The Myth of Etana

Craig Bakalian

Four F Horns

Foreword

The Myth of Etana is the story of the ancient Sumerian King of Kish who ascends to heaven on an eagle to request the Plant of Birth from the gods so that he might have a son. That the myth is very old is attested to by cylinder seals depicting Etana on the eagle's back which date from the reign of Sargon of Akkad (2334-2279 BCE). The Neo-Assyrian version from Ashurbanipal's library happens to be the most surviving text, but where it overlaps with an Old Babylonian version of a thousand years earlier it corresponds with it very closely, sometimes word for word.

The Babylonian legend says that Etana was desperate to have a child, until one day he helped save an eagle from starving, who then took him up into the sky to find the plant of birth. This led to the birth of his son, Balih. In the detailed form of the legend, there is a tree with the eagle's nest at the top, and a serpent at the base. Both the serpent and eagle have promised Utu (the sun god) to behave well toward one another, and they share food with their children. But one day, the eagle eats the serpent's children. The serpent comes back and cries. Utu tells the serpent to hide inside of the stomach of a dead bull. The eagle goes down to eat the bull. The serpent captures the eagle, and throws him into a pit to die of hunger and thirst. Utu sends a man, Etana, to help the eagle. Etana saves the eagle, but he also asks the bird to find the plant of birth, in order to become father of a son. The eagle takes Etana up to the heaven of the god Anu, but Etana becomes afraid in the air and he goes back to the ground. He makes another attempt, and finds the plant of birth,

The score and parts are written in F. All notes written, including the notes written in bass clef sound a fifth lower.

Craig Bakalian
December 30, 2014

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for F Horn Quartet

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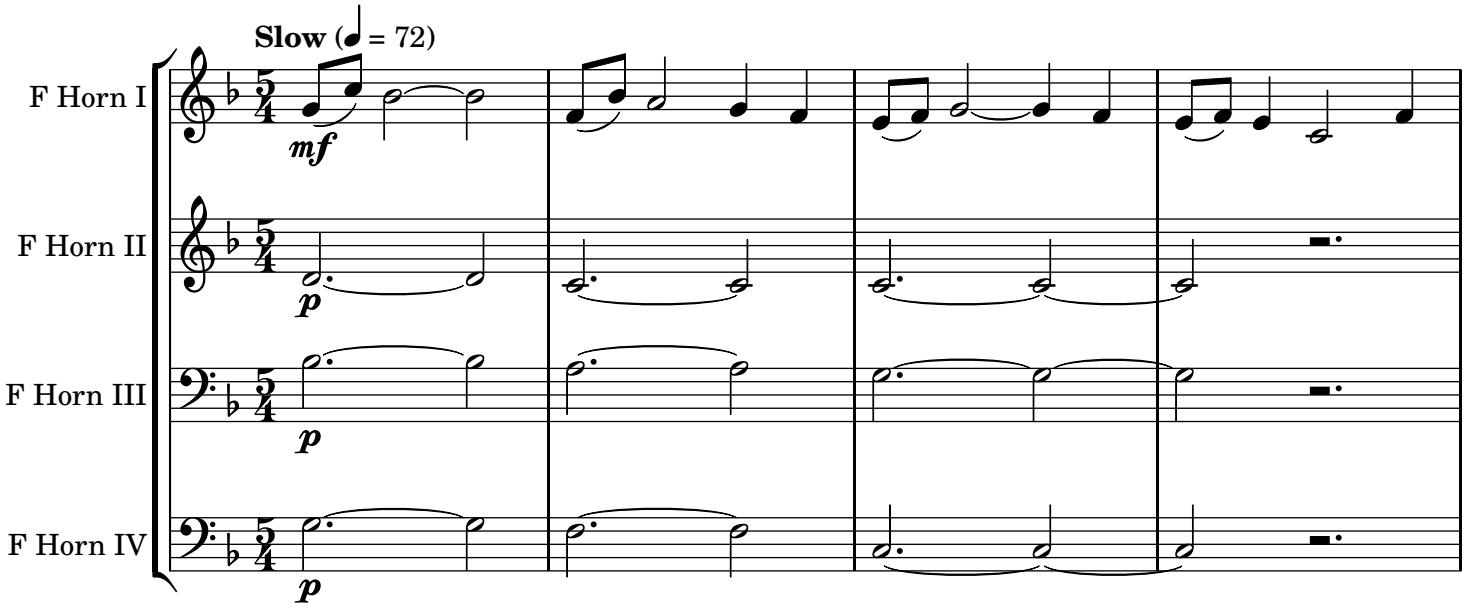

