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Music Inspired by the Works of Robert Frost

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Music Inspired by the Works of Robert Frost

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Music in Composition

by

Ryan Martin
Missouri Valley College
Bachelor of Arts in Music, 2014
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Master of Music in Jazz Studies, 2020
May 2022
University of Arkansas

This thesis is approved for recommendation to the graduate council.

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Robert Mueller, DMA
Thesis Director

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Jeremy Allen, DMA
Committee Member

_____

Joon Park, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Abstract

Many years ago on Easter, my mother gave me a book of Robert Frost's poems as a gift. As a child, I enjoyed his rhyming schemes and the characteristically simple, beautiful, natural imagery he portrayed in his verses, but the deeper meaning of the words was largely lost on me. As I grew, I would revisit the poems from time to time and would enjoy discovering a subtly hidden metaphor or experiencing new feelings and emotions evoked by a poem I had already read dozens of times. When looking for inspiration as a music composition student here at the University of Arkansas, Frost's poetry proved to be an ideal source as it not only provided me with a wealth of visual imagery to try and recreate (pizzicato strings mimicking the blinking of fireflies at the end of "Fireflies in the Garden" for example), but also contained a bevy of personal thoughts, emotions, and memories ripe for being morphed into musical ideas.

Like James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* or Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, some of Frost's poems leave the reader with no clear message or conclusion. Writing like this used to frustrate me. However, I have since come to understand that the words, although they do not necessarily always form an easily discernable and coherent thought, just like pieces of instrumental music, *do* still elicit an emotion from me and *that* is perhaps where the bridge between language and music resides in part.

Although the poems were the main inspiration for this music, much of it is informed by my study of jazz. Musical ideas from some of my favorite jazz artists including Billy Strayhorn, Django Reinhardt, and Coleman Hawkins are echoed throughout these pieces. Electronic musical introductions/interludes featuring both hardware and software synths along with videos were part of these pieces in their conception. I leave it up to the performer(s) to experiment with this idea. I hope I have done a good job in translating the feelings I have felt reading these poems into sound.

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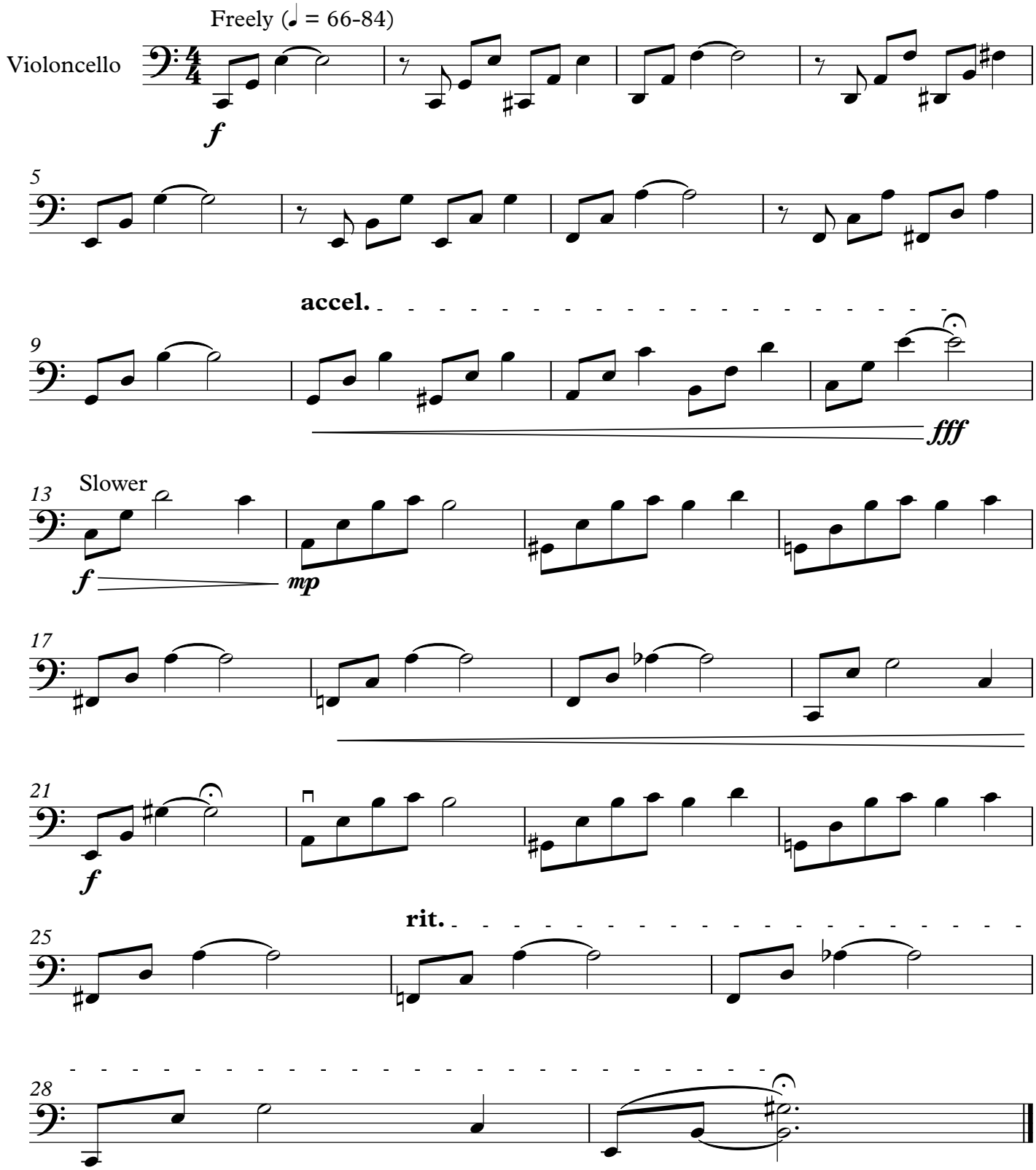
1. Nocturne

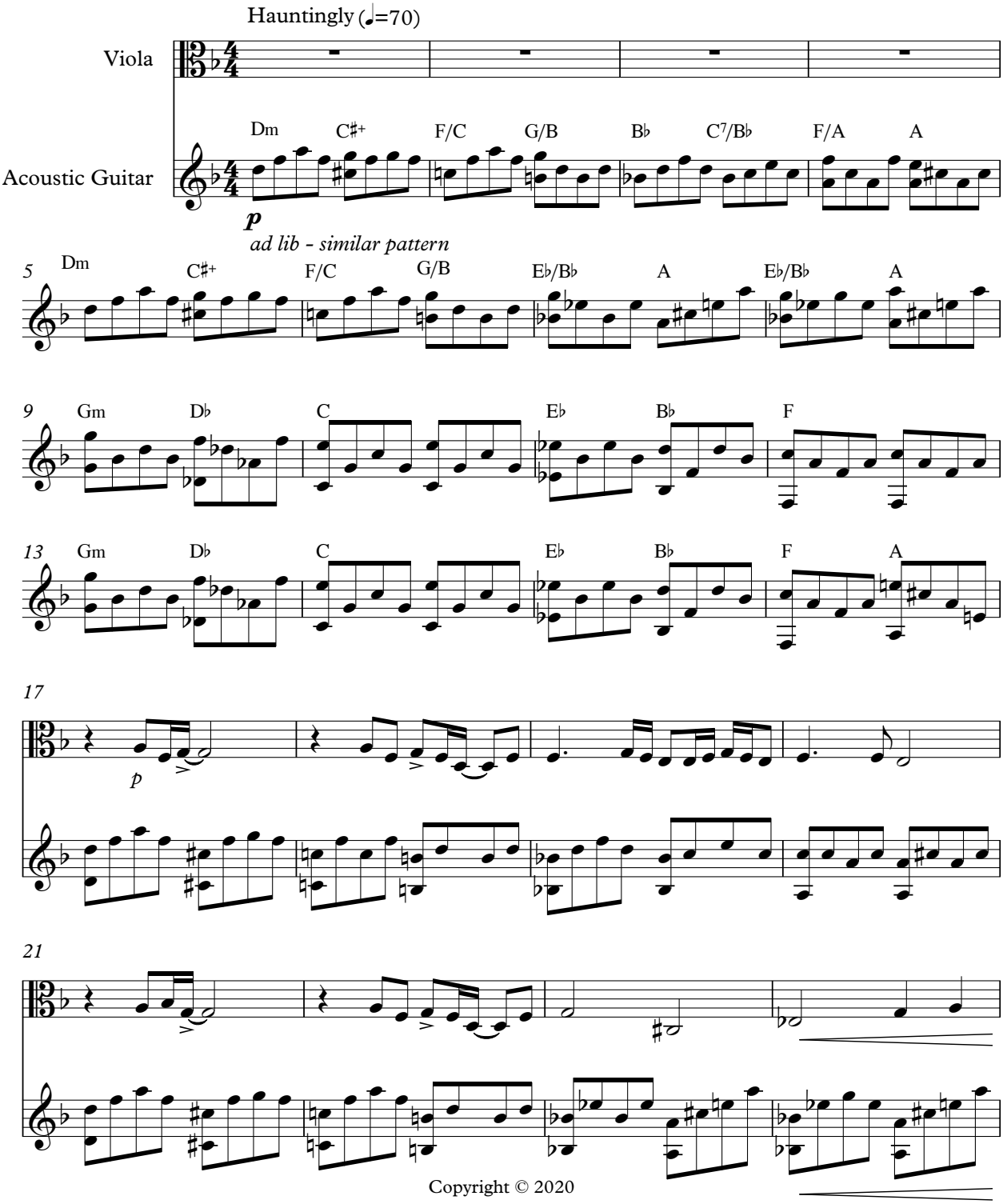
Ryan Martin



2. The Road Not Taken

For Viola & Guitar

Ryan Martin



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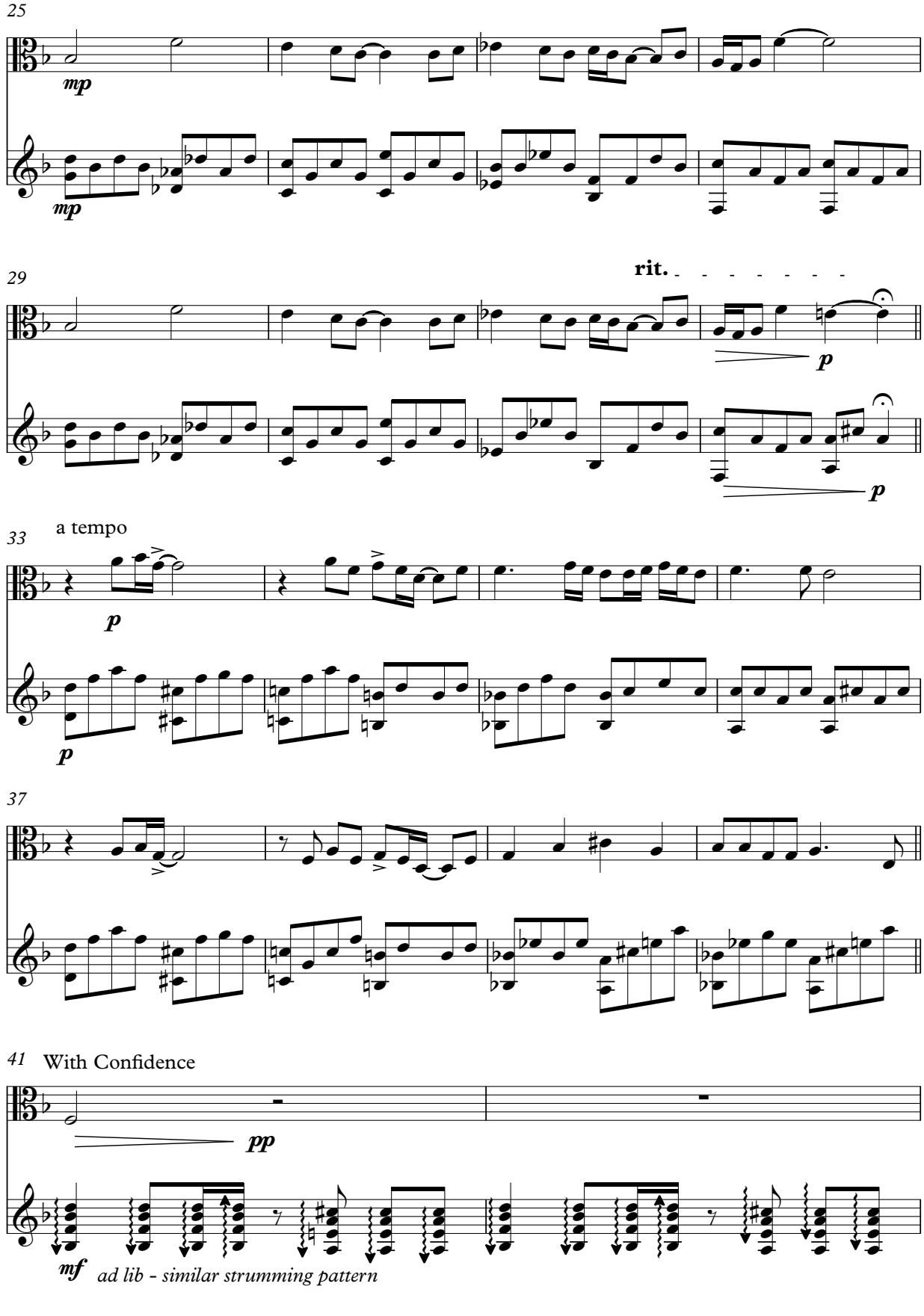
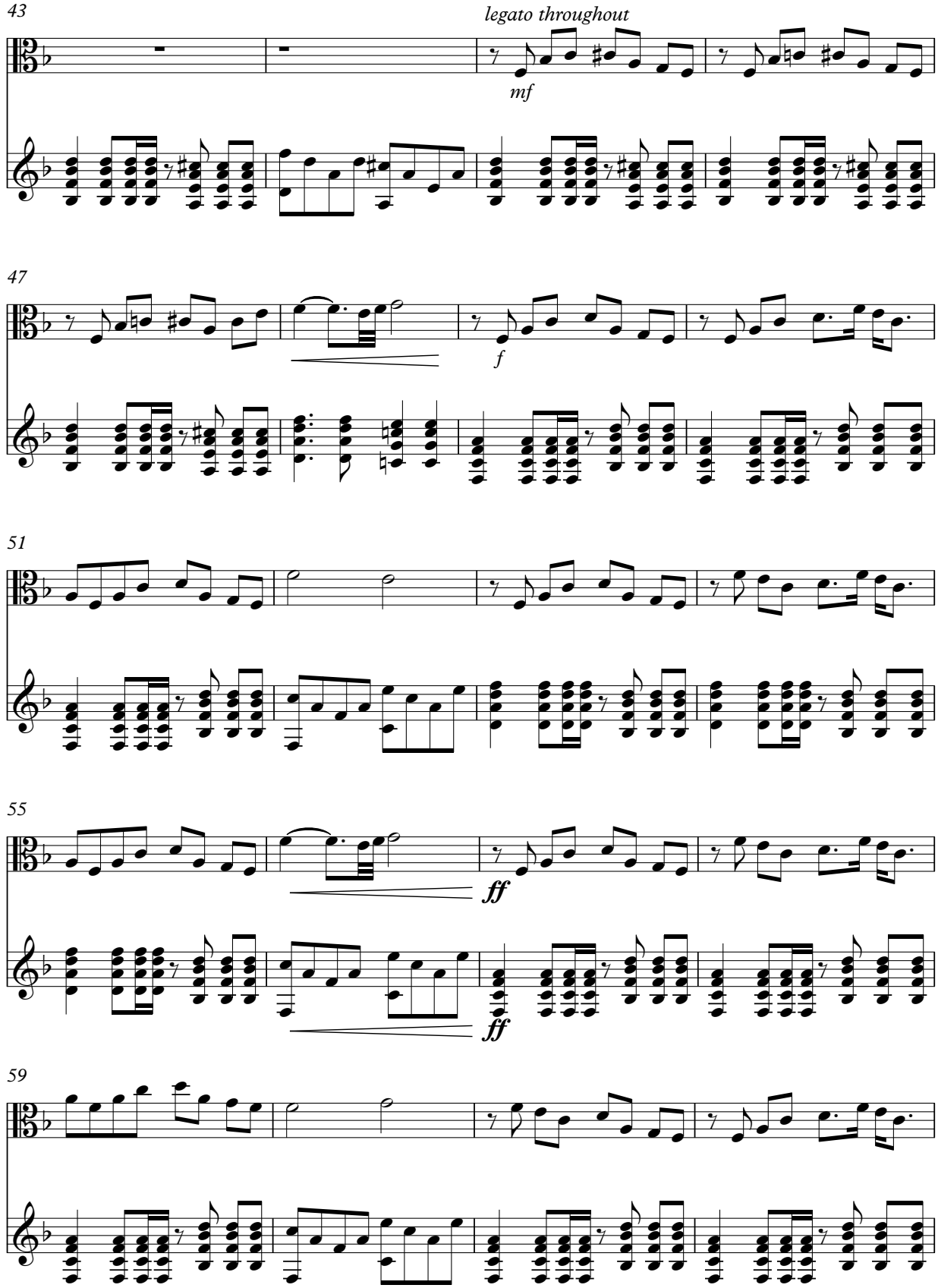
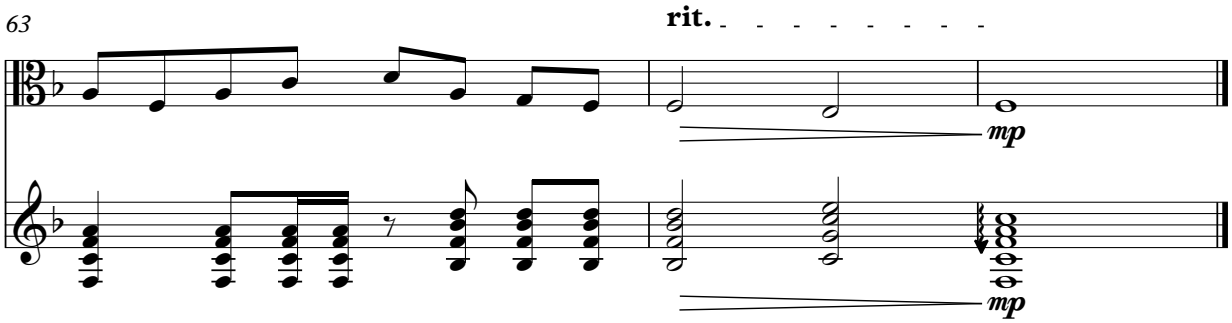

25
mp
mp
29
rit.
p
p
33
a tempo
p
p
37
41
With Confidence
pp
mf
ad lib - similar strumming pattern

