Edition Frobozz

EF-13A

Quintet K.407

For Horn, Violin, 2 Violas, and 'Cello.

Composed by

Wolfgang Amadeus

Mozart

(1756-1791)

Full Score

Edited by David Rothschild

The Frobozz Magic Sheet Music Co. Printed in Quendor.

Preface

"Remind me to give plenty of good work for the horns," said the eighteen-year-old Mozart to his sister Nannerl while writing his first symphony in the riverside community of Chelsea outside of London. The children of Leopold Mozart had set to work composing while their father recuperated from an illness sustained on the long journey from their home of Salzburg. The year was 1764 and the Mozarts were in the midst of several family sojourns in the imperial capitals and courts of 18th-century Europe, entertaining and astonishing emperors and empresses, princes and princesses with their great talent and, most importantly, the incredible genius of the young child, Wolfgang.

It is a noteworthy, if slightly ironic, fact that, at this very early stage in his career, the young Mozart concerned himself so with the horn; most, if not all of the composer's significant horn literature would not actually be composed until the last decade of his short life. But certainly part of this early fascination with the horn was due to the very nature of the instrument itself. A relative newcomer to the symphony orchestra, the horn had made its first appearance in the English orchestra in Handel's score for the *Water Music* in 1717 and only as recently as 1759 had the Concert Spirituel in Paris made two horns part of the permanent personnel of the opera orchestra. Mozart knew only the natural or valveless horn, which employed a collection of crooks (rings of tubing of assorted lengths) in combination with the traditional use of varied lip pressures to alter the instrument's natural harmonic series of tones. Around the middle of the 18th century, a new technique of hand-stopping had been codified by the Dresden horn player, A.J. Hampel, which greatly supplemented the previous techniques. But, in the solo literature, the instrument remained an enigma, eluding all the most virtuosic of players. The horn would not become a truly chromatic instrument until the application of valves to brass instruments around 1815.

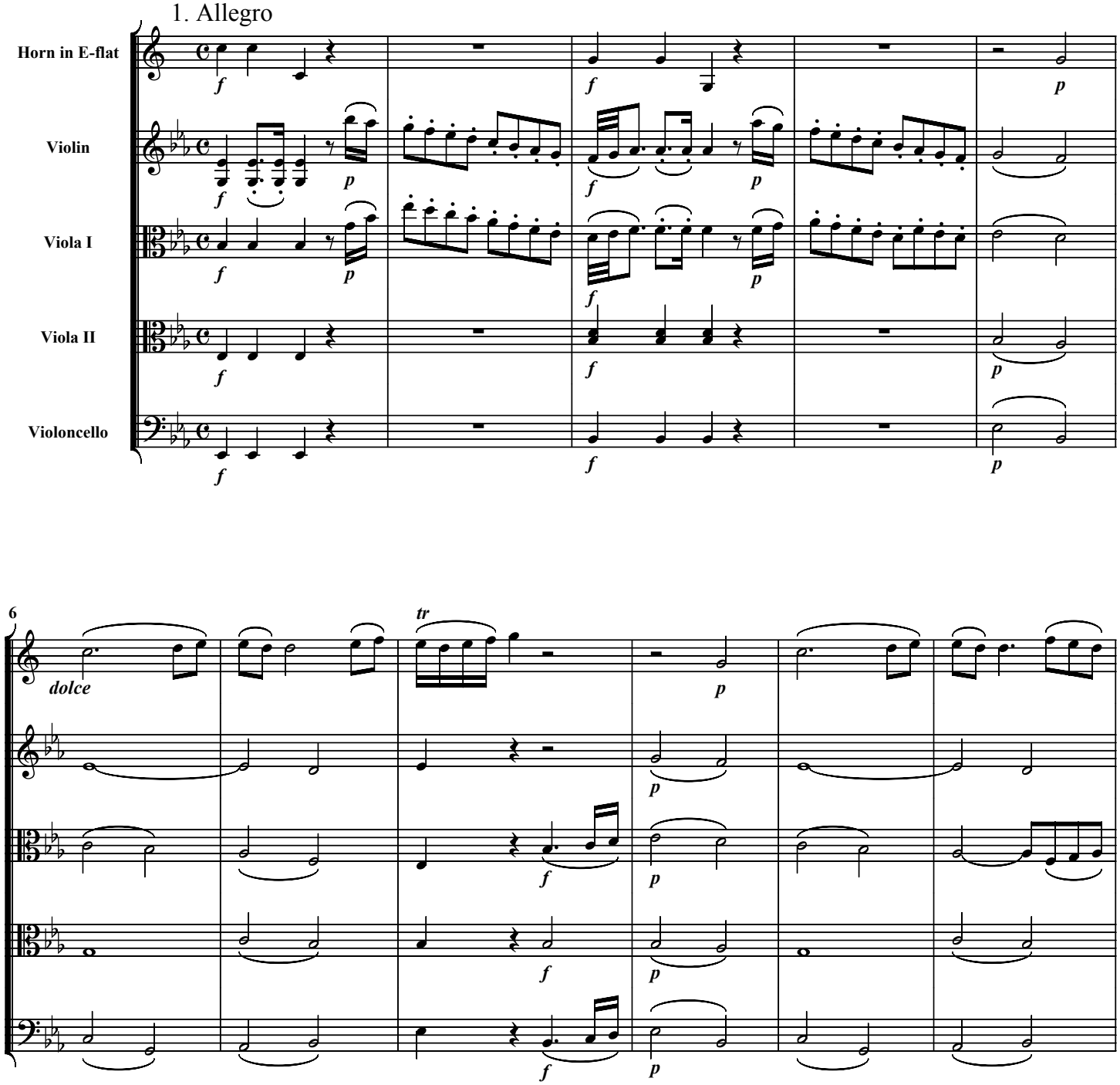
Given these limitations, it is no surprise that Mozart's works for solo horn were composed almost exclusively for one particular player, Mozart's life-long friend and Salzburg compatriot, Ignaz Leitgreb. History has painted a rather checkered portrait of Leitgreb, depicting him as clumsy, boorish, and nit-witted, known almost as much for the cheese shop he opened on funds borrowed from the Mozarts as for his supreme mastery of the natural horn. Musicologist Alfred Einstein called him "the butt of Mozart's jokes" and Einstein's observation seems borne out in the manuscript of Mozart's fourth horn concerto, written in a variety of blue, red, green, and black inks, all deliberately to confuse the poor performer! But such things set aside, it is clear that the relationship between Mozart and Leitgreb was an important one, producing some of the finest works available in all of the horn literature.

One of these works is this Horn Quintet (K.407), composed toward the end of 1782 in Vienna. Mozart was entering a period of great success and productivity and perhaps the happiest time in his life. He was becoming settled in Vienna, establishing himself as a composer and a teacher, and enjoying the first years of marriage to Constanze Weber. The Quintet is the work of a composer delighting in the art of composition. Each of the three movements is a paragon of balance and tonal beauty with the added pleasure of classic Mozartian humor, the *sine qua non* of most every work written for Leitgreb. Many have placed the Quintet alongside the concertos, and with good reason. Throughout, the horn proudly displays its brilliance against what is most often, with the exception of the second movement, accompaniment in the strings. The declamatory octave-leap motive which opens the work permeates the *Allegro* movement, providing moments of jocular play in which the strings mimic and attempt to confuse the unsuspecting hornist.

Interestingly, Mozart chose a string complement that includes two violas instead of the traditional double violins. The result is an ensemble sound of greater warmth, complementing the mellifluous tones of the horn. This choice of instrumentation works to great effect in the *Andante*. Here the horn takes up what Einstein has referred to as "a love duet between the horn and violin." Again, Mozart outlines the octave motive from the first movement, but in his inimitable fashion, drapes the idea in a cloak of vastly different colors. The *Rondo* finale brings the work to an appropriately bold and sparkling close, with the horn afforded one last chance to display its virtuosity.

Quintet for Horn & Strings, K.407

W.A. Mozart (1756-1791)



