Preface

This work was inspired by the University of South Dakota Chamber Orchestra. The group performs without conductor. Dr. Ioana Galu, violin and viola professor, and Sonja Kraus, cello professor lead the group from their respective chairs. They are both technically demanding and musically inspiring. My wife Penny and I had the privilege of soloing with the group in April 2017. We had the opportunity to hear the group again this past April and were very impressed by how much the group had grown and matured as an ensemble in just one year.

After the concert, I approached Dr. Galu with the idea of writing a work for the ensemble. She was thrilled and very supportive. Dr. Galu is from Romania and has been in the United States since 2001, earning a master's and doctorate from Bowling Green State University in Ohio and an artist's diploma from the Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music. She has been teaching on the college level since 2004.

Dr. Galu requested a piece that would pay tribute to the United States, her new home. I have composed a number of mashups and medleys, but I wanted this to be more. Rather than a mashup or medley, I would describe this piece as a collage. I wanted to pay tribute to the vast musical heritage of the United States, along with the great contributions of the many immigrant groups that have shaped our country.

This piece can be divided into seven sections. I wanted to open by honoring the Native American culture, the original Americans. My inspiration was a Sioux prayer. The Sioux are known as the First Nations people of North America, from the Dakota region. Special thanks to Butchie Eastman for his beautiful performance on Youtube: (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ODmET6-SHg).

The prayer melds quietly into the "America the Beautiful" section which is combined with "Oh Shenandoah" and Stephen Foster's "Old Folks at Home" creating an open, flowing, lyrical texture. Brief quotations from "Dixie" and "Yankee Doodle" lead into the patriotic, fourth of July parade section. Several melodies, including "You're a Grand Old Flag," "Yankee Doodle Dandy," "Yankee Doodle" and Sousa's "The Thunderer March" create almost a feeling of dueling bands.

The parade is followed by a Hoedown, or Square Dance, featuring traditional country fiddle music. The strings duel each other, first with "Turkey in the Straw," followed by "O Susannah," "The Devil's Dream," "Polly Wolly Doodle" and "Arkansas Traveler." The hay settles and we are engaged by the soulful music of the African American spiritual. We first hear "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," which soon combines with "Amazing Grace." Quotes from "She'll be Comin' Round the Mountain," "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child," "We Shall Overcome" and "Let My People Go" are woven through the fabric.

SAMPLE

We are now in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, and the beginning of mass immigration to the United States. The dissonance that follows represents the coming of the railroad, the acceleration of the locomotive, and the blowing of the horns. “I’ve Been Working on the Railroad” becomes the underlying melody, combining with music from many immigrant groups: Irish (“The Irish Washerwoman”), Chinese (“Mòlìhuā”), Italian (“O Sole Mio!”), Australian (“Waltzing Matilda”), Mexican (“Cielito Lindo”), French (“Le Marseillaise”) and Russian (“Song of the Volga Boatmen”). As more and more melodies enter, the friction and dissonance increases to a point of total chaos.

The dissonance dissolves into a simple, quiet chordal texture which serves as accompaniment to a slow and tentative rendition of “This Land is Your Land.” The music gradually gains more energy and confidence, combining with “America the Beautiful” for a rousing ending. This land is all our land. It belongs to all of us. We are all immigrants and are all an indispensable part of the fabric which makes up this country. Our rich heritage is enhanced by immigrants. Hopefully, future generations will enjoy the contributions of those still arriving at our shores.

SAMPLE

to Dr. Ioana Galu

Full Score

An American Dream

Fantasy for String Orchestra

Slow, prayerful, but flowing ♩ = 52

Steven Kruse

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Contrabass

Solo

p

Lakota Indian Prayer Song

a piacere

mf

(Freely with no clear meter. Grace notes are intended as bending the pitch, a quarter tone below the main not, executed with the same finger.)

(Open palm slap on front of instrument, upper bout.)

mf *mf*

SAMPLE

4

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

mf

(Two-hand rapping with finger tips on upper bout.)

