13 Pieces Inspired by Works of Mark Keffer

Artist Statement:

When I see the works of Mark Keffer from the *No Us* series, one word comes to mind: Baroque. These miraculous paintings are complex, multi-layered and busy, with imitative counterpoint and an overall sense that everything is controlled -- nothing left to chance.

I may as well be describing my own compositions. As a creator of new music in a Neobaroque style, I appreciate Keffer's attention to detail, formality of presentation, and elegant color choices. But what I find most special about his work is its Futuristic scope, reminiscent of computer motherboards or panels of a spaceship.

This aspect of Keffer's work inspired me to take my music further into a realm of what I imagine music to sound like in a millennium from now. And that's where this project began: I re-instrumentated my work with old MIDI sounds, sped it up so it would be out of the realm of human performance, added elastic tempo changes that would be nearly impossible for any ensemble of musicians to hold together, and fragmented the music by injecting space/silences.

In this way, the paintings of Mark Keffer had a profound impact on my musical output; it created a path for my current compositions to stand out from the rest of my oeuvre. I never anticipated a visual medium would prompt such a drastic new direction, but it also makes sense when you're making music unlike anything you've ever heard before.

Of course there are certain seminal pieces of music which coalesced in my brain for this project: *Philomen* by Milton Babbit (1964), *Baroque Variations* by Lucas Foss (1967), *Solo for Piano* by John Cage (1948), *Faxanadu* by Jun Chikuma (1987). If you put them in a blender, the end result may taste like my music; but it was the work of Mark Keffer that plugged the food processor in and pressed the button marked frappé.

One particular parallel between his work and mine is the perception that digital means were utilized. Keffer's precision and cleanliness originally made me assume they were created on the computer, in the same way listeners might assume the effects of my music falling apart/disintegrating were done in post-editing. However, his process is done entirely by hand, just as my music is all composed by hand. He takes brush to paper; I take pencil to paper.

And in the same way his colors are synthetic (acrylics), so too are mine, the musical timbres coming from sine waves, square waves, and saw waves. I also find connections between the sizes of Keffer's work and the length of my pieces. His are large enough to make an impact but not oversized. In the same way, the musical works for this project are scaled to make my point without creating a time-vampire.

Musically responding to 13 paintings proved to be a two-pronged decision: on one hand, I have been very, very preoccupied with that number since specific personal life-events that happened nearly a decade ago; on the other hand, I feel that thirteen pieces is a perfect solo exhibition for a visual artist working within the size dimensions that Mark uses.

I must mention that this project was not a collaboration. In fact, I kept it a surprise from *everybody* until it was done. So completely drawn to reshape my music in order to fit what I saw within these compelling visuals, I didn't tell a soul for fear of people thinking I was overstepping bounds of propriety. I did not assume anyone would understand.

Exactly how the music relates to the paintings ultimately amounts to esotericism and possibly even pretentiousness, but I knew if I did it right then people would understand in a way that necessarily transcends words. I also created a 107-page score for the project, with every single sound notated and every tempo change labeled with specific beats per minute.

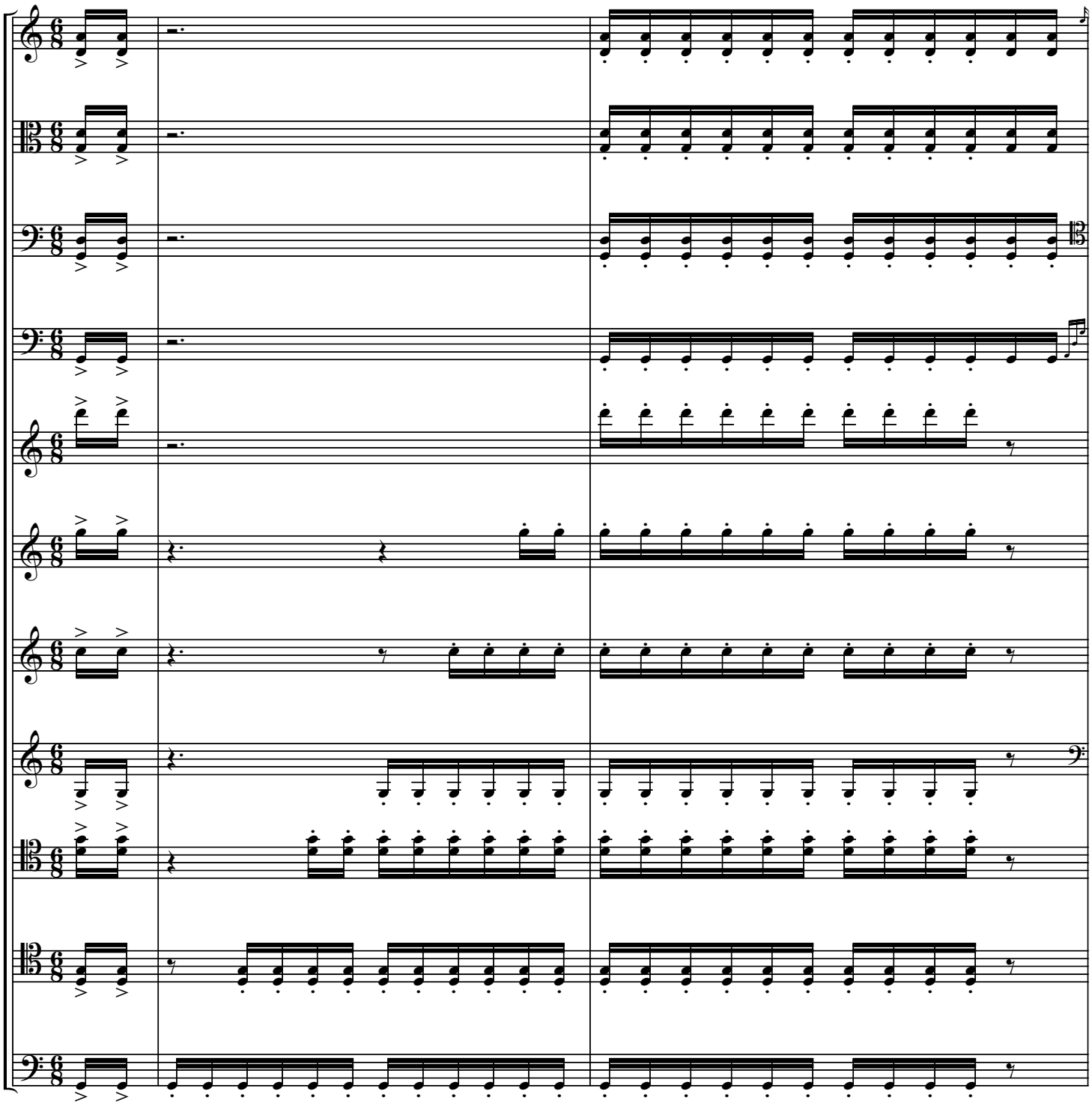
Thank you Mark for 'getting it' and not being offended that I took such liberties in analyzing your work. I am very pleased with the results and especially grateful that you described the music as "mesmerizing" and "re*mark*able" (pun intended?).

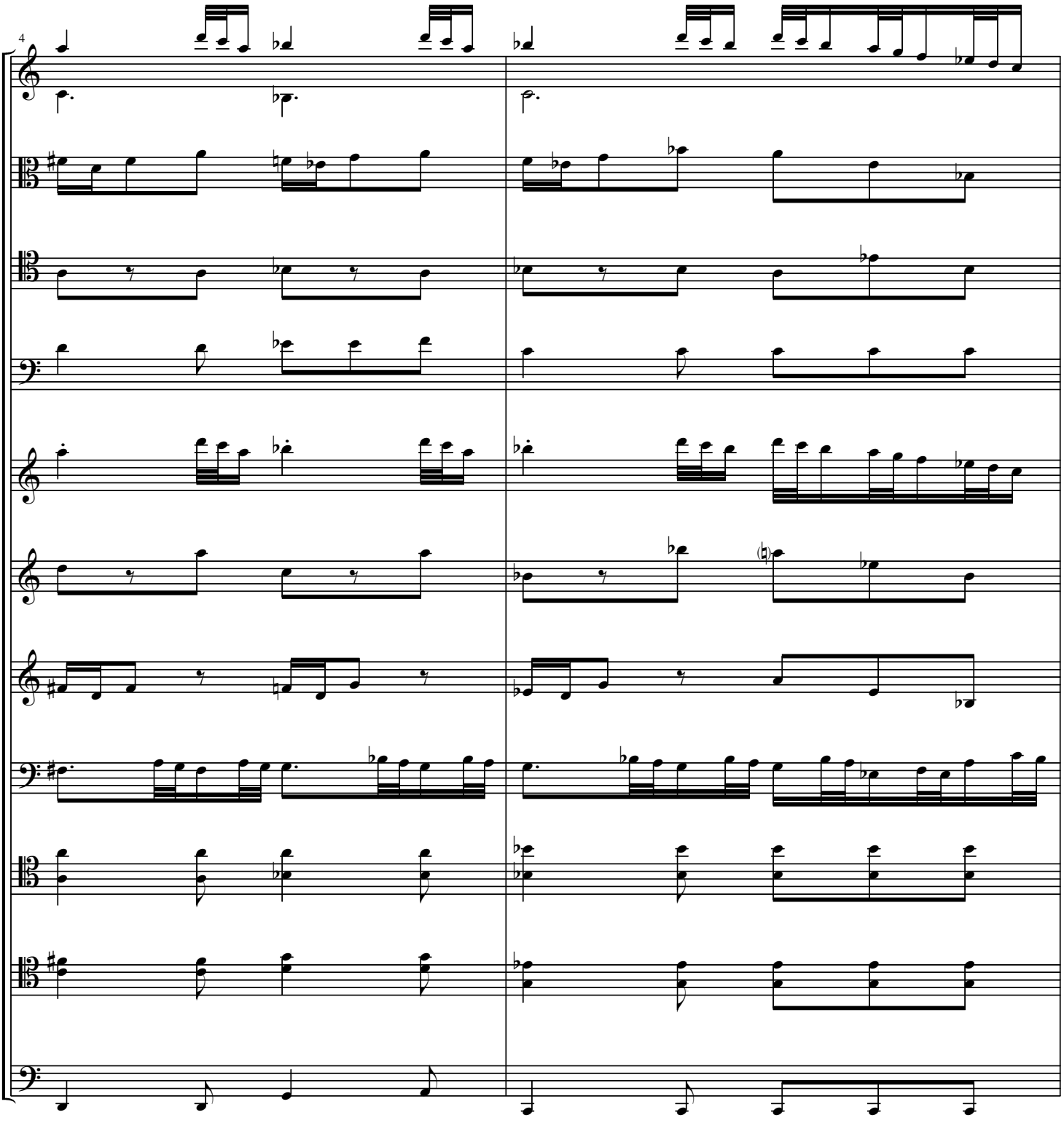
- Ryan Charles Ramer, composer

No Us 48, acrylic on paper, 20 x 16", 2022

♩. = 60

Ryan Charles Ramer

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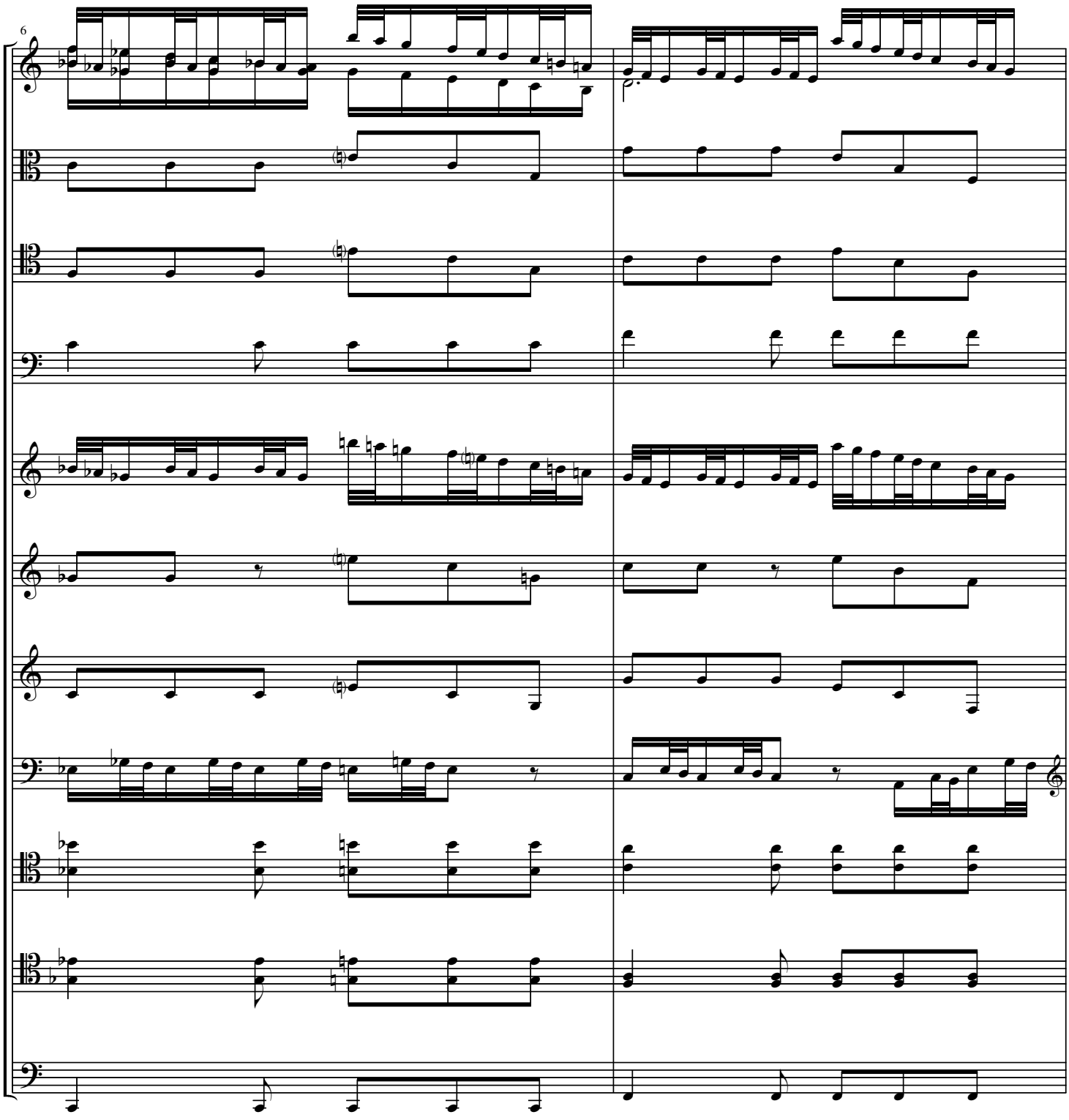
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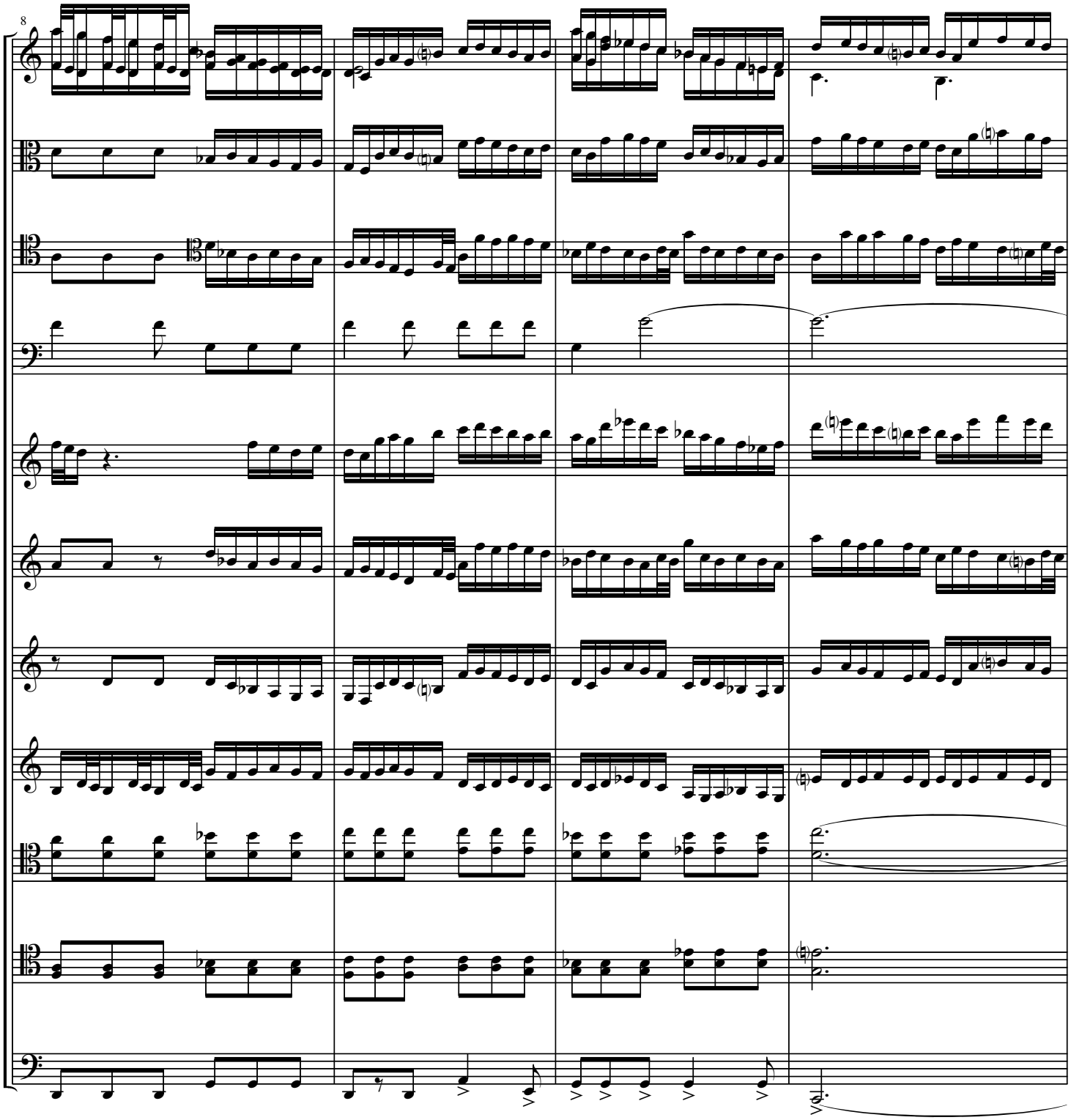
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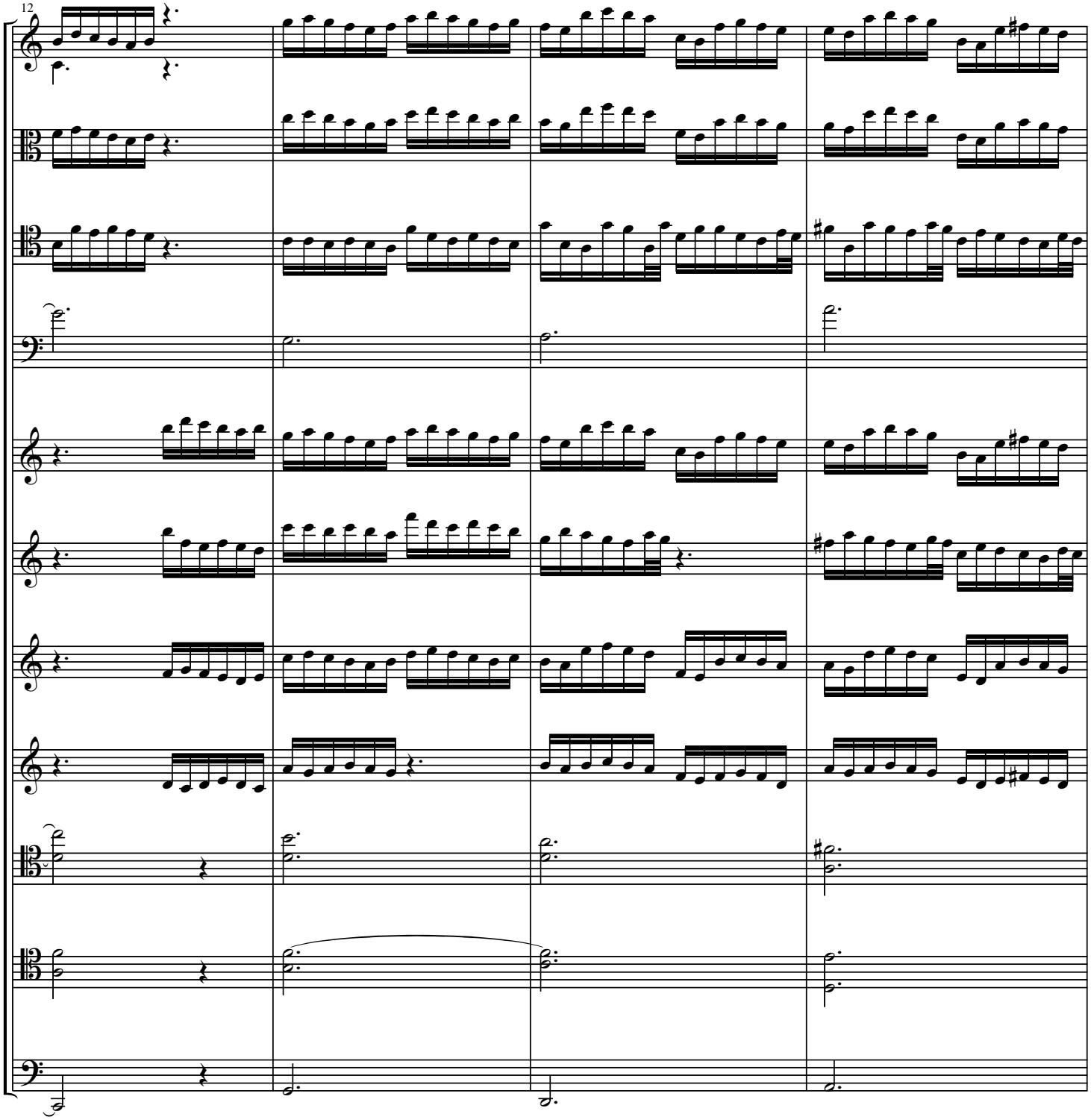
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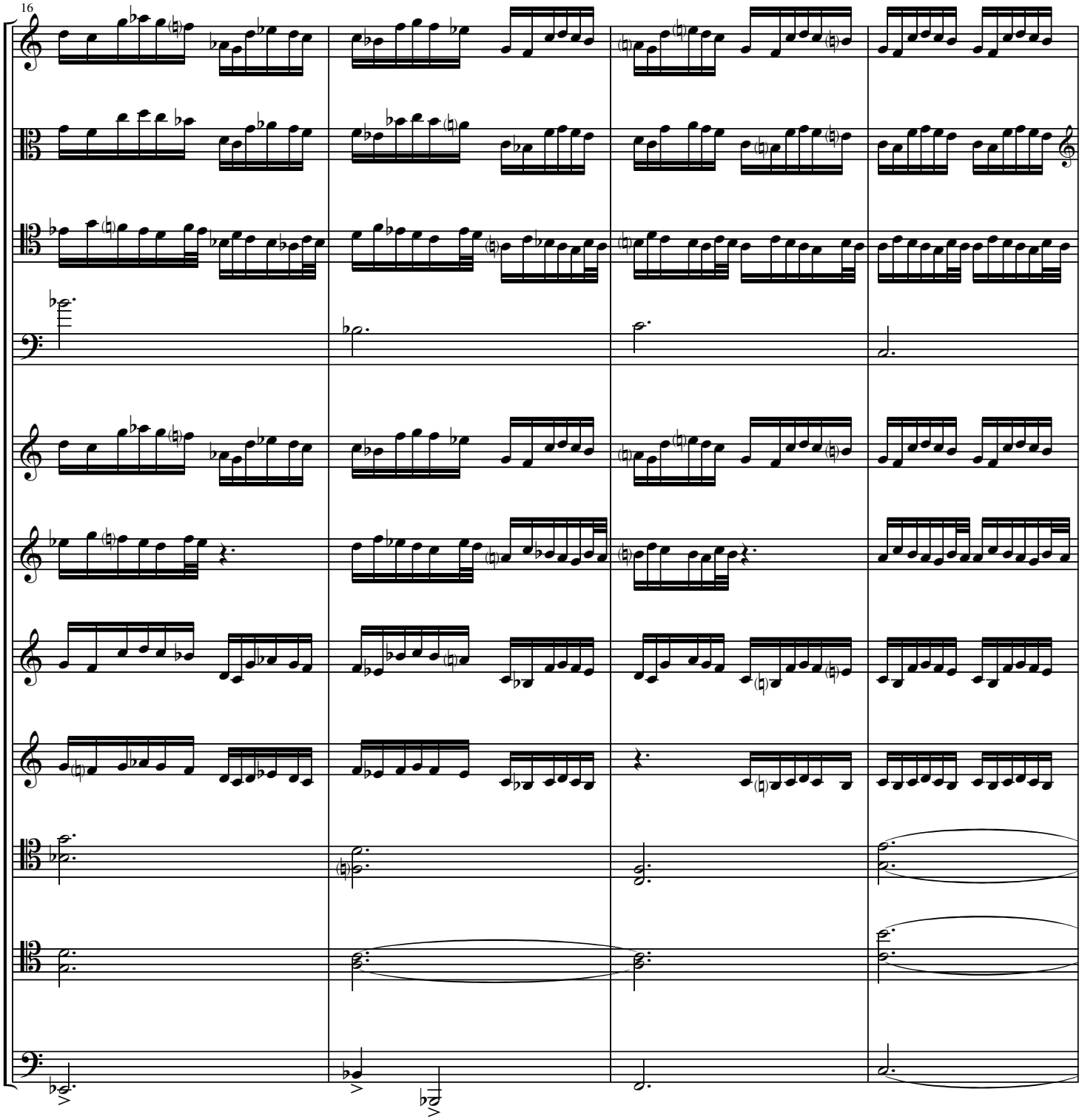
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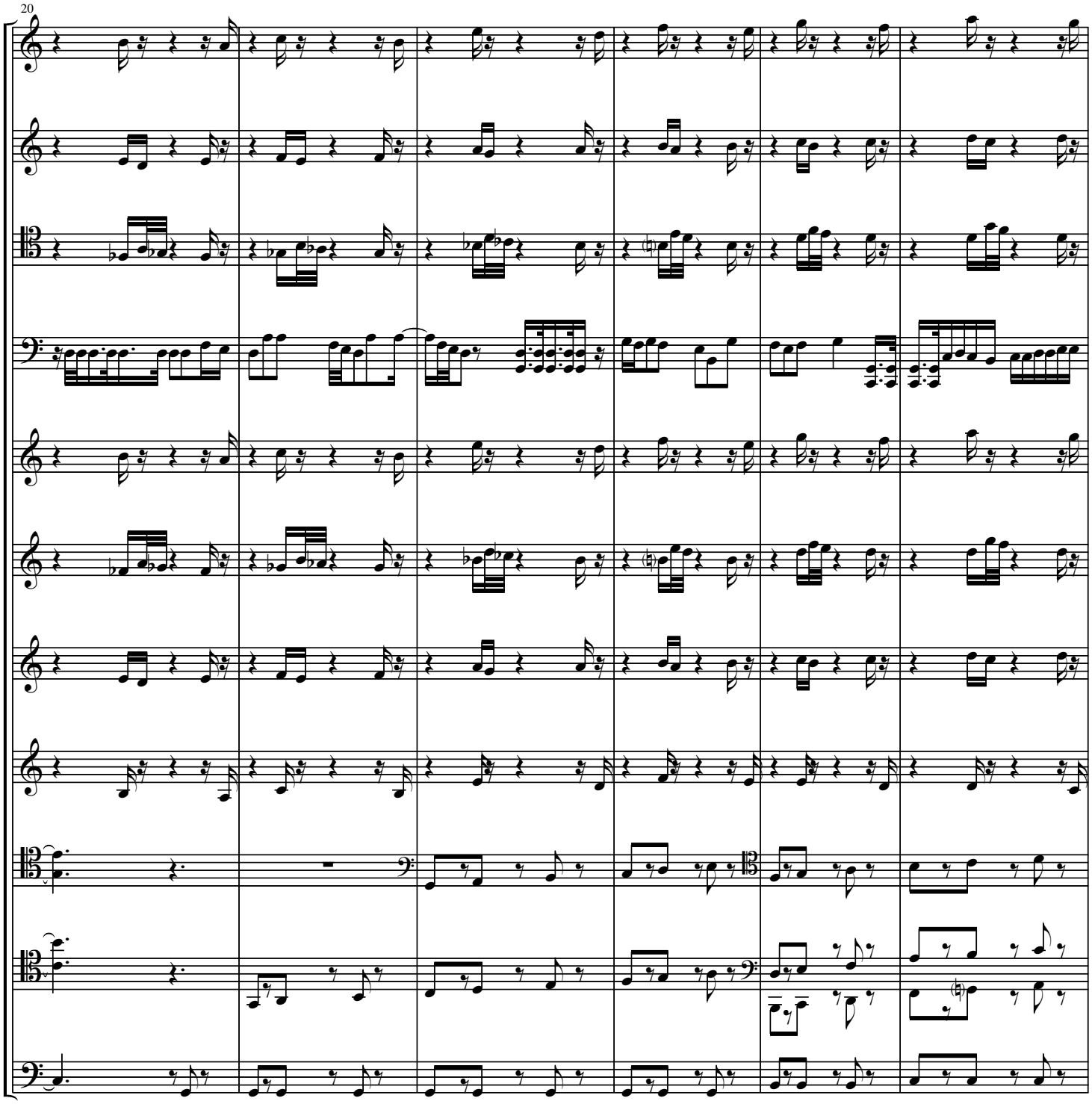
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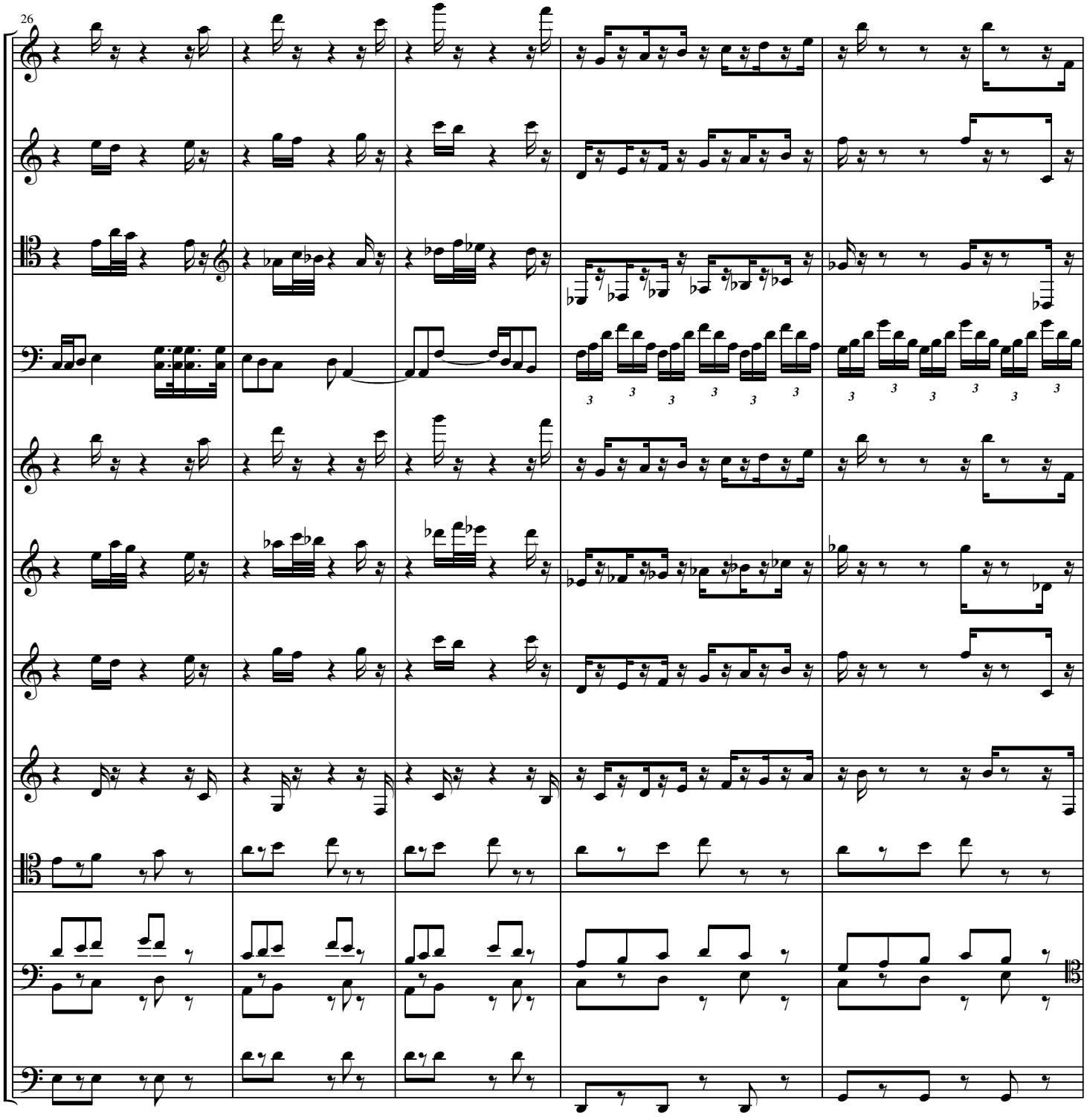
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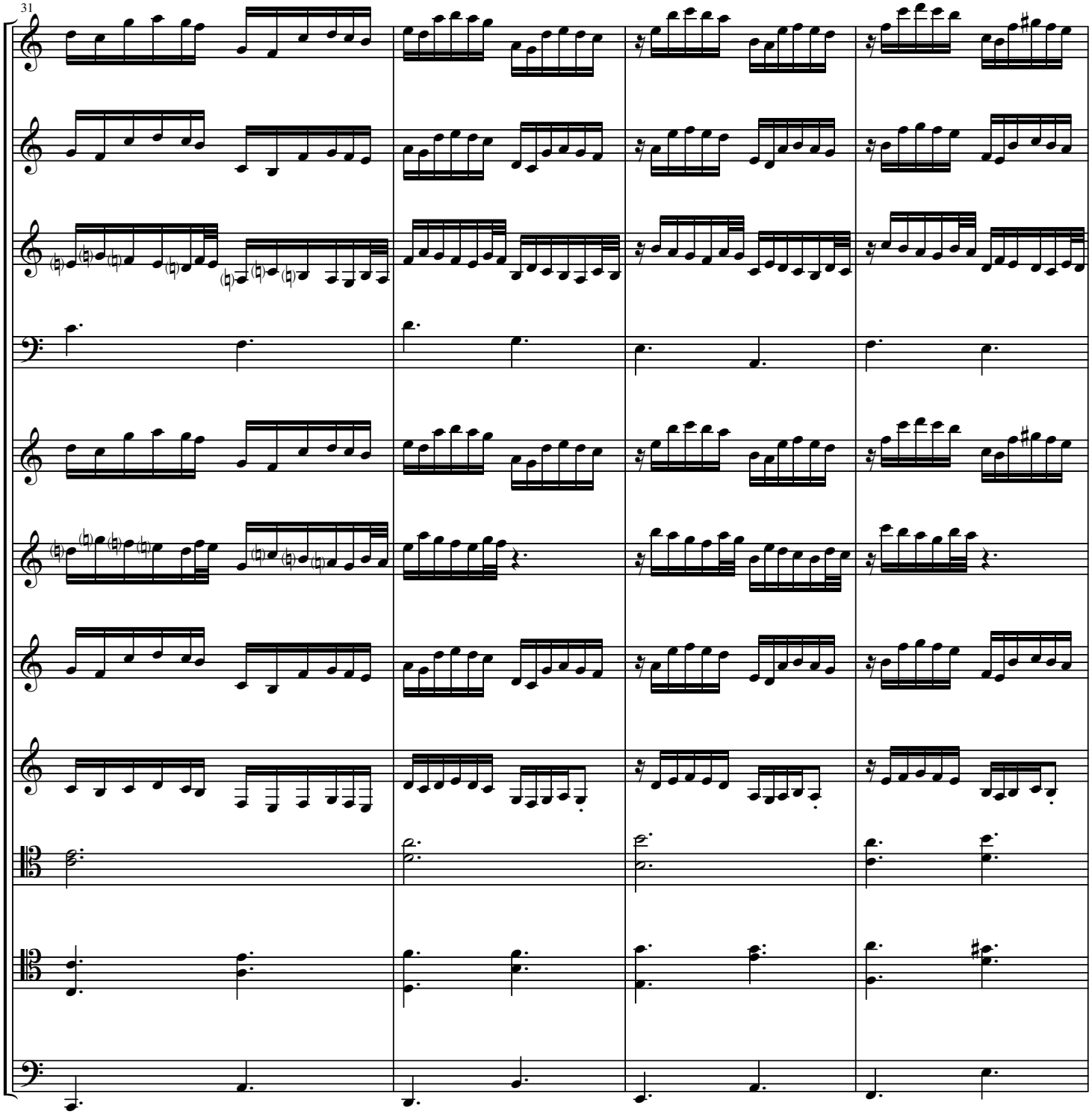
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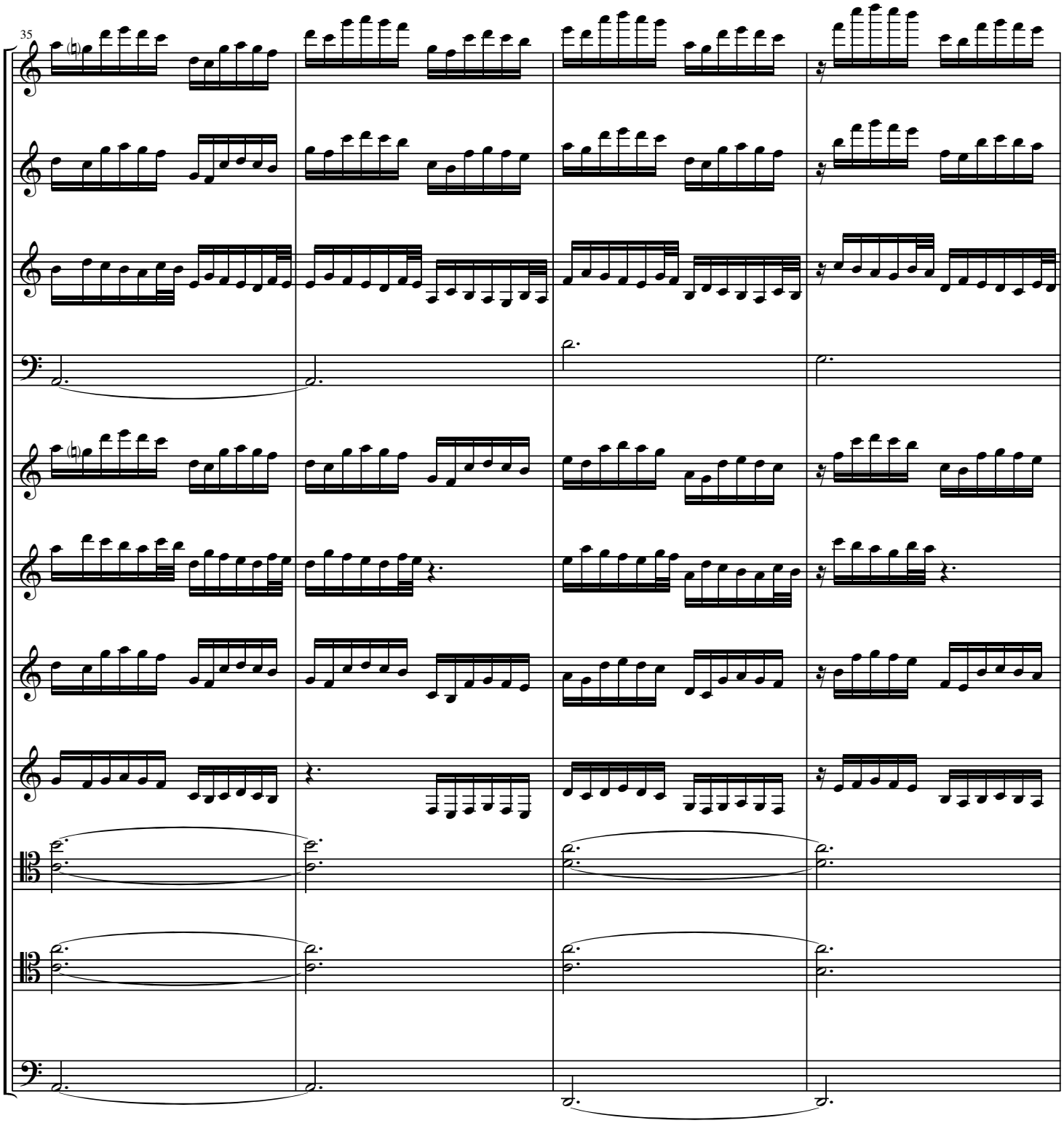
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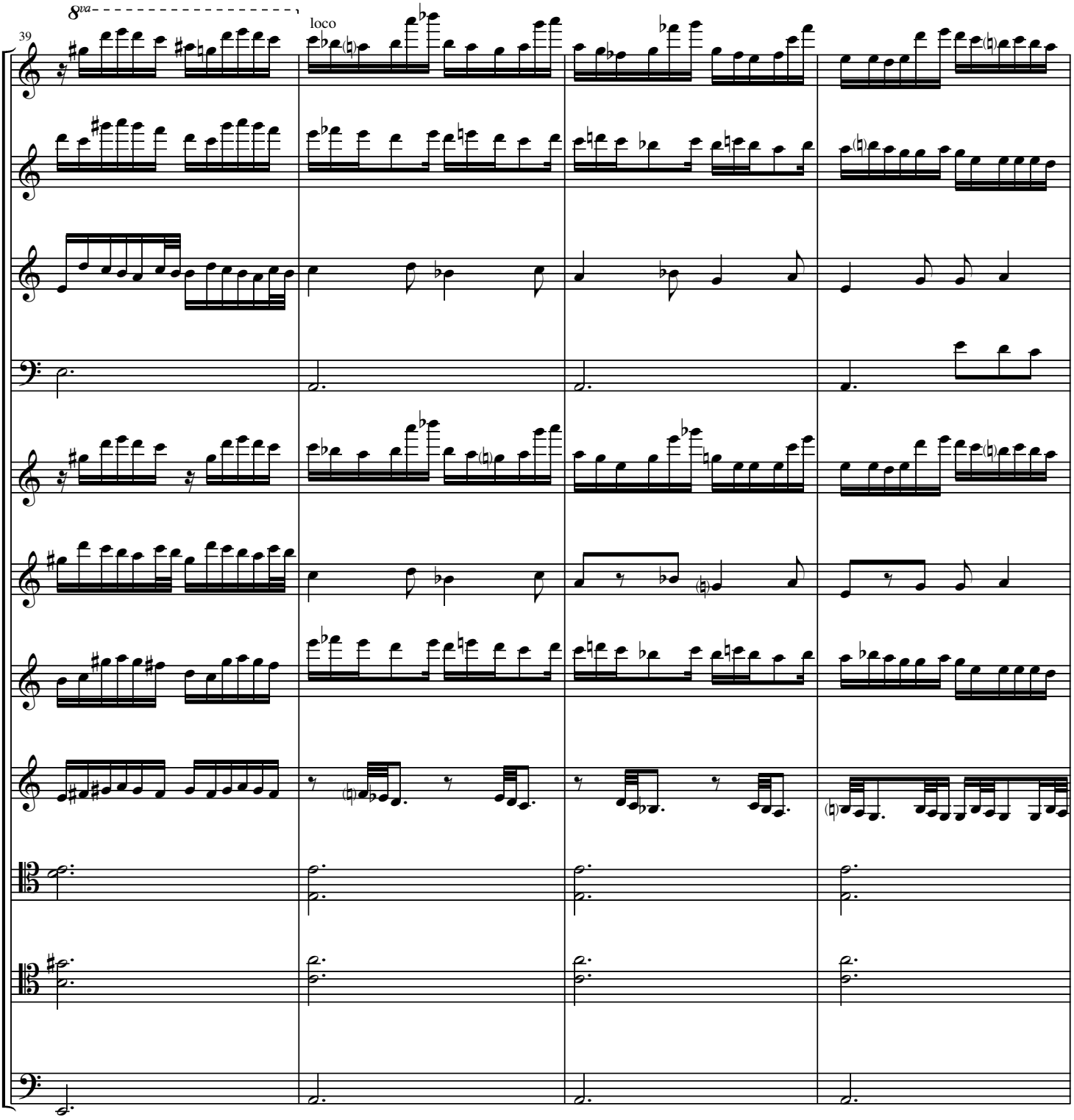
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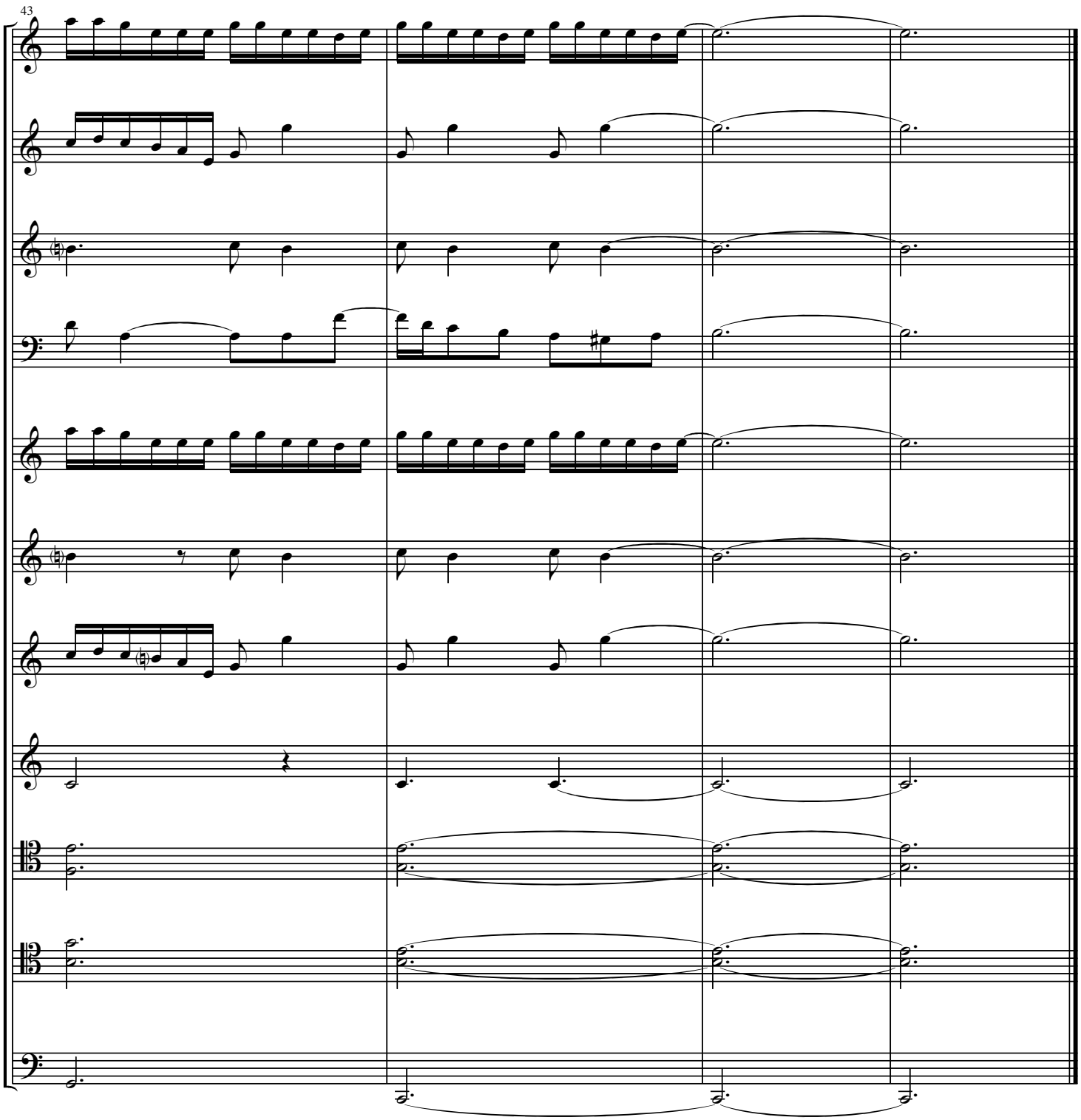
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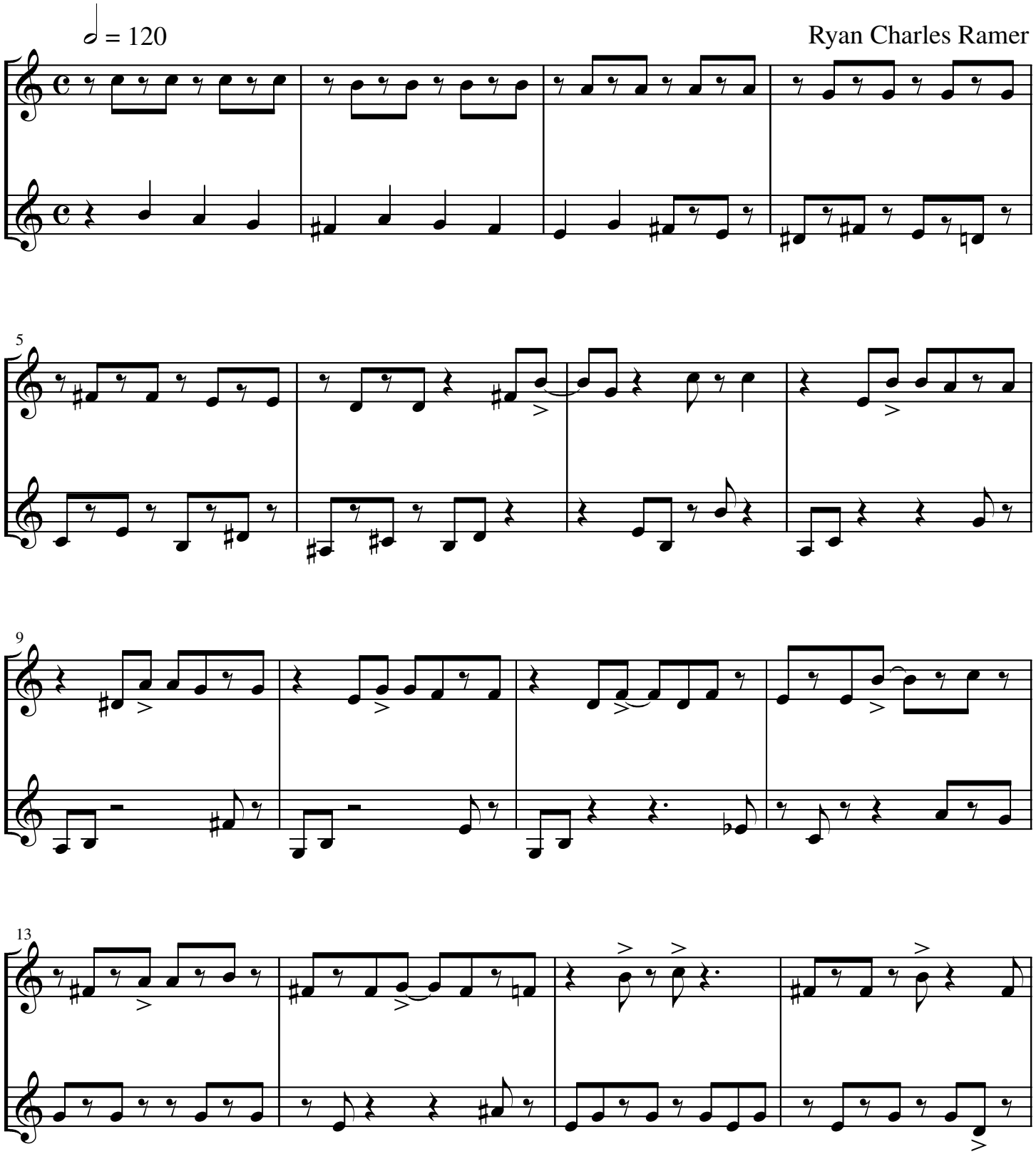

