J.S. Bach
Brandenburg Concerto no. 3 BWV 1048

arranged for 2 violins, 2 violas and 2 violoncellos
by Mauk de Wildt (2016)

- Score -

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Introduction to this arrangement

The original score of this concerto, written for 3 violins, 3 violas, 3 violoncellos and continuo (including a violone) shows many empty bars in the different parts as well as many unisono passages. That stimulated me to investigate the possibility of a reduction of the 3+3+3+1 part scoring to a 2+2+2 part string sextet arrangement without changing the work's character.

The original scoring asks for an ad hoc ensemble: no other works can be found in the IMSLP library for the same instrumental combination. A string sextet ensemble is more common, for which there is already a rich repertoire (more than 40 original works in the IMSLP library).

After first reassigning the melodic and polyphonic lines to the six parts and subsequently reassigning the accompaniment notes it proved that only a limited number of notes were “left over” and had to be omitted. Fortunately all these notes were typical fill-in notes, without melodic, polyphonic or rhythmical importance and they could also be found in other parts, with the exemption of 2 or 3 places.

Double stopping is not common in Bachs orchestra and concerto parts, and so in this arrangement it is only used in bars 108 to 113 in the 1st violin and 2st viola part (comparable with passages in Bachs Concerto for 2 violins, part 3).

The original dynamic markings (indicating only “piano” and “forte”), which are already shown in the autograph, are not as usual meant to indicate a piano or forte character of an episode, but to control the balance between melodic voices and unisono ripieno (accompanying) voices. So in this concerto in all passages with dynamic markings some parts have to play forte and other parts at the same time piano. This is in my opinion what musicians with good ears normally do automatically.
In this arrangement, however, the dynamic balance is significantly changed, e.g. because hardly any unisono passages are left. That means that Bach’s original dynamic markings are of less importance or in some cases even unnecessary , and I choose to ignore these markings, leaving the balancing to the players.

What is lost in the arrangement is mainly visually: lost is the beautiful symmetry of the original score, where Bach treats the violins, violas and violoncellos as separate groups.

Mauk de Wildt, 2016

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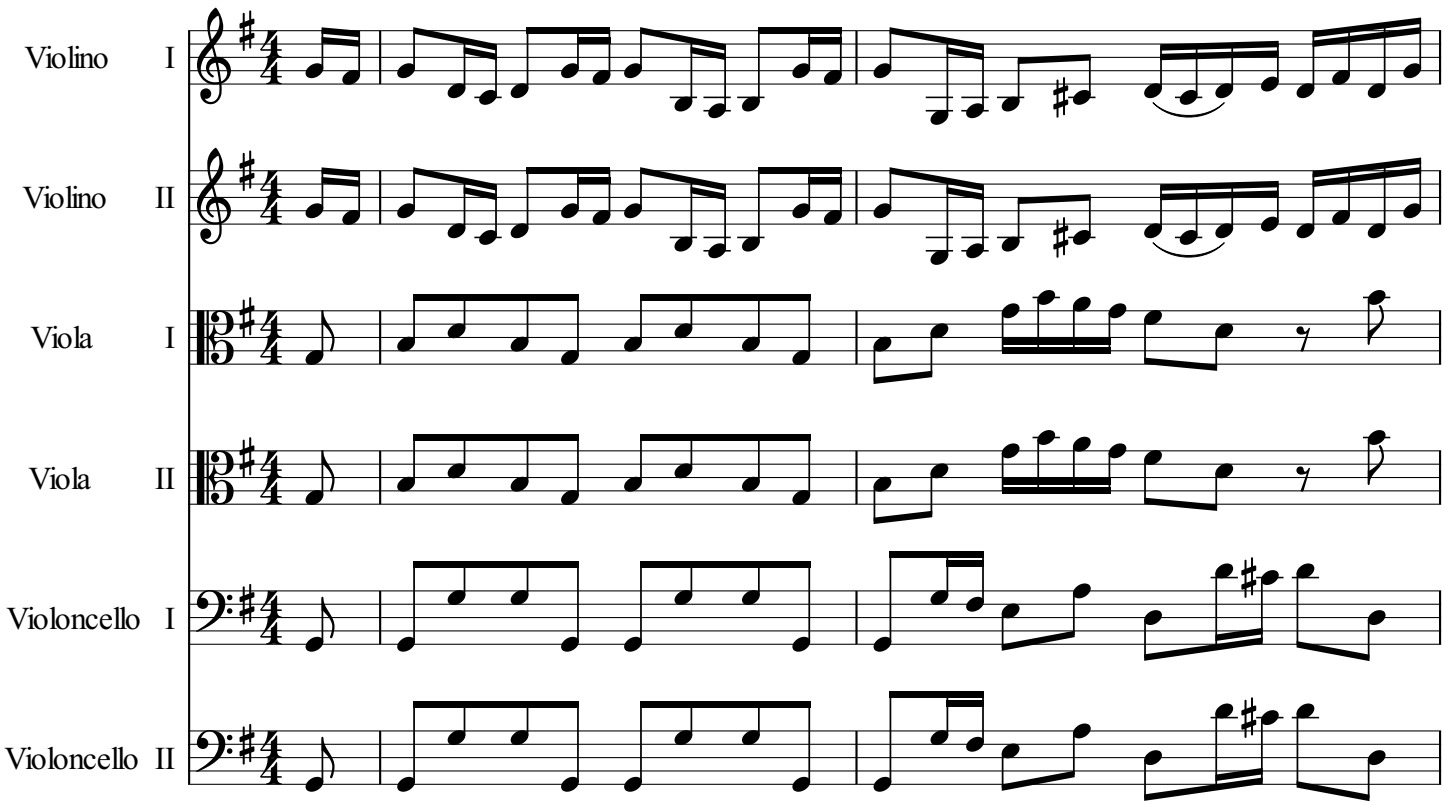

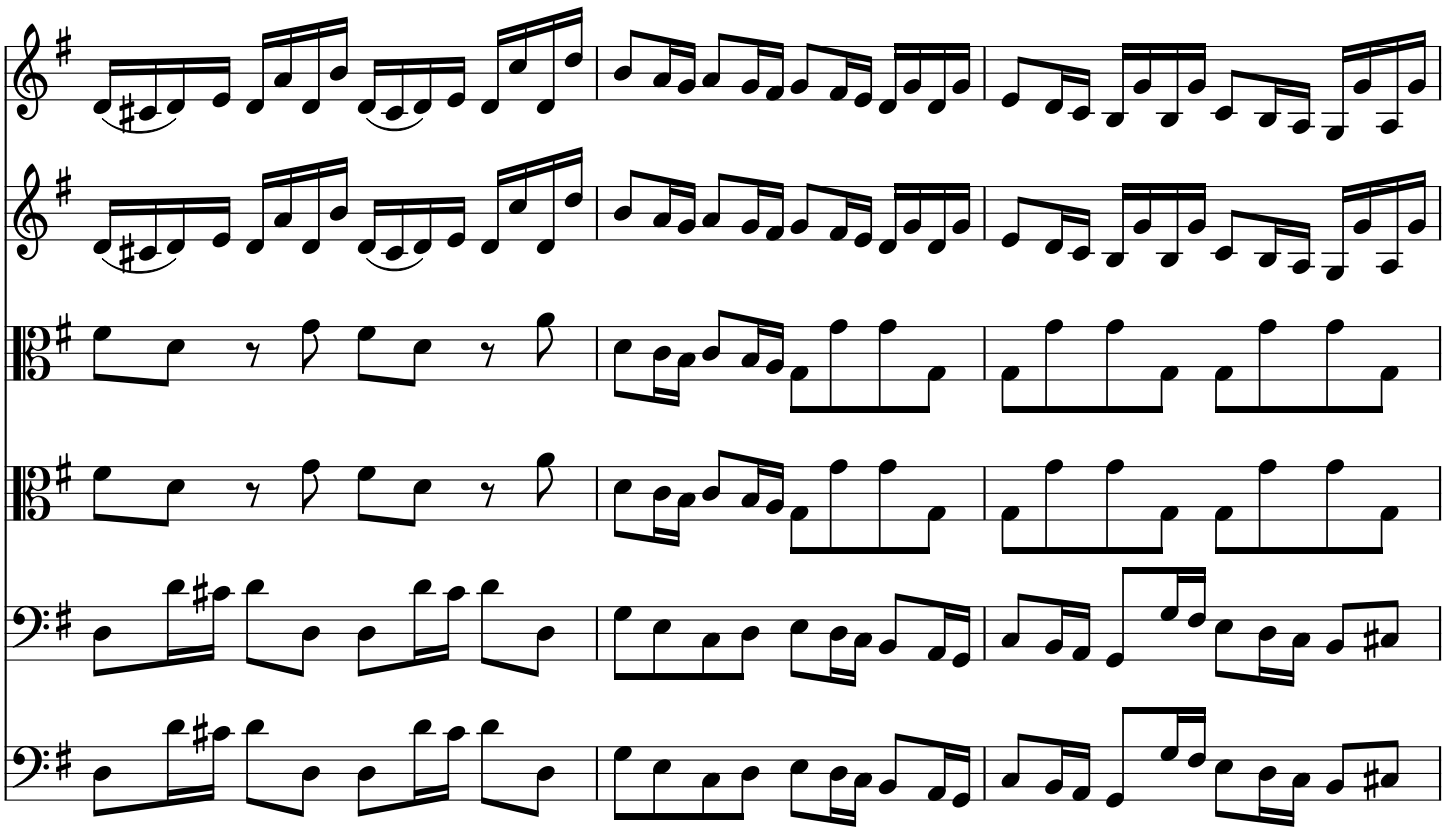

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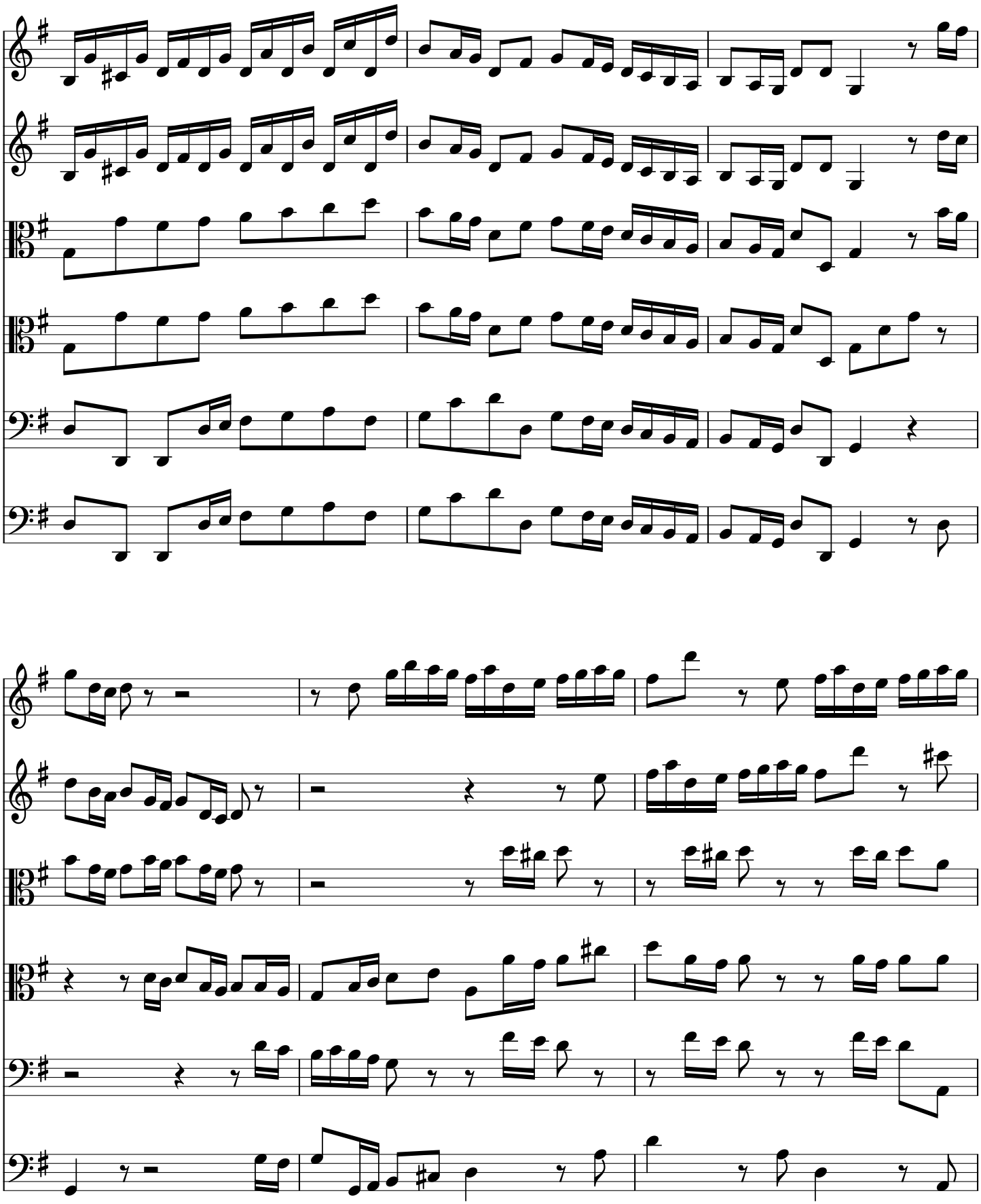
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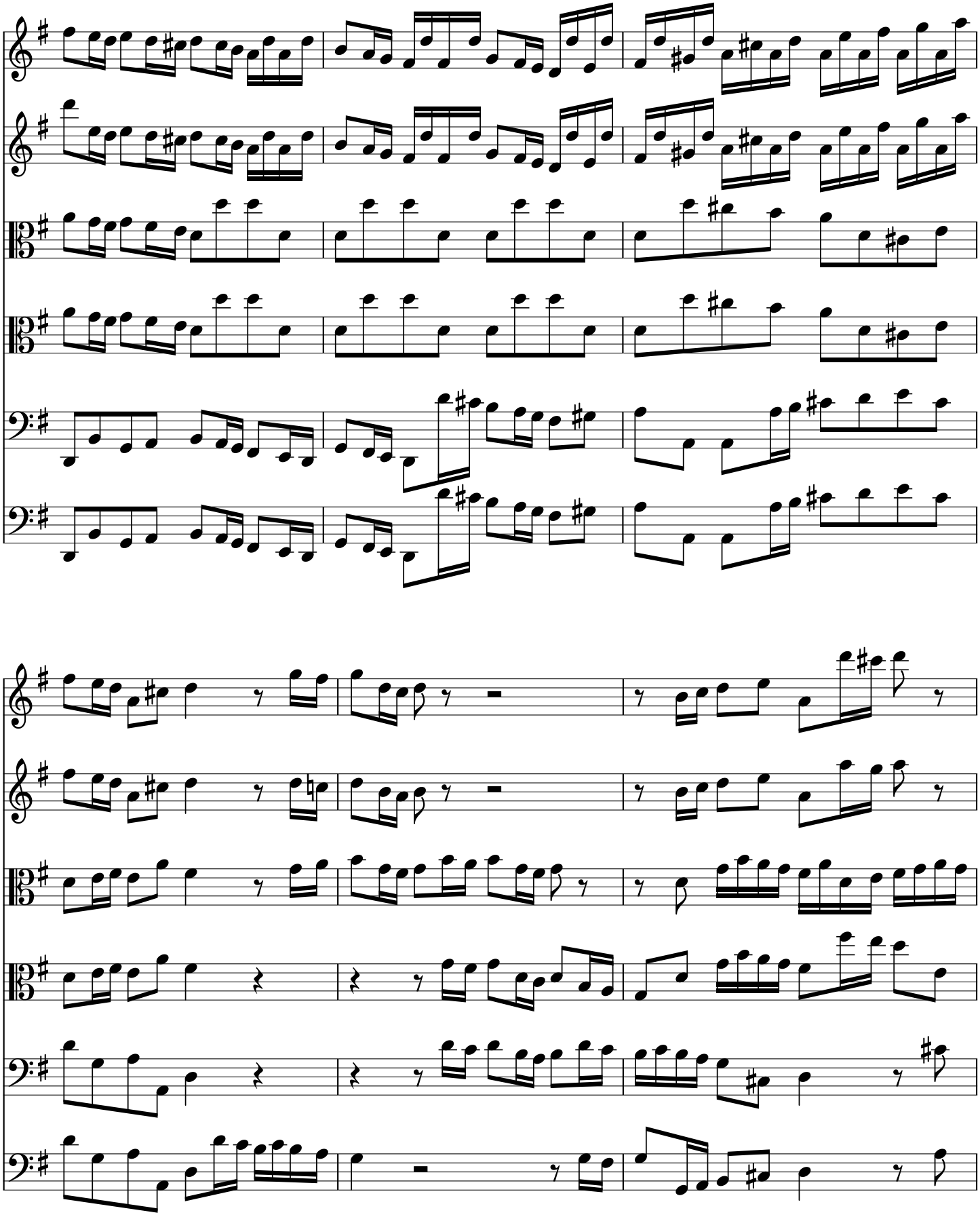

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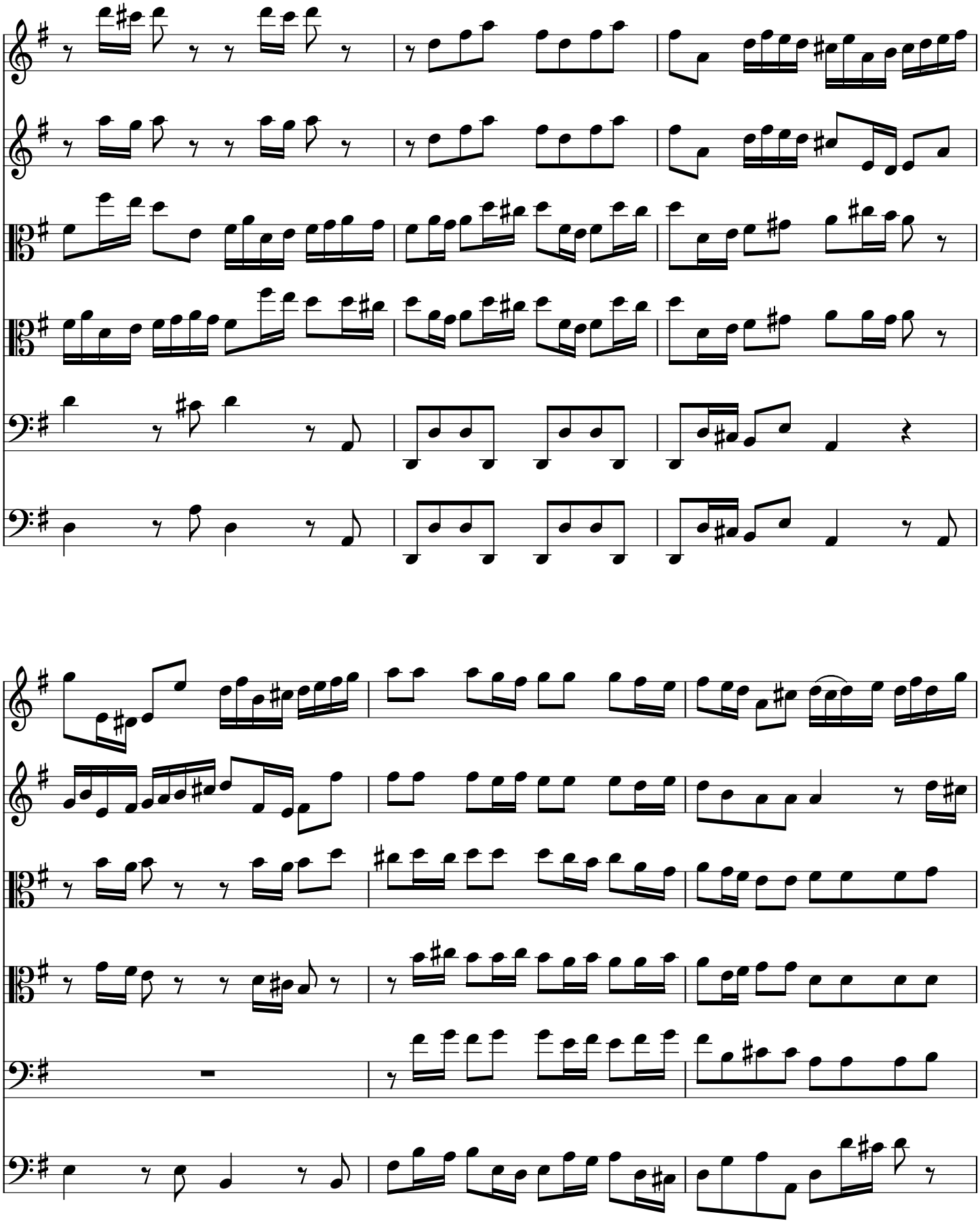
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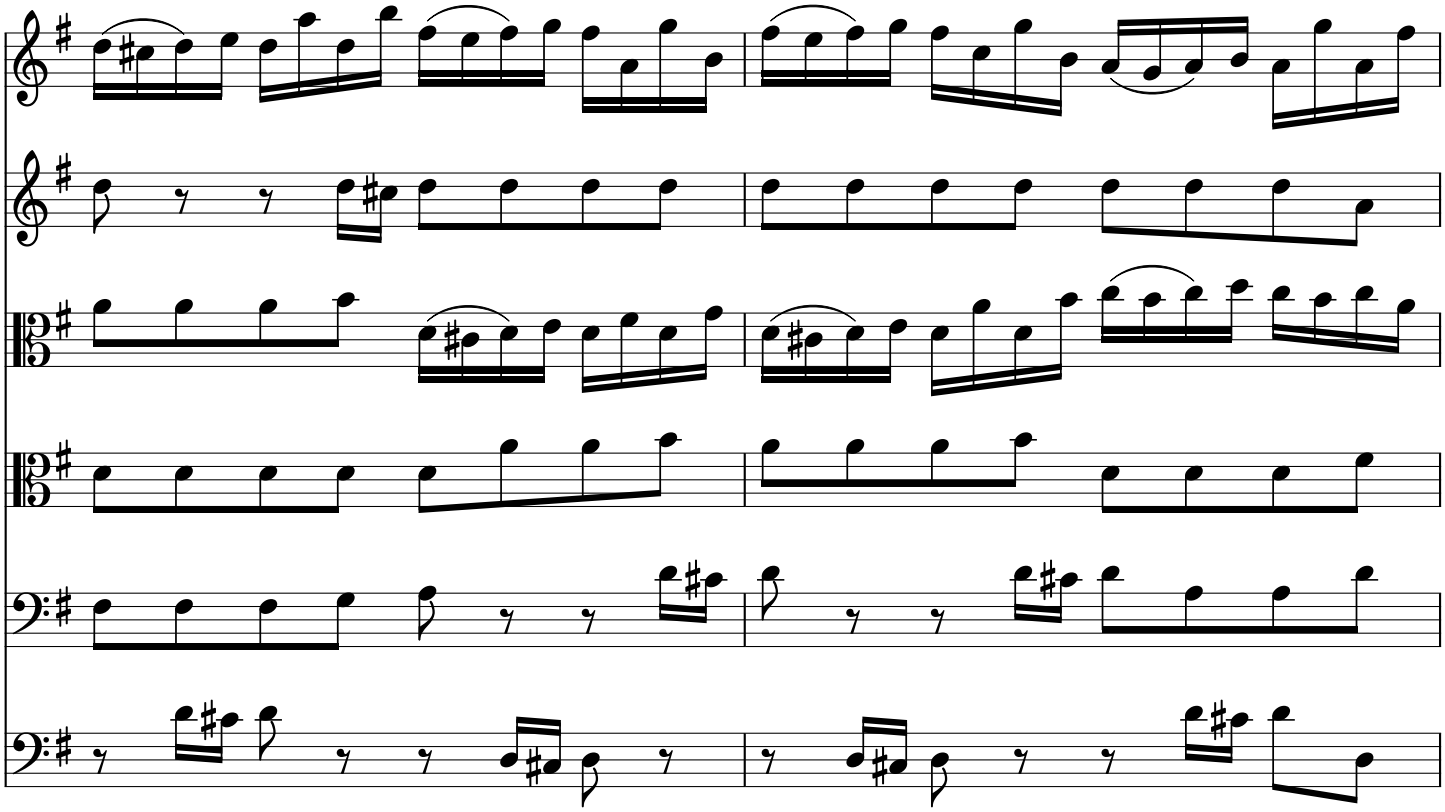