p *mf*

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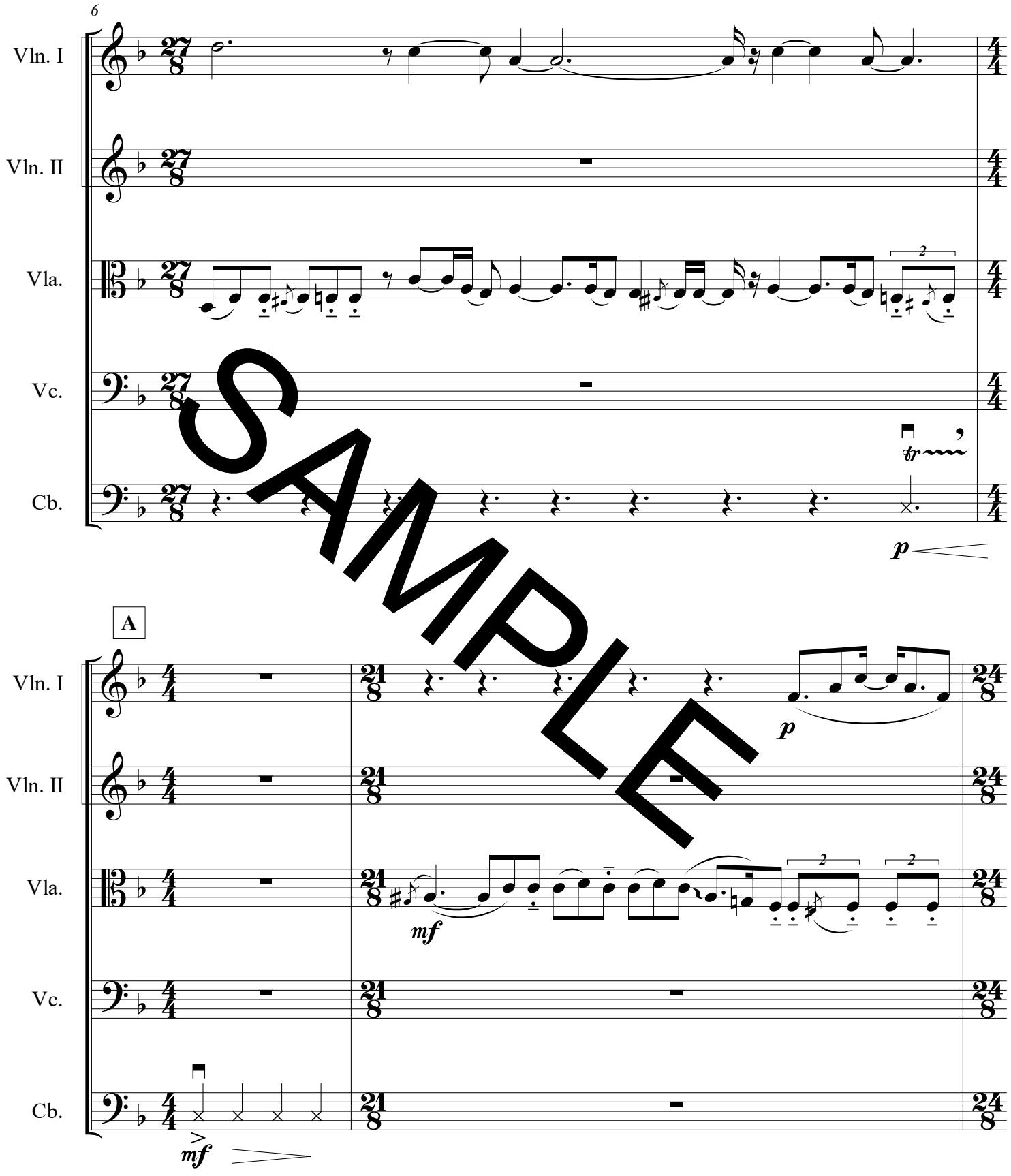

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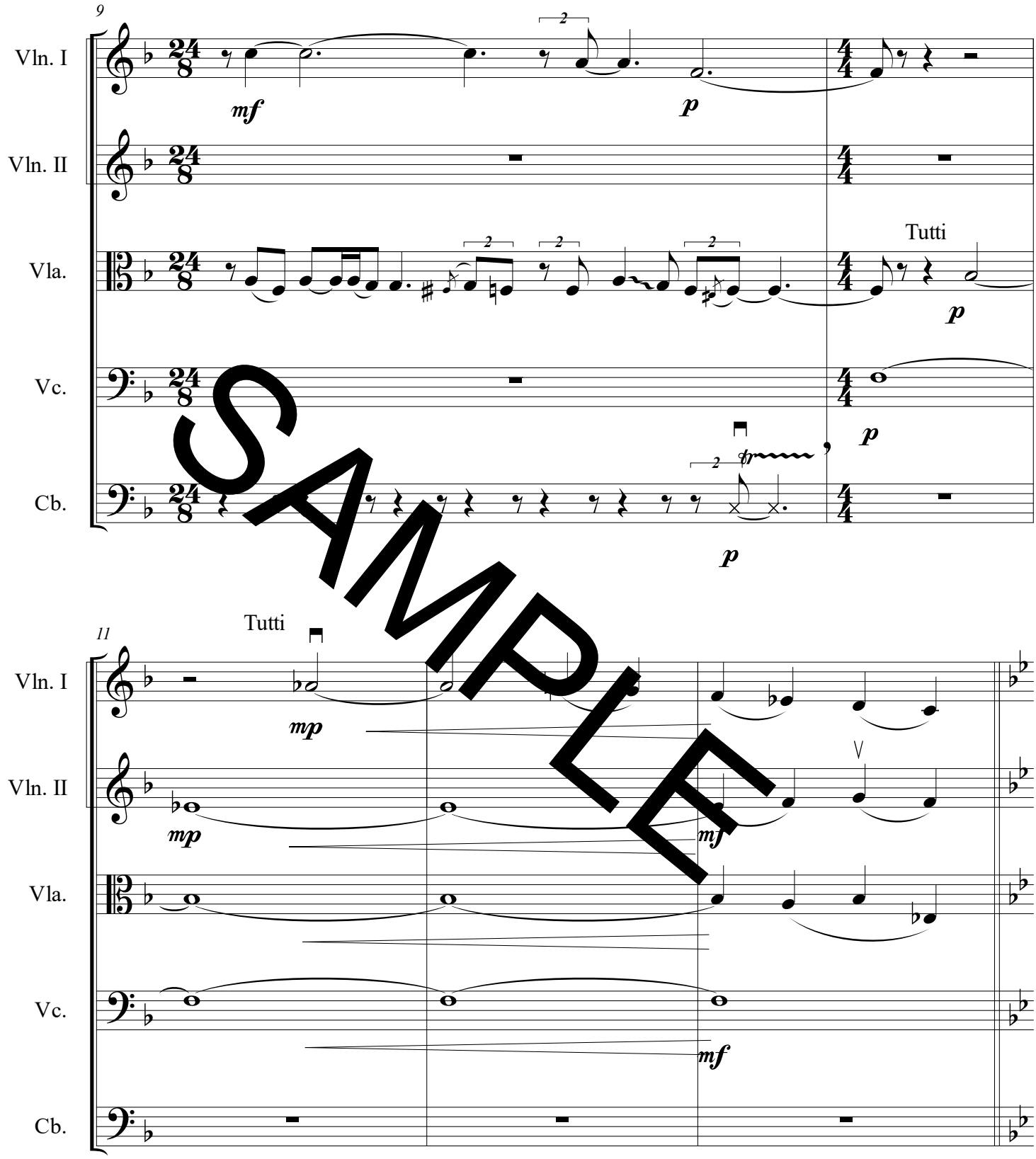

