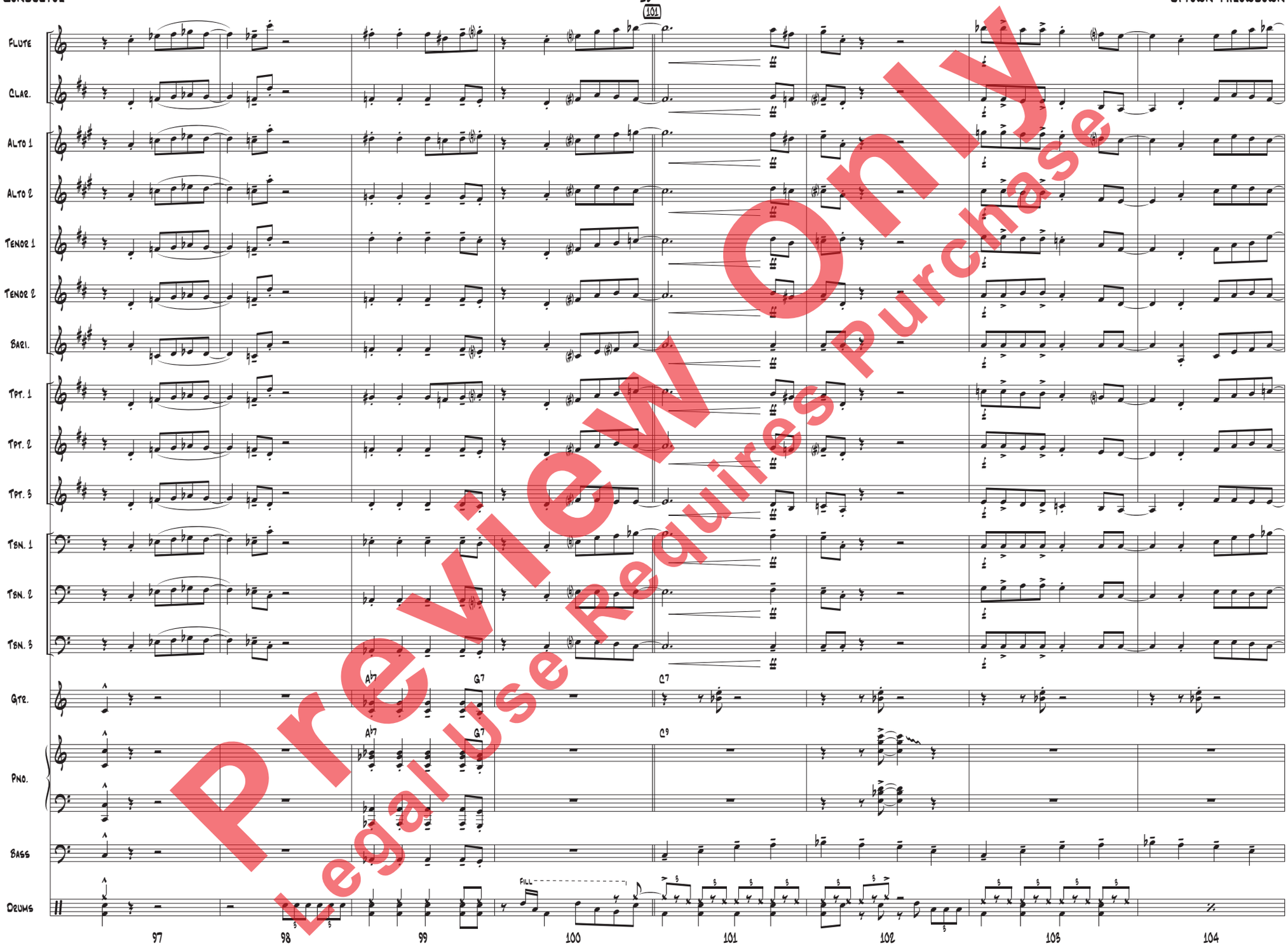

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