Prelude and Fugue No. 7 in Eb Major

from "The Well-Tempered Klavier"
by Johann Sebastian Bach

Arranged for Handbell Sextet
by Larry Sue

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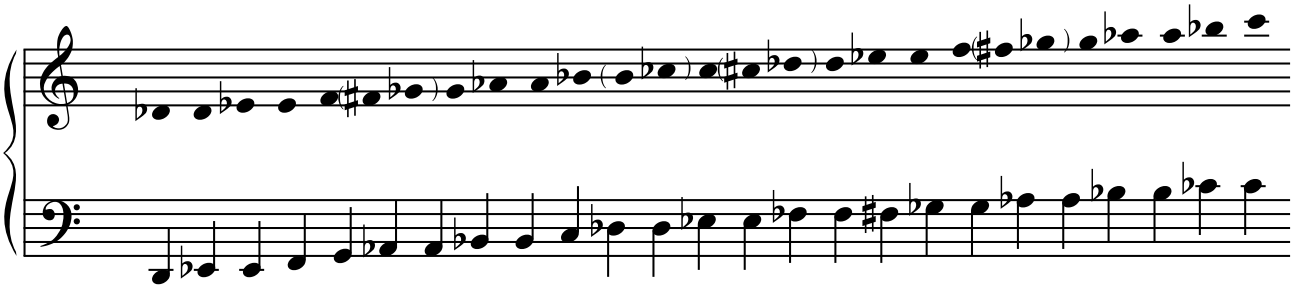
Performance Notes

5 Octaves
Handbells Used: 45



Sometime around 1720, "well-tempering", the tuning of a keyboard instrument was discovered. Without going into excruciating detail, this meant that it was now possible to play harpsichords and clavichords - and shortly thereafter, pianos - in every key.

In 1722, J.S. Bach combined this new technology with his inimitable compositional genius by writing preludes-and-fugue pairs in each major and each minor key. And as if that wasn't enough, in 1744 he did it again! The two sets of pieces are now known as Book I and Book 2 of "The Well-Tempered Klavier".

For nearly three centuries, they've been an indispensable part of the classical repertoire. As instructional works, they provide opportunity to learn the "sense of line" that's essential to great performance; as performance pieces, they charm and amaze ever after multiple hearings.

The two pieces for a particular key are intended to be played prelude first, fugue second. Invariably, this results in a beautiful contrast between the impressions created by each piece. Each prelude-fugue pair is arranged so they can be played back-to-back by the same (two to six) players.

Because of the nature of Baroque music, and the additional complexity injected by transferring it to handbells, these arrangements have been notated in "open score" format with use of cross-staffing to show where the musical lines are going; this is particularly true in the fugues.

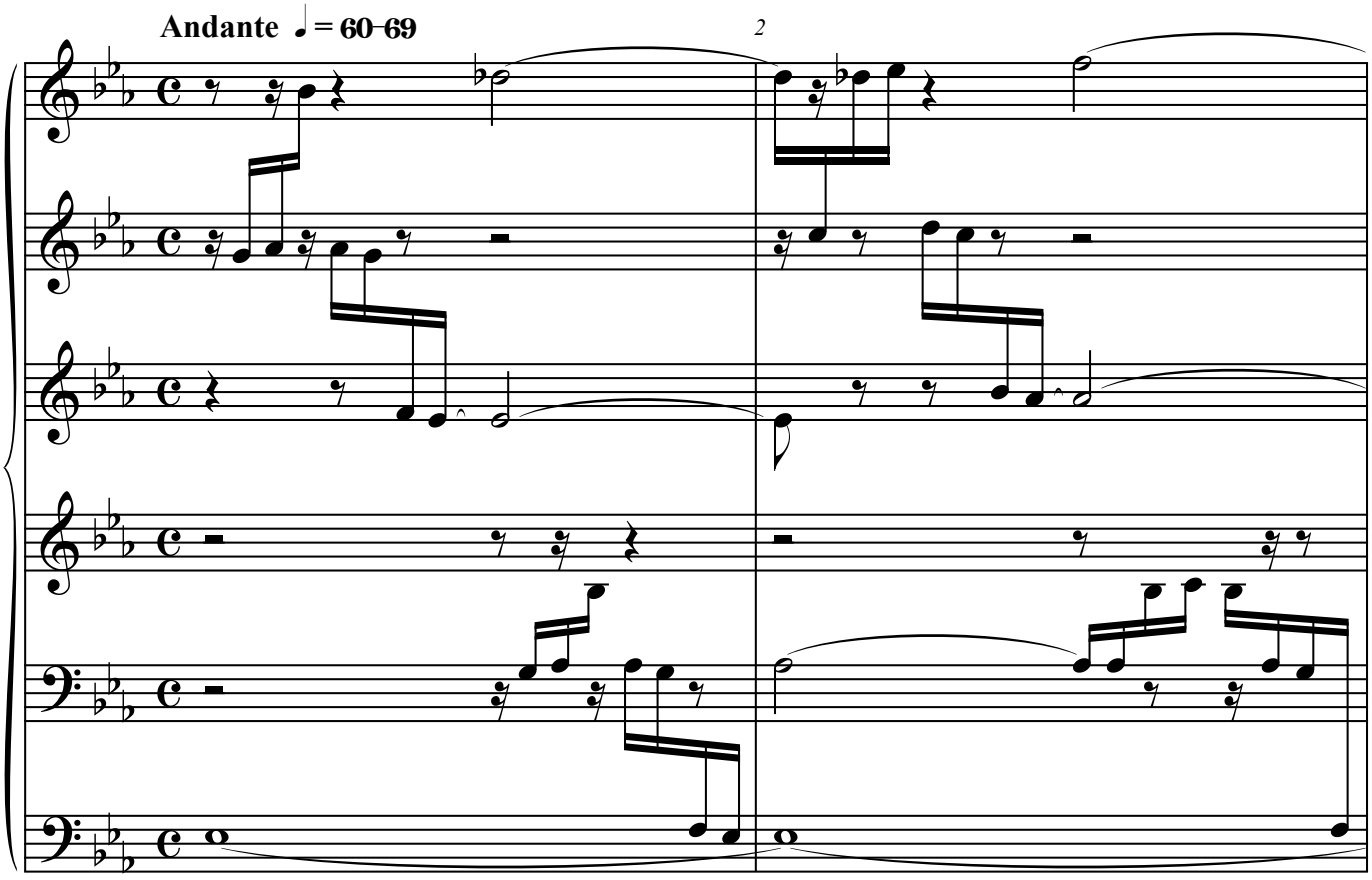
Prelude No. 7 has a cheerful cast that speaks of gentle waves by the seashore and a leisurely day spent gathering shells and driftwood. The idea is to make it so wonderful that the listener wishes it wouldn't end.

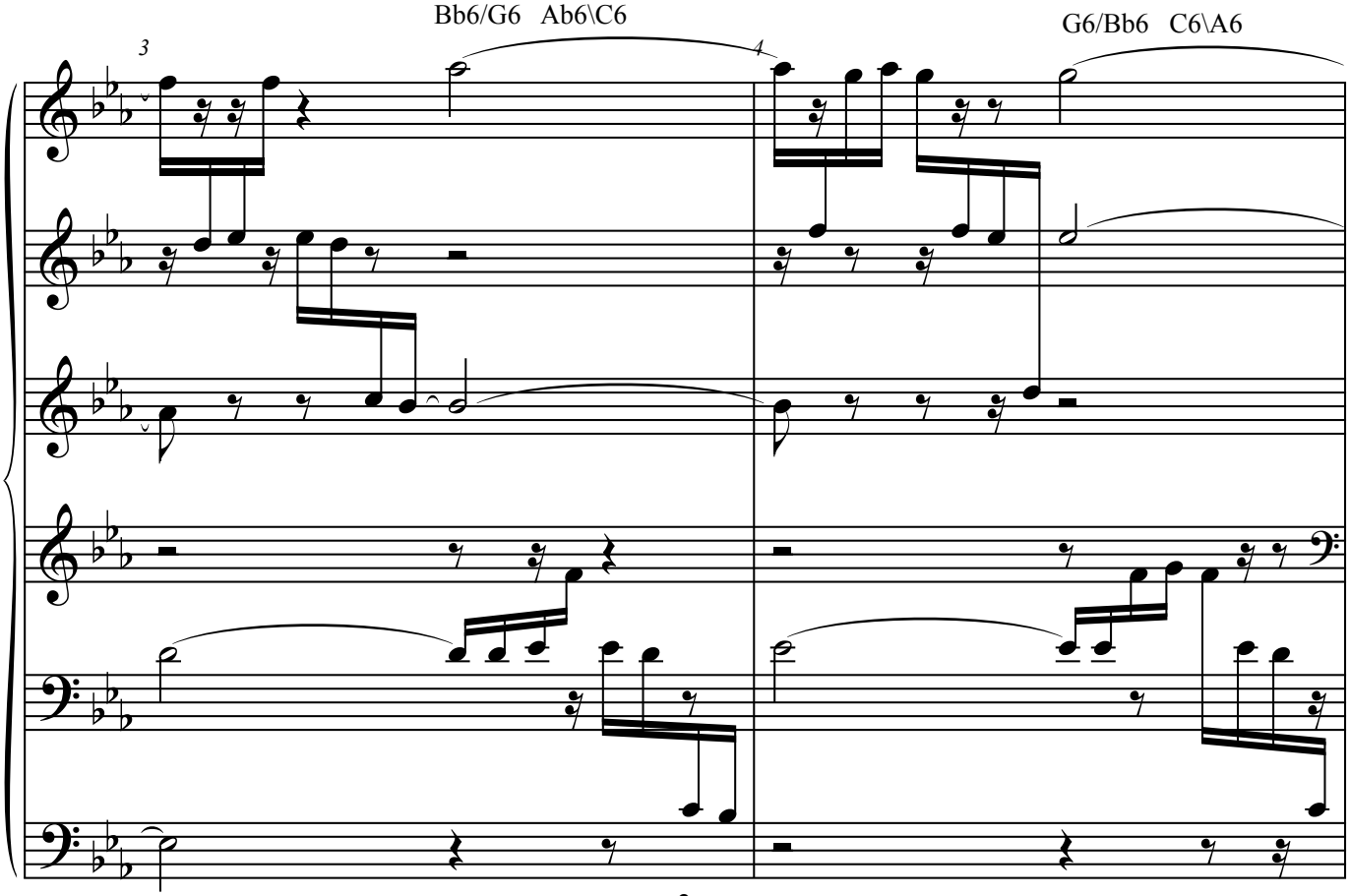
Fugue No. 7 has a bouncy, happy character marked by shakes on most of the quarter notes (these are notated with mordents and other such ornaments in the original score). It's important to play them because they serve to demarcate the end of the first part of the fugual statement, true, but they're also the key to showing that you're having fun with the music!

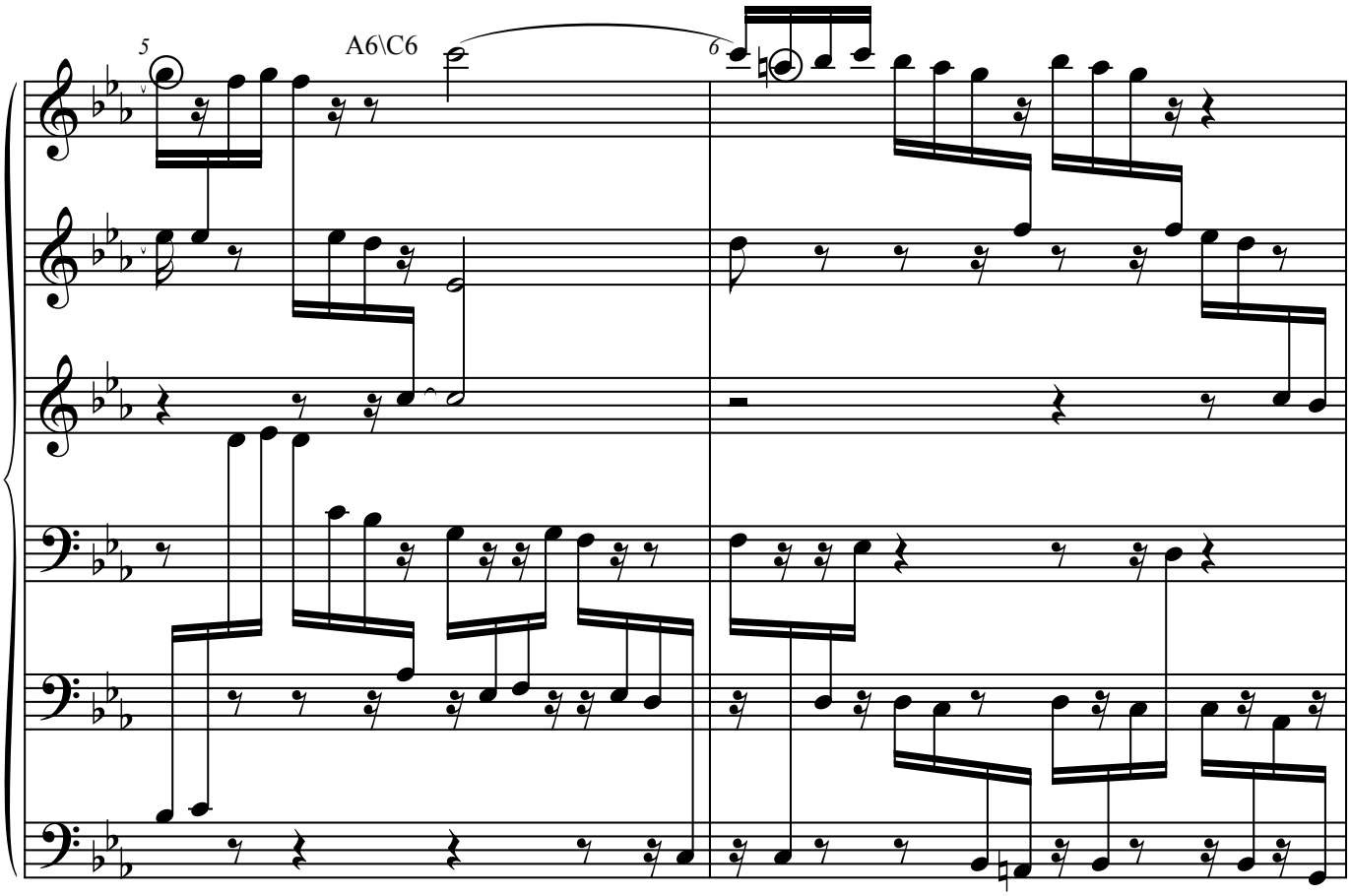
Have patience and persevere - at the end of the path lies a gorgeous performance!

