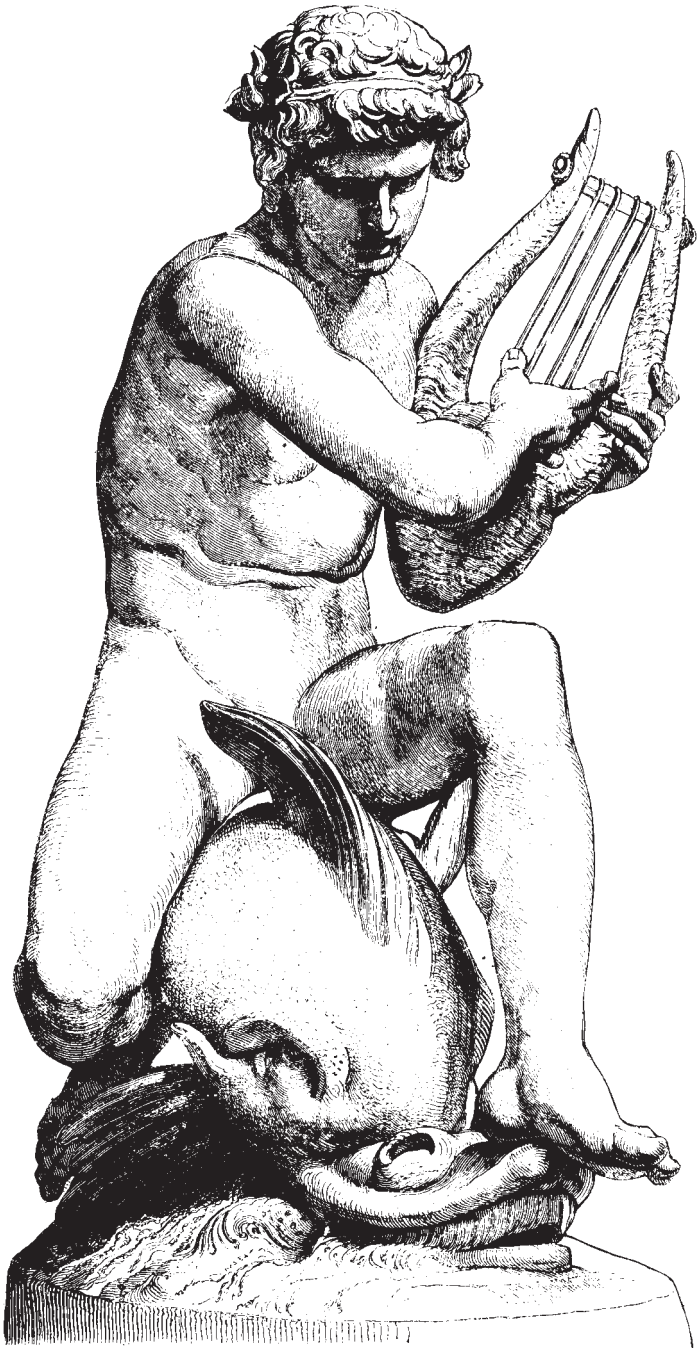
Johann Sebastian Bach



The Art of Fugue BWV 1080
transposed to e minor

Version for String Orchestra or String Ensemble

Full Score

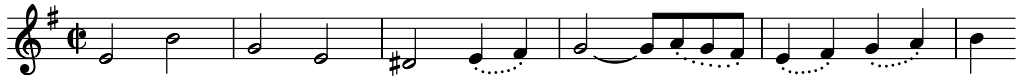
edited by Alan Bonds

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The Art of Fugue, or The Art of the Fugue (German: *Die Kunst der Fuge*), BWV 1080, is an incomplete musical work of unspecified instrumentation by Johann Sebastian Bach. Written in the last decade of his life, The Art of Fugue is the culmination of Bach's experimentation with monothematic instrumental works.

This work consists of fourteen fugues and four canons in D minor, each using some variation of a single principal subject, and generally ordered to increase in complexity. "The governing idea of the work", as put by Bach specialist Christoph Wolff, "was an exploration in depth of the contrapuntal possibilities inherent in a single musical subject." The word "contrapunctus" is often used for each fugue.

The Art of Fugue is based on a single subject, which each canon and fugue employs in some variation:



The work divides into seven groups, according to each piece's prevailing contrapuntal device; in both editions, these groups and their respective components are generally ordered to increase in complexity. In the order in which they occur in the printed edition of 1751 (without the aforementioned works of spurious inclusion), the groups, and their components are as follows.

Simple fugues:

Contrapunctus 1: four-voice fugue on principal subject
Contrapunctus 2: four-voice fugue on principal subject, accompanied by a 'French' style dotted rhythm
Contrapunctus 3: four-voice fugue on principal subject in inversion, employing intense chromaticism
Contrapunctus 4: four-voice fugue on principal subject in inversion, employing counter-subjects

Stretto-fugues (counter-fugues), in which the subject is used simultaneously in regular, inverted, augmented, and diminished forms:

Contrapunctus 5: has many stretto entries, as do Contrapuncti 6 and 7

Contrapunctus 6, a 4 in Stylo Francese: adds both forms of the theme in diminution, (halving note lengths), with little rising and descending clusters of semiquavers in one voice answered or punctuated by similar groups in demisemiquavers in another, against sustained notes in the accompanying voices. The dotted rhythm, enhanced by these little rising and descending groups, suggests what is called "French style" in Bach's day, hence the name Stylo Francese.

Contrapunctus 7, a 4 per Augment[ationem] et Diminut[ionem]: uses augmented (doubling all note lengths) and diminished versions of the main subject and its inversion.

Double and triple fugues, employing two and three subjects respectively:

Contrapunctus 8, a 3: triple fugue with three subjects, having independent expositions

Contrapunctus 9, a 4, alla Duodecima: double fugue, with two subjects occurring dependently and in invertible counterpoint at the twelfth

Contrapunctus 10, a 4, alla Decima: double fugue, with two subjects occurring dependently and in invertible counterpoint at the tenth

Contrapunctus 11, a 4: triple fugue, employing the three subjects of Contrapunctus 8 in inversion

Mirror fugues, in which a piece is notated once and then with voices and counterpoint completely inverted, without violating contrapuntal rules or musicality:

Contrapunctus inversus 12 a 4 [forma inversa and recta]
Contrapunctus inversus 13 a 3 [forma recta and inversa]

Canons, labeled by interval and technique:

Canon per Augmentationem in Contrario Motu: Canon in which the following voice is both inverted and augmented. The following voice, running at half-speed, eventually lags the first voice by 20 bars, making the canon effect hard to hear. Three versions have appeared in the autograph Mus. ms. autogr. P 200: Canon in Hypodiatesseron, al roversio [sic] e per augmentationem, perpetuus, Canon al roverscio et per augmentationem, and Canon p. Augmentationem contrario Motu, the third of which appears on the second supplemental Beilage.

Canon alla Ottava: canon in imitation at the octave; titled Canon in Hypodiapason in Mus. ms. autogr. P 200.

Canon alla Decima [in] Contrapunto alla Terza: canon in imitation at the tenth

Canon alla Duodecima in Contrapunto alla Quinta: canon in imitation at the twelfth

Alternate variants and arrangements:

Contra[punctus] a 4: alternate version of the last 22 bars of Contrapunctus 10.

Fuga a 2 Clav: and Alio modo. Fuga a 2 Clav.: two-keyboard arrangements of Contrapunctus inversus a 3, the forma inversa and recta, respectively.

Incomplete fugue:

[Contrapunctus 14] Fuga a 3 Soggetti: four-voice triple fugue (not completed by Bach, but likely to have become a quadruple fugue: see below), the third subject of which begins with the BACH motif, B♭–A–C–B♮ ('H' in German letter notation).

ABOUT THIS TRANSCRIPTION

The purpose of this transposition for string ensemble is (a) adjusting the range for all parts (esp. Vn2 & Vla) and (b) allowing the inclusion of Contrabass. (Even in this version a few notes descend to bottom D).

I don't envisage all will be played tutti (incl. Cb.) but it is at least a possibility in this key.

This version would also be suitable for mixed ensembles (incl. WW, Brass, keyboards etc. Some pieces are clearly intended for Keyboard (e.g. No's XVIII(a) & (b). Bach titled them *Fuga a 2 Clav.*
Some others are not really idiomatic for strings.

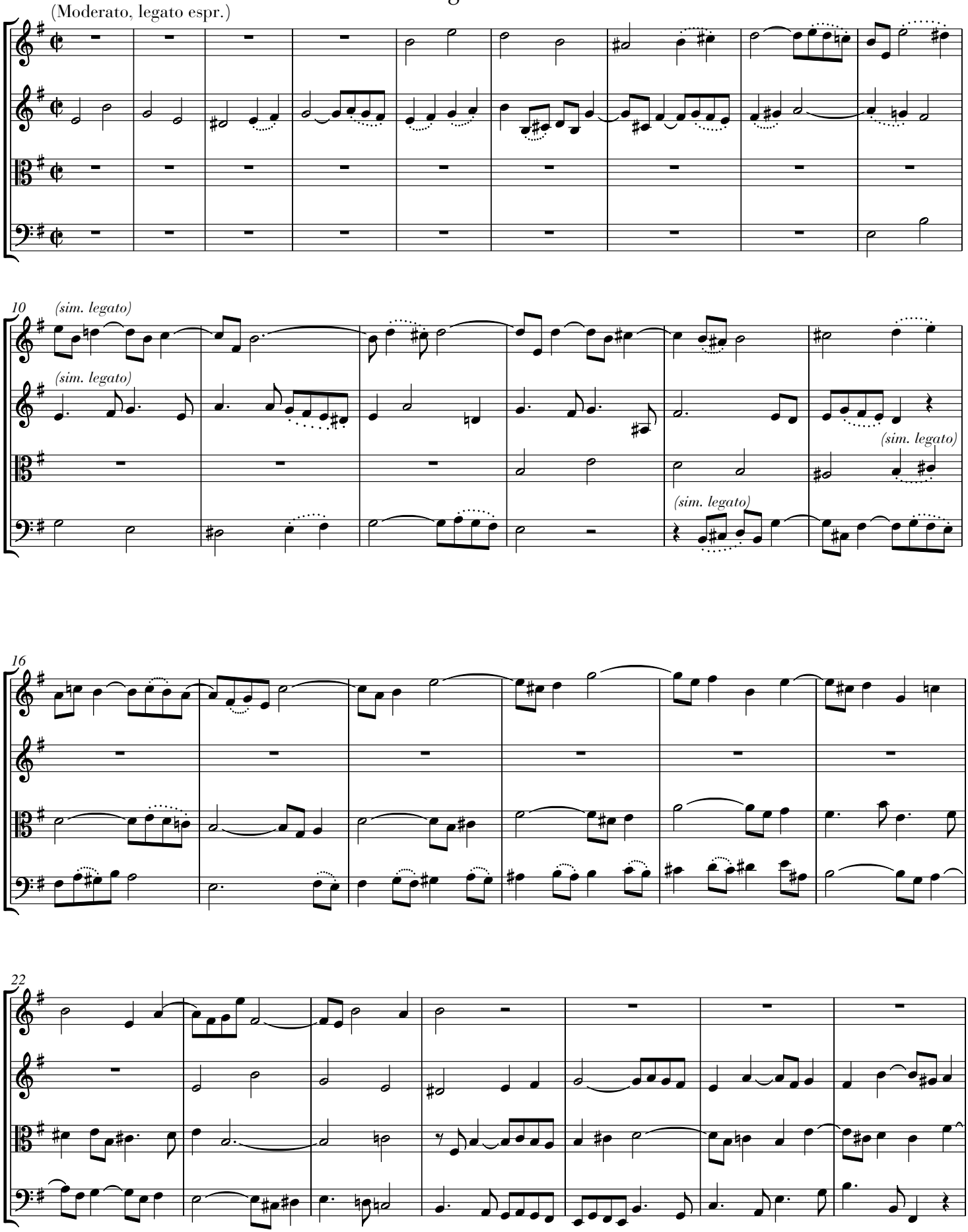
An excellent example is the superb performance by the Netherlands Bach Society (dir. Shunske Sato) using a huge number of different period instruments, even including wordless voices (à la Swingle Singers). They bring out the linear *legato* quality of many of the movements which would be more apparent on the Organ. There are some dreadful performances (on YouTube) overusing *marcato detaché* which should be reserved for the pieces like the *Stylo Francese* (no.'s 2 & 6).
Slurred bowings, which I have tentatively marked as dotted for the first few bars, and thereafter marked *simile legato* invites the players to invent some creative phrasing - but they need to consistent between the parts to bring out the imitative counterpoint, and especially to enhance the individual 'identity' of the different voices.

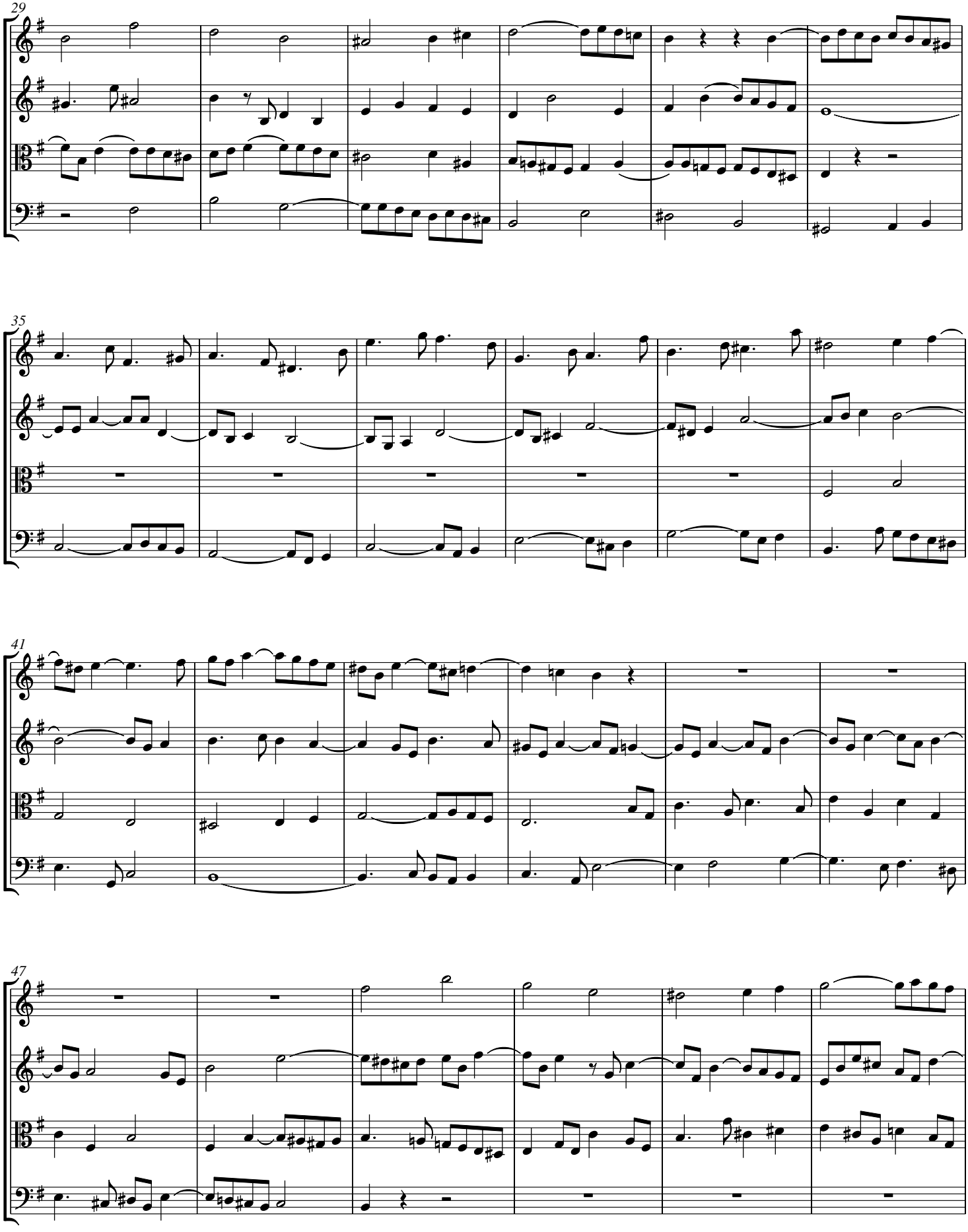
There is no fixed order for the entire opus. You are invited to pick-and-choose a varied suite.

Alan Bonds
[abonds@swiftdsl.com.au]
Perth, Western Australia,
April 2024

CONTRAPUNCTUS I

Fuga a 4 voci

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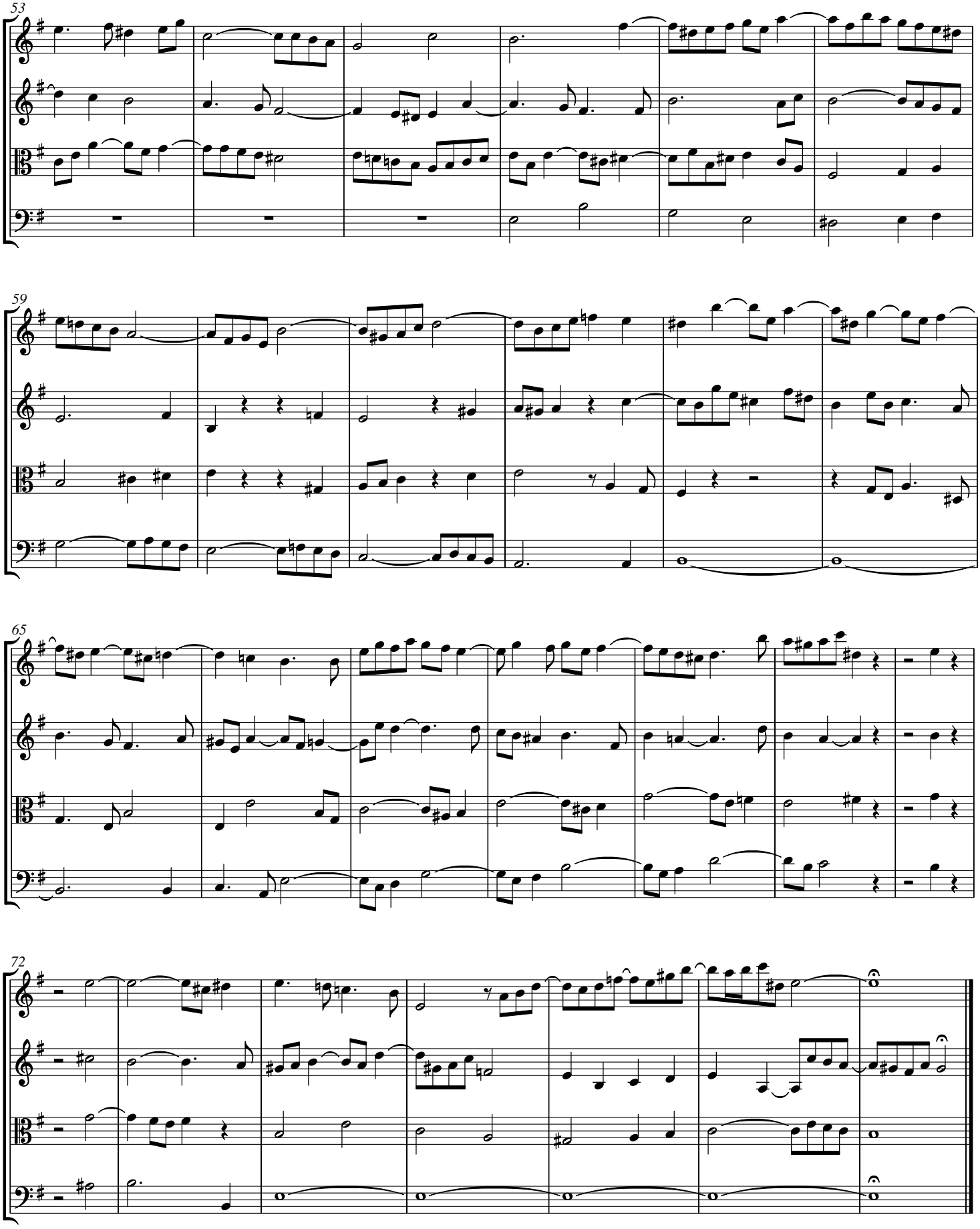
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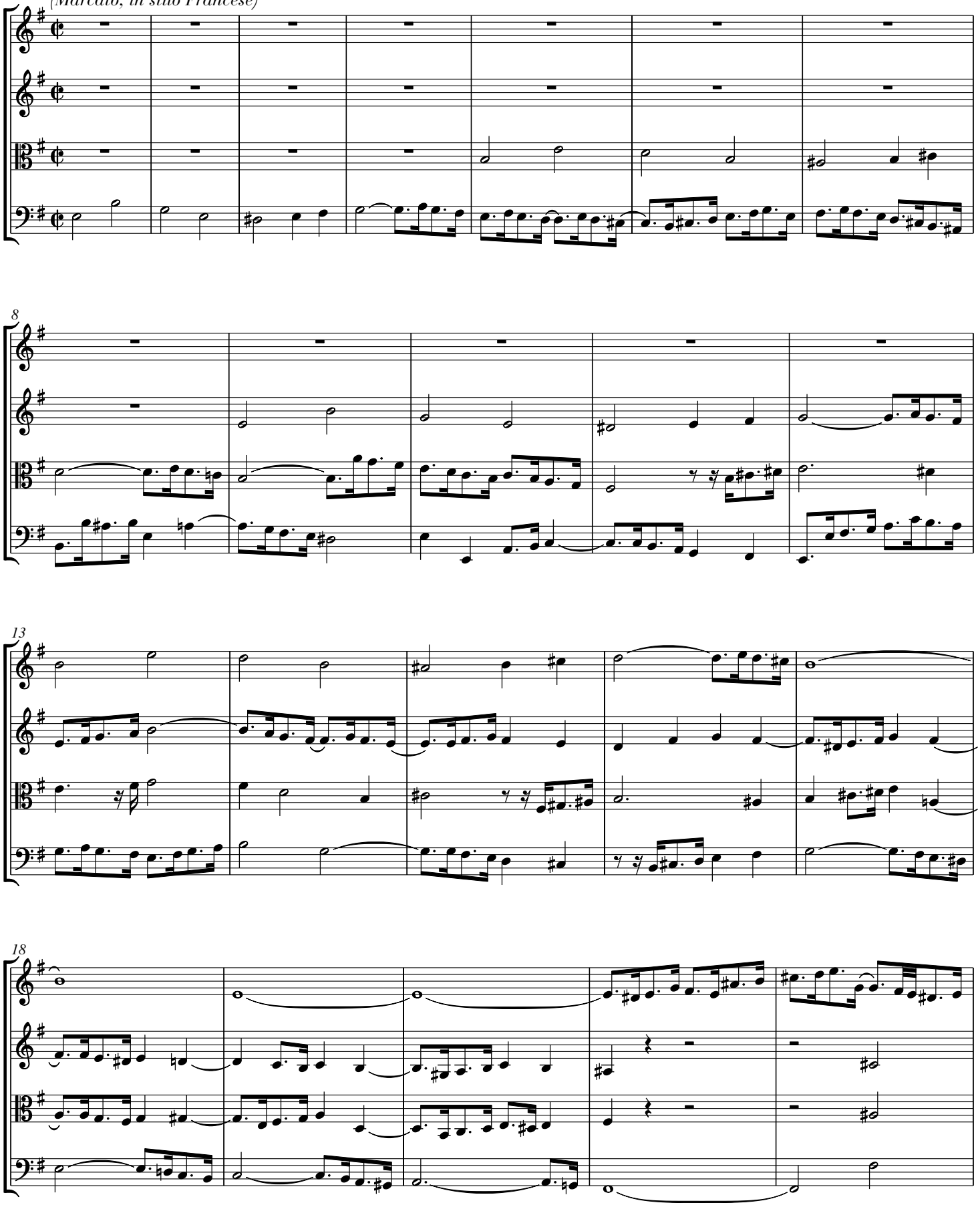
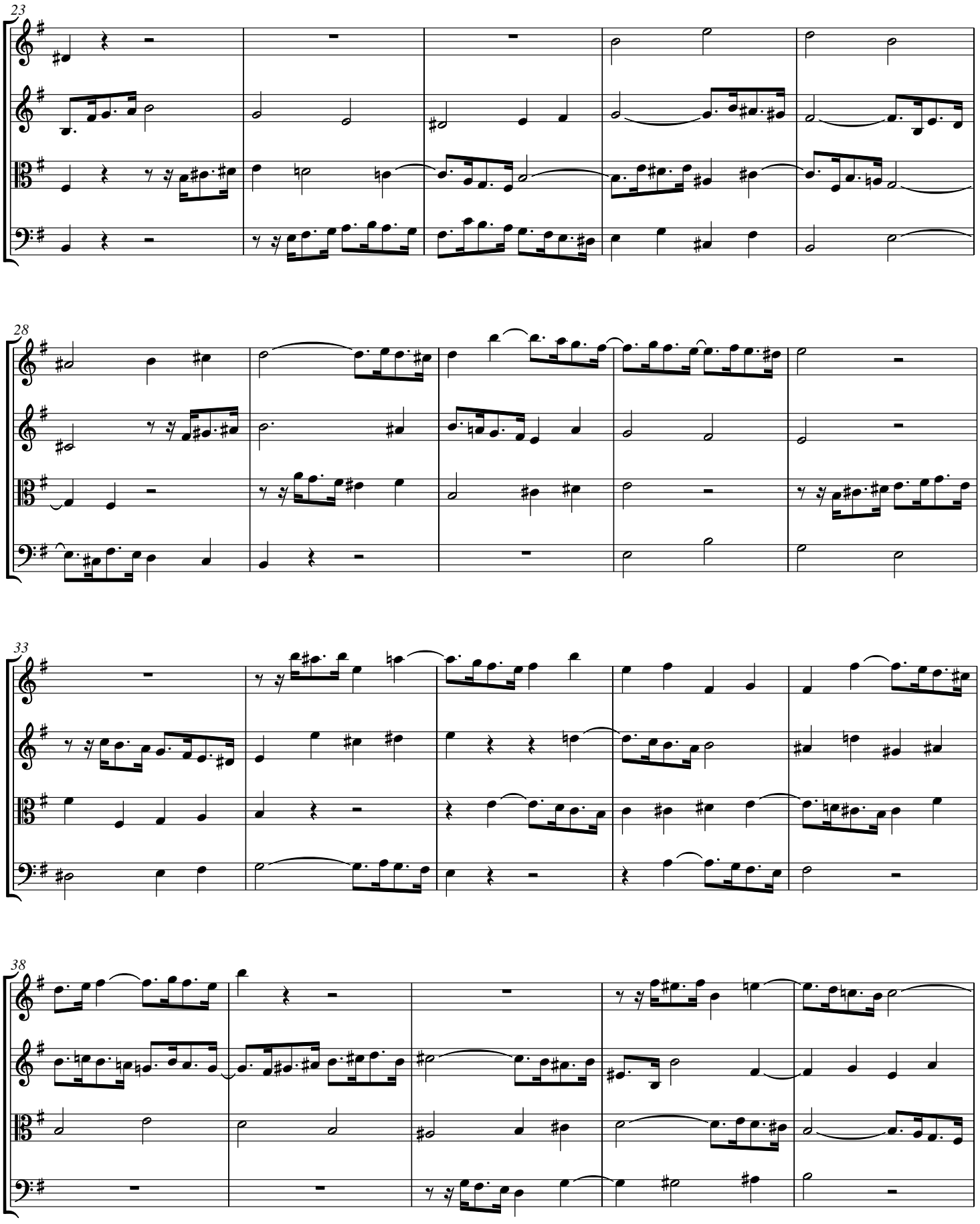
CONTRAPUNCTUS II

Fuga a 4 voci

(Marcato, in stilo Francese)

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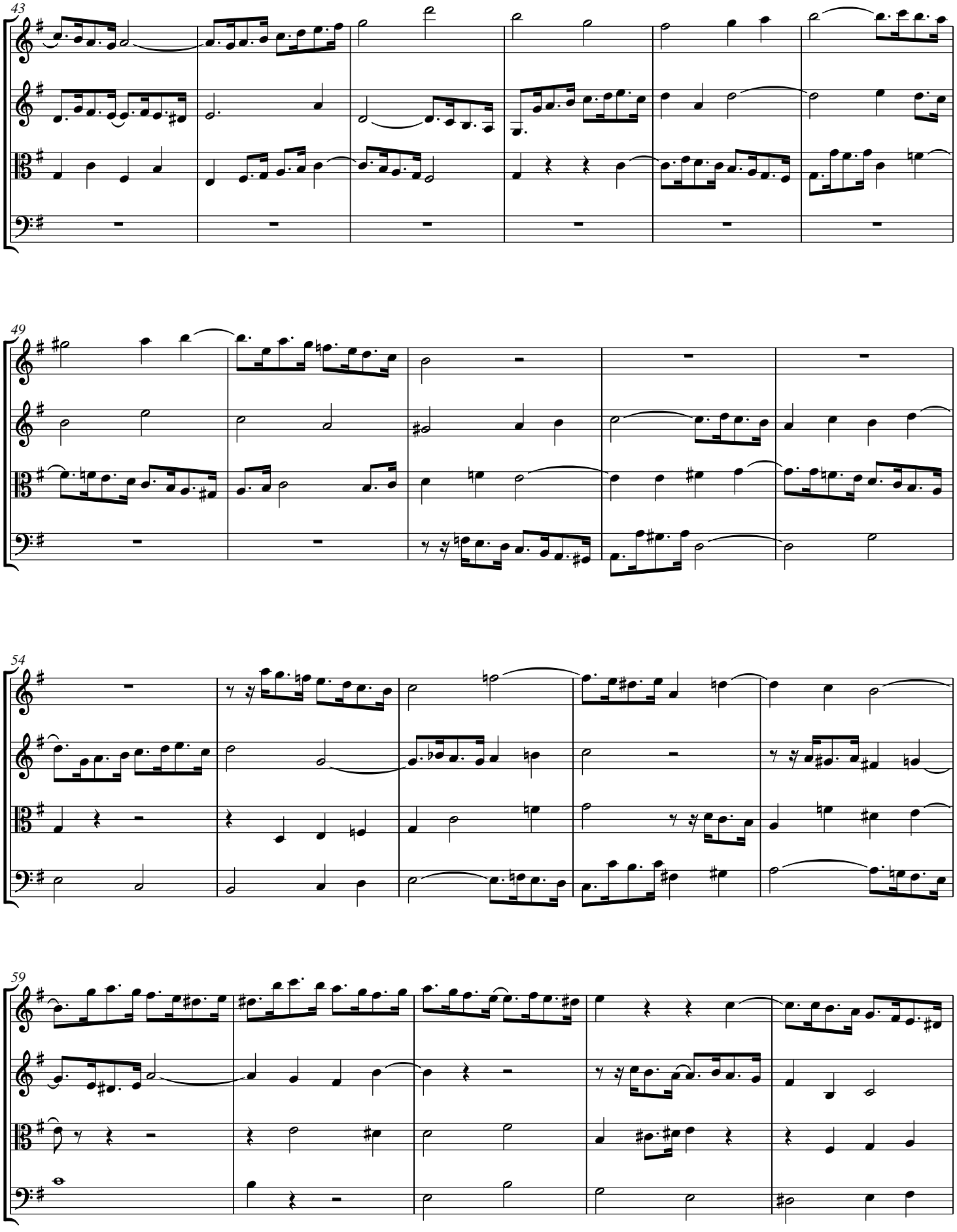
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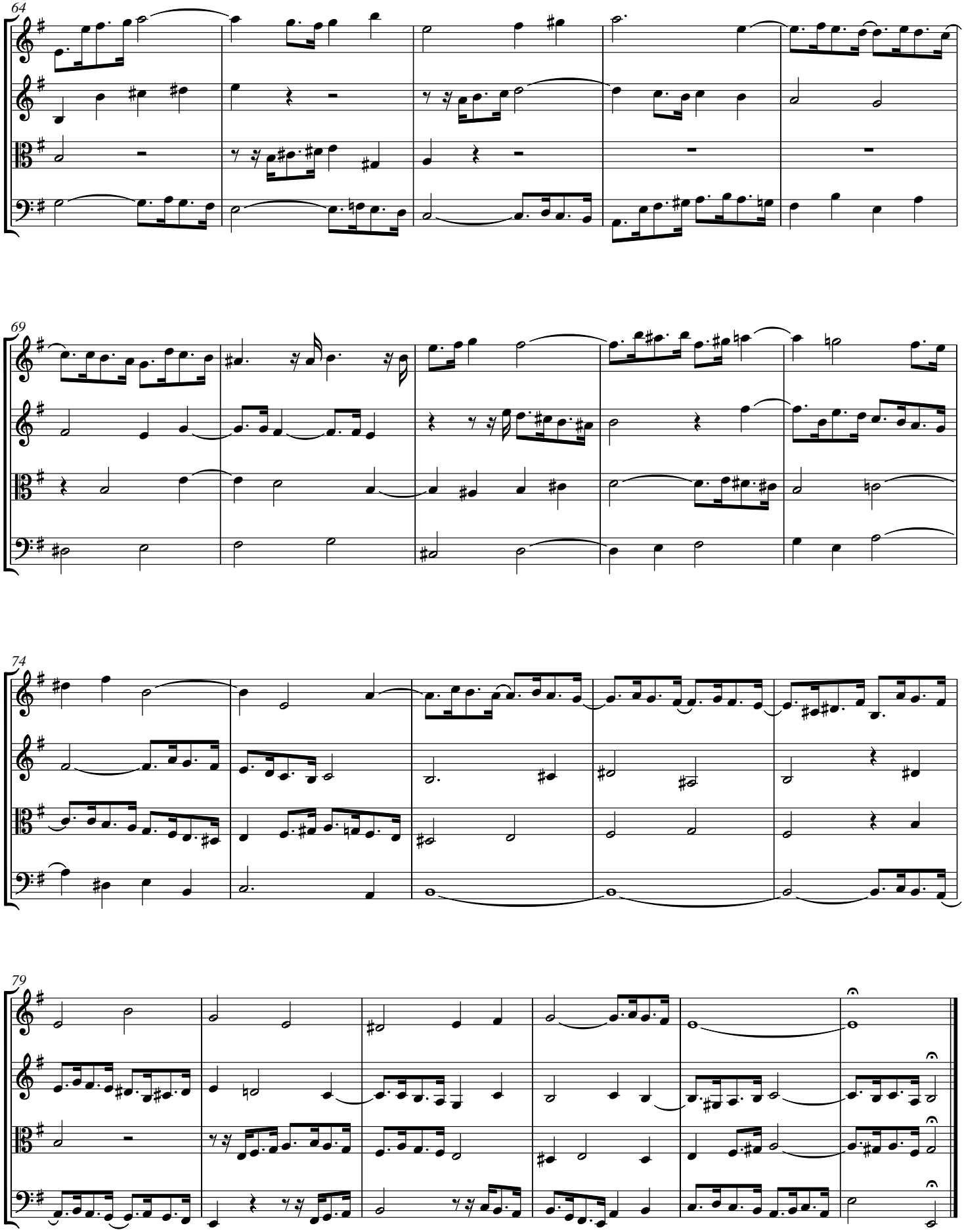
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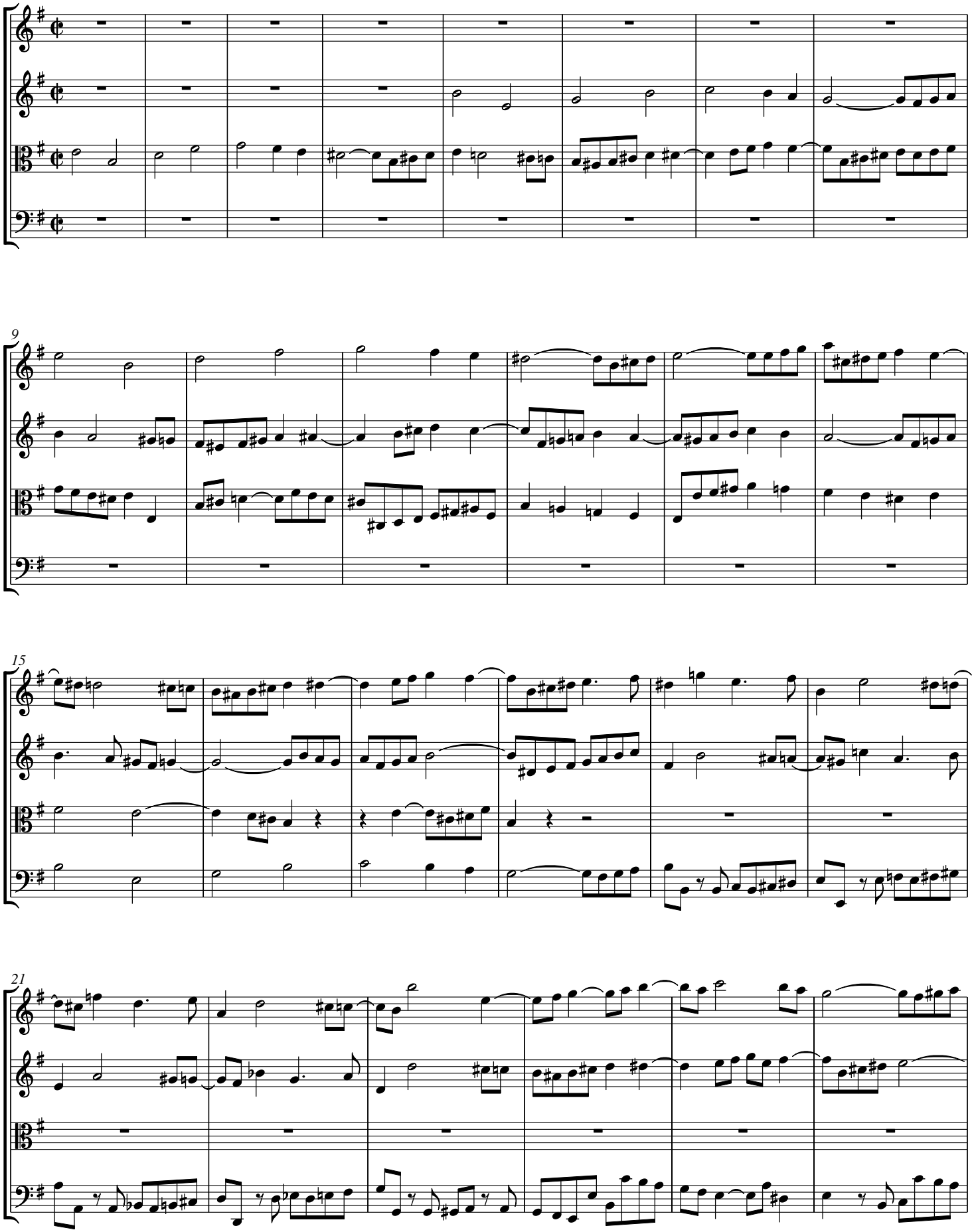
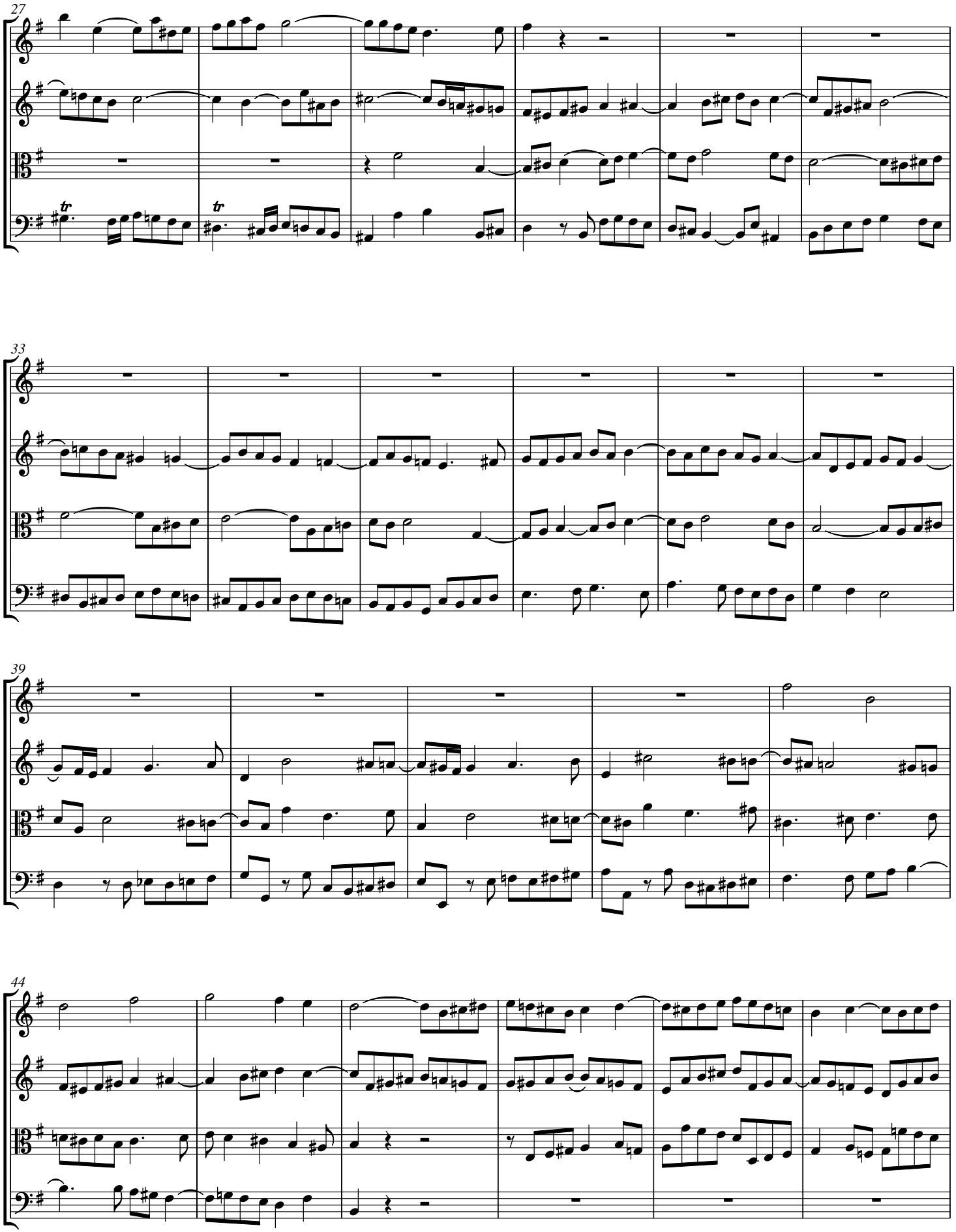
CONTRAPUNCTUS III

