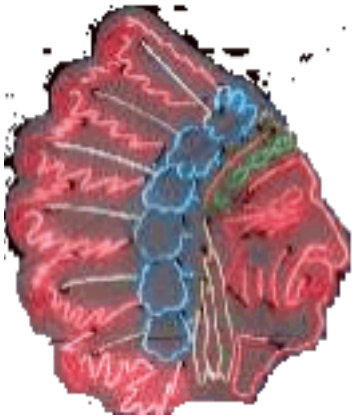
Victor Frost

Contrasts

for woodwind quintet, op. 34



FOUR WINDS PRESS
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Contrasts for woodwind quintet, op. 34

Contrasting elements at play both within movements and between them, that is to say. I wonder whether Bartók, writing his delightful trio to play with Szigeti and Goodman, was aware of Elgar's previous use of such title for his own divers set of musical diversions. Following are, slightly altered, some notes written when I first conceived the four numbers, toward the beginning of 1982. ("Out my window" refers to my Weehawken apartment of the time, with its view of the Manhattan skyline.)

1. Taghkanic. The Amerindian name is better known in its English transliteration because of a major artery which leads into New York City, the Taconic Parkway. But the historic Columbia County town itself adheres to the old Dutch spelling. (It would be as if the city I see when I look out my window were still called Nieuw Amsterdam!) The piece tries to evoke a day spent there recently, with a sunrise, various lakeside activities (about which I will be circumspect enough not to get specific now), the renewed but more subdued resplendence of the sun at dusk, and of course nightfall.

2. Rumba. The clarinet establishes this number's harmonic usage with a fanfare in which the intervals fan out gradually into a tritone. All successive measures feature this interval as part of their whole-tone harmonies, even the unexpected, final cadence in D. (Unexpected because no harmony built on this tone has appeared in the piece before!)

3. Variations. The bassoon and flute take turns presenting the main tune. The other instruments then present the first variation, a wry waltz. I kept up this division of labor in the siciliano variation which follows: flute and bassoon are the protagonists; the other instruments play a supporting role. It was my intention to write further variations which would exploit this kind of dramatic interplay but I hit a compositional roadblock, and could not see how to proceed. I had finished the siciliano on February 20th of this year. On March 20th, I was on the telephone with a friend, who said at one point that she couldn't hear the words I had just said: some bagpipe players had stationed themselves just below her open window. She held the receiver out the window so I could hear the ruckus myself. That was it! After getting off the blower as quickly as I politely could, I decided to forget all about overarching compositional game plans (Sebastian Bach I'm not…), and just get the music welling up in my soul down on paper as best I could. Interestingly, I stayed in 6/8, but at double the previous time (of the now month-old siciliano). The dour Italian part of my nature gave way to the ebullient Irish, in a jig for clarinet and …drones. Next came a somewhat Schumannesque (for me, anyway) variation in which the flute solo is in three, but the oboe and clarinet accompany throughout in two. A tango featuring horn solo and

often rude interspersions from the higher winds ensues and then we have a recap of the opening tema. But even this represents a slight variant since the bassoon starts alone, answered by the flute in imitation. After a few measures of this interplay both instruments resume the roles they had in the number's exposition.

4. Swingtime. I couldn't decide whether to notate this number in 4/4 or in 12/8. I soon realized that those with a feel for this style of music would know how to play it irrespective of notation, but those who never had such training or background would still be able to make a good case for it in 12/8.

At the time, I became dismayed that no group I shared it with chose to take the set on, although one quintet did opt to perform the Swingtime. (Remember, we composers didn't have music processing or the Internet to facilitate promulgation in those days.) In my frustration, I made the mistake of trying an orchestral arrangement, but this proved so unsatisfying that ultimately I withdrew it. This year, some 33 years after the work was first conceived, I returned to my yellowing wind quintet sketches, effected a few minor revisions, and engraved the work in such form so as to share it out anew. Somewhere in the intervening decades were born the members of a wonderful Italian group, who have played my opus 49a Big Apple Rag, and go by the august appellation Quintessenza Quintetto di Fiati! The present but older work having never borne a dedication, I can, at long last, assign it affectionately to them.

Victor Frost
9 III 15
New York City

to the members of Quintessenza Quintetto di Fiati

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for woodwind quintet, op. 34

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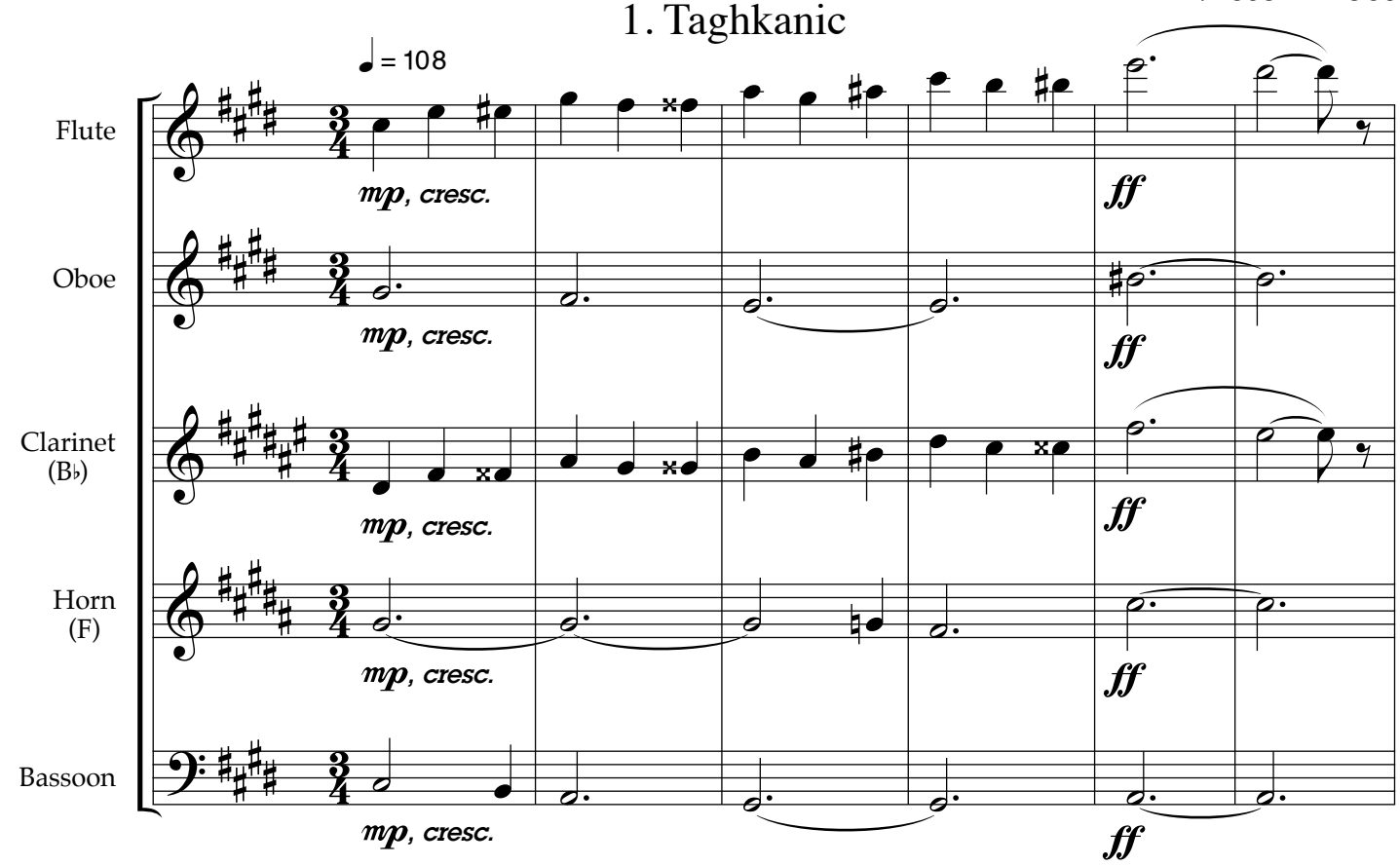
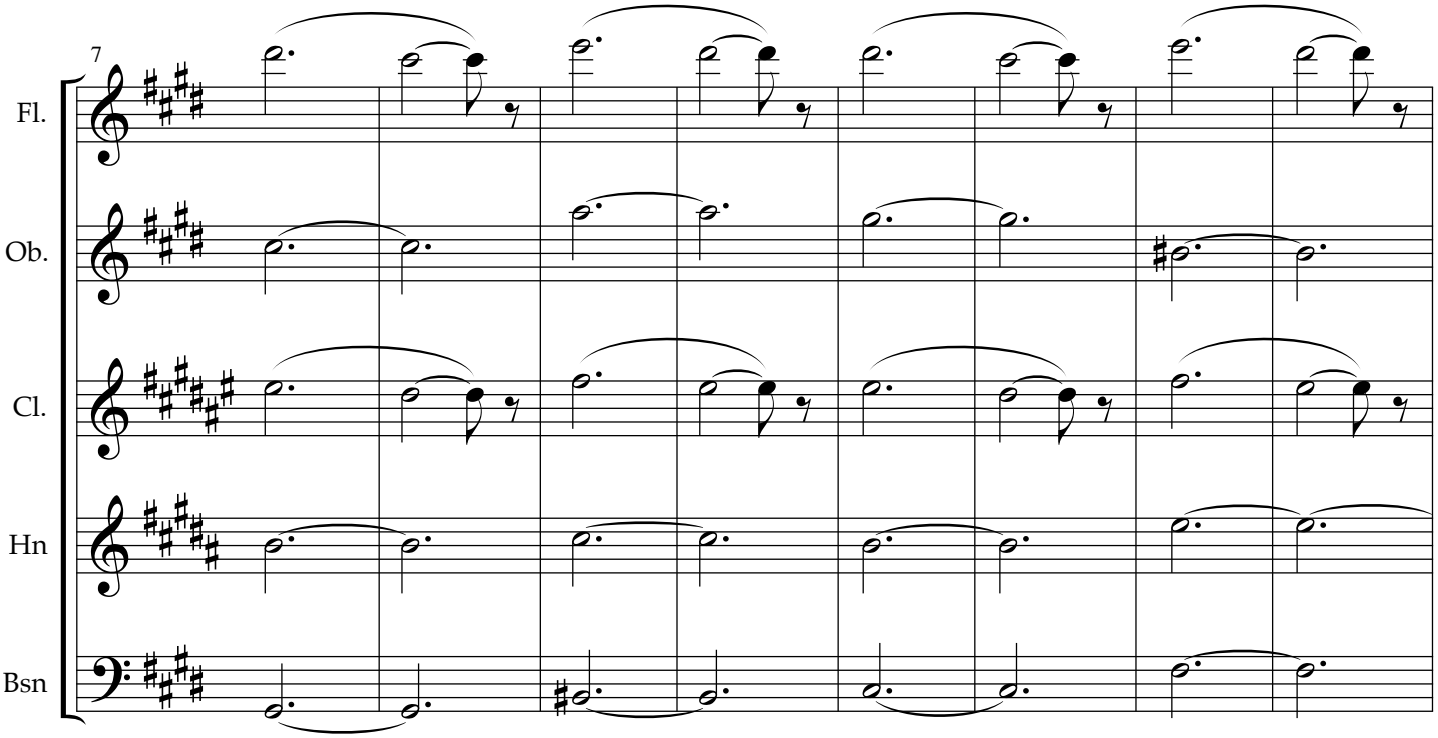
1. Taghkanic





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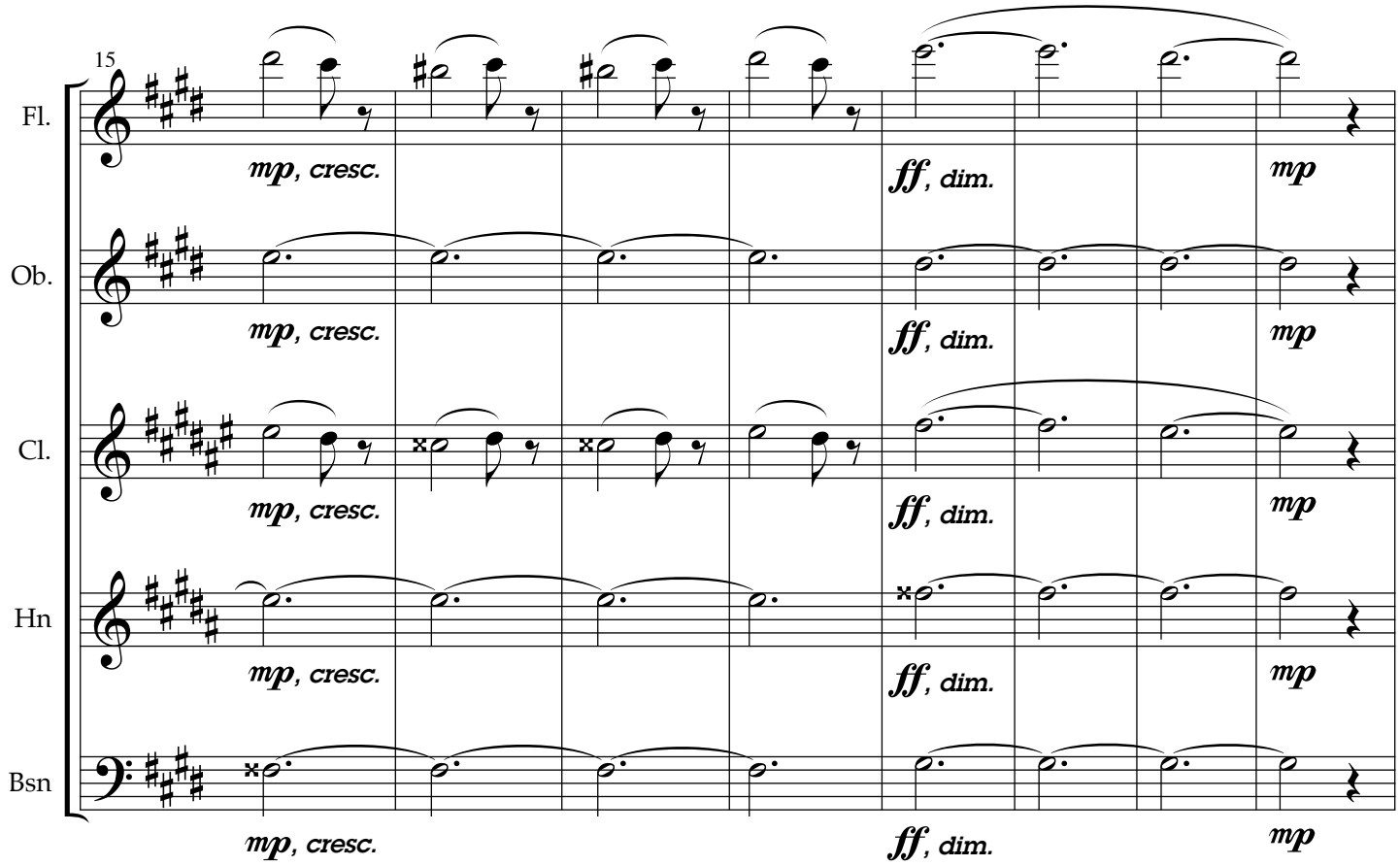
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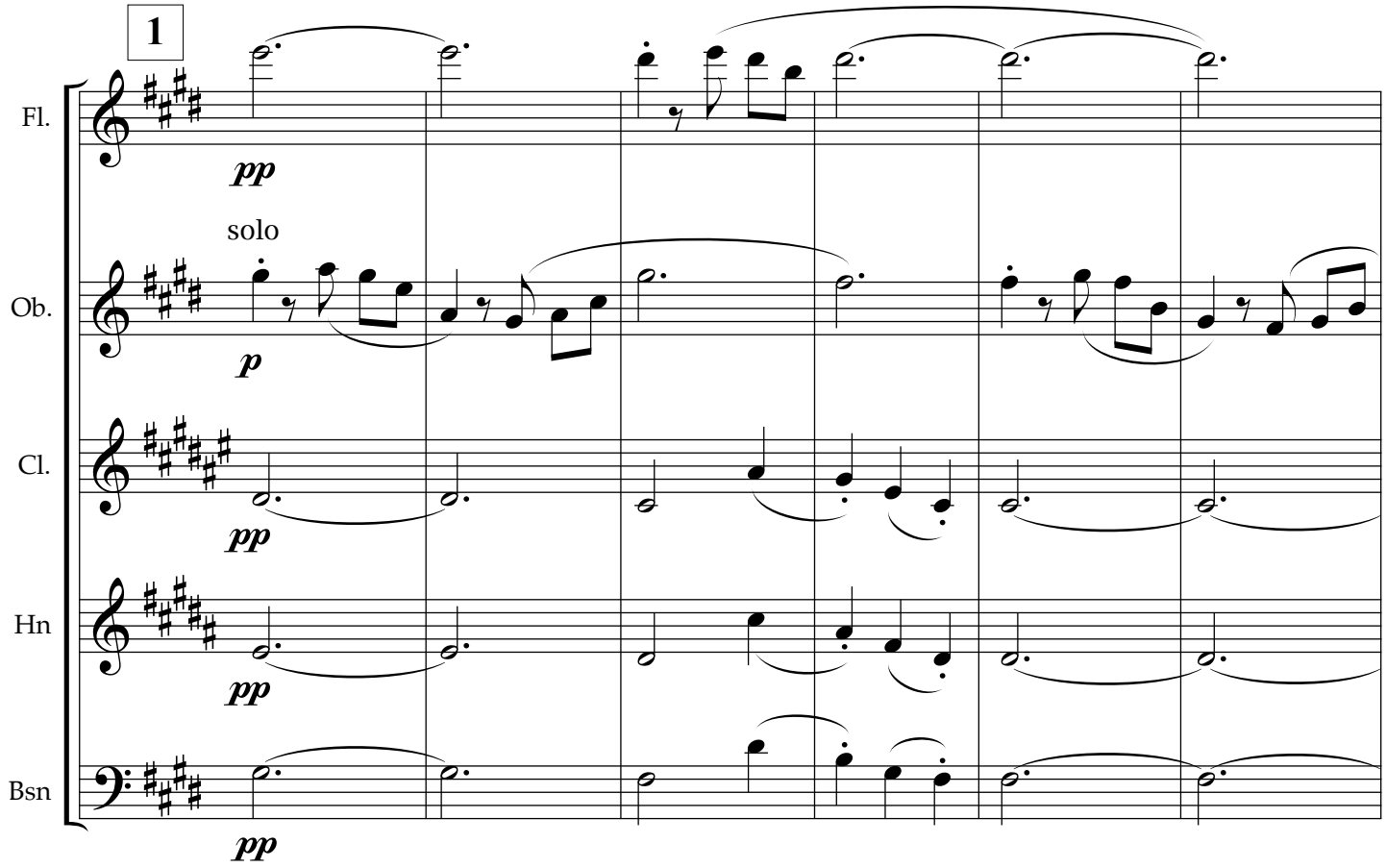
ff, dim.
mp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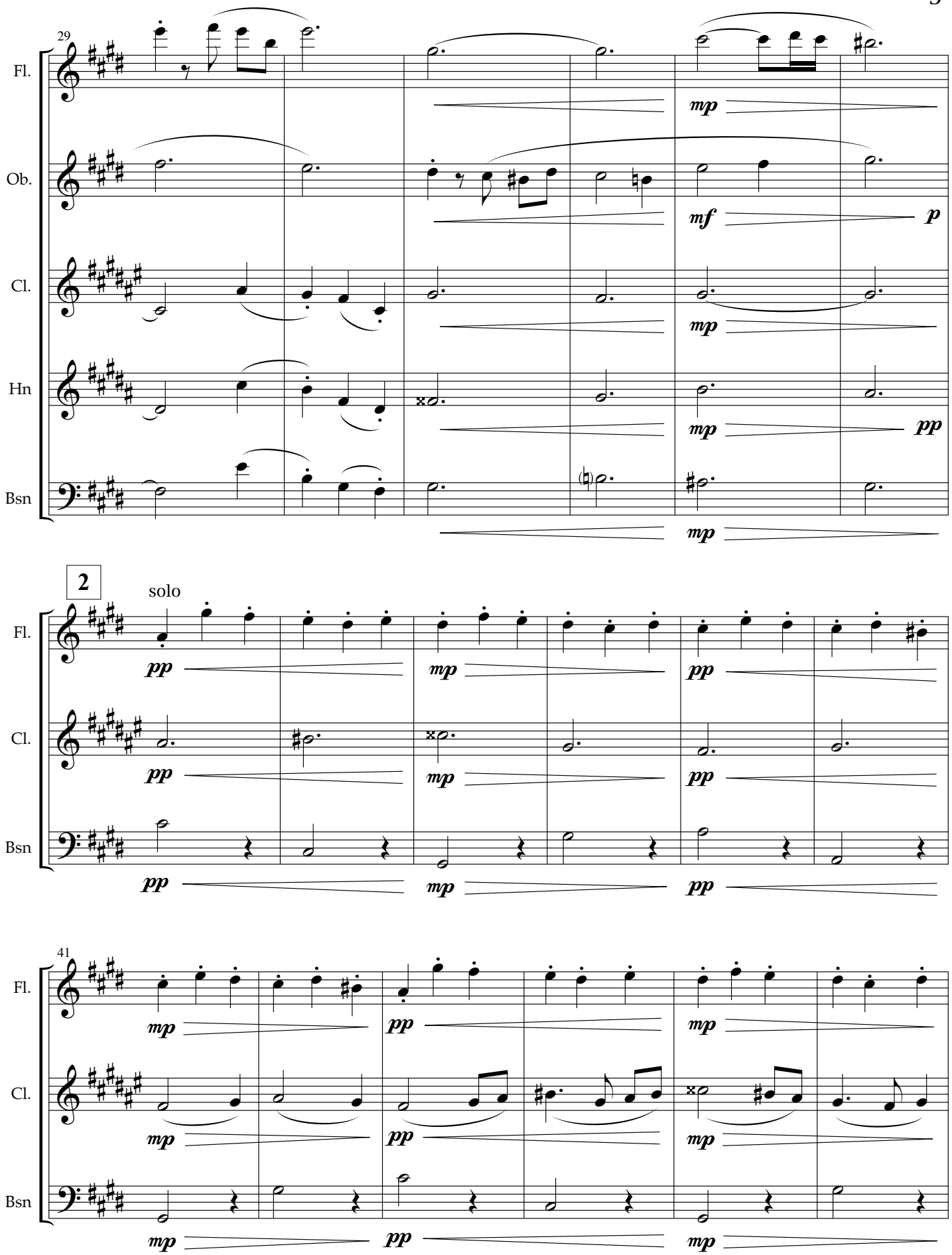
p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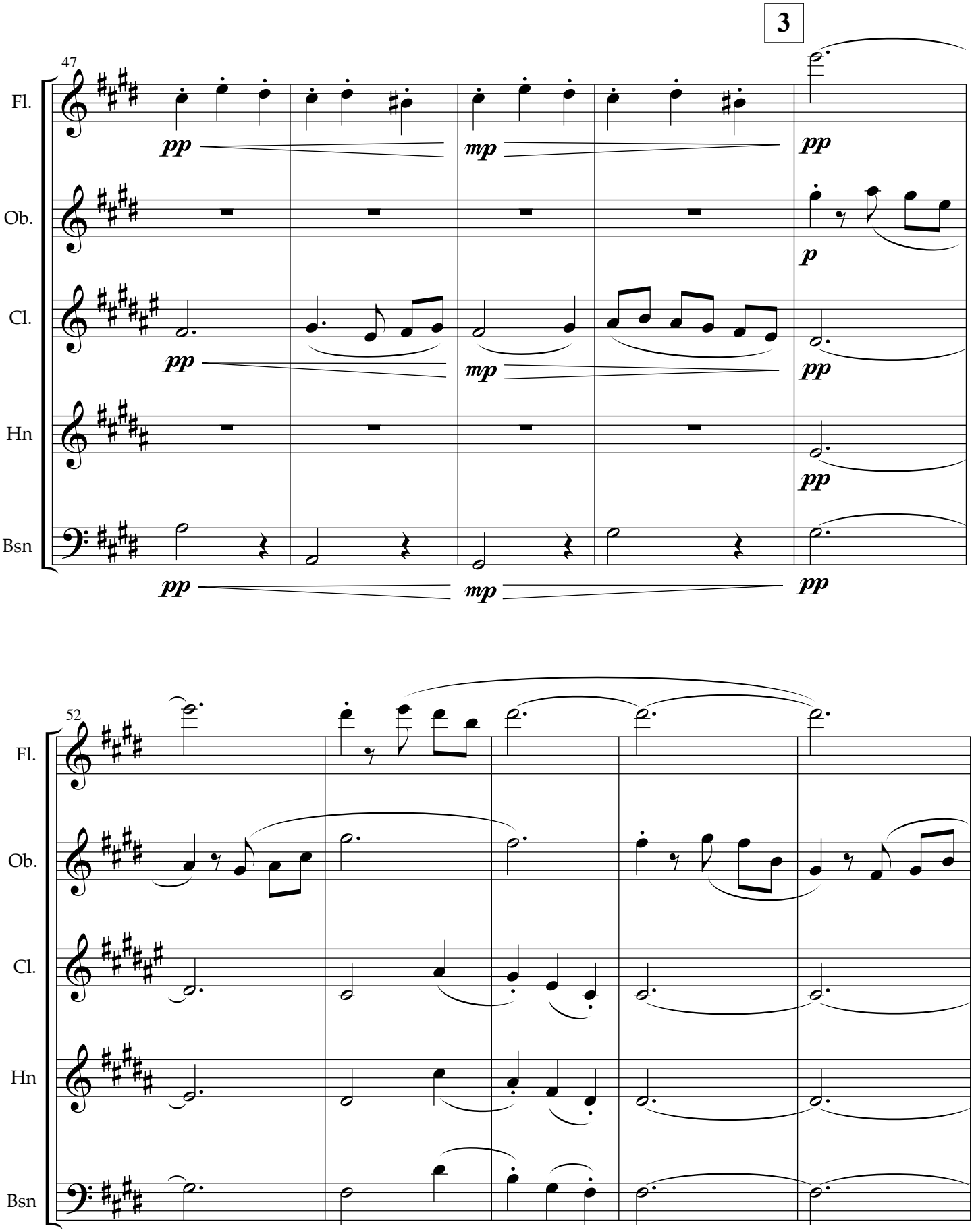
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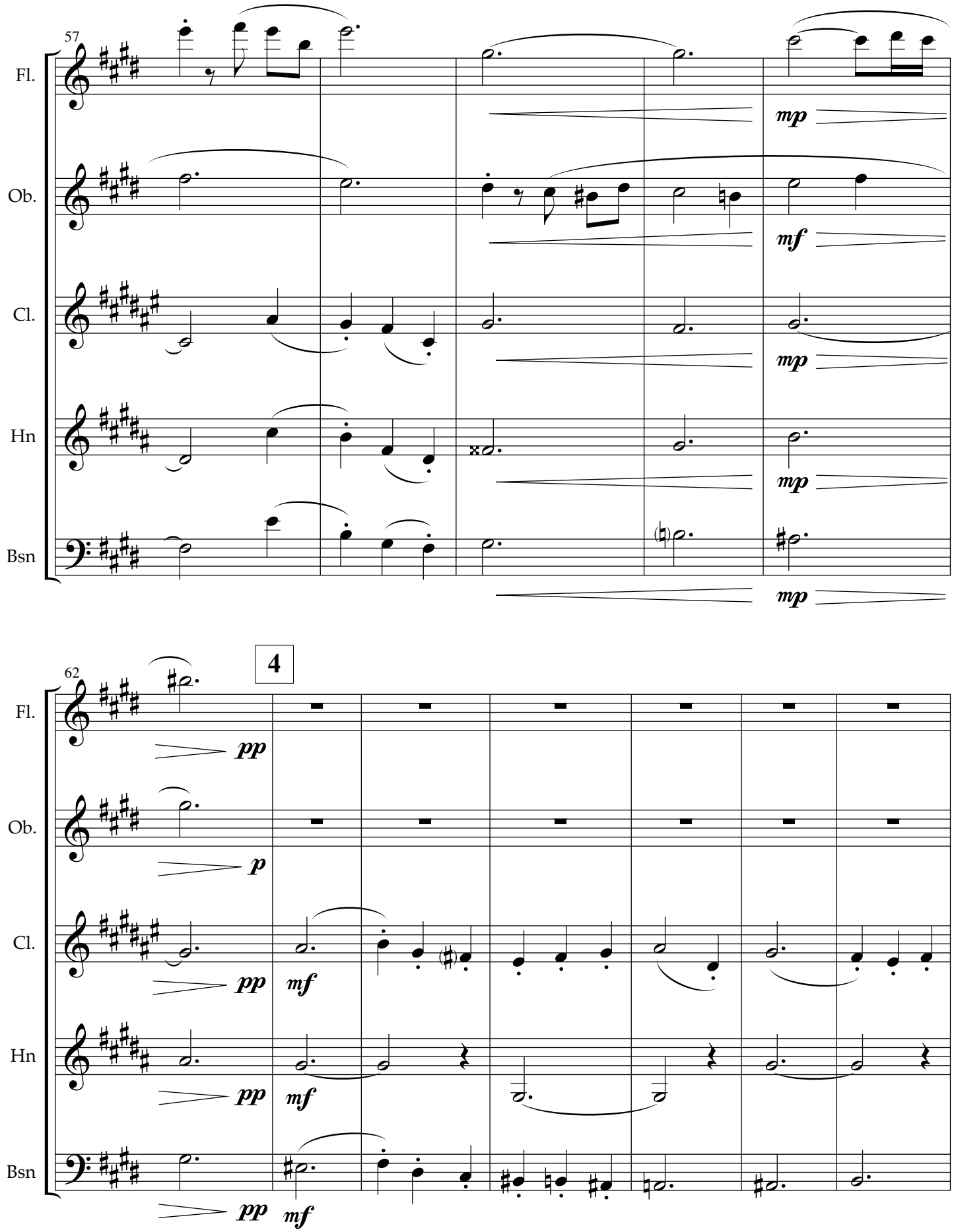
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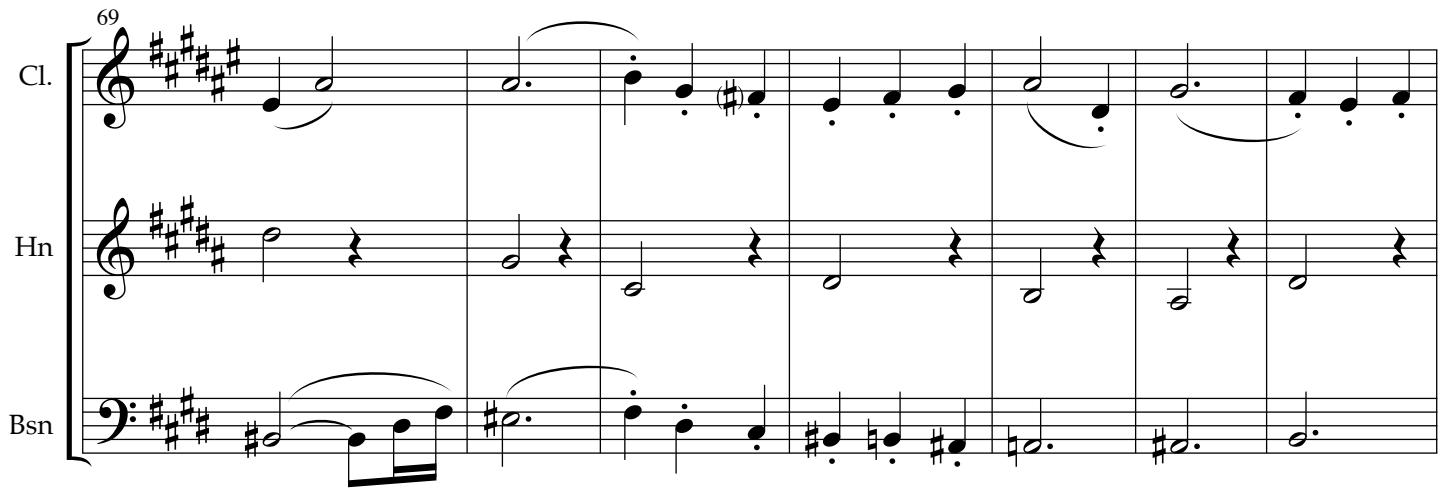
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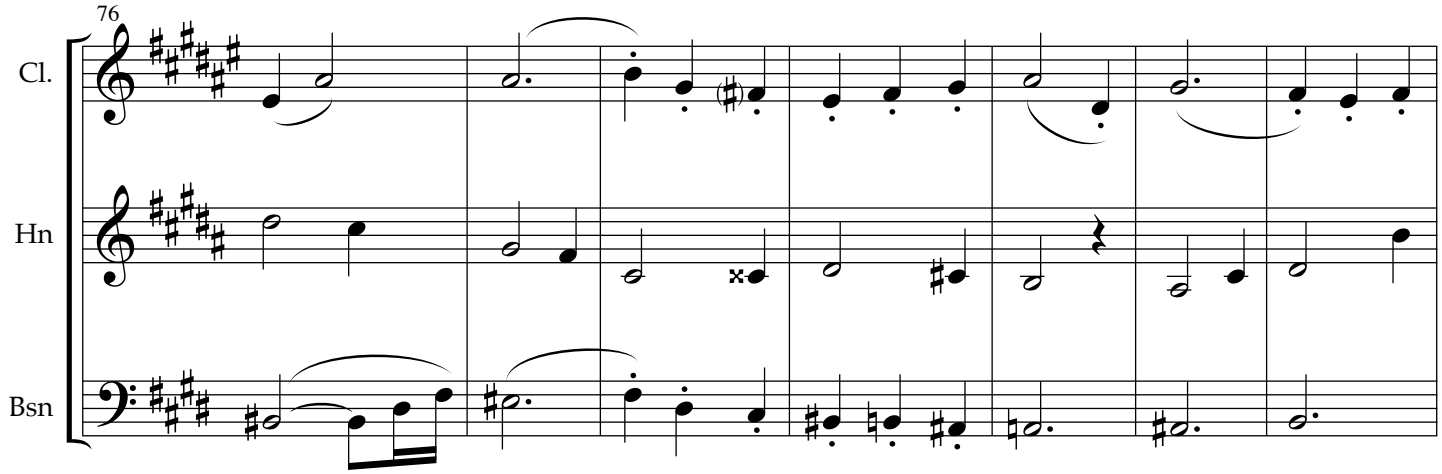
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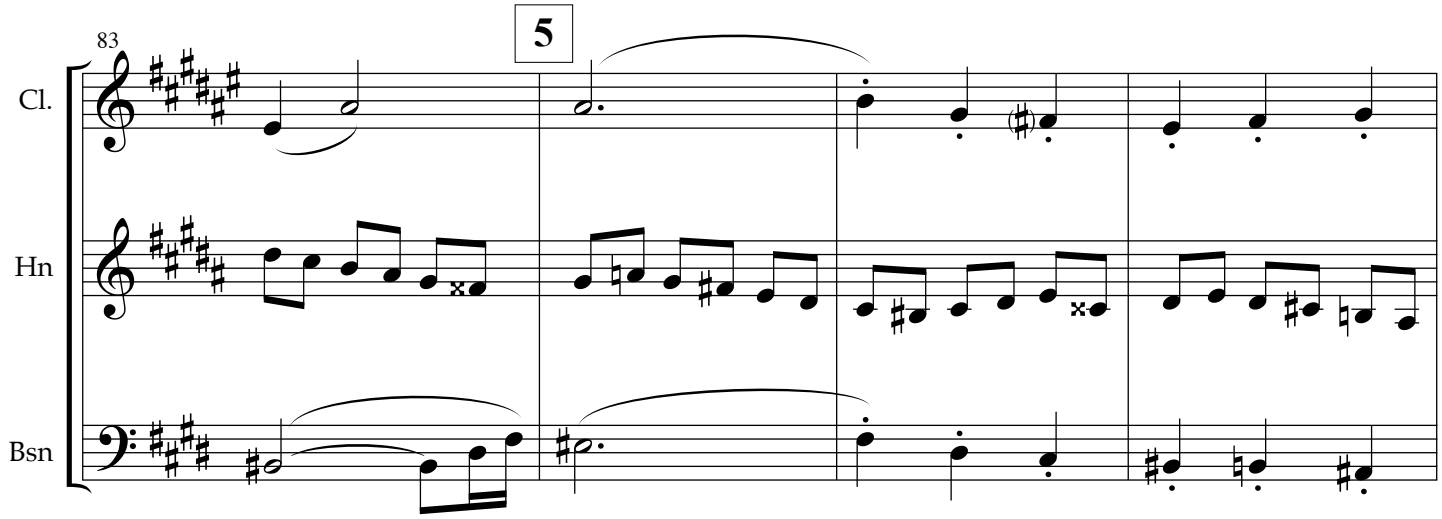
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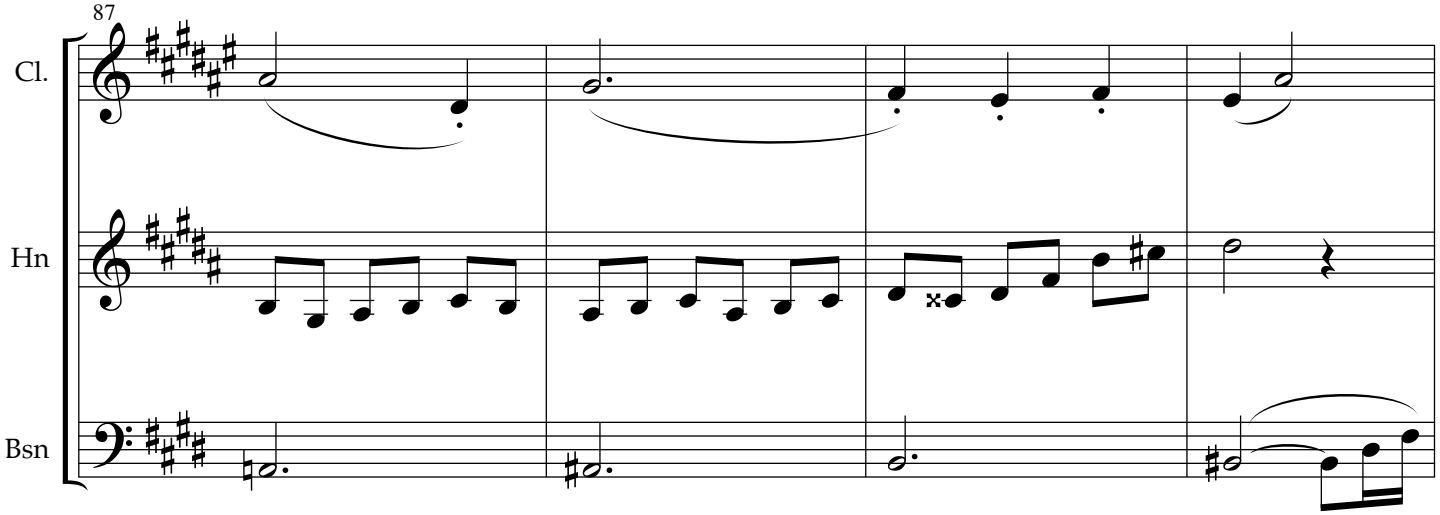
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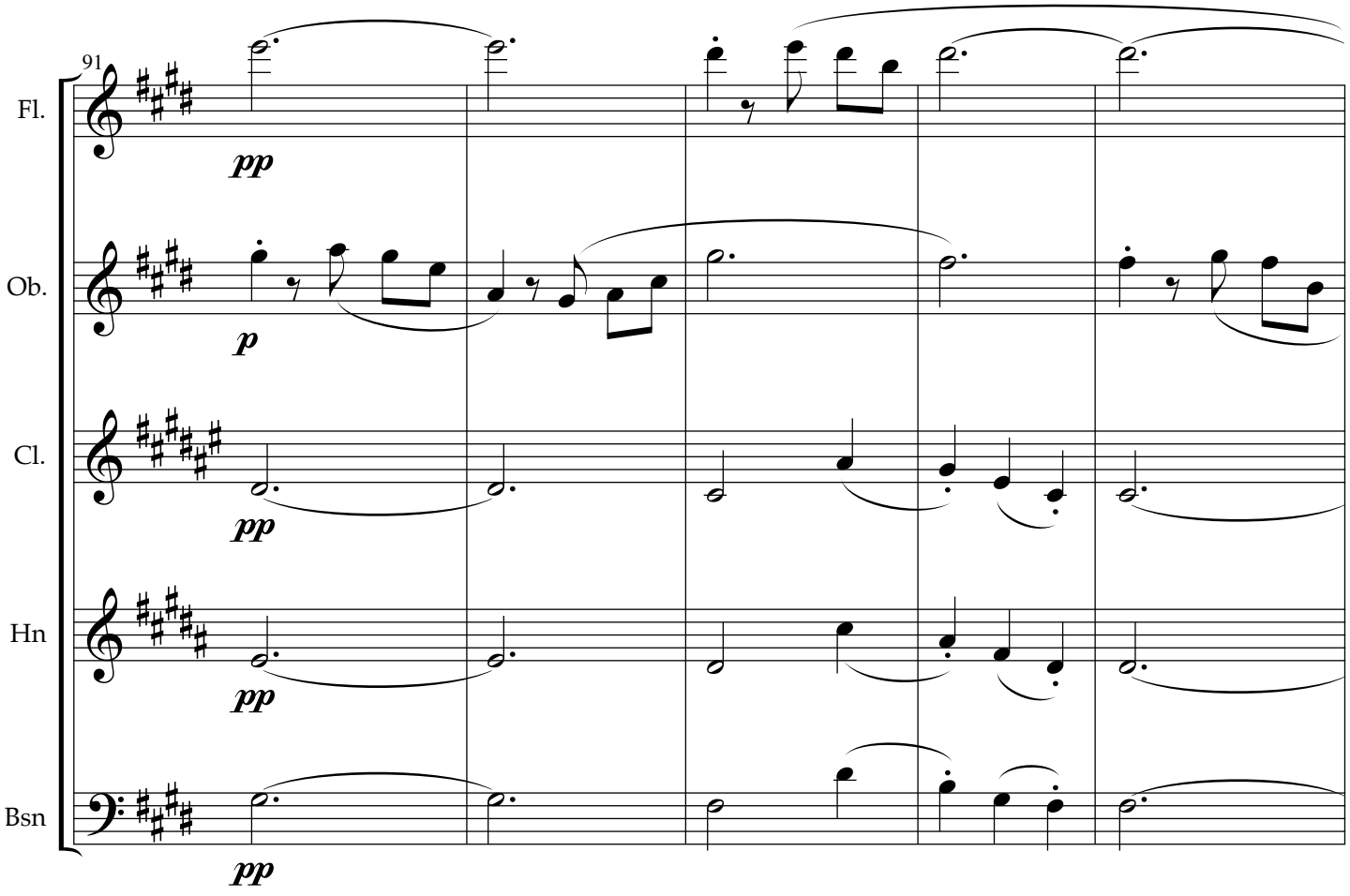
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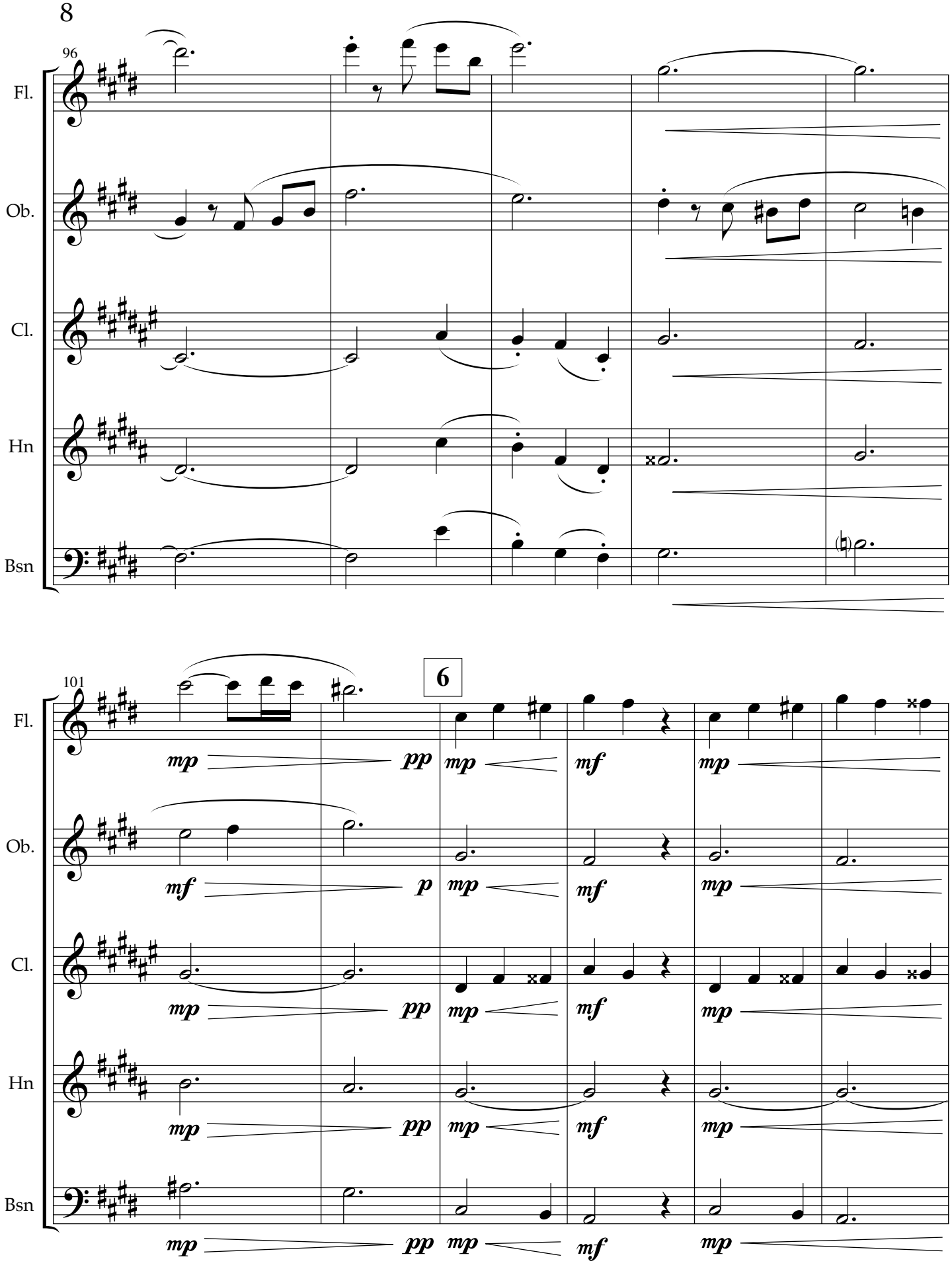
pp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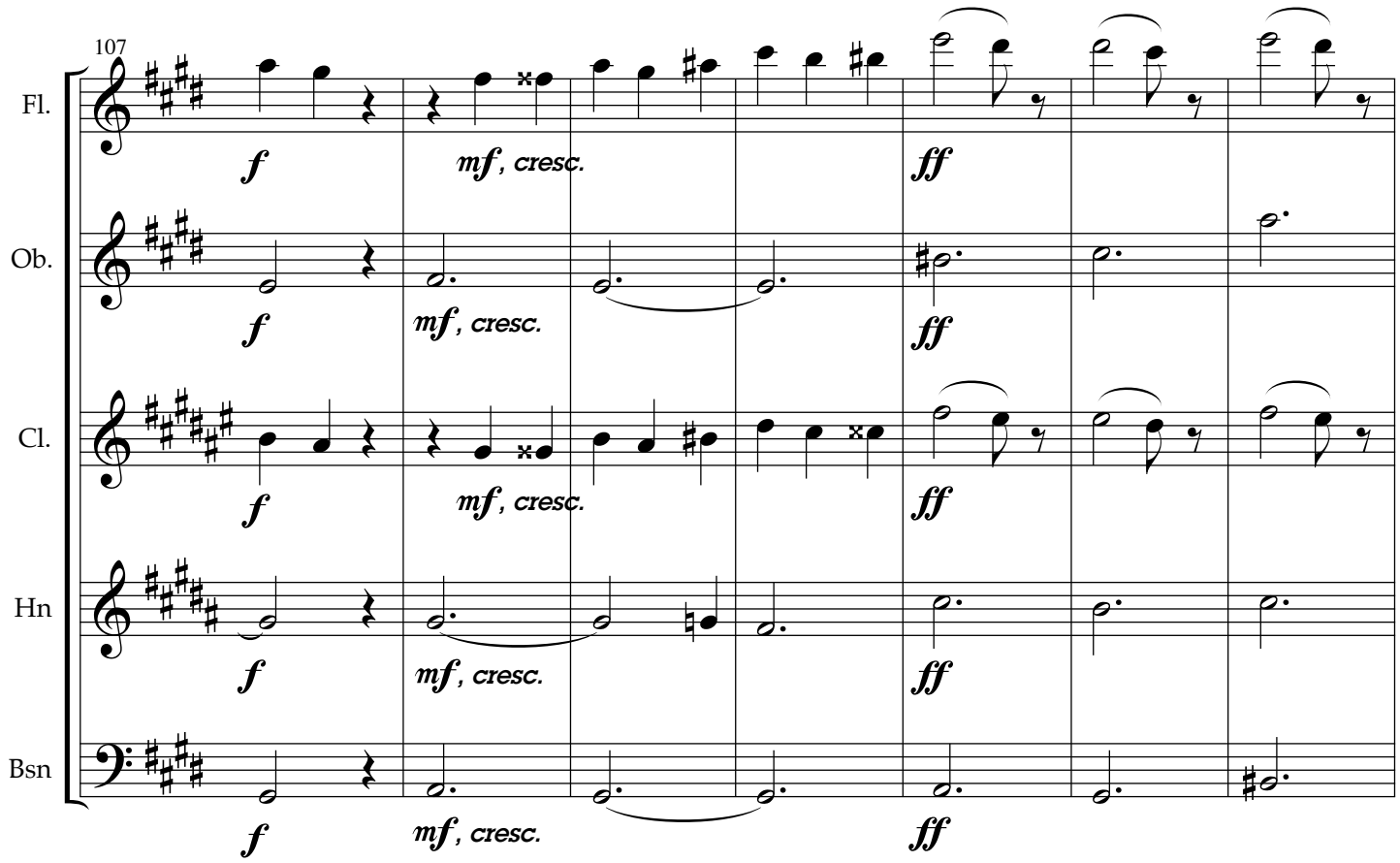
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f
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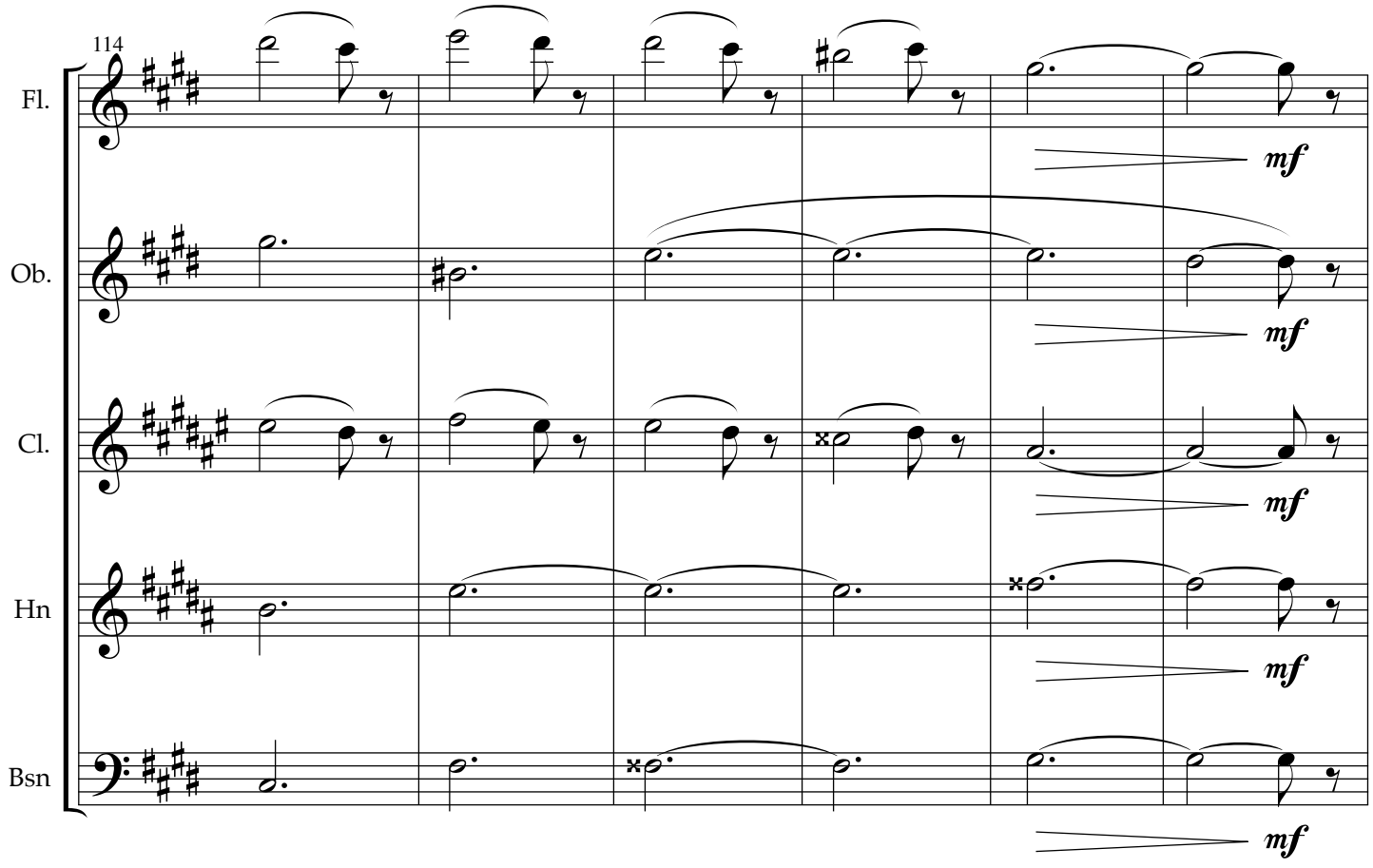
ff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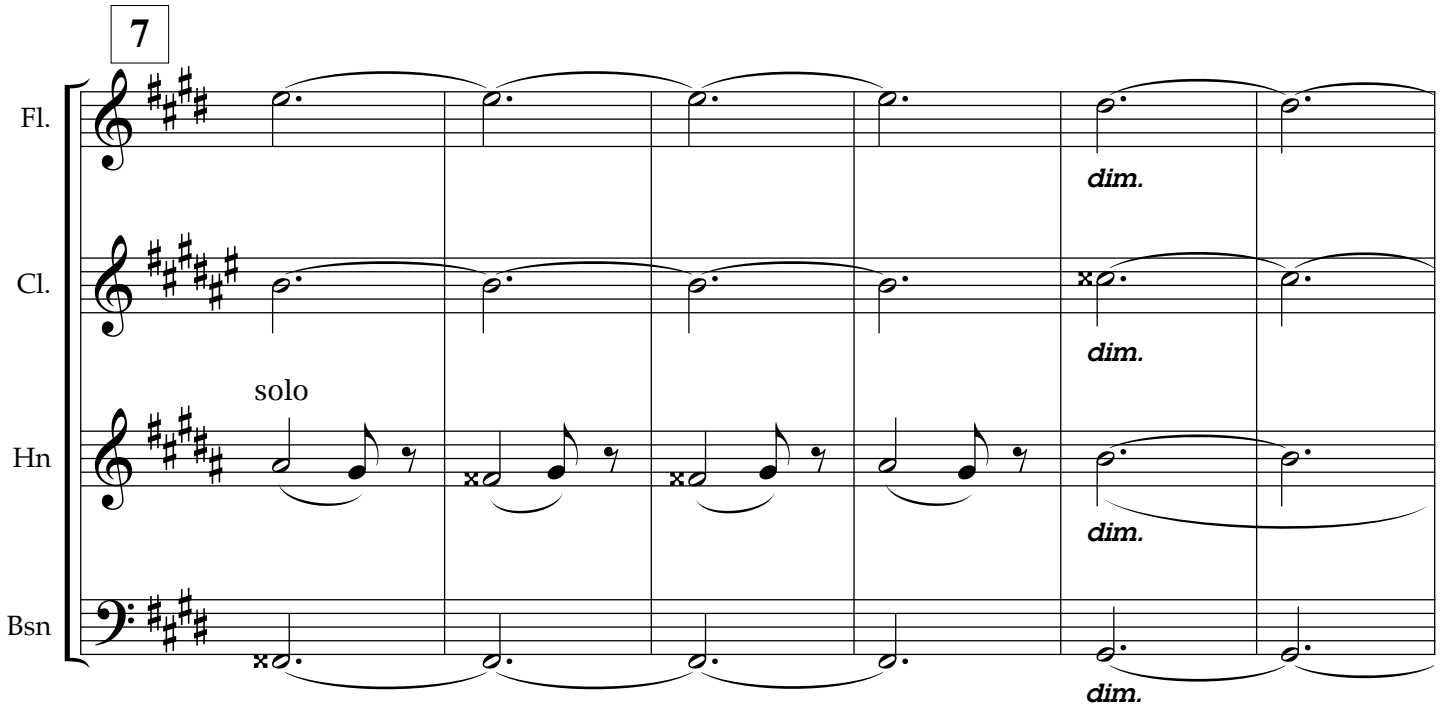
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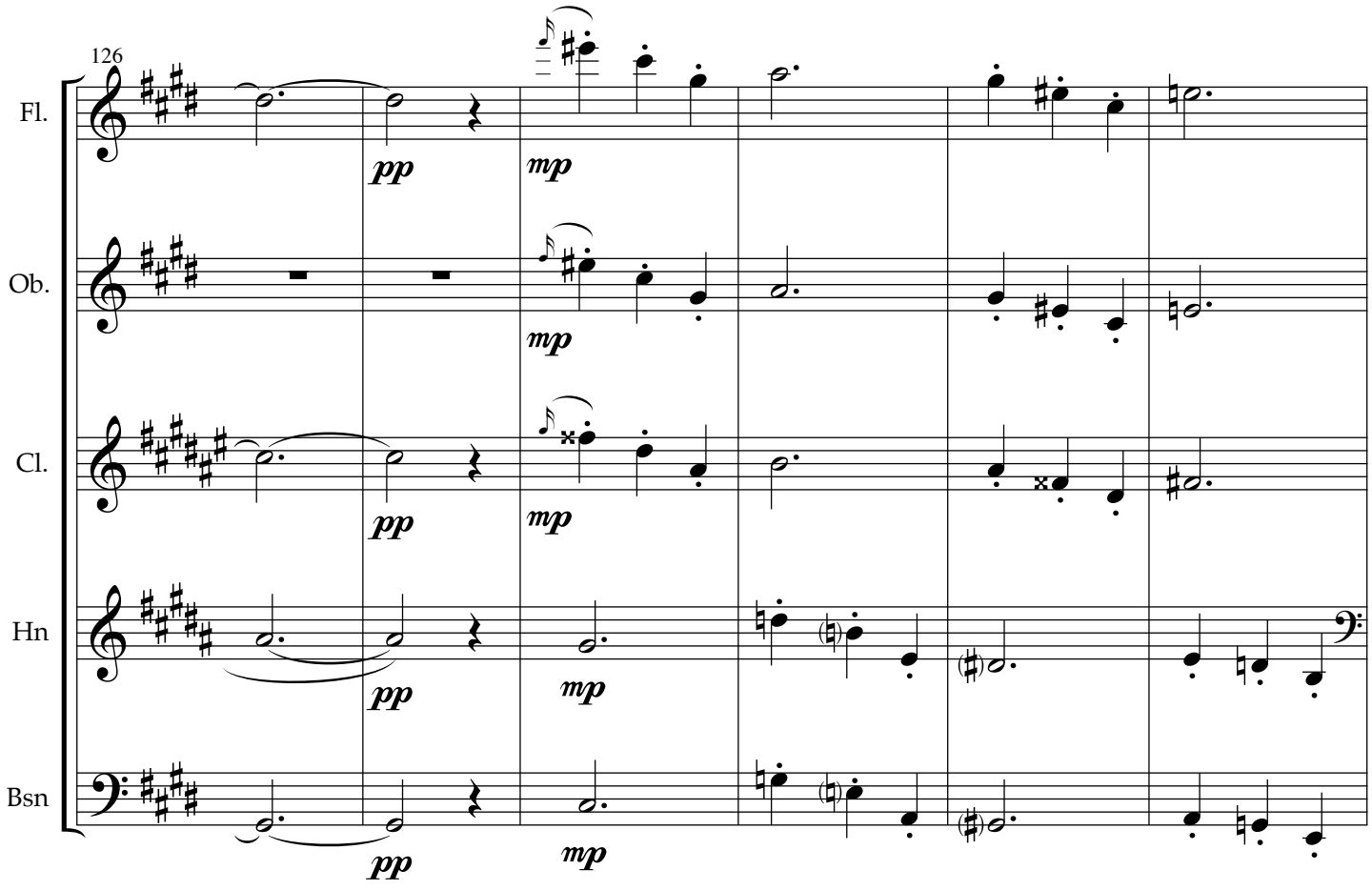
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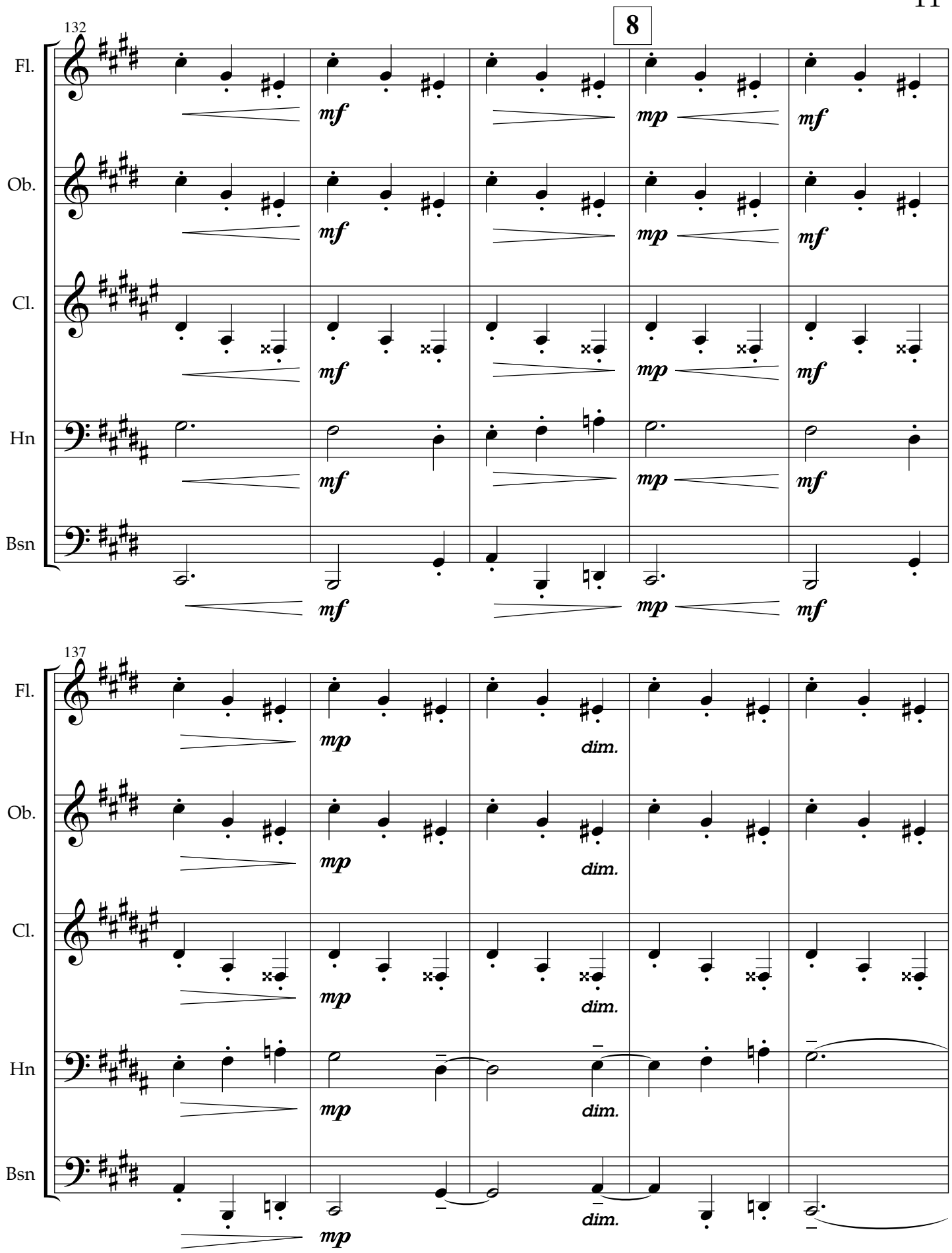
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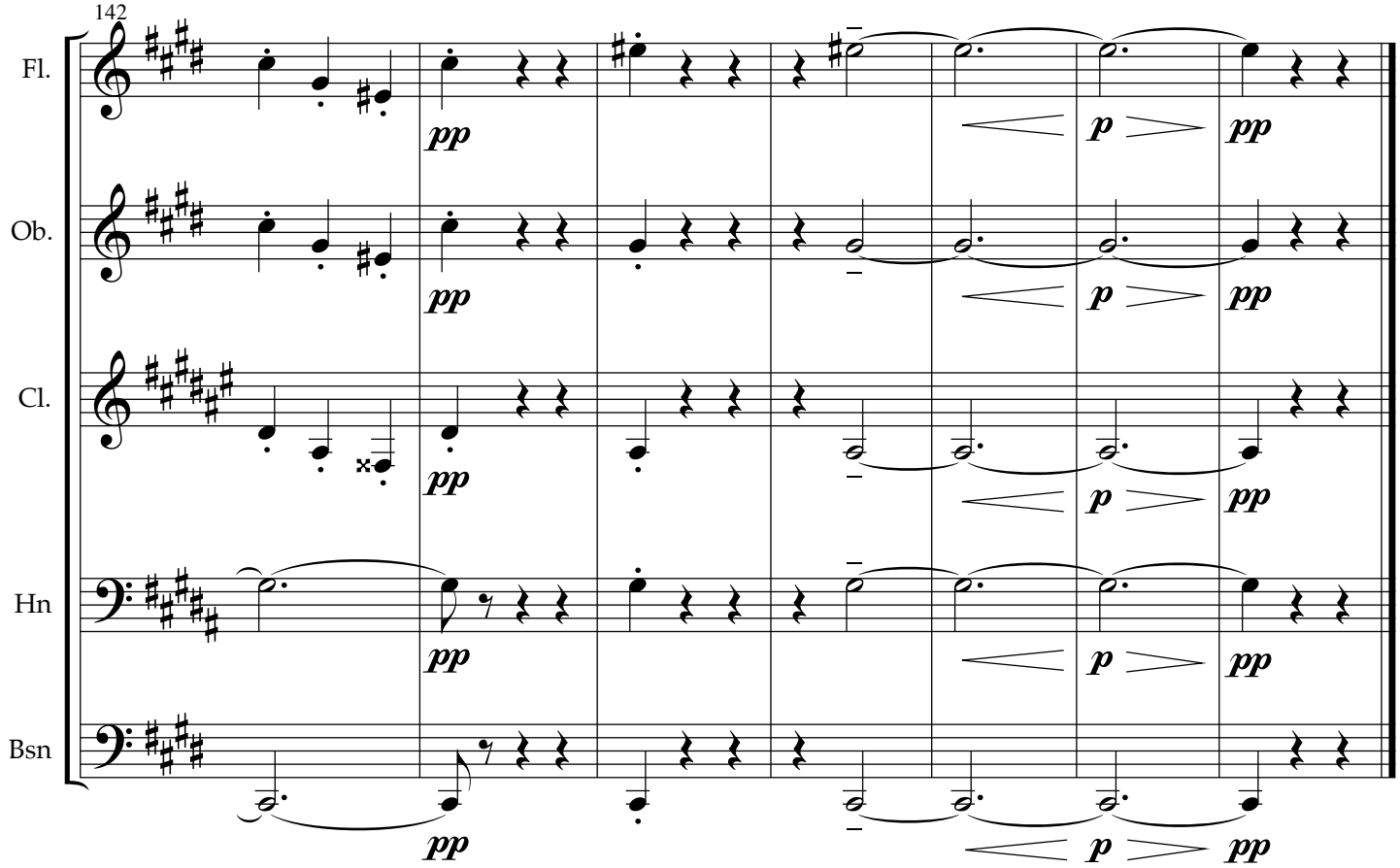

