THE VILE RAINBOW

ERIC SHANFIELD

THE VILE RAINBOW

Eric Shanfield | ENS.2001.1 | 16'

1. Electric Pulses
2. Scintillant Orange
3. Still
4. Medical Radiography

String Quartet

In 2001 I composed *The Vile Rainbow*, an epic six-hour extravaganza for my four-person improvising group *Vertigo*. About fifteen minutes seemed worth salvaging.

Inspired by William T. Vollmann, Damien Hirst, Hermes Trismegistus, Peter Kubelka, and Sol LeWitt (among others), *The Vile Rainbow* consisted of a series of what were essentially etudes, each movement exploring a single compositional idea. For example, one consisted entirely of quarter note A naturals played evenly in the same octave for twenty minutes by a solo cello, each however performed in a slightly different way, over which wailed a tenor sax solo. Though the piece was highly conceptual and not entirely successful—to say the least!—it represented an important step in my evolution as a composer, and several movements pointed toward future directions my work would take. Four of these I transcribed for string quartet, stripped of any improvisational decoration, and arranged in a set.

In *Electric Pulses*, a seven-beat figure is arrayed against constantly changing versions of itself in different meters. *Scintillant Orange* follows a series of permutations to create an aural simulation of a Sol LeWitt wall drawing. *Still* depicts Damien Hirst's vitrines, small cells of musical material boxed up and placed next to one another in slowly shifting patterns. *Medical Radiography* closes out the set, a serene viola solo gradually becoming harsher and harsher as a grinding bow reveals the physicality of sound beneath its surface, the music X-raying itself.

The Vile Rainbow was composed in 2001 and 2002 and lasts about sixteen mintues. It is dedicated to Peter Hess and Jeff Hudgins of *Vertigo*, who first performed this music and helped teach me what works and doesn't work outside my own head.

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THE VILE RAINBOW

1. ELECTRIC PULSES

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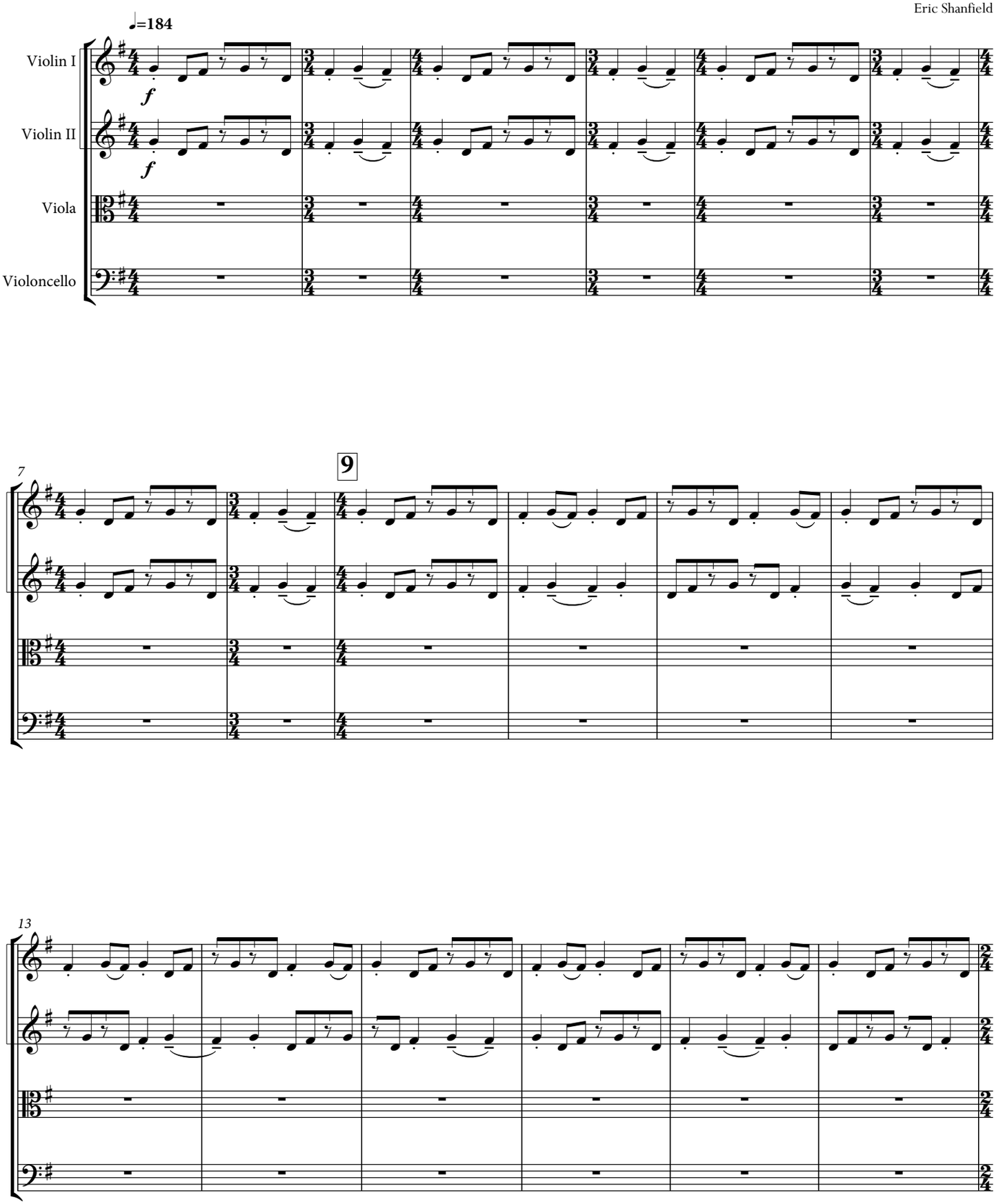

