Coiling Tendrils

for saxophone quartet

JOHN LESZCZYNSKI

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Coiling Tendrils was commissioned by the BARKADA QUARTET:
Christopher Elchico · Shane Rathburn · Steven Lawhon · Justin Polyblank

Duration: 5 ½ minutes

PERFORMANCE NOTE

Bold Measure Lines
Most of the piece is actually in $\frac{5}{2}$ but divided into different combinations of $\frac{2}{2}$, $\frac{3}{2}$, and $\frac{5}{4}$. The bold measure lines show the larger $\frac{5}{2}$ divisions. Note that in a few places, the beats within the bold measure lines do not add up to five, but they do eventually come into alignment. For example, in measures 43-47, three $\frac{5}{2}$ bars are covered by five $\frac{3}{2}$ bars.

Please contact the composer with any further questions: jrleszczynski@gmail.com.

PROGRAM NOTE

Some climbing plants such as cucumbers and passion flowers have a remarkable way of hoisting themselves up towards the sun using coiling tendrils. The plants send threadlike tendrils upwards which swirl around in a blind exploratory motion, the same way we might search in the dark for an overhead light switch pull chain. When a tendril touches something, it grabs on for support and then something physically changes in the tendril, and it begins to wind itself up. As the tendril coils and gets shorter, it pulls the rest of the plant up with it towards the sunlight, where it uses the extra light to produce more exploratory tendrils and continue the climb.

The quartet depicts a plant's journey upward from the ground into full sunlight. Just as the plant cannot suddenly leap up to a higher level, nearly all the upward motion in the piece happens step by step. At the beginning, the plant is quietly putting all its energy into producing the initial tendrils. Once these are established, they begin whirling around, searching for a foothold. The swirling soprano and alto saxophones eventually grab ahold of something and begin coiling up the tenor and baritone behind them. From this point, the plant produces more tendrils, and begins searching for an even higher support. Eventually the tendrils latch onto something and again coil themselves to pull up the heart of the plant. As the piece ends, the plant is now at its highest position and basks in full sunlight.

Rhythmically, the piece is an obsessive exploration of groupings of five. The phrases are five measures long, the measures are five beats long, and these beats are further divided into quintuplets. Much of the musical development is accomplished by passing motives through the different nested layers of fives so that the same theme becomes faster or slower.

J.L.

I have more than once gone on purpose during a gale to watch a Bryony growing in an exposed hedge, with its tendrils attached to the surrounding bushes; and as the thick and thin branches were tossed to and fro by the wind, the tendrils, had they not been excessively elastic, would instantly have been torn off and the plant thrown prostate. But as it was, the Bryony safely rode out the gale, like a ship with two anchors down, and with a long range of cable ahead to serve as a spring as she surges to the storm.

—Charles Darwin, *On the Movements And Habits of Climbing Plants*

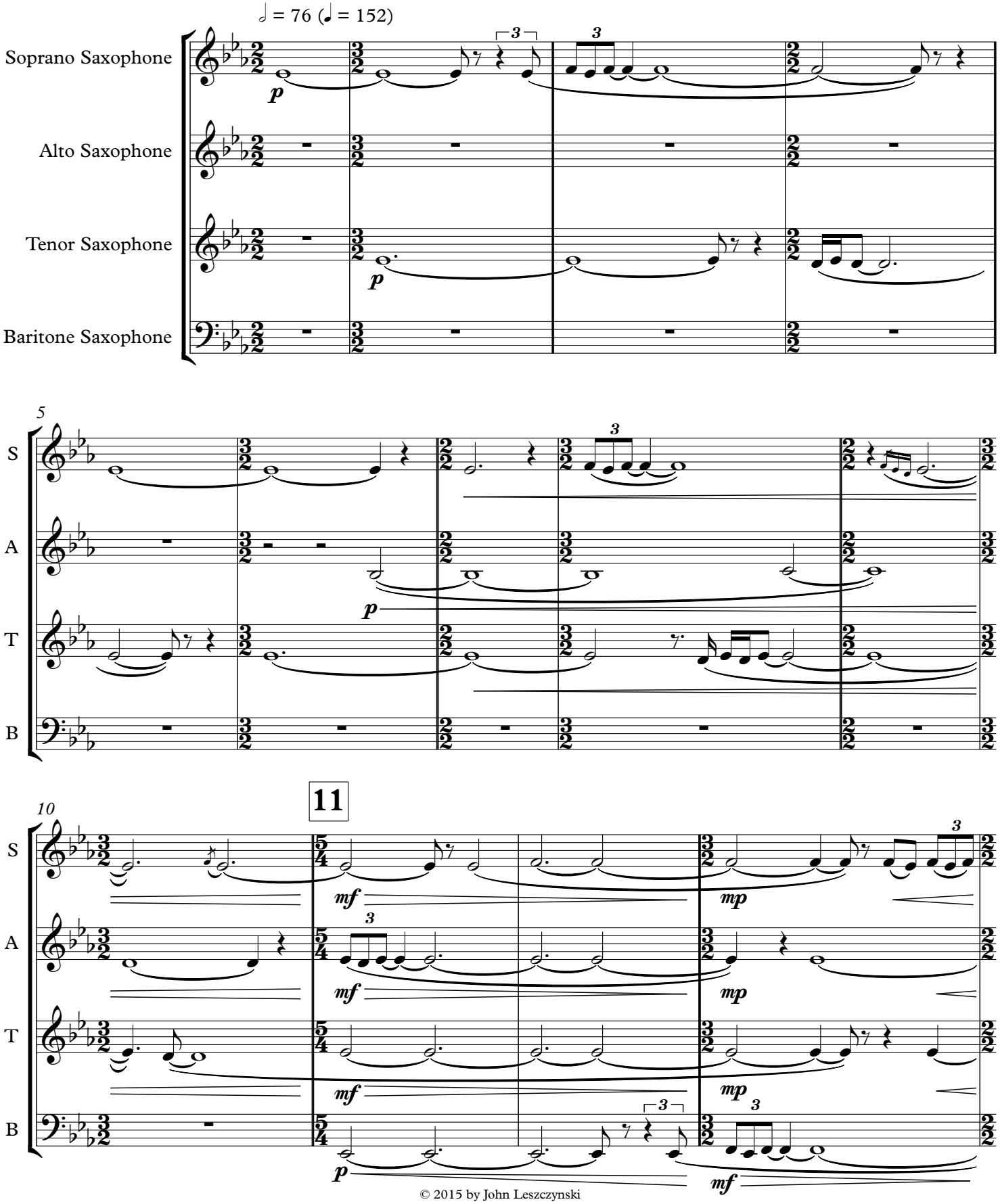
Commissioned by and dedicated to The Barkada Quartet