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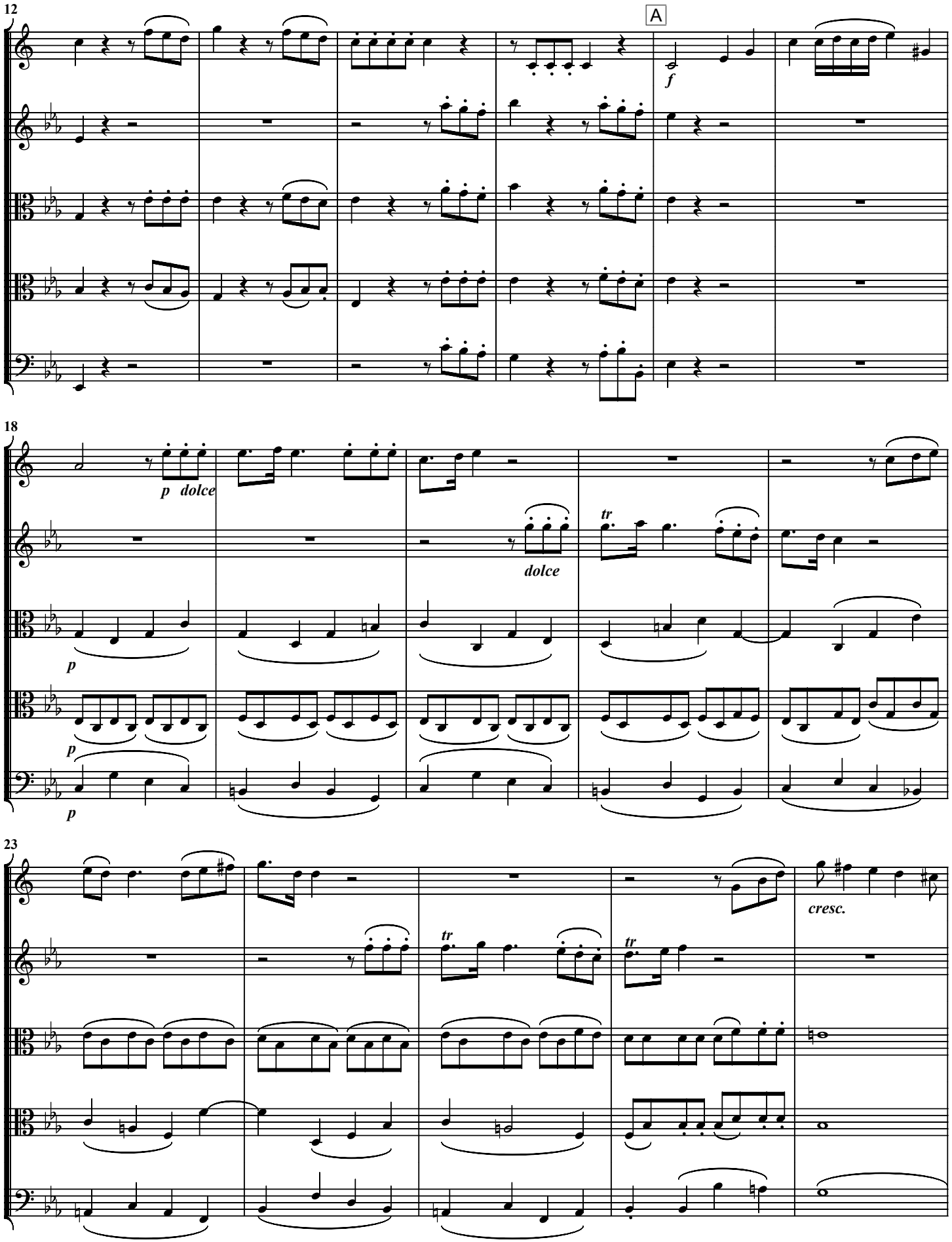
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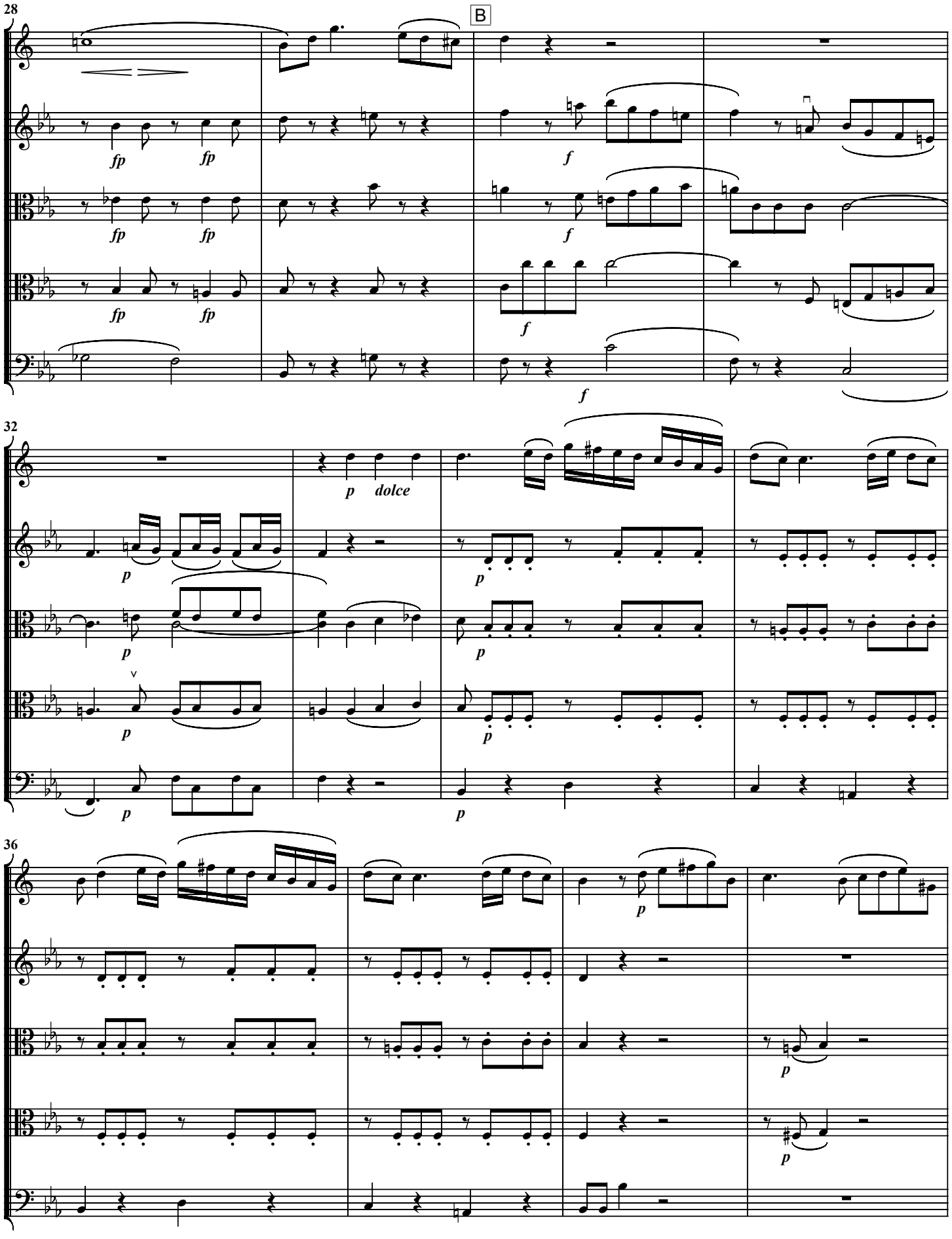
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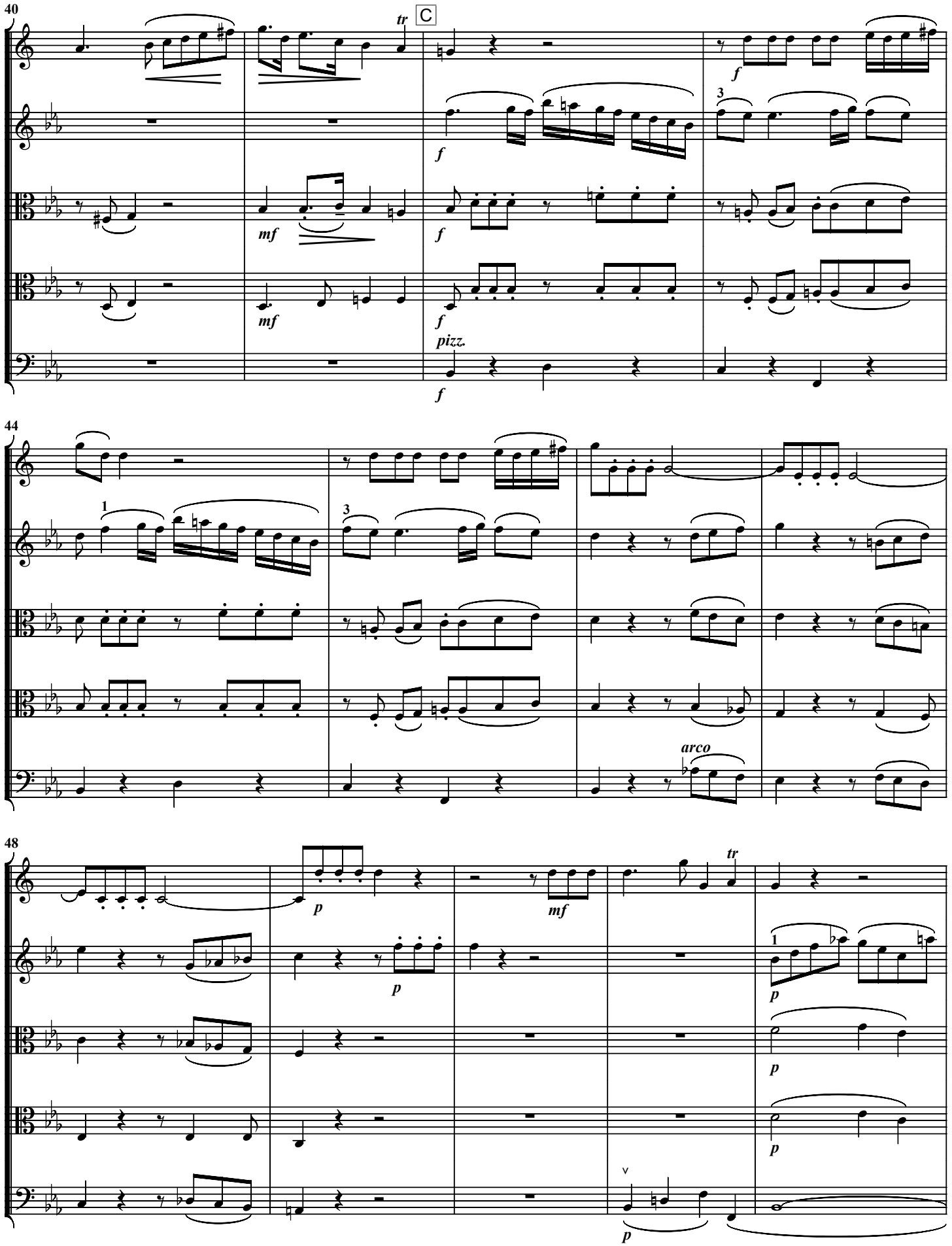
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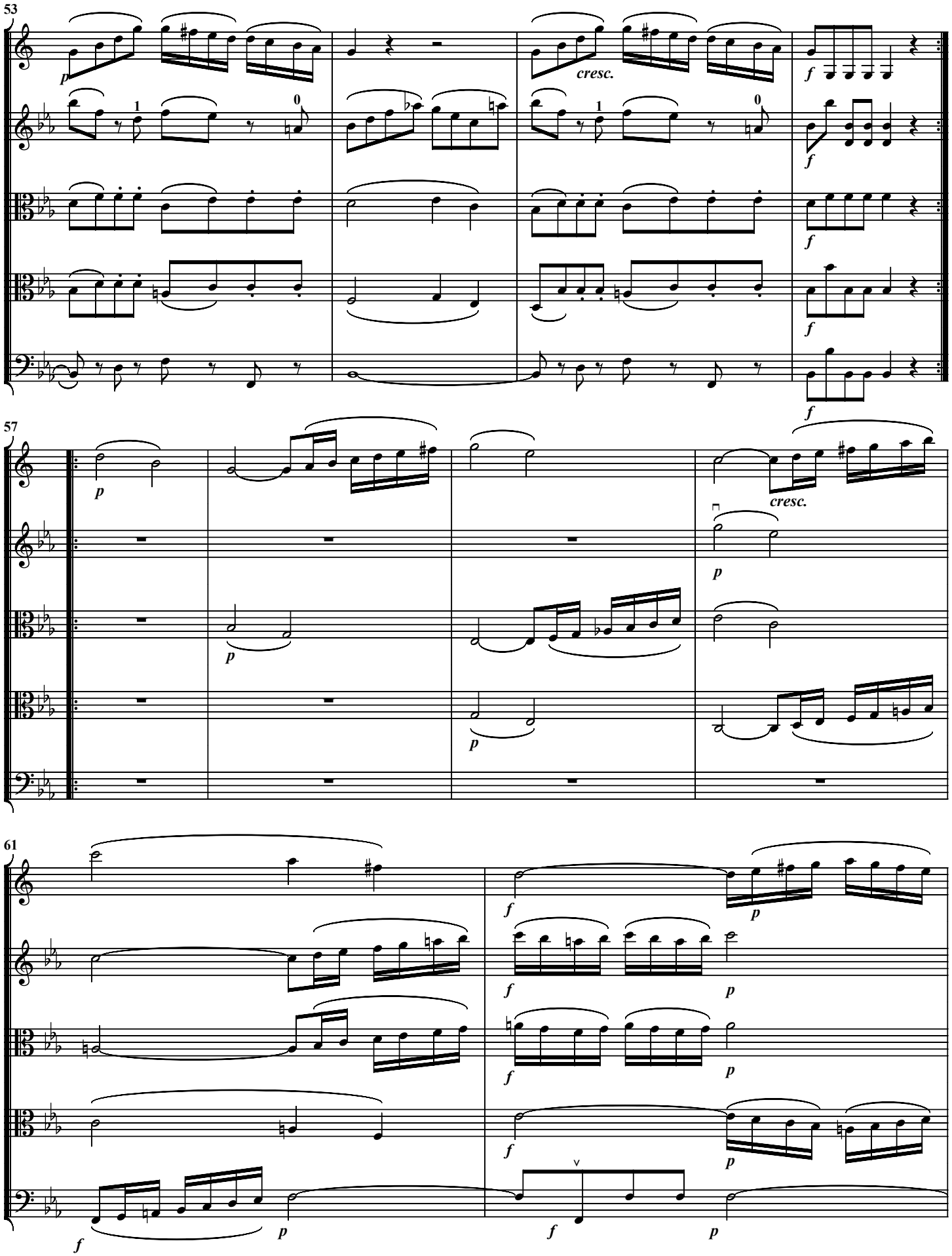
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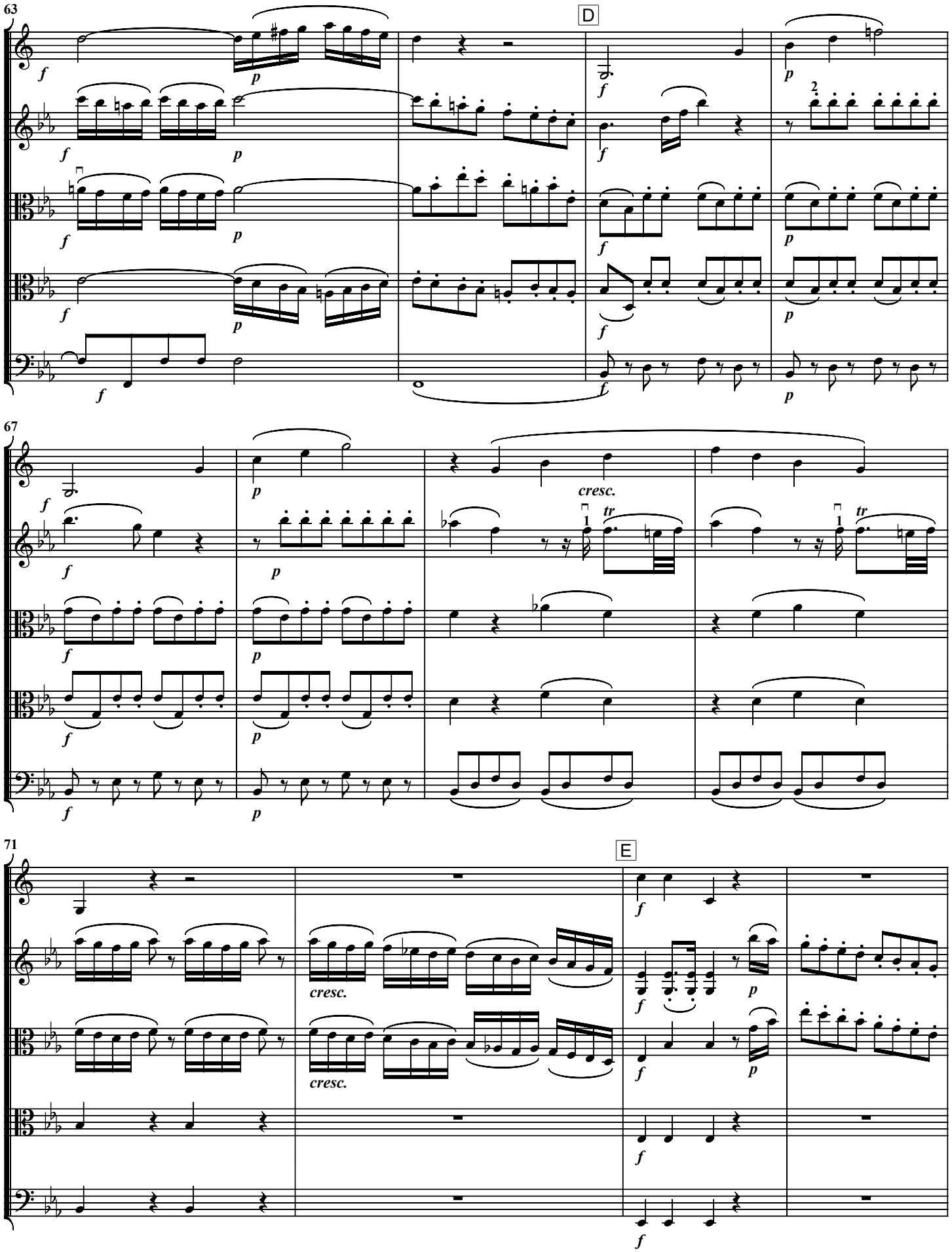
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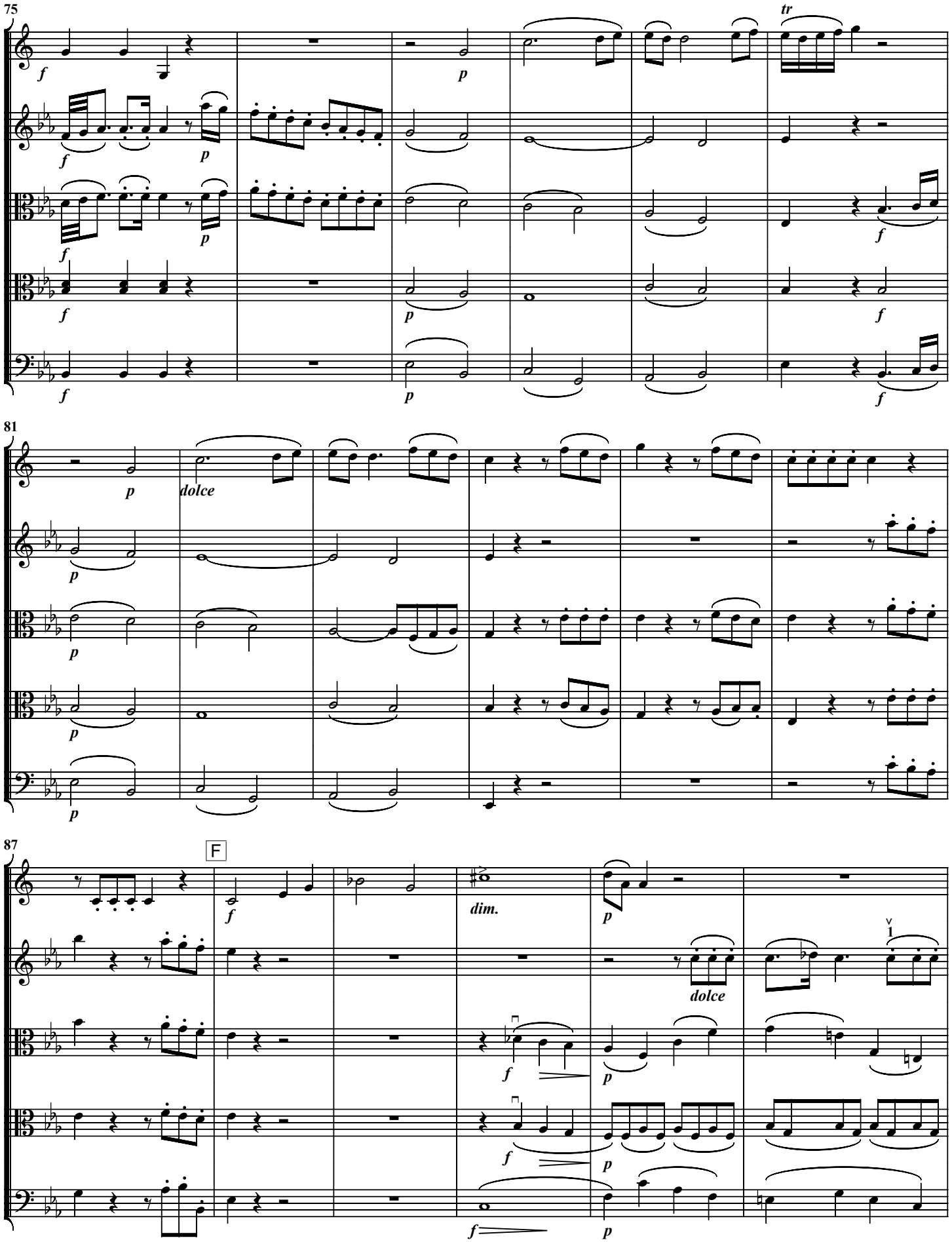
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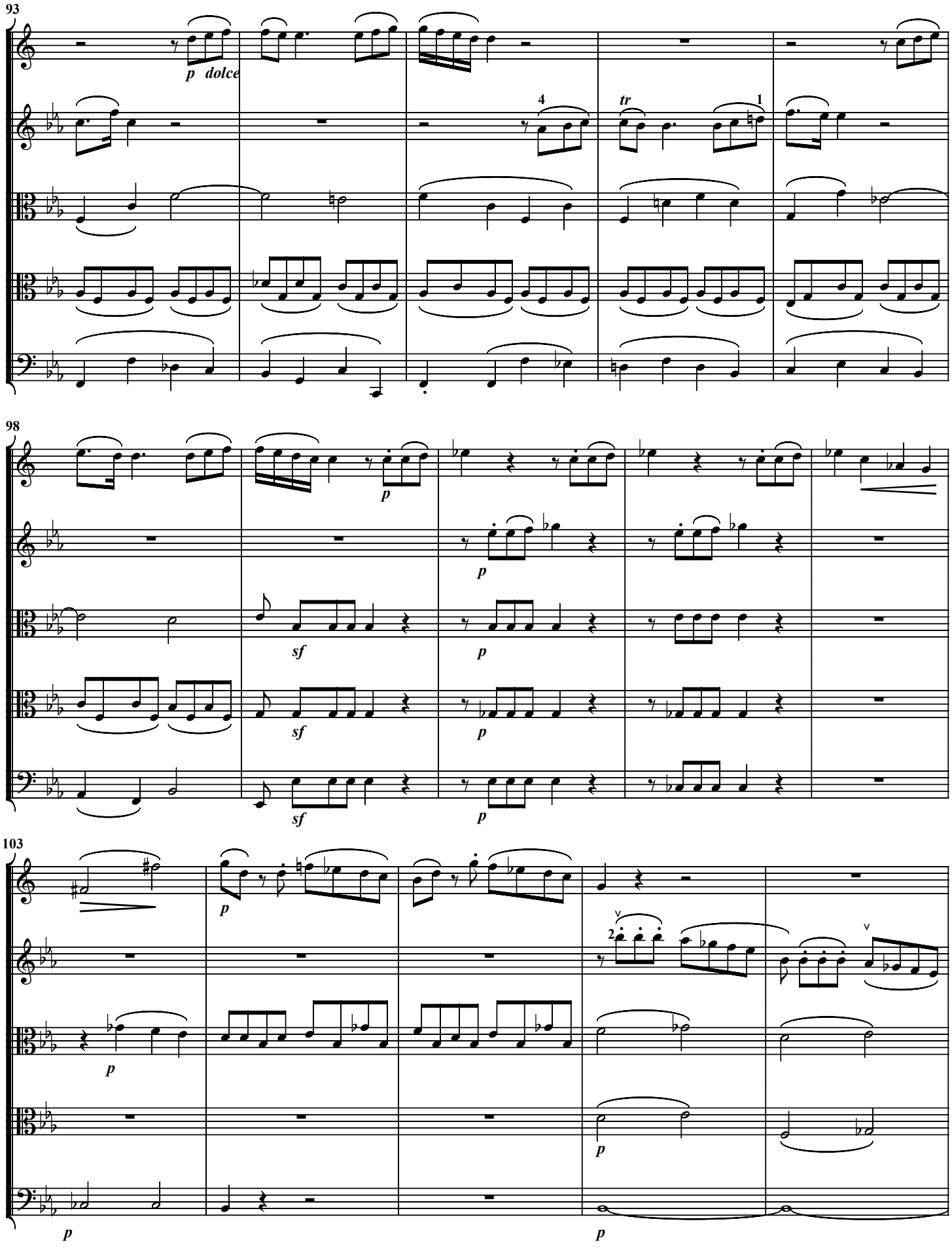
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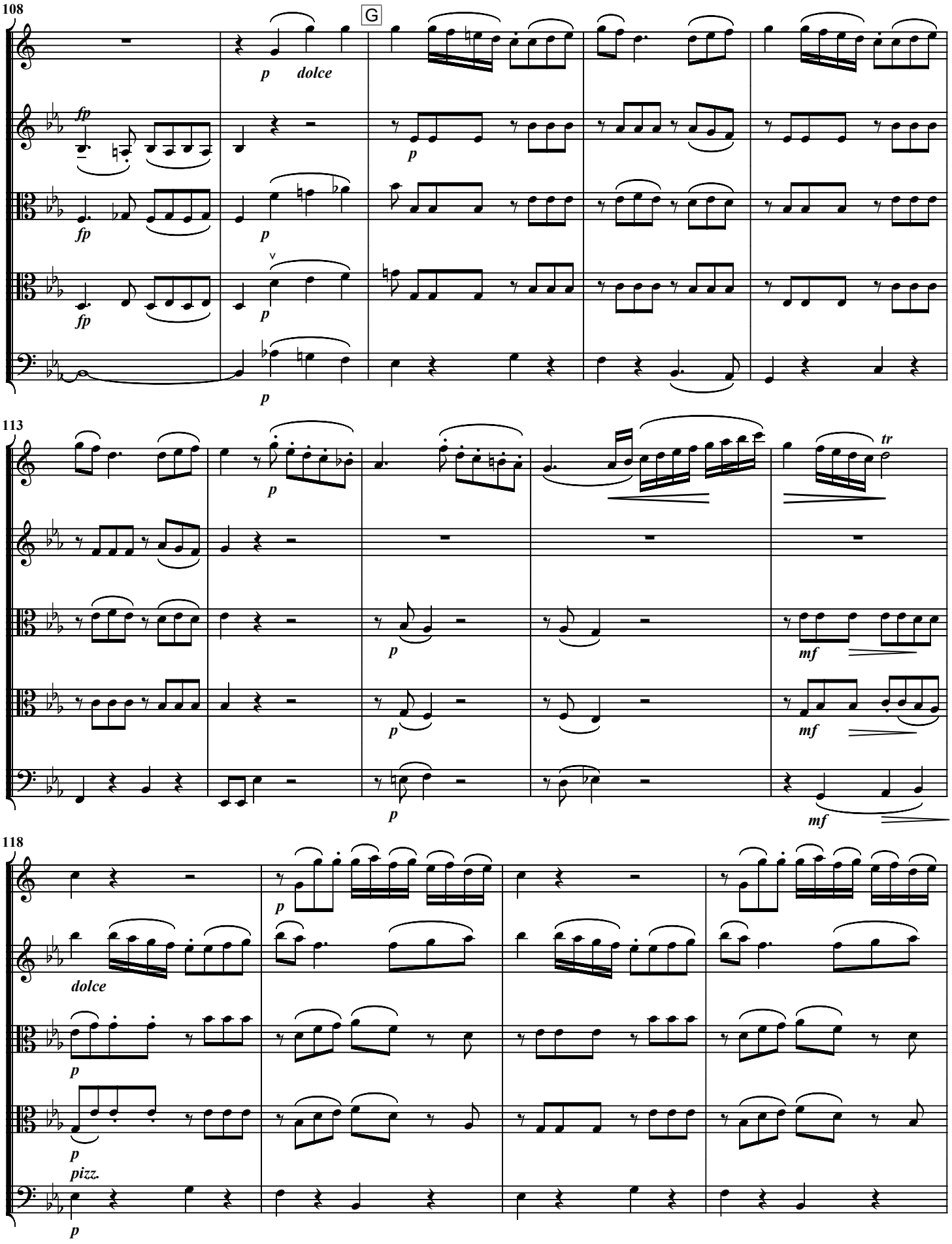
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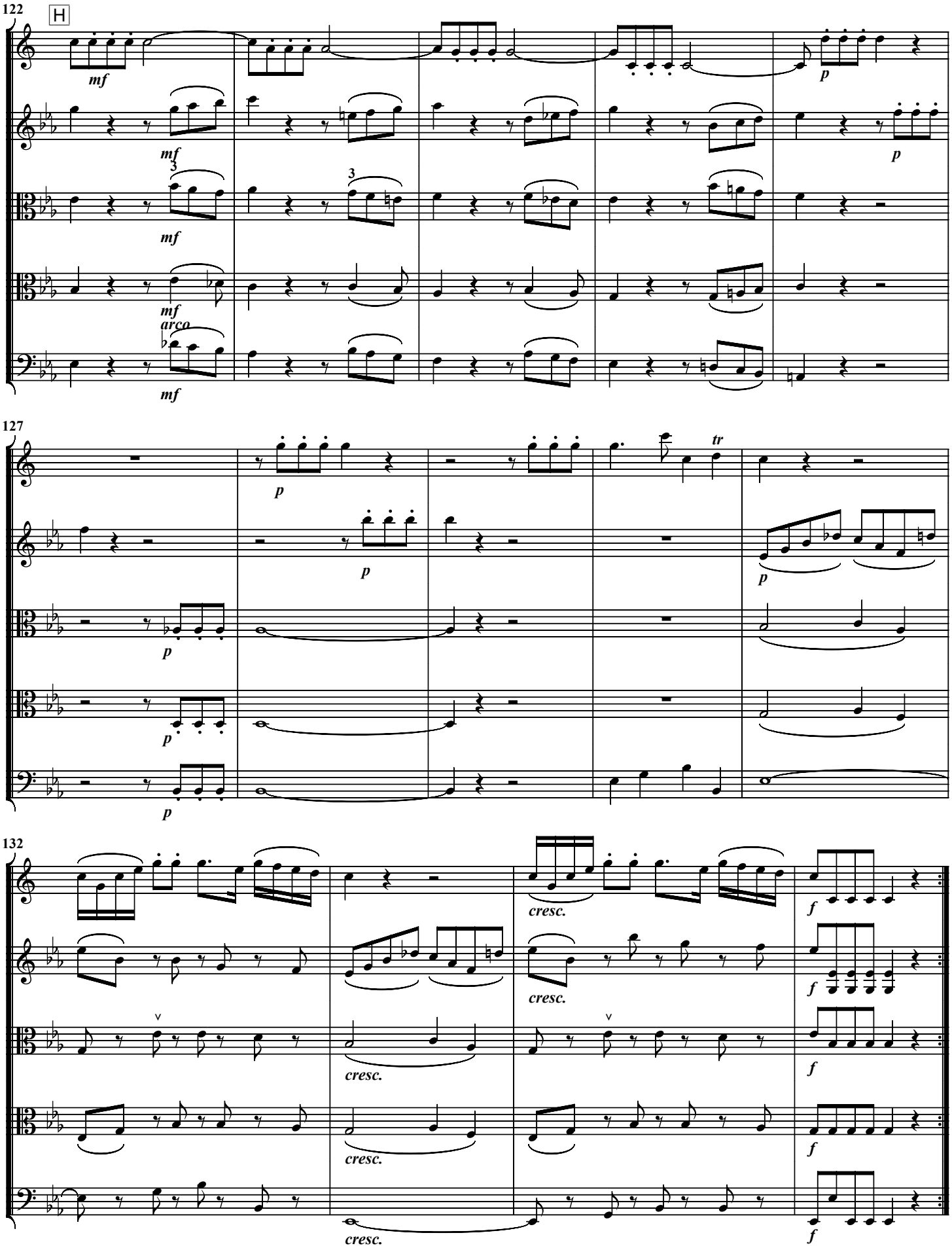
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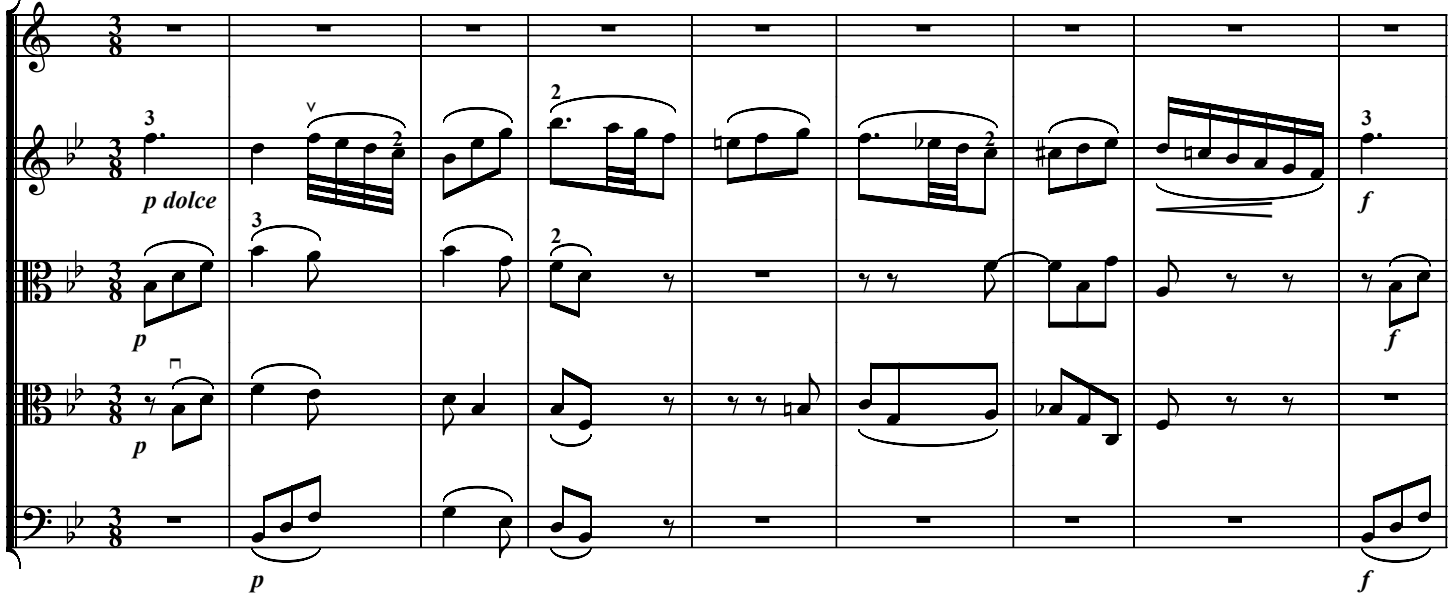