Larry Sue

Prelude No. 7



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A6\C6
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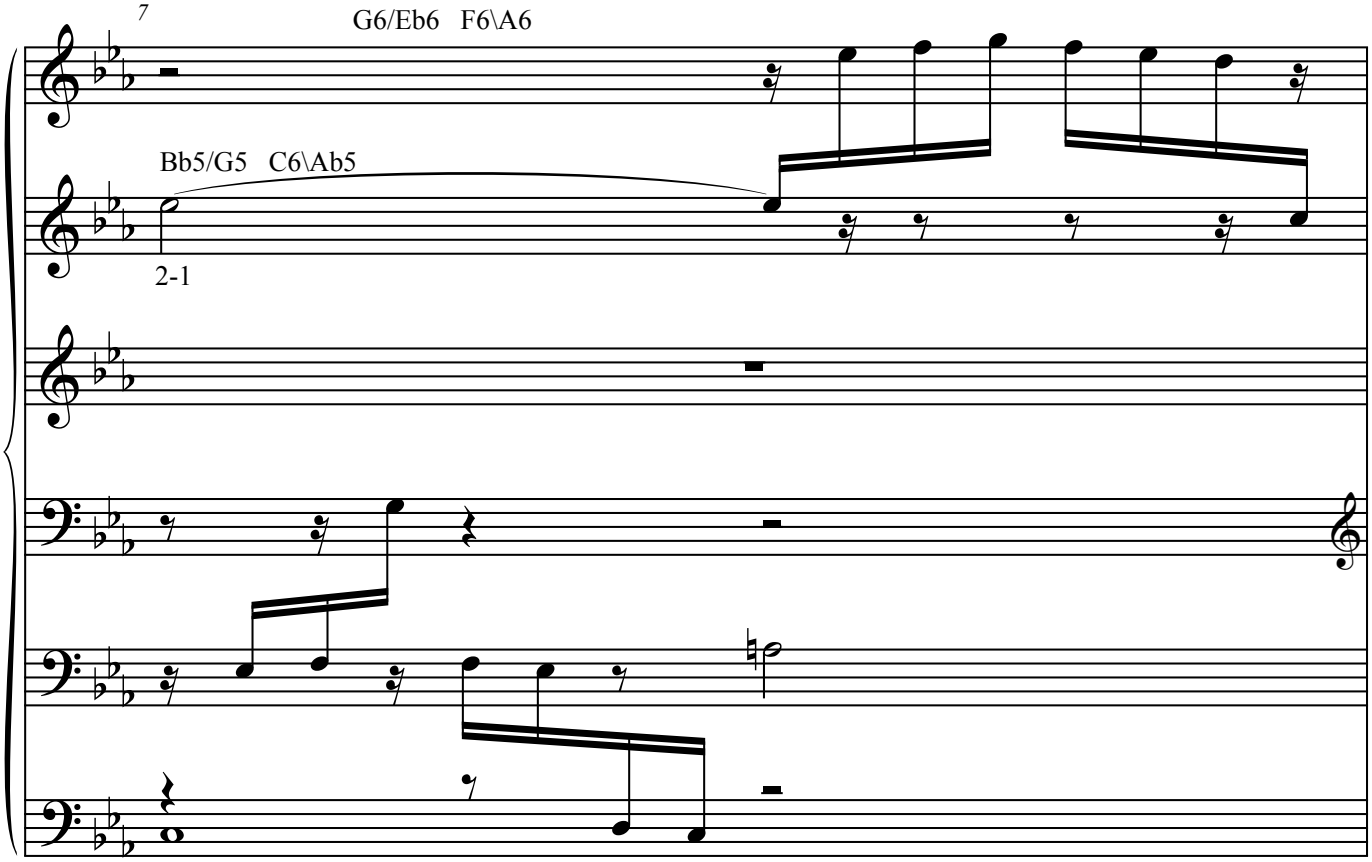
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G6/Eb6 F6\A6
Bb5/G5 C6\Ab5
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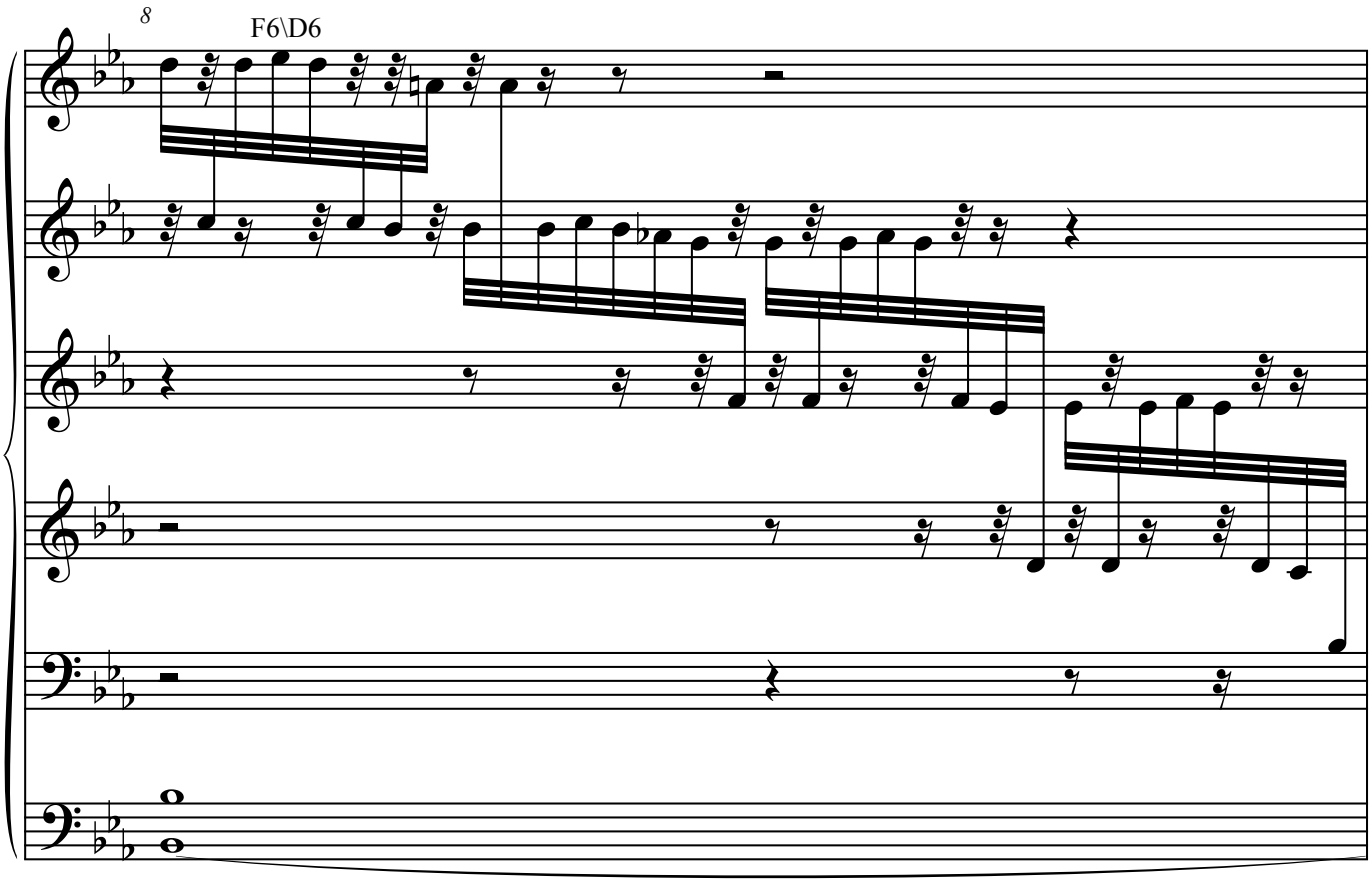
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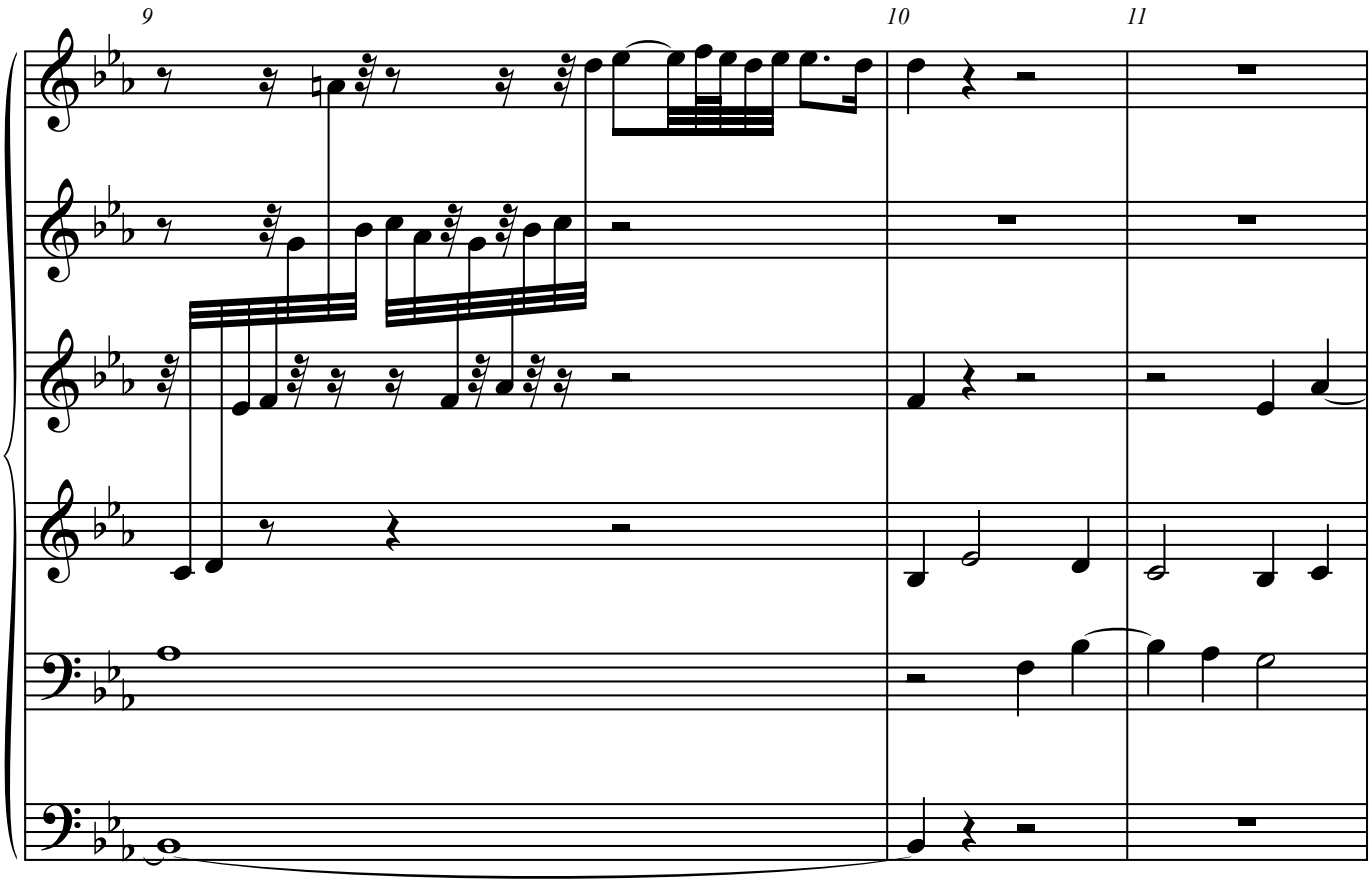
F6\D6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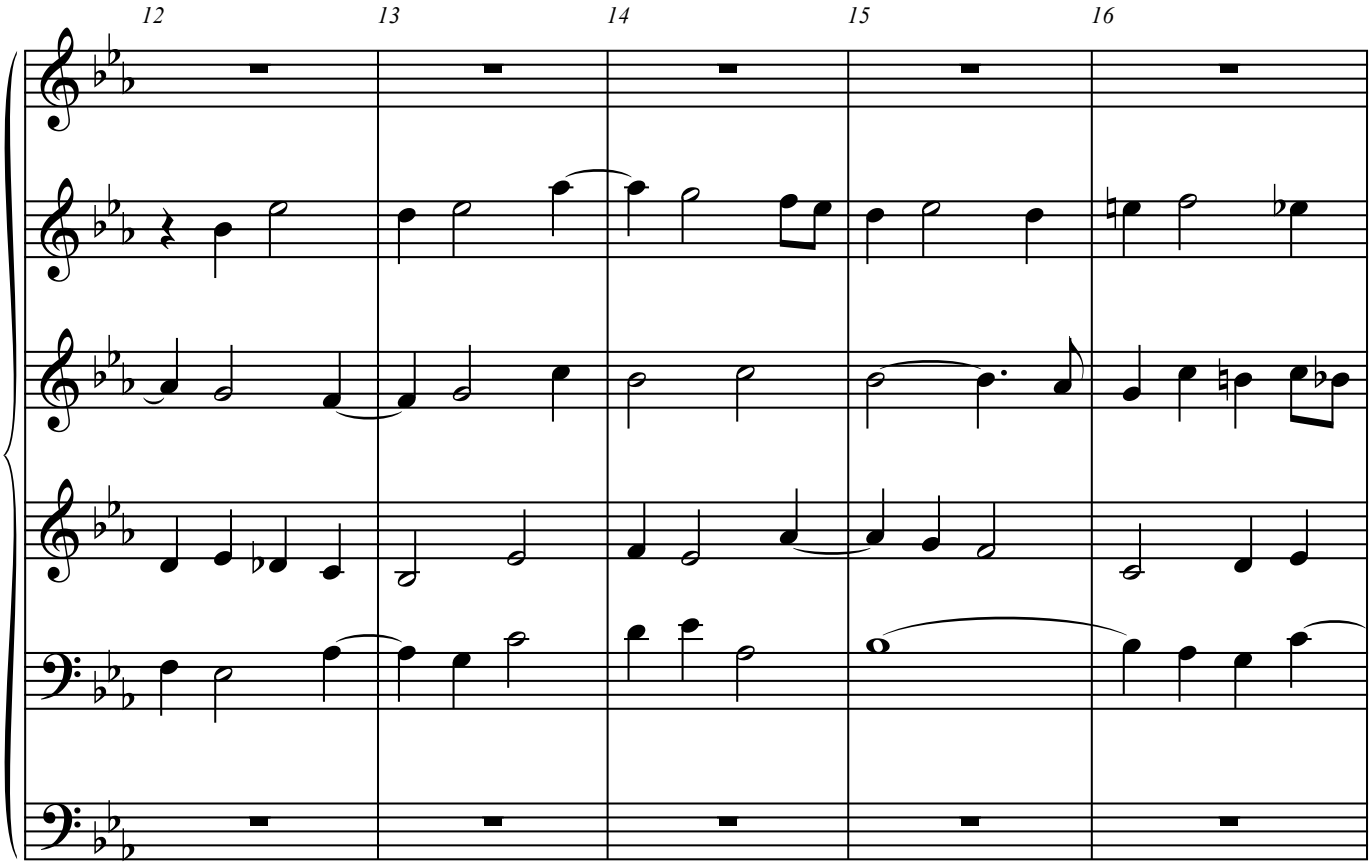
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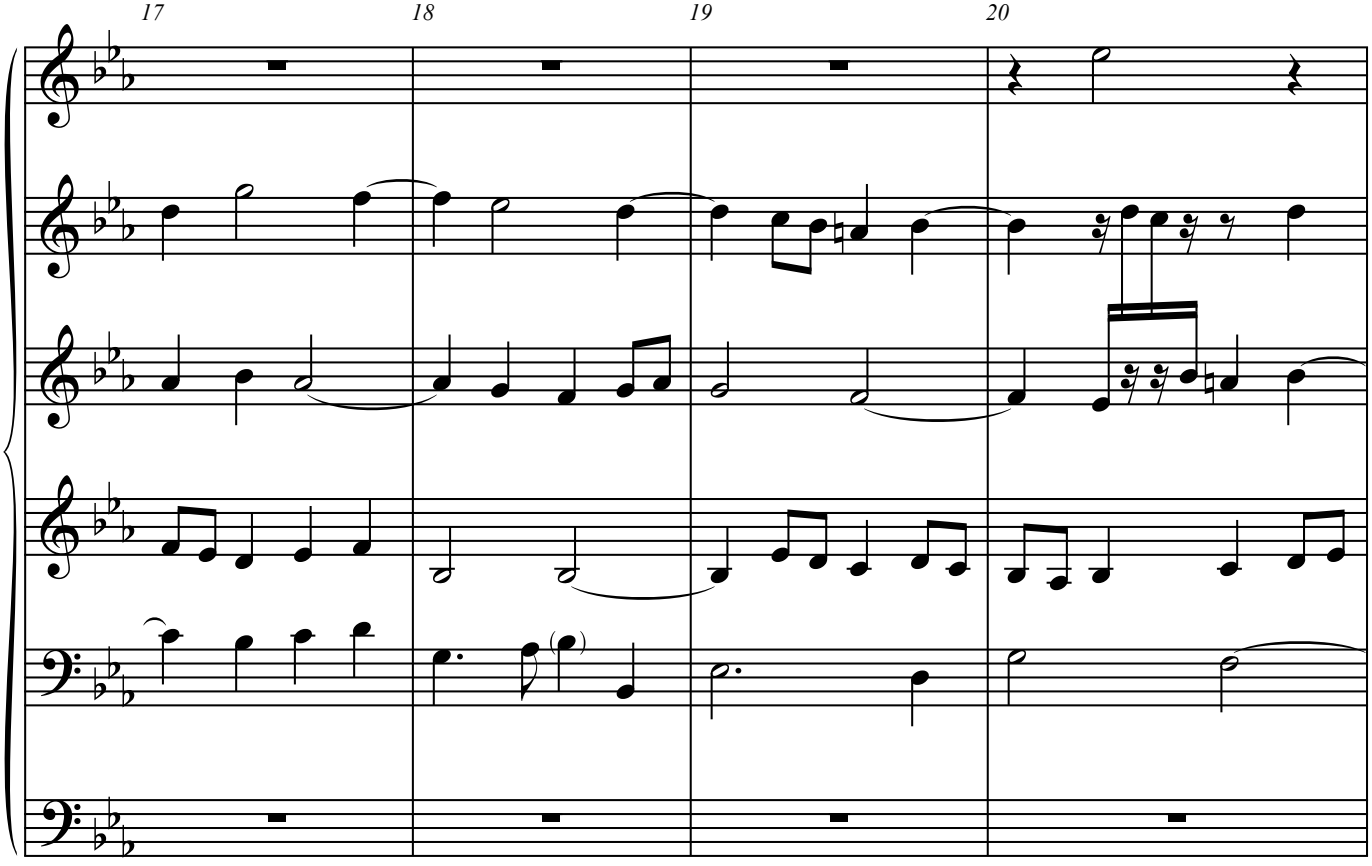