Coiling Tendrils

for Saxophone Quartet

Score in C

John Leszczynski



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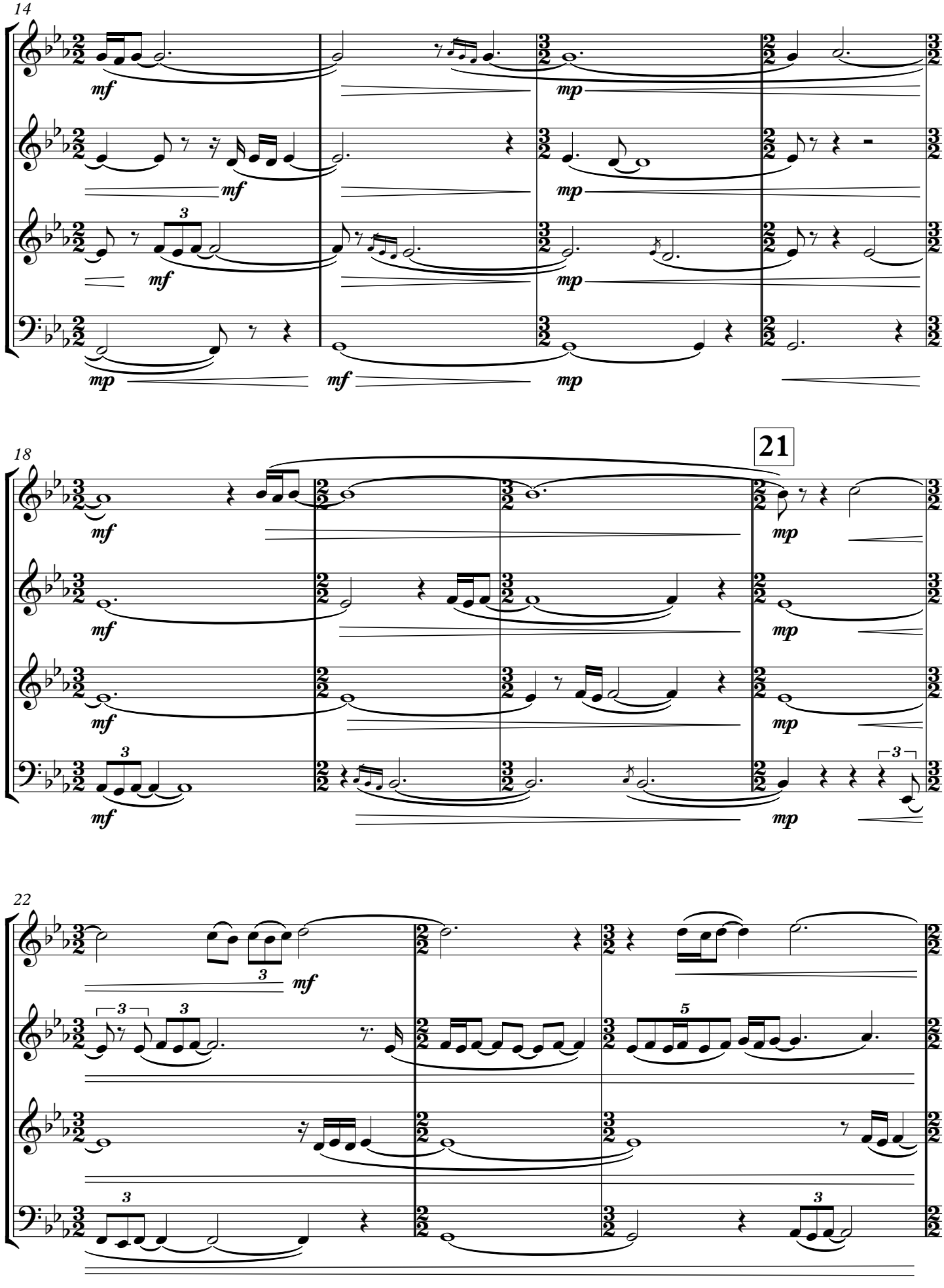
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B
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mp
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21
22
3
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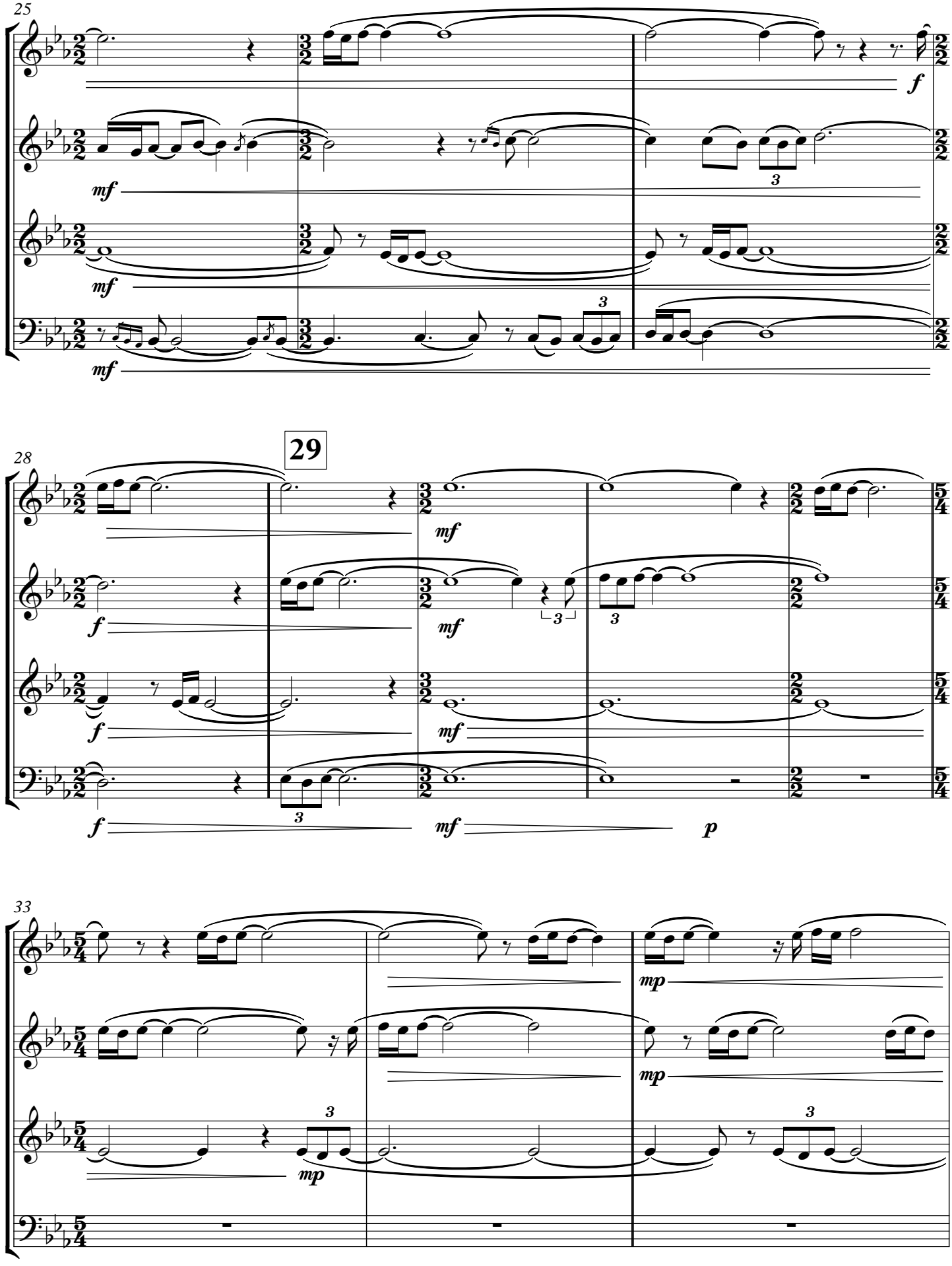
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p
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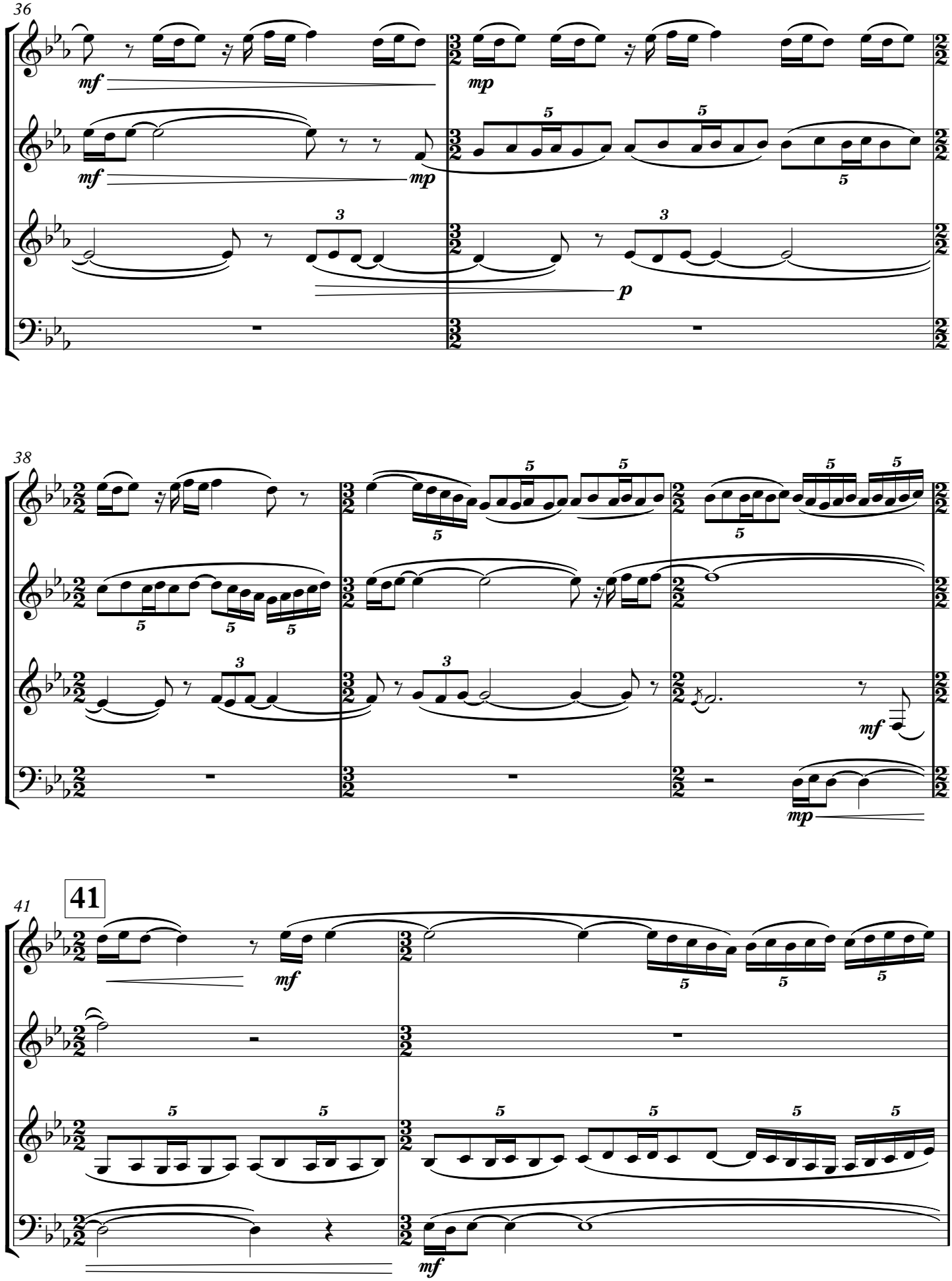