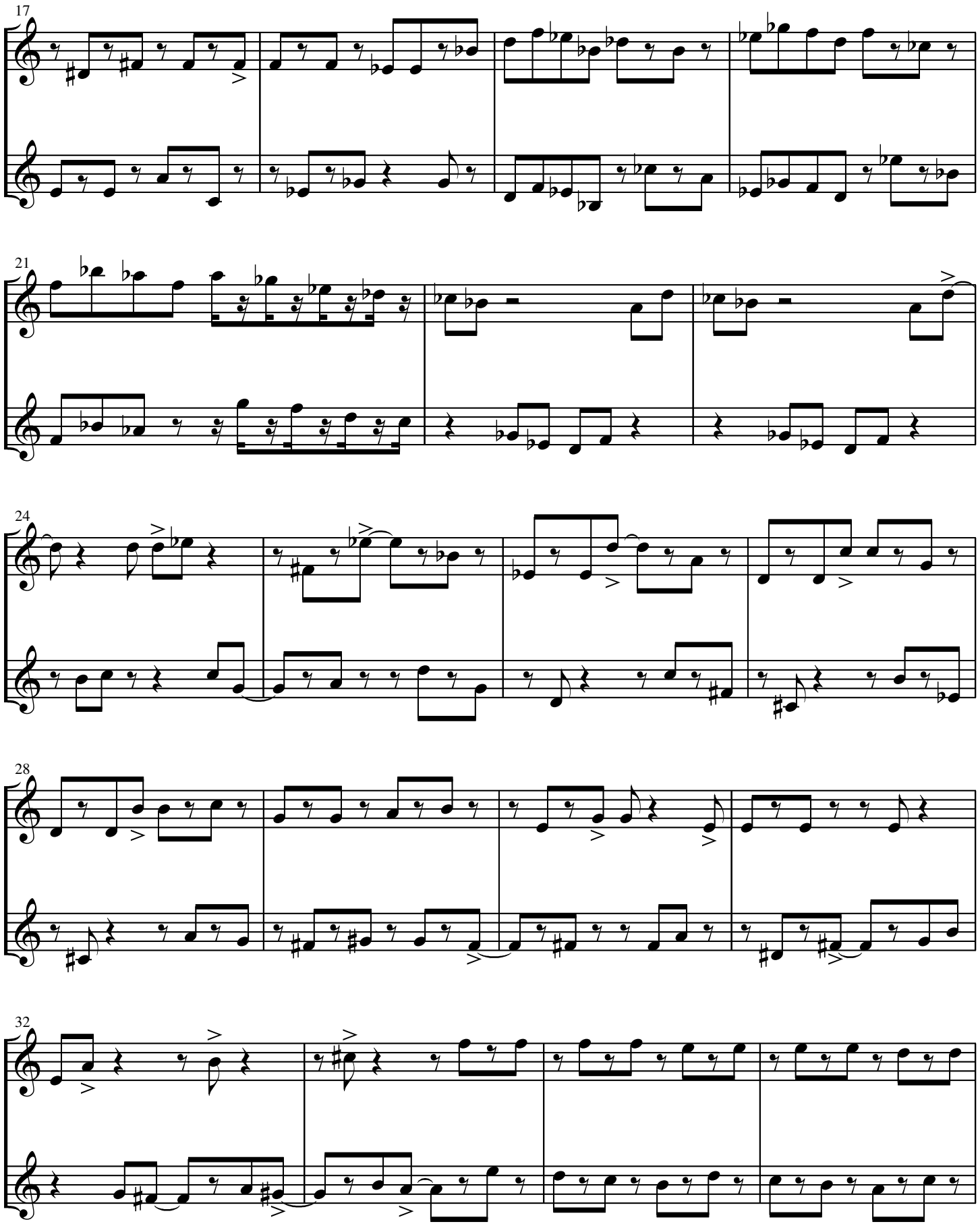
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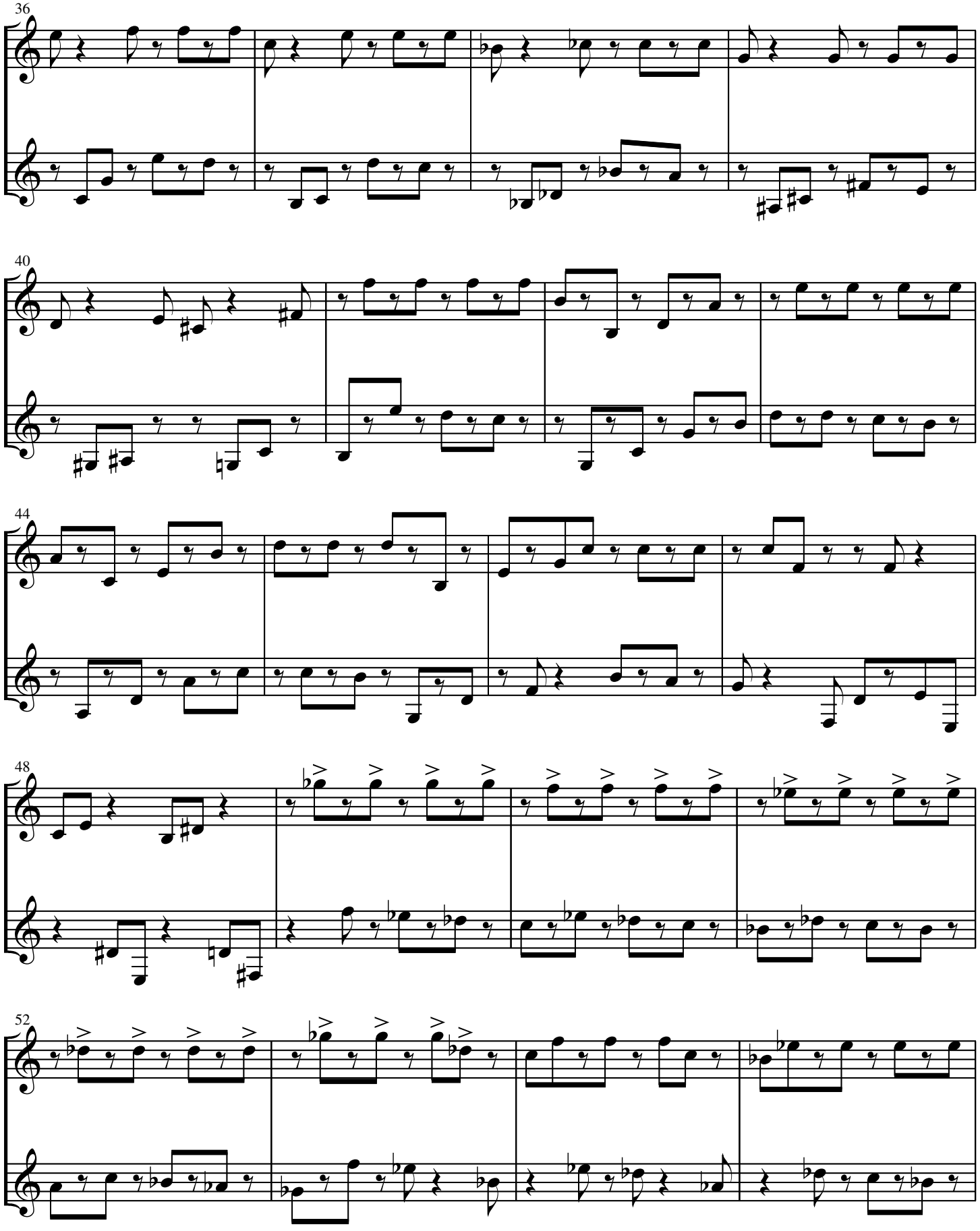
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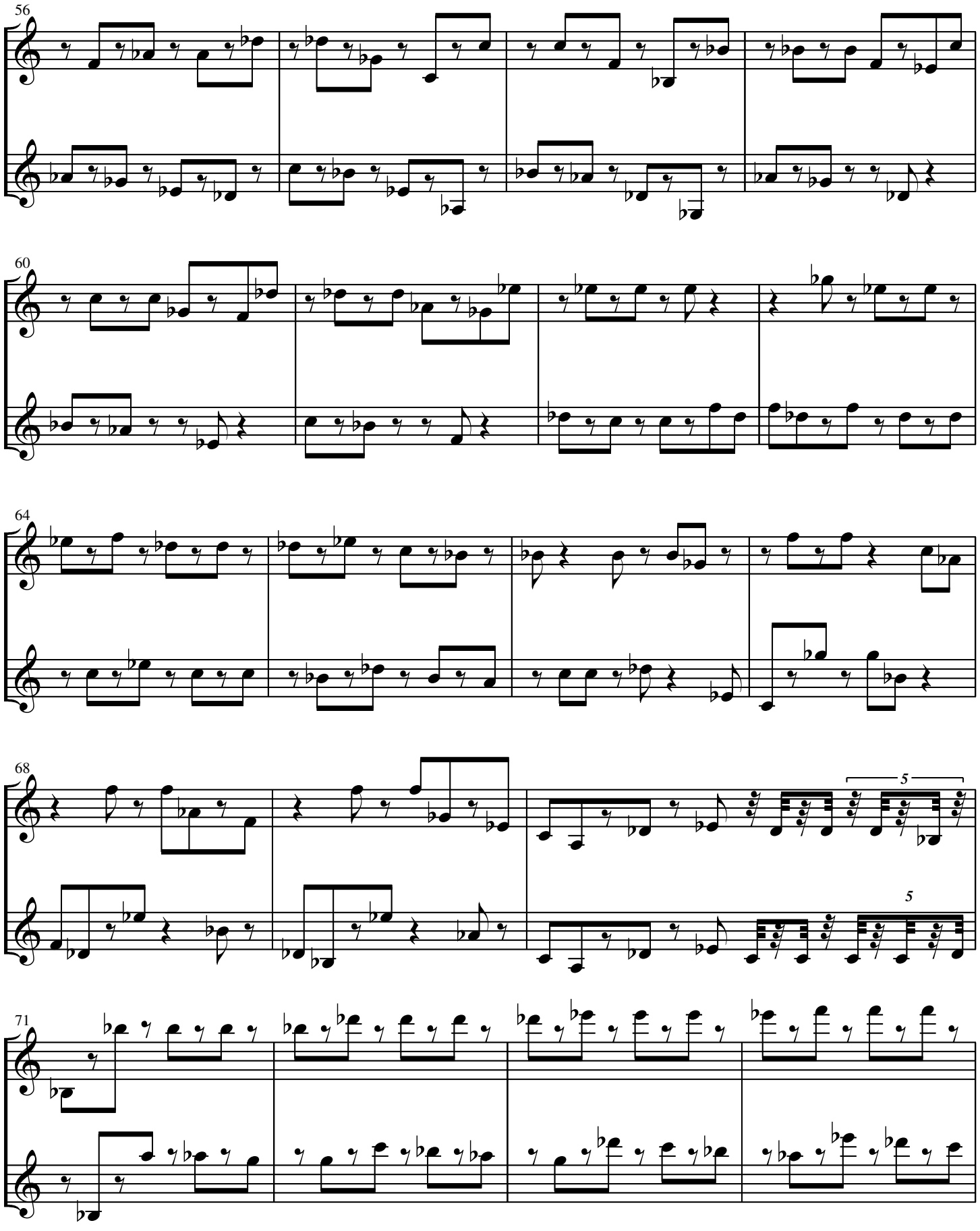
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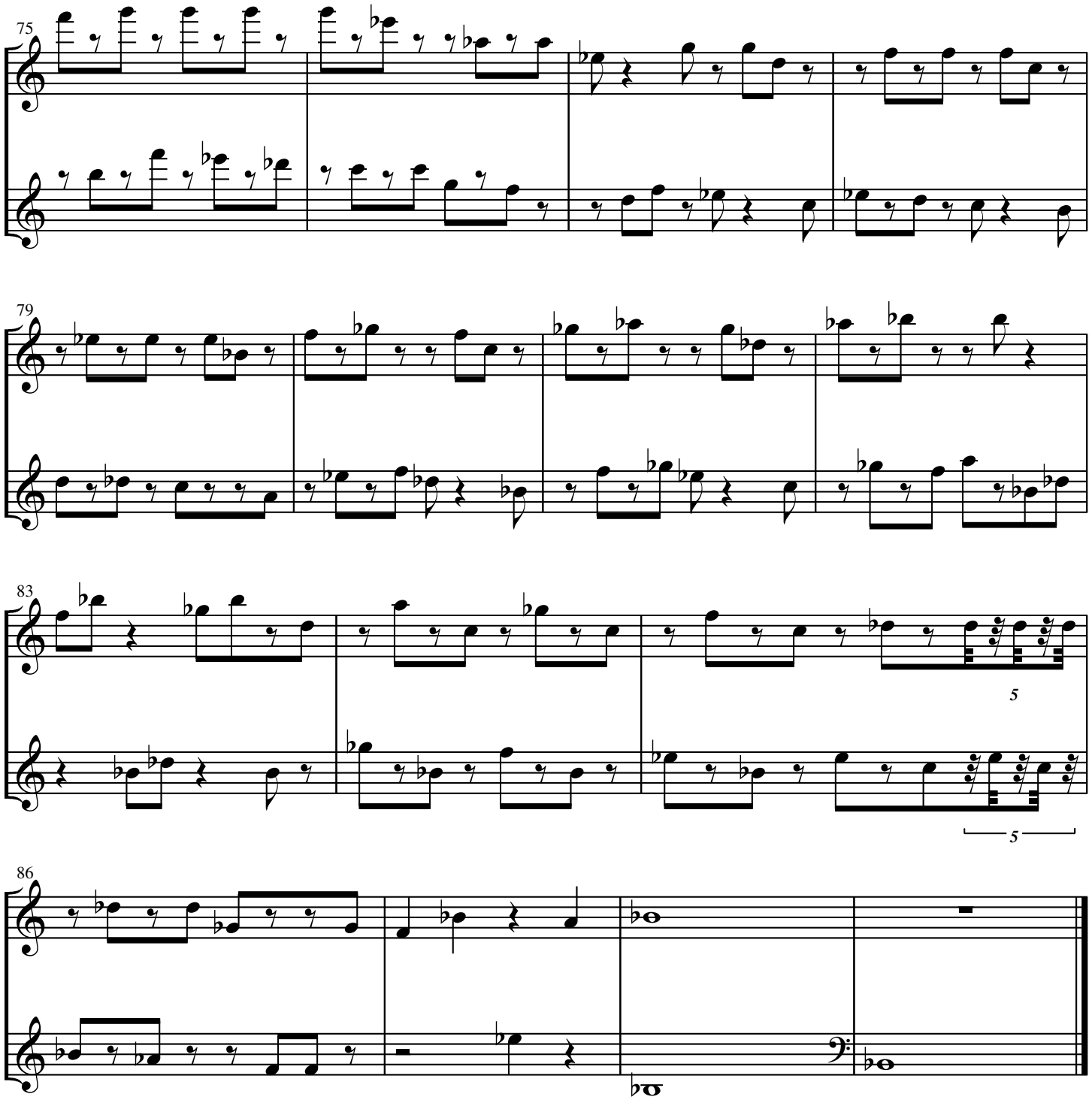
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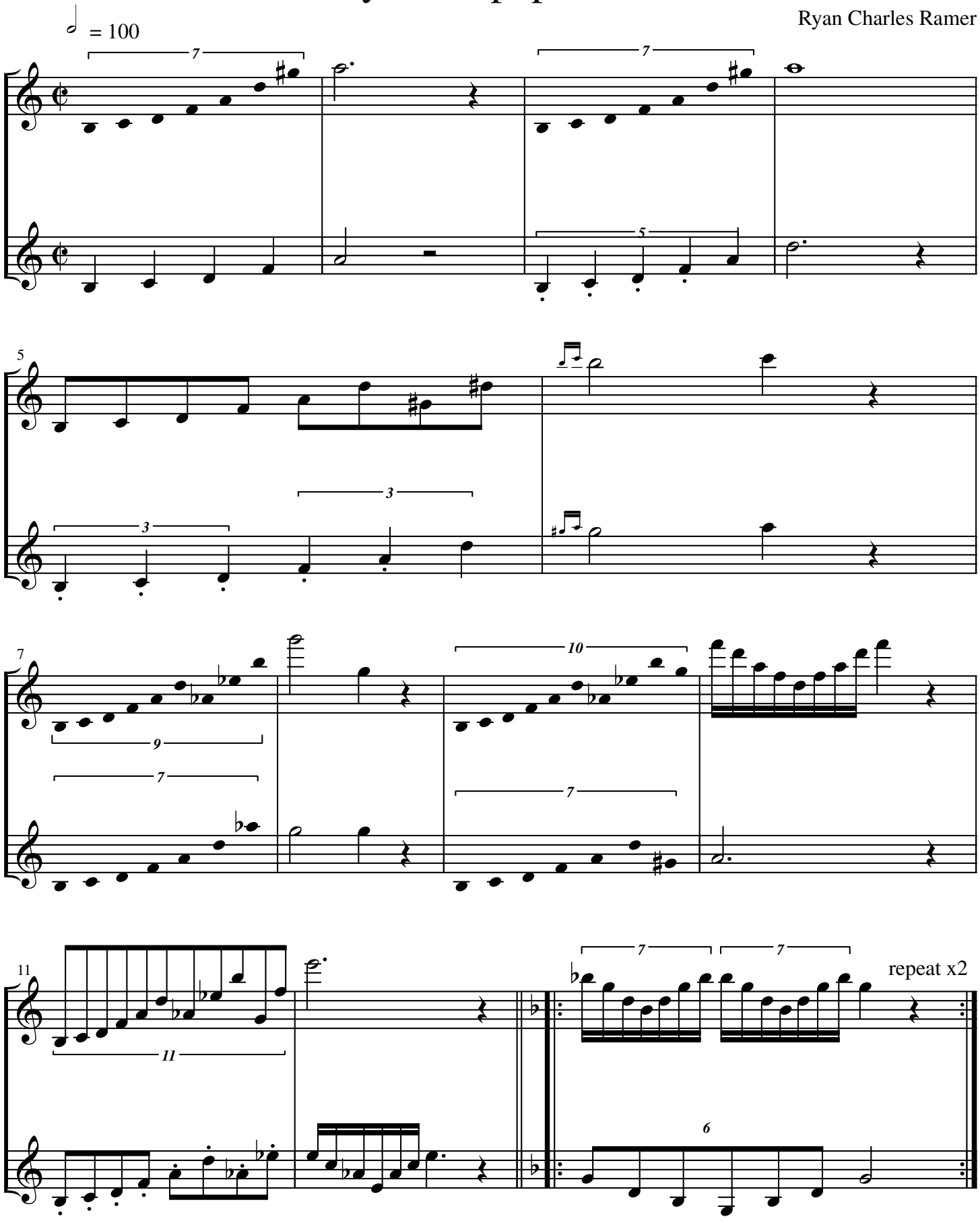
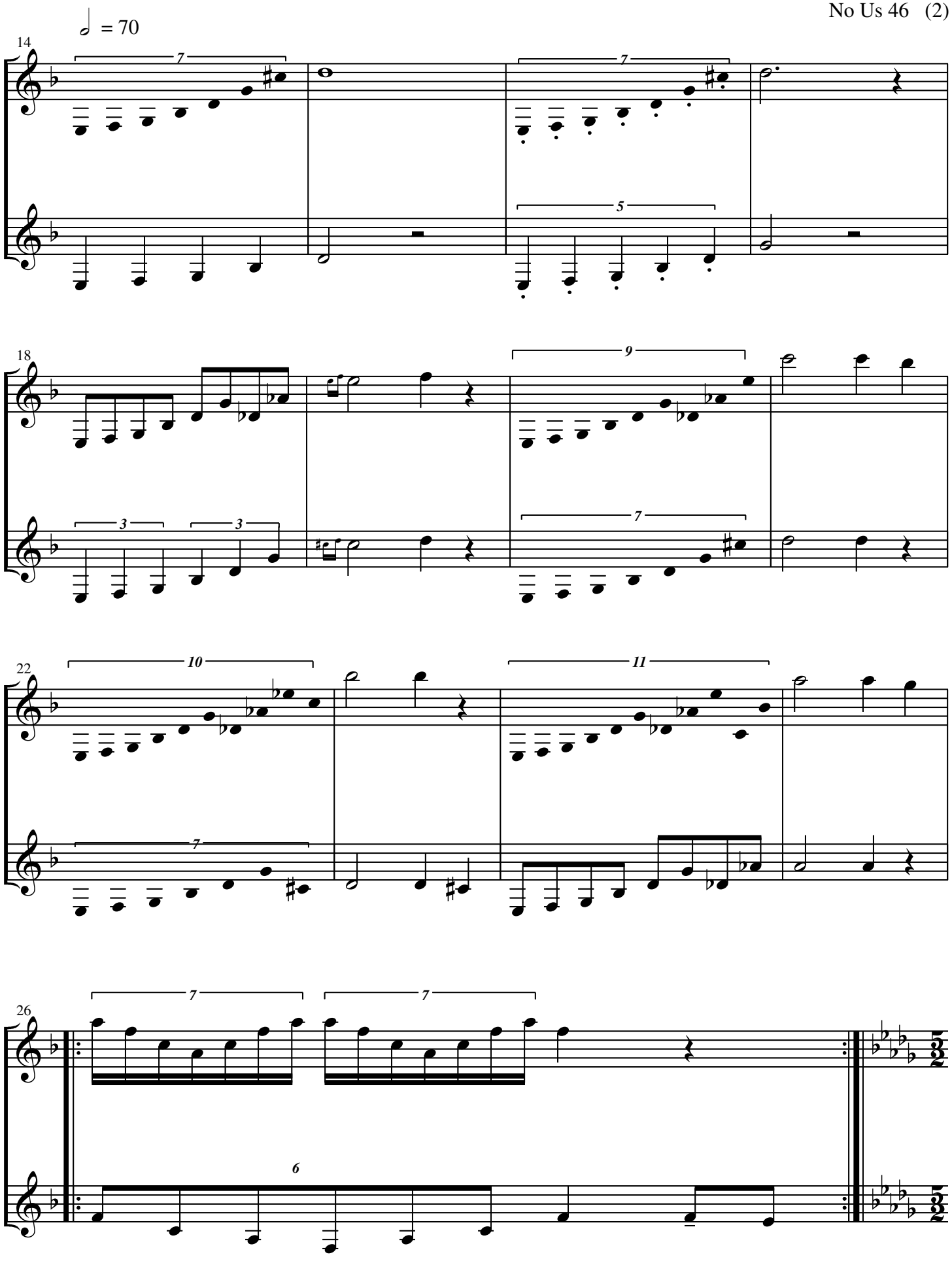
No Us 46, acrylic on paper, 20 x 16", 2022

Ryan Charles Ramer

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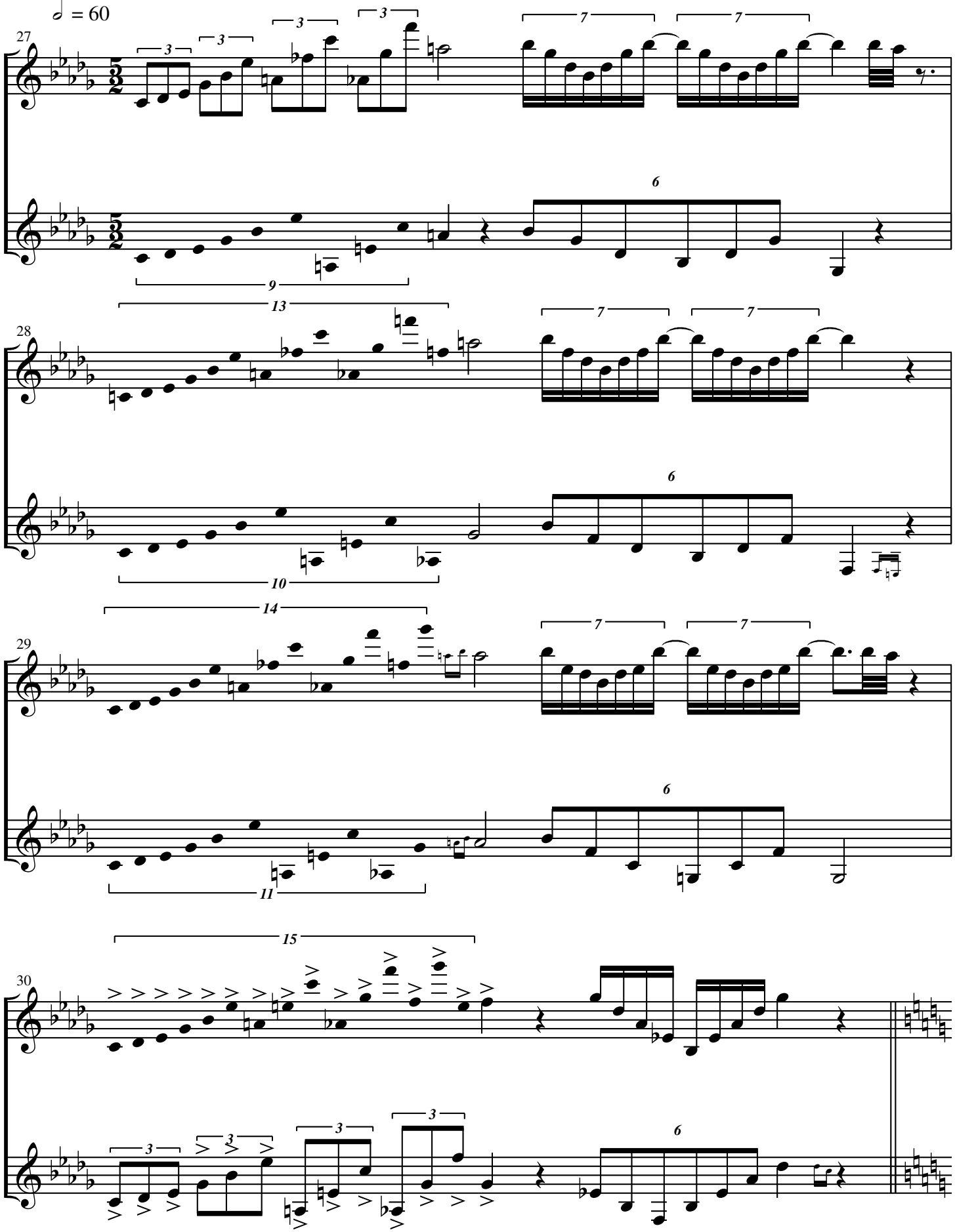
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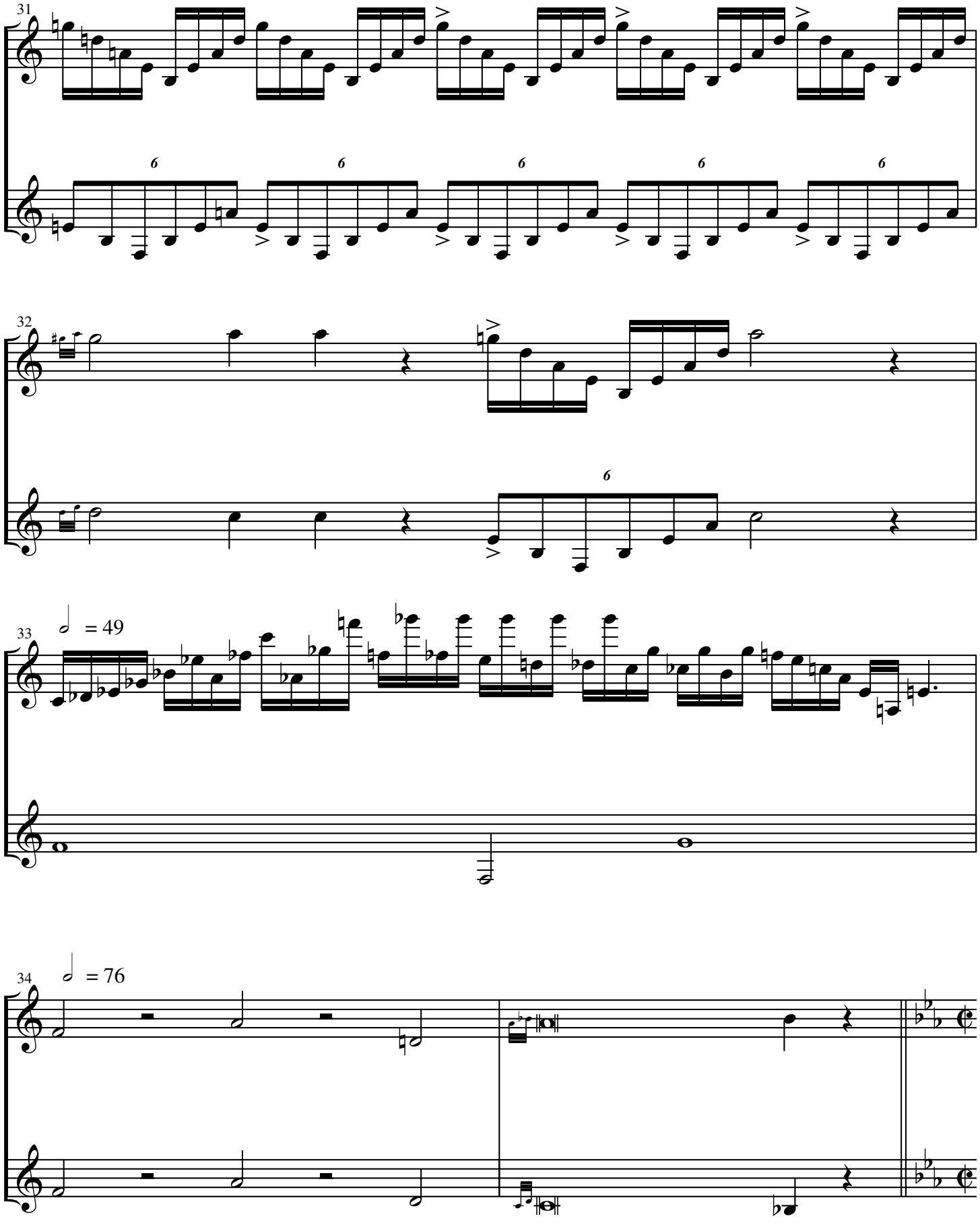
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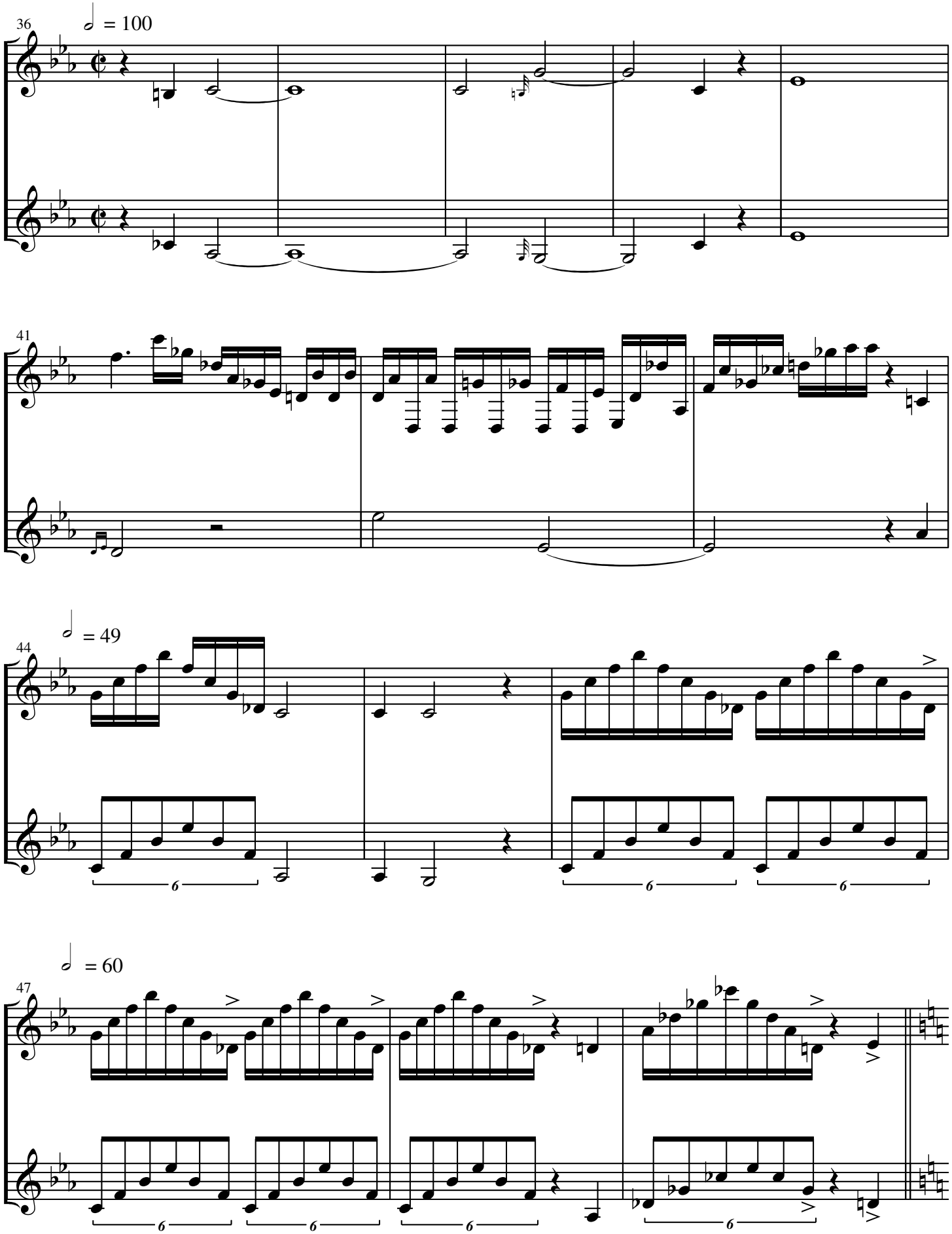
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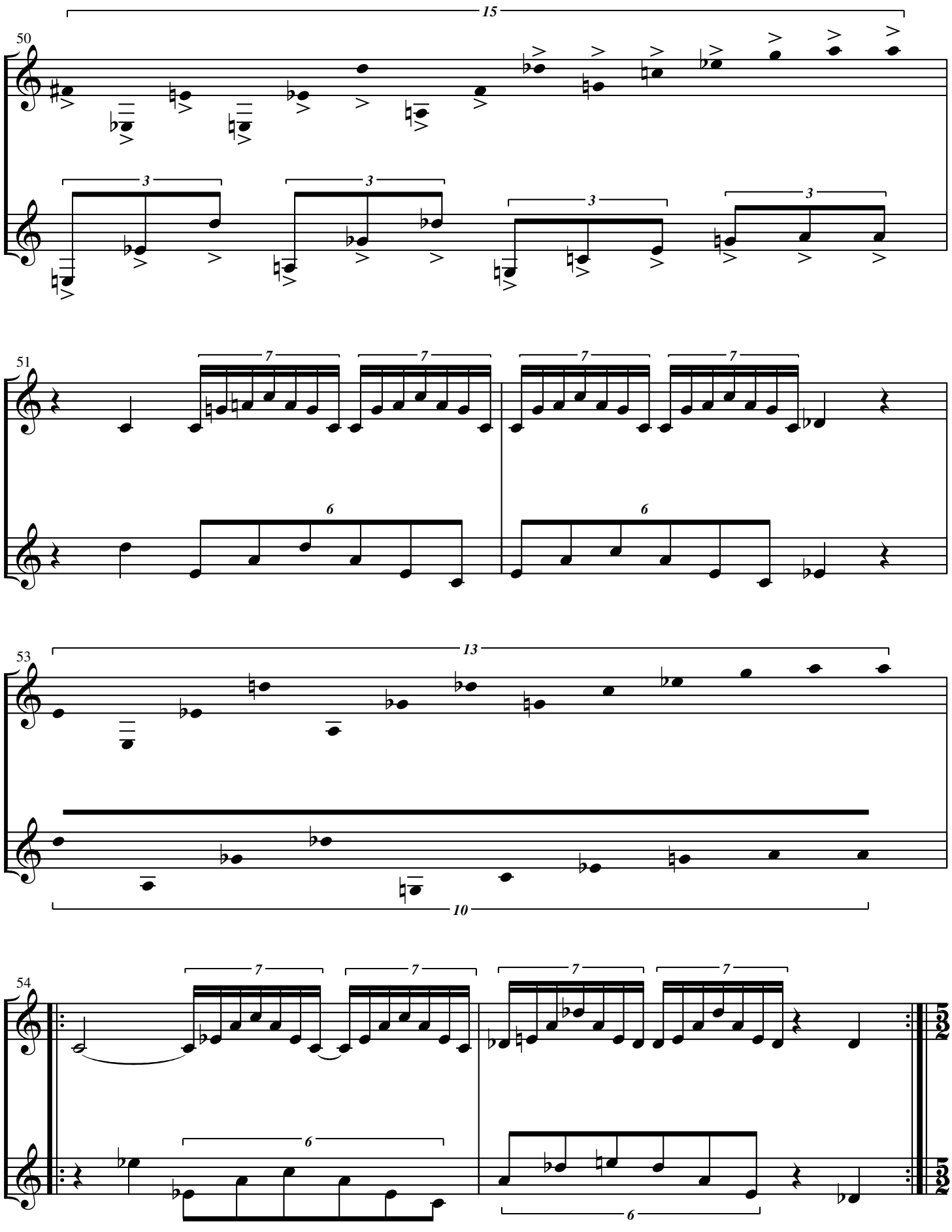
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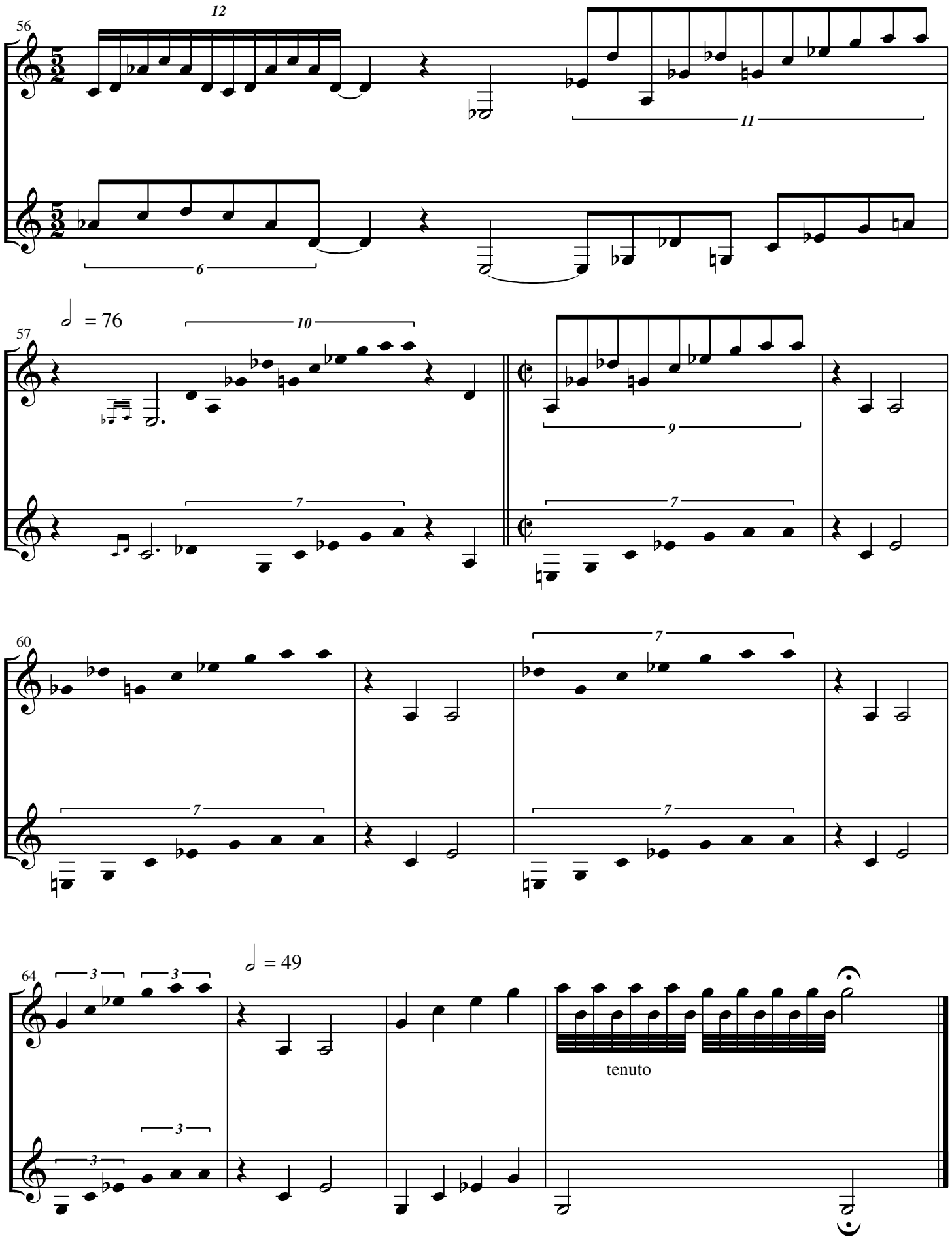
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No Us 45, acrylic on paper, 20 x 16", 2022

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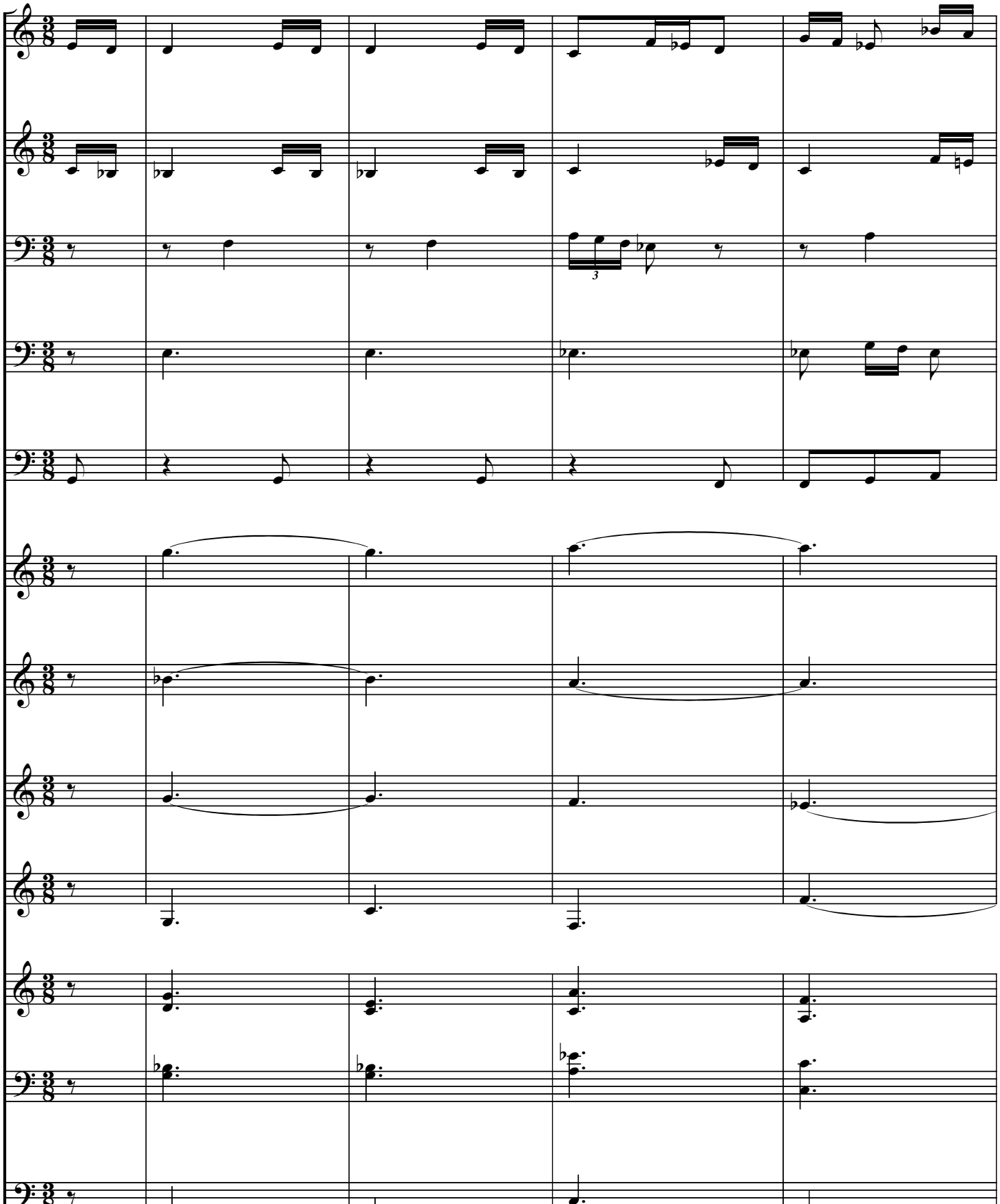
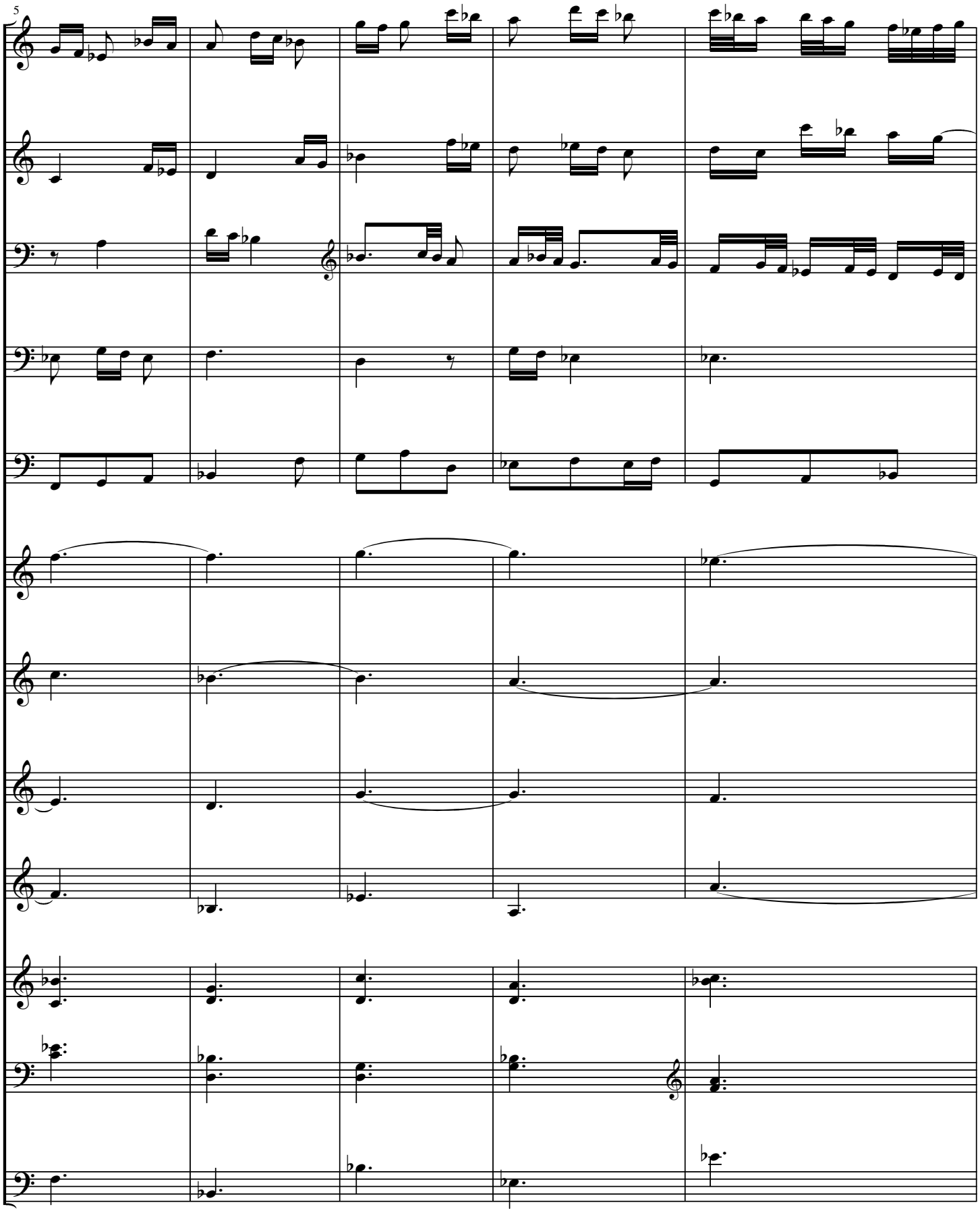
Ryan Charles Ramer