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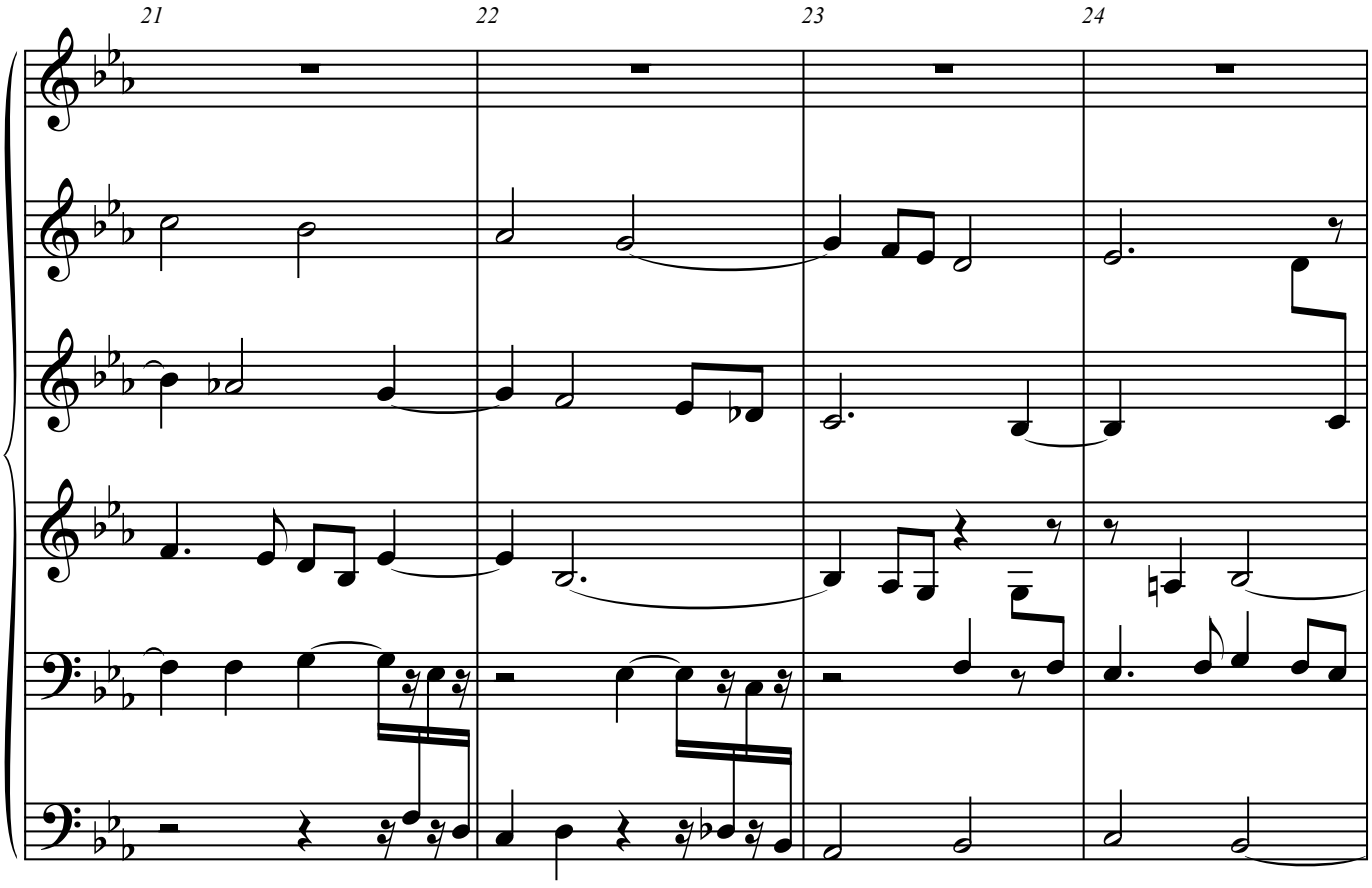
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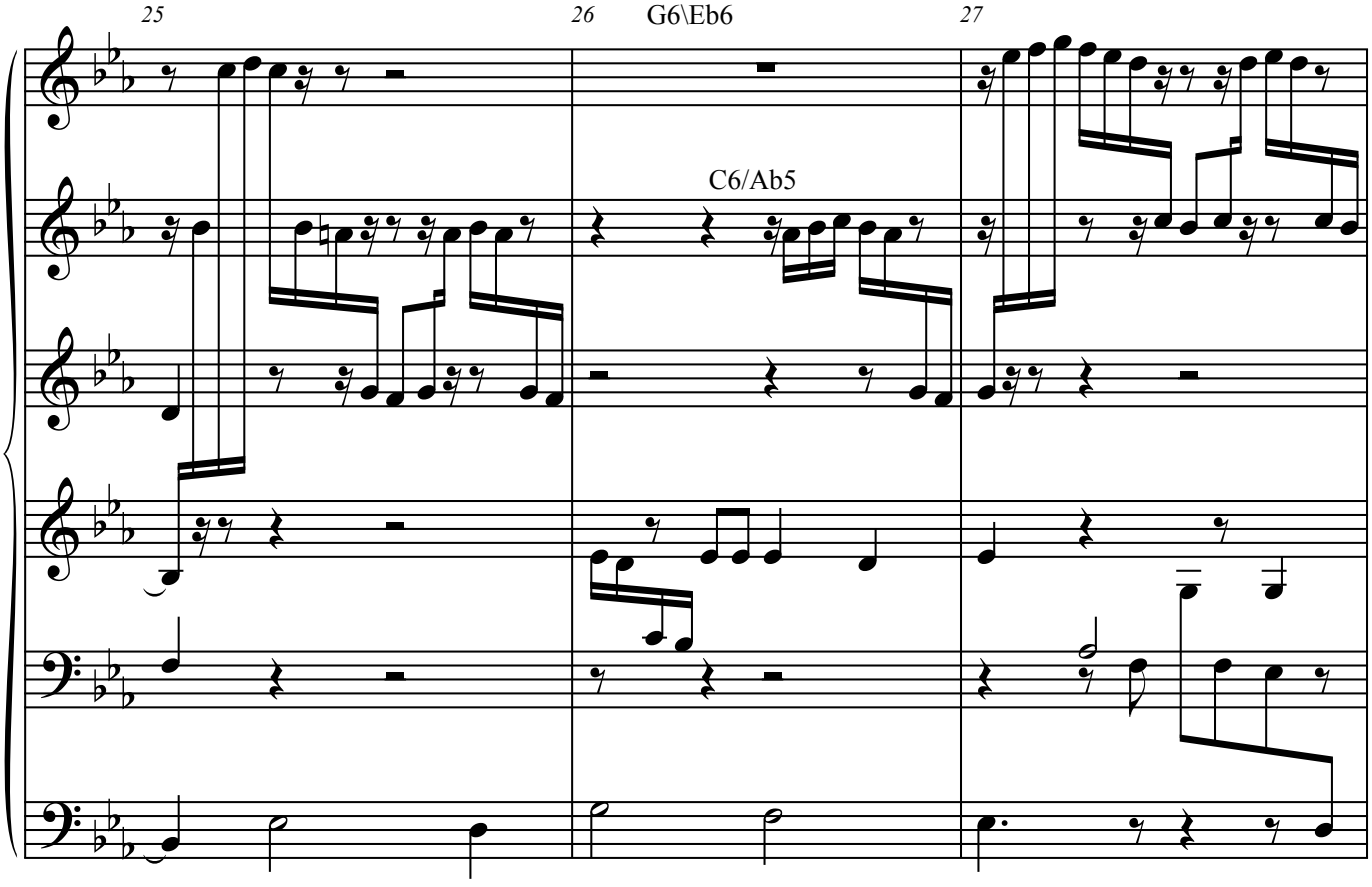
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G6\Eb6
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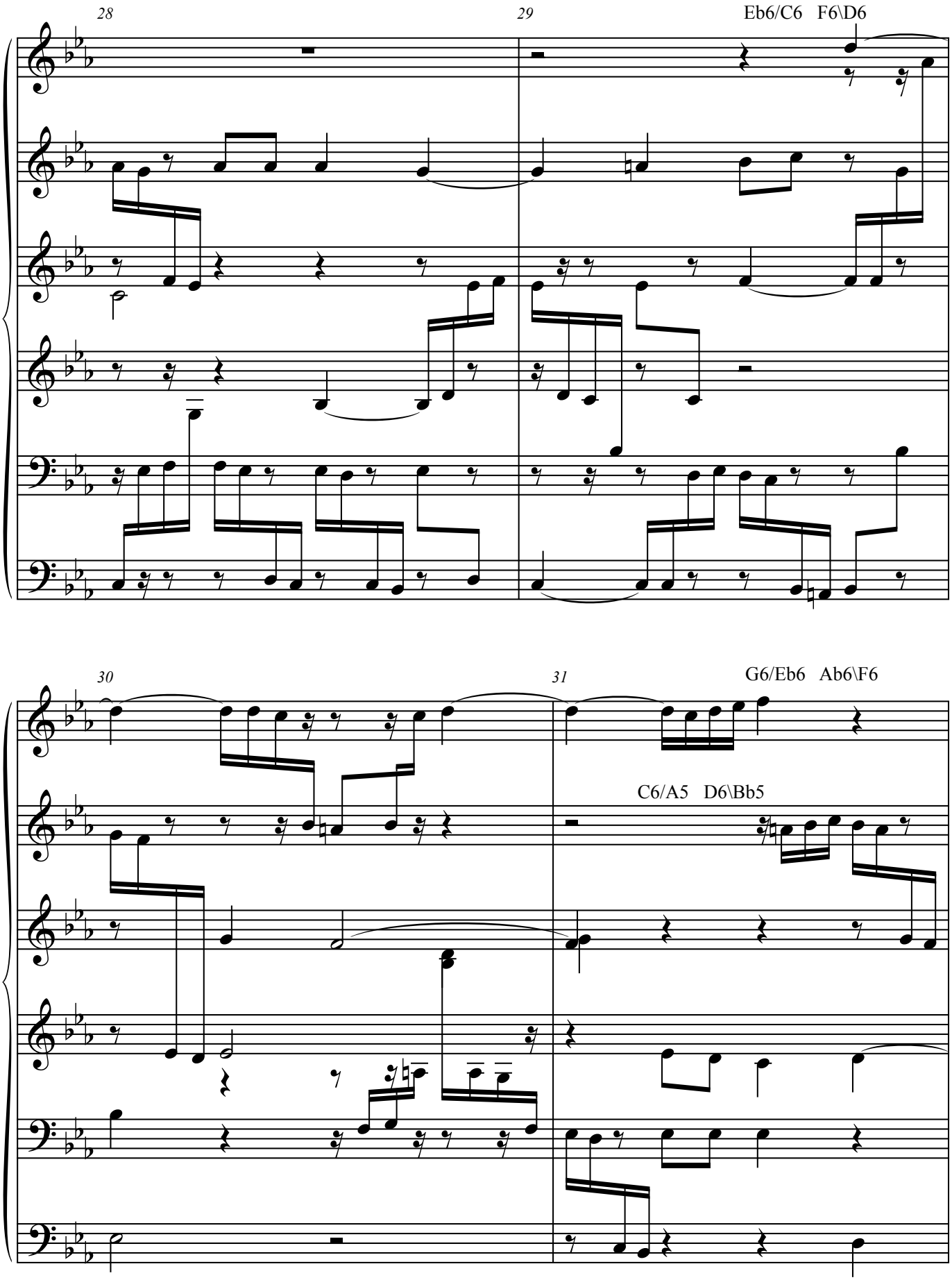
C6/Ab5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Eb6/C6 F6\D6
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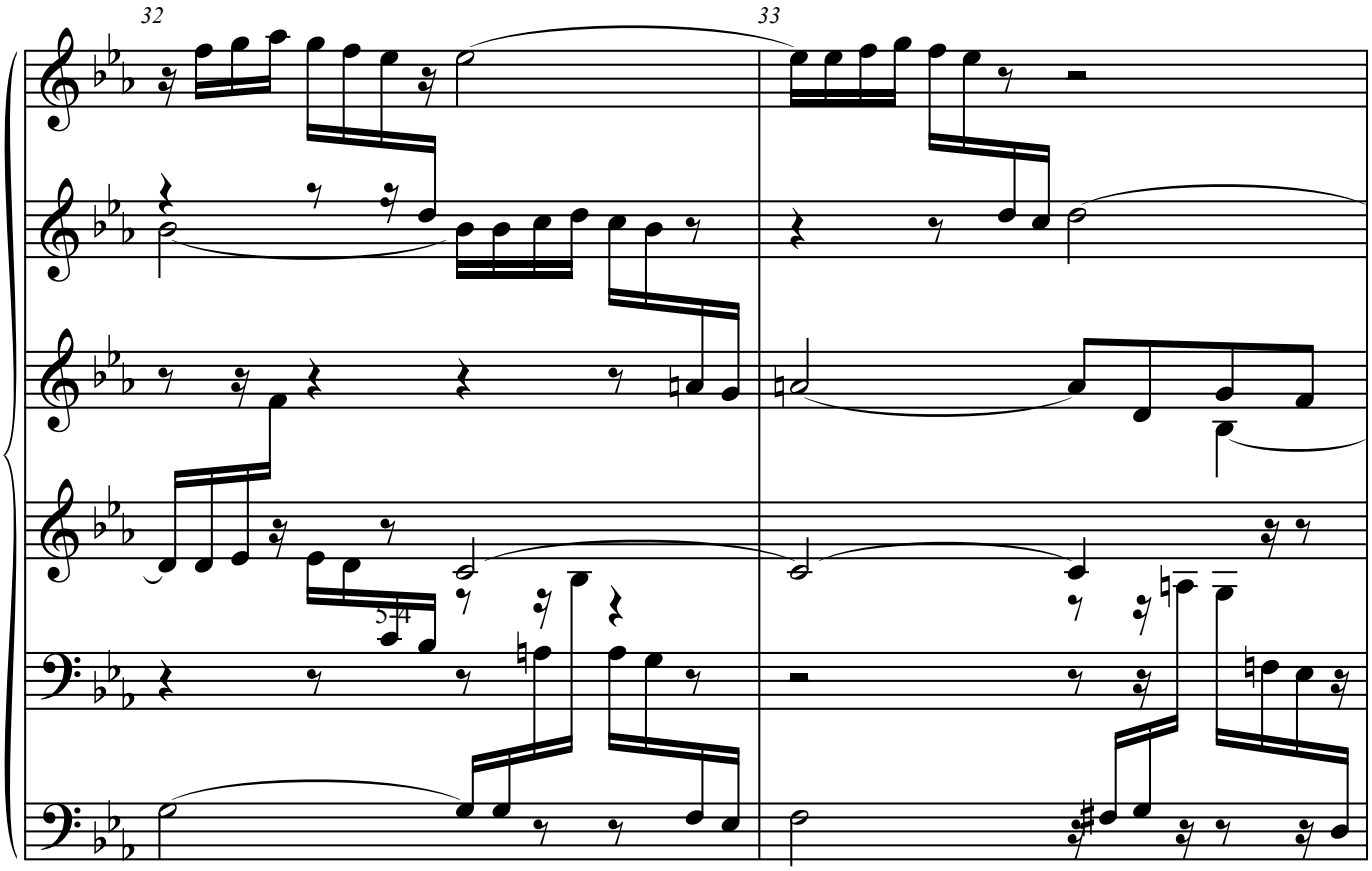
G6/Eb6 Ab6\F6
C6/A5 D6\Bb5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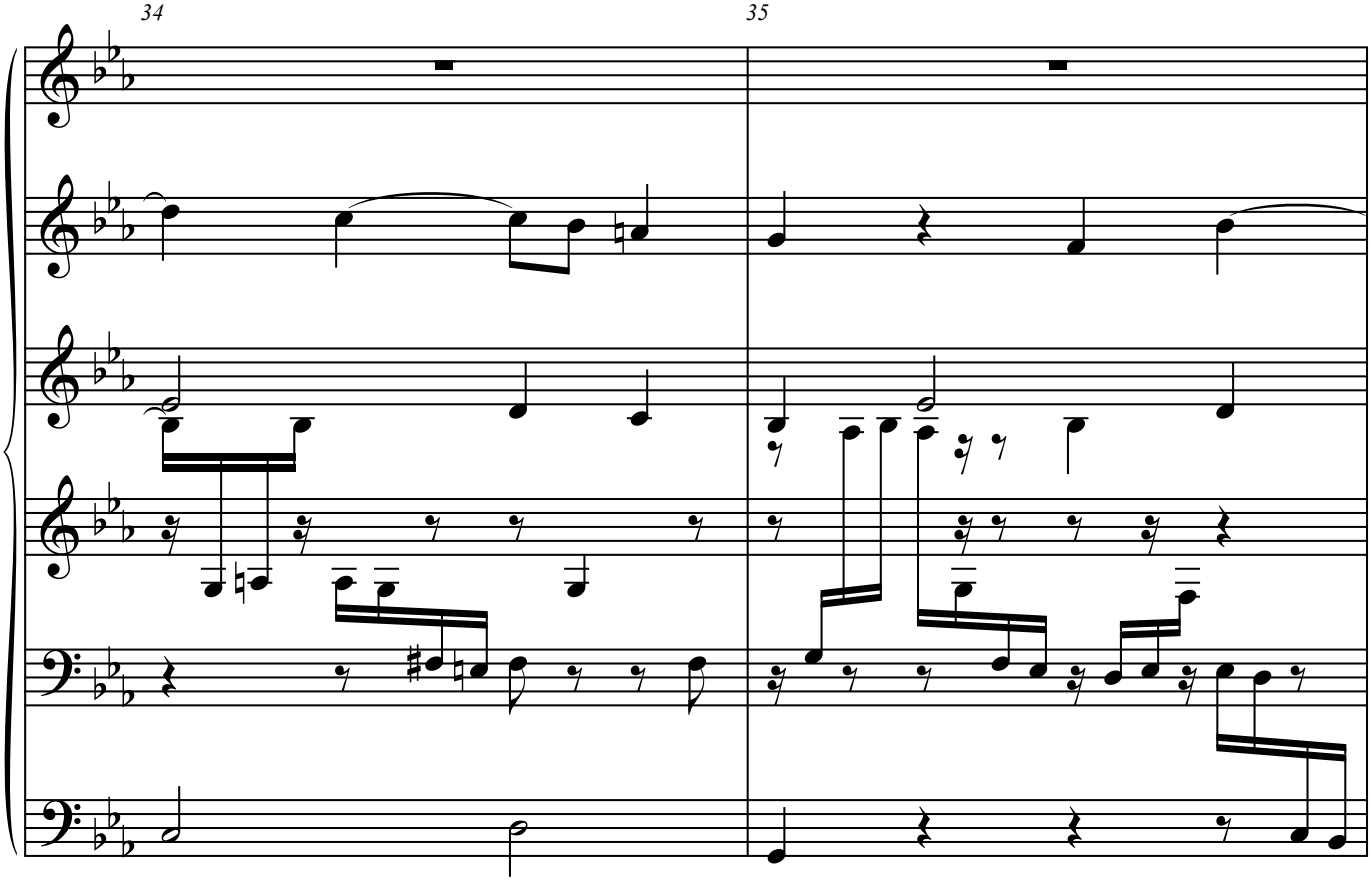