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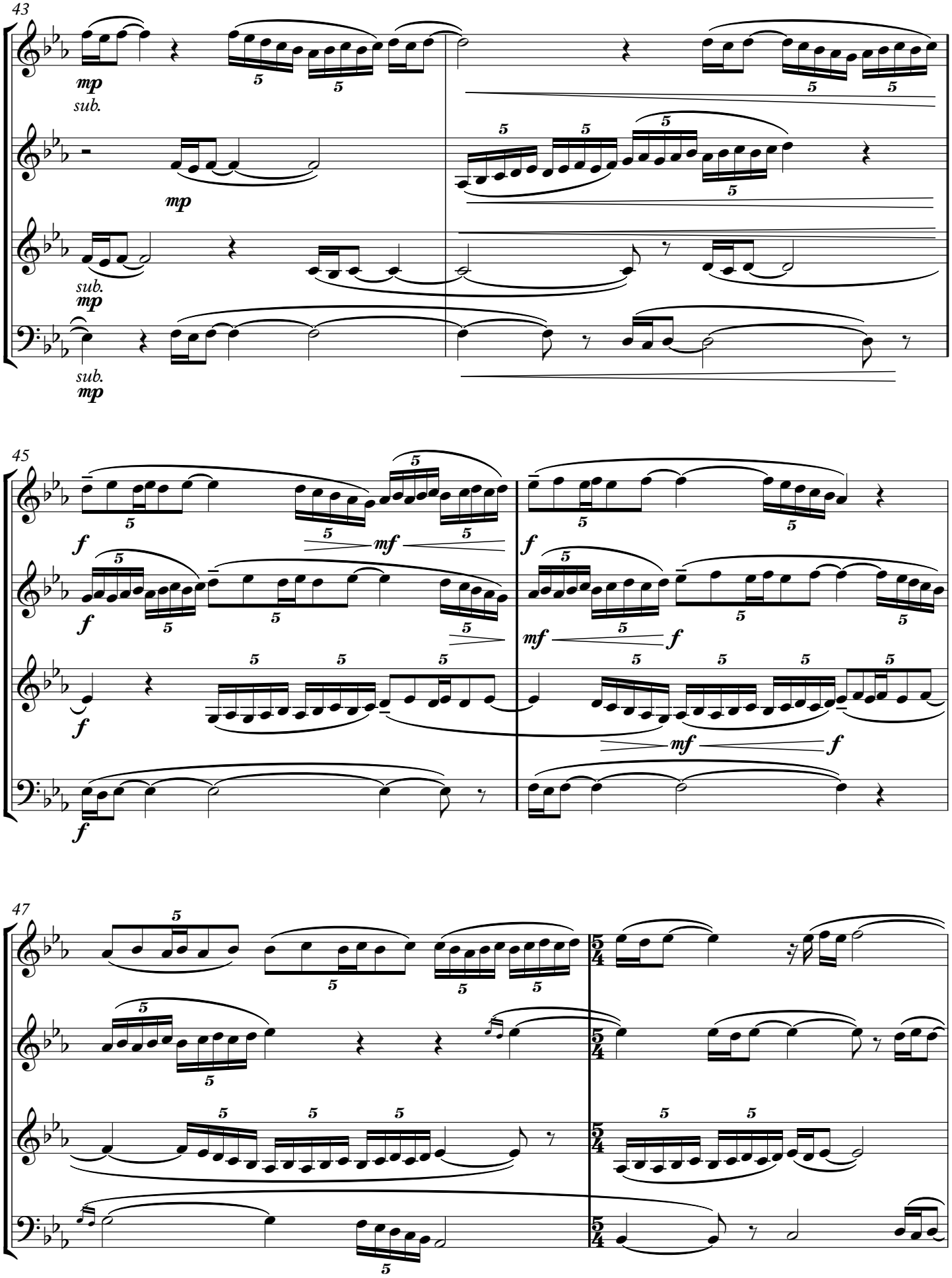
mp
p
38
mf
mp
41
41
mf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A
T
B
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sub.
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sub.
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sub.
mp
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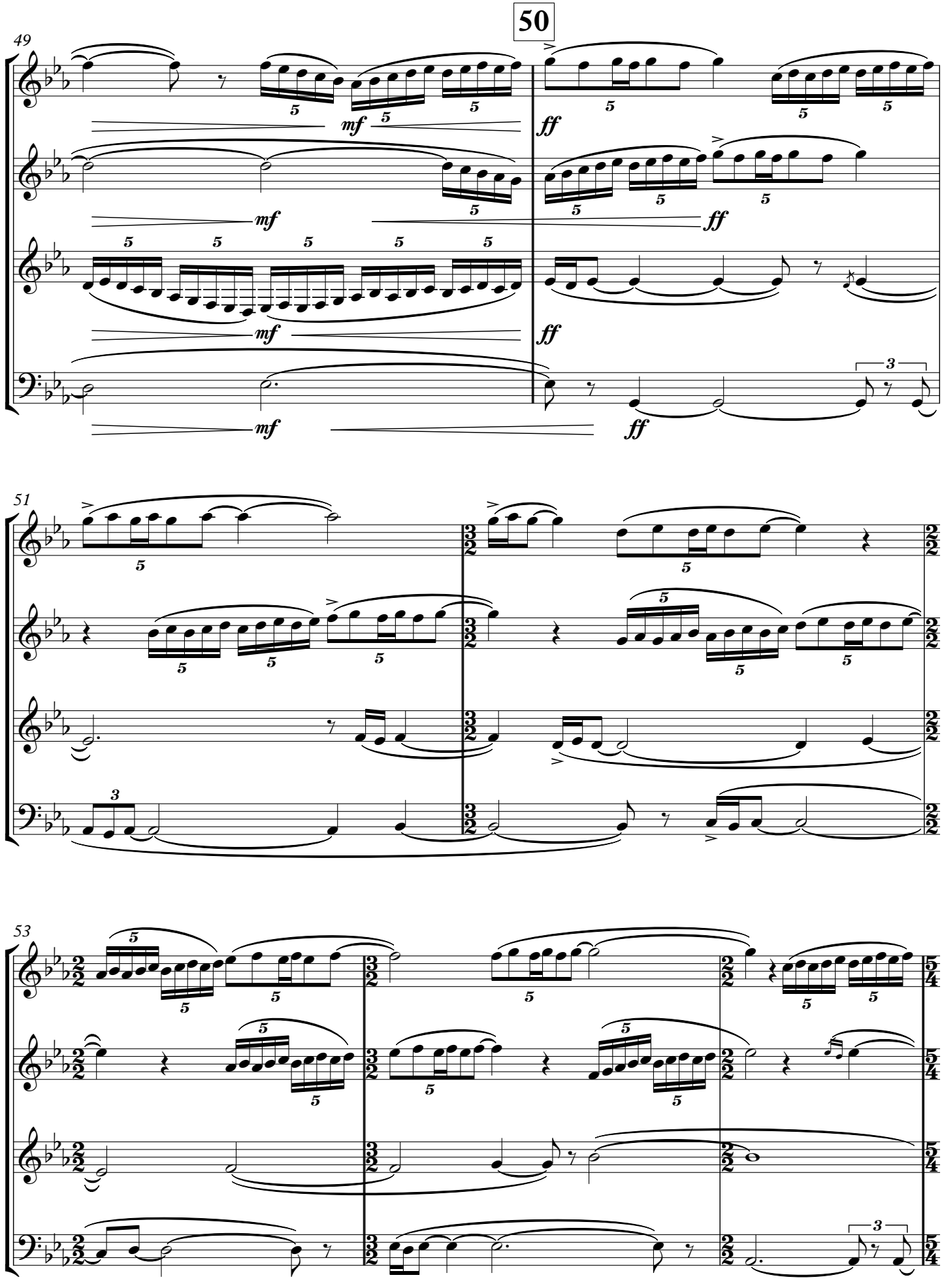
f
mf
f
f
mf
f
f
mf
f
f
47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49
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T
B
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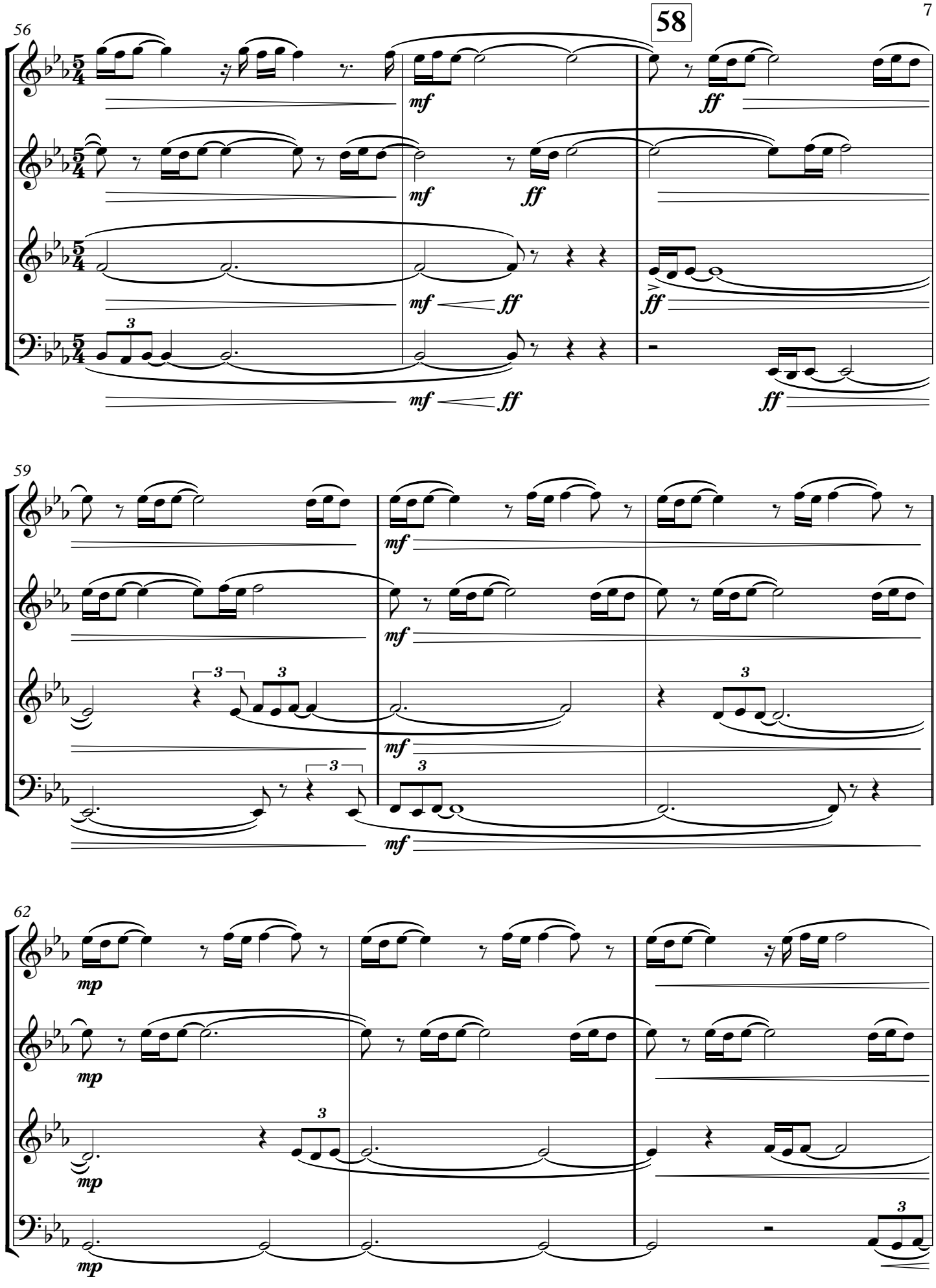
