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Why?

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Kirsten Johnson

Why?

for strings

Notes on the piece

Why? is unsettling. There is never a resolution to the musical question,
asked in layers and circling around.
Why? is a comment on the uncertain times we live in,
and the existential question that cries out in pain: why?

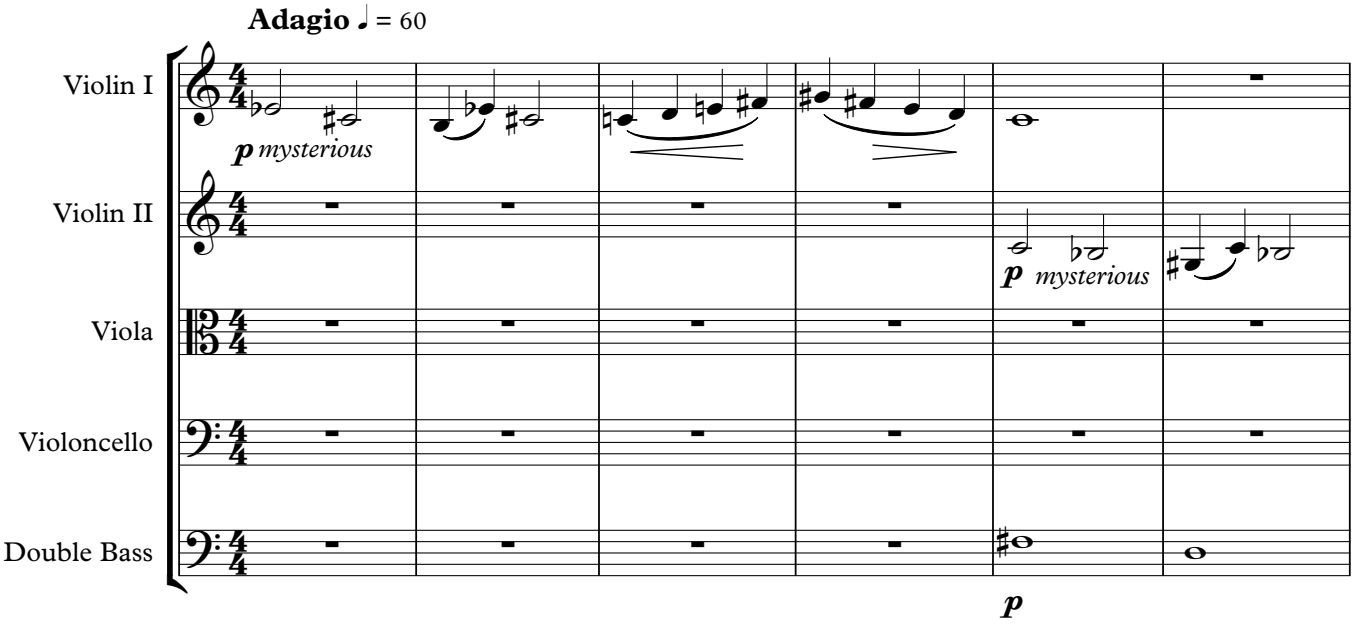