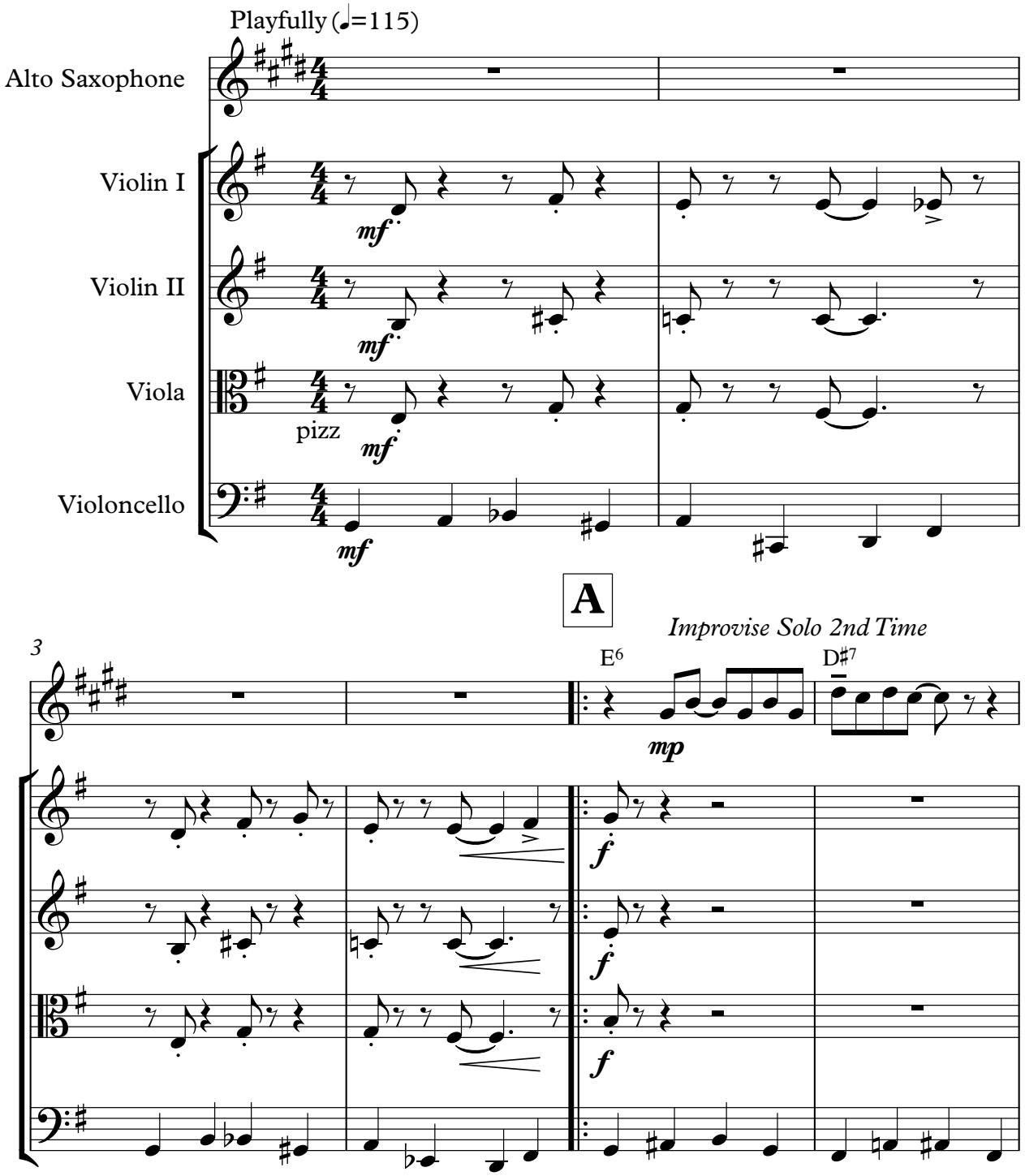

43
legato throughout
mf
47
f
51
55
ff
ff
59


63
rit.
mp
mp

3. Fireflies in the Garden

For Alto Saxophone & String Quartet

Ryan Martin



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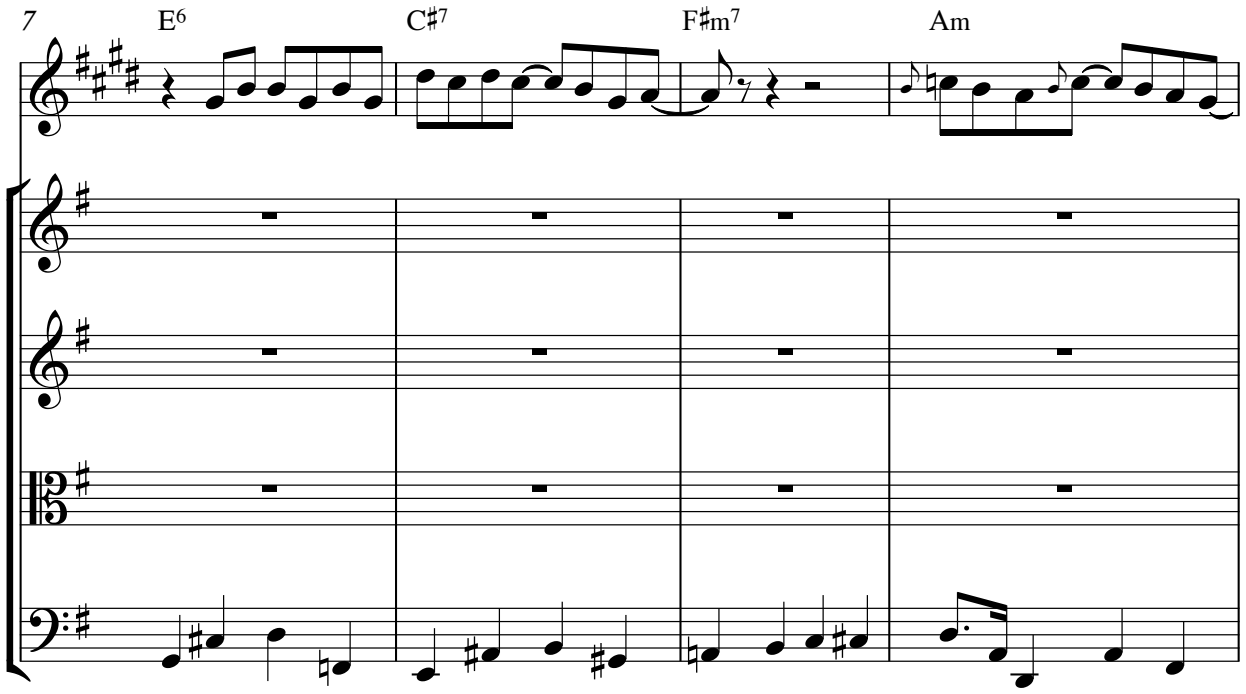
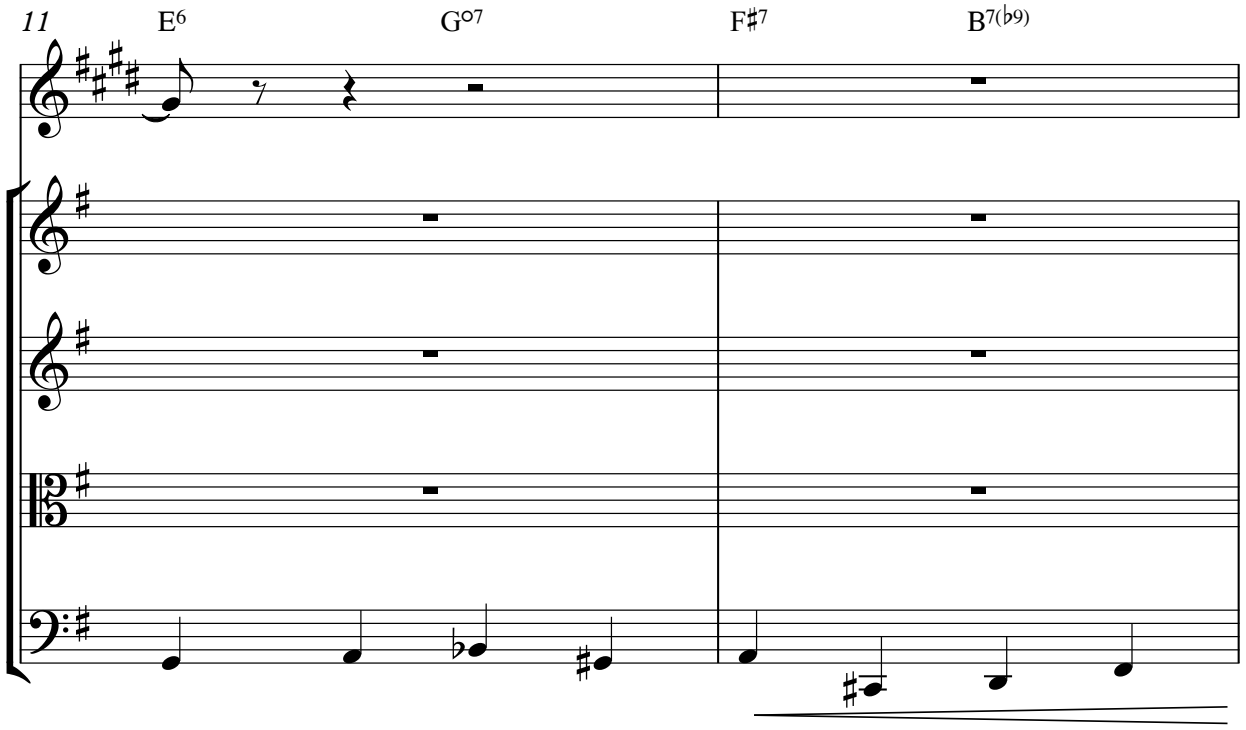
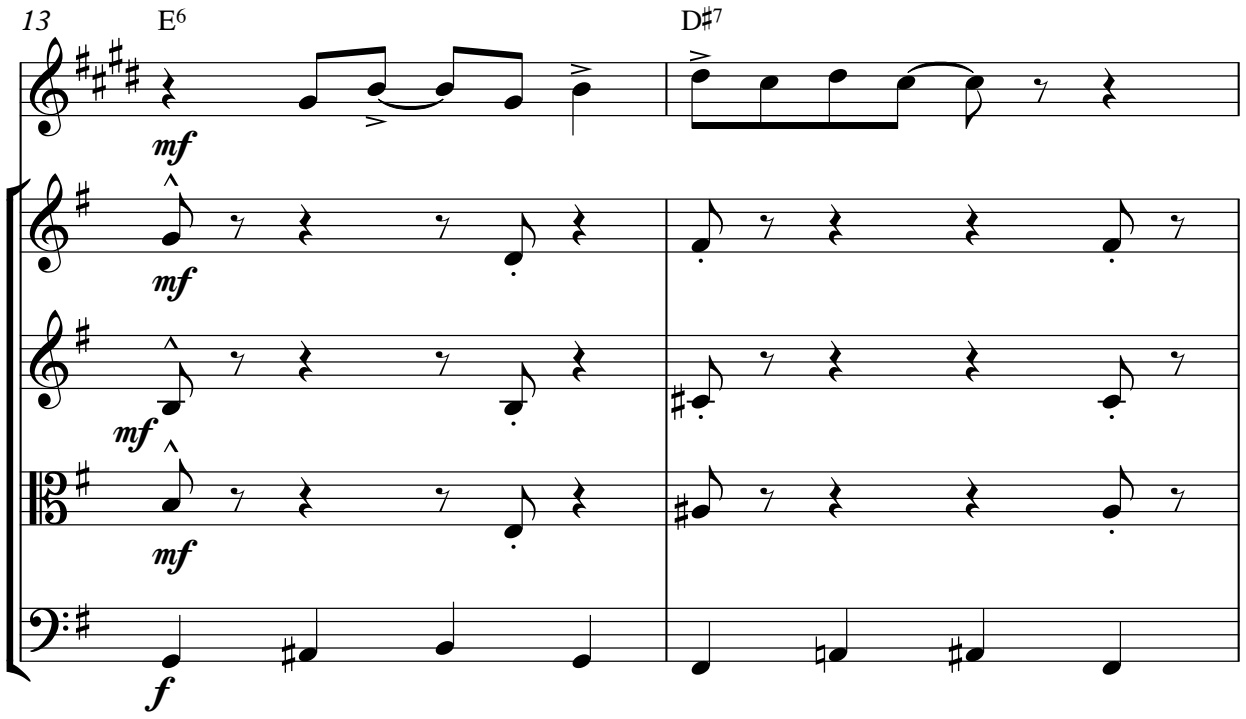

7
E6
C♯7
F♯m7
Am

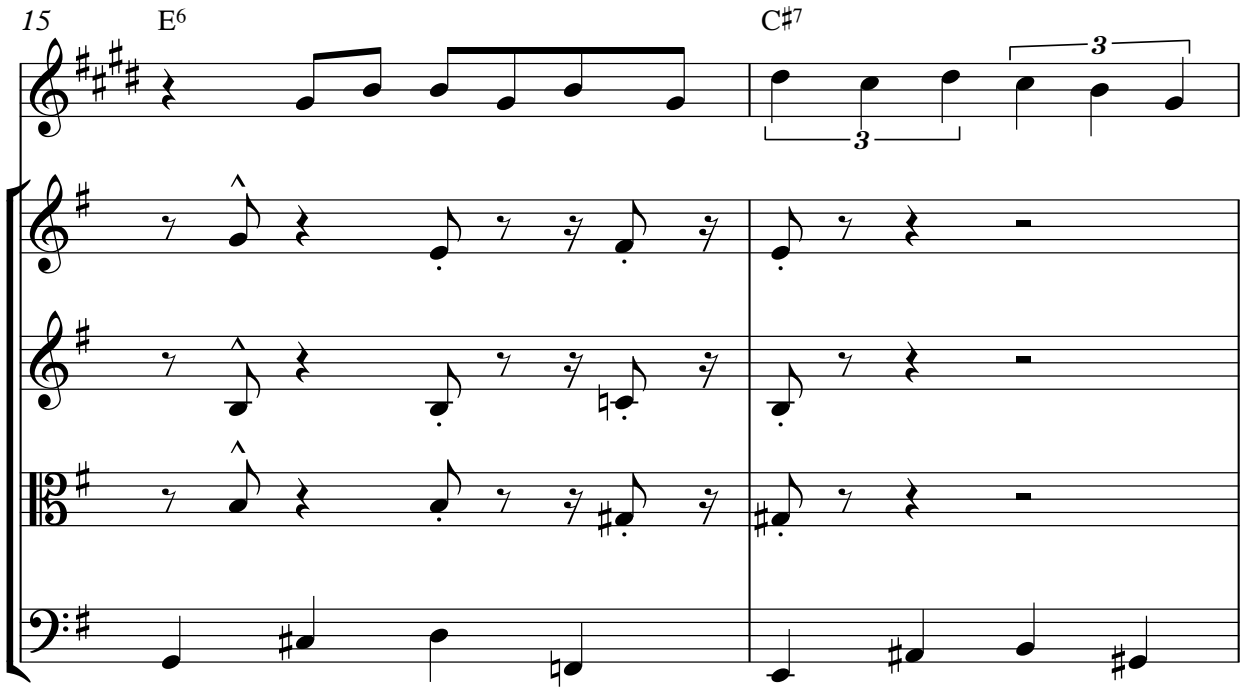

11
E6
G°7
F♯7
B7(♭9)

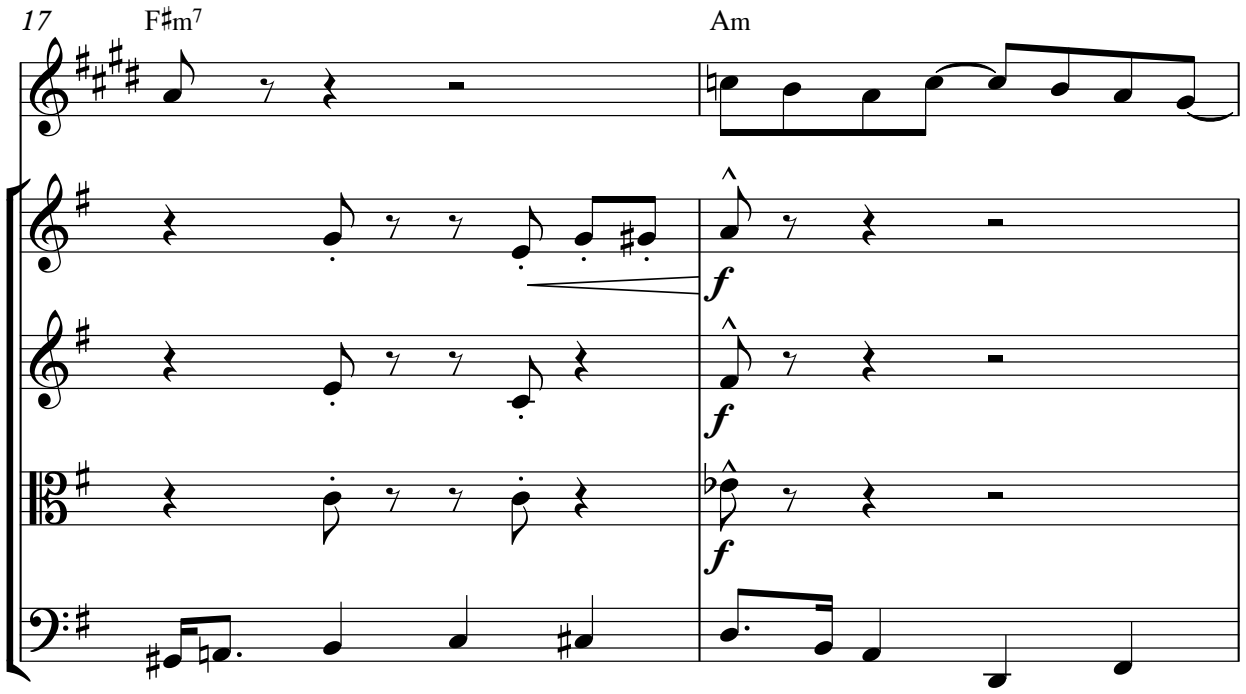
A2

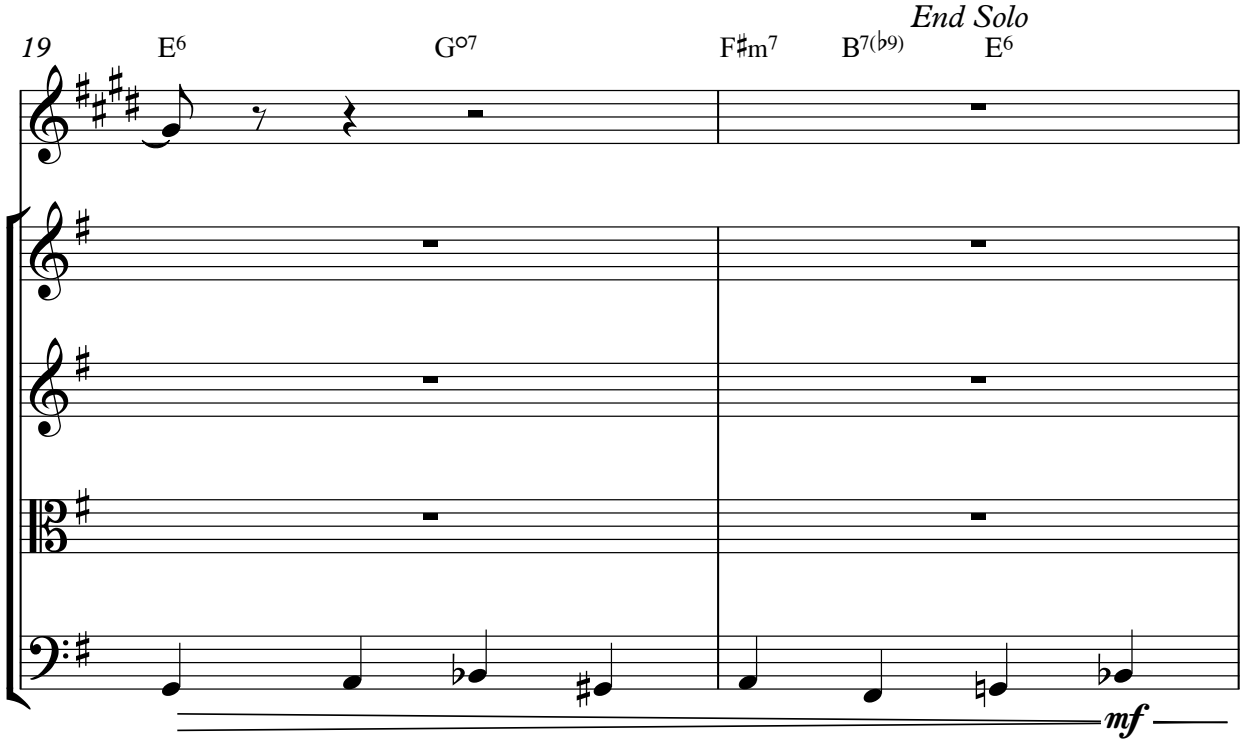
13 E6 D♯7



15 E6 C♯7




17
F♯m7
Am
f
f
f


19
E6
G°7
F♯m7
B7(♭9)
End Solo
E6
mf

B

21

Improvise 2nd Time

B7

port.

mf

mf

23

Improvise 2nd Time

E7

mf

25

(2nd Time Tacet Until A3)

Improvise 2nd Time

A7

27

f

(2nd Time Tacet Until A3)

f

(2nd Time Tacet Until A3)

