The University Of Sheffield.

The York Symphonies of Giovanni Battista Serini: Study and Edition

Volume 2: Edition

By:

Federico Furnari

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Giovanni Battista Serini

SIX ‘YORK’ SYMPHONIES

Edited by Federico Furnari

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Introduction

The figure of the Italian composer Giovanni Battsita Serini (c.1710-after 1766) has suffered almost total neglect in musicology. Only two short studies have been published in the last fifty years, both concerned primarily with his biography; his music, both in terms of enumerating his compositions and in terms of style criticism, has received the most cursory treatment possible. However, for his contemporaries Serini numbered among the group of Milanese symphonists, whose fame and importance in their own day has only in the past two decades begun to be matched by sustained scholarly attention. The adjective 'Milanese' in this context is to be understood as referring to the North Italian region as a whole, and not in the strict sense of deriving from the city of Milan itself. As Fausto Torrefranca pointed out as early as 1915, it was the Milanese composers—among them such figures as Antonio Brioschi (fl. 1725-50) and Giovanni Battista Sammartini (1700-1775)—who made the decisive contribution in developing the new genre of the concert symphony.[1]

Until 2014, only one autograph source was known for Serini's symphonies, rather mysteriously preserved in York Minster Library (GB-Y MS 129 S). Today we are aware of a second autograph source, the collection of nine symphonies preserved in Regensburg (D-Rtt Serini 1 to 9), which shares three symphonies with the York manuscript. The Regensburg source is particularly valuable for both scholars and performers in that it is not in score but in parts, with specific indications for performance in Serini's own hand. More recently still, a third source for the first movement of one of the York symphonies has come to light in two Swiss libraries, where it serves as the overture to a cantata.

Here the six symphonies in York are presented in a critical edition, taking full account of the concordant sources which in some case give substantially different instrumentation. These symphonies were composed between 1750, when Serini began work at the court of Buckeburg, and 1755, the date of the dedication in the York manuscript. This volume represents the first modern edition not only of Serini's symphonies, but of his music altogether.

[1] Fausto Torrefranca, *Le Sinfonie dell'Imbrattacarte* (Torino: Fratelli Bocca, 1915)

The Composer

Giovanni Battista Serini was born around 1710, either in Cremona or more likely the nearby village of Casalmaggiore, in the region of Lombardy, North Italy. By 1714, the young Giovanni Battista had moved with his father, a professional violinist, to Venice. In the lagoon Serini began his musical training, initially with his father and then with the barber-musician Angelo Galuppi, father of the more famous Baldassare Galuppi. Serini's earliest surviving compositions are four symphonies in the Fonds Blancheton in Paris, datable to the 1730s and written in the early Milanese style. A further eight symphonies also in the Milanese style, preserved incomplete in the Fondo Correr, form part of an anthology assembled by another Milanese symphonist, Andrea Bernasconi, probably for use at the Ospedale della Pieta in Venice during his tenure there as *maestro di cappella*. Simultaneously, Serini enjoyed some success as an opera composer, with works staged in Venice in 1736 and 1737, and Bergamo in 1740, the music to all of which is sadly lost. Between 1744 and 1746 Giovanni Battsita worked as musician in the Venetian household of the British diplomat Robert d'Arcy, to whom he later gave the manuscript now preserved in the York Minster library.

In 1750, Serini left Italy for Bückeburg, a small court near Hanover in Germany, ruled over by Count Wilhelm Schaumburg-Lippe, where he remained as court composer until the outbreak of the Seven Years' War. During this period the Italian composed most of the rest of his surviving music: concertos, symphonies, duets, trios, church music, and cantatas.

With the onset of war, Serini and his colleague Angelo Colonna, the Buckeburg concertmaster, left the German court for Prague. From there, by an unknown route Serini found his way into the service of another British diplomat, George Cressener, in whose household he served as music tutor to Cressener's daughter. Serini was with Cressener in Maastricht by 1761, and followed him to Regensburg in 1763. Nine symphonies surviving in the Thurn und Taxis library in Regensburg may represent the fruits of a collaboration with the court orchestra of Prince Alexander Ferdinand of Thurn und Taxis during his brief stay in the city.

In the same year, Cressener and Serini left for Bonn, where they remained; we last hear from the composer in January 1766, suggesting that he died in the late 1760s or early 1770s. A list of music sent as a gift to Count Wilhelm in 1765 (the music itself does not survive) mentions

twelve symphonies written for chamber and theatre, suggesting that Serini may once again have made friends with the local court orchestra, that of the Elector of Cologne. The other items in the list—a serenata *a5*, solo and duo chamber cantatas, and eight 'trios for harpsichord and violin' written specifically for his pupil—must represent the fruits of his work within the Cressener household. An undated printed Op.1 containing six violin duos may similarly preserve works written in the course of his tuition of Miss Cressener.

The Music of the Edition

The symphonies presented in the edition were composed between 1750 and 1755, years that Serini spent at the Bückeburg court. The *terminus ad quem* is given by the dedication on the 212-page manuscript book preserved in York Minster library. The dedication is signed by Serini himself along with the date 15th June 1755. Meanwhile, the dedication presents the six symphonies as works produced in the service of Count Wilhelm, providing a *terminus post quem* of 1750, the year in which the composer took up employment in Bückeburg. The first movement of Symphony 3 had a previous life as the overture to the cantata *Il Sogno di Scipione*, a work which Georg Schunemann was able to date specifically to 1751 on the basis of a copy in the Buckeburg library, now lost.[2] The other concordant sources, those in Regensburg and Switzerland, are later than the York manuscript.

All the symphonies in the edition are three-movement cycles structured as fast-slow-fast. The first symphony calls for two flutes, 2 *corni da caccia,* strings, cembalo, and bassoon. The same scoring is prescribed for the second symphony with the addition of two oboes and two trumpets. The third symphony presents a smaller ensemble with two flutes, two oboes, two *corni da caccia*, strings, and cembalo. The last three symphonies (4, 5, and 6) call for two *corni da caccia*, strings and cembalo.

The symphonies are characterized by a preference for major keys: G, D, D, F, G, E. The first and last movement are in the same key, while the middle movement is presented in the relative minor (1), parallel minor (5, 6), built on the dominant (4) or maintaining the same major key (2, 3). Alternation of homophonic and independent and imitative passages occurs frequently as well as solo-tutti effects. In Symphonies 1 and 2 the horns play an important

[2] Georg Schunemann, 'Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach', *Bach-Jarhbuch* 11 (1914), 45-165, at 52 n29.

role with virtuoso solo passages. The viola has a notably independent part-writing throughout the collection.

The first movement is the longest of the cycle; it is in a fast tempo marked *spiritoso* (1 and 2) *allegro assai* (3, 5, and 6) and *vivace* (5). The last four symphonies (3 to 6) employ common time while the first two are in 3/4. The slow movement is presented as *andantino* (in one case followed by *grazioso*) or *lento* (2 and 5). Meters employed for the middle movements are 2/4, 3/4 and 3/8. The last movements are likewise varied with *allegro* (in symphony 1 followed by *ma non presto*, in 2 by *assai*), *presto*, and in the last symphony the source reads *a tempo di minuet*. On the other hand, the meters are not so varied: with the exception of symphonies 3 and 5 (*alla breve*), all are in 3/8.

First movements have two sections without a *ritornello*. These movements present a clear tonic-dominant polarization. The first part moves to the dominant, and the tension is then resolved in the second part by a return to the home key. The first part of the movement, corresponding with the exposition in sonata form, presents a very clear first theme and a less clear second theme. Except for the first symphony, all use a *ritornello* in the last movement. Here again the tonic-dominant polarization is evident: the tension grows to reach its peak at the middle of the movement, where it begins its decline and resolution towards the end of the movement. The middle movement is consistently the most expressive in the cycle.

Notes on Performance

The different sources of the symphonies are completely concordant for the music but present differences in the agogic and other performance directions. In this respect, the three sources preserved in Regensburg proved very useful in understanding Serini's preferred manner of performing his music. However, the two main sources used in this edition (GB-Y MS 129 S and D-Rtt 4, 5, and 8) differ in their orchestration. While all six symphonies in York are for strings, flutes and horns, two in Regensburg (correposnding to York 2 and 3) present a larger ensemble with trumpets, timpani and oboes.

There are several potential explanations for this. The York source, in which the horns are notated at concert pitch, seems to have been designed for the convenience of a single reader (d'Arcy) rather than for the use of an ensemble, and it is possible that it gives the

instrumentation stripped down to what Serini considered to be its essentials. On the other hand, it could equally be that different forces were available for a performance in Regensburg that had not been available in Buckeburg, and the instrumentation was expanded to take advantage. Changing tastes between the 1750s and 1760s may also be a factor, in a period that saw a general growth in orchestra size. Whatever the reasons, this edition presents the fullest version of the instrumentation, but the user is advised that a performance of Symphonies 2 and 3 without trumpets, timpani and oboes would be equally 'authentic'.

The symphonies in this volume include only two types of ornaments: trill, and both lower and upper appoggiatura. In the manuscripts the appoggiaturas are generally indicated as quavers or crotchets; when performed they are varied in length according to the value of the main note. For specific advice on these ornaments, performers can refer to any of the several mid-eighteenth-century treatises, especially those written by Italian and German authors, for example Tosi[3], Quantz, C. P. E. Bach, and Leopold Mozart.[4]

[3]Pier Francesco Tosi, *Opinioni de' Cantori Antichi e Moderni* (Bologna: Lelio della Volpe, 1723).
[4] Quantz, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen* (1752), ed. And trans. Edward R. Reilly as *On Playing the Flute*, 2nd ed. (New York: Schirmer Books, 1985); C.P.E. Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen* (1753/62), ed. And trans. William J. Mitchell as *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments* (New York: Norton, 1949); Leopold Mozart, *Veruch einer gründlichen Violinschule* (1765), trans. Editha Knocker as *A Treatise of the Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951). See also Frederick Neumann, *Ornamentation in Baroque and post-Baroque Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 164-99; 345-364; Manfredo Zimmermann, *The Ornamentation of Baroque Music: A Guide for Independent Embellishing* (Book on Demand: 2019).

Critical Report

Sources

The six symphonies survive in manuscript, both autograph and copies, housed in the UK, Germany and Switzerland. The autograph source preserved in the UK is in score, the others are notated in parts. However, the York collection is the only source containing all six symphonies, of which three are *unica*. The German manuscripts, in parts, are an important source for symphonies 2, 3, and 4; while the two copies preserved in Switzerland transmit only the first movement of symphony 3. No print sources are known for those symphonies. Thus, the number of sources for the symphonies varies from one to three. All sources agree with the titles: *sinfonia* is common to all manuscripts, always presenting the Italian spelling.

The York Source (GB-Y MS 129 S)

The York manuscript is a collection of several composition by Serini. In addition to the six symphonies, the sources preserves six concertos for harpsichord, seven arias, and six sonatas for flute. The book is autograph and presents a dedication to the British diplomat Robert d'Arcy in the hand of Serini dated Bückeburg 1755.[5]

All the six symphonies are written on paper with 18 staves in 4° format. Characteristic of this source is the spelling of the traverse flute: it is always written as *Flut Traversie*. This name for the flute is distinctive to Serini; it recurrs in all autographs by the Italian composer.

The musical text is very clear, although when compared with concordant sources it is less helpful as regards slurs and agogic signs.

[5] David Griffiths, *A Catalogue of the Music Manuscripts in the York Minster Library,* (York: The Library, 1981), 149.

The Regensburg Sources (D-Rtt Serini 4, 5, and 8)

Rtt4 and 5 show nothing to challenge the dating of 1750-55 derived from the York source; although the additional instrumentation, copied onto paper with a different watermark, probably dates from between Serini's departure from Buckeburg in 1756 and his brief stay in Regensburg in 1763. In the case of Rtt8, the date 1751 is signed at the end of the violin I part, refining the dating indicated by the York manuscript. The symphonies are in parts; on the whole, the principal parts are in the hand of Serini, while the copies (i.e. second copies of violin I and violin II) are in a different hand. Except for the woodwind, the pages are in oblong format. The musical text is accurate and very clear, including the slurs and agogic signs. Parts are marked with the names of the instruments according to the Italian spelling. Flute parts are marked as 'flut traversie'.

The Swiss Sources (CH-EN MS A 278 and CH-E MS 969.16)

These two sources are two copies of the cantata *Il Sogno di Scipione*, composed in 1751, preserved in two Swiss abbeys, Kloster Engelberg and Kloster Einsiedeln. The sources transmit only the fourth symphony (F major) with no additions in respect to the sources preserved in York and Regensburg; for this reason the Swiss sources have not been used in preparing the present edition. The opening overture is symphony 3 in the York Manuscript and part labelled as Serini 8 in Regensburg. The manuscript CH-E MS A 278 is erroneously attributed to Giovanni Battista Ferrini (Rome, 1600-1674). The title page reads Ferini, thus, the misreading could be linked to the provenance of the copyist, who probably was not Italian. Ferrini, in fact, was well known in ecclesiastical circle as he mainly composed church music. Thus, /Serini/ easily become /Ferini/ for *lectio facilior*. In any case, the text is by Pietro Metastasio (1698-1782) who wrote the cantata only on 1735. The title page of the second copy of the cantata, CH-EN MS 969.16, does not name the composer and was catalogued as anonymous. These two sources are valuable also for the aria "Biancheggia in Mar lo Scoglio," which appears in GB-Y MS 129 S.

The two manuscripts are sets of parts, the Einsiedeln incomplete. The musical text is generally clear but not particularly accurate. Slurs and agogic signs are minimal.

Editorial Methods

The edition follows closely the musical text of the York source, with Regensburg for the wind instruments (i.e. oboes in symphony n. 2 are not notated in York). For all symphonies the principal source is GB-Y MS 129 S, while for the symphonies 2, and 3 the principal source have been integrated with D-Rtt Serini: symphony n.2 Rtt Serini 4for flutes, trumpets and oboes; symphony n. 3 Rtt Serini 5 for oboes and flutes. For each symphony the original title has been maintained. Editorial addition of dynamics is set in bold typeface, while dashed slurs and ties represent slurs and ties added by the editor. Names of instruments have been modernised and left in the Italian spelling. The name 'basso' has been retained, as in the eighteenth century the noun 'basso' signified a group of instruments rather than a single instrument. The part was generally played by harpsichord as continuo along with any combination of cello, violone, double bass, and bassoon. It should be noted, however, that Serini wrote out a bassoon part when he required one, thus the bassoon probably was not among Serini's own continuo group. The figures for the harpsichord given in this edition are present in the manuscripts both in score and in parts.

The beaming has been maintained as reading in the sources. All sources show the same beaming. Redundant accidentals within a measure have been omitted without comment according to the modern practice. Cautionary accidentals placed in parenthesis are kept to a minimum and they are generally added only when the note is not clear. Appoggiaturas have not been slurred to the principal note according to their presentation in the manuscript. The original bowing and dynamics have been preserved. In this edition the *corni da caccia* parts have been transcribed without alteration to their musical content. However, the horn parts that were originally notated in bass clef are given transposed in treble clef.

Any changes are reported in the 'Critical Notes'.

Critical Notes and Commentary

The Helmholtz method of pitch identification has been adopted (c' indicating middle C). Abbreviations are as follows: M = measure; Mm – measures; hn = horns; tr = trumpets; fl = flutes; fg = bassoon; ob = oboes; vl = violin; vla = viola; bs = bass; bc = basso continuo.

Symphony 1 in G Major

SPIRITOSO

Hr notated in mezzo-soprano clef have been transposed in treble clef.

ALLEGRO MA NON PRESTO

Hr notated in mezzo-soprano clef have been transposed in treble clef.

M. 91, bs, the source reads quaver and three semiquavers, corrected to quaver, two semiquavers, quaver.

Symphony 2 in D Major

SPIRITOSO

Hr notated in bass clef have been transposed in treble clef.

In Rtt there are 2 fl; (transverse flutes), 2 ob.

Rtt 4, vl I, vivace. M. 8, bc, 7 on the first quaver. M. 14, bc, 6 on the fifth quaver. M. 20, bc, no number. M. 23, bc, no number. M. 28, bc, figure on the last quaver. M. 34, bc, no number. M. 36, bc, 5 on the first quaver. M. 47, bc, 3 on the first quaver. M. 48, bc, no number. M. 51, bc, 7. M. 54, bc, no number. M. 61, bc, no number. M. 64, bc, no number. M. 79, bc, no number. M. 97, bc, 5 on the first quaver. M. 104, bc, 7. M. 106, bc, 7. M. 111, bc, 7 on the fifth quaver.

LENTO

In Rtt, the violin part is marked as *piano sempre*.

In Rtt there are 2 additional parts not present in GB-Y: 2 flutes (fl I unison with vl I; fl II unison with vl II). M. 44, *dolce*. M. 48, vls, d' minim.

Symphony 3 in D Major

ALLEGRO ASSAI

Hr notated in bass clef have been transposed in treble clef.

Rtt there are 2 fl; 2 ob. in addition to GB-Y.

In Rtt M. 18, vla, first note is d; fifth note is c; sixth note is d. M. 29, vl II, second beat is crotchet, third beat two quavers. M. 50, vla, g' in the second half of the second beat is natural. M. 67, first beat is crotchet, second beat two quavers.

ANDANTINO GRAZIOSO

In Rtt, vl II, the adjective *grazioso* is missing. M. 1, vl I, vl II, and vla the indication *sottovoce*. M. 18, fl II, first beat the acciaccatura is missing in MS 129 S. M. 33, *Da Capo al Segno*.

PRESTO

M. 31, vl I, the chord is in three parts in minims (two beats). M. 91, vl I, first beat chord in minims; second beat repeat the same chord. M. 93, vl I, chord three parts in crotchets.

Symphony 4 in F Major

ASSAI VIVACE

Hr notated in bass clef have been transposed in treble clef.

Rtt presents the same ensemble.

Symphony 5 in G Major

ALLEGRO ASSAI

Hr notated in bass clef have been transposed in treble clef.

M. 17, Hr I, two tied minims.

ALLEGRO

M 22, vl I, in MS 129 S, quaver rest, two quavers, three quavers.

Symphony 6 in E Major

ALLEGRO ASSAI

Hr notated in bass clef have been transposed in treble clef.

Plate 1

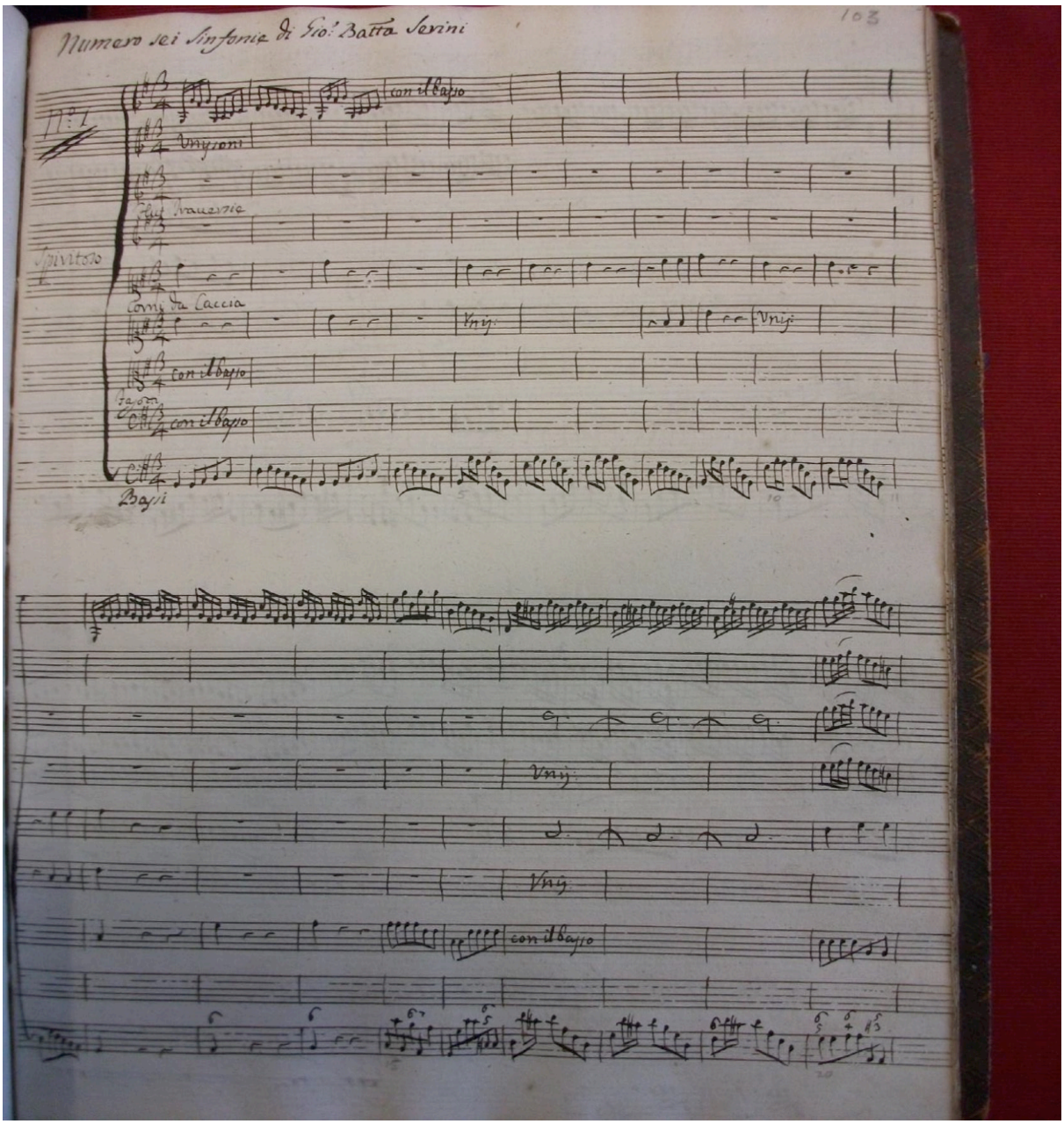
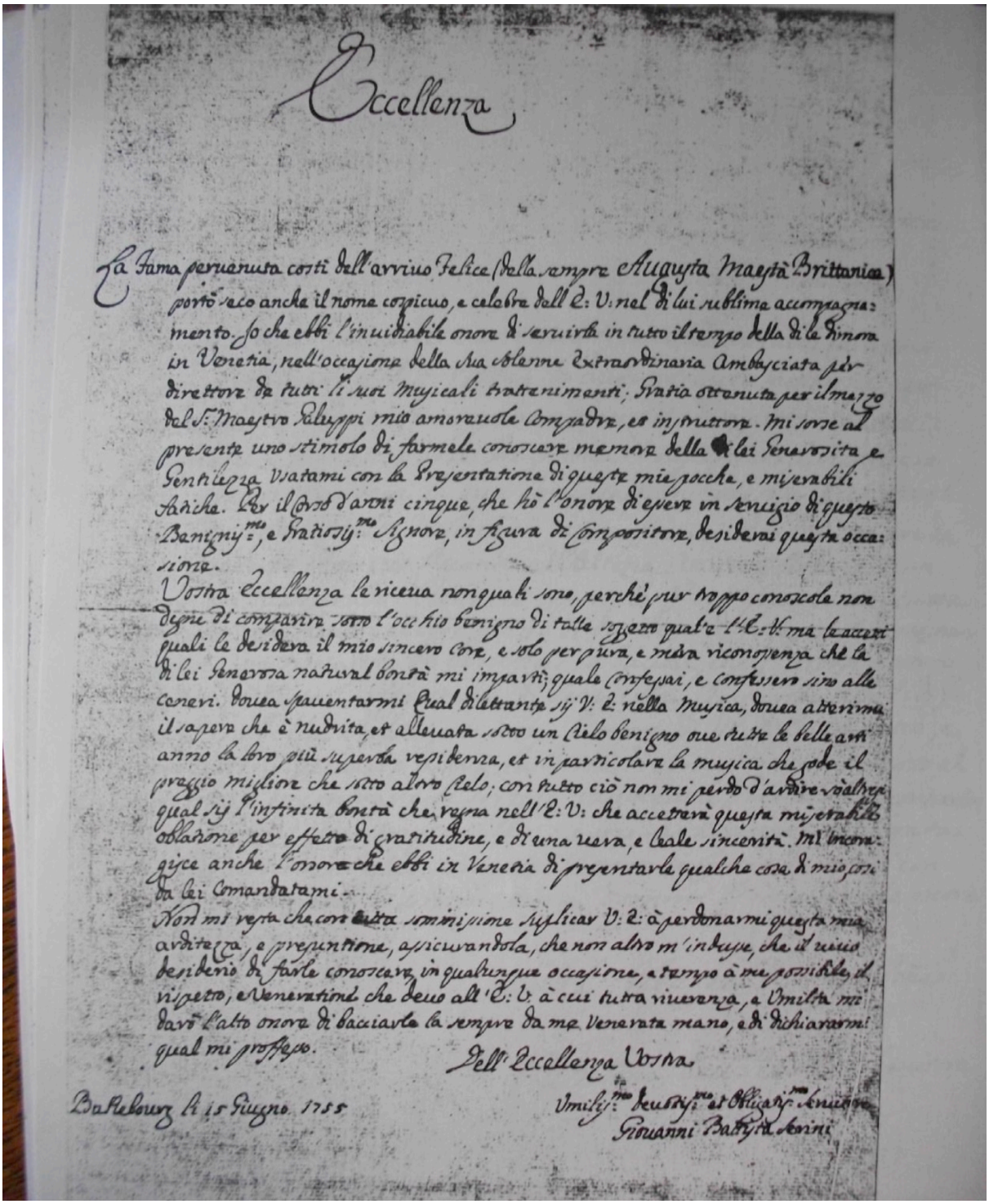


Figure 1 Giovanni Battista Serini, MS 129 S, Symphony 1, first page.

Plate 2



Eccellenza

La Fama peruenuta costì dell'arriuo Felice (della sempre Augusta Maestà Brittanica) portò seco anche il nome cospicuo, e celebre dell'E: V: nel di lui sublime accompagnamento. Io che ebbi l'inuidiabile onore di seruirla in tutto il tempo della di lei dimora in Venetia, nell'occasione della sua solenne Extraordinaria Ambasciata per direttore de tutti li suoi musicali trattenimenti; Gratia ottenuta per il mezzo del S: Maestro Galuppi mio amoreuole Compadre, et instruttore. Mi sorse al presente uno stimolo di farmele conoscere memore della di lei Generosità e Gentilezza Vsatami con la Presentatione di queste mie pocche, e miserabili fatiche. Per il Corso d'anni cinque, che hò l'onore di essere in seruigio di questo Benignis:mo, e Gratiosis:mo Signore, in figura di Compositore, desiderai questa occasione.

Vostra Eccellenza le riceua non quali sono, perchè pur troppo conoscole non degne di comparire sotto l'occhio benigno di tale soggetto qual'è l'E: V: ma le accetti quali le desidera il mio sincero Core, e solo per pura, e mera riconoscenza che la di lei Generosa natural bontà mi impartì; quale Confessai, e Confessero sino alle Ceneri. douea spauentarmi Qual dilettante sij V: E: nella Musica, douea atterirmi il sapere che è nudrita, et alleuata sotto un Cielo benigno oue tutte le belle arti anno la loro più superba residenza, et in particolare la musica che gode il preggio migliore che sotto altro Cielo; con tutto ciò non mi perdo d'ardire sò altresì qual sij l'infinita bontà che regna nell'E: V: che accetterà questa miserabile oblatione per effetto di gratitudine, e di una uera, e leale sincerità. Mi incoragisce anche l'onore che ebbi in Venetia di presentarle qualche cosa di mio, così da lei Comandatami.

Non mi resta che con tutta sommissione suplicar V: E: à perdonarmi questa mia arditezza, e presuntione, assicurandola, che non altro m'indusse, che il uiuo desiderio di farle conoscere, in qualunque occasione, e tempo à me possibile, il rispetto, e Veneratione che deuo all'E: V: à cui tutta riuerenza, e Vmiltà mi darò l'alto onore di bacciarle la sempre da me Venerata mano, e di dichiararmi qual mi professo.

Dell'Eccellenza Vostra

Bakebourg li 15 Giugno 1755

Vmilis:mo deuotis:mo et Obligatis:mo Seruitore
Giouanni Battista Serini

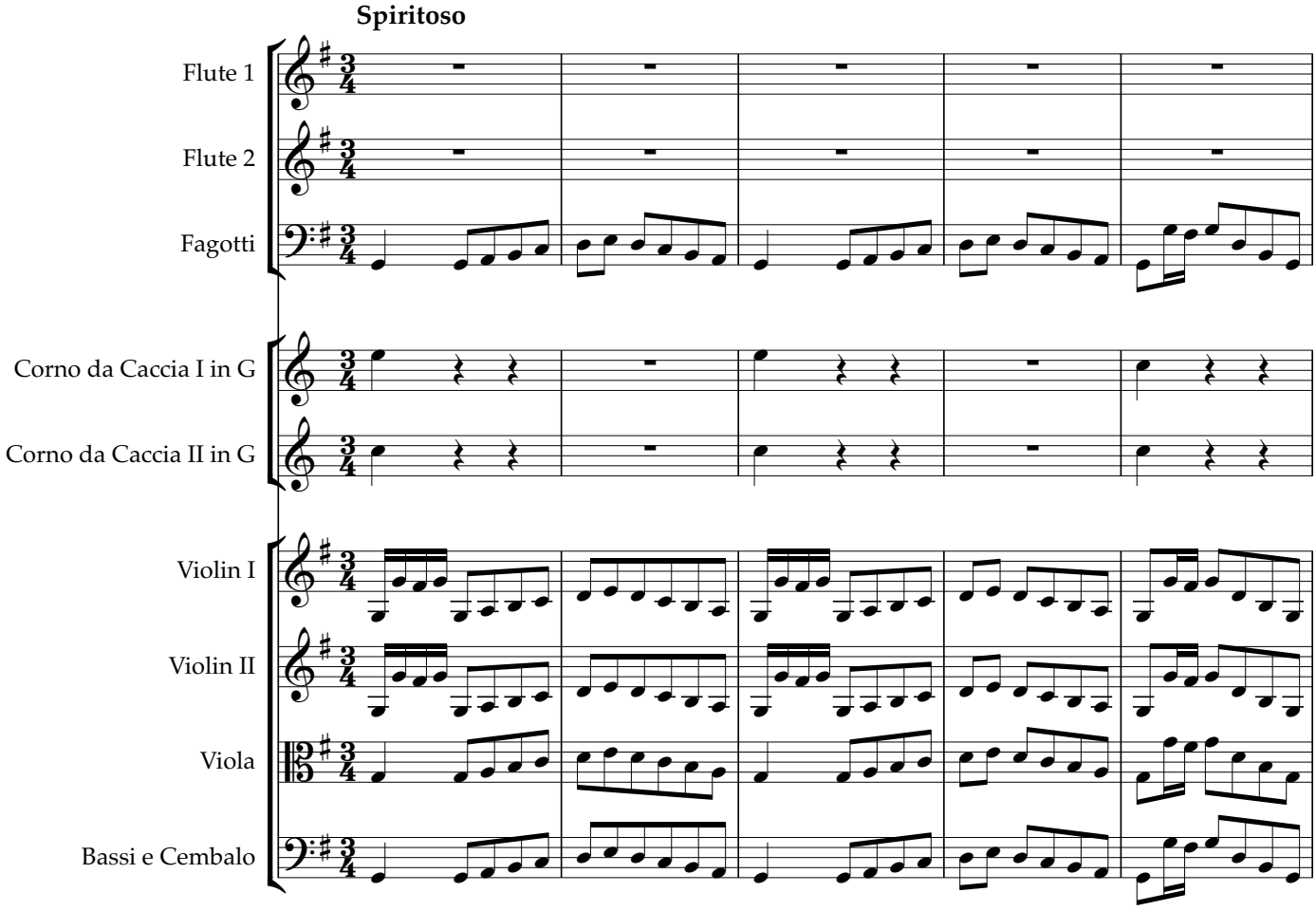
Figure 2 Giovanni Battista Serini, MS 129 S, dedication.

Giovanni Battista Serini

Symphony 1

Symphony 1

Principal Source: GB-Y, MS 129 S



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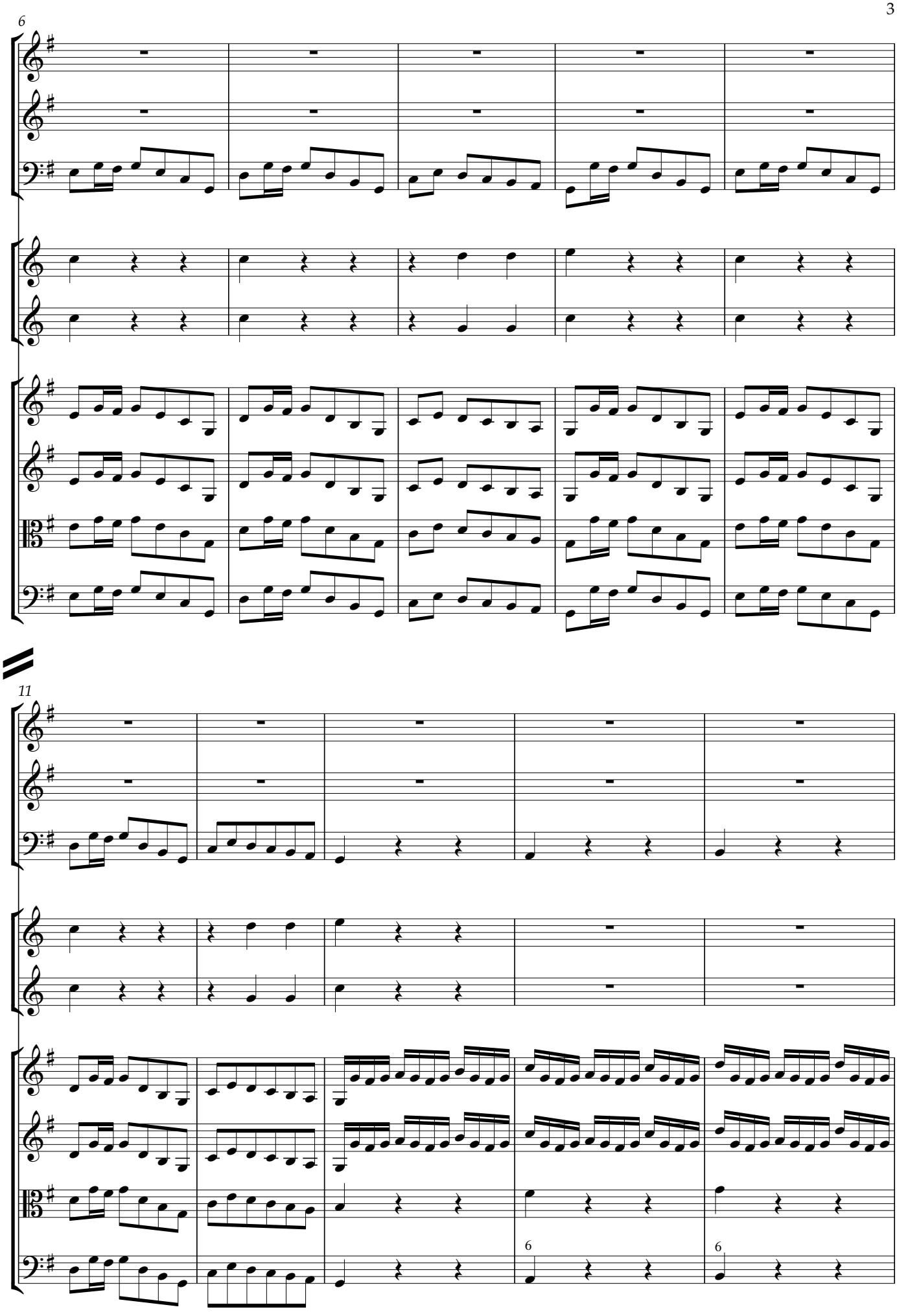
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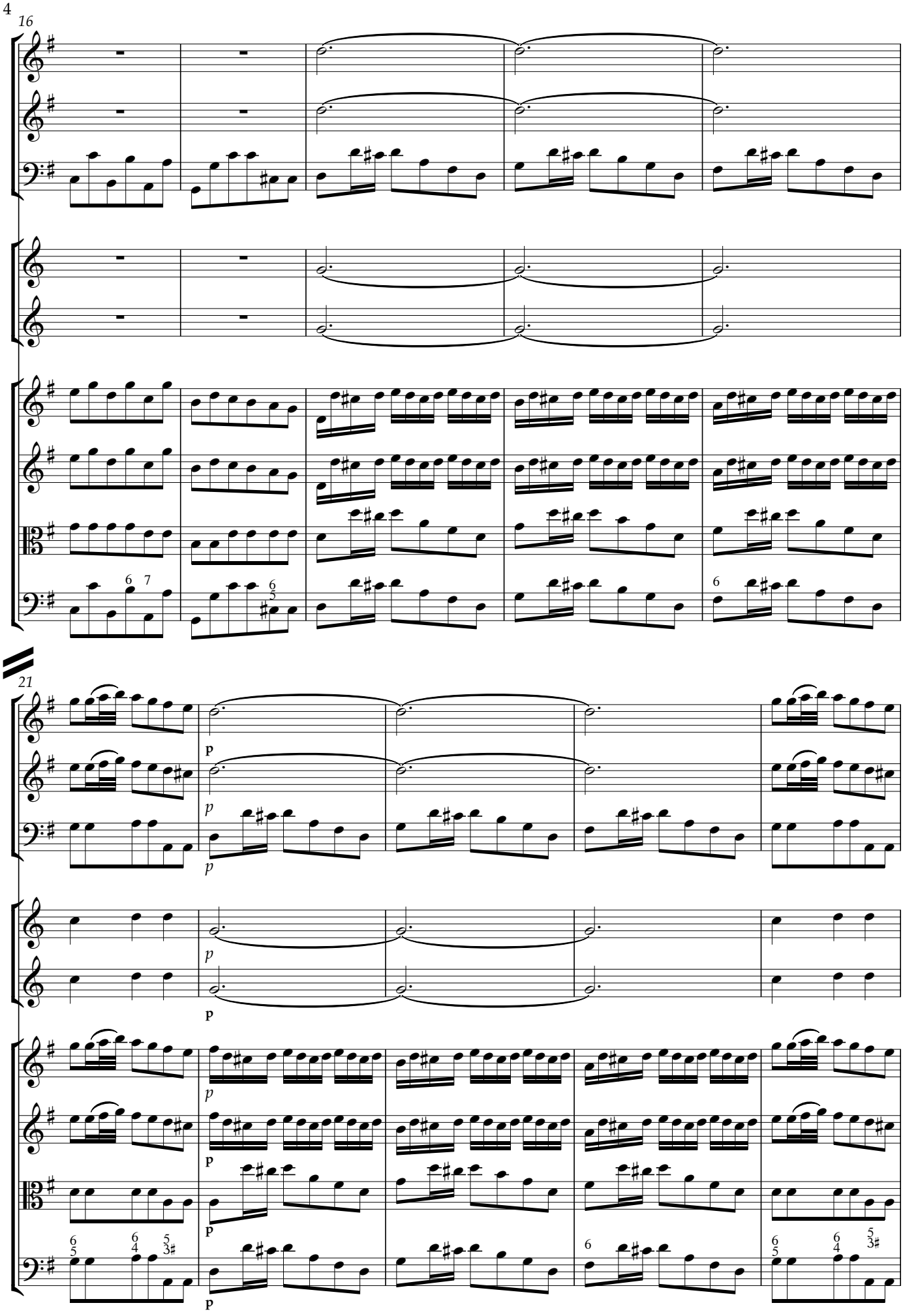
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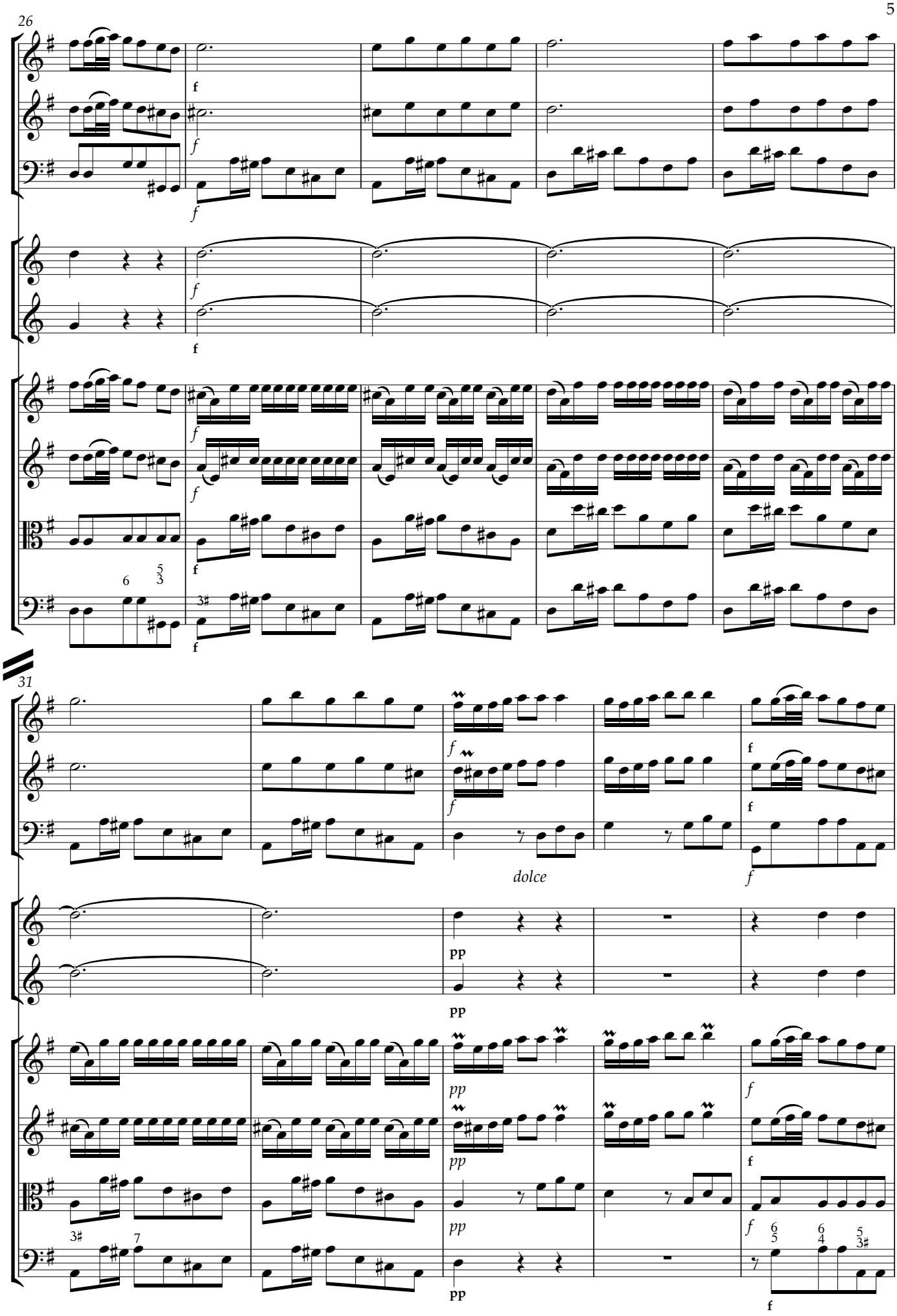
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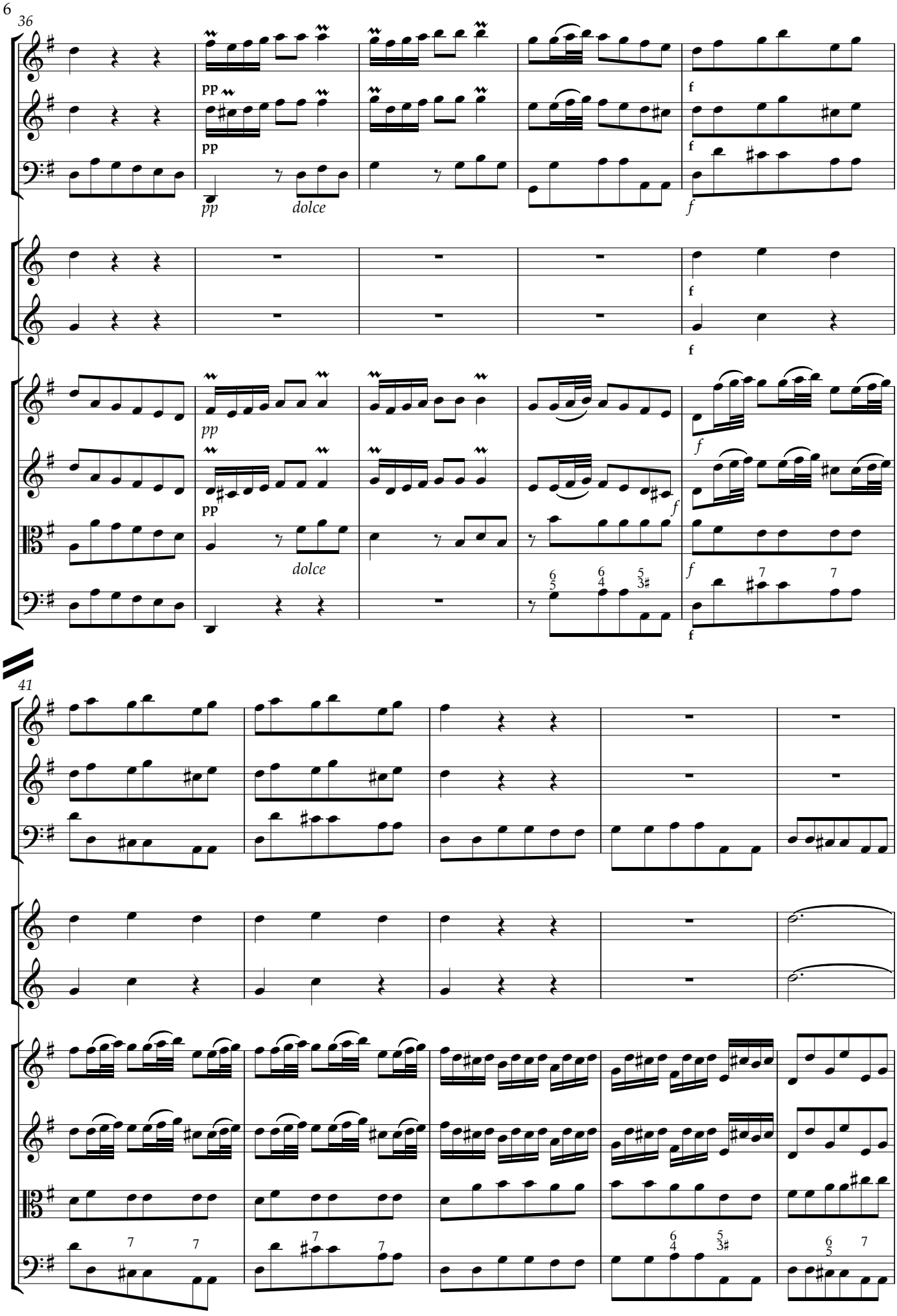
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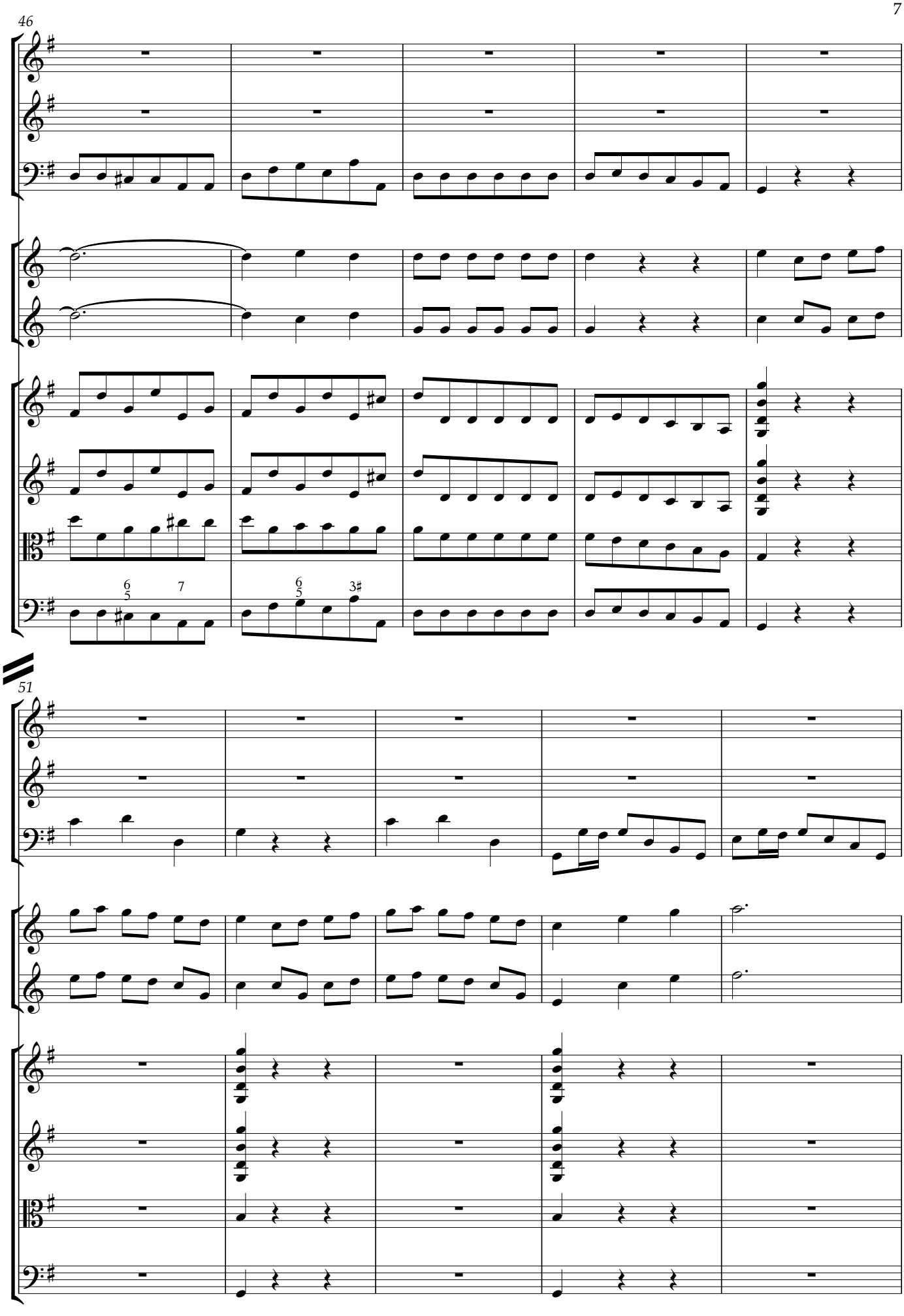
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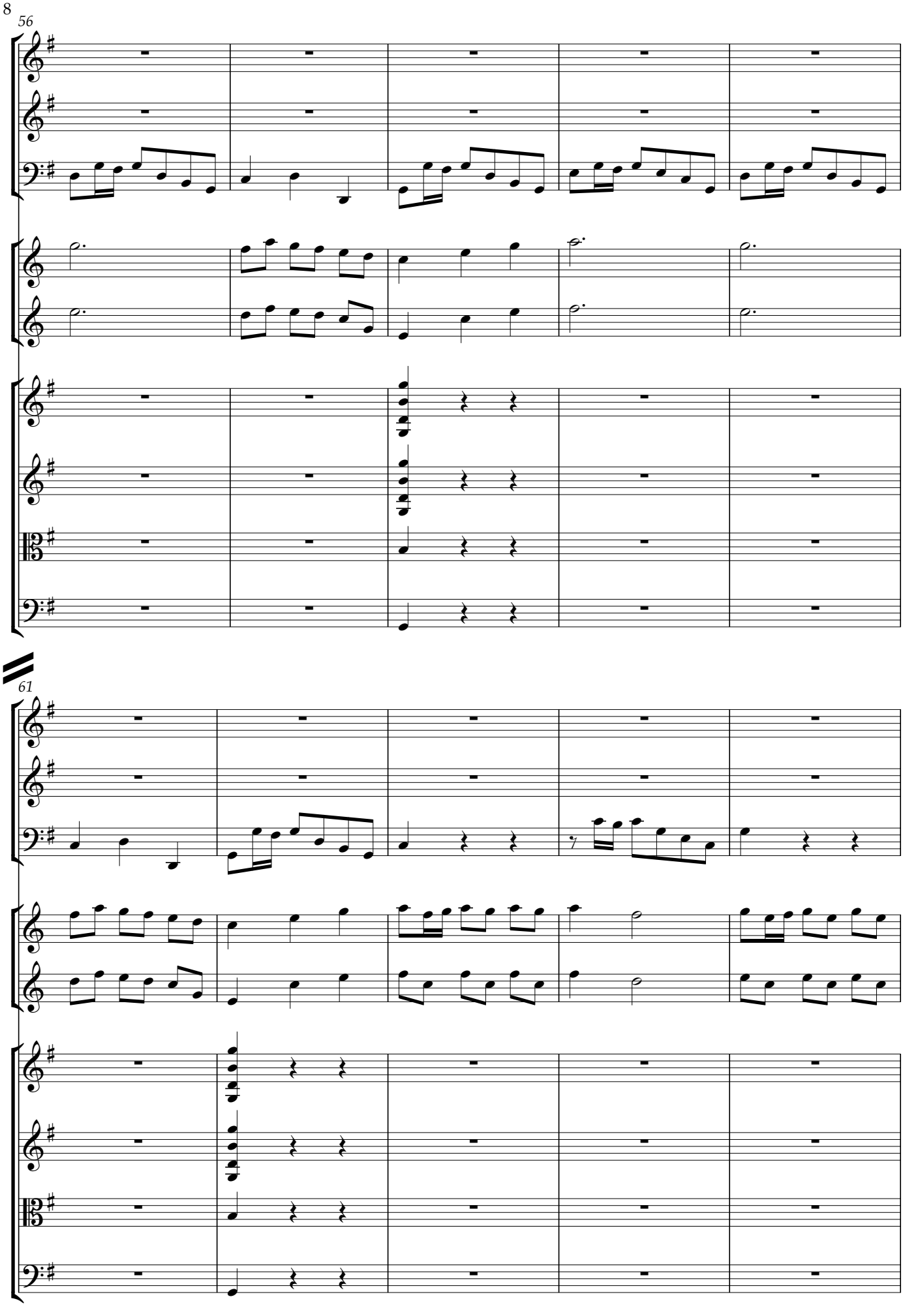
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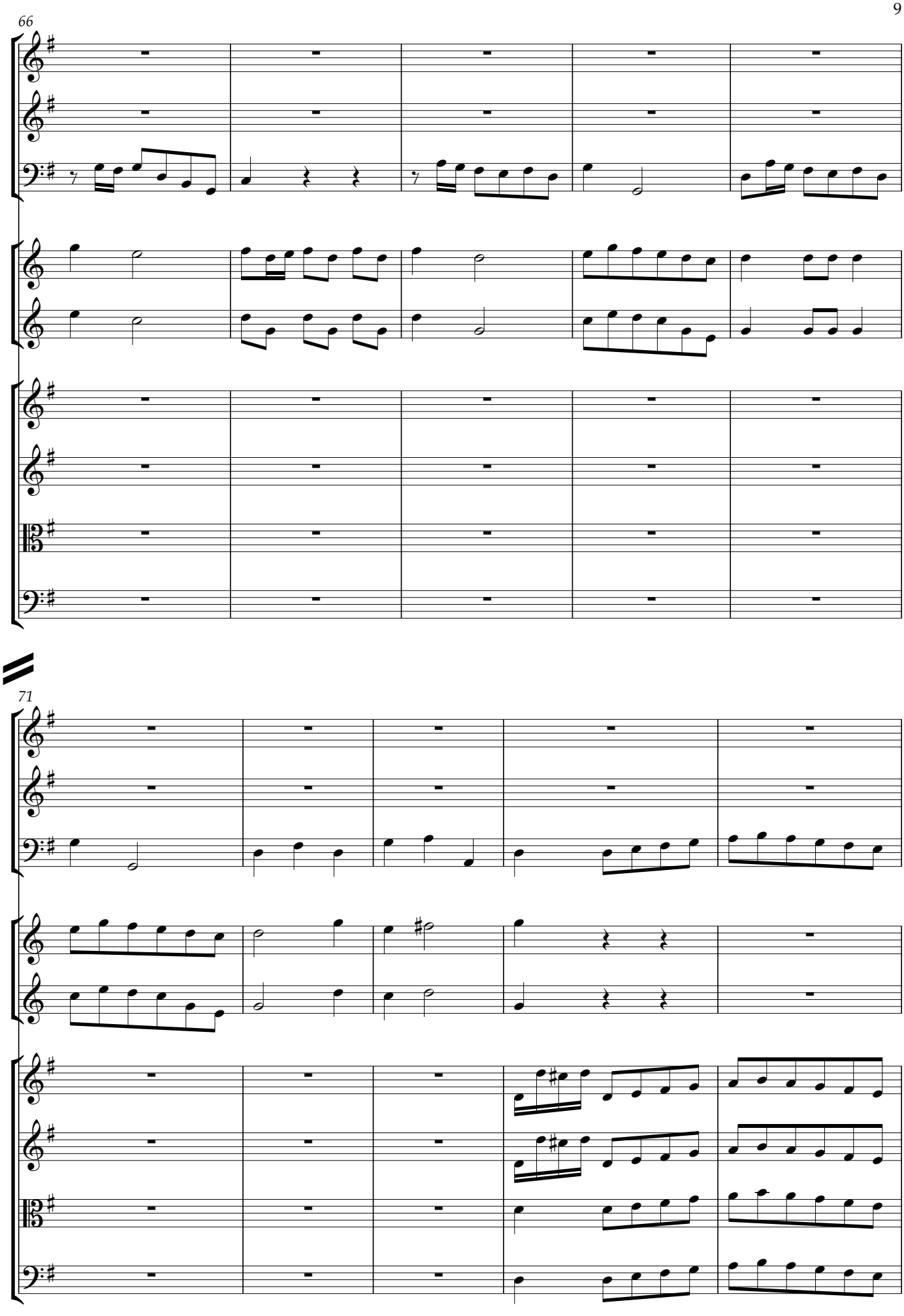
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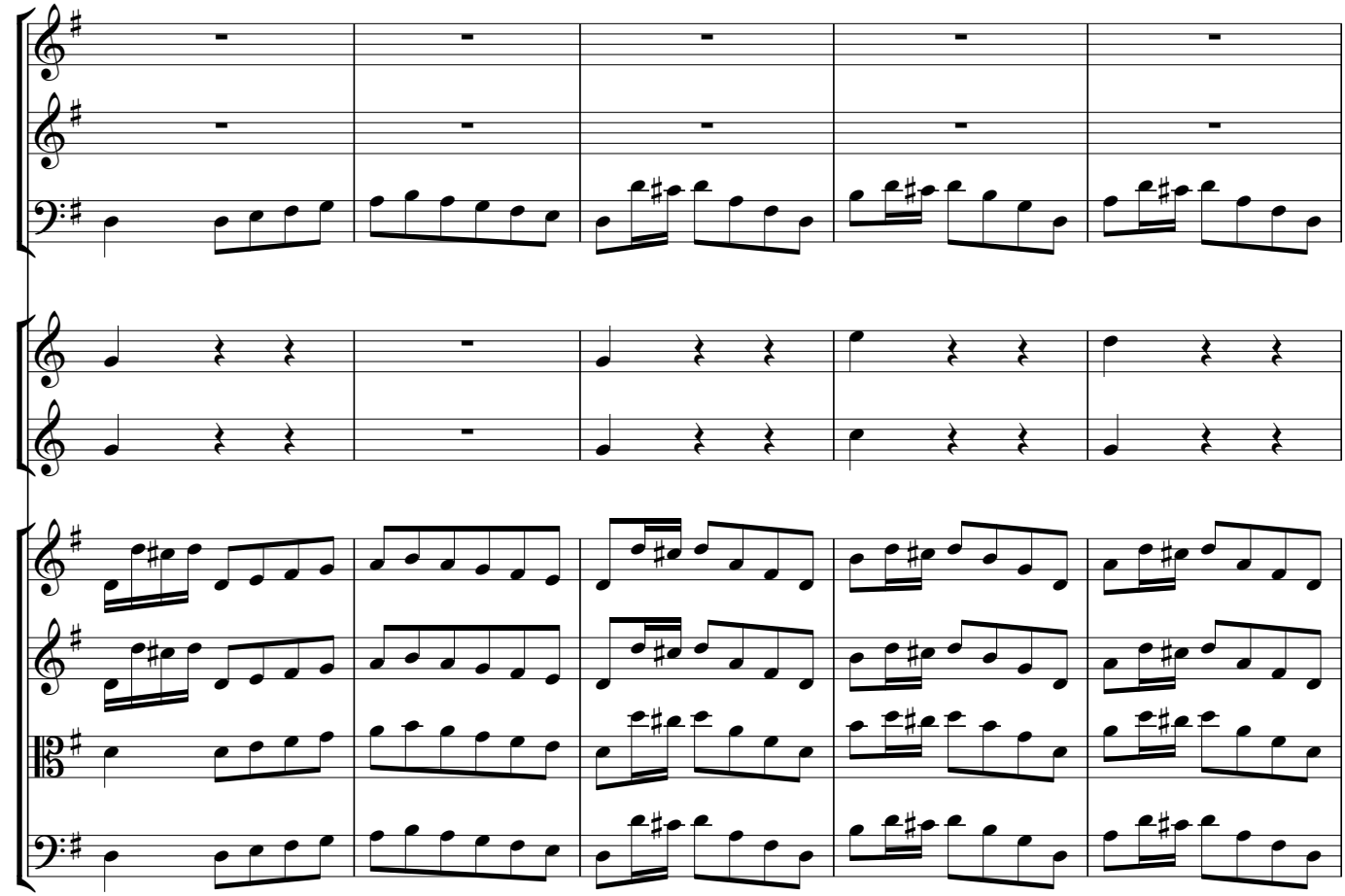

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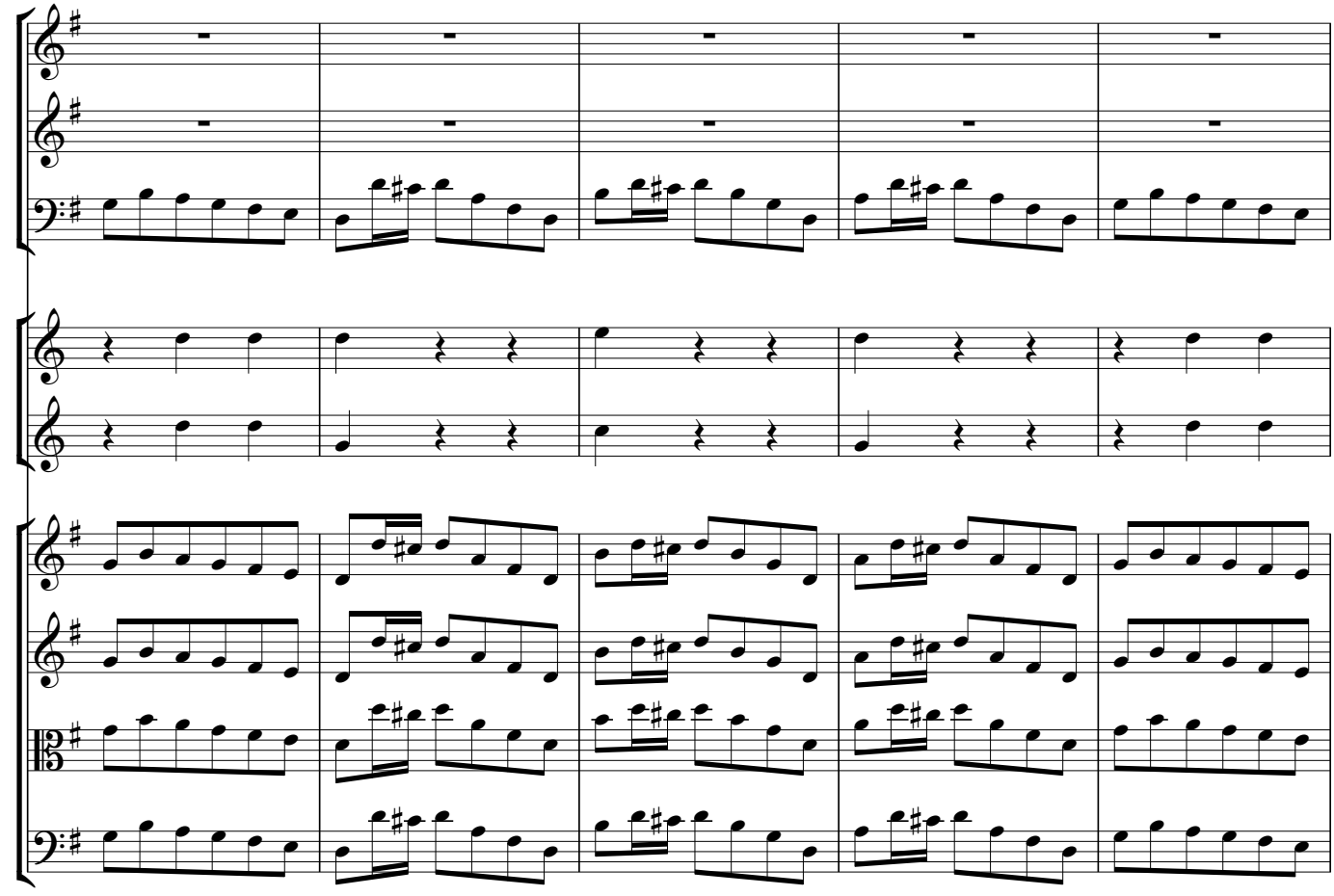

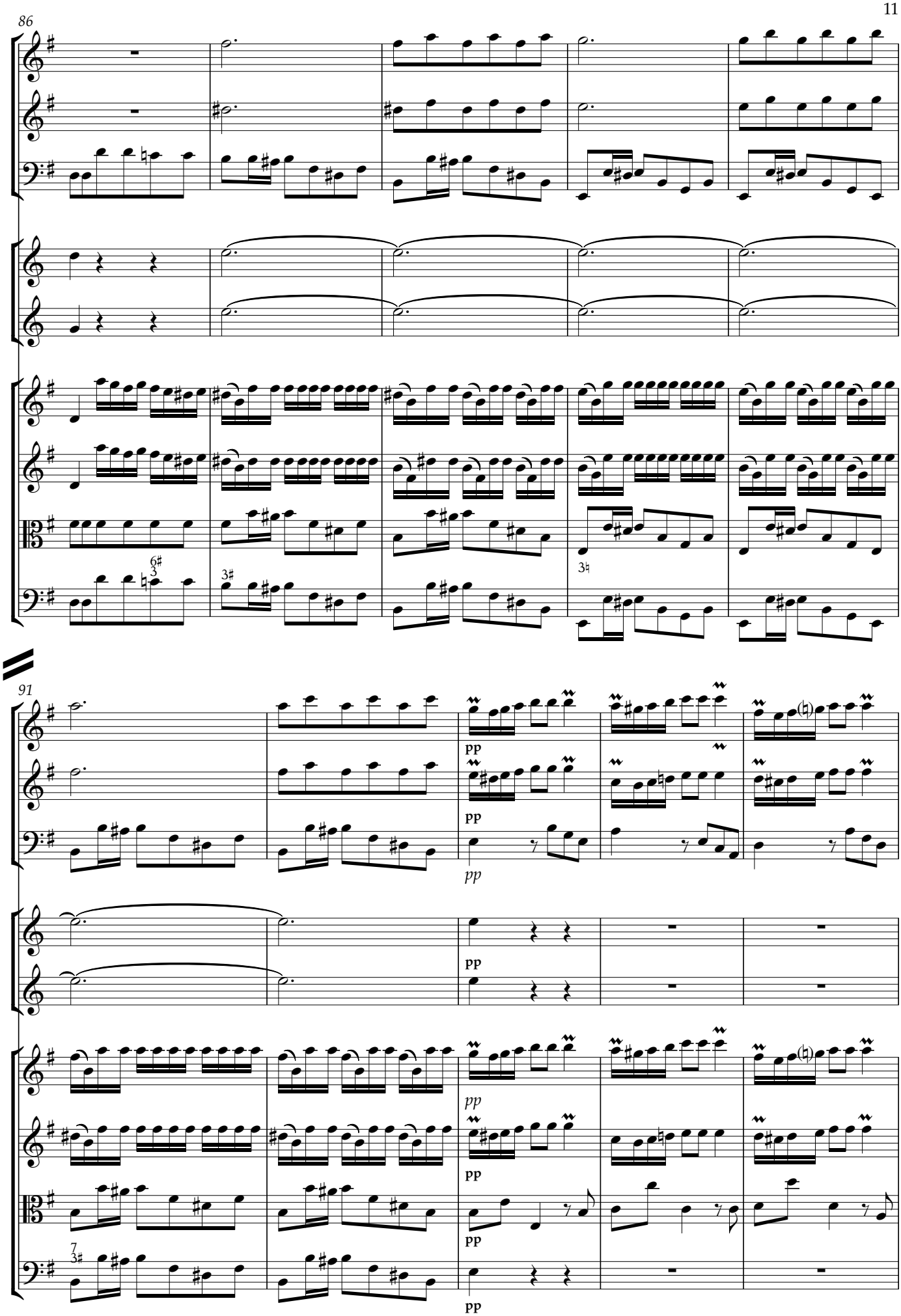
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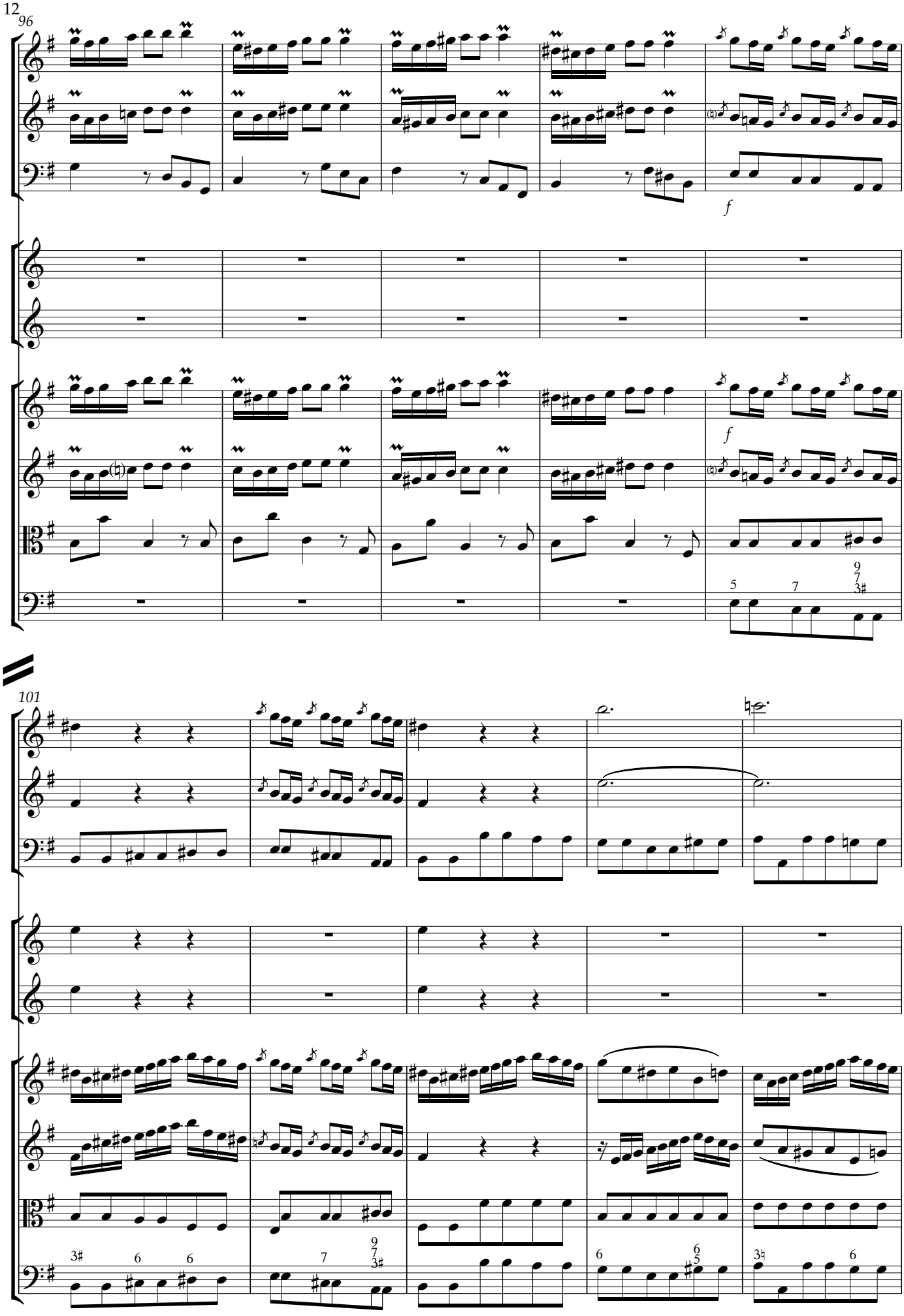
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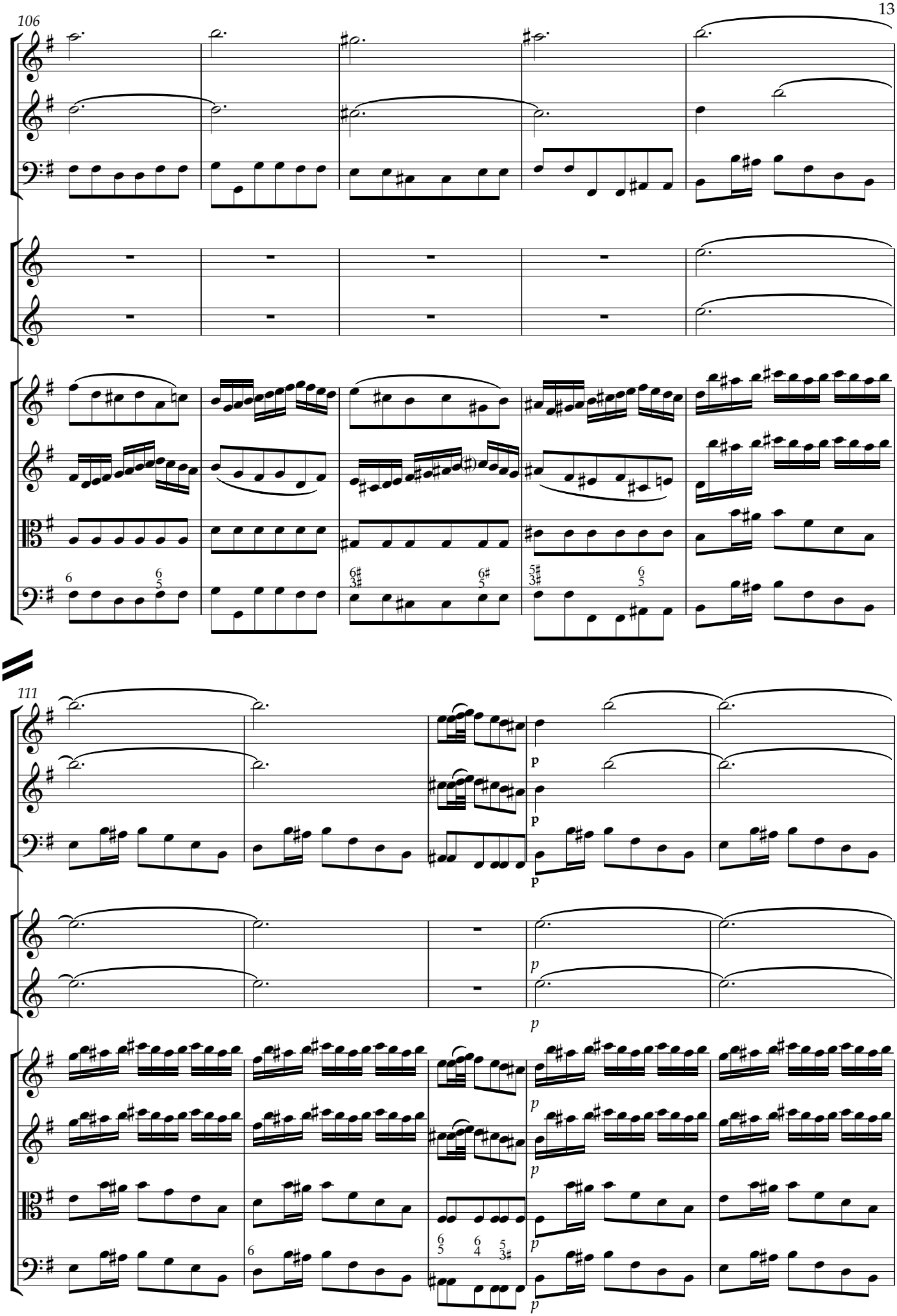
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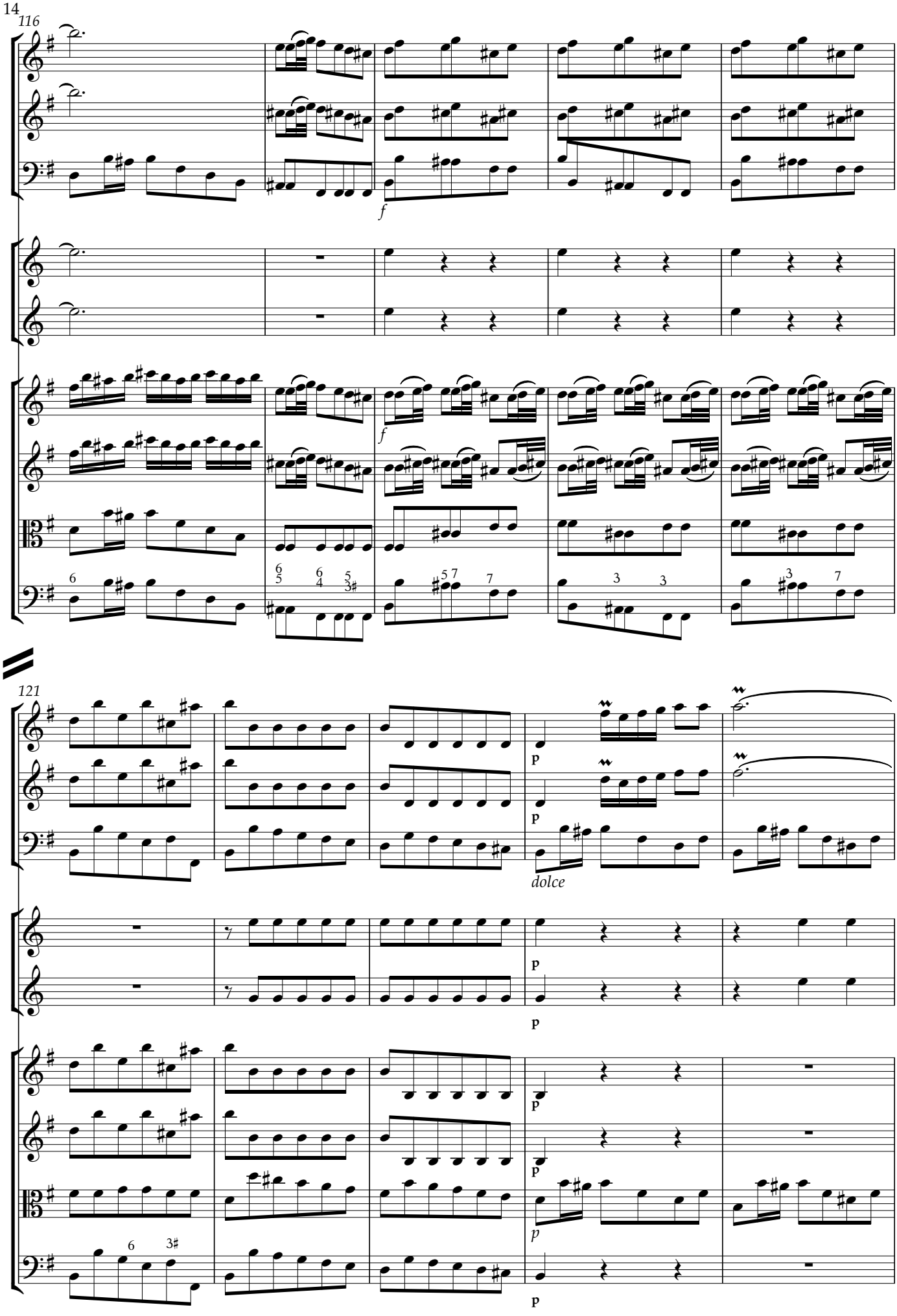
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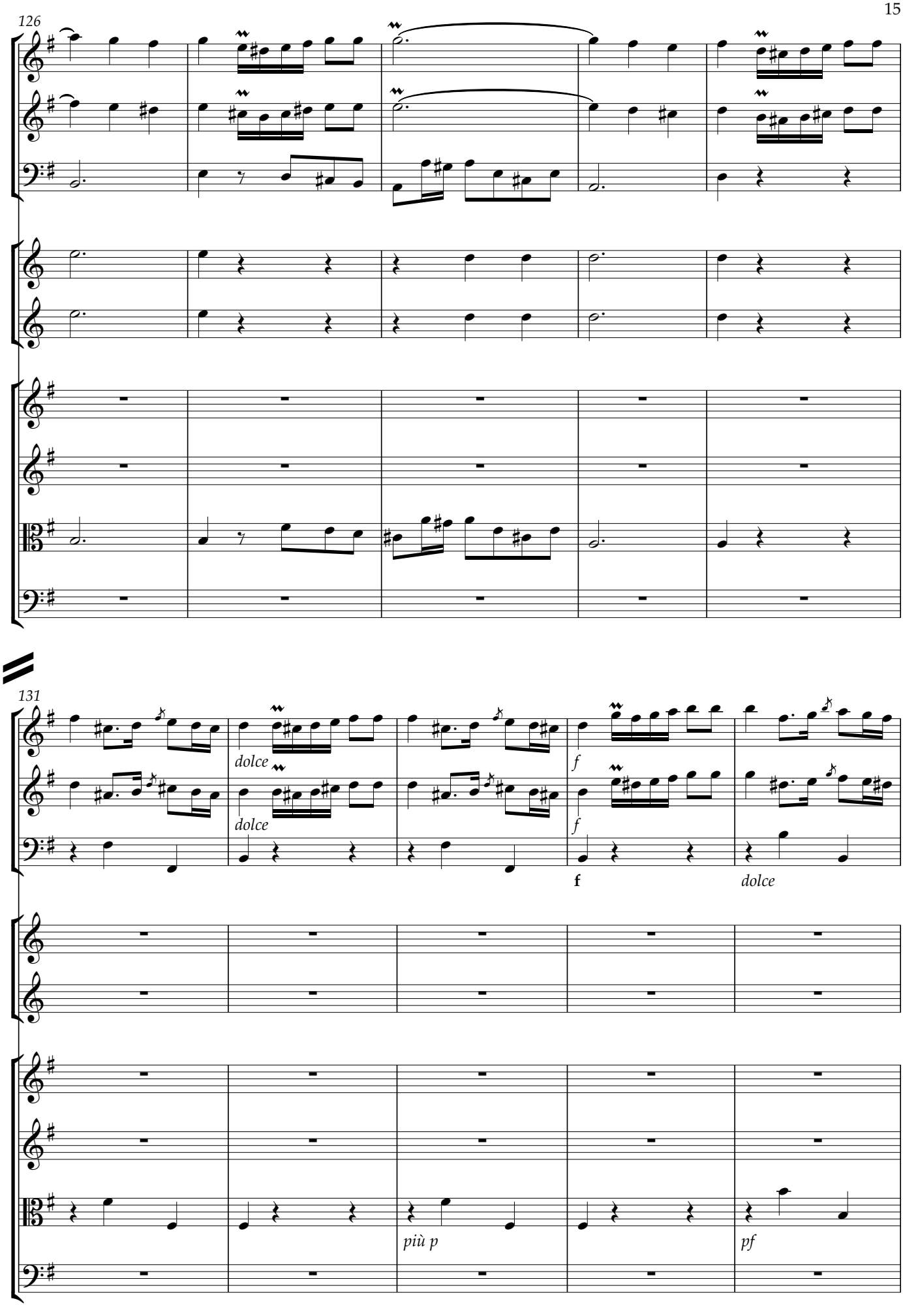
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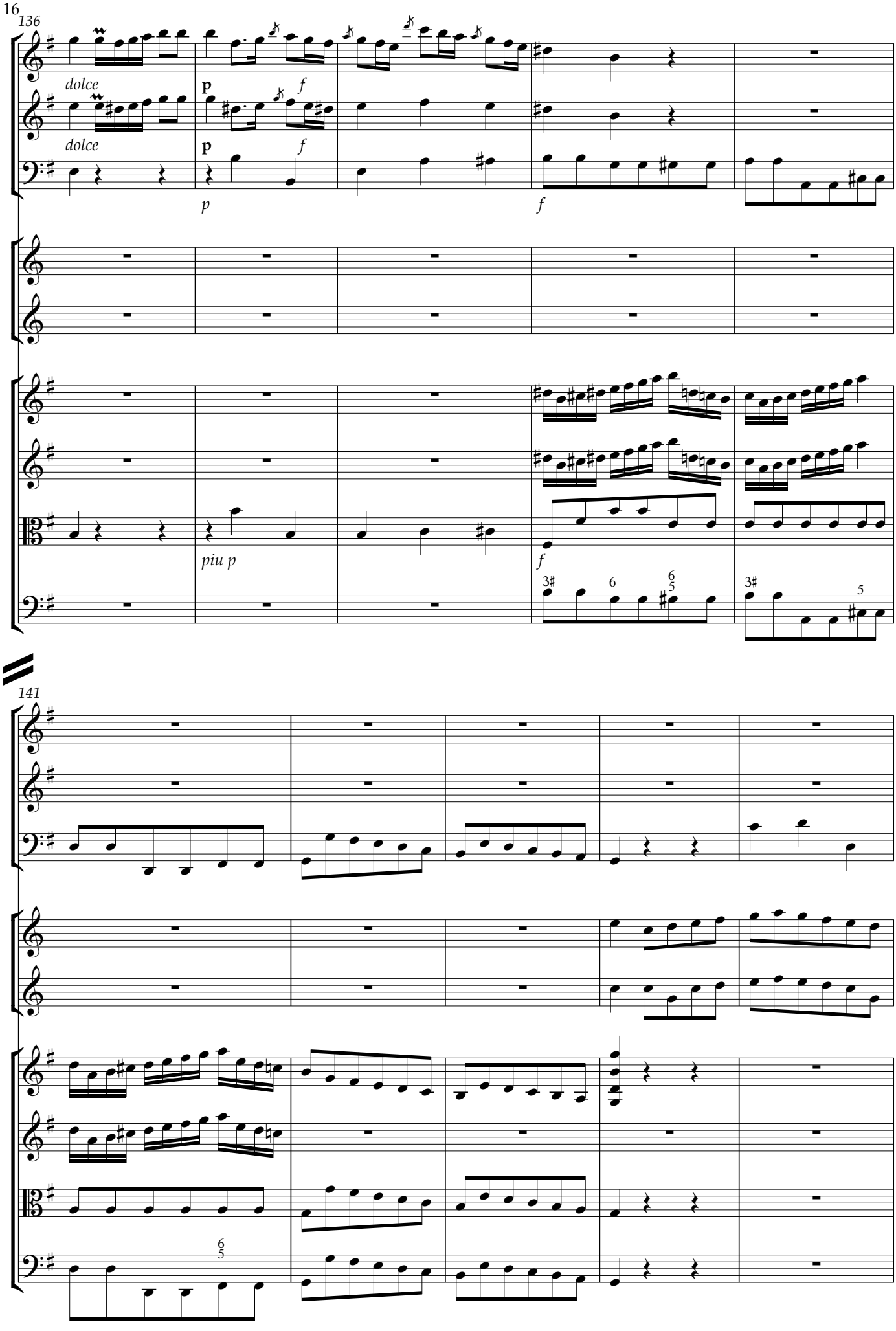
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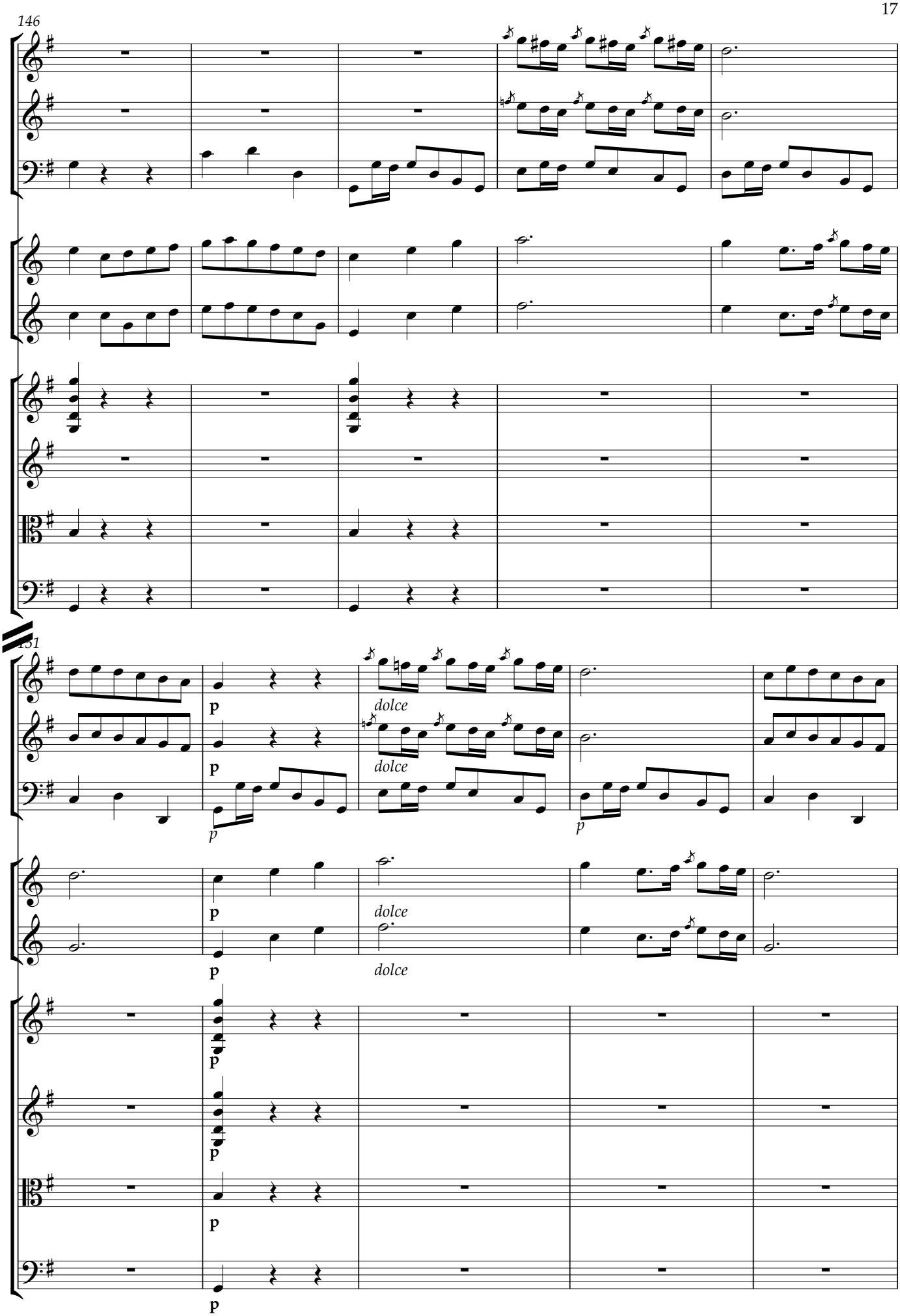
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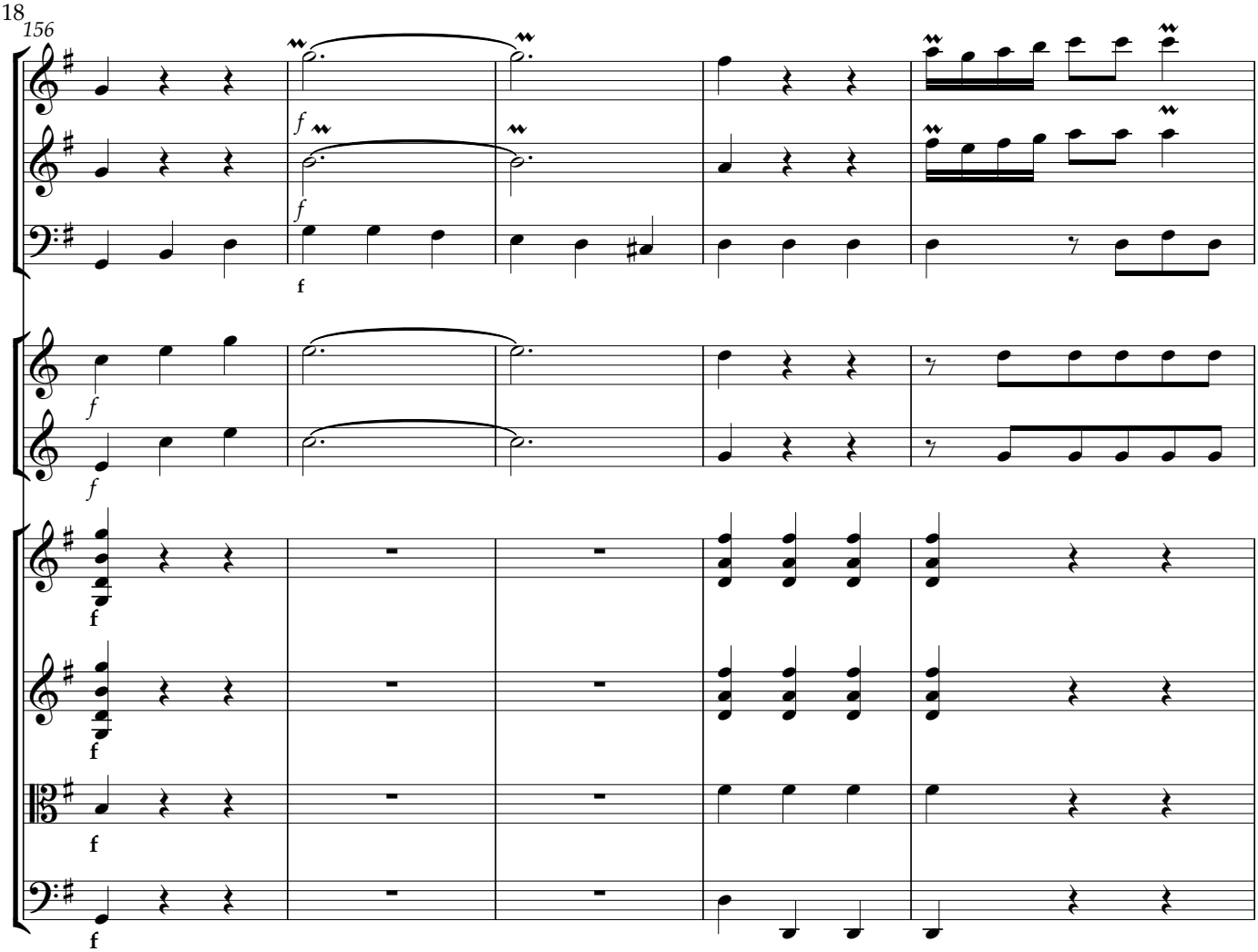
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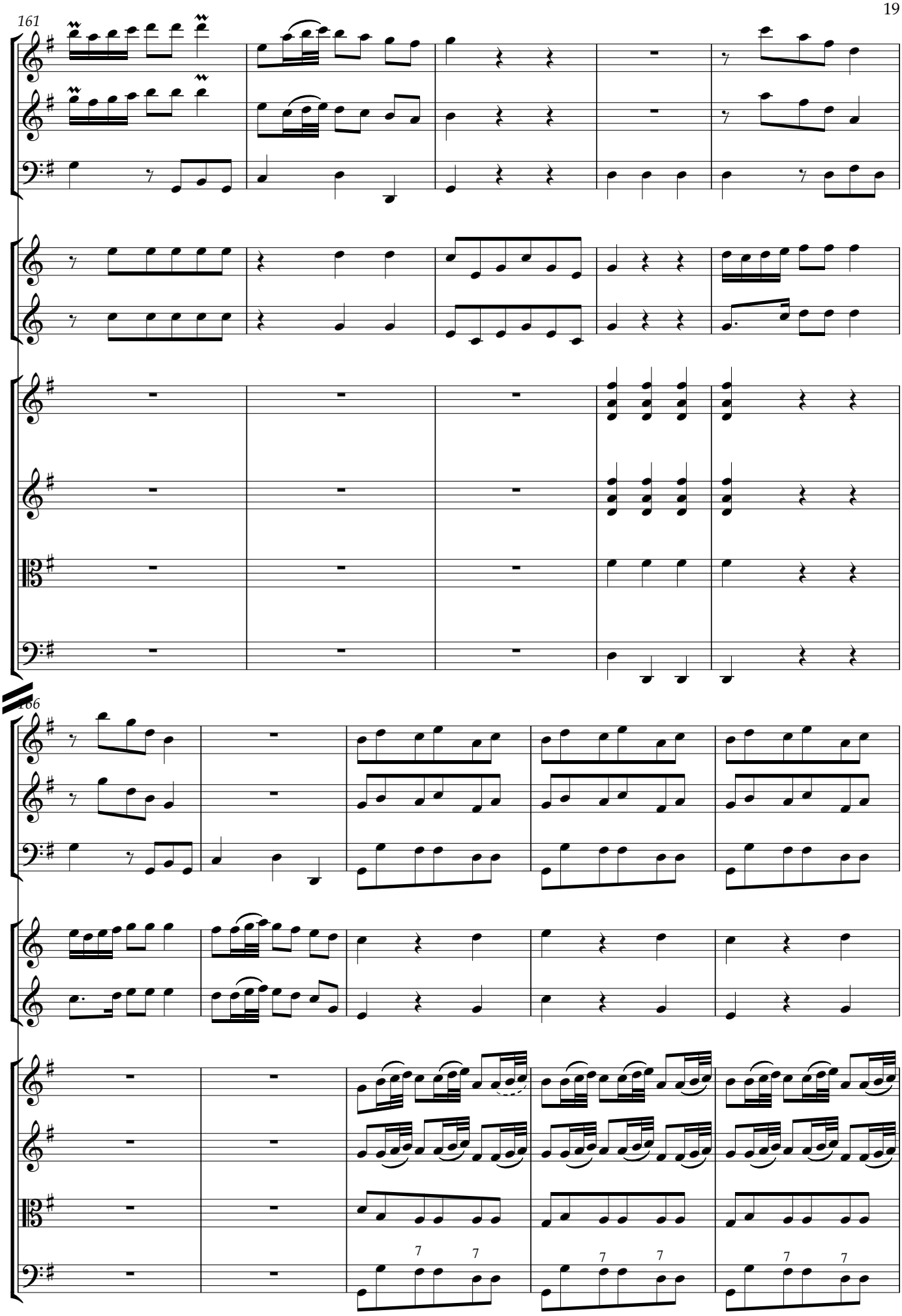
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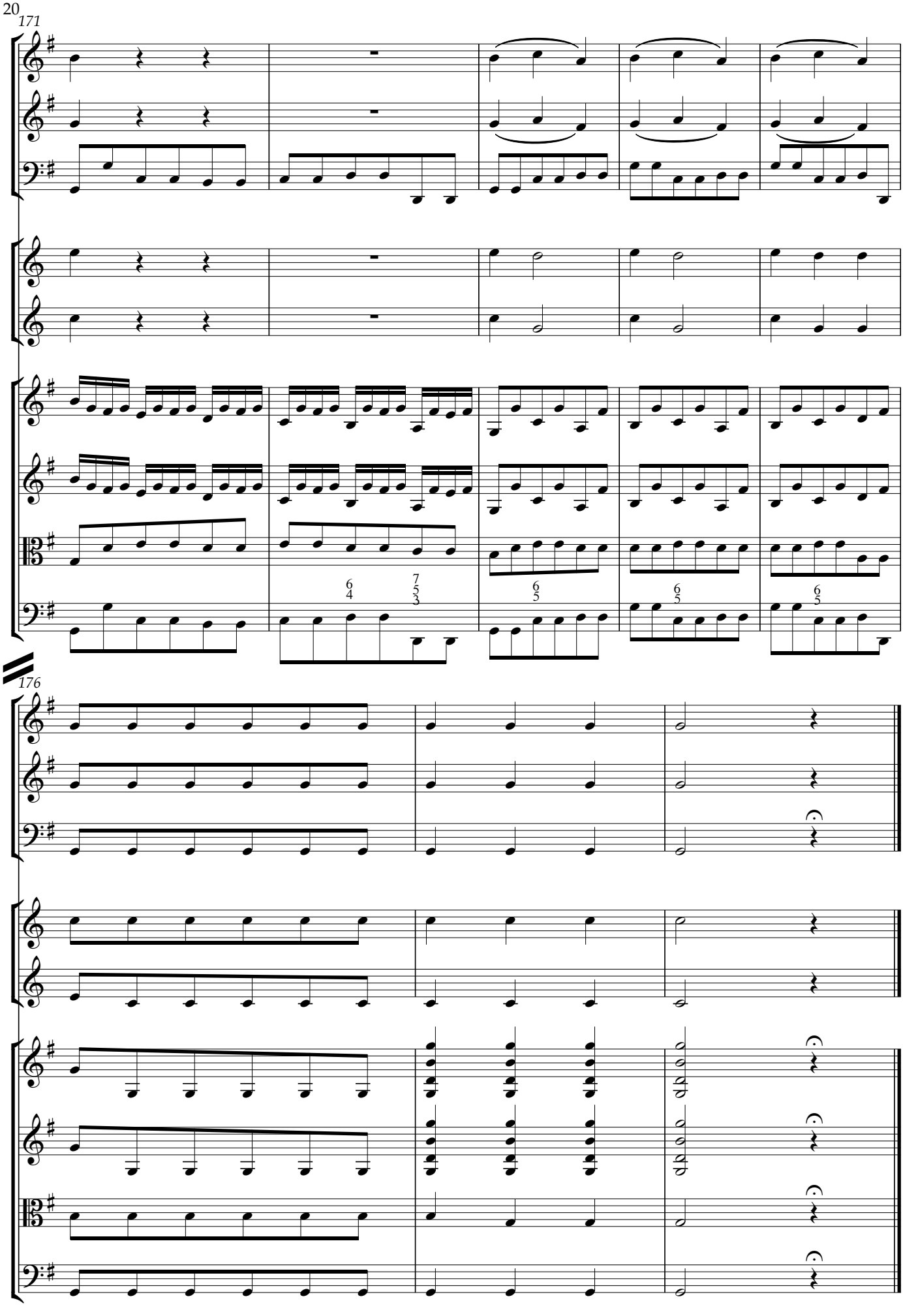
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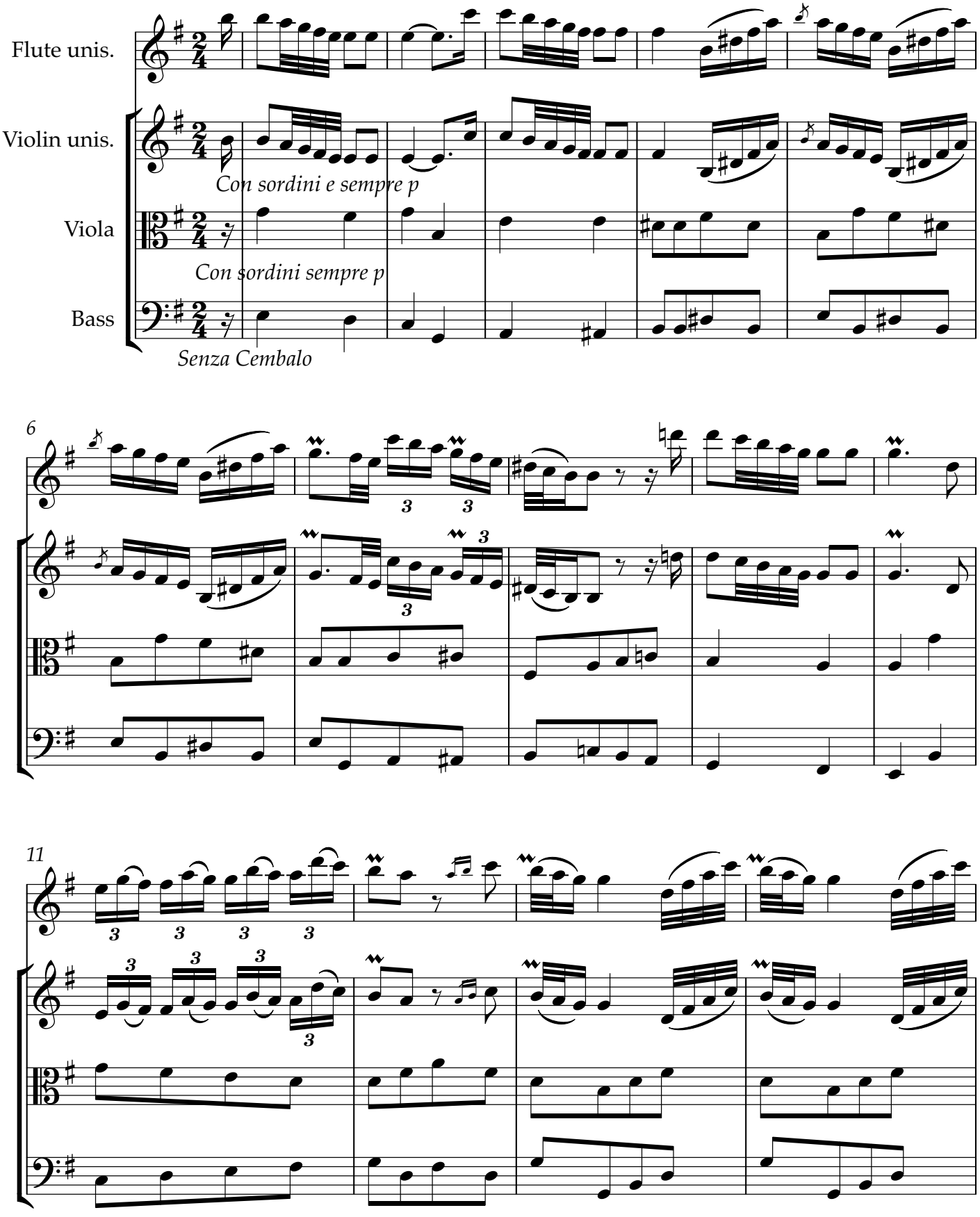
II