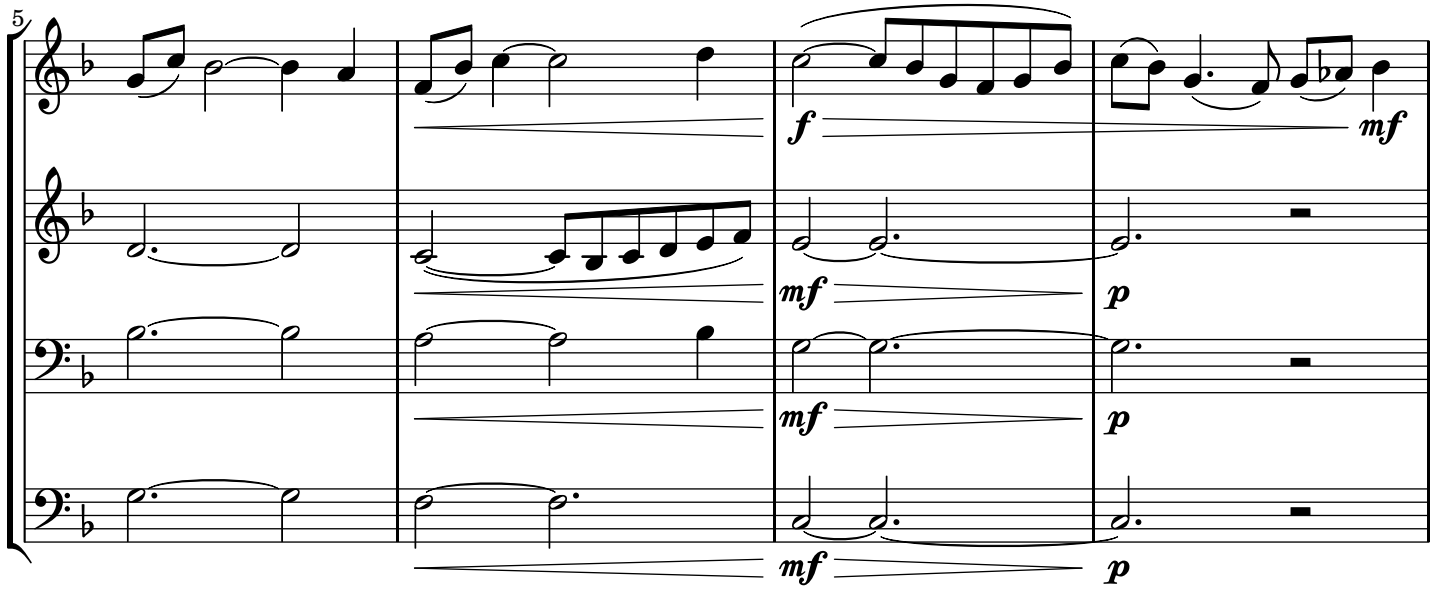

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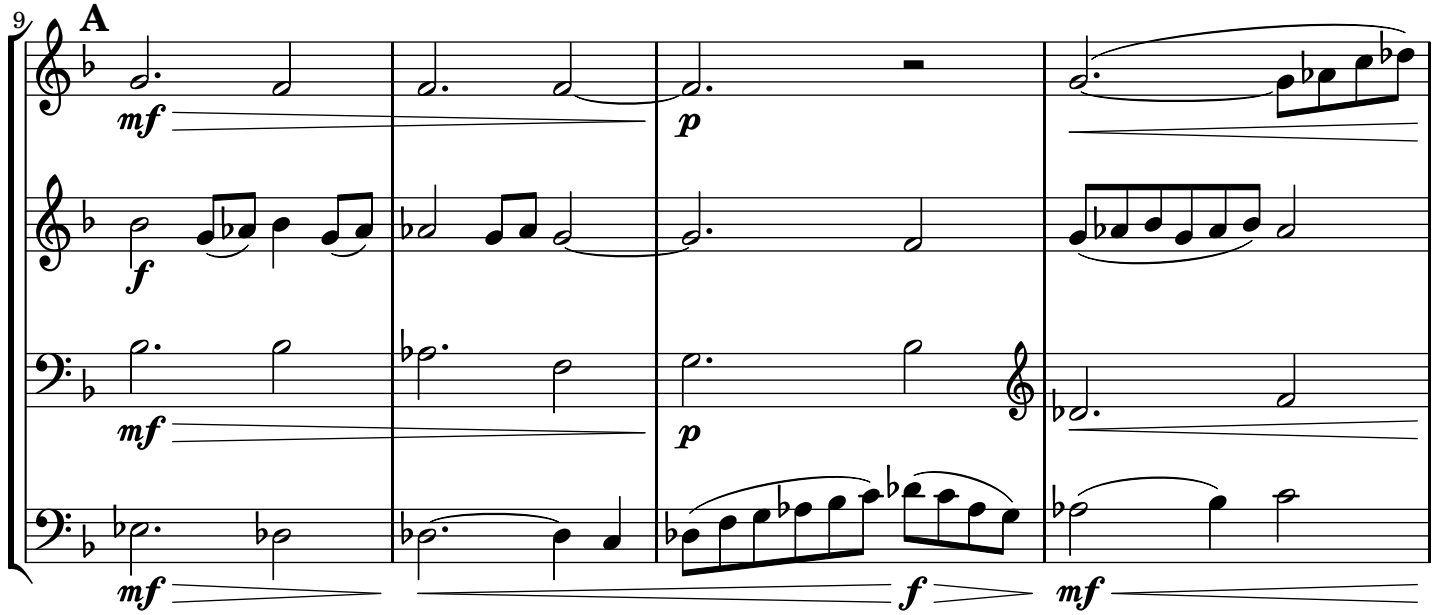
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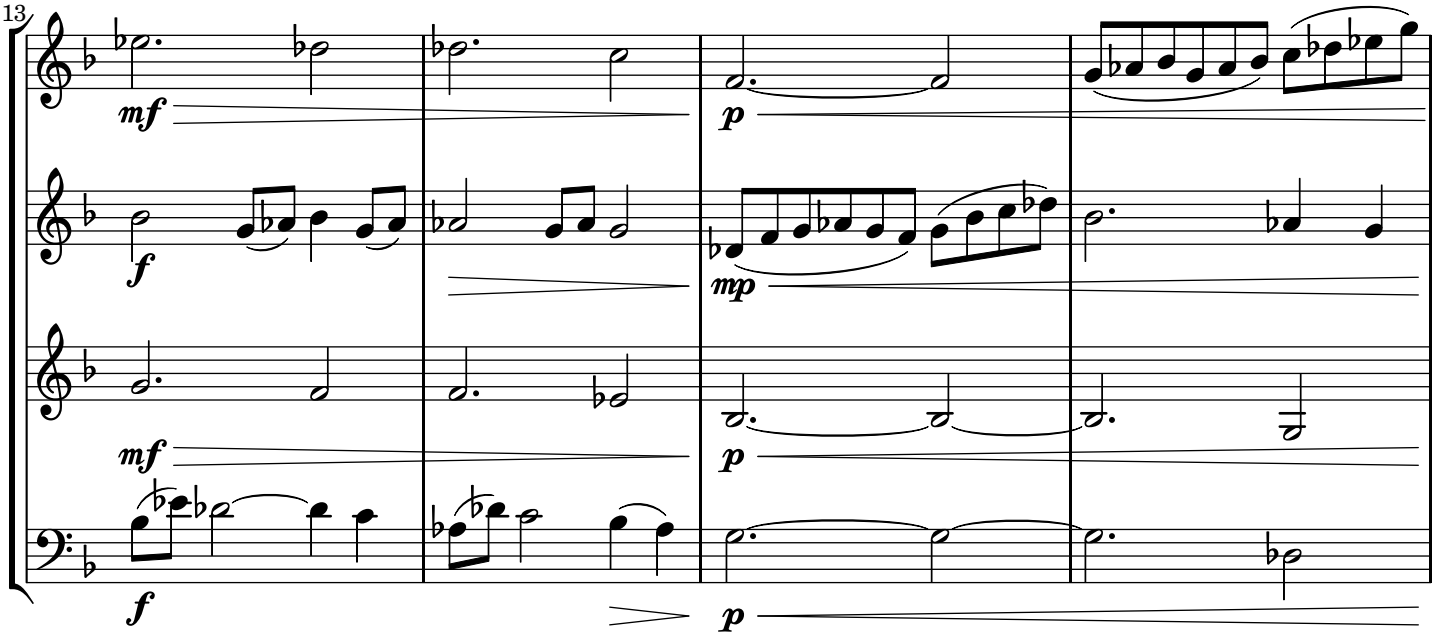
mf
f
mf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mf
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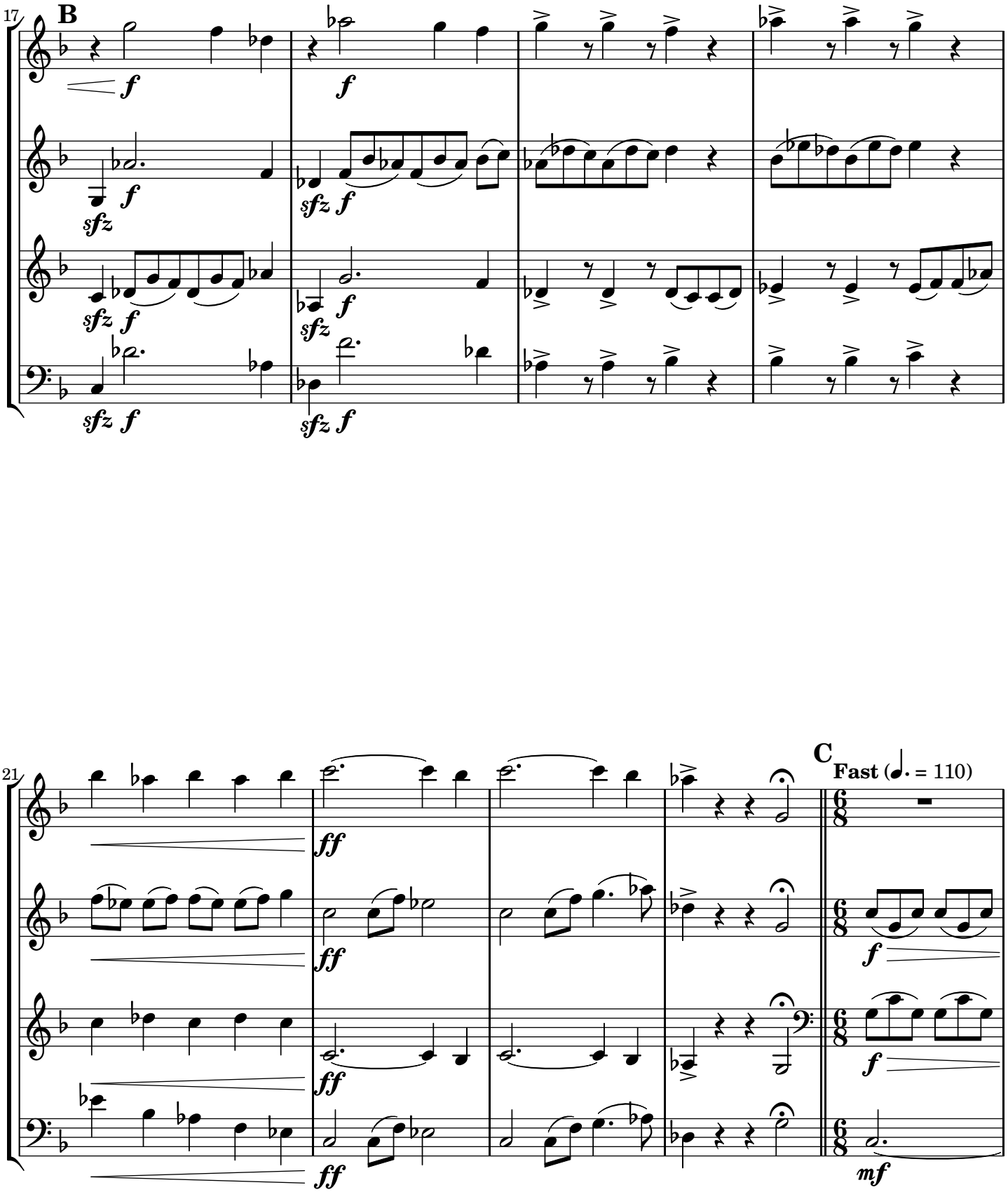
f
p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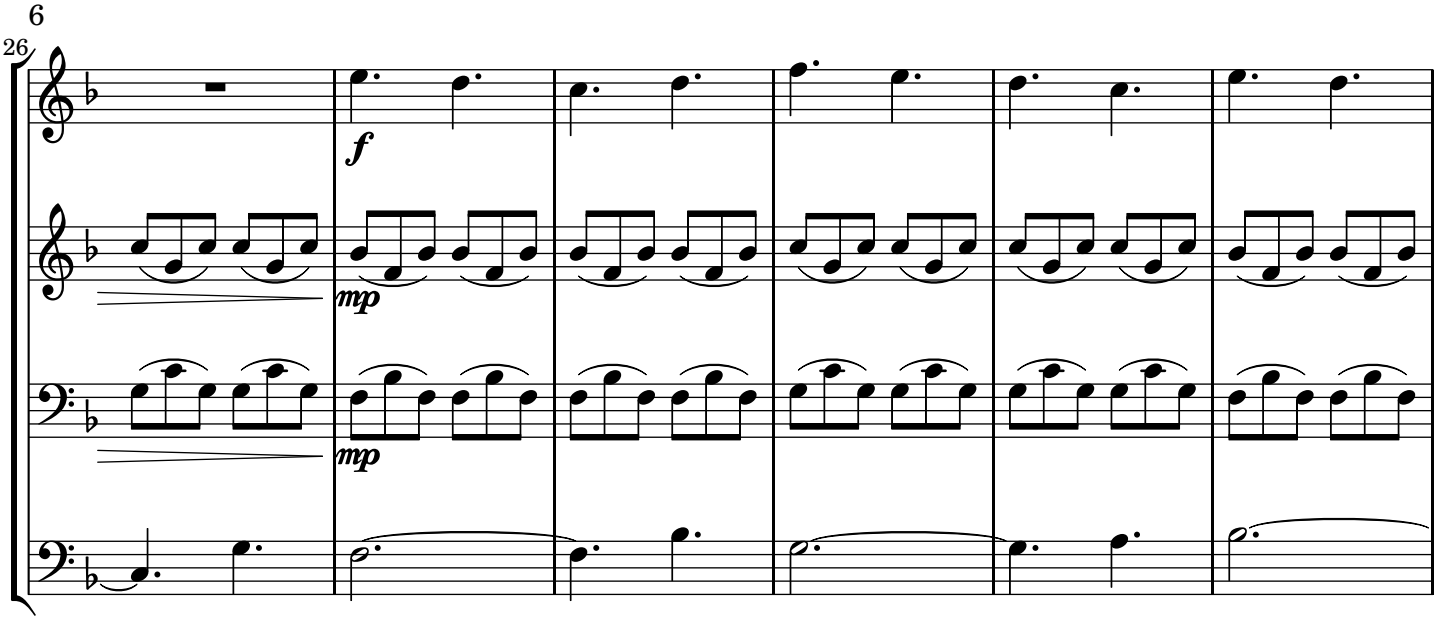
C
Fast (♩. = 110)
ff
mf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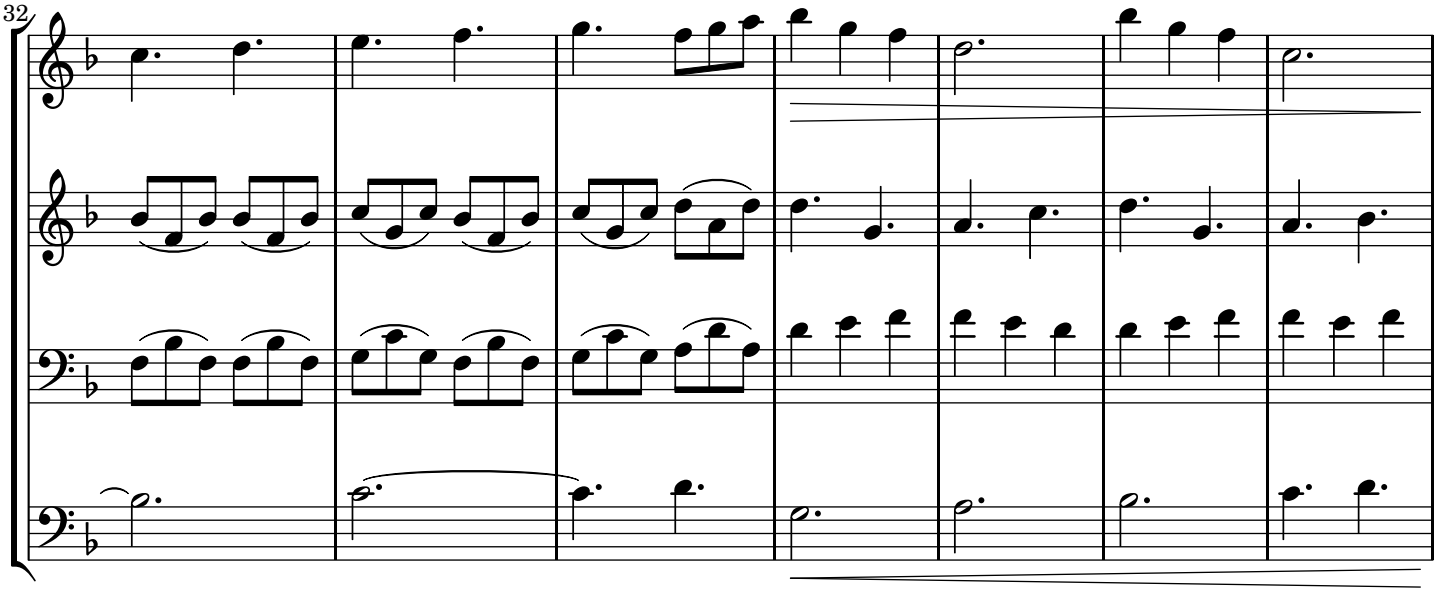
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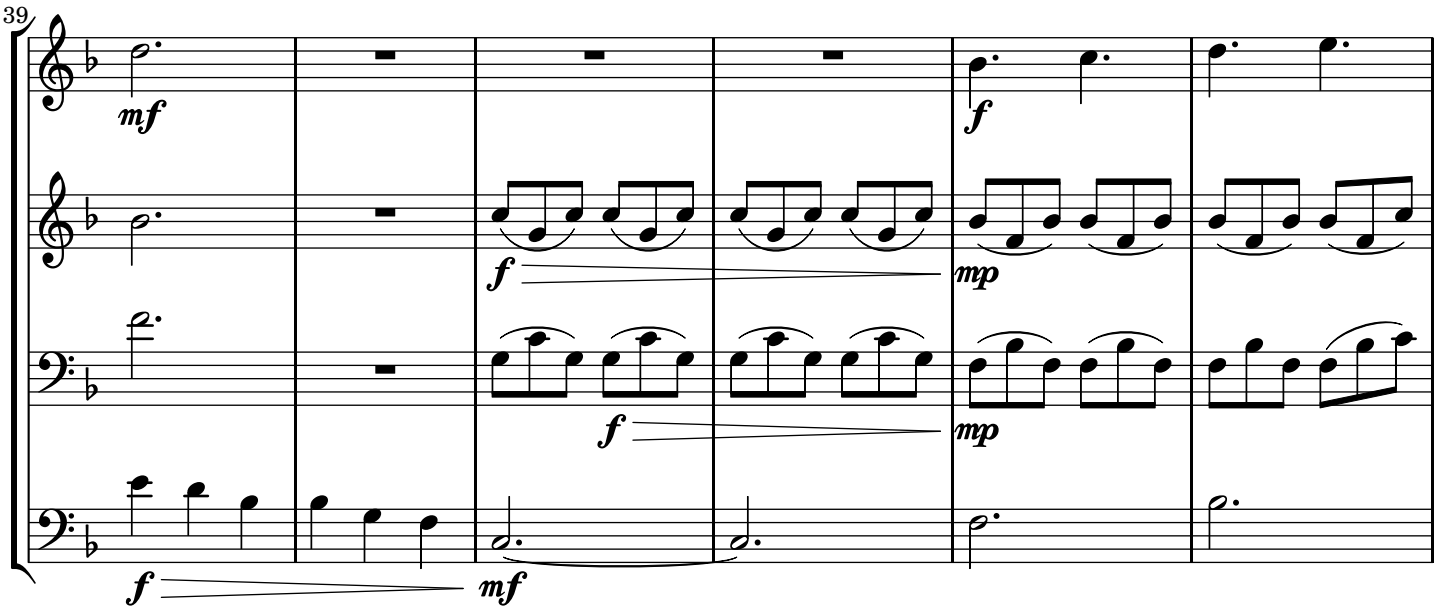
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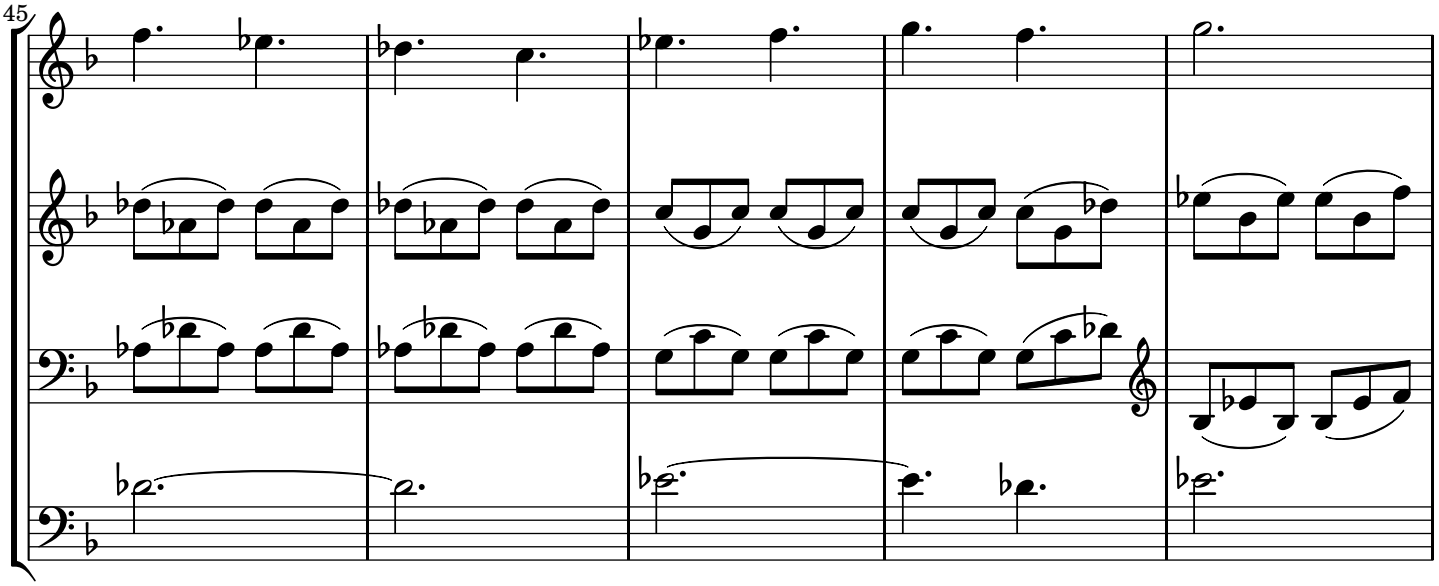
f
f
mp
f
mp
f
mf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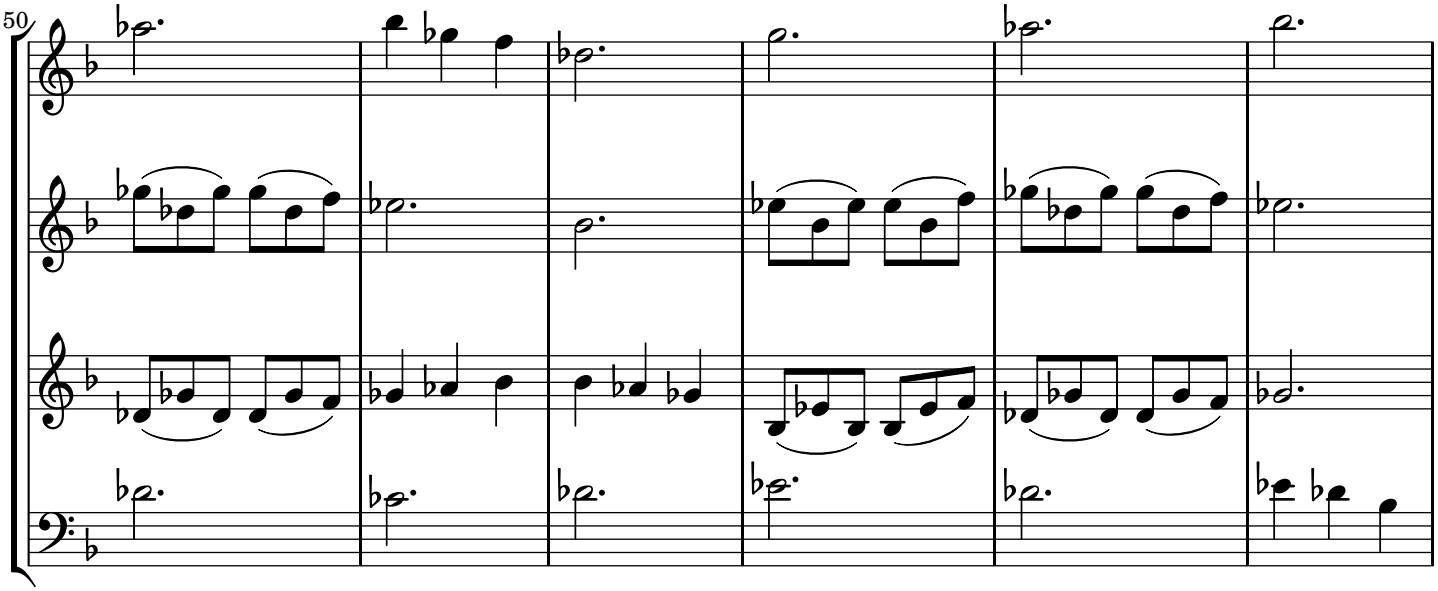