2. Rumba

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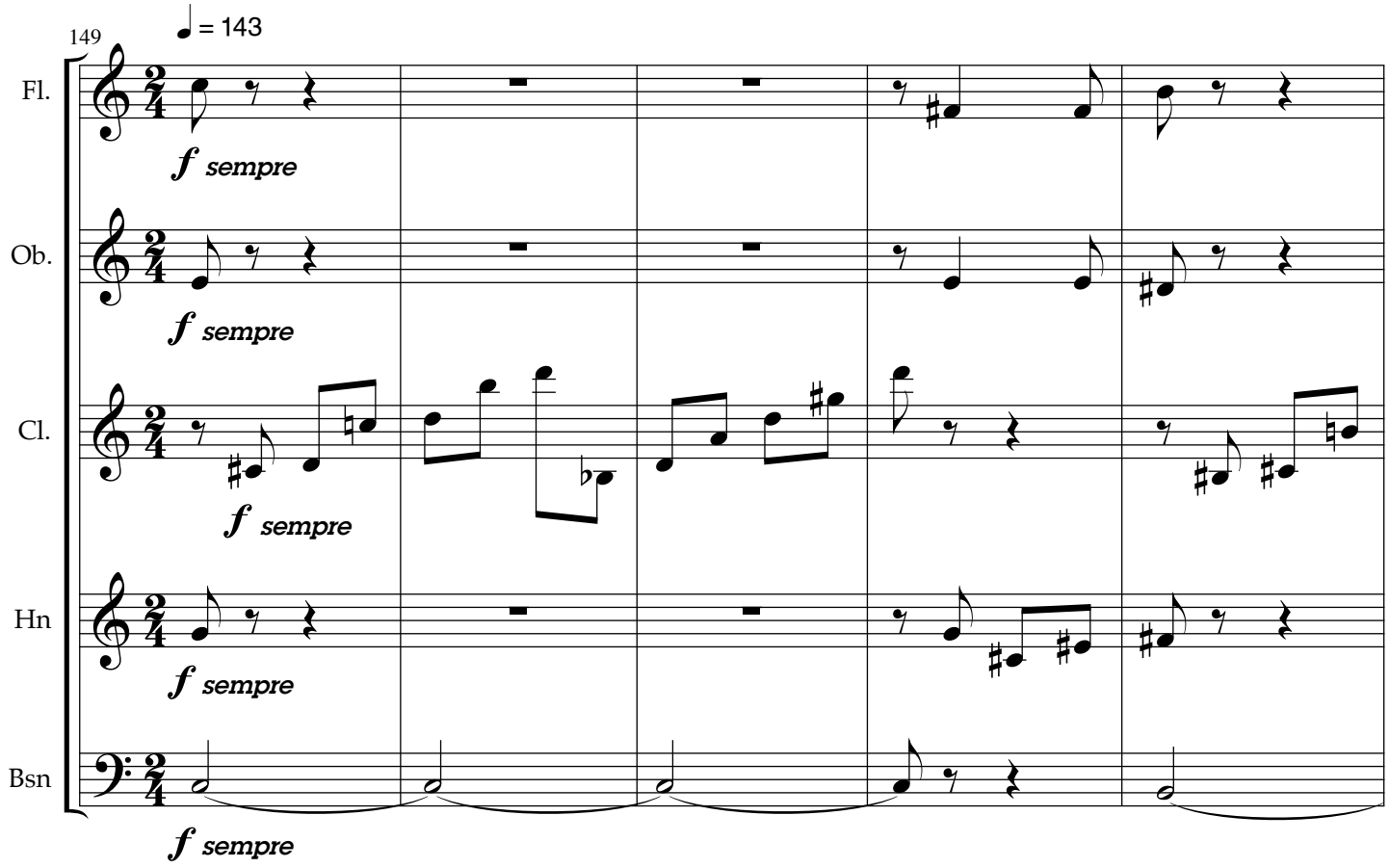