ff
51
53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T
B
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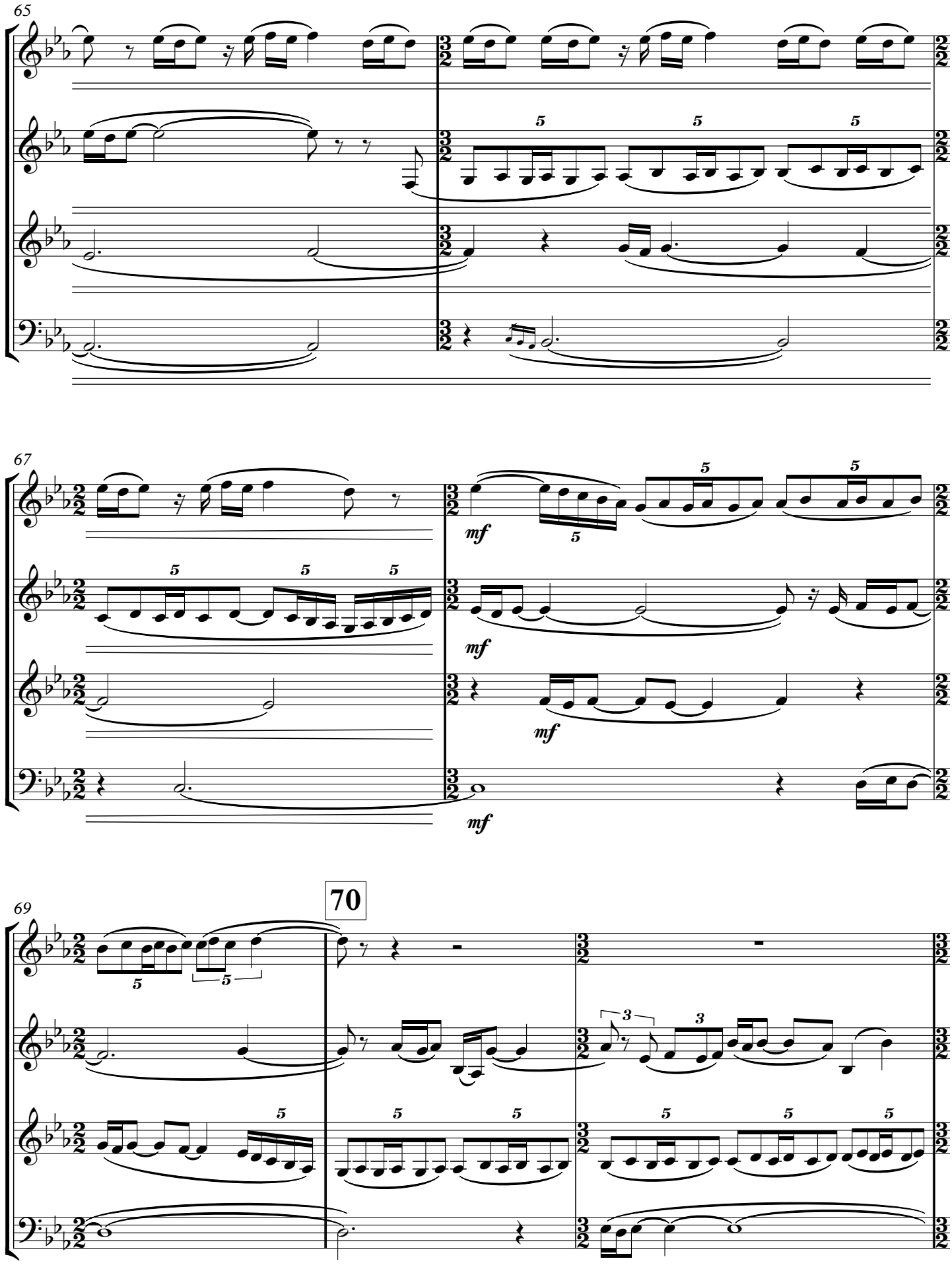
ff
59
mf
62
mp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mf
69
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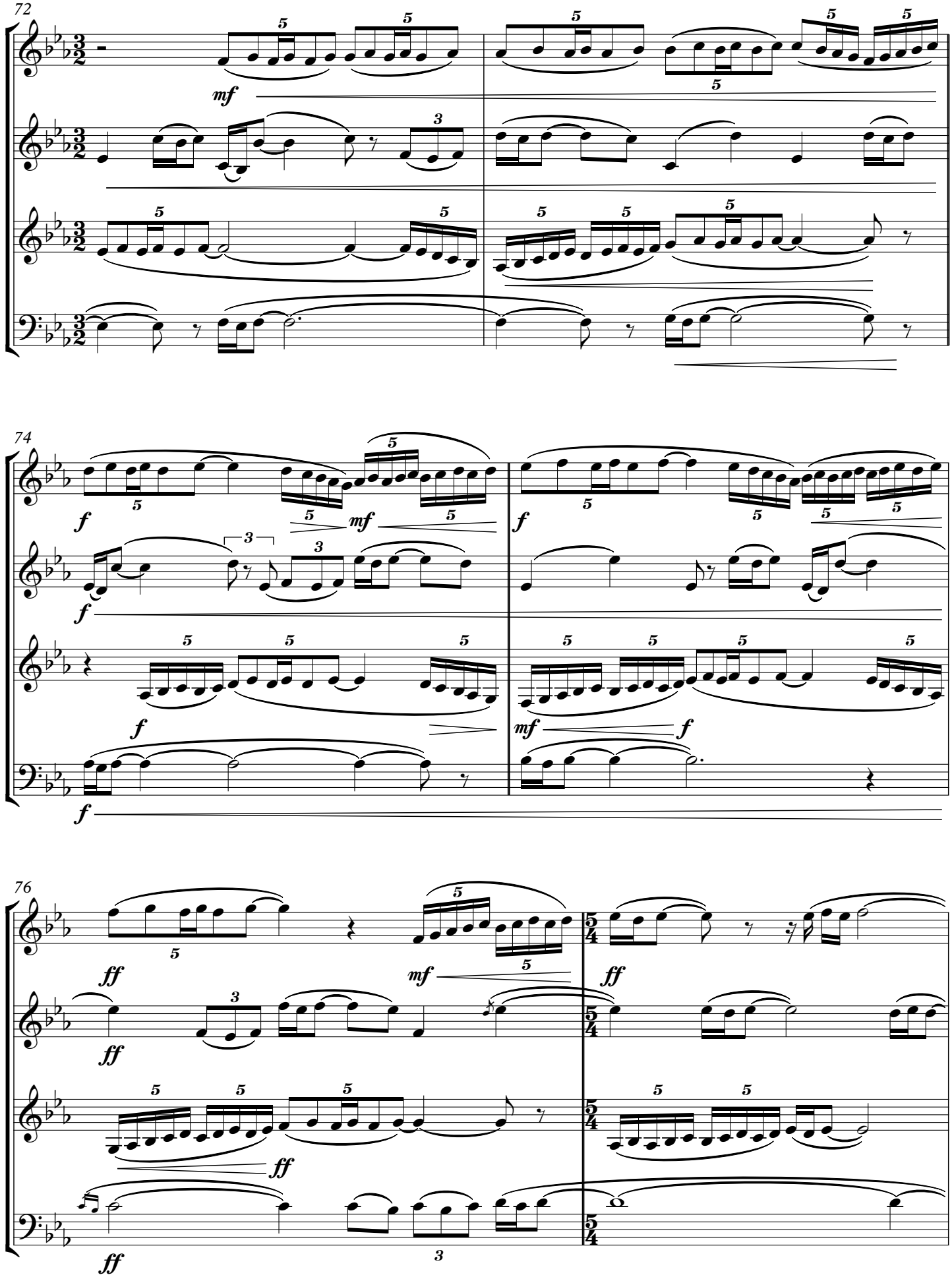
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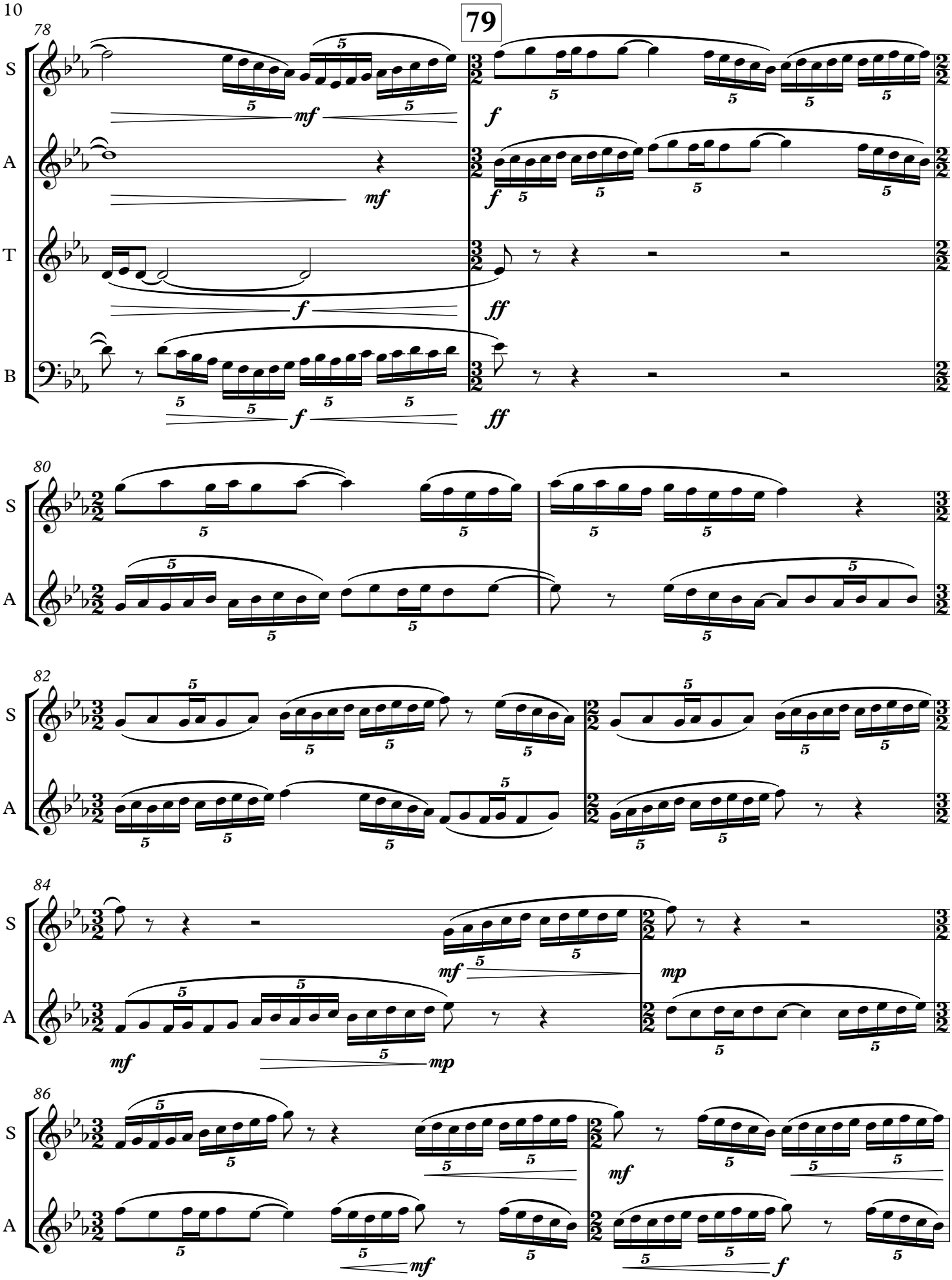
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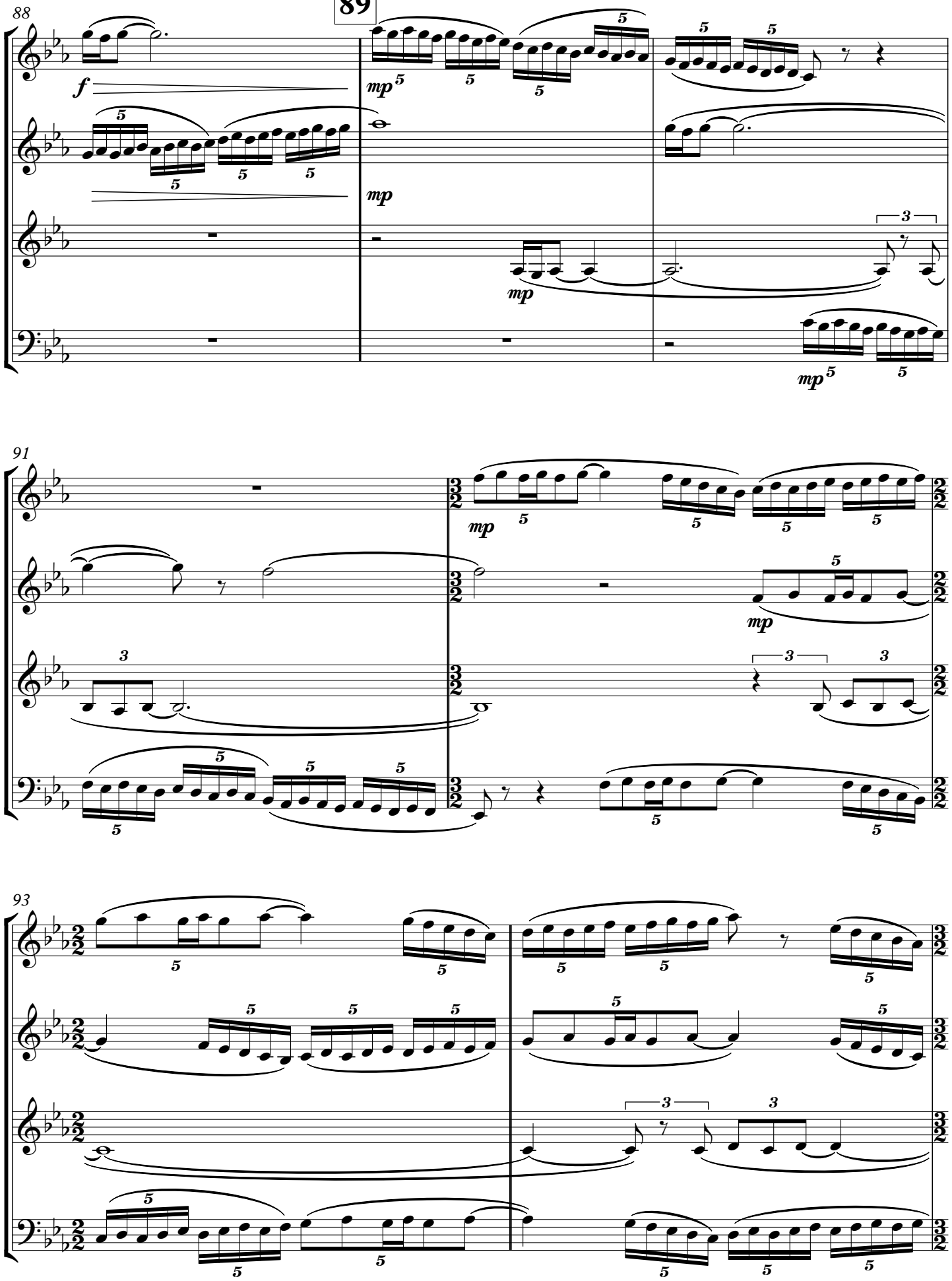
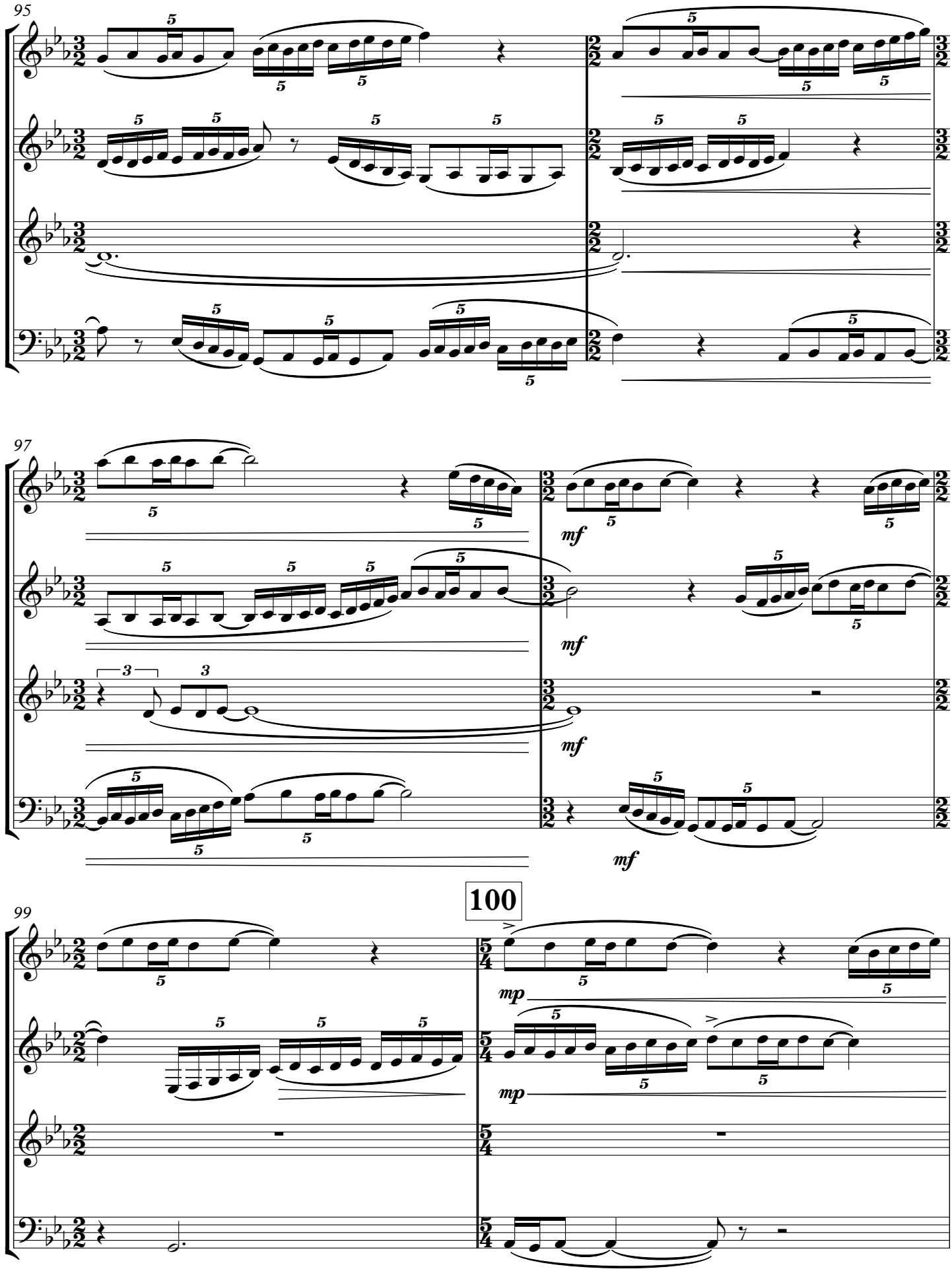
mp
86