Fuga a 4 voci

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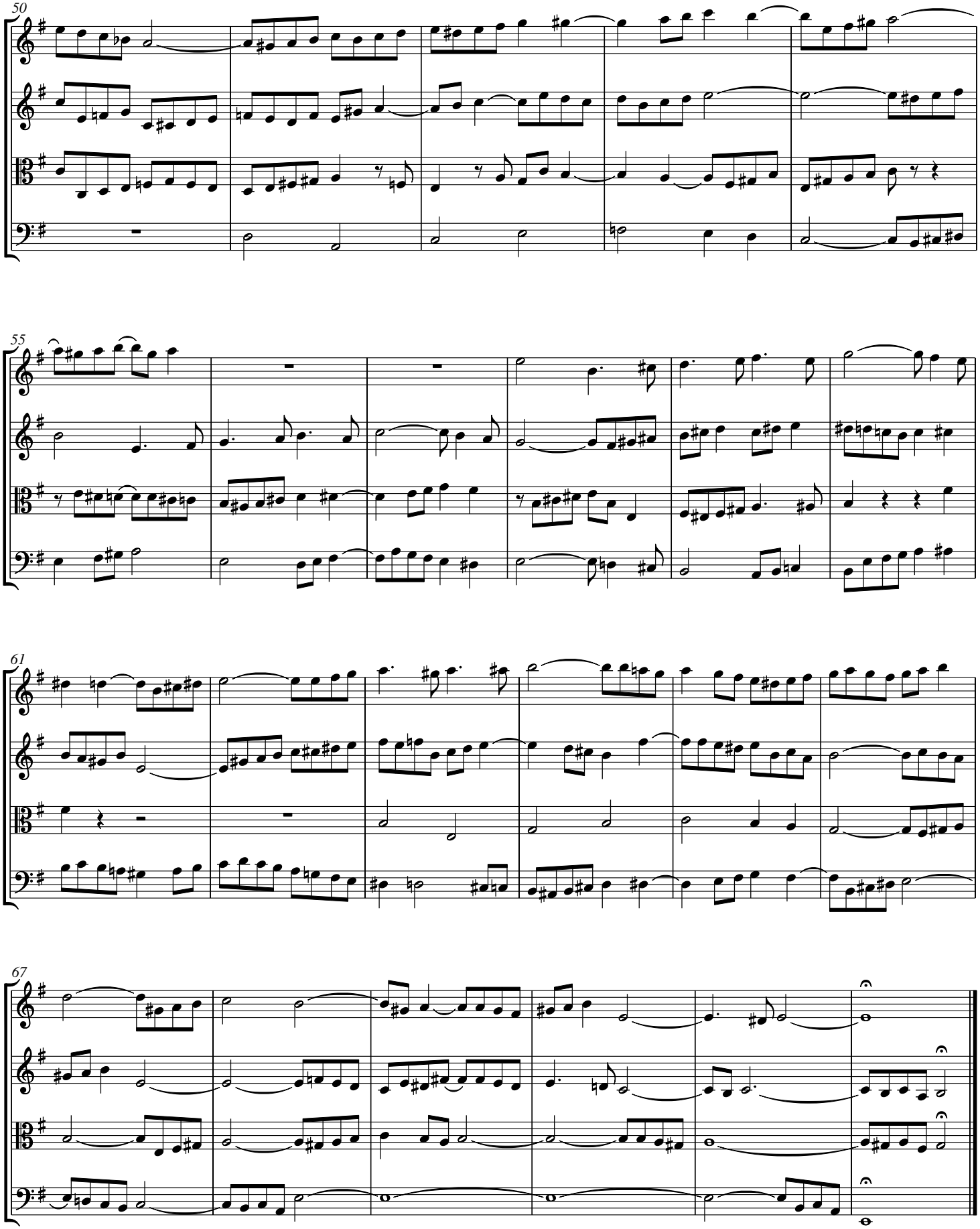
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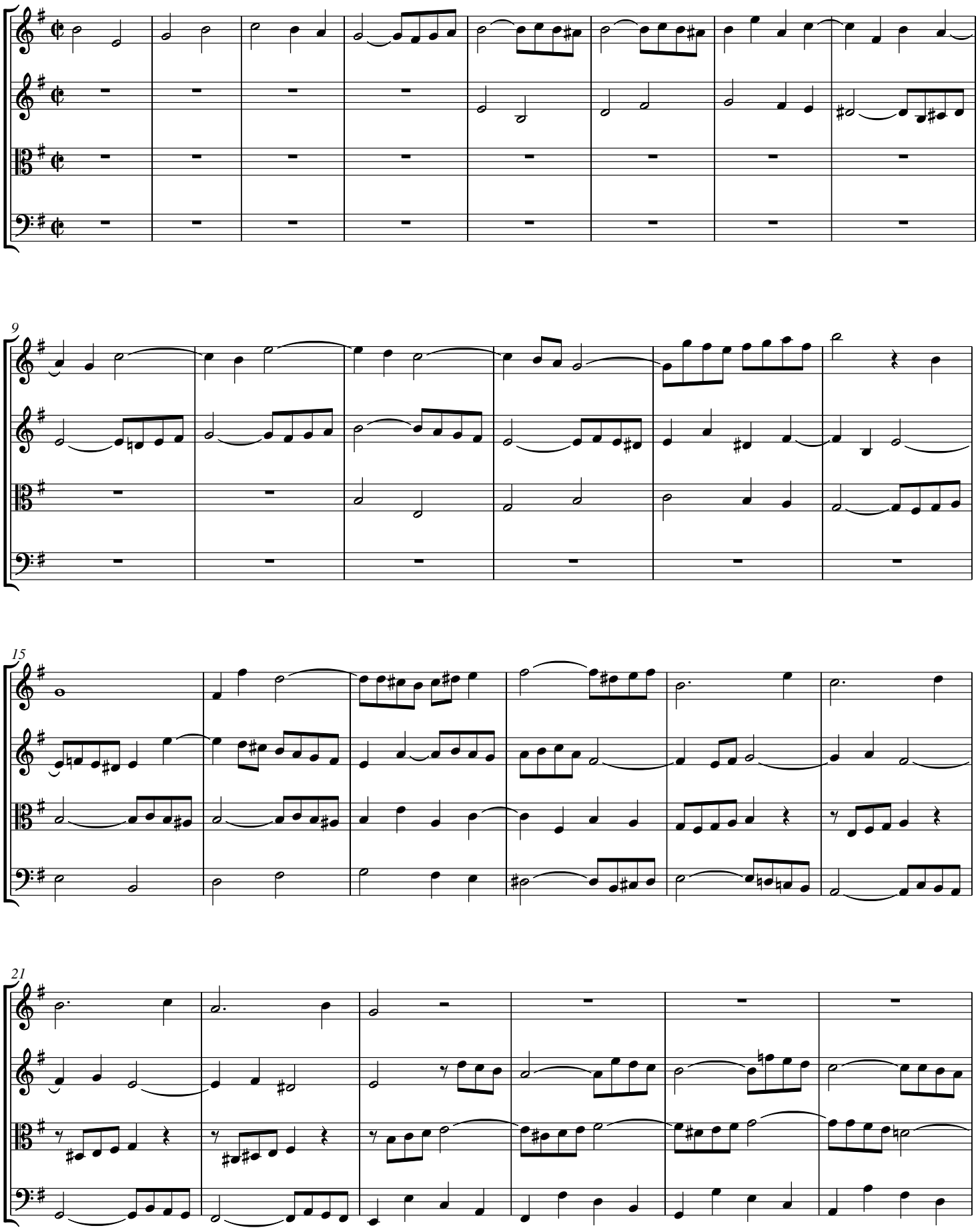
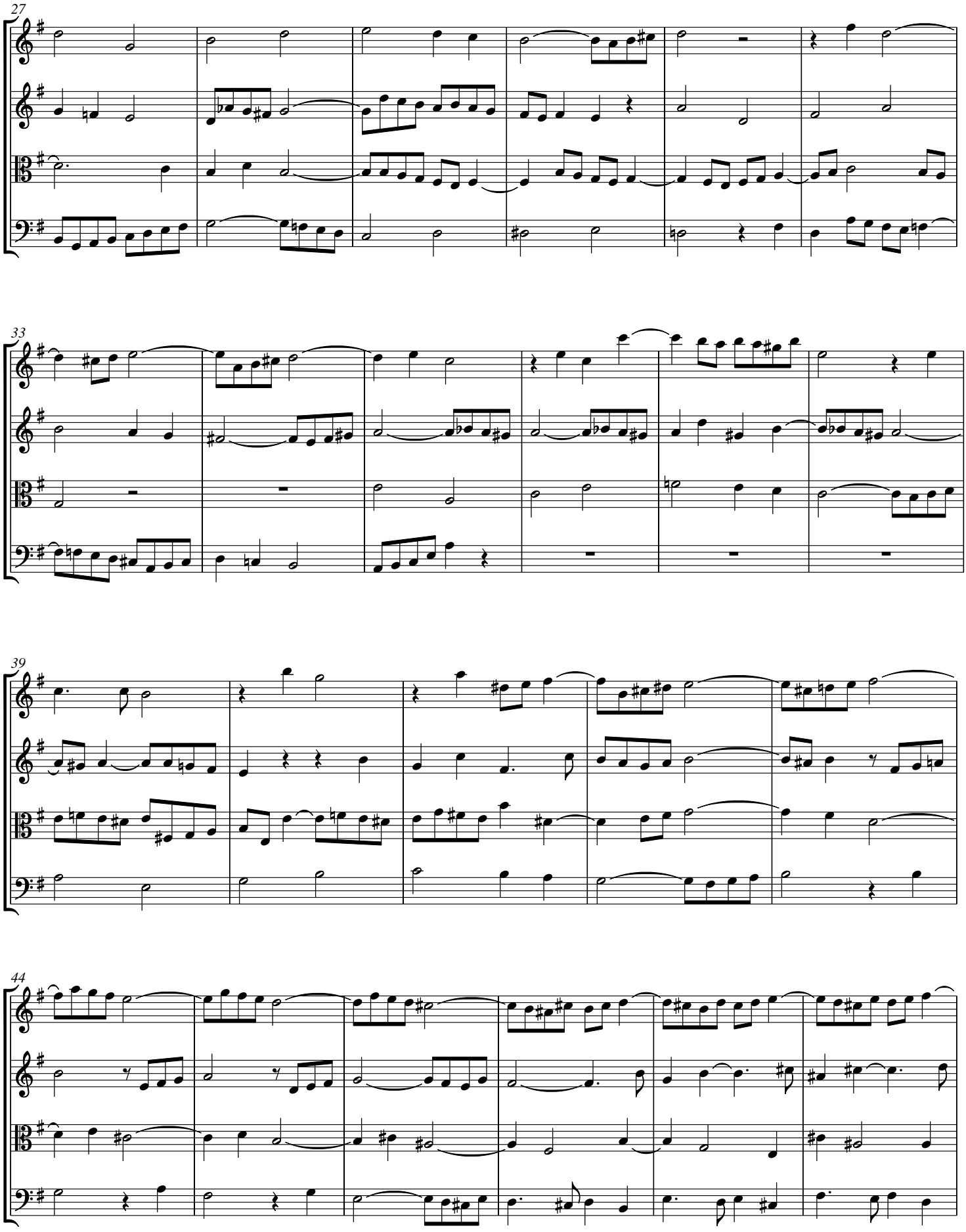
CONTRAPUNCTUS IV

Fuga a 4 voci

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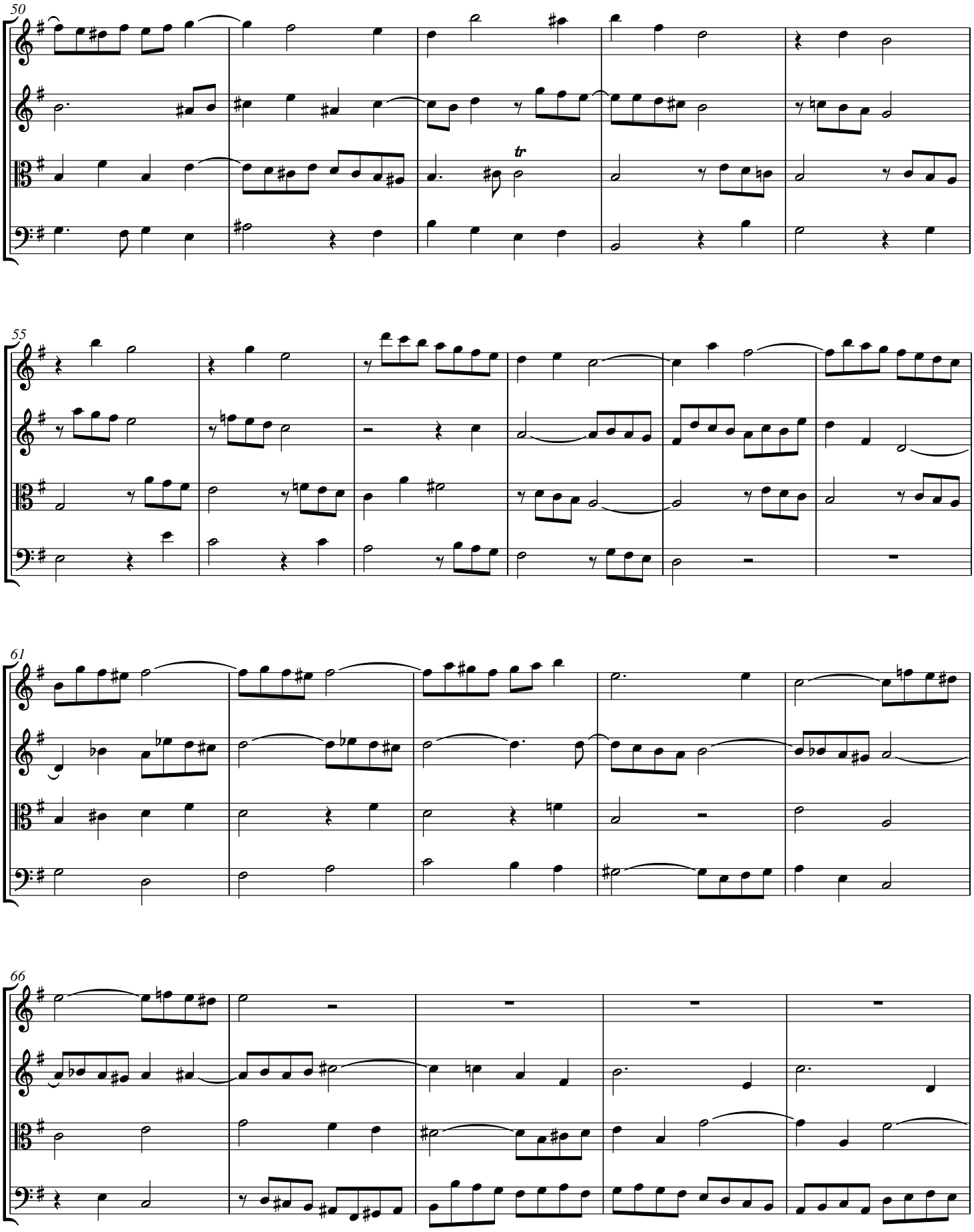
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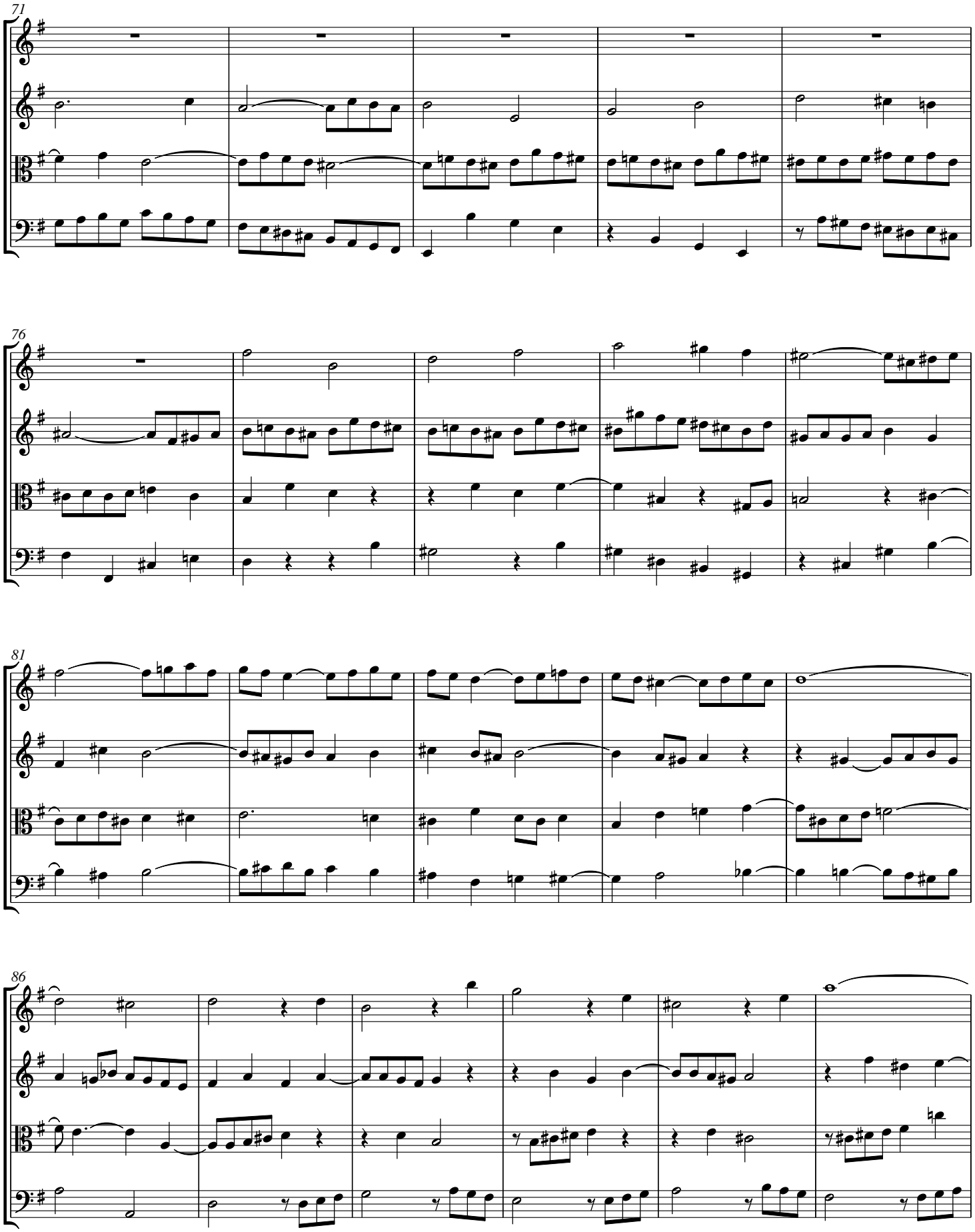
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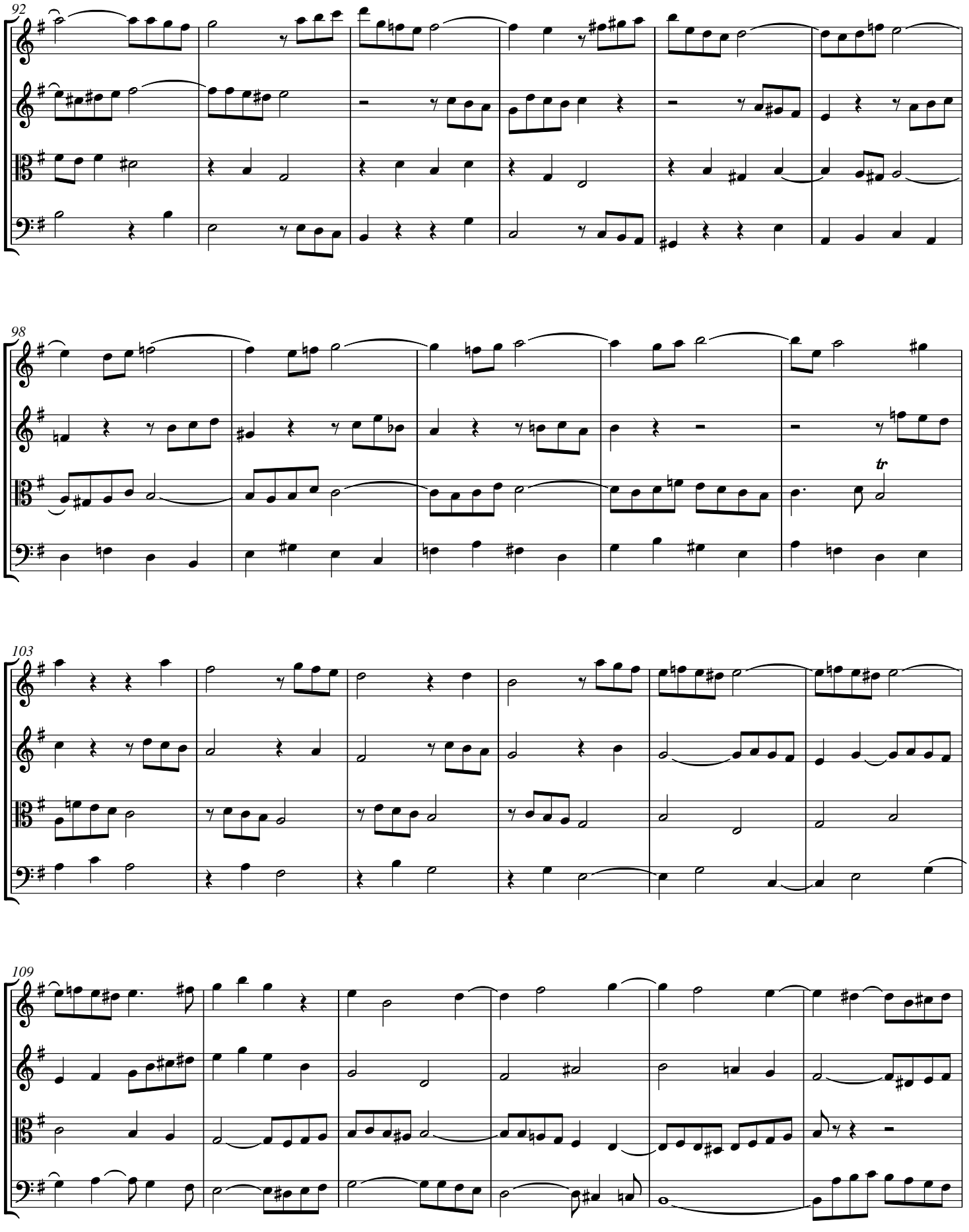
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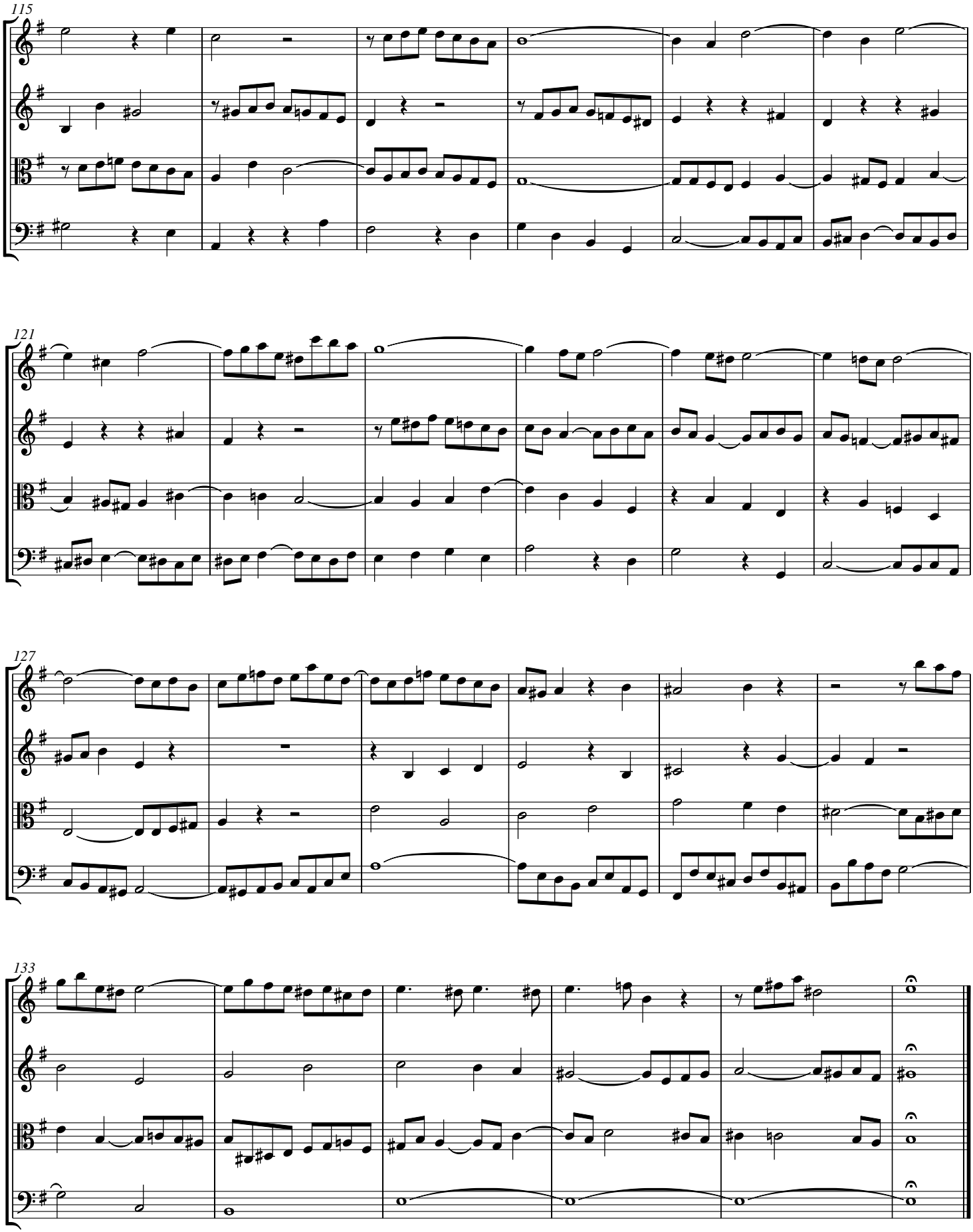
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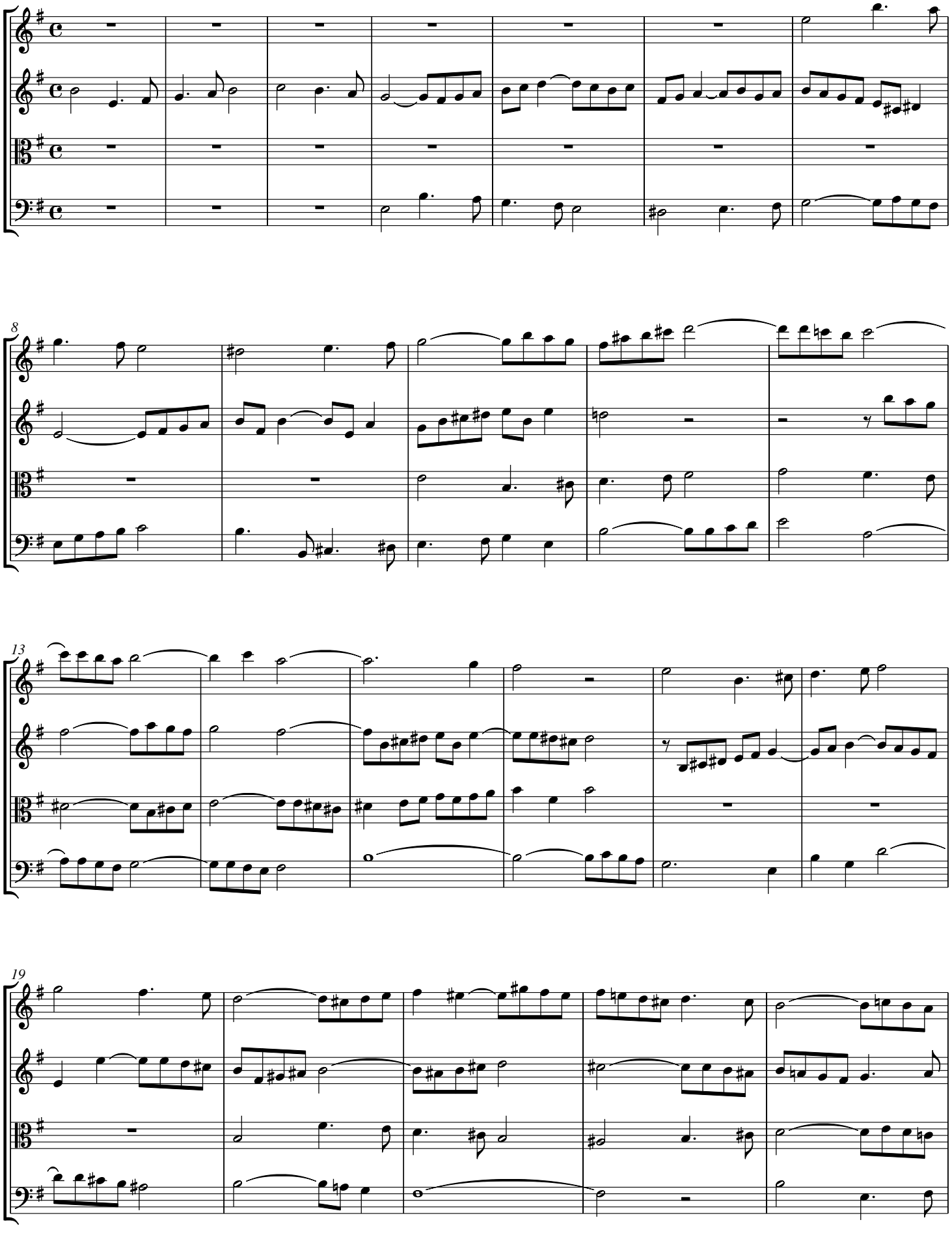
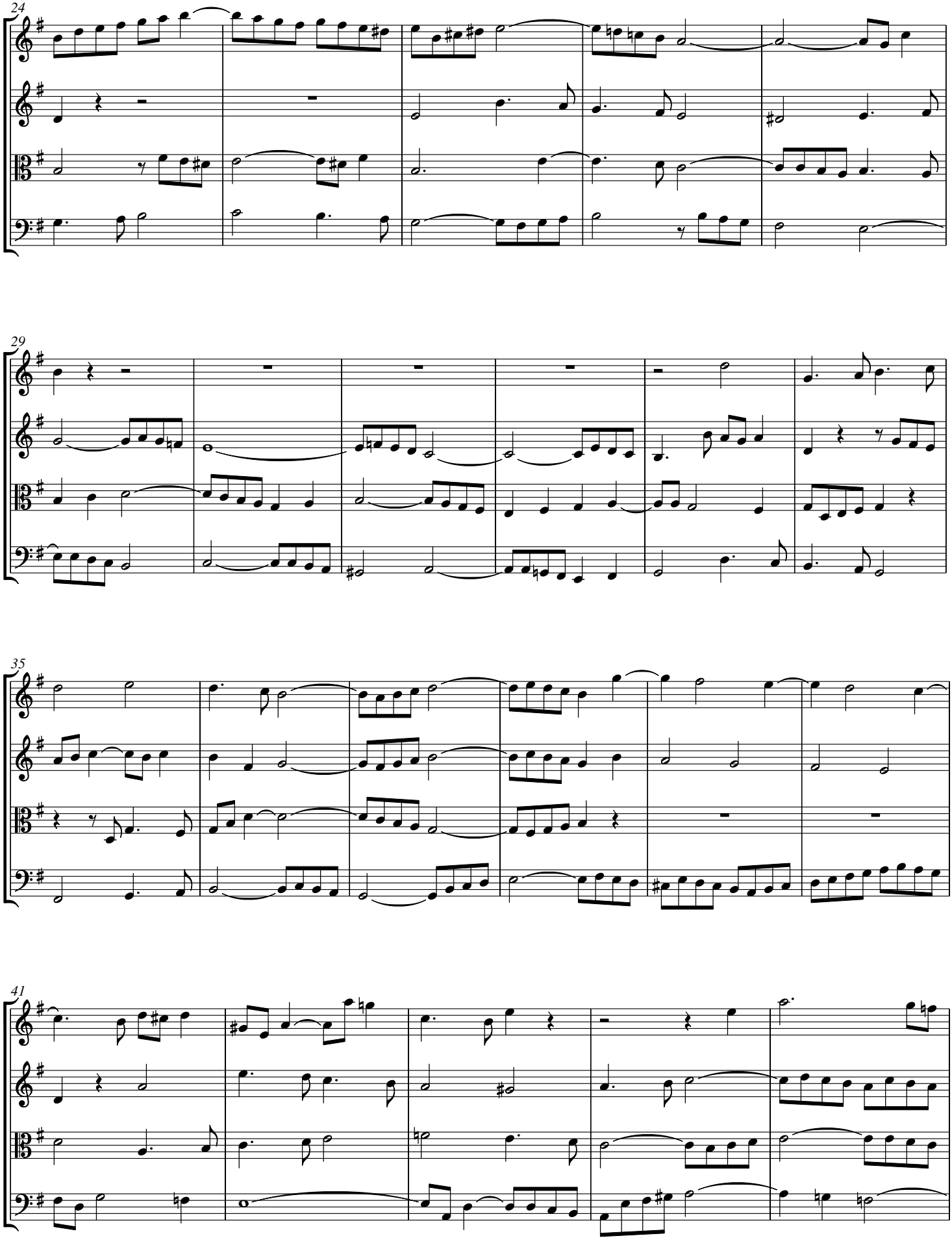
CONTRAPUNCTUS V

Fuga a 4 voci

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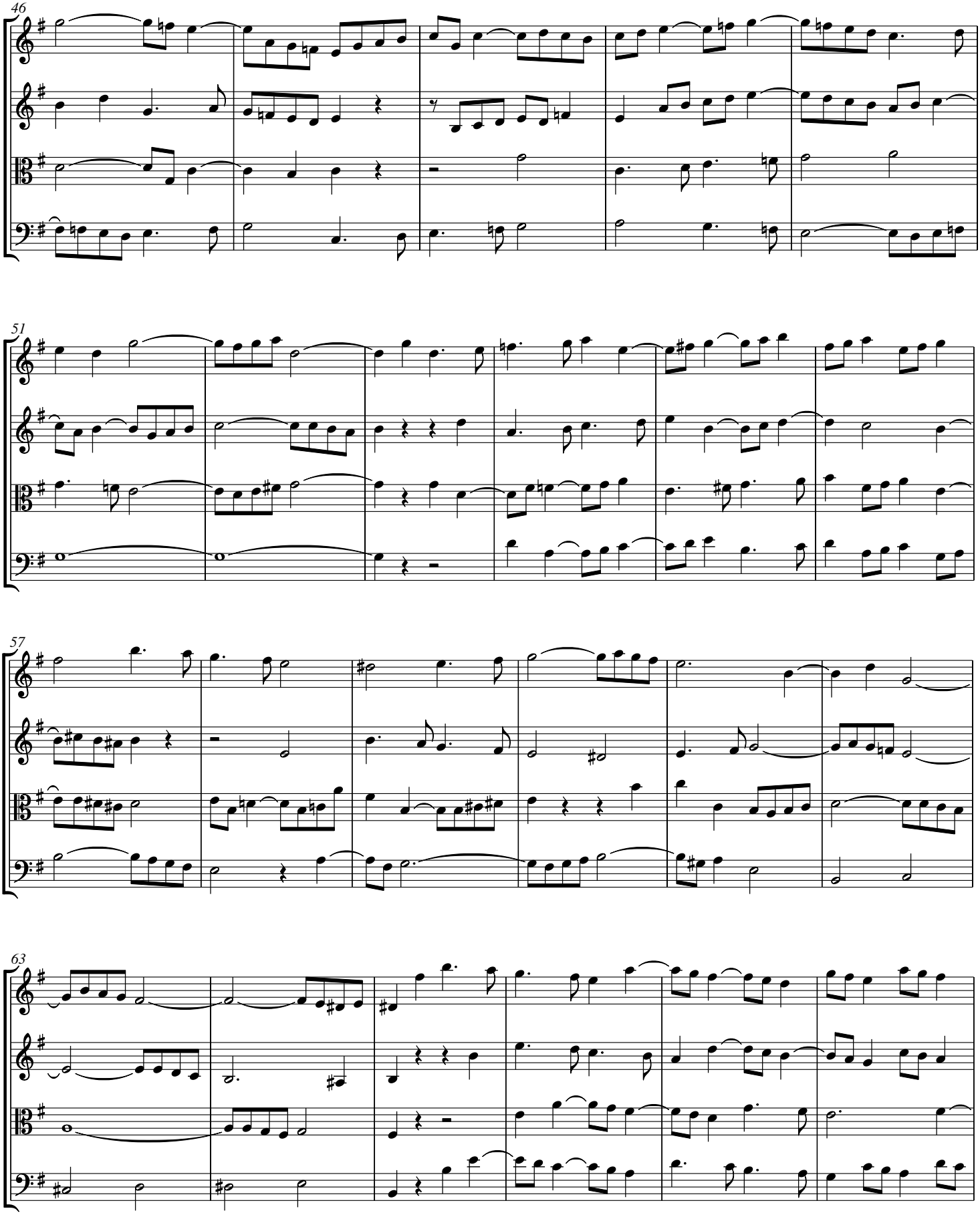
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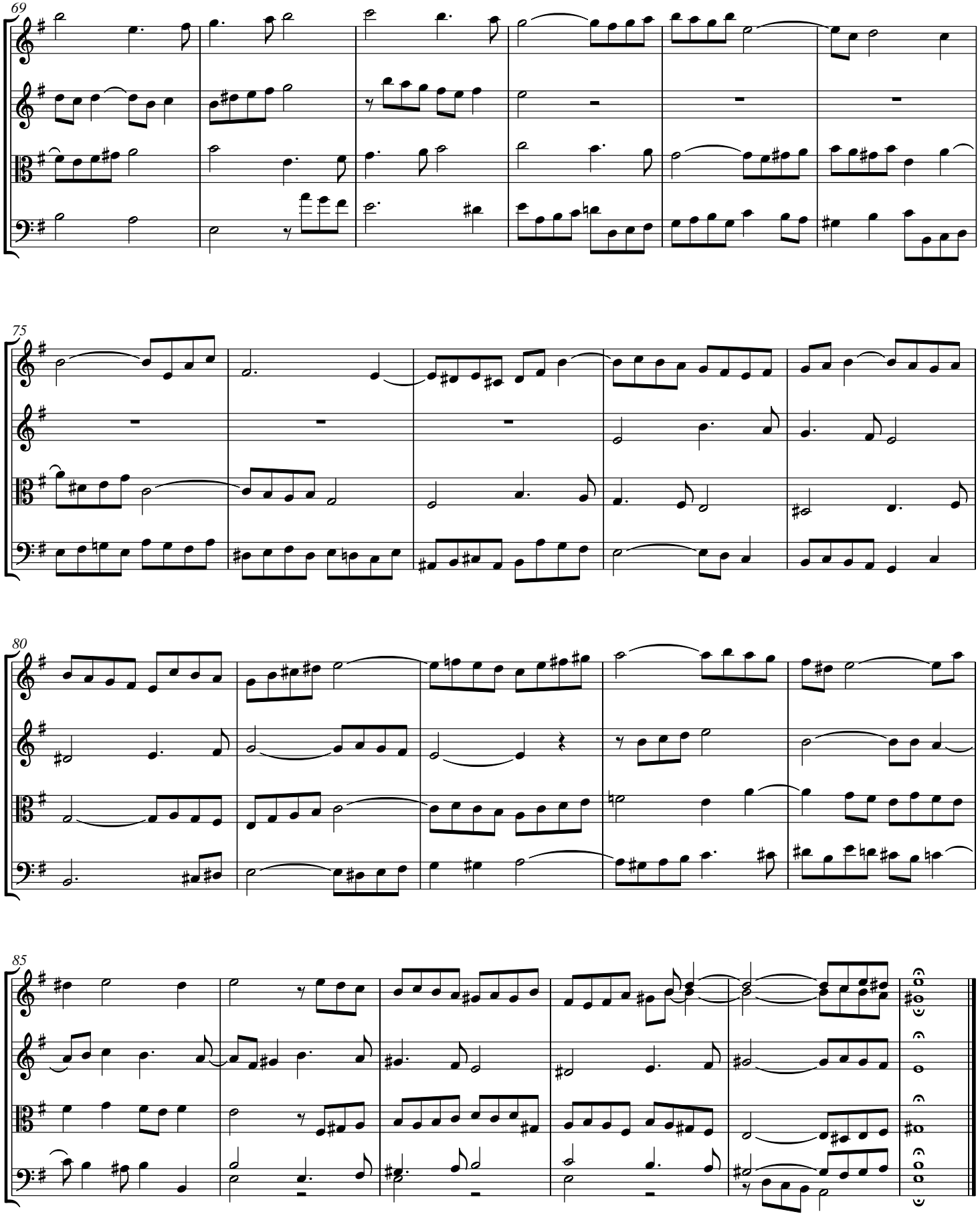
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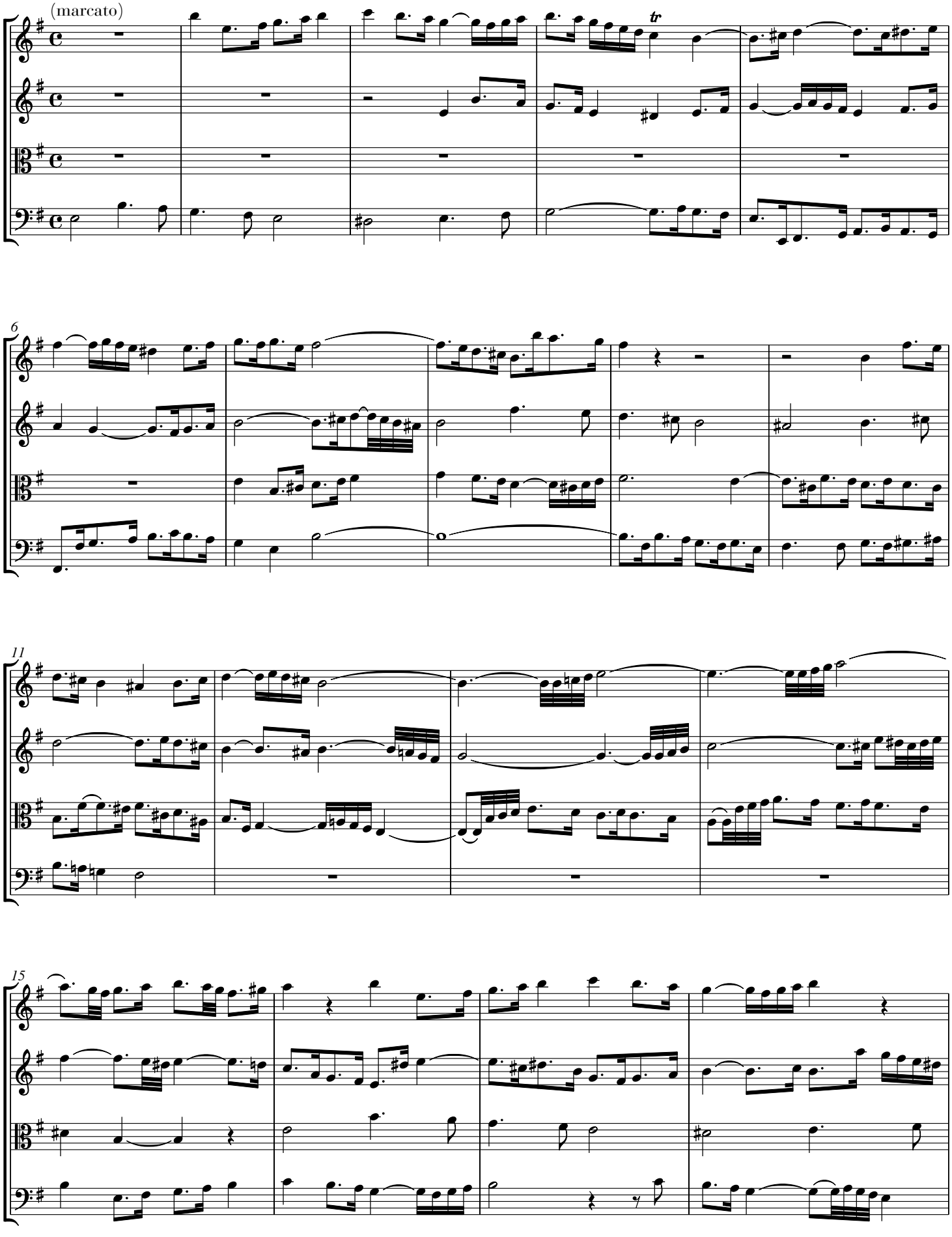
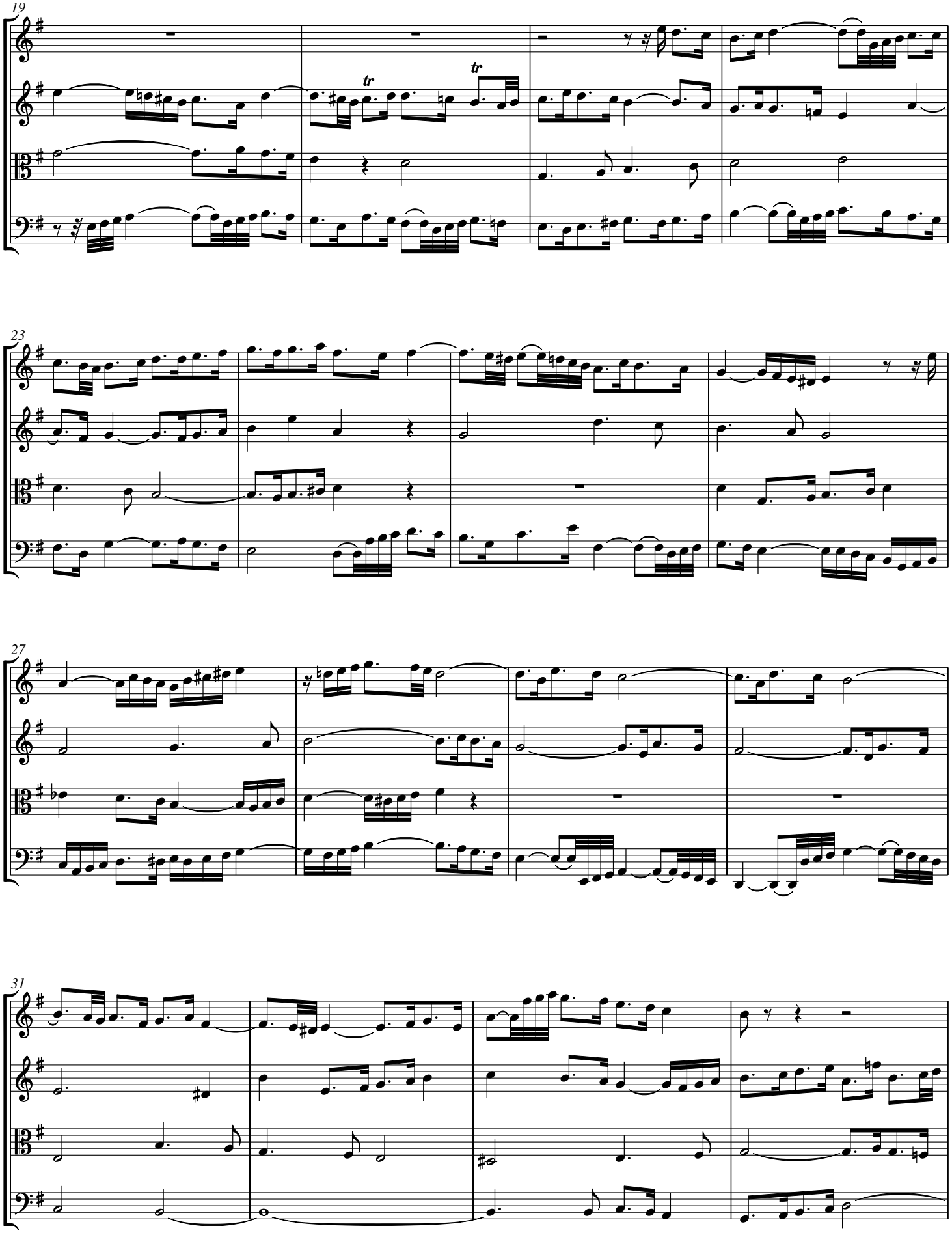
CONTRAPUNCTUS VI