Giovanni Battista Serini

Andantino



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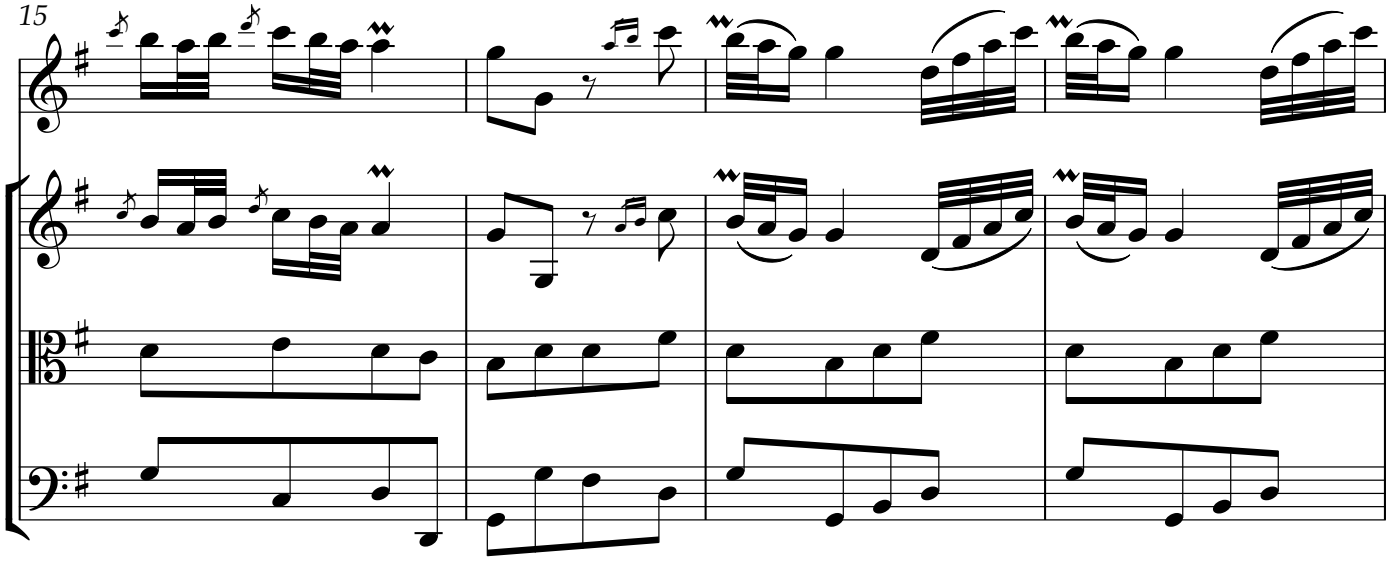
15



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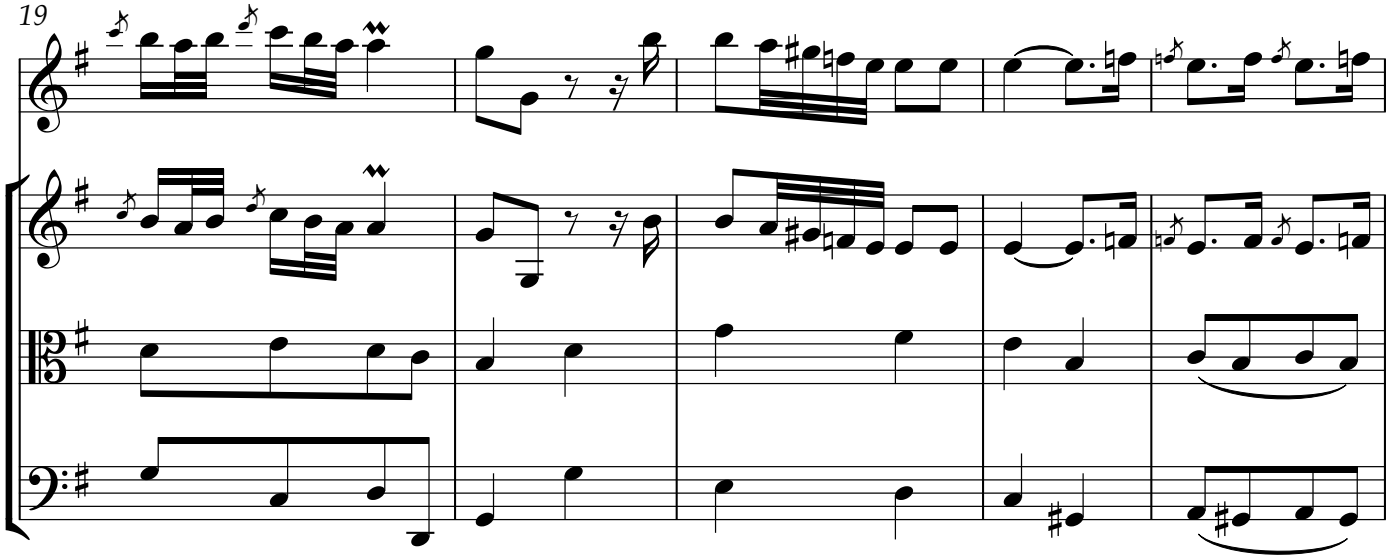

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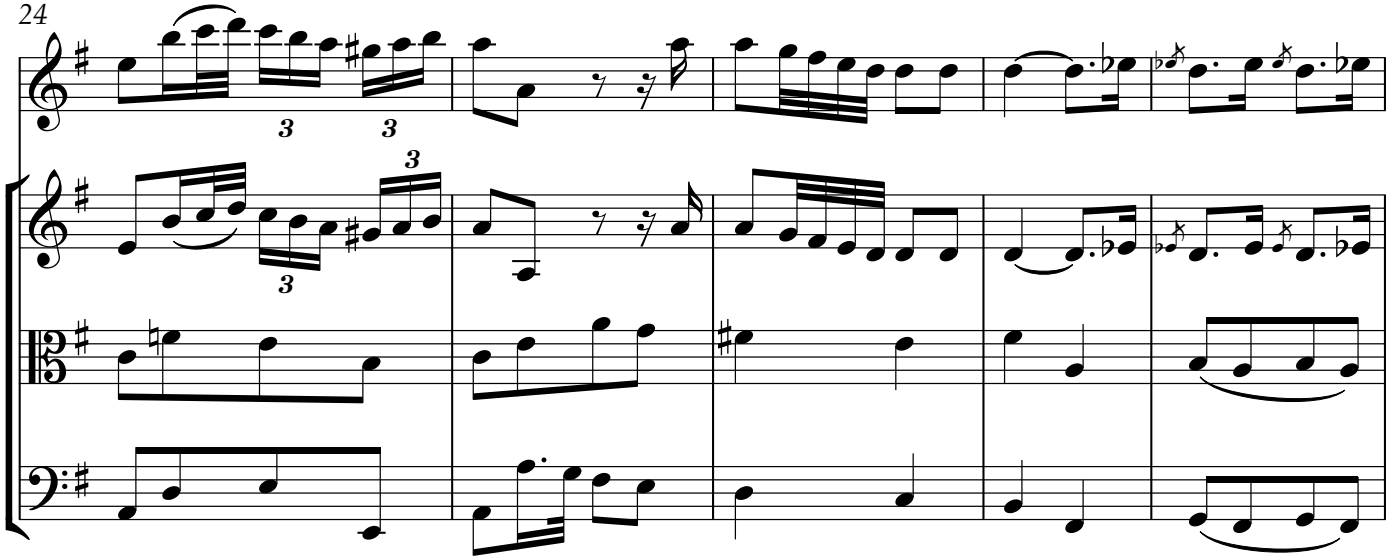

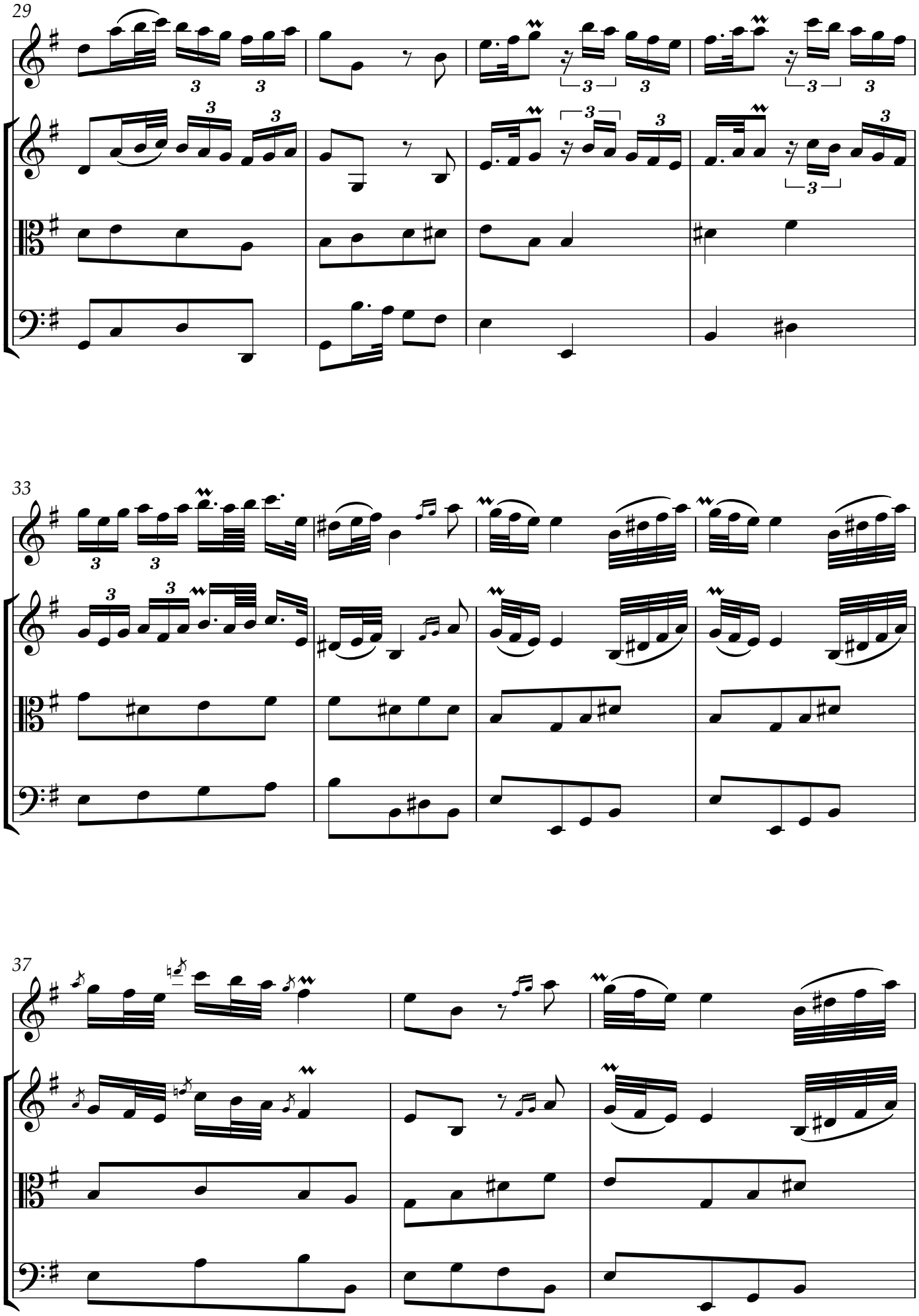
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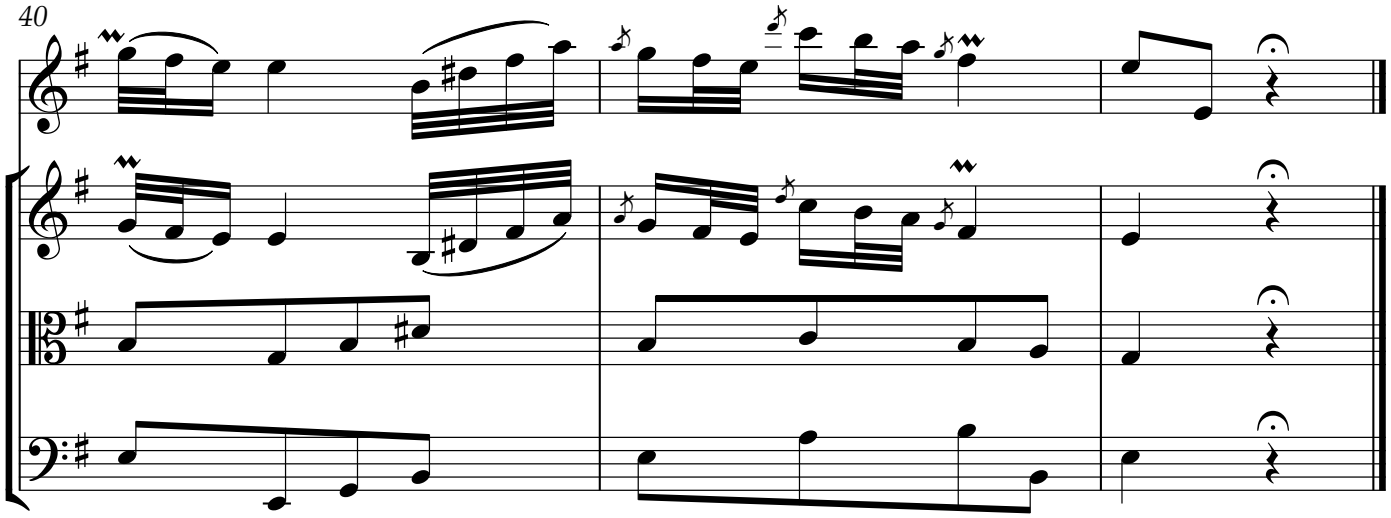
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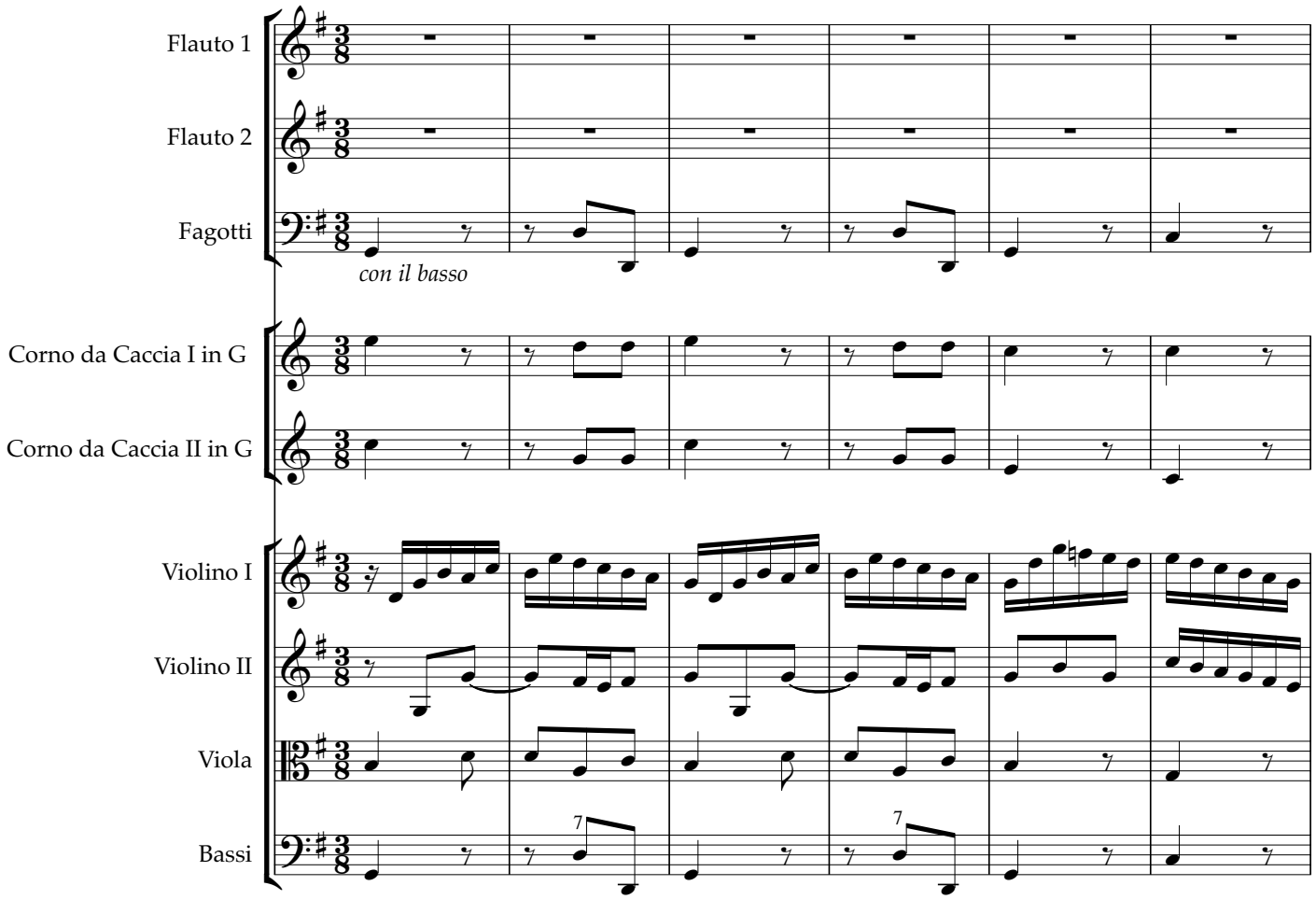
III

Giovanni Battista Serini

Allegro ma non presto



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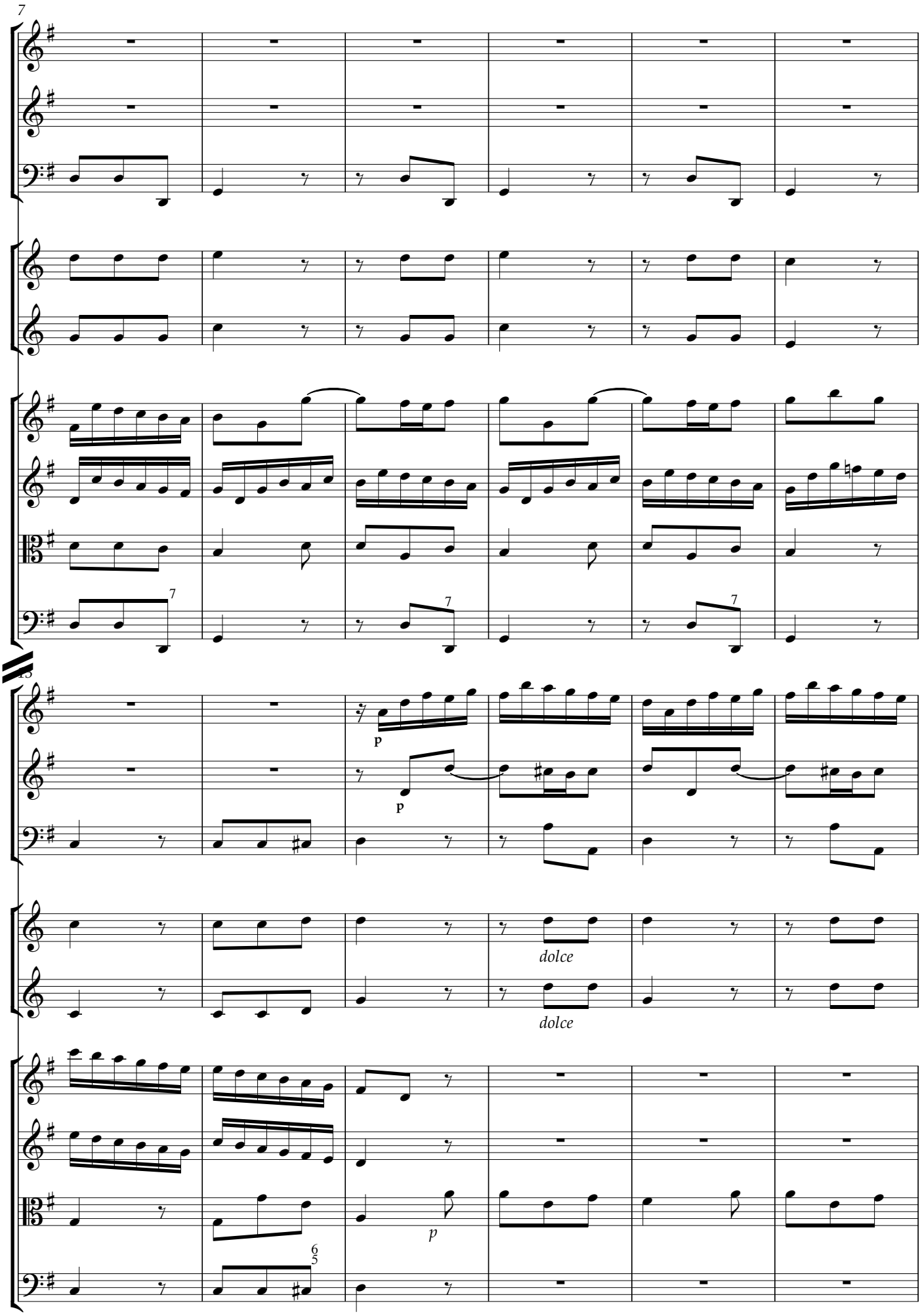
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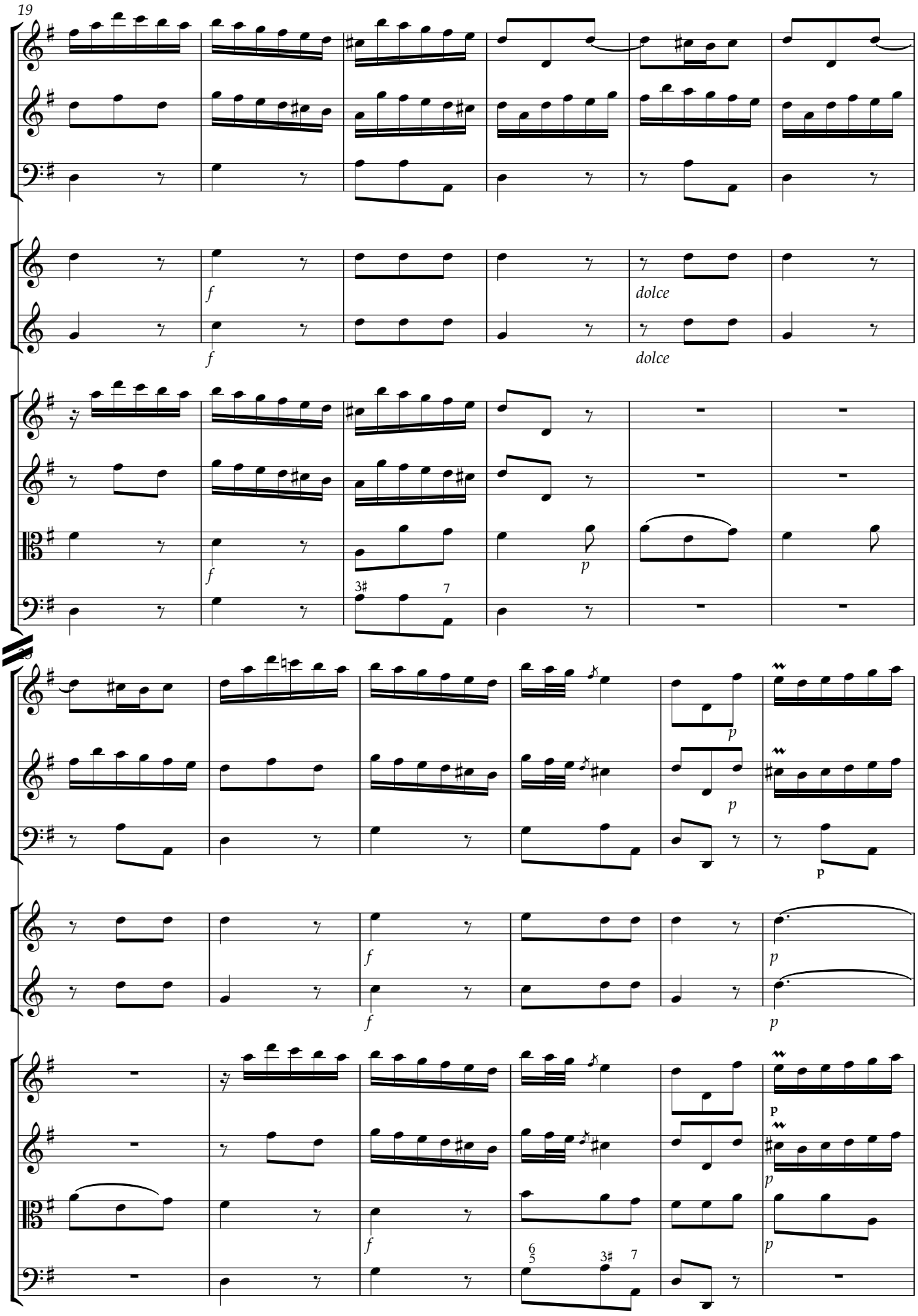
19
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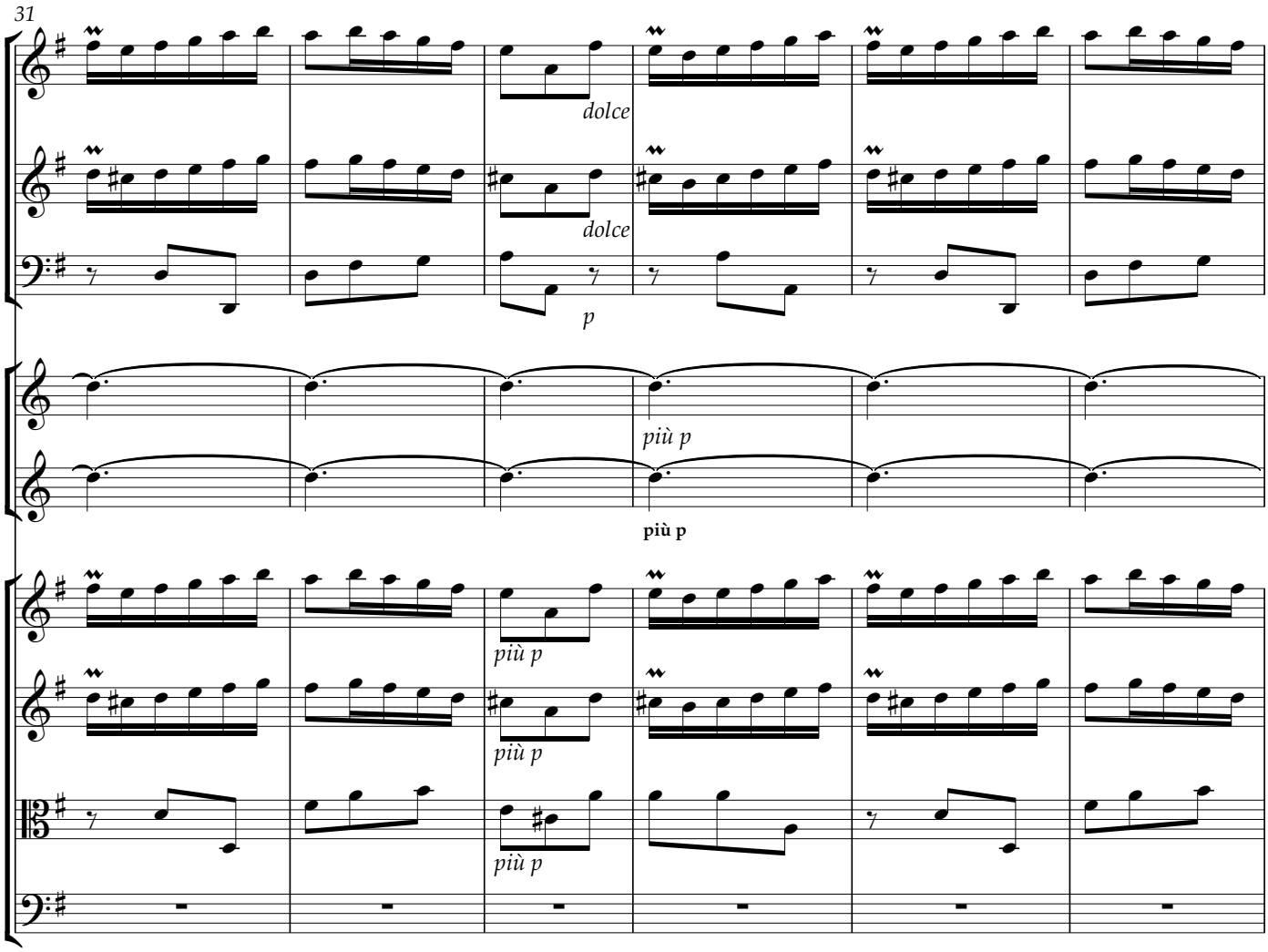
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più p
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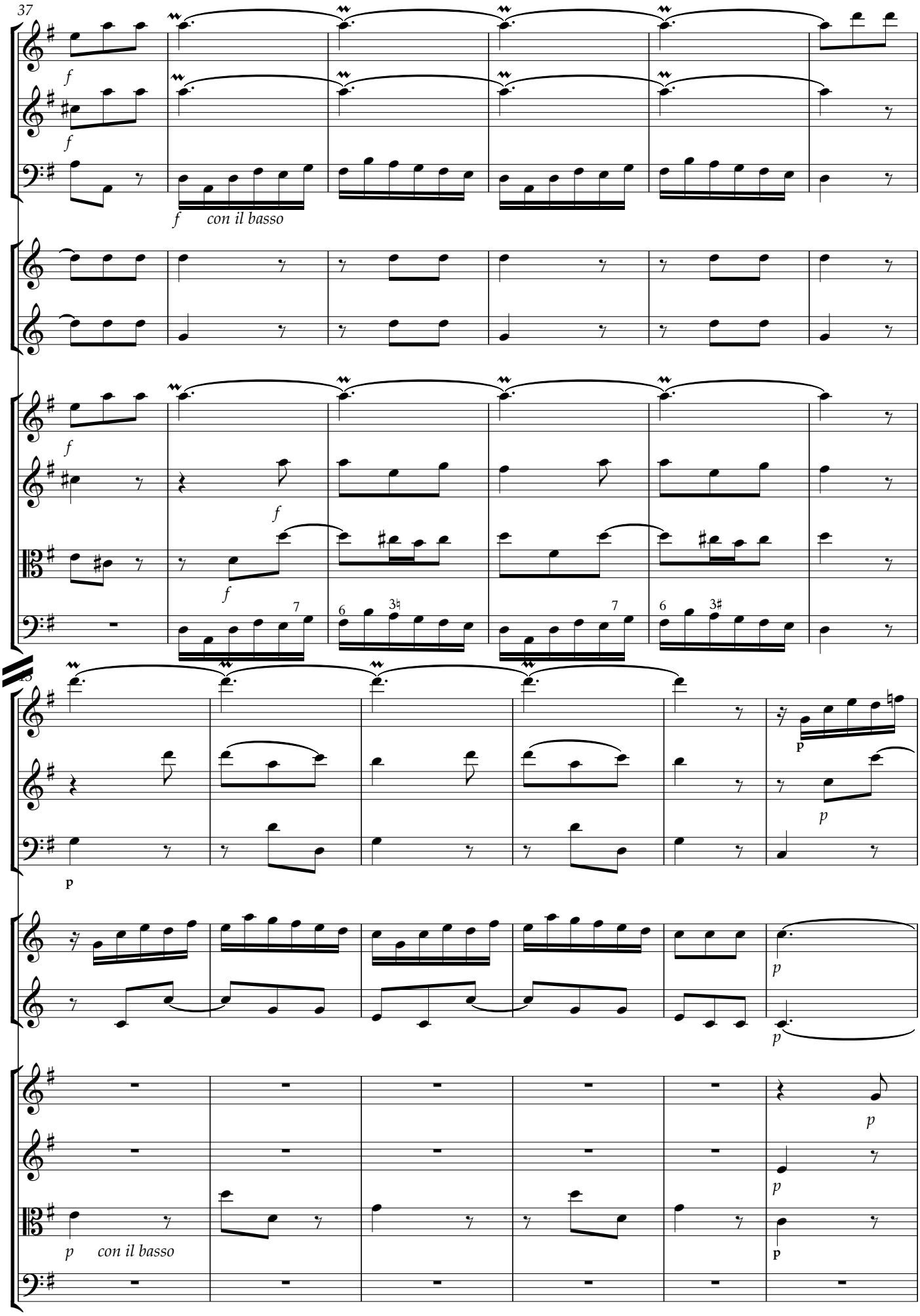
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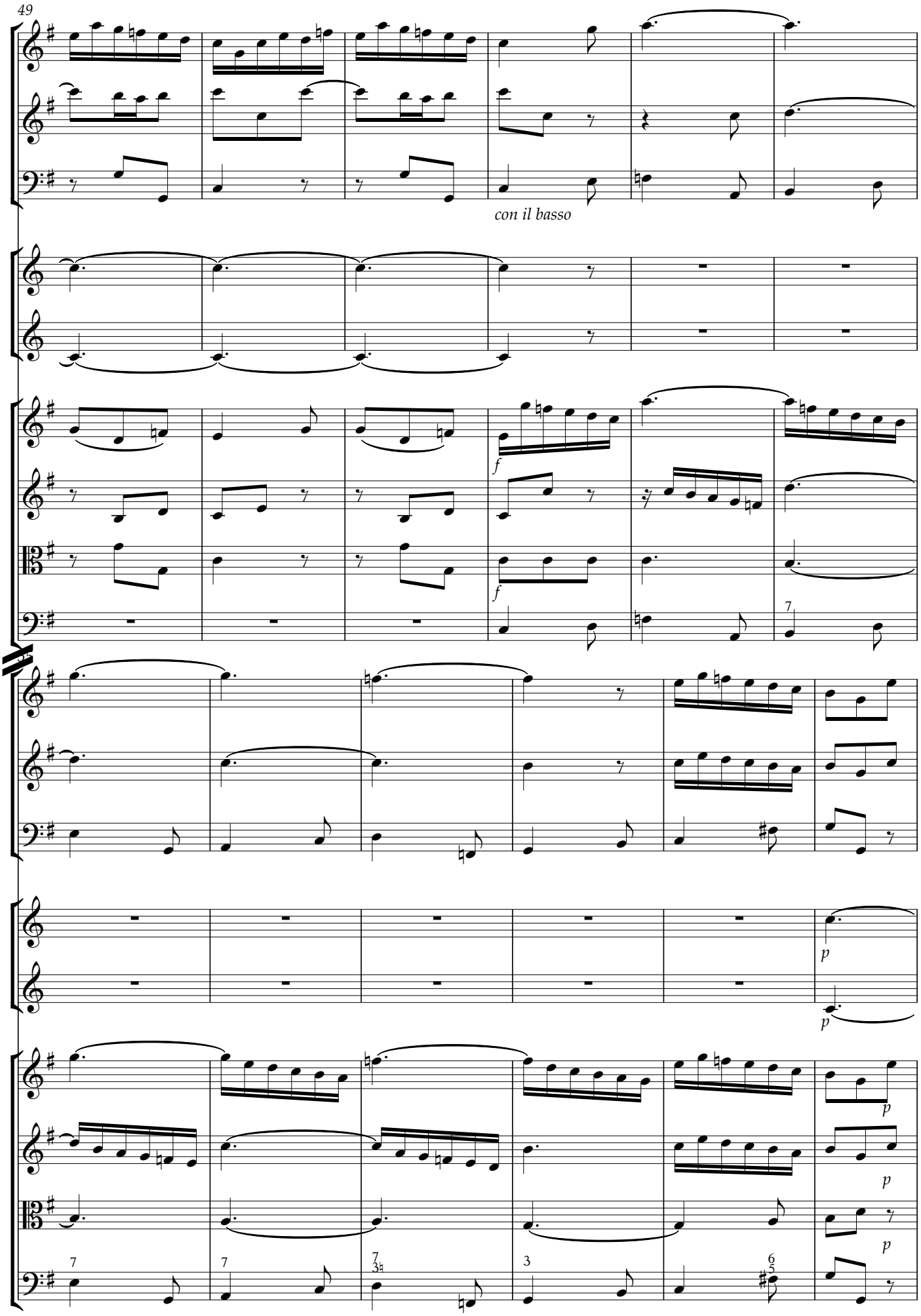
p con il basso
p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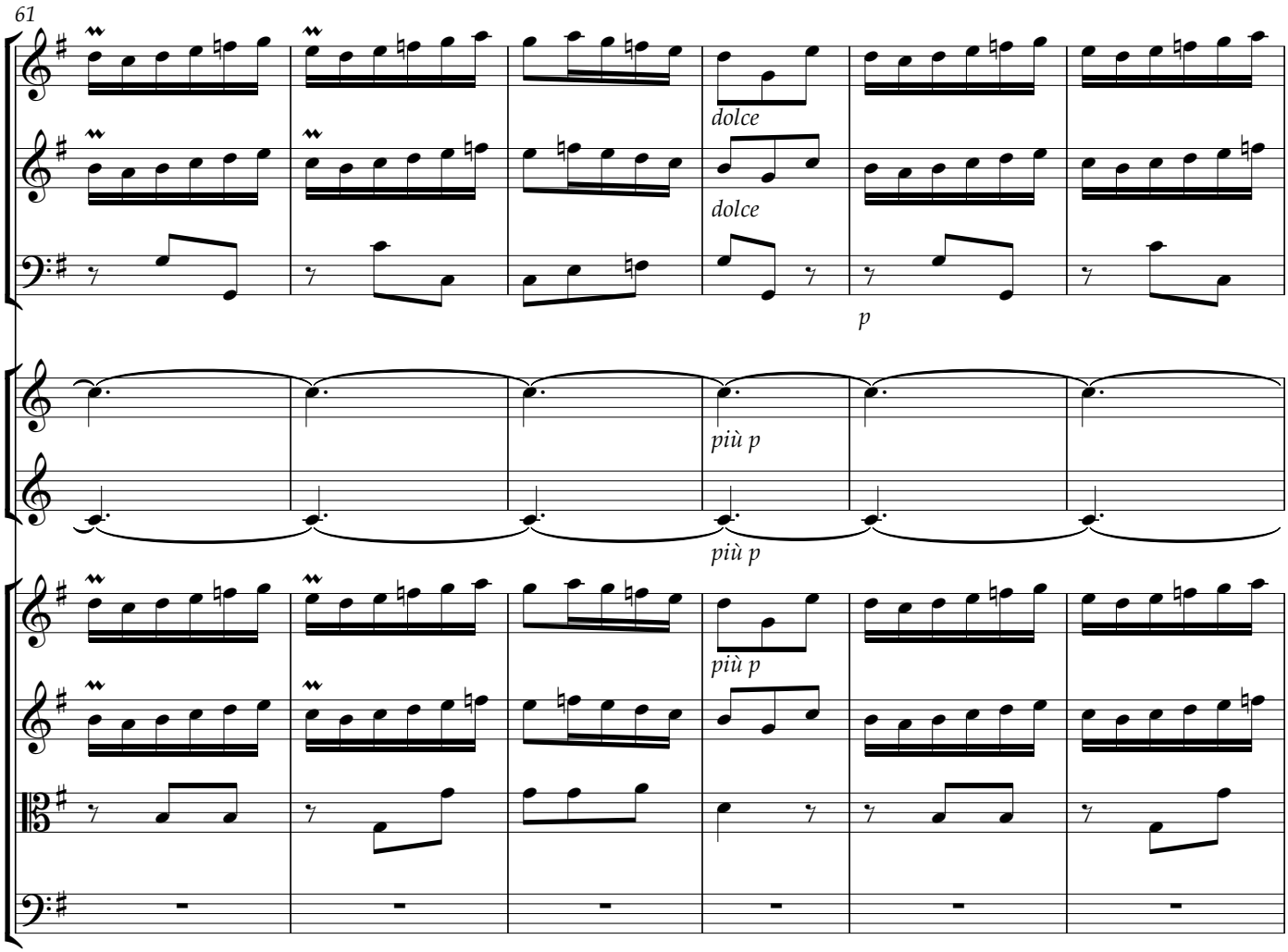
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dolce
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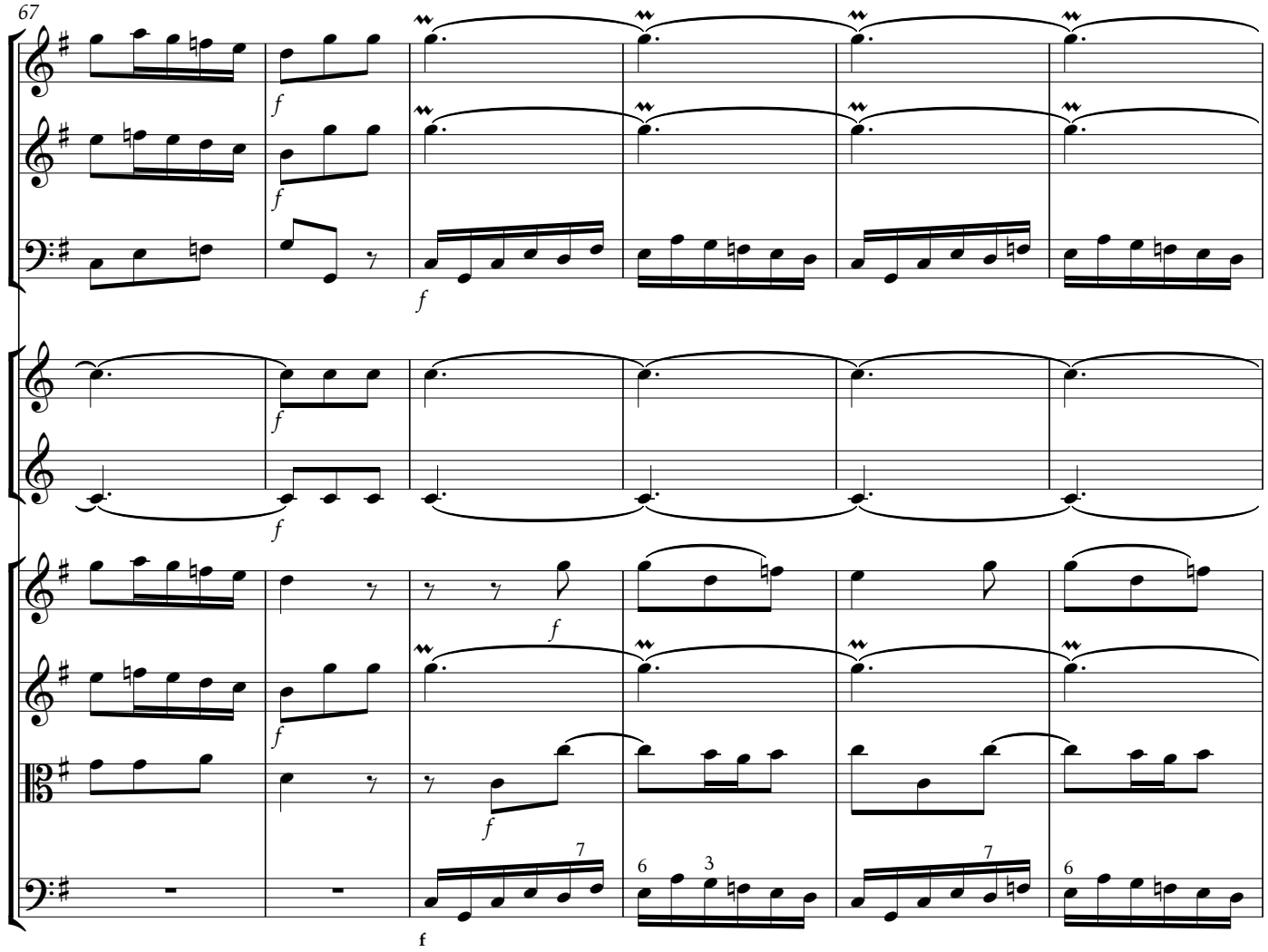
più p
più p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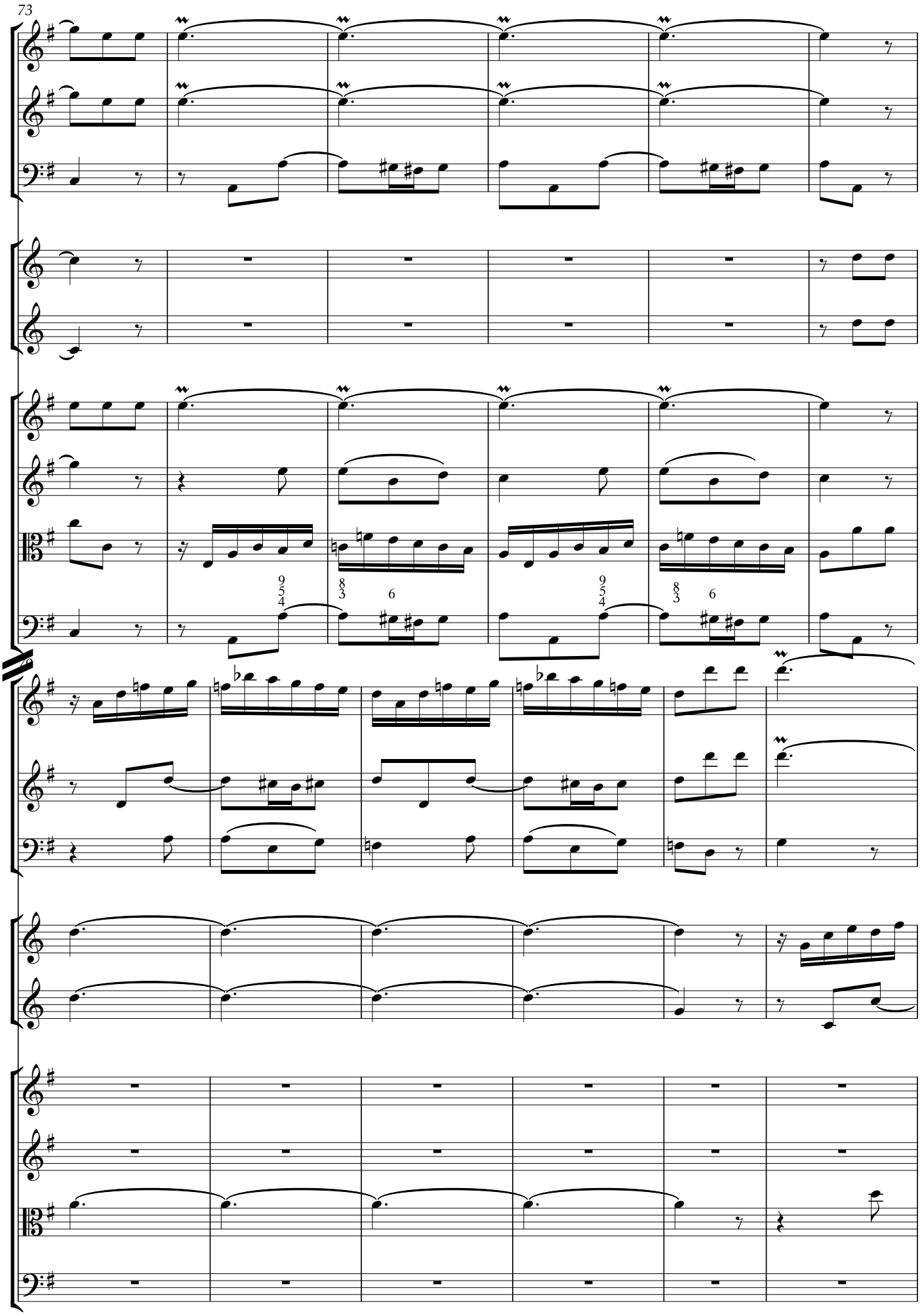
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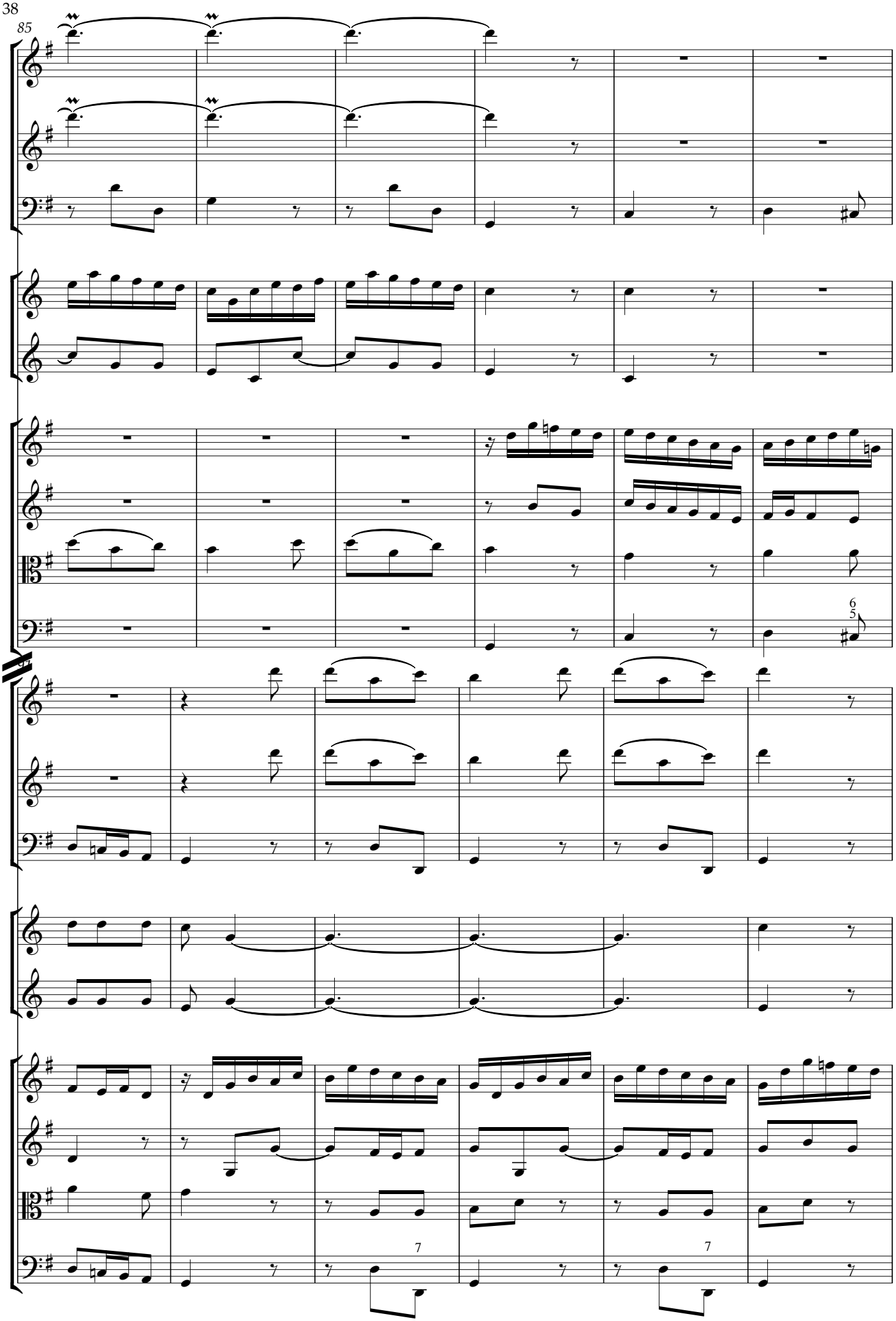
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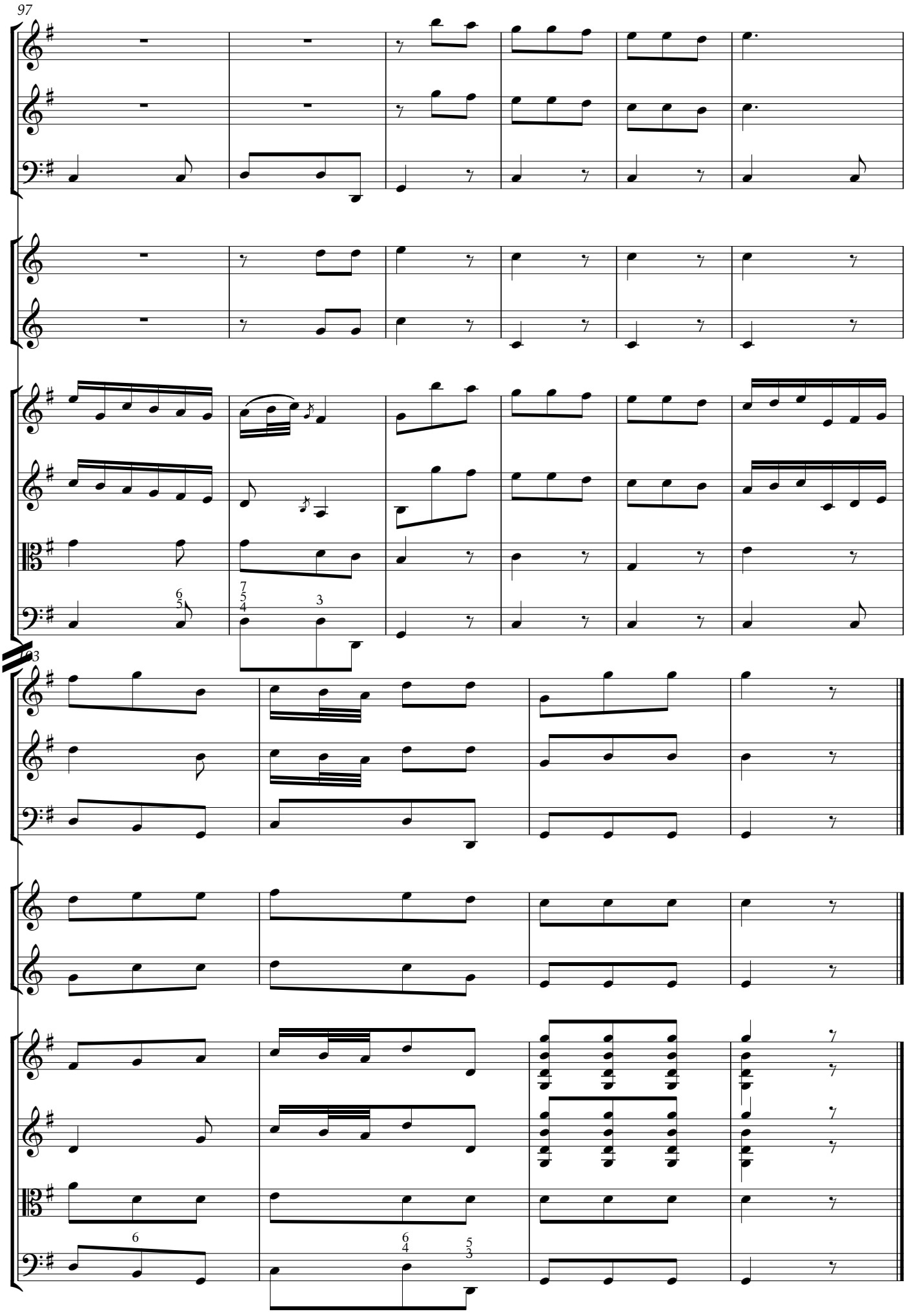
97
6
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7
5
4
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3
6
6
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3

Giovanni Battista Serini

Sinfonia

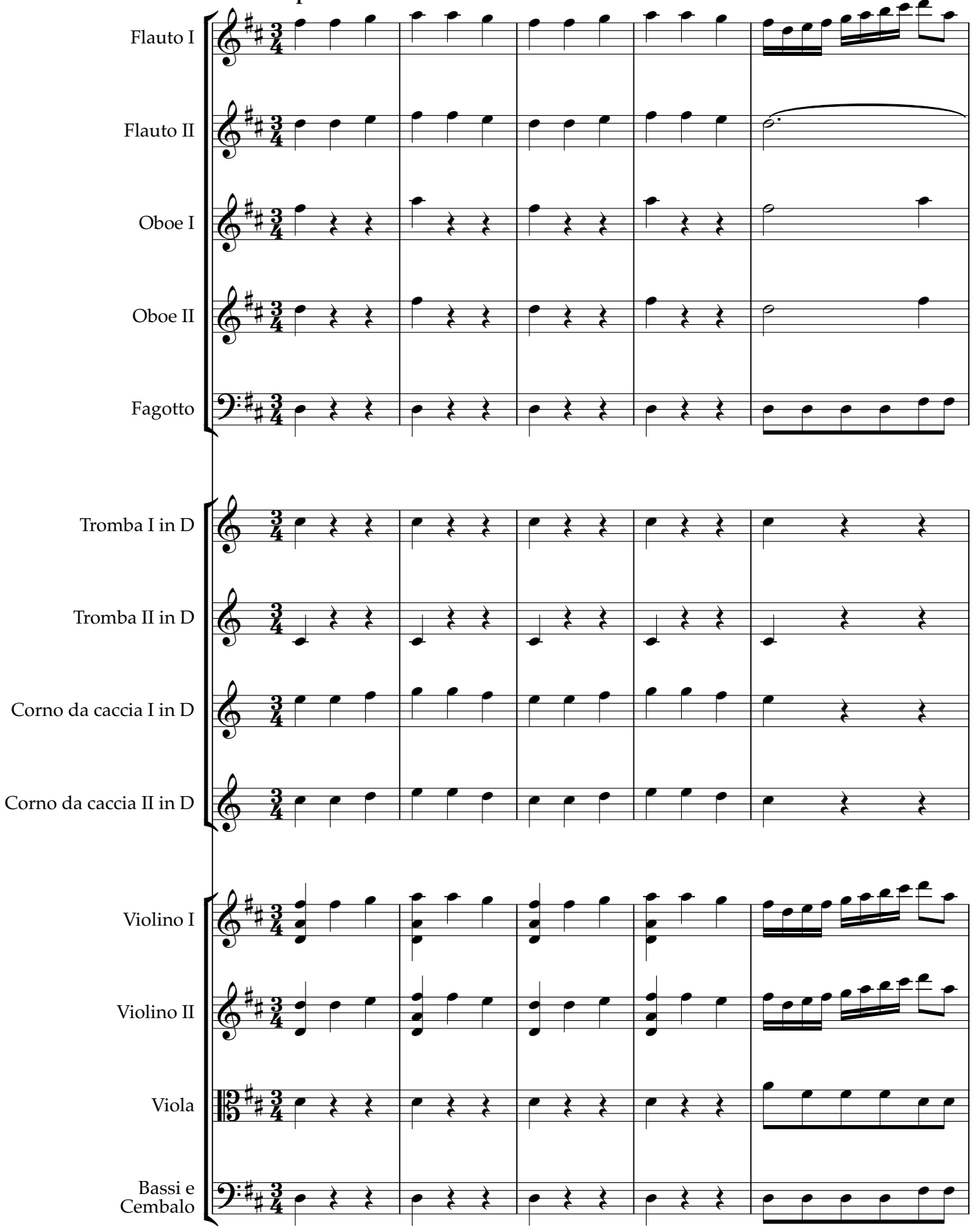
con corni da caccia, e fagotto
obbligati