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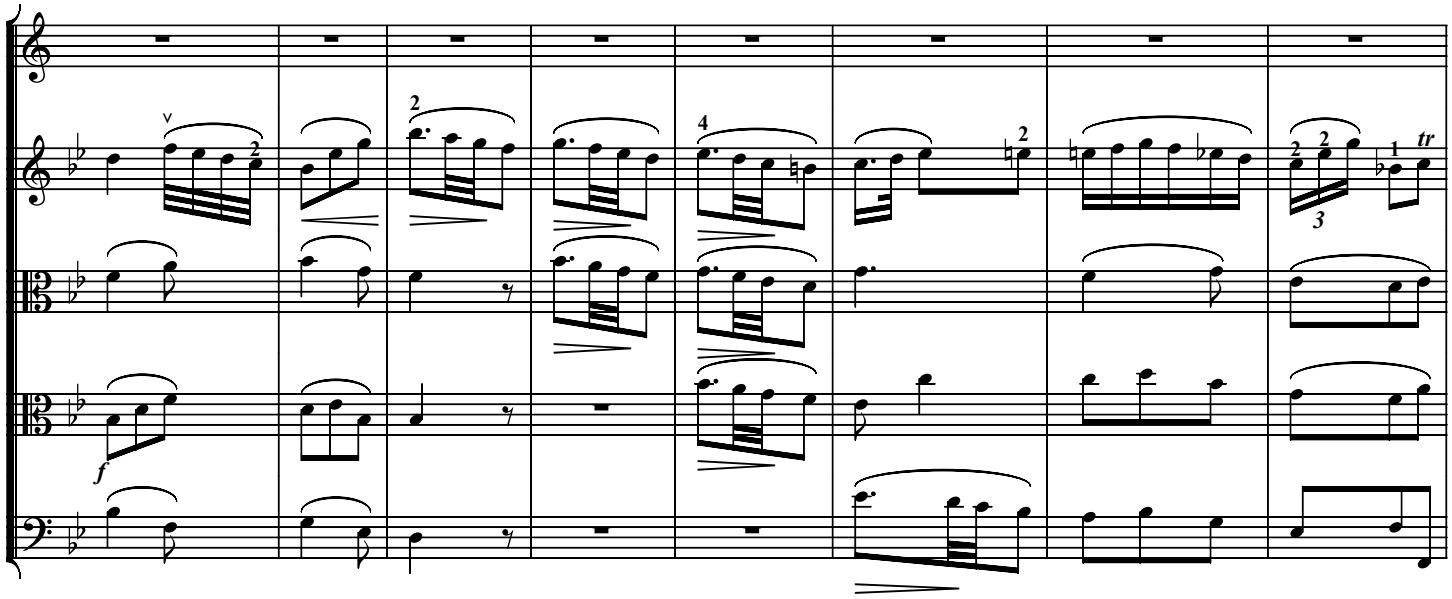