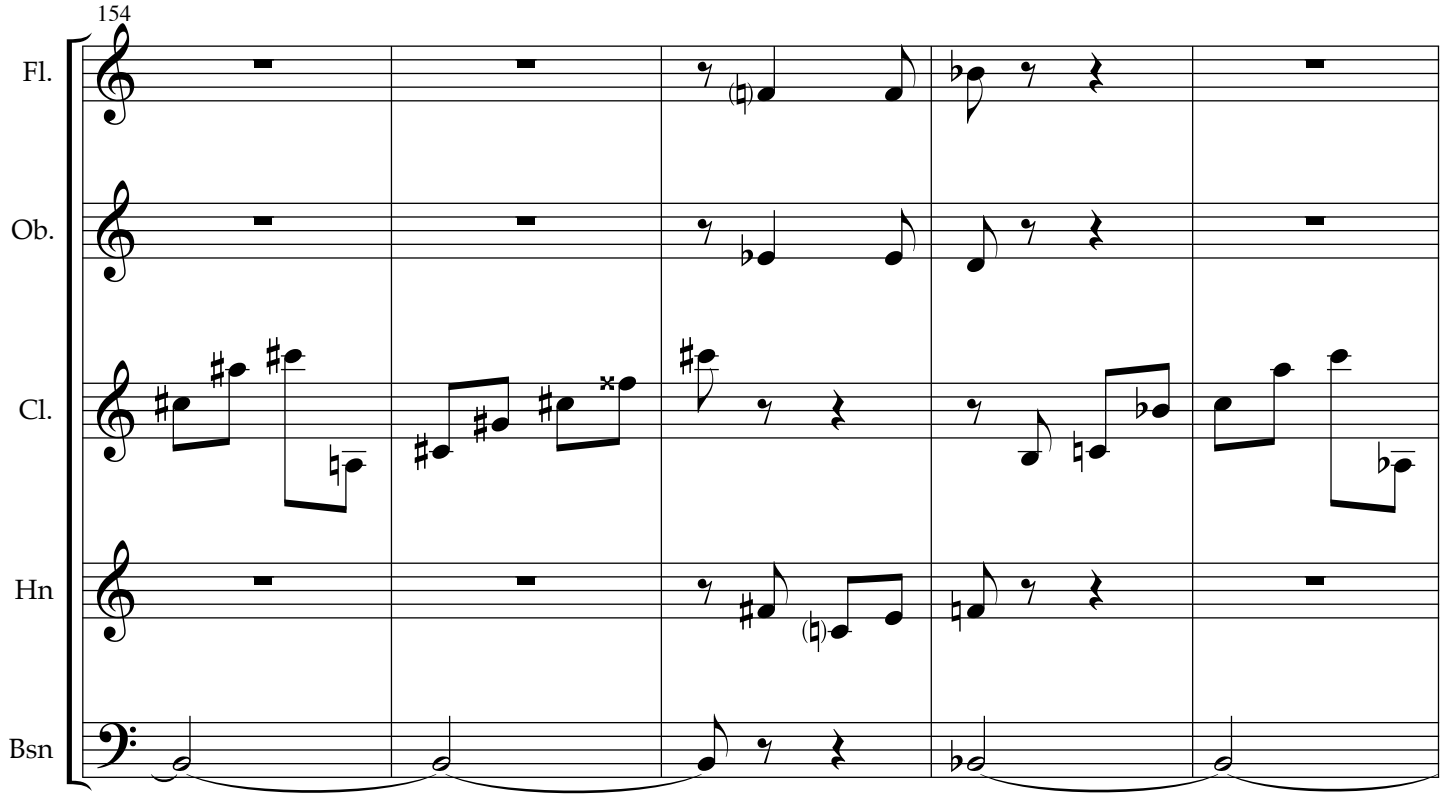
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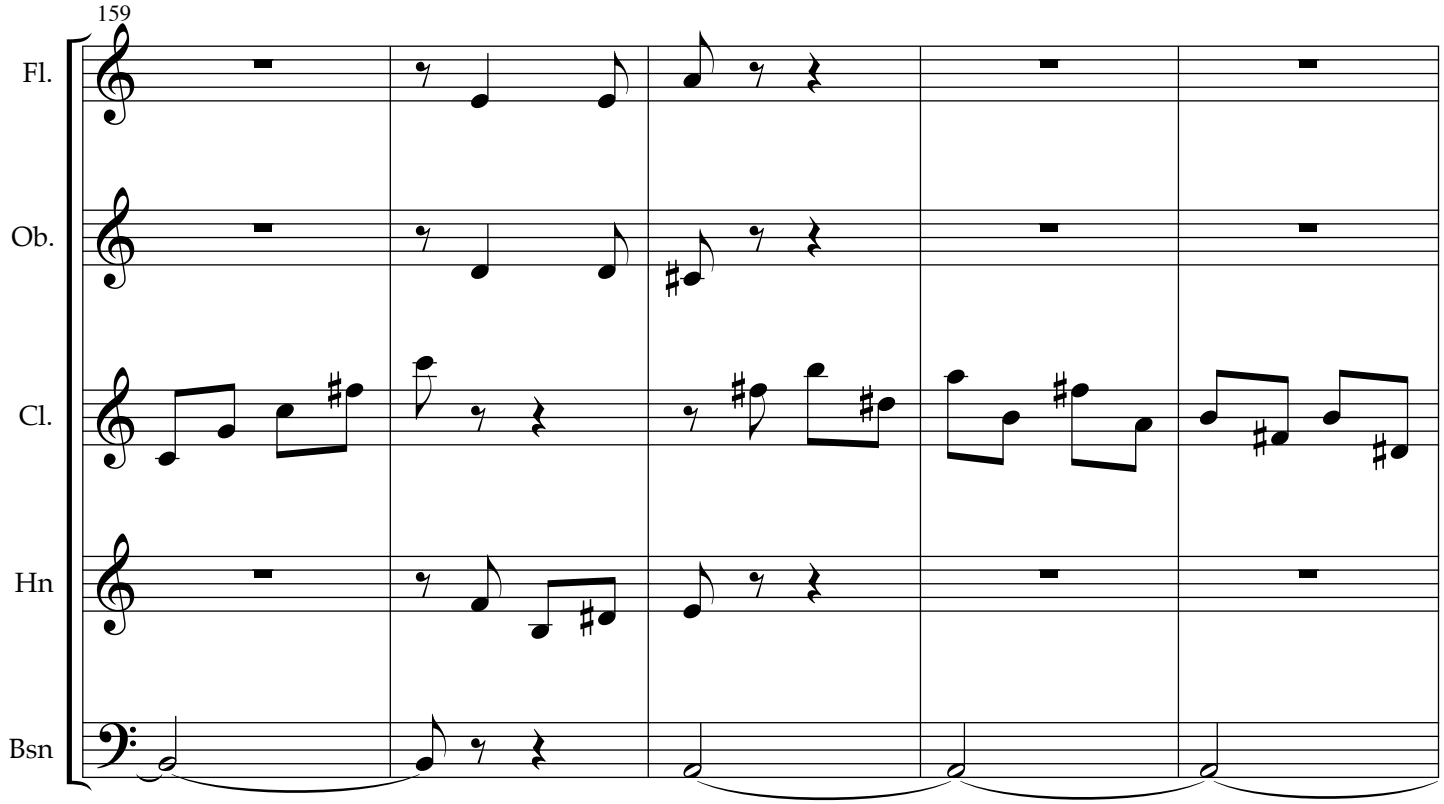
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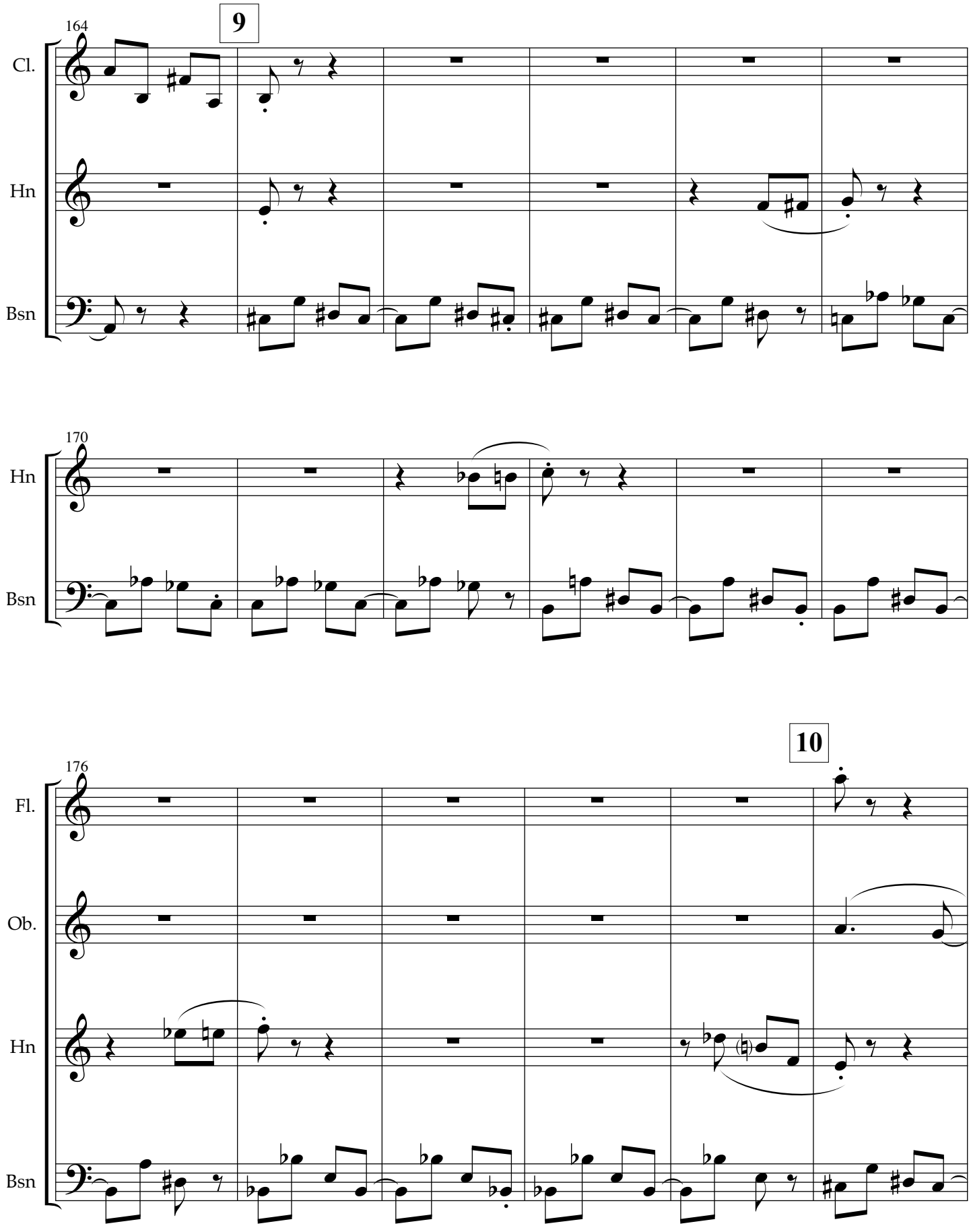
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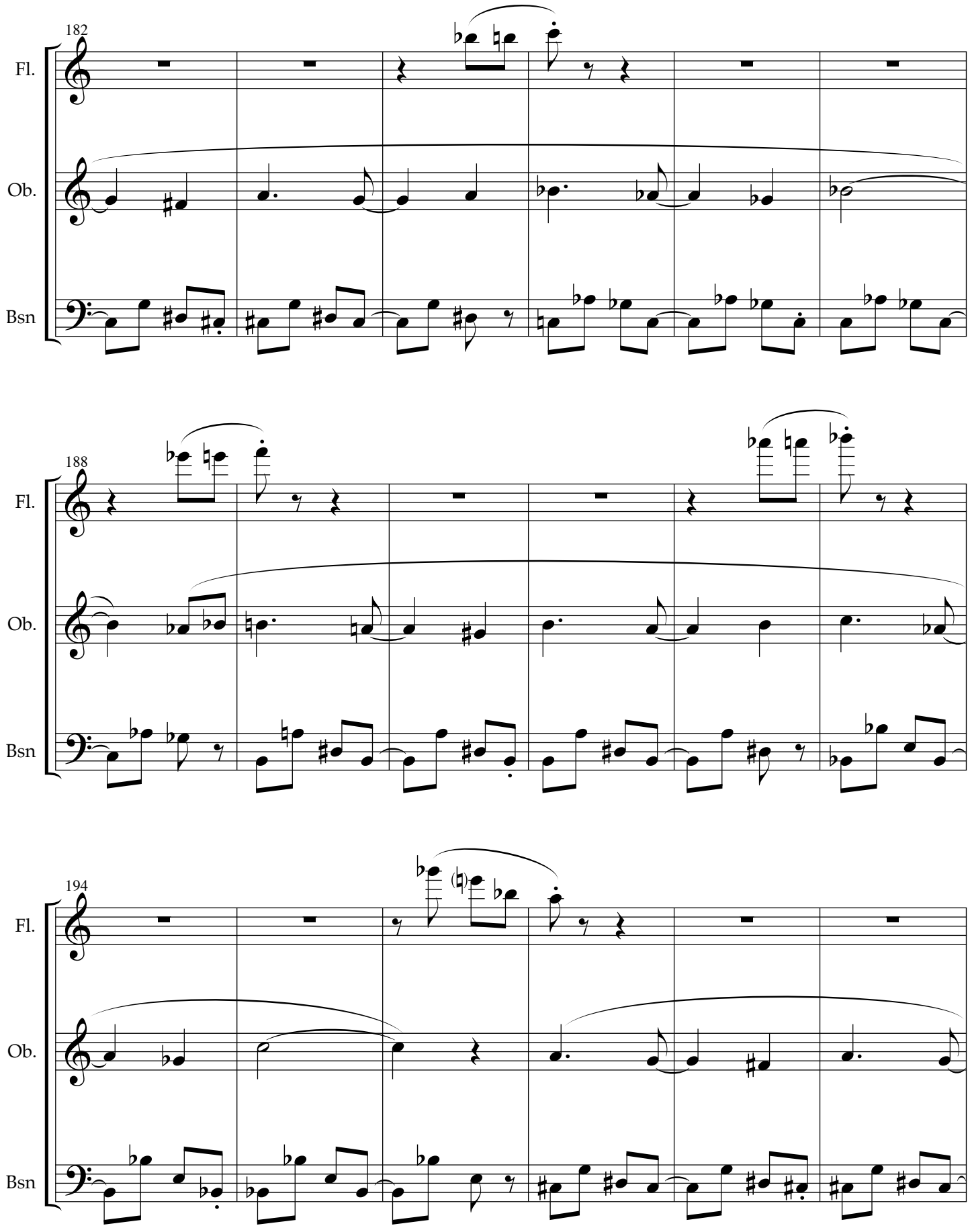
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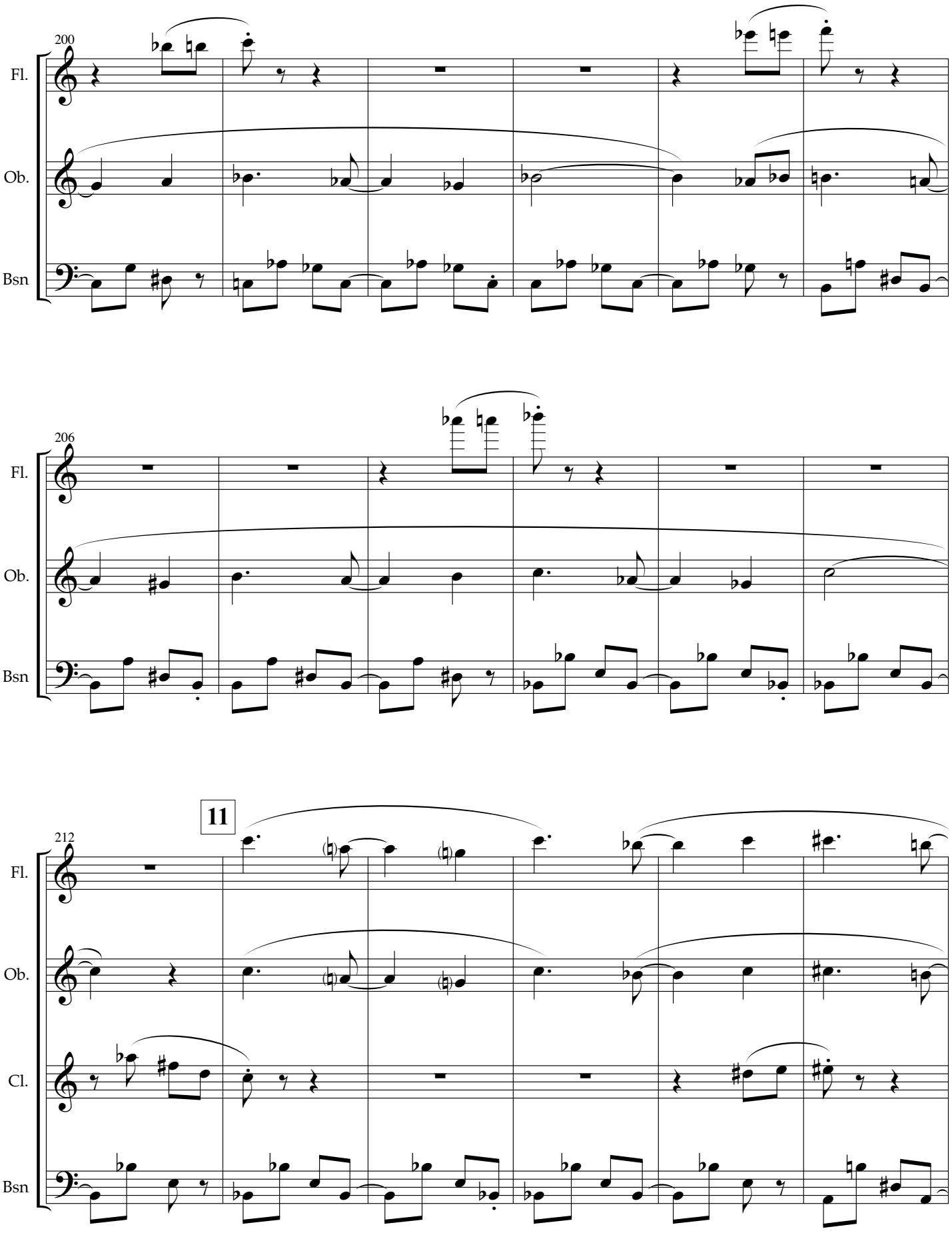
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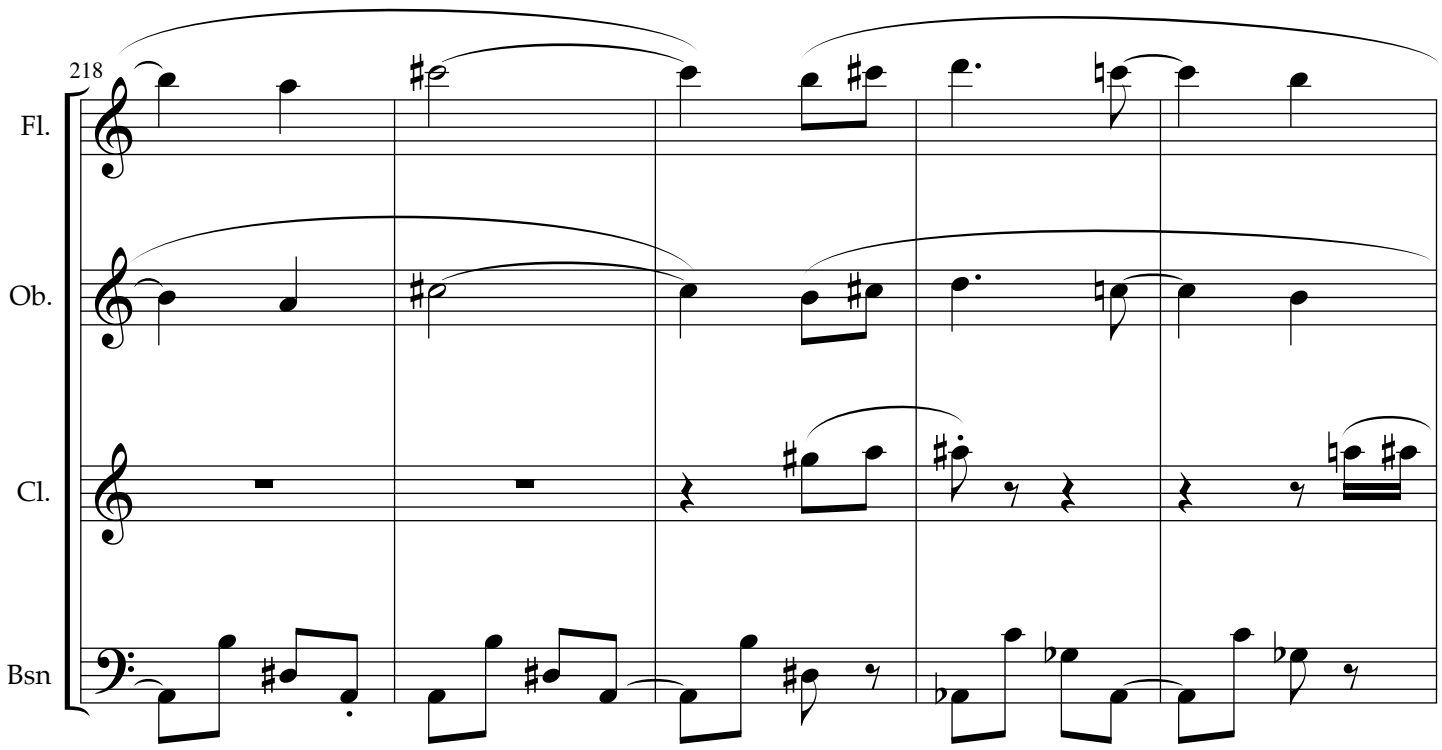
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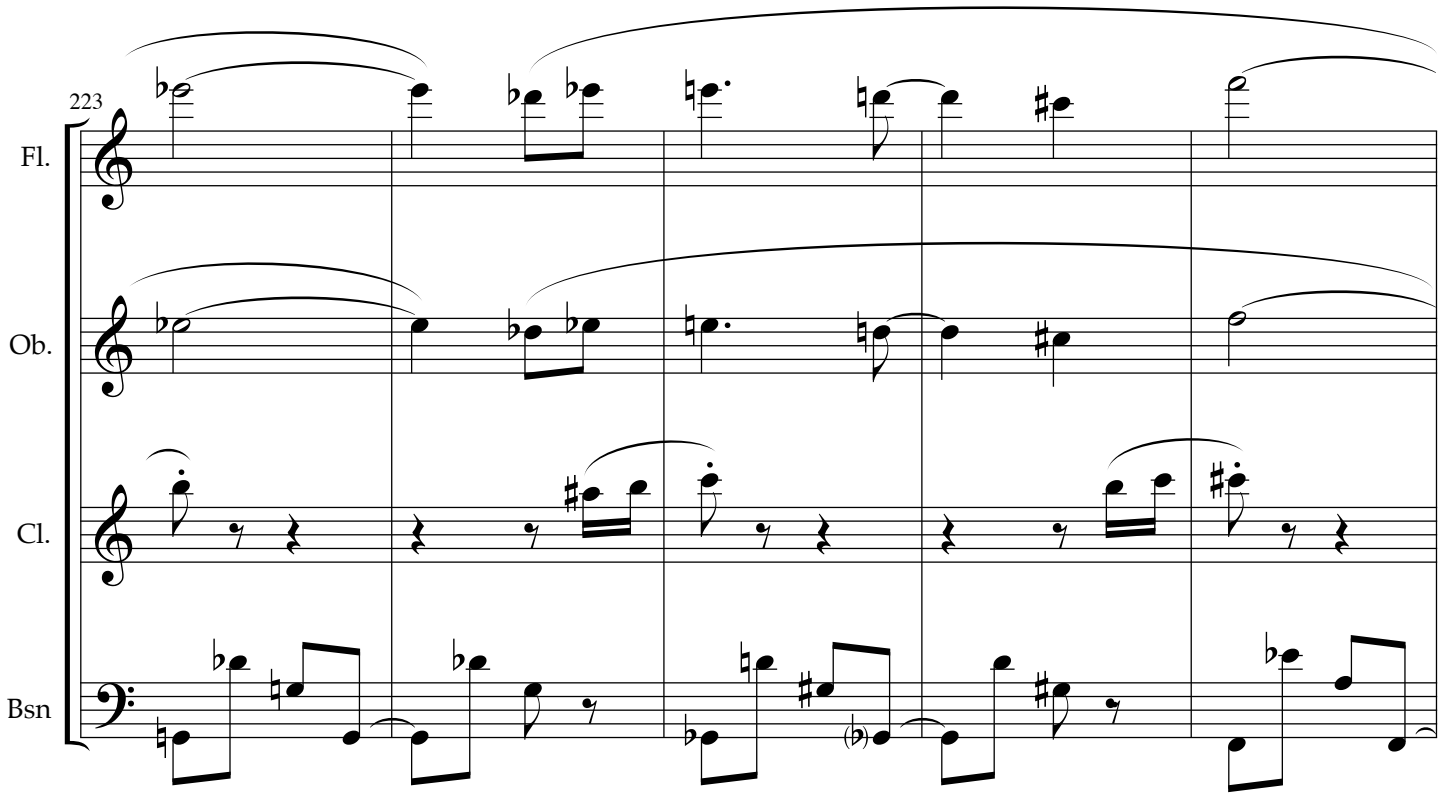
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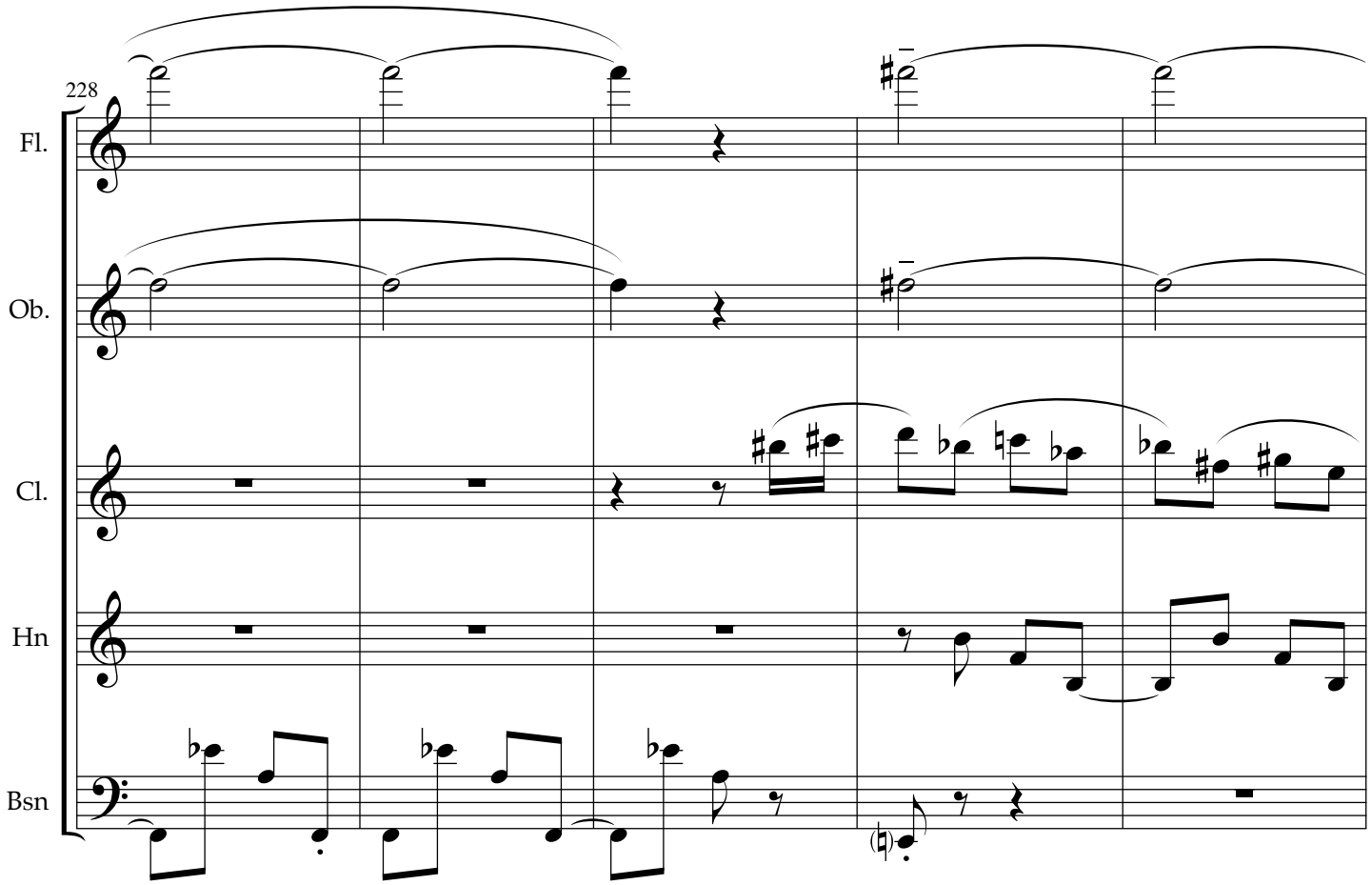
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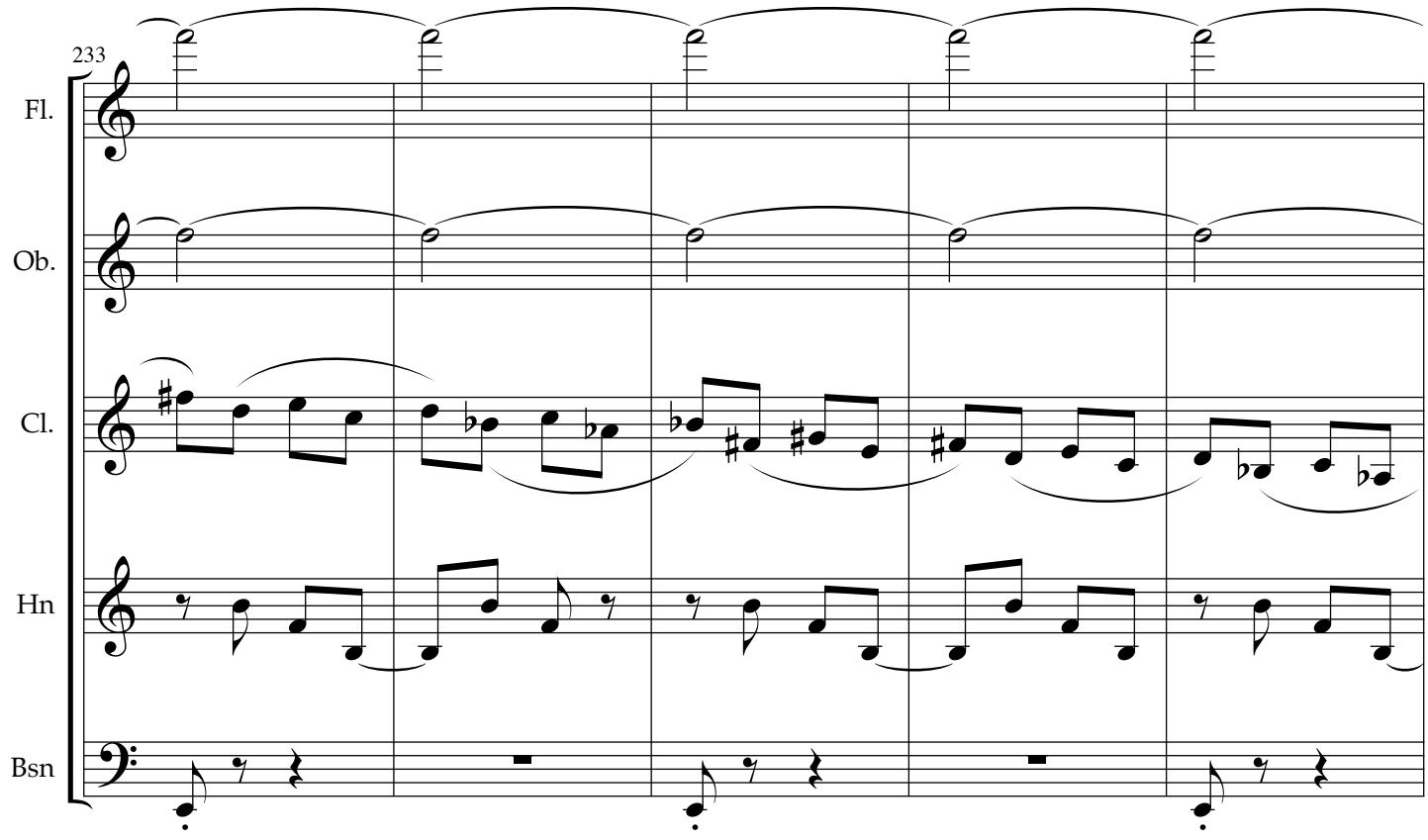
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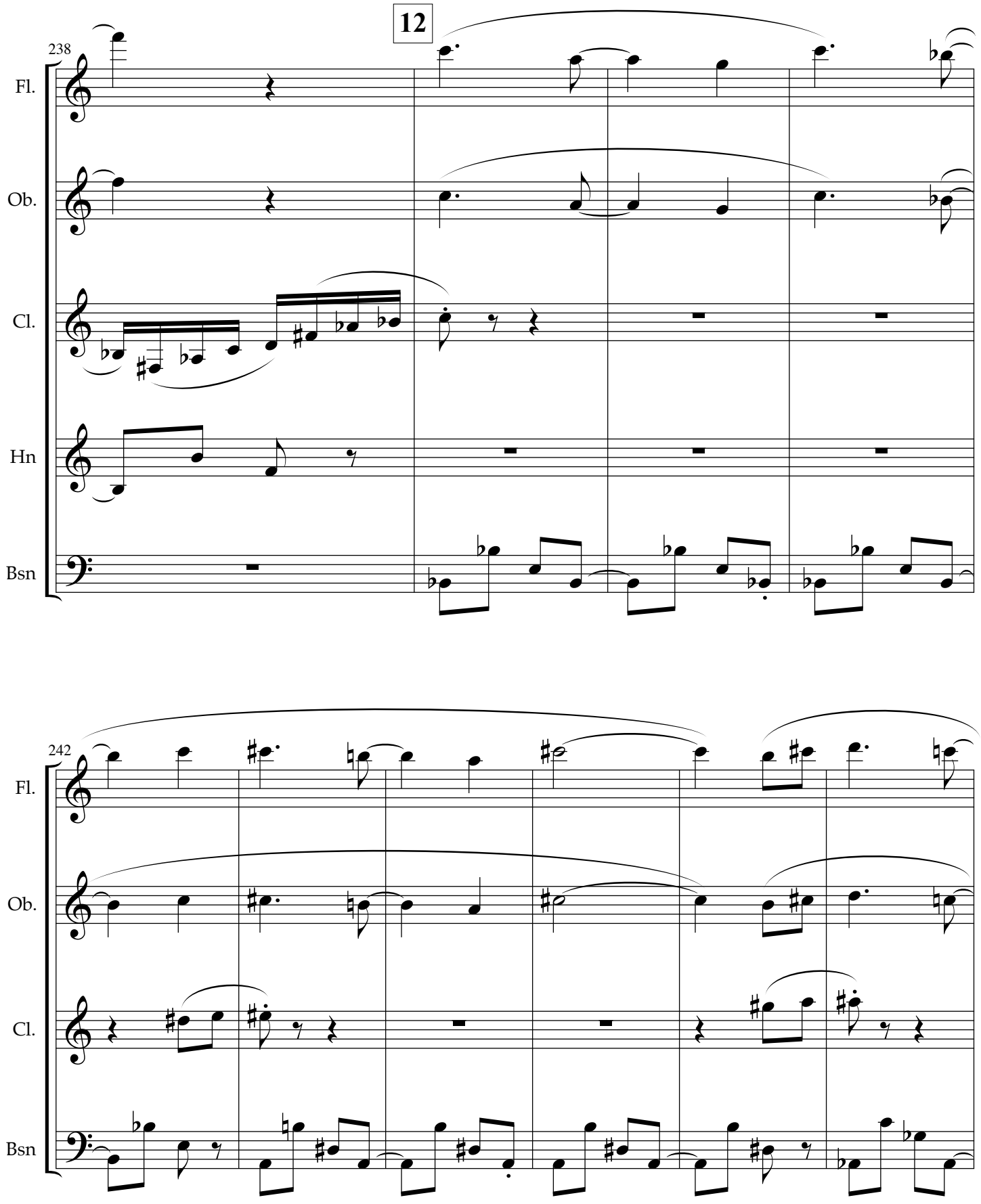
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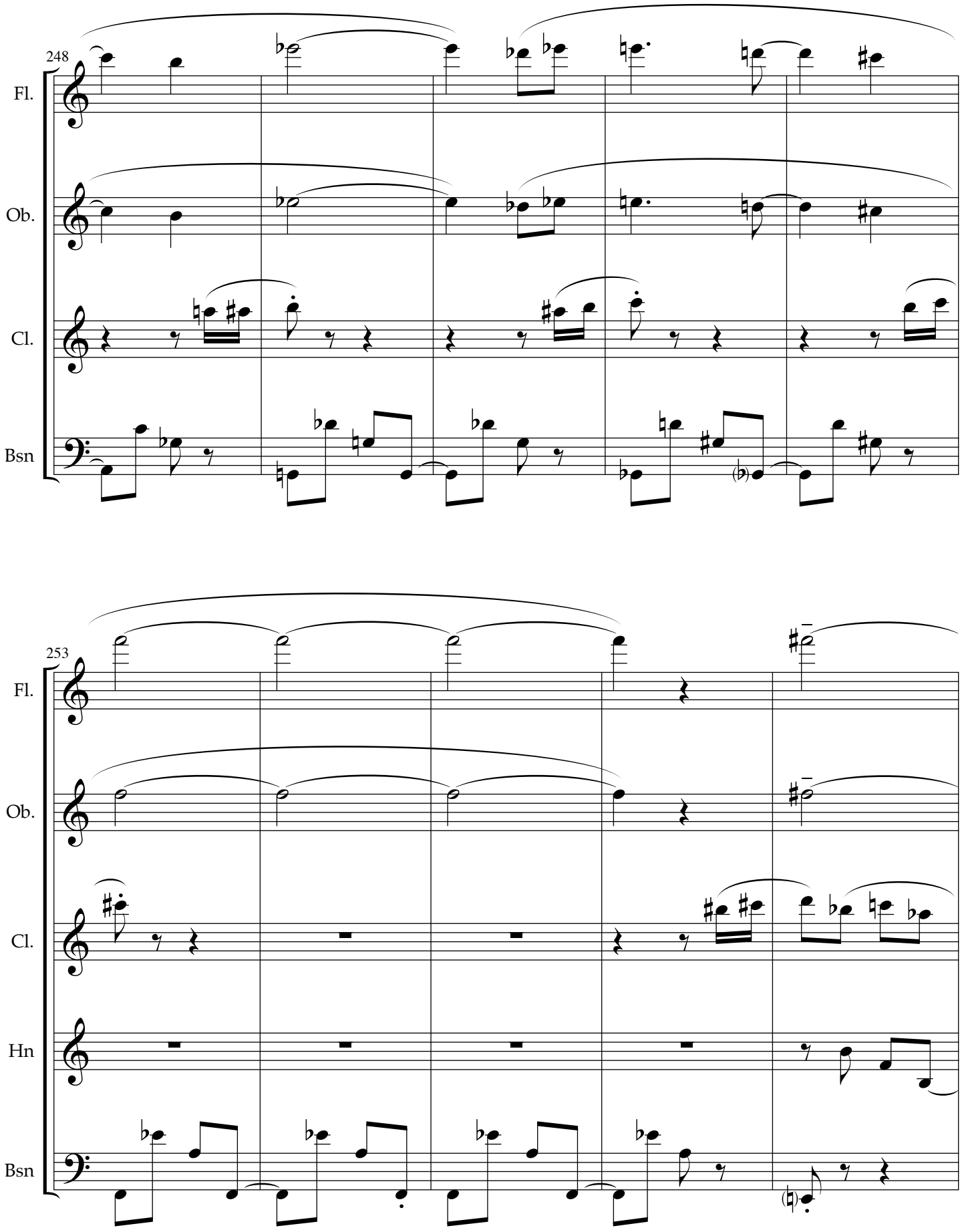
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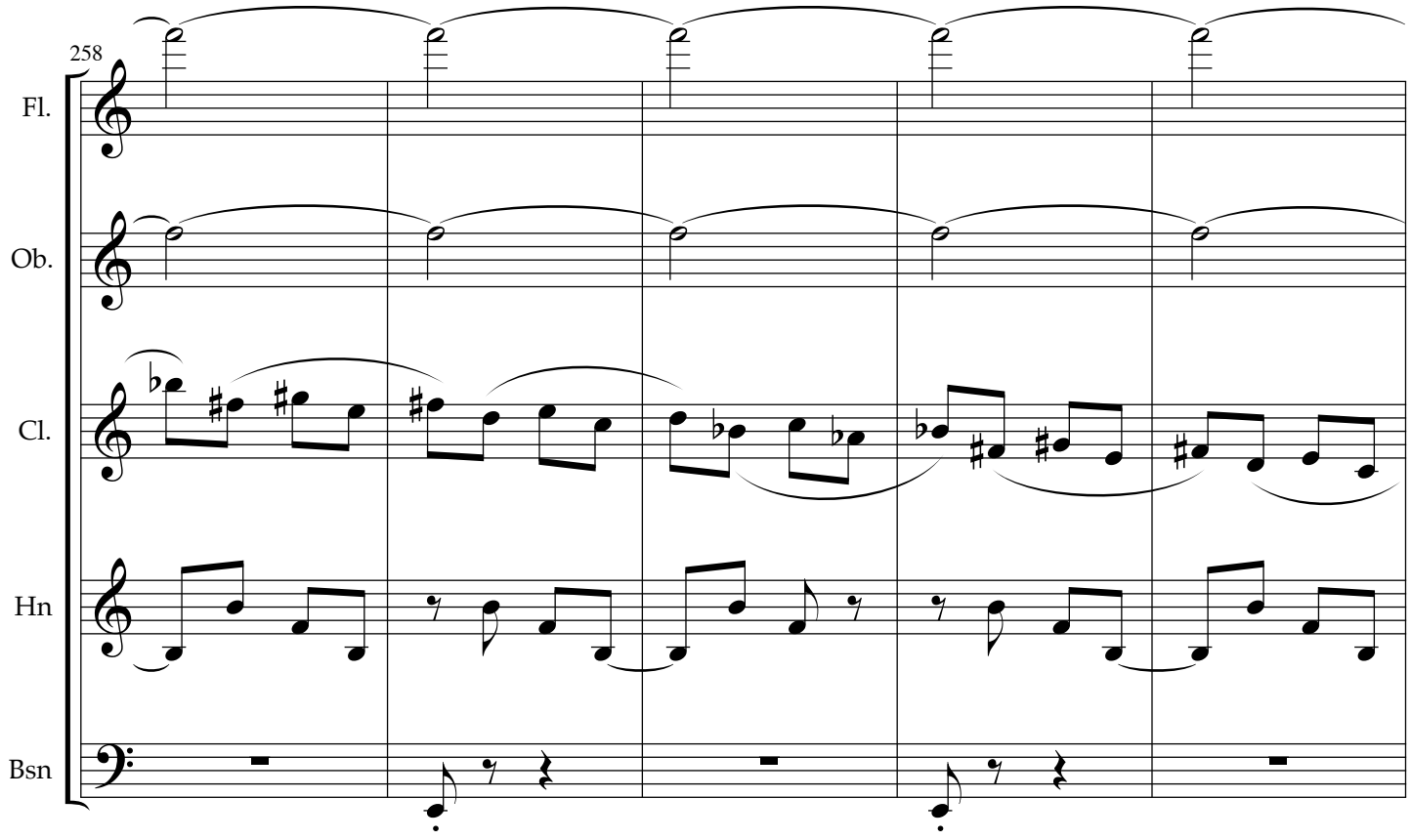
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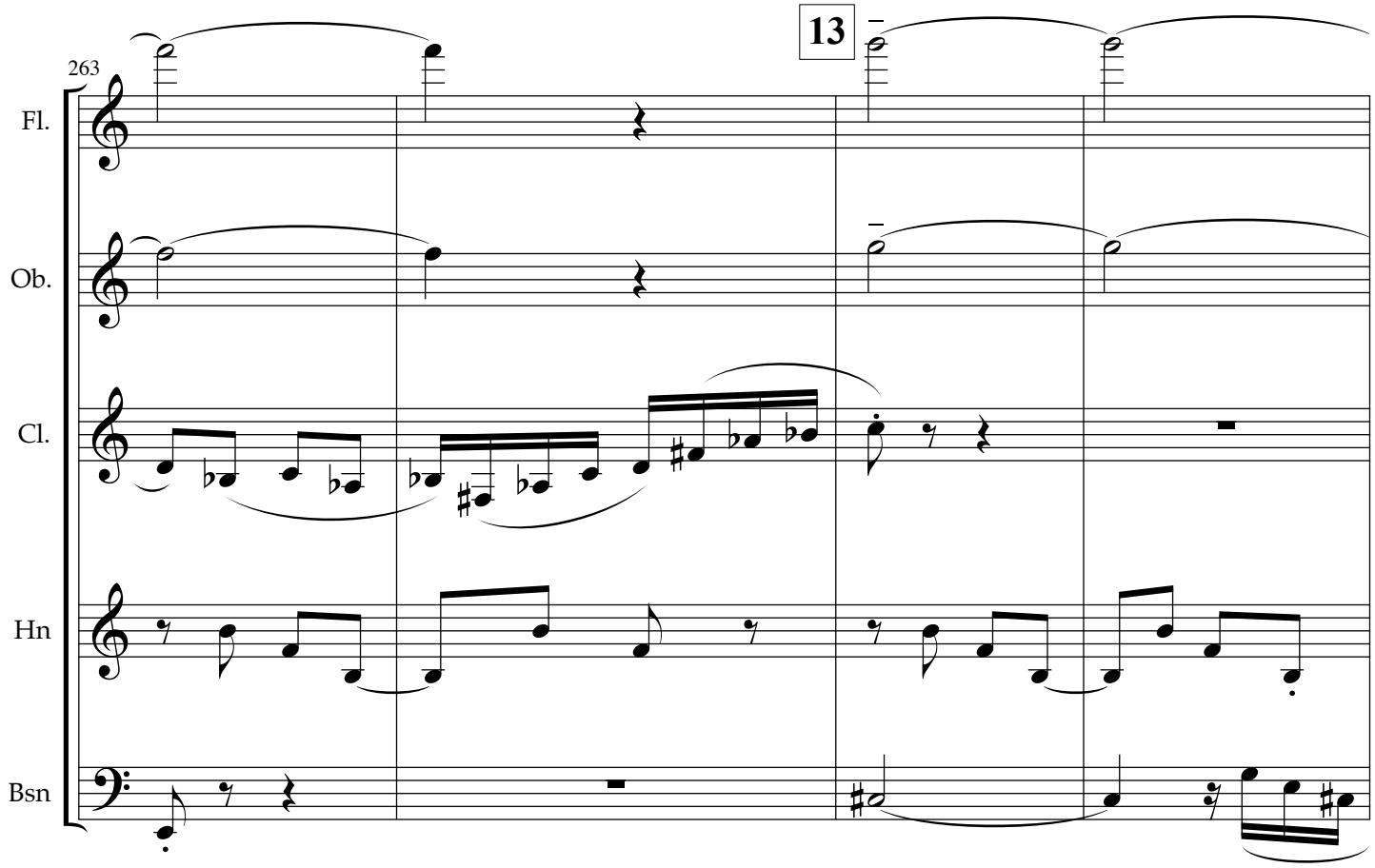
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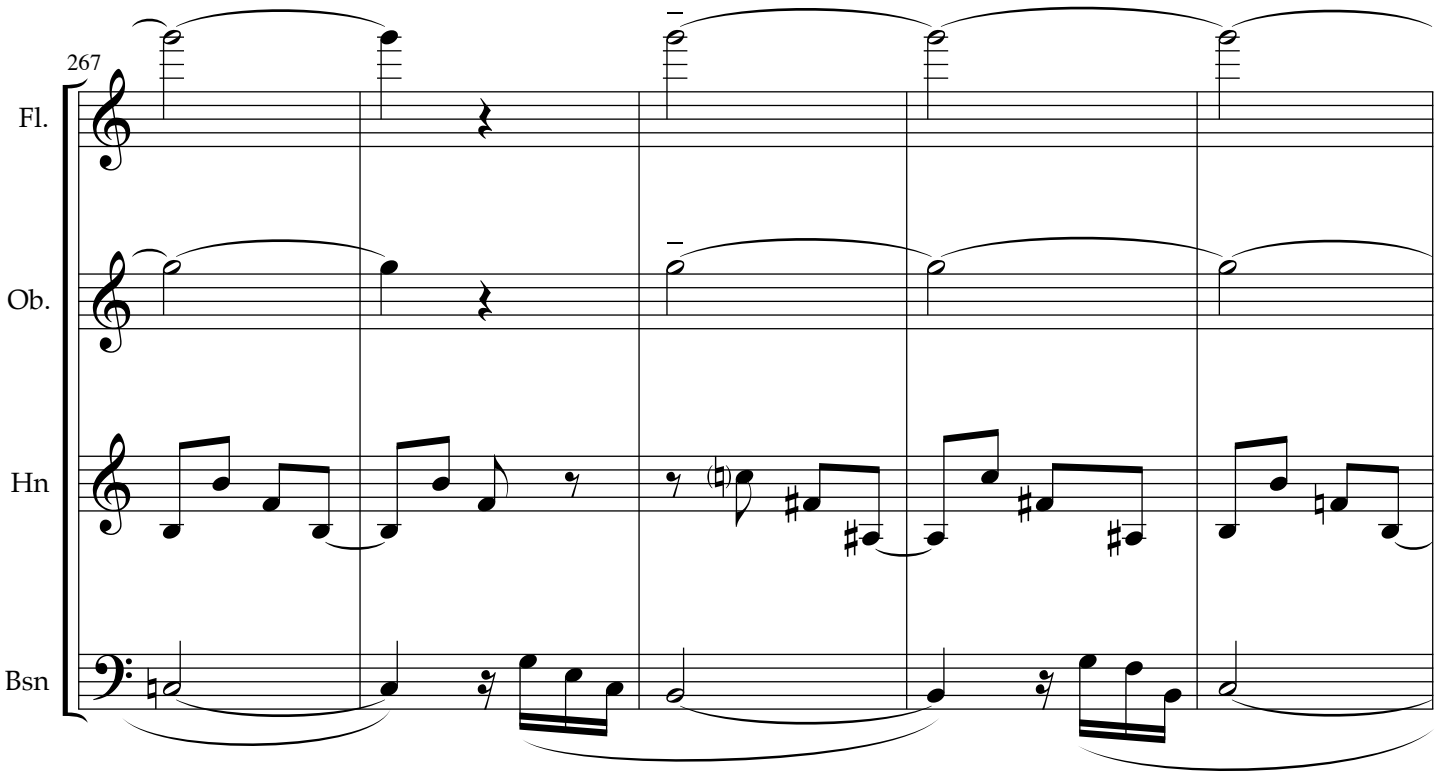
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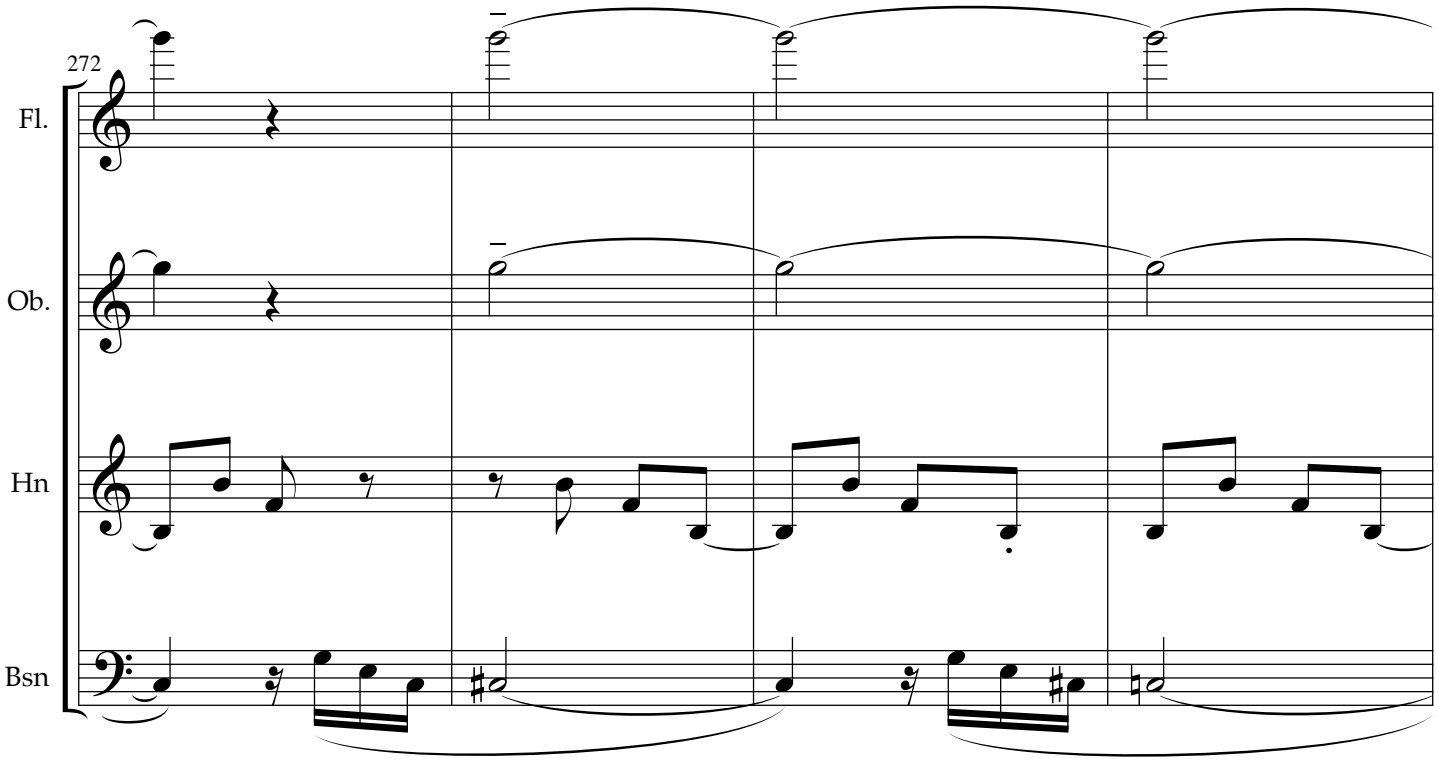
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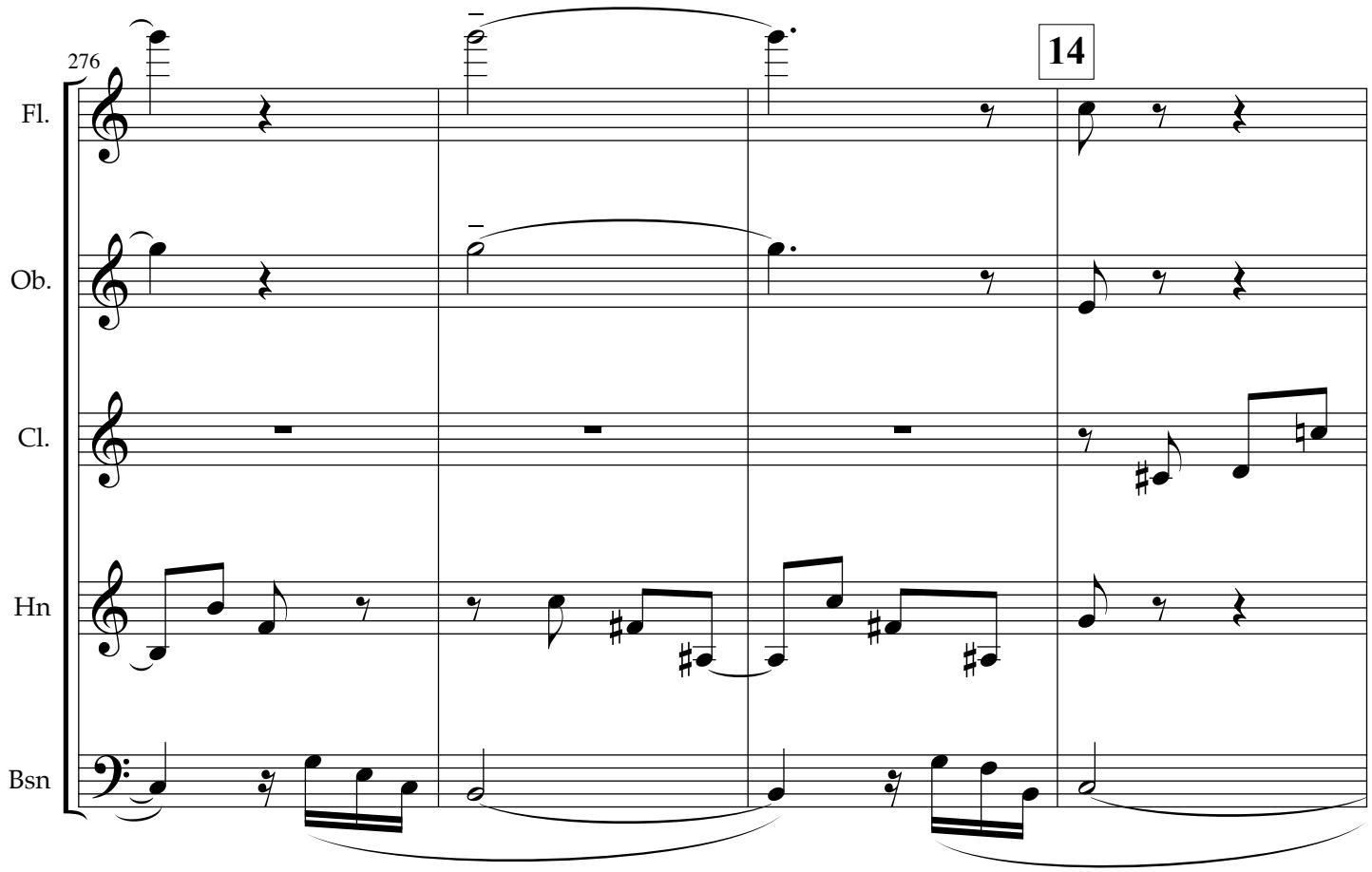
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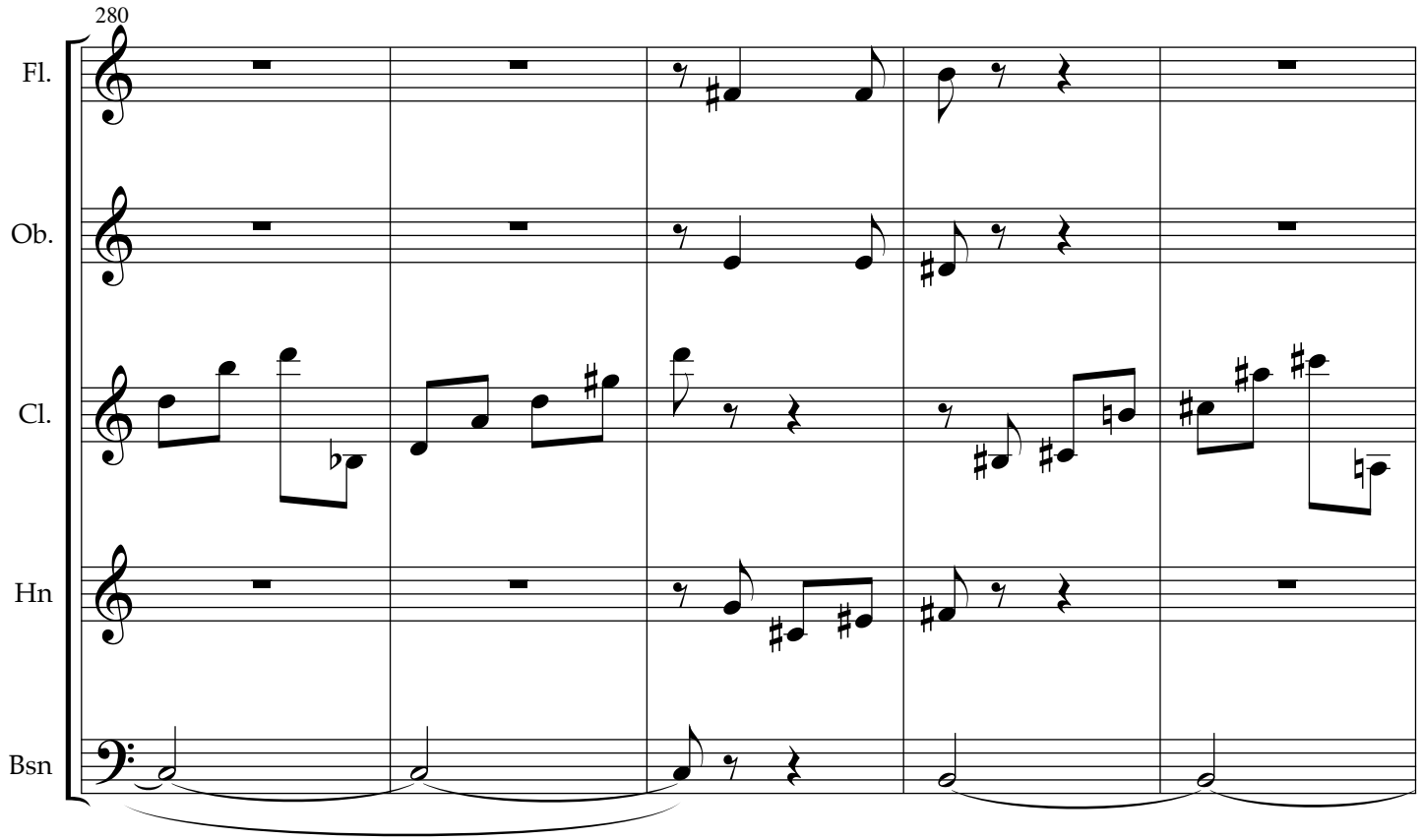
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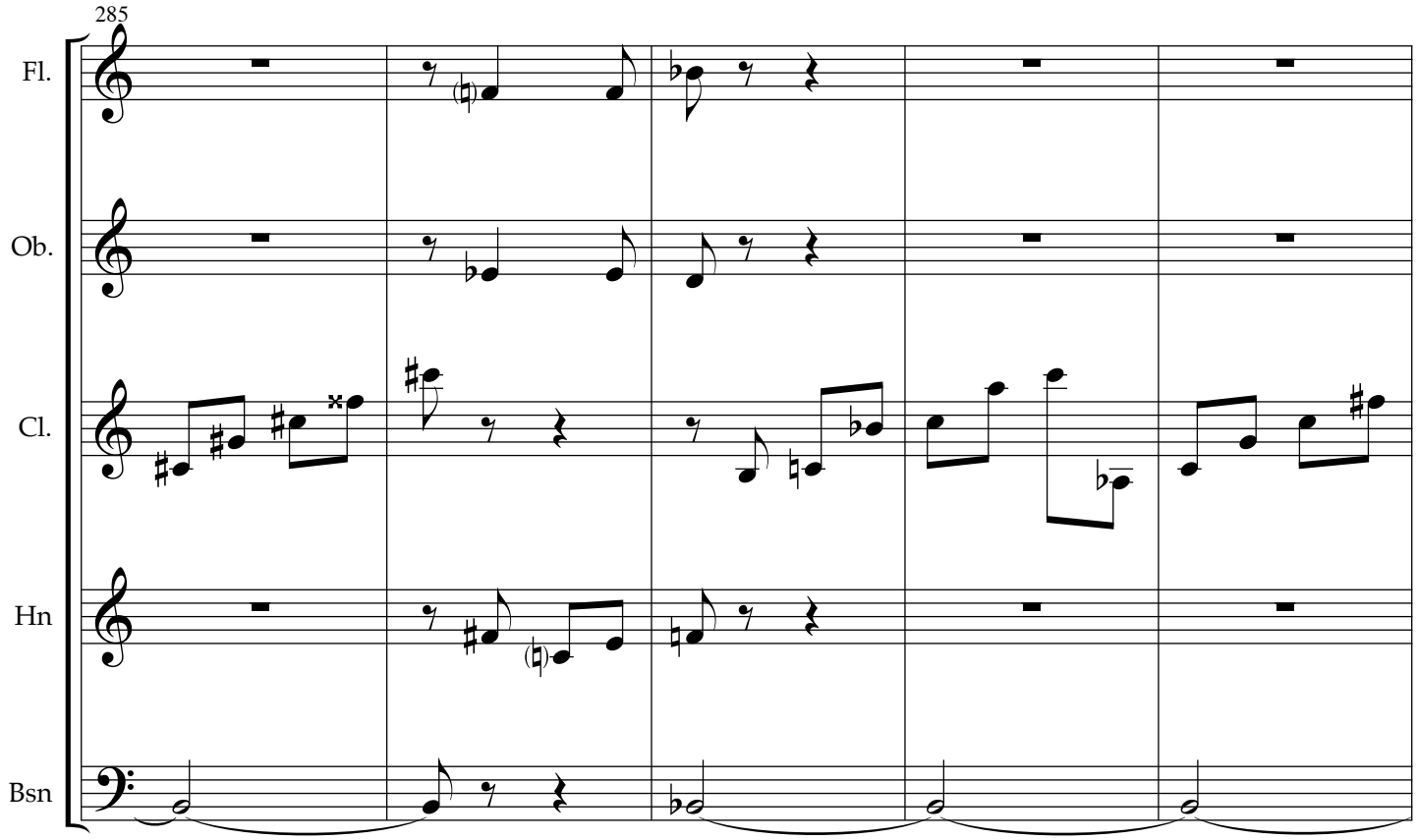
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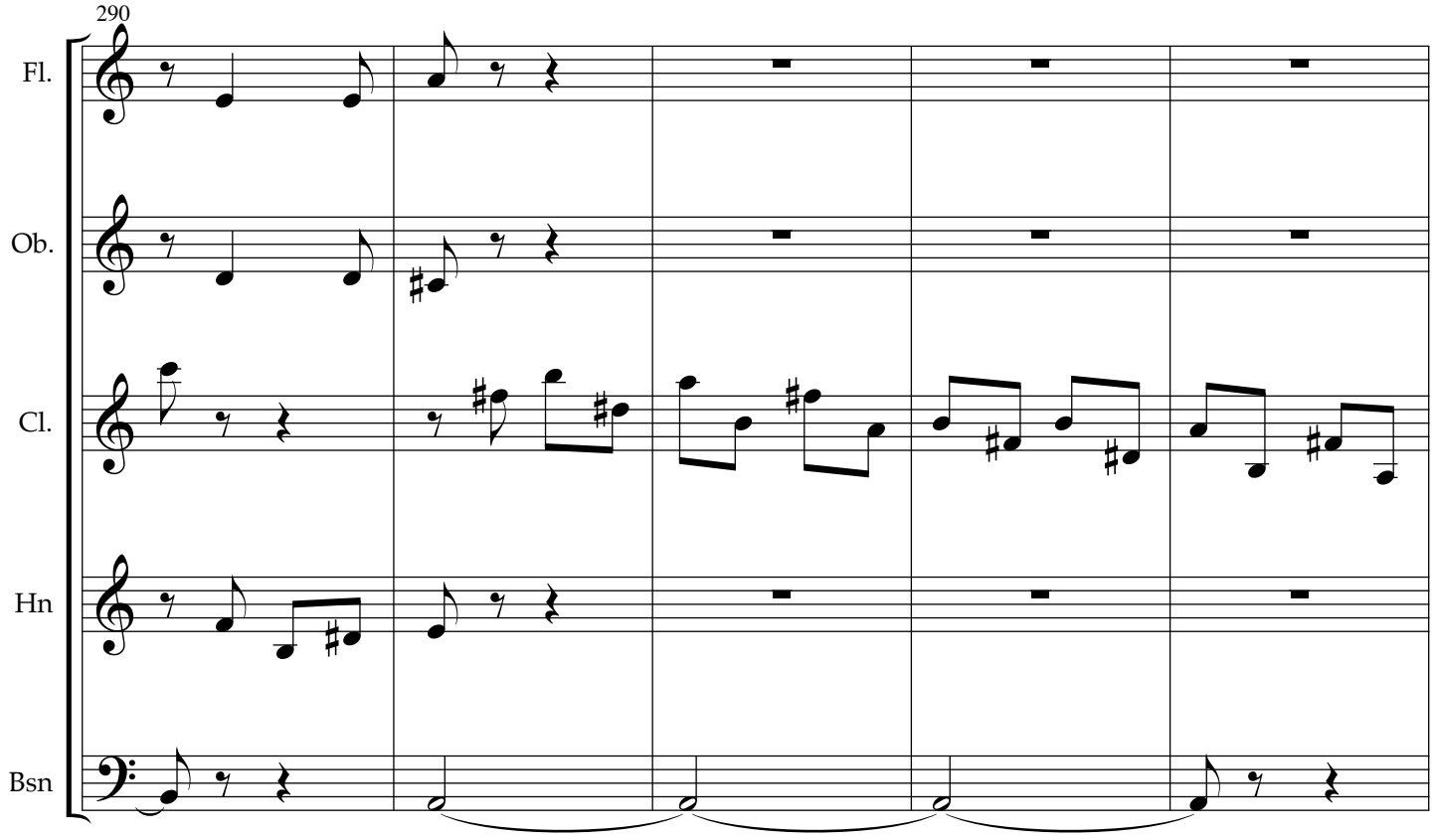
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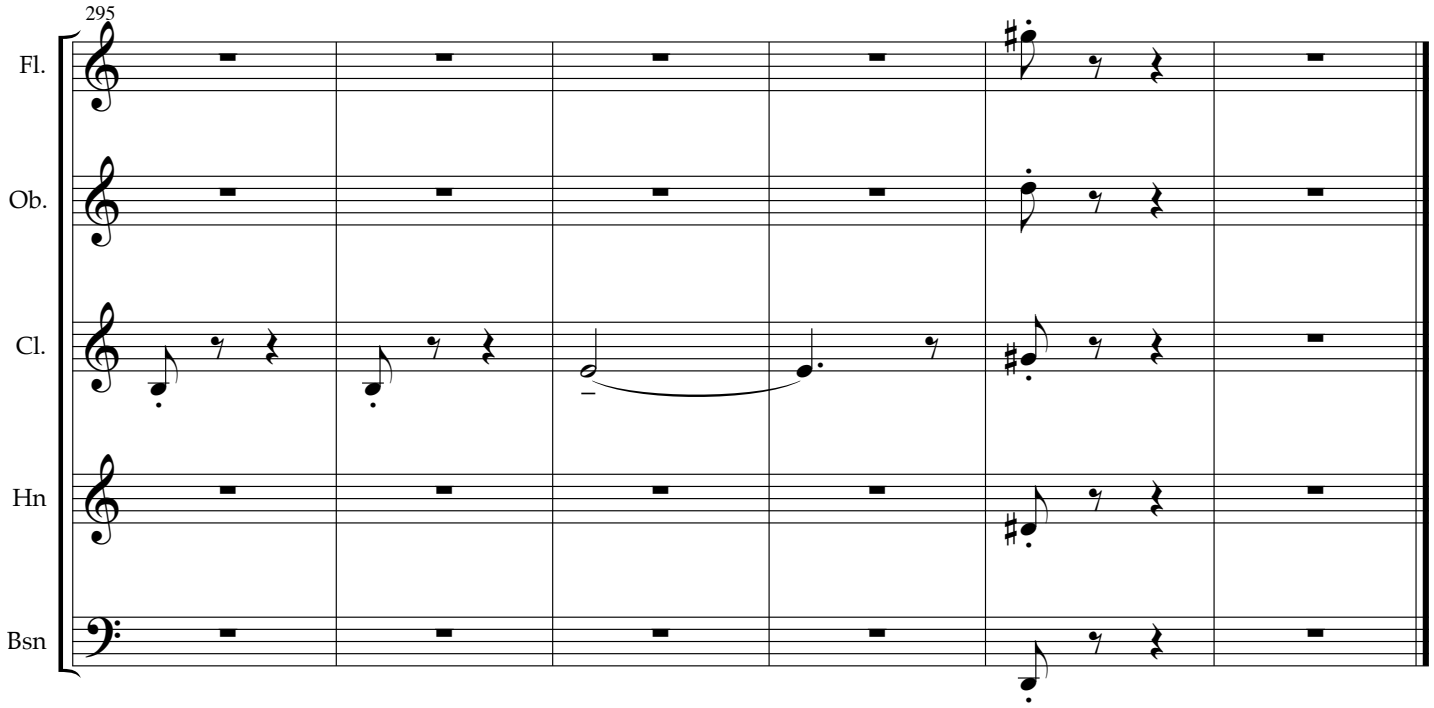
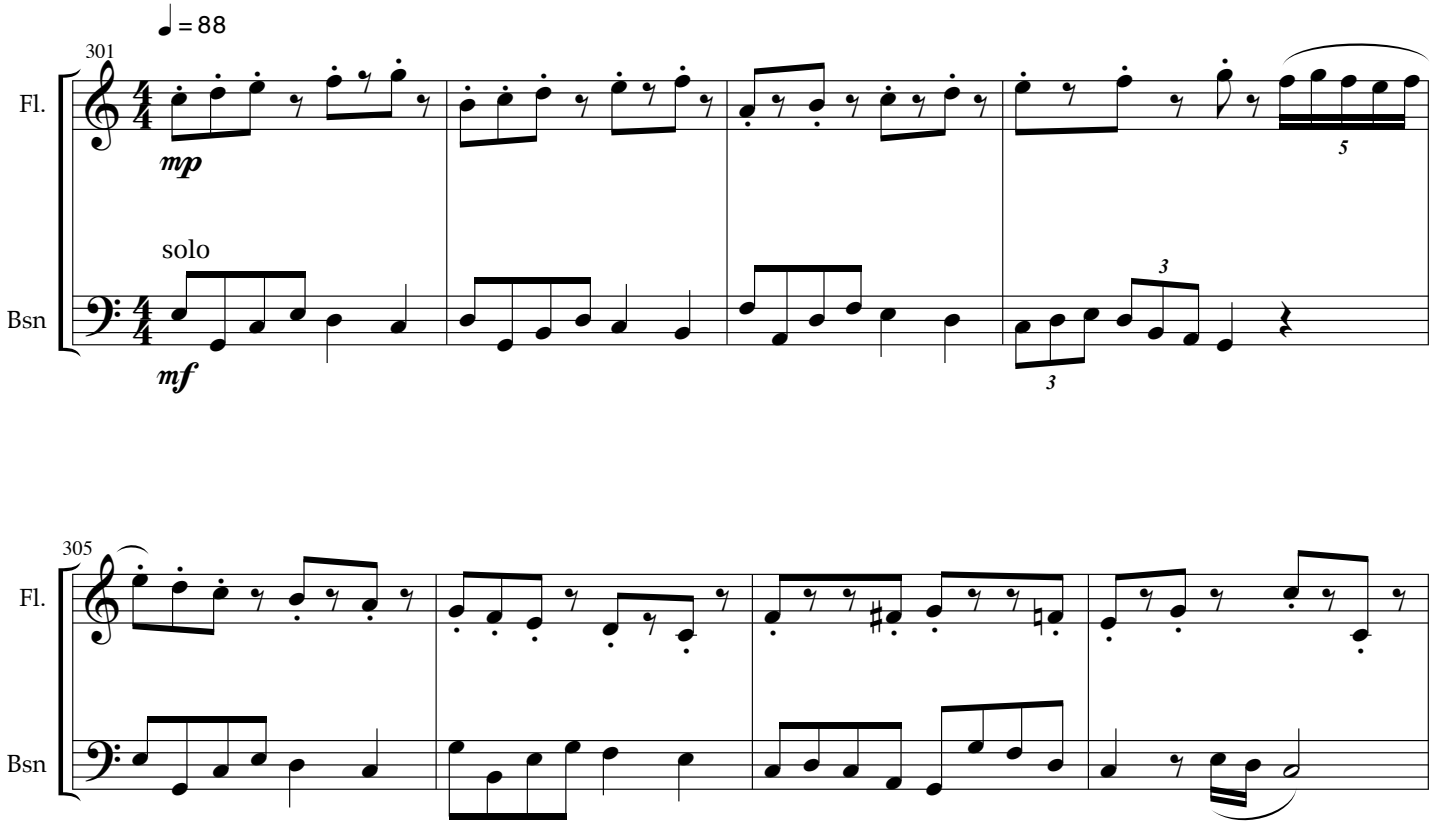
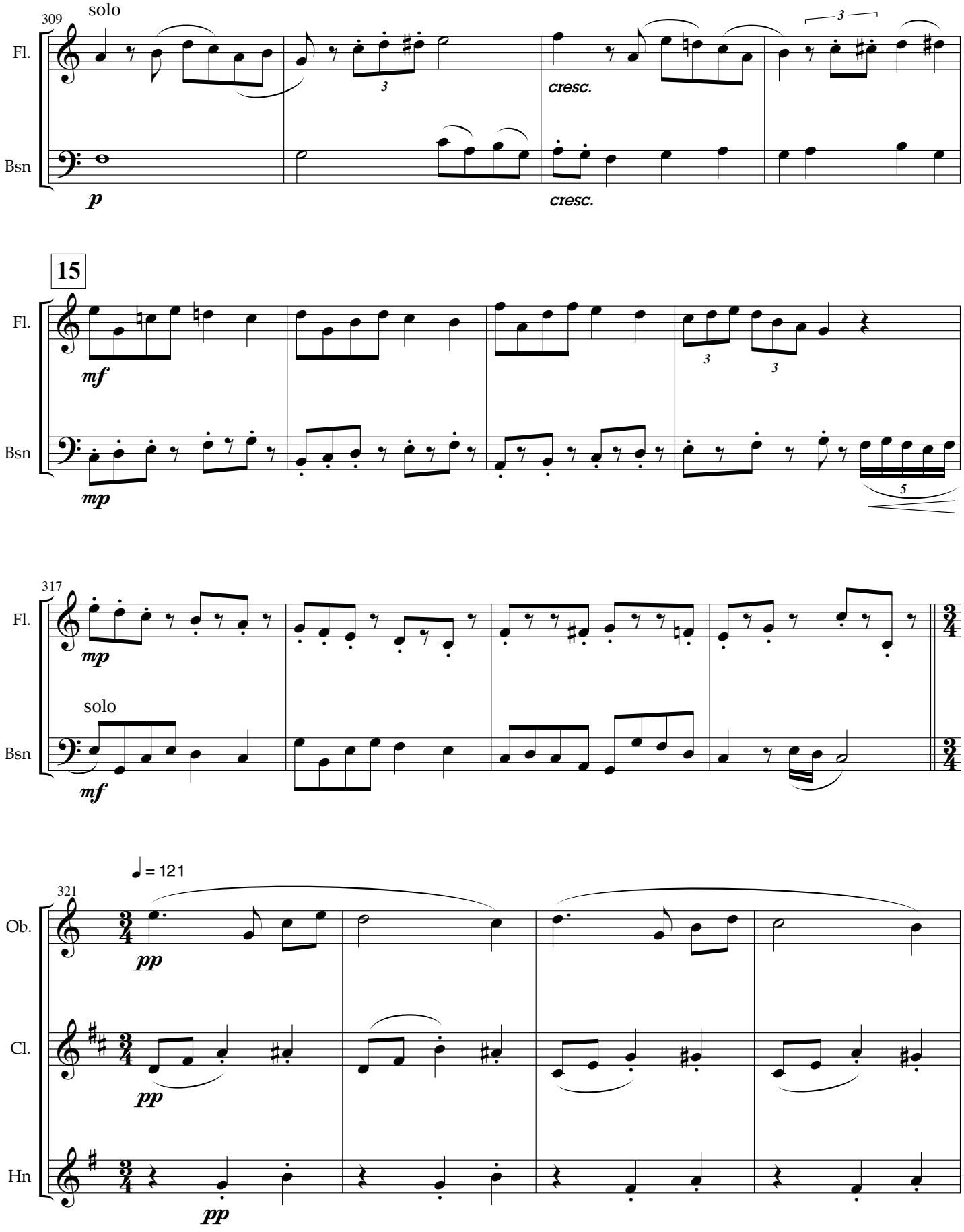
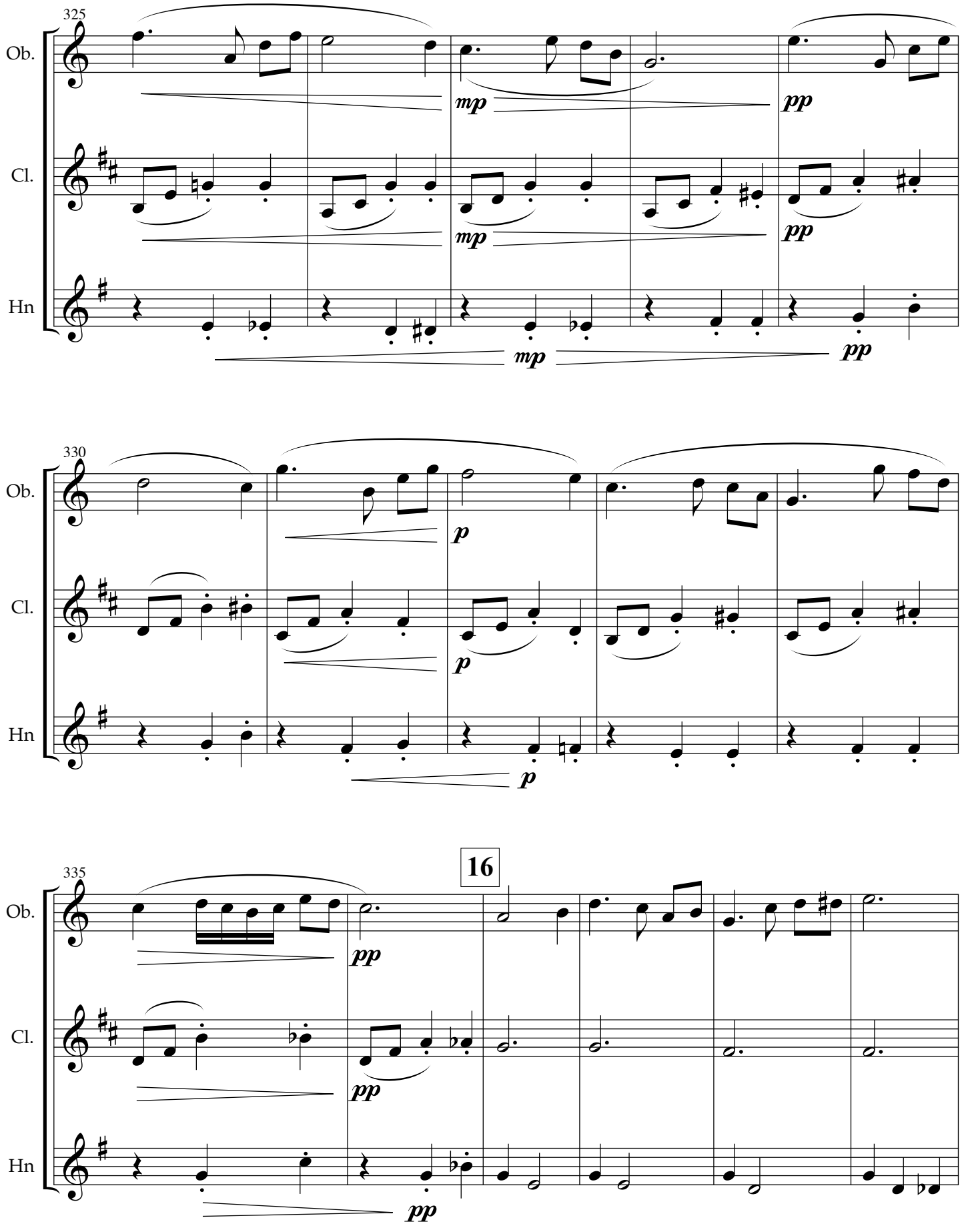
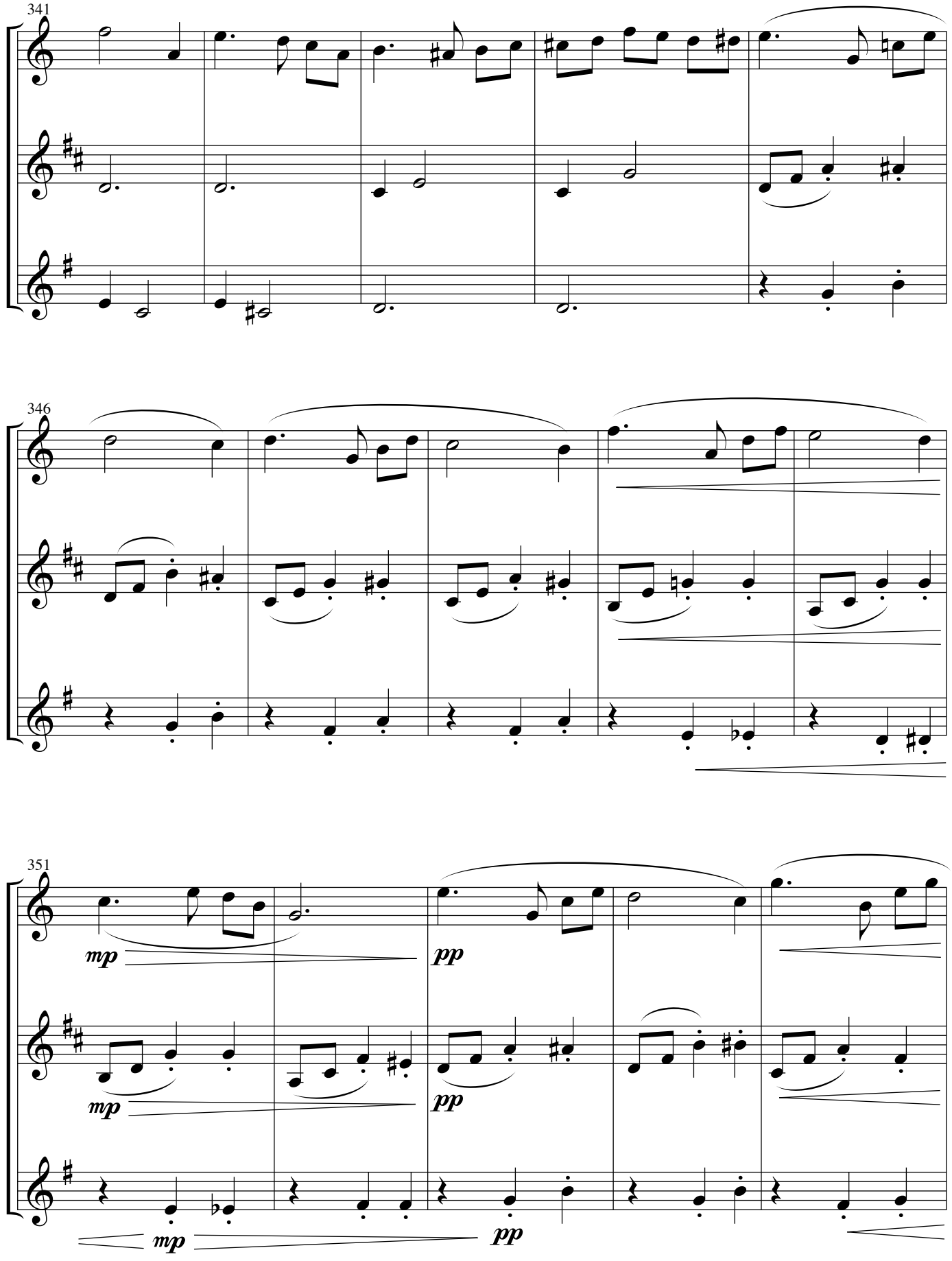