89

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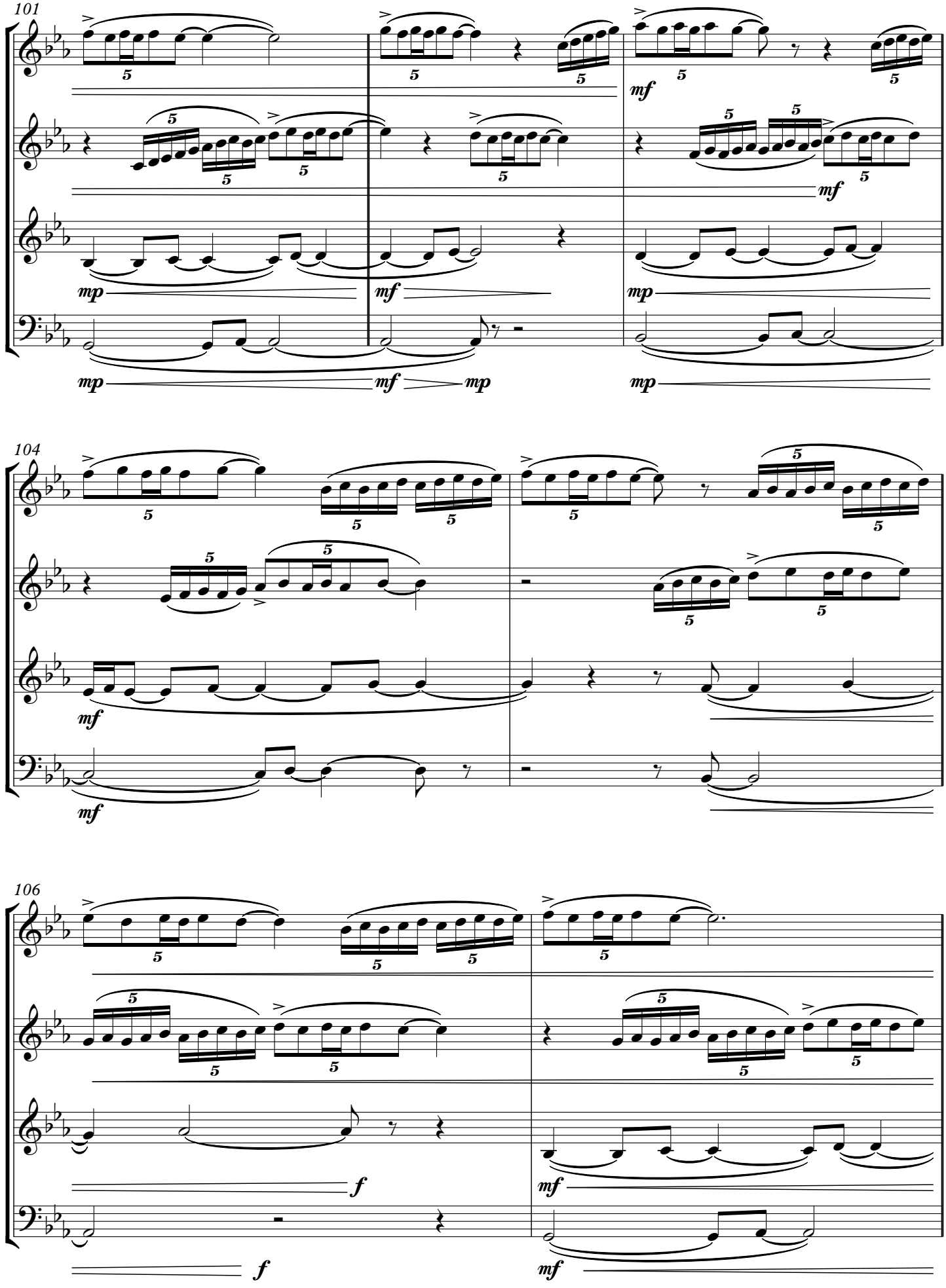
mp
mp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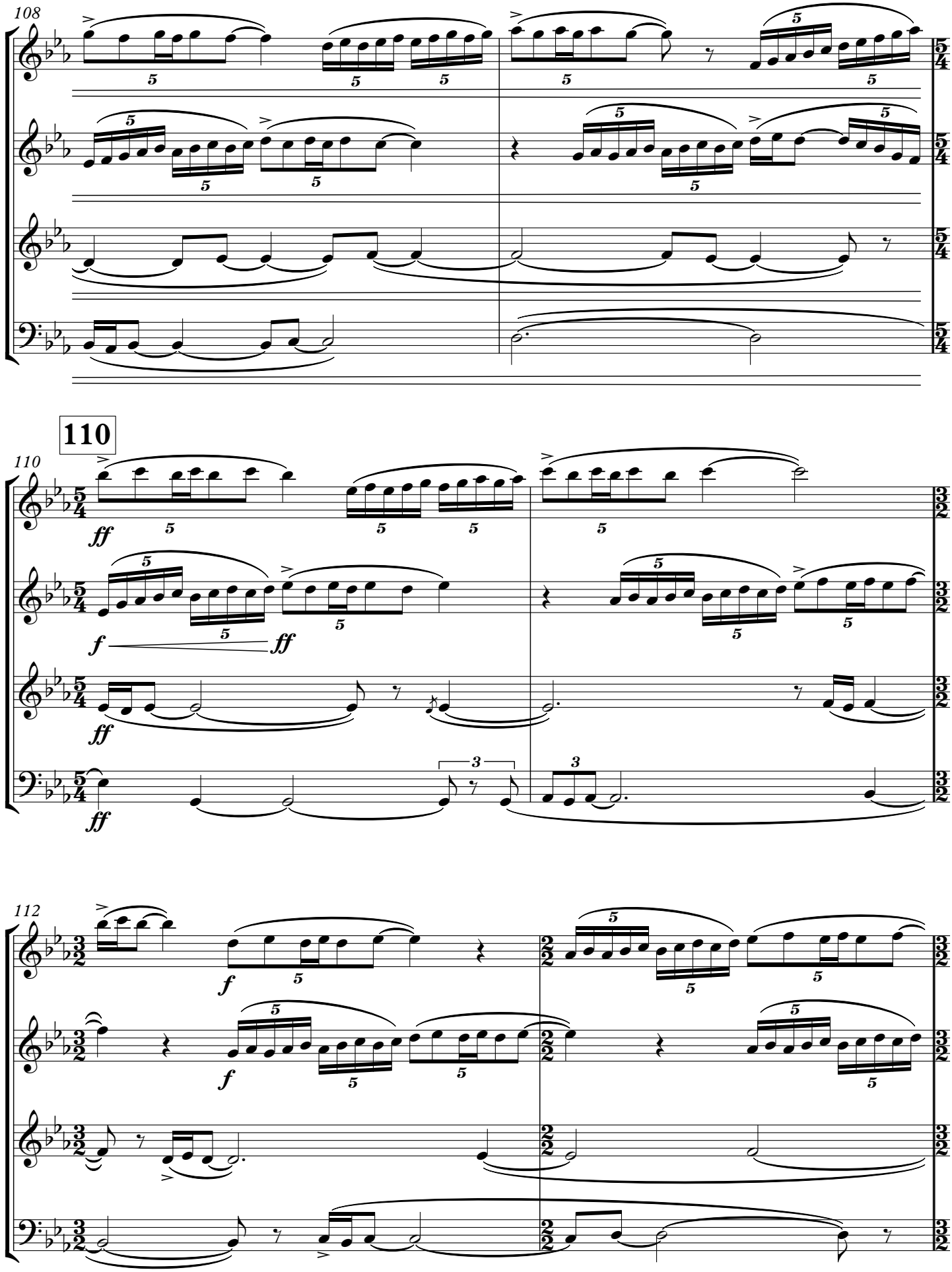
106
f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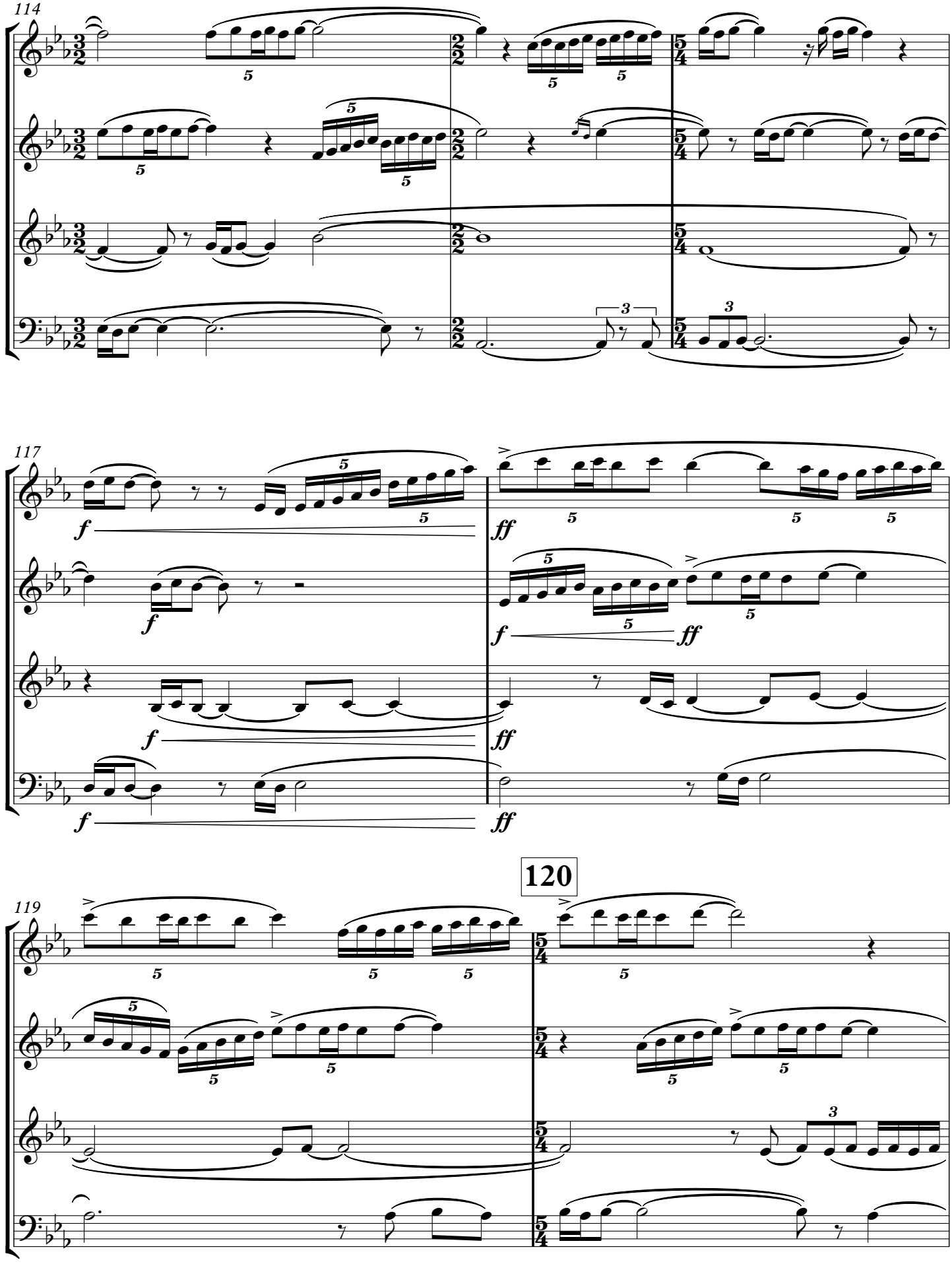
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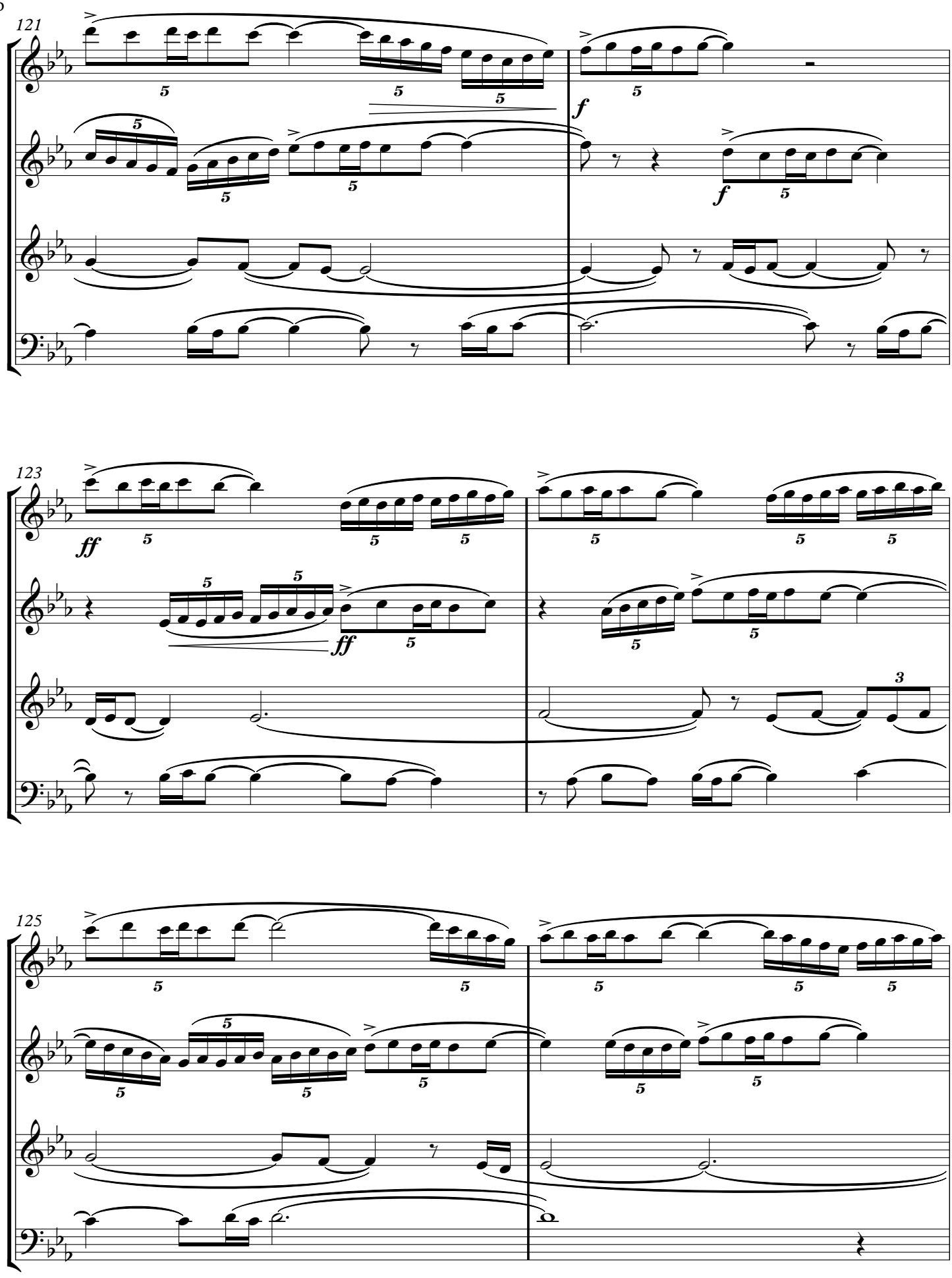