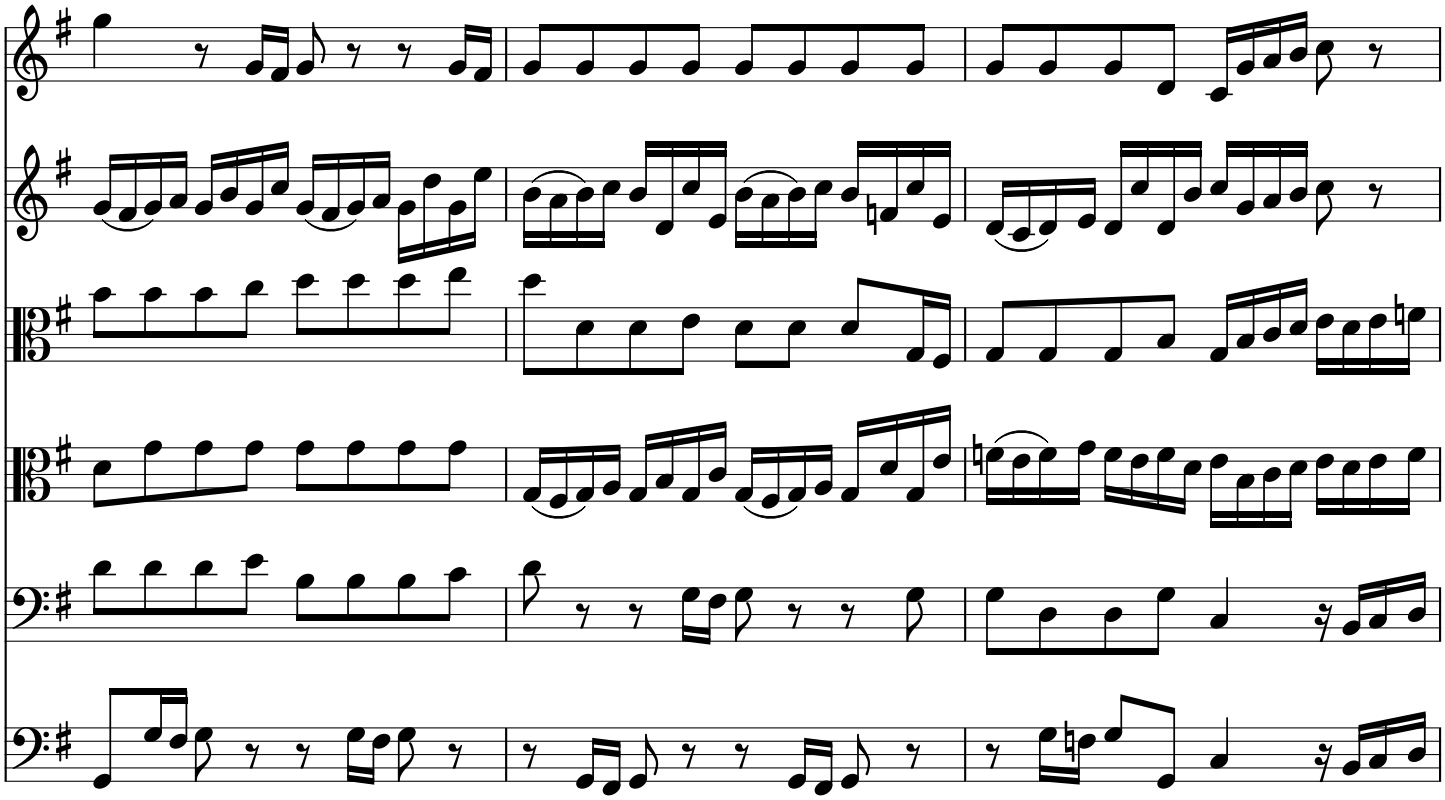

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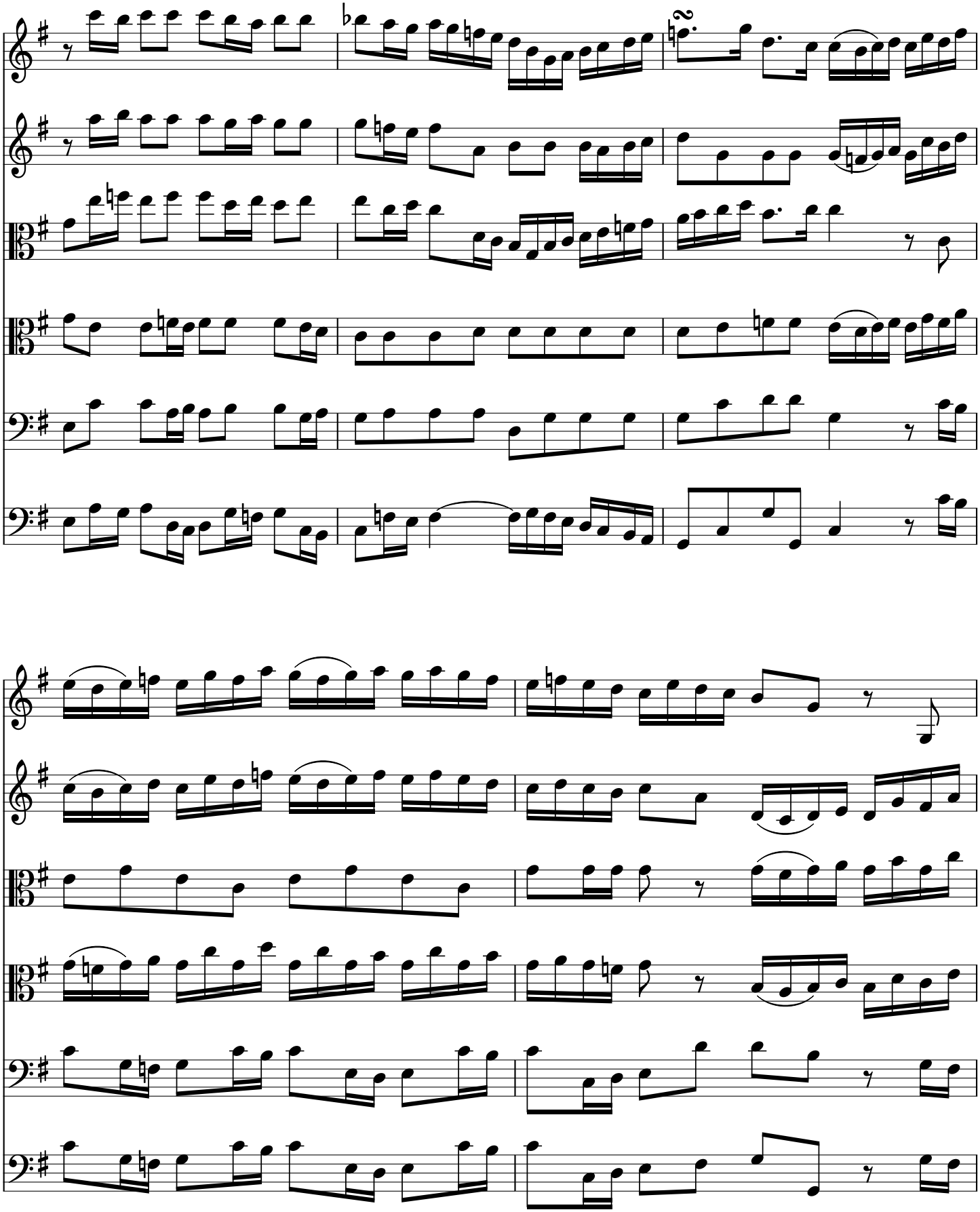
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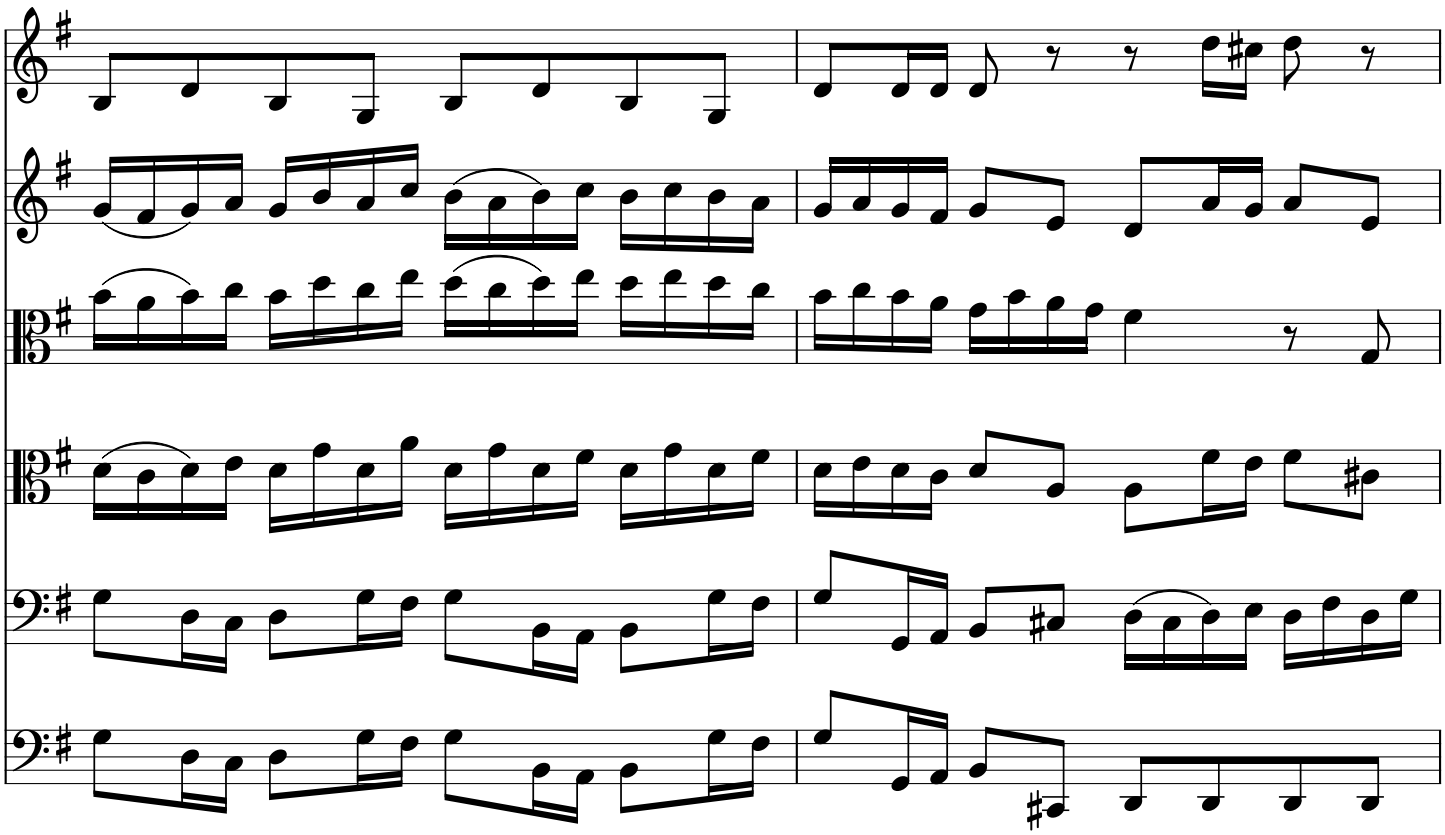

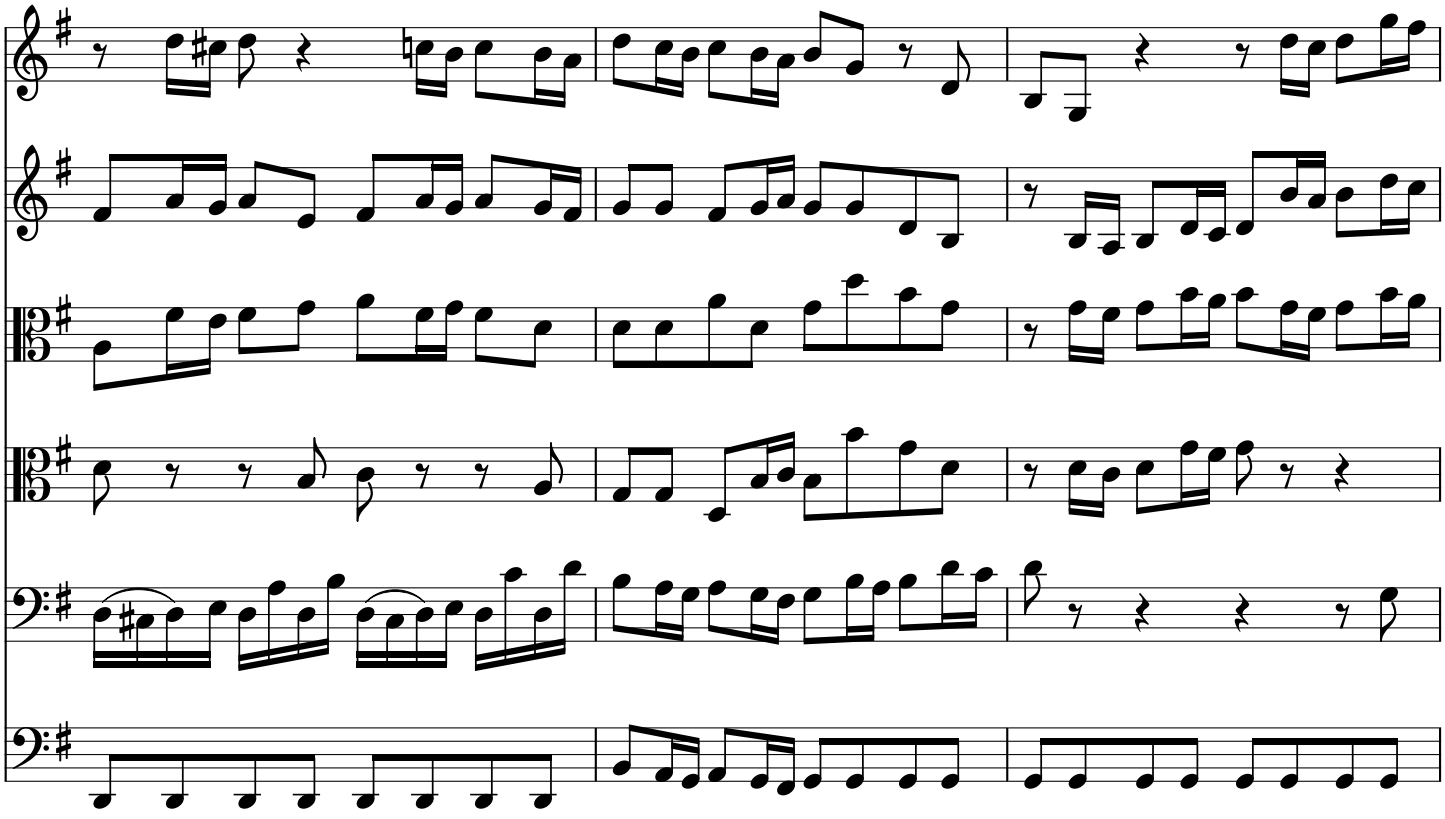

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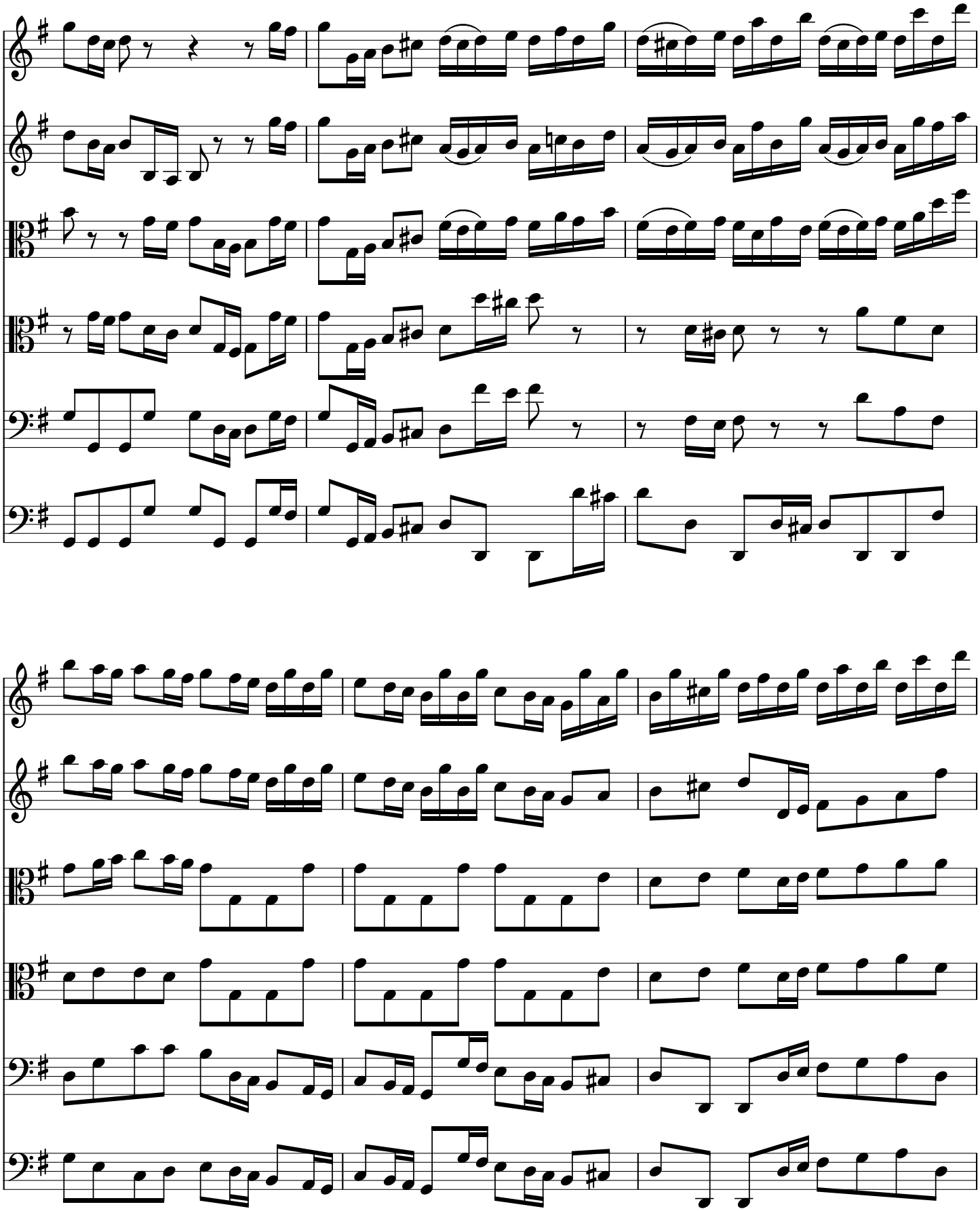
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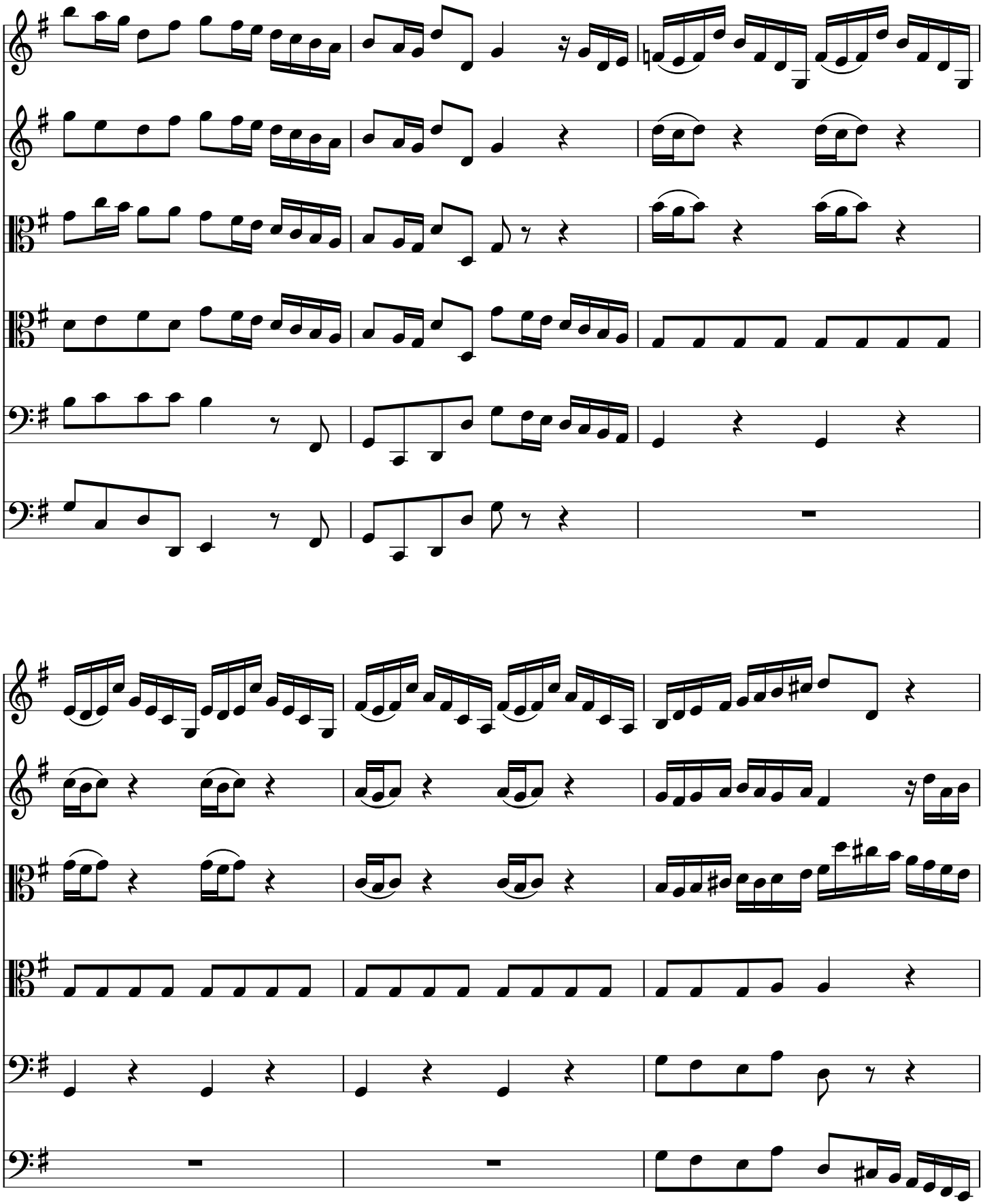