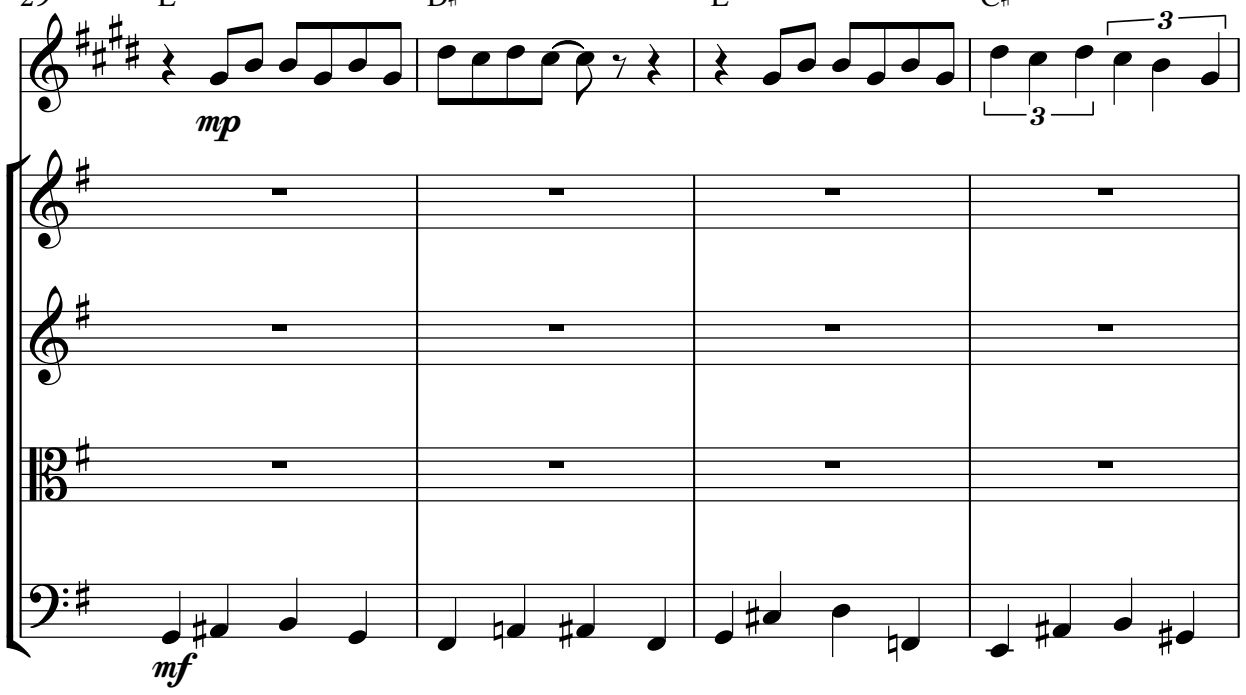
f Improvise 2nd Time

D7

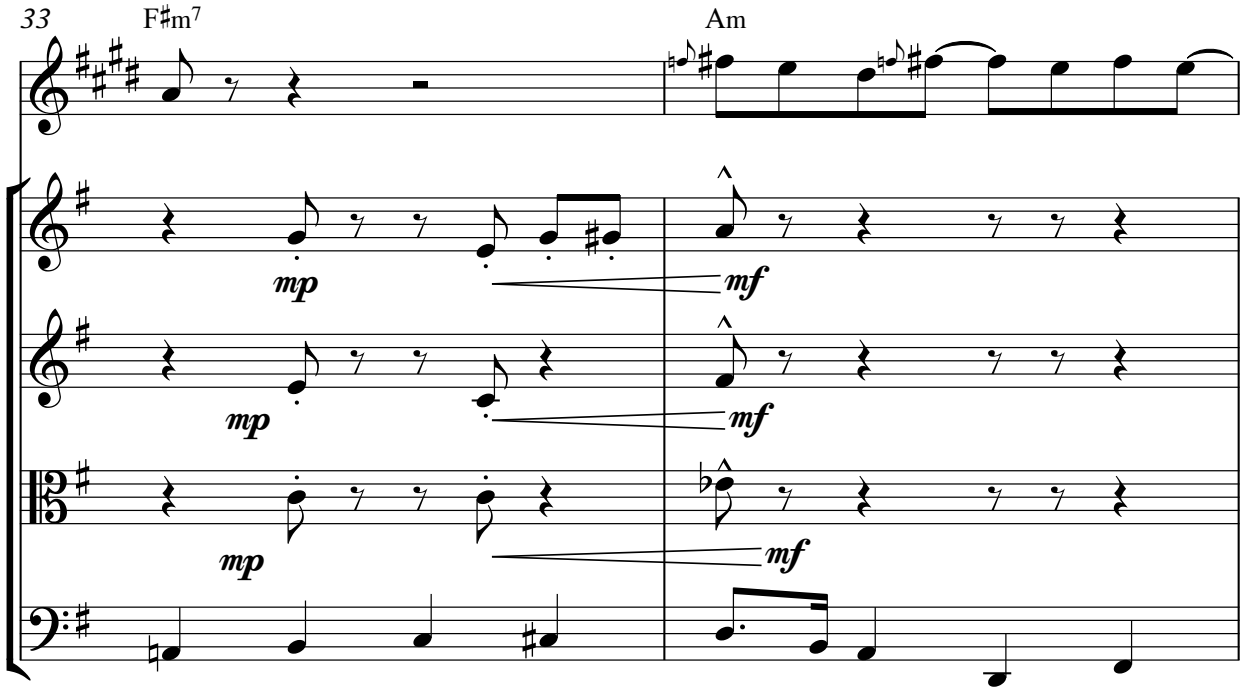
f

A3

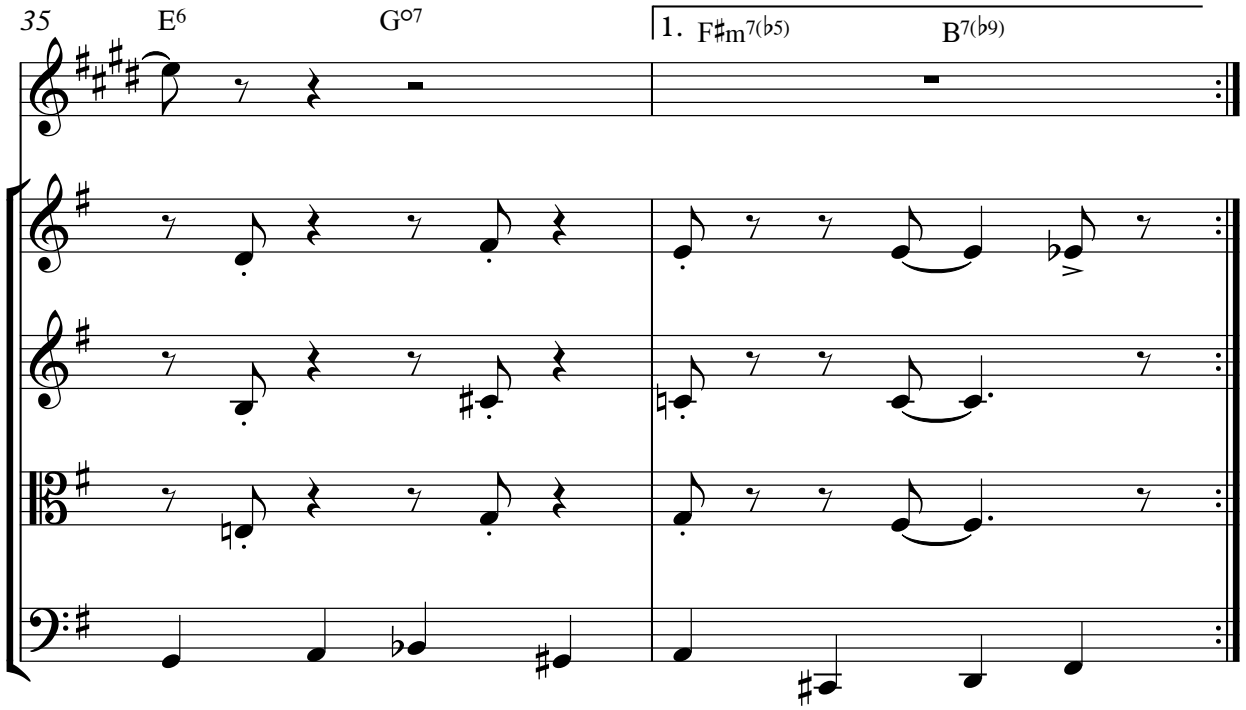
29 E6 D♯7 E6 C♯7

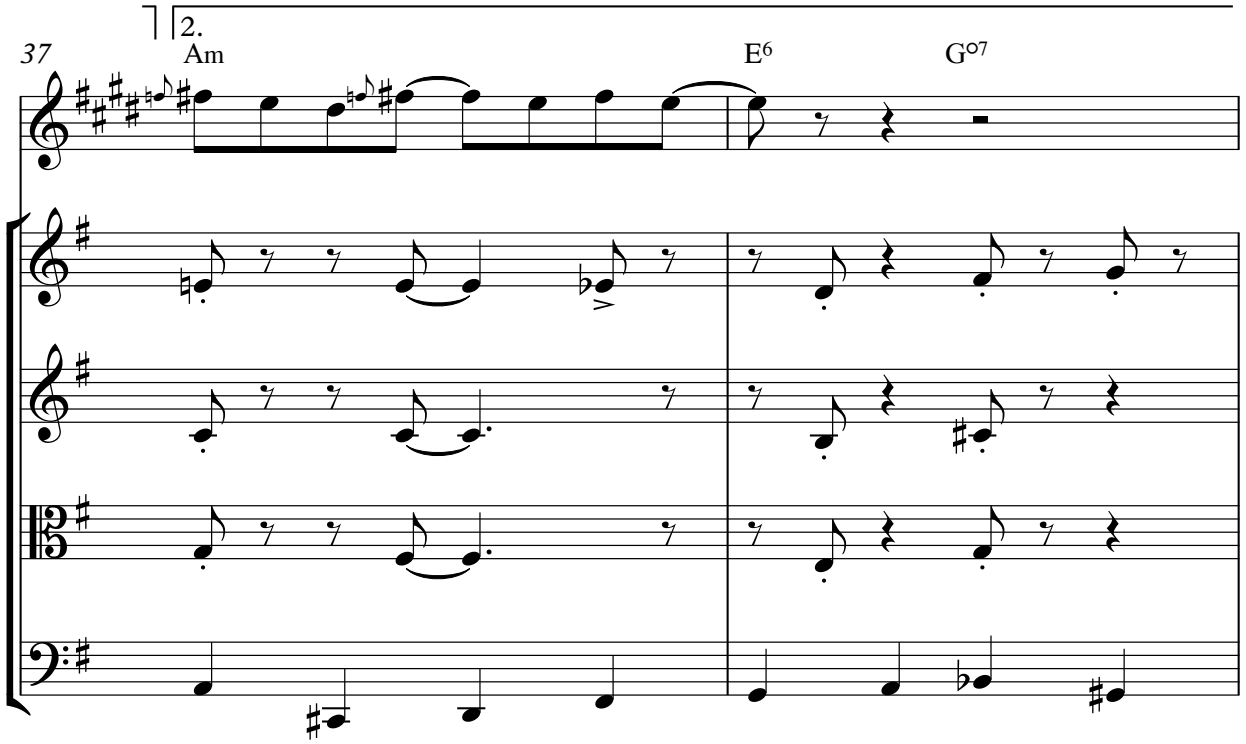


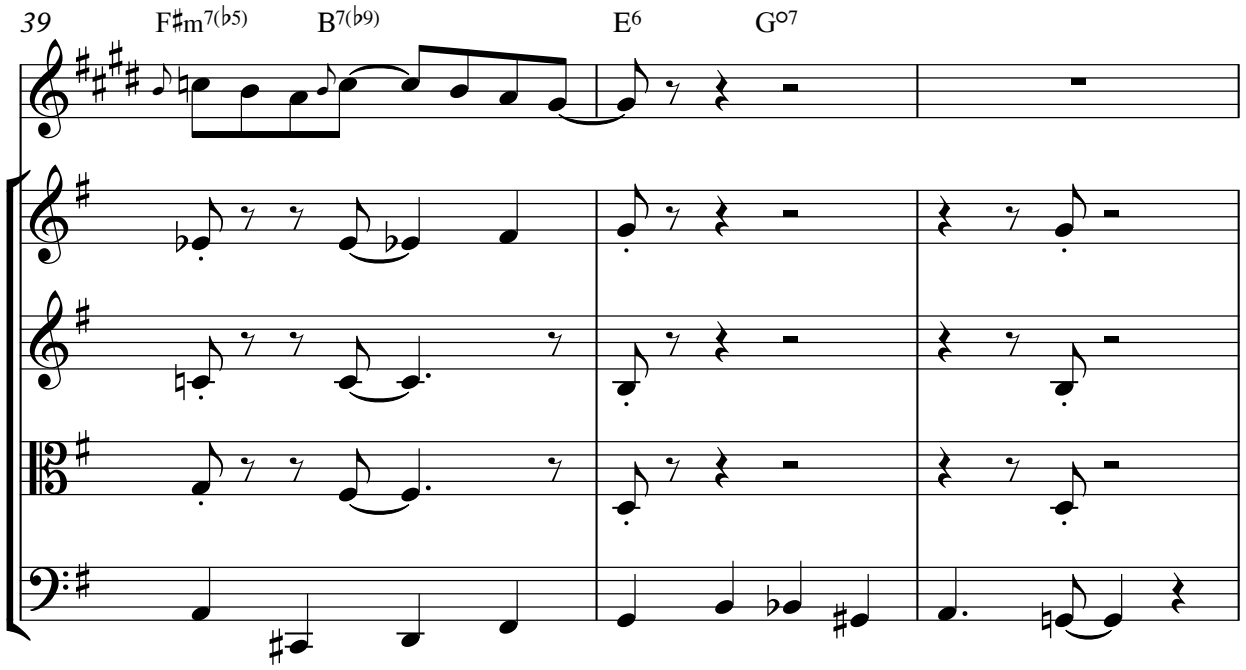
33 F♯m7 Am



(Begin Sax Solo)

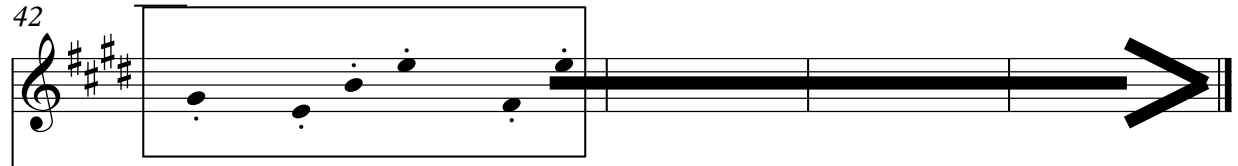





39
F♯m7(♭5)
B7(♭9)
E6
G°7

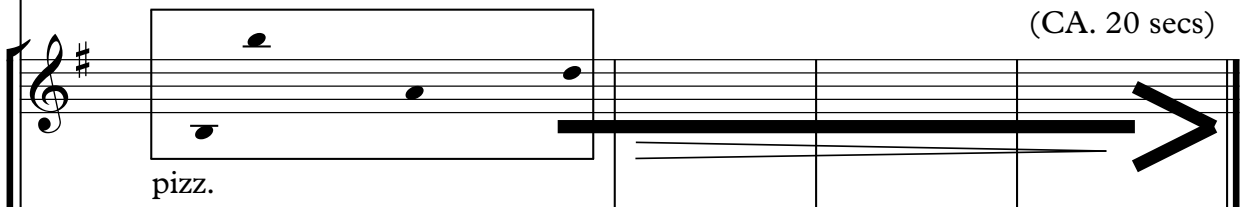
Play pitches in random order, gradually more sparsely until end.

42



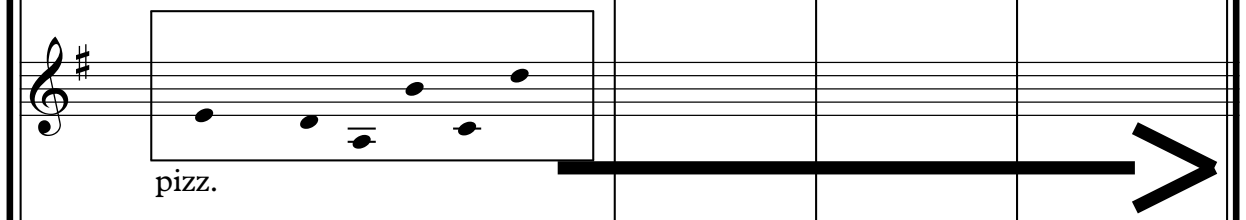
Play pitches in random order, gradually more sparsely until end.

(CA. 20 secs)



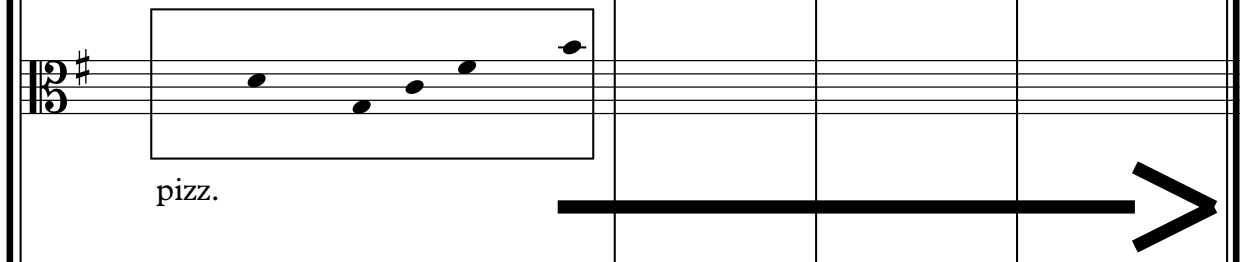
pizz.

Play pitches in random order, gradually more sparsely until end.



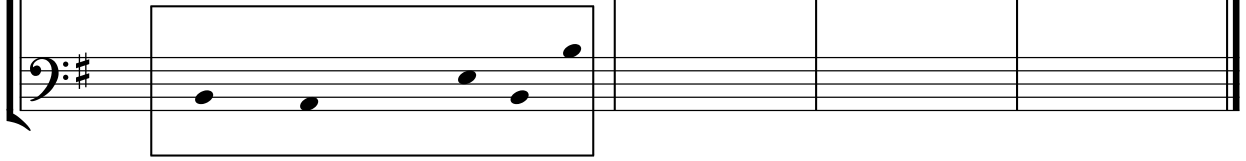
pizz.

Play pitches in random order, gradually more sparsely until end.



pizz.

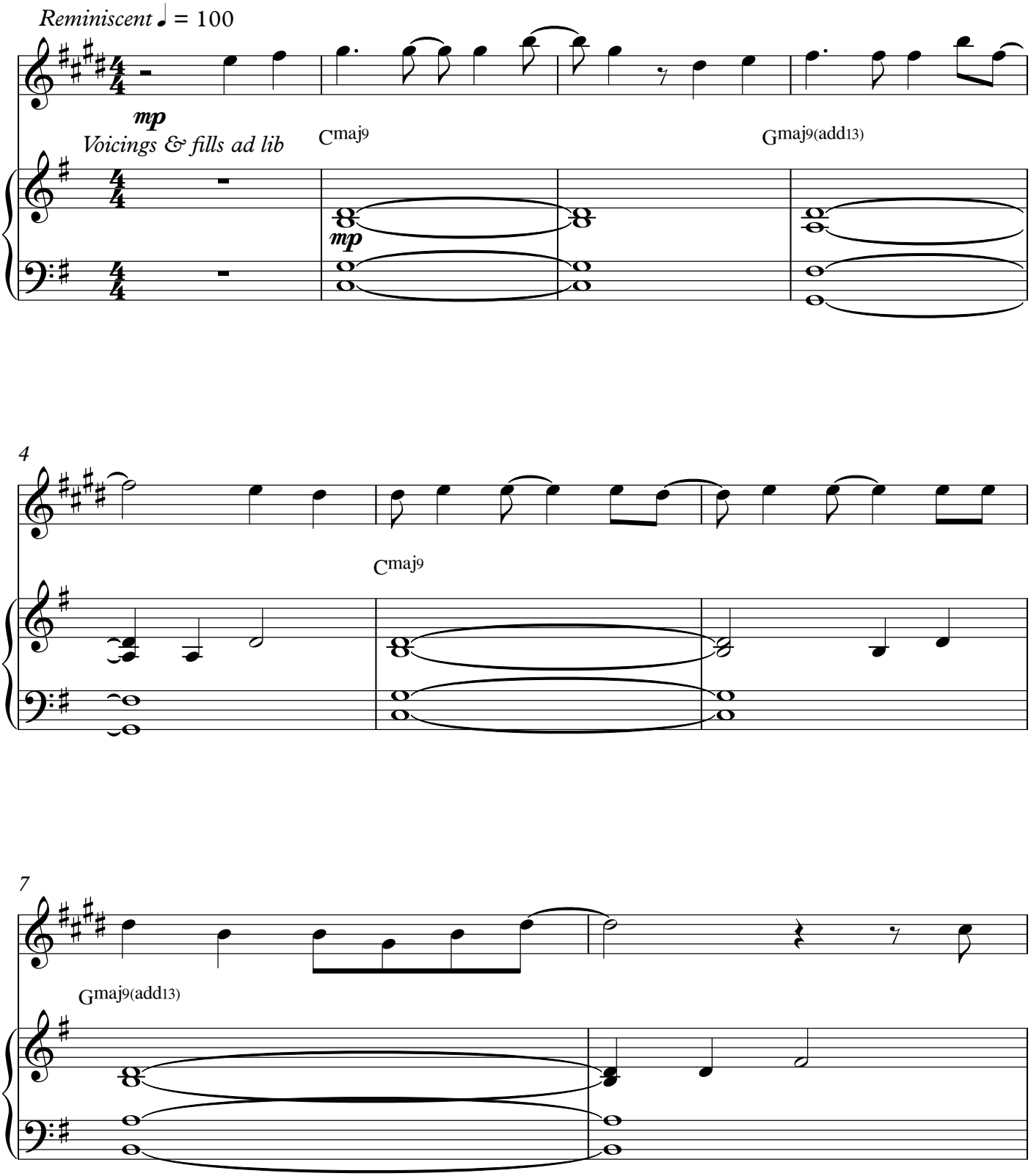
Play pitches in random order, gradually more sparsely until end.



pizz.

