# Burnish Cluster

for B-flat Clarinet
and Harpsichord

Kevin H Gray

# FOREWORD

***Burnish Cluster*** **is a direct response to a suggestion from my dear friend Carina L. N. Washington that I compose a piece for clarinet and harpsichord, and it is dedicated to her. It is doubtful whether I would ever have composed for this pair of instruments without her suggestion; however, upon reflection, I soon began to see many desirable possibilities in exploiting the timbral brightness of this particular combination.**

**This composition purports to explore a finite range of musical parameters, and contrasting volumes is not among them. Also, harpsichords vary with regard to their intrinsic loudness, and therefore, volume indications for the clarinet are a bit more sparse than one would normally find in one of my scores. The clarinet's volume level should never be *significantly* different from that of the harpsichord; thus dynamic increments for the clarinet must be interpreted as operating in a more narrow range of contrast than normal. The exception to this is my admonition that clarinet accents not be subtle. The harpsichord should employ only the 8' rank throughout.**

**Articulations for clarinet and harpsichord are notated uniformly, with both symbols in question carrying the same meaning for both players.**

**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.**

**The dash, which is sometimes referred to as the *tenuto* mark, has two possible interpretations depending on the 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. This lengthening effect should be greater with longer note values, less with shorter ones. 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 the relatively few places (in the clarinet part only) 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*."**

**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. (Of course,**

**the time signature 19/16 is too rarely used to be weighed down with accrued conventions.) 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.**

**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.**

**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, March 2010**

*for Carina L. N. Washington*

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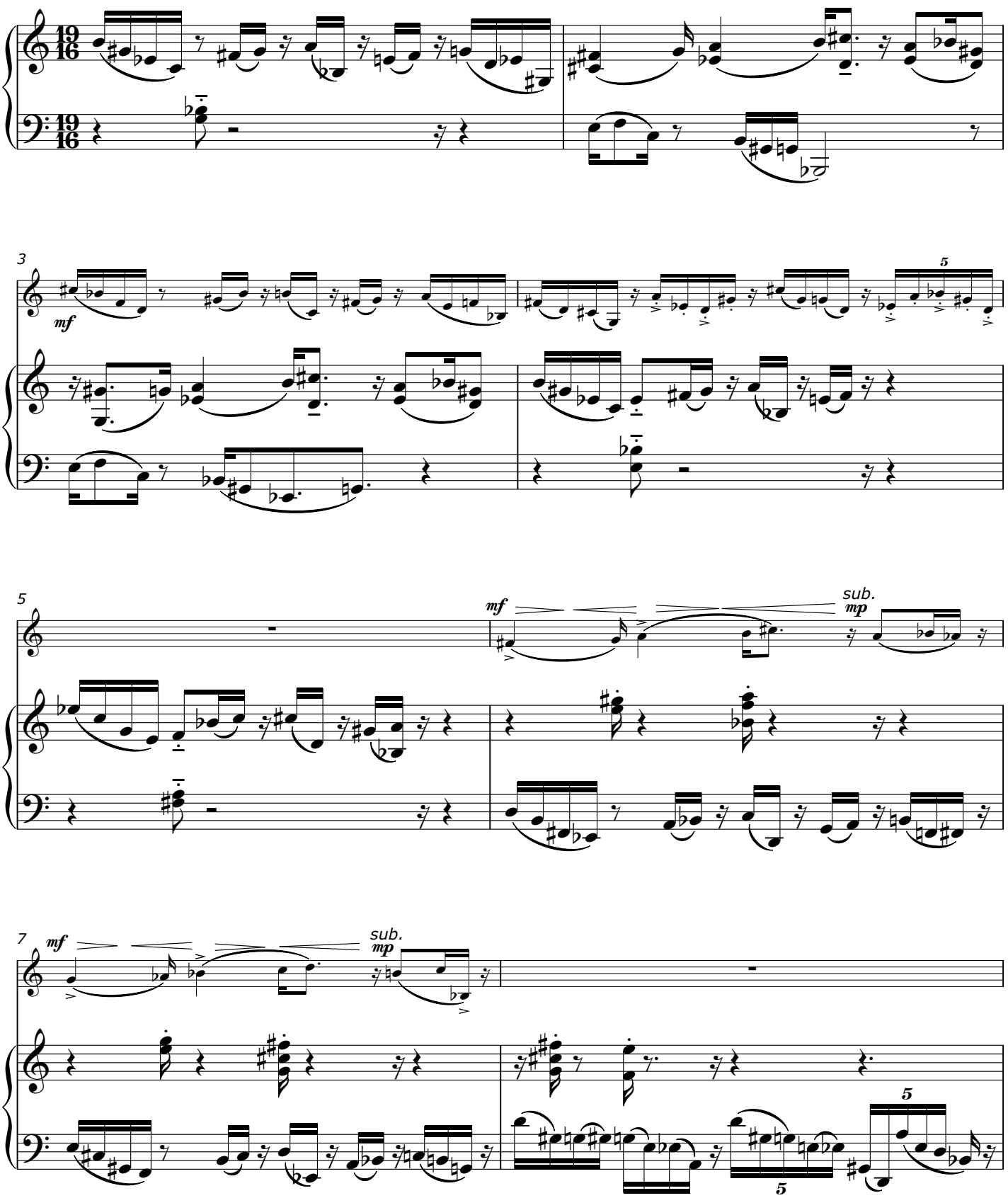
I

♩ = 96

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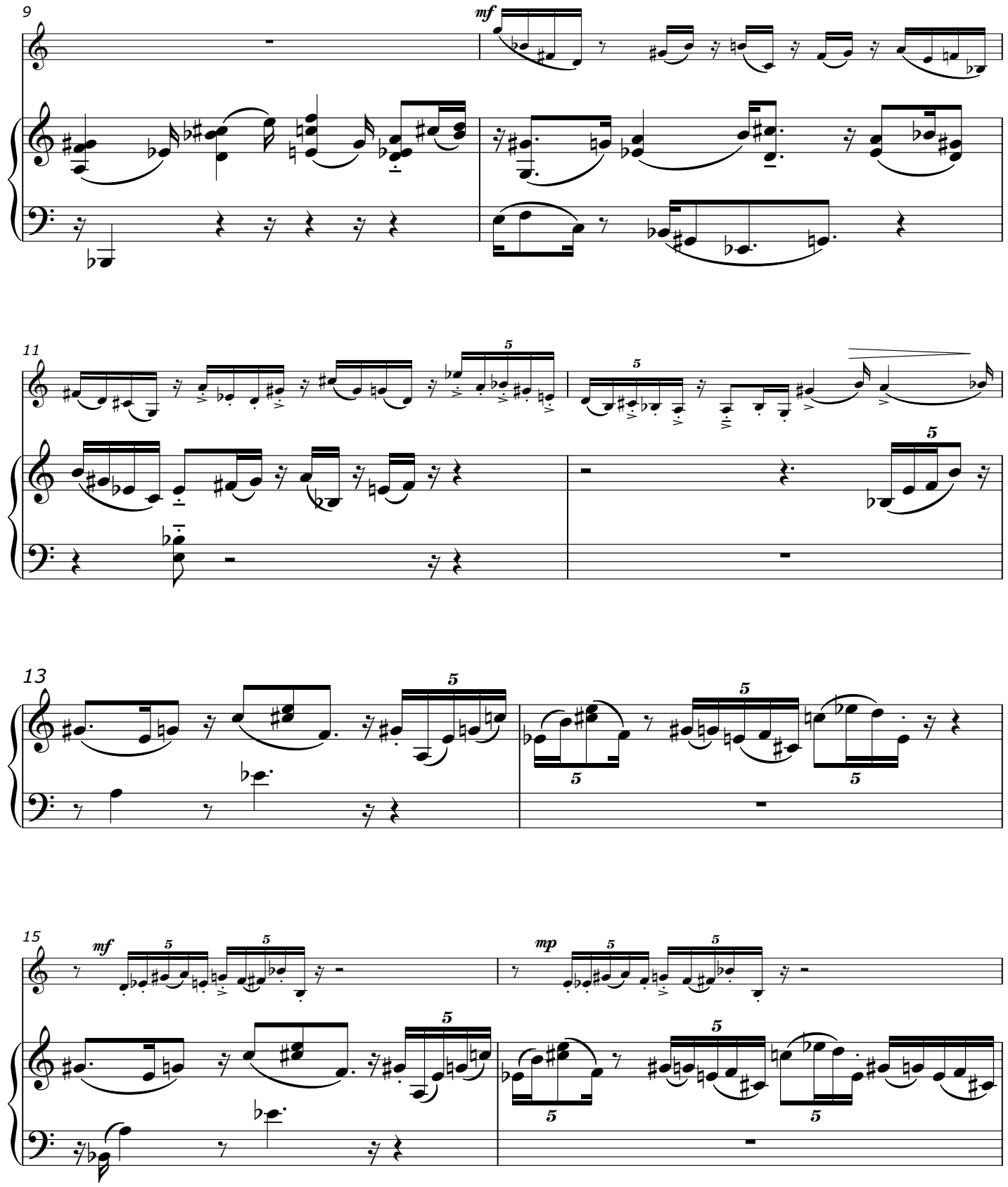

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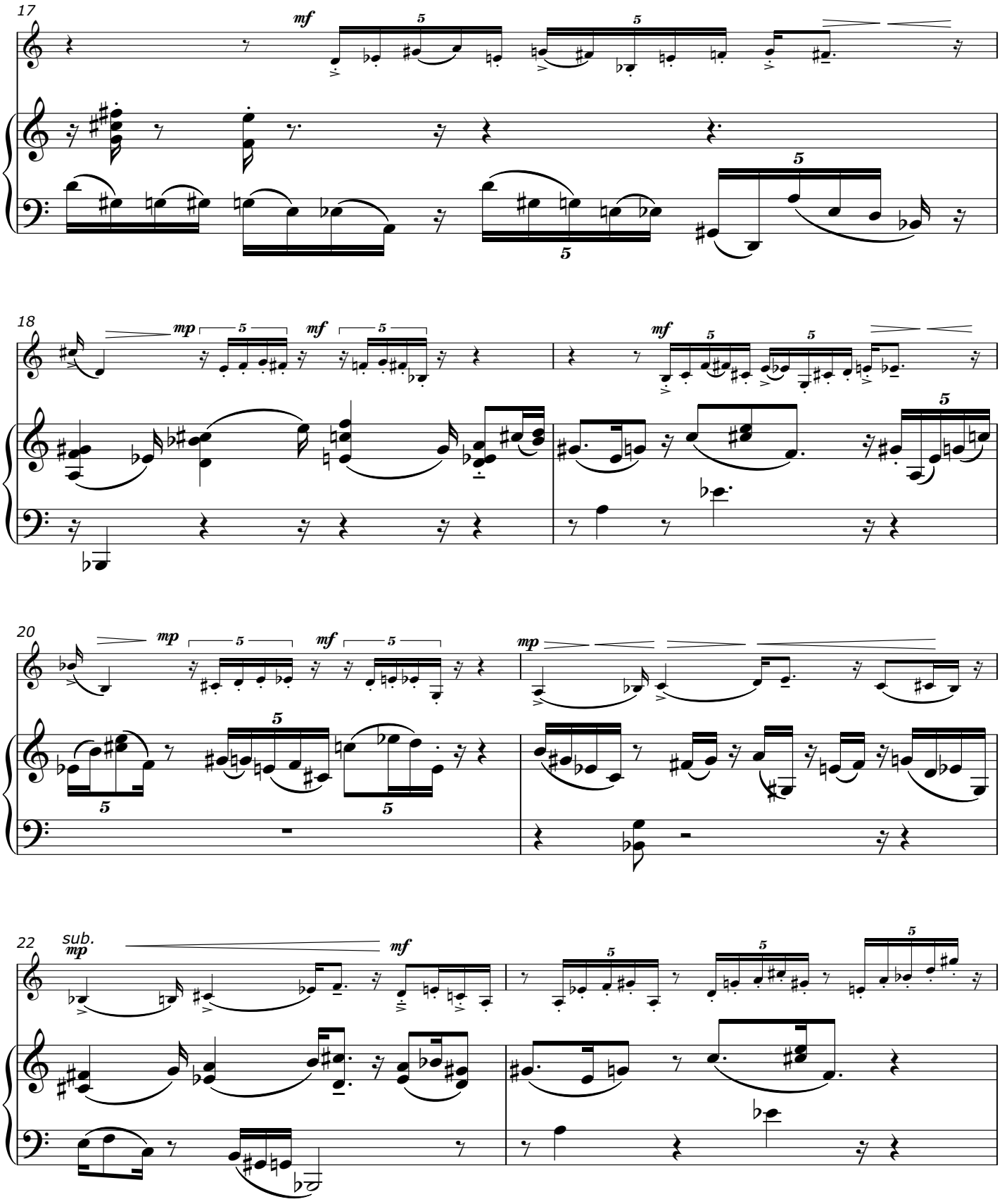