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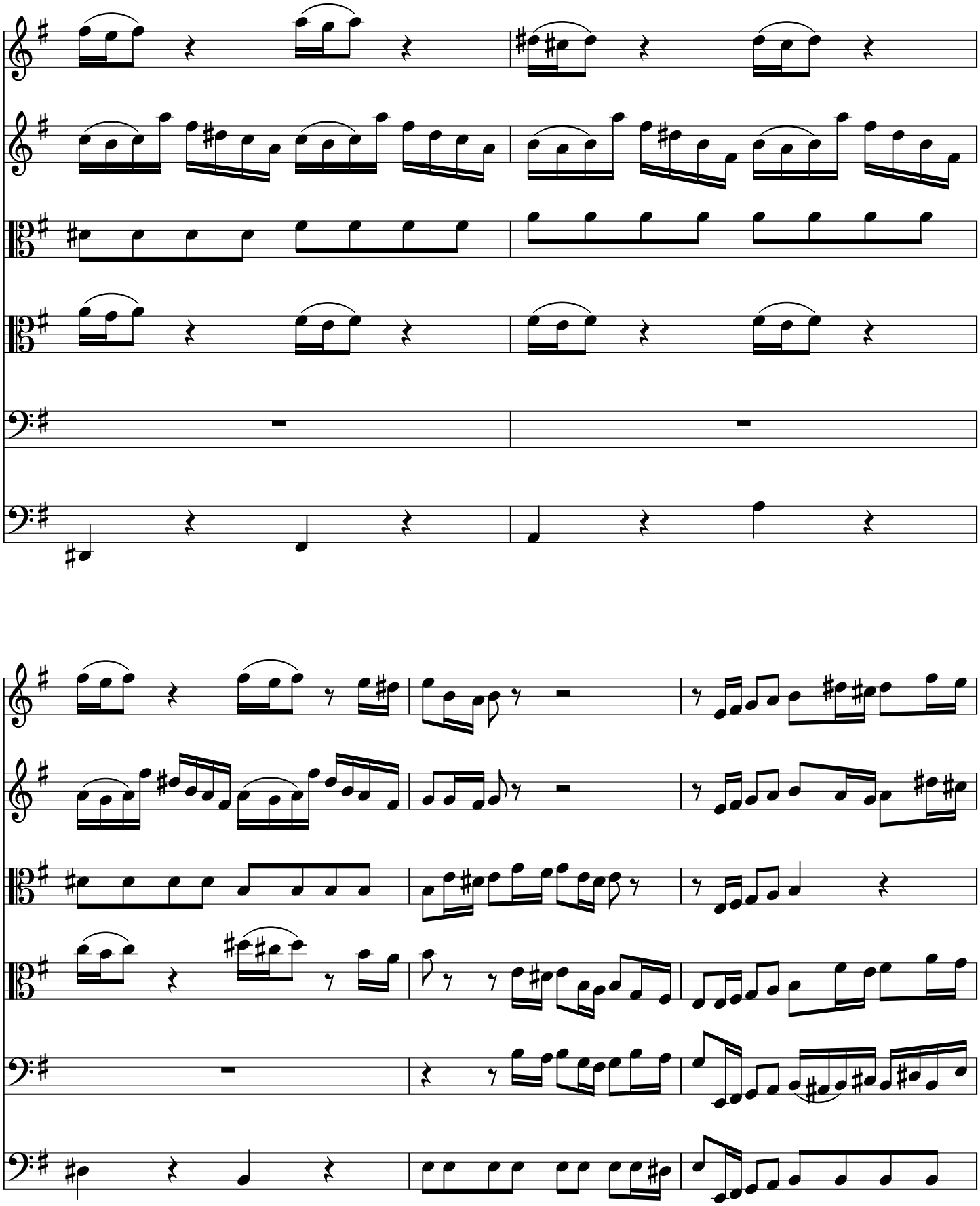
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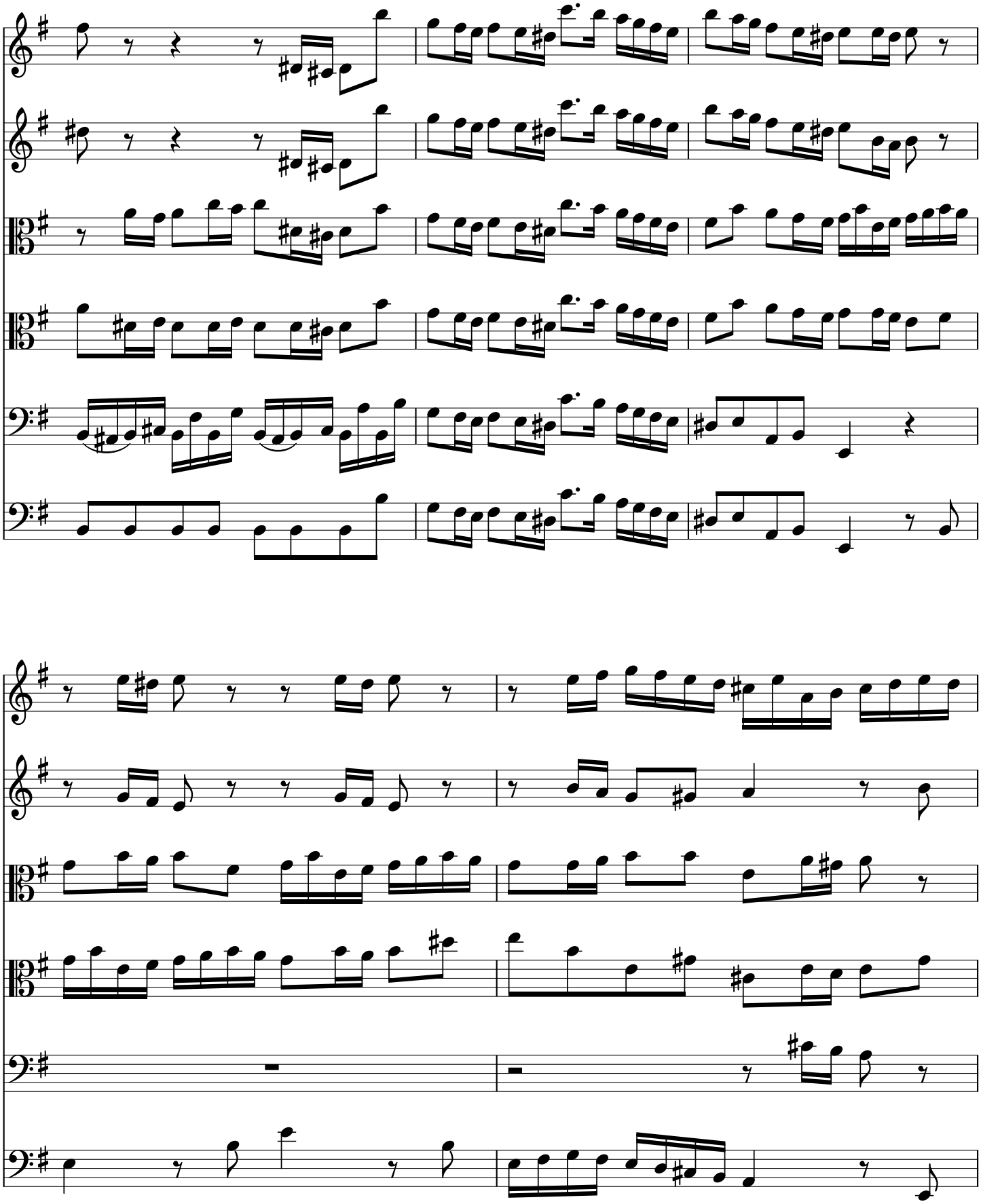

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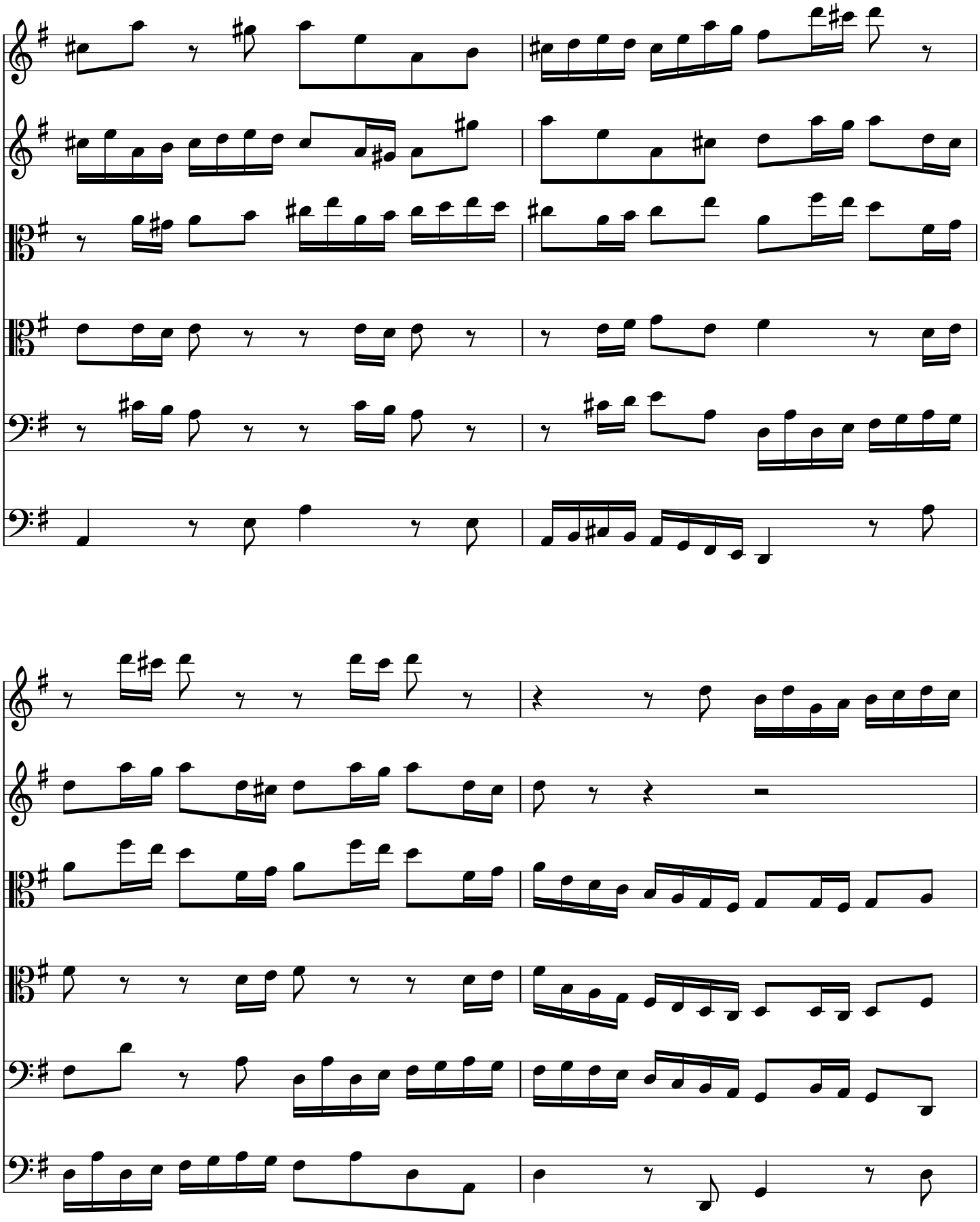
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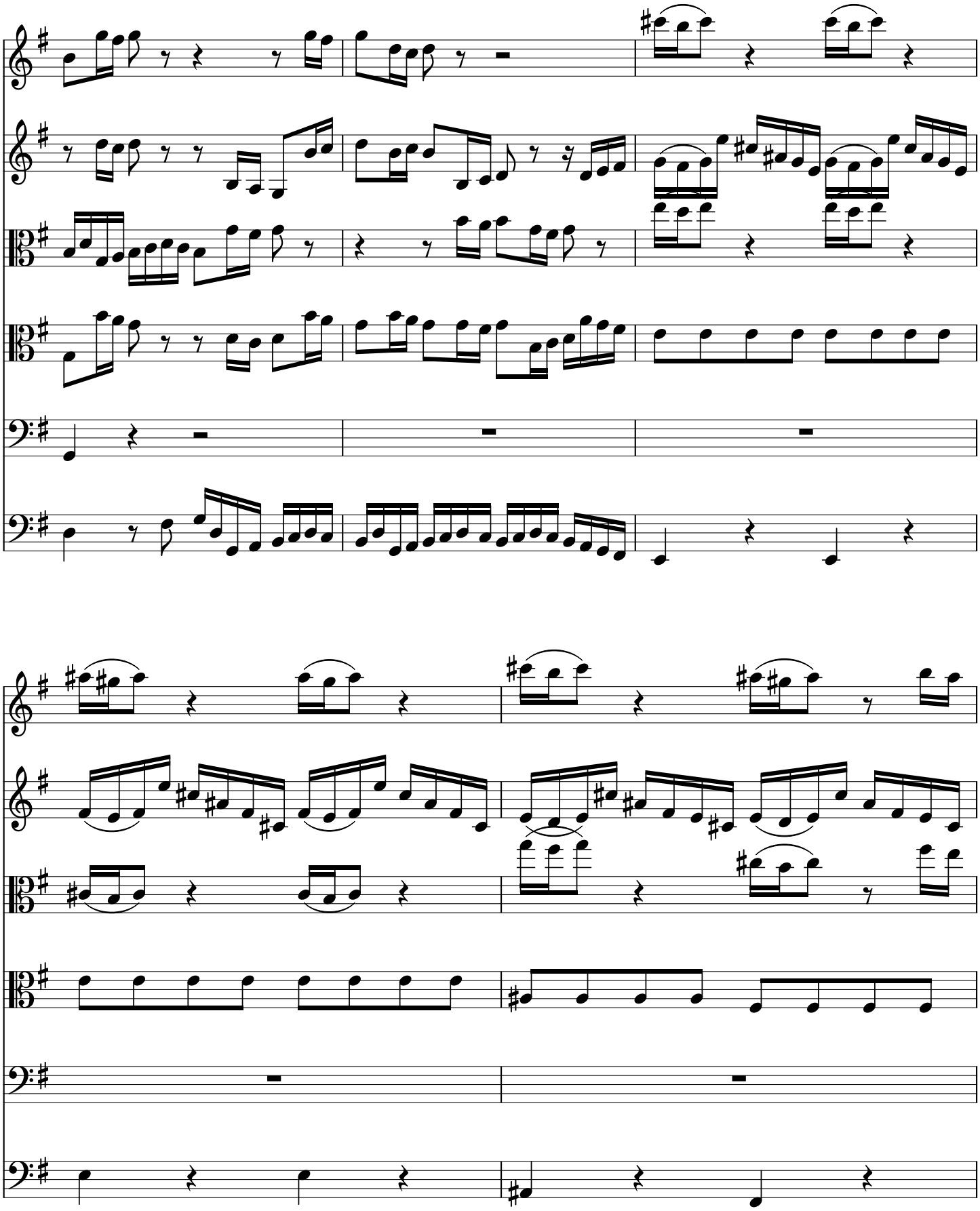

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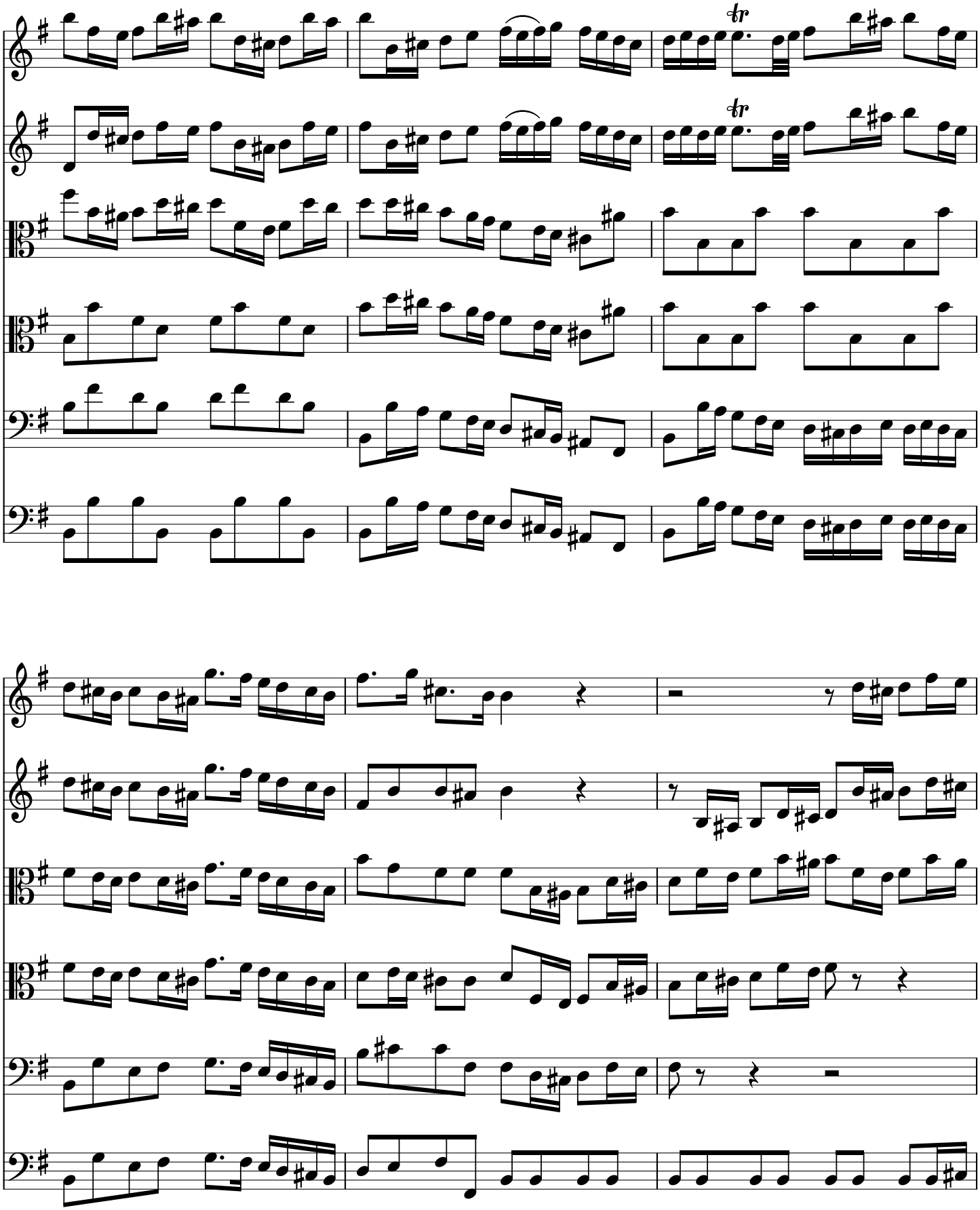
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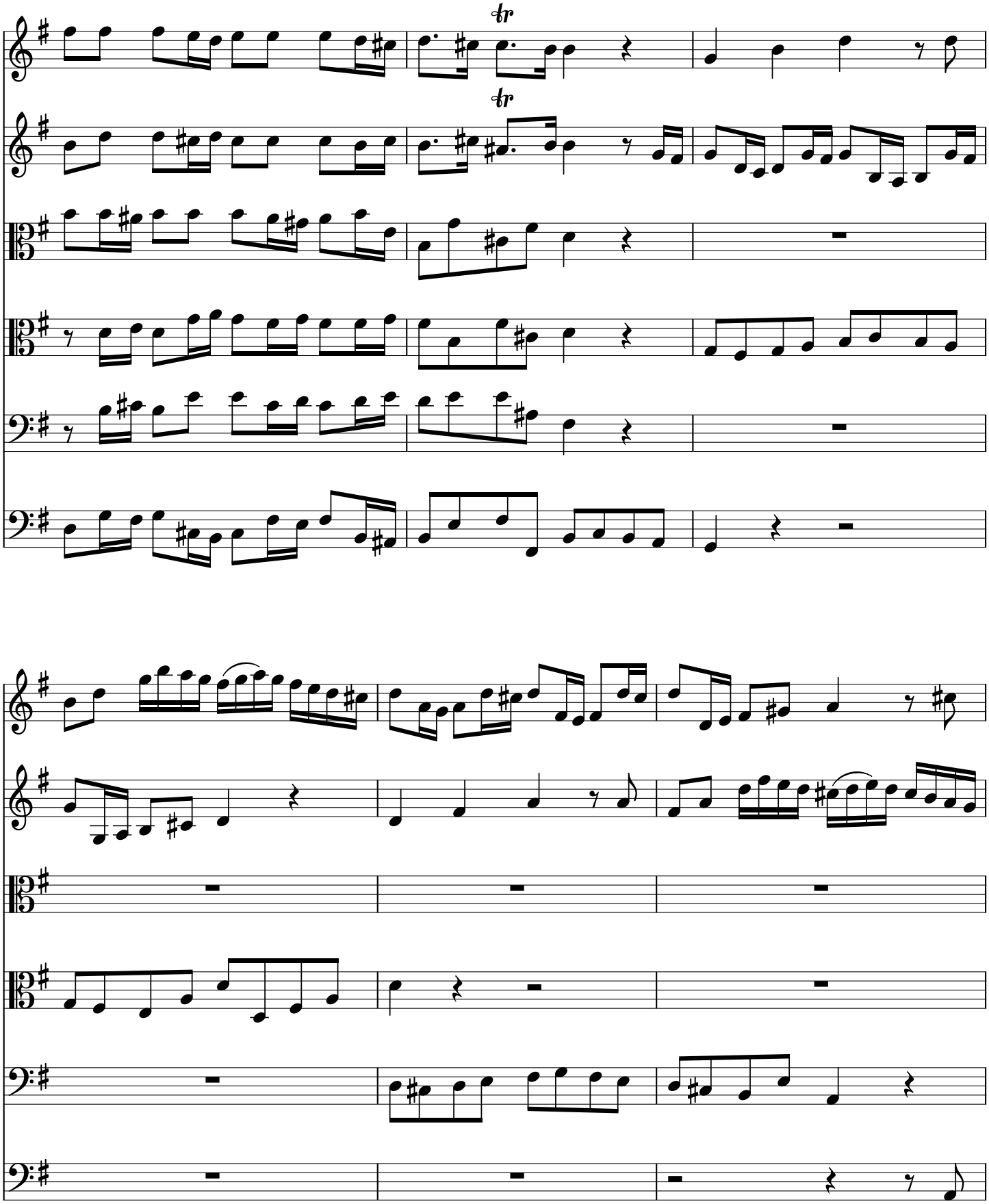

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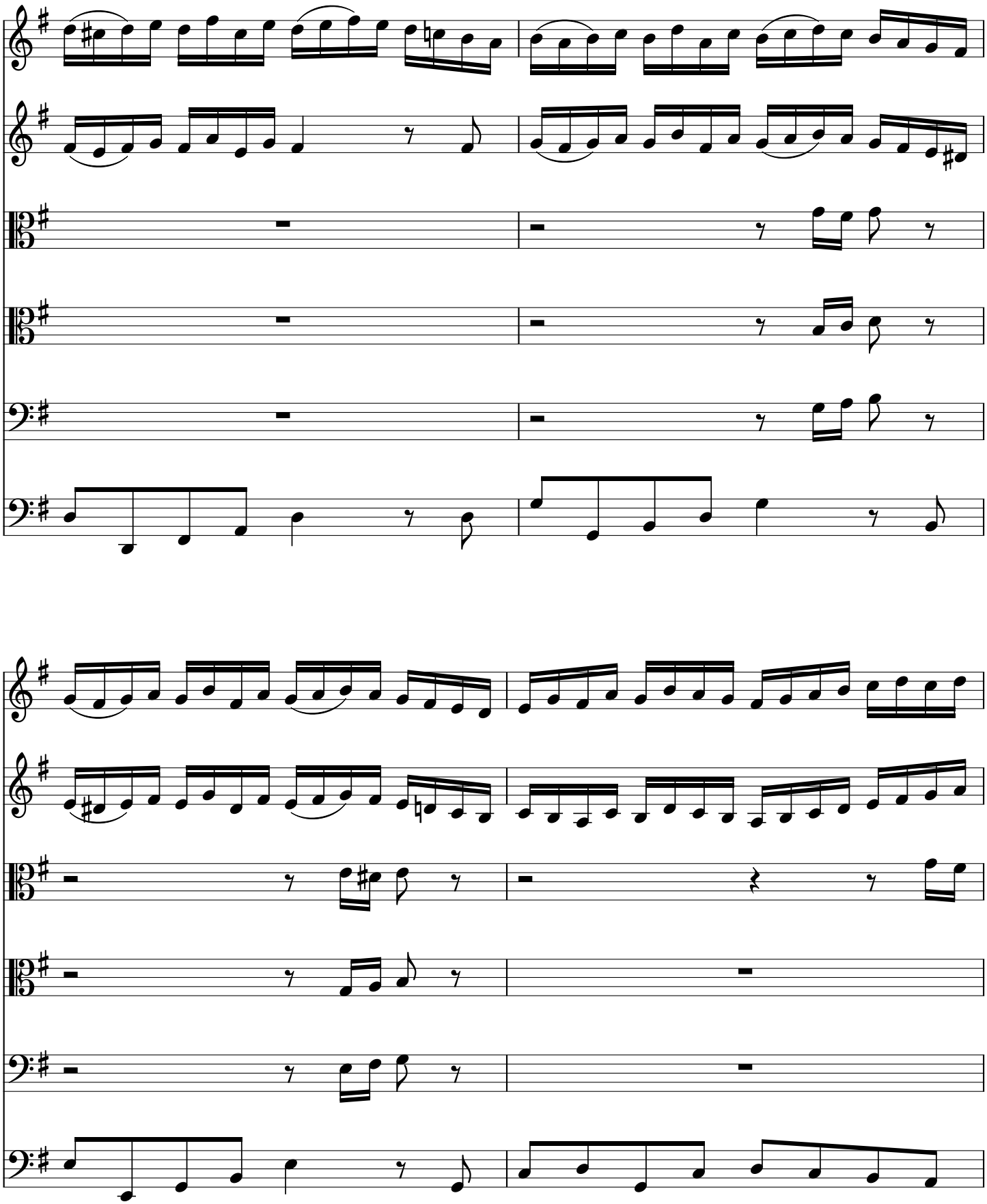
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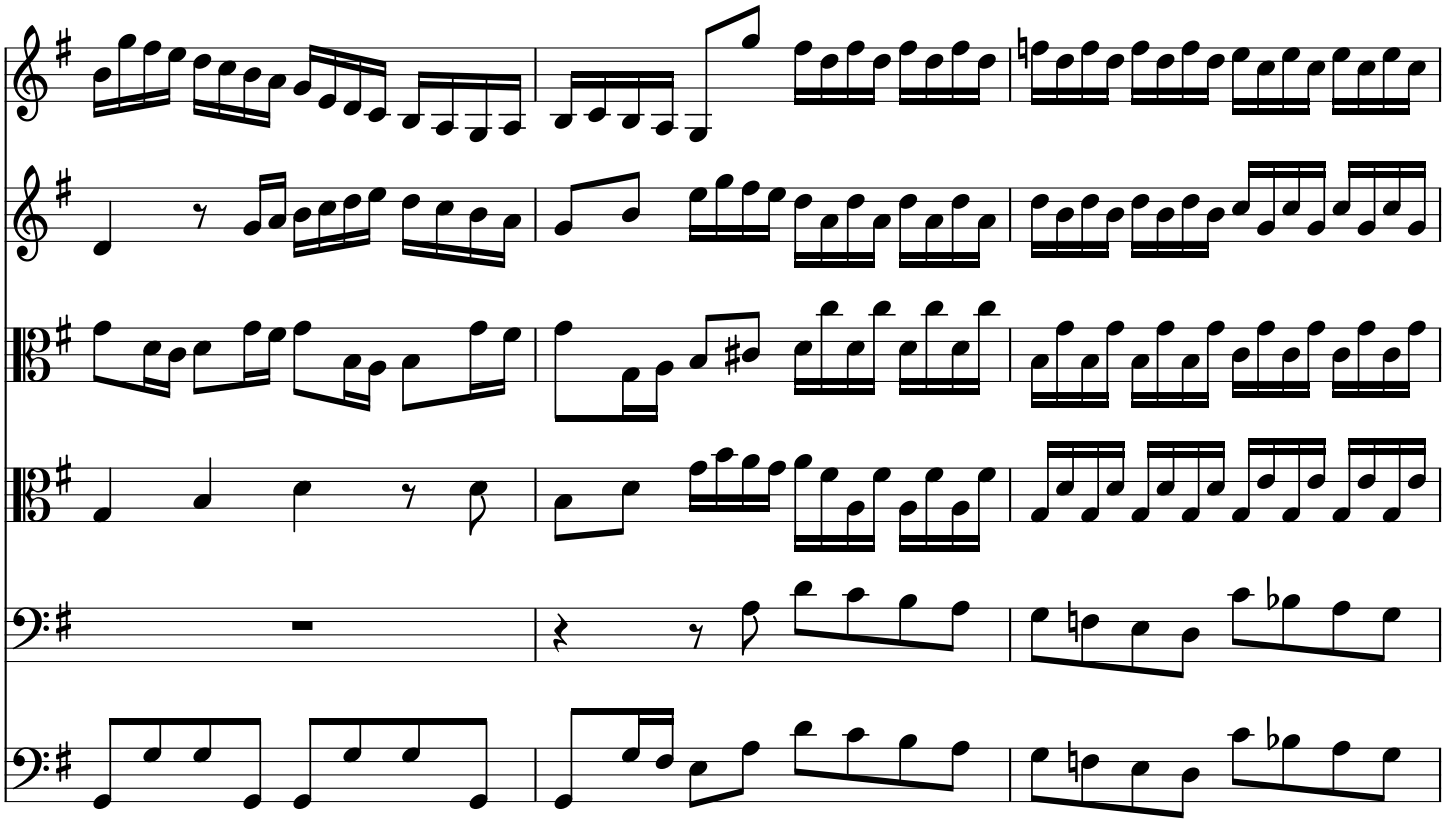