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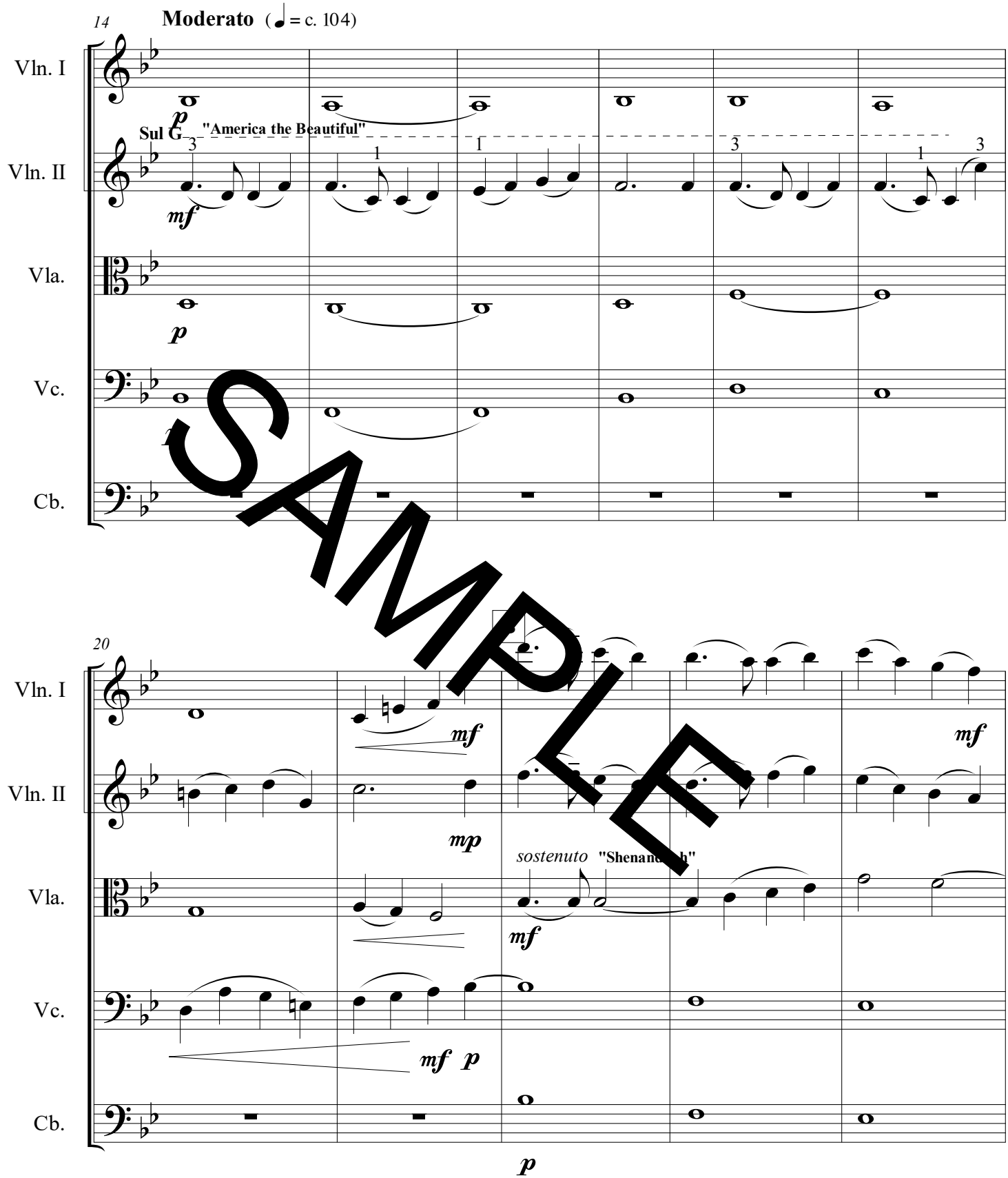