The fugal opening of *Why?* begins with the first violins stating the haunting melody.
Based on whole-tone patterns, the last note of the melody becomes
the first note of the next statement, in the second violins.
The last note of this transposed melody becomes the next reiteration, in the violas.
Finally, the celli come in with the last transposition of the open melody,
using the final note in the violas as their starting point.

The piece builds, with motives from the opening melody
developed across the string orchestra. This material is mirrored in inversion,
and layered in quaver and semiquaver patterns. There isn't a tonal centre
to the piece – opening on E-flat, and moving through colours
of the musical landscape, climaxing on E diminished, finishing on a
D major third – the piece is not centred, it is not stable, it is hurting and anguished.

Why?

for strings

Kirsten Johnson



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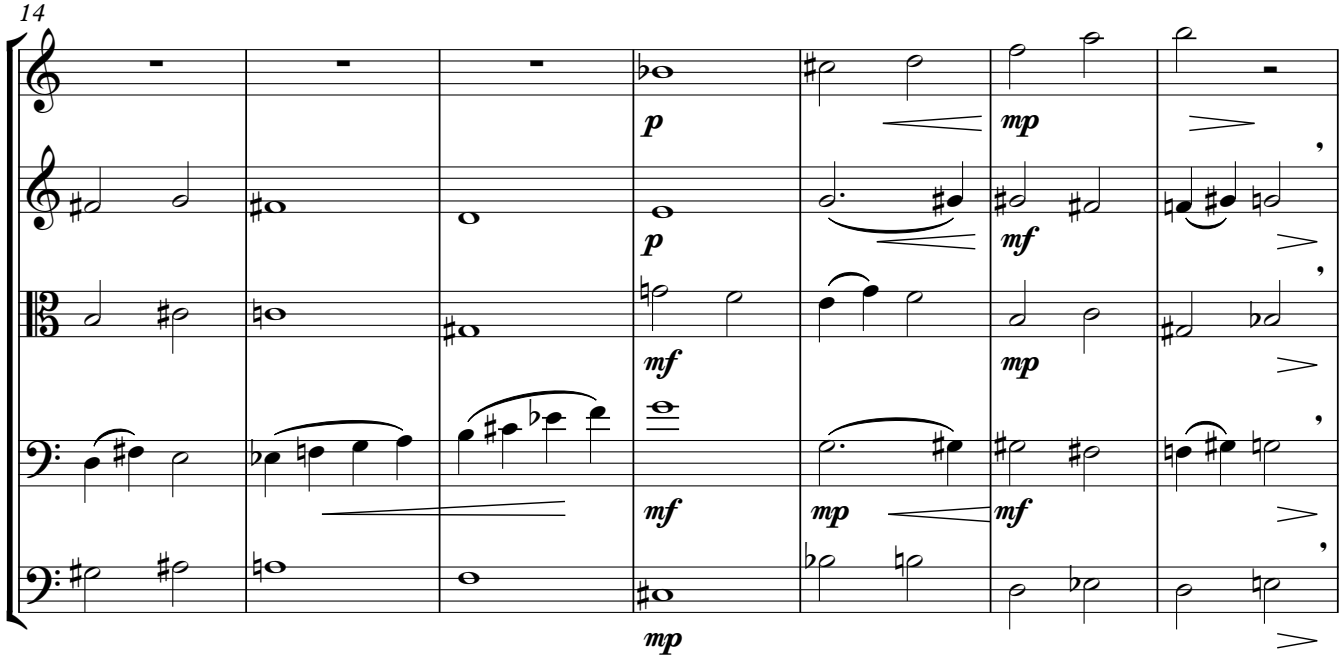
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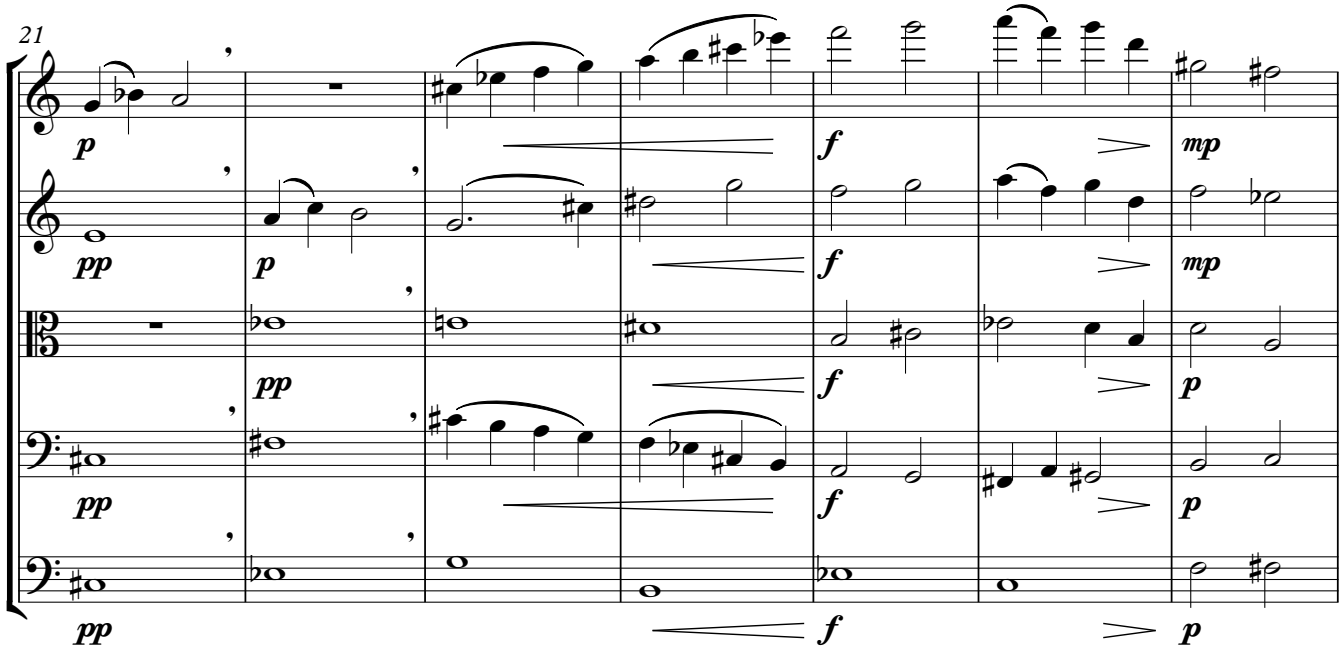
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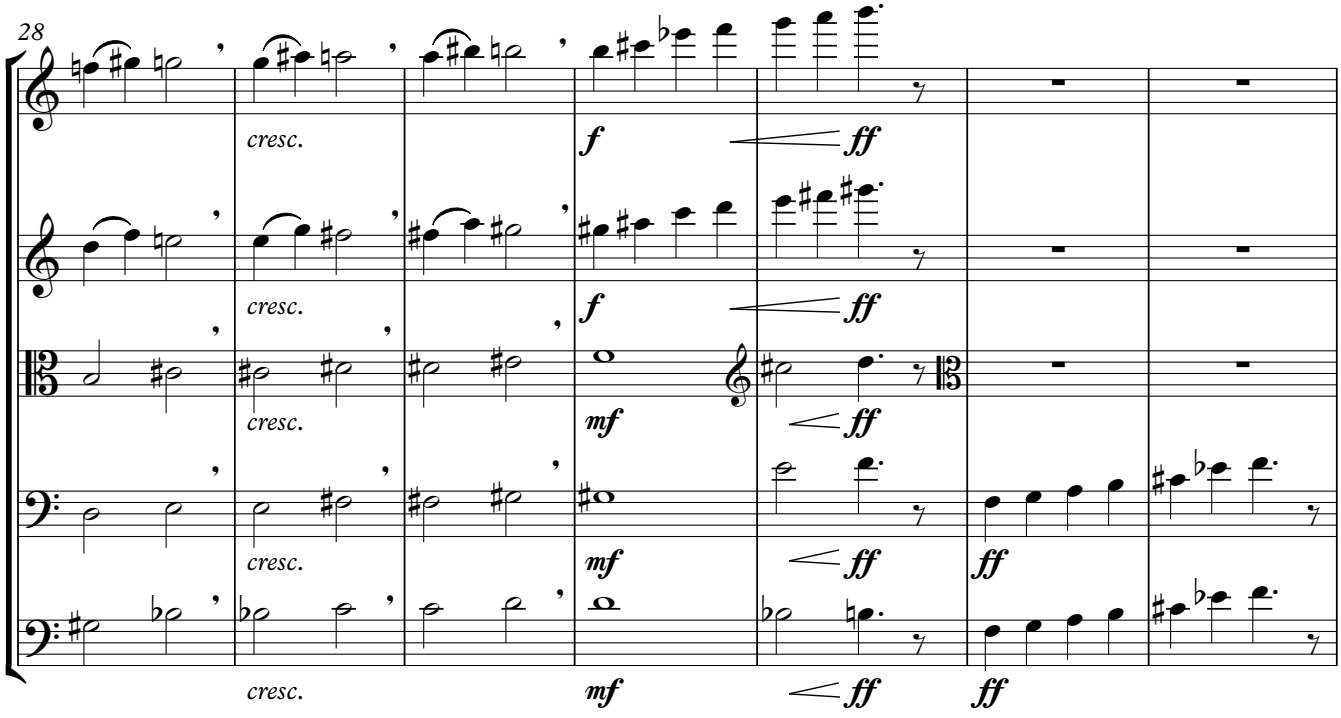
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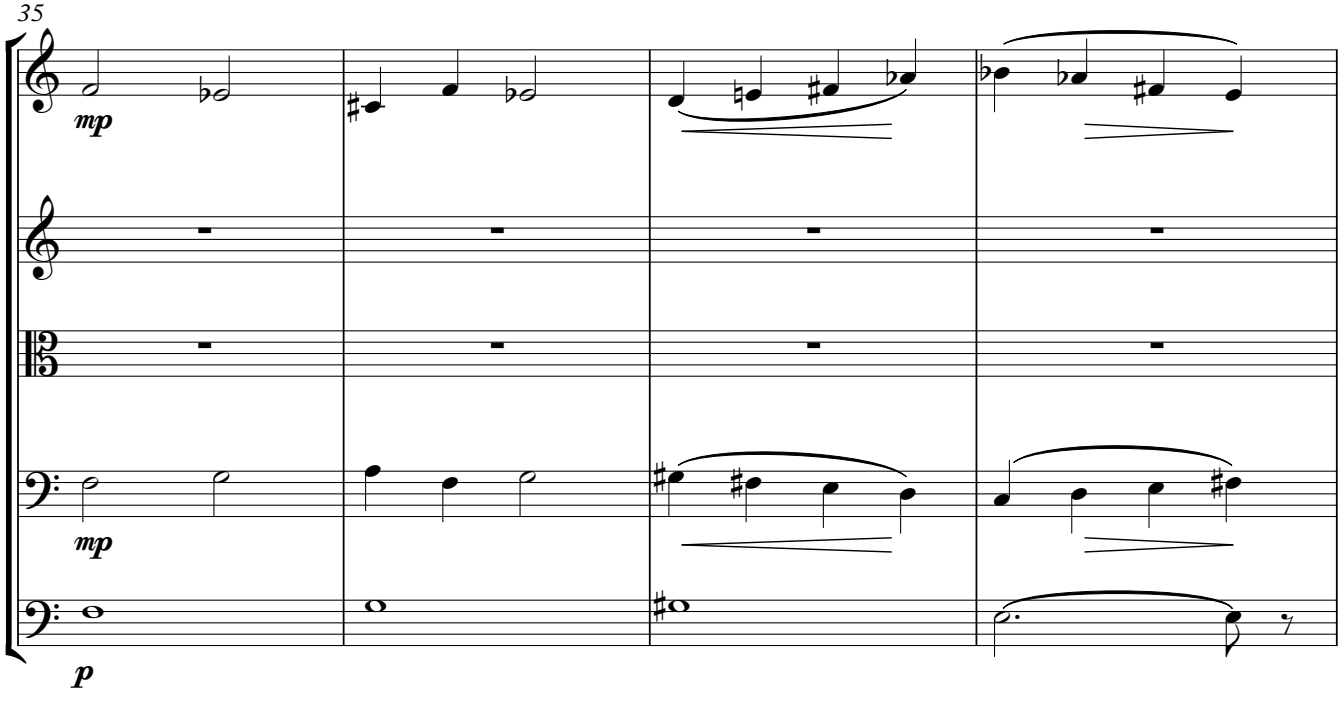
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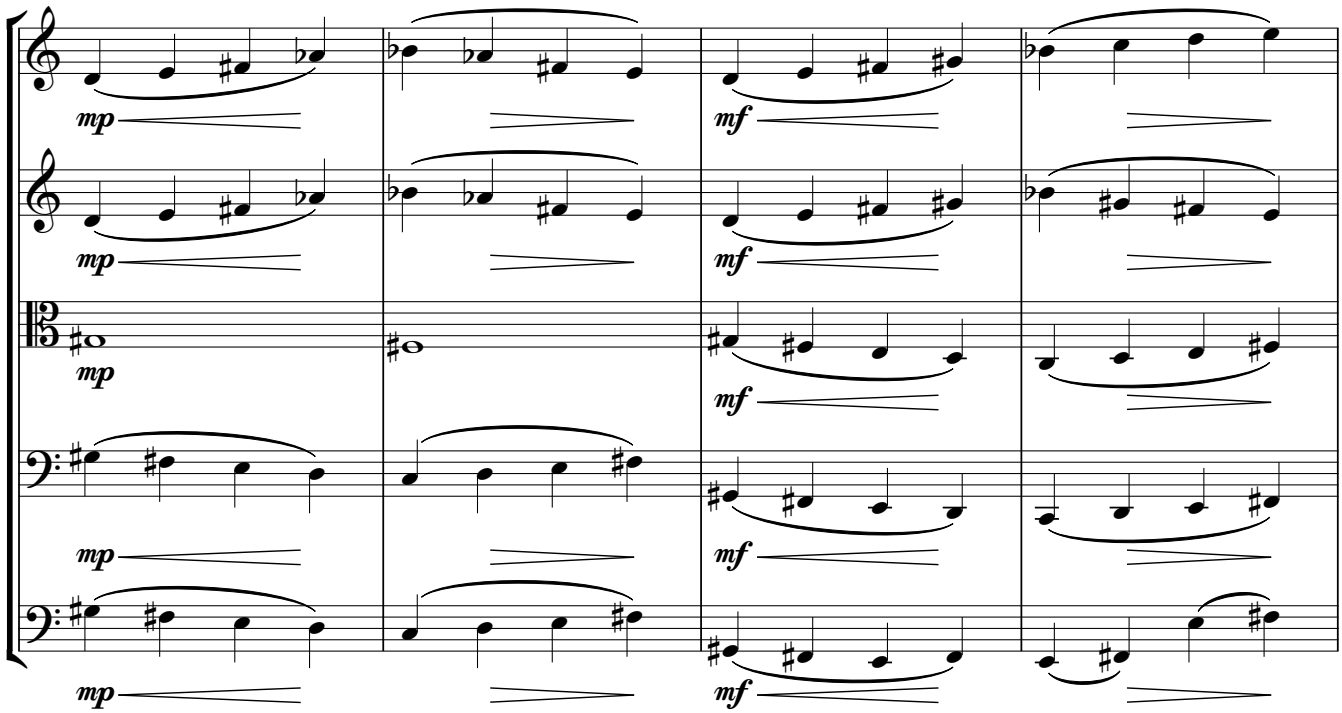