Symphony 2

Symphony 2

Principal source:GB-Y MS 129 S
D-Rtt Serini 4

Spiritoso



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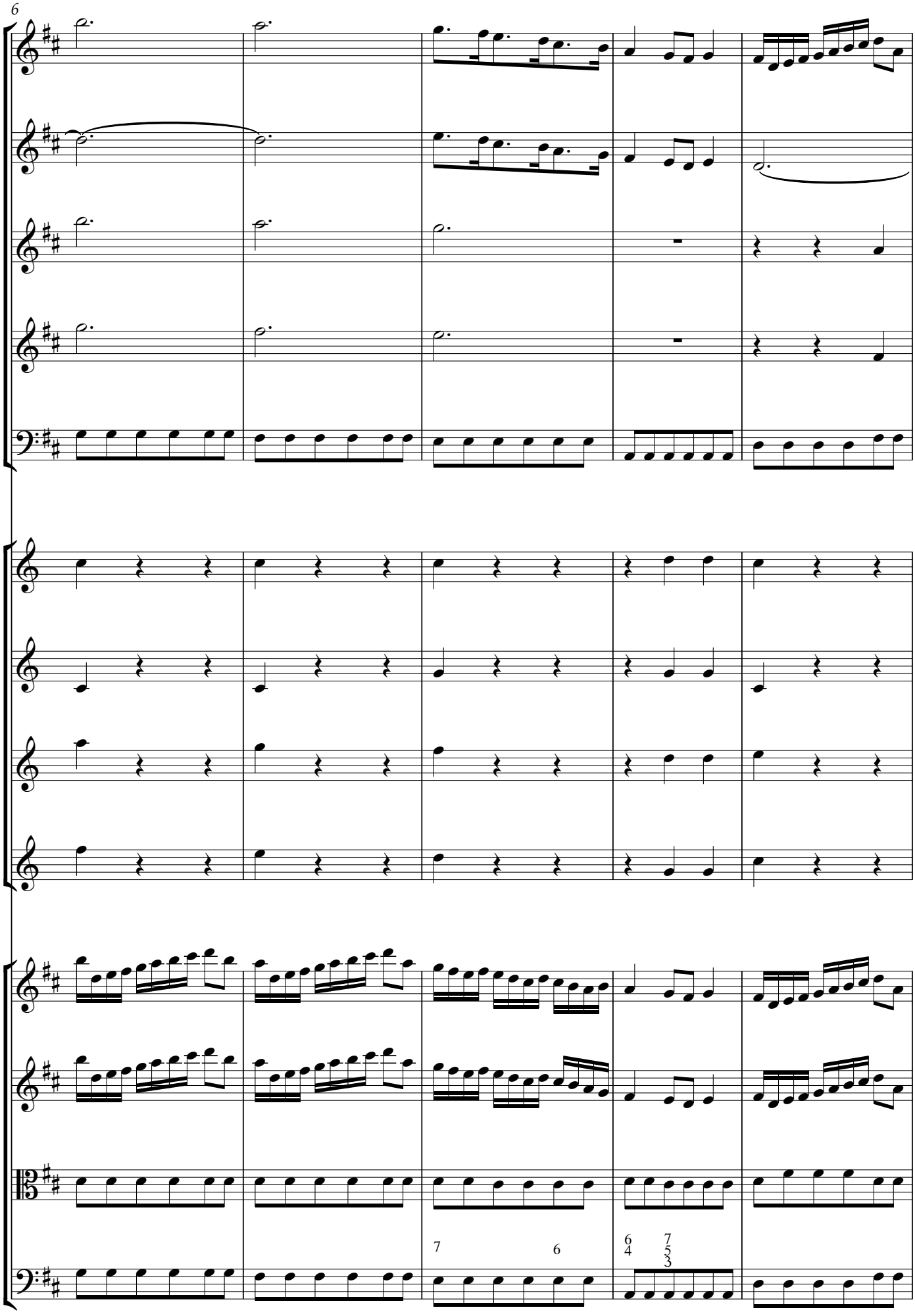
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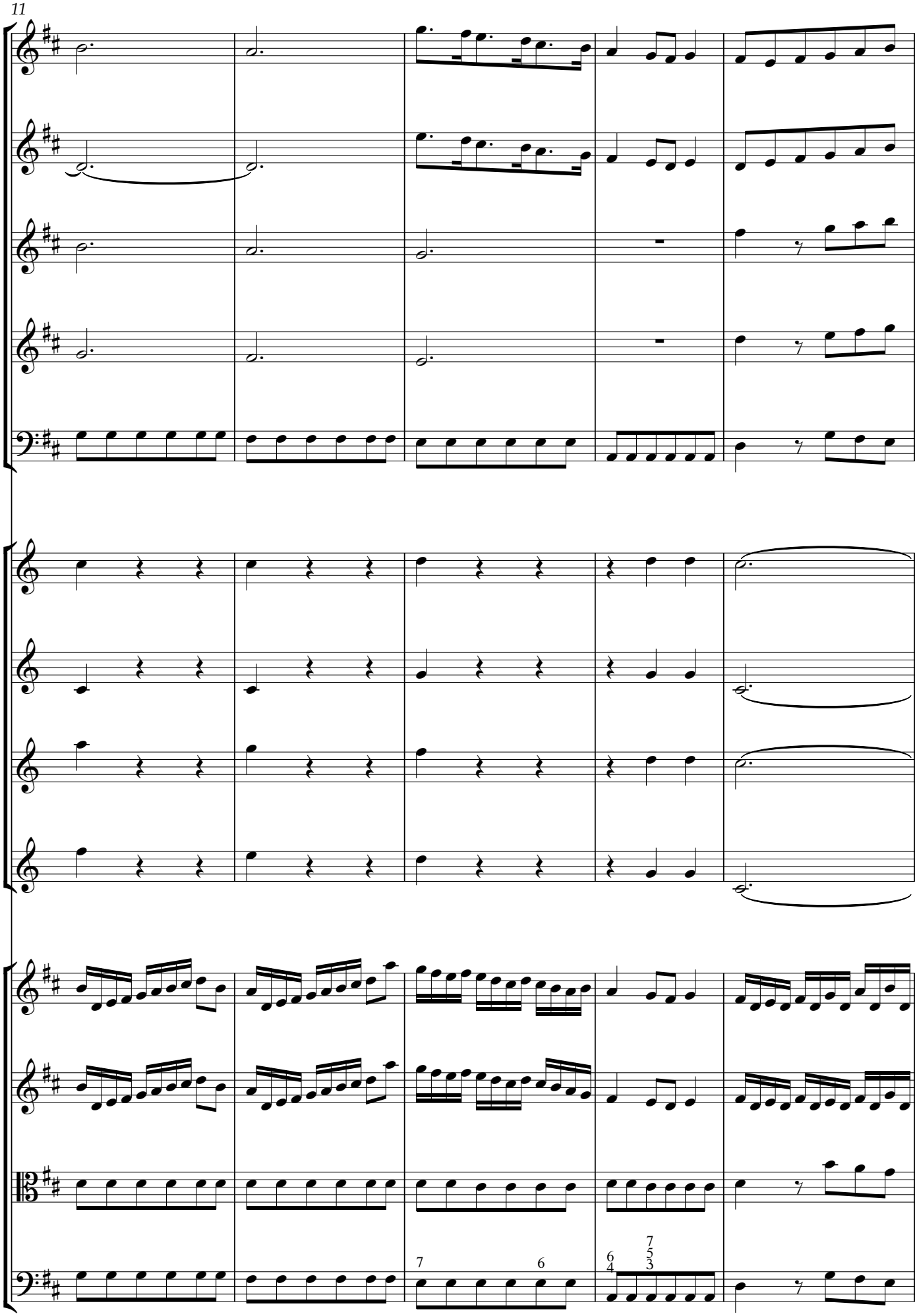
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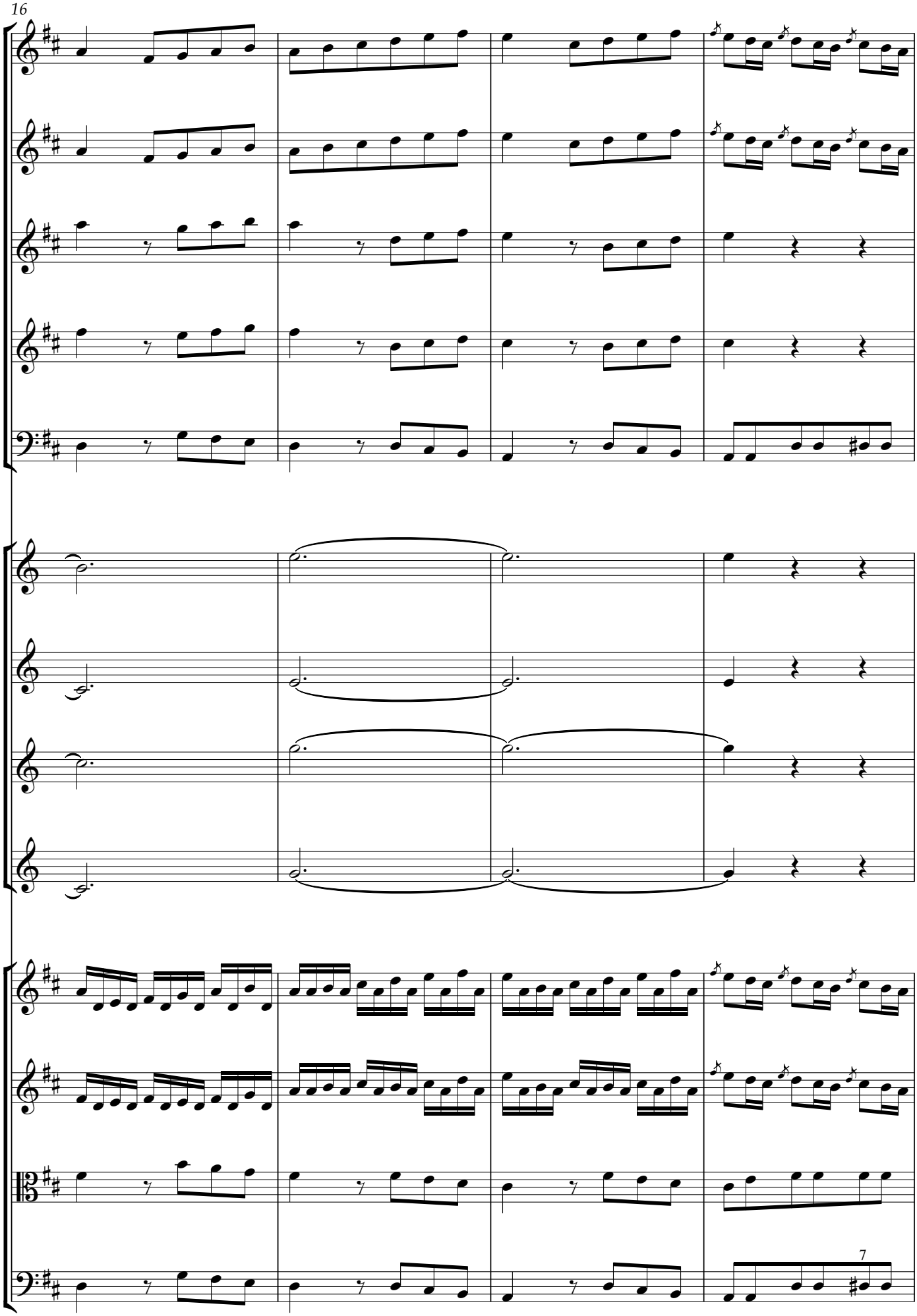
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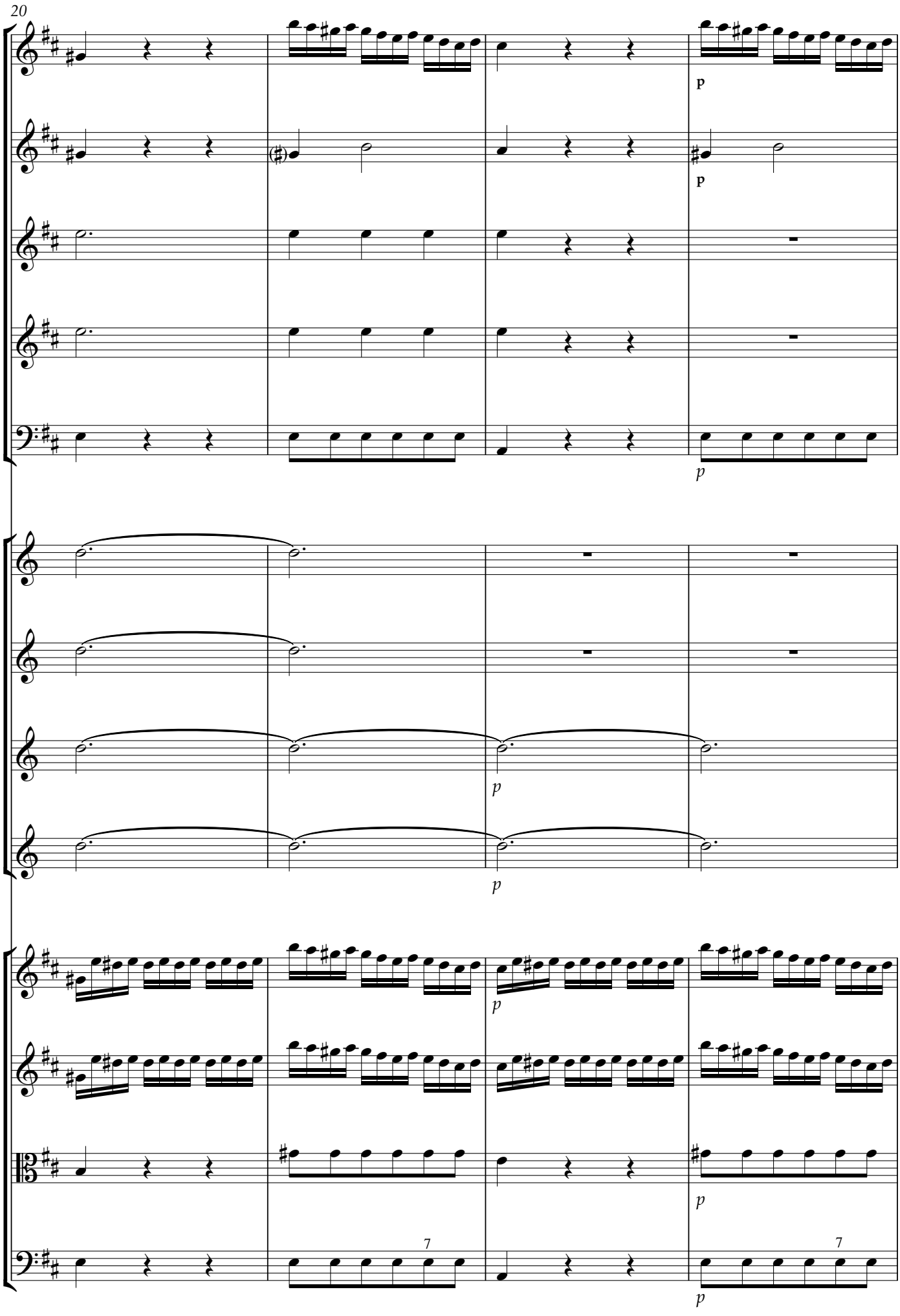
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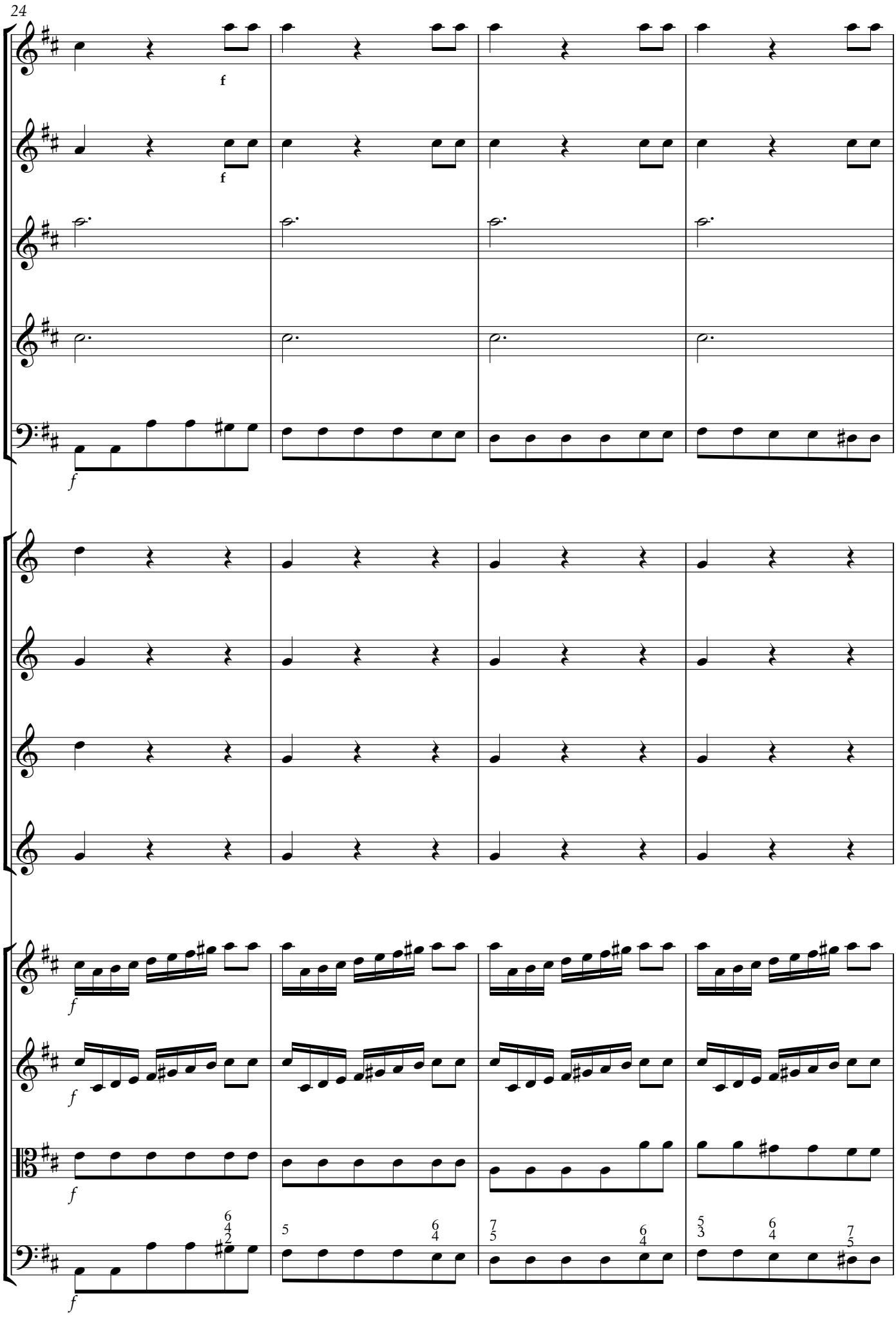
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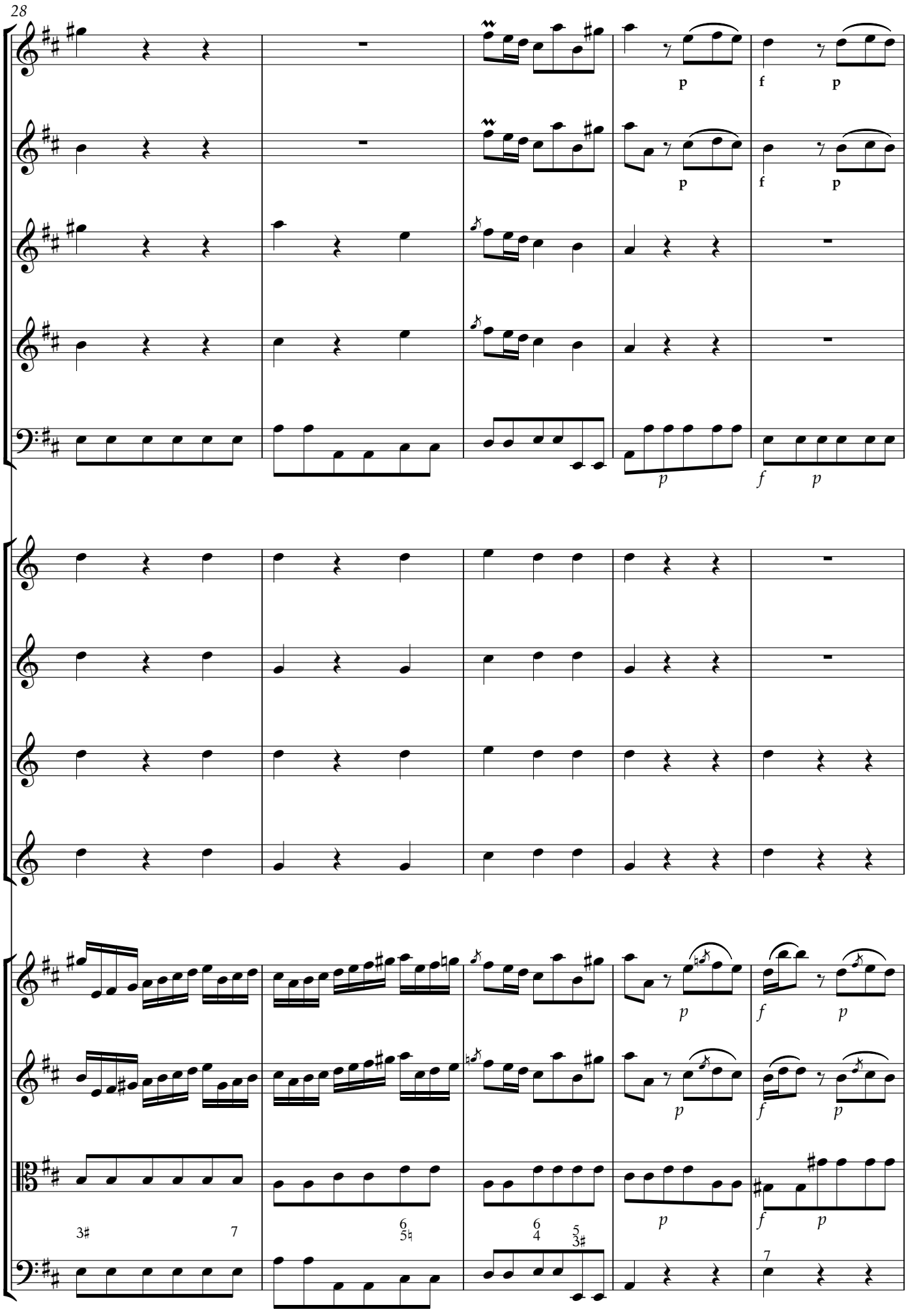
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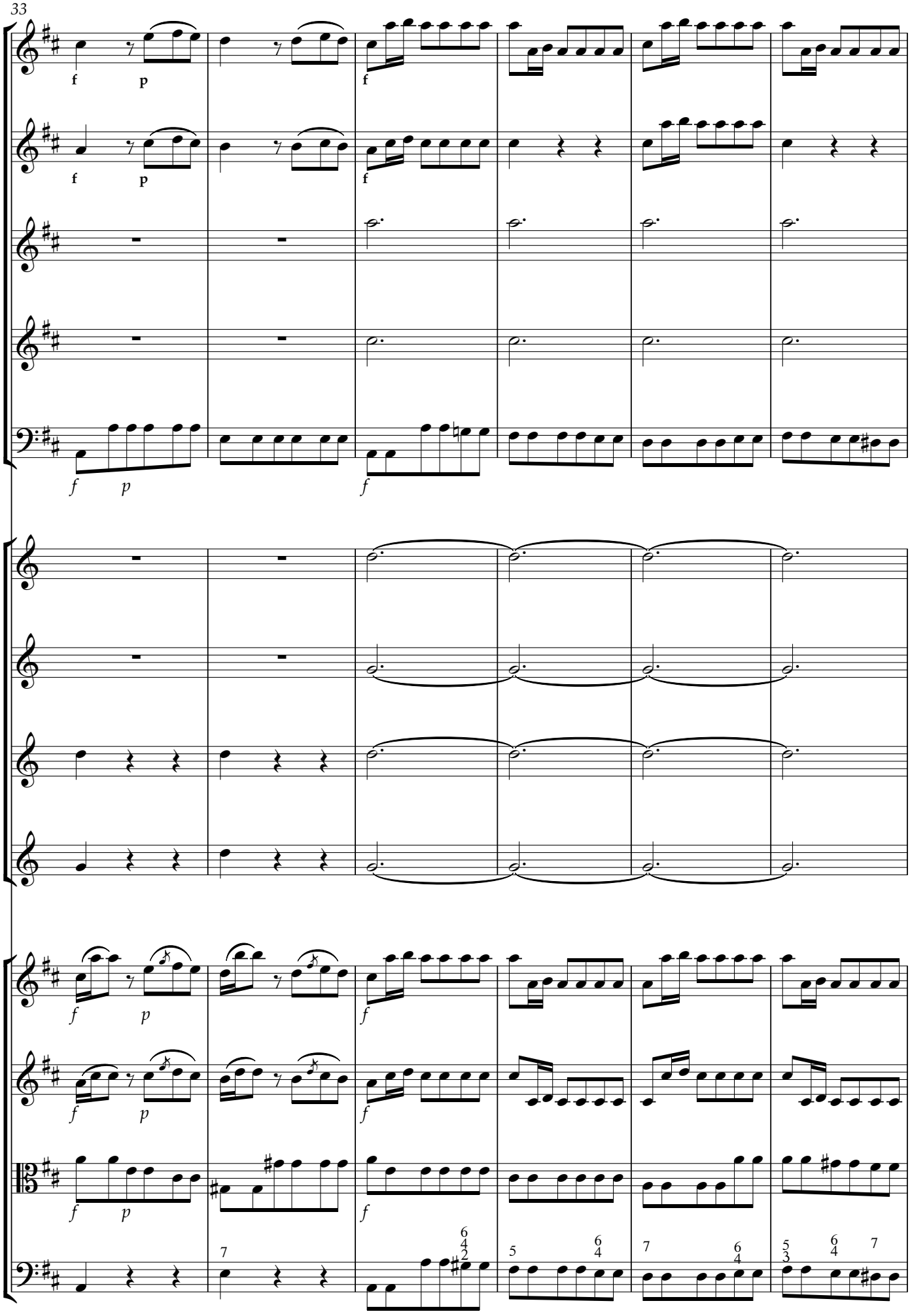
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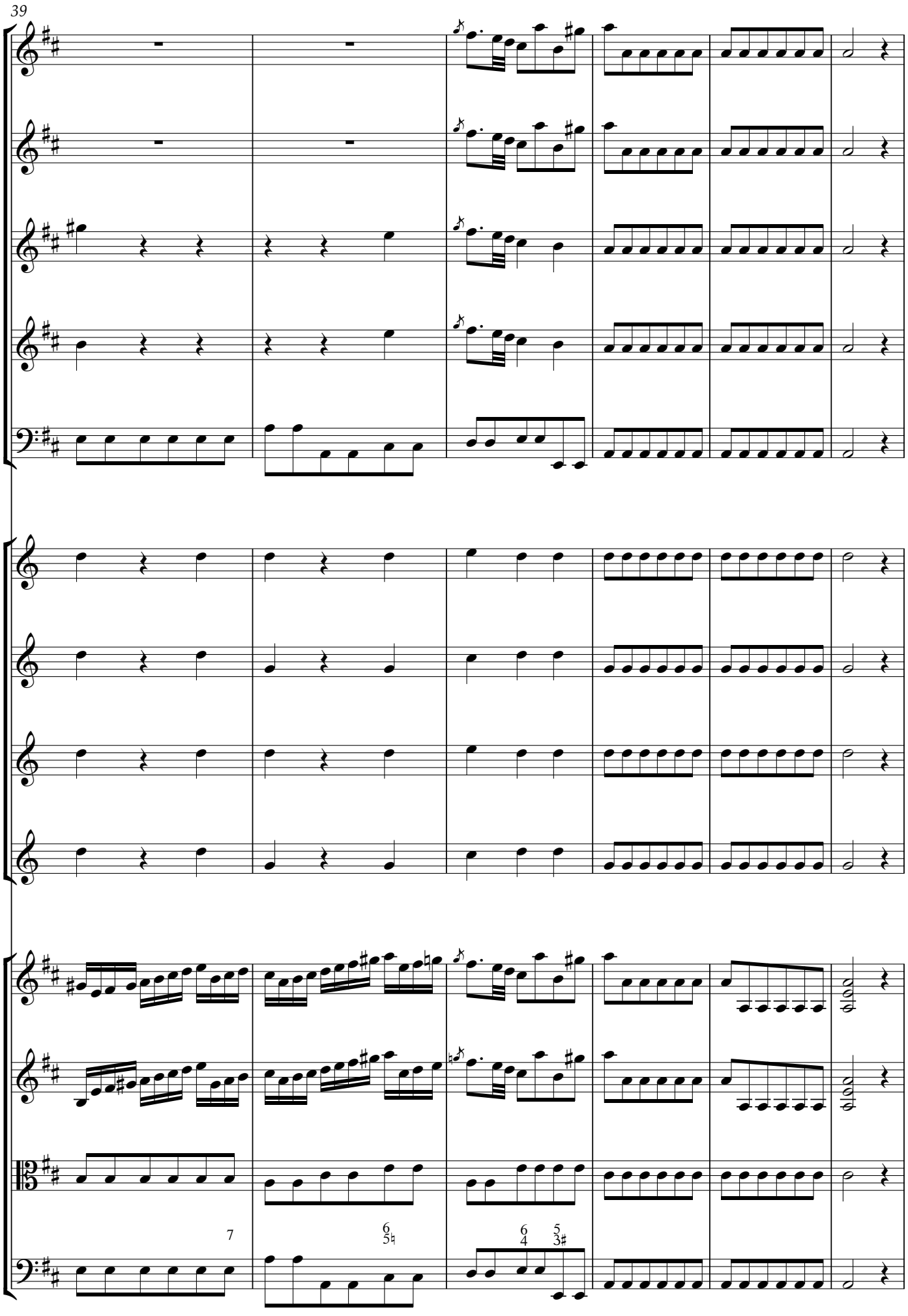
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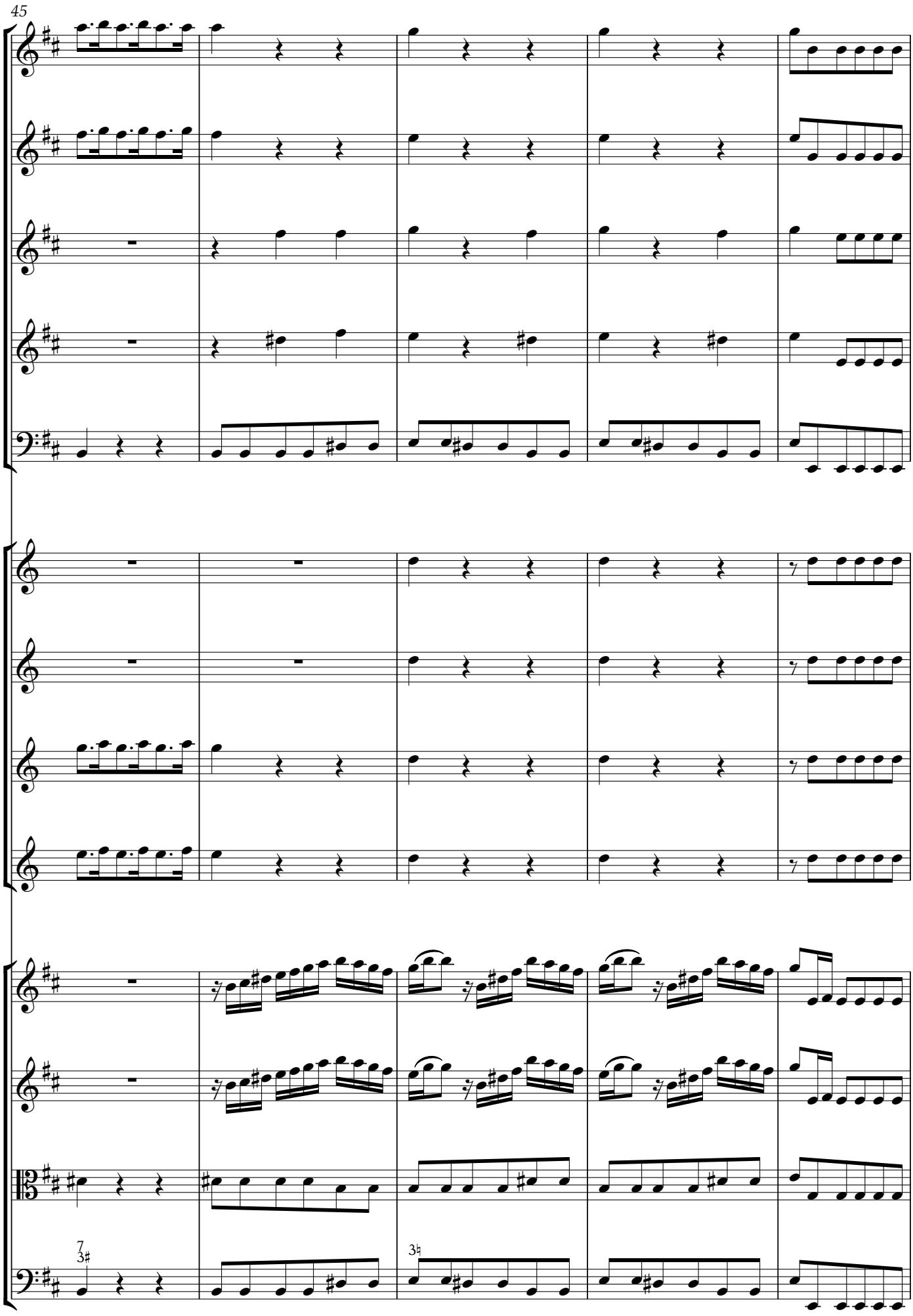
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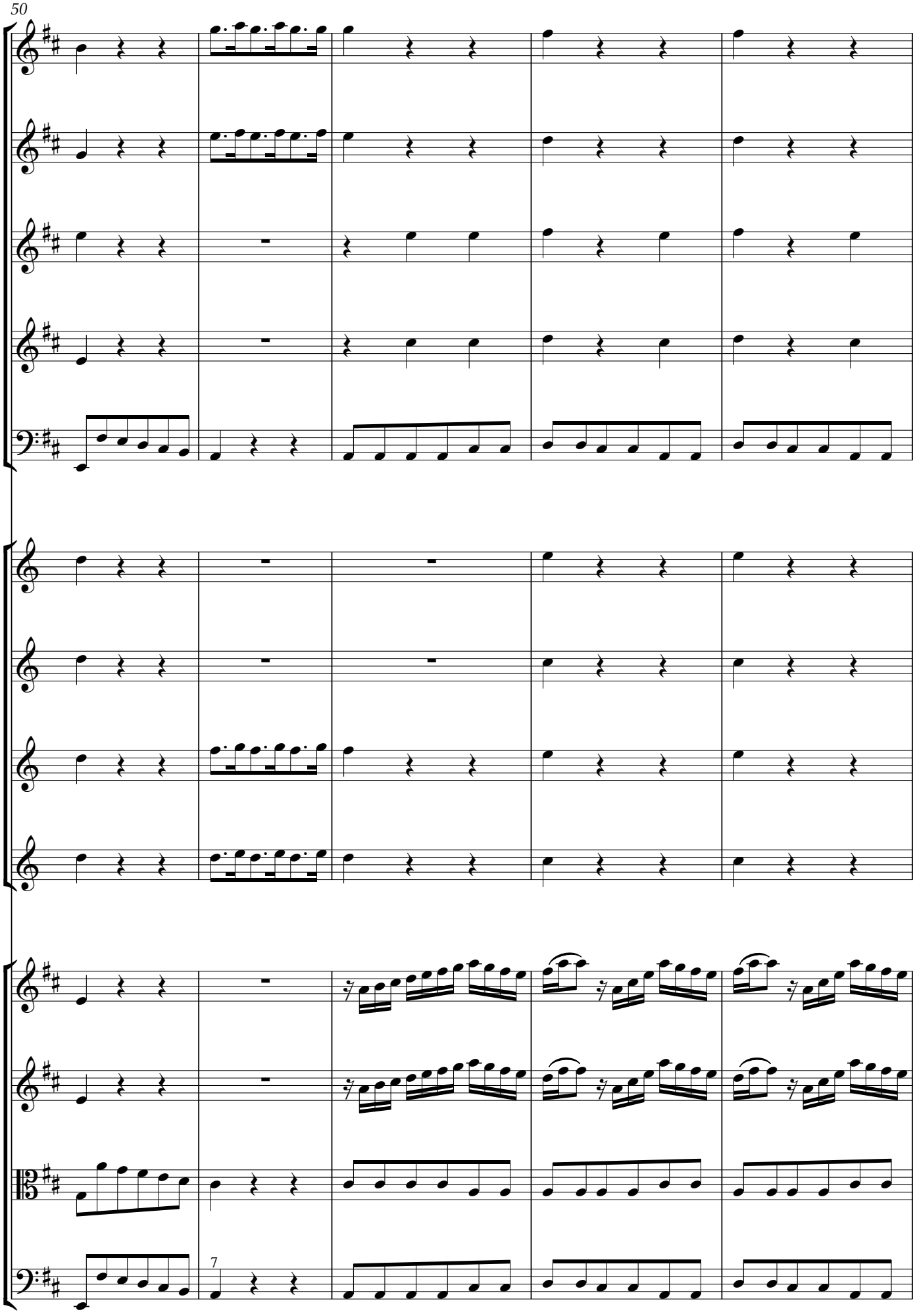
3♮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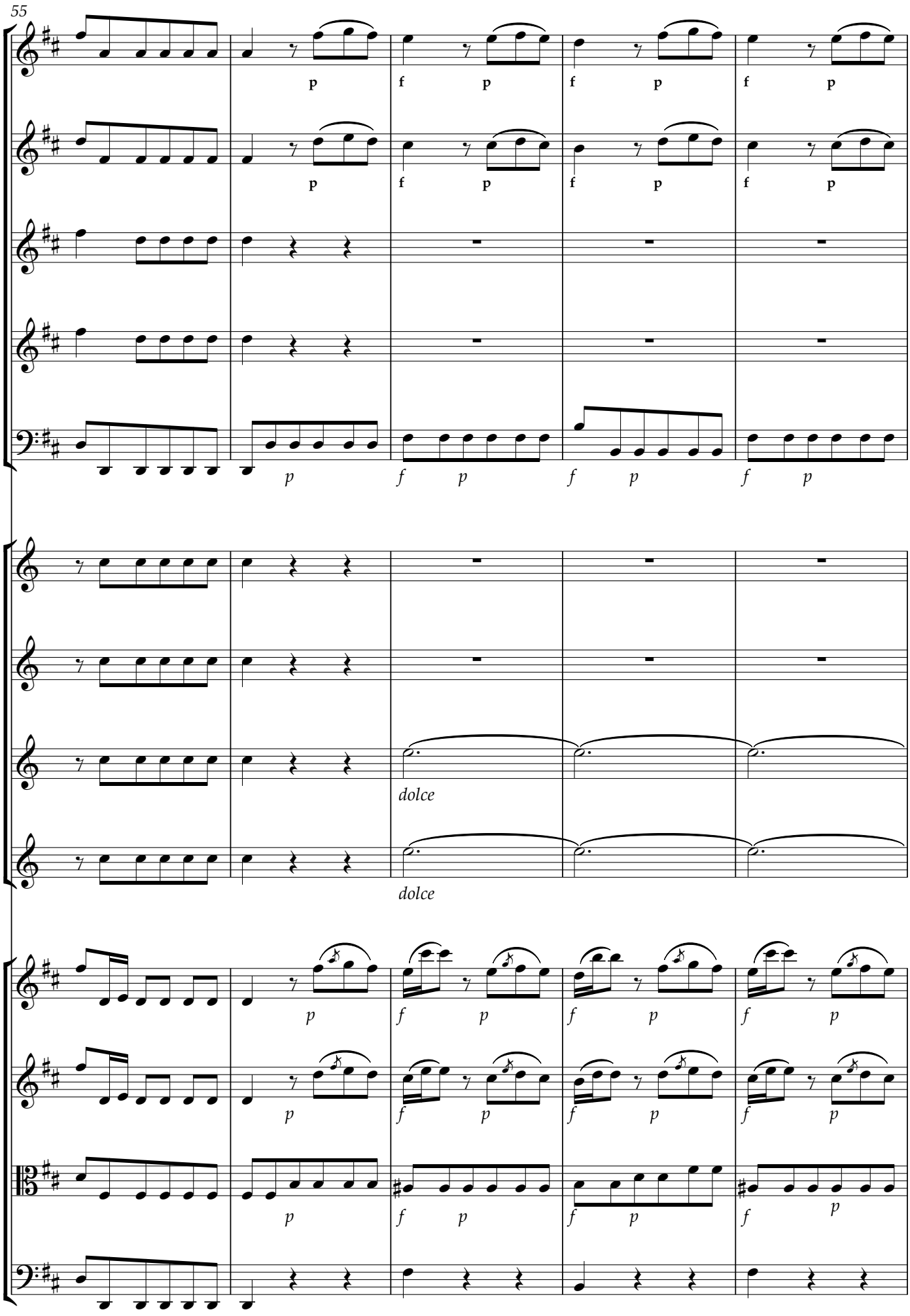
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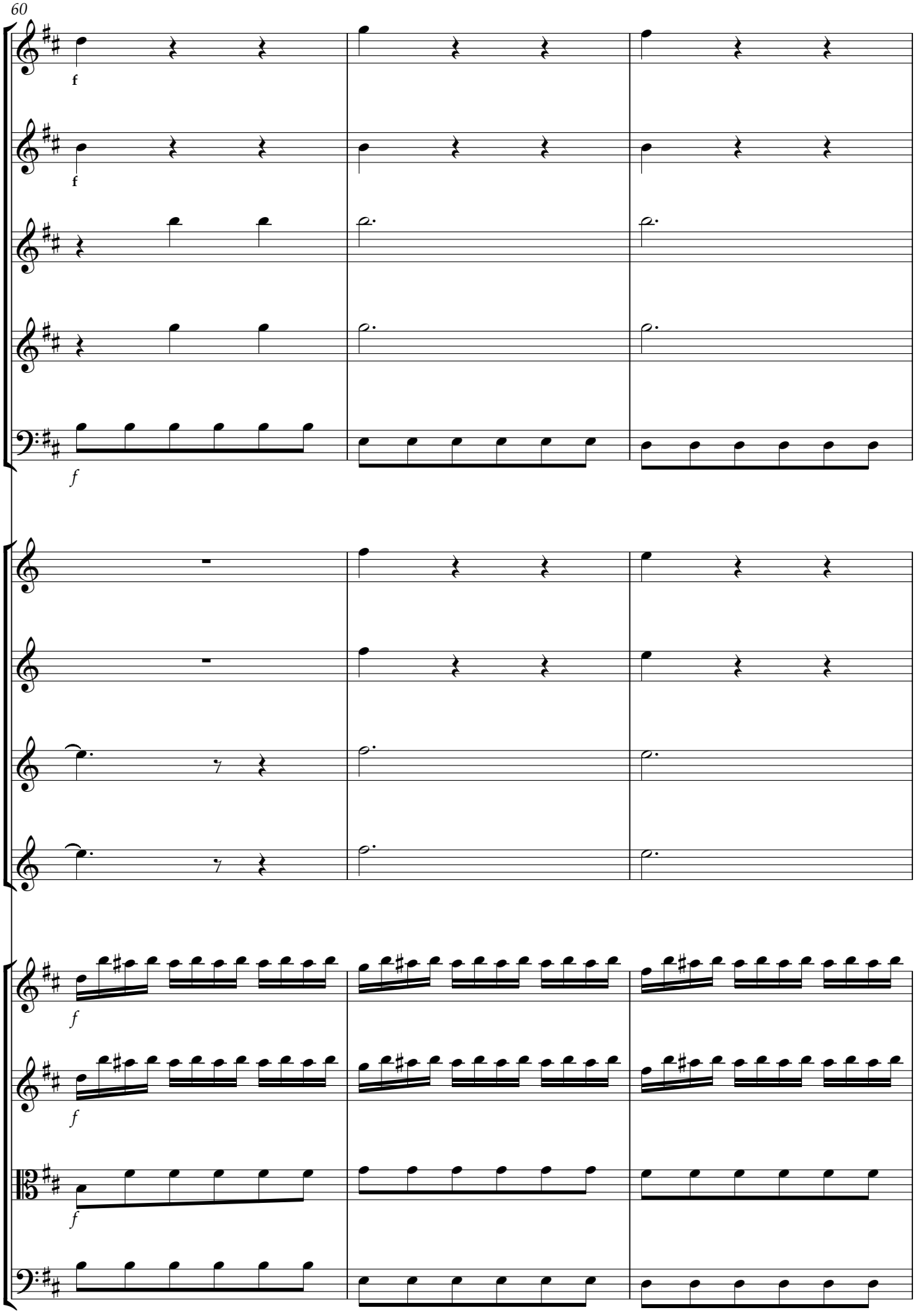
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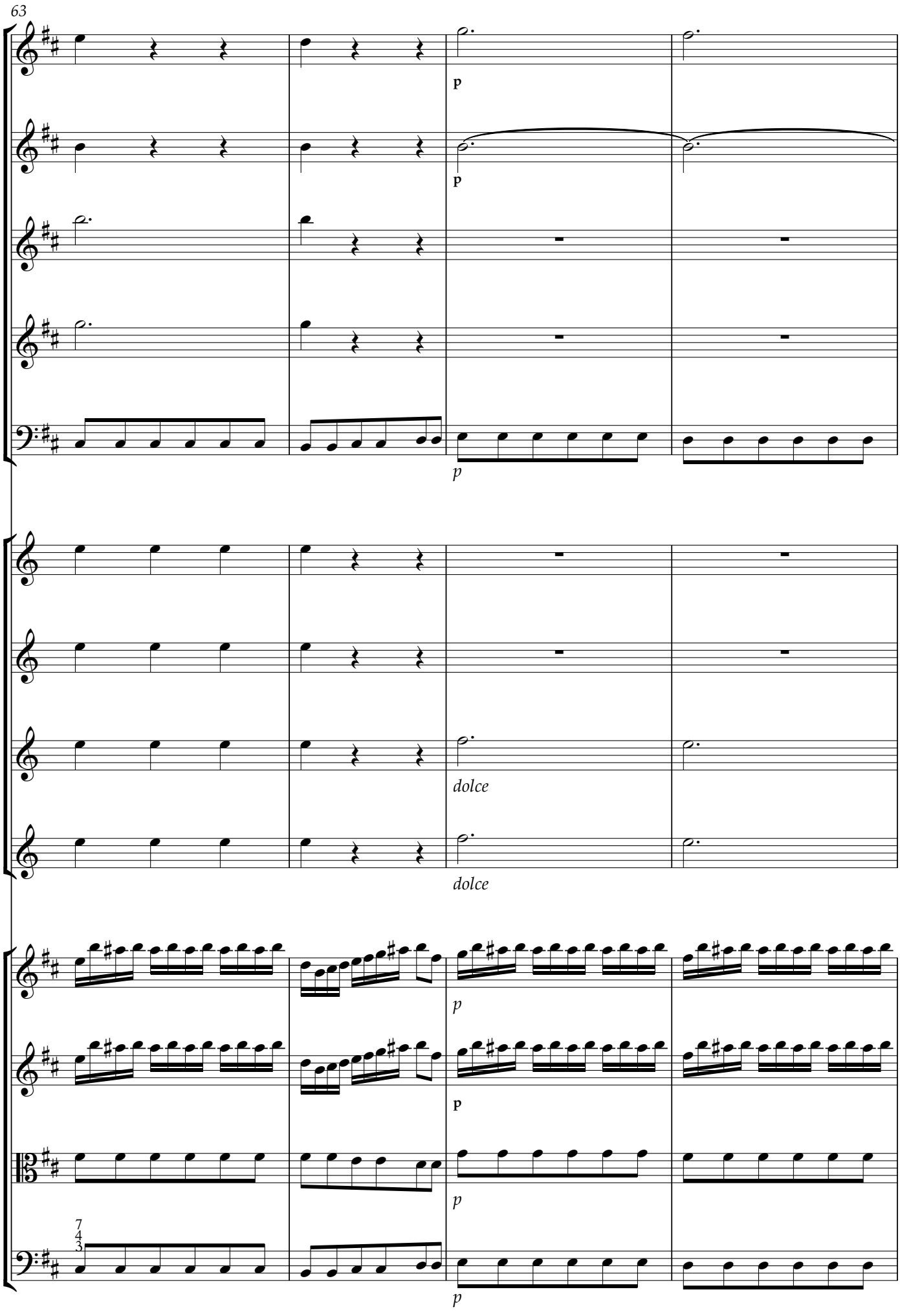
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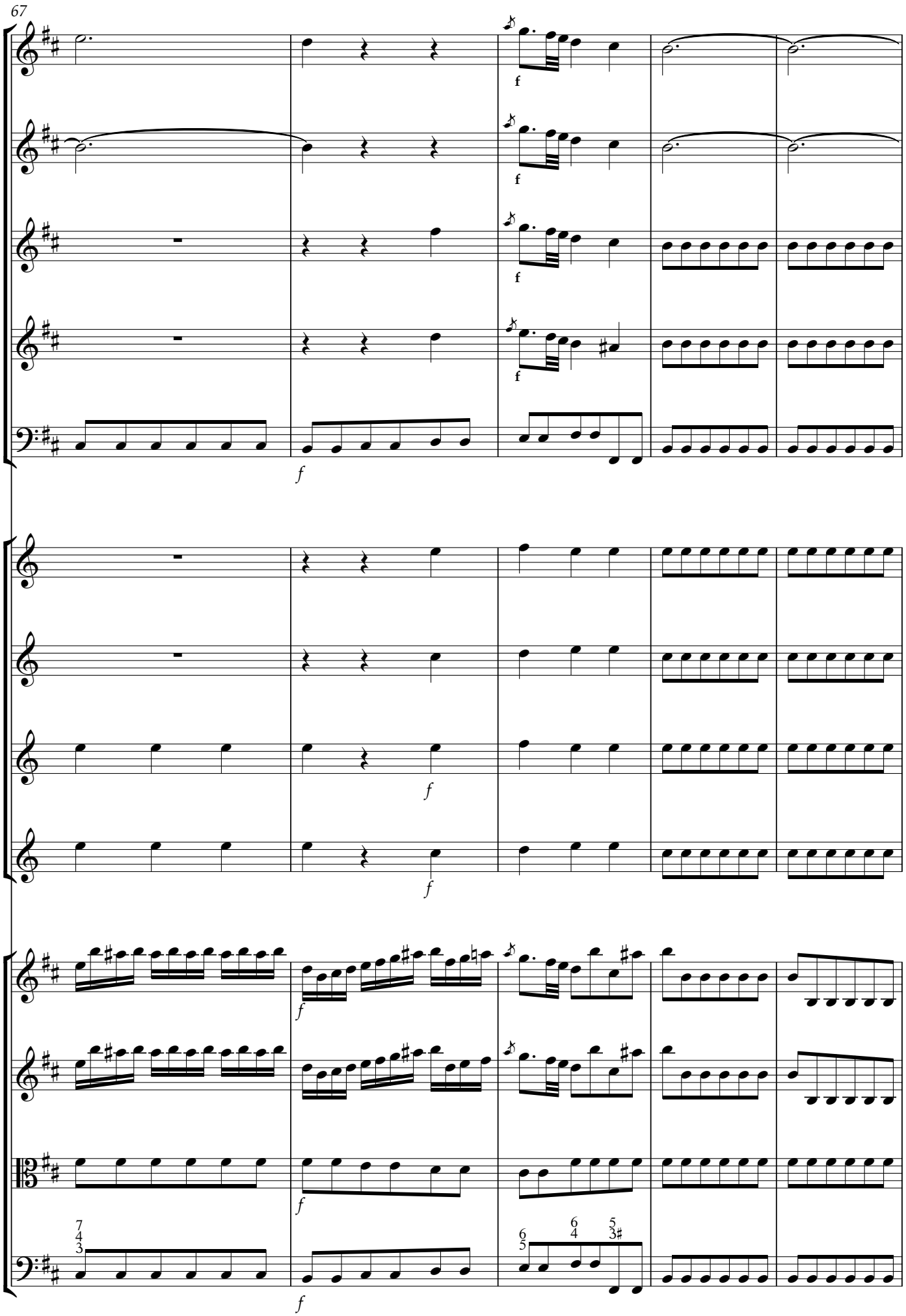
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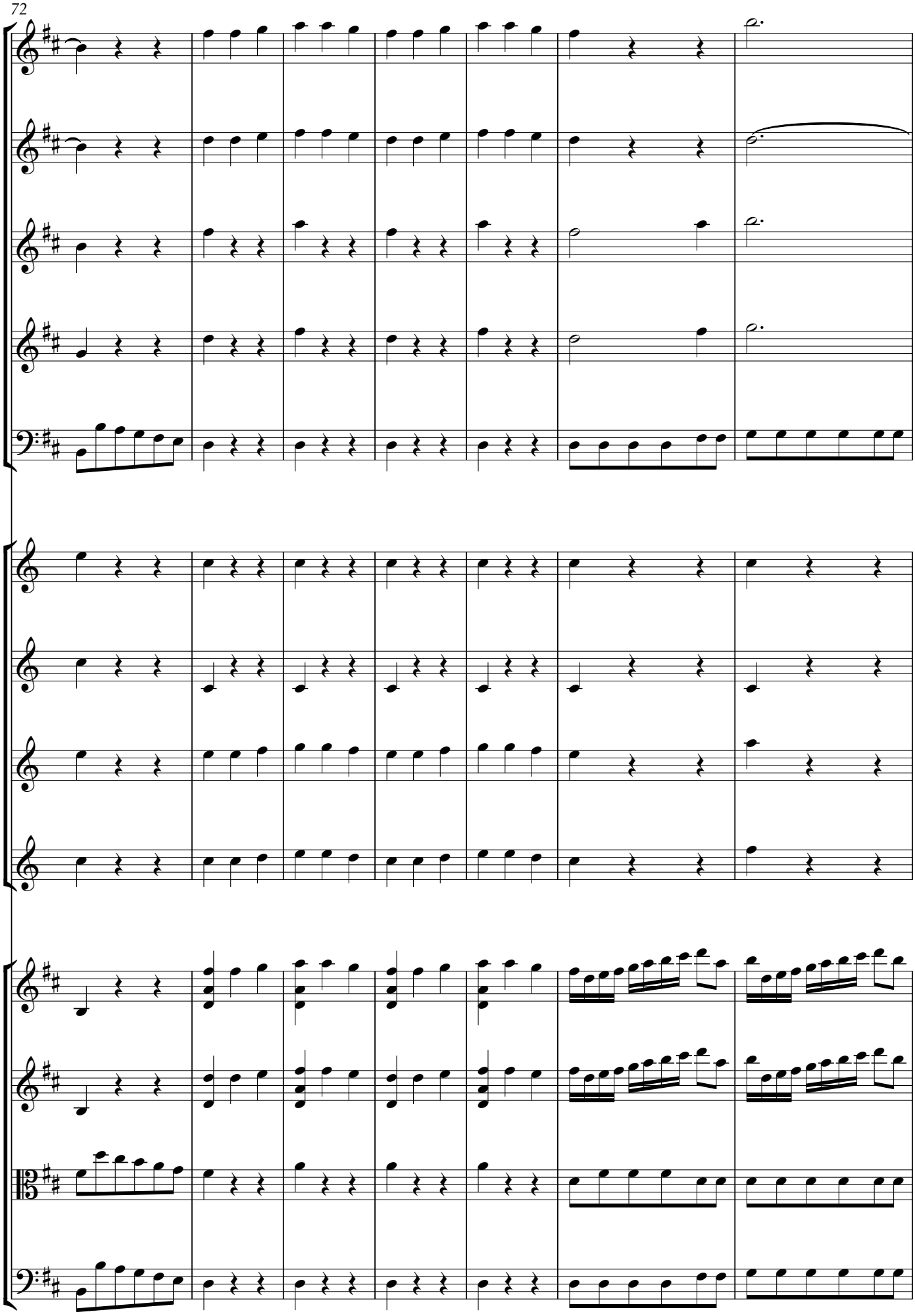
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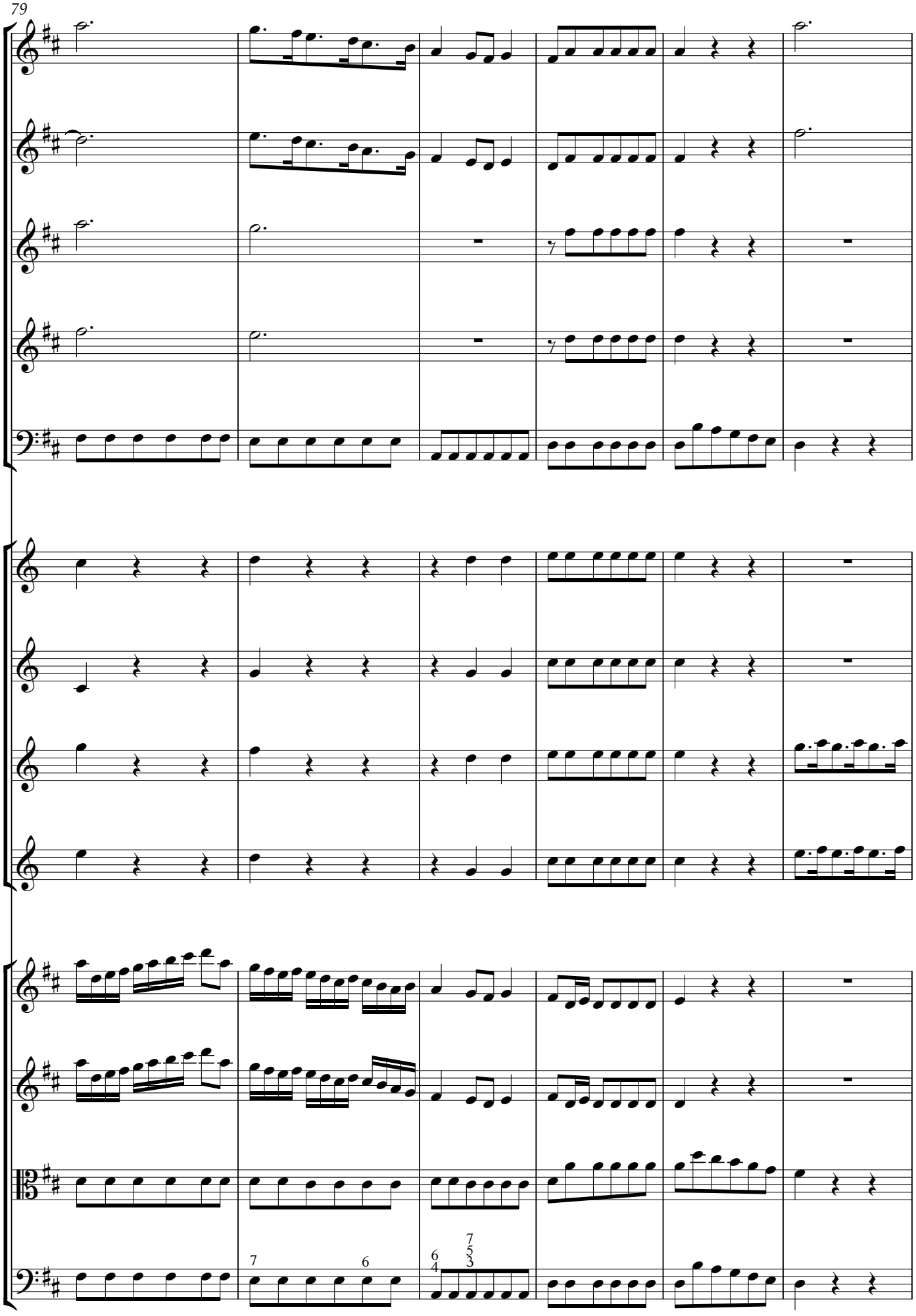
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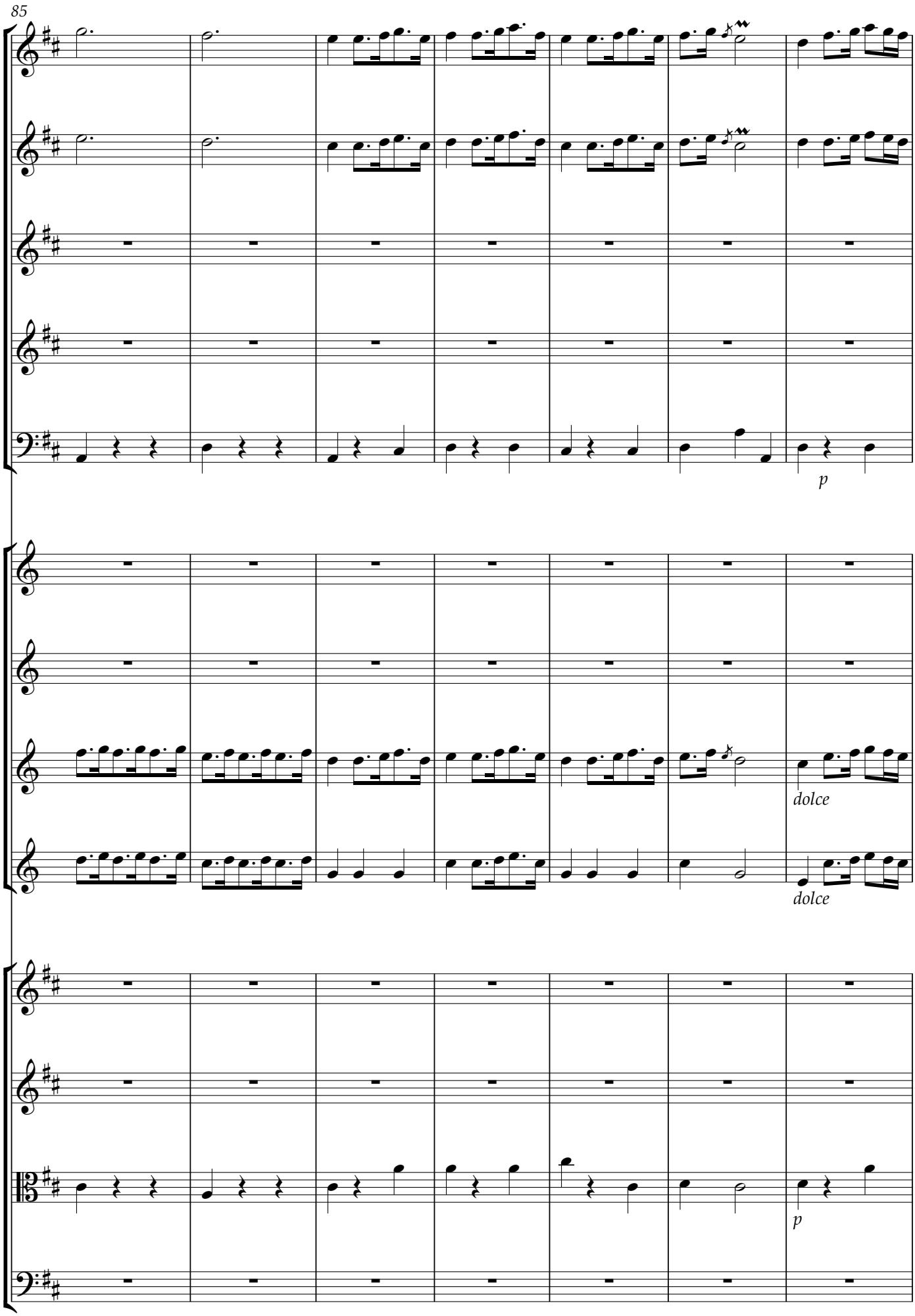
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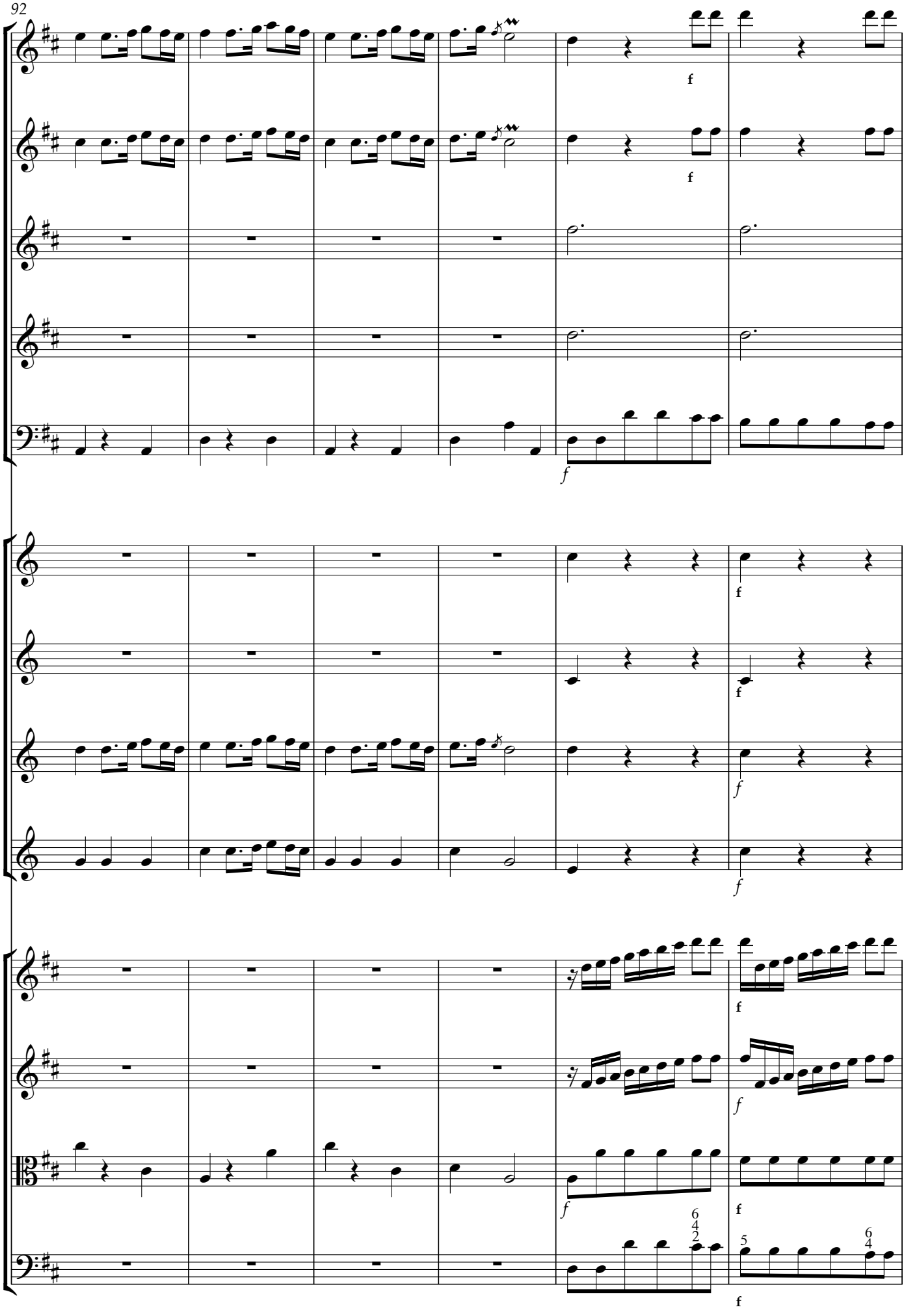
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2
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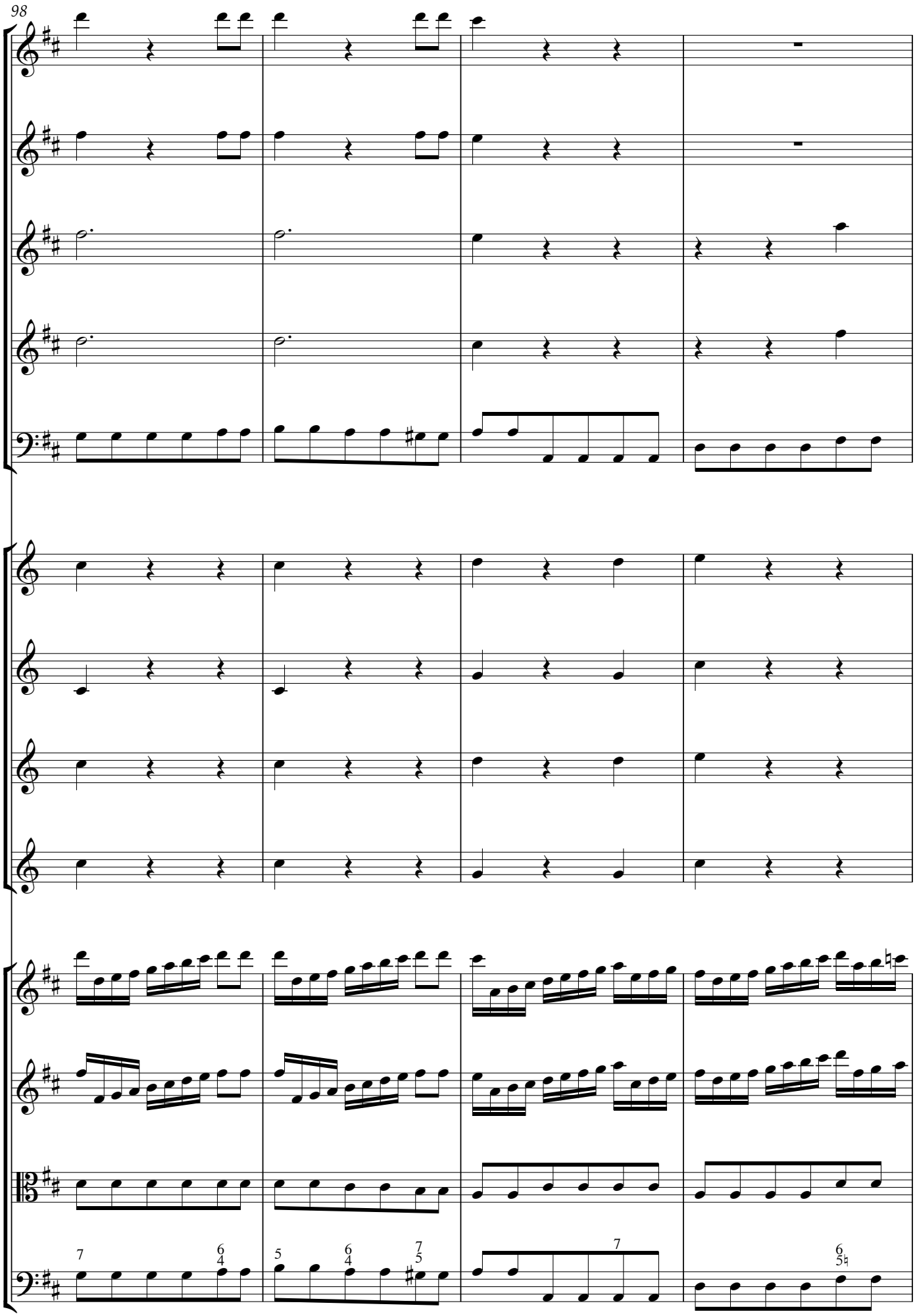
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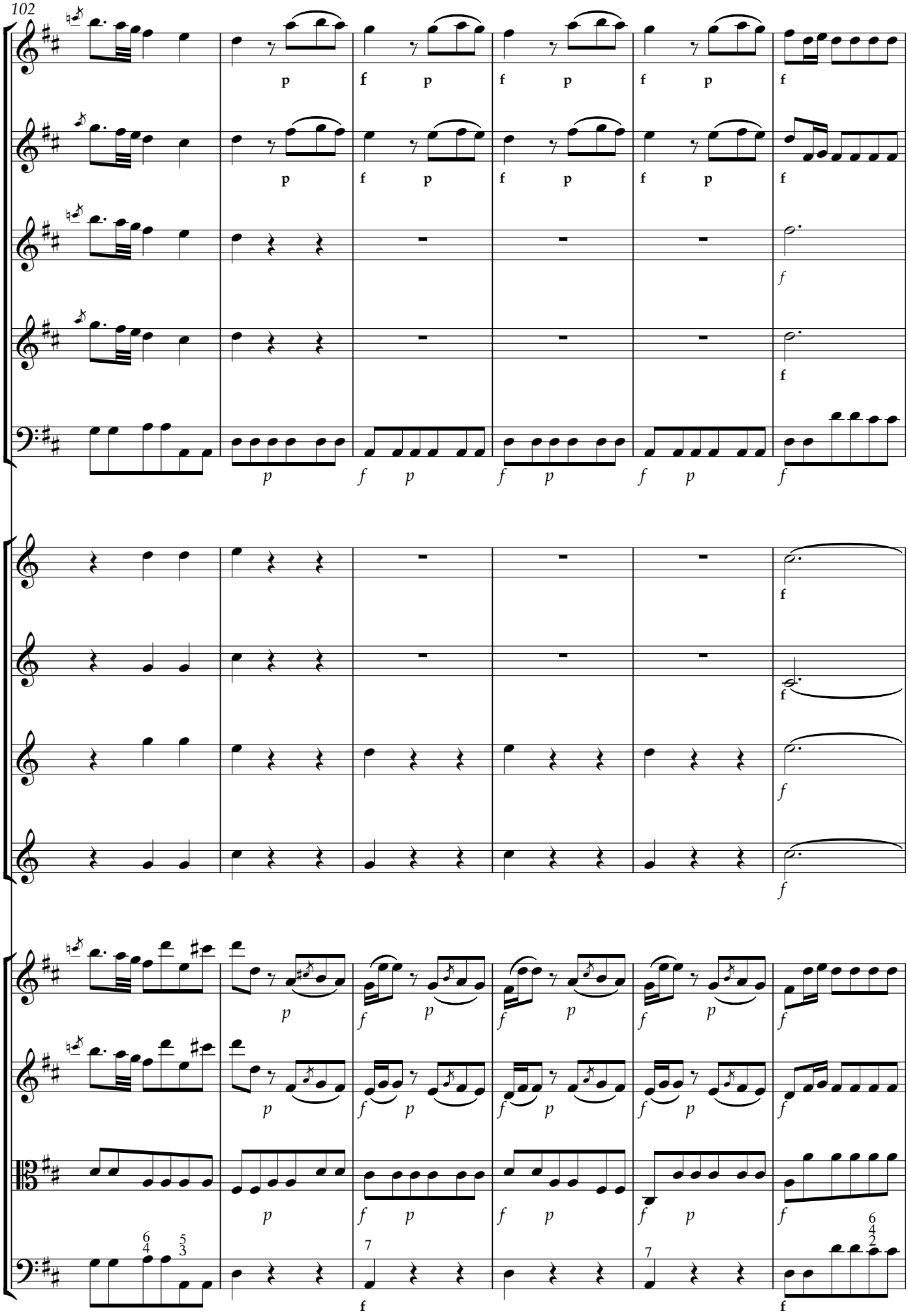
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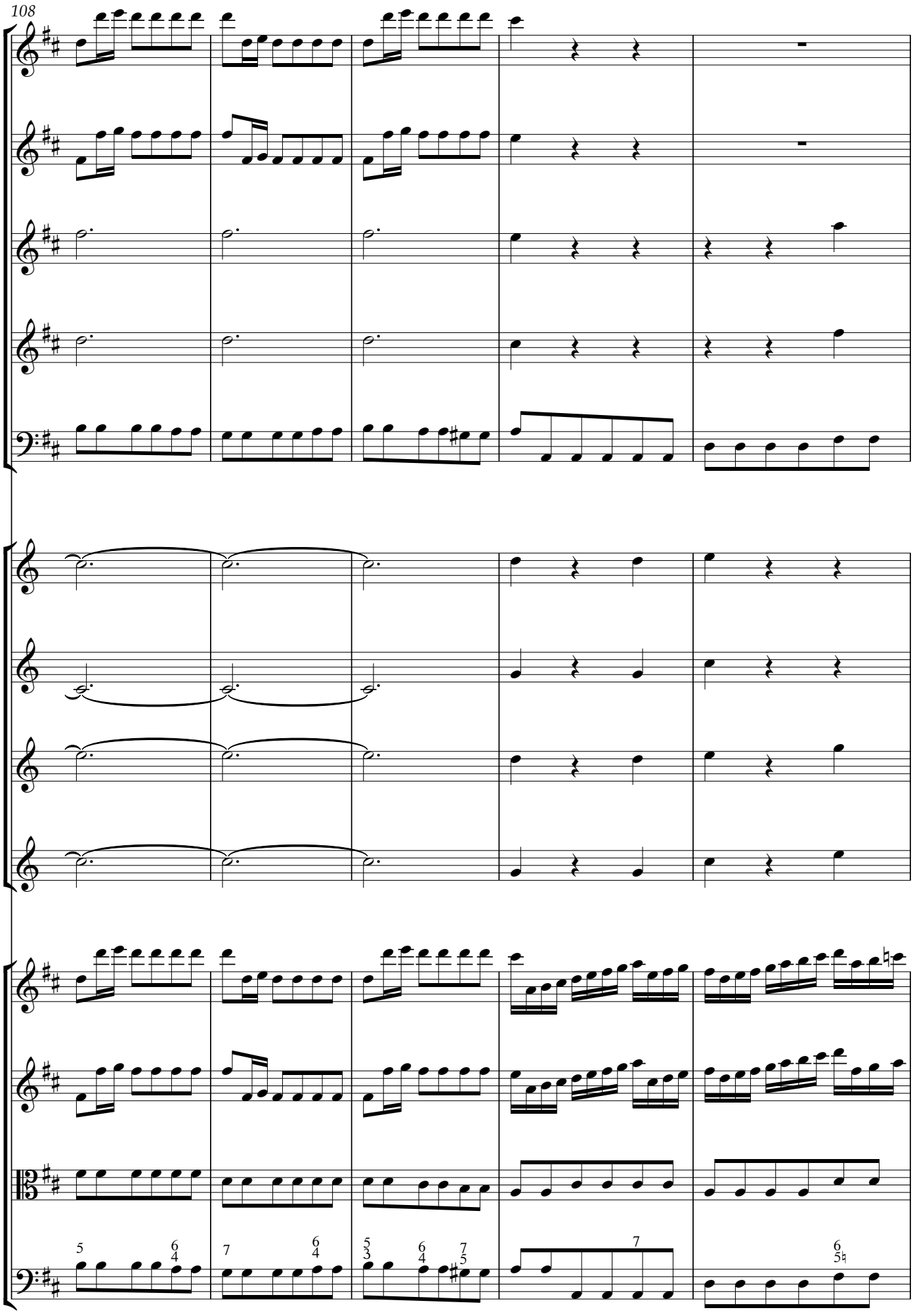
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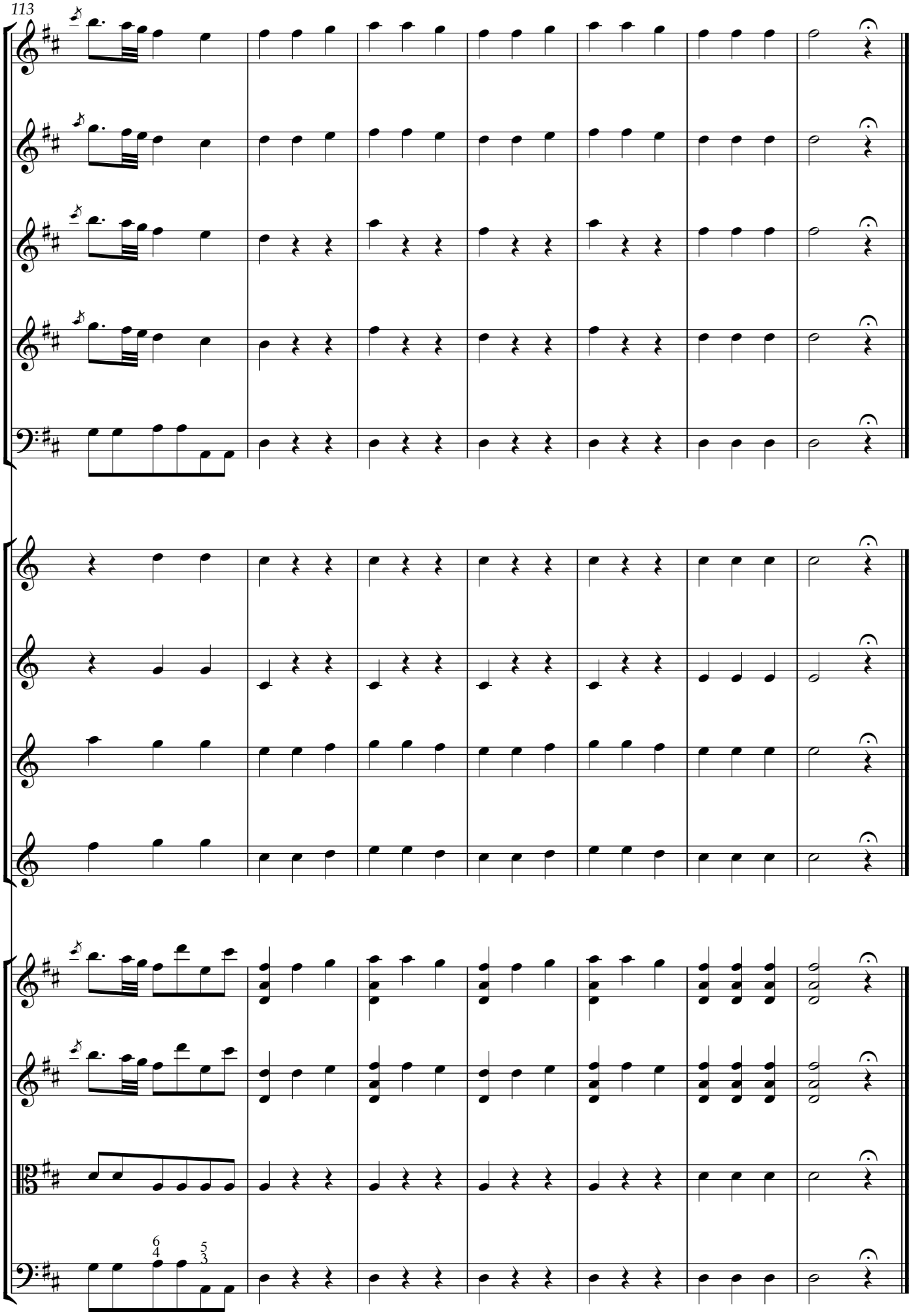
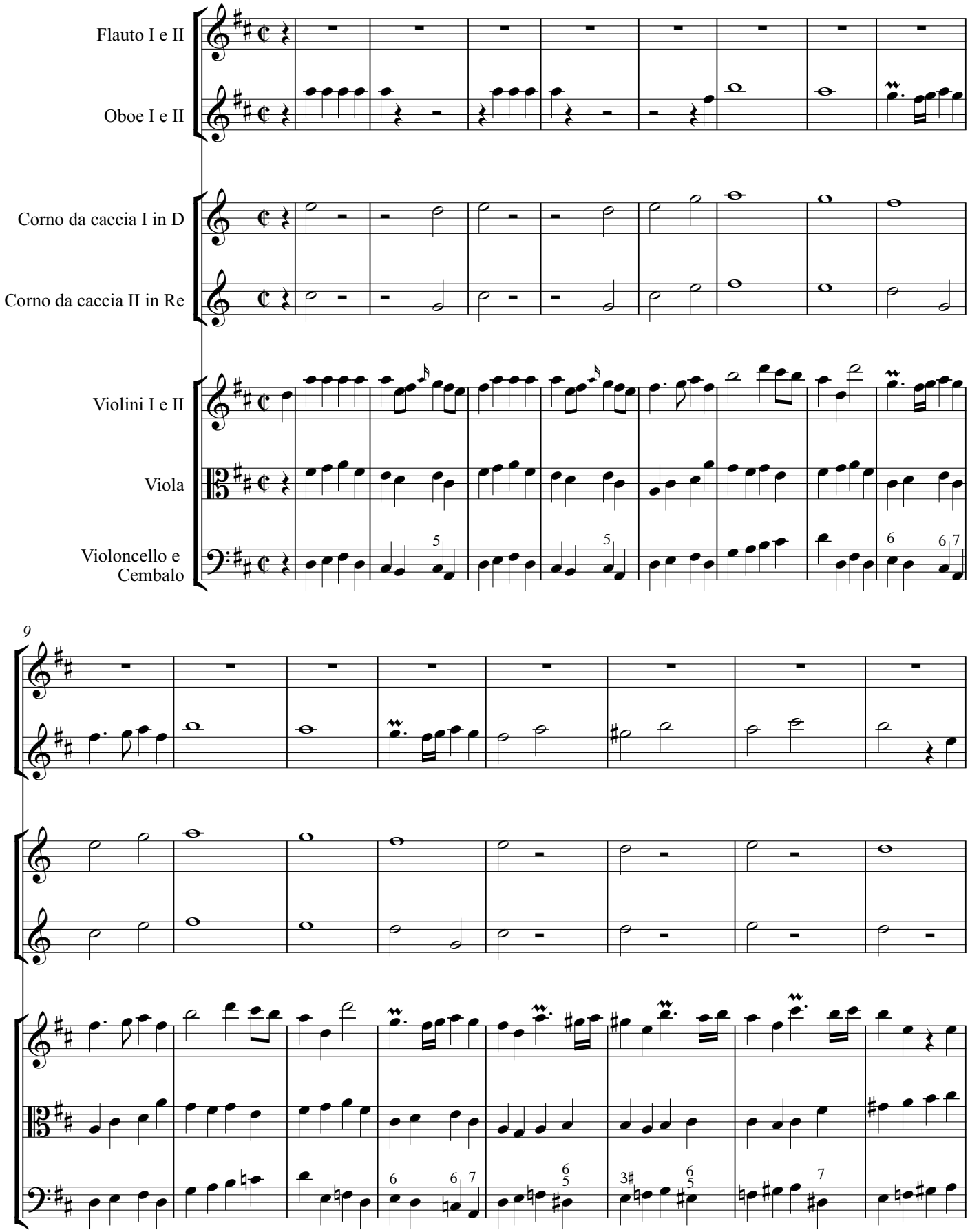

113
6
4
5
3

Sinfonia 3 III

Giovanni Battista Serini

Presto



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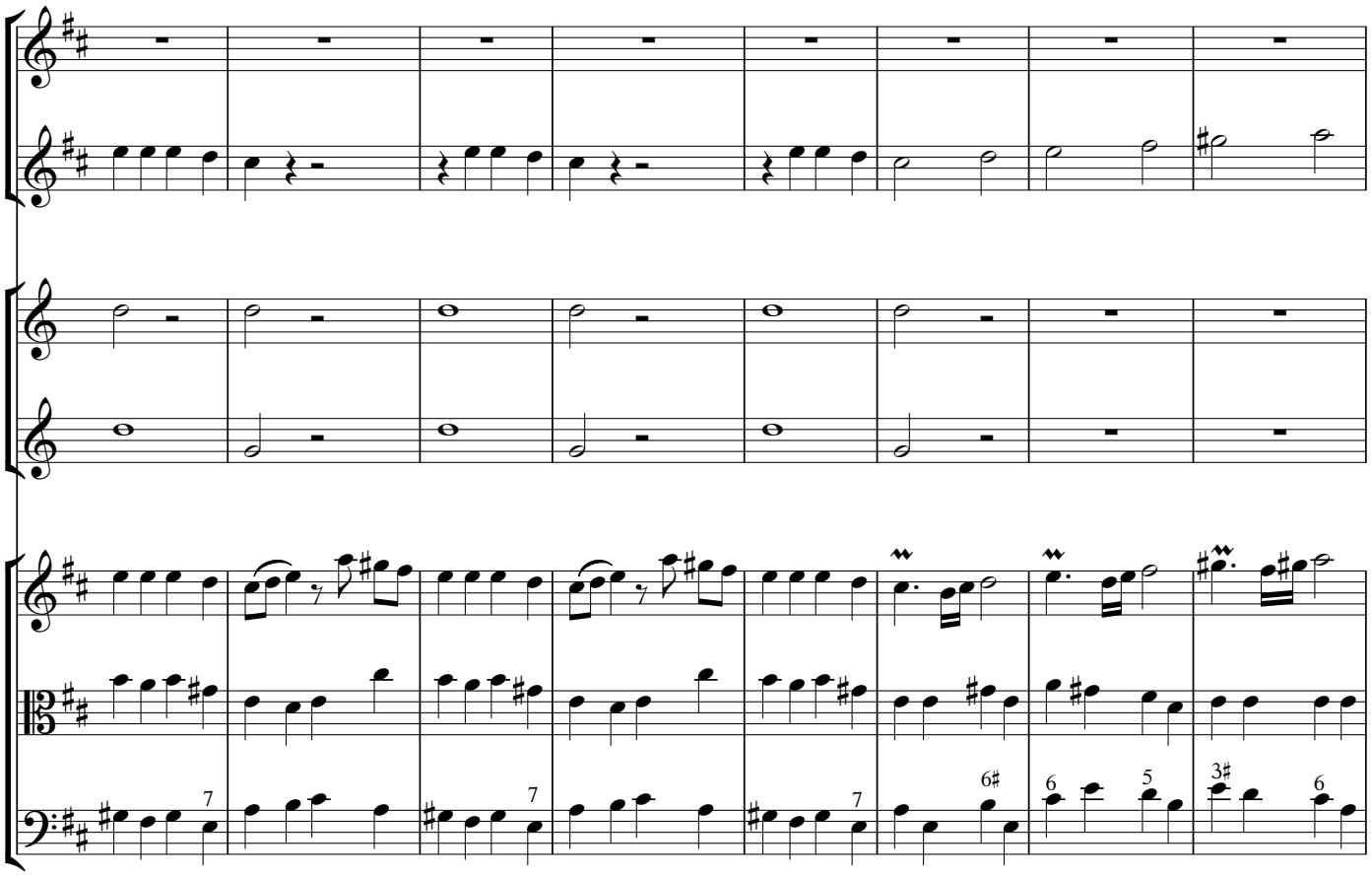

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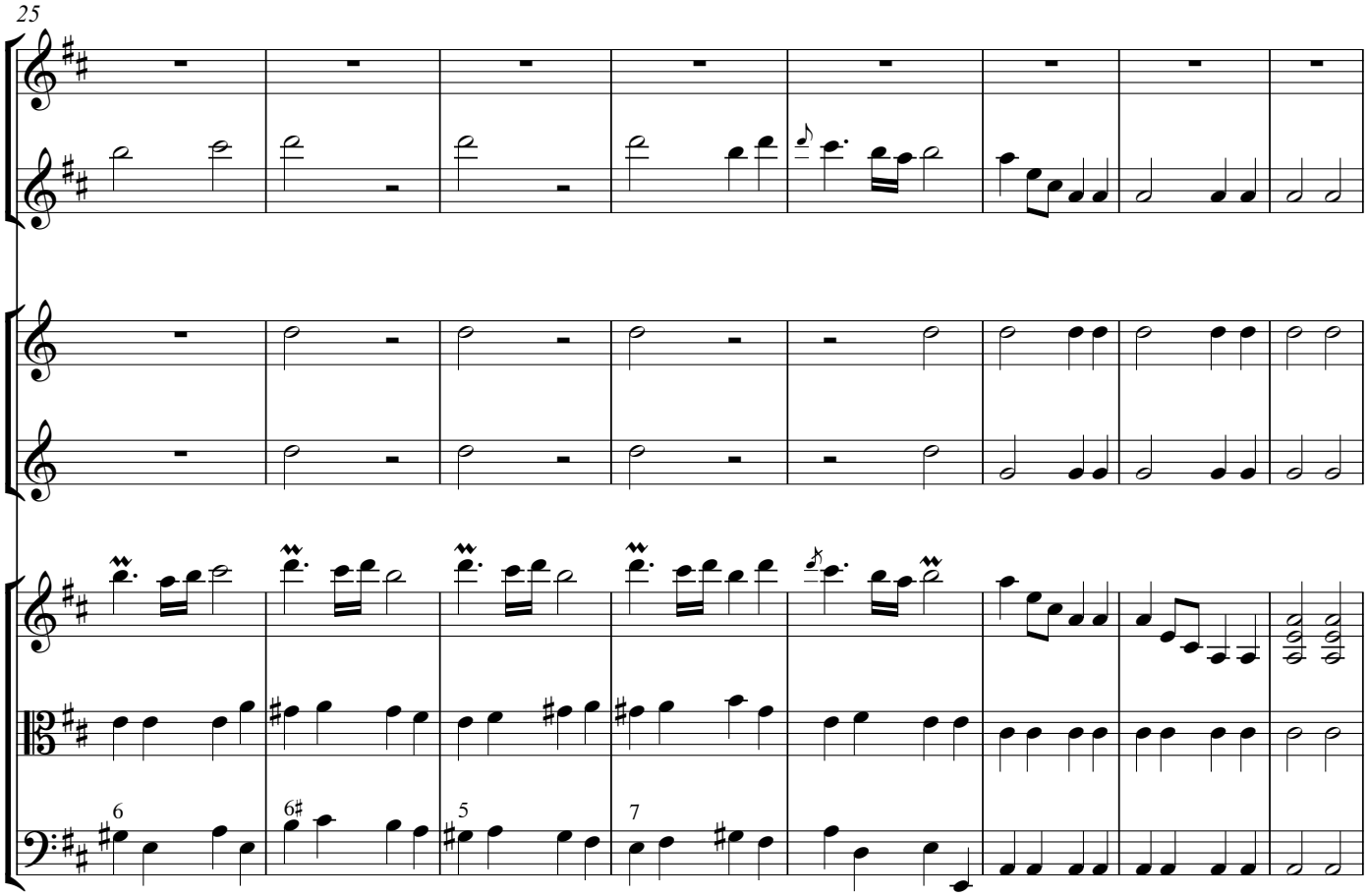

