mass and band

for abby sher

with special thanks to brian parks and colleen thorburn

instrumentation and notation:

the top three parts are played on one or more plucked string instruments or a minimum of three sustaining instruments. that is, a player can play from any or all of the parts (but should try to avoid doublings with other players). the bottom two parts (written on grand staves) are strictly played on plucked string instruments (harpsichord, virginal, or harp). not all parts need be played: the first plucked string part (given on the first grand staff) can be paired with one or more of the other parts.

a normal notehead indicates the onset of a tone and its further availability until a corresponding x-notehead which indicates that the tone is no longer available. note that a normal notehead may not always have a corresponding x-notehead and if it does, that the corresponding x-notehead may be spelled enharmonically to facilitate legibility in the vertical domain of the score.

for performers playing plucked stringed instruments are encouraged to occasionally rearticulate a tone if the time between a normal notehead and its corresponding x-notehead* is relatively long with respect to the overall feel of the piece. the onset of all of the pitches should be played as accurately as possible.

performers playing sustaining instruments should generally hold a note for the duration indicated by the distance between a normal notehead and its corresponding x-notehead*. on or after the x-notehead* the player may choose to rest or hold the tone until a new note is available (preferring the latter over the former unless the time until the next onset is significant). this means that unlike those playing plucked stringed instruments, those playing sustaining instruments are only playing a subset of the written notes while disregarding possible new notes until the corresponding x-notehead* of the currently sustained note is reached. doublings should be minimized to the extent possible.

*(or the next onset/normal notehead of the same pitch if the corresponding x-notehead does not exist)

tempo and dynamics:

the tempo should be approximately 72 quarter notes per minute and the dynamic generally constant and even across all parts. that is, clear and not loud.

tuning:

the top three parts are limited to octave equivalents of the 8^{th} through 16^{th} partials of a low a (the reference fundamental). this is partially to segregate the simpler harmonic relationships from the more complex relationships in the other parts.

the two plucked string instruments are retuned differently across all octaves. if an instrument can play all the notes (virginal or harpsichord), it should be given the first of the parts on grand staves. if any of the parts are played on harp, the harpist should choose a pedal setting, tune the available notes accordingly, and disregard notes not within the pedal setting. another (perhaps better) option is to distribute the notes of one of the parts among two harp players.

first realization:

the first realization of the piece performed by brian parks (virginal) and colleen thorburn (harp) is also included. in their version, only the bottom parts were realized and colleen played all notes without accidentals (in their respective tunings). their performance was far more beautiful than i could have ever imagined in mind. this piece would not have clarified itself so well without their dedication. point being is that the recording from their nov. 15, 2011 performance at willow place auditorium may provide better instruction than those i have given above.

a general note about realizing the piece:

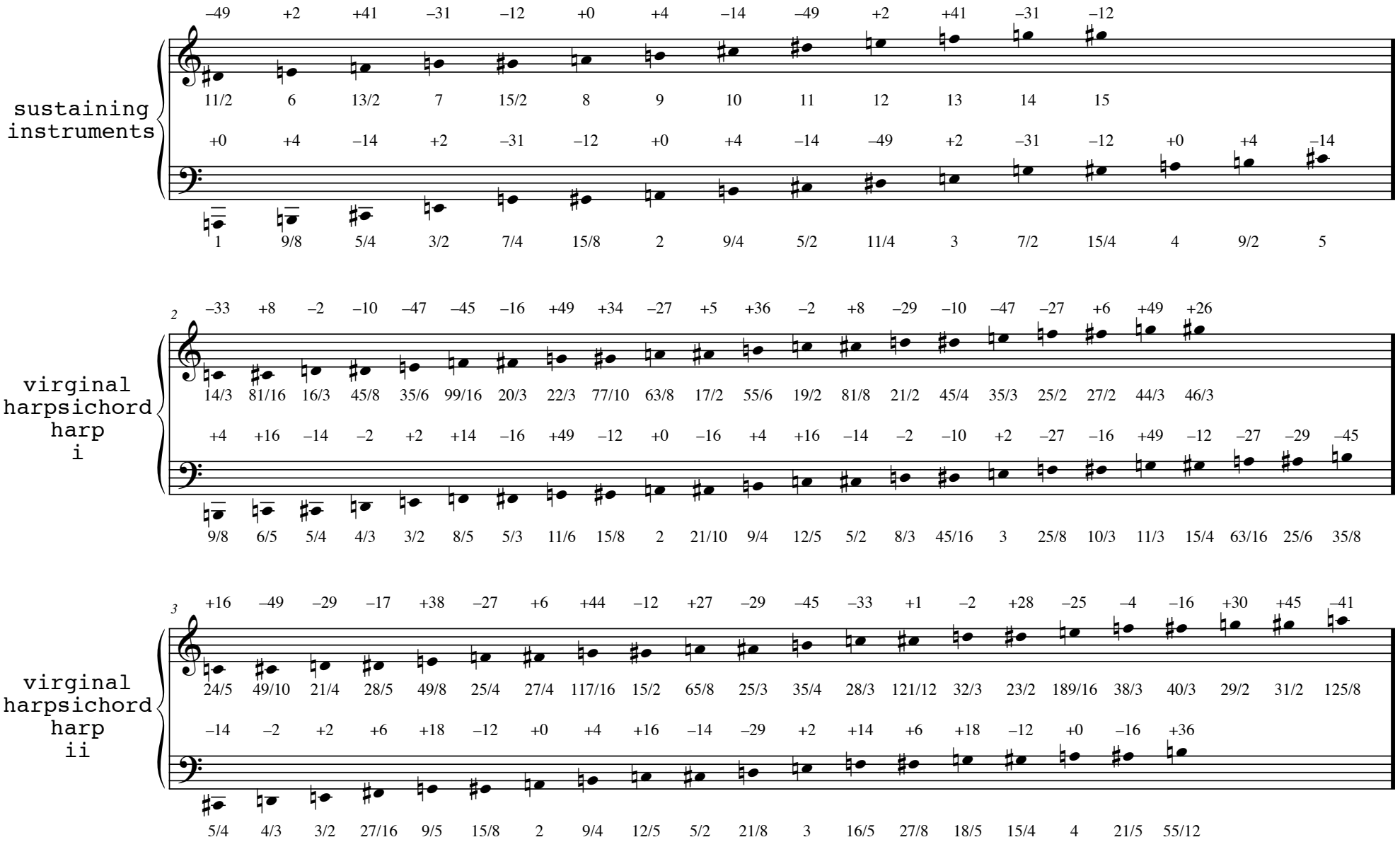
the piece should never feel fragile. for example, using sustaining instruments for the top parts as opposed to plucked strings should only be considered if the general texture and flow of the piece remain consistent throughout. the use of sustaining instruments will by nature have a dissociative effect from the plucked string instruments. use of sustaining instruments should only be attempted if this effect is not amplified as the ensemble should always sound unified to the extent possible.

michael winter (la, 2011)

mass and band

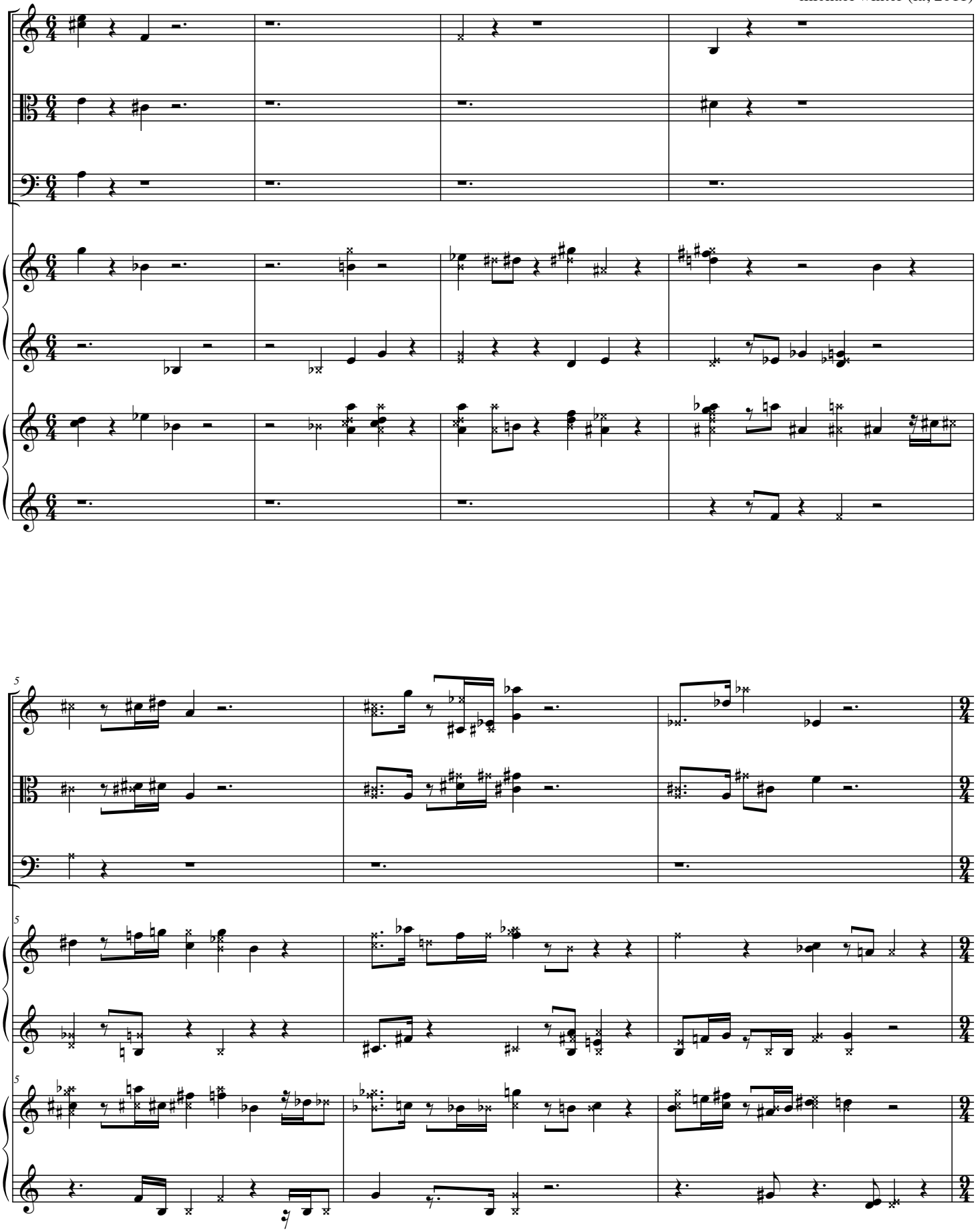
tuning chart

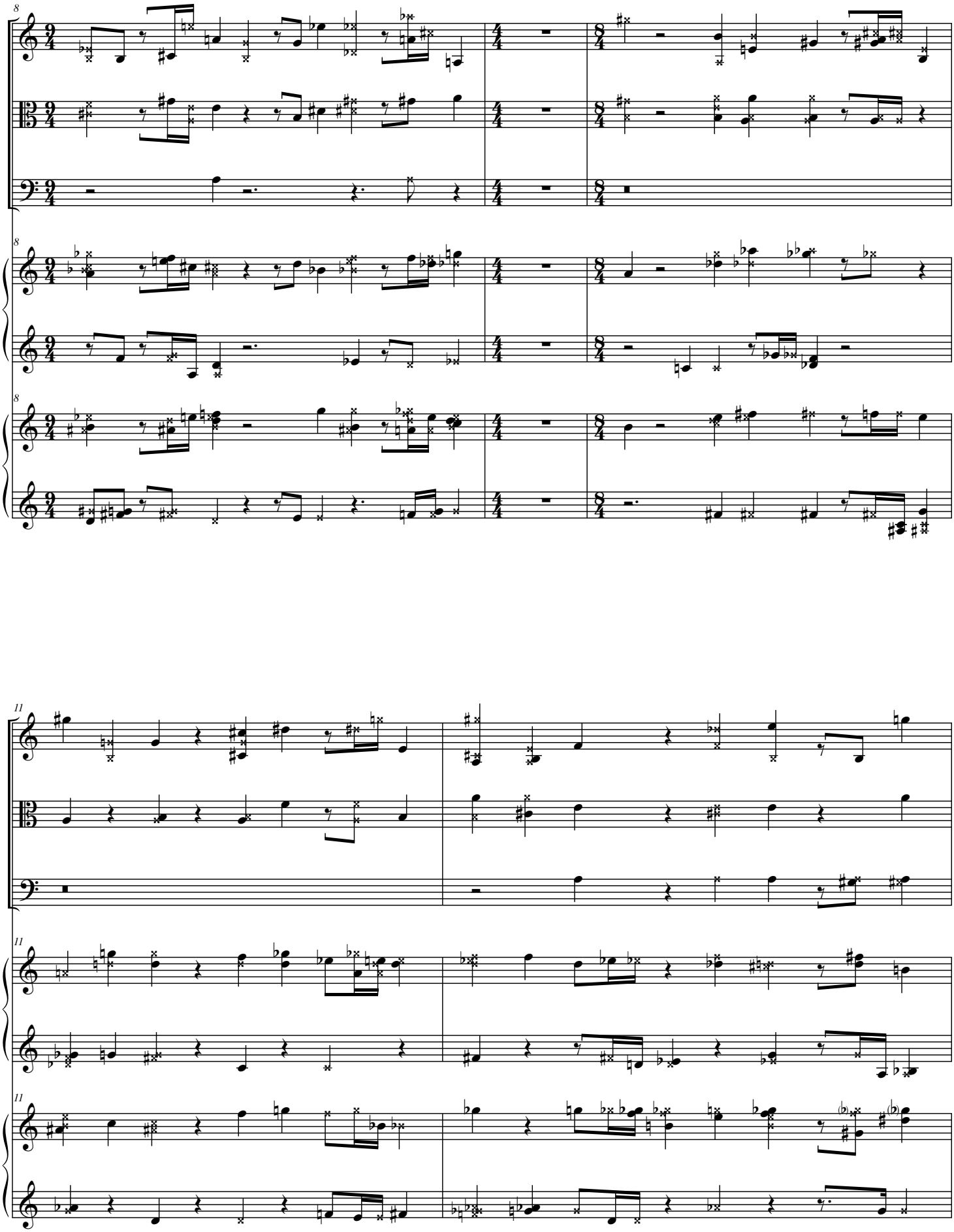
michael winter (la, 2011)



mass and band

michael winter (la, 2011)