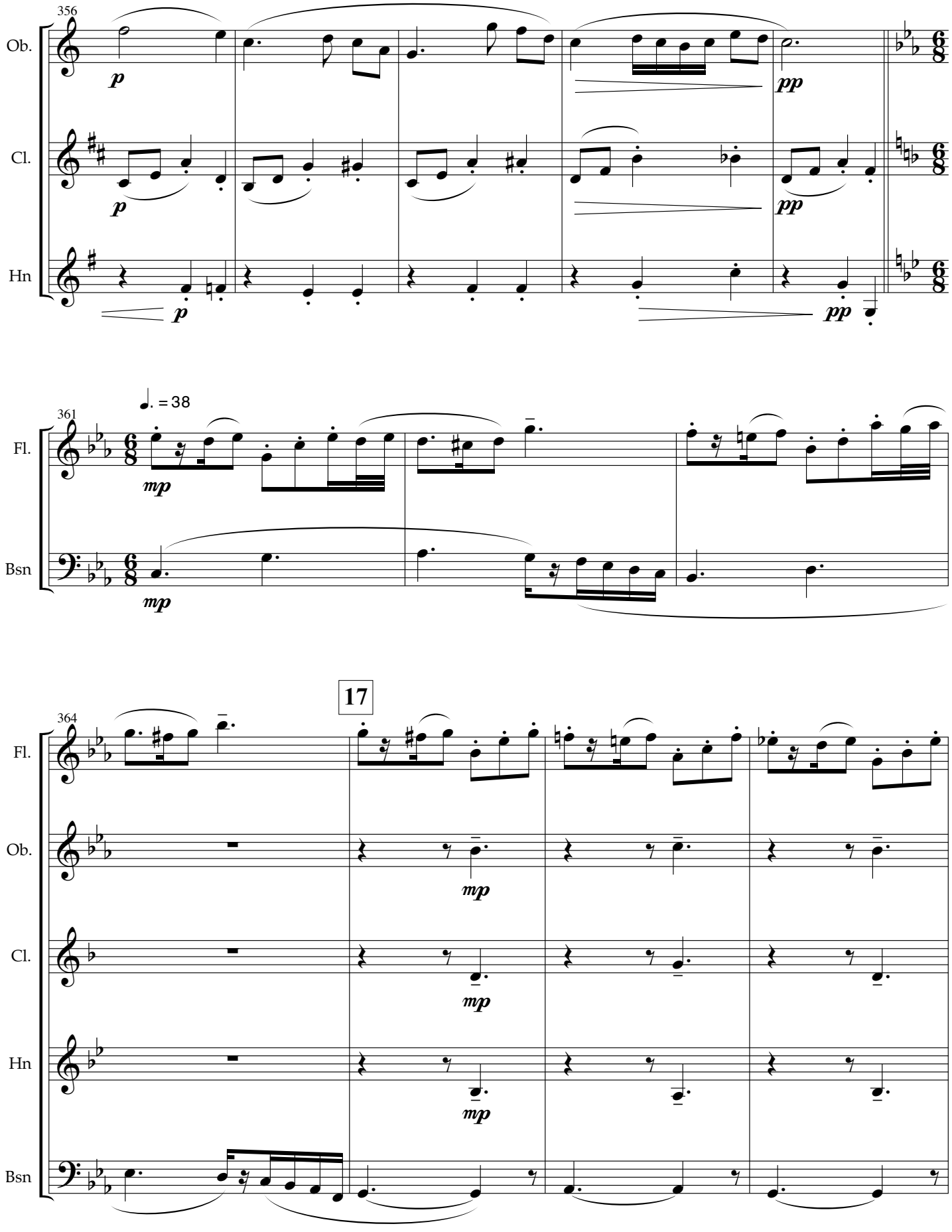
3. Variations

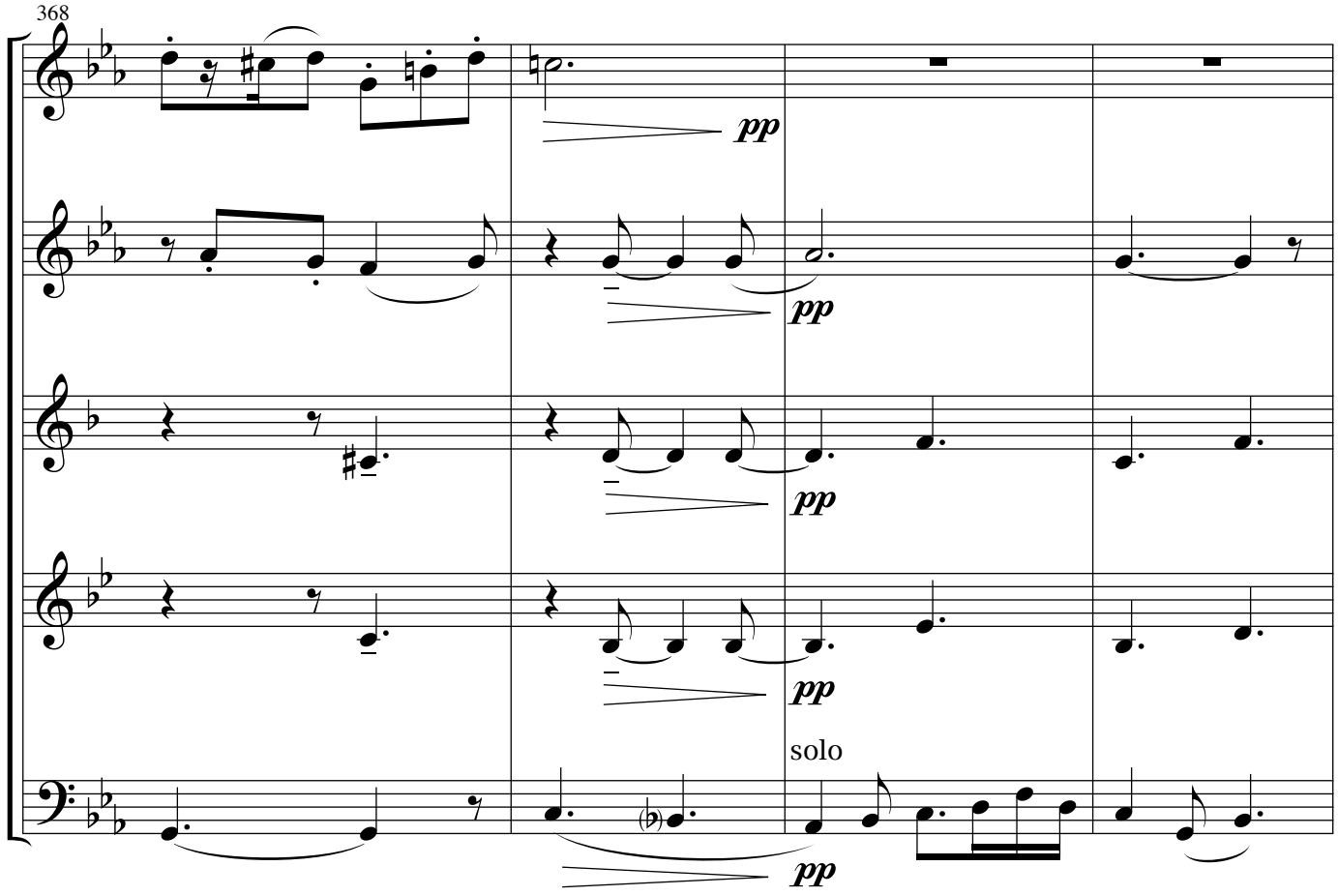


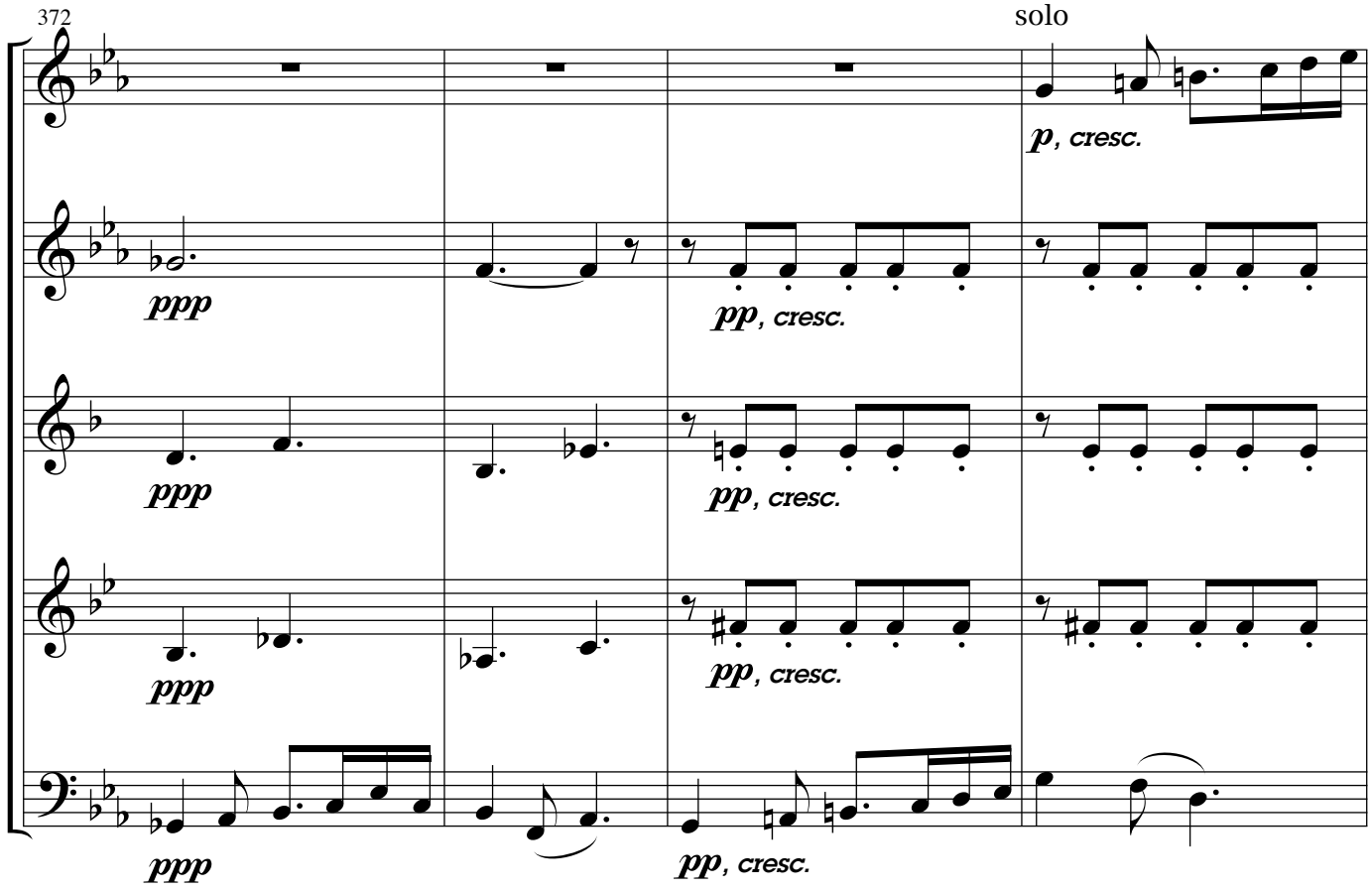

309
solo
Fl.
Bsn
p
cresc.
cresc.
3
15
mf
mp
5
317
mp
solo
mf
3/4
♩ = 121
321
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
pp
pp
pp