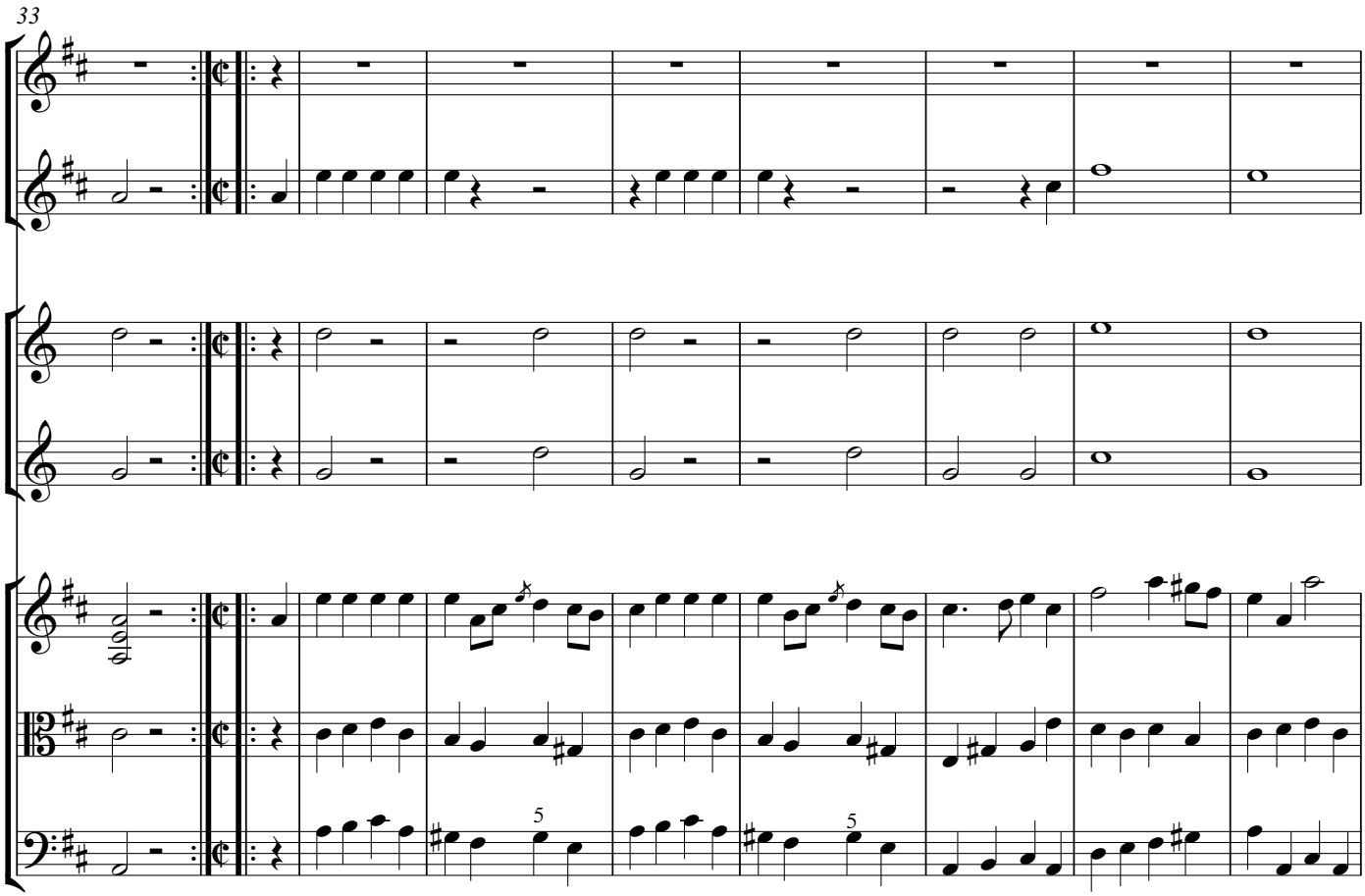
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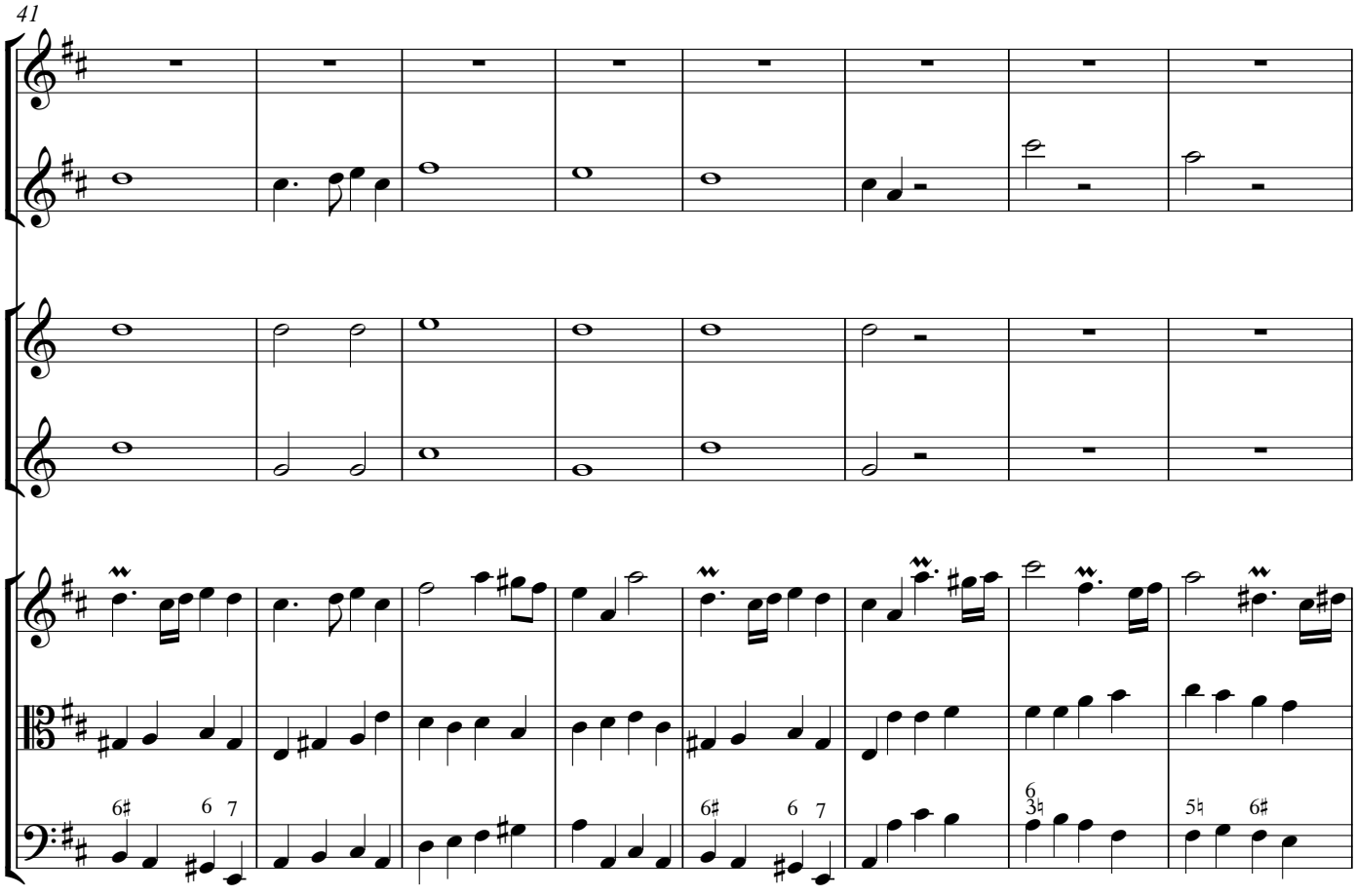
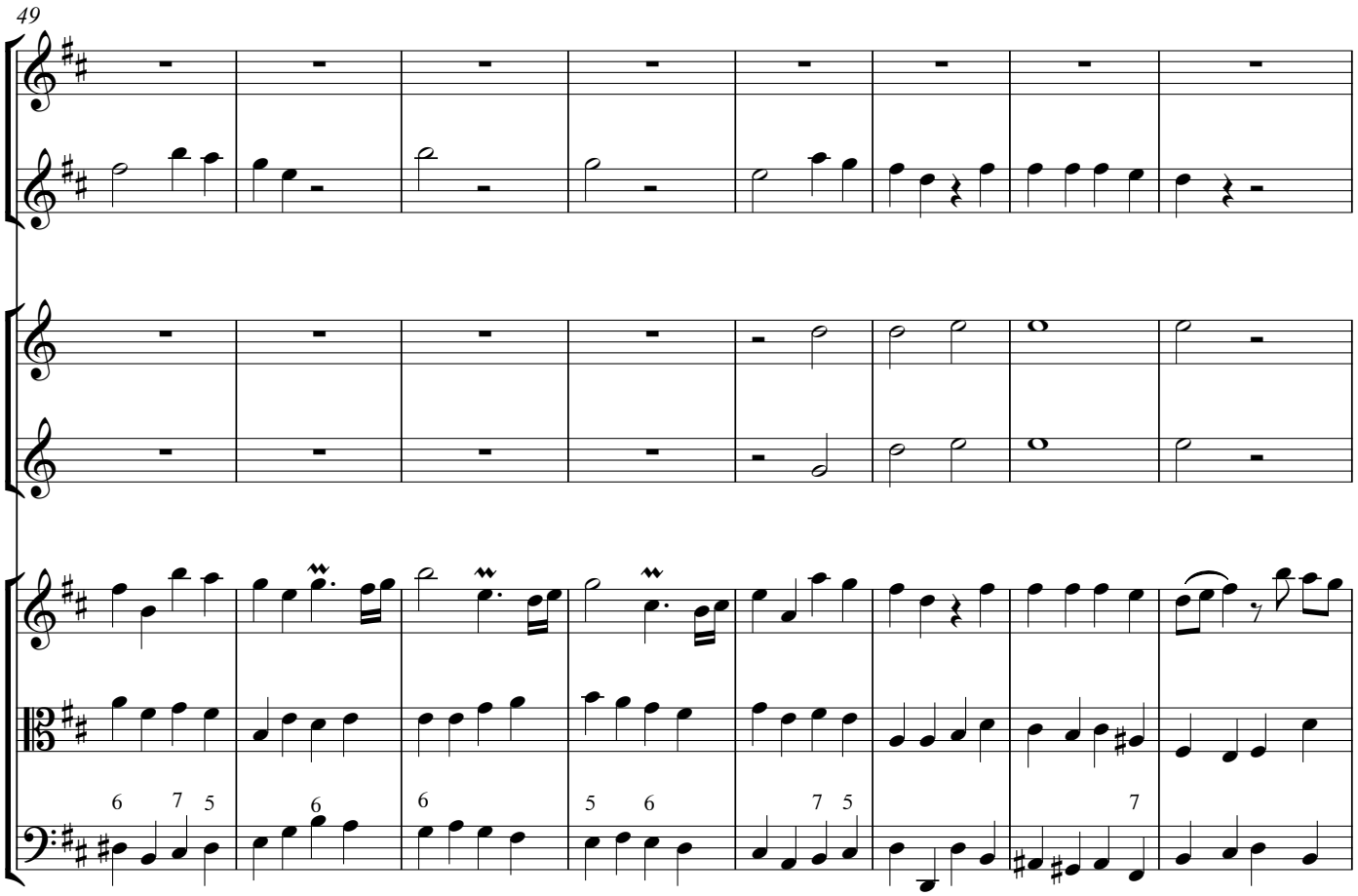

41
6♯ 6 7
6♯ 6 7
6 3♮
5♮ 6♯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6 7 5
6
6
5 6
7 5
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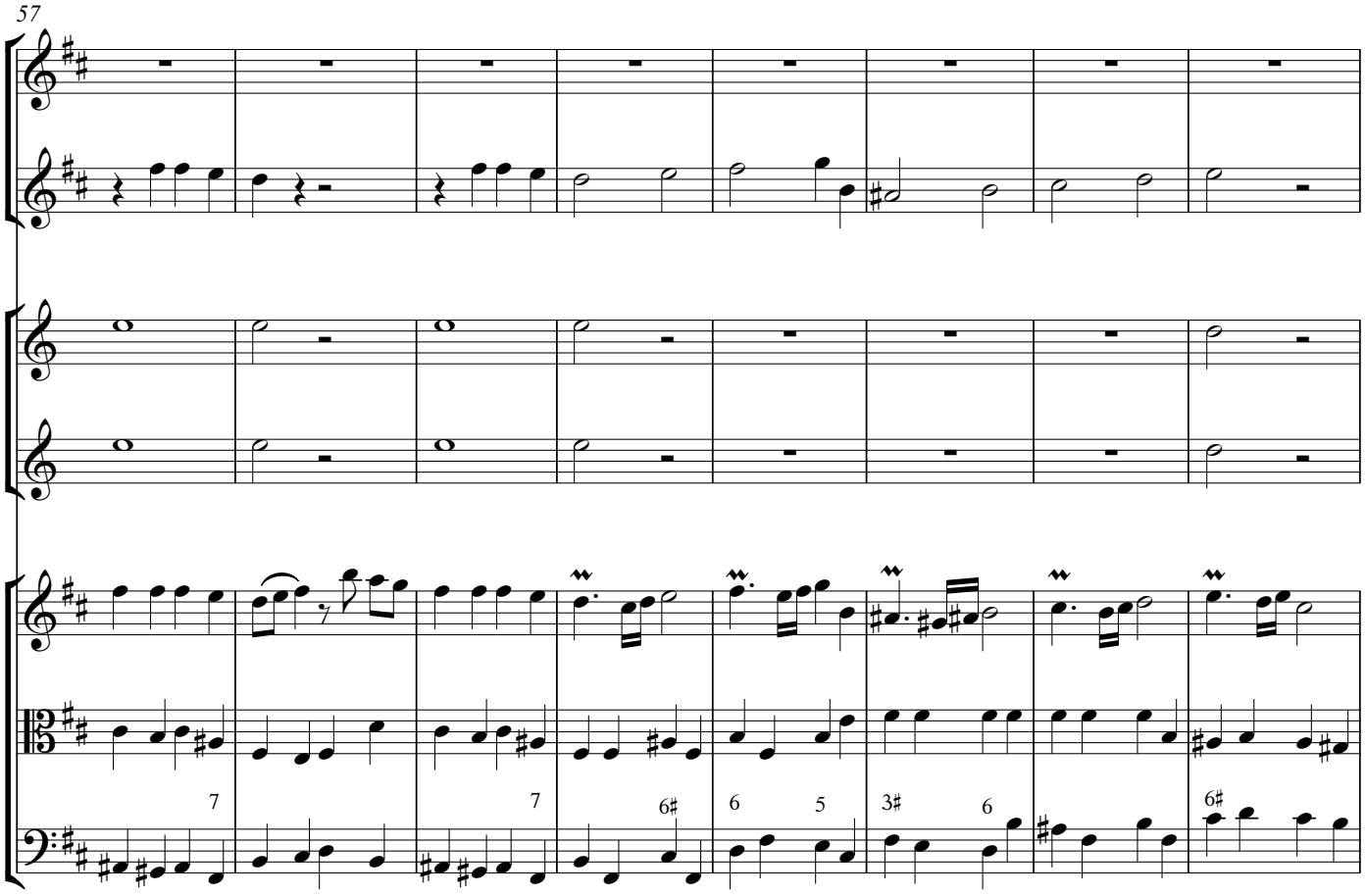
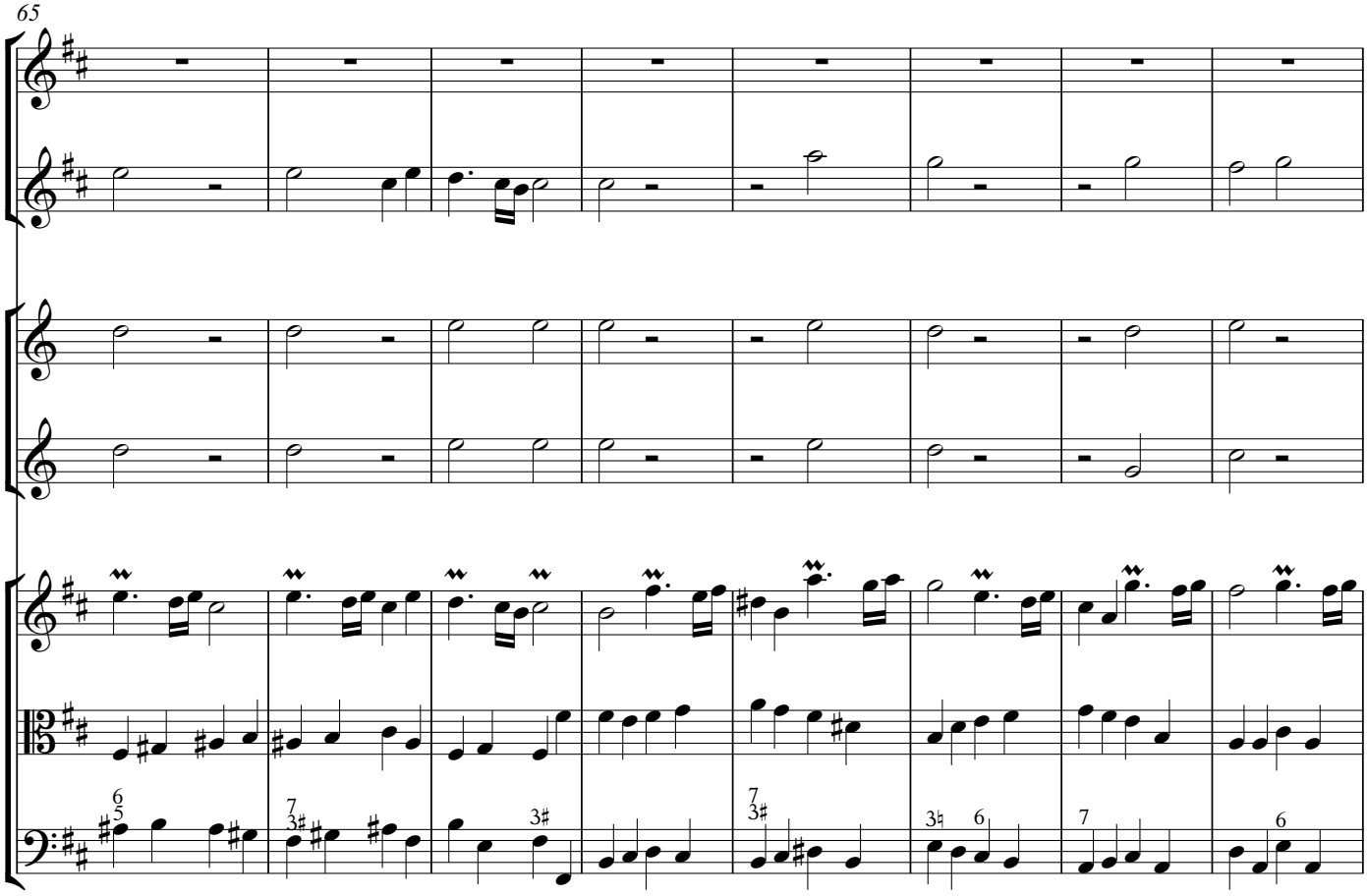

57
7
7
6♯
6 5
3♯ 6
6♯

65



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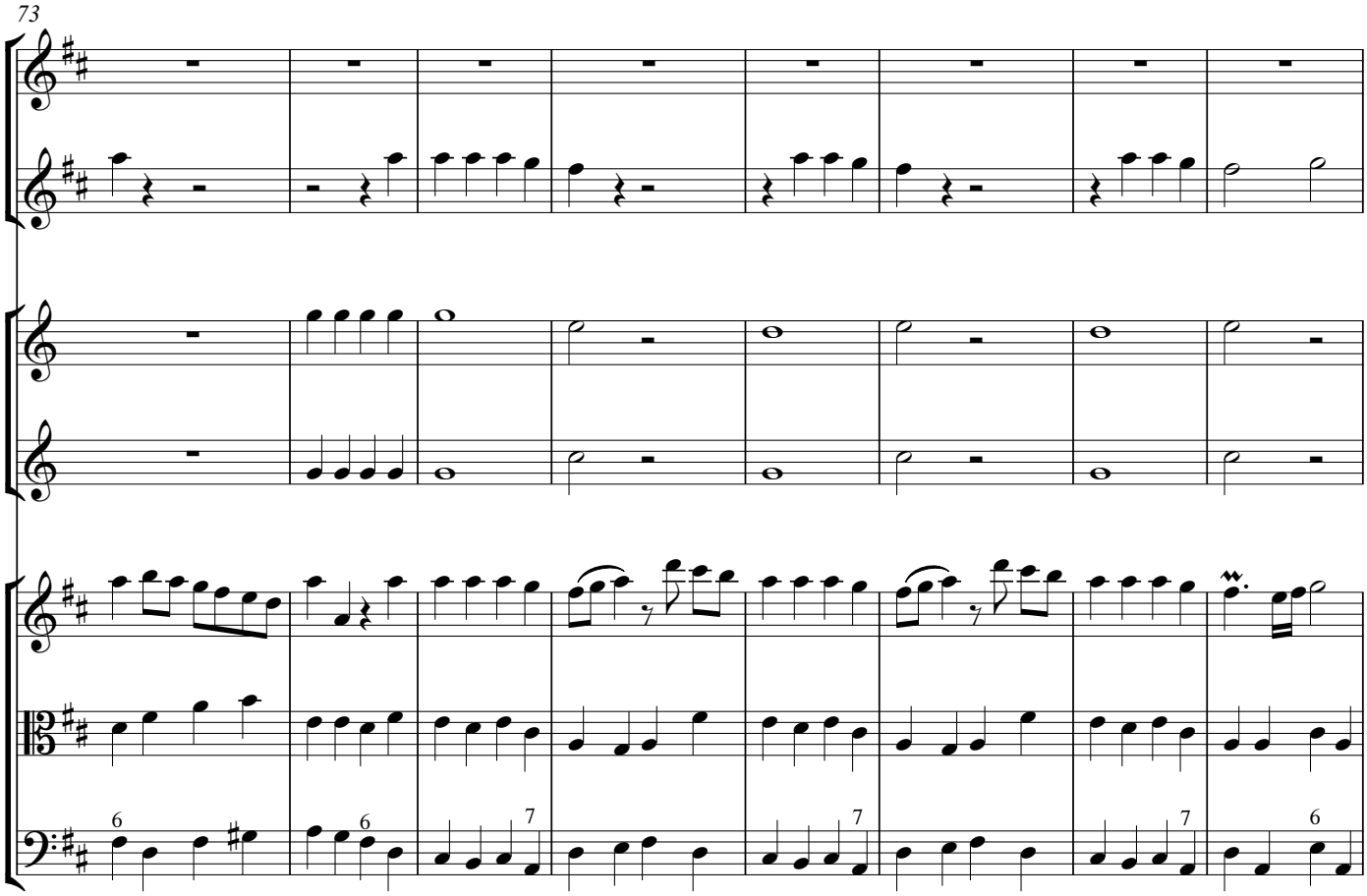

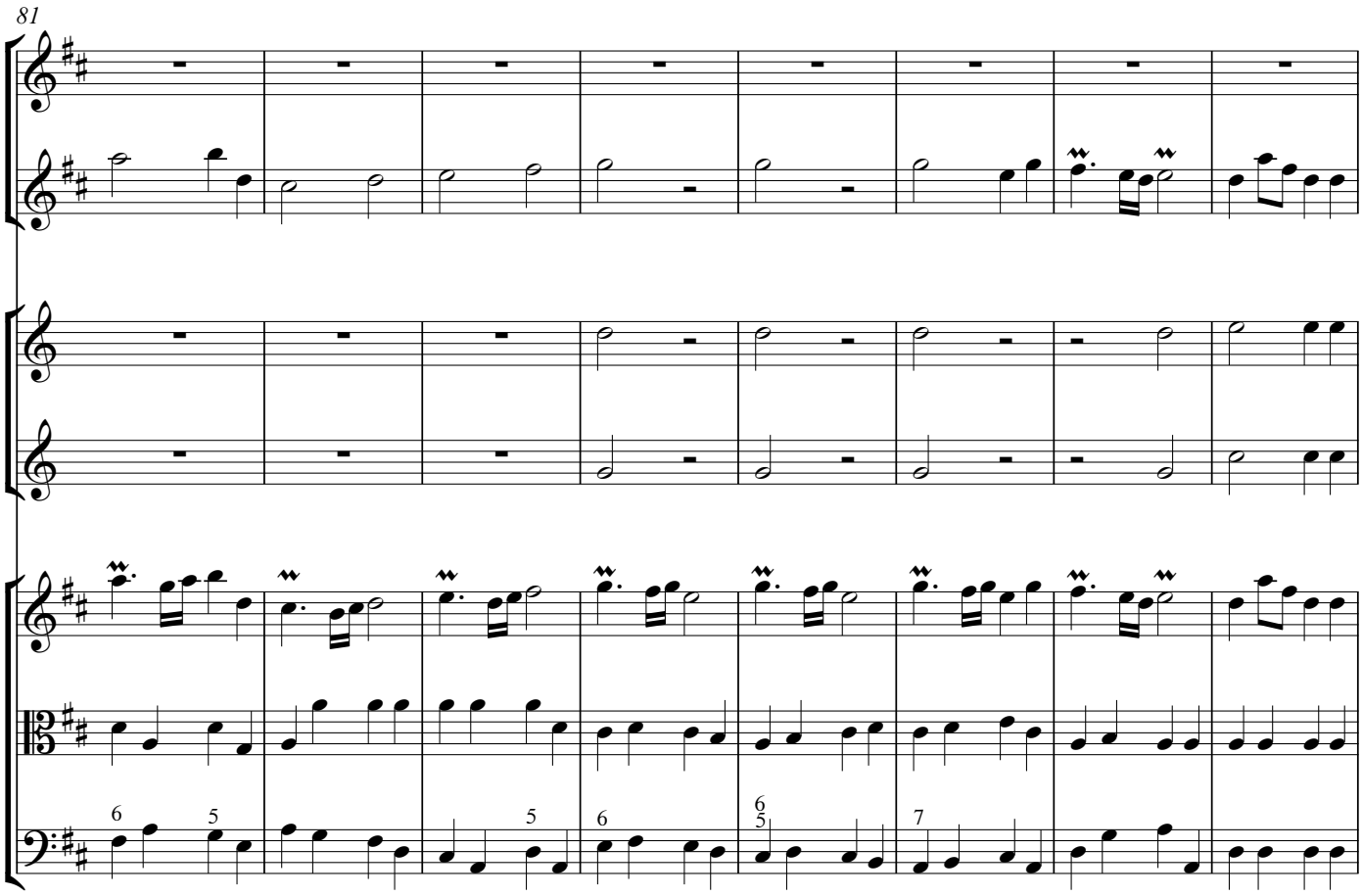
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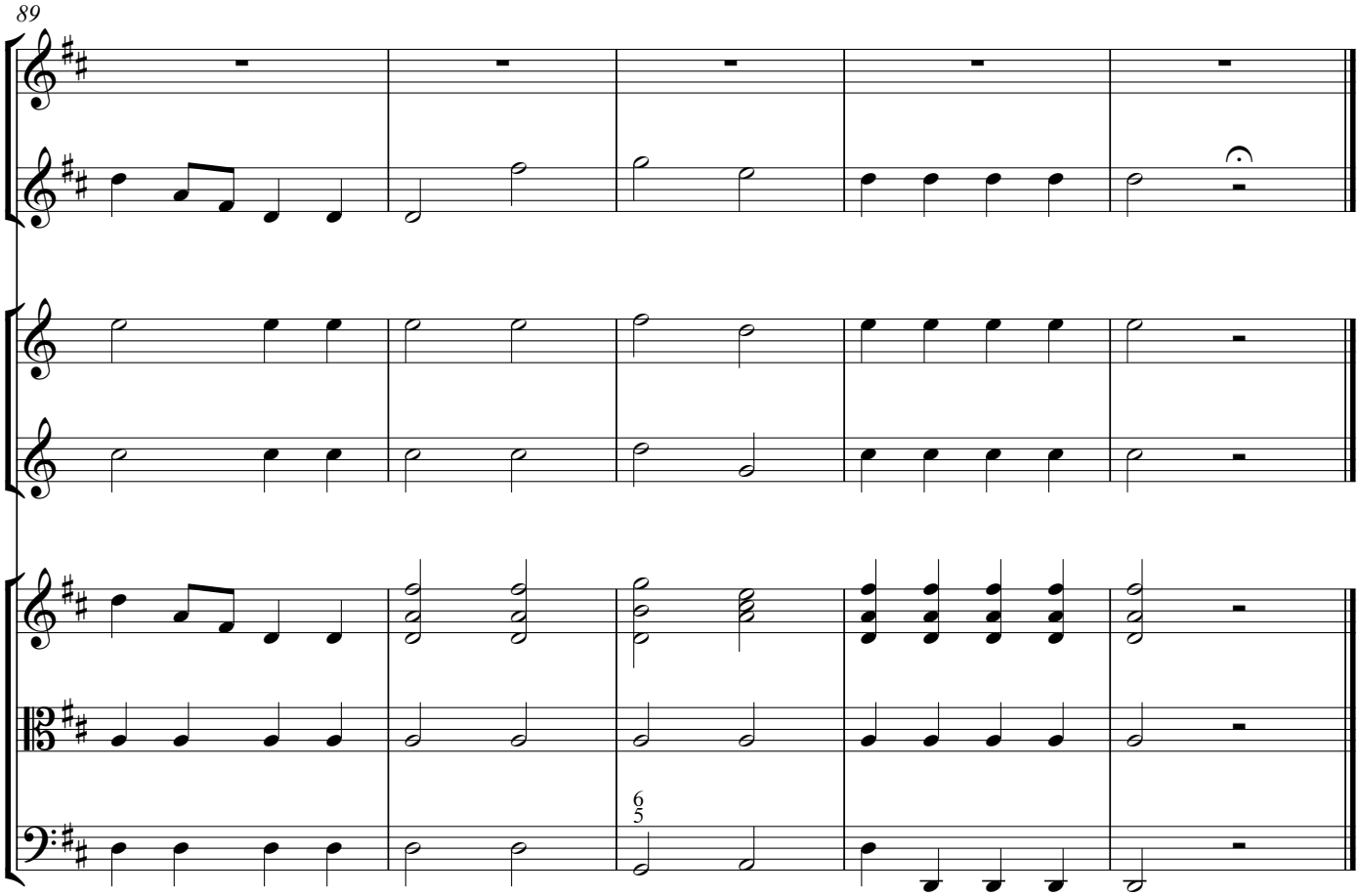

89

Giovanni Battista Serini

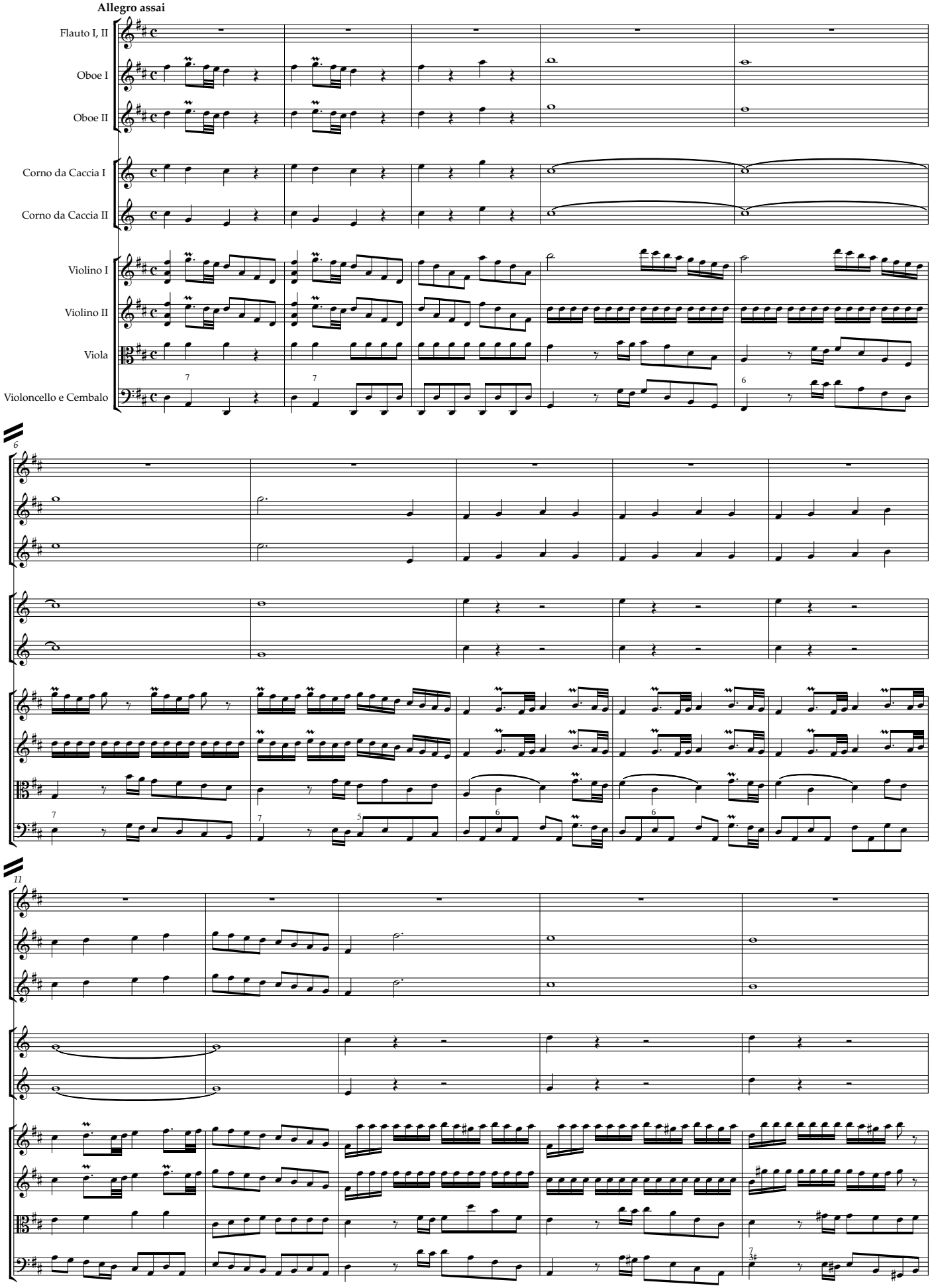
Sinfonia
con corni da caccia di ripieno
Flut Traverie, e Violoncello
obbligati

Symphony 3

Symphony 3

Principal source: GB-Y MS 129 S
D-Rtt Serini 5

Allegro assai



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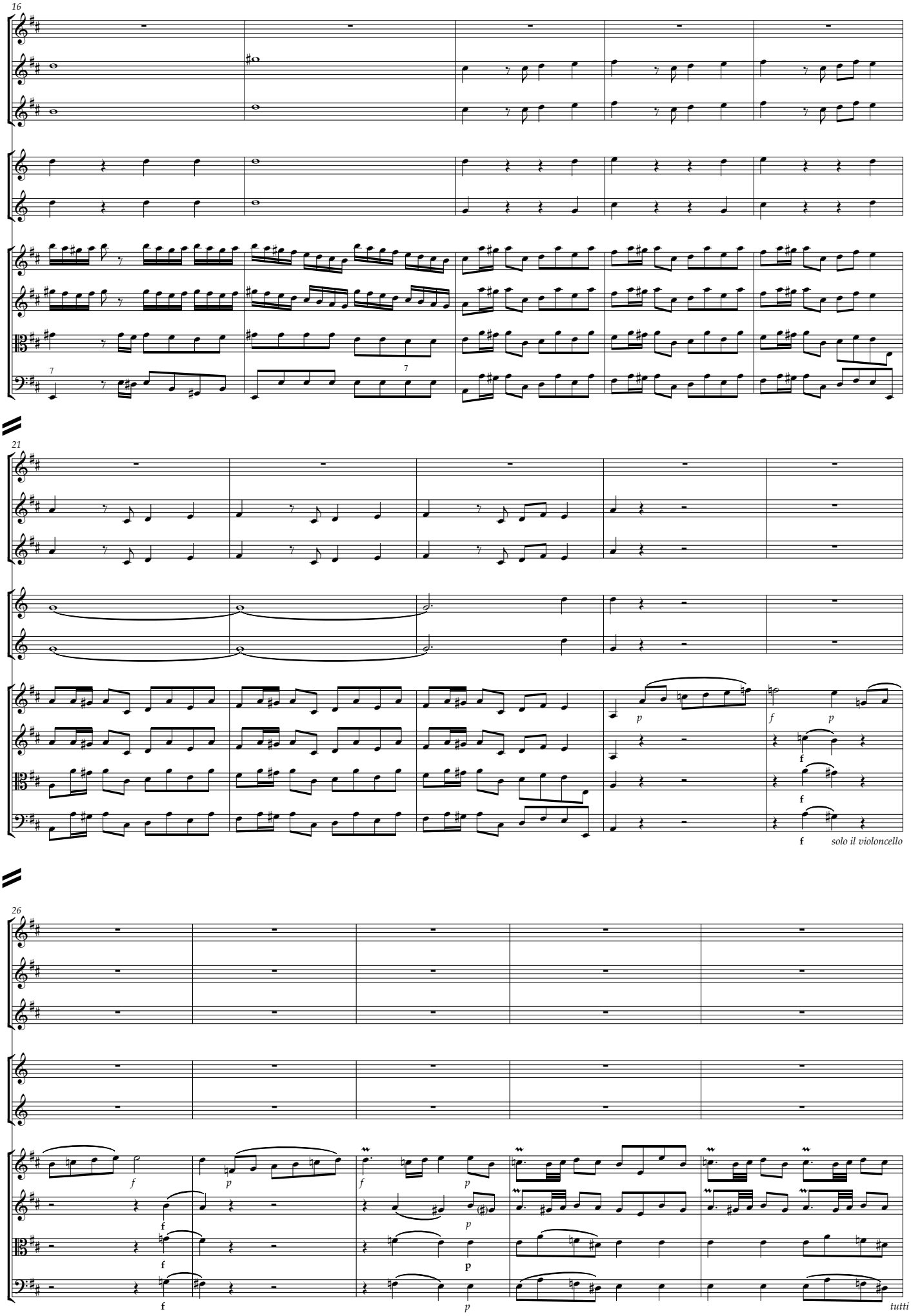
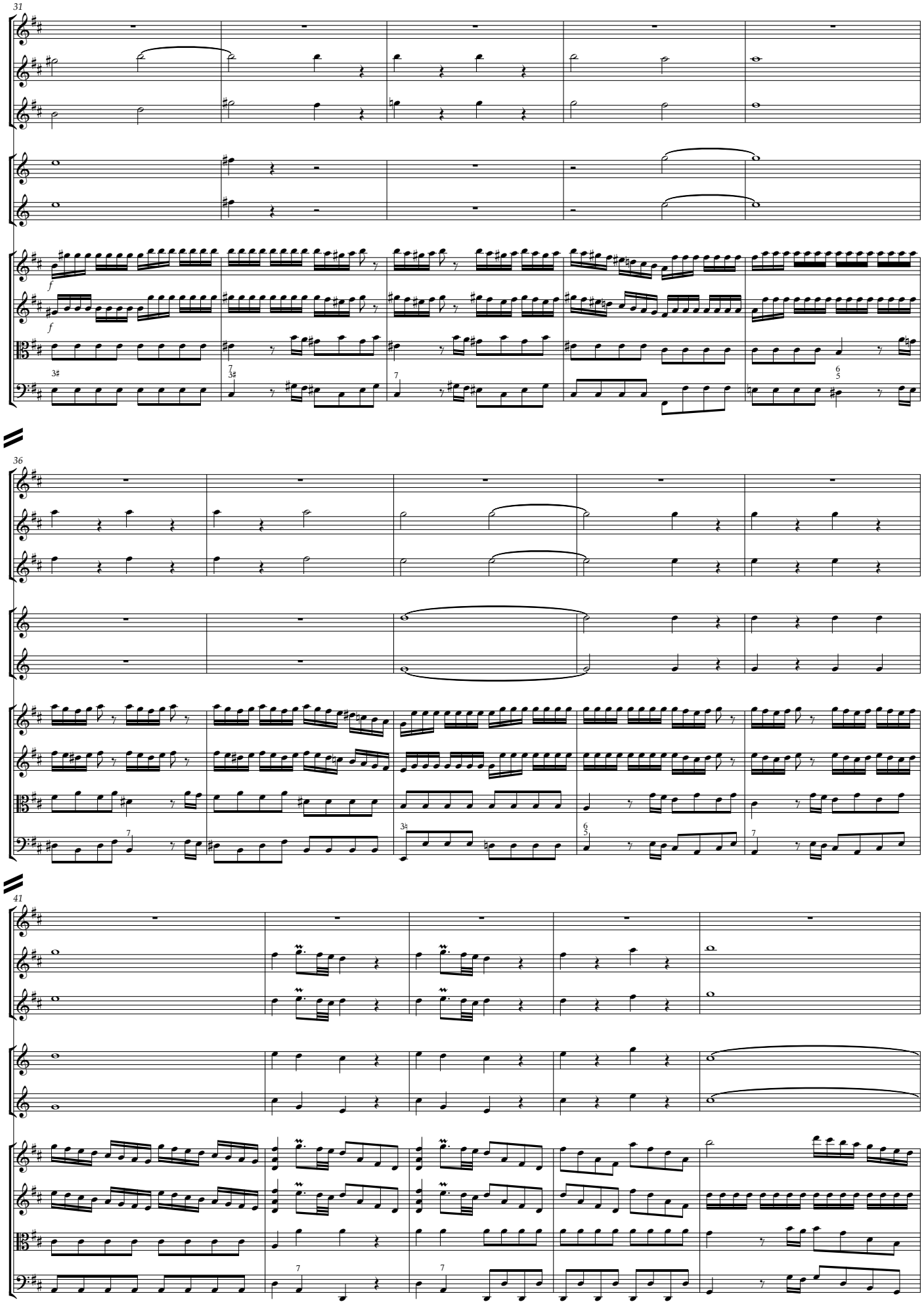
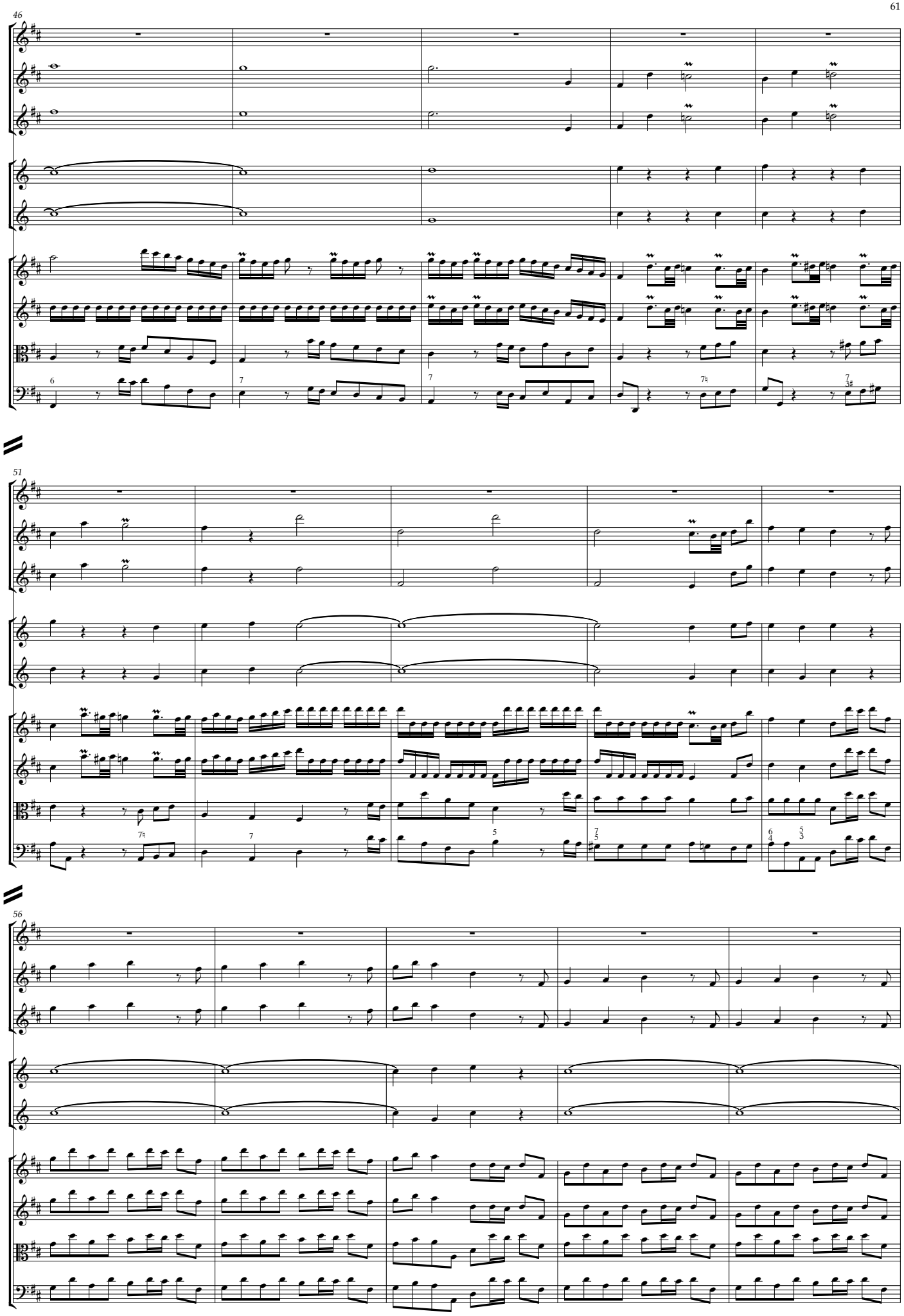
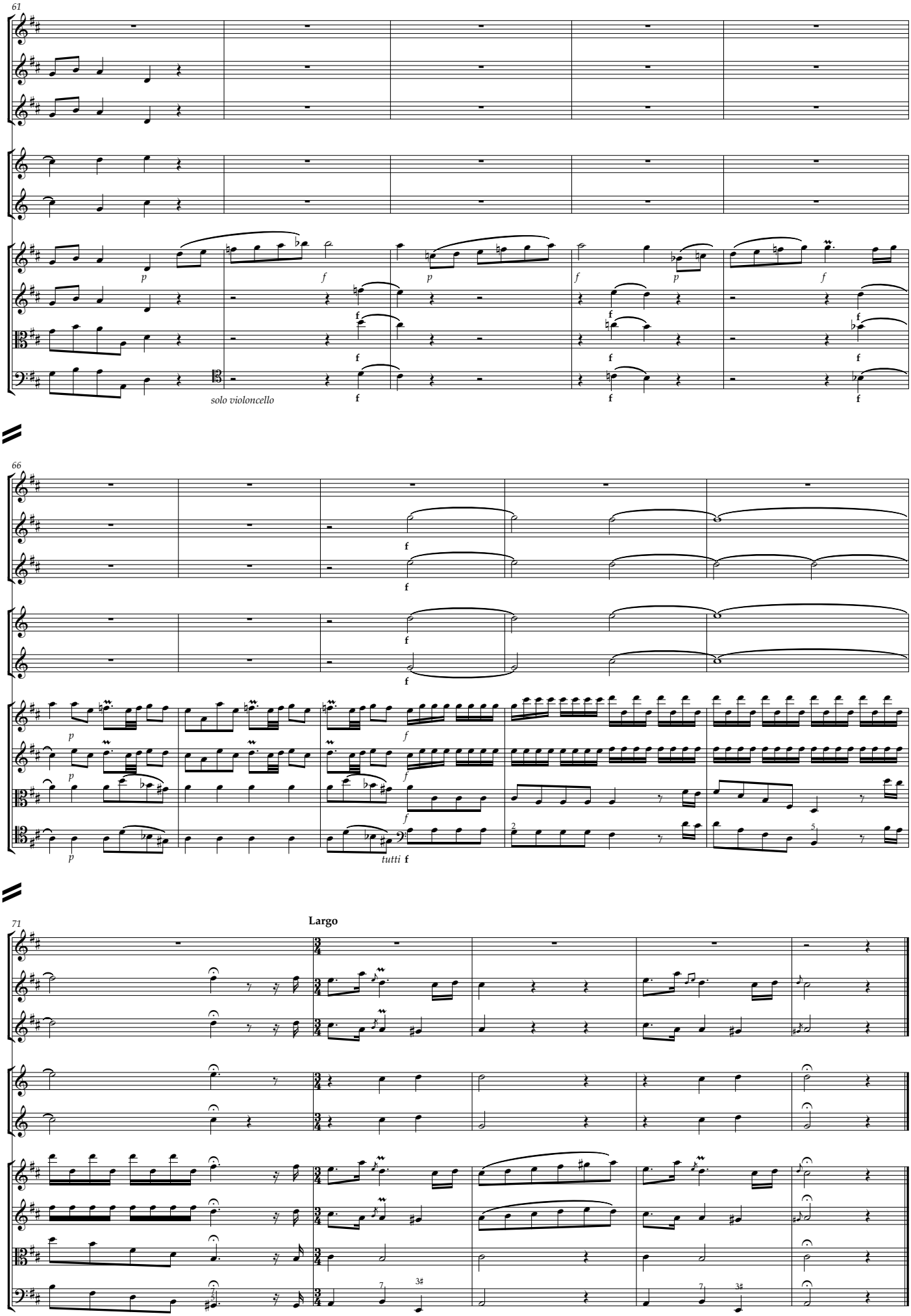

16
7
7
21
p
f
p
f
f
f
solo il violoncello
26
f
p
f
p
f
p
f
p
f
p
tutti

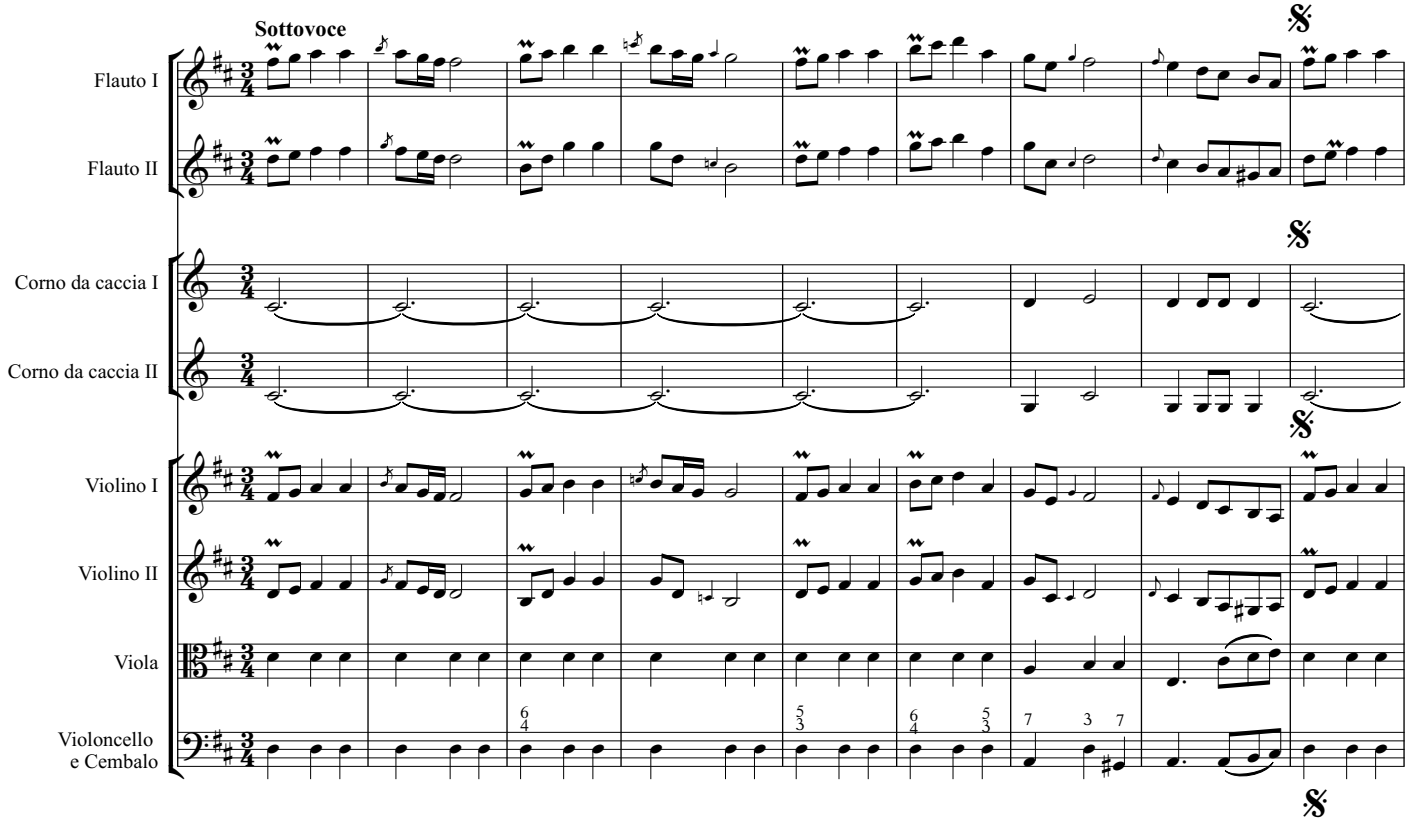

31
36
41

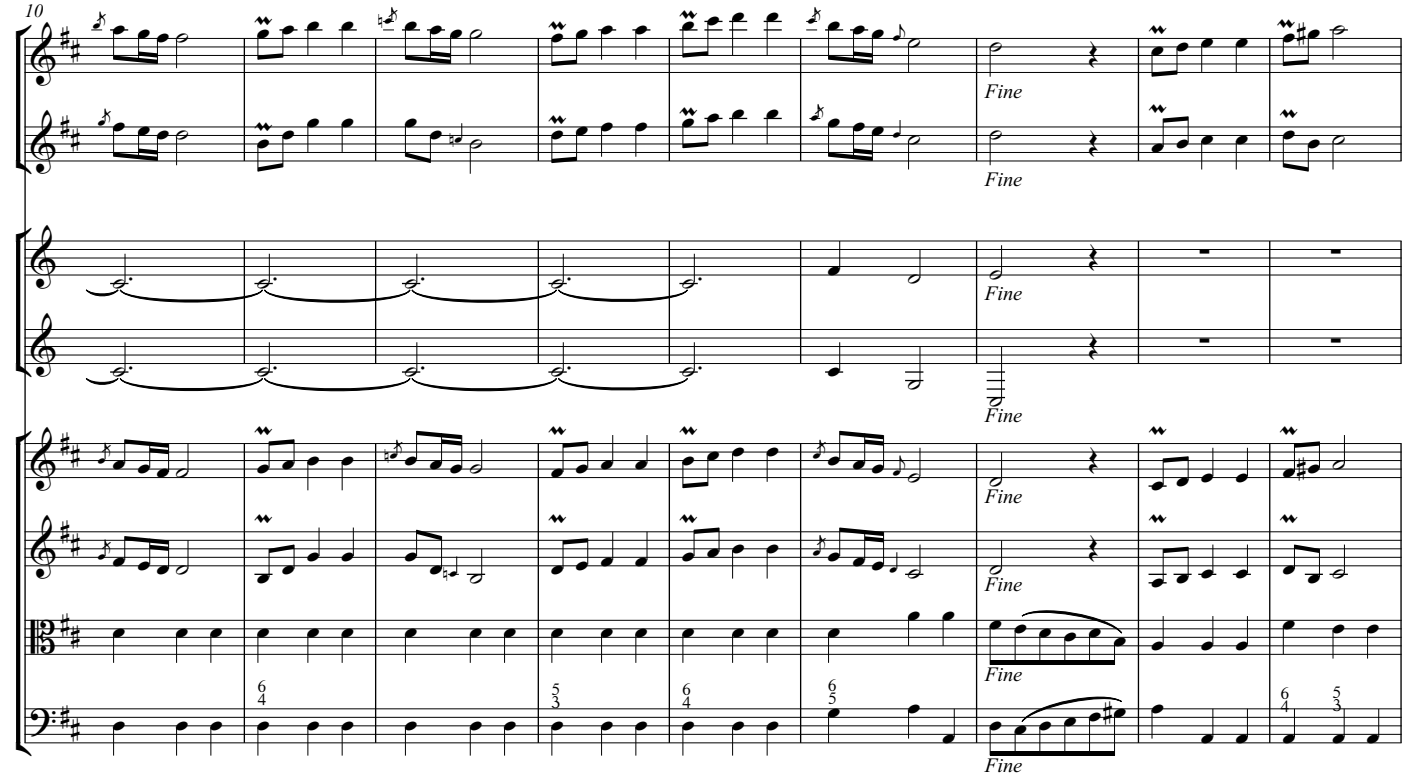

46
51
56


61
solo violoncello
66
tutti f
71
Largo

Sinfonia 3 II mv

Giovanni Battista Serini





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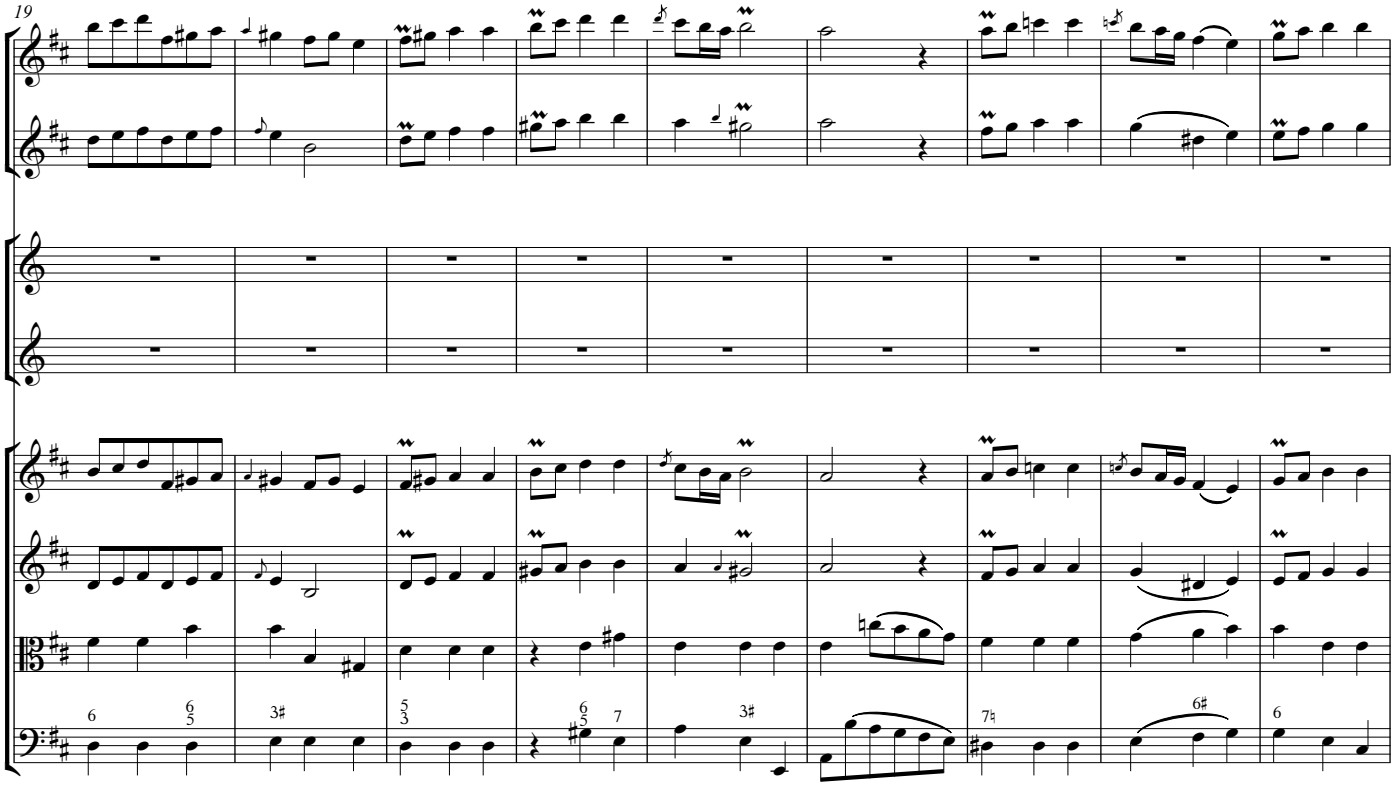
19



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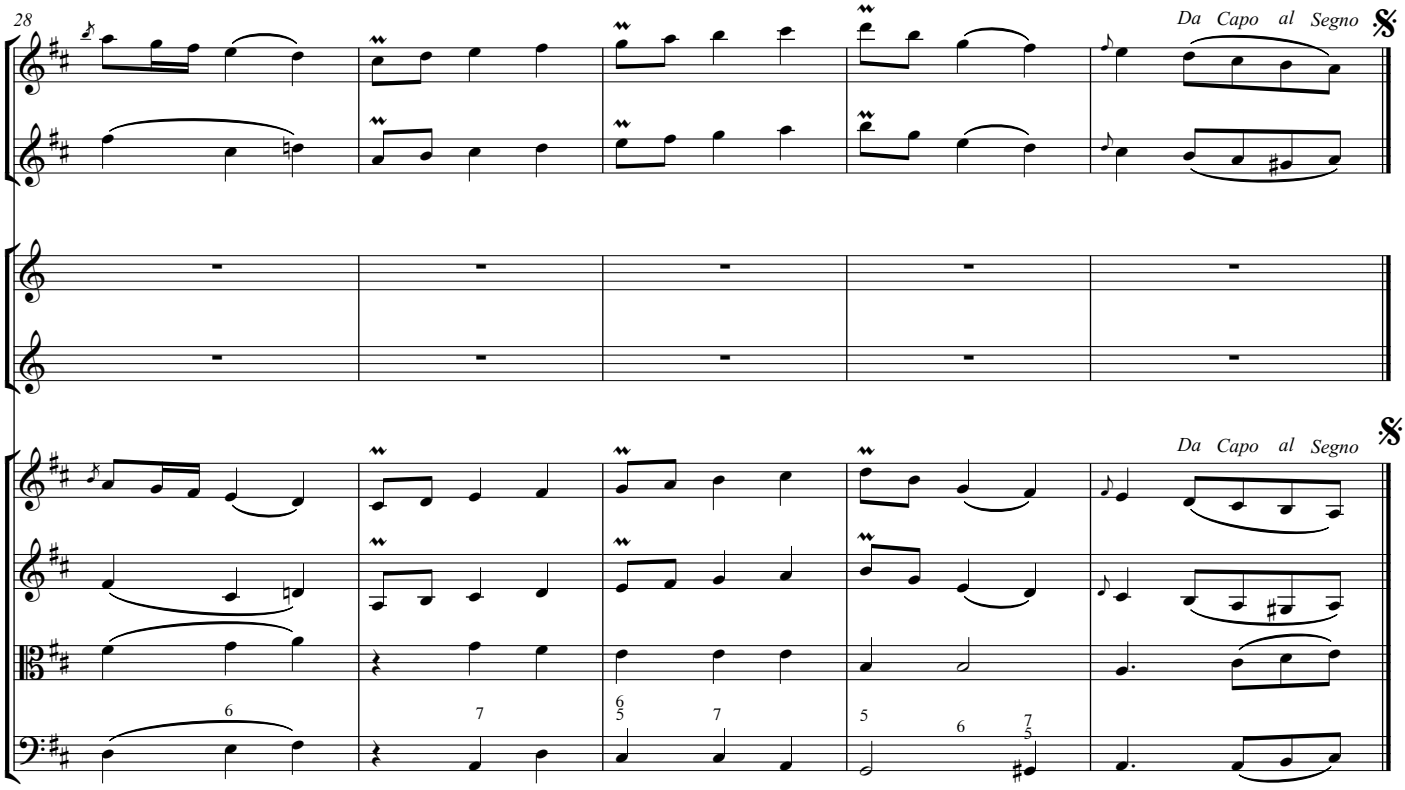
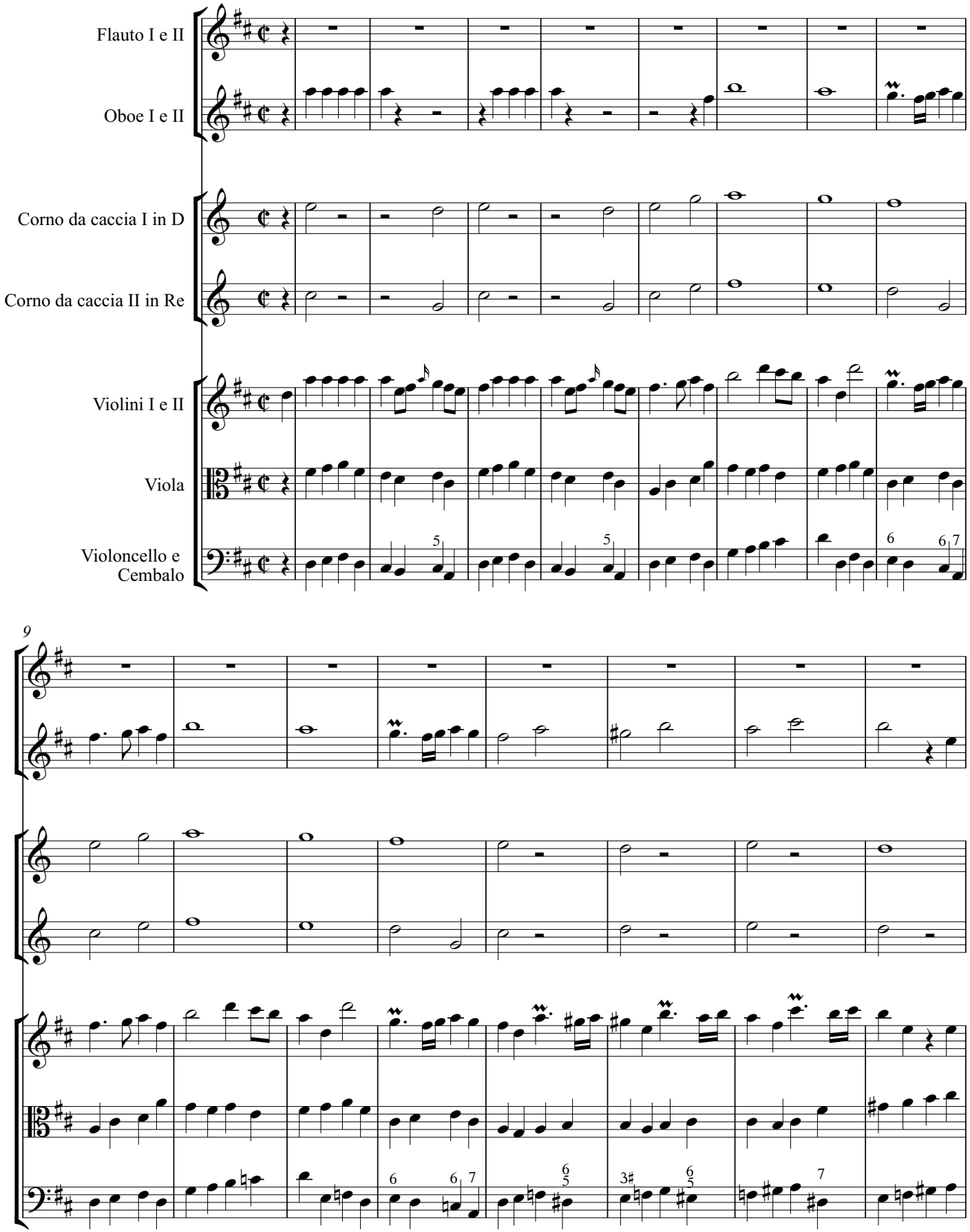


Sinfonia 3 III

Giovanni Battista Serini

Presto



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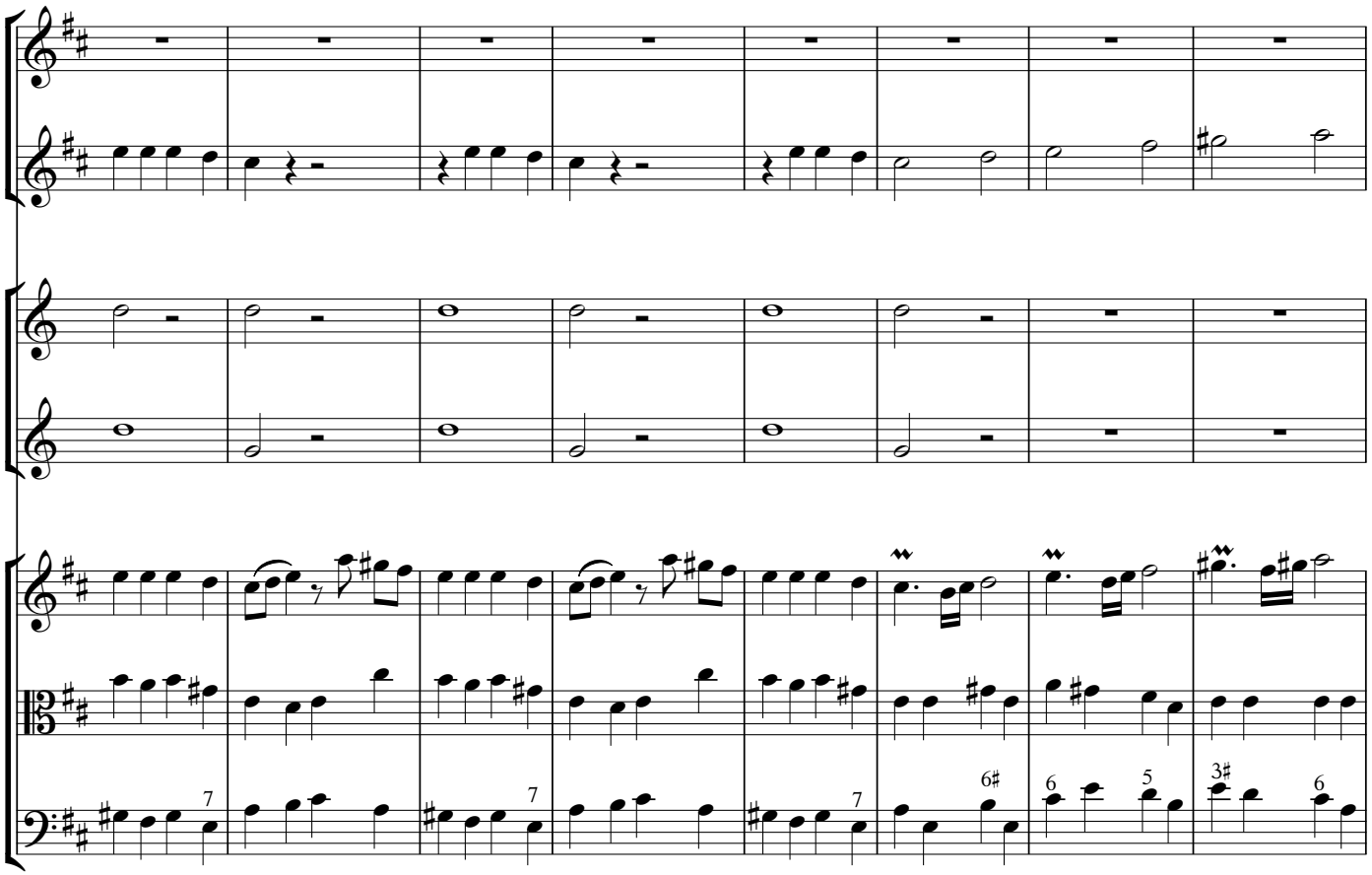
17



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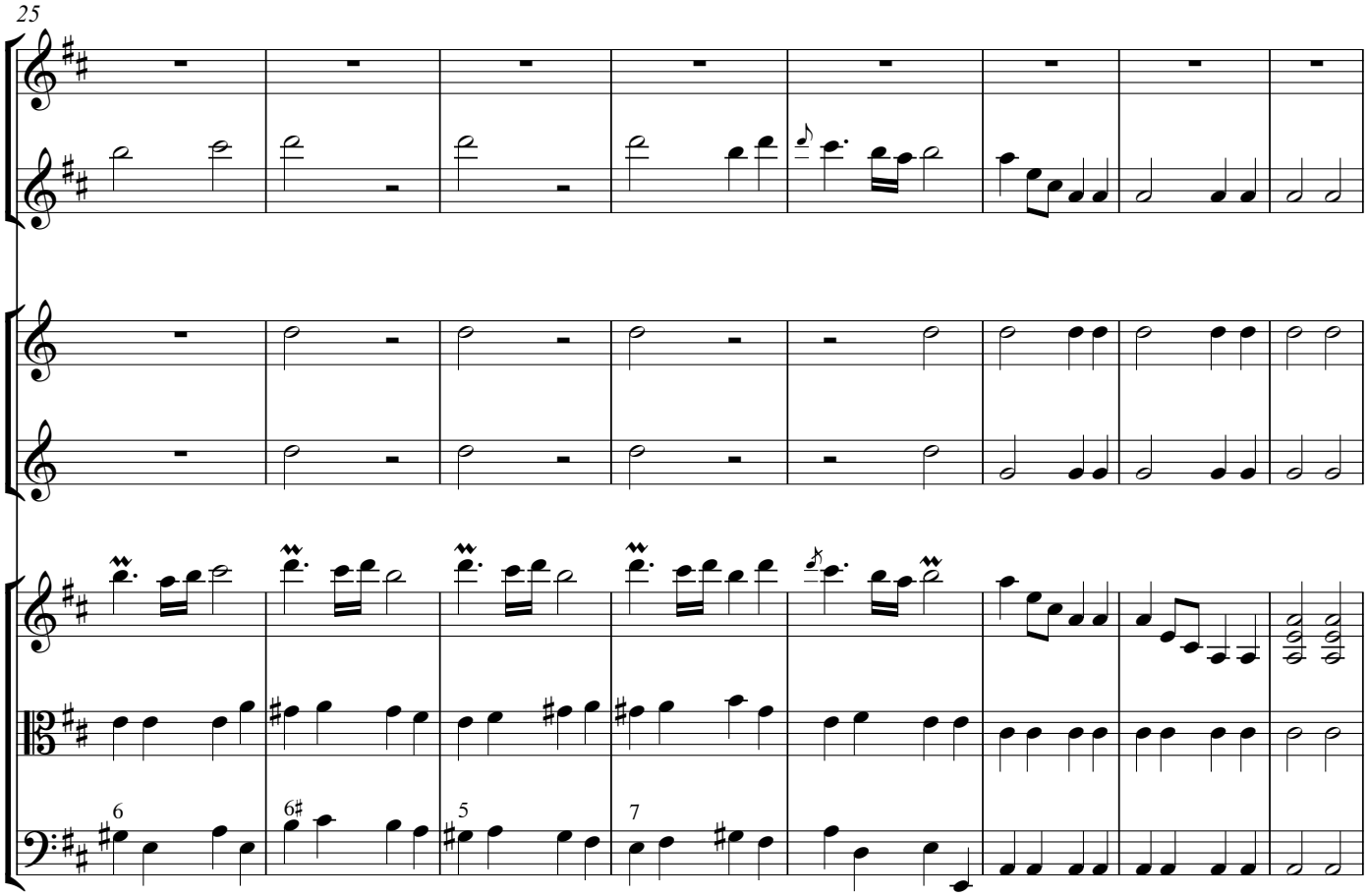

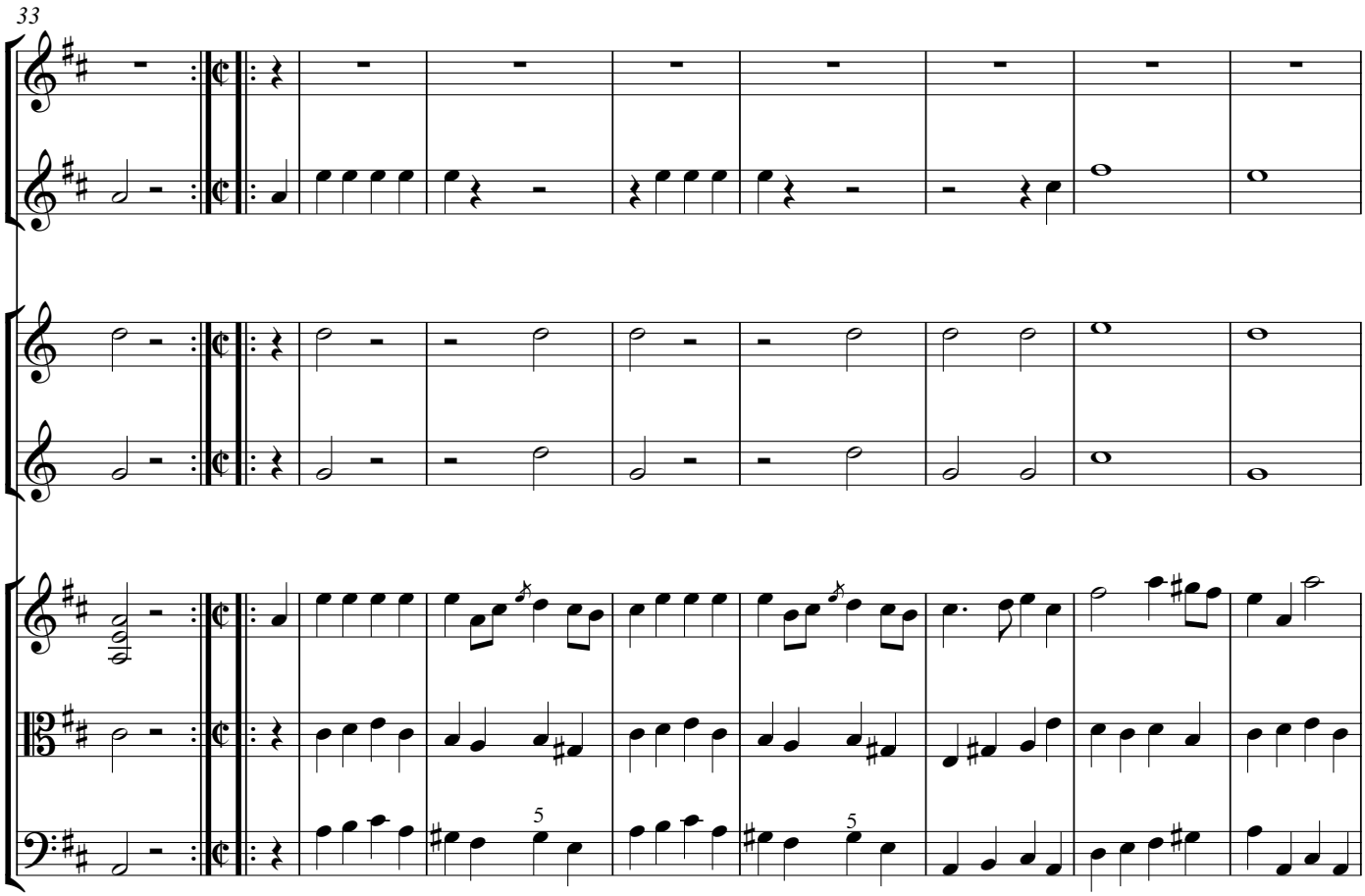
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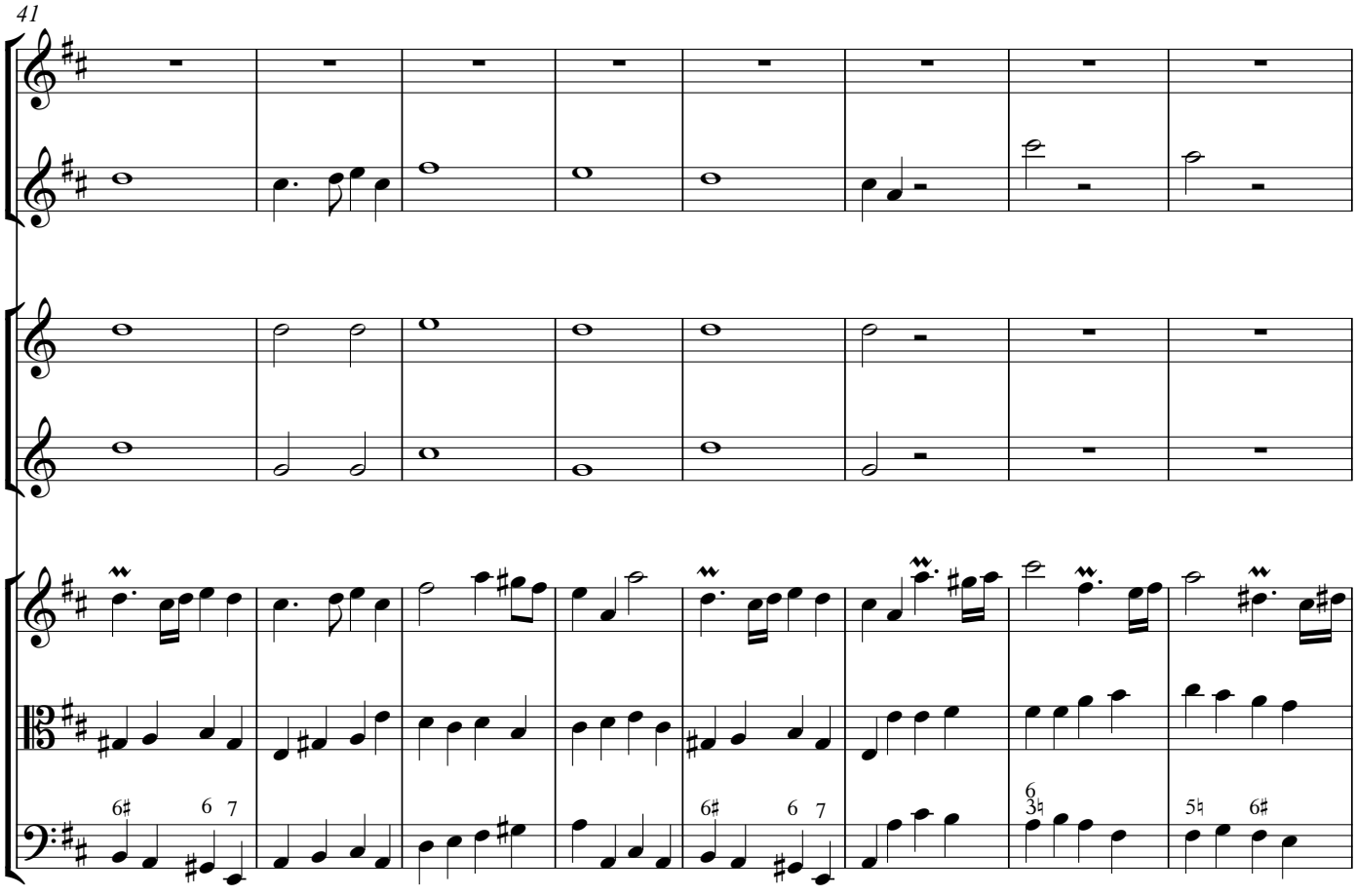
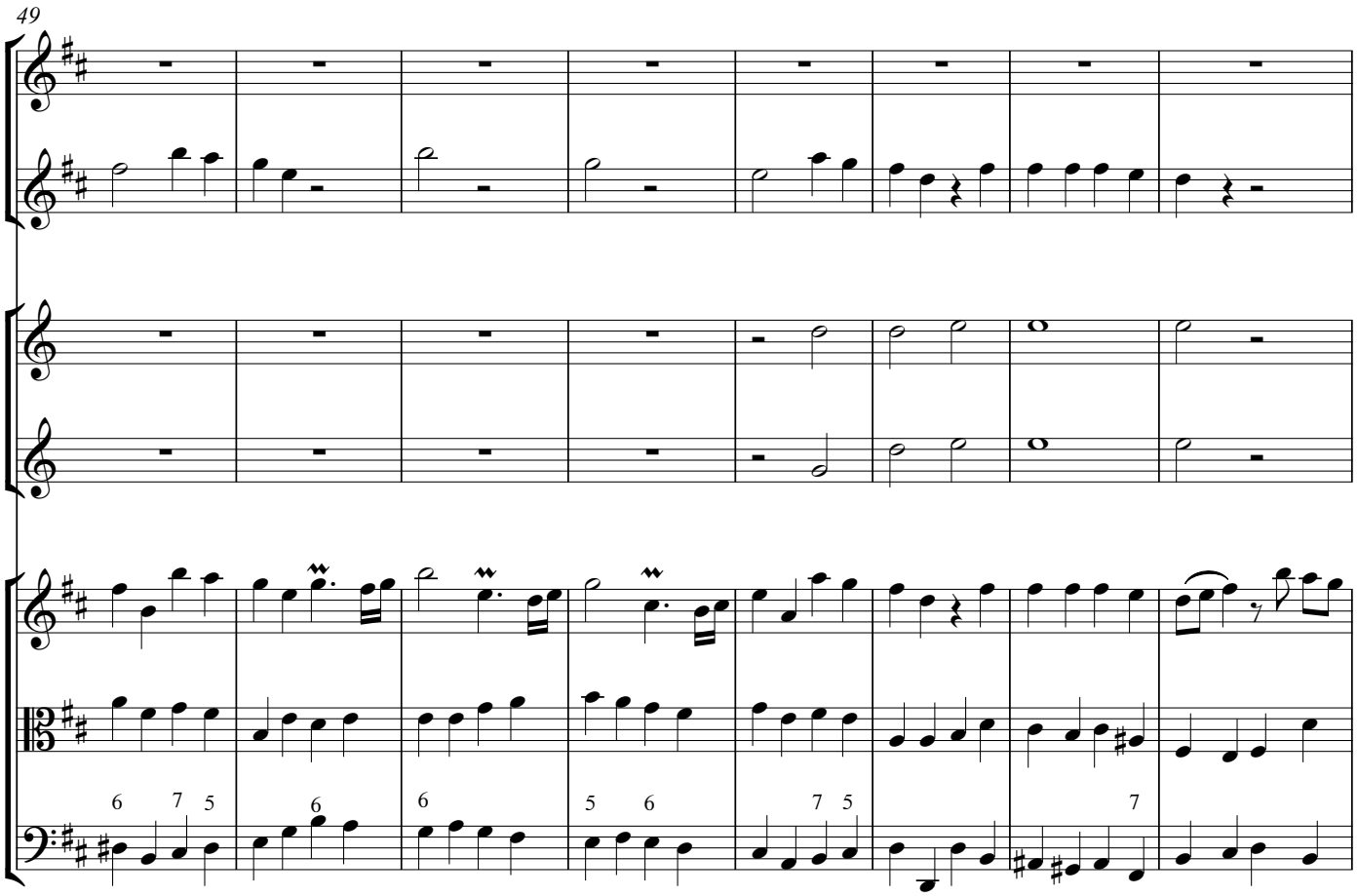