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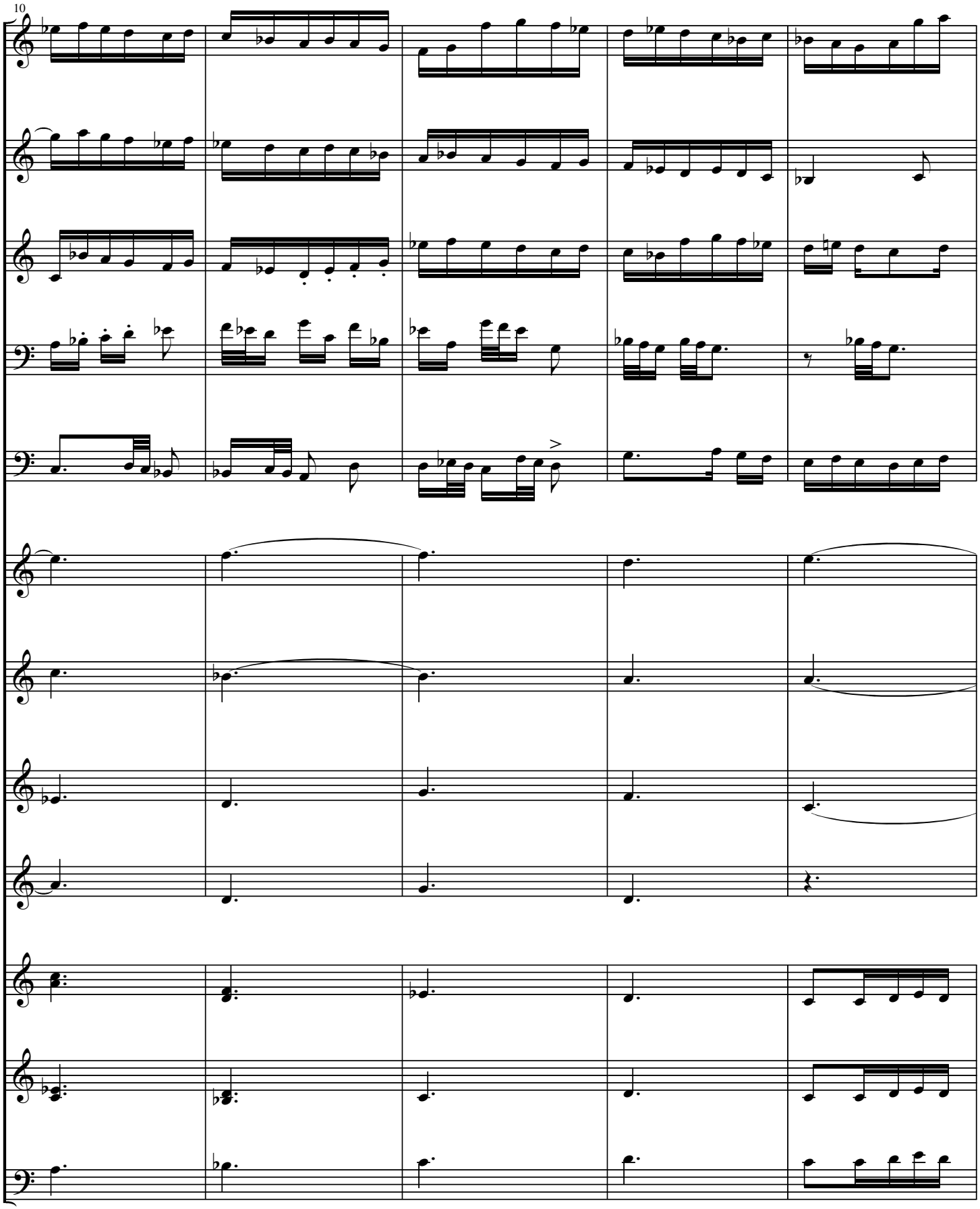
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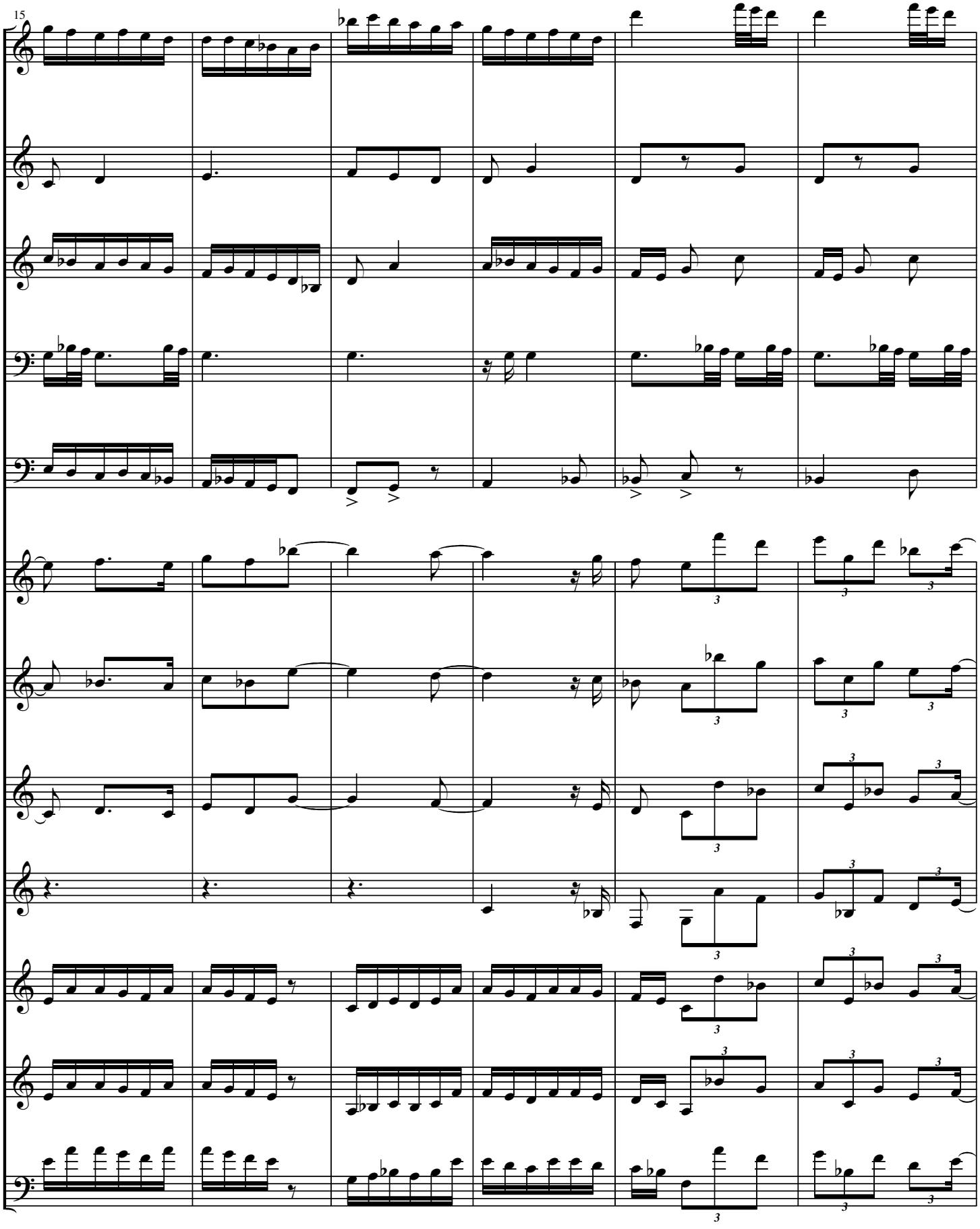
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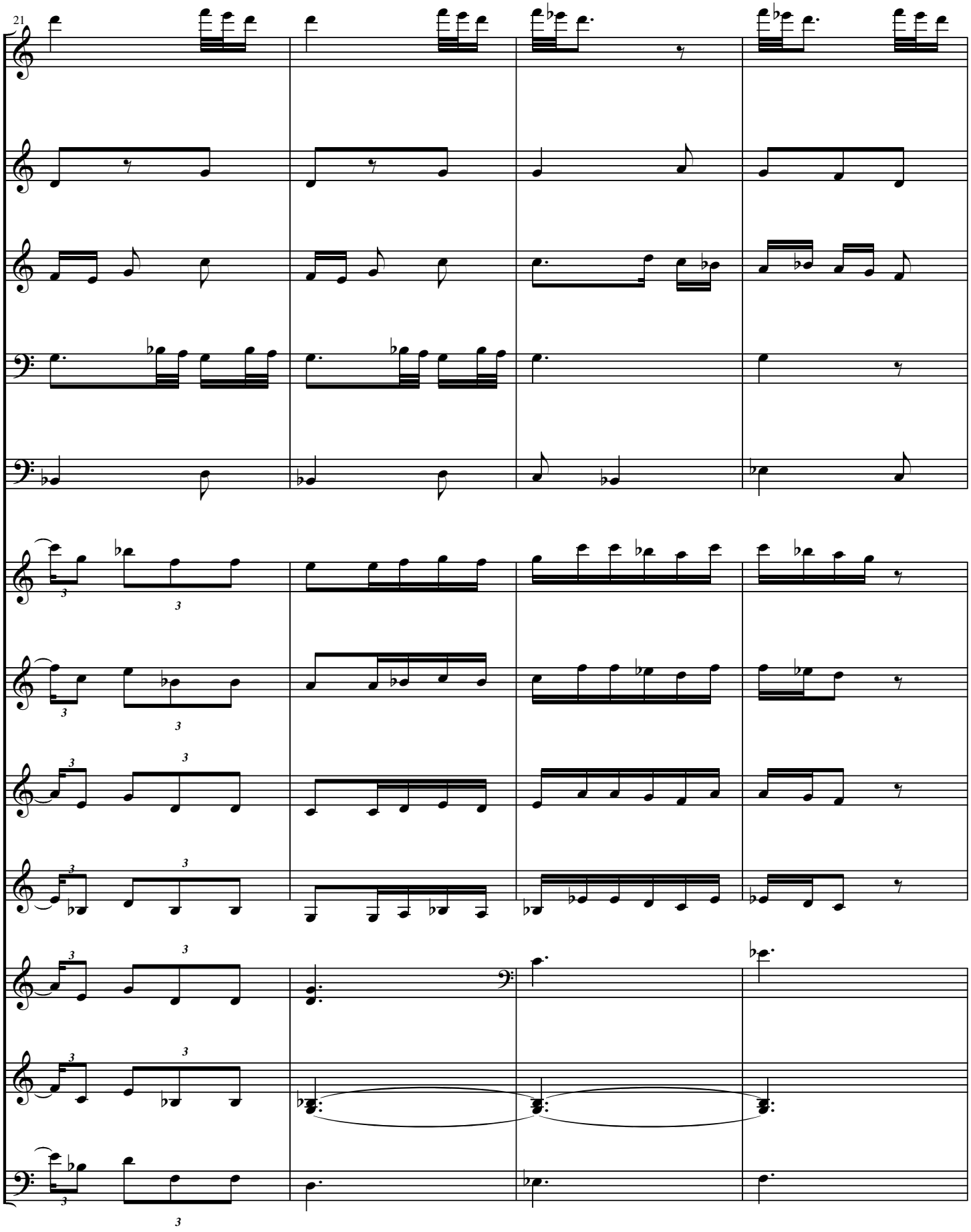
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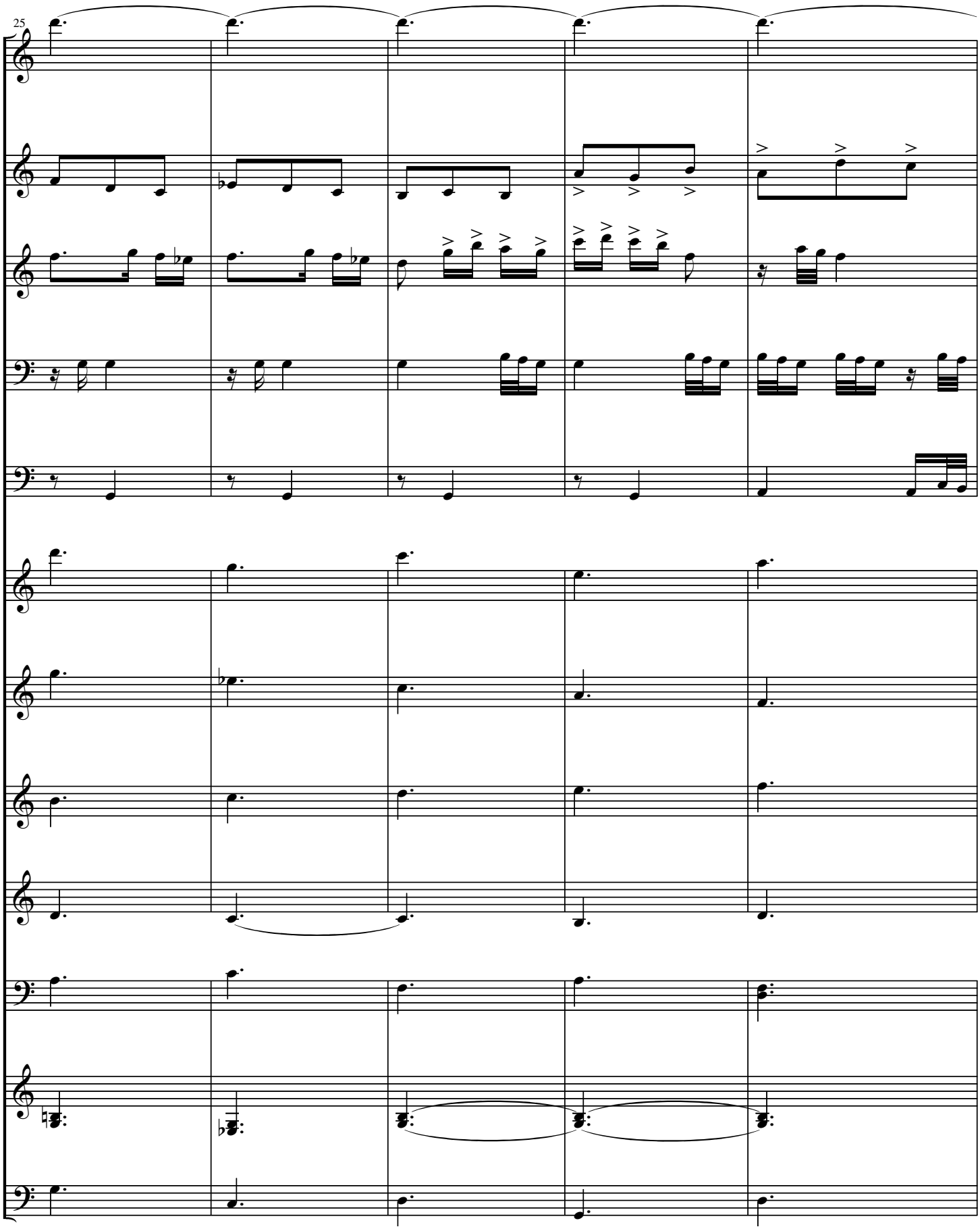
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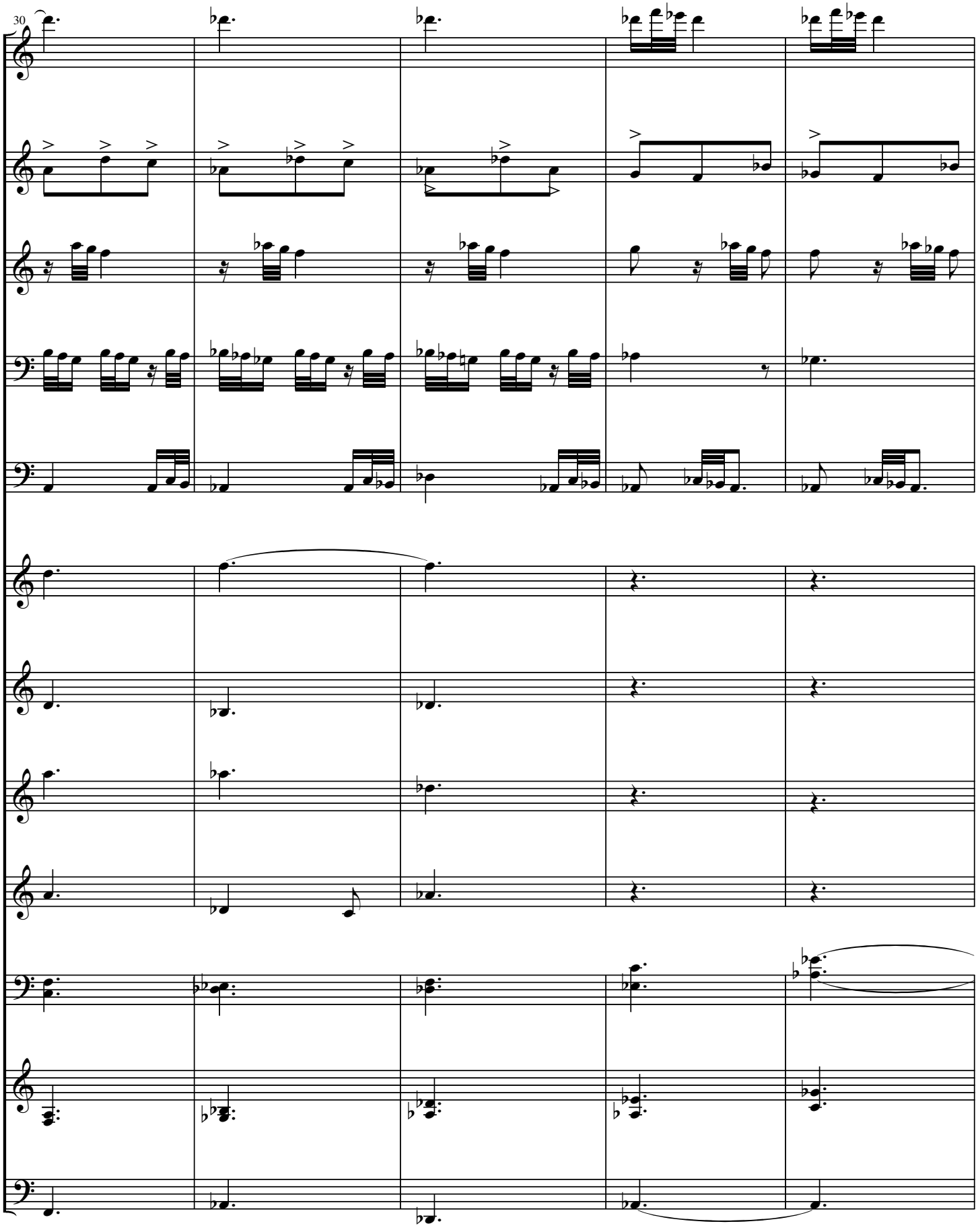
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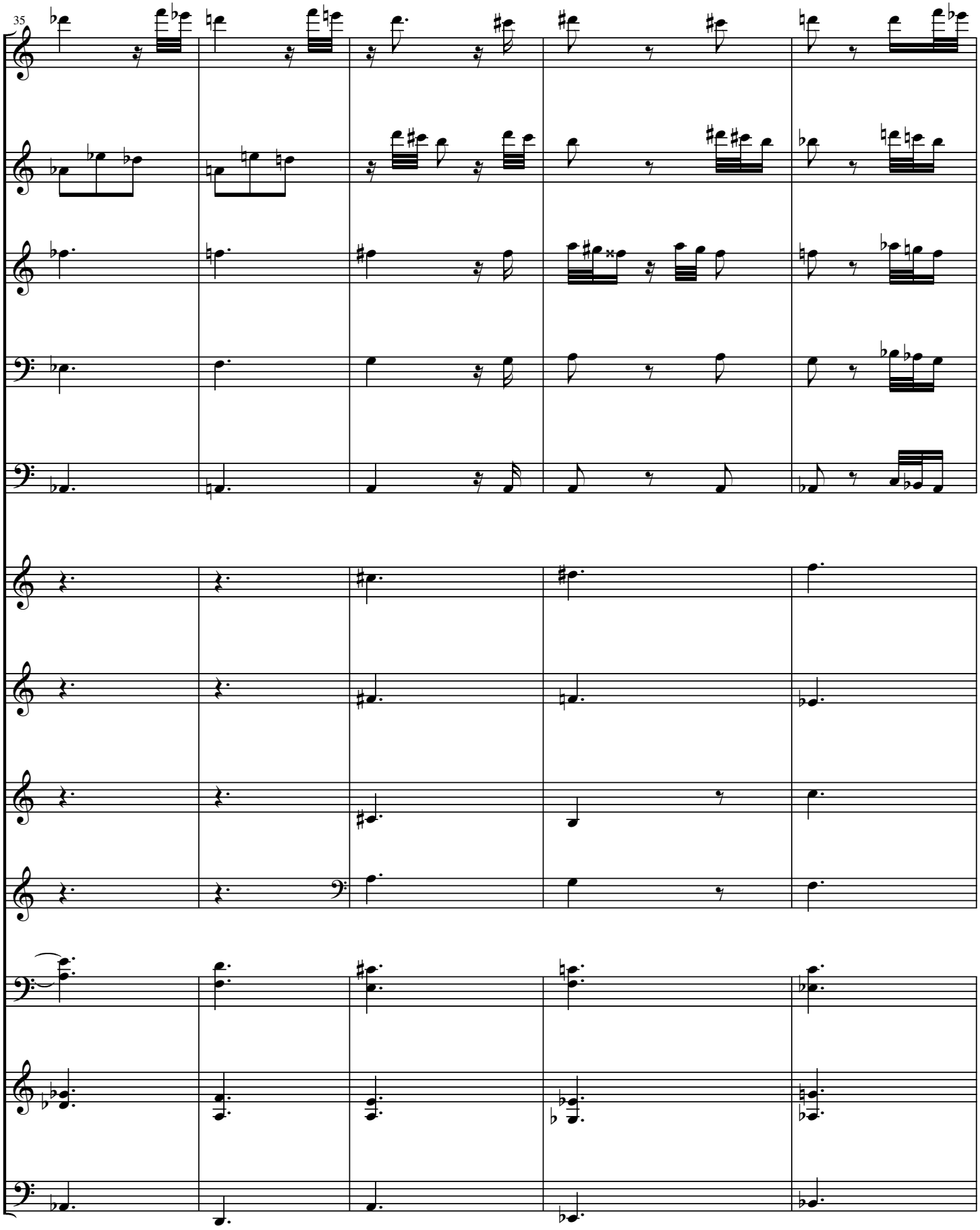
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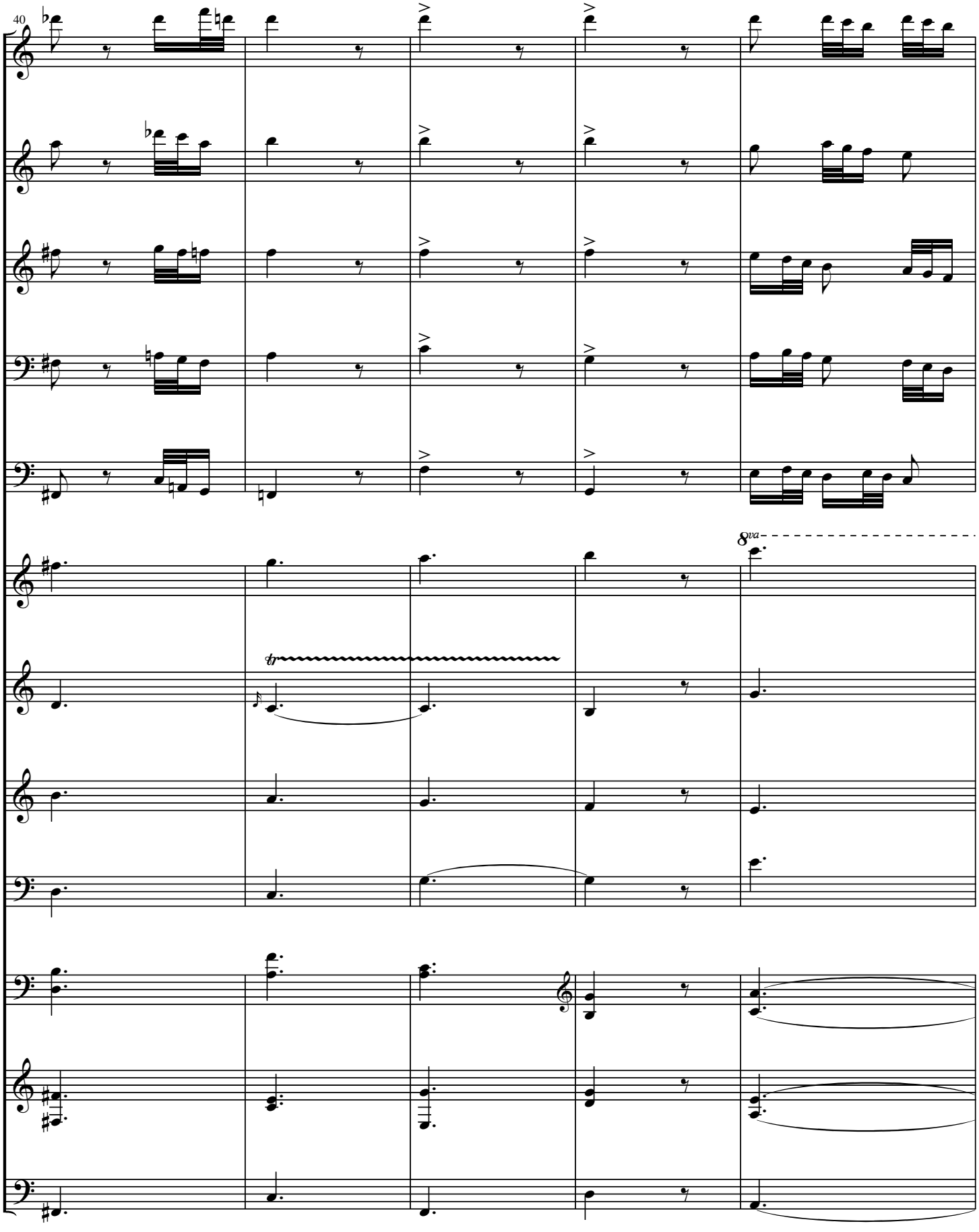
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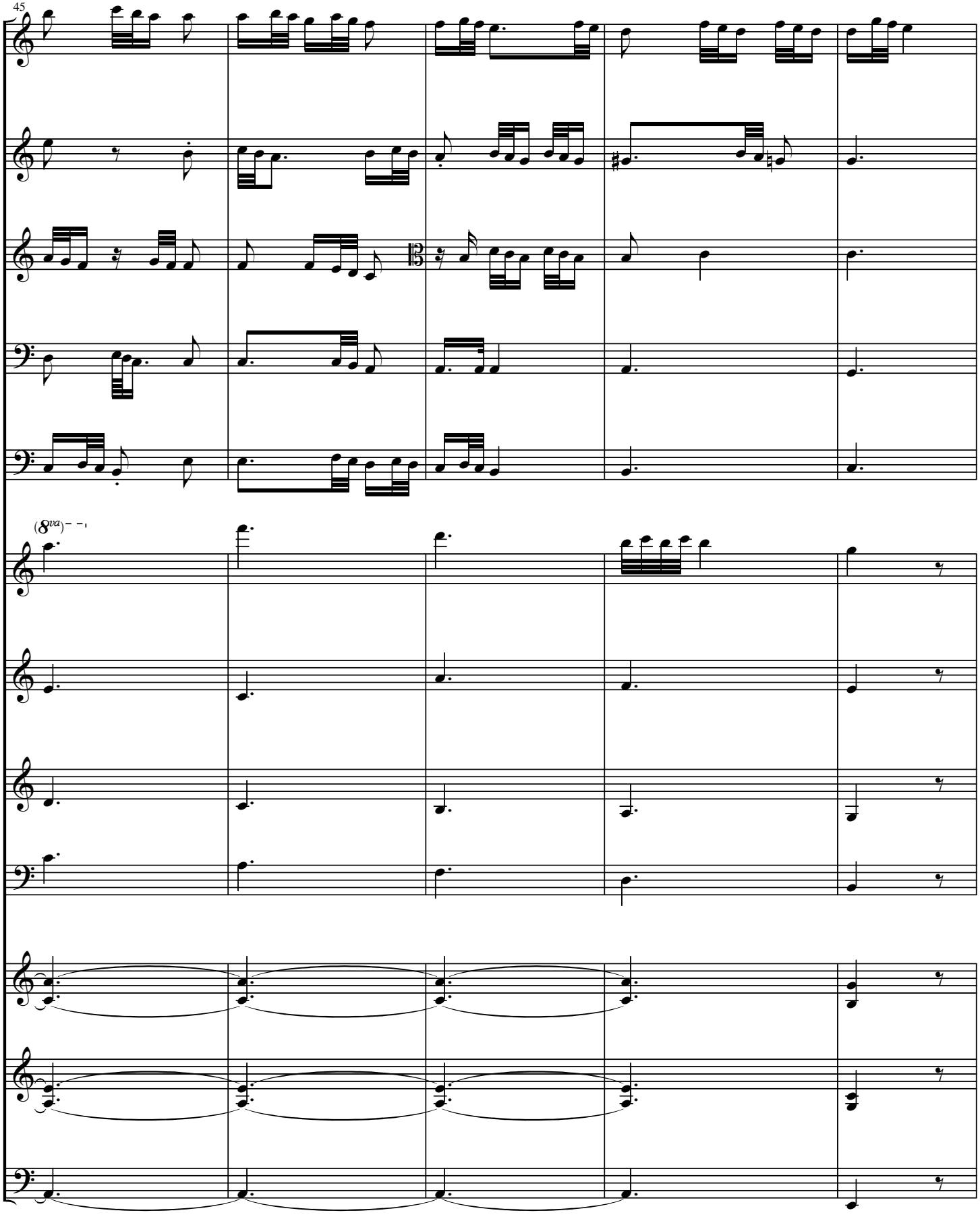
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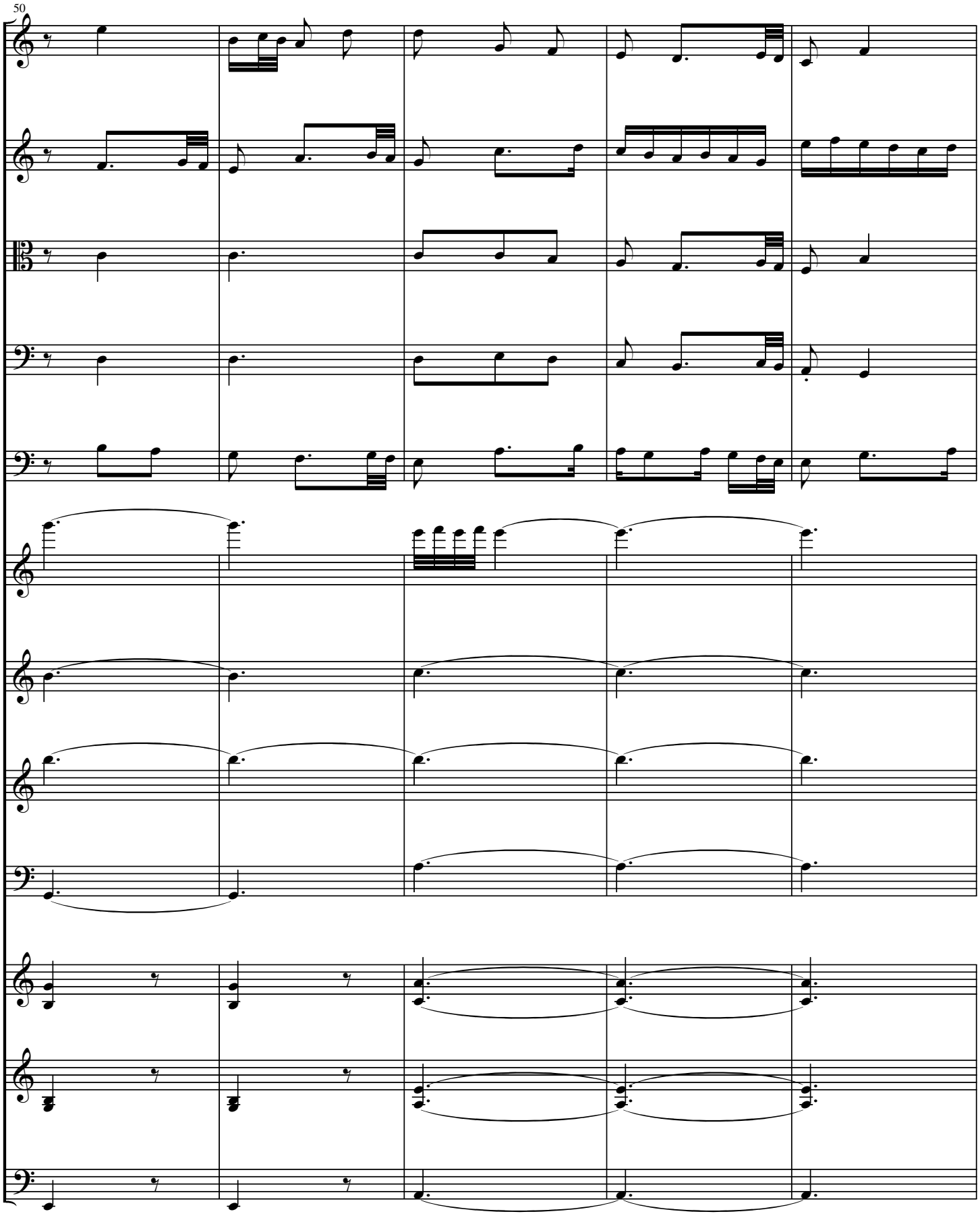
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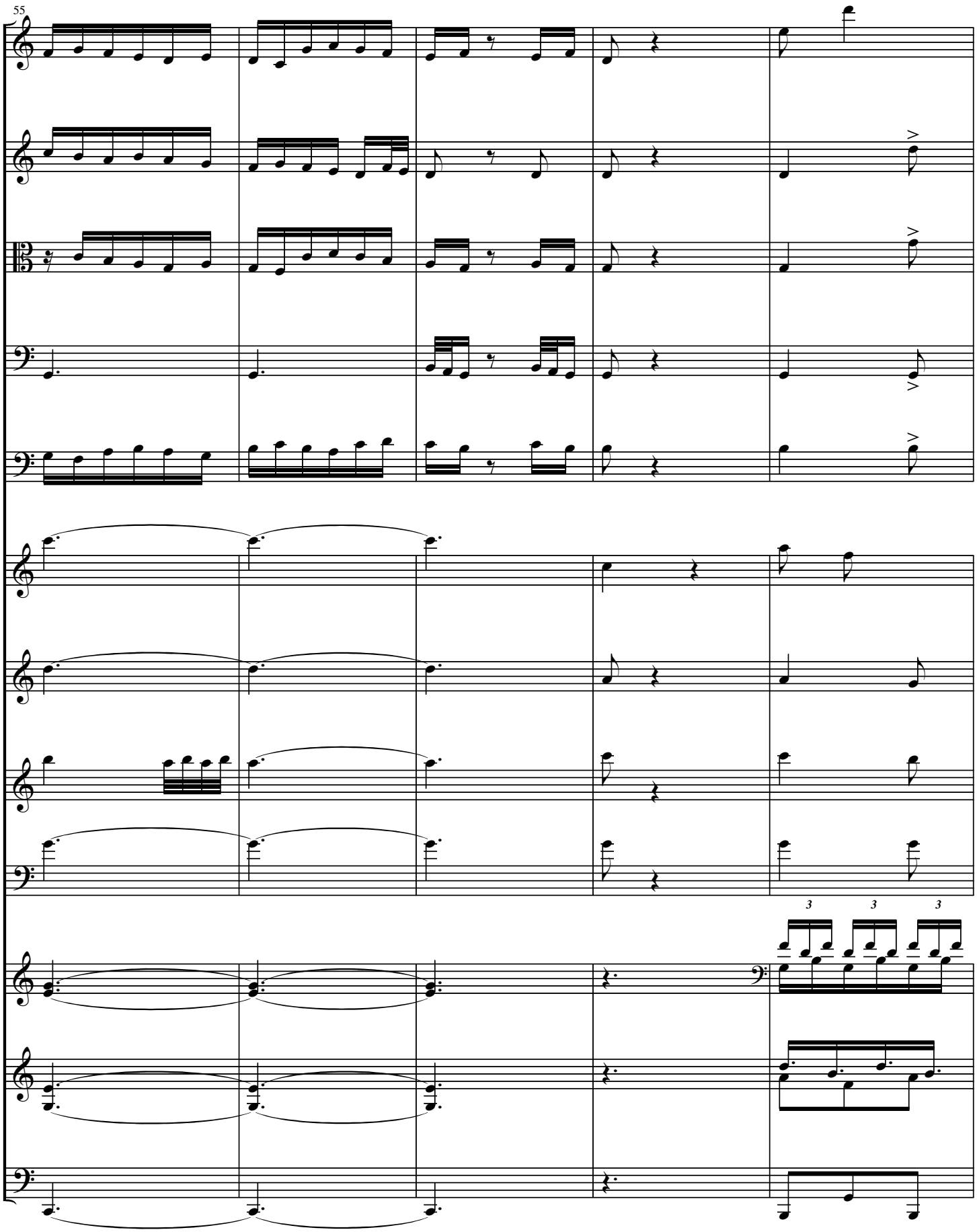
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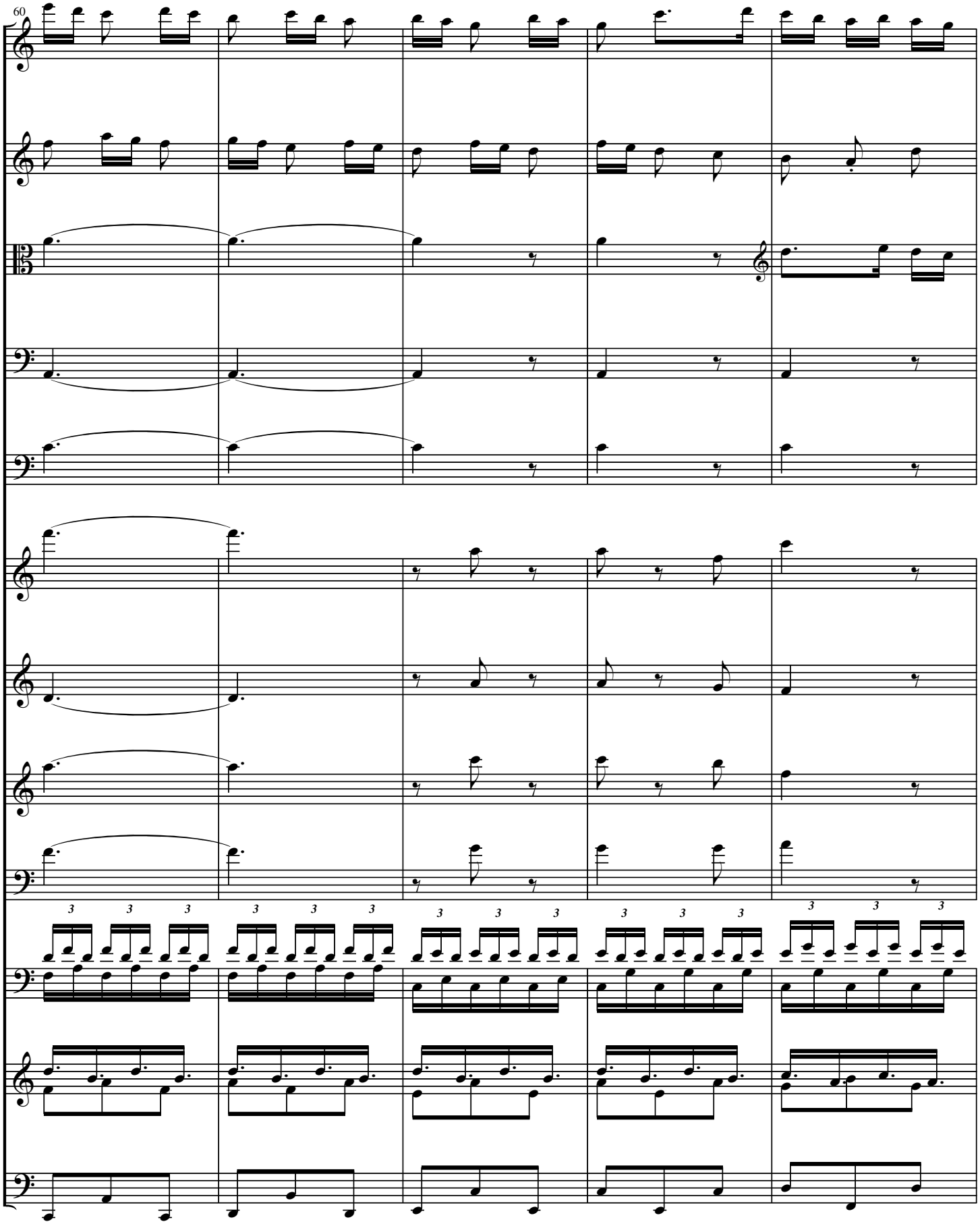
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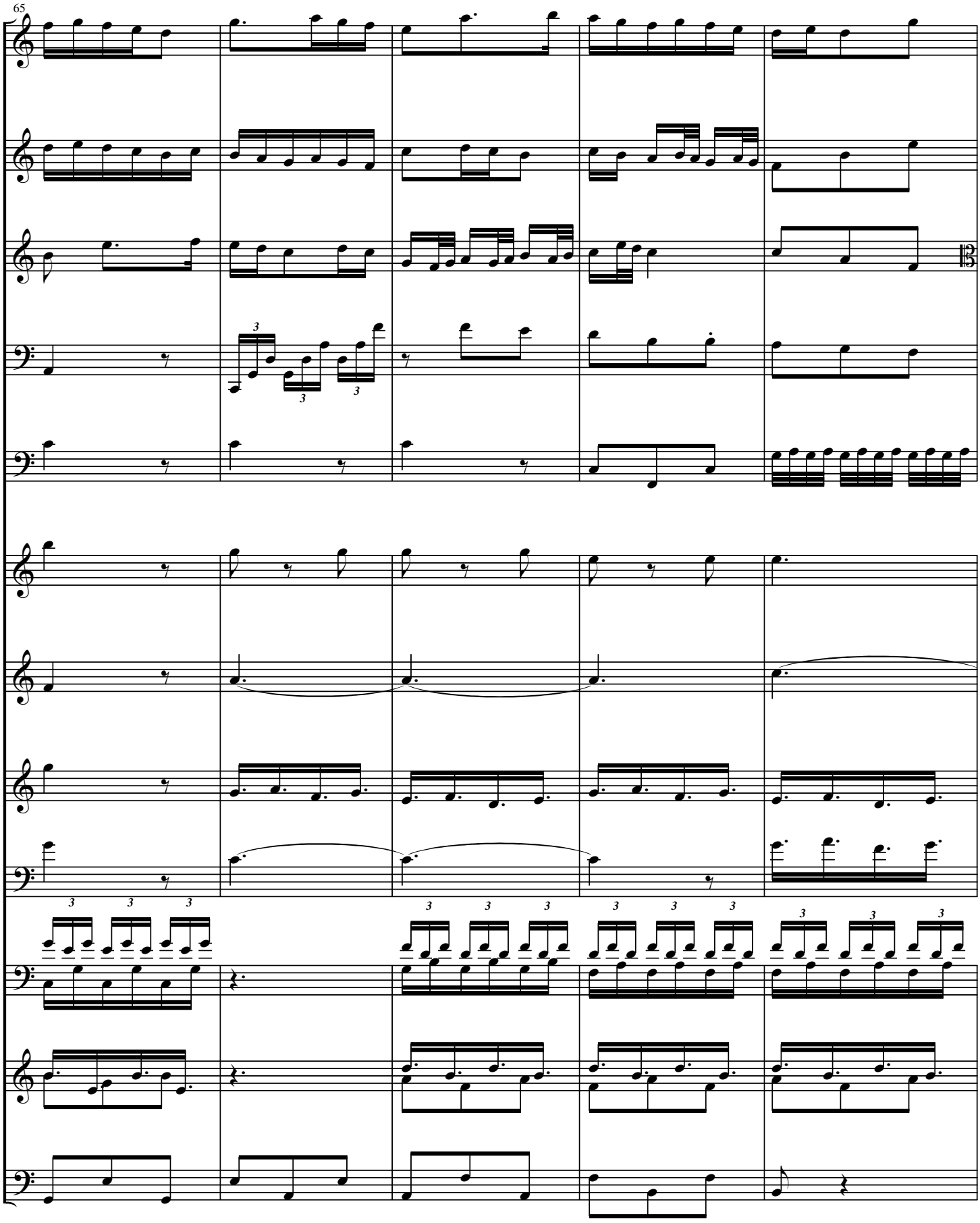
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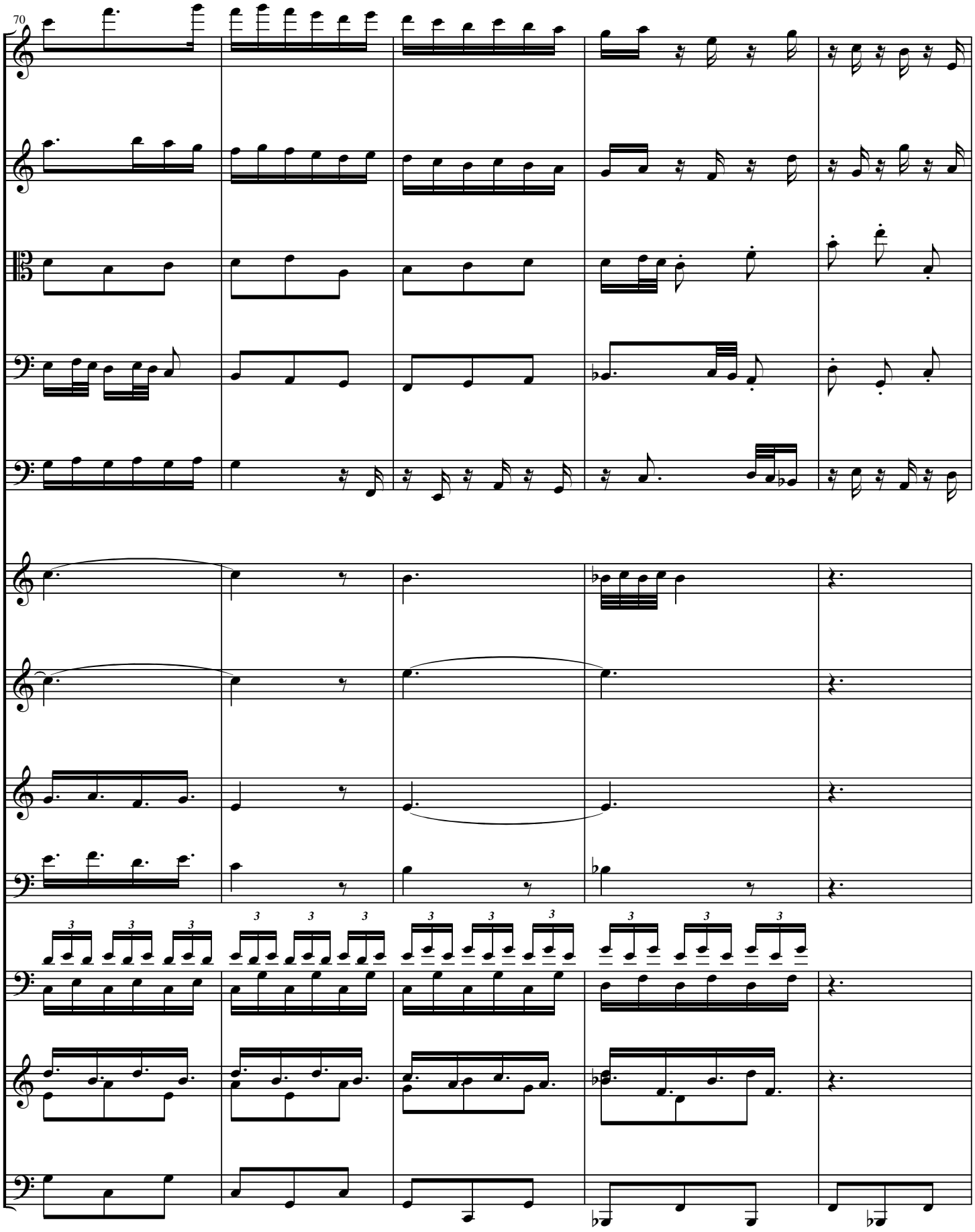
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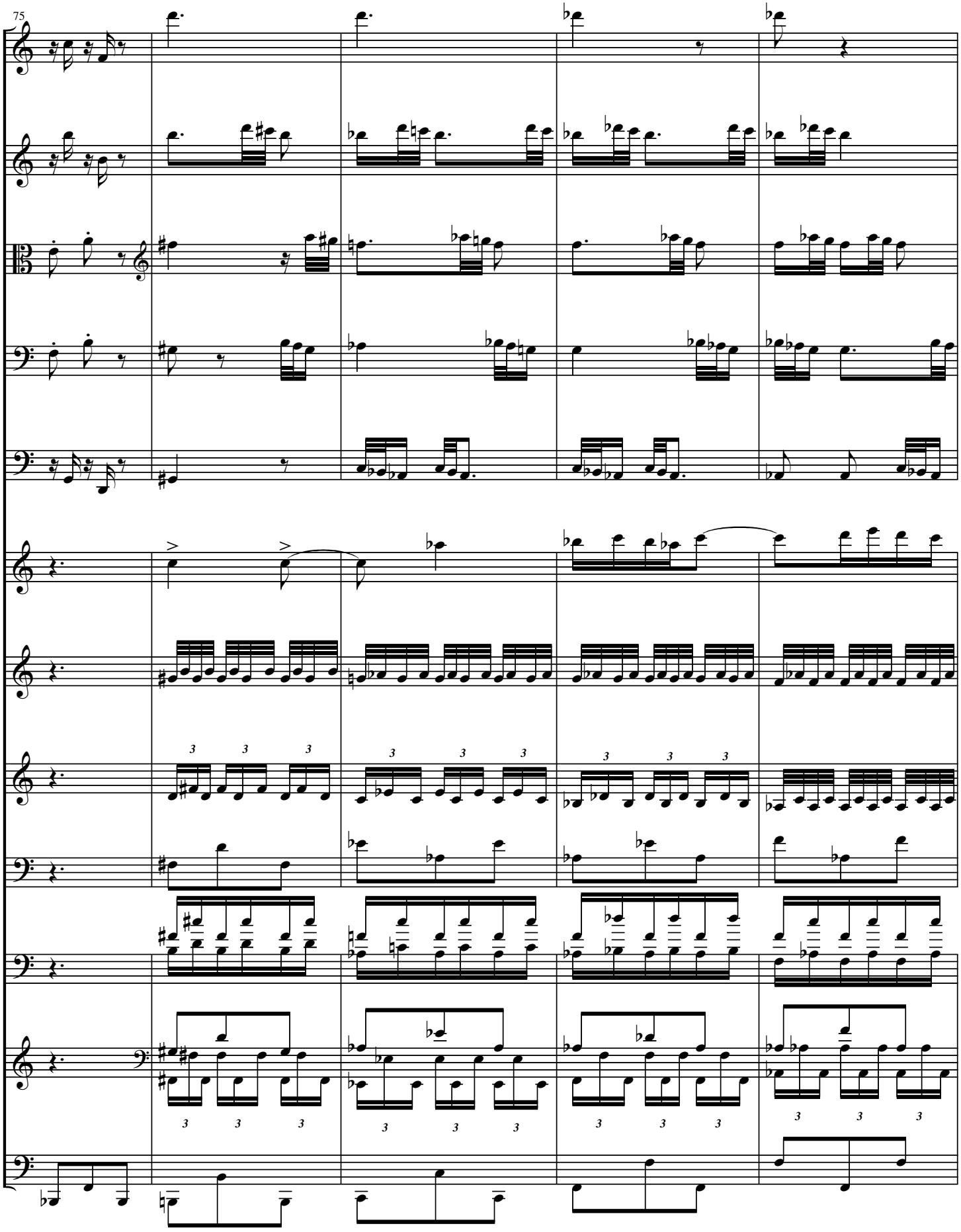
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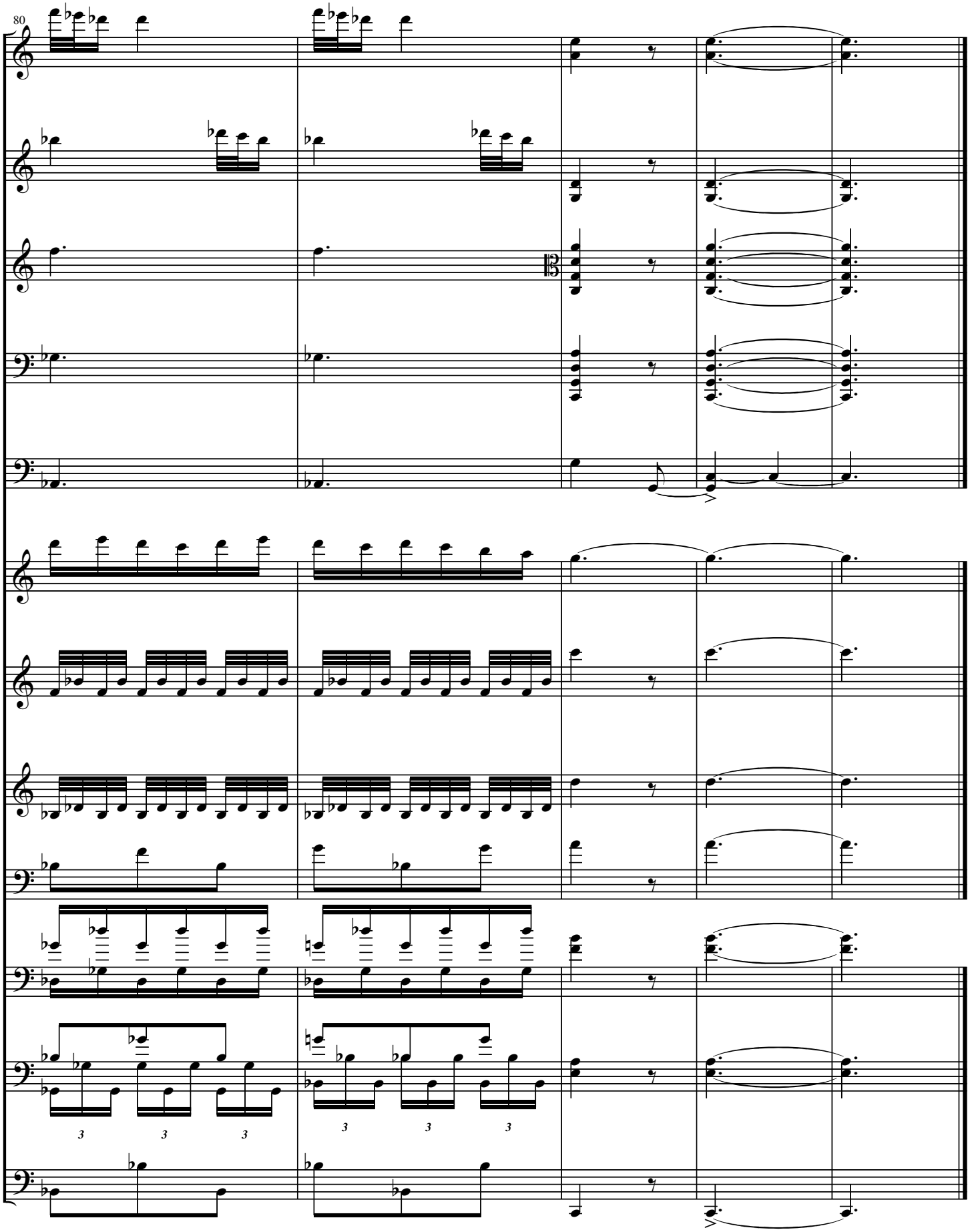
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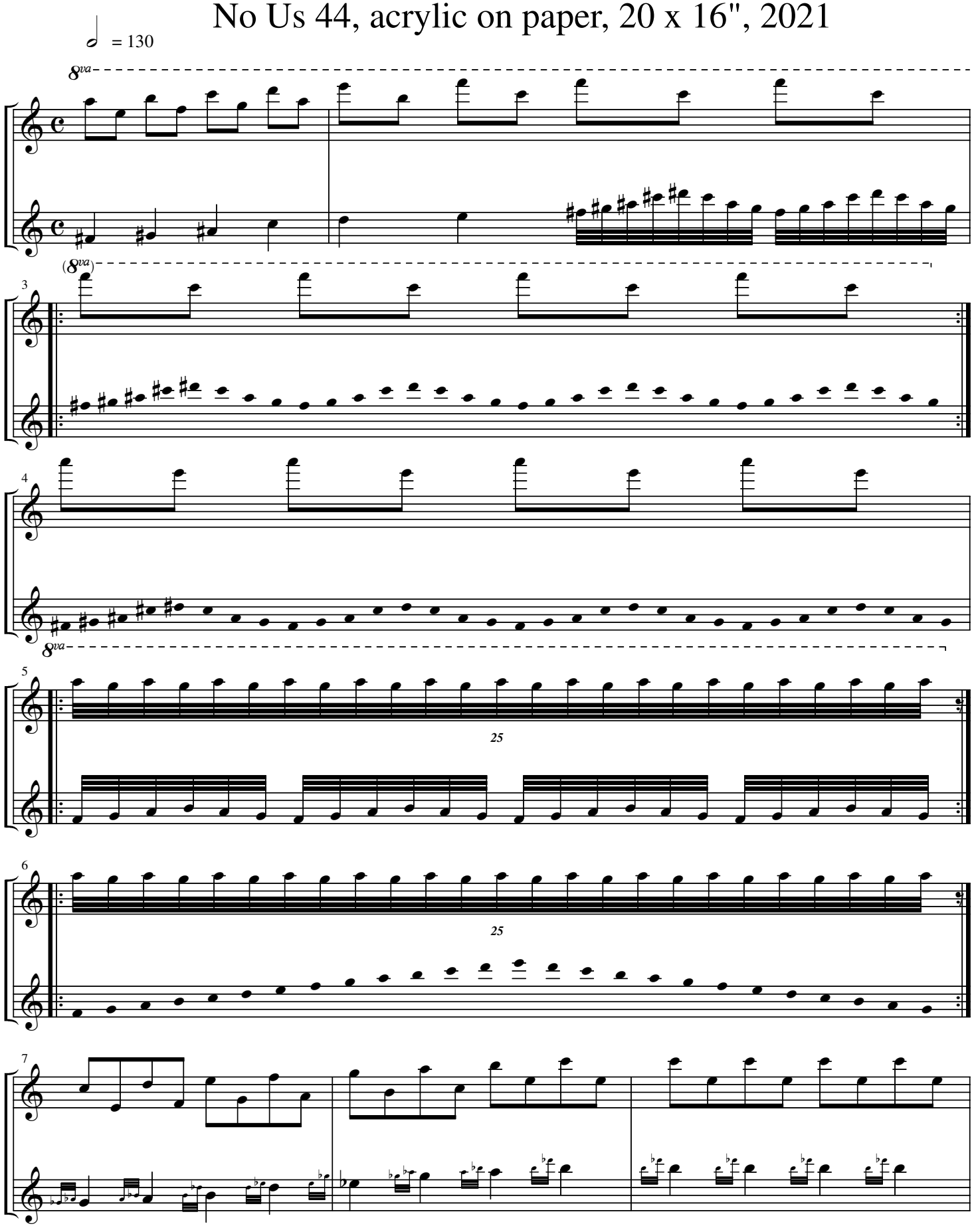