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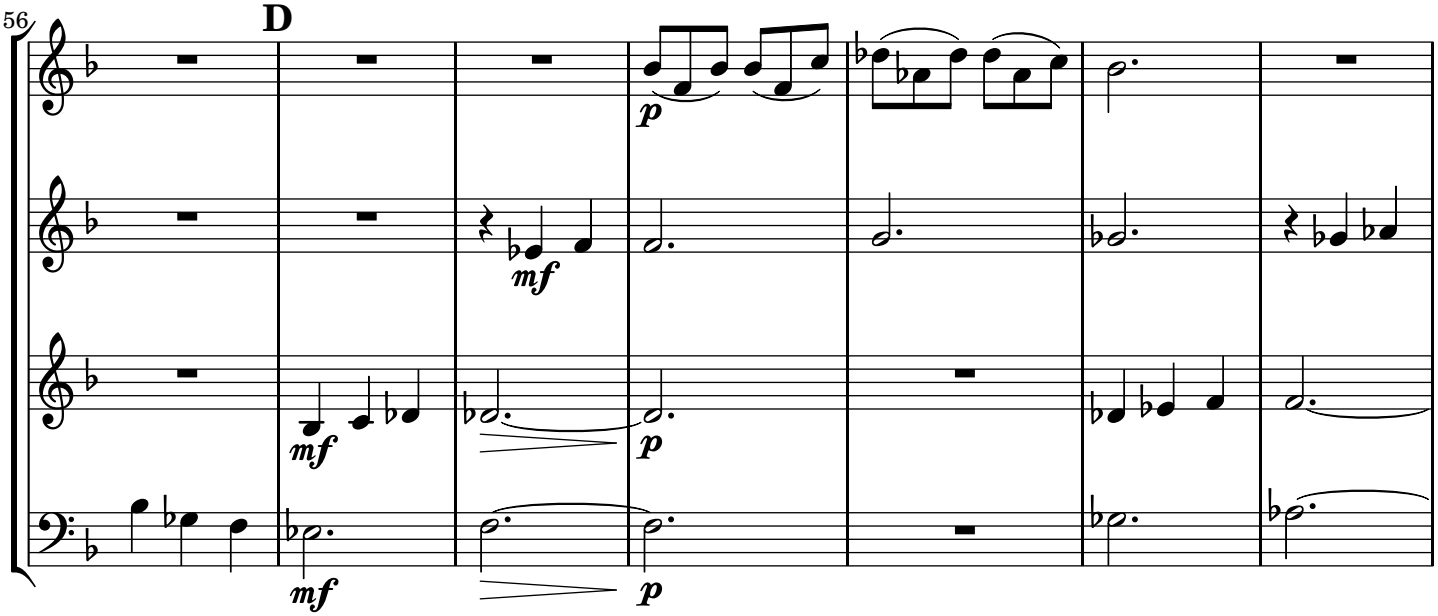

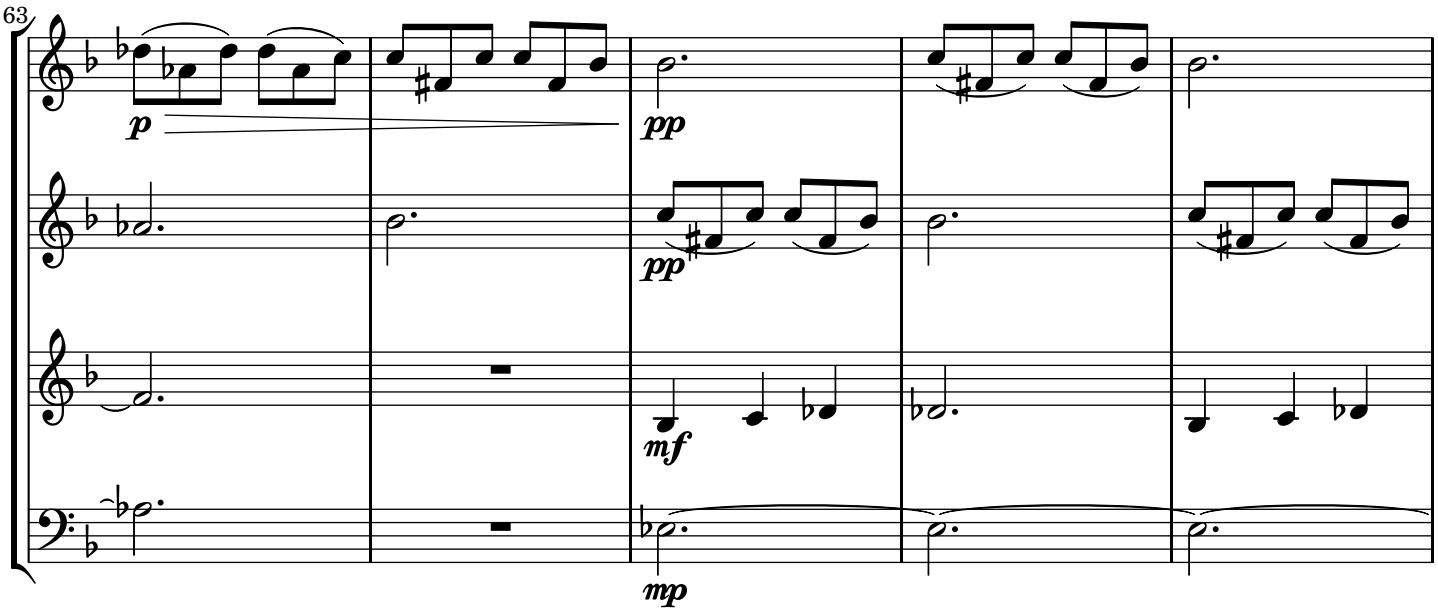
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pp
pp
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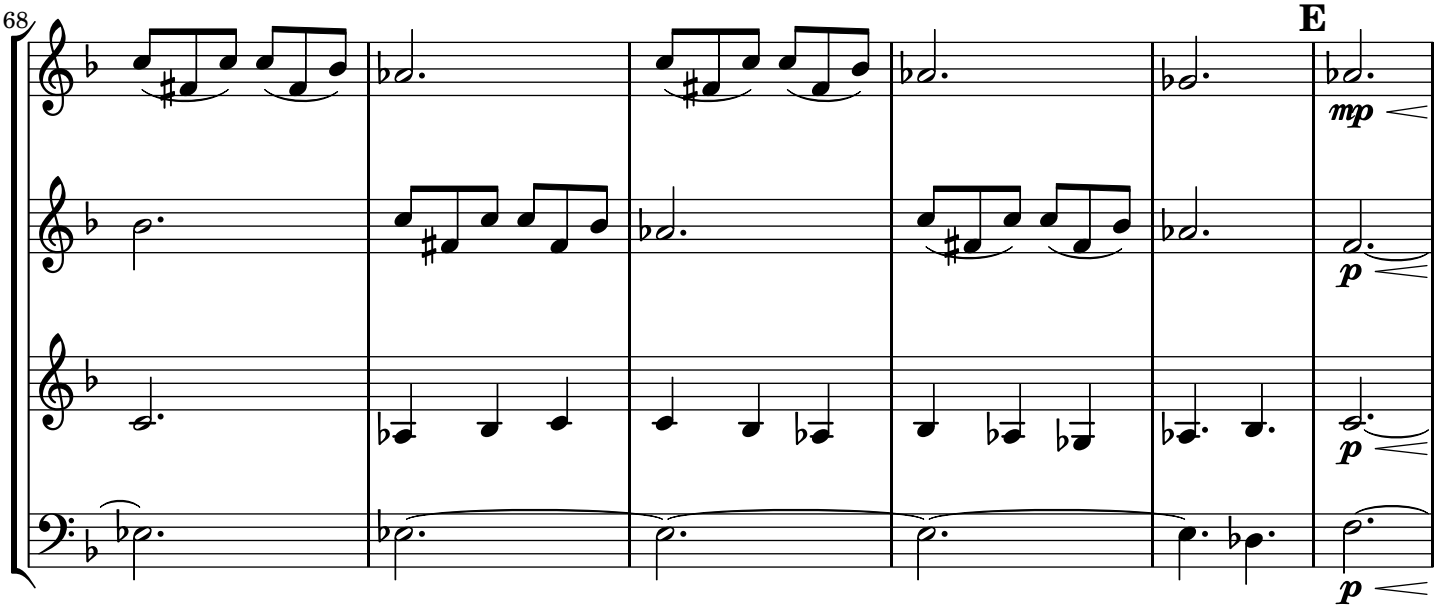
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E
mp
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p
p