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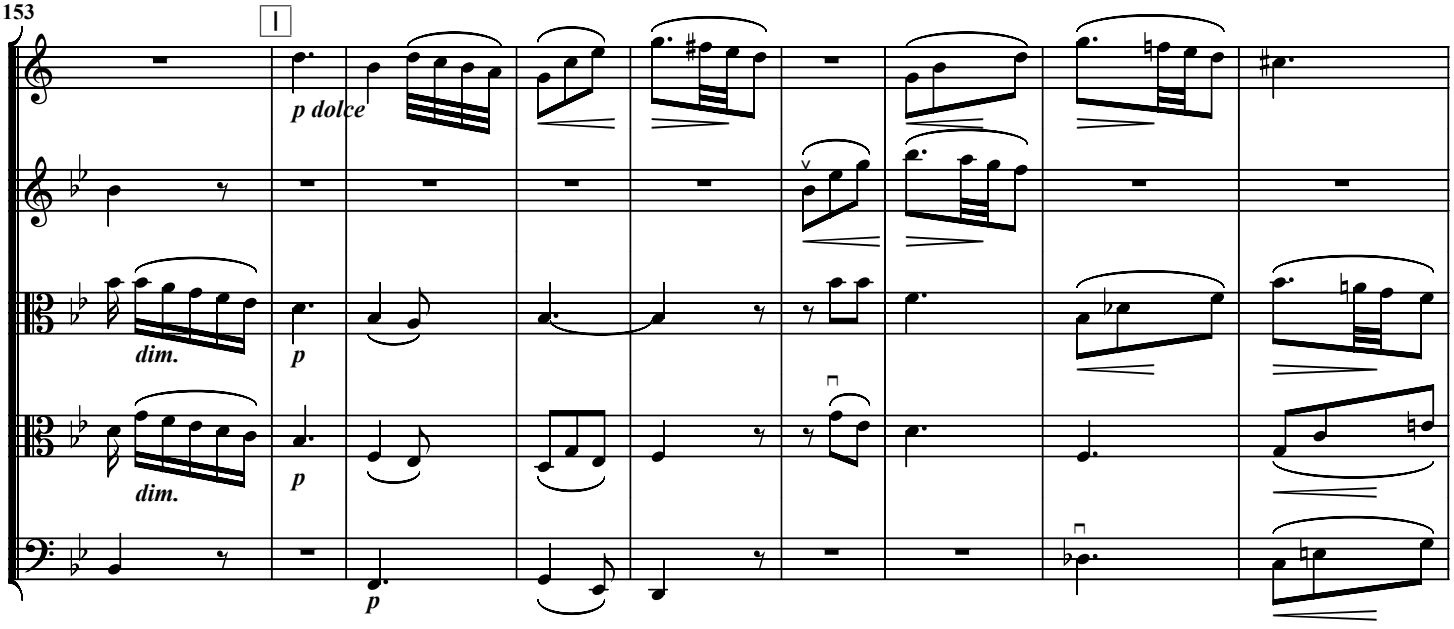

