AUSSTREUUNG

for
English Horn
and
Piano

(2012)

Kevin H Gray

FOREWORD

Ausstreuung **was written during a time when I was otherwise preoccupied with the production of music for piano solo, some of it quite demanding:** ***Flocculent Vectors***, ***Holophrasms***, **and** ***Das Seufzen der Zahlen*** **were in various stages of development at roughly the same time. It seems natural then, that the present work should be obsessively concerned with pushing the boundaries of instrumental technique in a specific fashion probably not seen in my chamber work since** ***Chronaxie***.

The piano part contains several passages that have specific pedal instructions, but the absence of pedal elsewhere is not necessarily thereby implied. The pianist will find areas where legato is untenable without pedal, and certain passages may sound rather too dry, in some rooms, without a touch of pedal. However, I will ever prefer performances of my piano music, and the present piece is no exception, that are characterized by under-pedaling rather than by over-pedaling.

There are places in the score, none of which are specifically indicated, but are nonetheless hereby sanctioned, where the English hornist plays tones of a half-note's duration or more, in which the hornist might turn, if desired, and point the bell of the instrument directly into the piano for the purpose of enticing sympathetic vibrations from the piano strings. Measures where this performance technique seems appropriate include 82, 84, 86, 88, and 158. If a discrete (and slight) fermata must needs be interpolated in these cases to better accommodate this effect, this expedient is also hereby sanctioned. Although I won't go so far as to ban this mode of performance in passages in which the English horn part is largely comprised of faster notes, I will request that it be used infrequently in such passages. Performer-interpolated fermatas in such passages are also not sanctioned. Of course, the pianist will need to modify his overall design of pedal deployment to accommodate this technique, should the hornist wish to utilize it.

Articulations for both instruments are notated uniformly, with the three symbols in question carrying the same meaning for both players.

First, and most simply, accents should not be subtle; and must be easily perceived to stand out from their surroundings by even a casual listener, though their intensity should still, to some extent, be context-dependent.

Next, the unmitigated staccato dot is intended to represent the shortest possible duration, irrespective of all and sundry considerations which, in the minds of many players of all

instruments, often justify the lengthening of notes that bear a staccato dot. I find that when I coach players in performances of my music, the first comment I am likely to make is to request shorter staccatos. Within the locus of my composition, the use of staccato is usually meant to evoke an abruptness bordering on violence, regardless of the volume level. I therefore invite players to stretch themselves a bit in this regard, and to sacrifice concerns of tone quality on the altar of brevity, when staccato is indicated.

This brings us to the third and final articulation mark, which is the dash sometimes referred to as the *tenuto* mark. This symbol's interpretation depends on context. If used in tandem with the staccato dot, it should function to mitigate the severity of the staccato effect, thereby subtly lengthening the duration of the affected note, producing what might be referred to as a slightly "fat" staccato. Whenever the dot and dash are present beneath the same note, the dash's only purpose is the mitigation of the staccato dot, and no additional meaning should be inferred.

In those instances where the dash appears without the dot, its use denotes, for the note in question, an additional heft, weight, or darkening of the tone, perhaps similar to the manner in which most players might respond to the Italian term "*pesante*."

Please exaggerate contrasting articulations.

Several aspects of my approach to rhythm warrant brief discussion.

First of all, my beaming choices do not always adhere to conventional expectations for a given time signature. In these cases, the decision to disregard convention is always purposeful, in that the unexpected beaming reflects the music's structure more clearly than conventional beaming would have done. Of course, *Ausstreuung* seldom employs commonly-used time signatures.

Secondly, I find the still-commonly accepted perspective that tuplets may only begin on main beats to be unendurably restrictive. While I recognize that this practice of allowing tuplets to begin more or less anywhere creates counting dilemmas for some performers, I feel that persistence, a strong sense of pulse, the ability and willingness to subdivide obsessively, and knowing one's partner's part just as well as one's own, can not only overcome any difficulties encountered, but also be quite rewarding.

Thirdly, while I do, in fact, view measures (and phrases, as well) as discrete musical events, I reject the notion that time signatures in post-modern music, and especially in my music, necessarily imply the presence of an unwritten yet obligatory accent structure. Measures seldom carry, in my music, any requirement of behavioral response from the performer. Therefore, please only emphasize a downbeat if an accent on that downbeat is present in the score. For me, the measure is an organizational tool, and the vehicle through which I, and also the performers, jointly chart the endless universe of rhythmic potential. The use of measures also provides the interested performer with a glimpse into the compositional process. In the wake of the myriad rhythmic

innovations of the twentieth century, the notion that measures and time signatures must continue to be interpreted just as they were in 1900 seems, at best, unrealistic, and at worst, anachronistic. The beauty, and genius, of the system of notation that we have commonly inherited, is, I feel, its unerring ability to adapt to the inevitability of shifting aesthetic priorities.

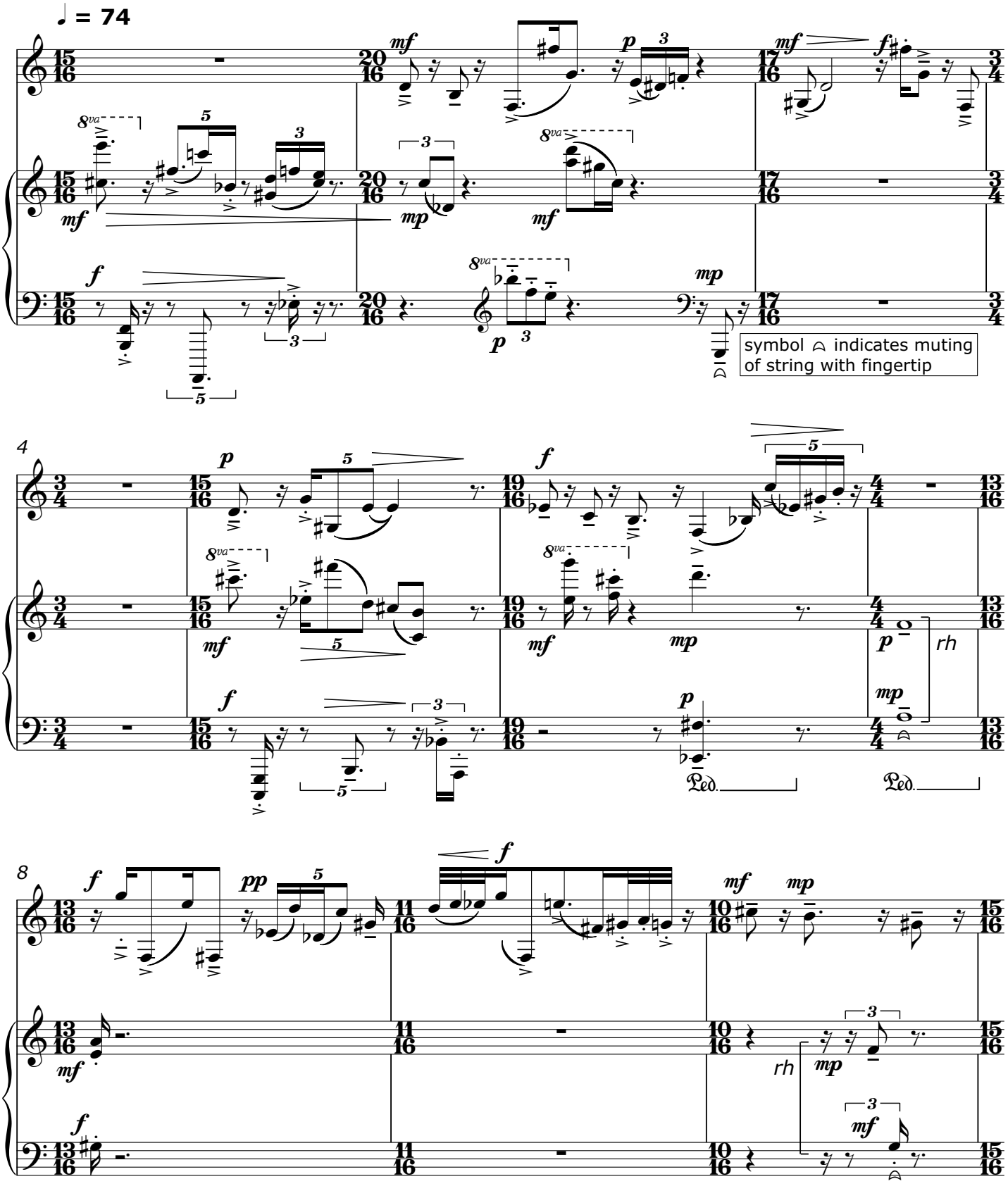
Likewise, I also reject the notion that phrases must always be characterized by arched dynamics. One often hears instrumental affectations that are relics of the romantic period utilized in the performance of music from other periods. I find this problematic, from an aesthetic point of view, and especially so if the music in question is predominantly avant-garde in nature.

Kevin H Gray
May, 2012

Ausstreuung

for English Horn and Piano

Kevin H Gray



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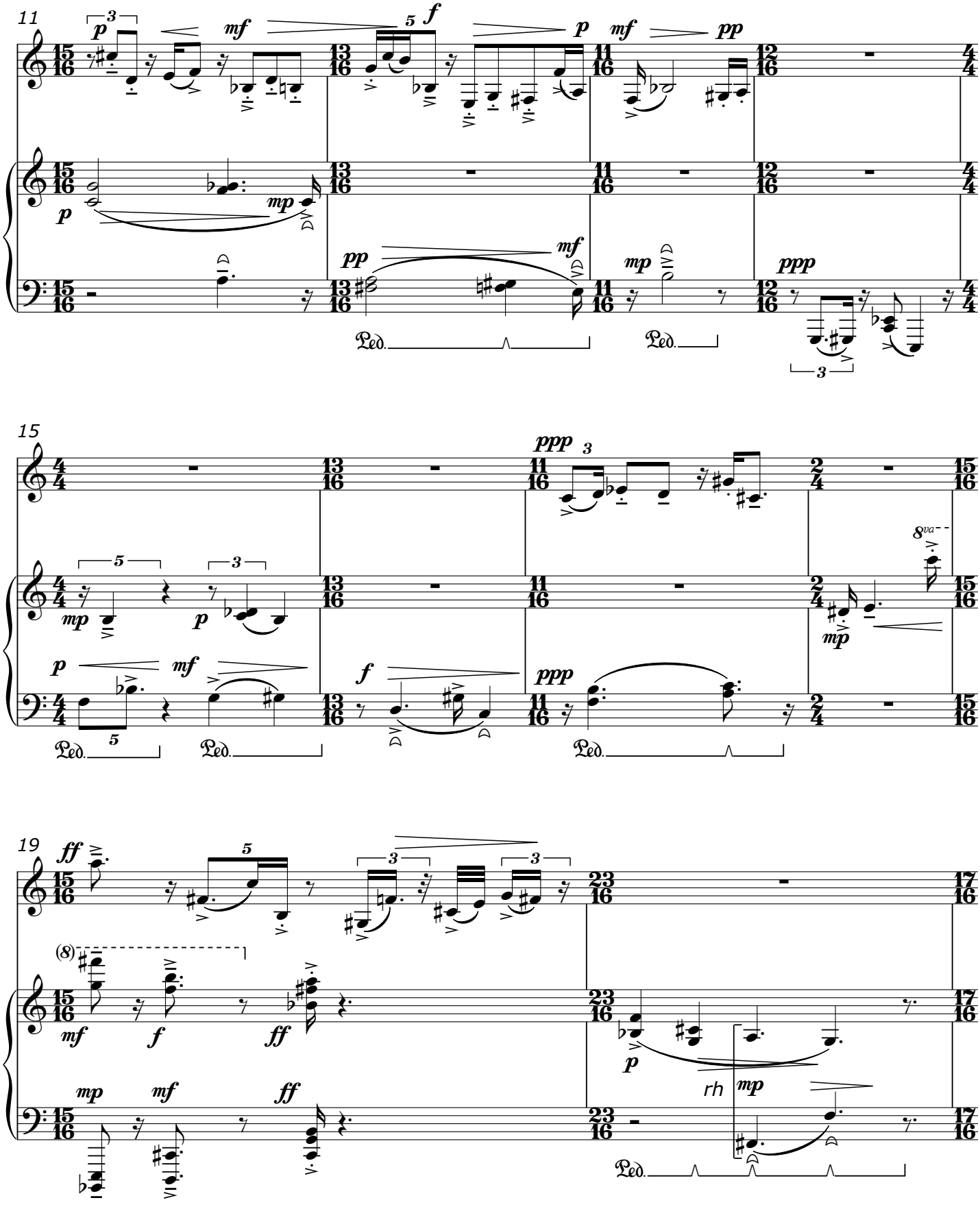

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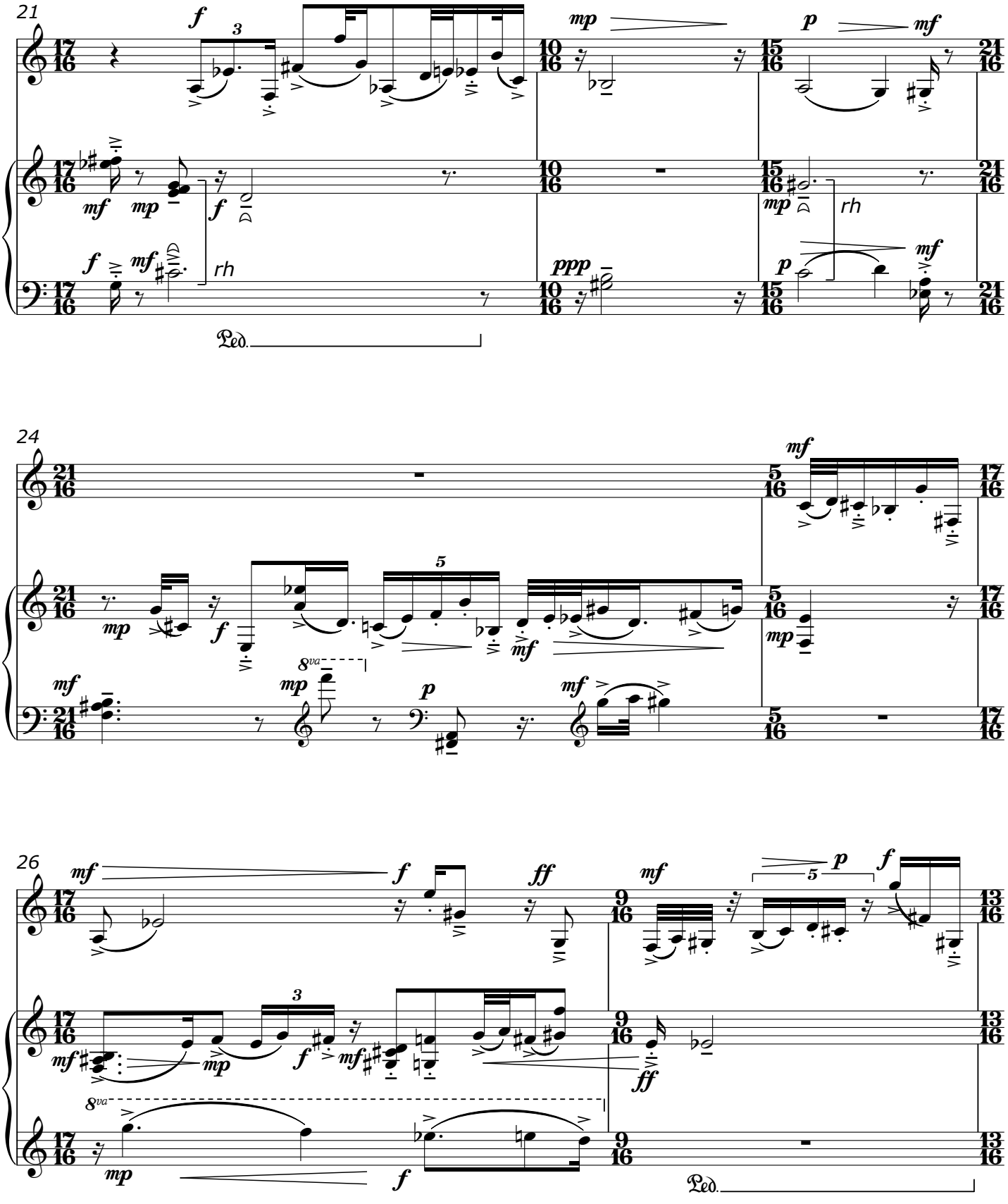

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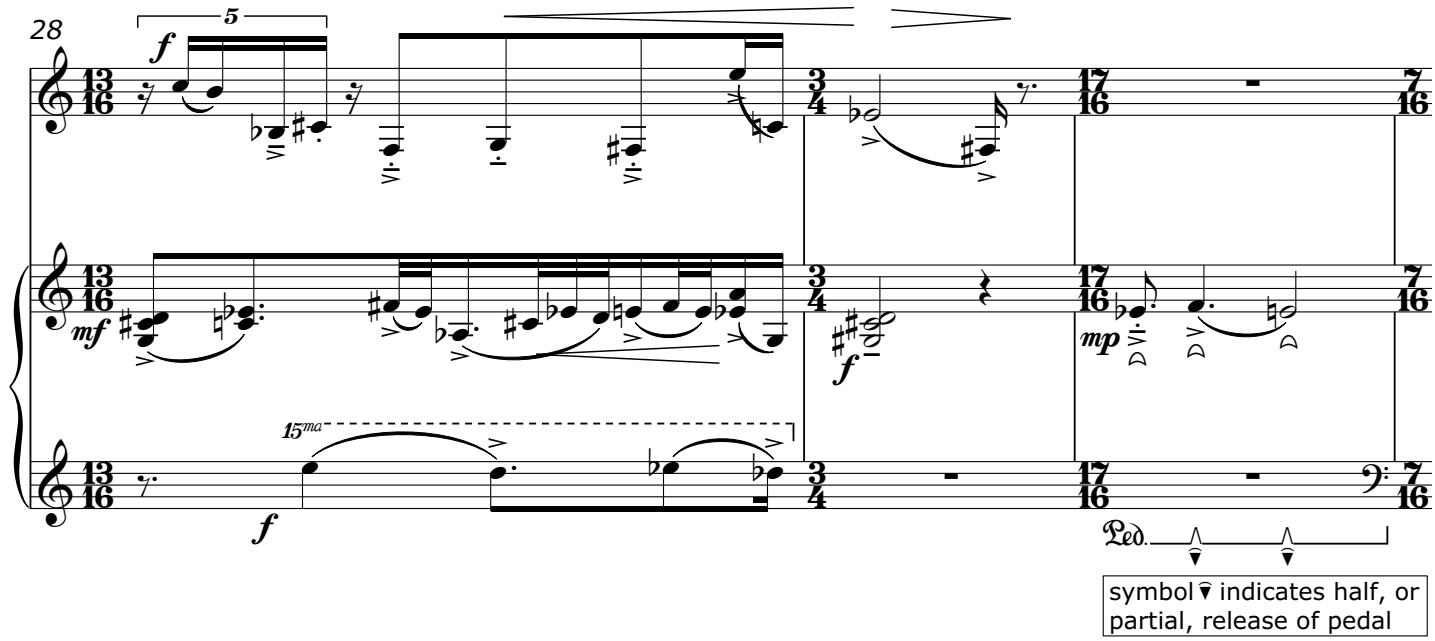

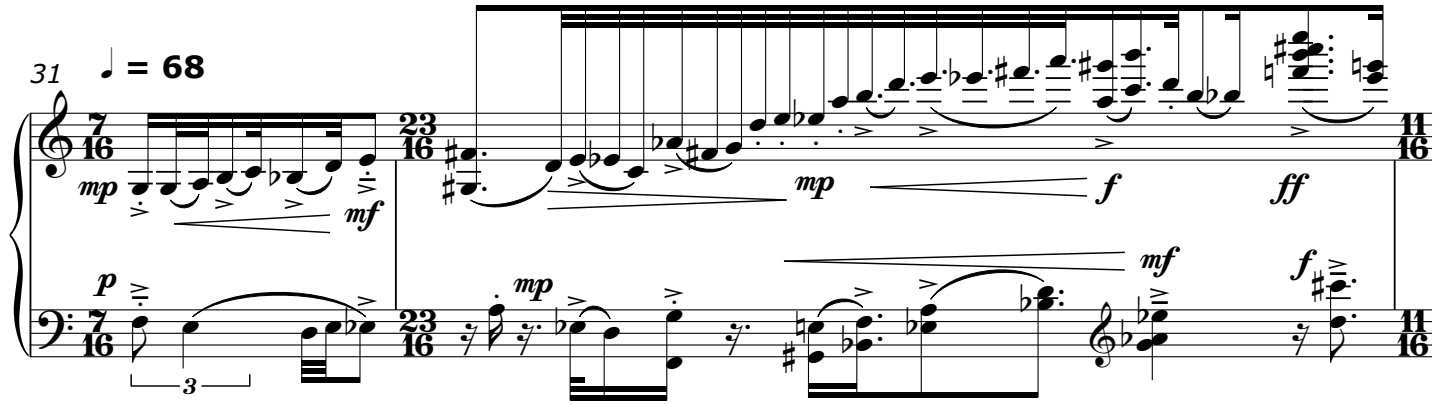

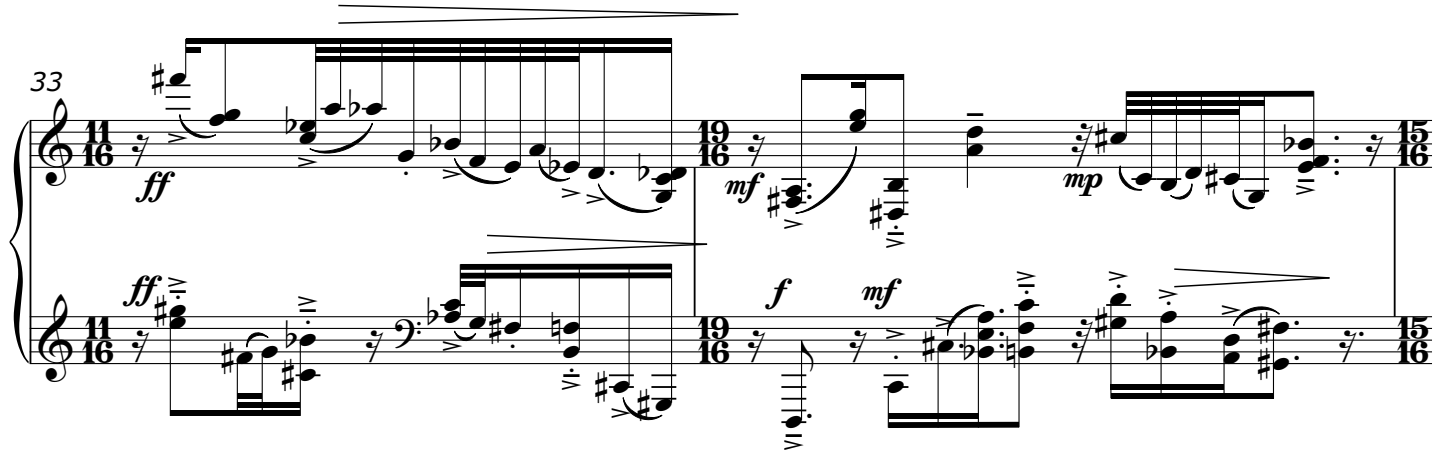

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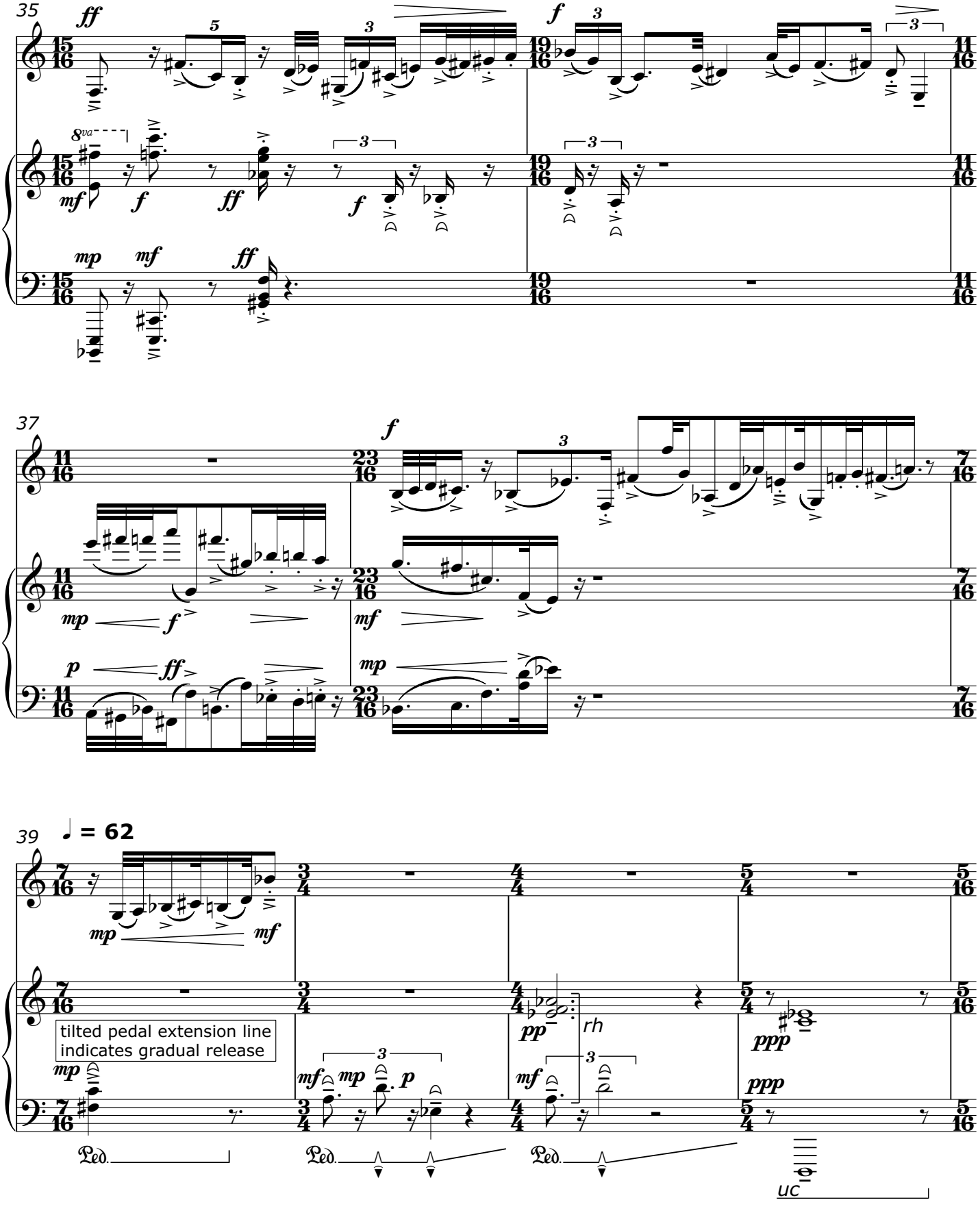

