MICHAEL MARKOWSKI

FINDING THE WORDS

FOR SAXOPHONE QUARTET

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FINDING THE WORDS

Duration: ca. 10:00

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Sursum Quartet
Robby Ávila
George Rosas
Ashley Krogstad
AJ Pratt

Individual Contributors
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Kenneth A. Carter II
Marcia Doerr
Dr. Andrew Harrison
Trevor C. McMillan
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PROGRAM NOTE

Sometimes, a piece of music is about... *nothing*. And that's okay! But in deciding what to title that piece about 'nothing,' the music itself can lend clues. The style, harmony, and overall visceral feeling can often suggest a particular character or musical personality that the composer perhaps never initially intended.

For instance, the first movement from *Finding The Words* is full of flashy, technical phrases designed to dazzle and impress. Its personality, though, seems to me to sound a bit pretentious, highfalutin, and rhythmically stiff. Because of this, I found myself lured into naming this movement *Five-Dollar Diction* as an echo of Mark Twain's warning to aspiring writers: "don't use a five-dollar word when a fifty-cent word will do."

If movement one is trying too hard to show off how much it knows, then in contrast, movement two is offering humility. To me, this heartbreaking song seems to express some kind of emptiness — perhaps a longing to find meaning, purpose, or importance. Even as the music searches for this fulfillment, though, in the end, it will remain tragically unfulfilled and *Undefined*.

A short pause cleanses our palette for a change of scenery. Here in movement three, the musical character seems to venture somewhere across the border. The saxophones sing passionately in their *Foreign Tongues*, and we're quickly seduced by their charming accents and exotic vernacular. Although this isn't our own native language, the music seems to invite us to join in and sing along, even if we have to mouth the words. But who needs words anyway?

Finding The Words premiered on April 28, 2019 in Tucson, Arizona with the Sursum Saxophone Quartet: Robby Ávila (soprano), George Rosas (alto), Ashley Krogstad (tenor), and AJ Pratt (baritone).

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Transposed Score

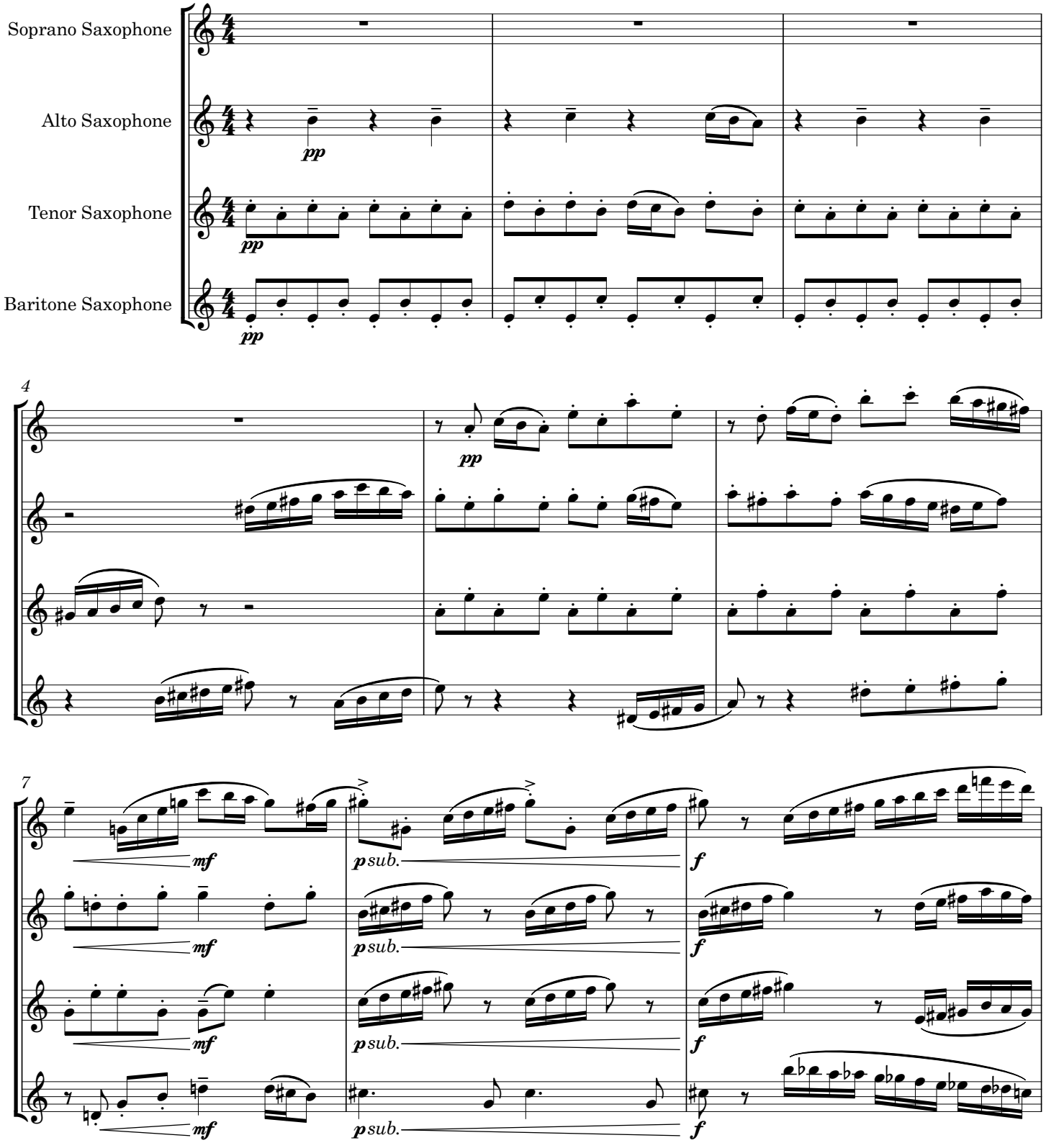
For AJ Pratt

FINDING THE WORDS

MICHAEL MARKOWSKI

1. Five-Dollar Diction

♩ = 148+



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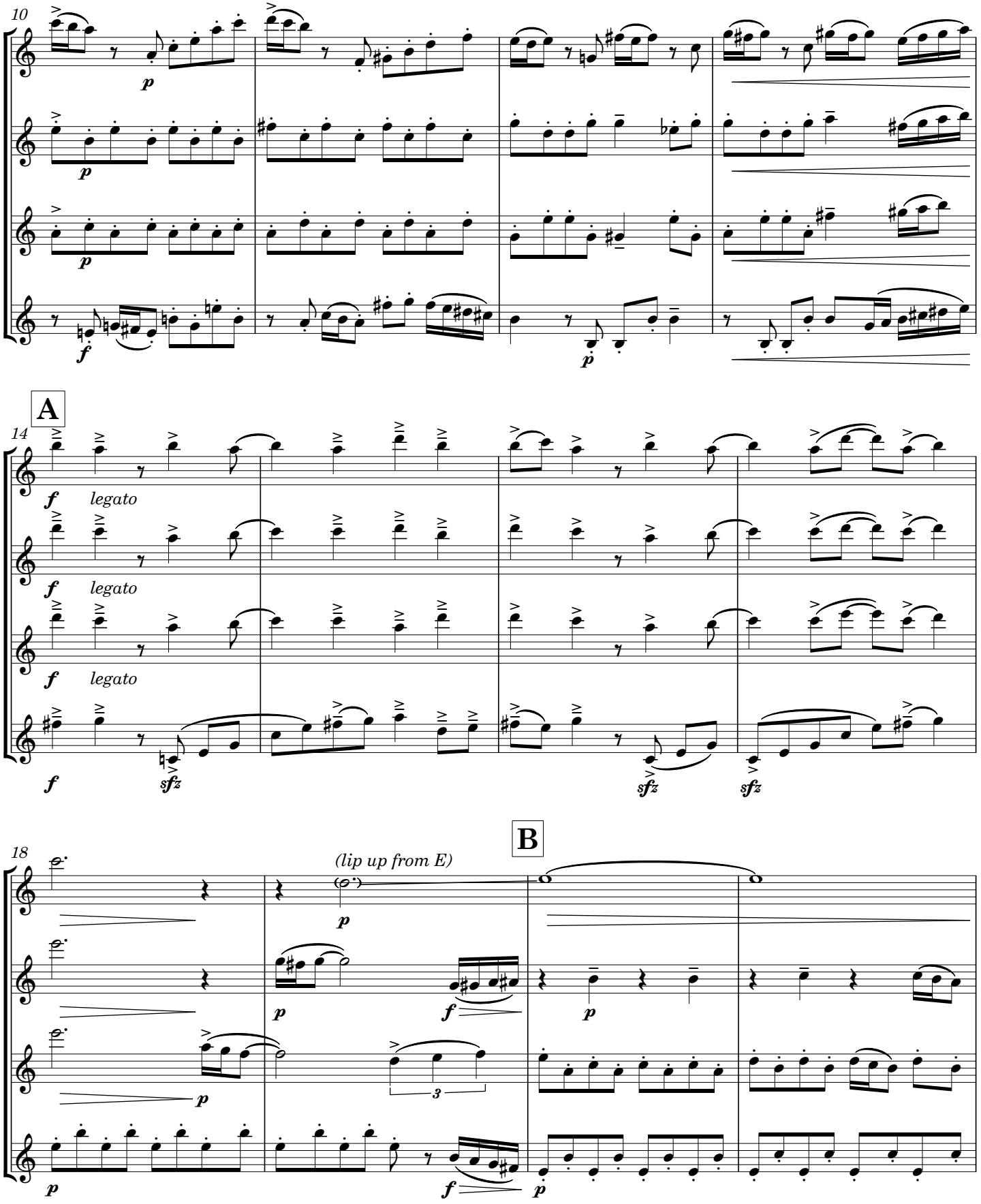

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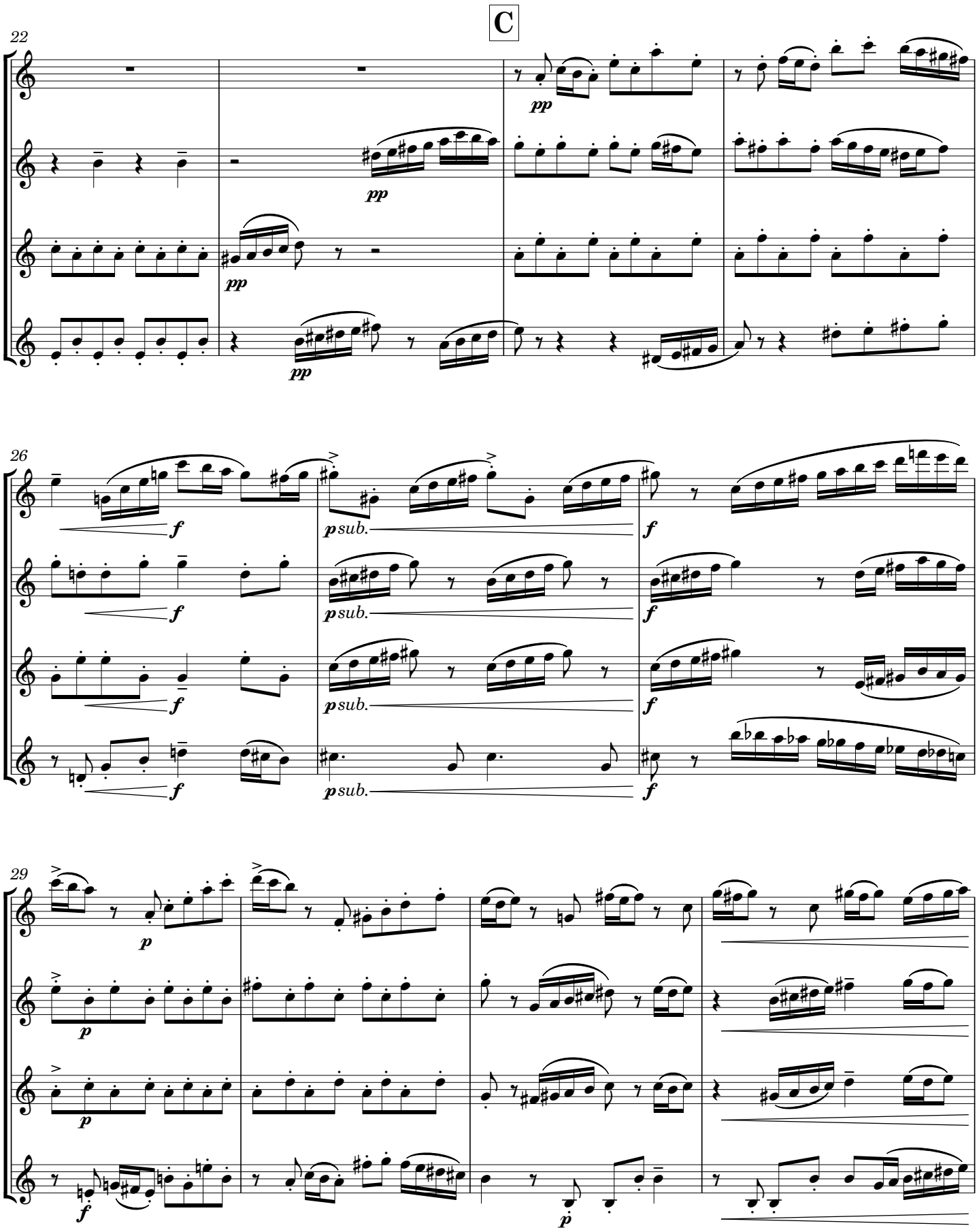