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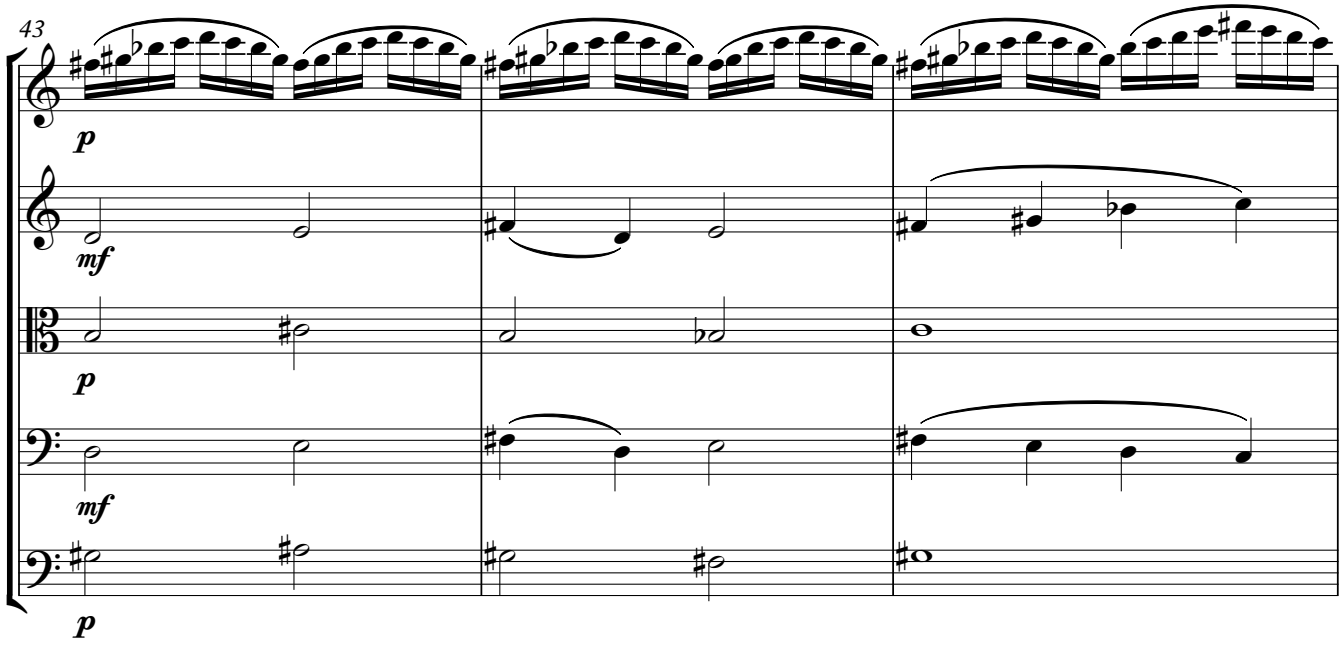

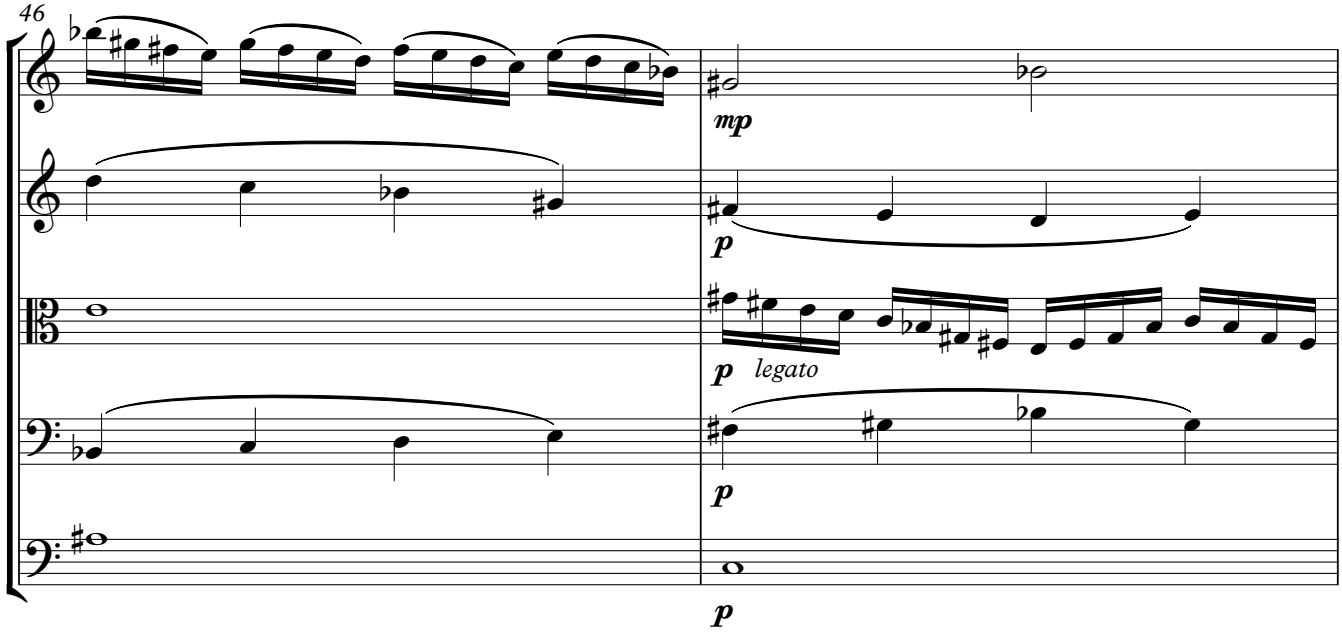
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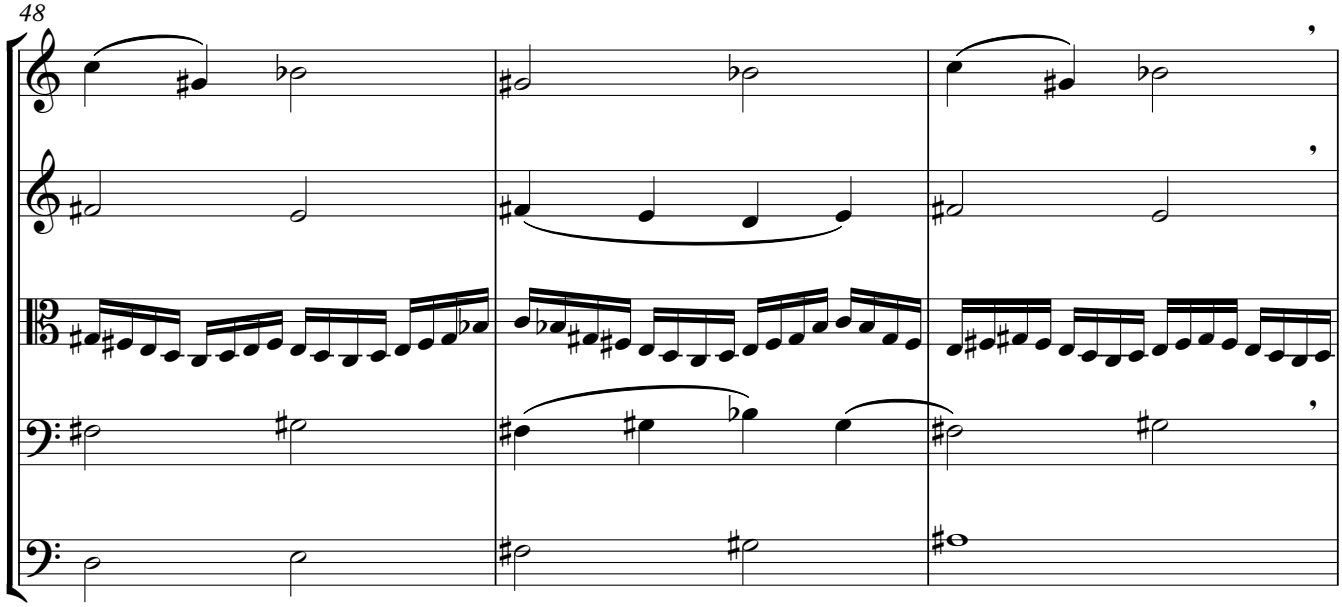
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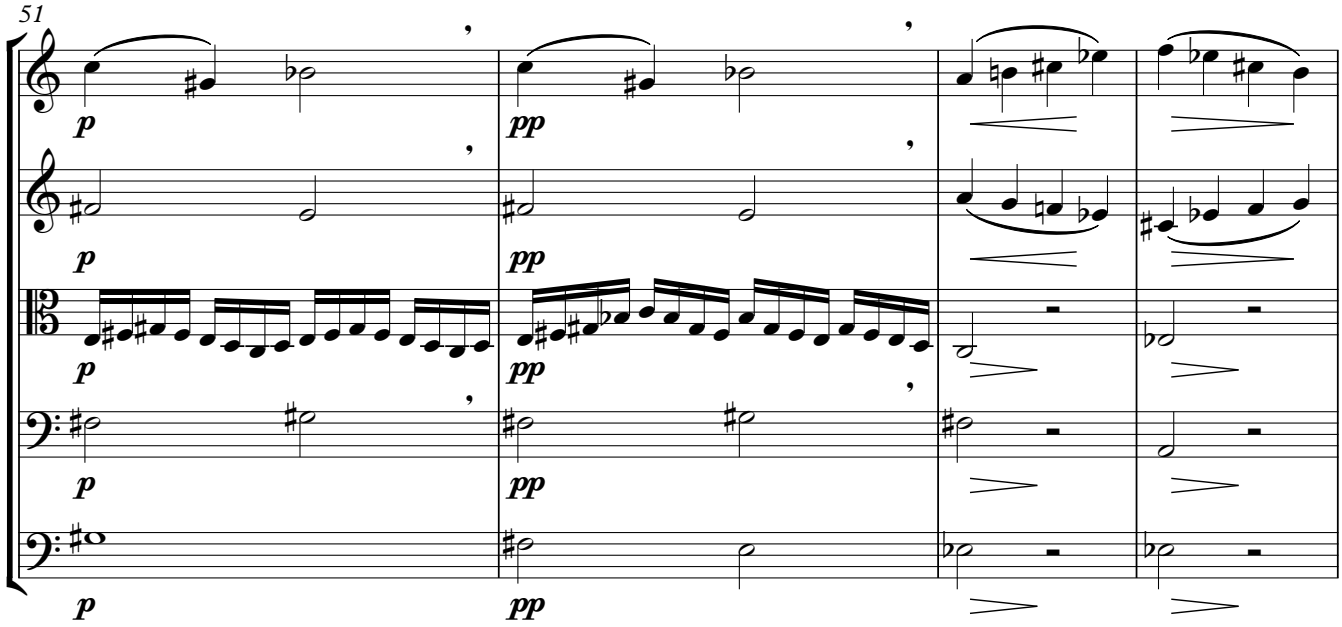
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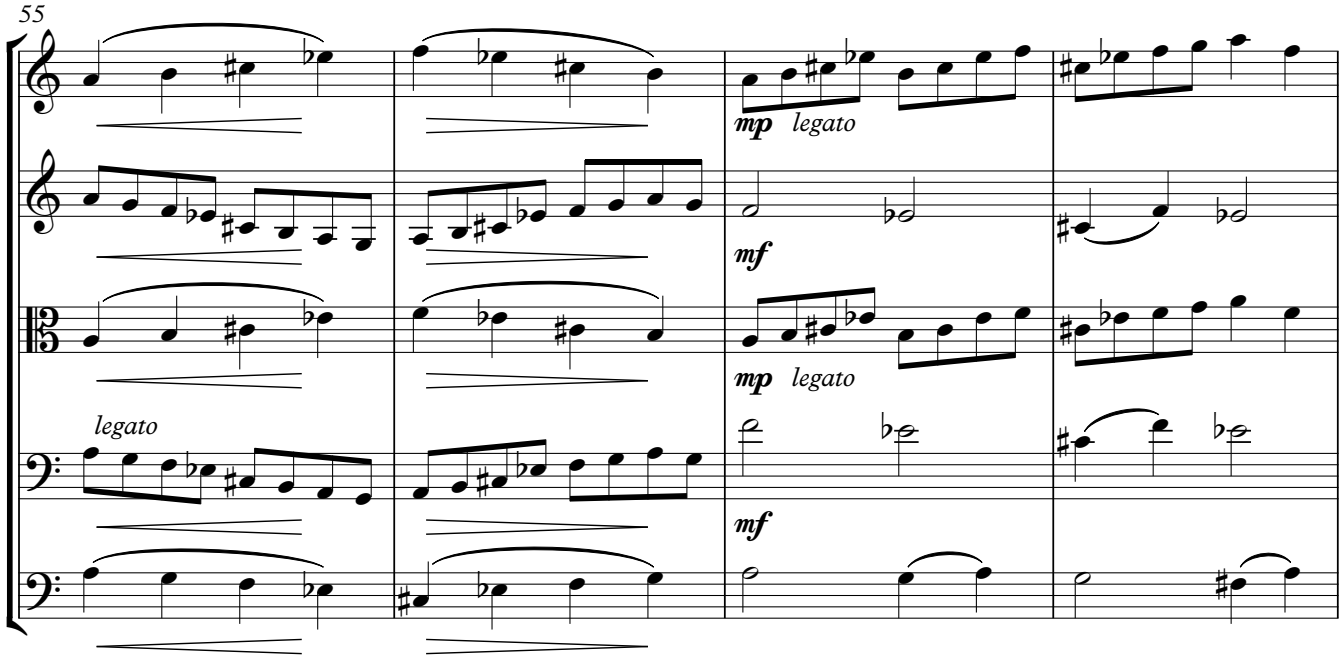