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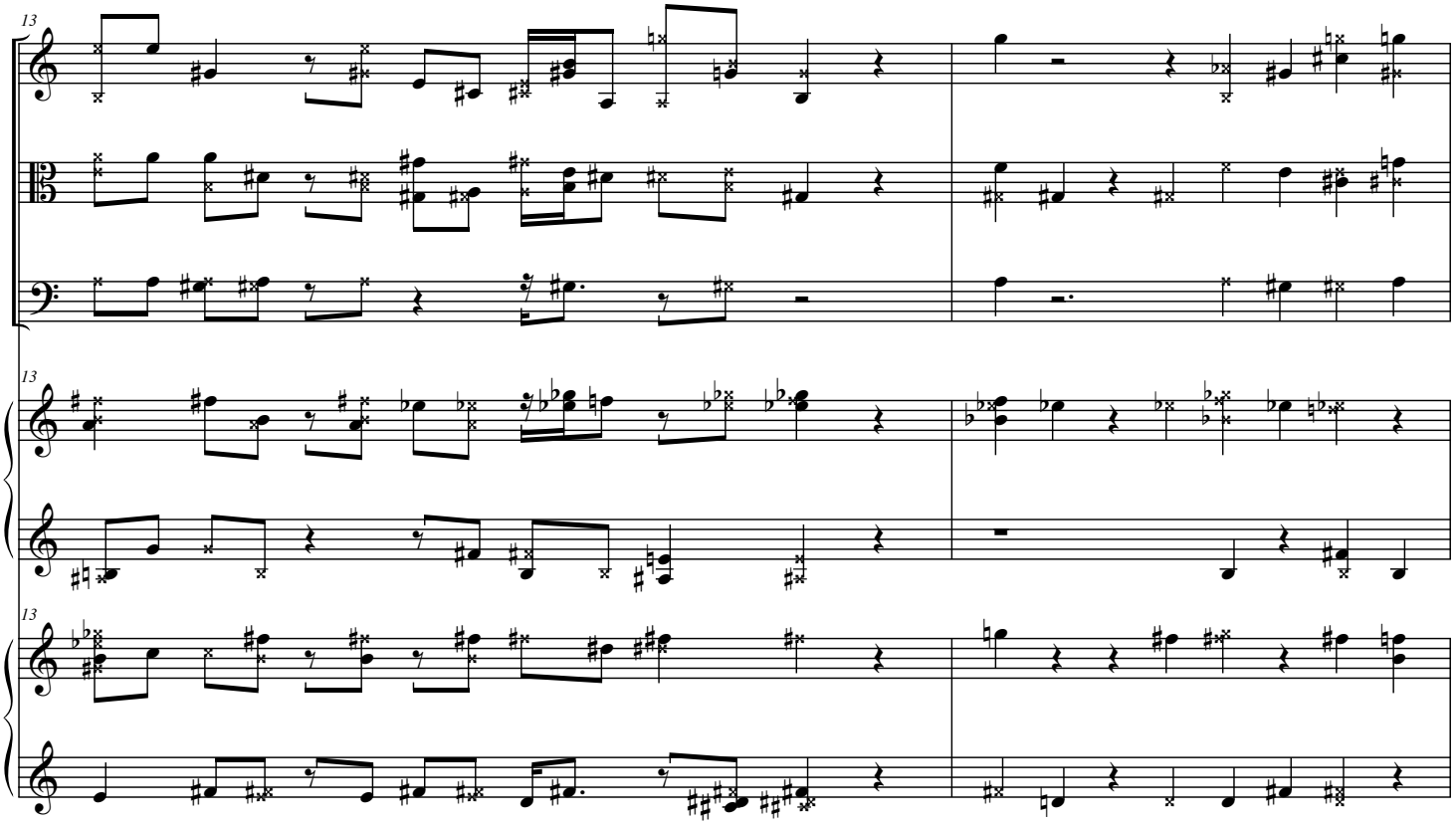
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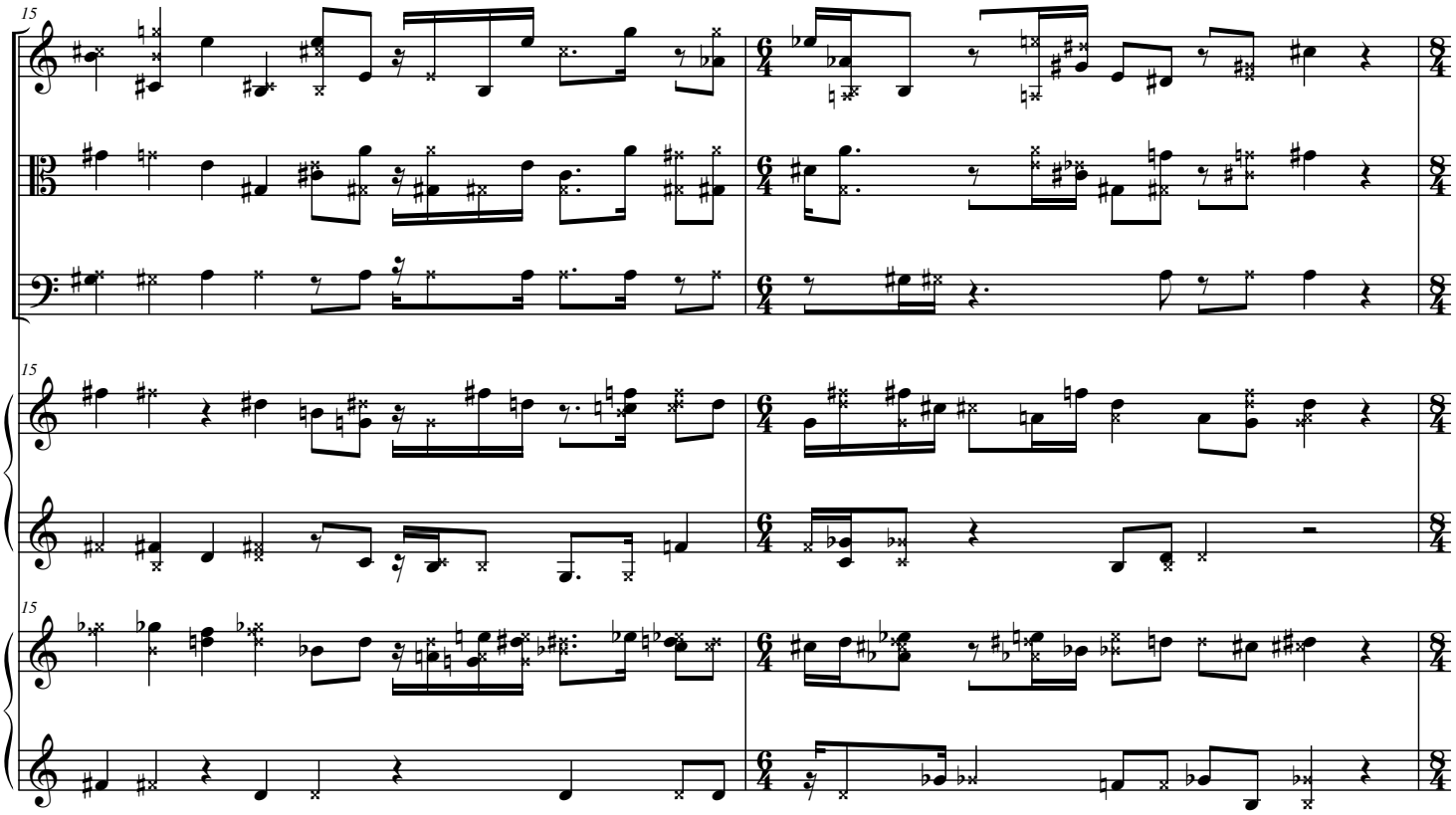
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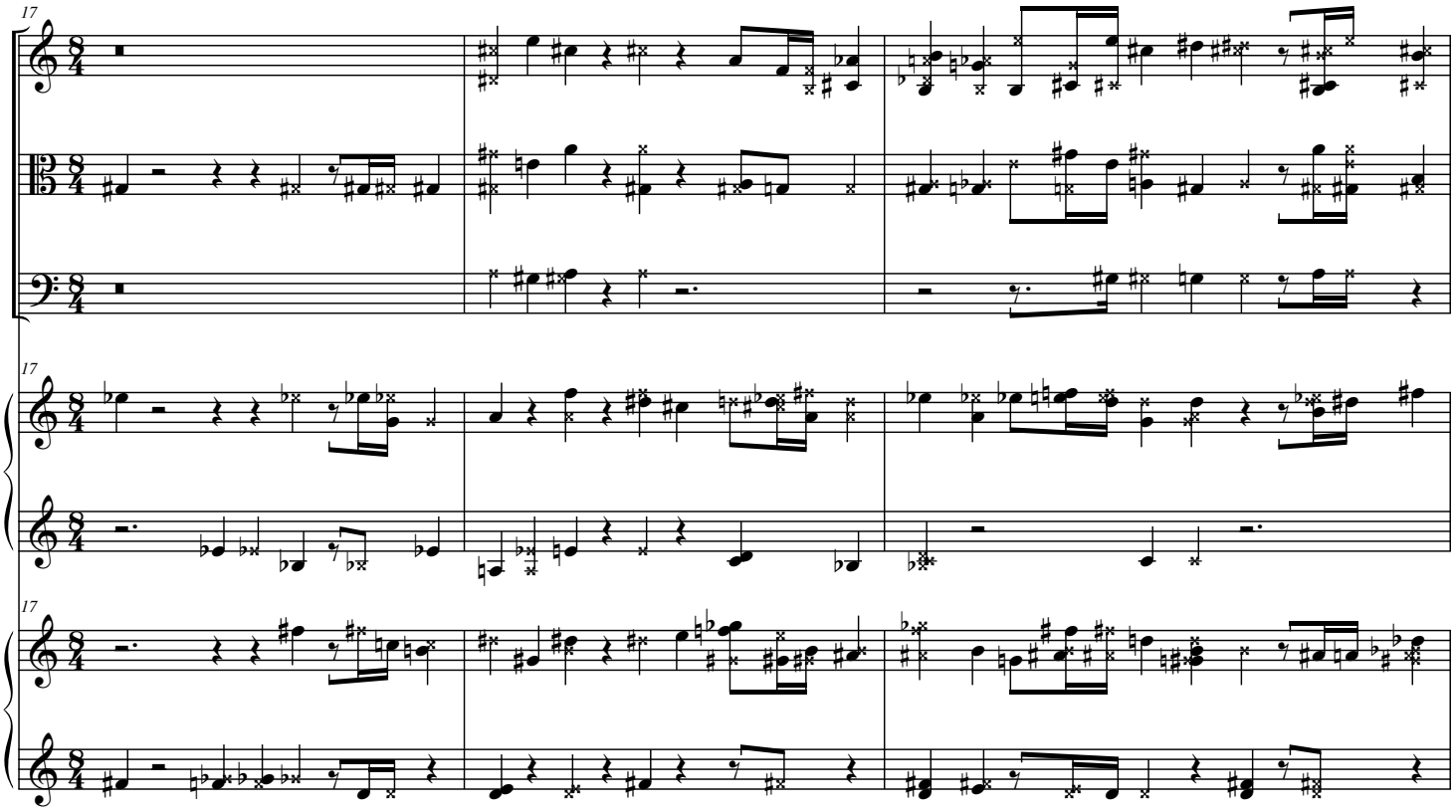
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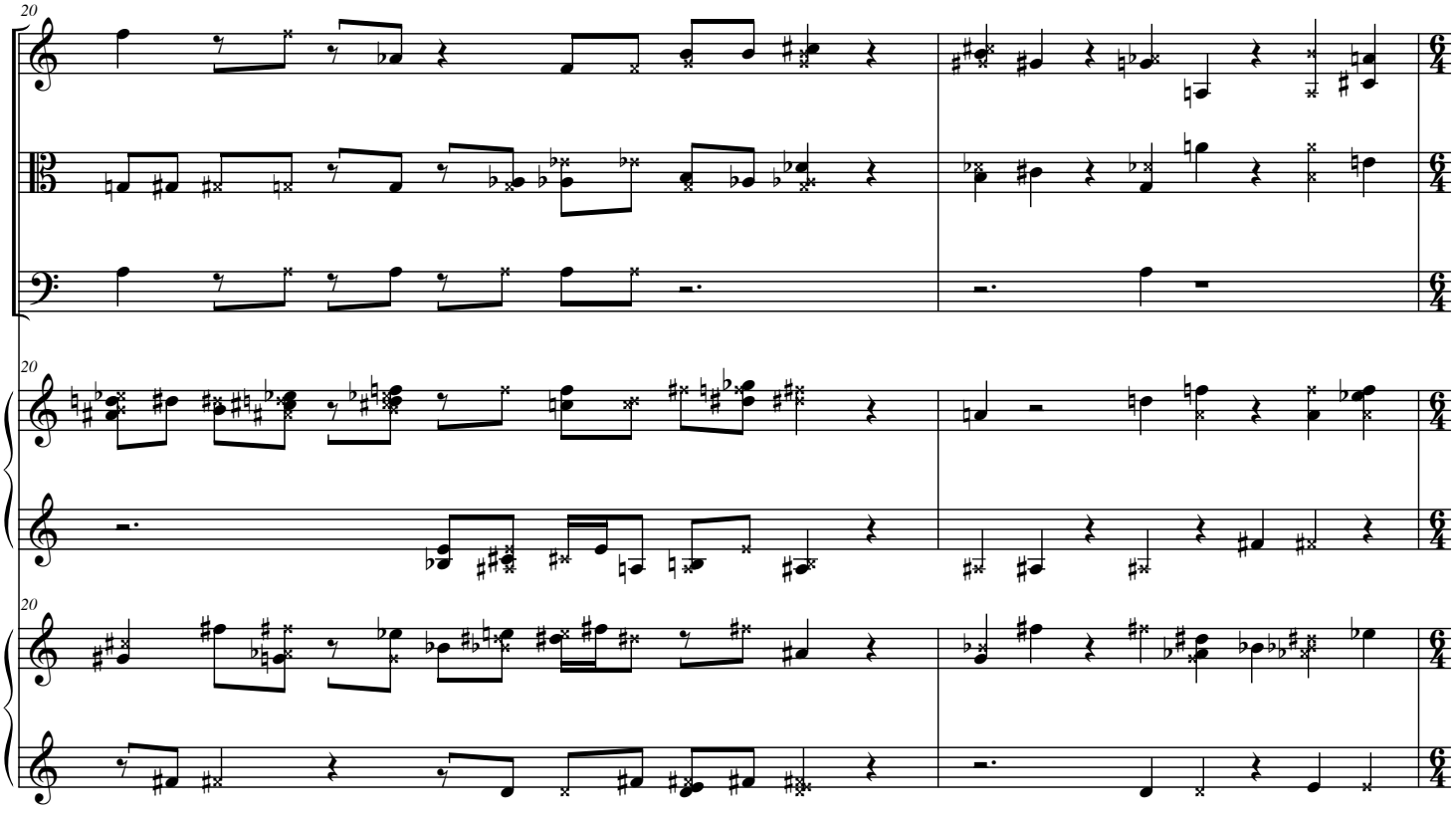
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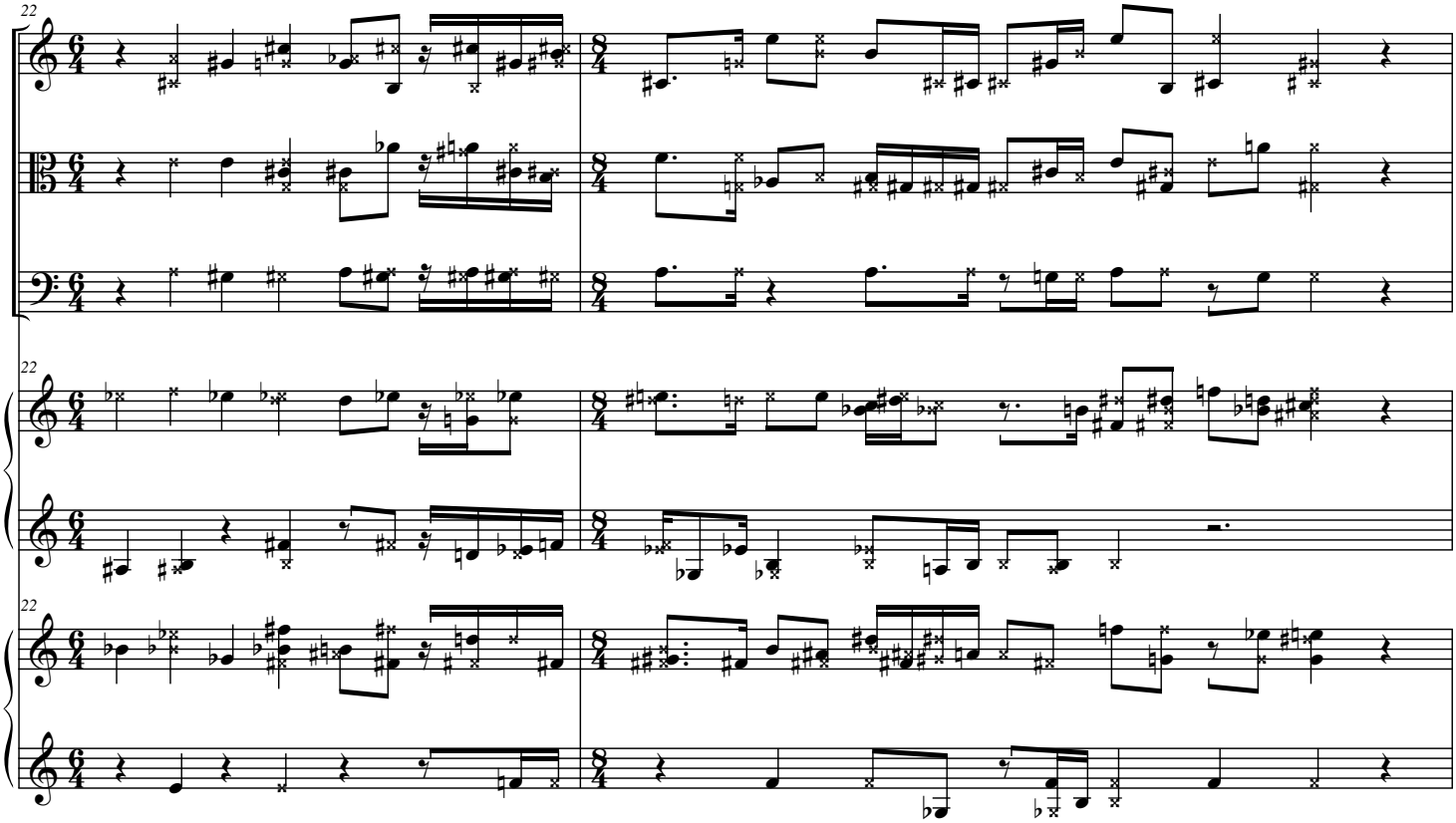
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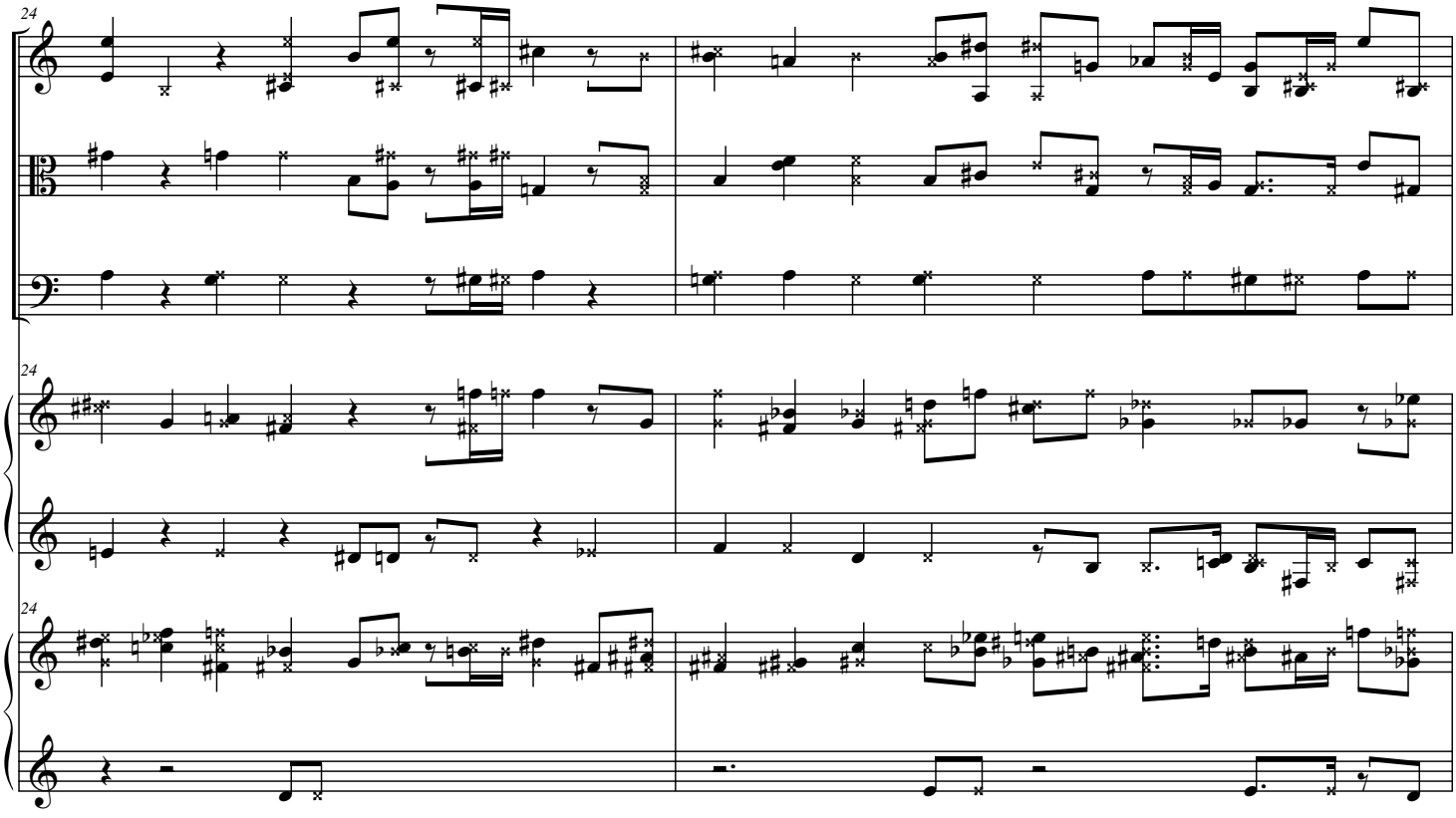
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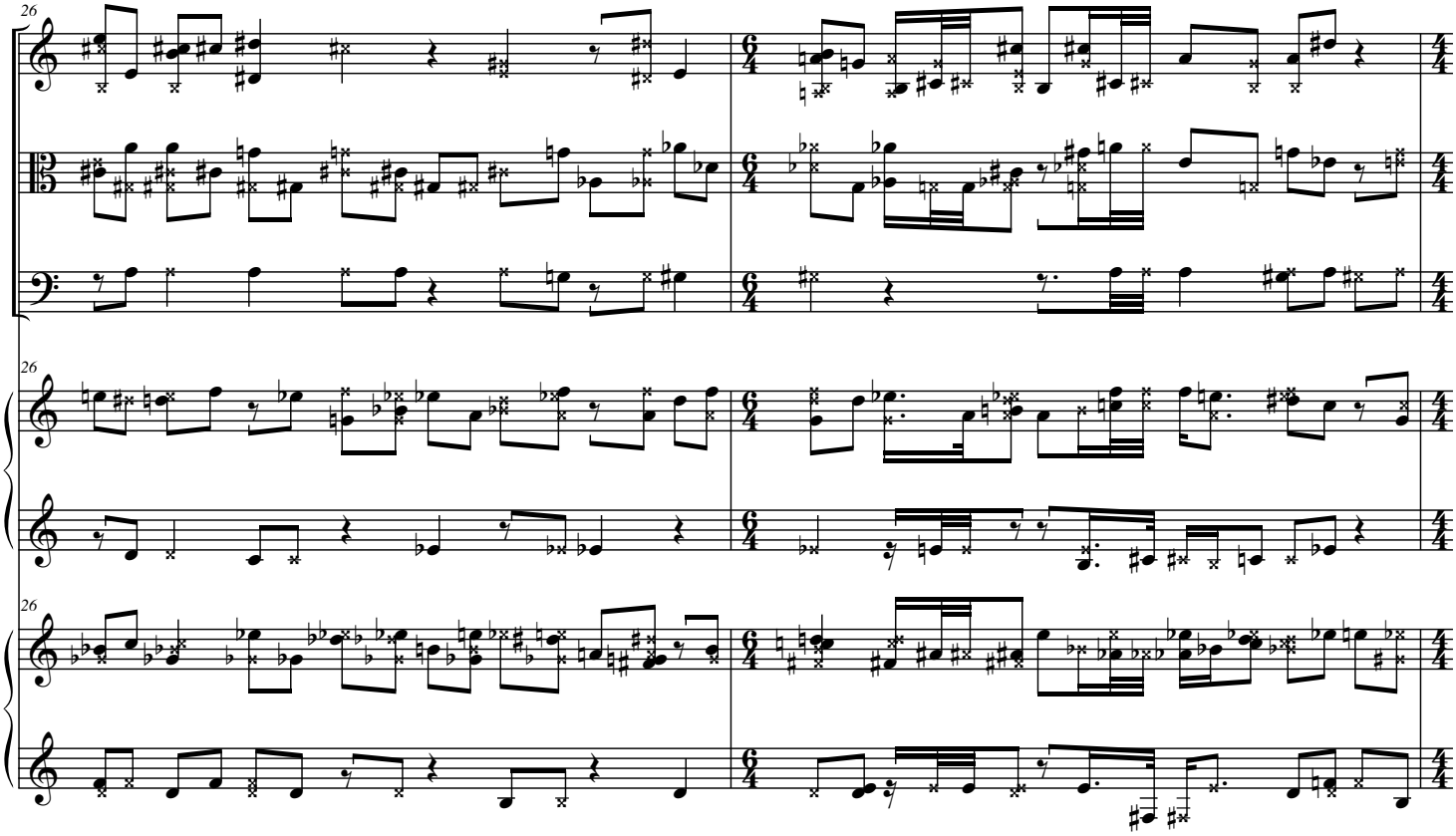
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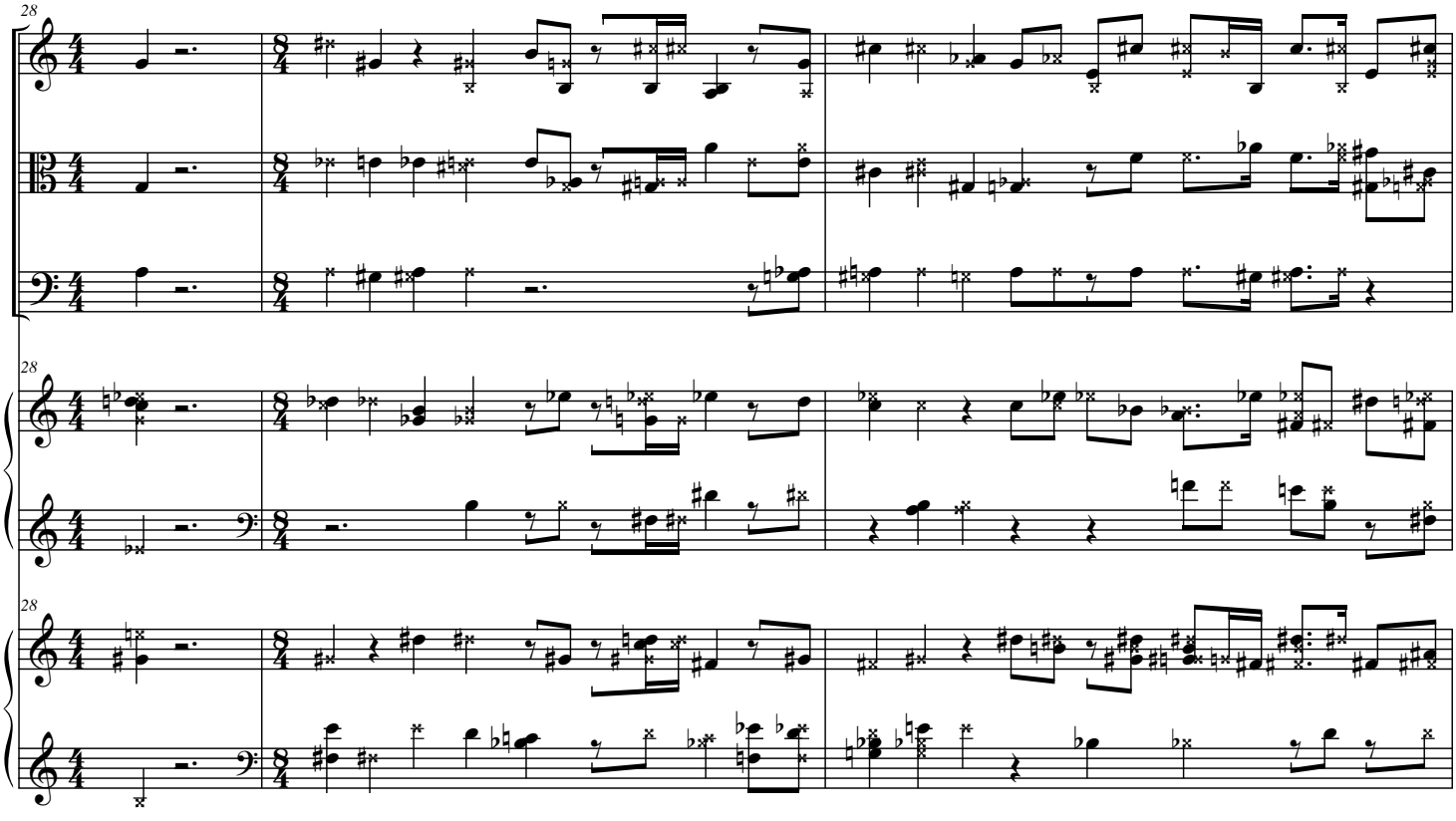
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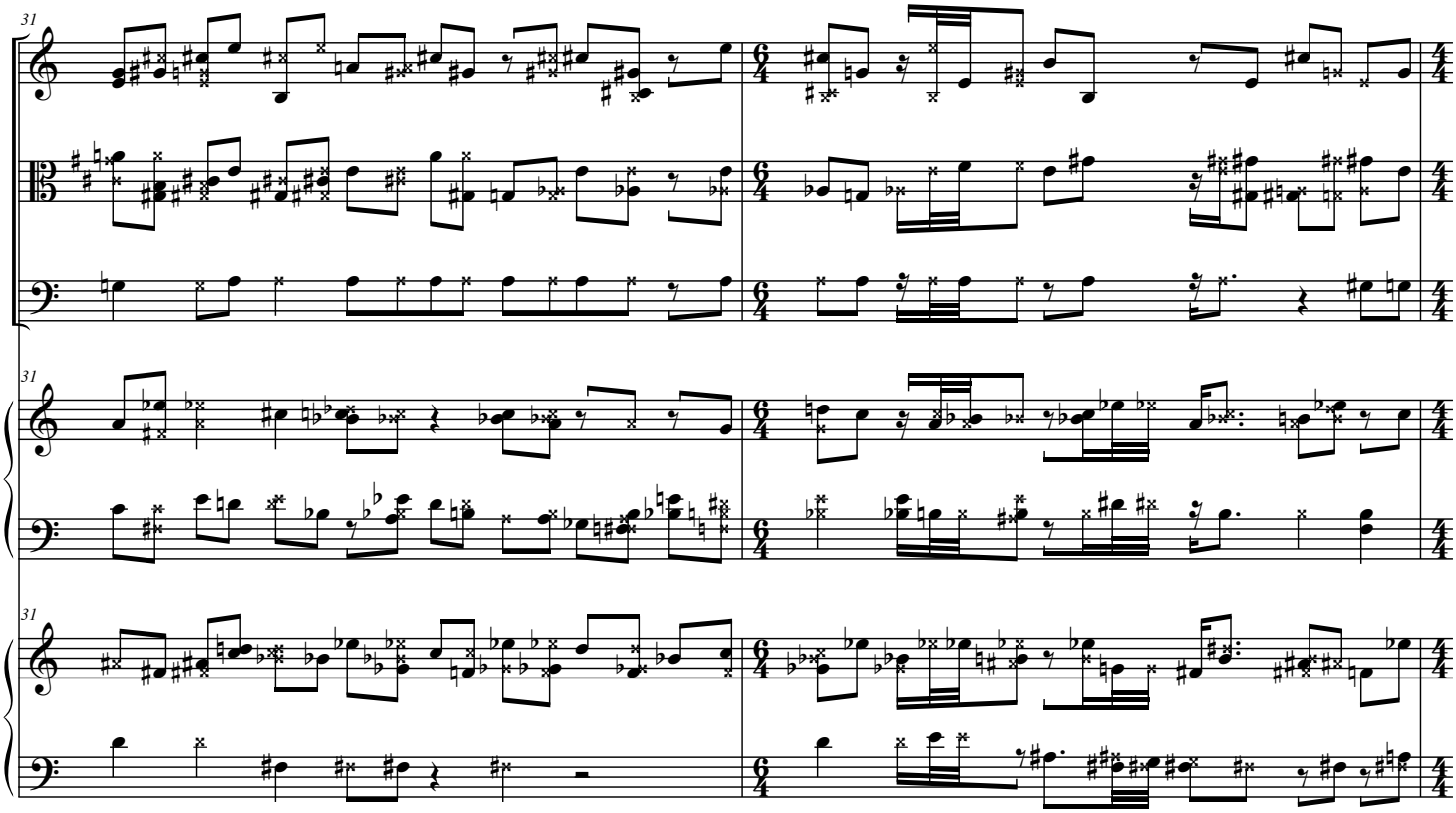