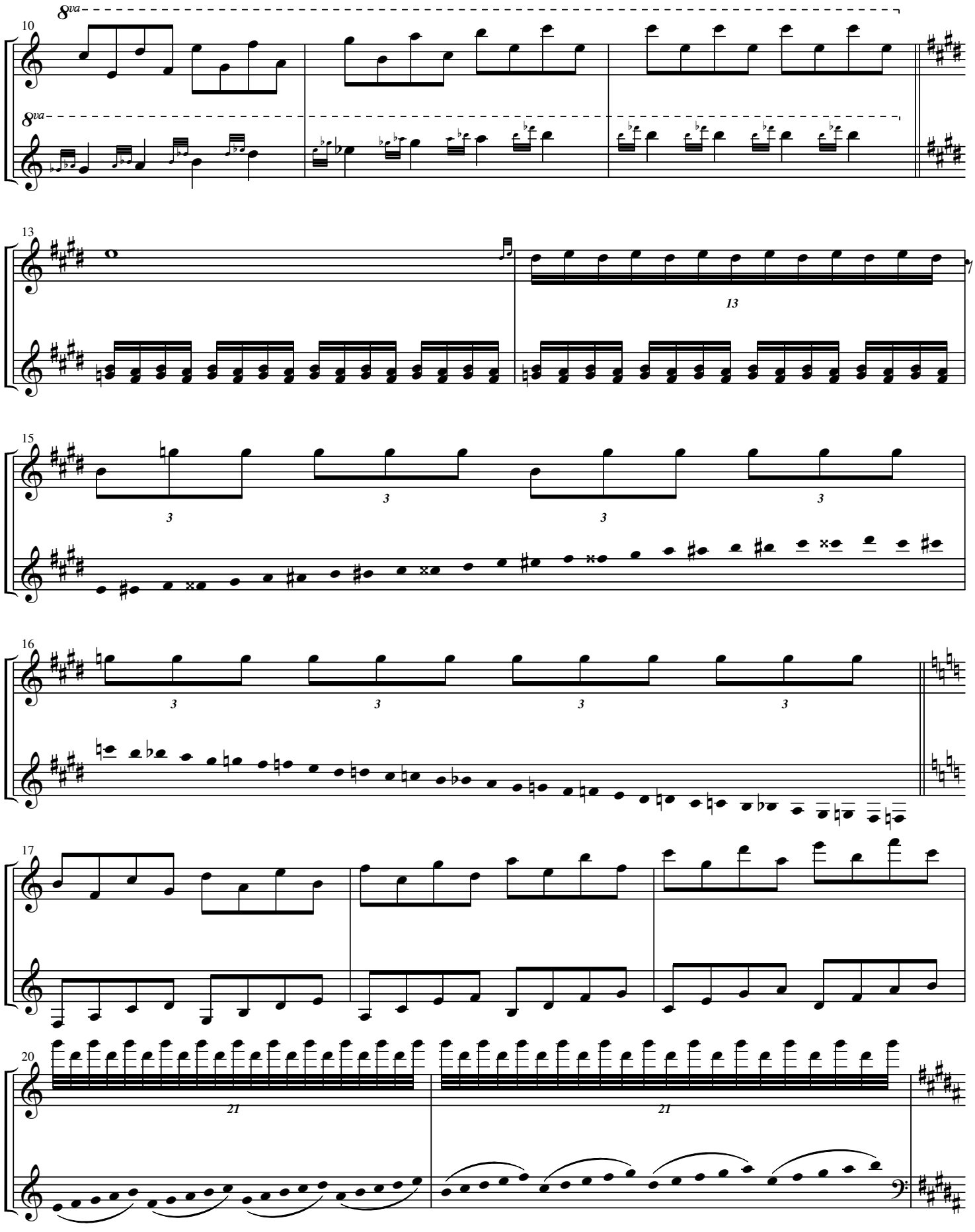
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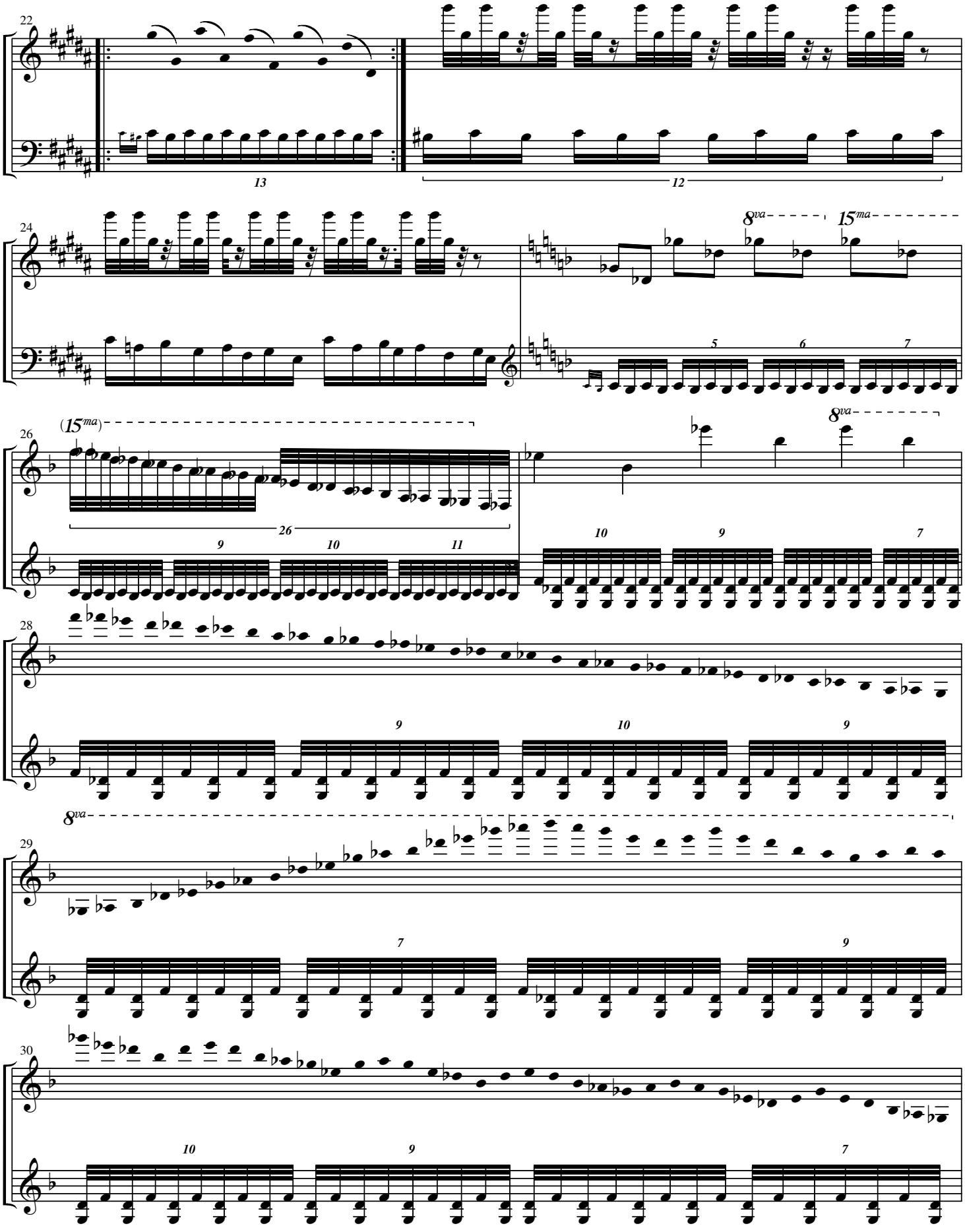
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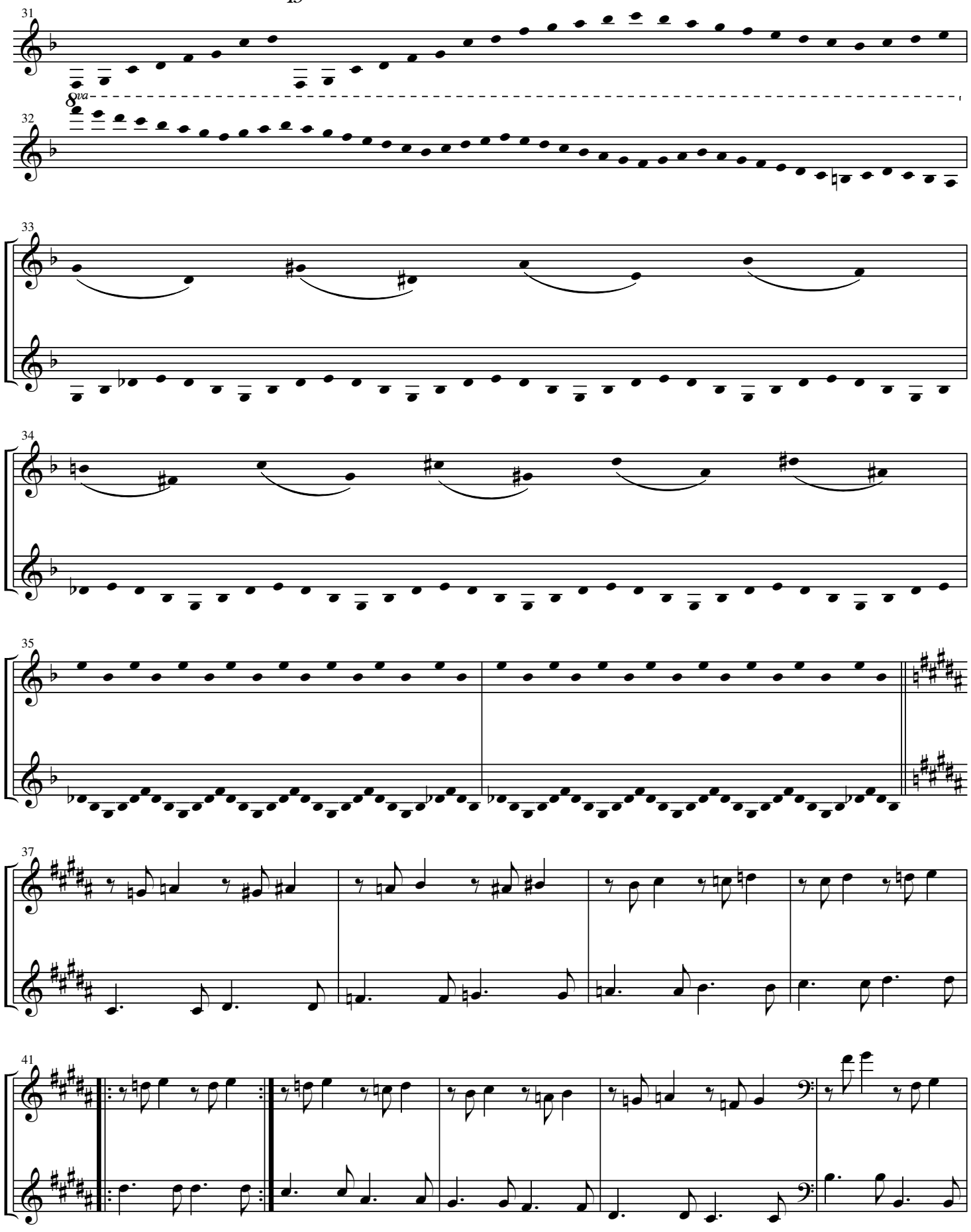
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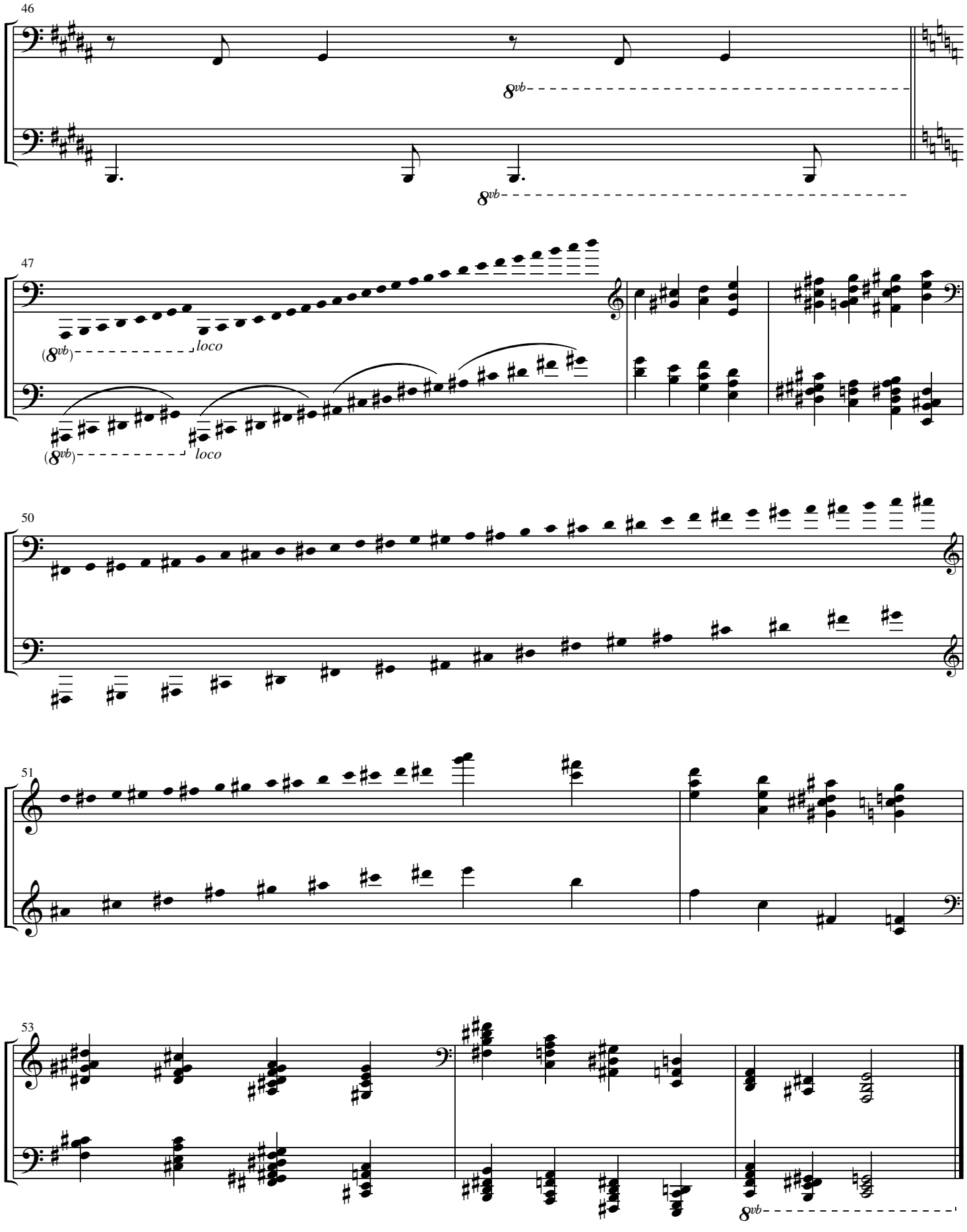
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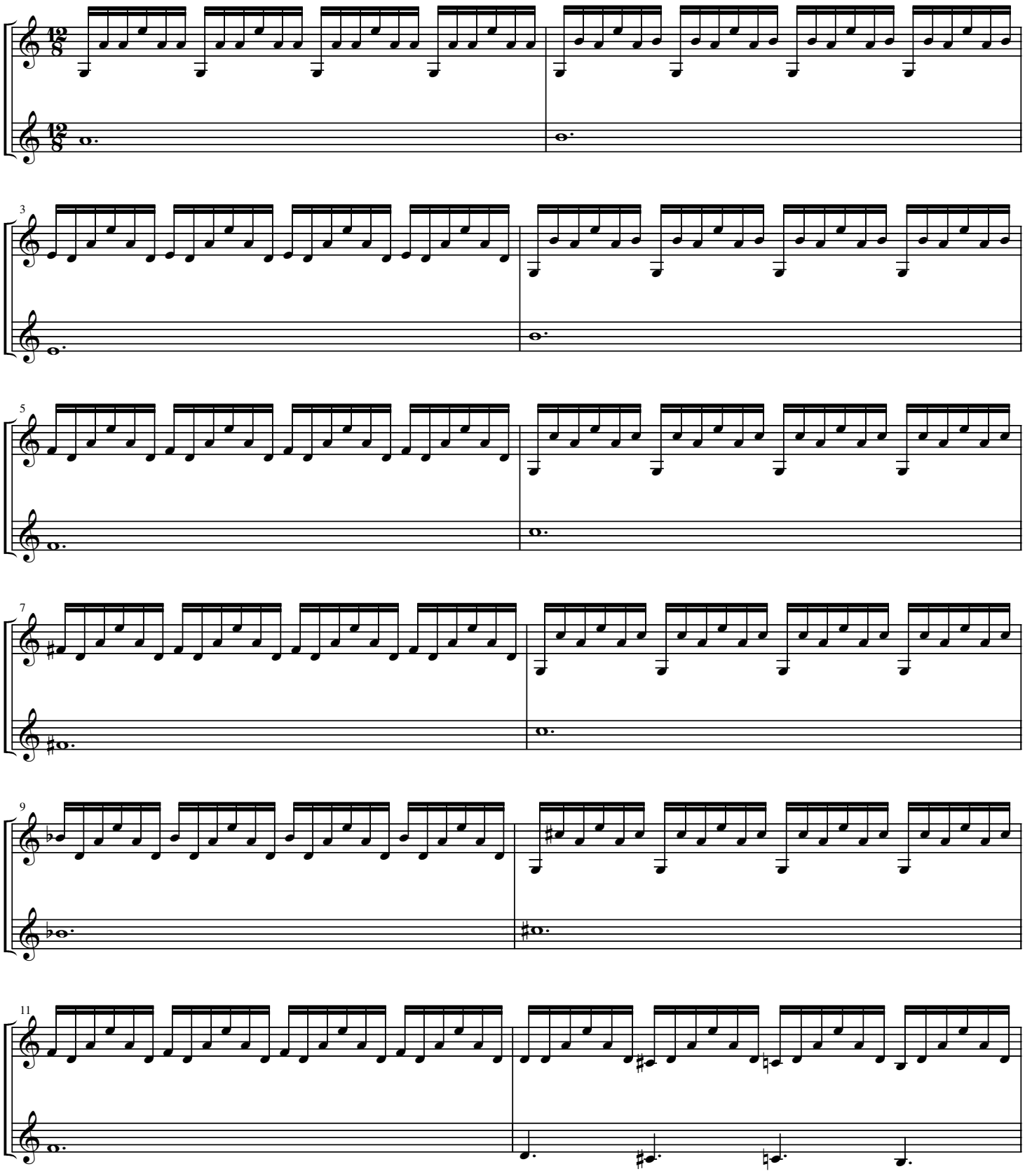
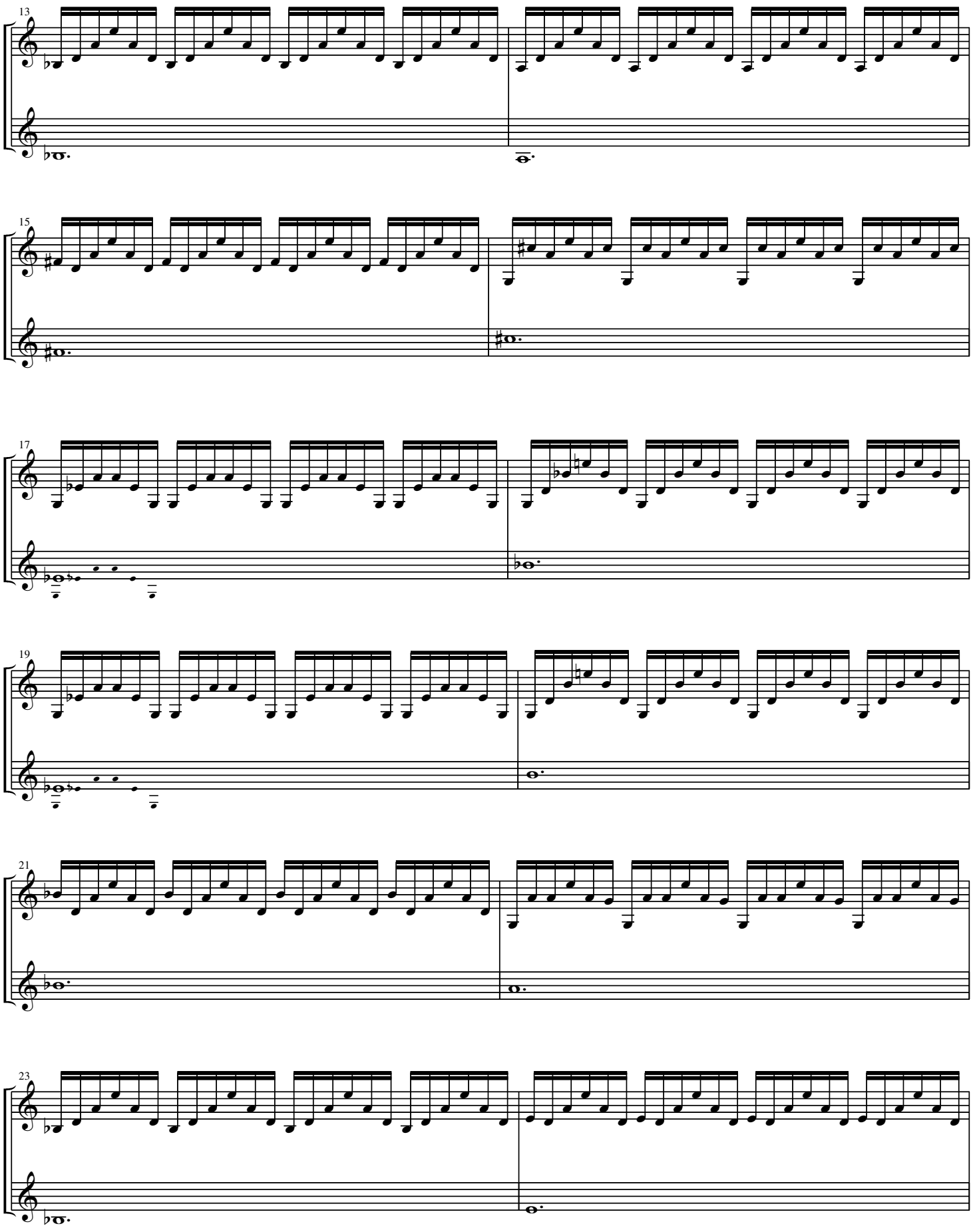
No Us 42 (alien language), acrylic on paper, 20 x 16", 2021

♩= 120

Ryan Charles Ramer

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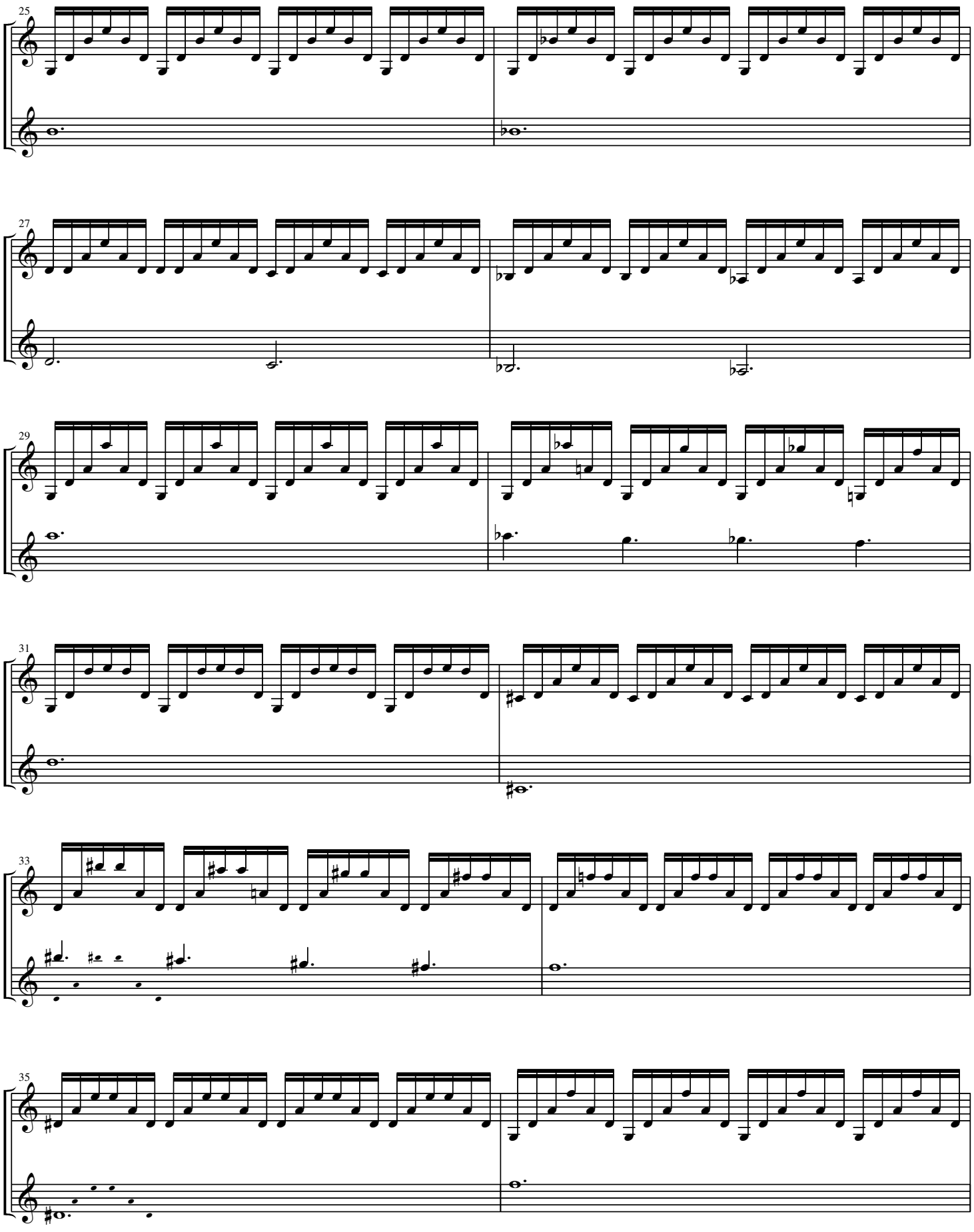
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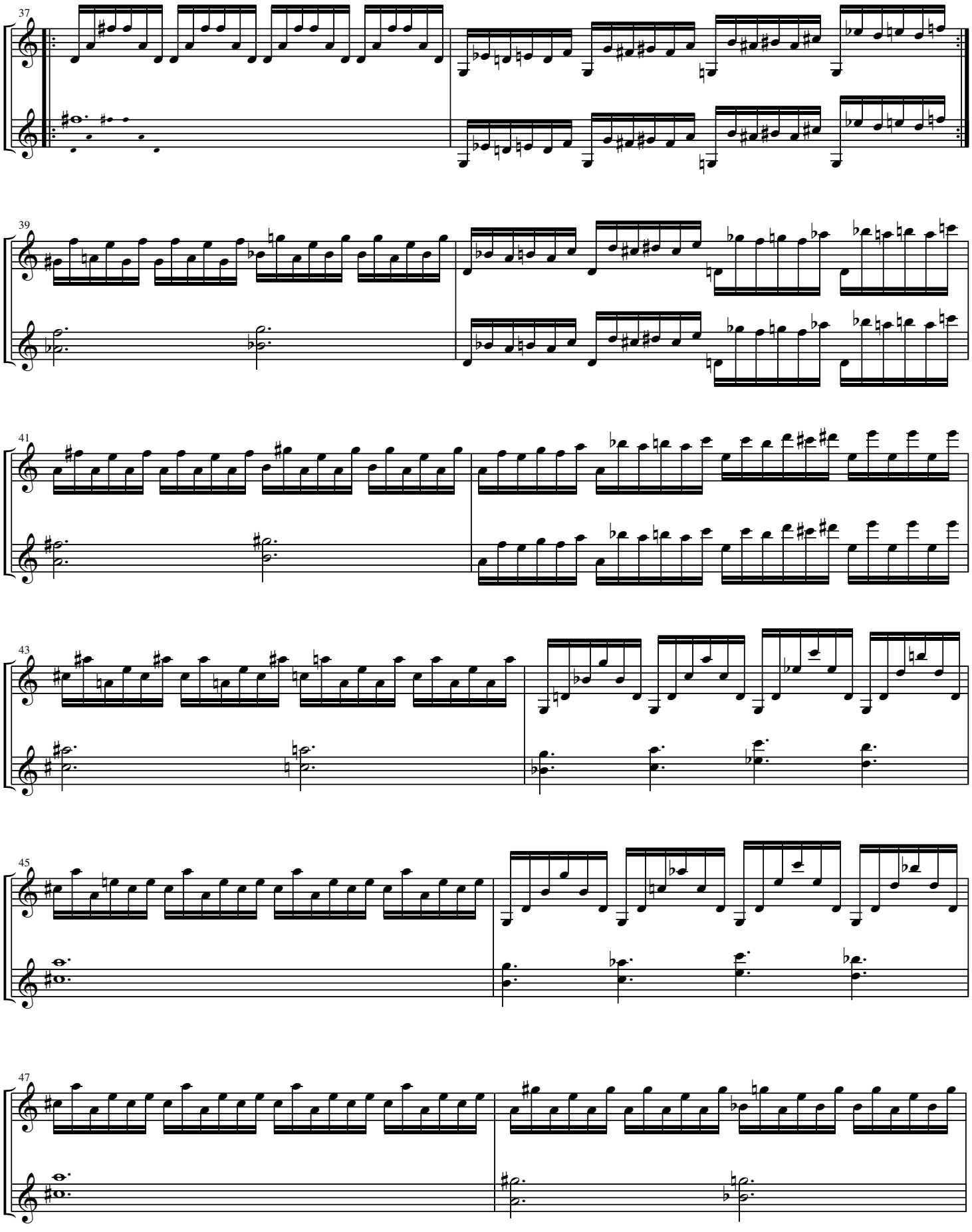
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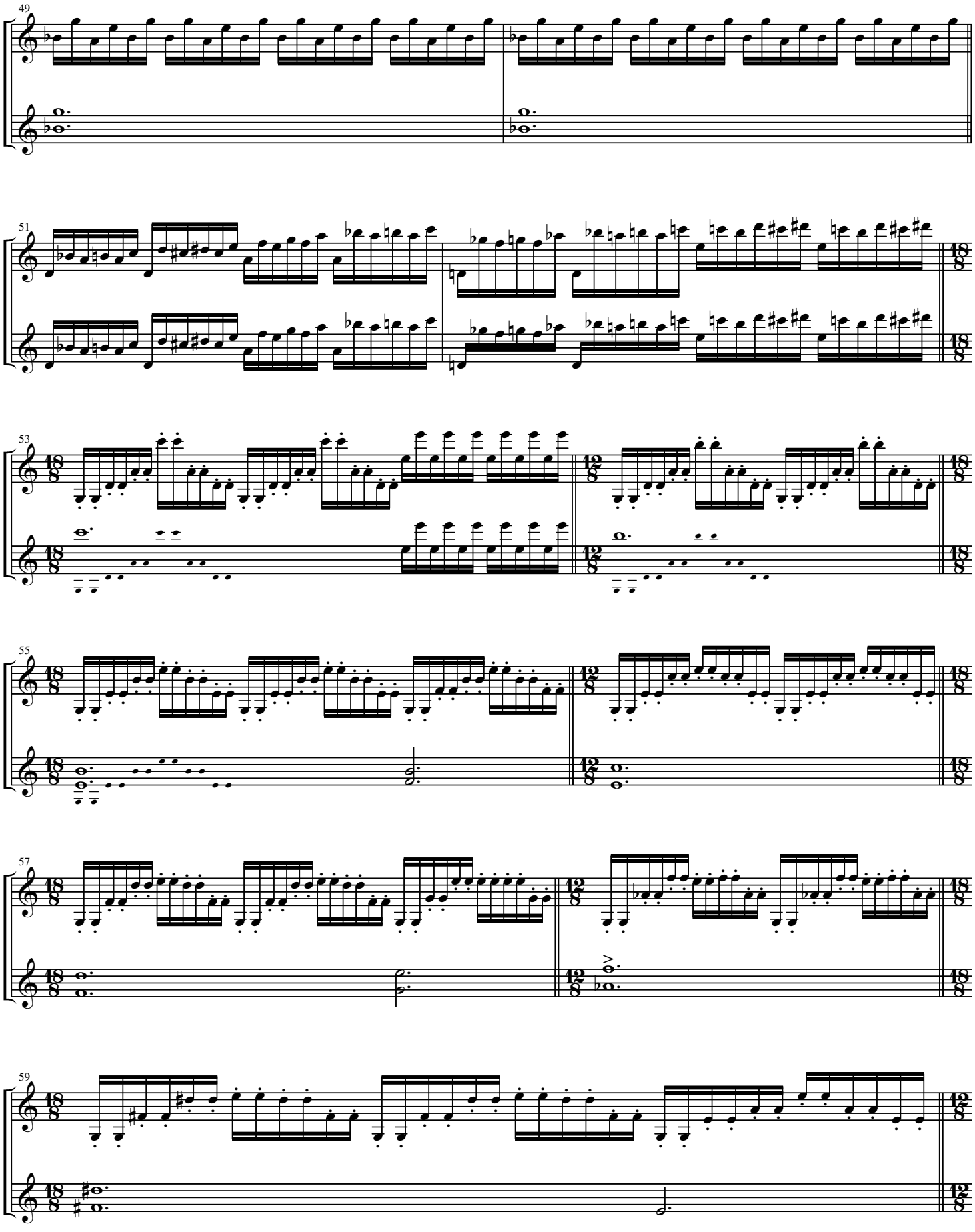
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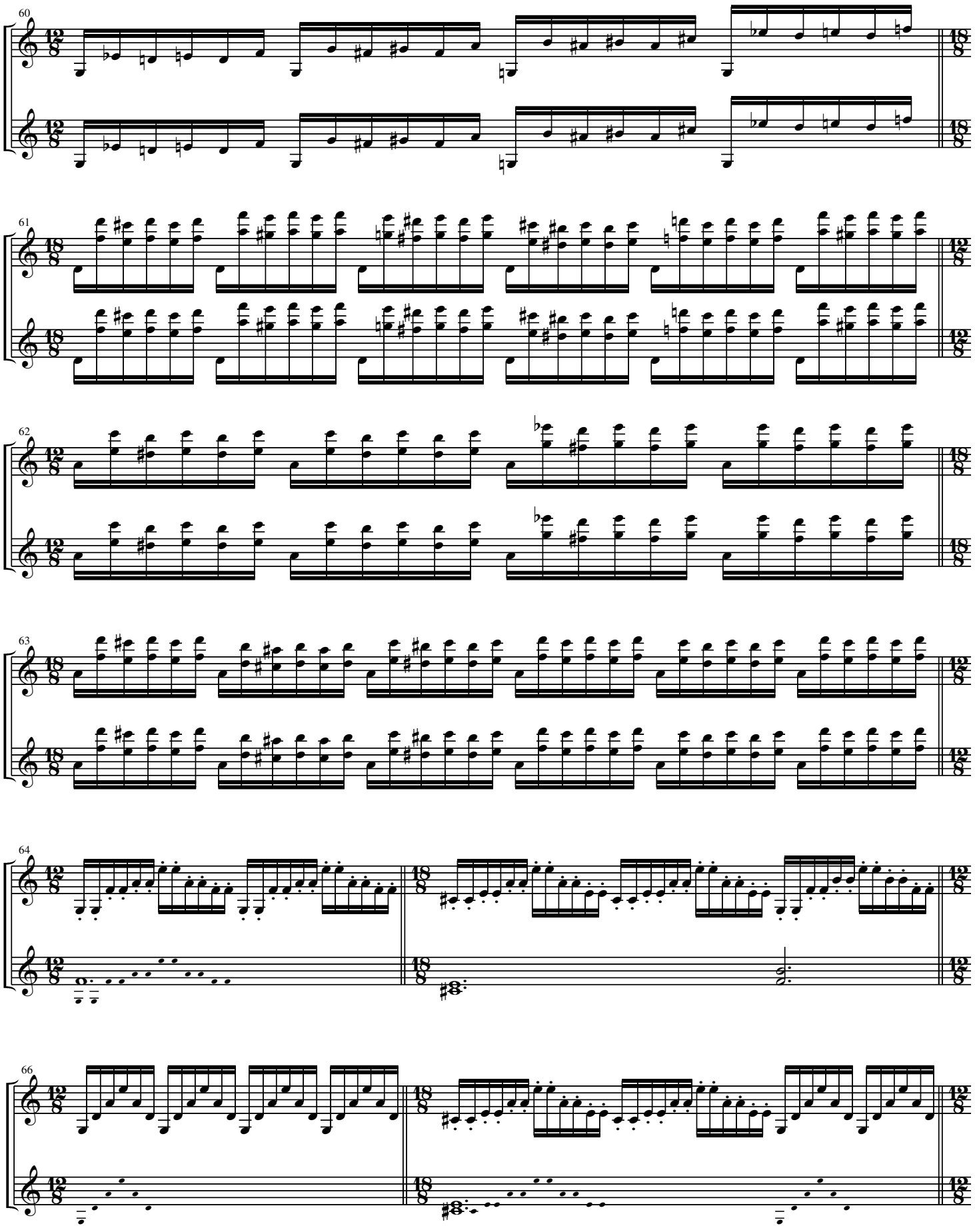
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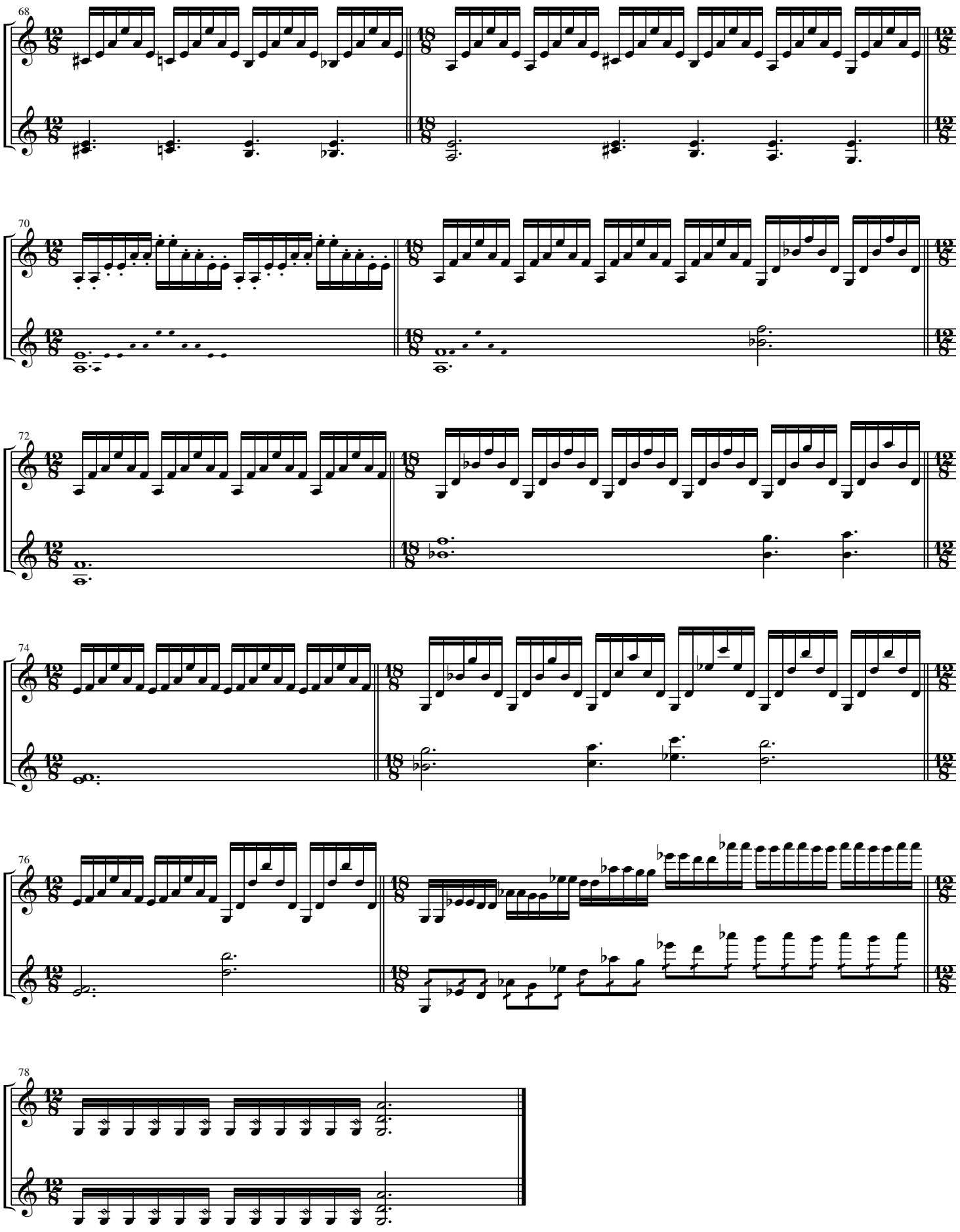
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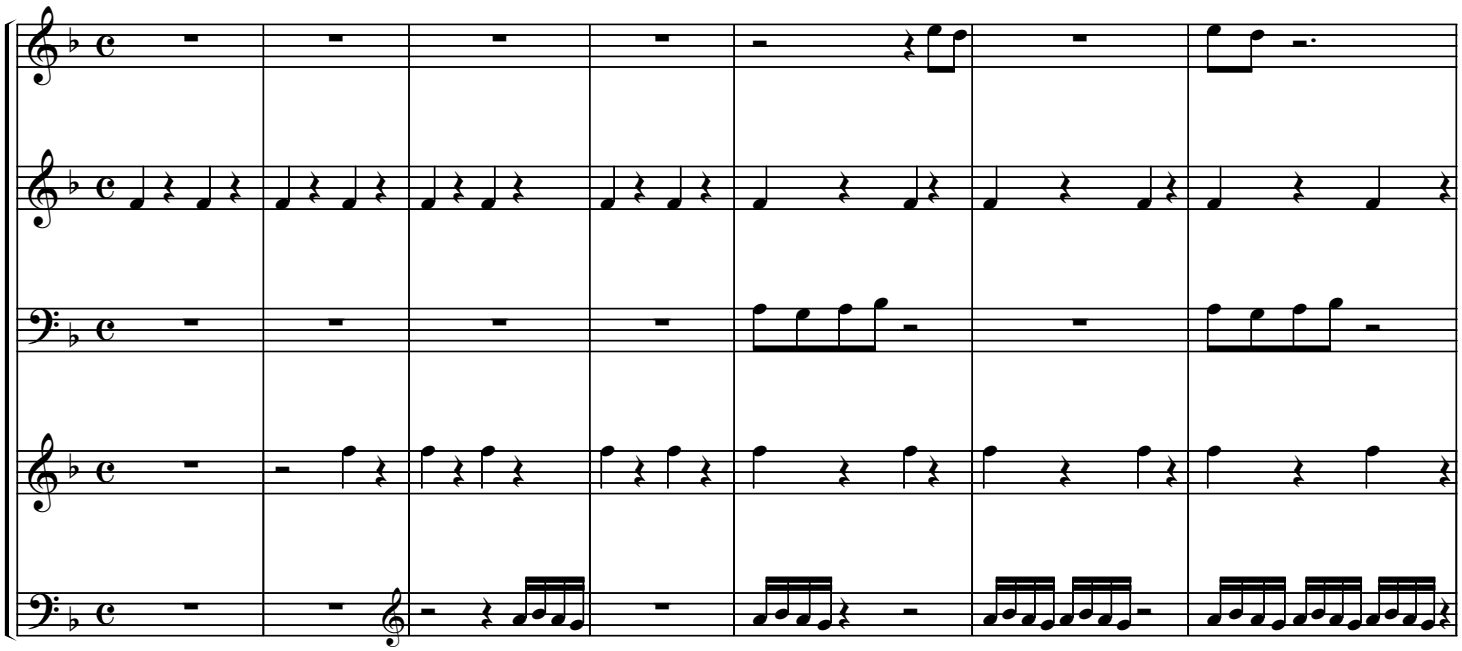
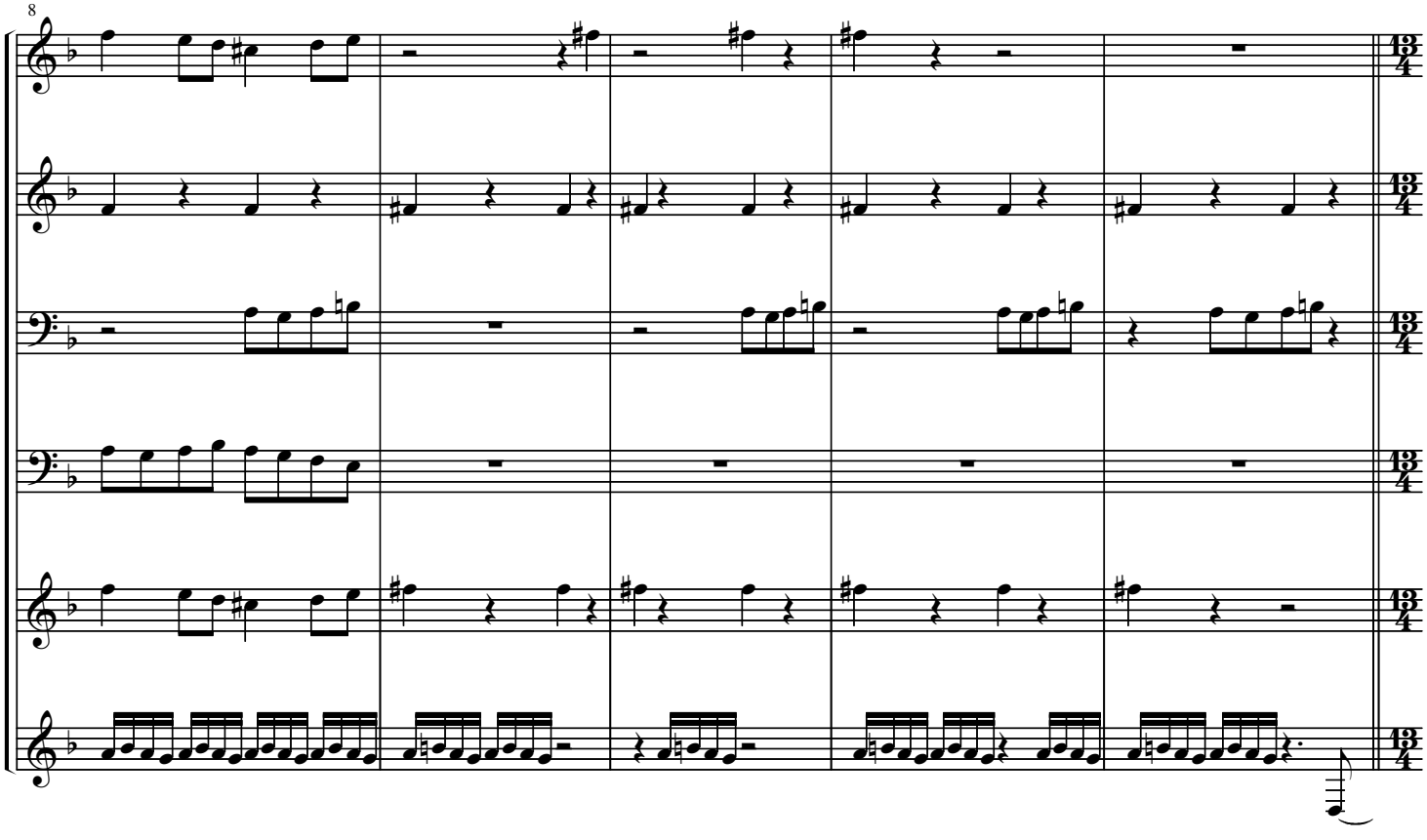
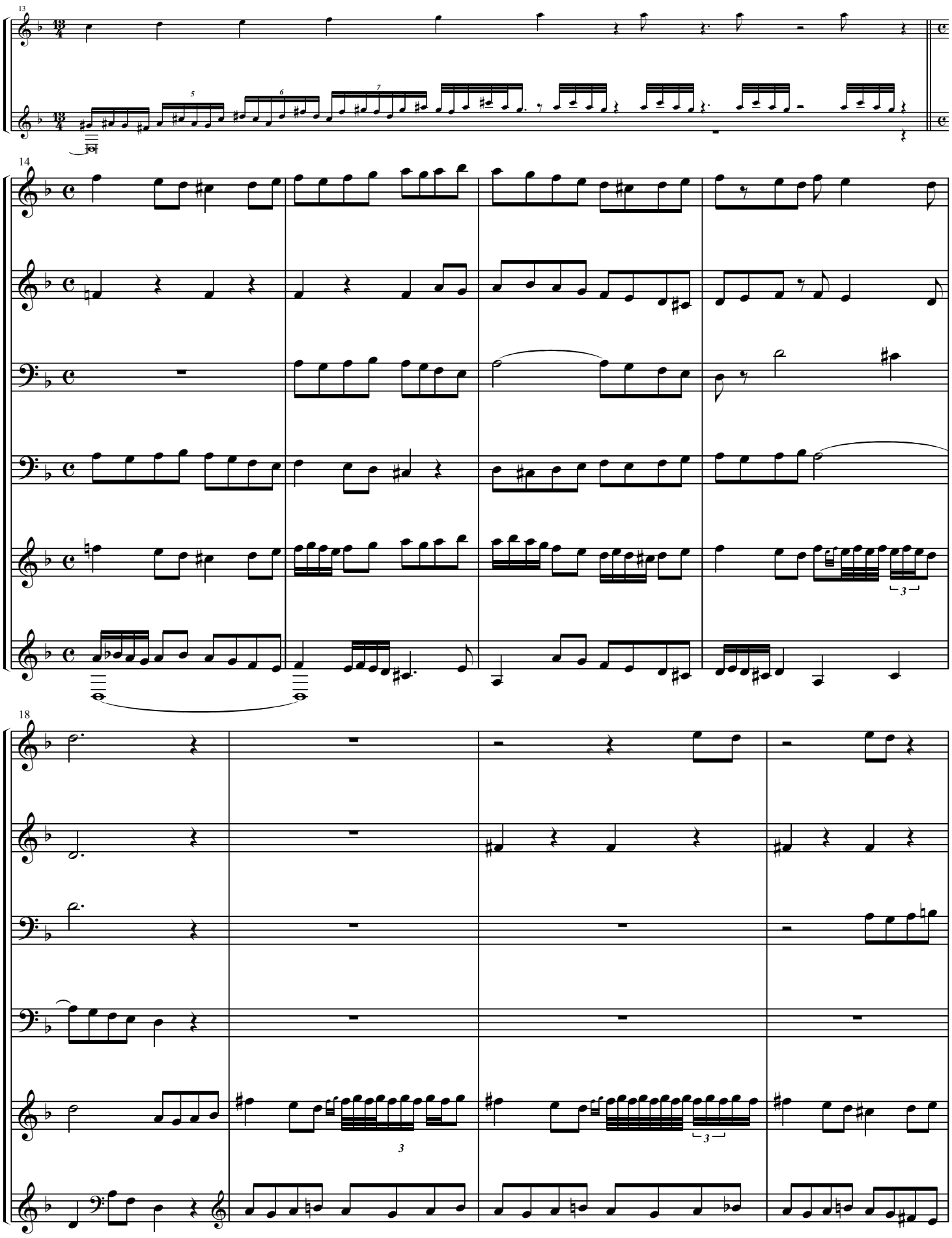
No Us 40, acrylic on paper, 20 x 16", 2021