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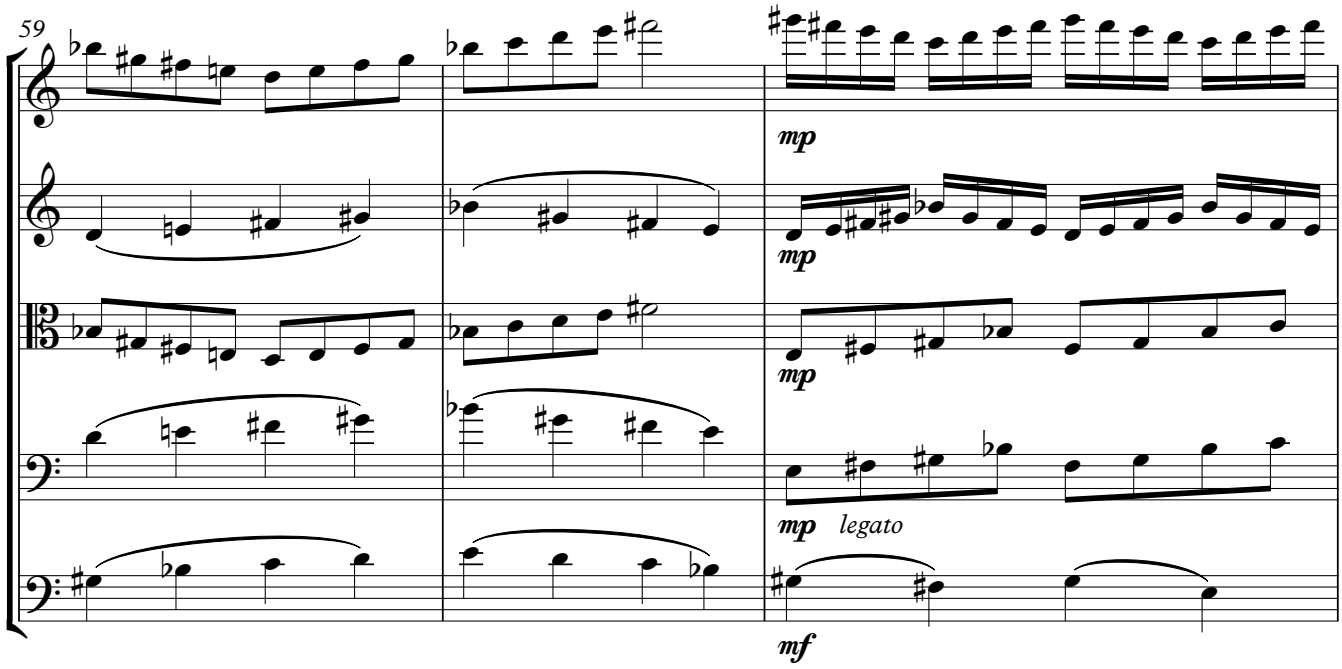
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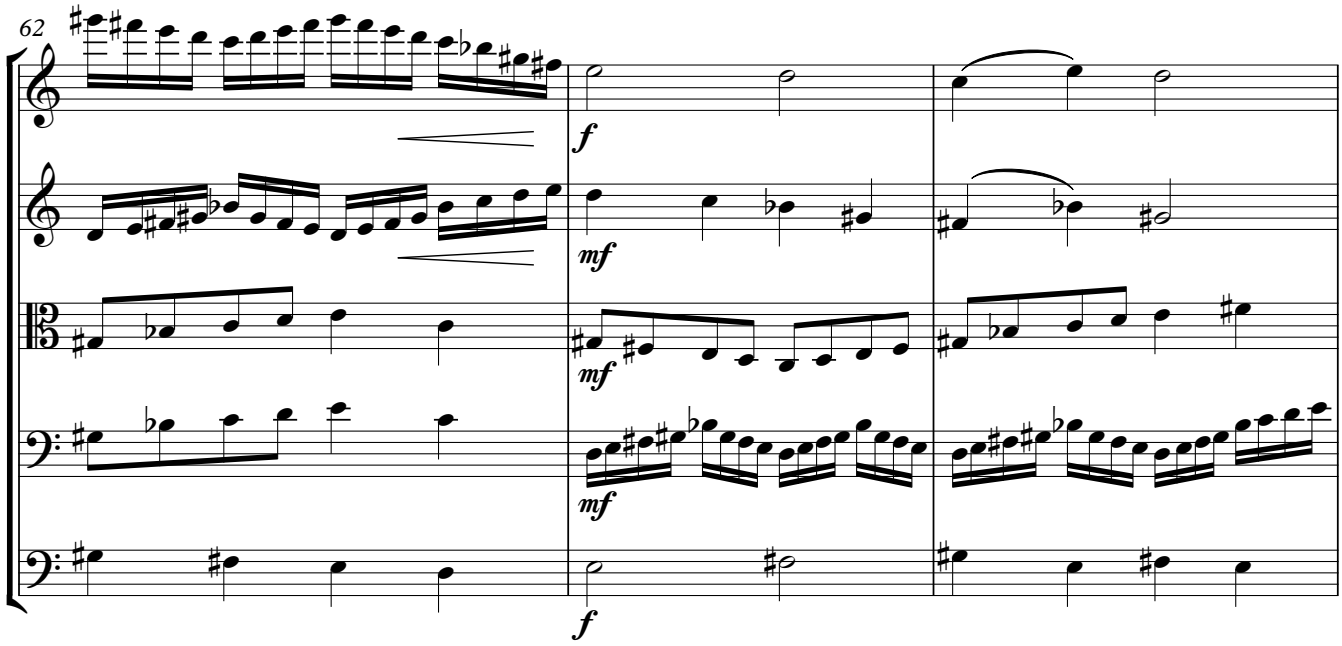
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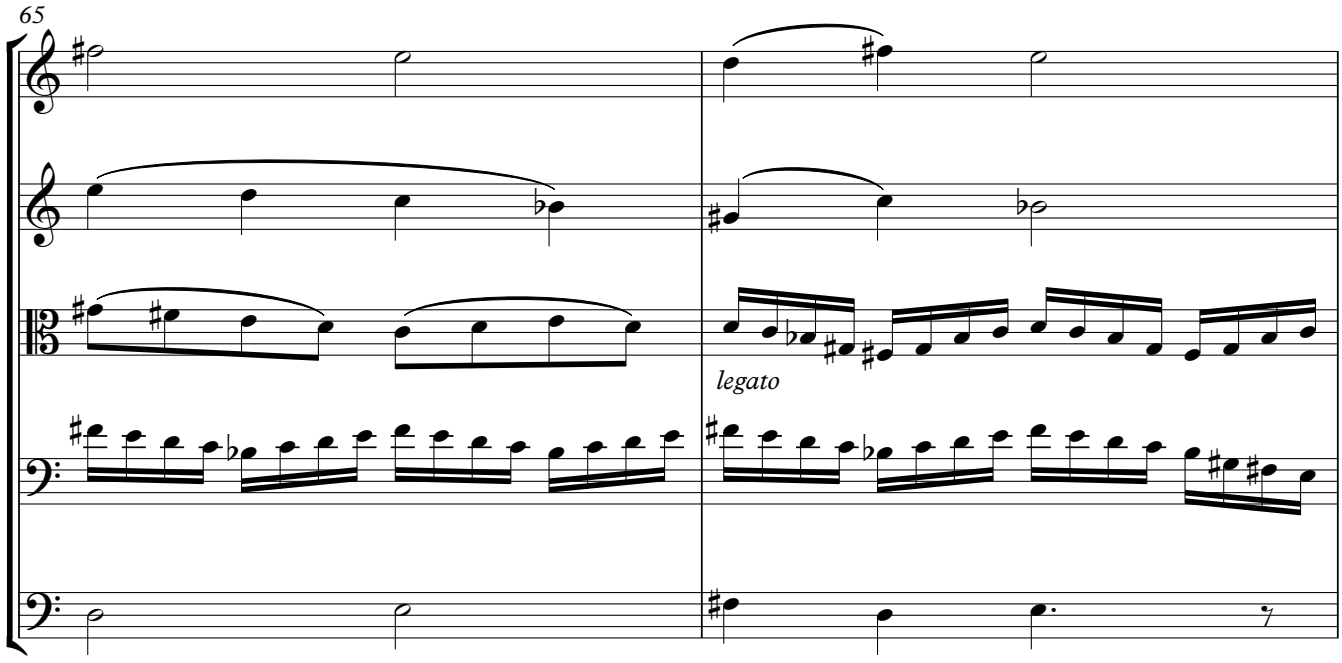
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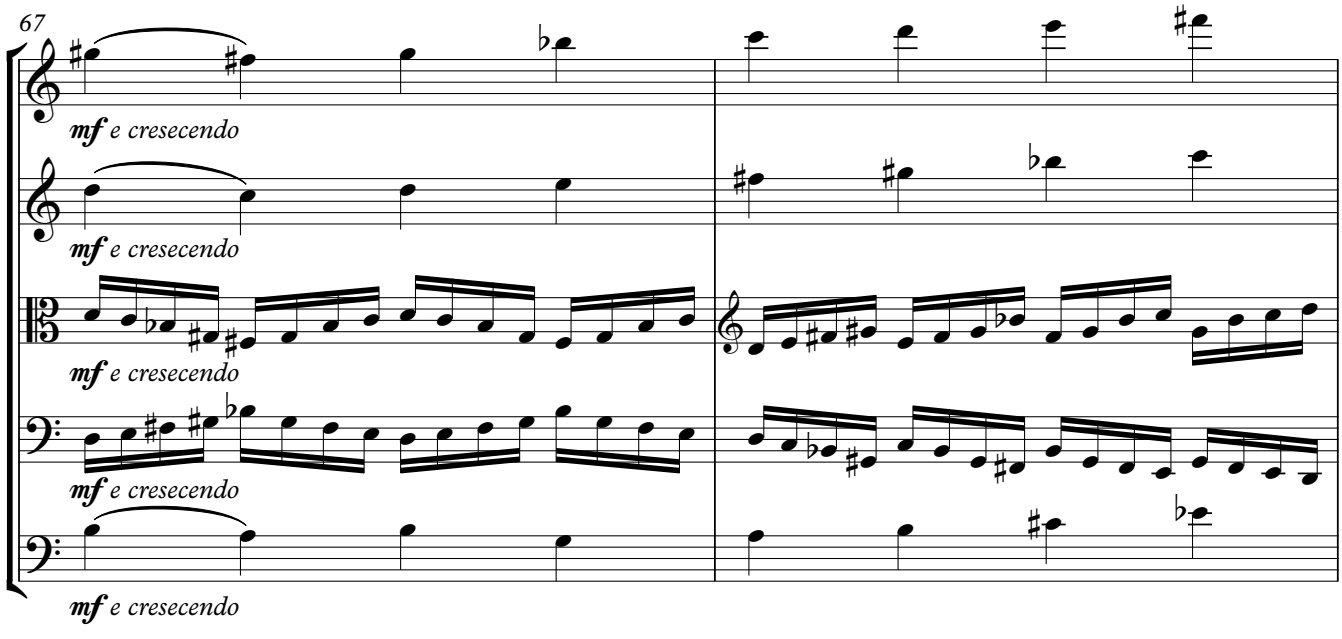
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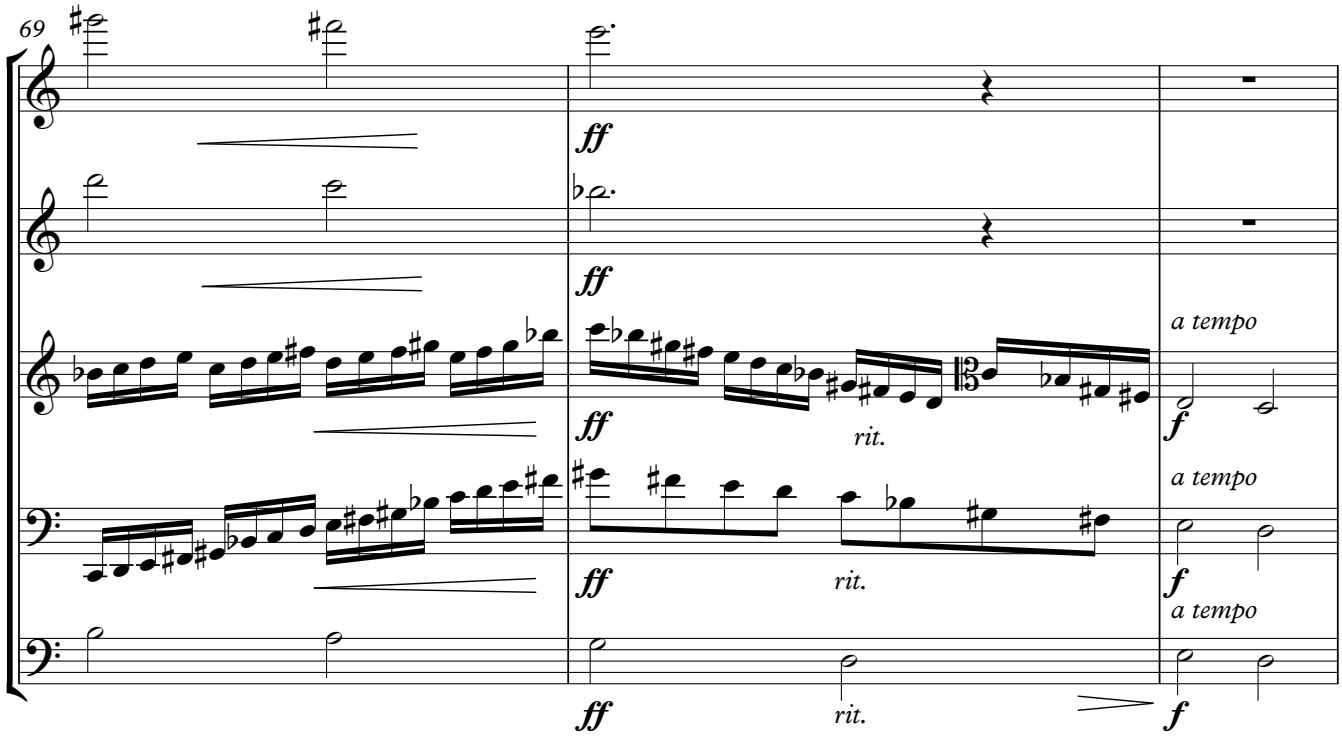