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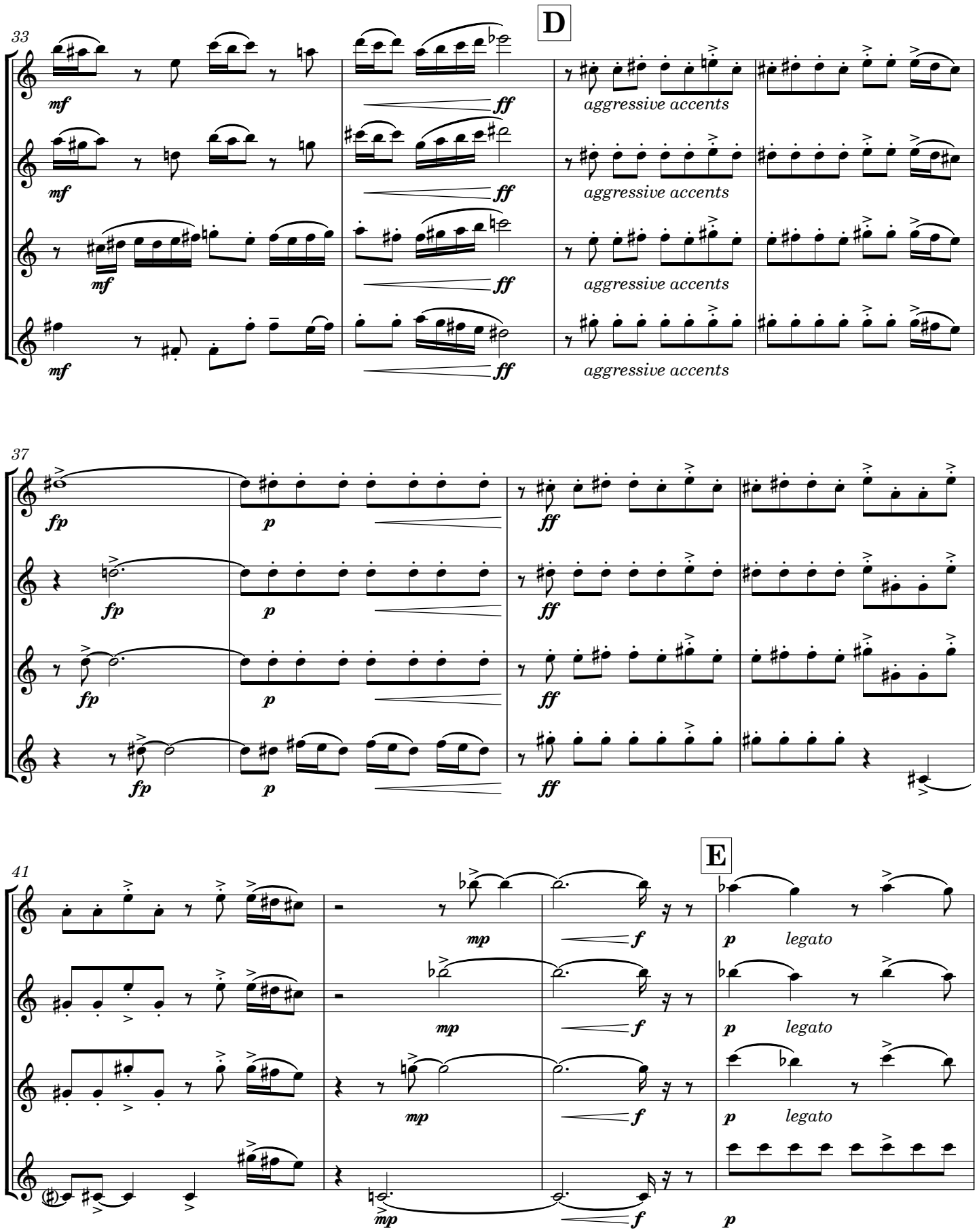

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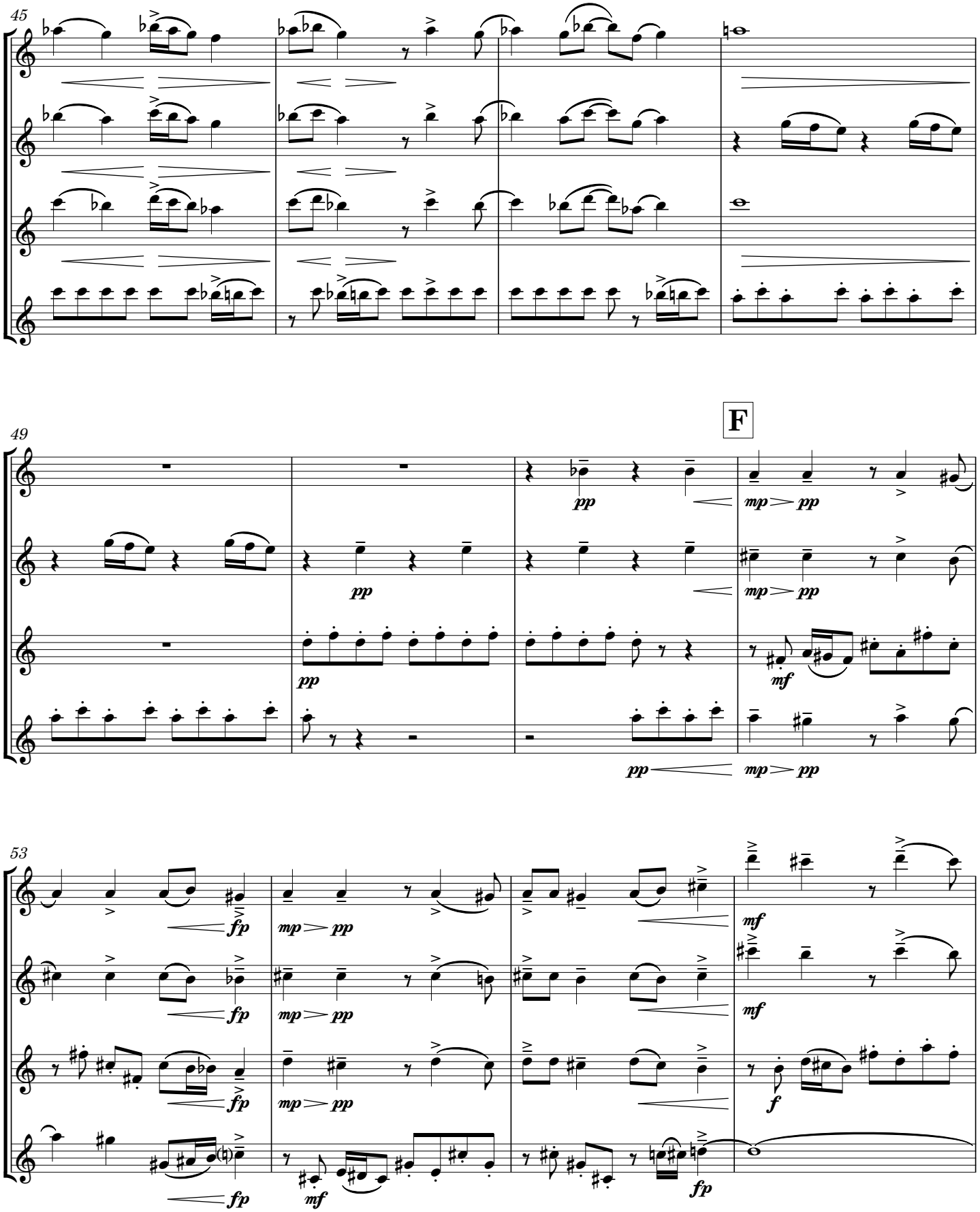

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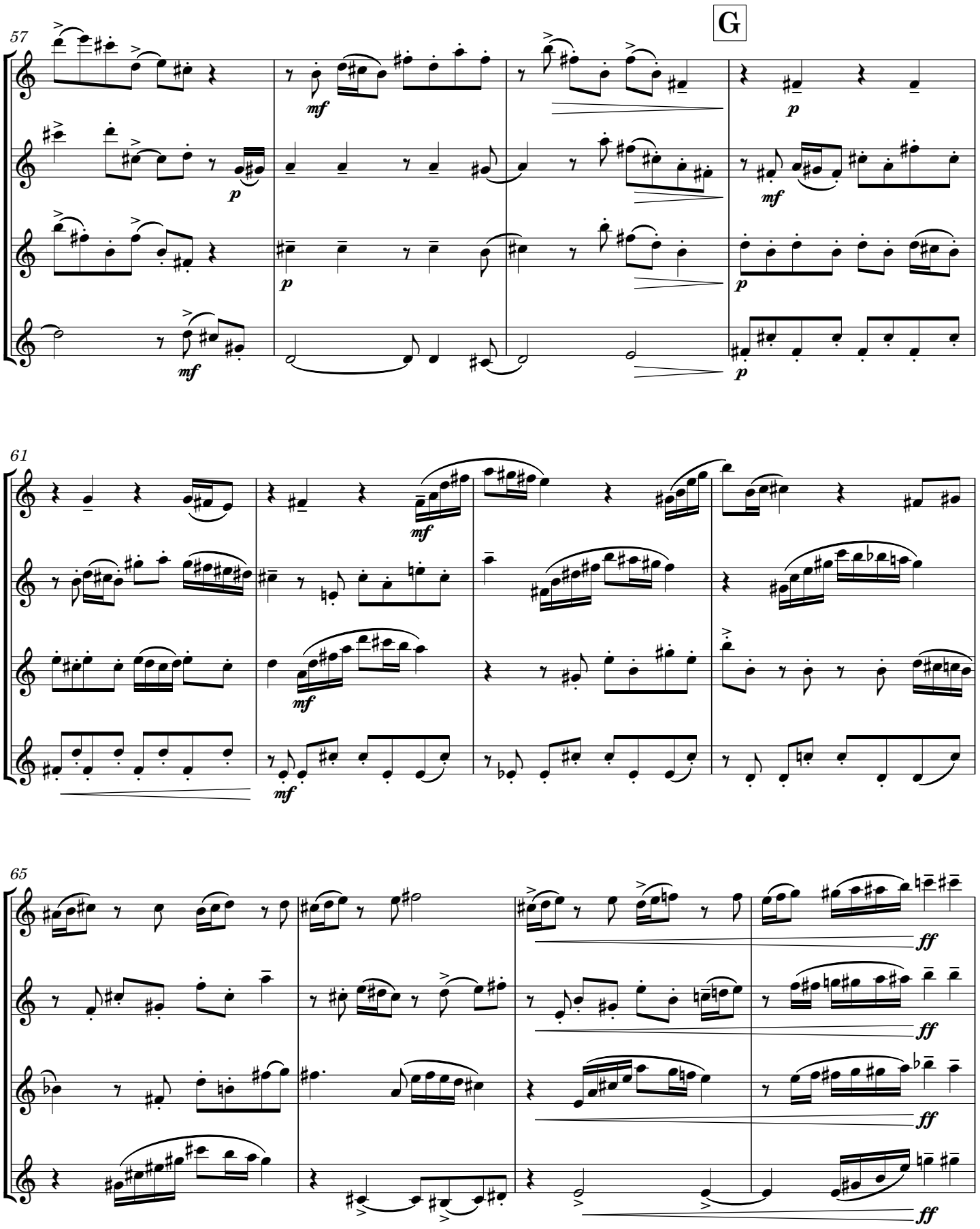