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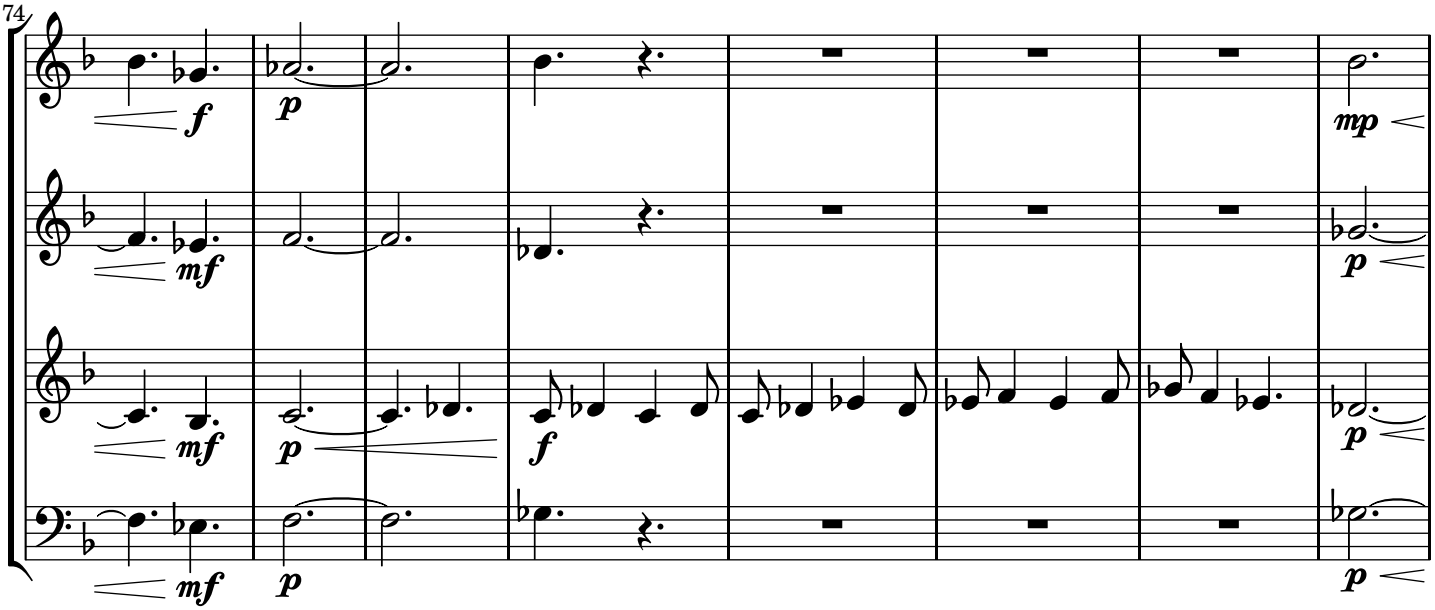

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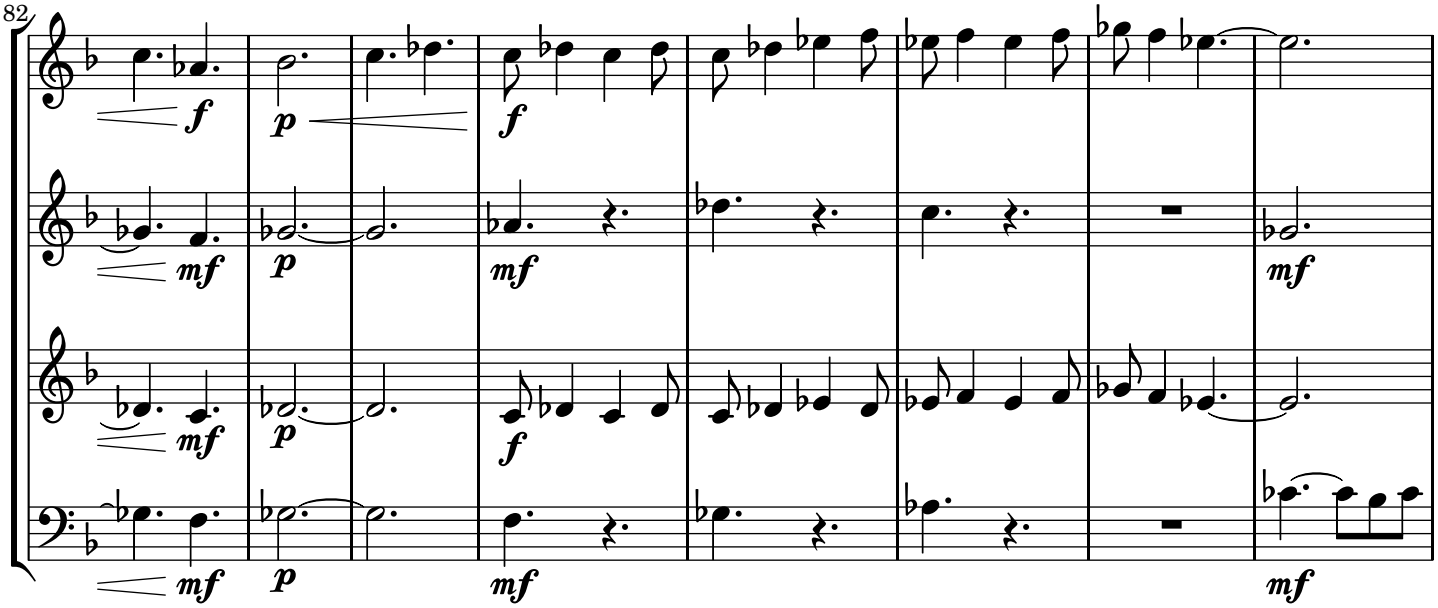

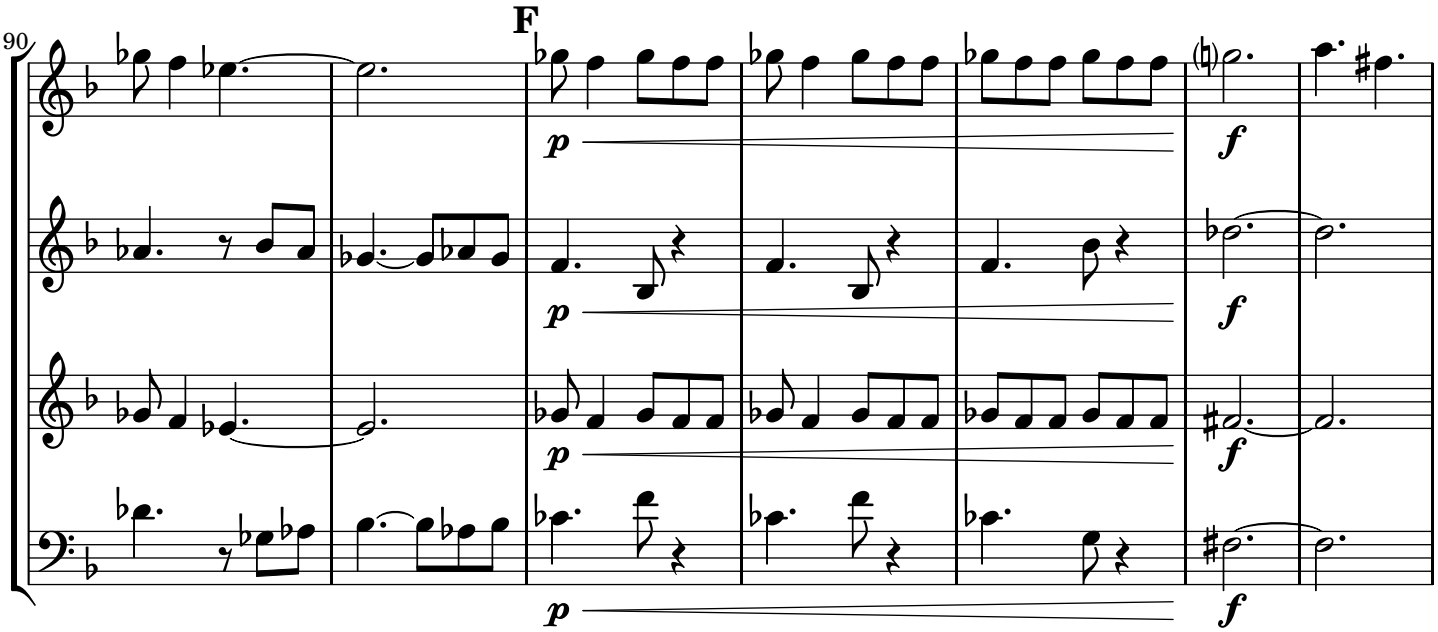
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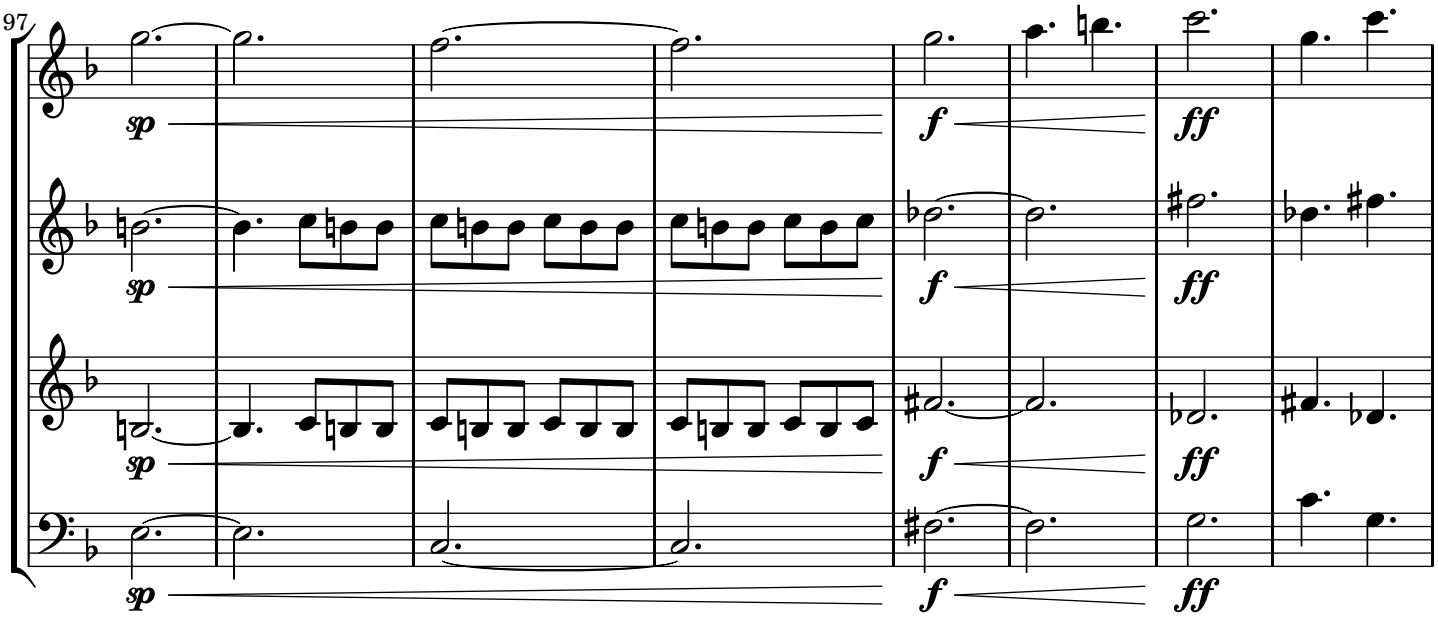
F
p
f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sp
f
ff

105

G

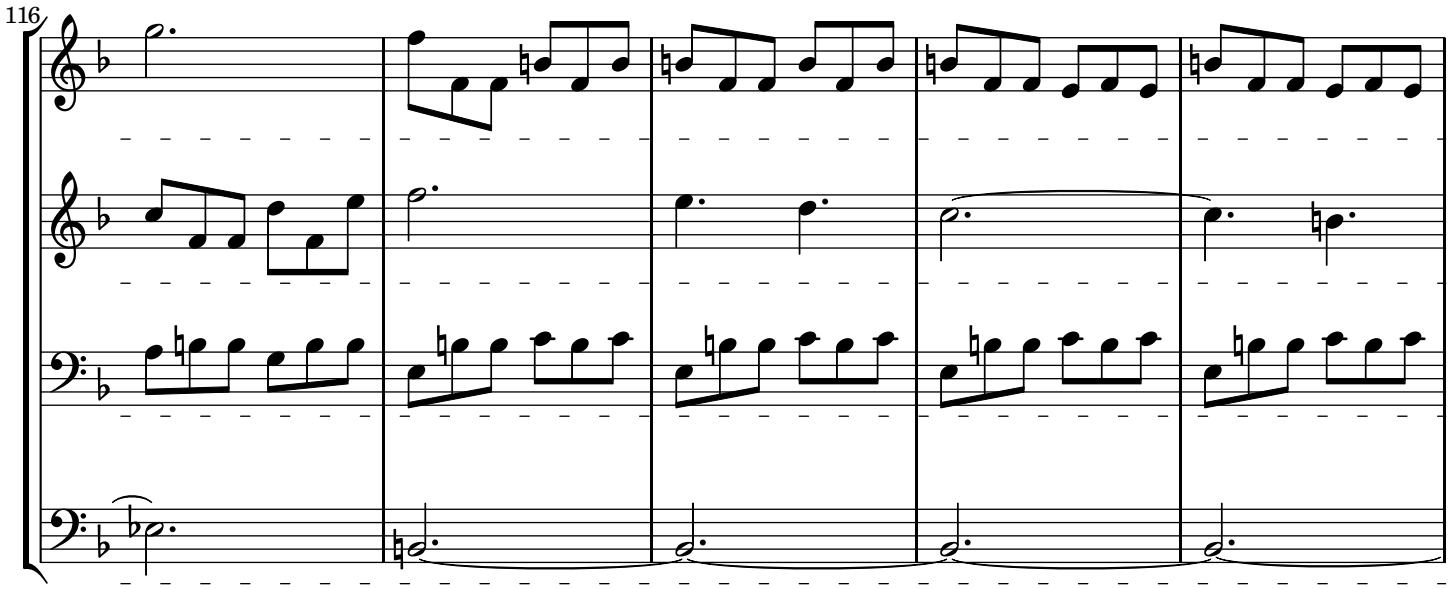
decresc.

decresc.

decresc.

decresc.