Fuga a 4 voci in stile francese

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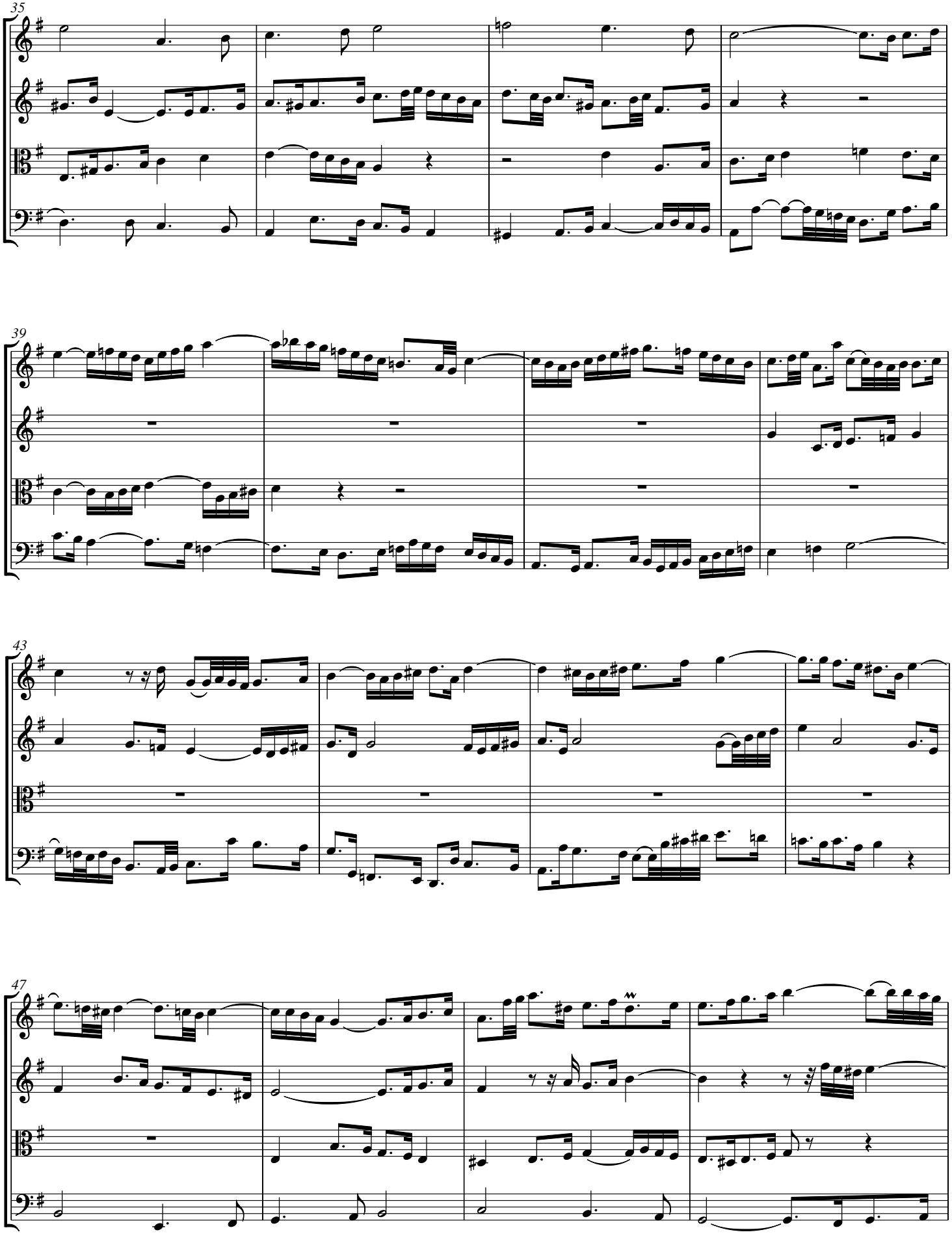
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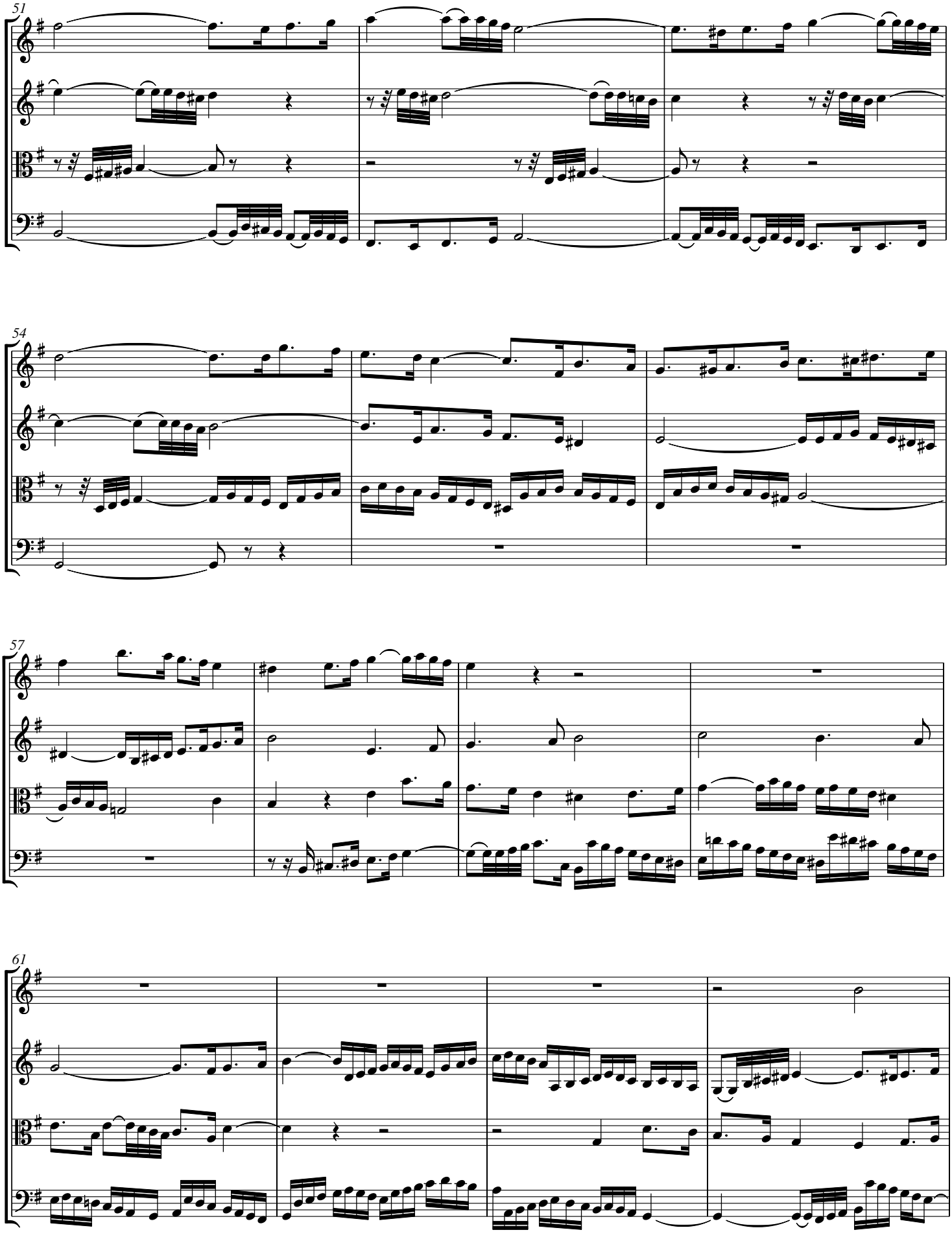
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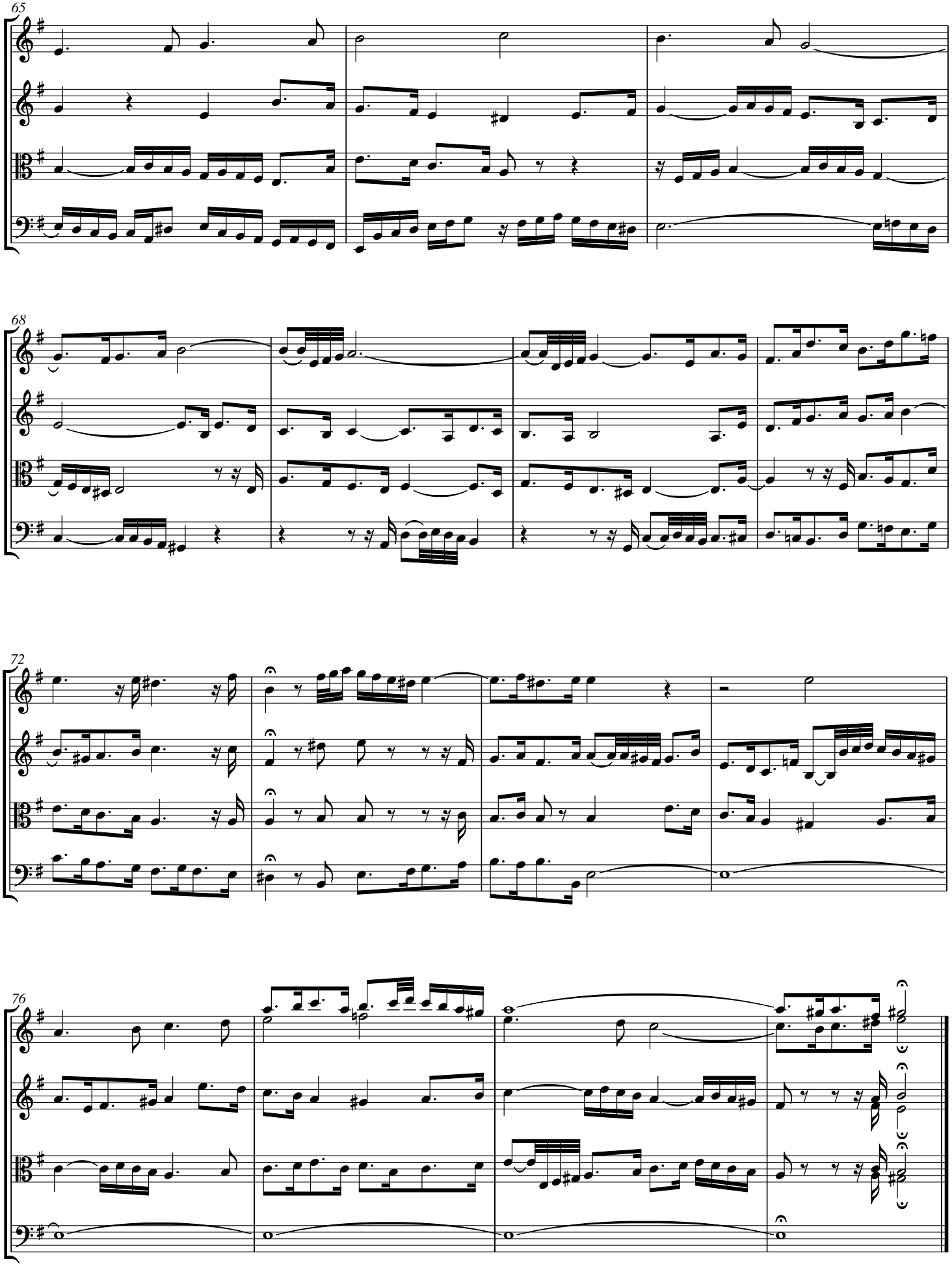
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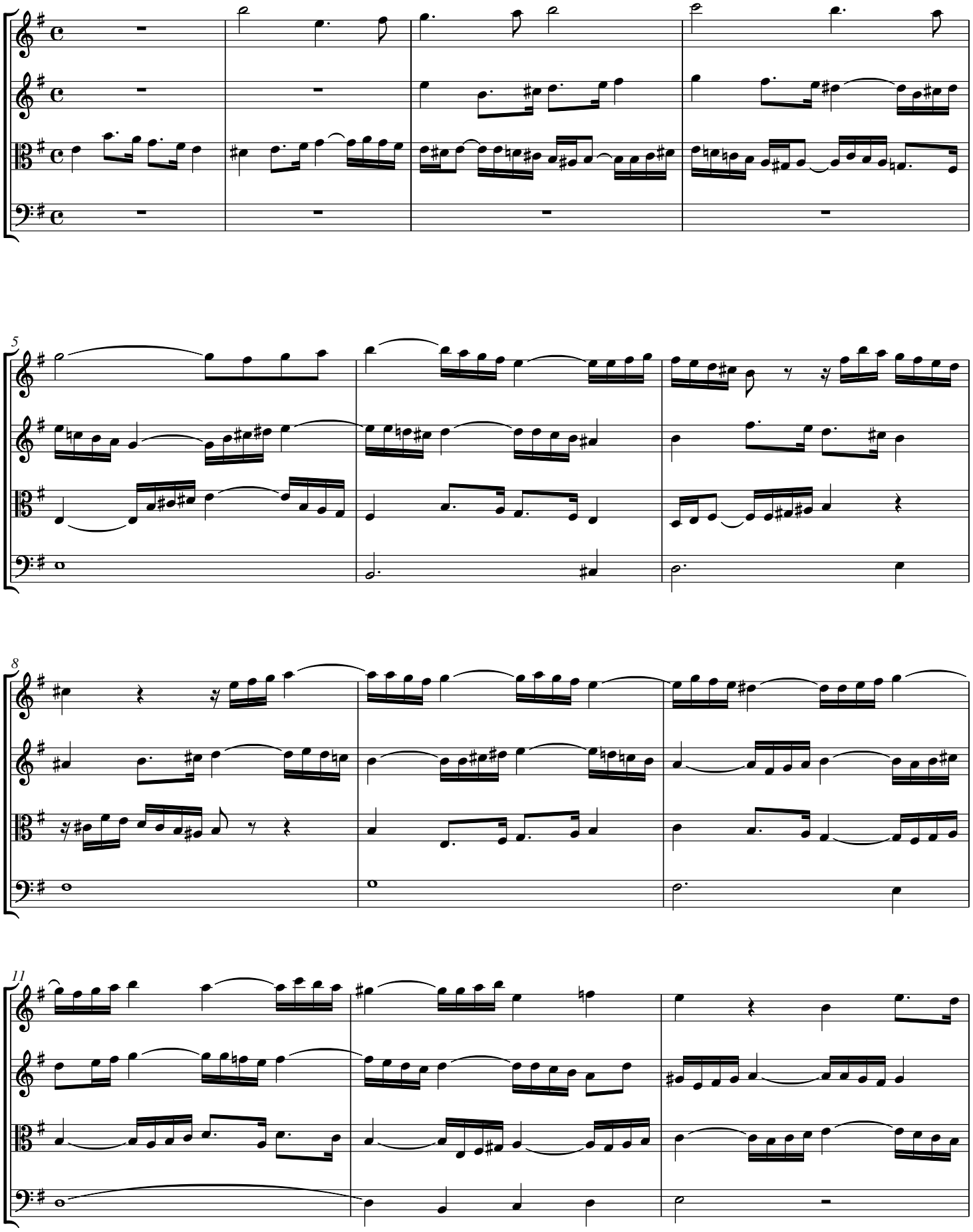
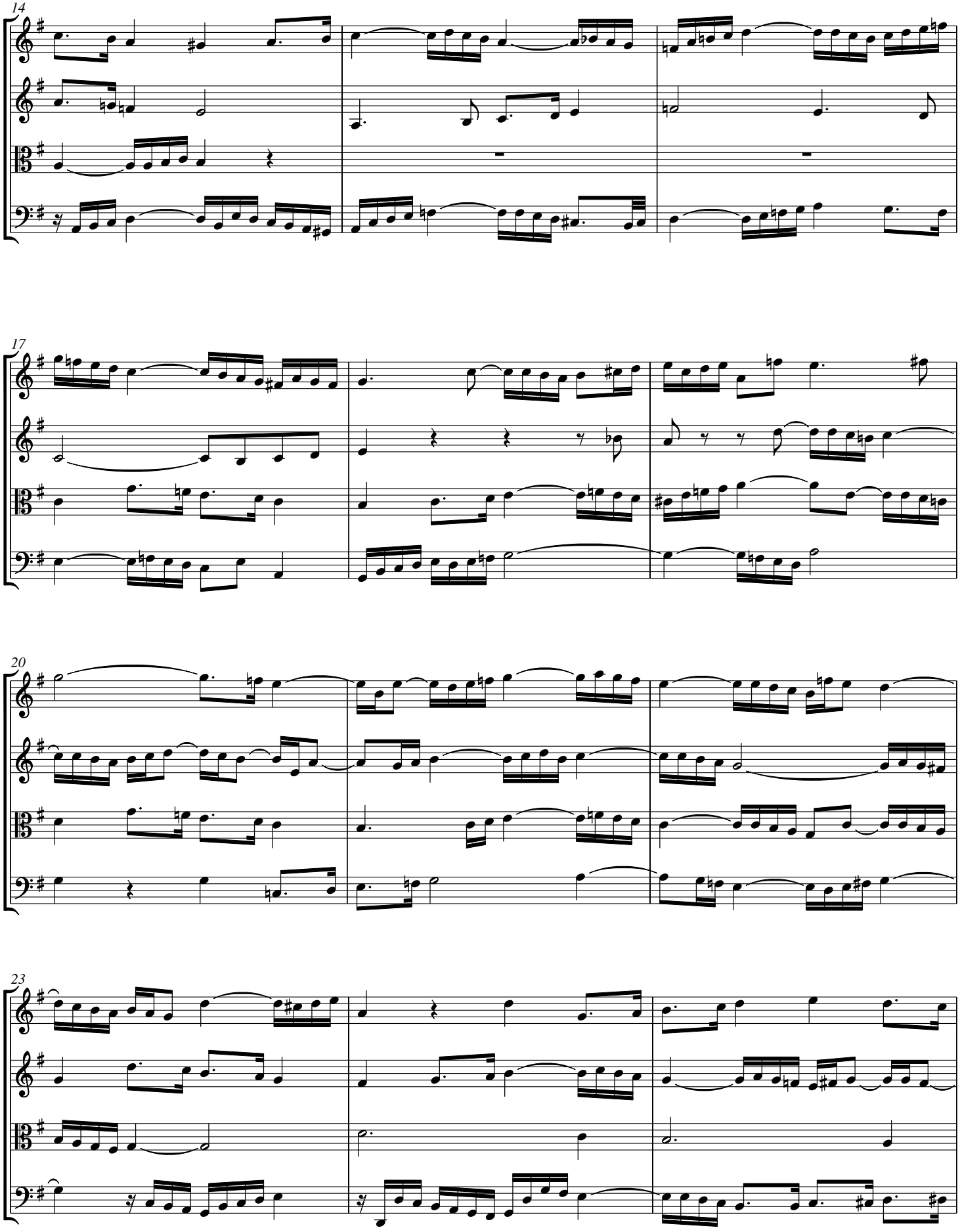
CONTRAPUNCTUS VII

Fuga a 4 per Augmentationem et Diminutionem

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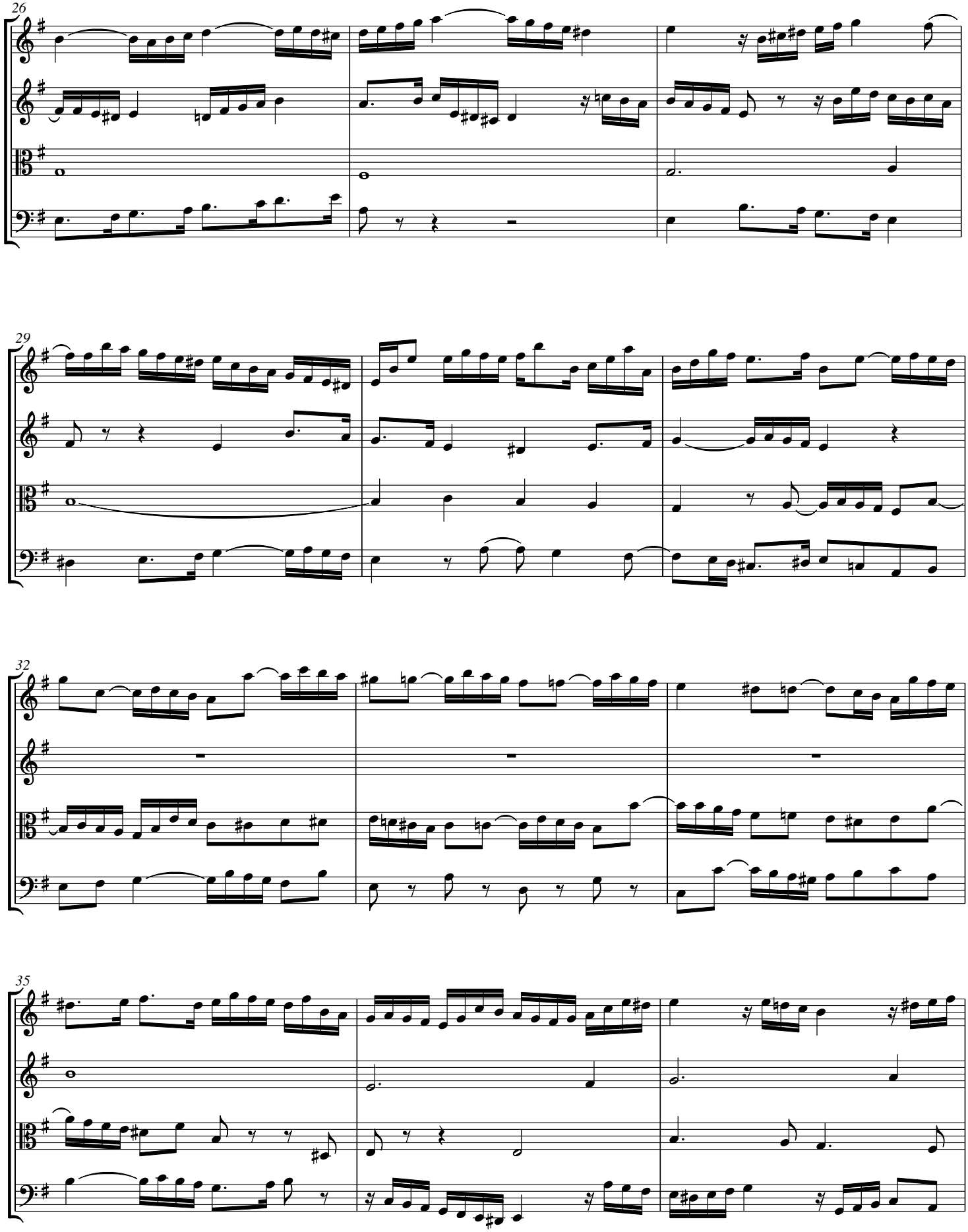
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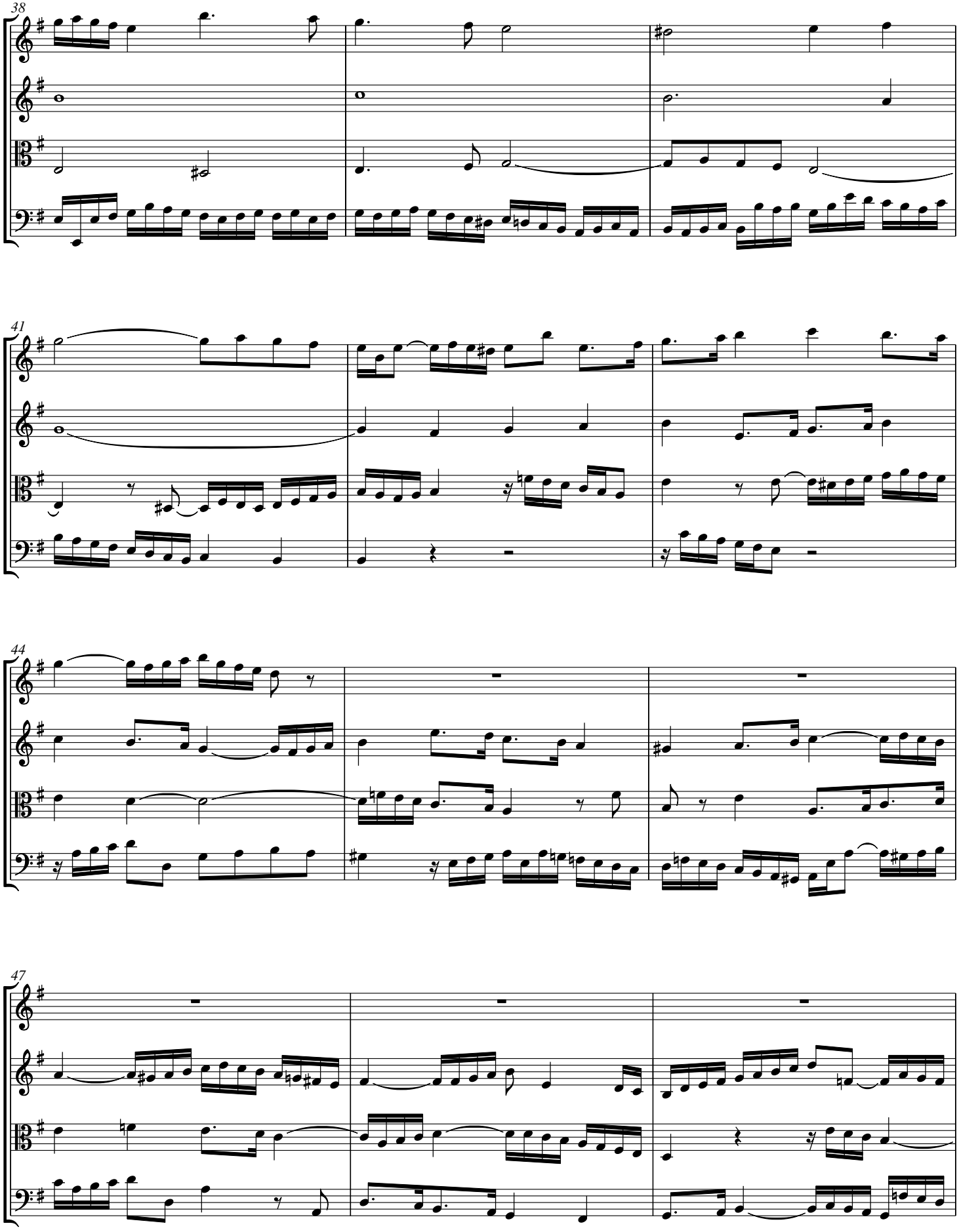
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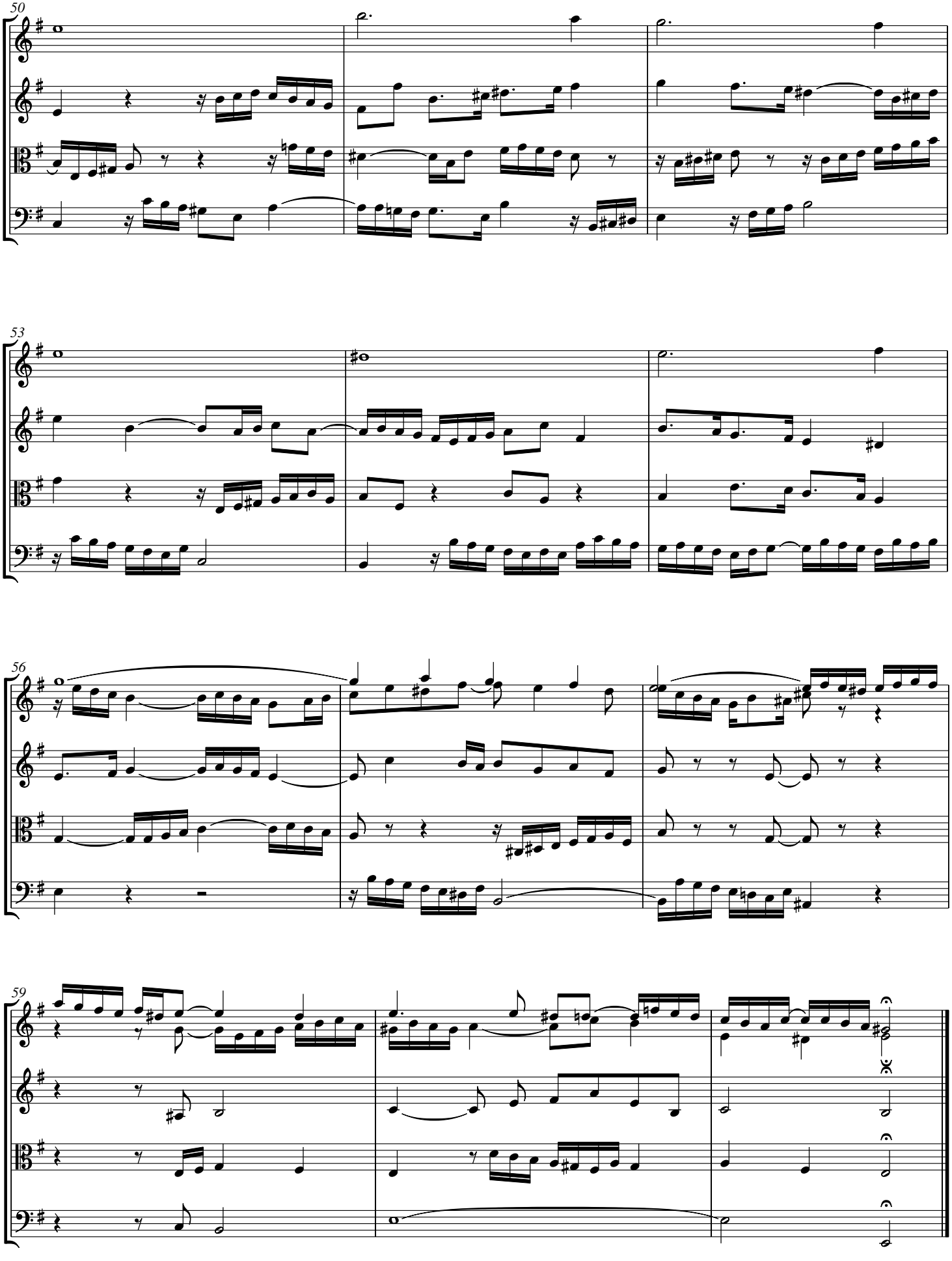
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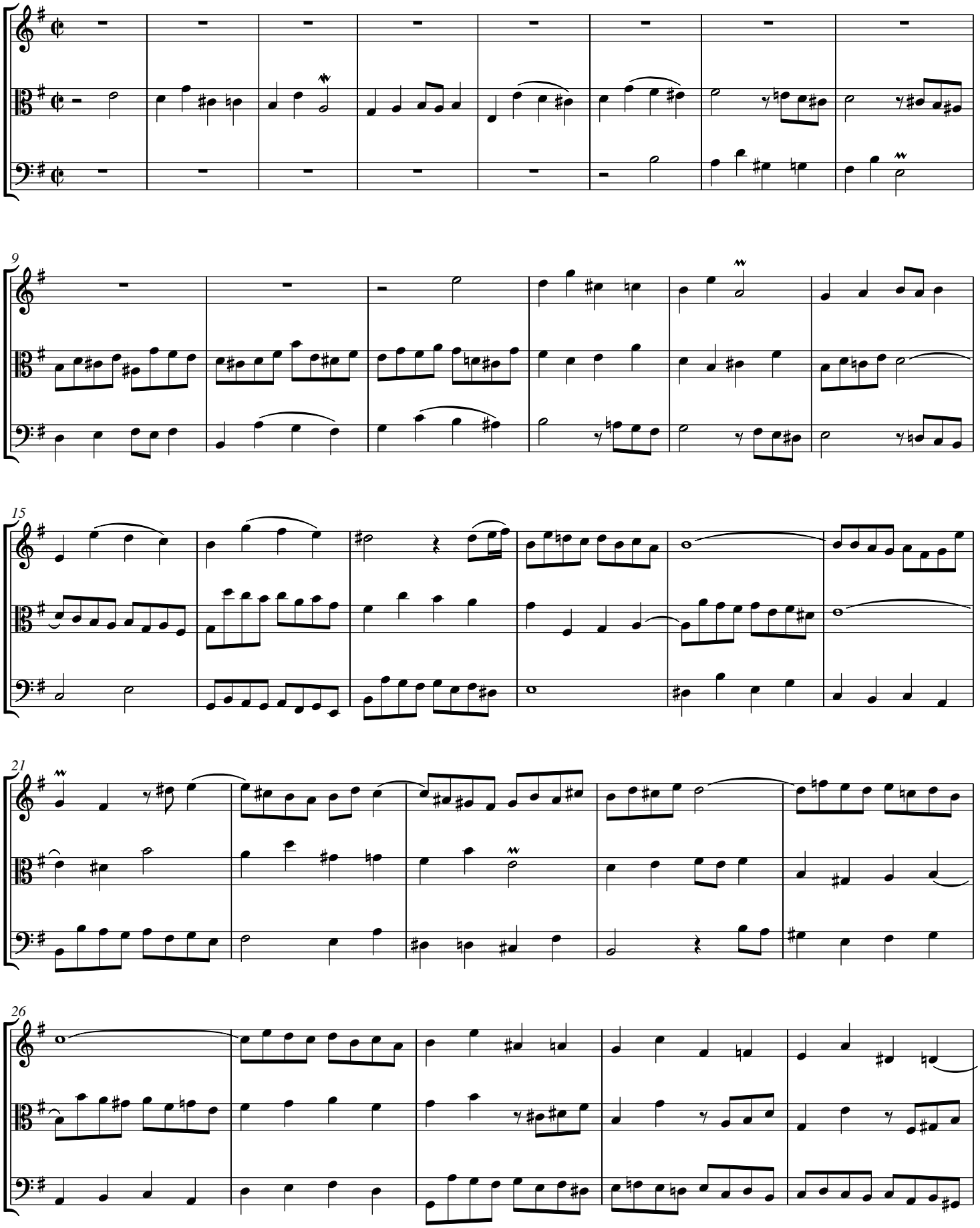
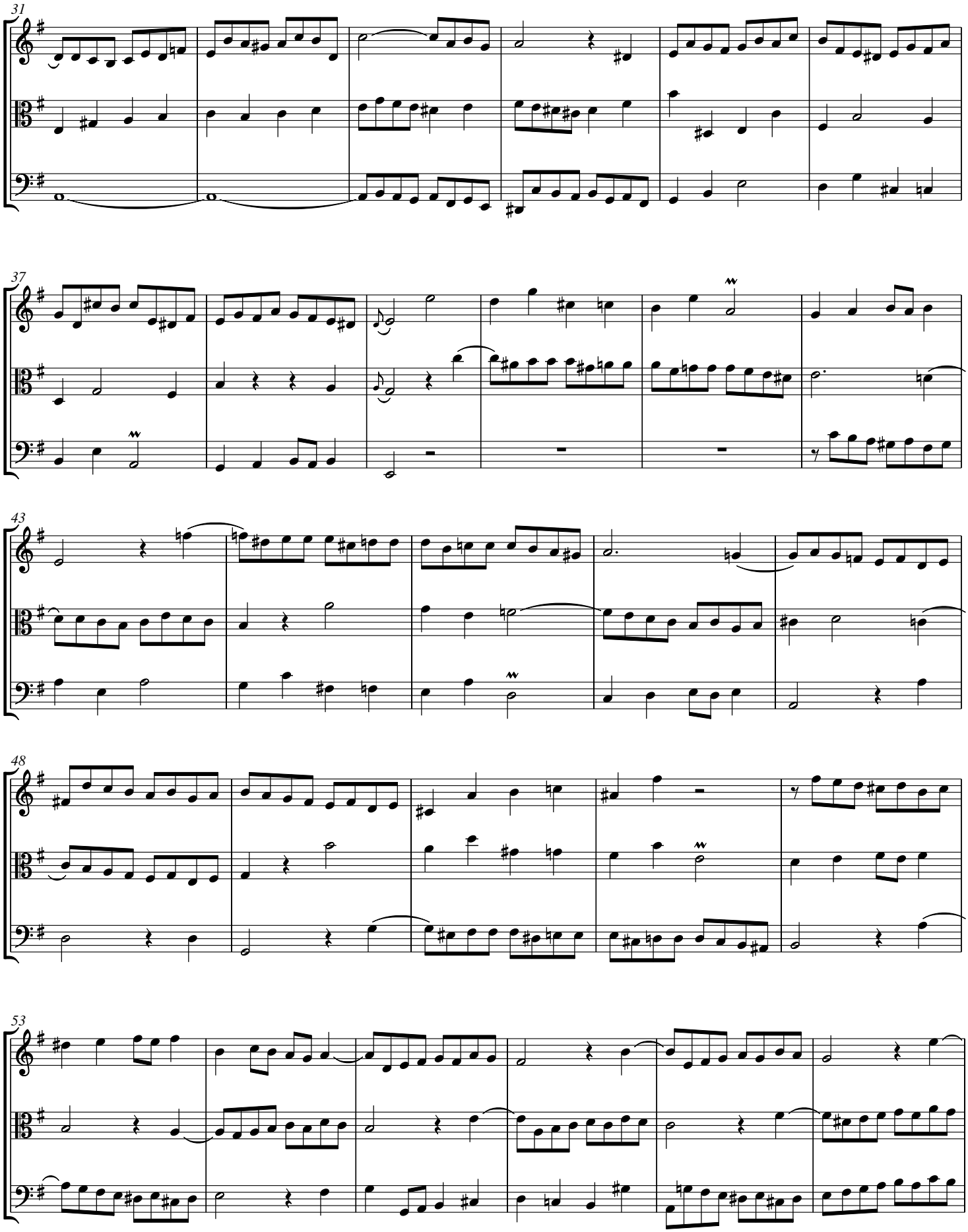
CONTRAPUNCTUS VIII

Fuga a 3 voci

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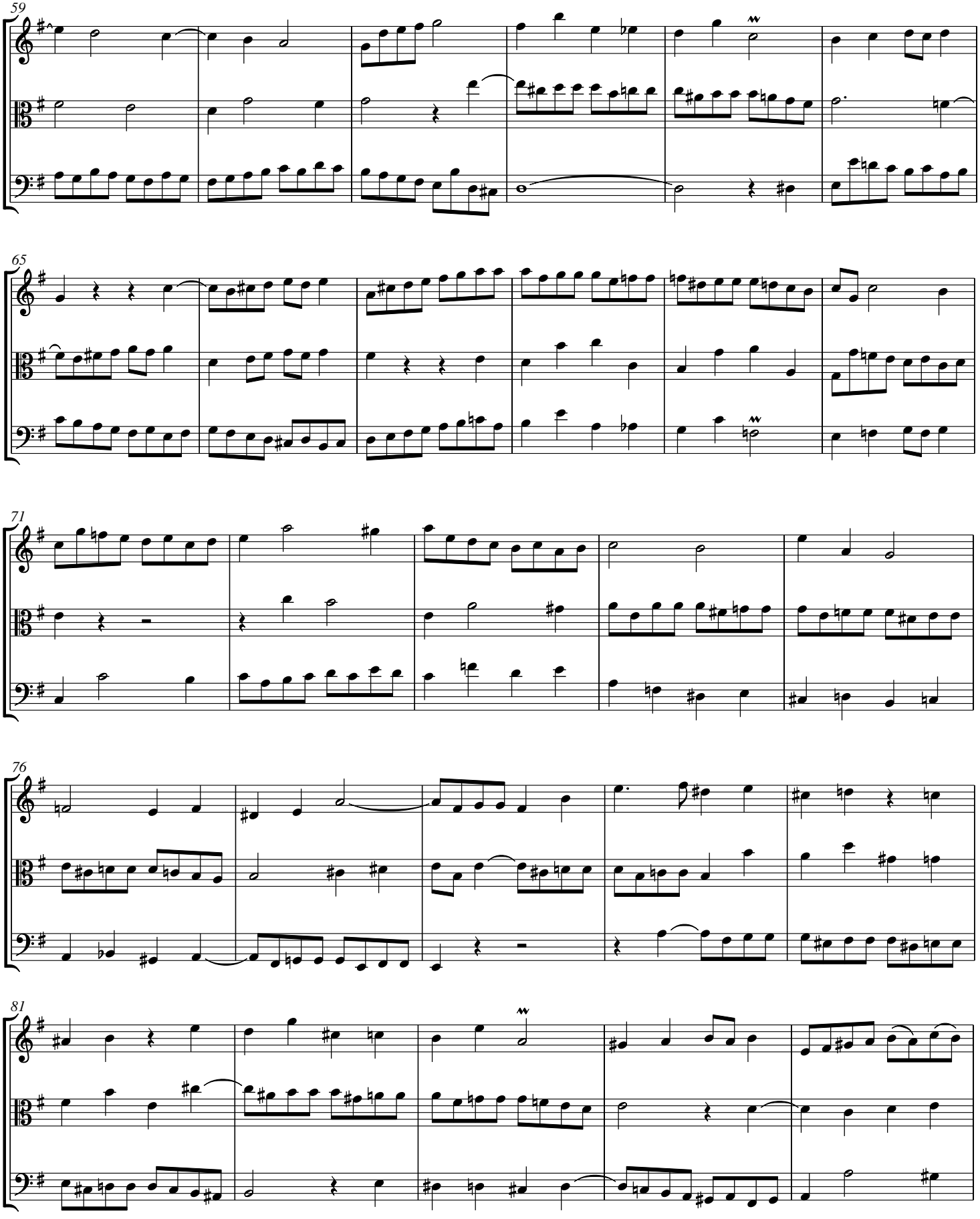
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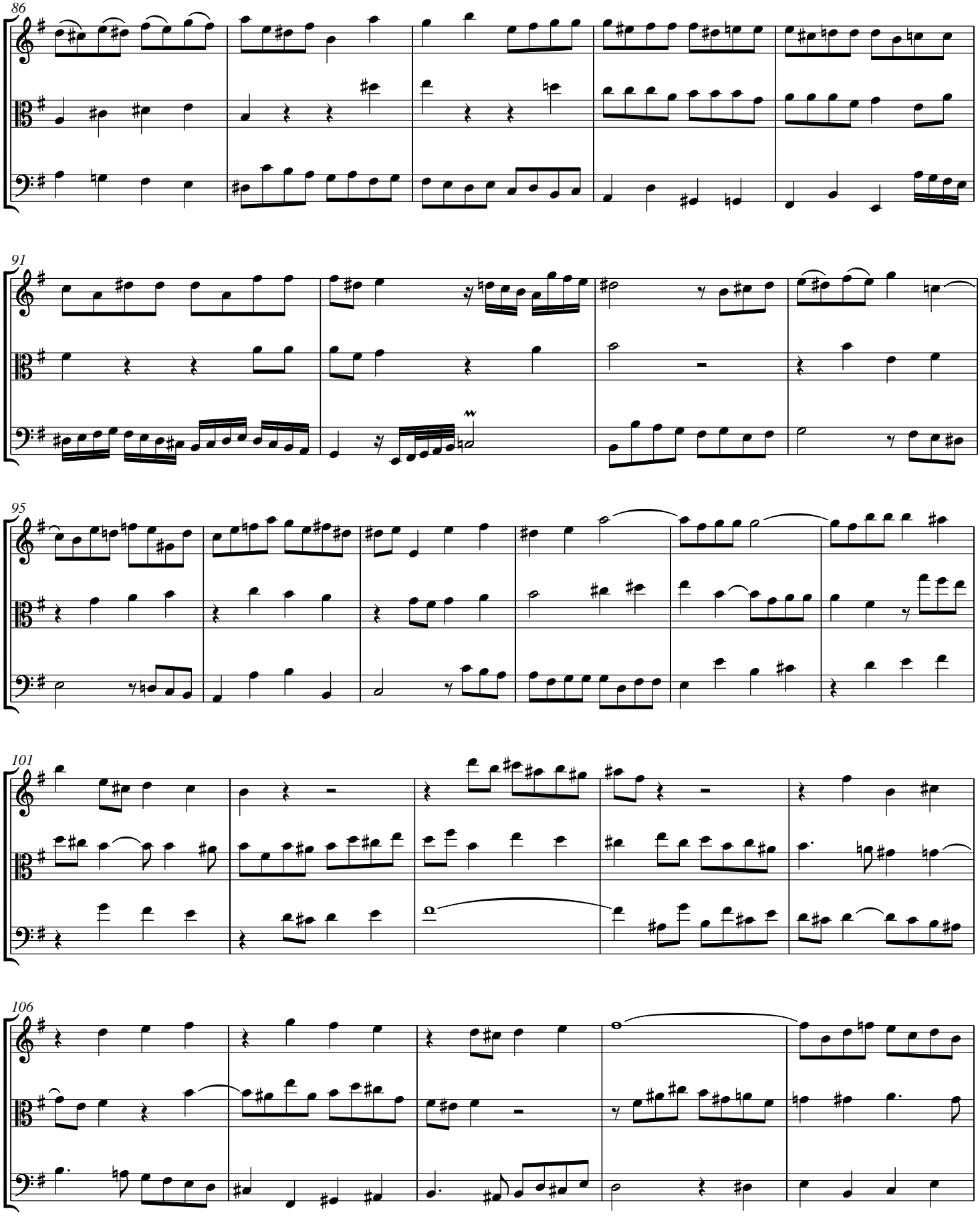
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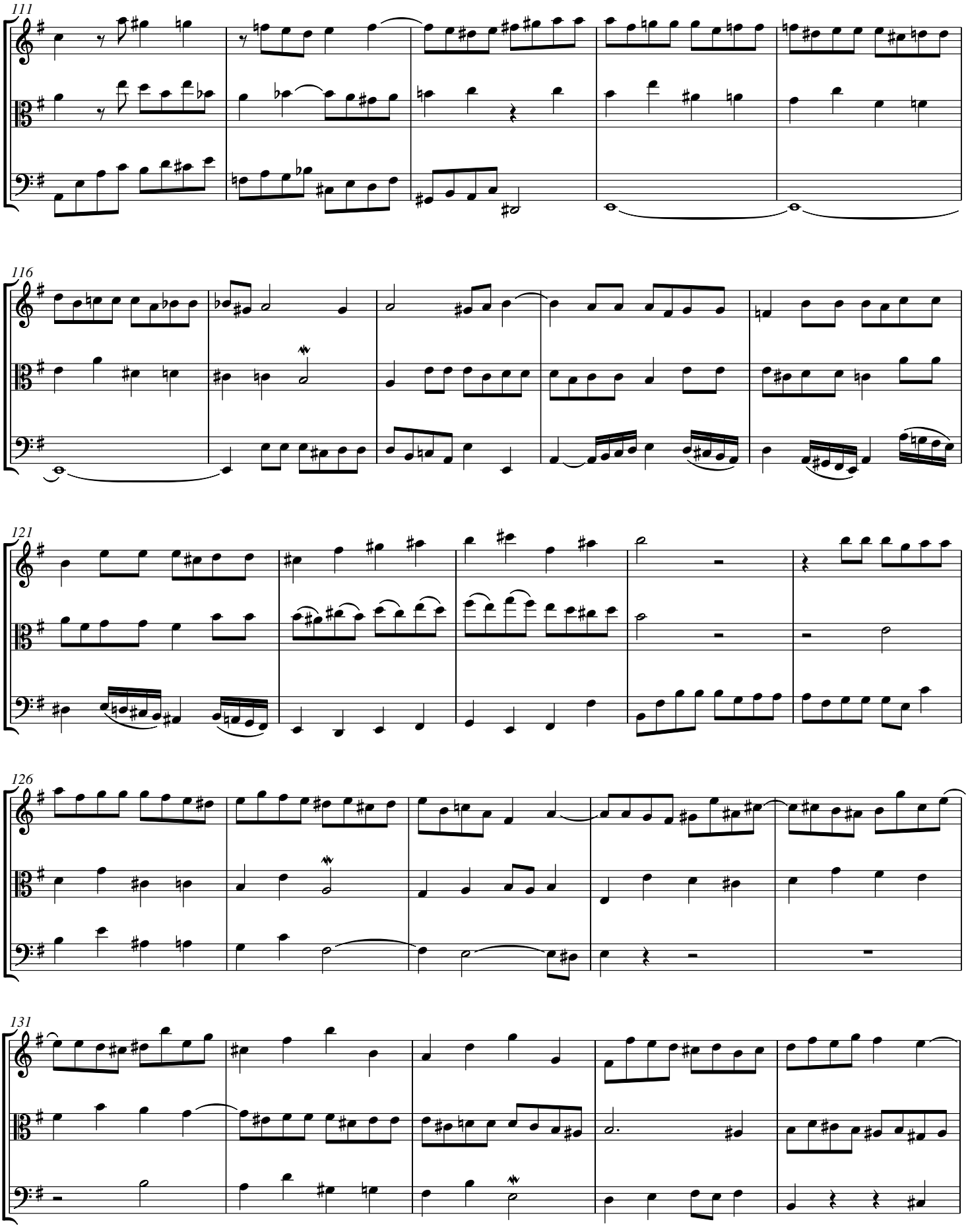
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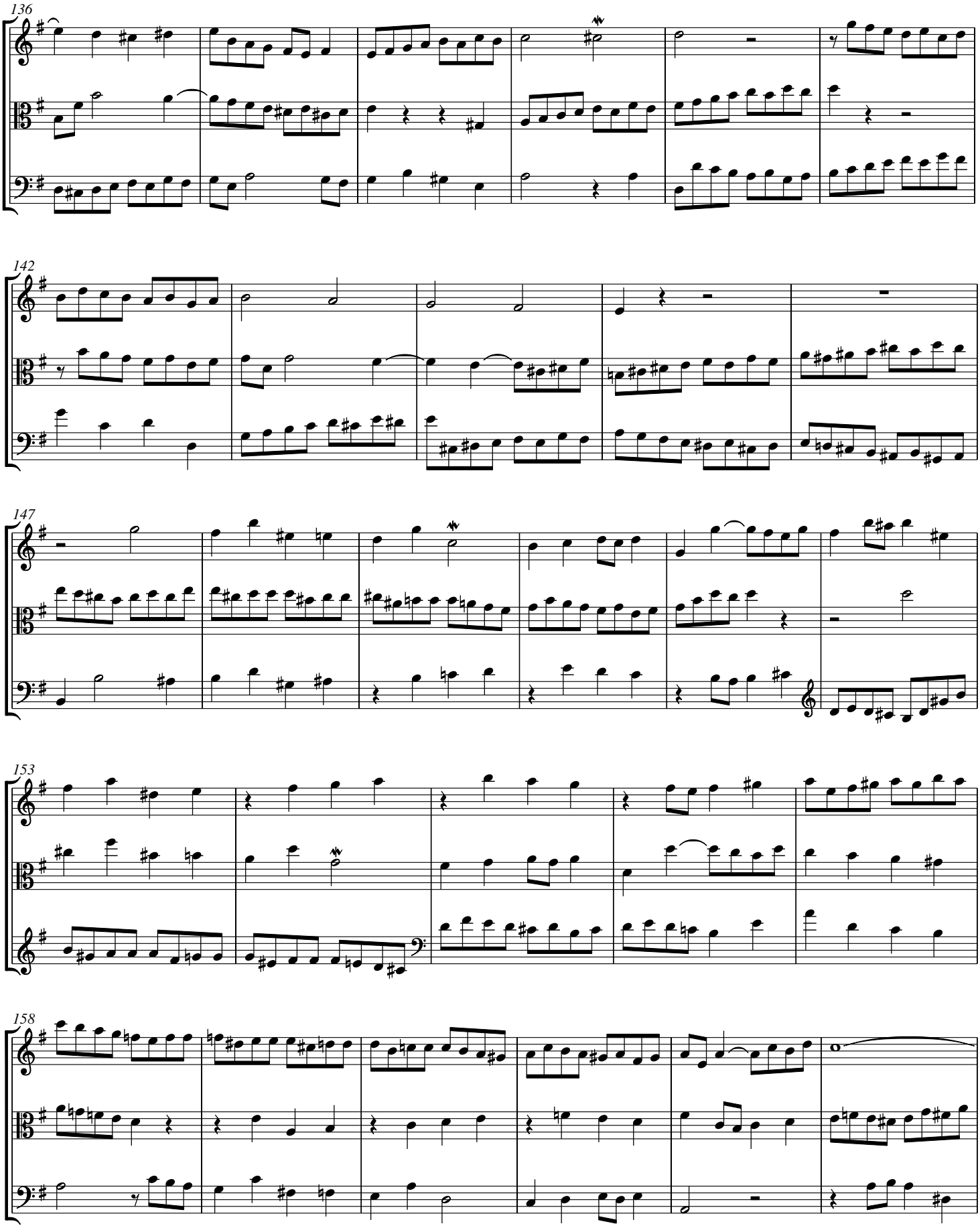
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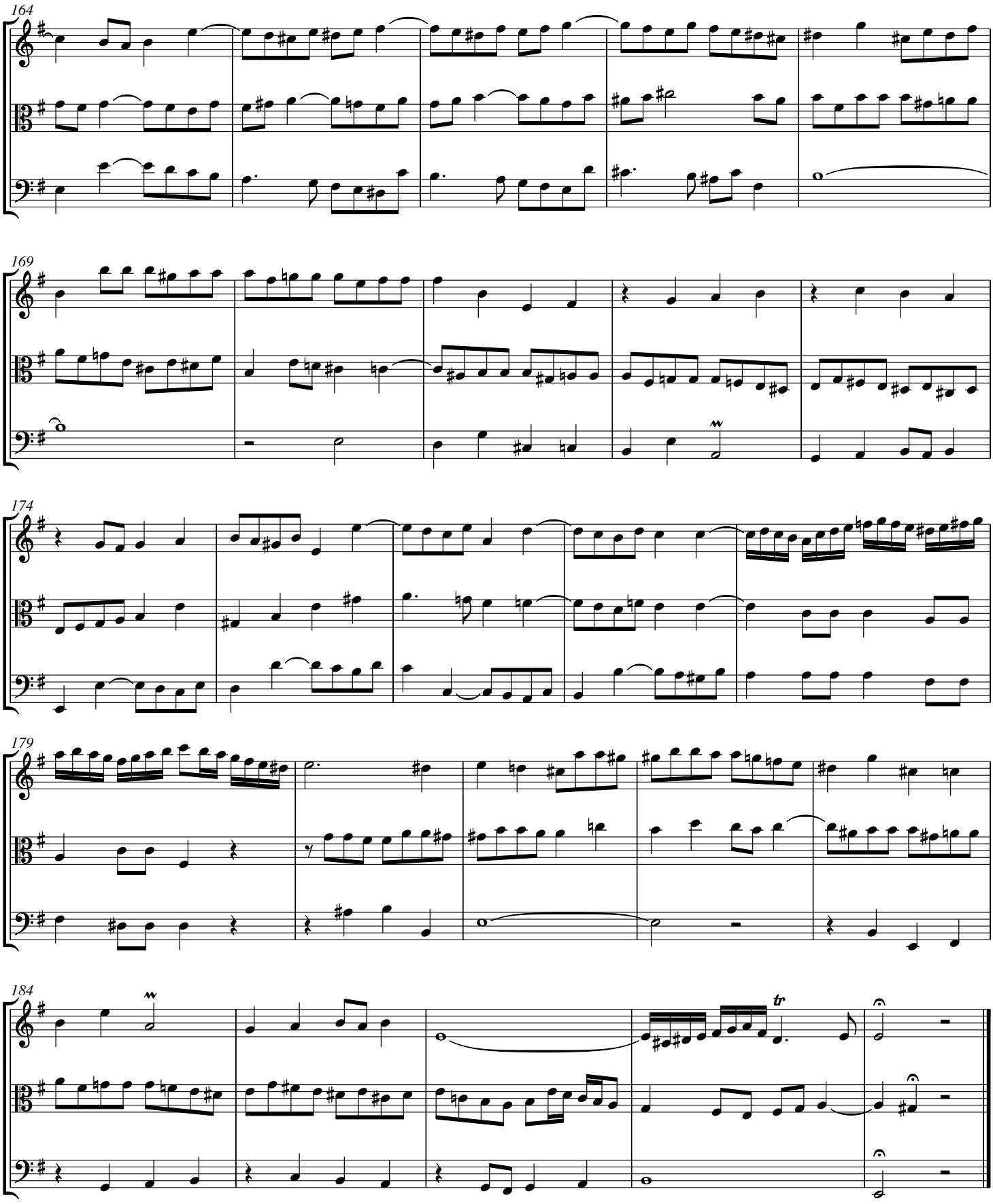
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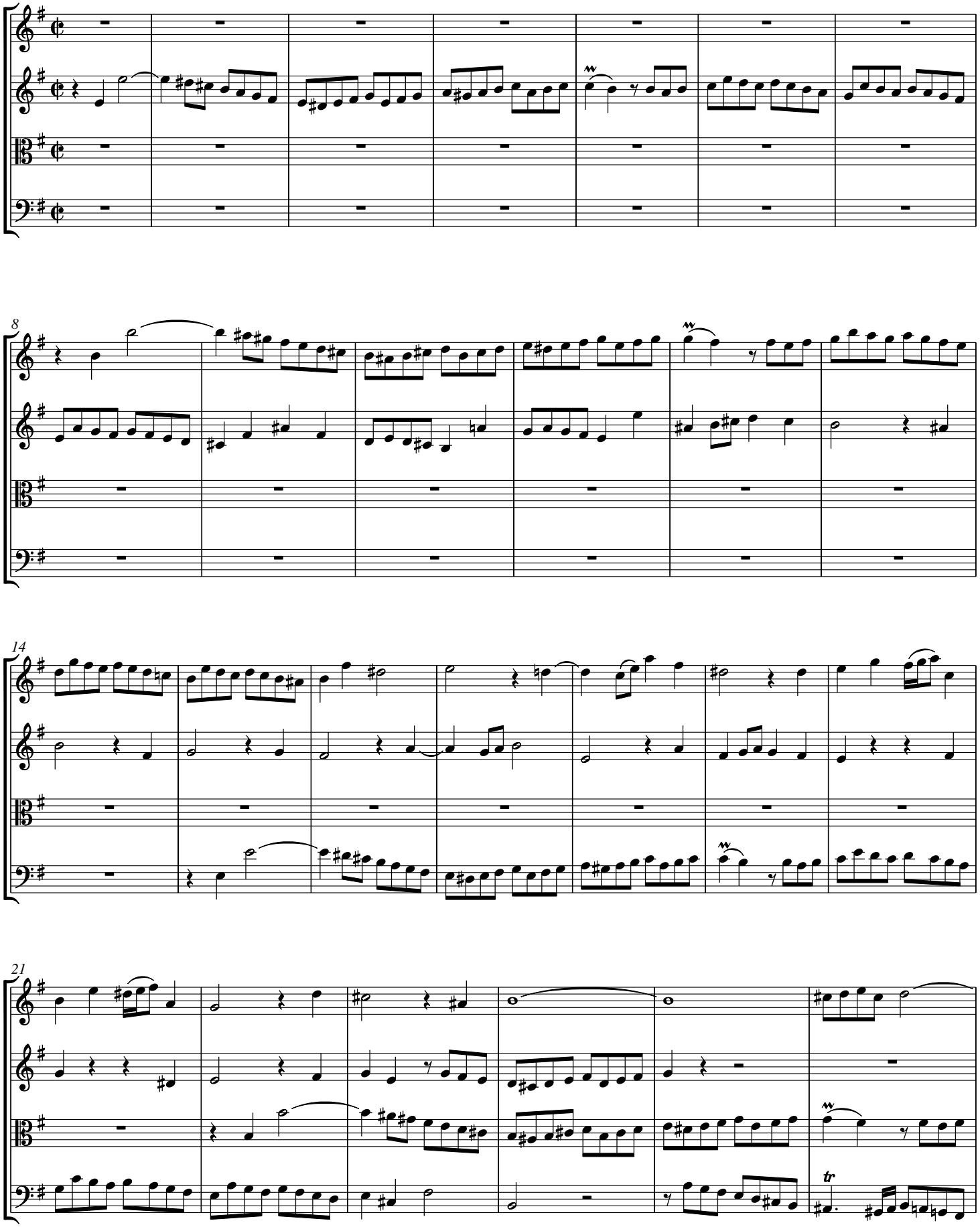
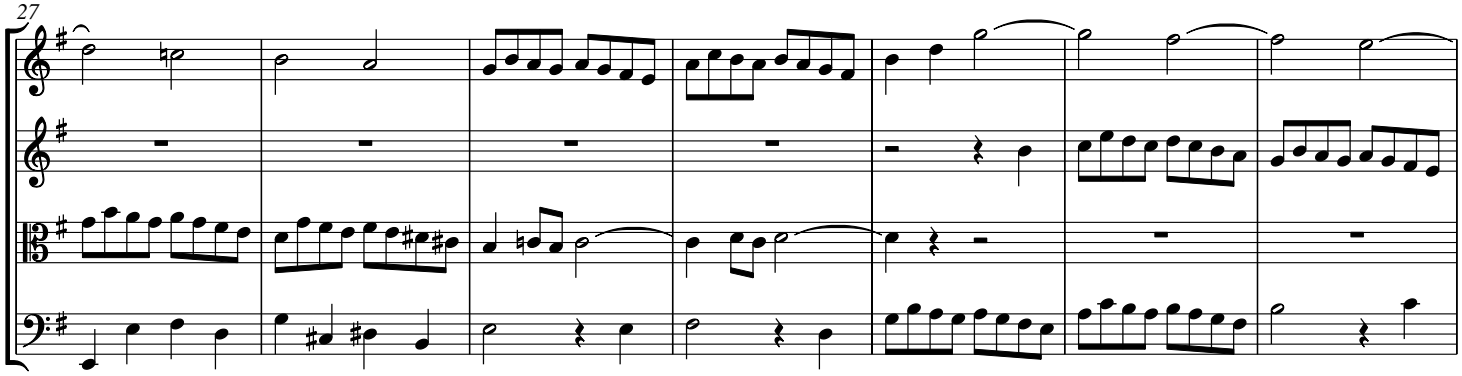
CONTRAPUNCTUS IX