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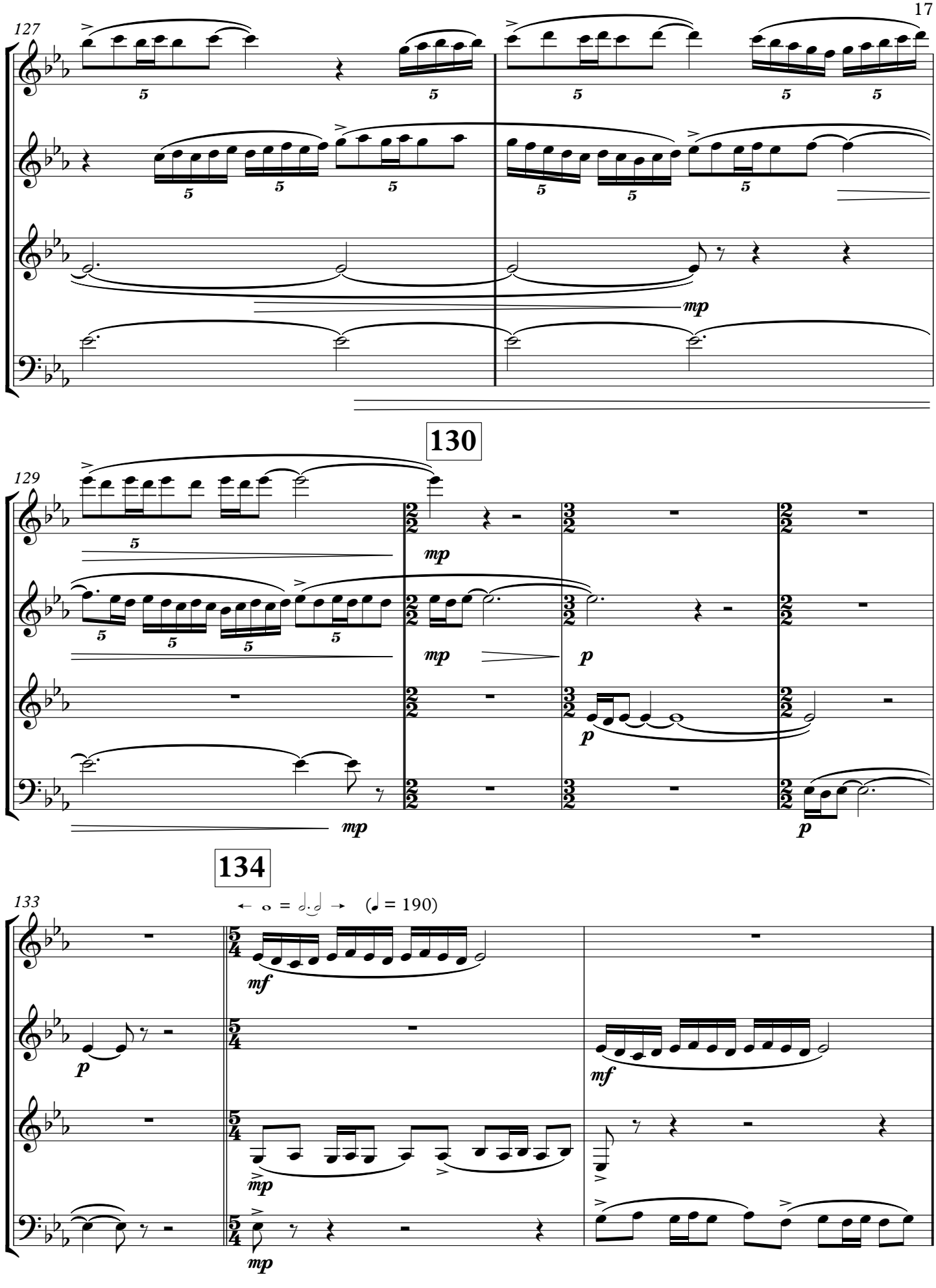
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B
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130
129
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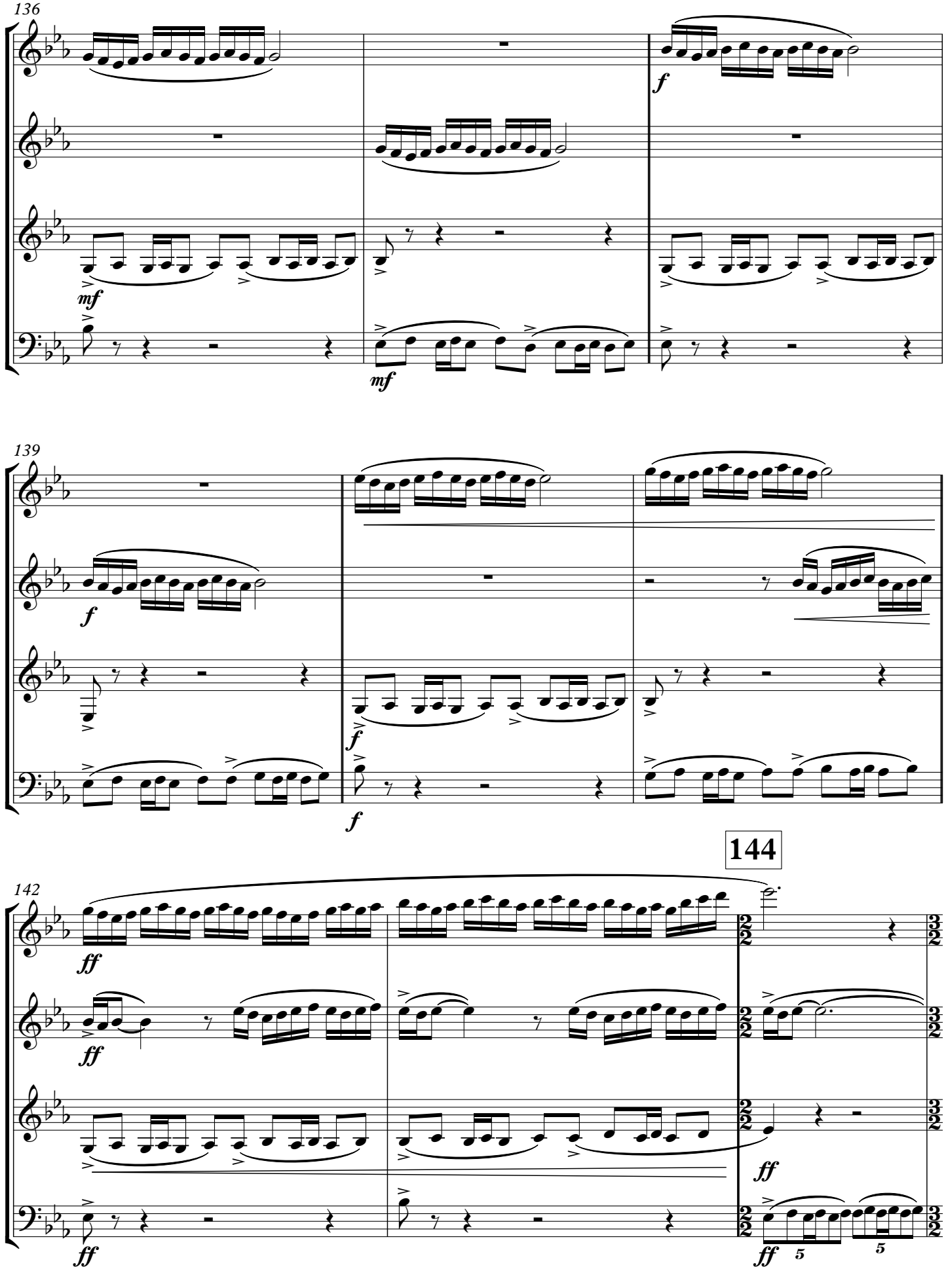
mf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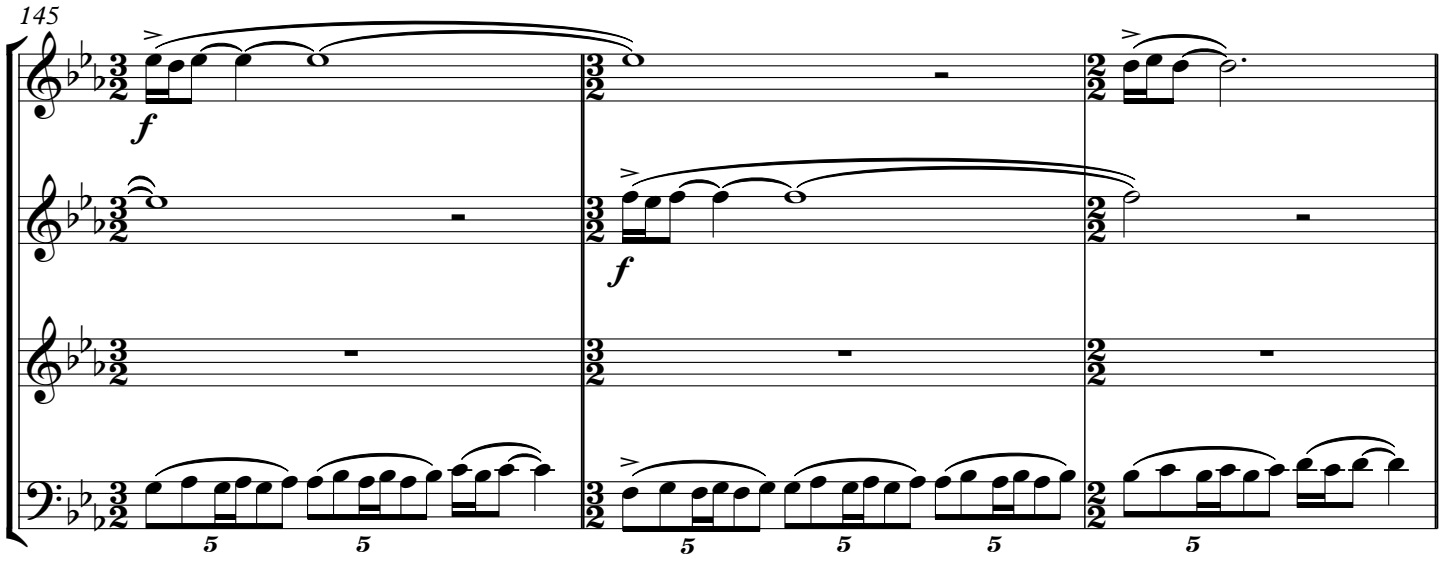
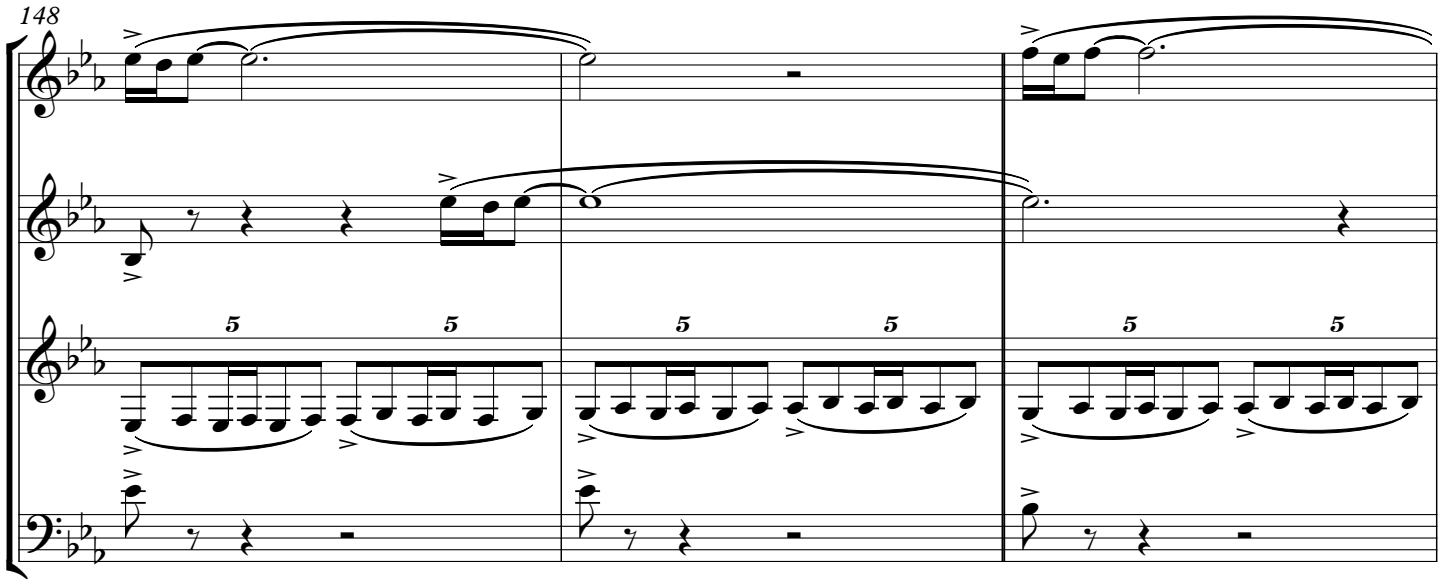
ff
ff
5
5