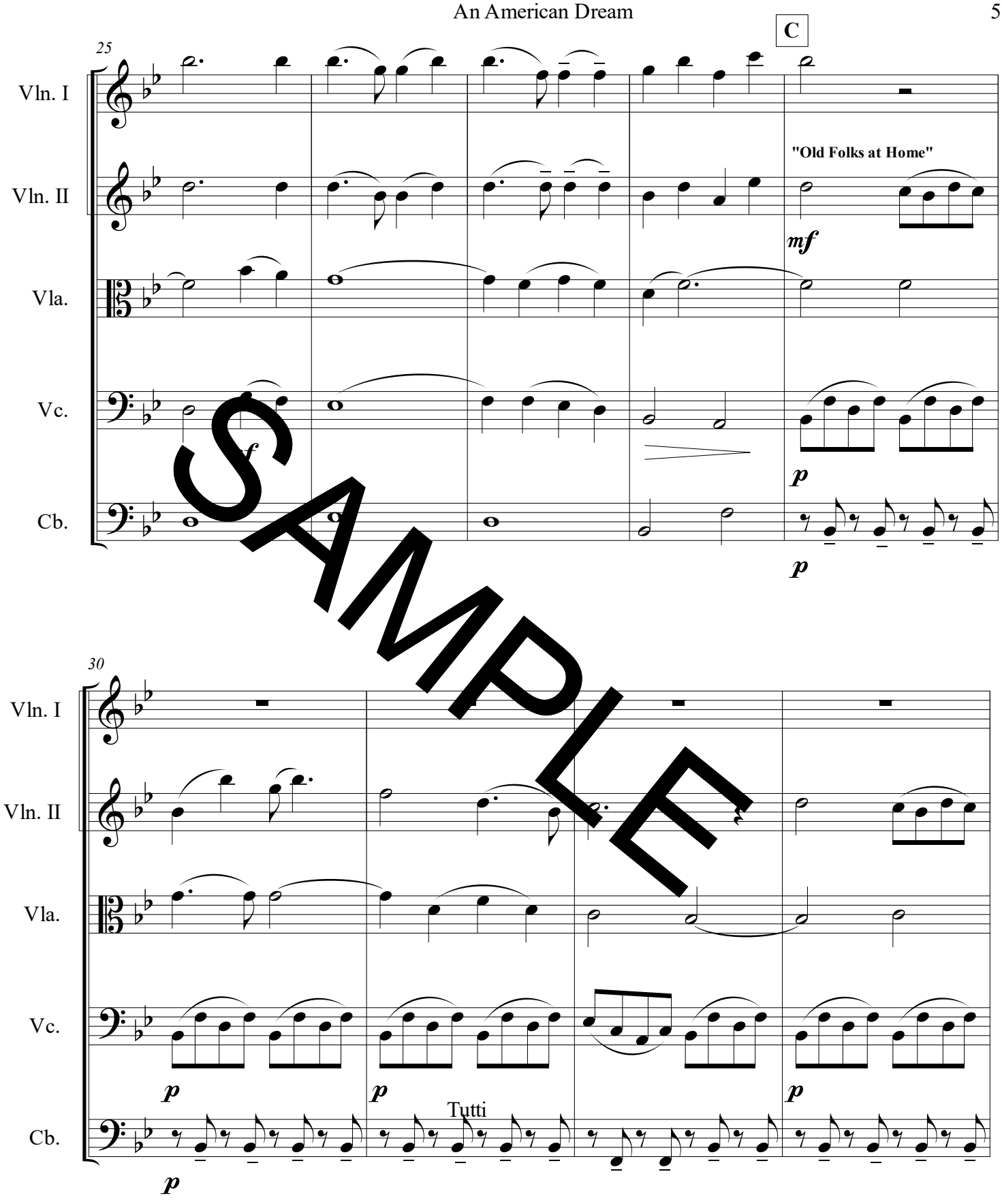
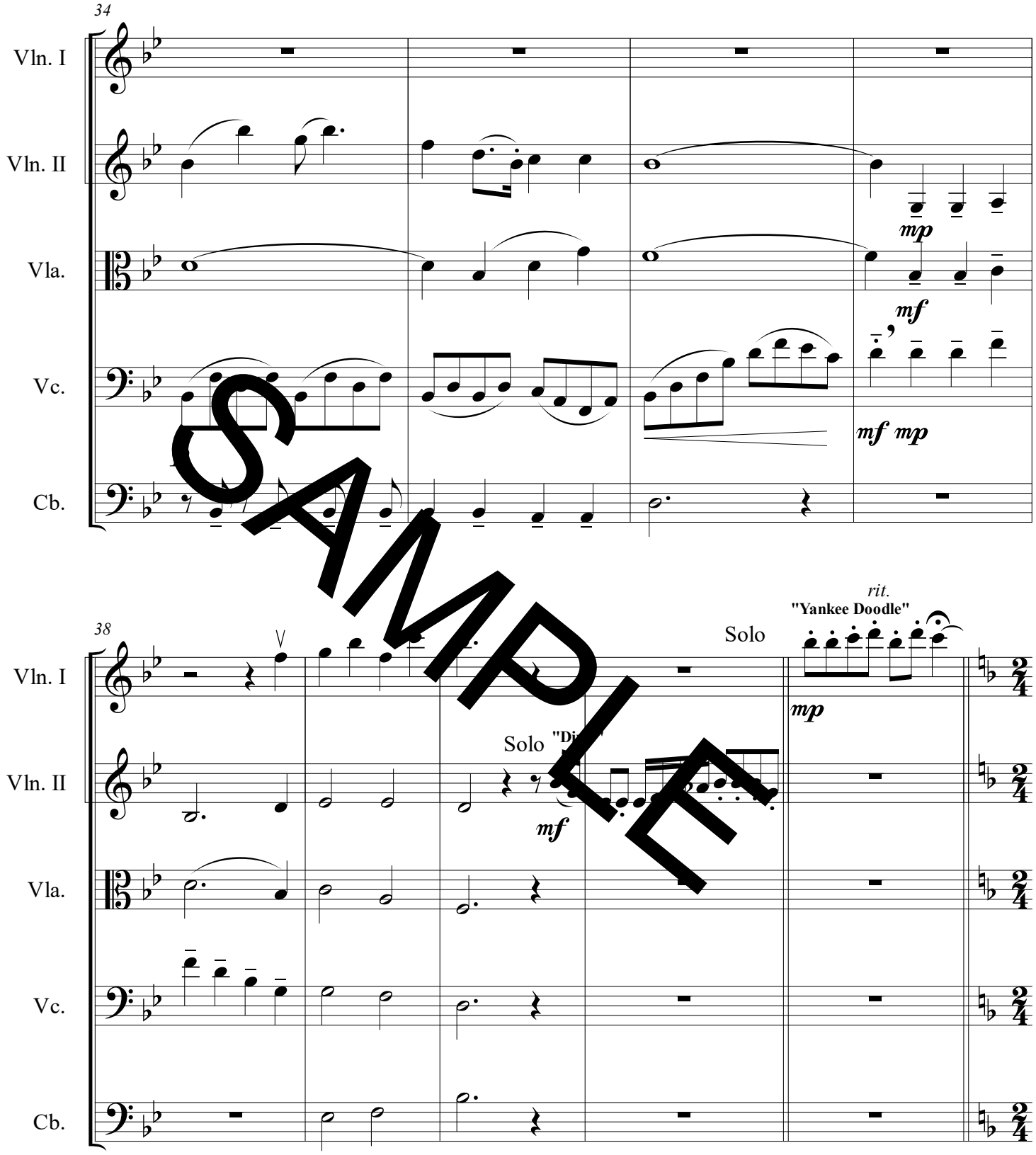