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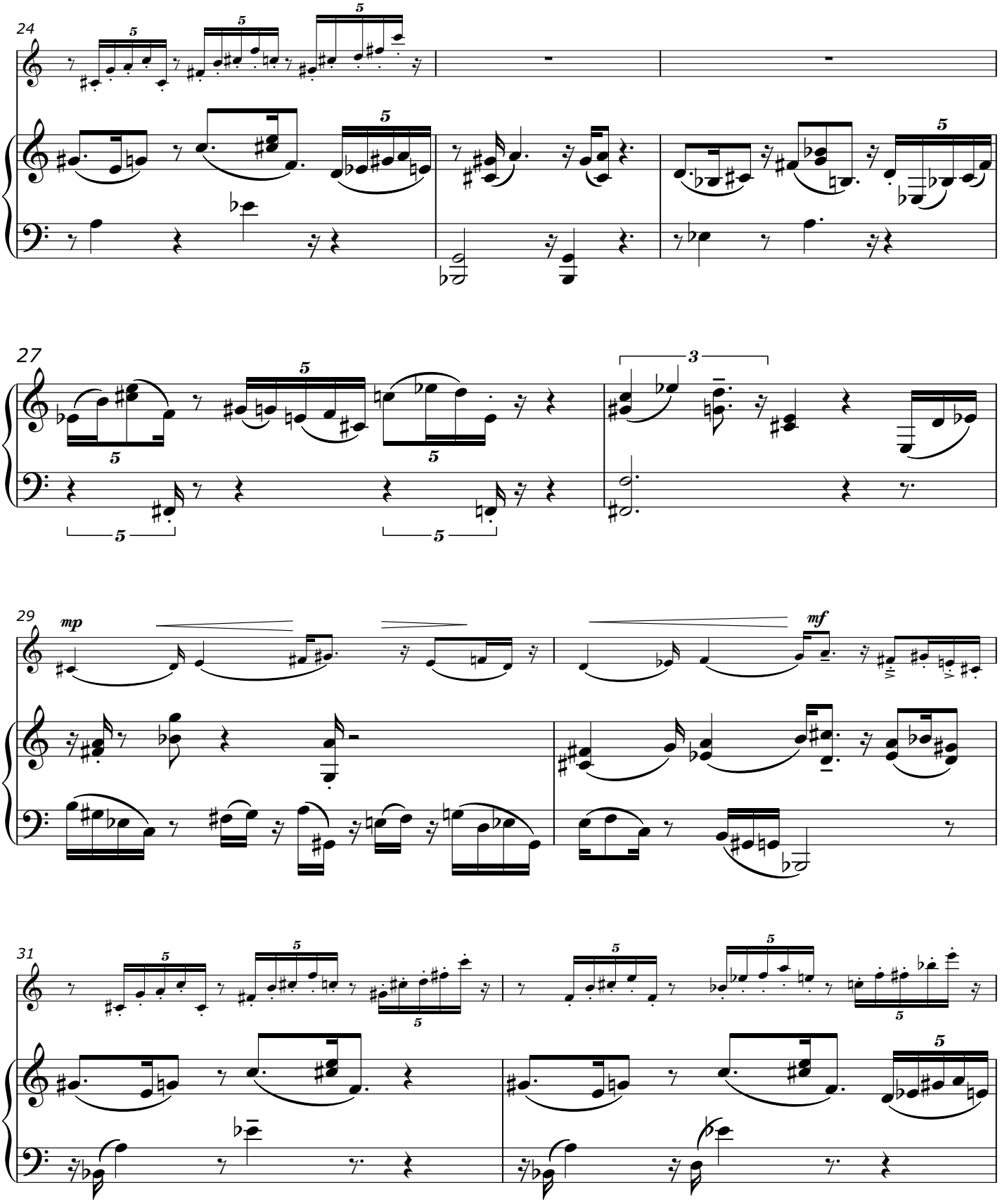

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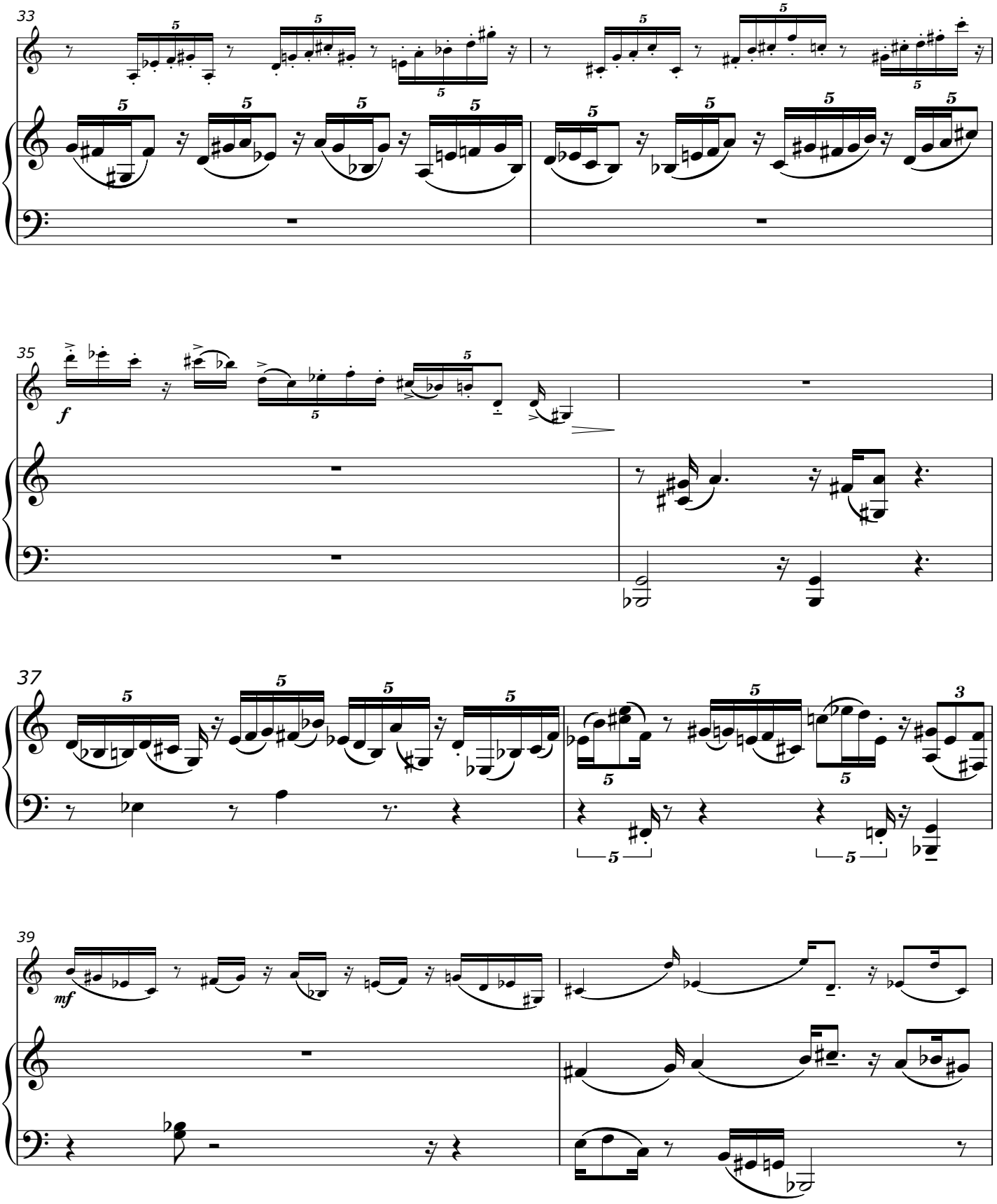

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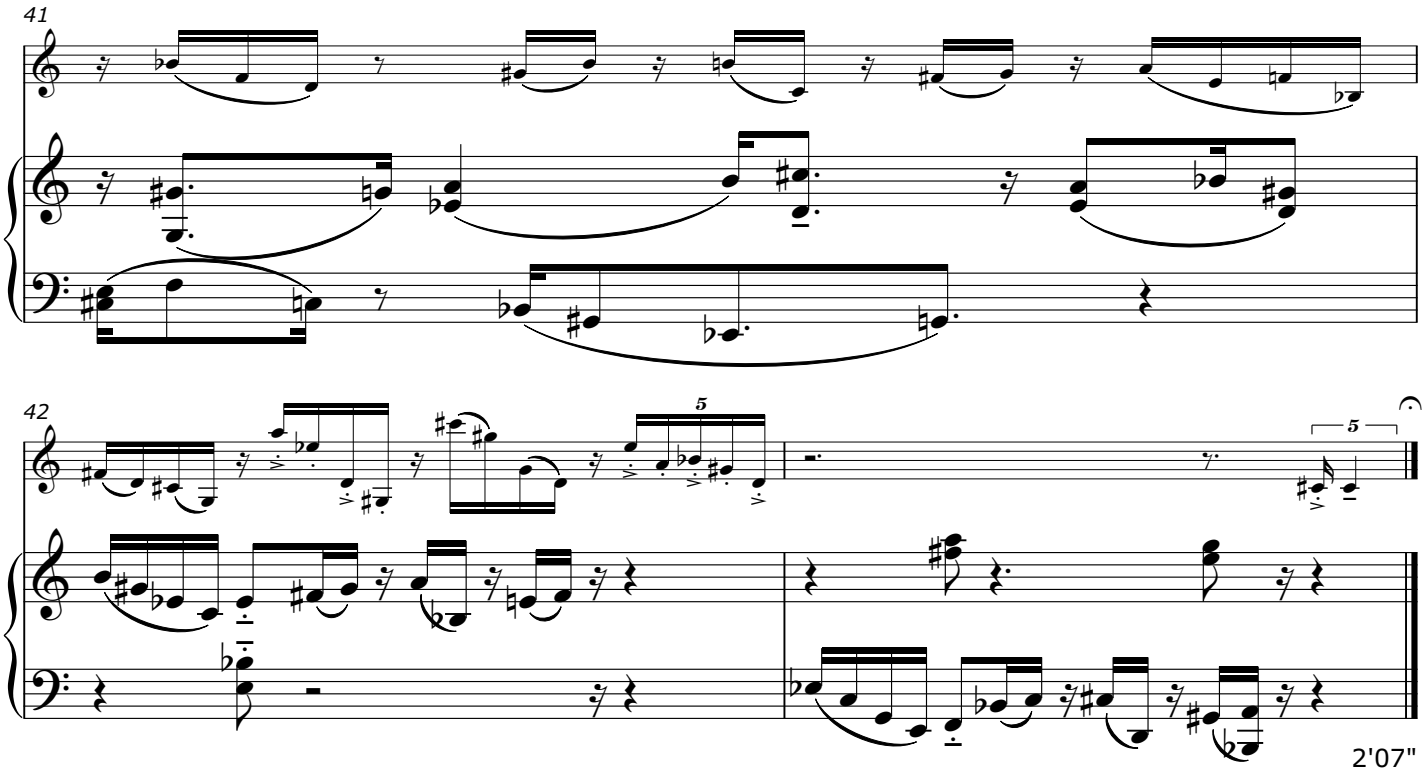