41
6♯ 6 7
6♯ 6 7
6 3♮
5♮ 6♯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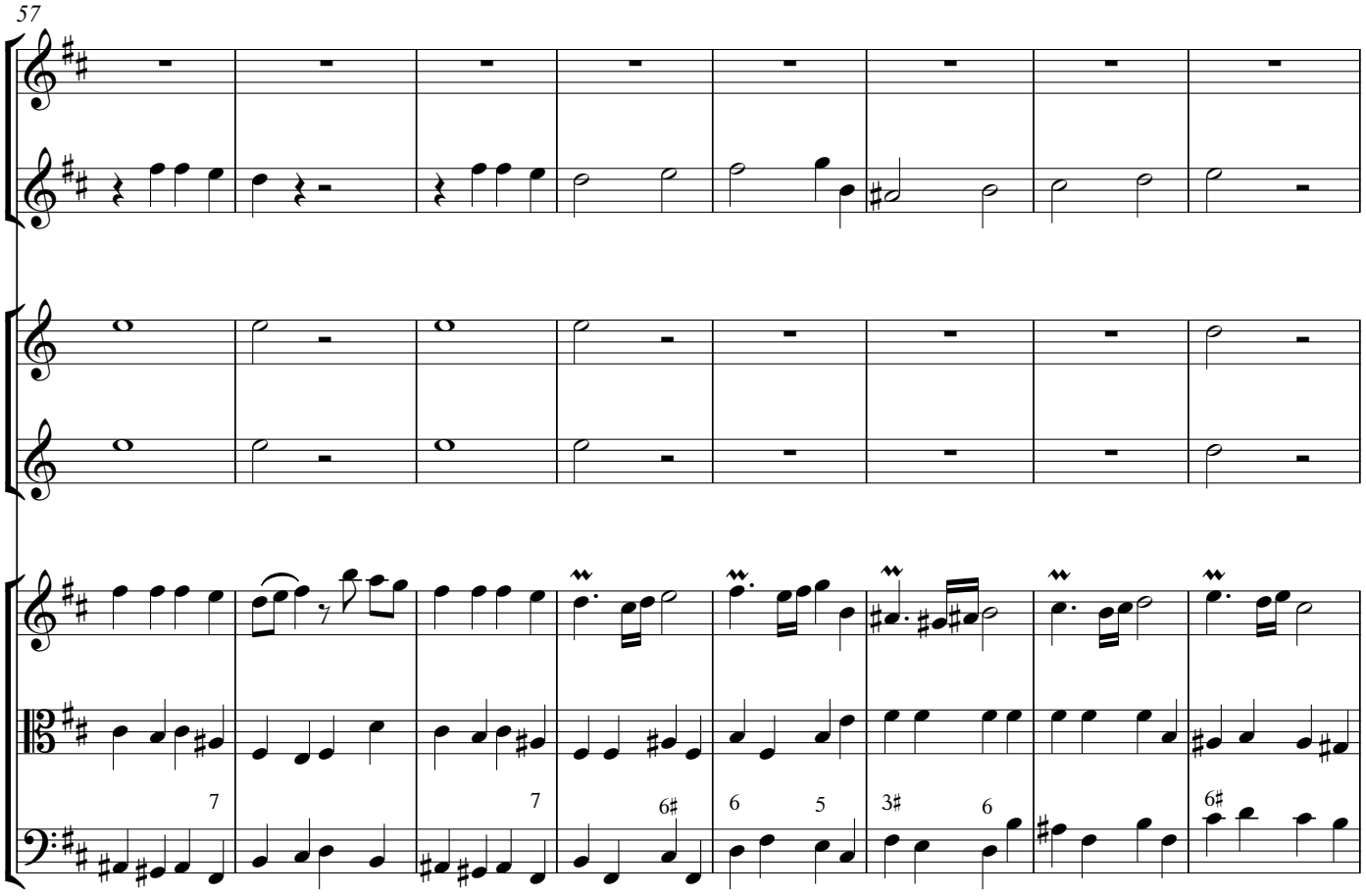
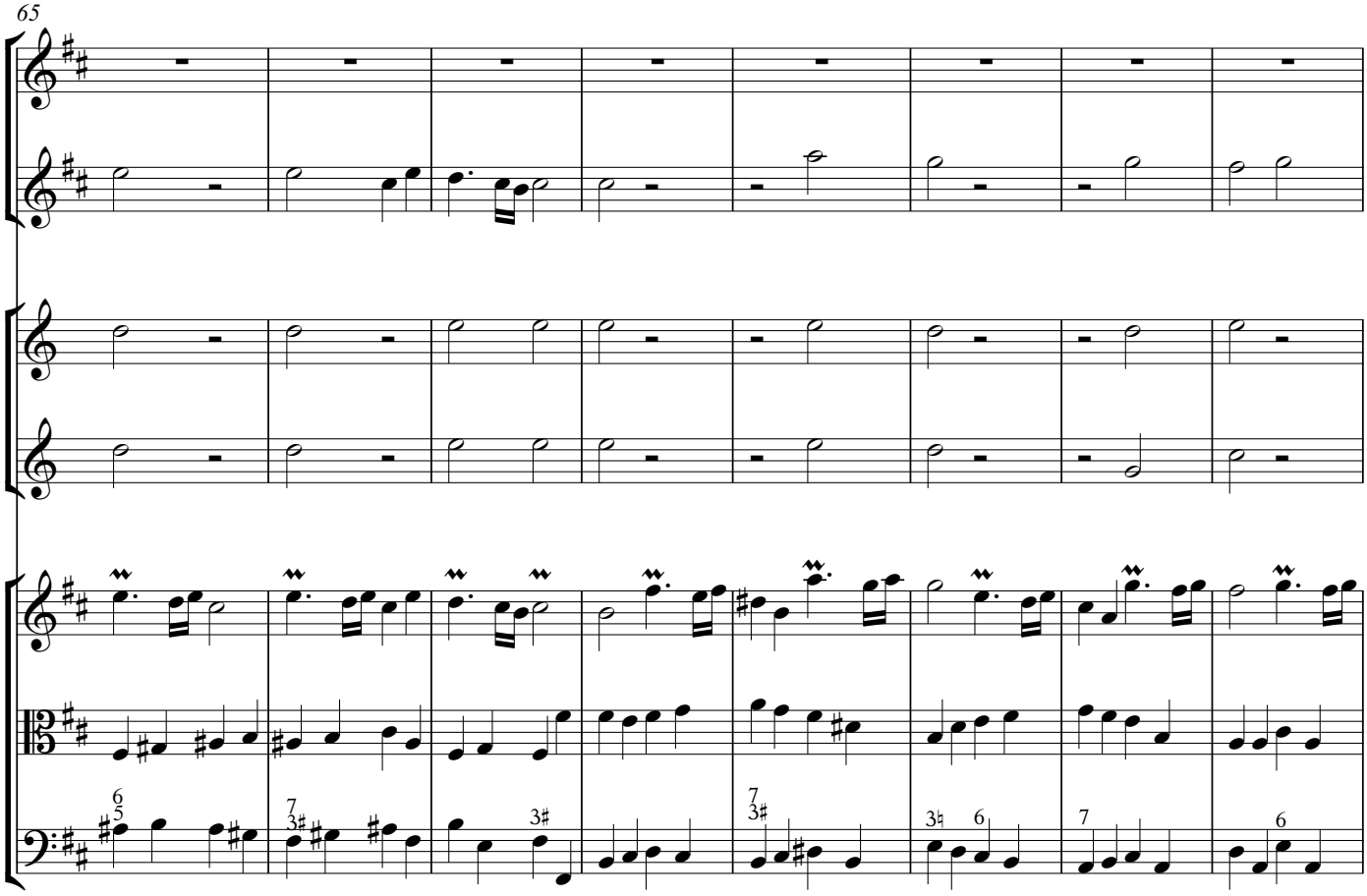
6 7 5
6
6
5 6
7 5
7


57
7
7
6♯
6 5
3♯ 6
6♯

65



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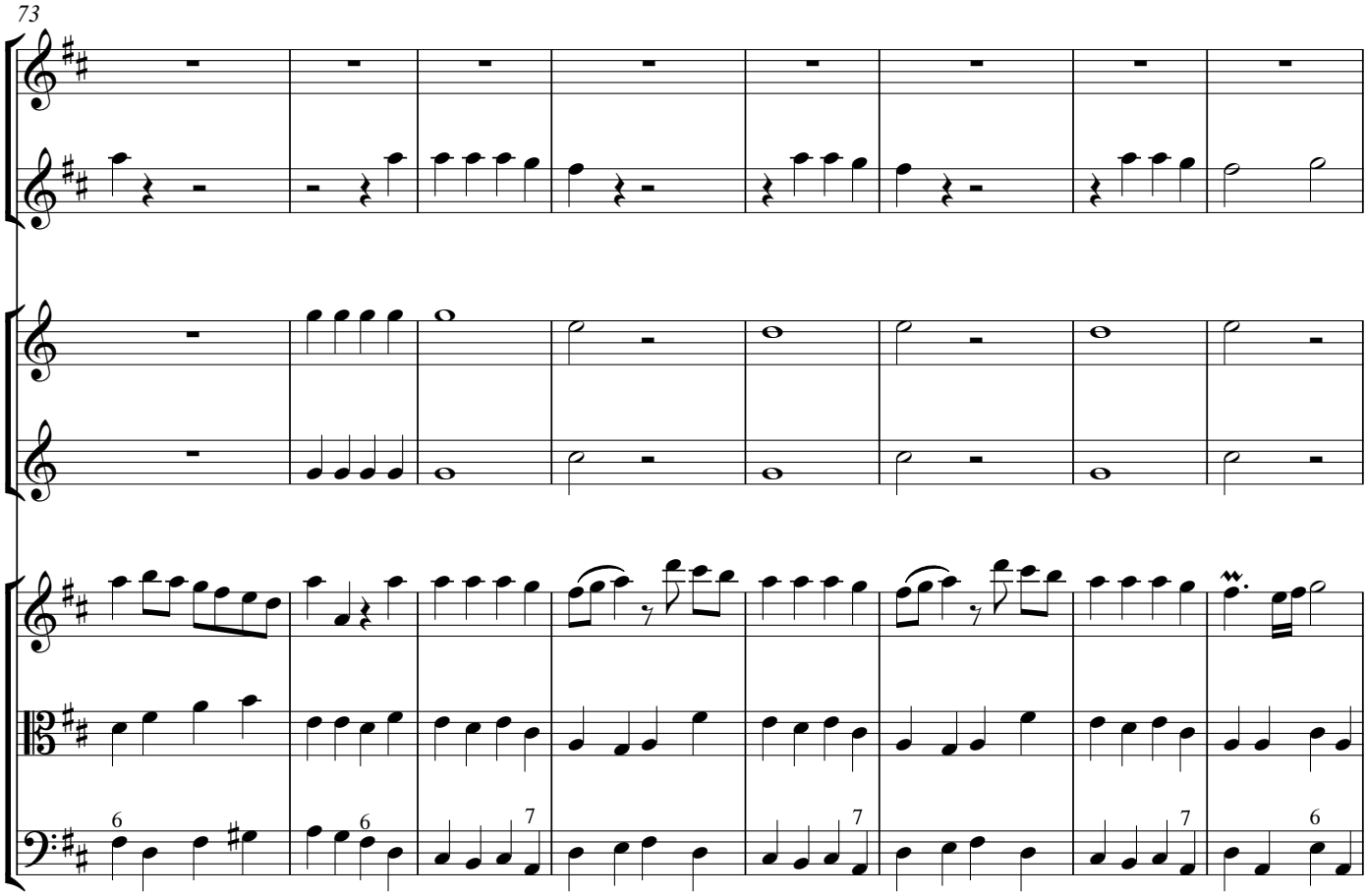

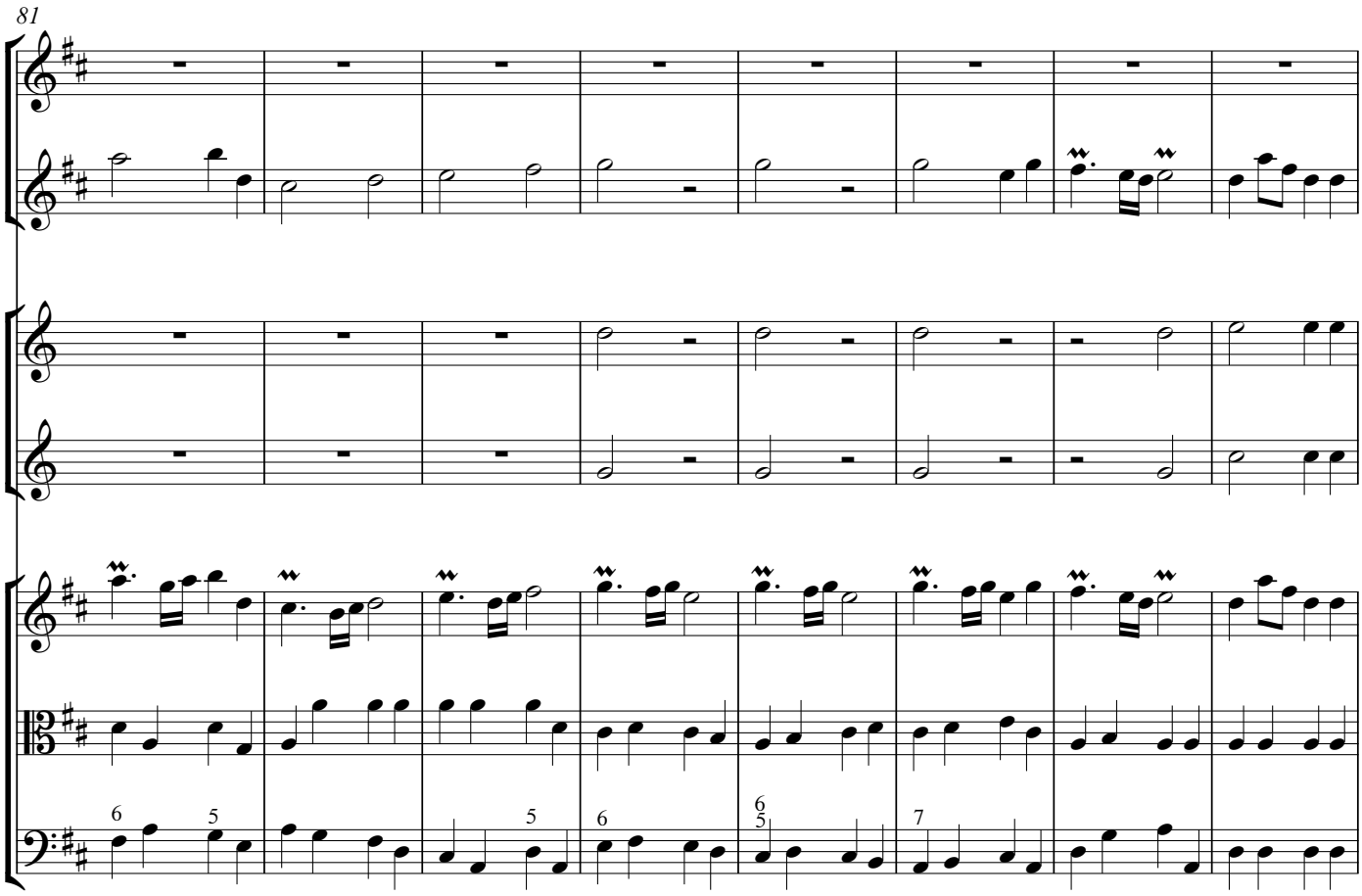
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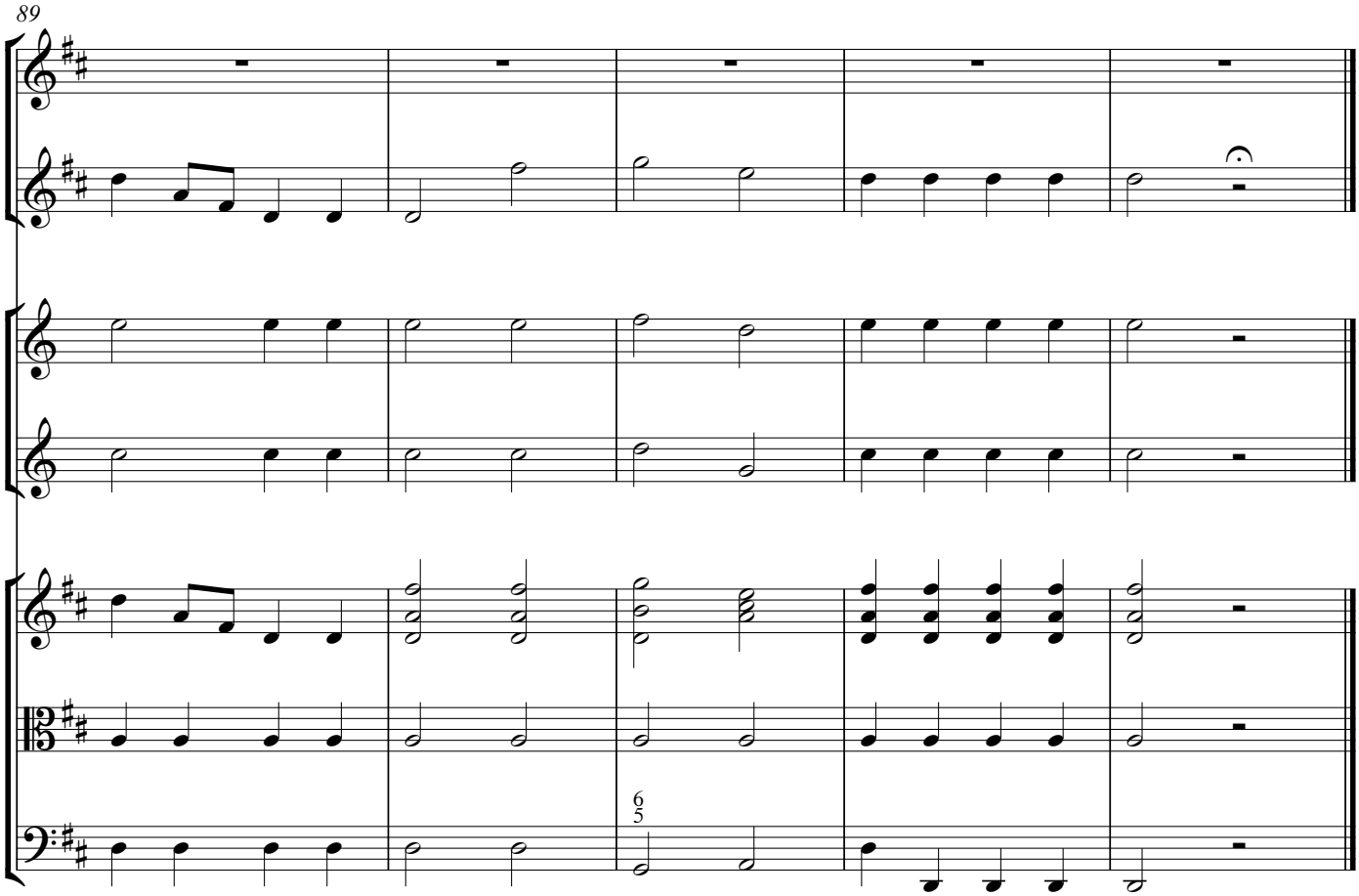

89

Giovanni Battista

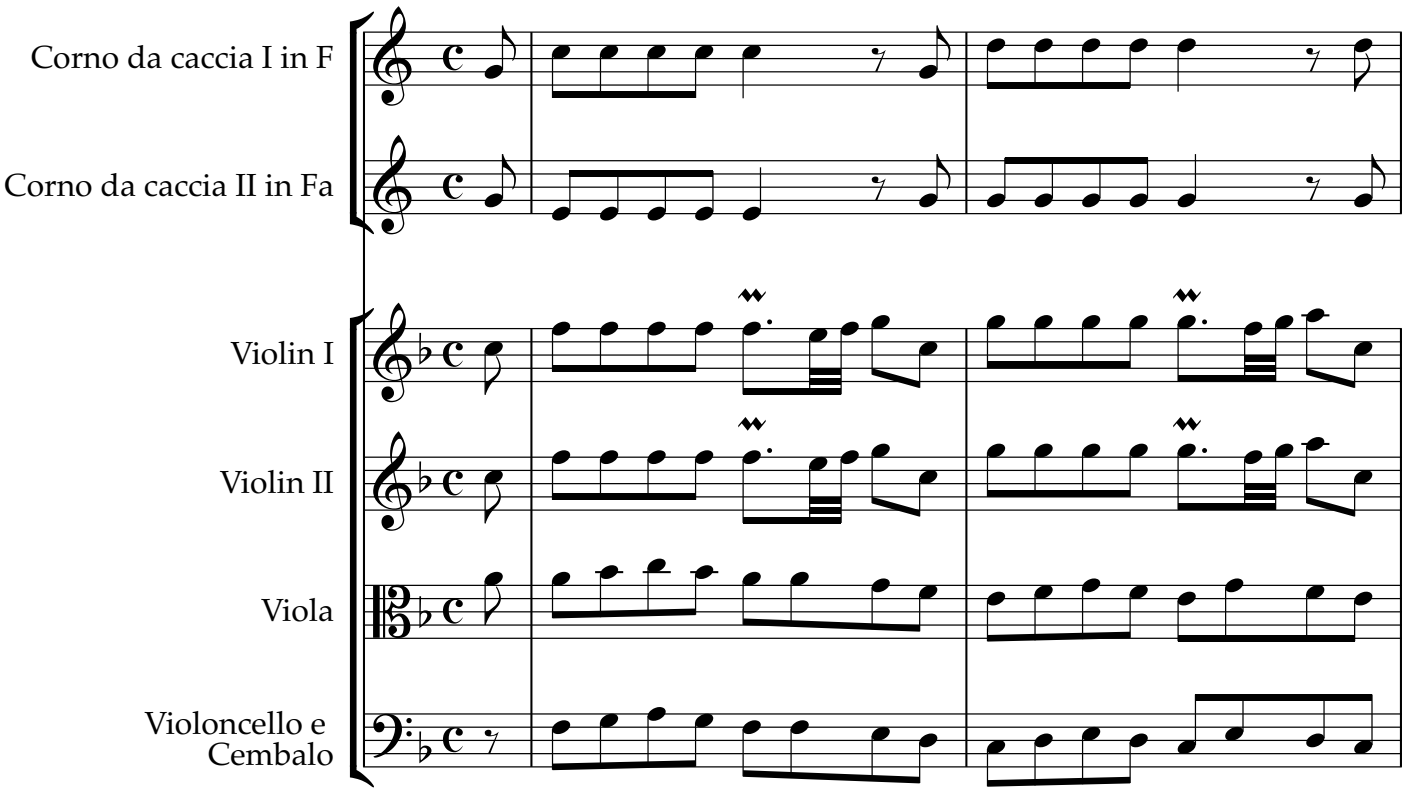
Sinfonia
a 4 con corni da caccia
di ripieno

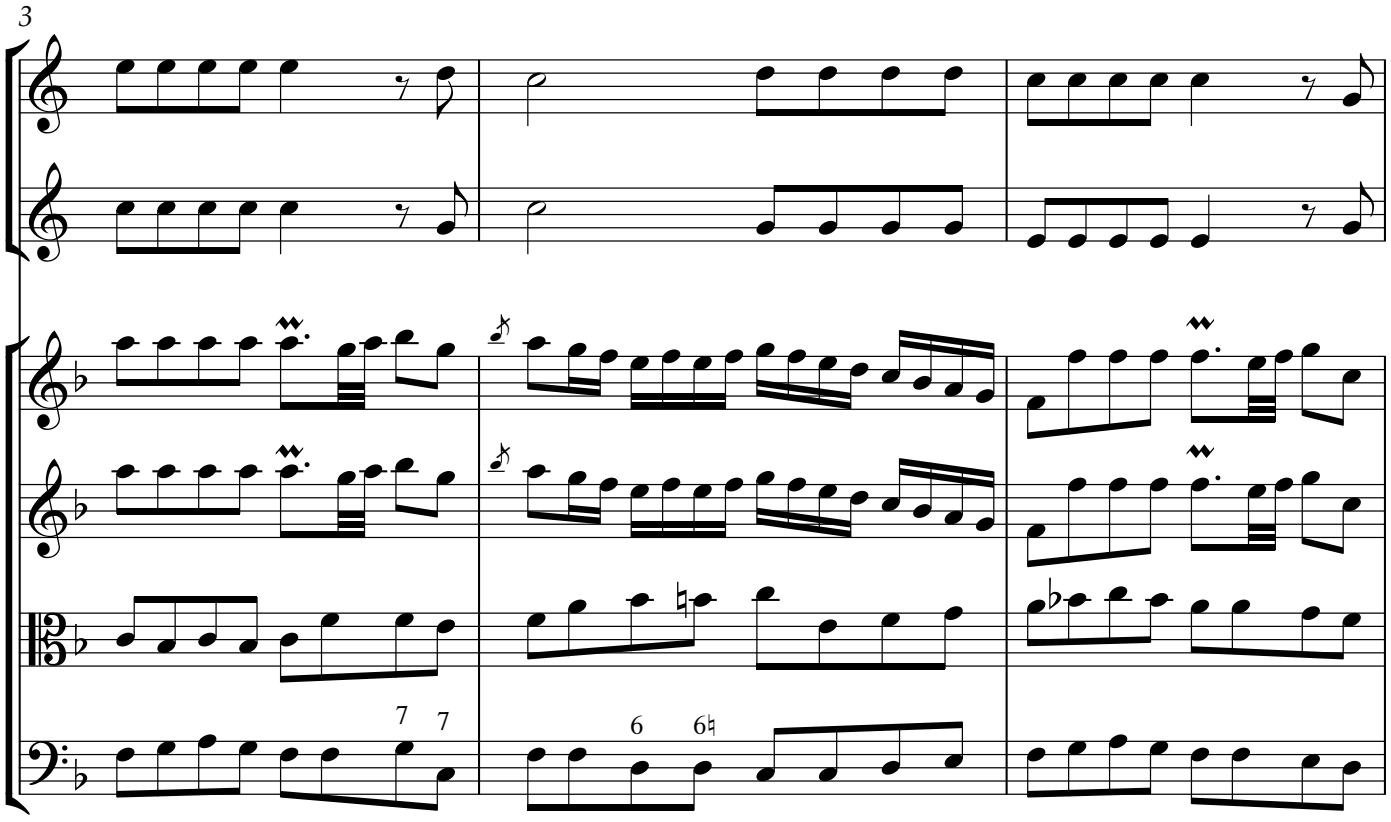
Symphony 4

Symphony 4

Principal source: GB-Y MS 129 S
D-Rtt Serini 8

Vivace





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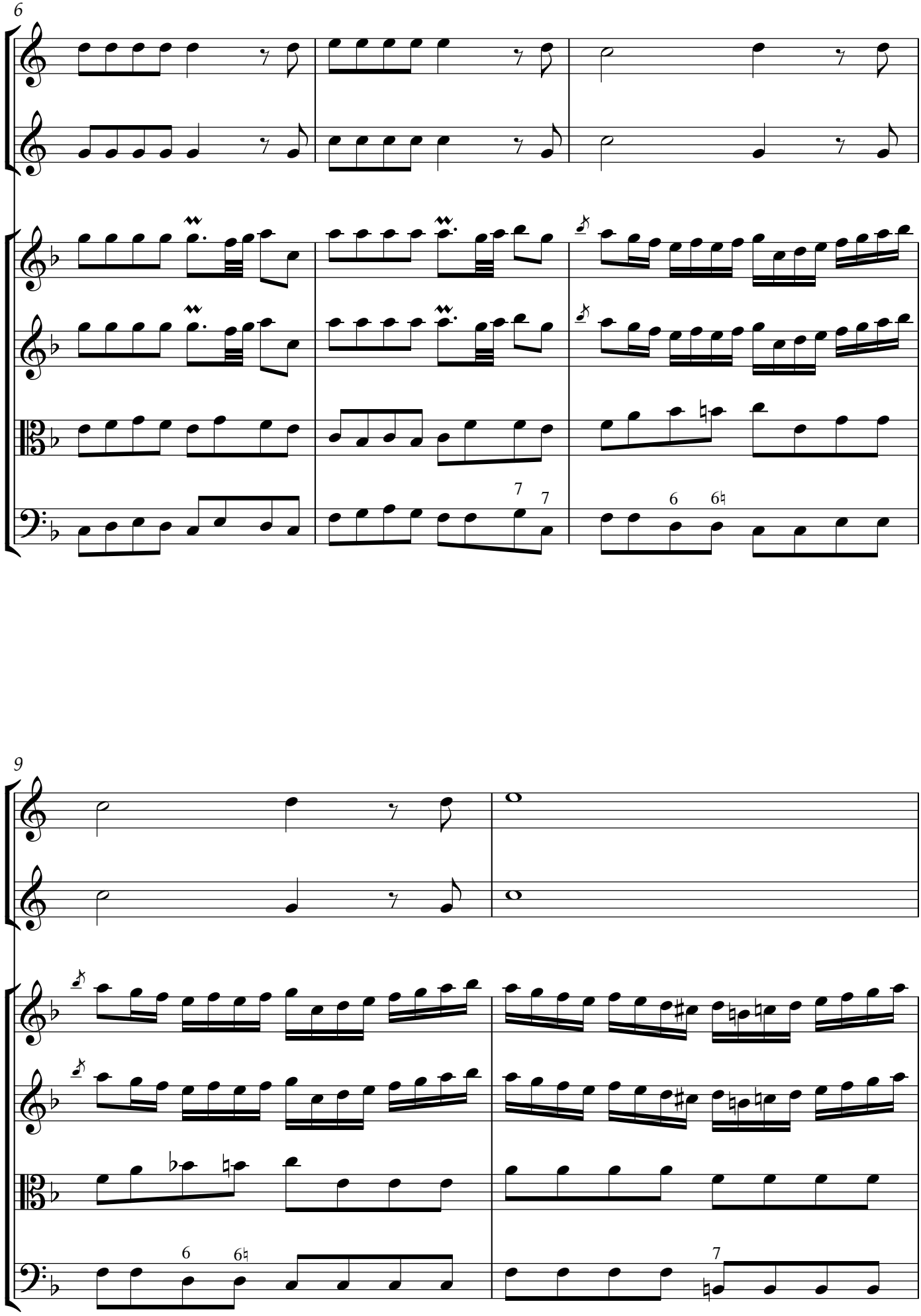
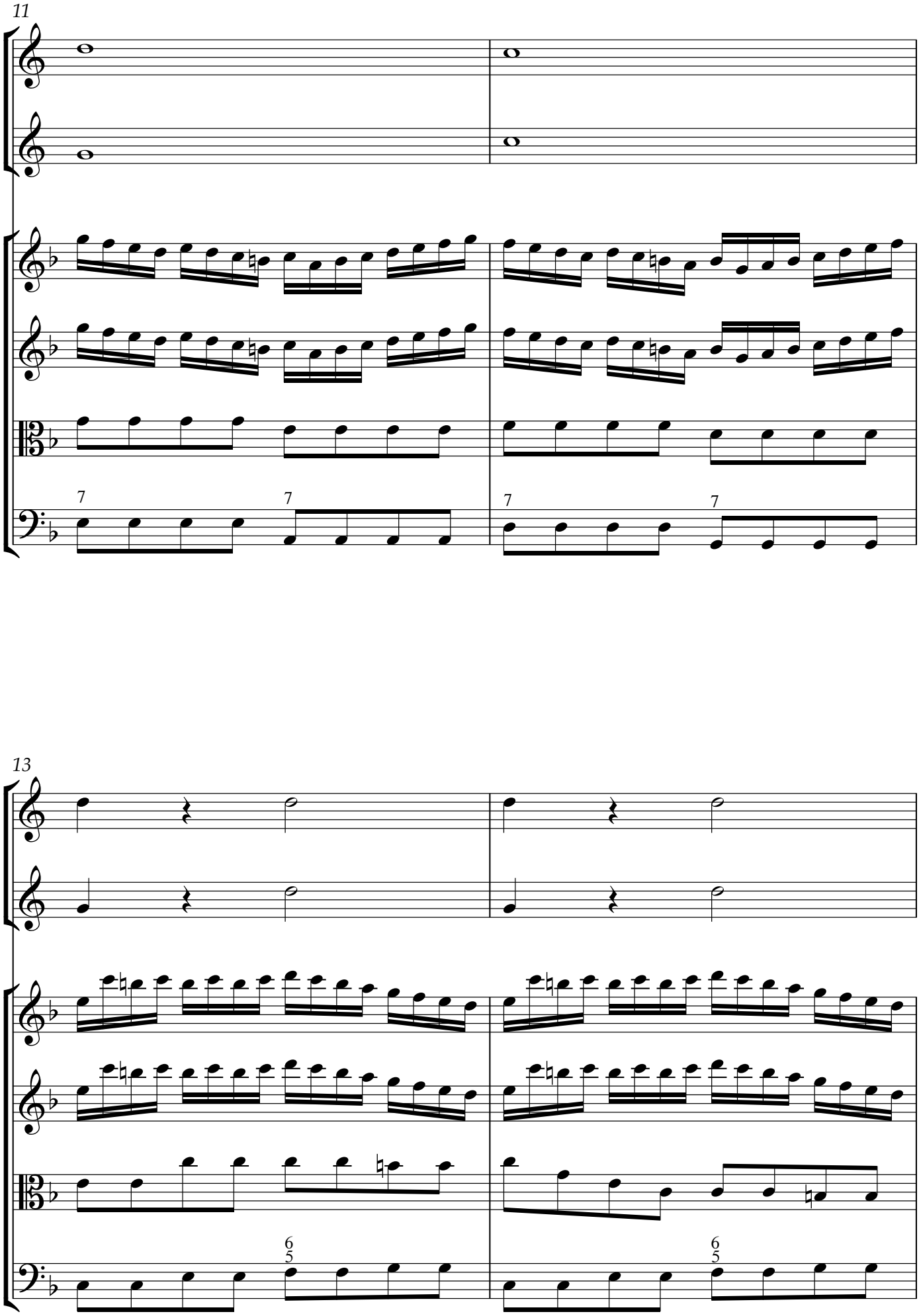
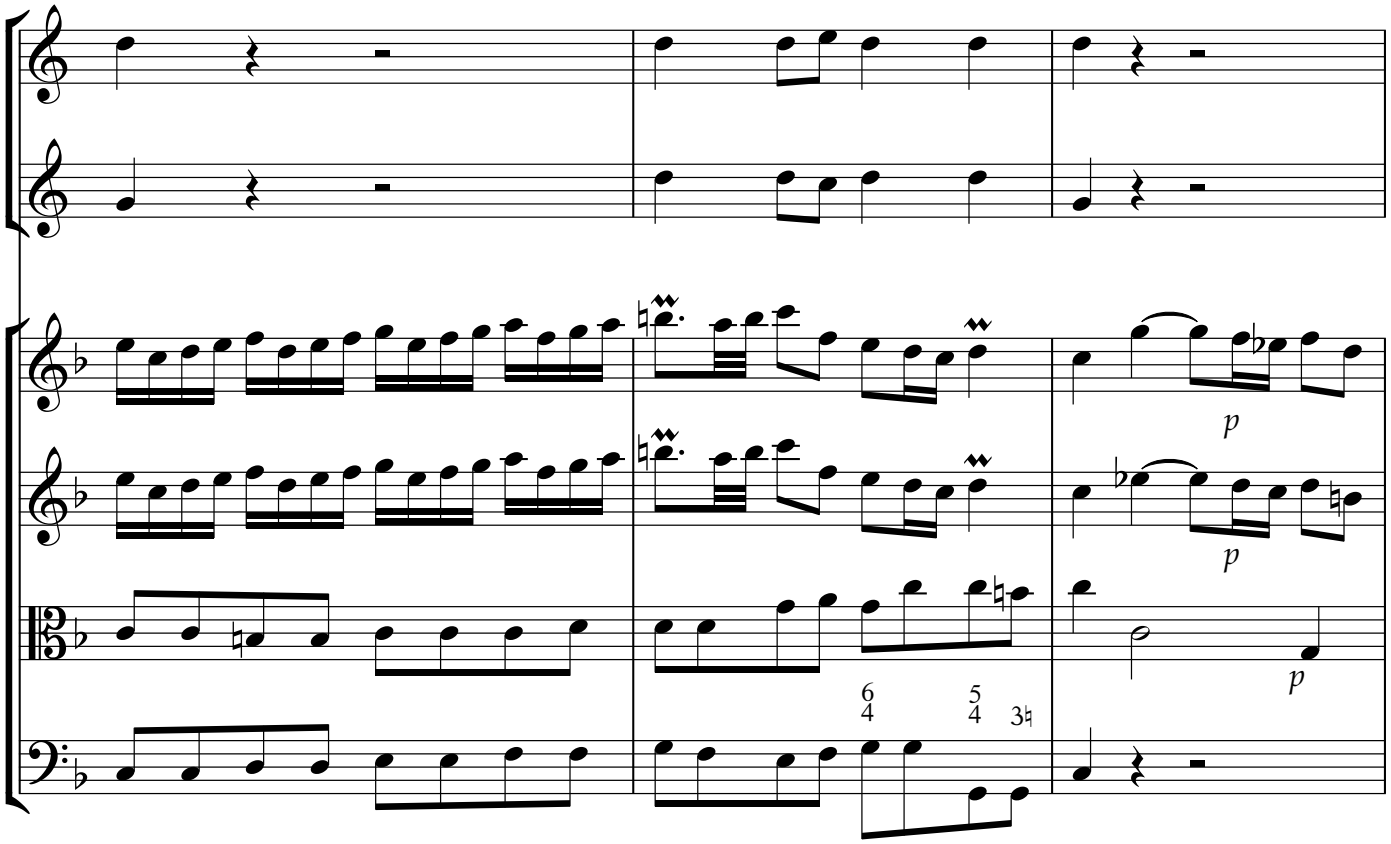

6
7
7
6
6♮
9
6
6♮
7


11
7
7
7
7
13
6
5
6
5

15



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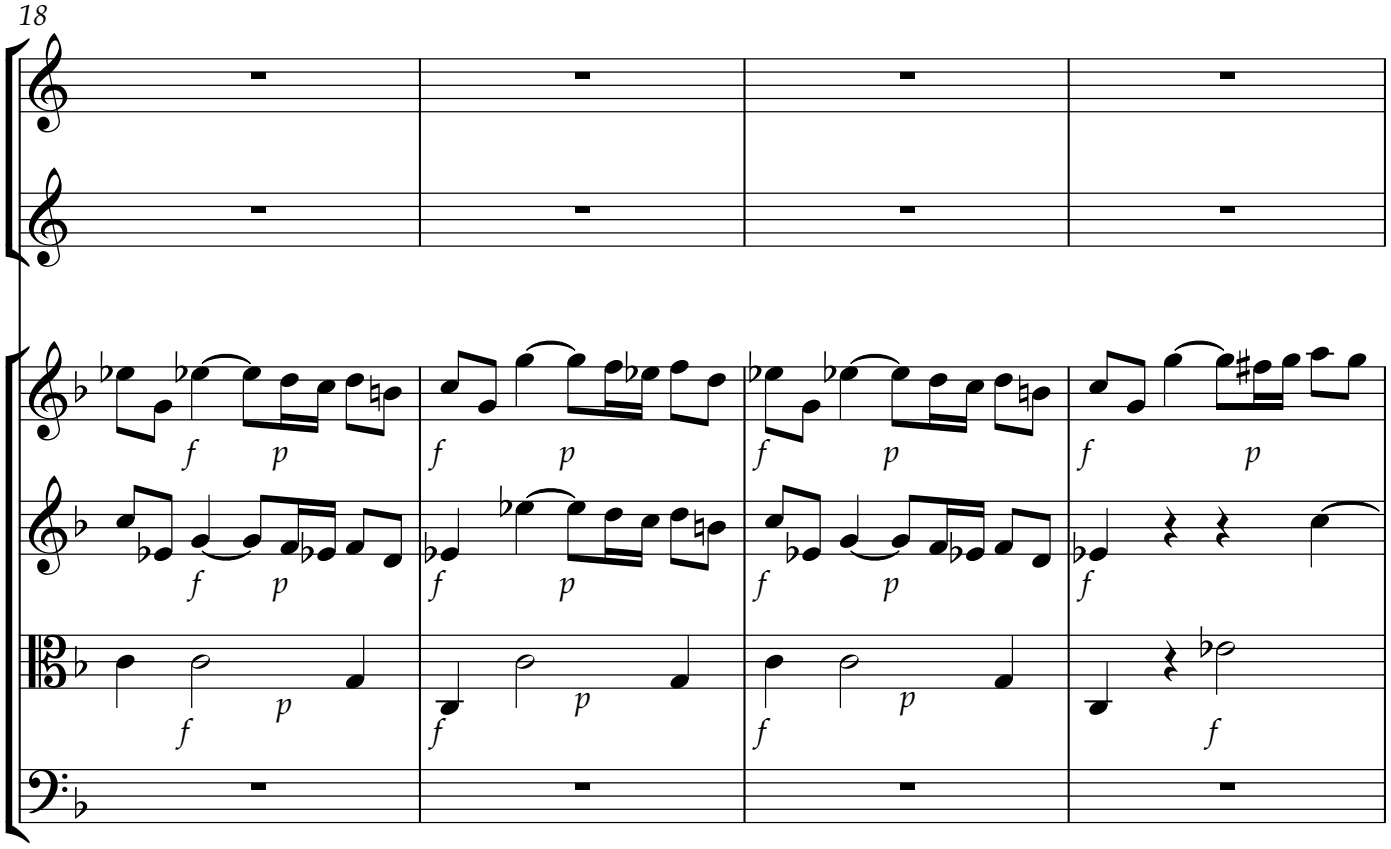

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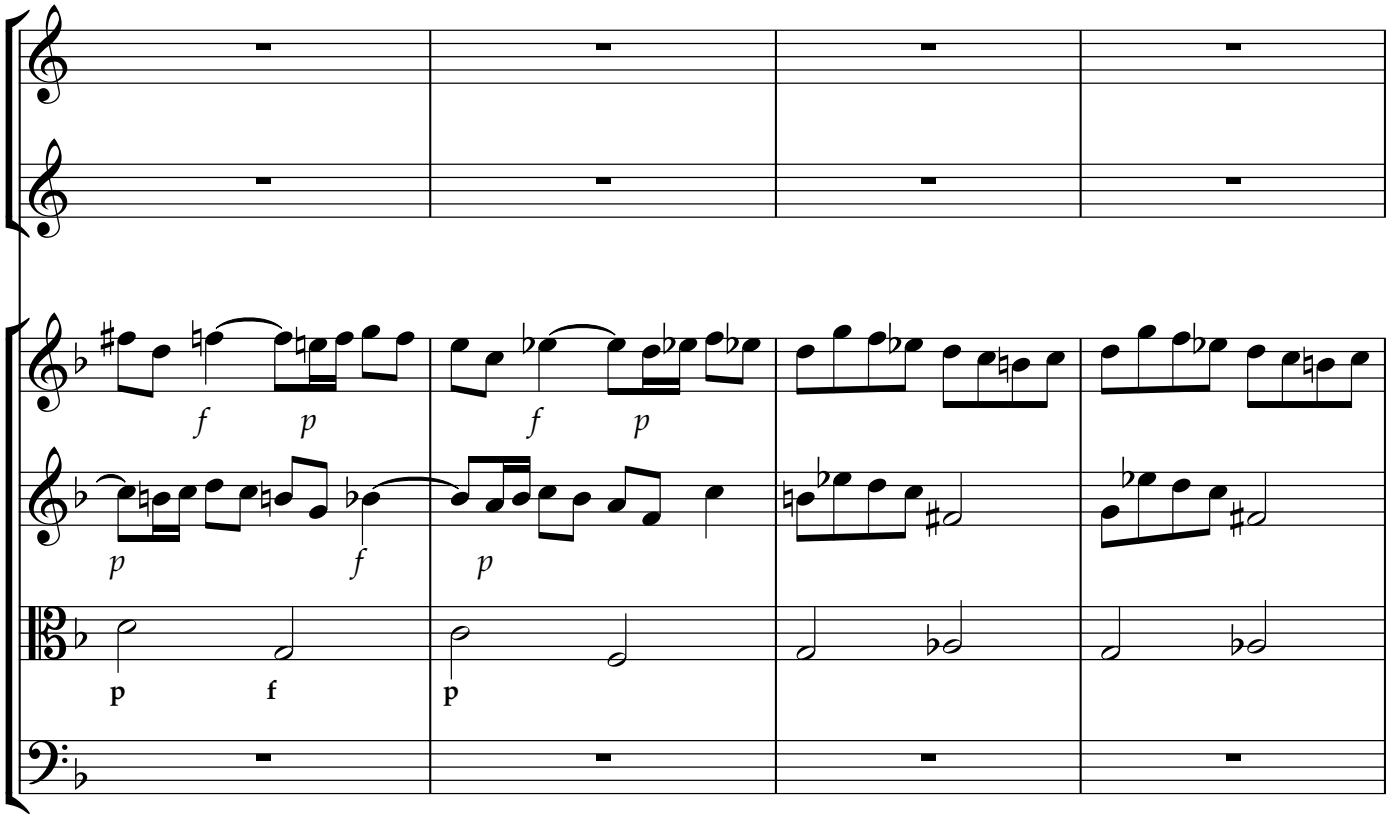

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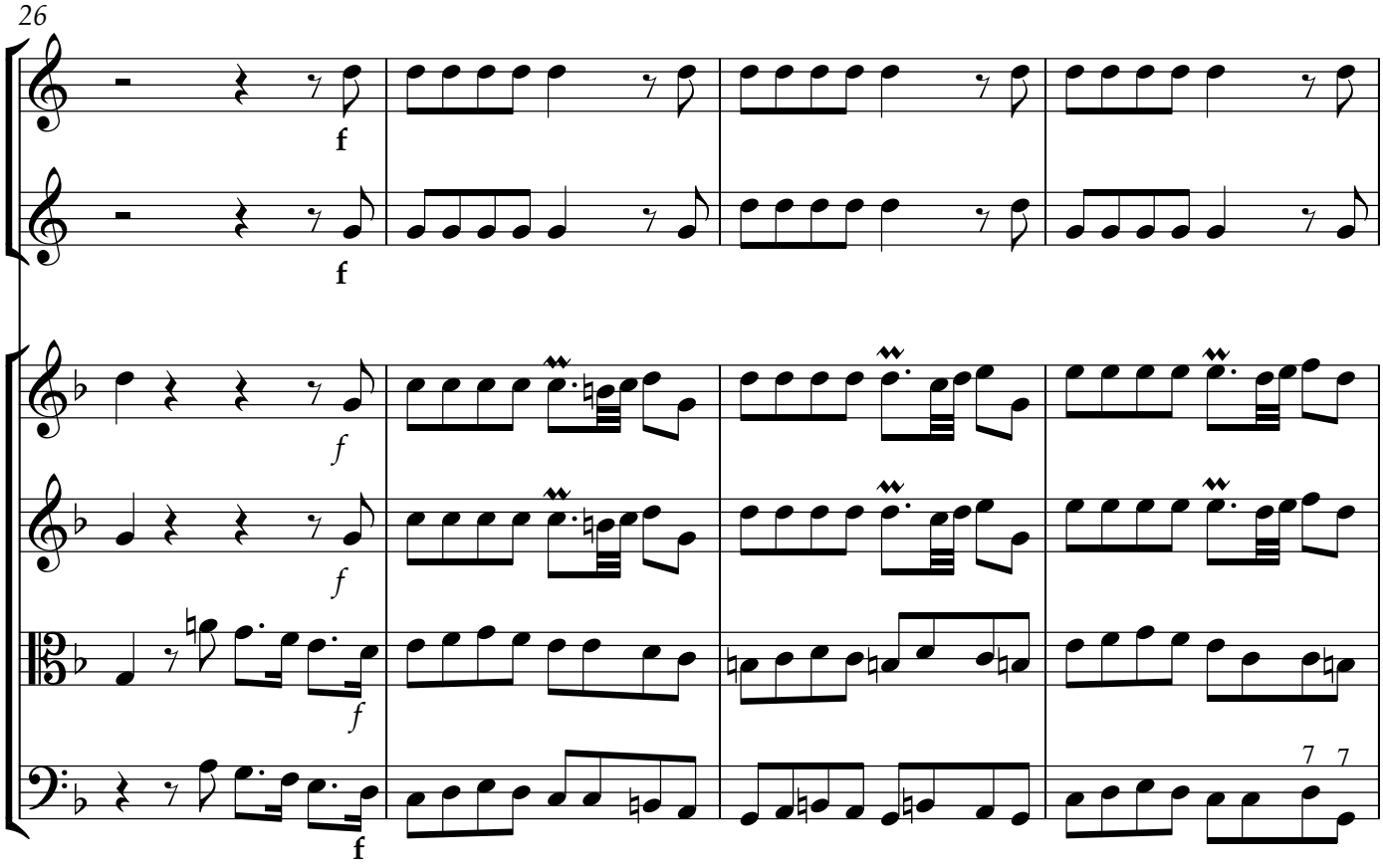

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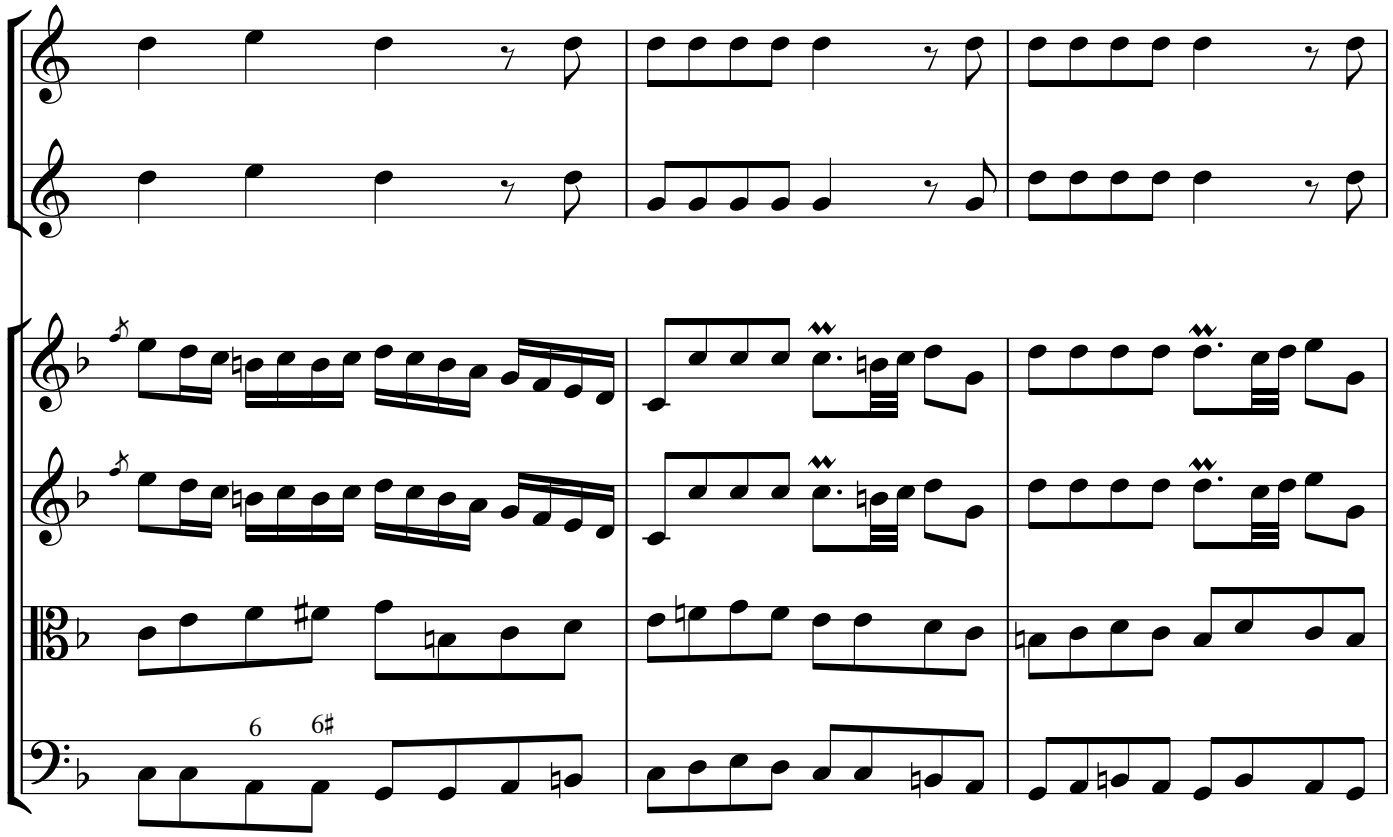

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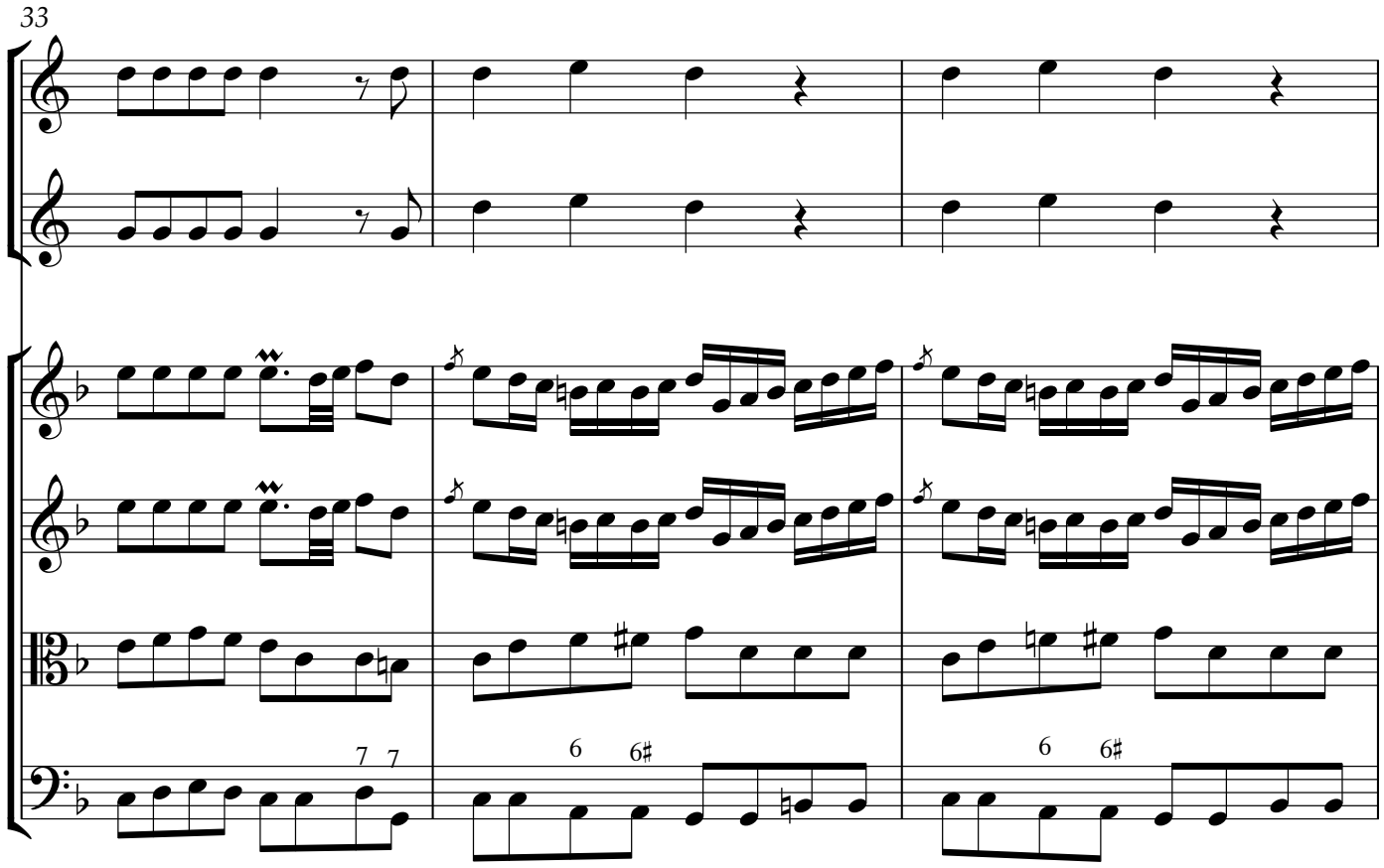
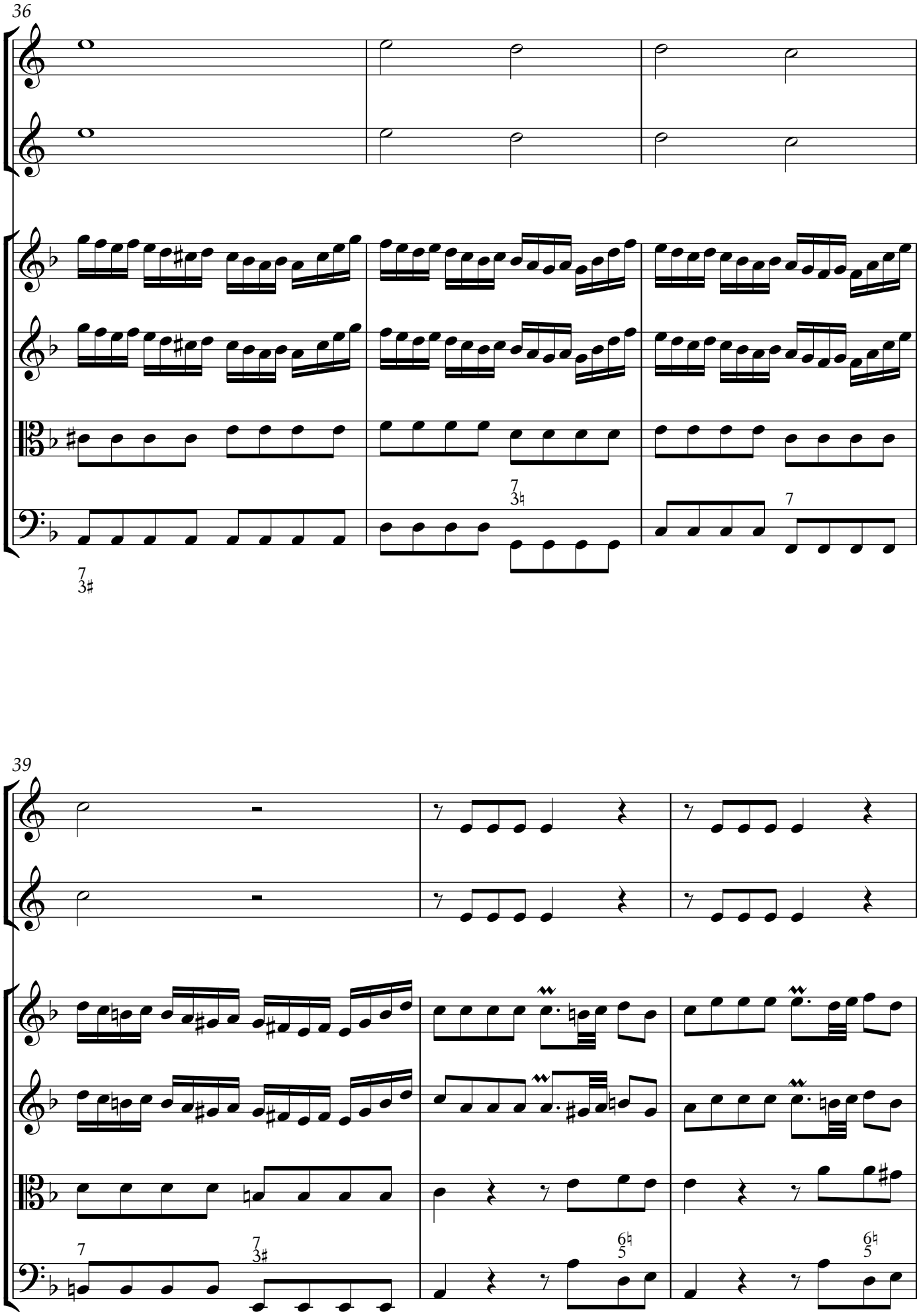
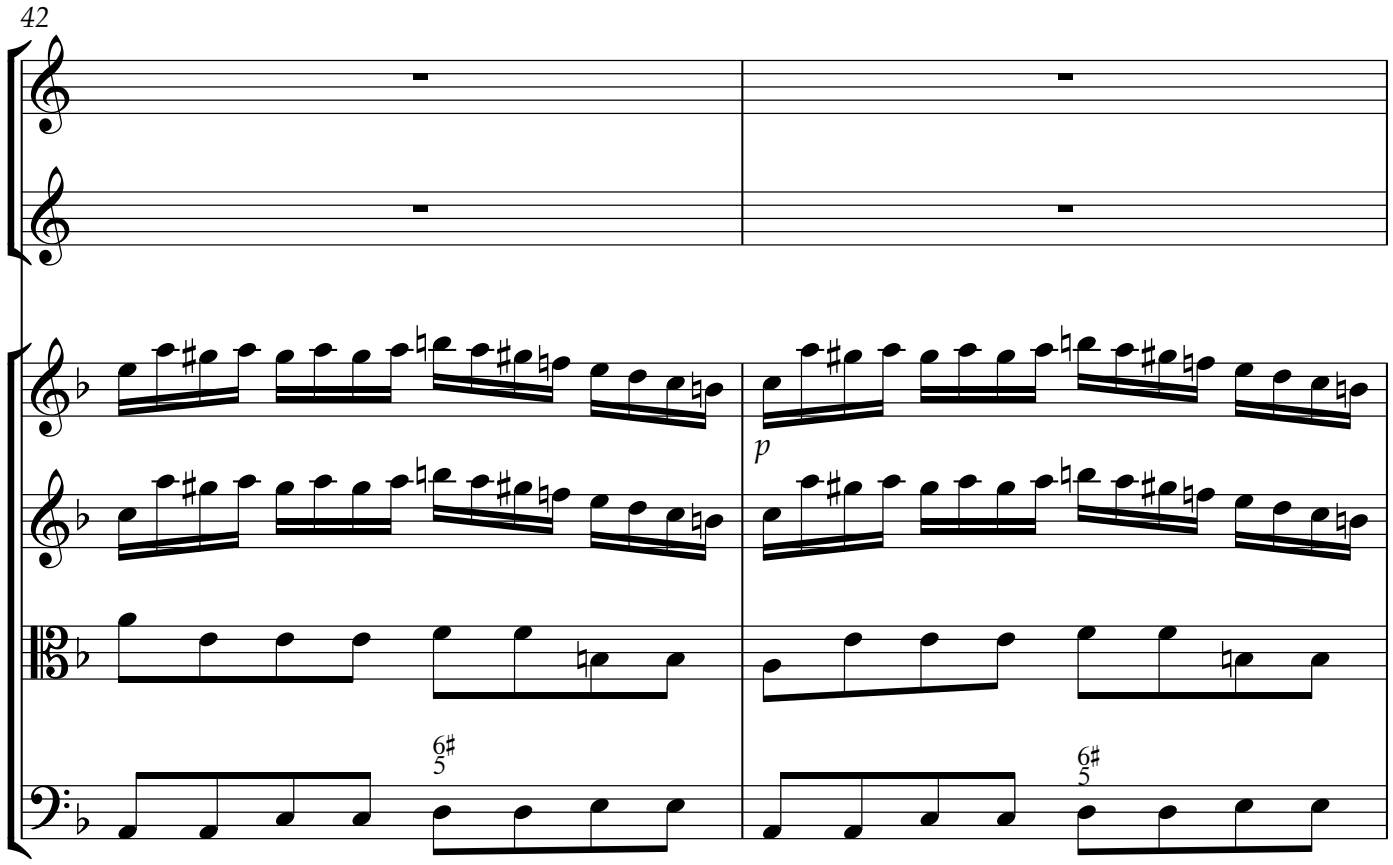



36
7
3♯
7
3♮
7
39
7
7
3♯
6♮
5
6♮
5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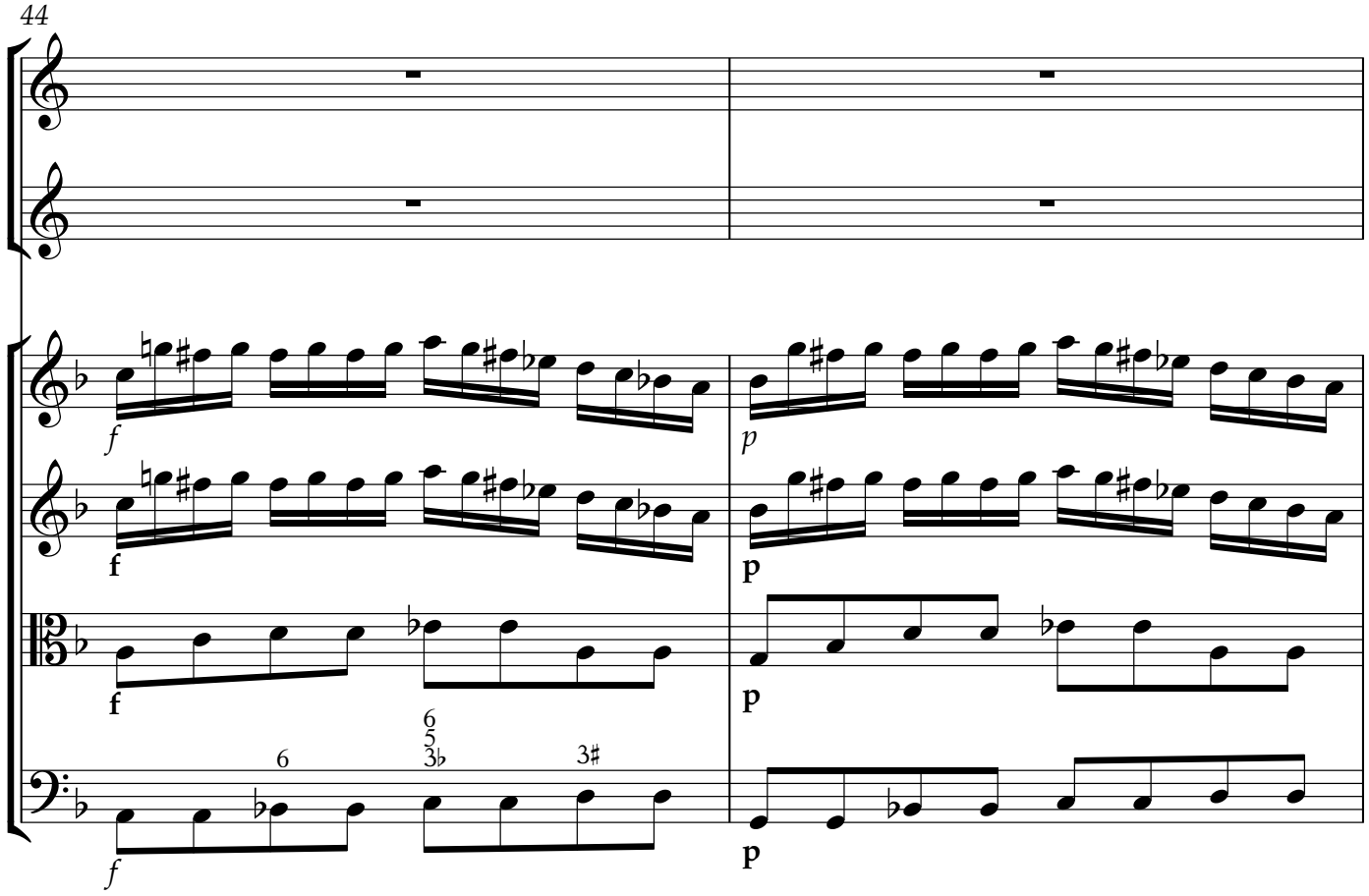
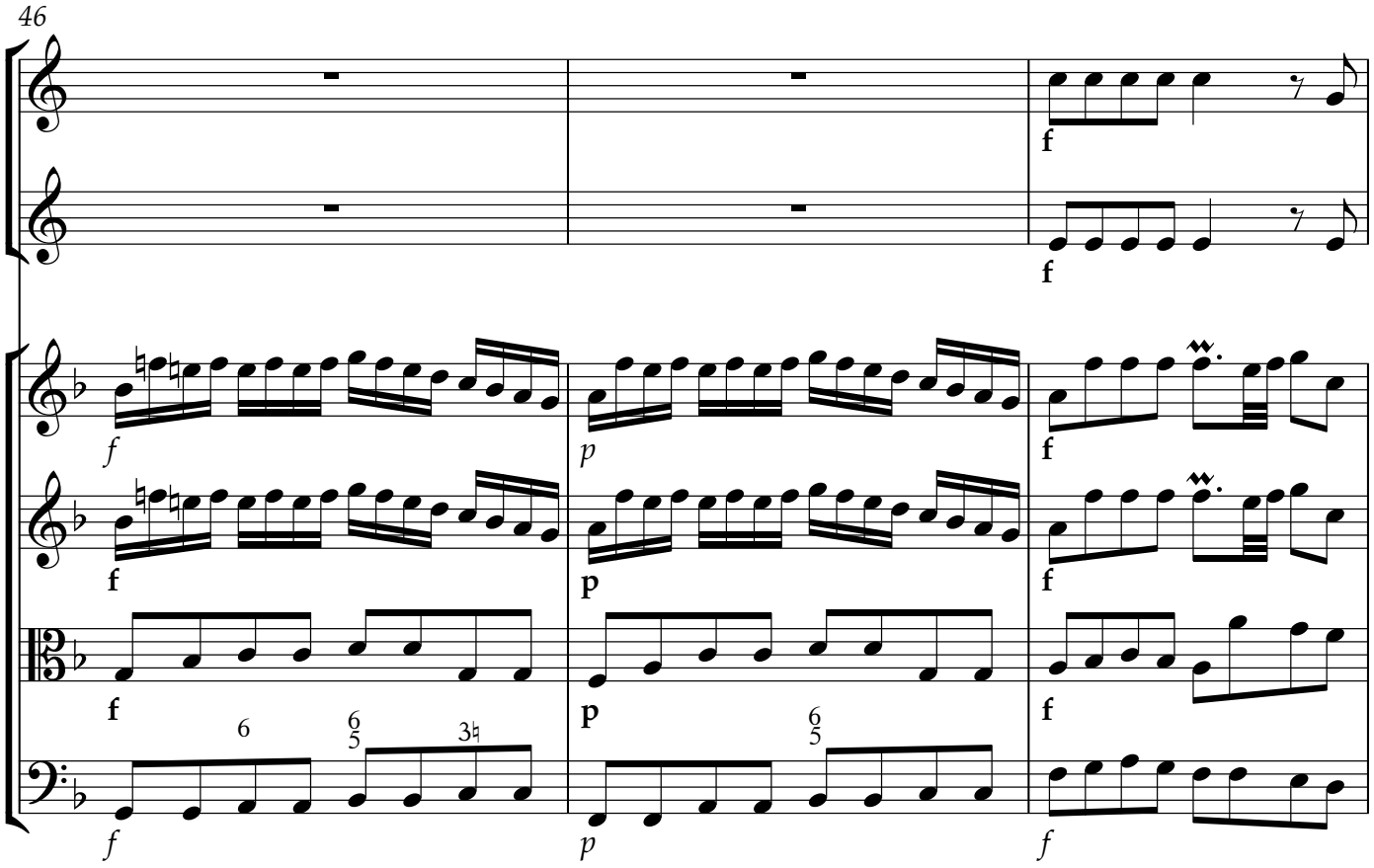
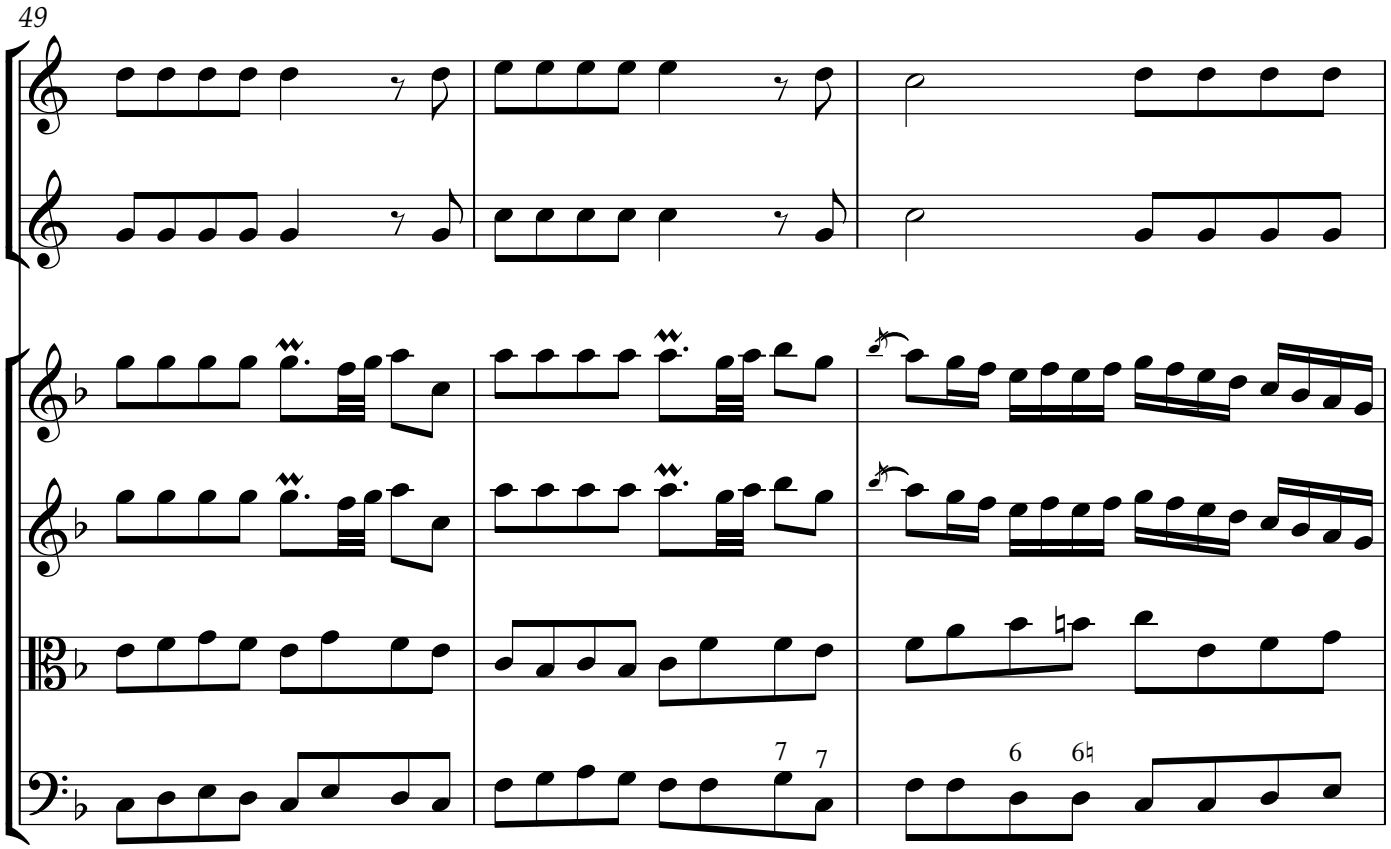
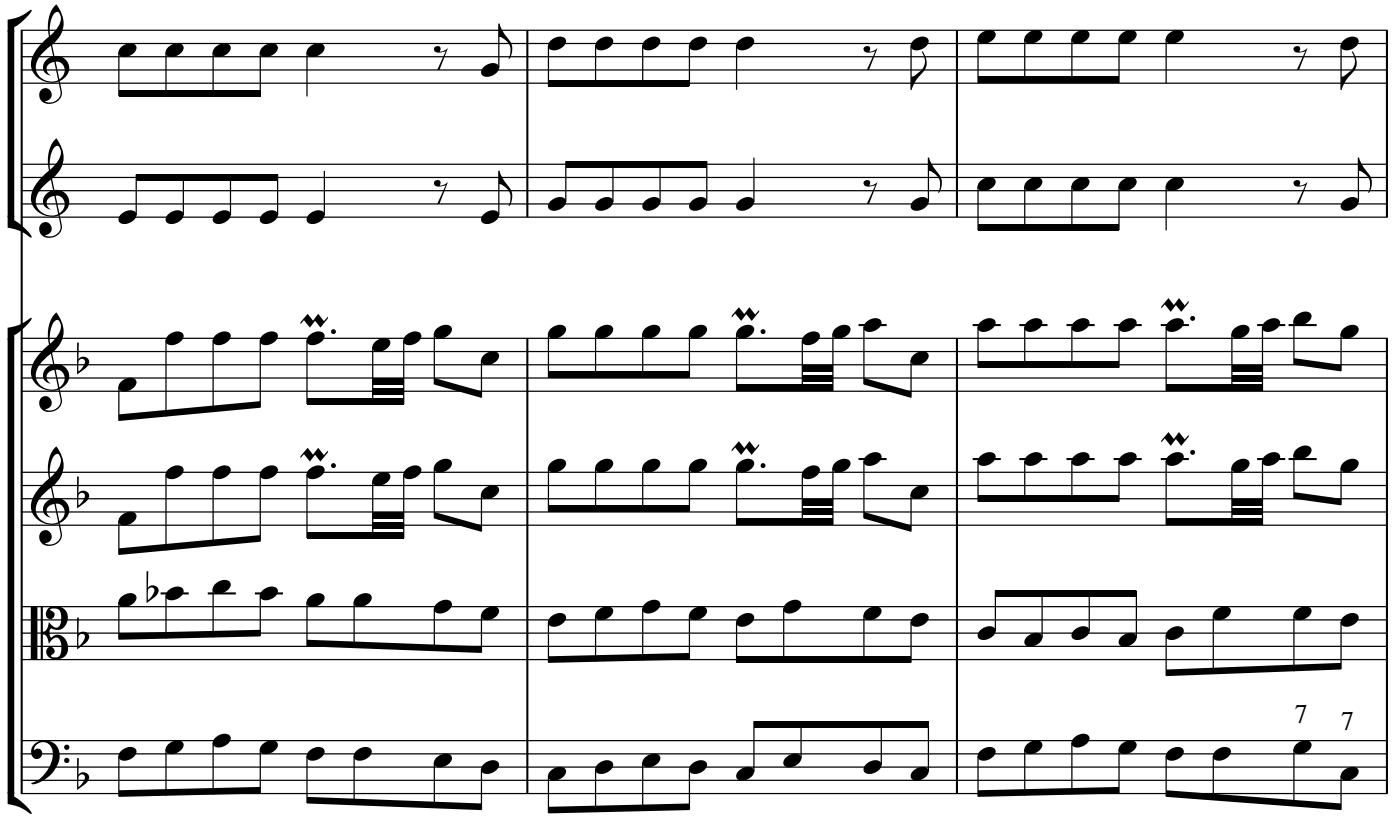

44
f
p
f
p
f
p
f
p


46
f
p
f
6
6/5
3♮


49
7
7
6
6♮

52



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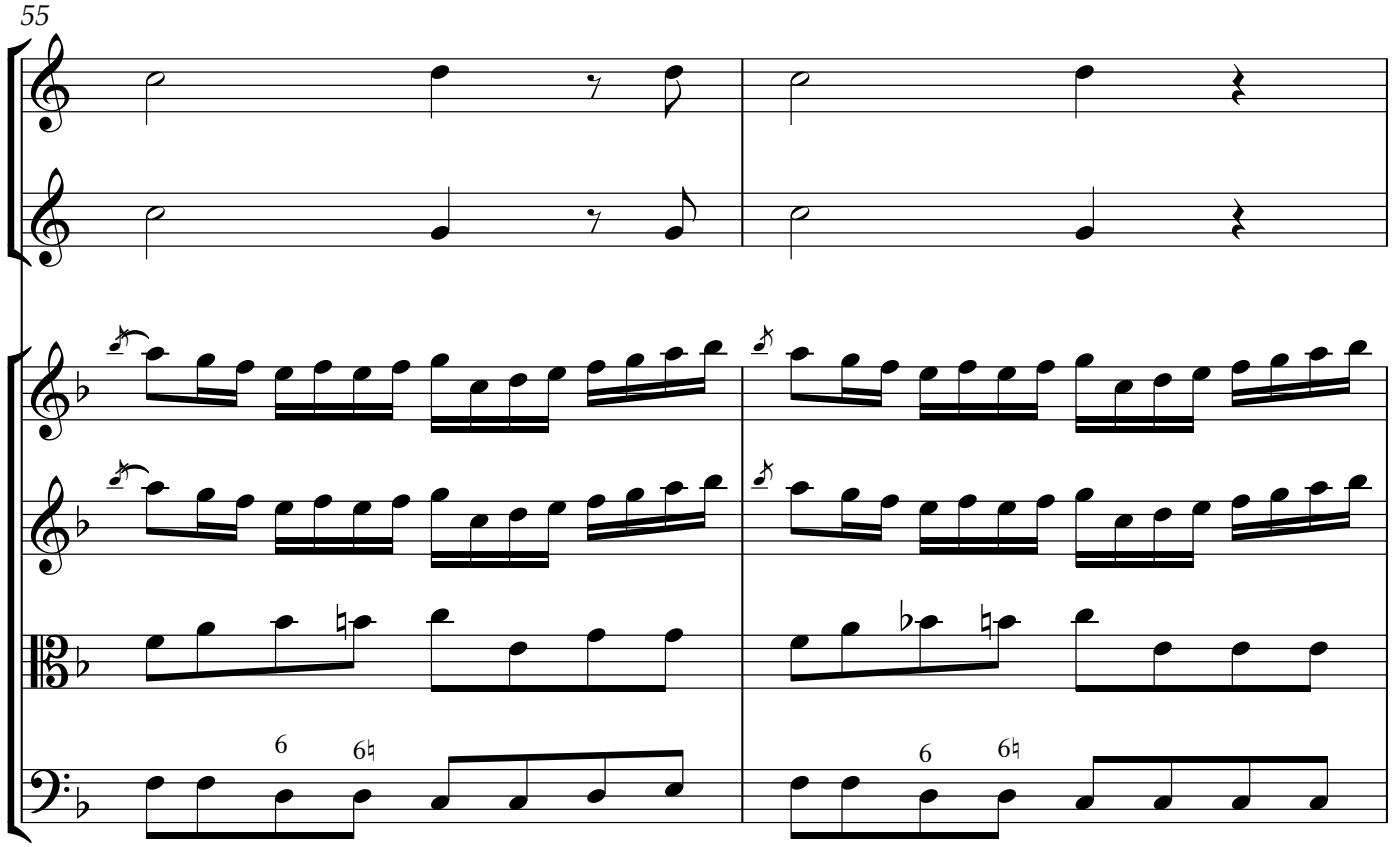