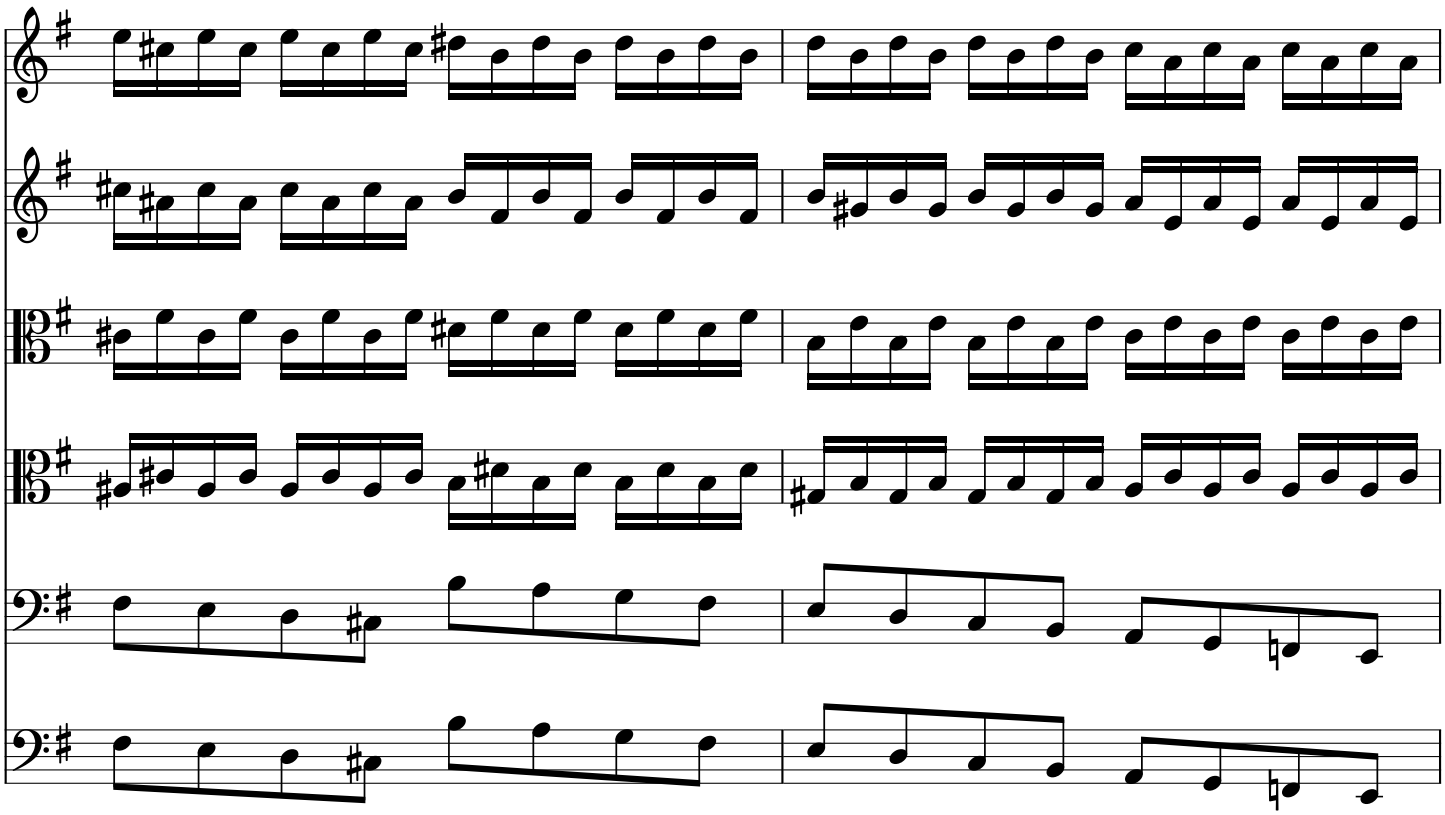

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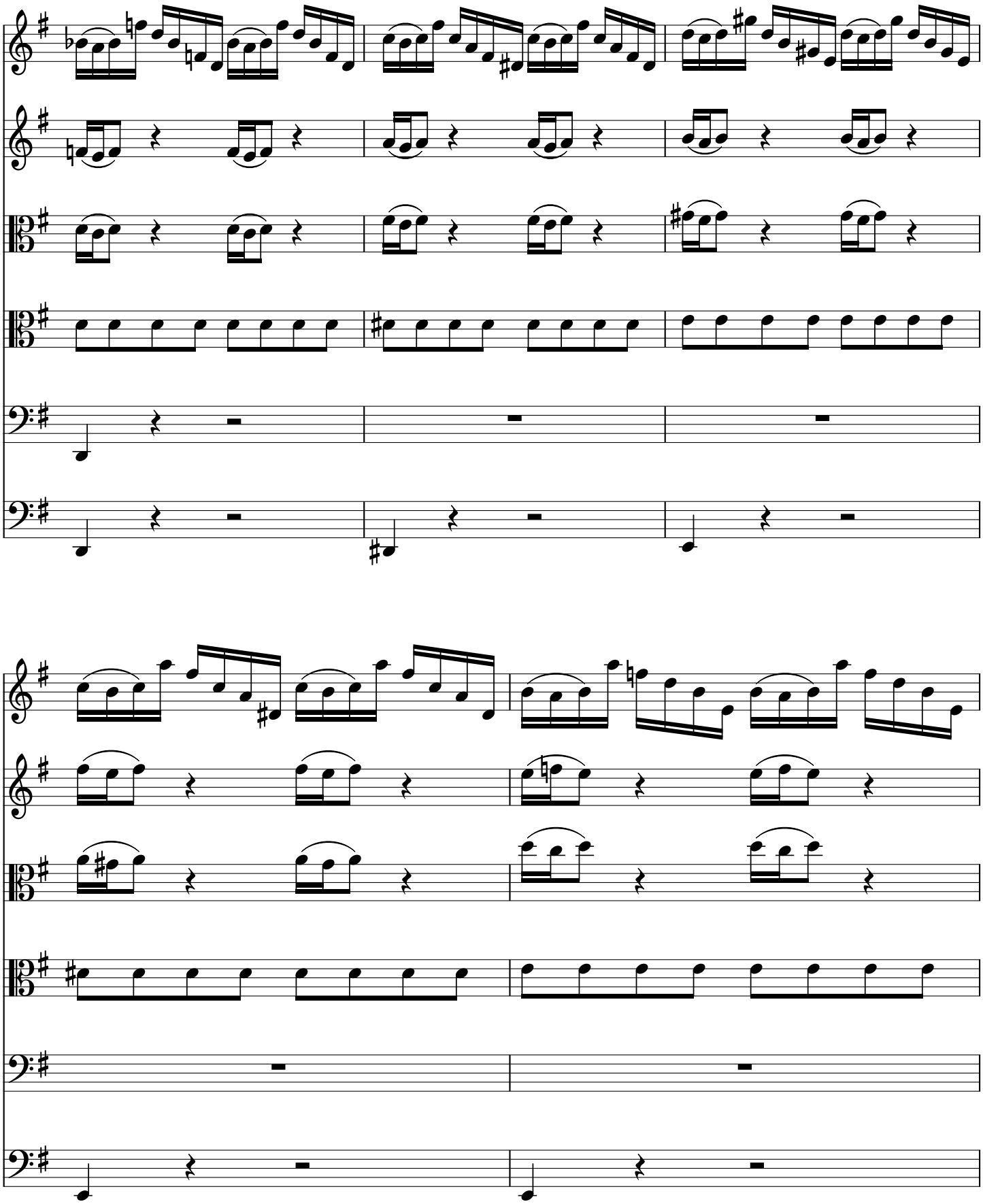
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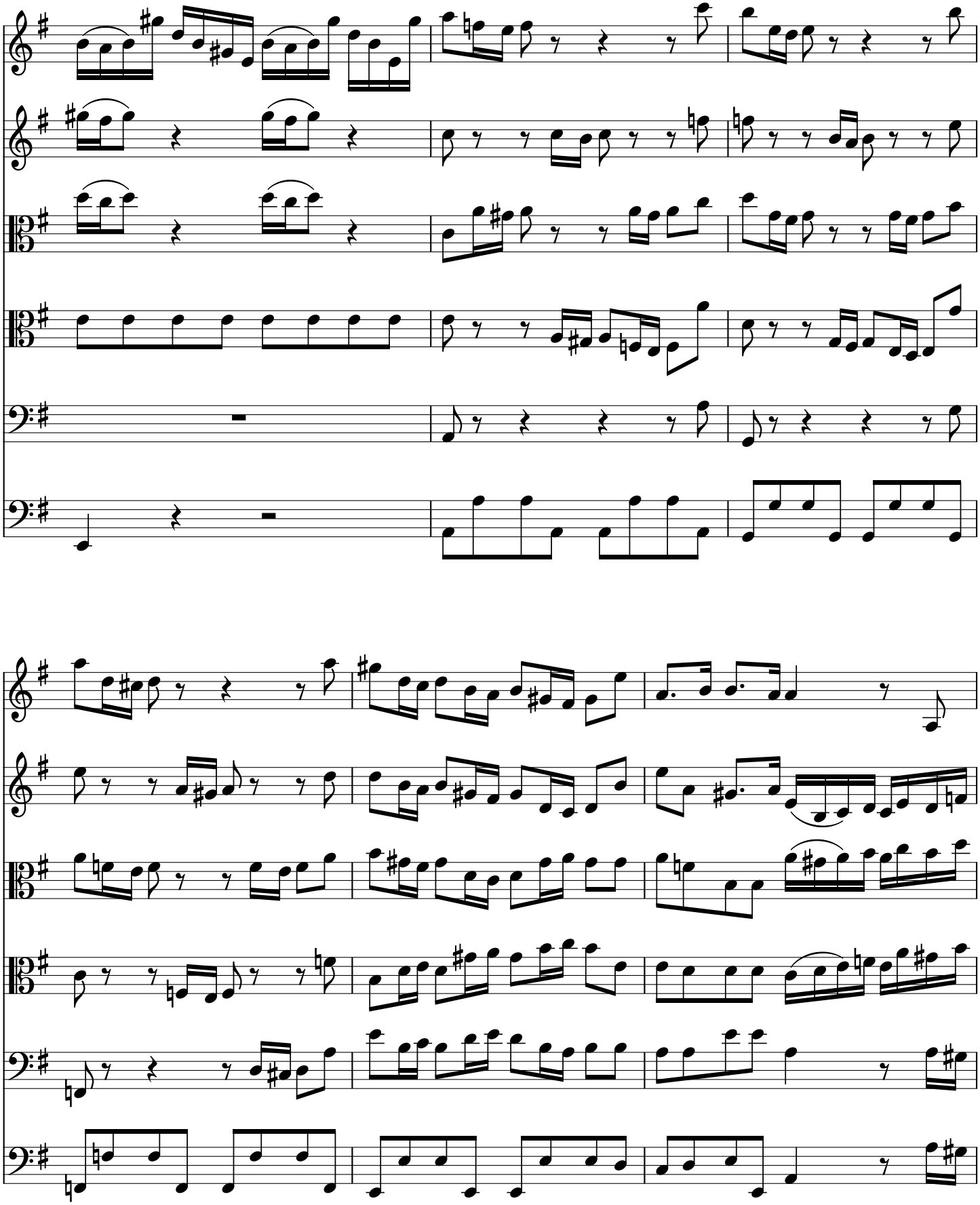

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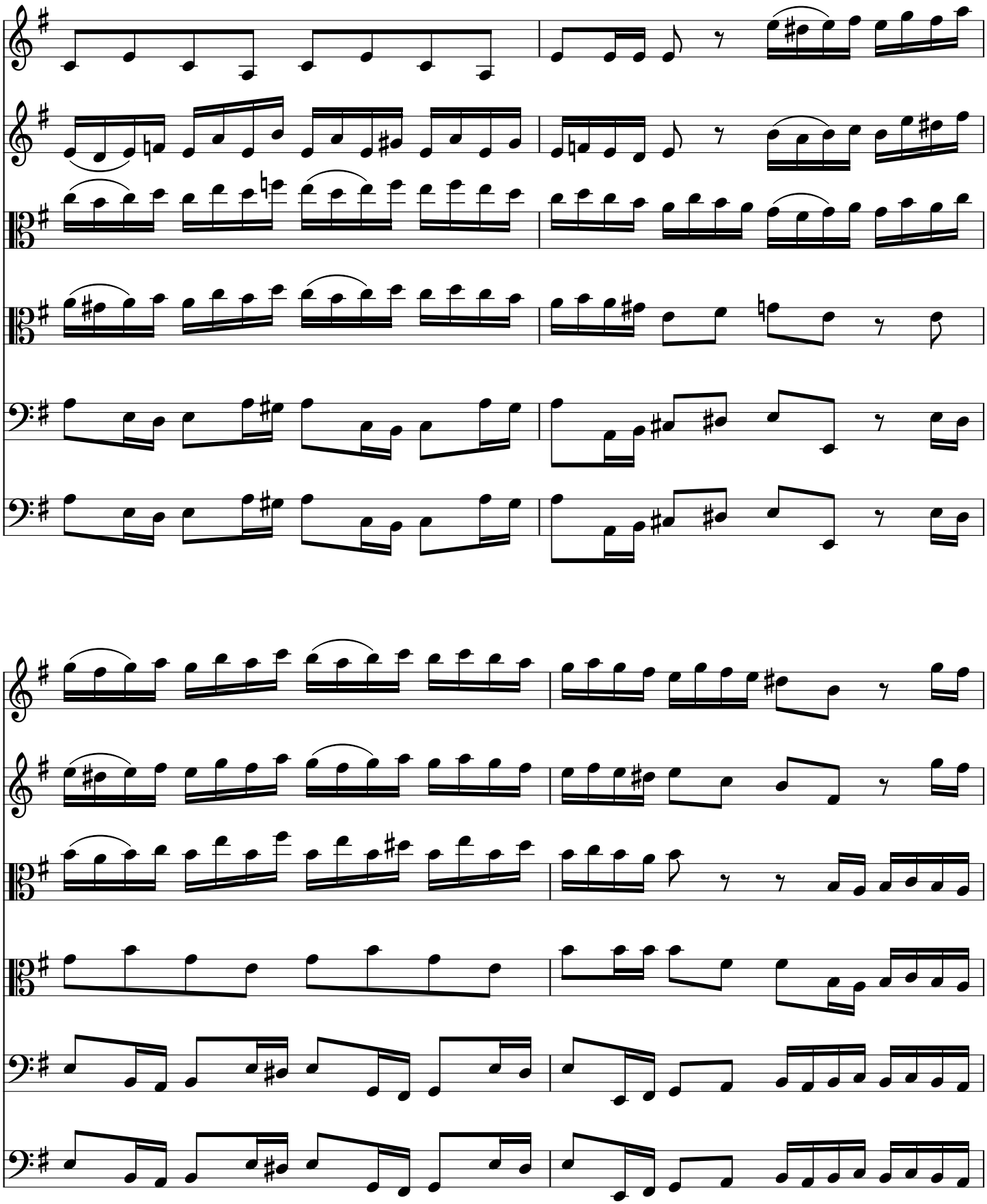
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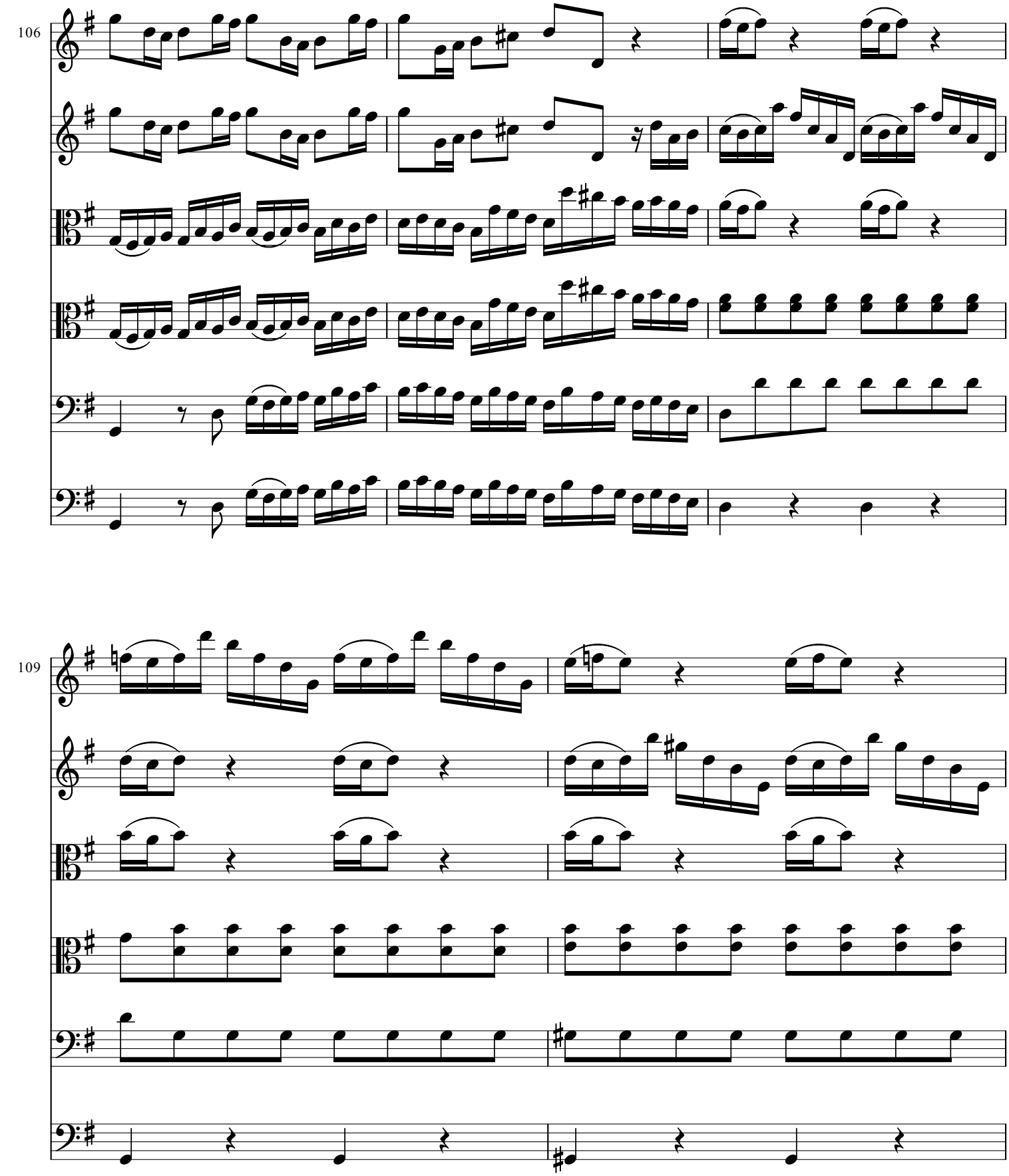

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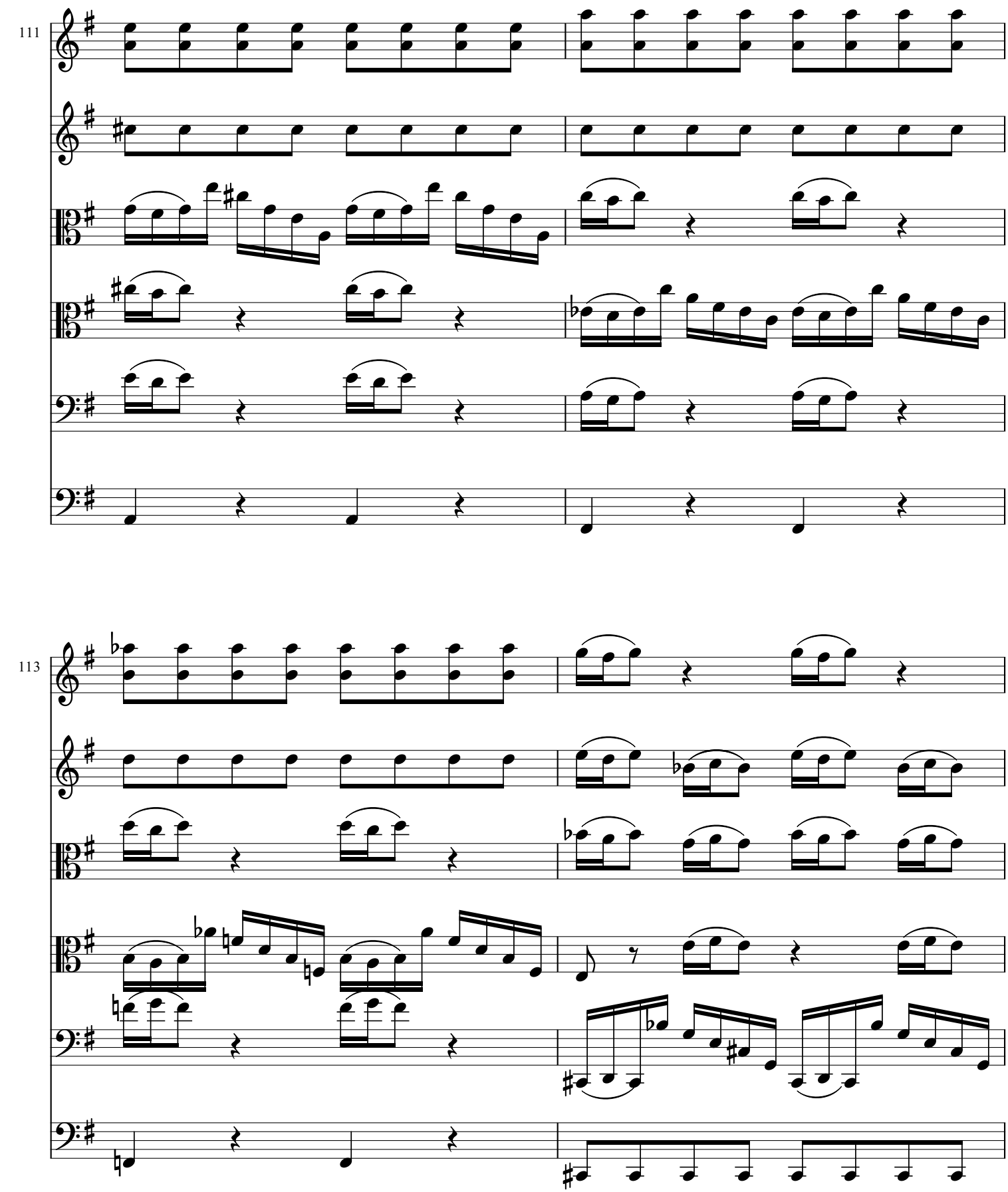
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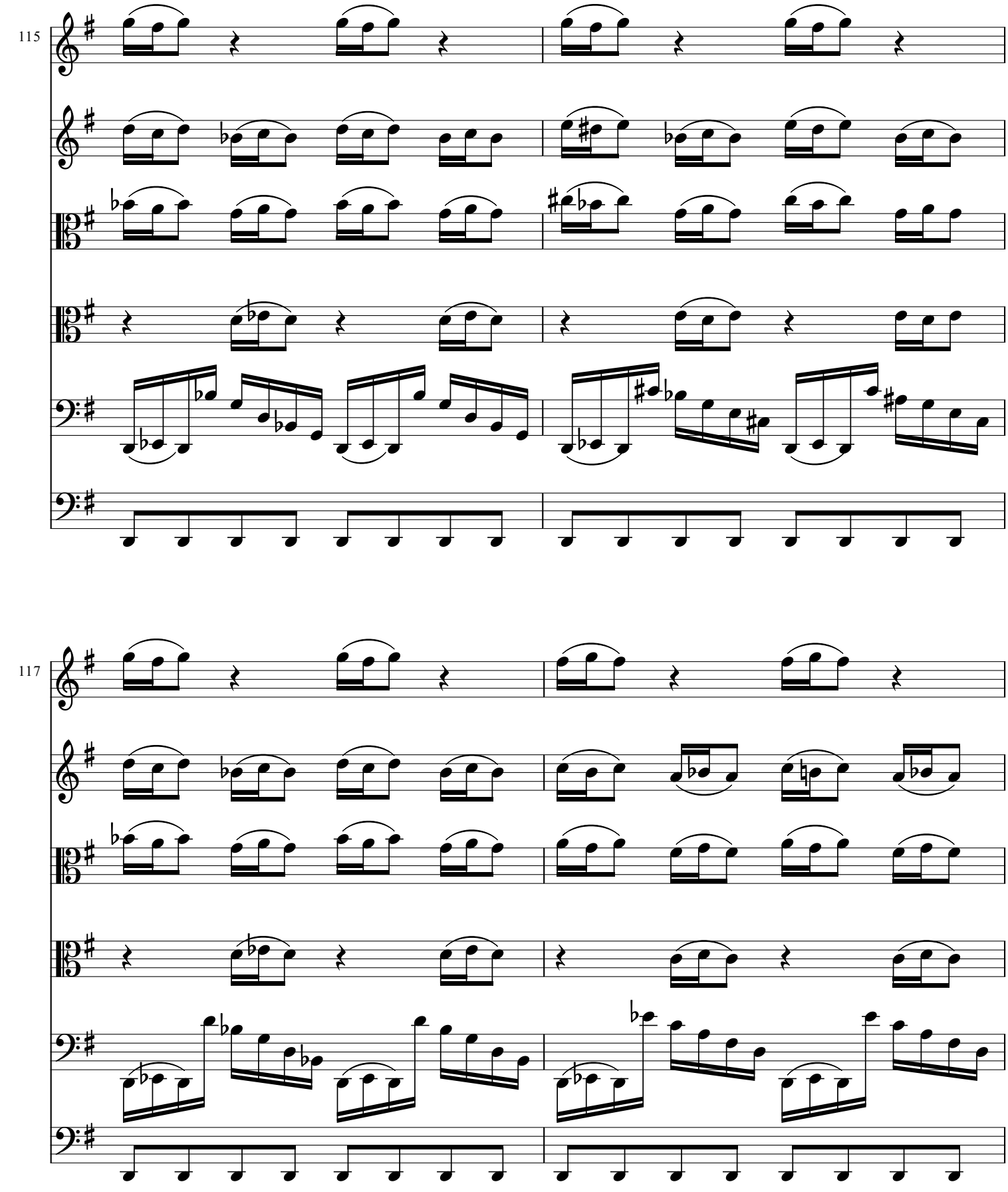