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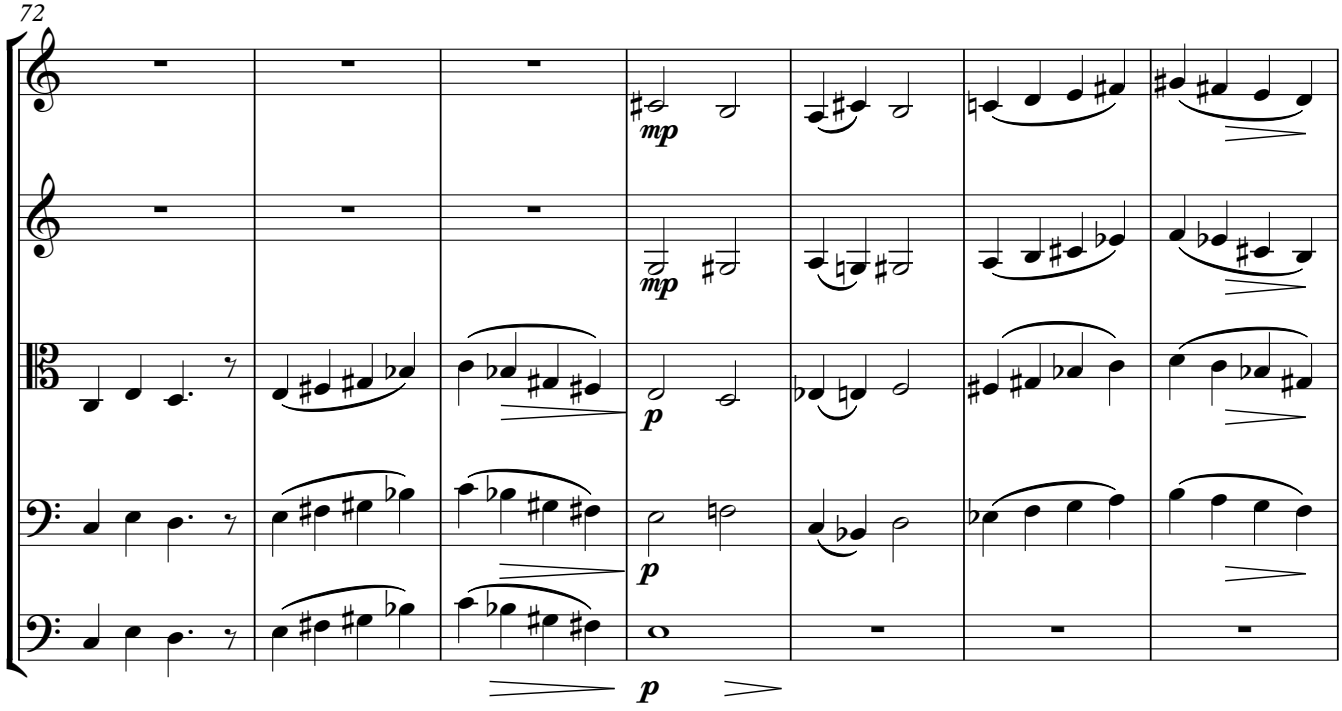
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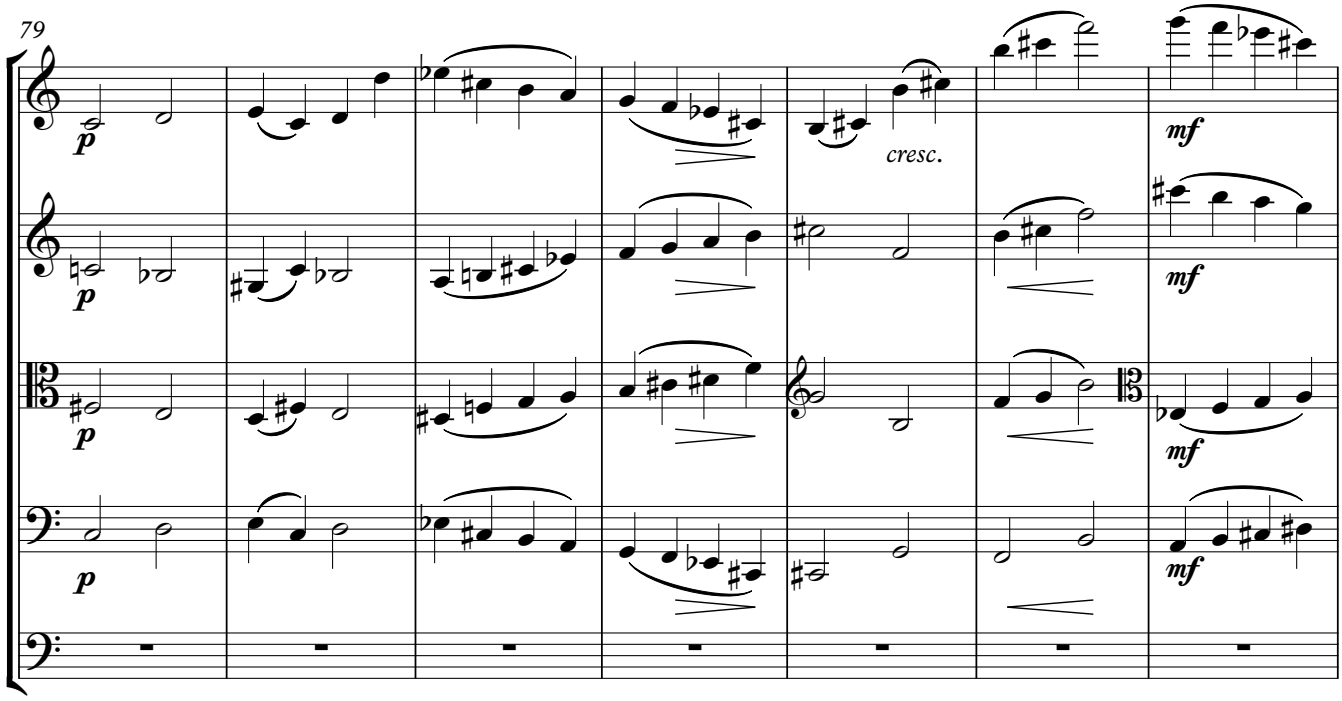
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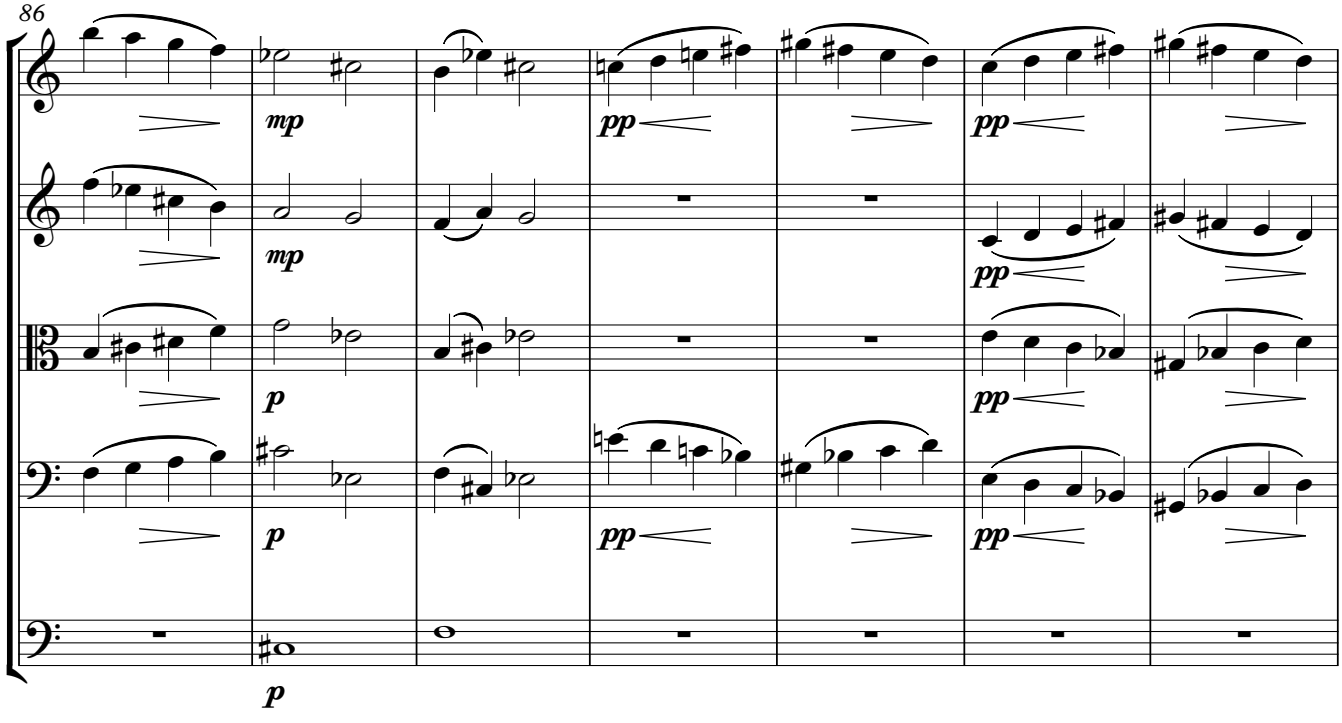
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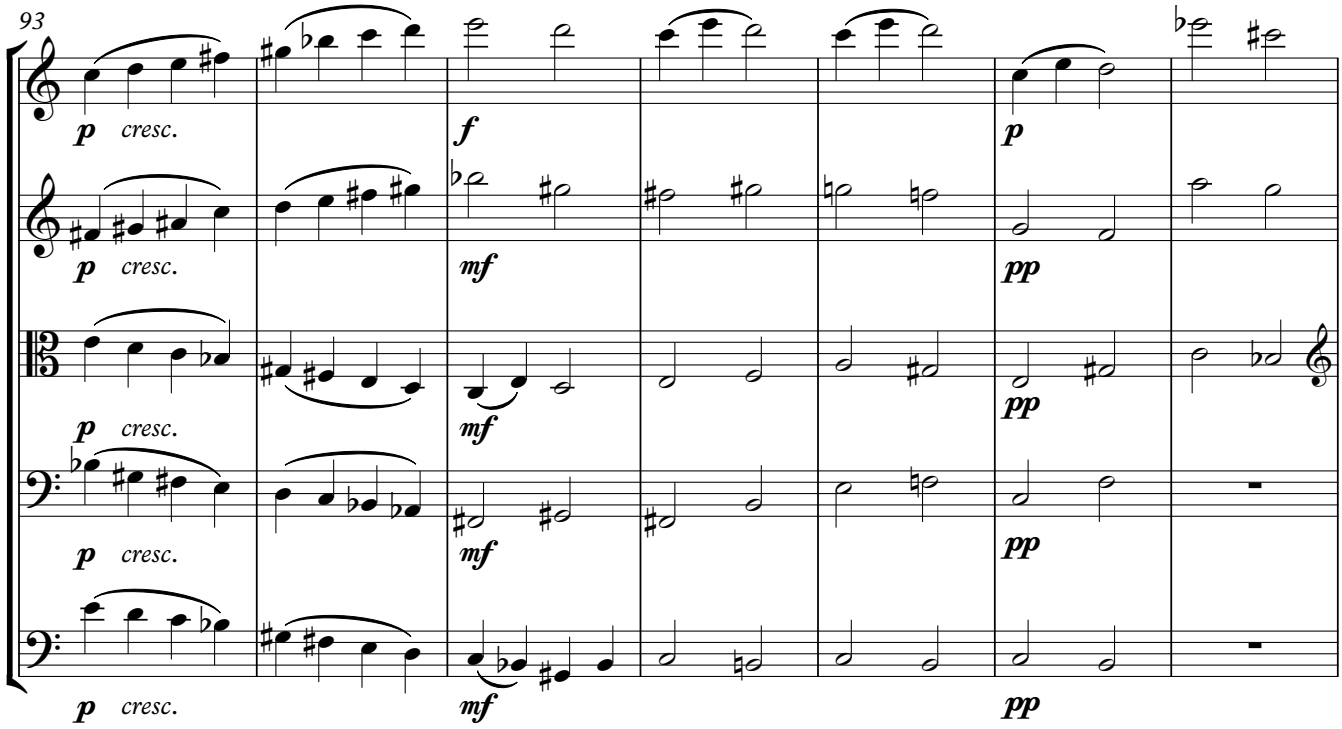
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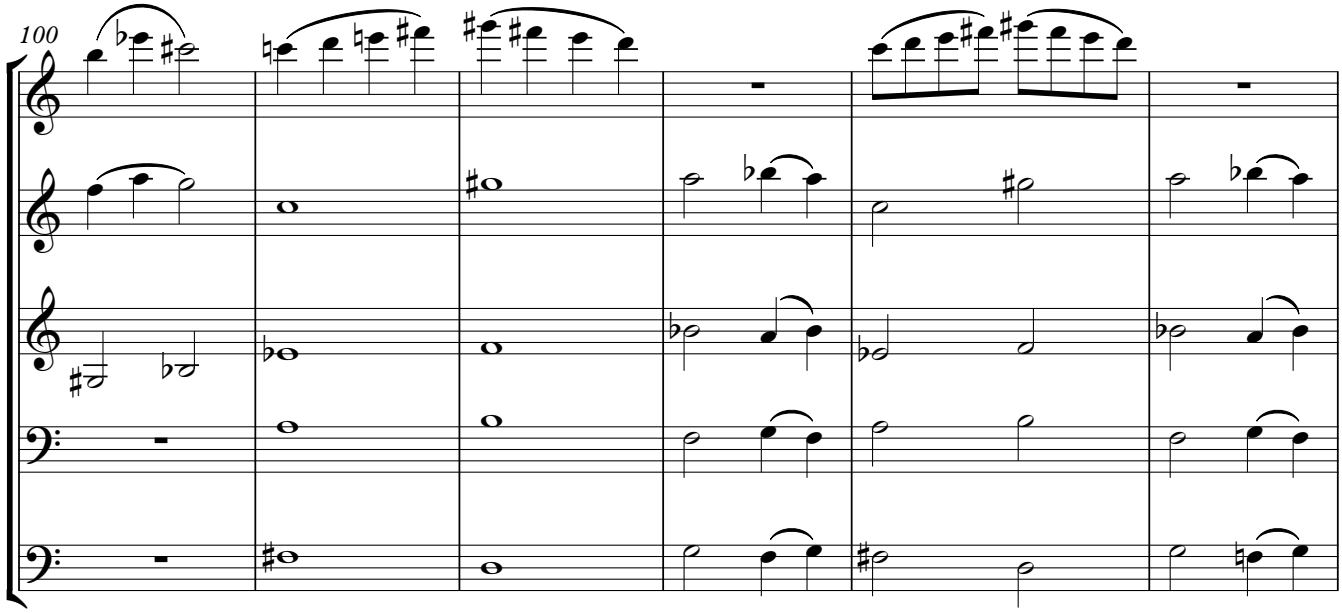