A Late Walk

Ryan Martin



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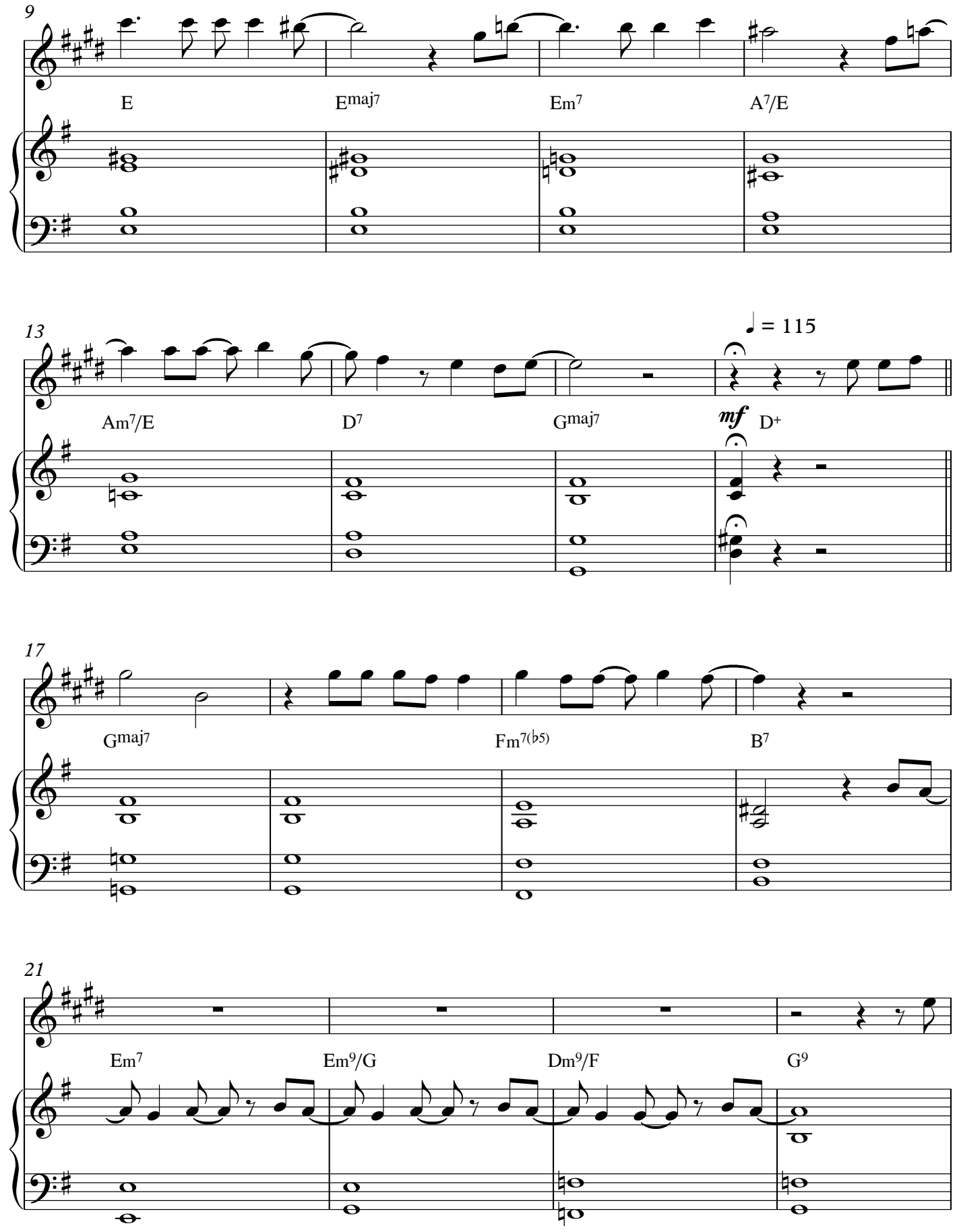
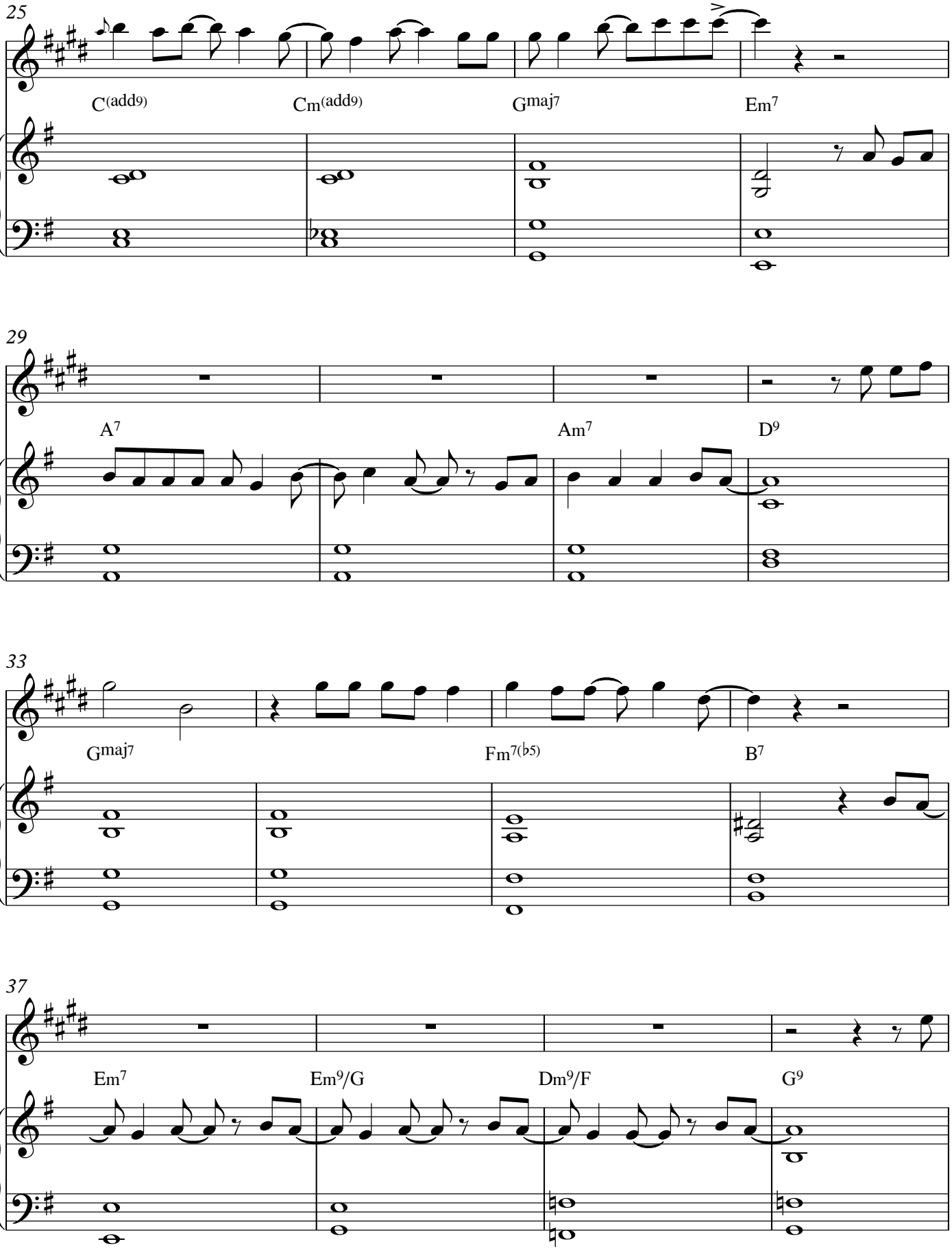
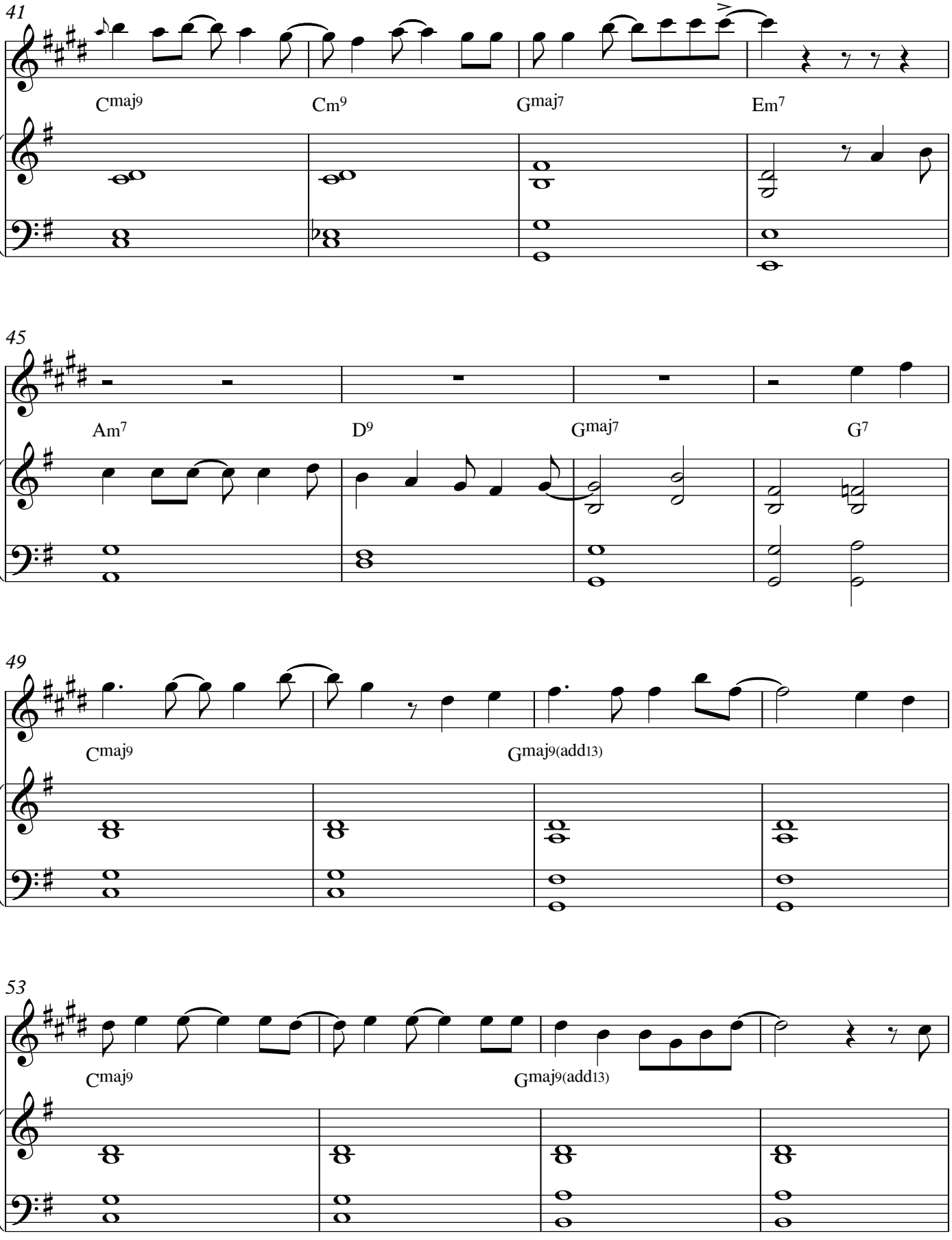
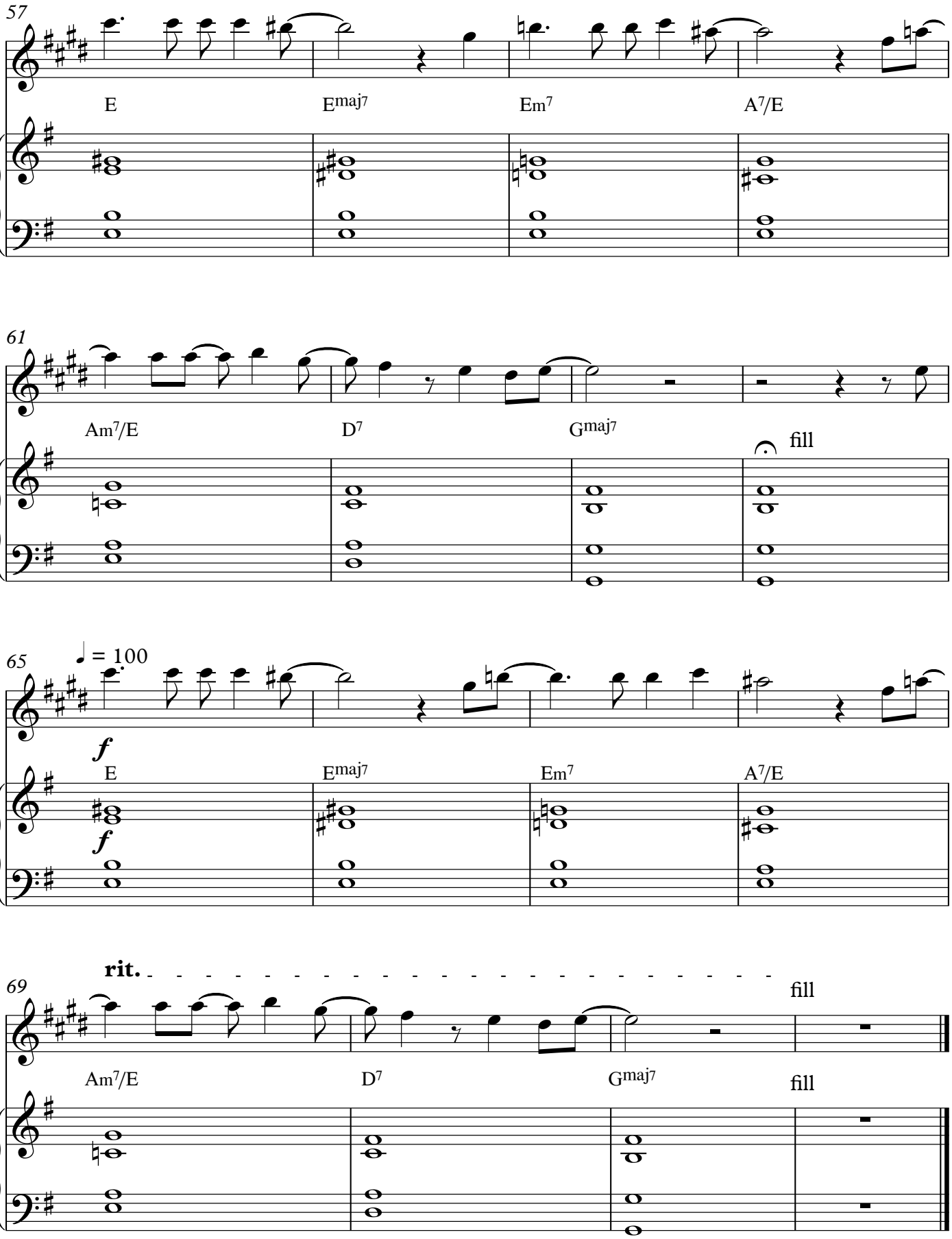