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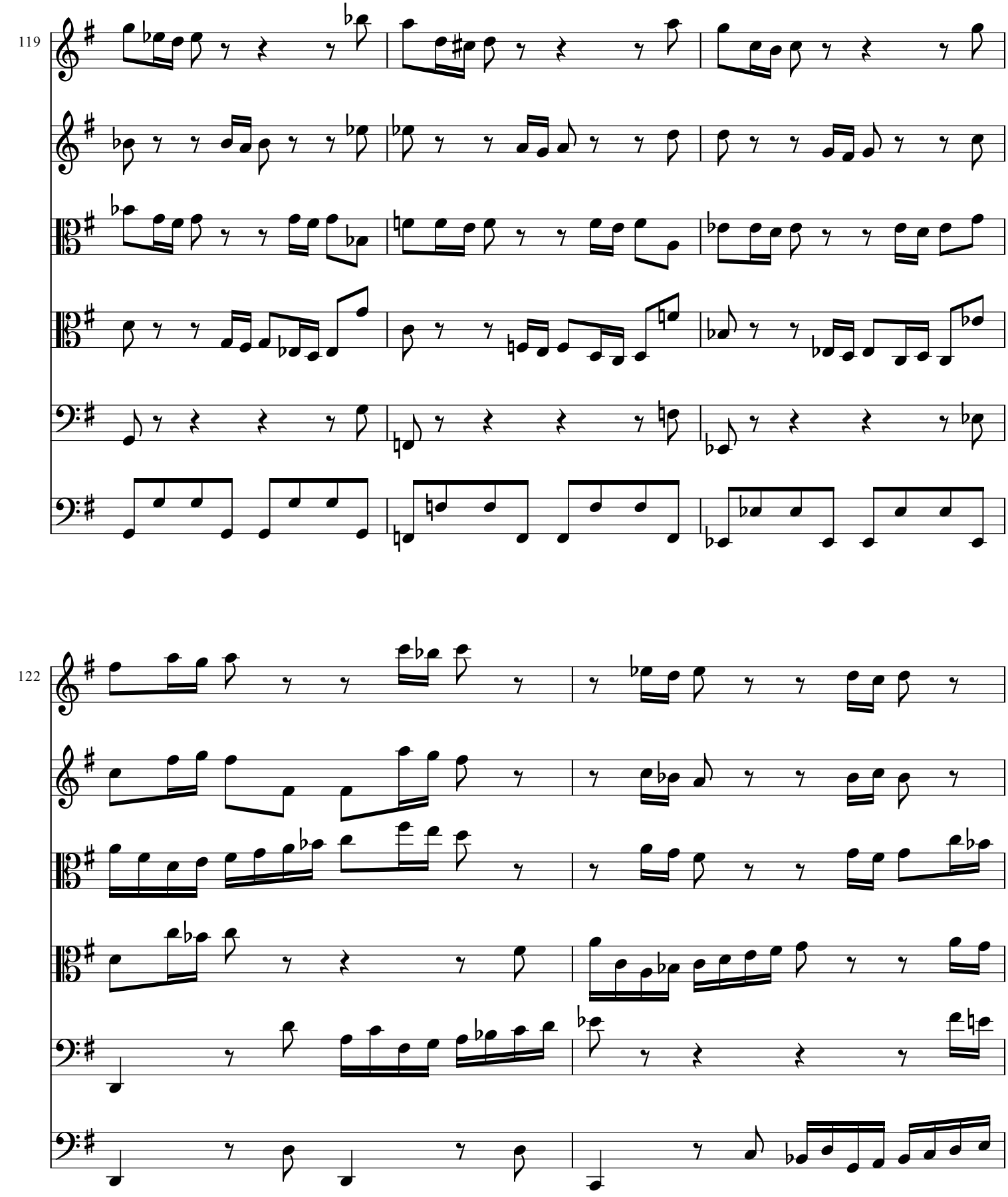
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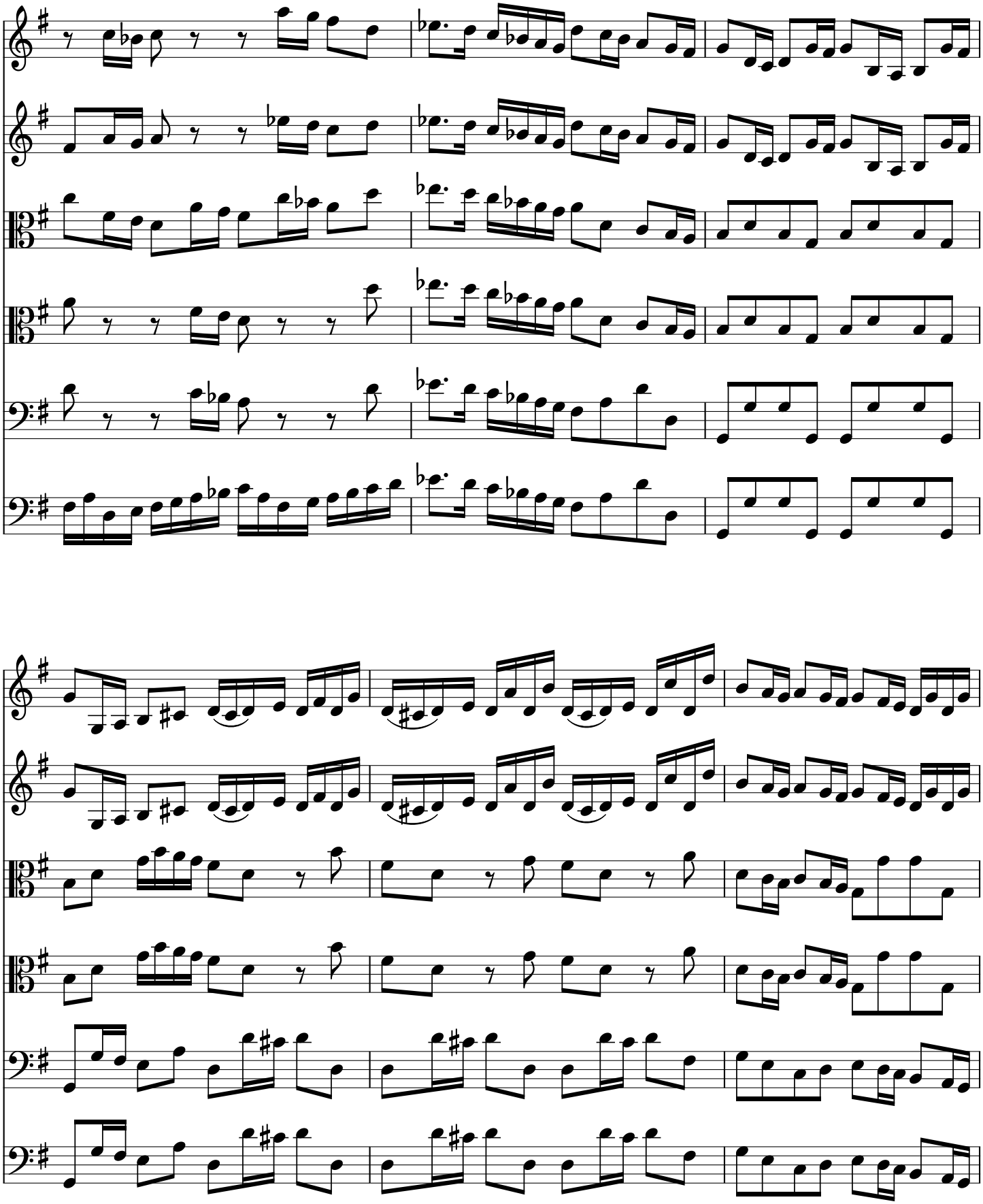

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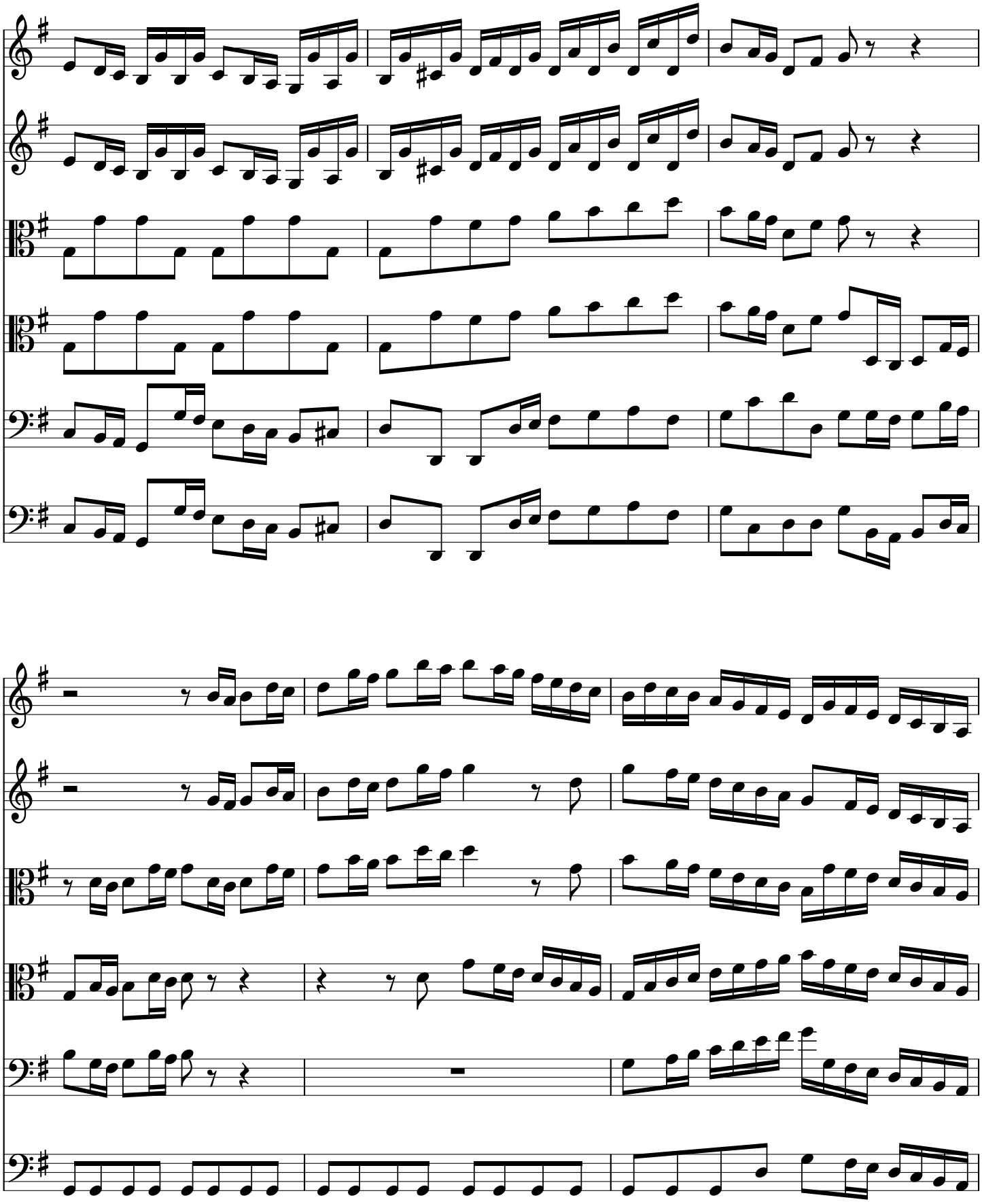
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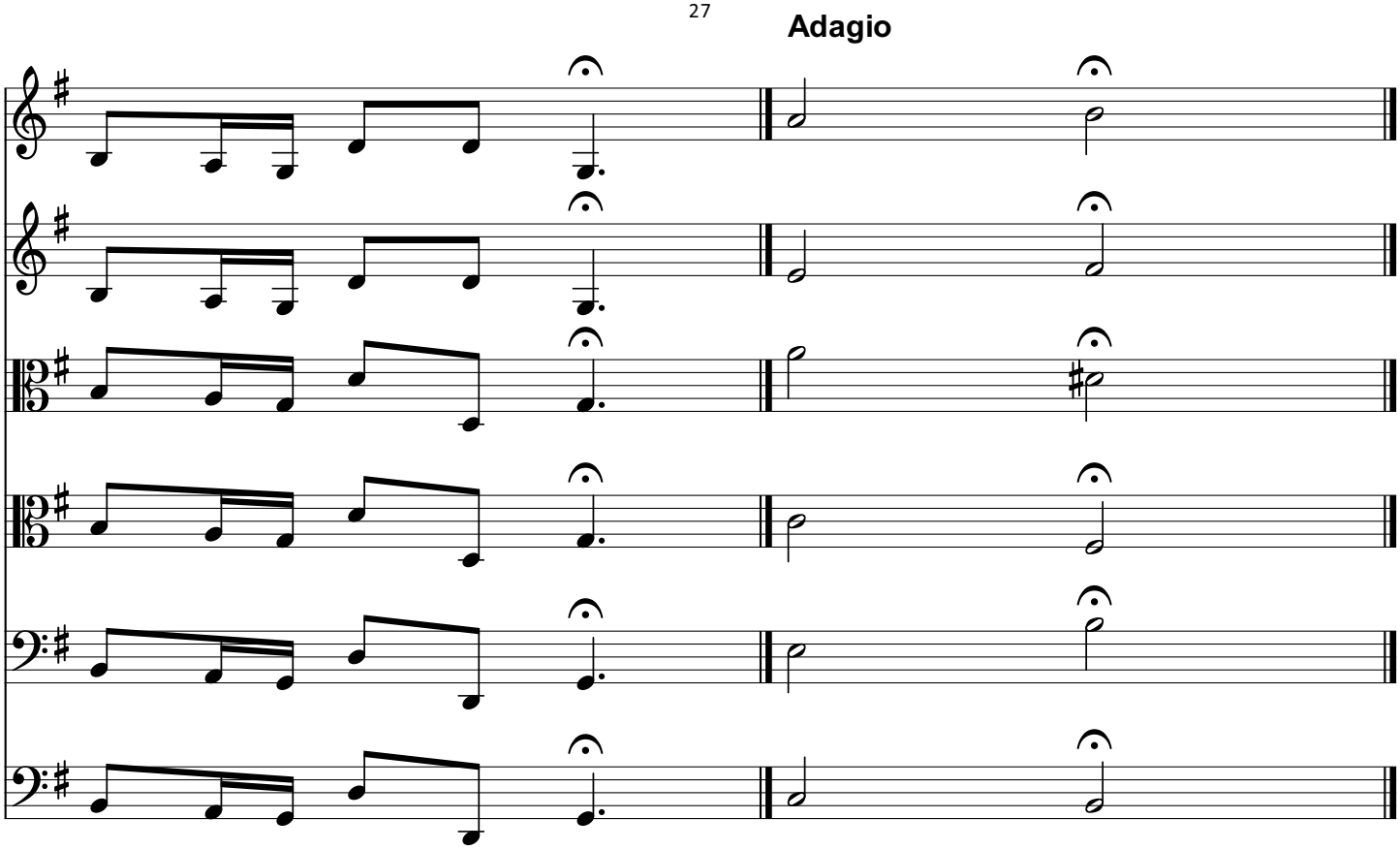