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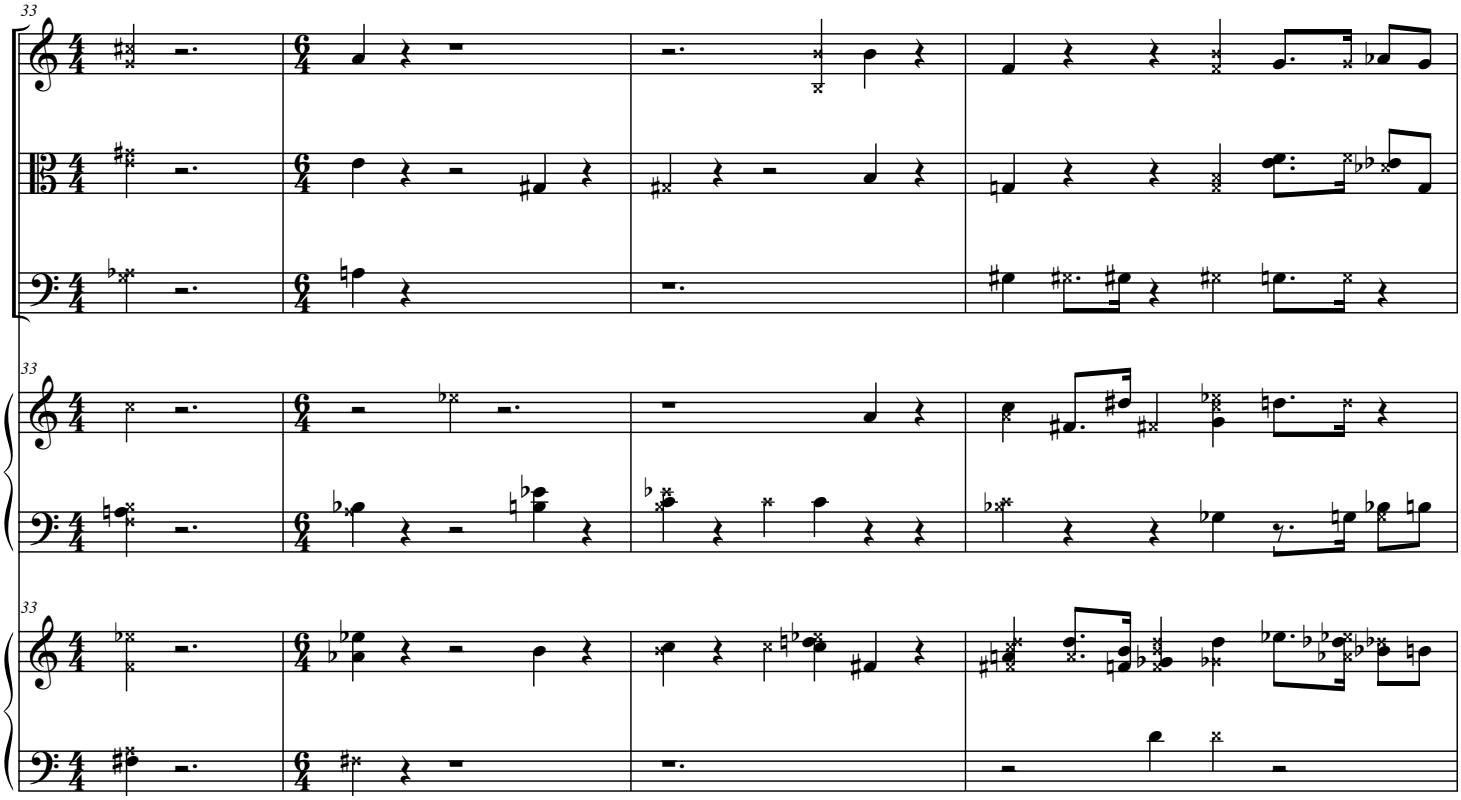
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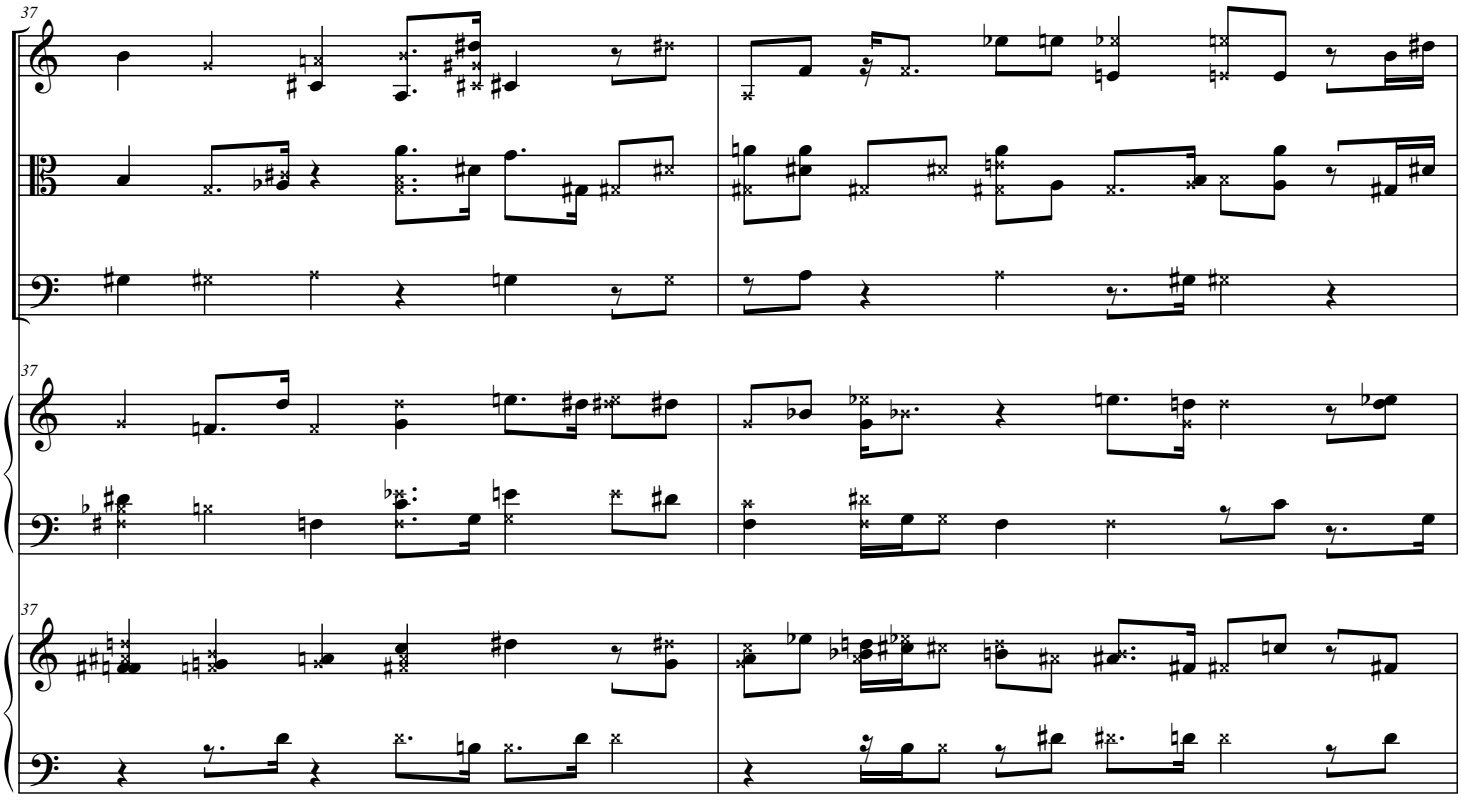
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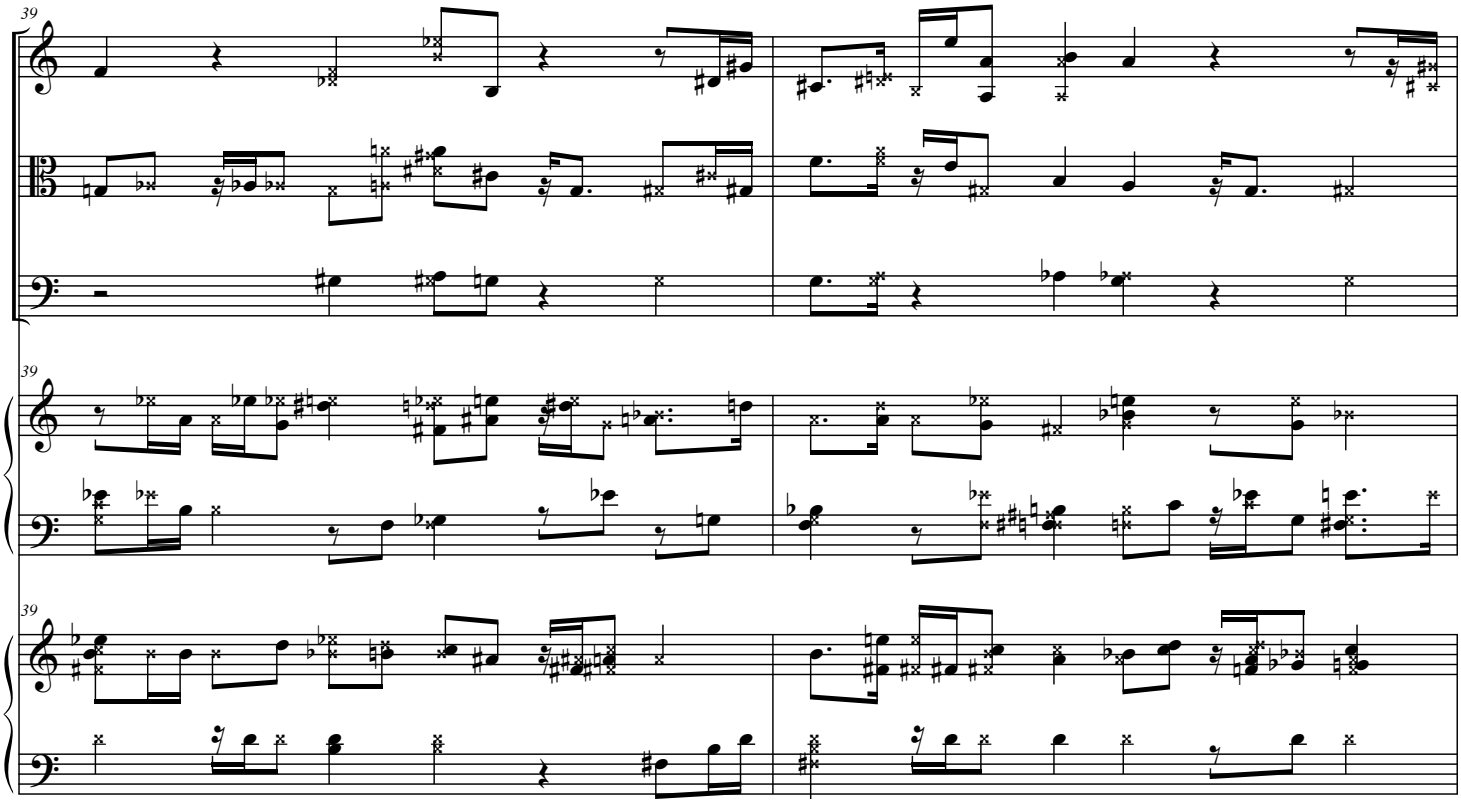
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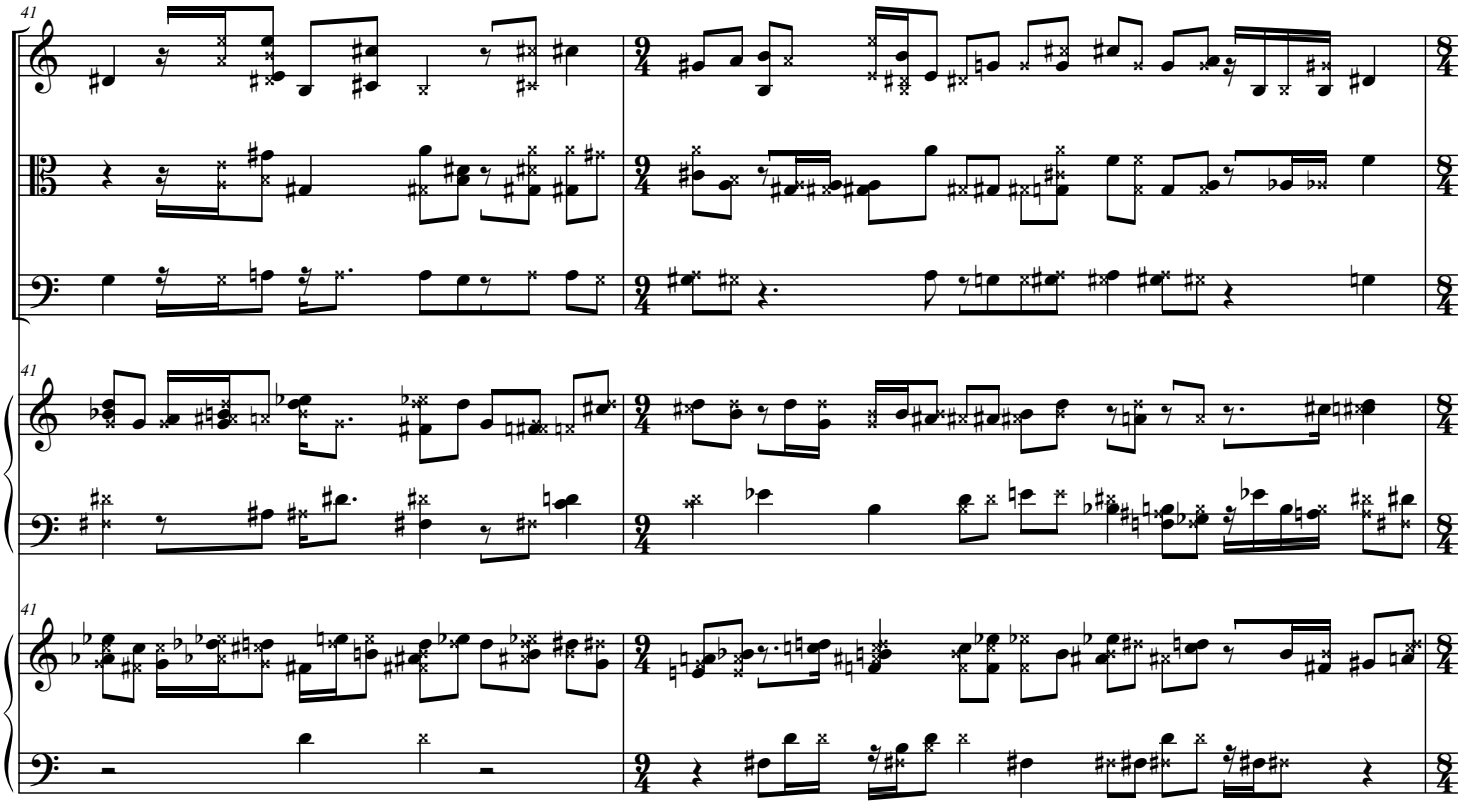
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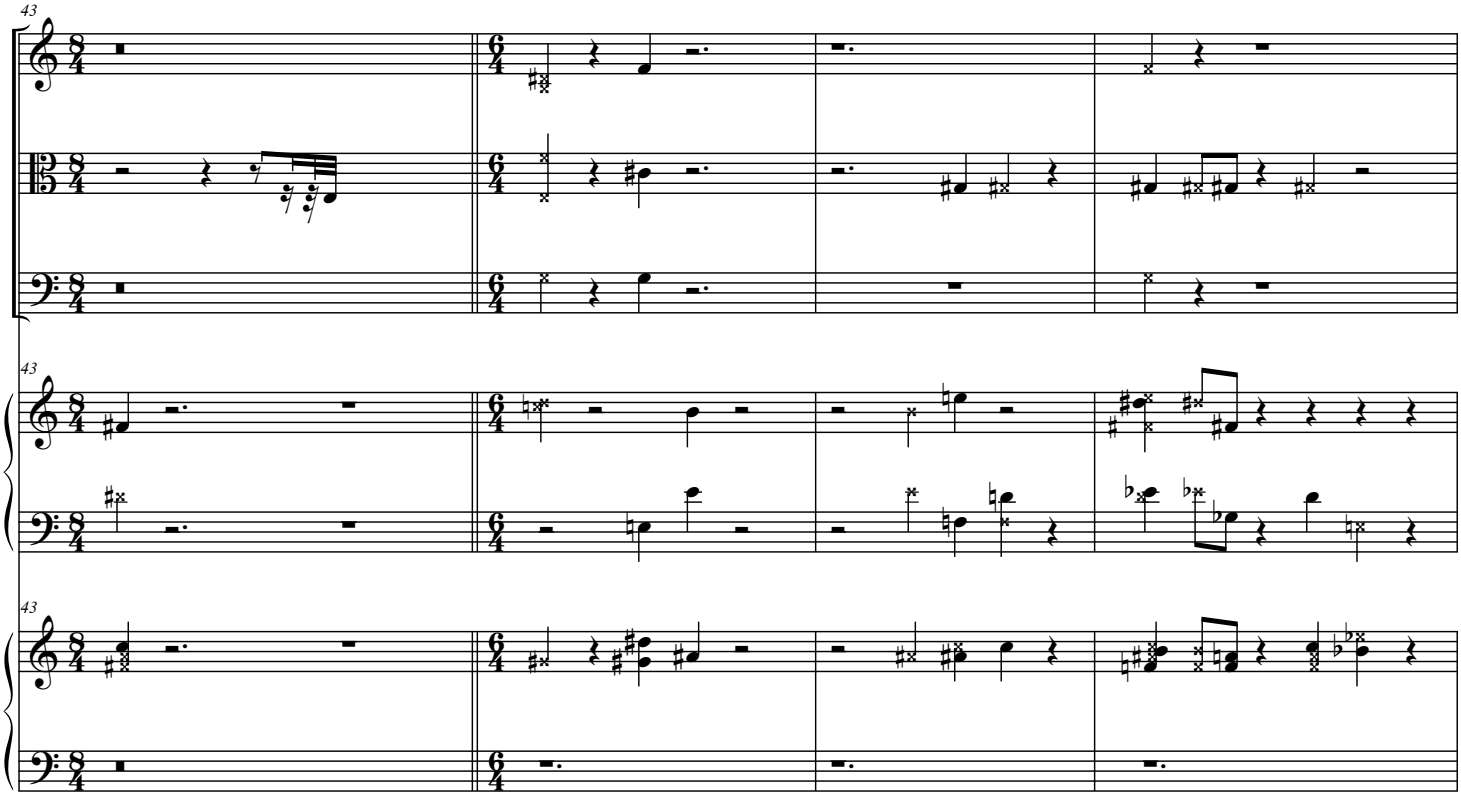
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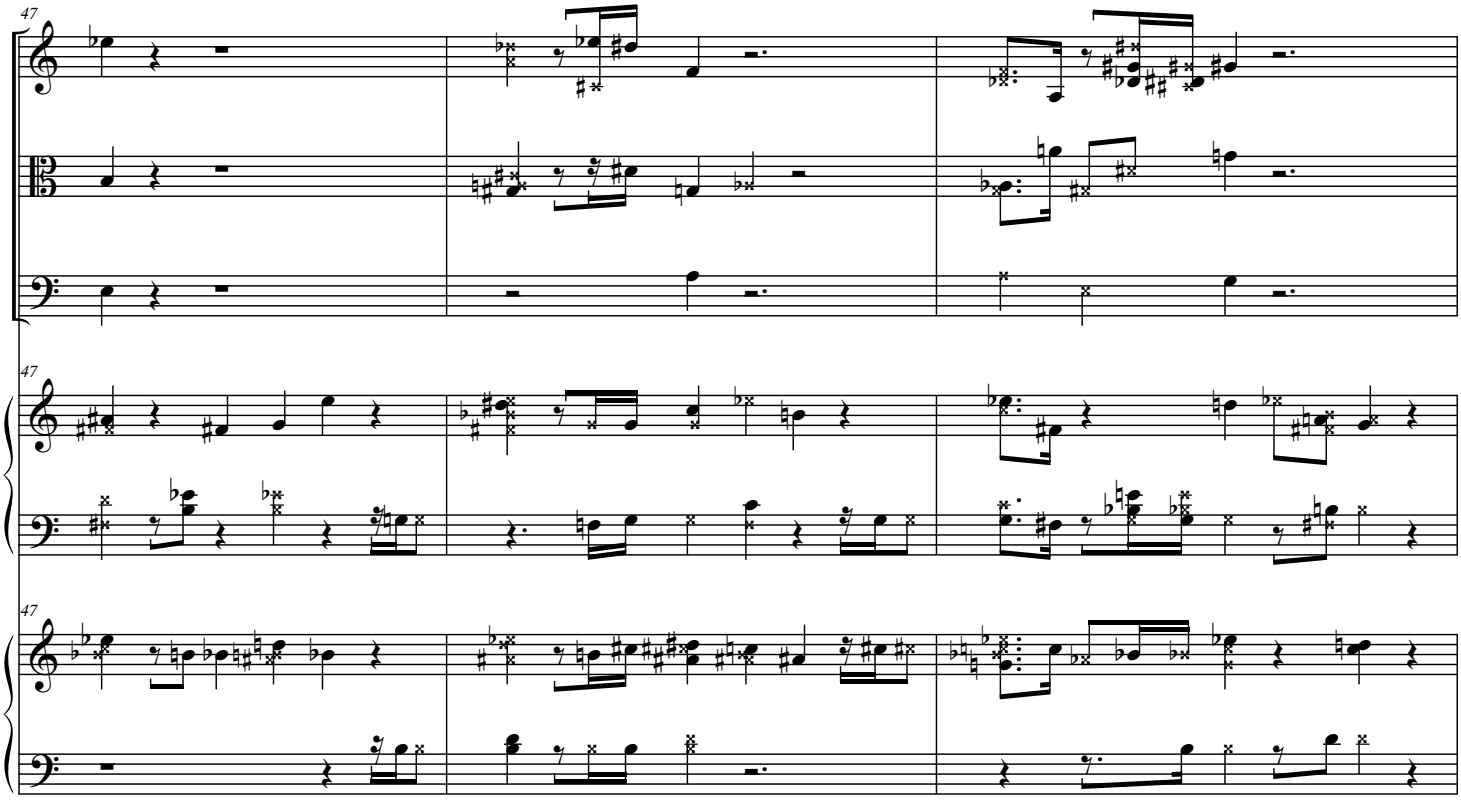
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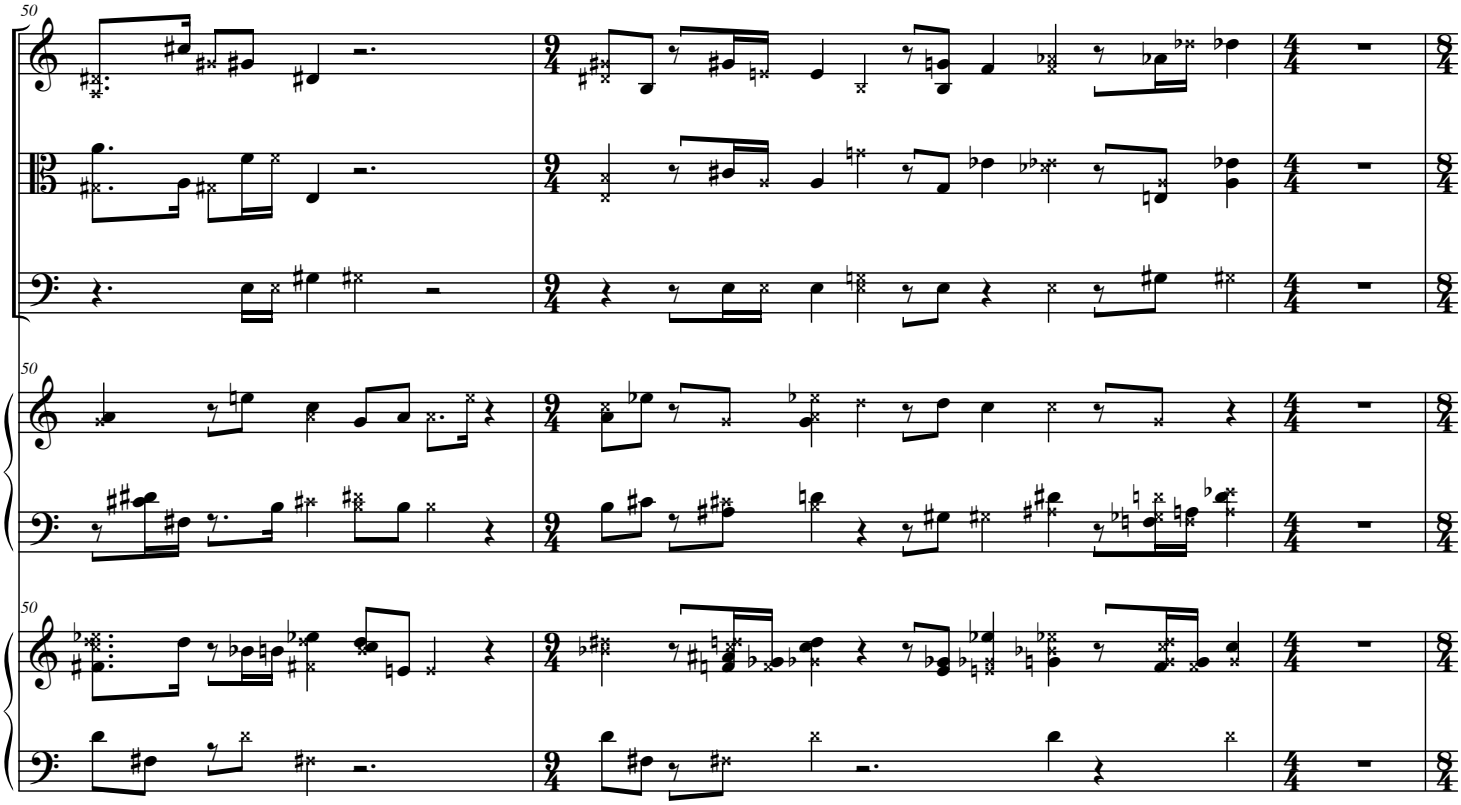
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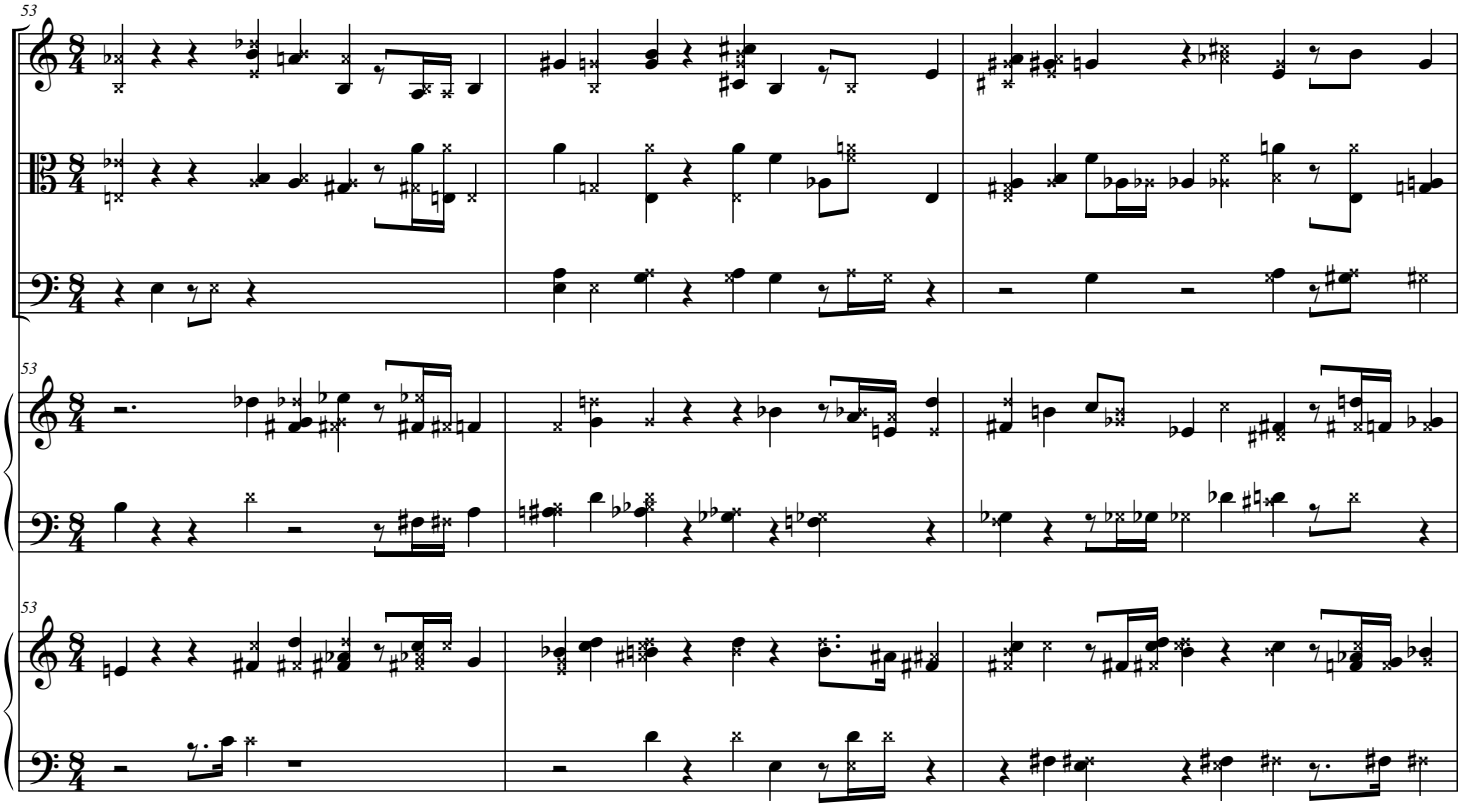