9
E
Emaj7
Em7
A7/E
13
♩ = 115
Am7/E
D7
Gmaj7
mf
D+
17
Gmaj7
Fm7(♭5)
B7
21
Em7
Em9/G
Dm9/F
G9

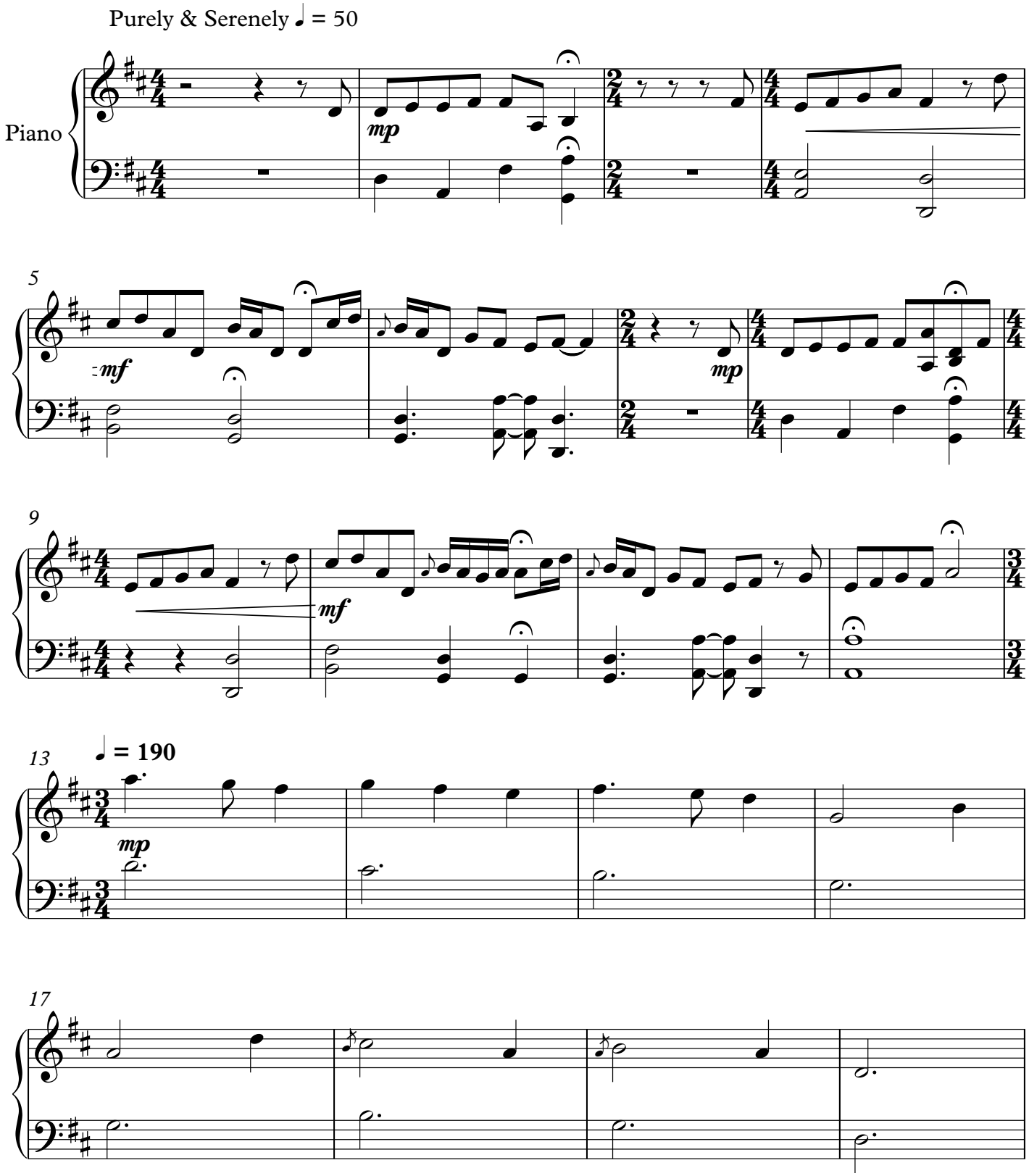

25
C(add9)
Cm(add9)
Gmaj7
Em7
29
A7
Am7
D9
33
Gmaj7
Fm7(b5)
B7
37
Em7
Em9/G
Dm9/F
G9


41
Cmaj9
Cm9
Gmaj7
Em7
45
Am7
D9
Gmaj7
G7
49
Cmaj9
Gmaj9(add13)
53
Cmaj9
Gmaj9(add13)


57
E
Emaj7
Em7
A7/E
61
Am7/E
D7
Gmaj7
fill
65
♩ = 100
f
E
Emaj7
Em7
A7/E
f
rit.
69
fill
Am7/E
D7
Gmaj7
fill

Wind and Window Flower

Ryan Martin



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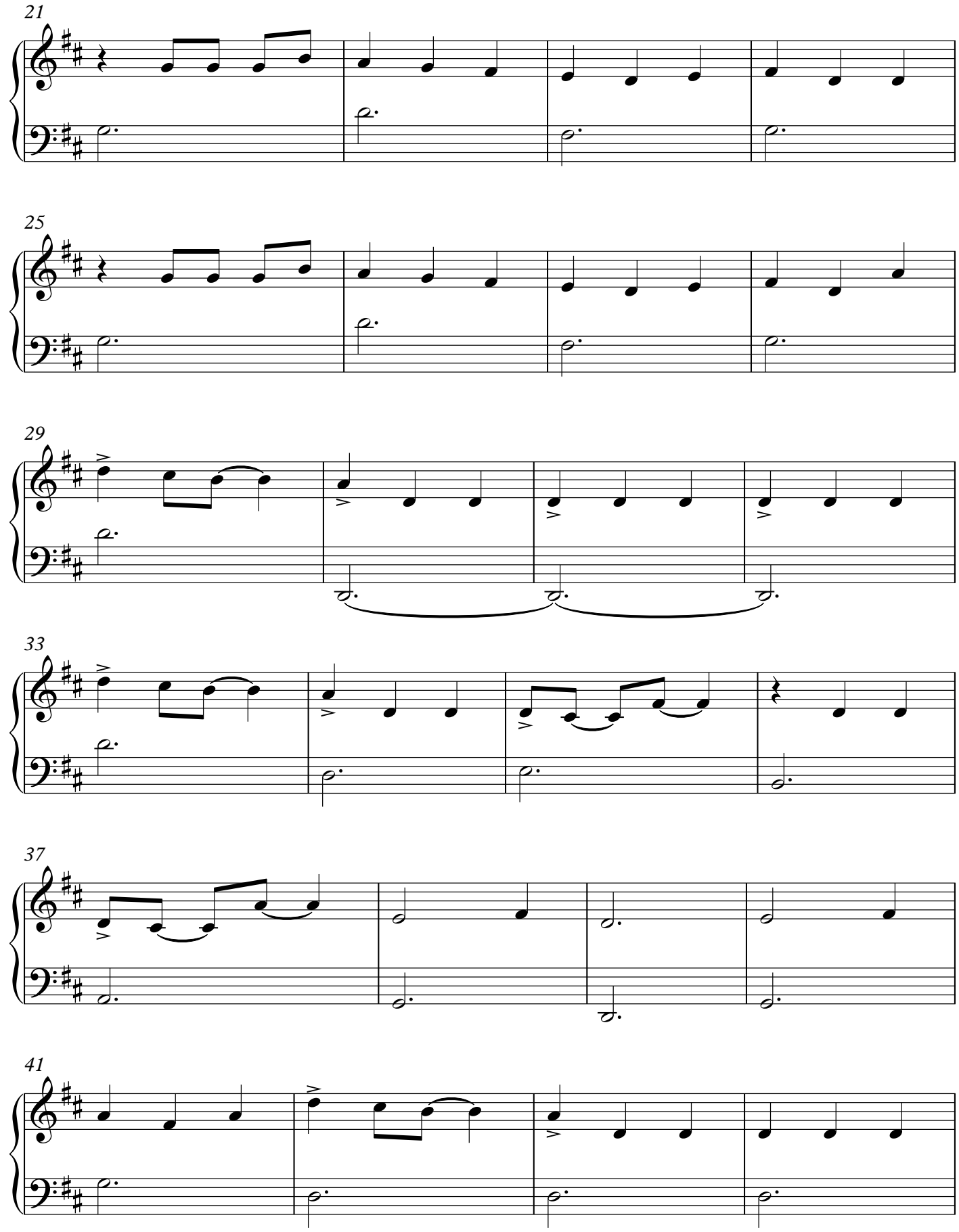
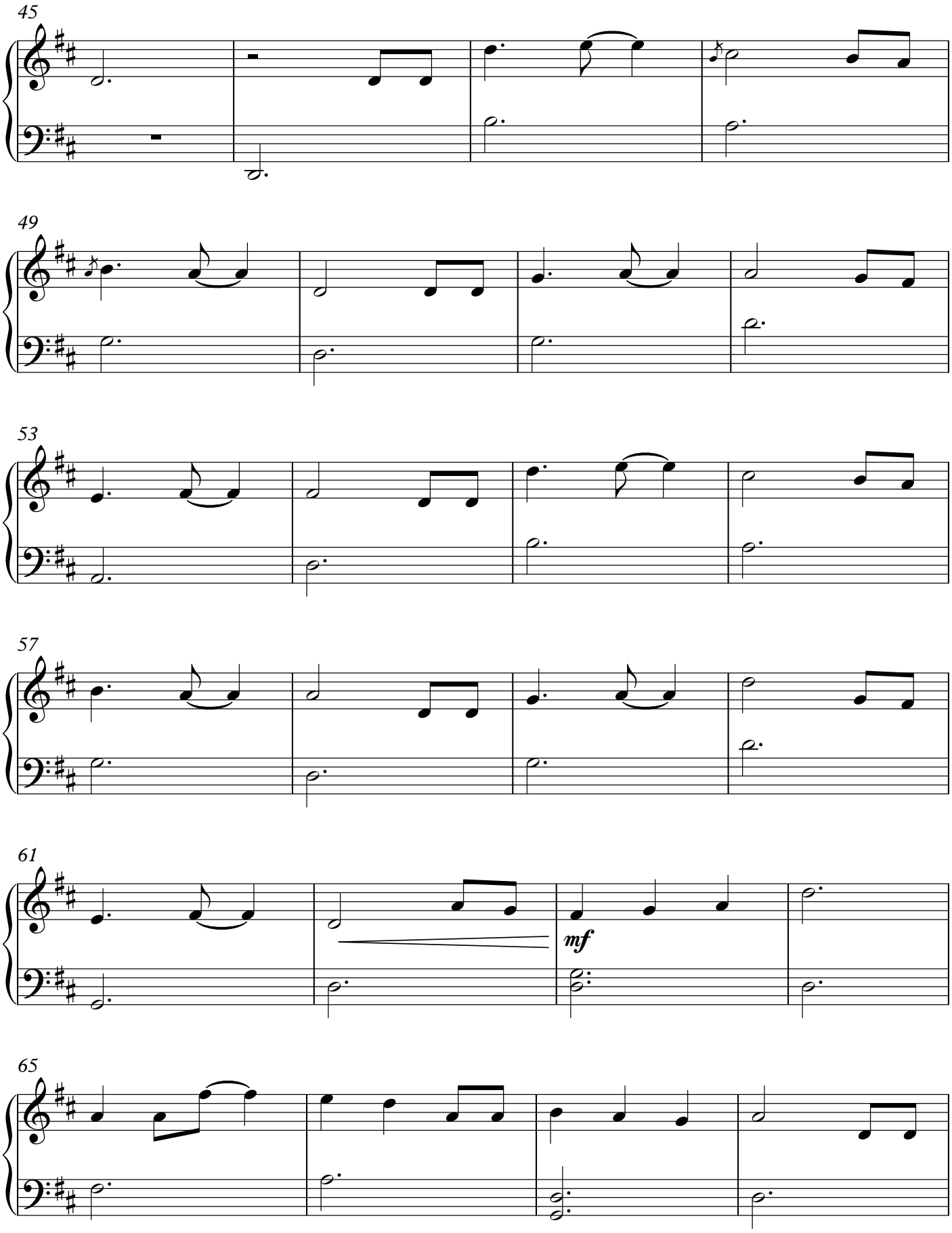
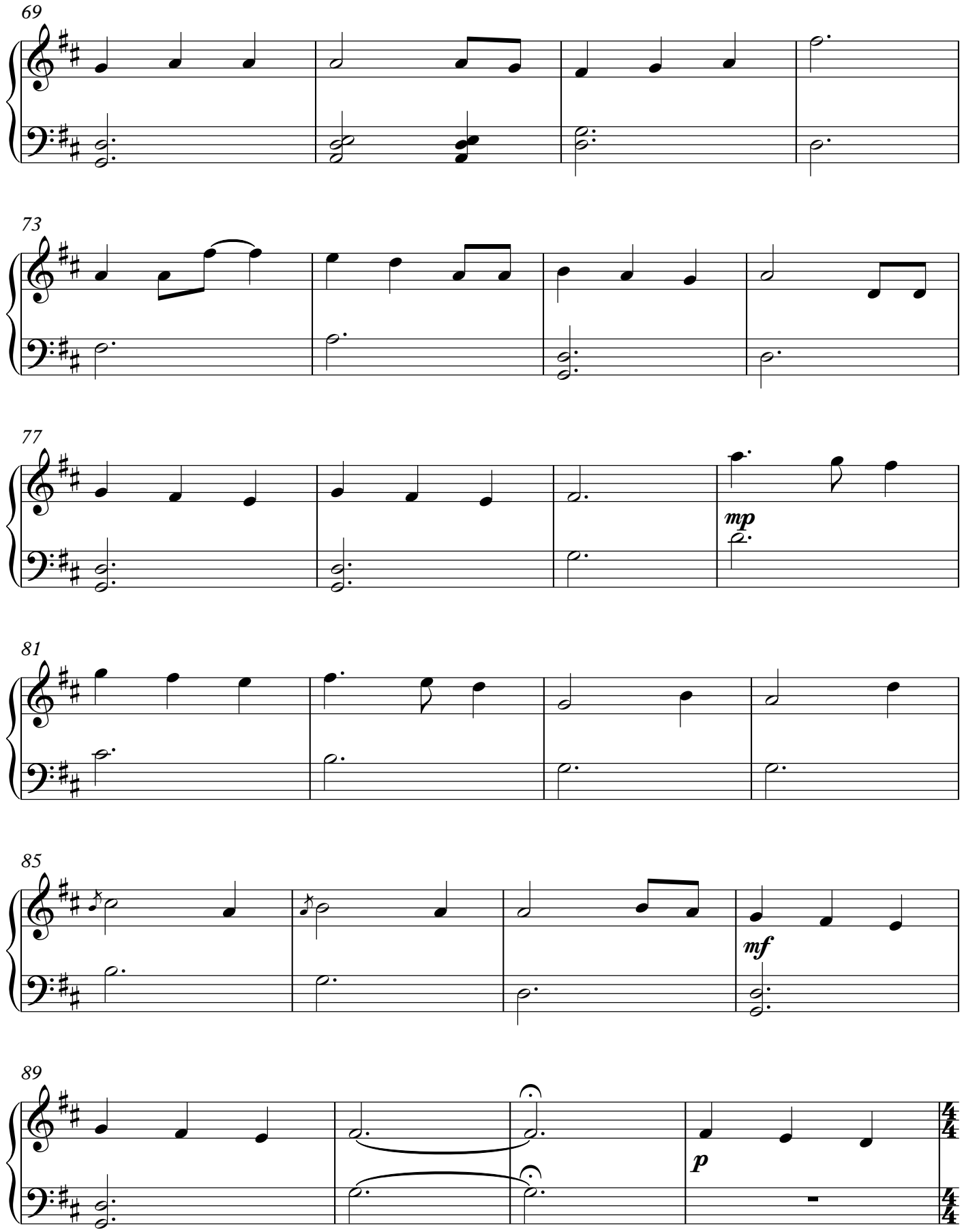

21
25
29
33
37
41


45
49
53
57
61
mf
65


69
73
77
mp
81
85
mf
89
p

93

97

101

105

rit.

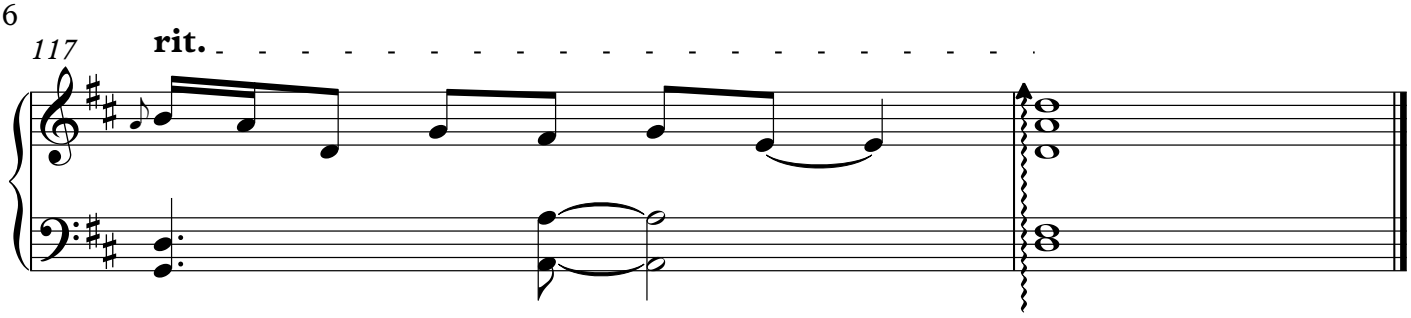
f

mp

109

♩ = 50
Like the beginning

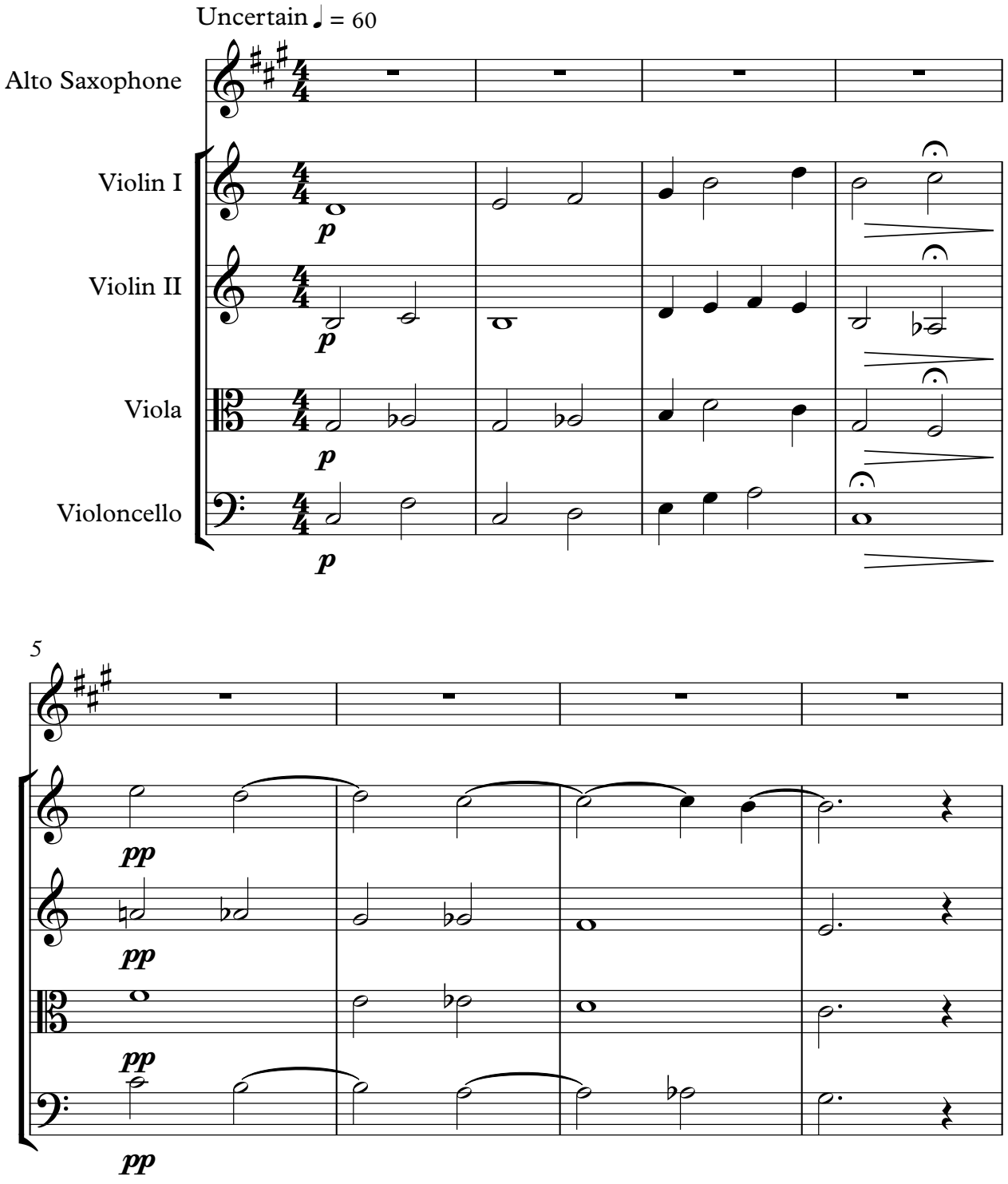
113


117
rit.

6. Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

For Alto Saxophone & String Quartet

Ryan Martin



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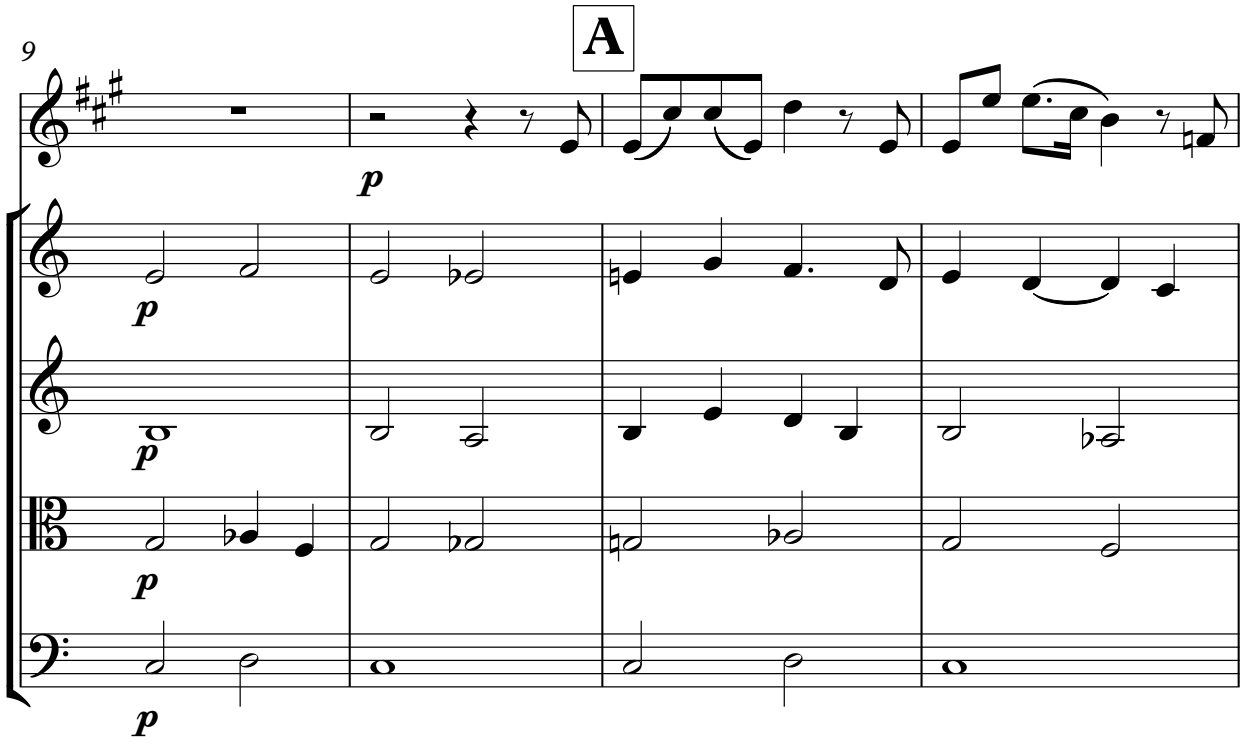
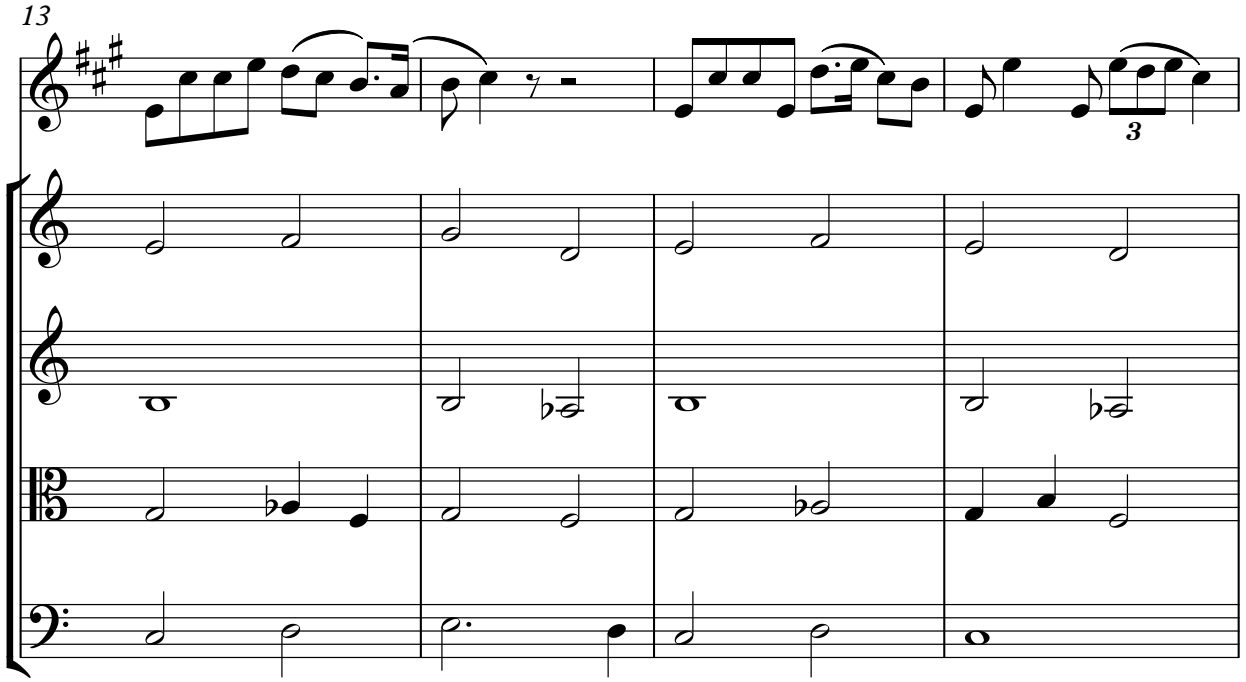
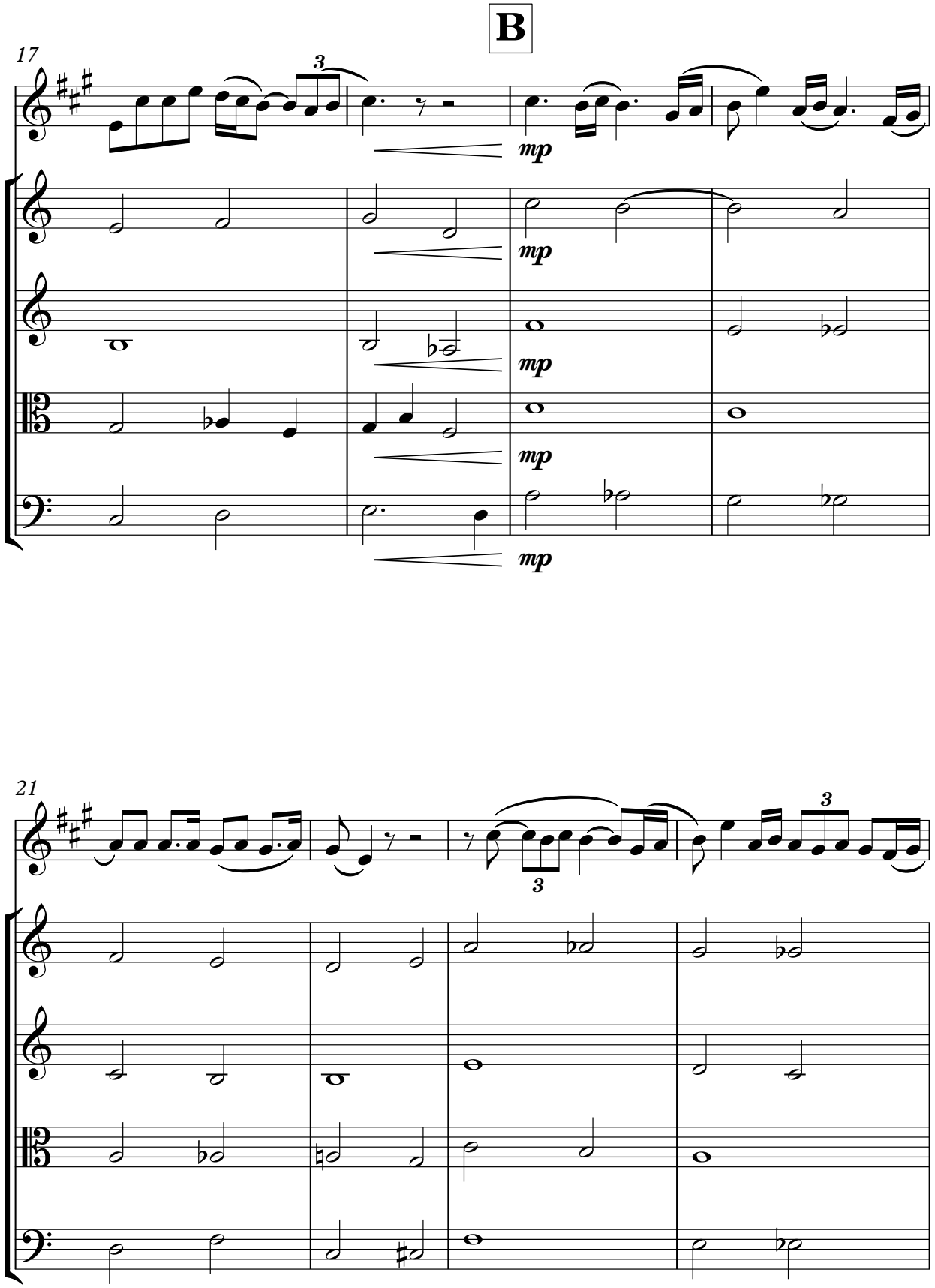
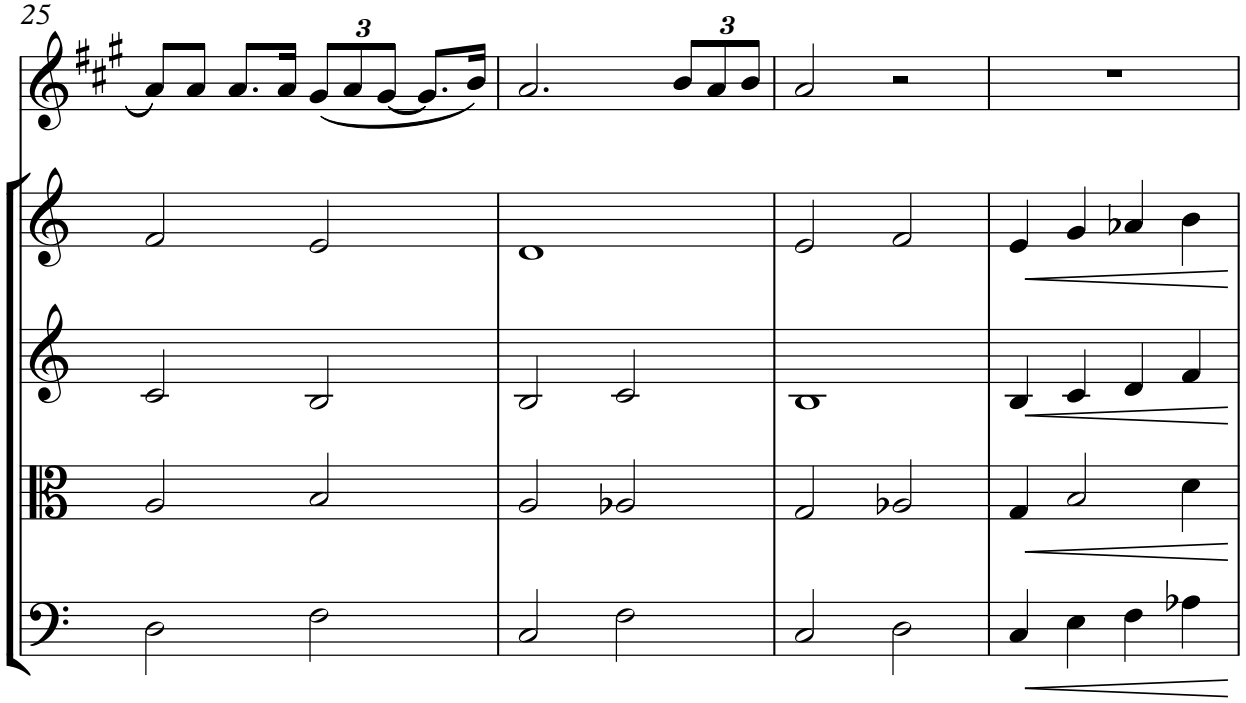
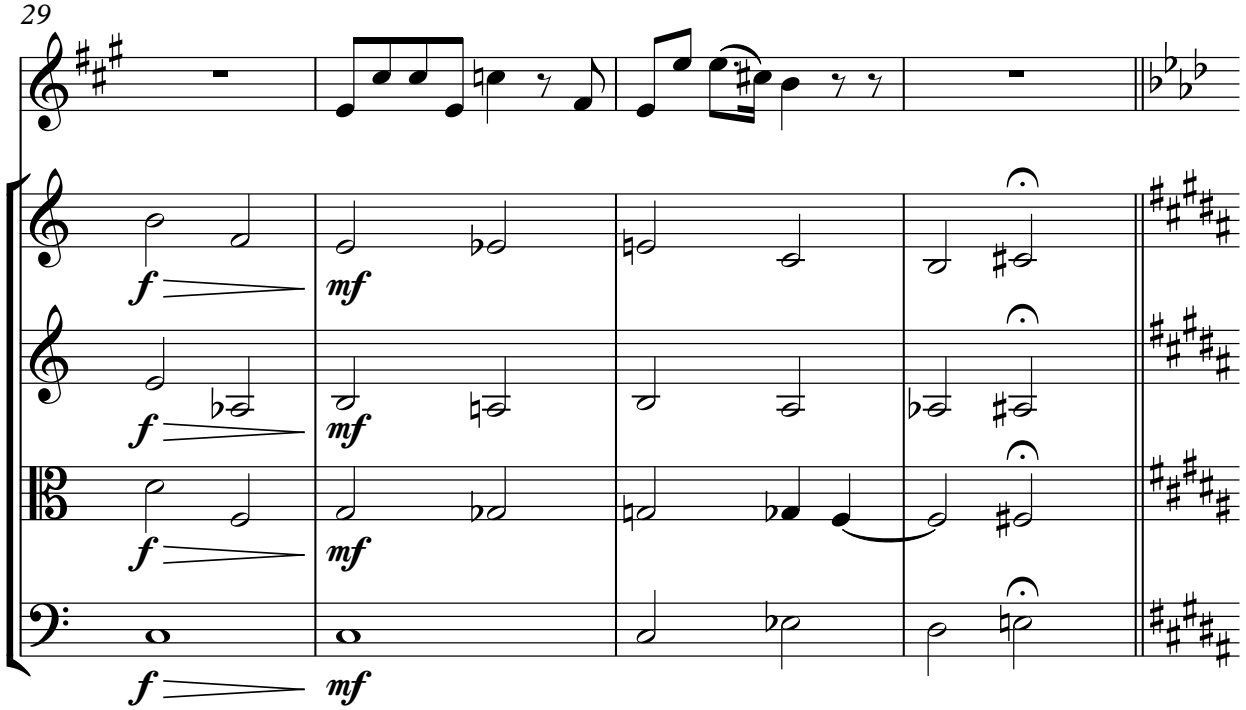
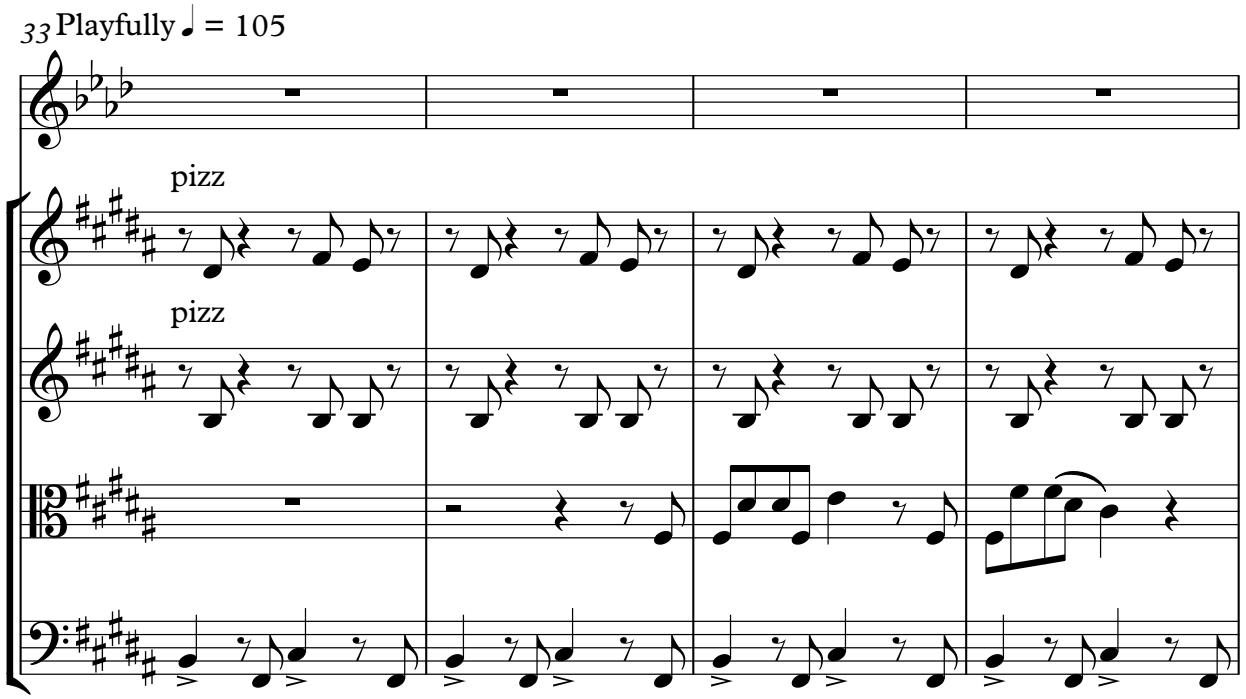