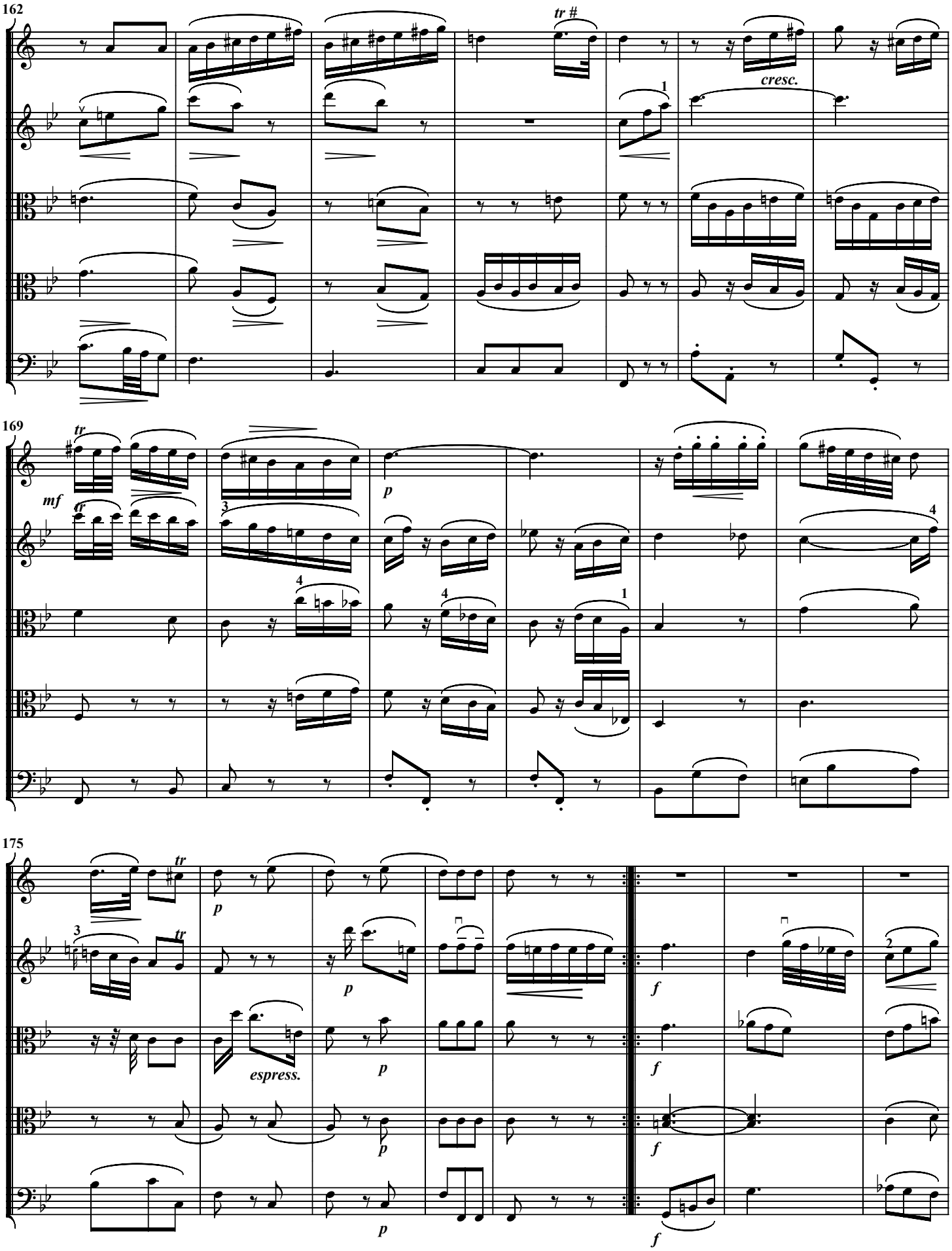
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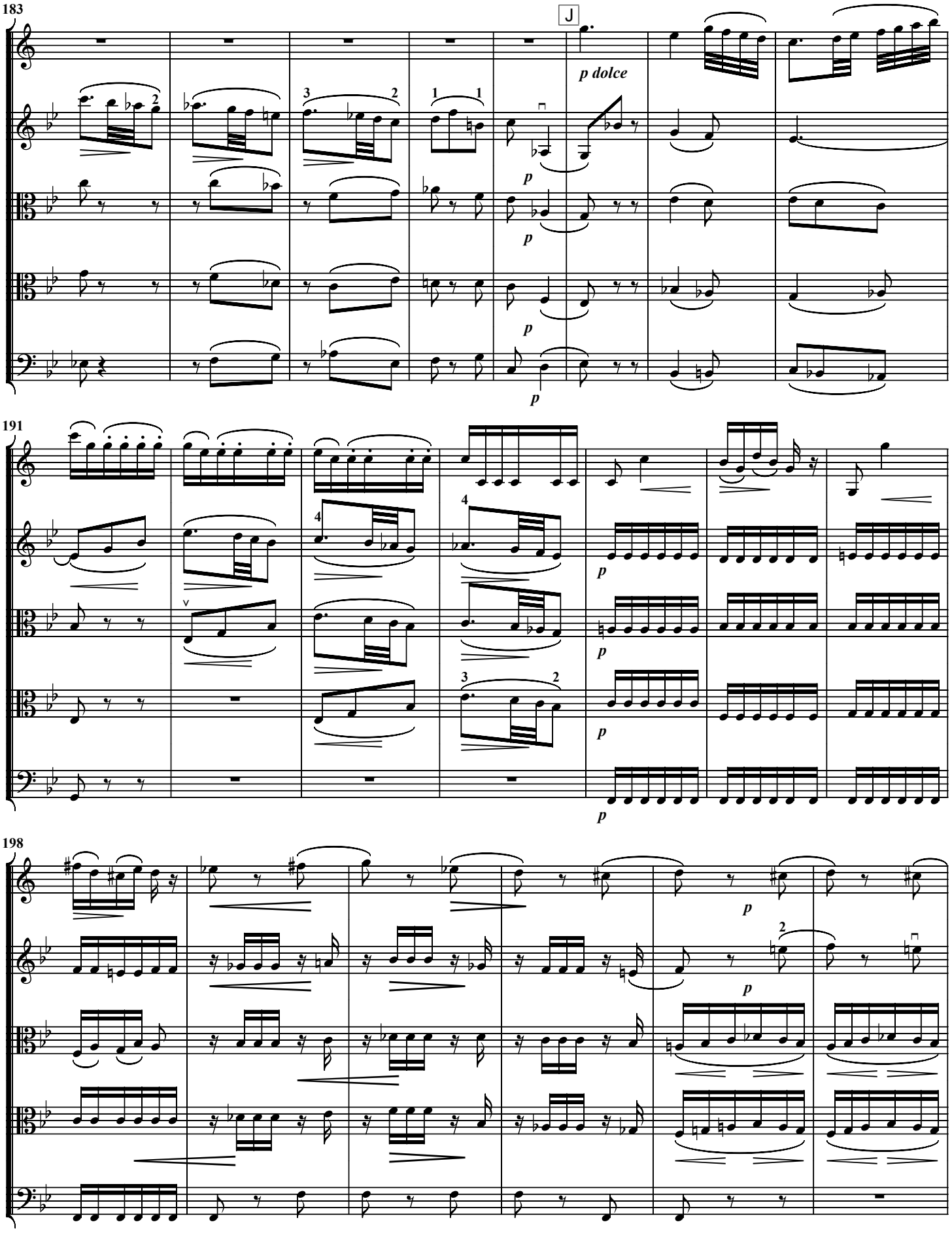
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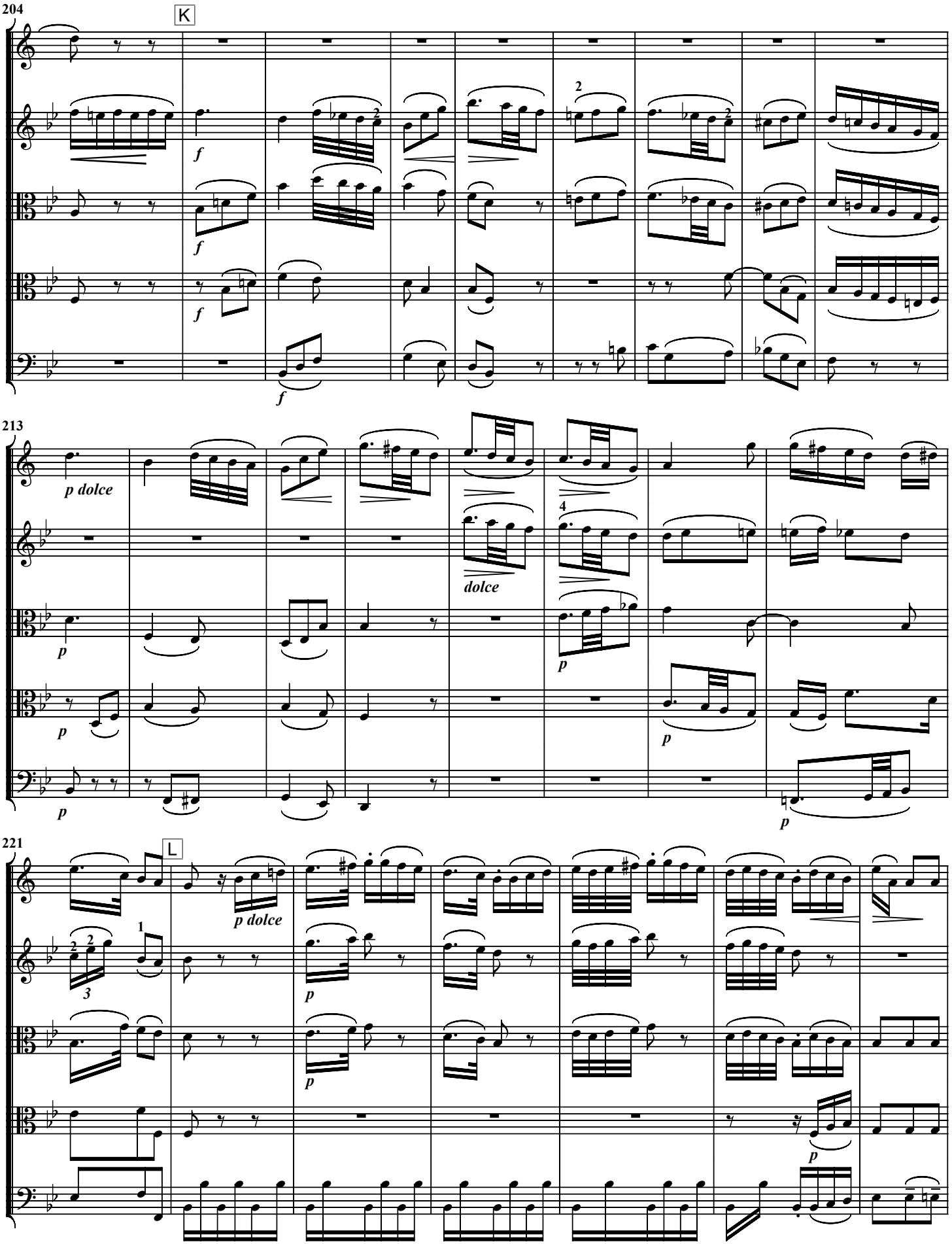
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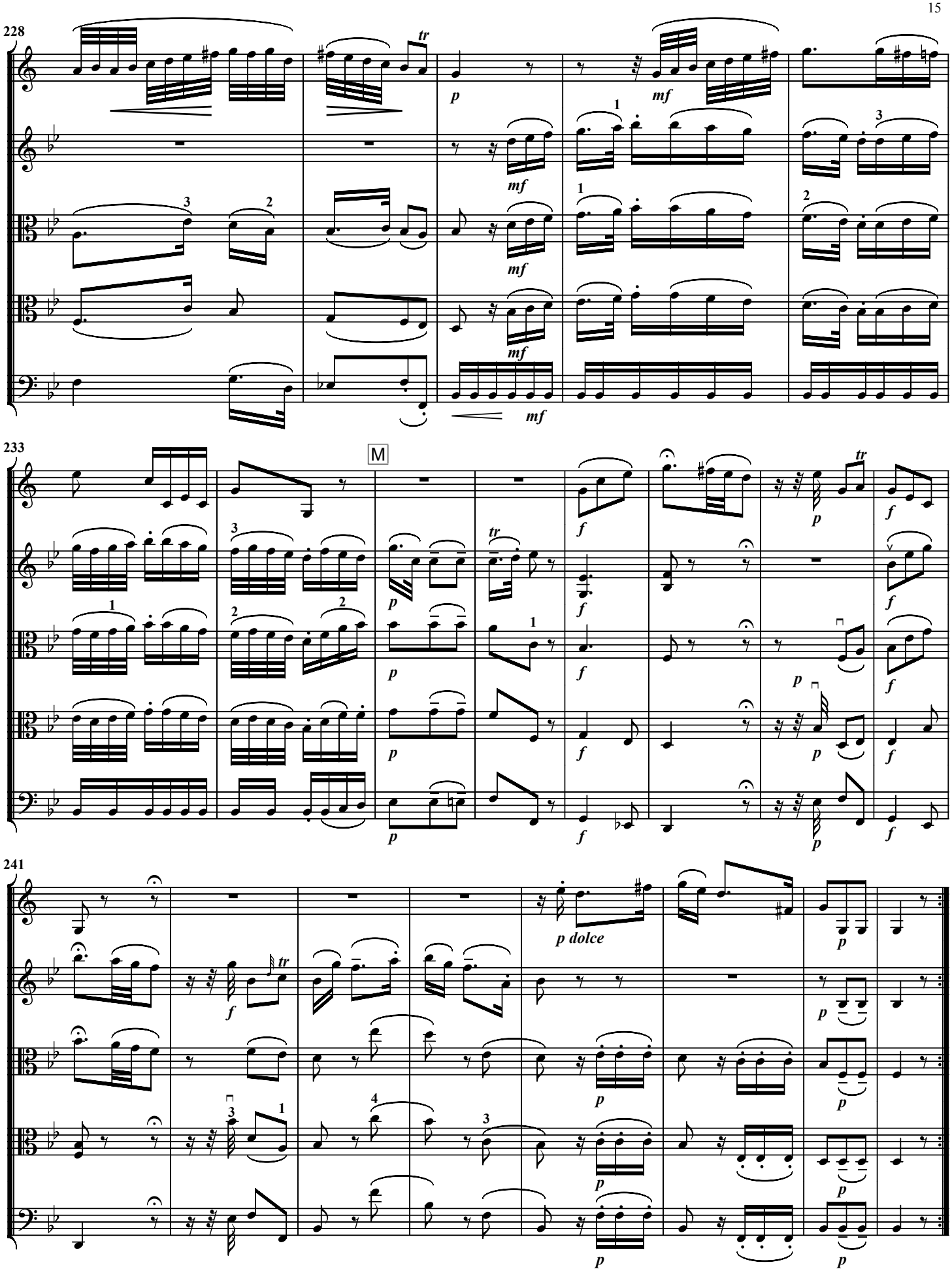
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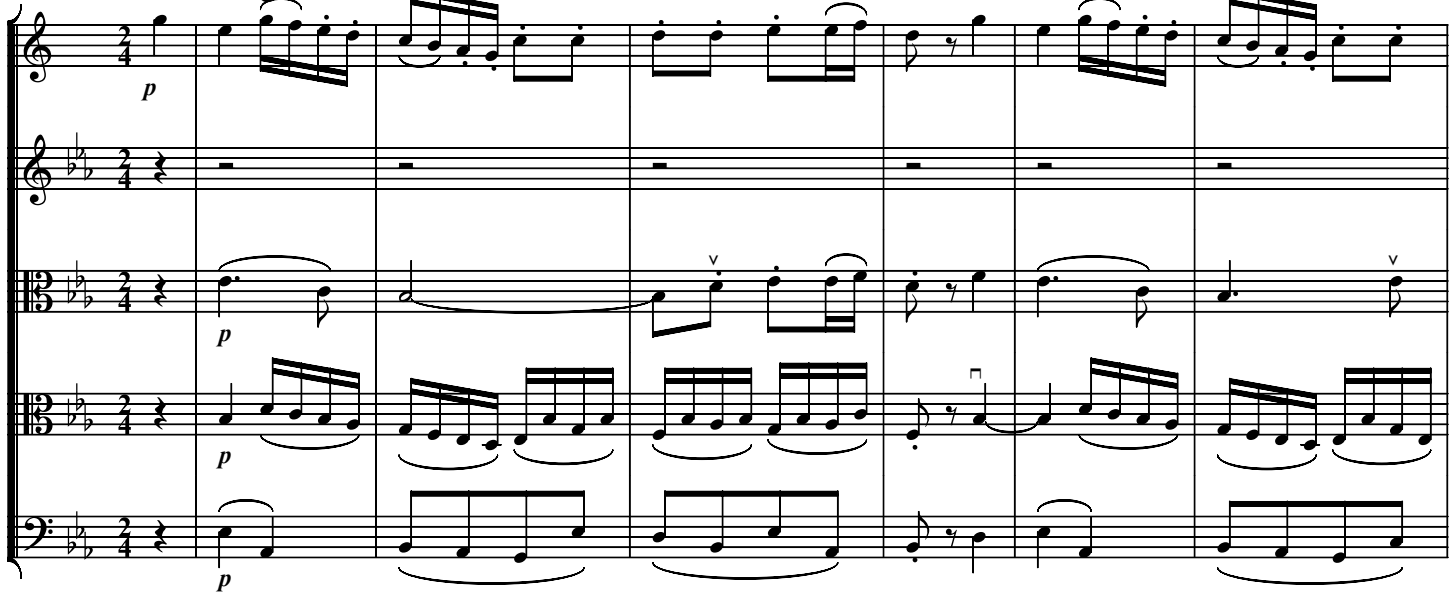