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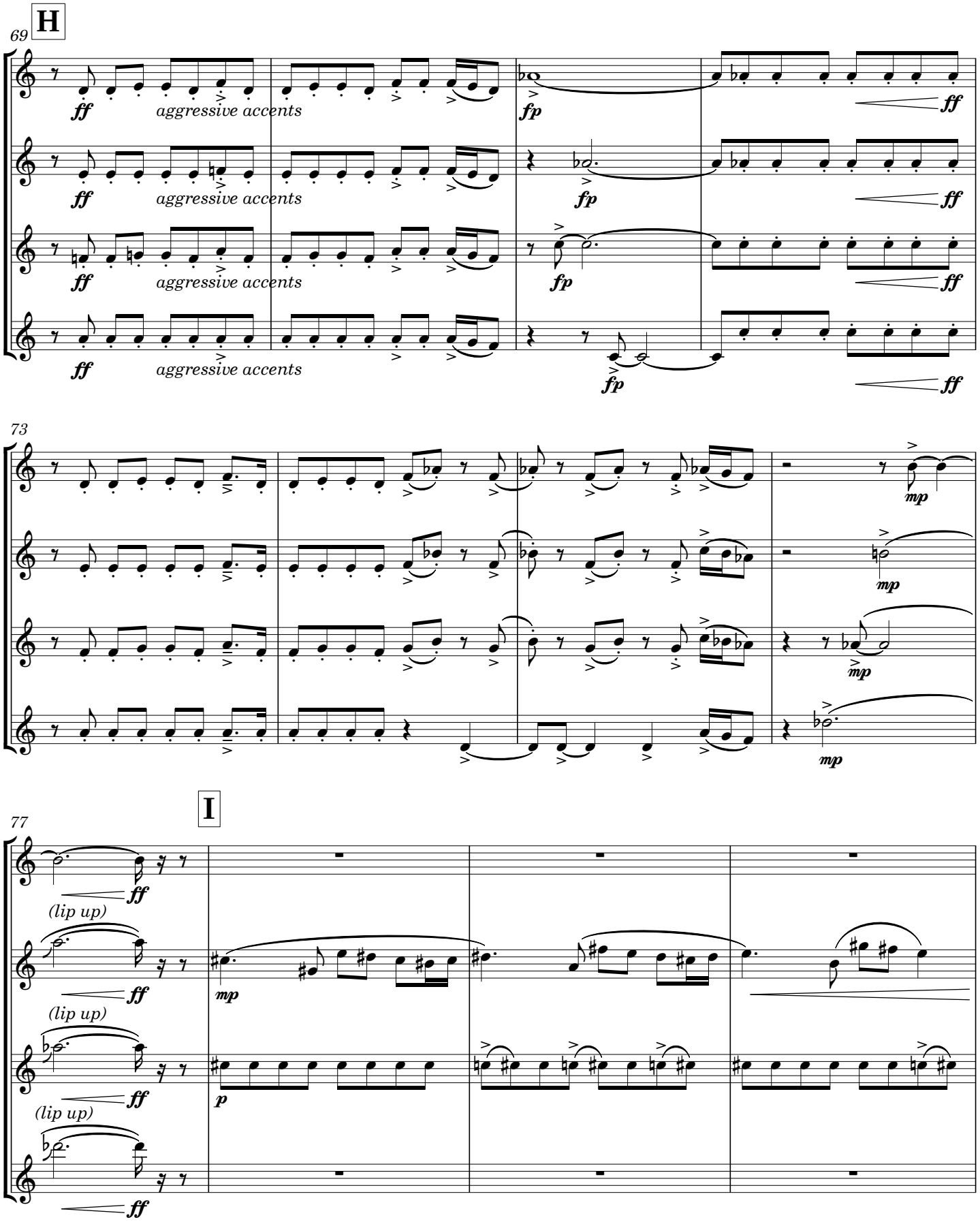

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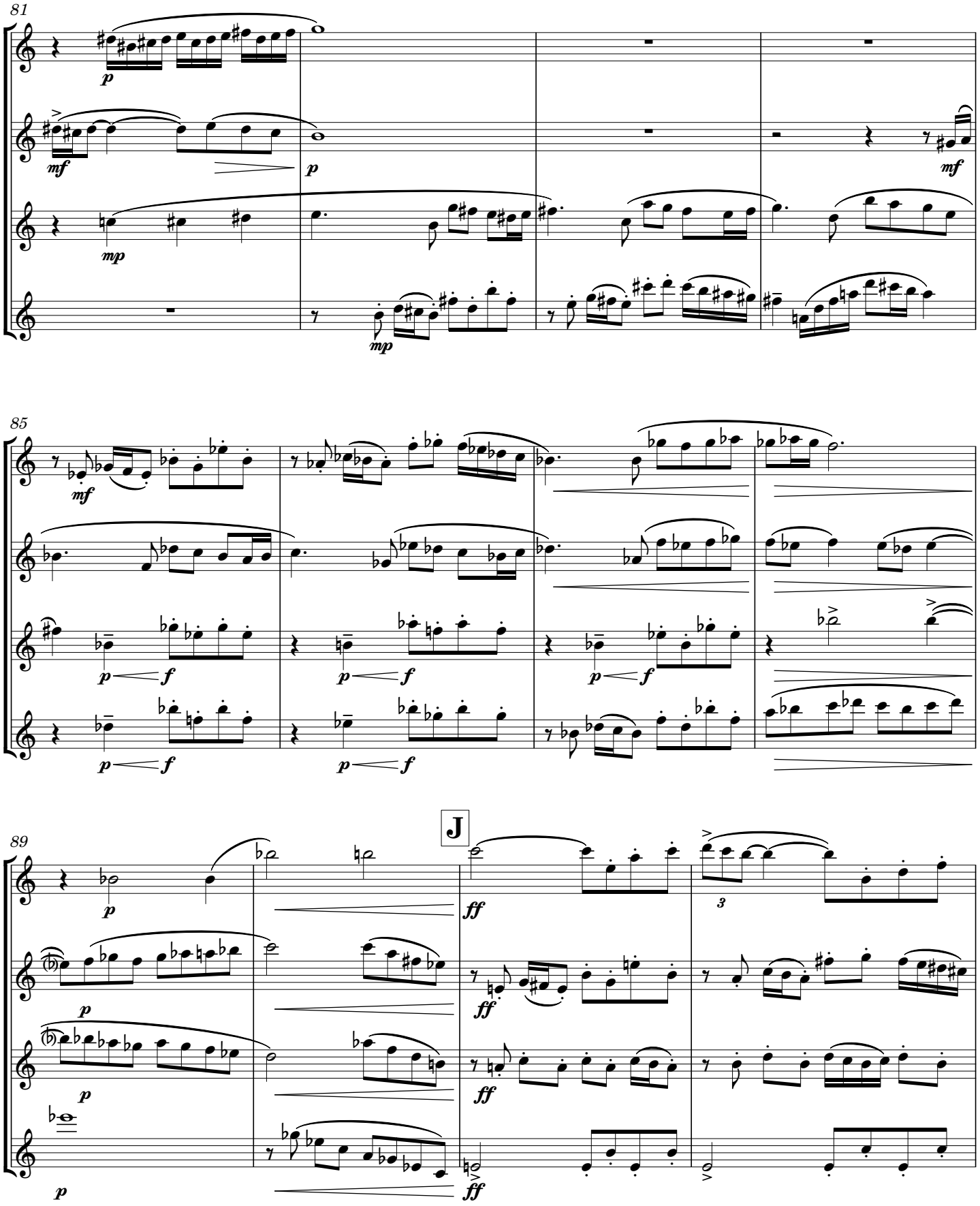

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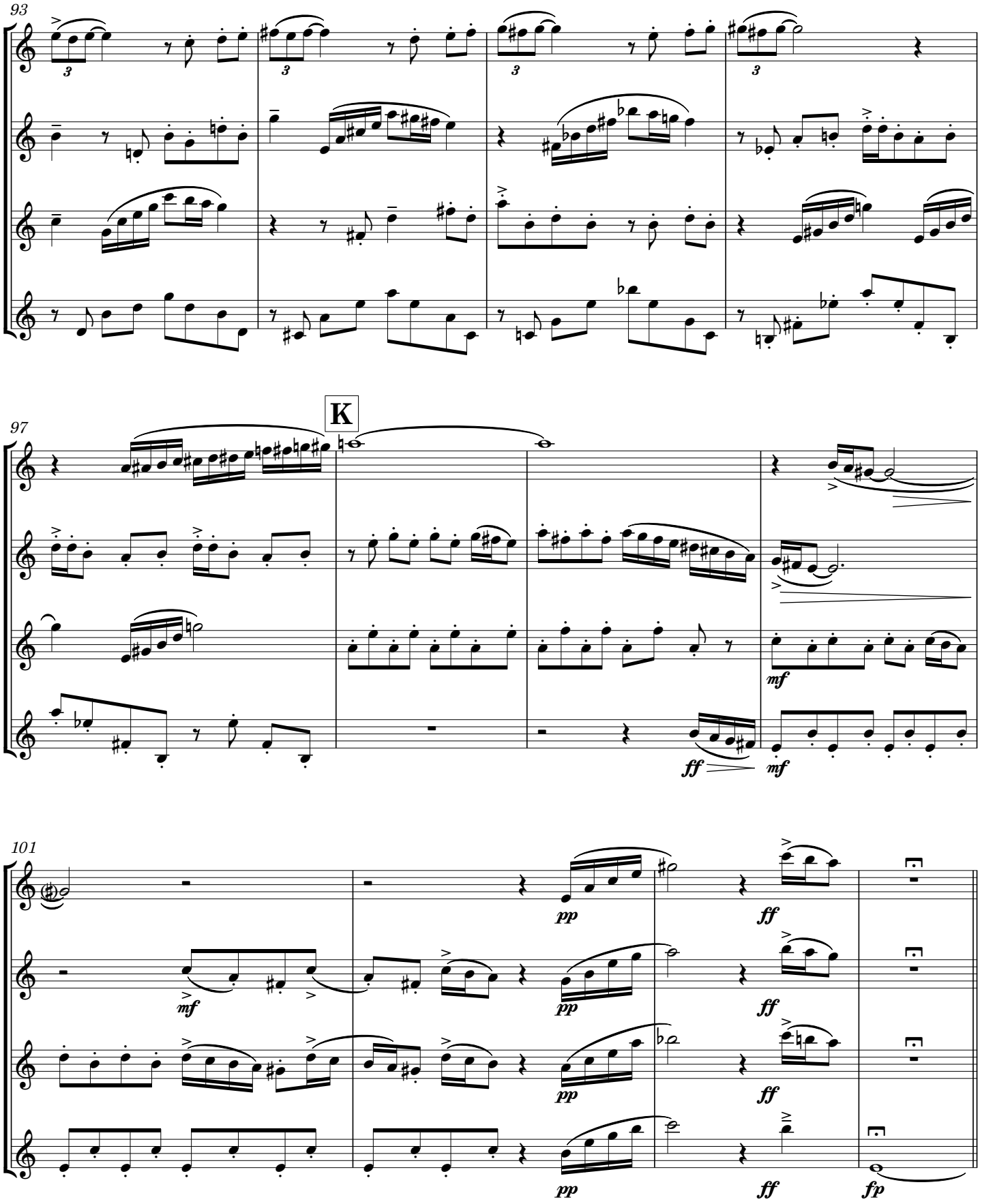