Fuga a 4 voci, alla Duodecima

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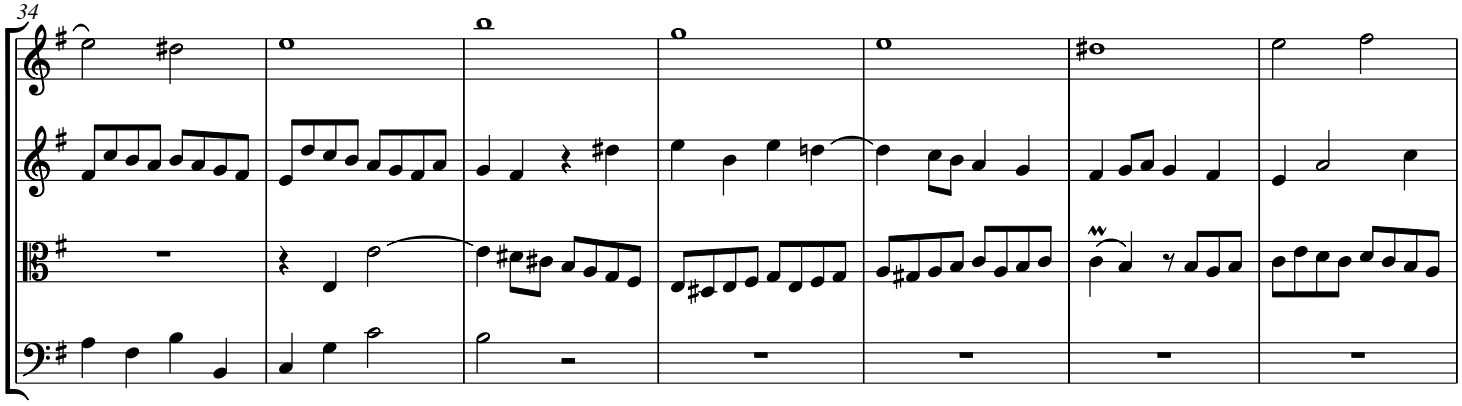
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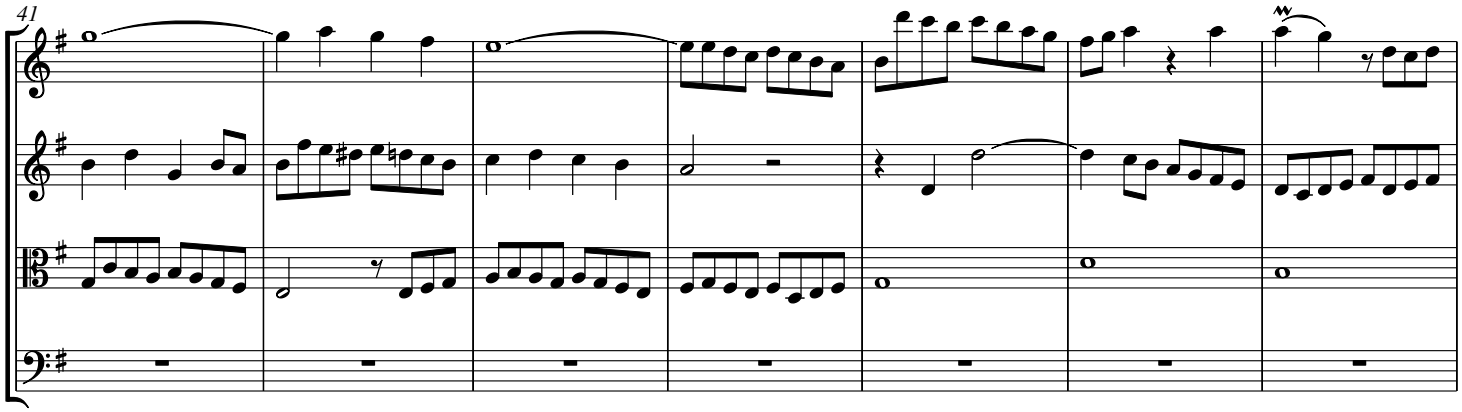
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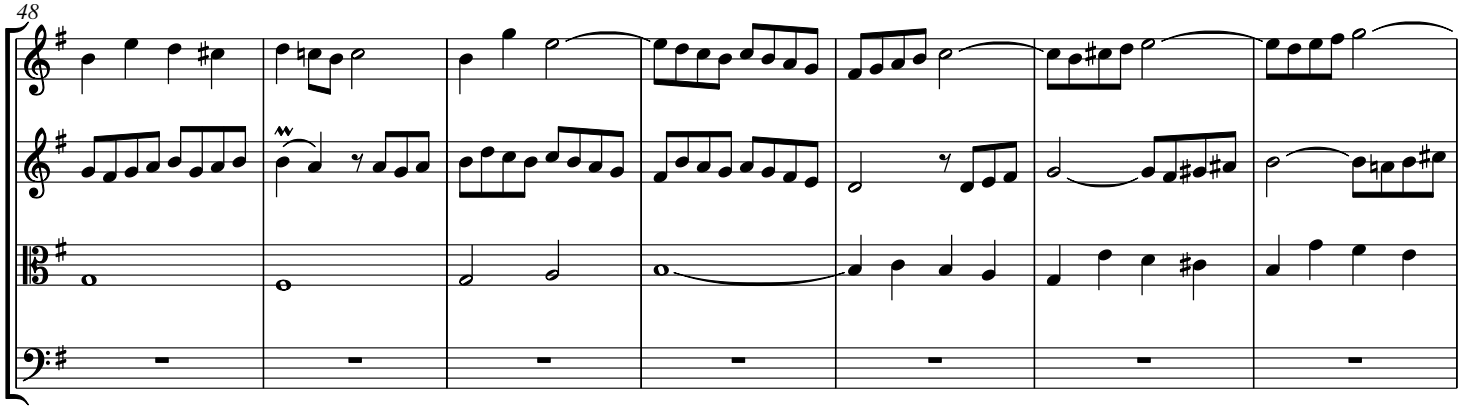
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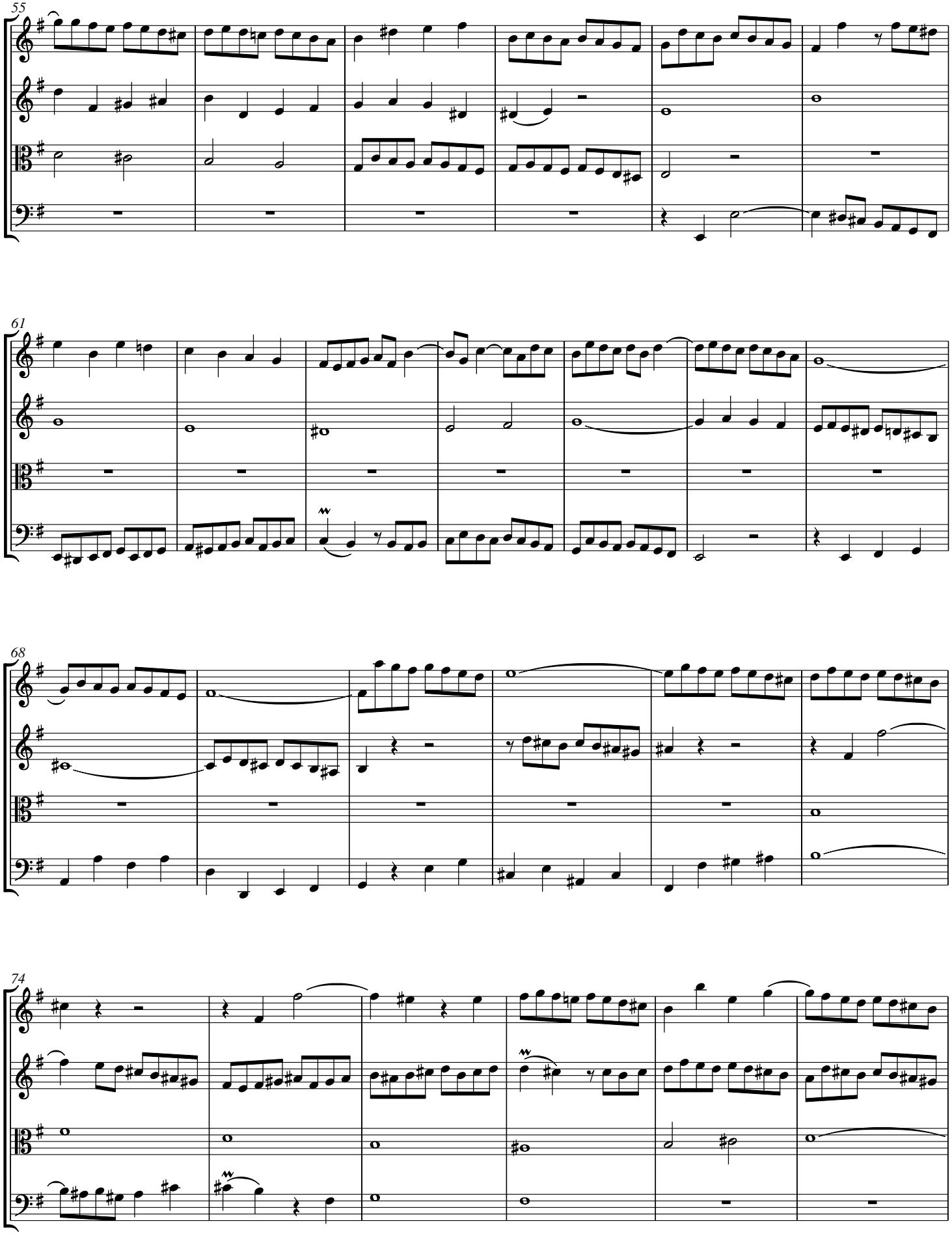
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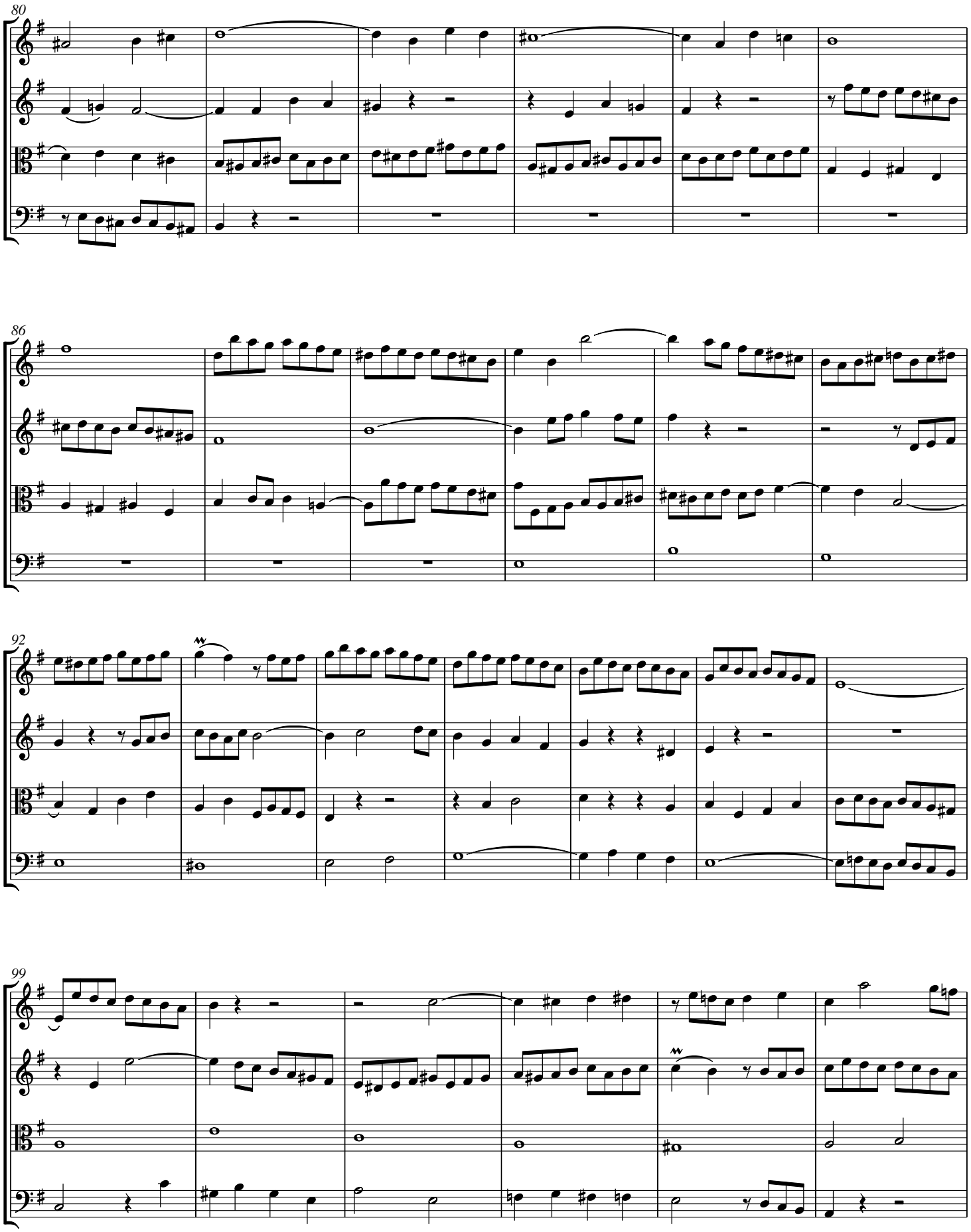
61
68
74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86
92
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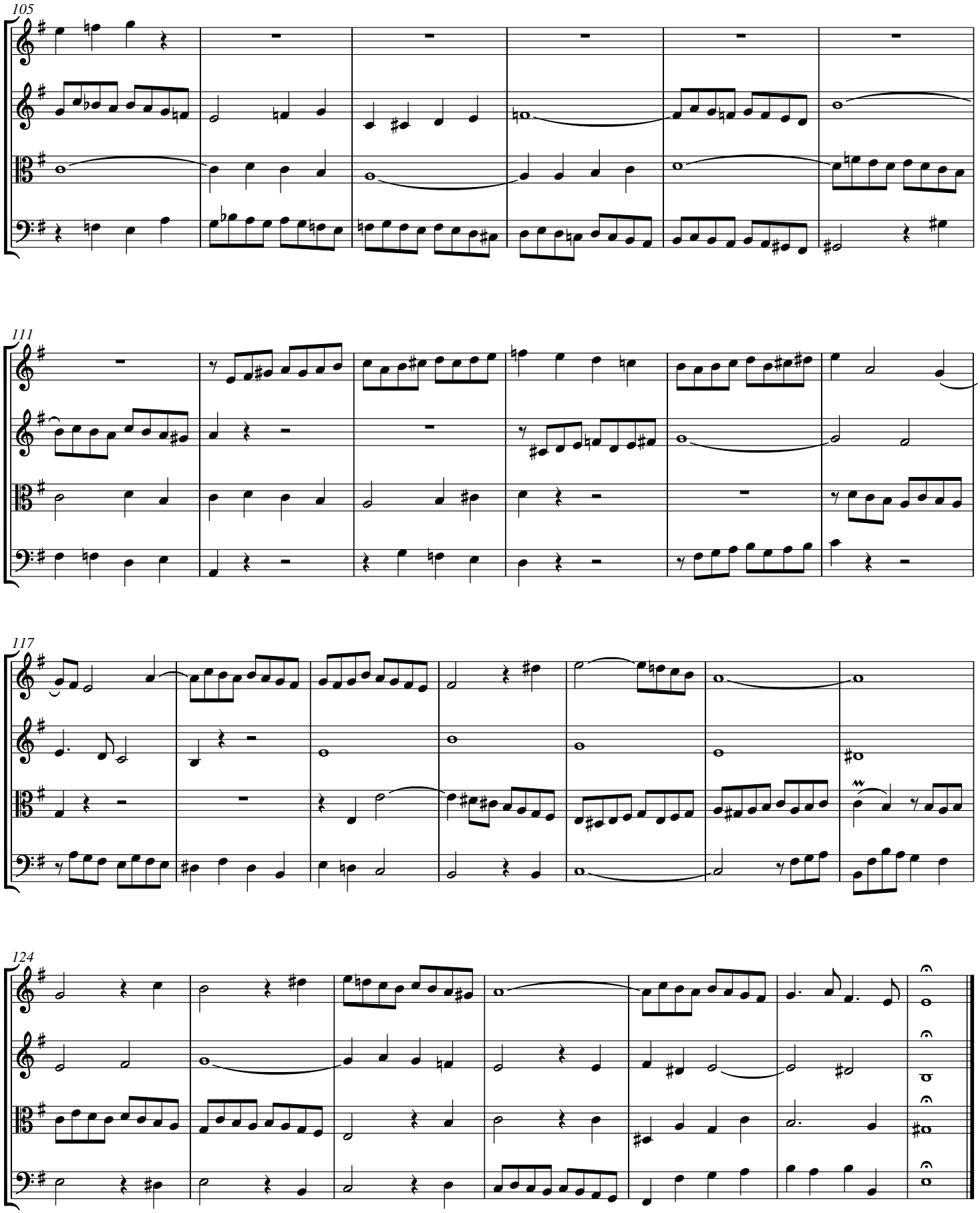
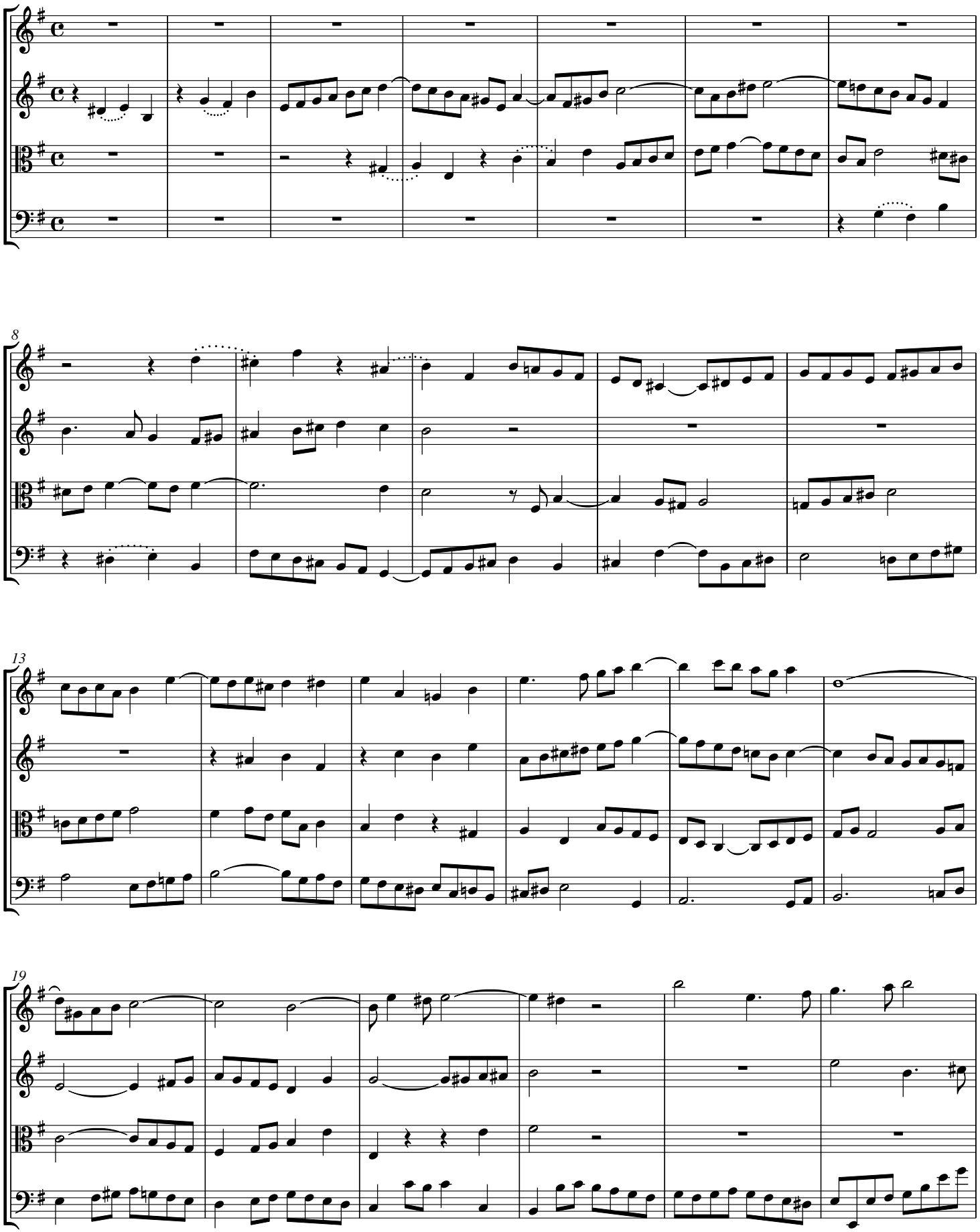
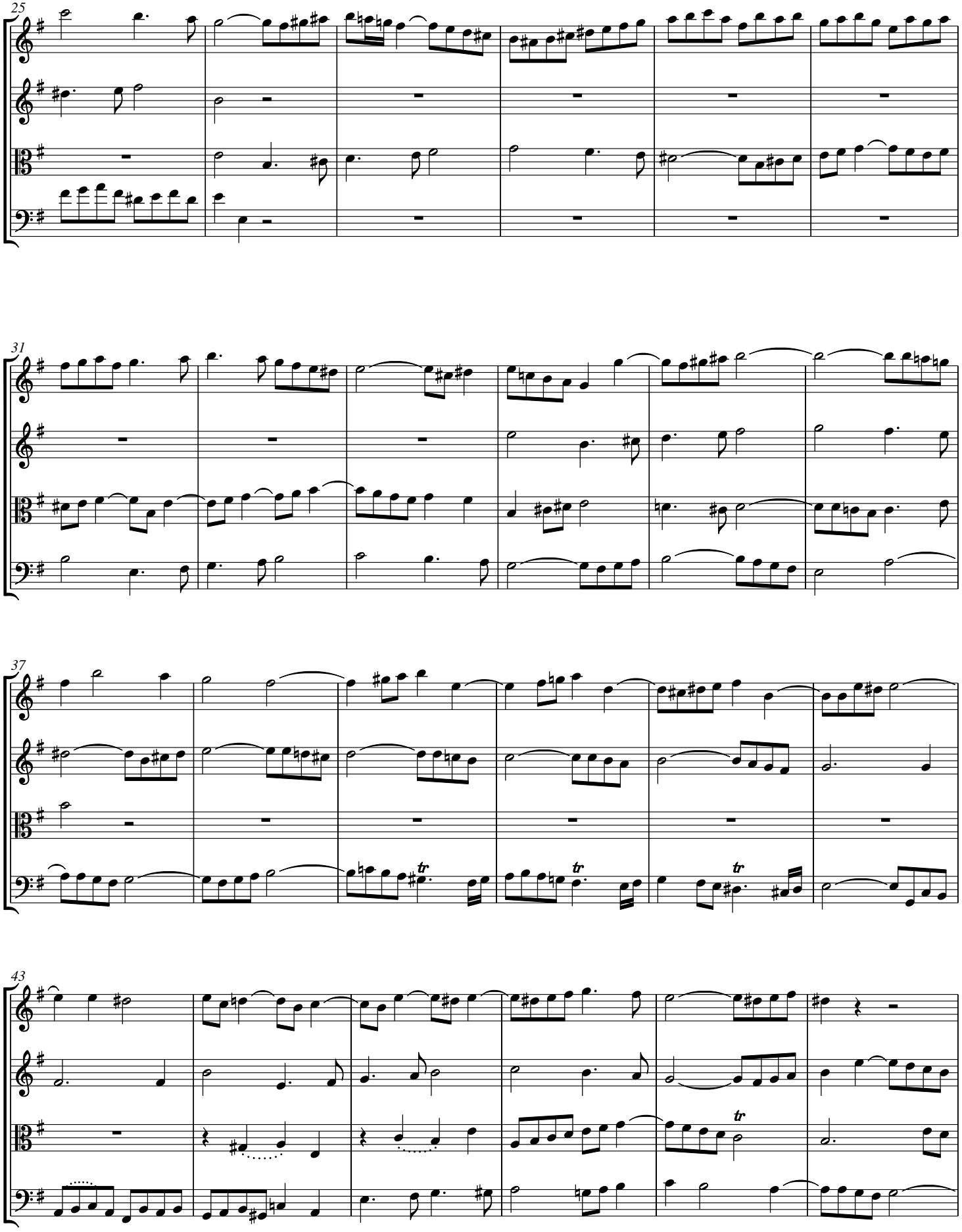
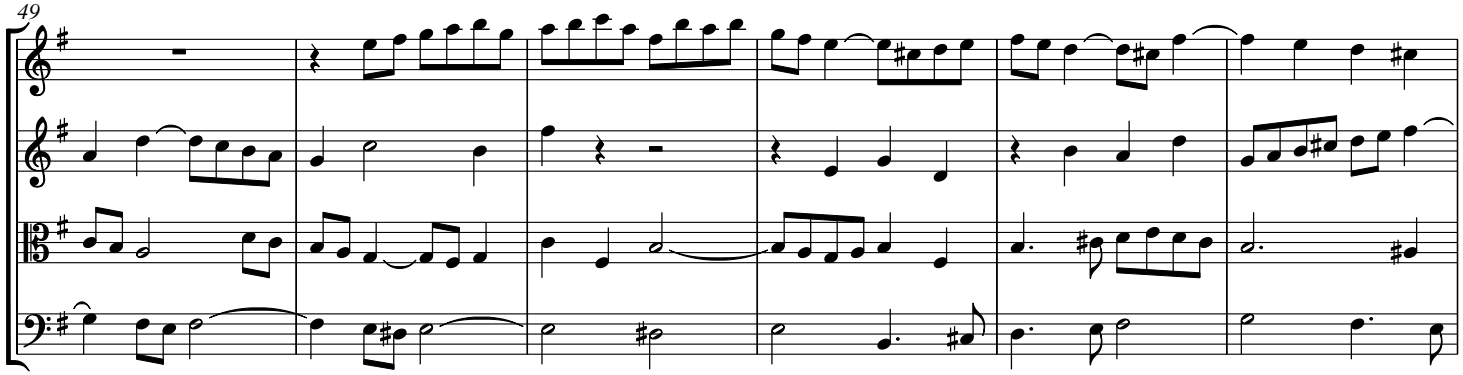

105
111
117
124

CONTRAPUNCTUS X

Fuga a 4 voci, alla Decima




25
31
37
43
tr
tr
tr
tr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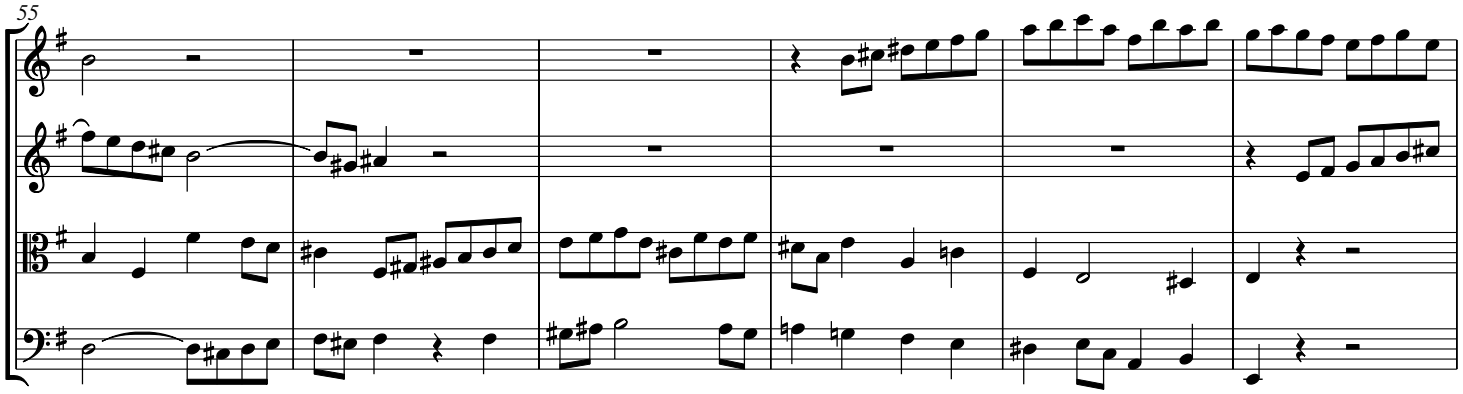
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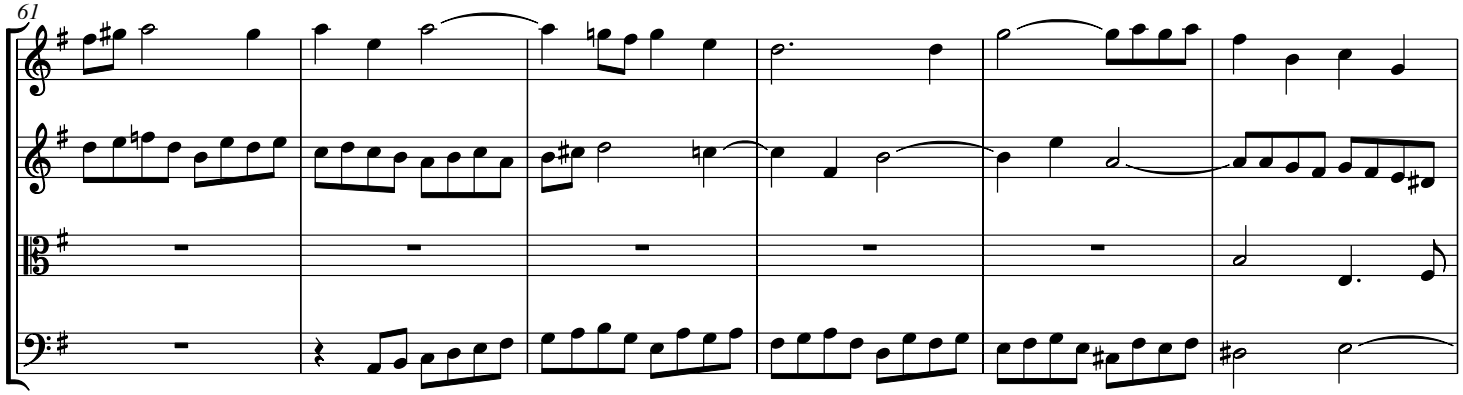
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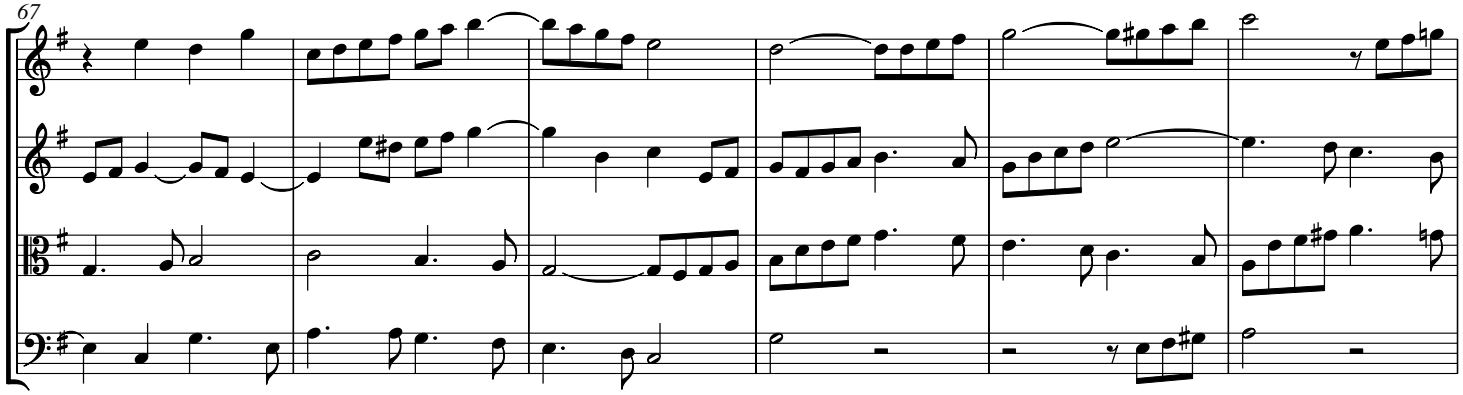
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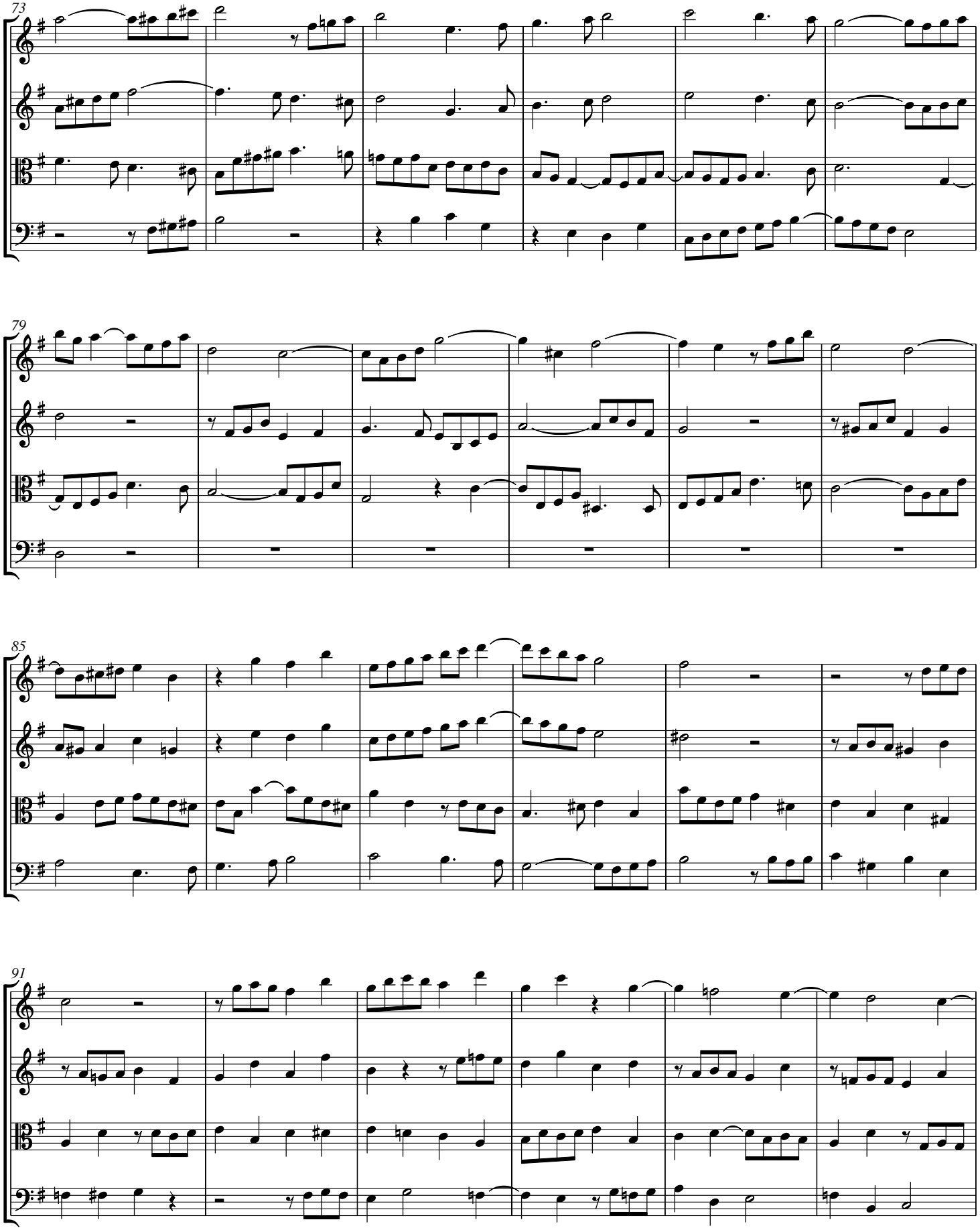
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79
85
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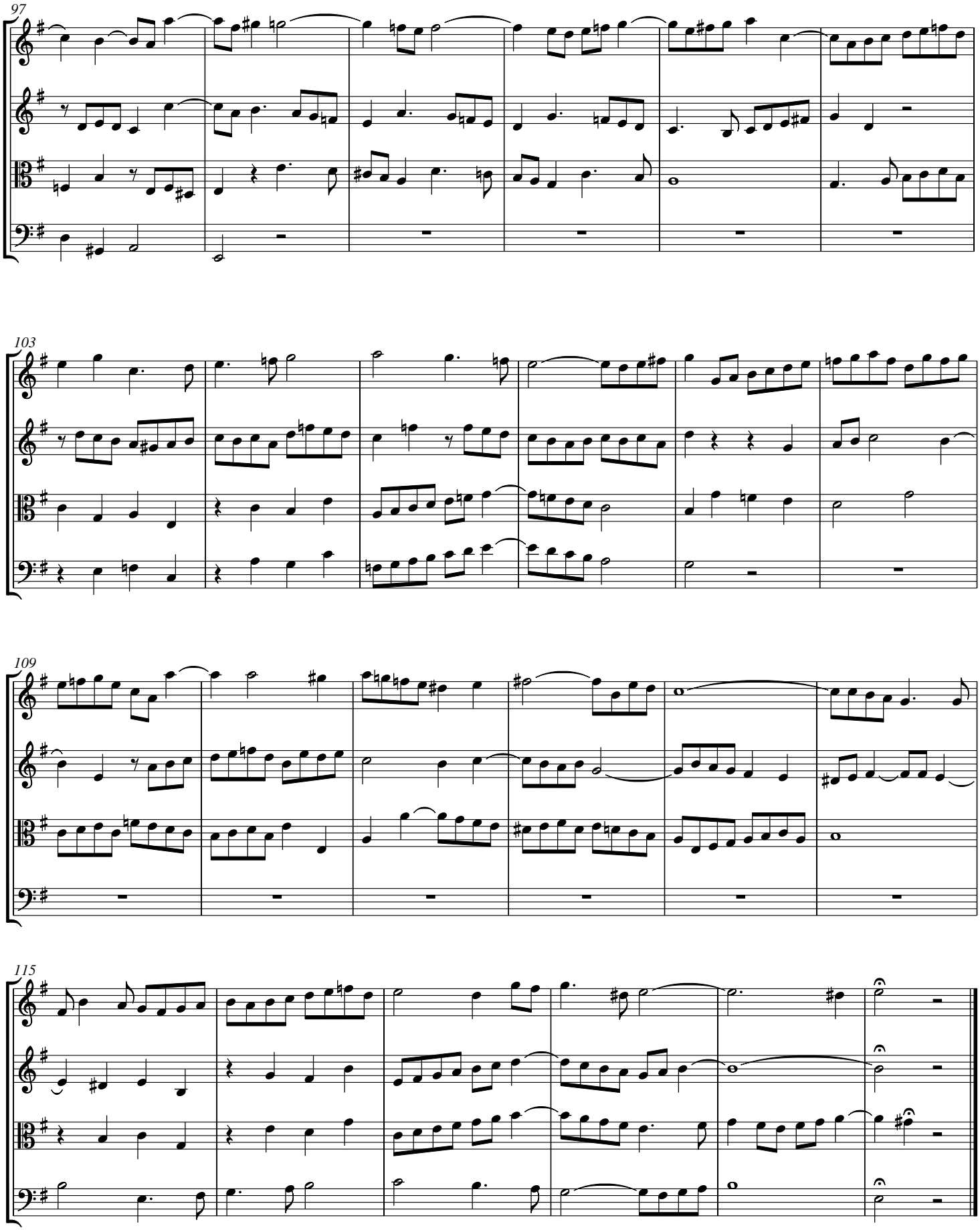
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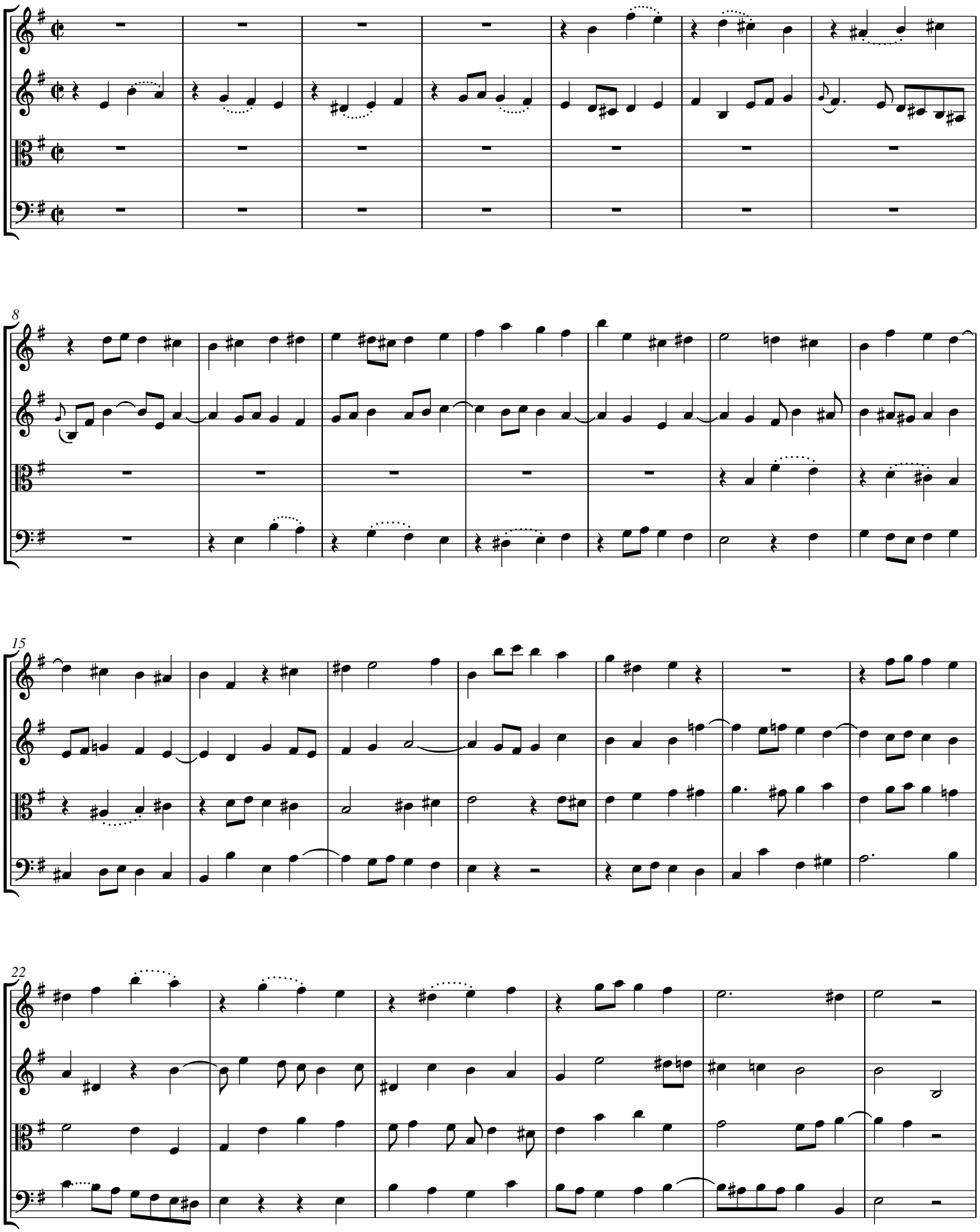
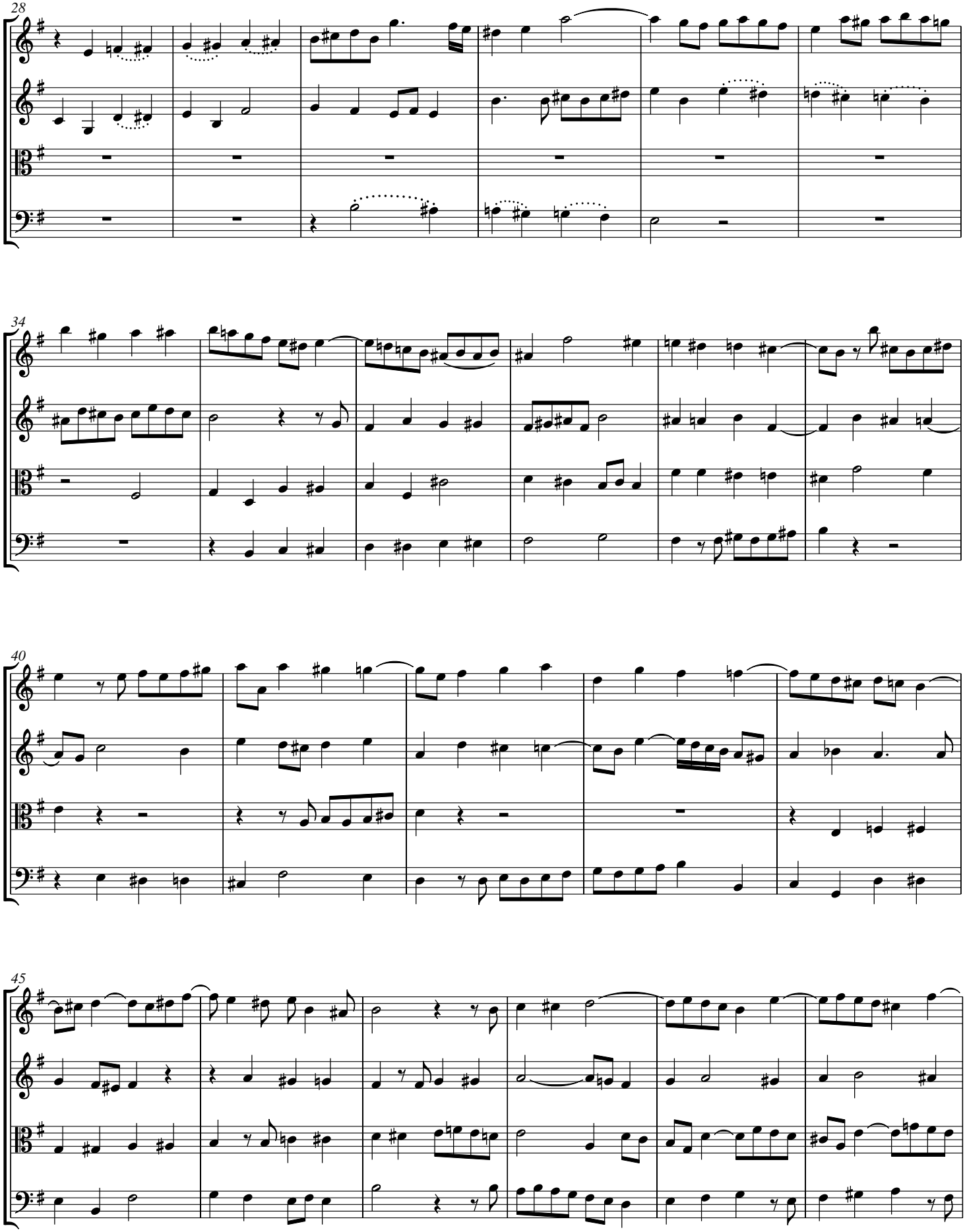
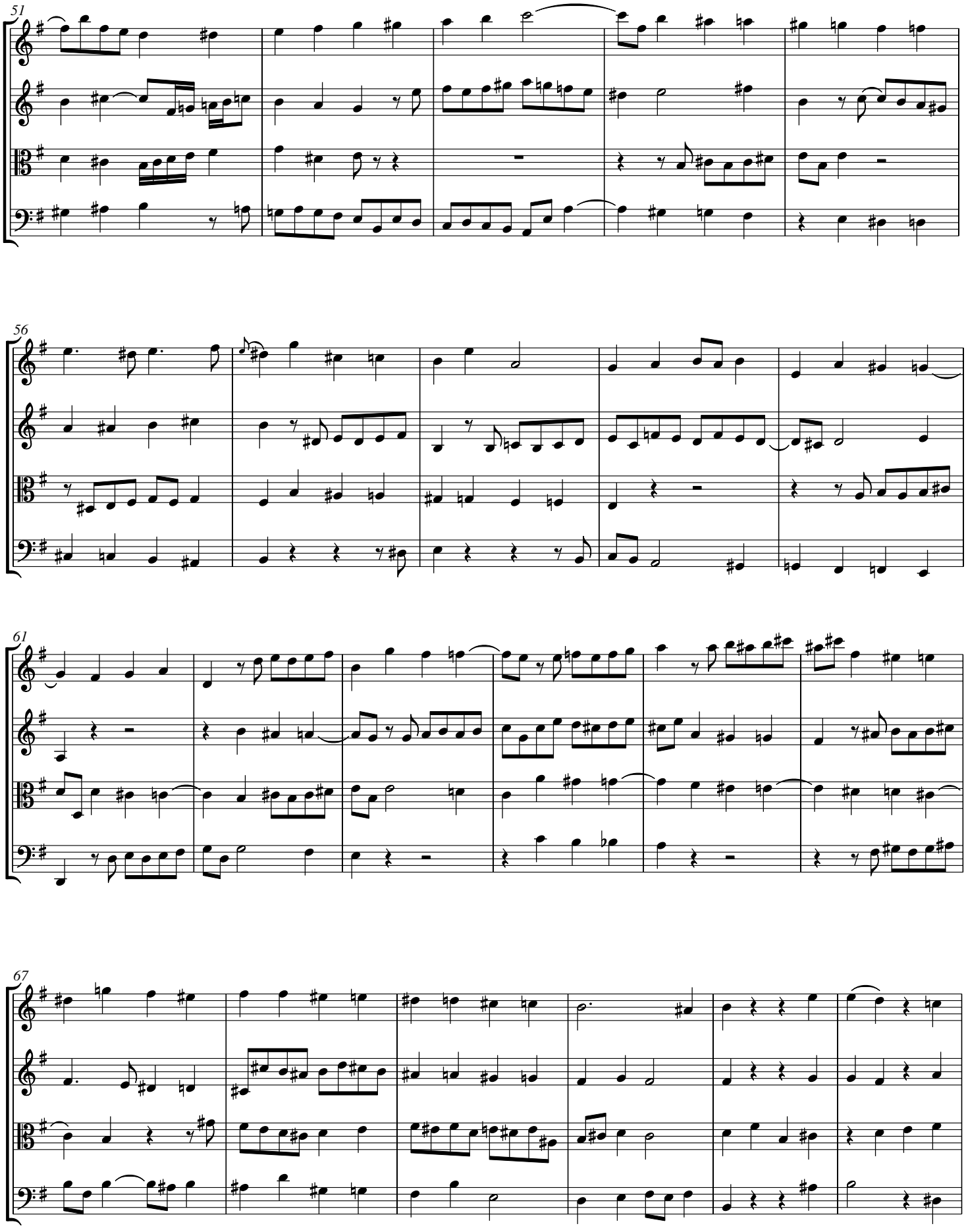
103
109
115