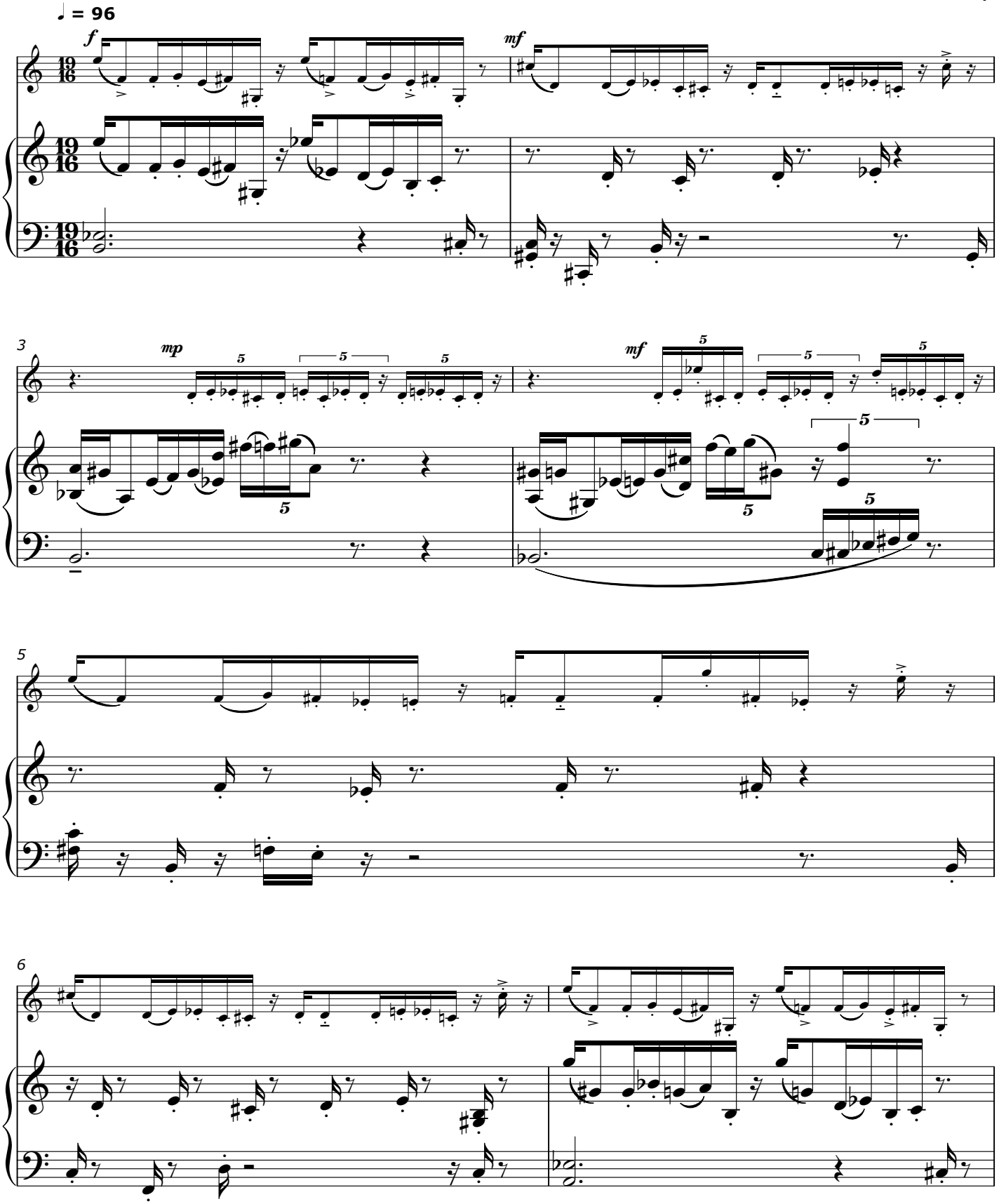


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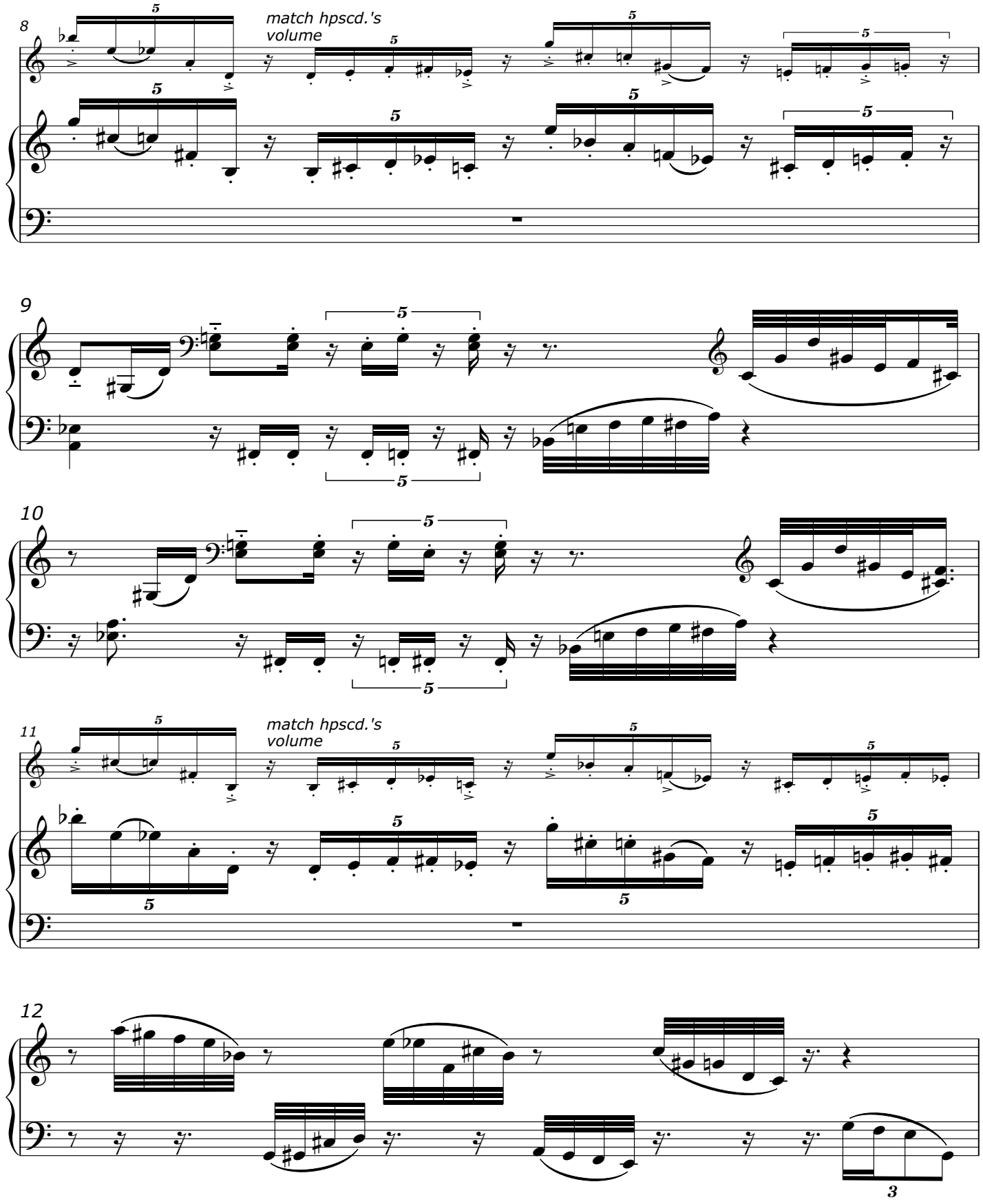

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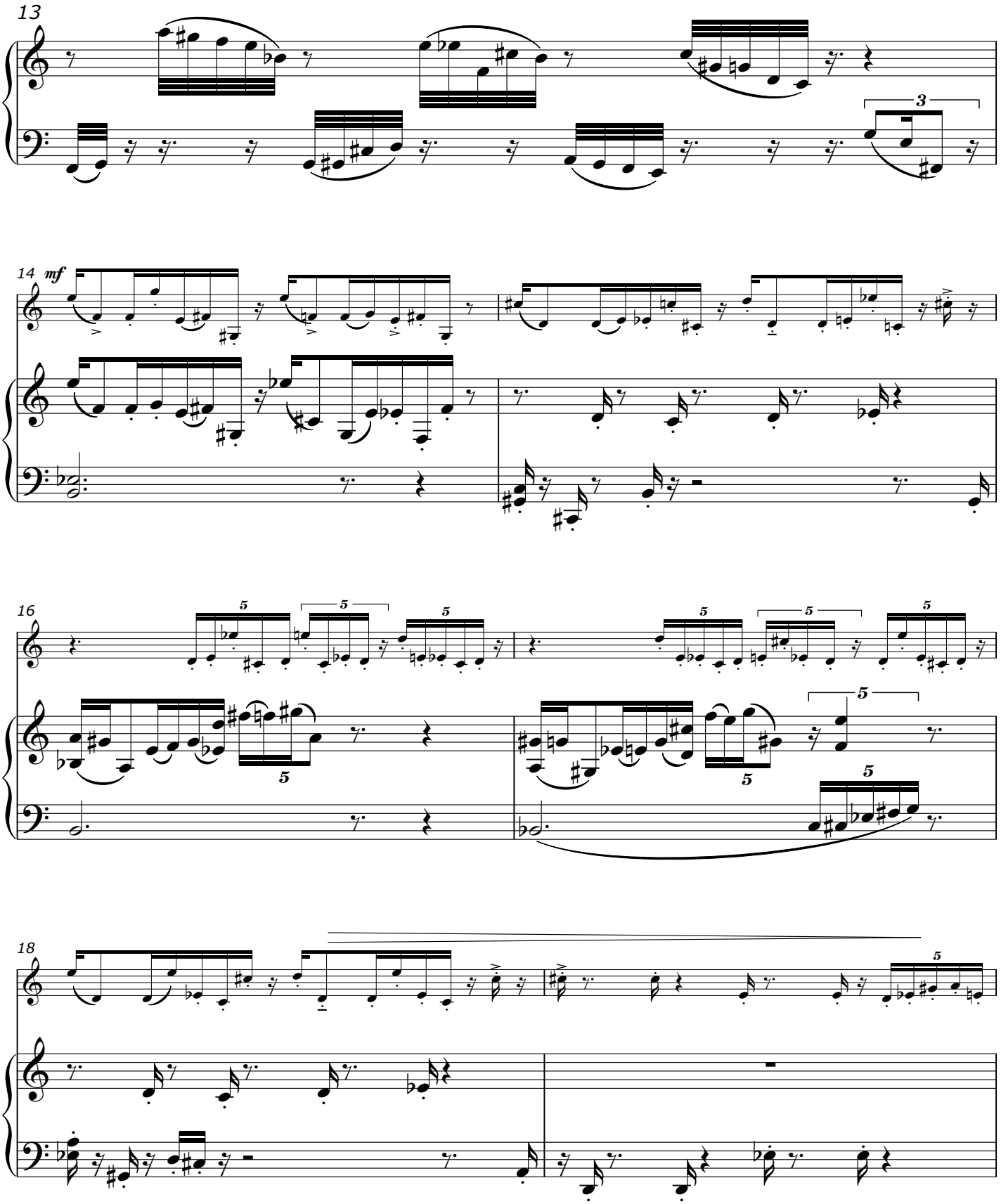

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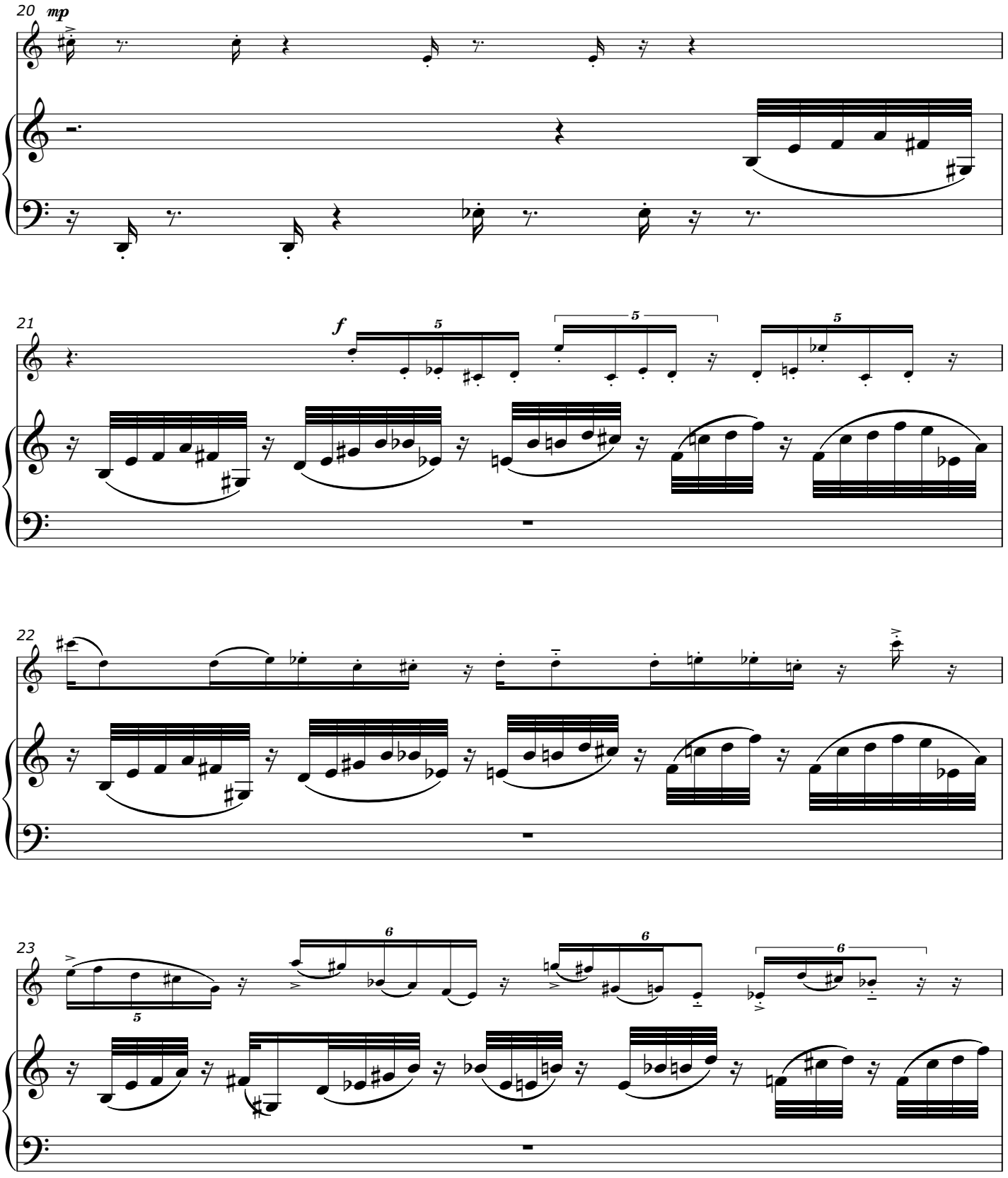