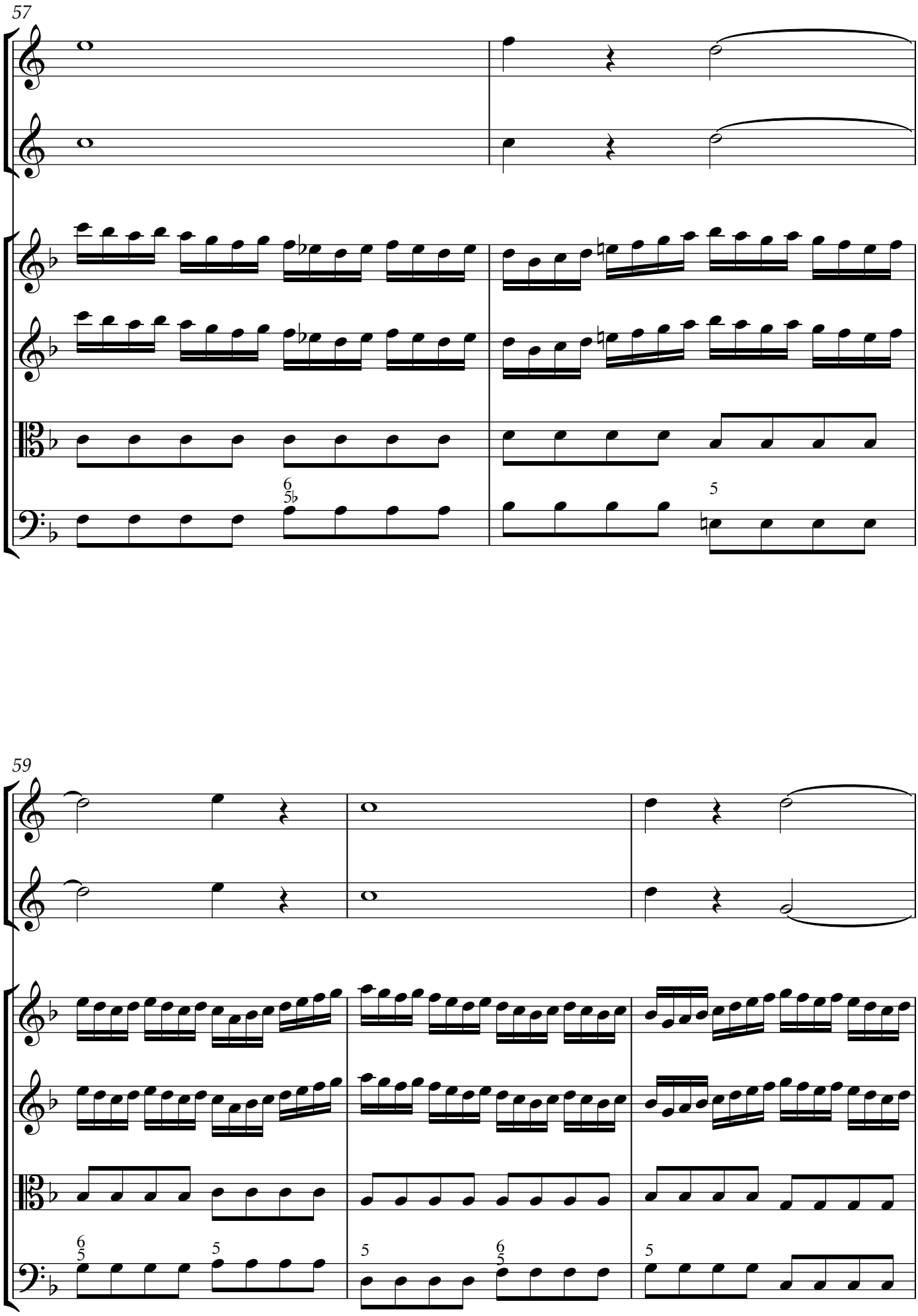
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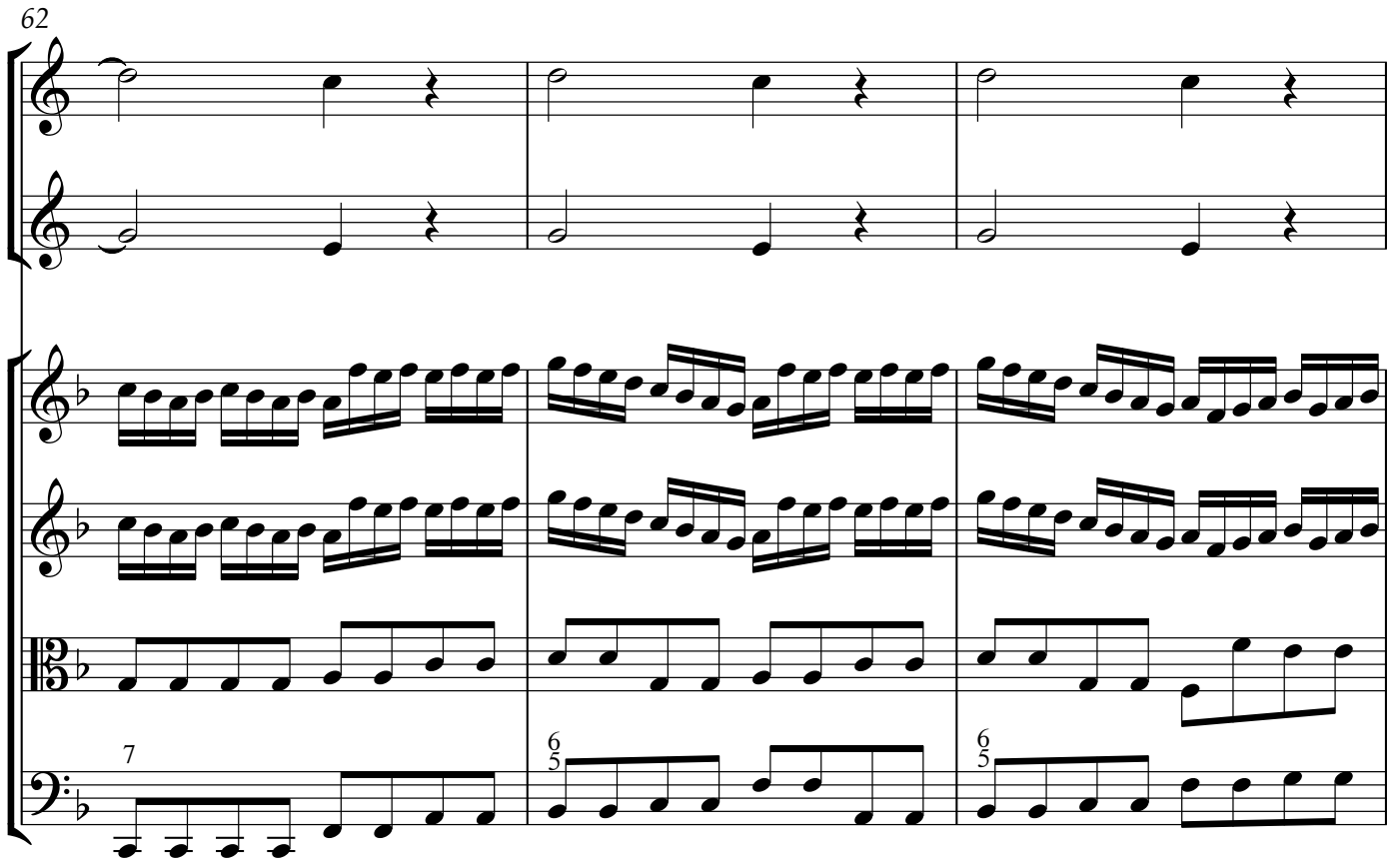
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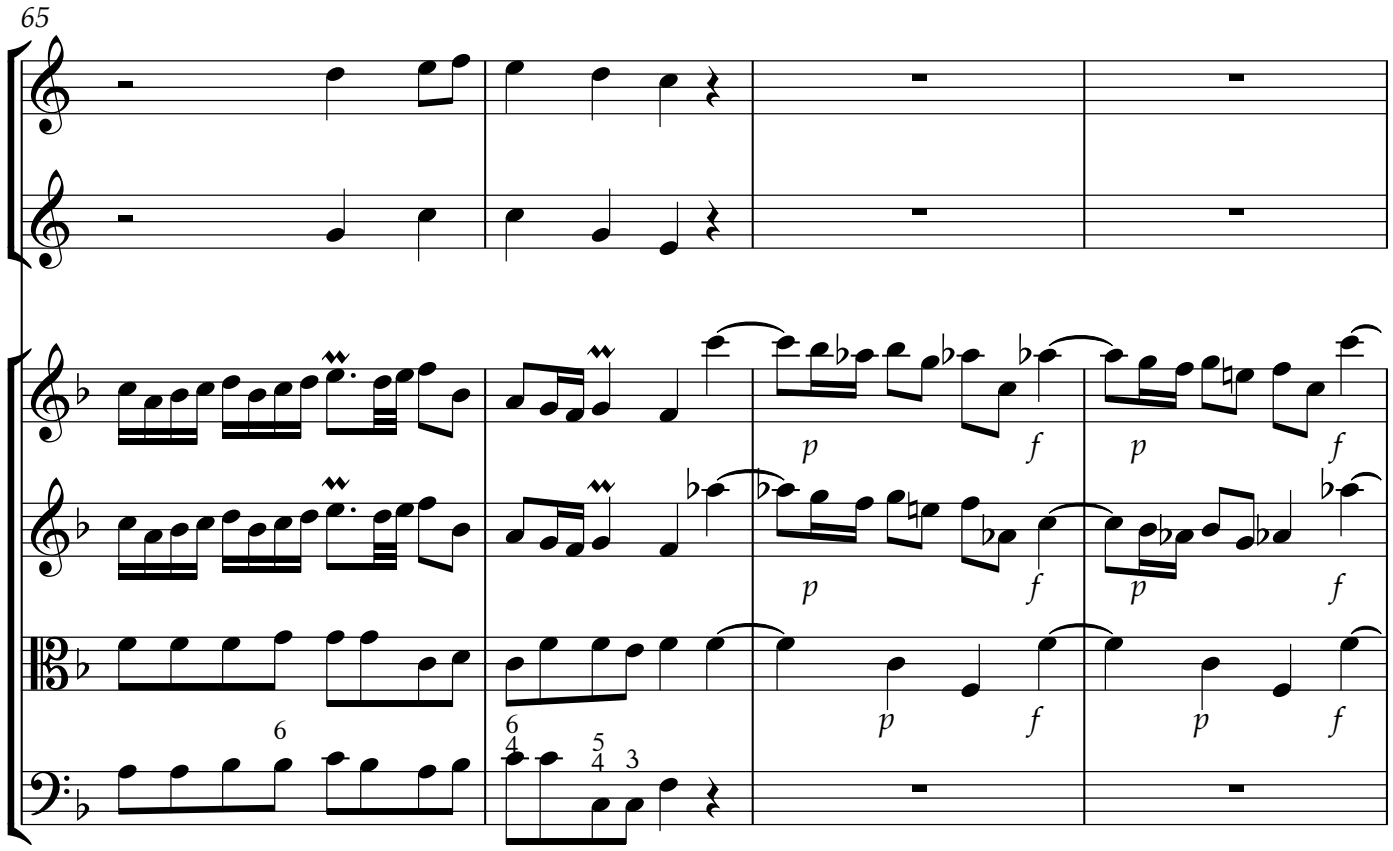
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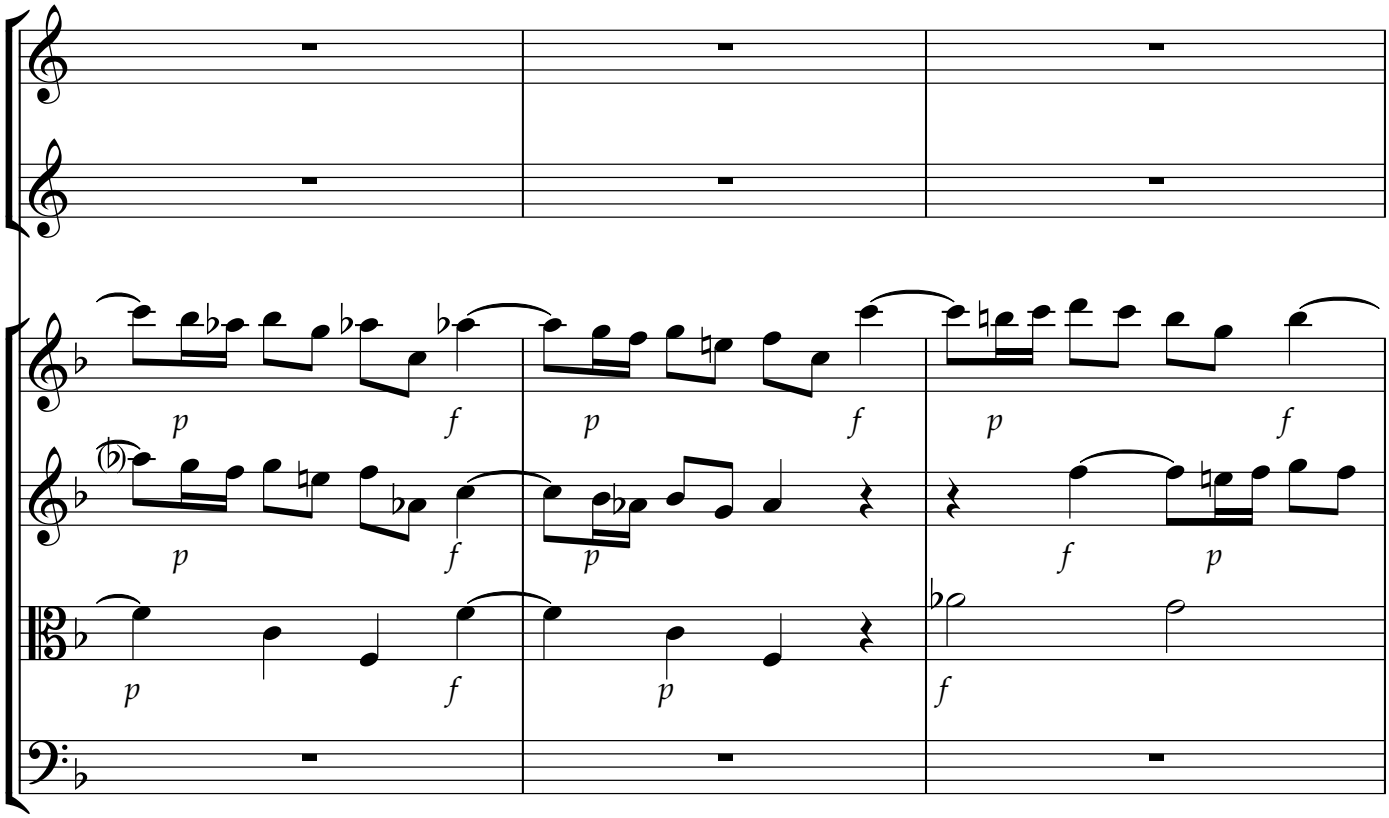

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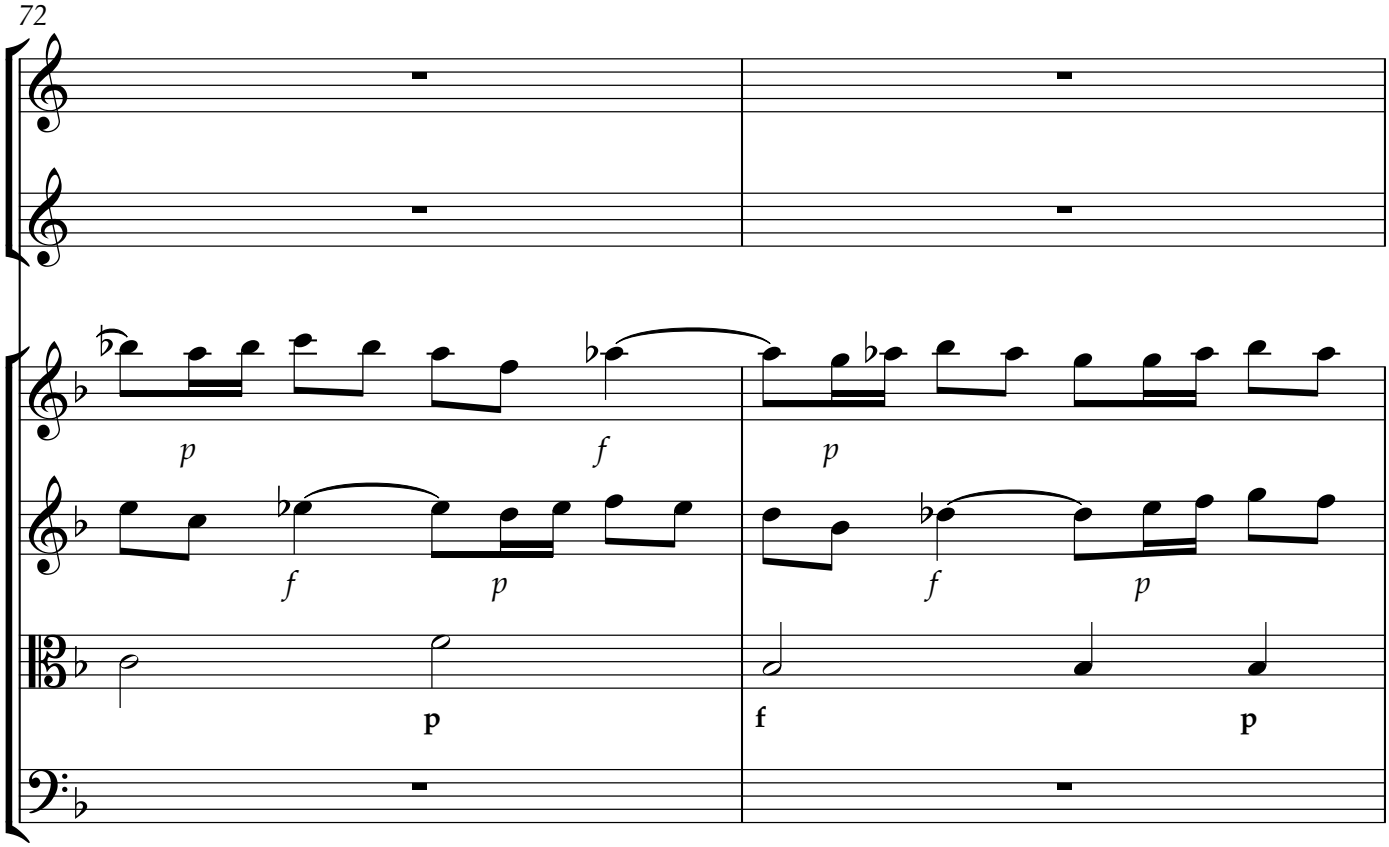

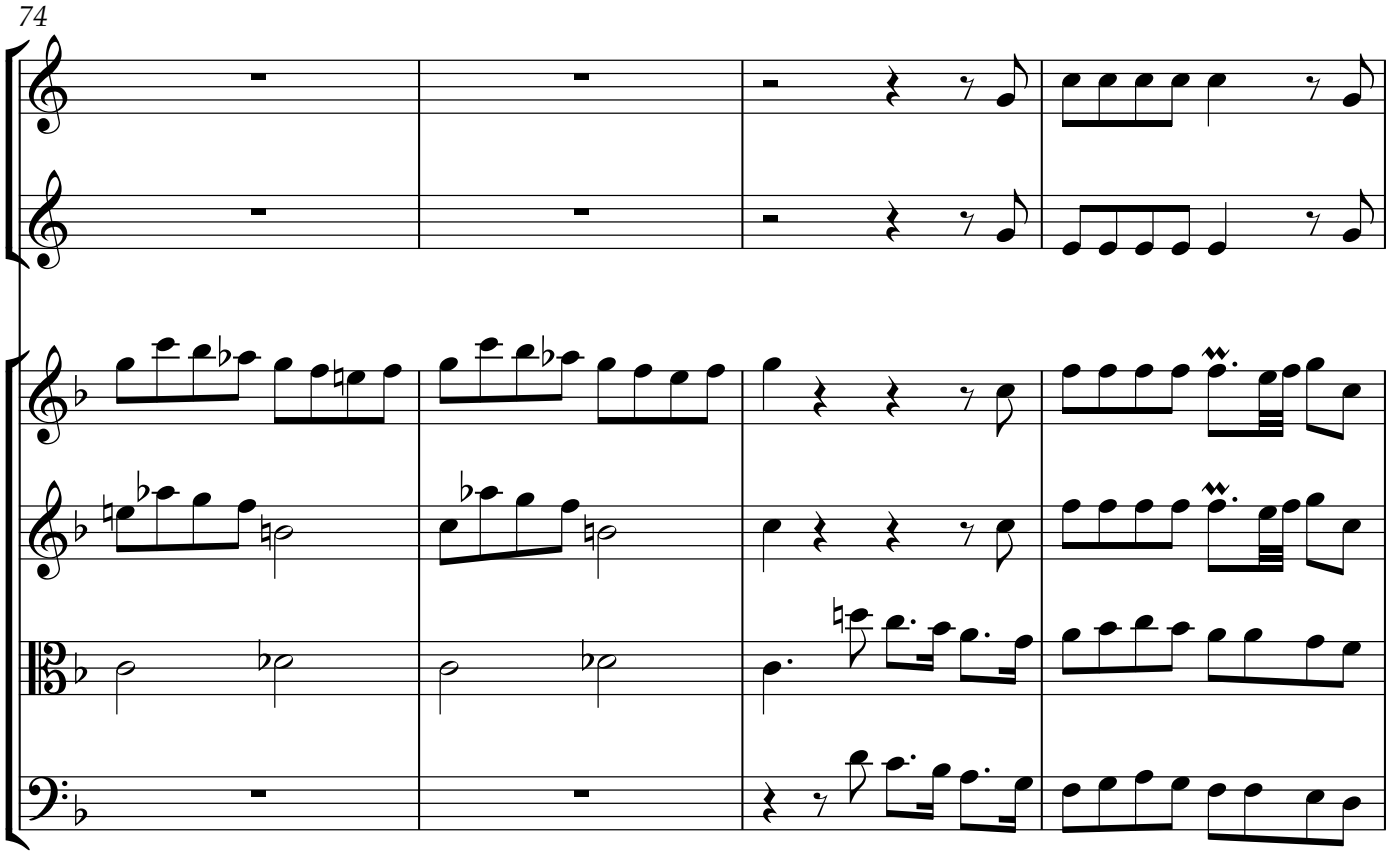
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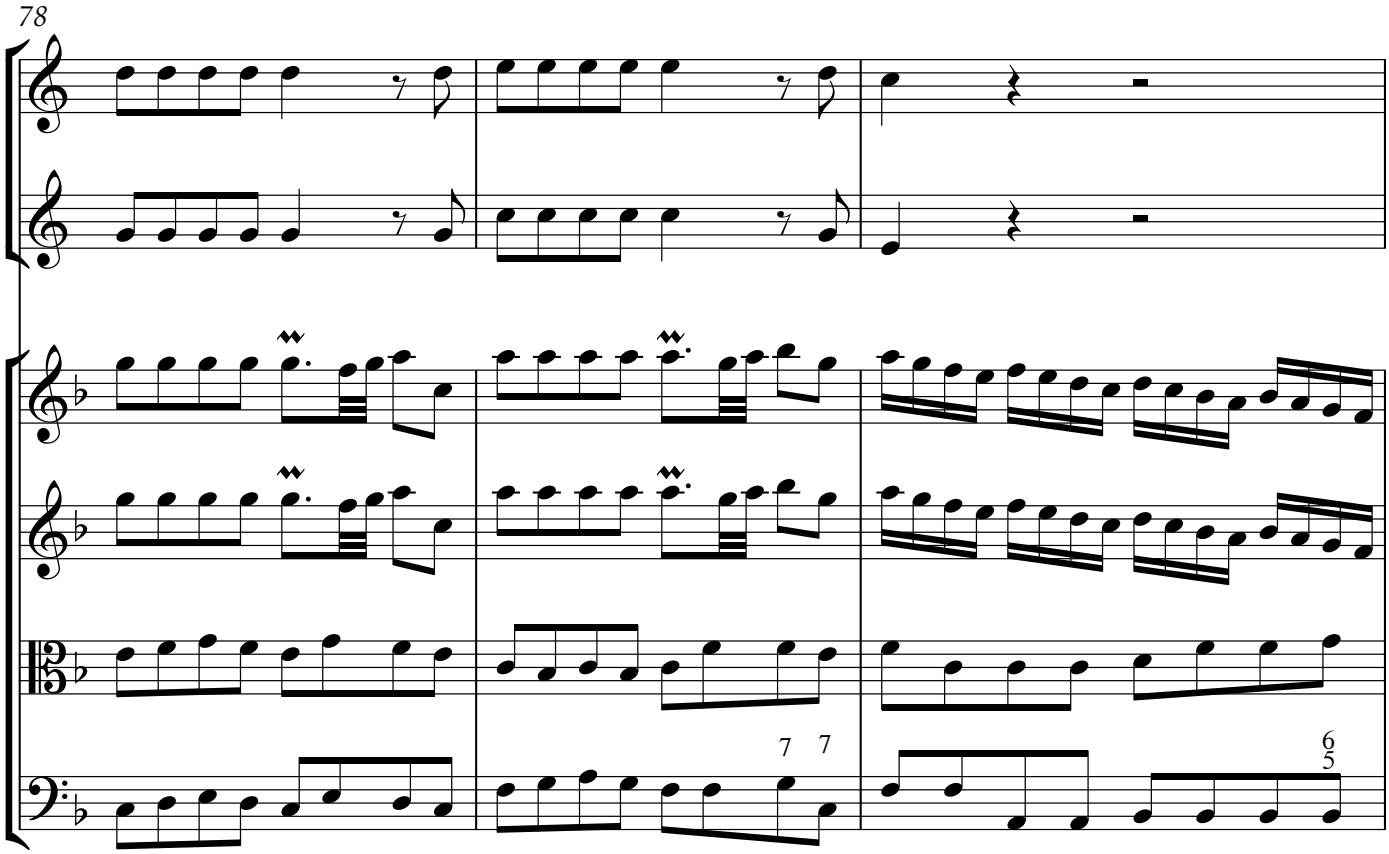
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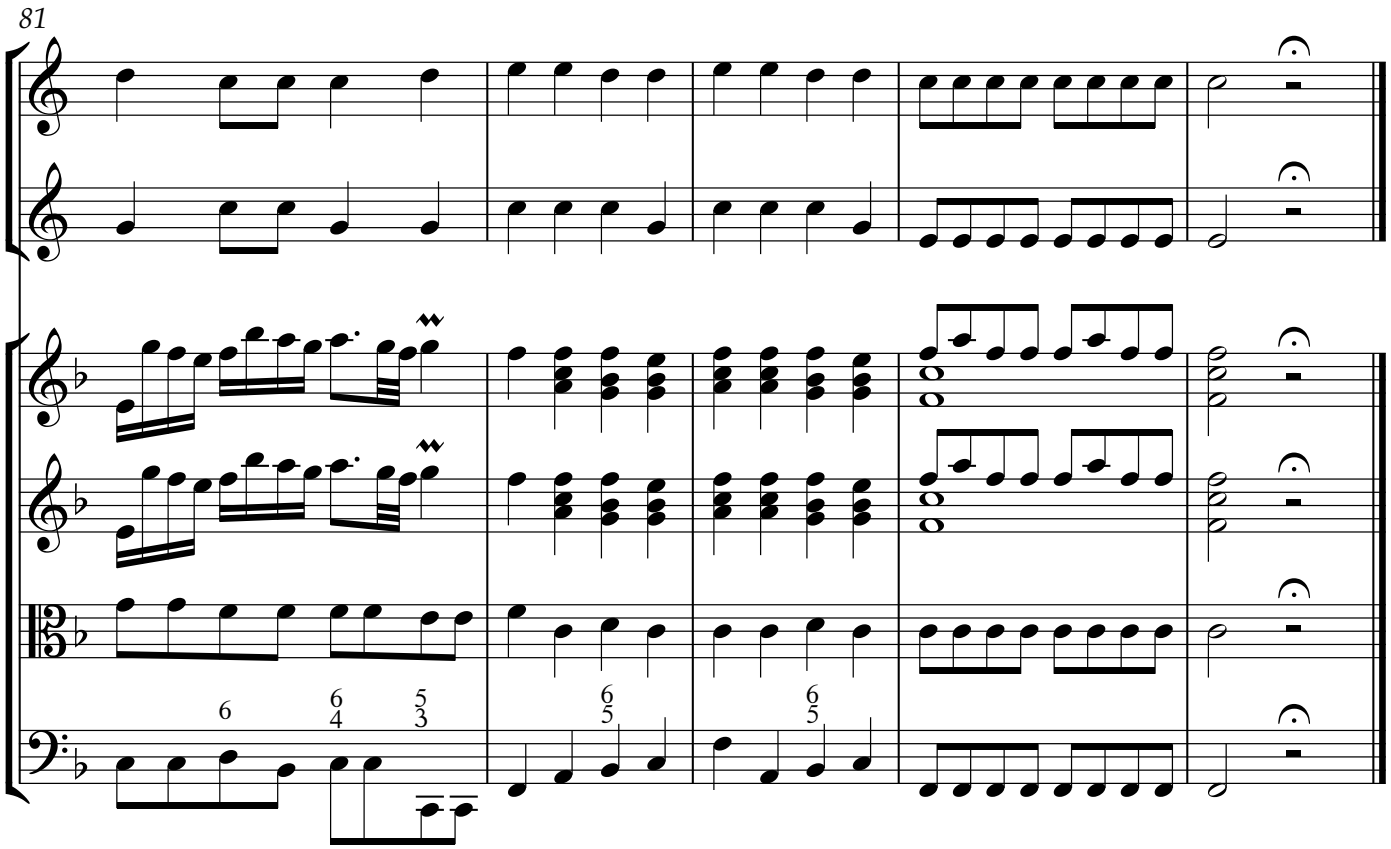
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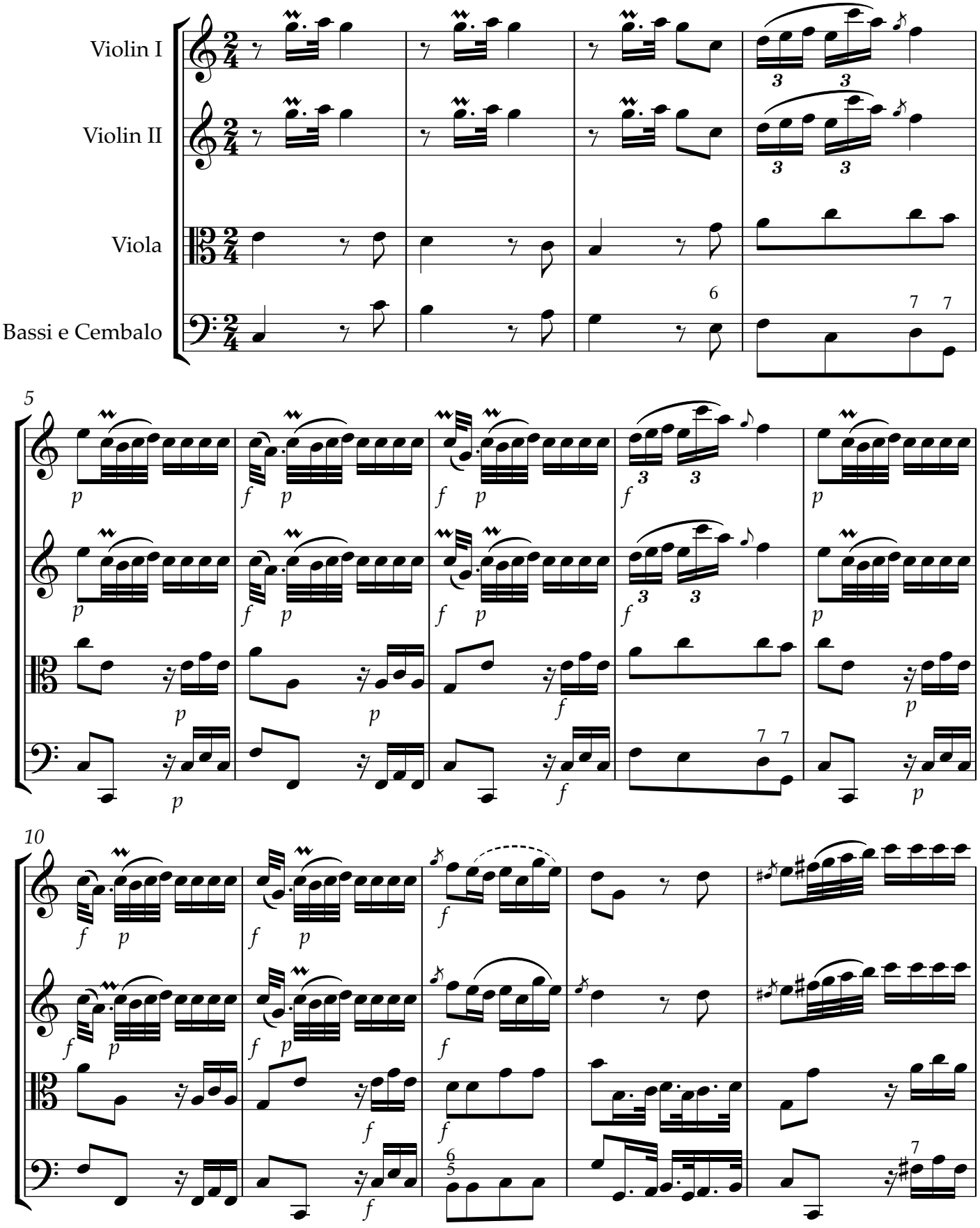

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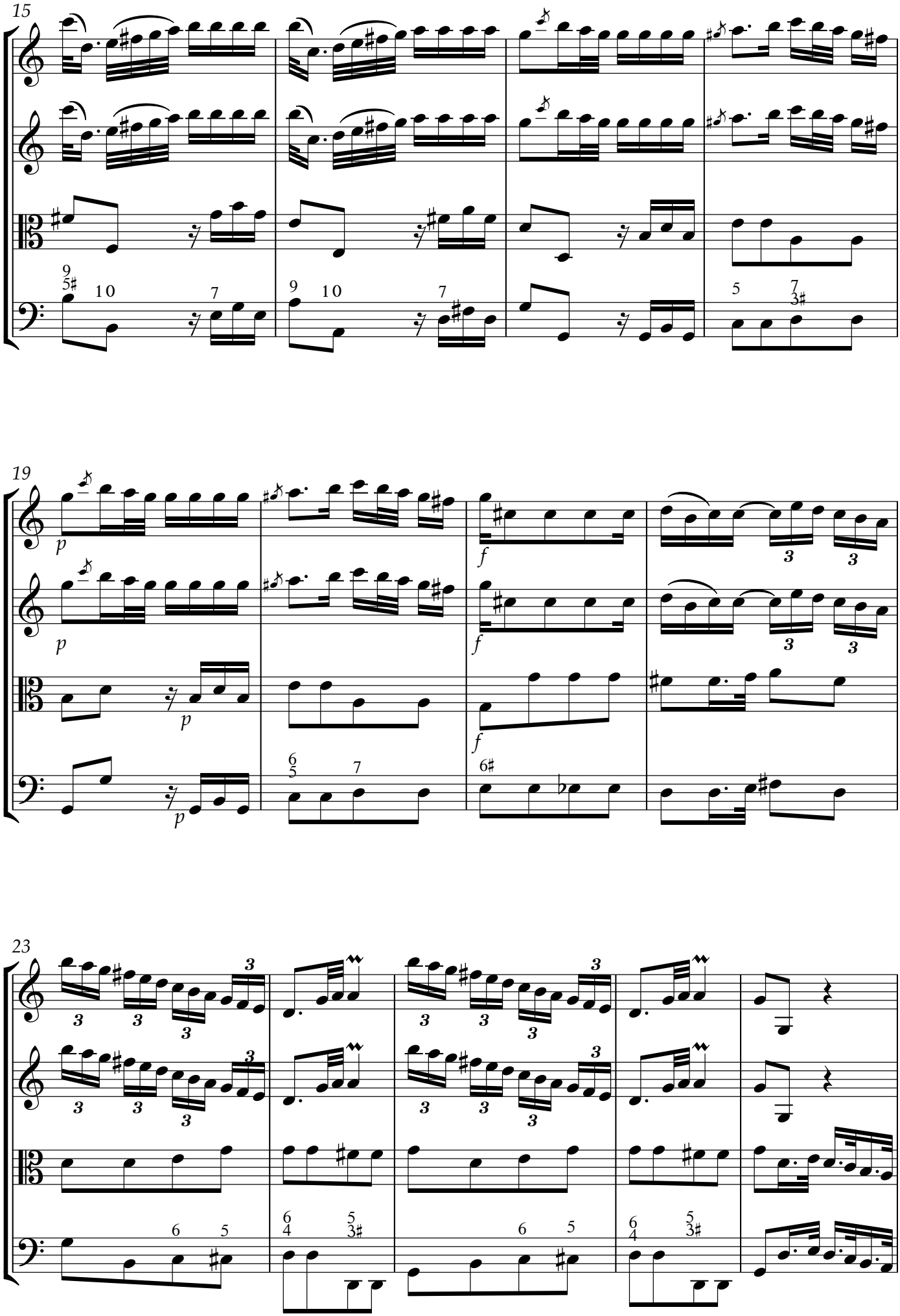
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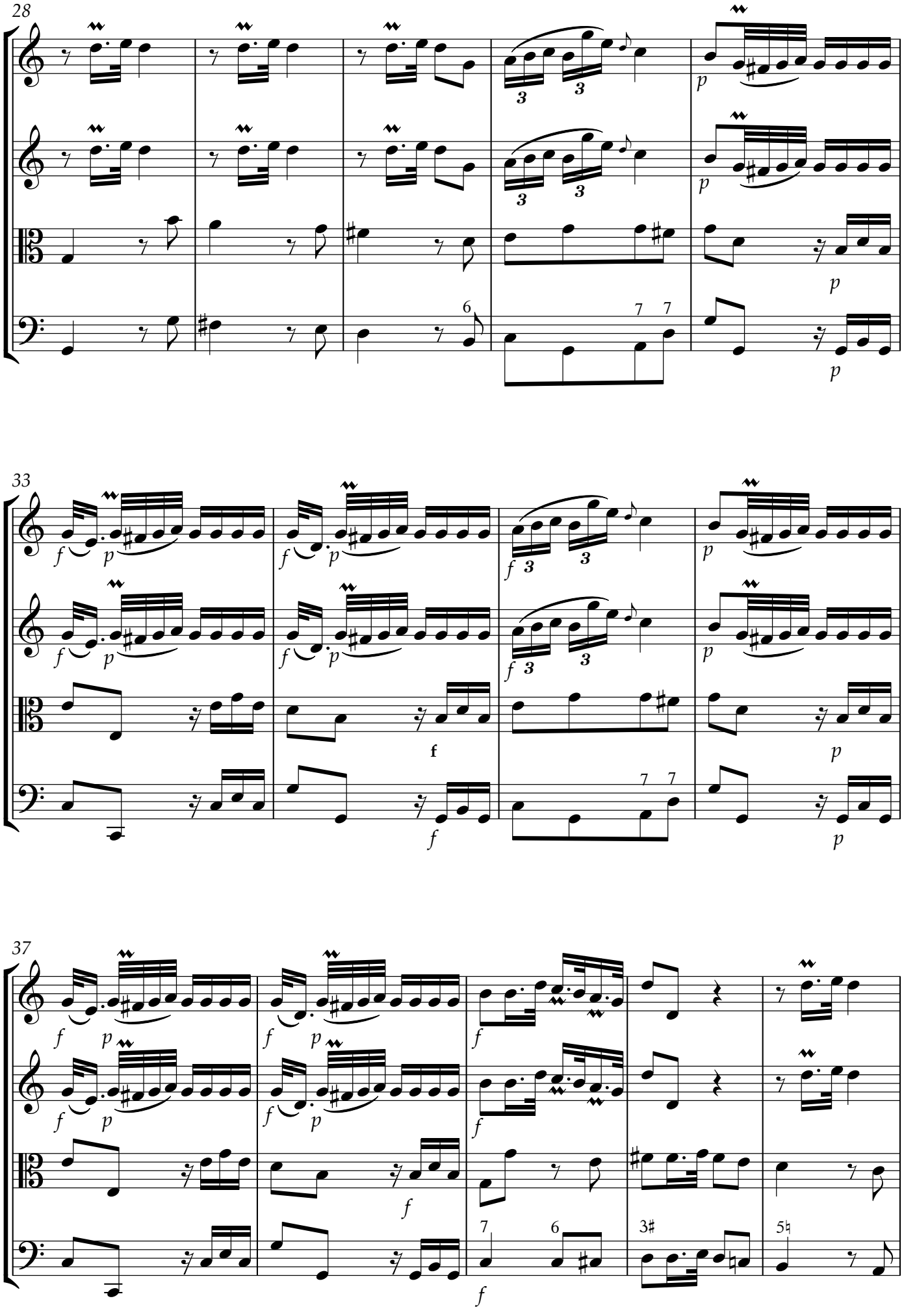
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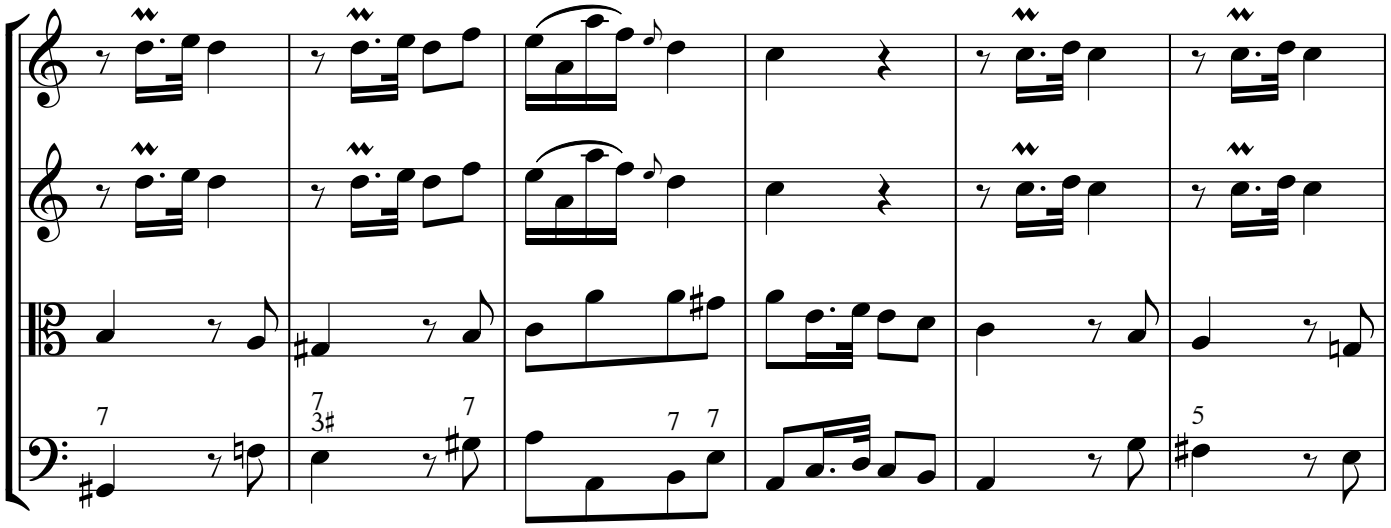

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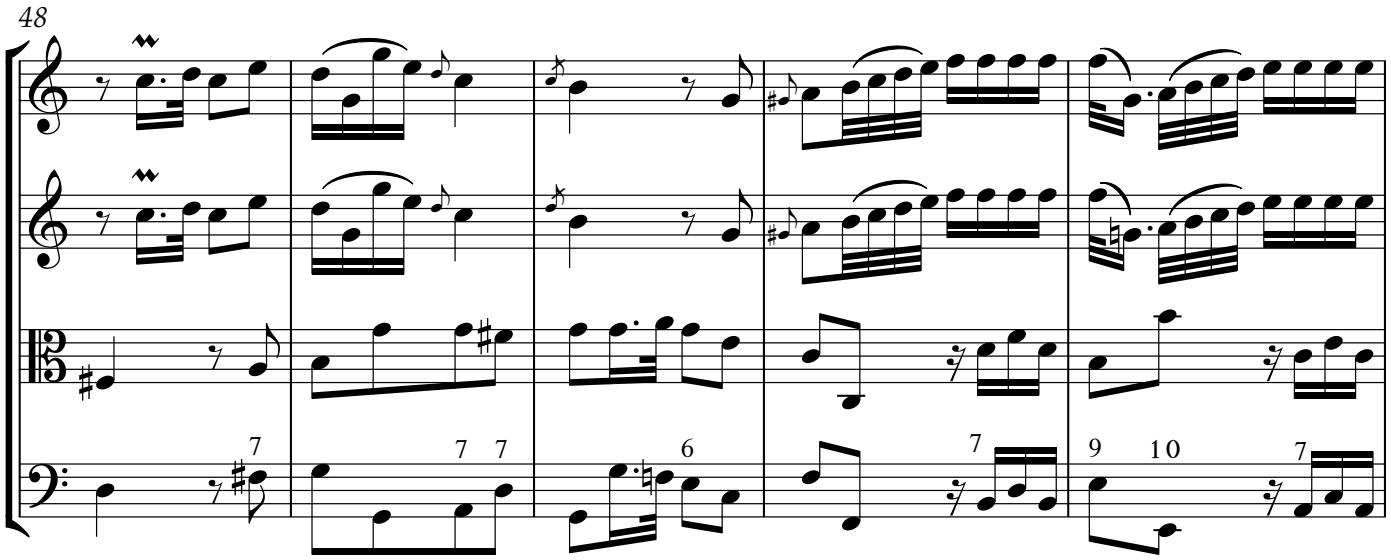

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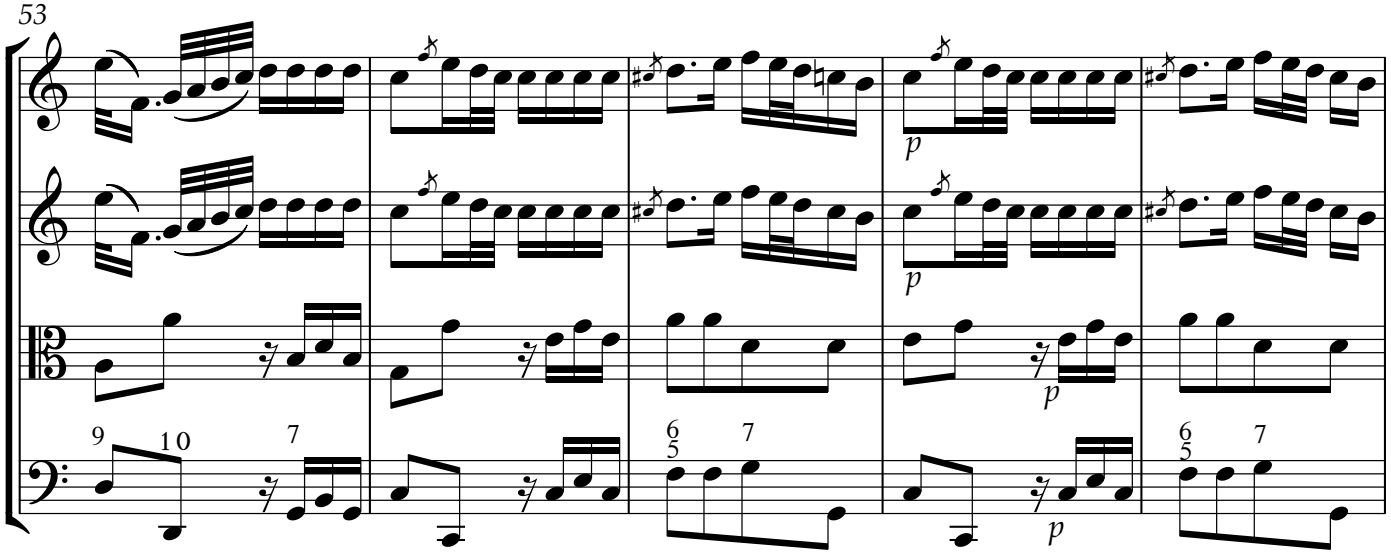

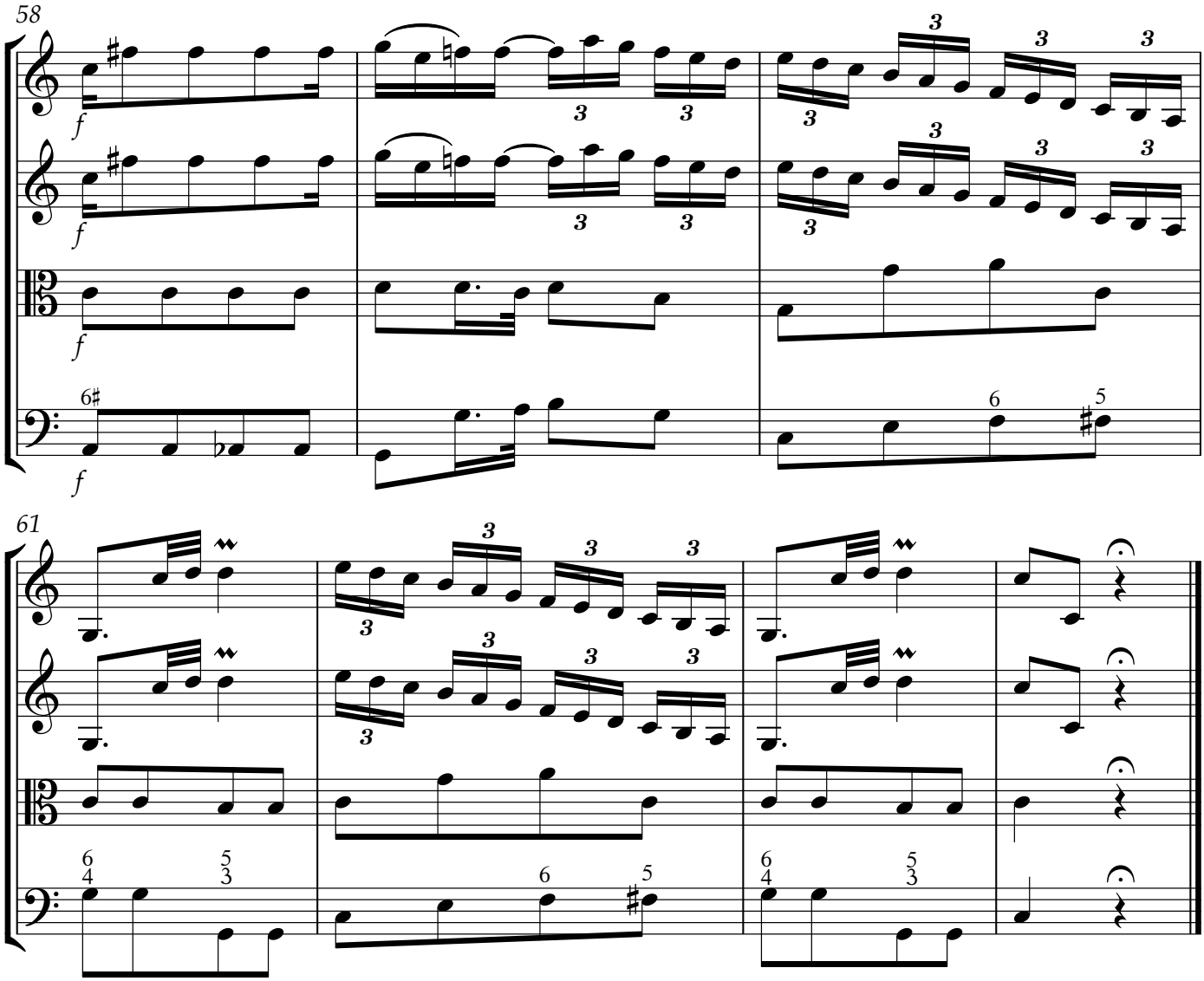
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III

Allegro

Corno da caccia I in F

Corno da caccia II in F

Violino I

Violino II

Viola

Bassi e Cembalo

10

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19

28

36

45

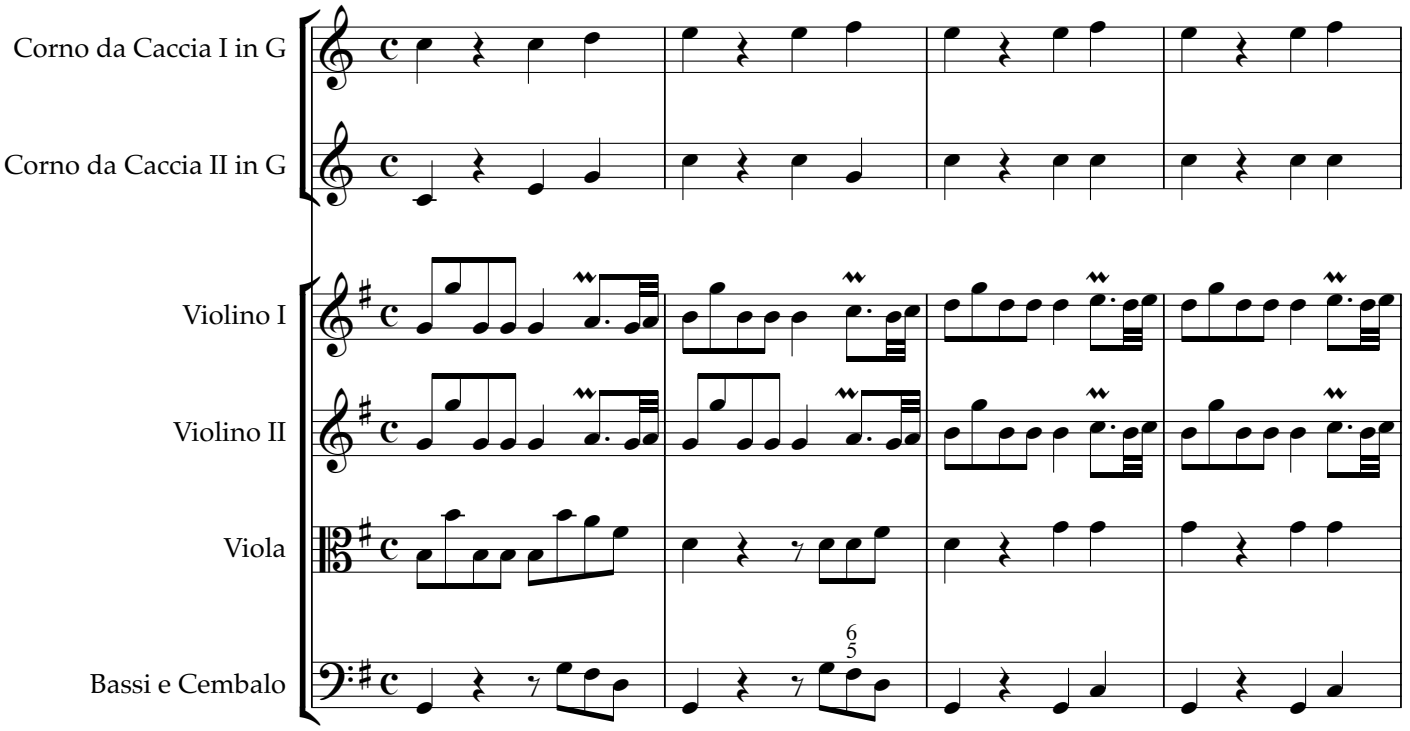
Giovanni Battista Serini

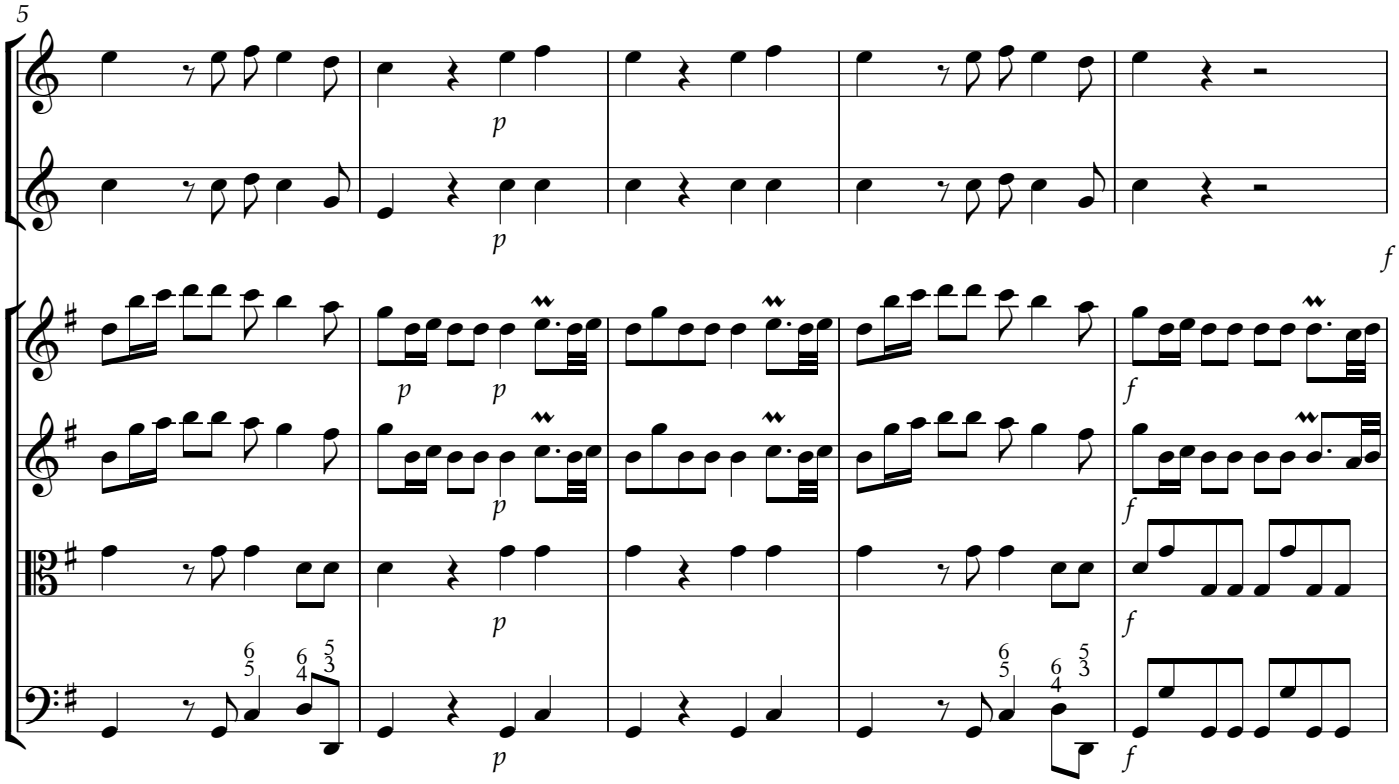
Symphony 5

Symphony 5

Principal source: GB-Y MS 129 S

Allegro assai





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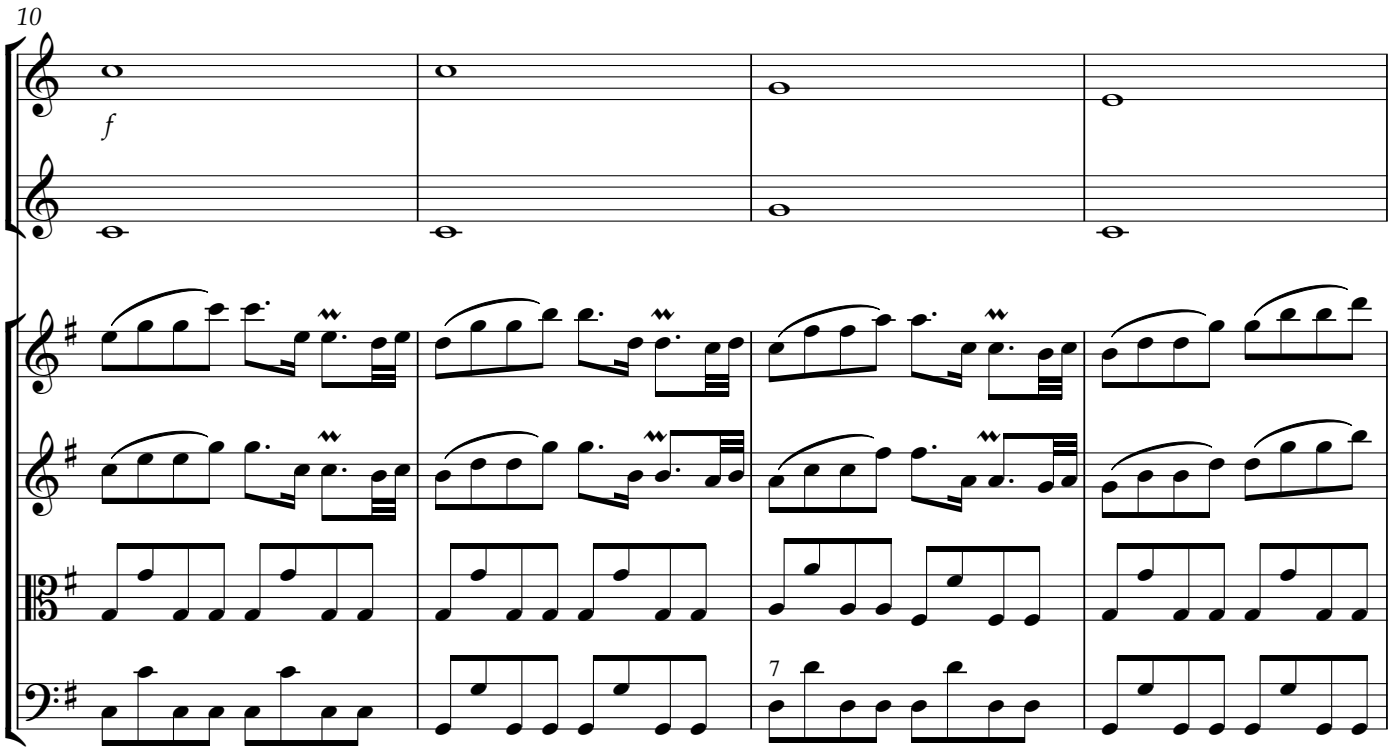
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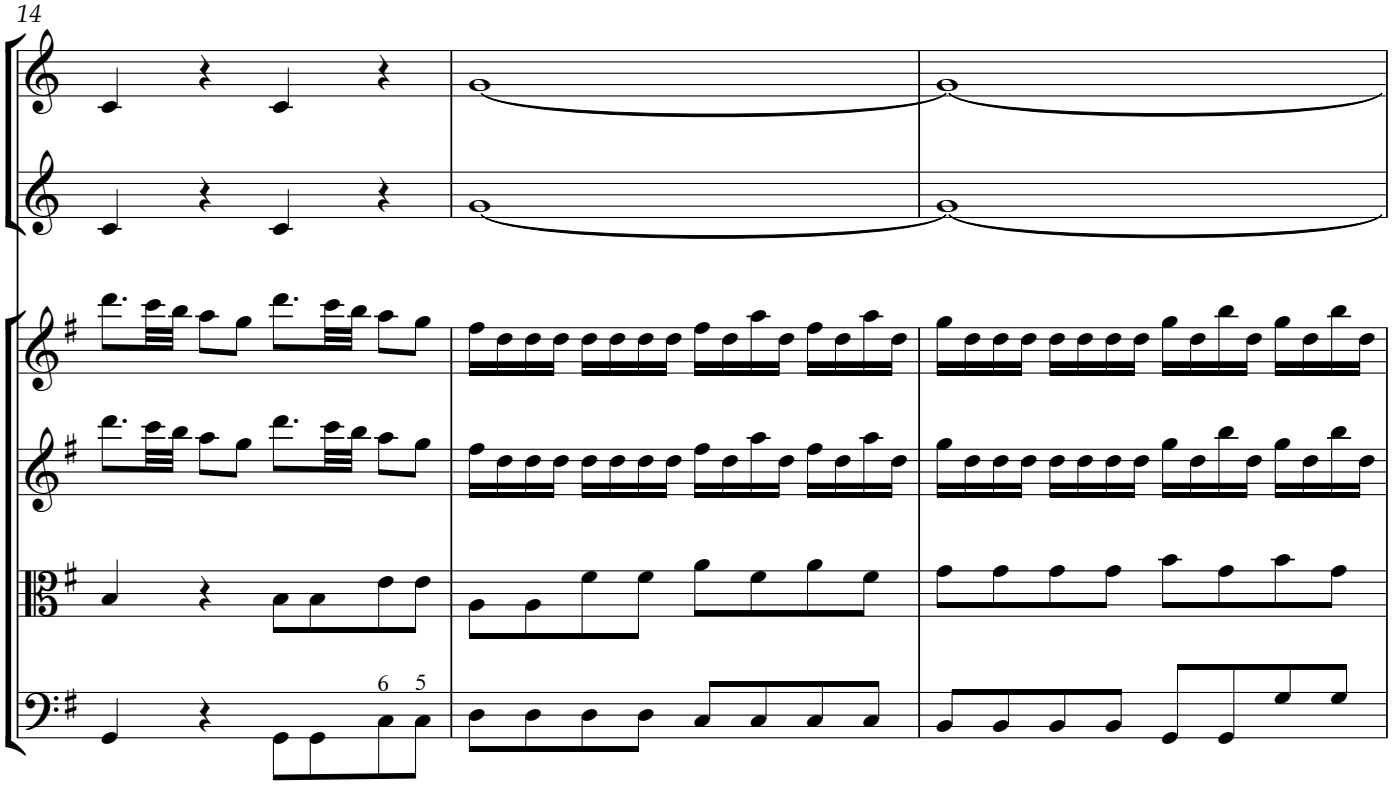
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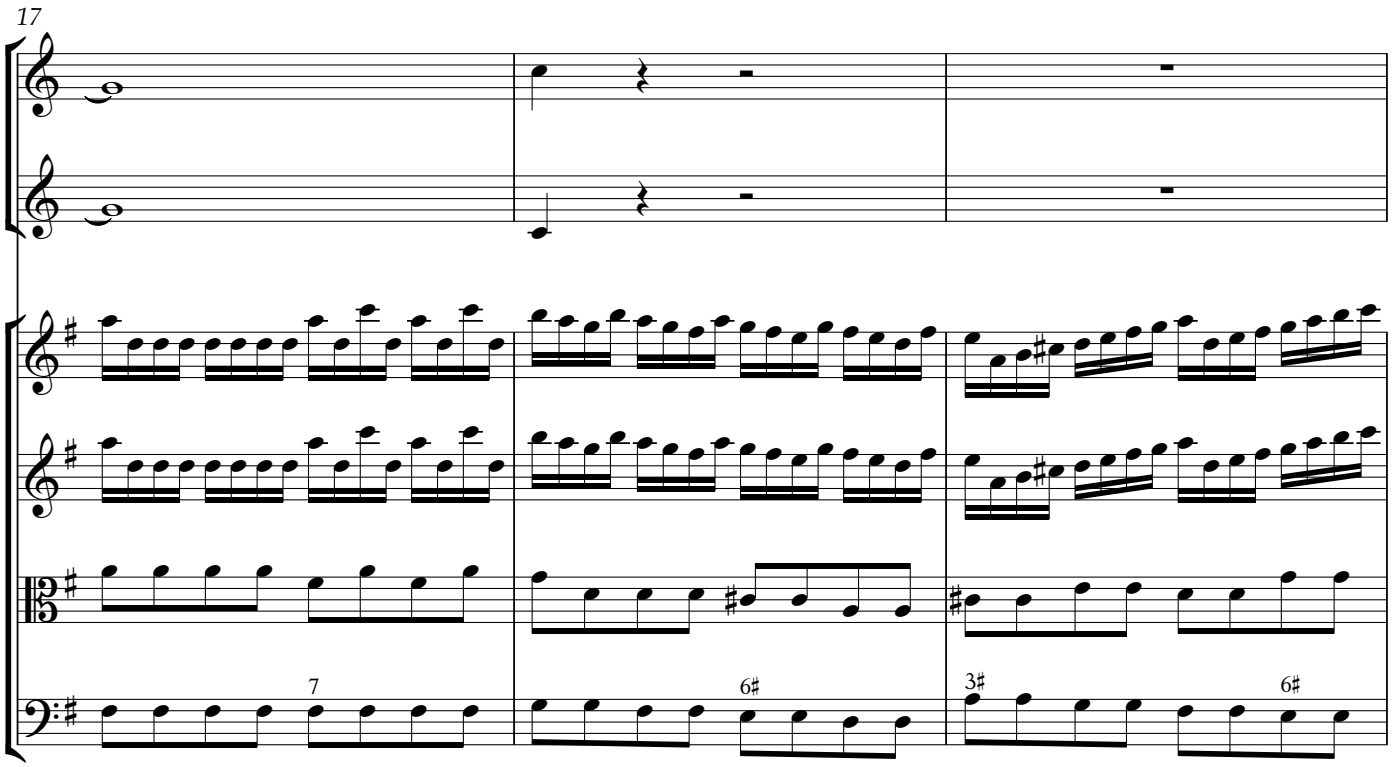
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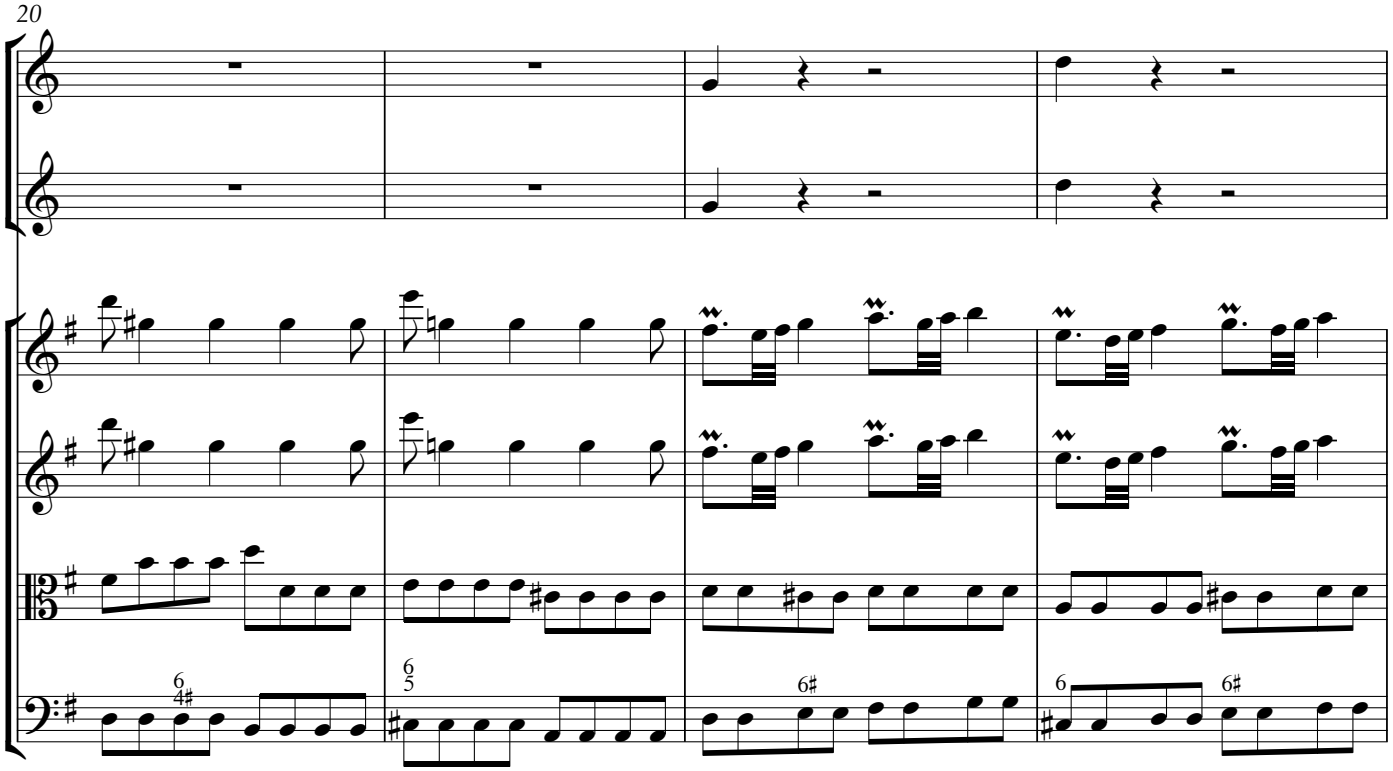
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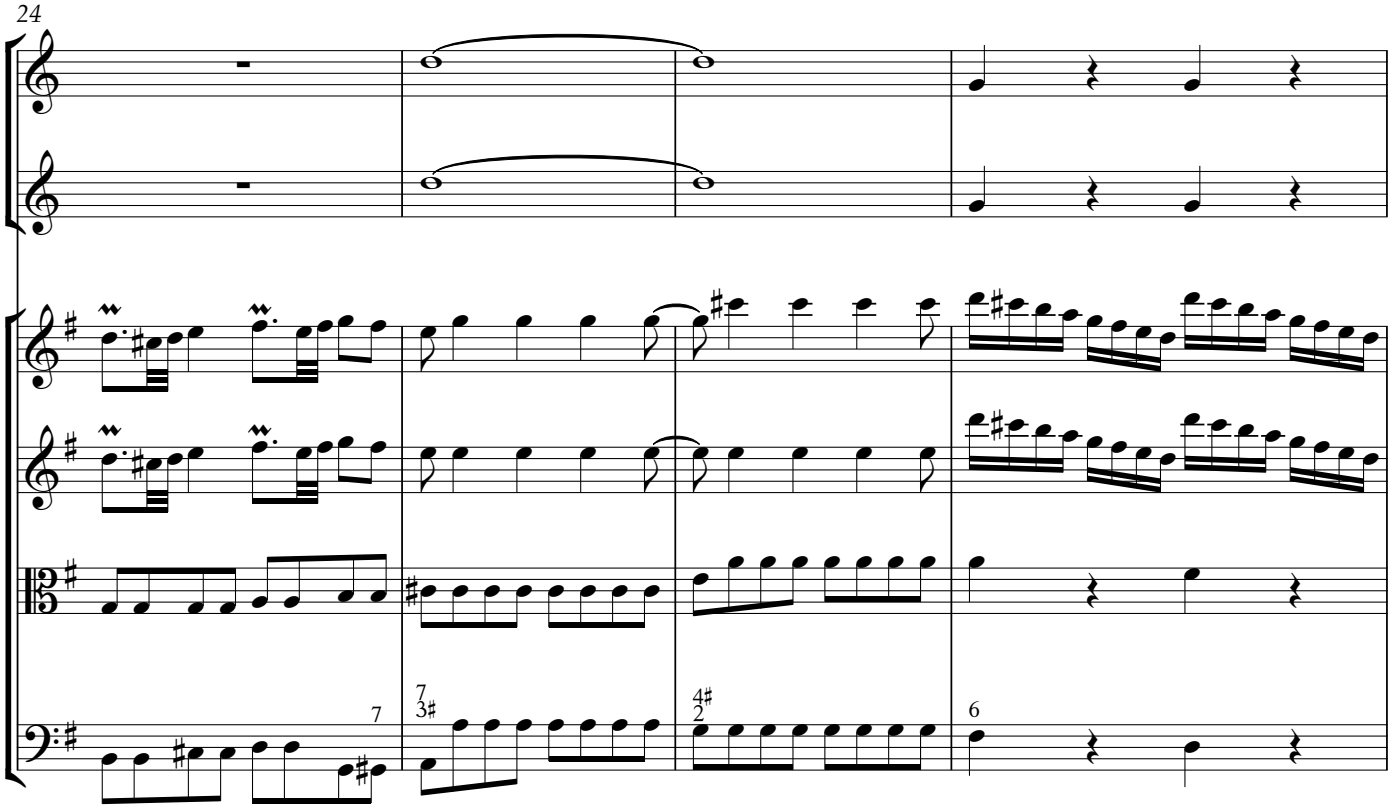
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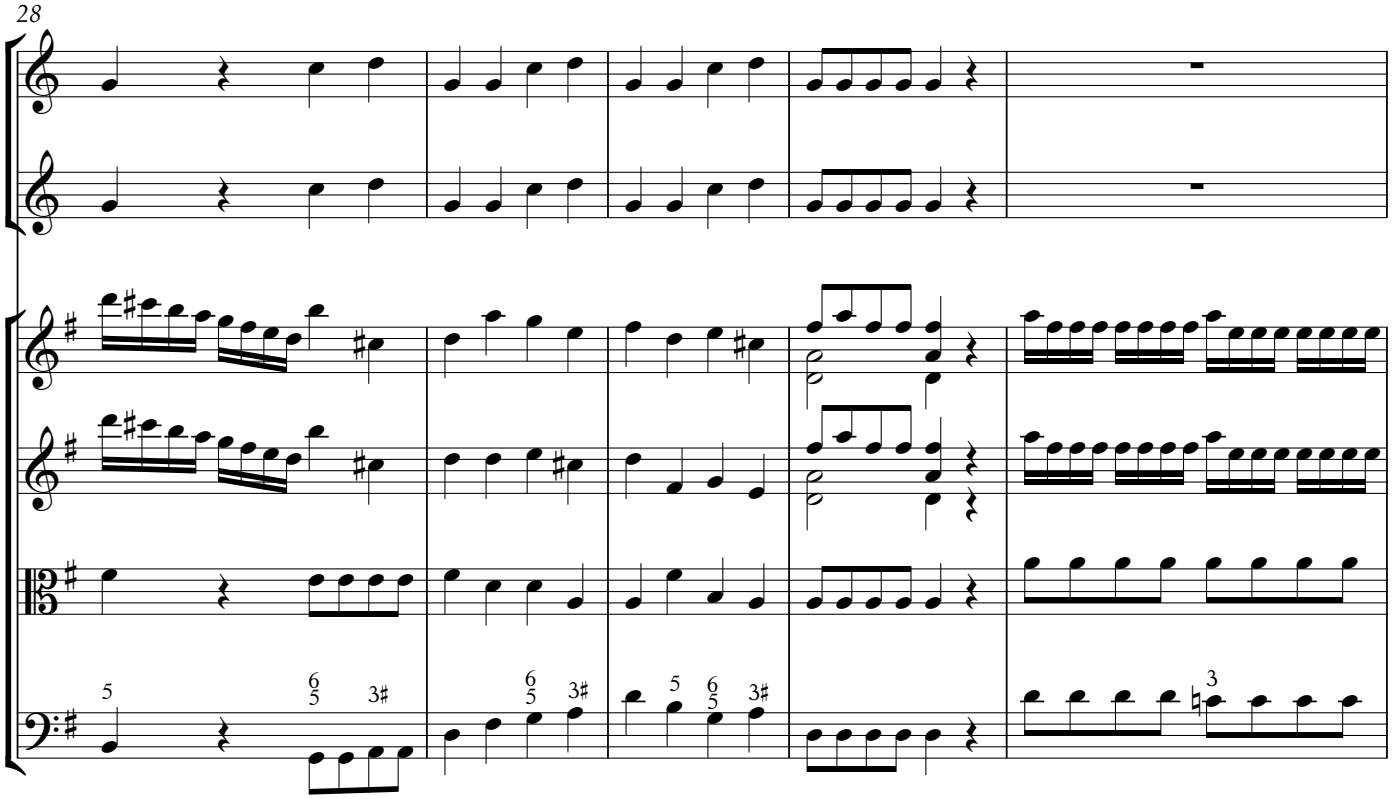
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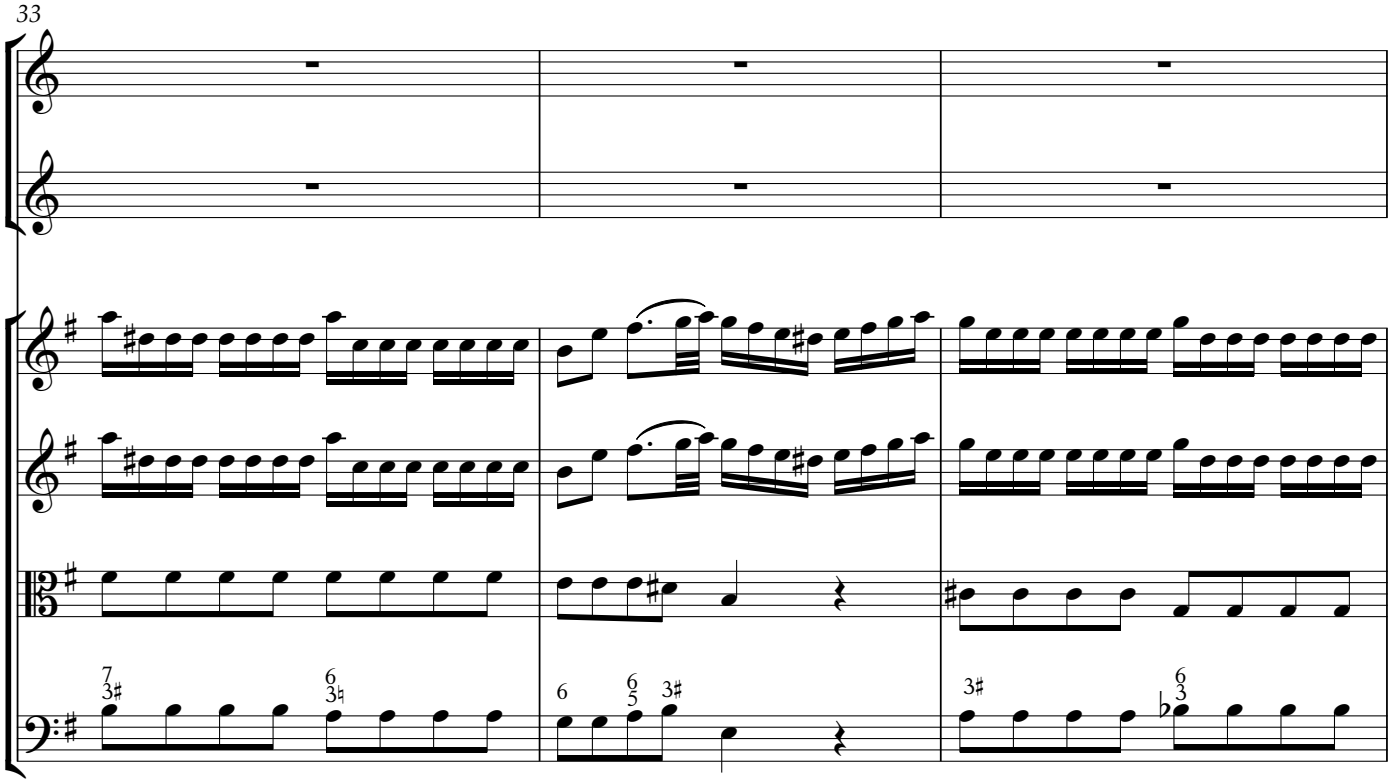

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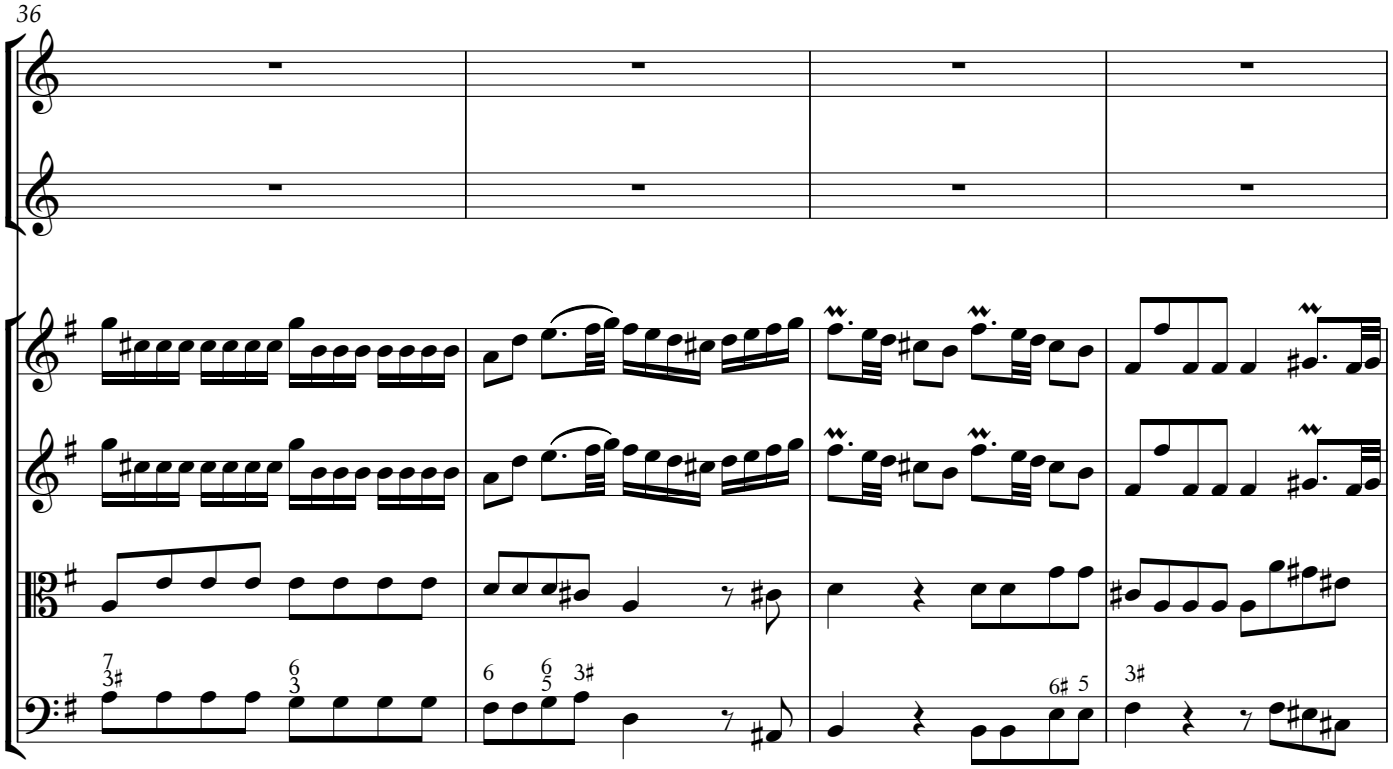

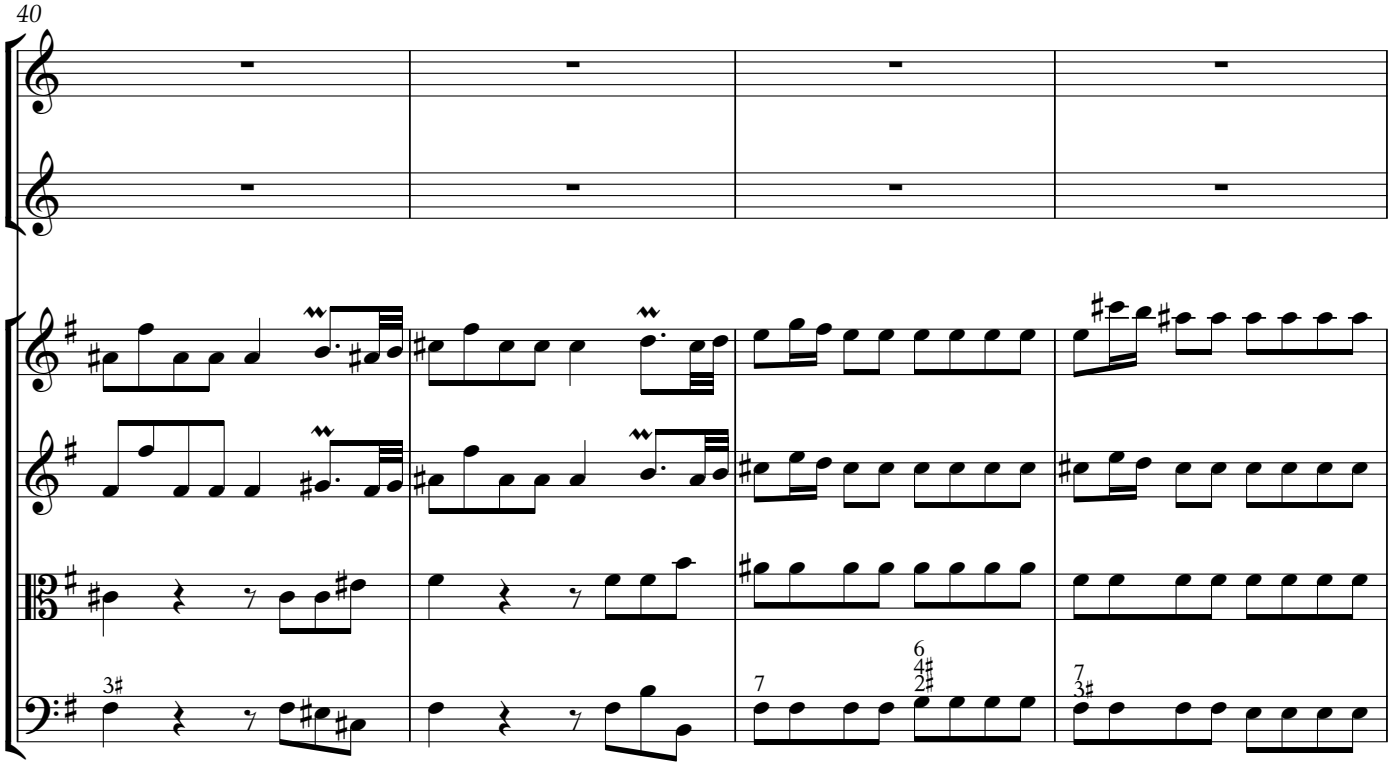
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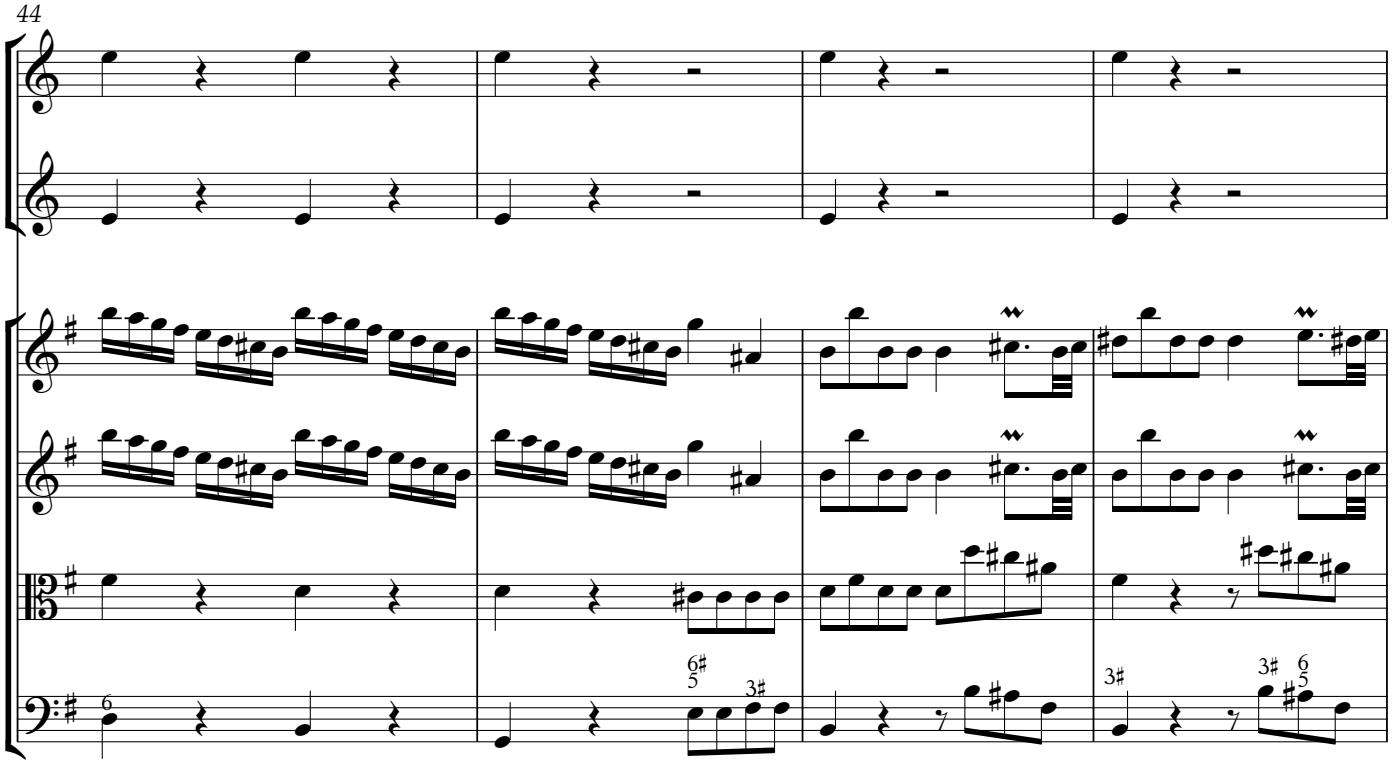
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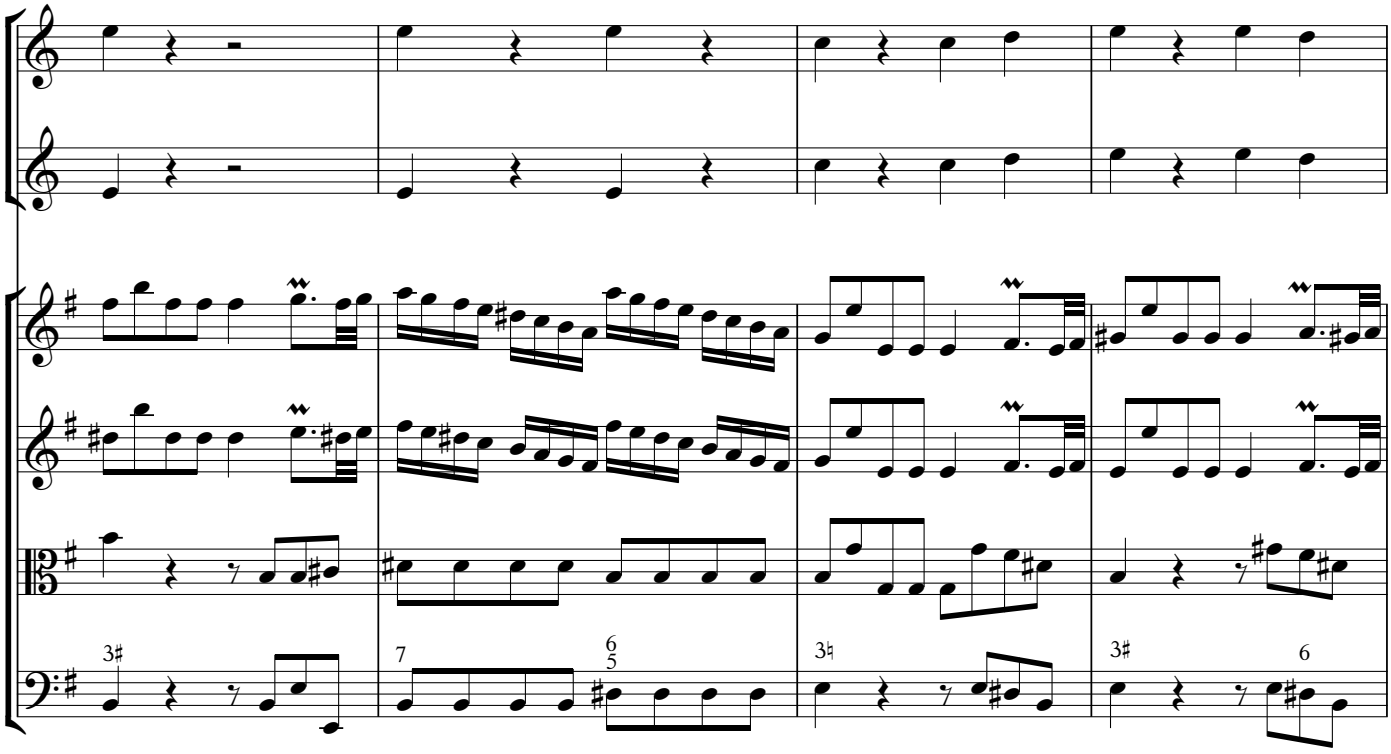