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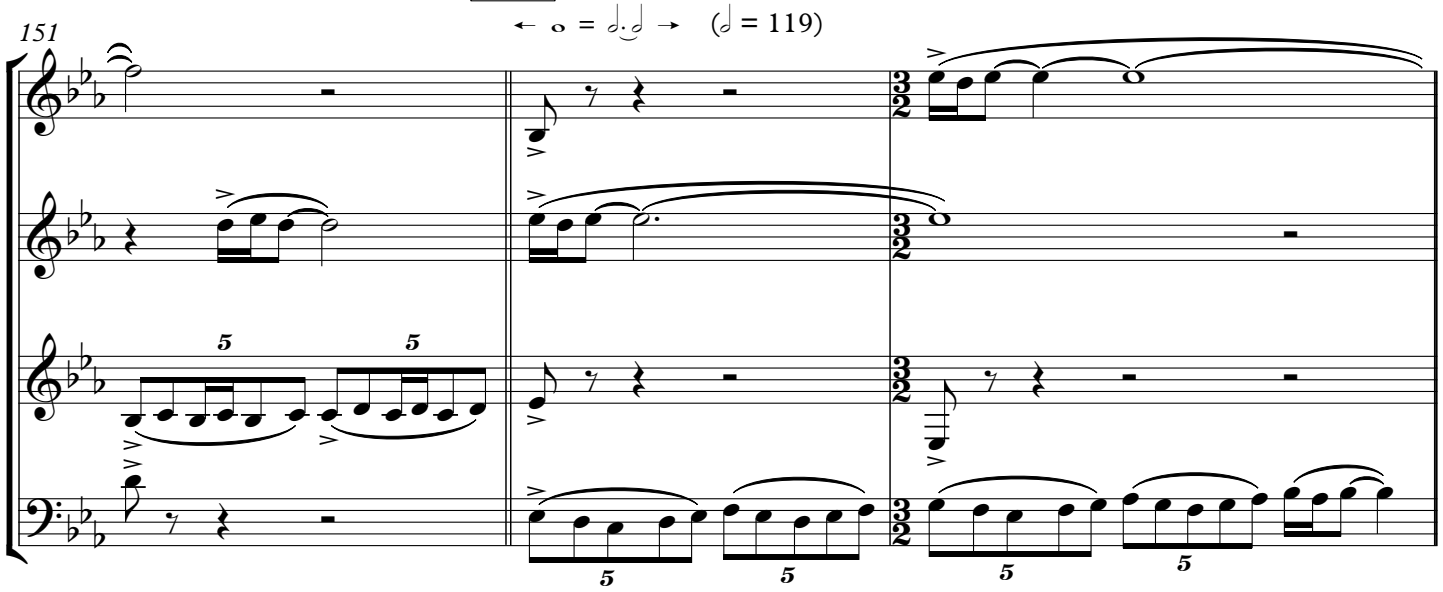