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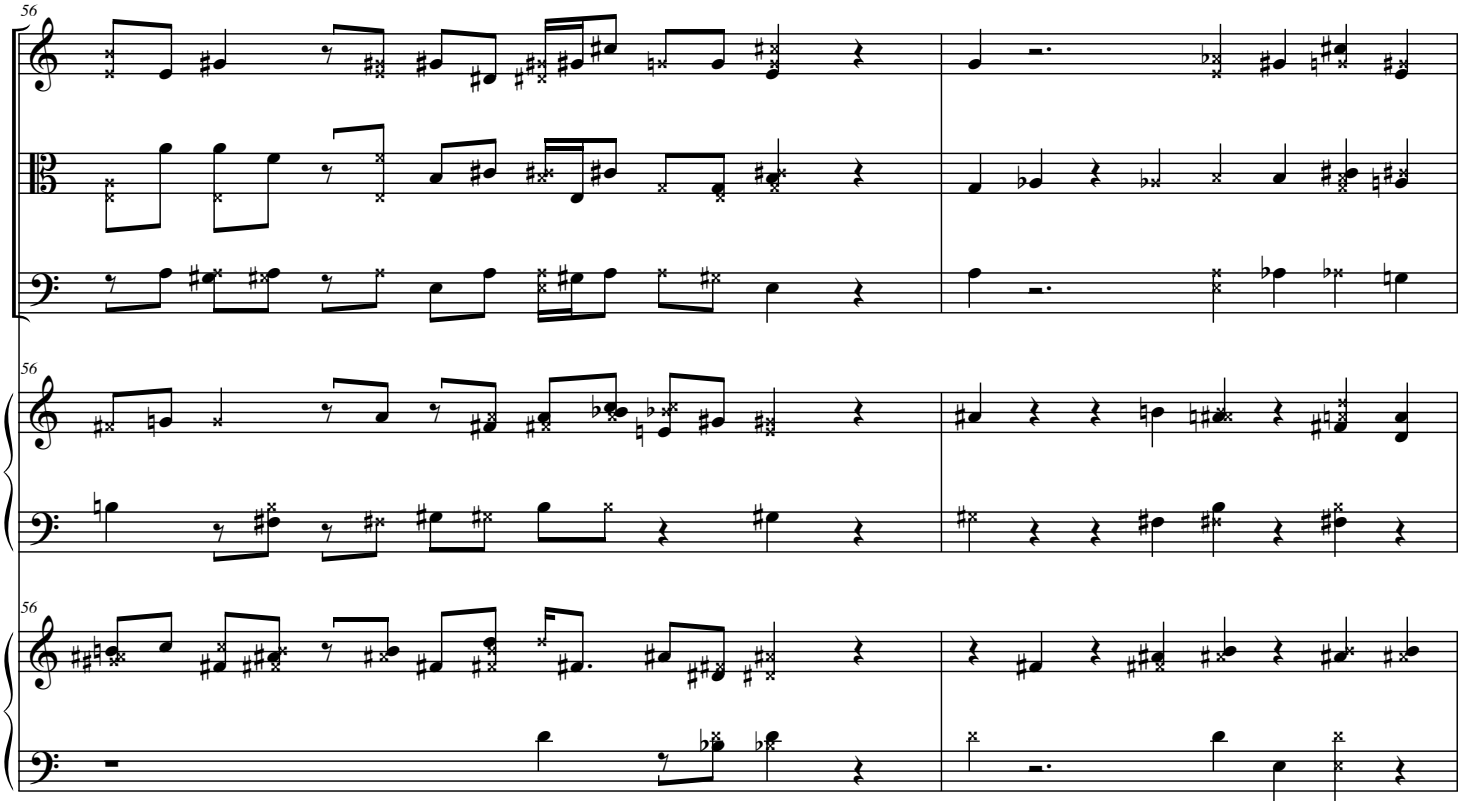
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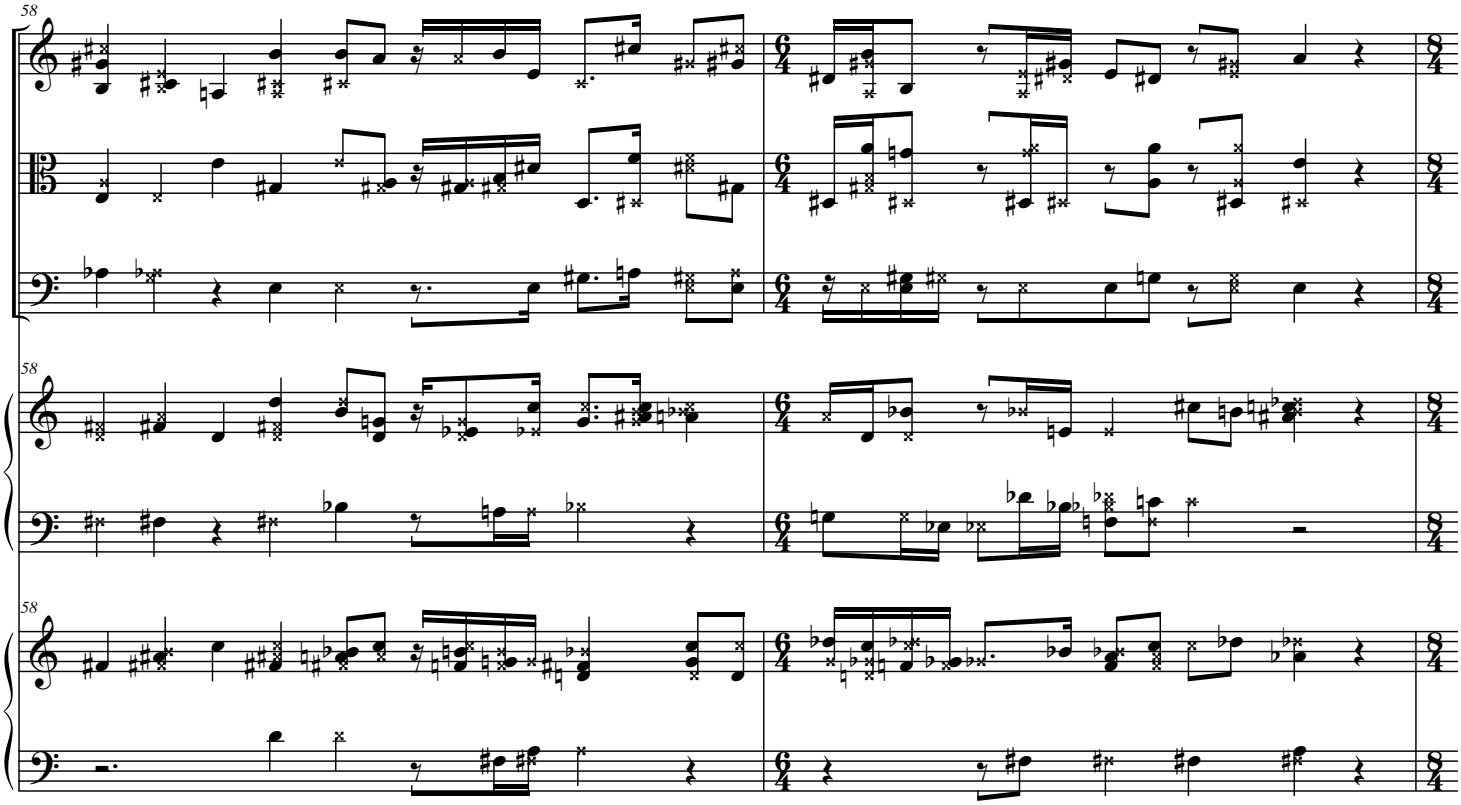
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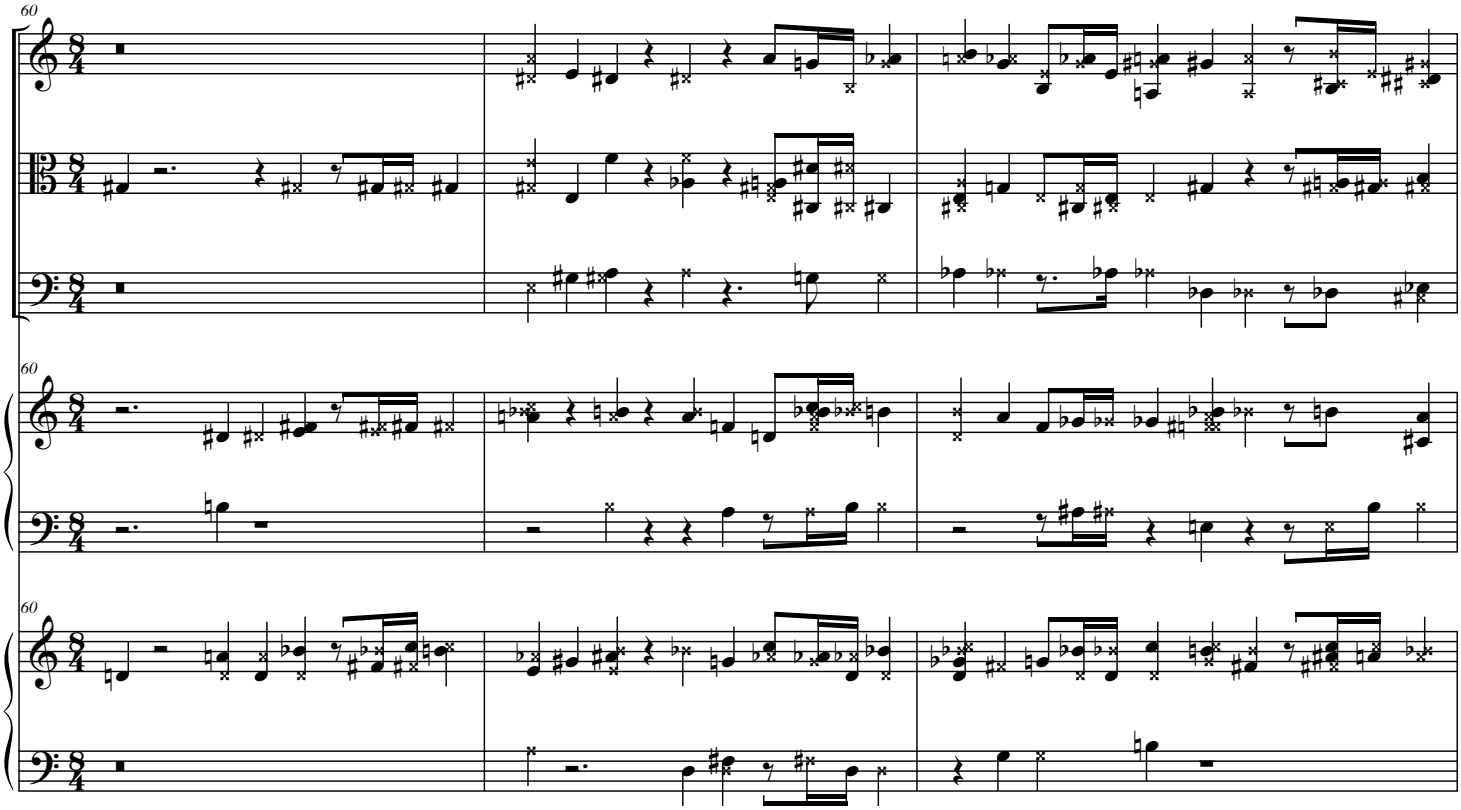
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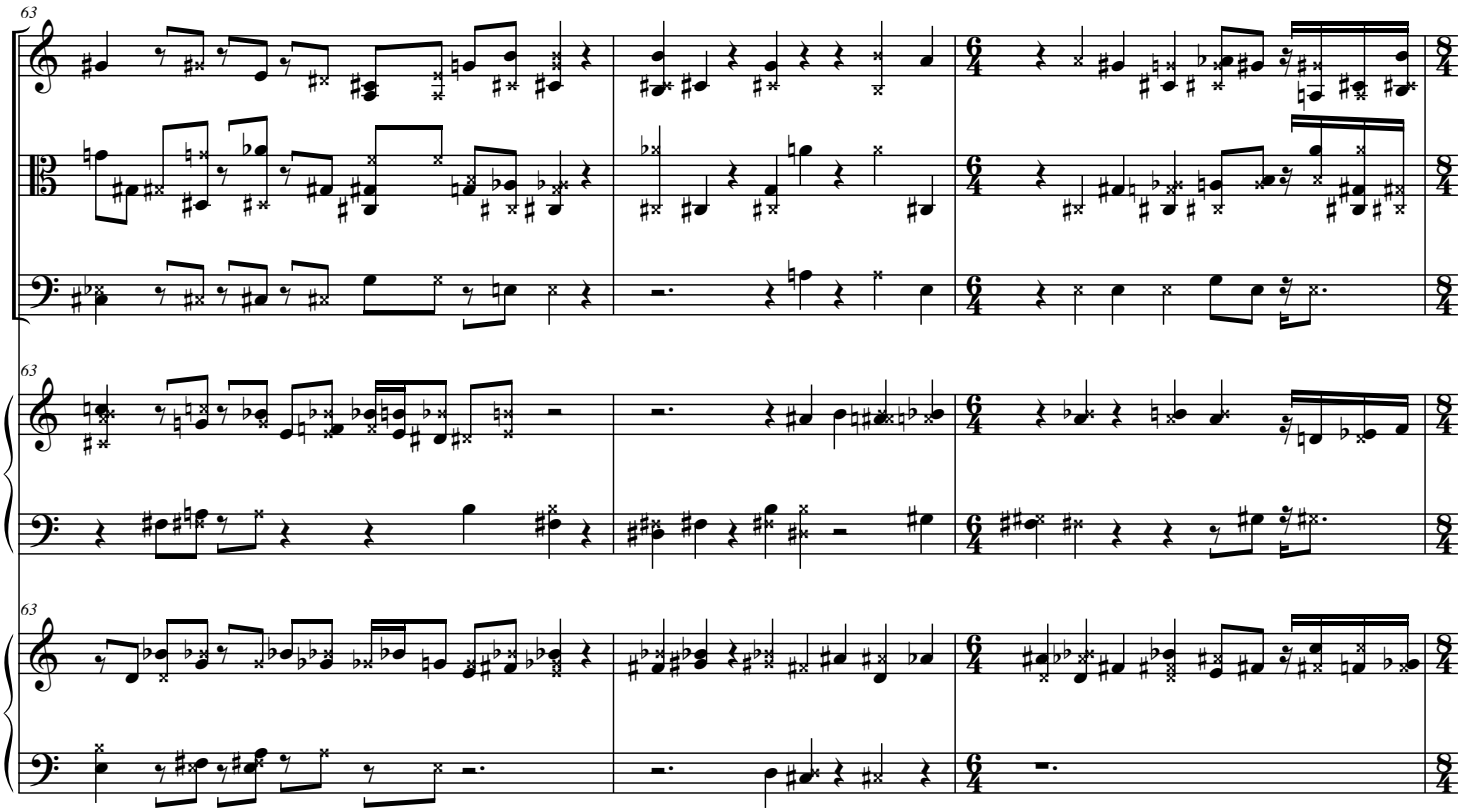
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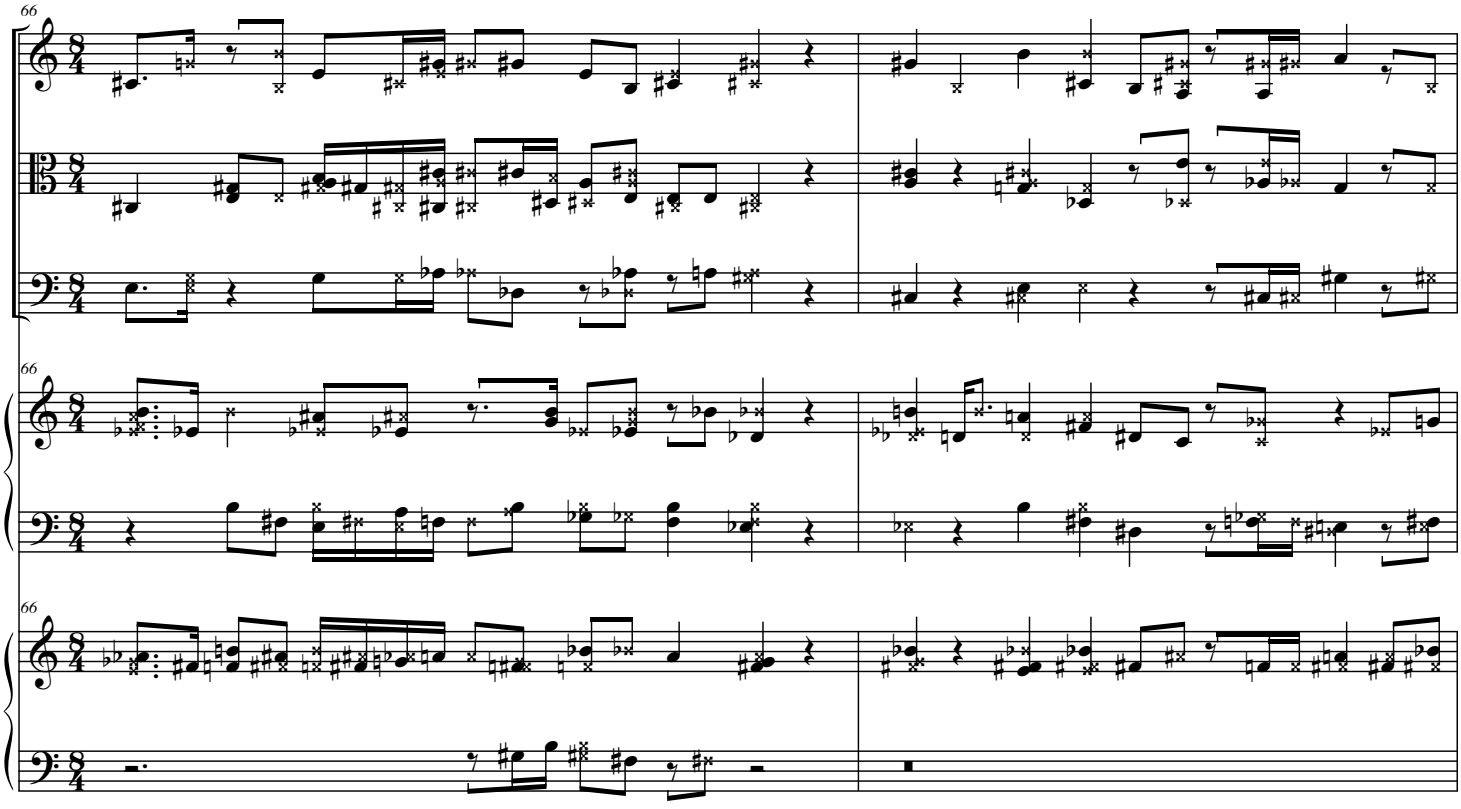
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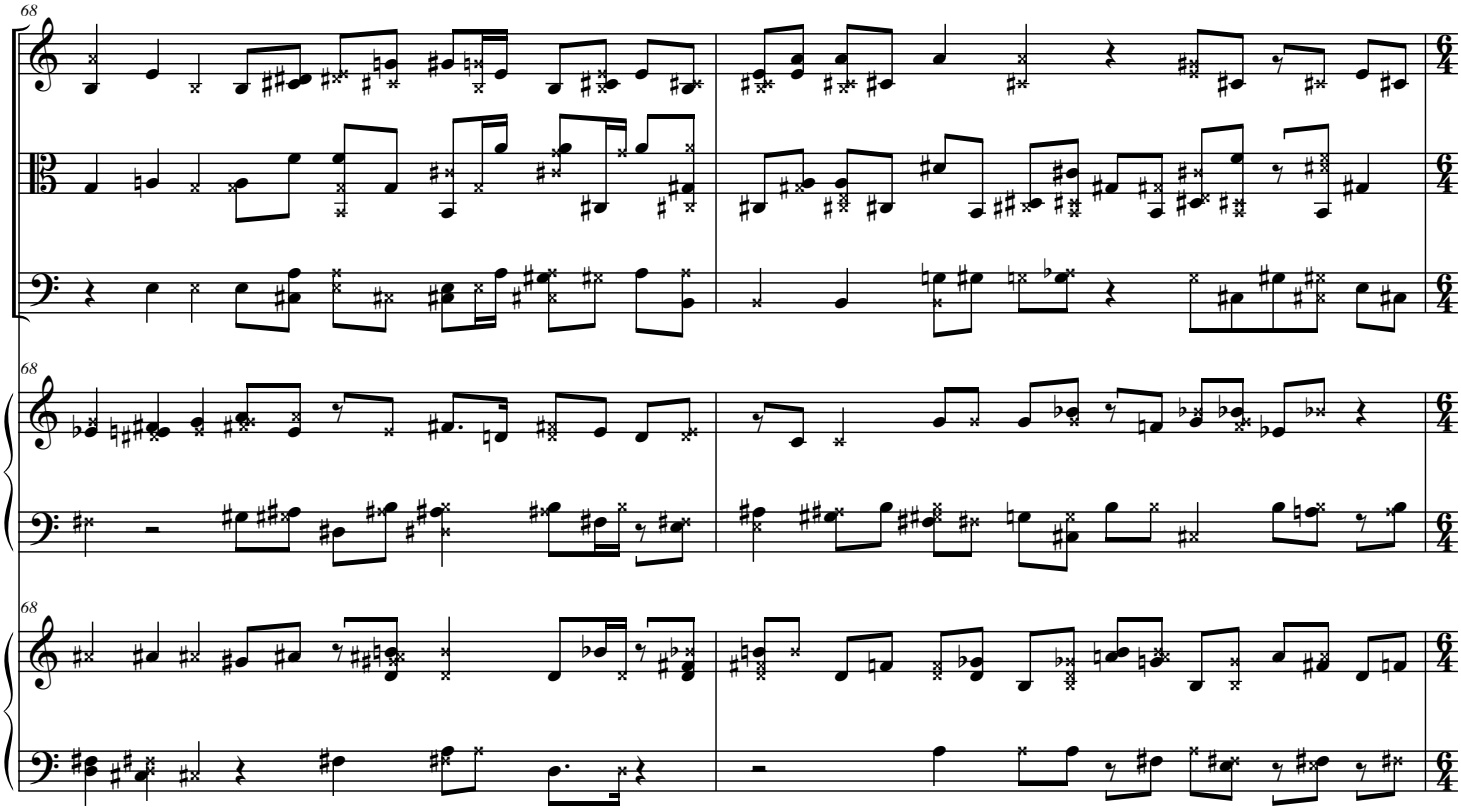
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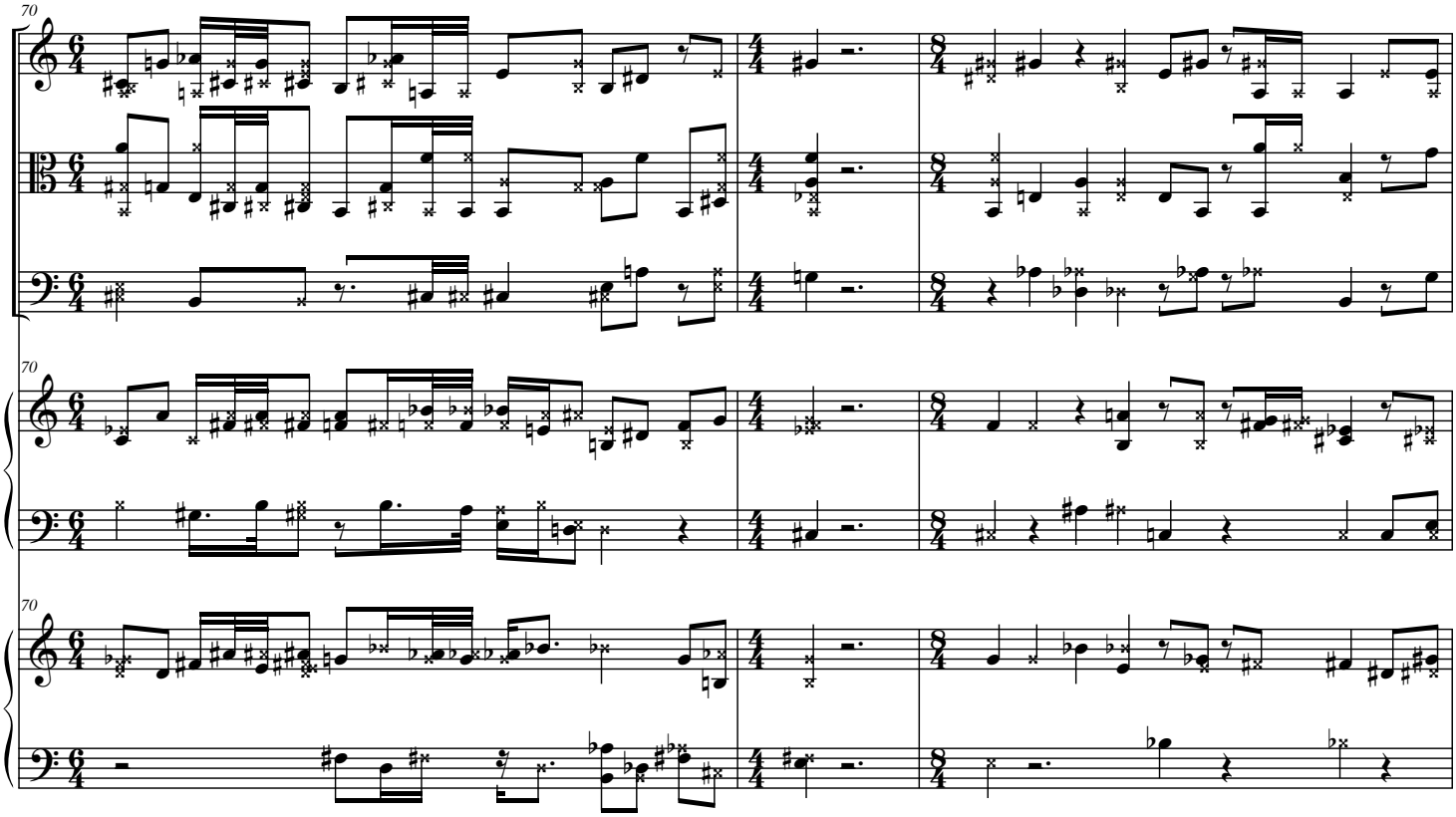
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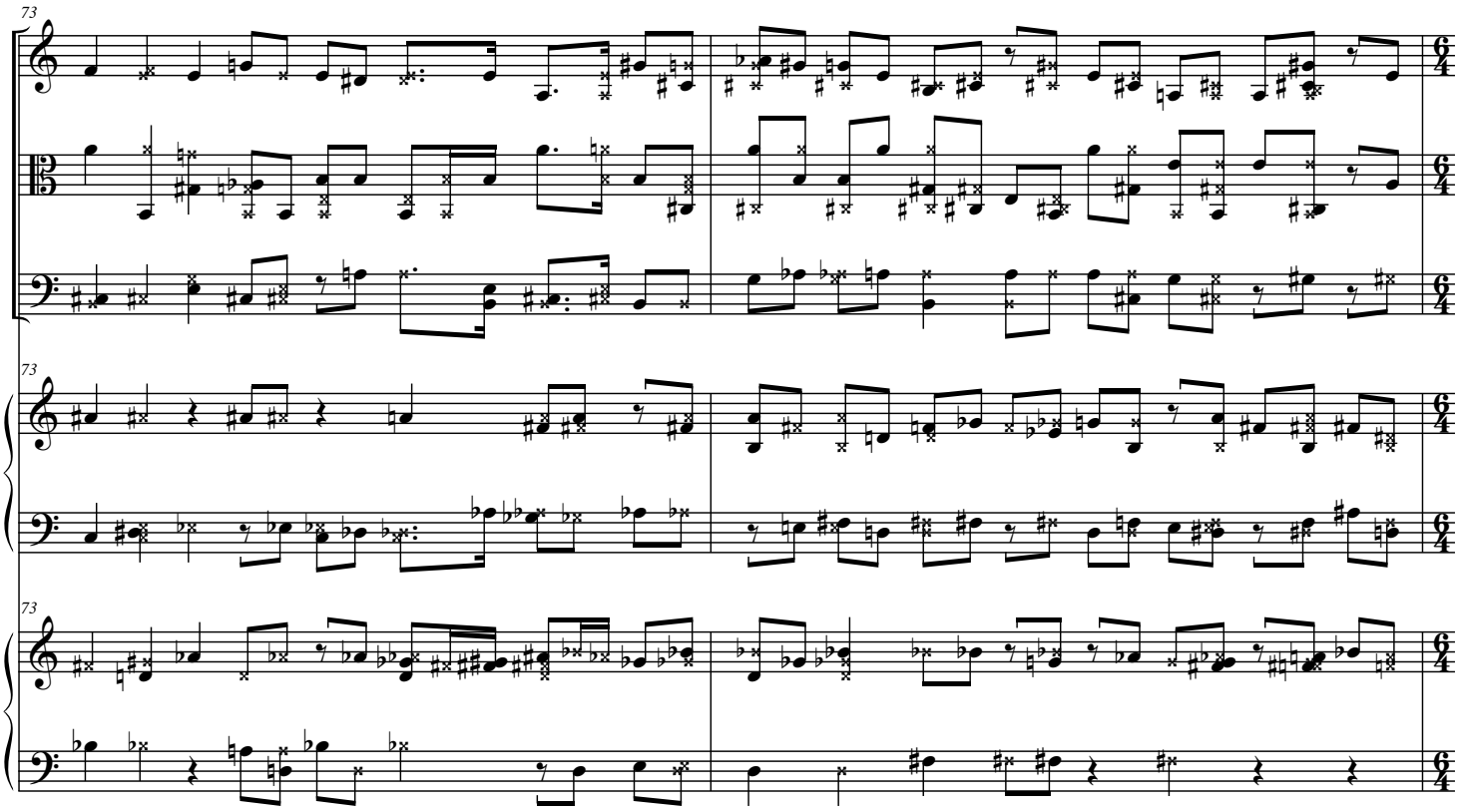
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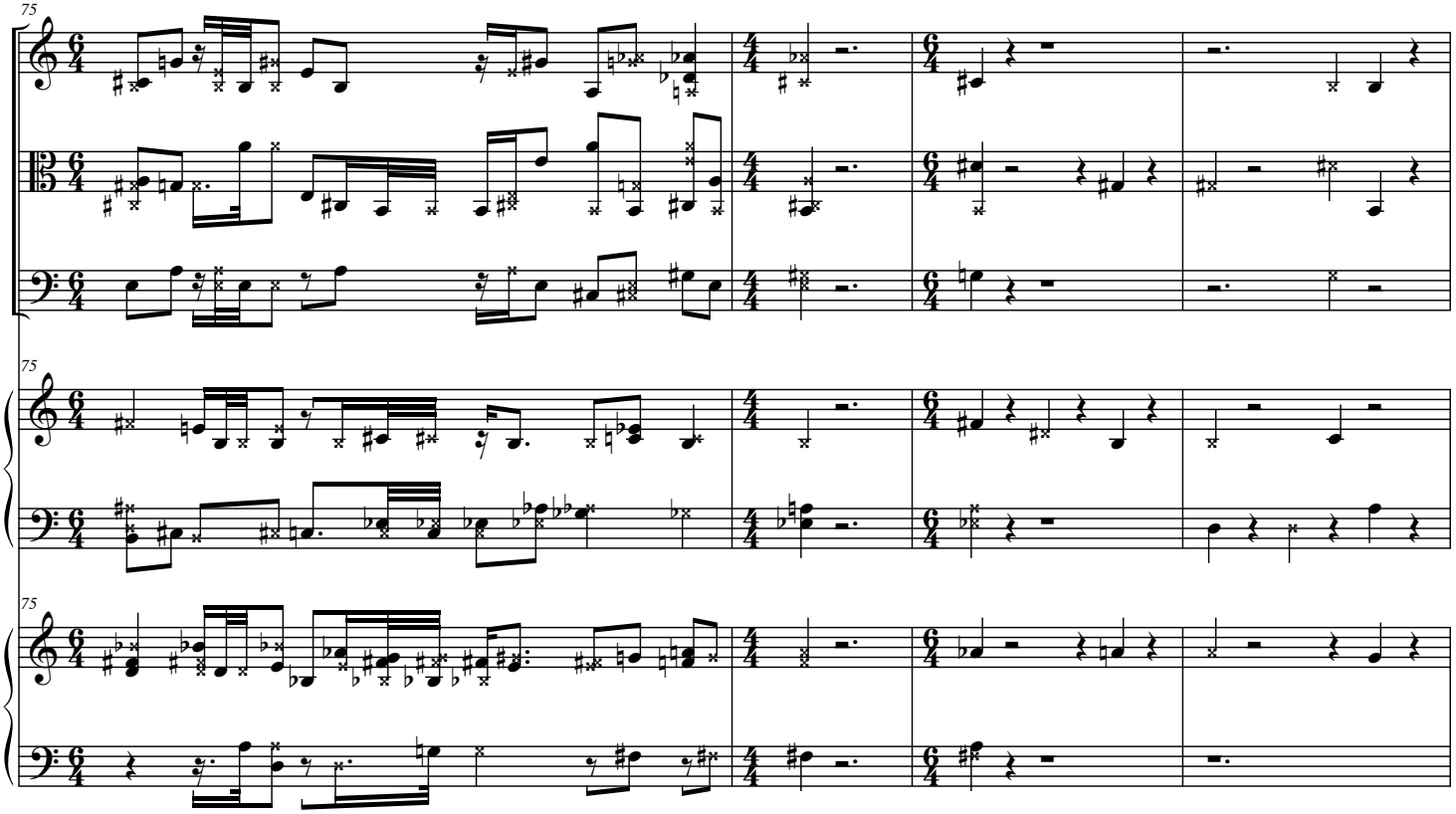