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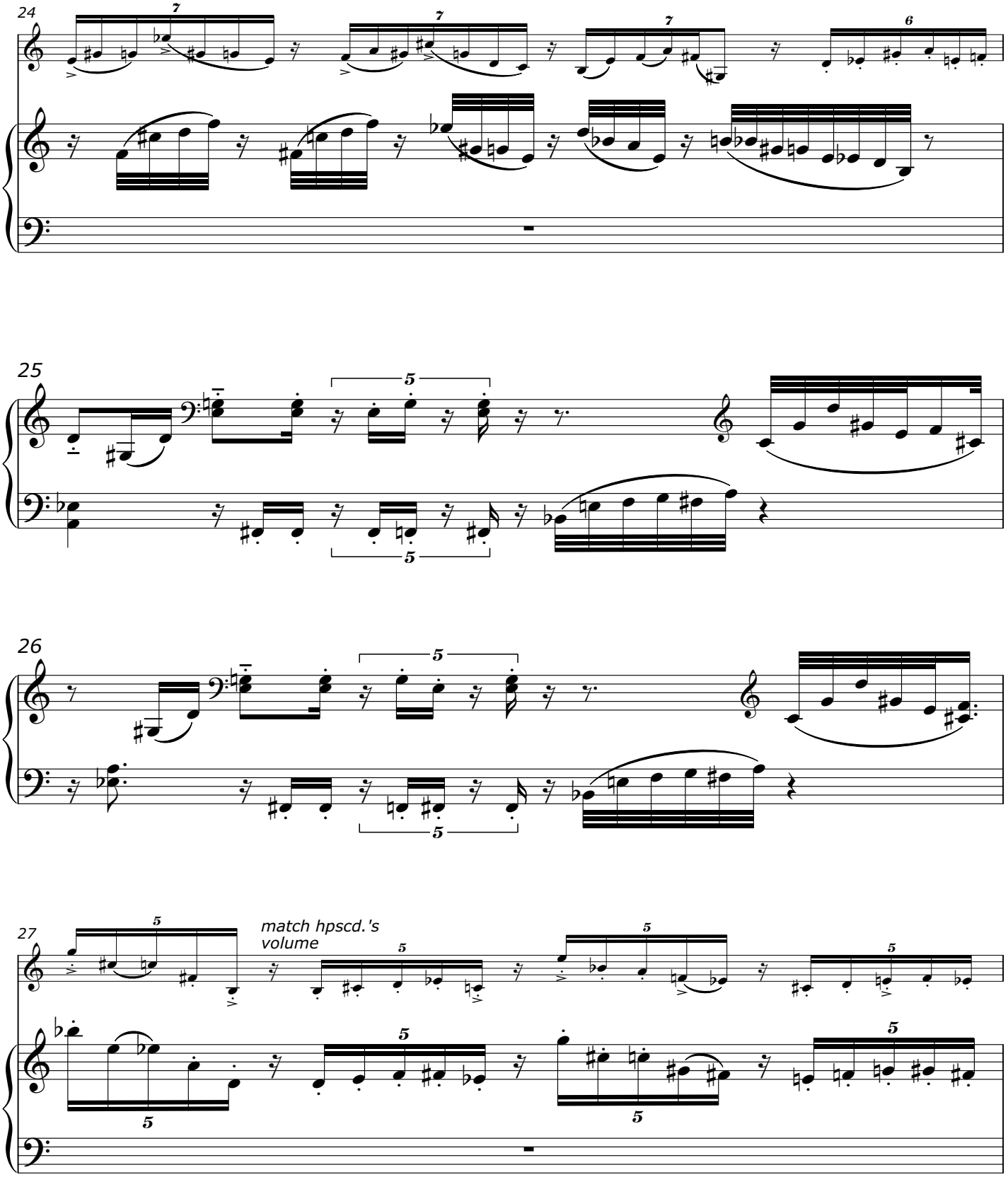

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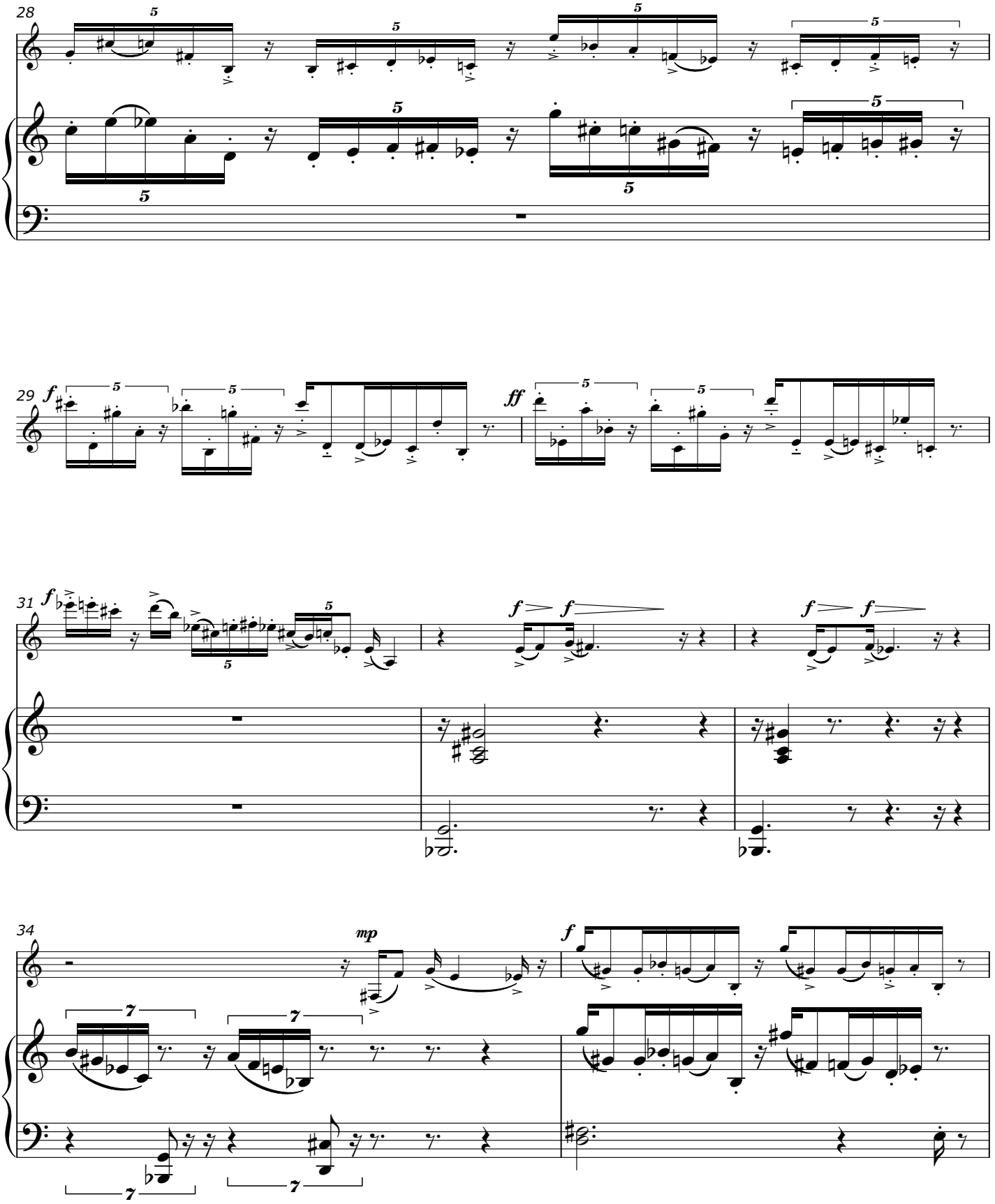

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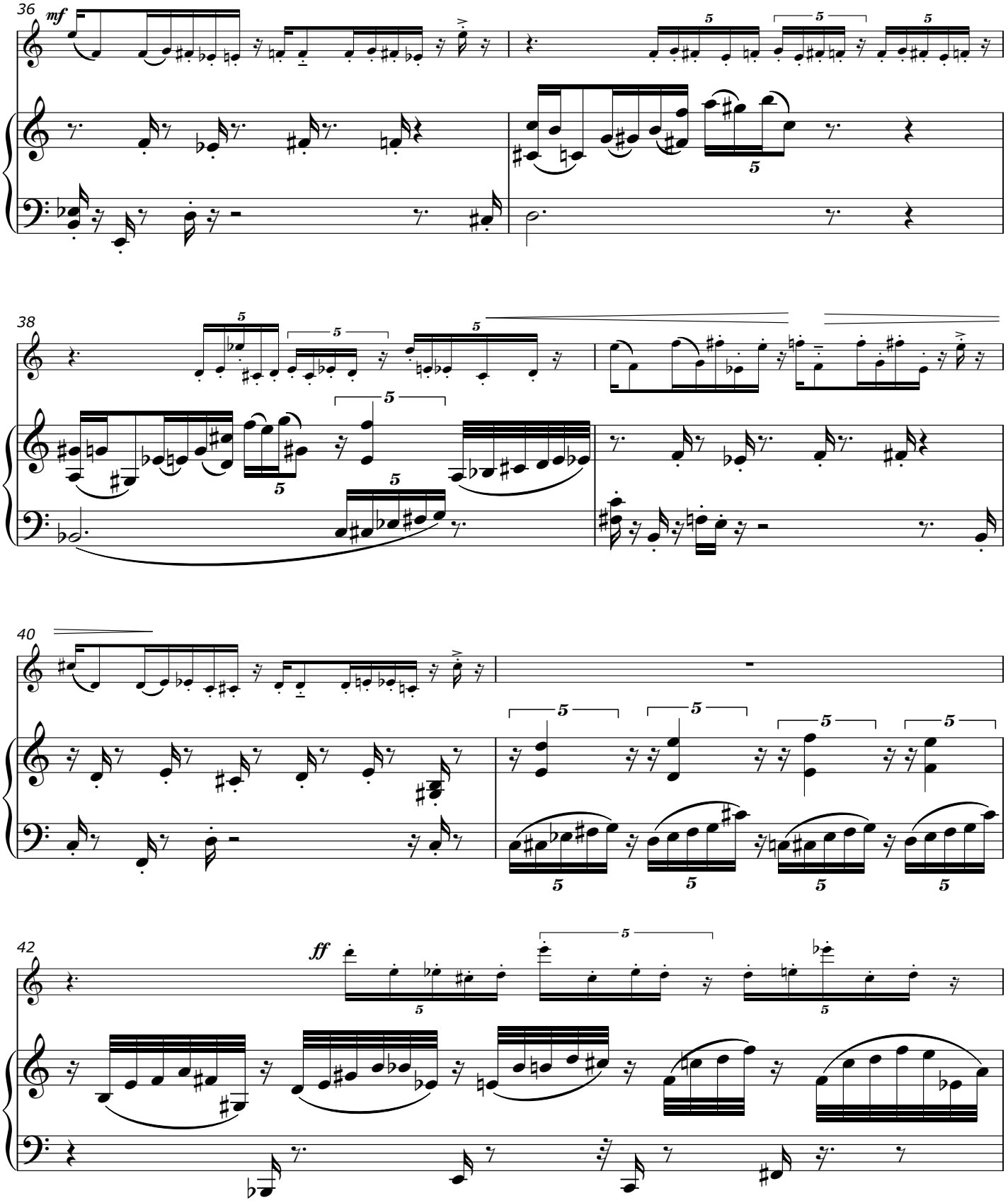