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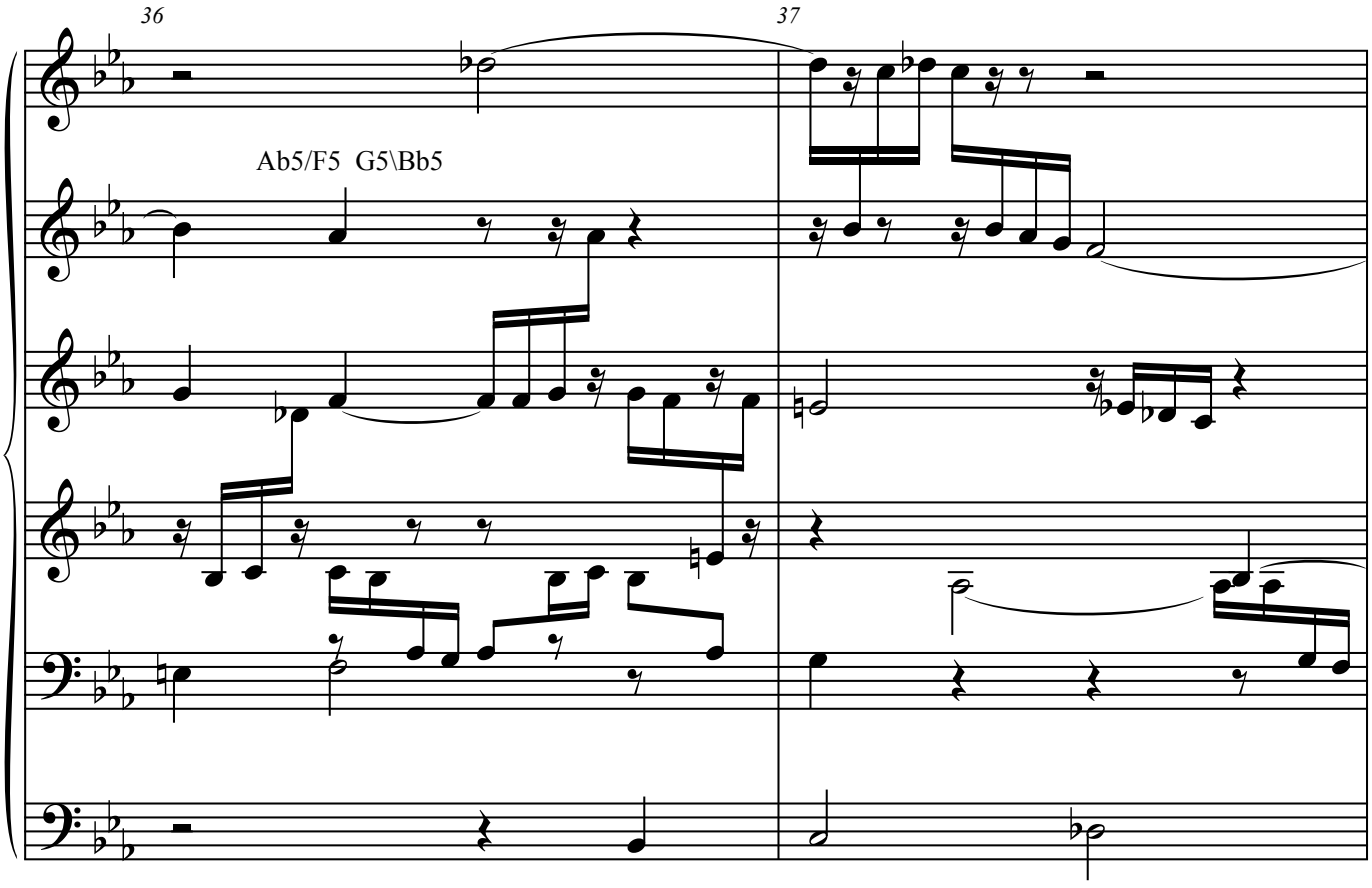
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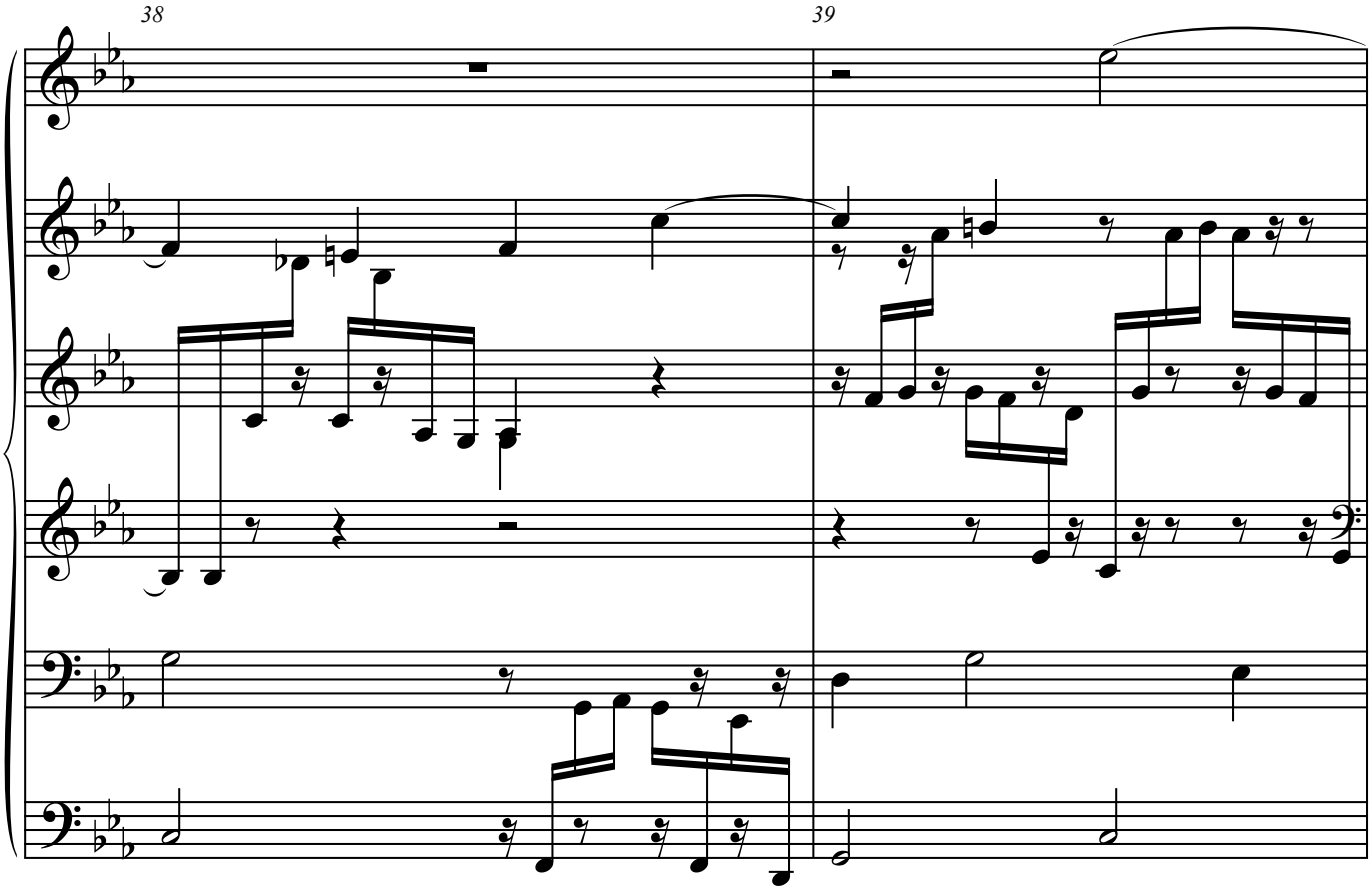
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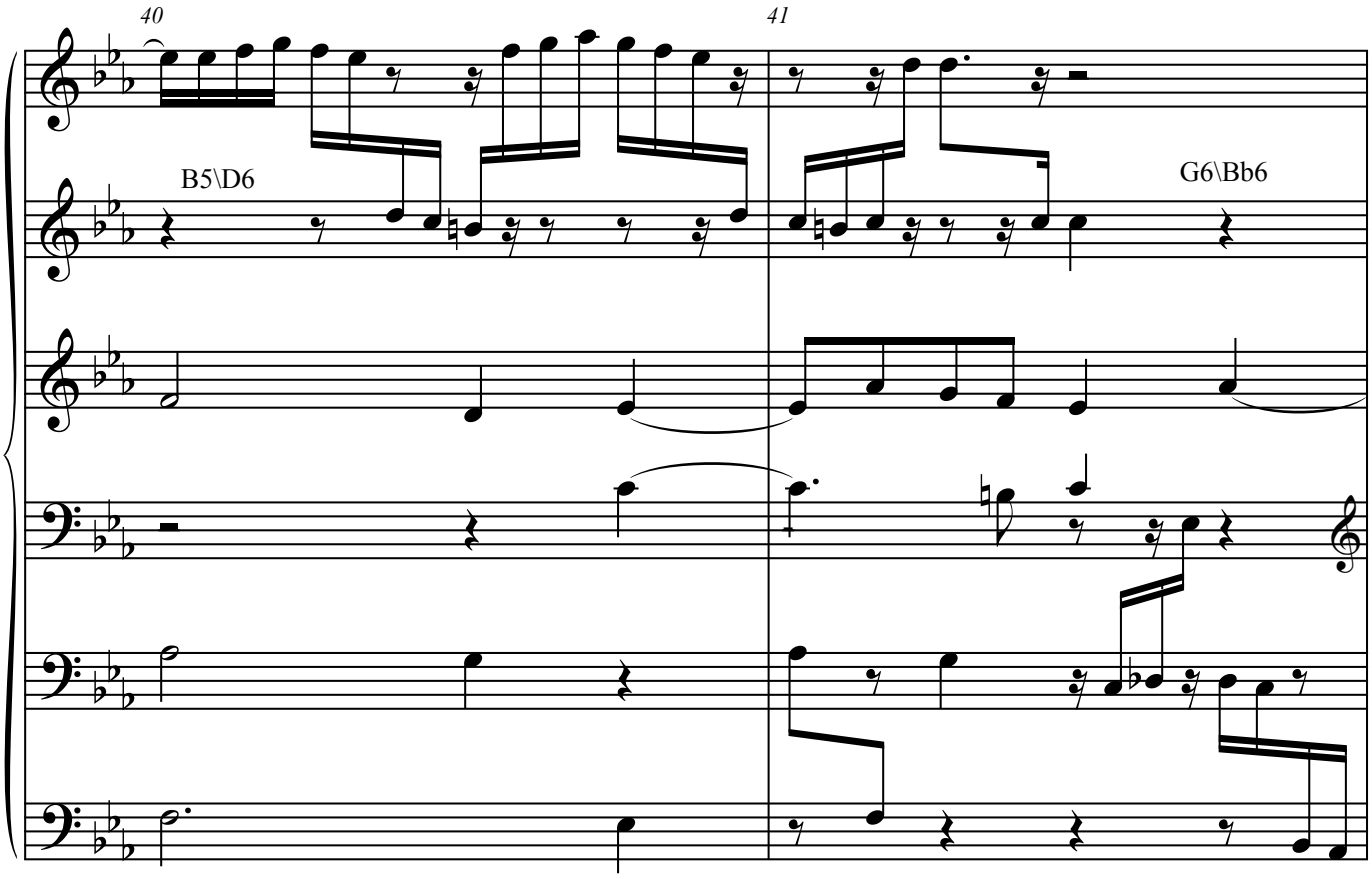
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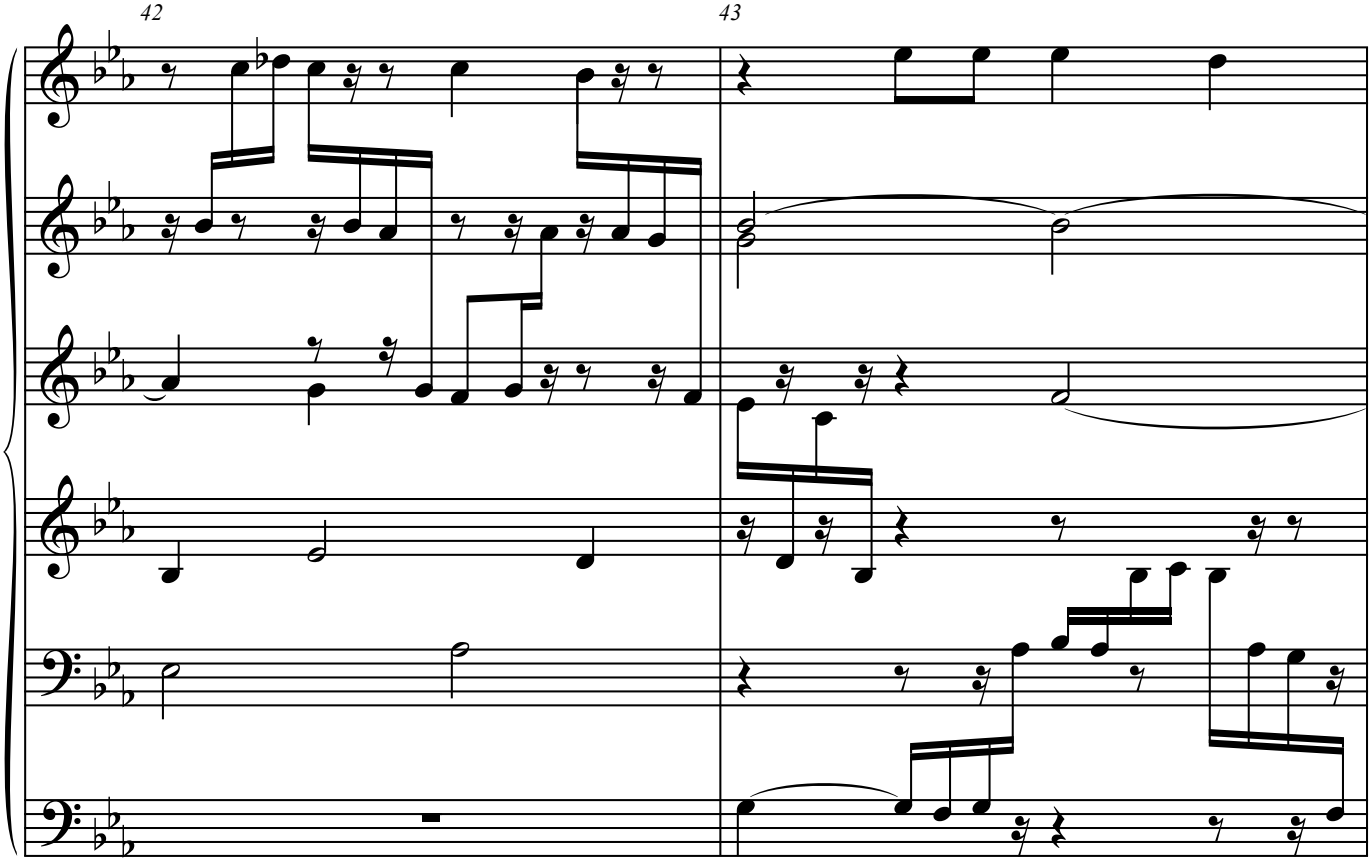
G6\Bb6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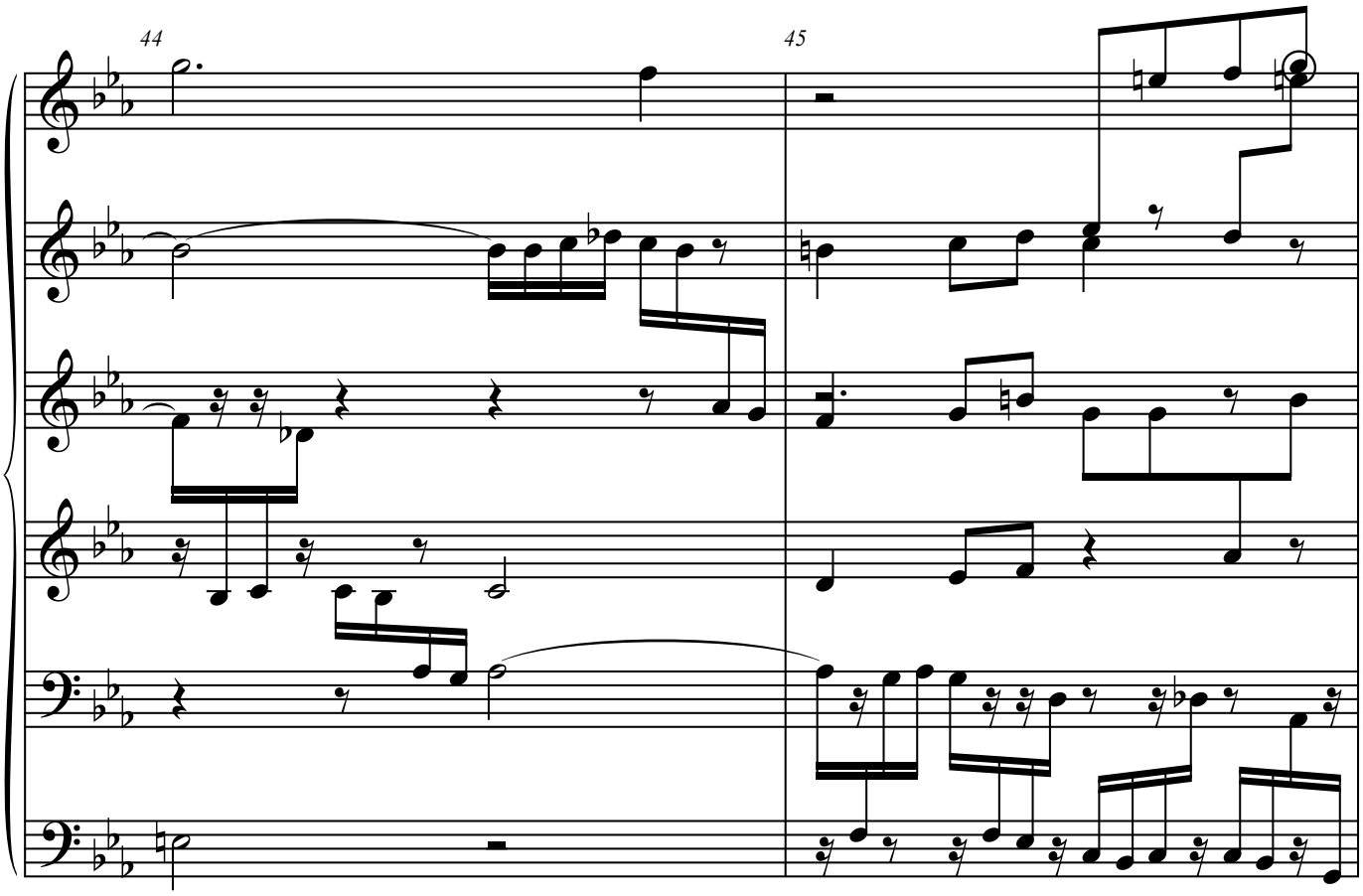
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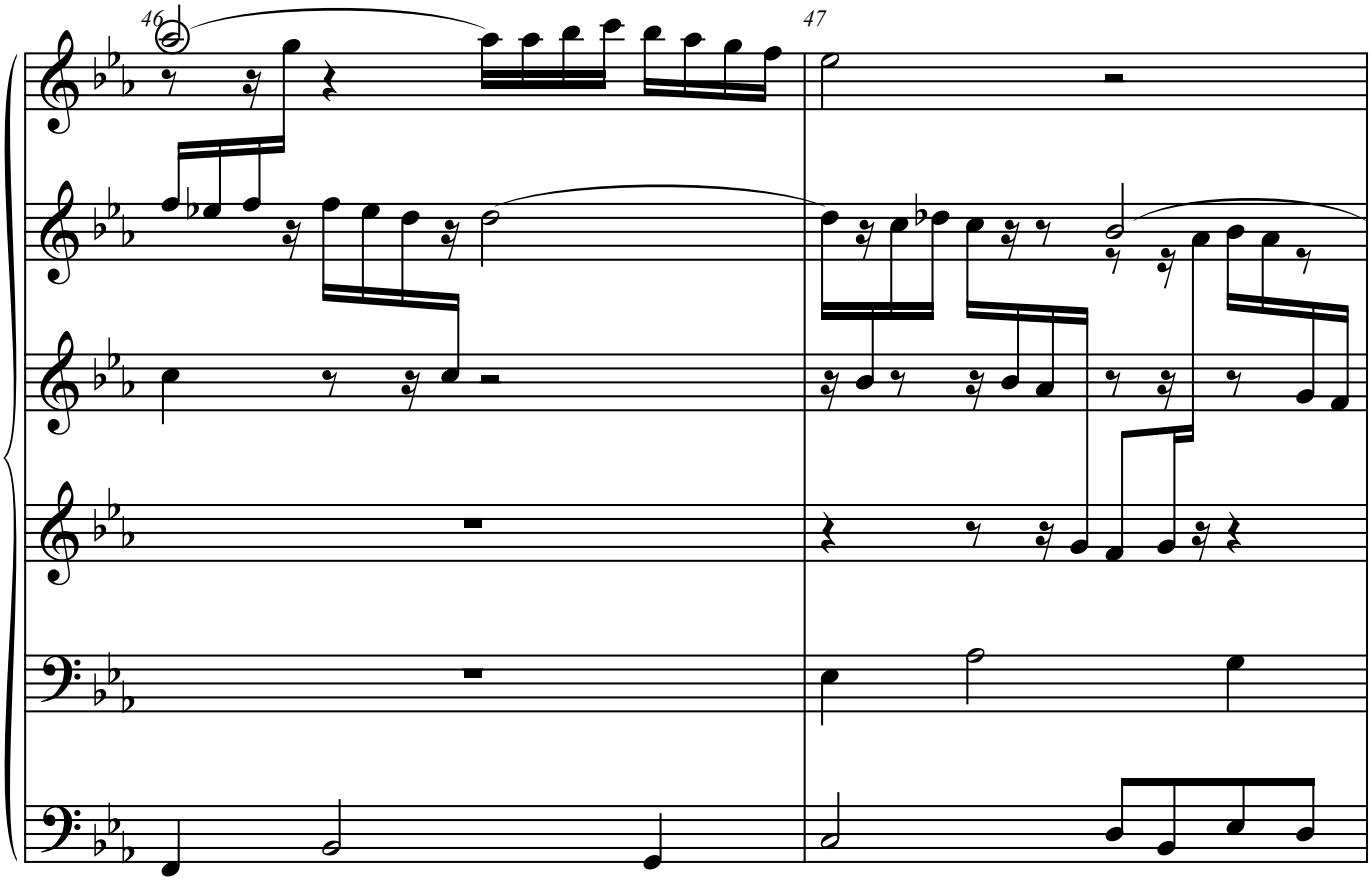