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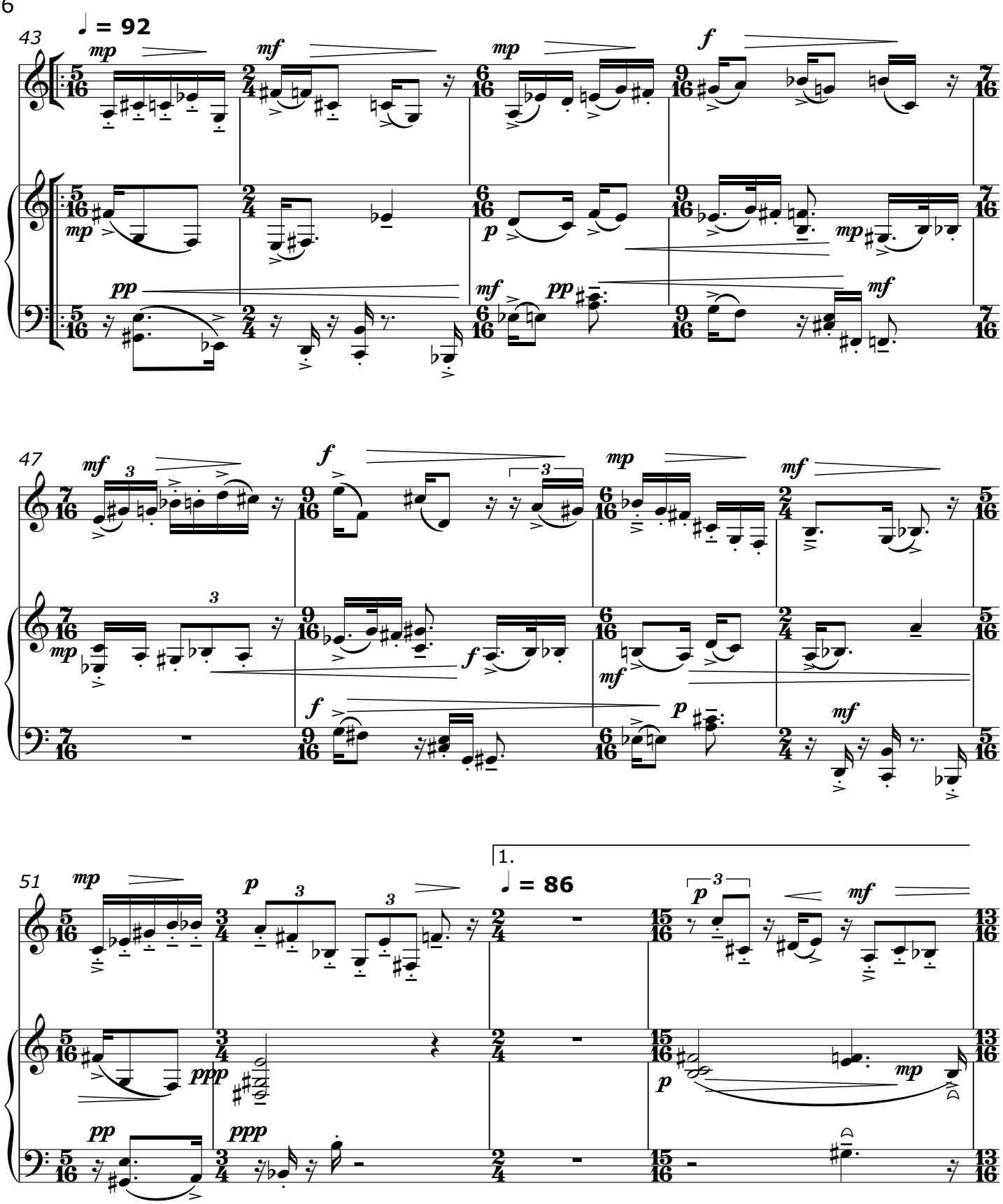

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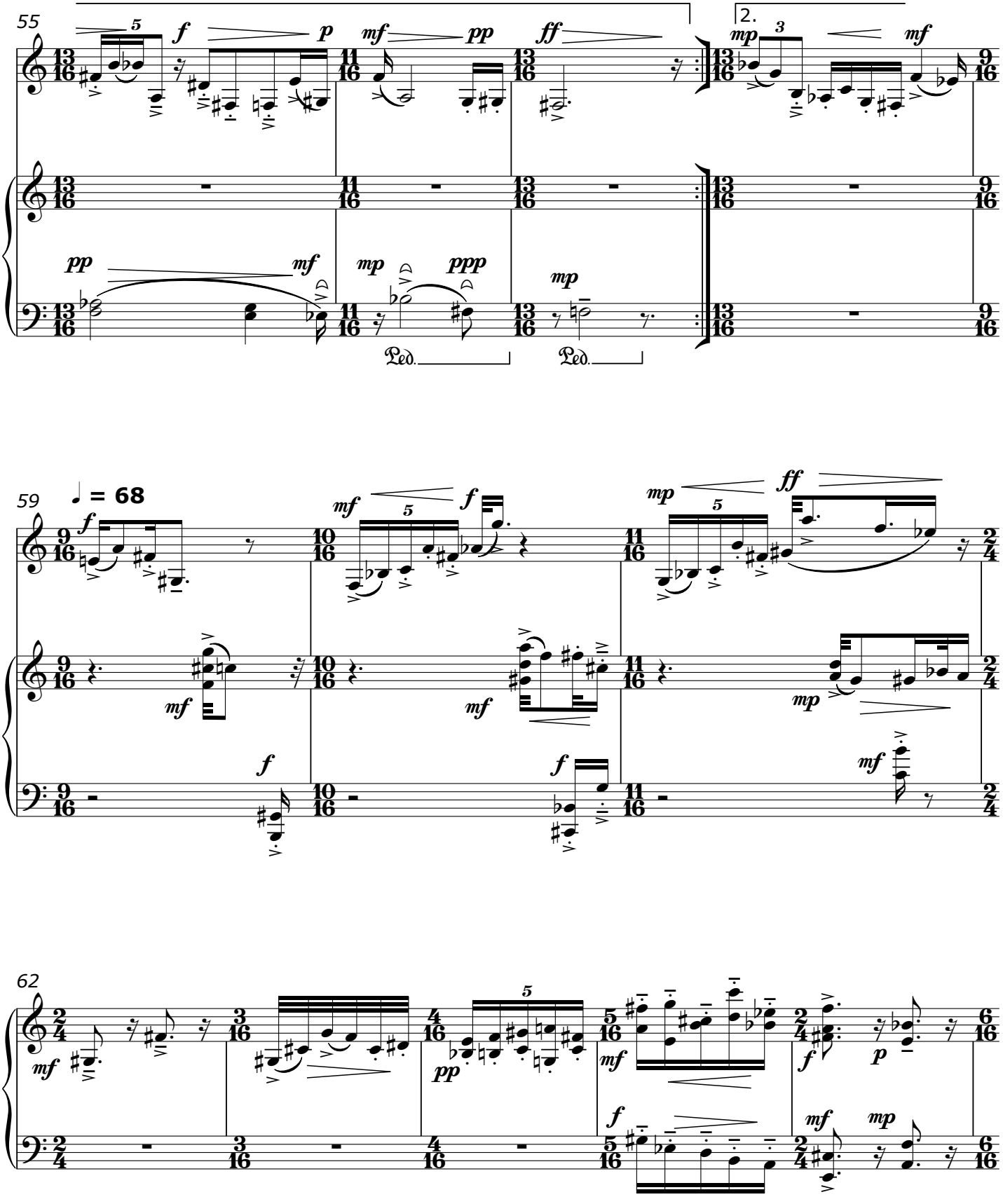

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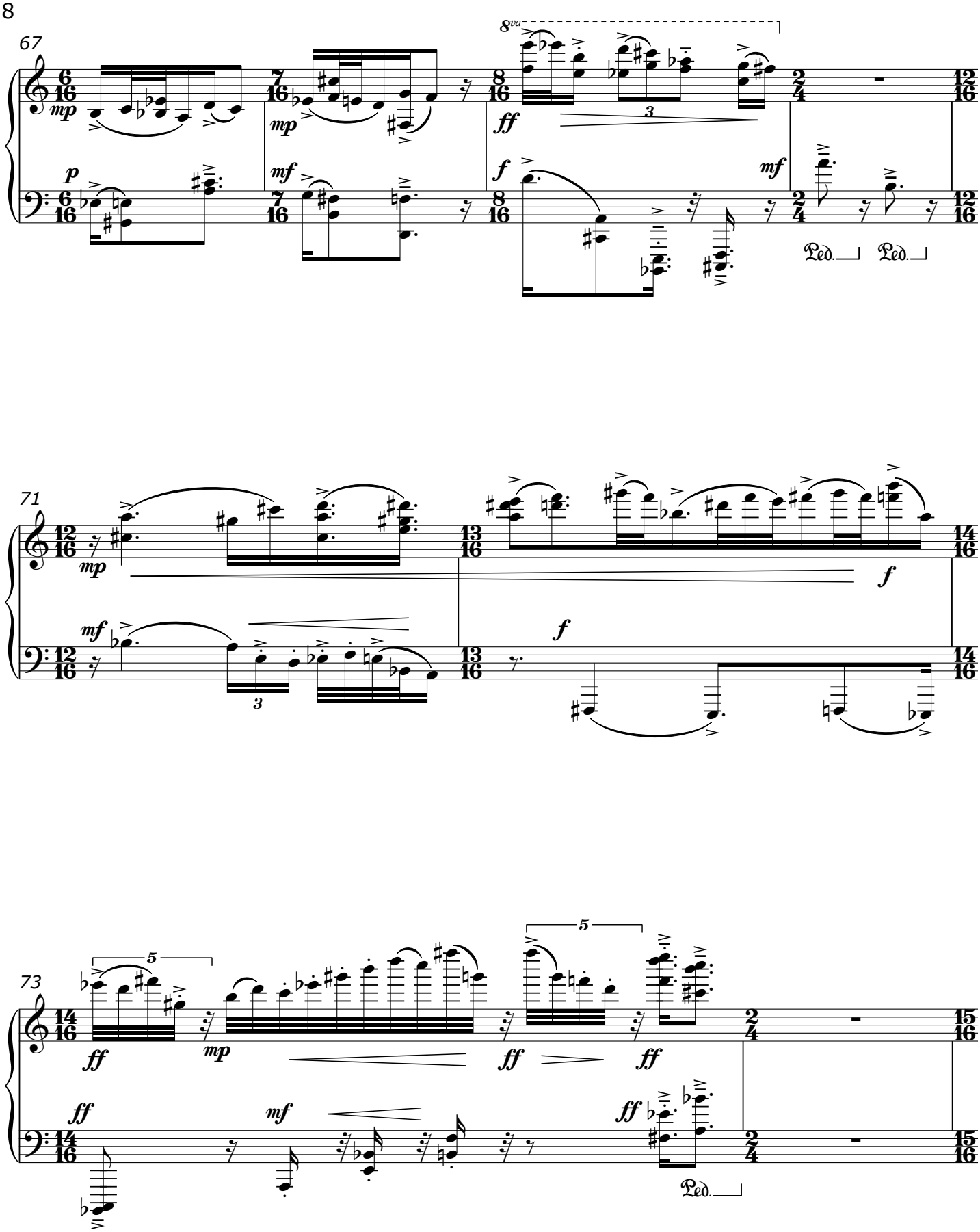

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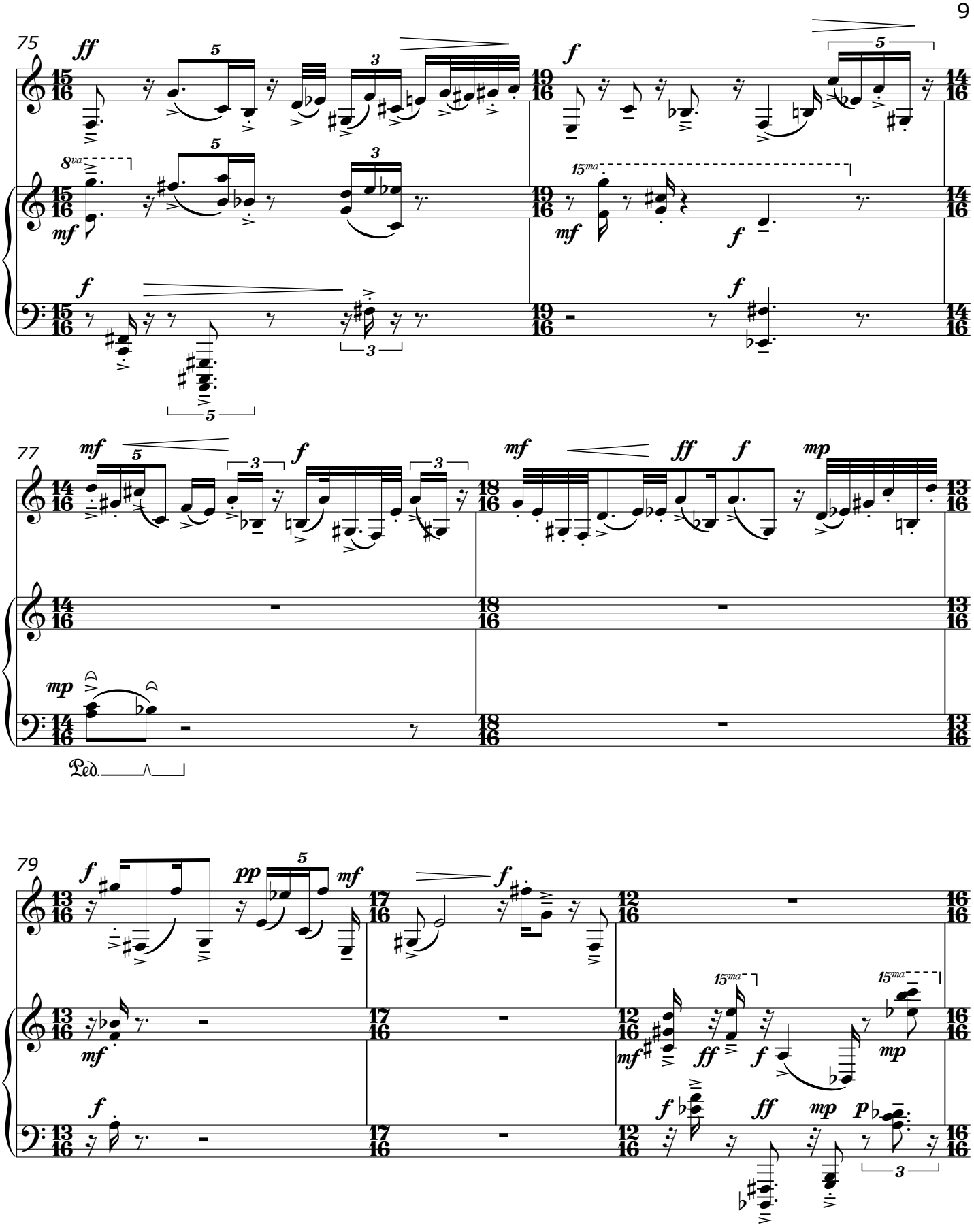

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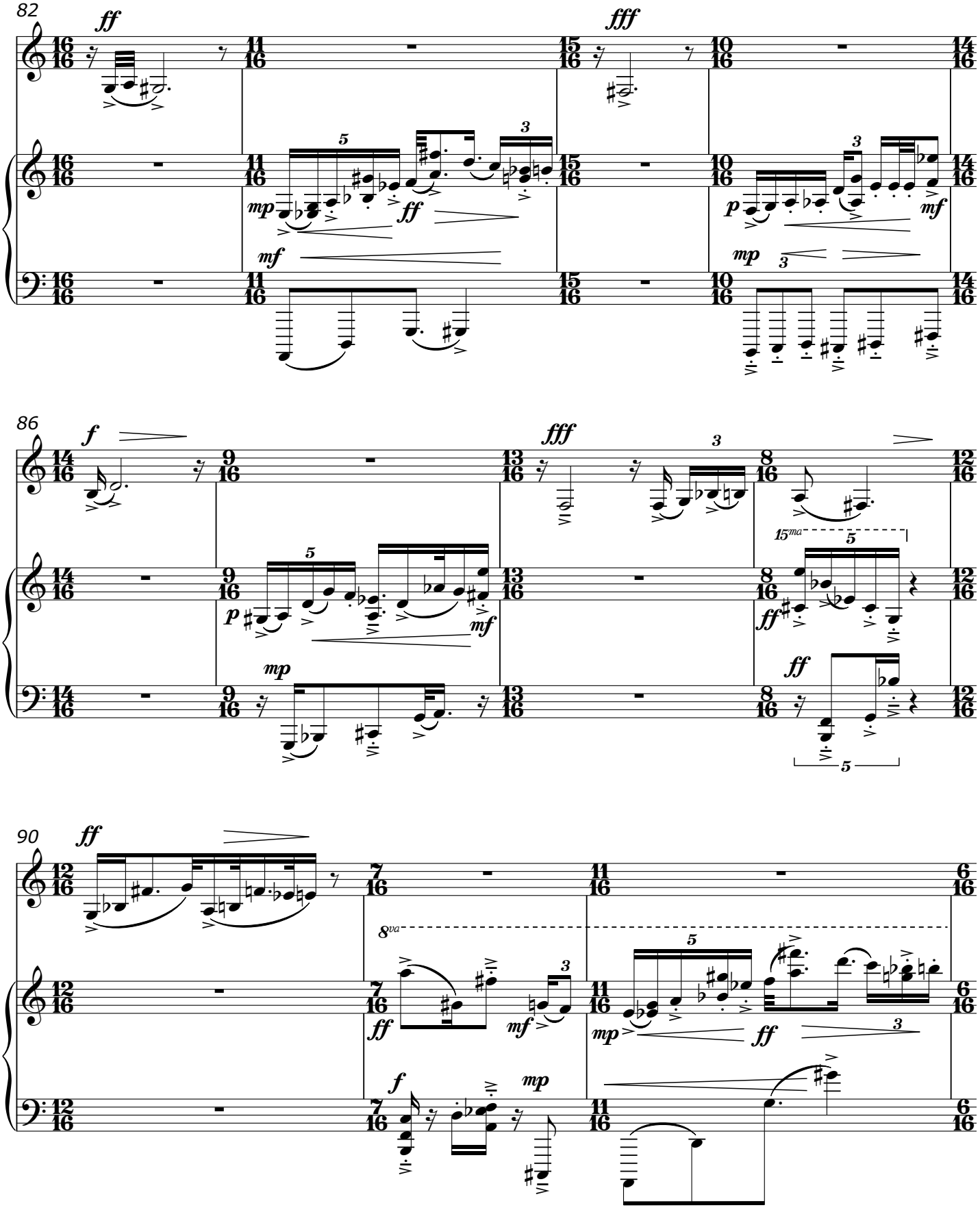

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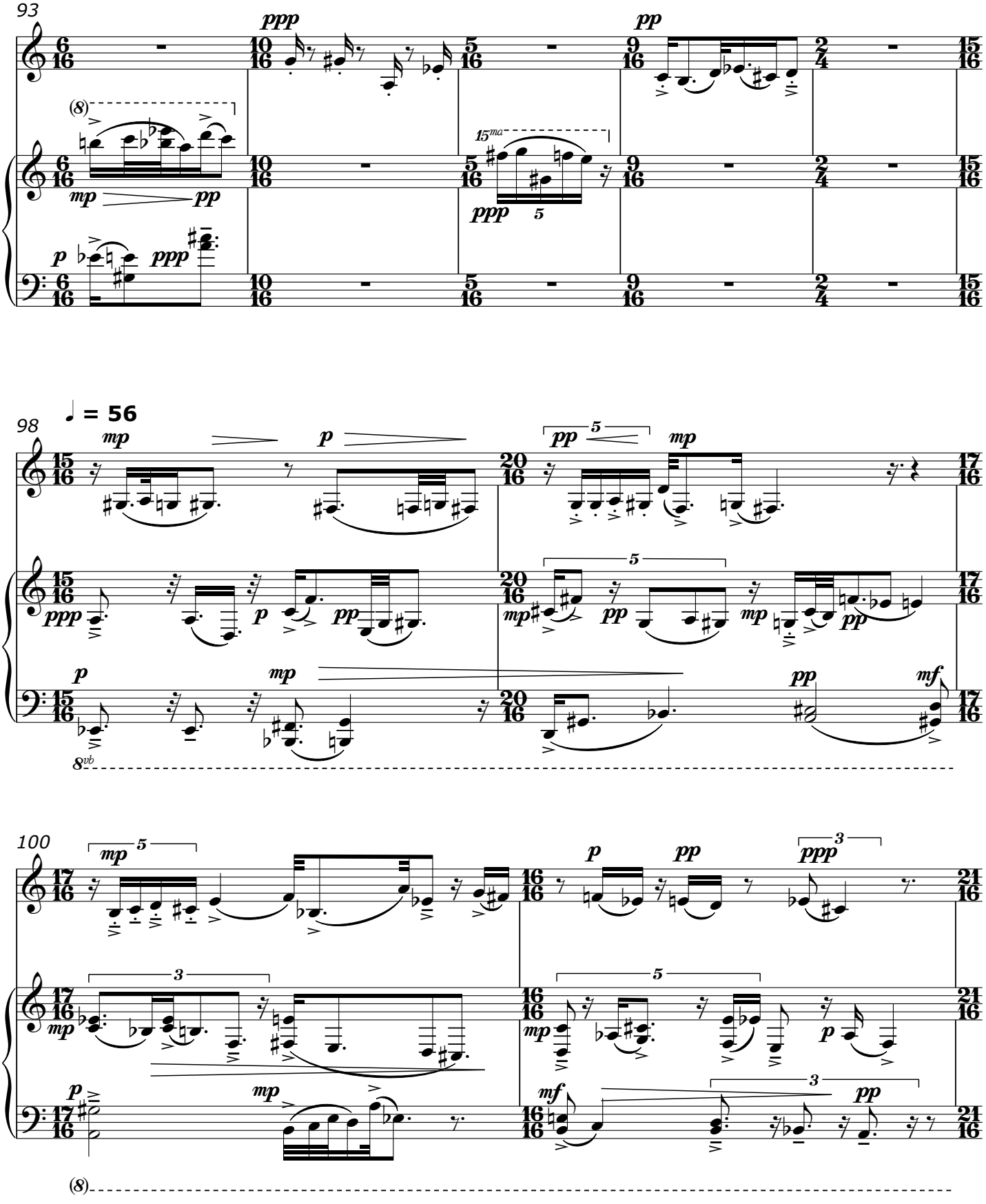

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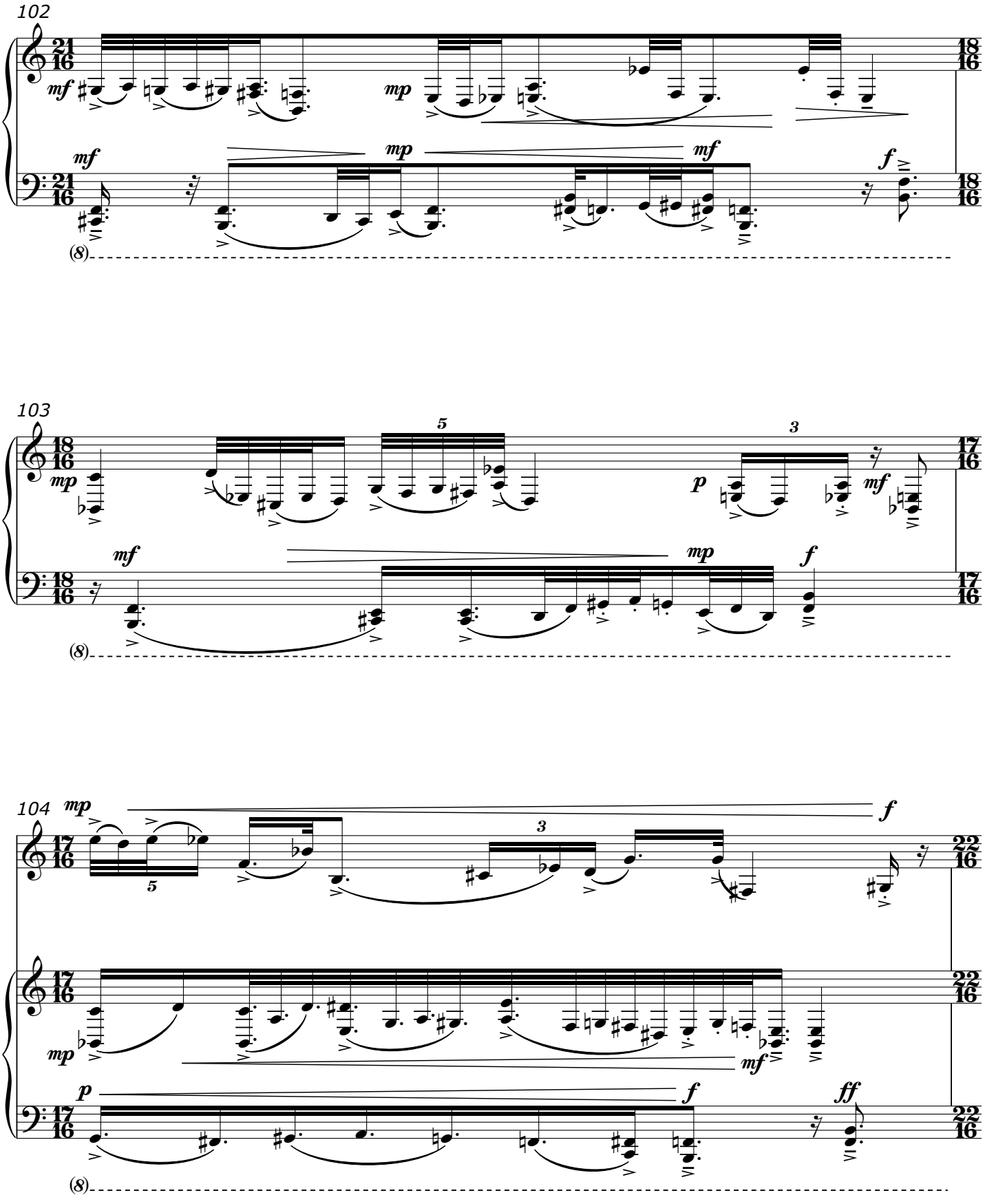