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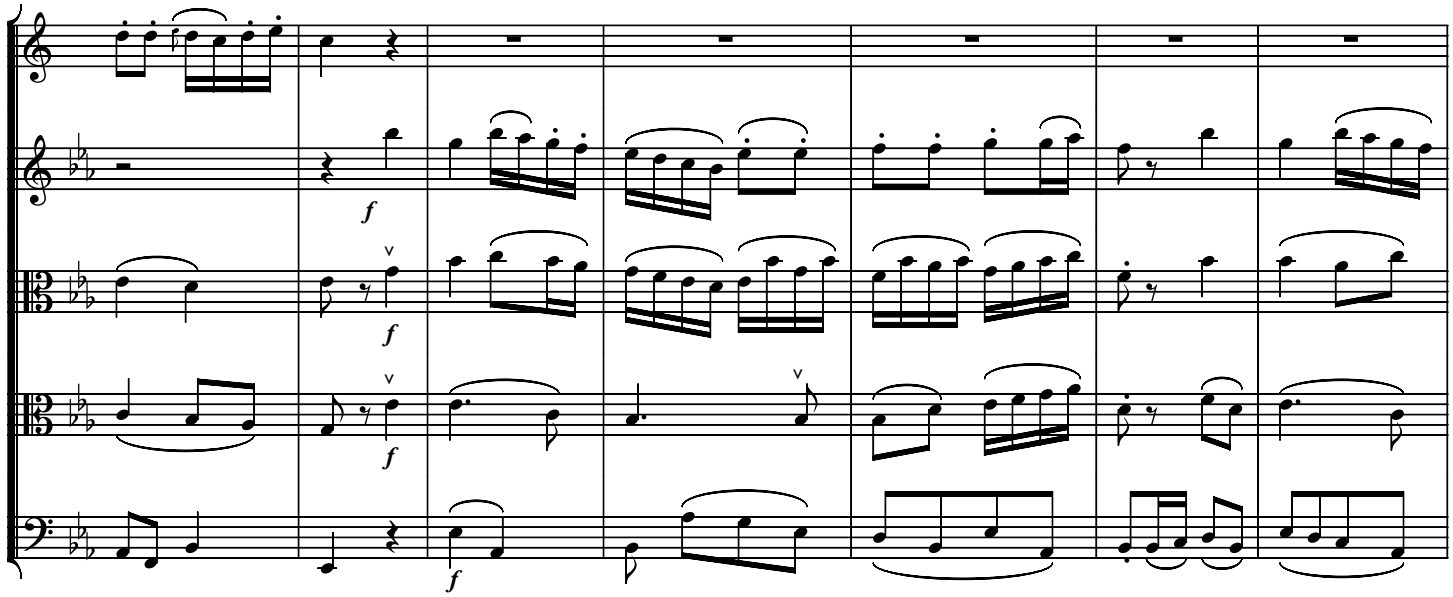

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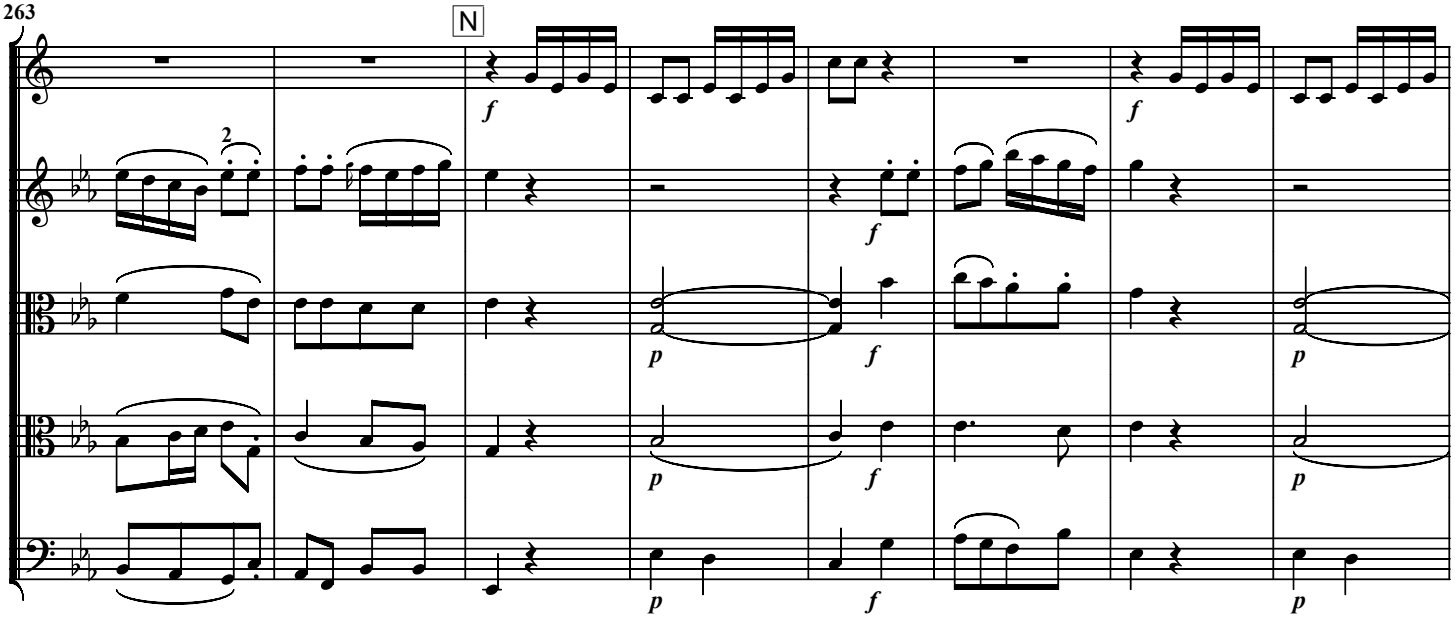

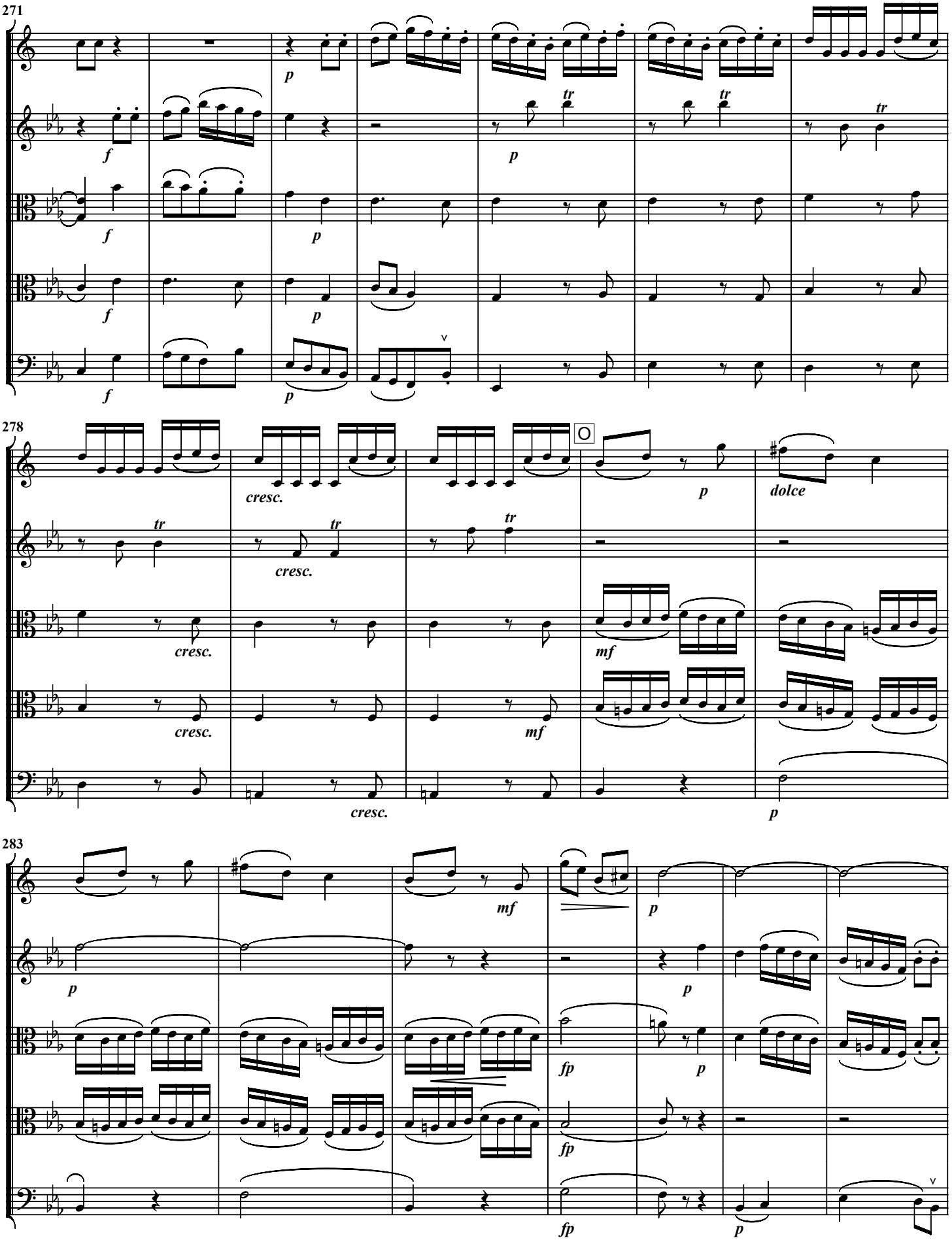
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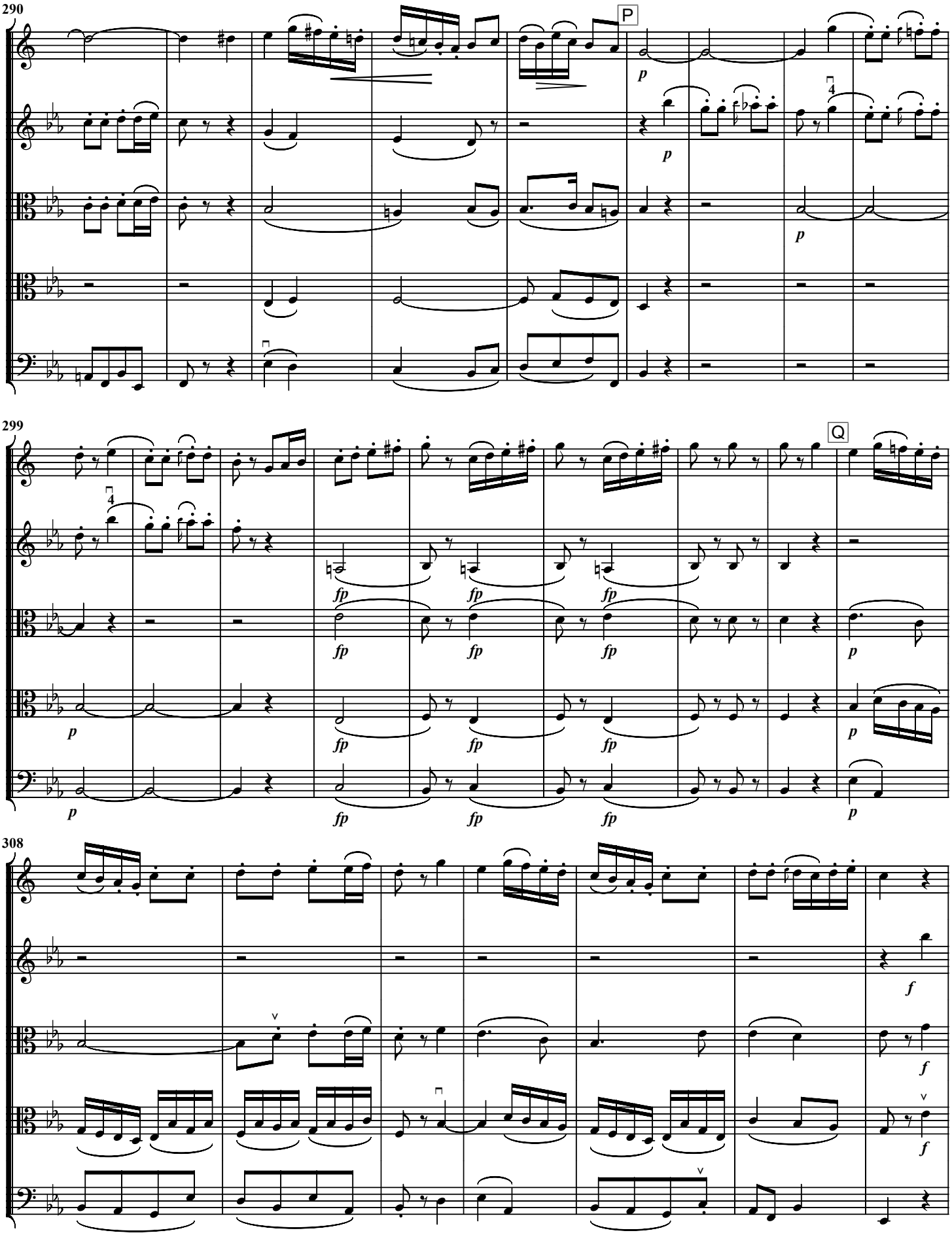
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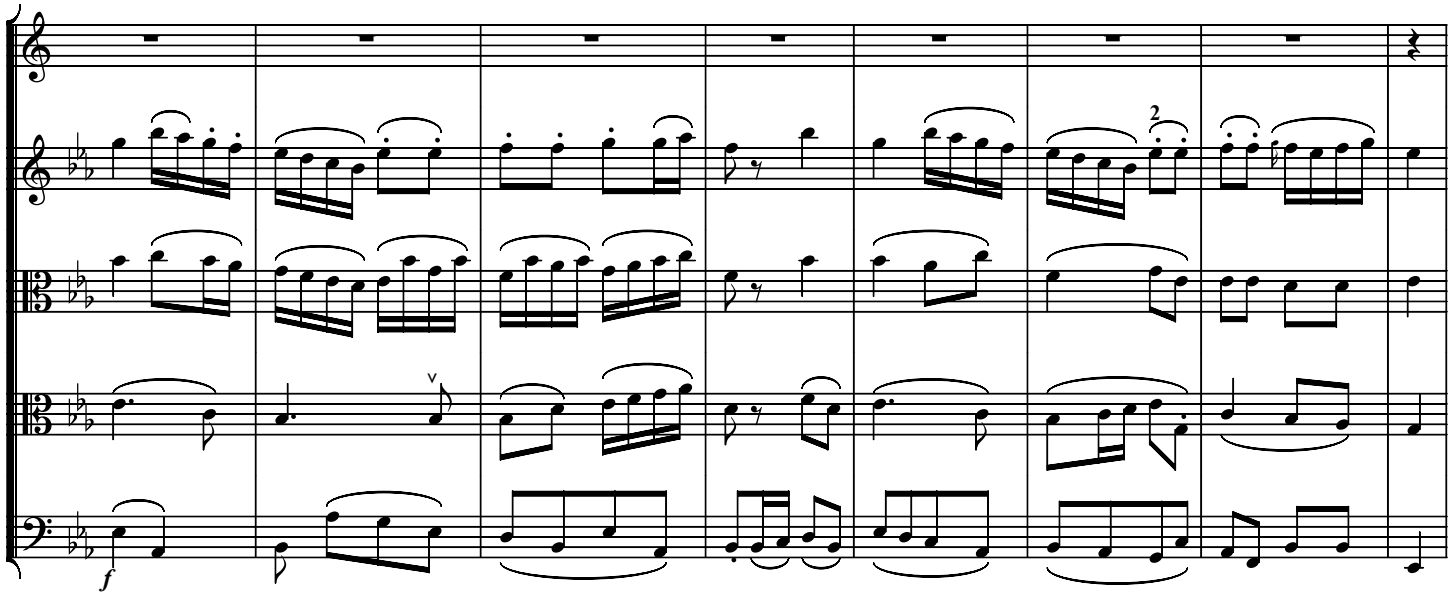