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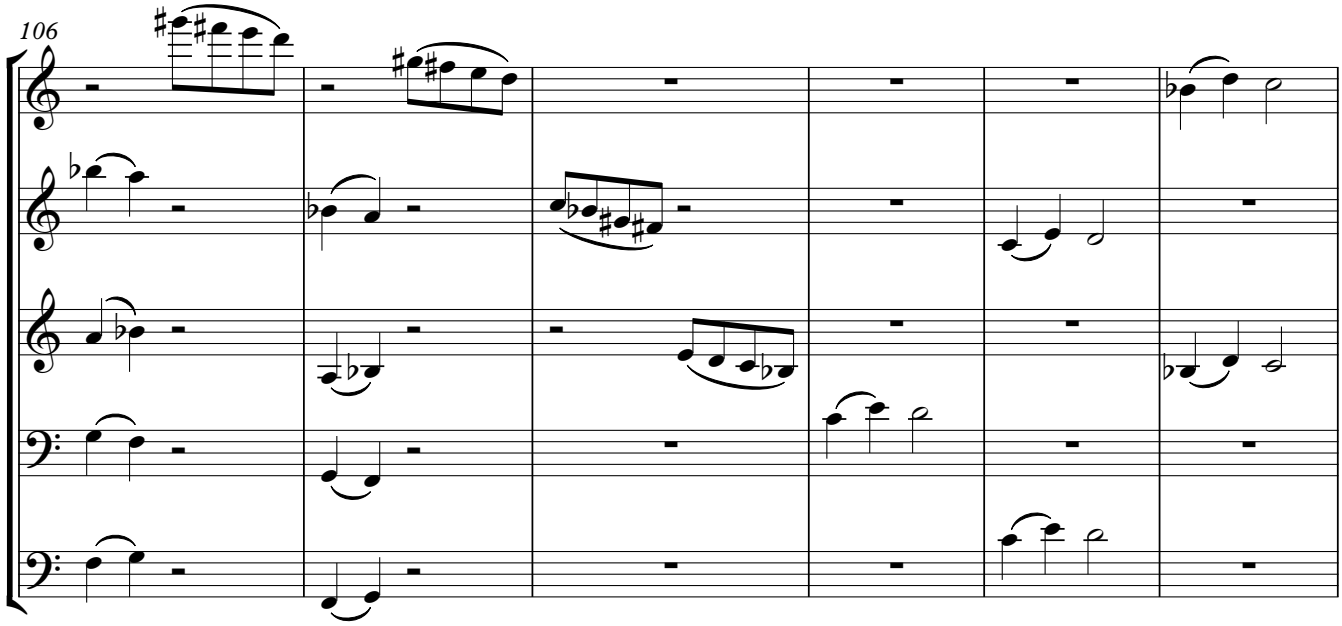
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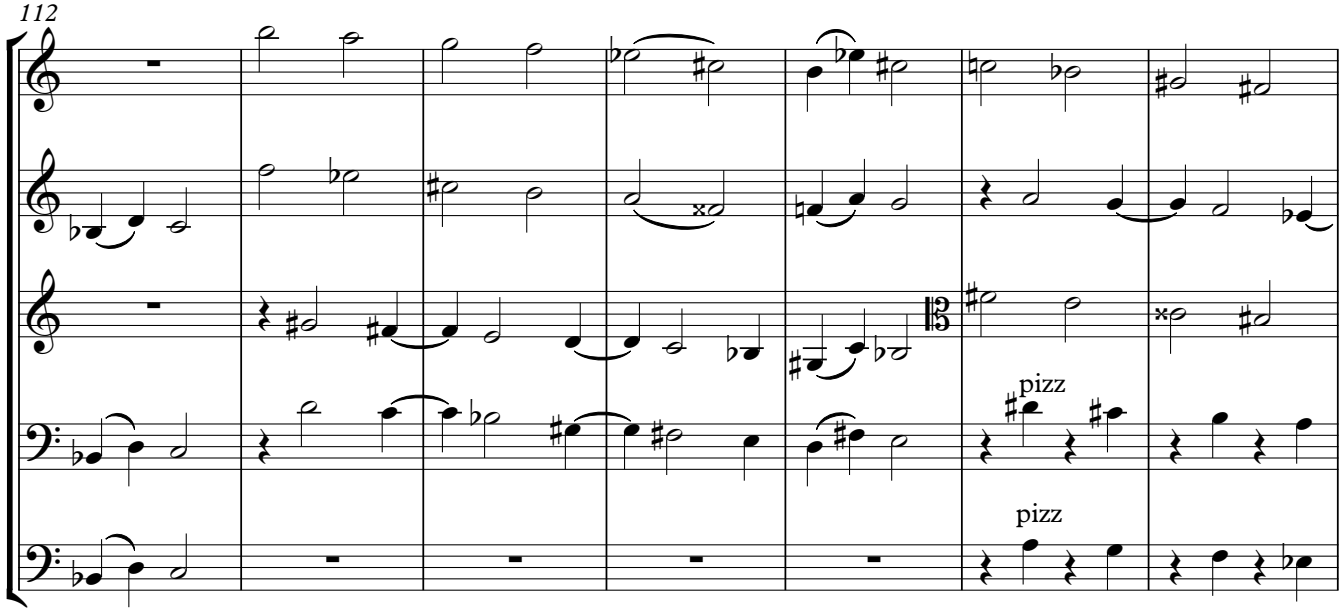
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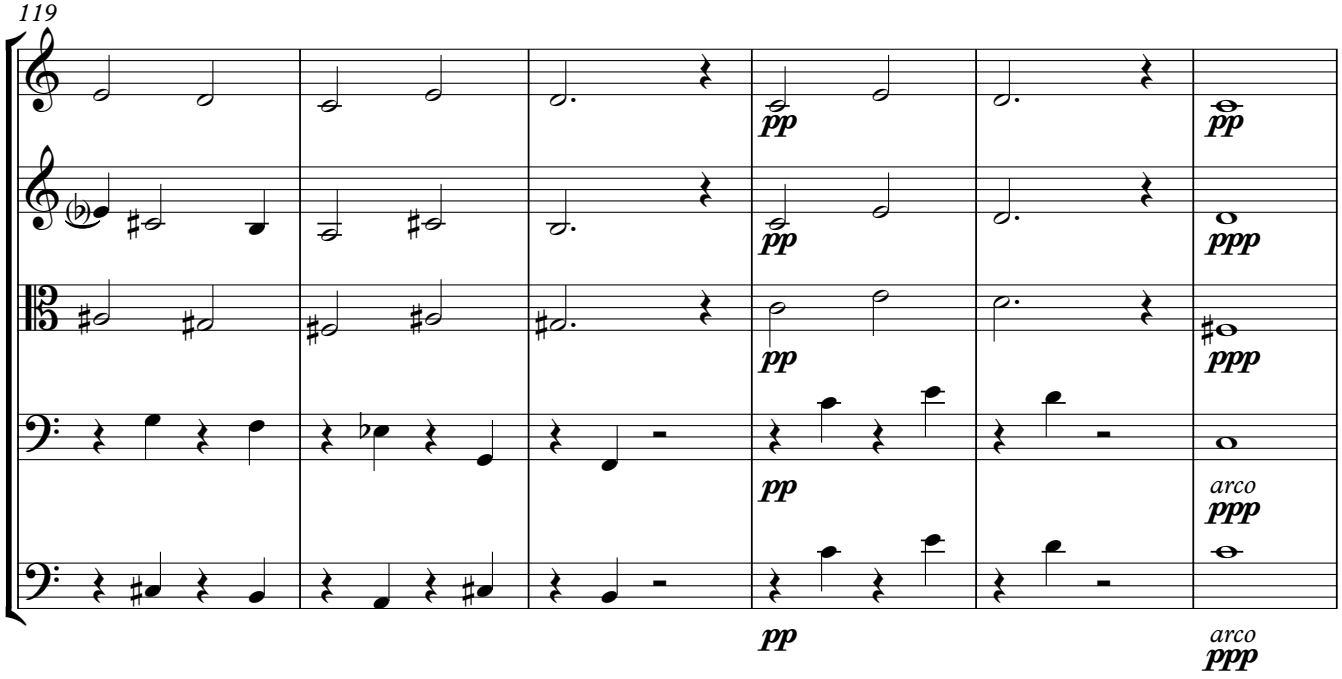
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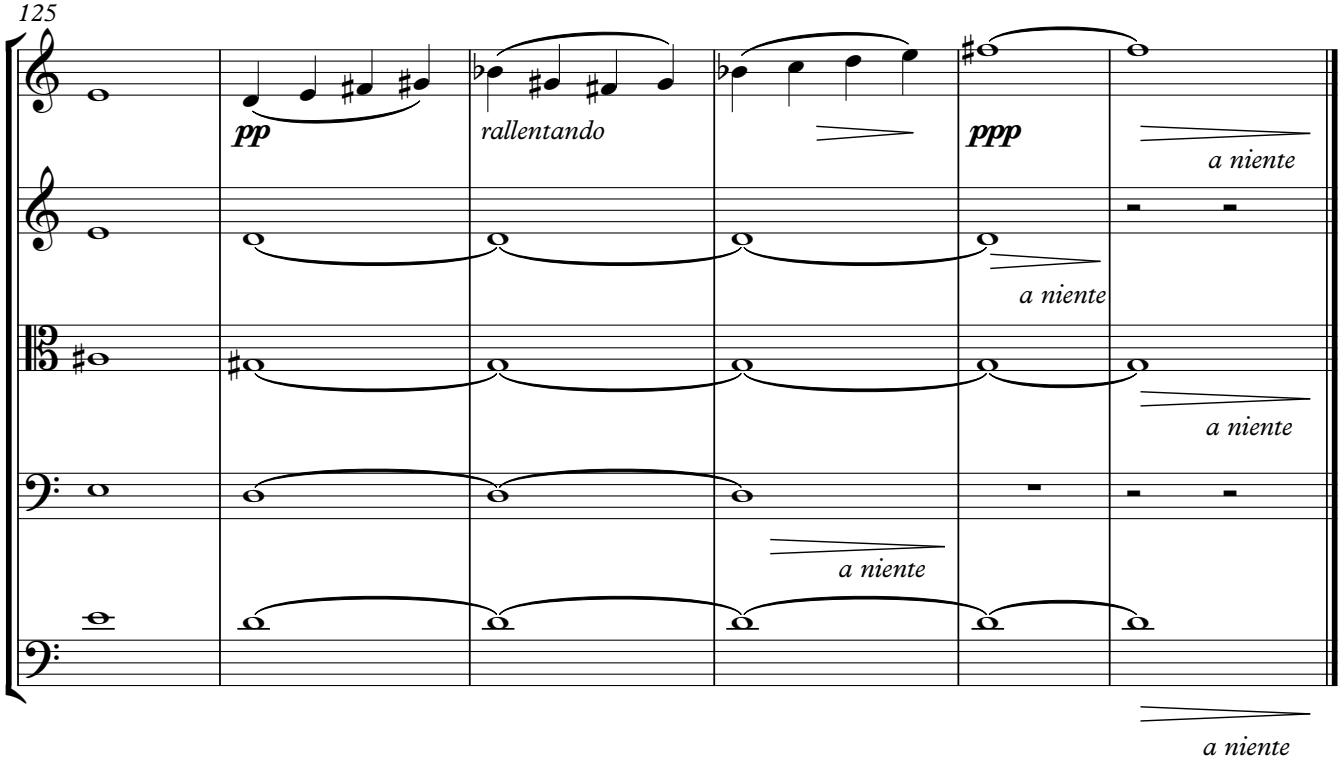
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