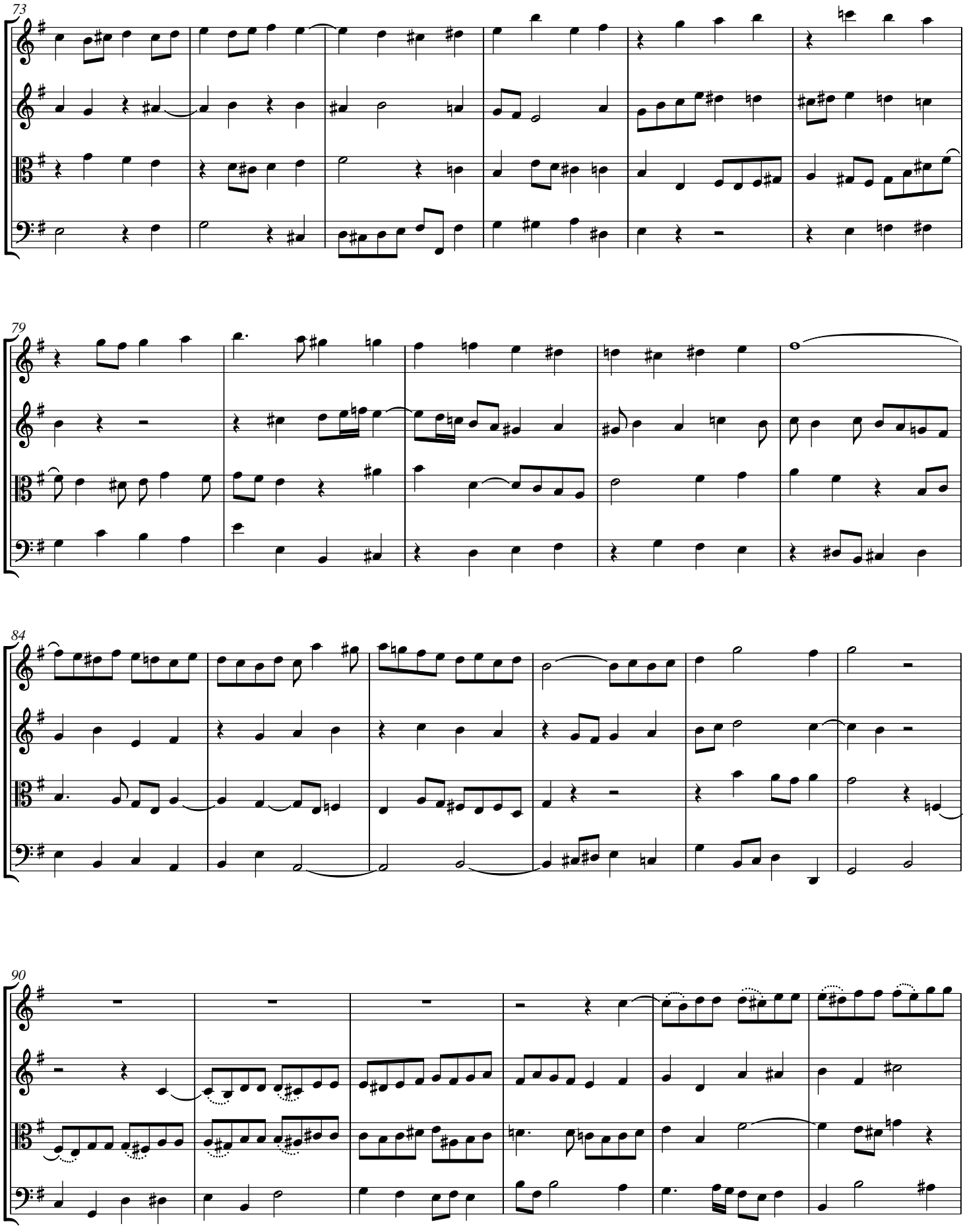
CONTRAPUNCTUS XI

Fuga a 4 voci




28
34
40
45


51
56
61
67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79
84
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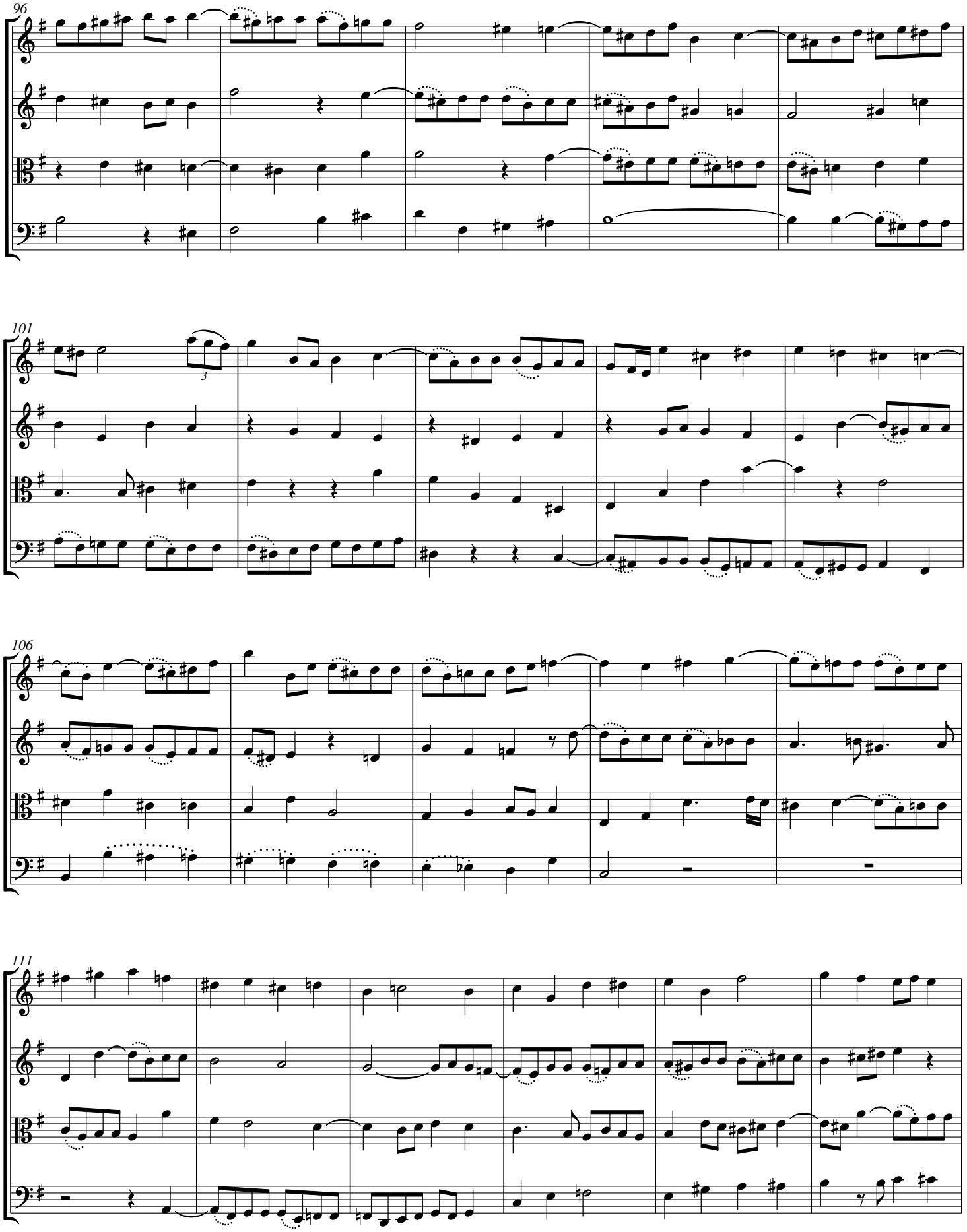
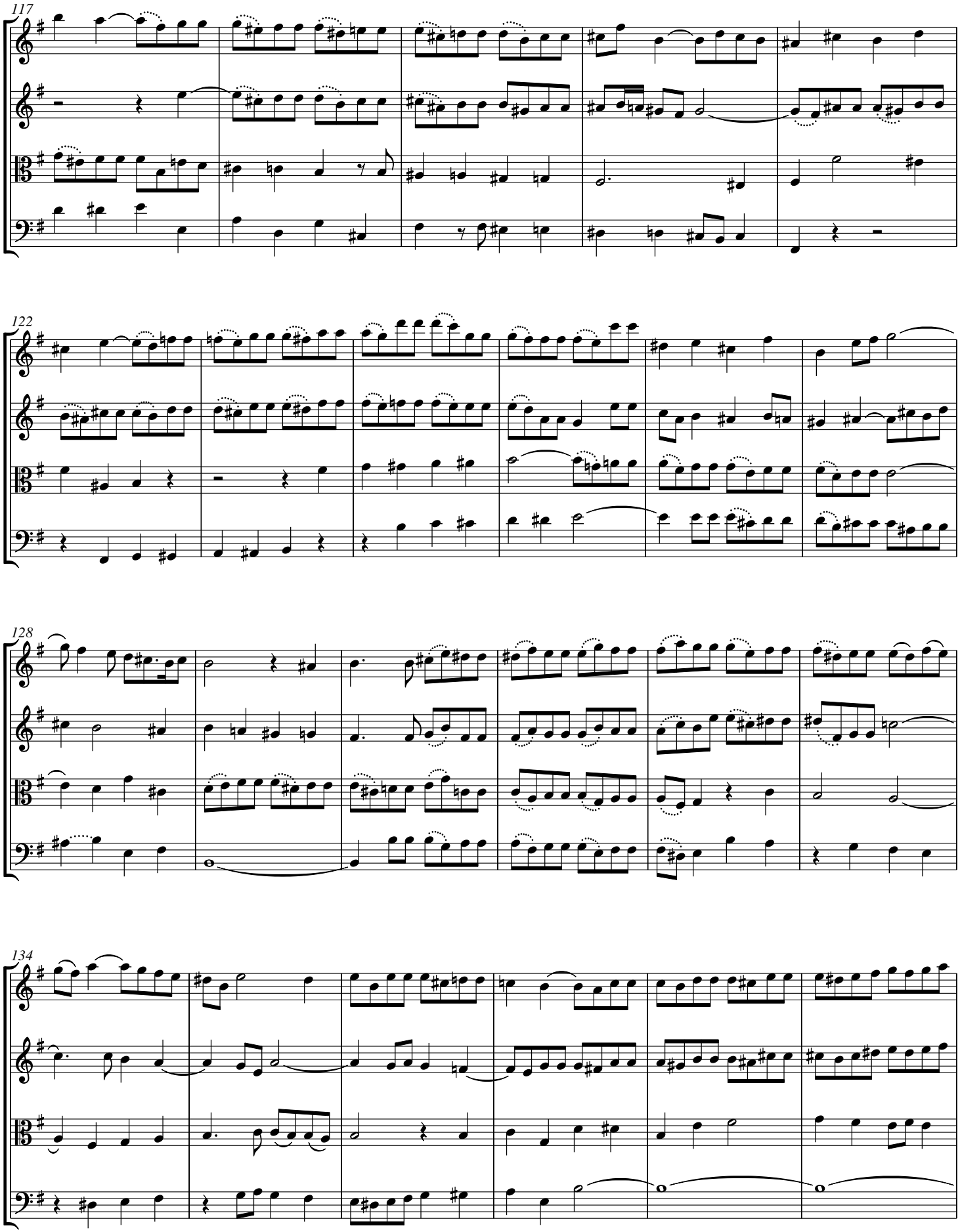
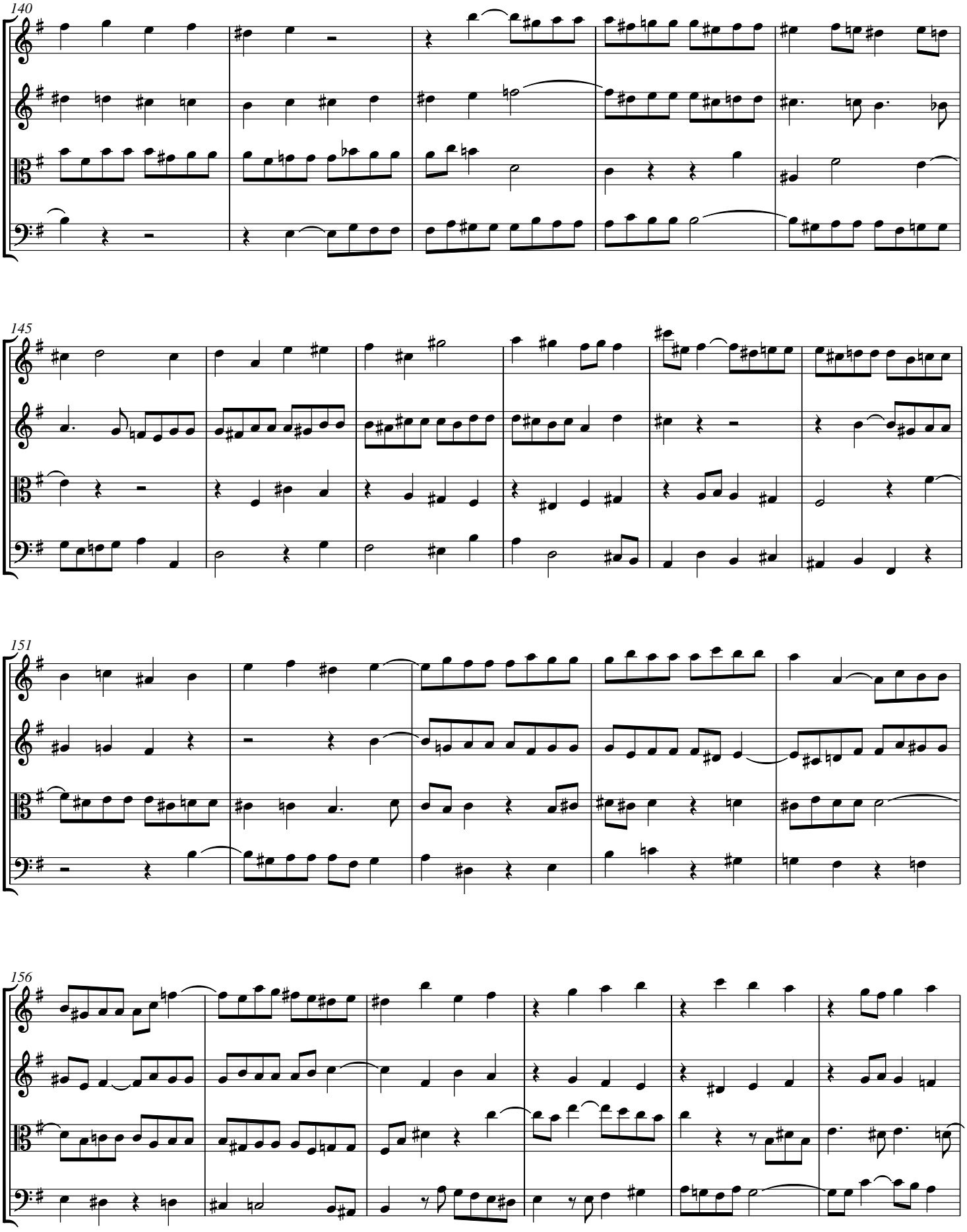
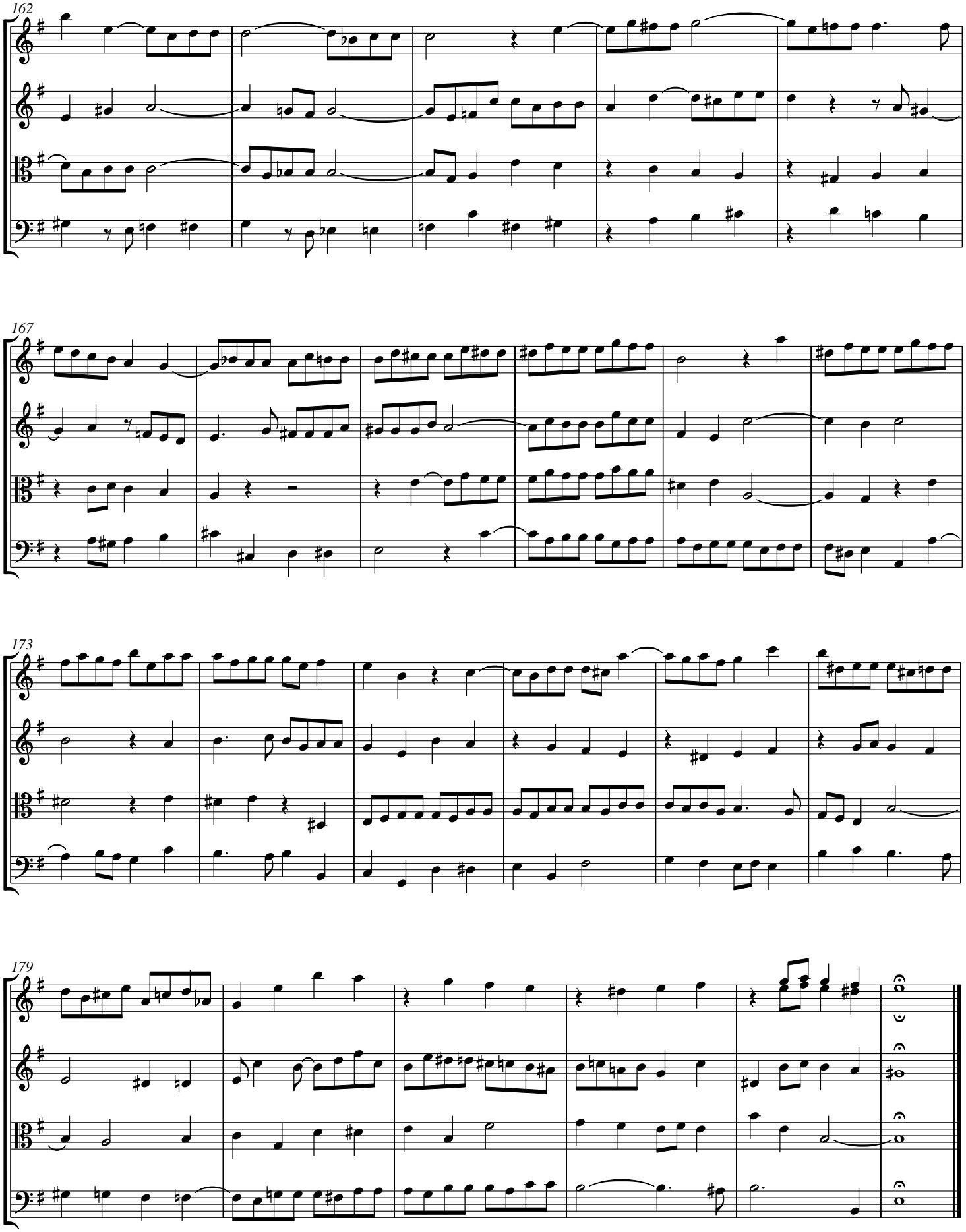