♩= 117

Ryan Charles Ramer



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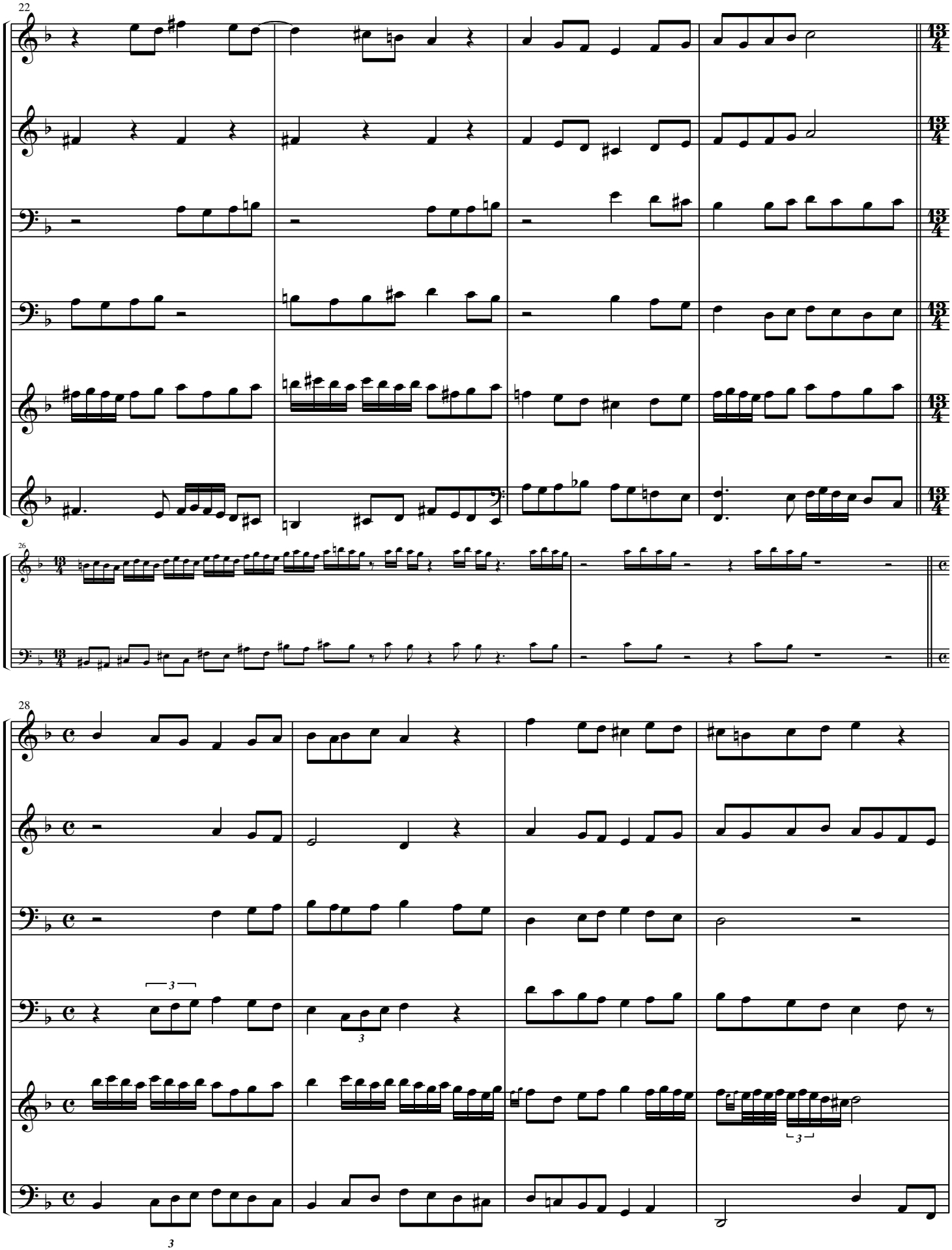
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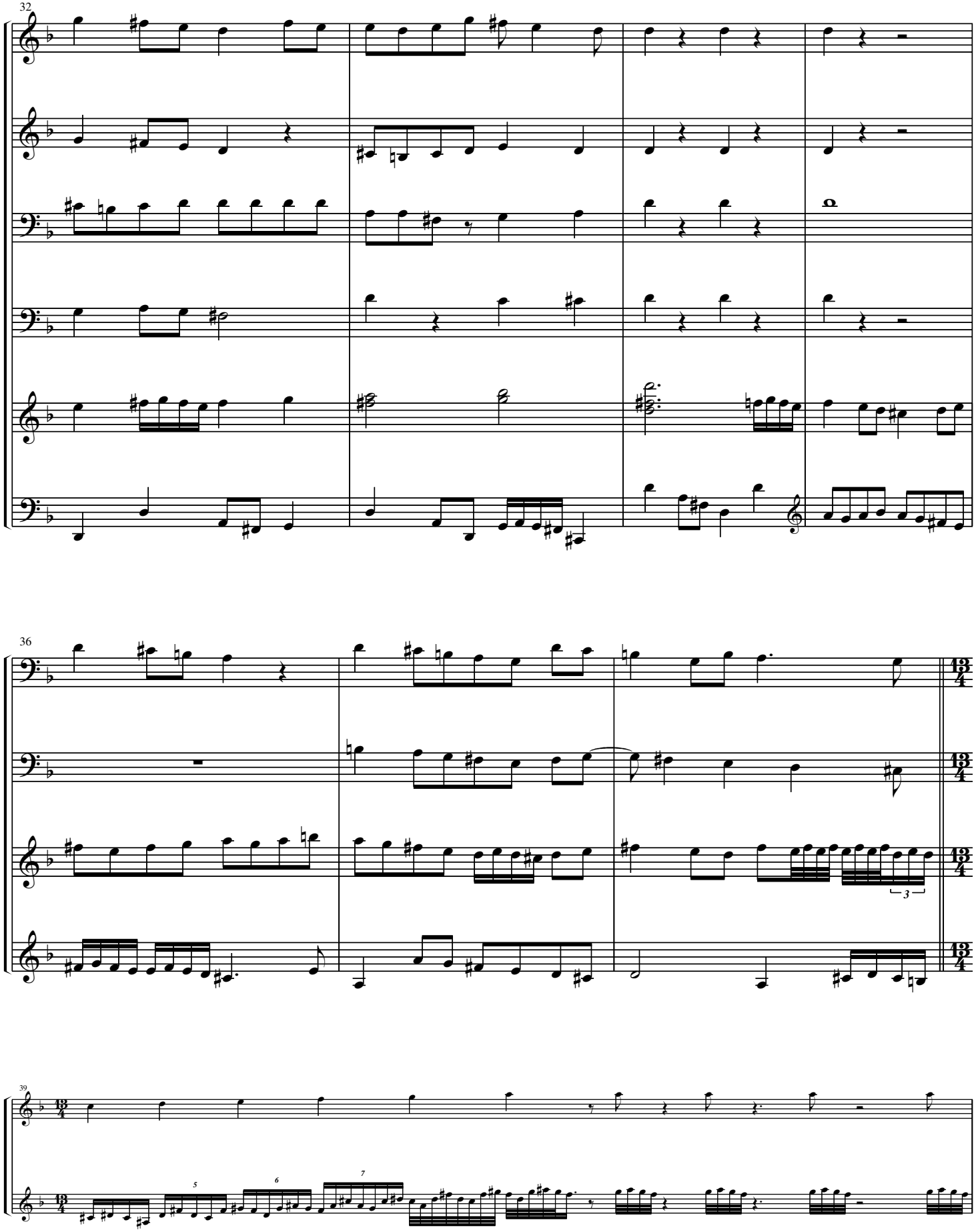
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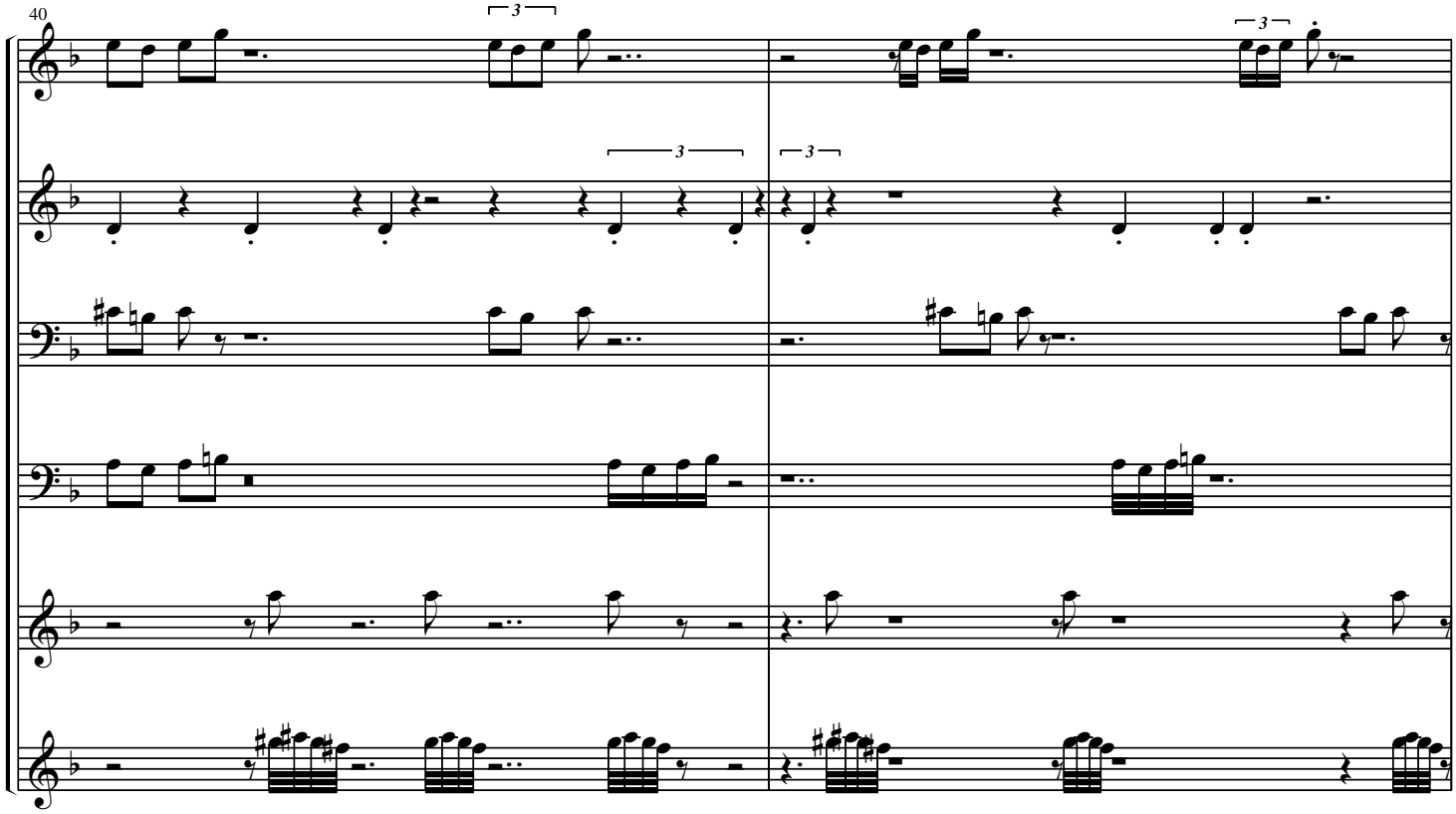
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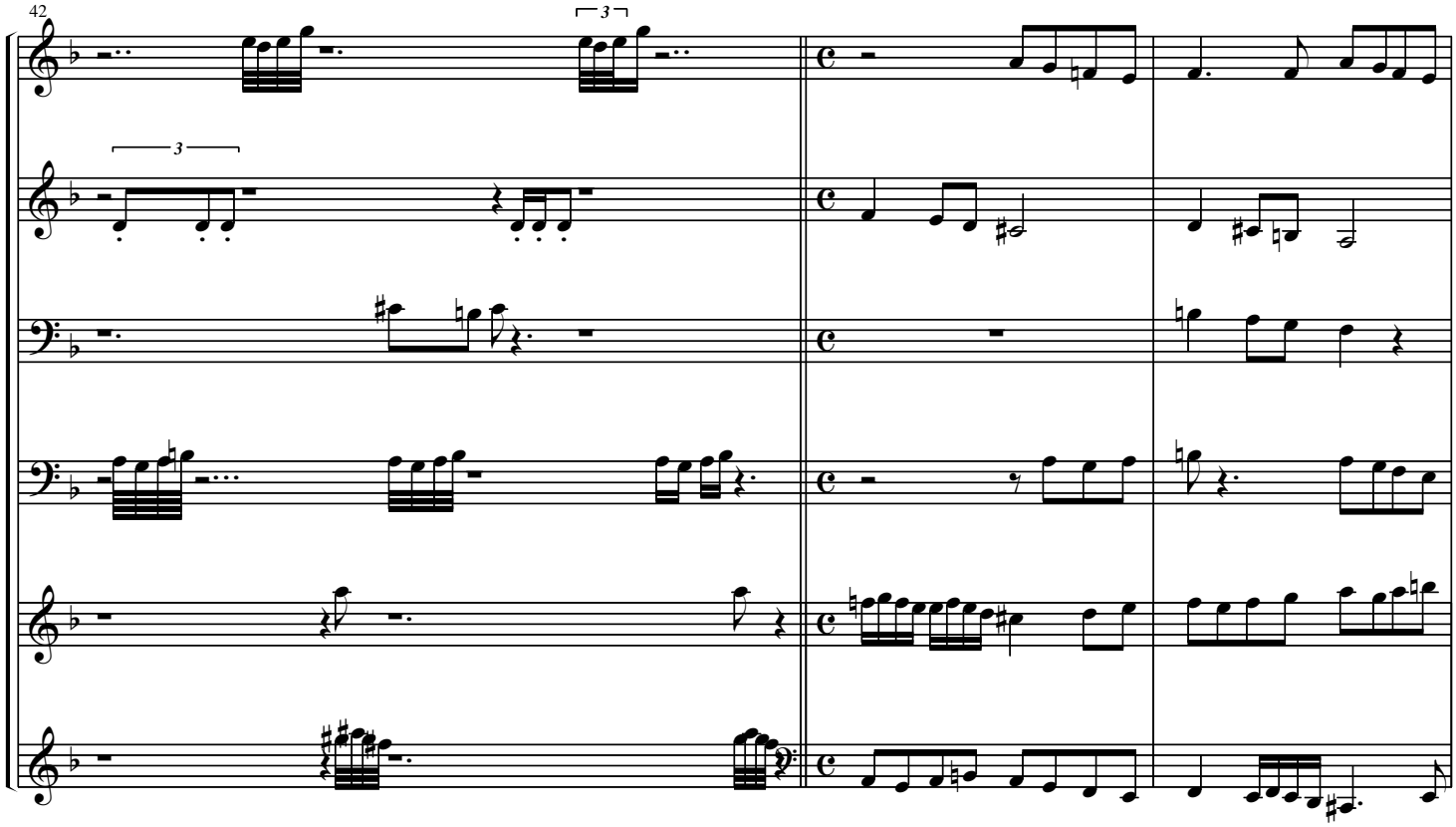
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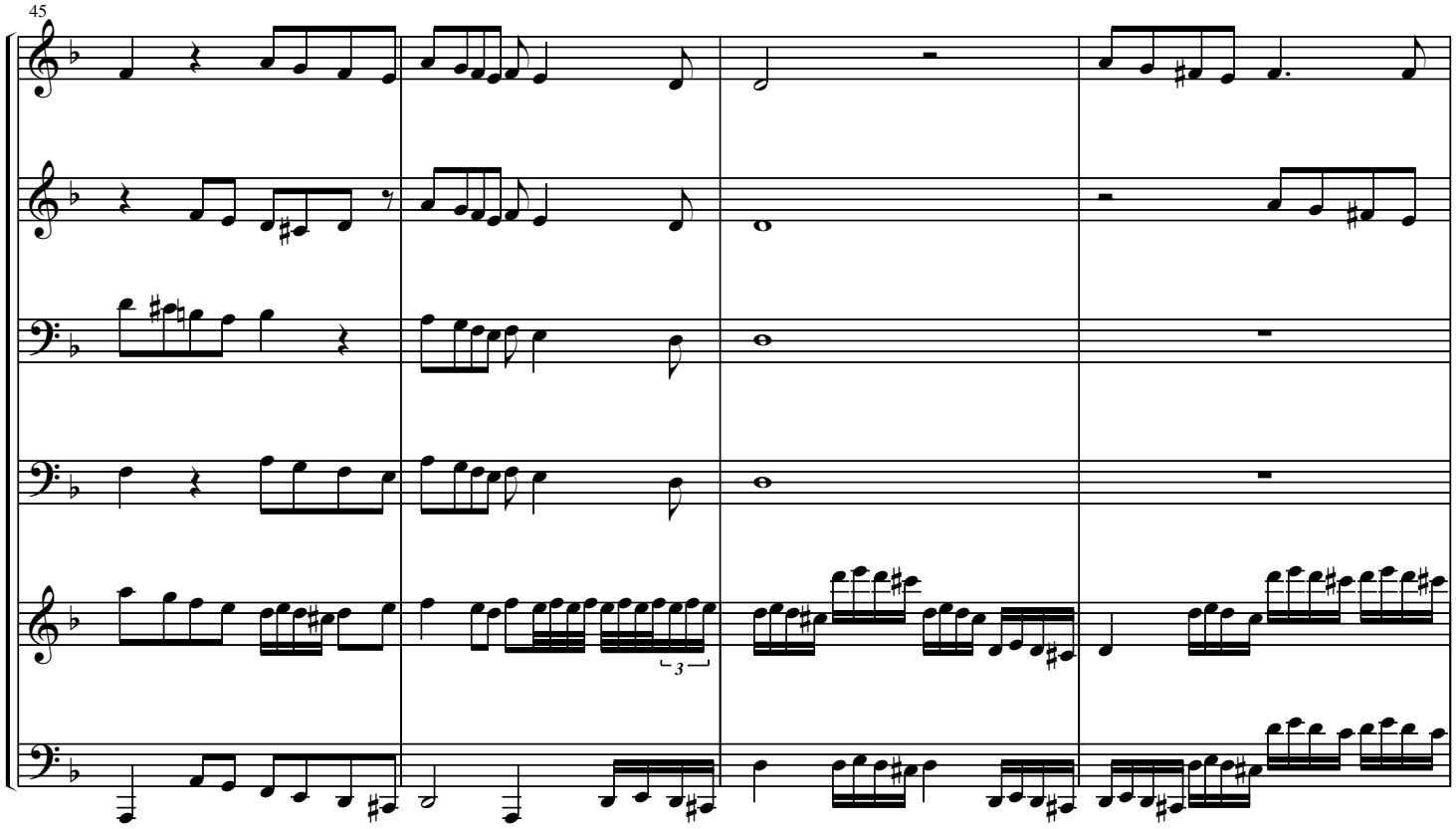
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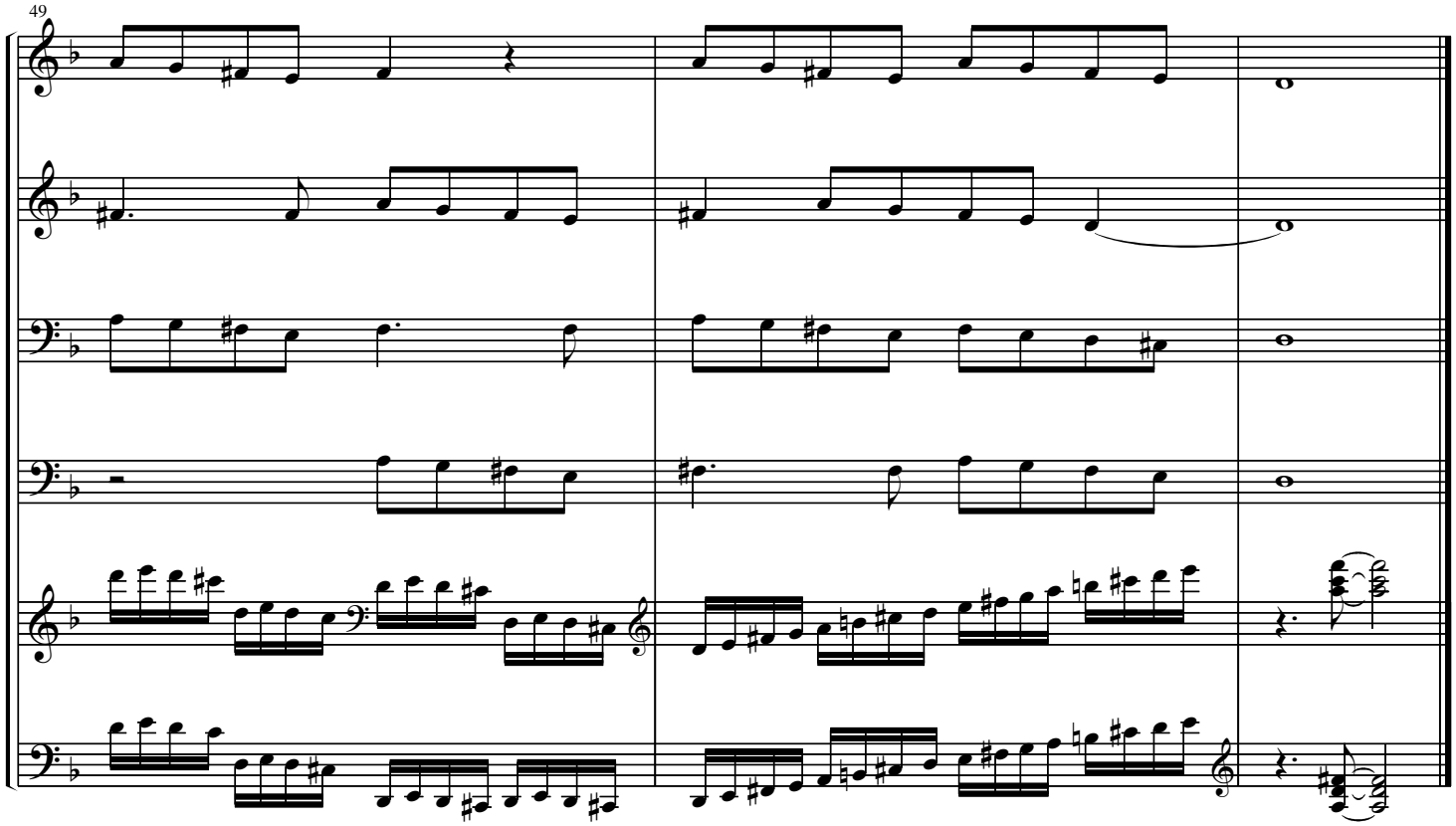
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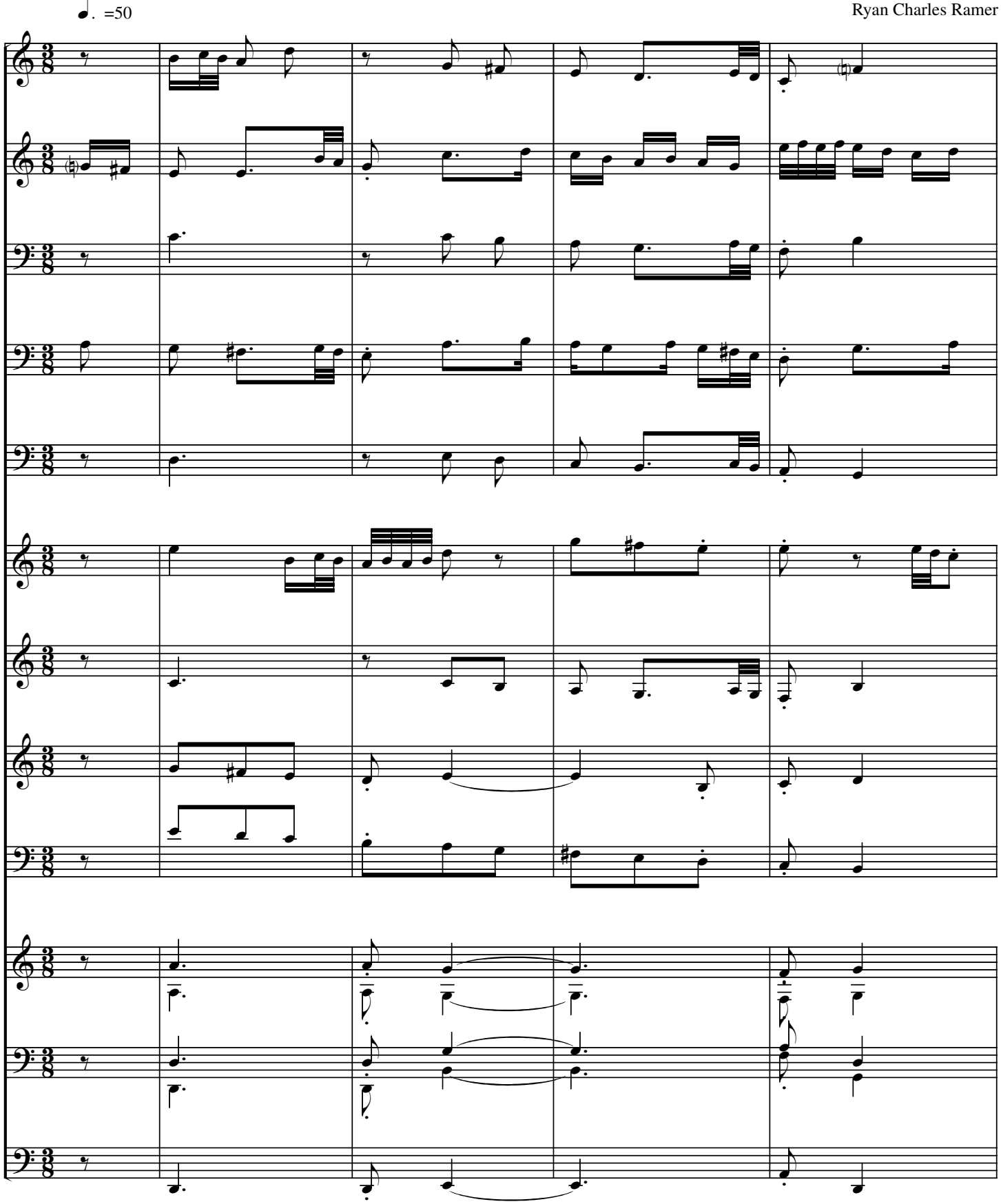
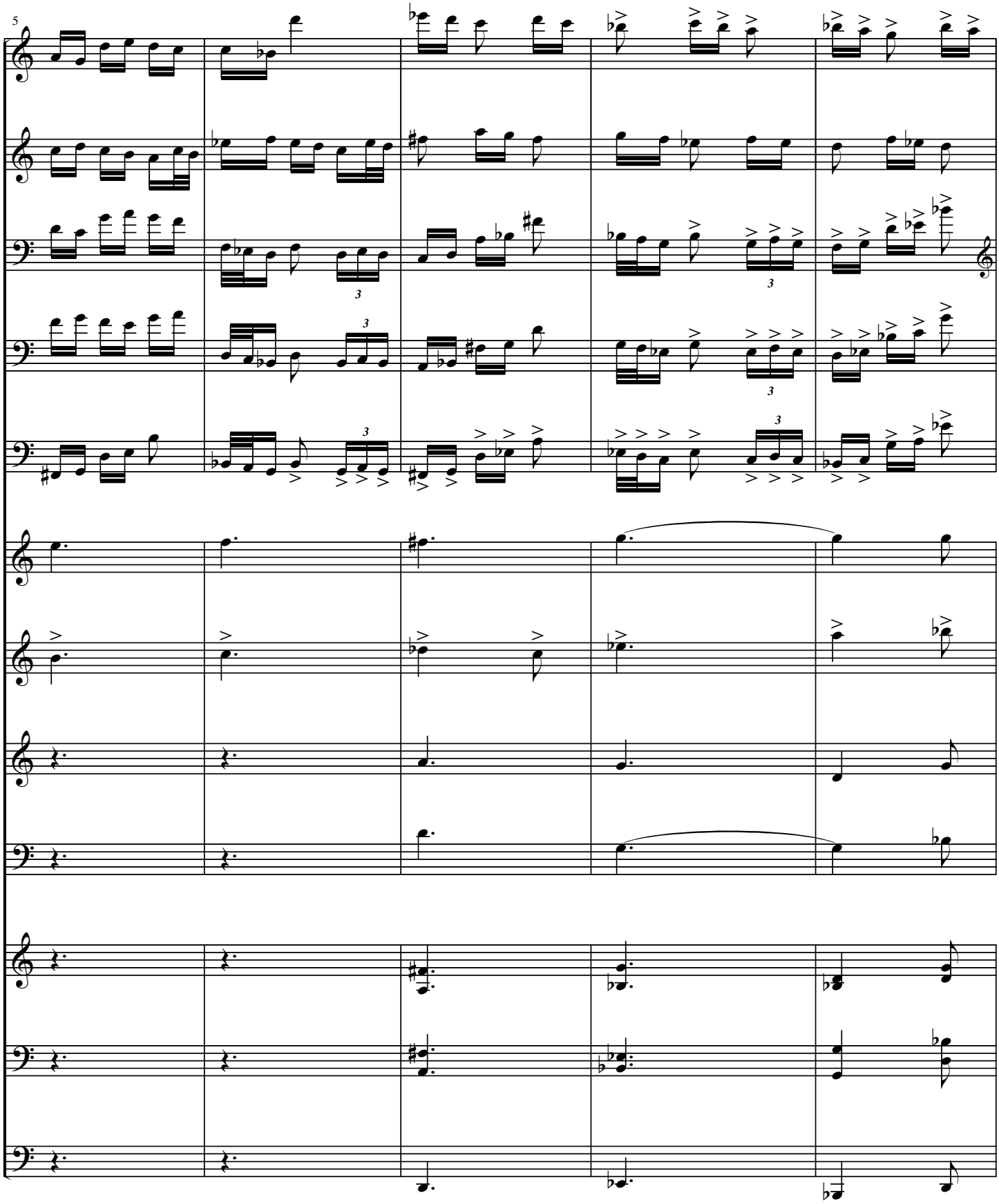
No Us 39 (ooh zero zero), acrylic on paper, 20 x 16", 2022

Ryan Charles Ramer

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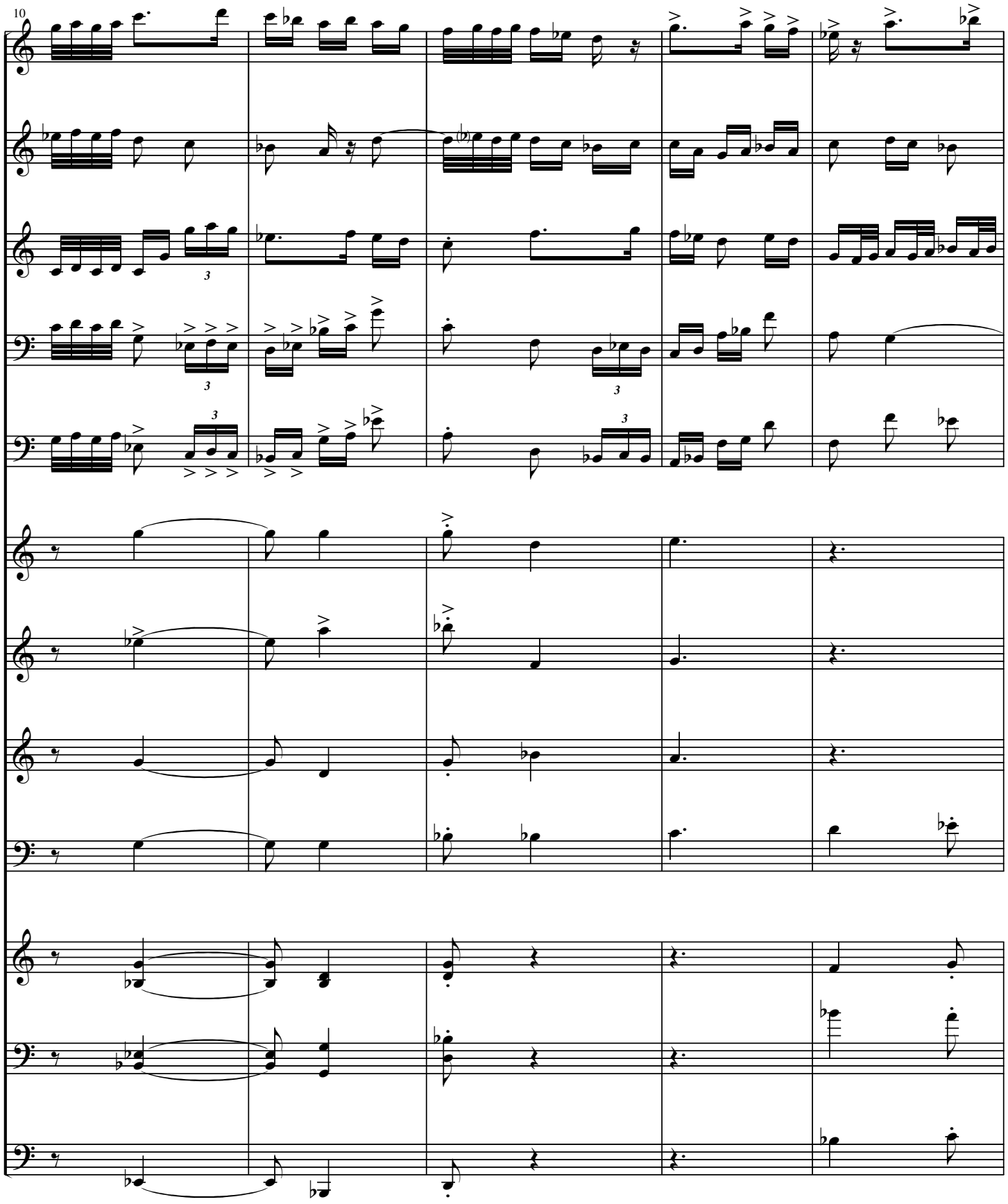
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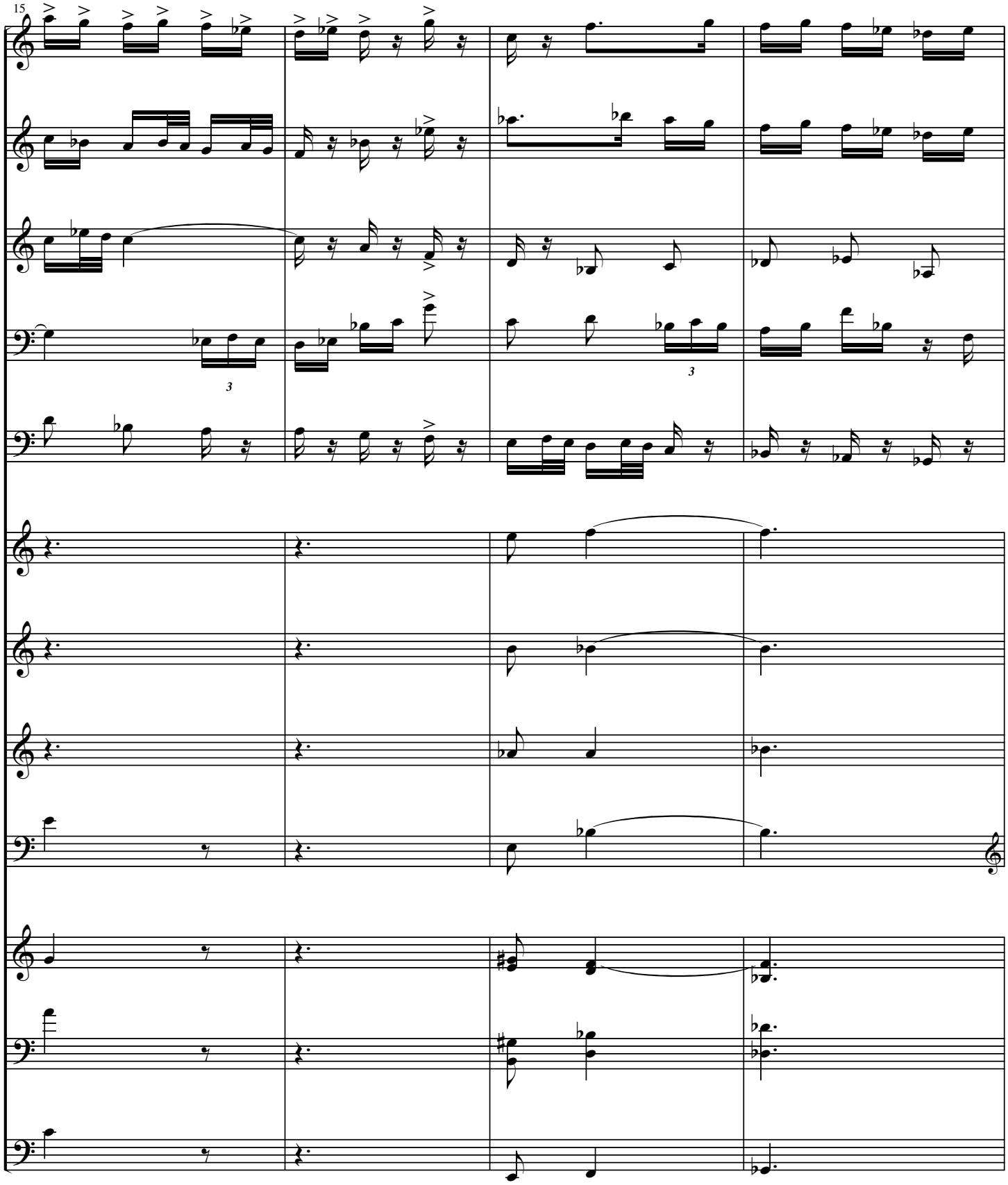
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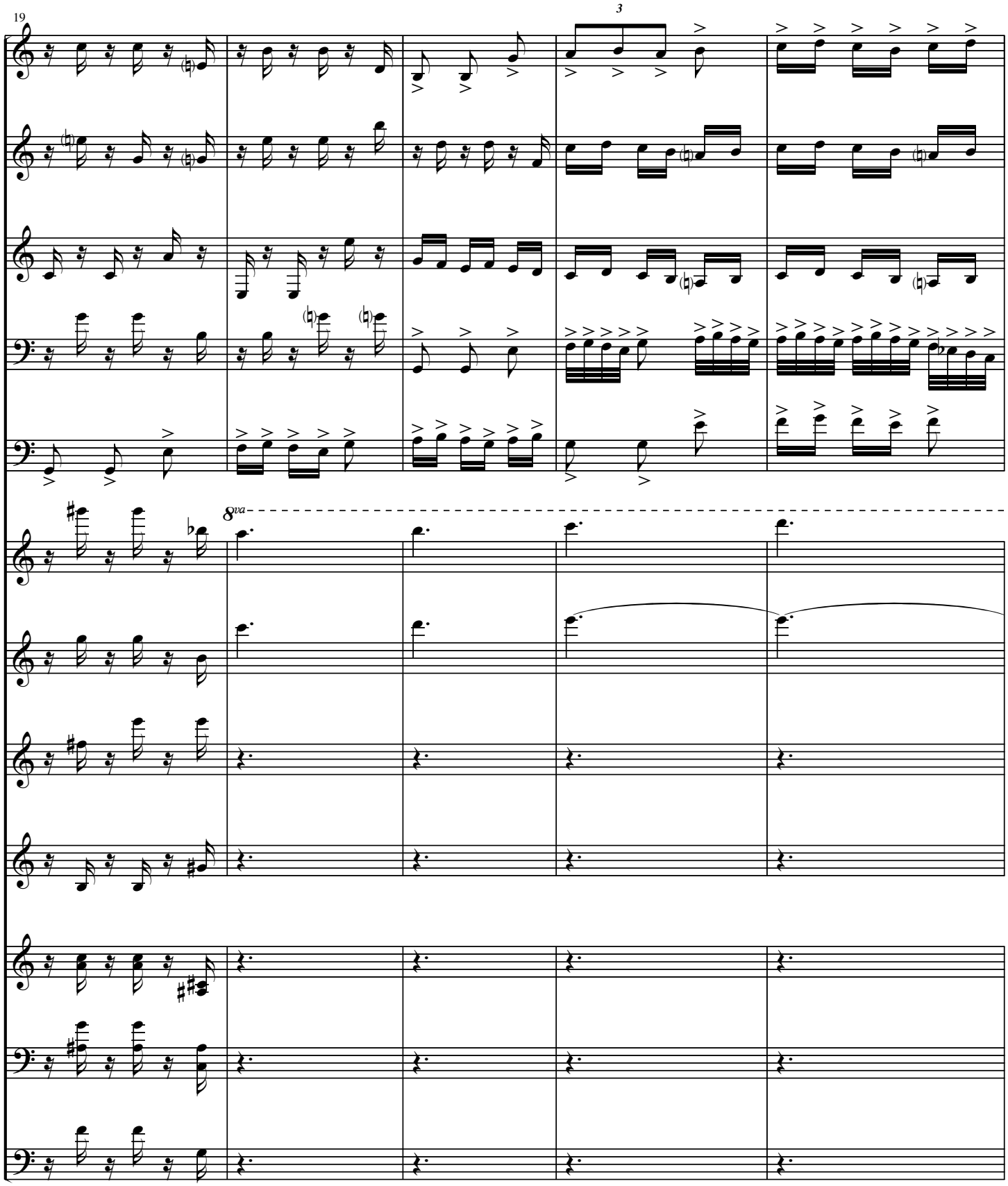
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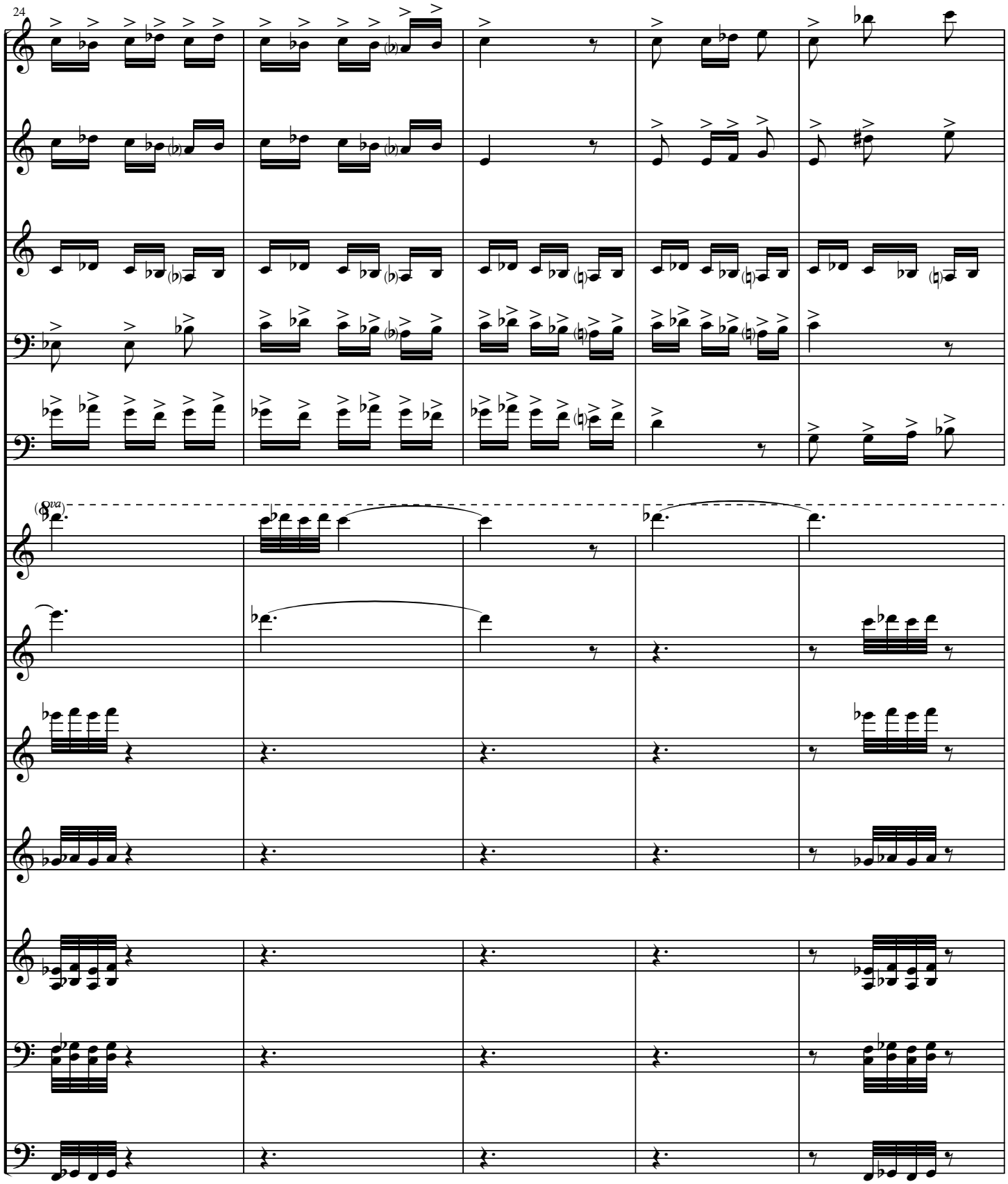
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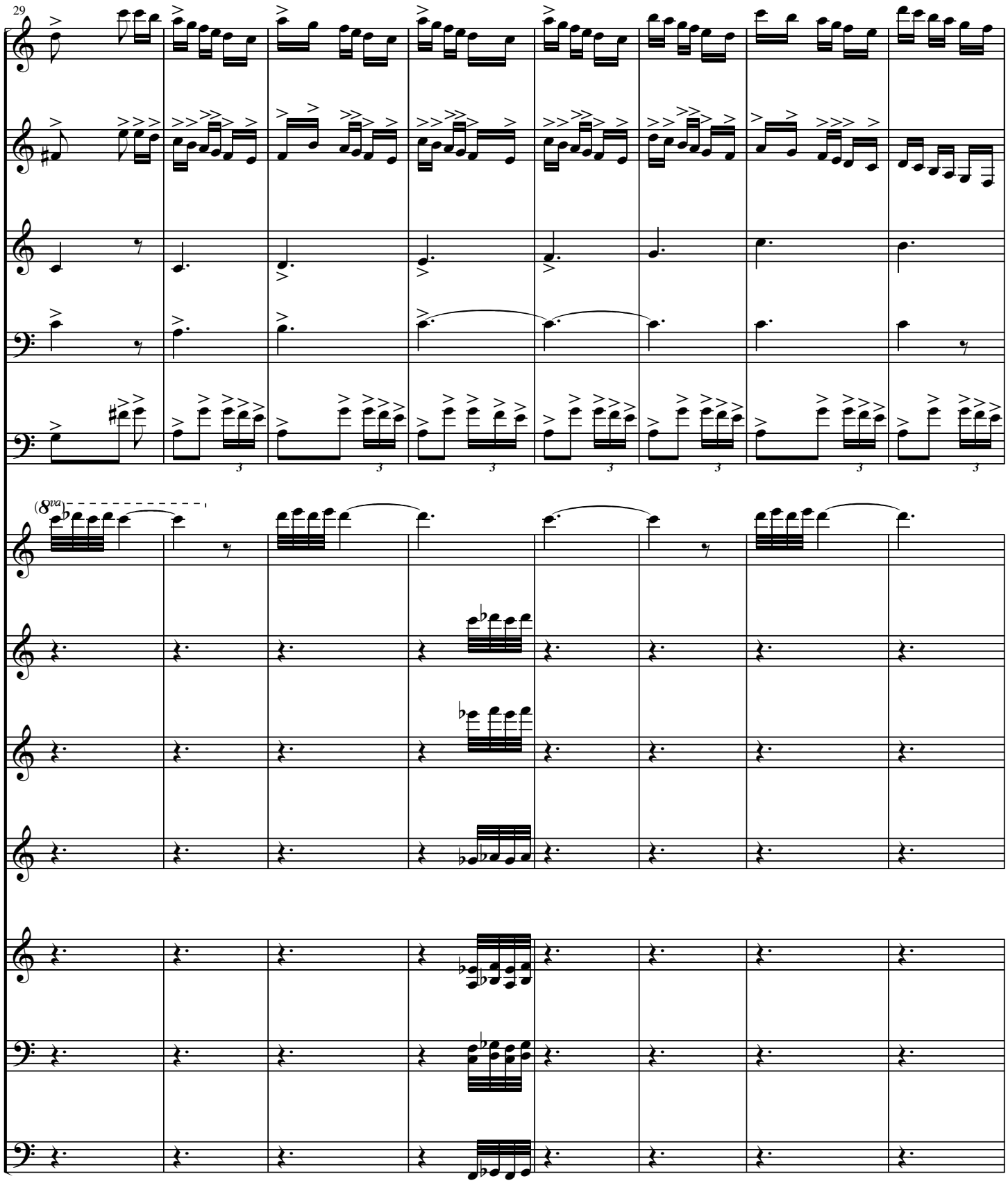
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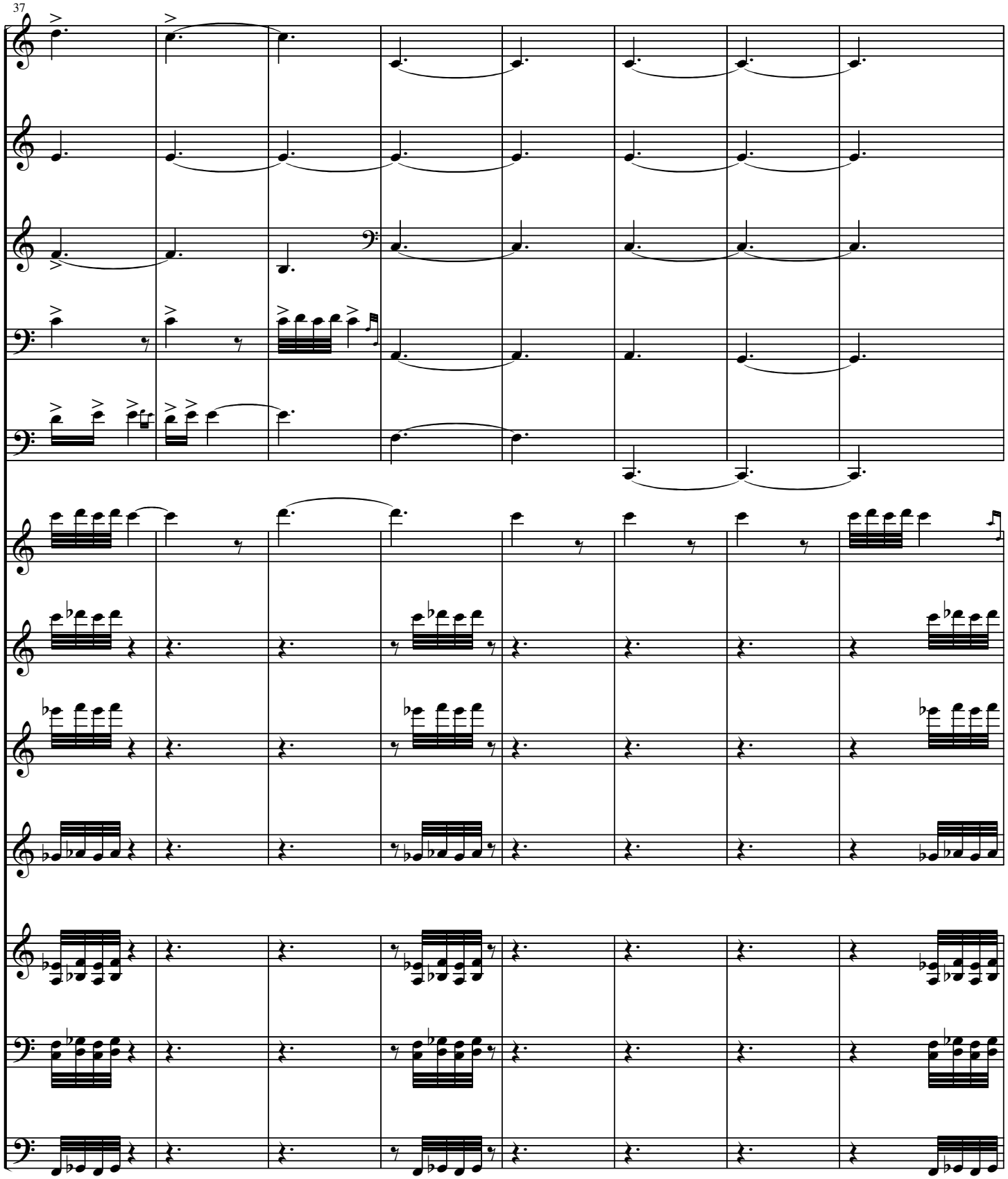
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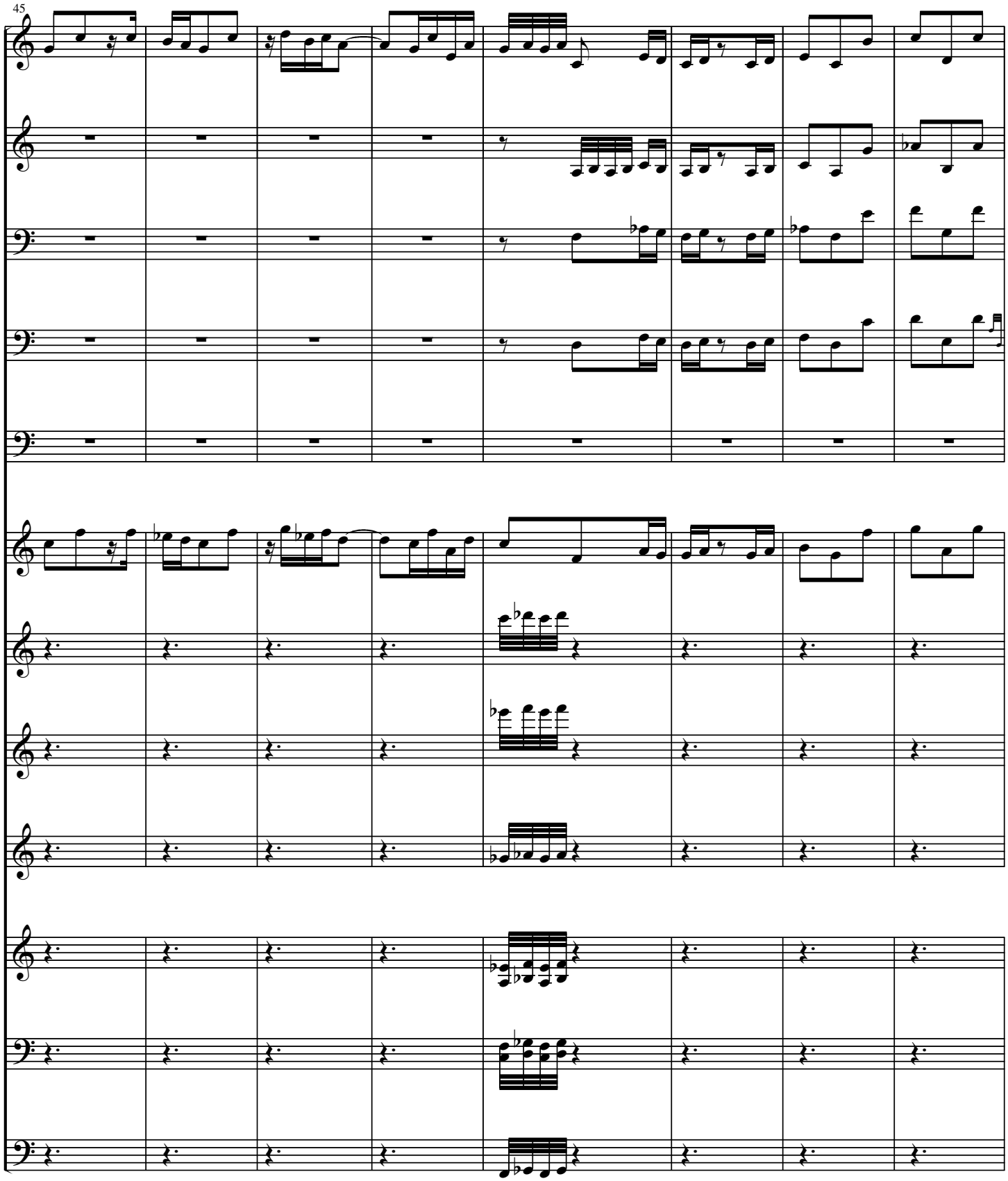
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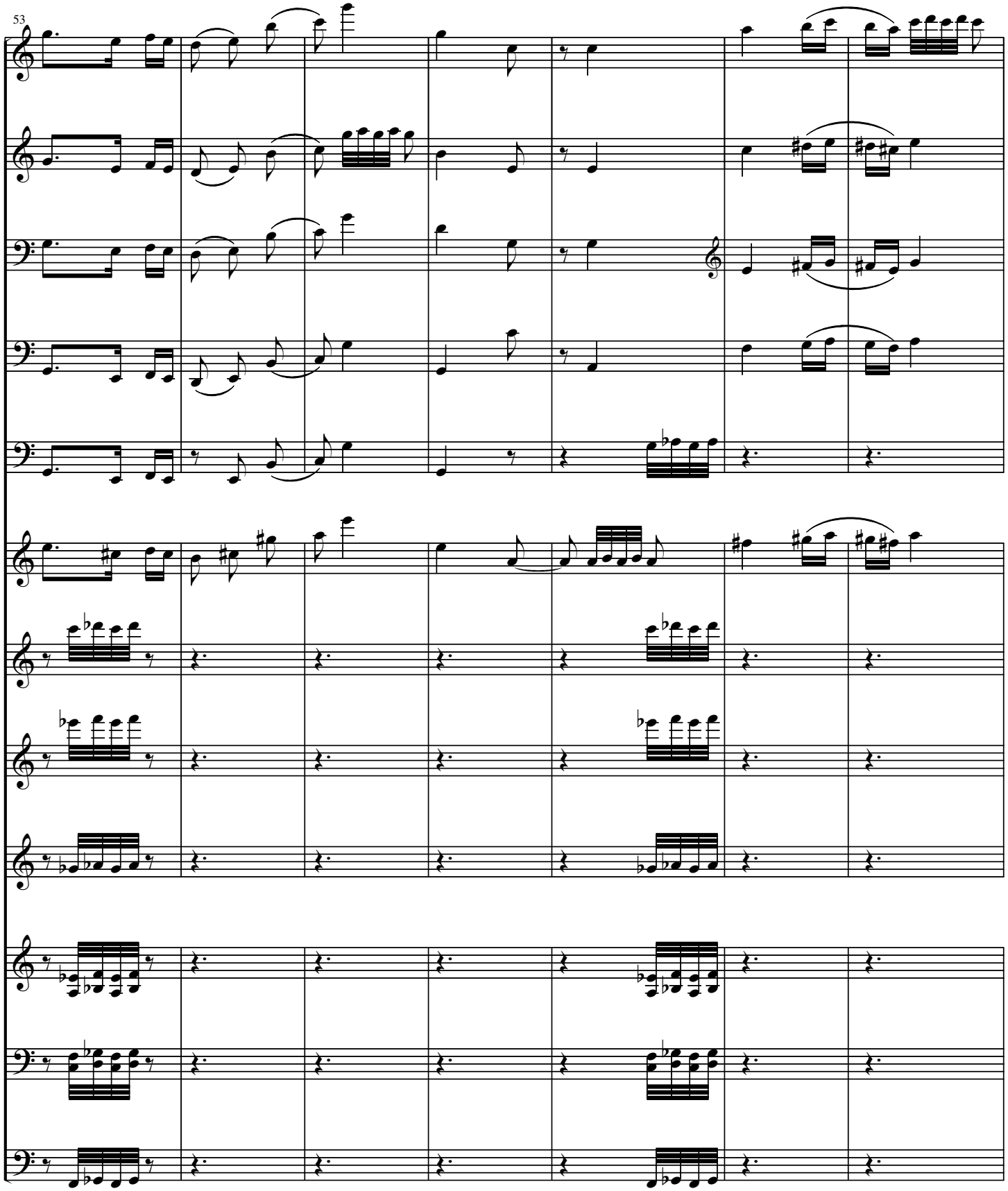
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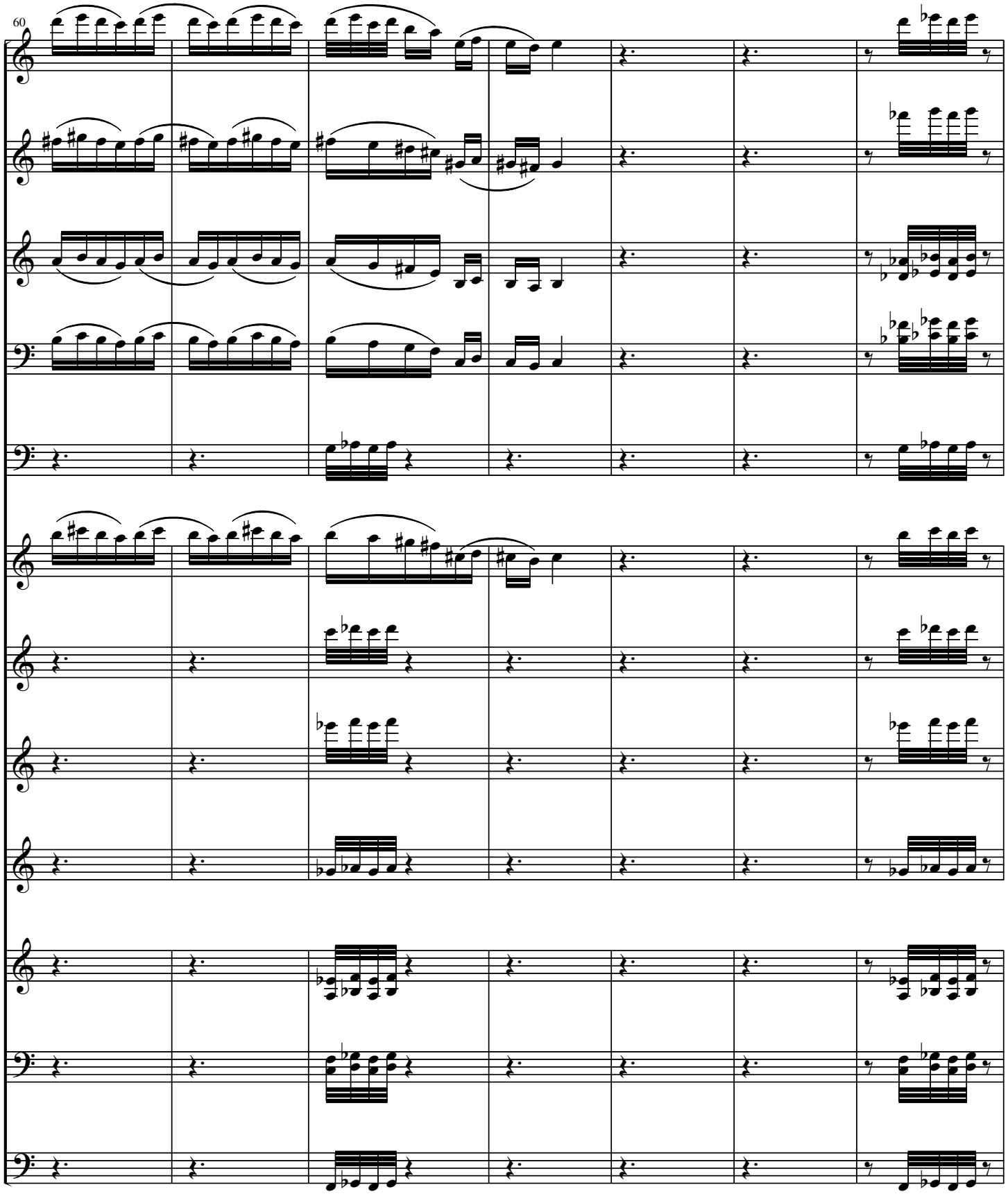
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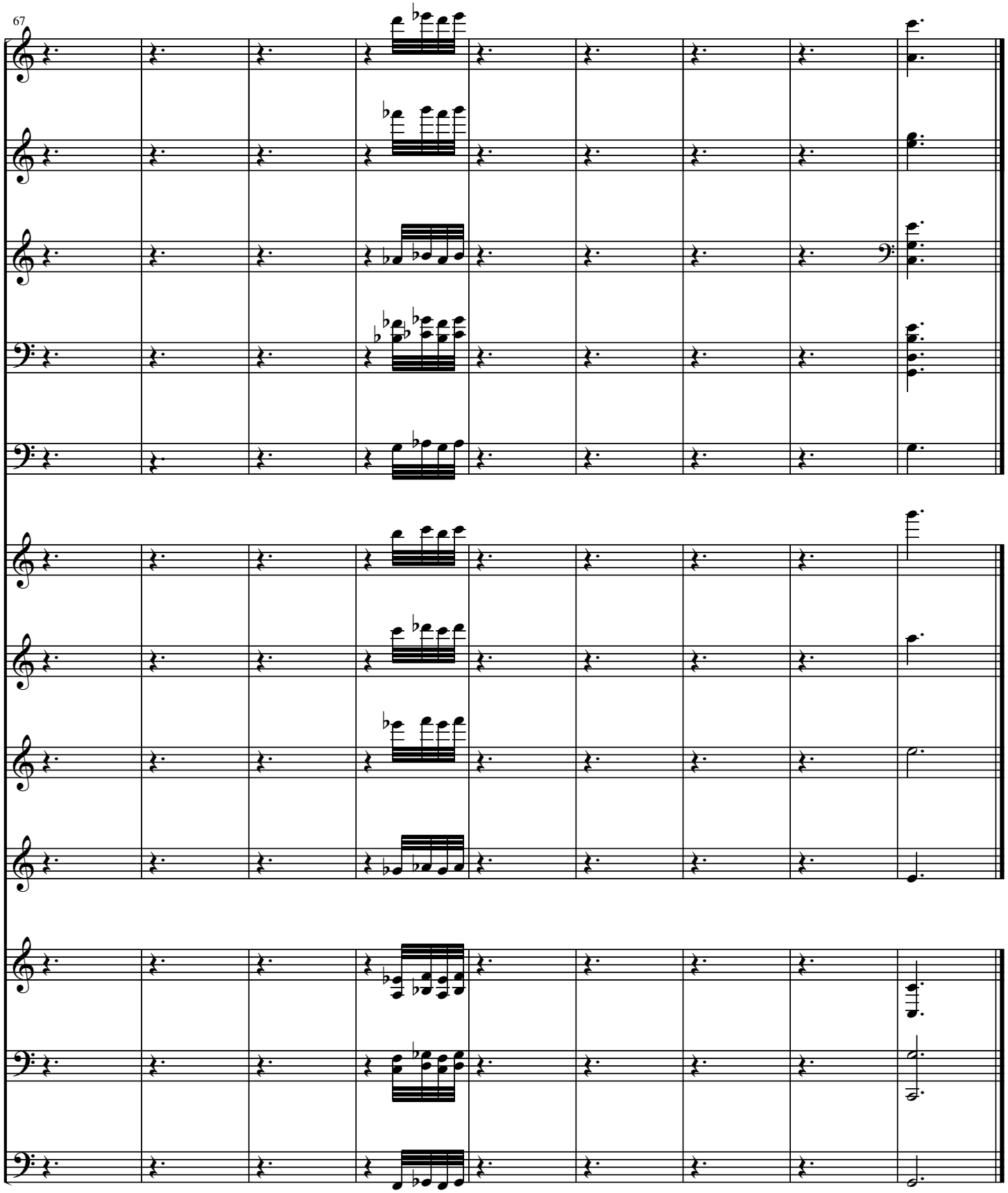
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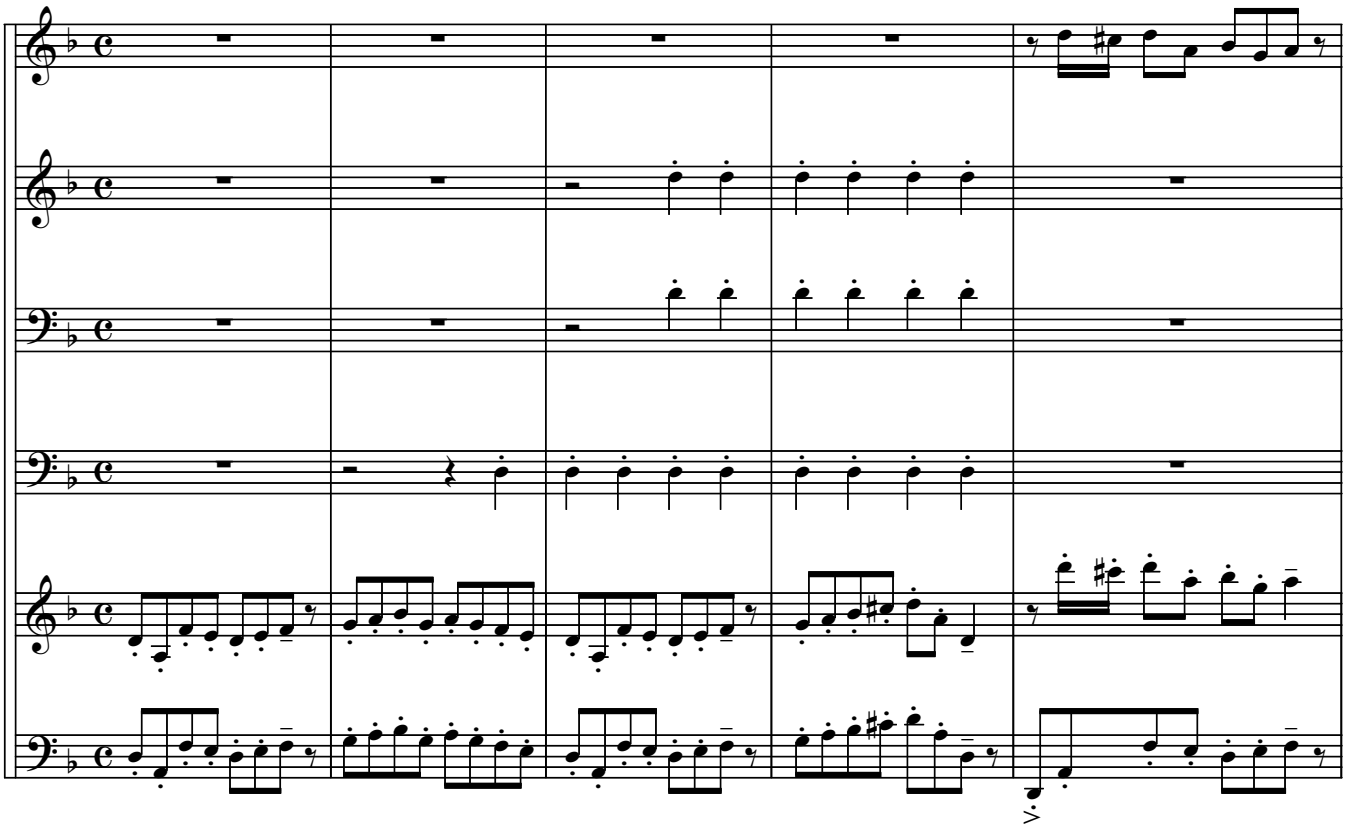
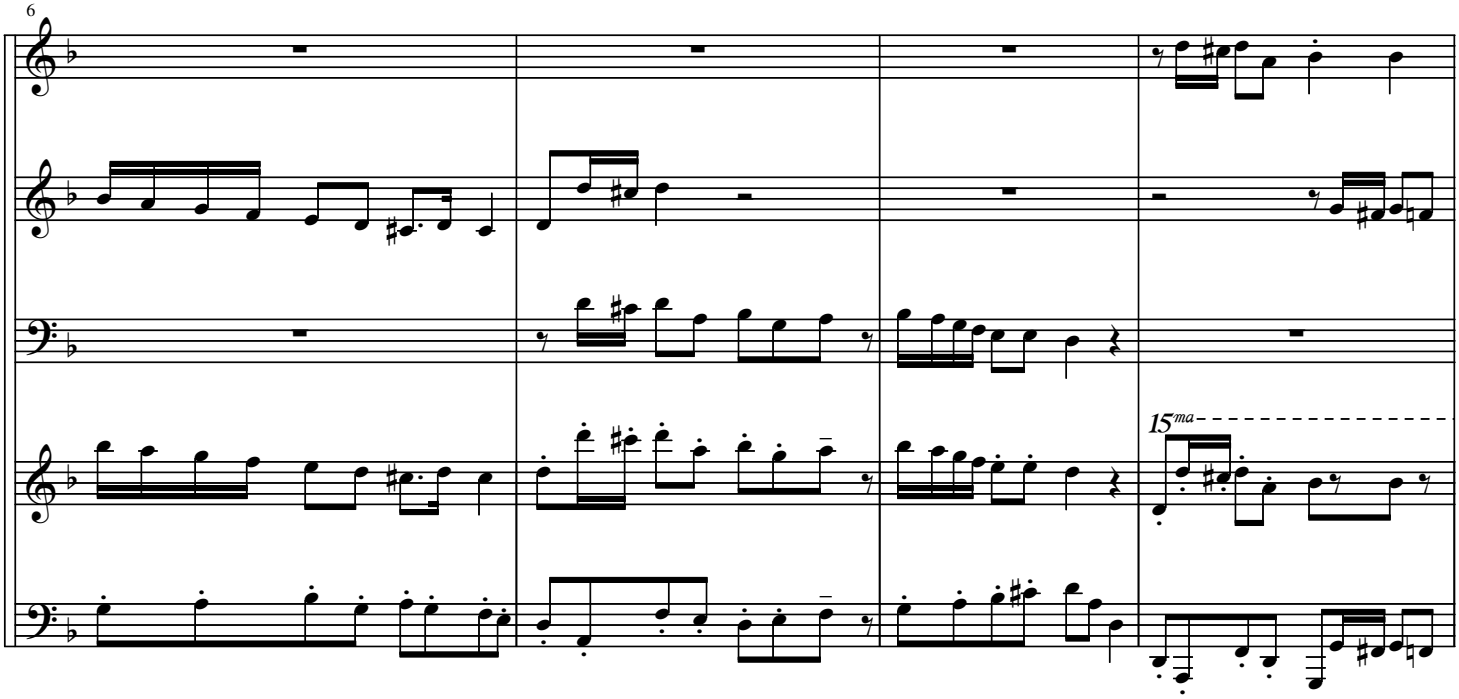
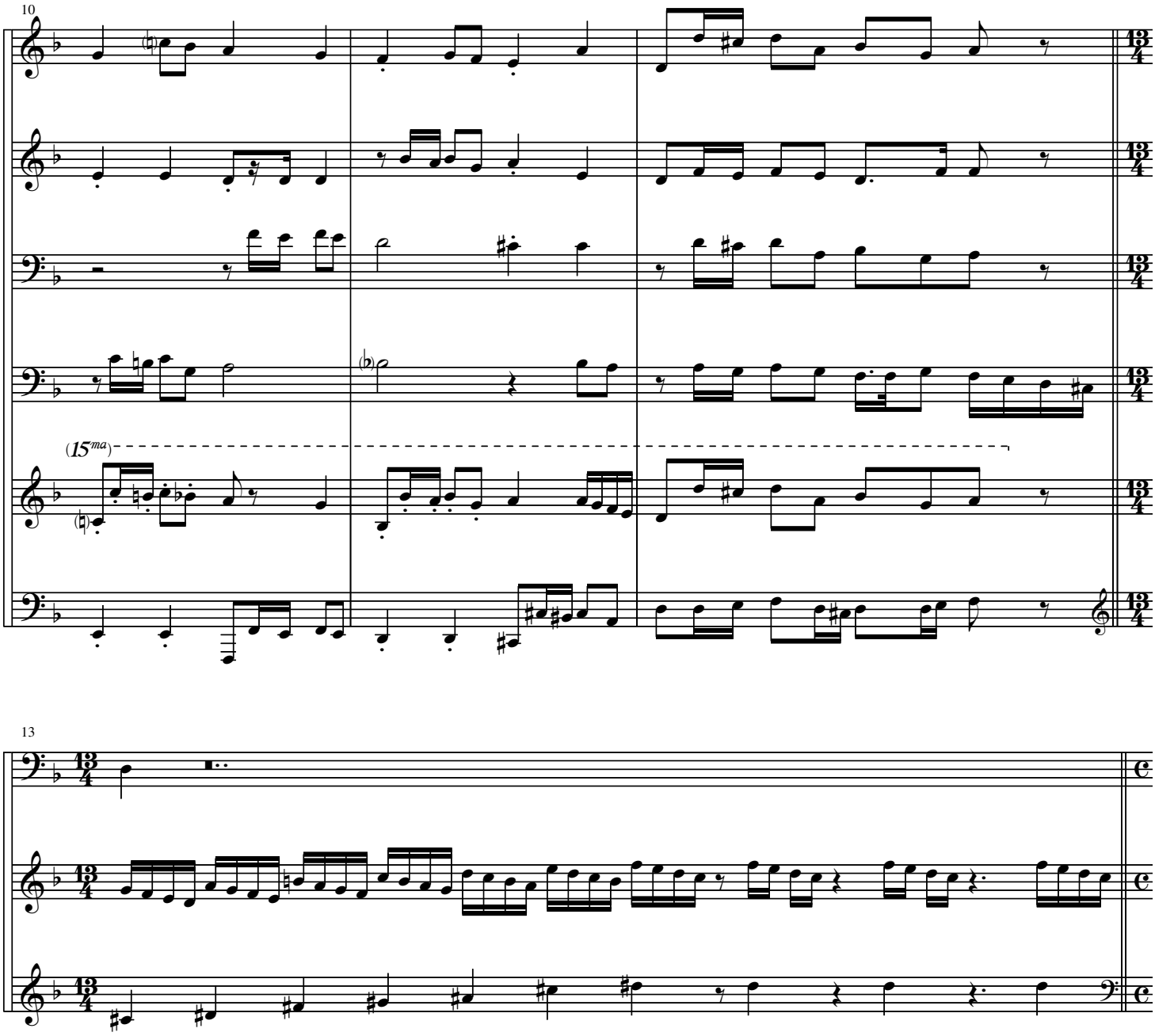
No Us 38, acrylic on paper, 20 x 16", 2021