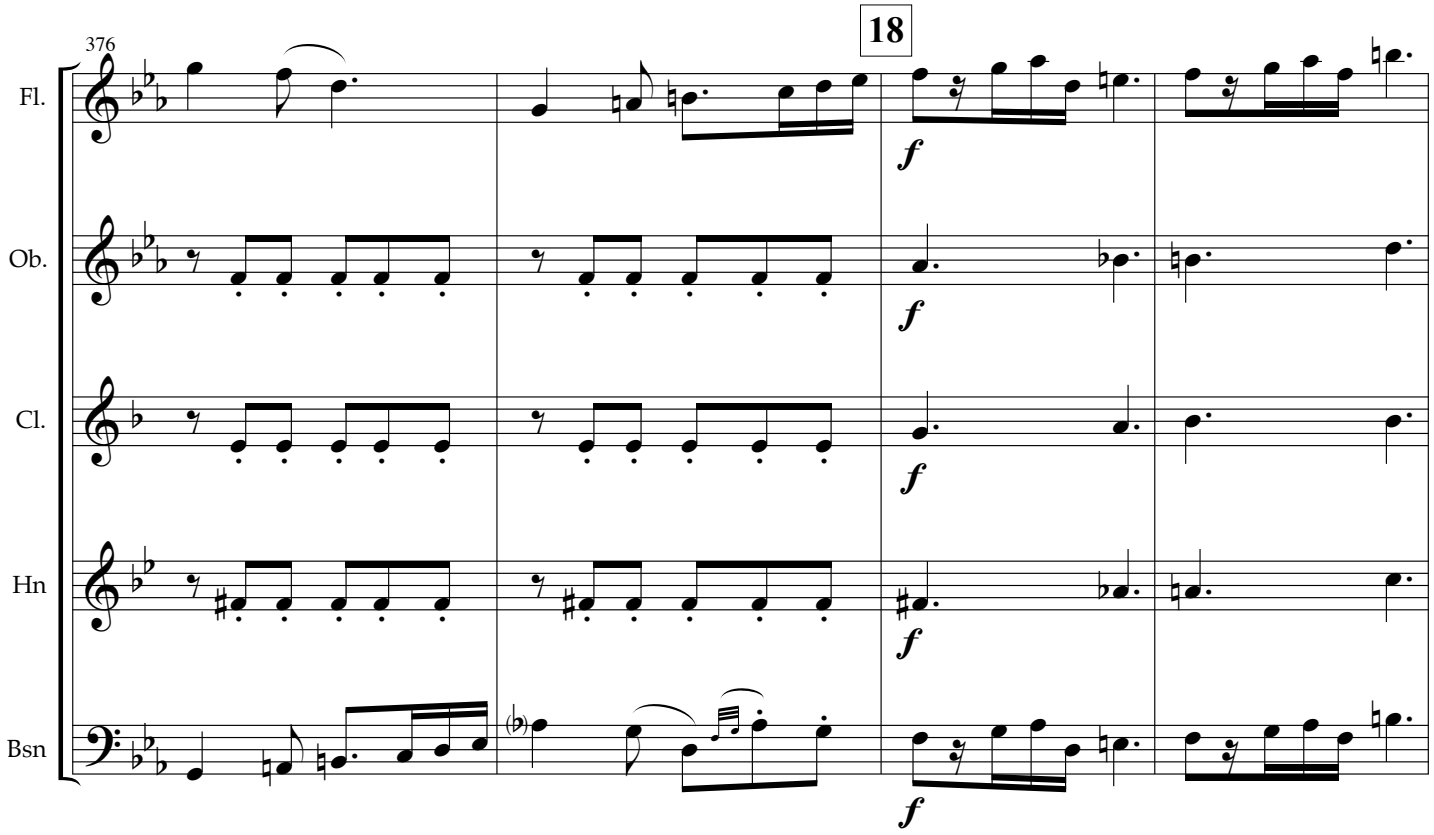

325
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
mp
pp
330
p
16
335
pp

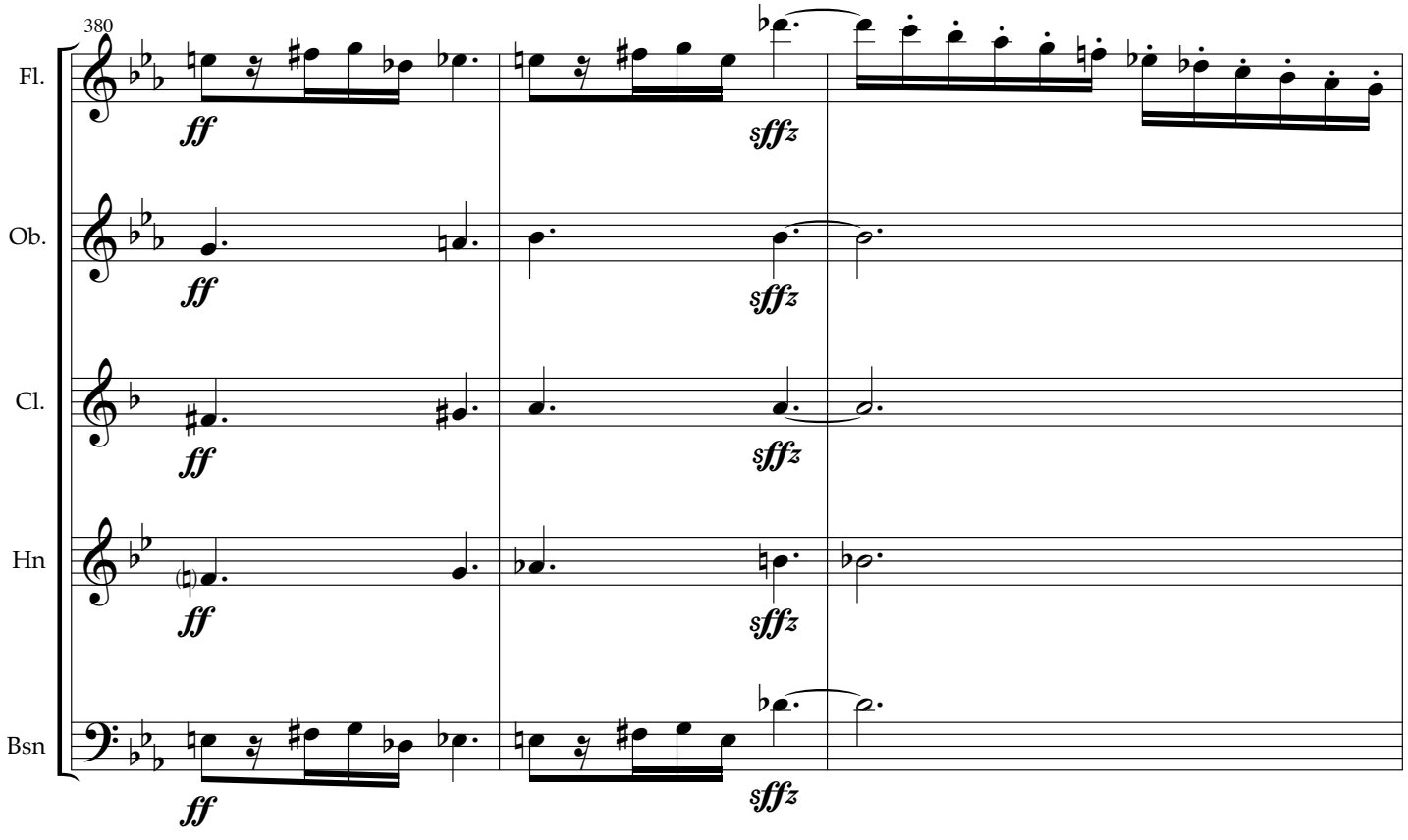

341
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
346
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
351
Ob.
mp
pp
Cl.
mp
pp
Hn
mp
pp

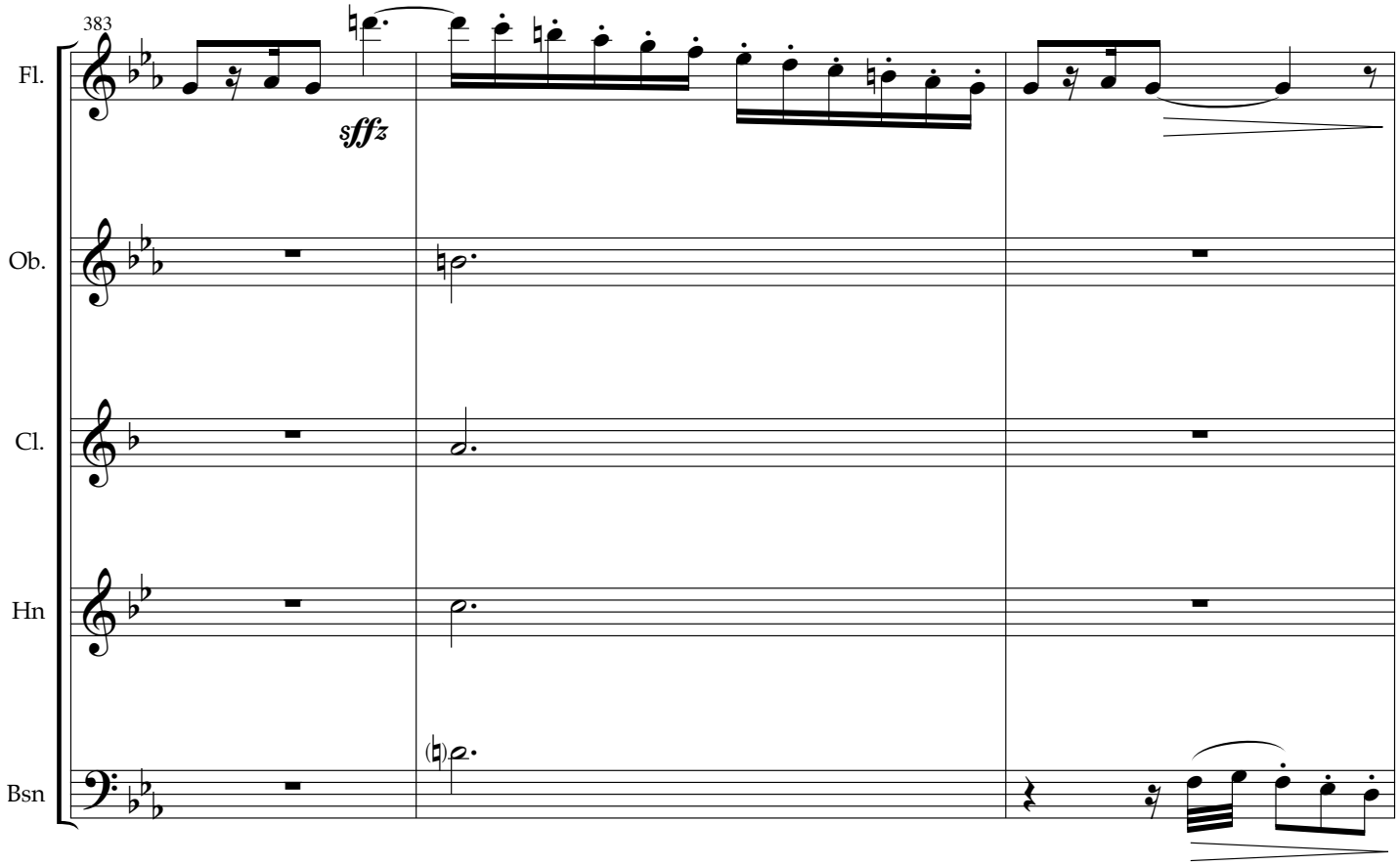

356
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
p
pp
361
♩. = 38
Fl.
Bsn
mp
17
364
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
mp

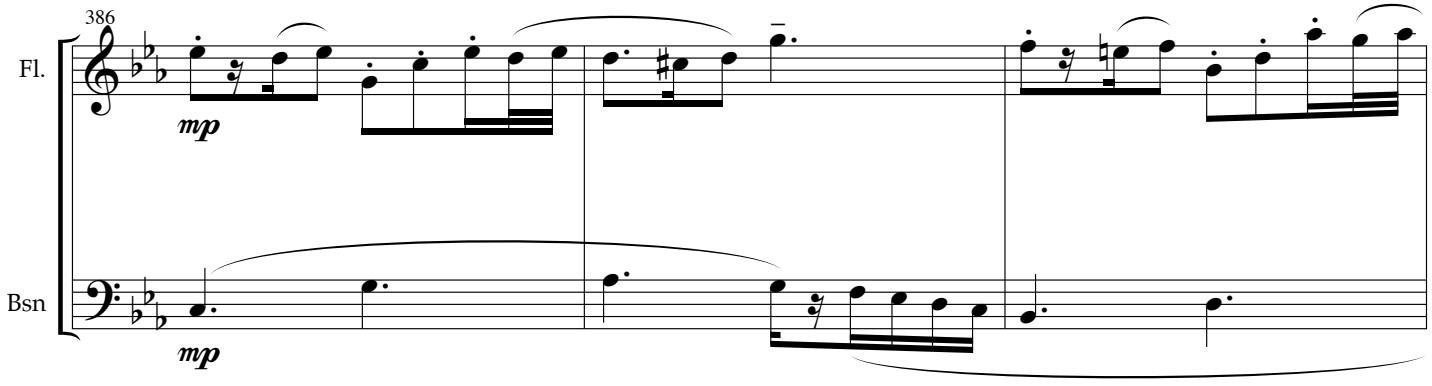

368
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
pp
pp
pp
pp
solo
pp

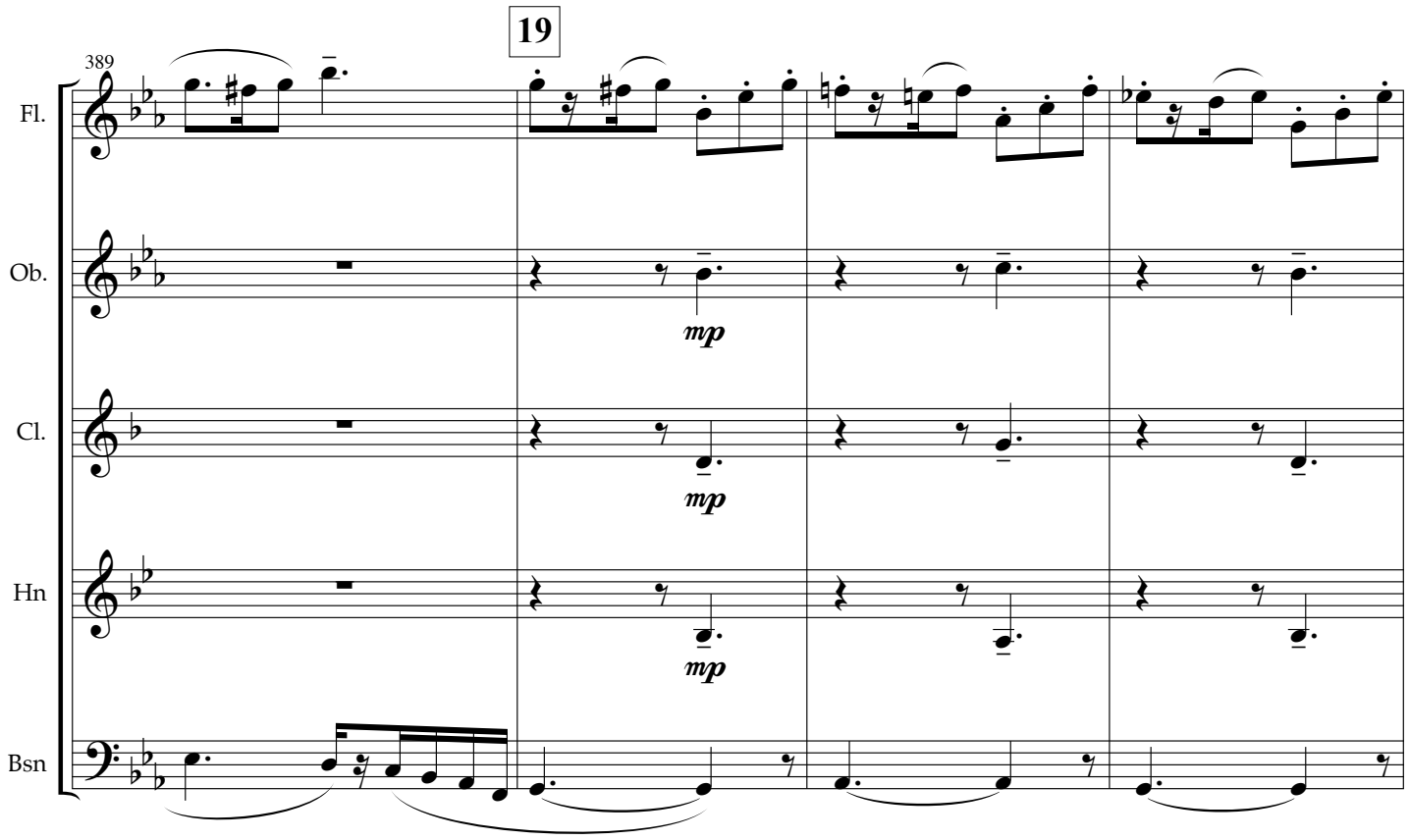

372
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
solo
p, cresc.
ppp
ppp
ppp
ppp, cresc.
pp, cresc.
pp, cresc.
pp, cresc.

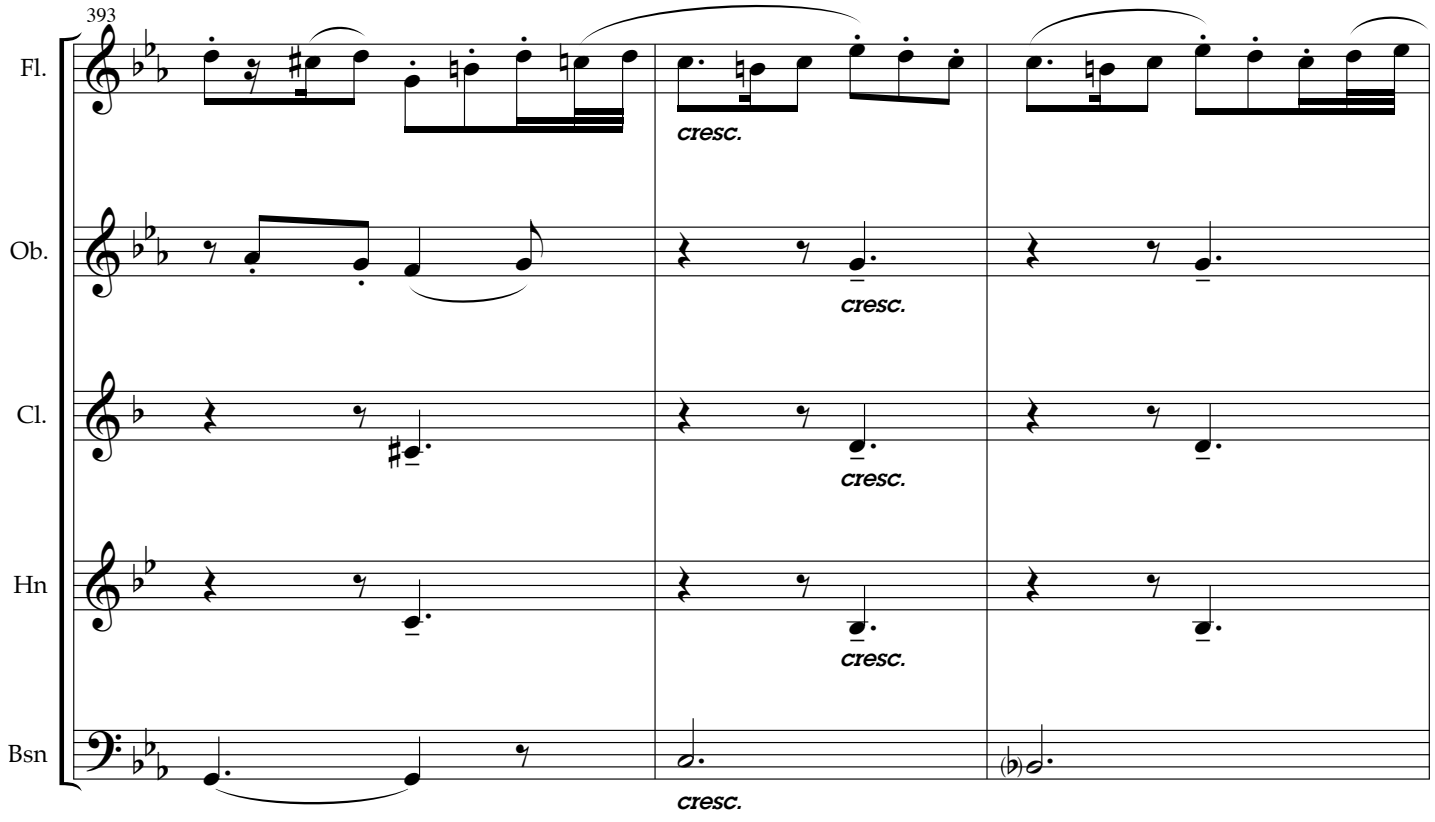

18
376
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
f

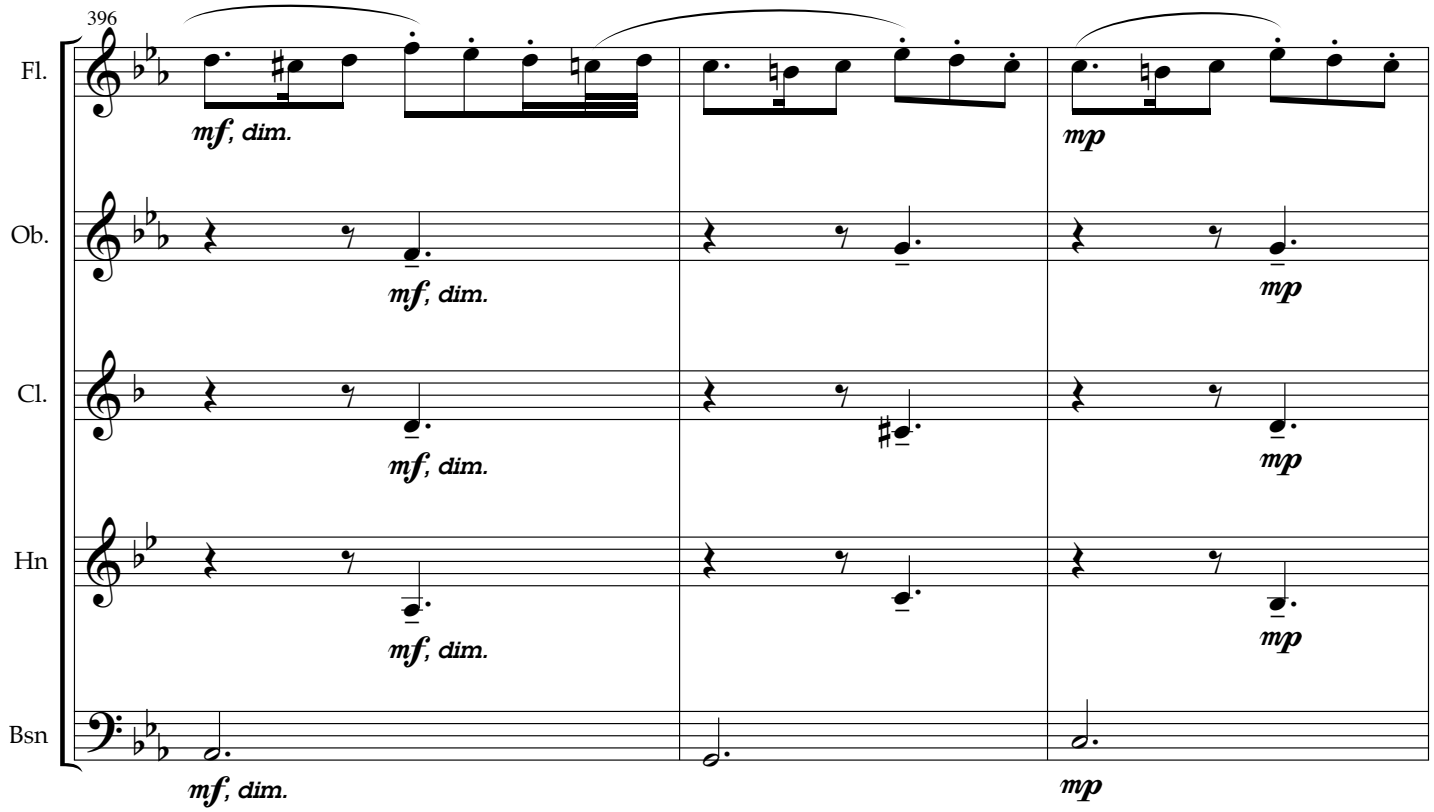

380
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
ff
sffz

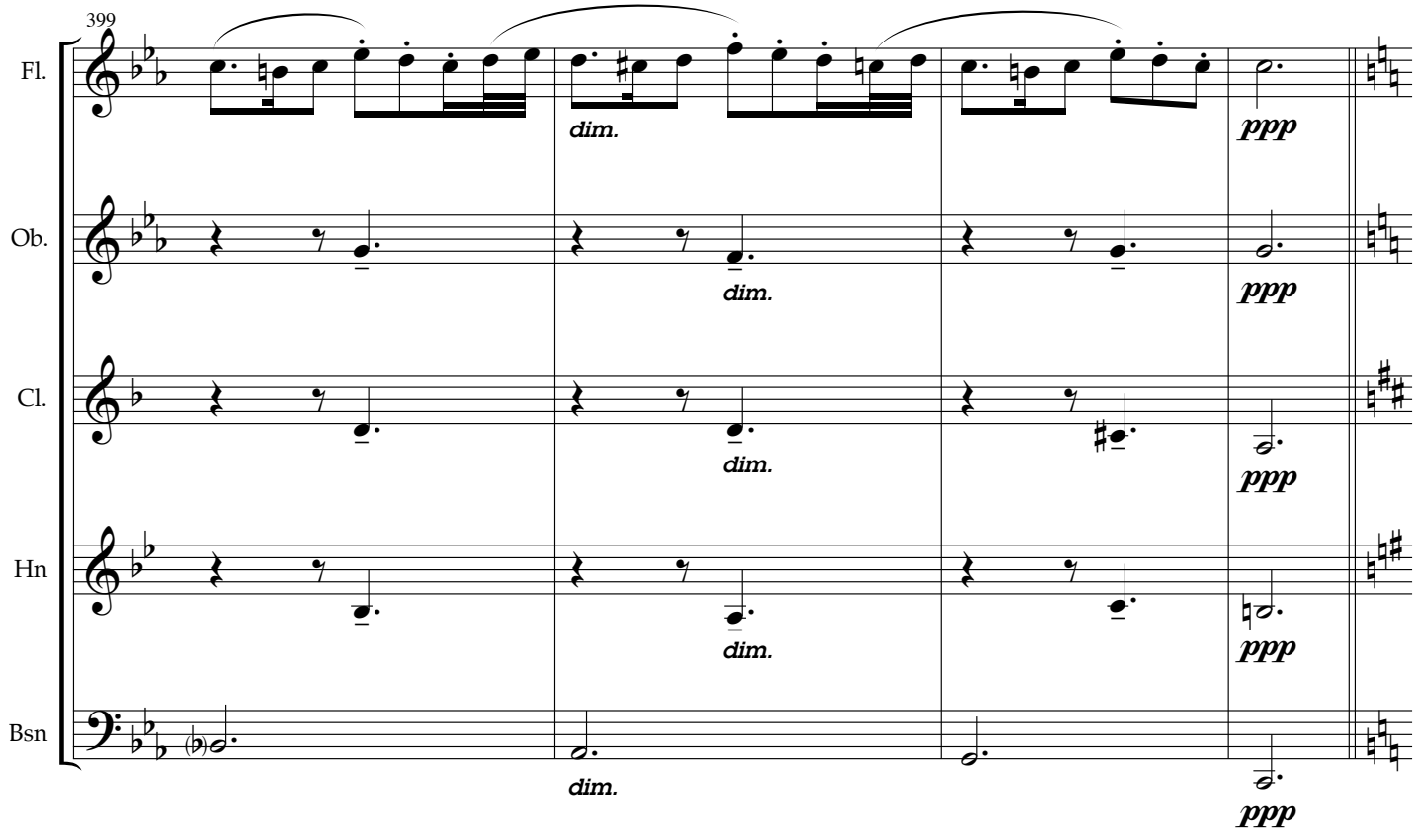

383
Fl.
sfffz
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn


386
Fl.
mp
Bsn
mp

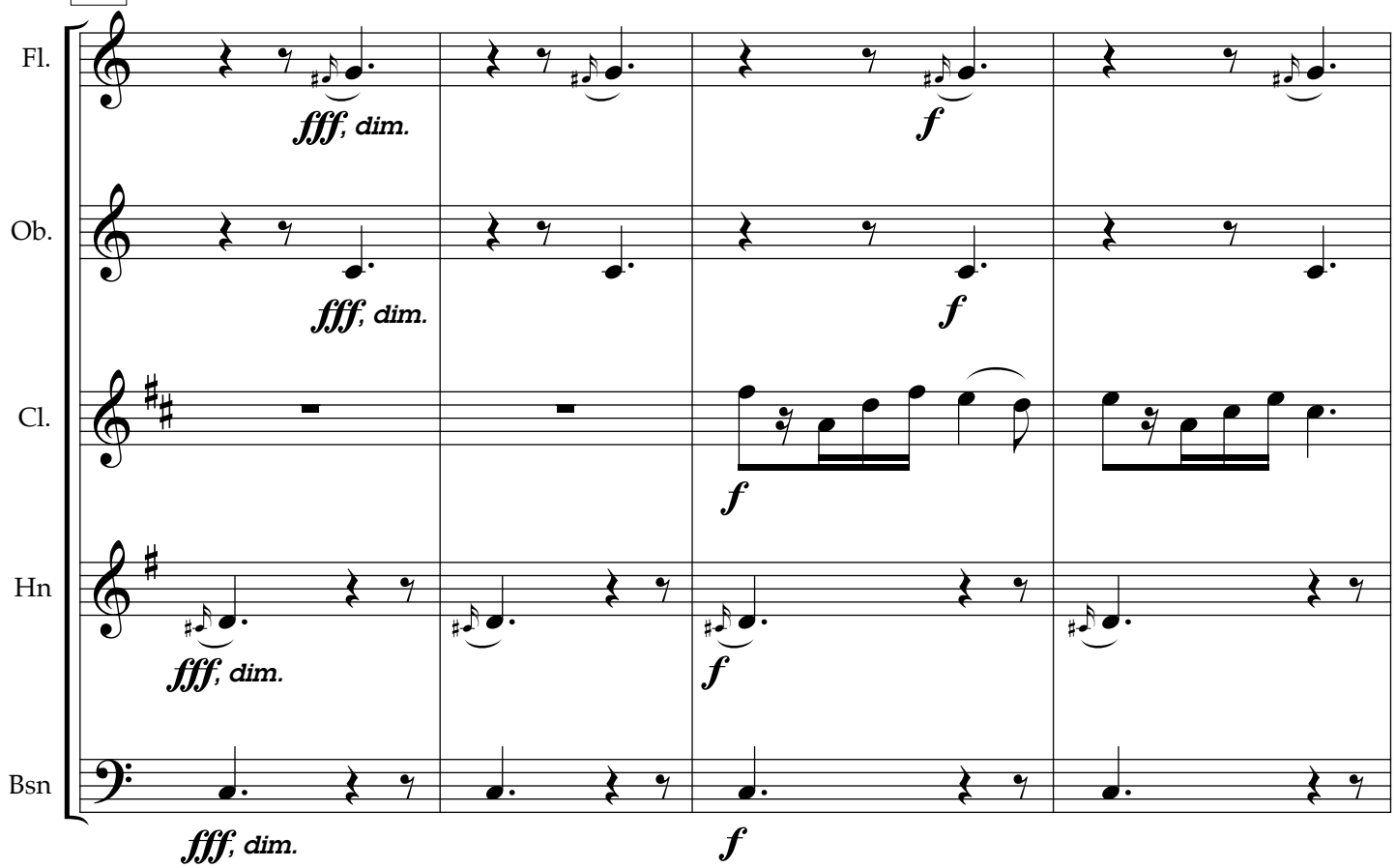

19
389
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
mp
mp
mp

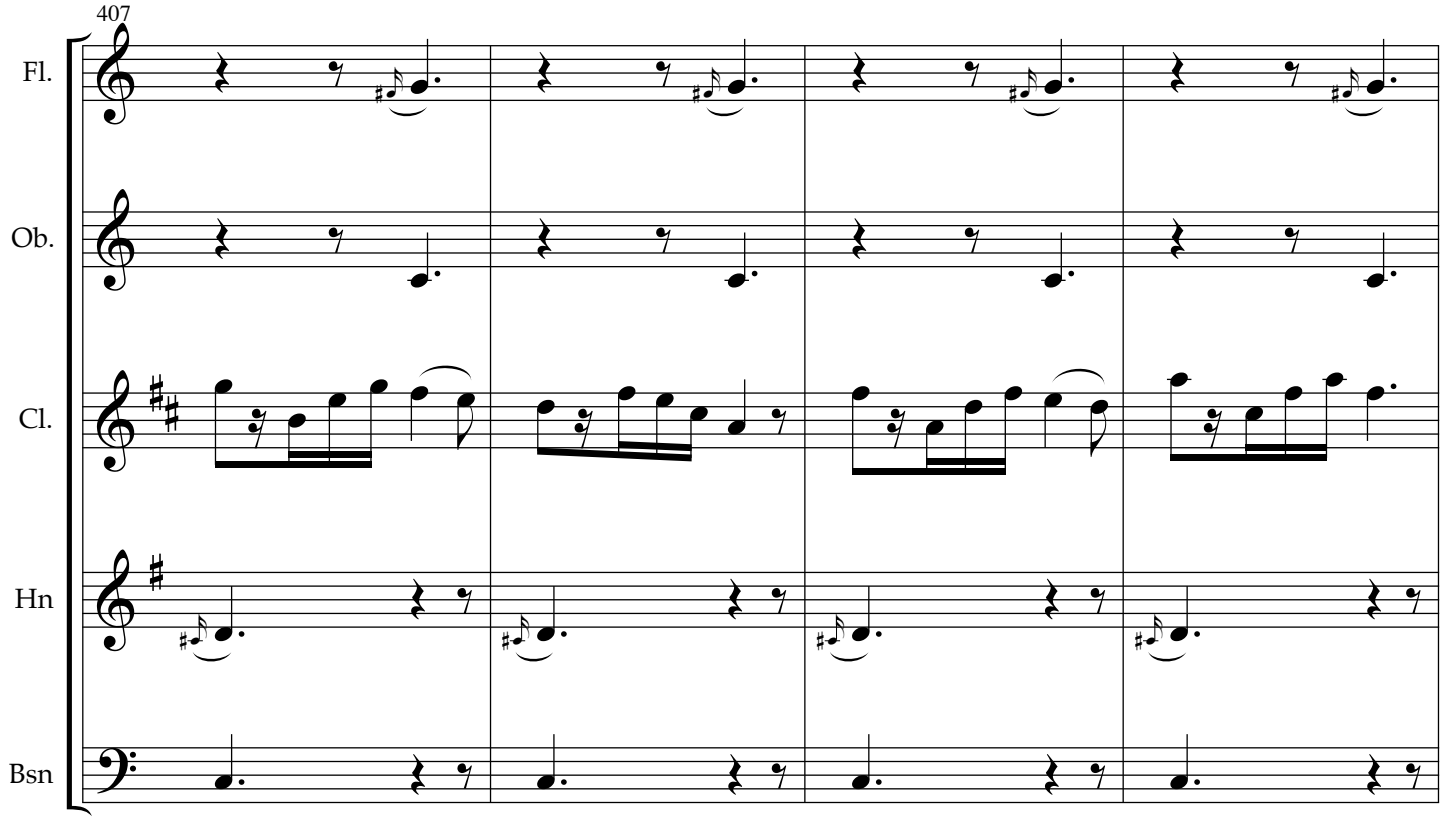

393
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.


396
Fl.
mf, dim.
mp
Ob.
mf, dim.
mp
Cl.
mf, dim.
mp
Hn
mf, dim.
mp
Bsn
mf, dim.
mp


399
Fl.
dim.
ppp
Ob.
dim.
ppp
Cl.
dim.
ppp
Hn
dim.
ppp
Bsn
dim.
ppp

20 Doppio movimento ♩. = 76





411

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Hn

Bsn

414

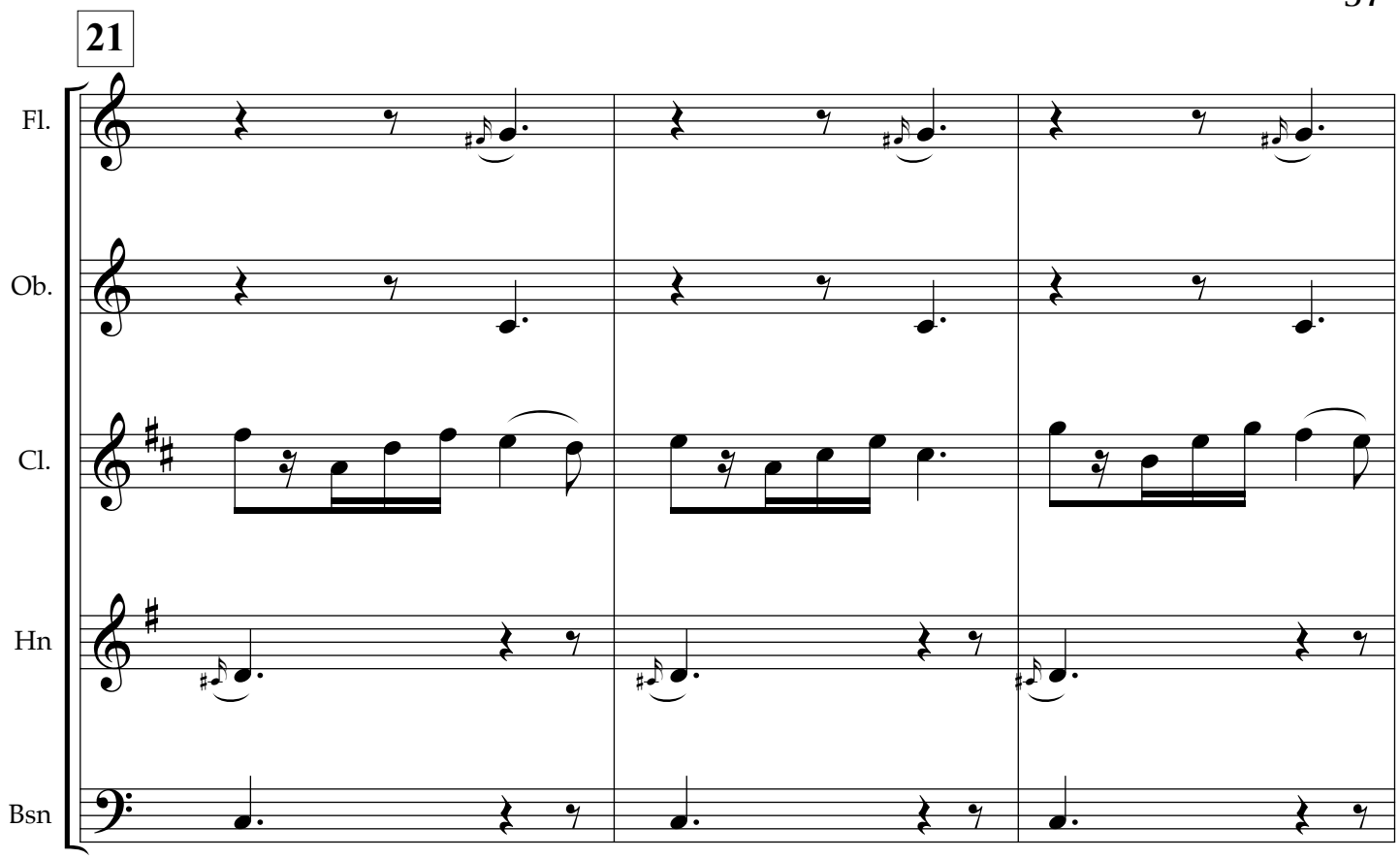
Fl.

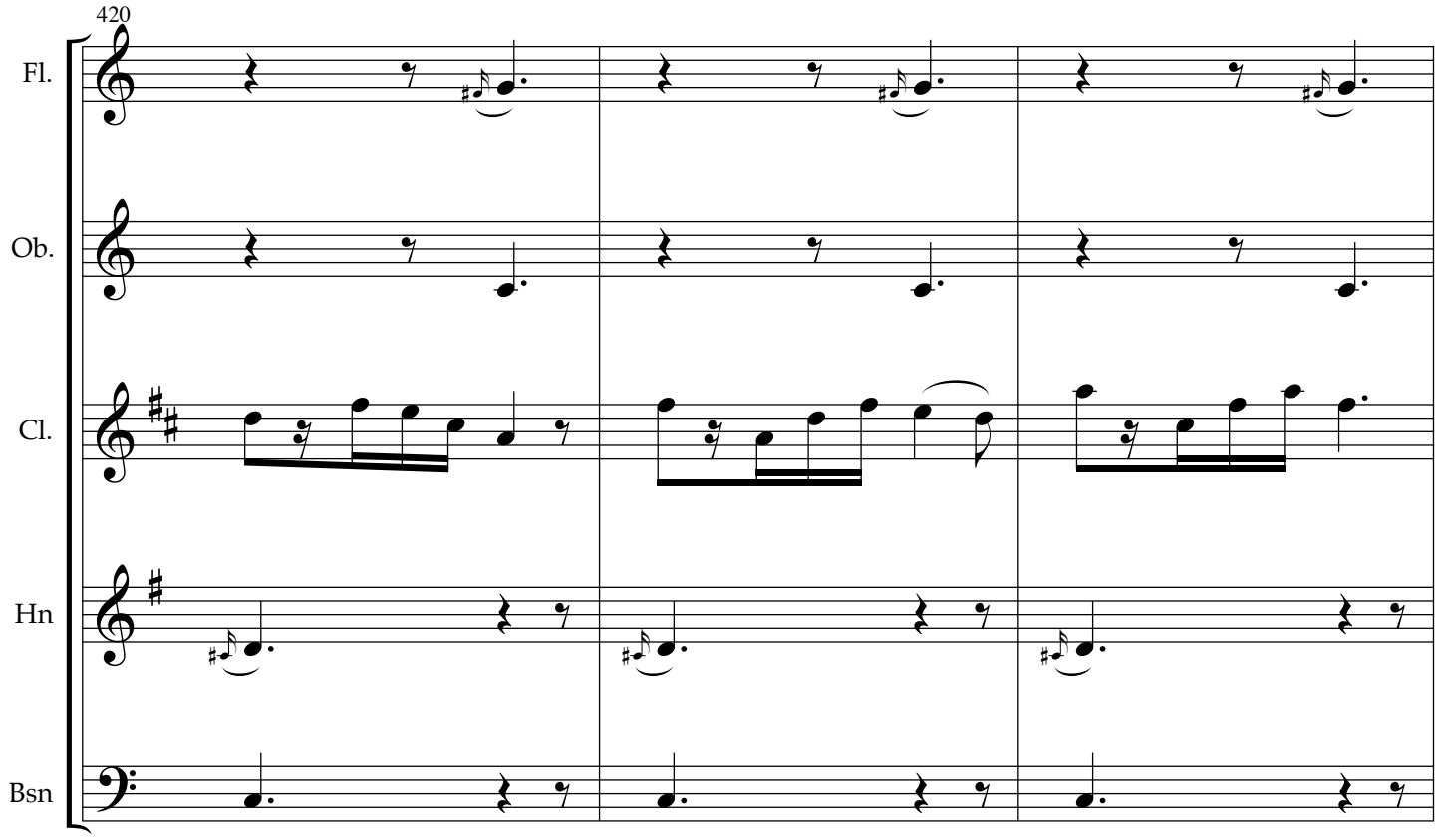
Ob.

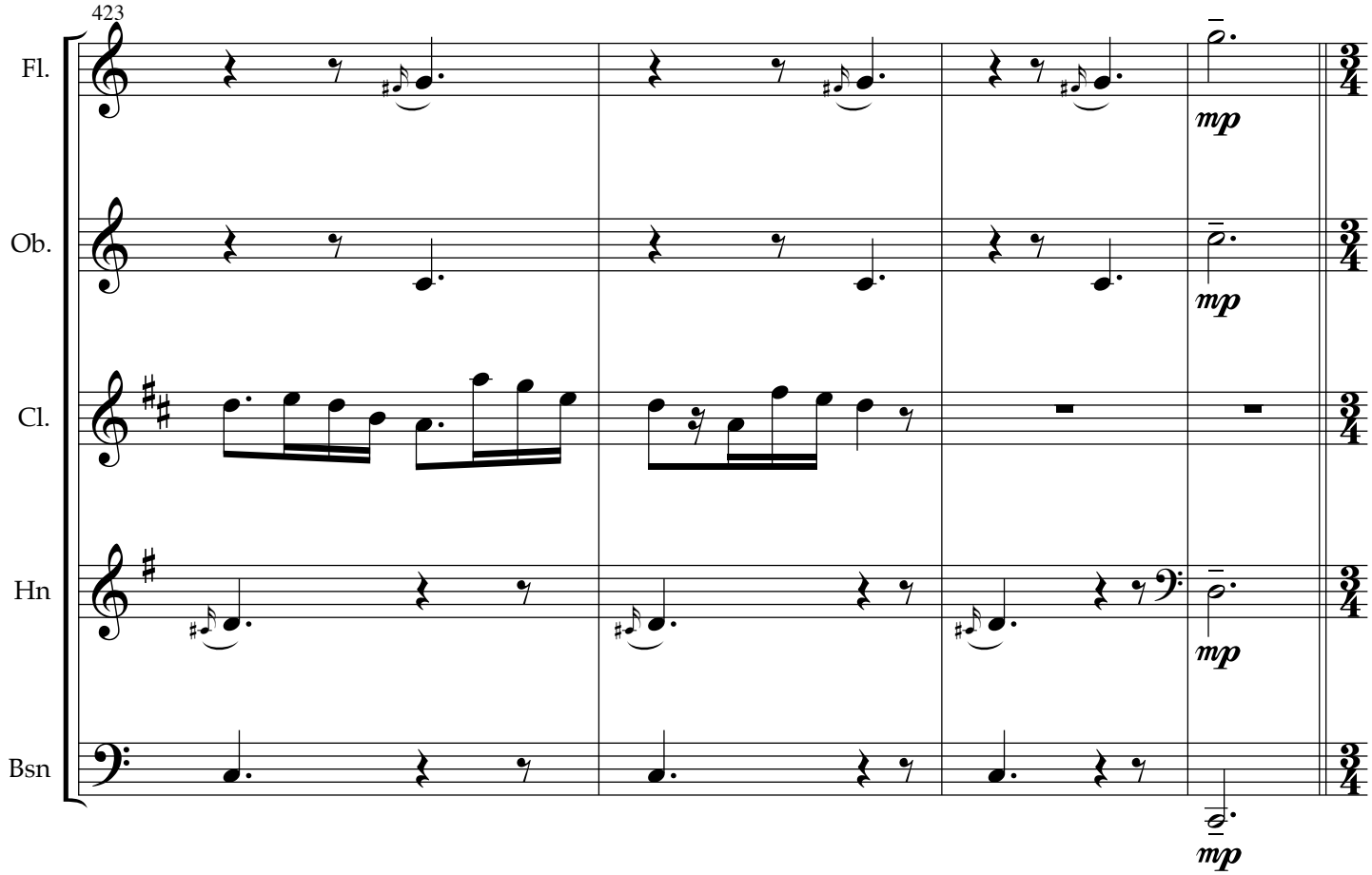
Cl.