14
Moderato (= c. 104)
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
p
Sul G
"America the Beautiful"
mf
20
mf
mp
sostenuto
mf
mf p
p

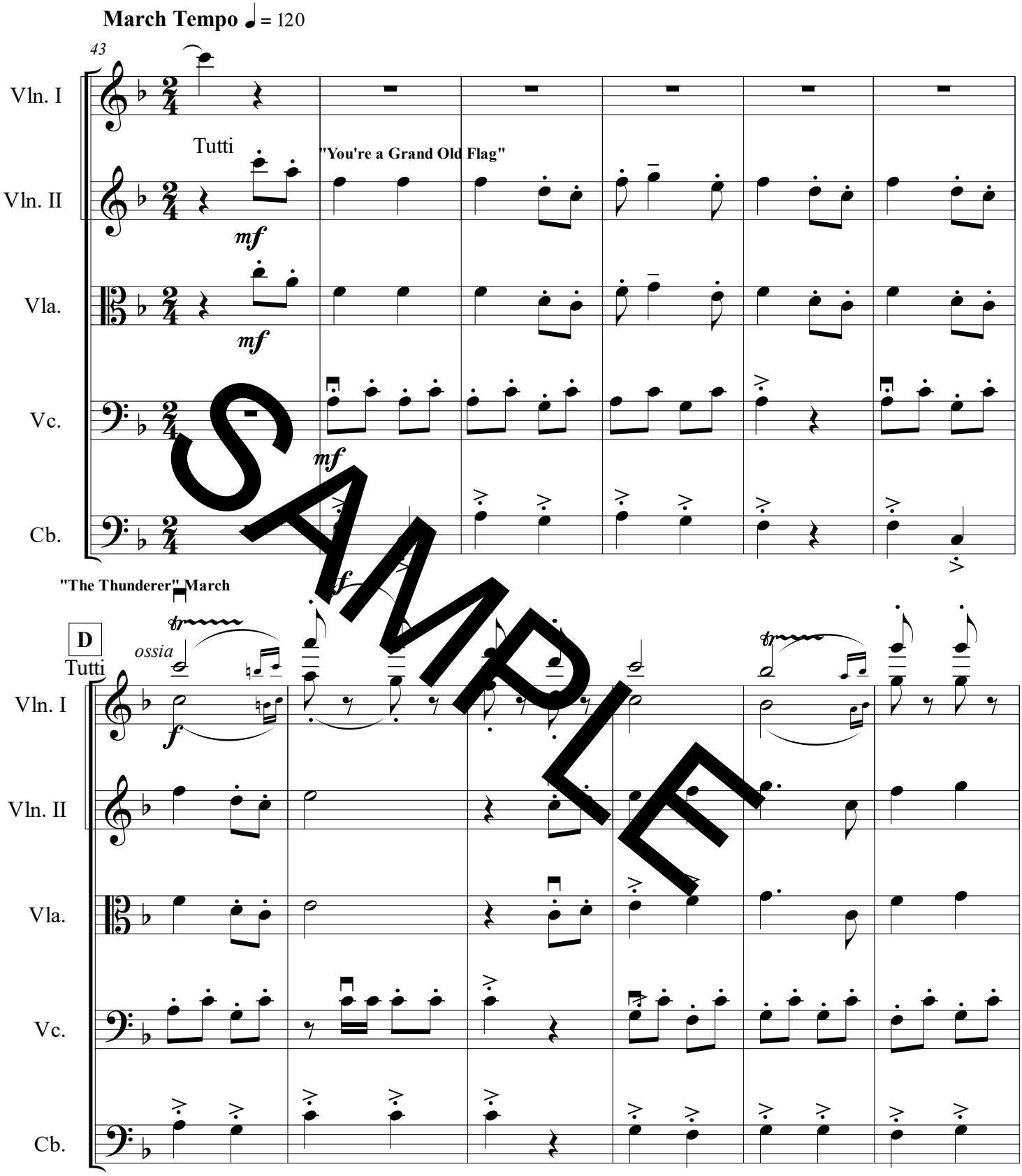
SAMPLE


C
25
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
"Old Folks at Home"
mf
f
p
p
30
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
p
p
p
p
Tutti