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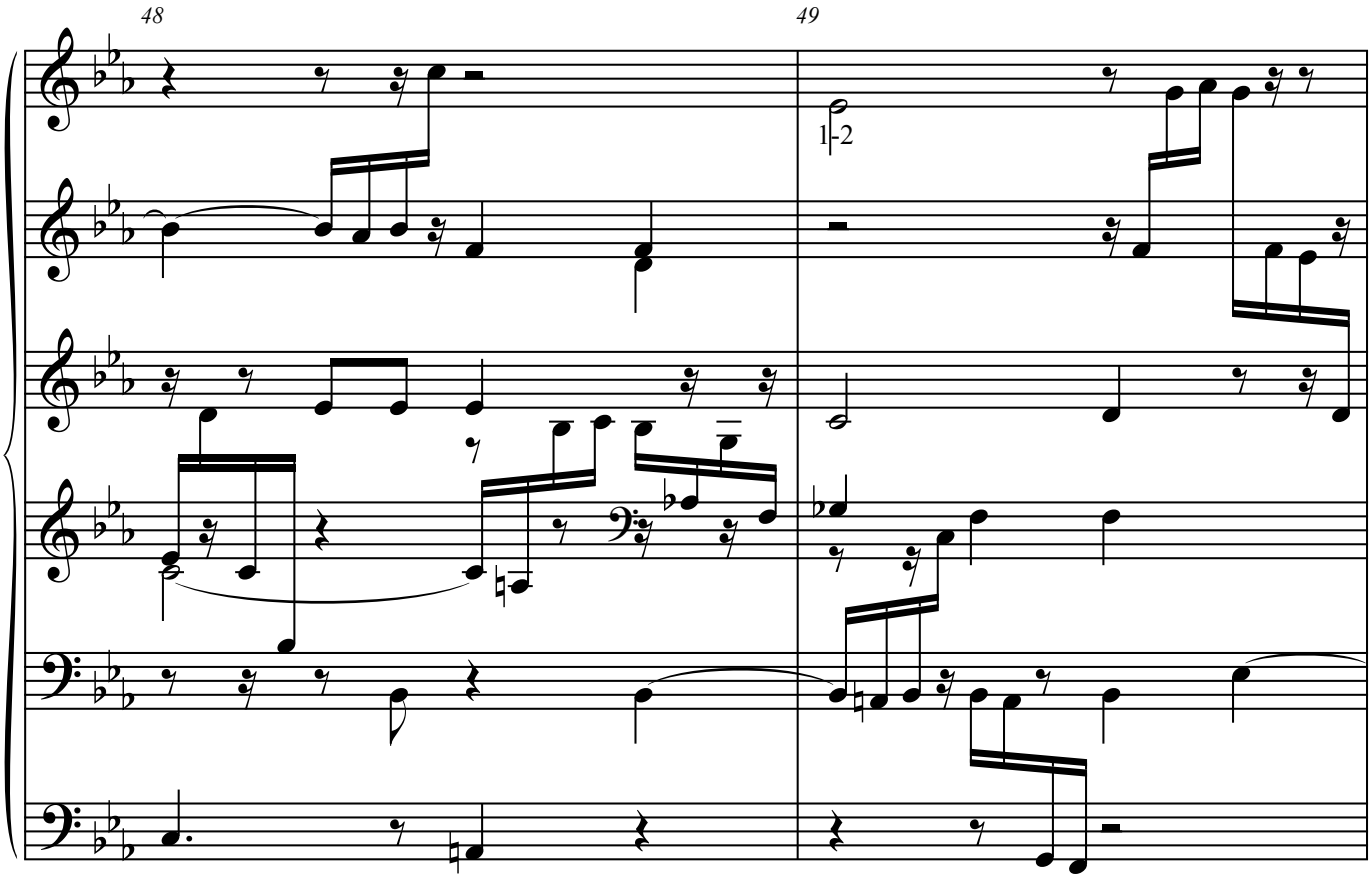
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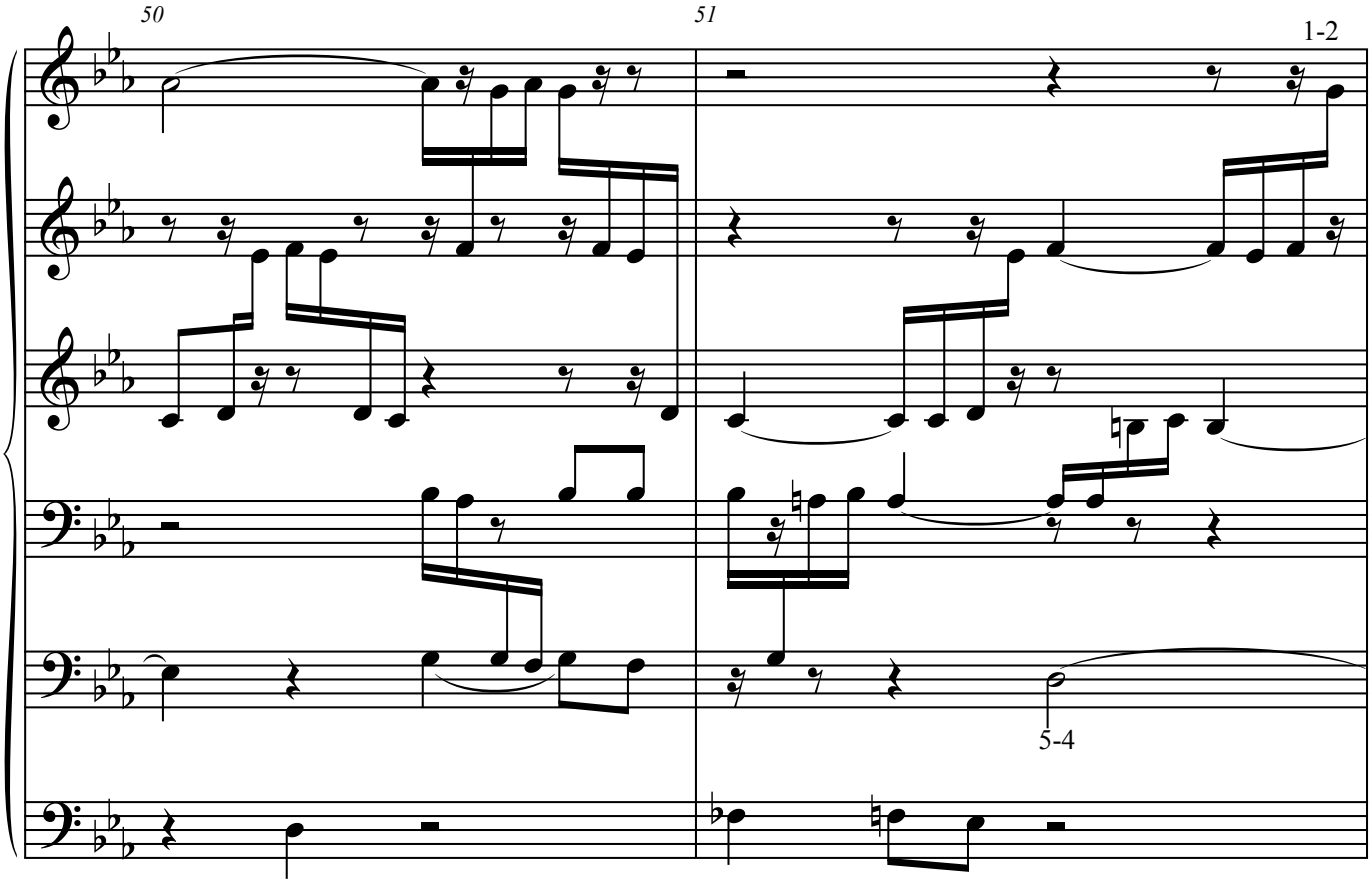
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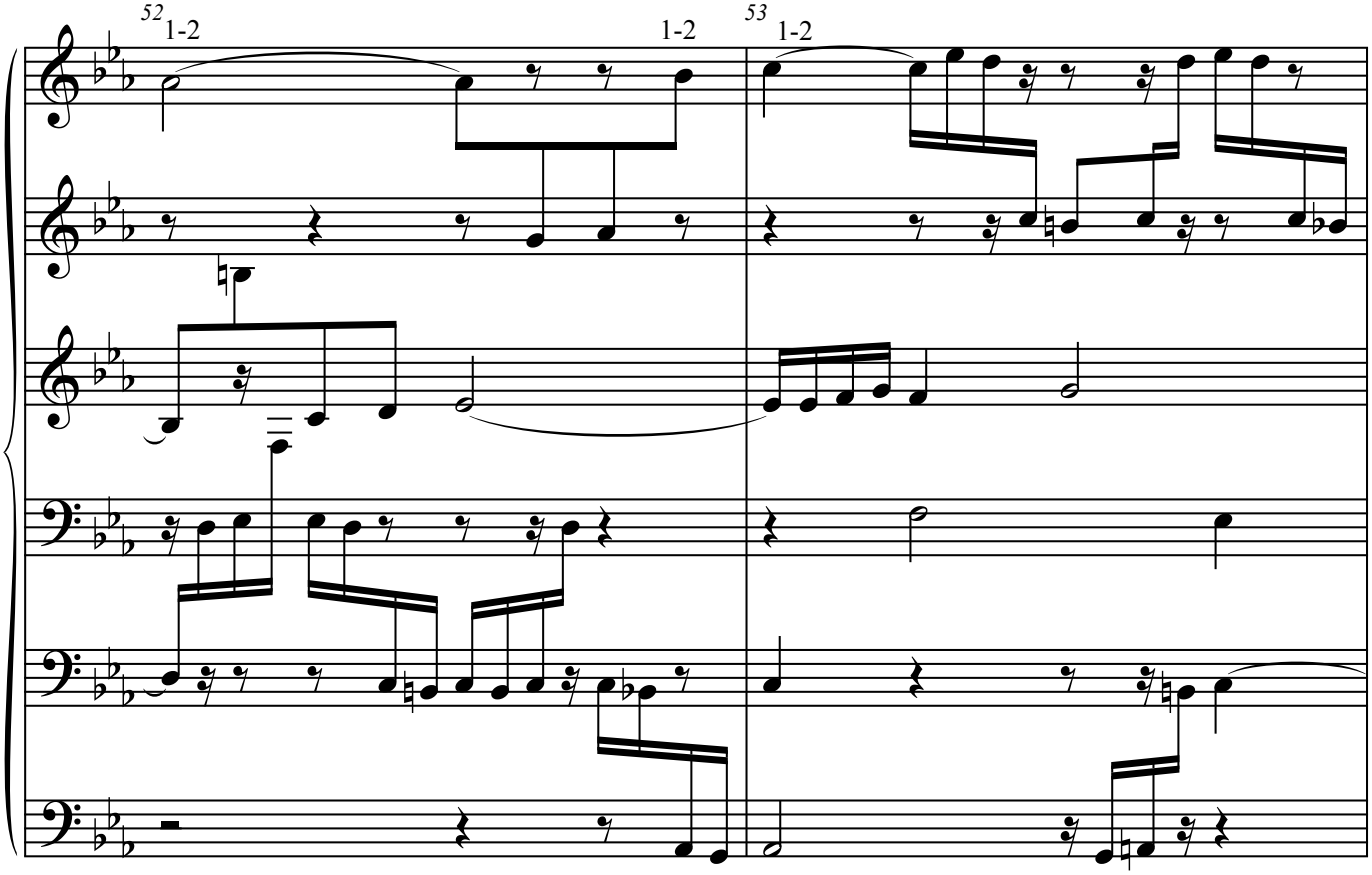
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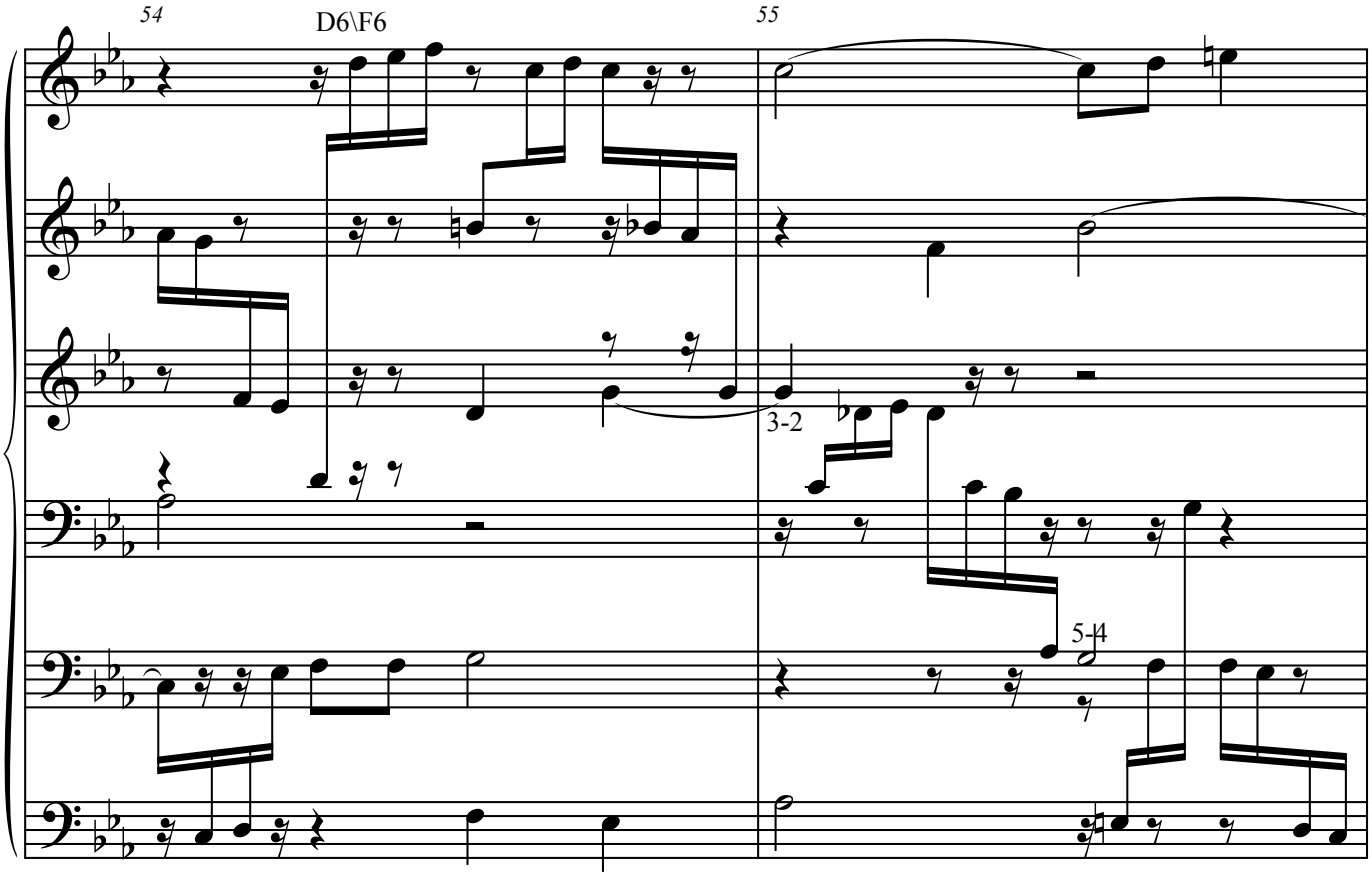
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D6\F6
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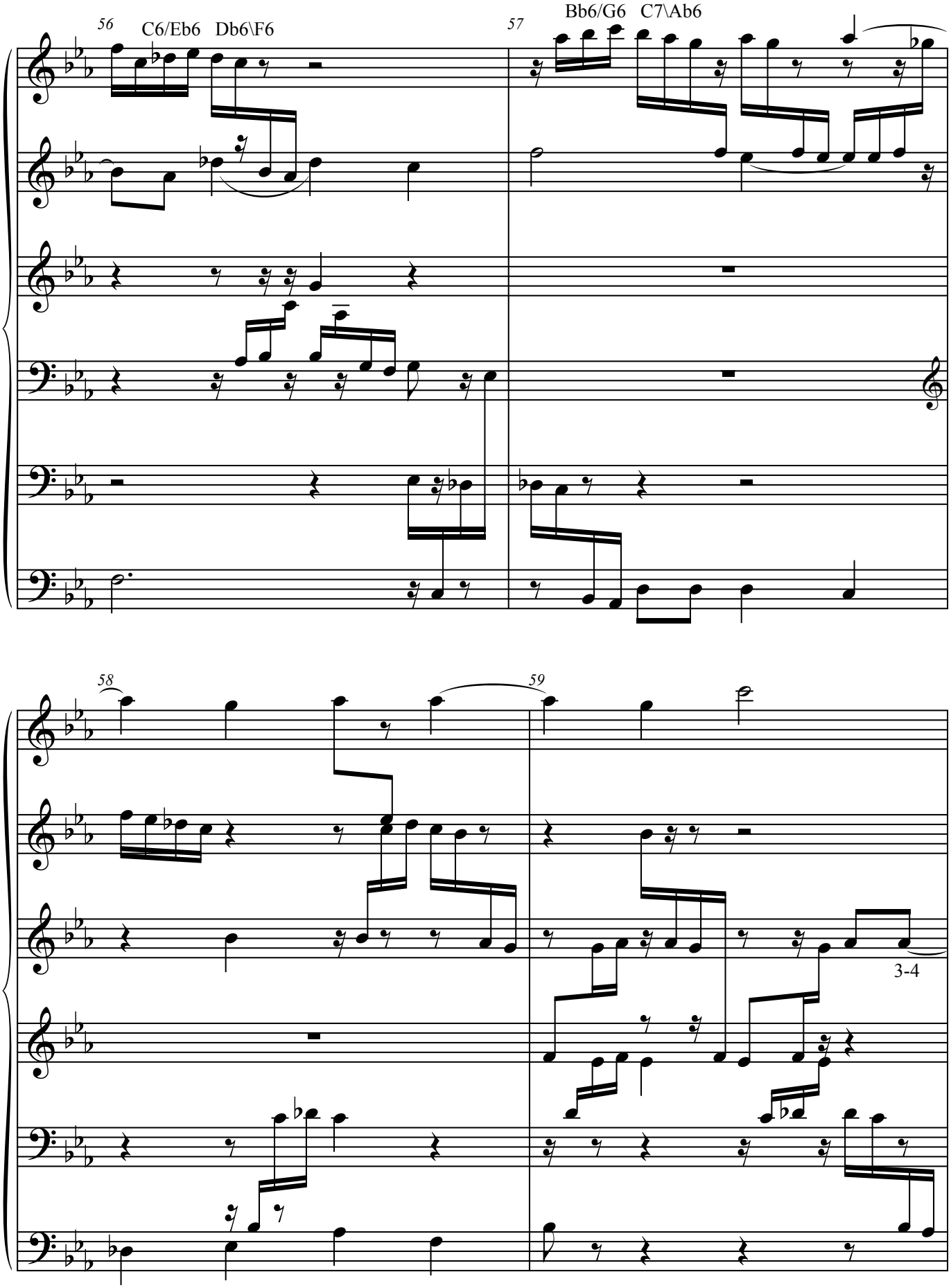
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Bb6/G6 C7\Ab6