96
101
106
111

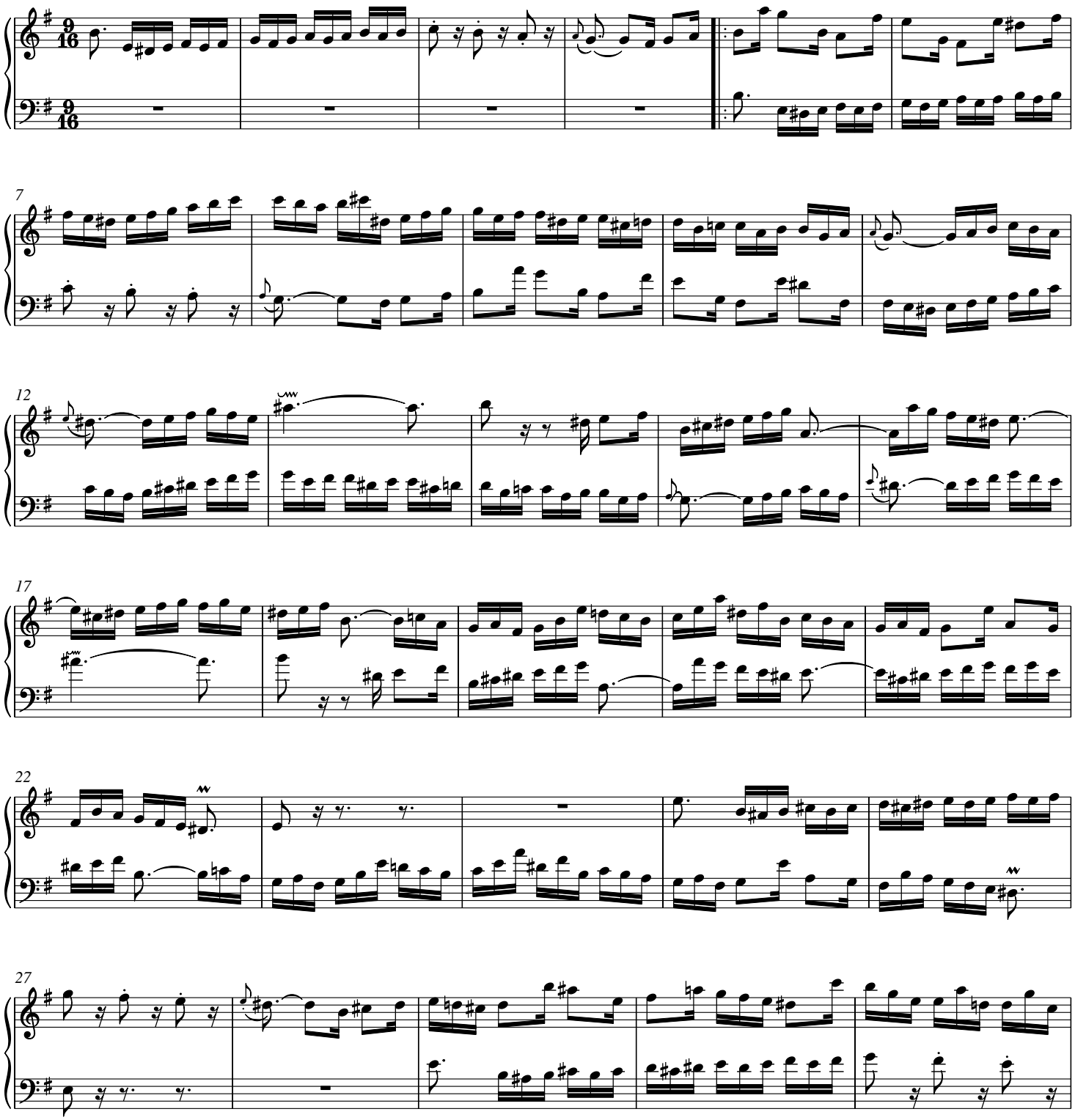

117
122
128
134

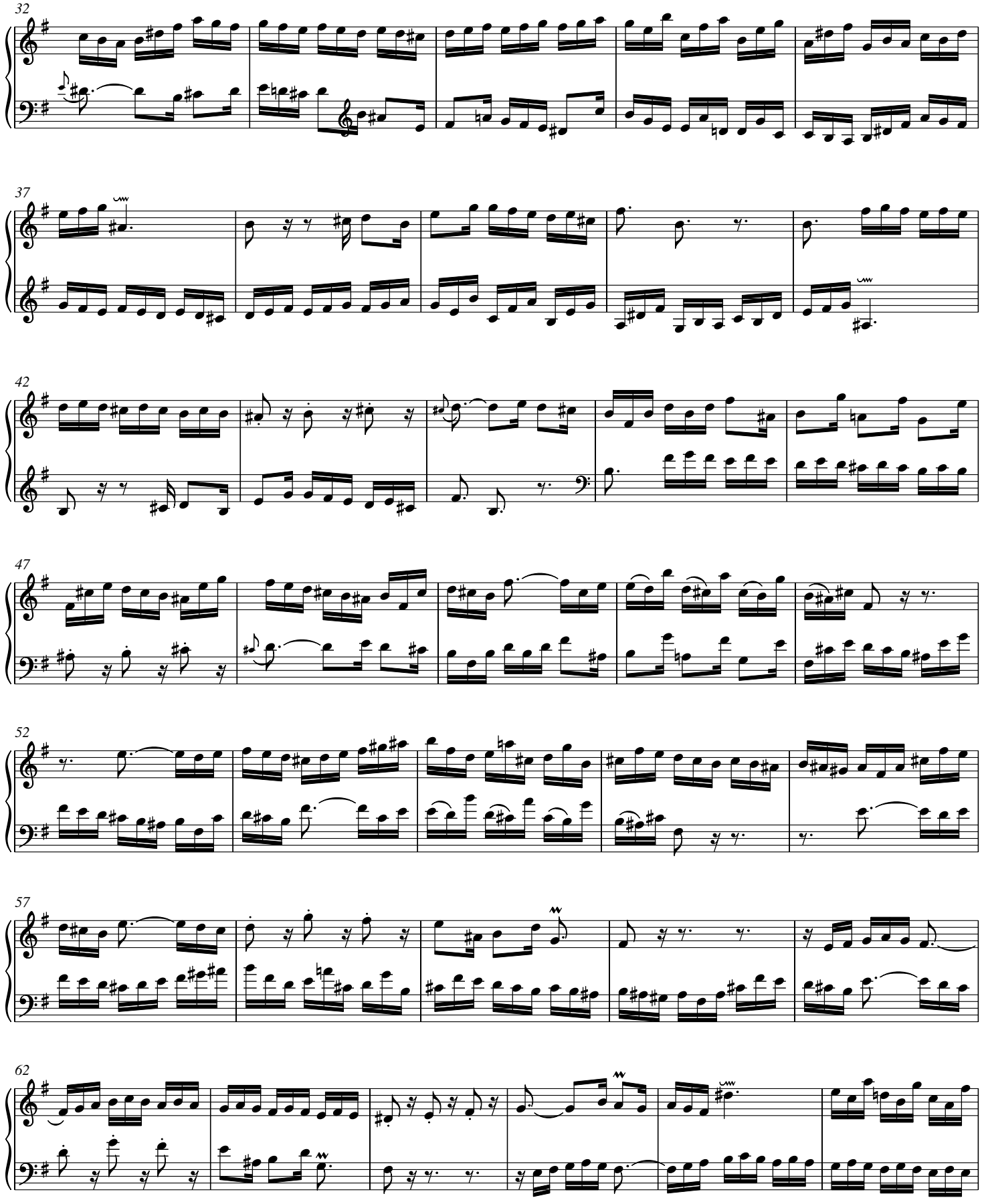

140
145
151
156

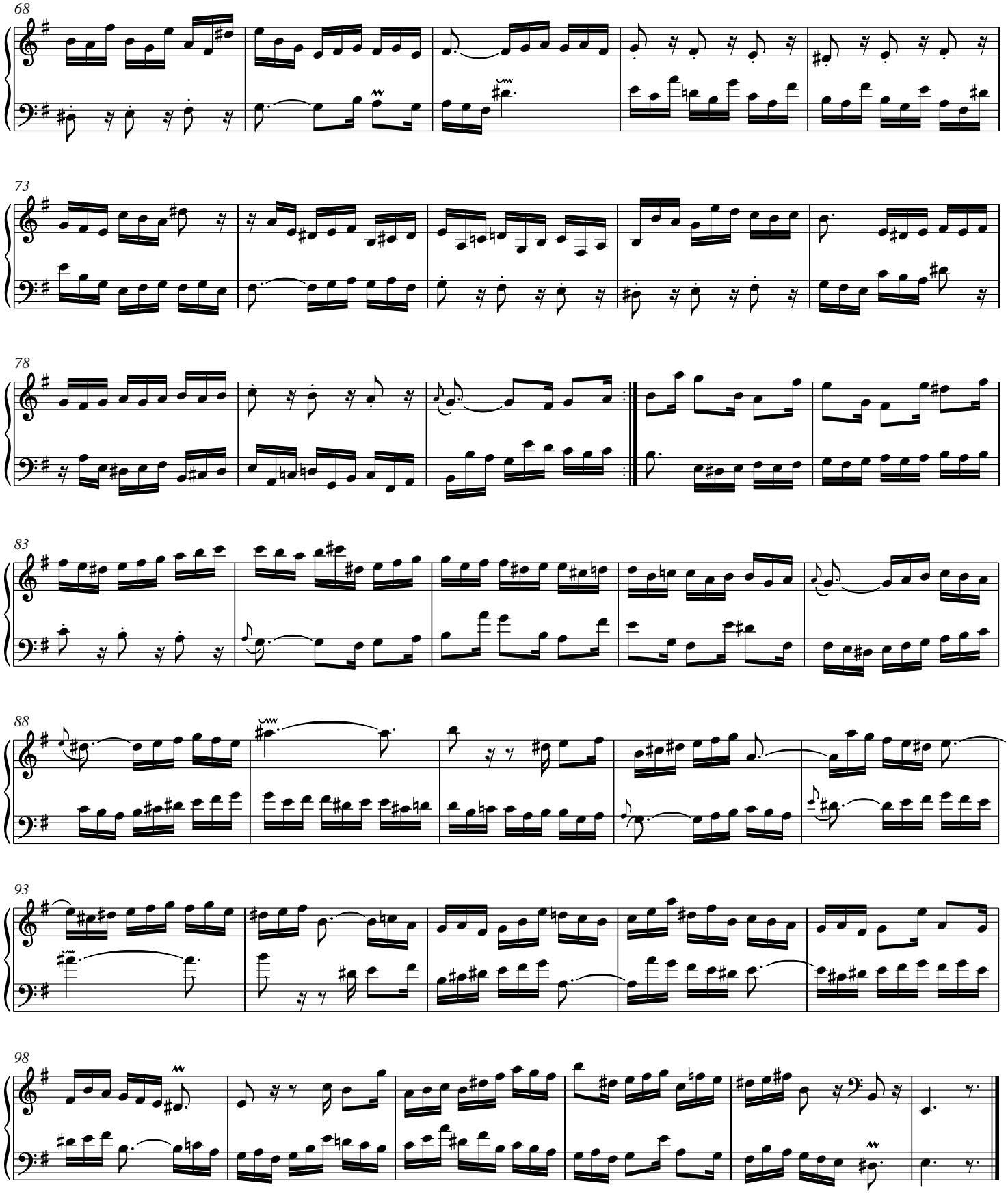

162
167
173
179

CONTRAPUNCTUS XII

Canon all' ottava

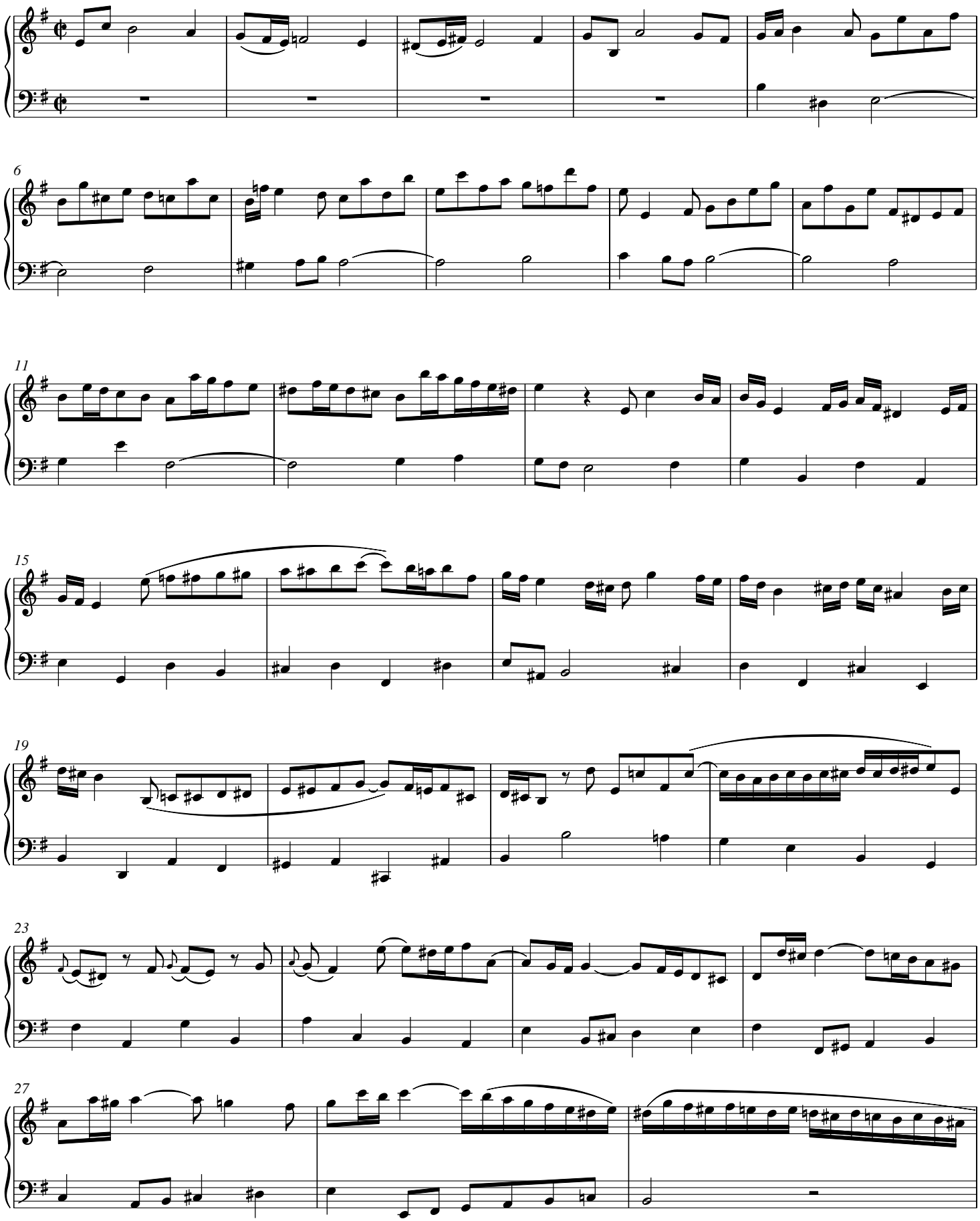


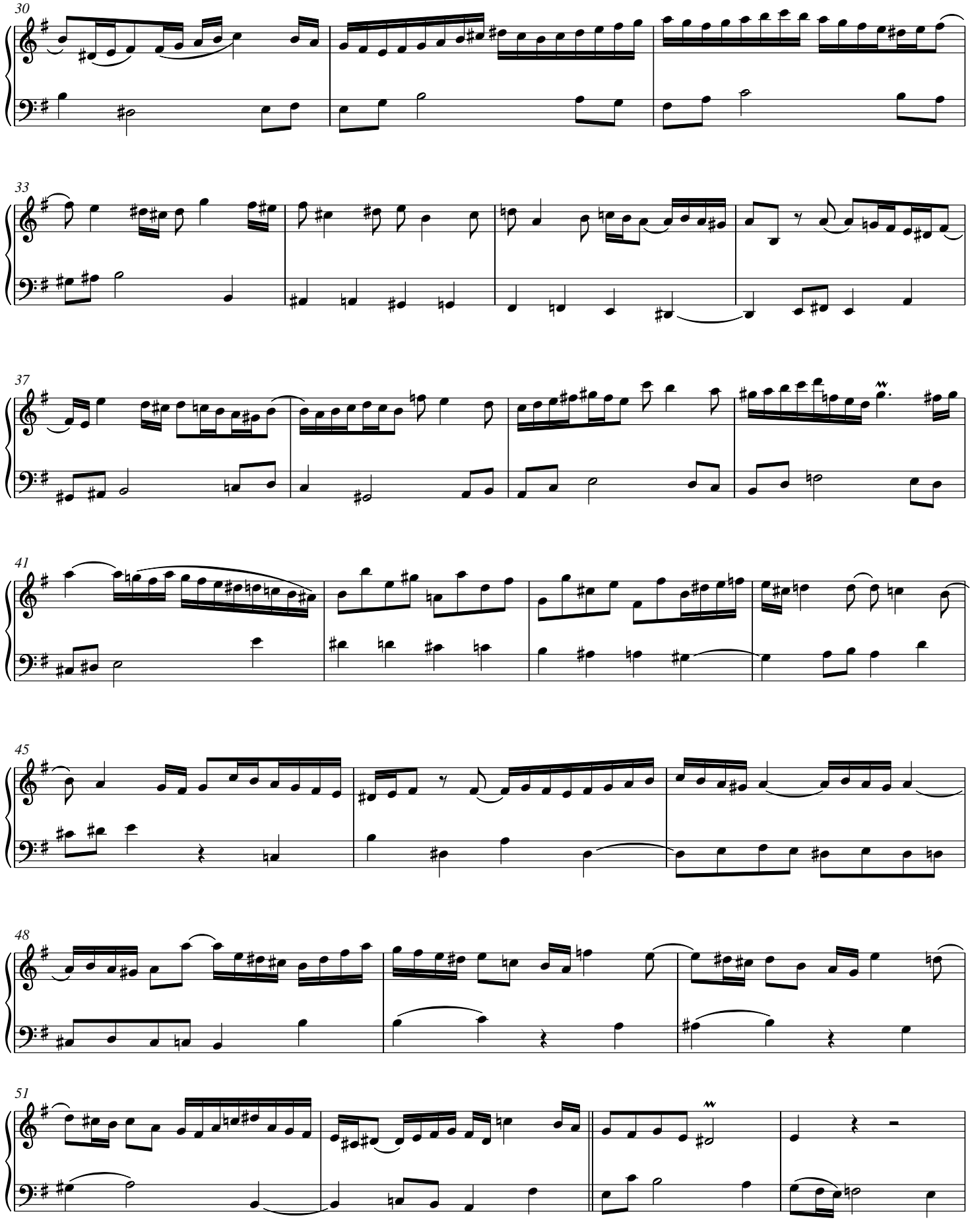

32
37
42
47
52
57
62

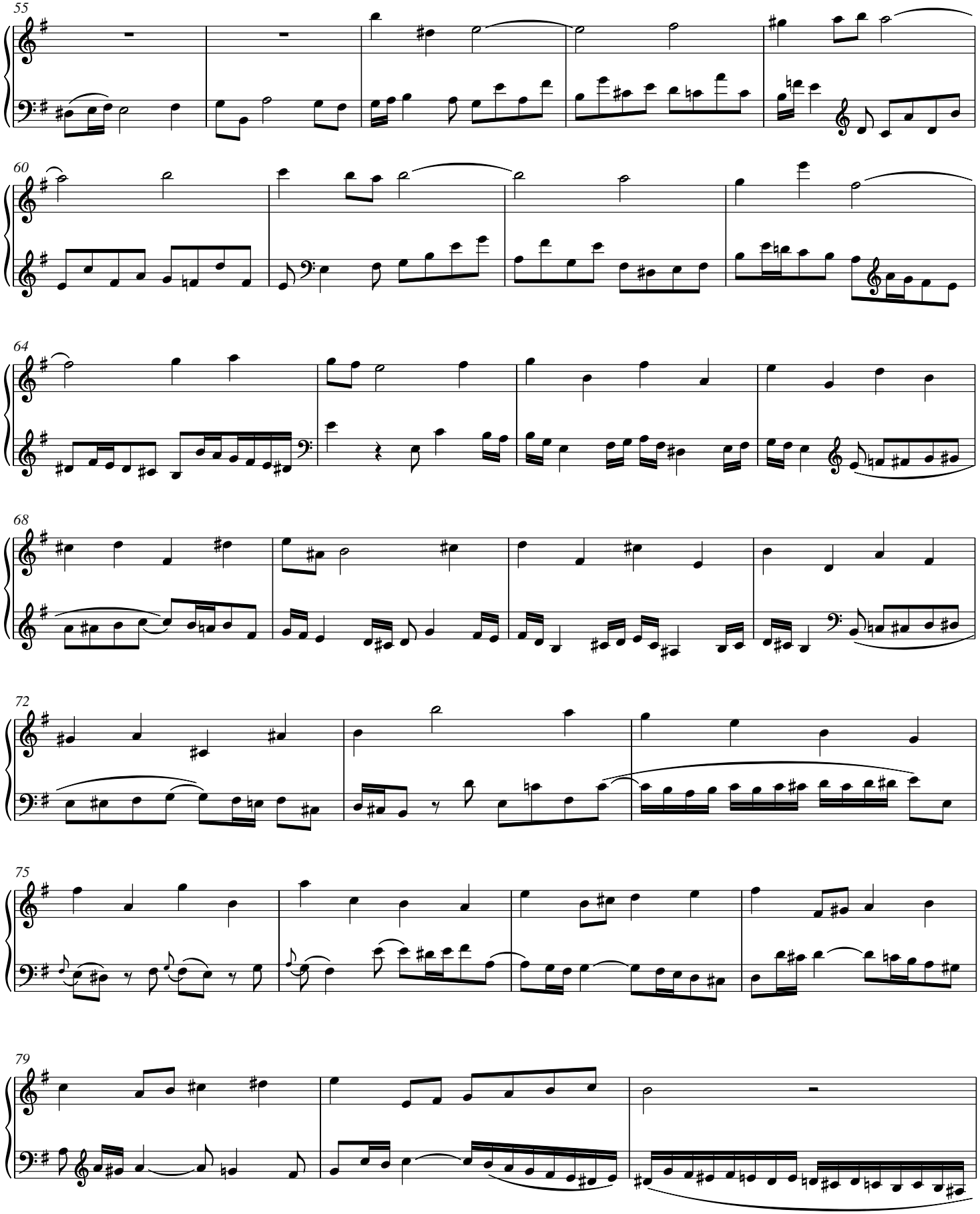

68
73
78
83
88
93
98

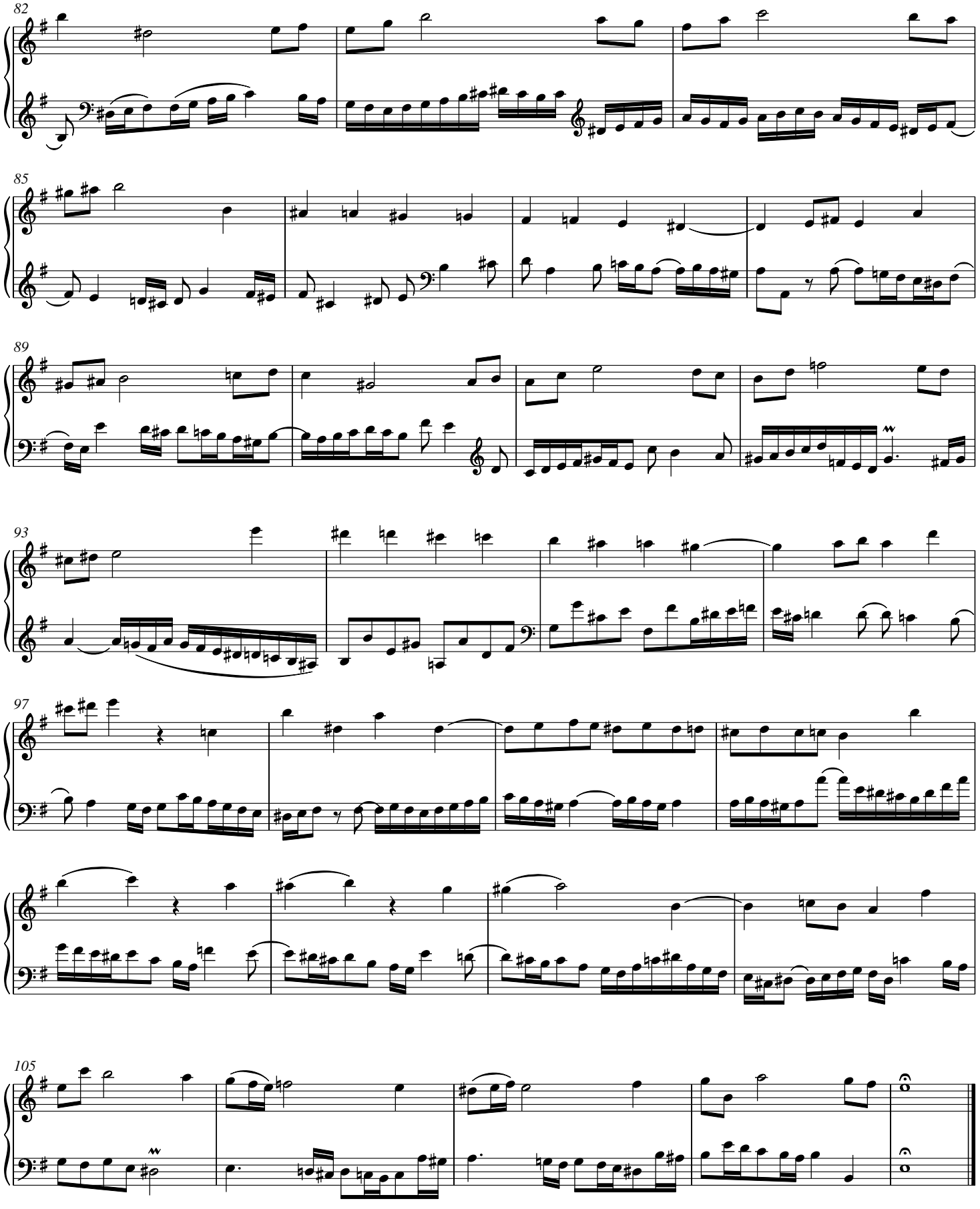
CONTRAPUNCTUS XIII

Canon per Augmentationem in contrario motu




30
33
37
41
45
48
51

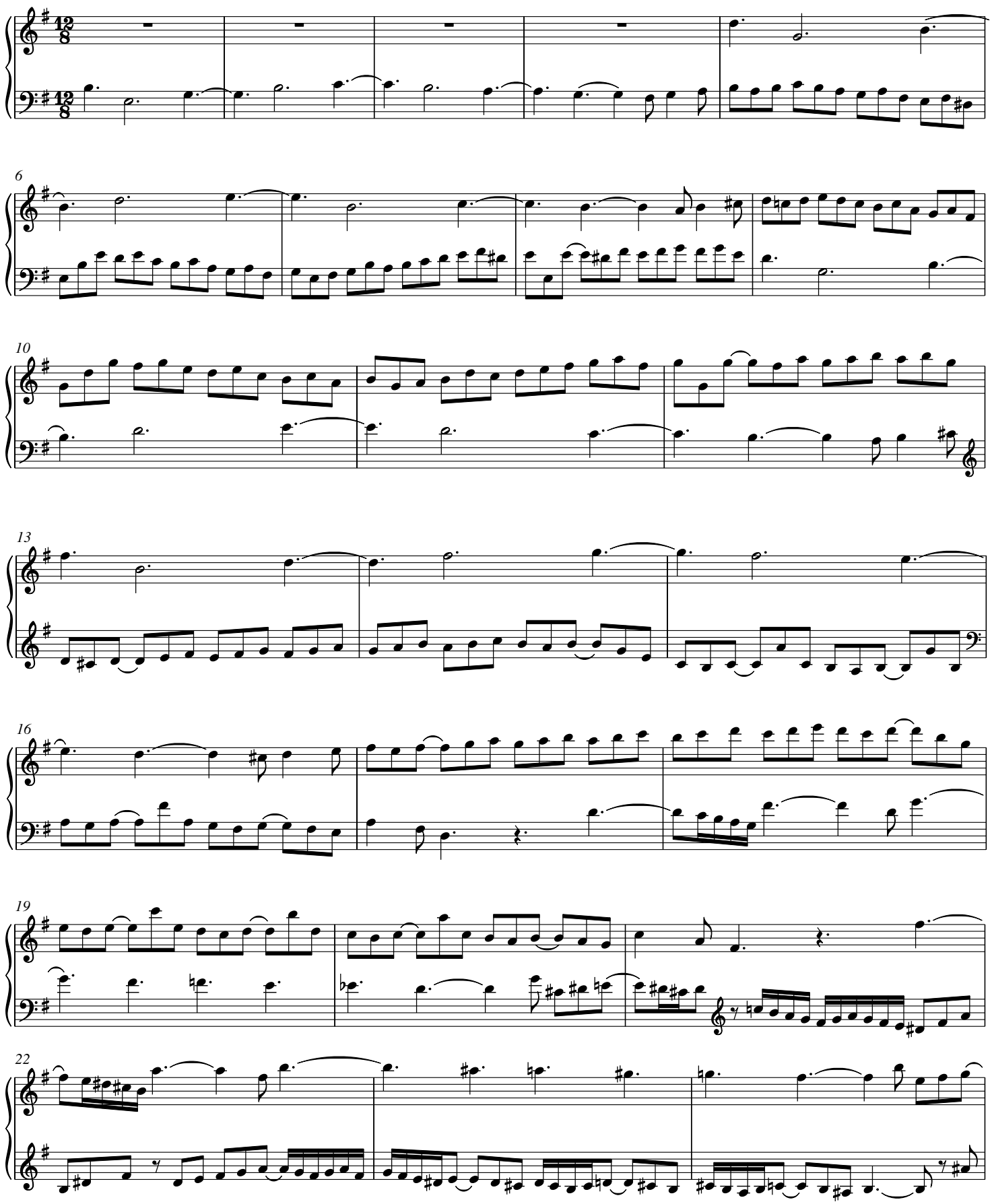

55
60
64
68
72
75
79

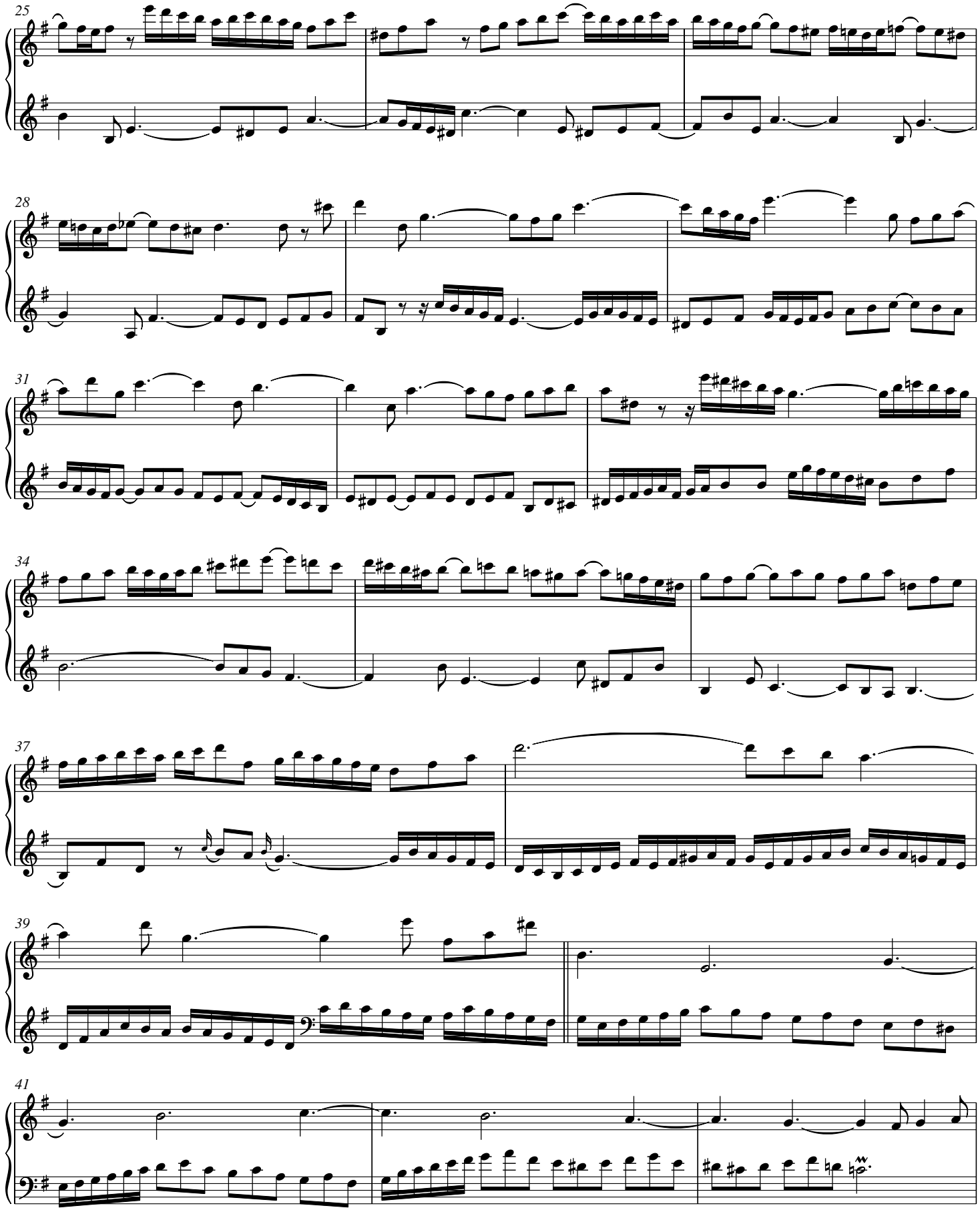

82
85
89
93
97
105

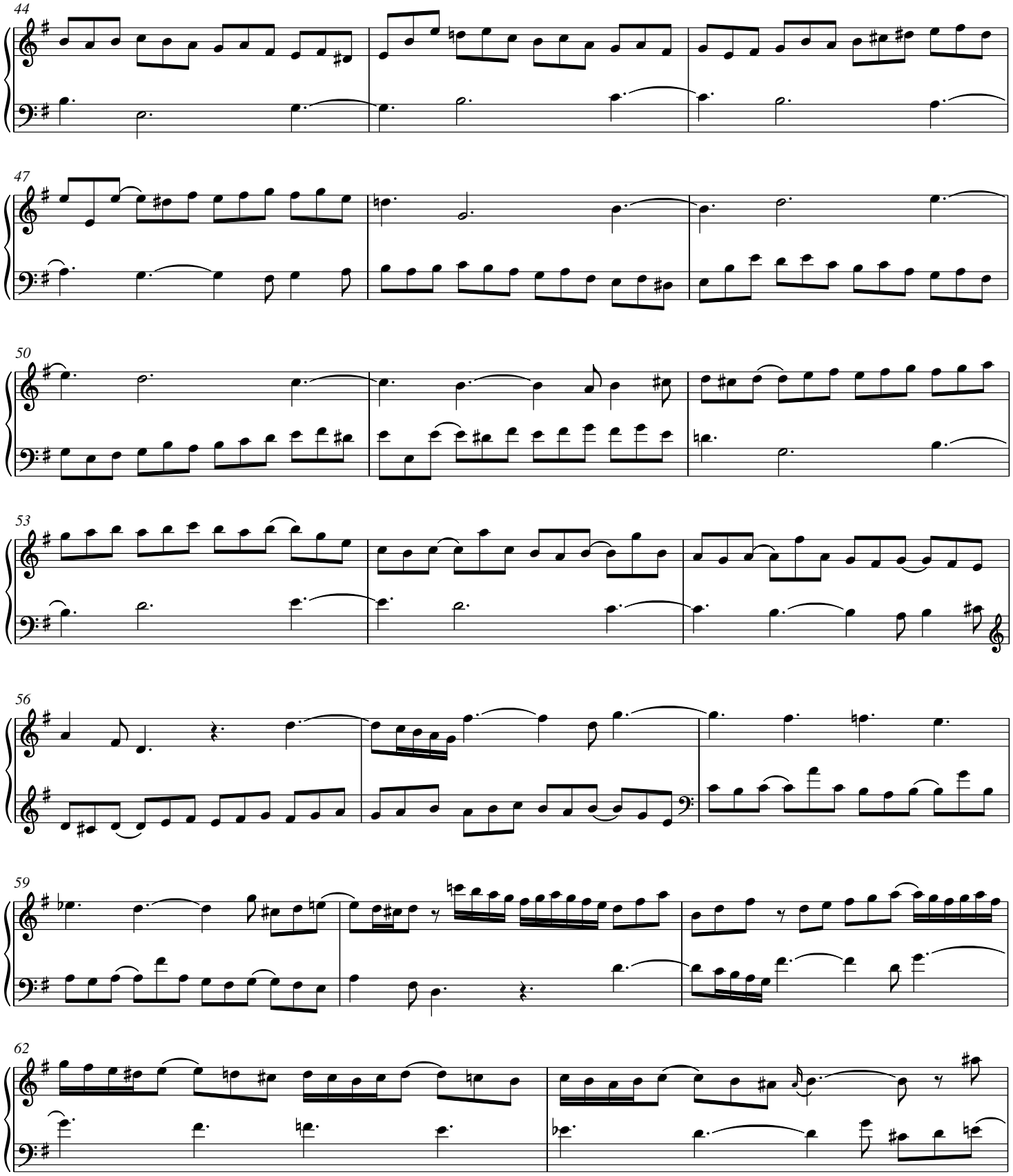
CONTRAPUNCTUS XIV

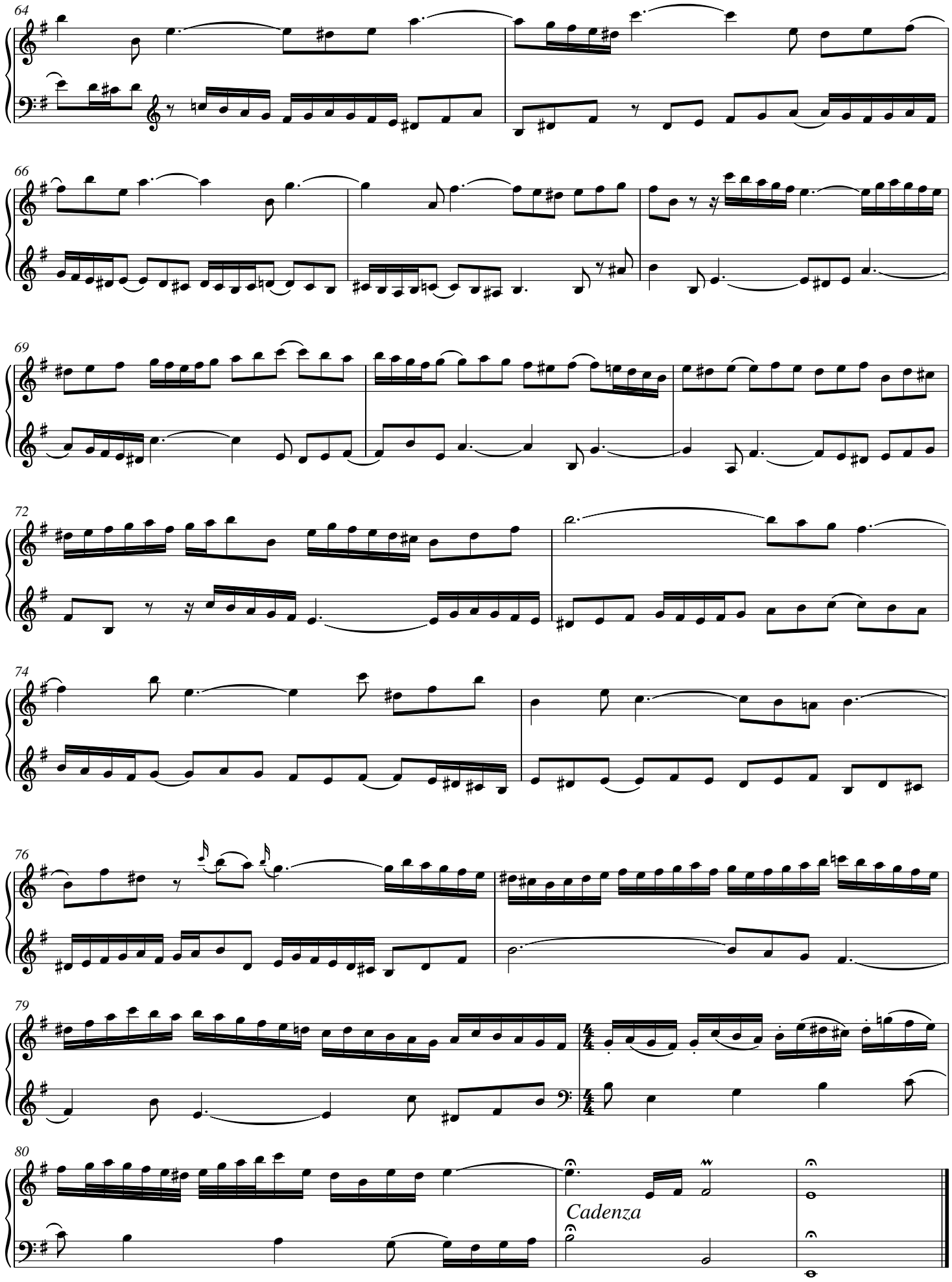
Canon alla Decima in contrapunto alla Terza

The rhythmic values in this piece
have been rationalized in accordance
with modern notation for compound time.