Ryan Charles Ramer

♩ = 85



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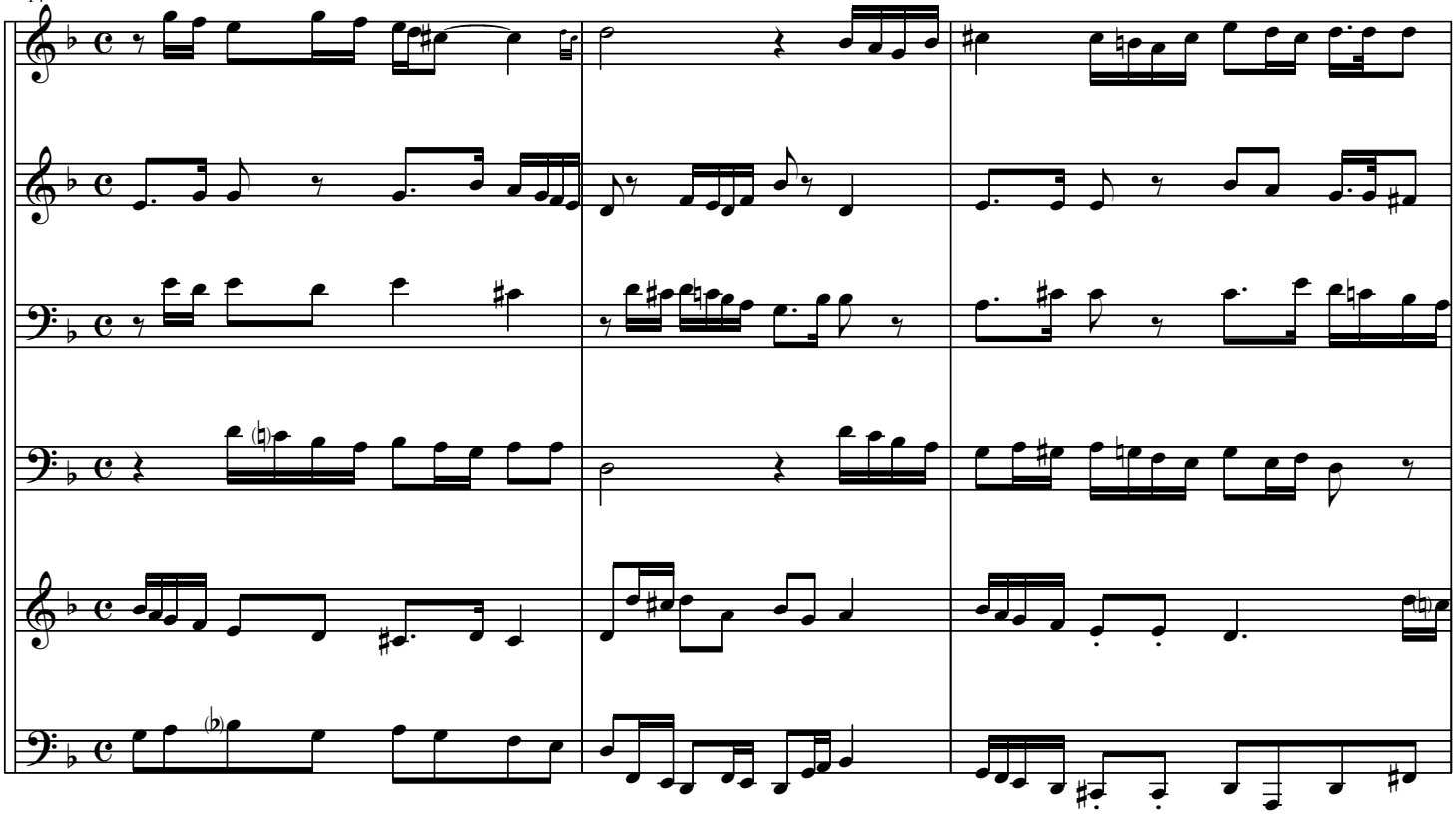

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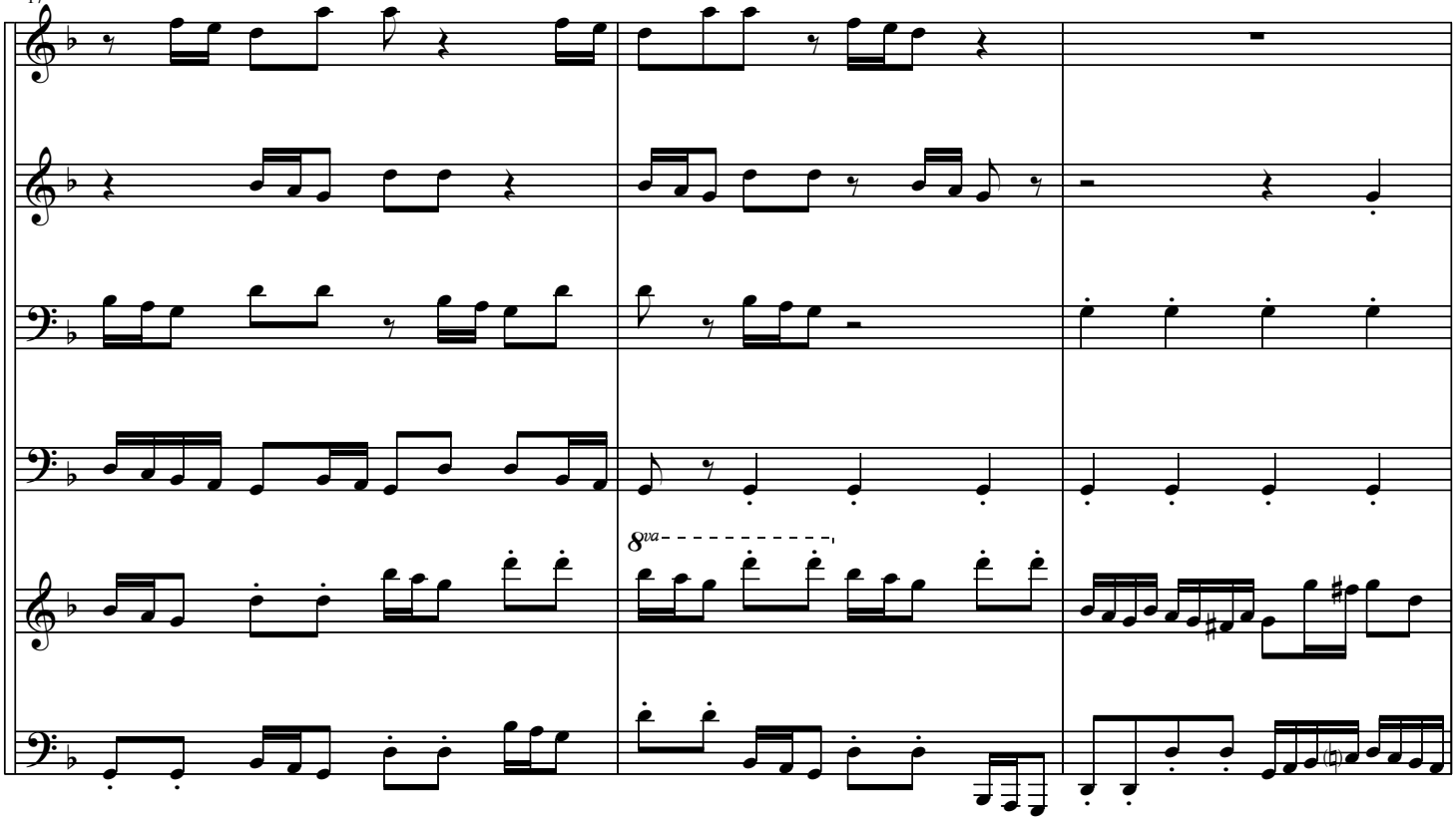

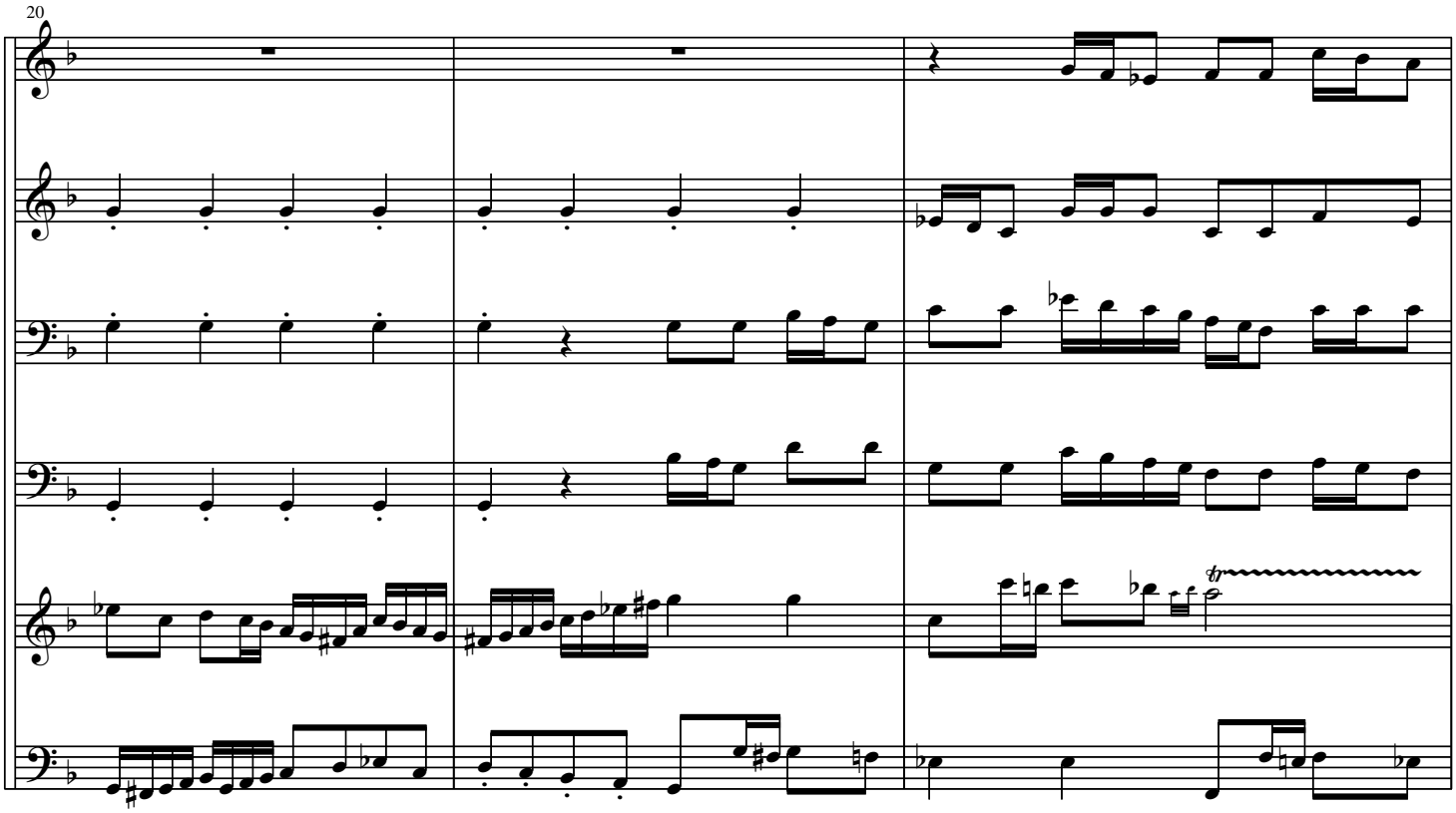
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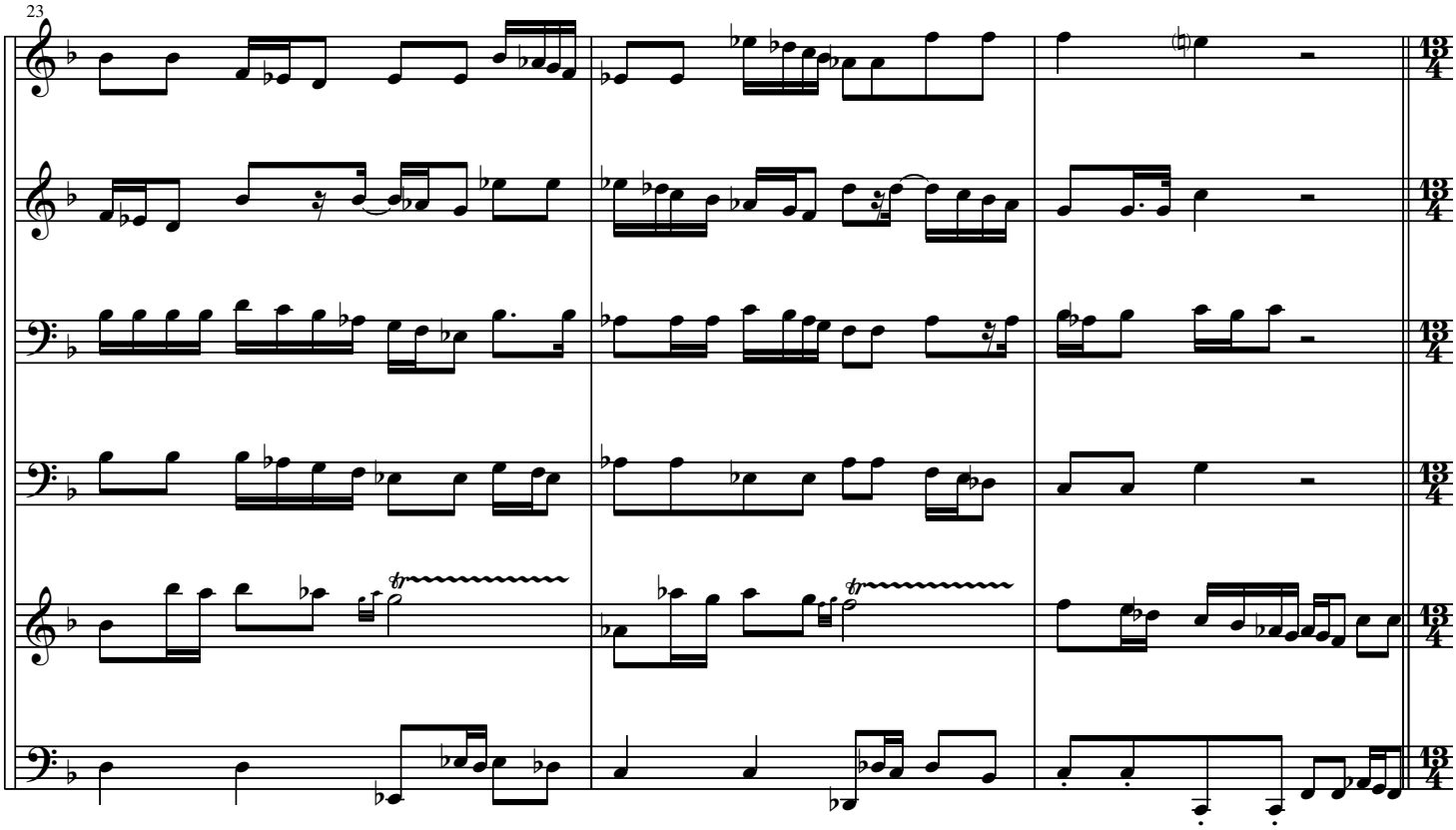
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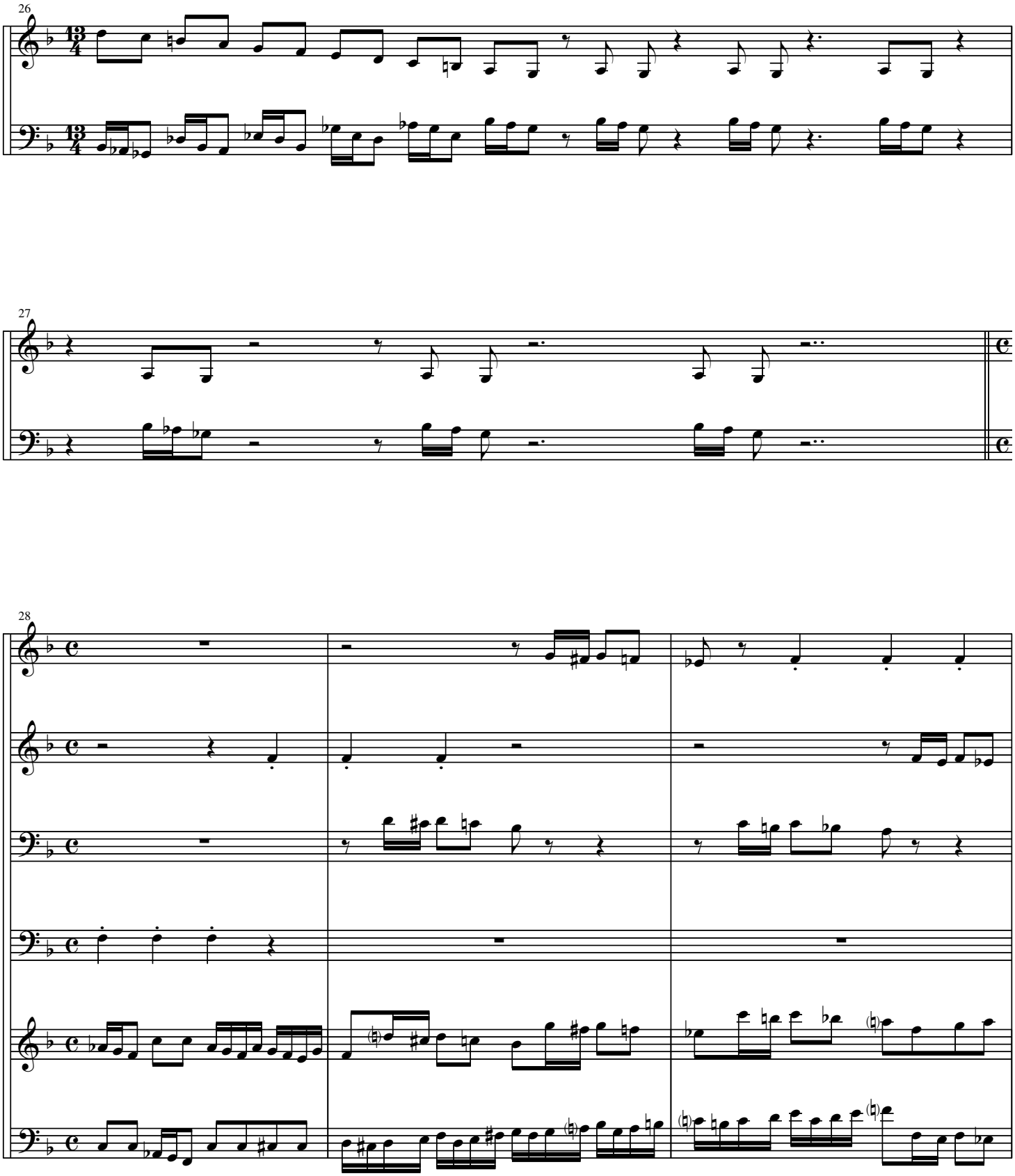
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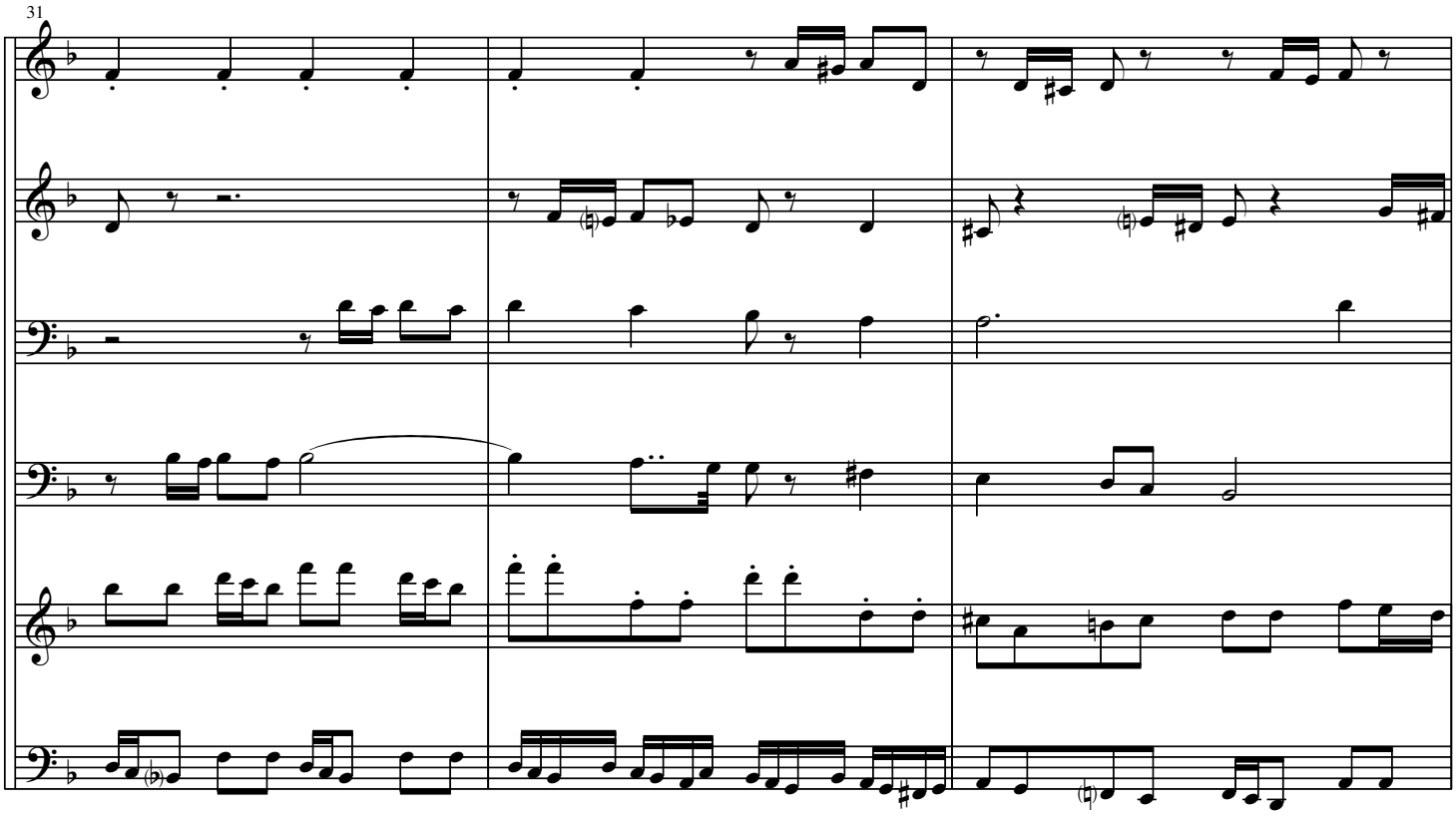
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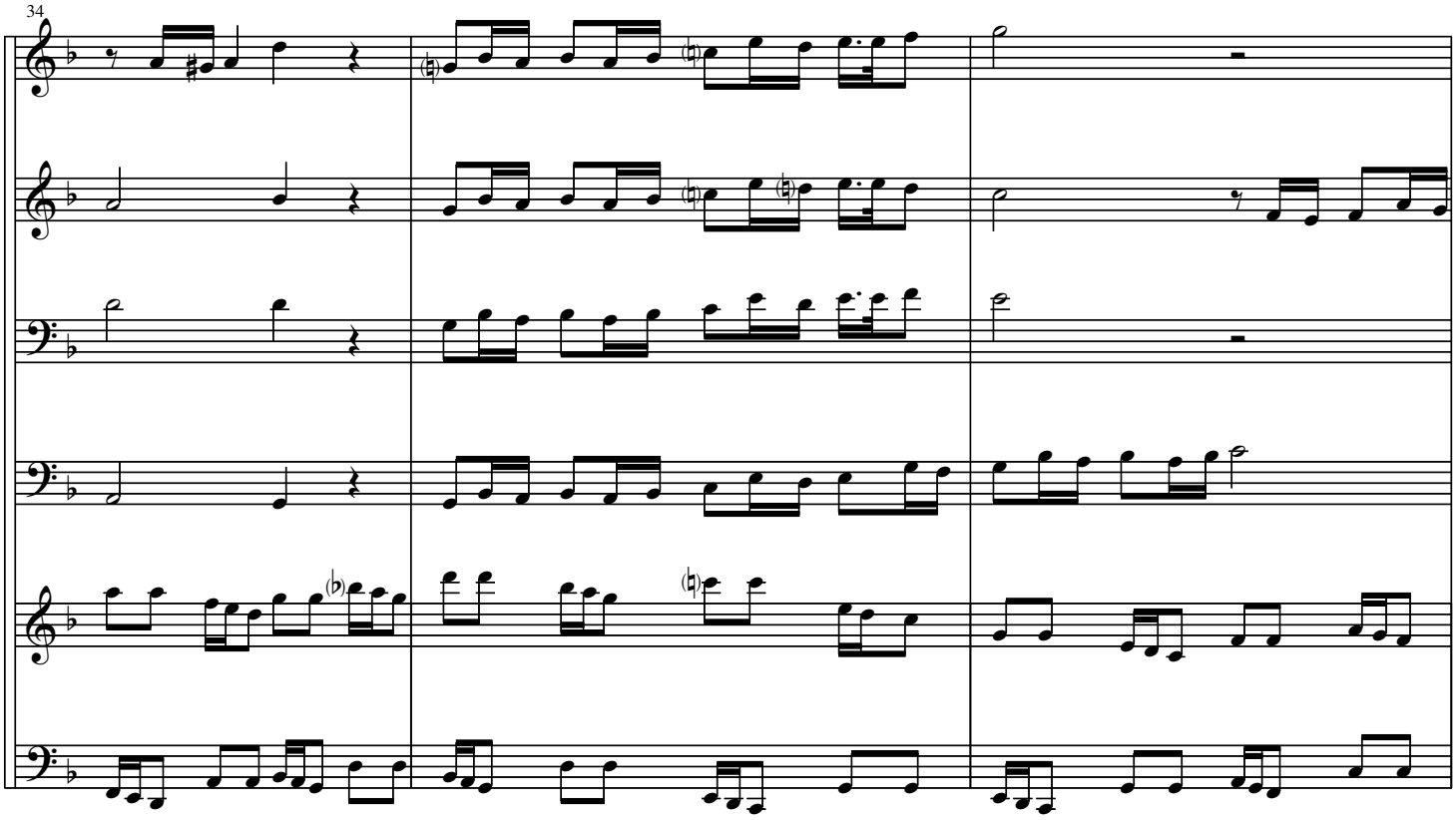
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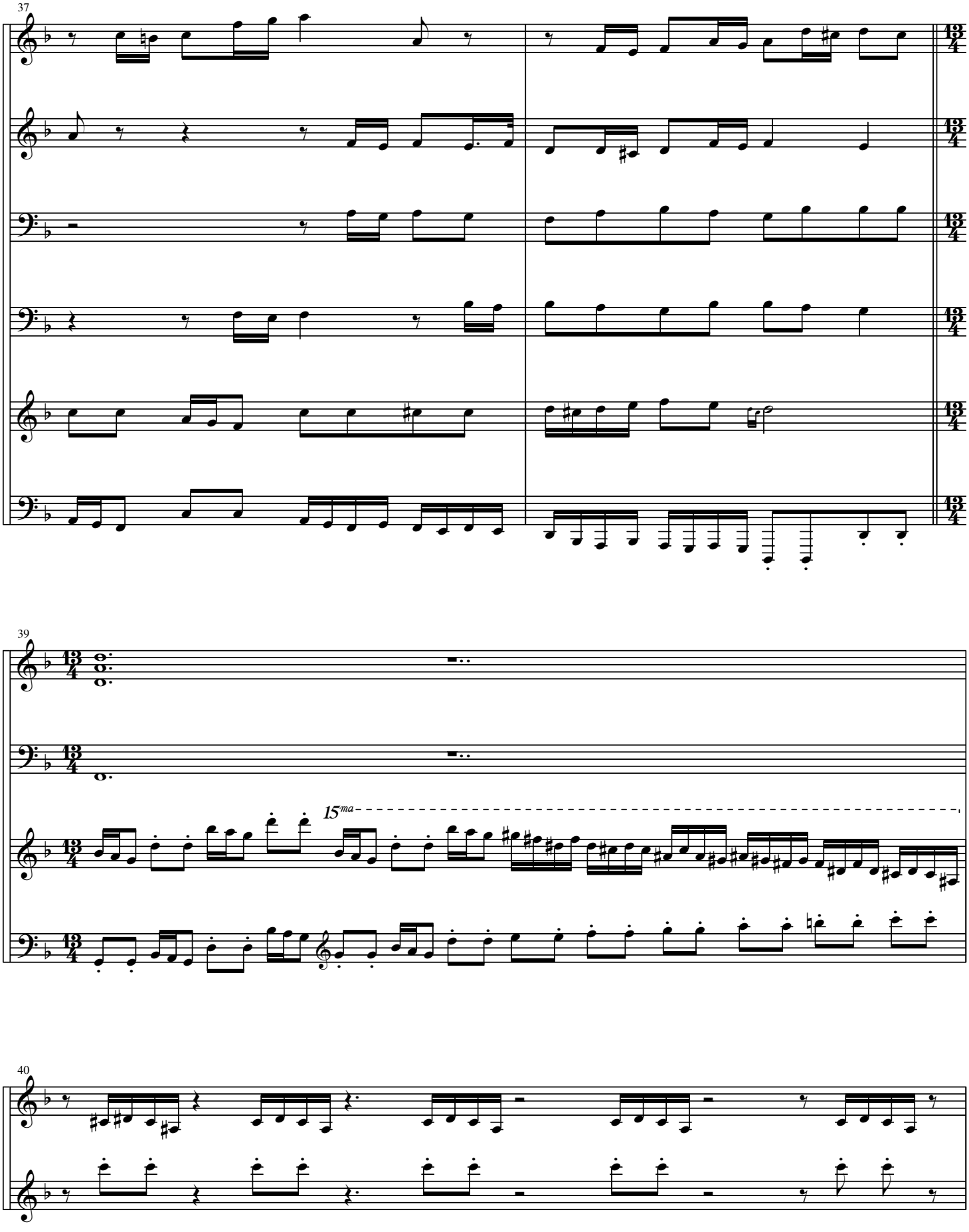
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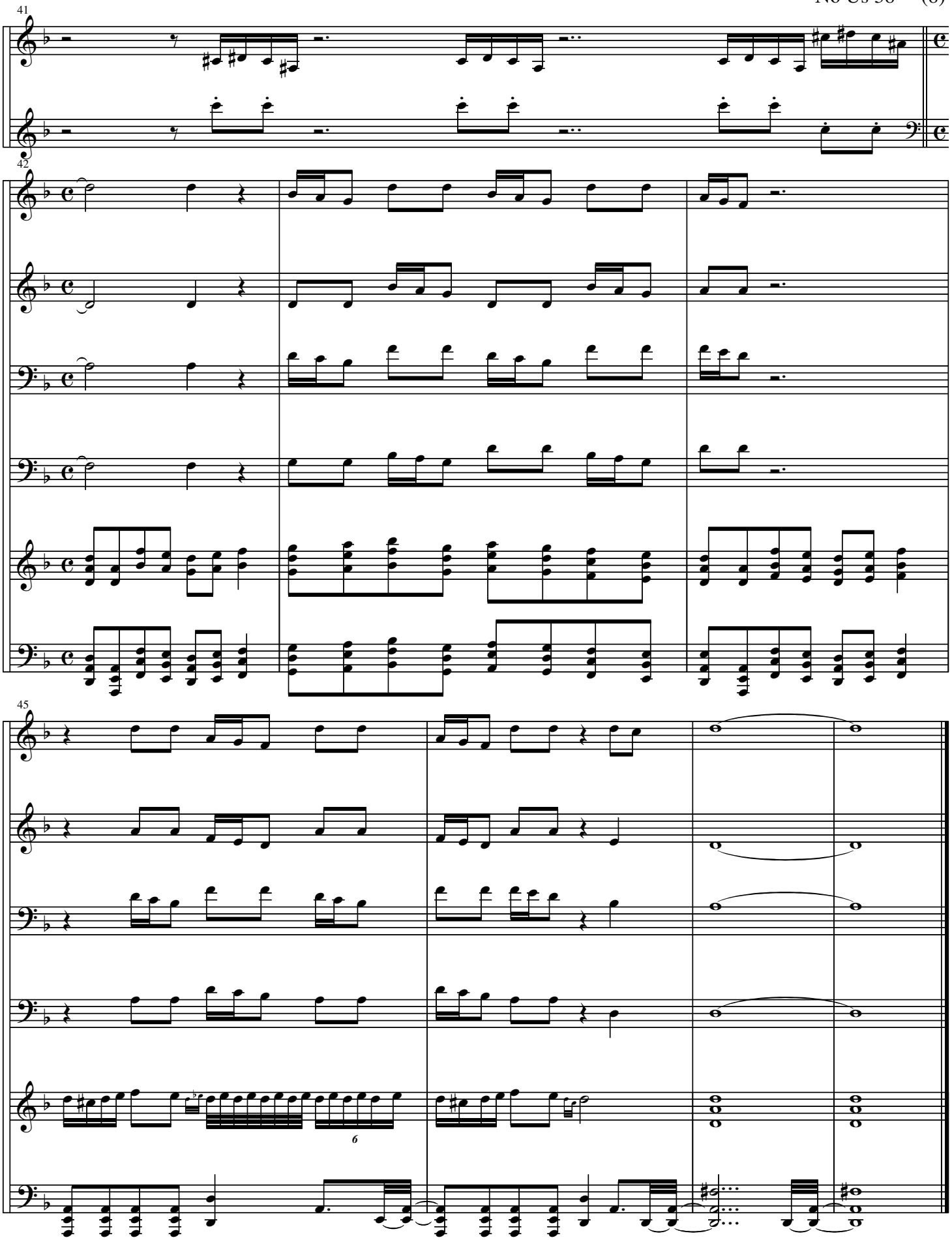
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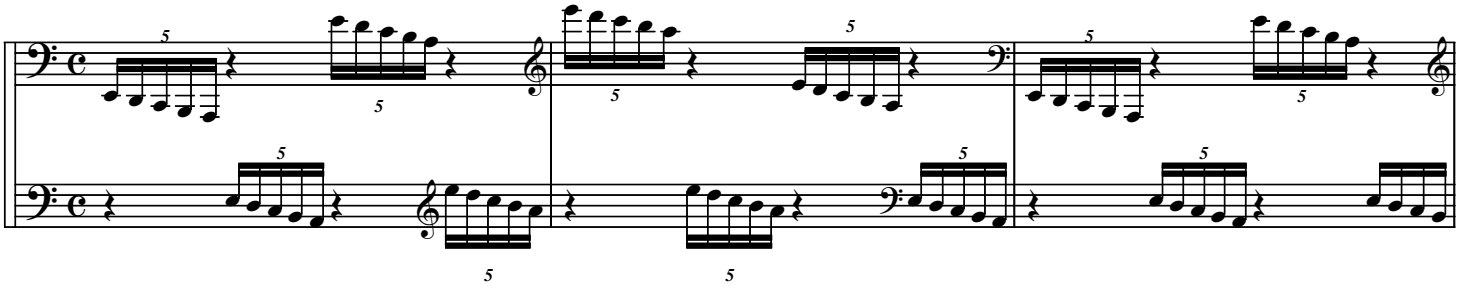
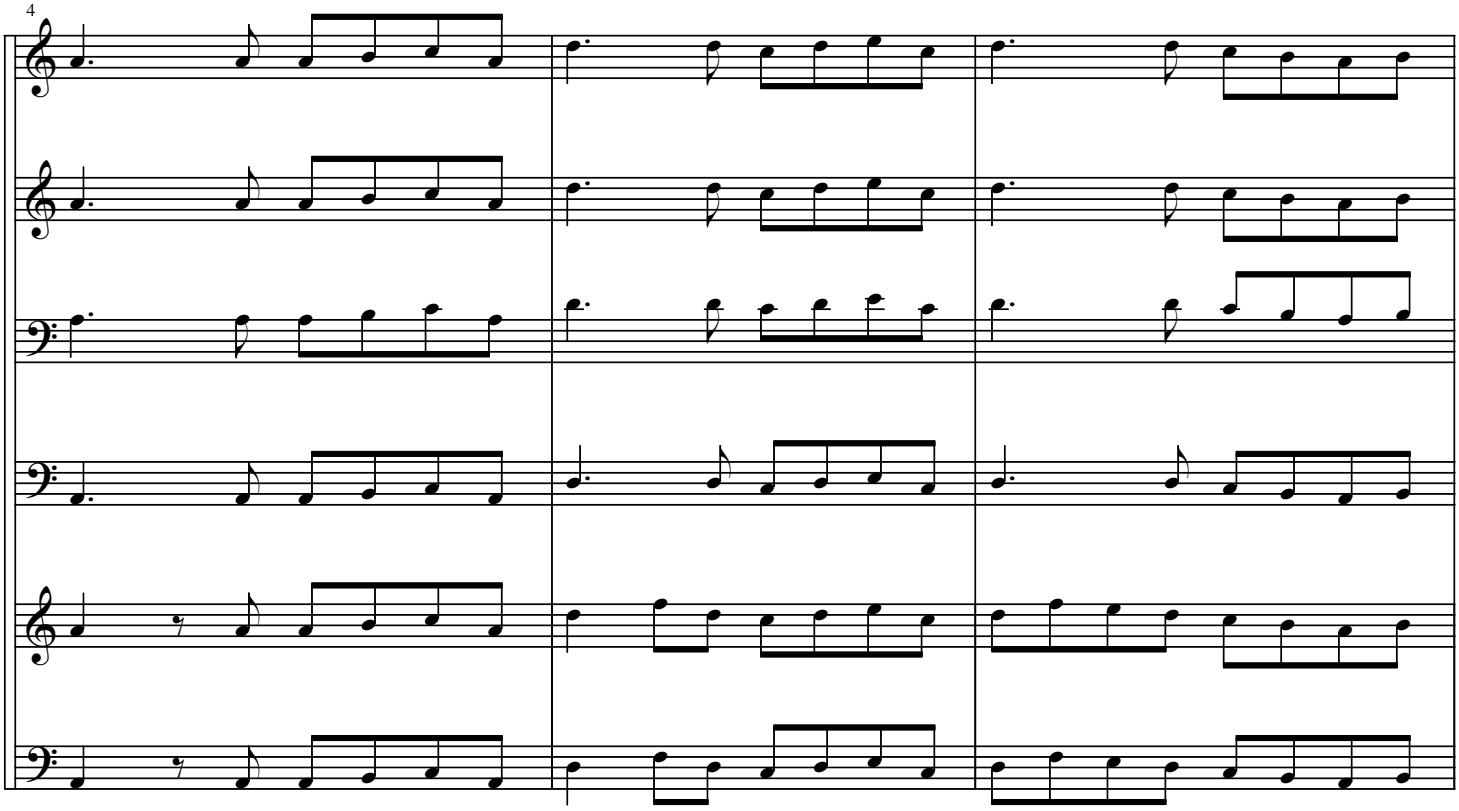
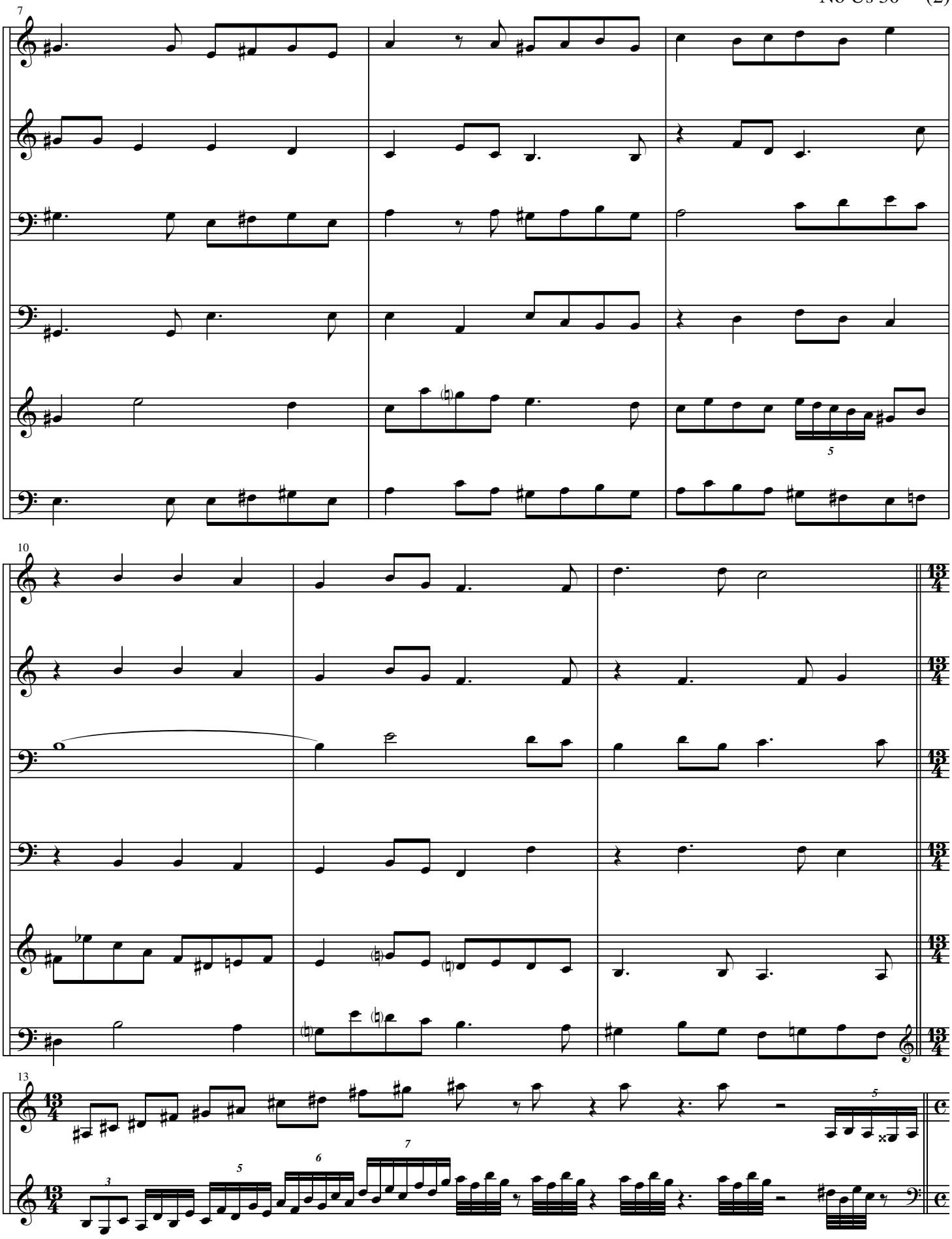
No Us 30, acrylic on paper, 30 x 24", 2020