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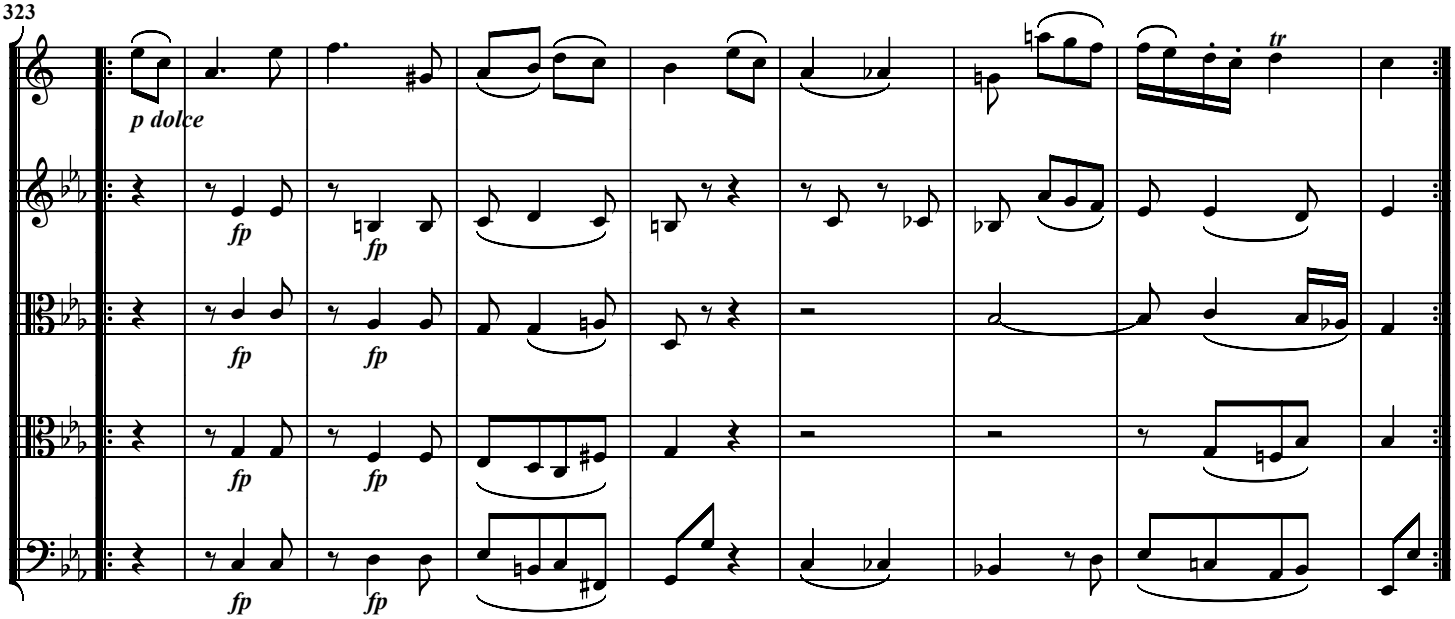

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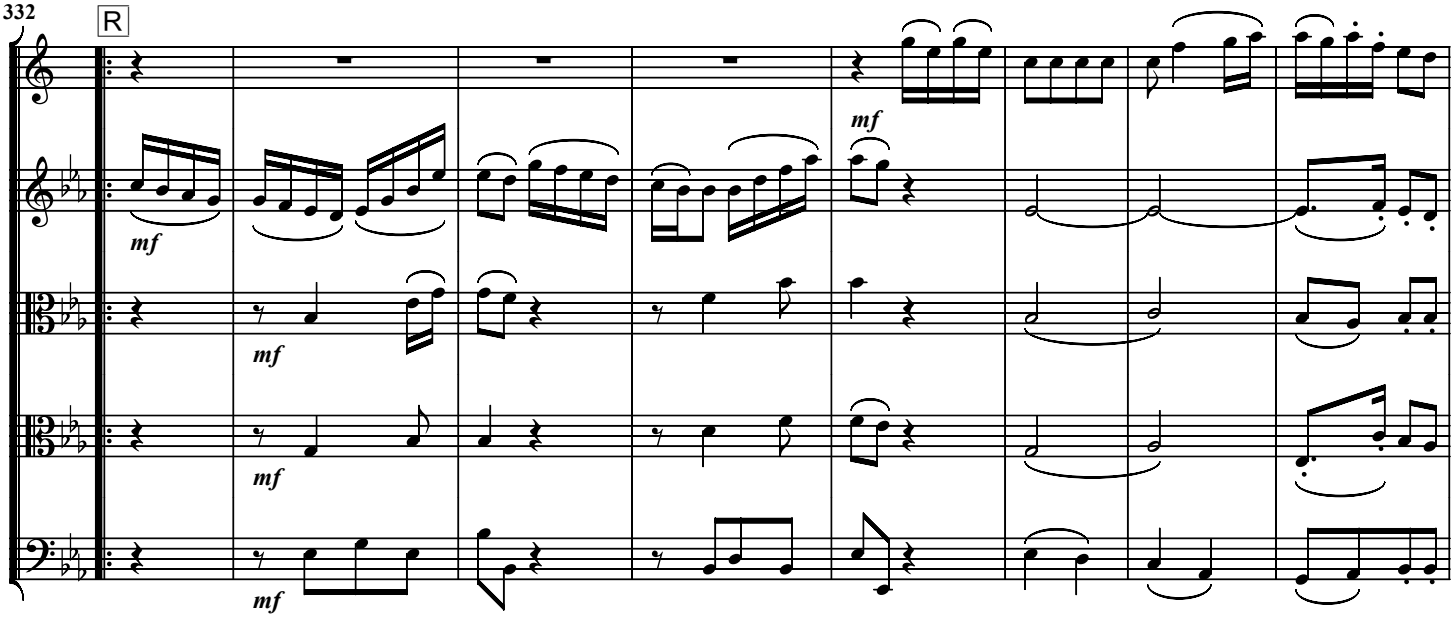