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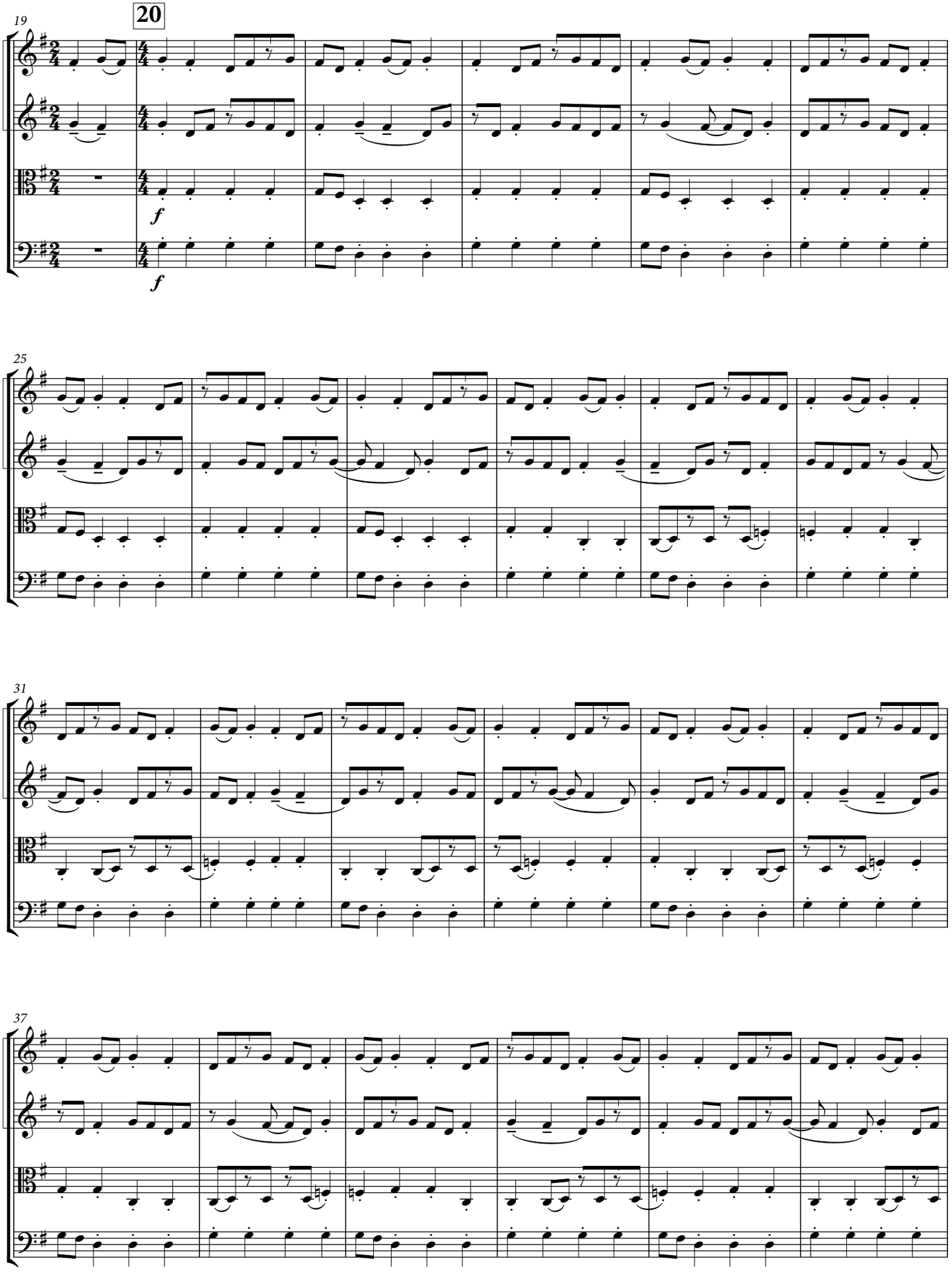
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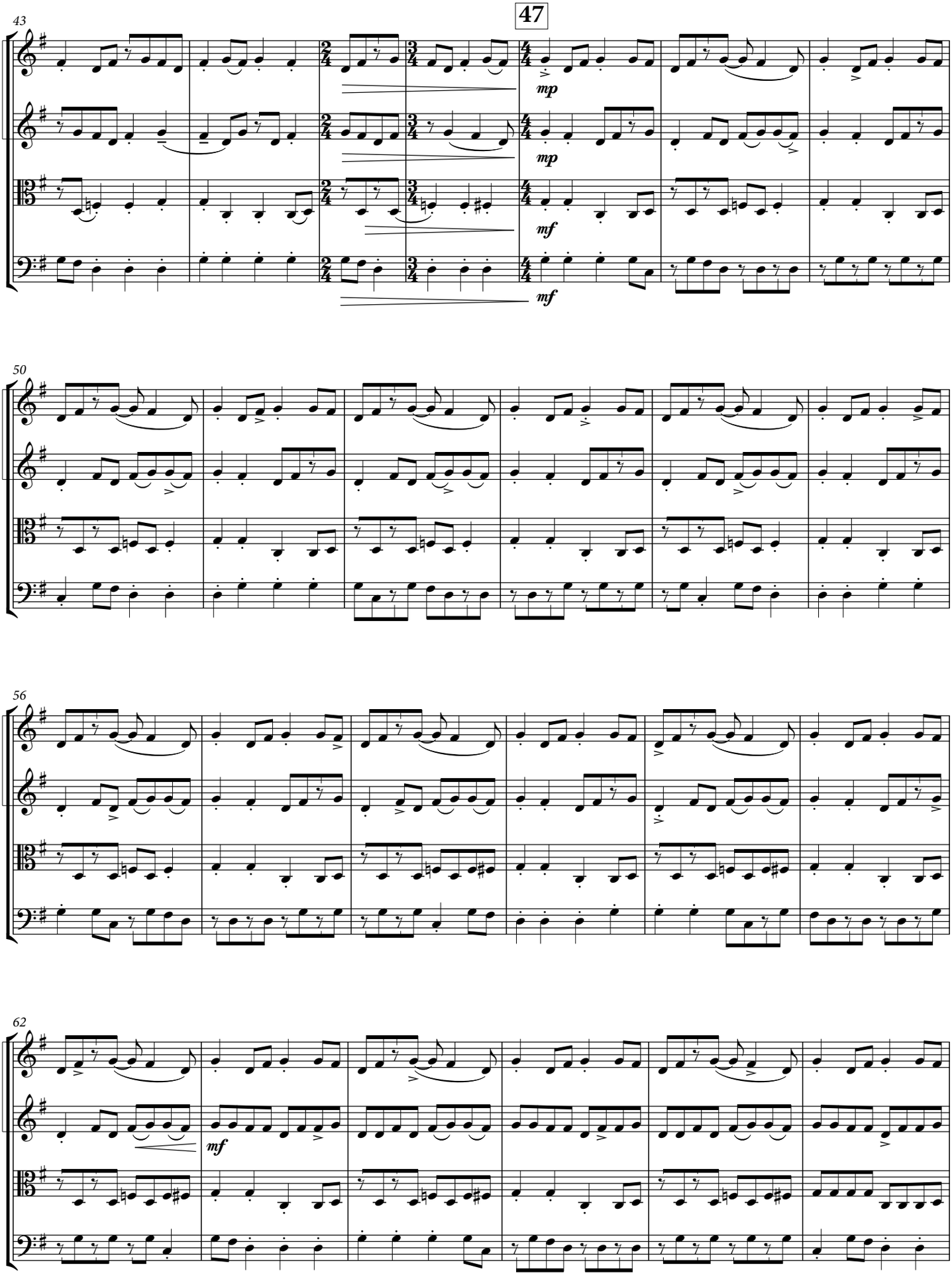
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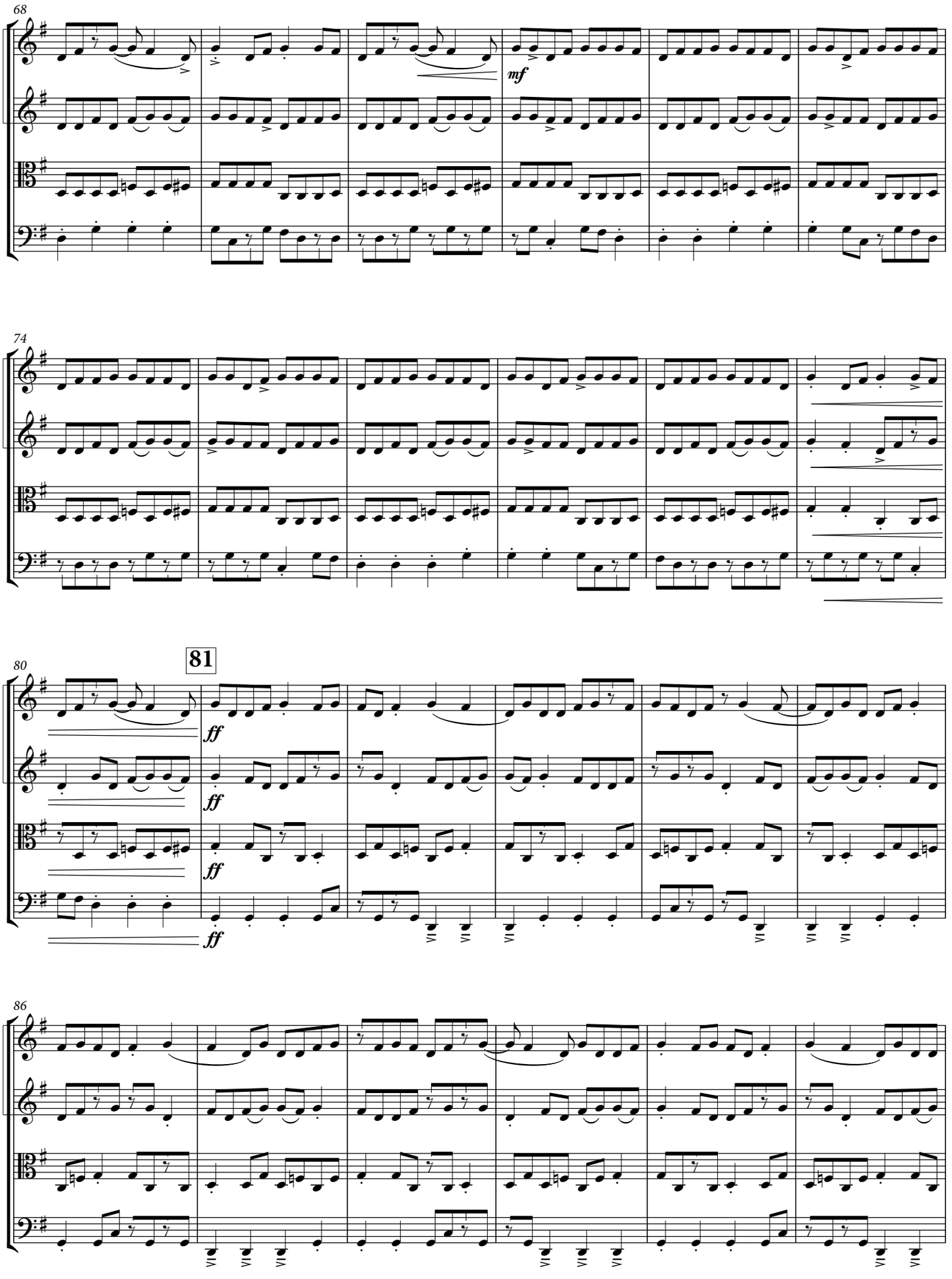
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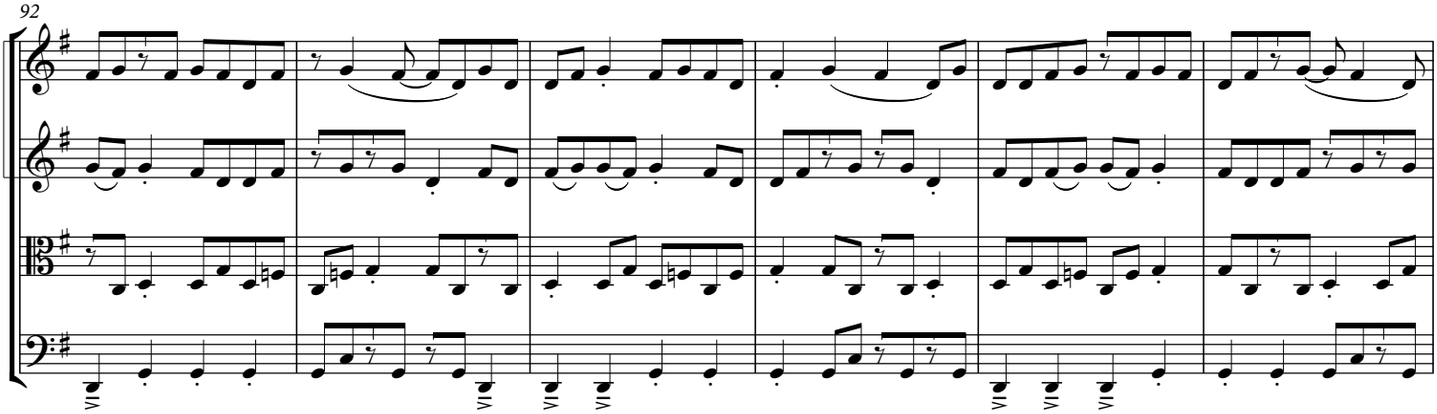