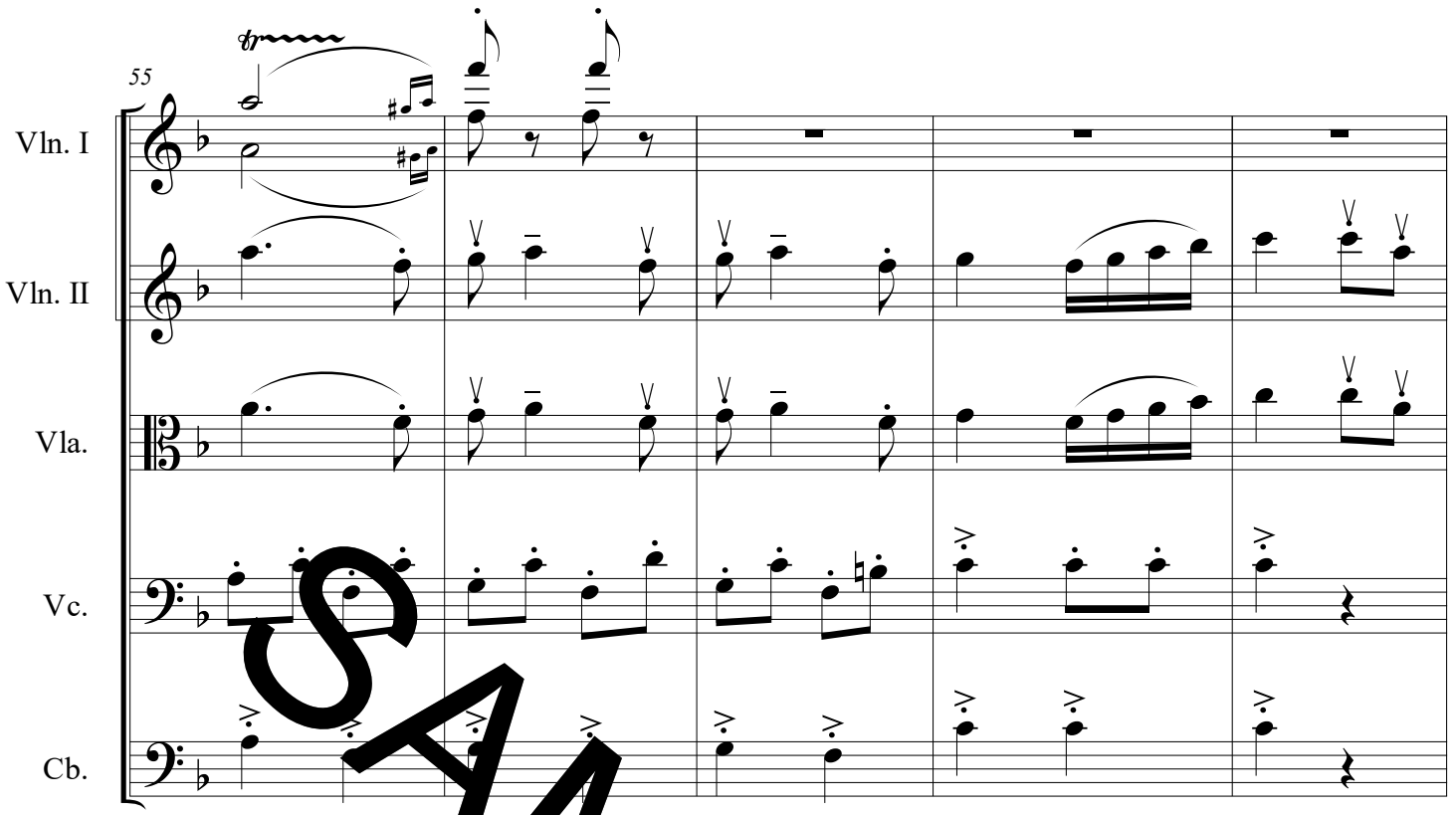
SAMPLE


34
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
mp
mf
mf mp
38
Solo
rit.
"Yankee Doodle"
mp
Solo
mf