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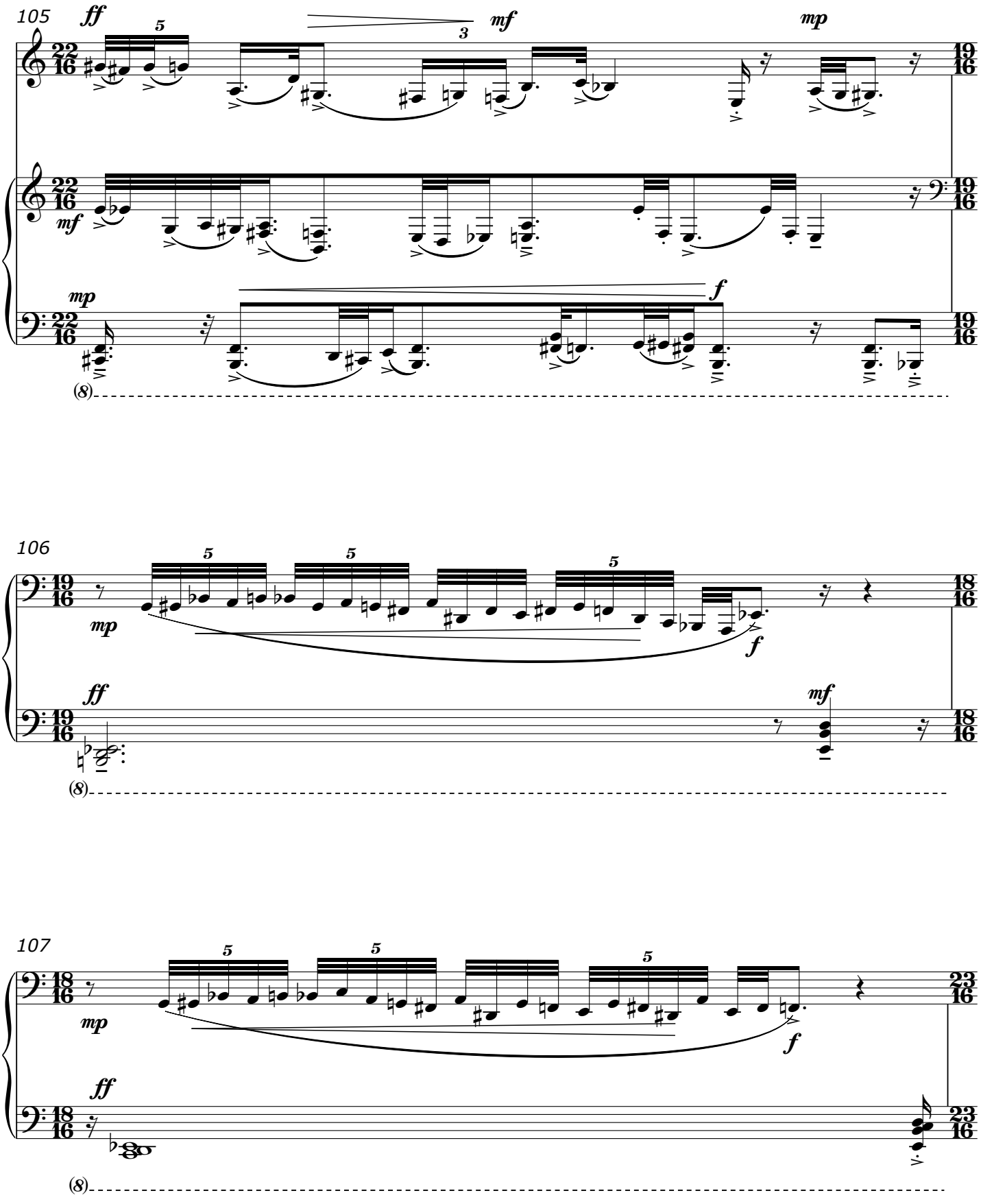

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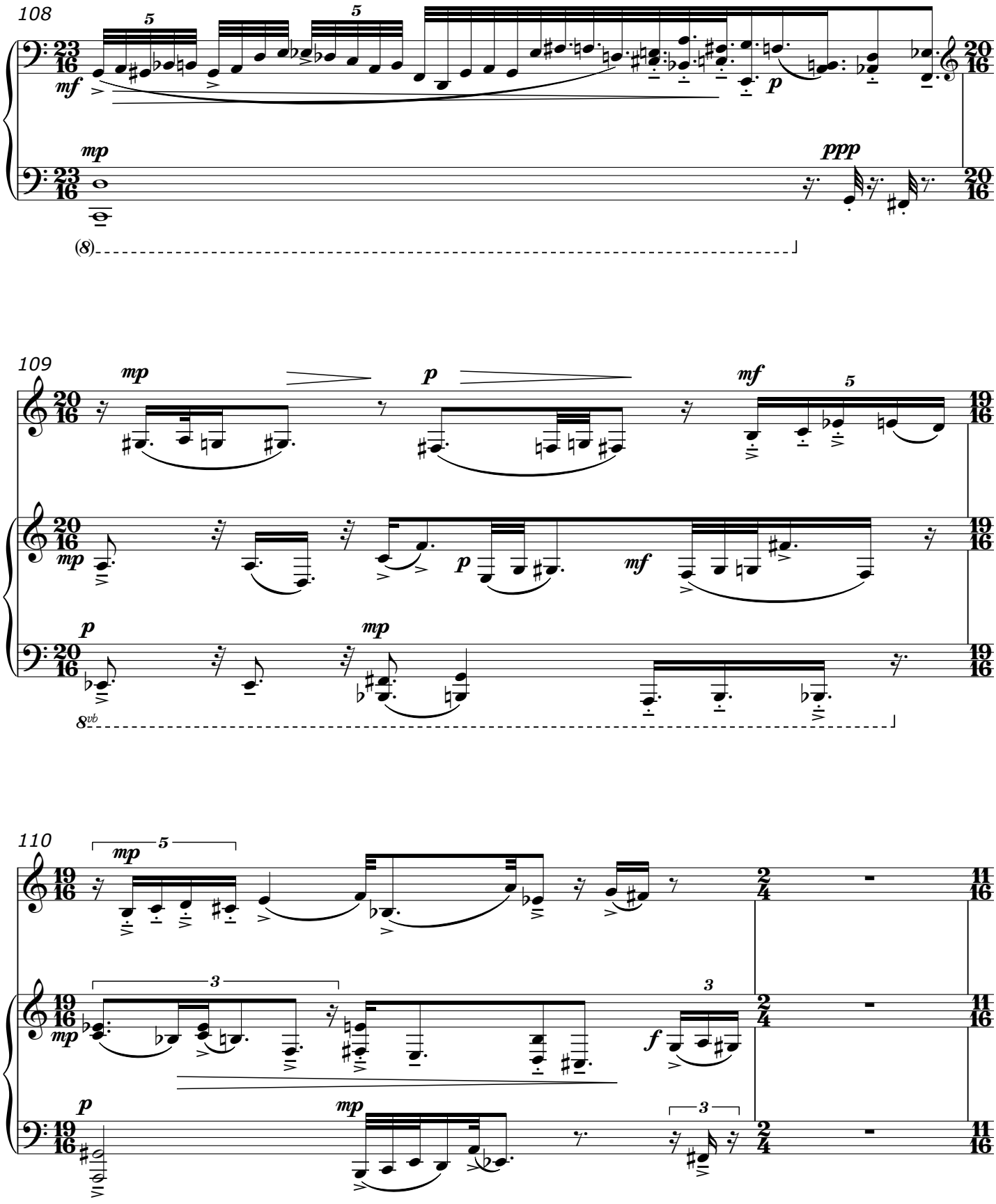

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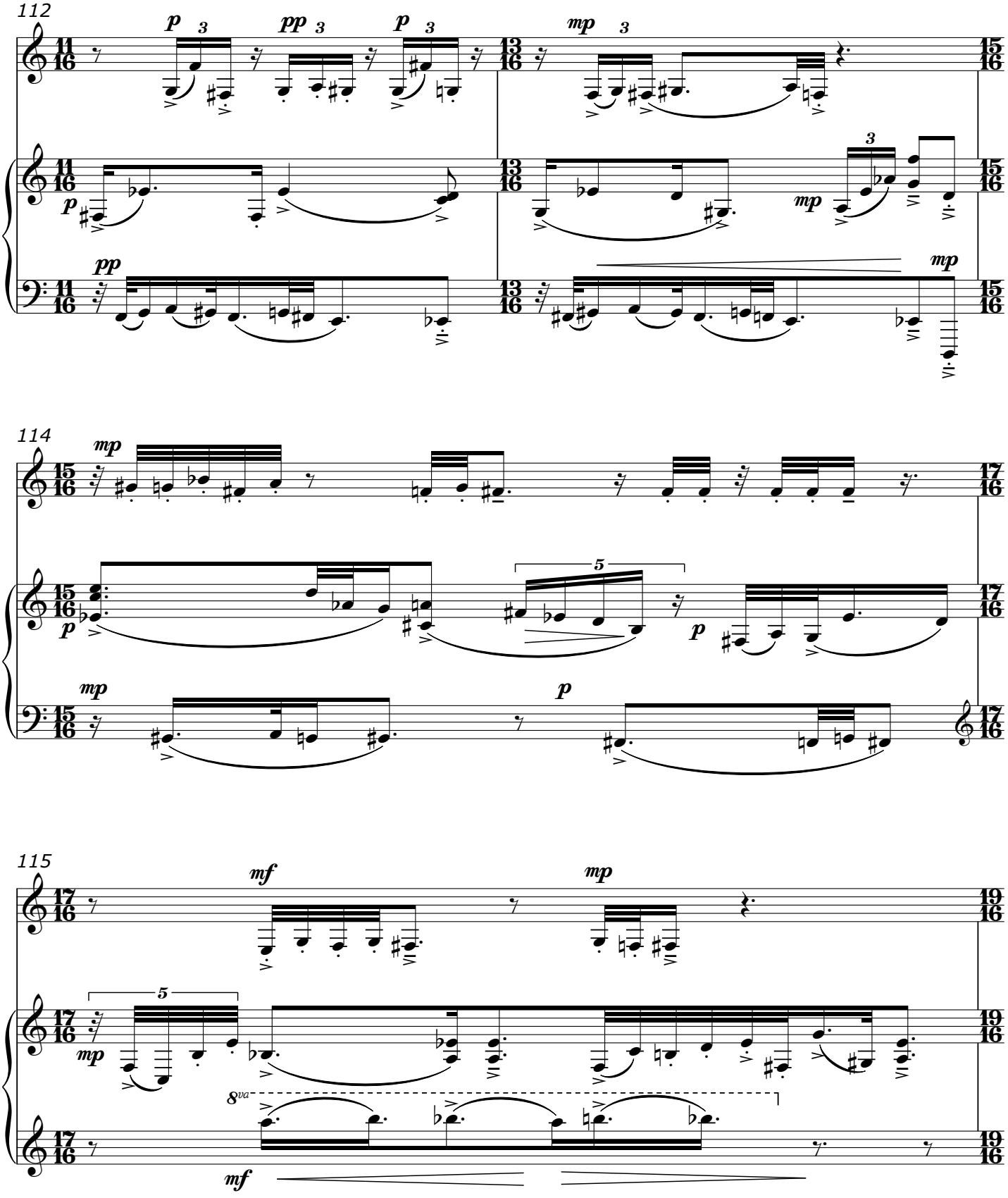

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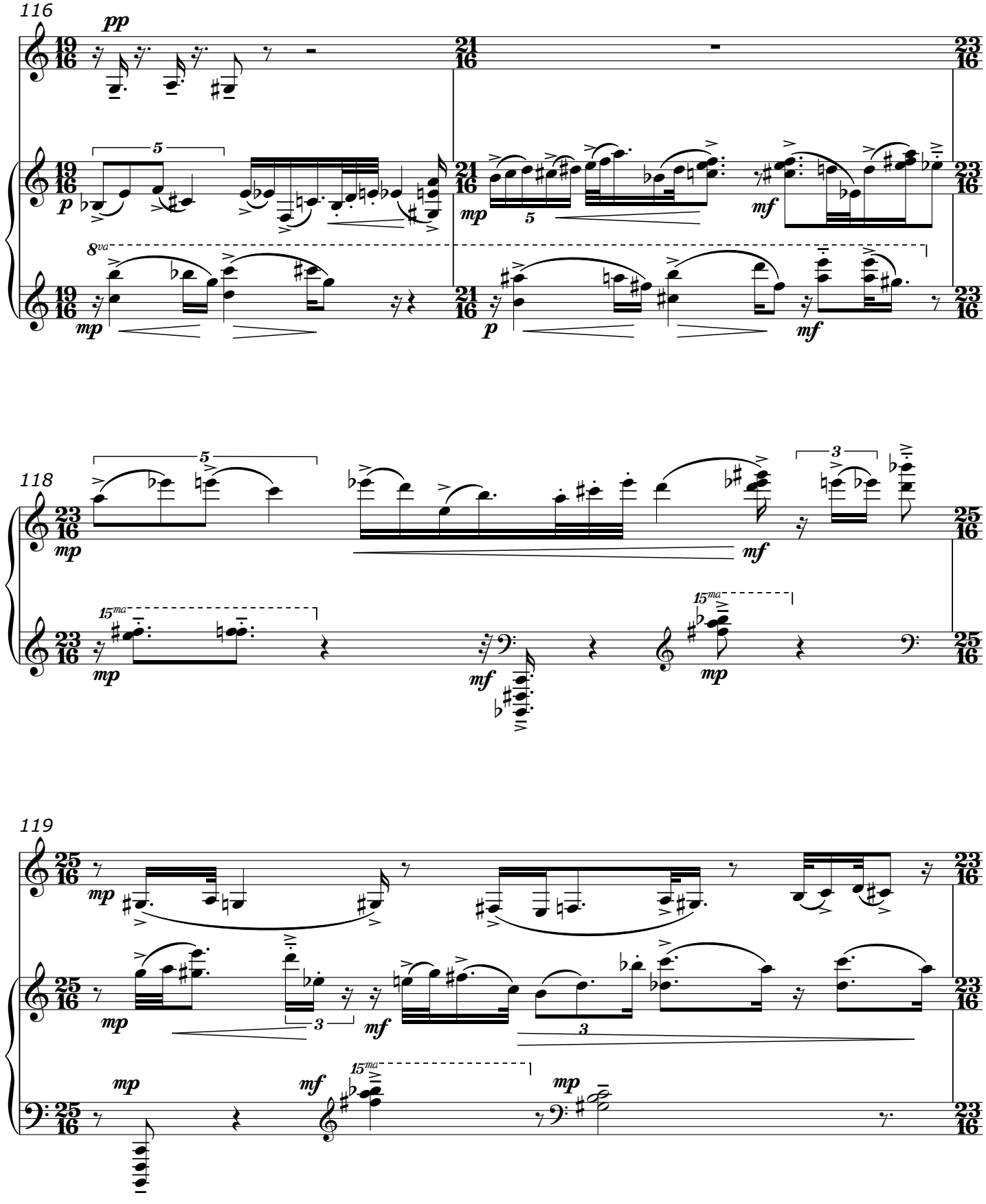

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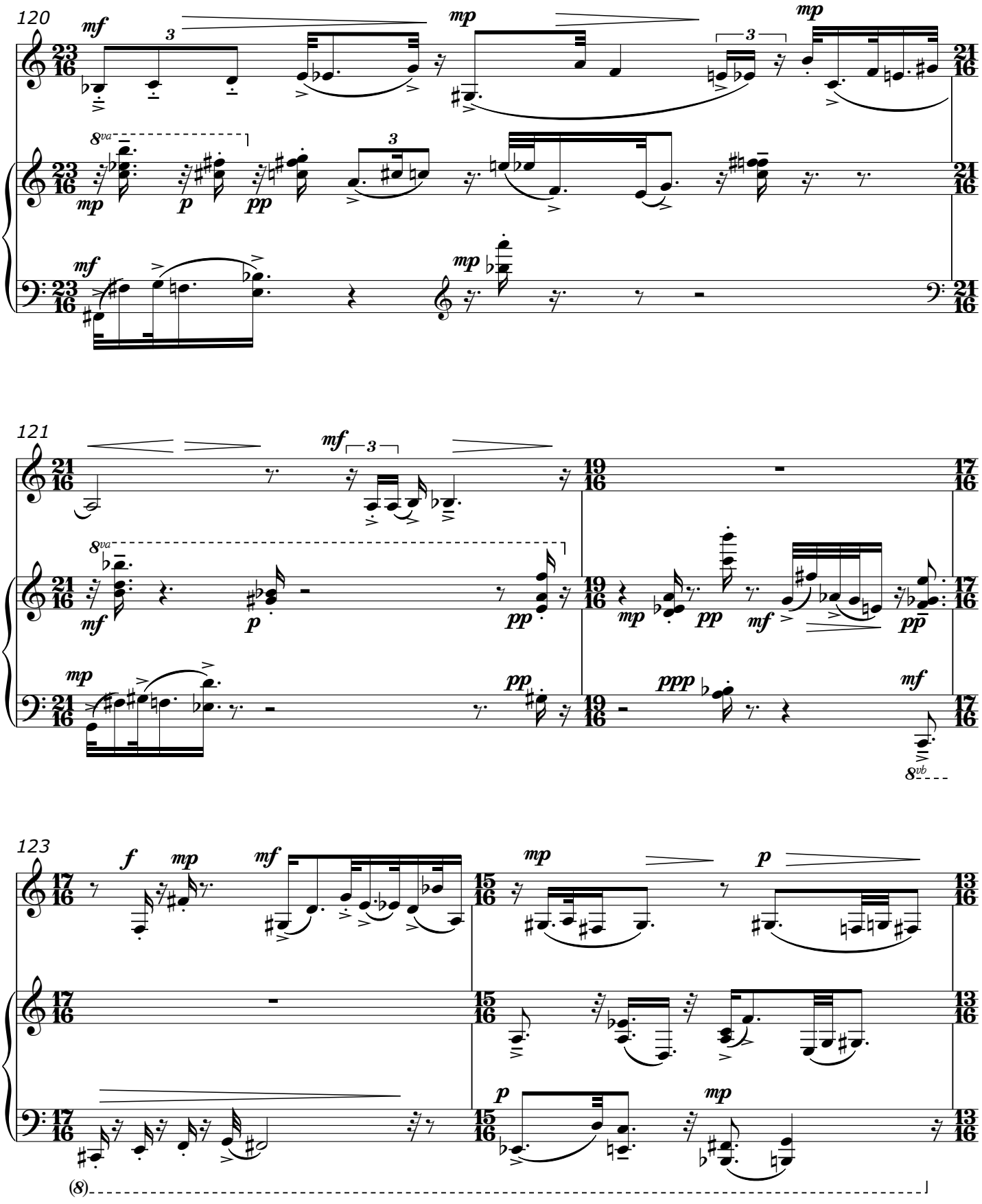

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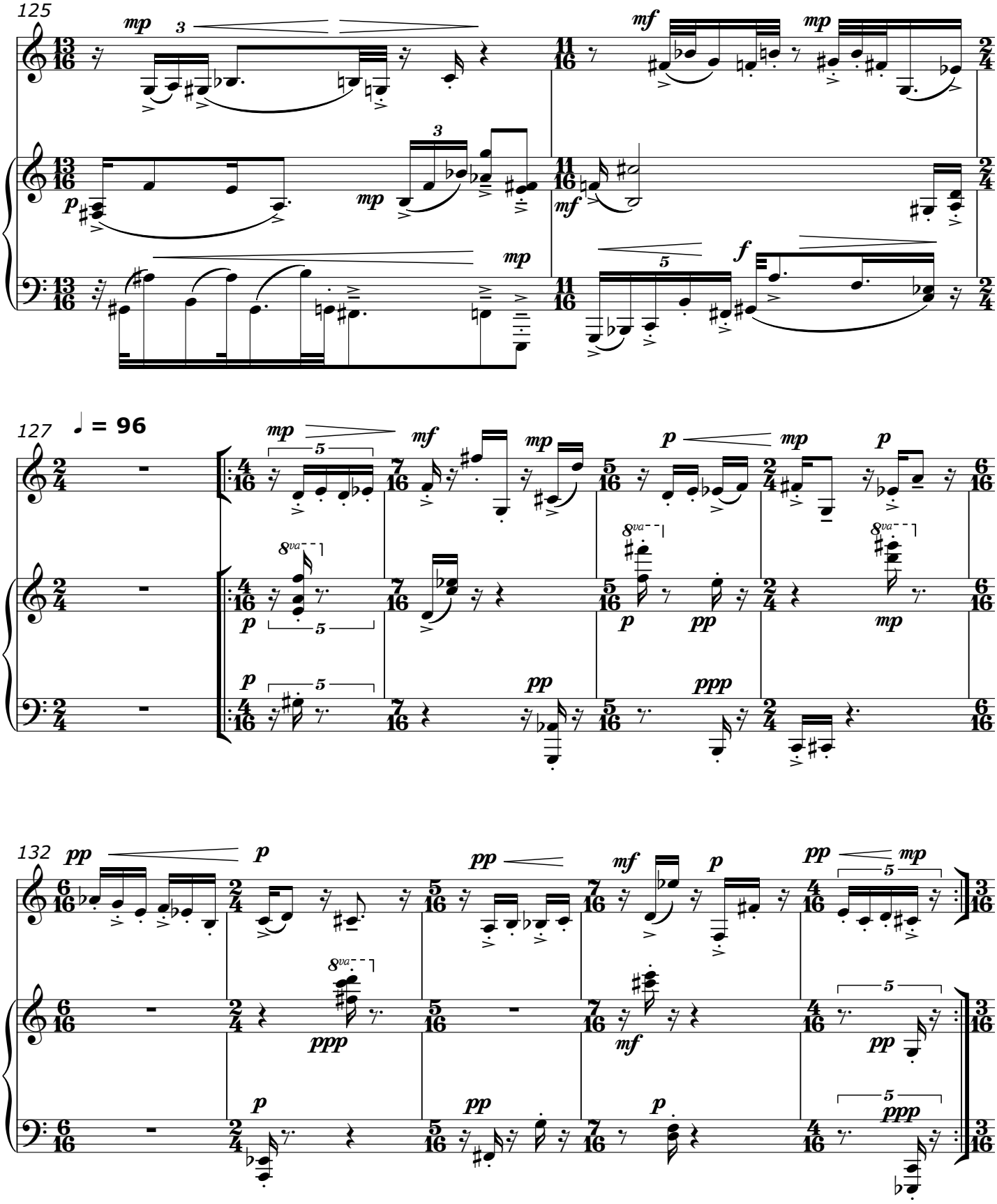

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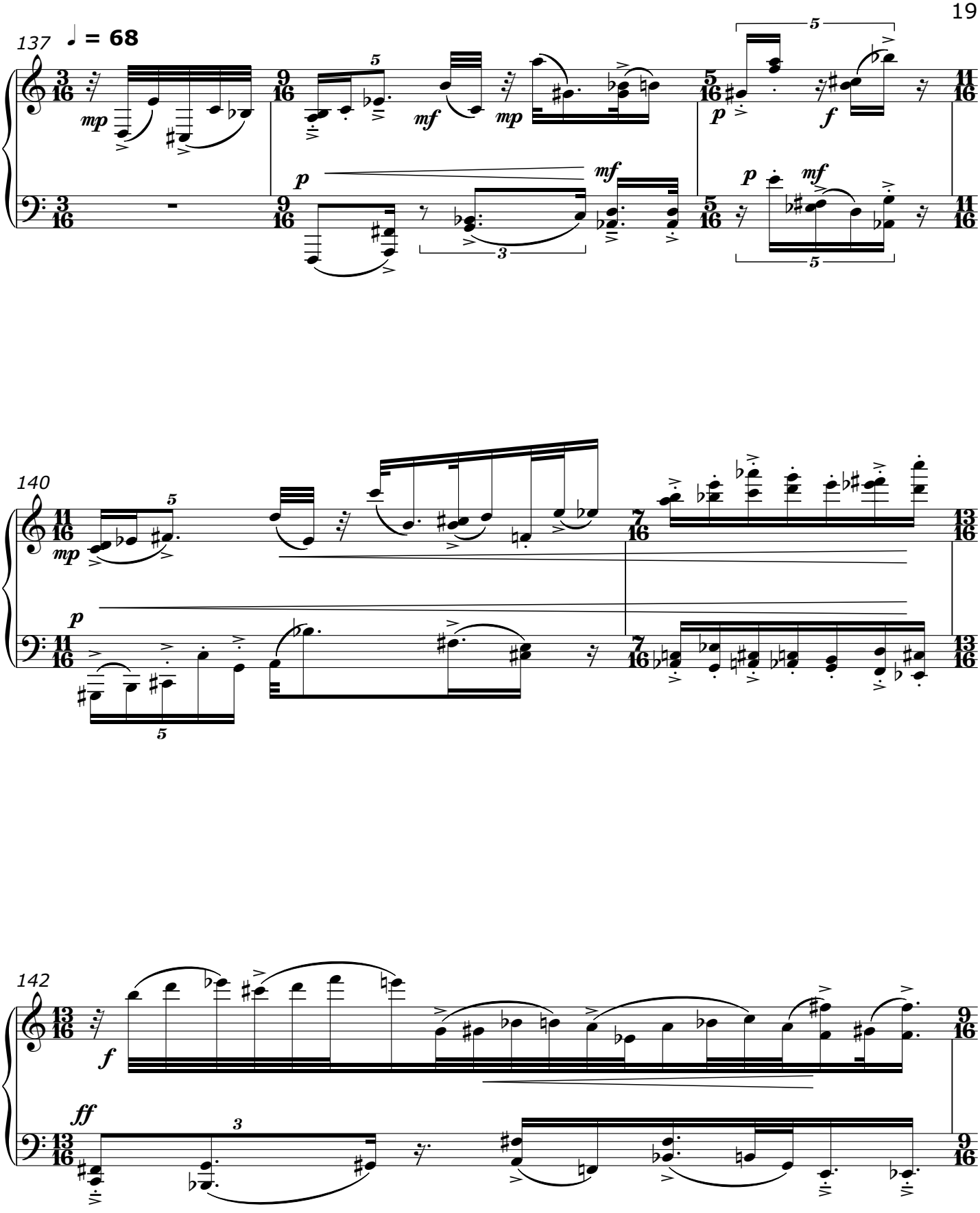