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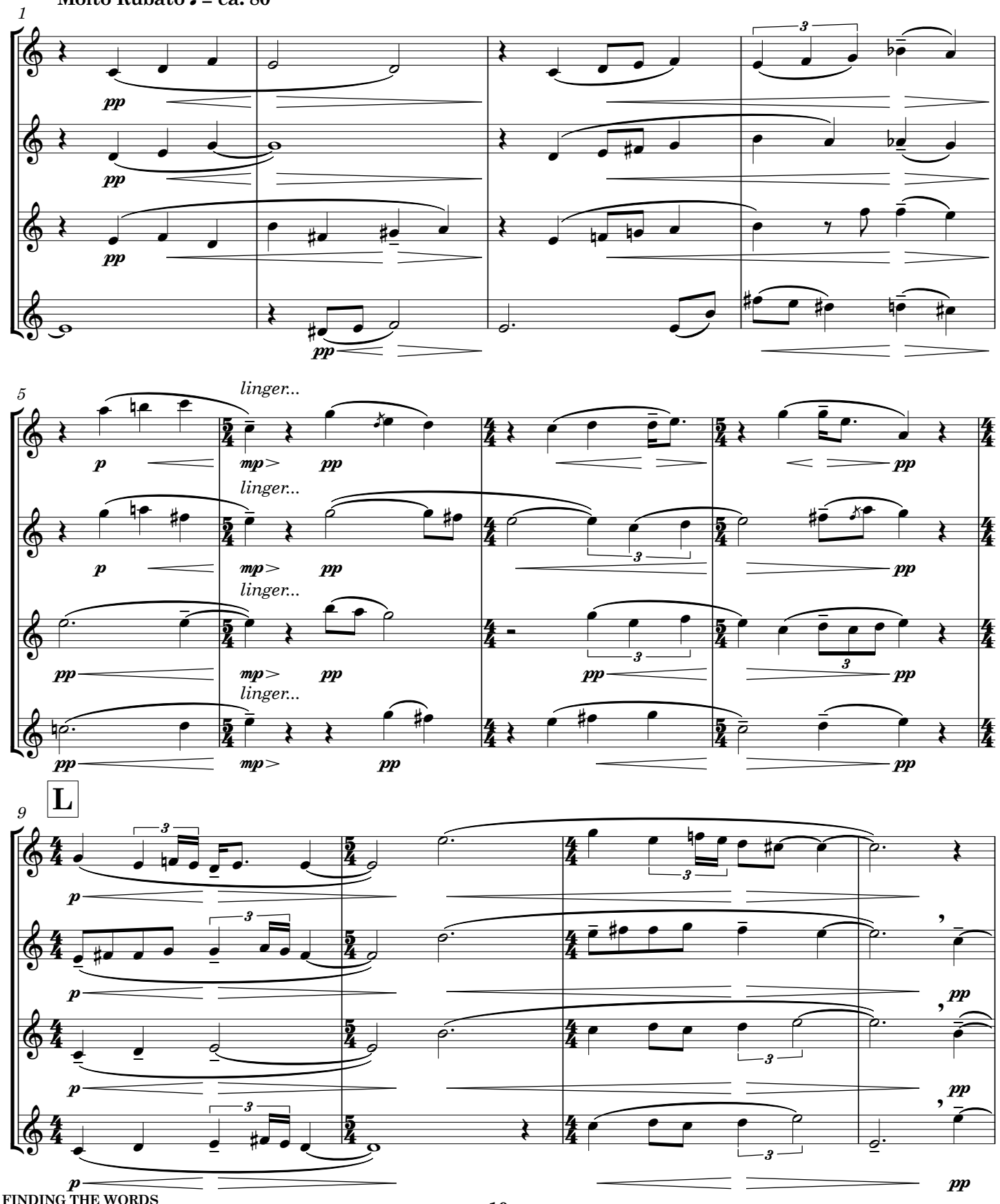
2. Undefined

Molto Rubato ♩ = ca. 80



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13 **pushing forward . . .**

legato

(sing out)

17 **M** **A Tempo**

21 **N**

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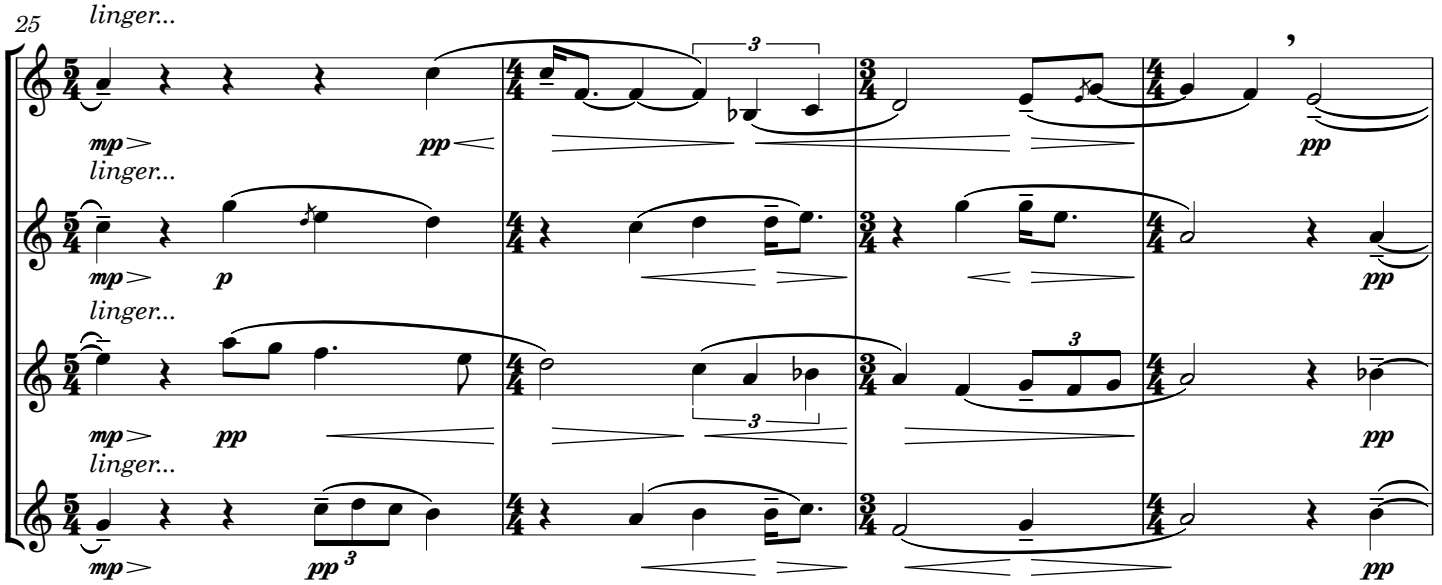