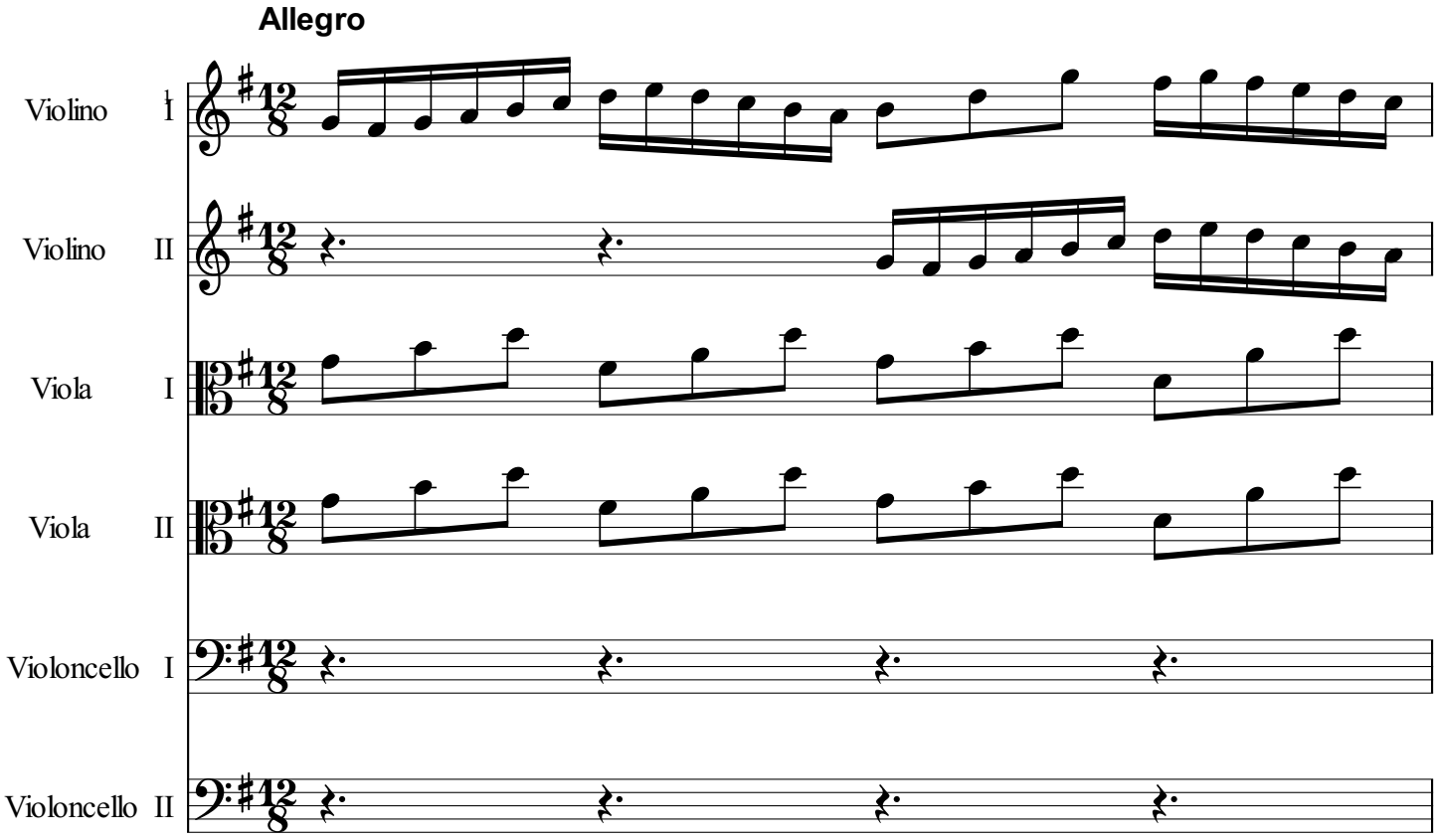

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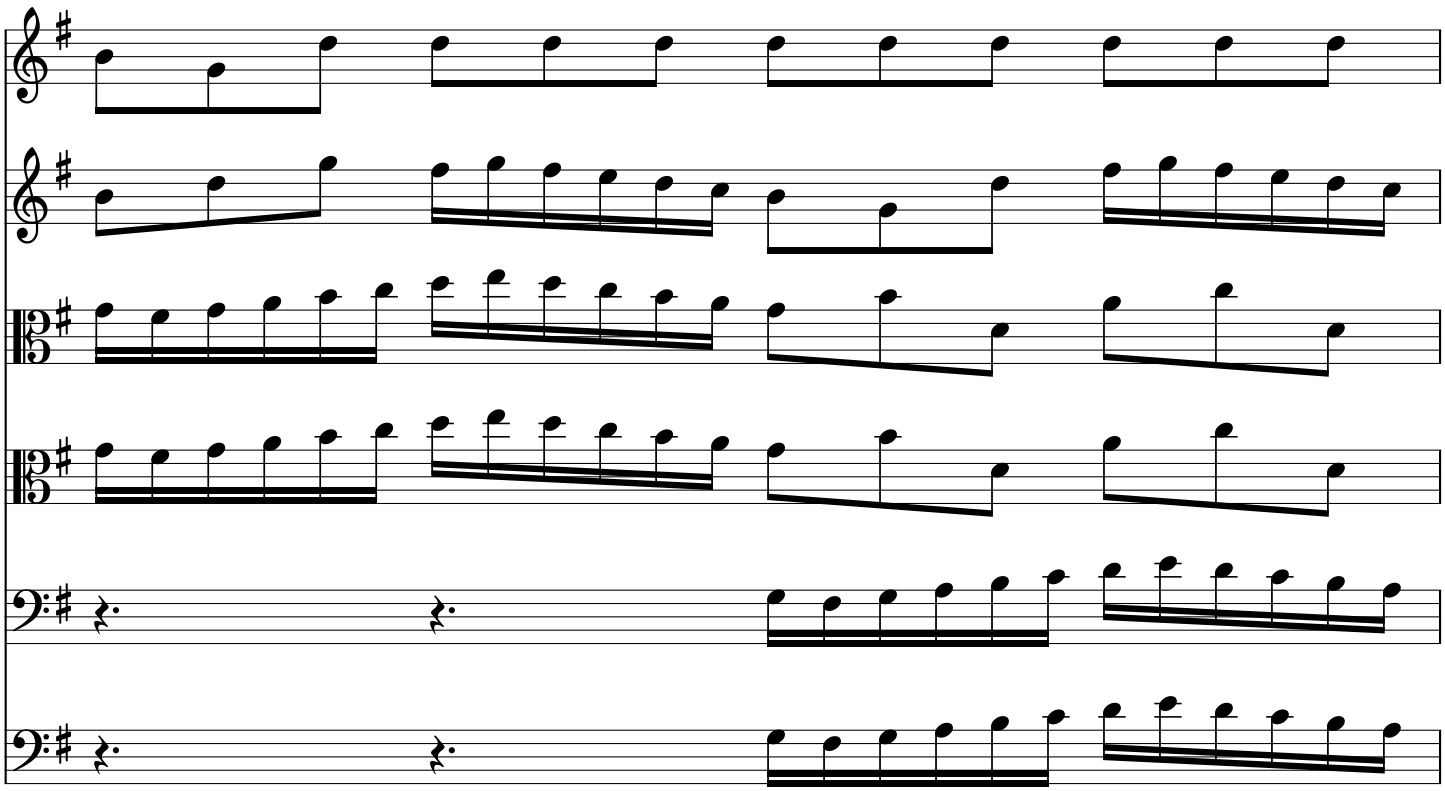
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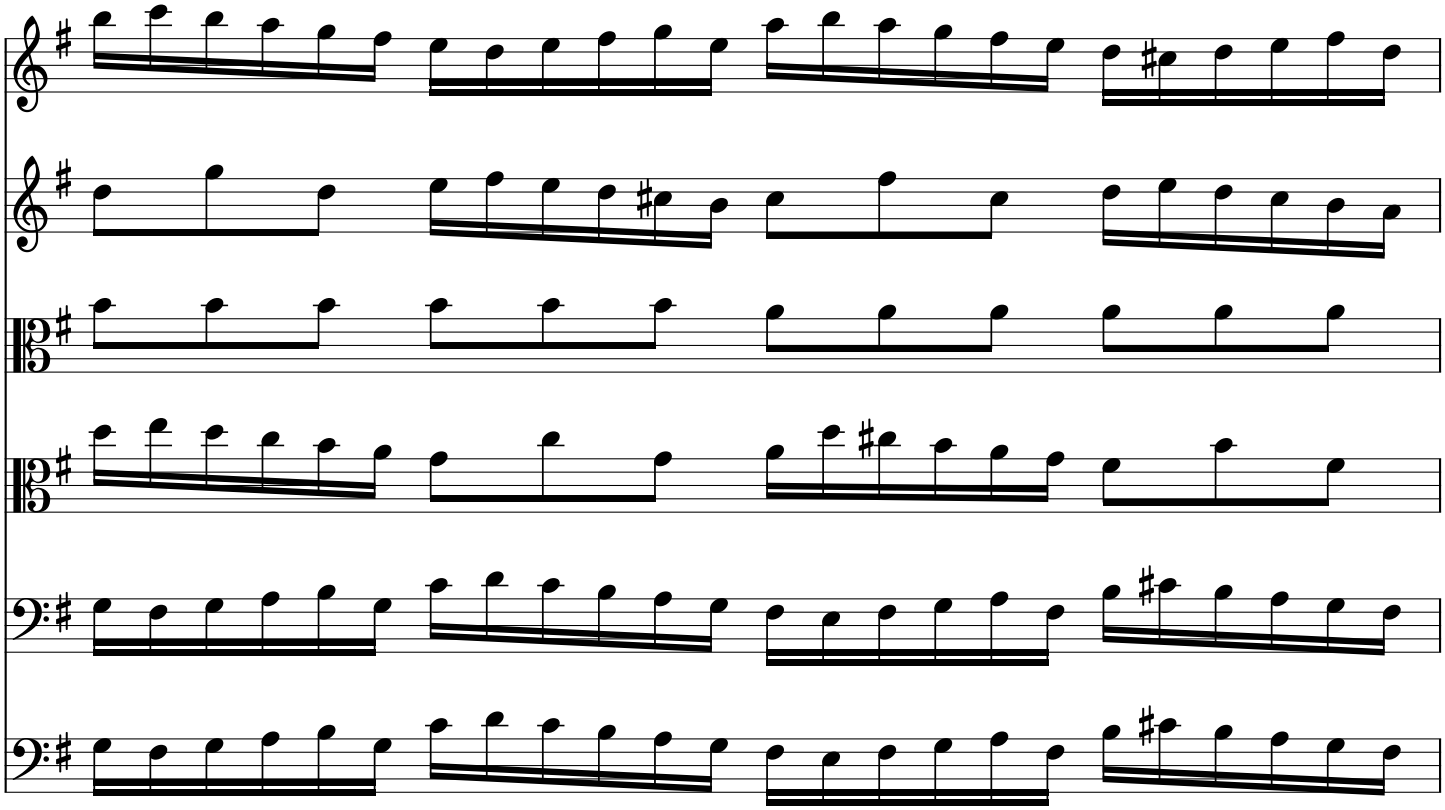
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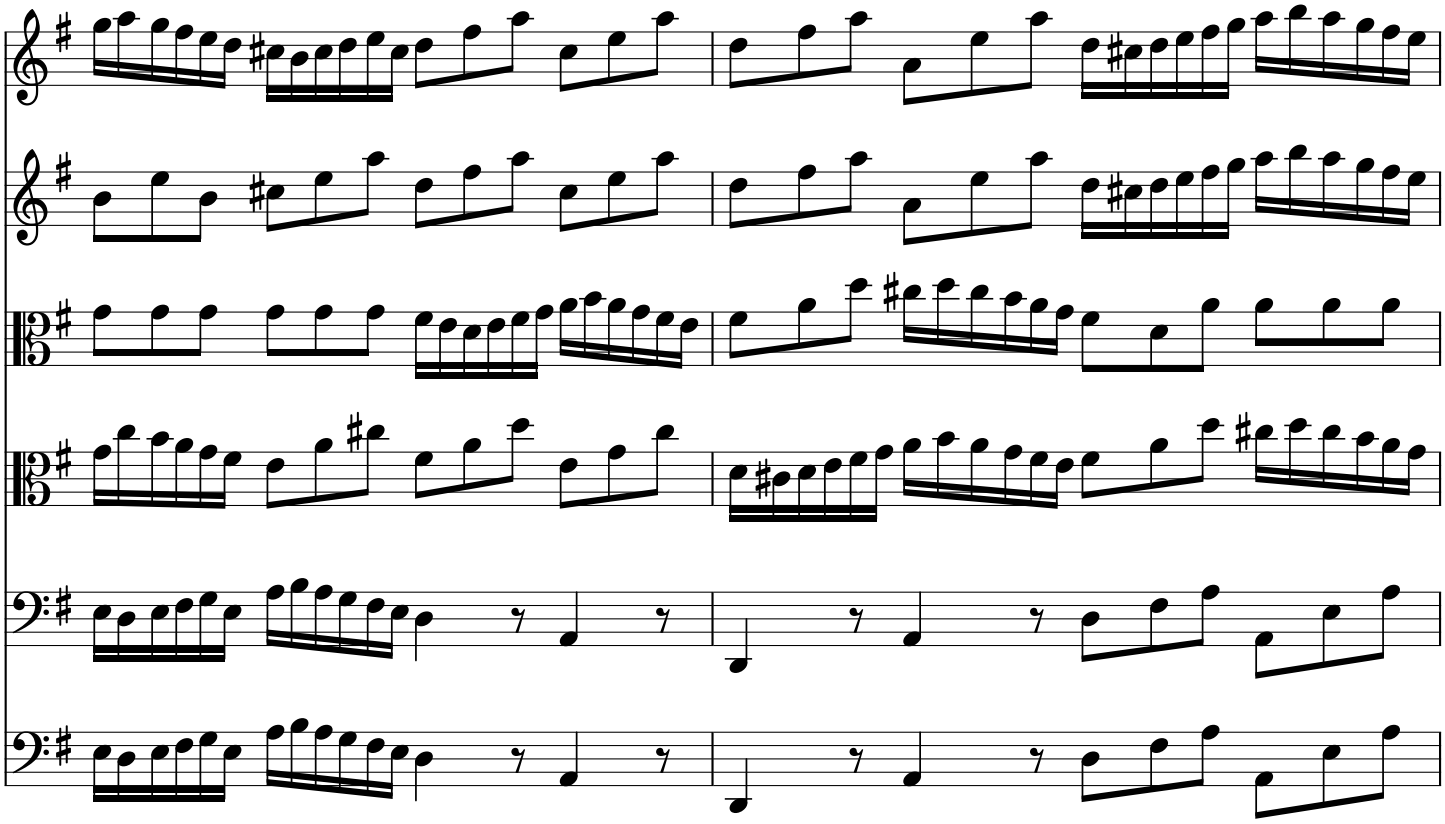

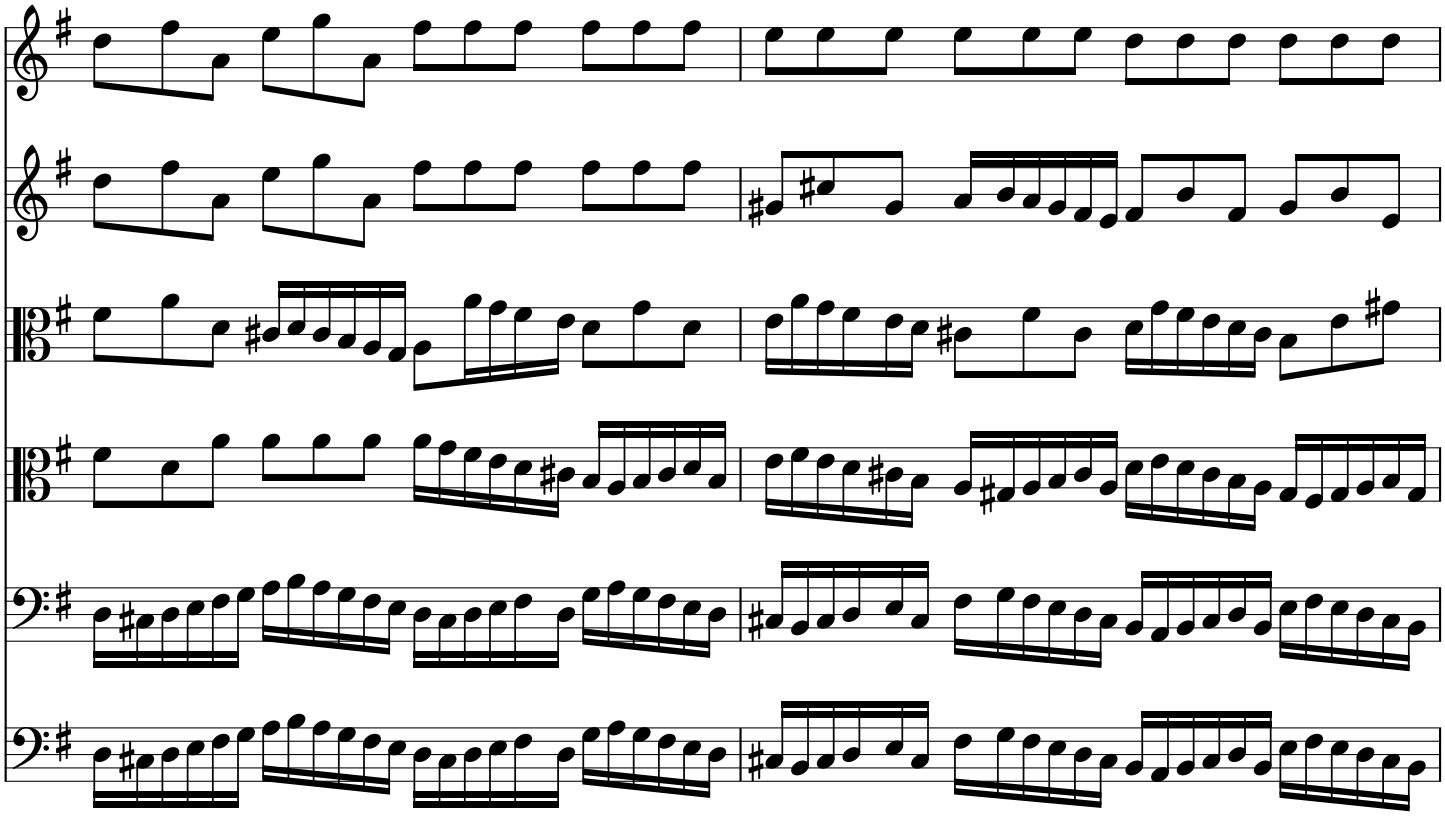

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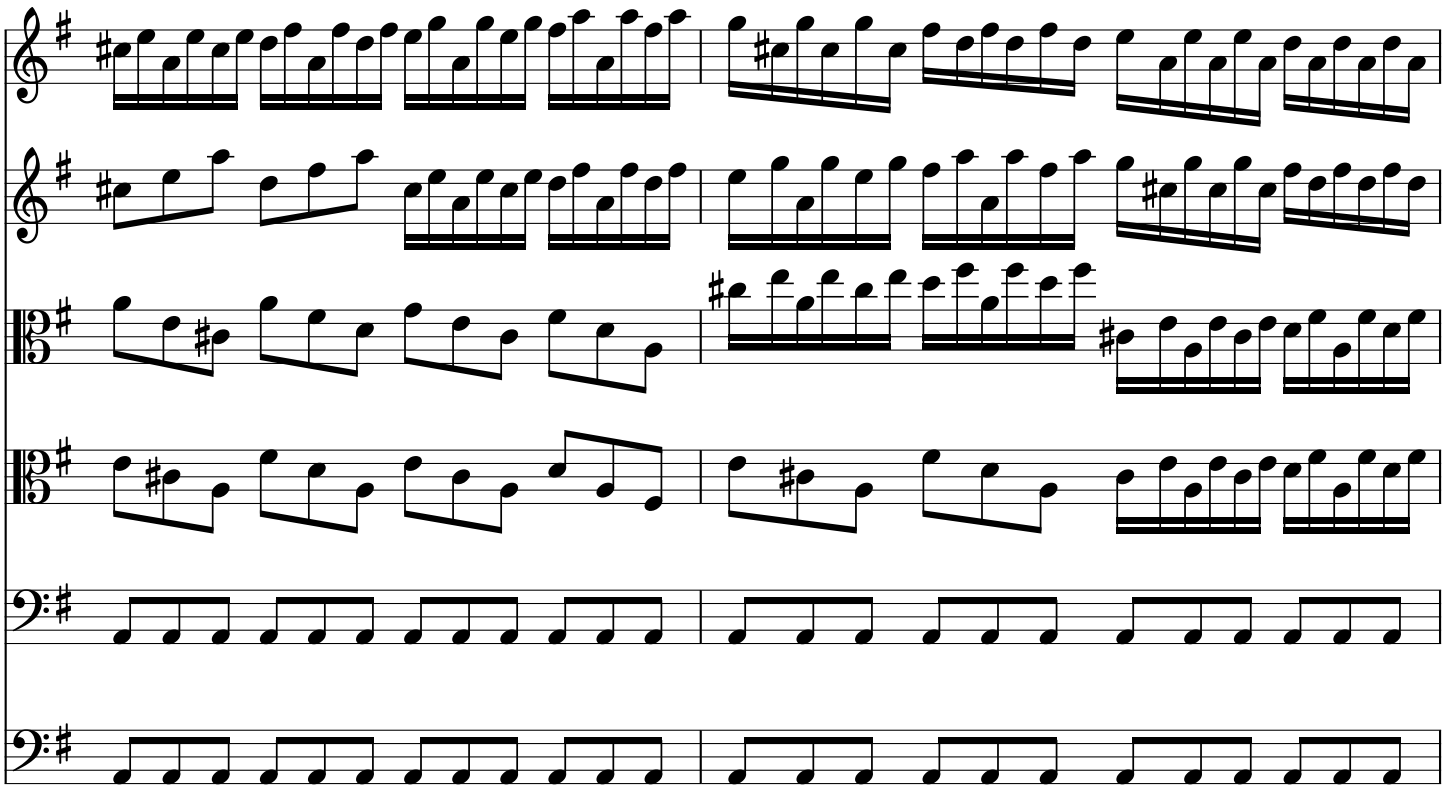
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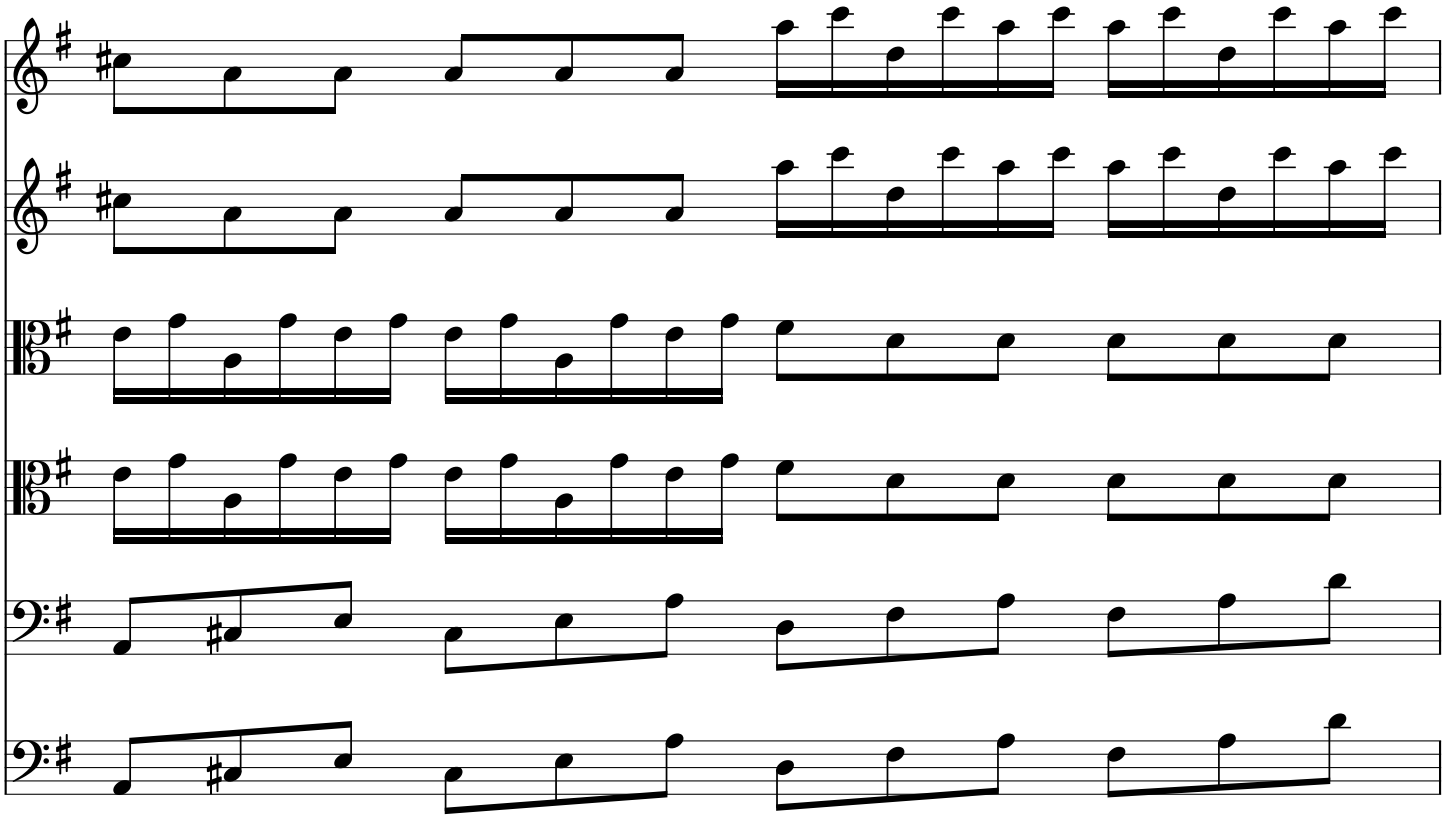
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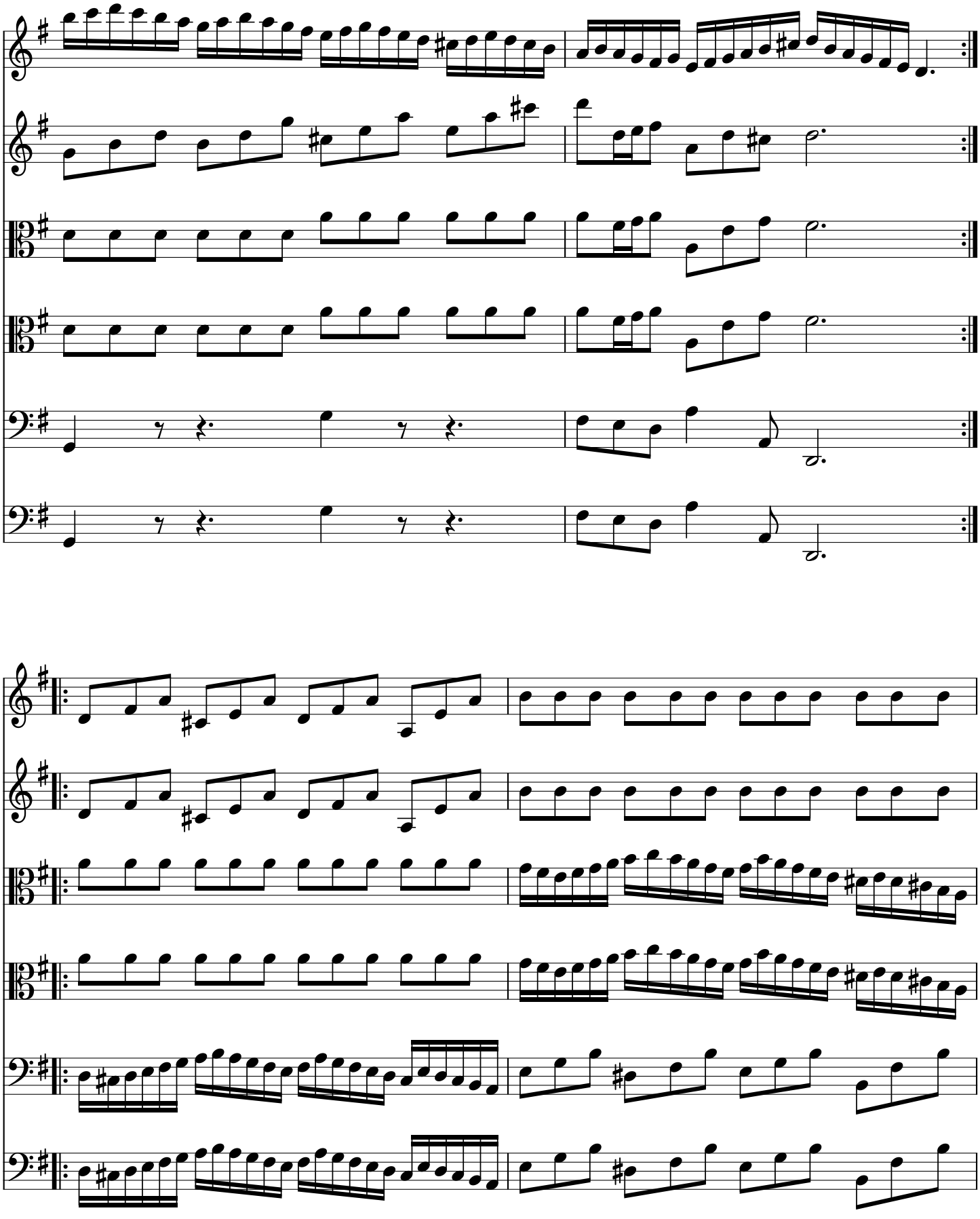