SAMPLE

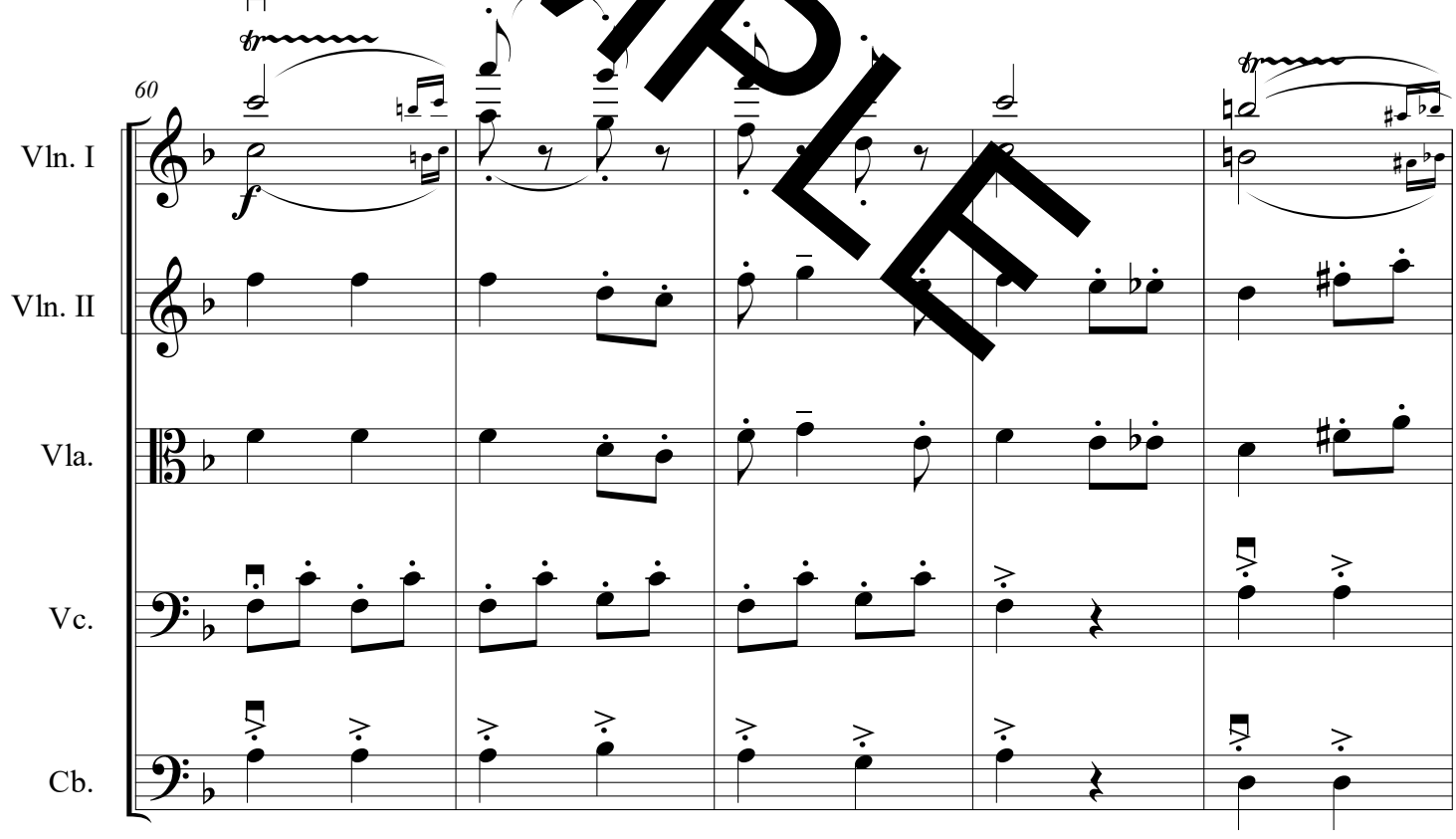

March Tempo ♩ = 120
43
Vln. I
Tutti
"You're a Grand Old Flag"
Vln. II
mf
Vla.
mf
Vc.
mf
Cb.
"The Thunderer" March
D
Tutti
ossia
f
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.