9
A
p
p
p
p
p

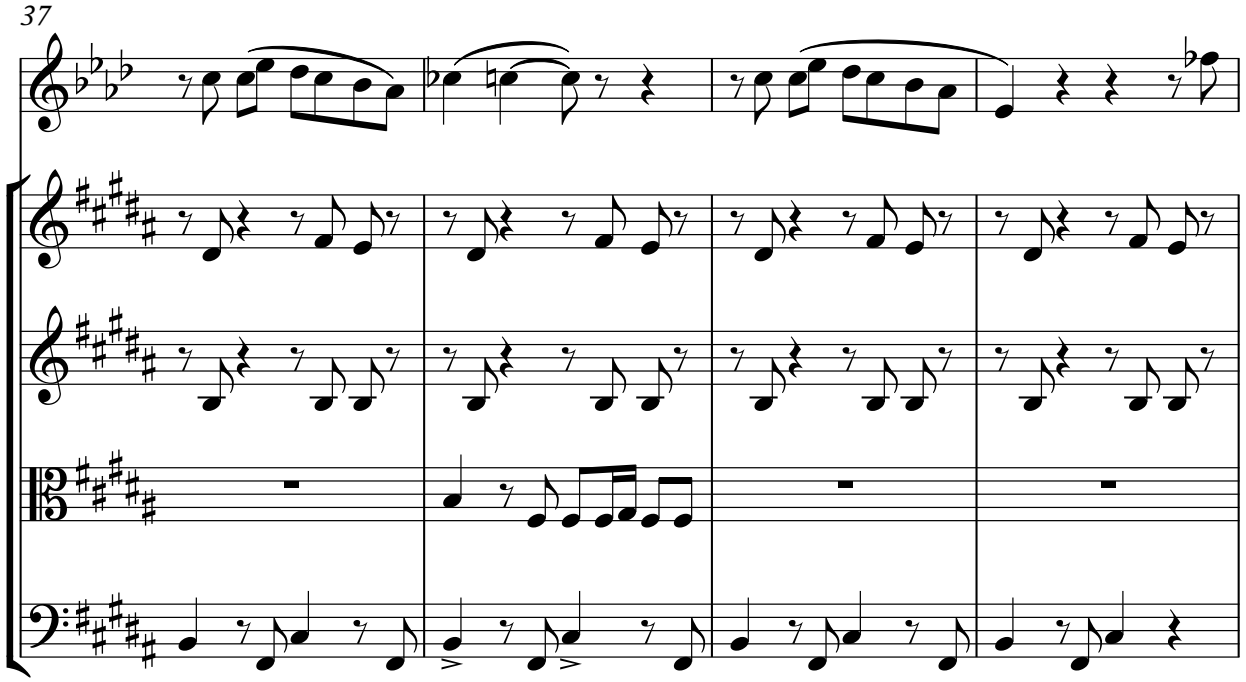

13
3


B
17
3
mp
mp
mp
mp
21
3
3


25
3
3


29
f
mf
f
mf
f
mf
f
mf


33
Playfully
♩ = 105
pizz
pizz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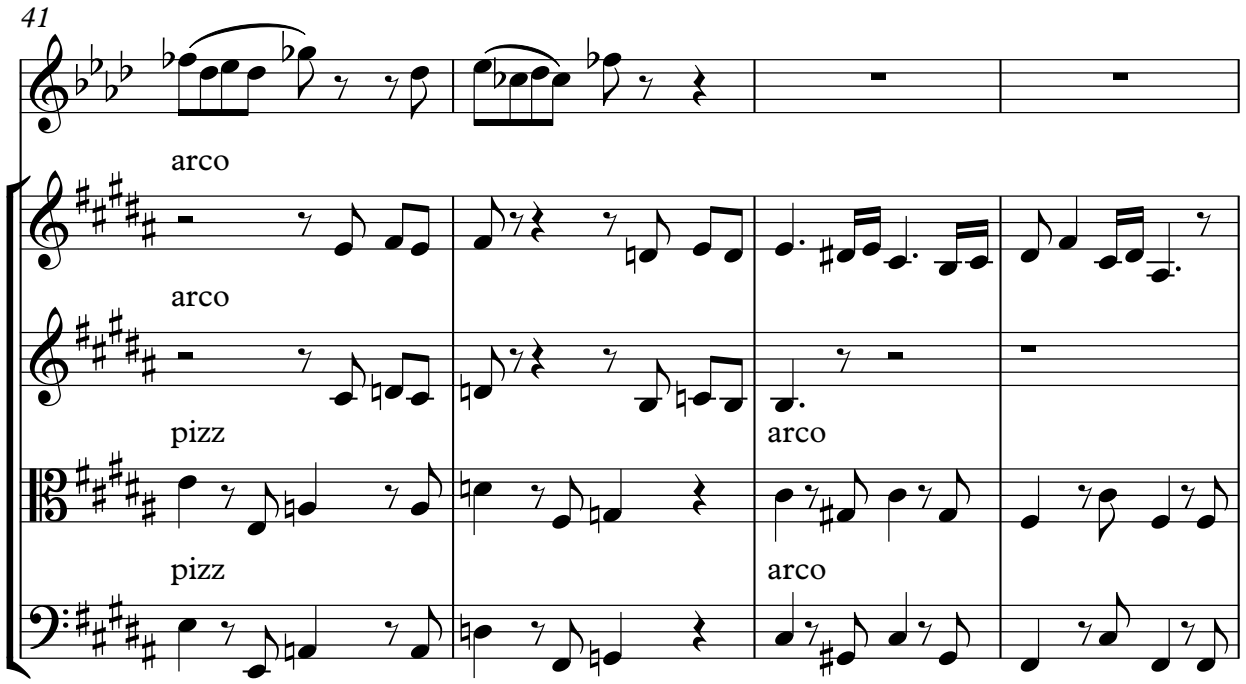
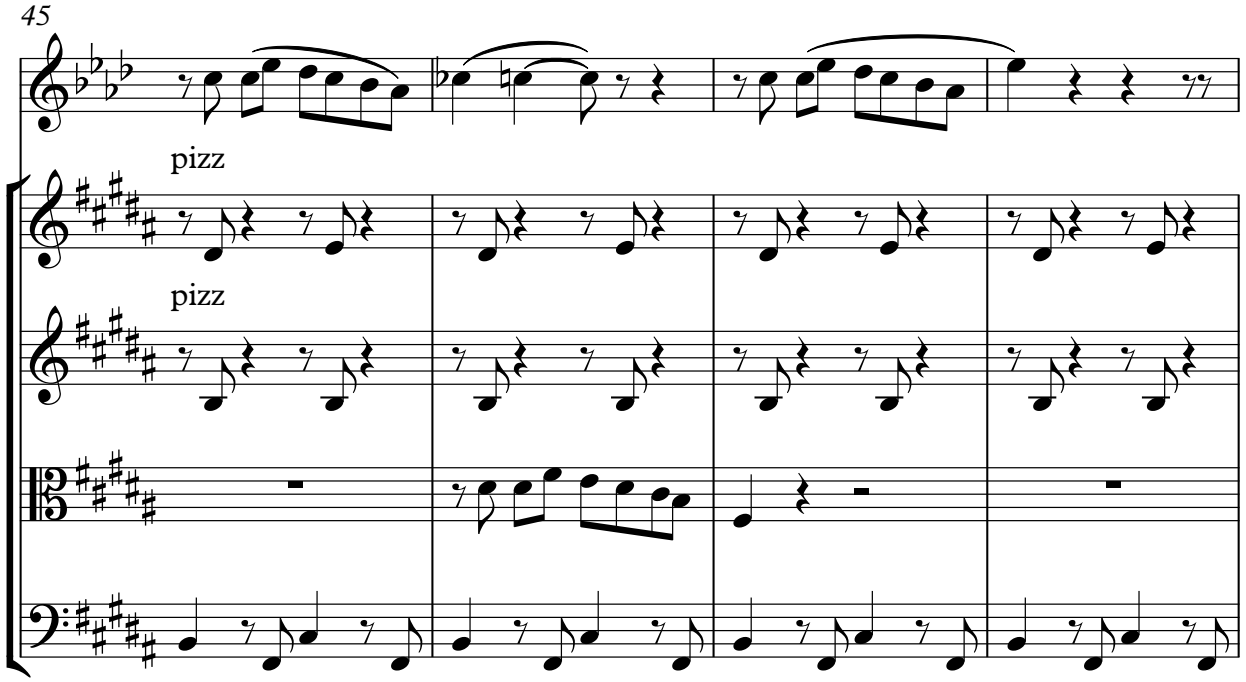
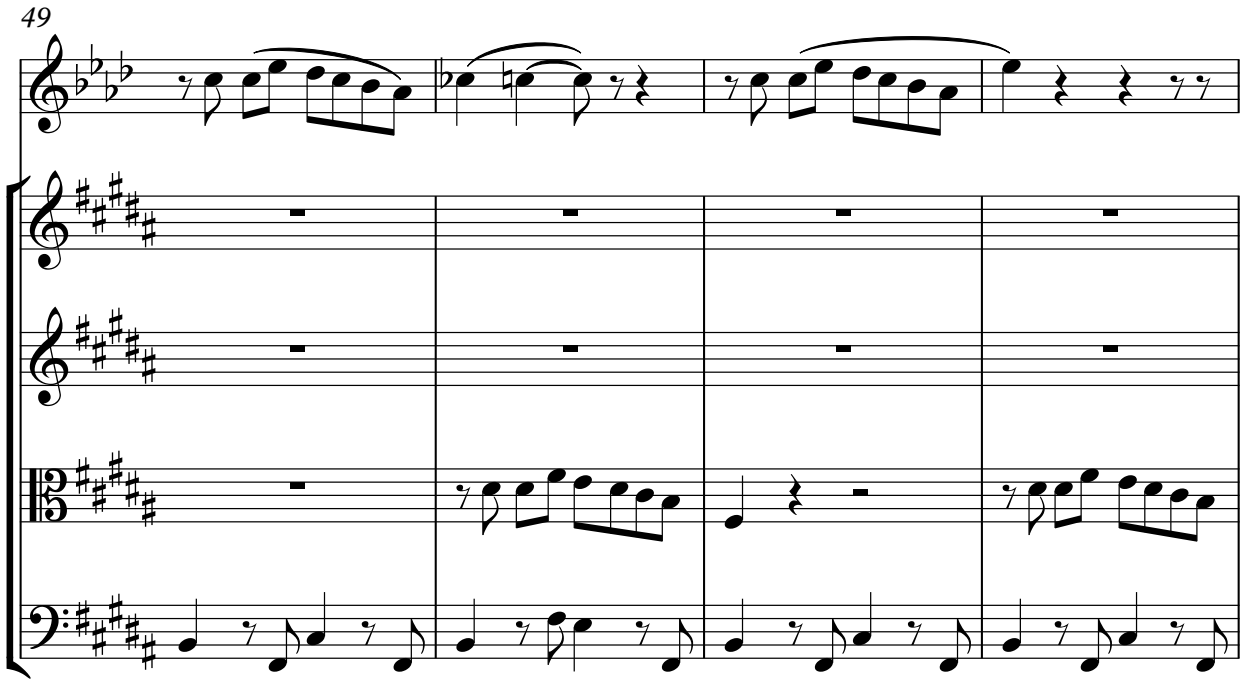