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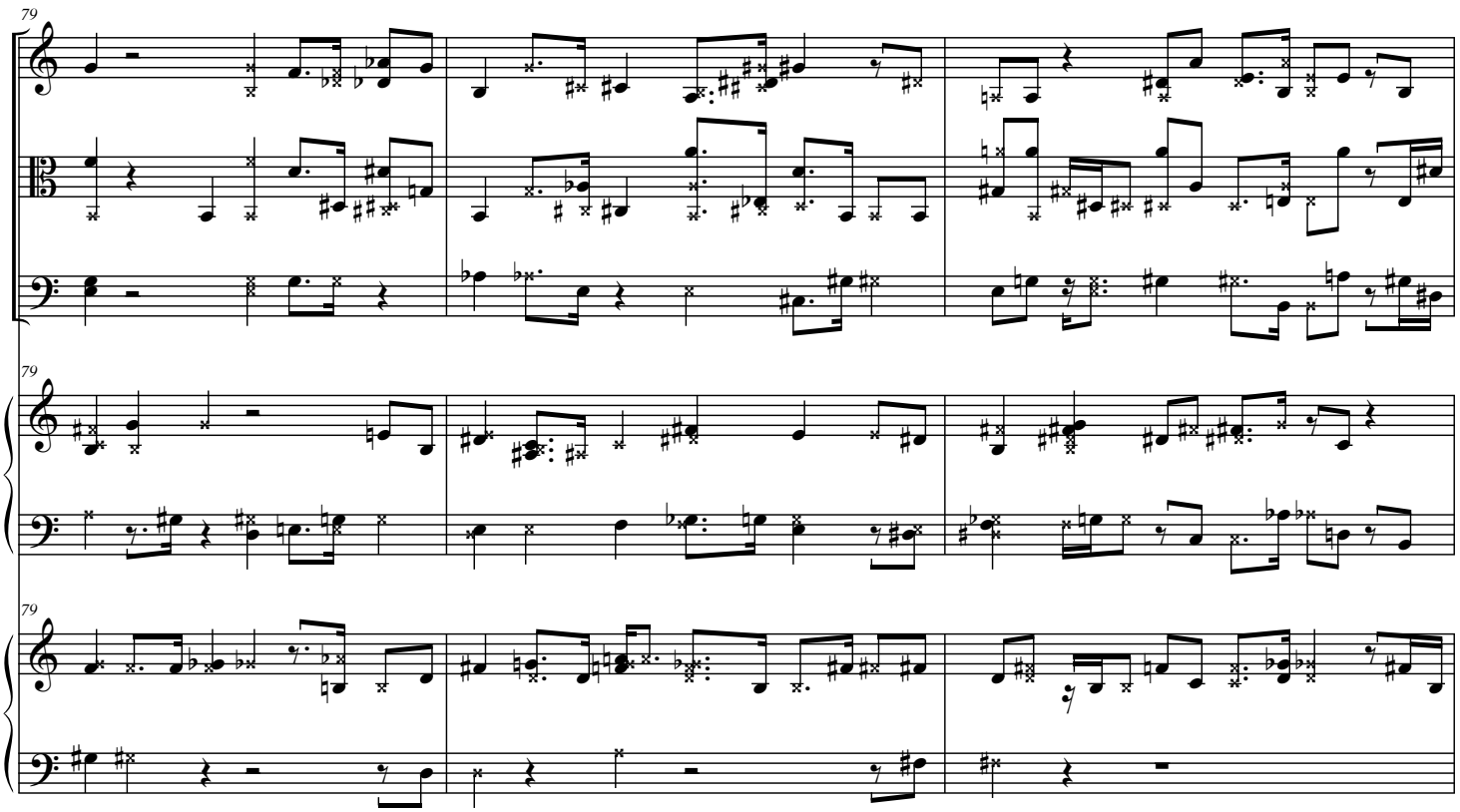
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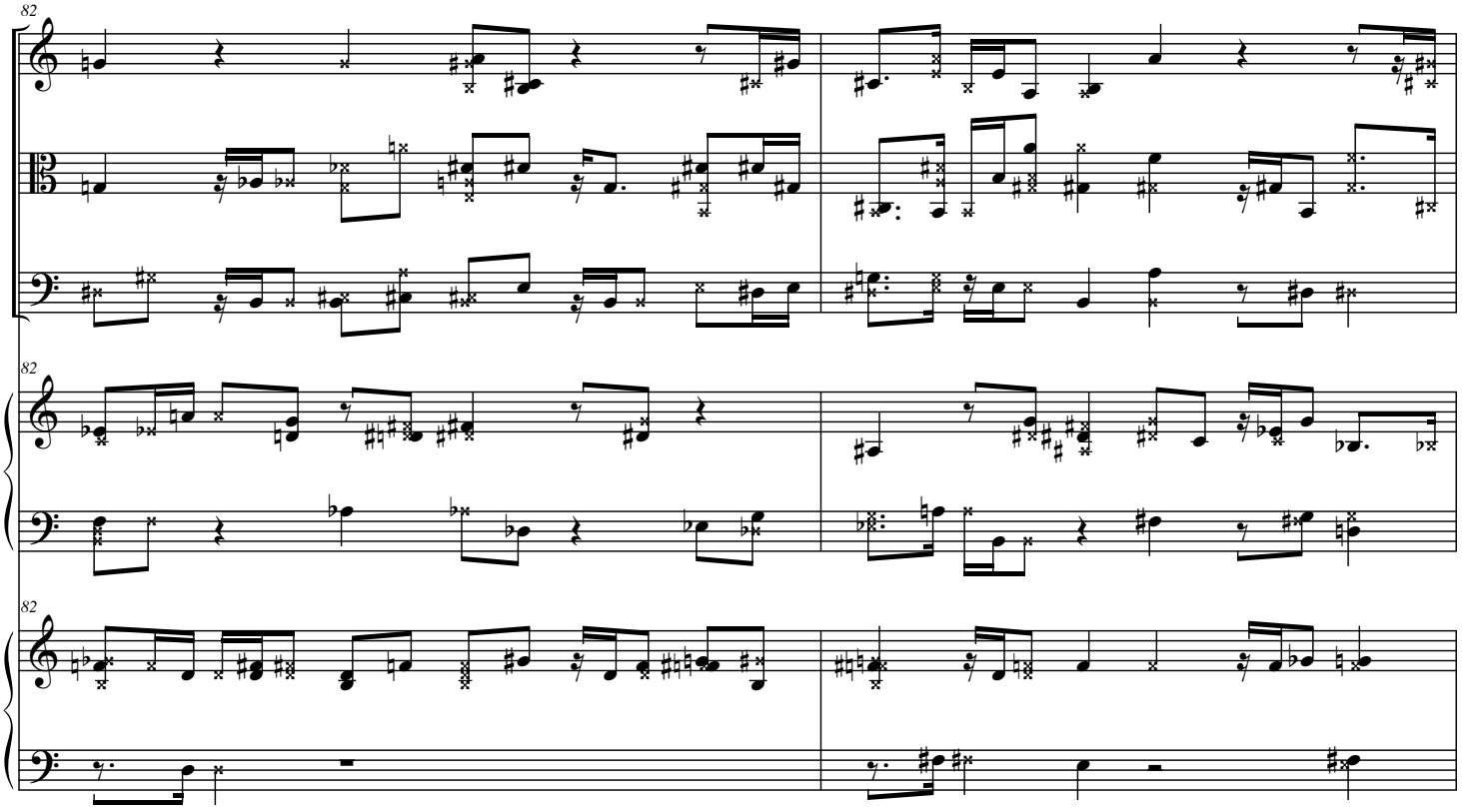
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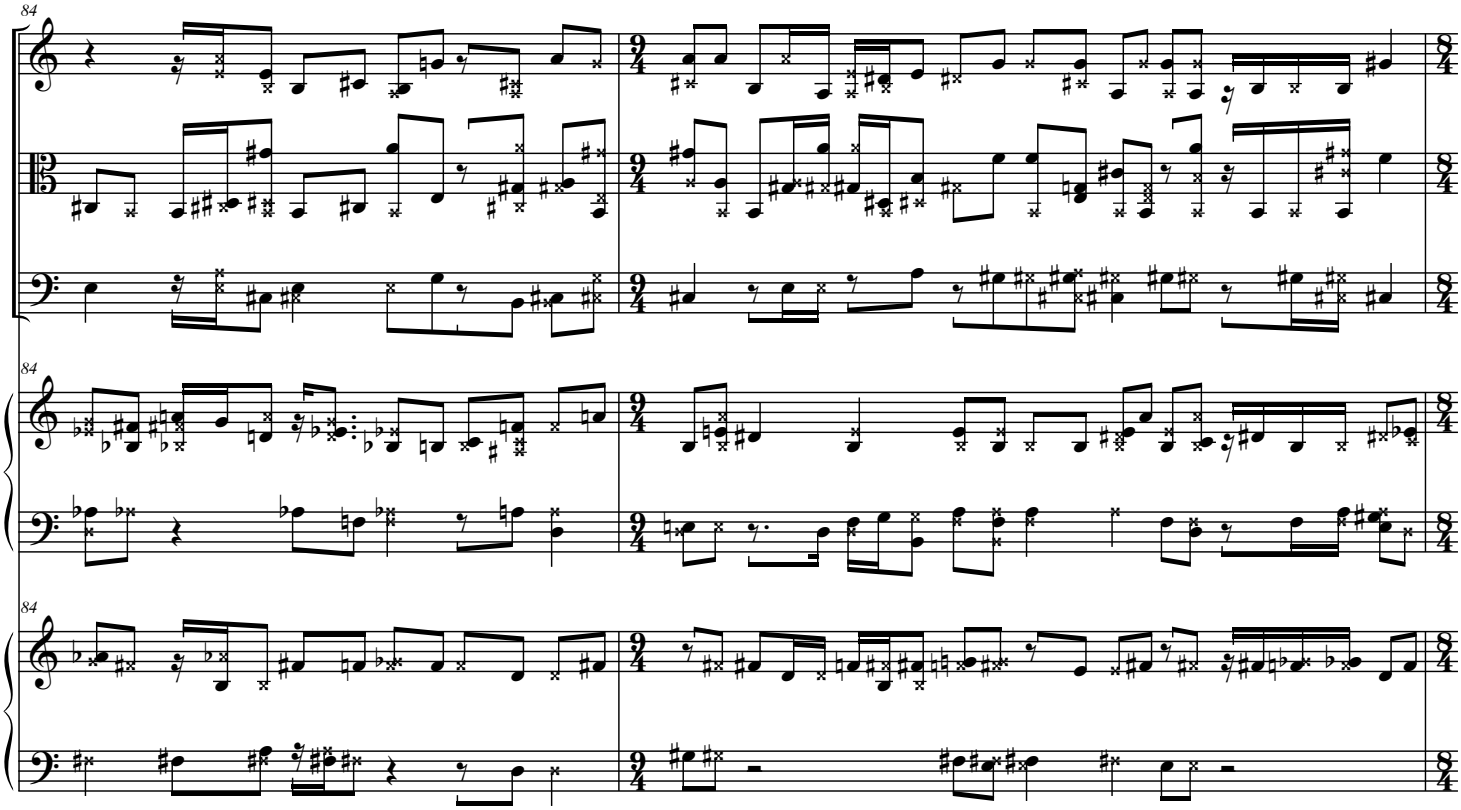
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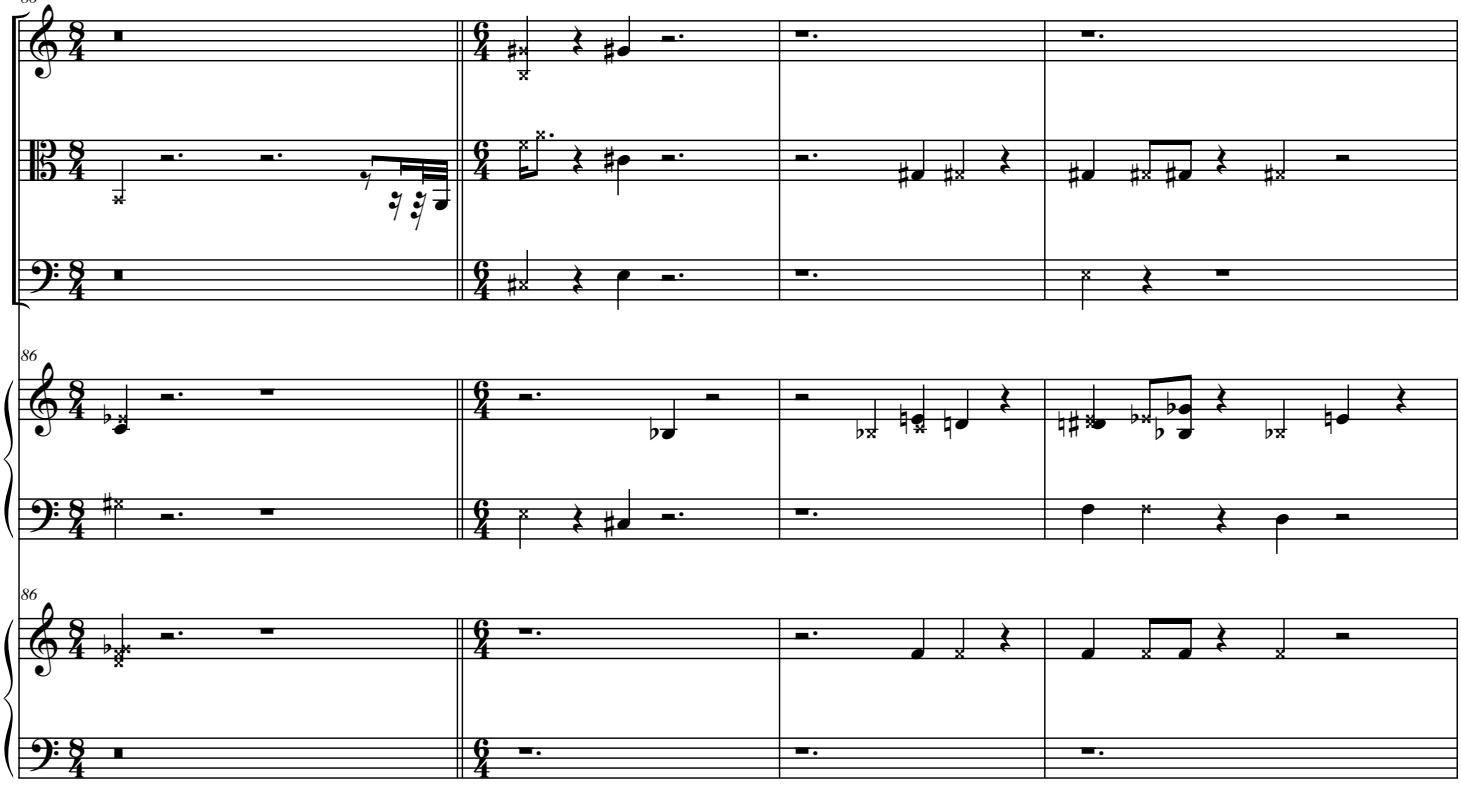
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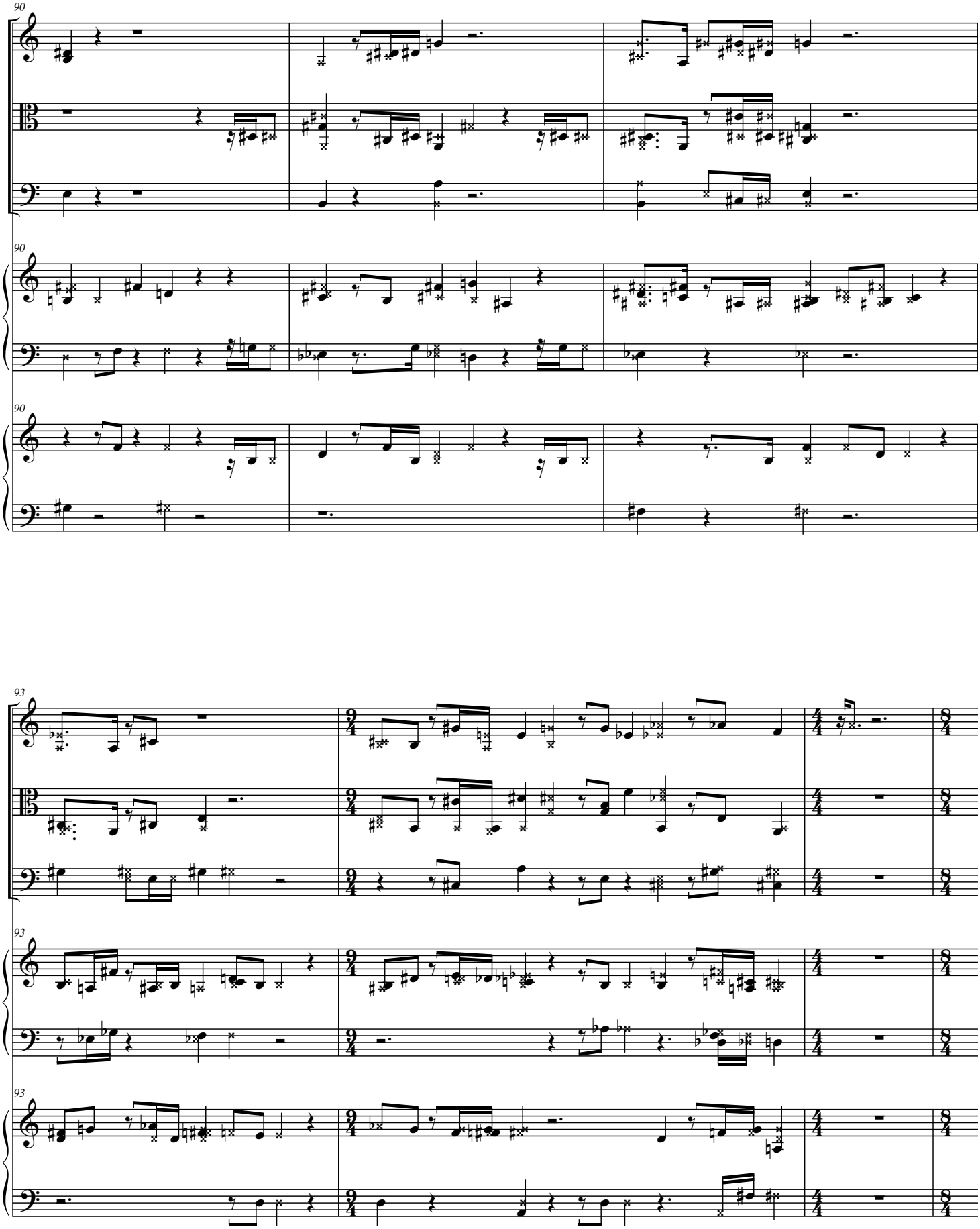
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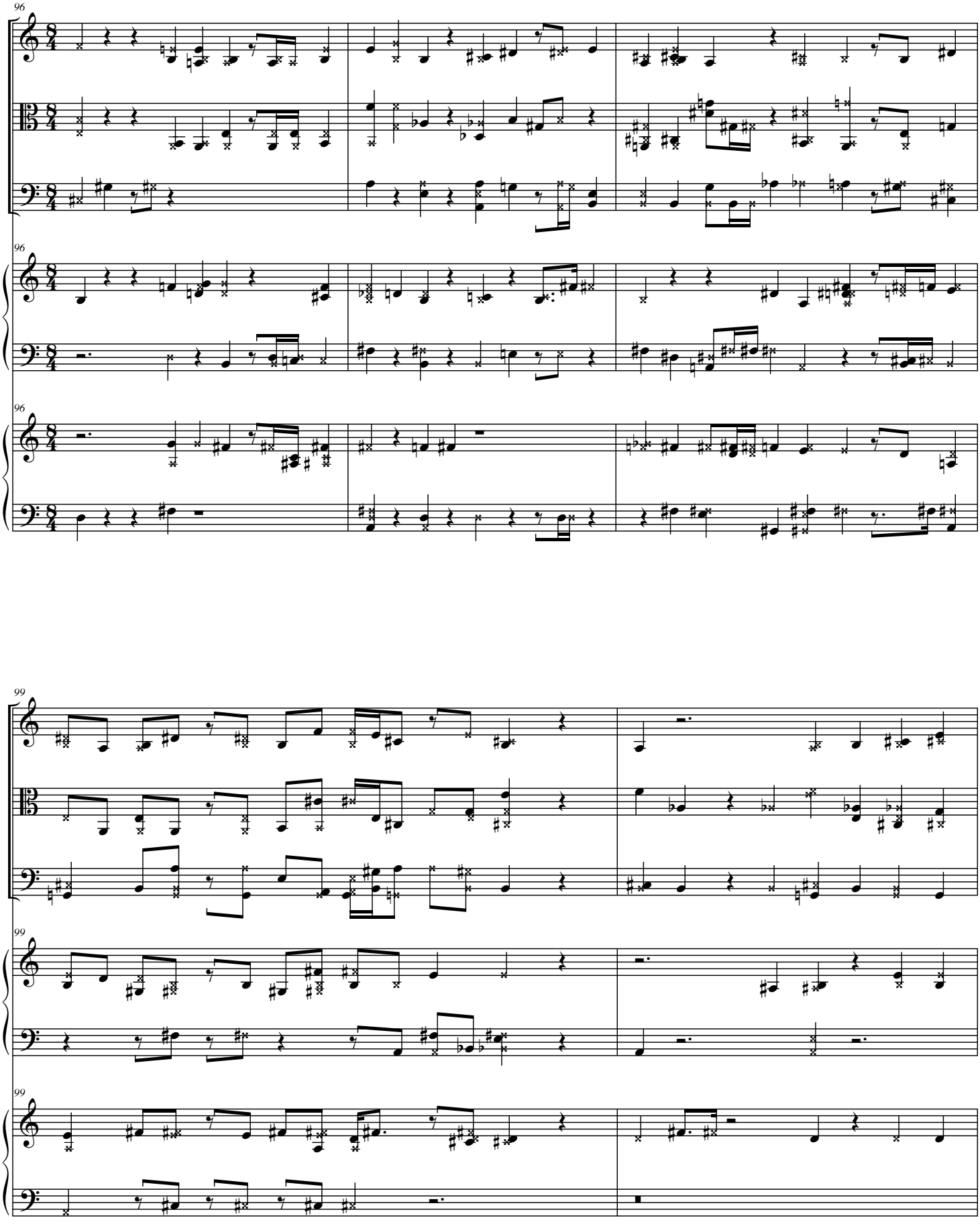
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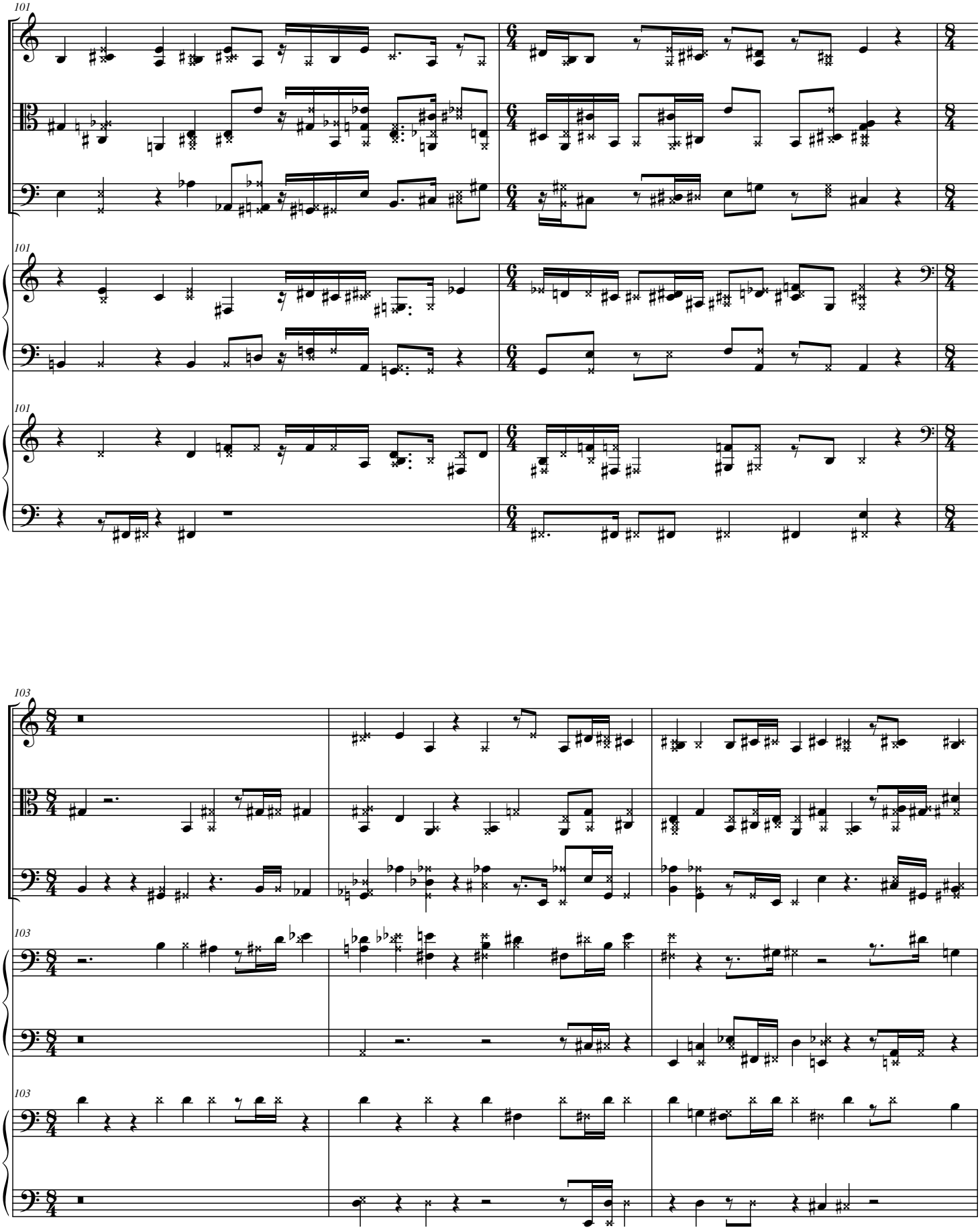
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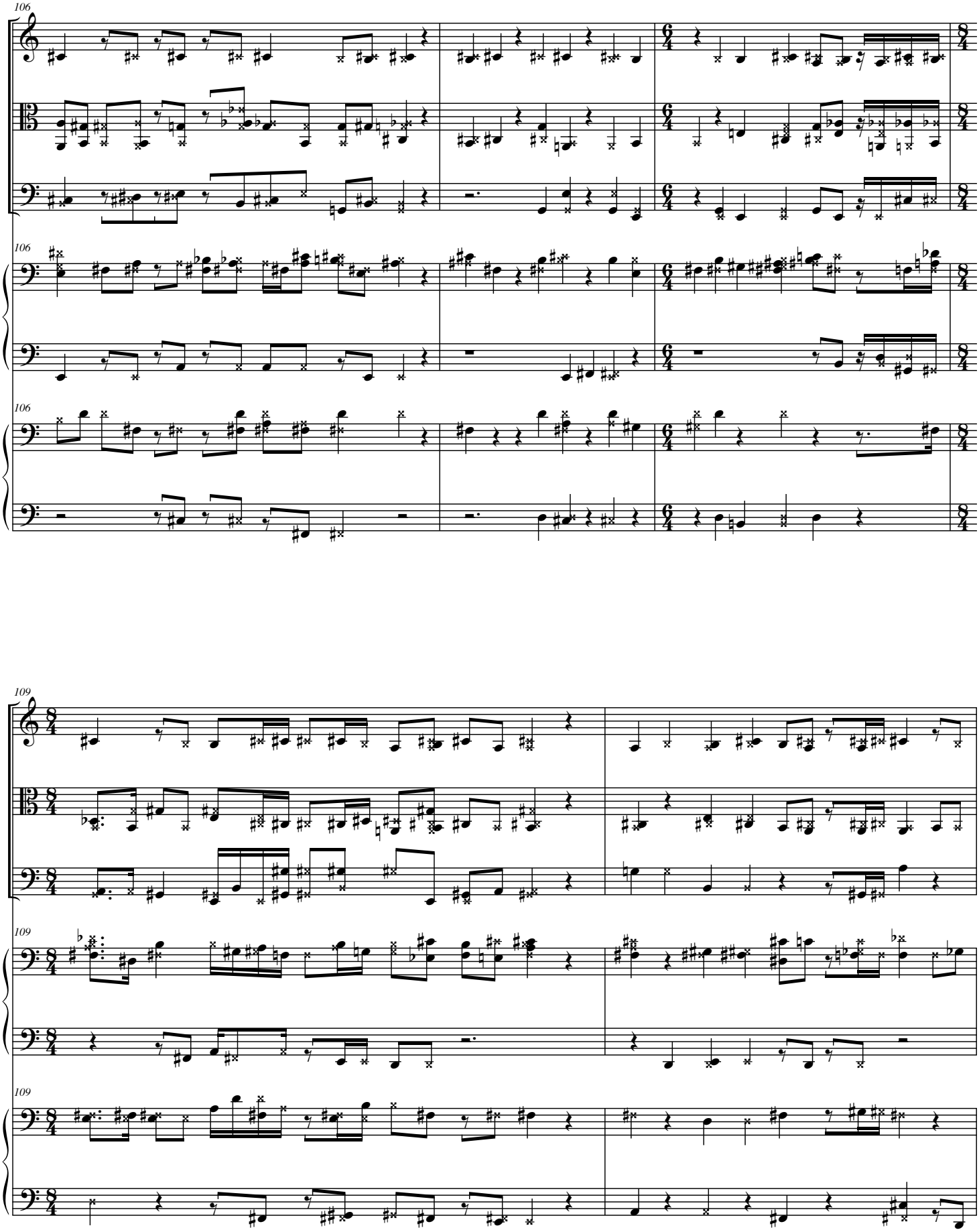
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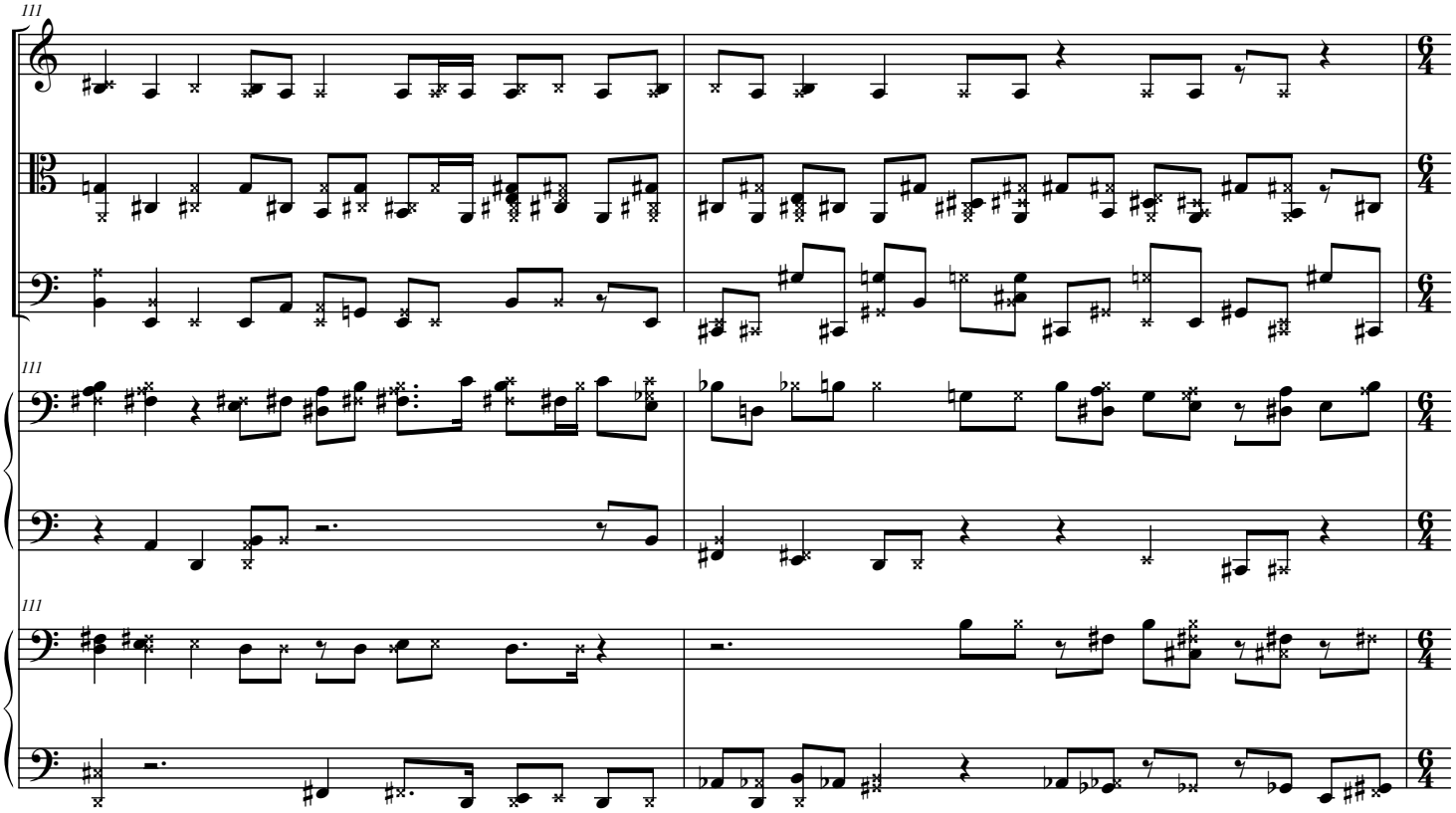