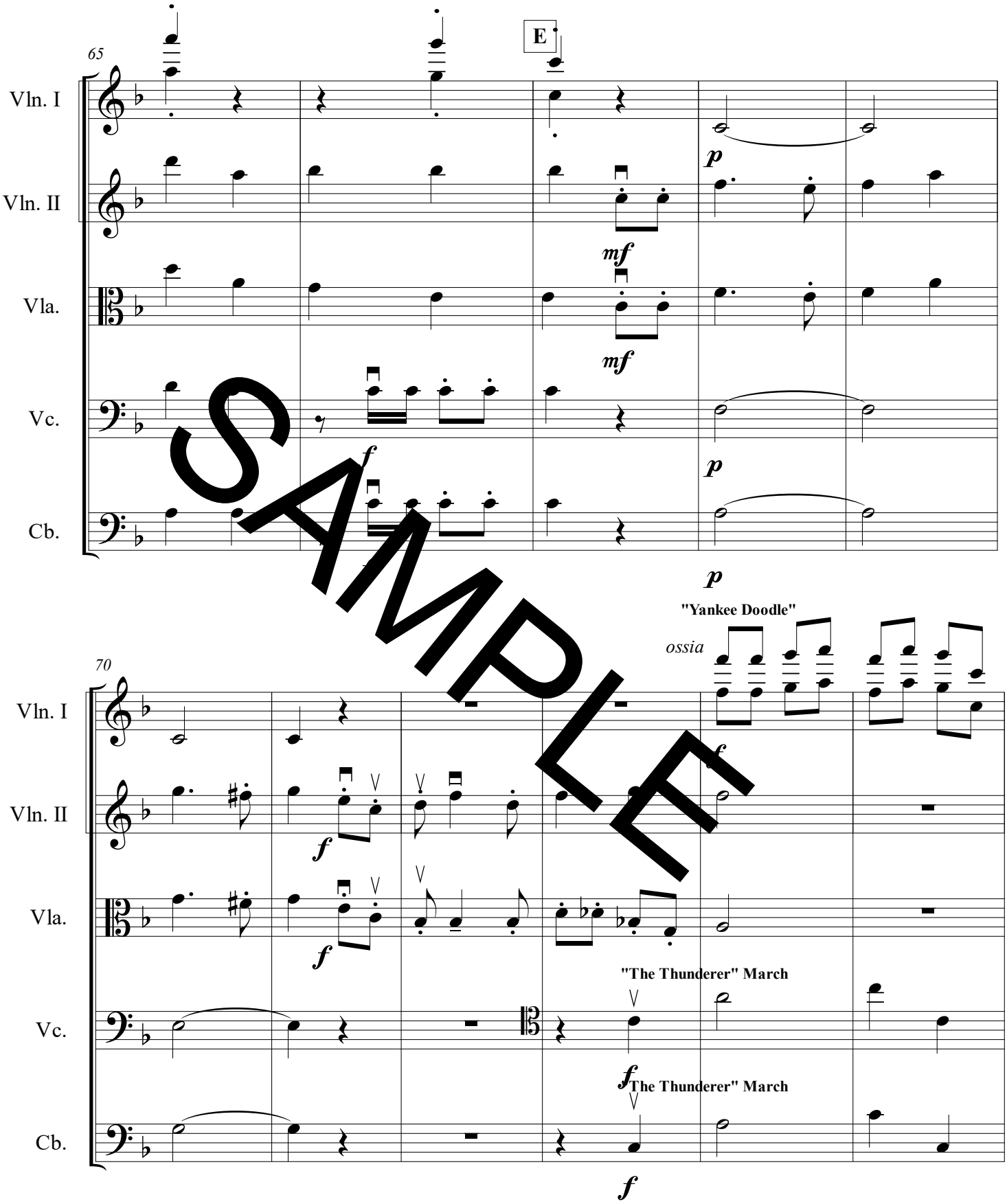
SAMPLE



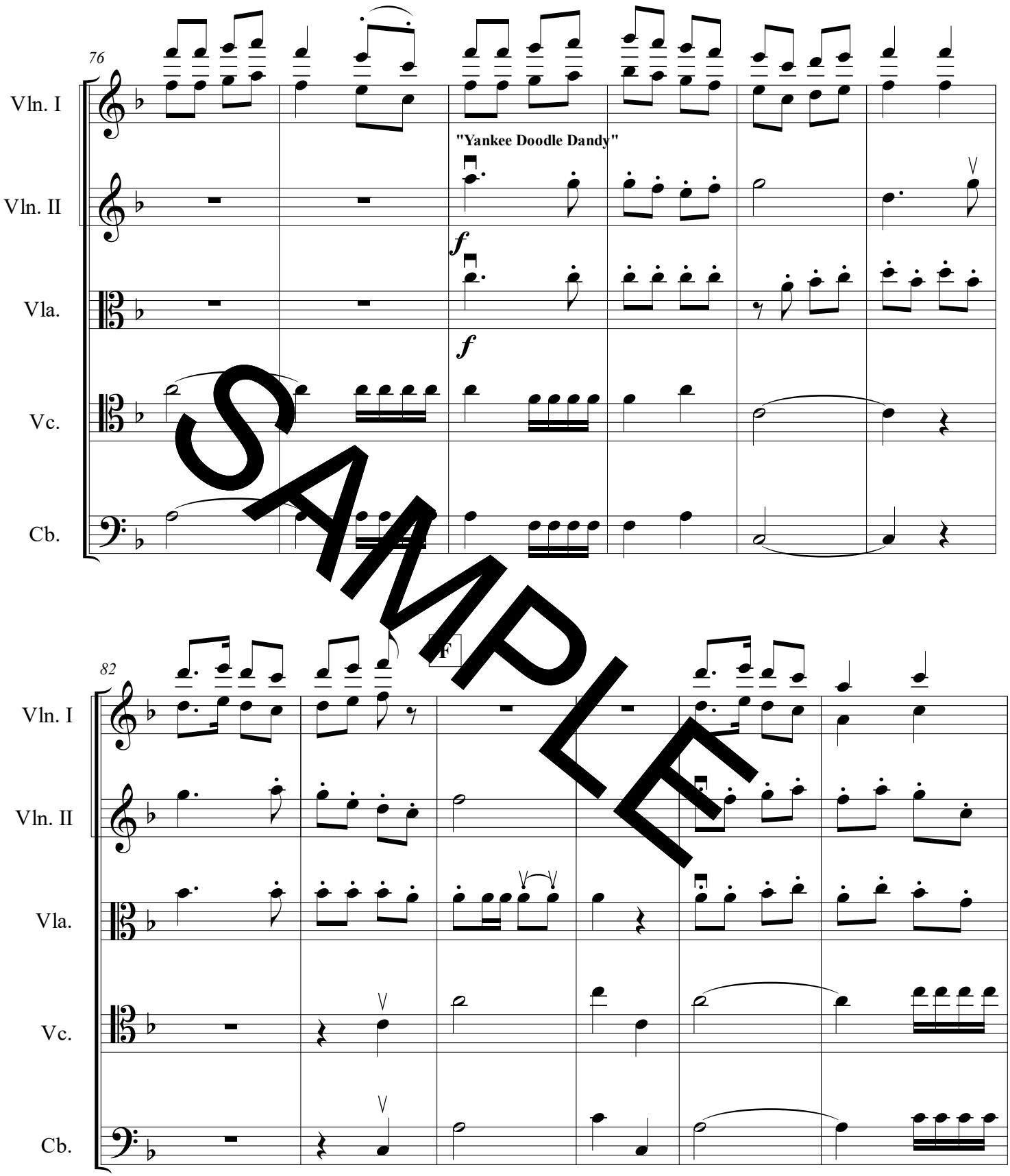
SAMPLE

"The Thunderer" March




65
E
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
p
mf
mf
f
p
p
"Yankee Doodle"
ossia
70
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.
f
f
f
"The Thunderer" March
f
"The Thunderer" March
f

SAMPLE



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