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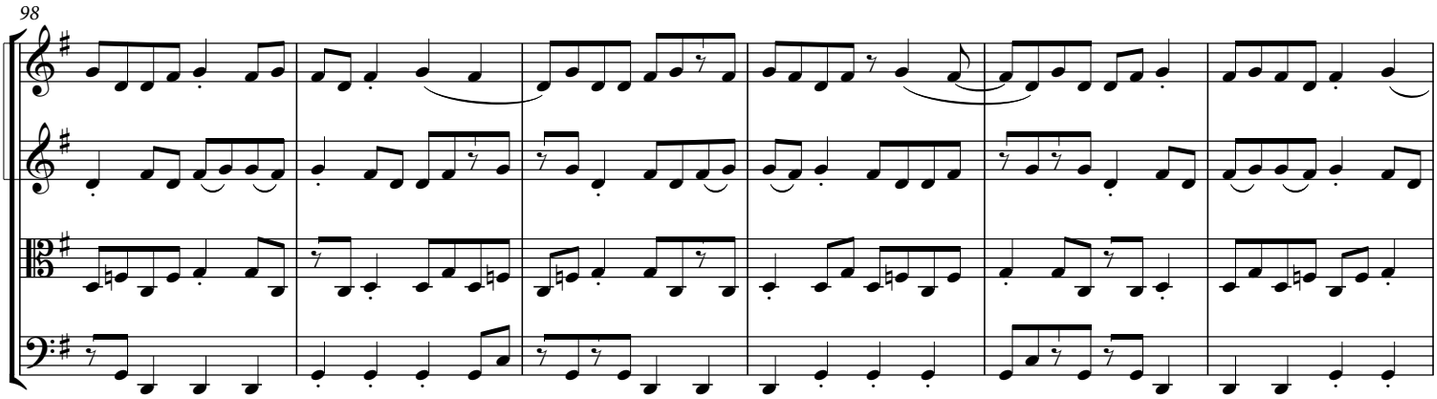

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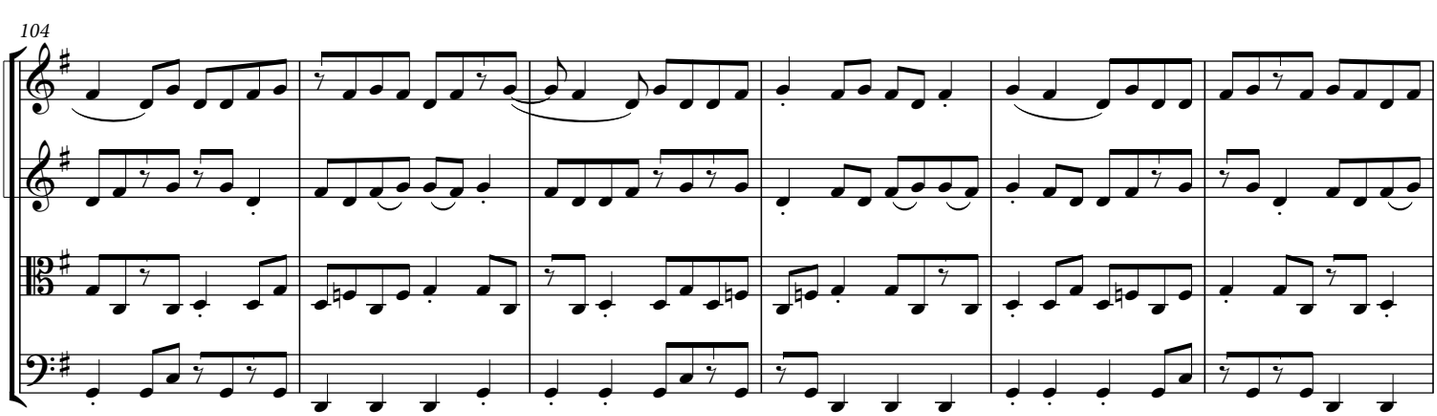

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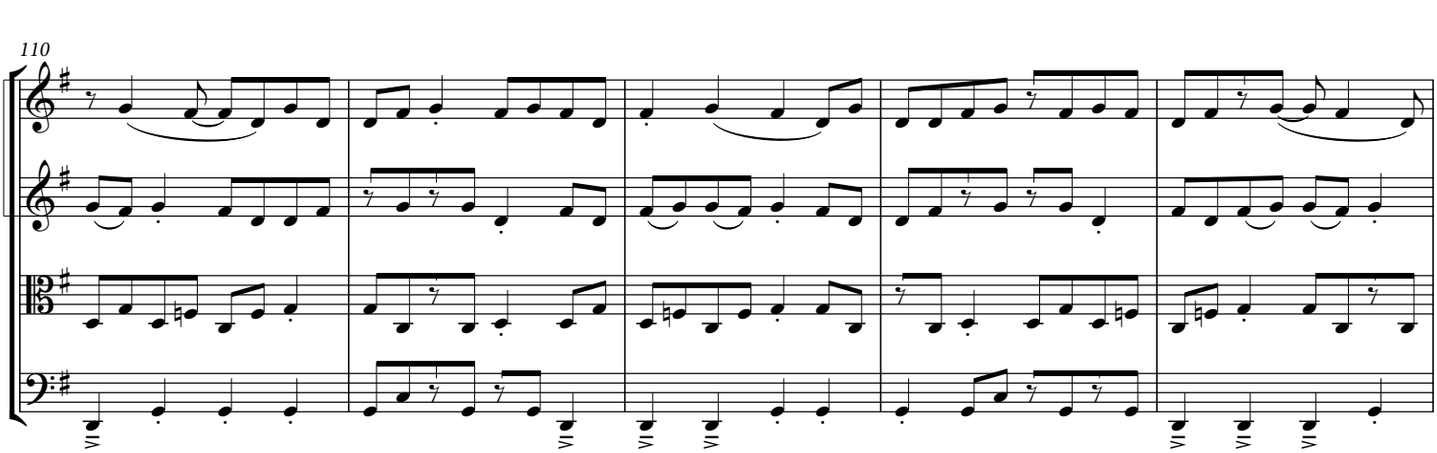