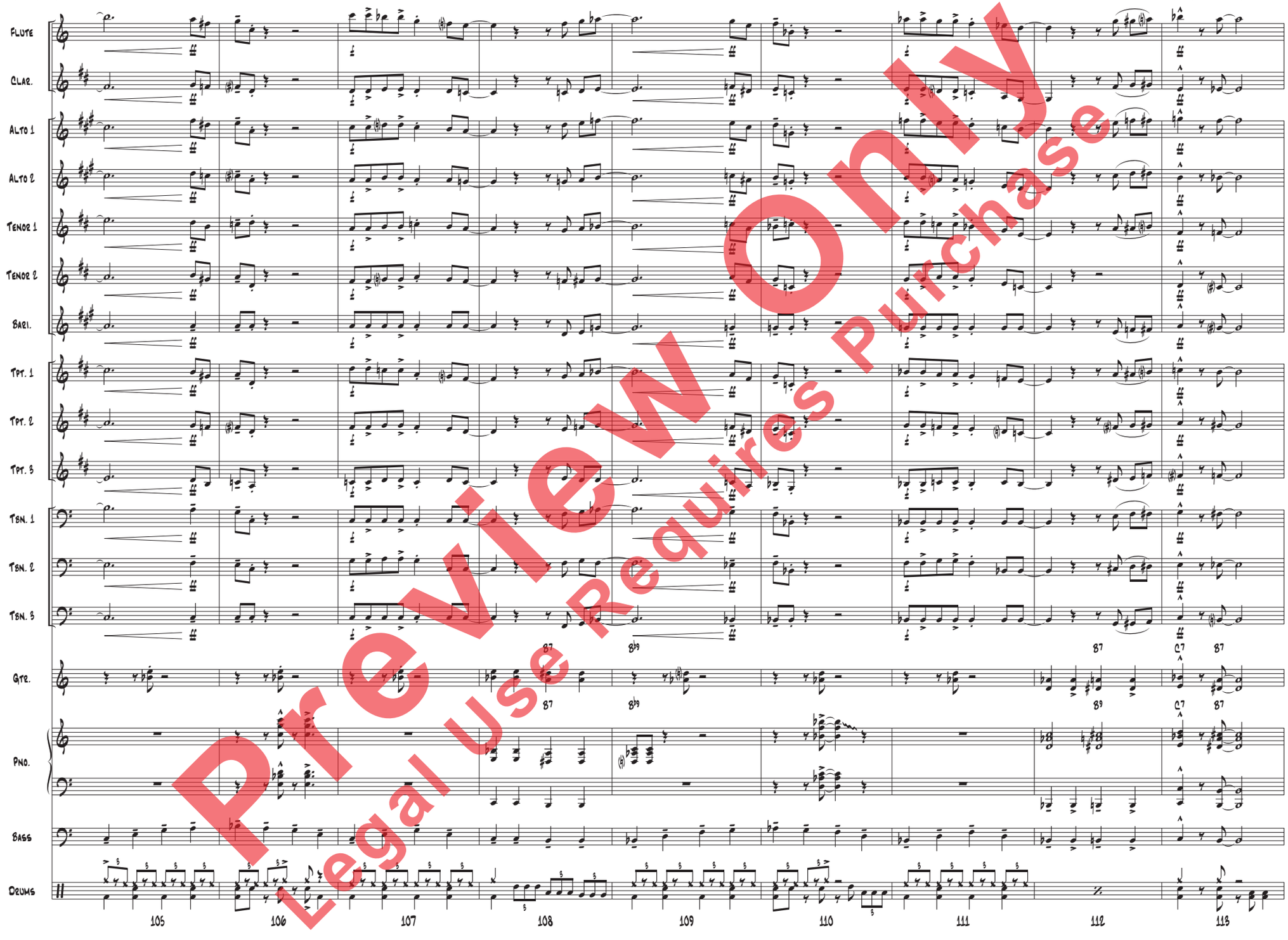

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