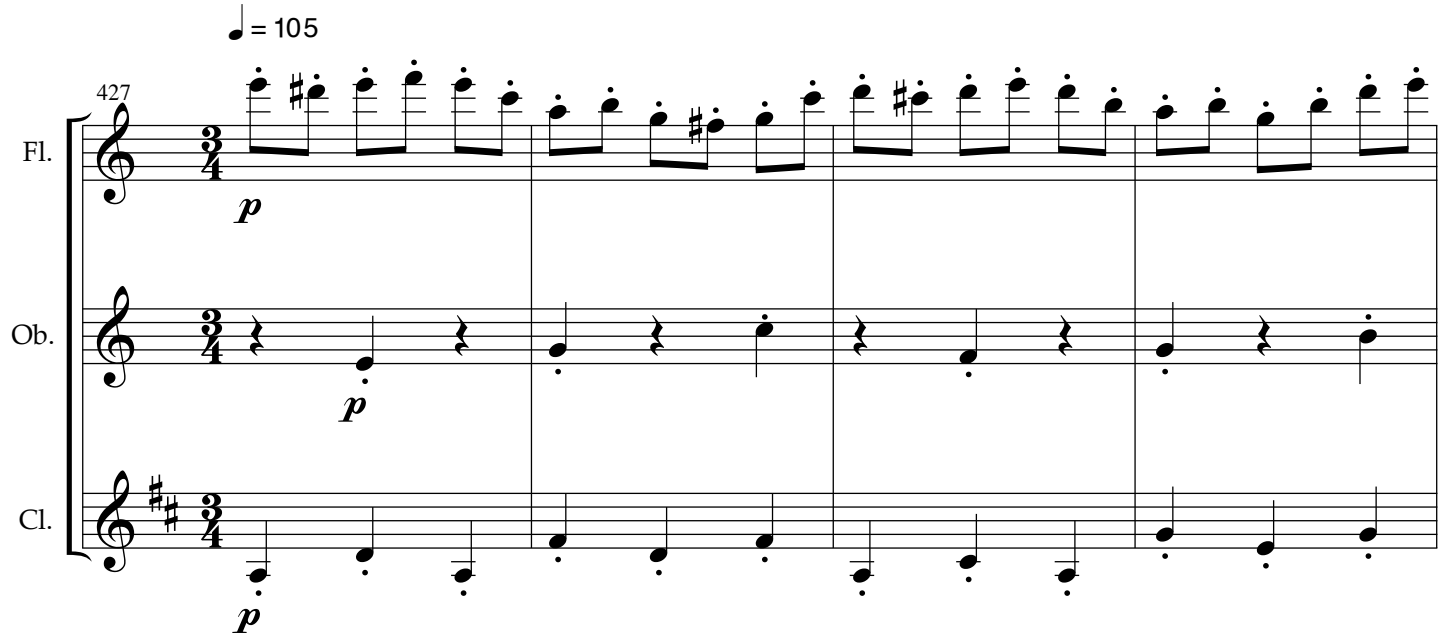
Hn

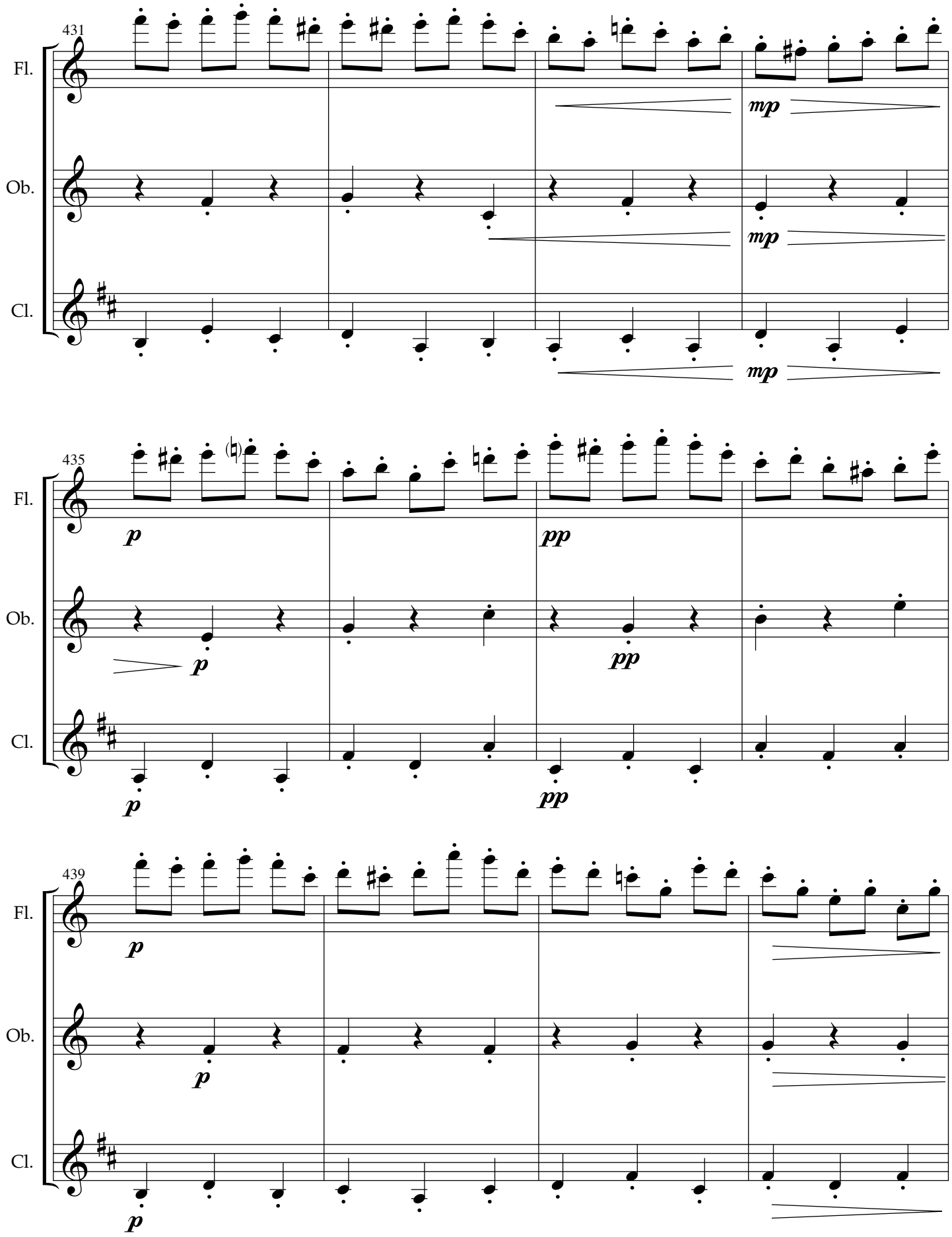
Bsn

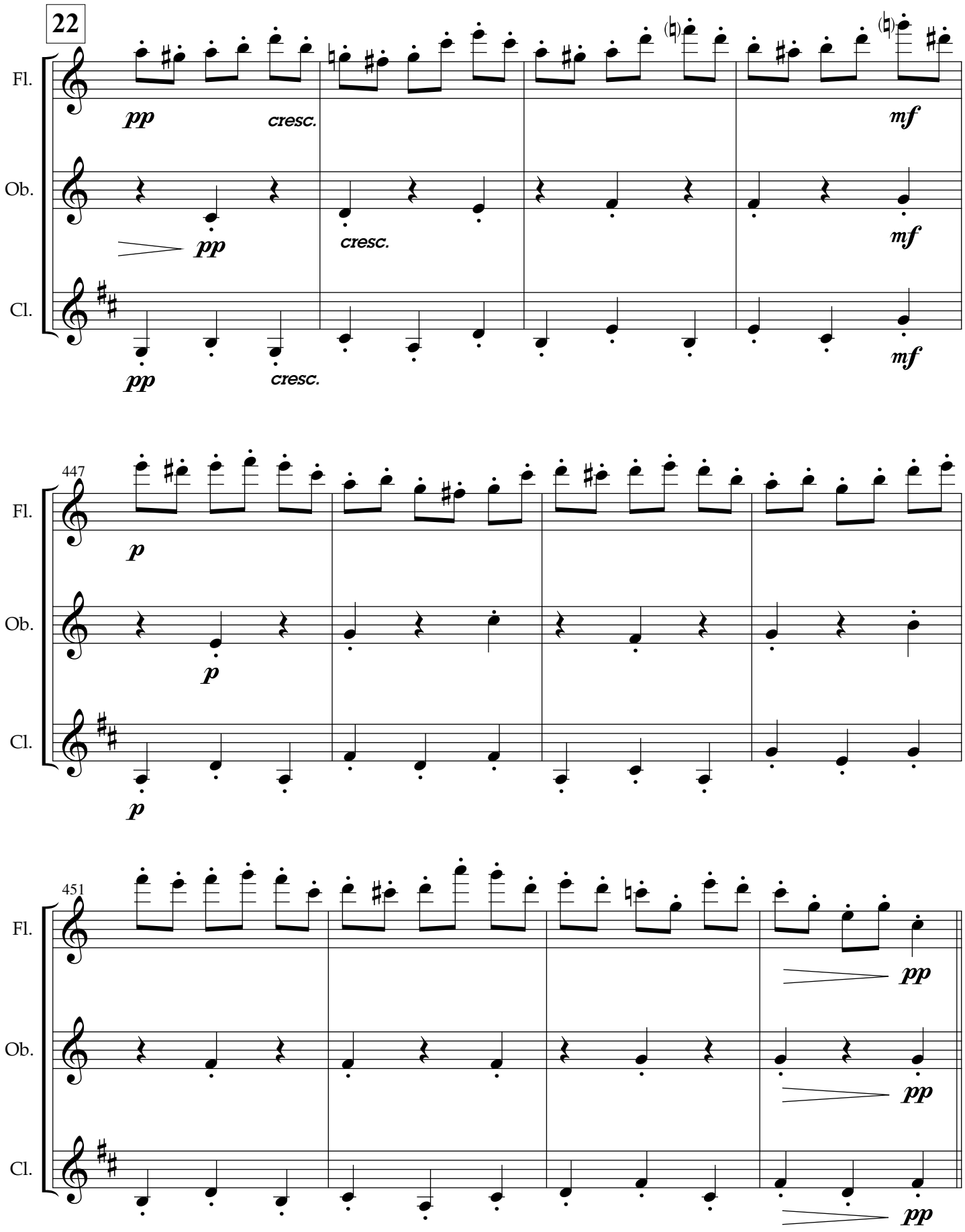

21
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn

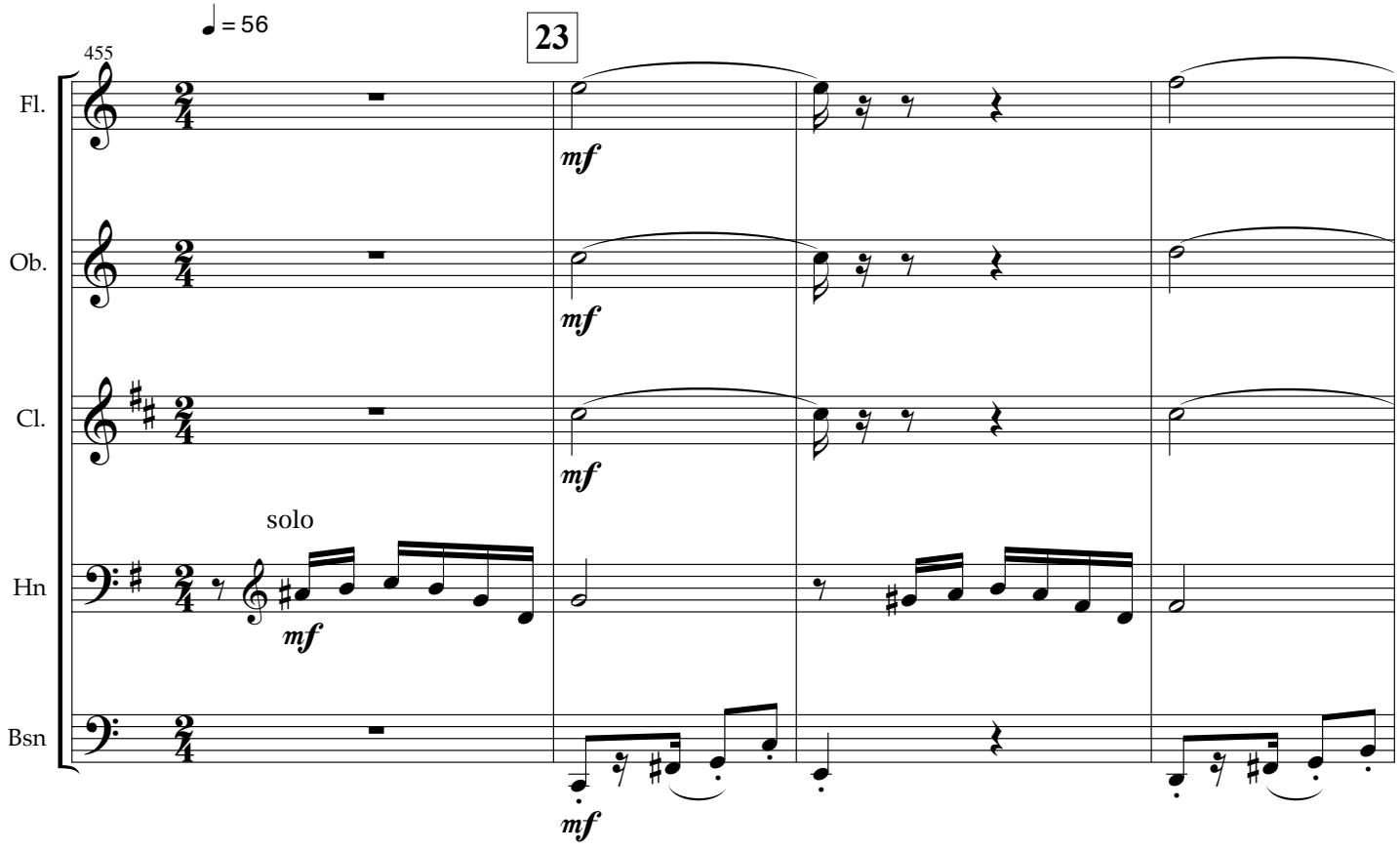

420
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn

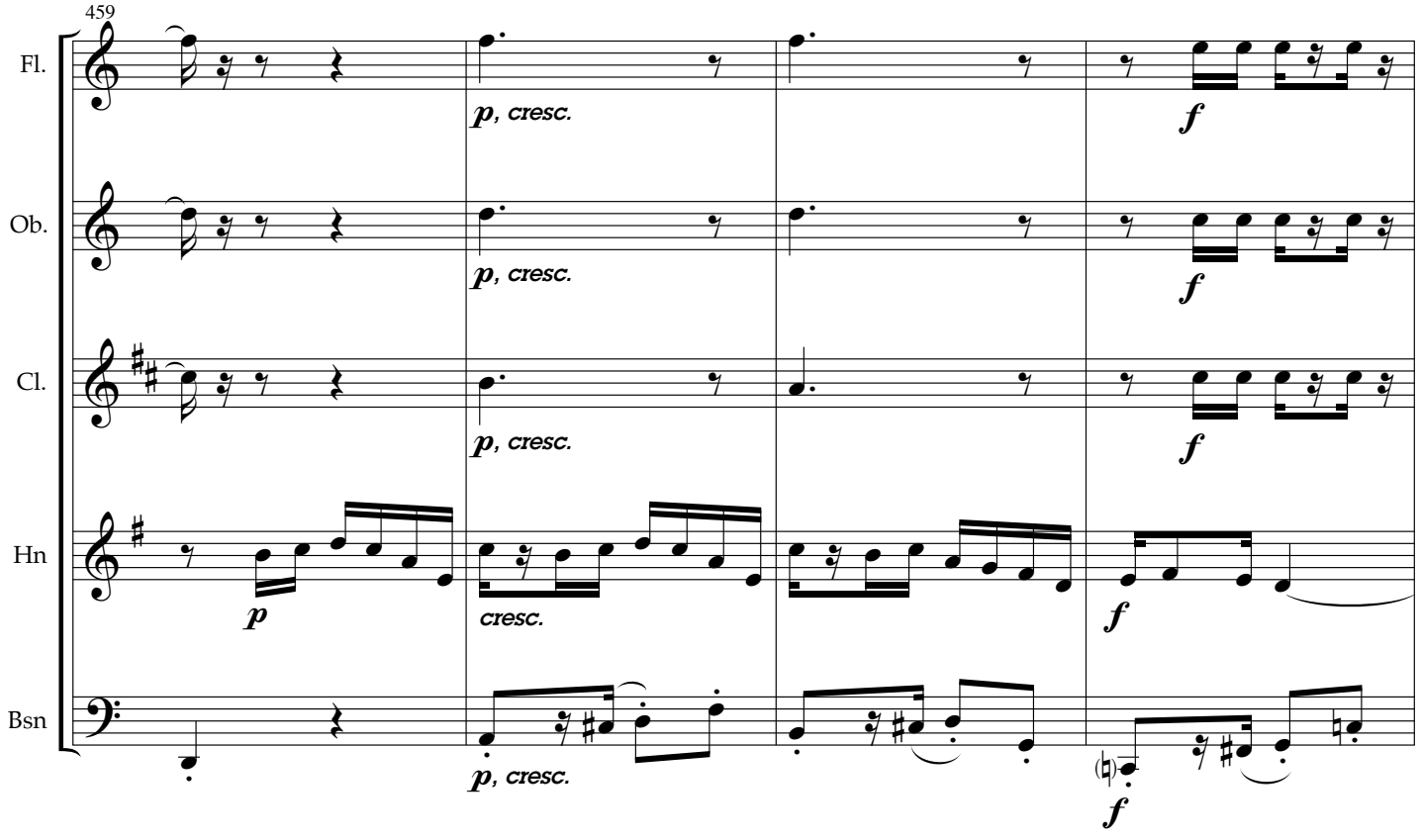

423
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
mp
mp
mp
mp

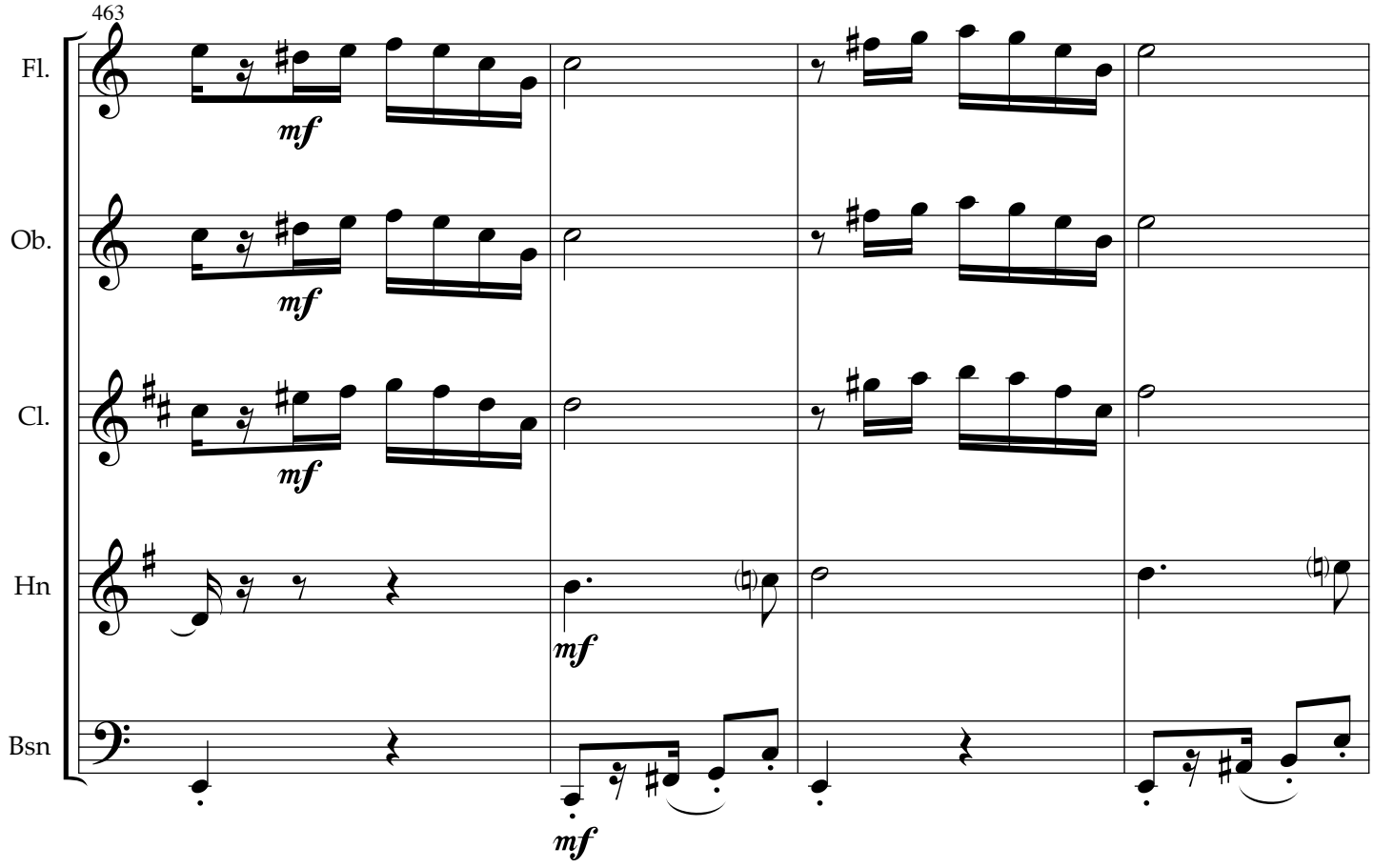

♩ = 105
427
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
p
p
p

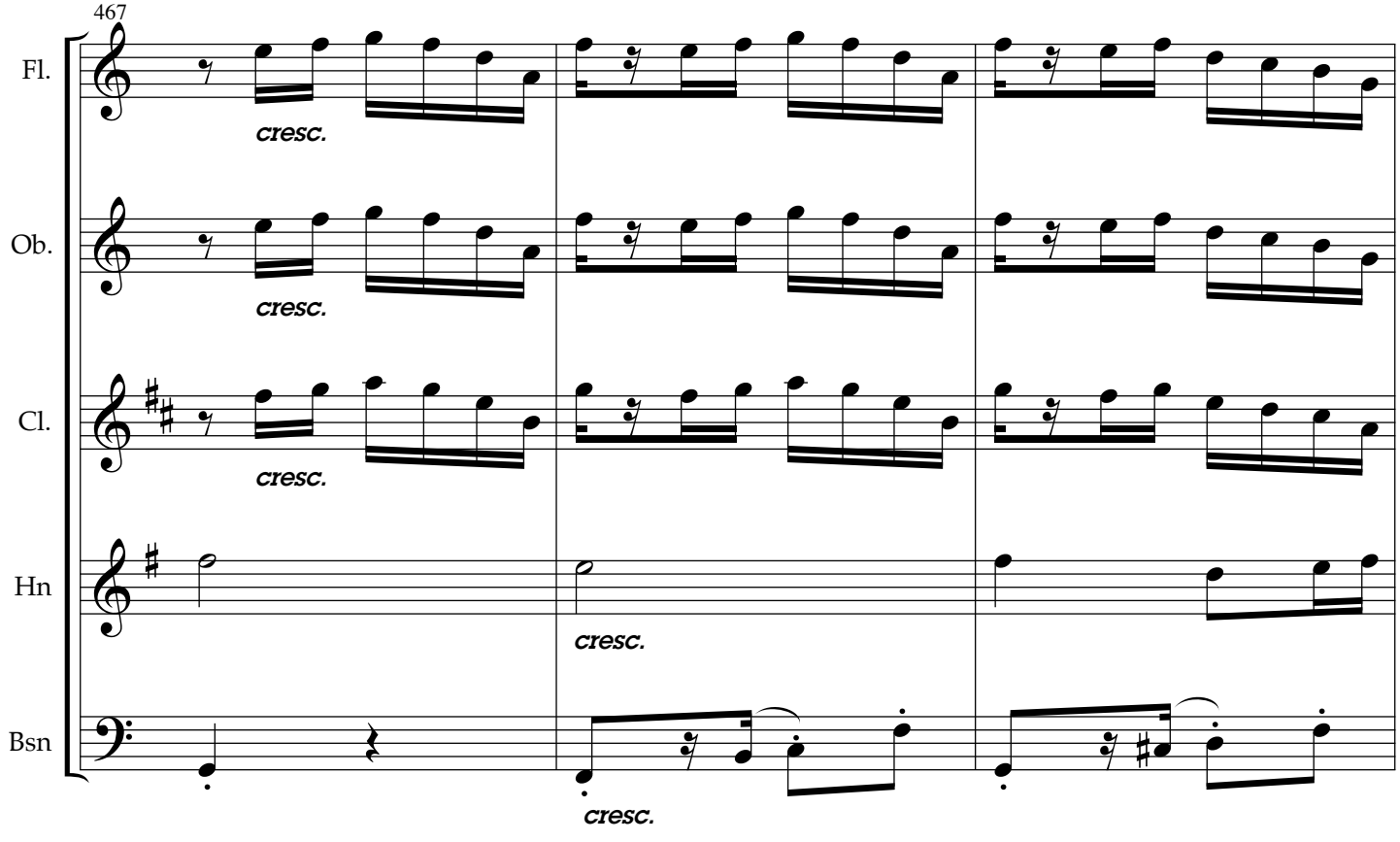

431
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
mp
mp
mp
435
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
p
pp
p
pp
p
pp
439
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
p
p
p

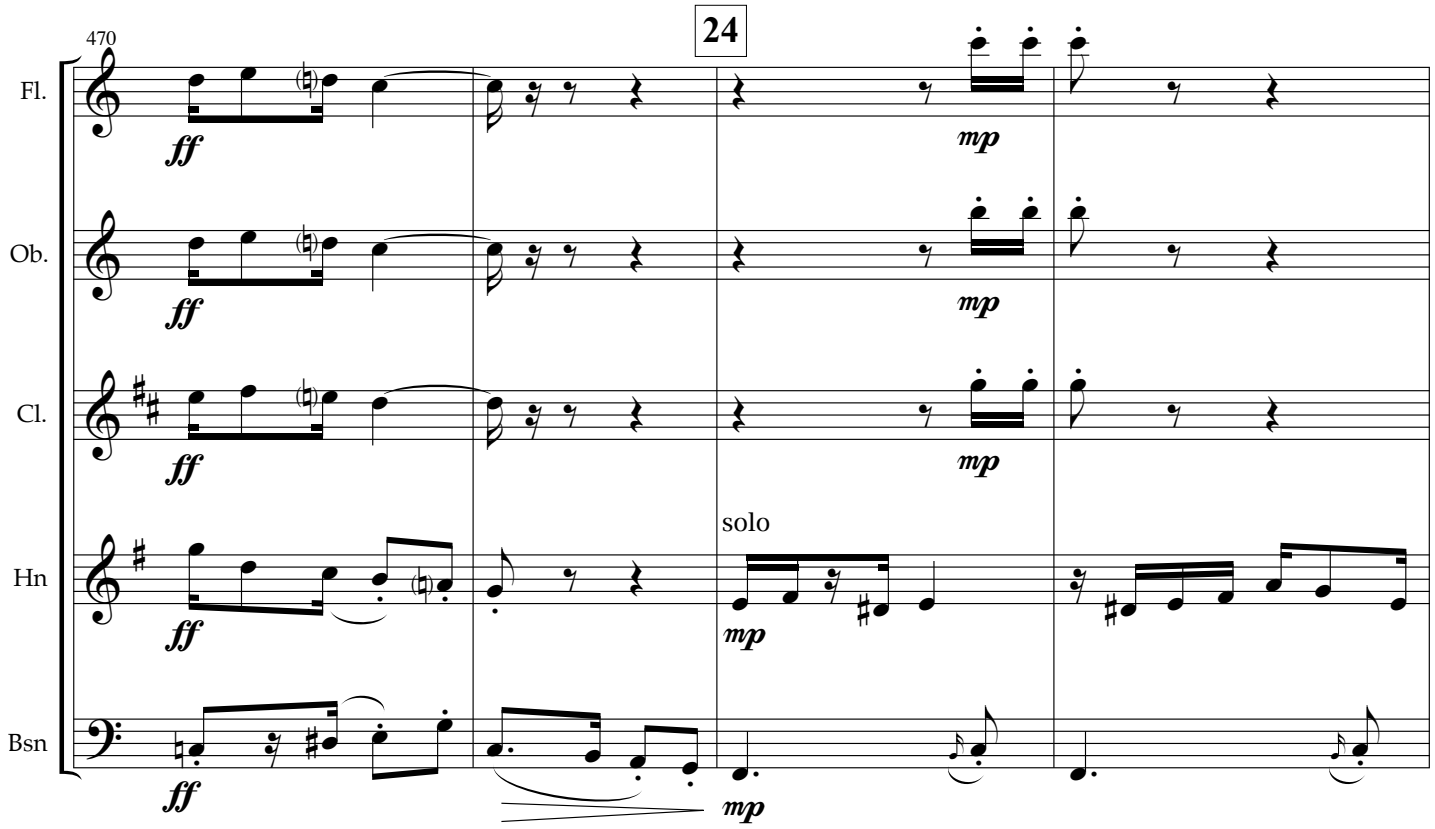

22
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
pp
cresc.
mf
447
p
451

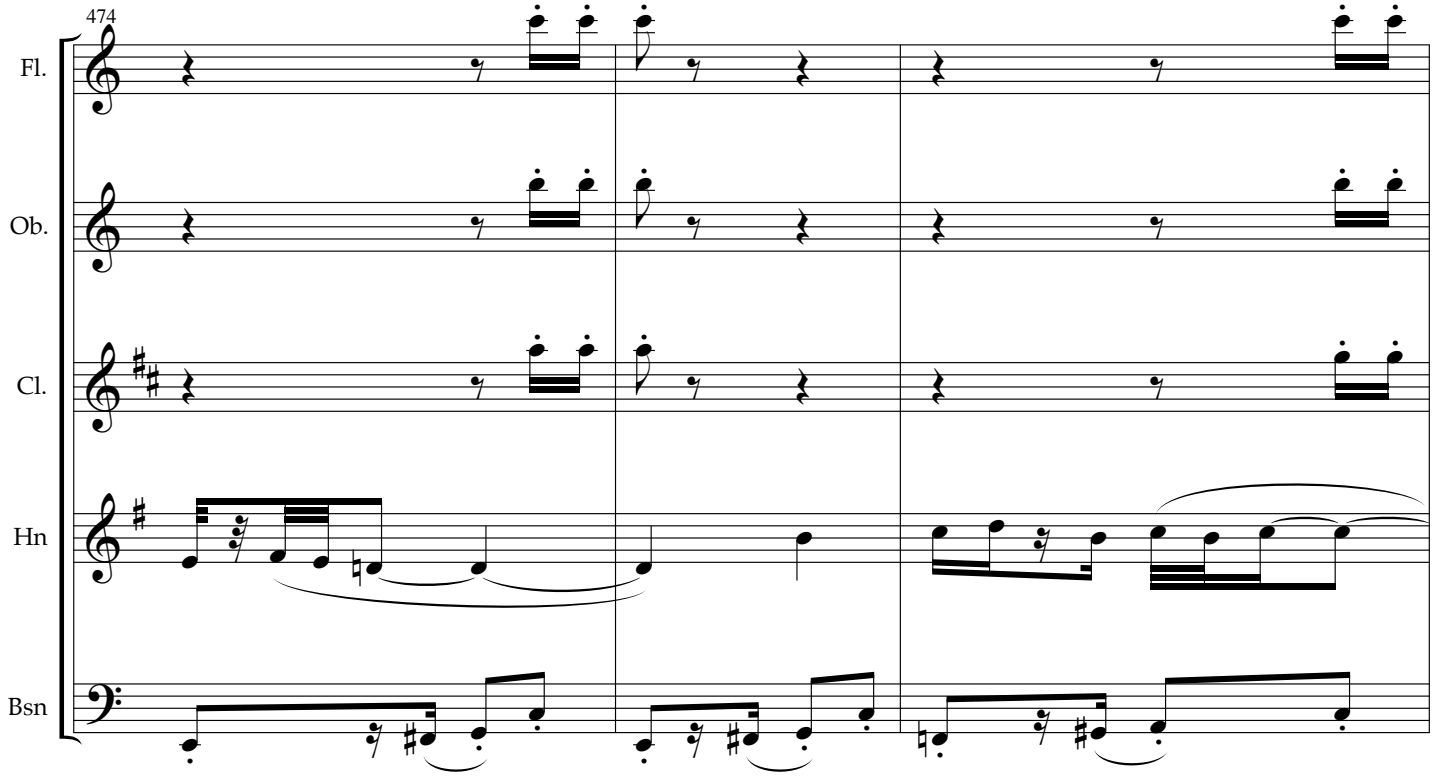

♩ = 56
23
455
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
mf
solo

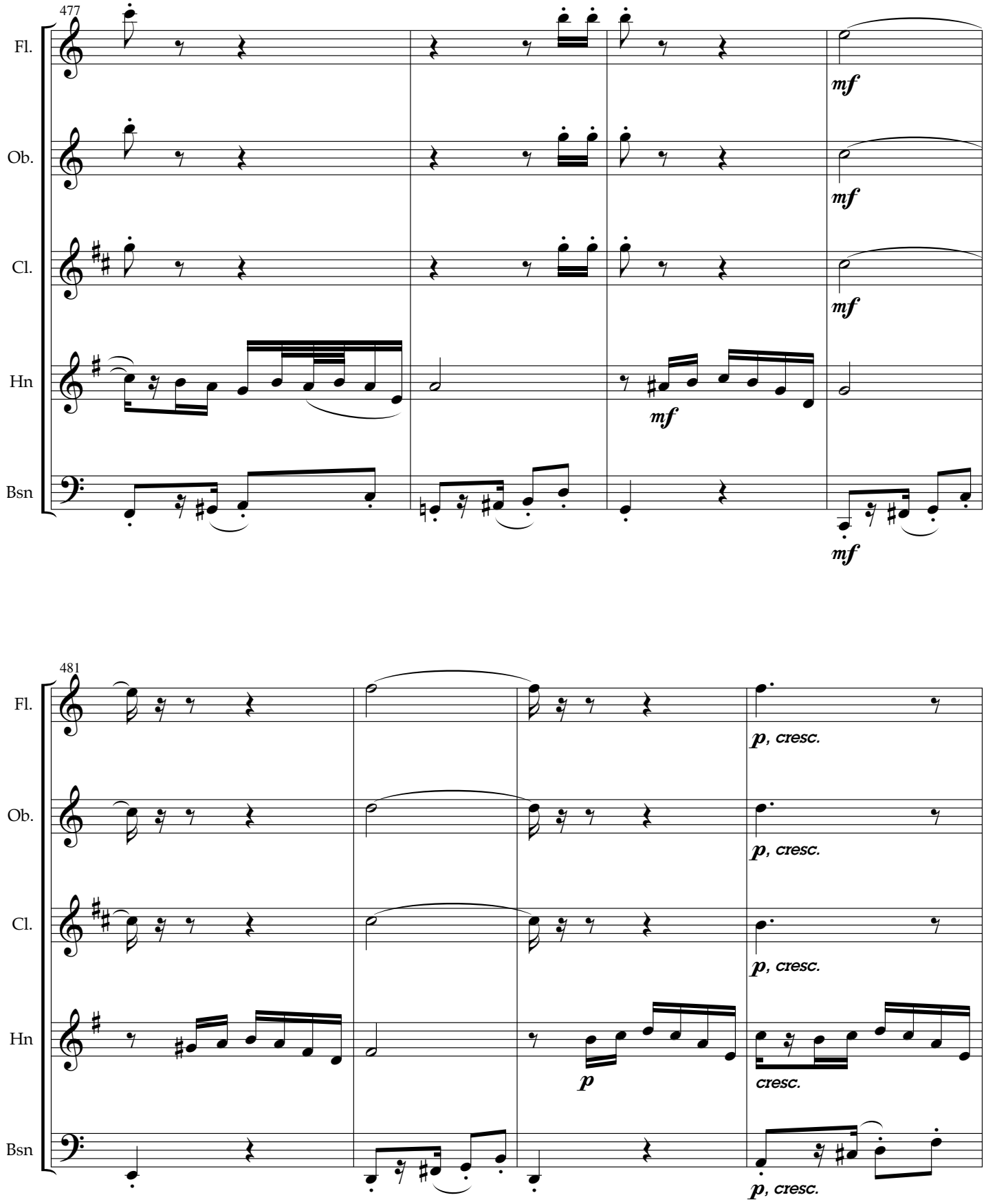

459
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
p, cresc.
cresc.
p
f

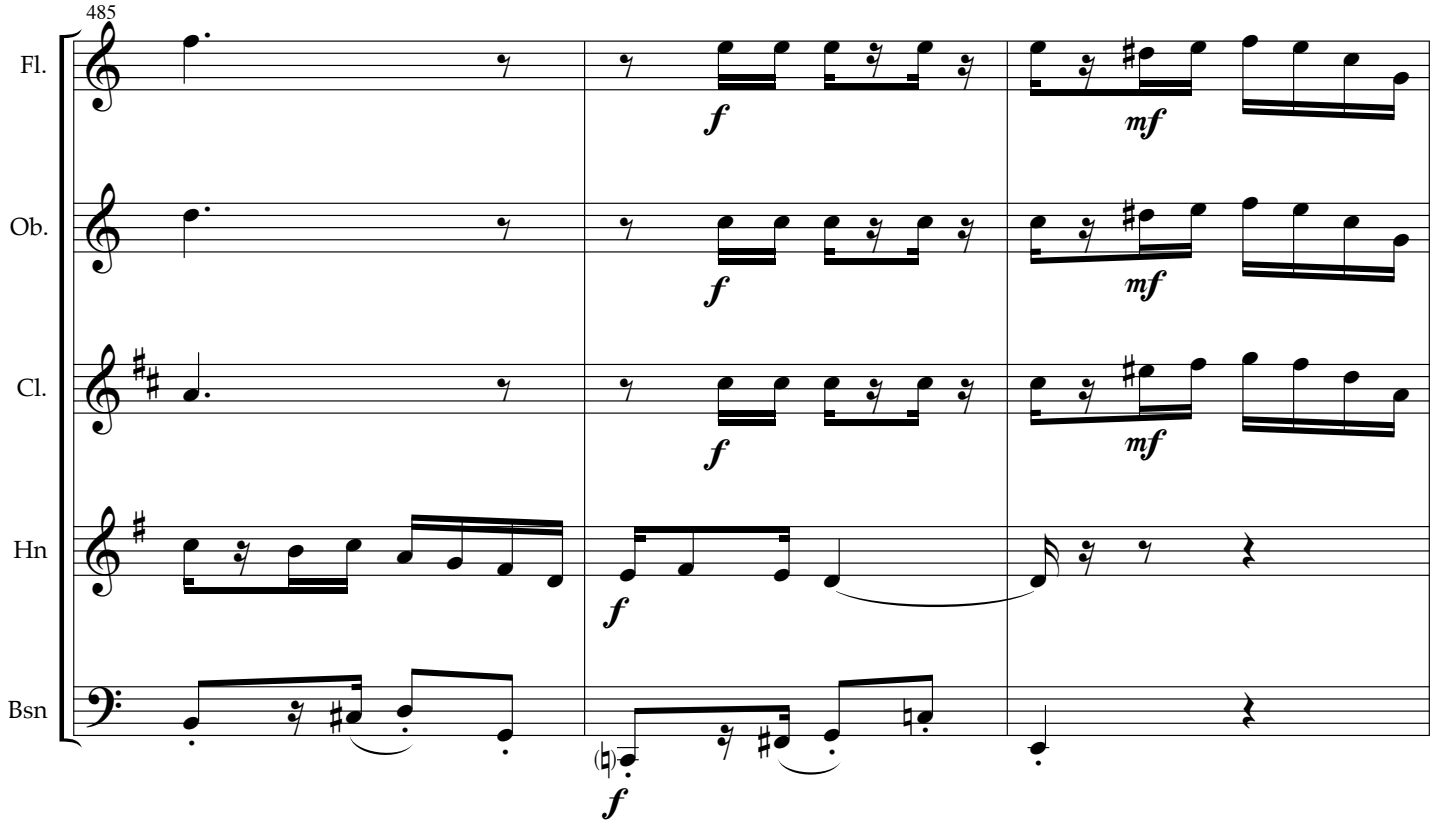

463
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
mf
mf
mf
mf
mf

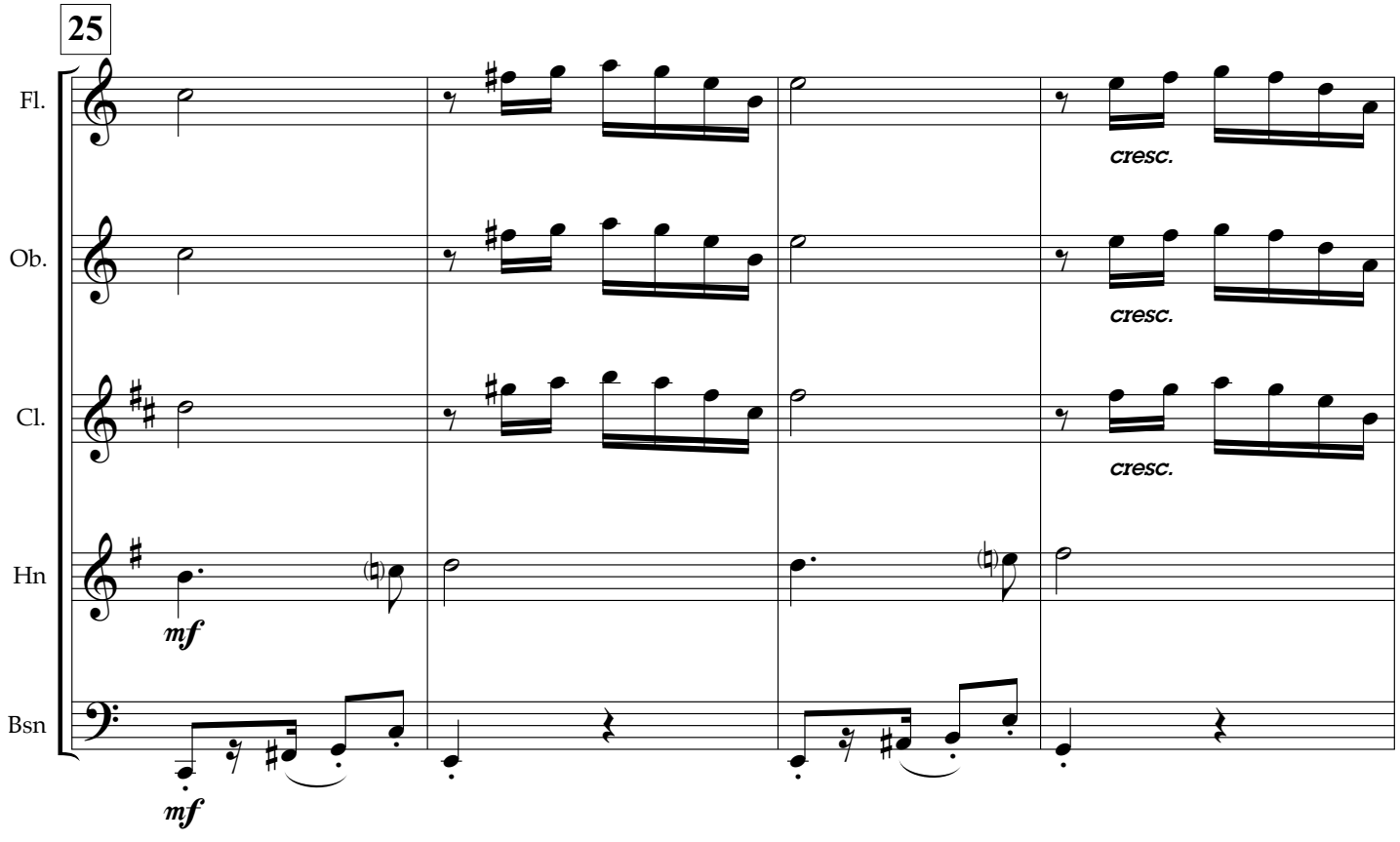

467
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.
cresc.