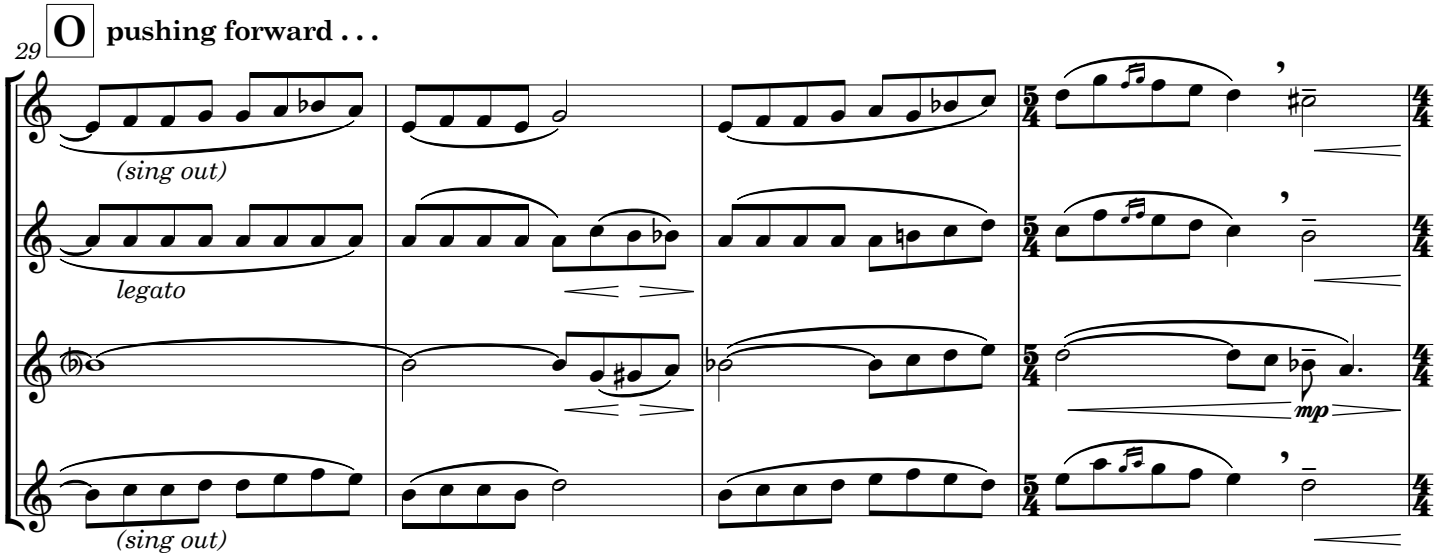

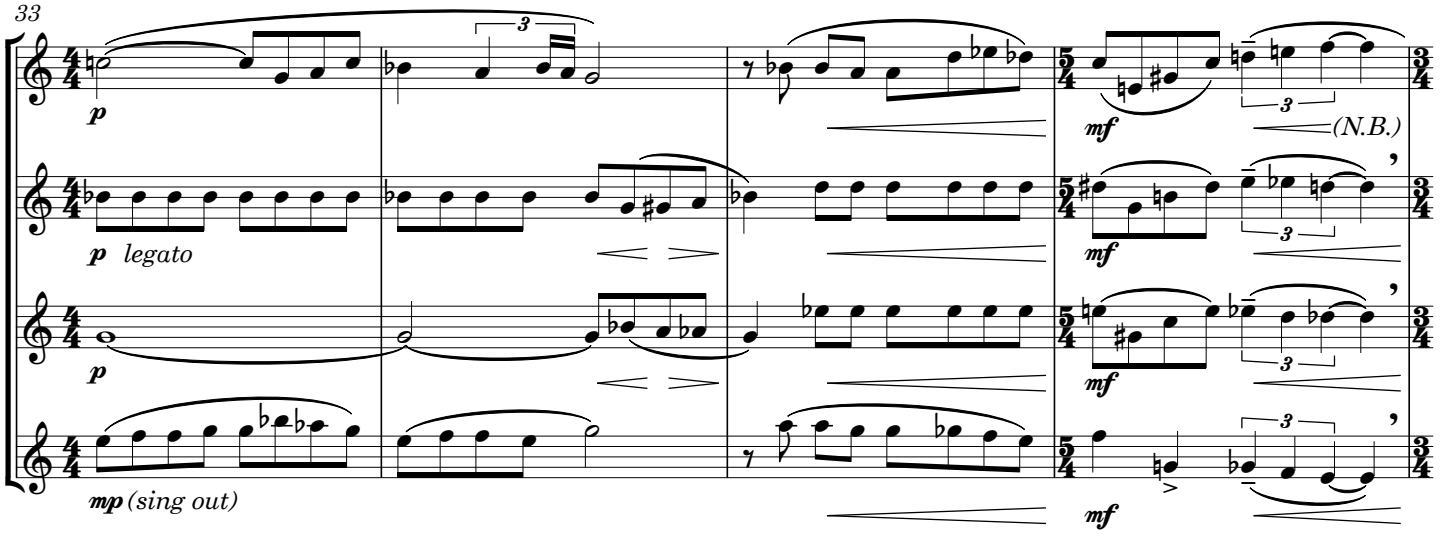

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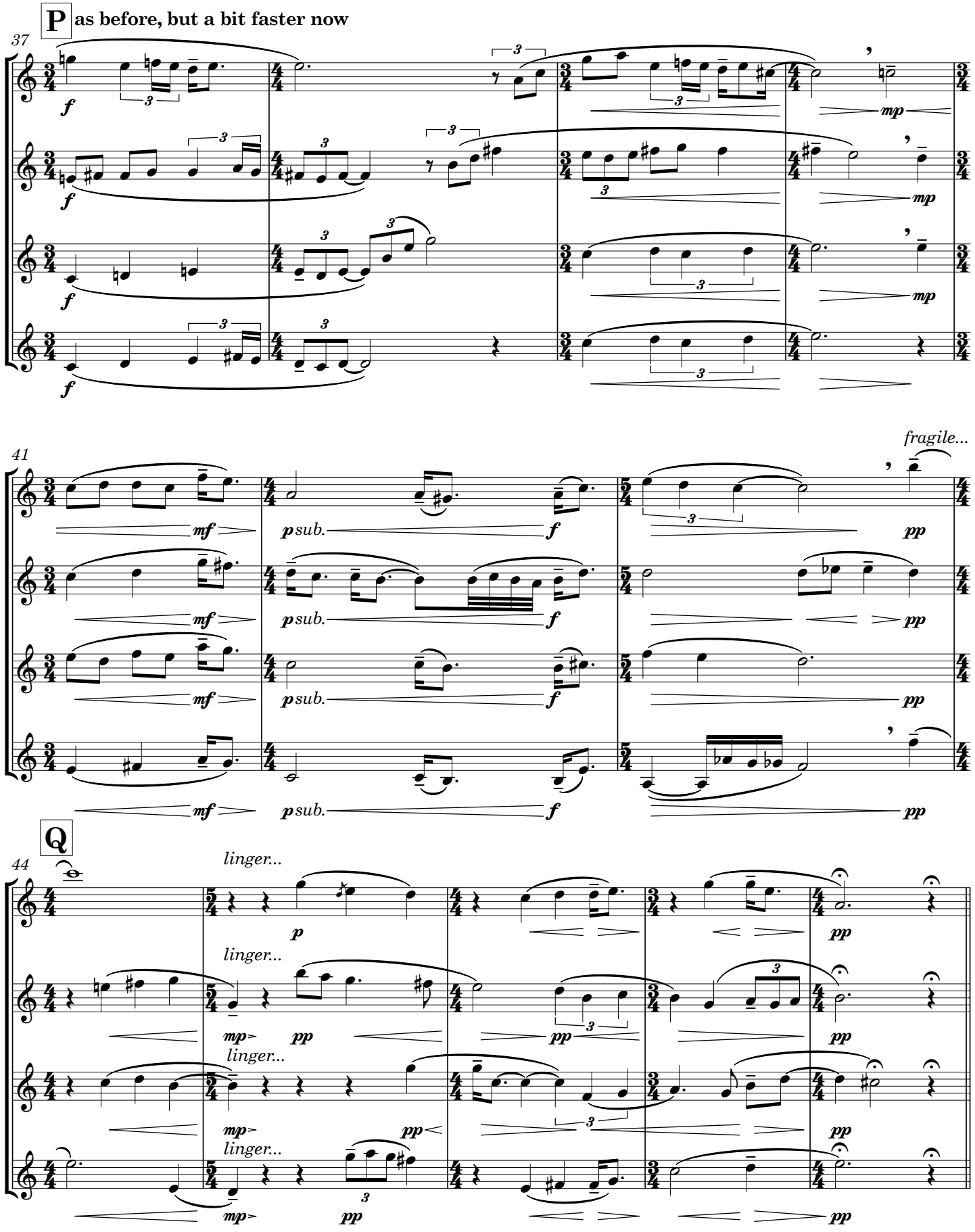

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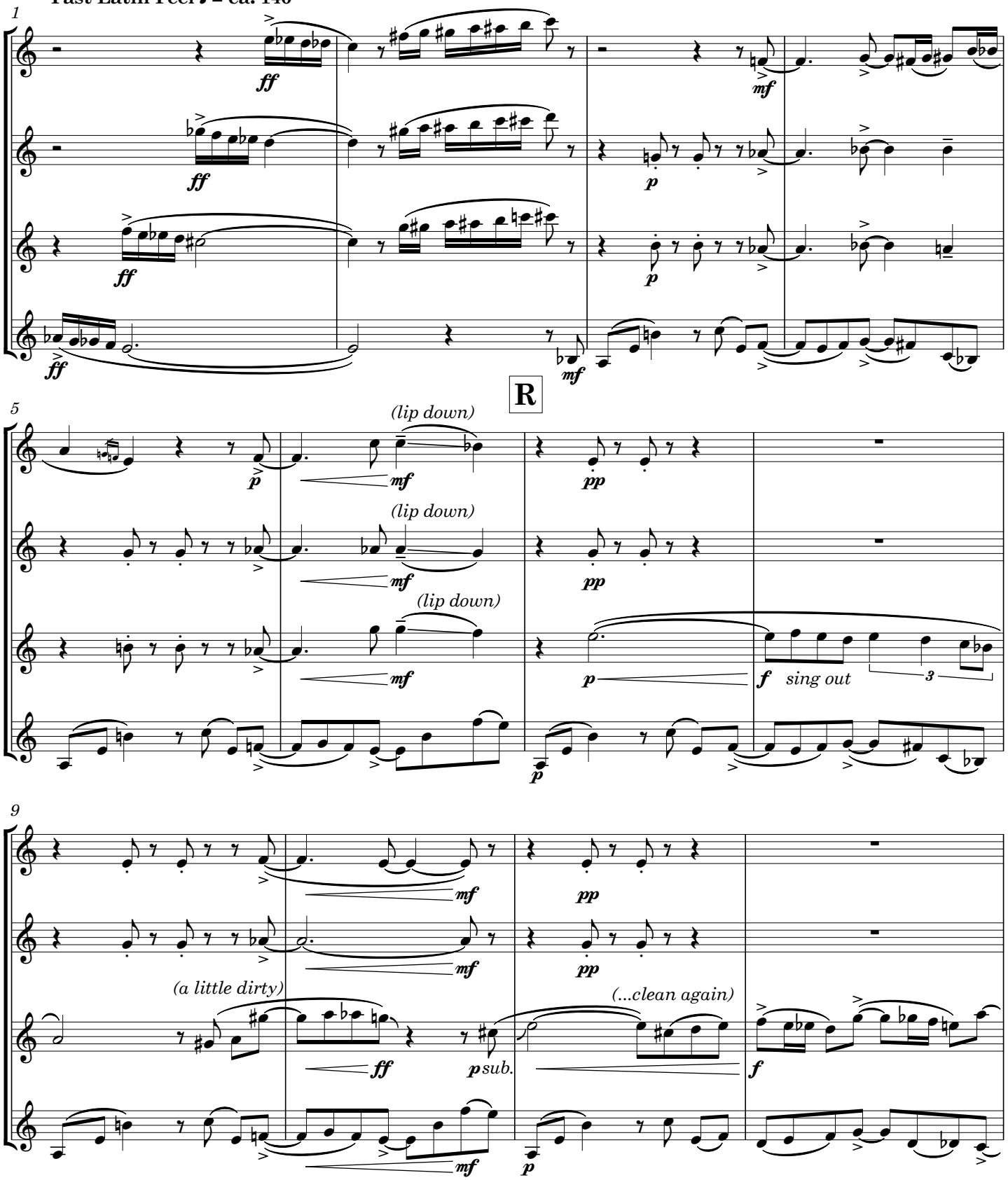
3. Foreign Tongues

Fast Latin Feel ♩ = ca. 140



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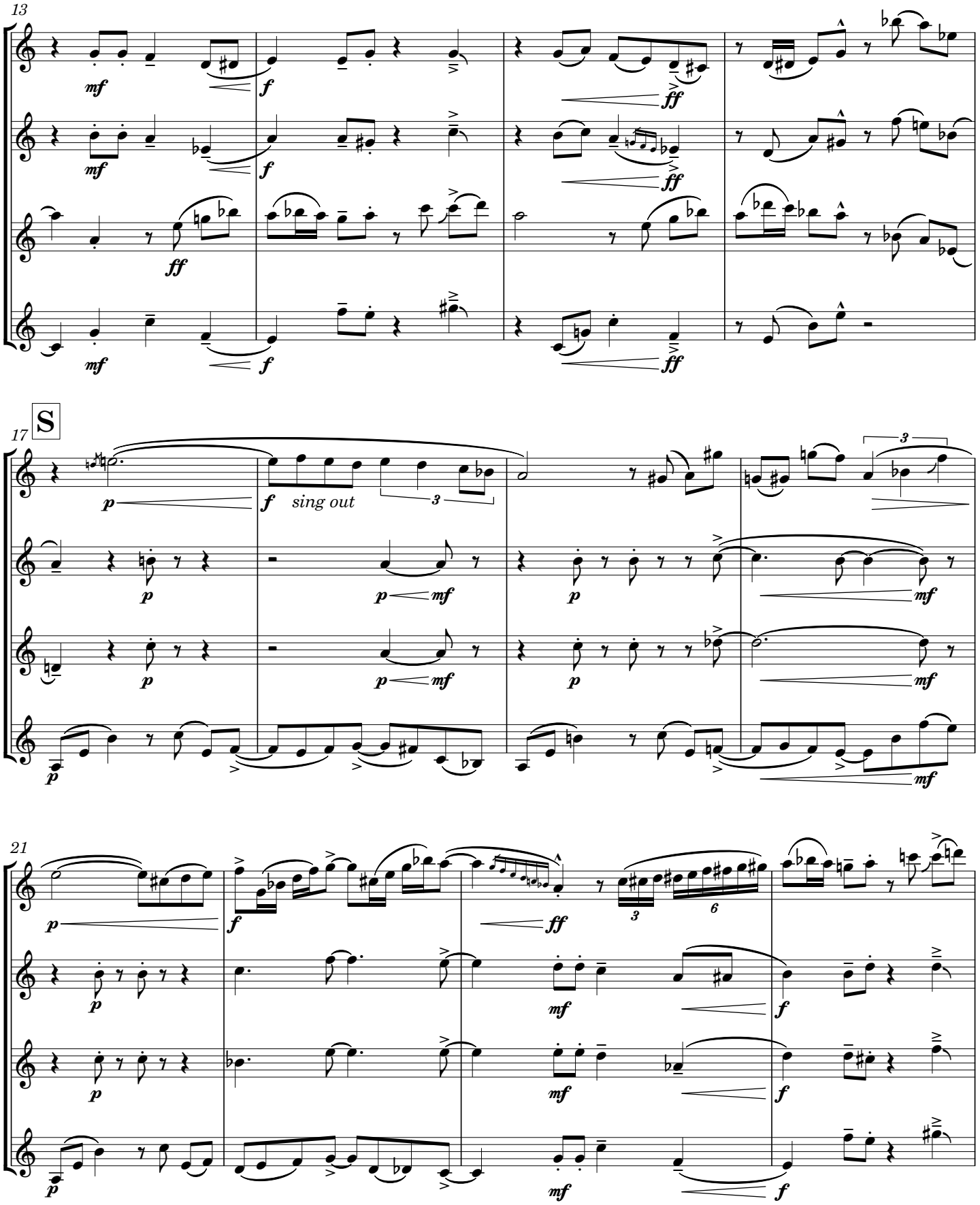