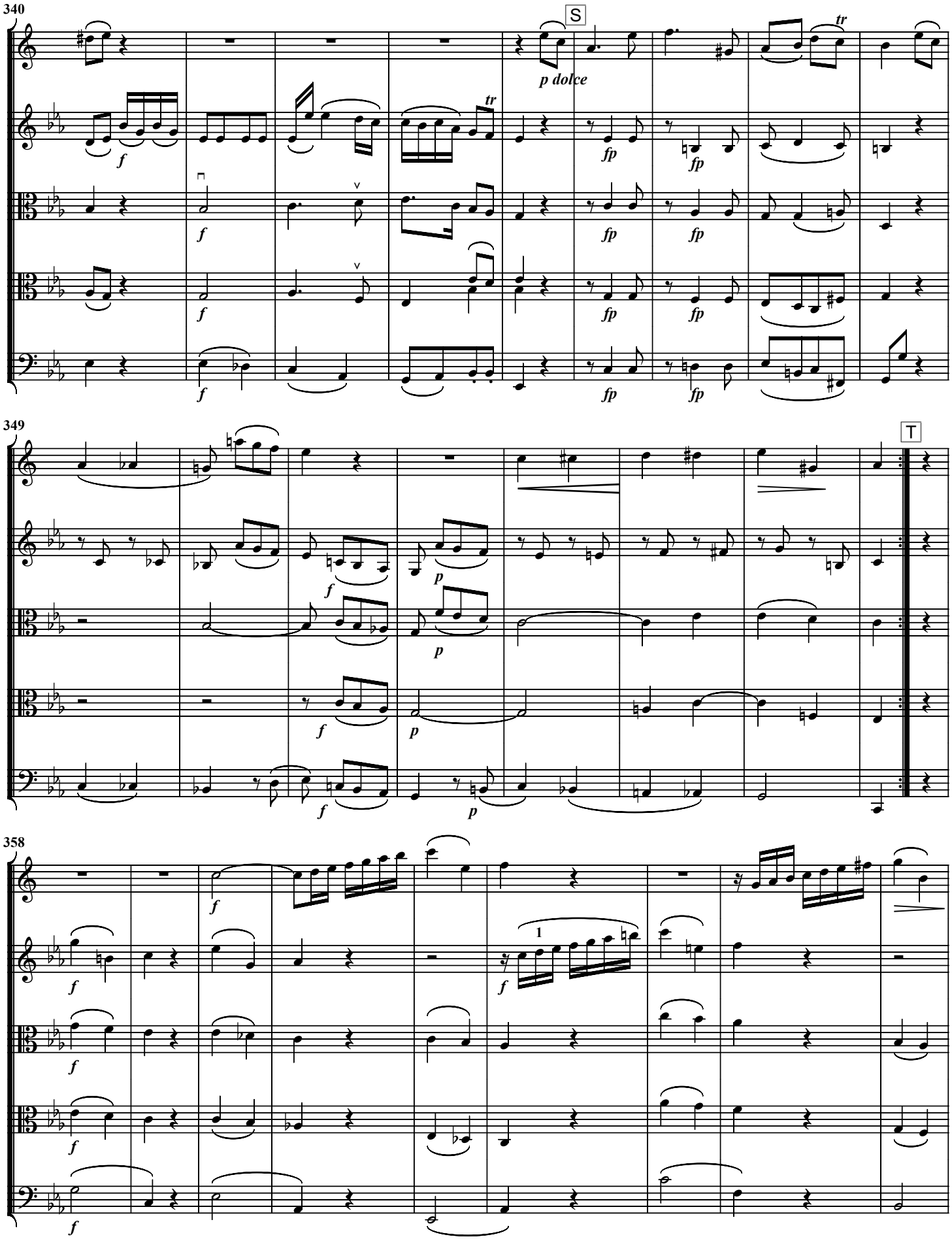
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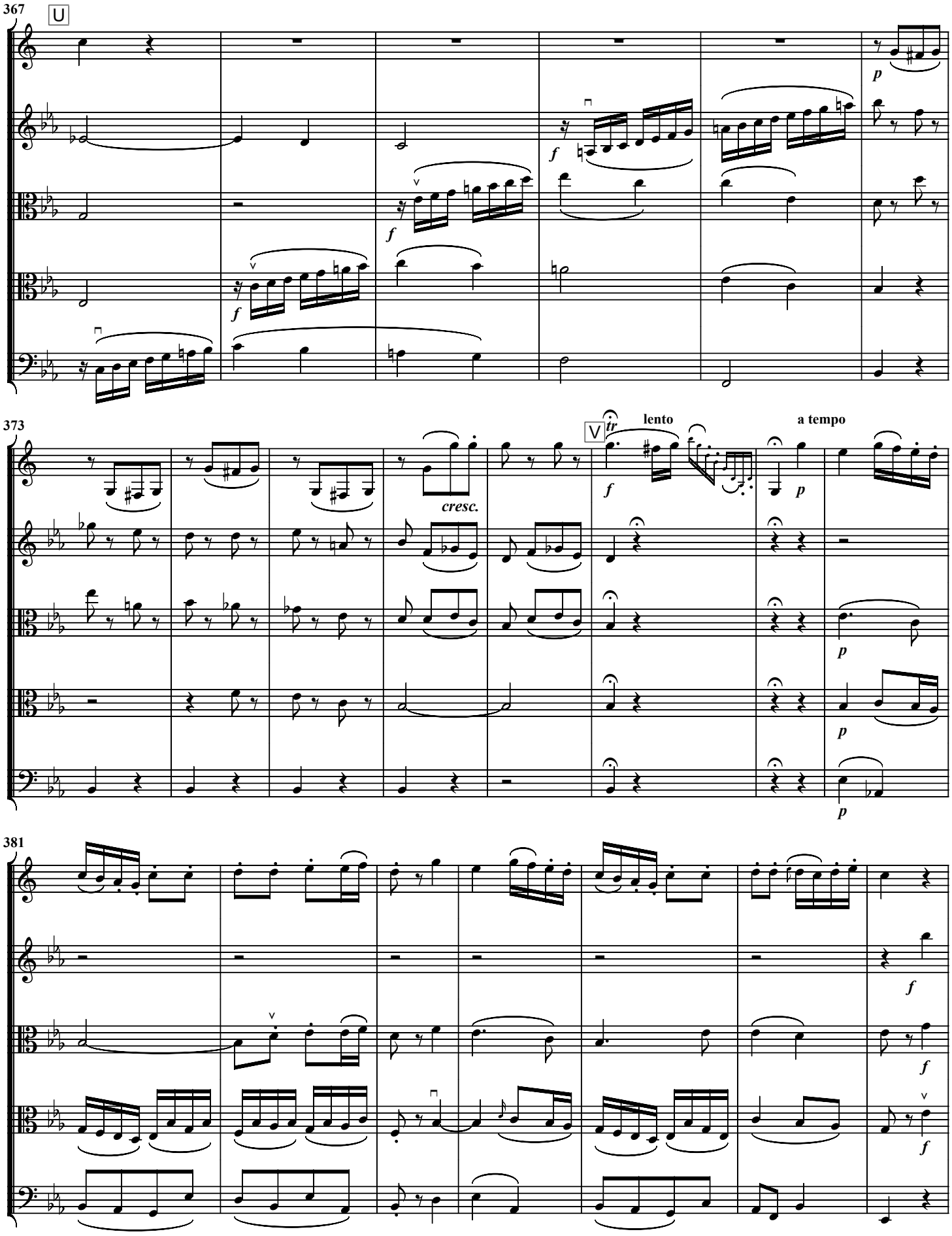
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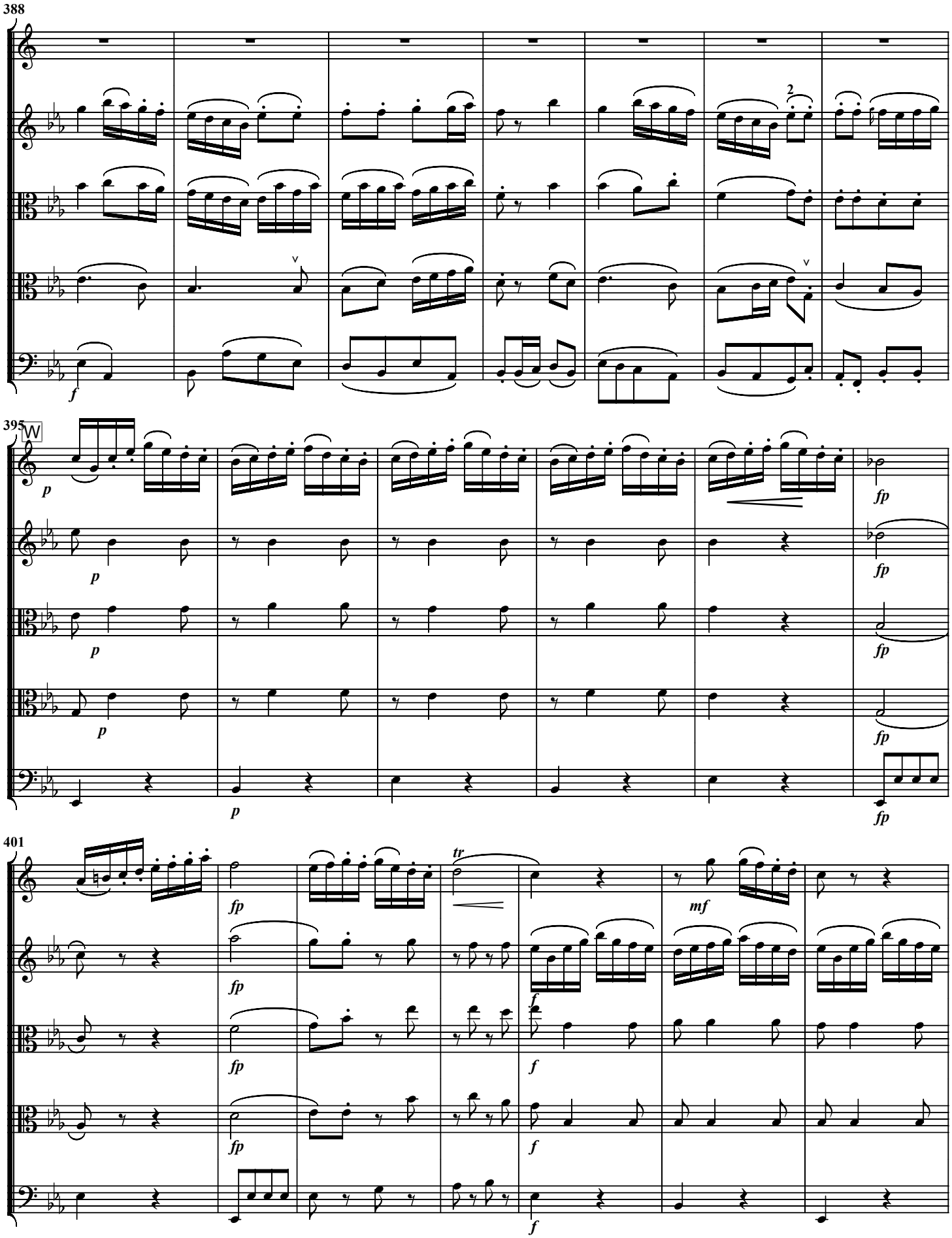
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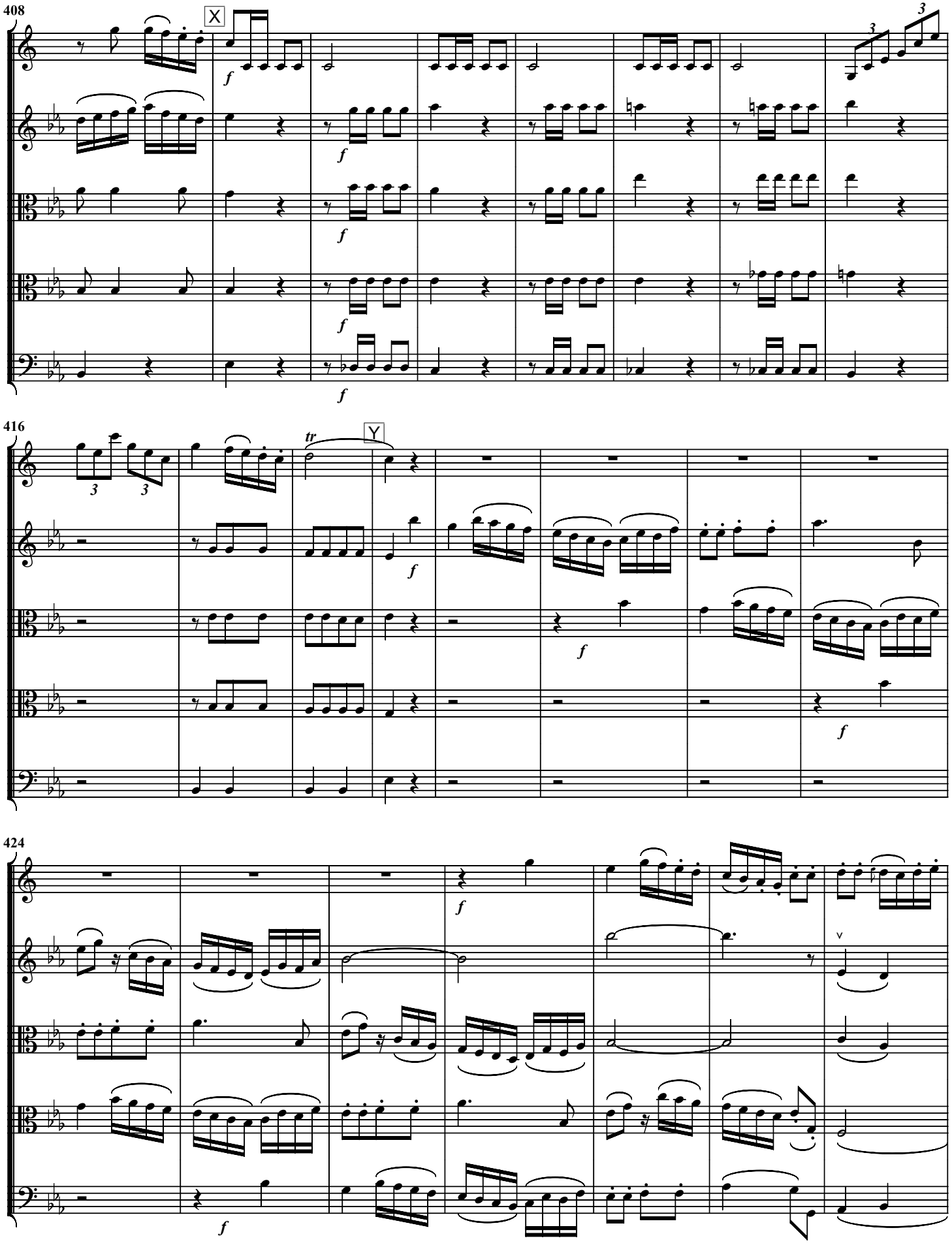
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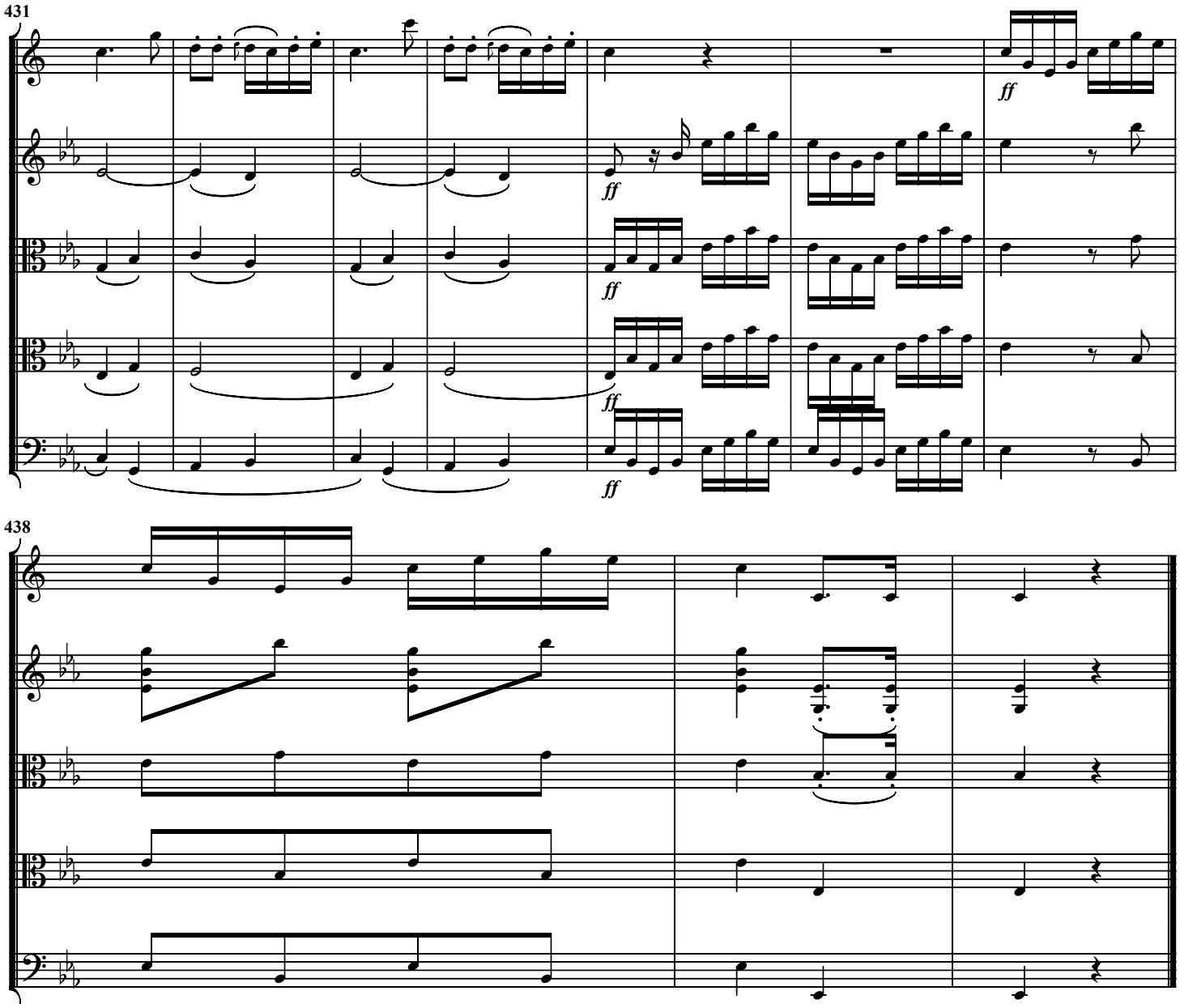
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