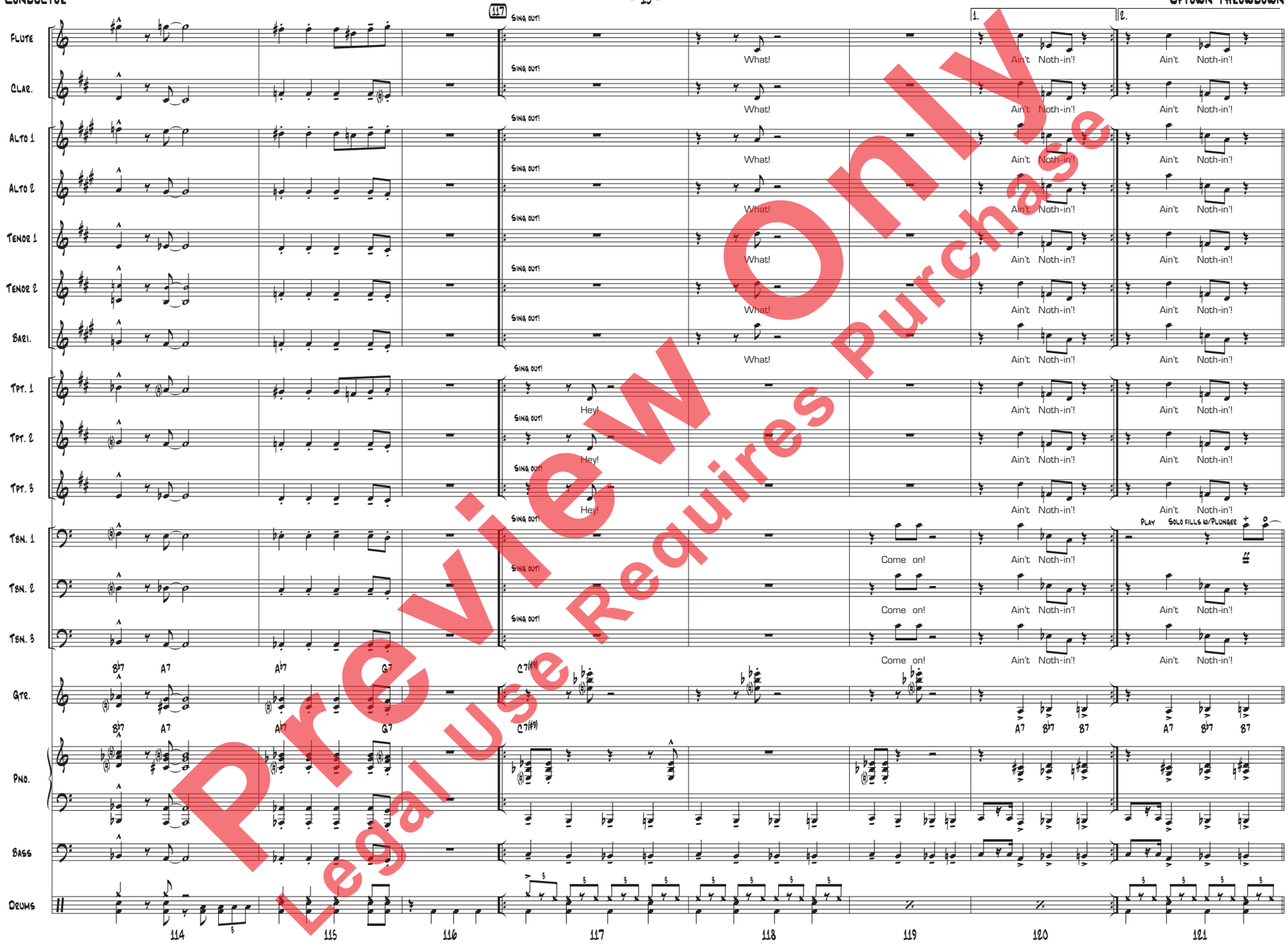

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