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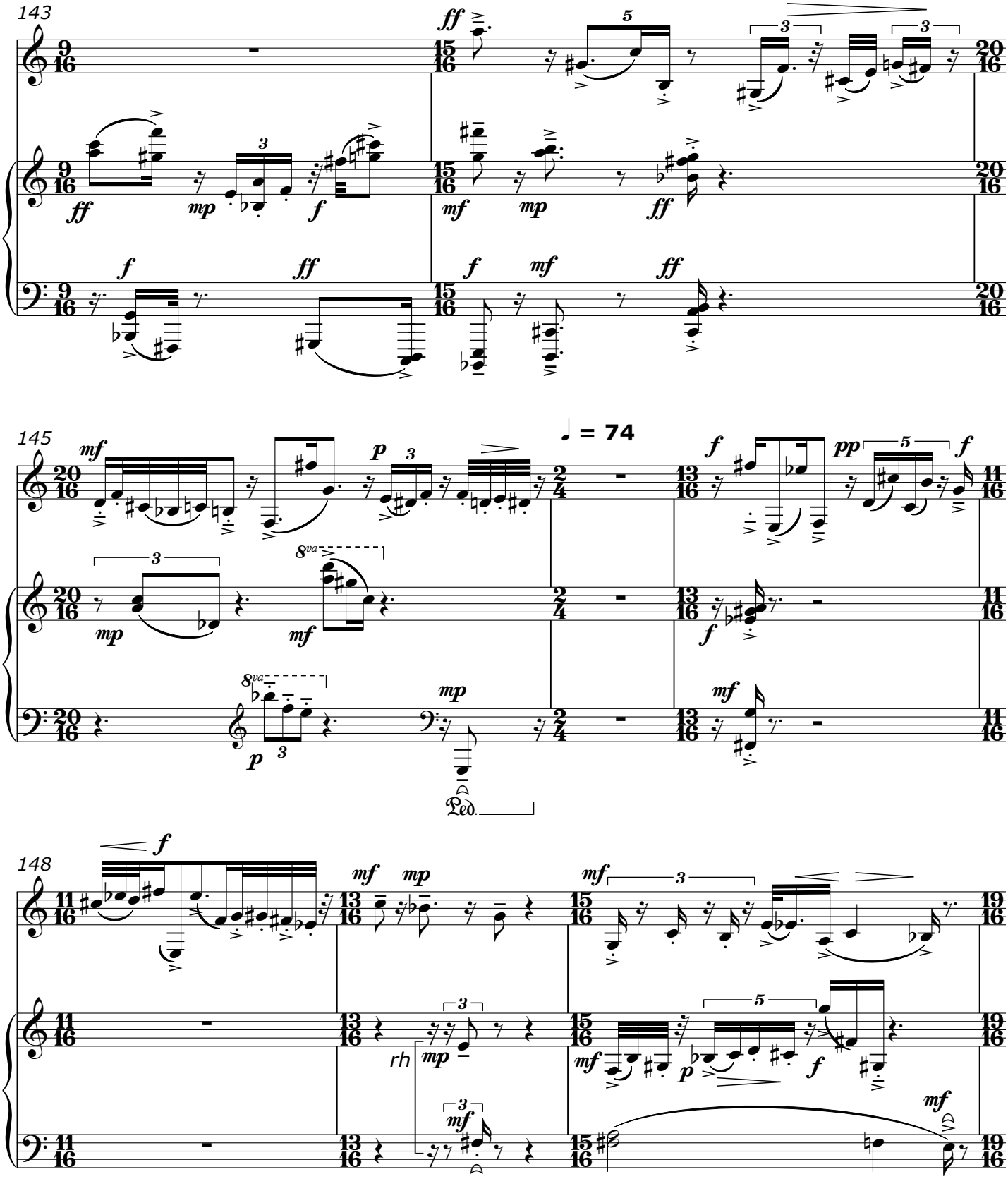

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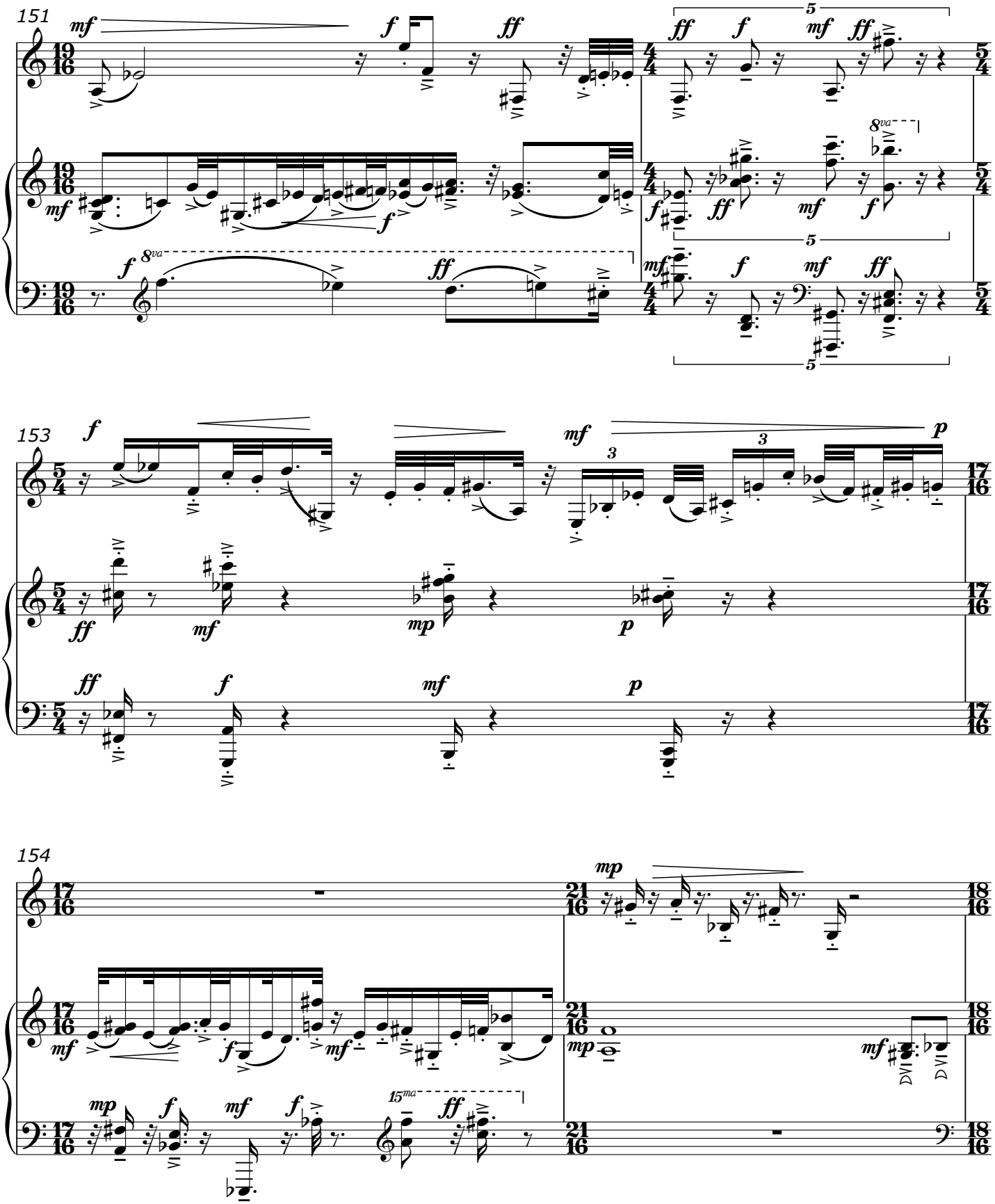

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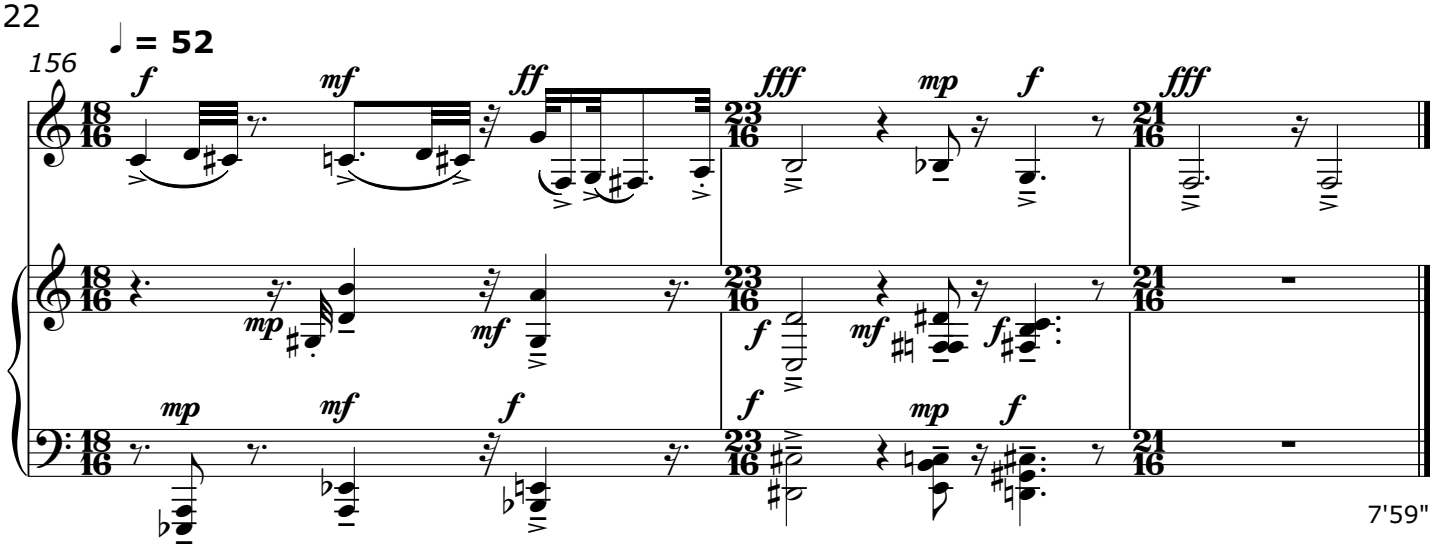
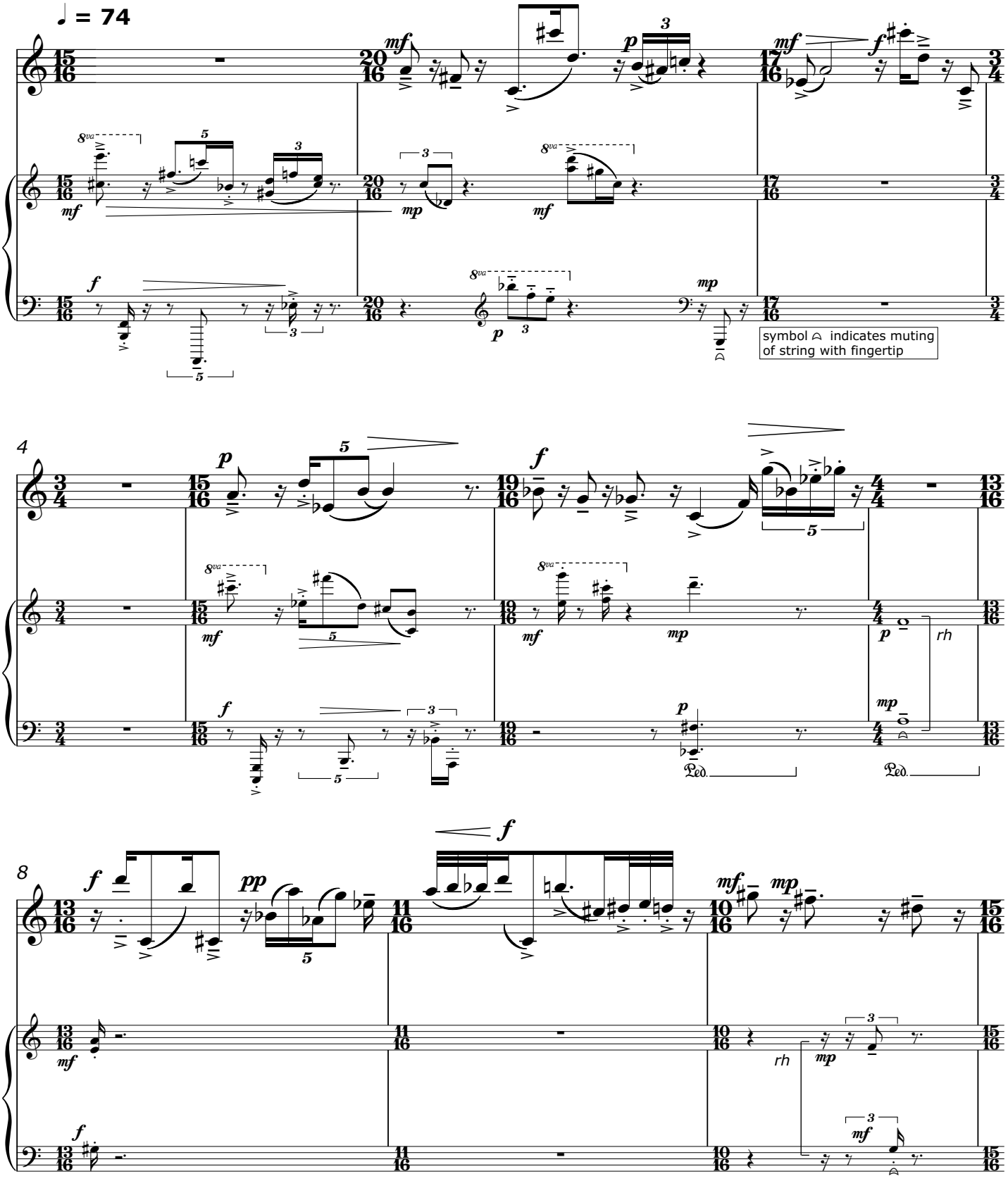


Ausstreuung

for English Horn and Piano

English Horn Score

Kevin H Gray



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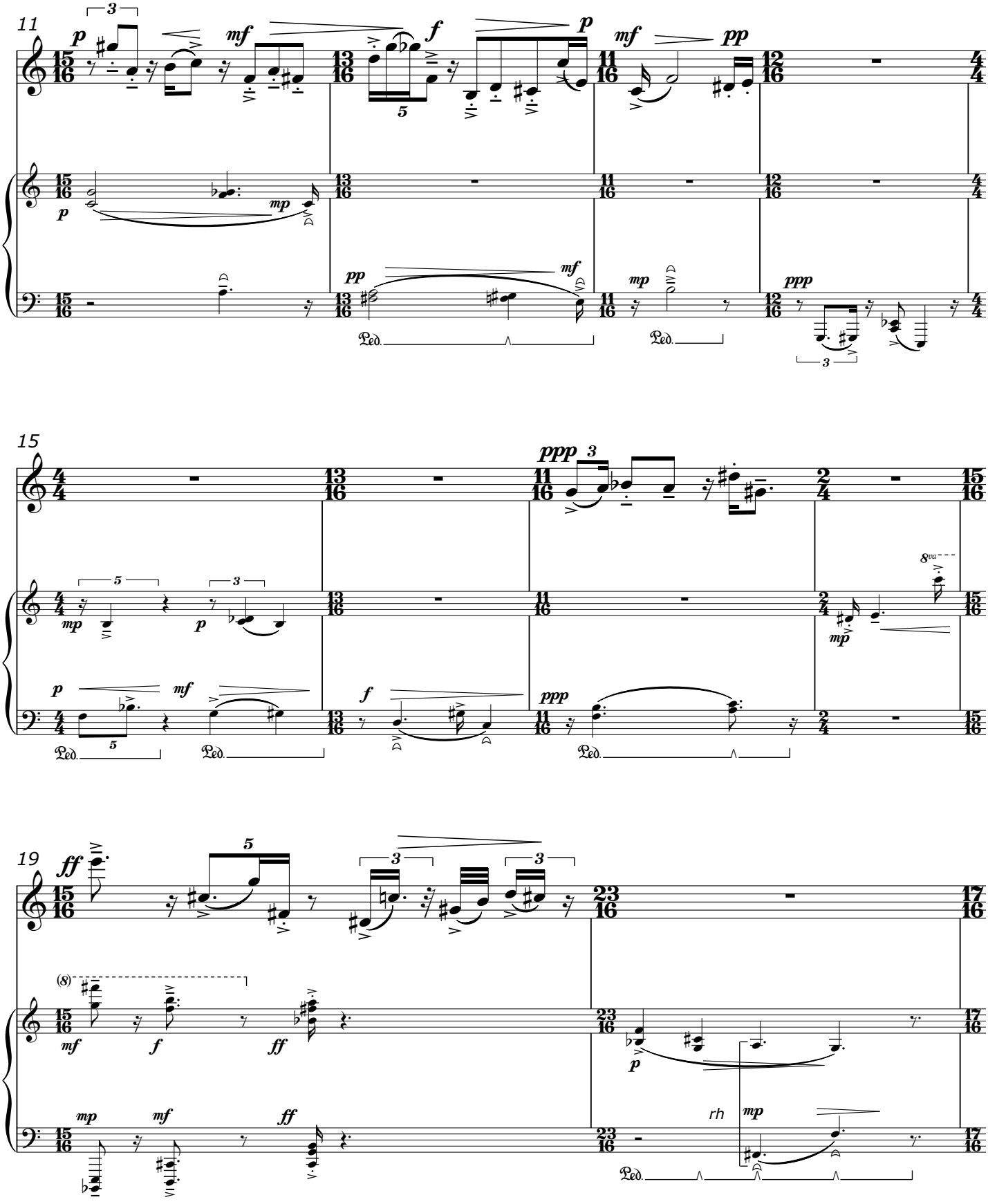

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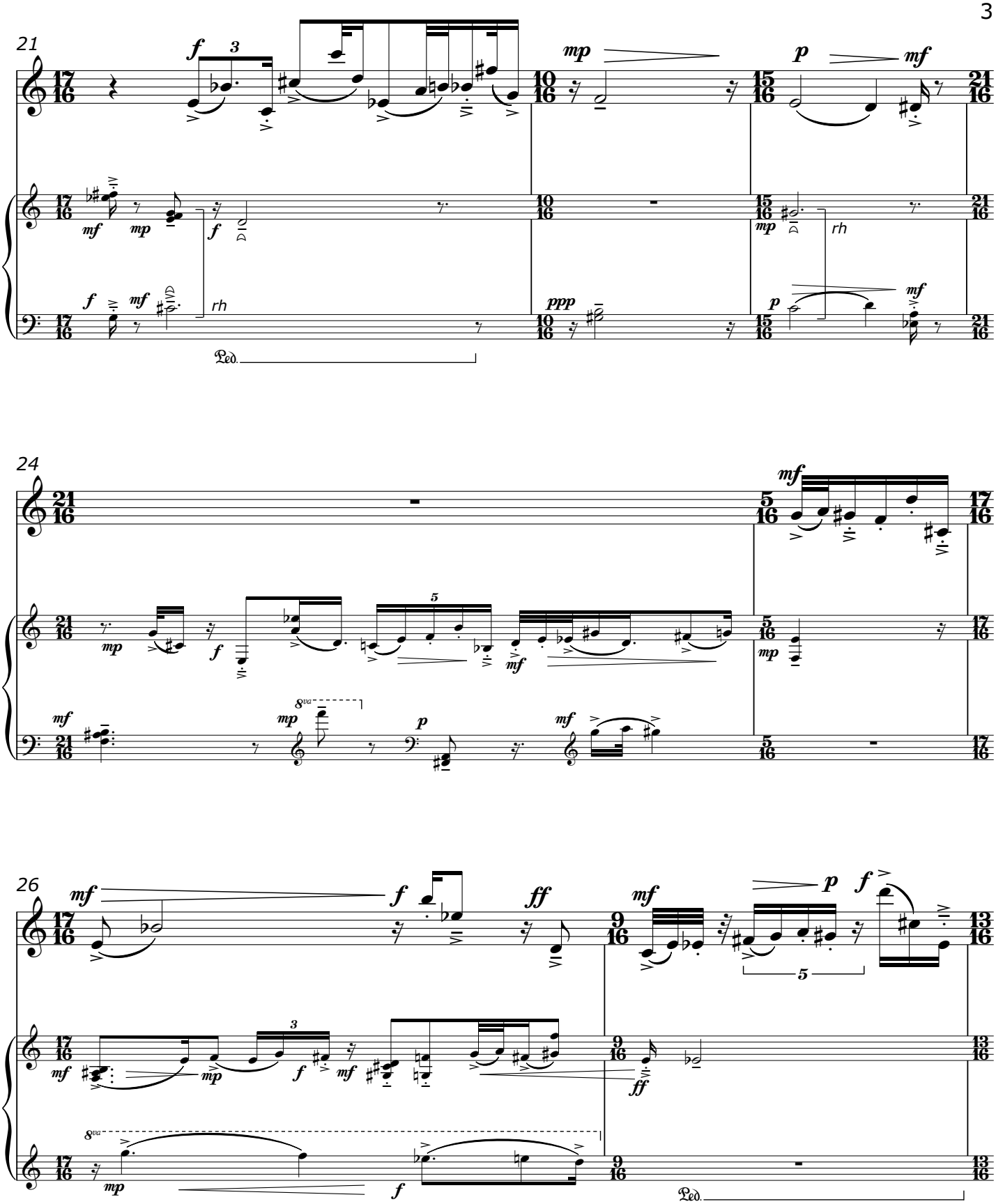

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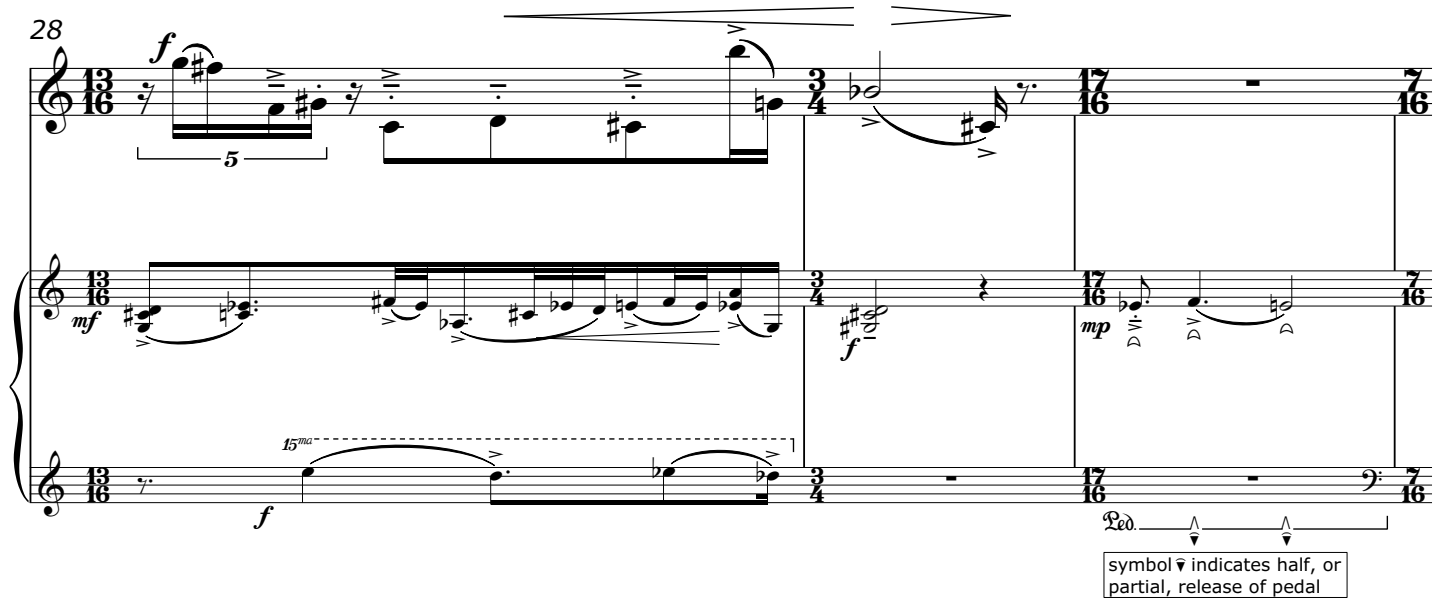