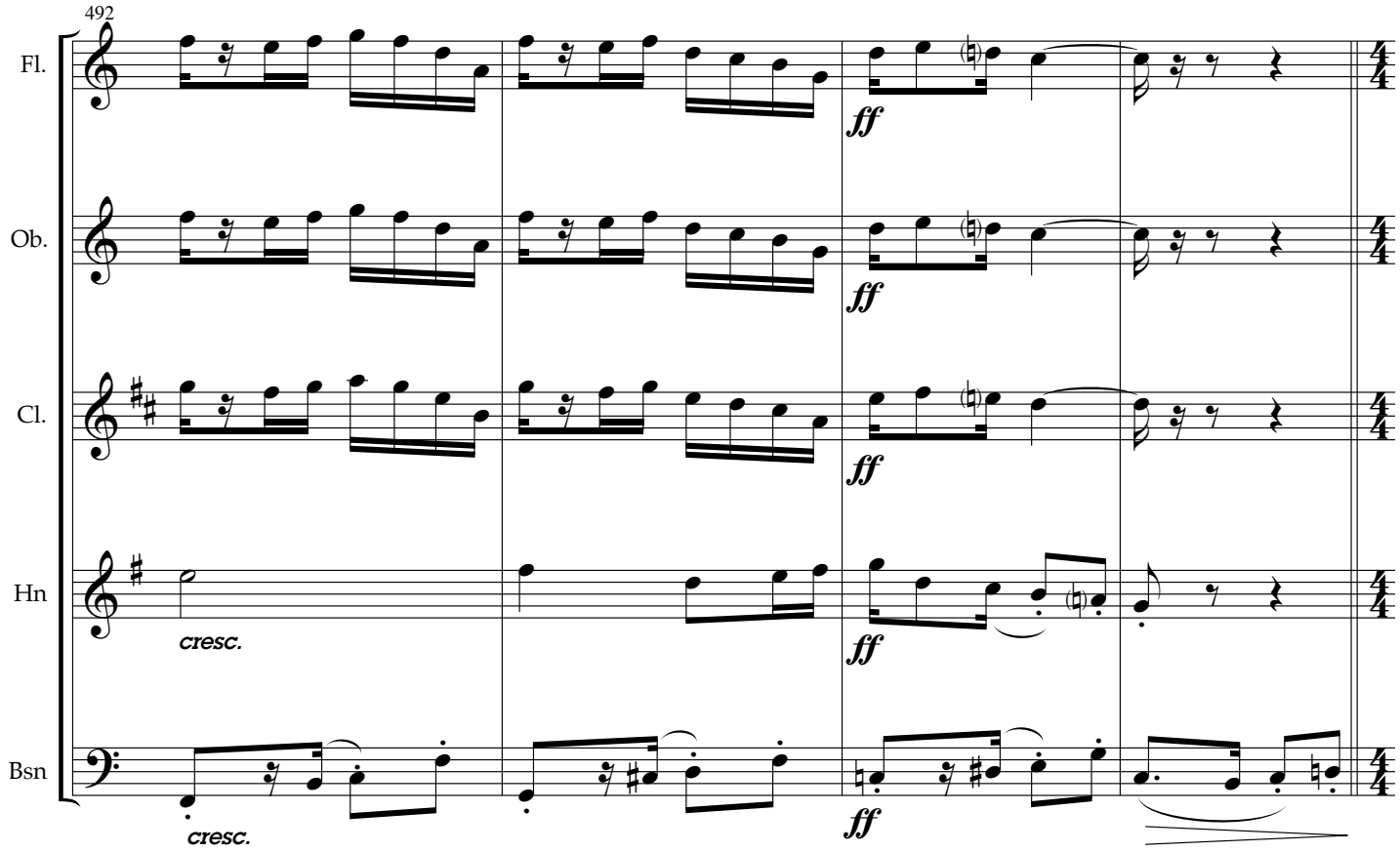

24
470
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
ff
mp
solo

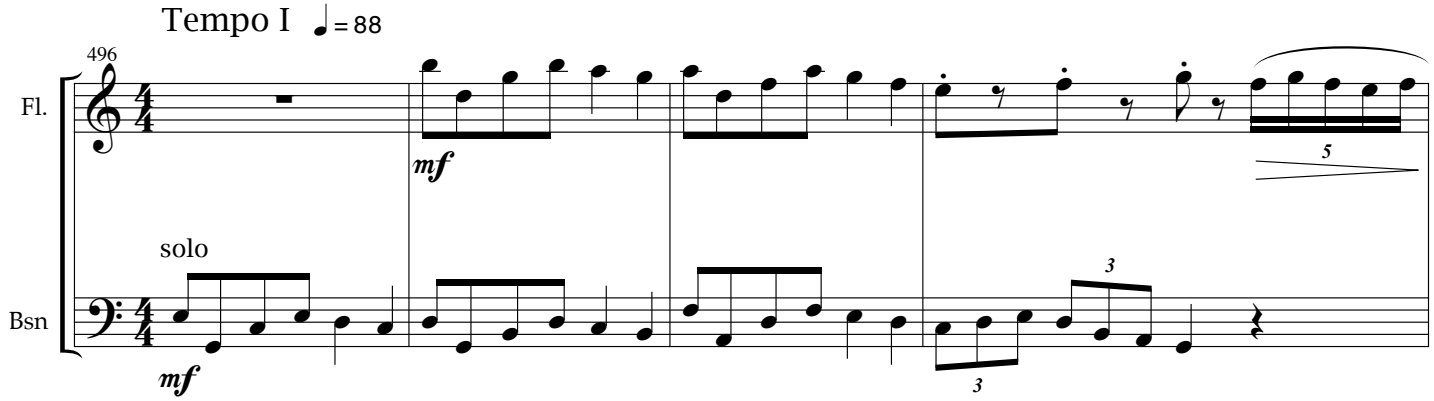

474
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn

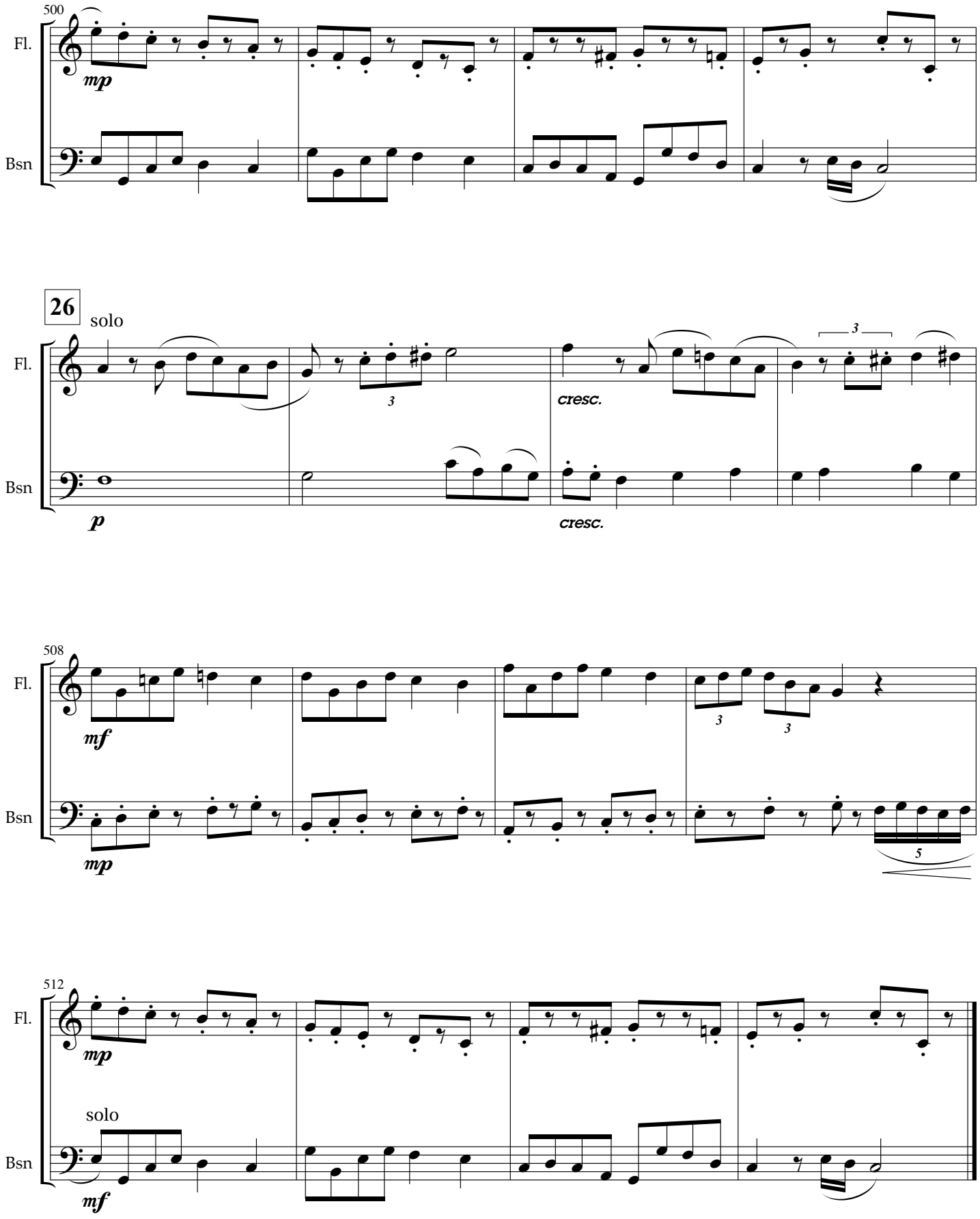

477
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
mf
481
p, cresc.
p
cresc.

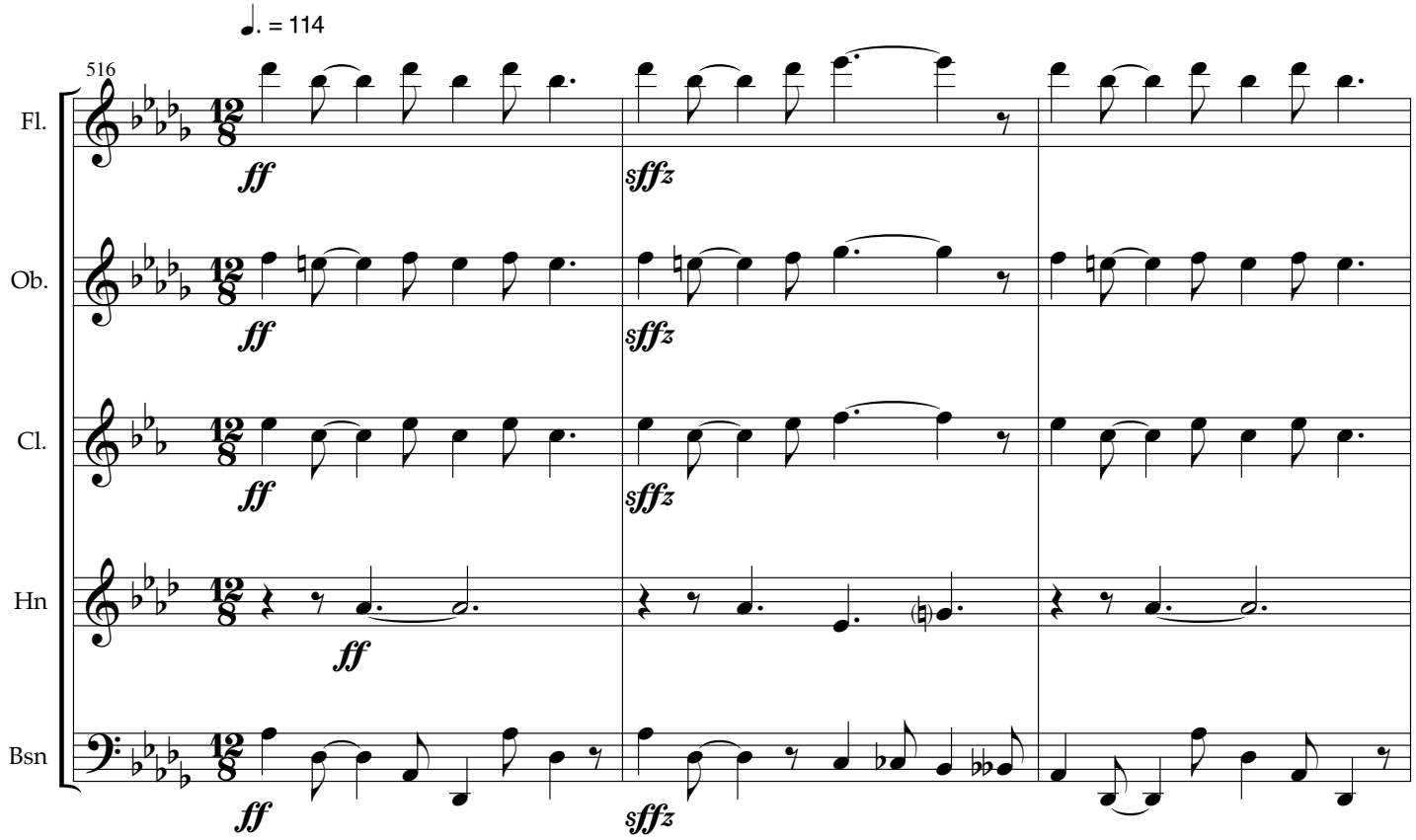

485
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
f
mf

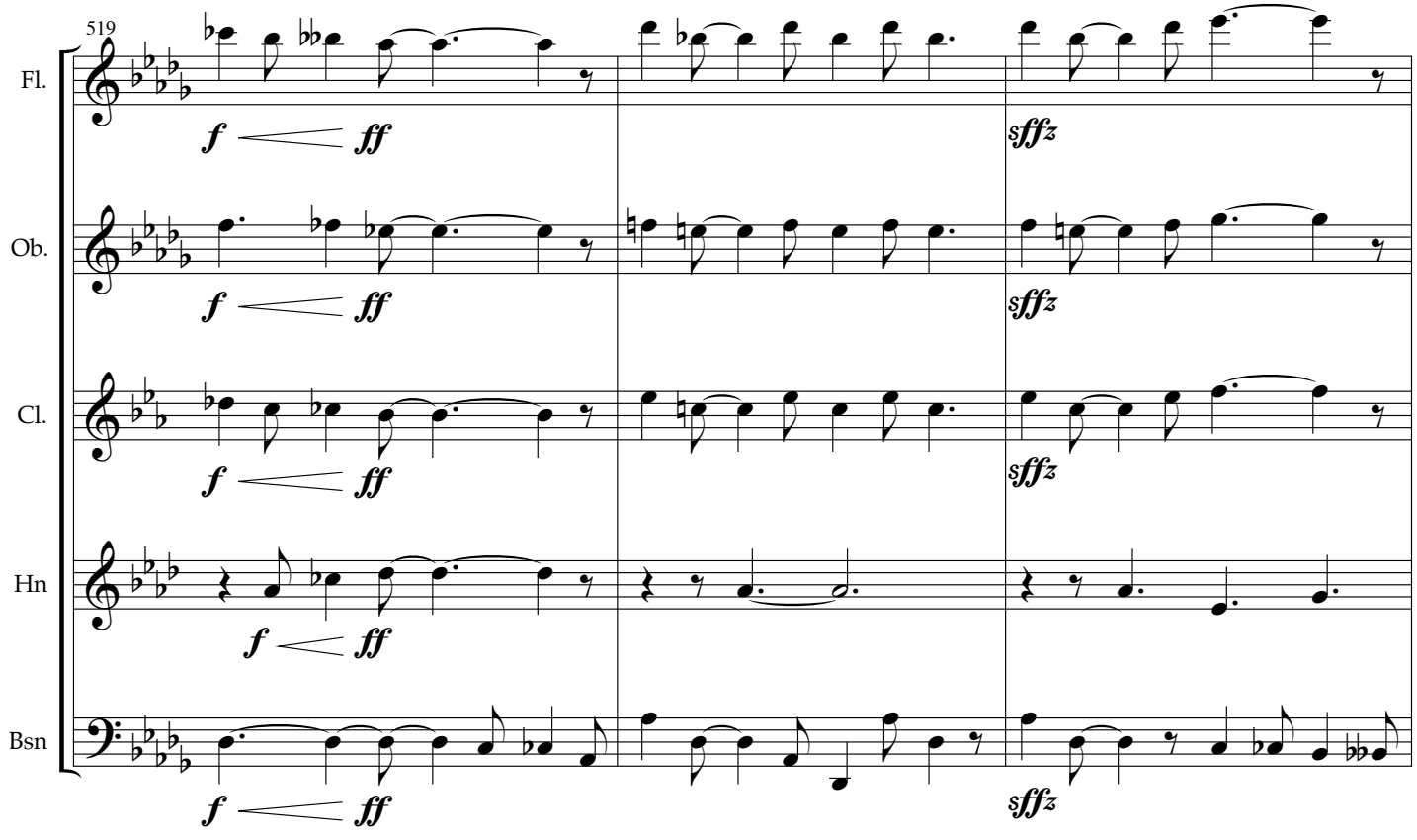

25
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
cresc.
mf

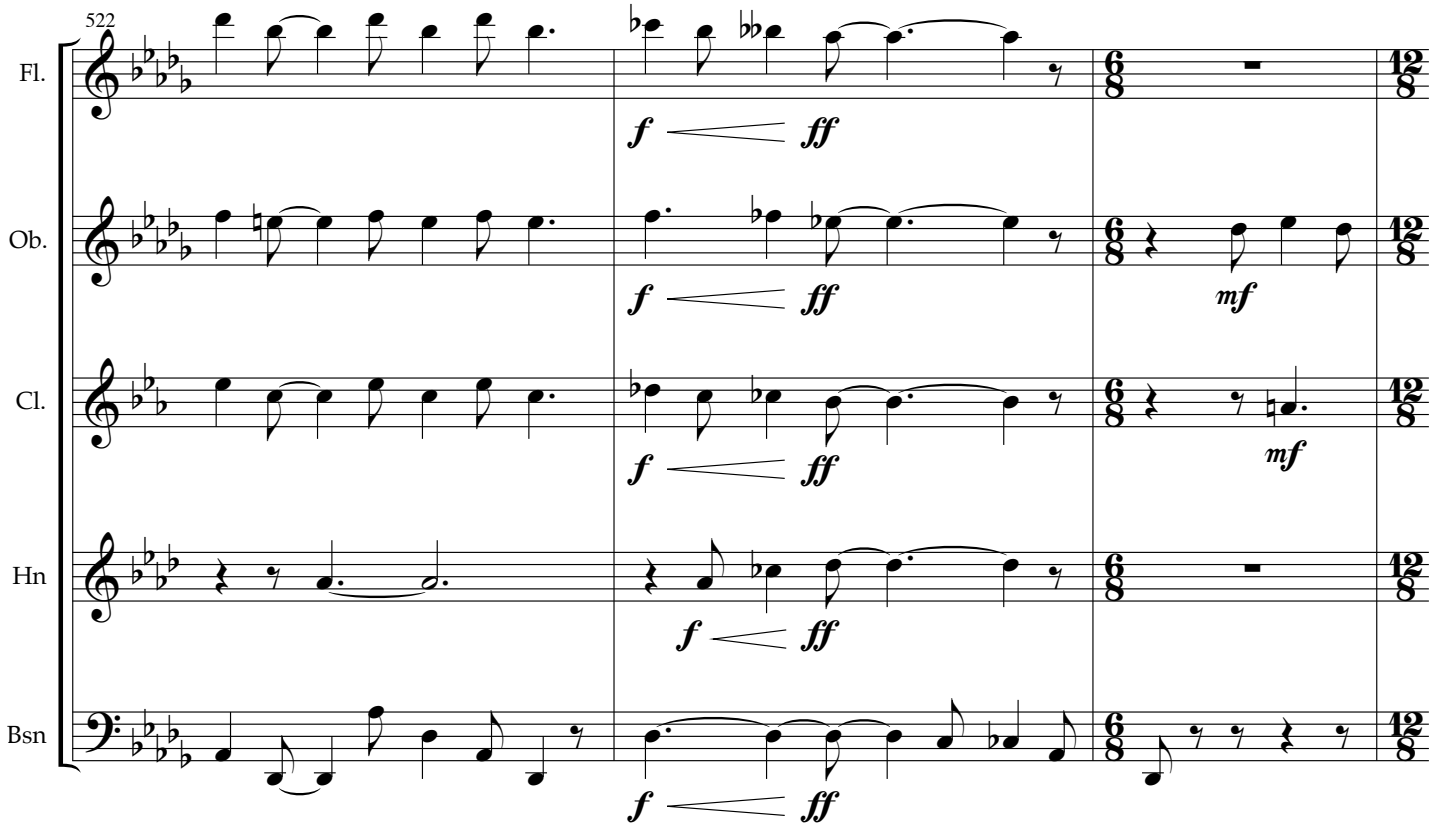

492
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
ff
cresc.

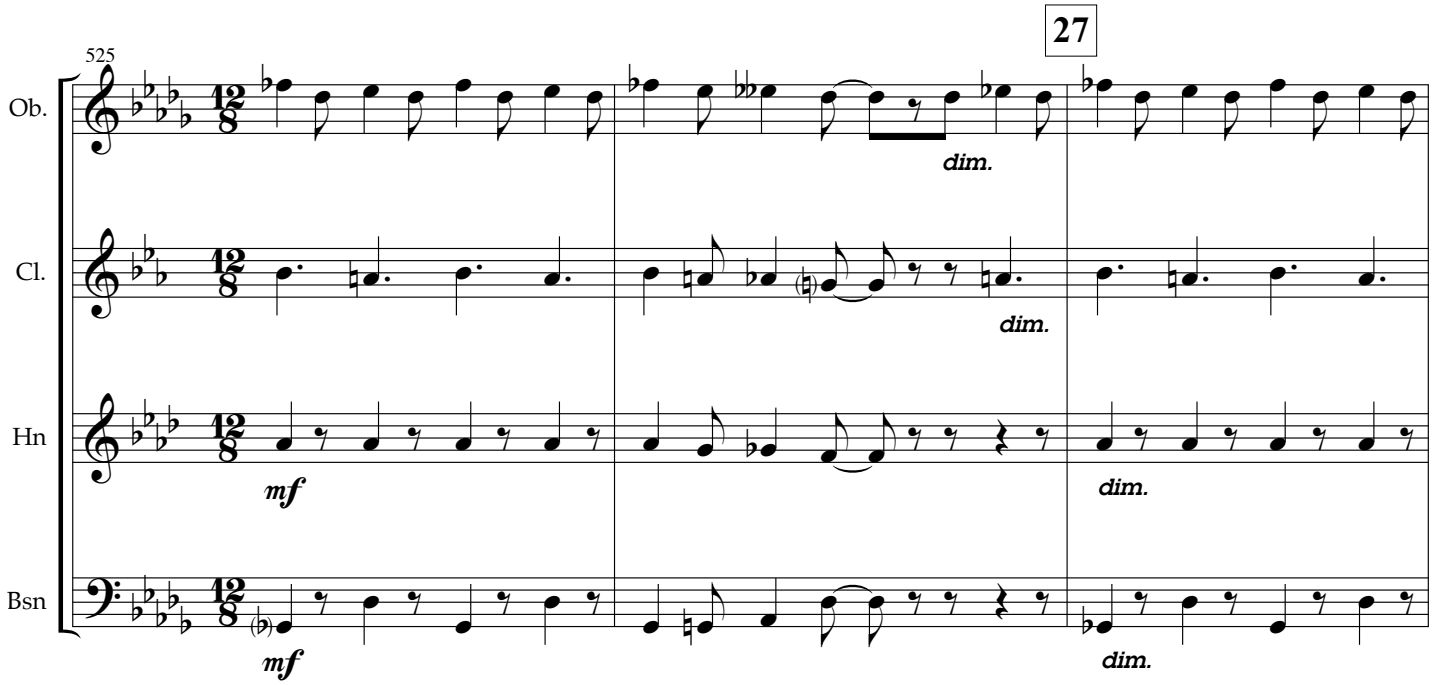

Tempo I ♩= 88
496
Fl.
Bsn
solo
mf
5
3

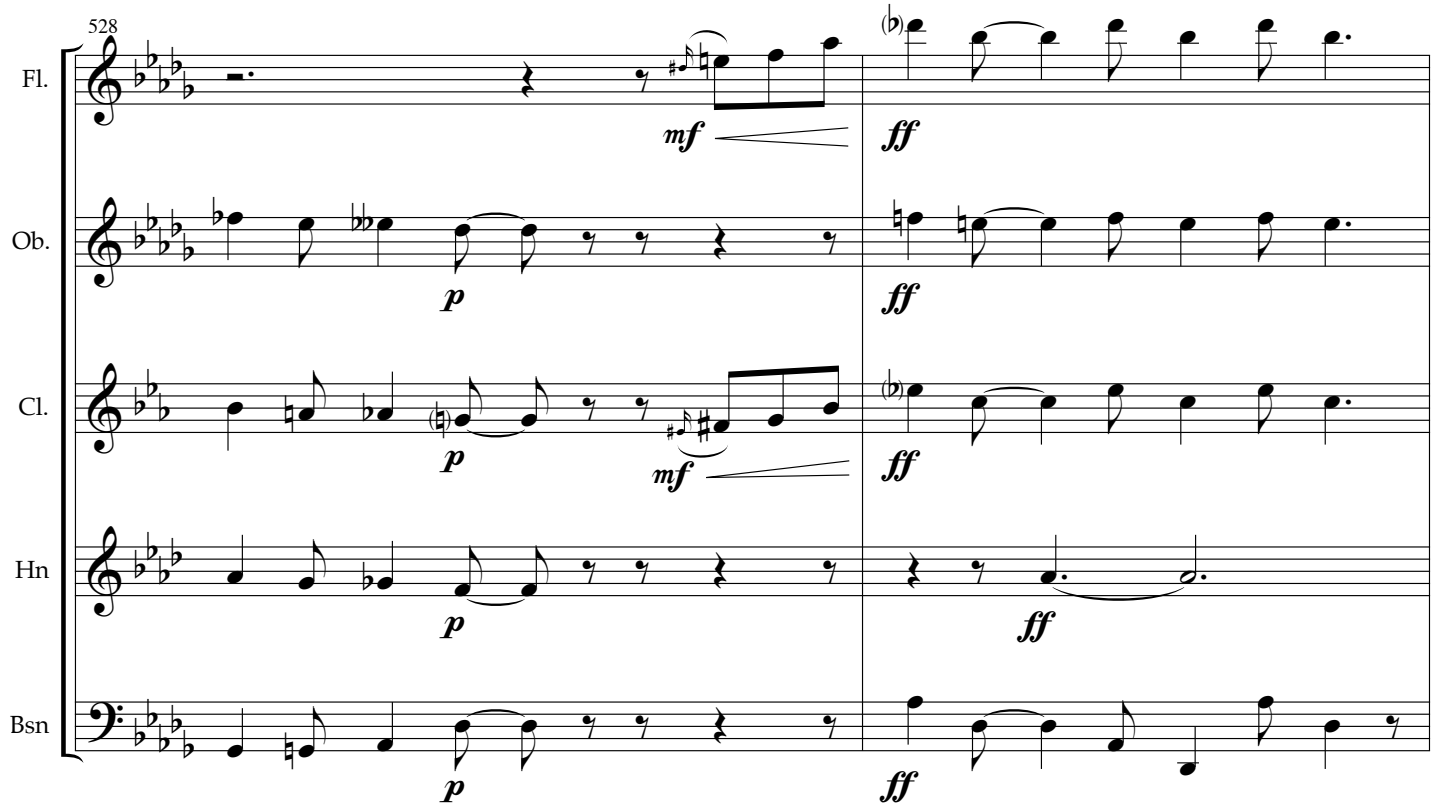

500
Fl.
mp
Bsn
26
solo
Fl.
3
cresc.
3
Bsn
p
cresc.
508
Fl.
mf
3
3
Bsn
mp
5
512
Fl.
mp
solo
Bsn
mf

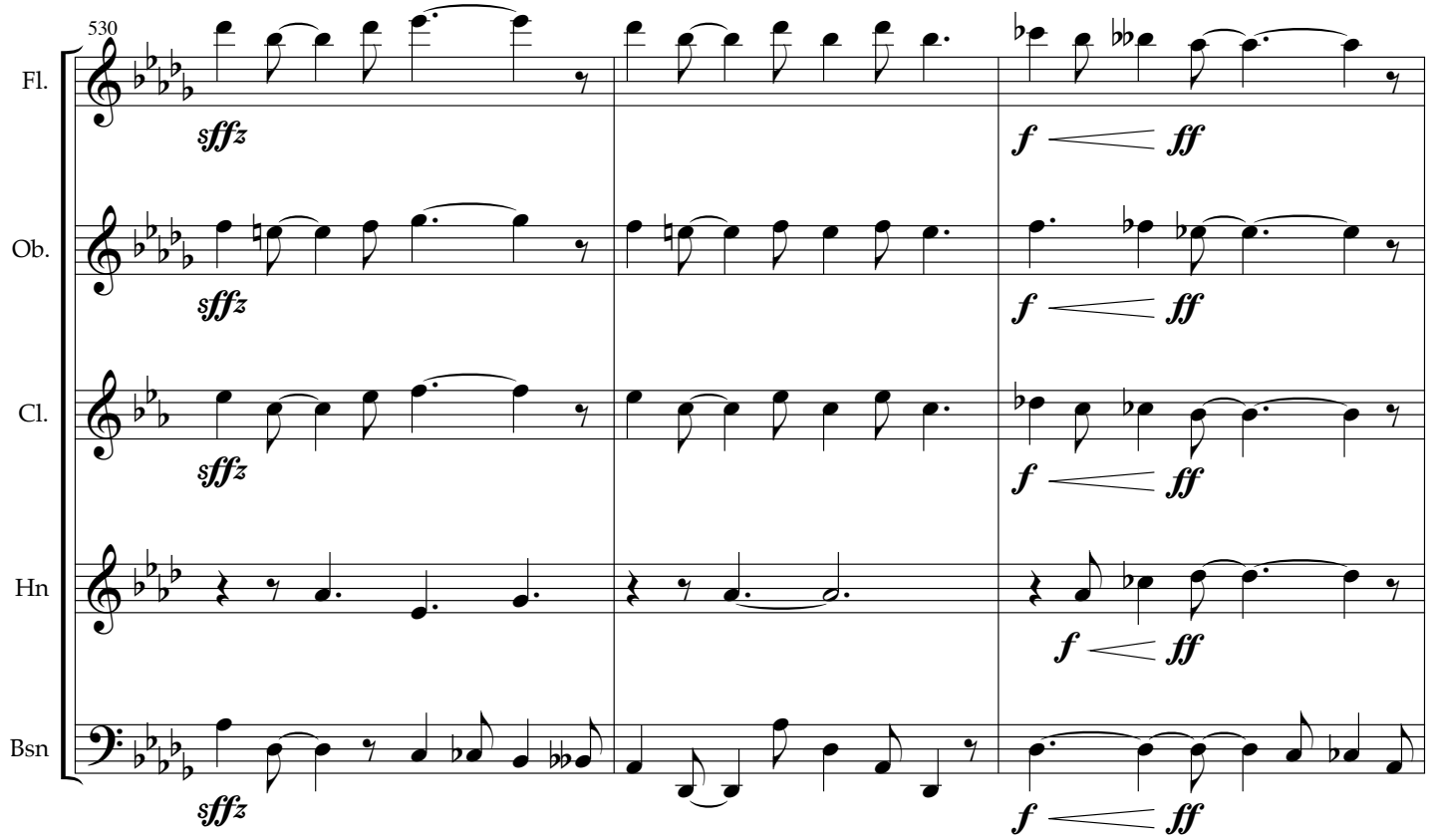

♩. = 114
516
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
ff
sffz

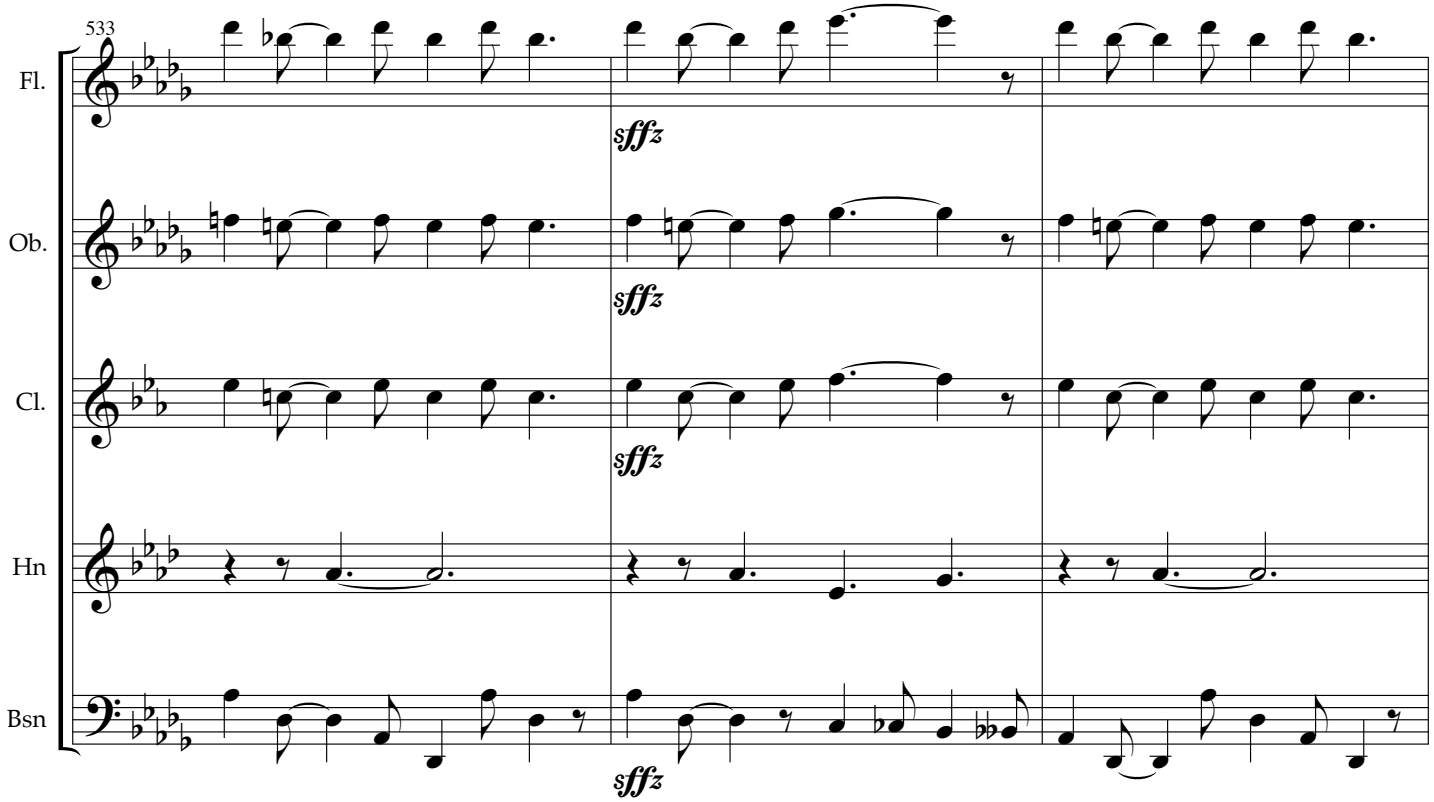

519
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
f
ff
sffz

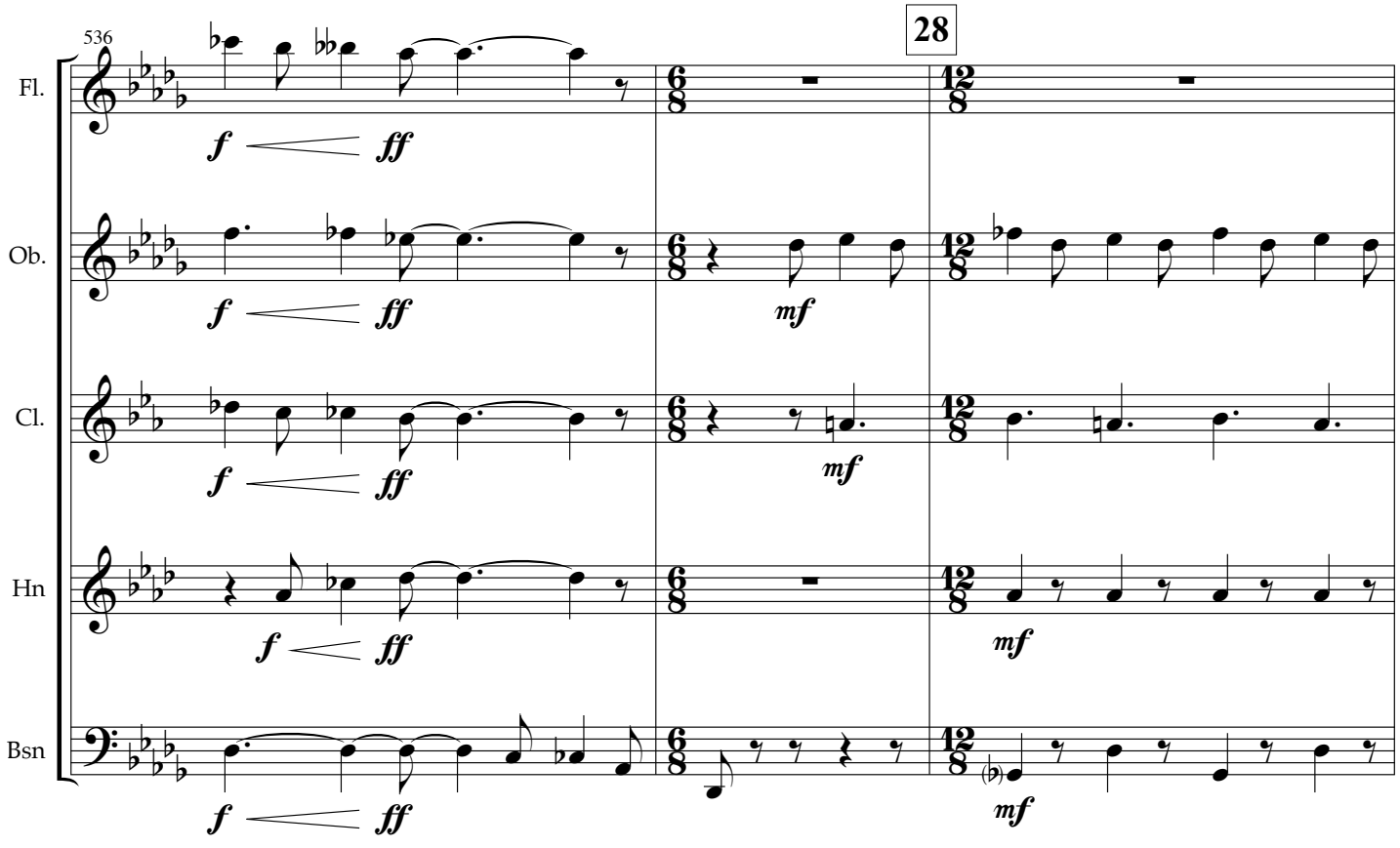

522
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
f
ff
mf

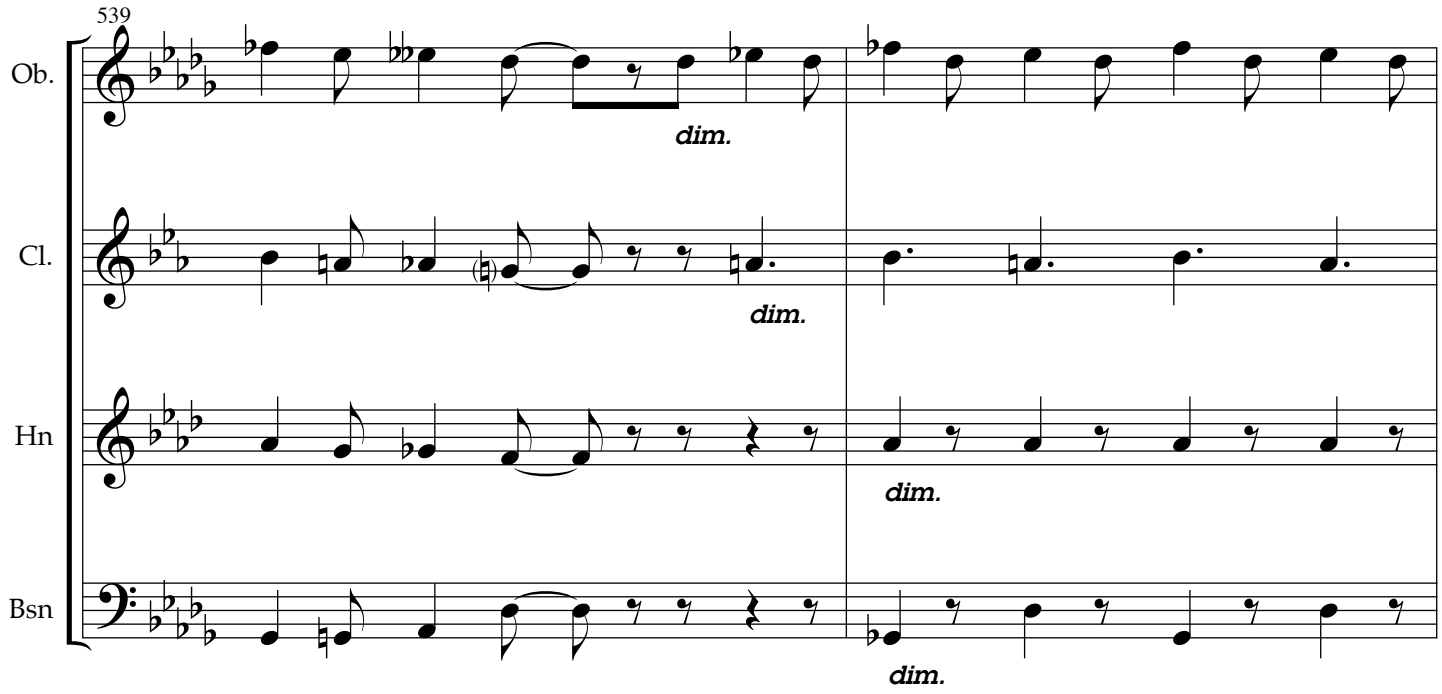

525
27
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
mf
dim.