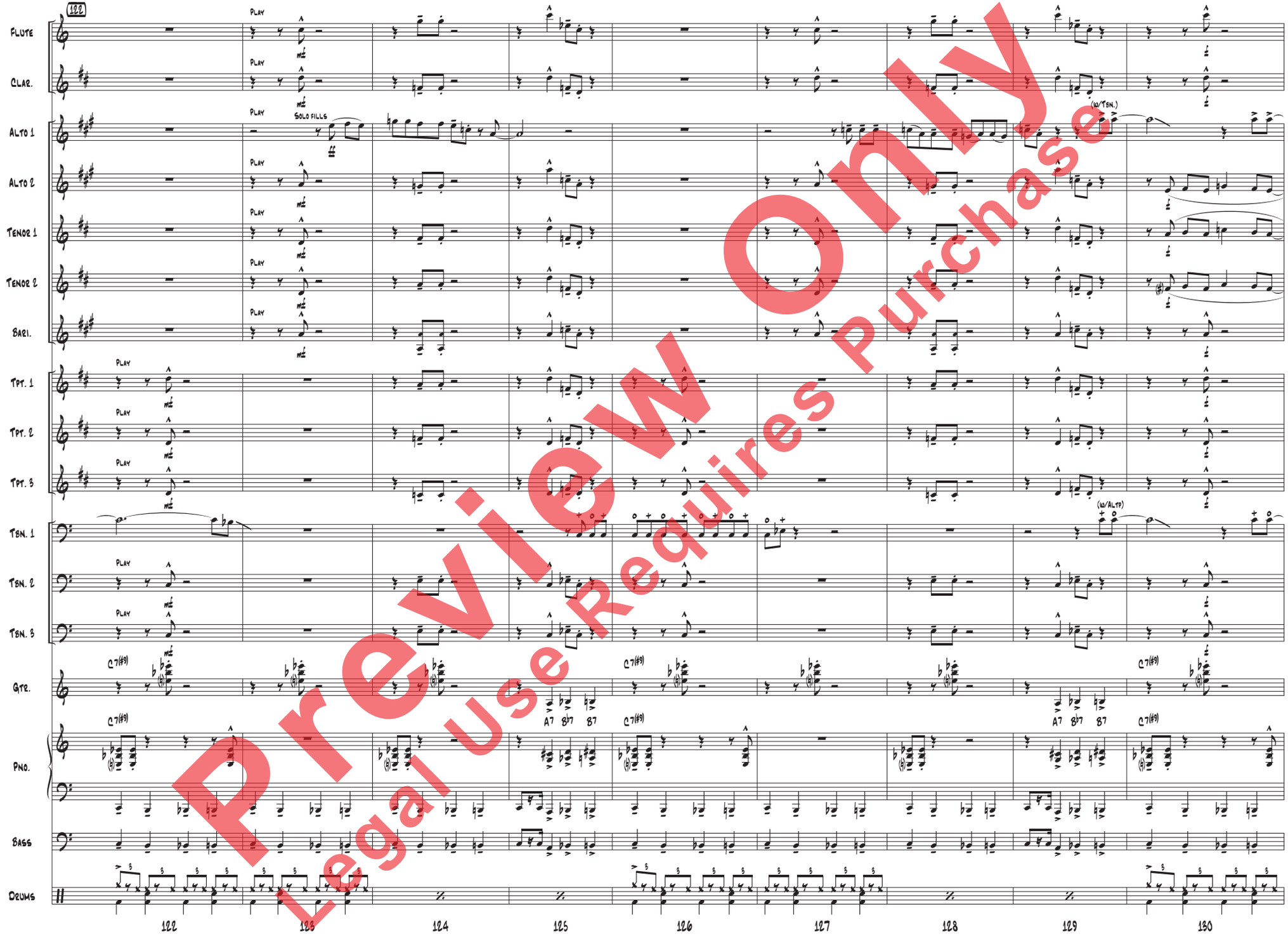

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