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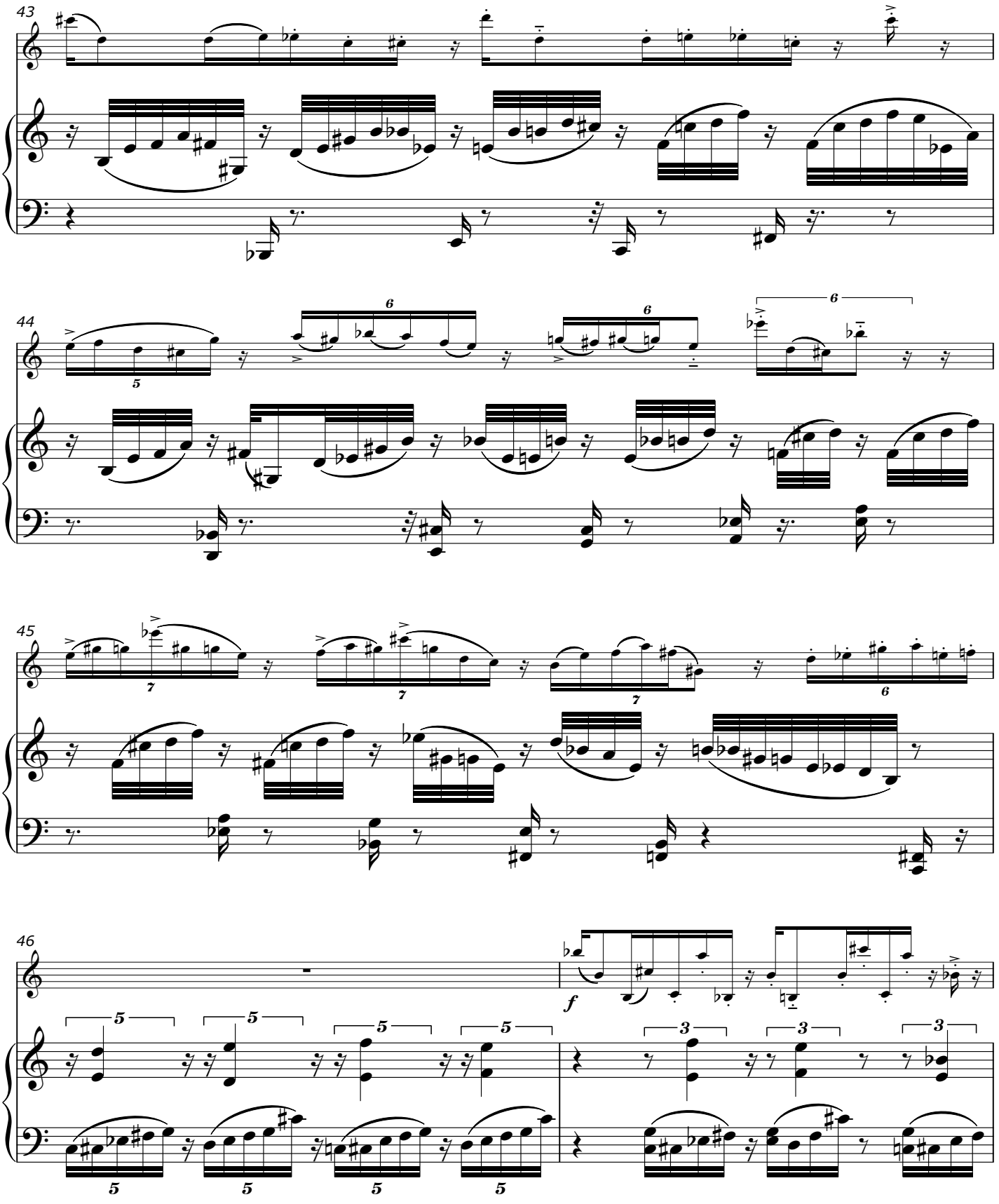

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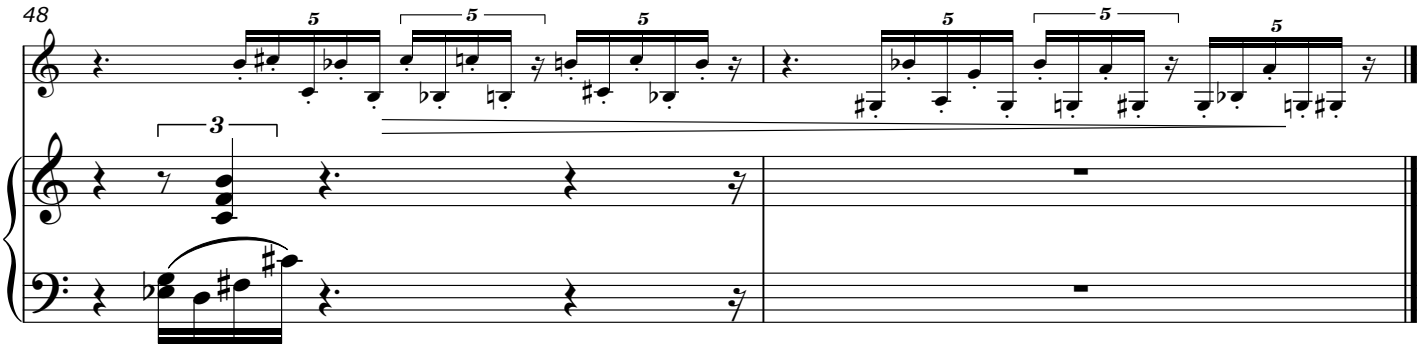



2'25"

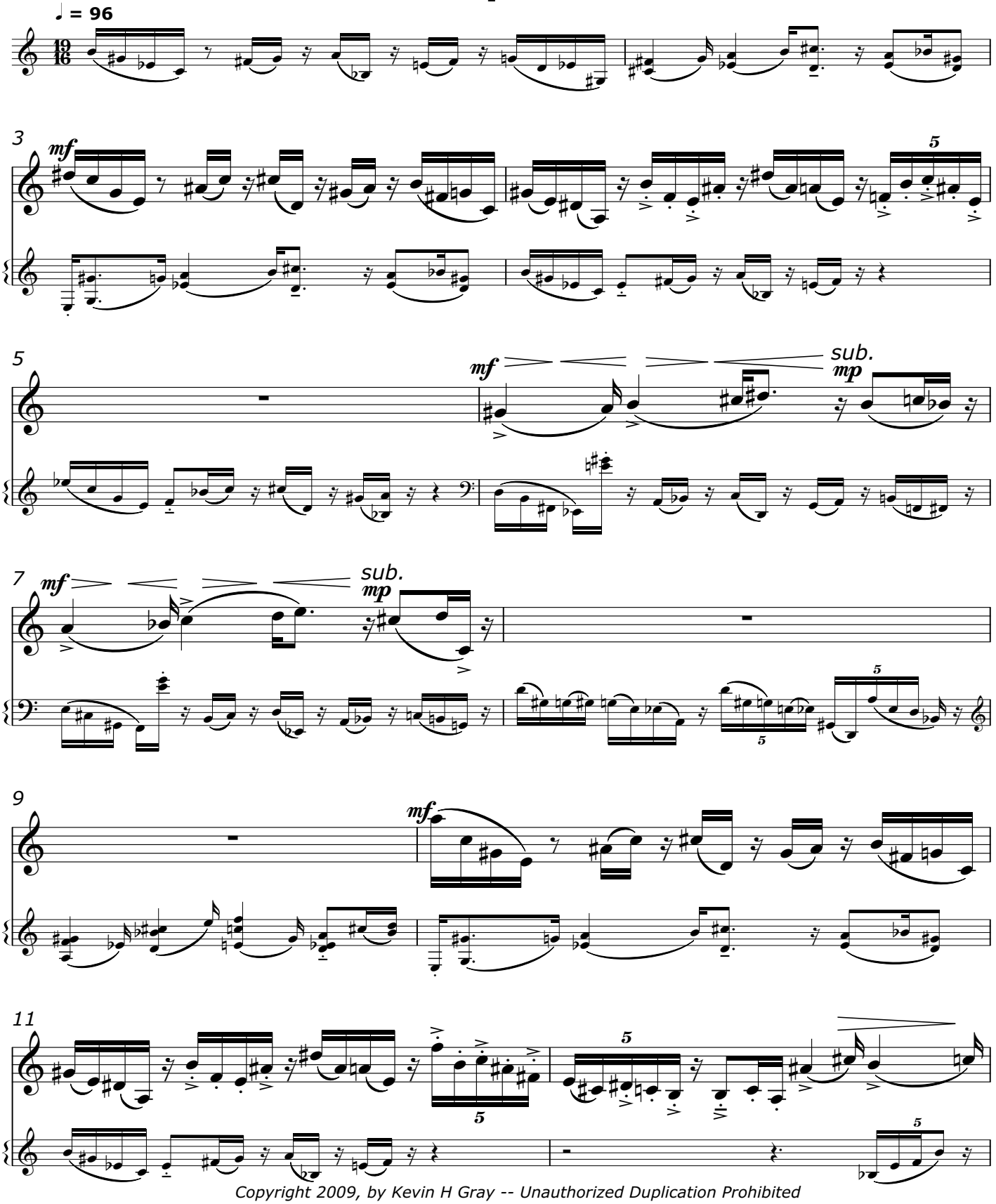
Clarinet in B♭
with harpsichord reduction

# Burnish Cluster

## for B-flat Clarinet and Harpsichord

I

Kevin H Gray

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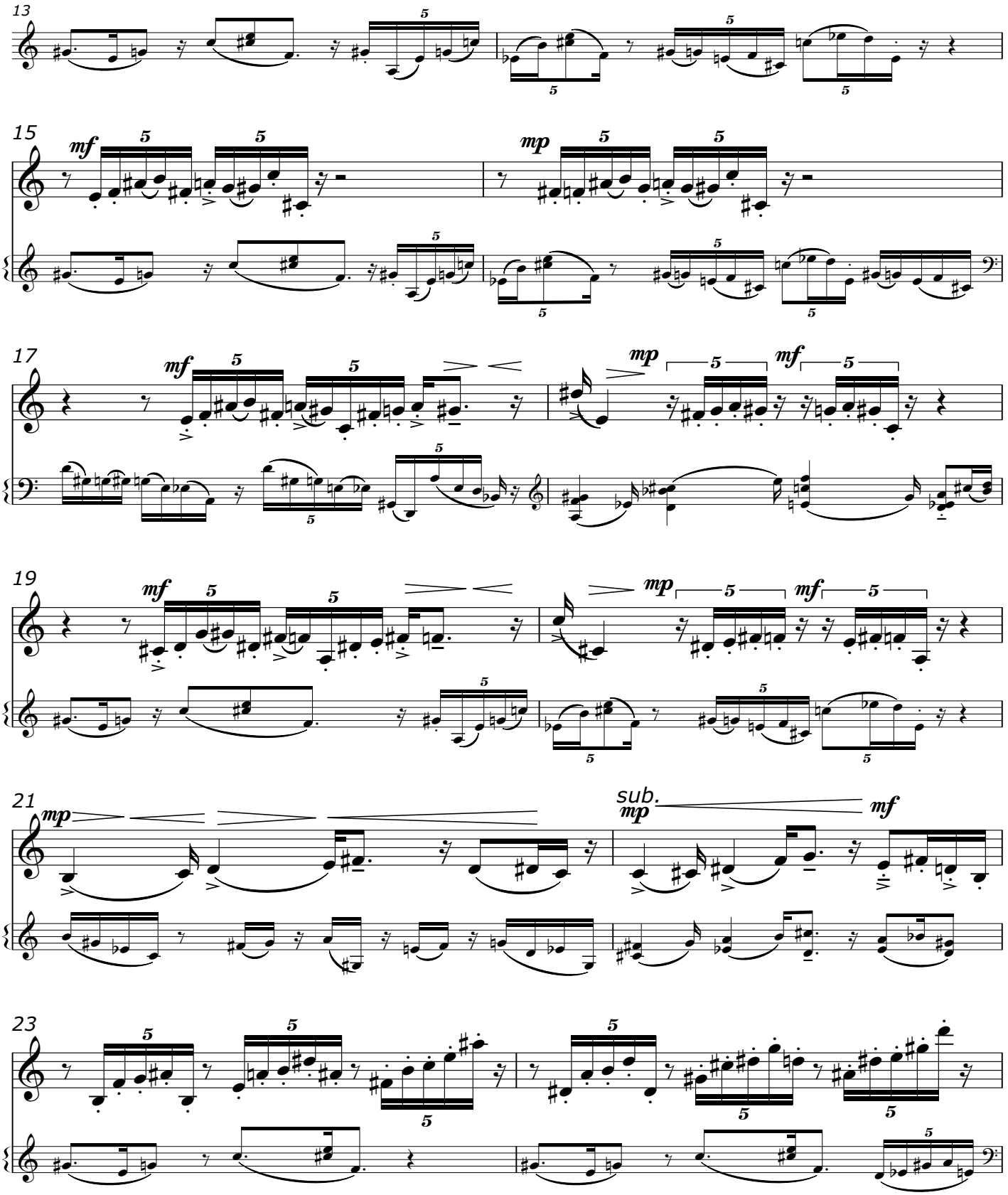