111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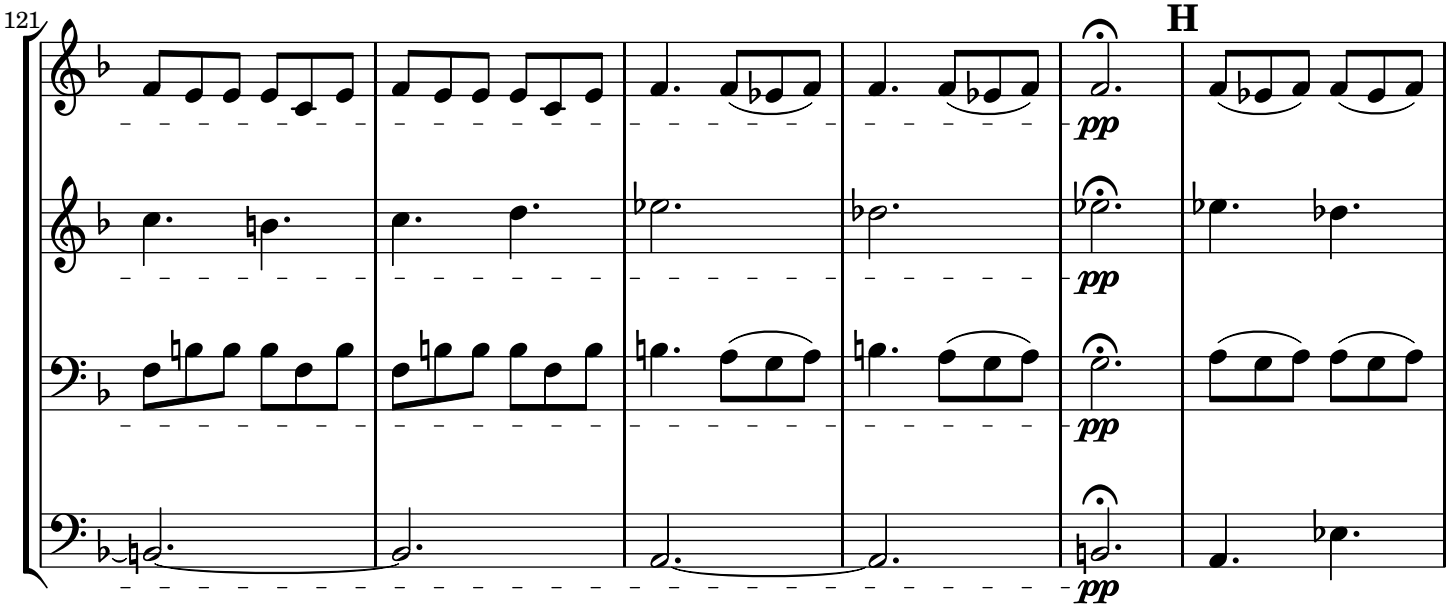
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H
pp
pp
pp
pp

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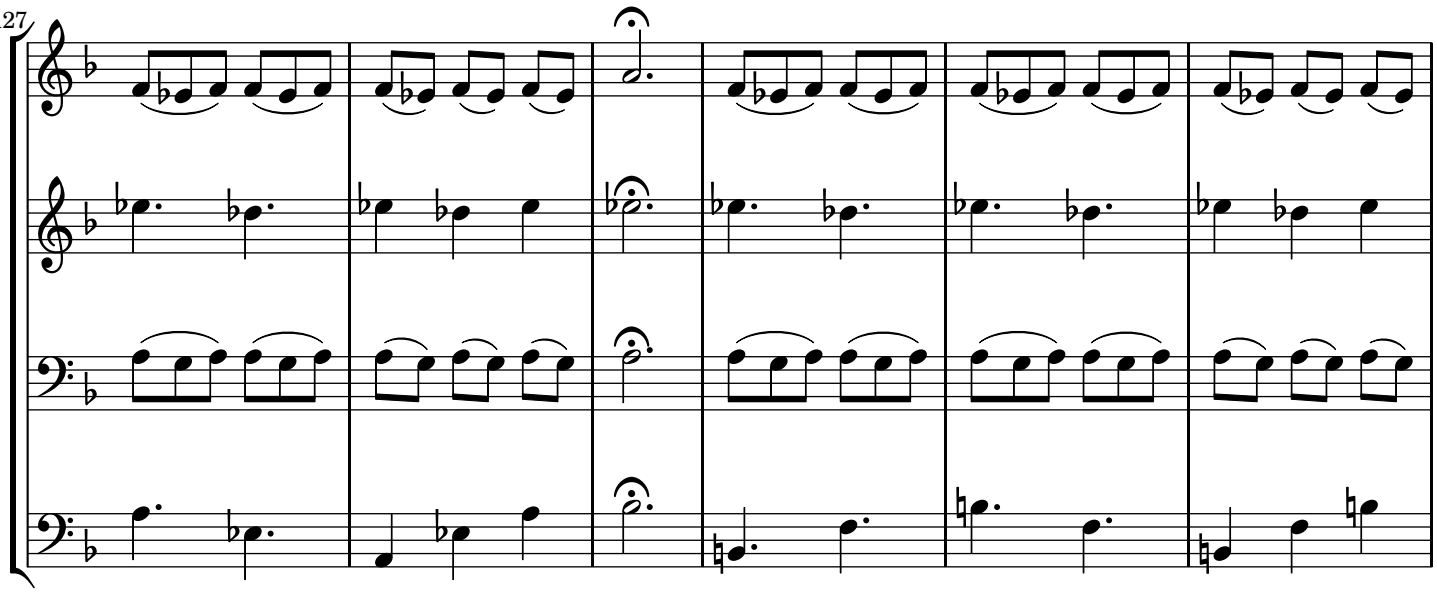

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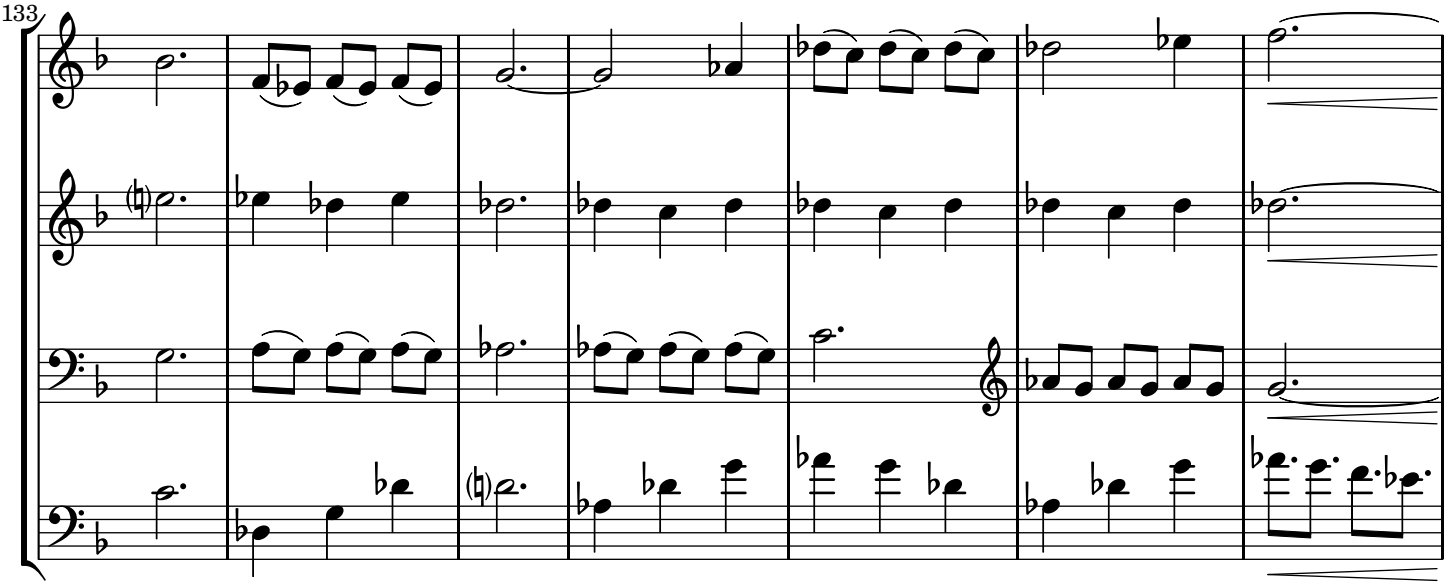

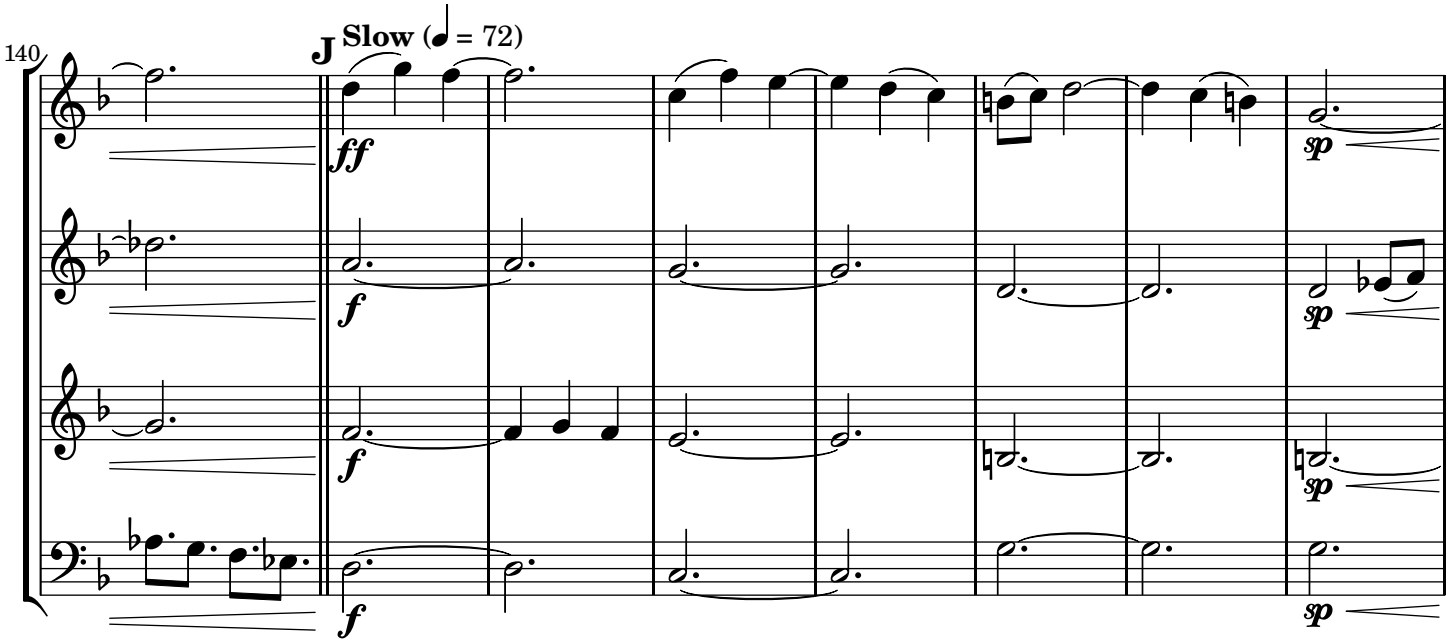
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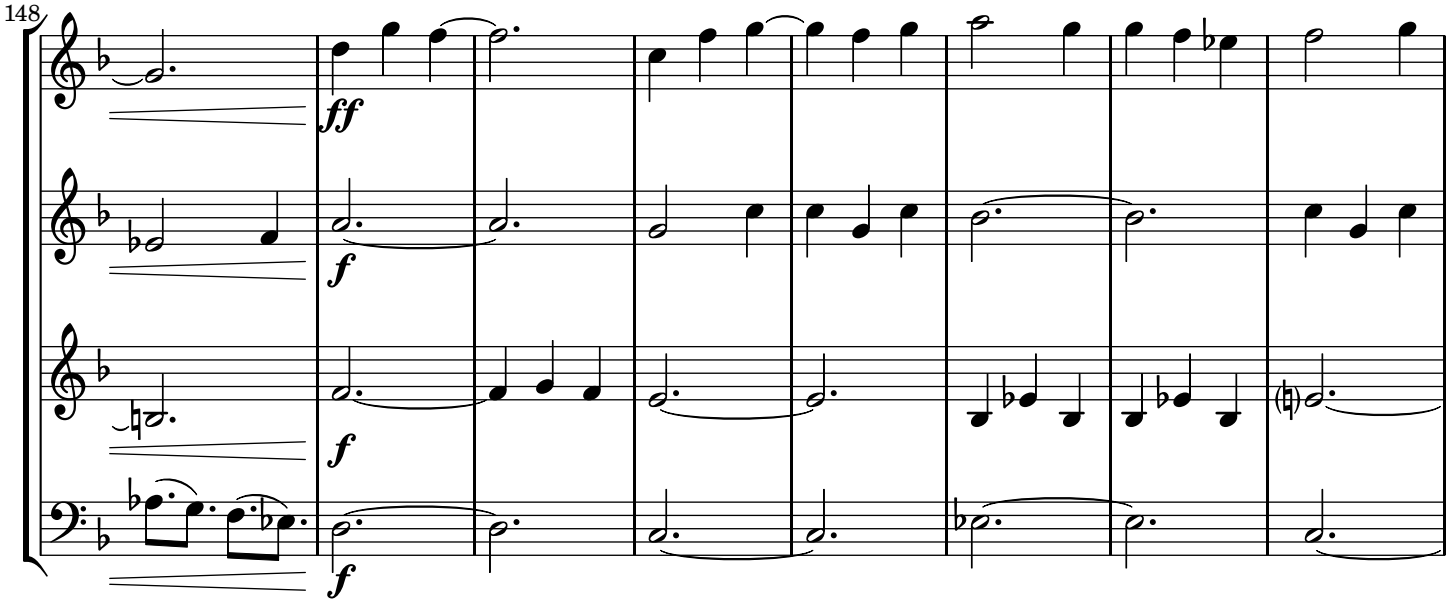
Slow (♩ = 72)
ff
f
sp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K