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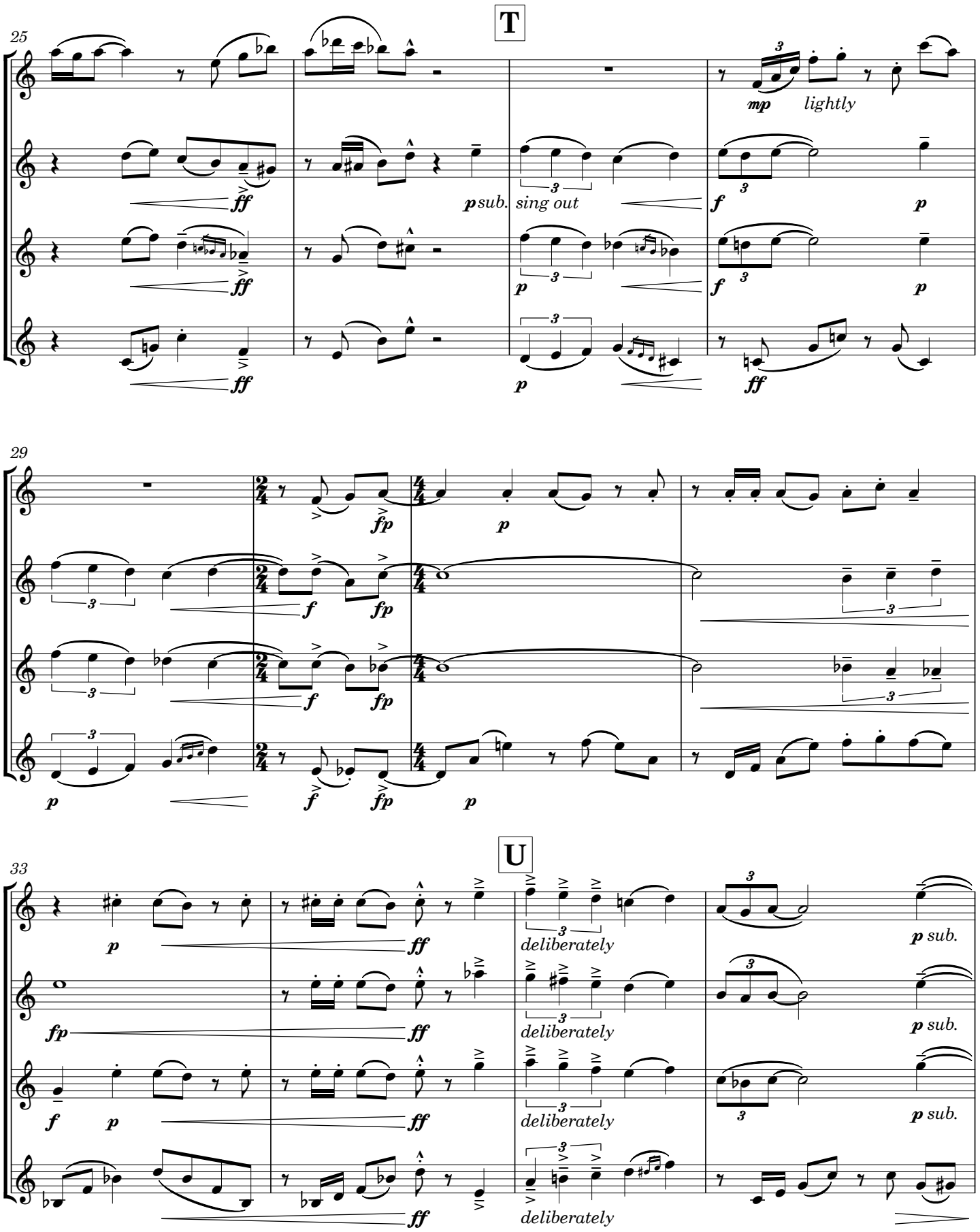

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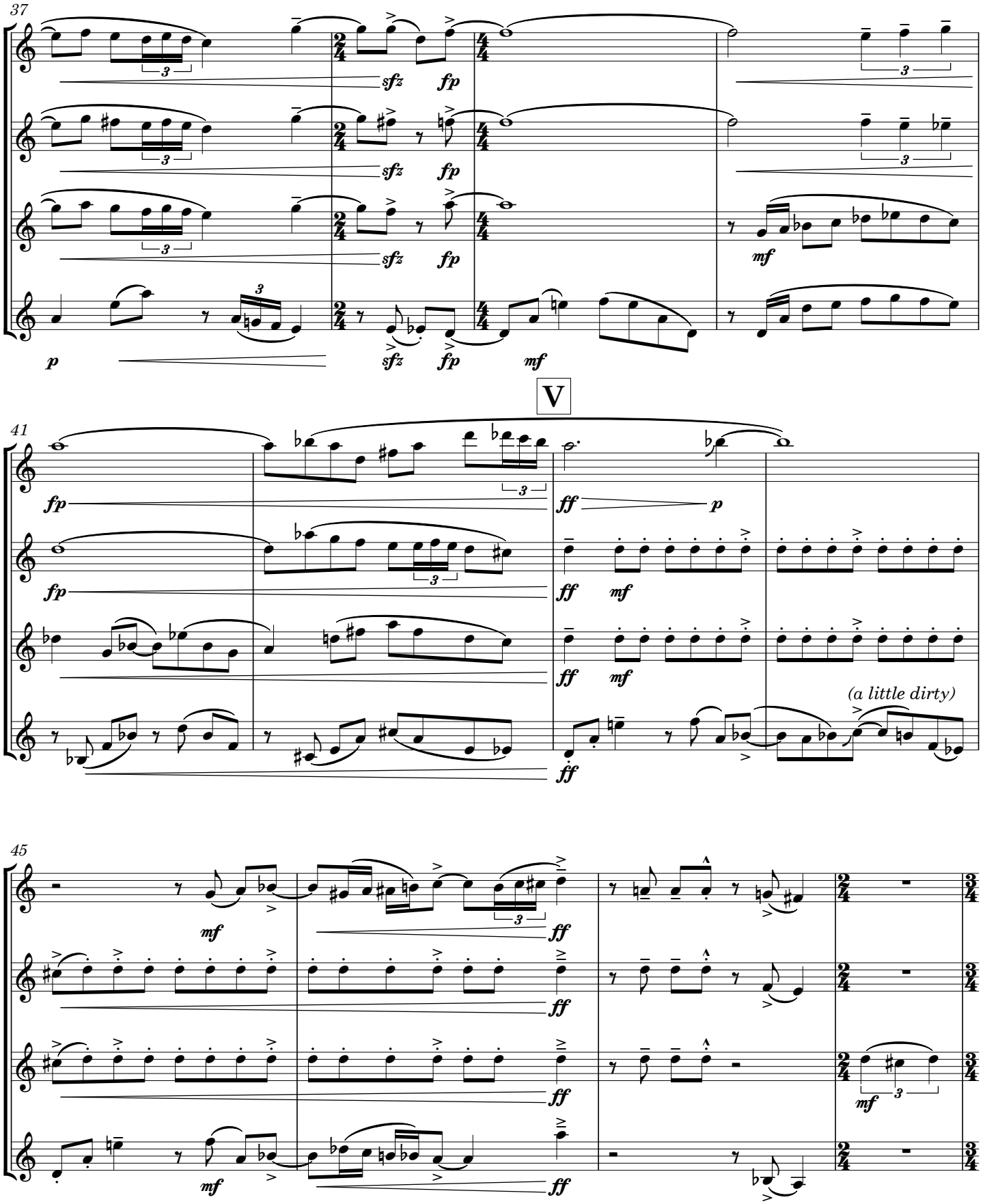

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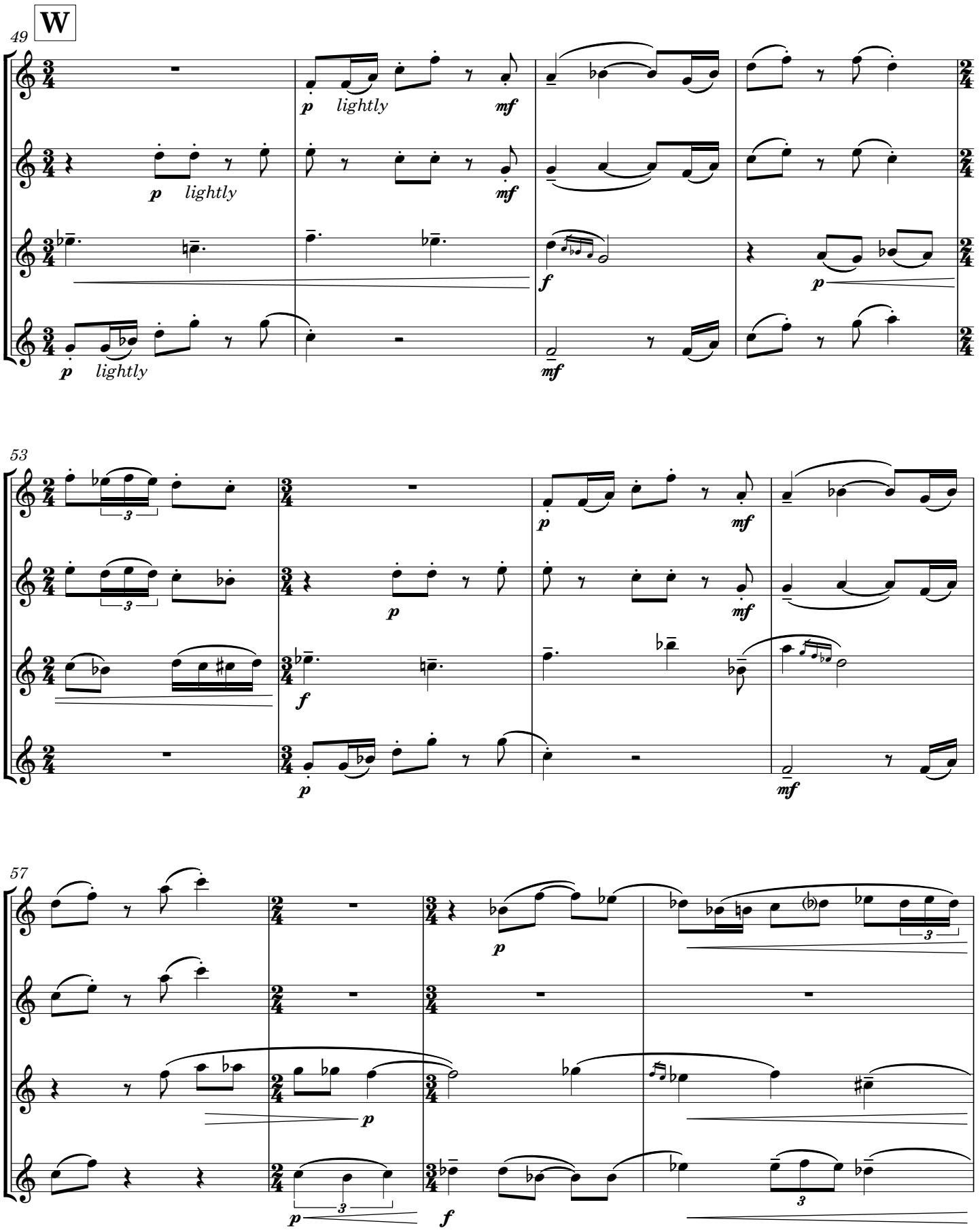