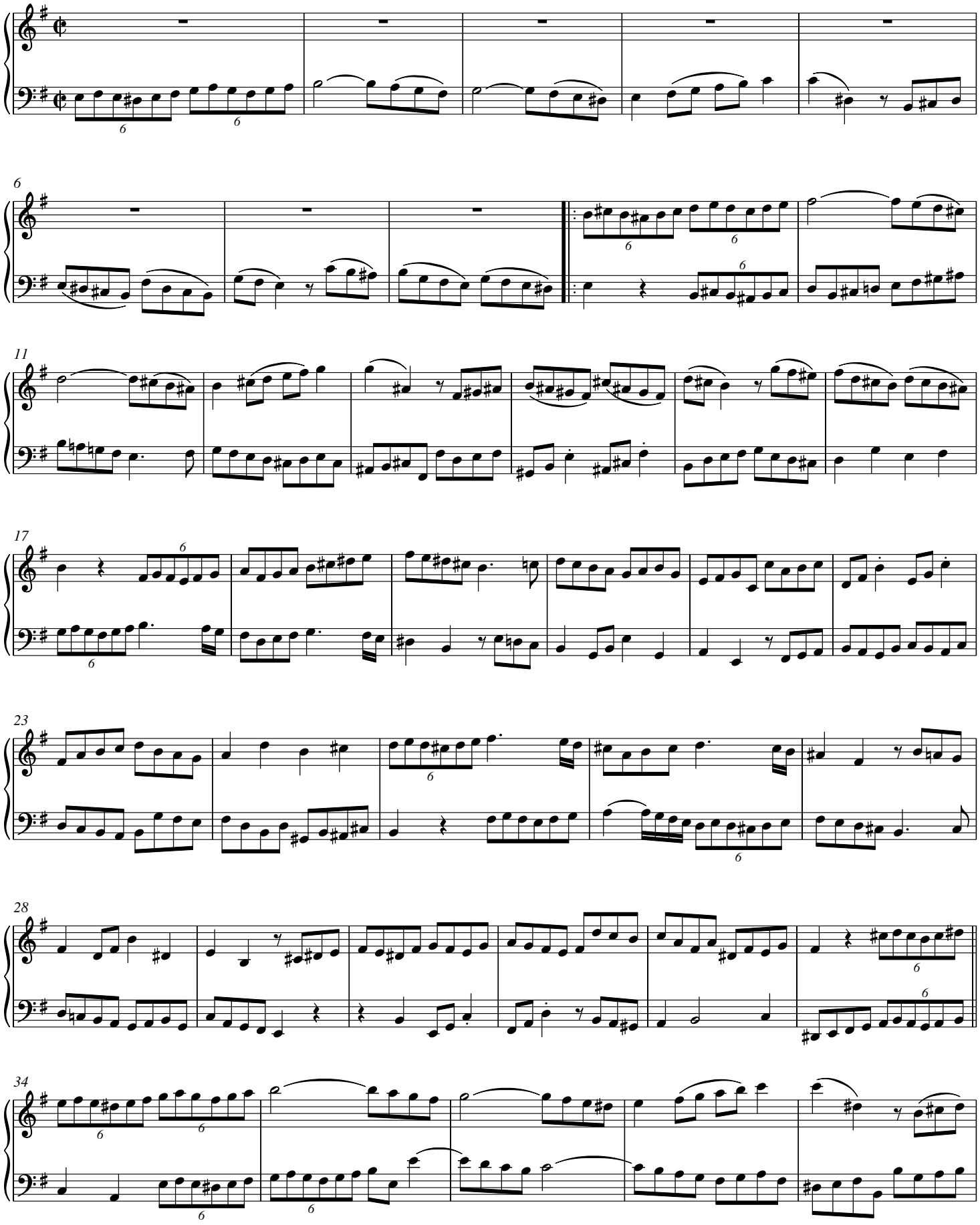

25
28
31
34
37
39
41

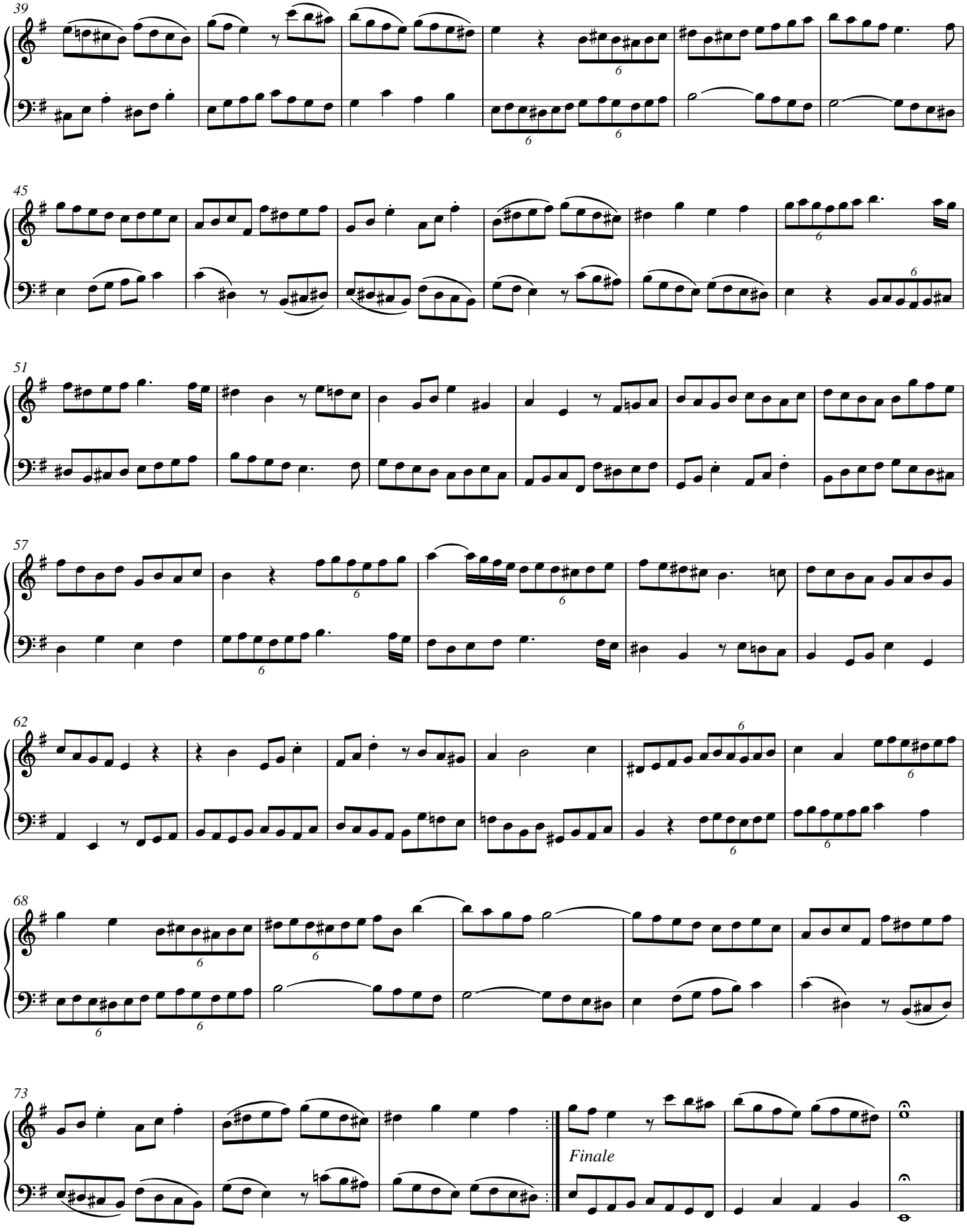

44
47
50
53
56
59
62


64
66
69
72
74
76
79
80
Cadenza

CONTRAPUNCTUS XV

Canon alla Duodecima in contrapunto alla Quinta

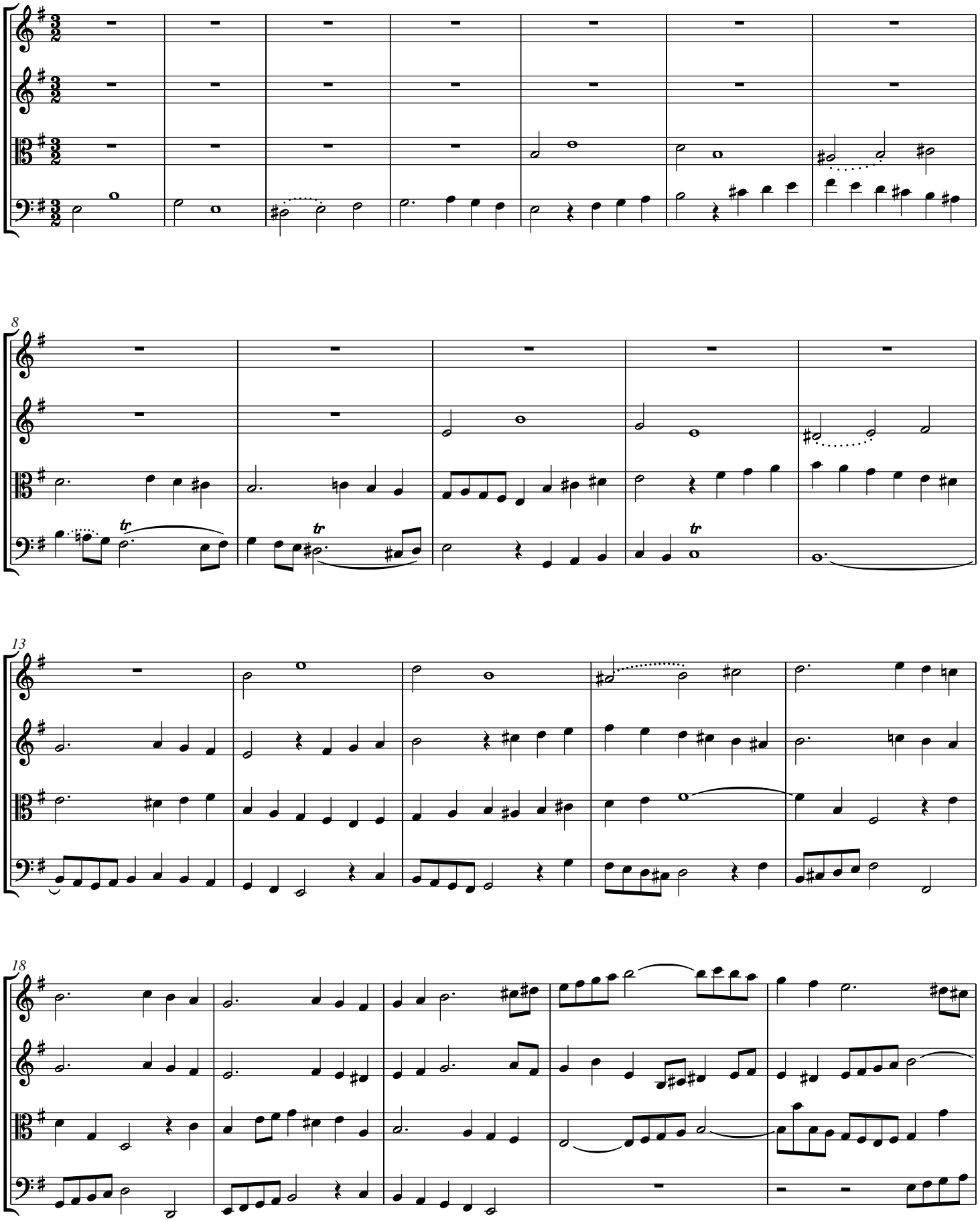


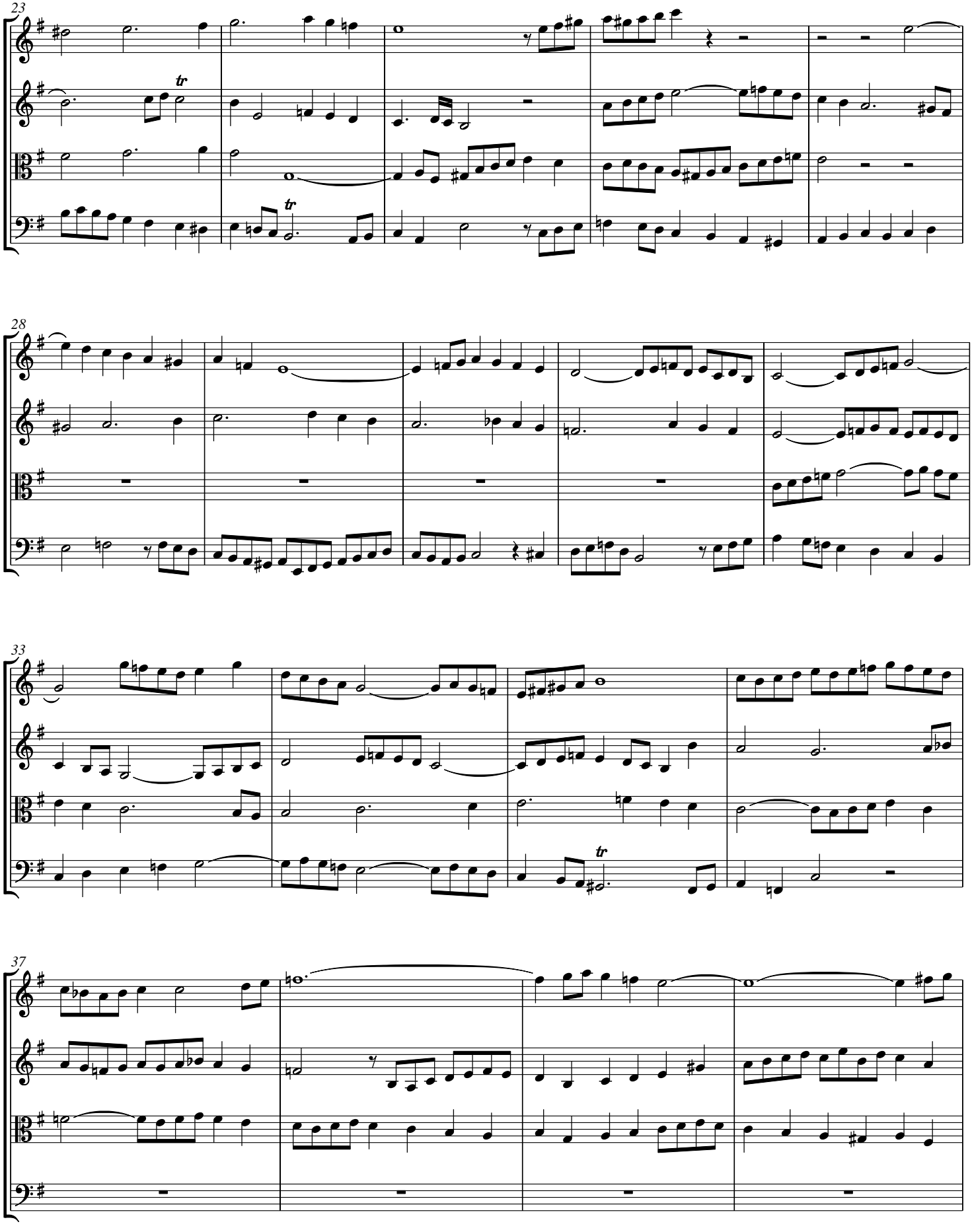

39
45
51
57
62
68
73
Finale

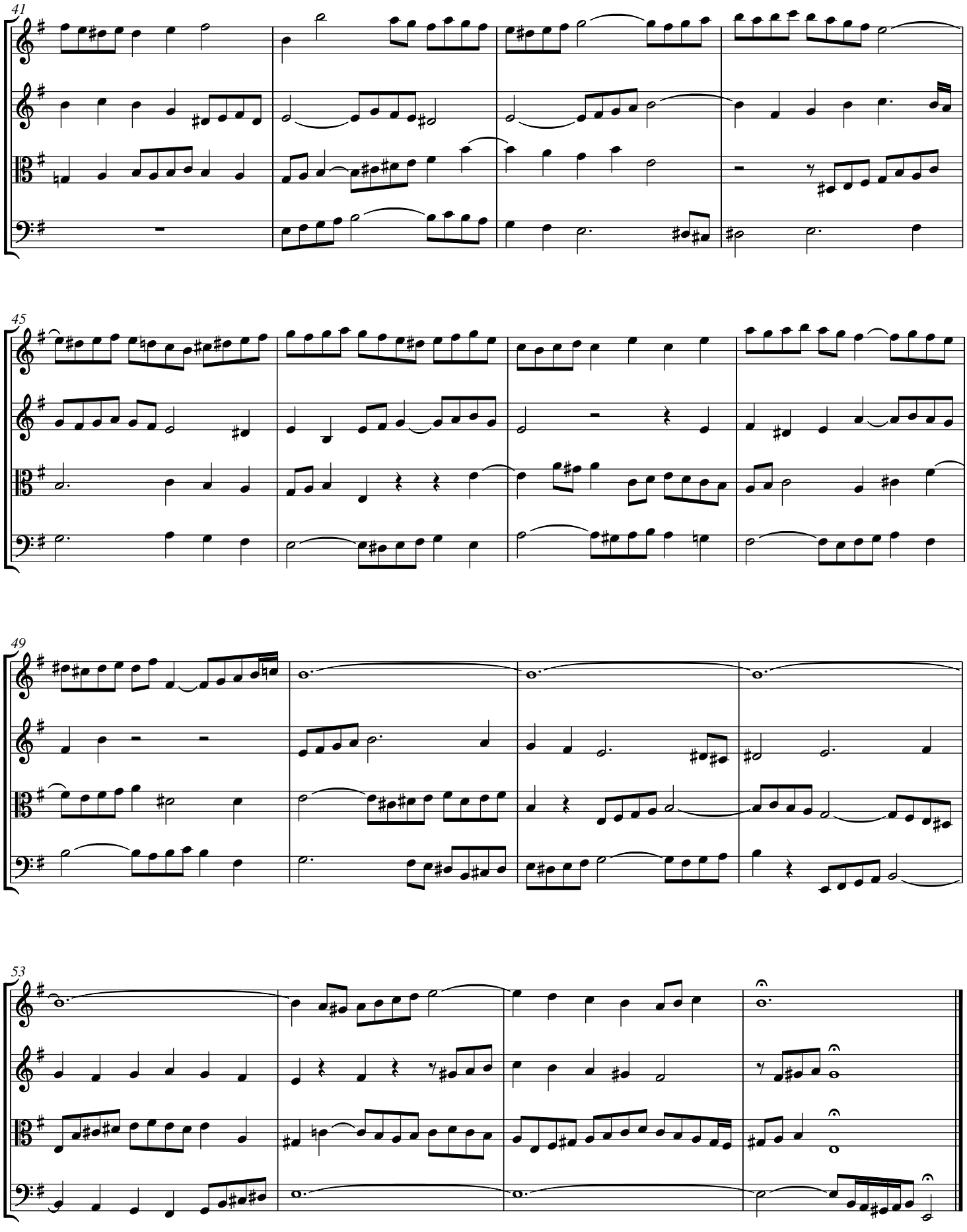
CONTRAPUNCTUS XVI

Fuga a 4 voci

RECTUS



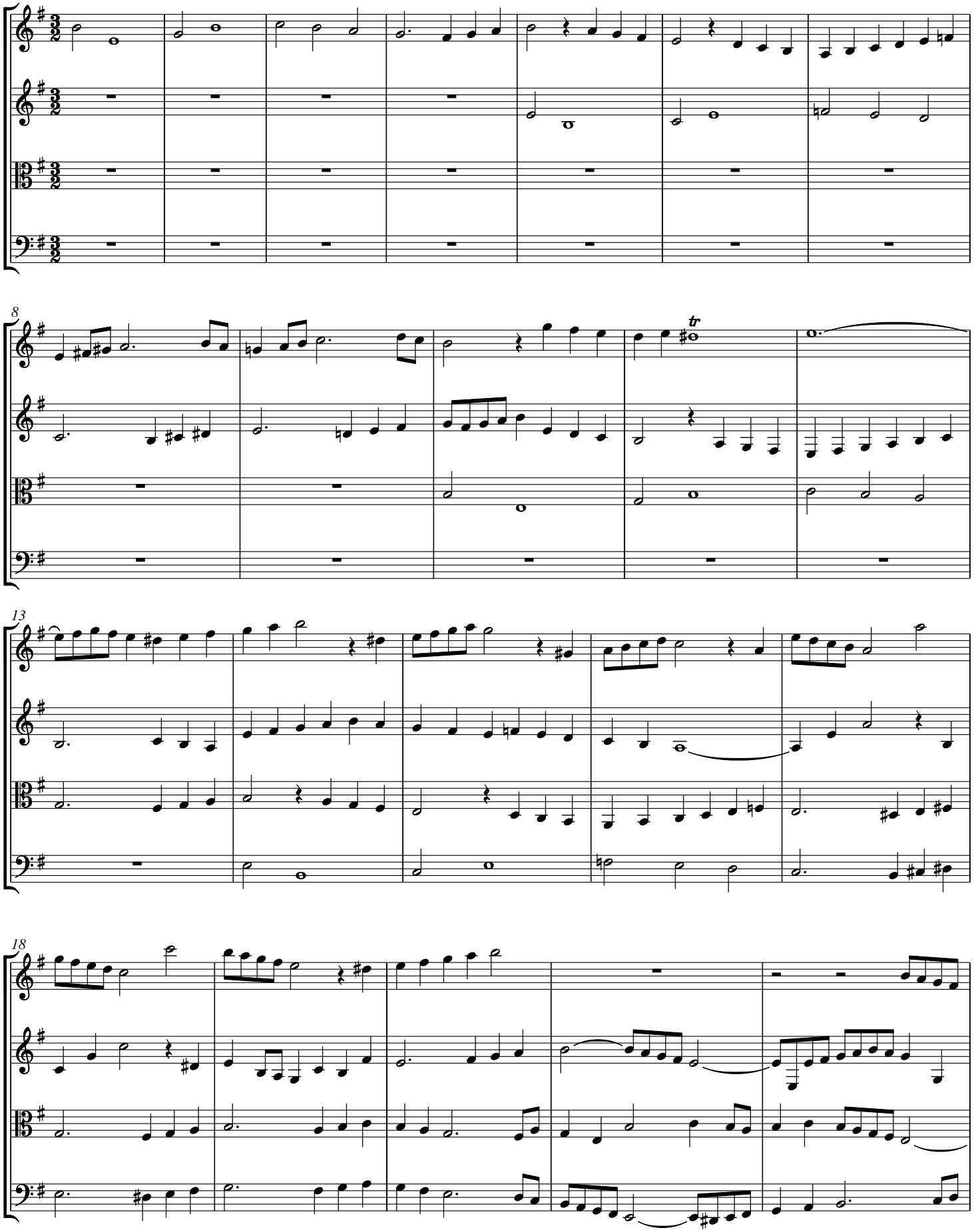

23
28
33
37

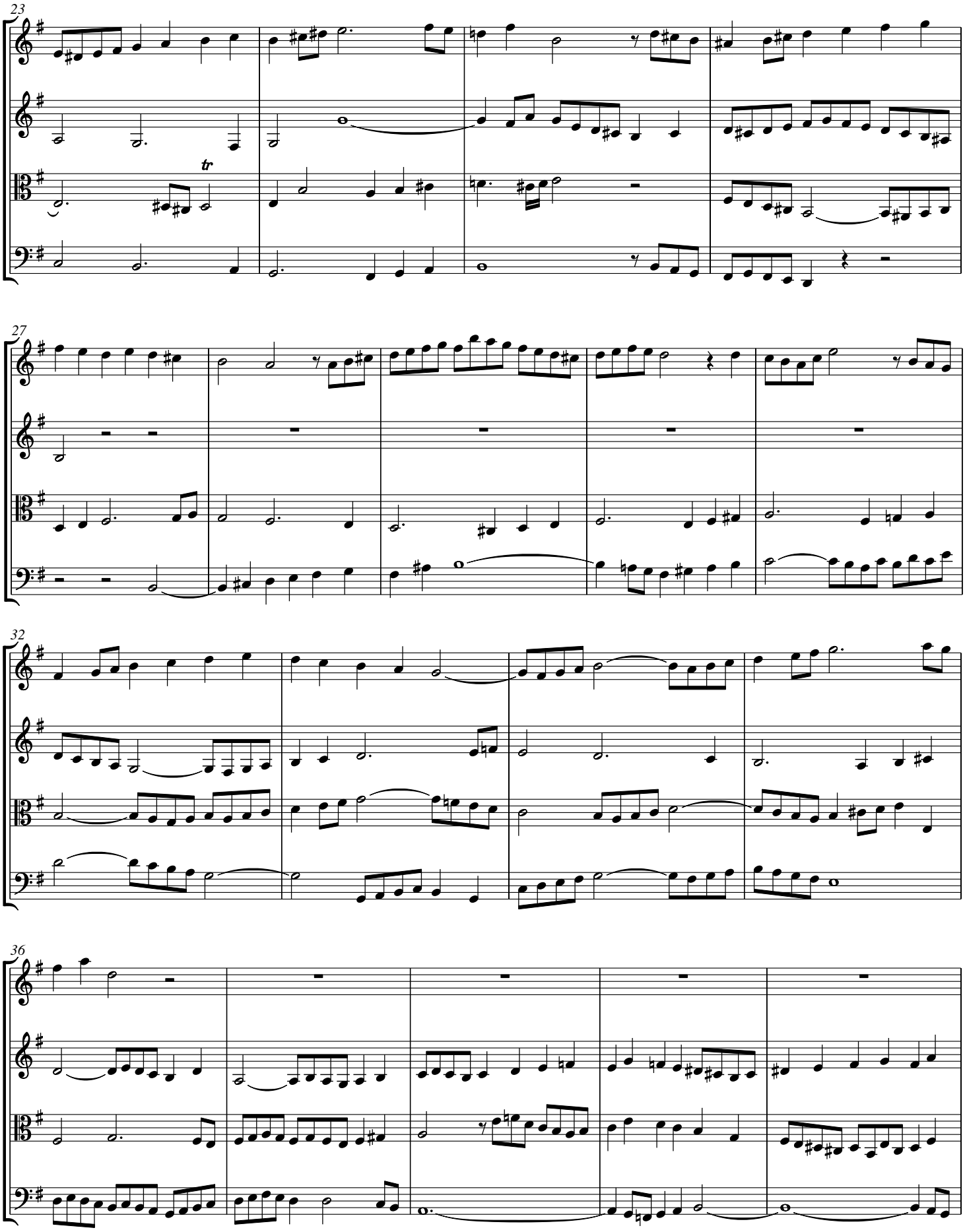

41
45
49
53

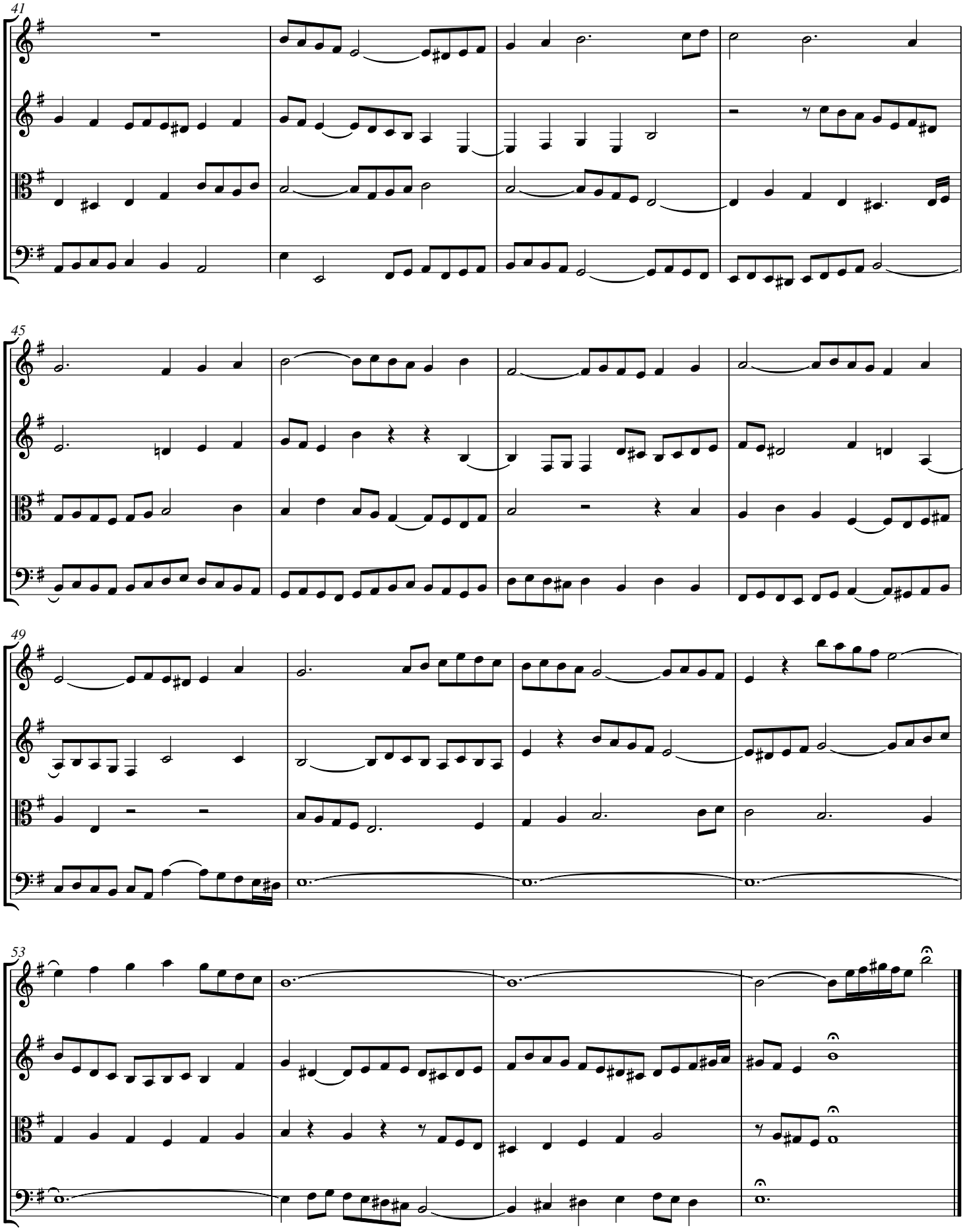
CONTRAPUNCTUS XVI

Fuga a 4 voci

INVERSUS




23
tr
27
32
36

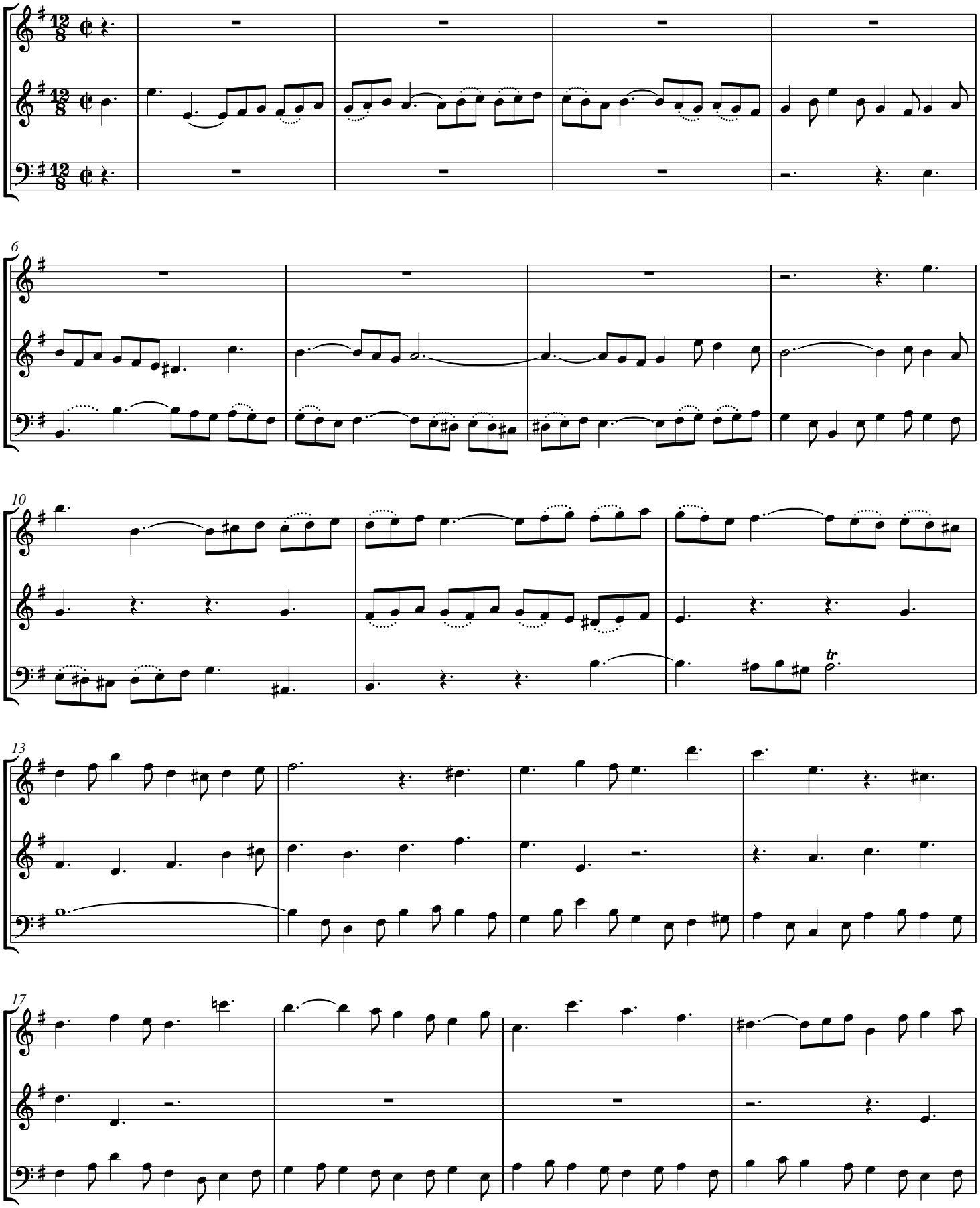

41
45
49
53

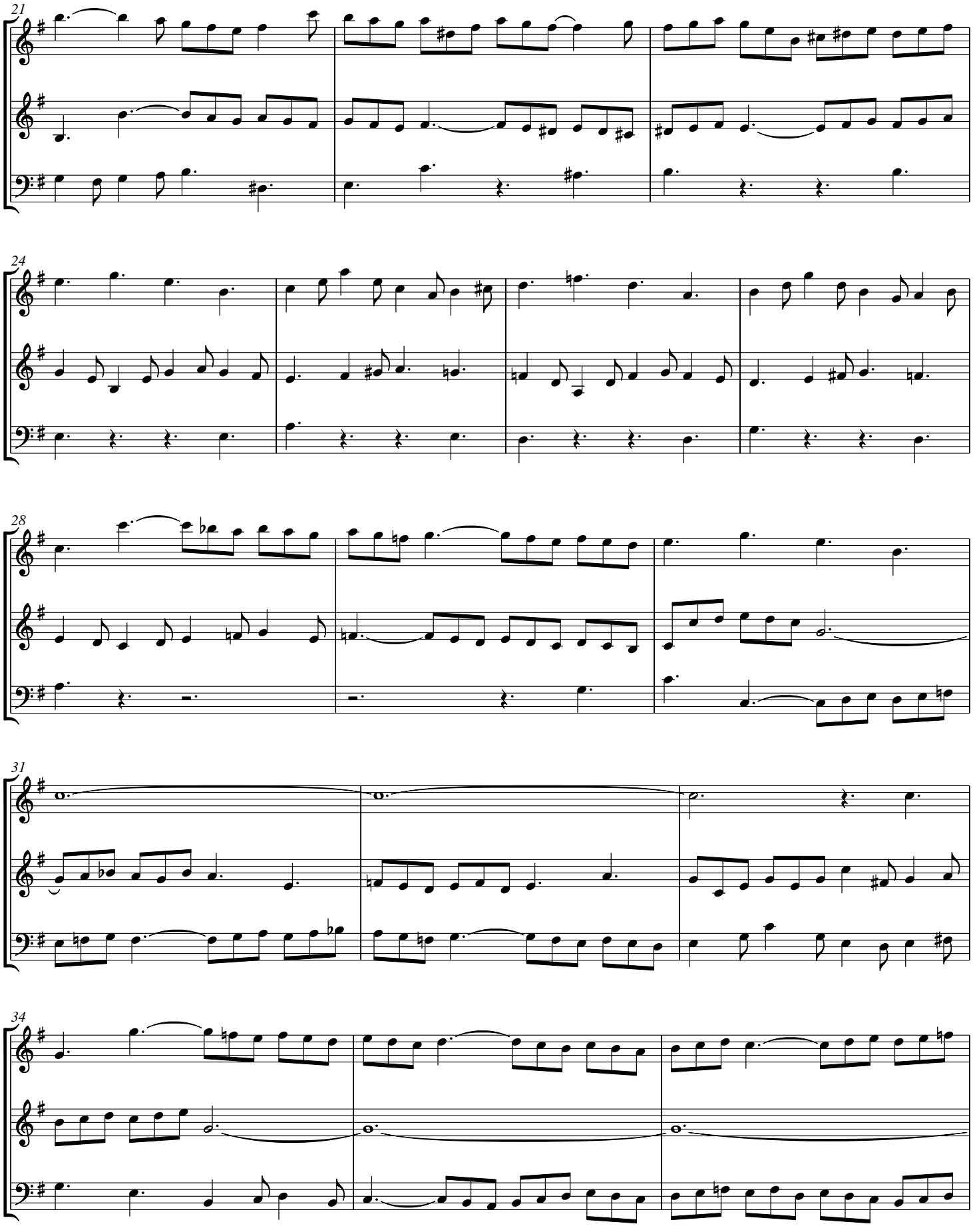
CONTRAPUNCTUS XVII

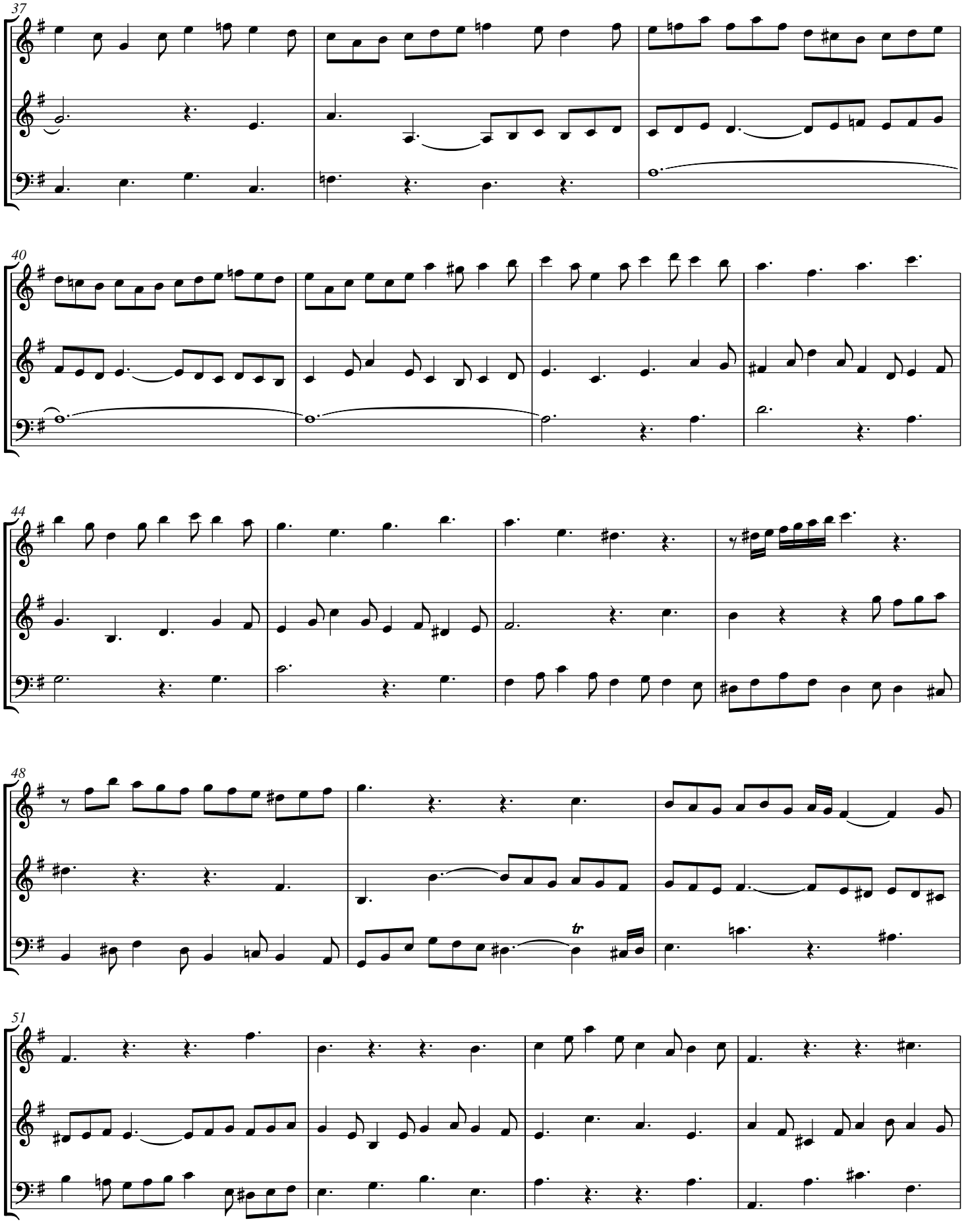
Fuga a 3 voci

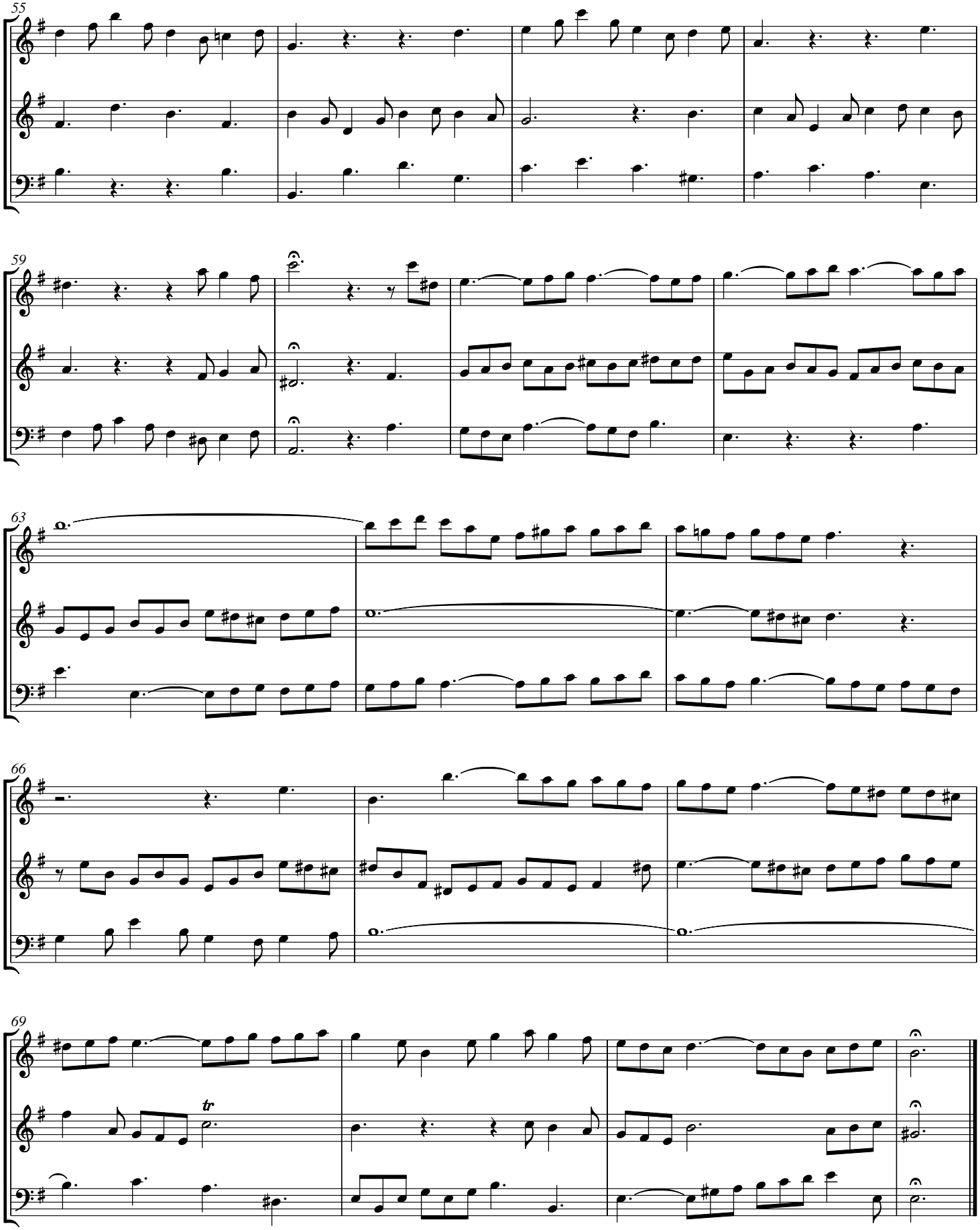
RECTUS

This rhythmic notation in this fugue has been rationalized to modern notation.




21
24
28
31
34


37
40
44
48
tr
51

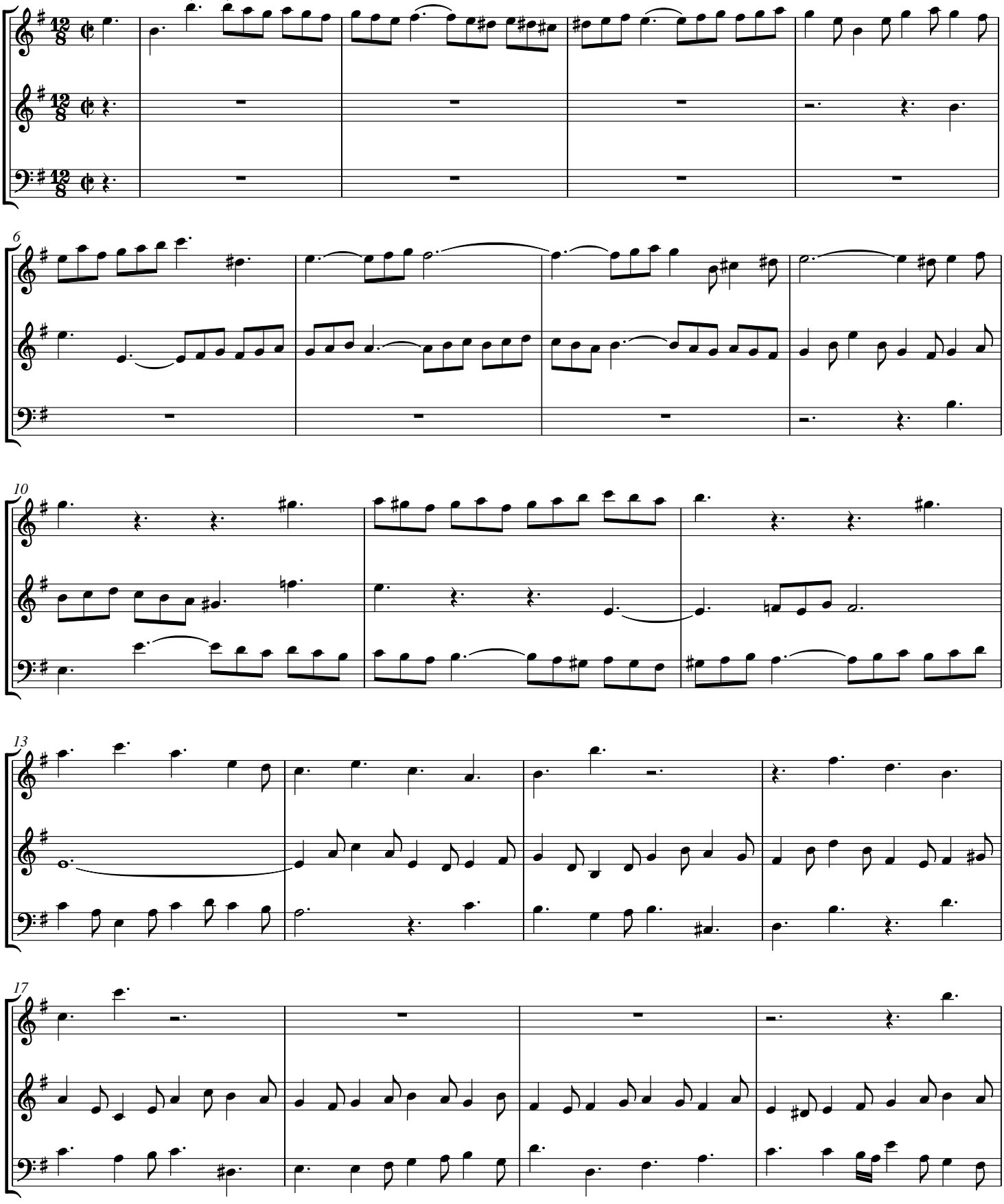

55
59
63
66
69
tr

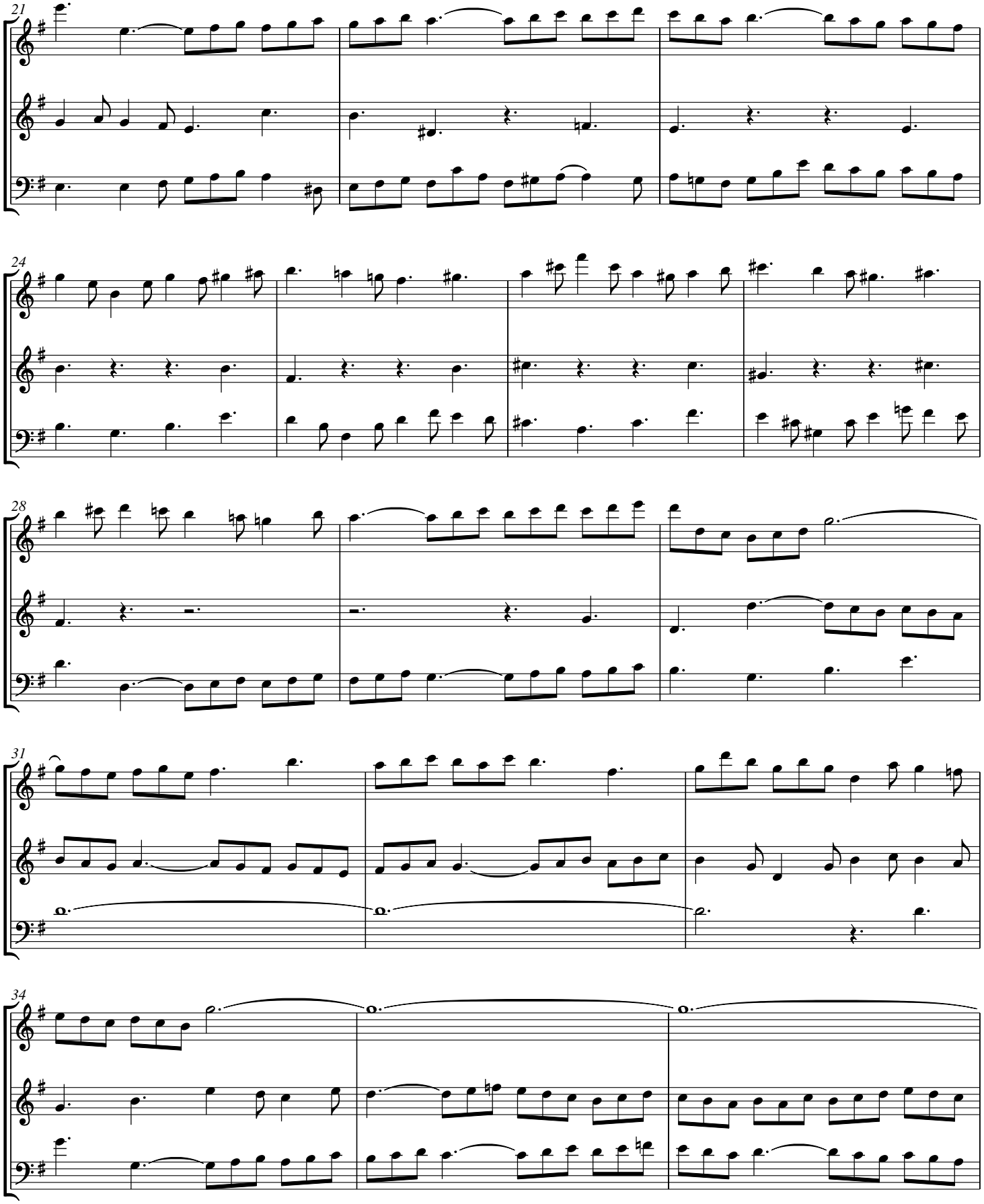
CONTRAPUNCTUS XVII

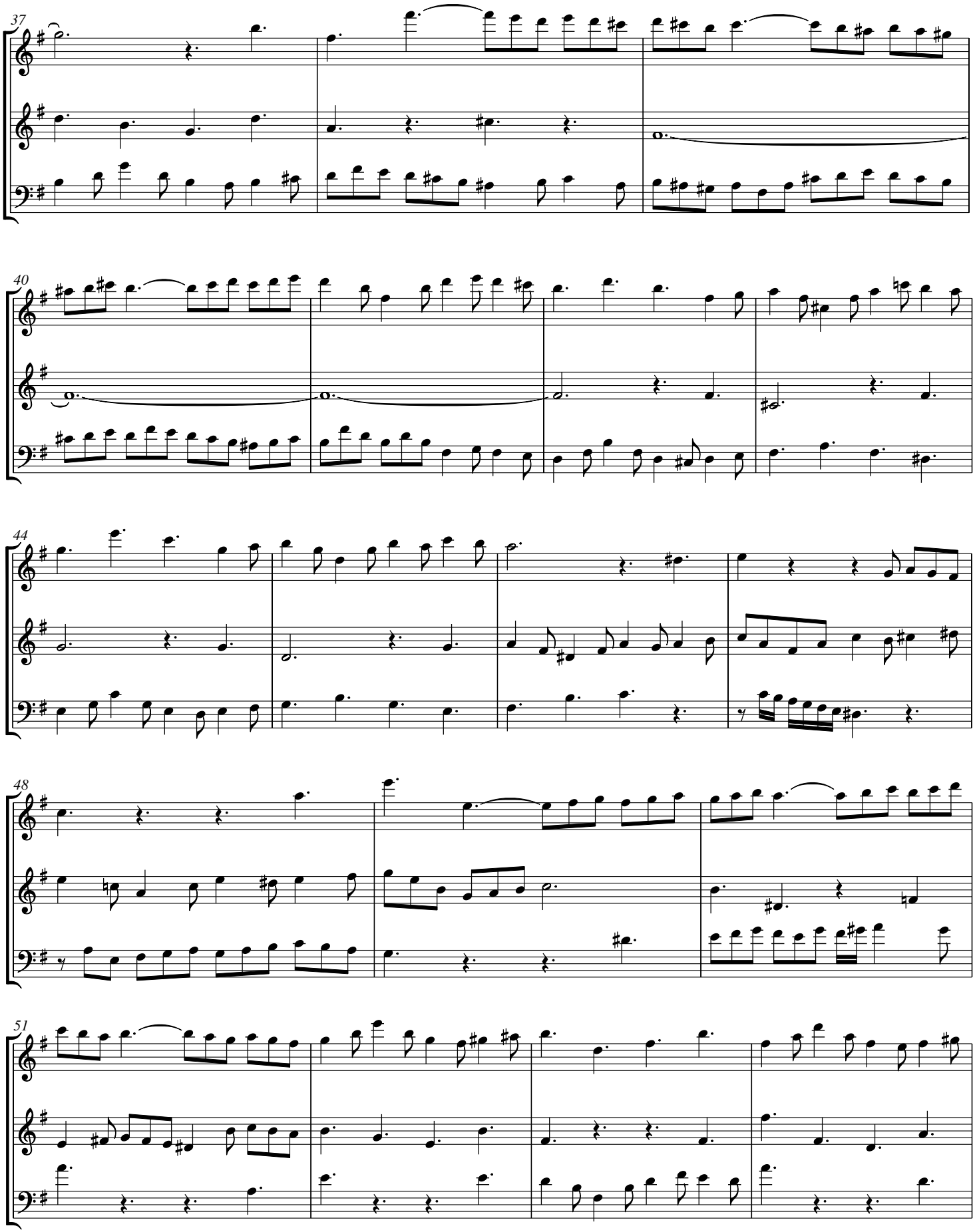
Fuga a 3 voci

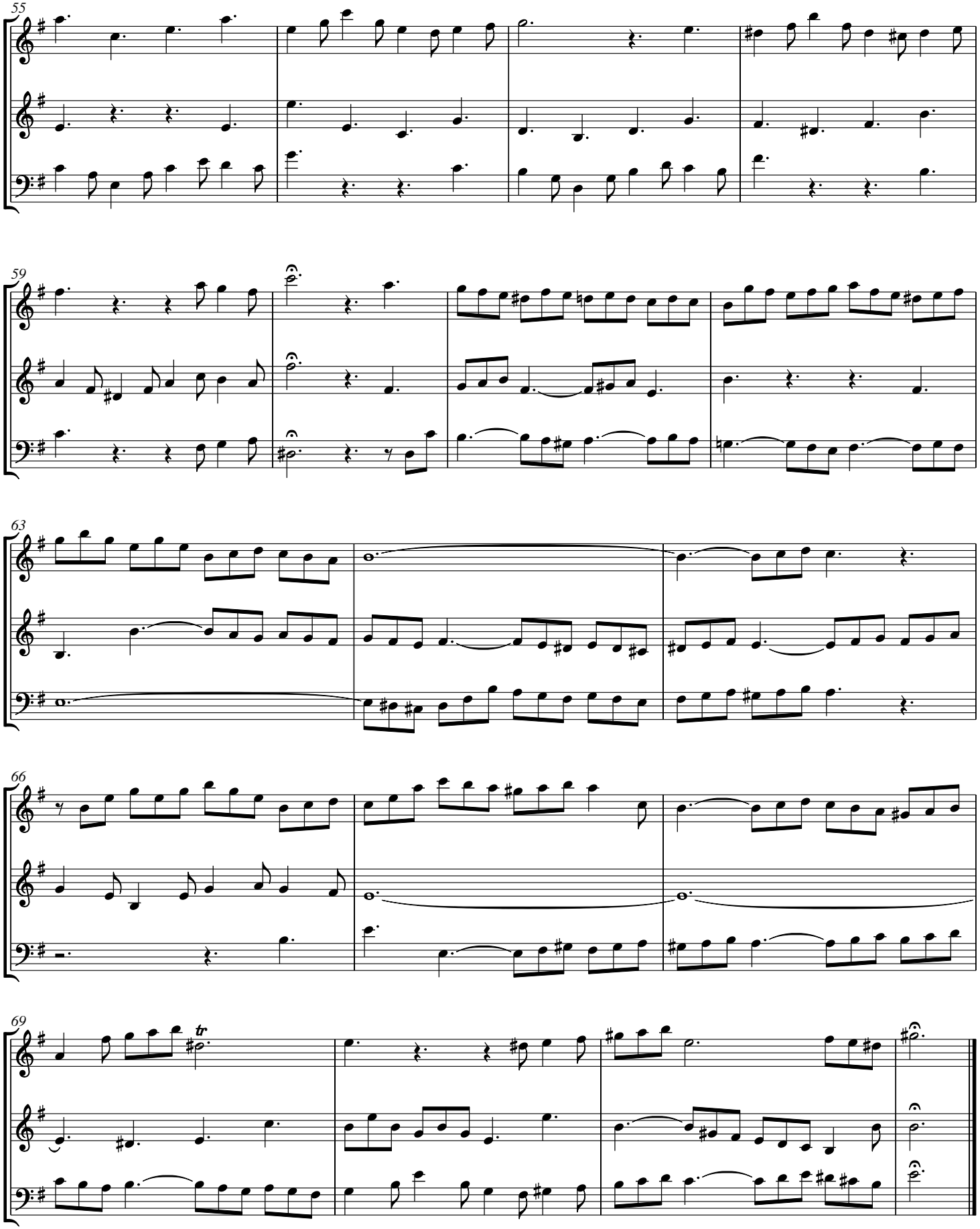
INVERSUS

This rhythmic notation in this fugue
has been rationalized to modern notation.



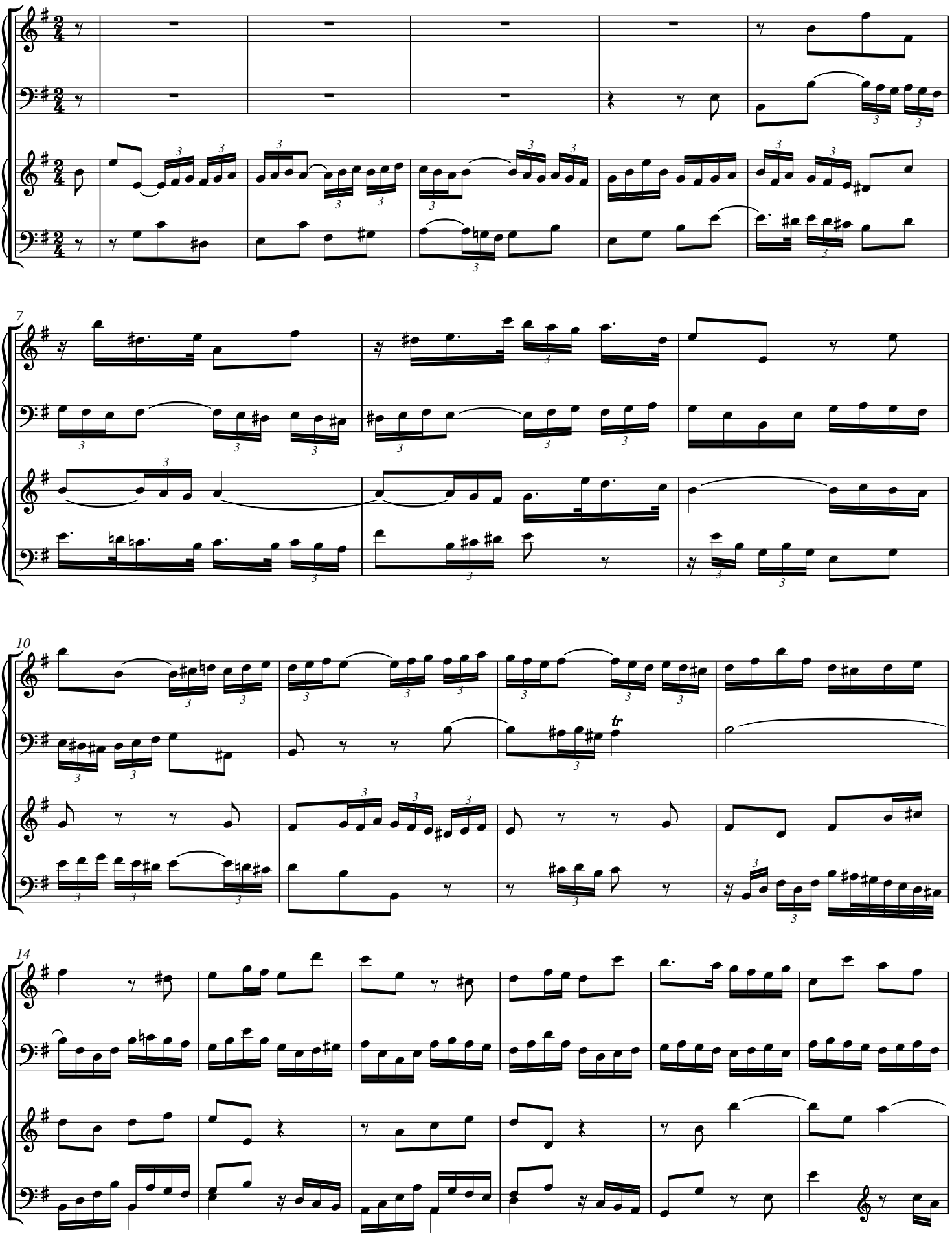

21
24
28
31
34

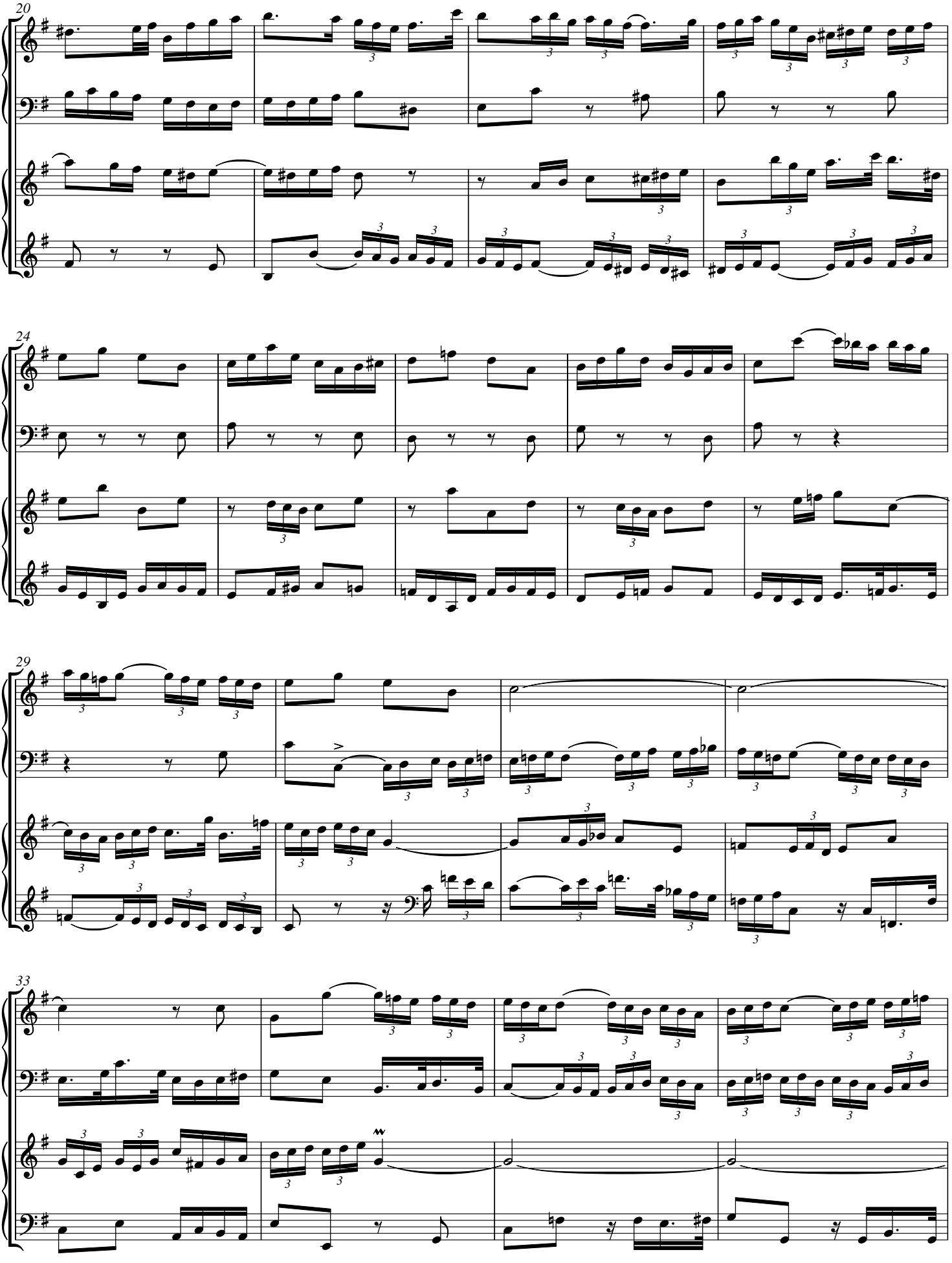

37
40
44
48
51

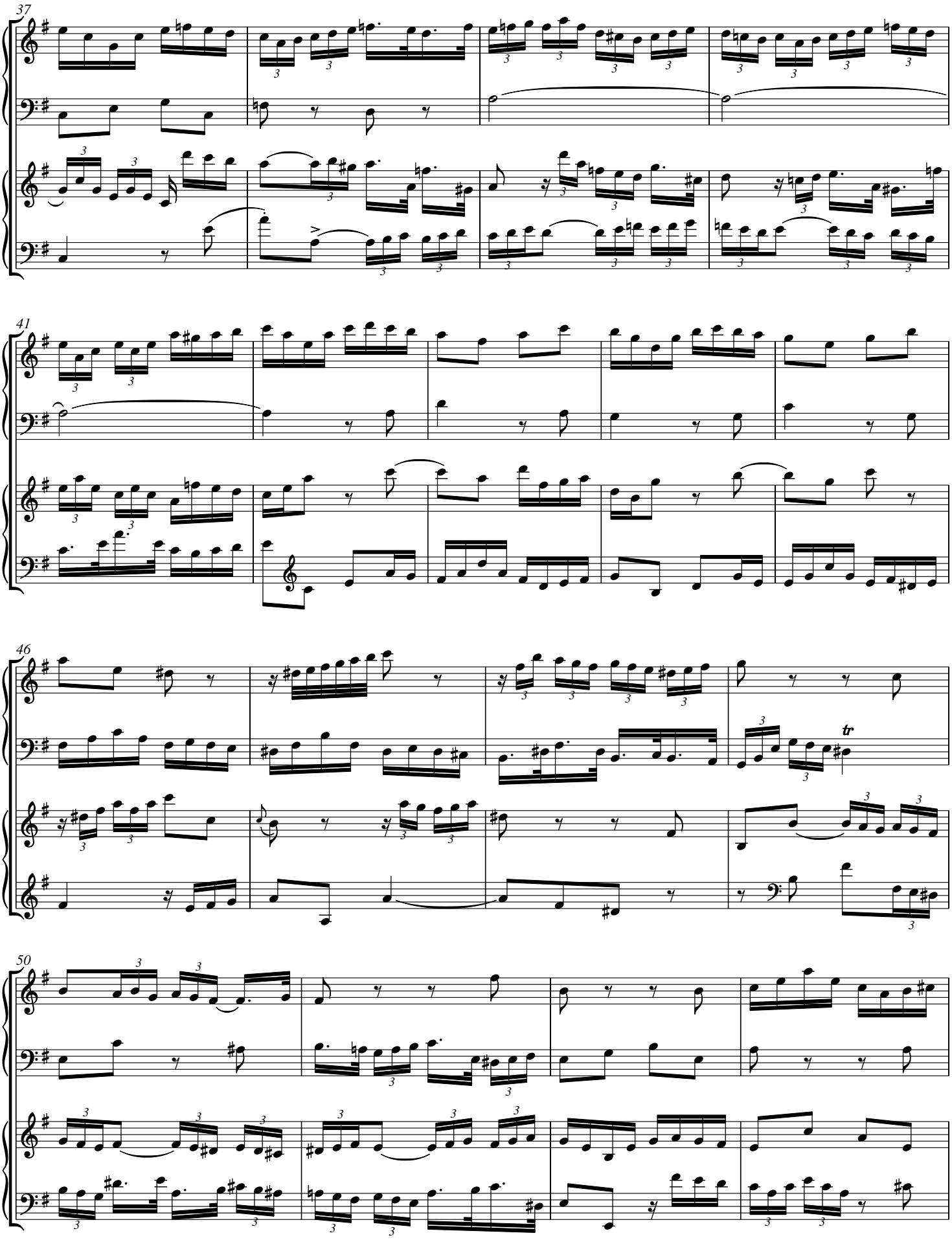

55
59
63
66
69
tr

CONTRAPUNCTUS XVIII

Fuga a 2 Clav.