p cresc.

p cresc.

p cresc.

p cresc.

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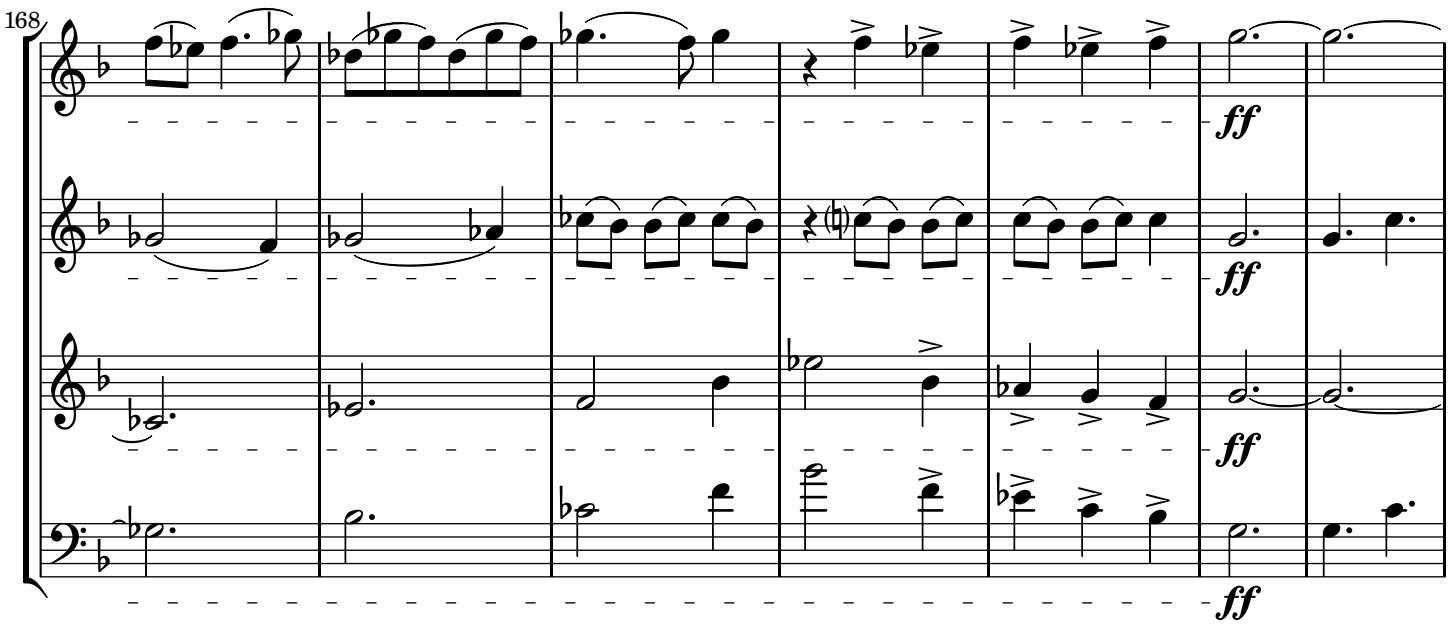
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ff
ff
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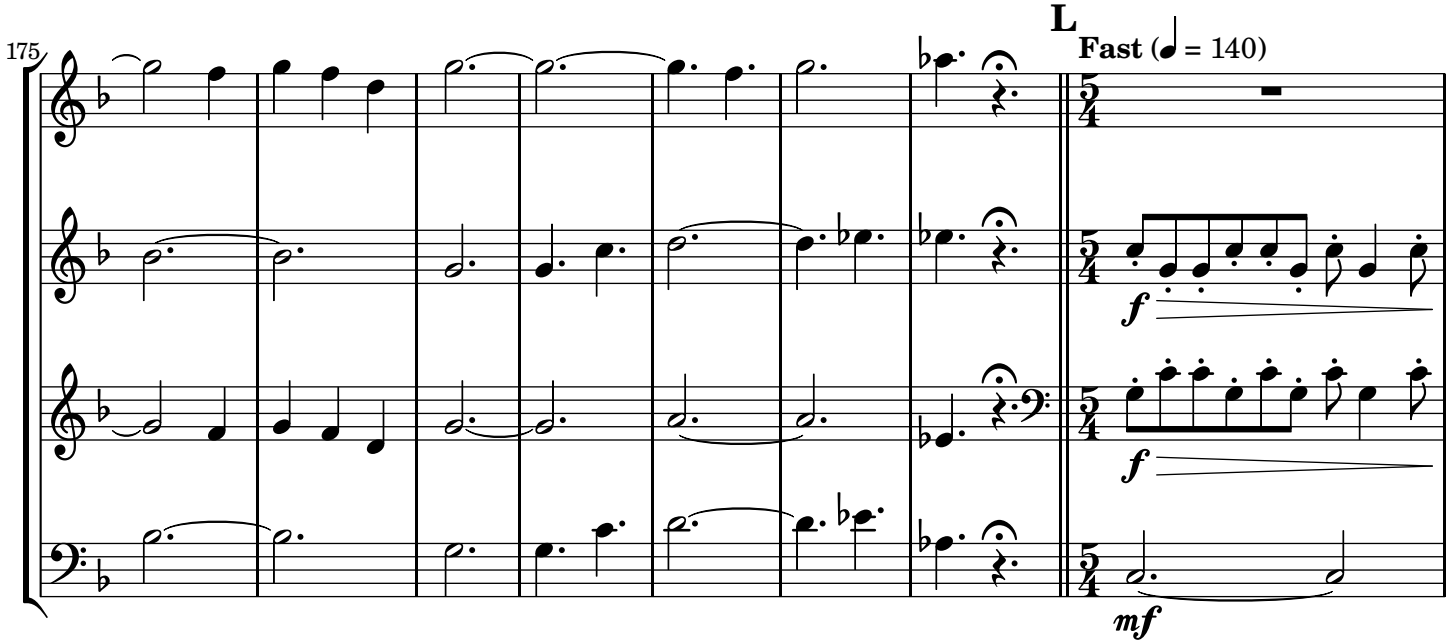
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Fast (♩ = 140)
f
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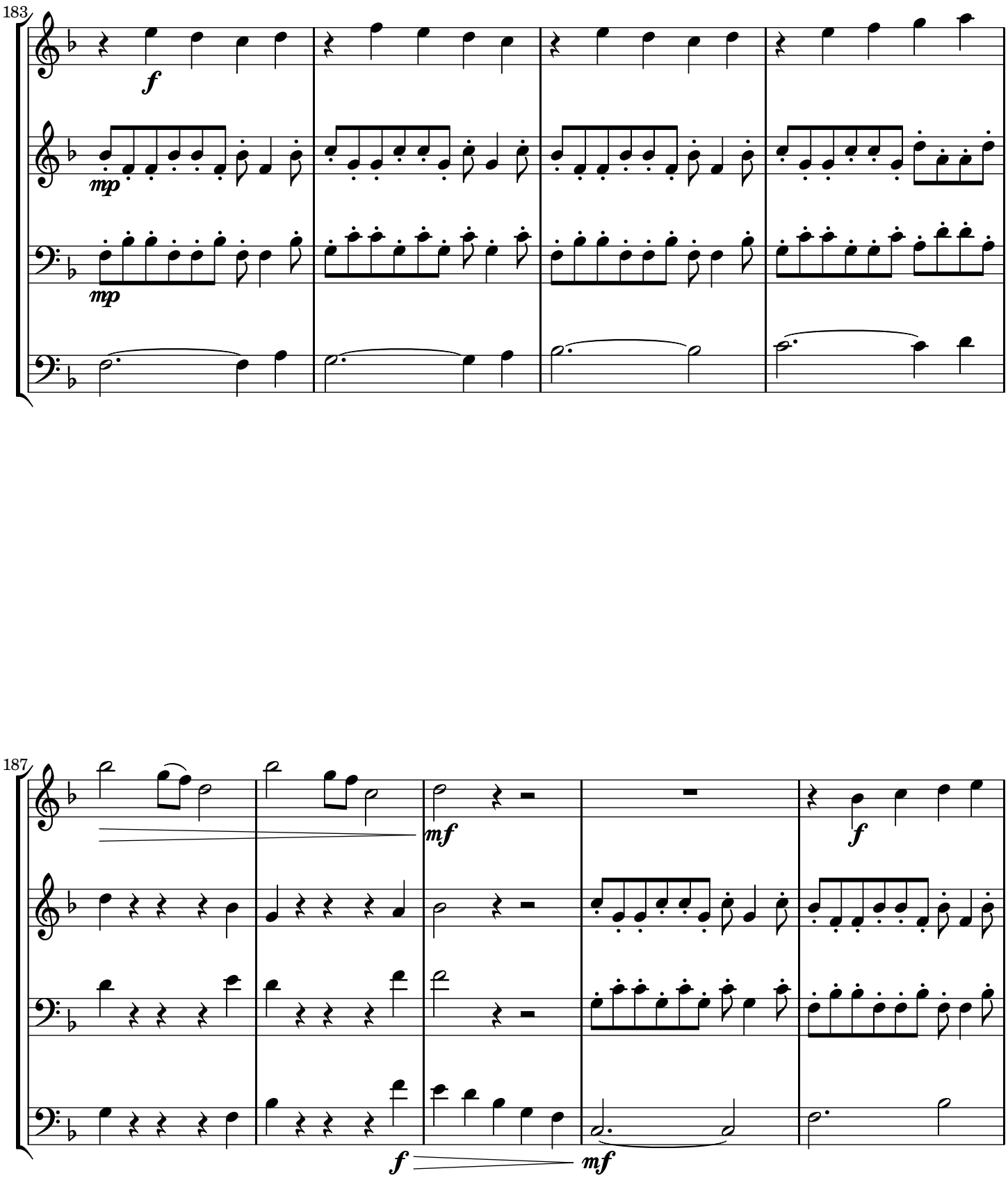
mf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f
mf