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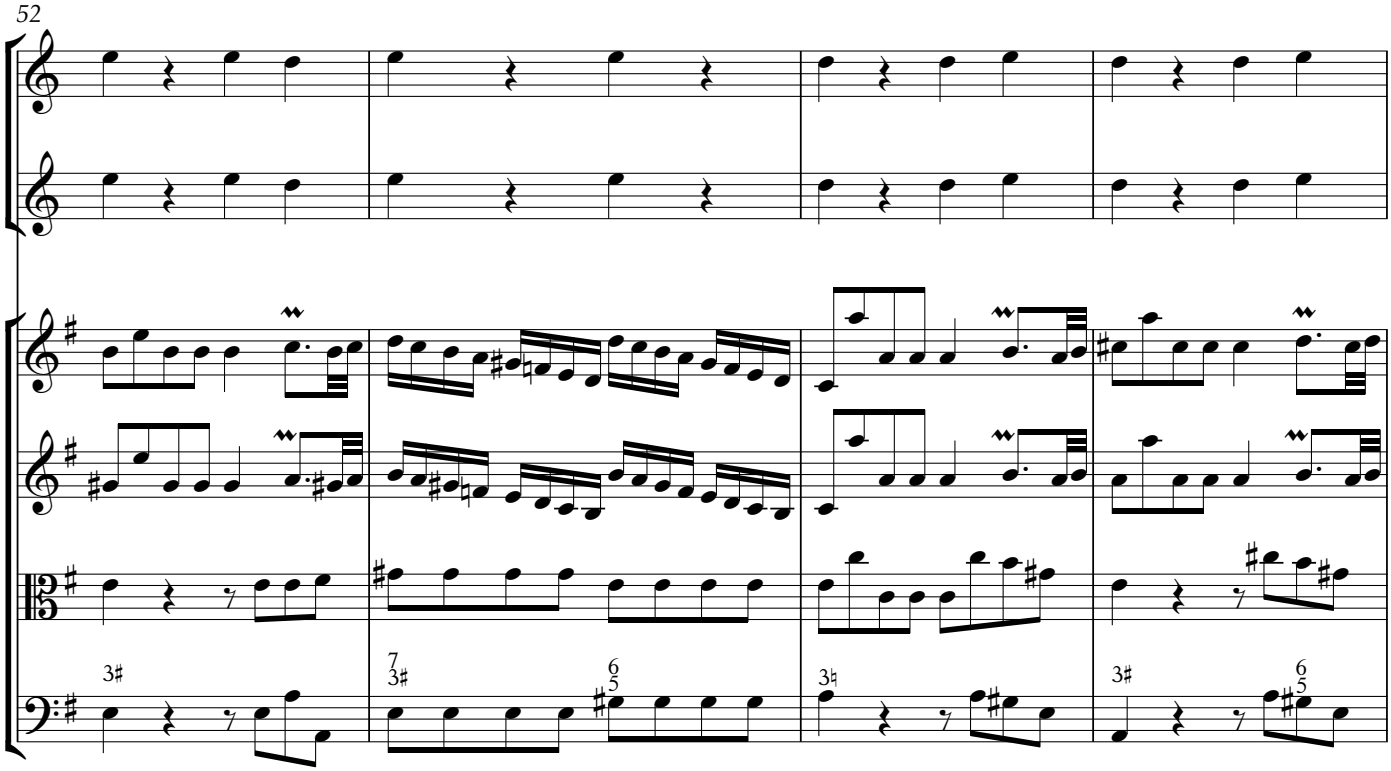

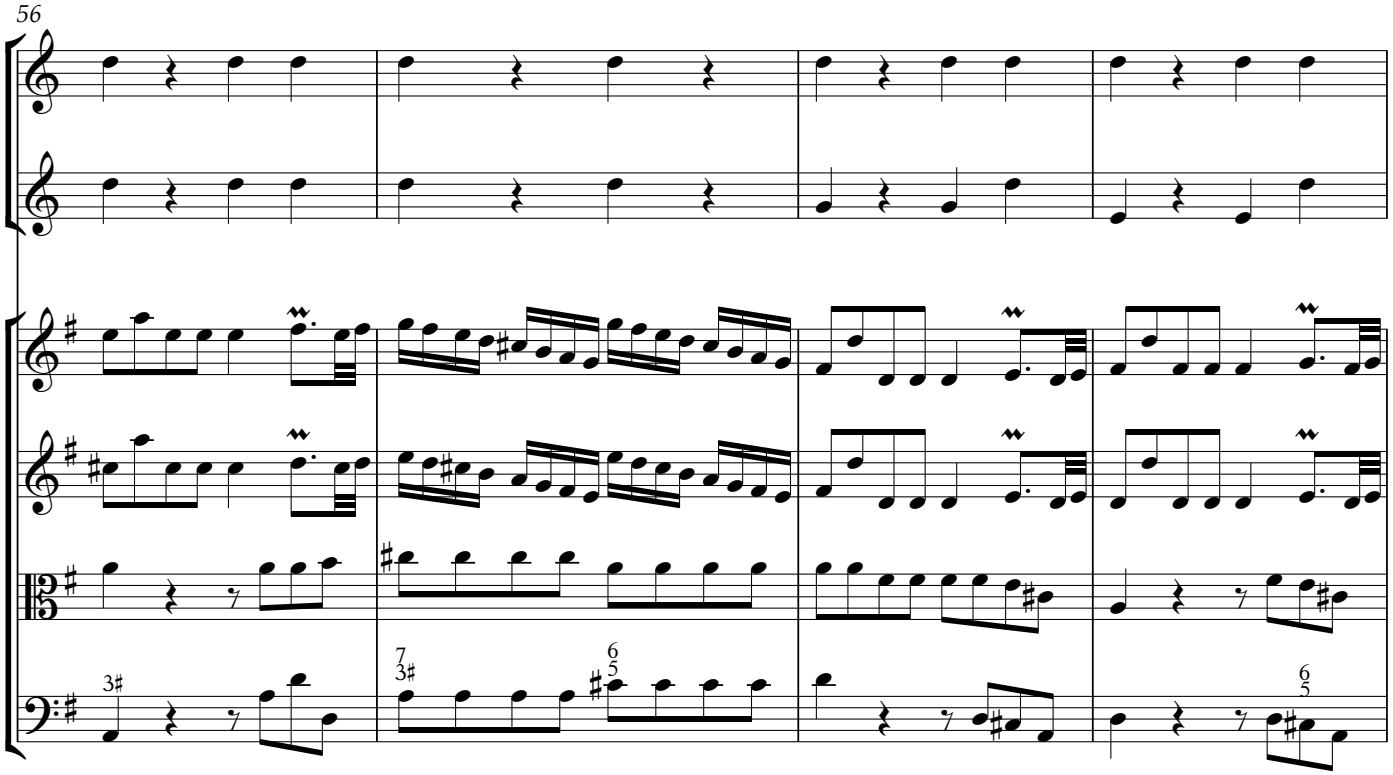
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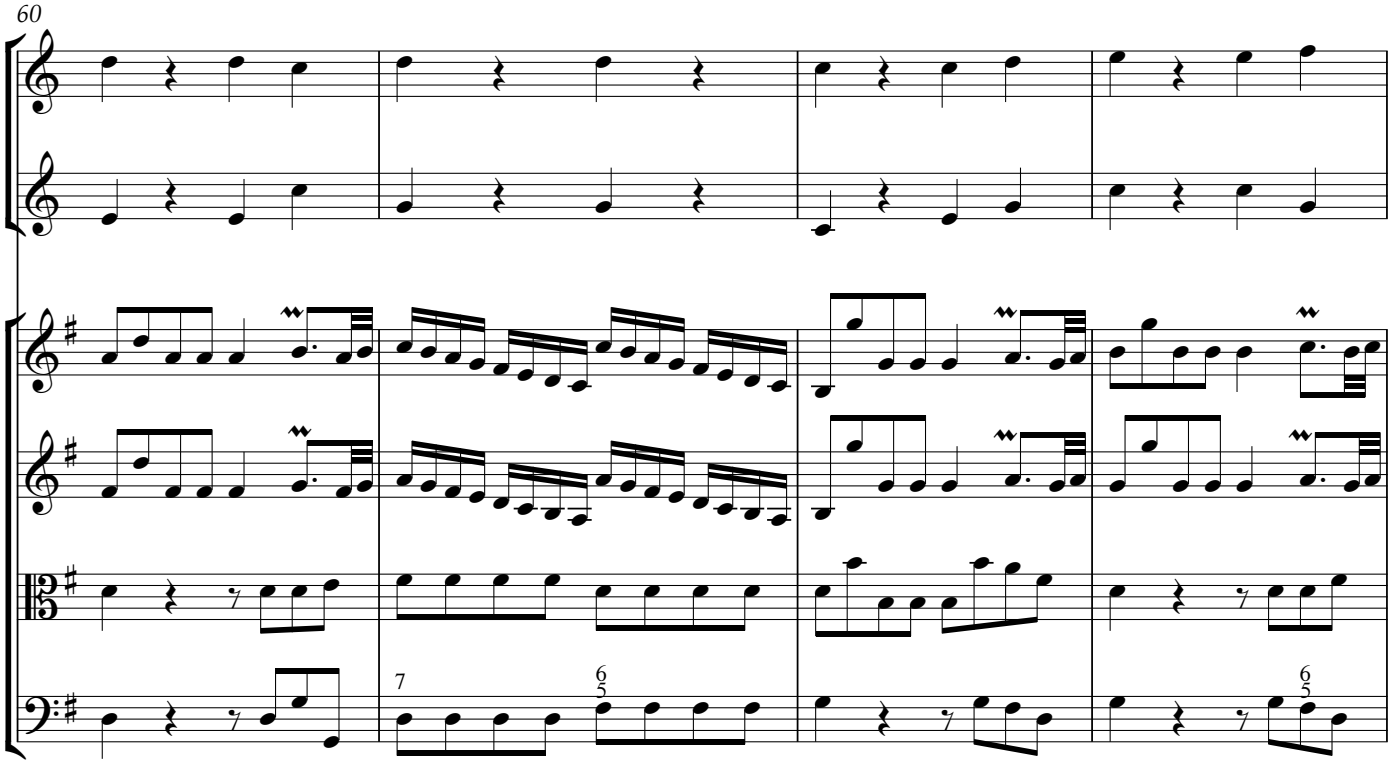
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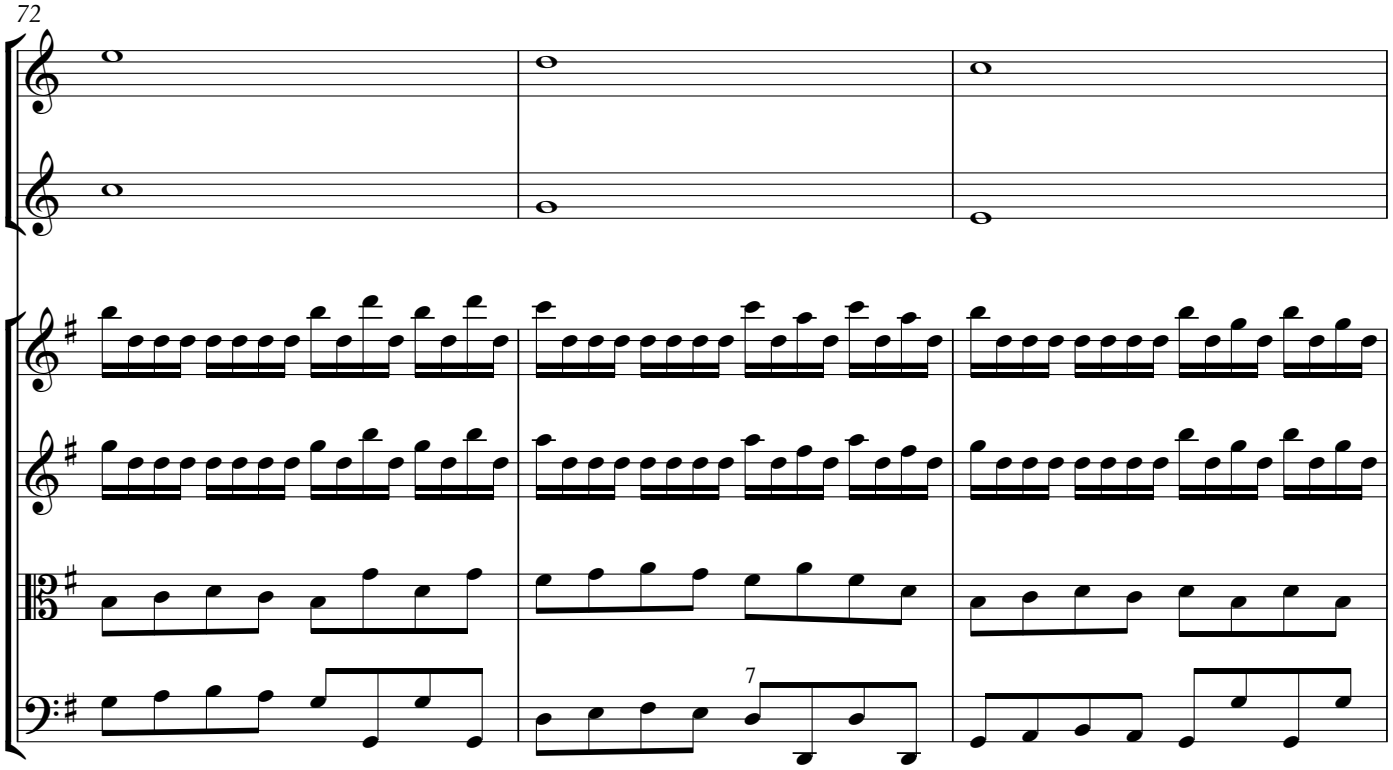
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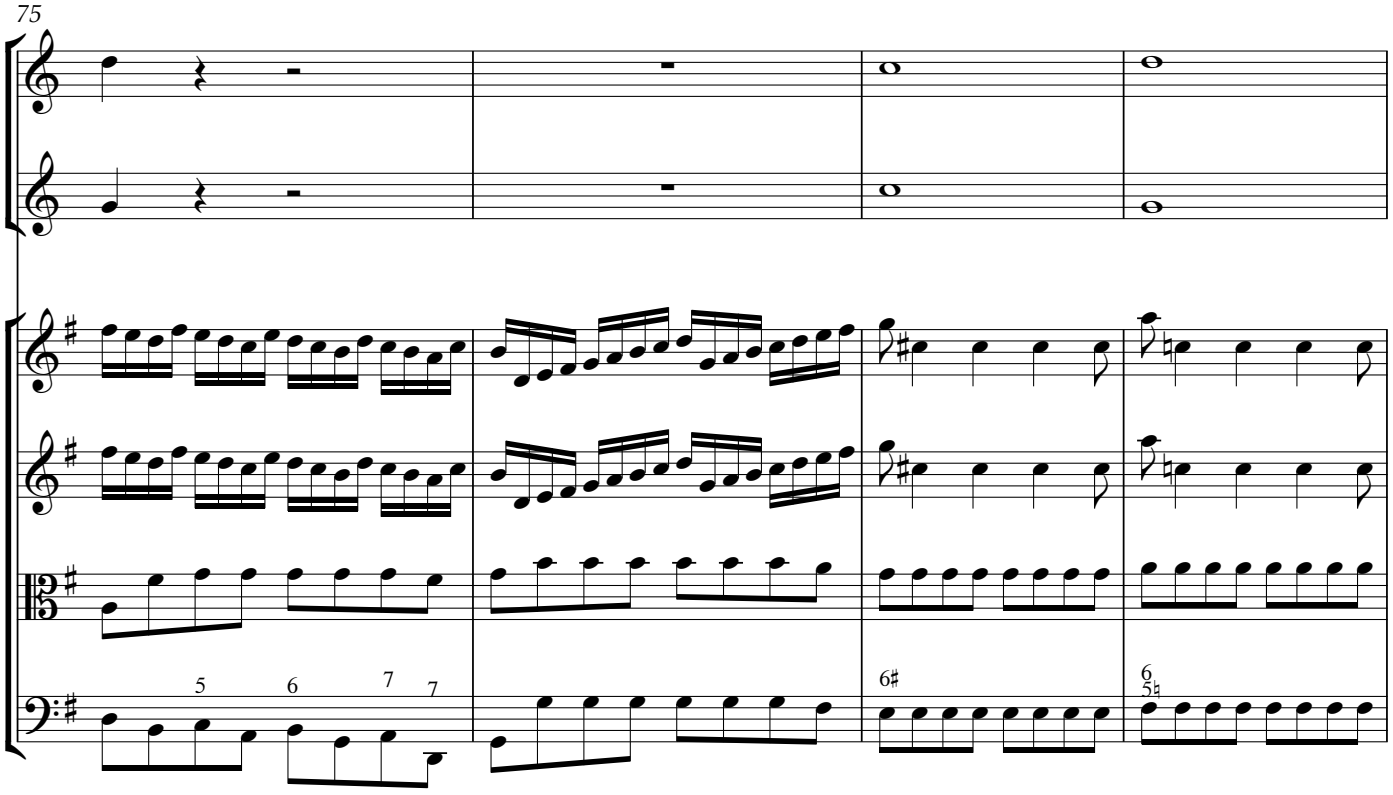
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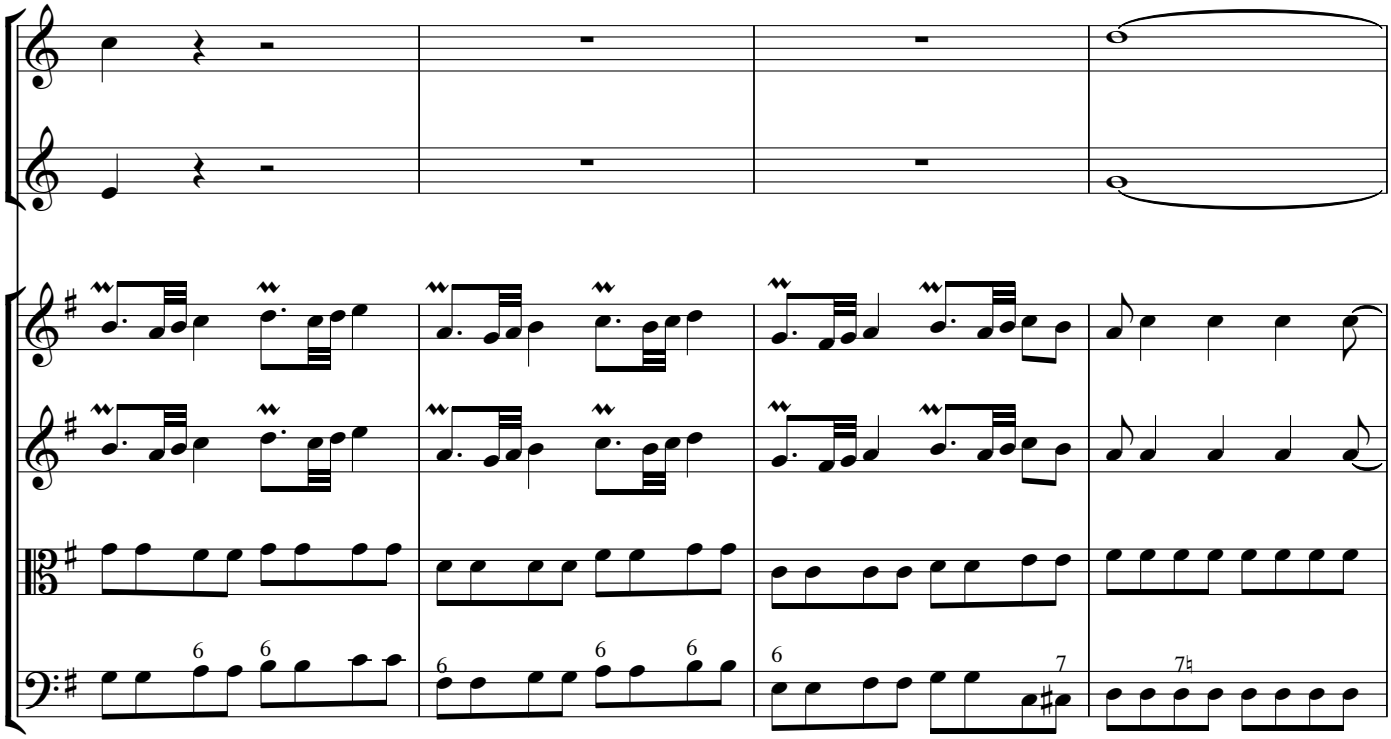

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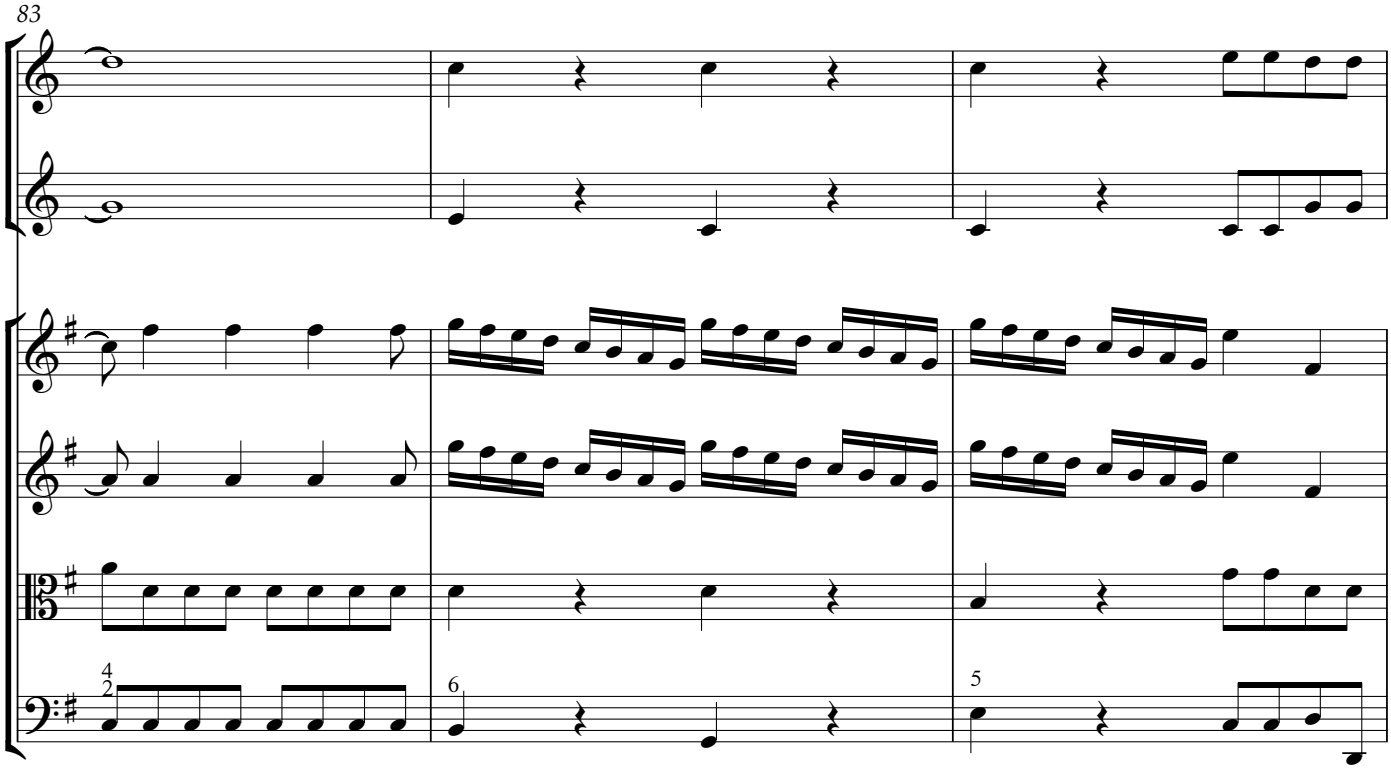

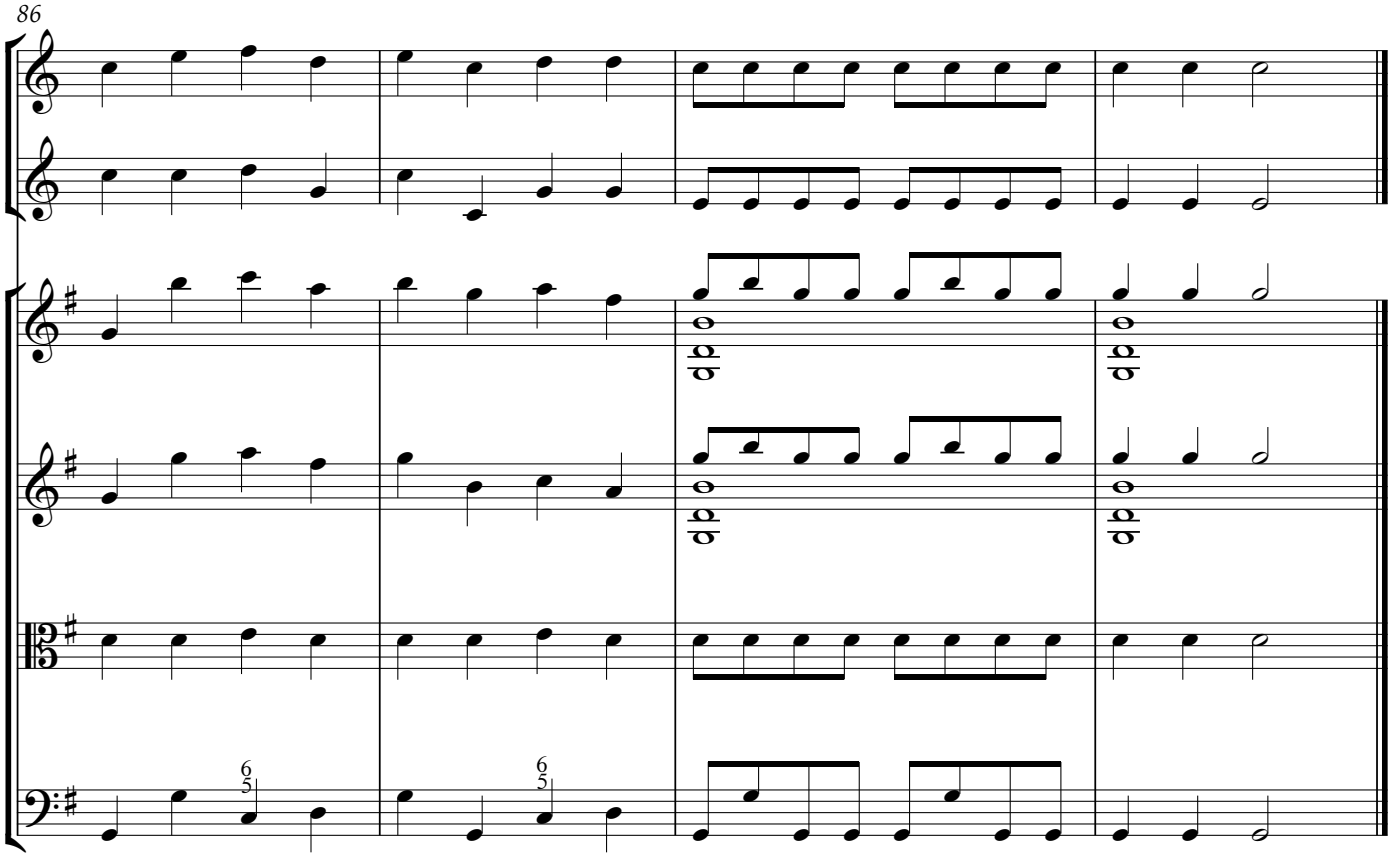
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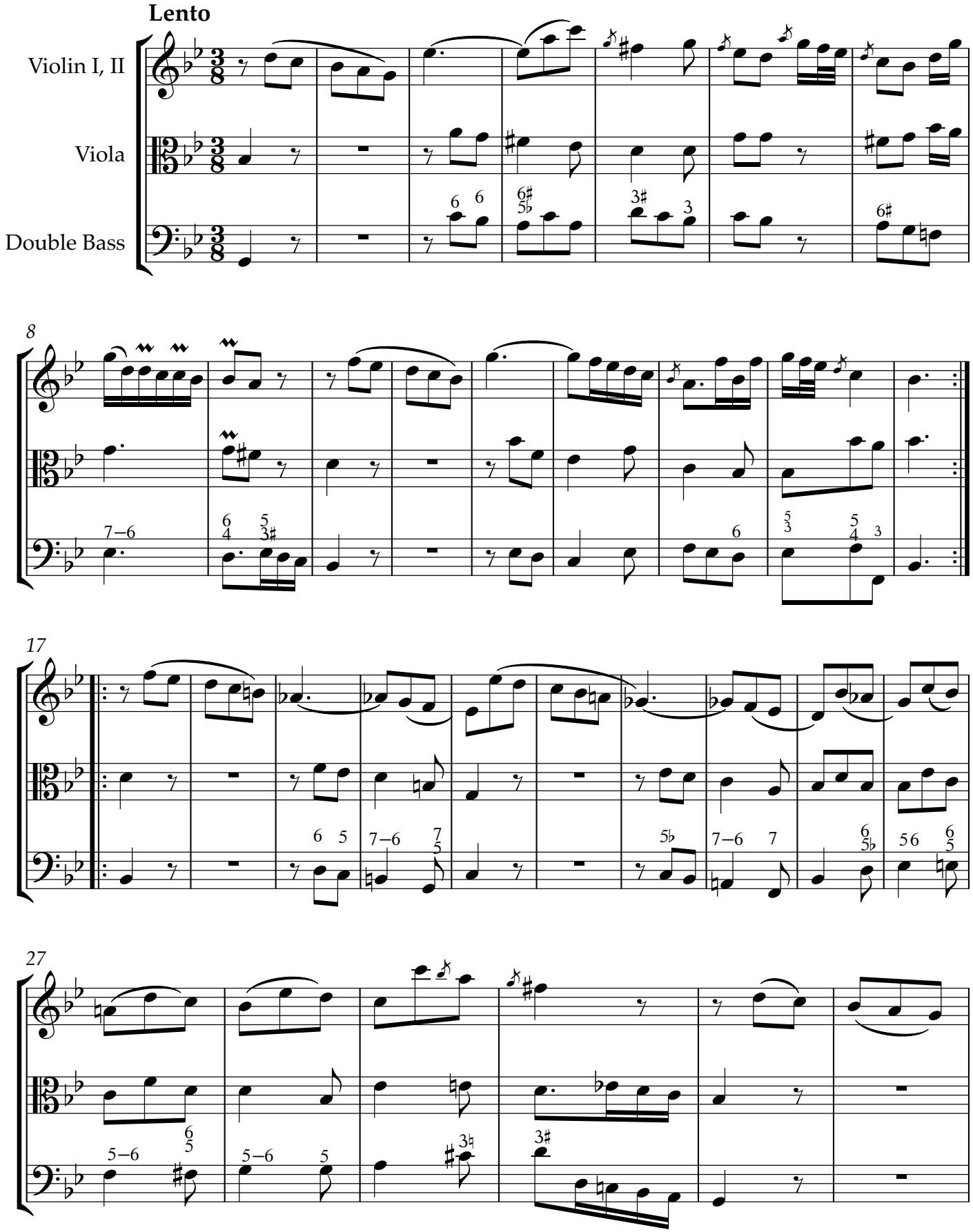

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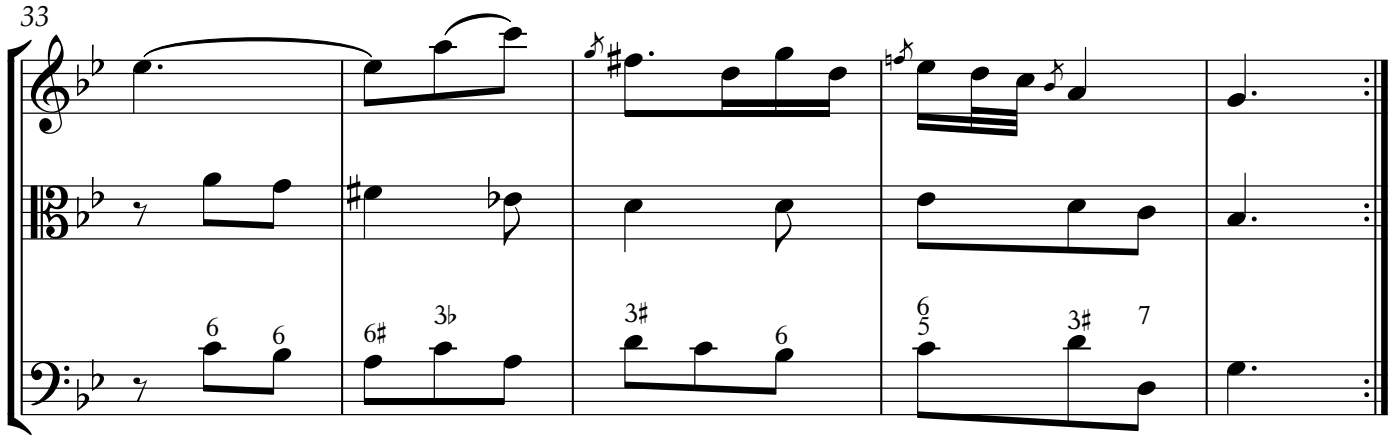
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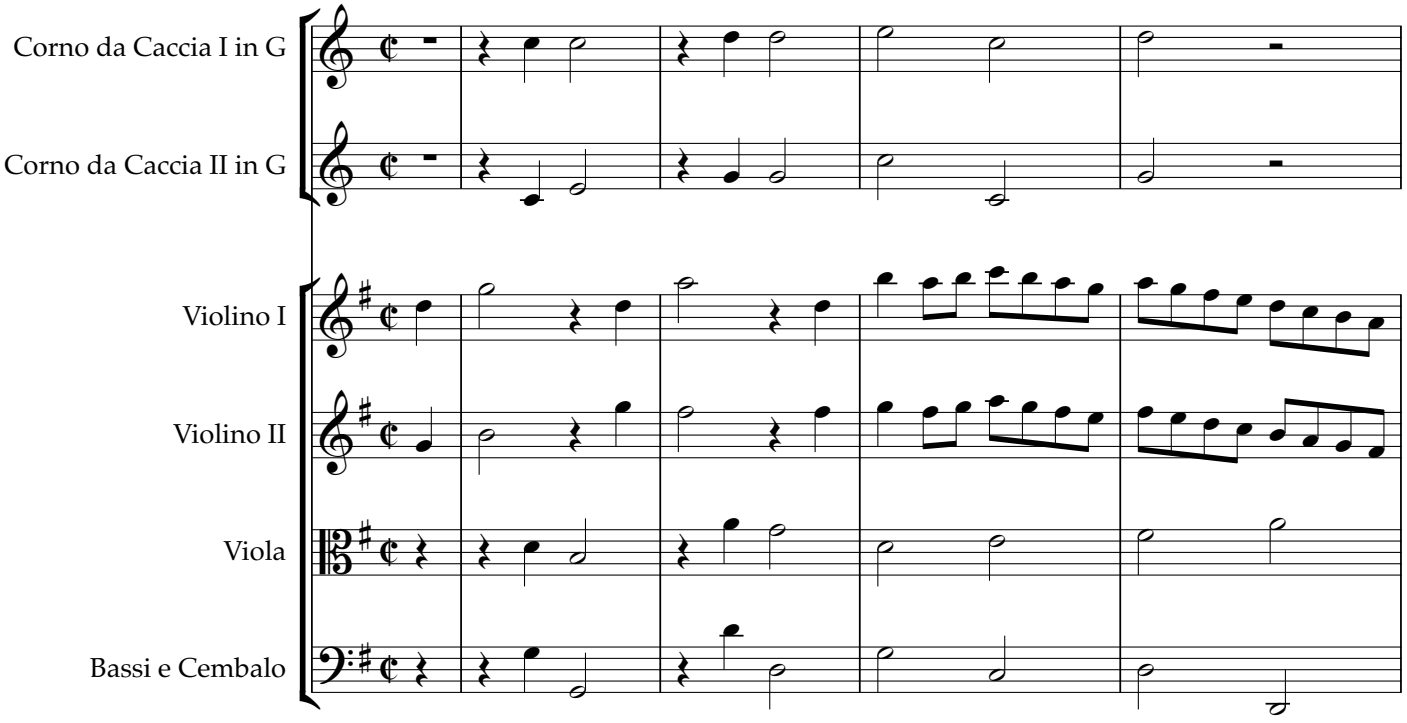
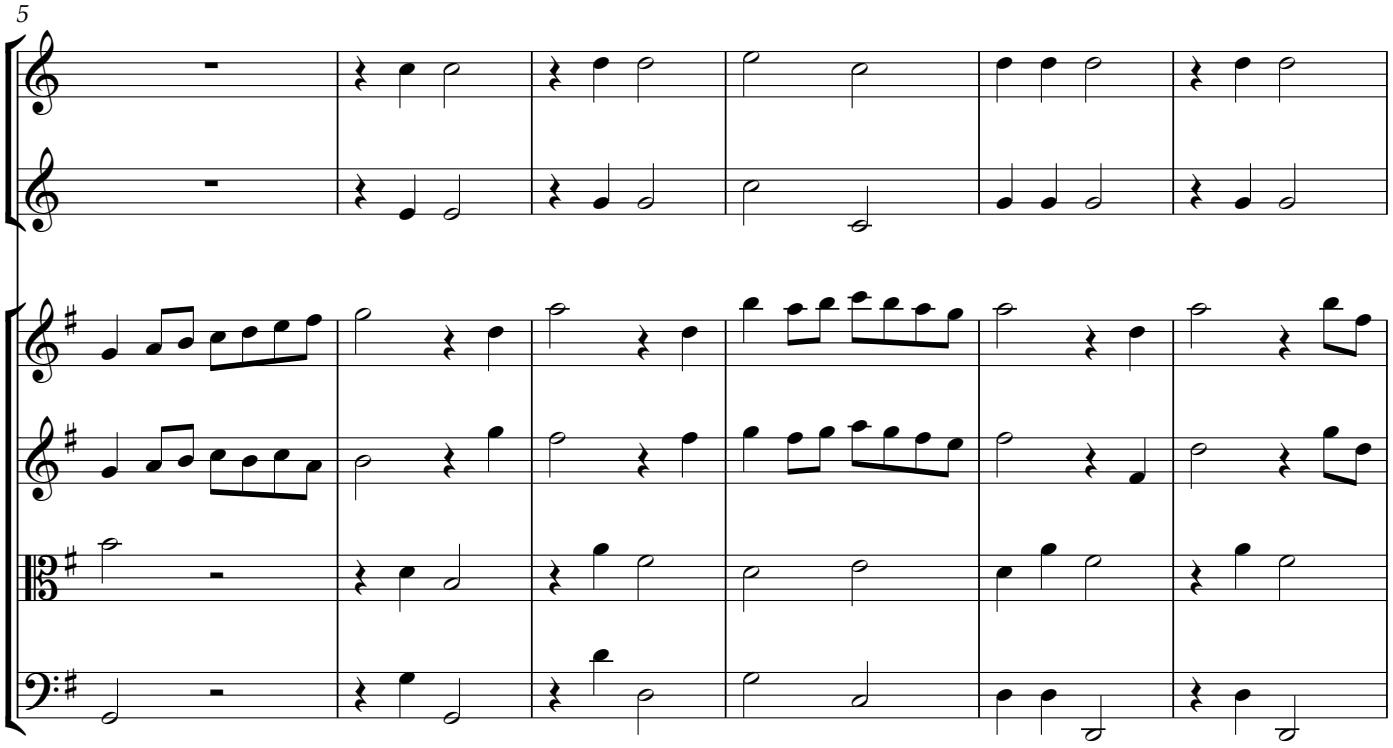
III

Allegro





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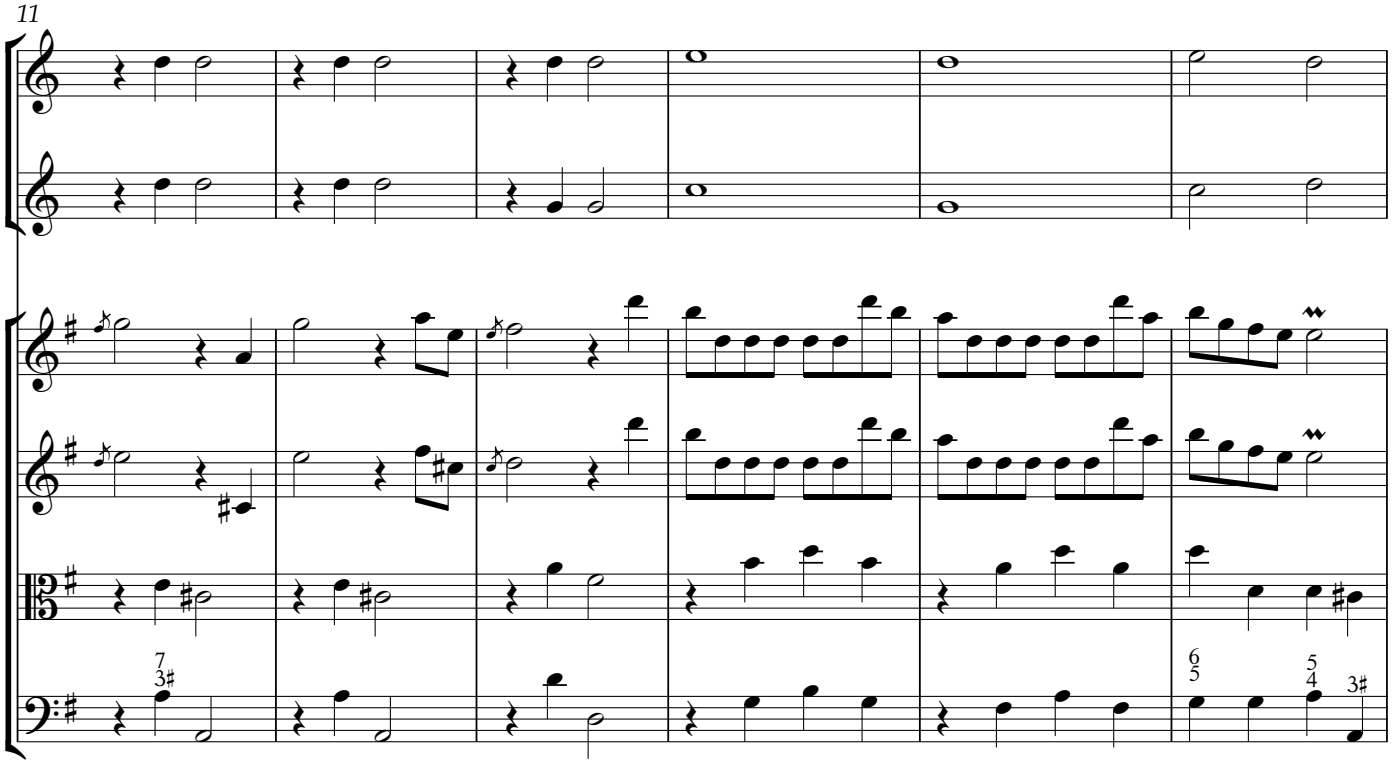
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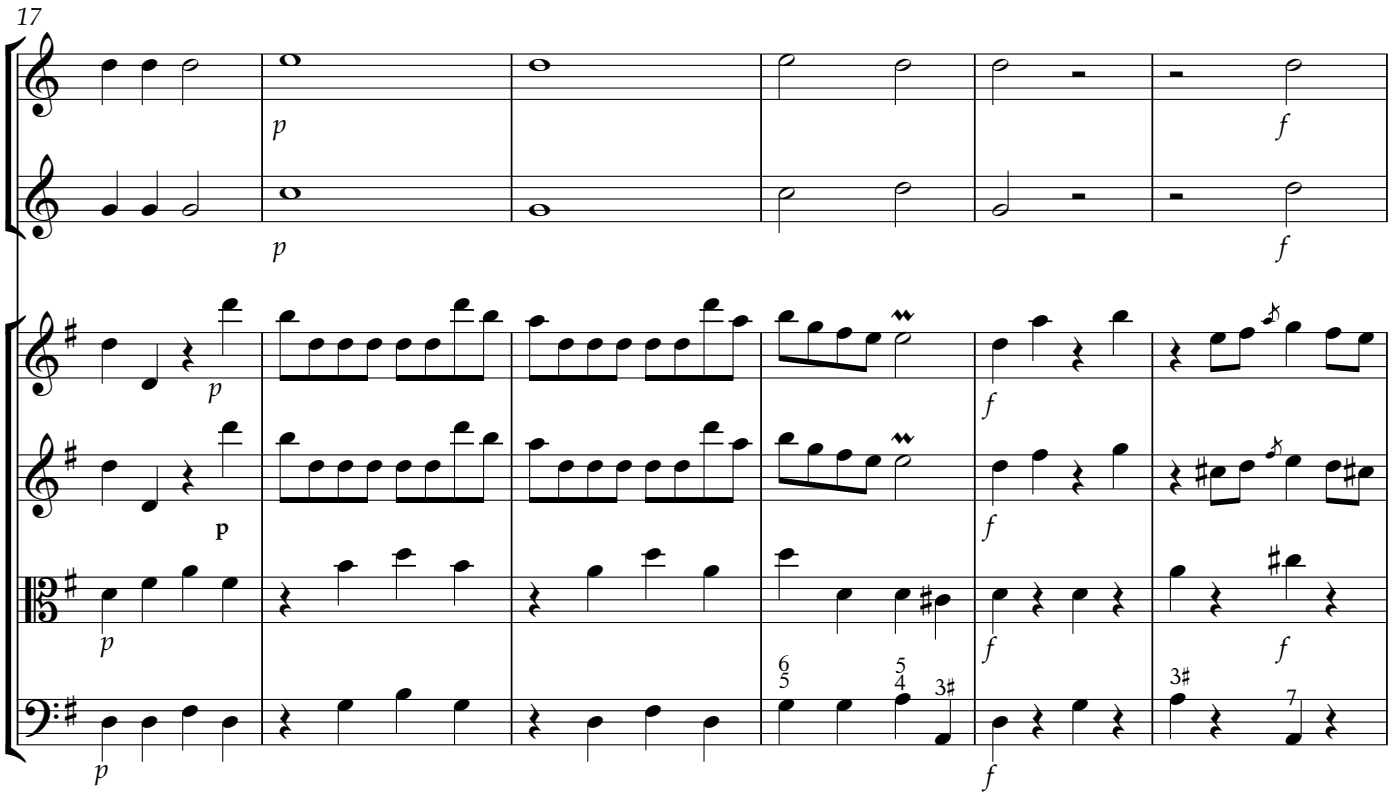
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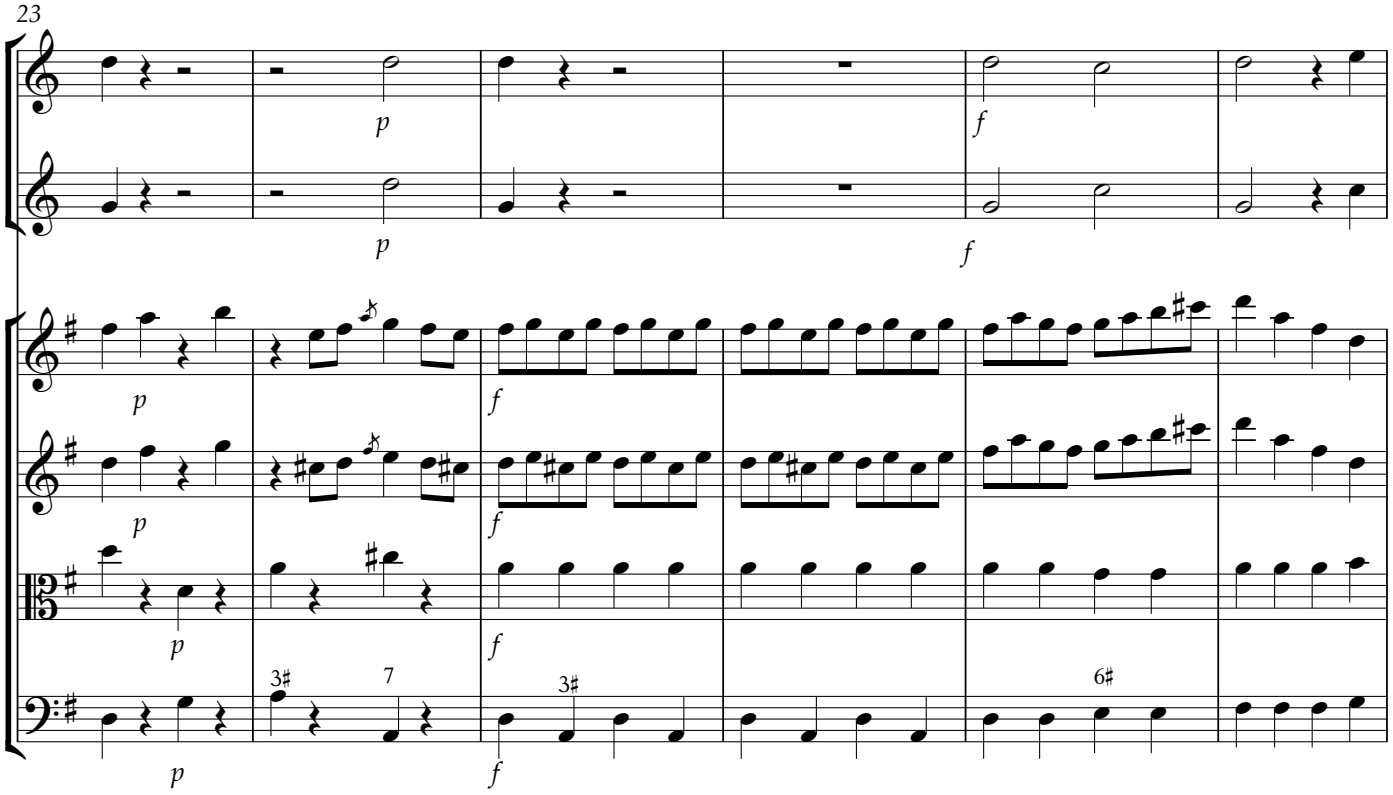
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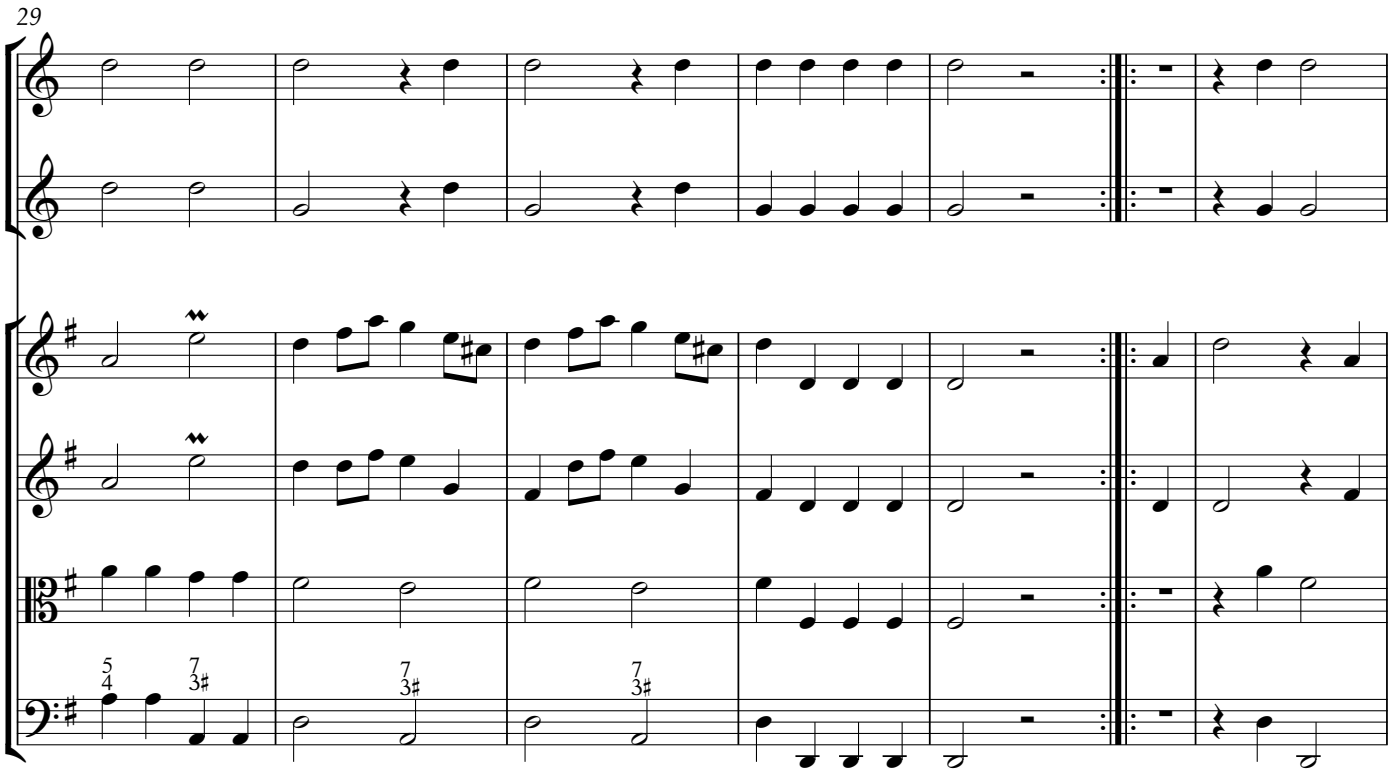
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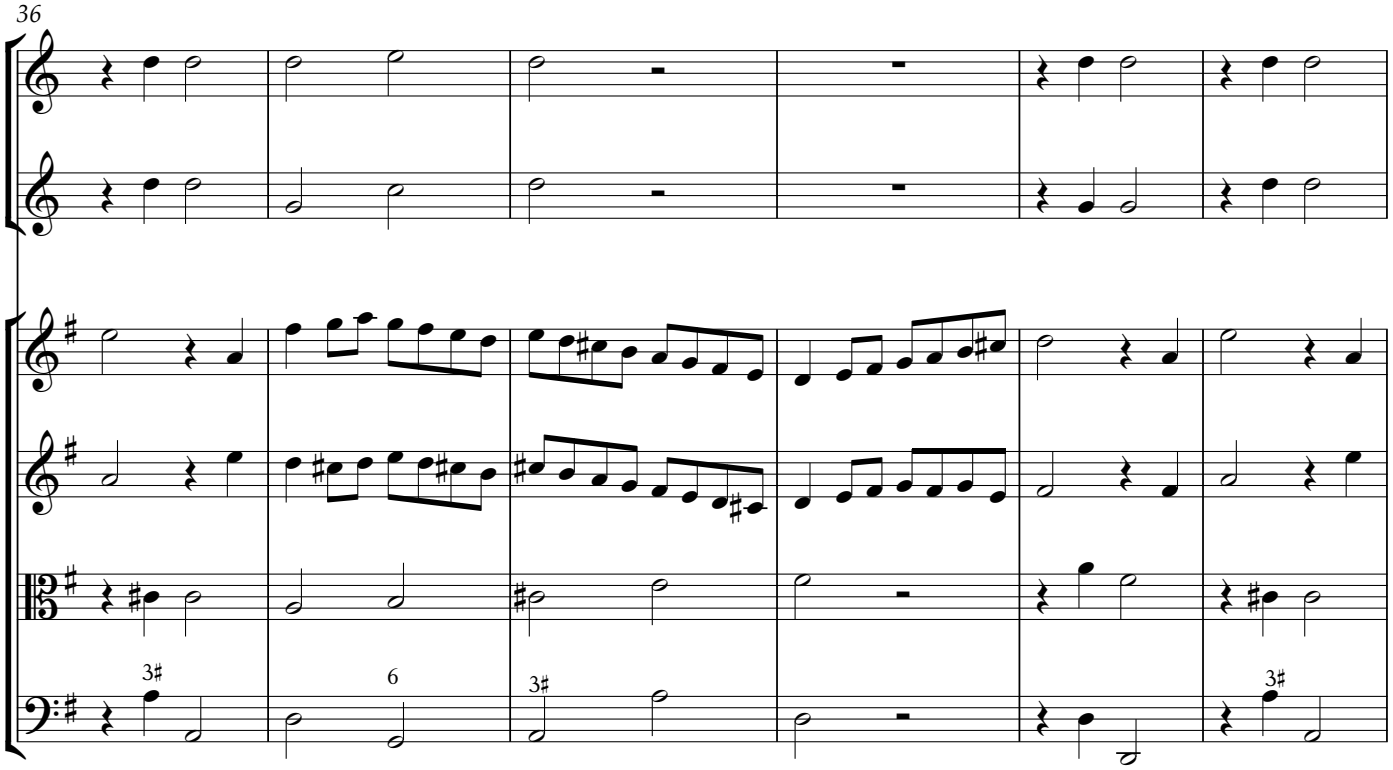
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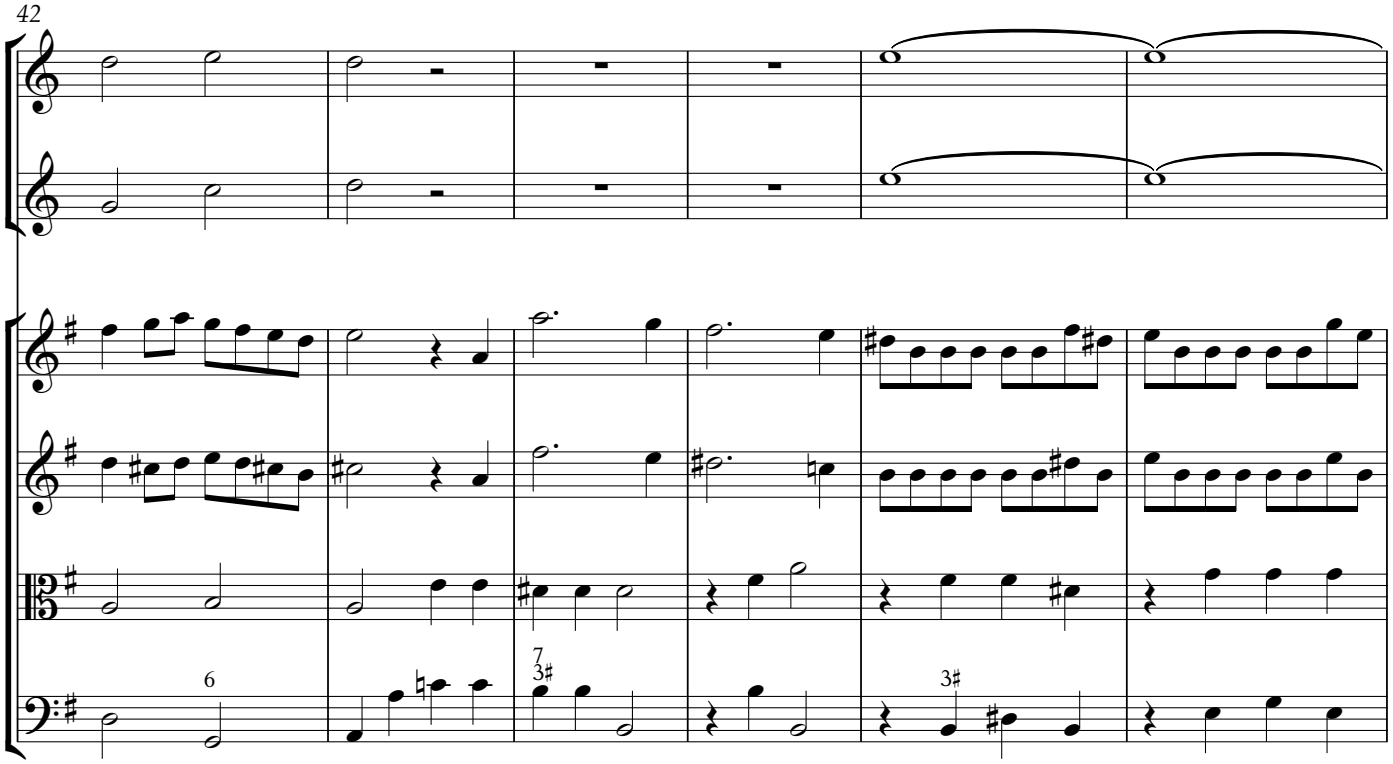
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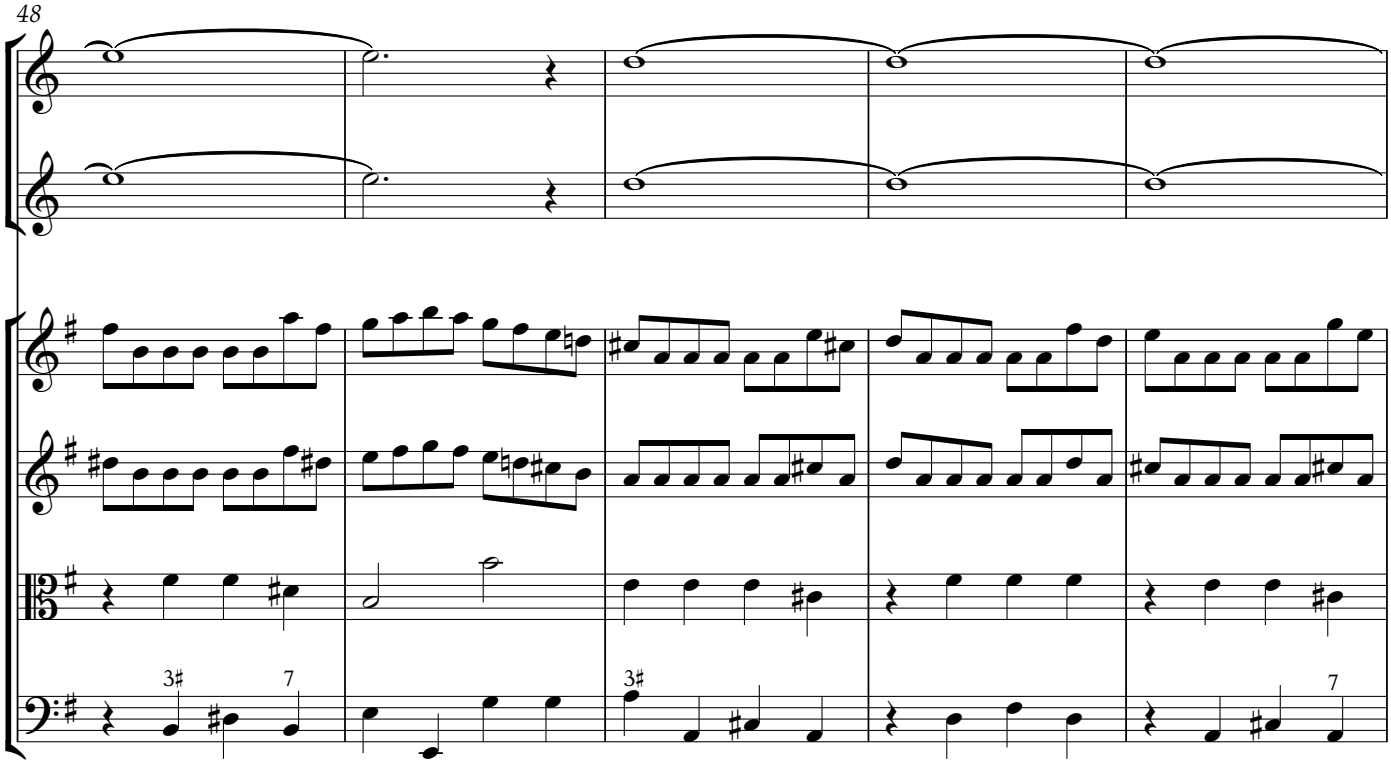
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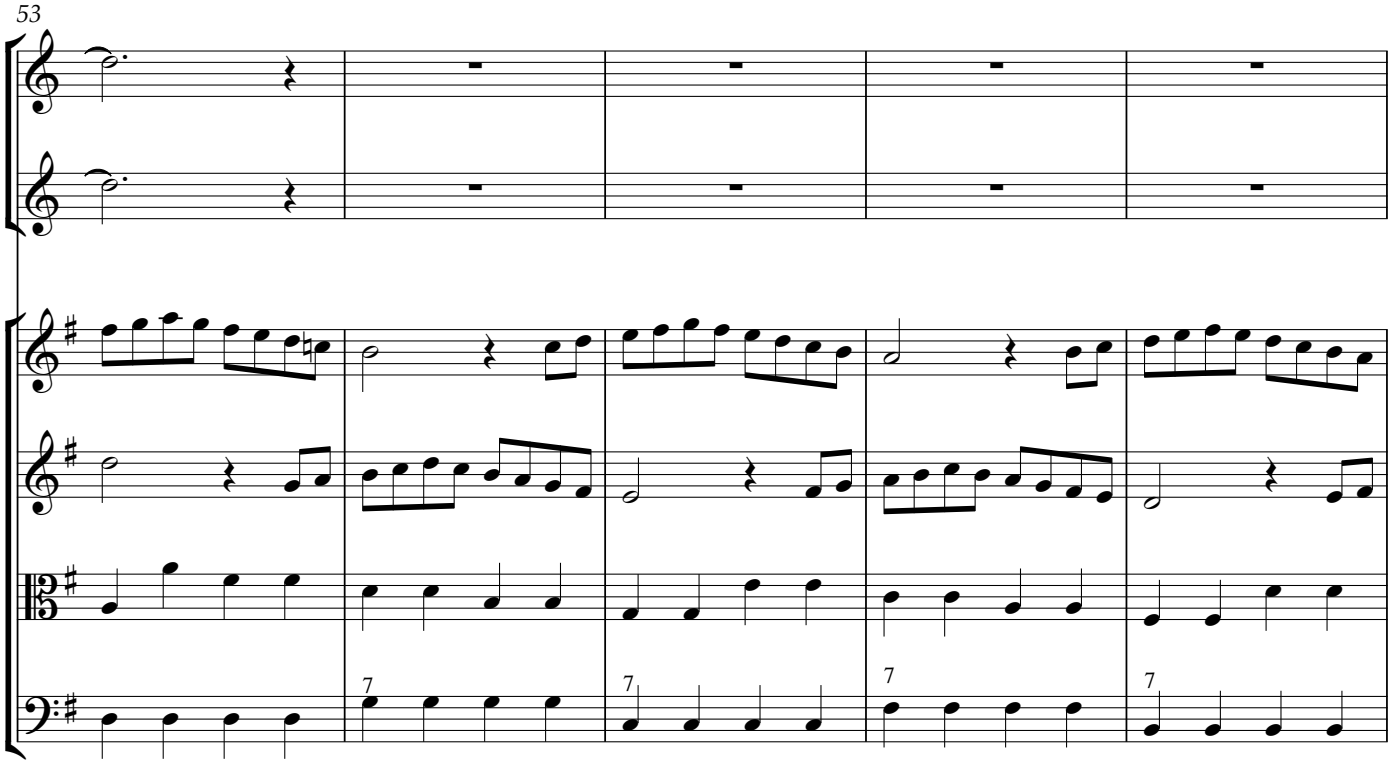
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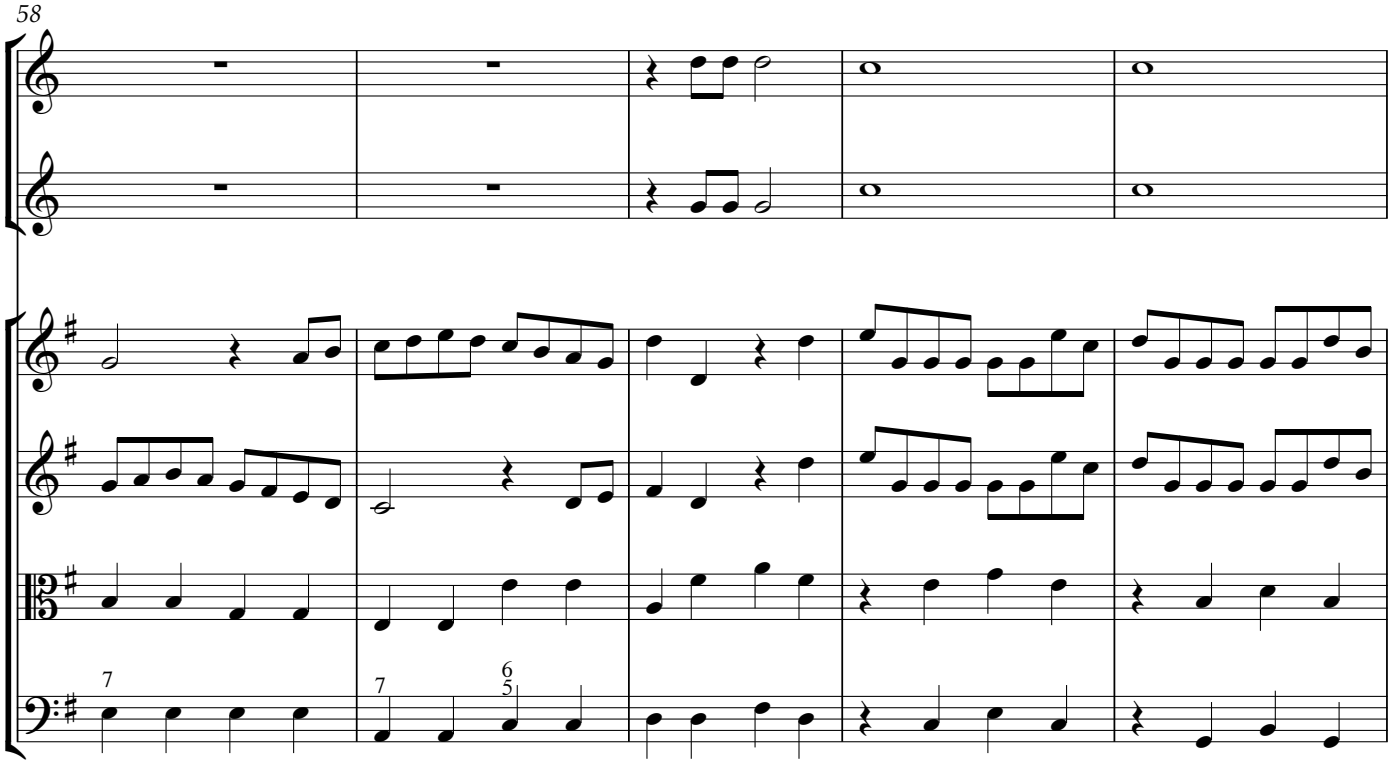
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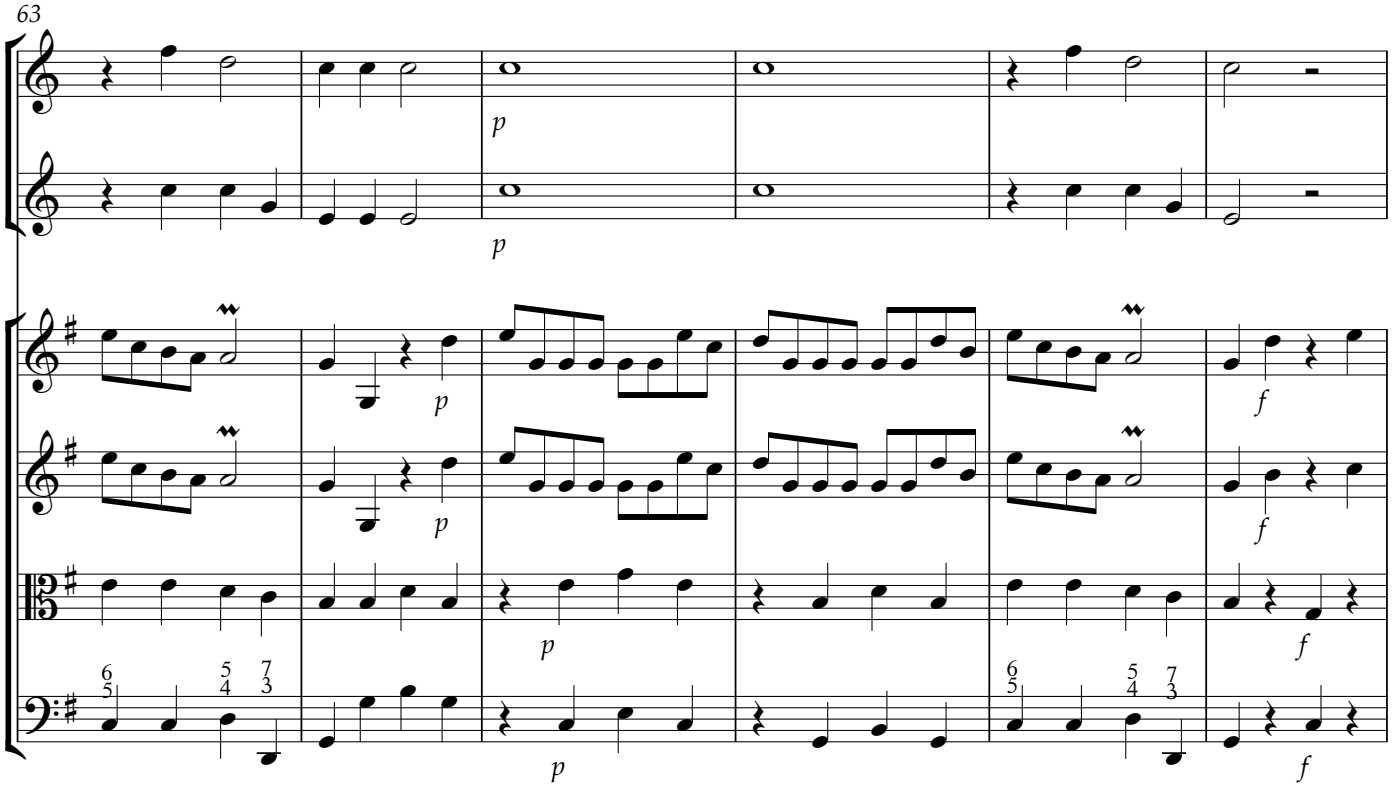
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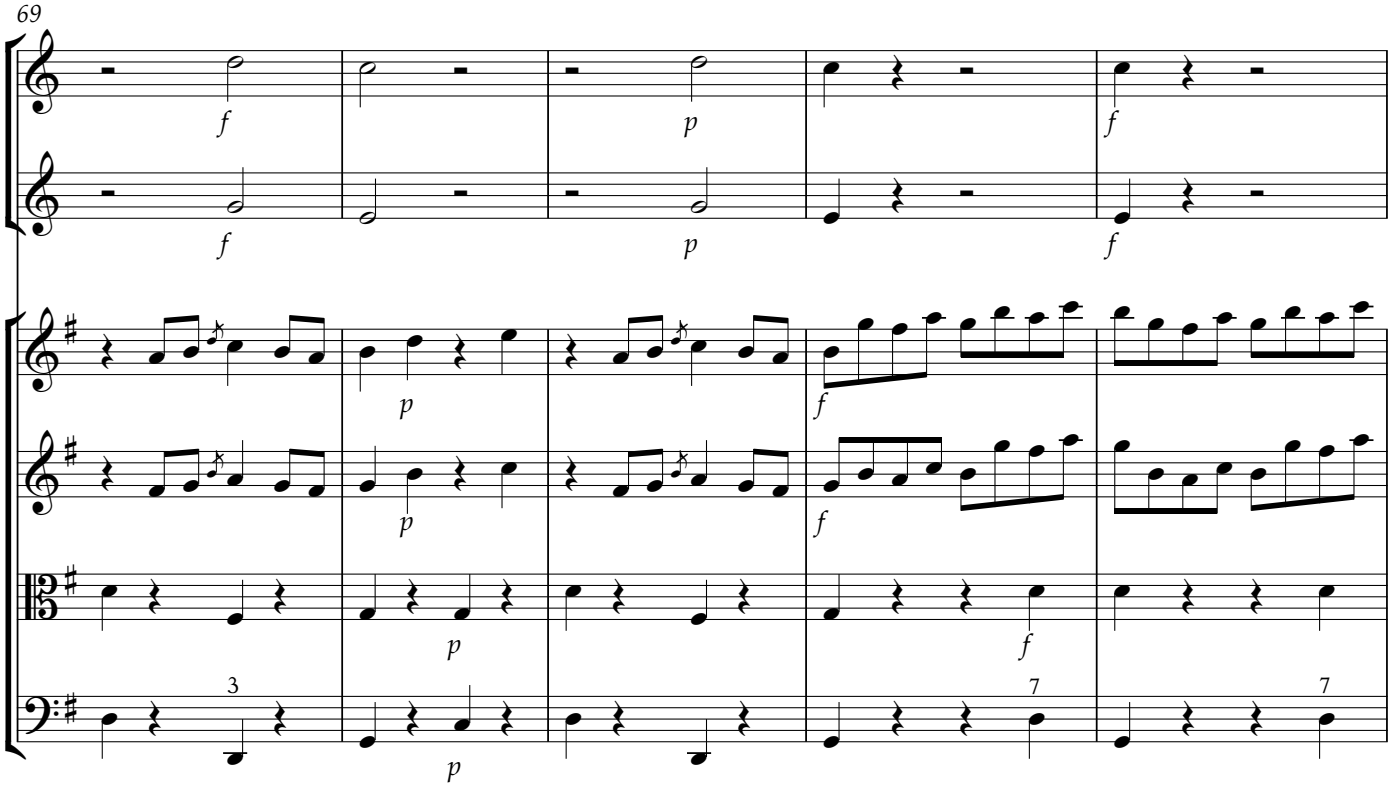
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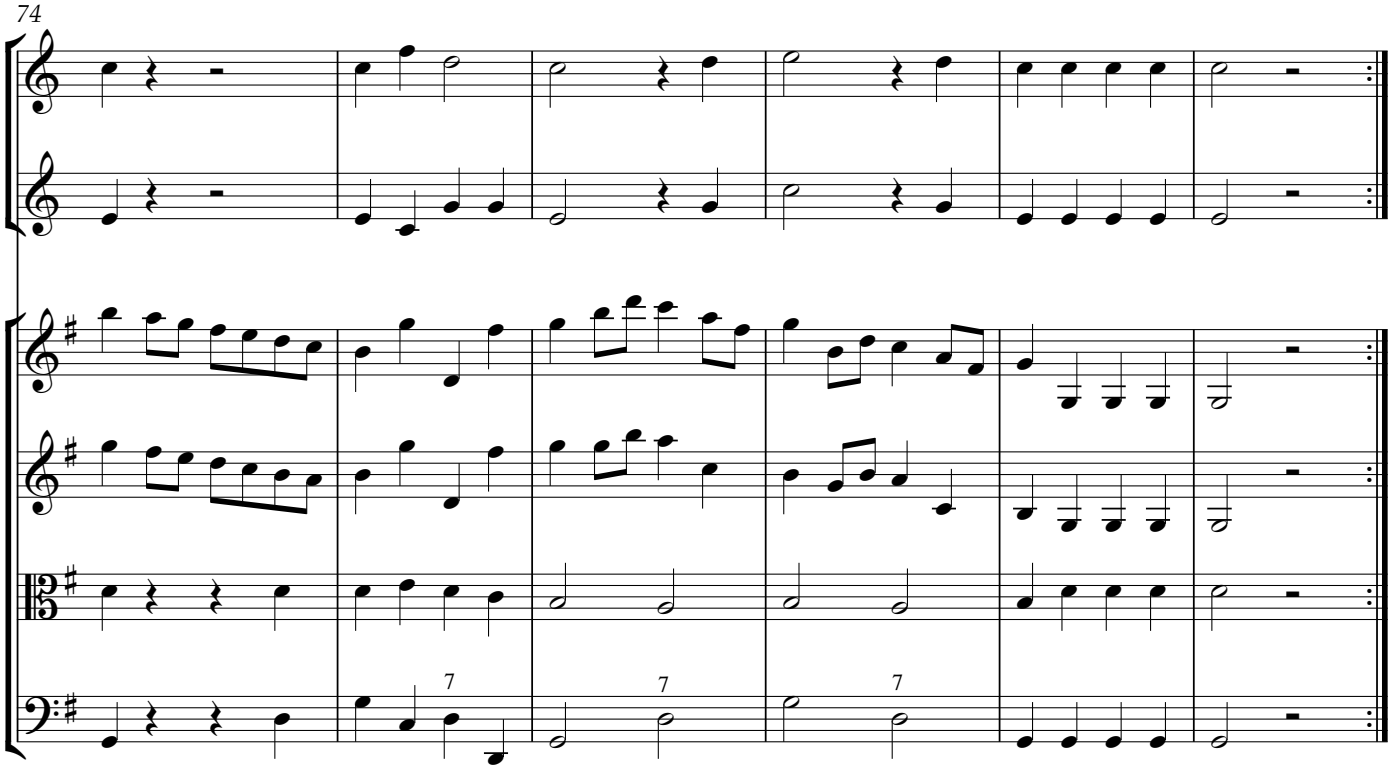
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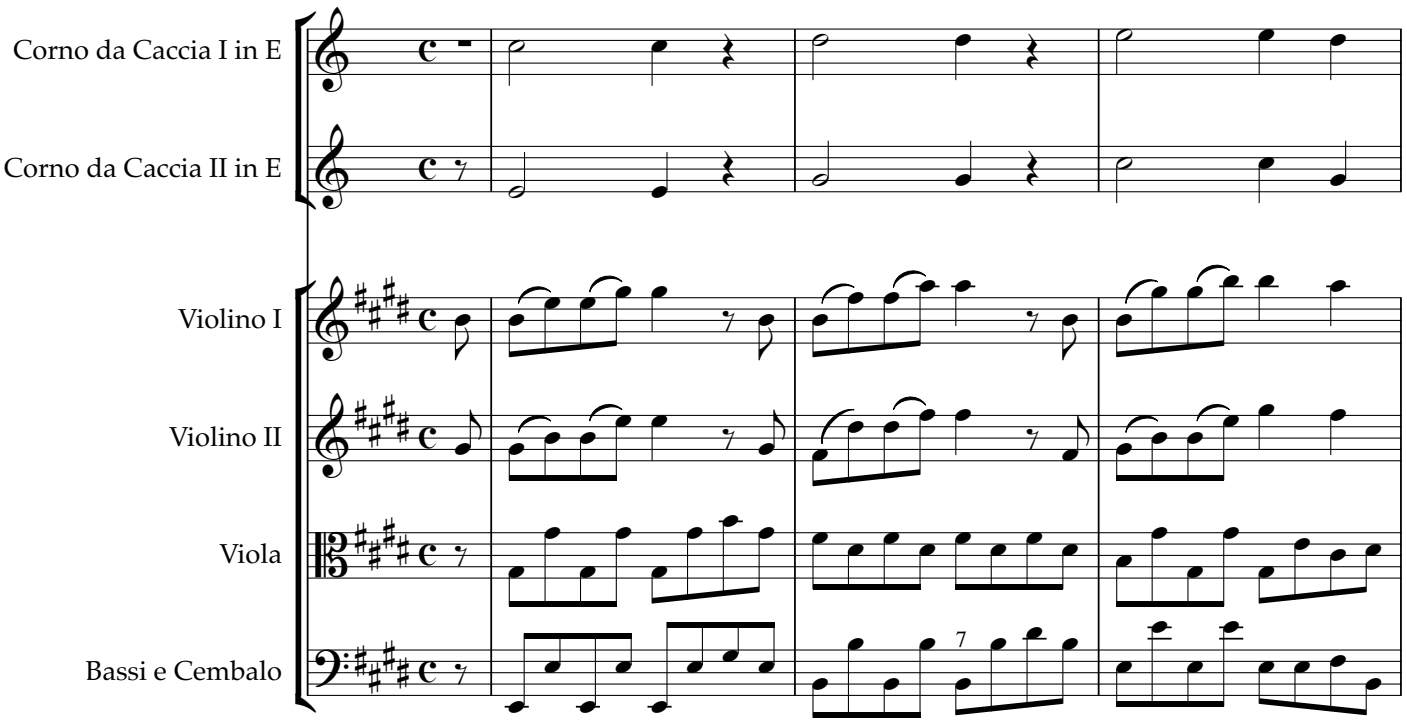
Giovanni Battista Serini