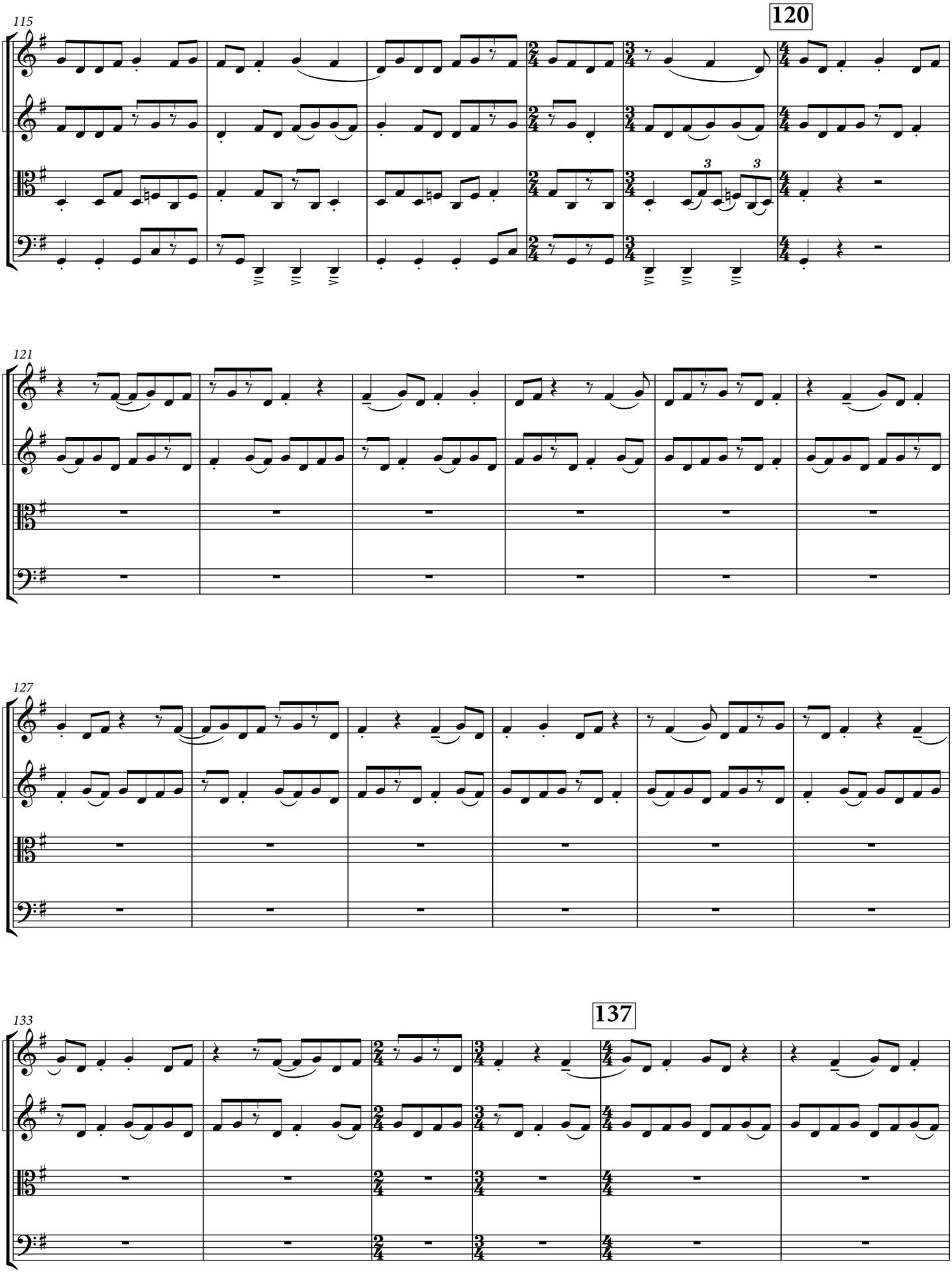
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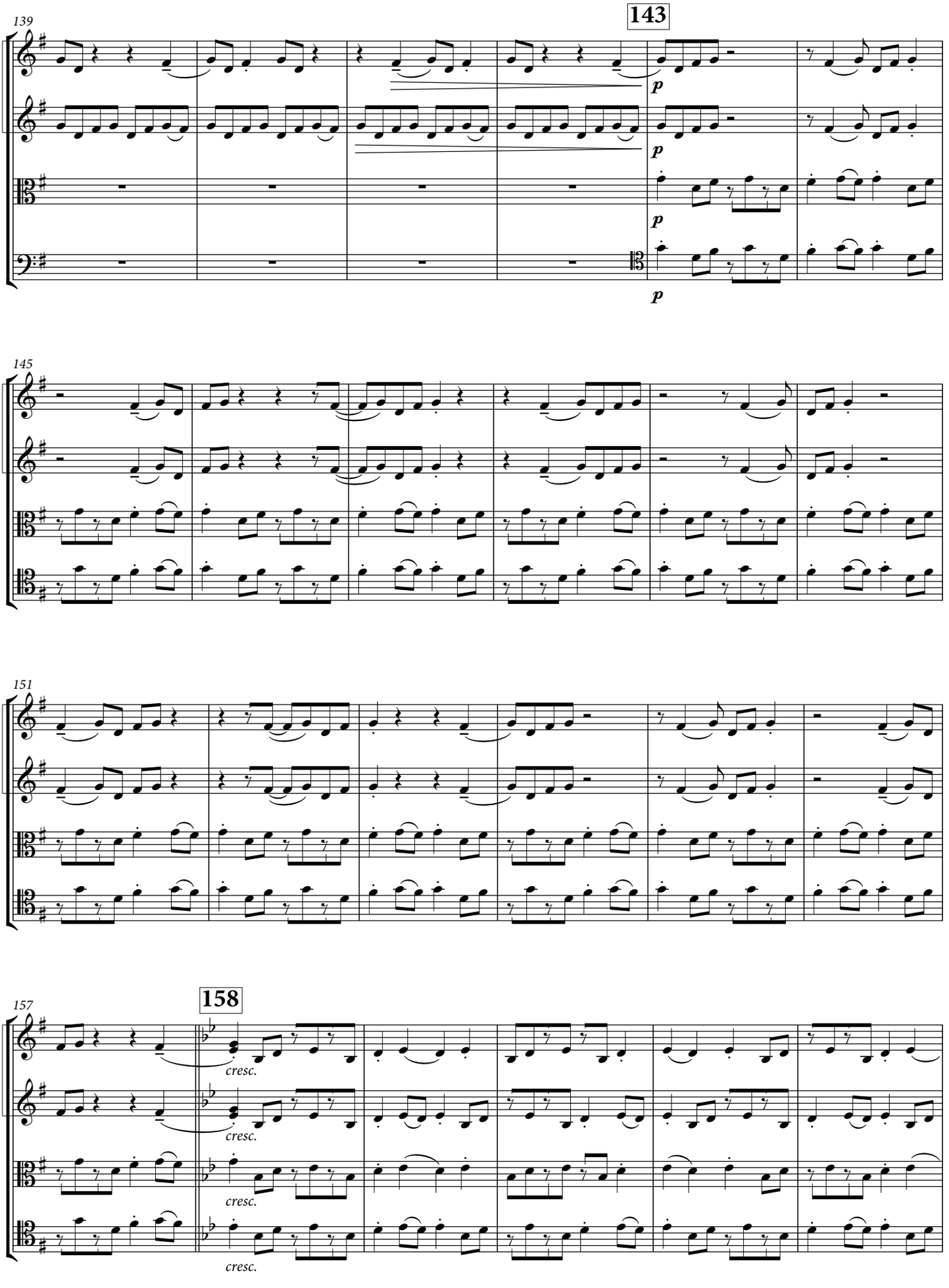
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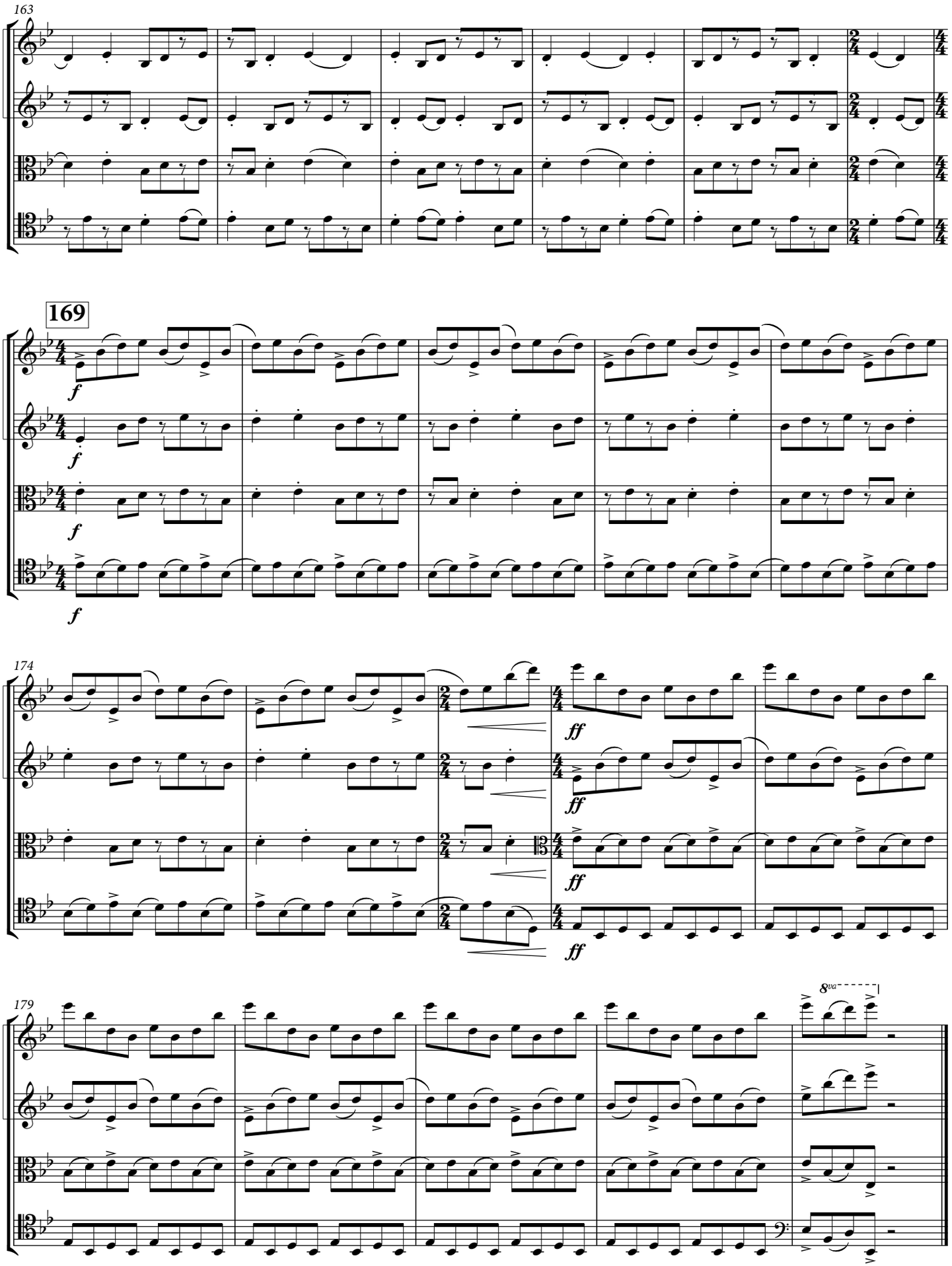
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8va