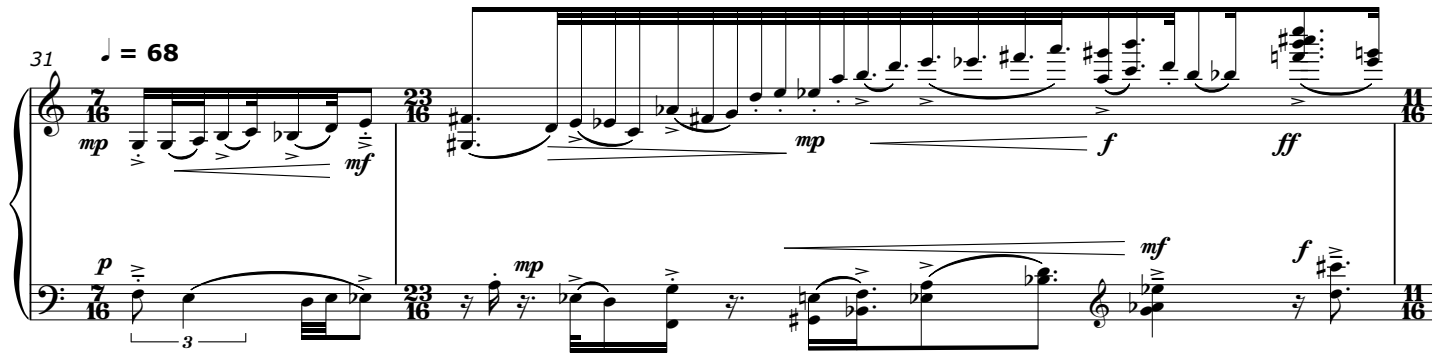

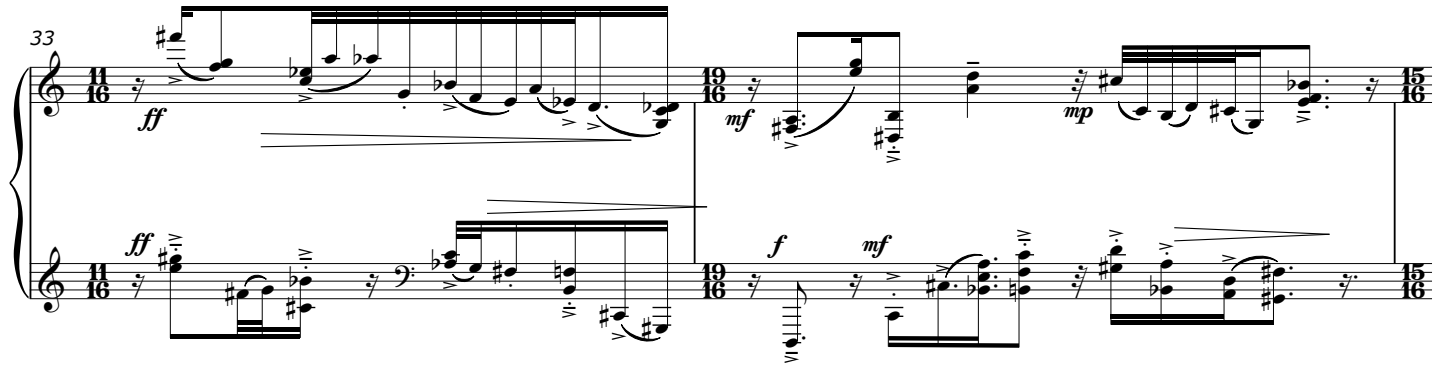

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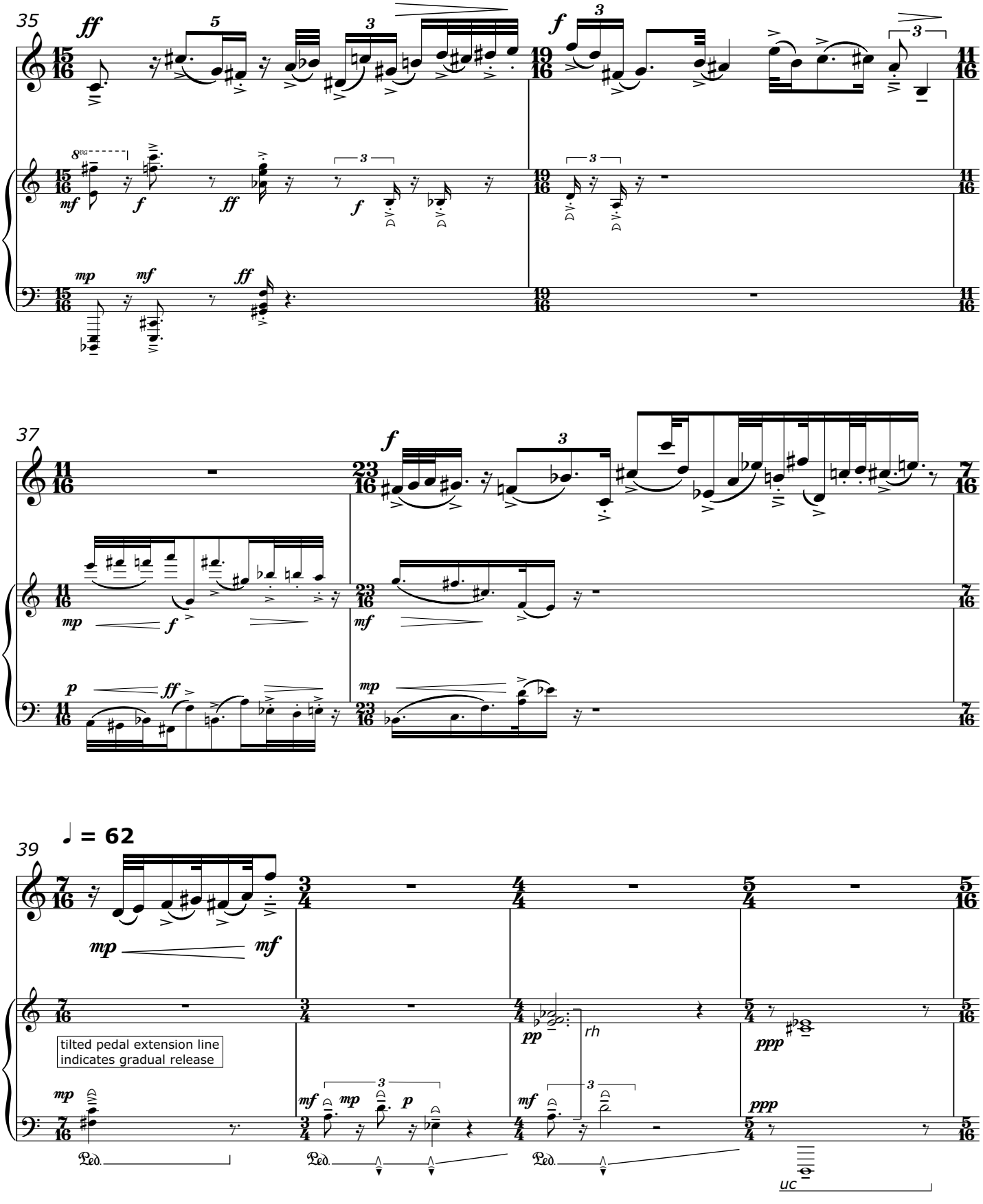

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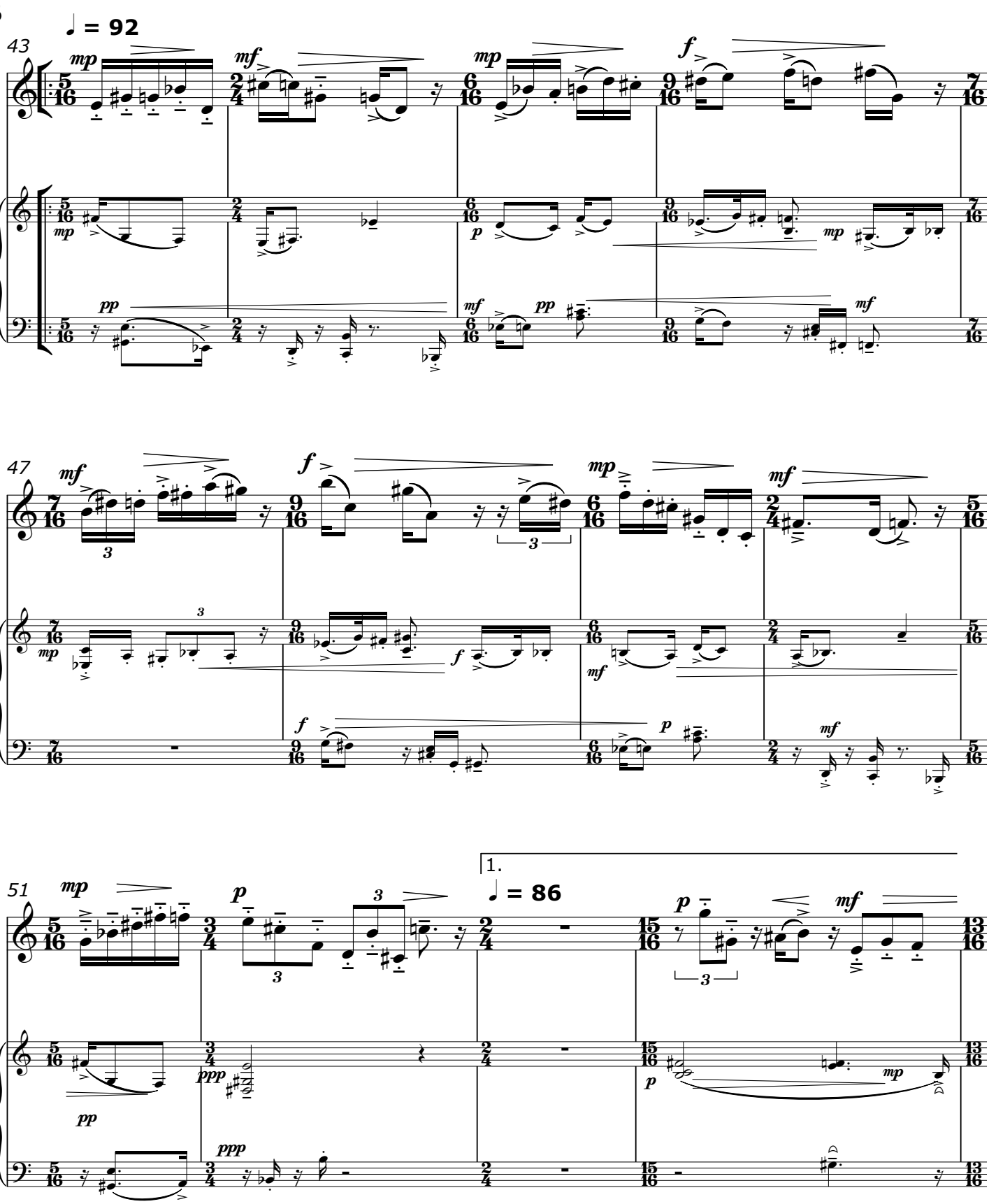

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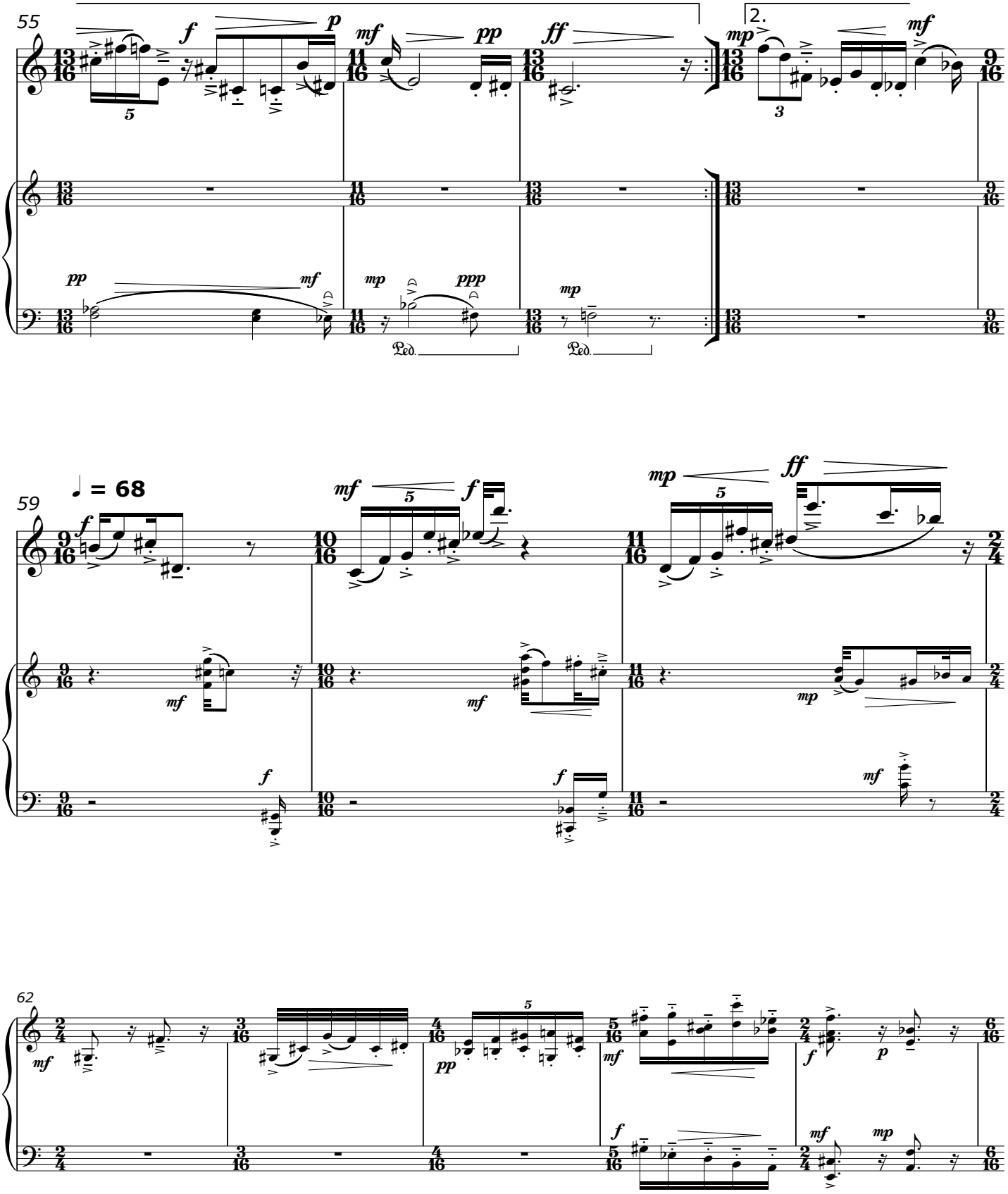

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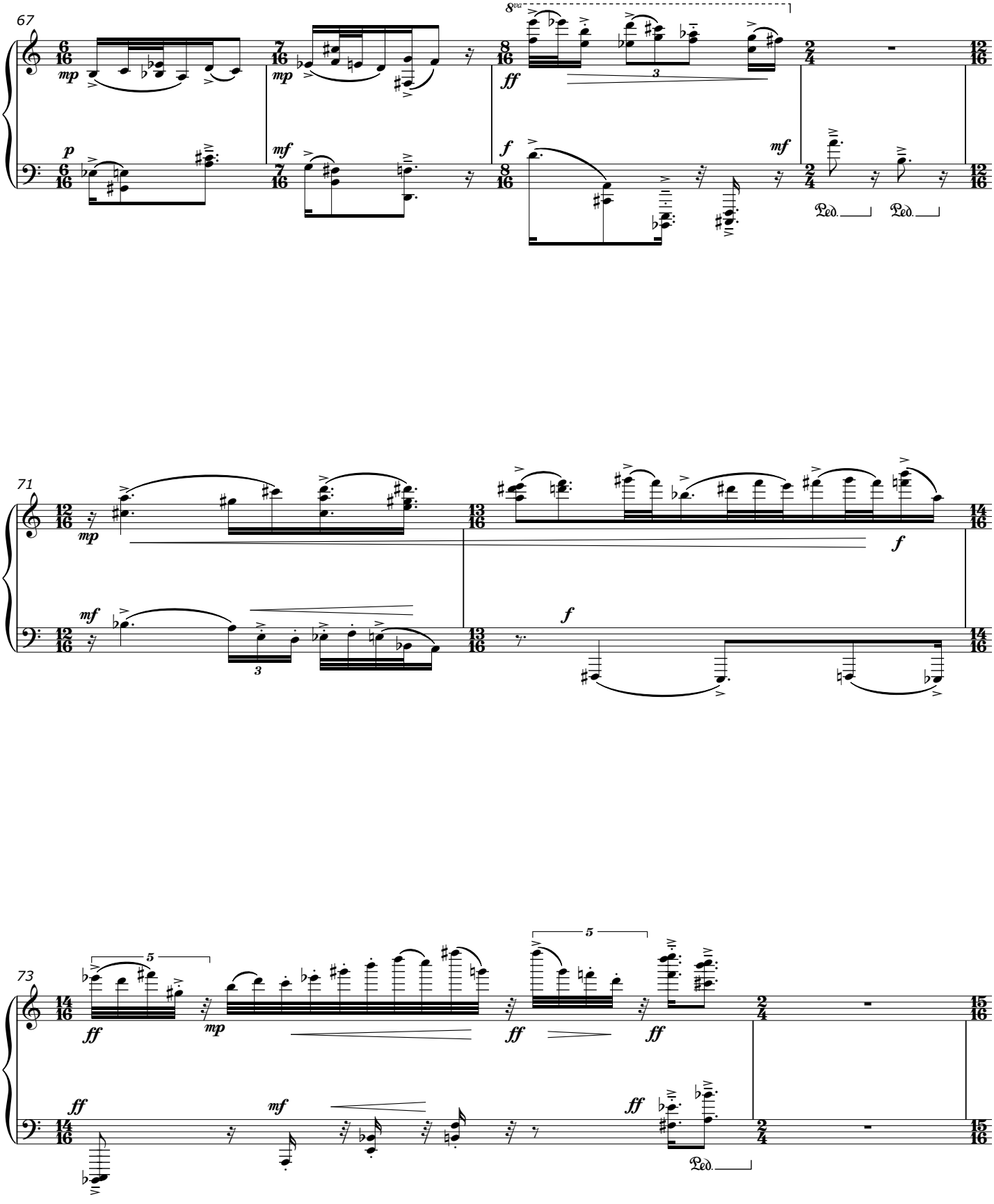

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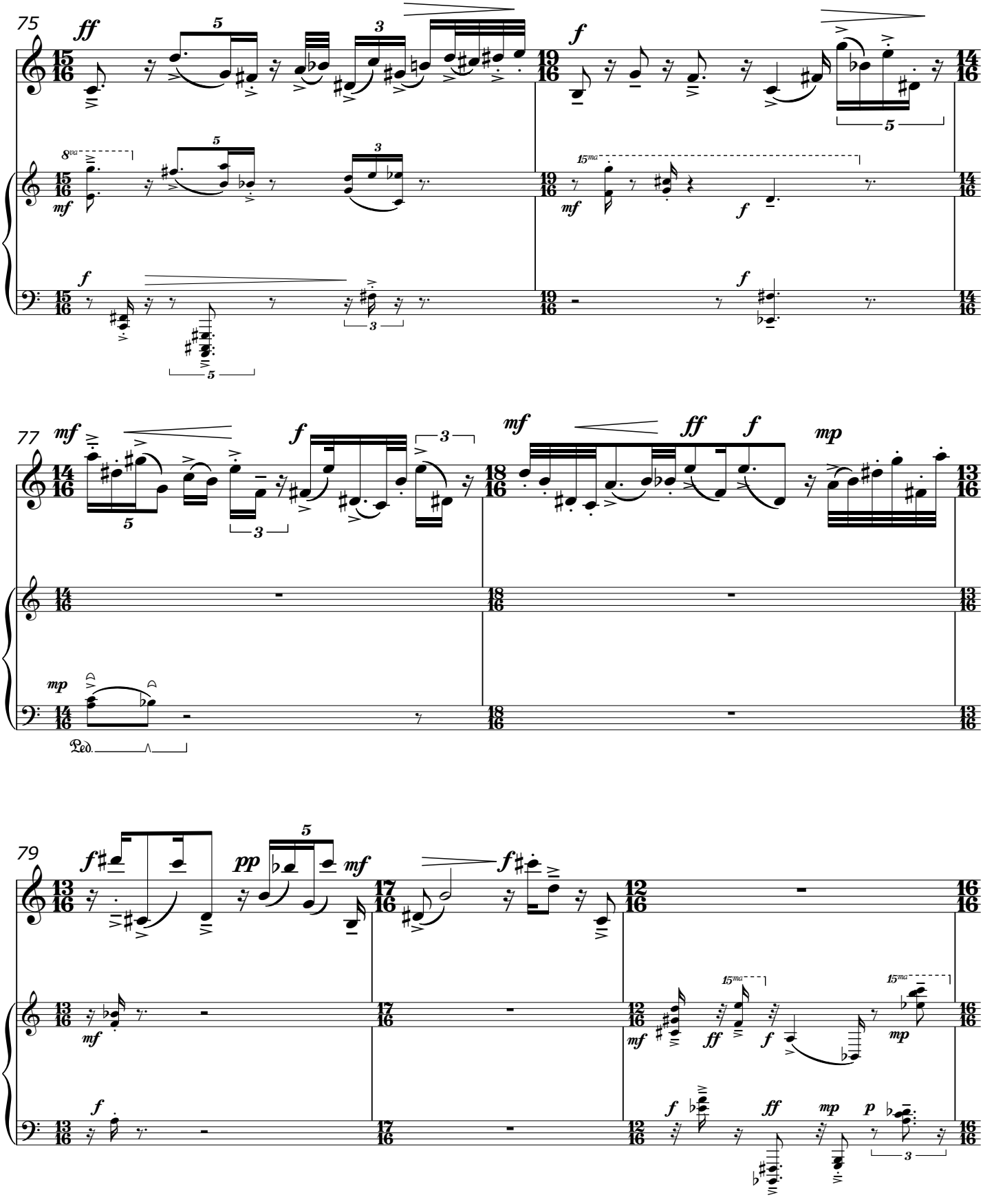

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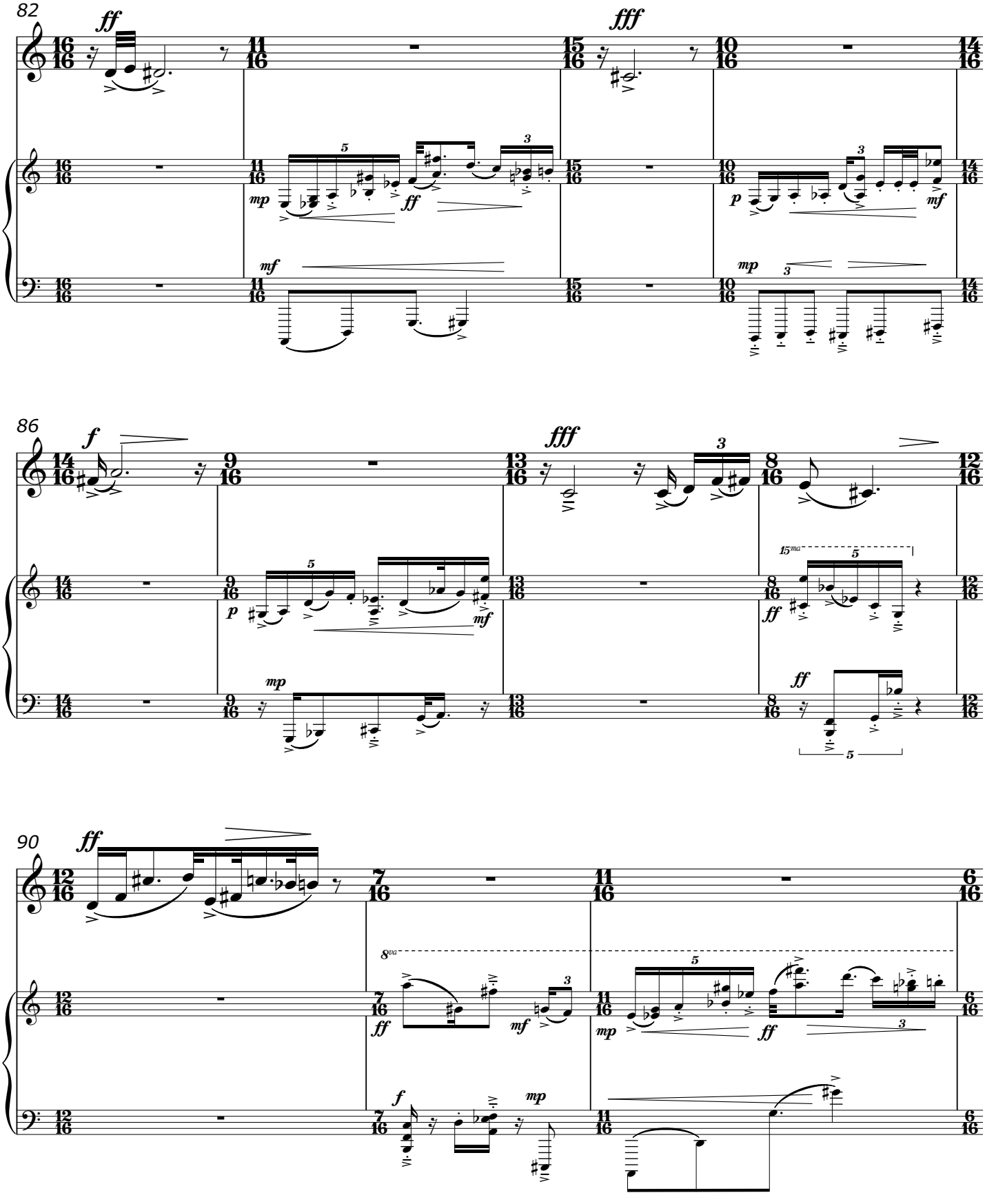