41
arco
arco
pizz
arco
pizz
arco


45
pizz
pizz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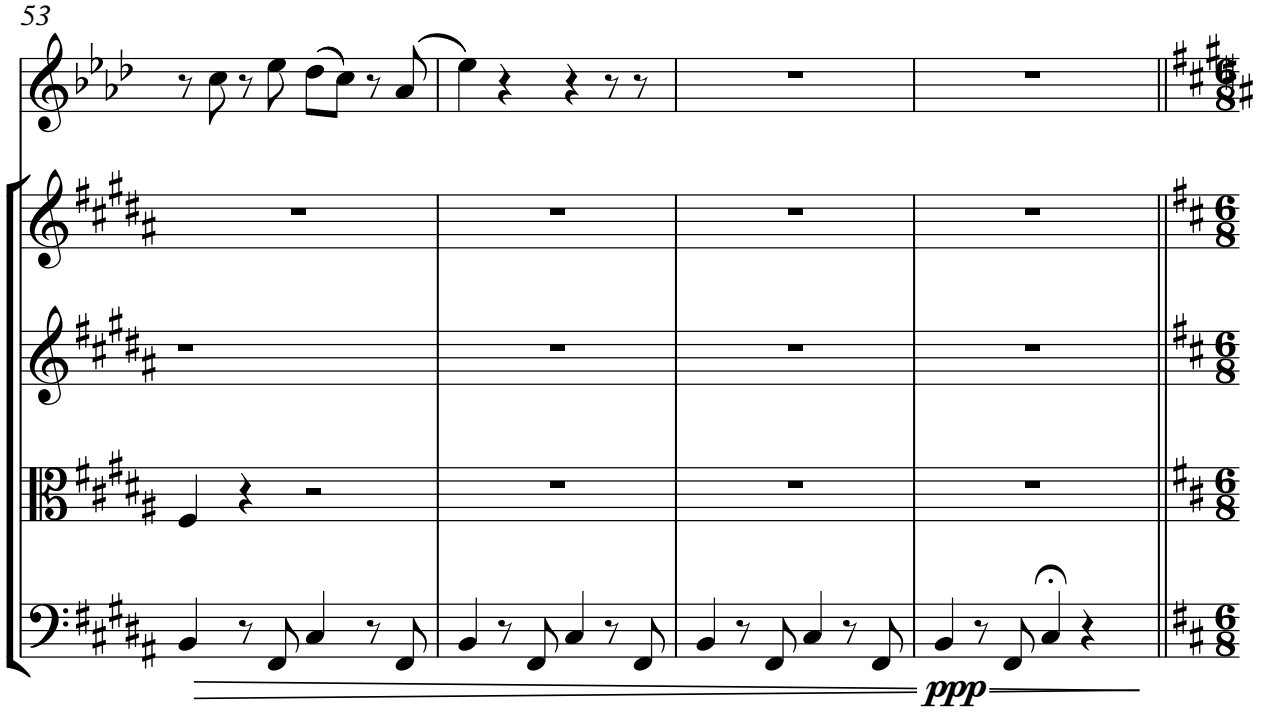
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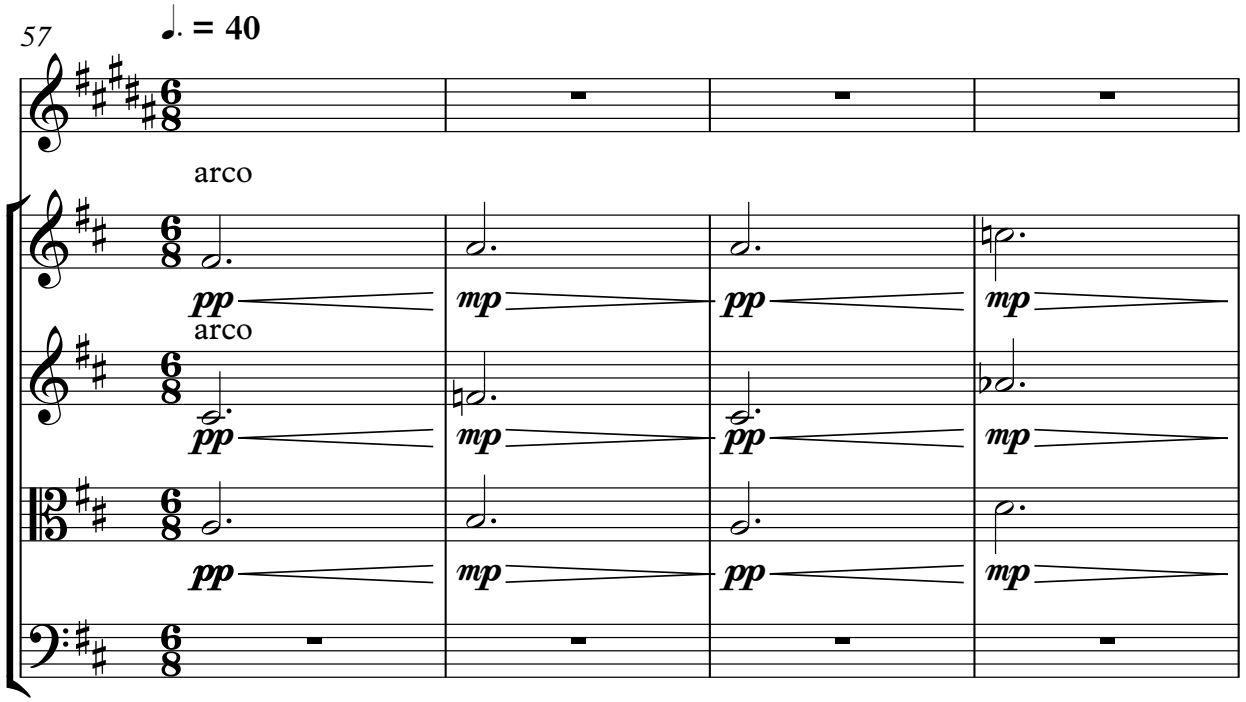
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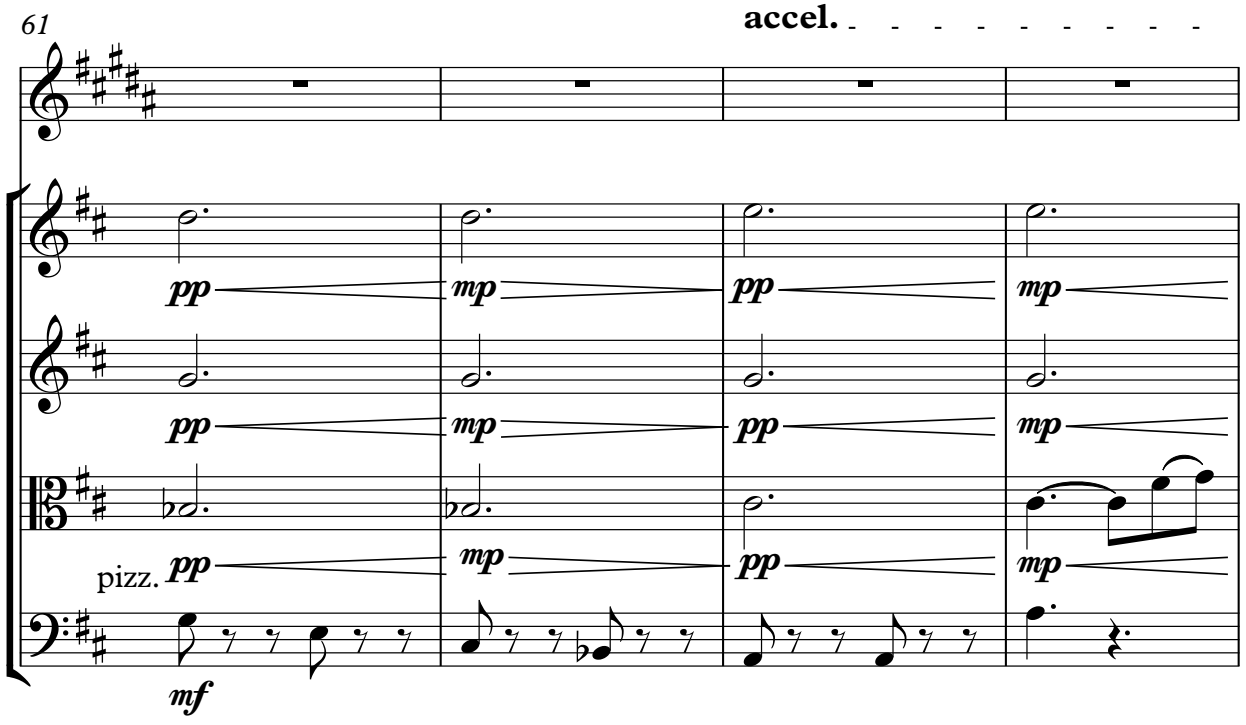
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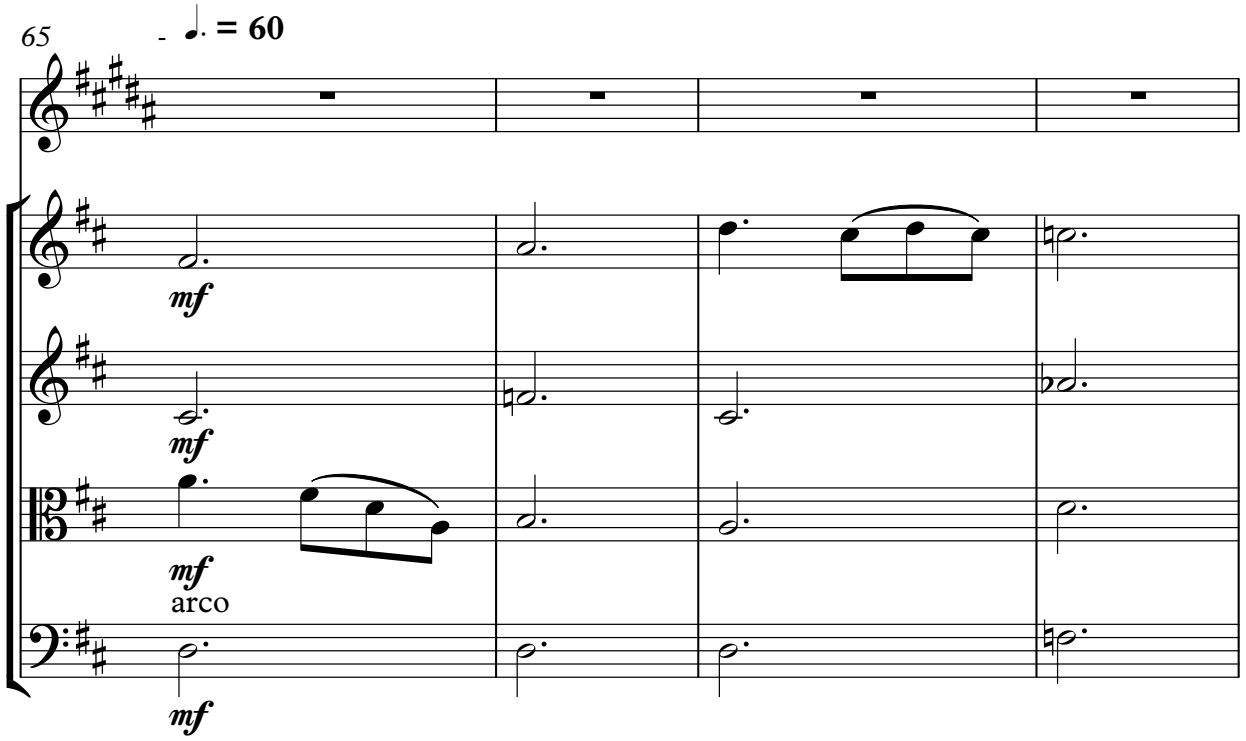
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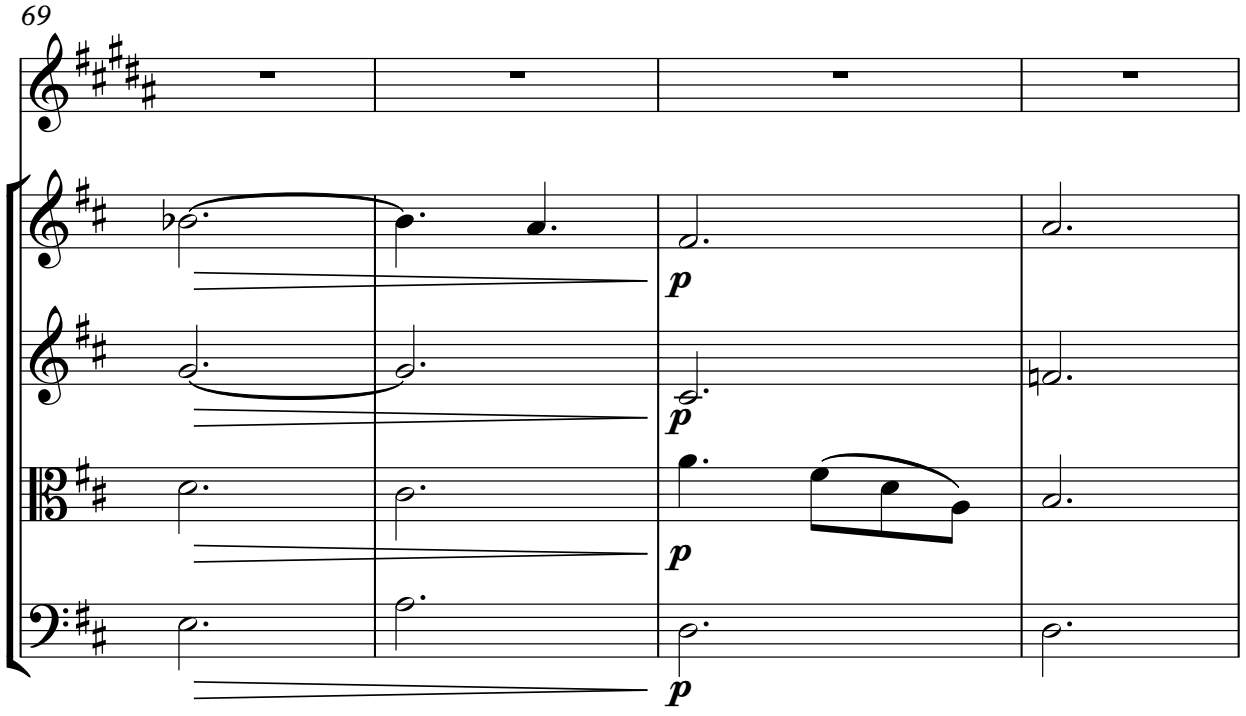
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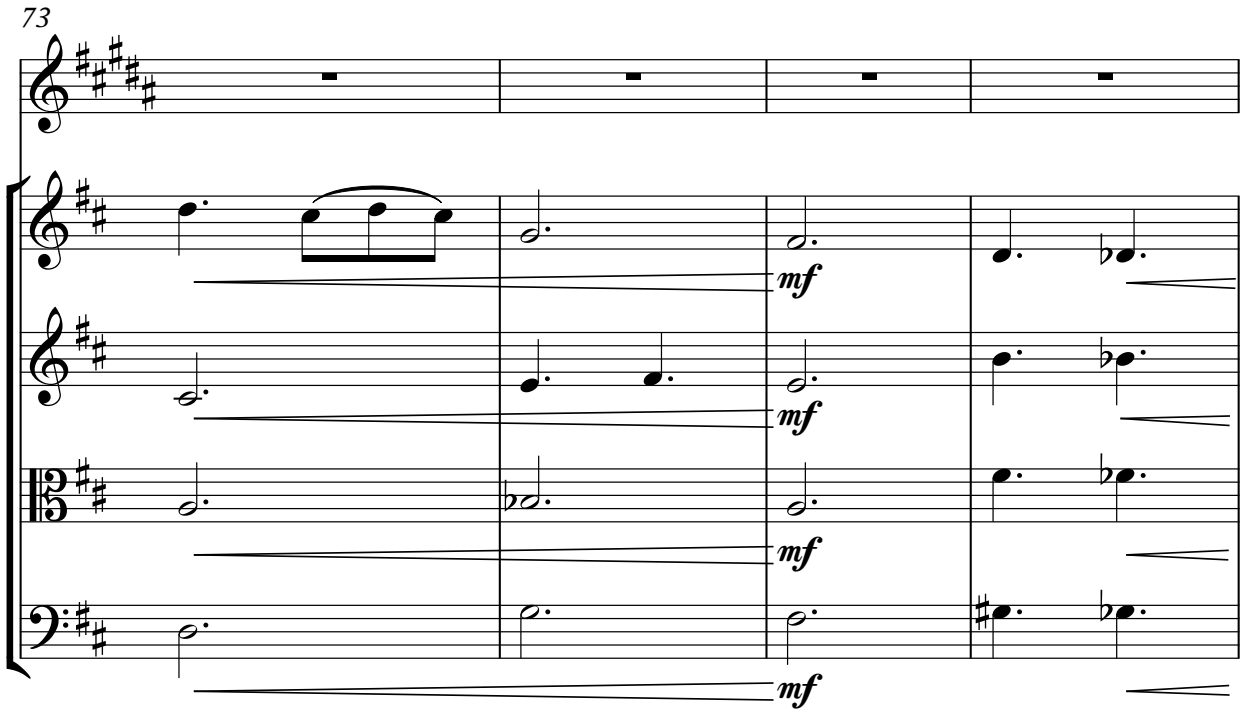
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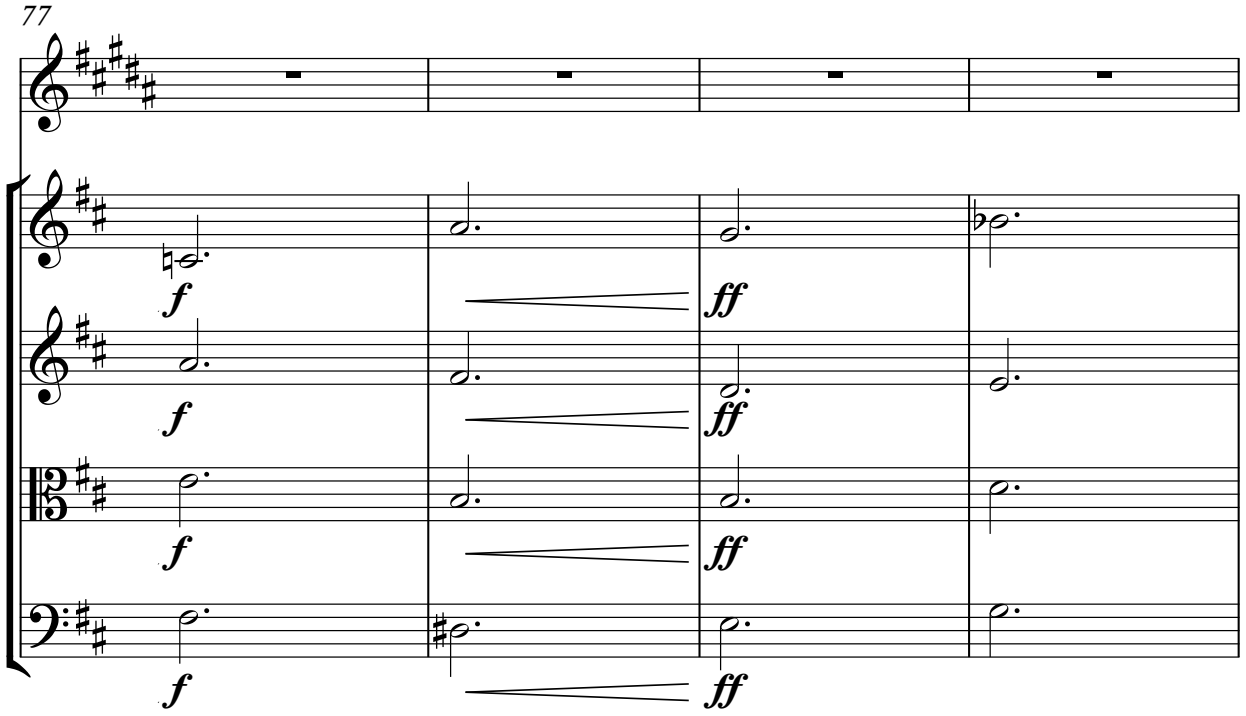
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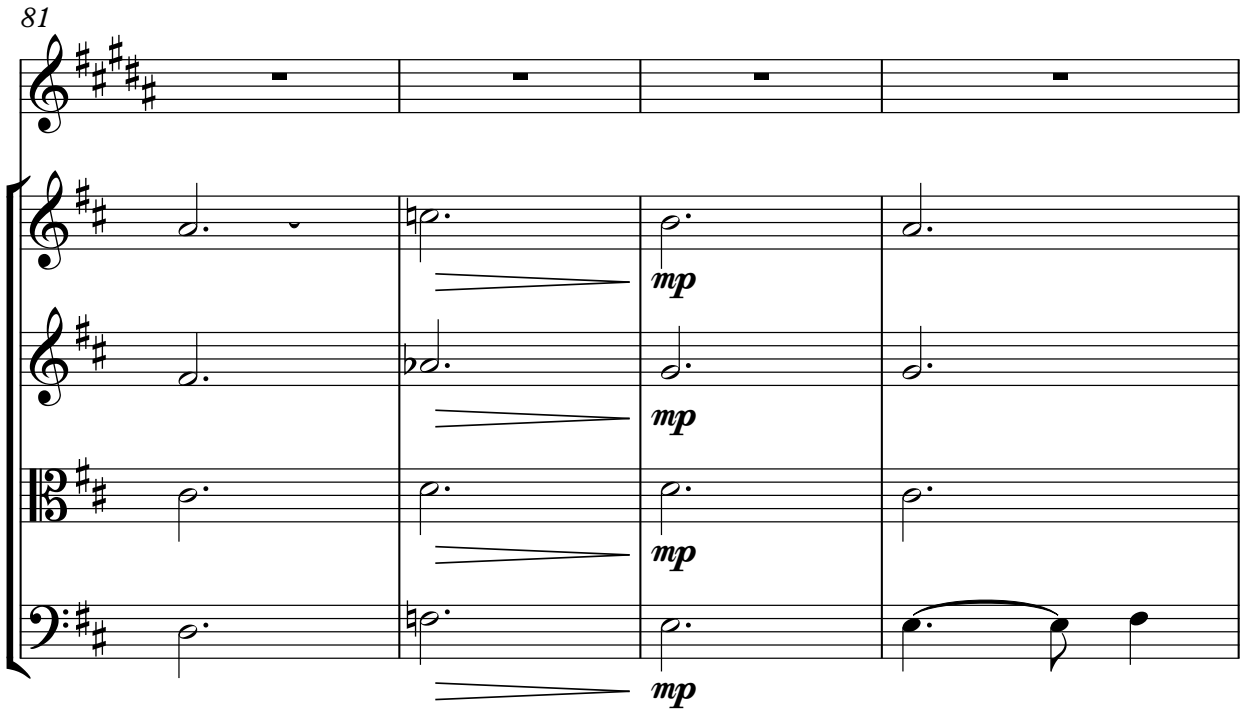