528
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
mf
ff
p


530
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
sffz
f
ff


533
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
sffz


536
28
Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
f
ff
mf


539
Ob.
Cl.
Hn
Bsn
dim.
dim.
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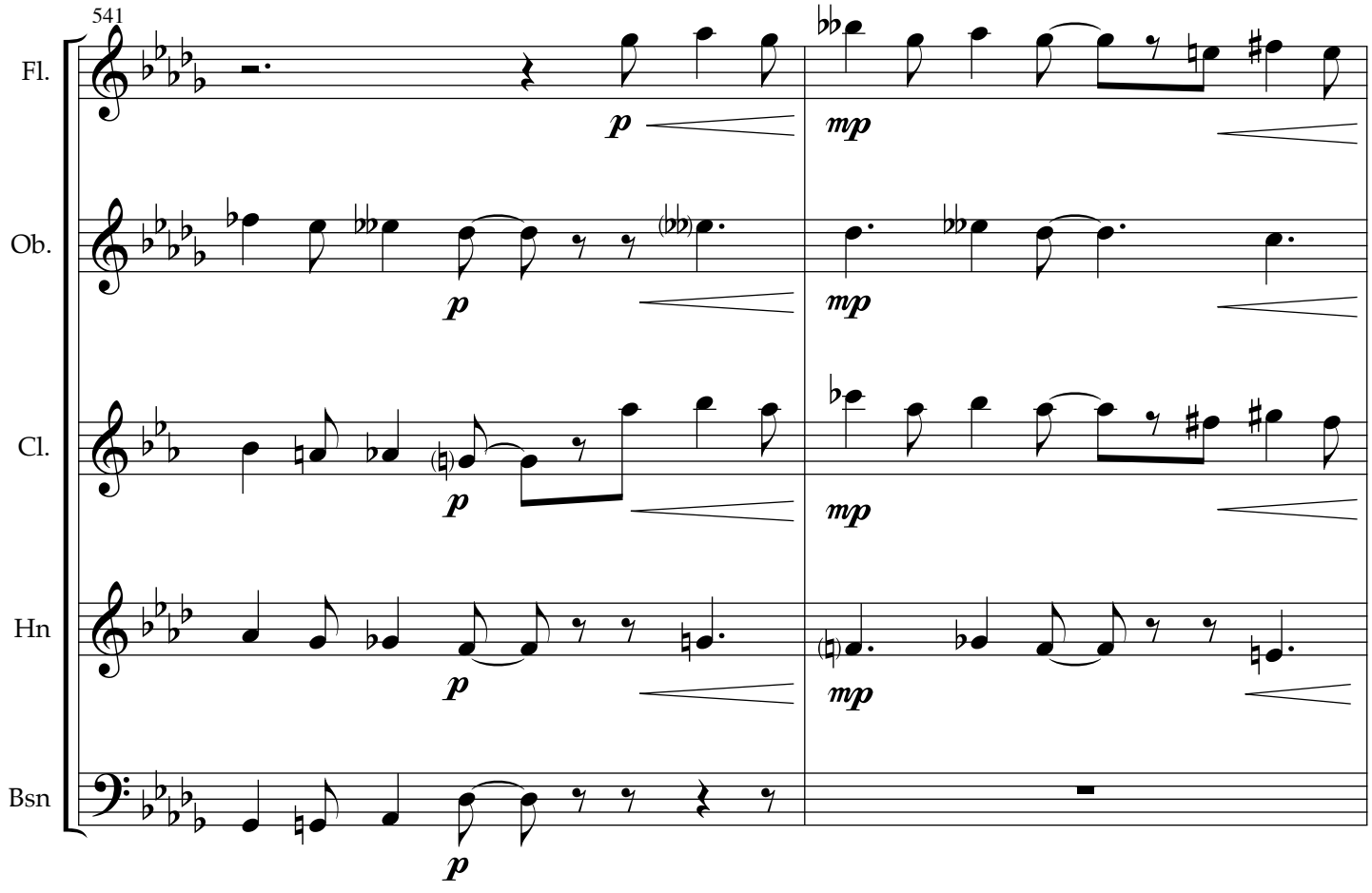
dim.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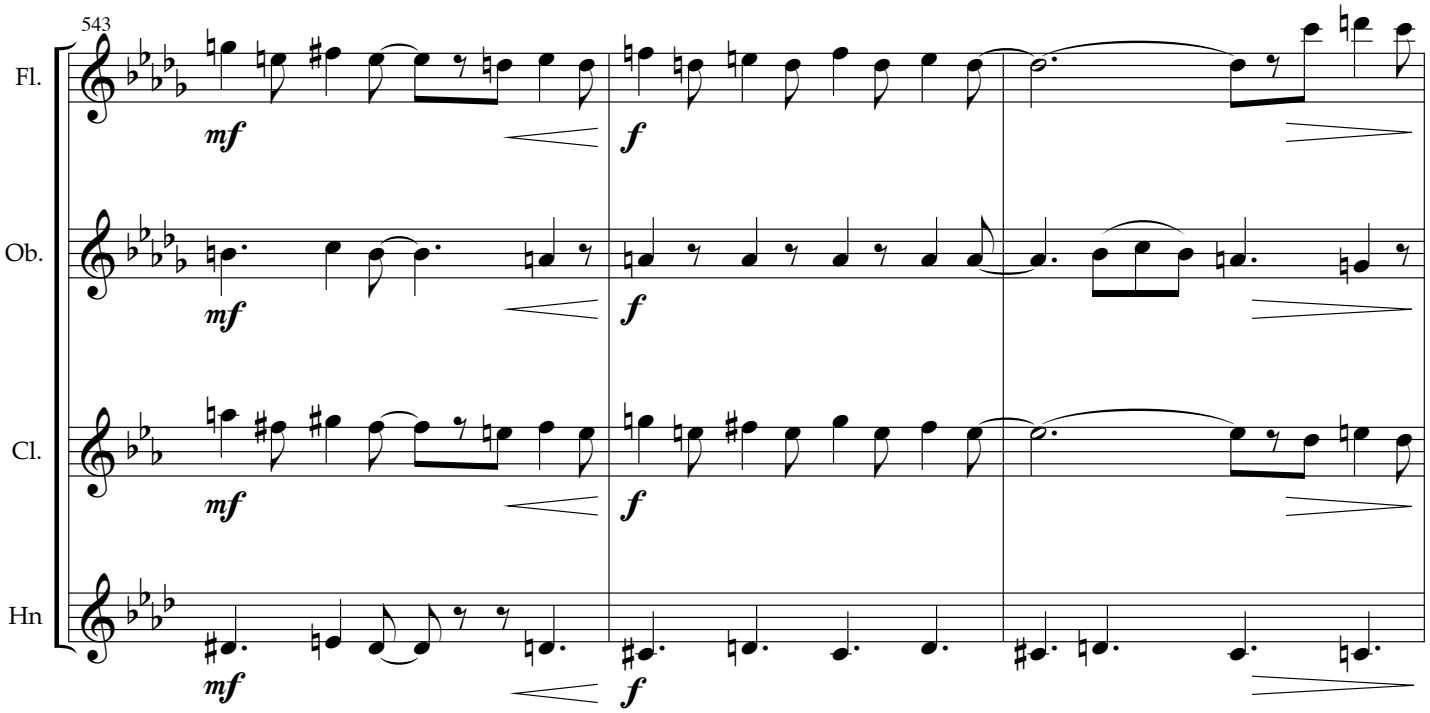
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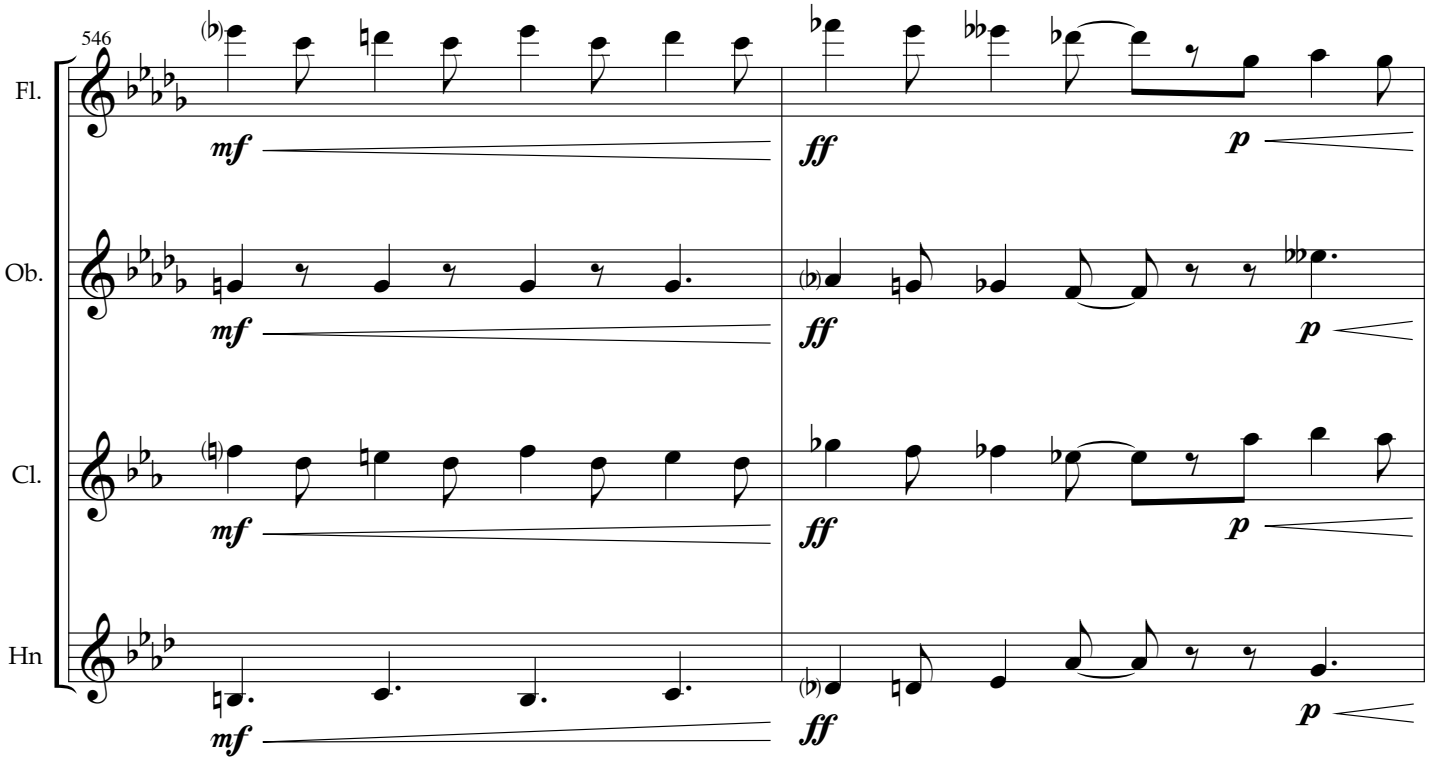
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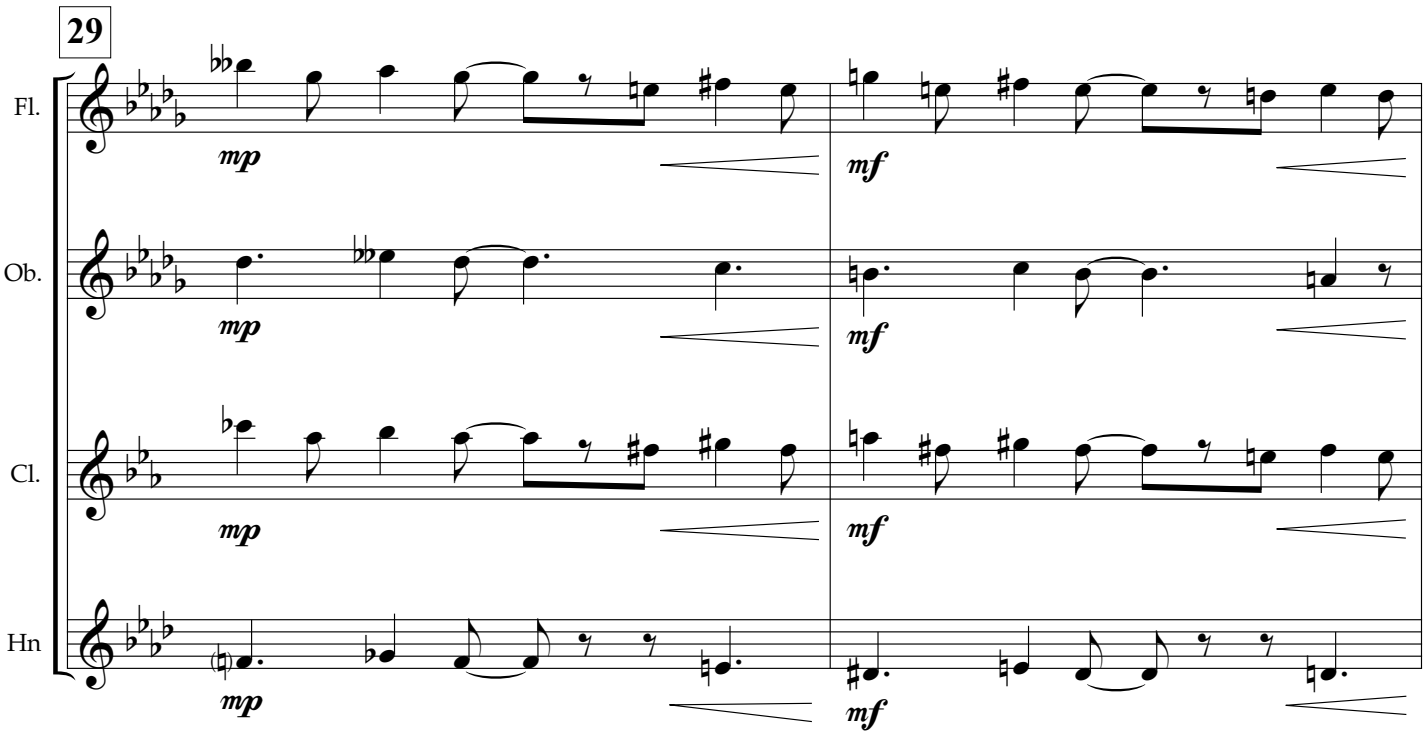
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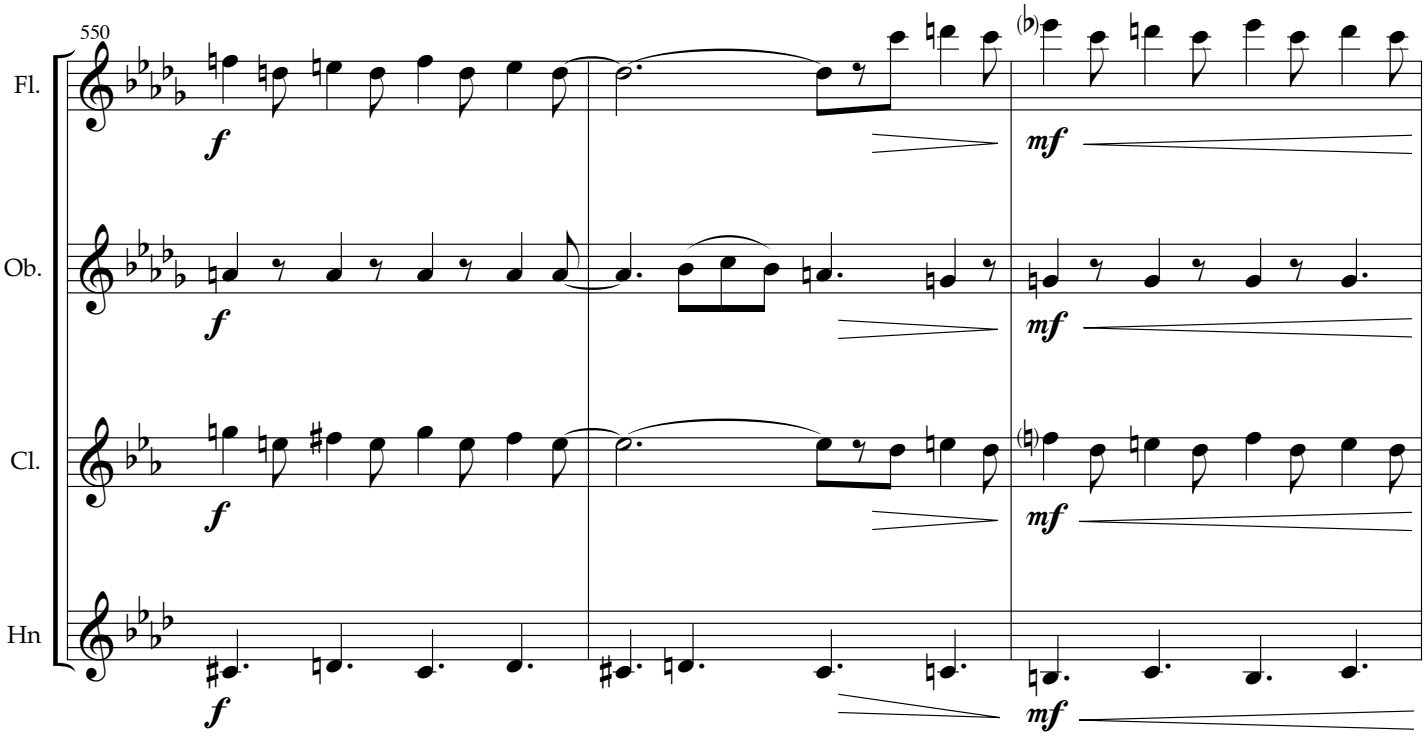
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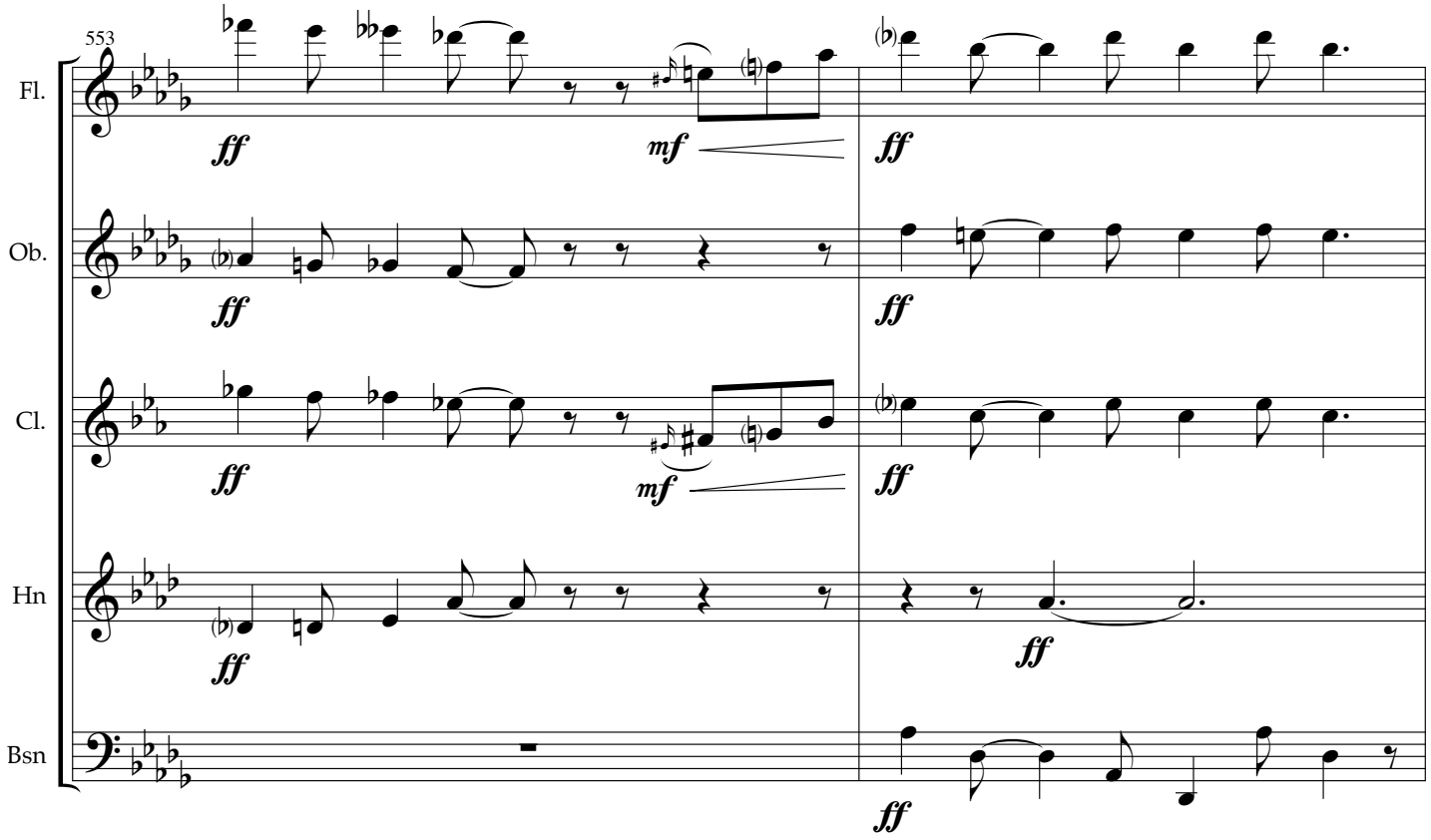
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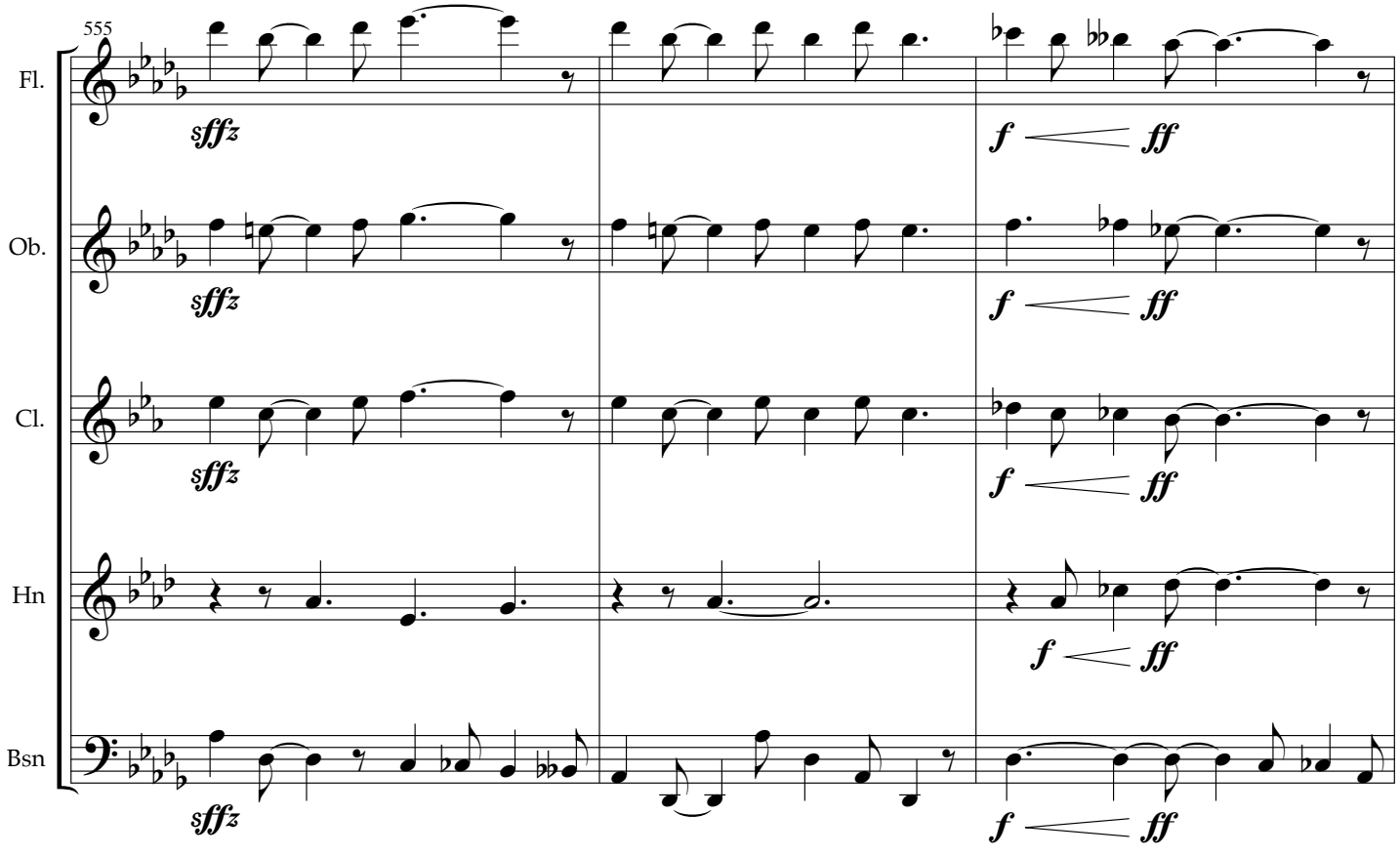
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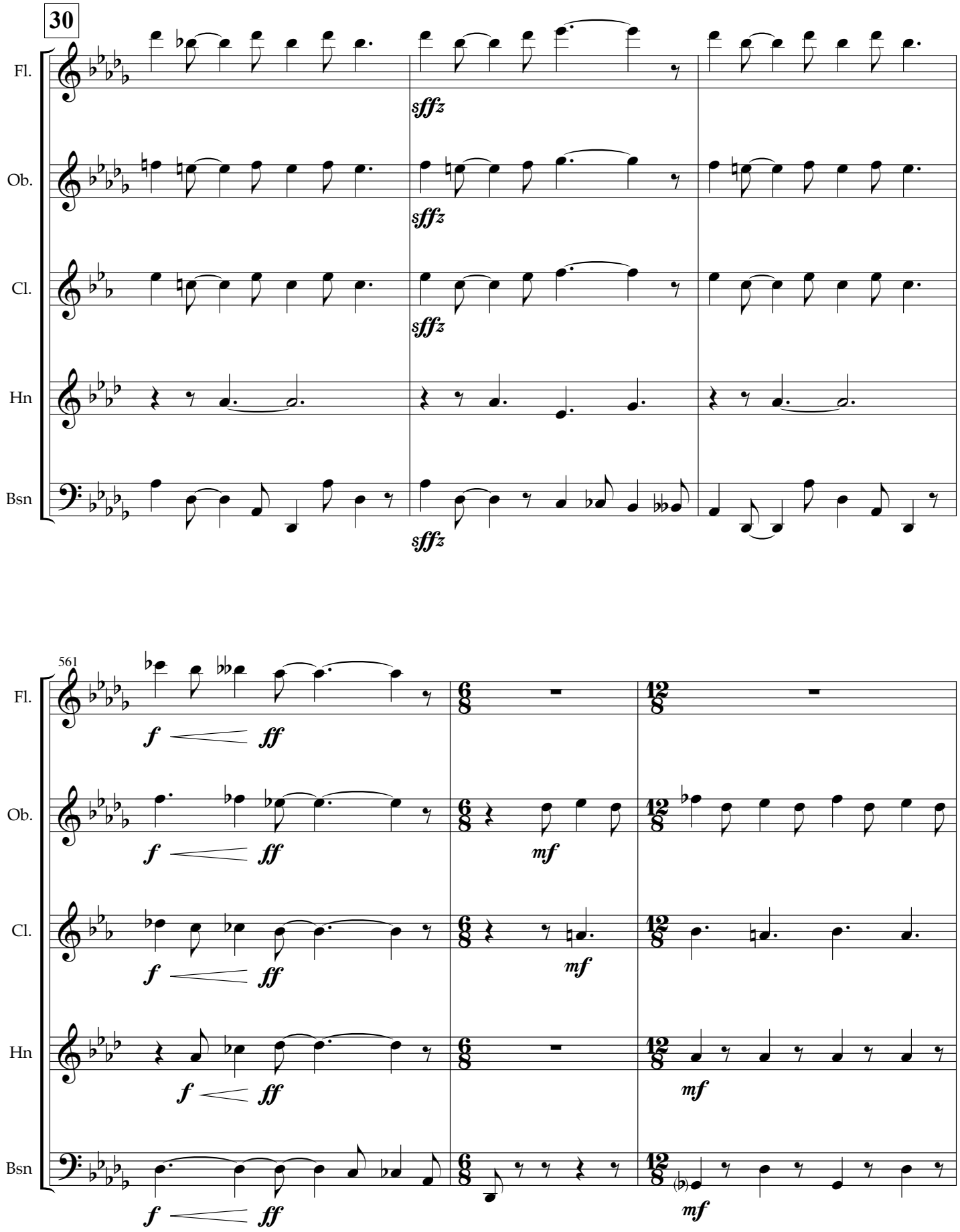
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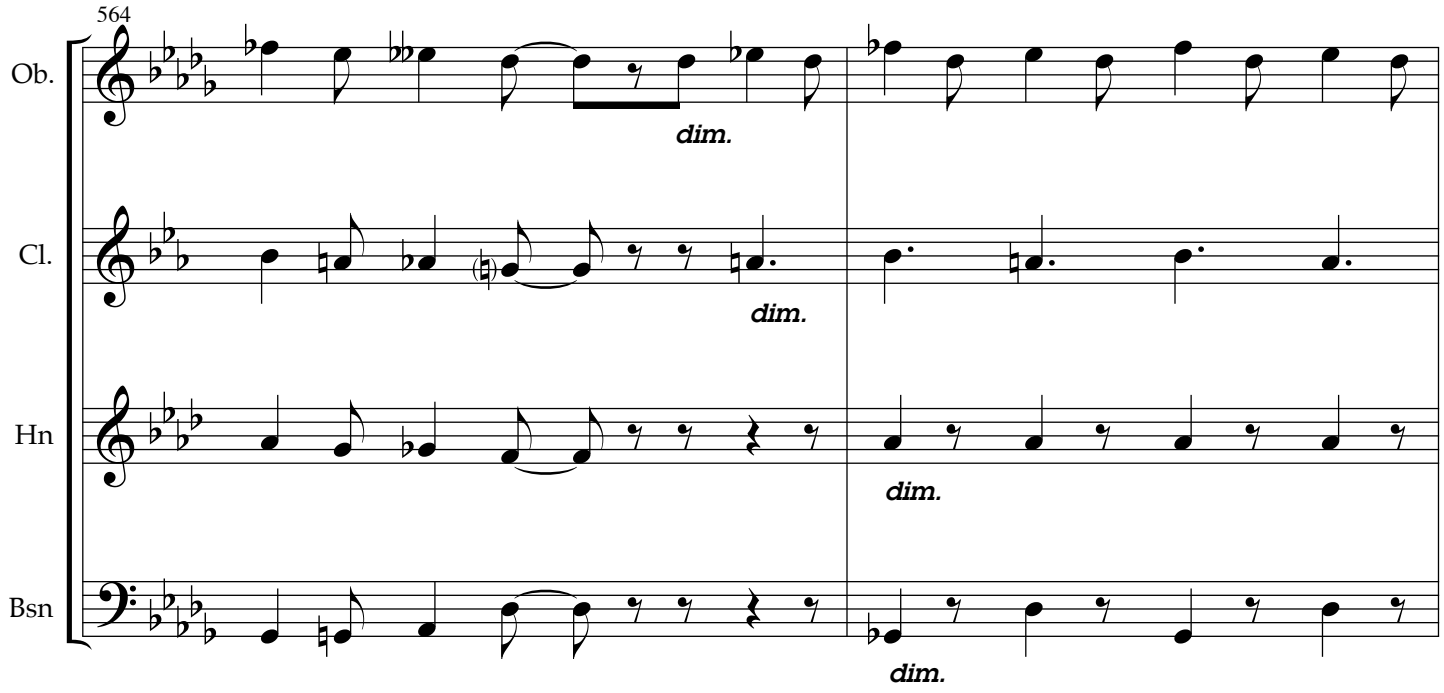
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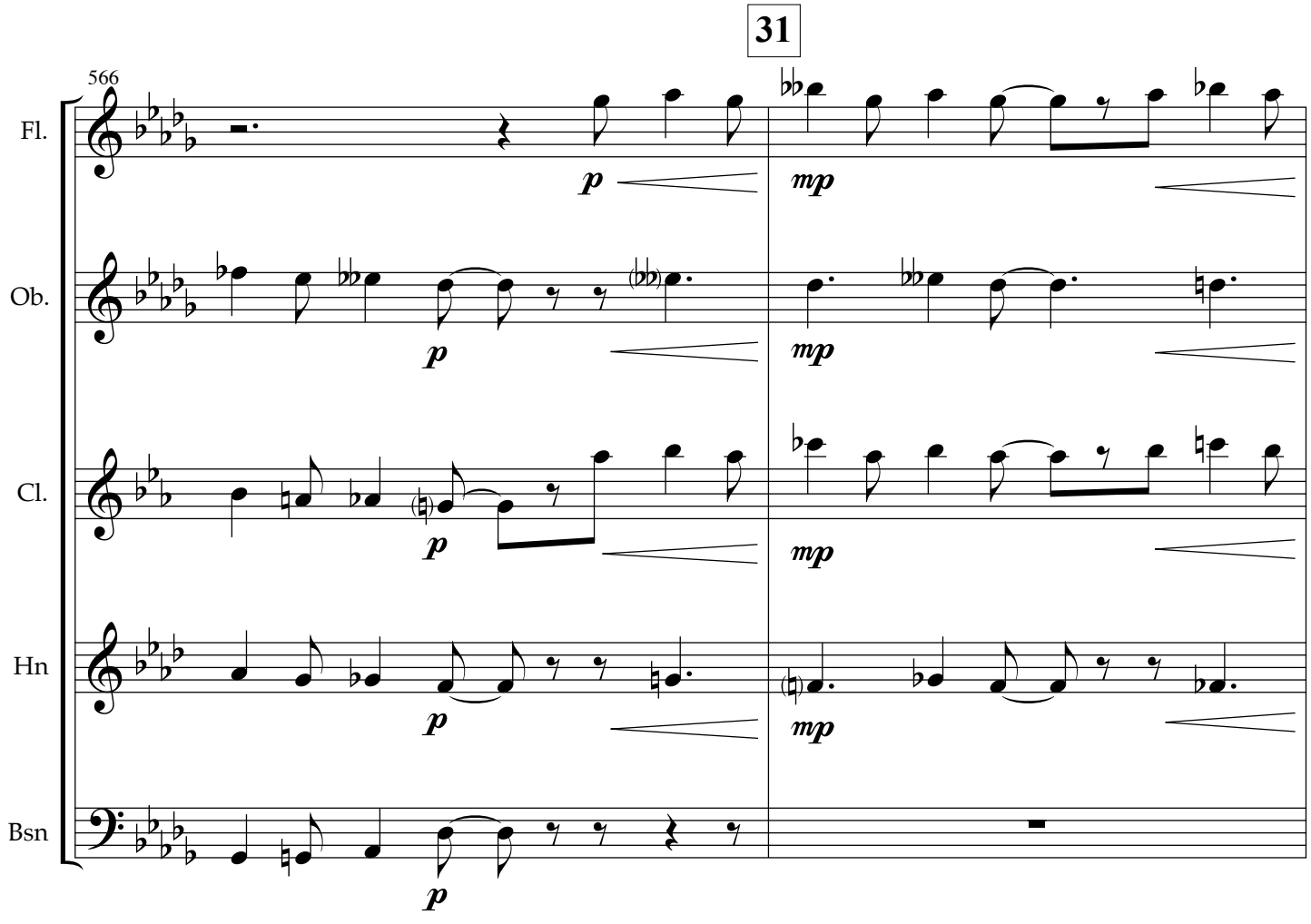
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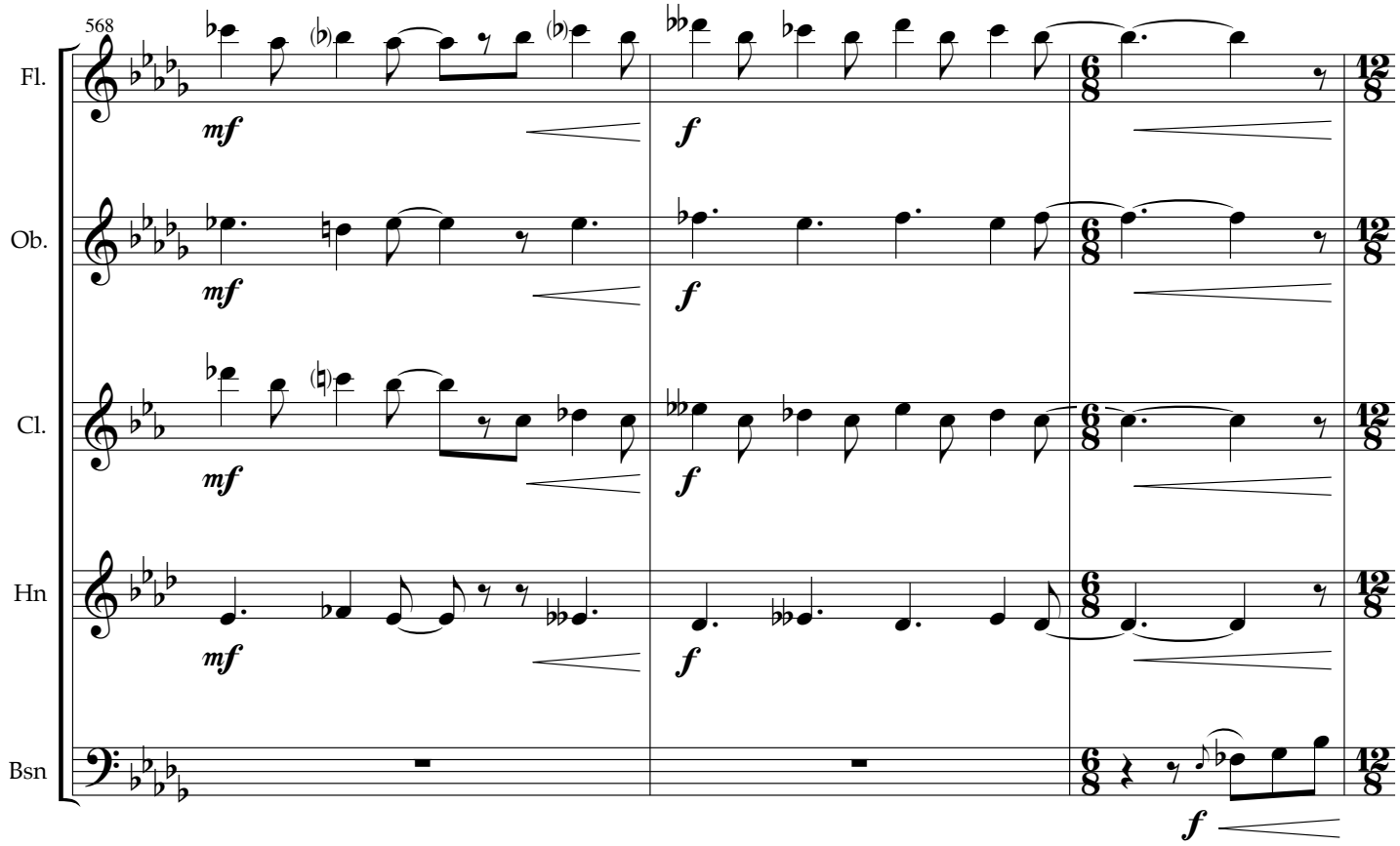
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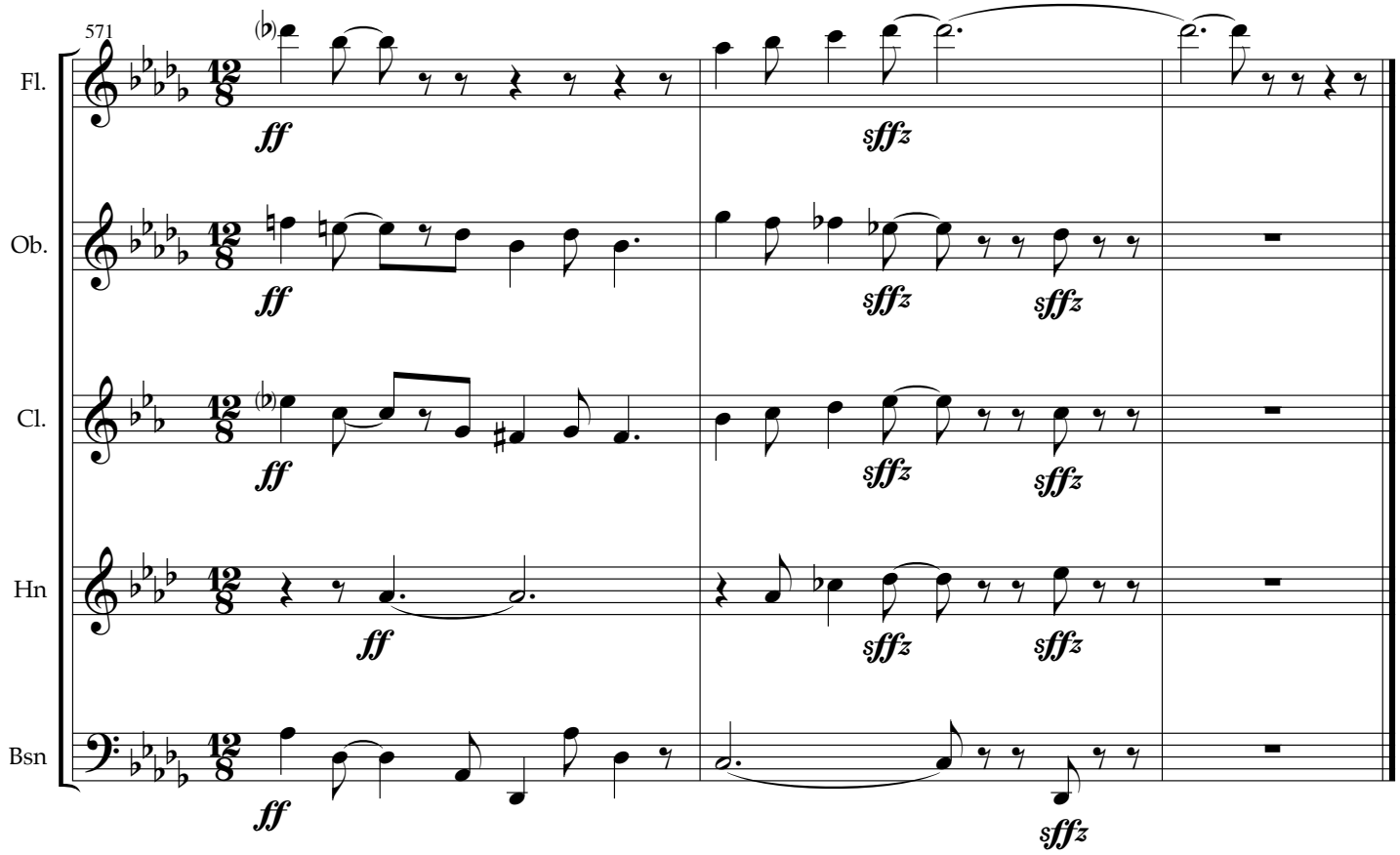
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