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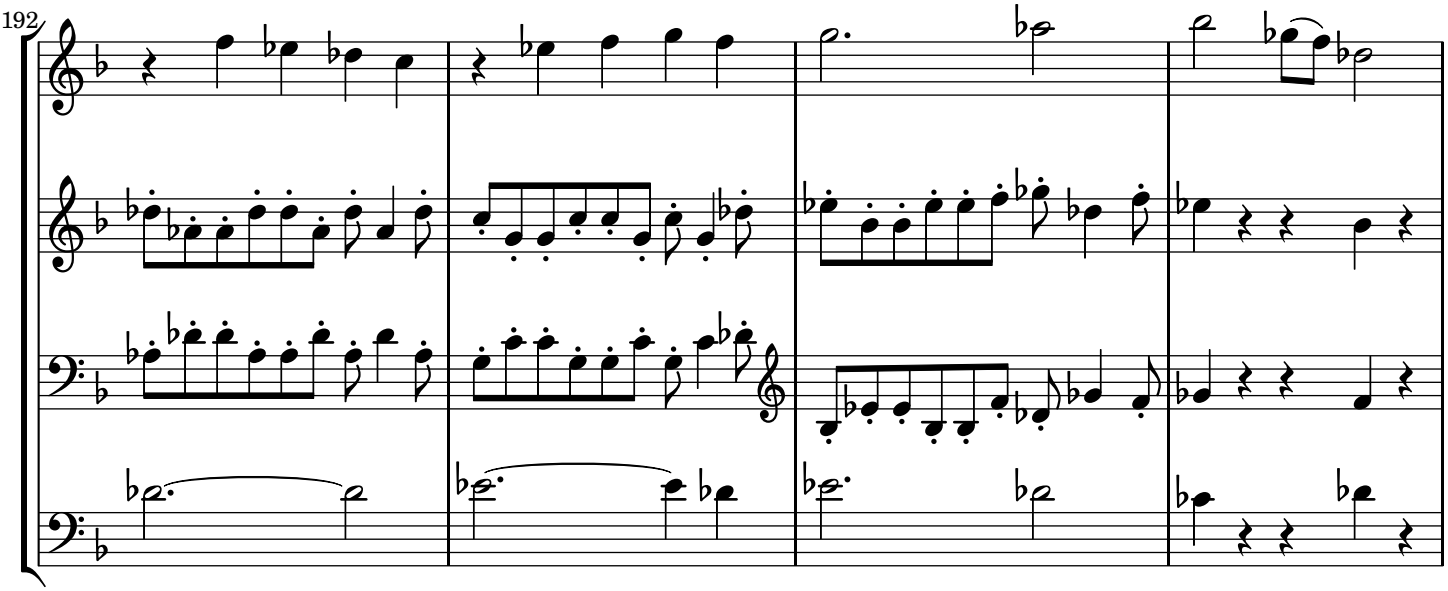

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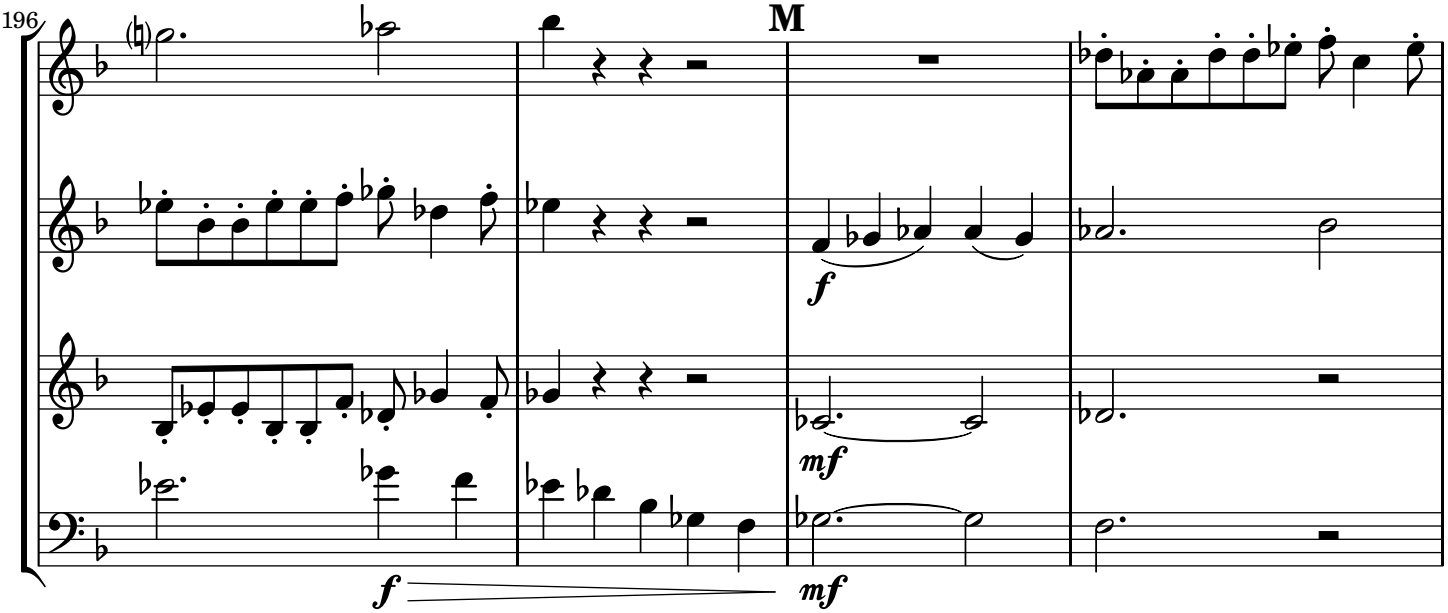

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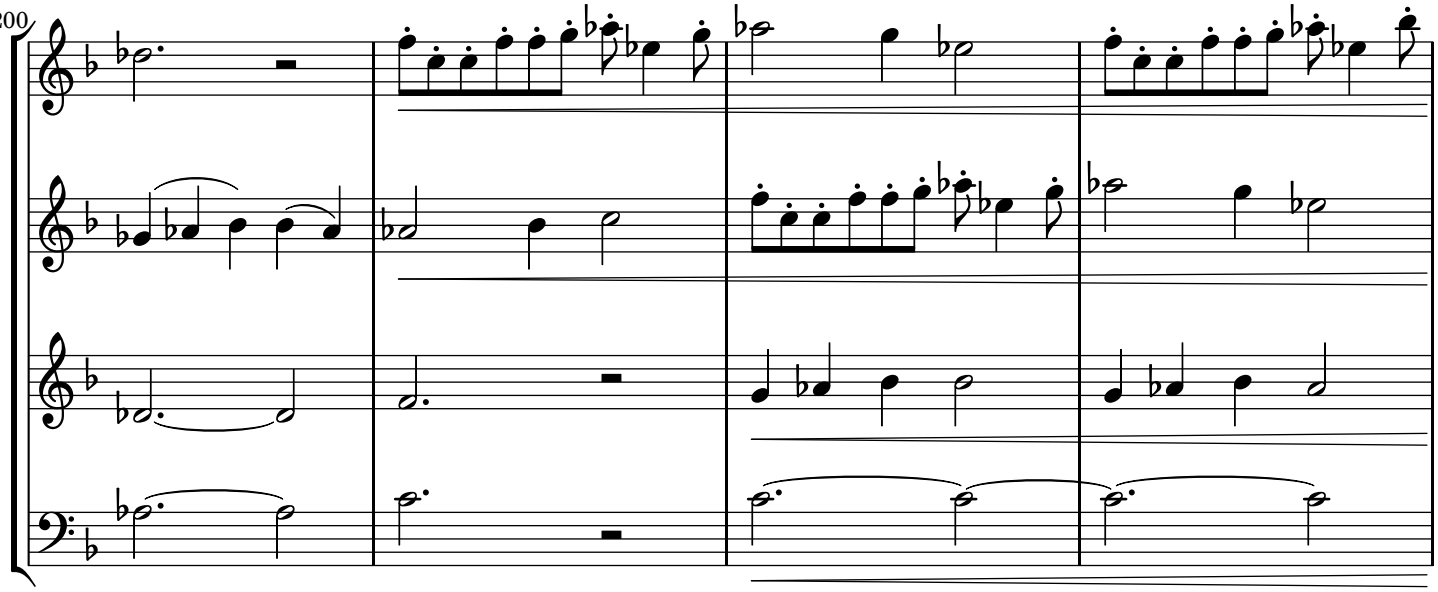

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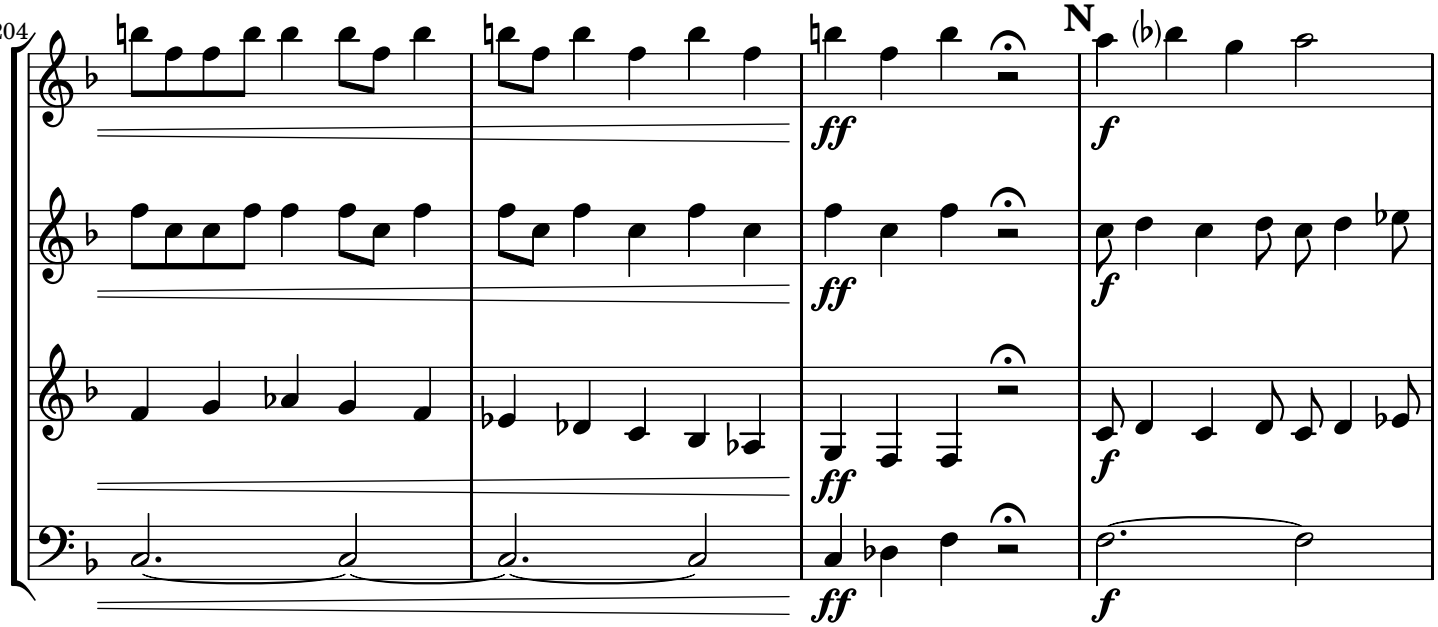

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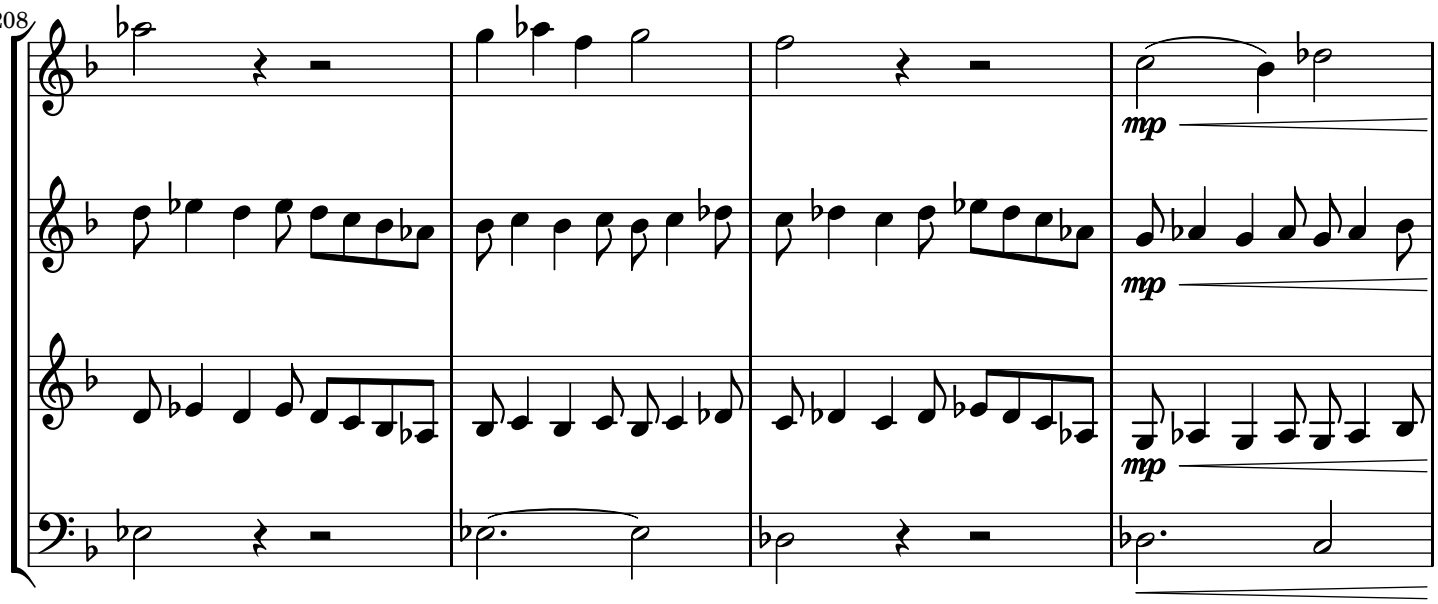