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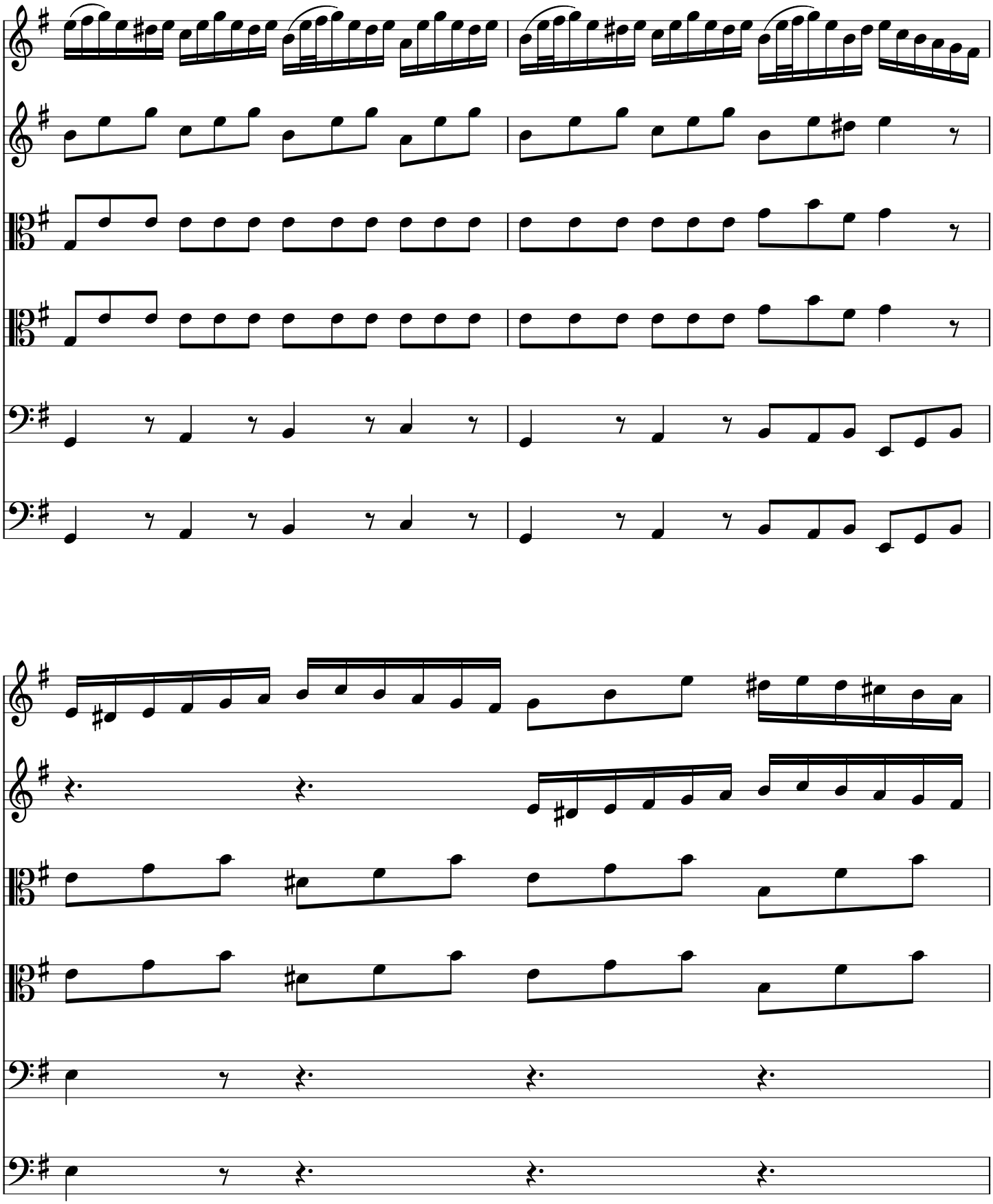
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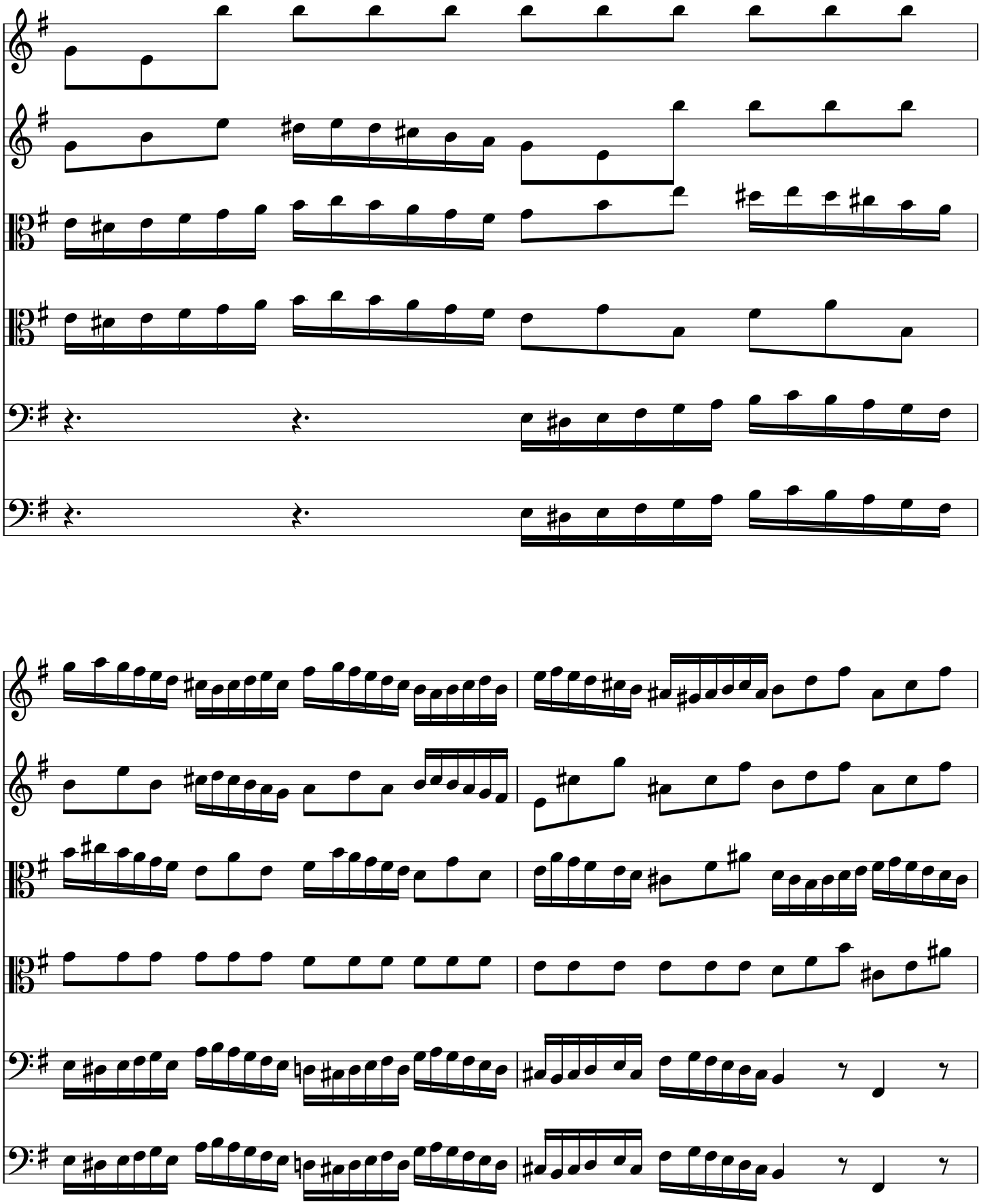

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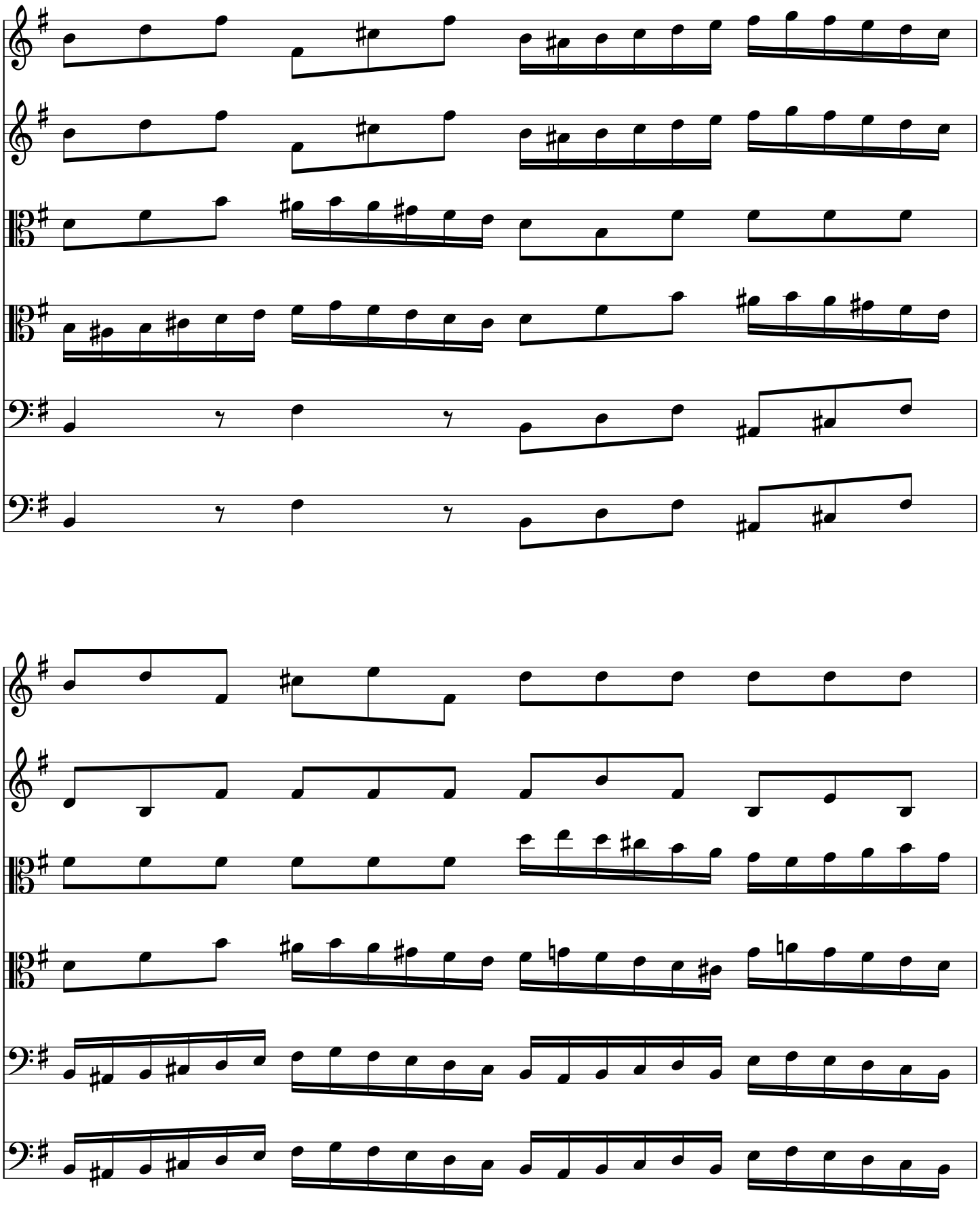
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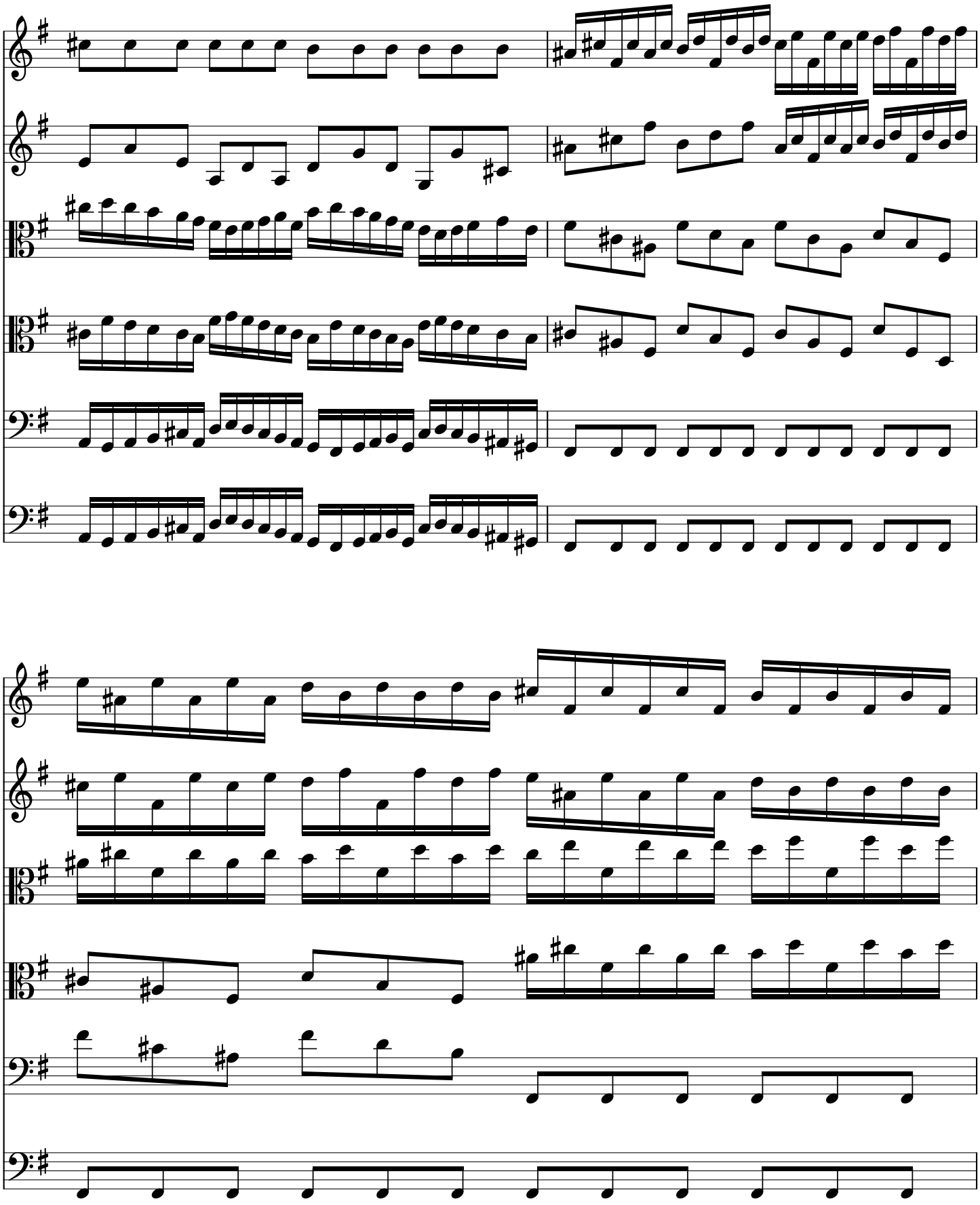

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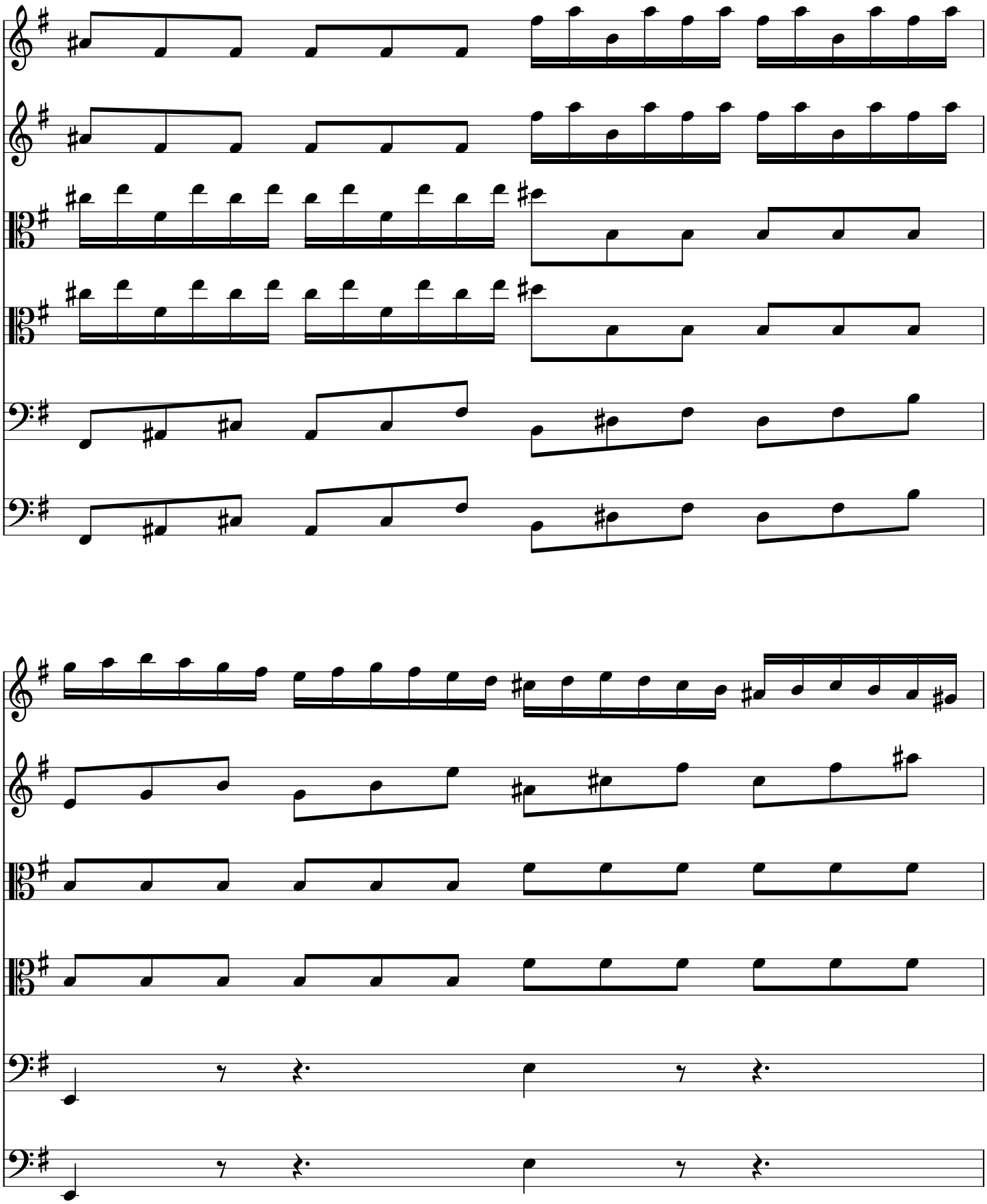
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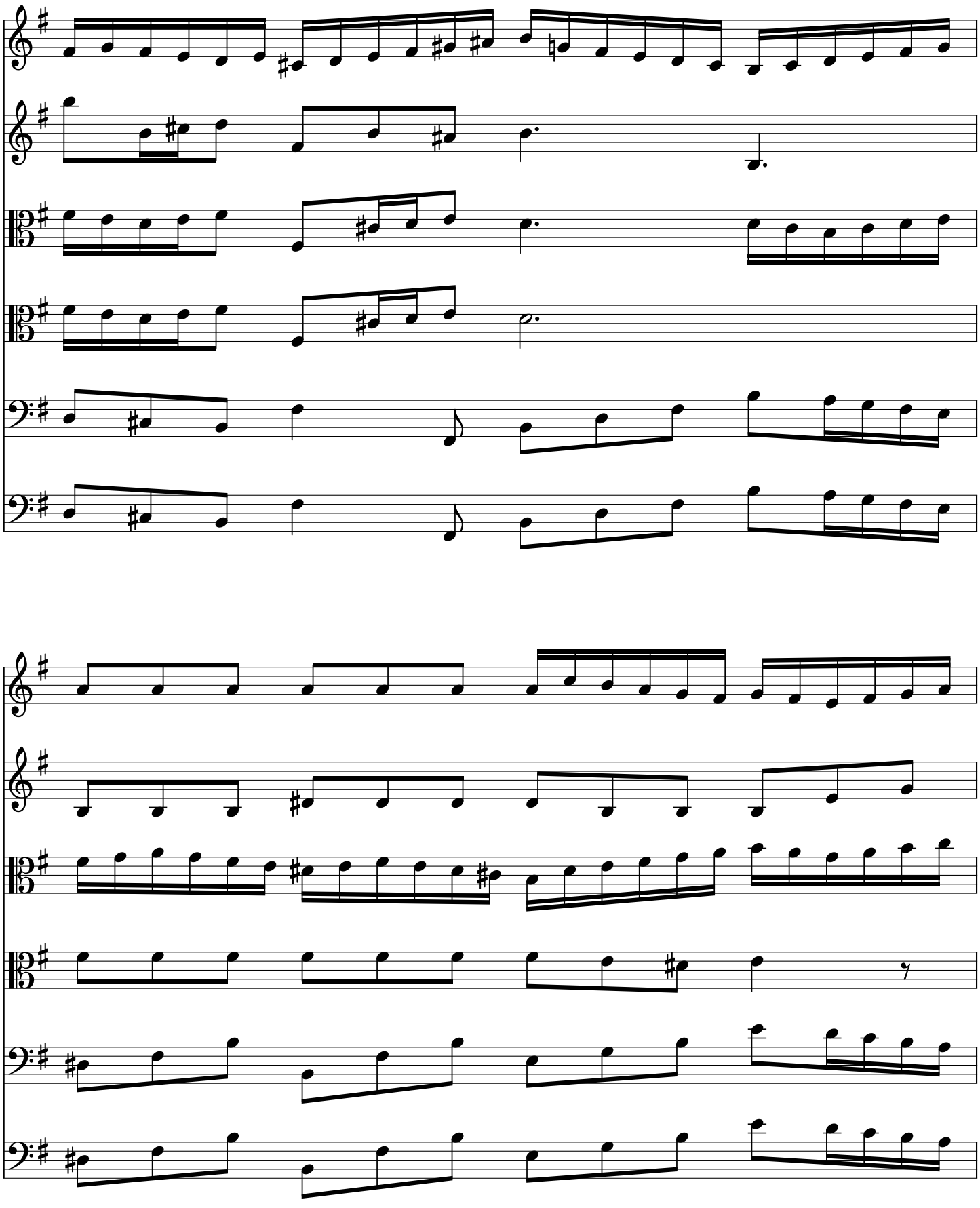

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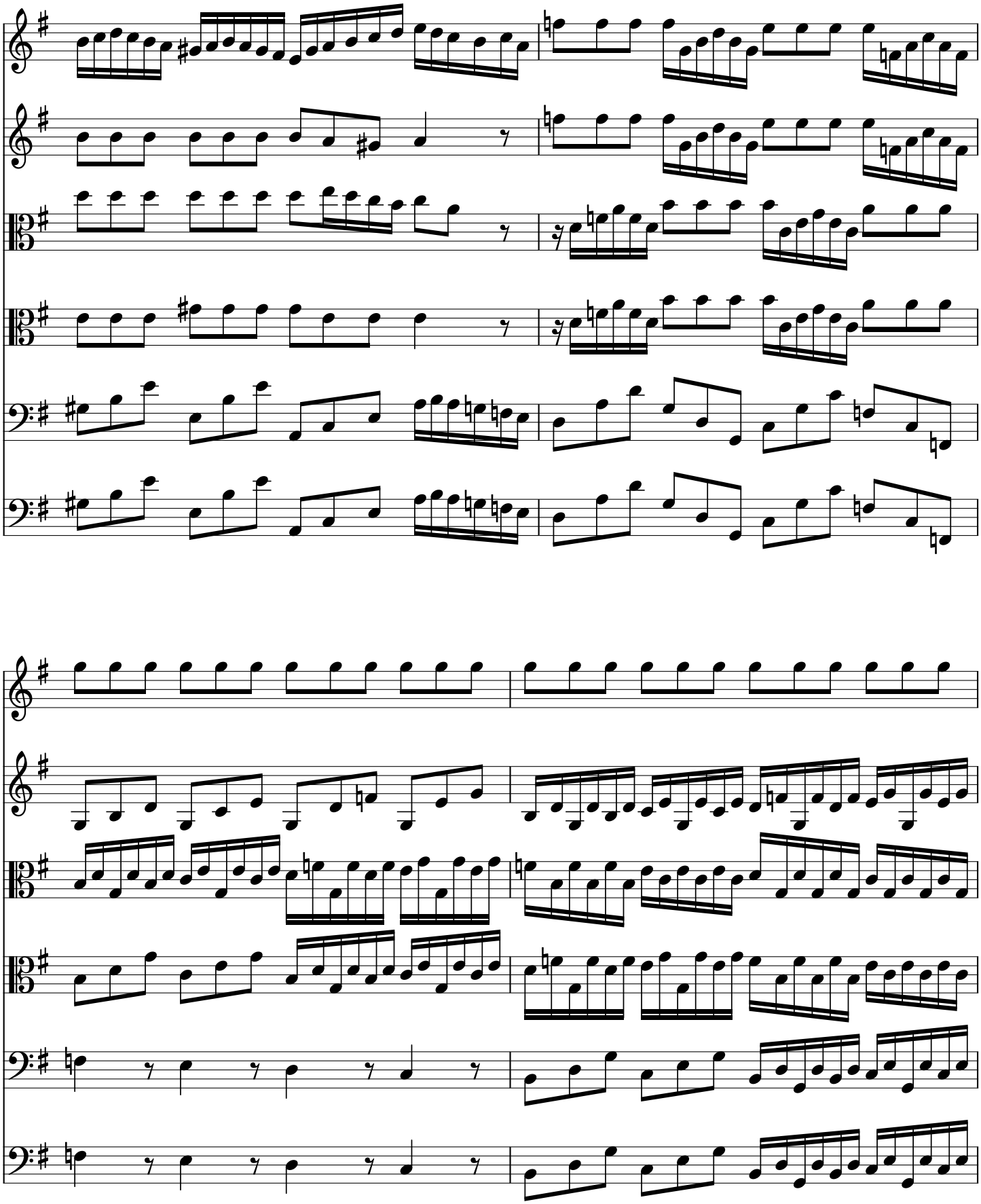
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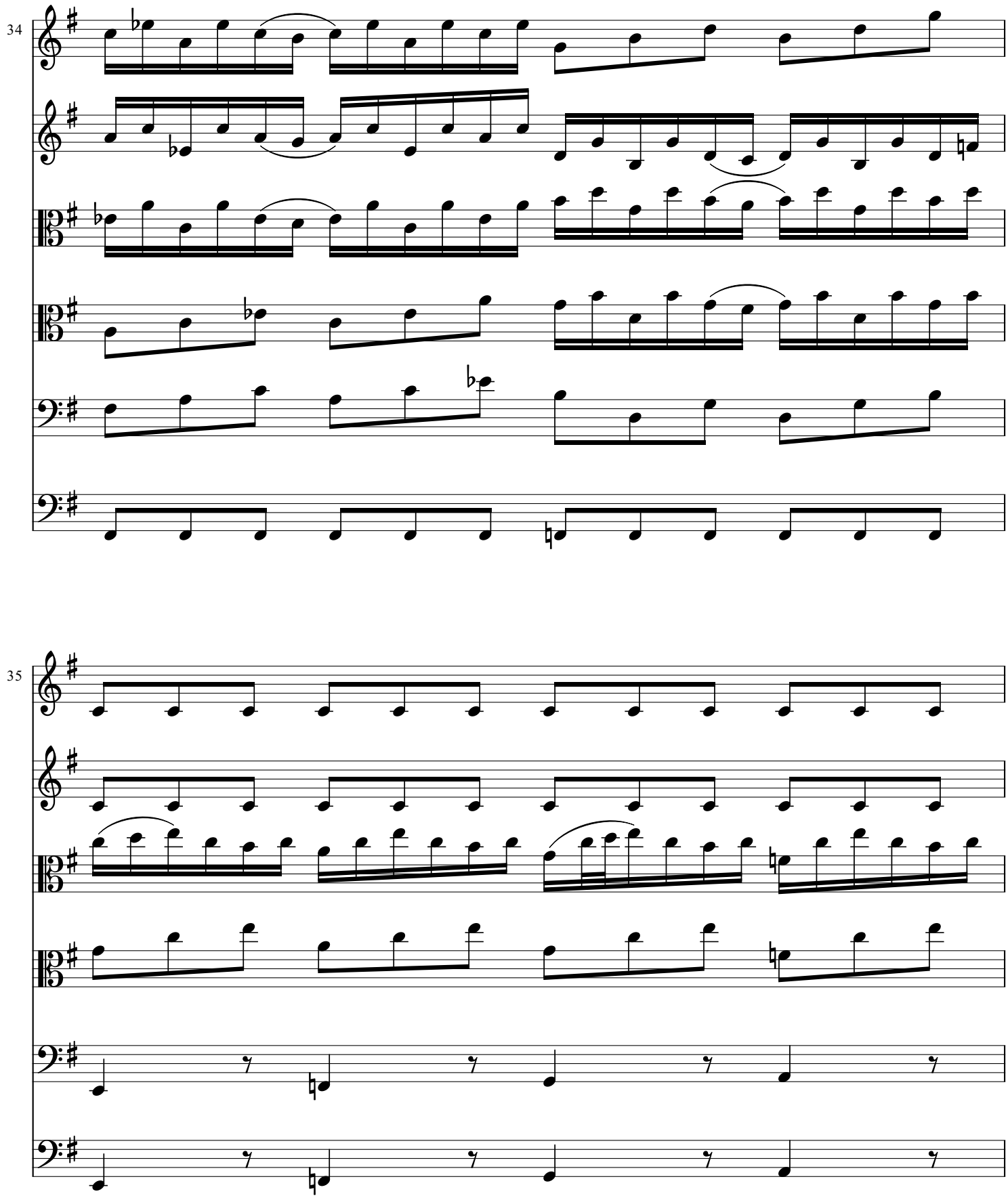