THE VILE RAINBOW

2. SCINTILLANT ORANGE

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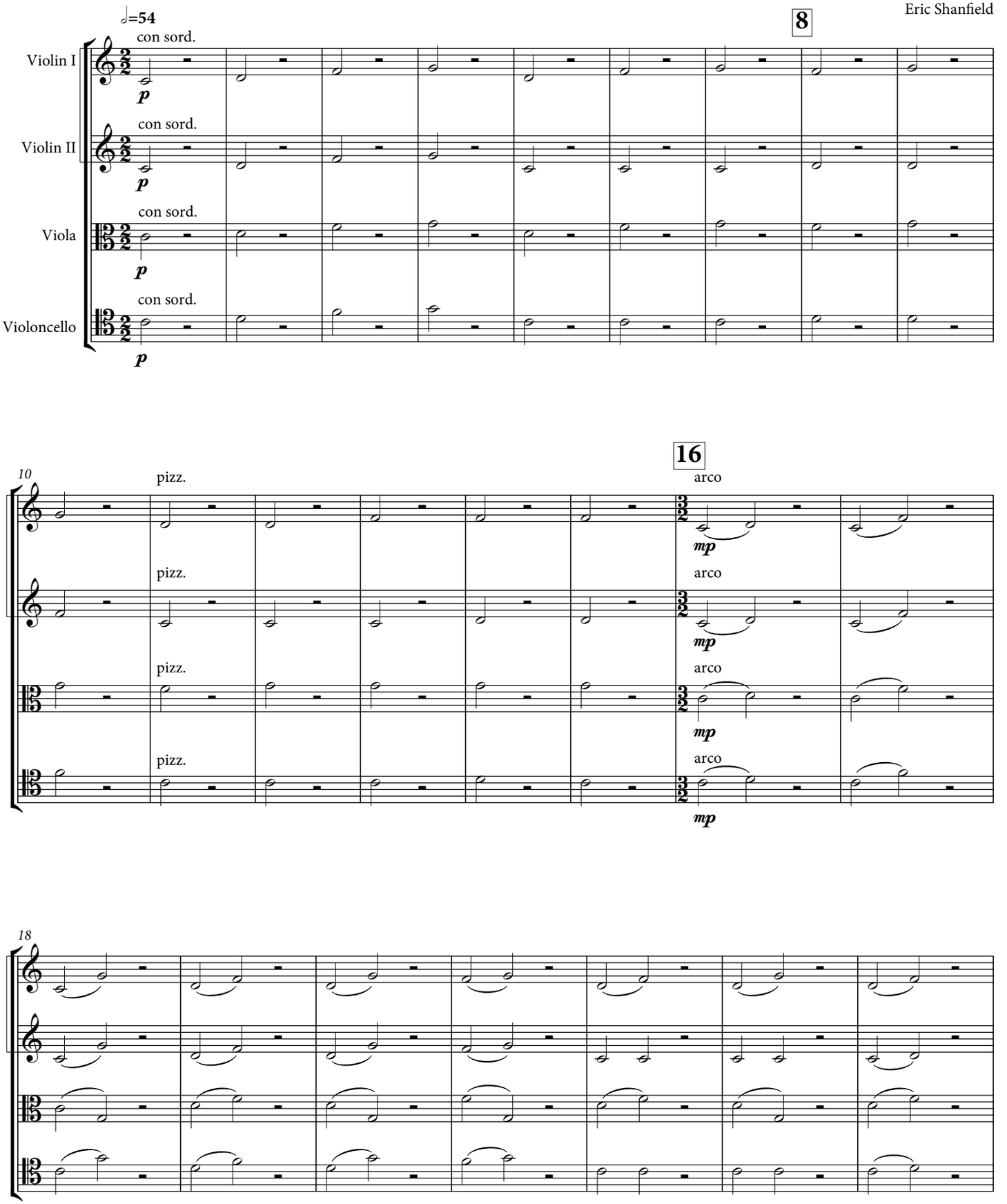