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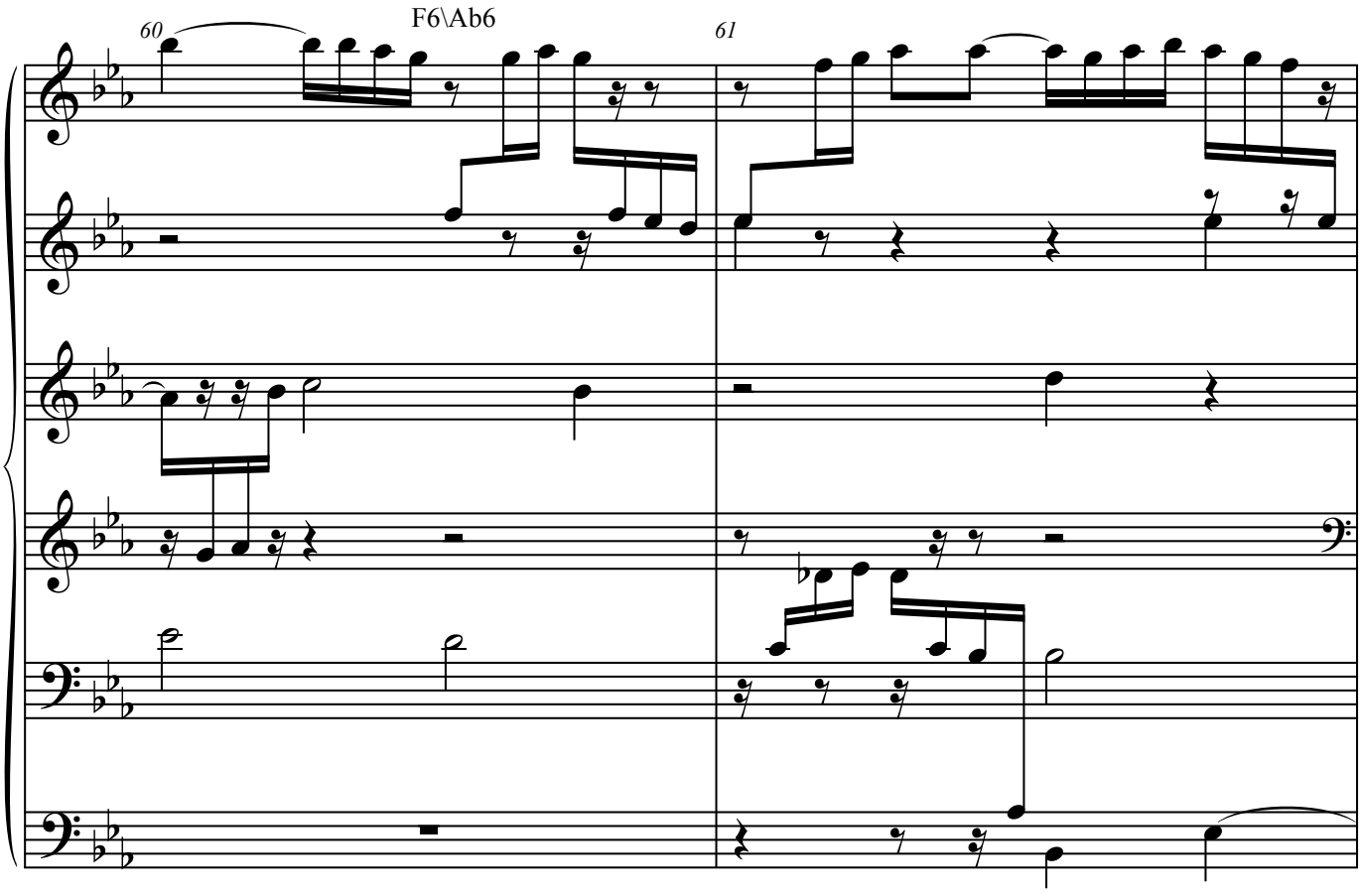
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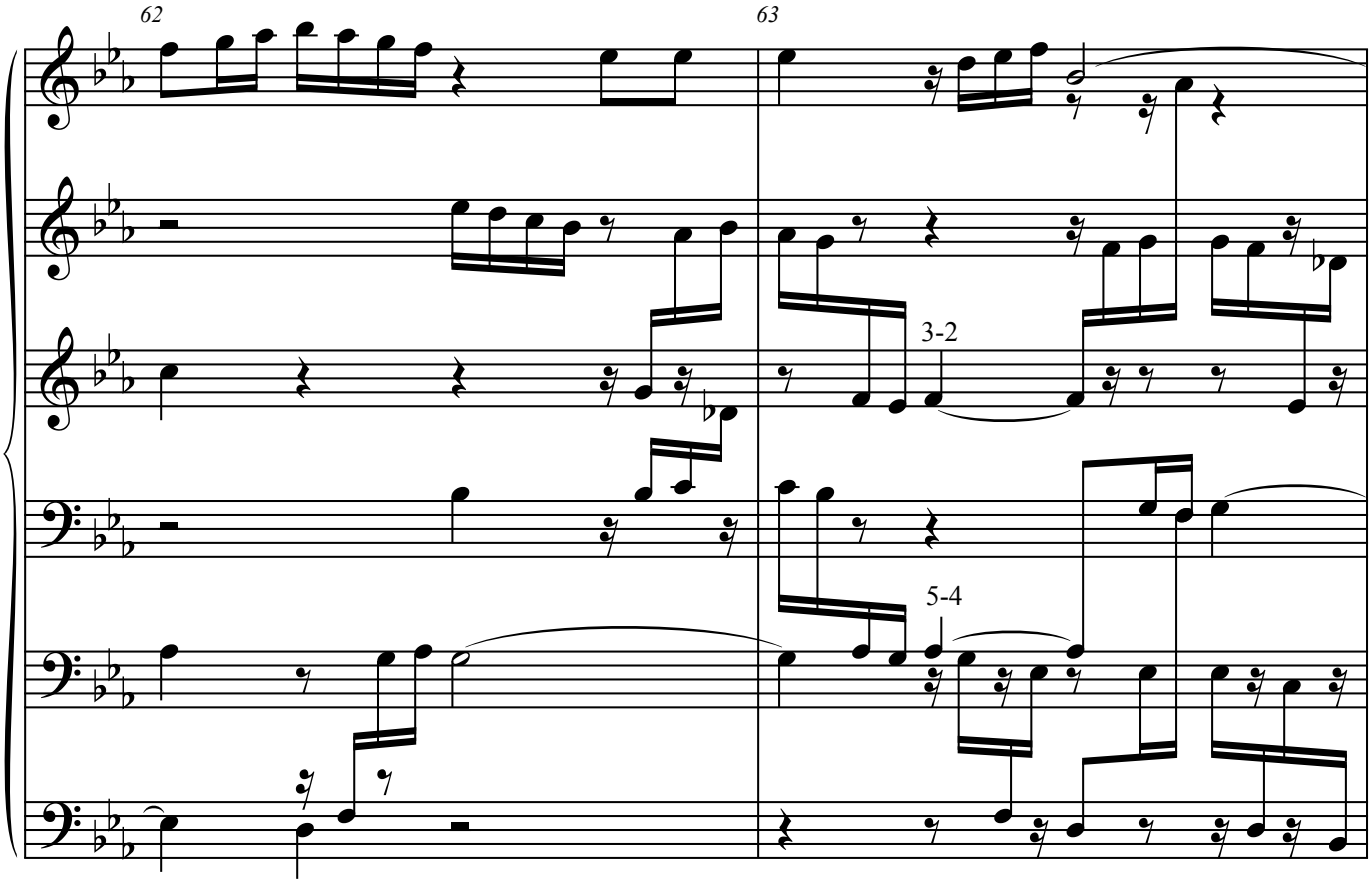
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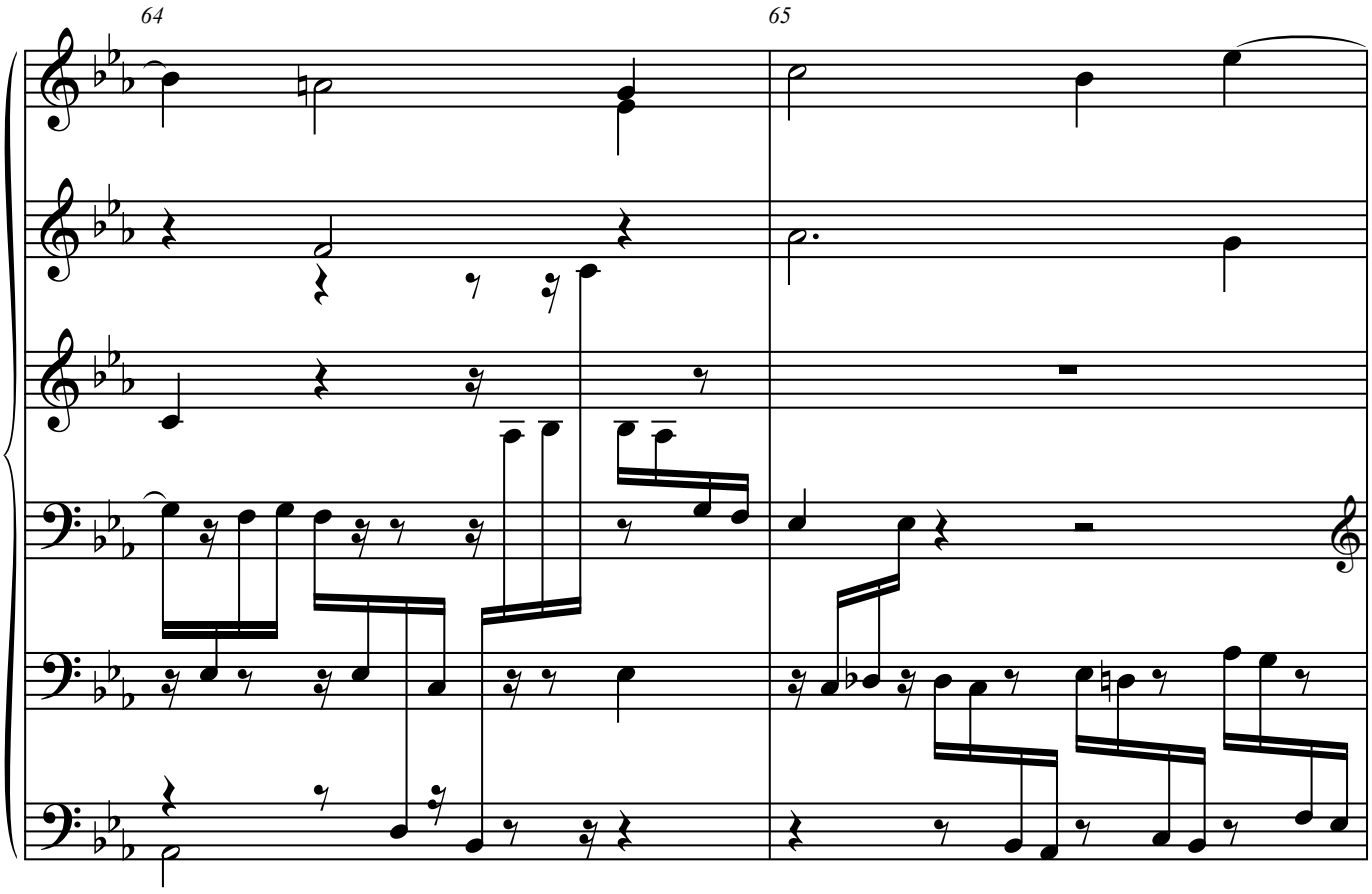
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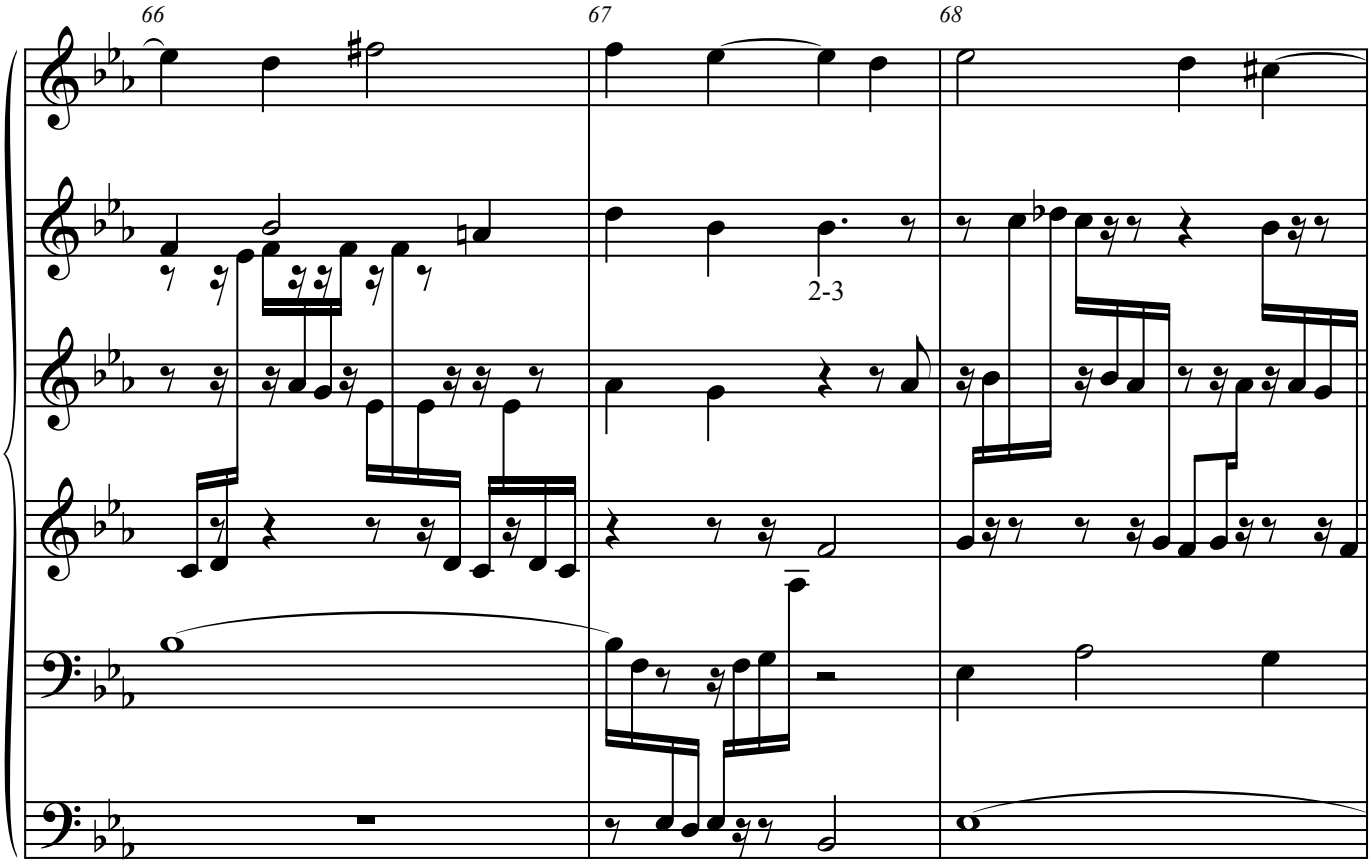
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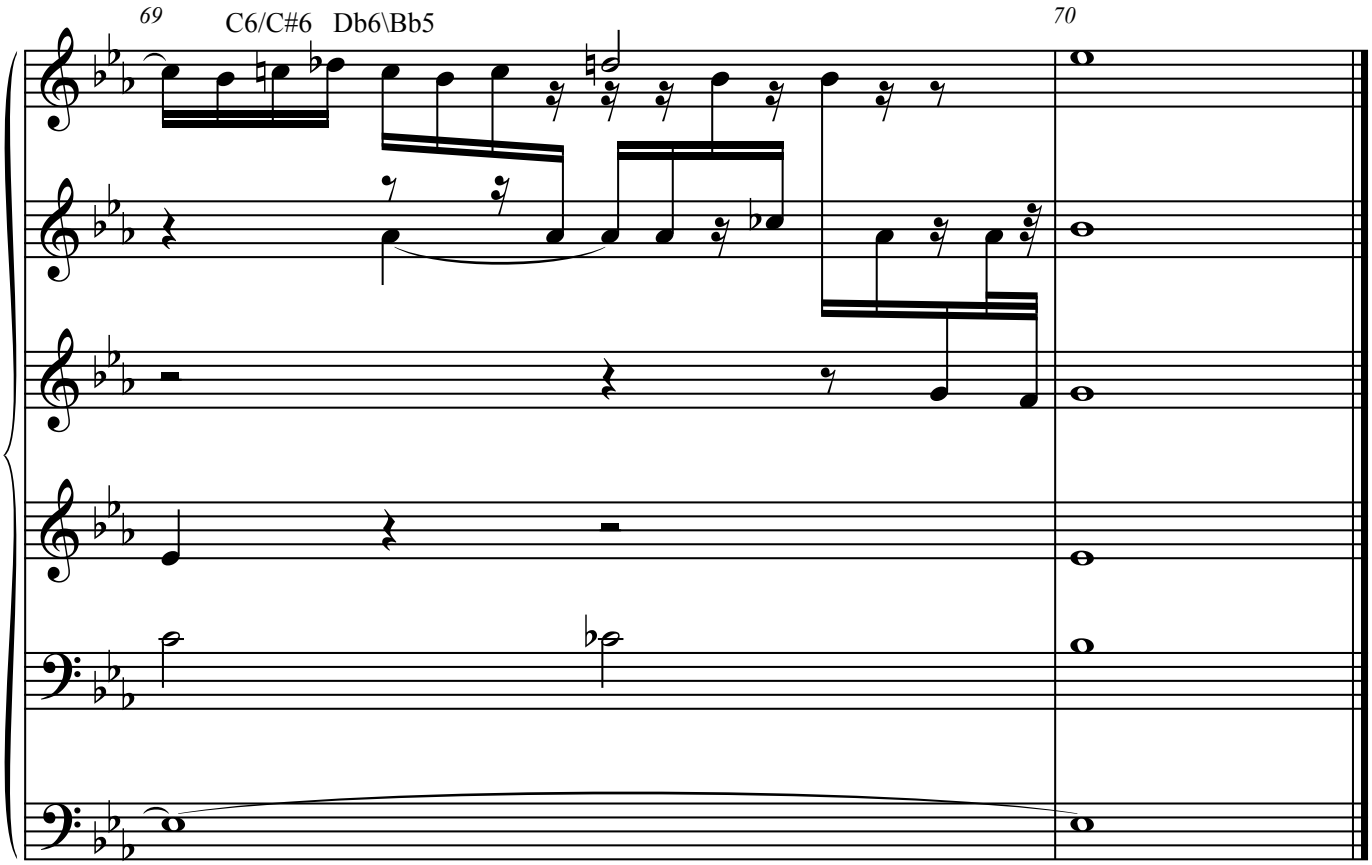
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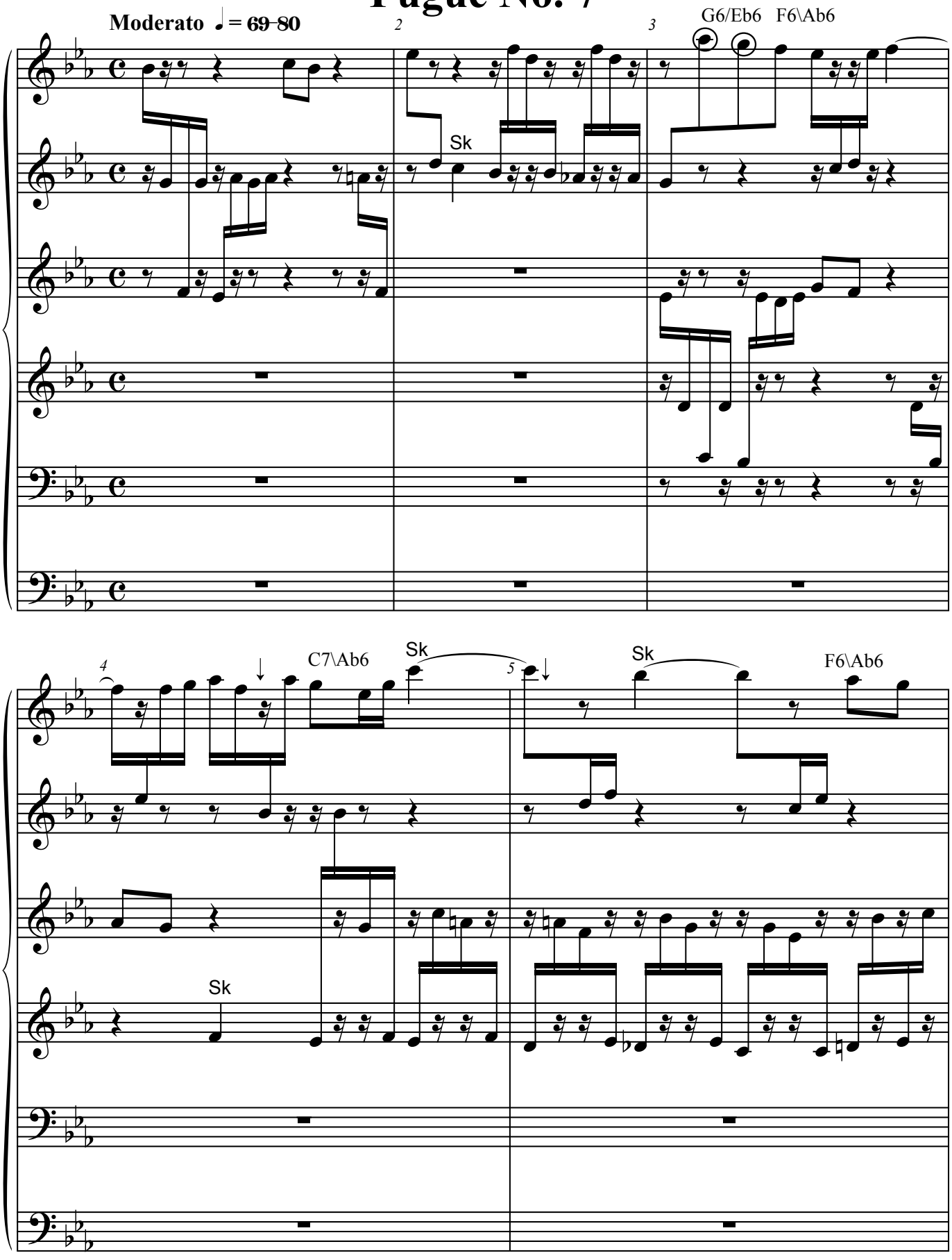
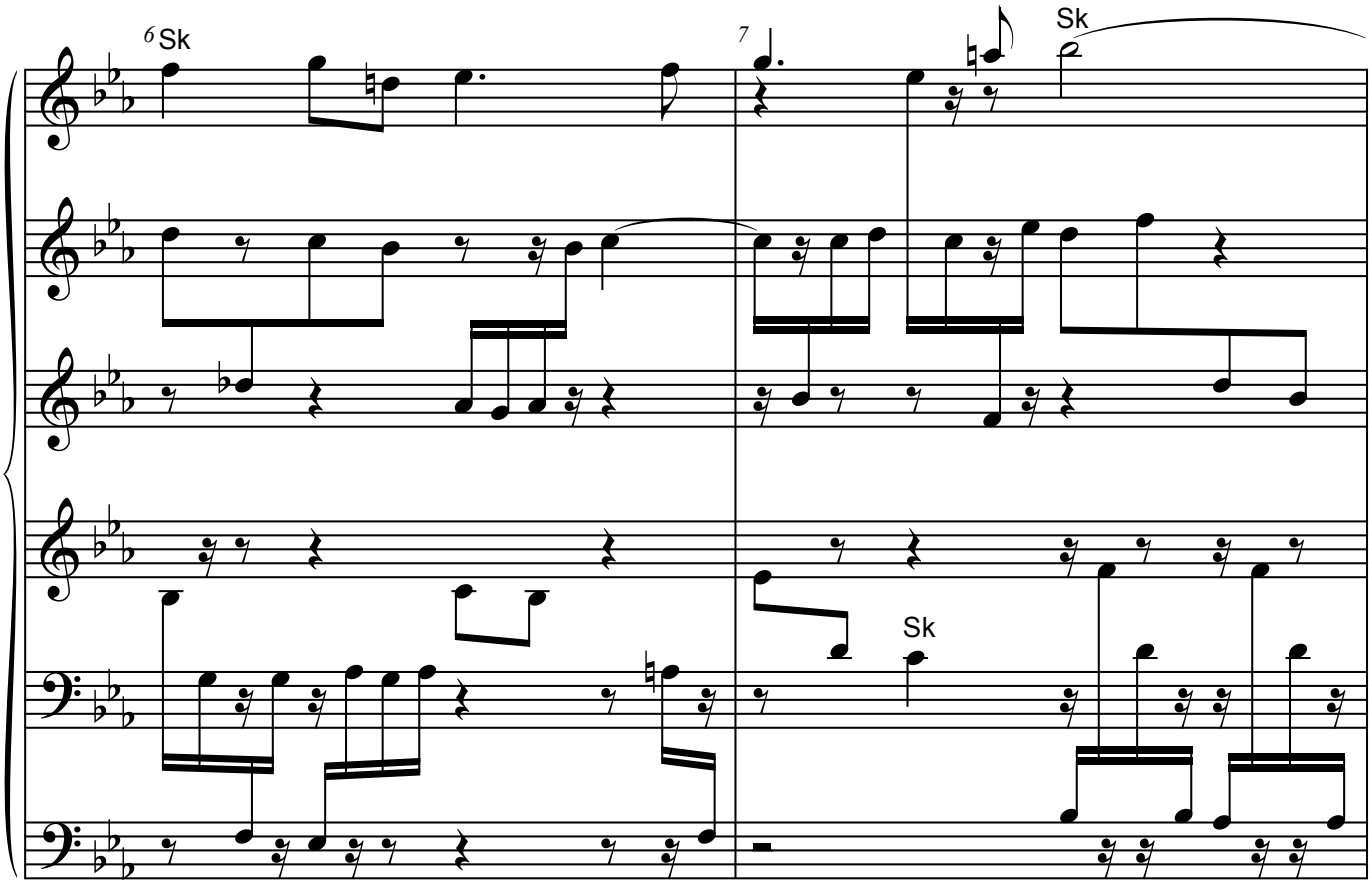
Fugue No. 7