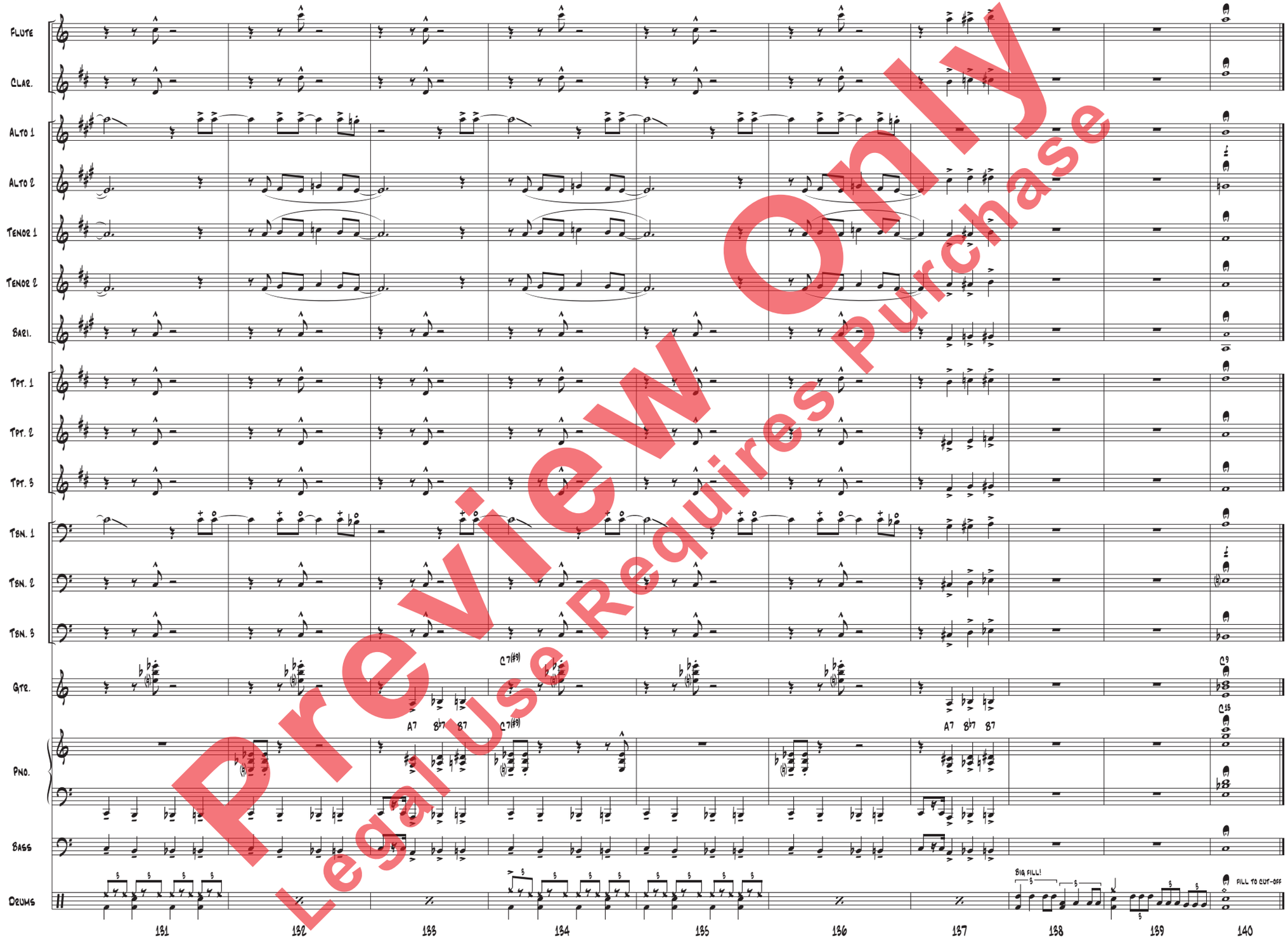

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