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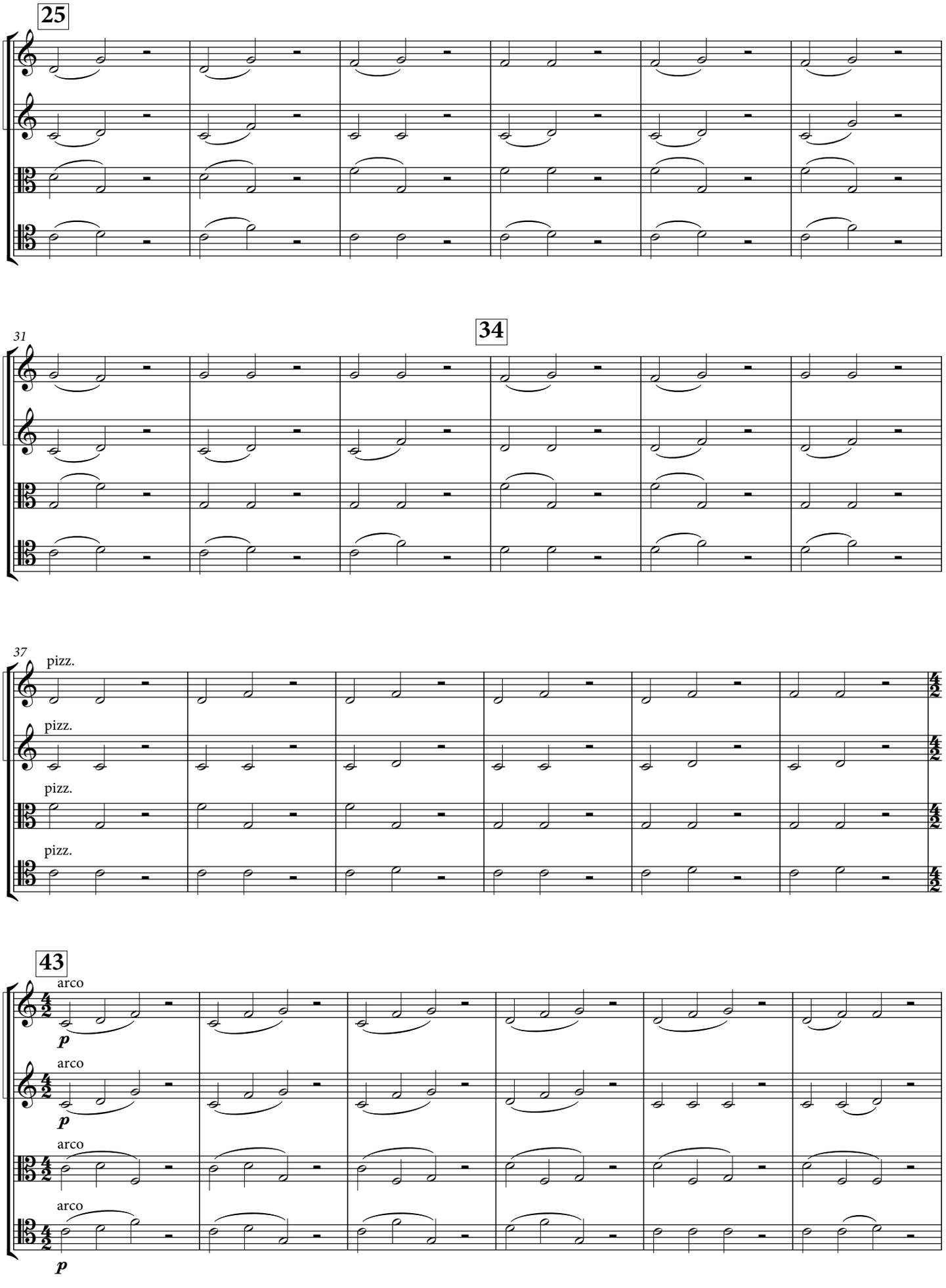
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p
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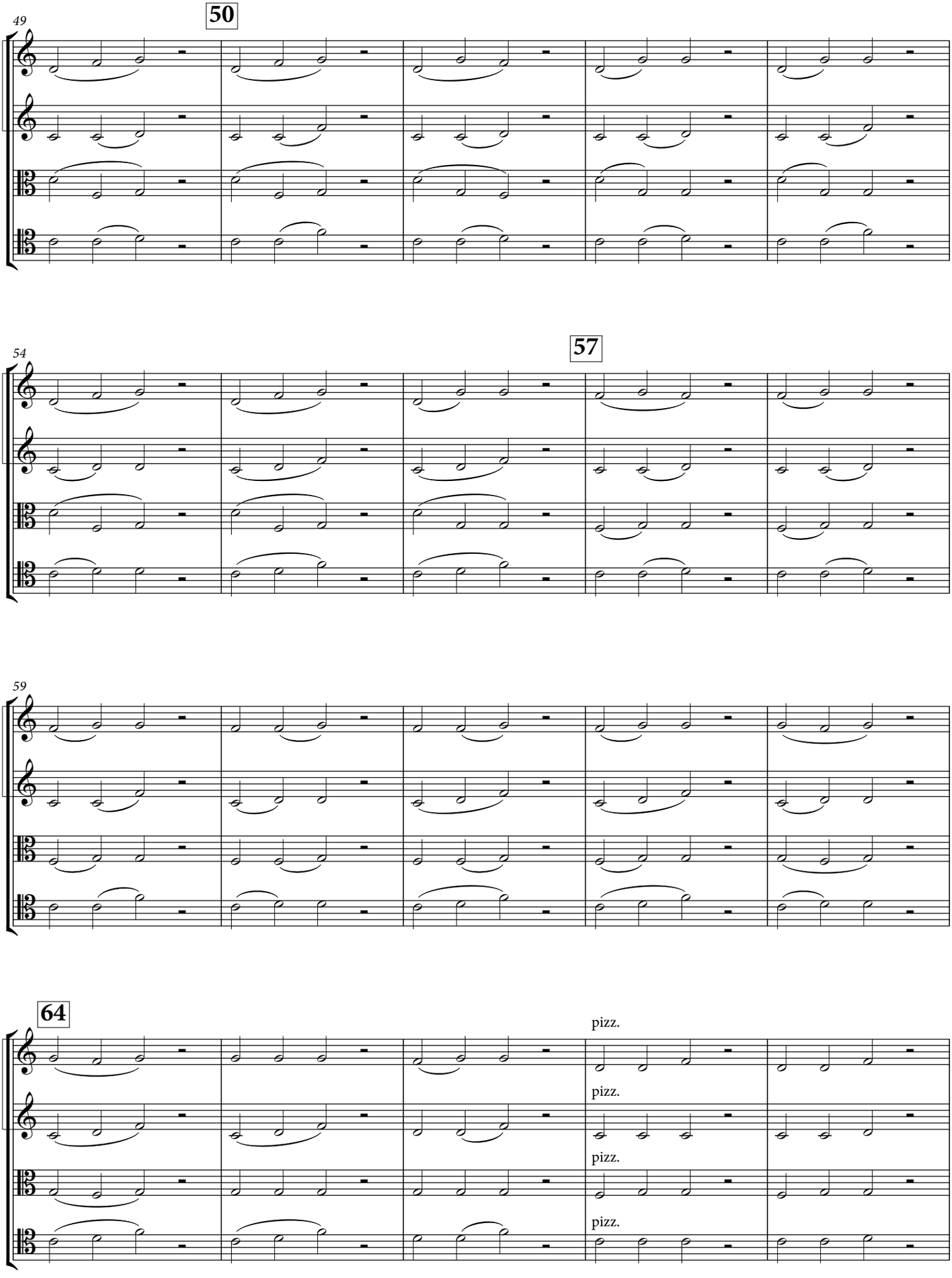
p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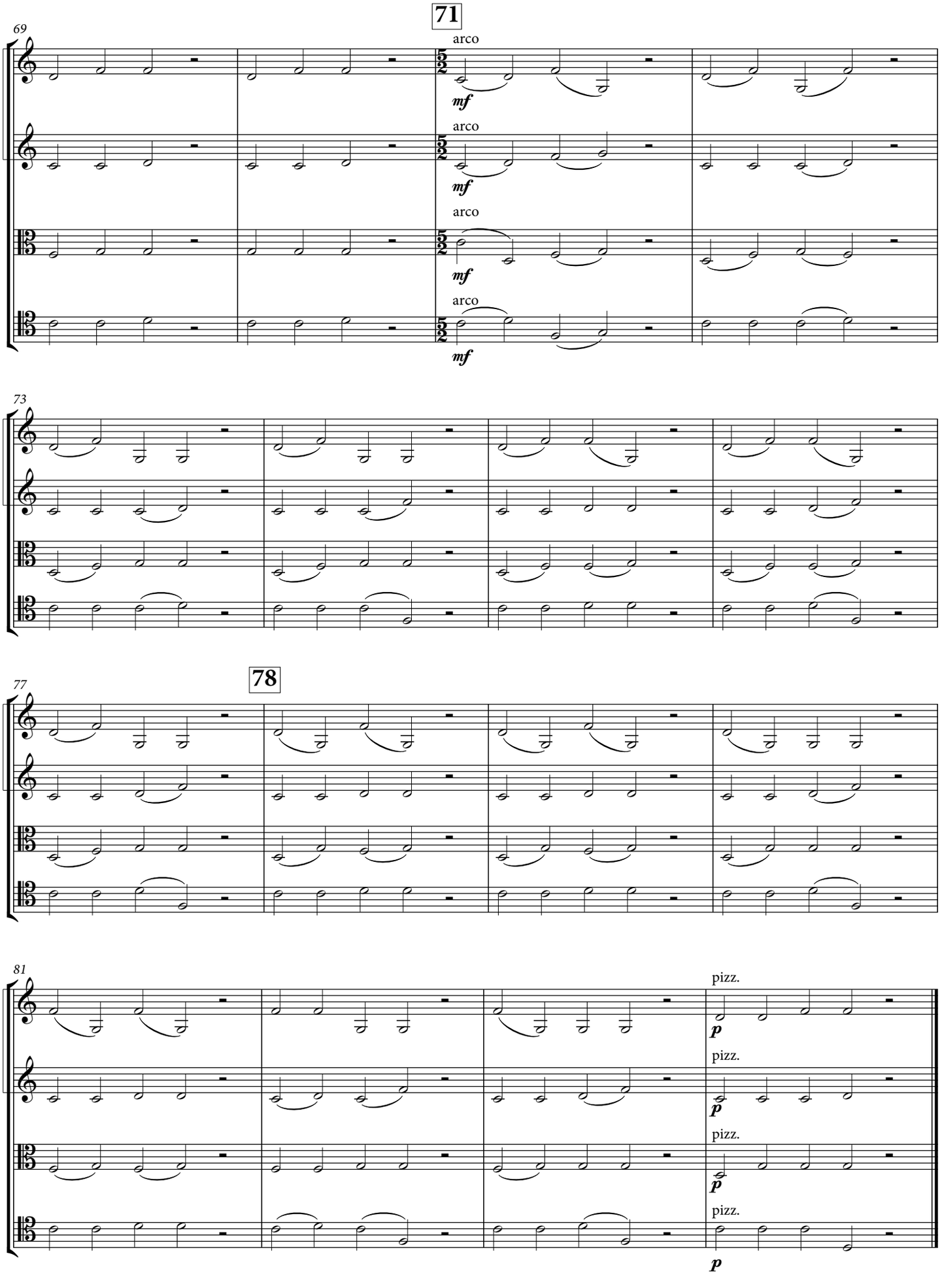
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arco
mf
arco
mf
arco
mf
73
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77
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p

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3. STILL

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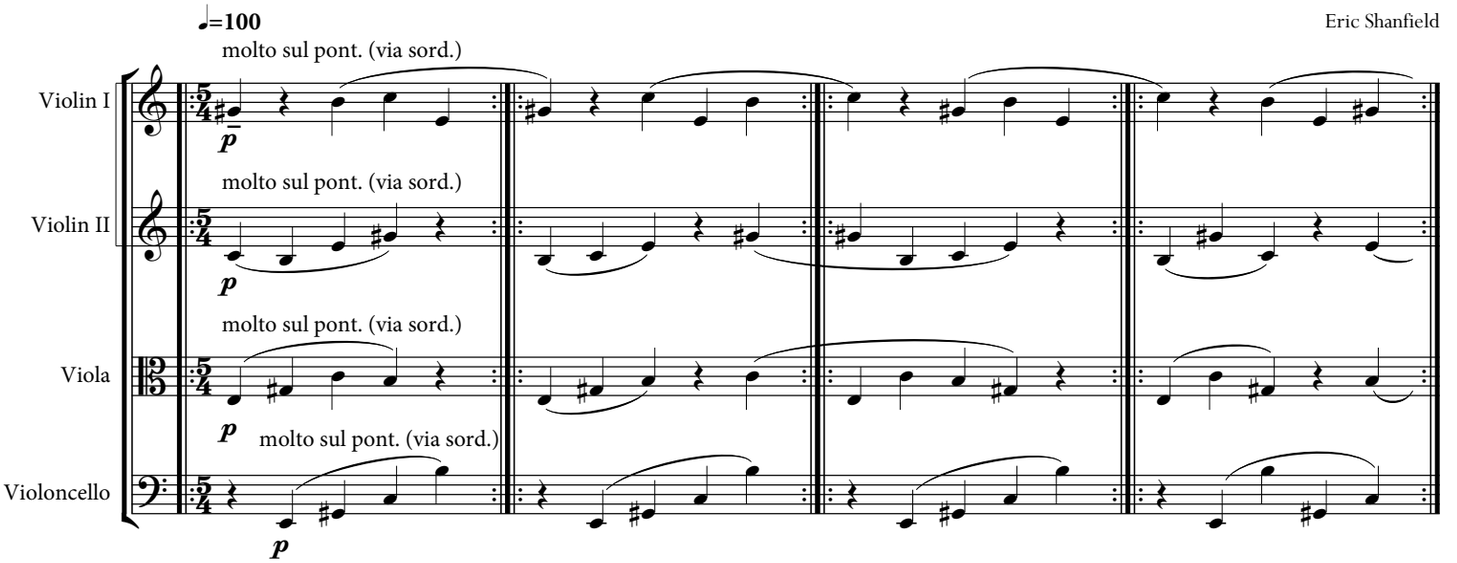