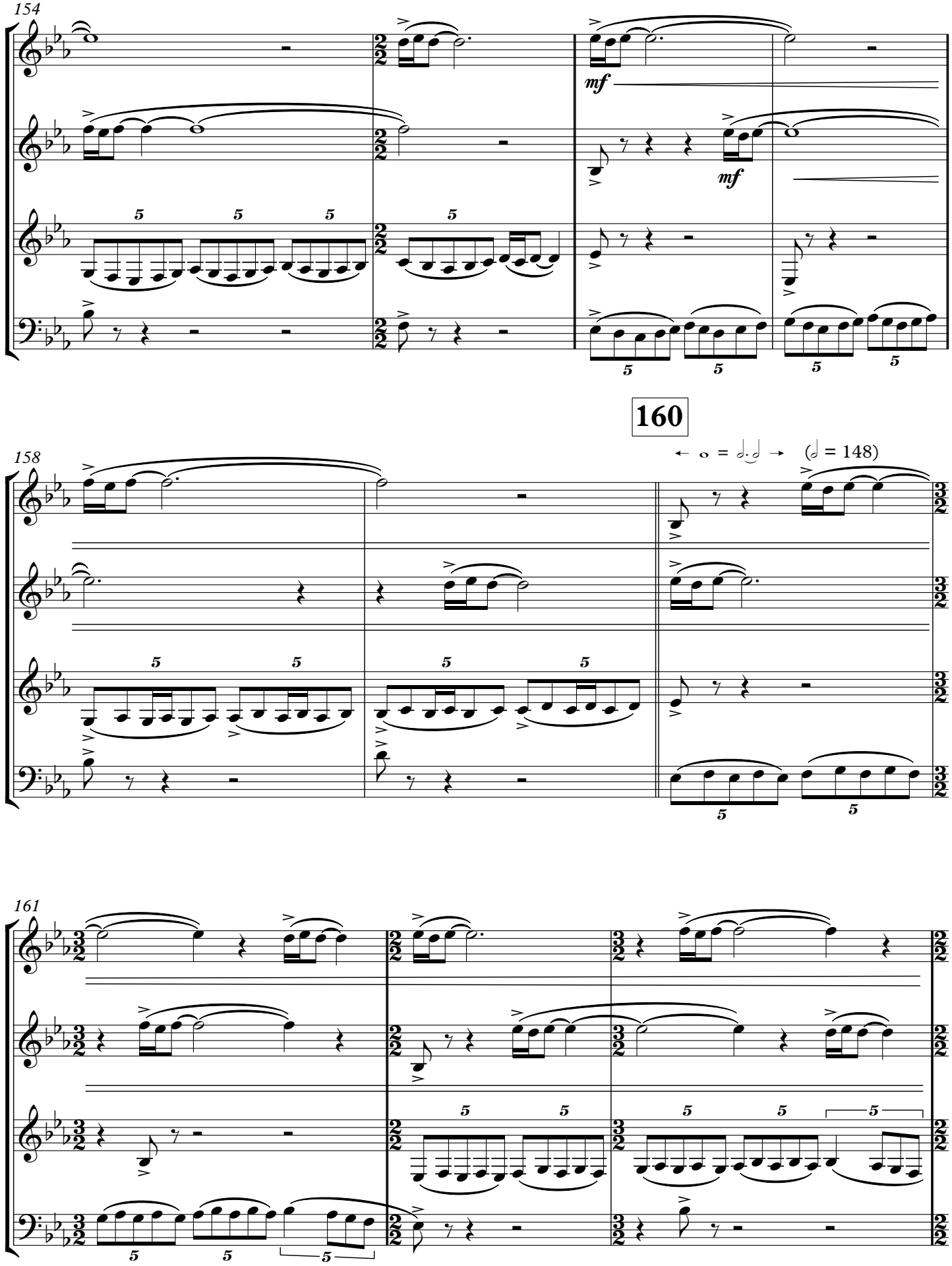
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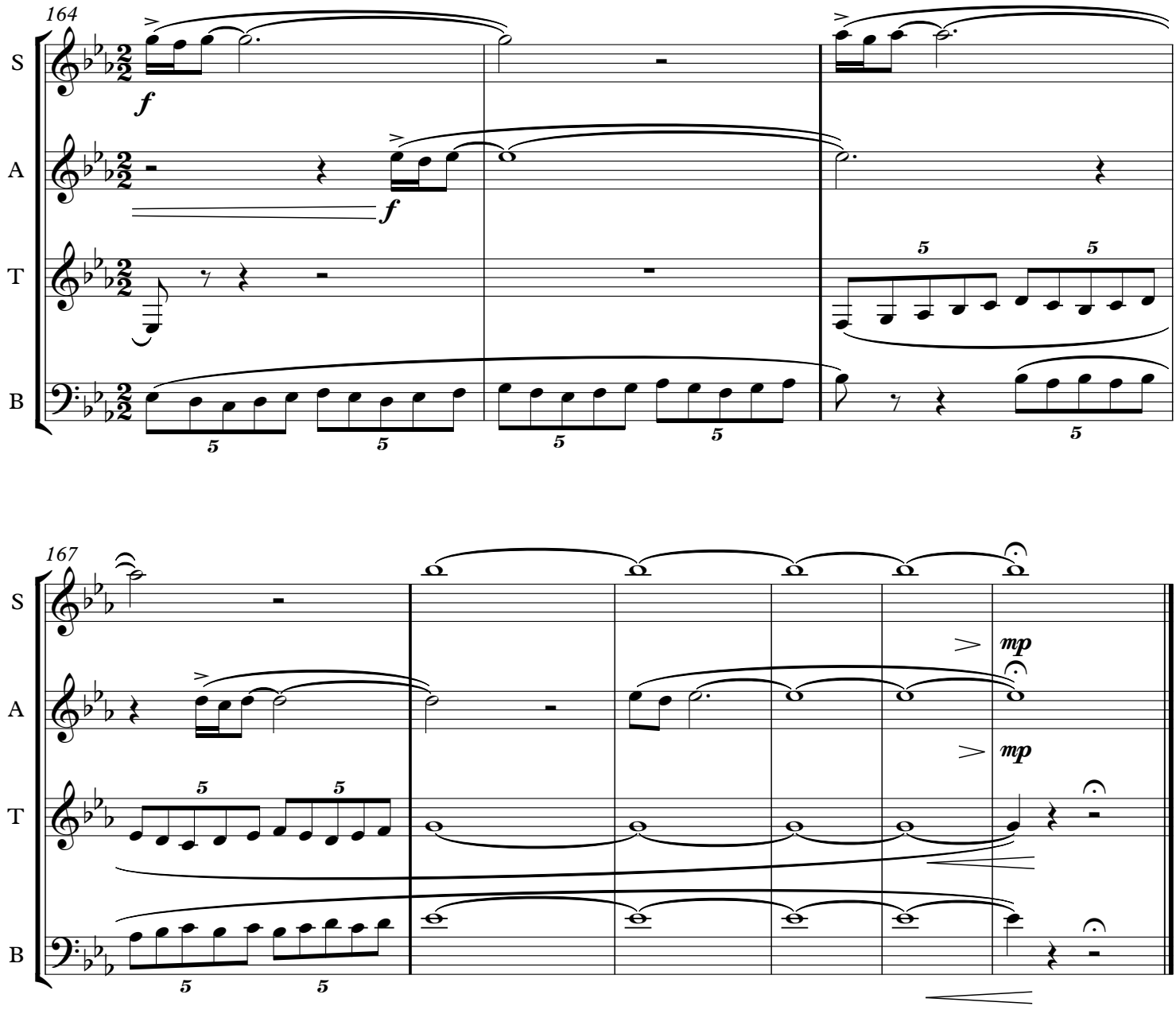
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5
5
5
5