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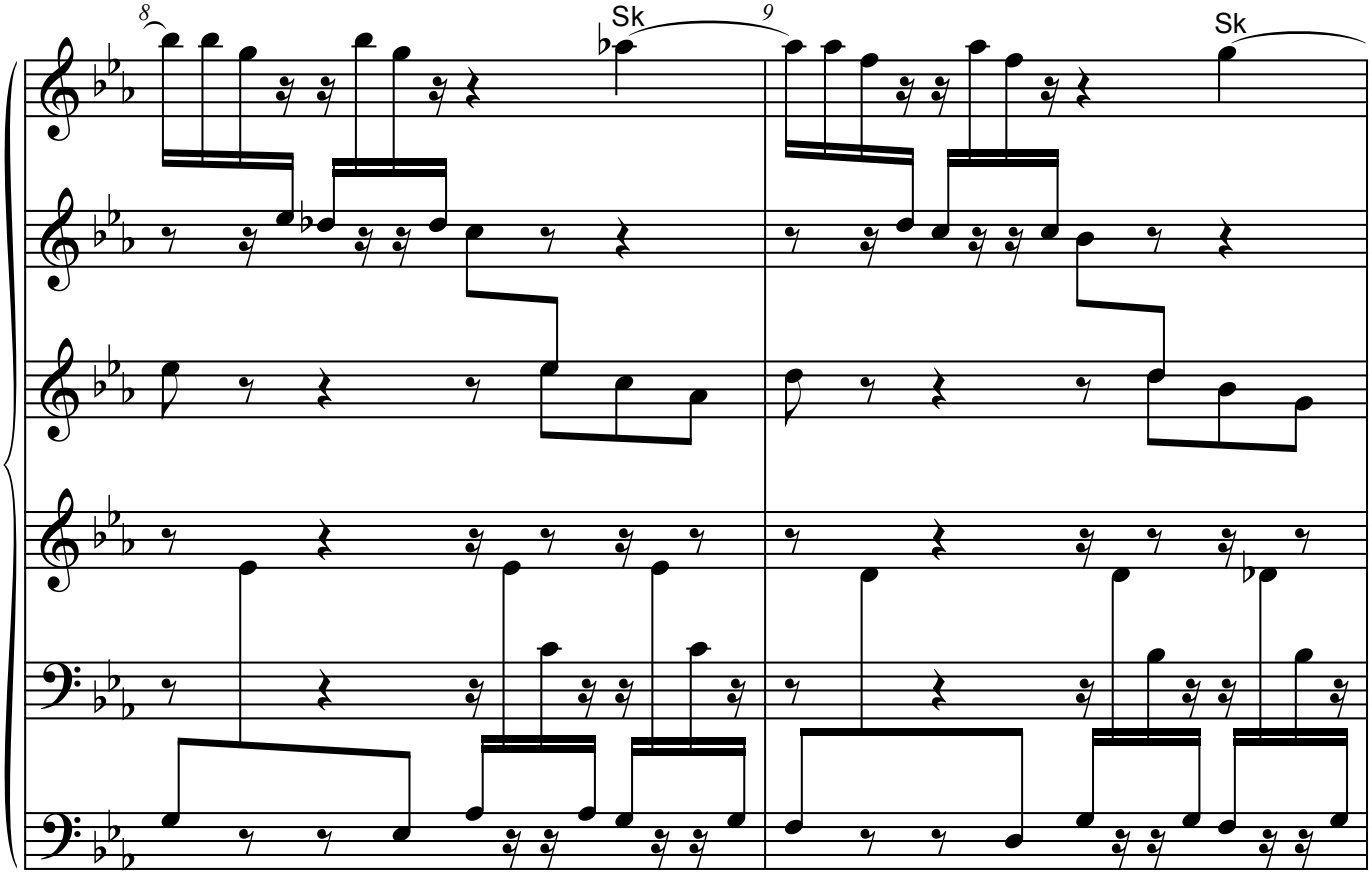
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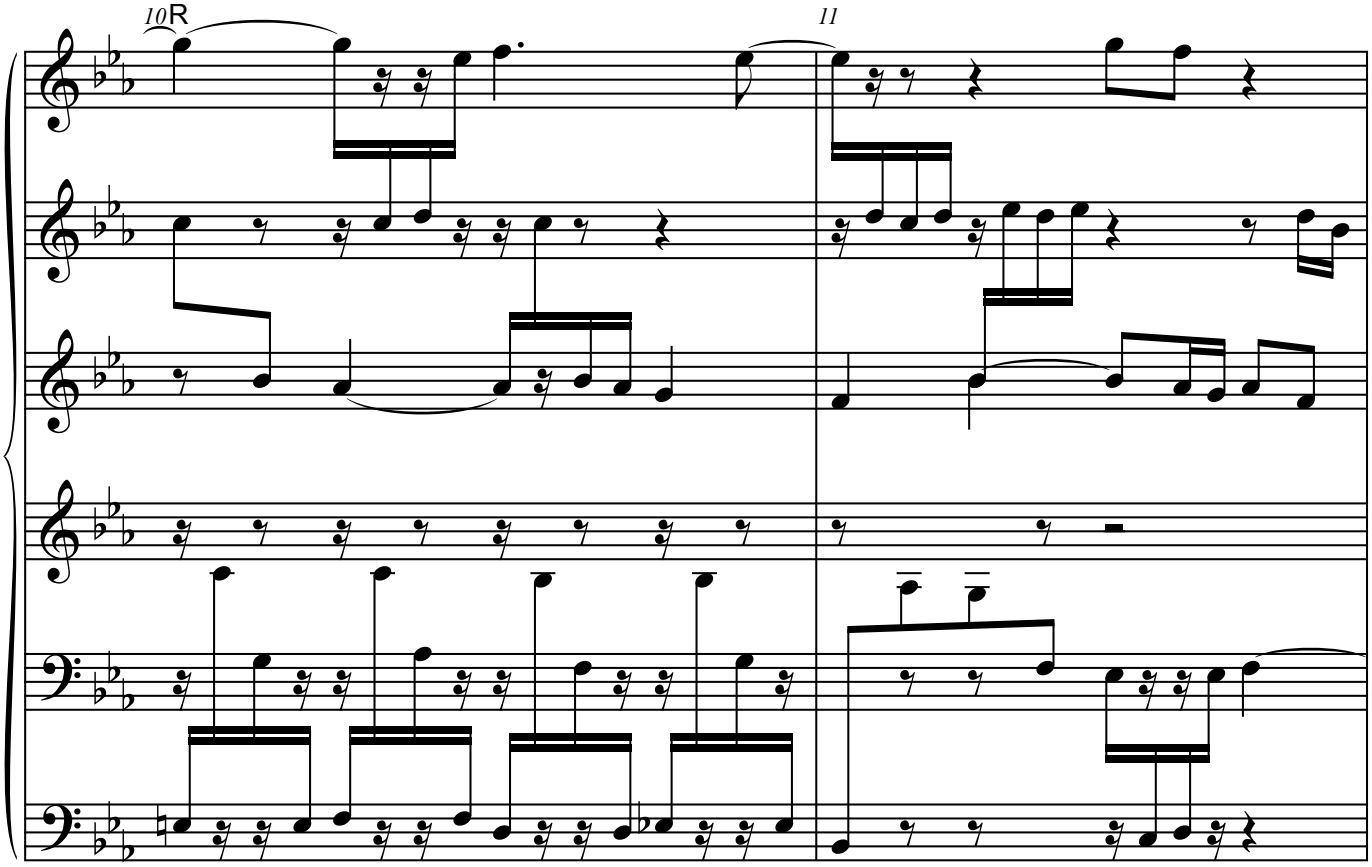
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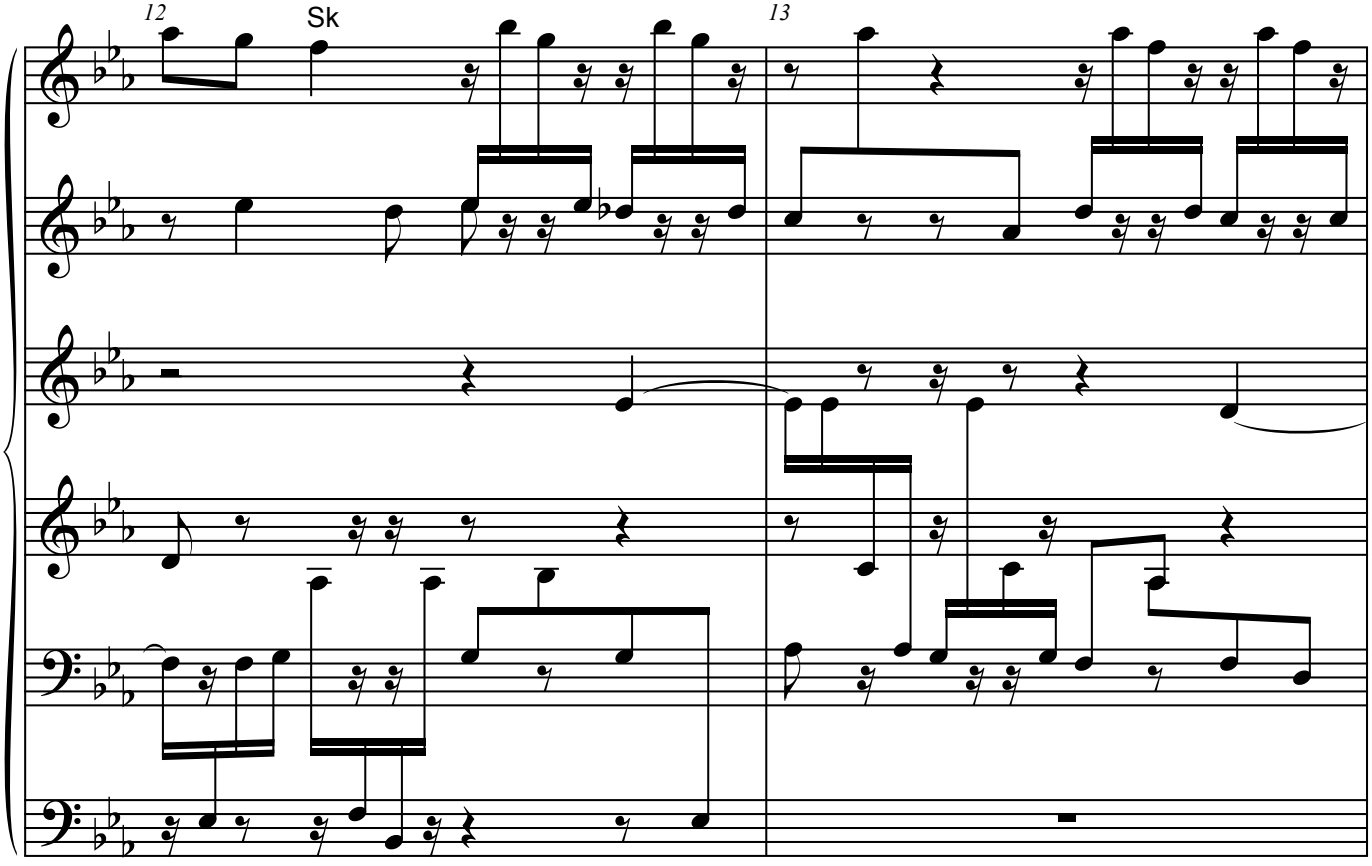
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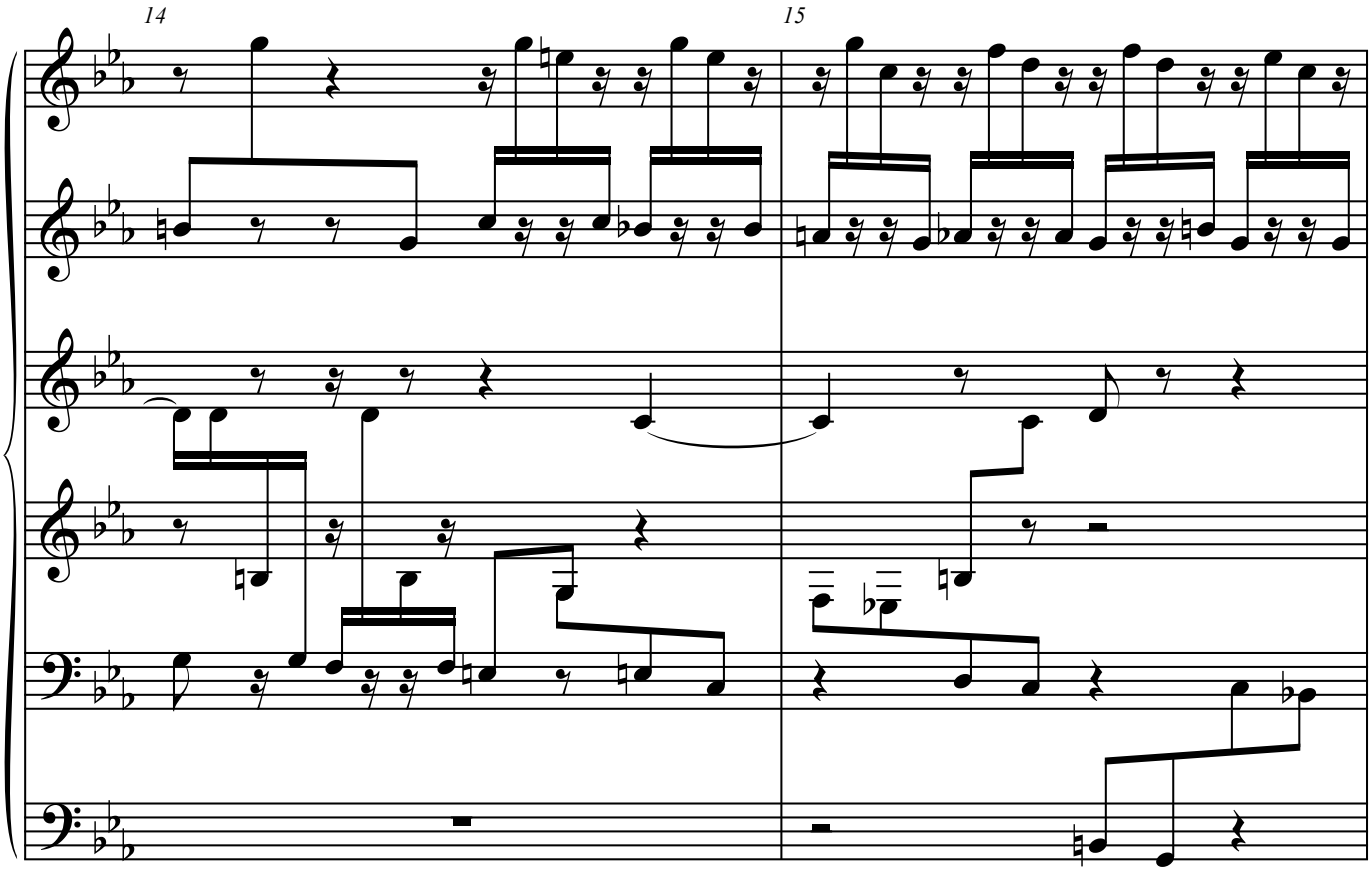
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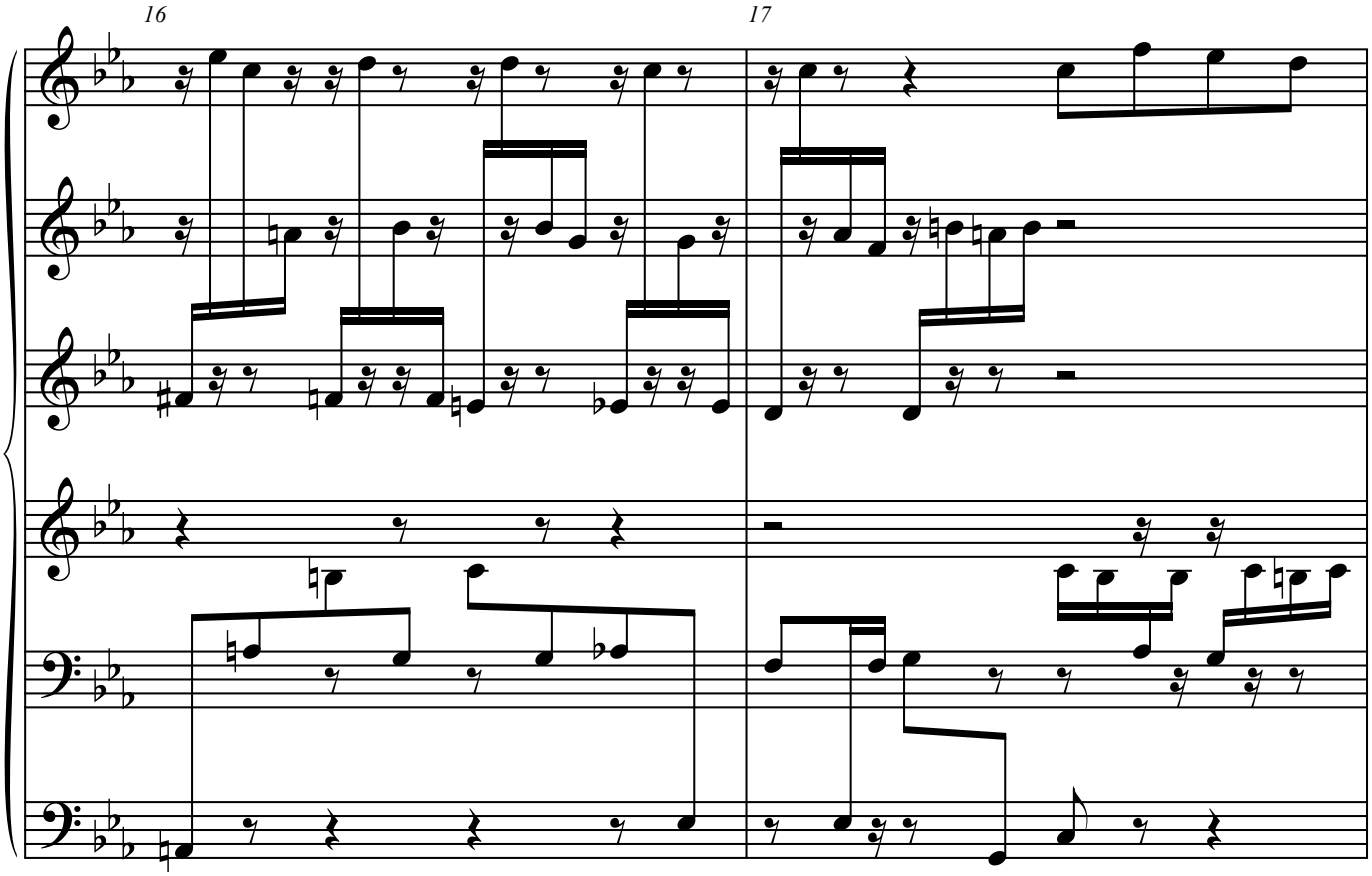
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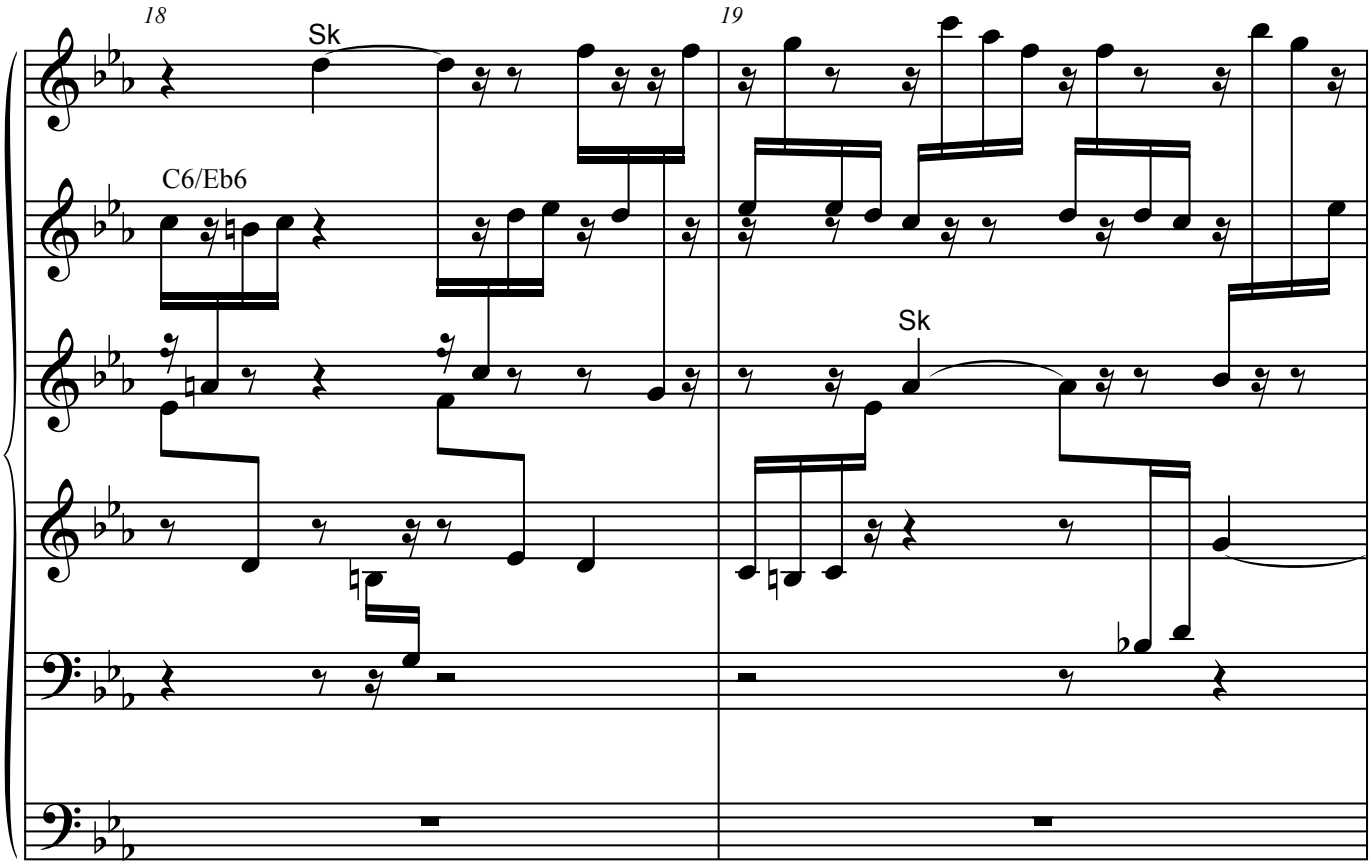
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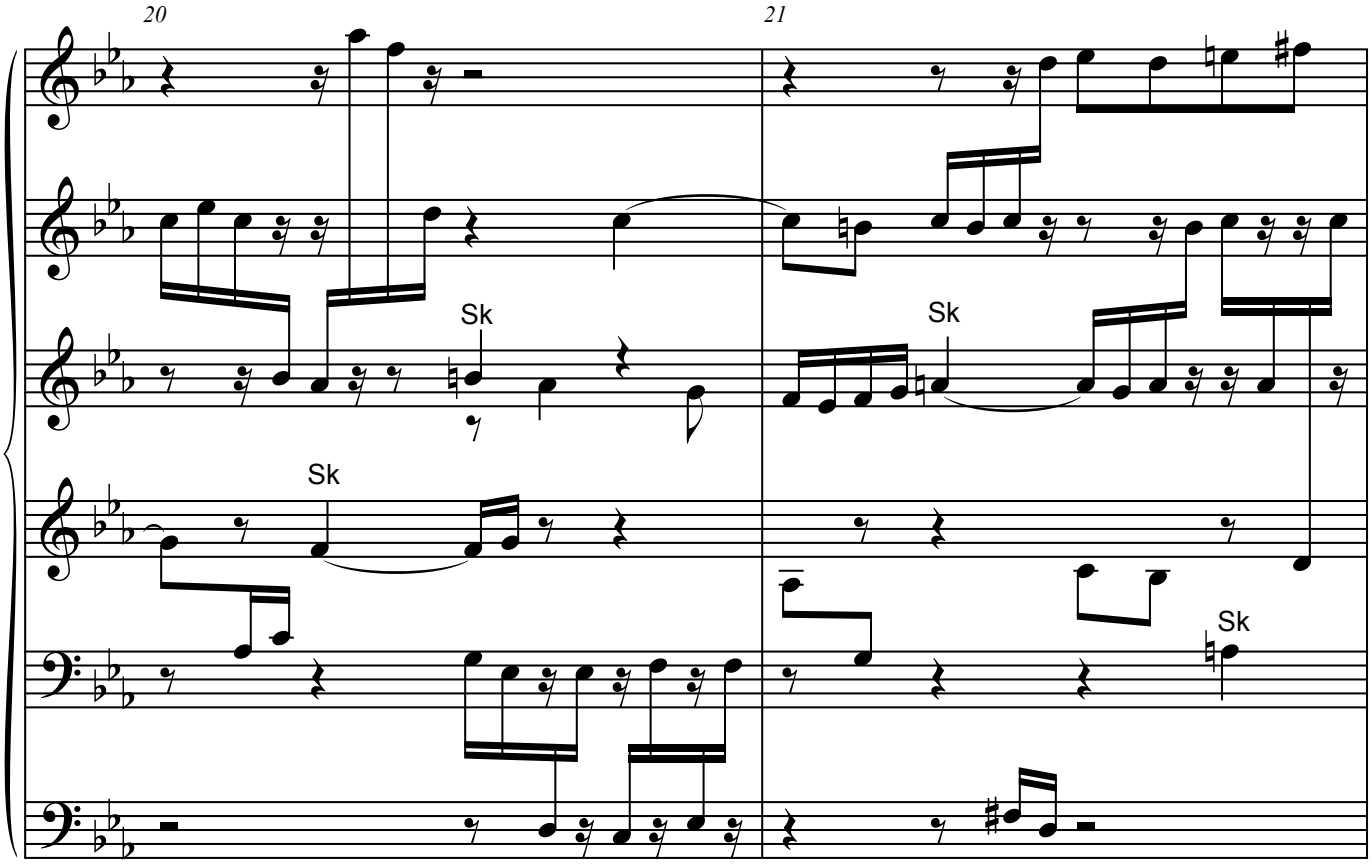