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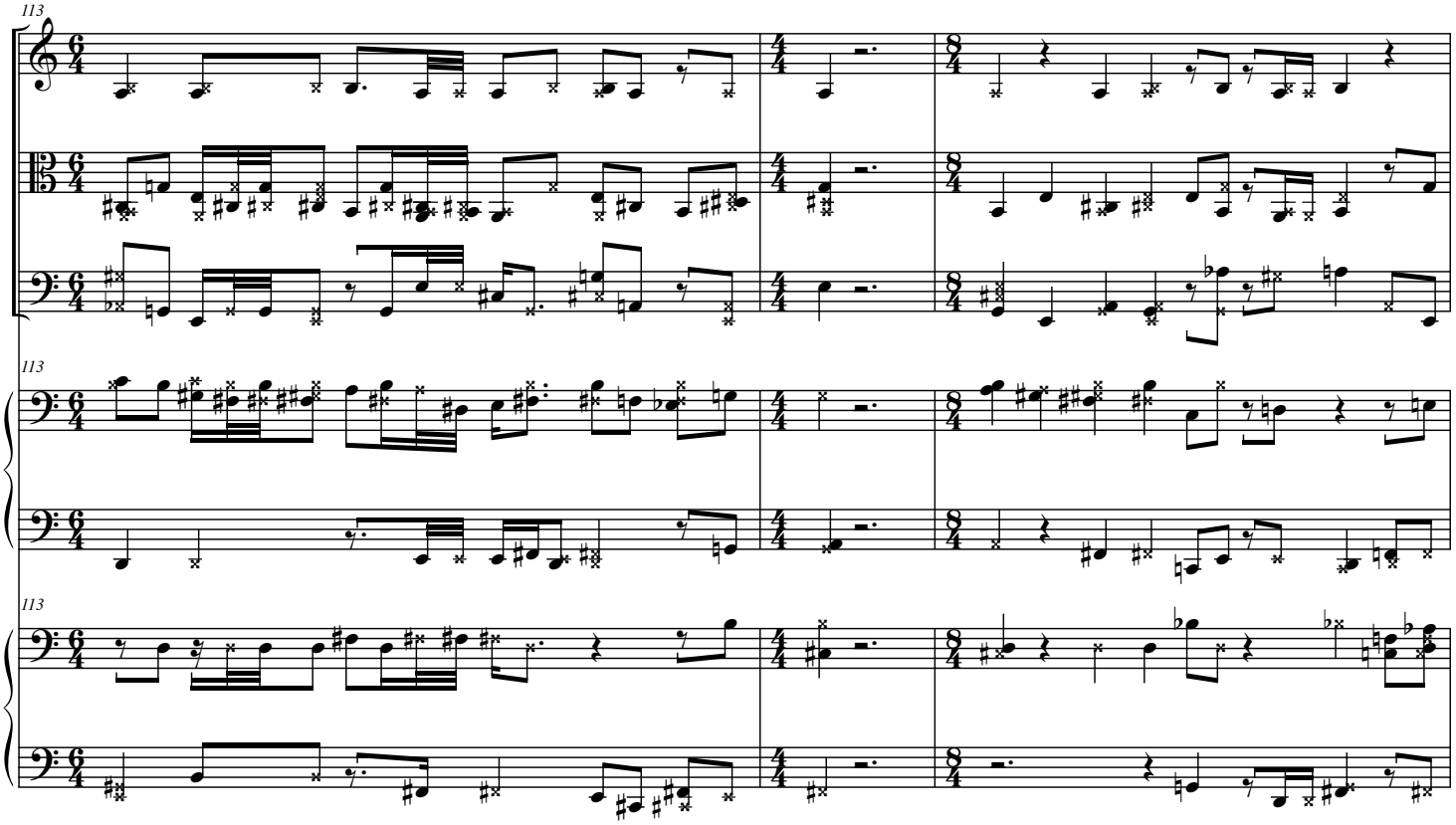
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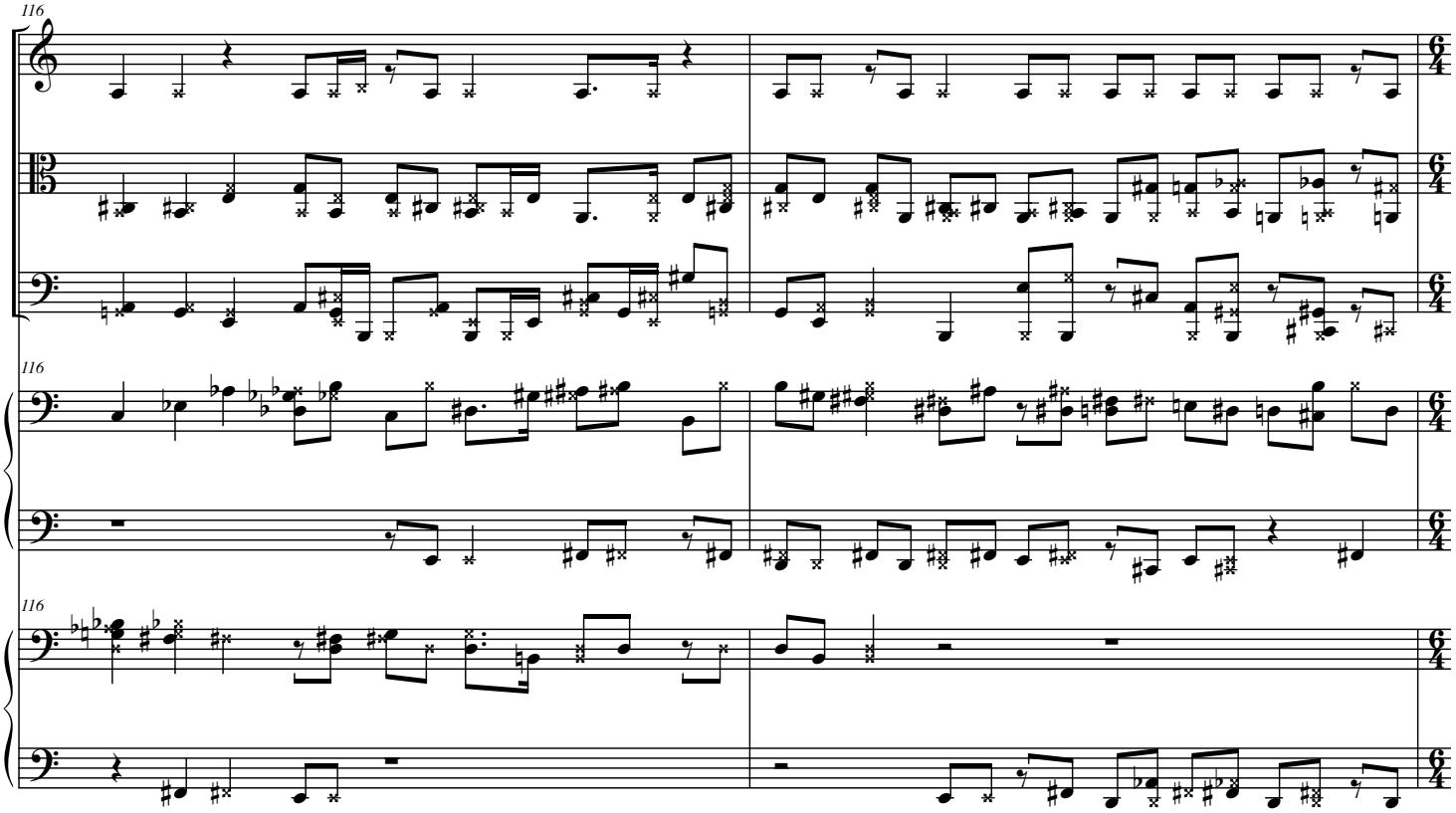
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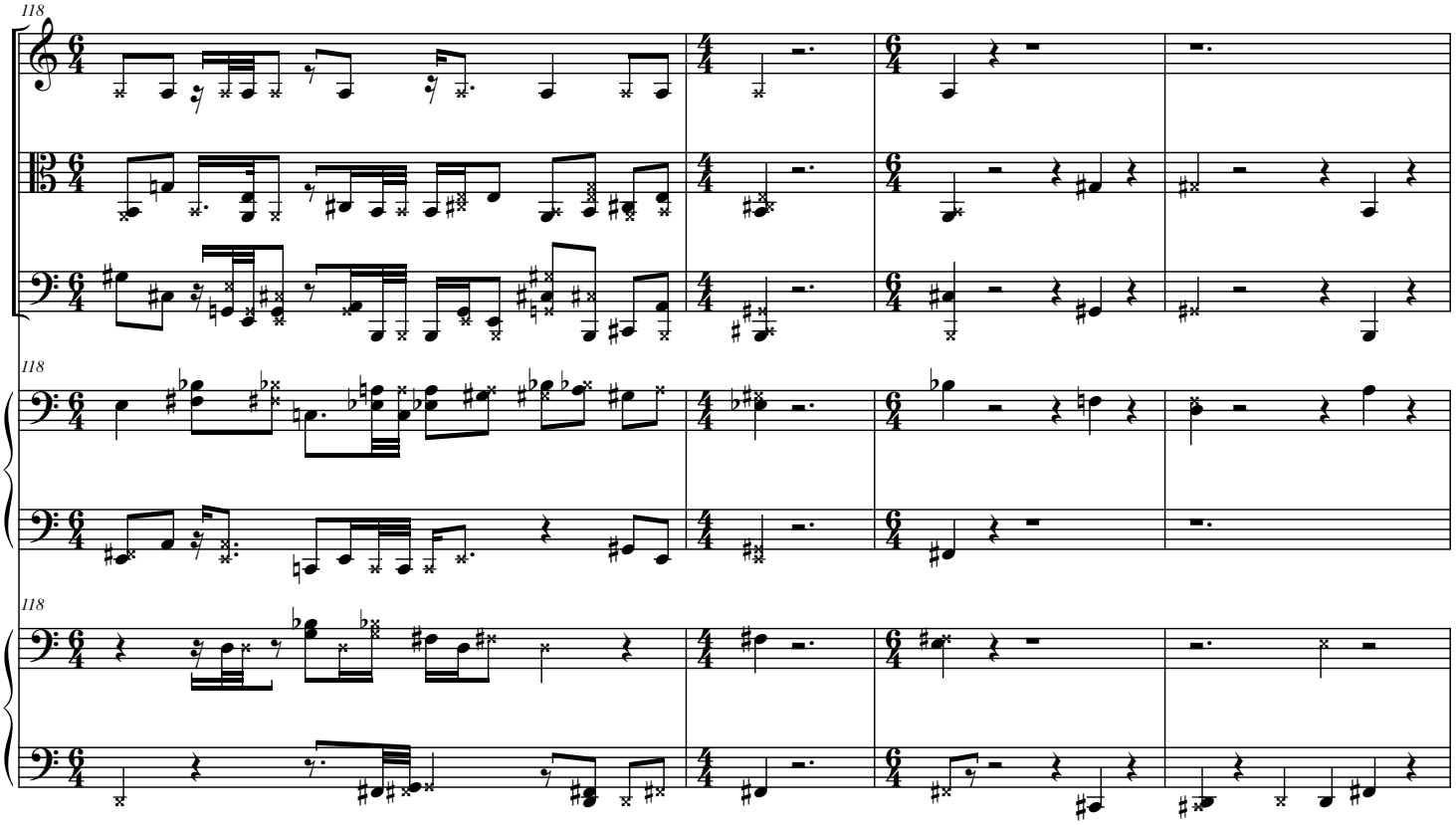
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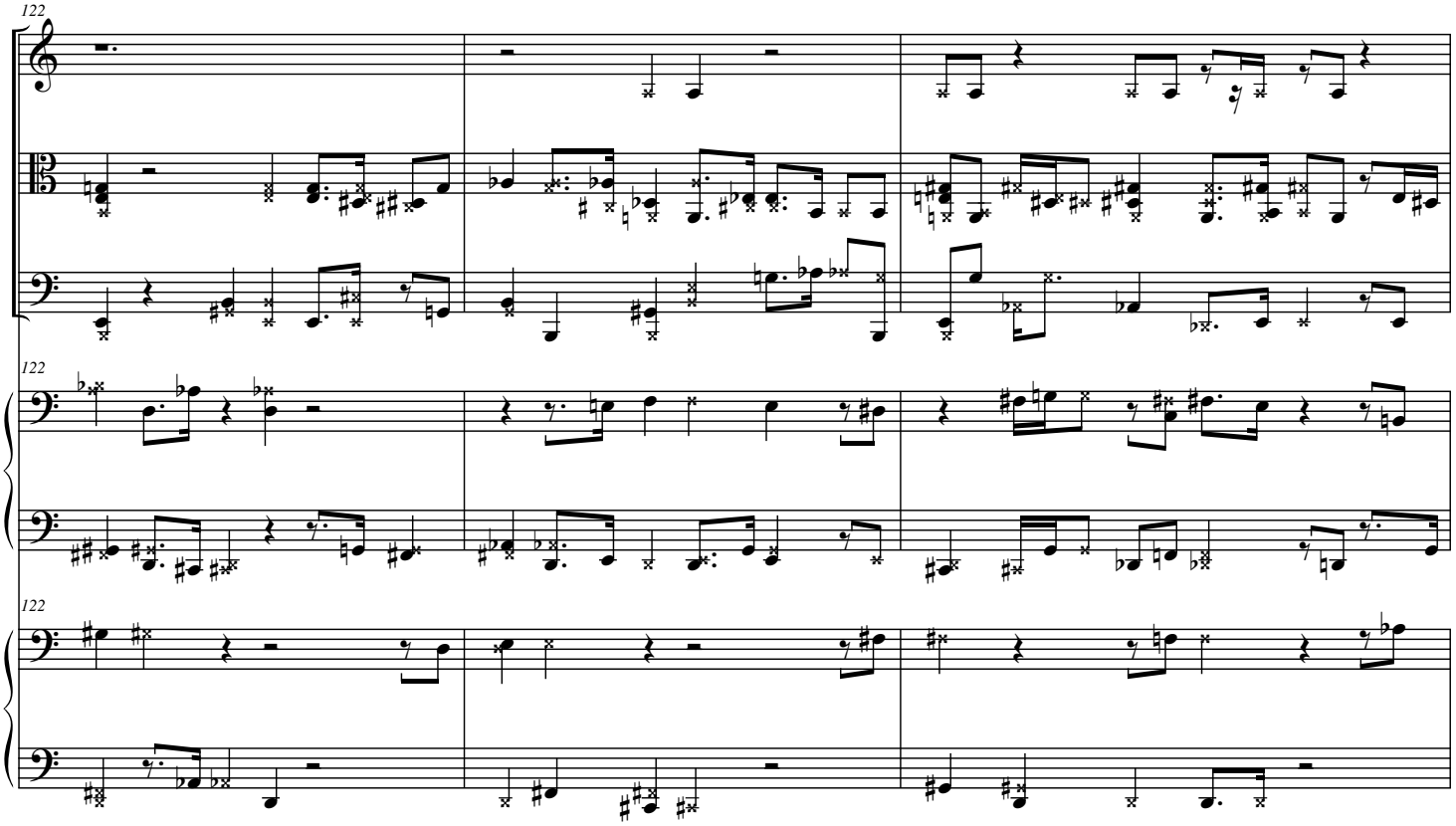
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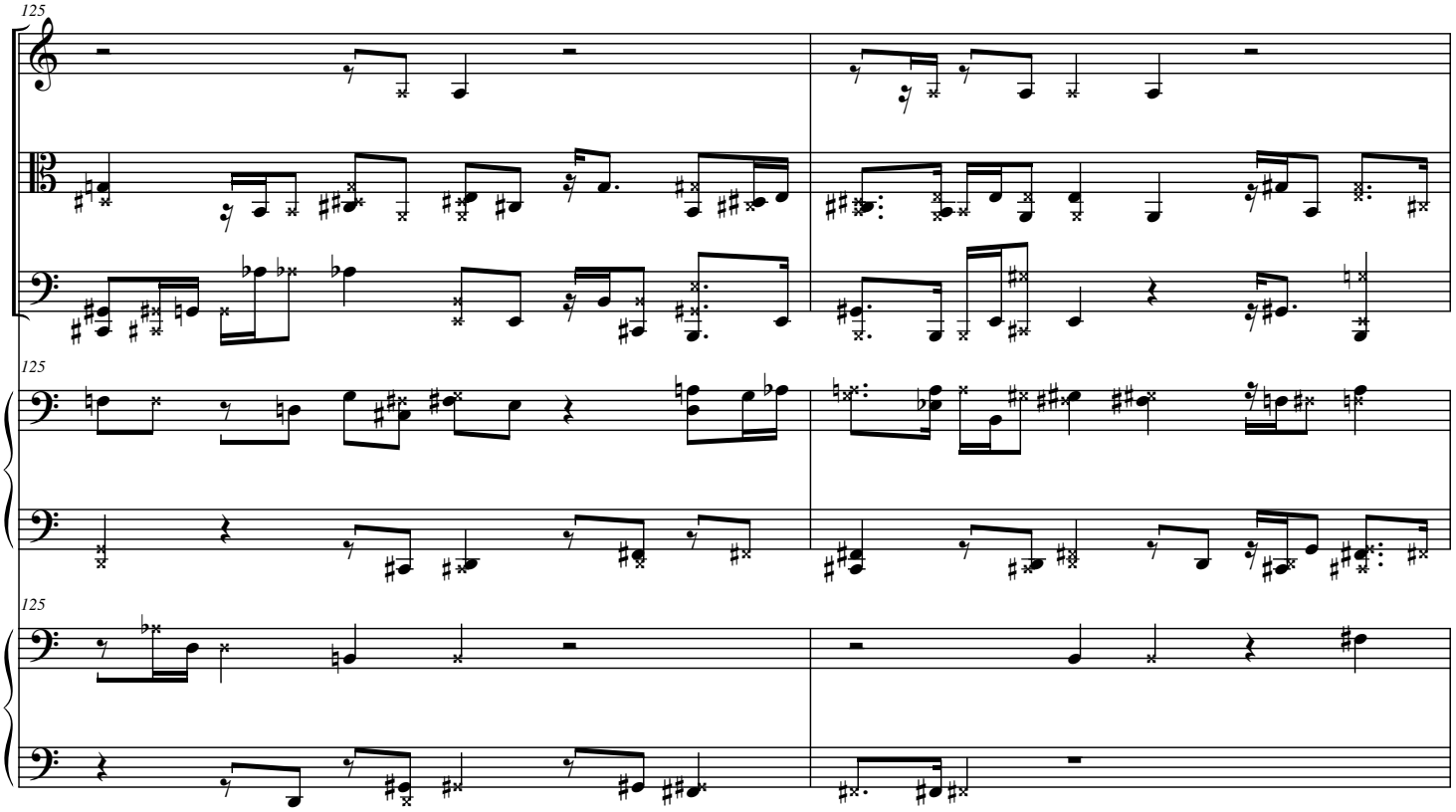
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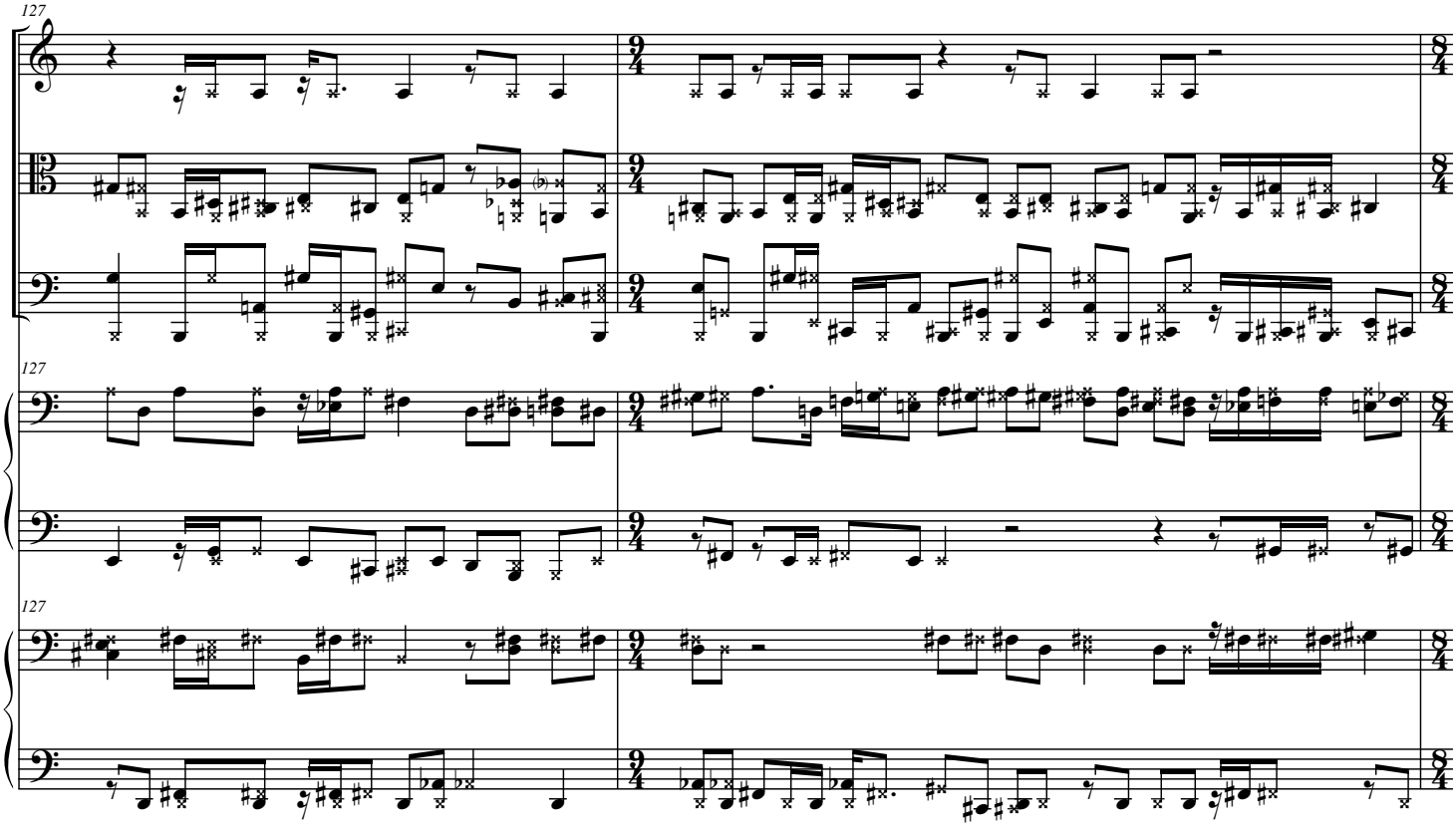
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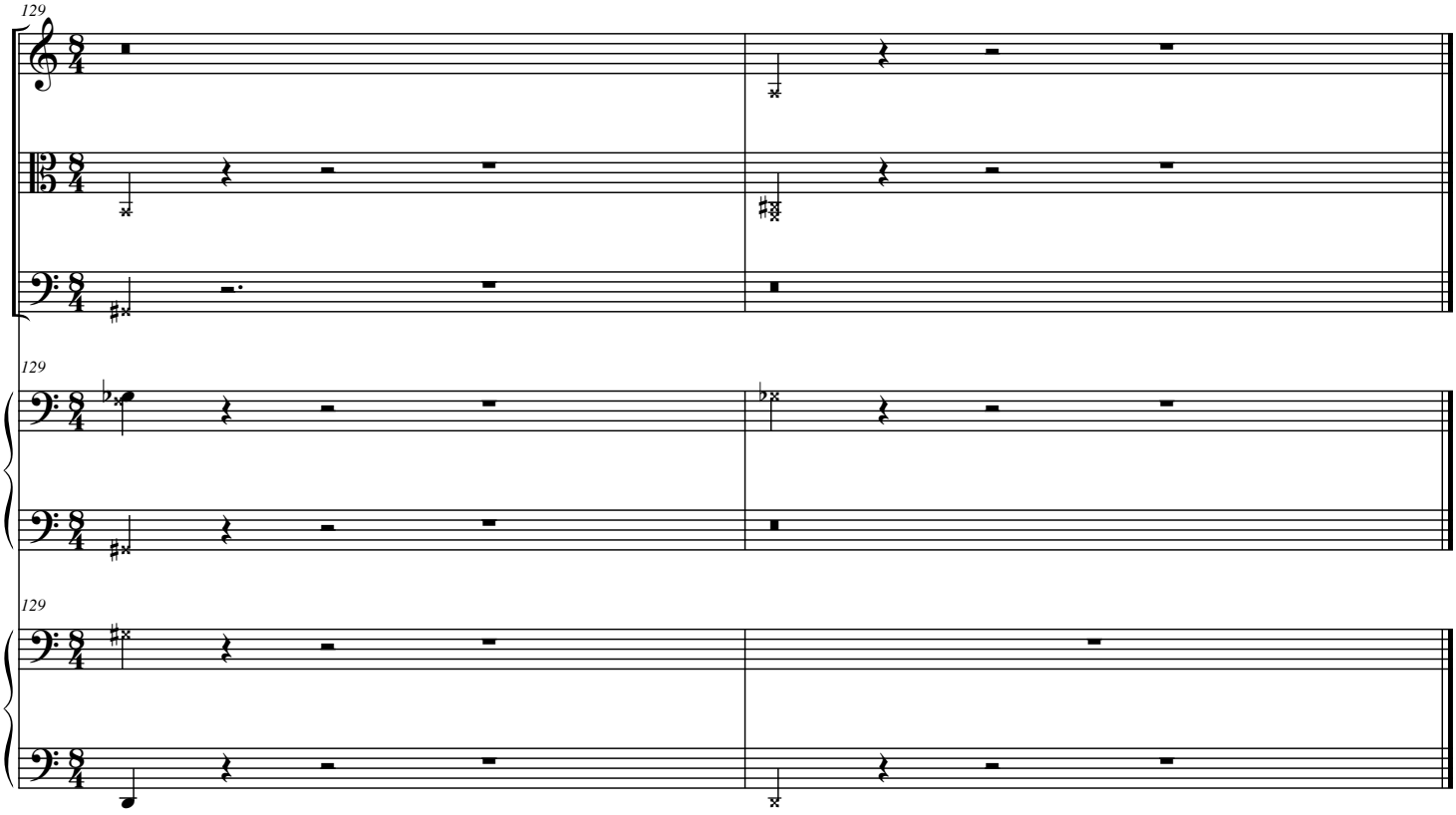
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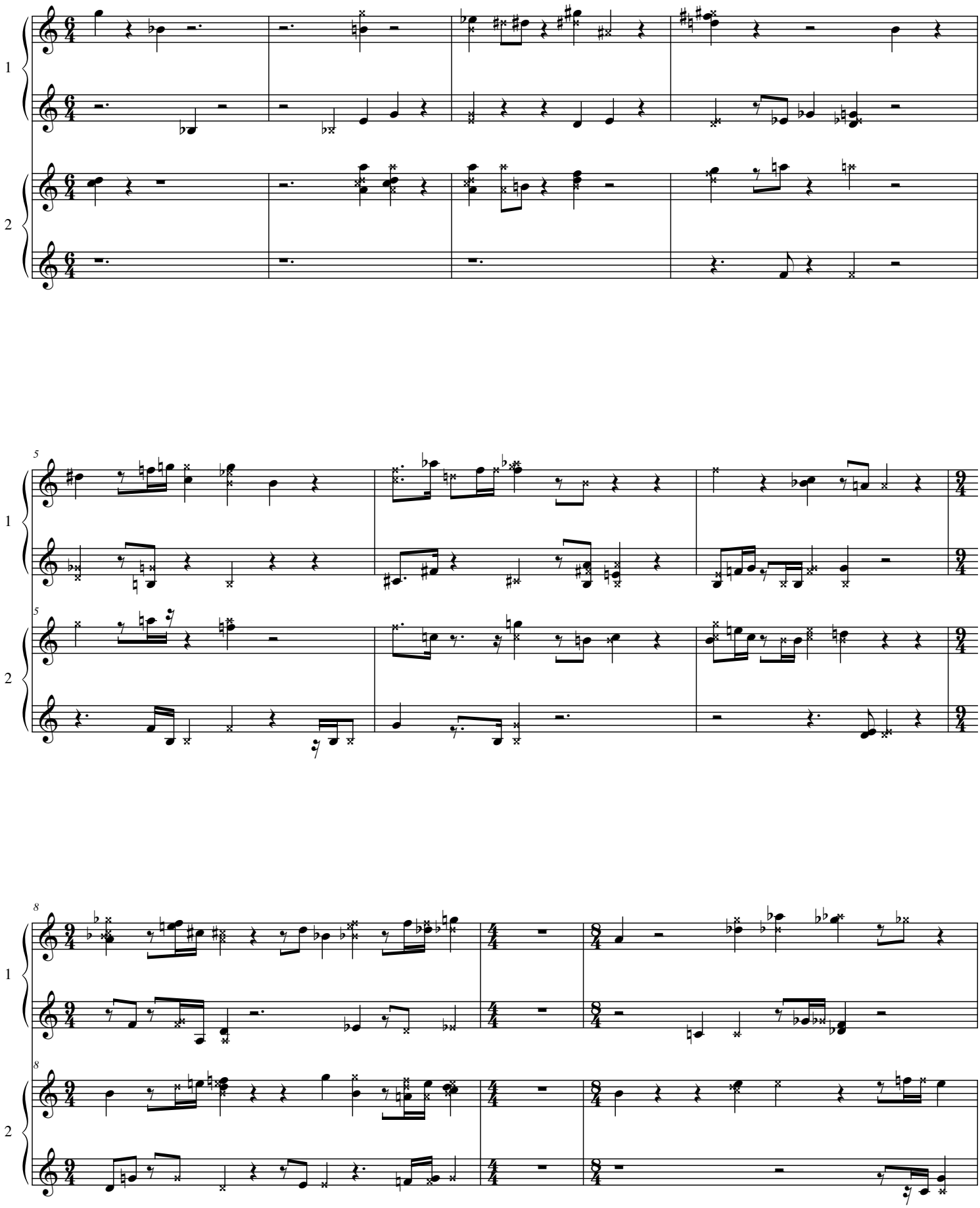
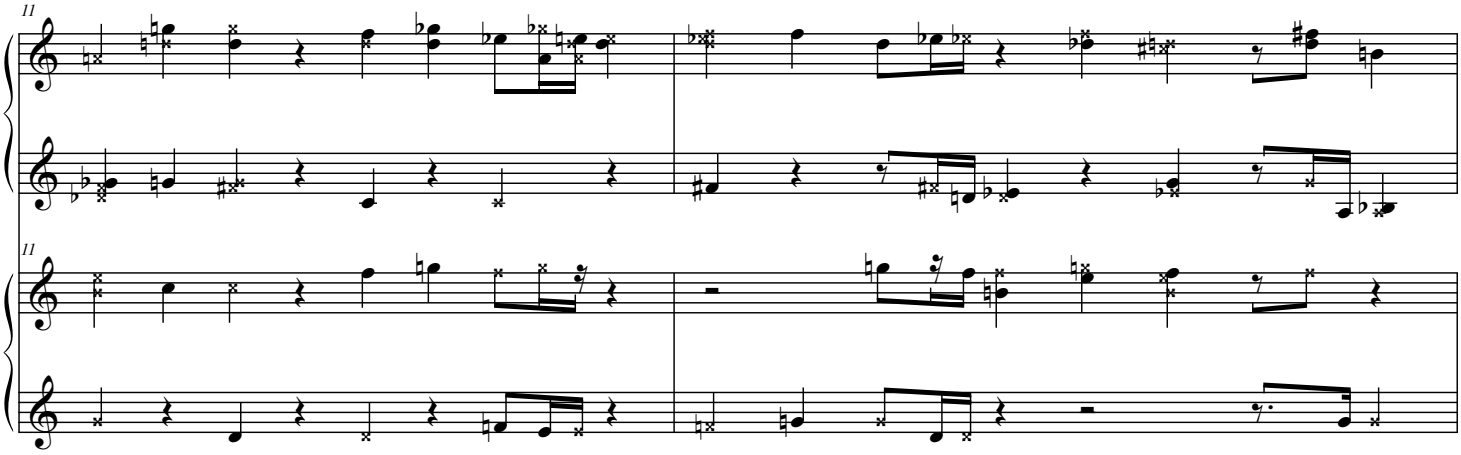
mass and band