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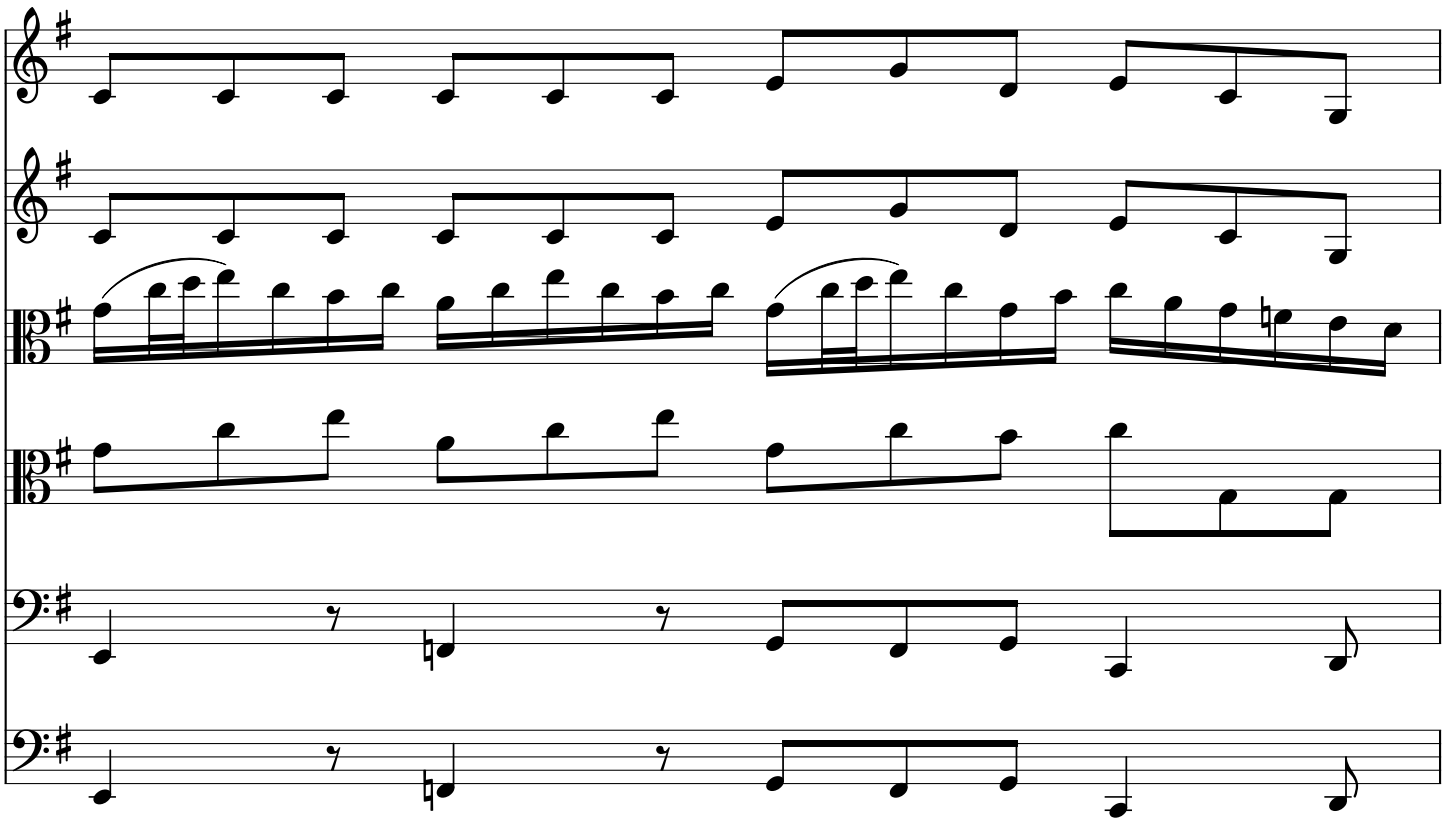
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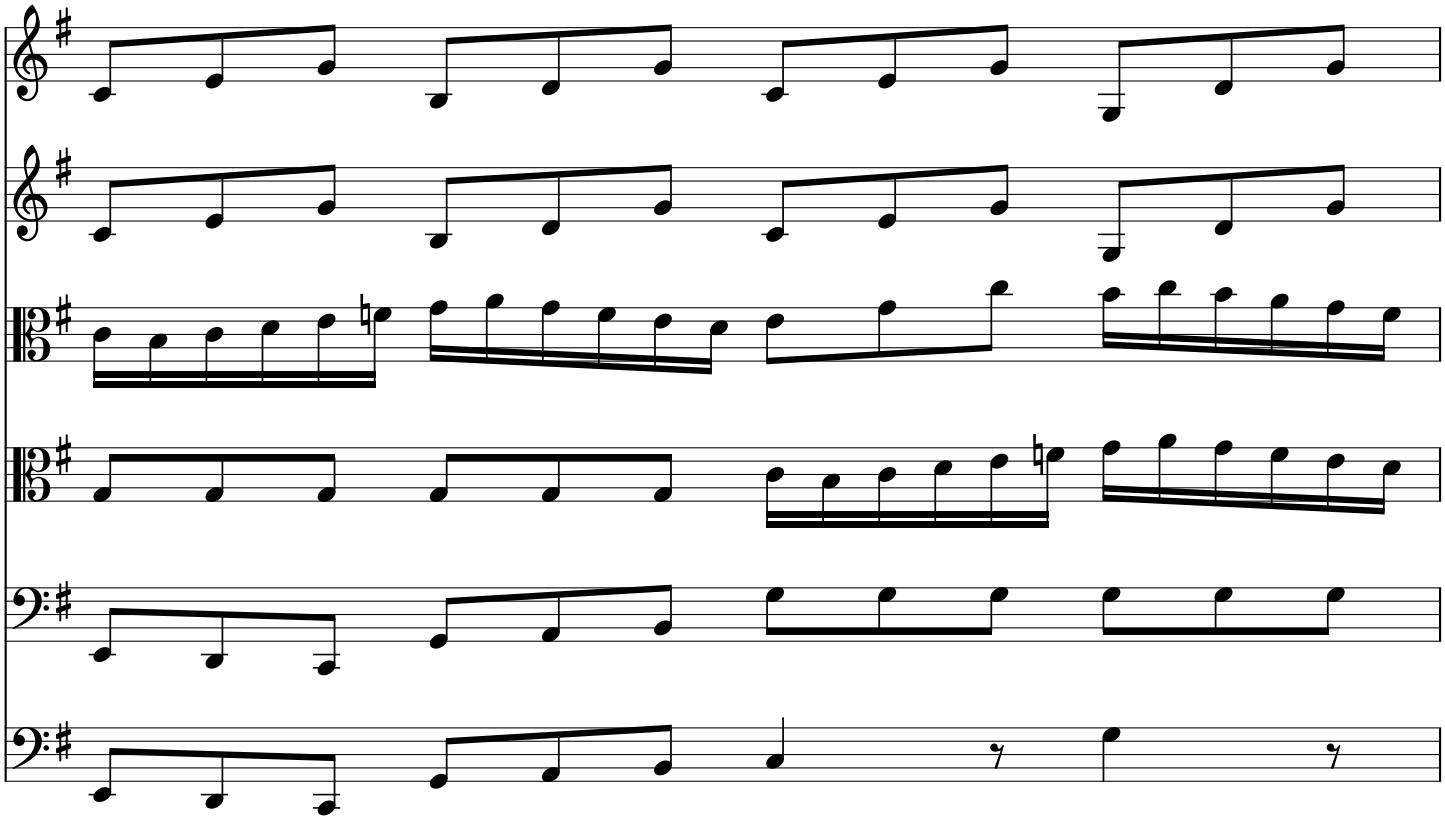
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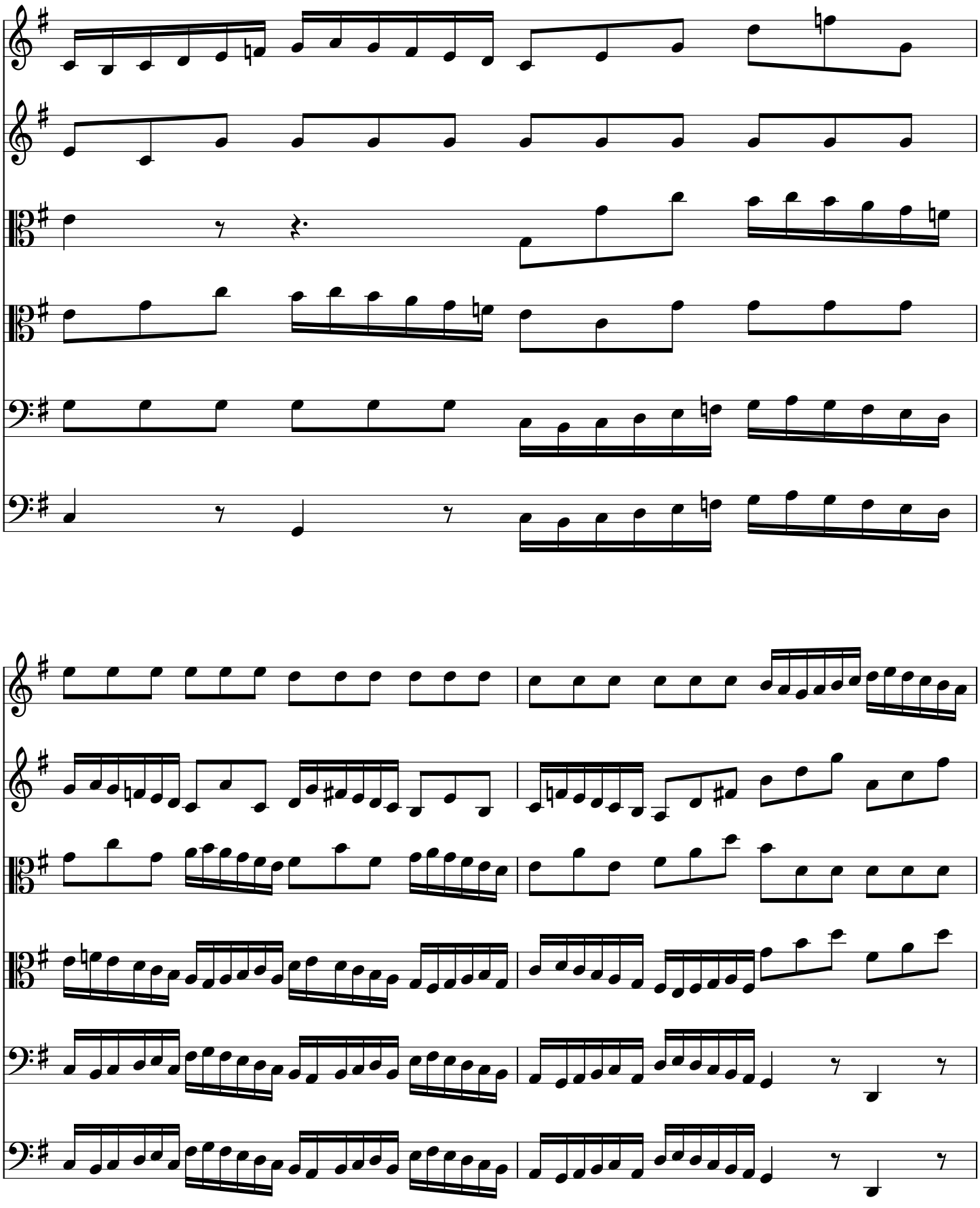

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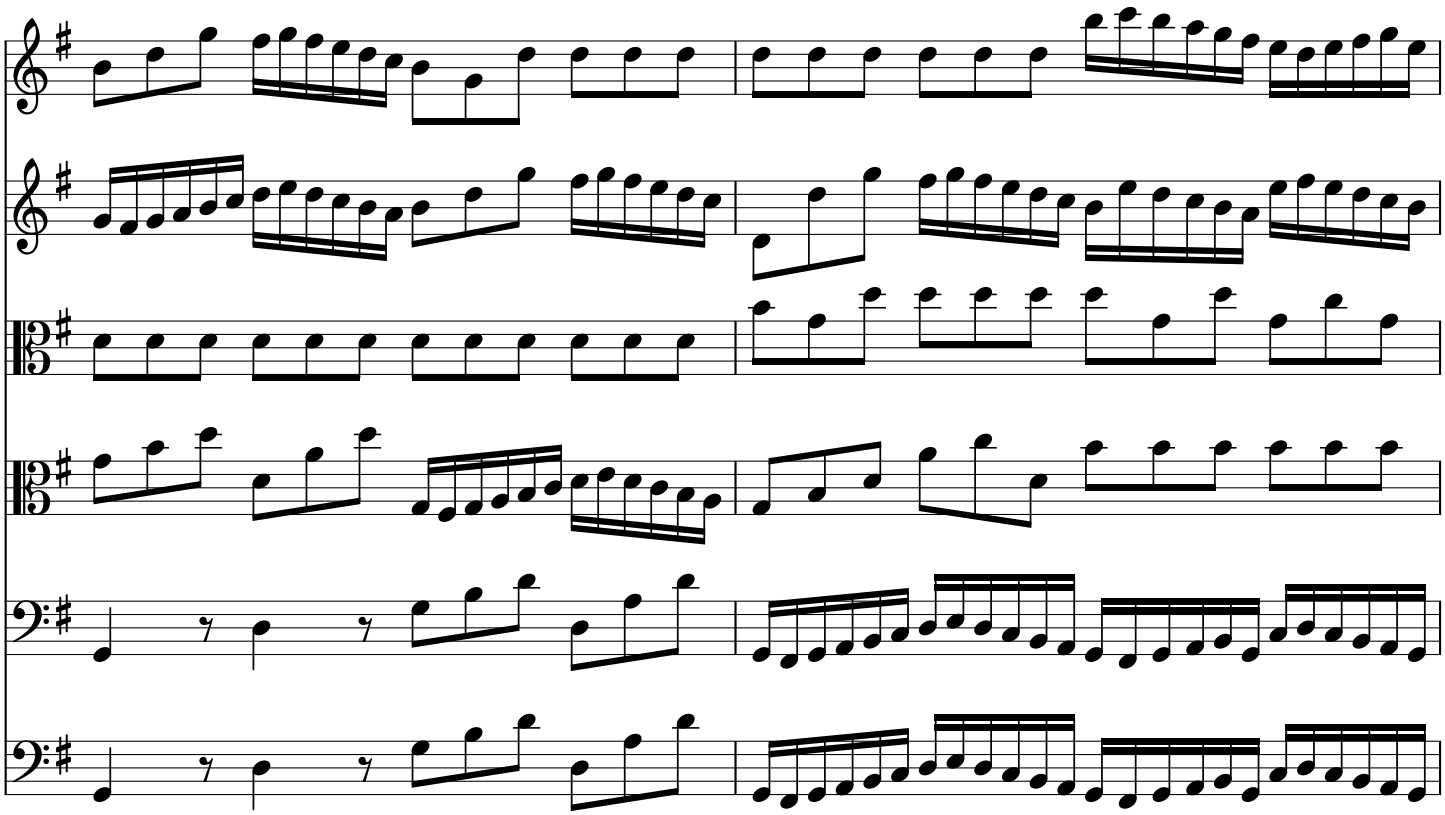
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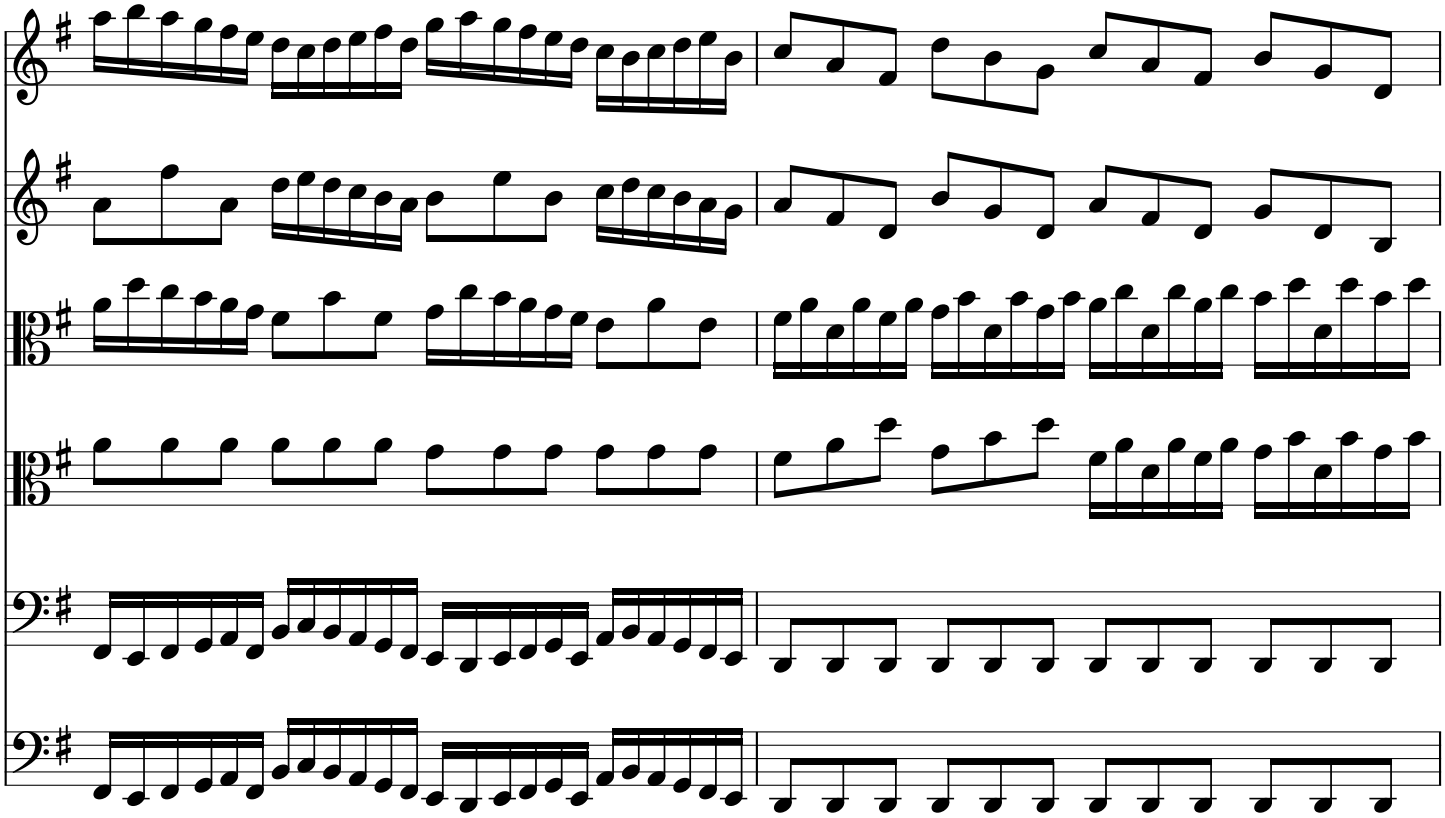
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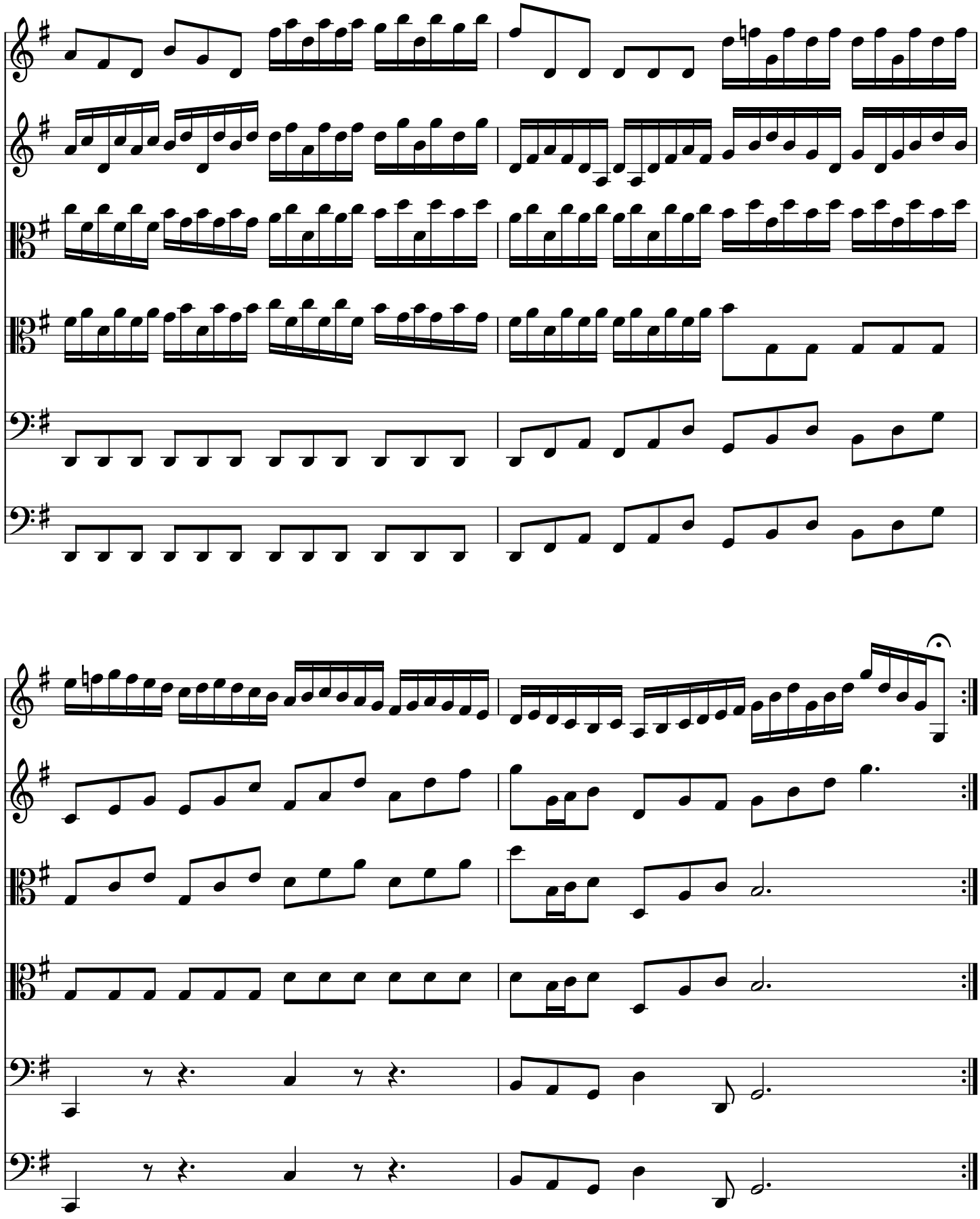

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