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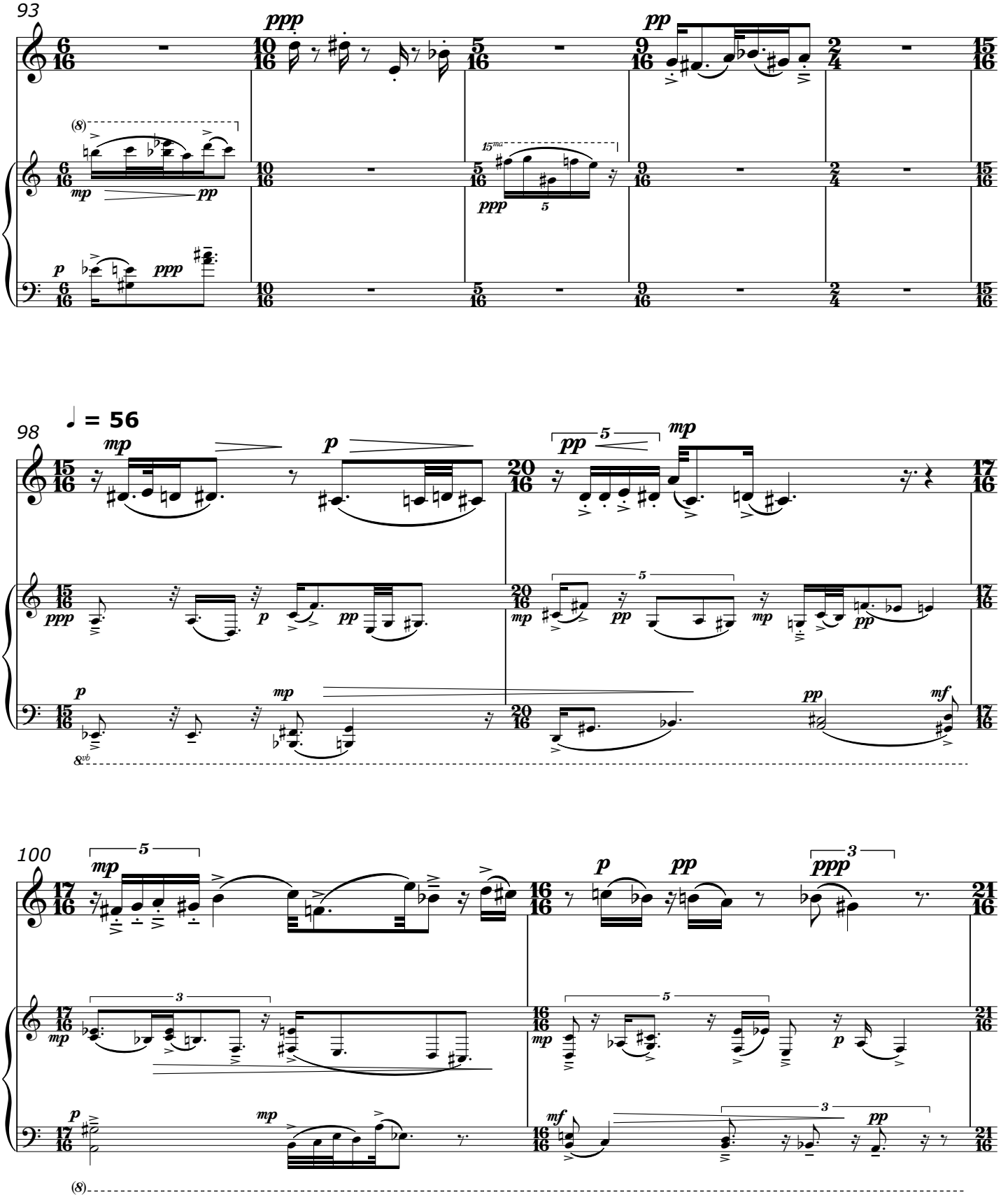

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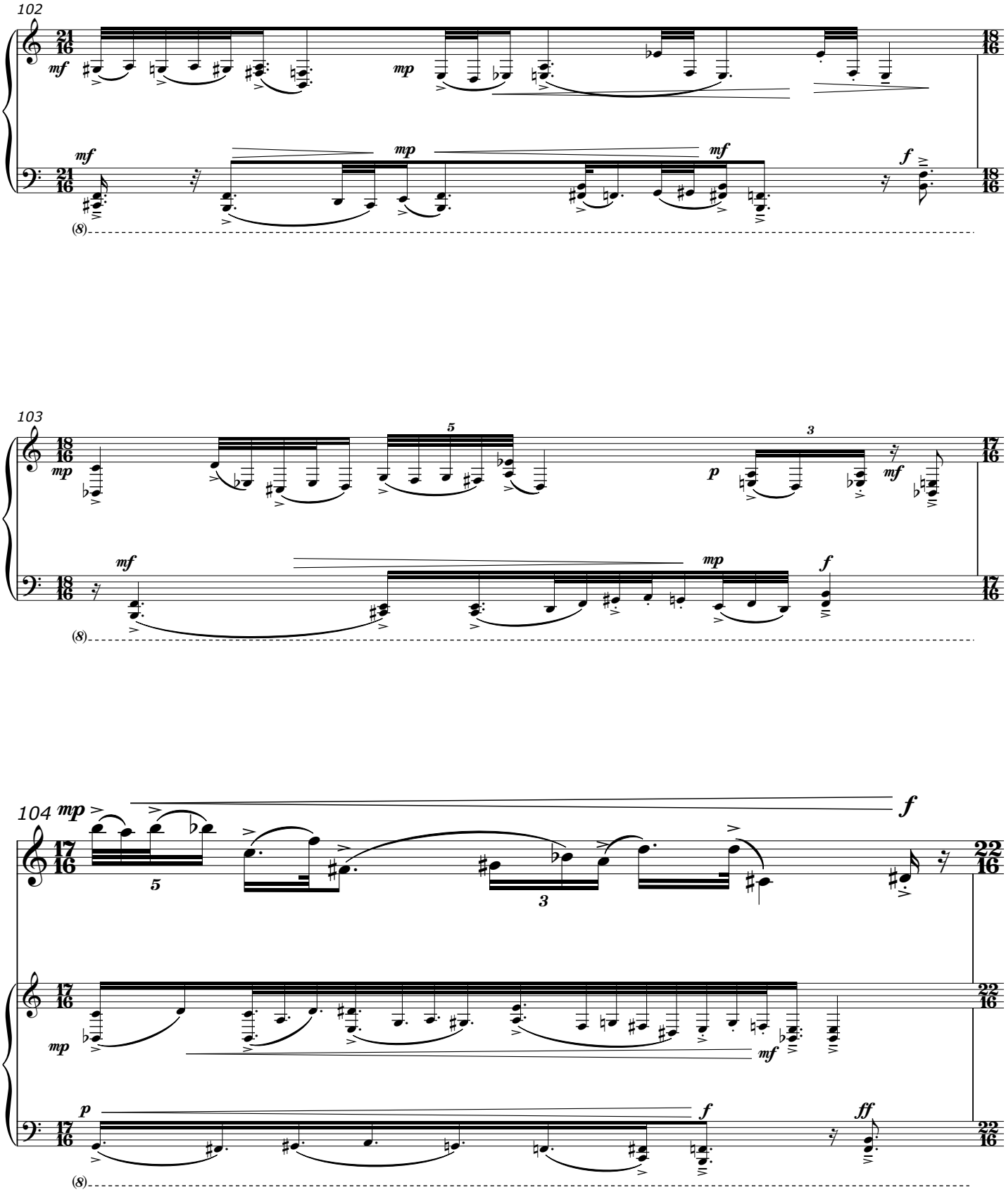

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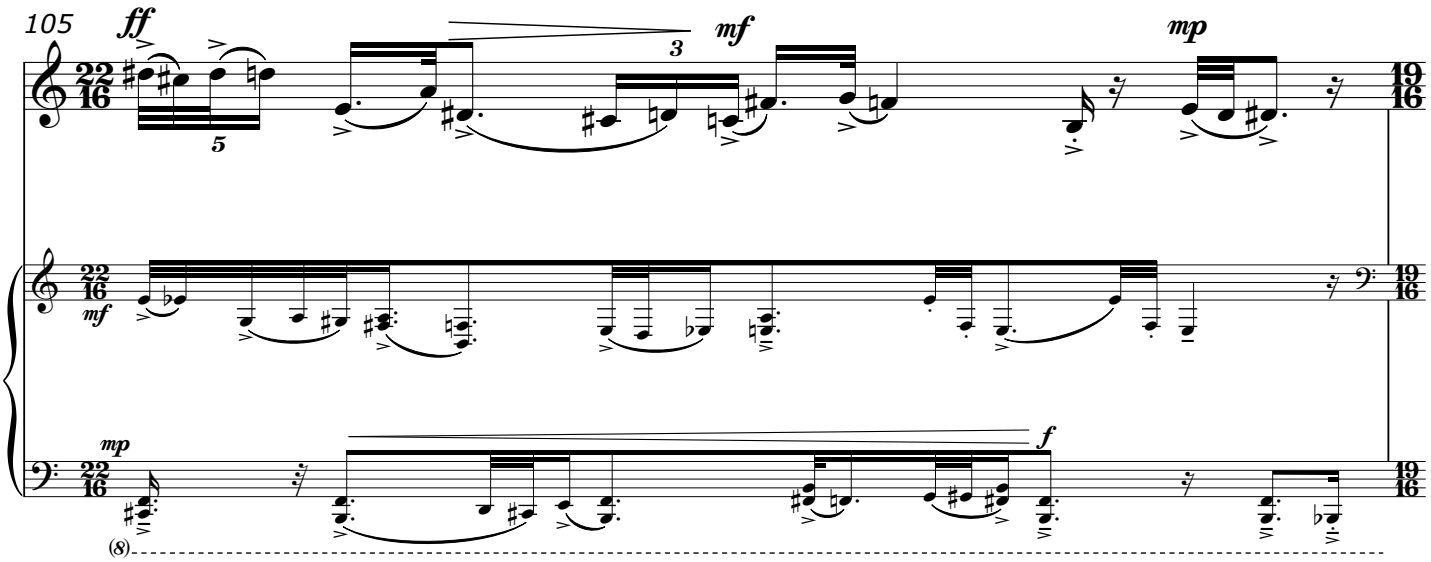

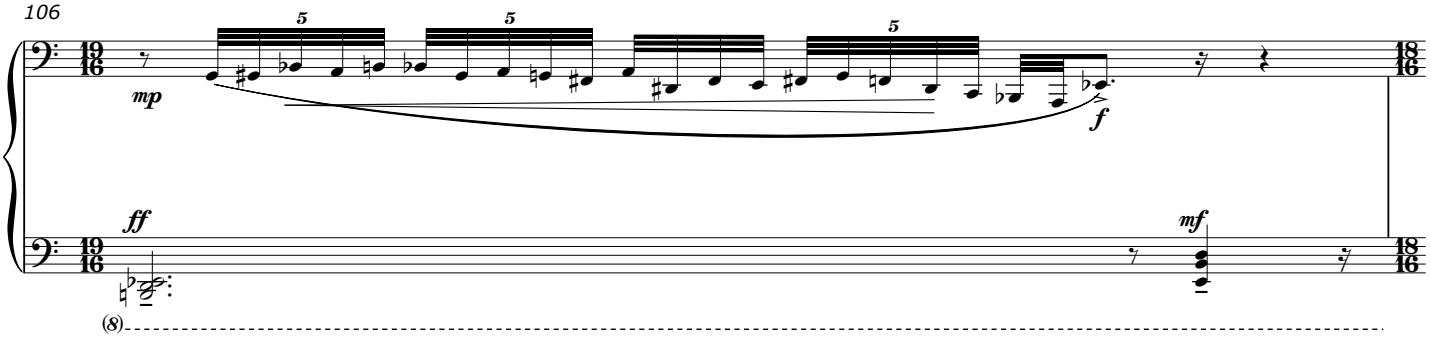

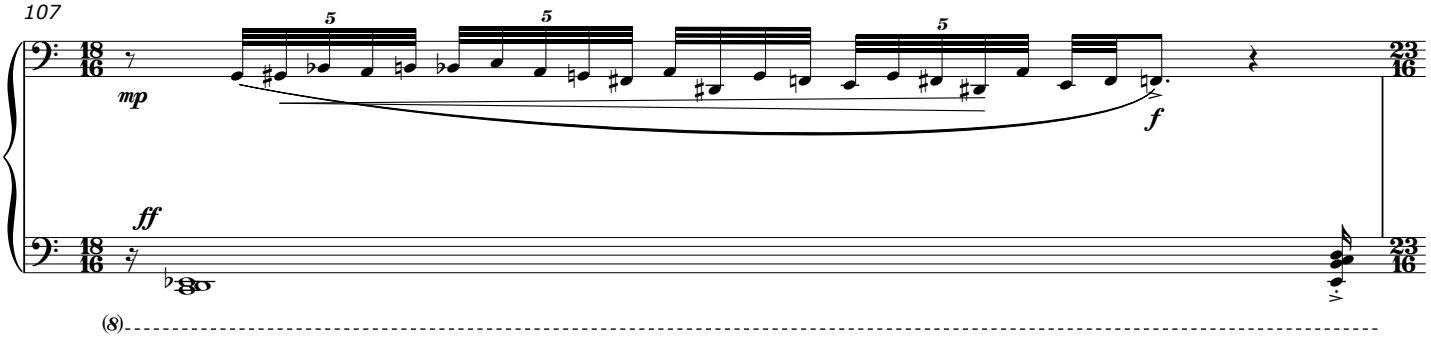

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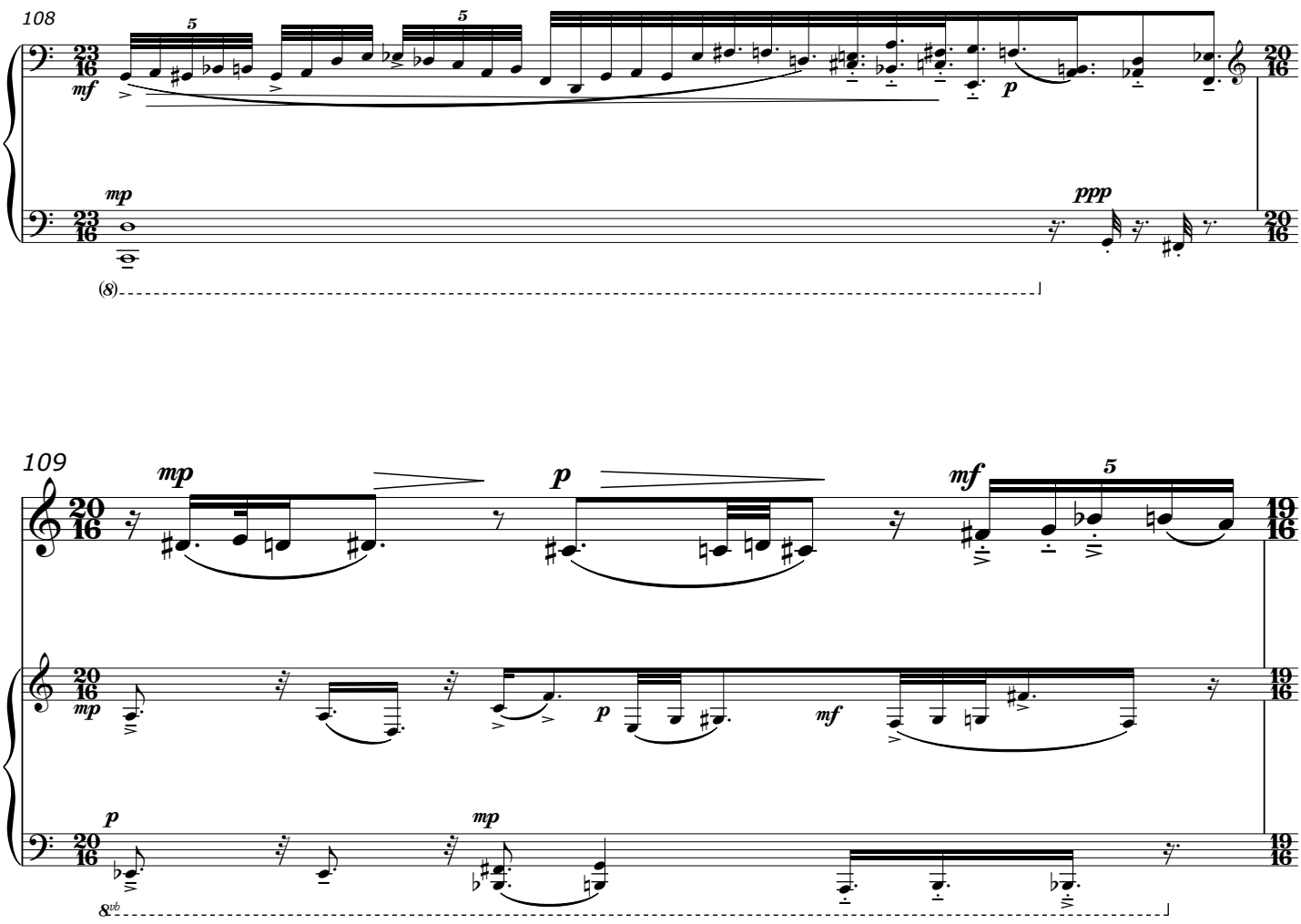

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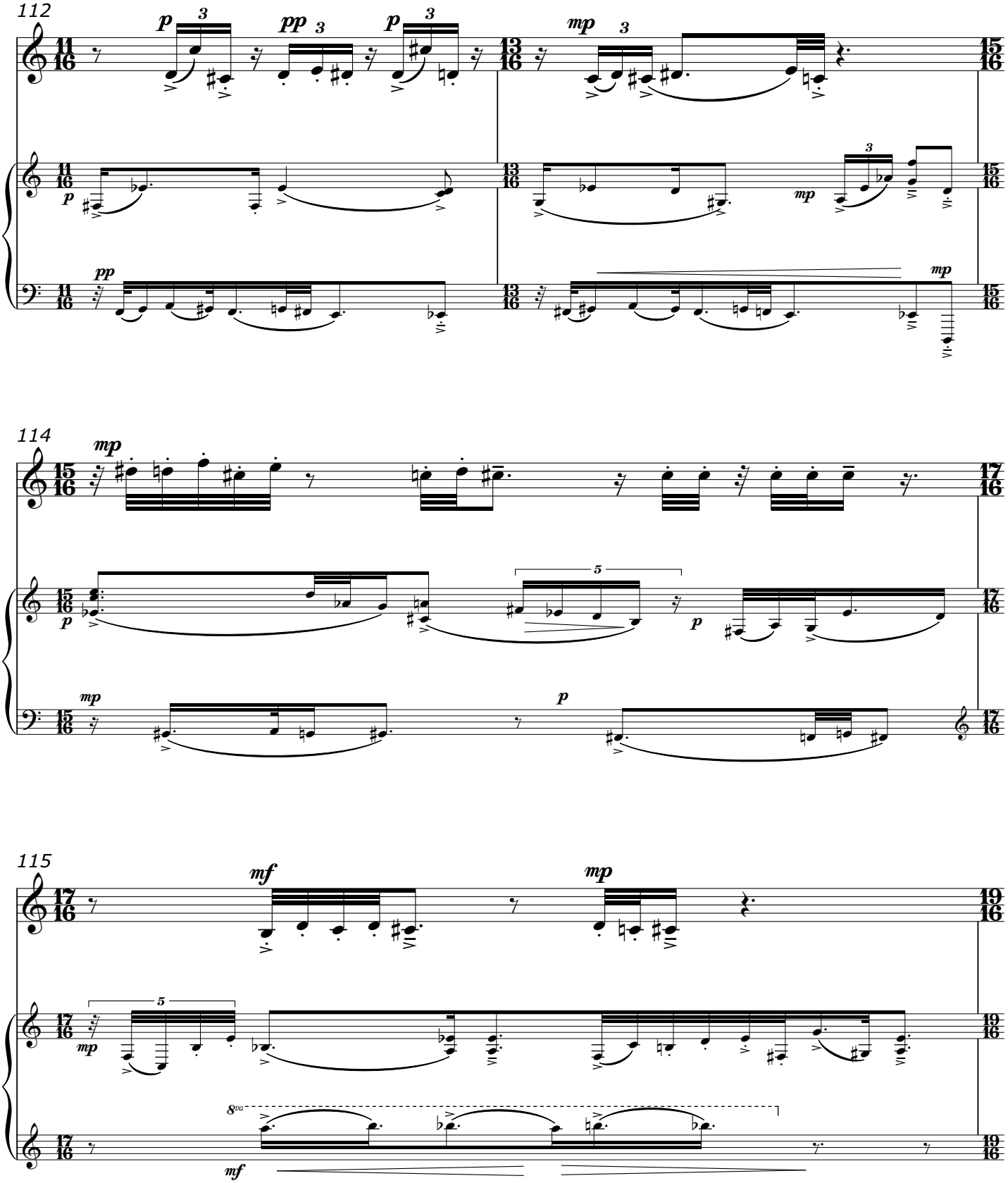

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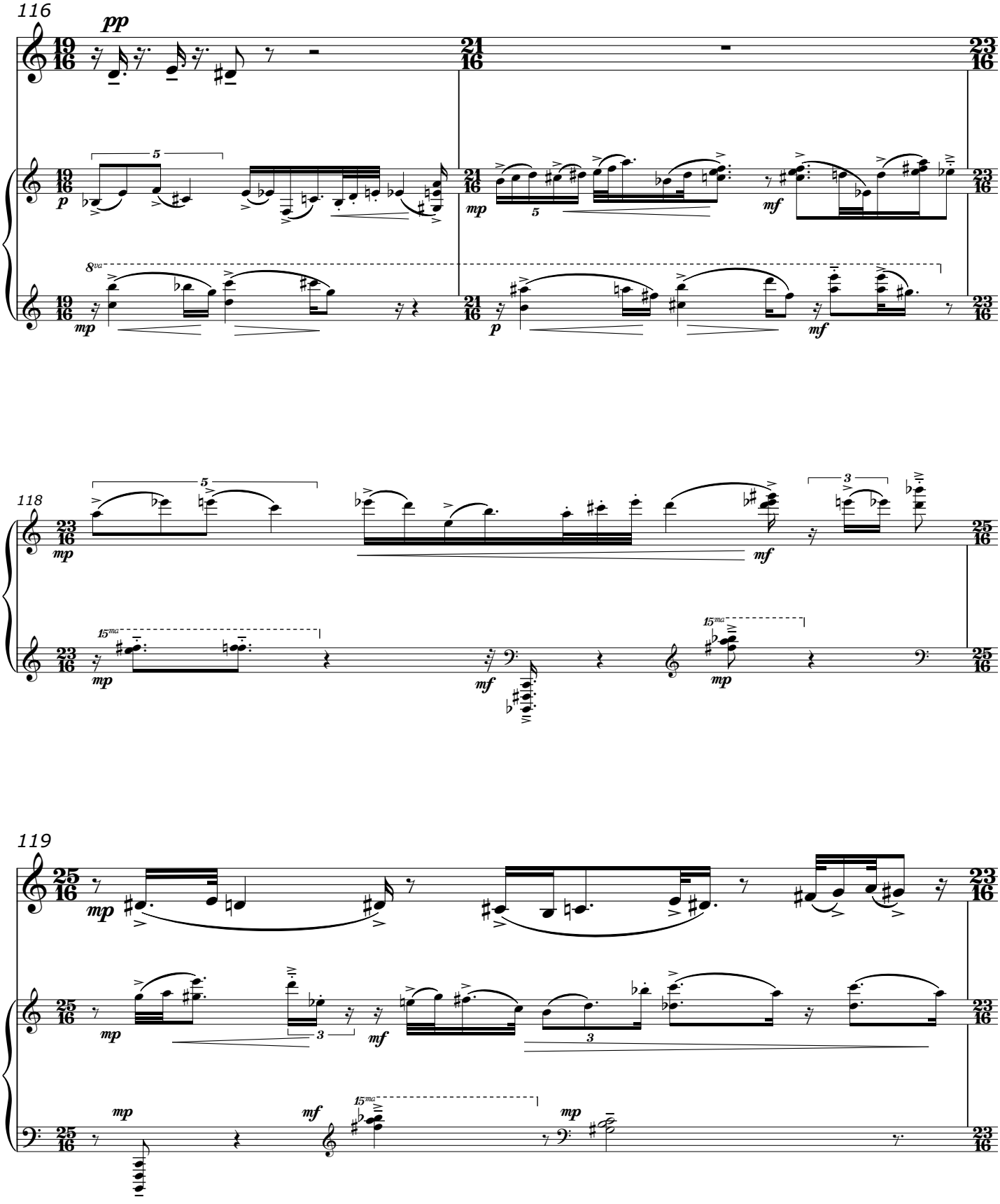

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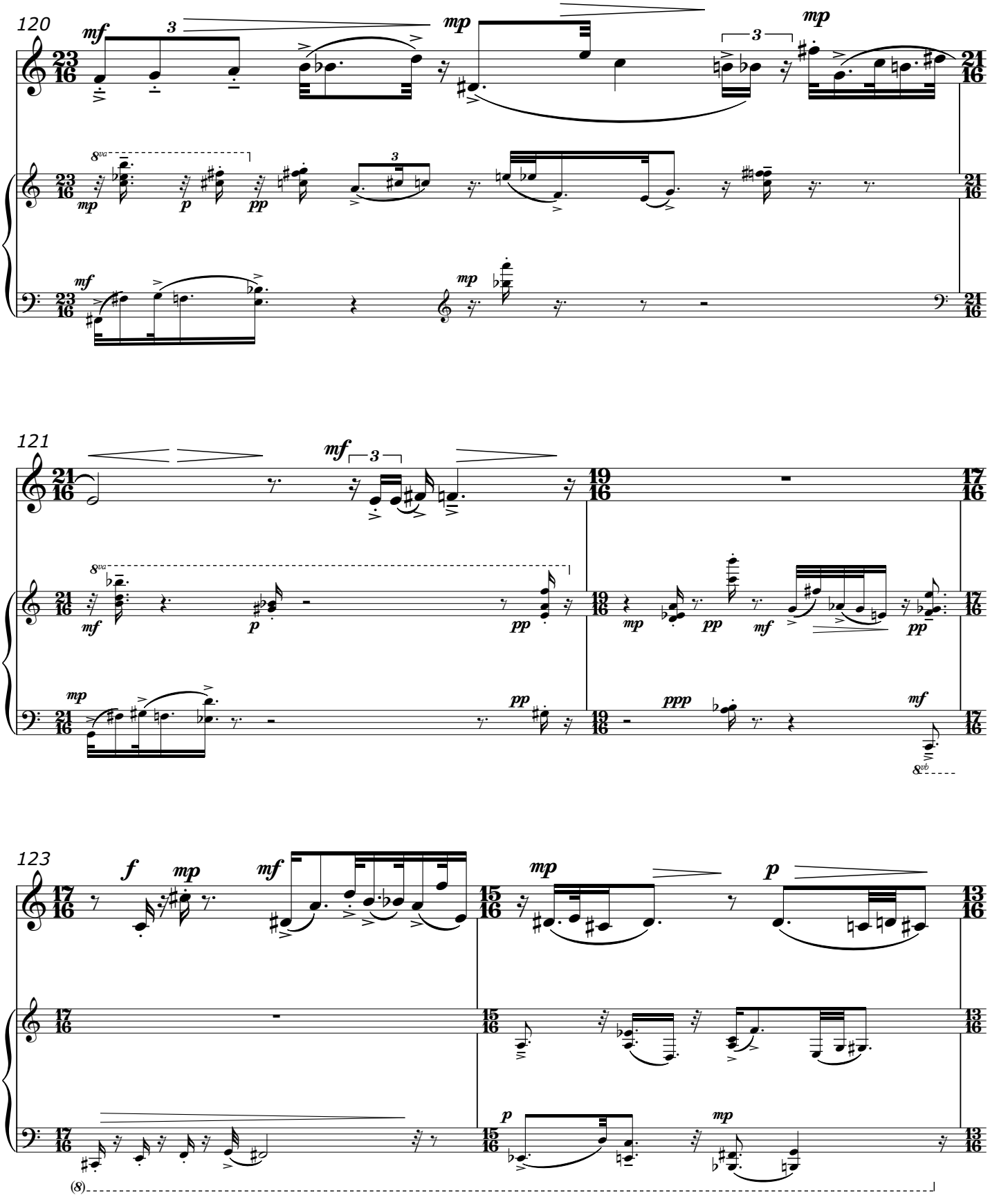