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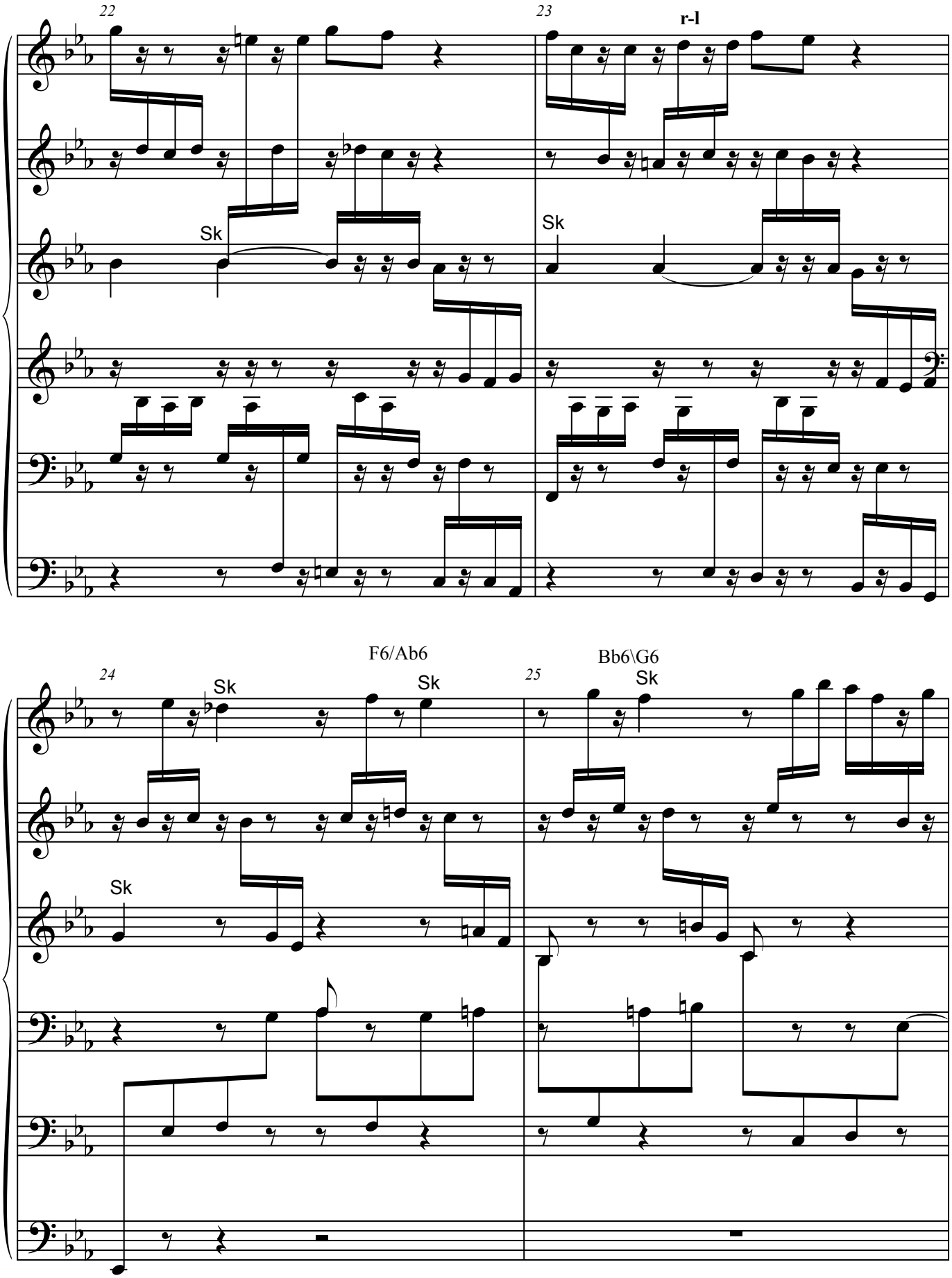
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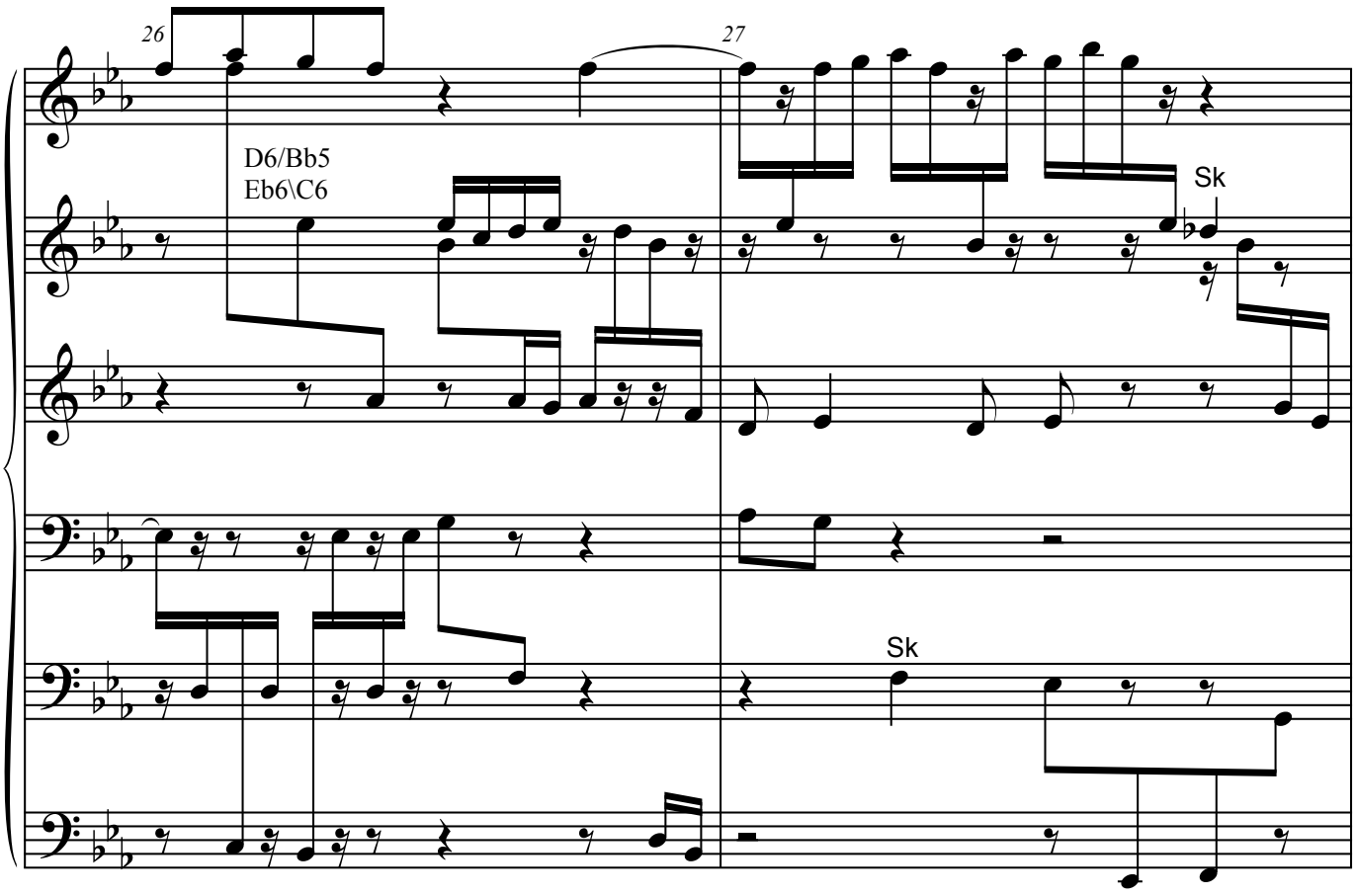
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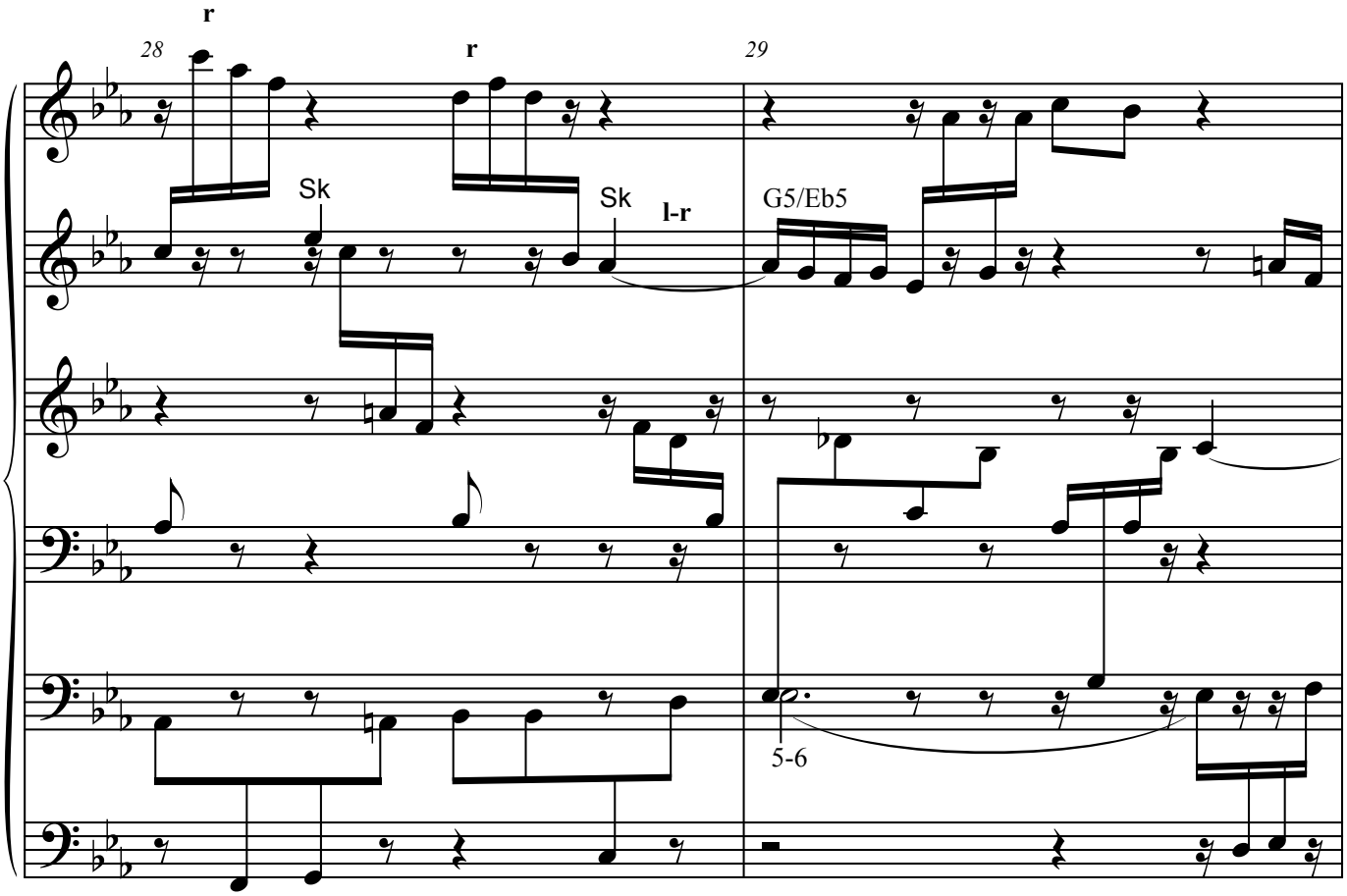
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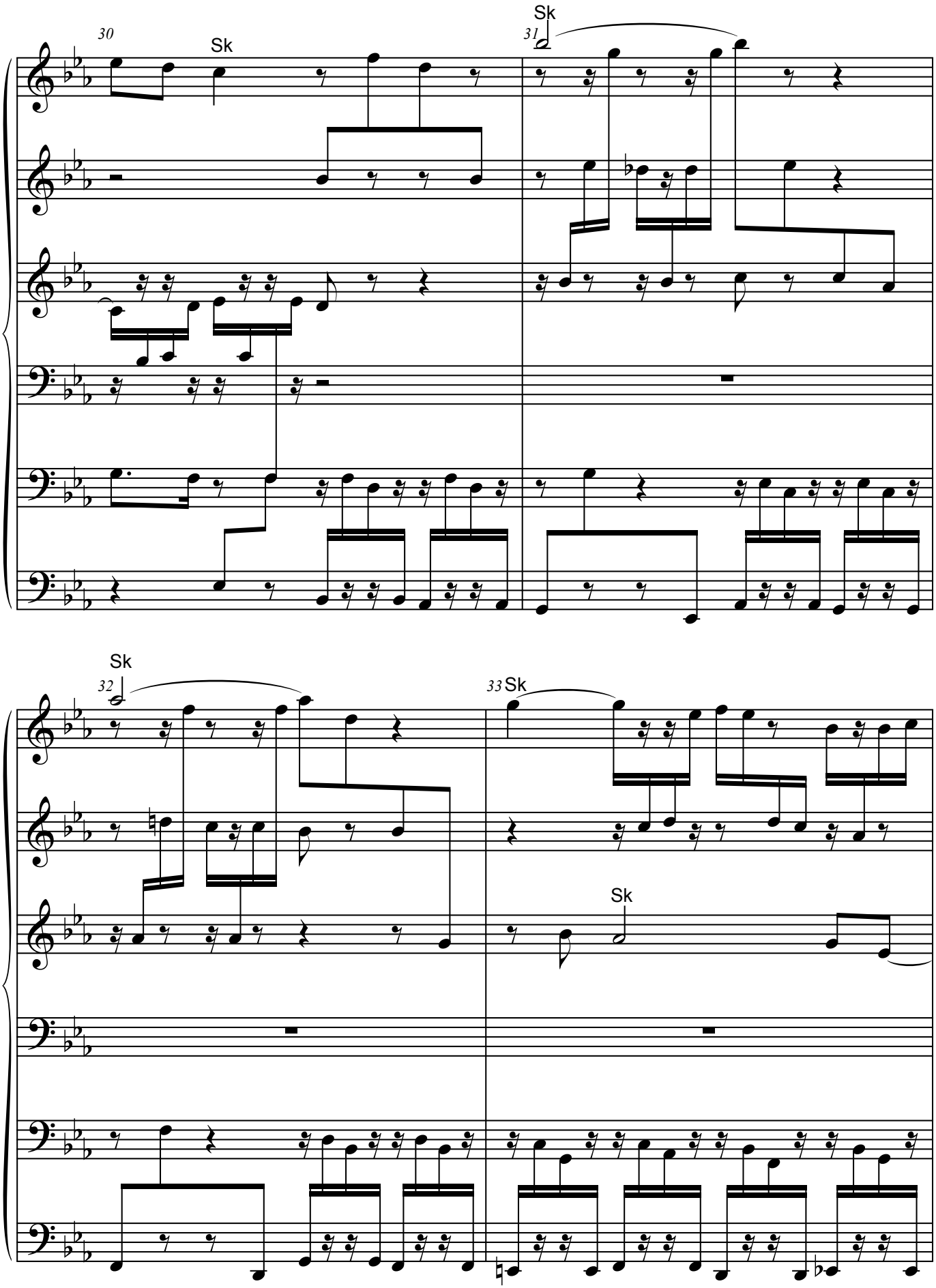
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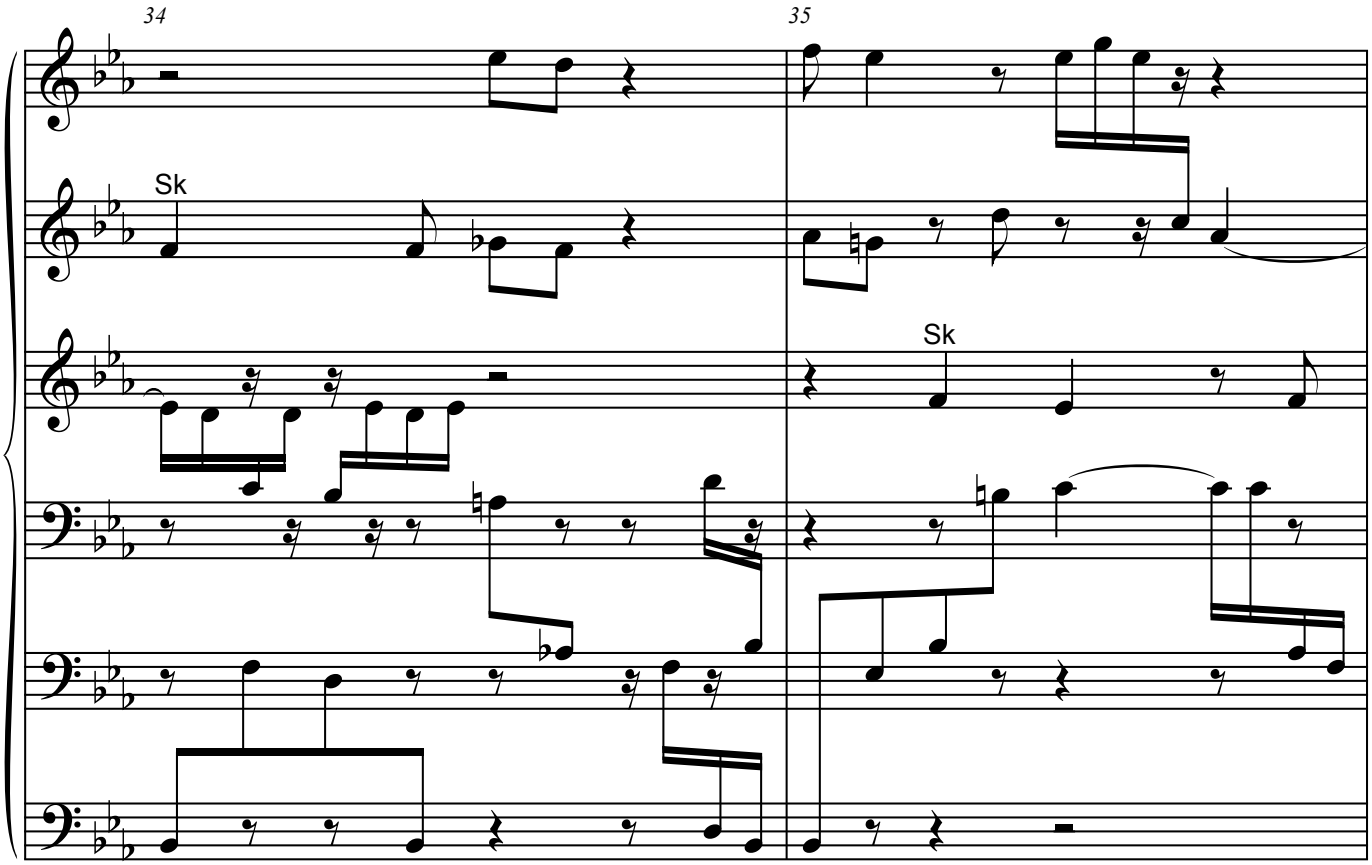
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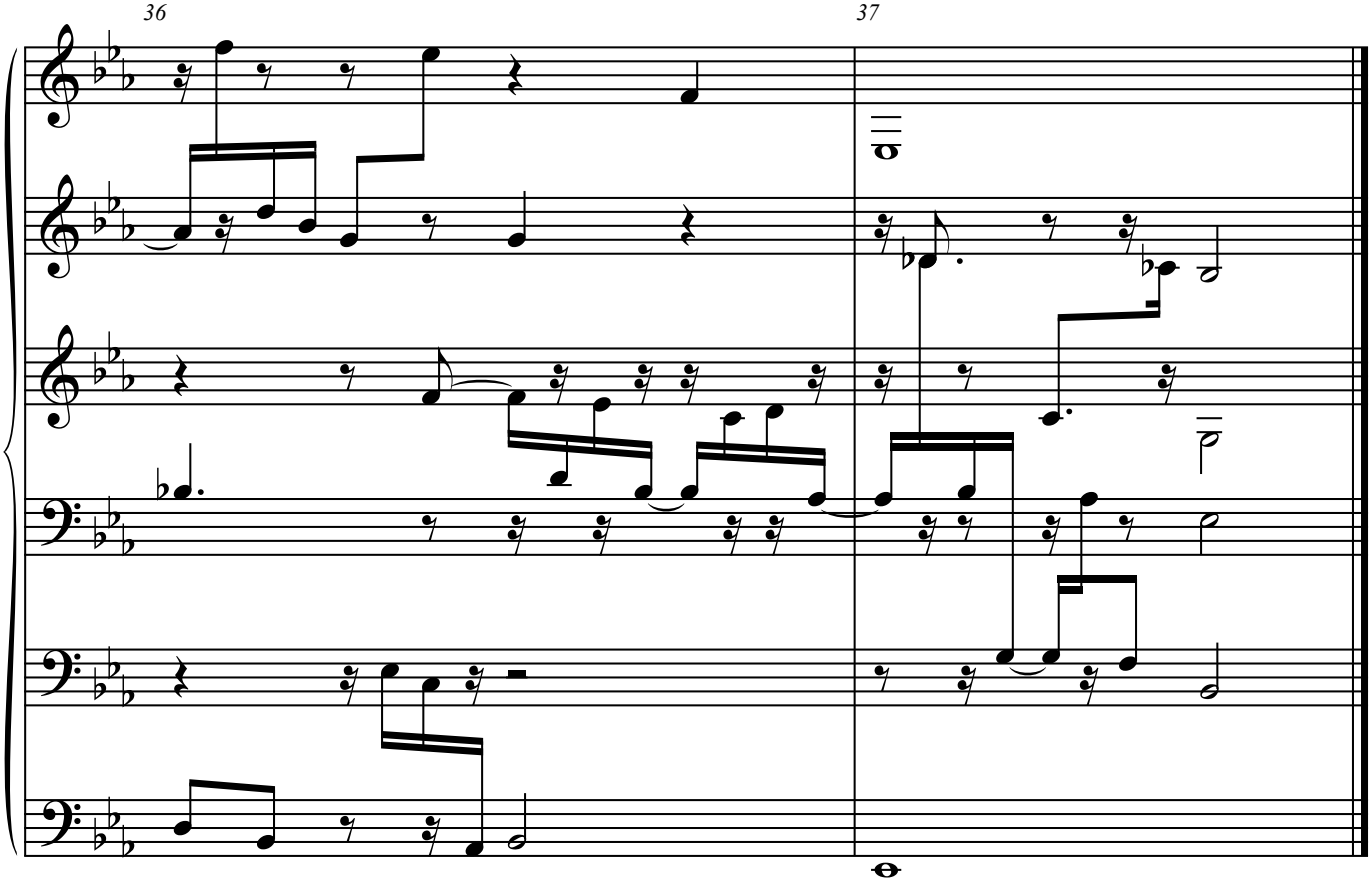
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