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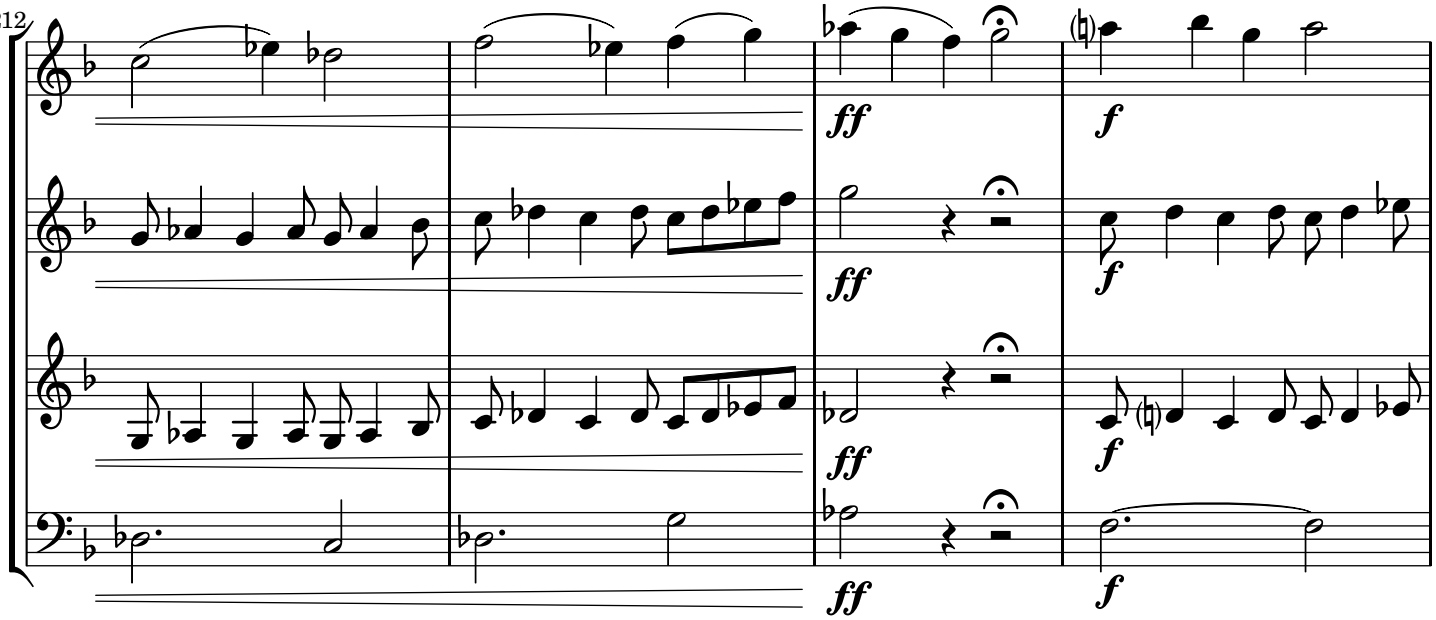

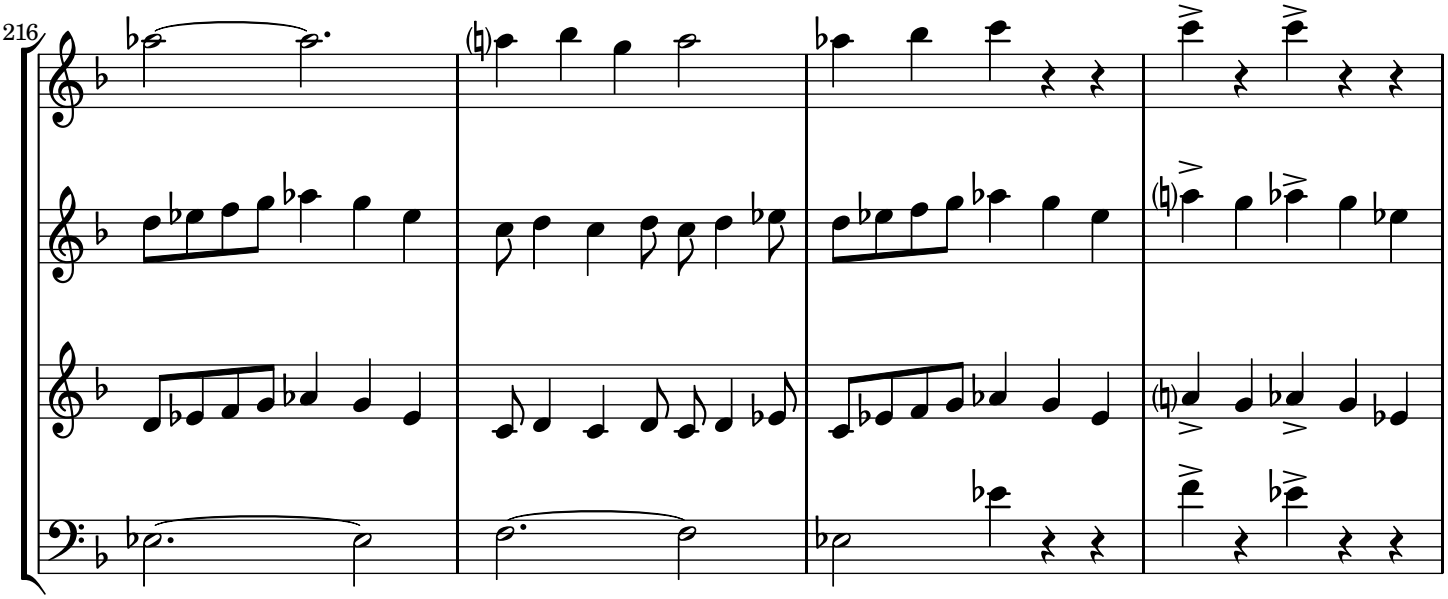
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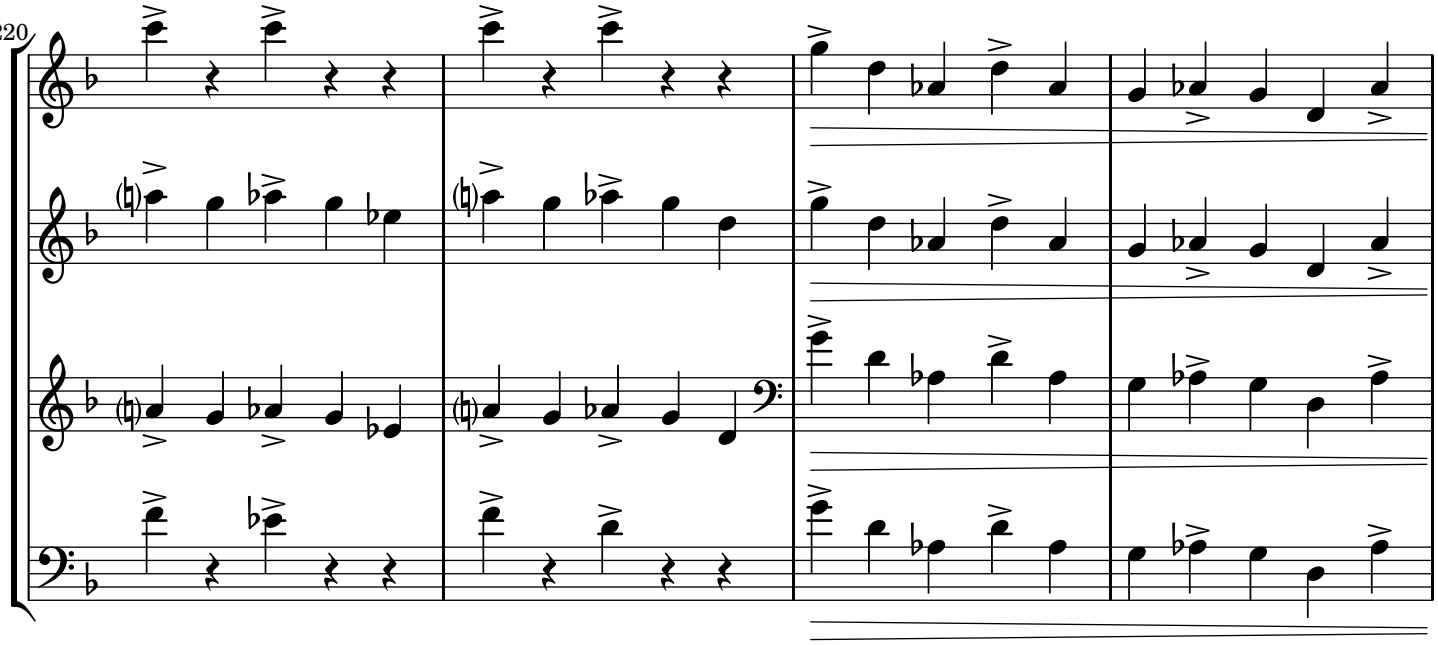
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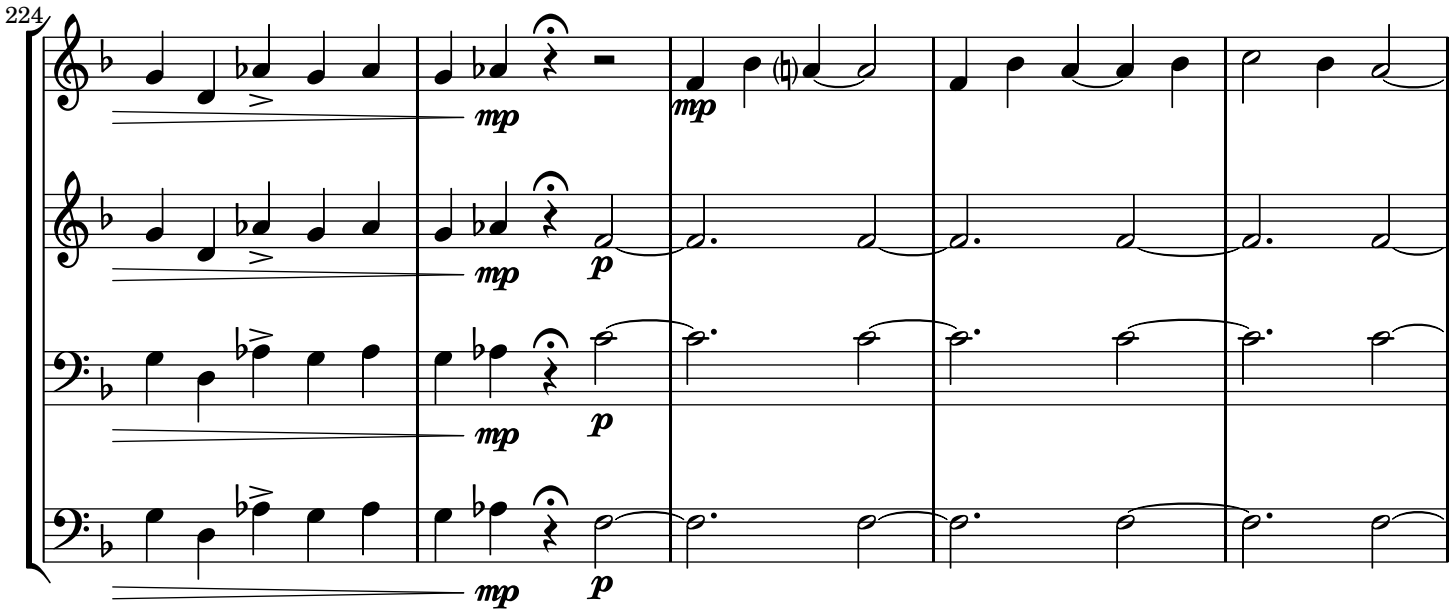
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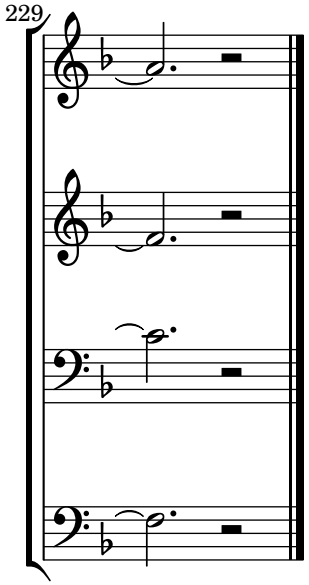
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