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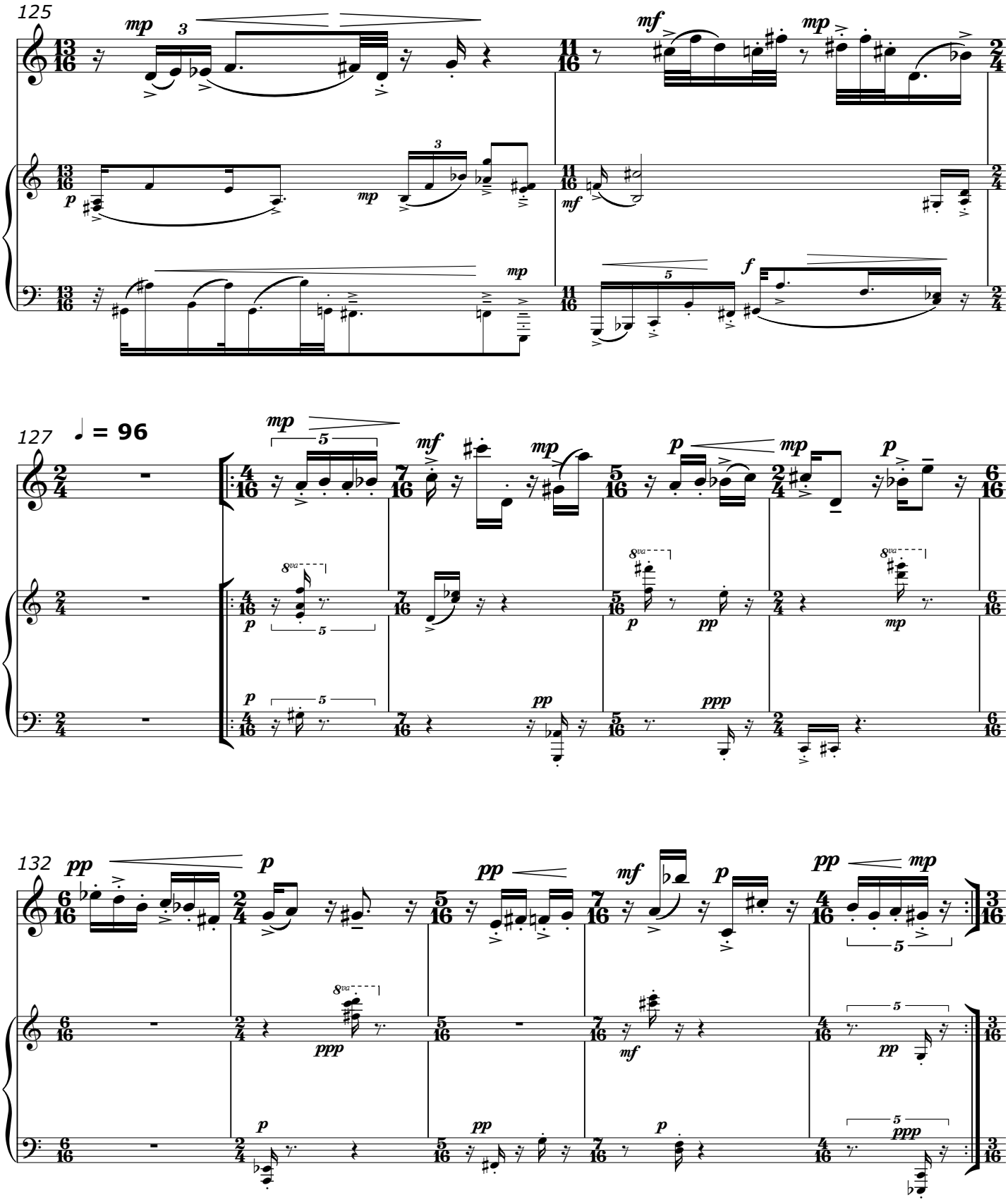

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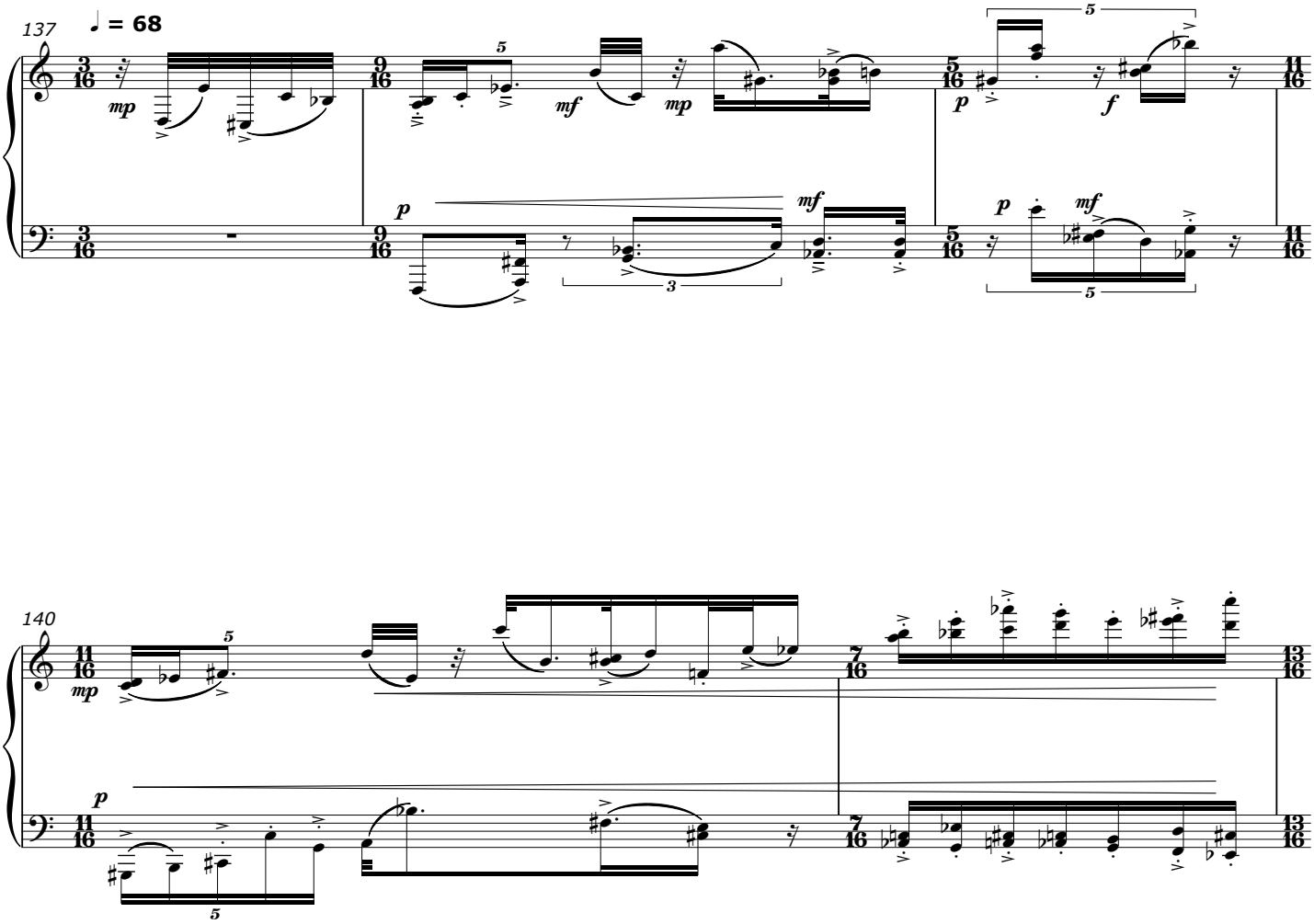

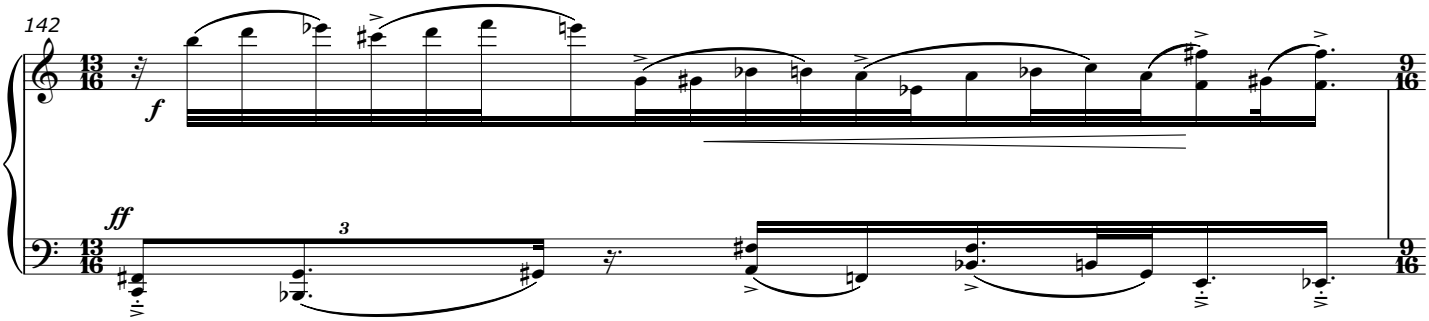

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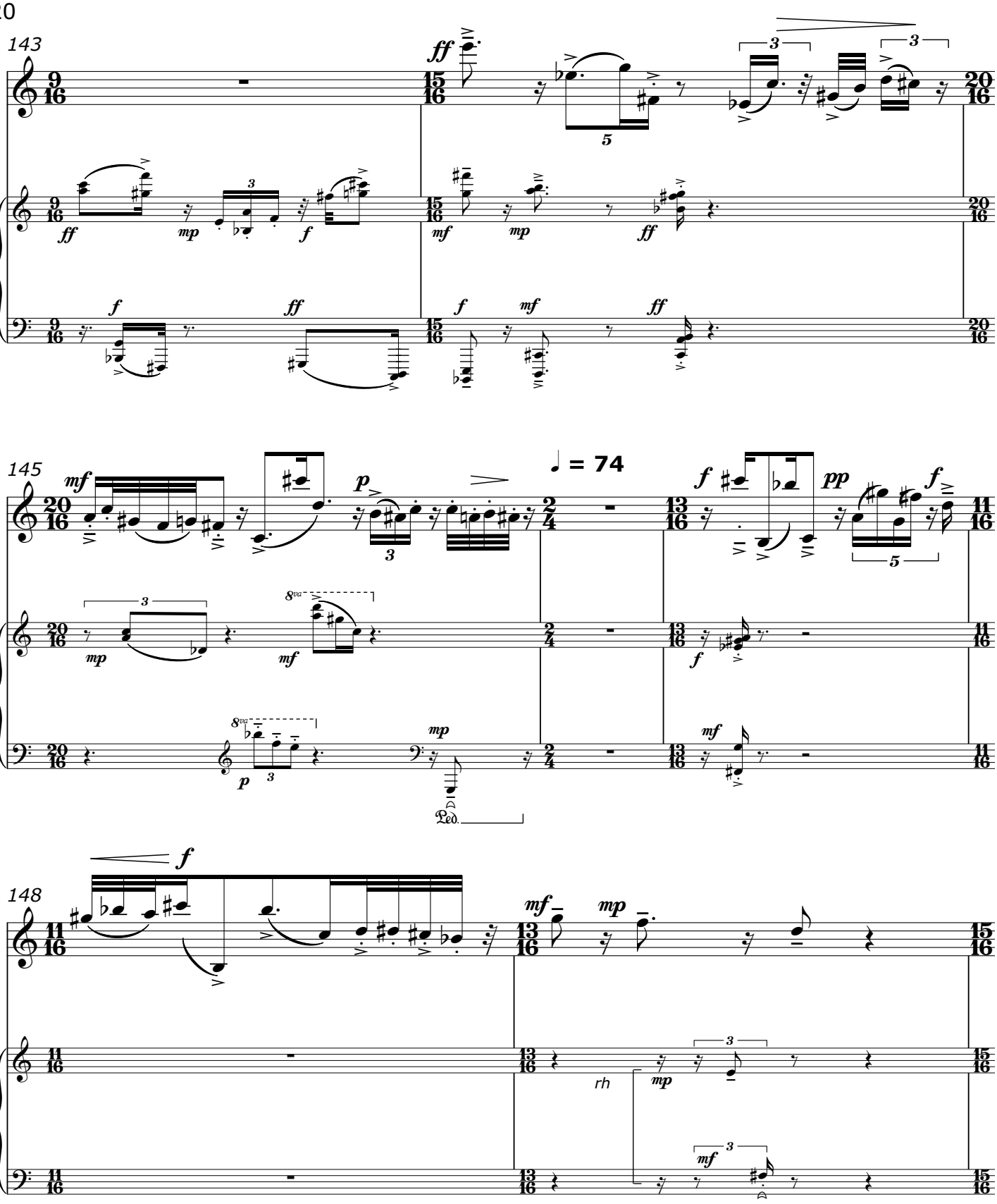

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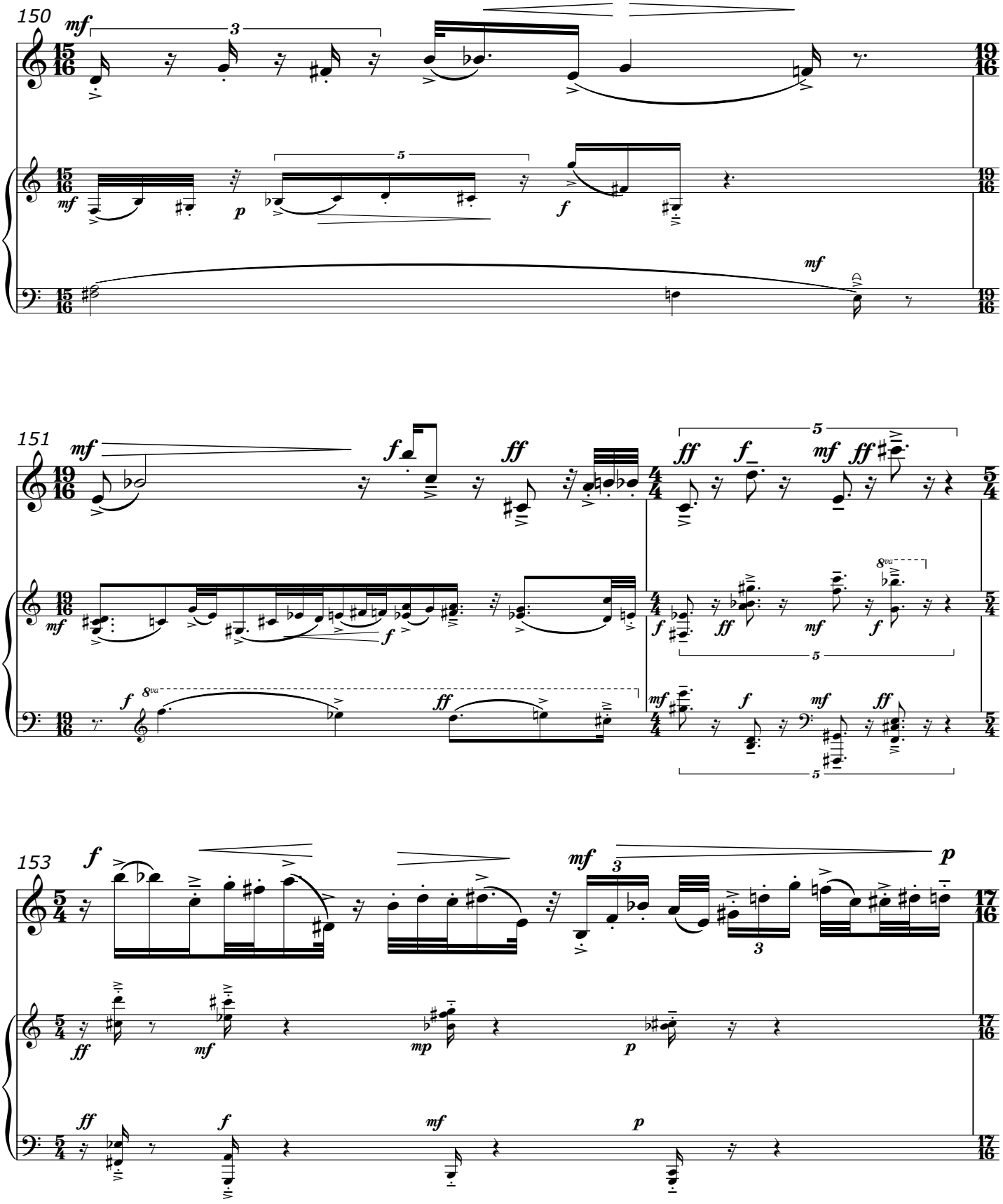

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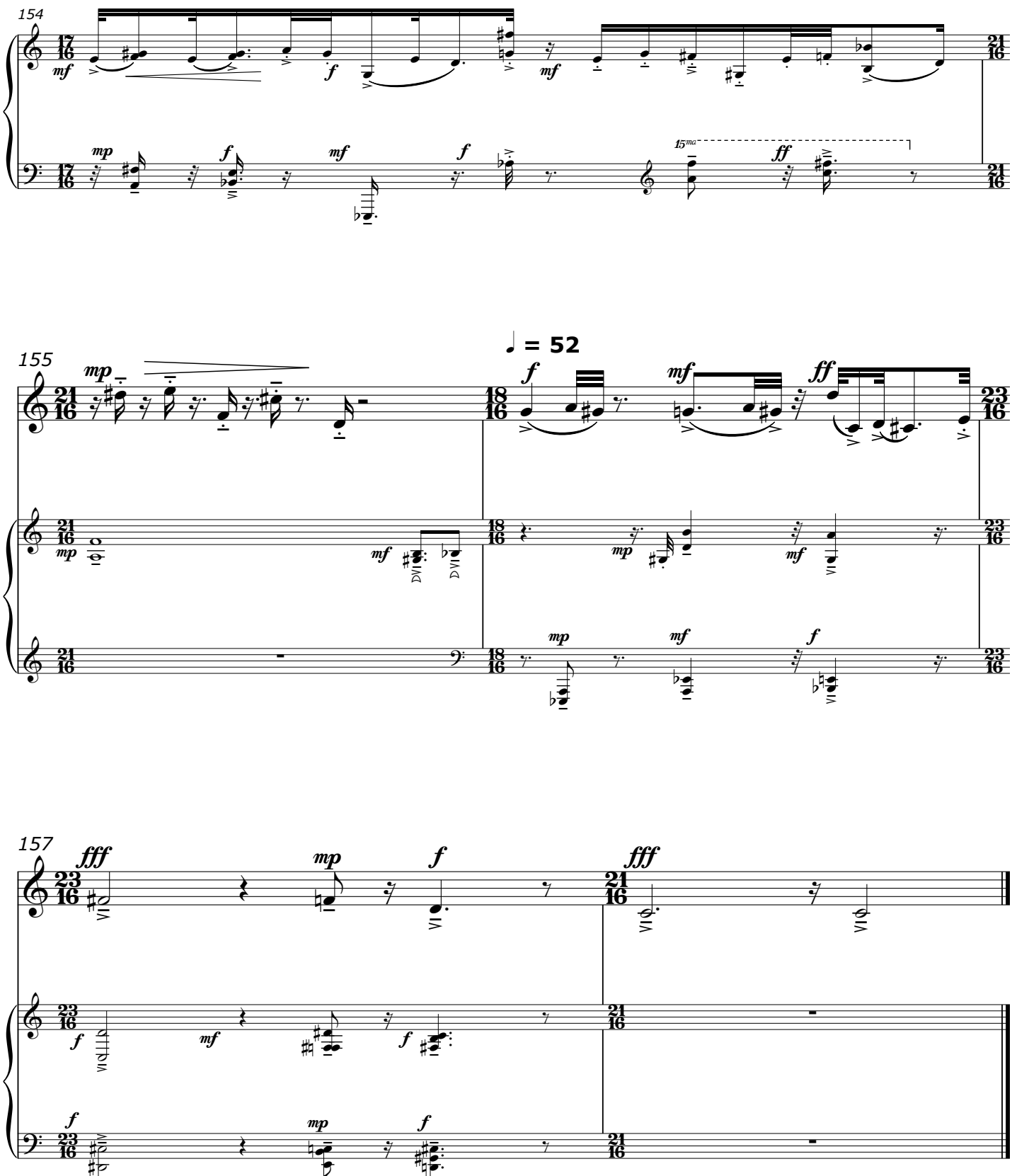
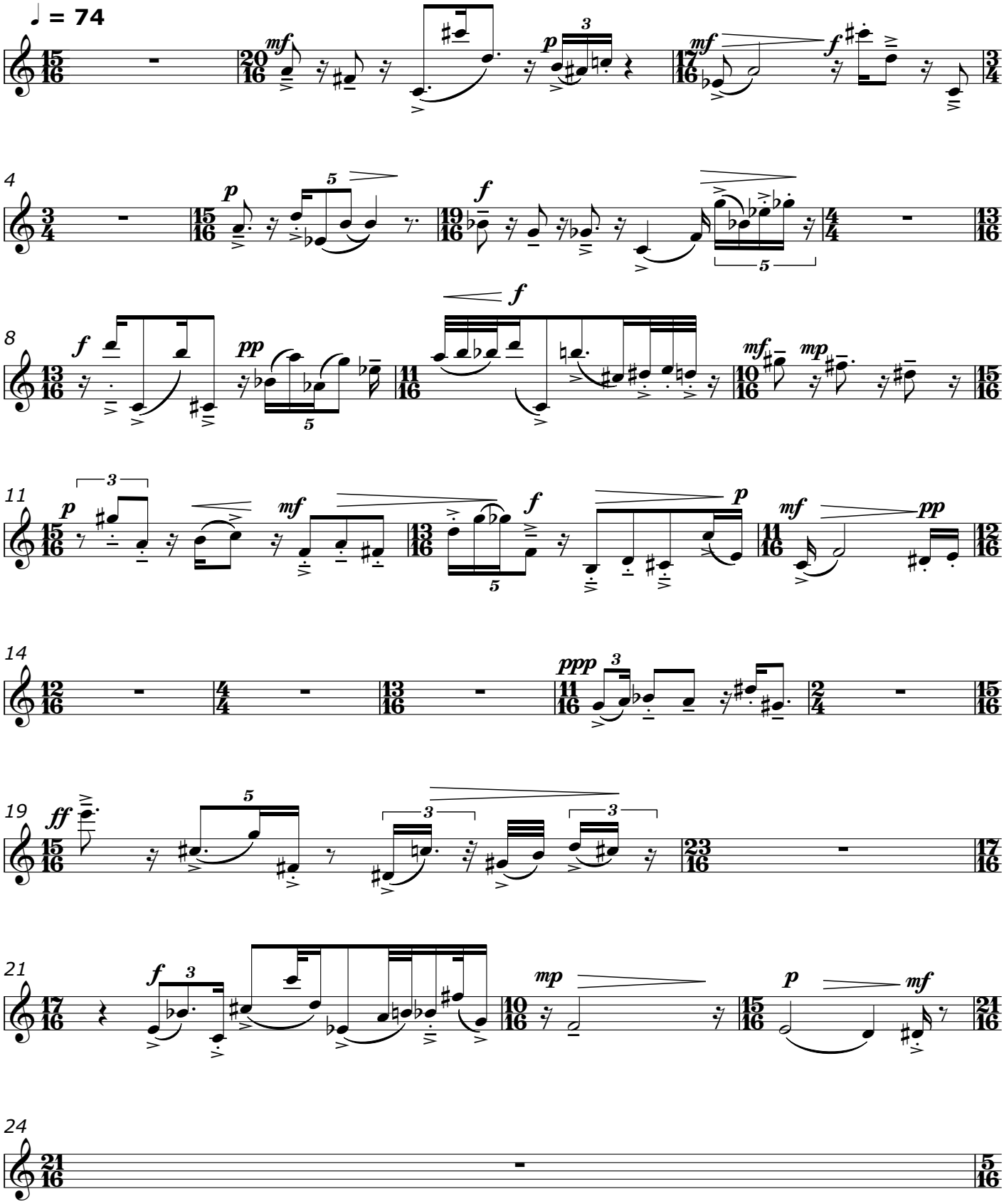