first realization

michael winter (la, 2011)

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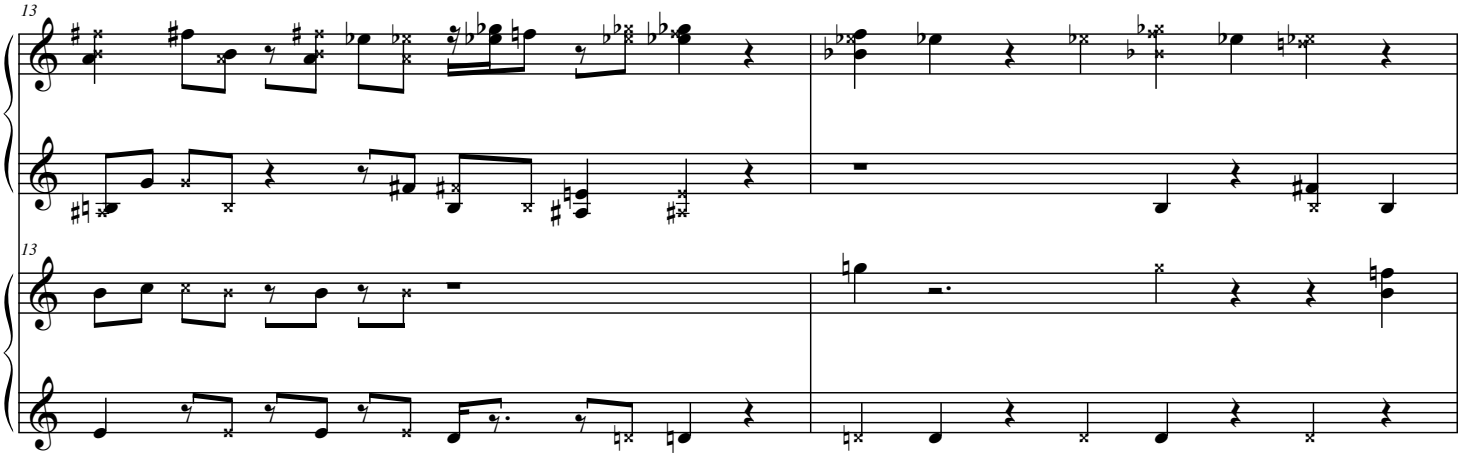
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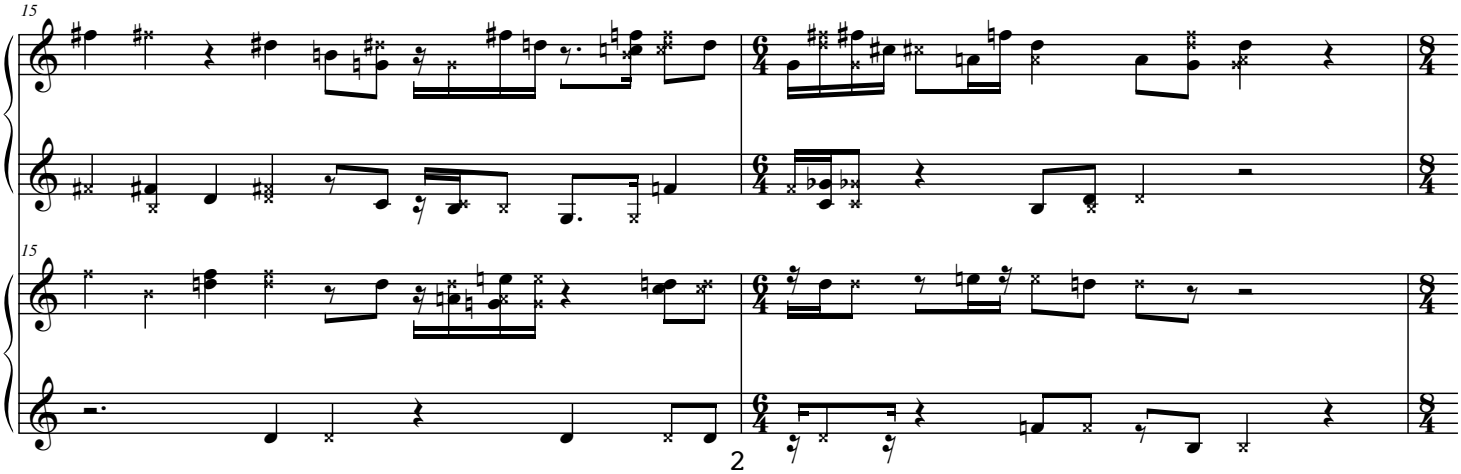
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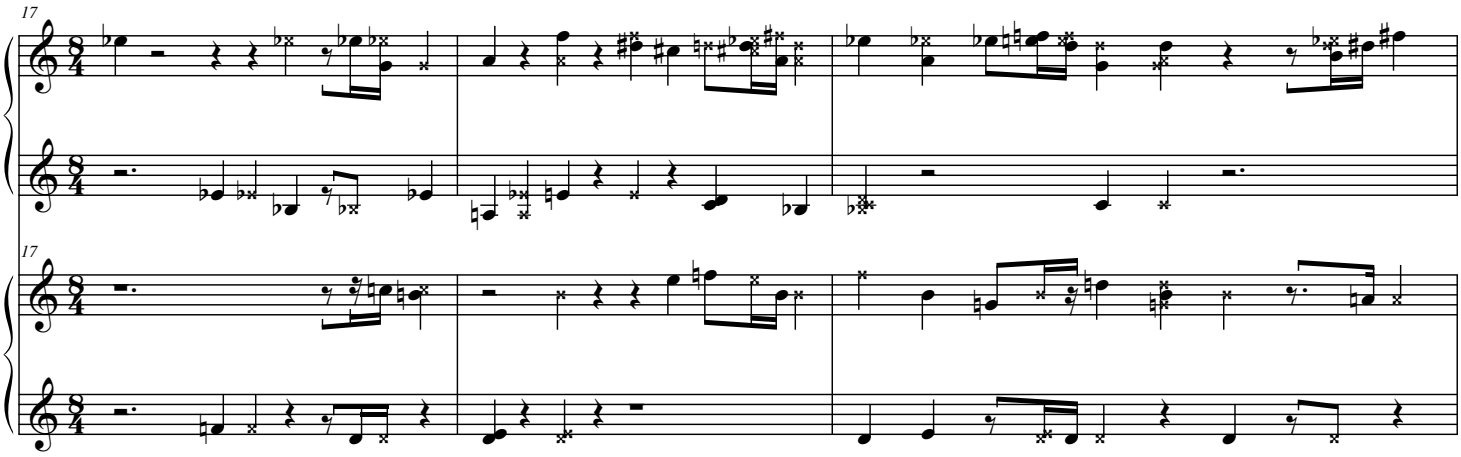
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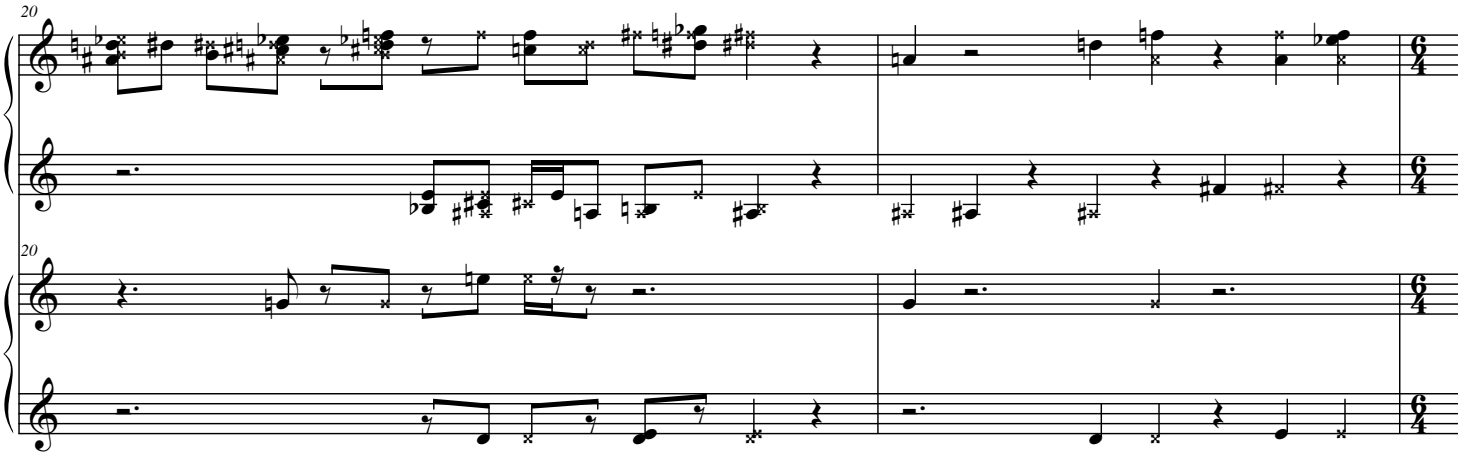
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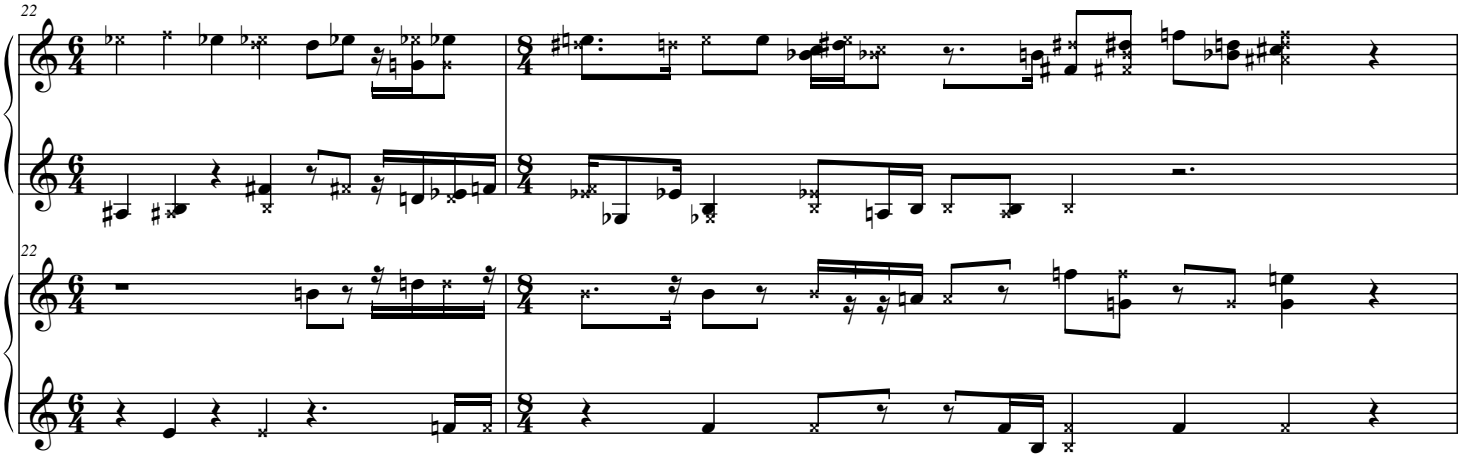
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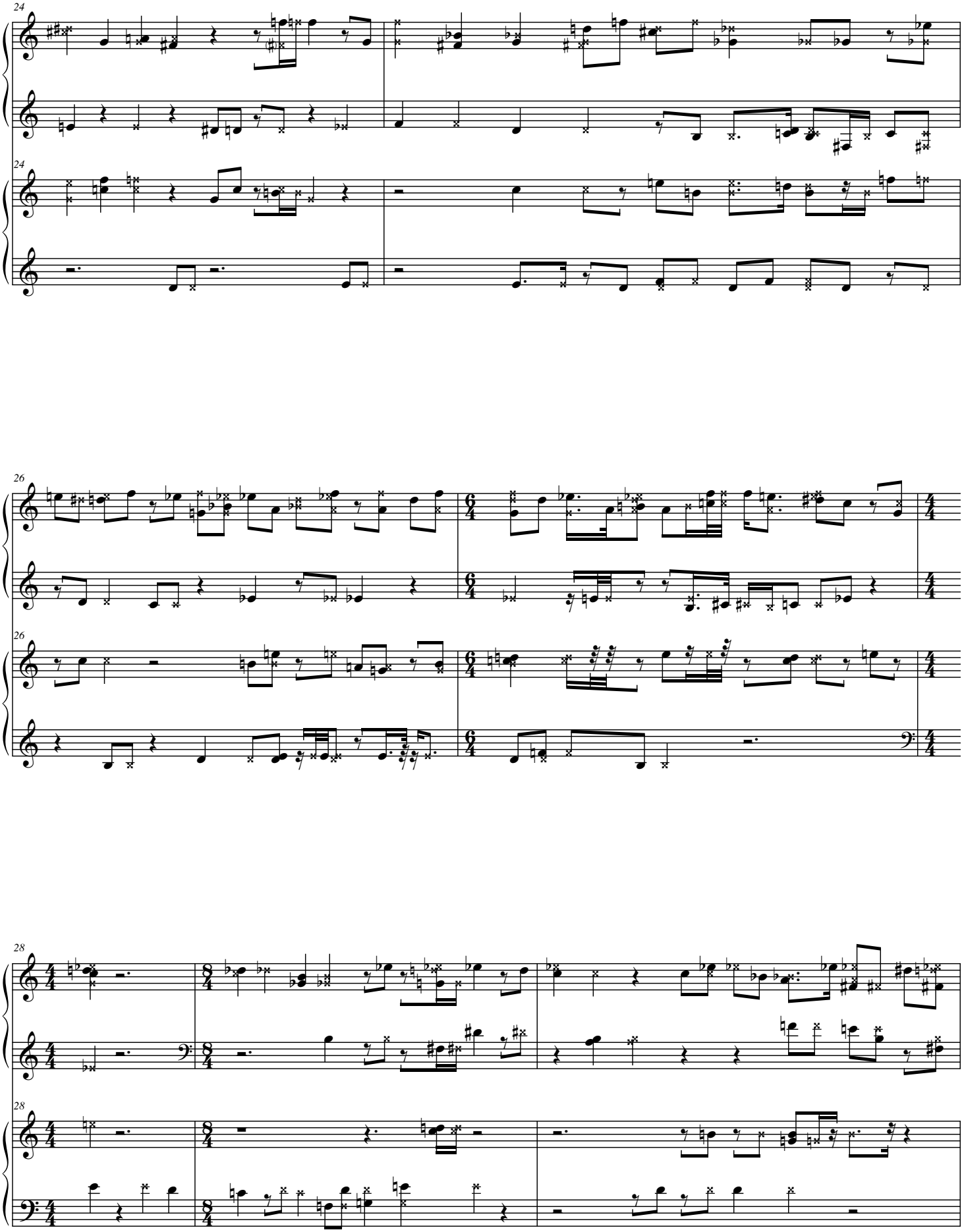
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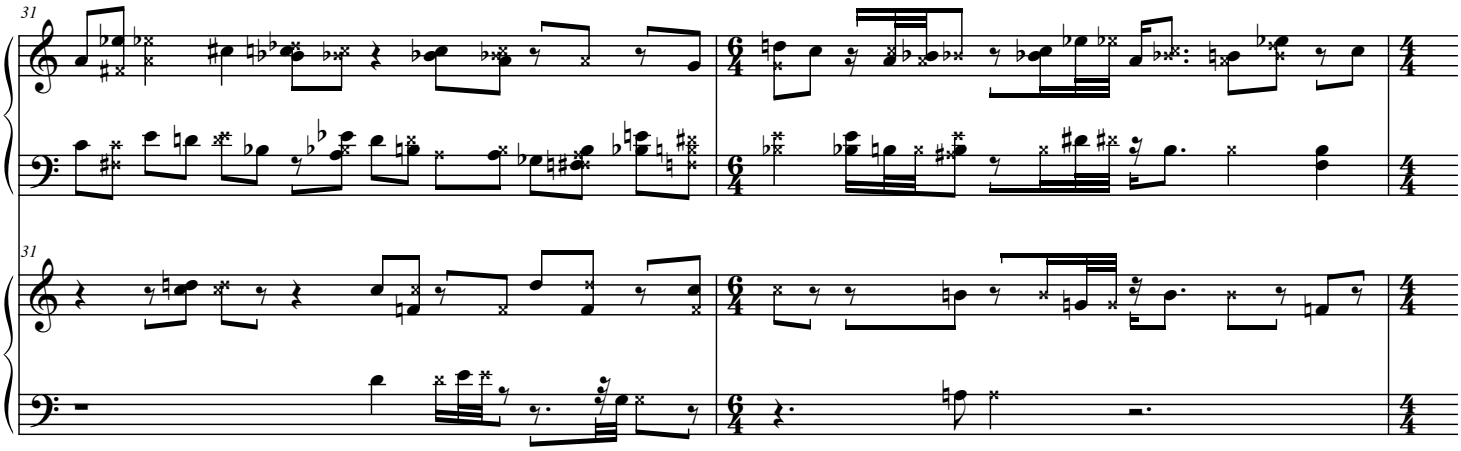
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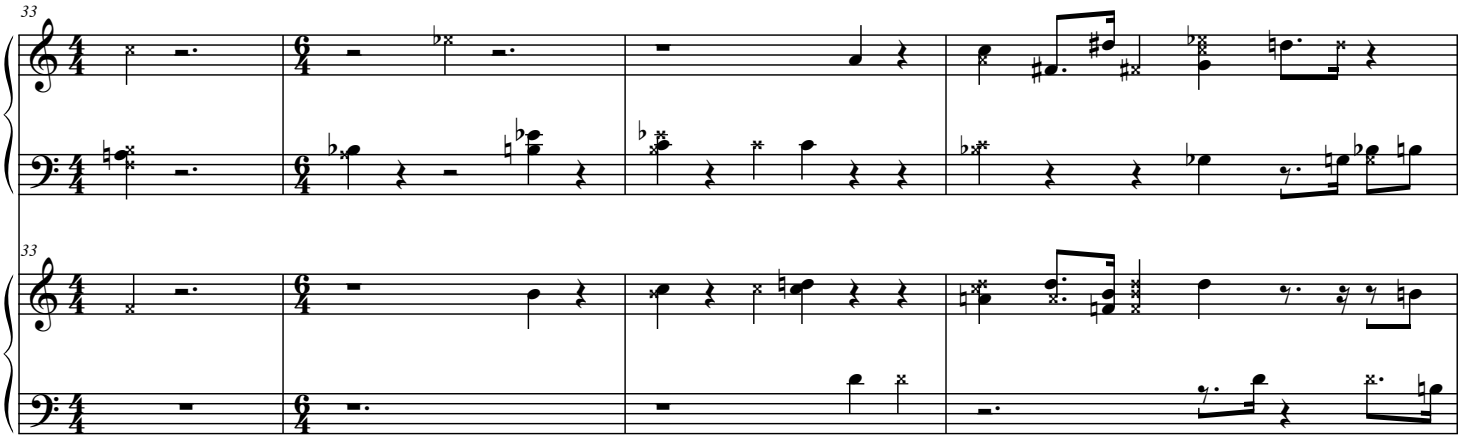
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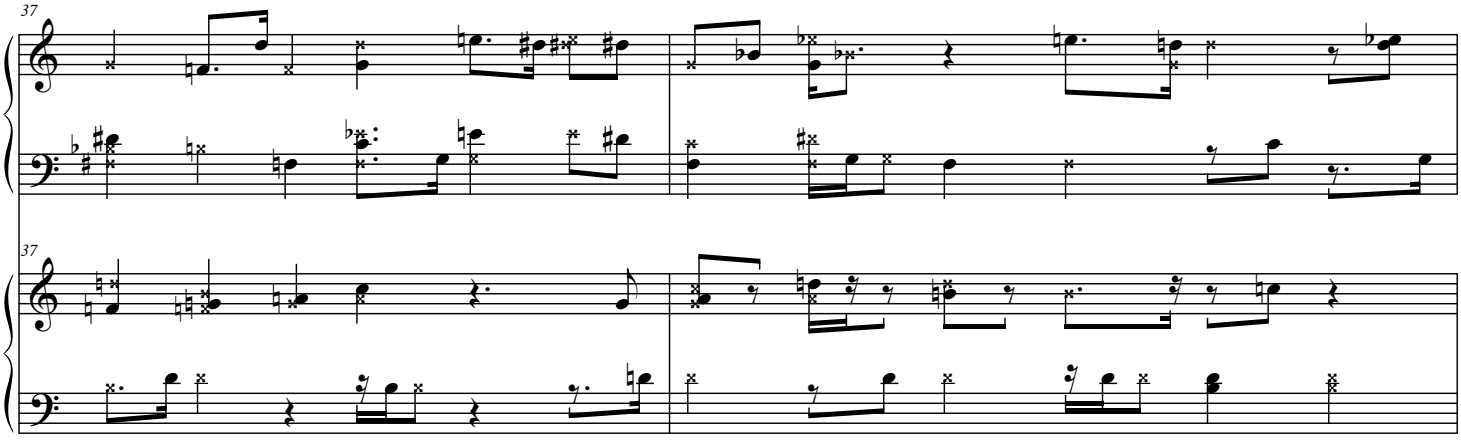
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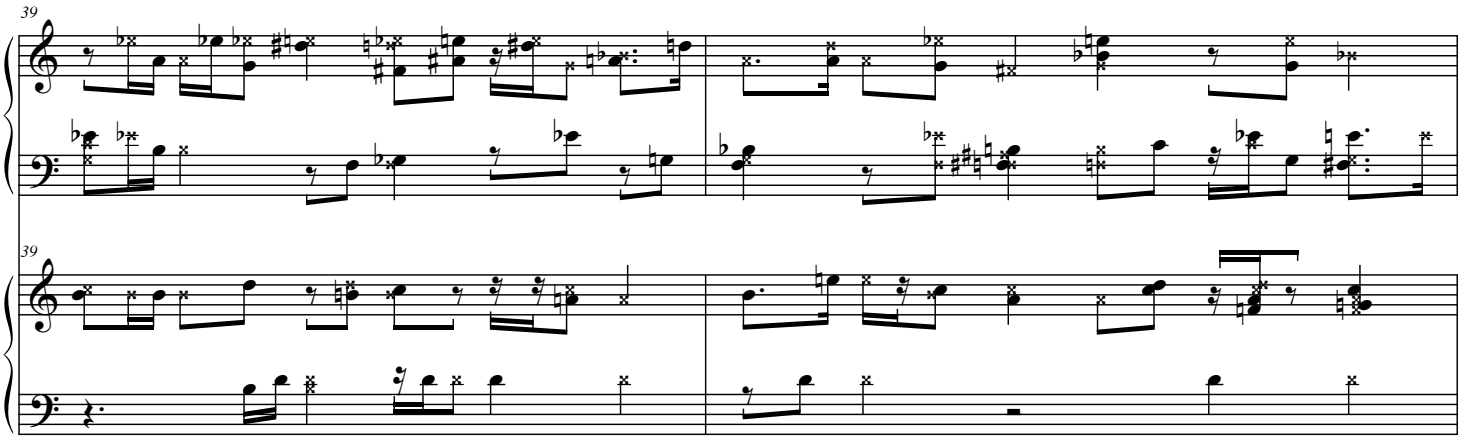
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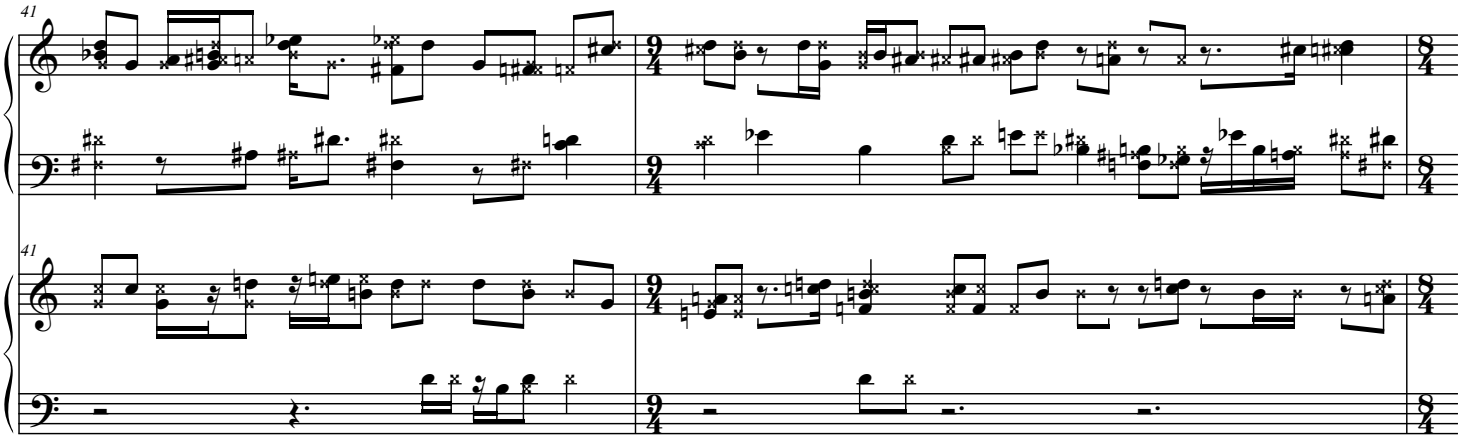
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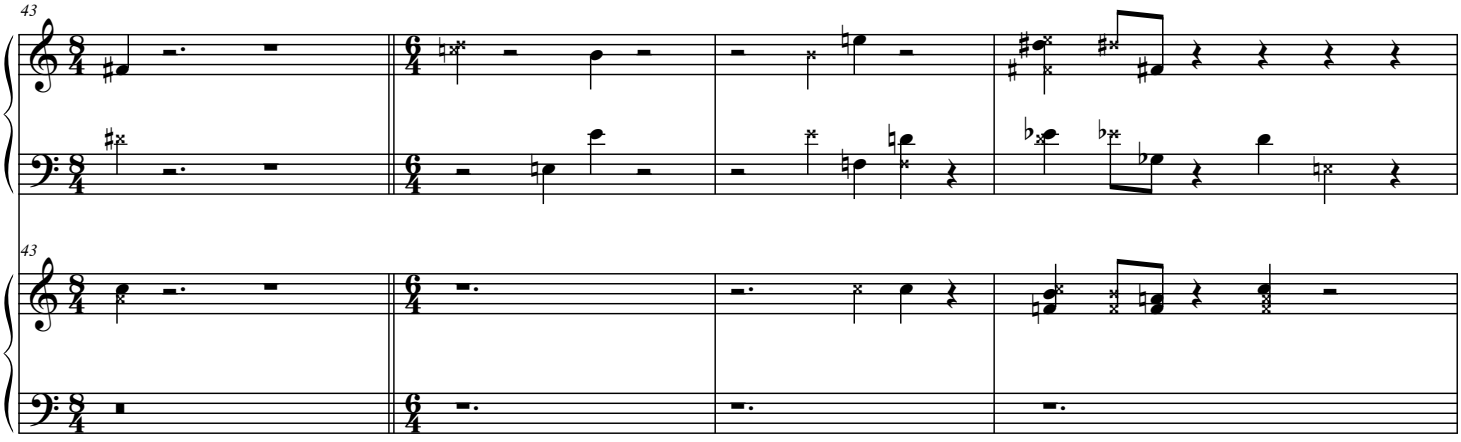
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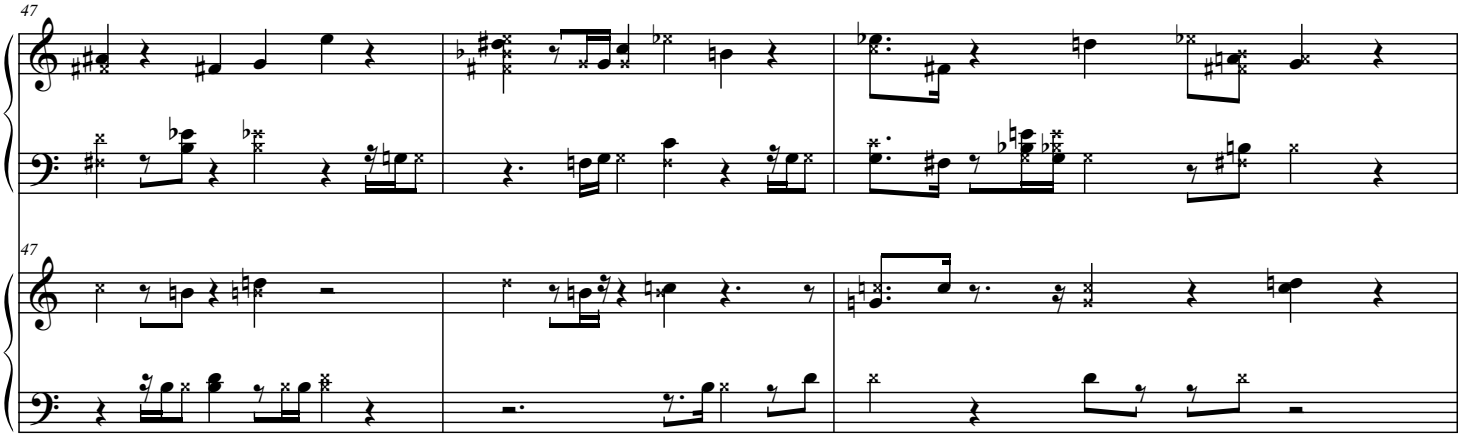
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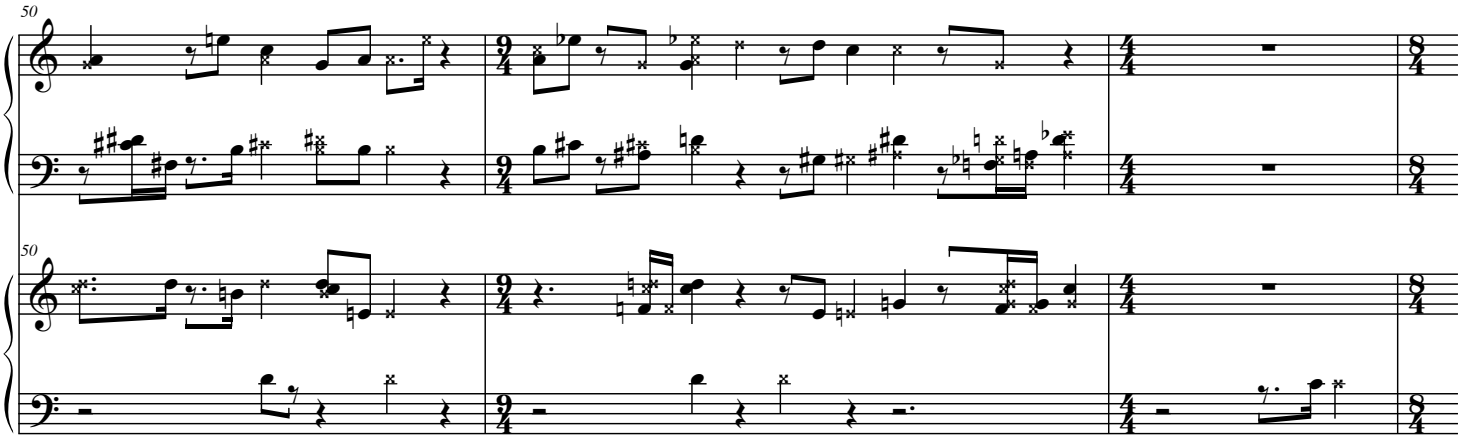
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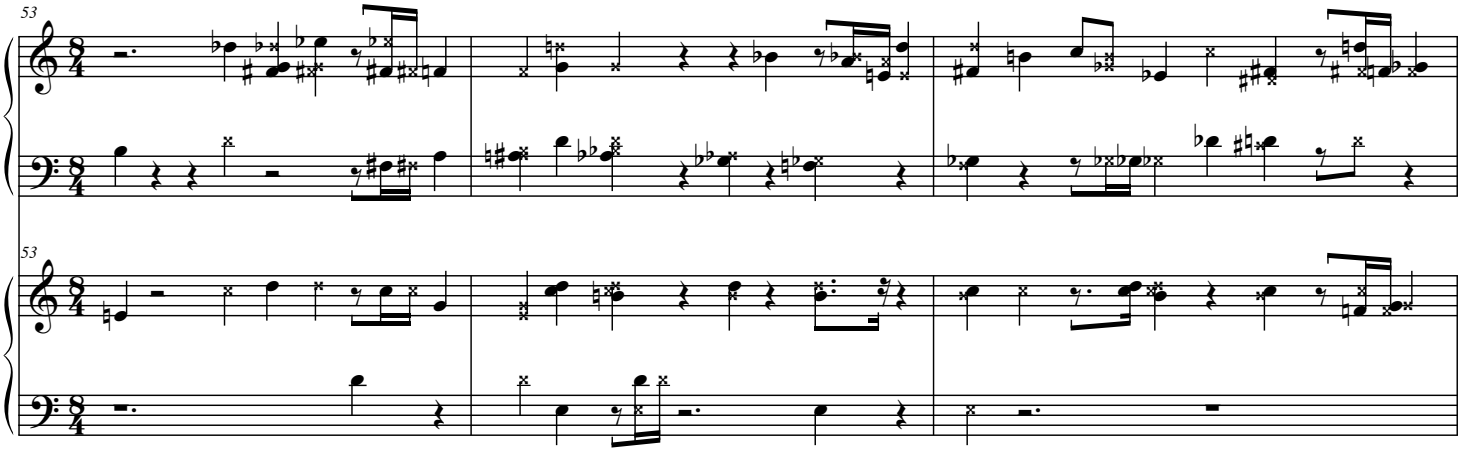
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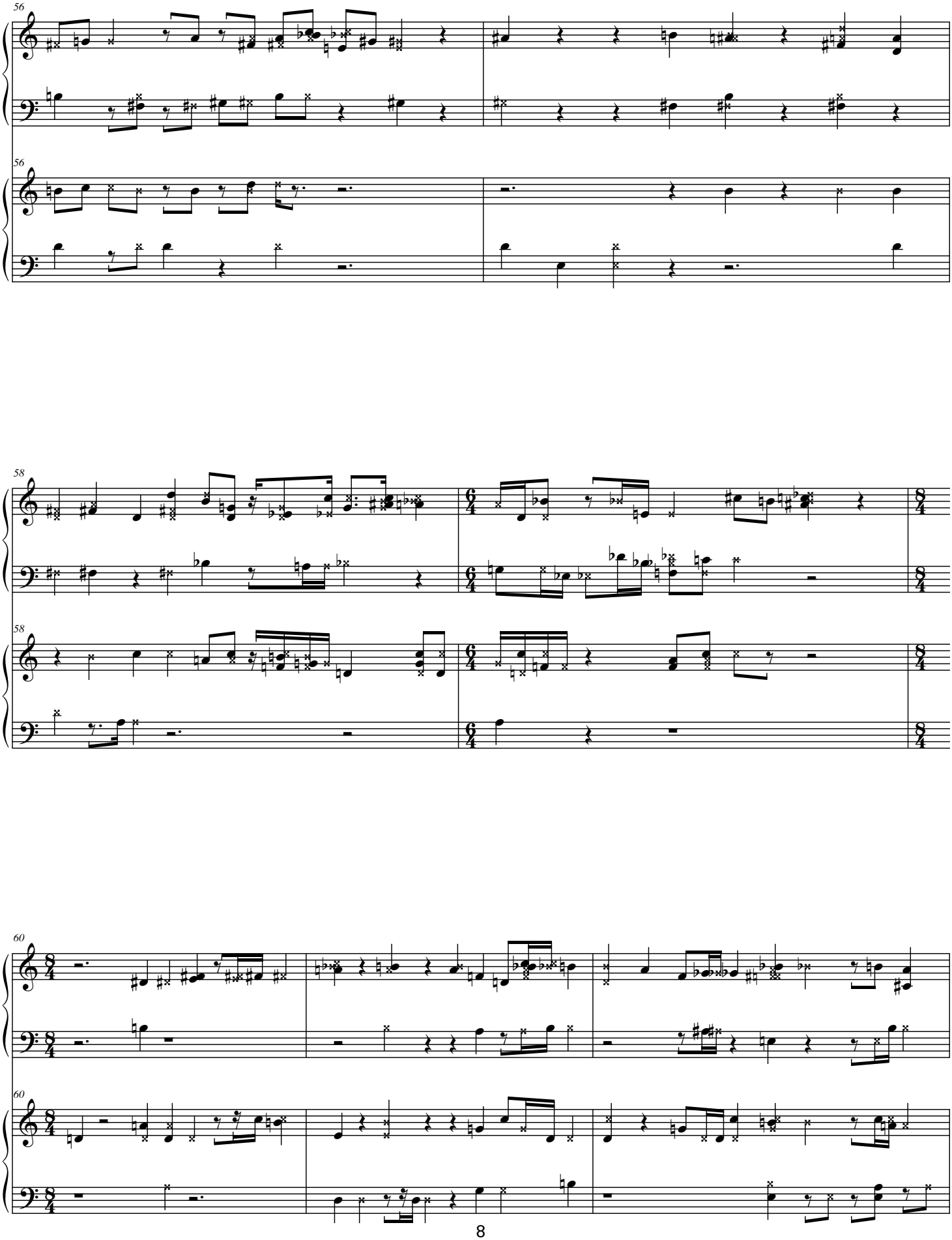
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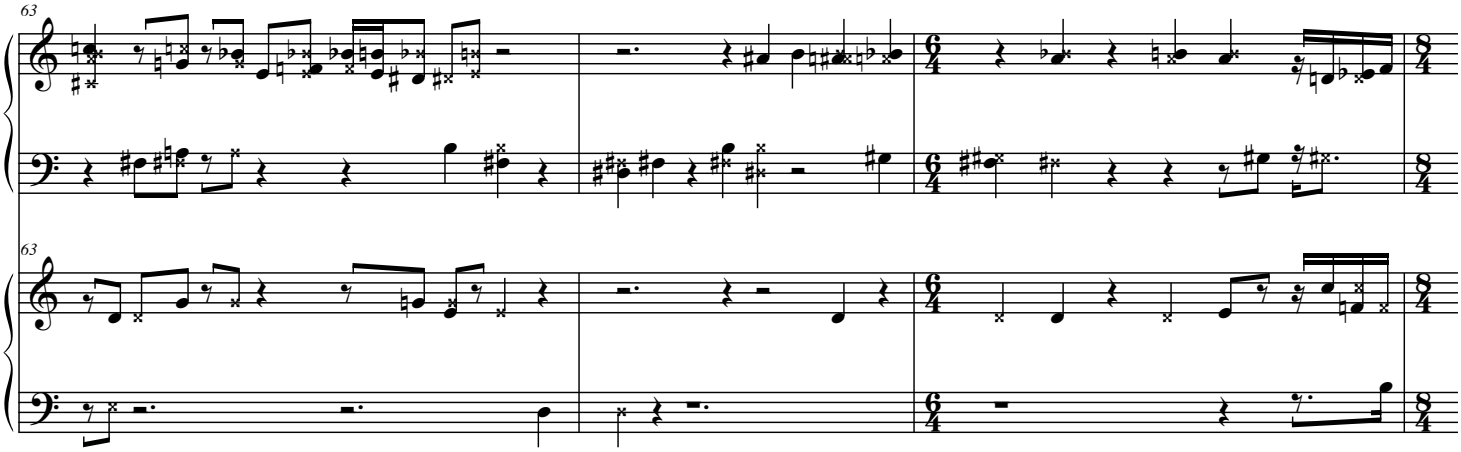