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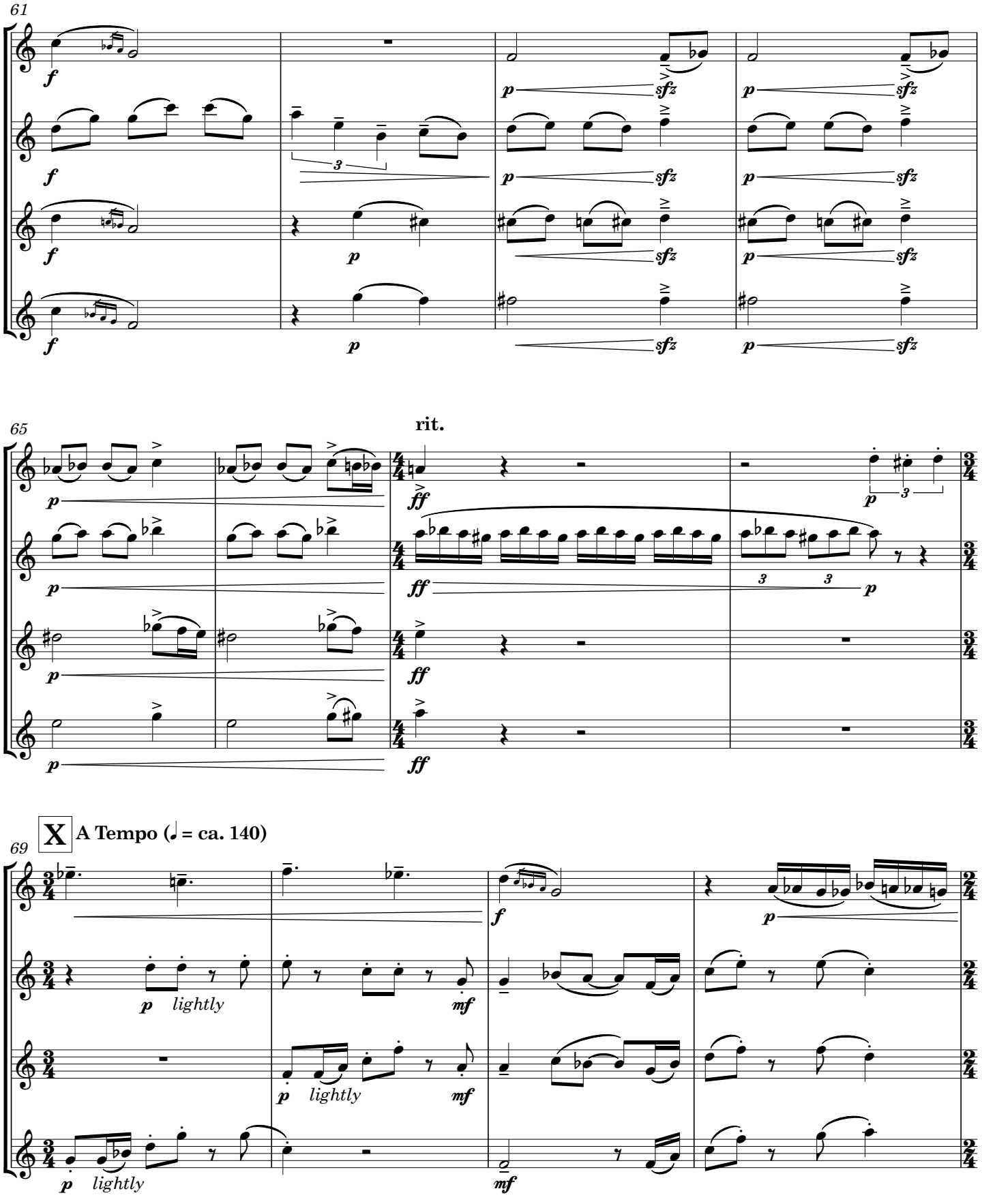

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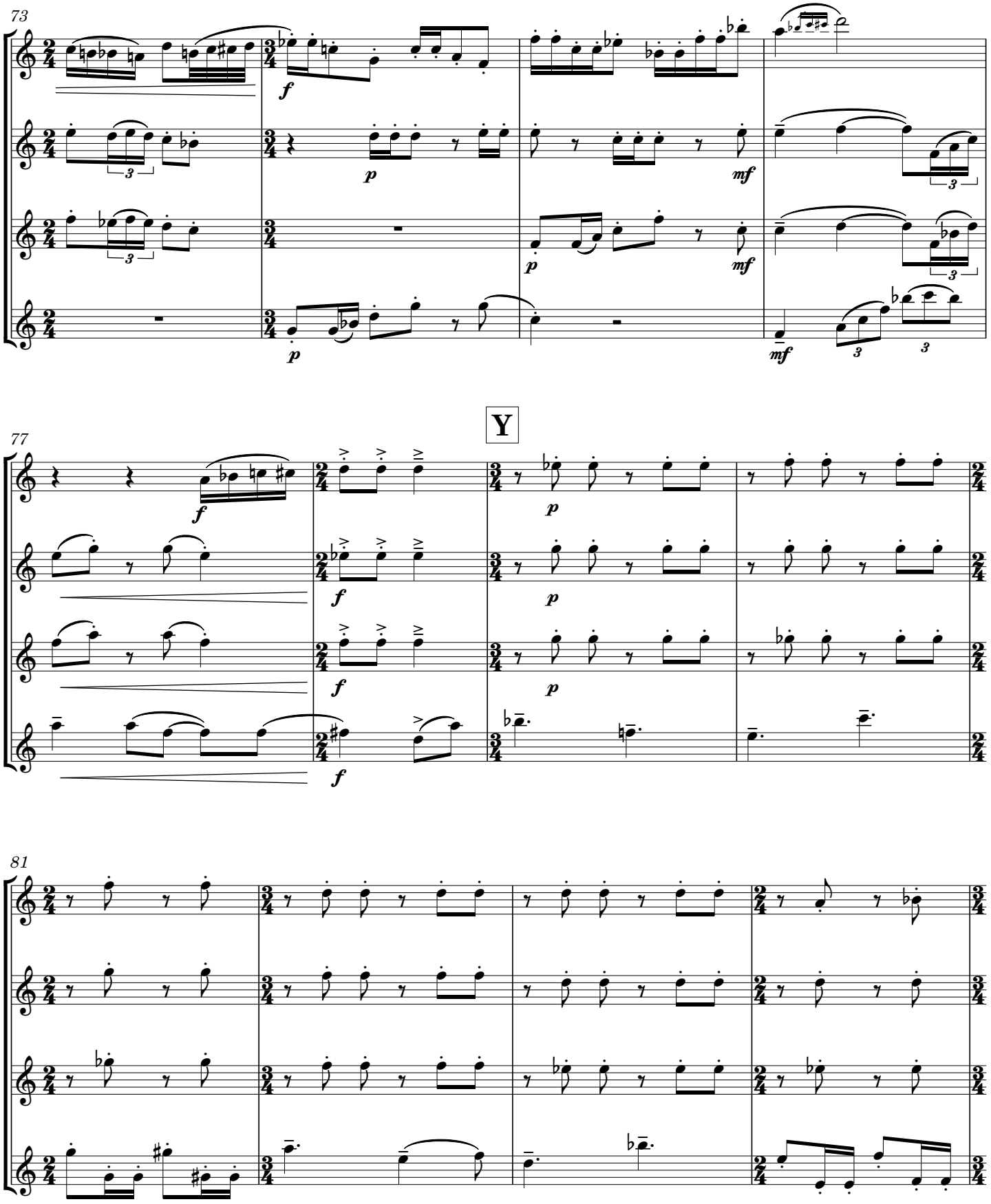

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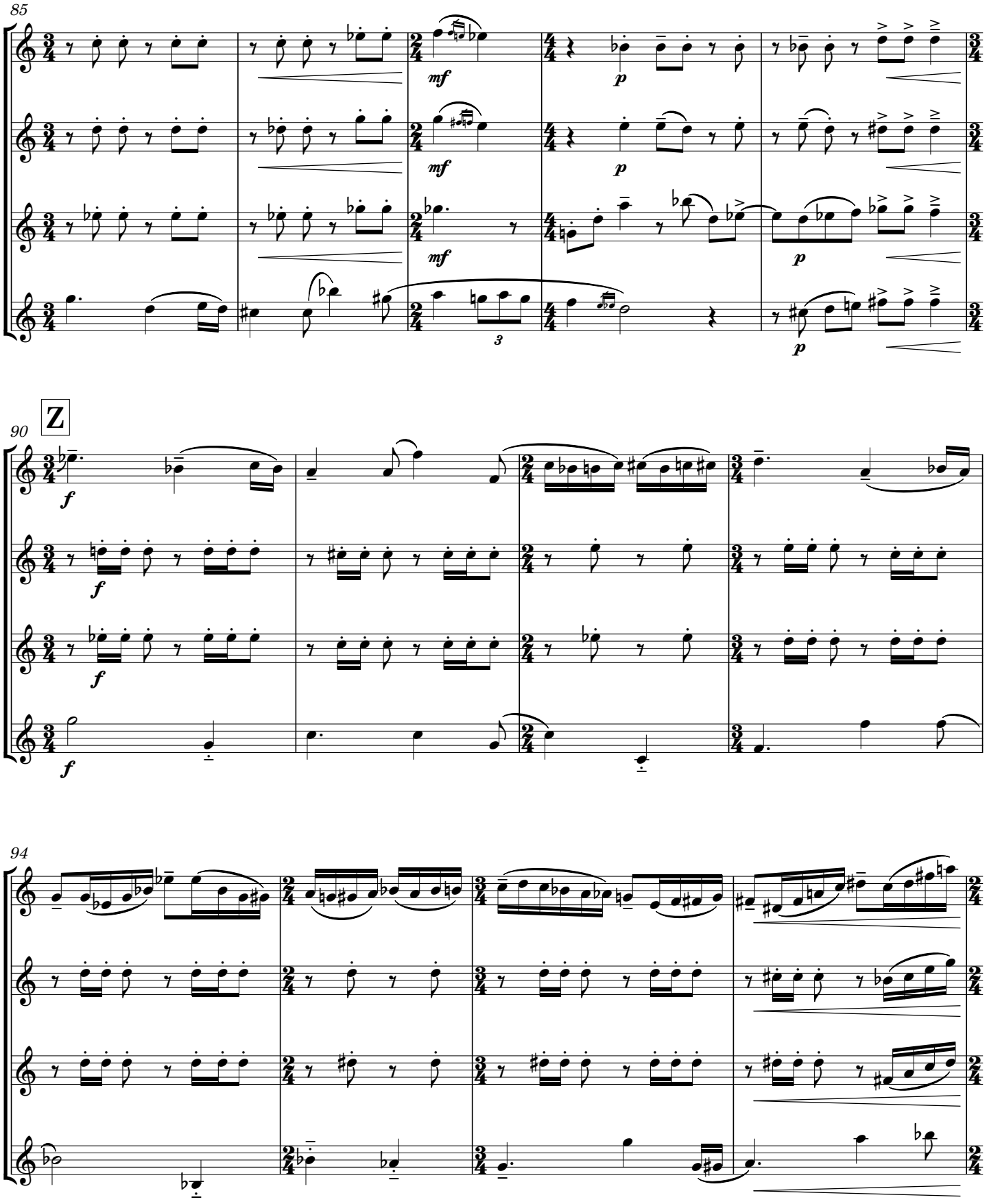