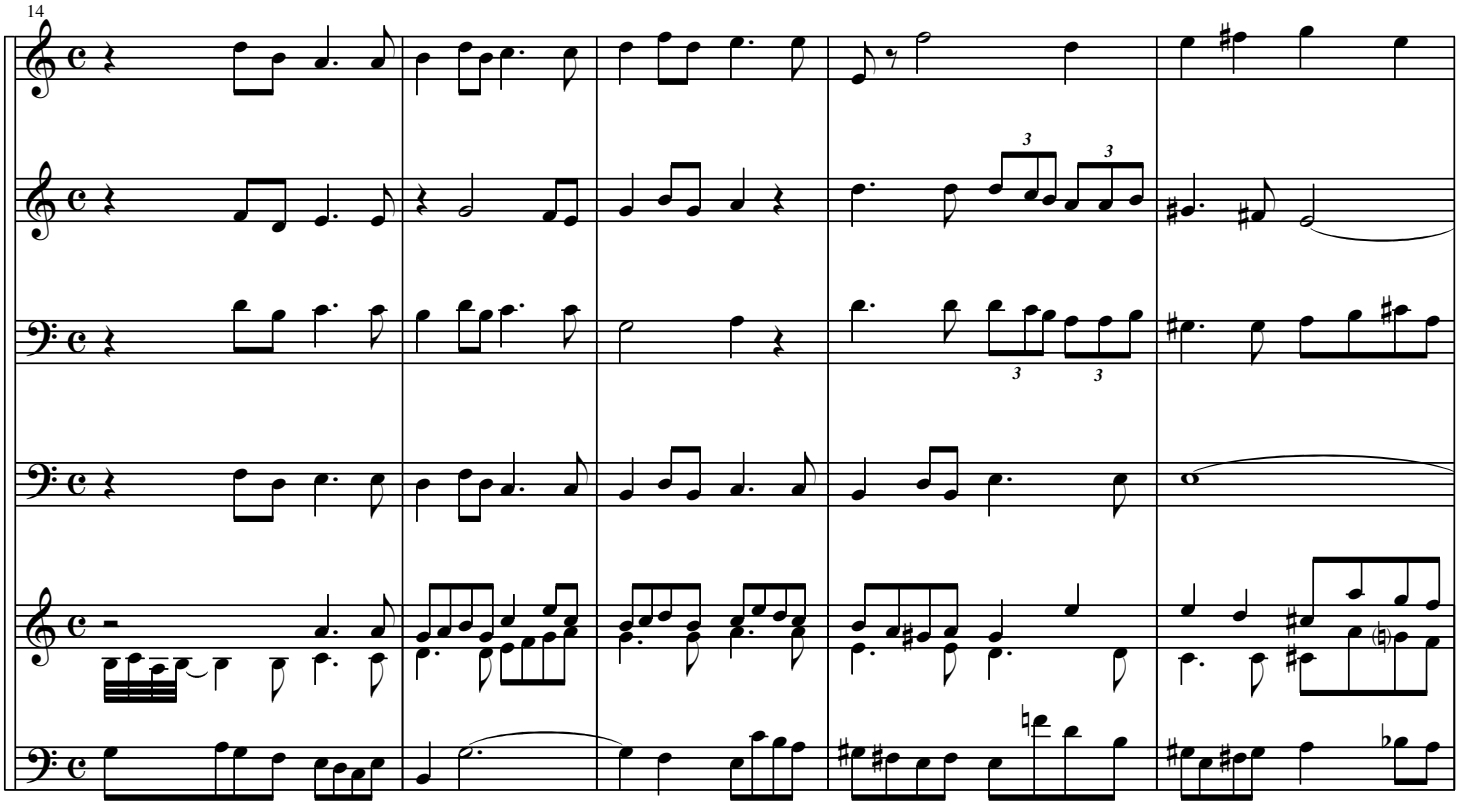
♩ = 130 - 150

Ryan Charles Ramer





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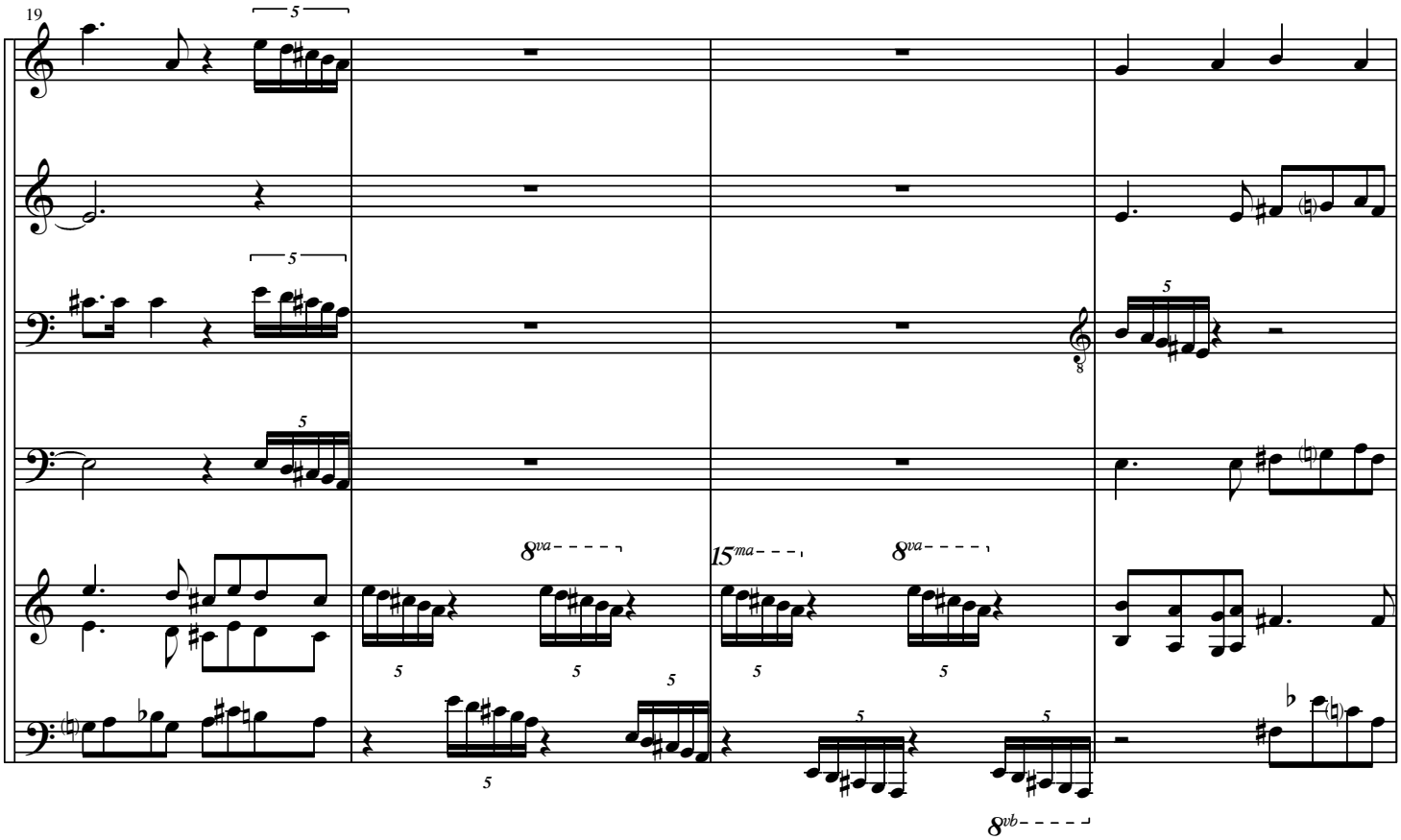
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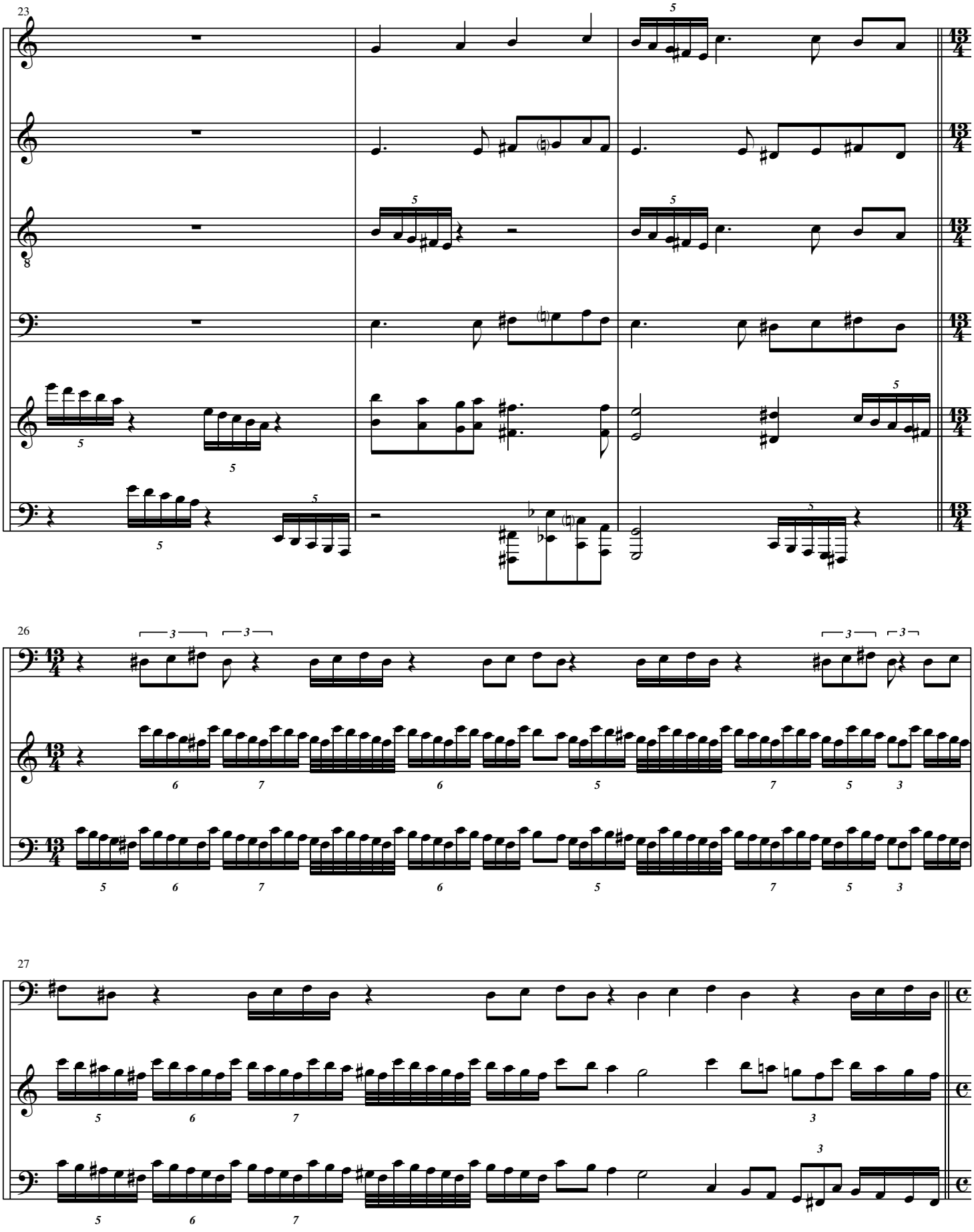
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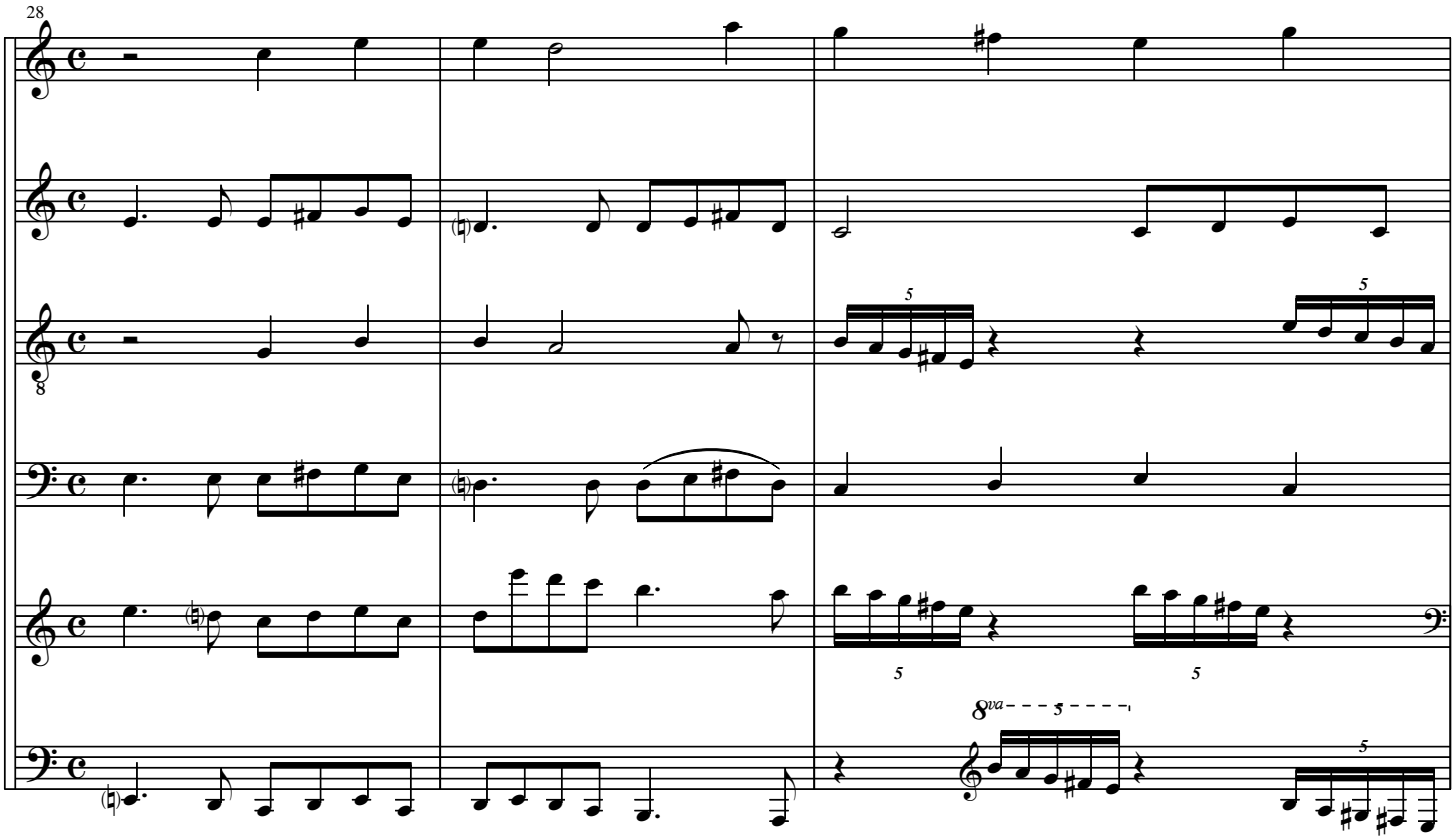
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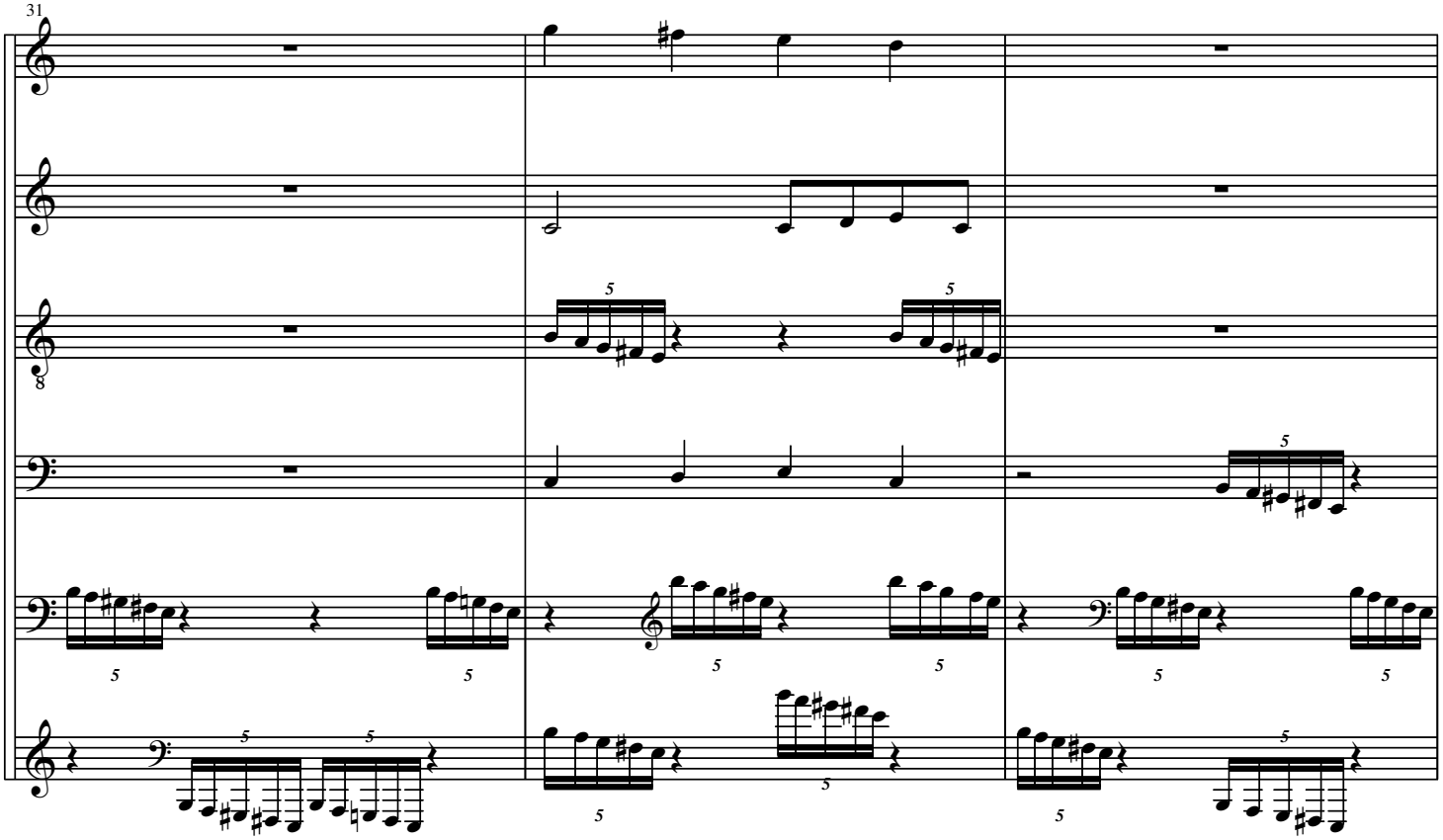
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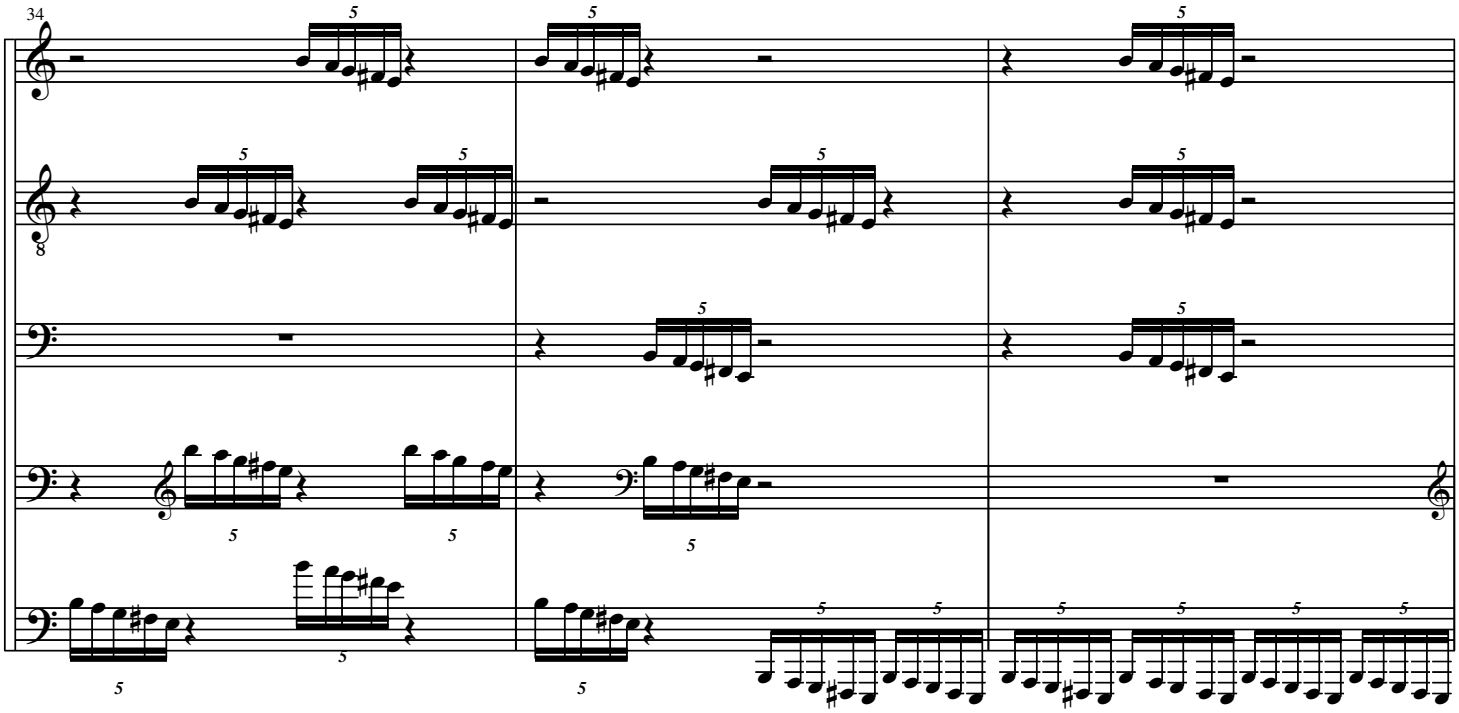
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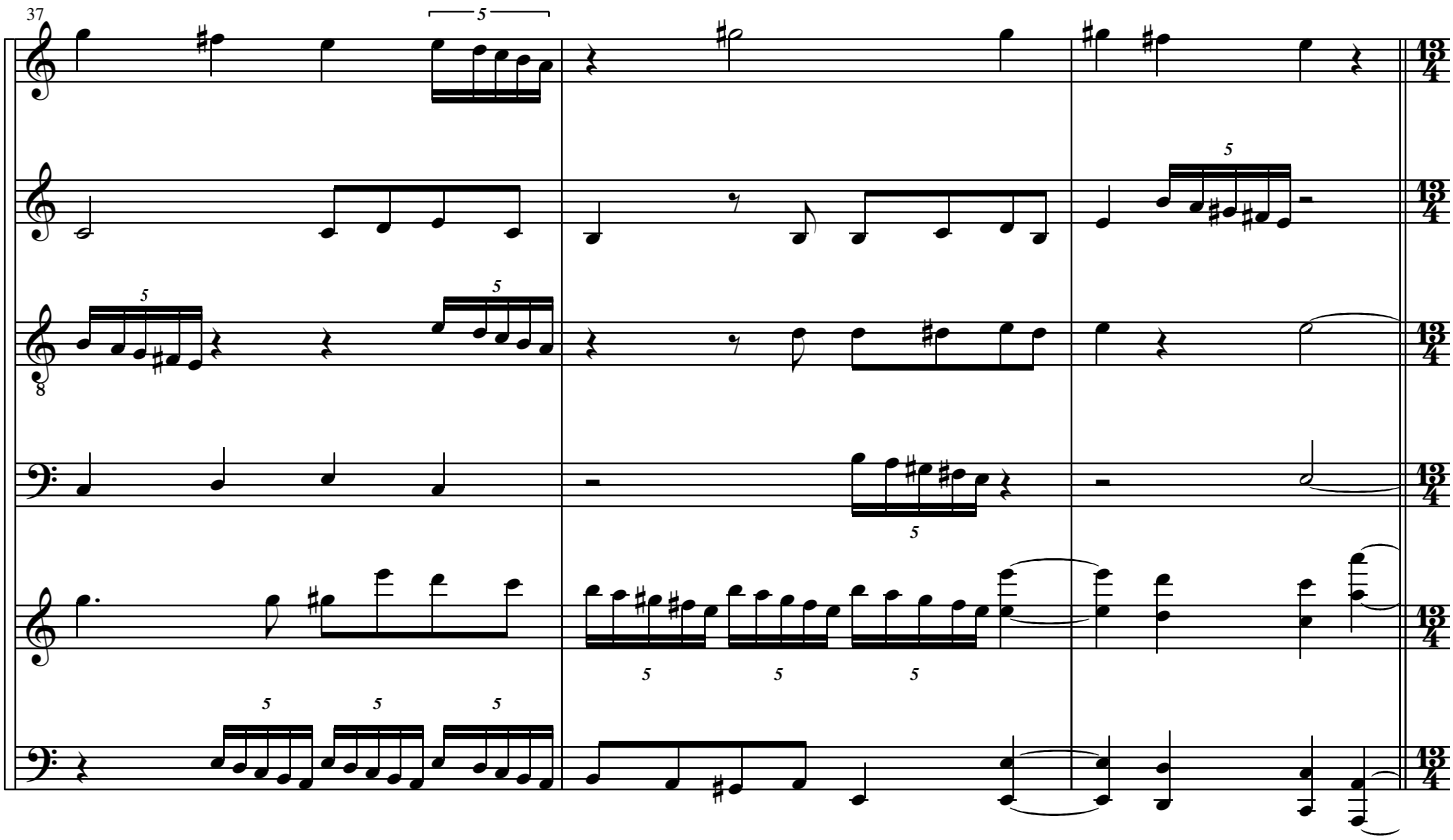
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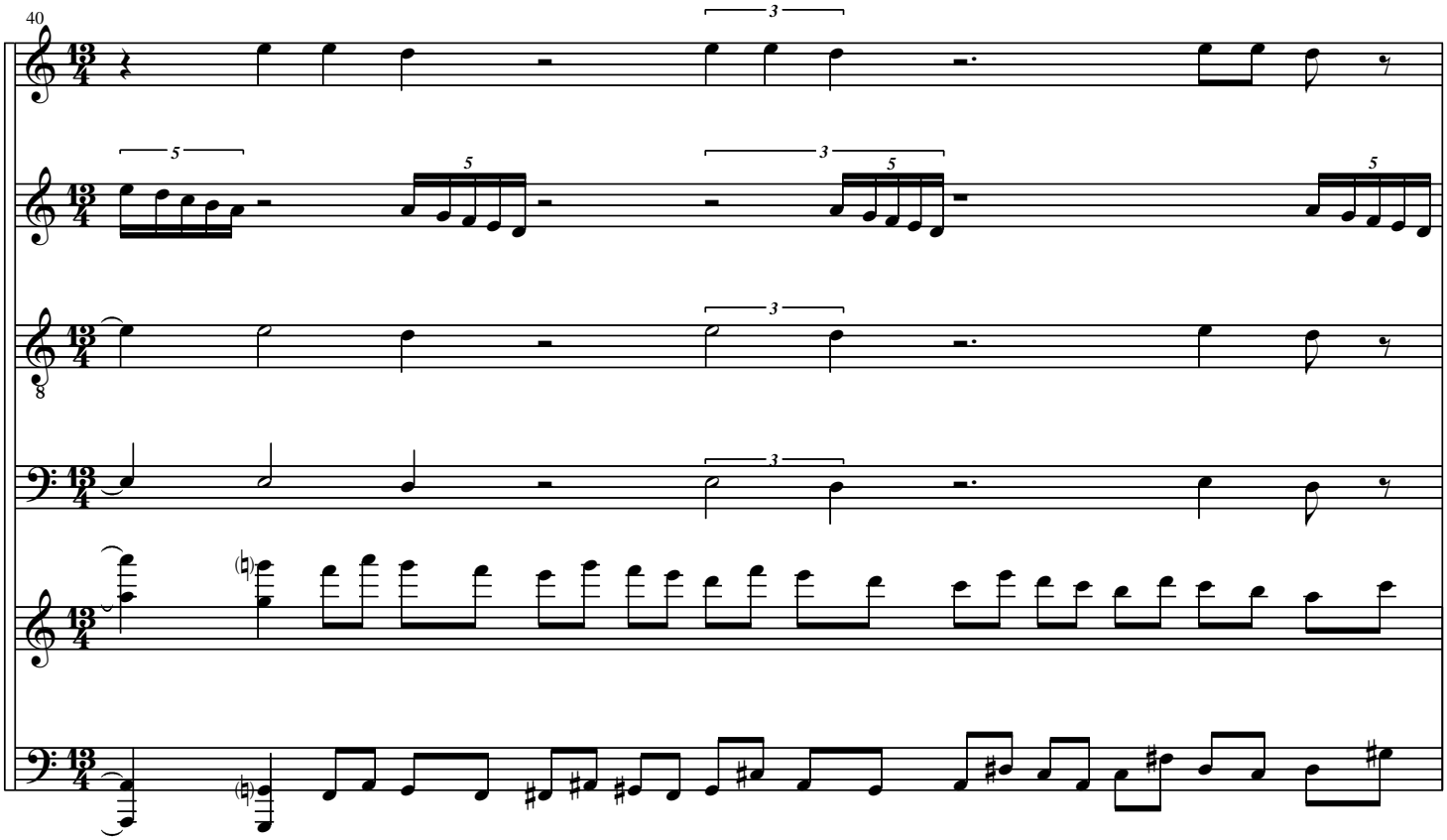
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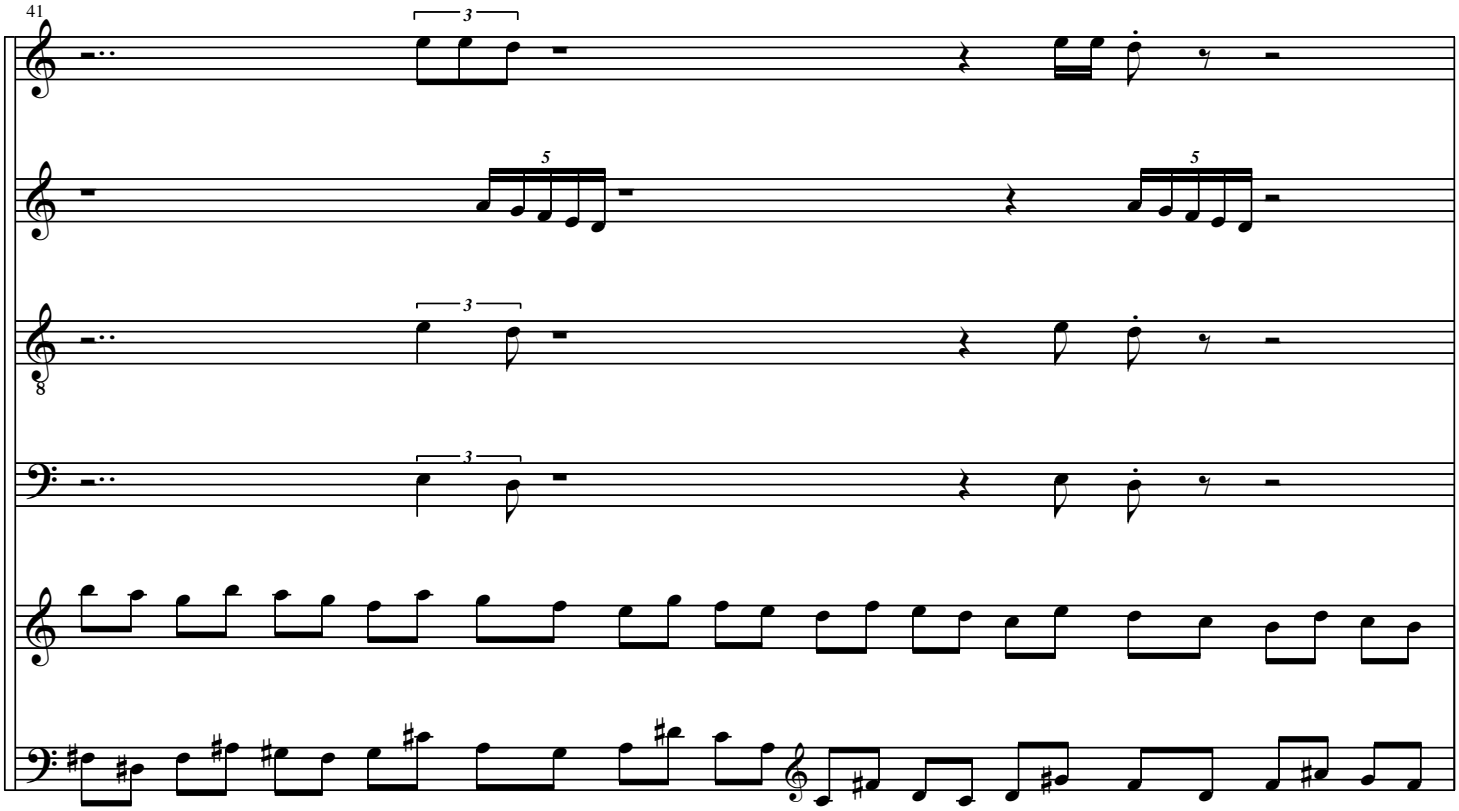
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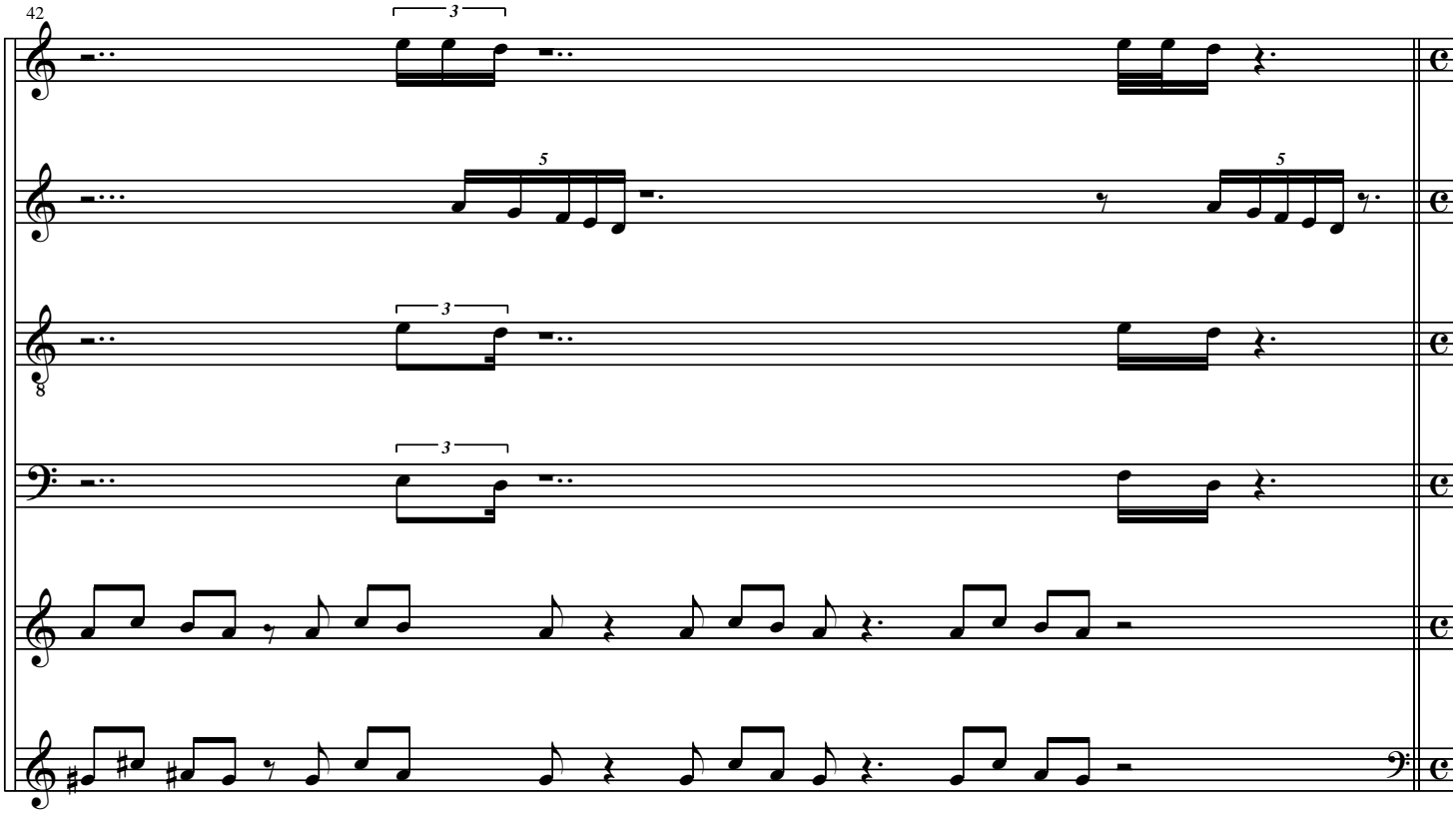
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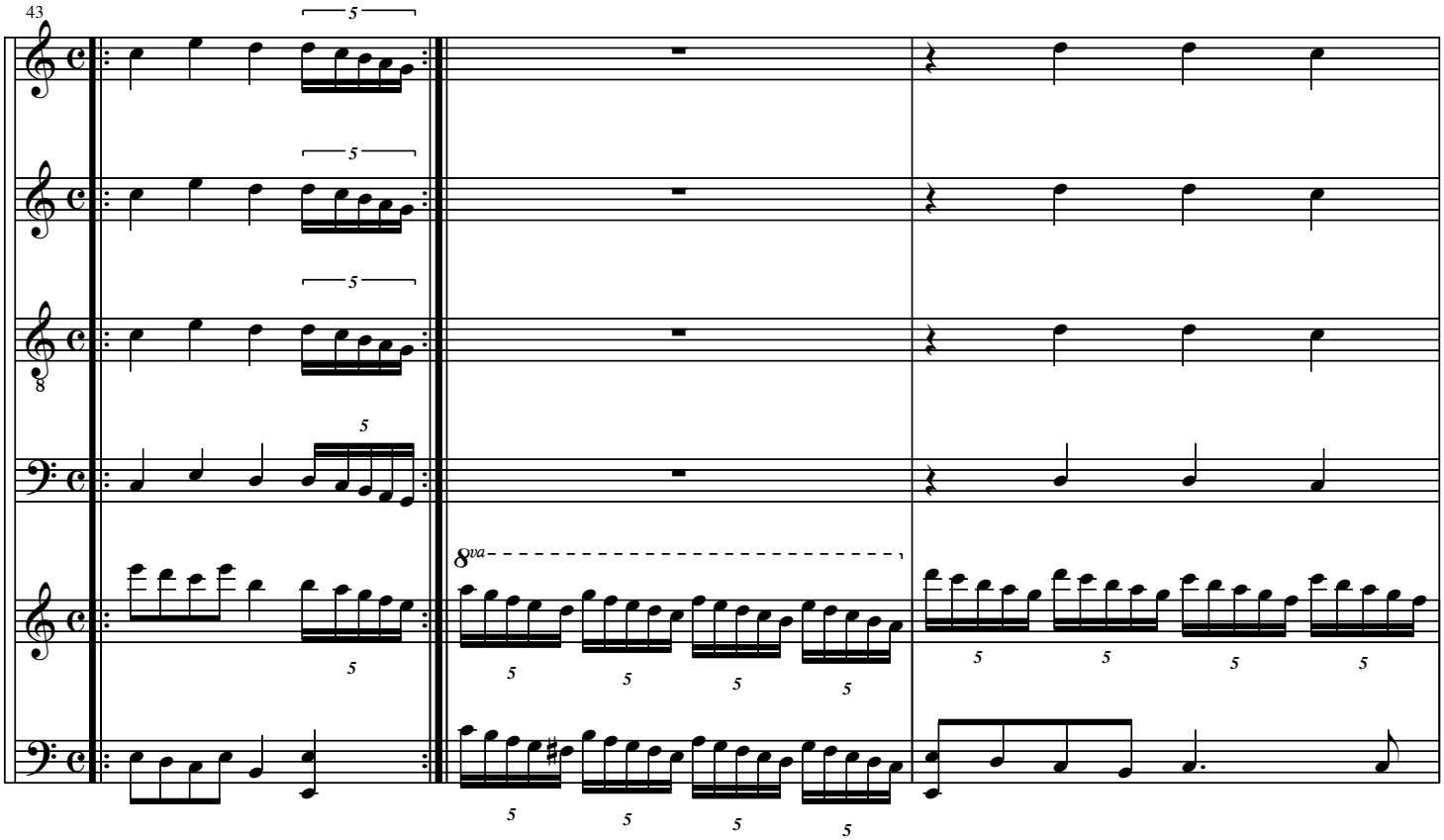
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8va
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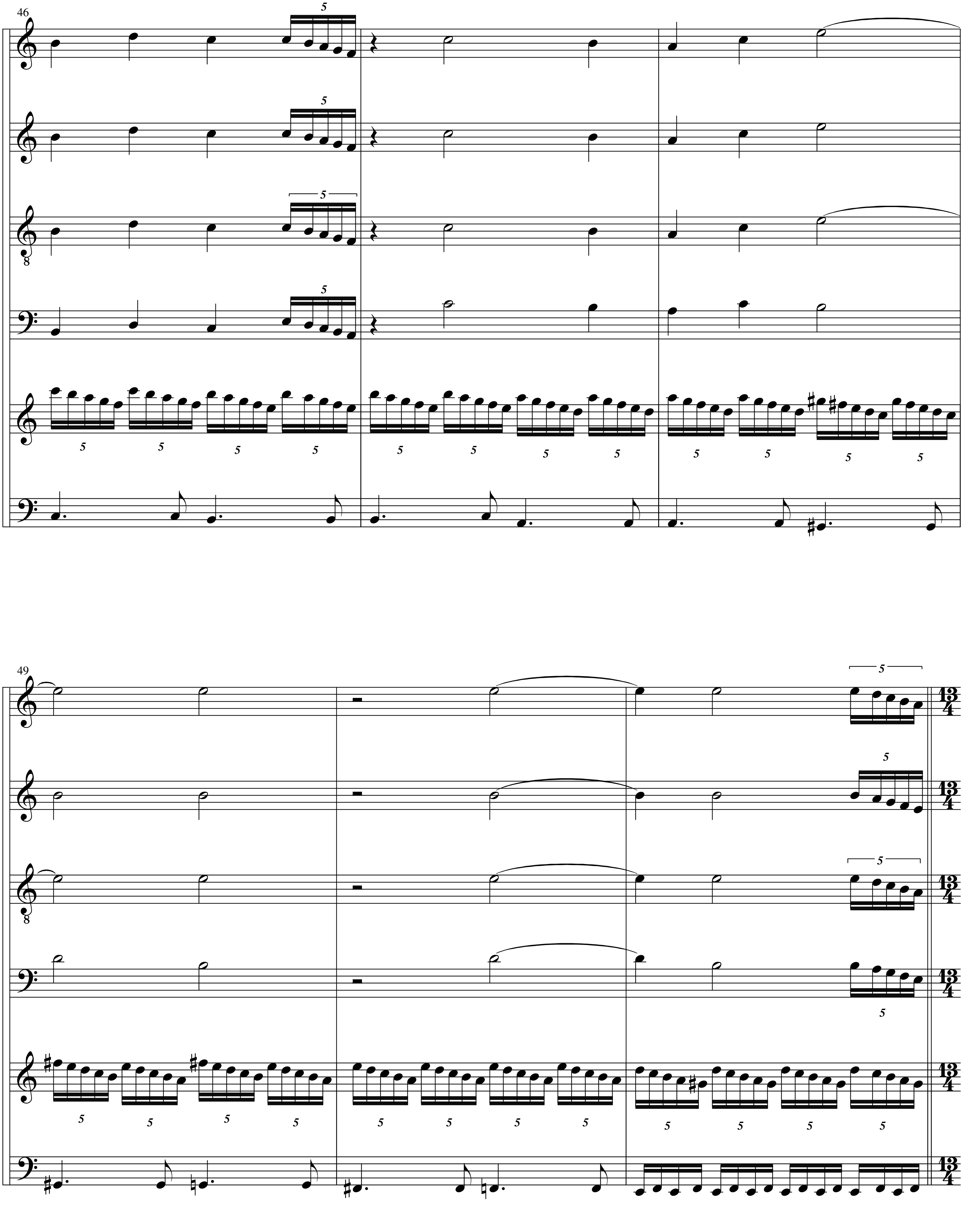
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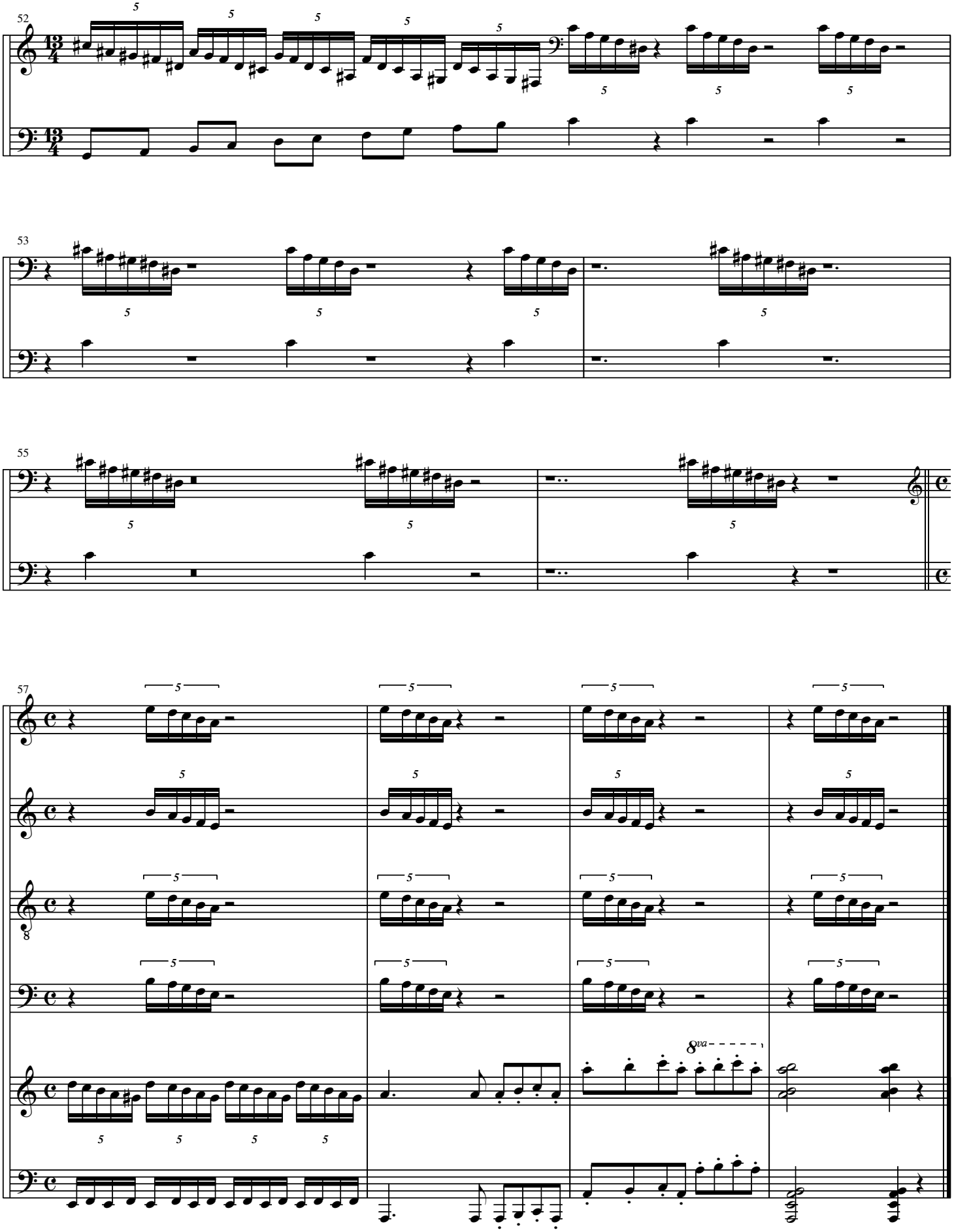
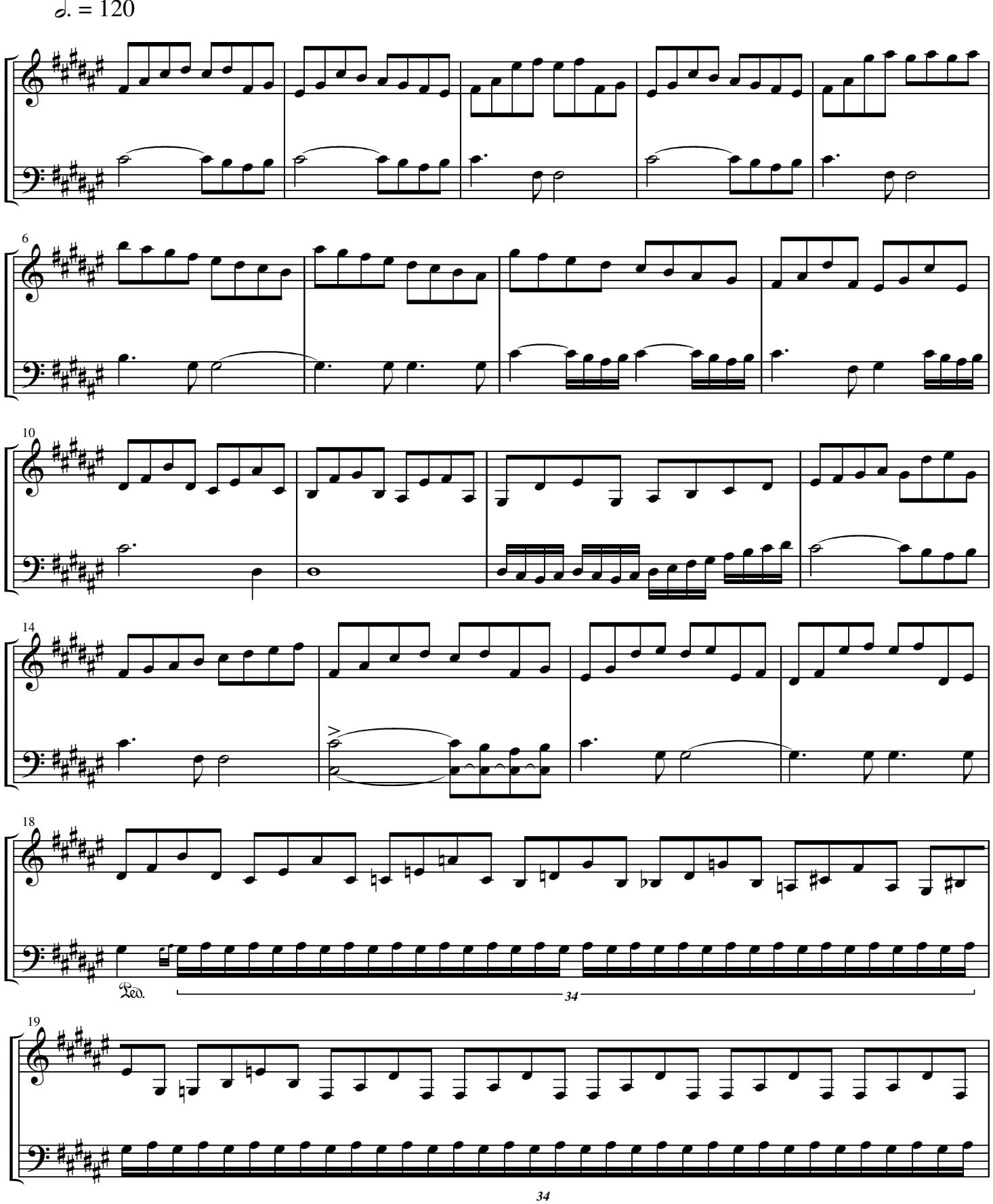
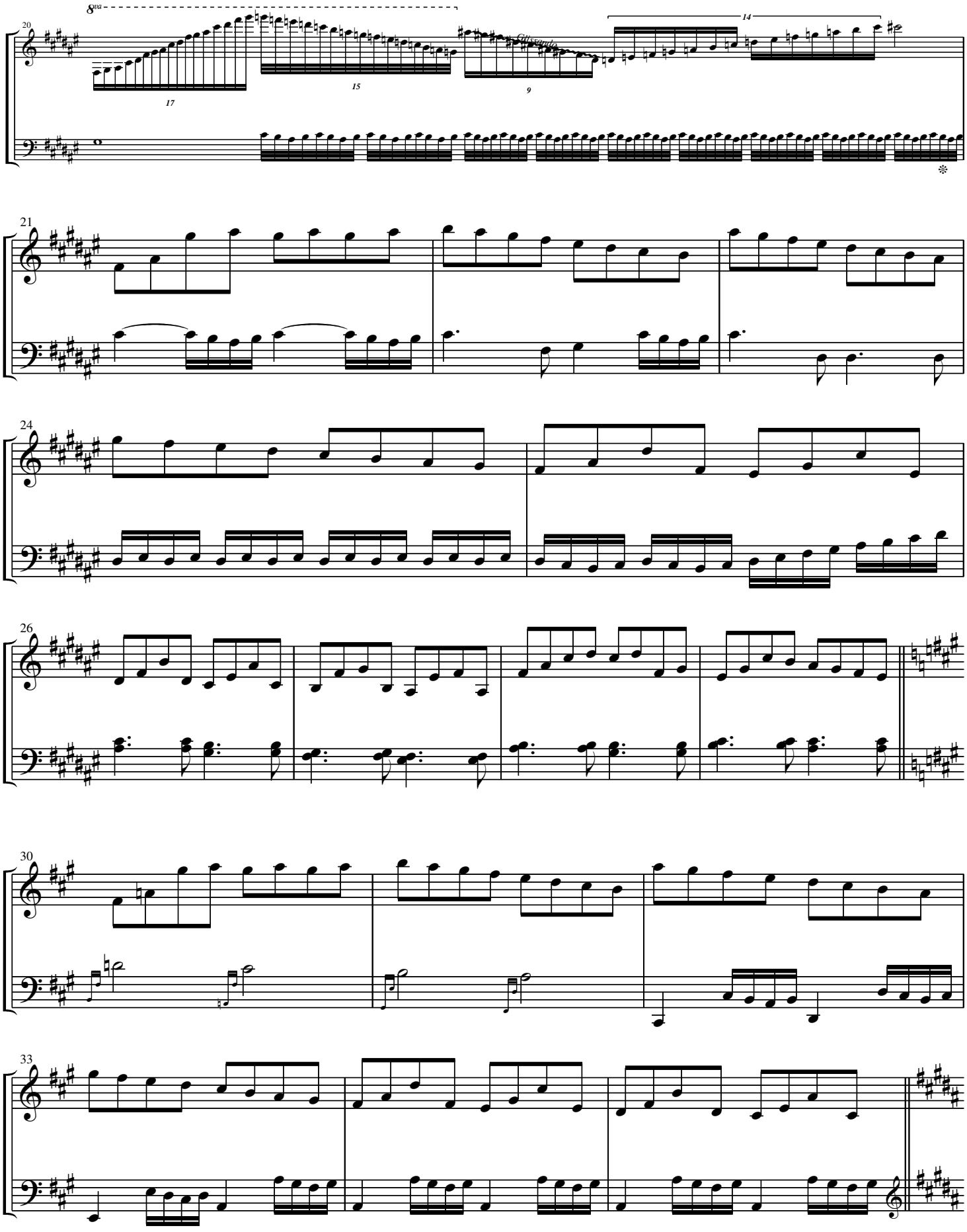

52
53
55
57
8va

No Us 23, acrylic on canvas, 40x32", 2019

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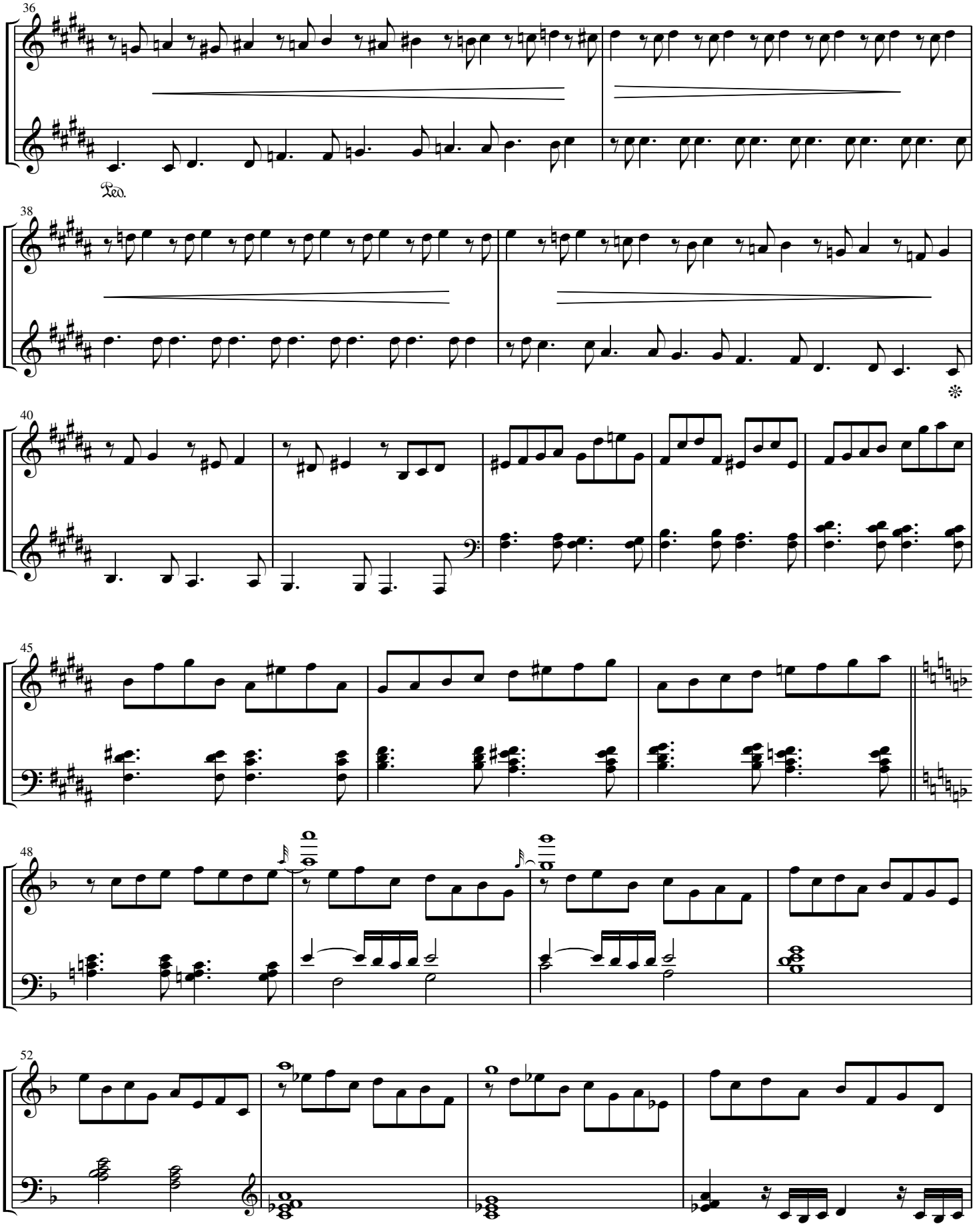
33


36
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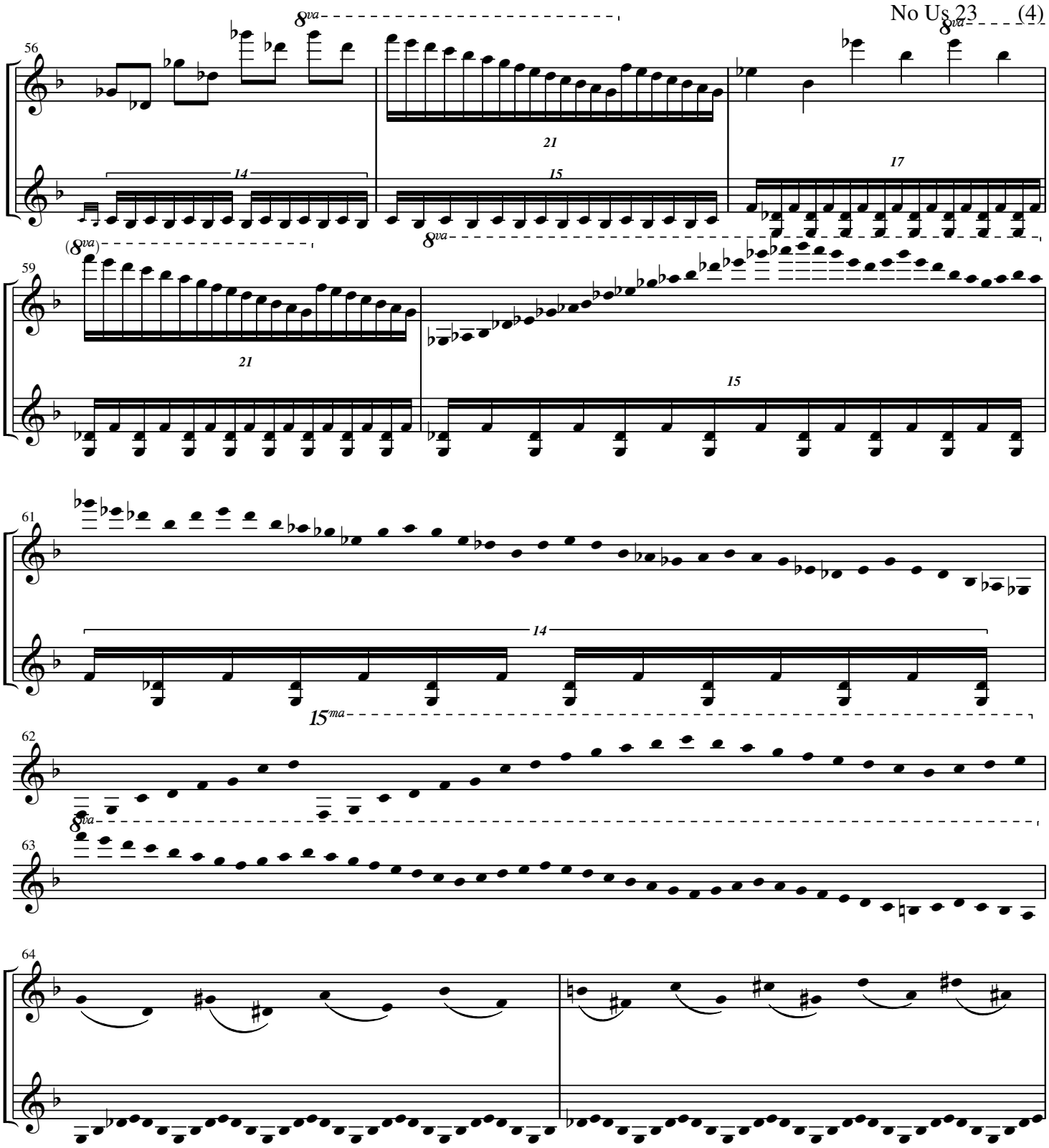
38
40
45
48
52