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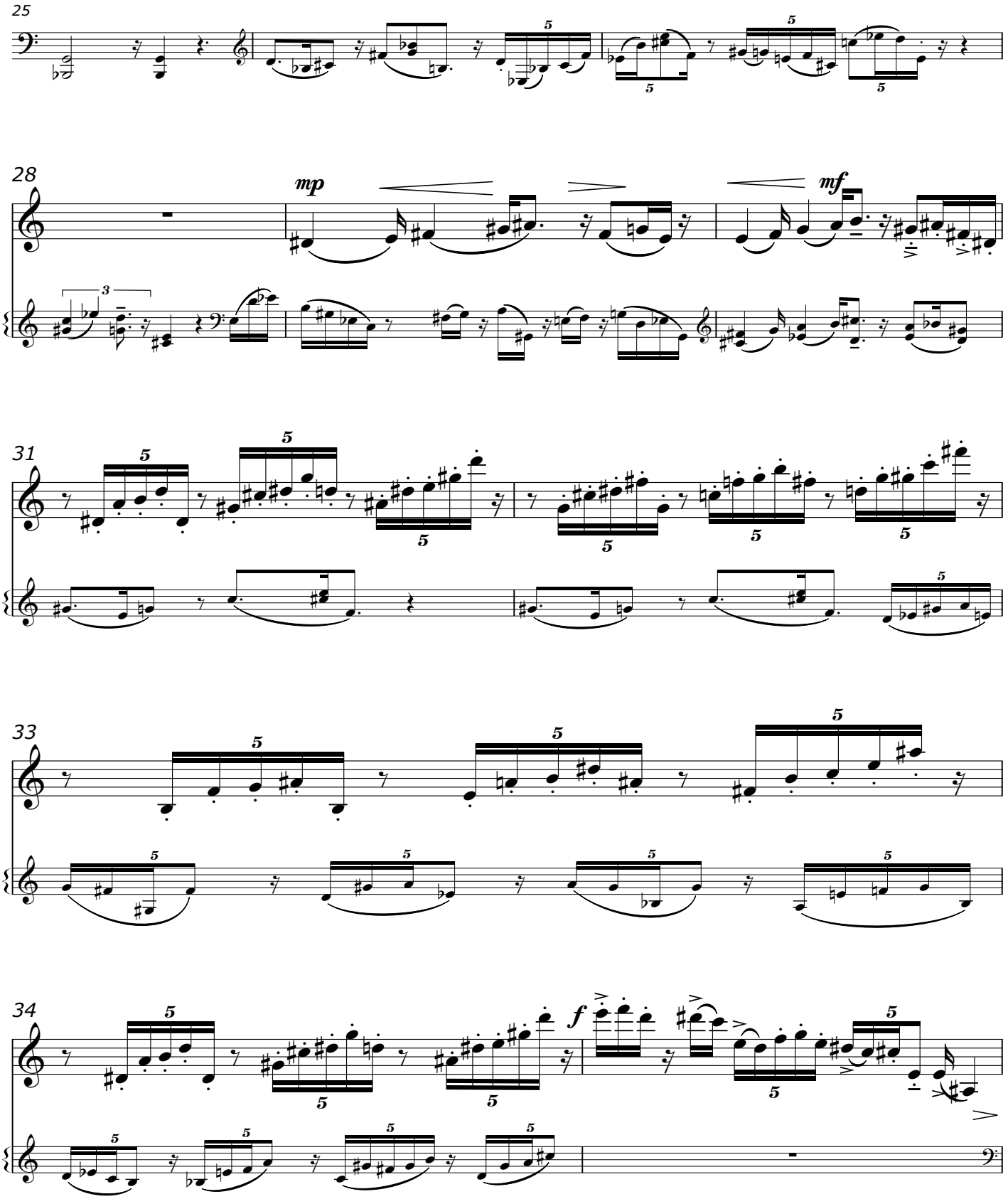


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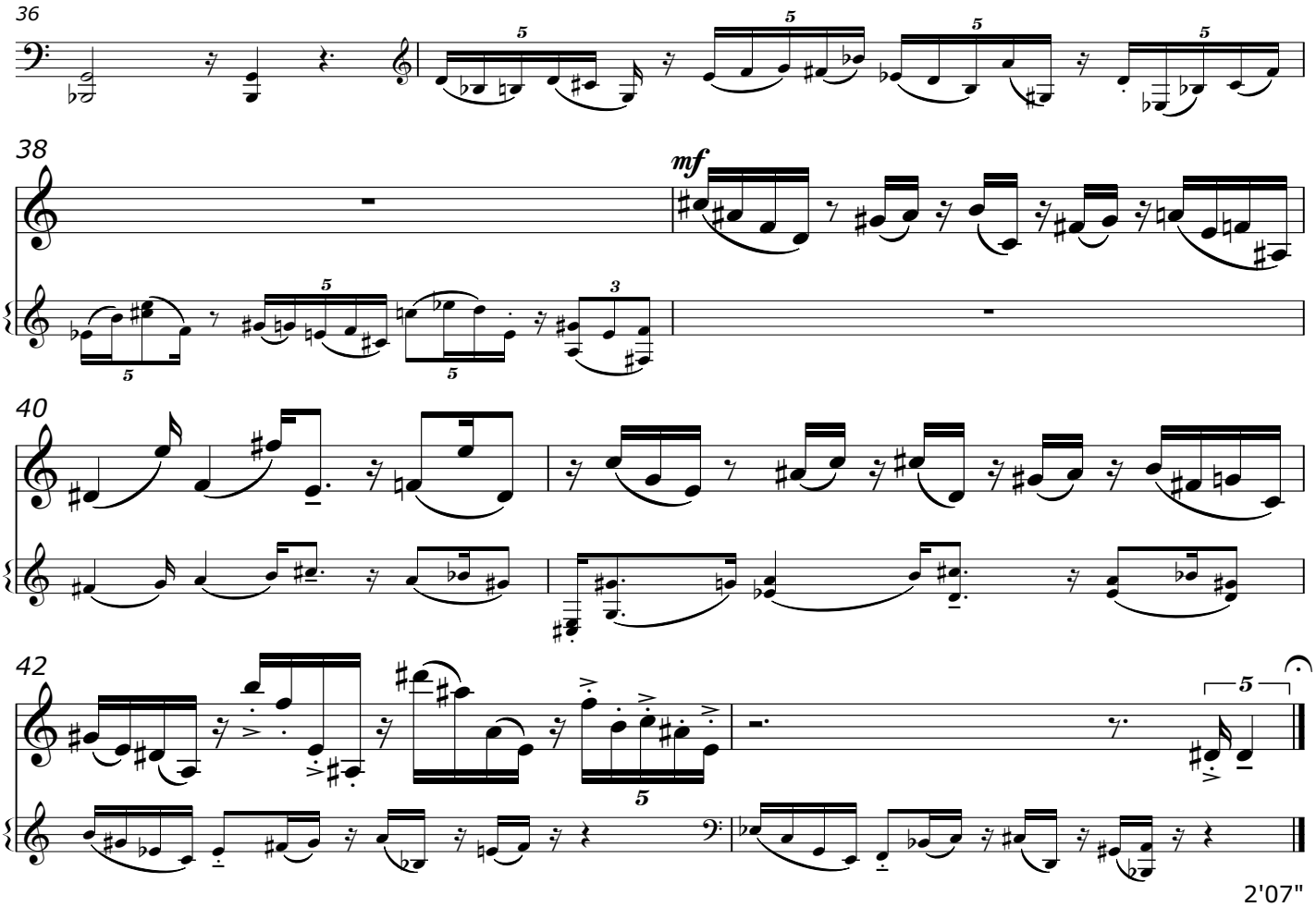


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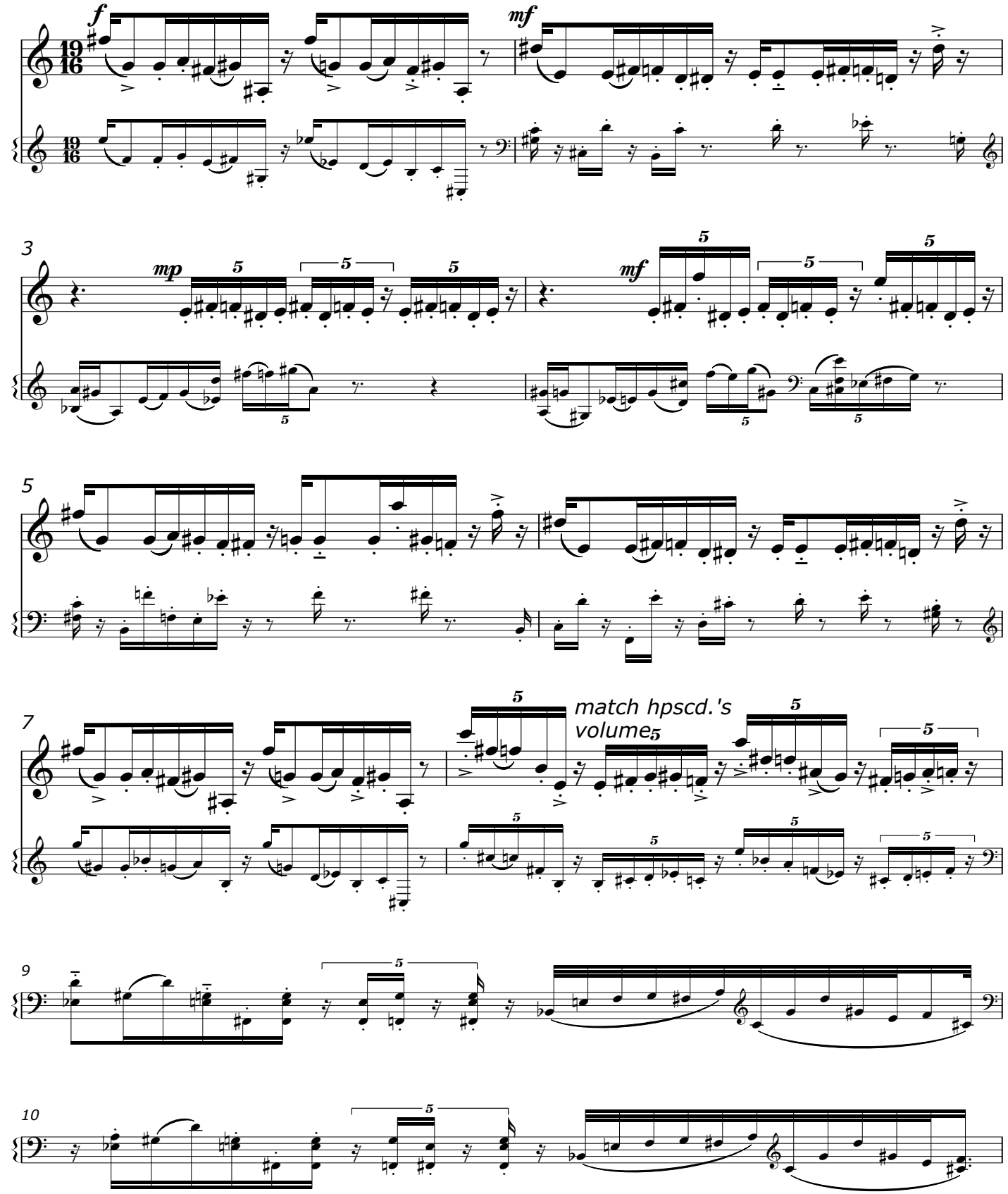
II