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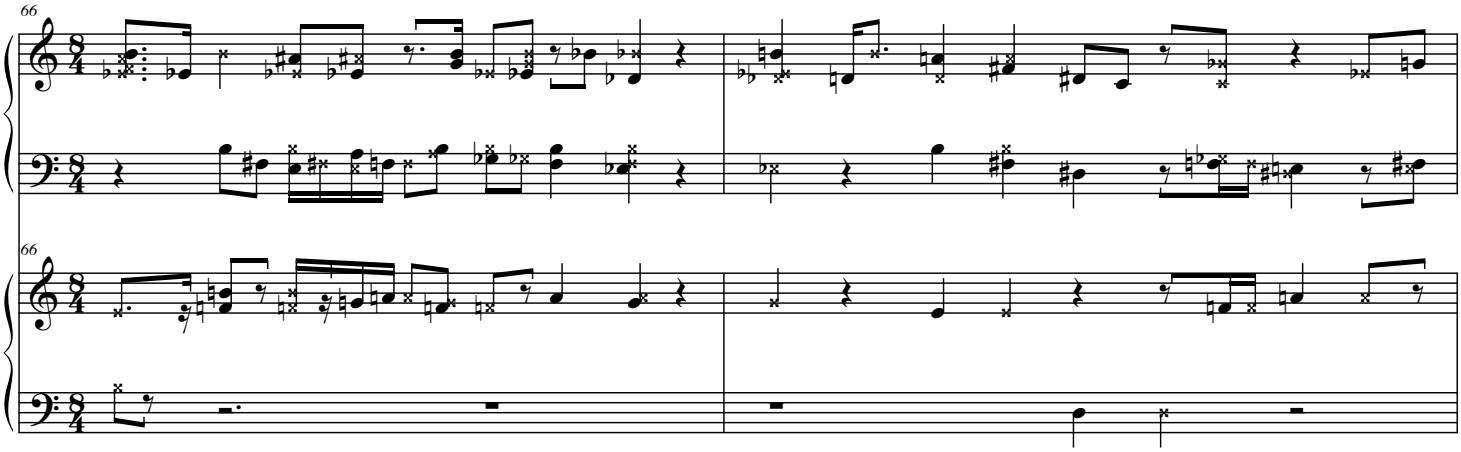
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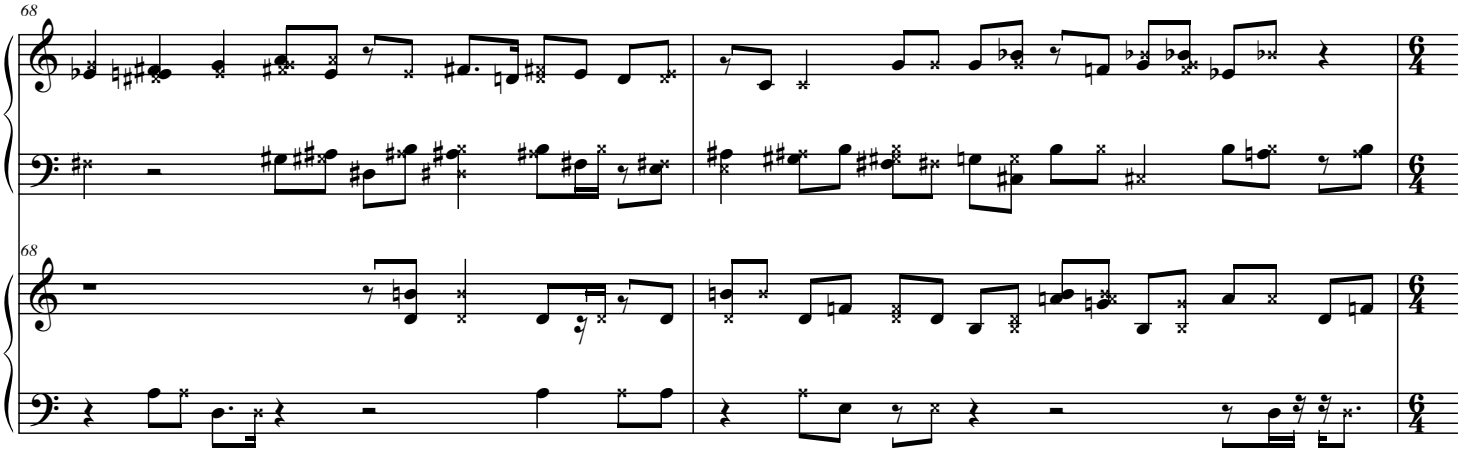
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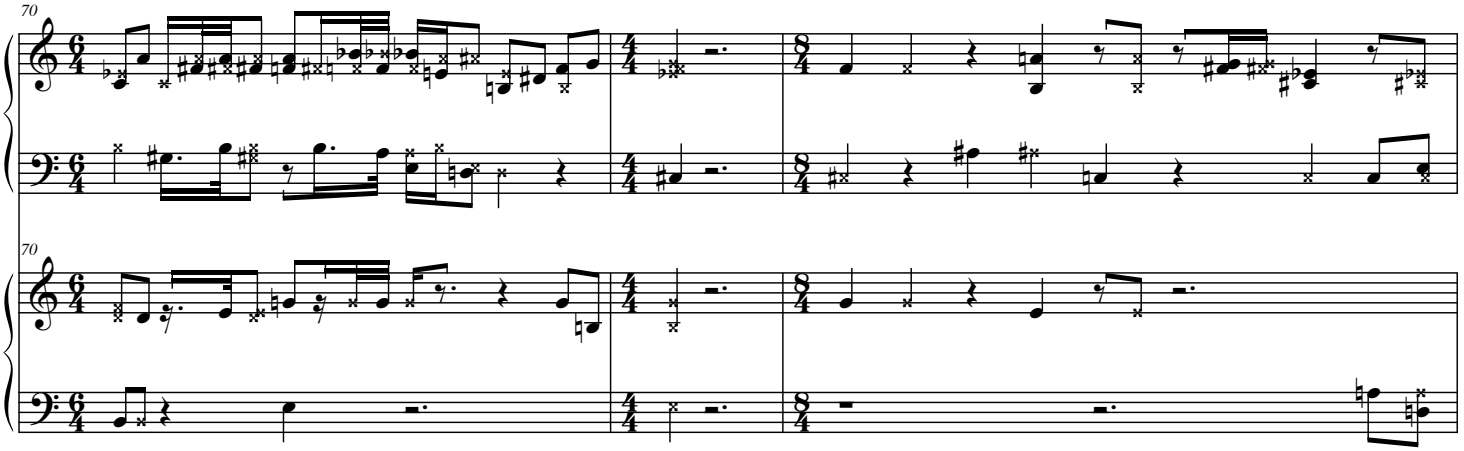
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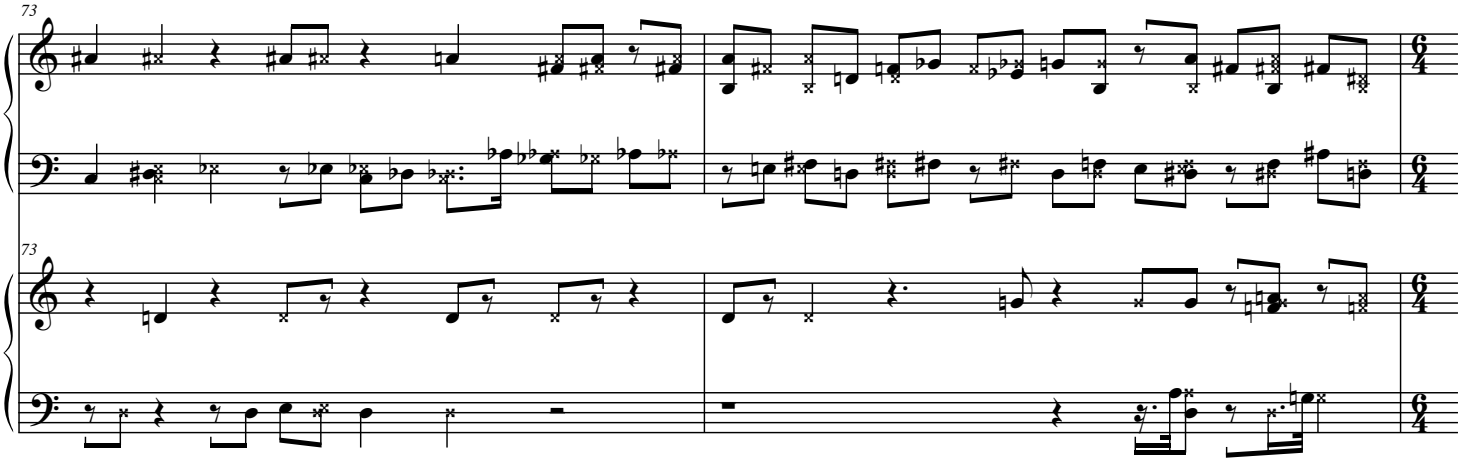
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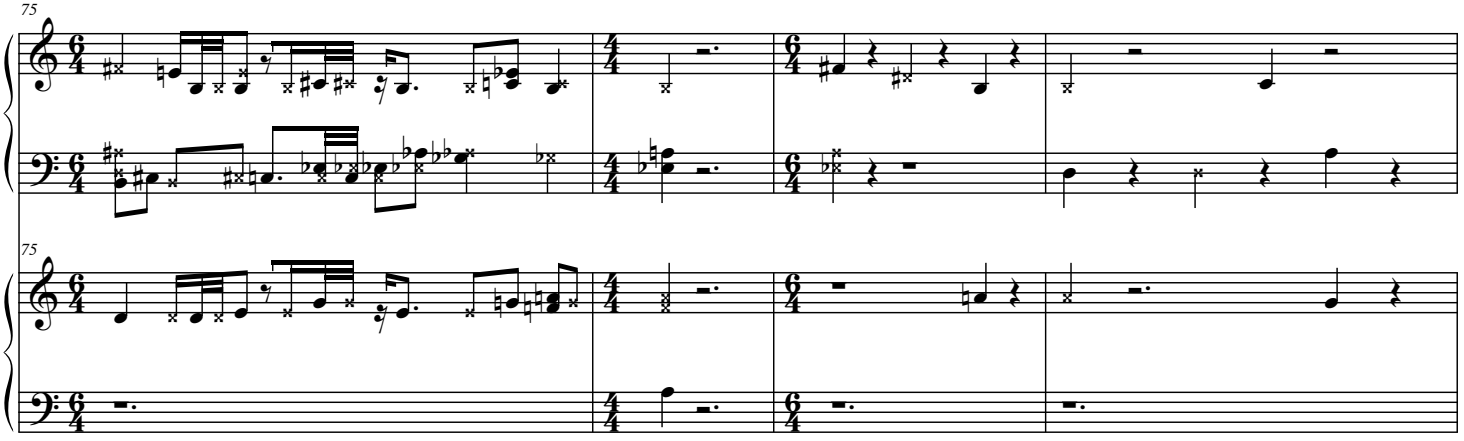
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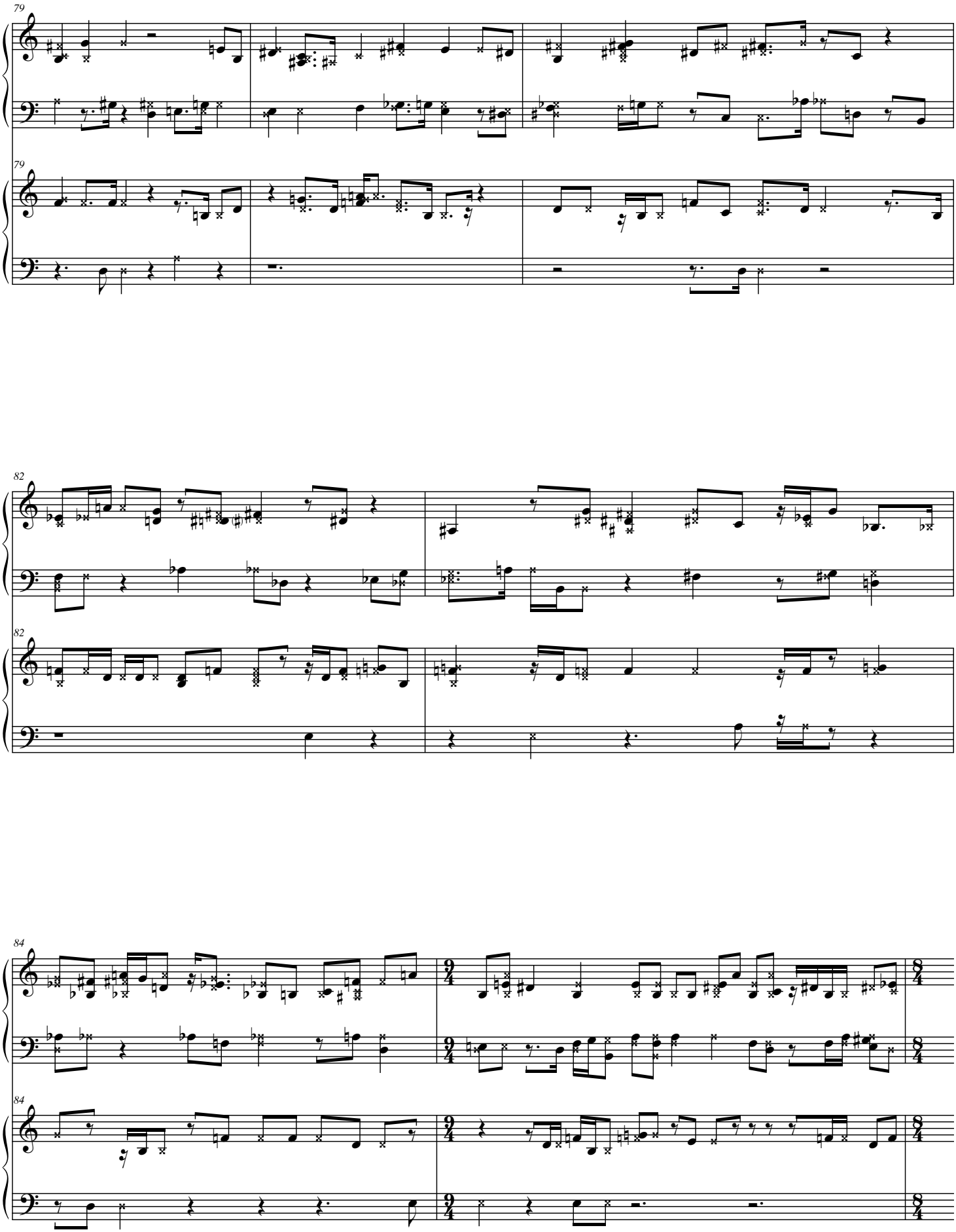
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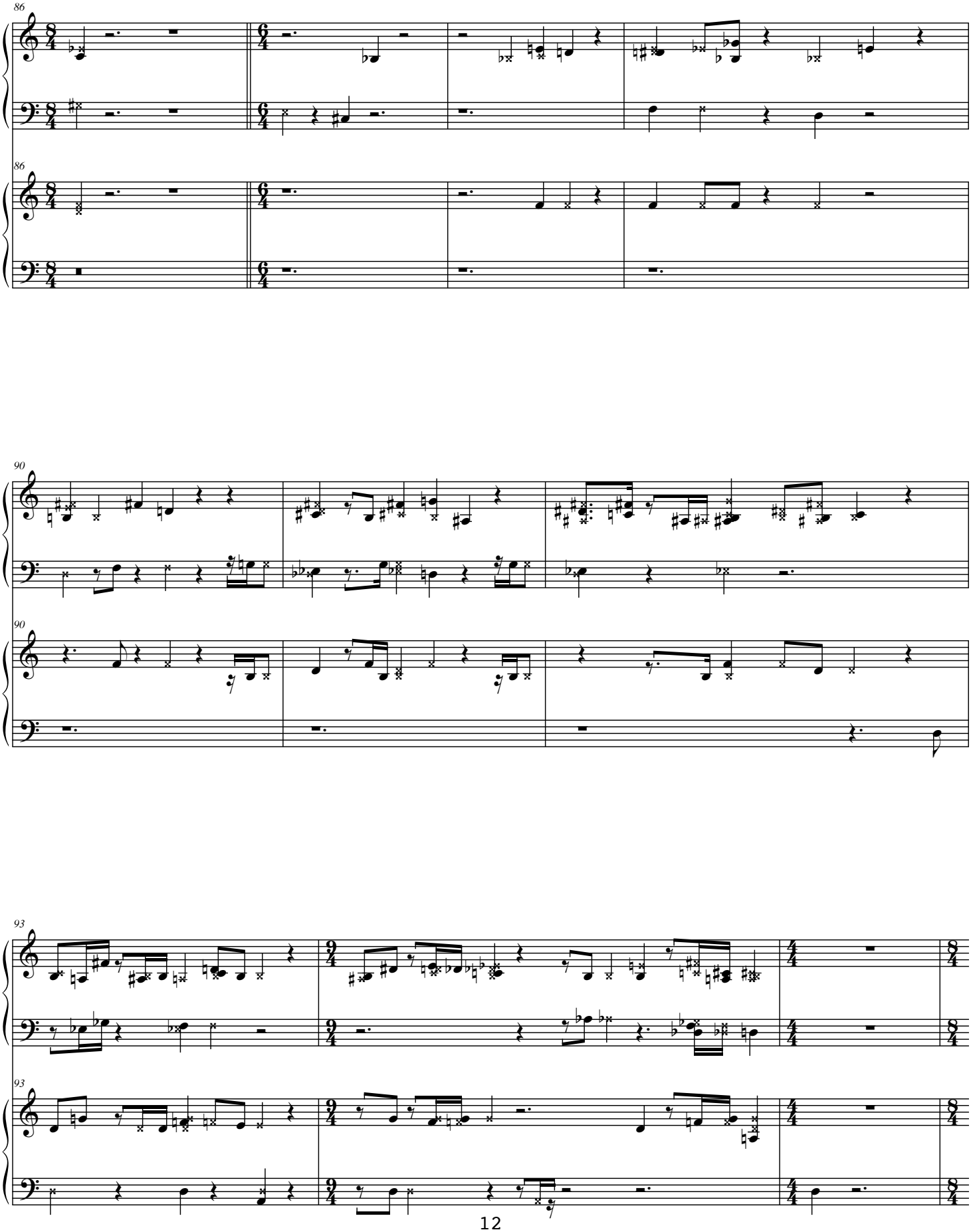
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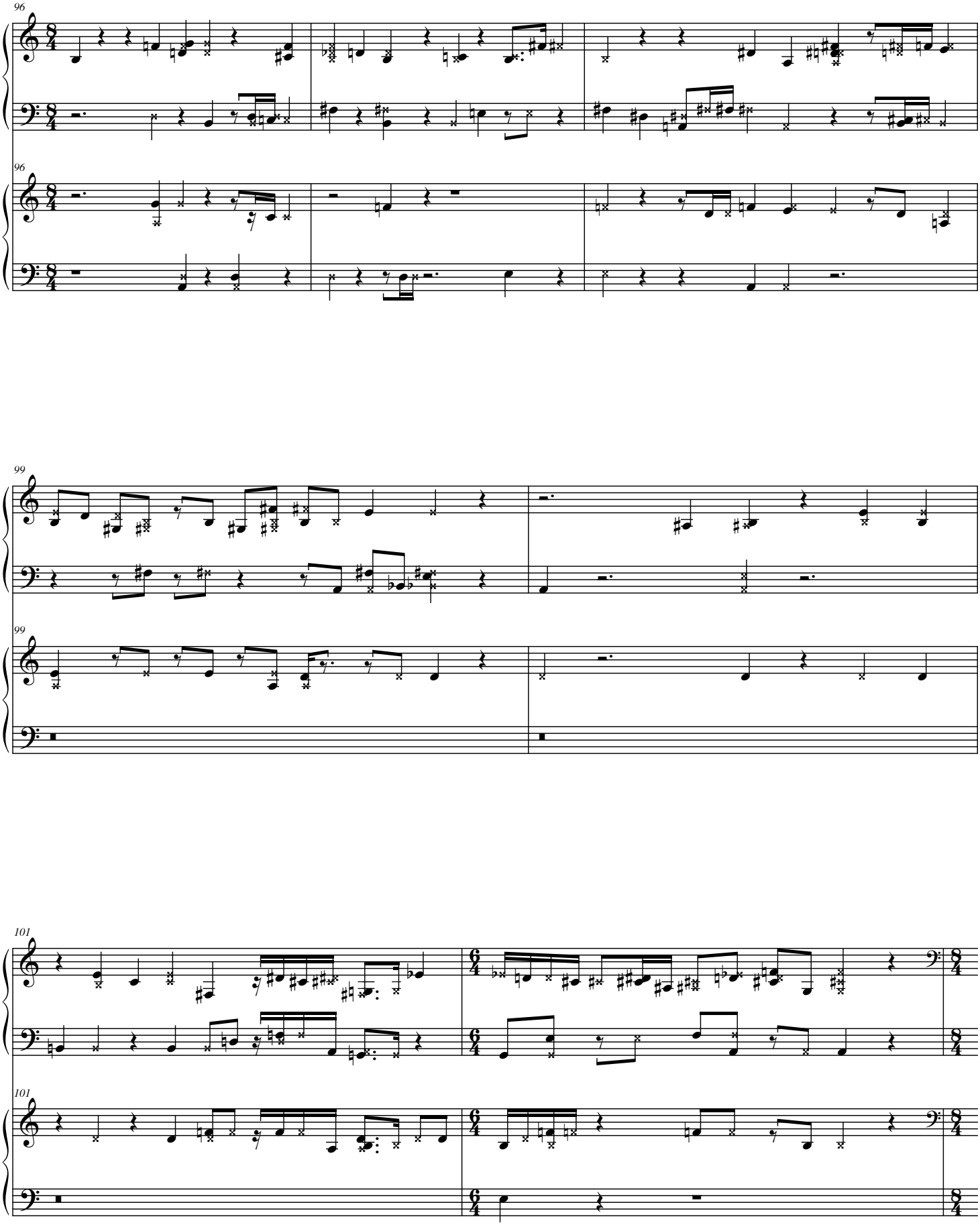
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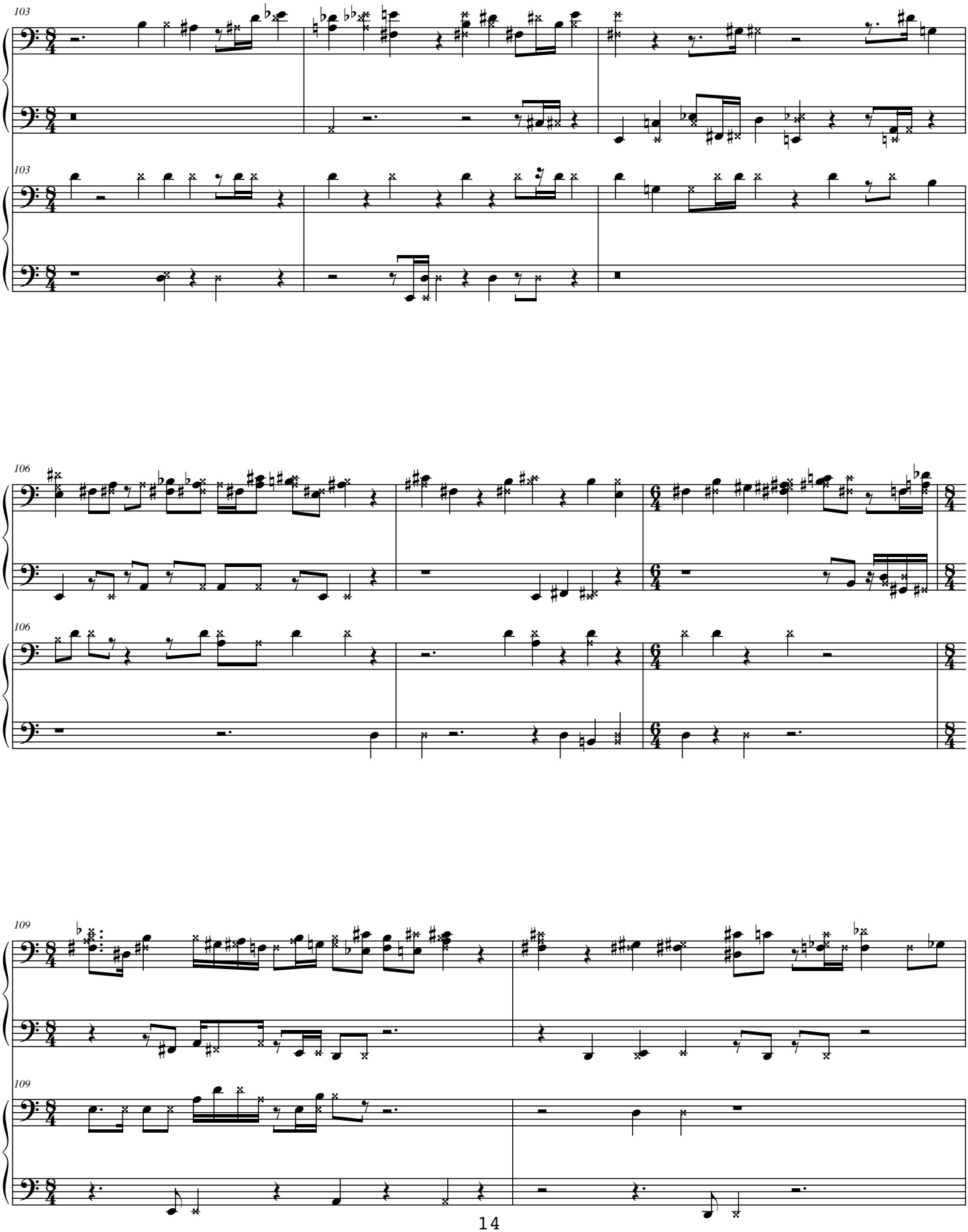
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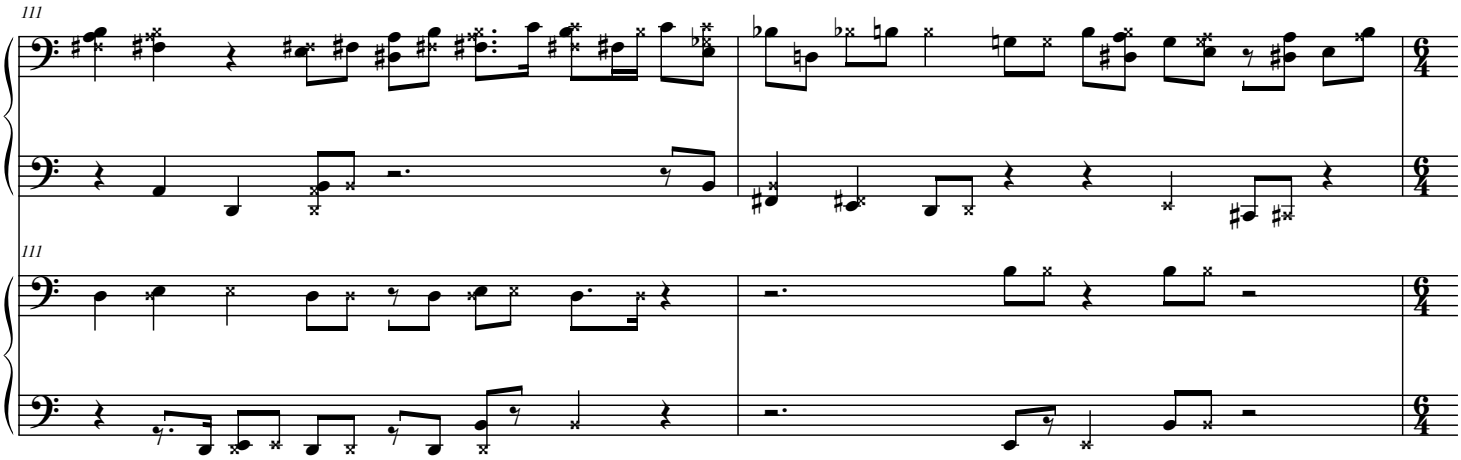
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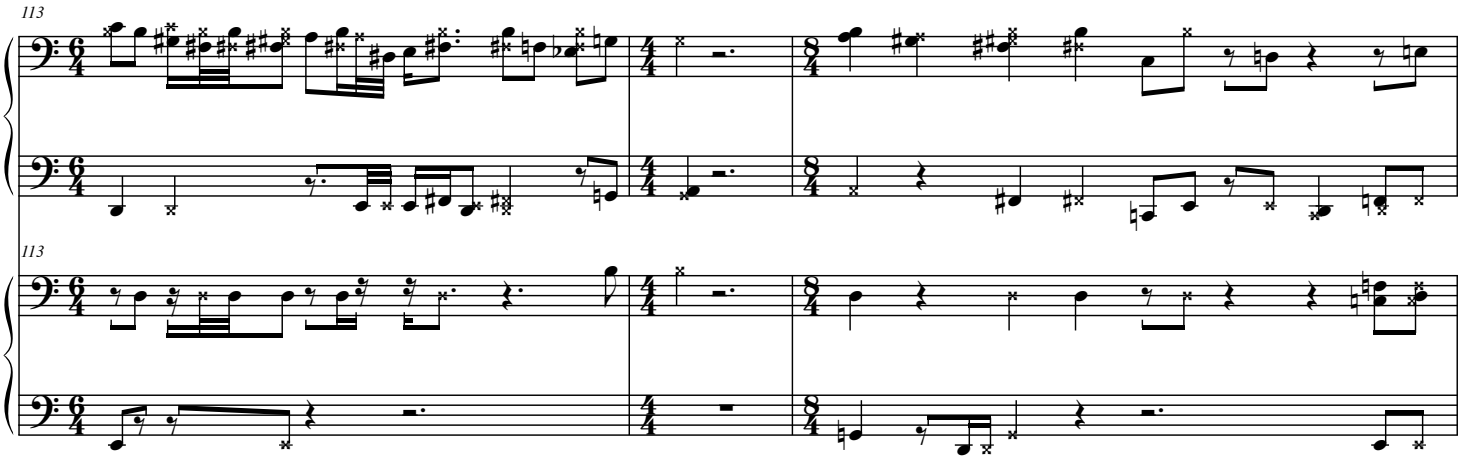
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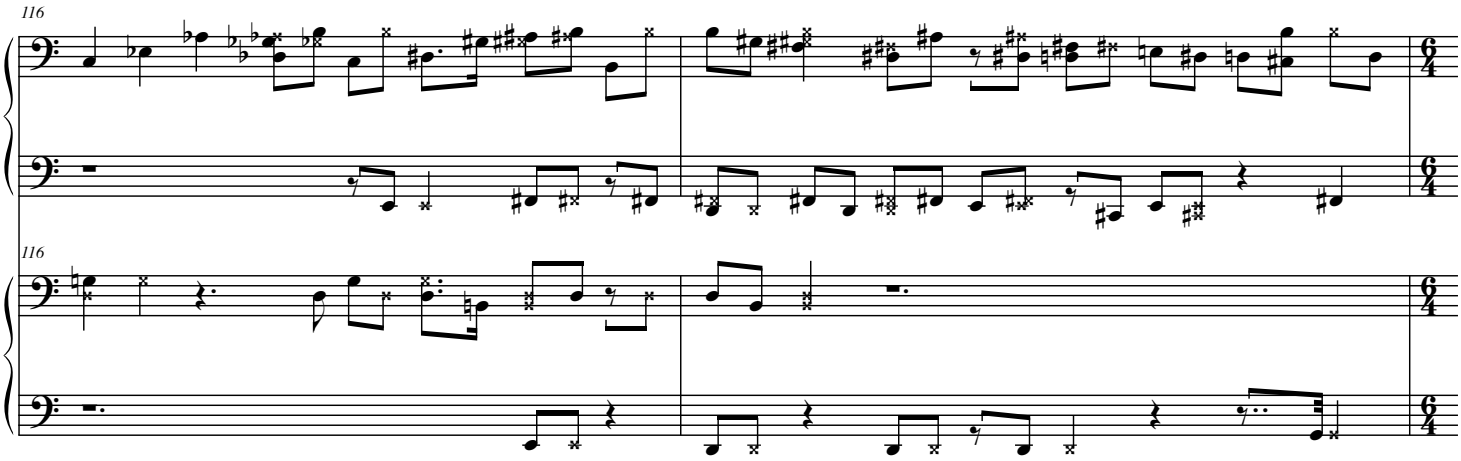
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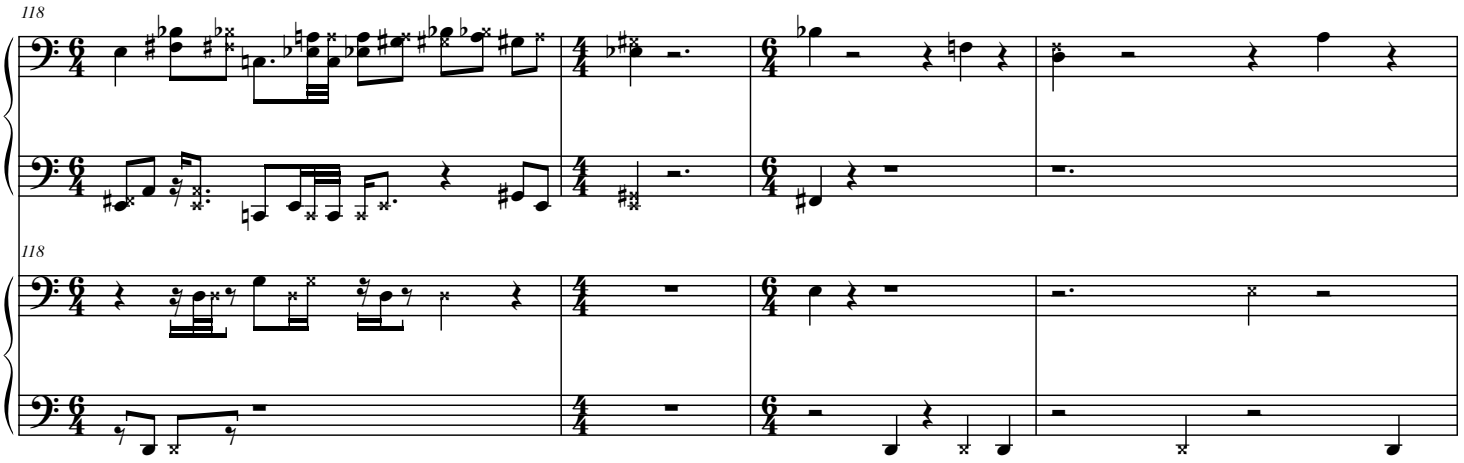
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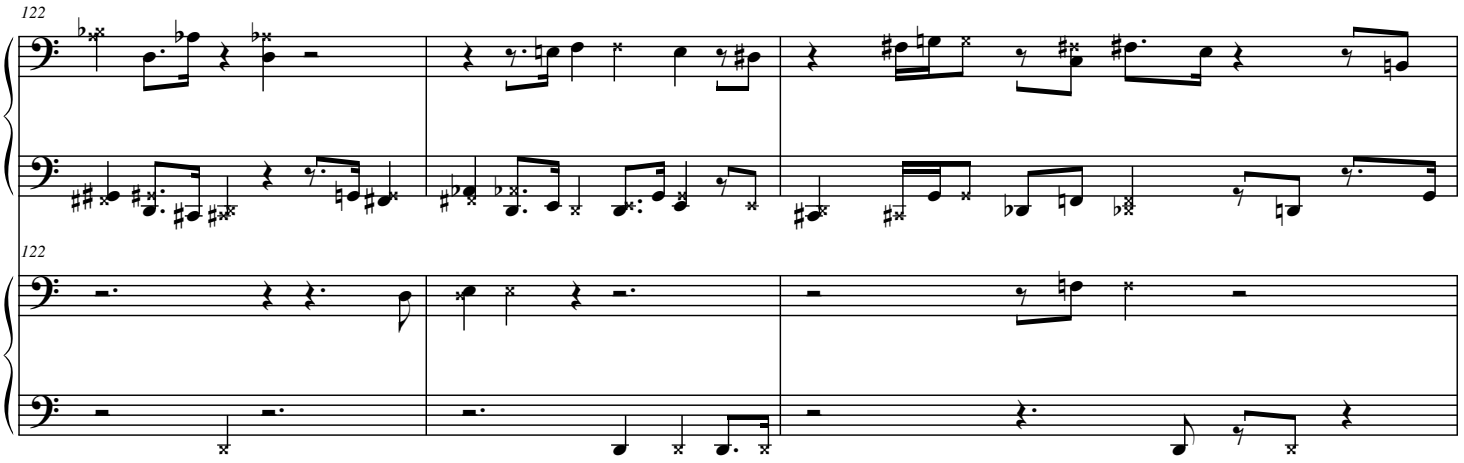
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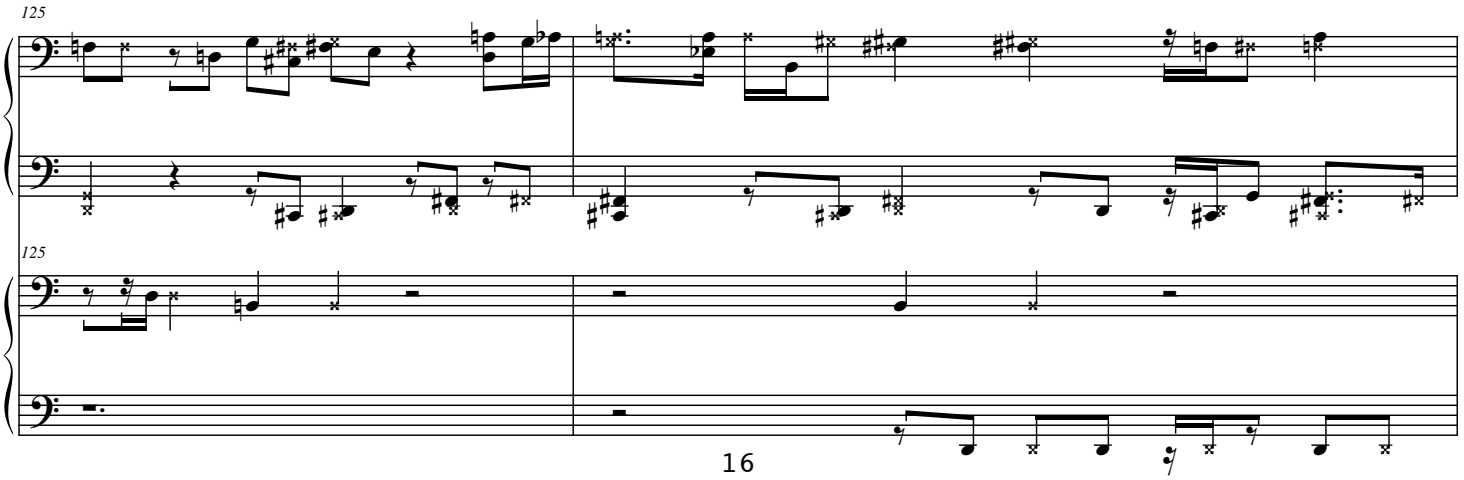
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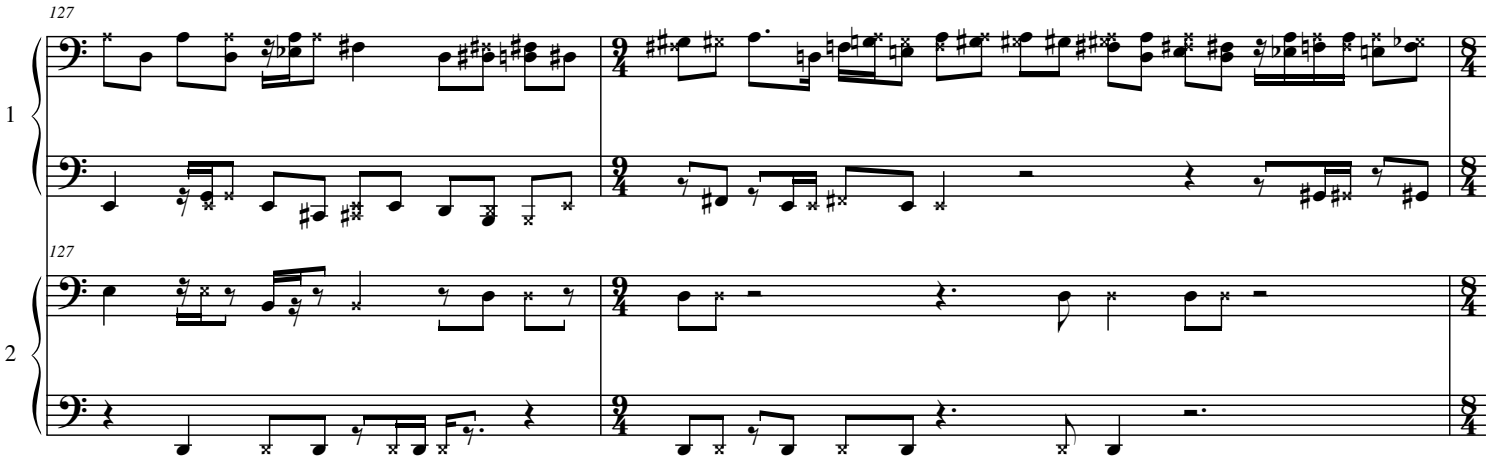
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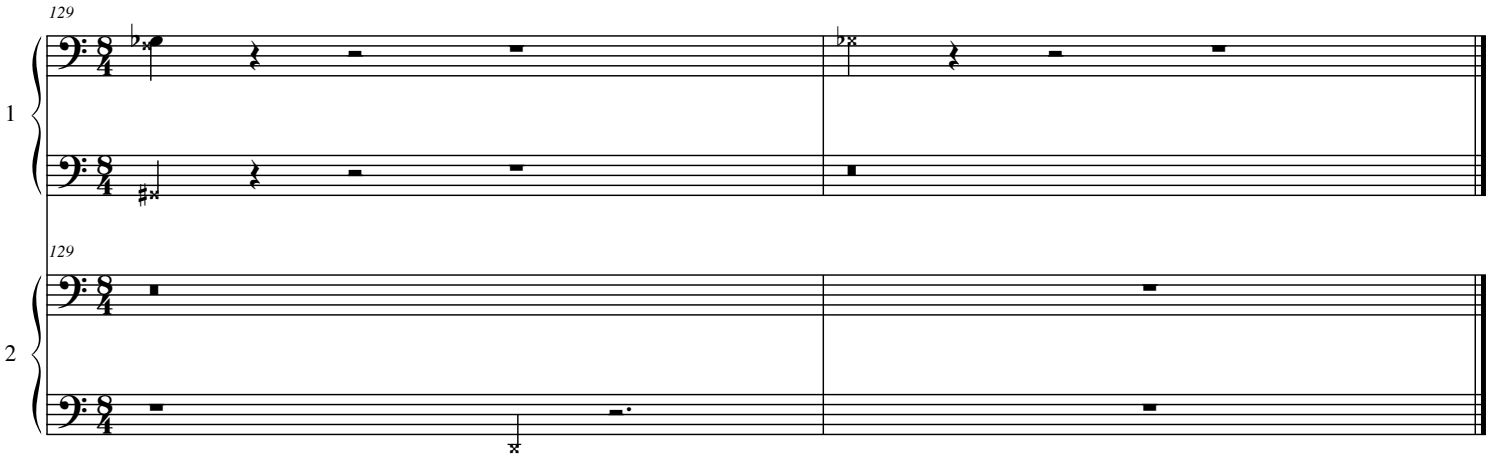
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