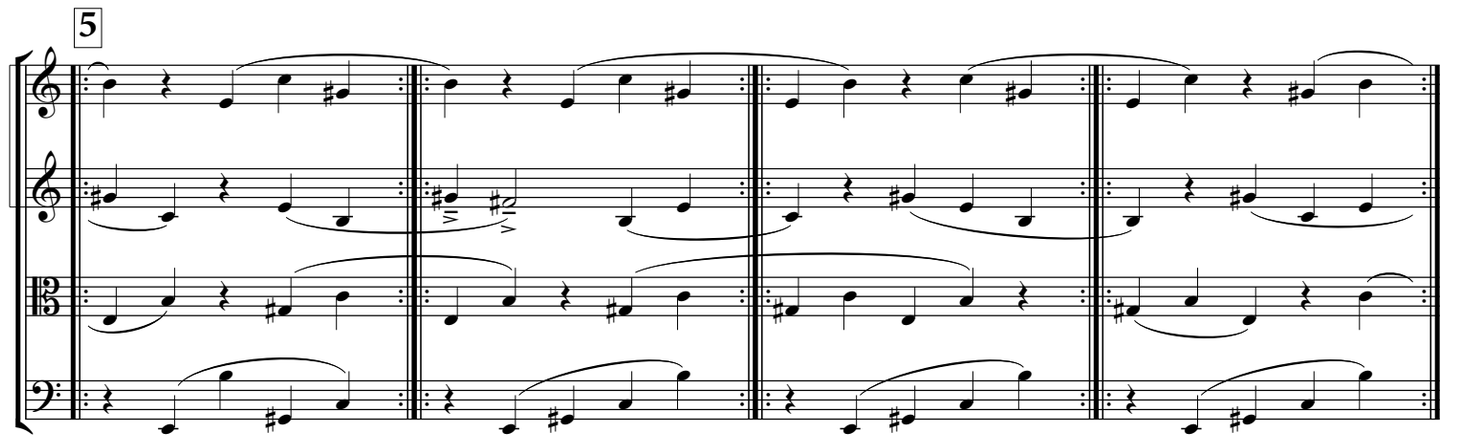

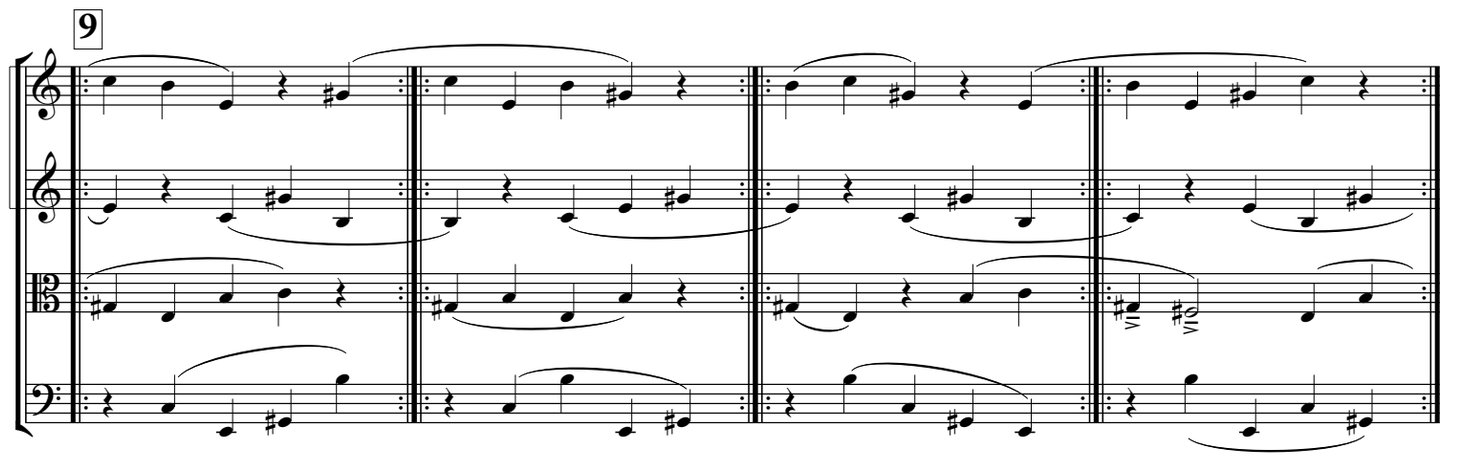

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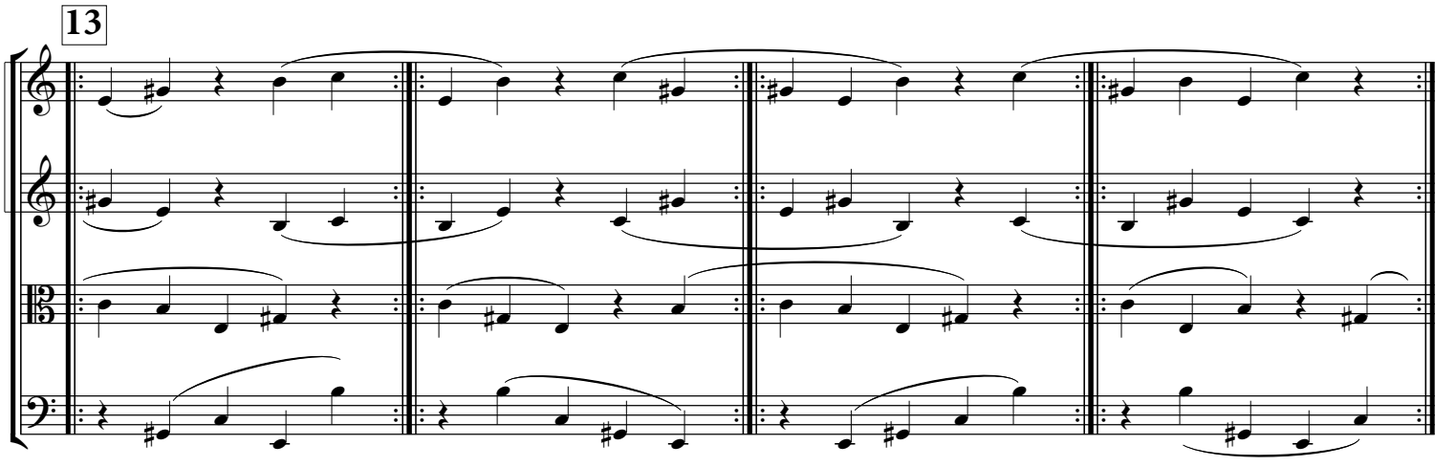
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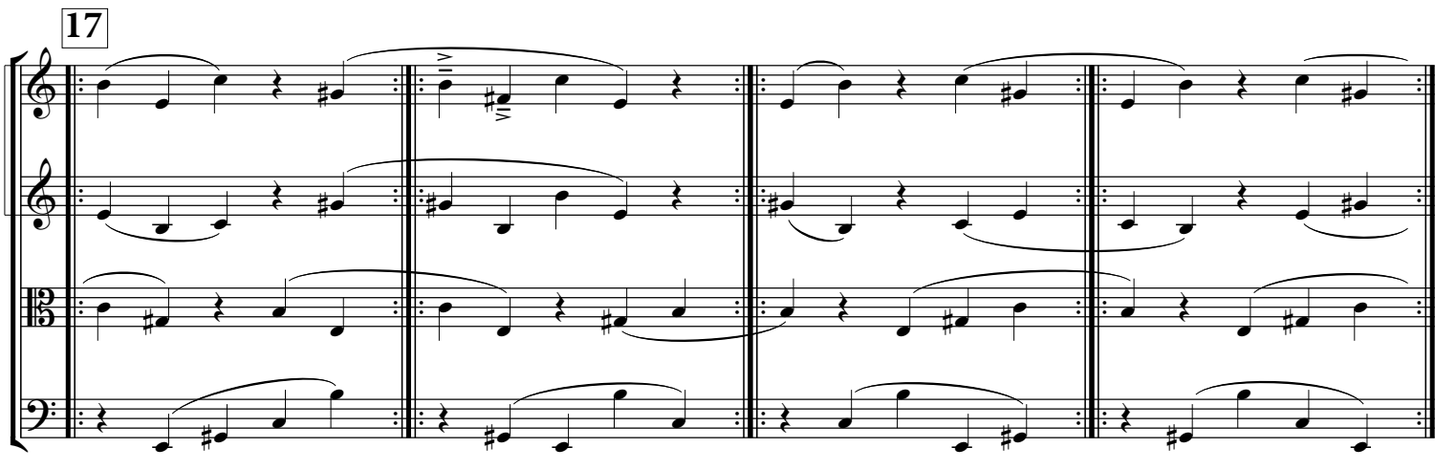
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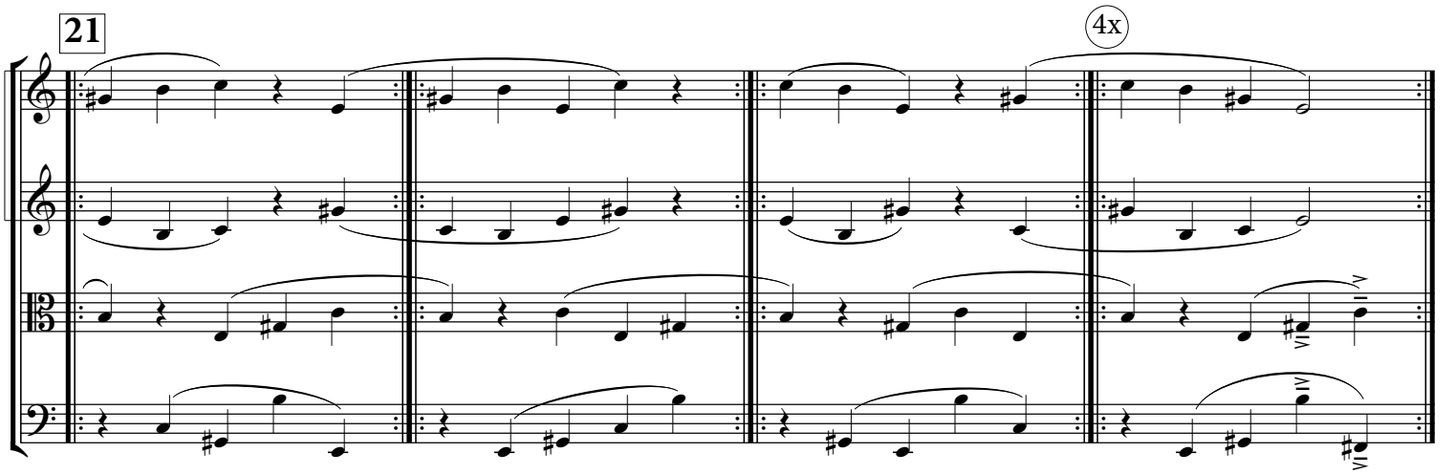
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THE VILE RAINBOW