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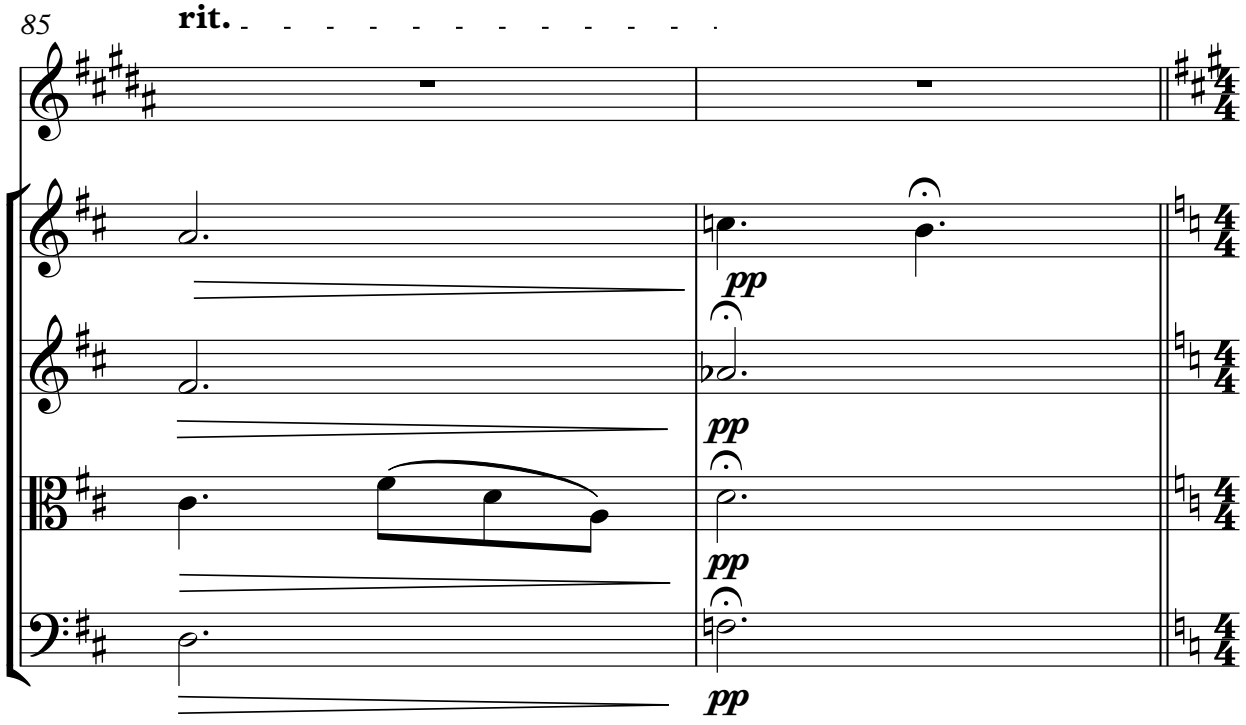
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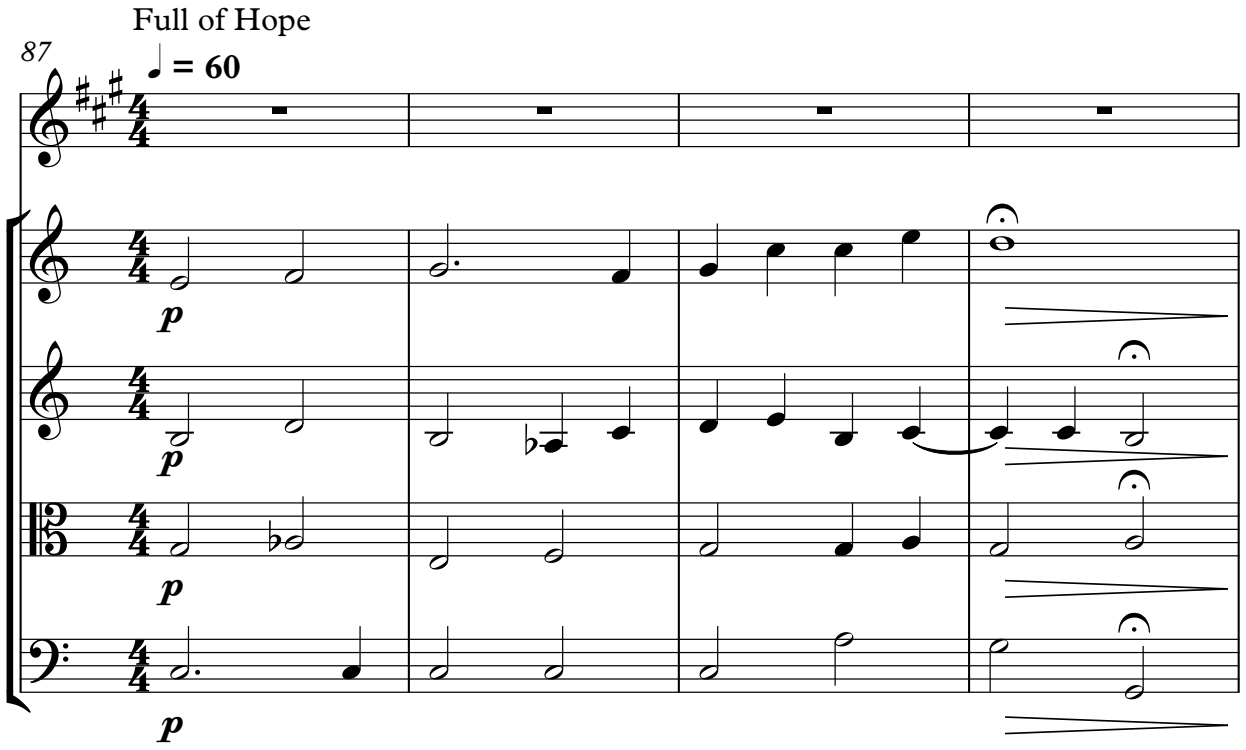
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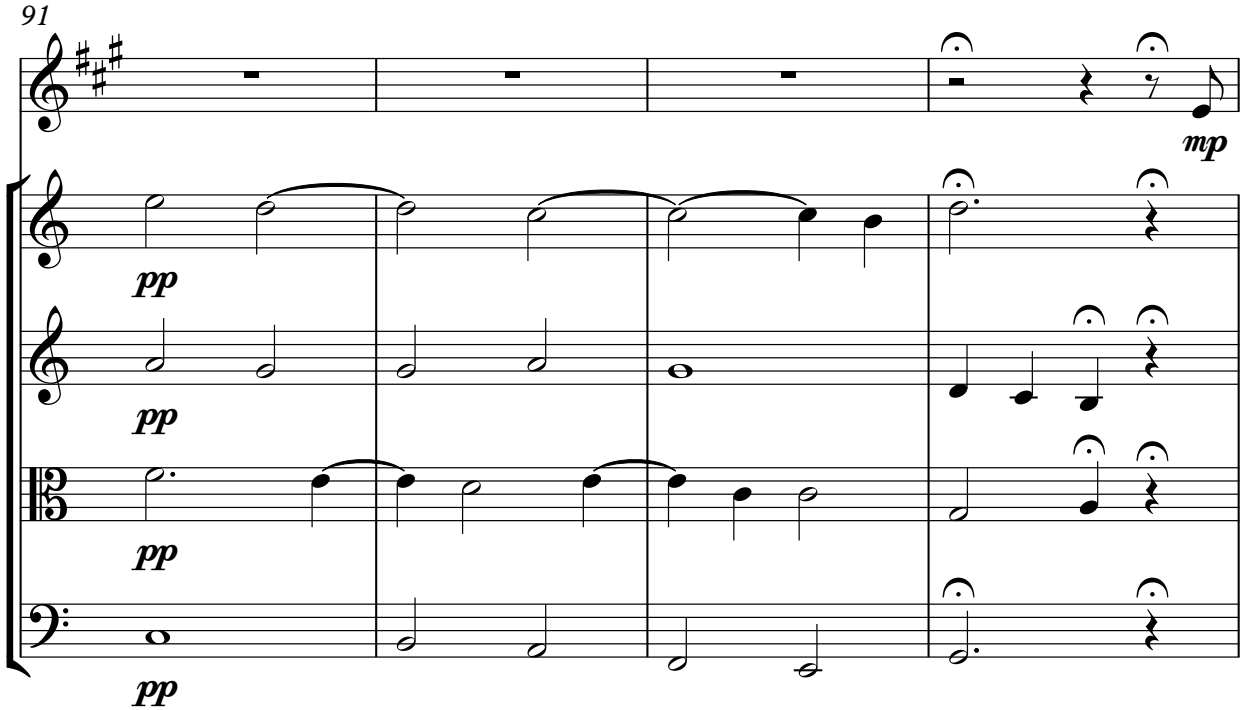
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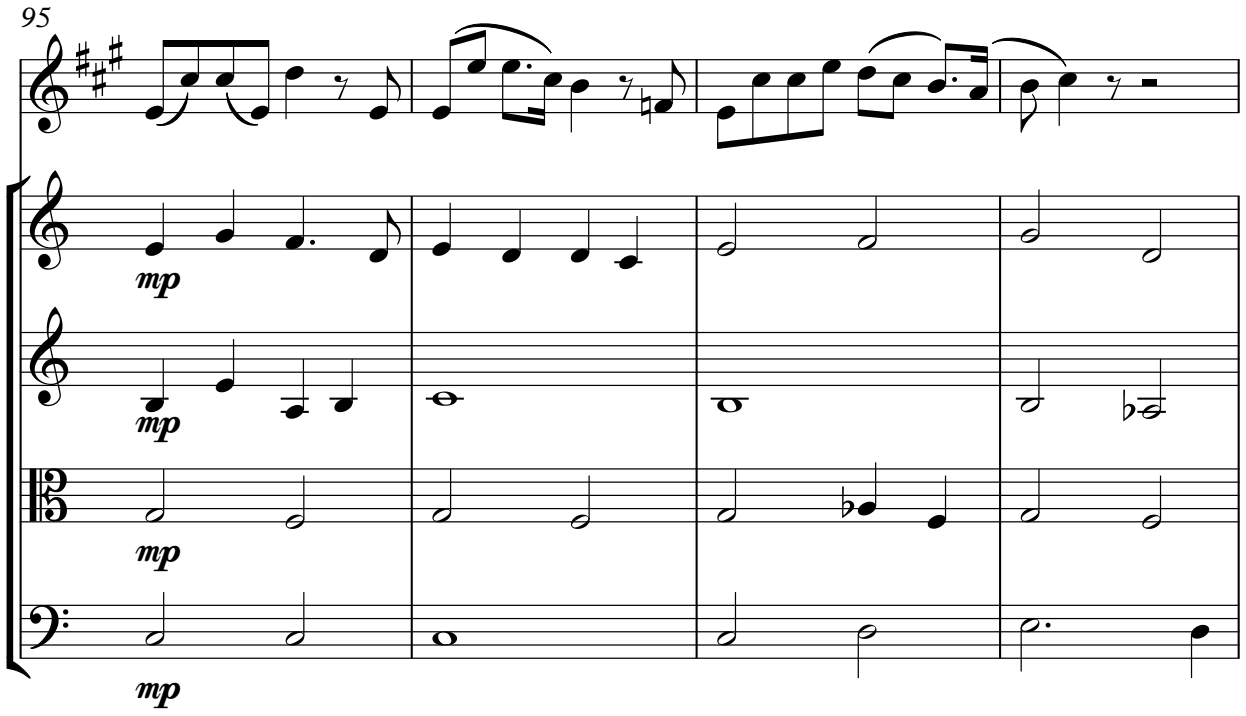
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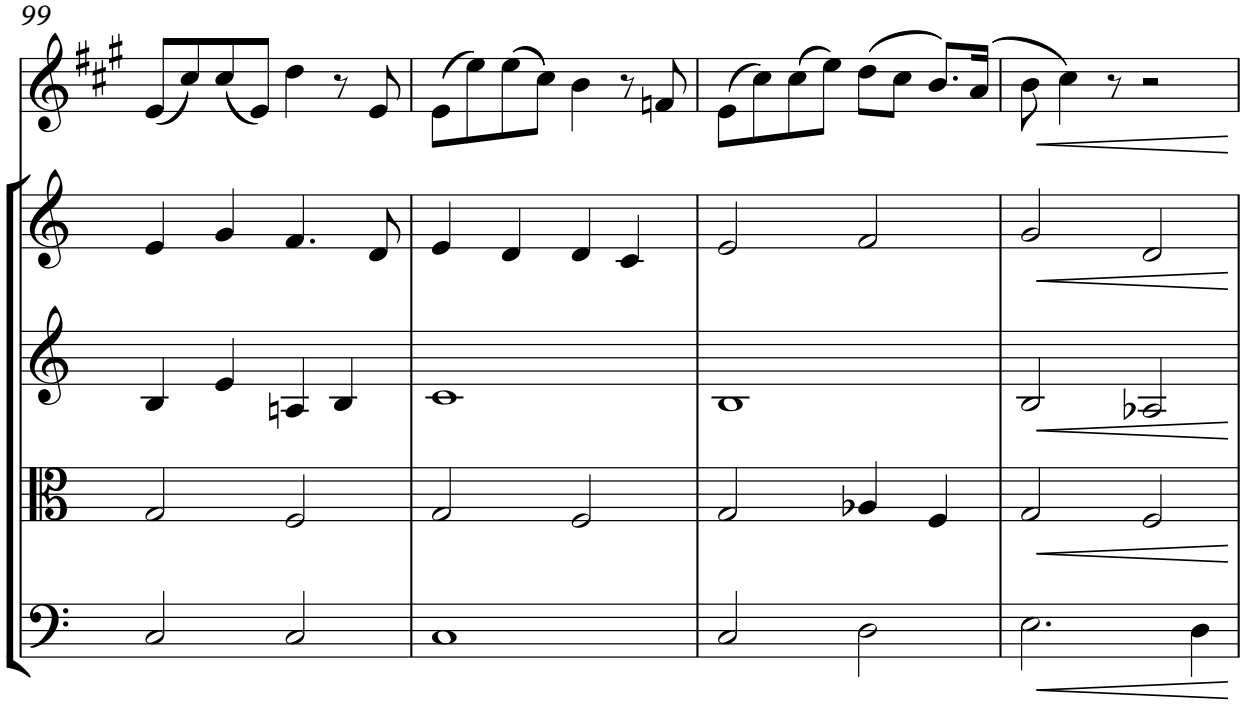
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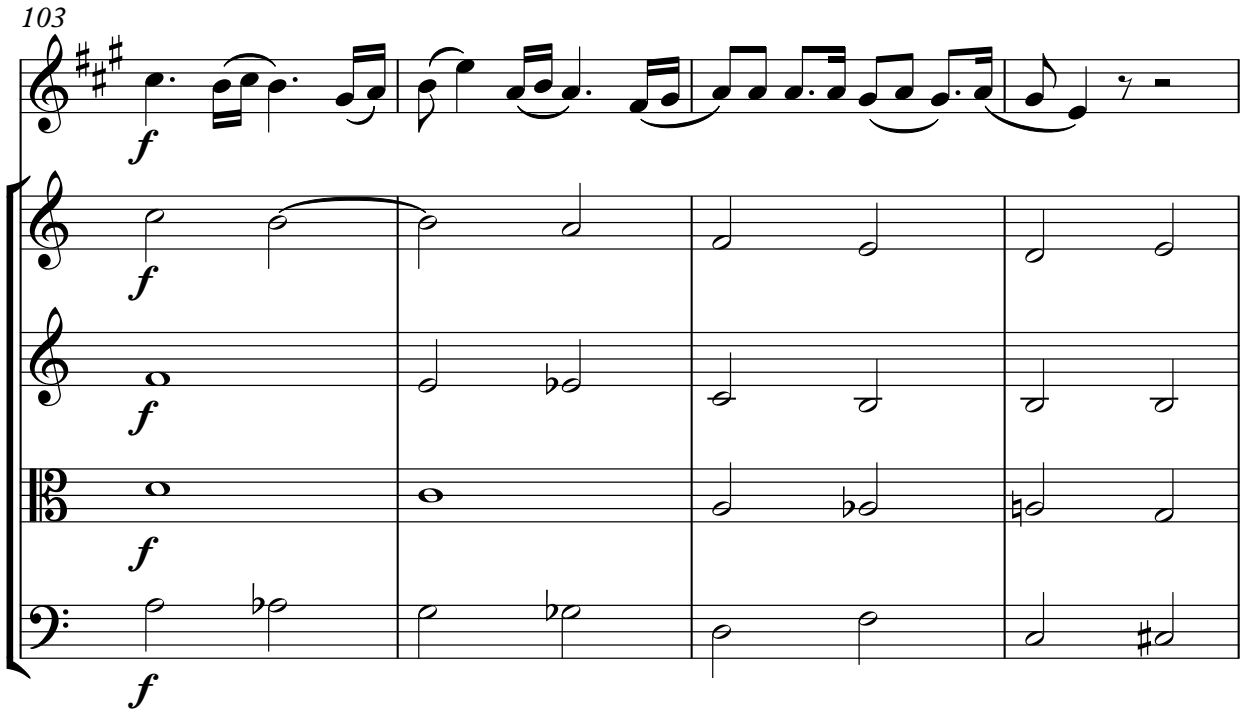
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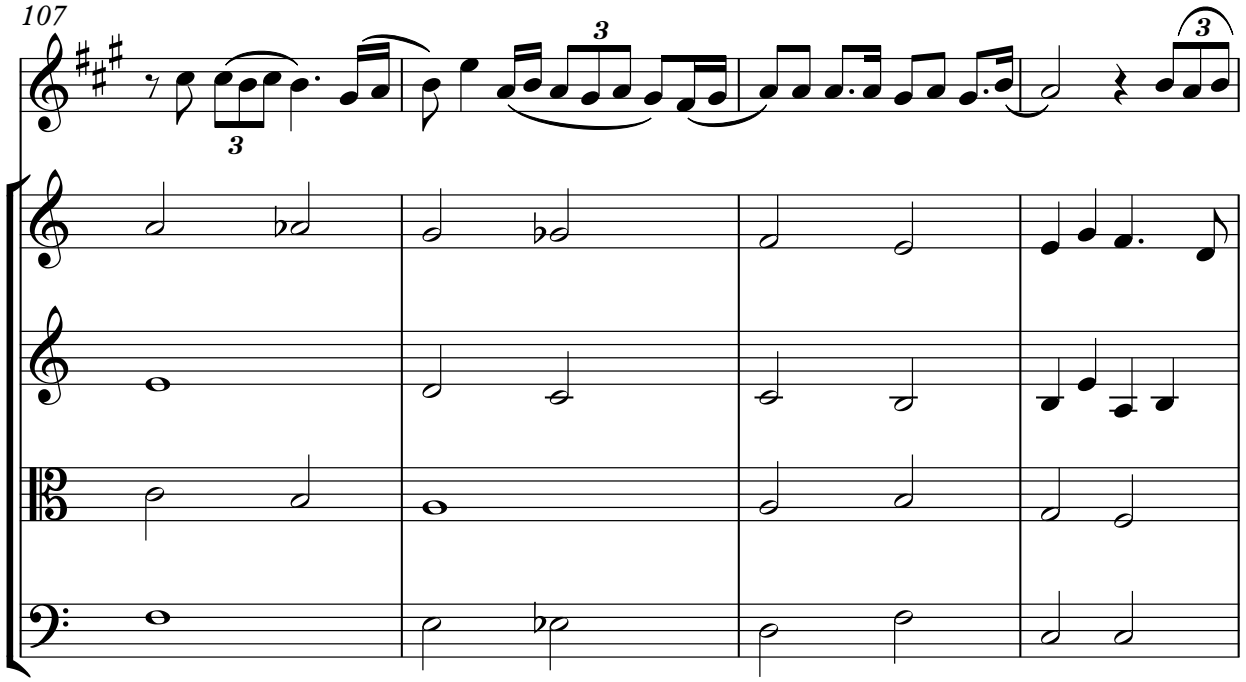
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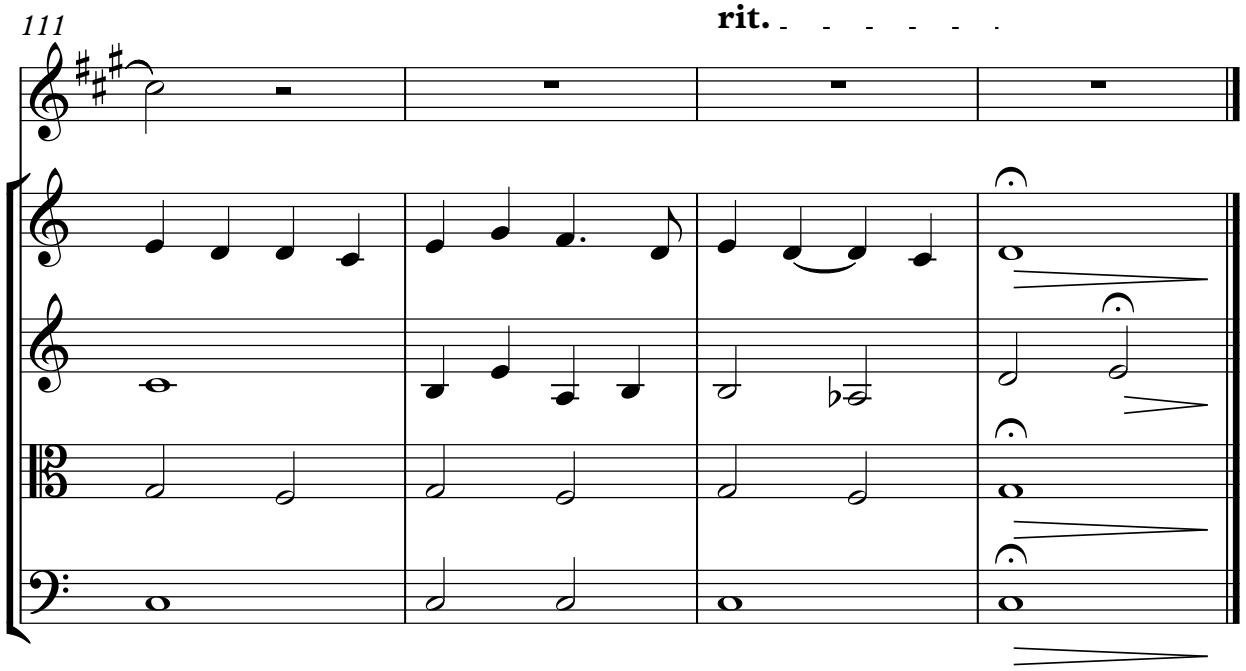
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