Clarinet in B♭

♩ = 96

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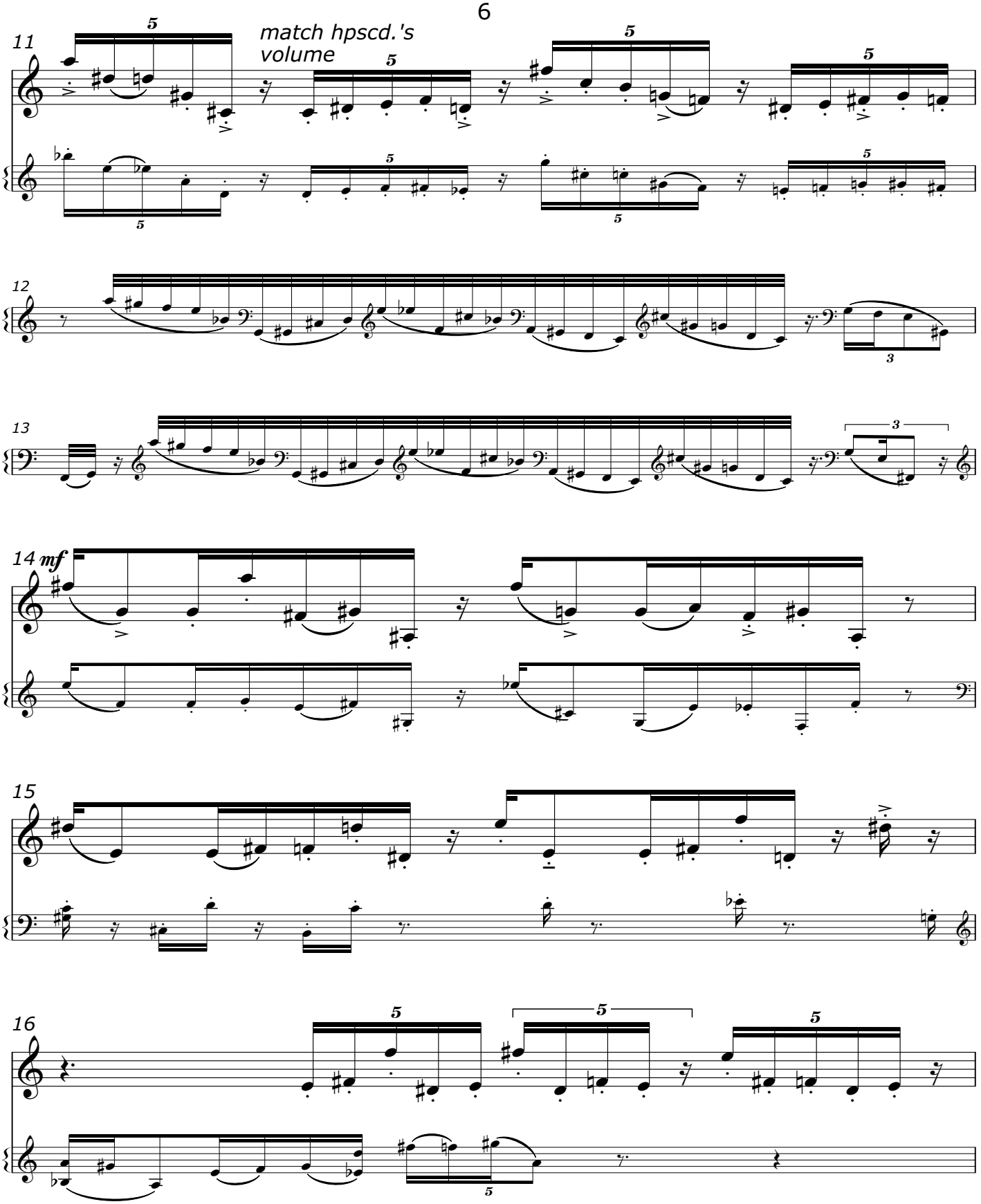


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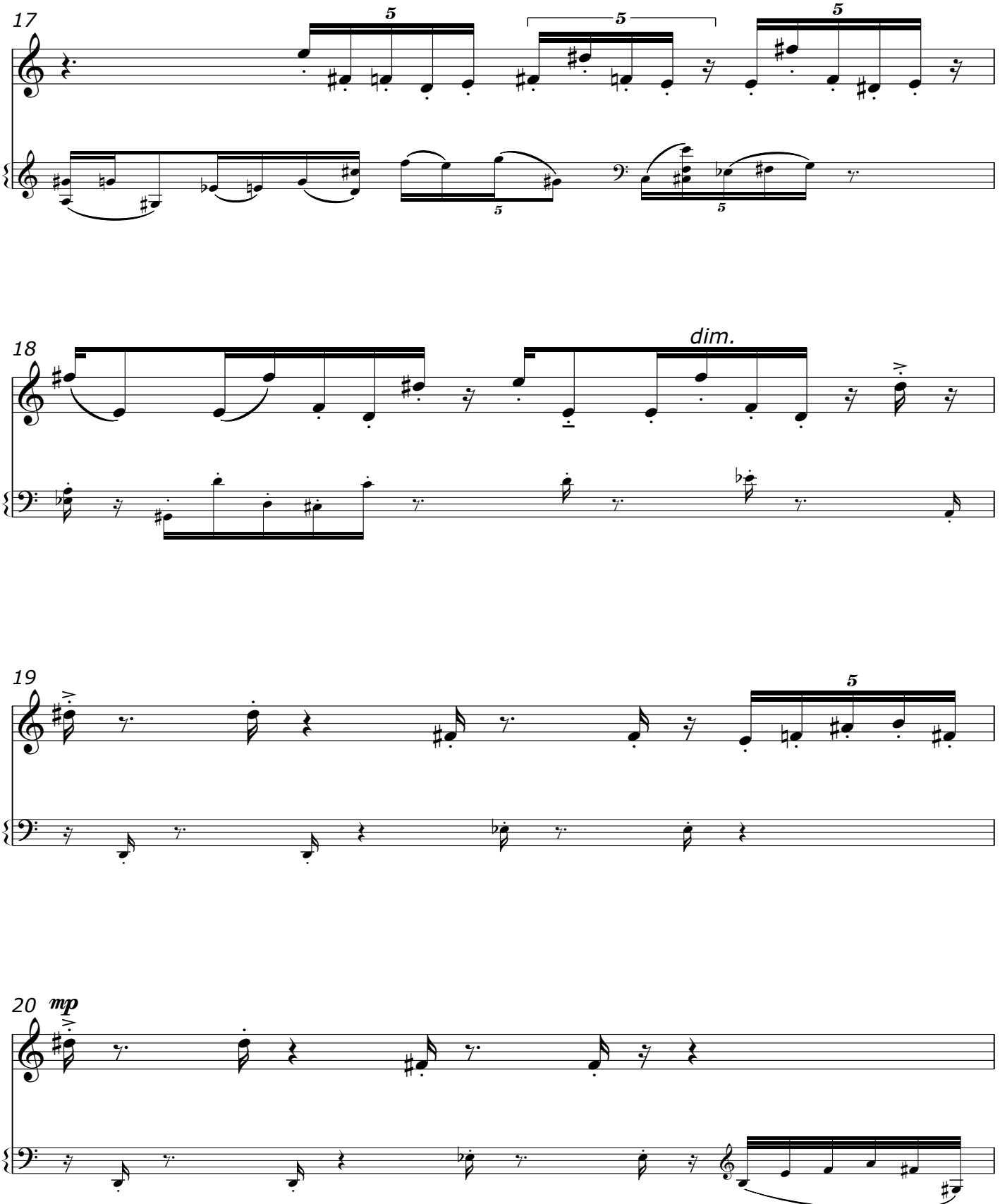


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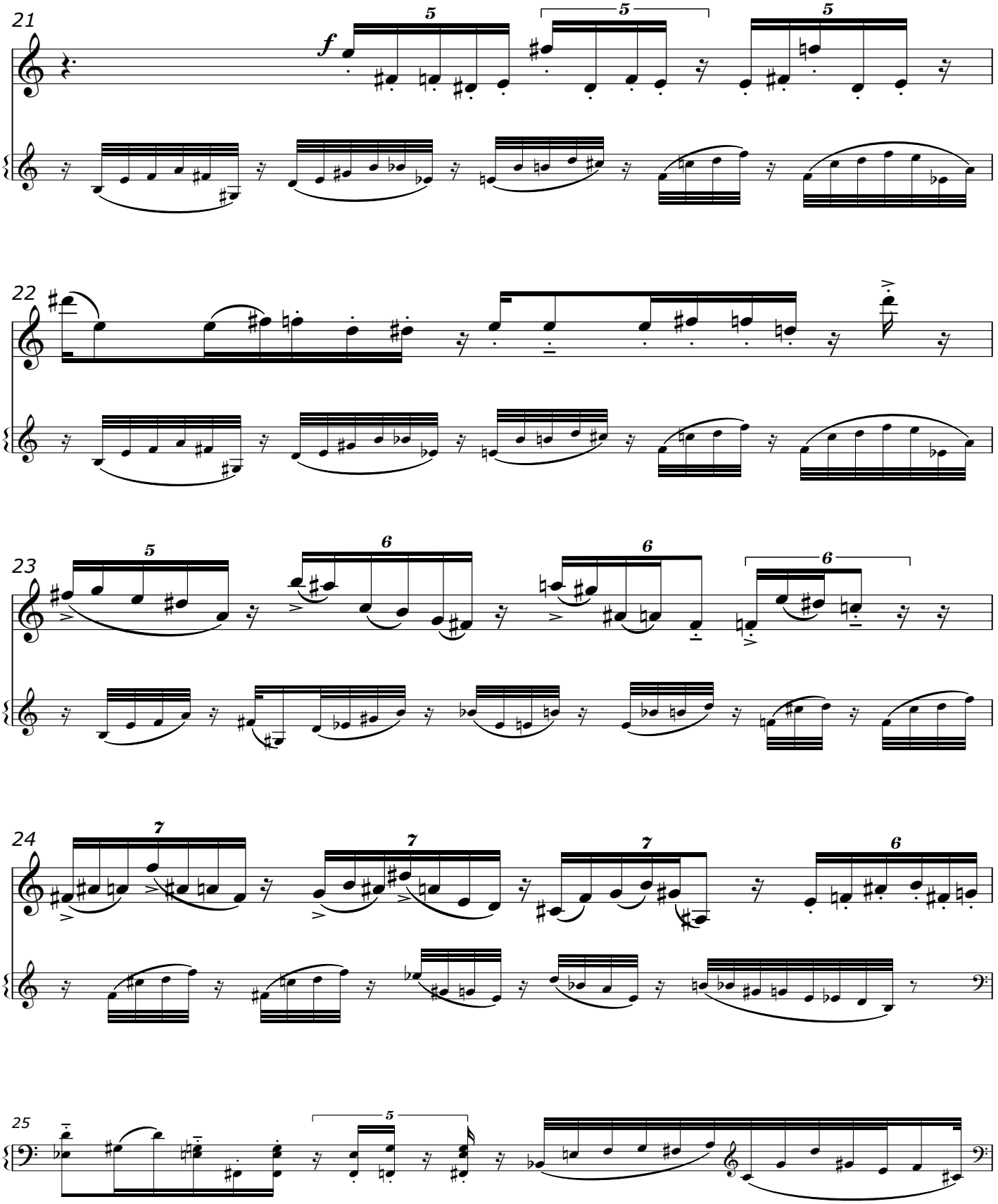