56
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17
(8va)
8va
59
21
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61
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62
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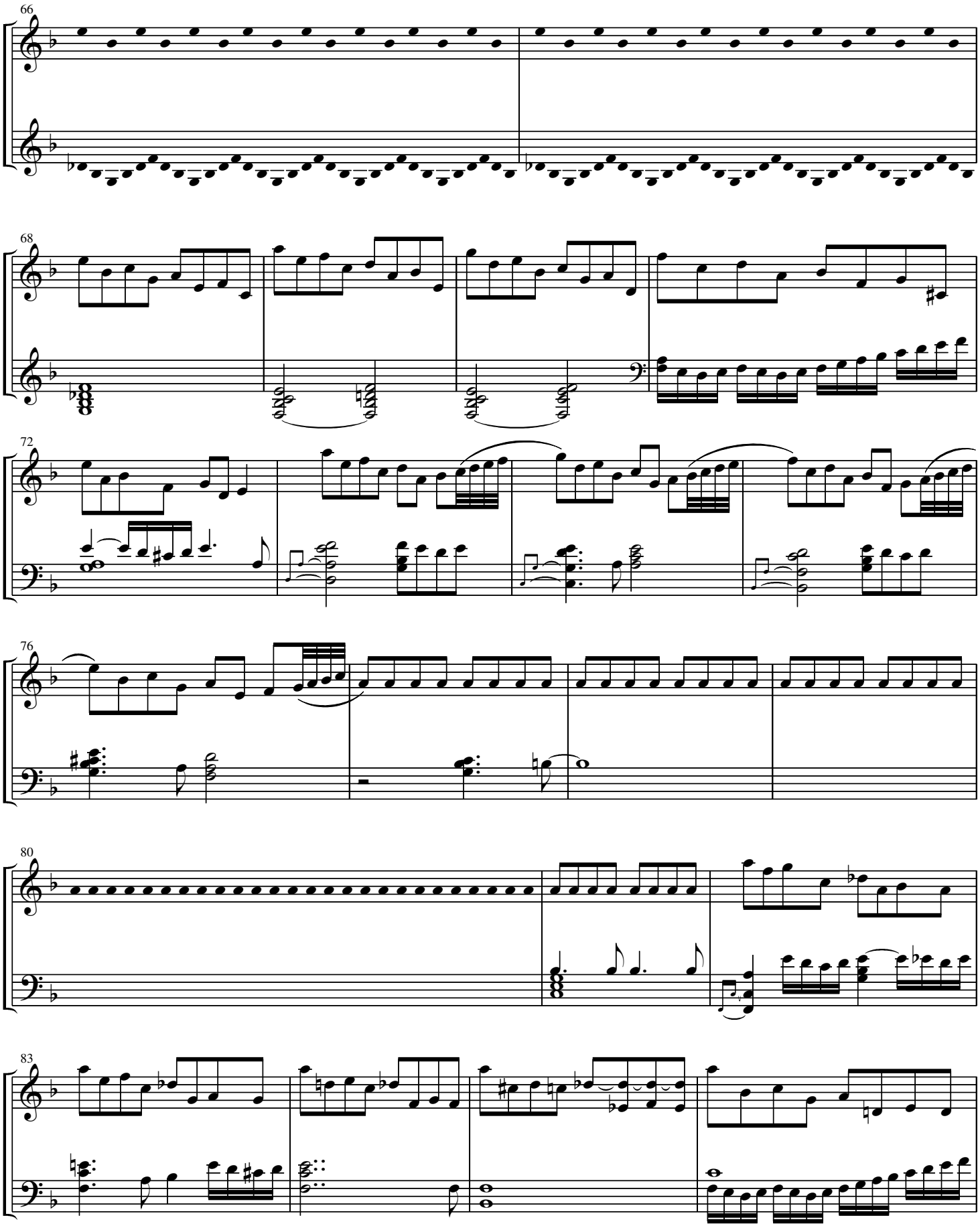
63
64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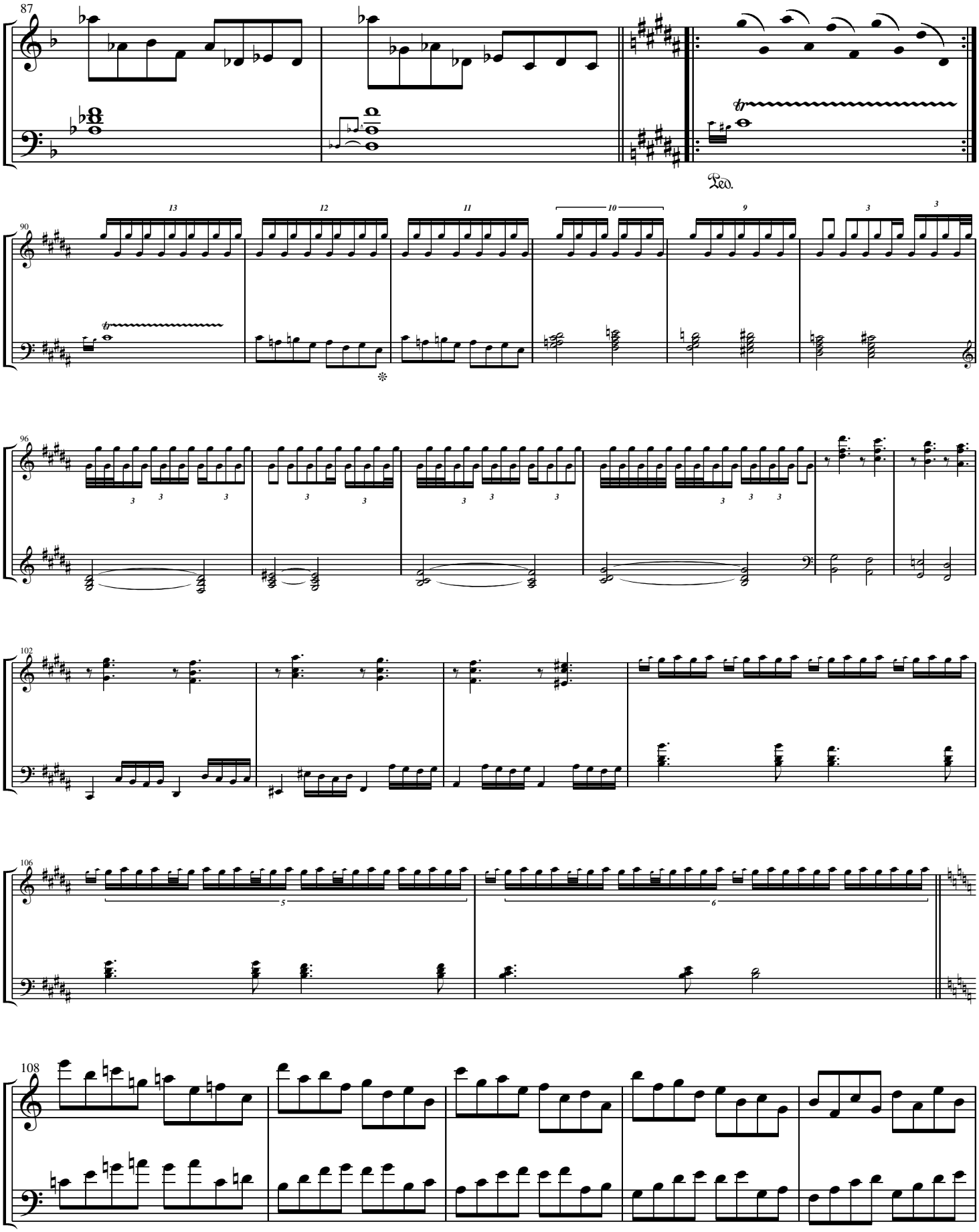
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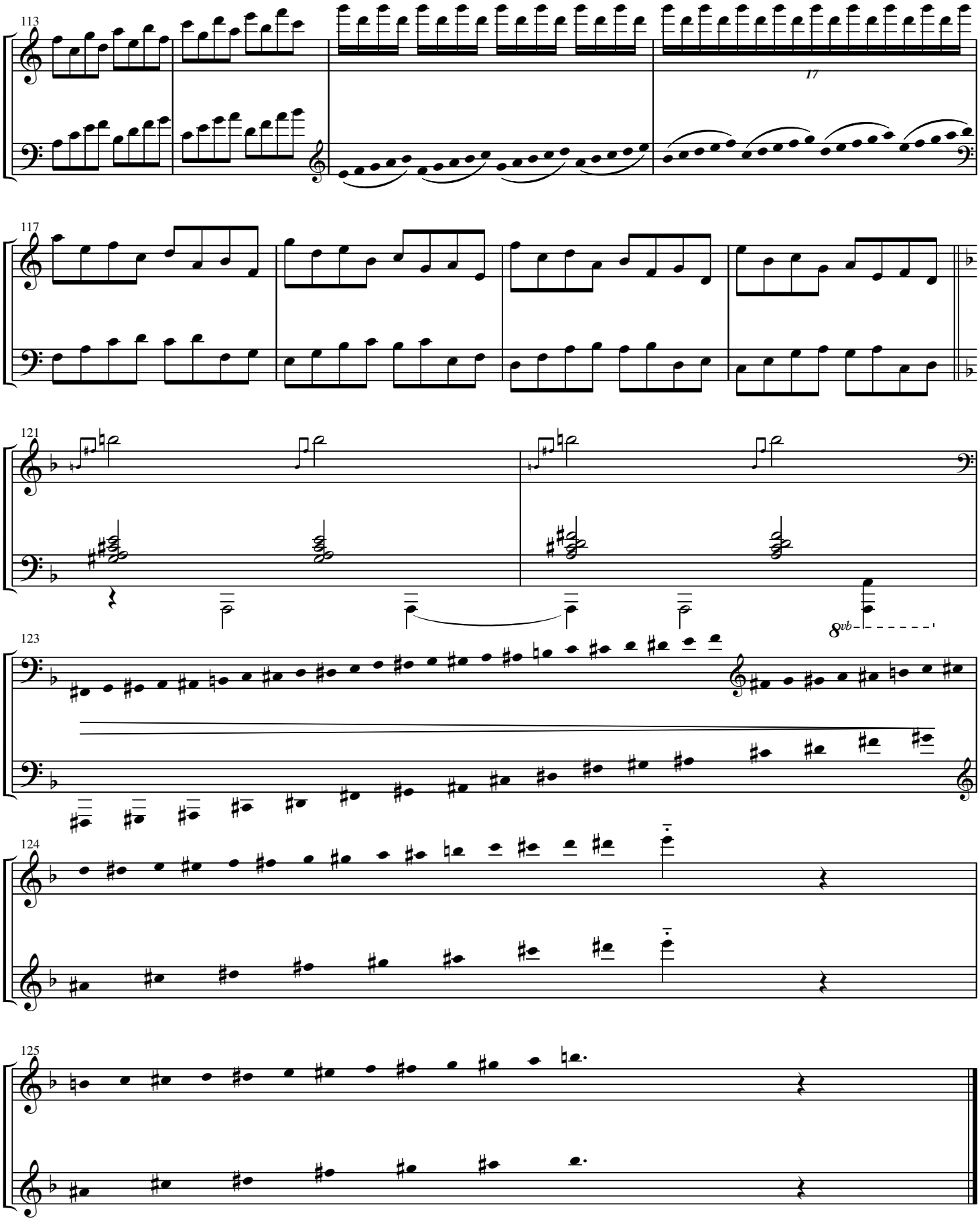
113
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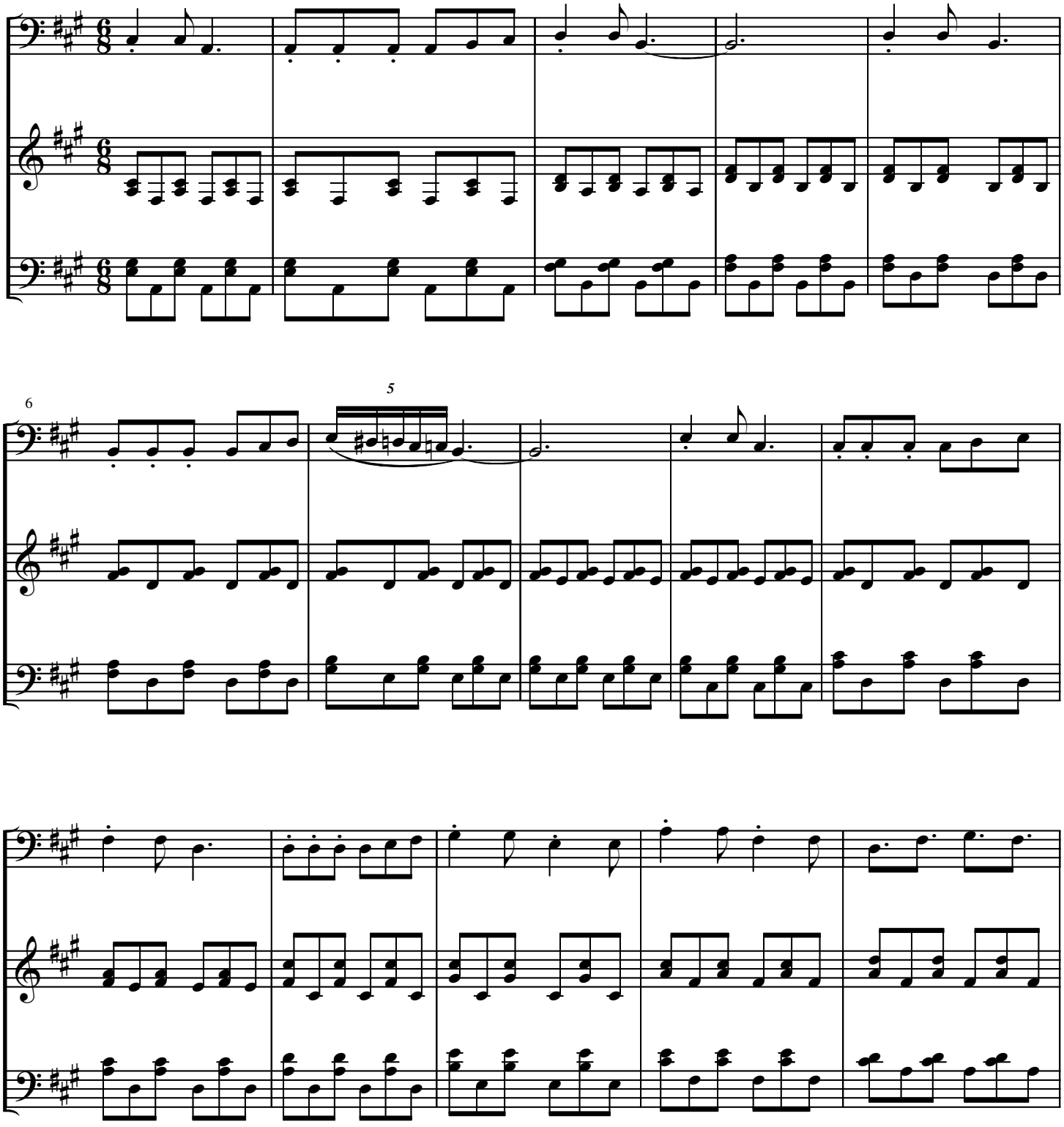
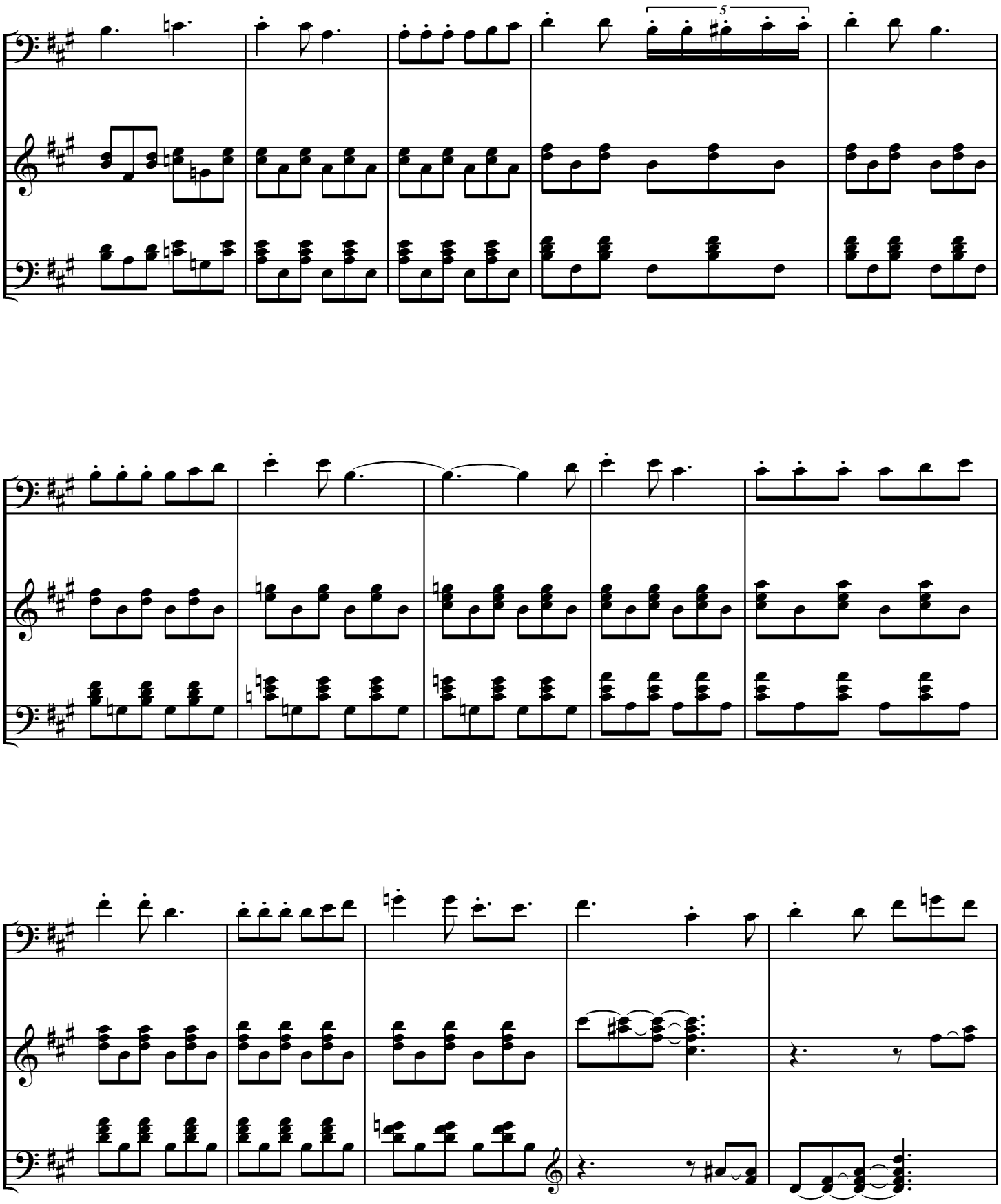
117
121
8vb
123
124
125

No Us 15, acrylic on paper, 28x20", 2019

♪ = 60

Ryan Charles Ramer

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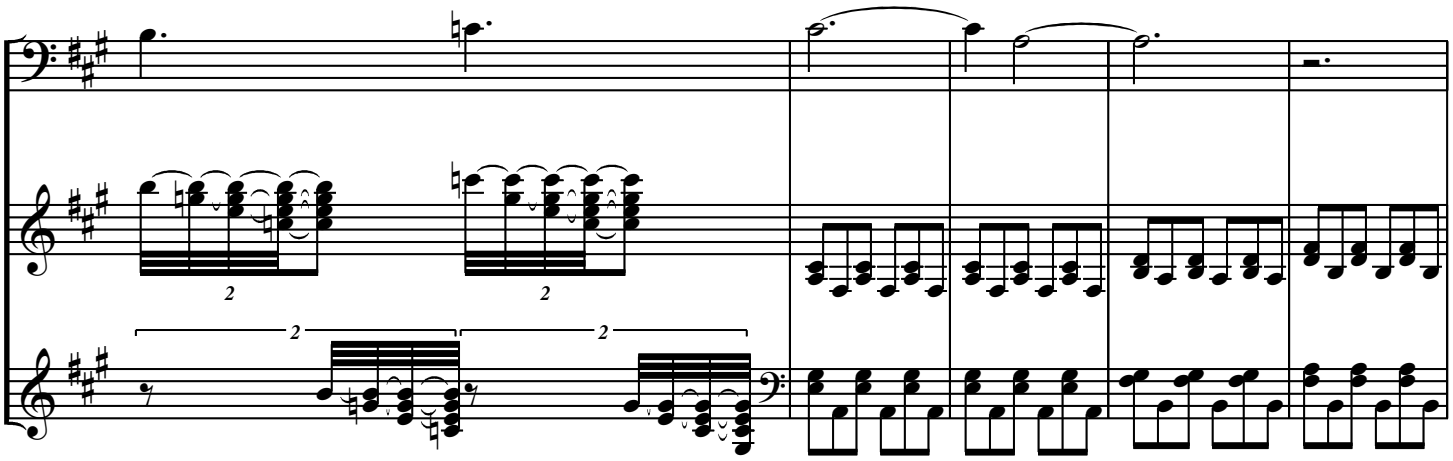

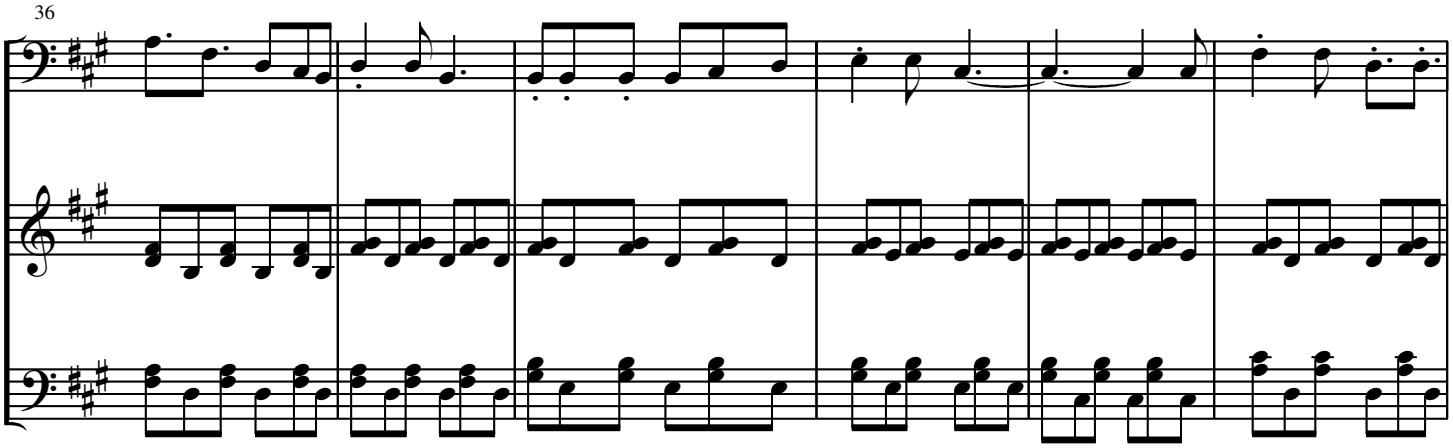
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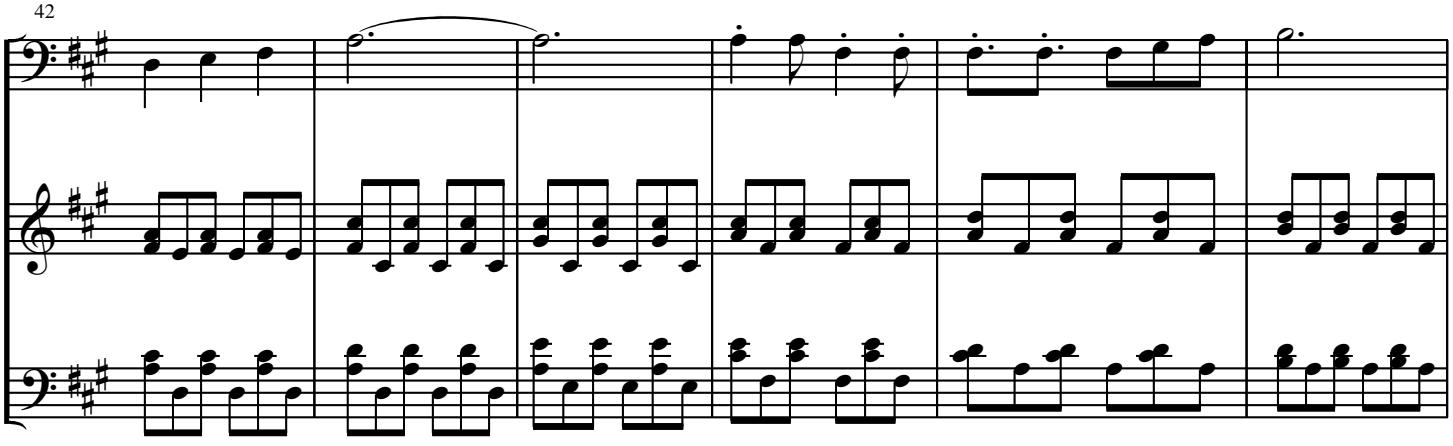
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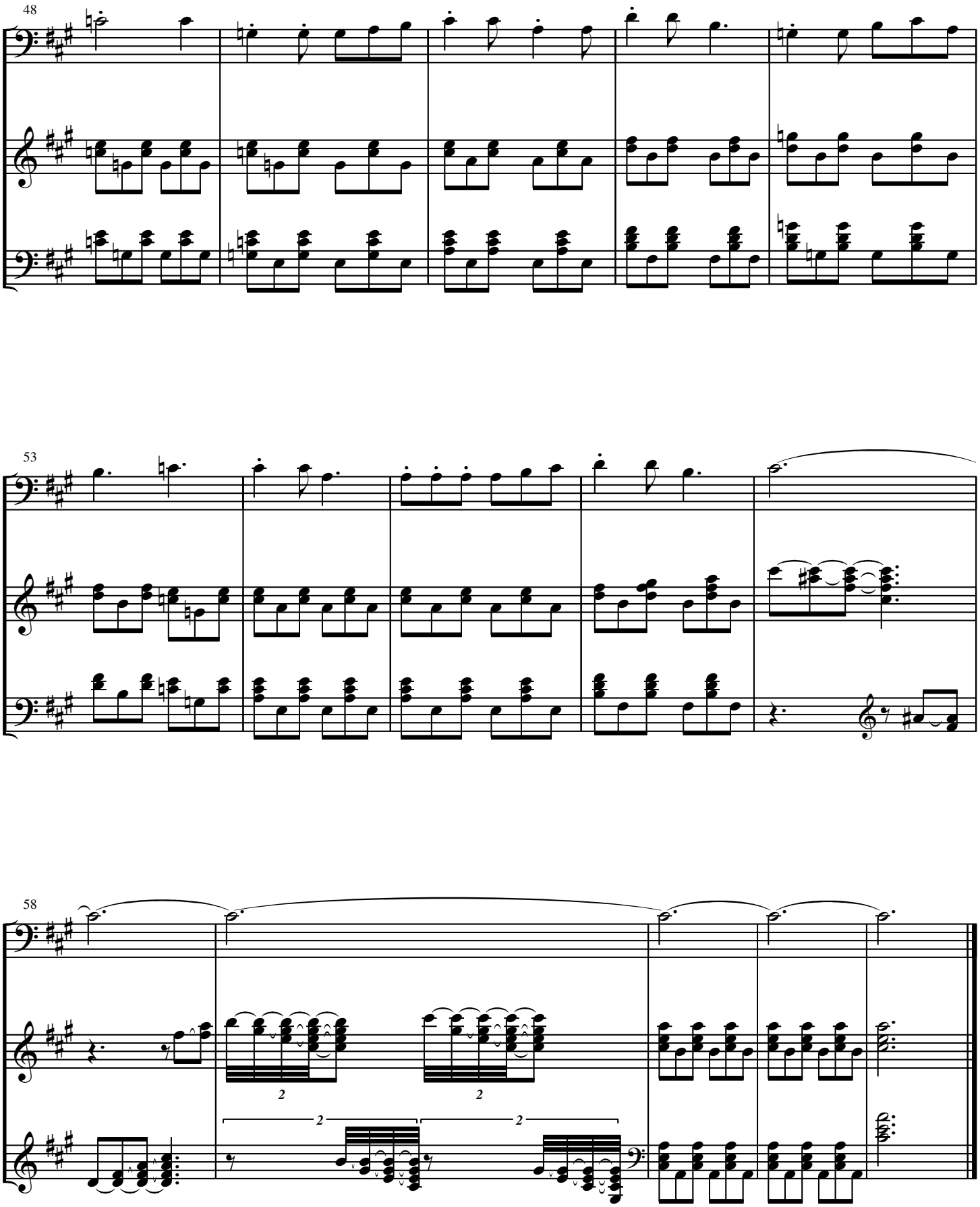
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53
58
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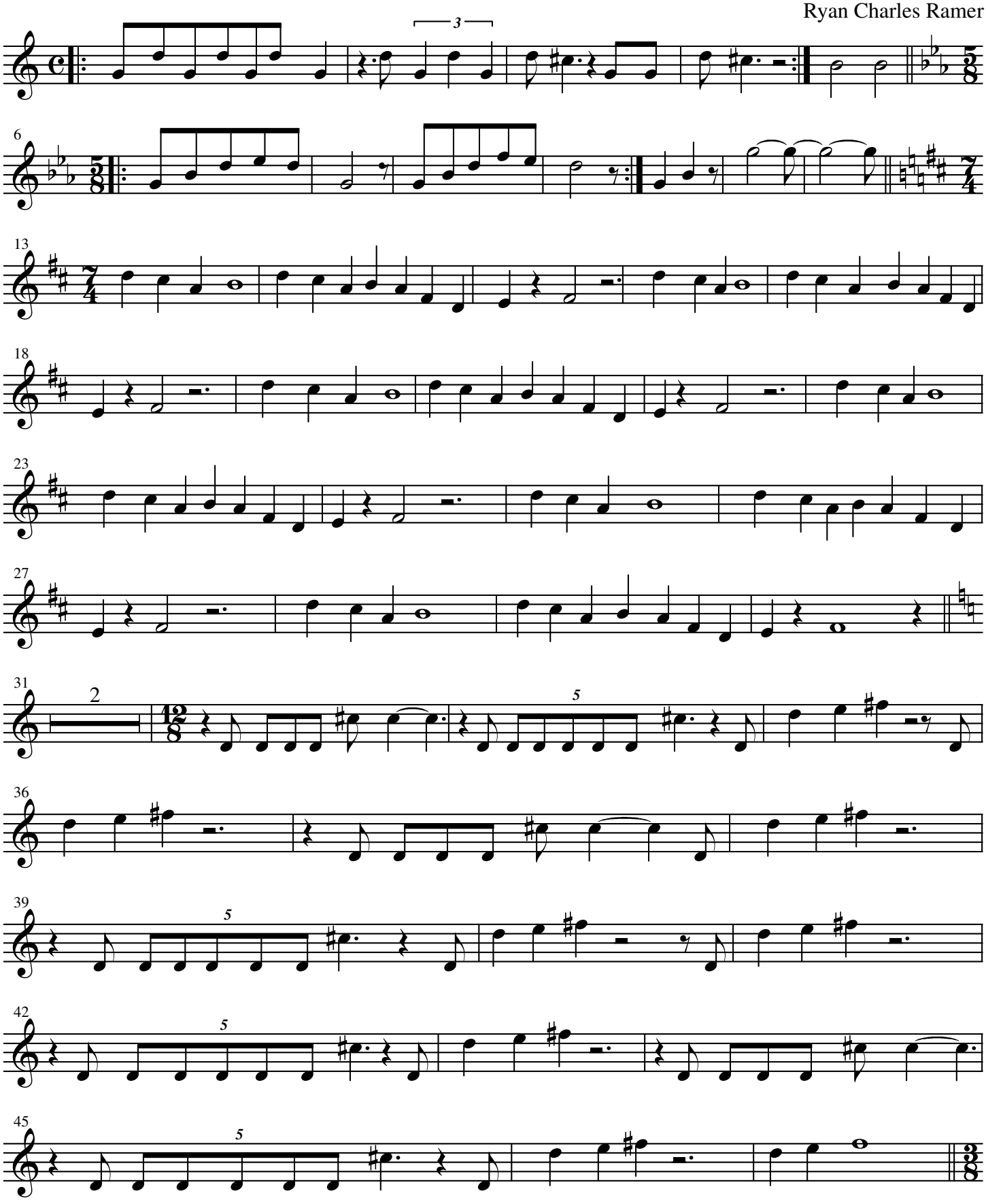
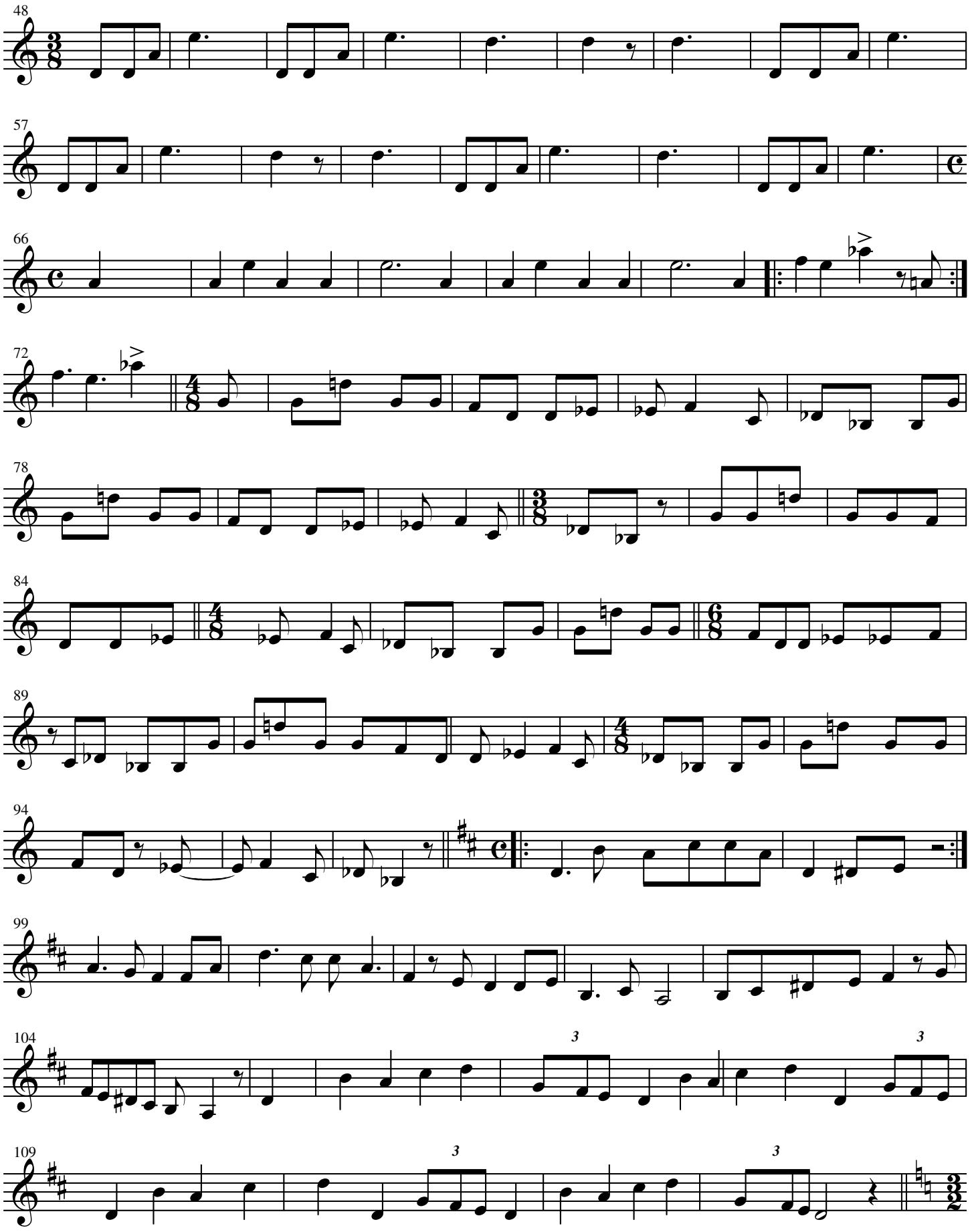
2
2
2

Event, 2019

Ryan Charles Ramer

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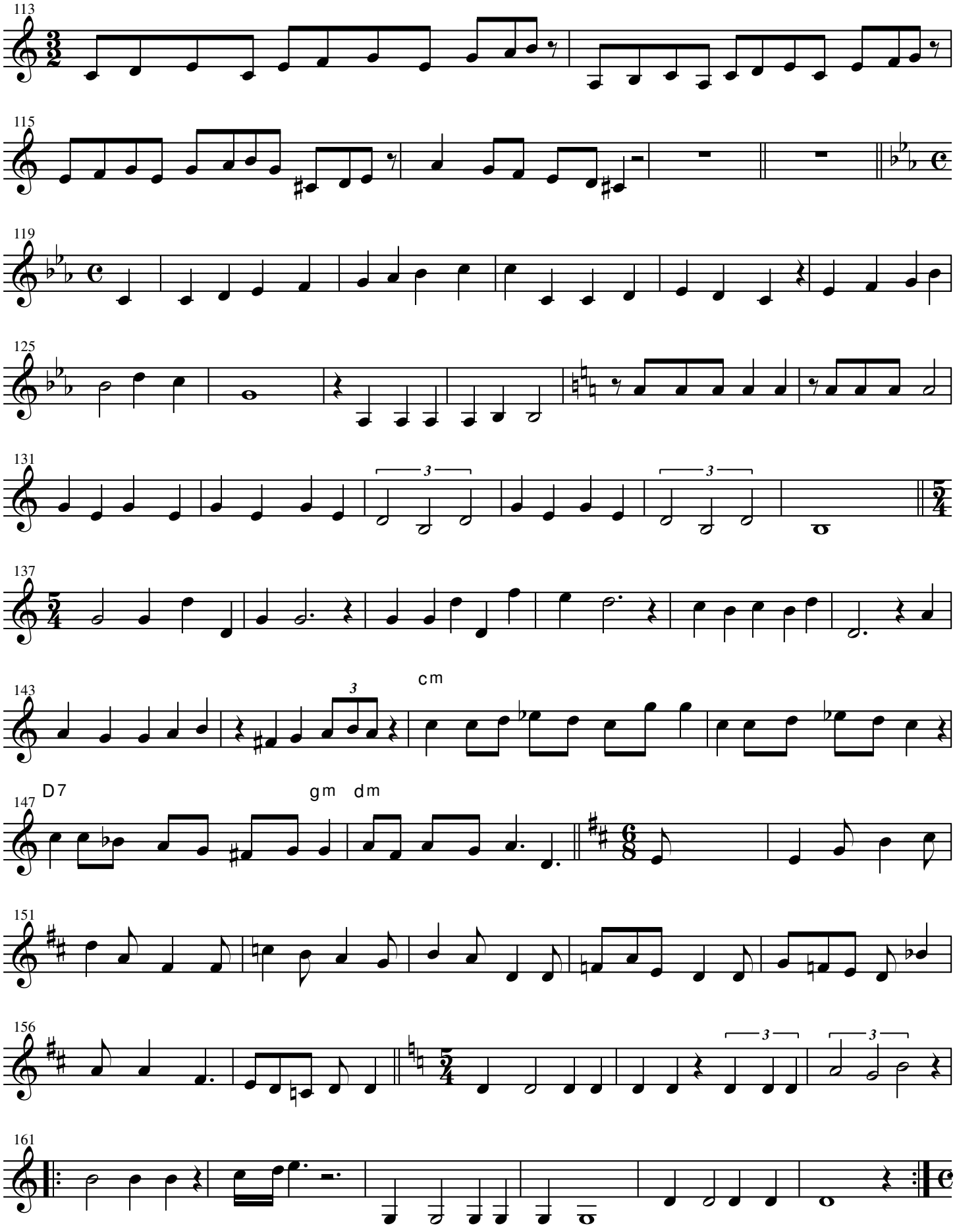
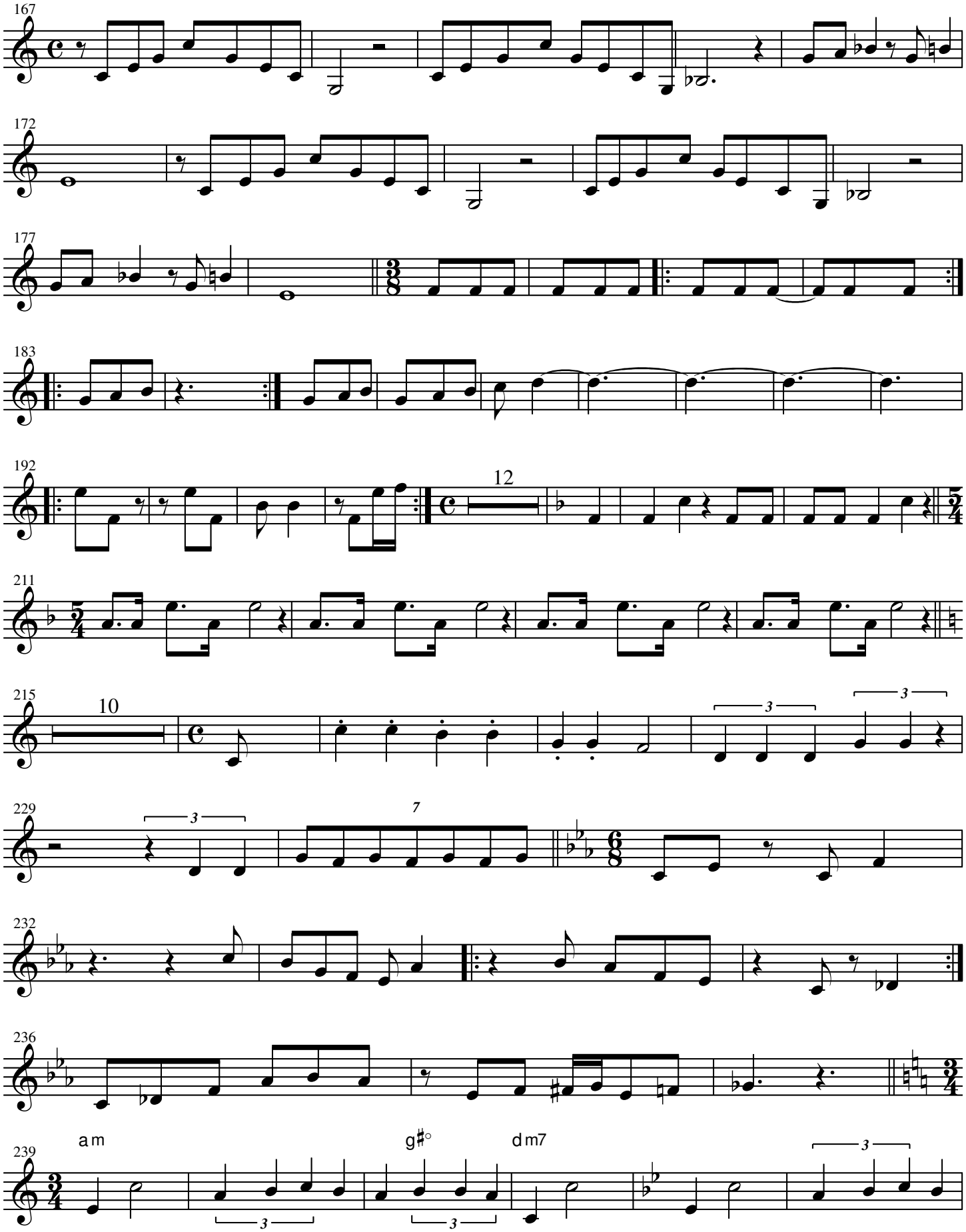
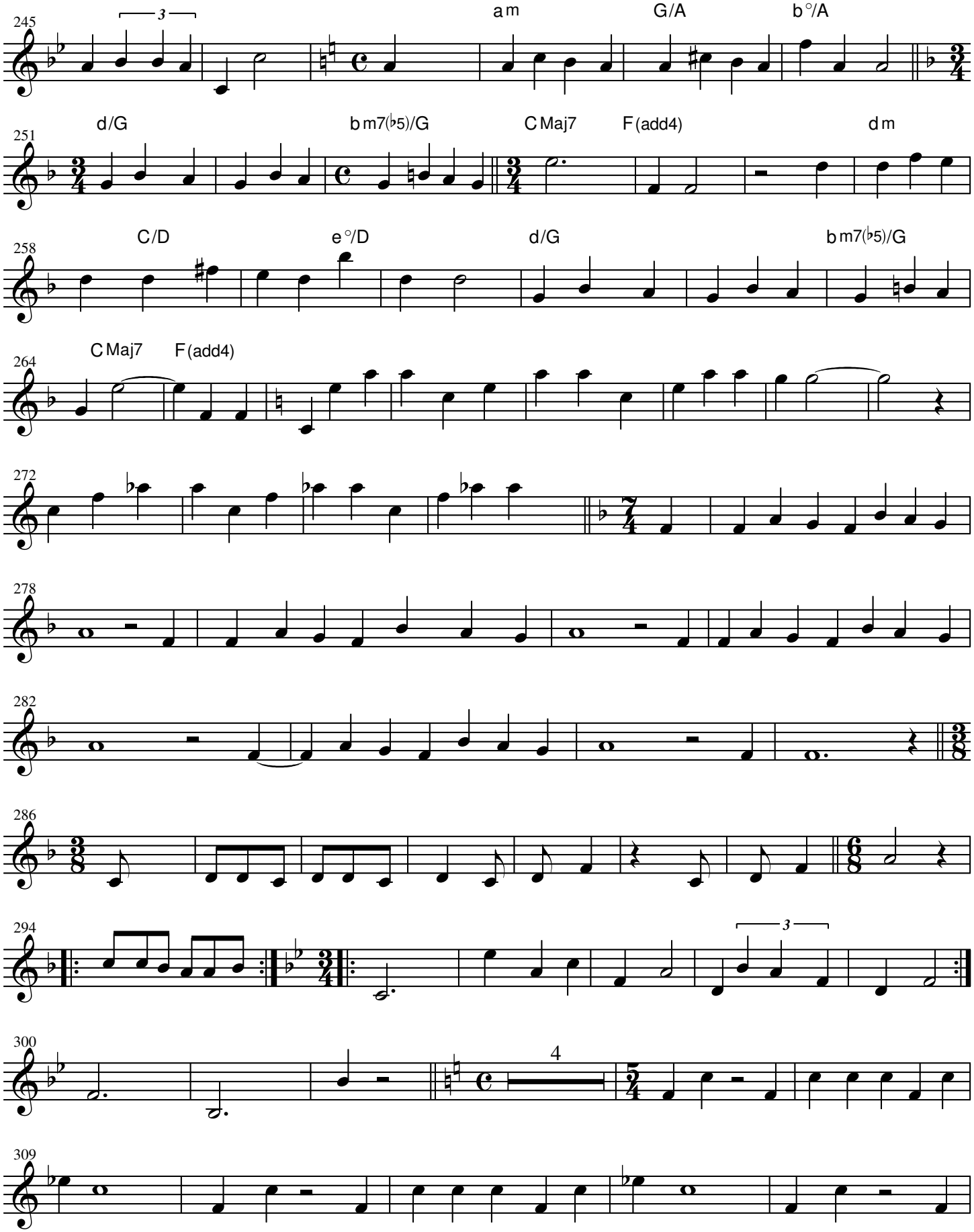
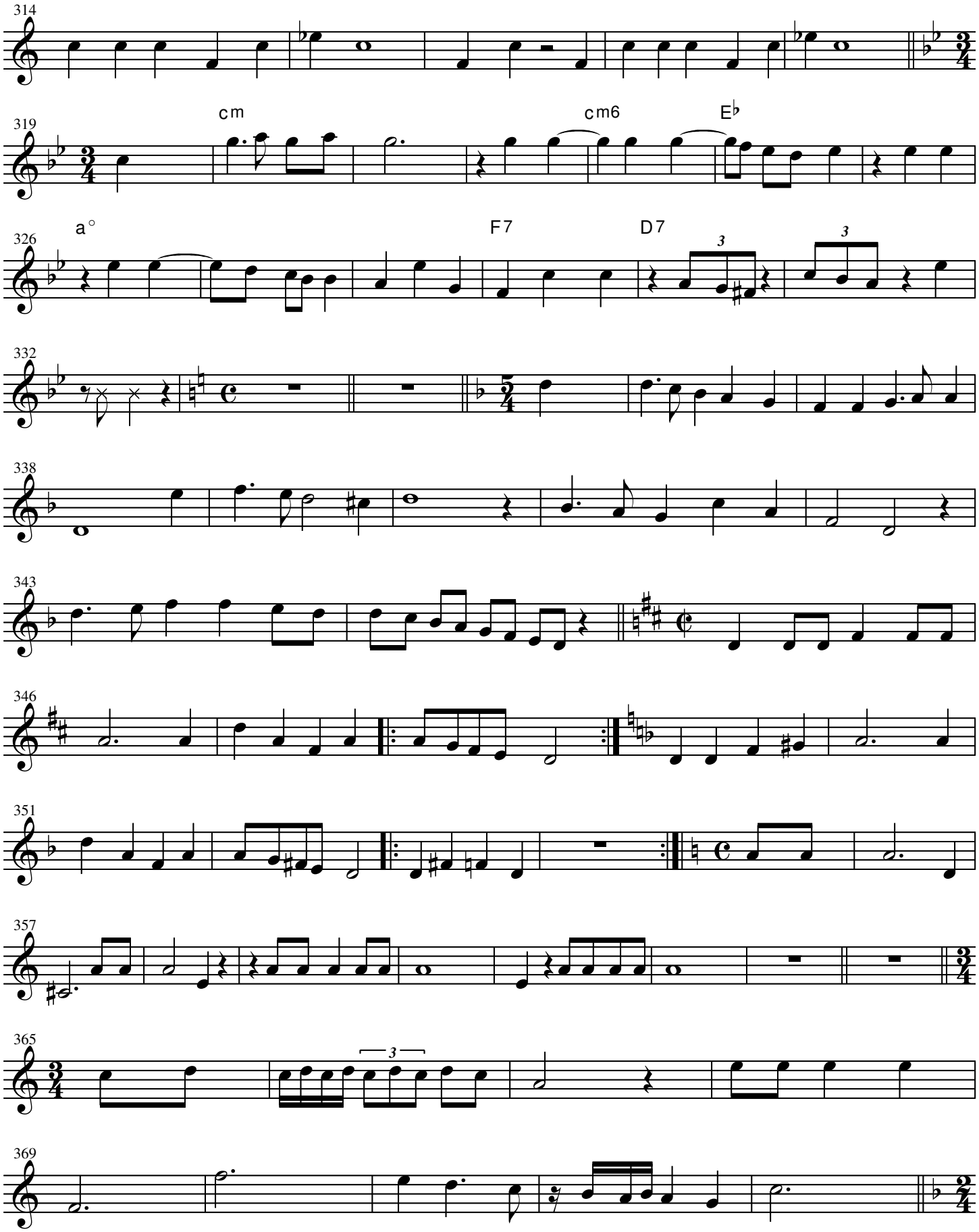

113
115
119
125
131
137
143
cm
147
D7
gm
dm
151
156
161


167
172
177
183
192
12
211
215
10
229
7
232
236
239
a m
g♯°
d m7


245
3
a m
G/A
b °/A
251
d/G
b m7(♭5)/G
C Maj7
F (add4)
d m
258
C/D
e °/D
d/G
b m7(♭5)/G
264
C Maj7
F (add4)
272
278
282
286
294
3
300
4
309


314
319
cm
cm6
E♭
326
a°
F7
D7
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338
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357
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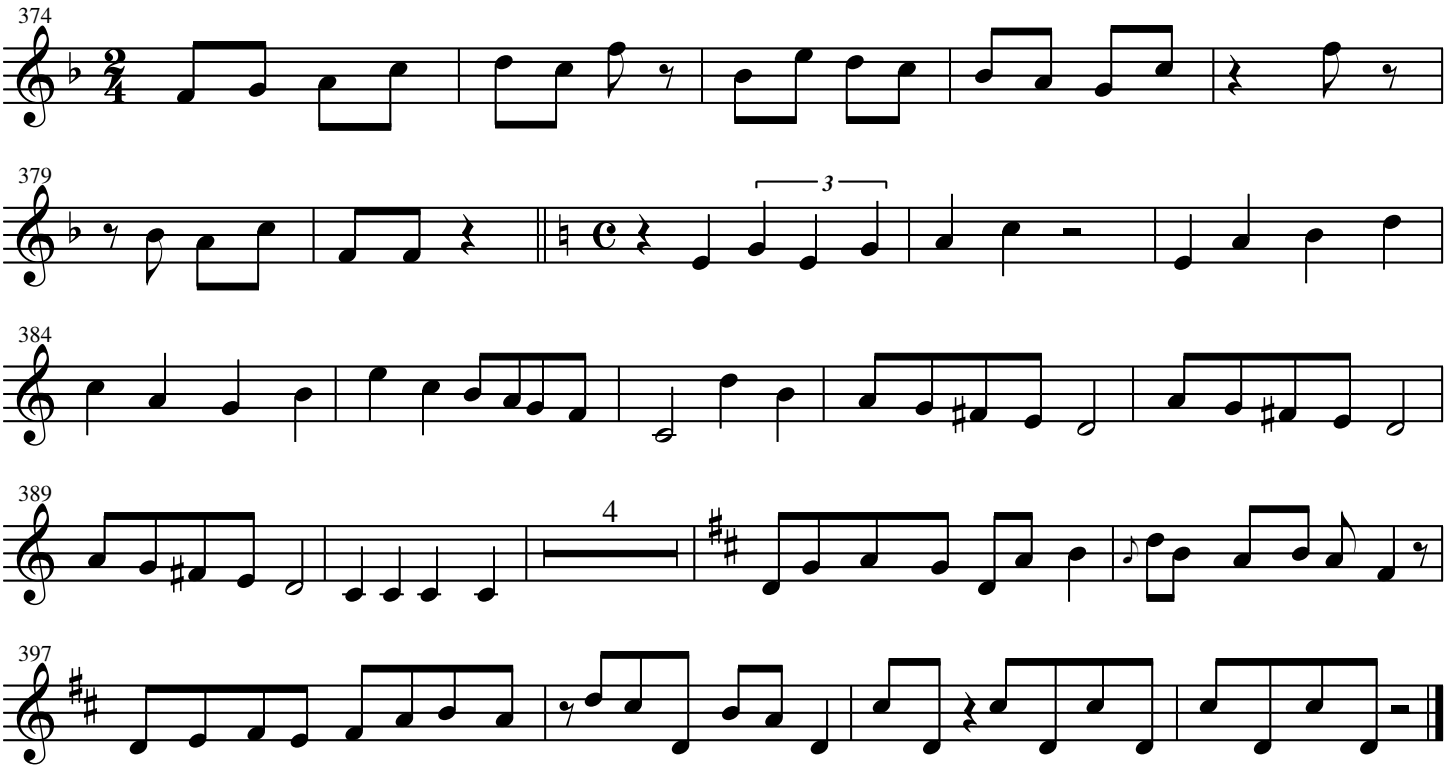
369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397