Ausstreuung

for English Horn and Piano

English Horn Part

Kevin H Gray



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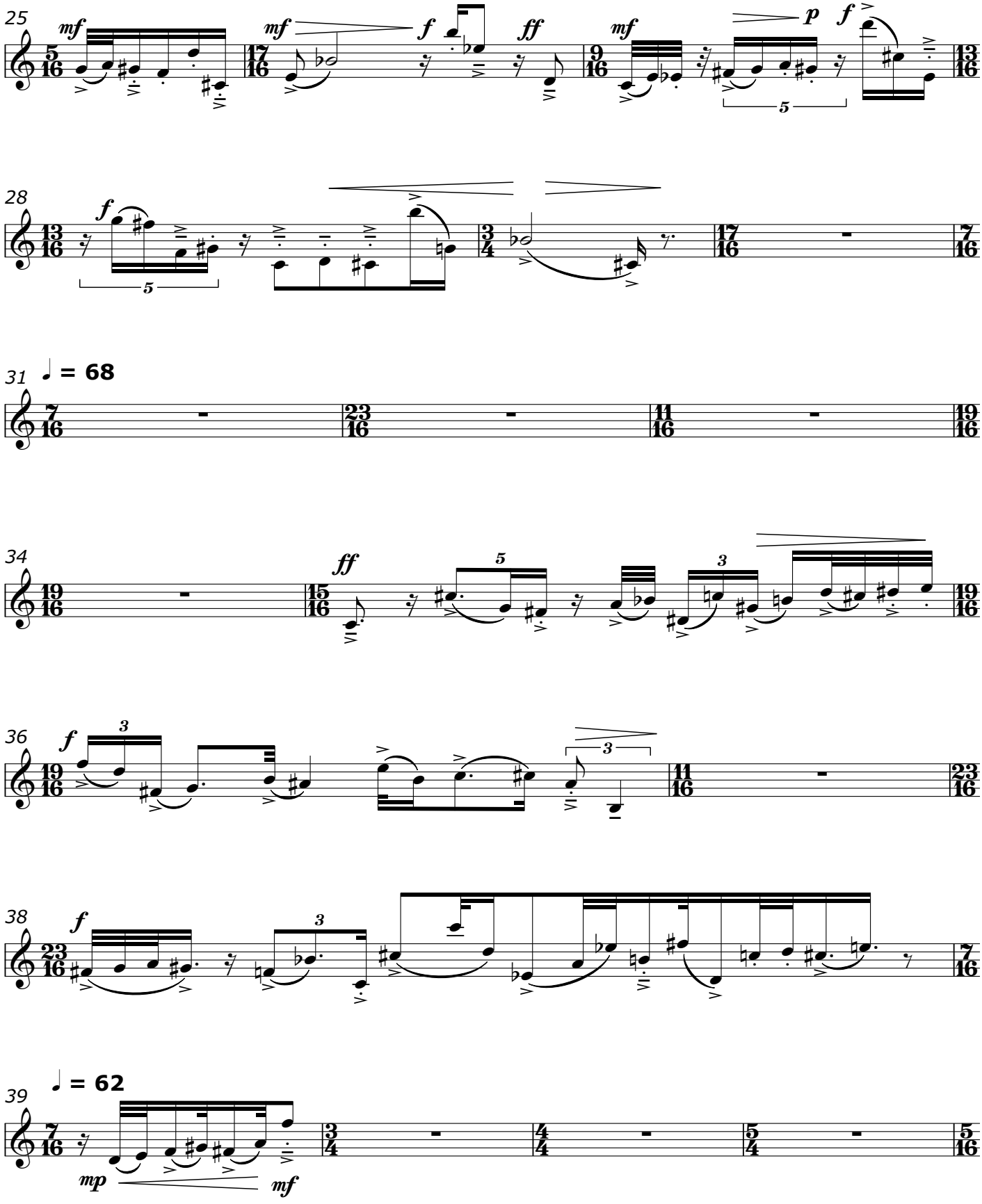

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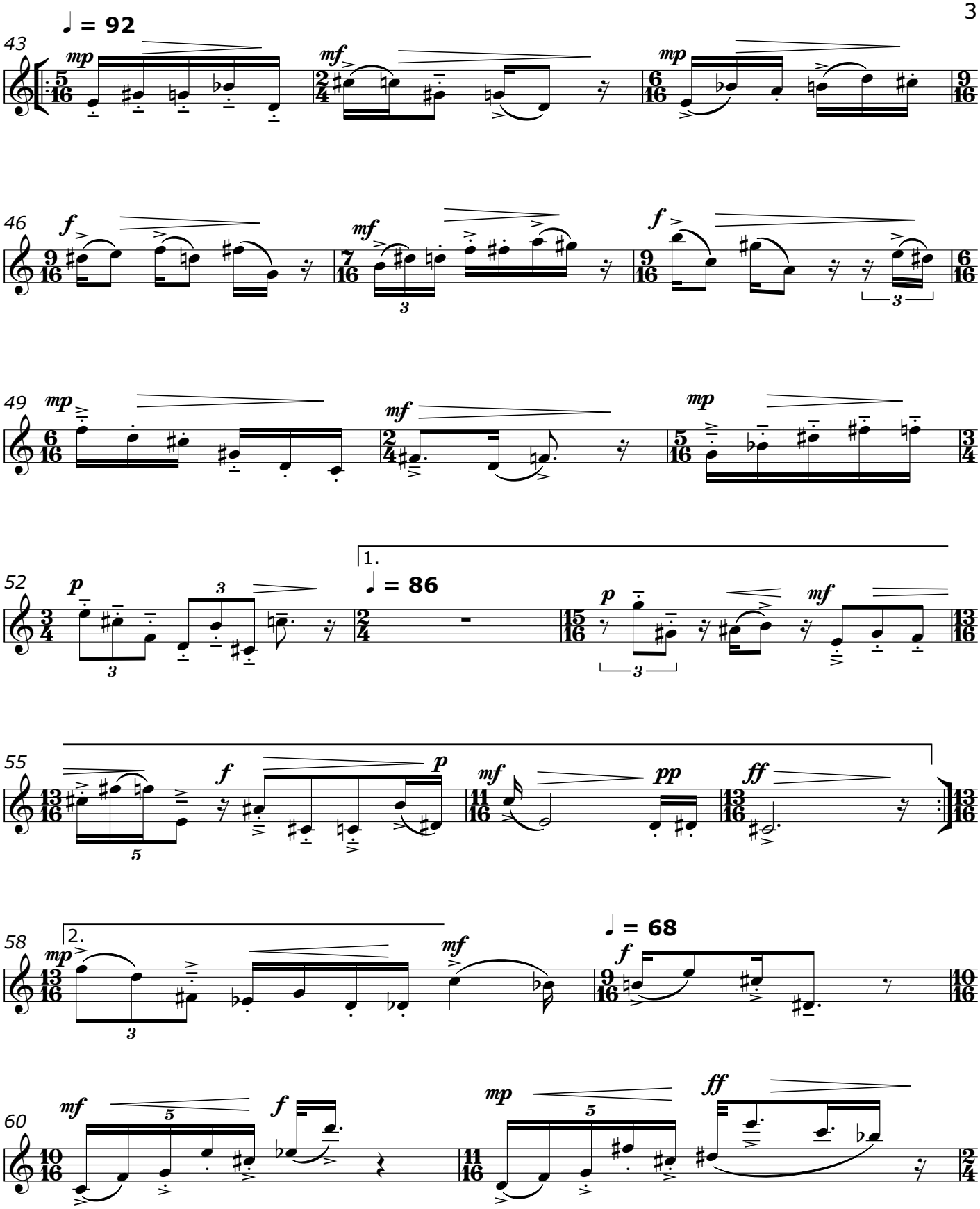

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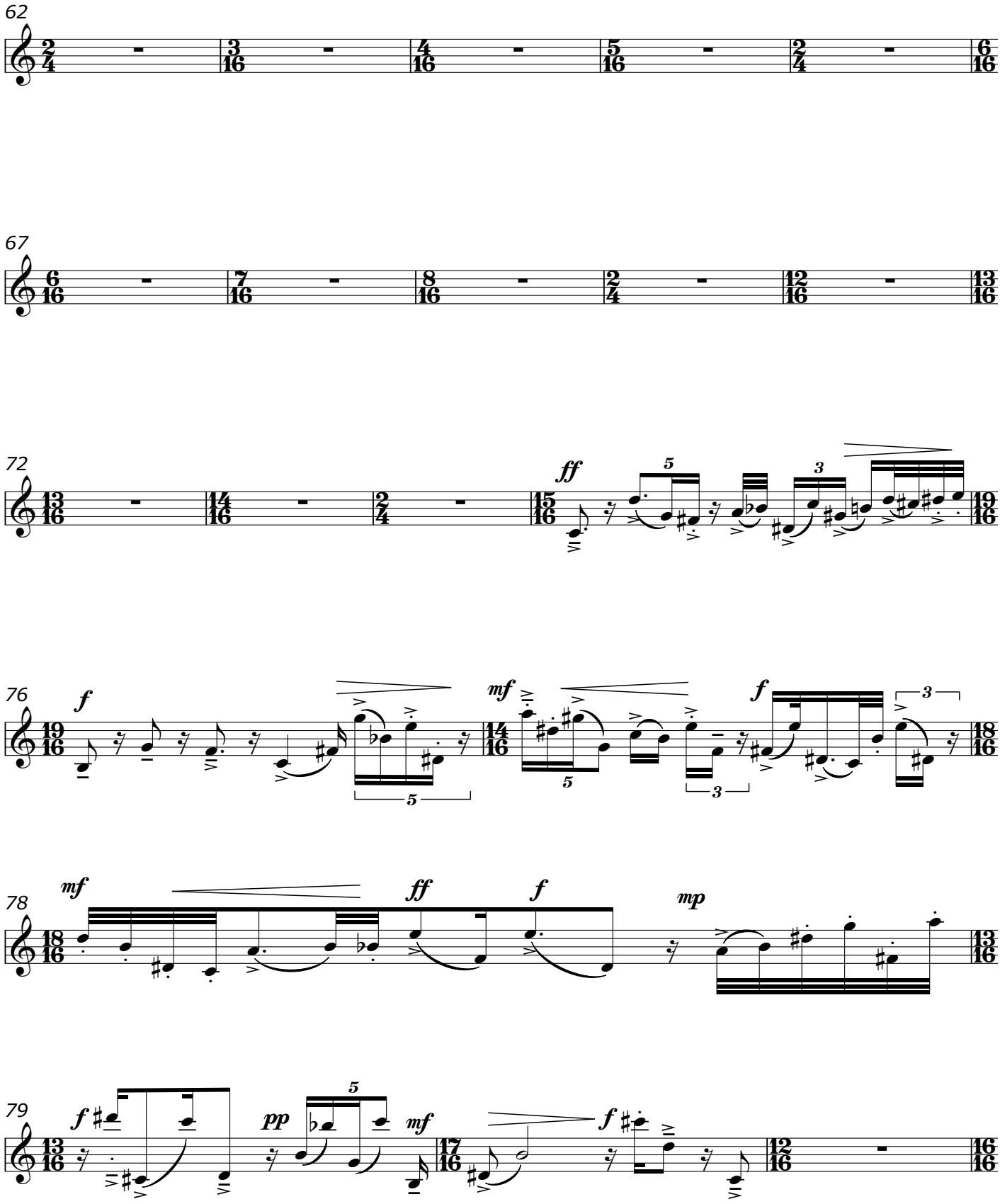

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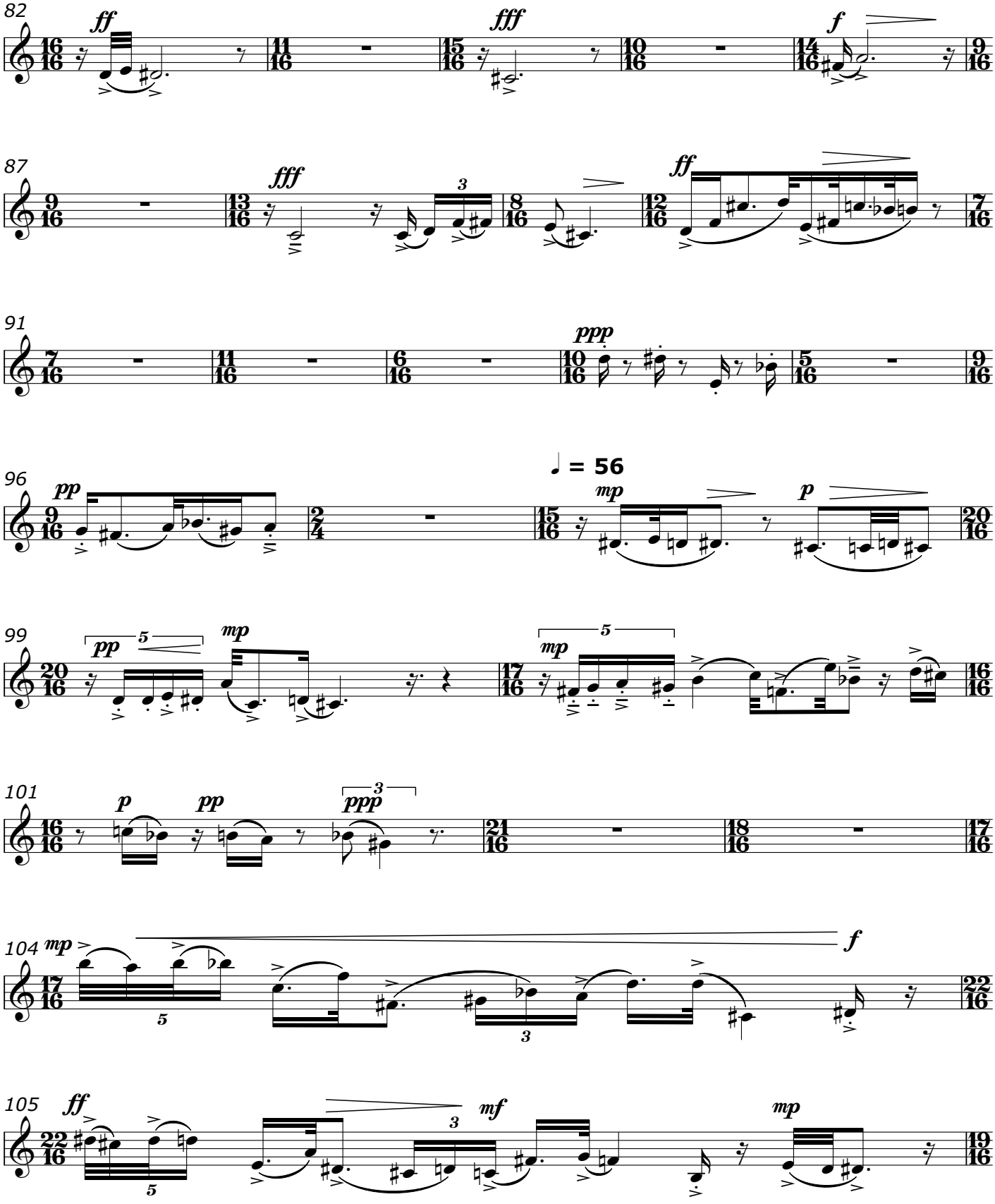

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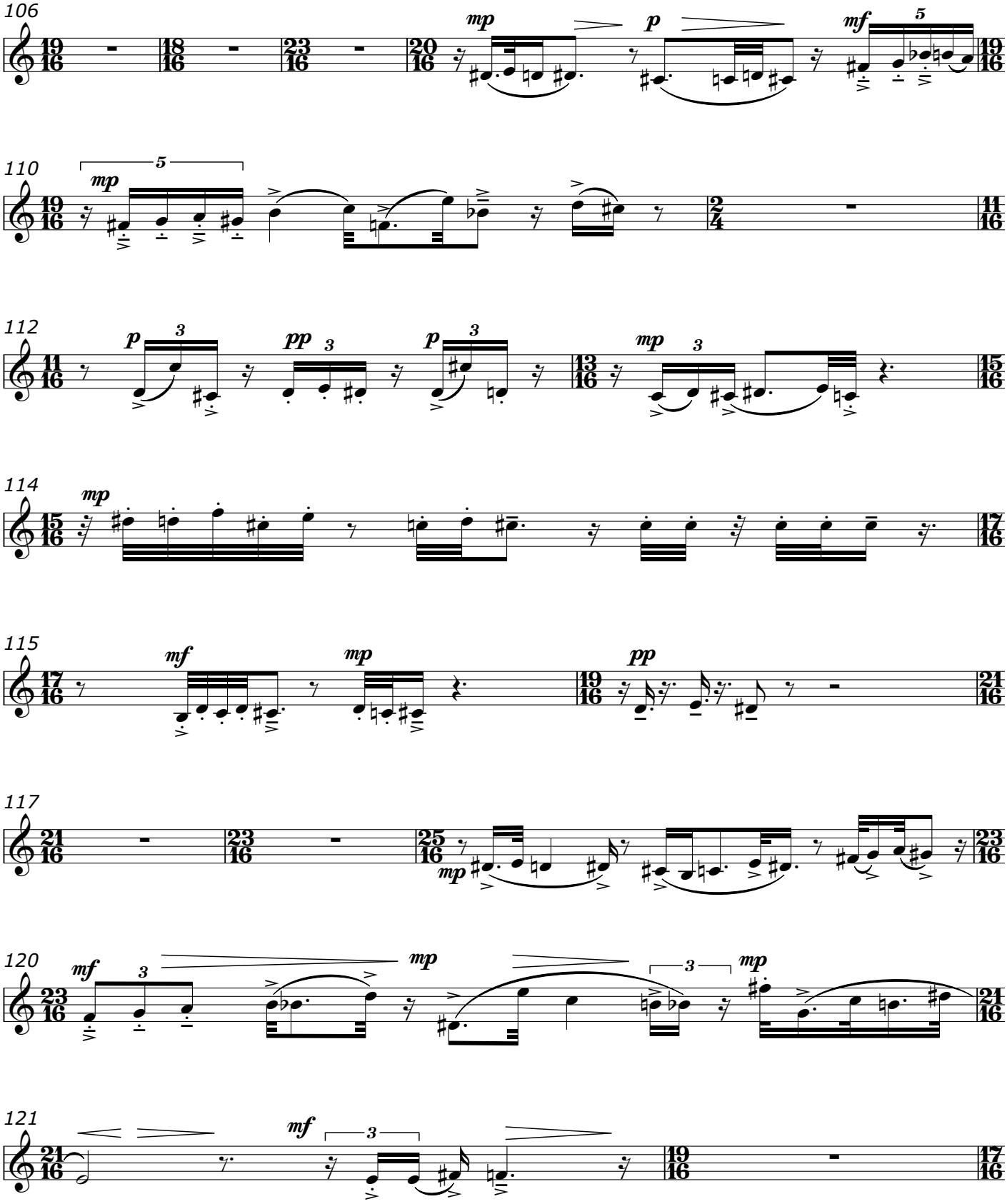

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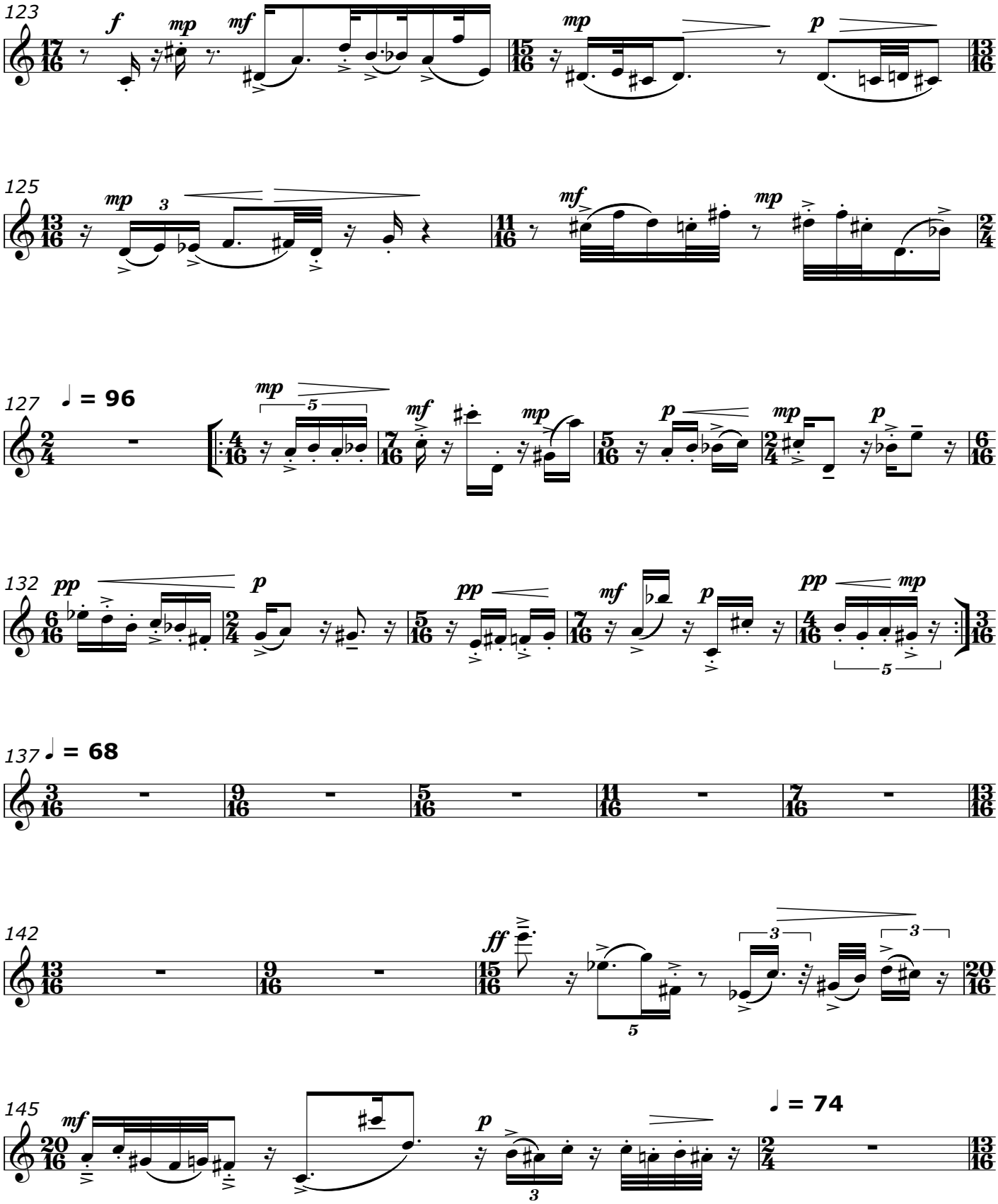
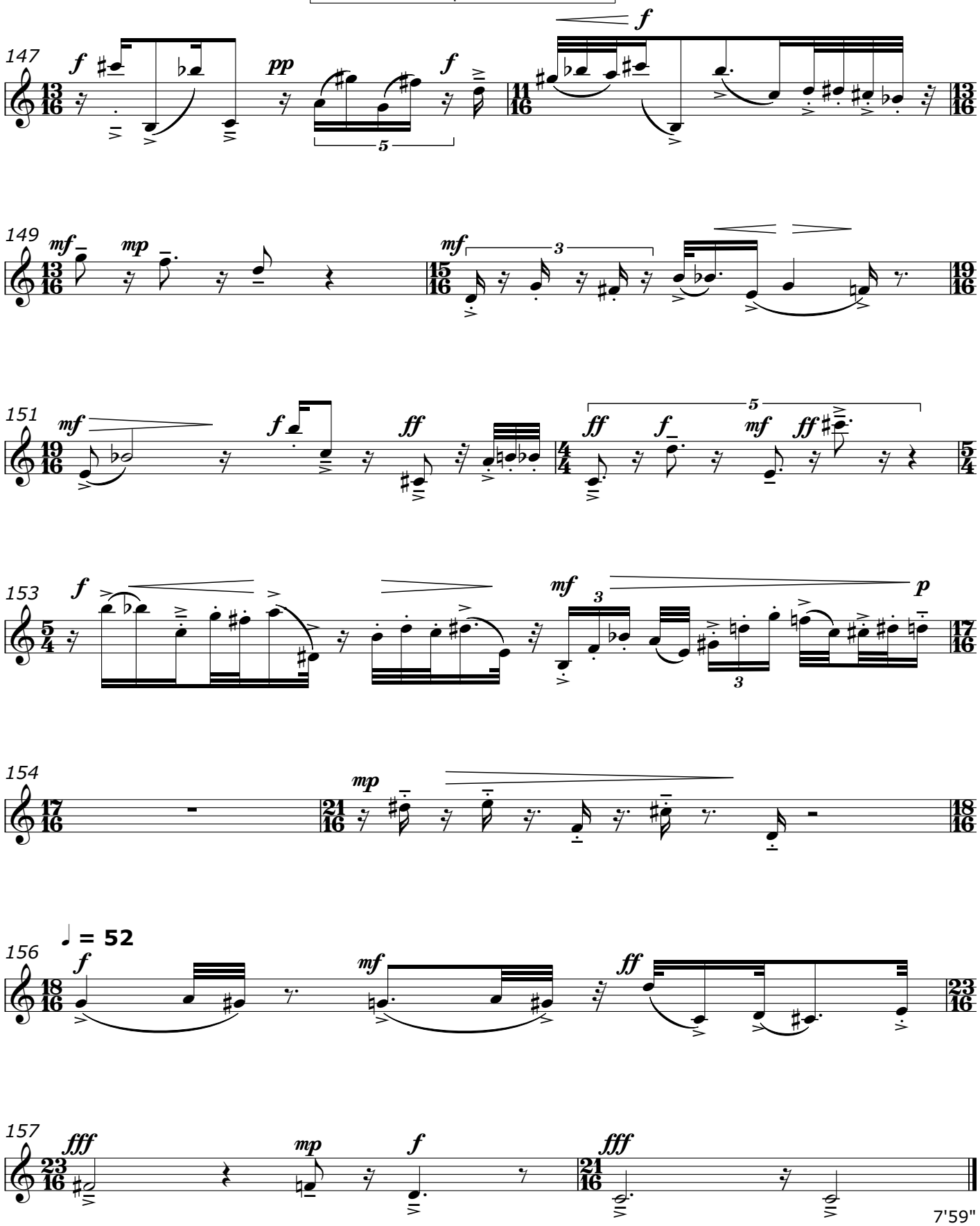
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