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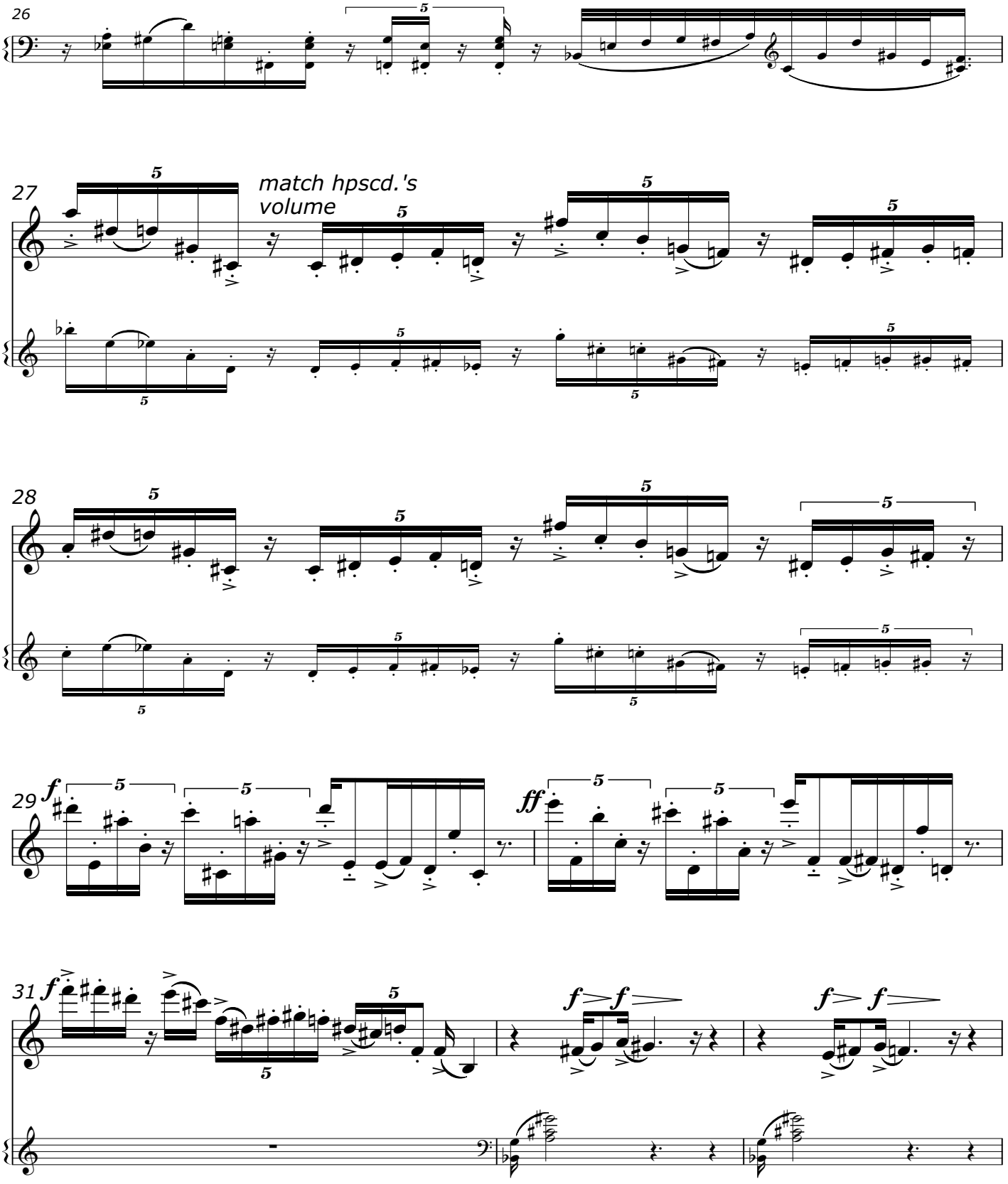


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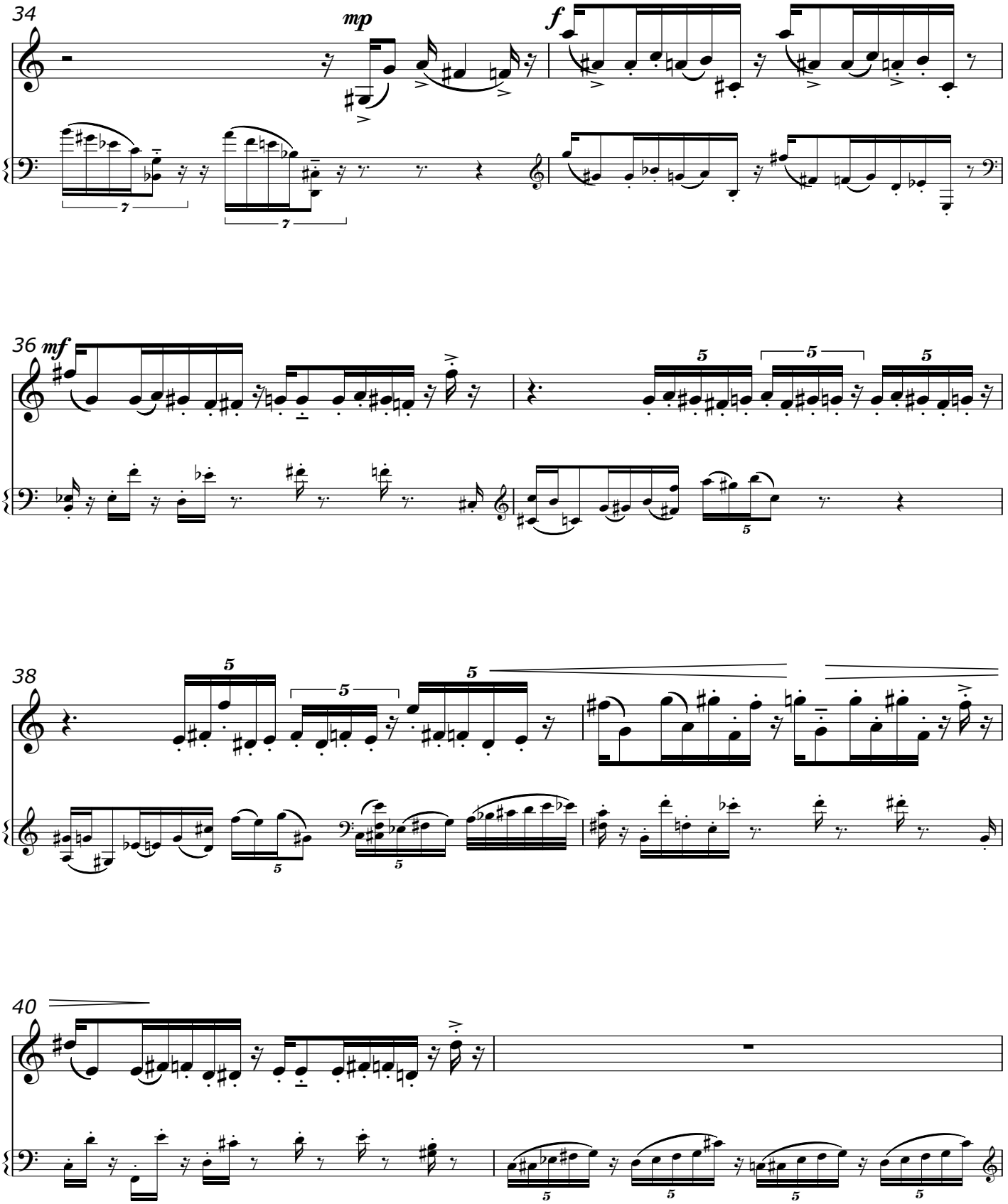


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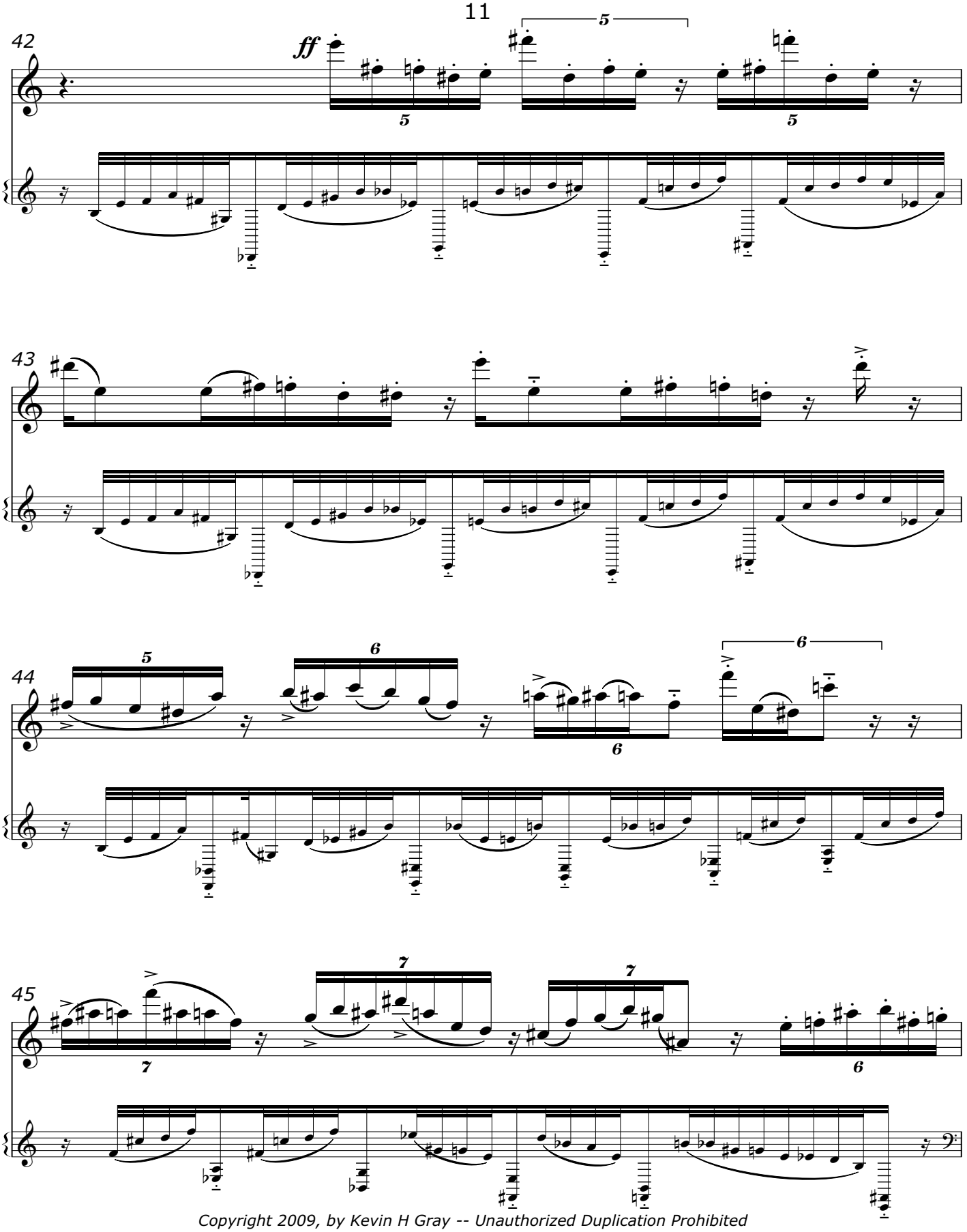


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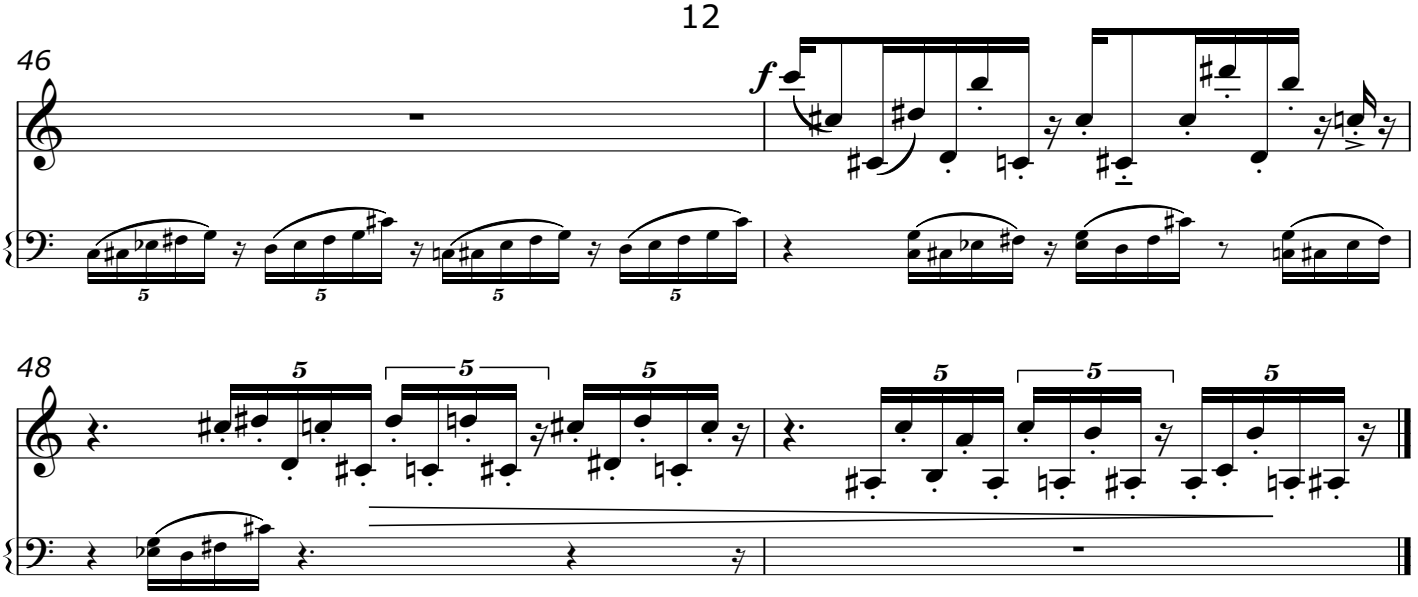


2'25"

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