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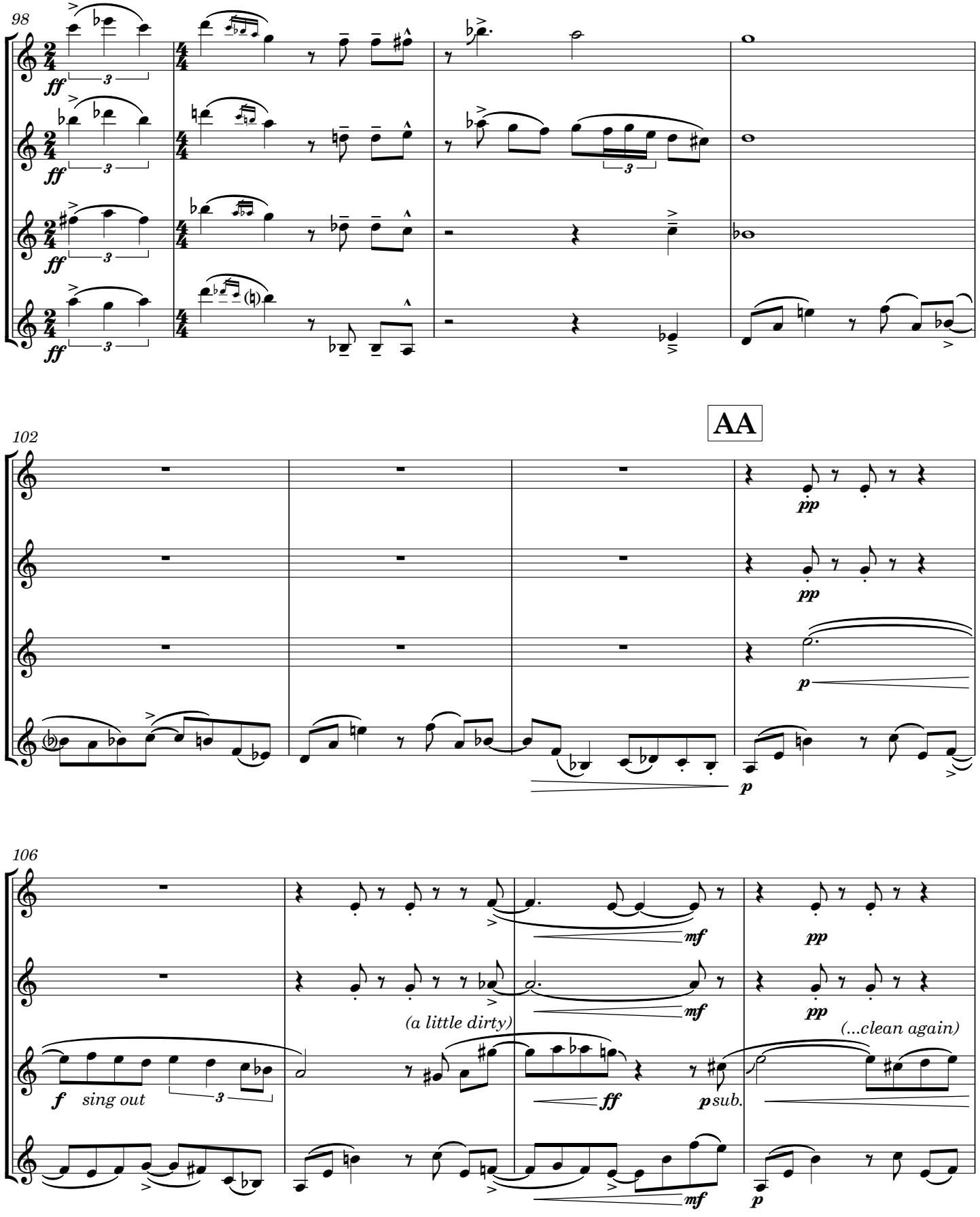

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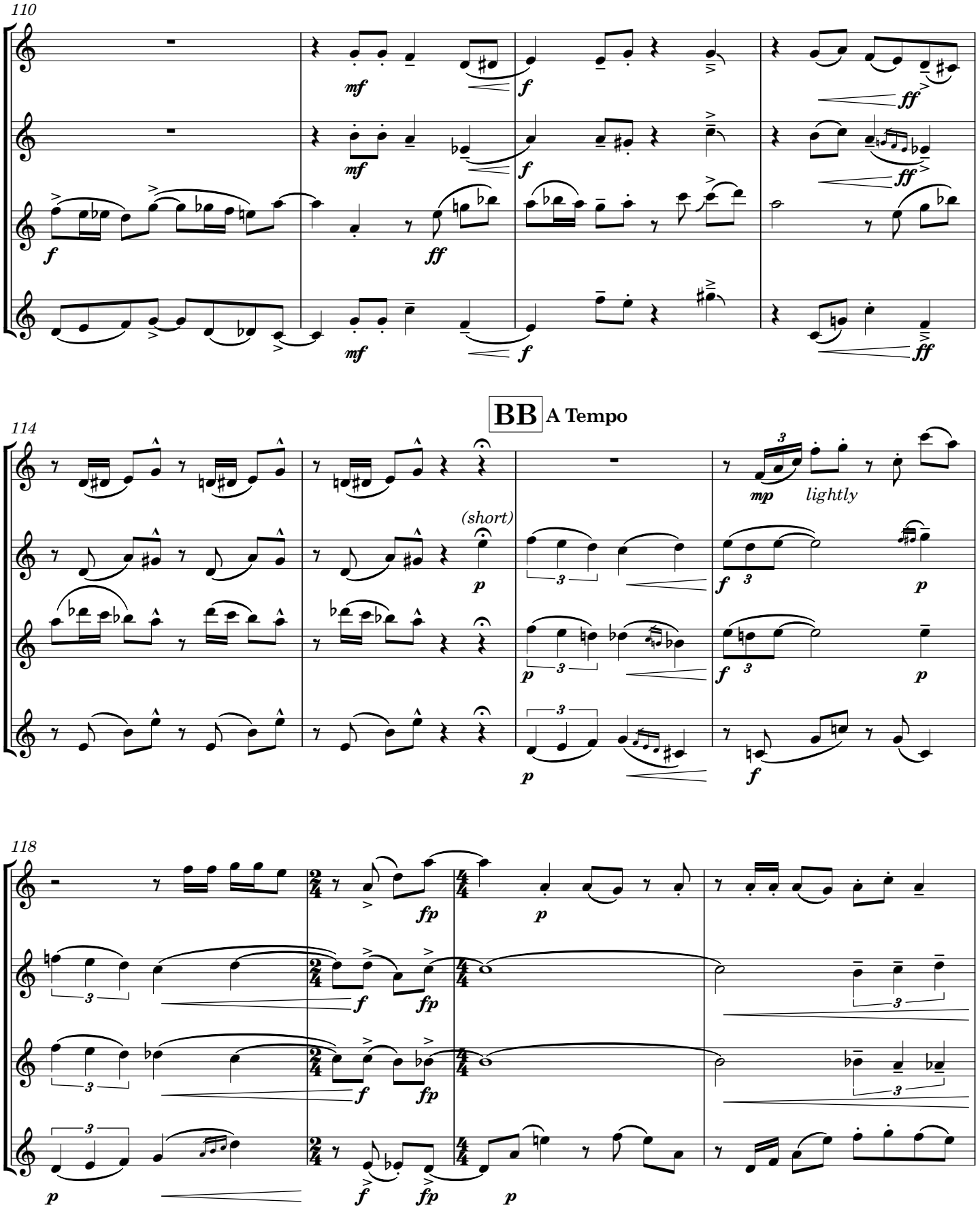

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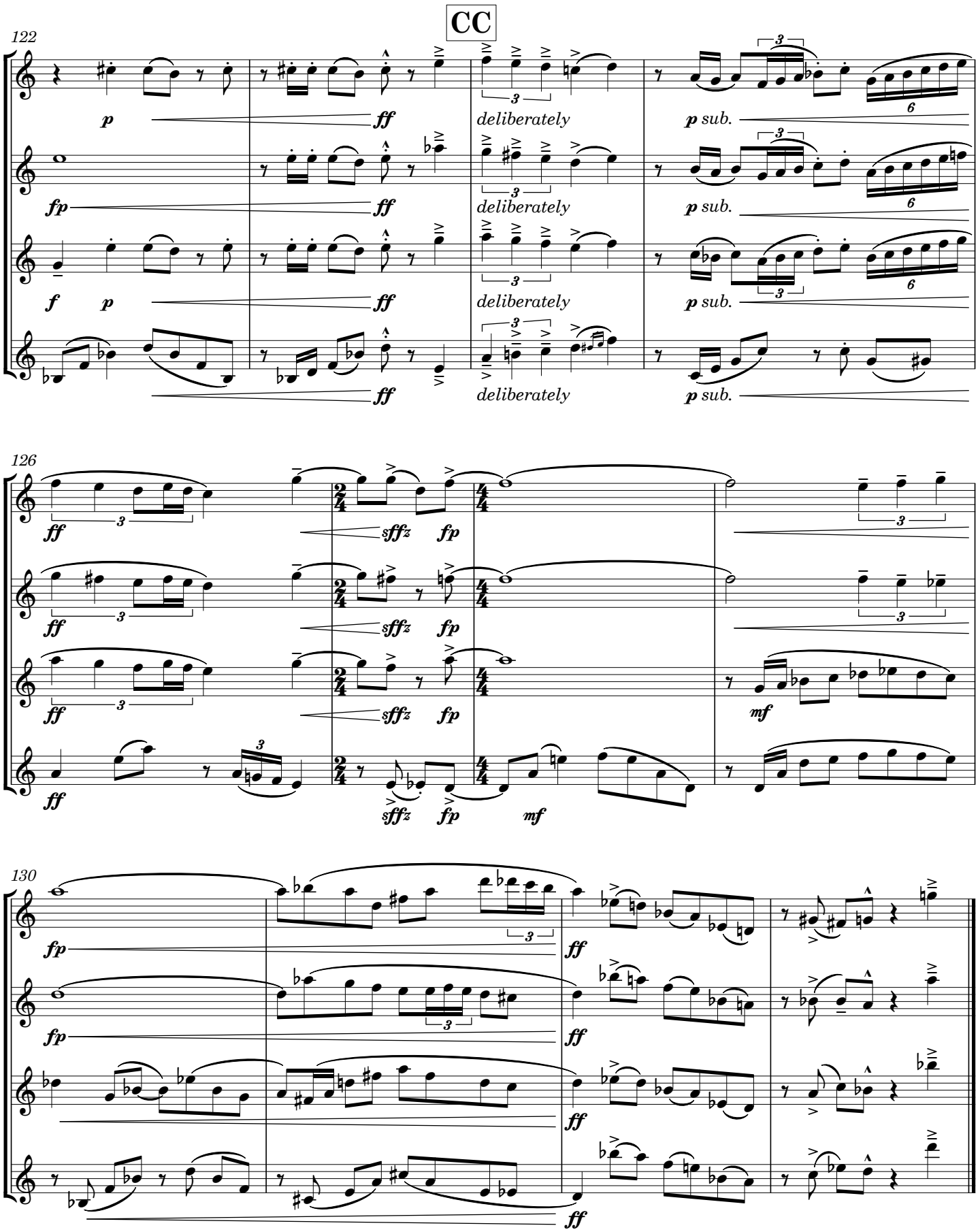

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