4. MEDICAL RADIOGRAPHY

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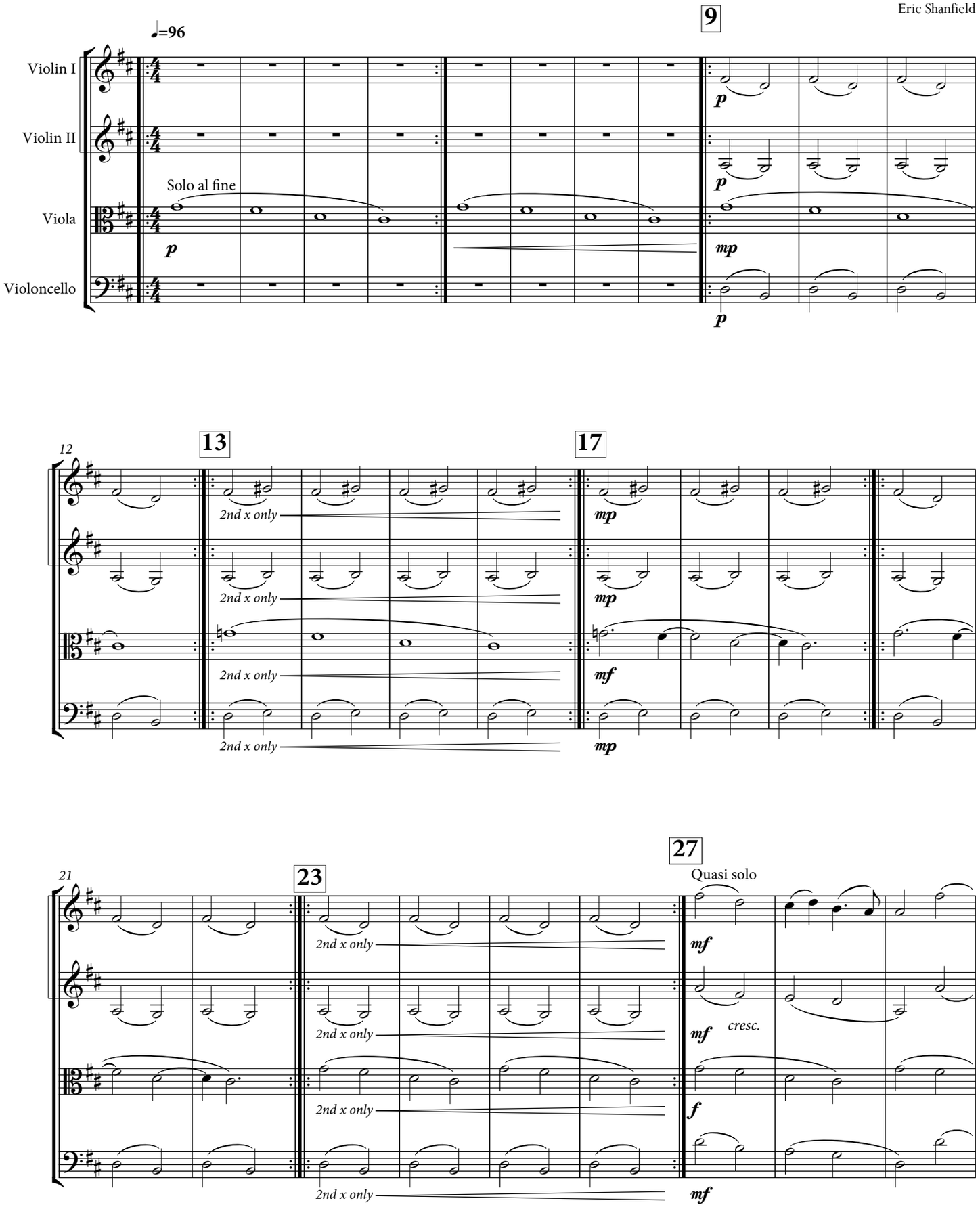

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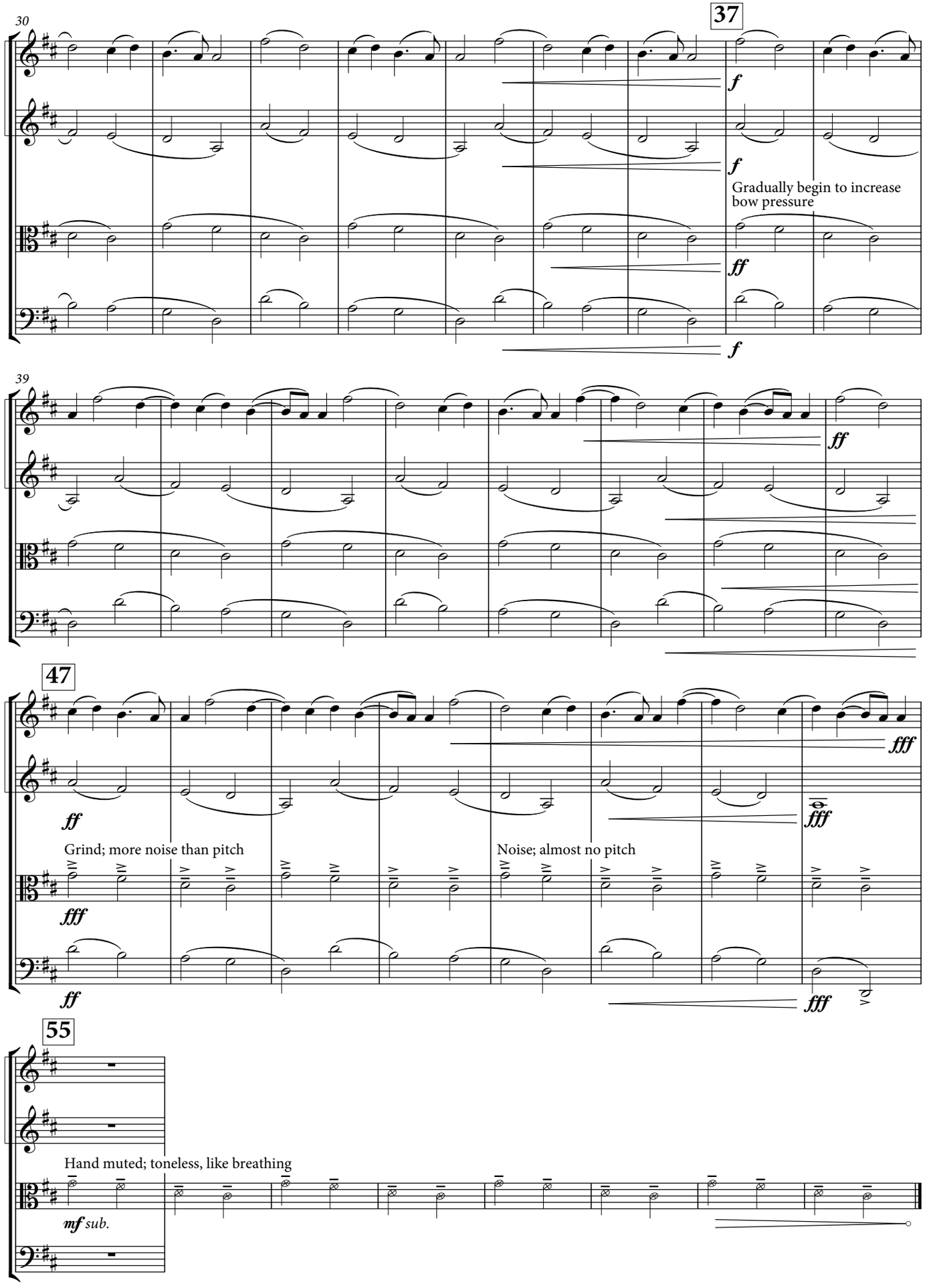
30
37
f
f
Gradually begin to increase bow pressure
ff
f
39
ff
47
fff
ff
fff
Grind; more noise than pitch
Noise; almost no pitch
fff
ff
fff
55
Hand muted; toneless, like breathing
mf sub.