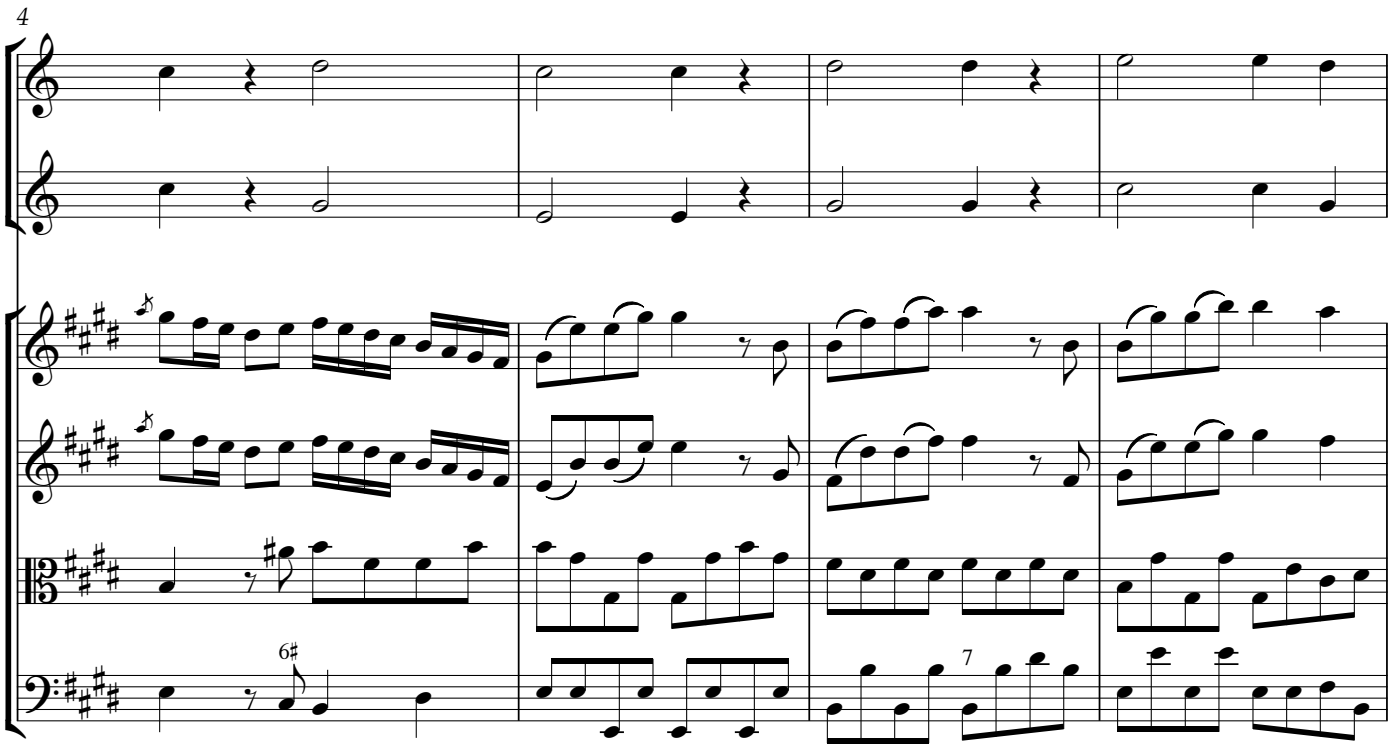
Symphony 6

Symphony 6

Principal source: GB-Y MS 129 S

Allegro Assai





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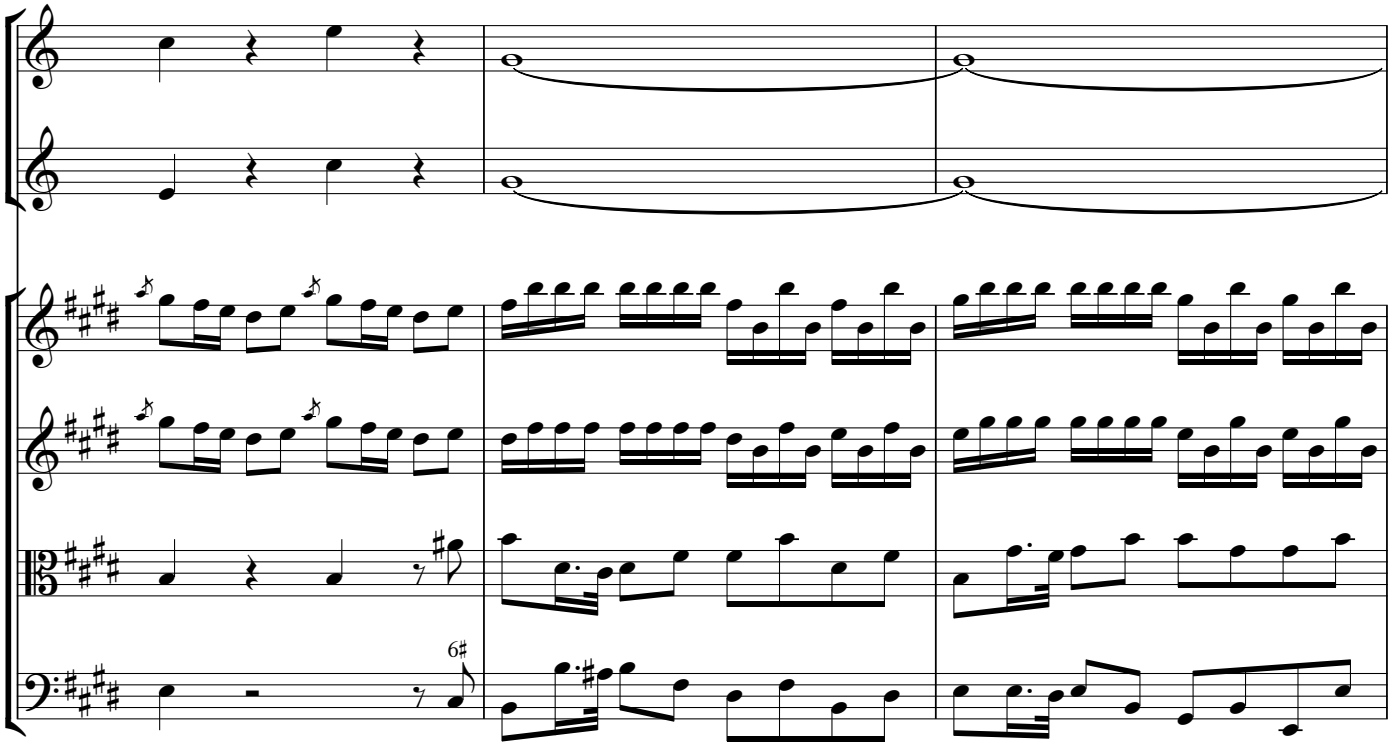

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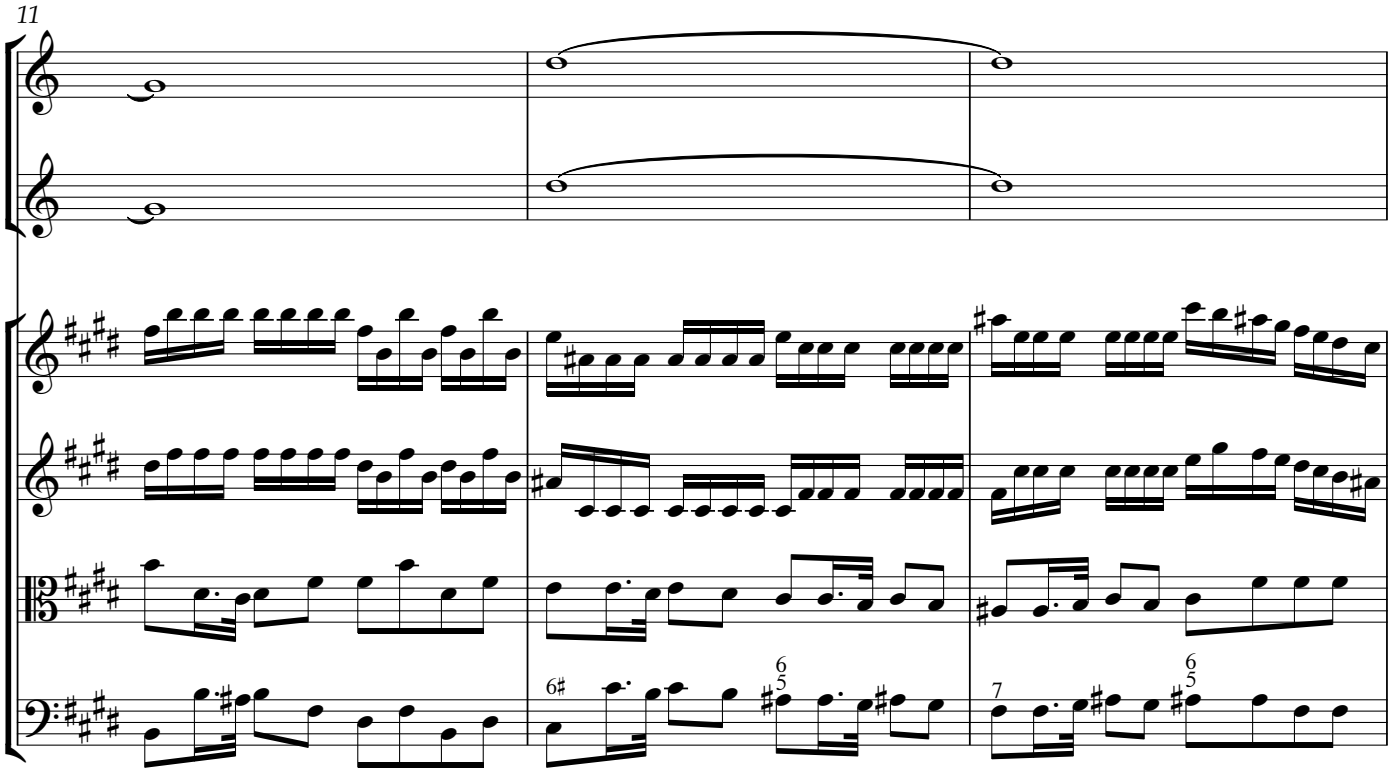

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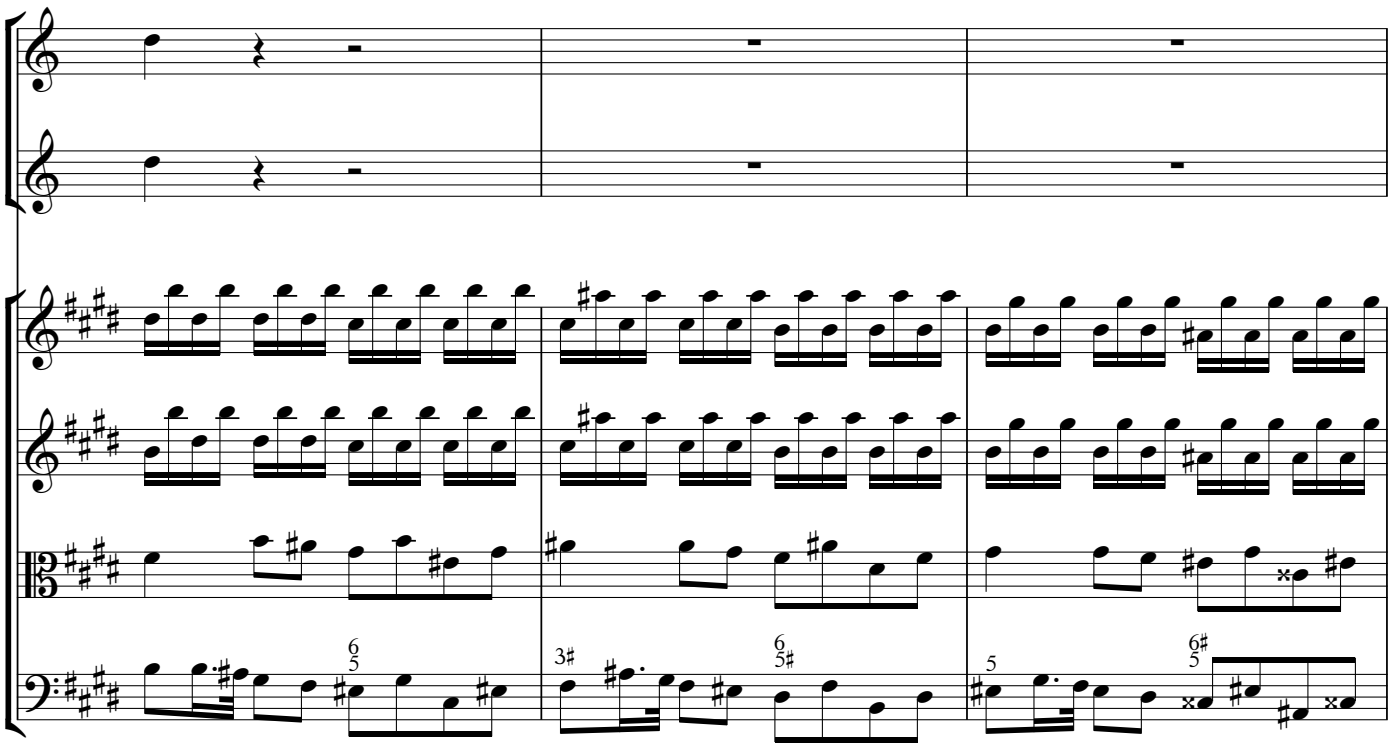

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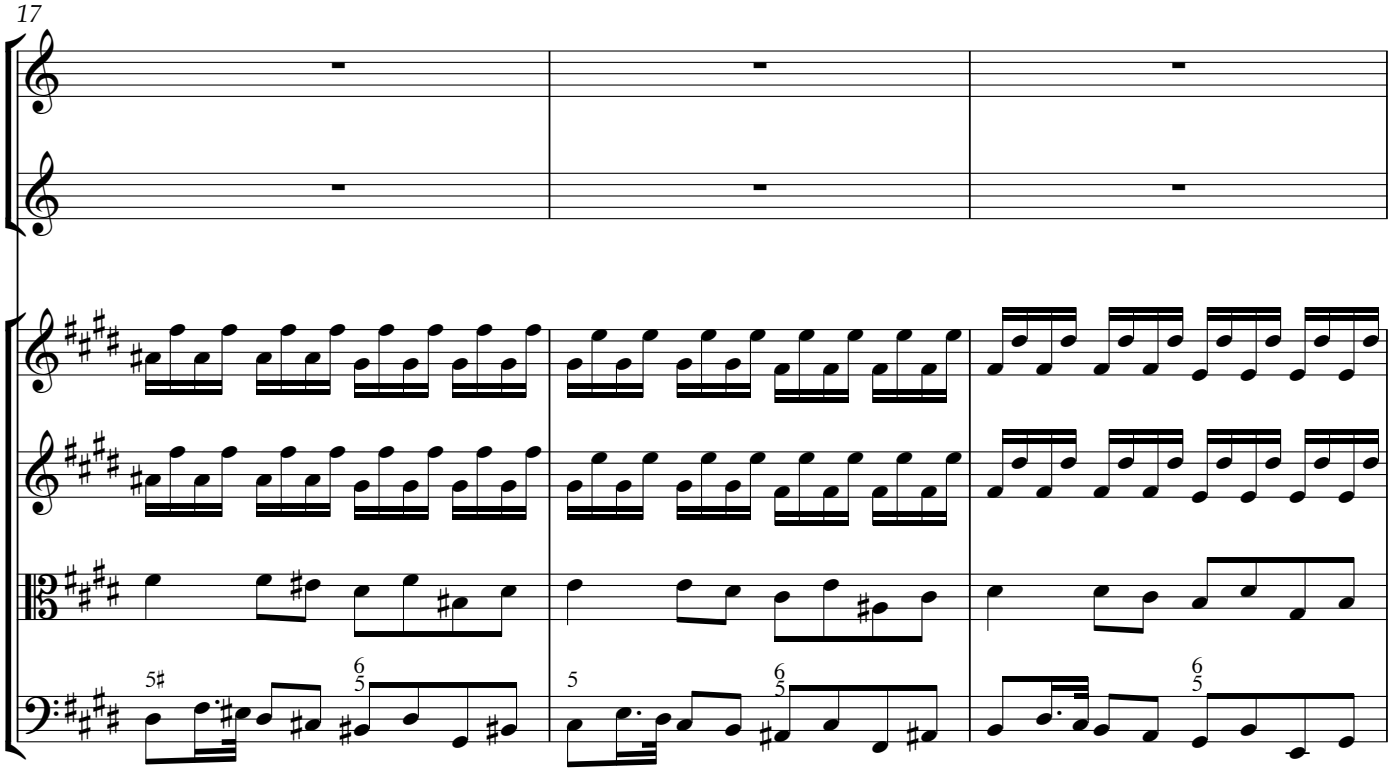

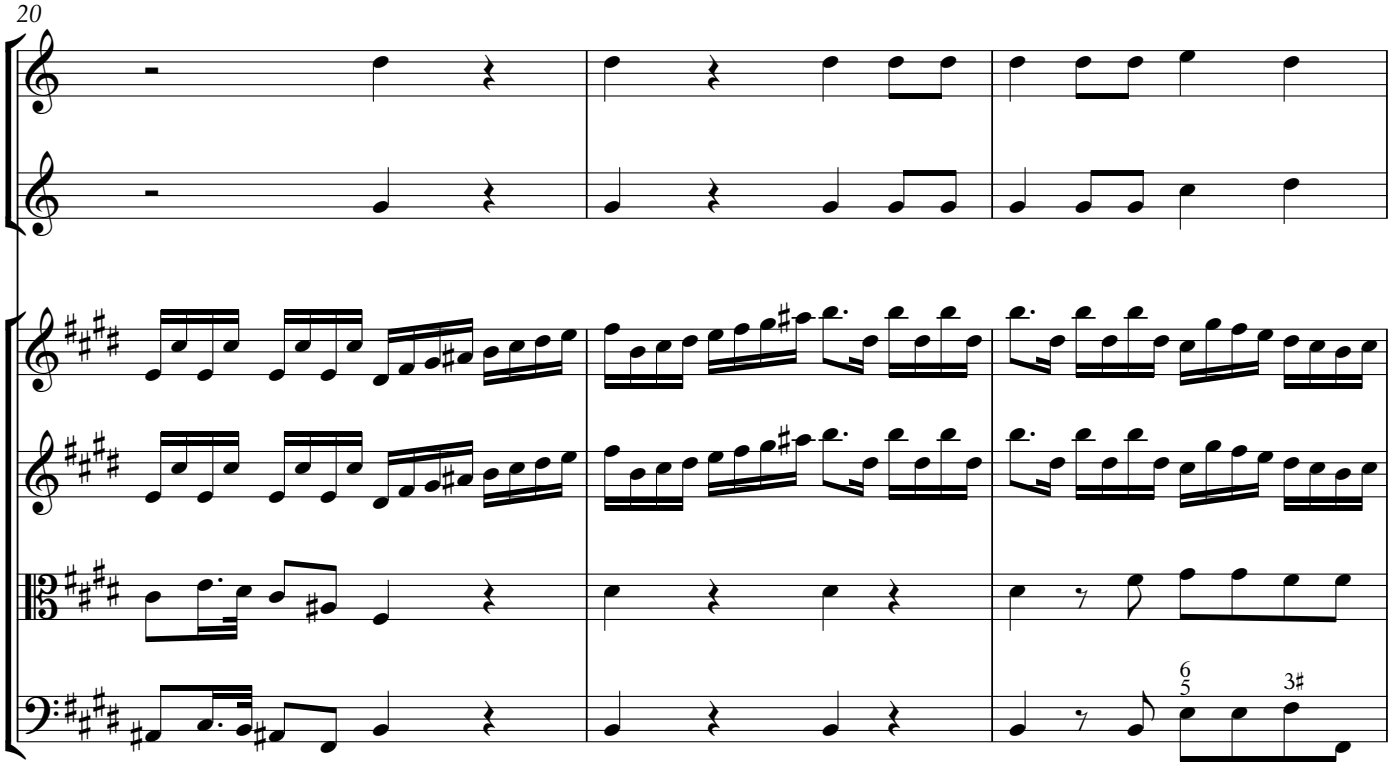
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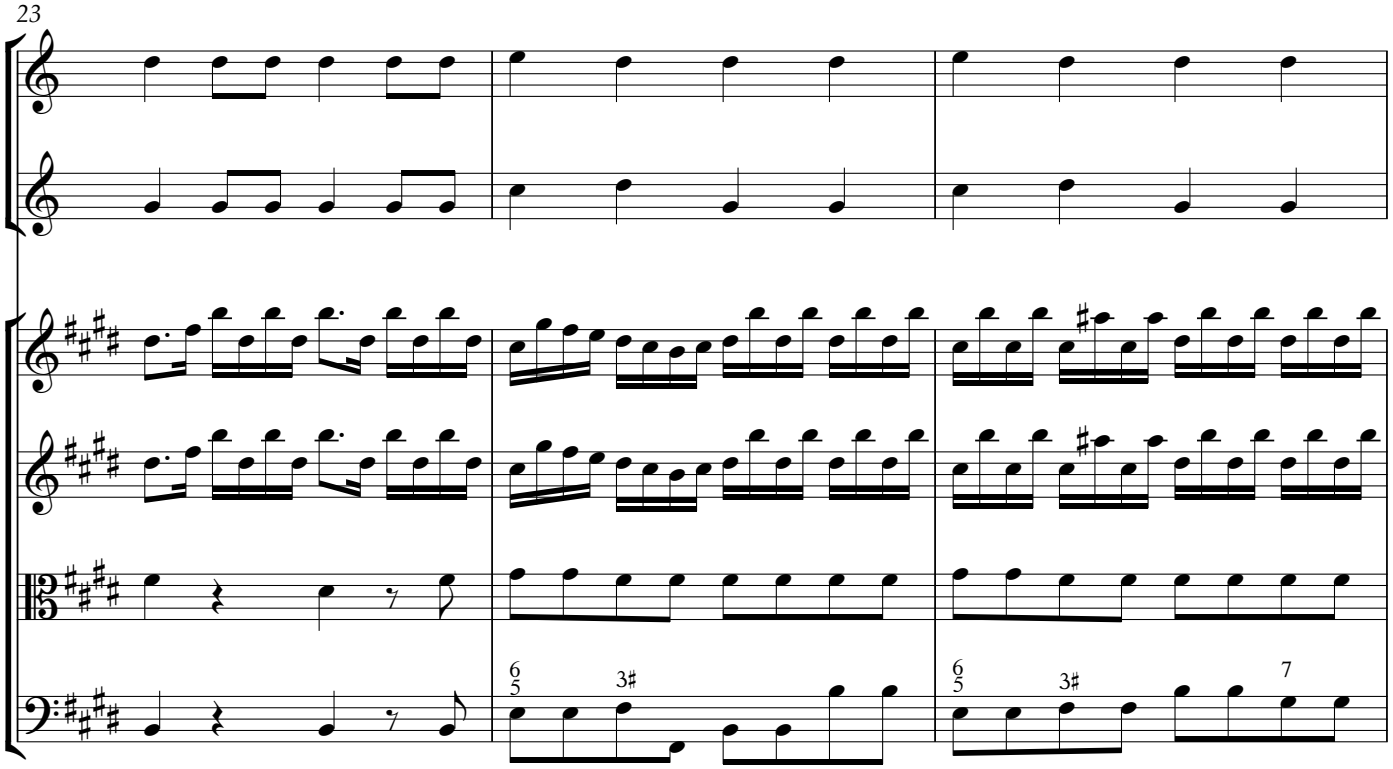
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3♯
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3♯
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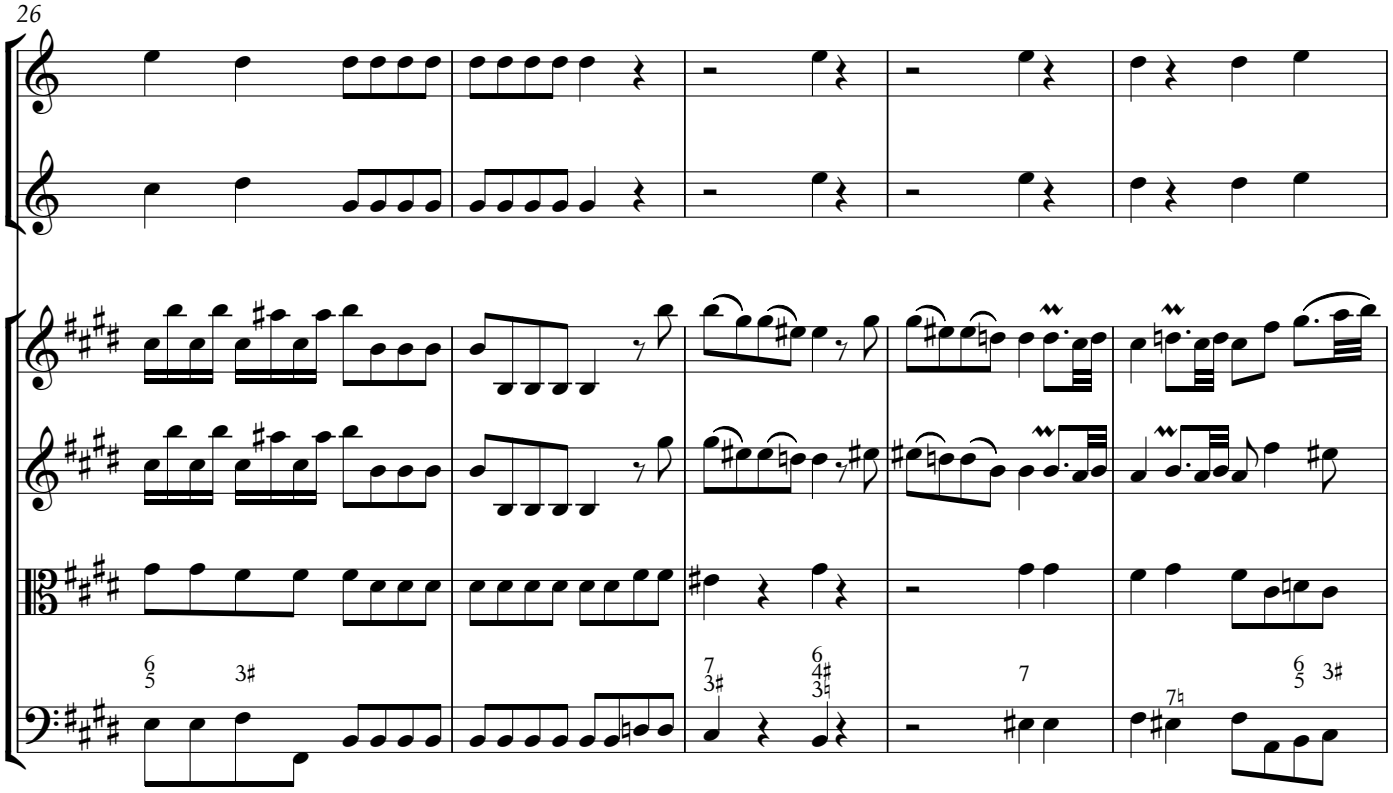
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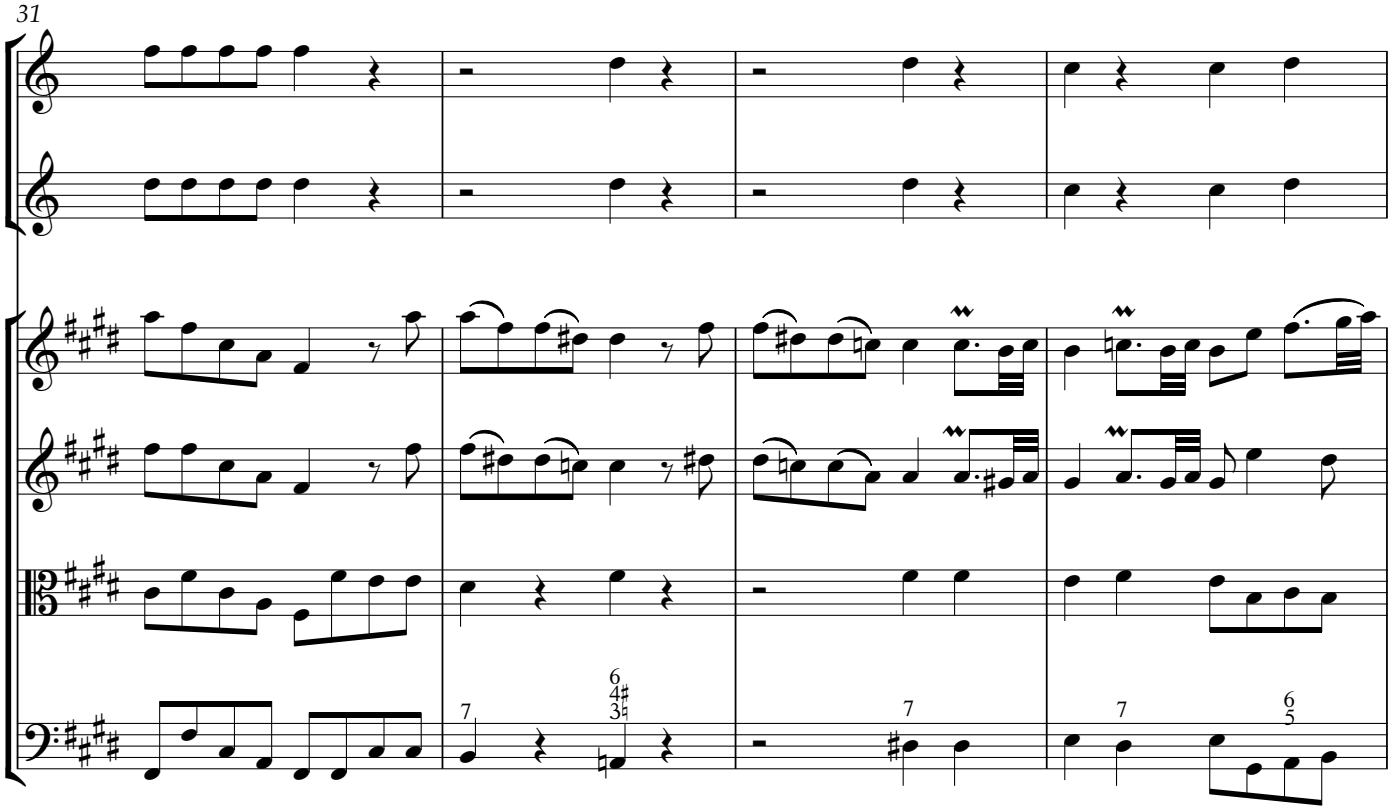
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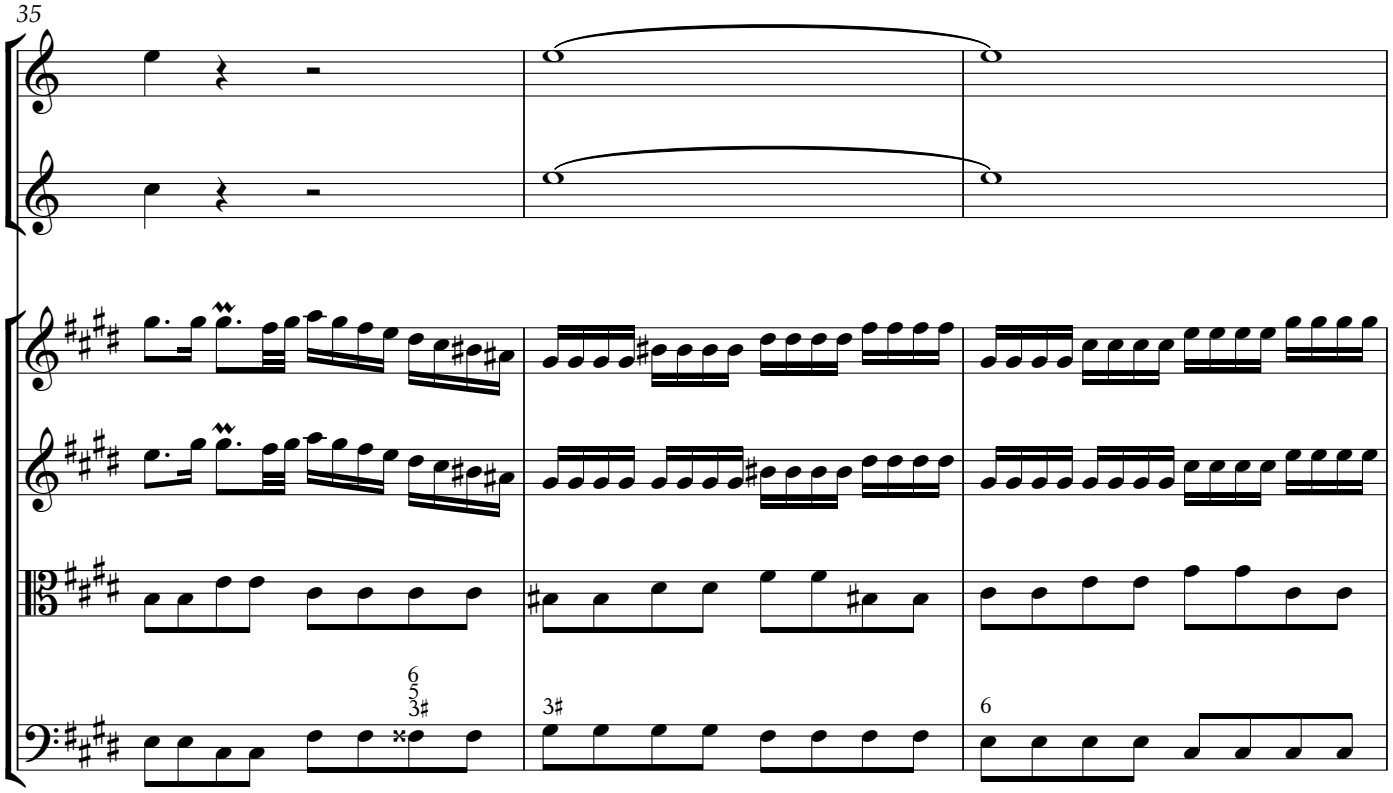
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3♯
3♯
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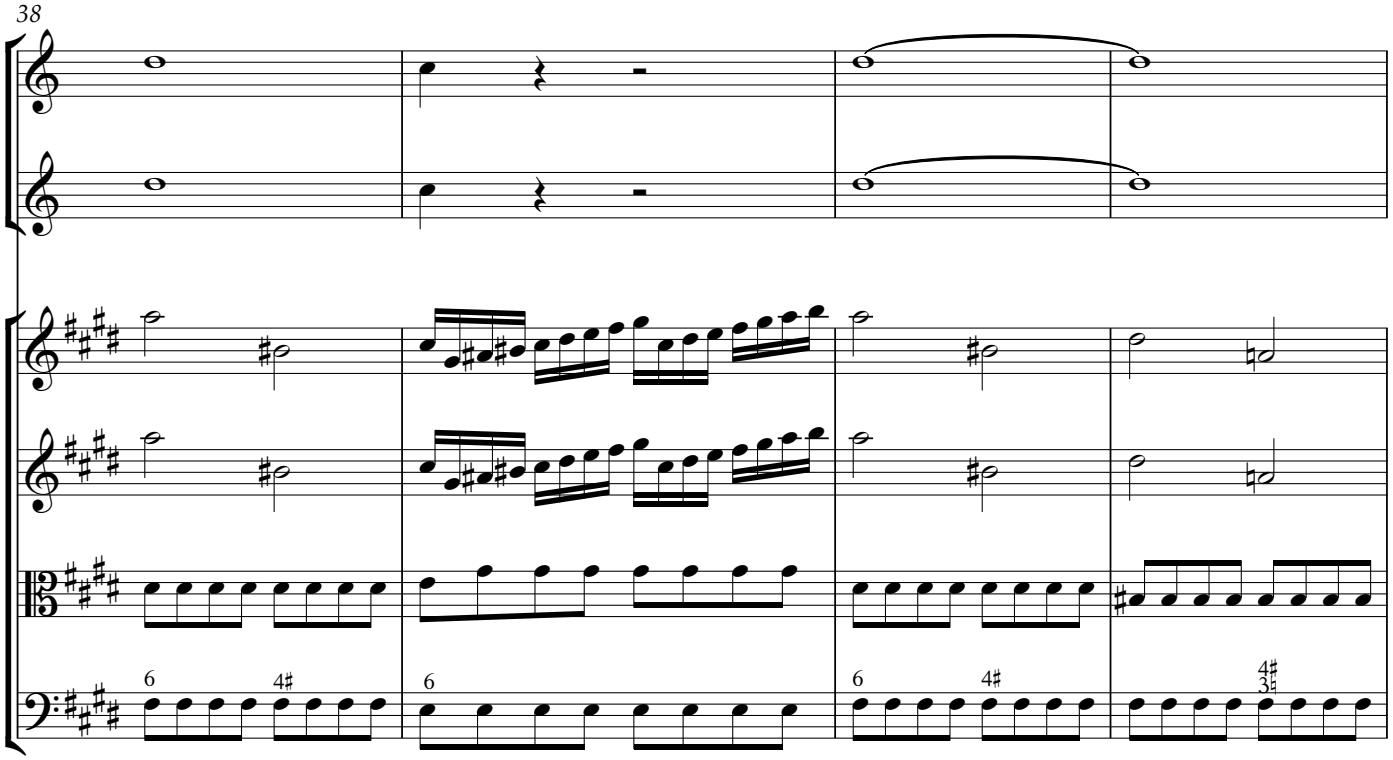
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4♯
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6
4♯
4♯
3♯

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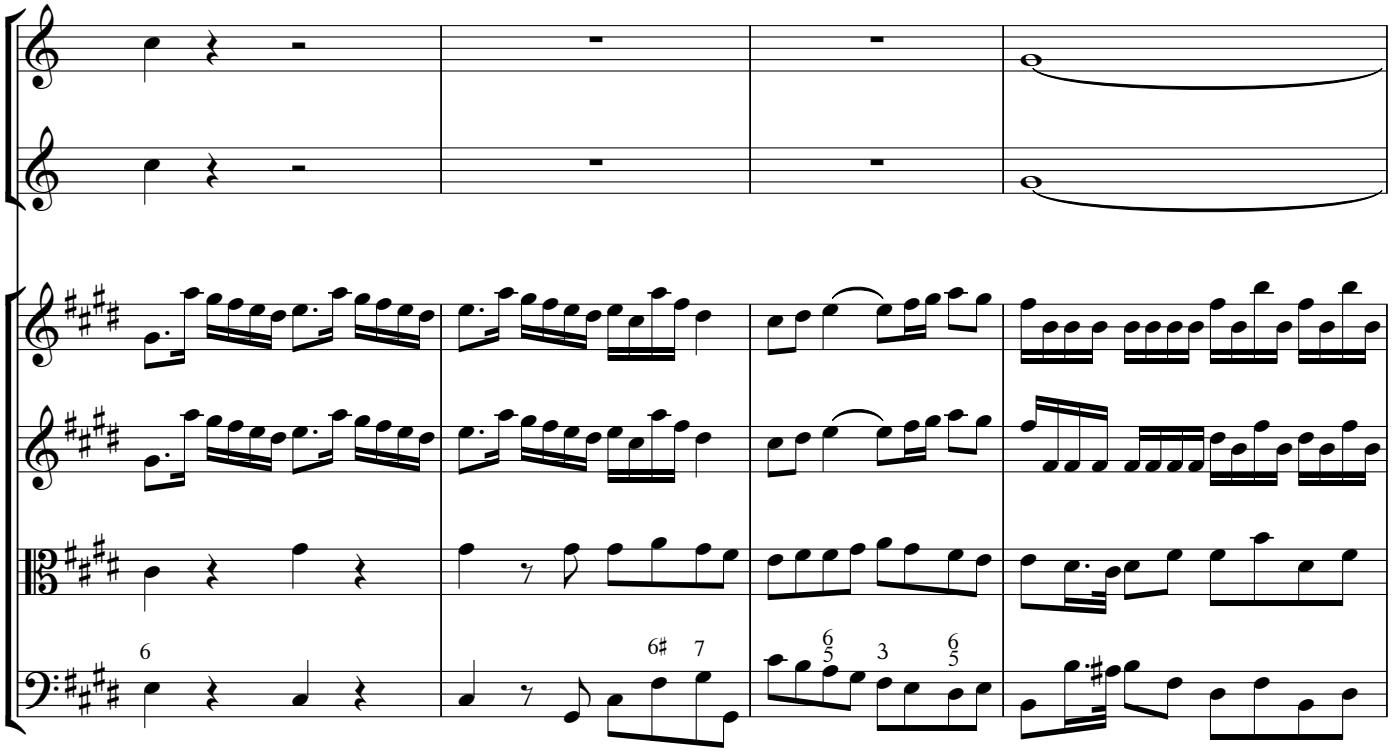

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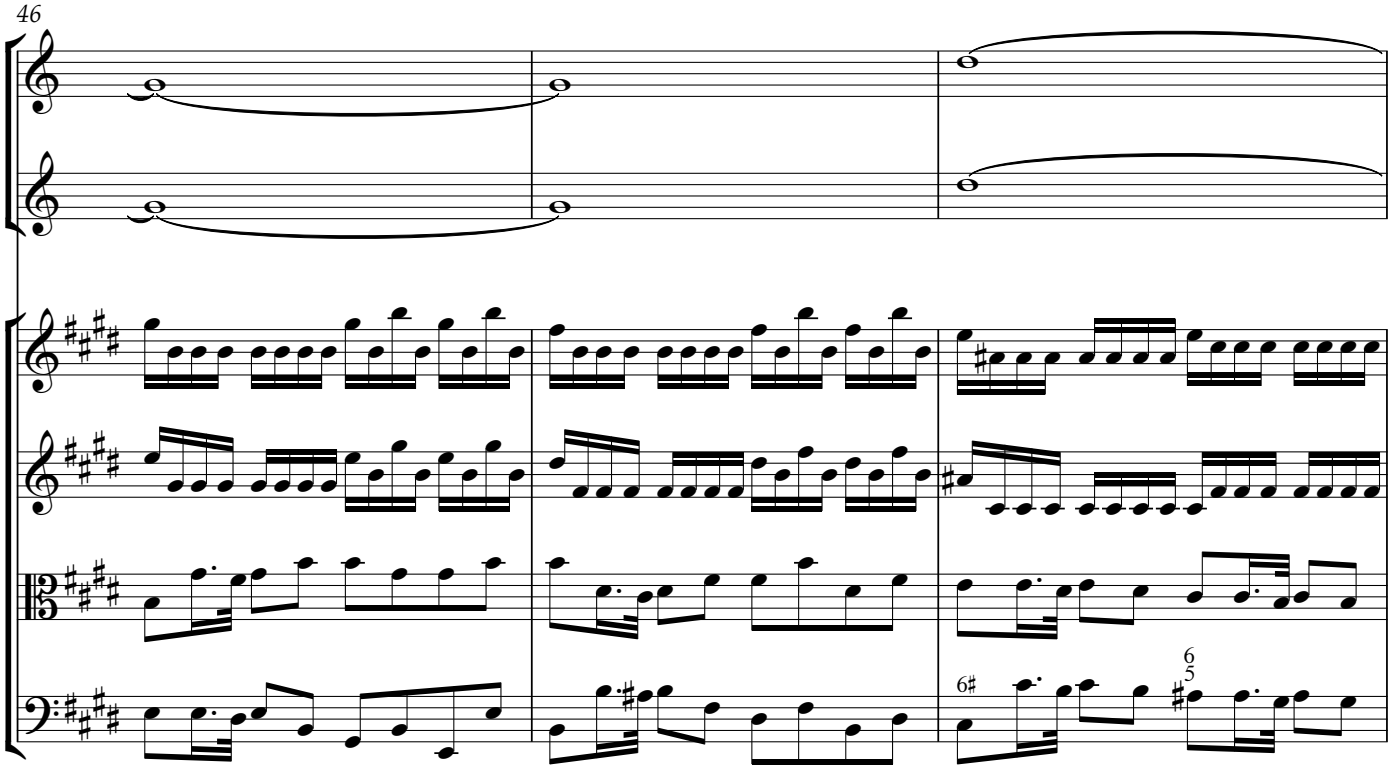

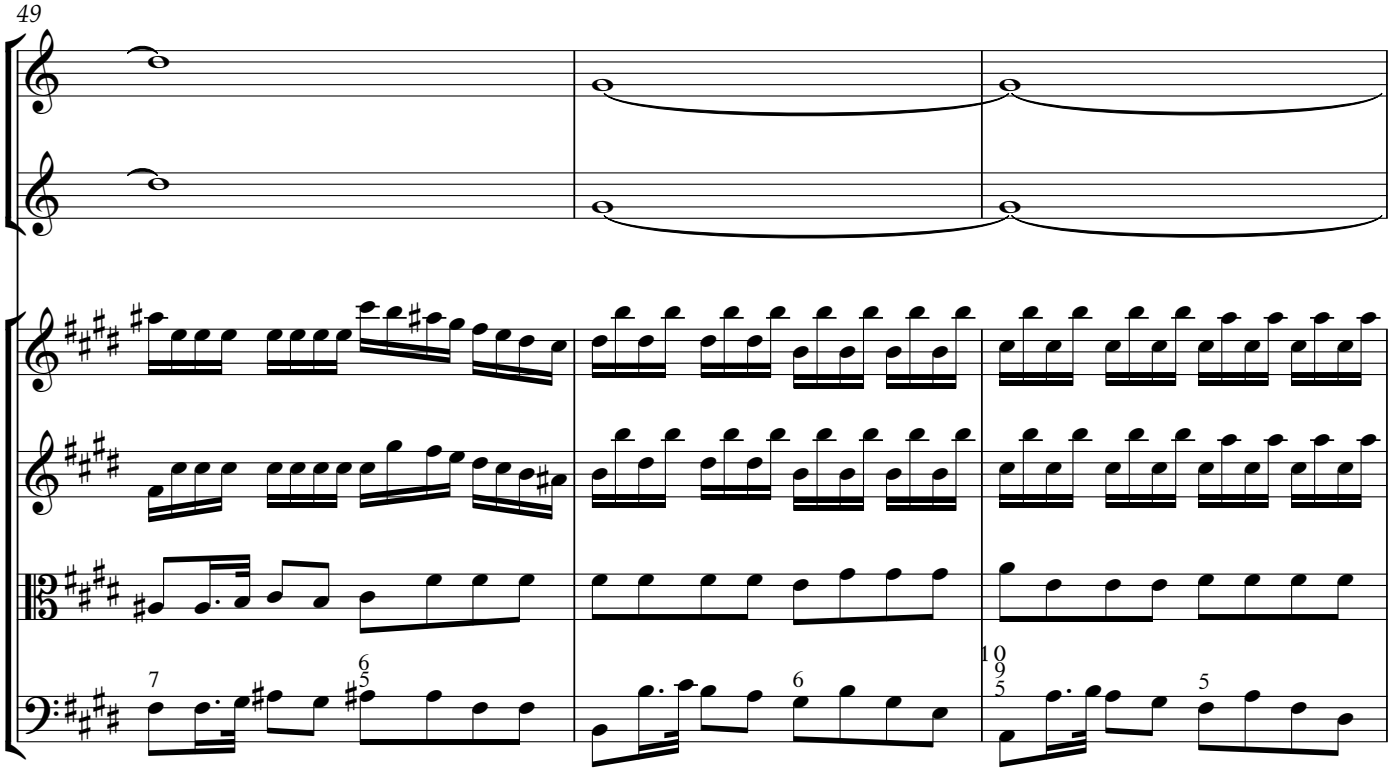
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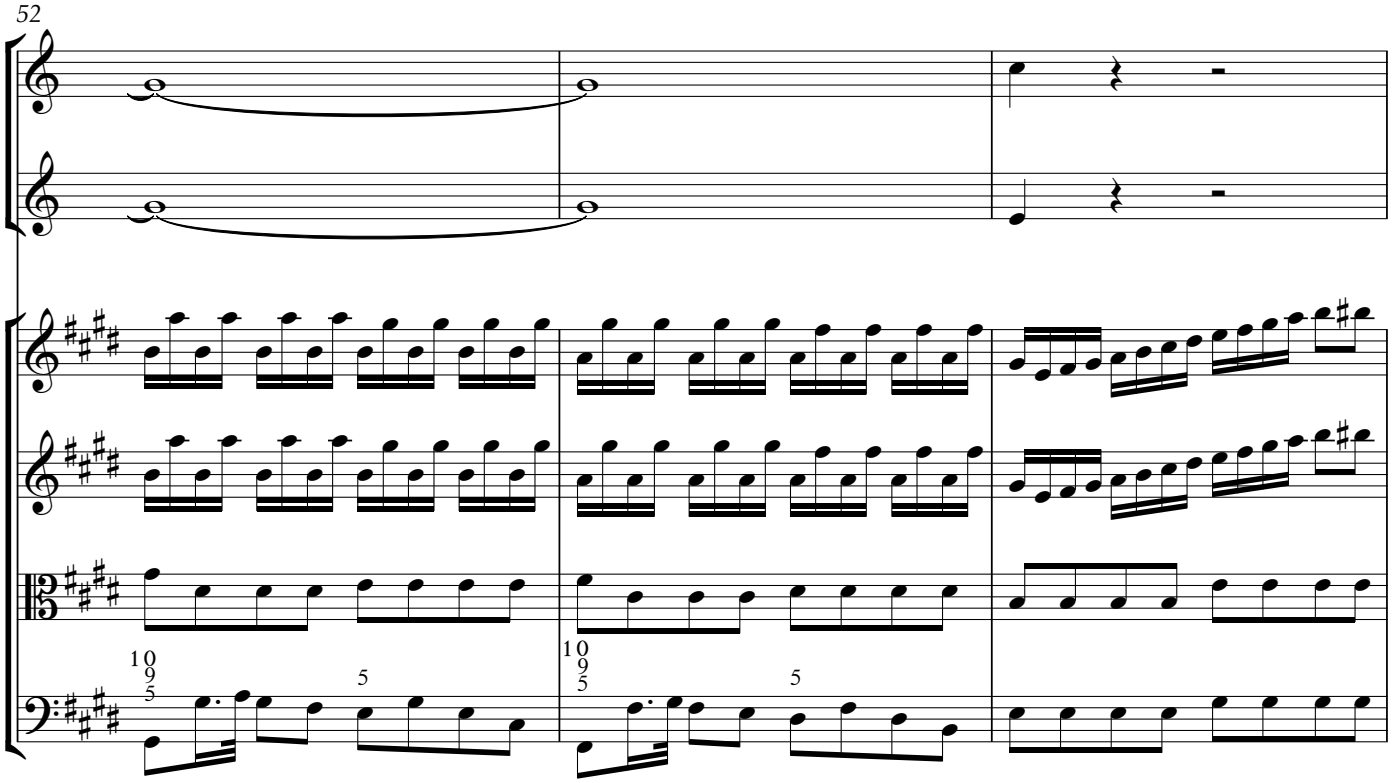
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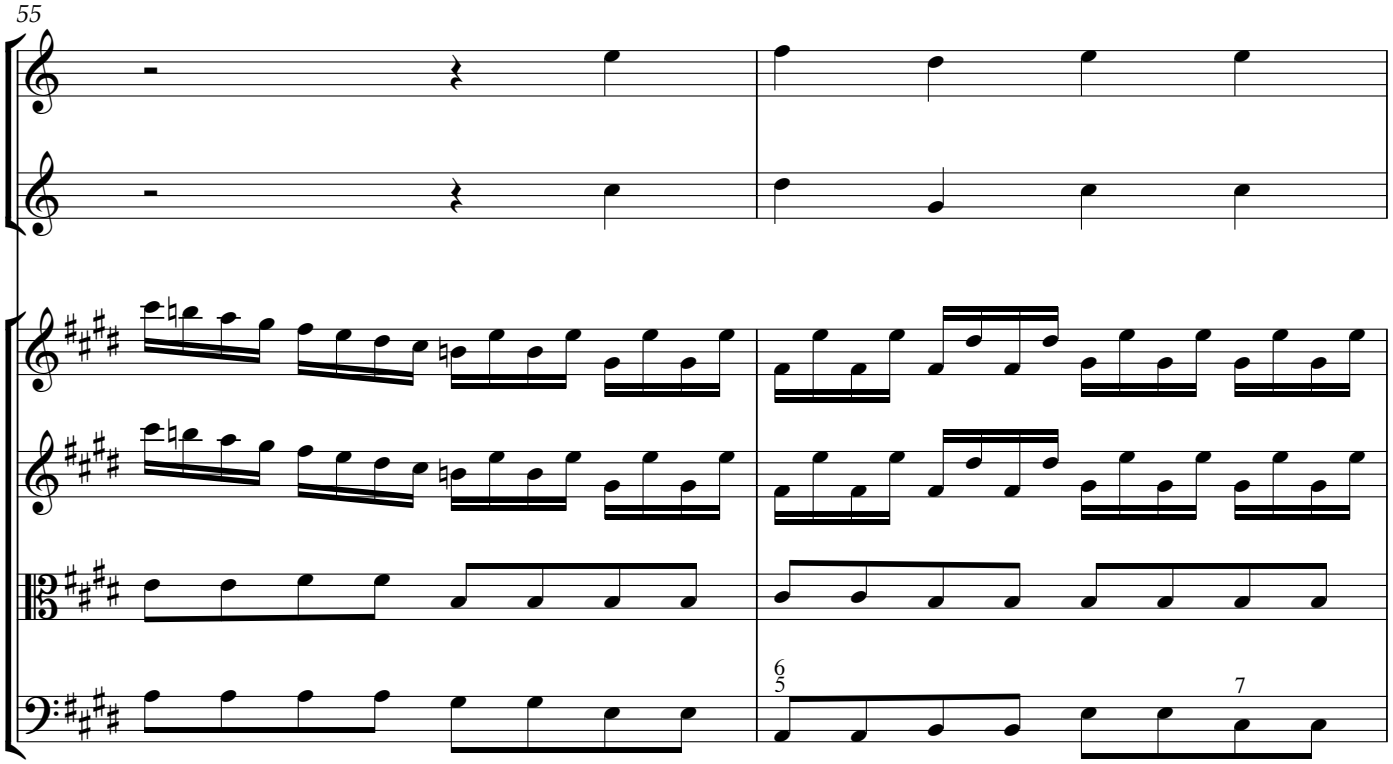
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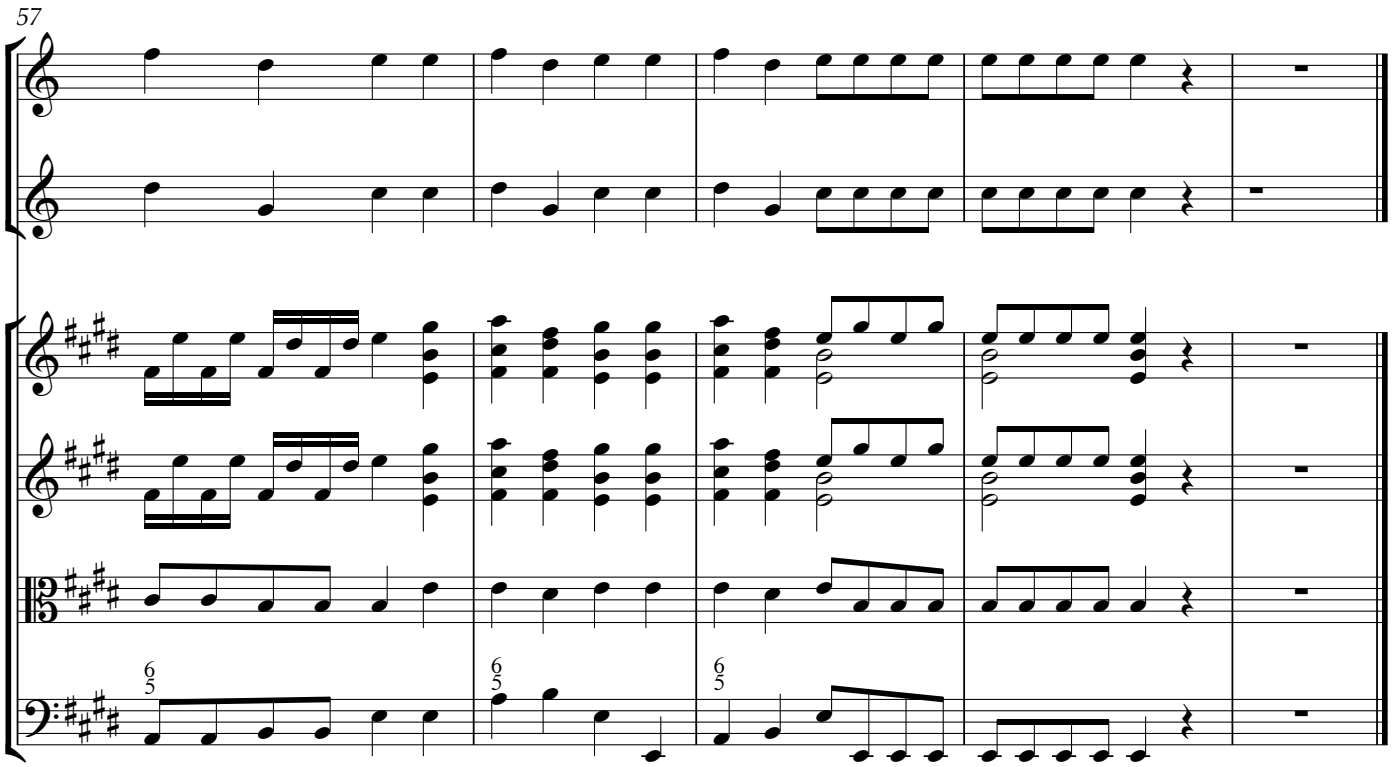
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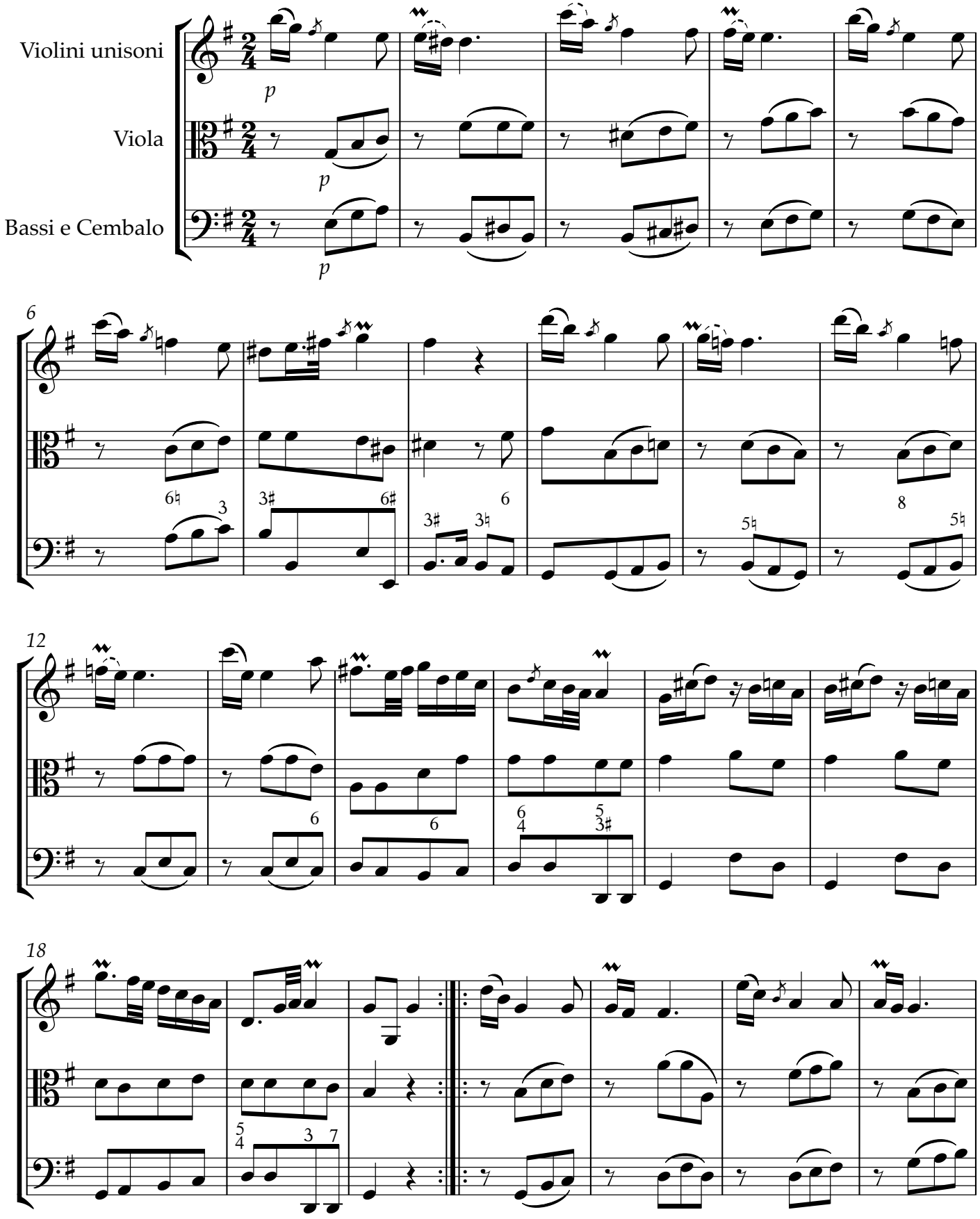
II

Andantino



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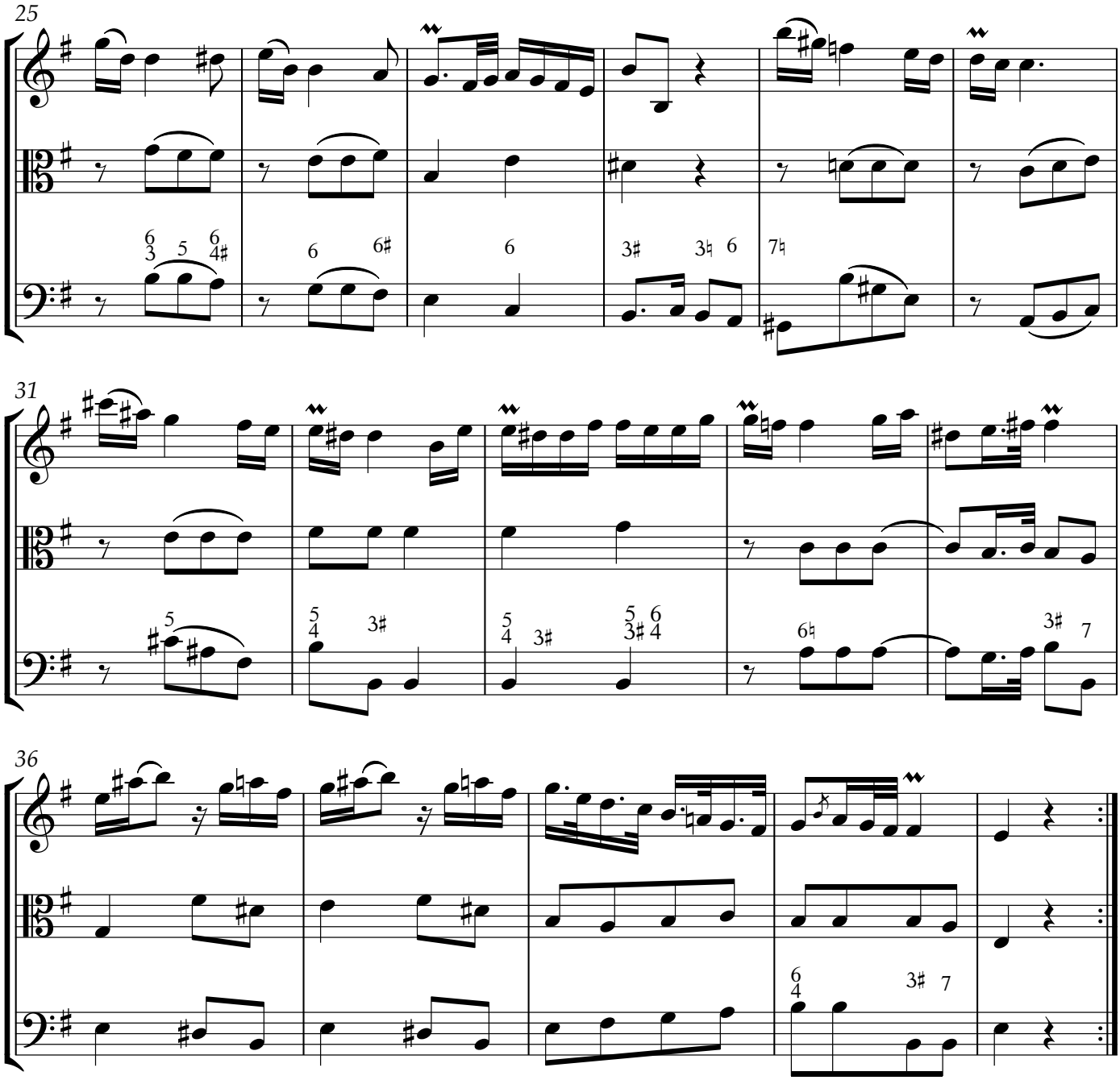
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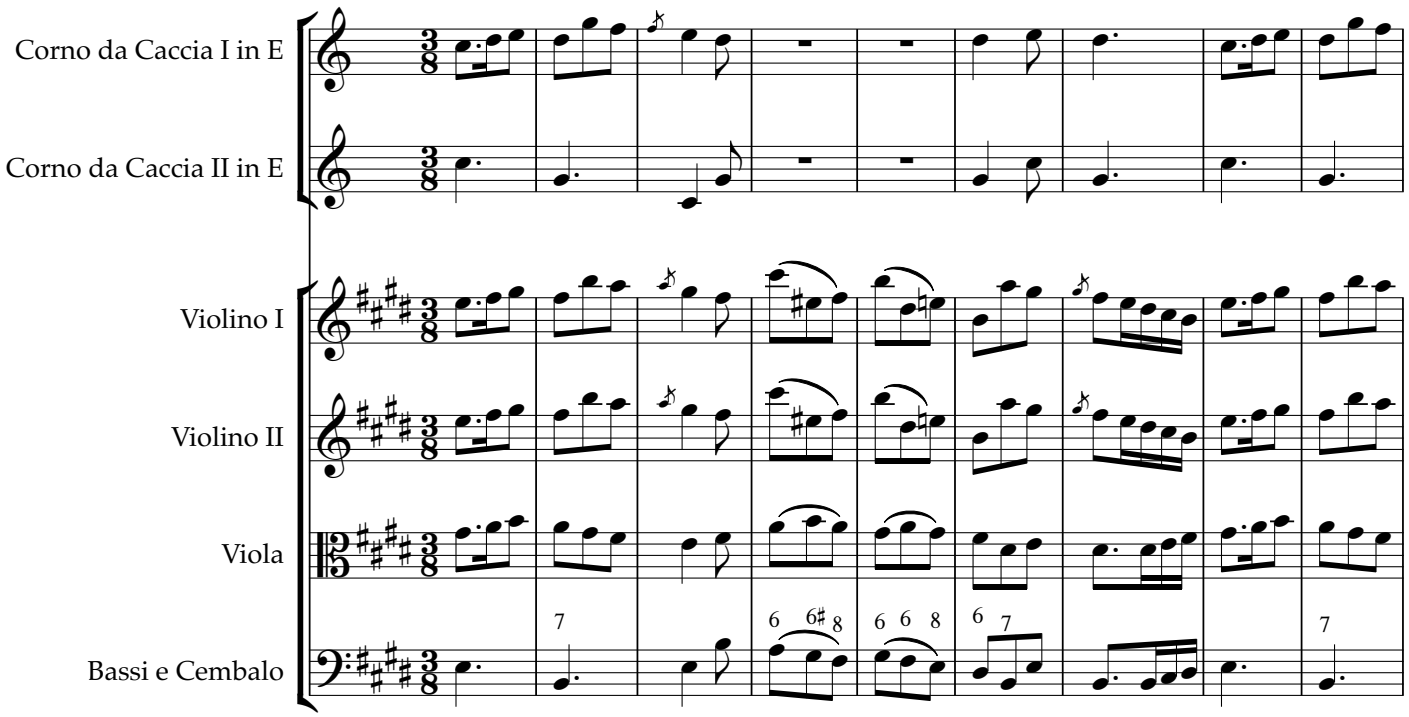
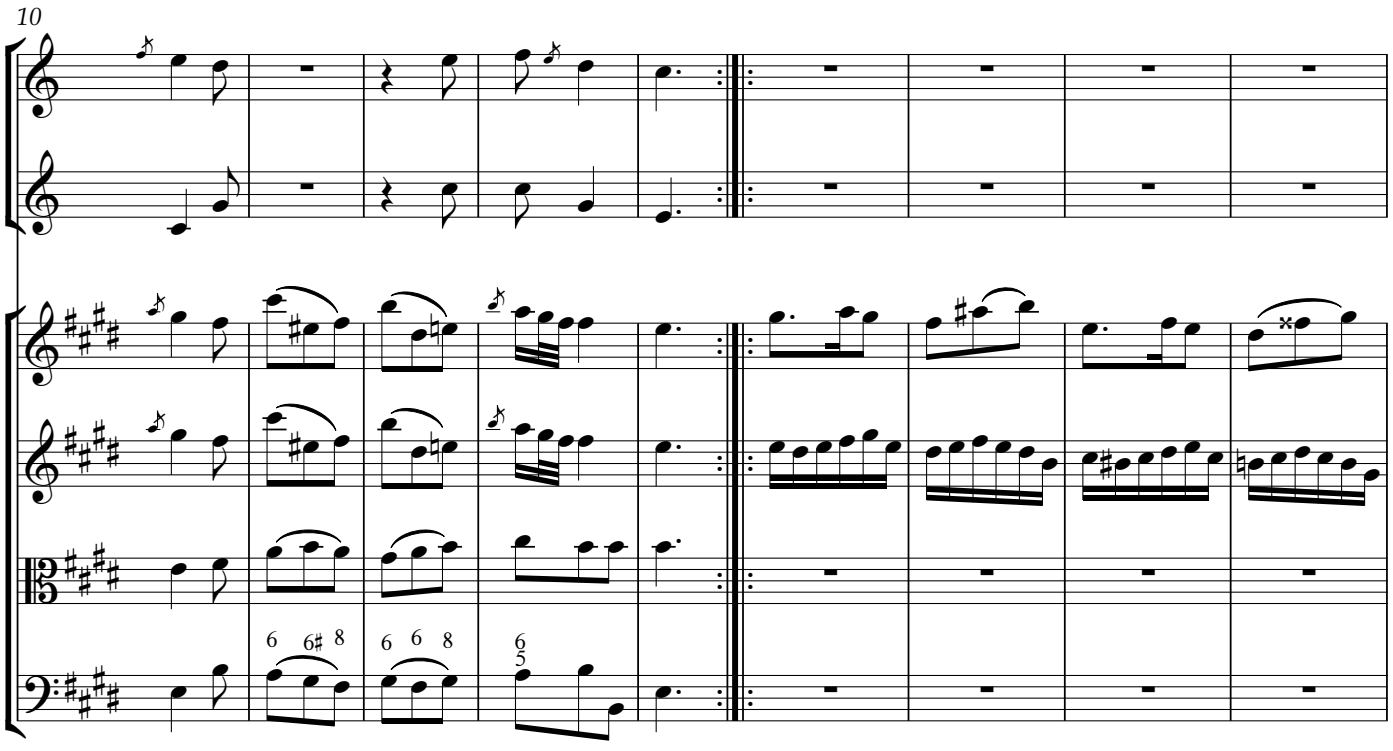
III

a tempo di minuet





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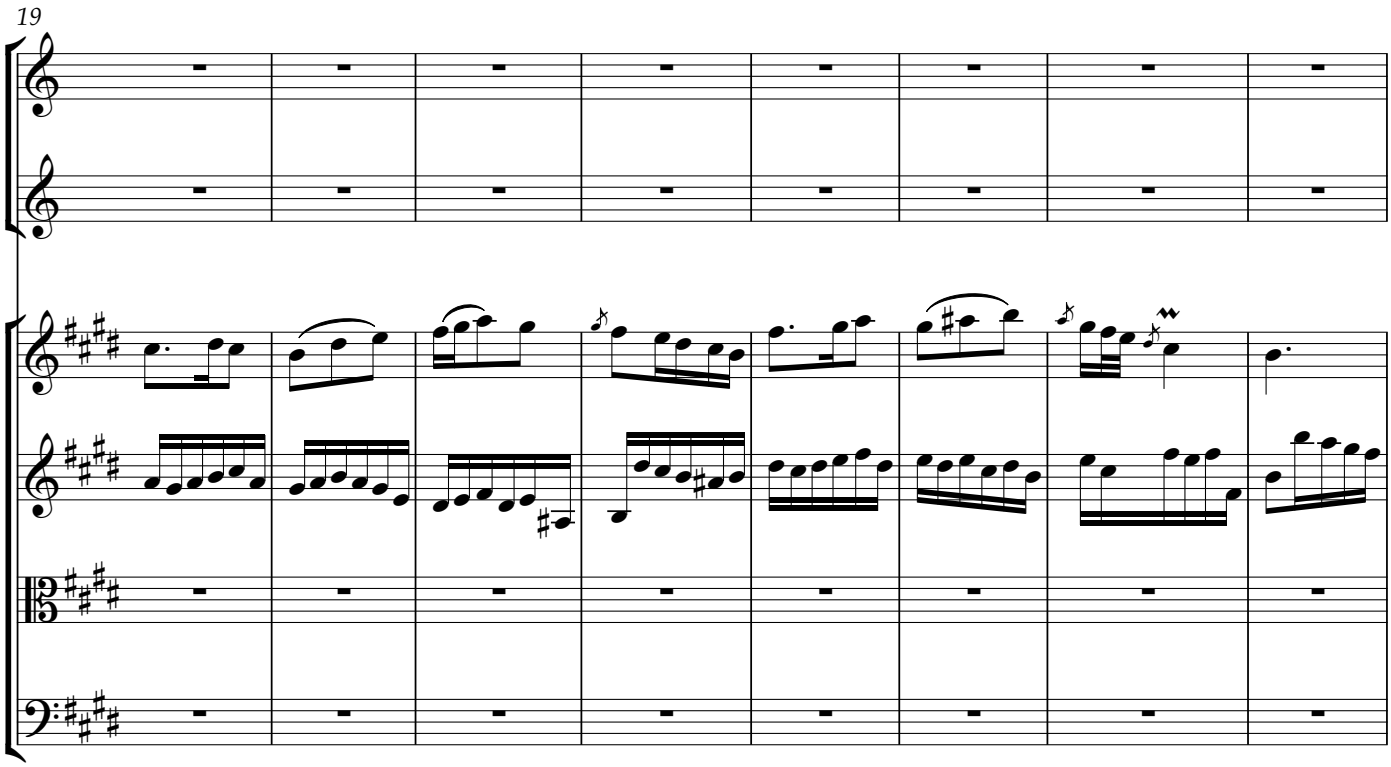
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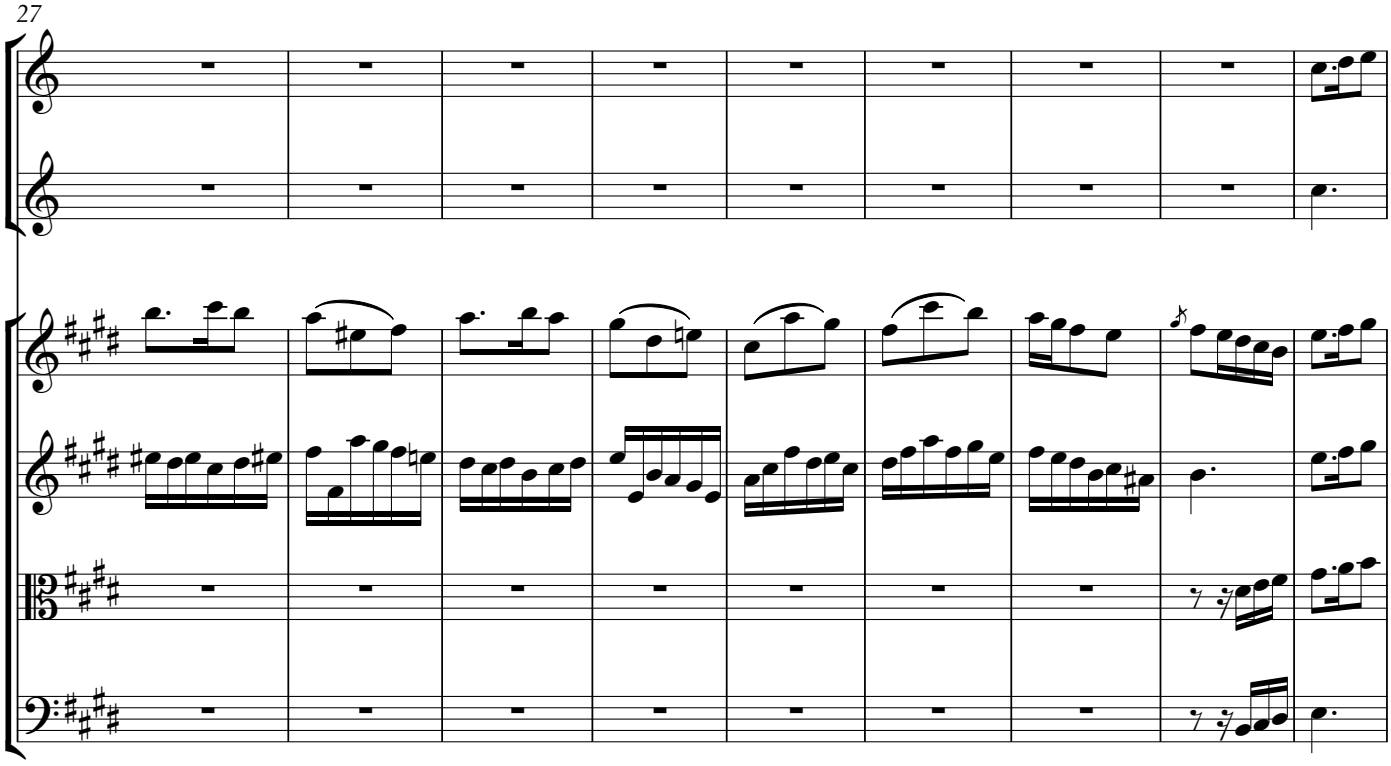
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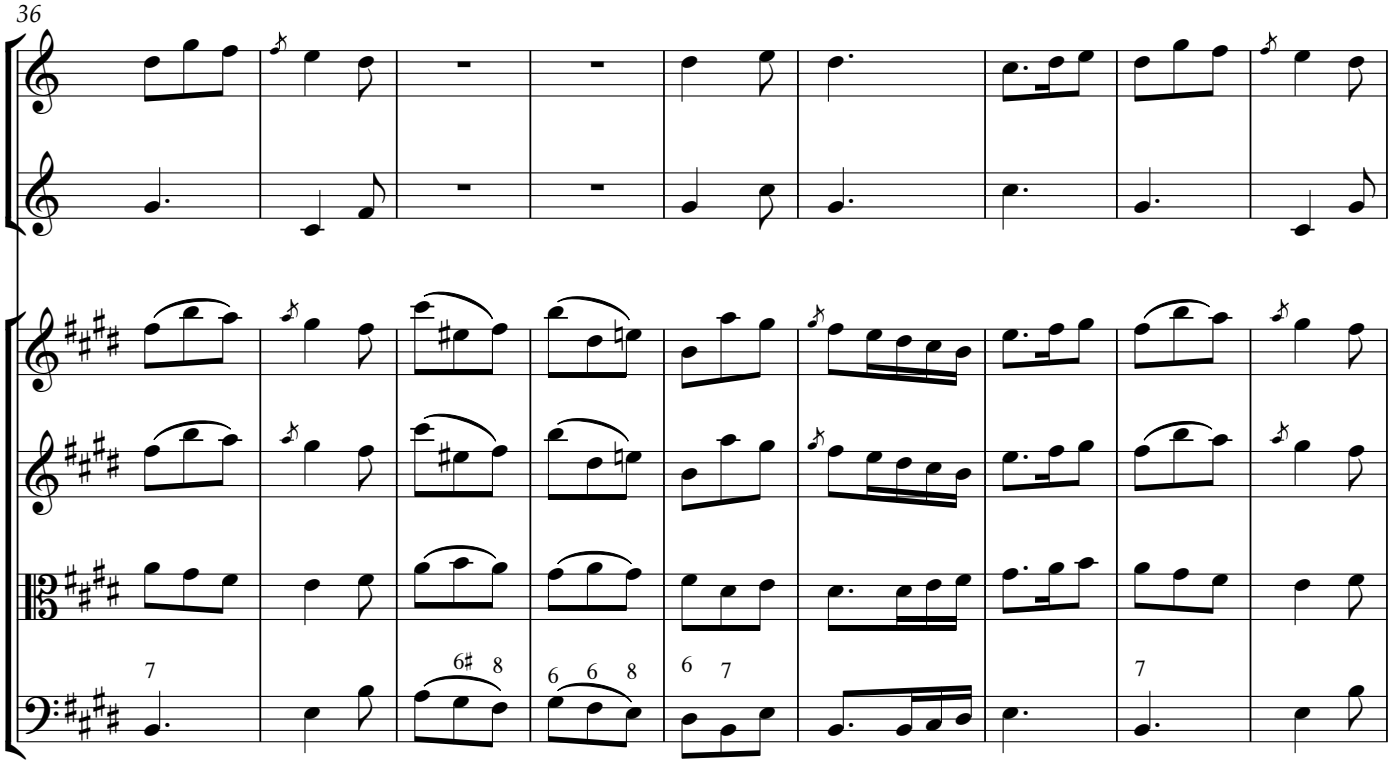
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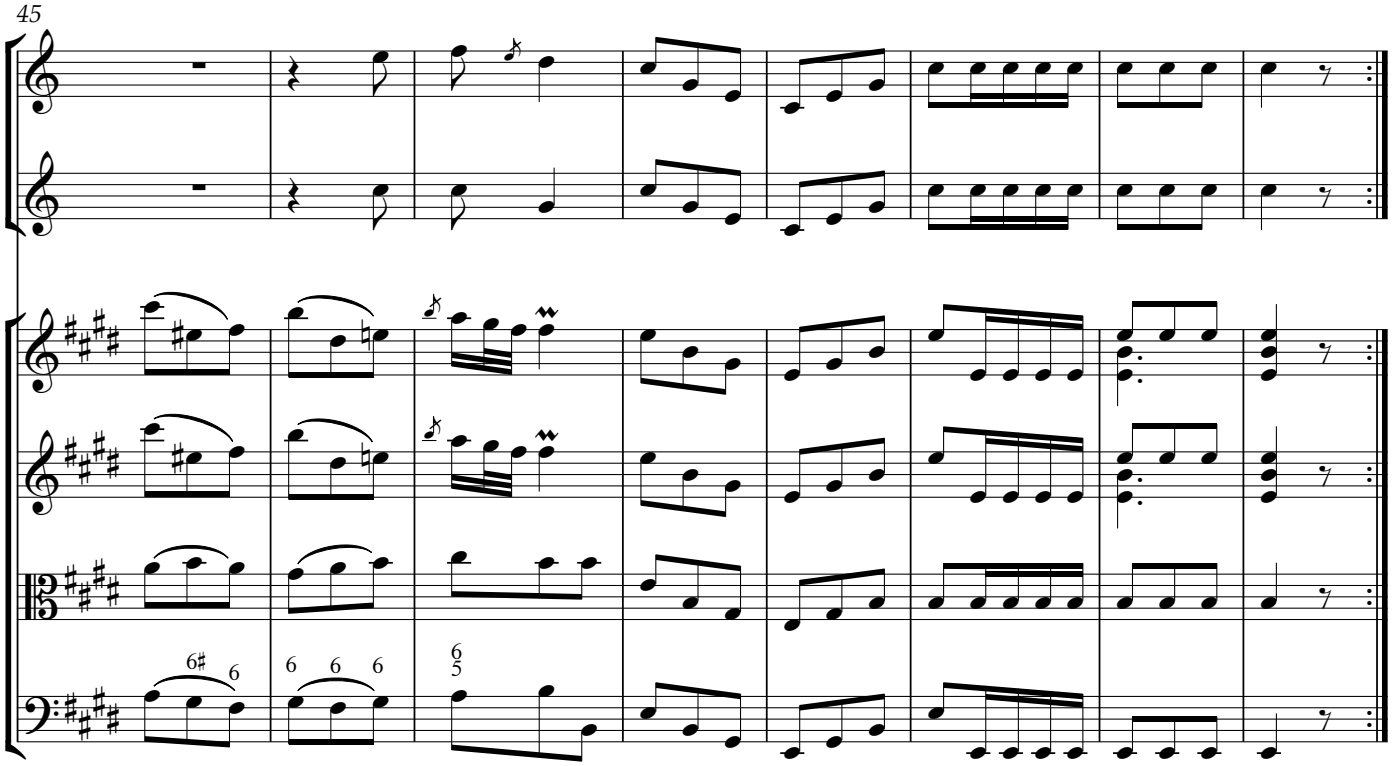
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