20
24
29
33


37
41
46
tr
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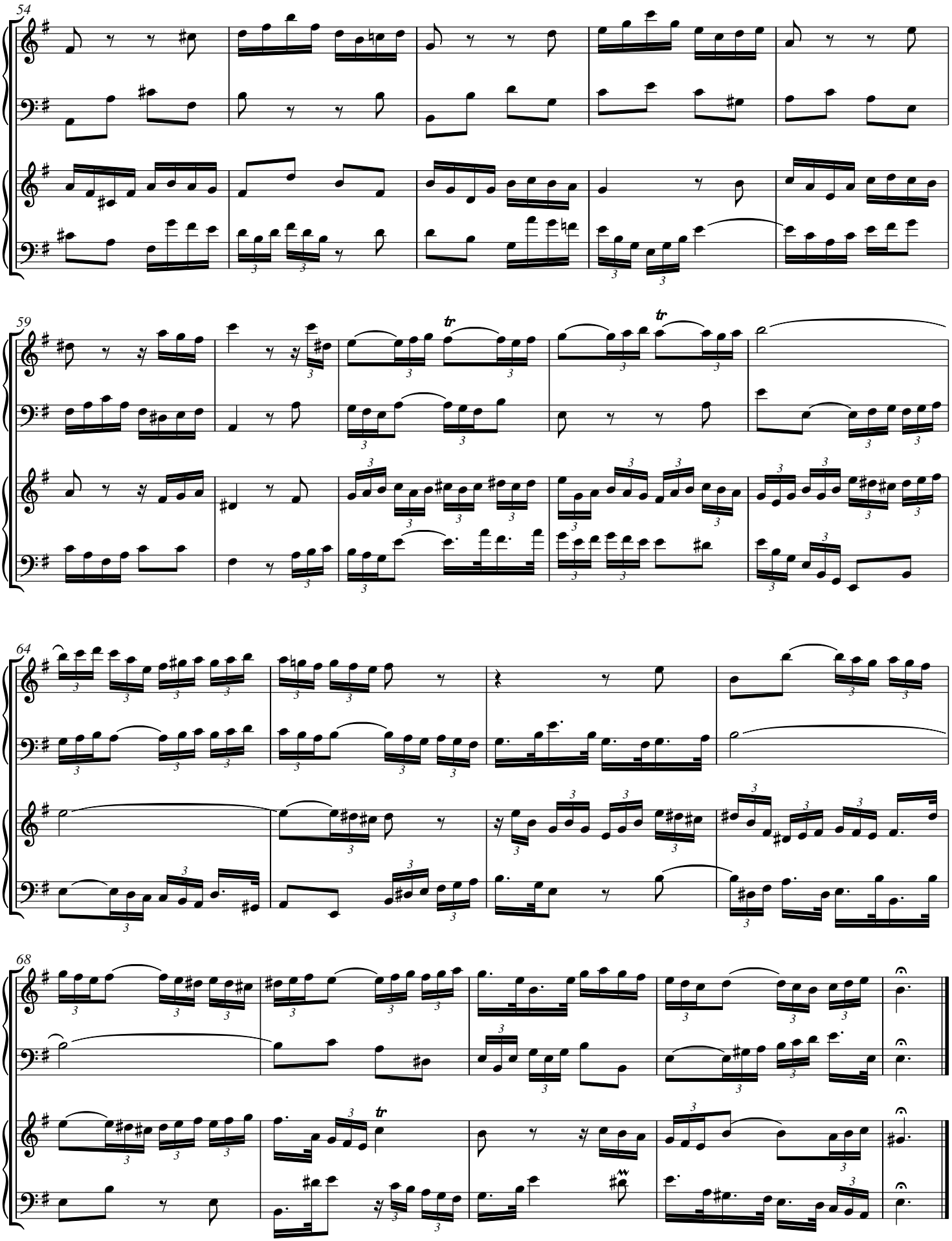
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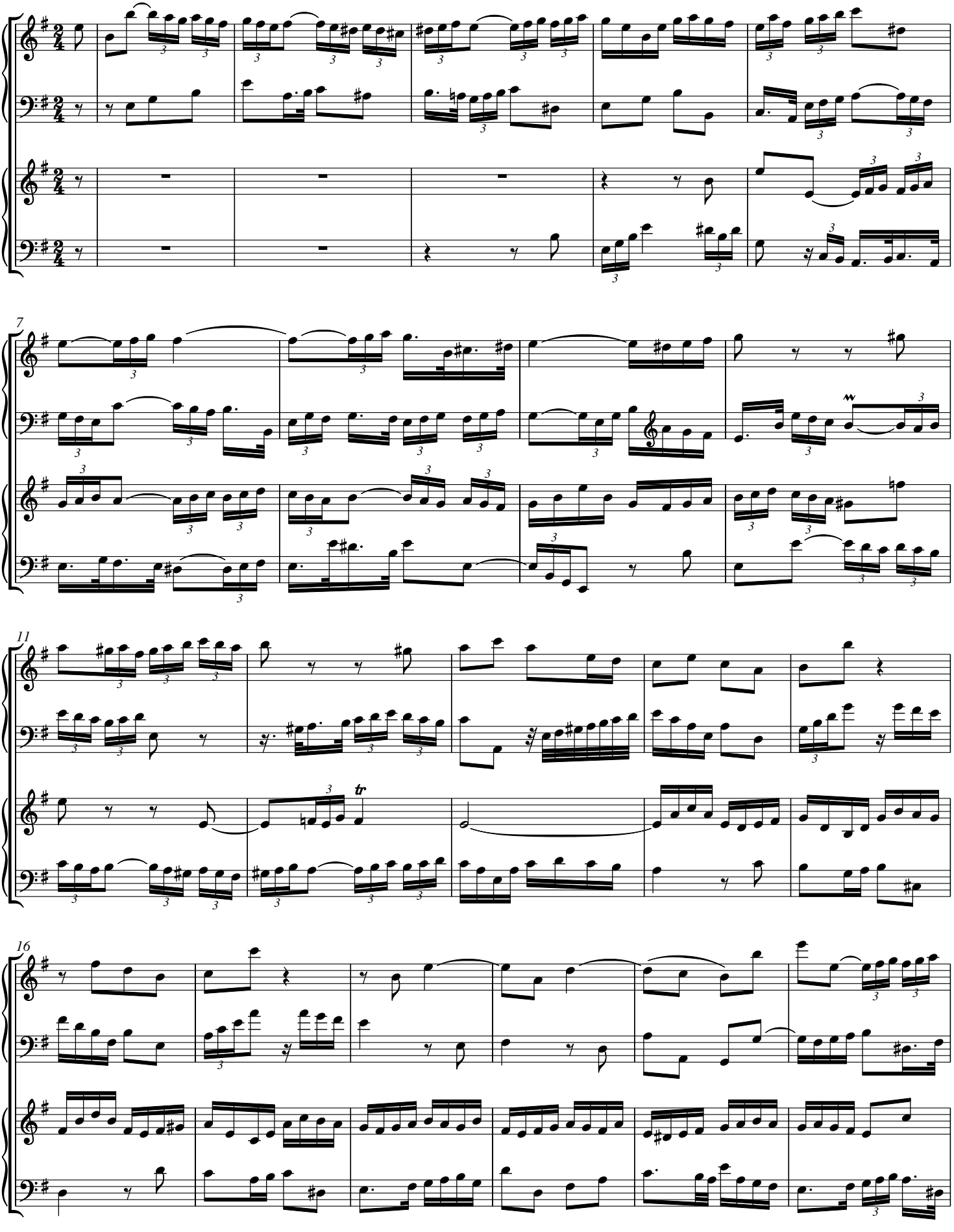
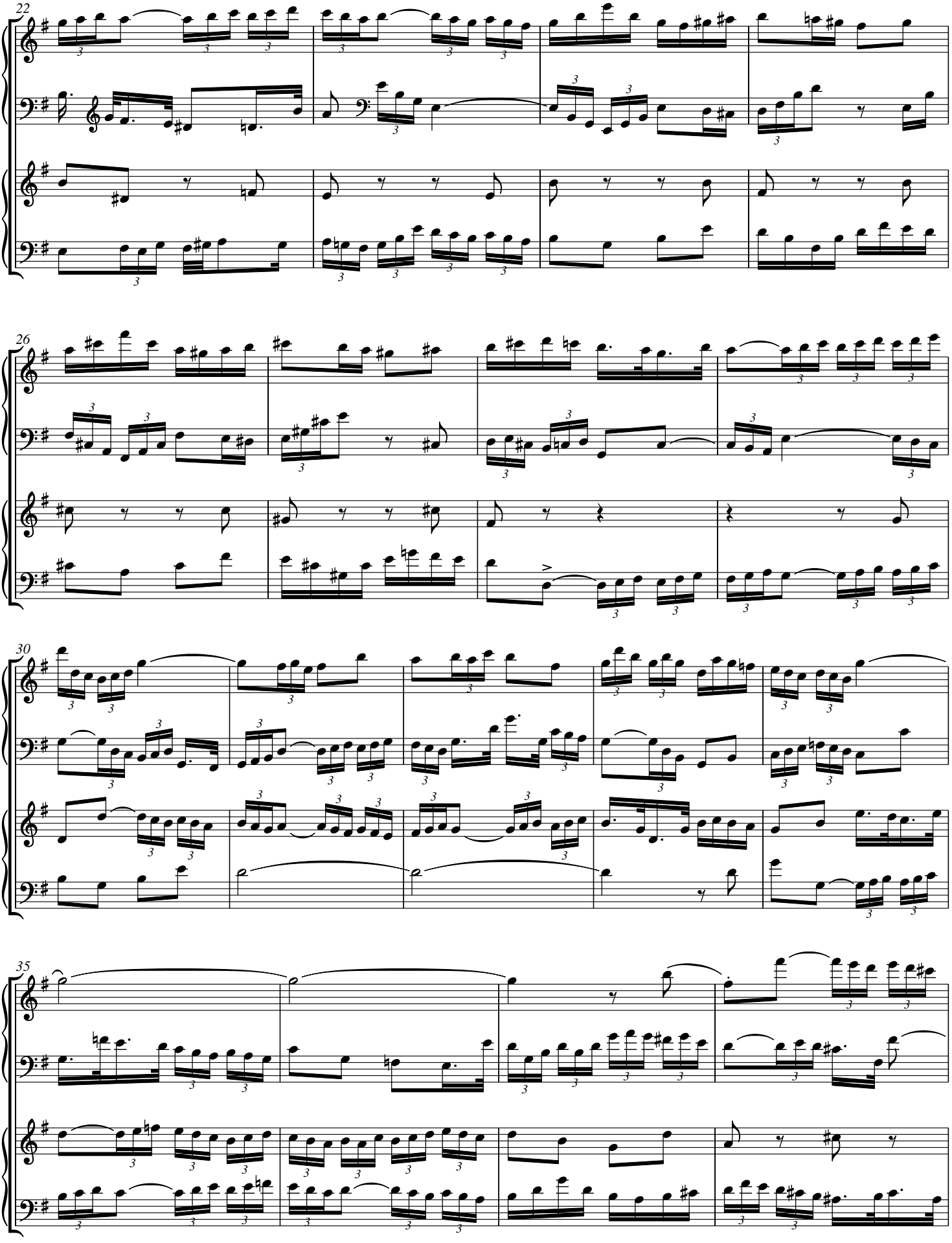
CONTRAPUNCTUS XVIII

Alio modo Fuga a 2 Clav.

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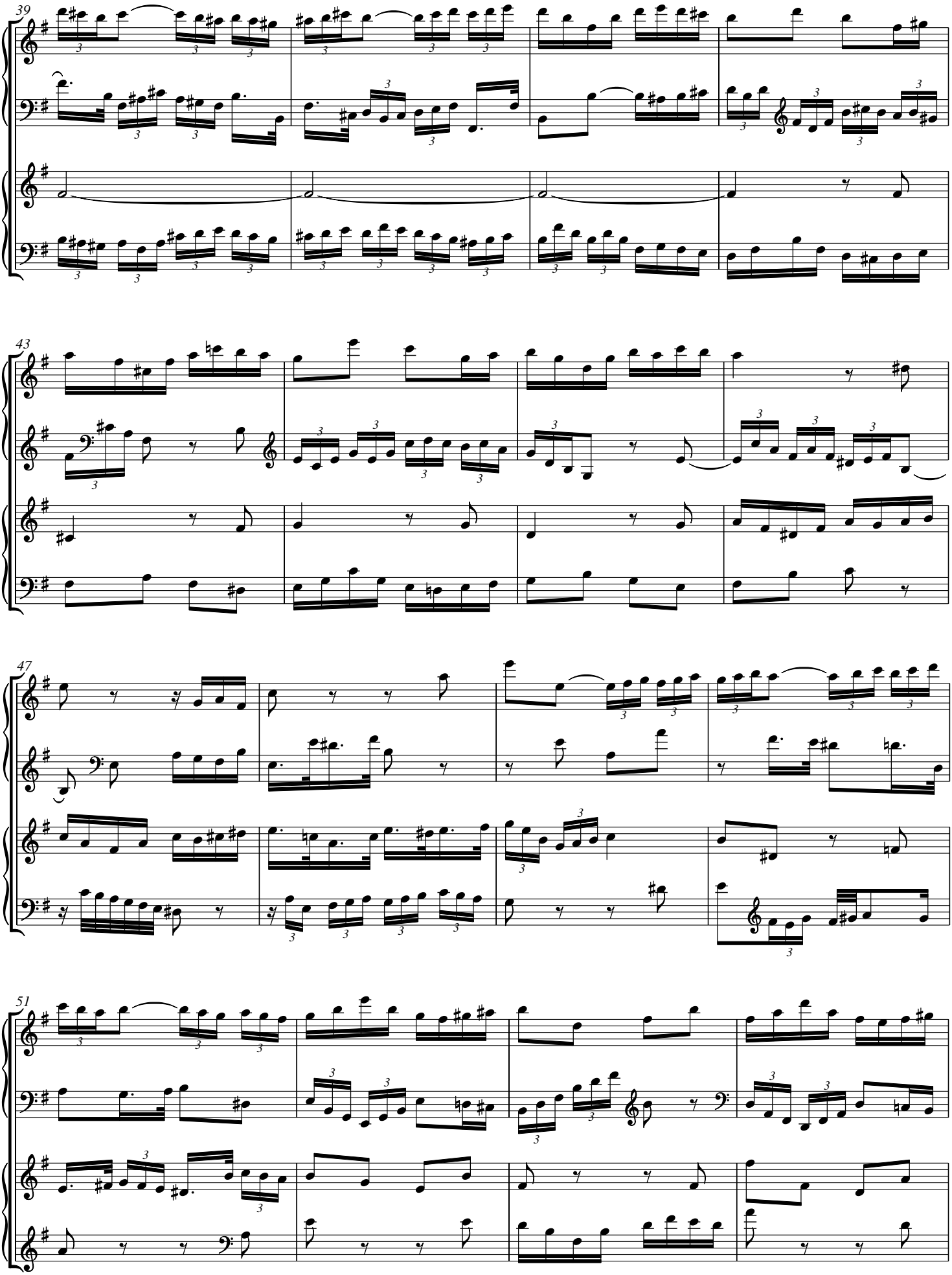
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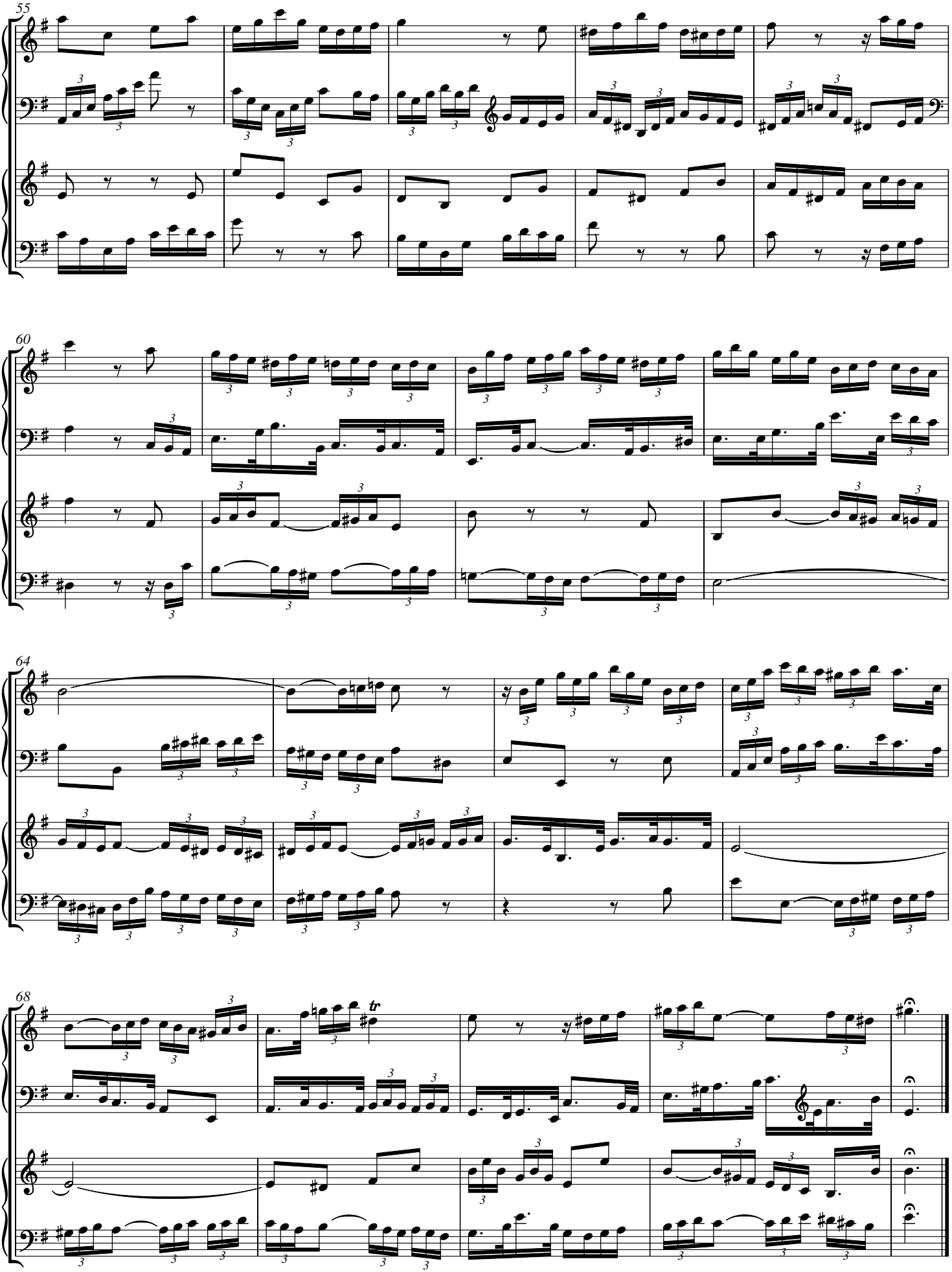
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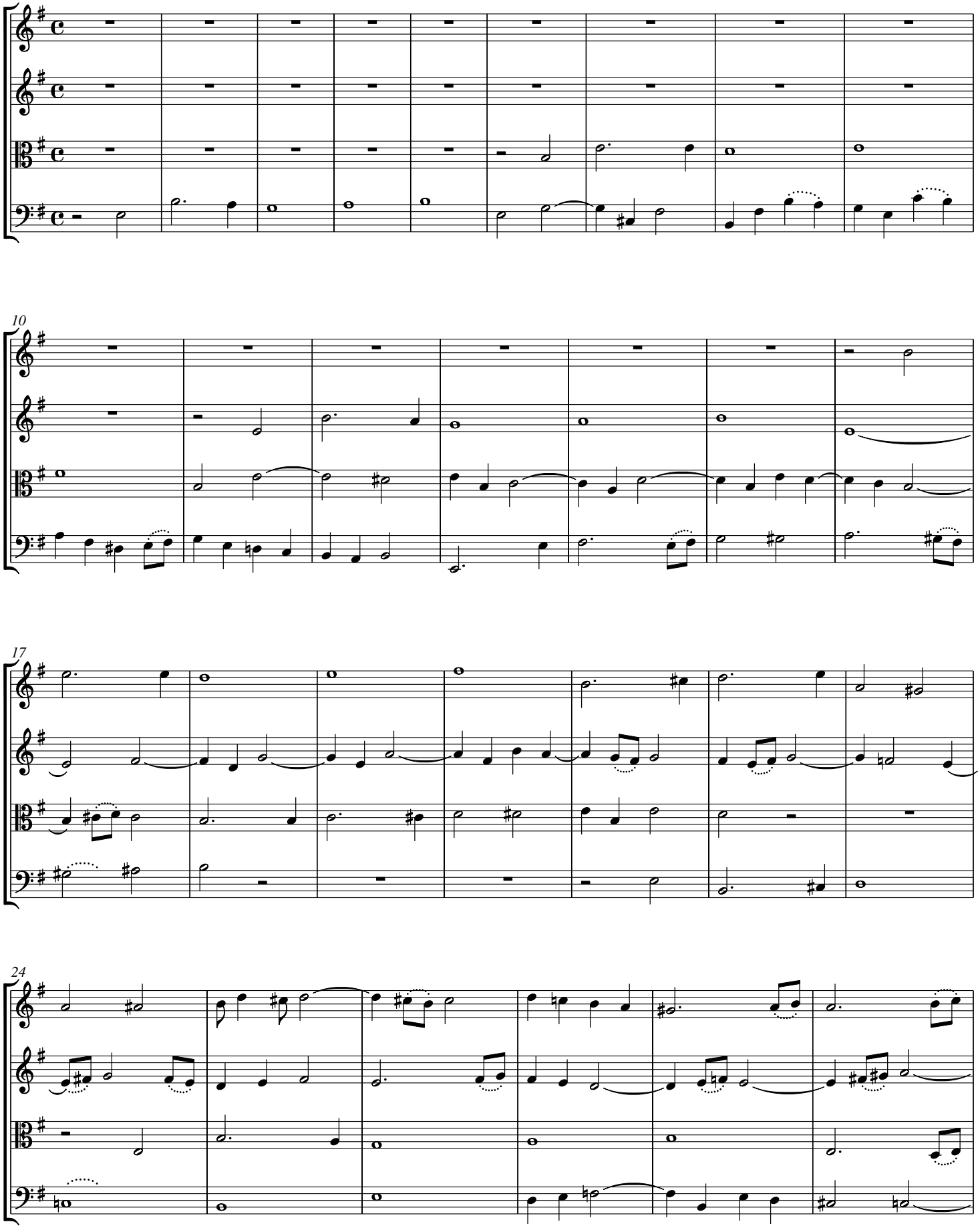
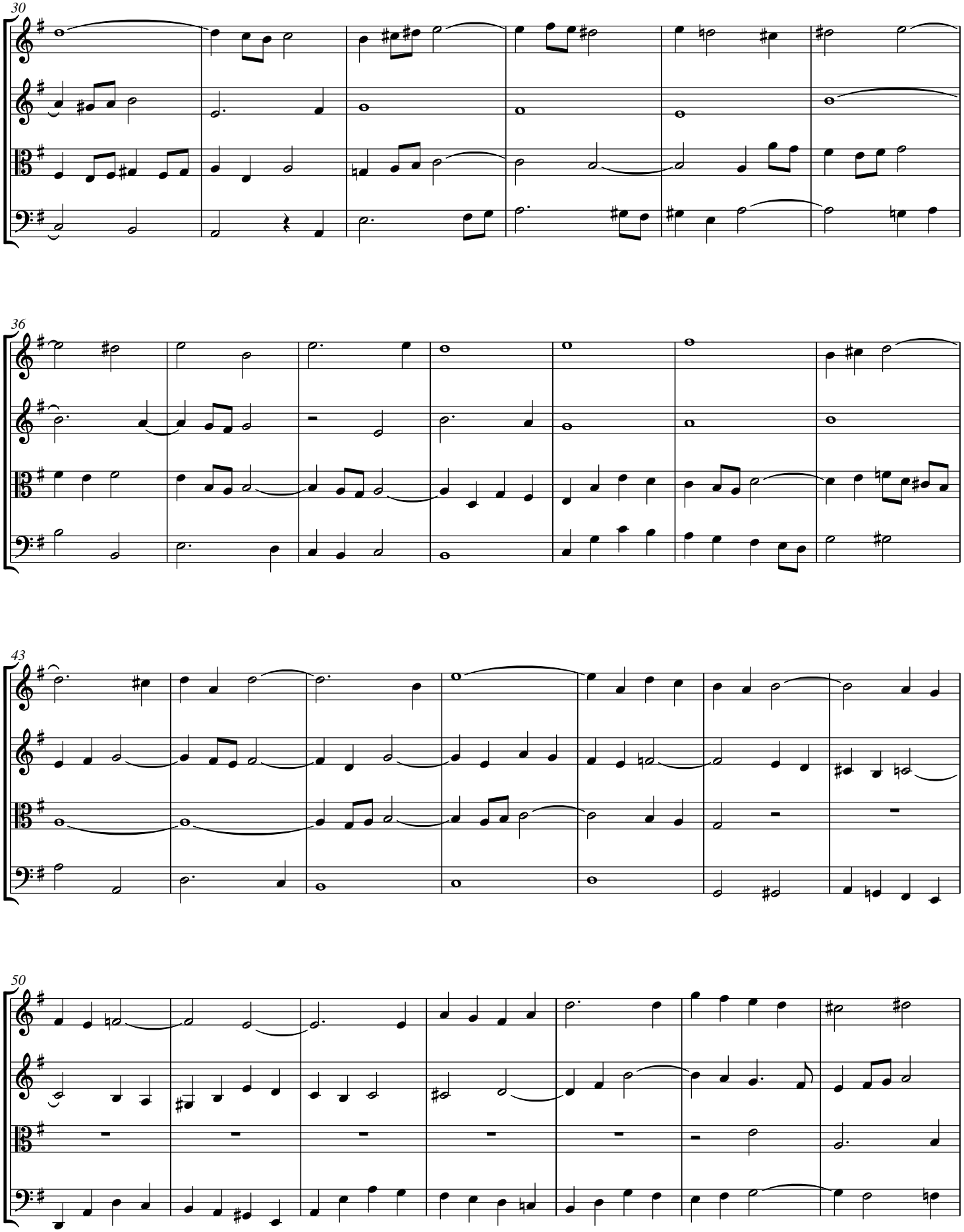
CONTRAPUNCTUS XIX

Fuga a 4 soggetti

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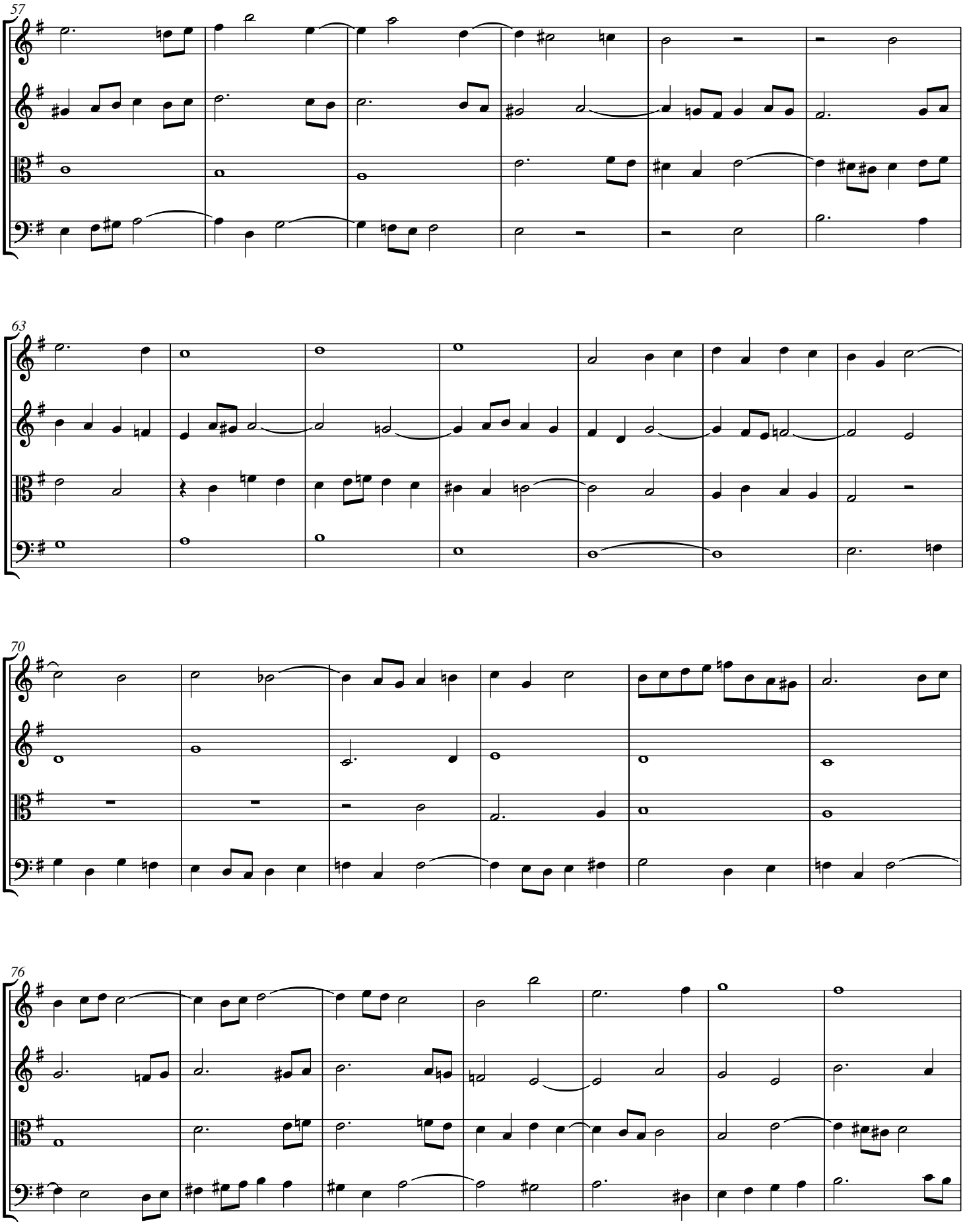
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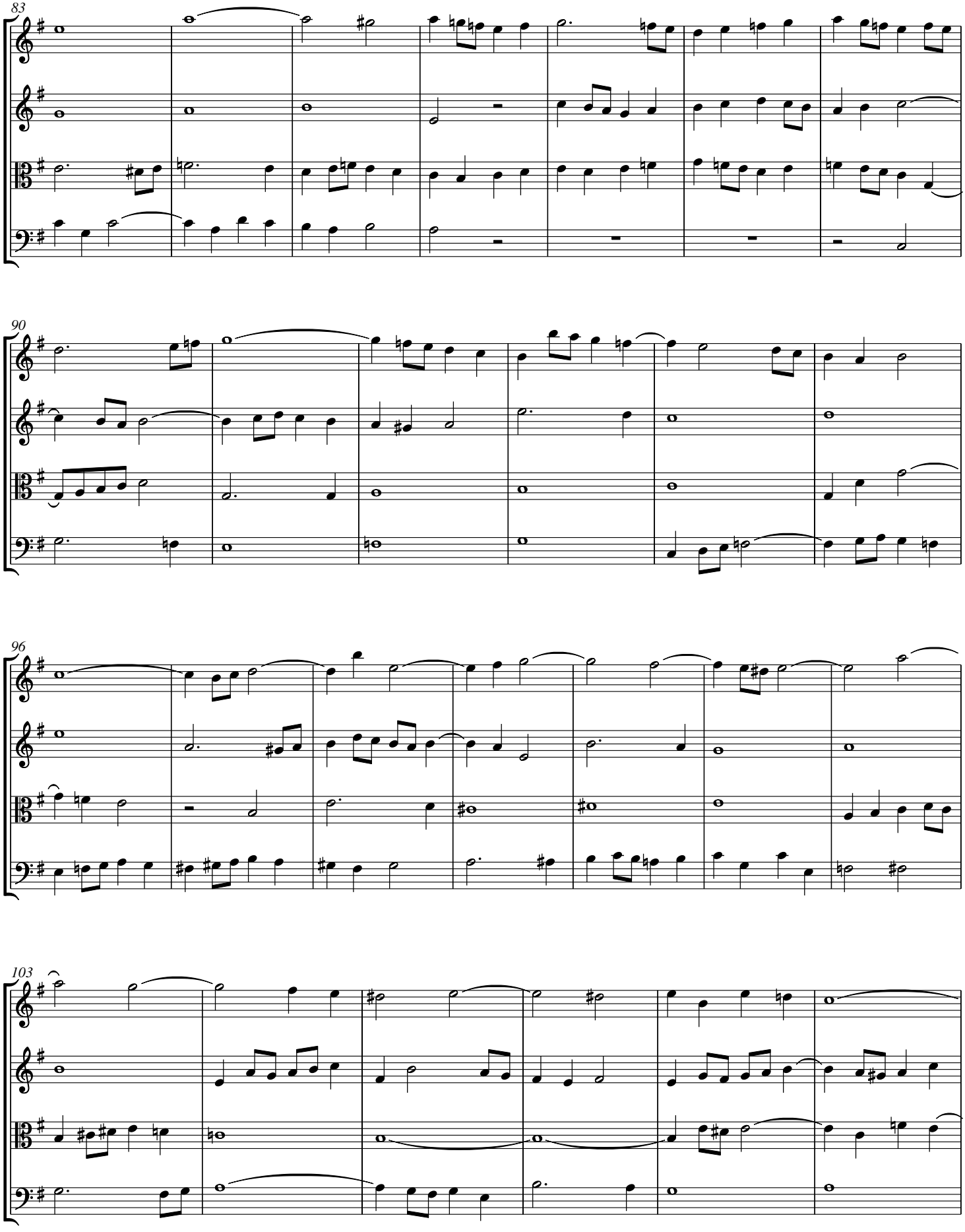
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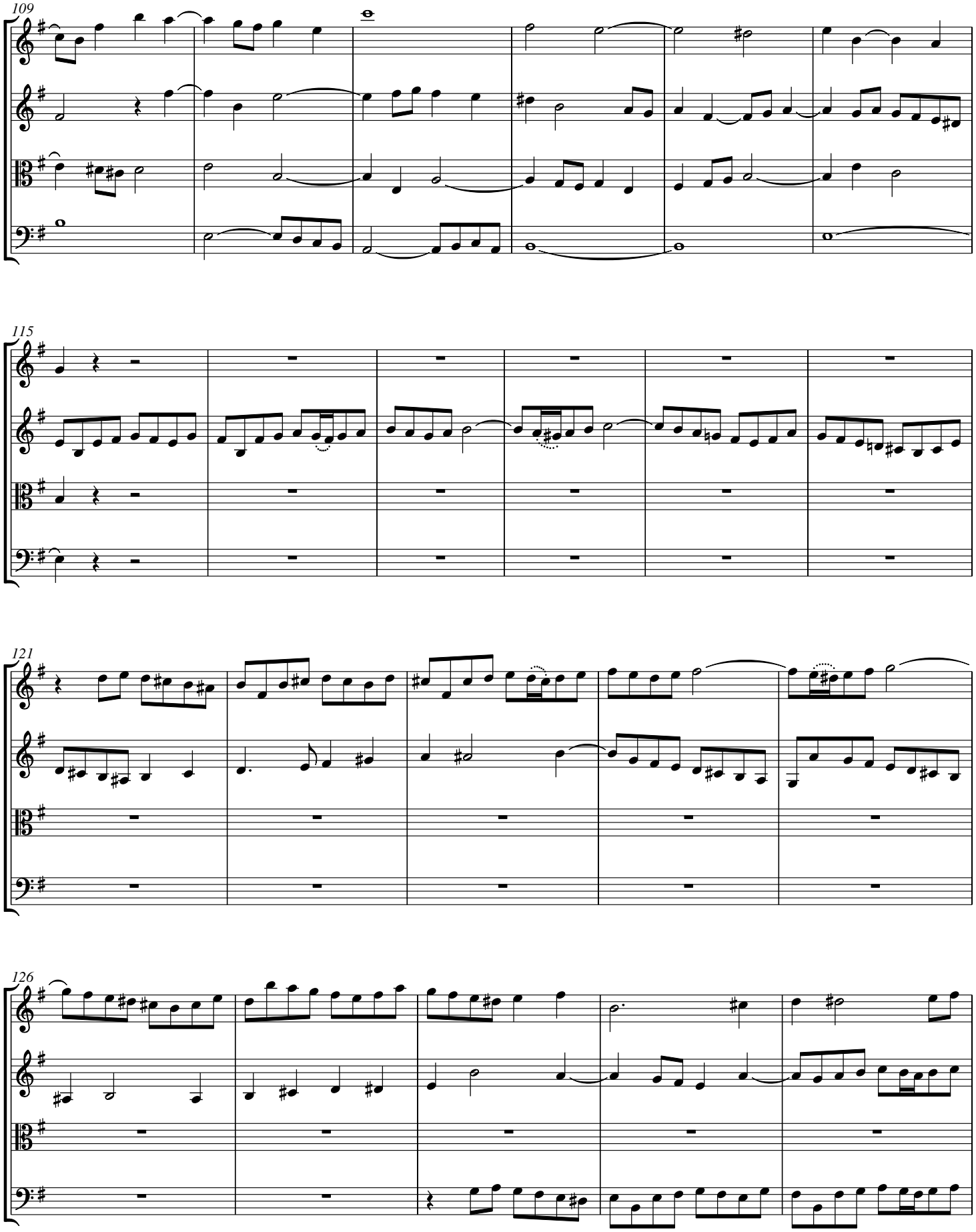
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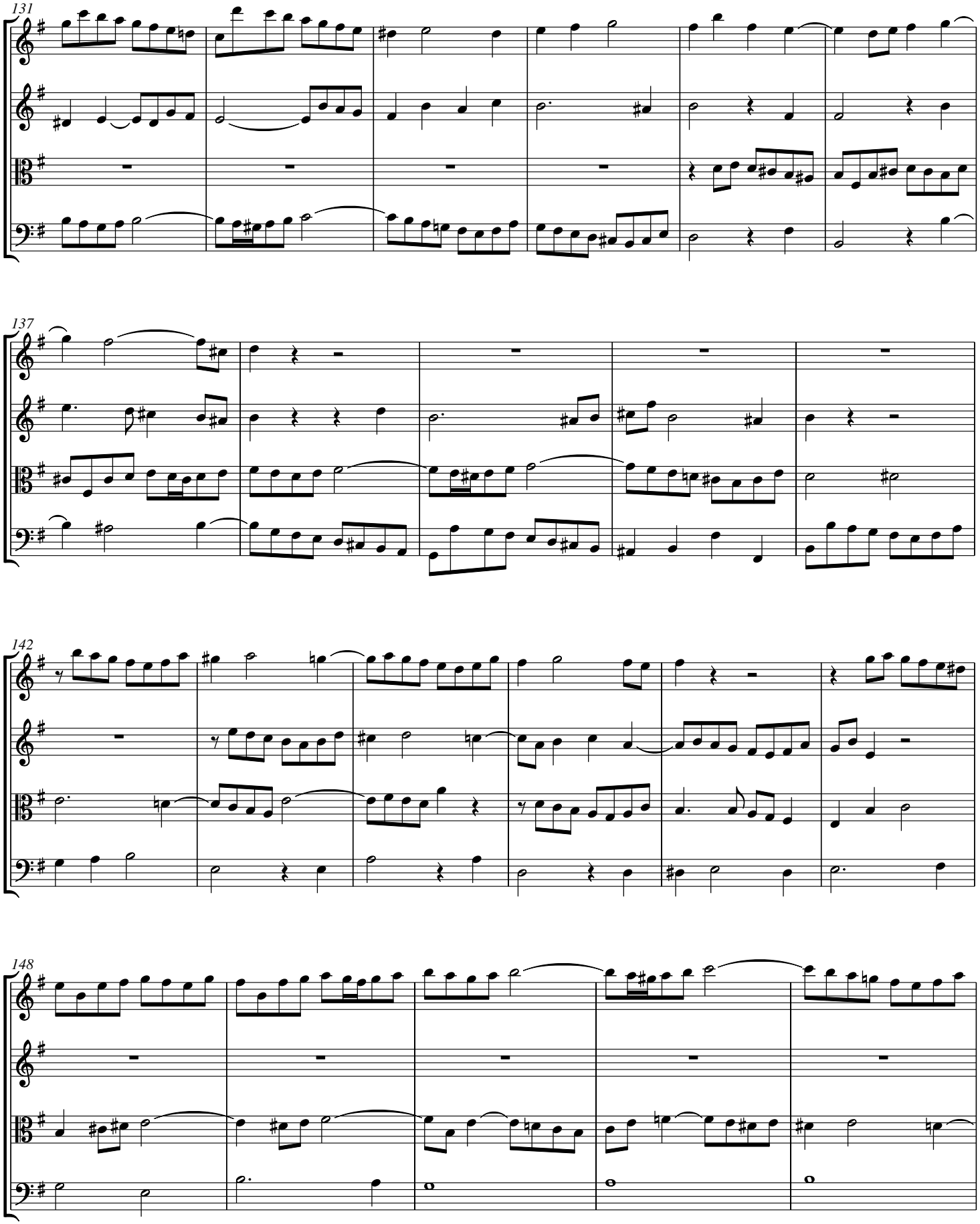
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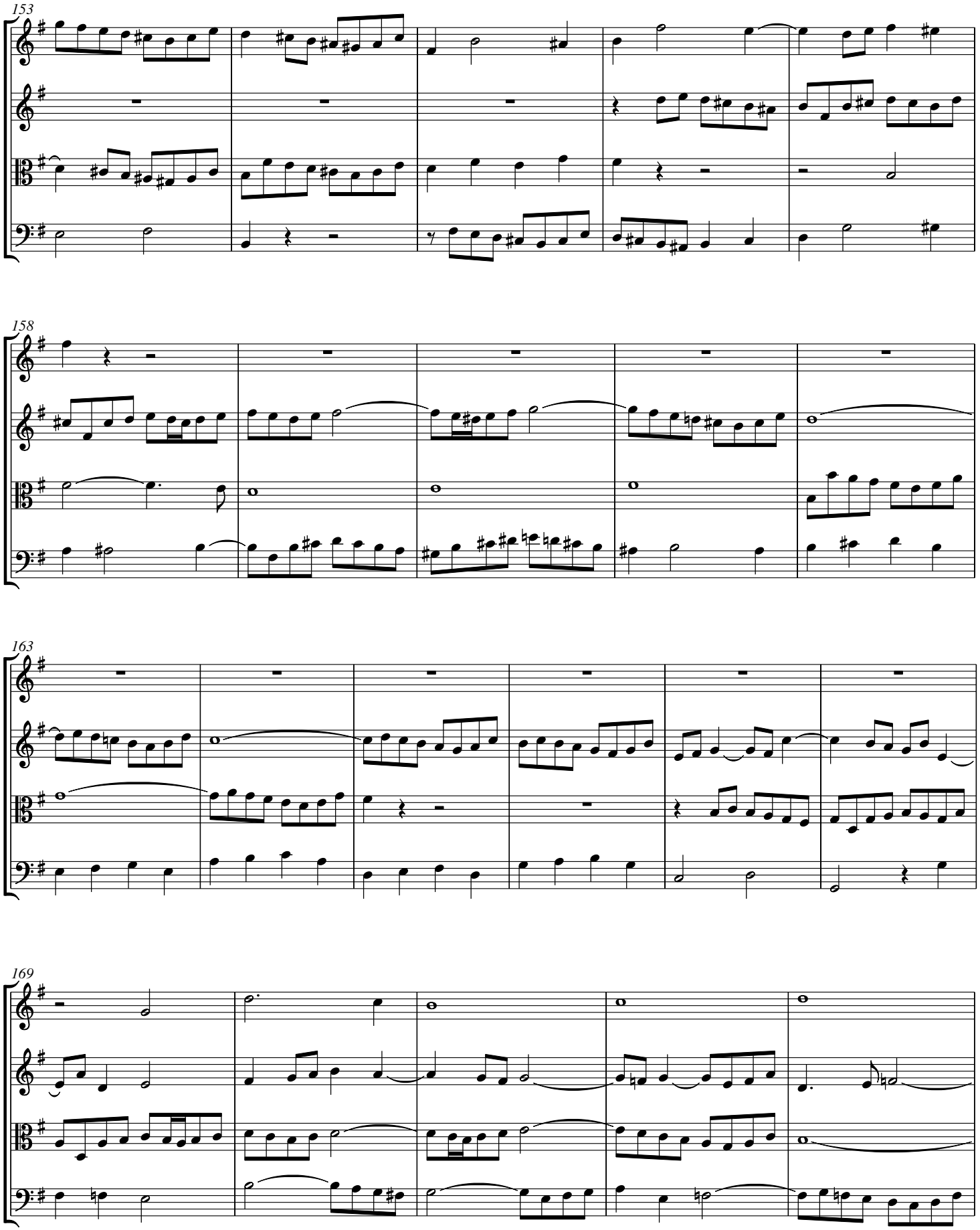
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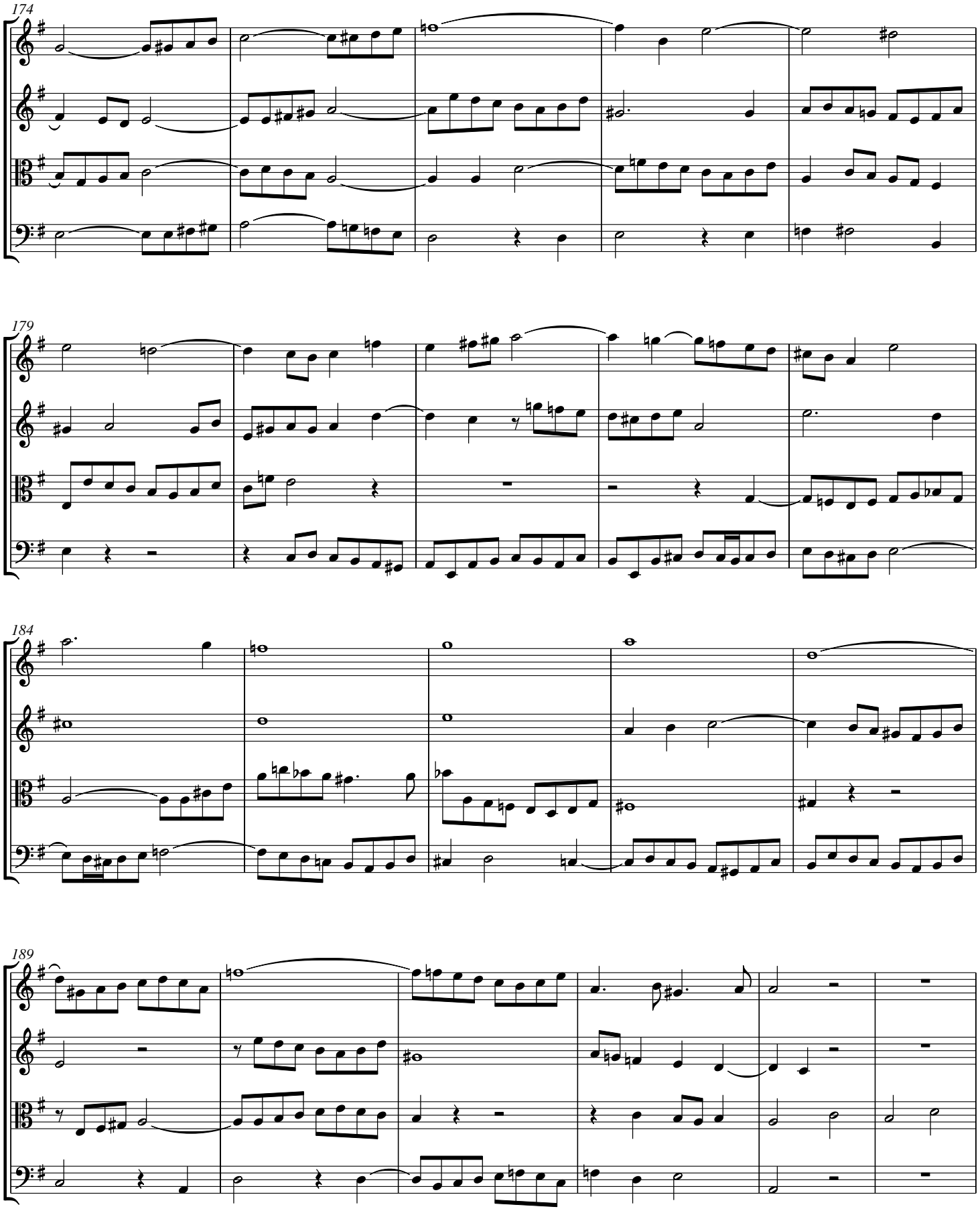
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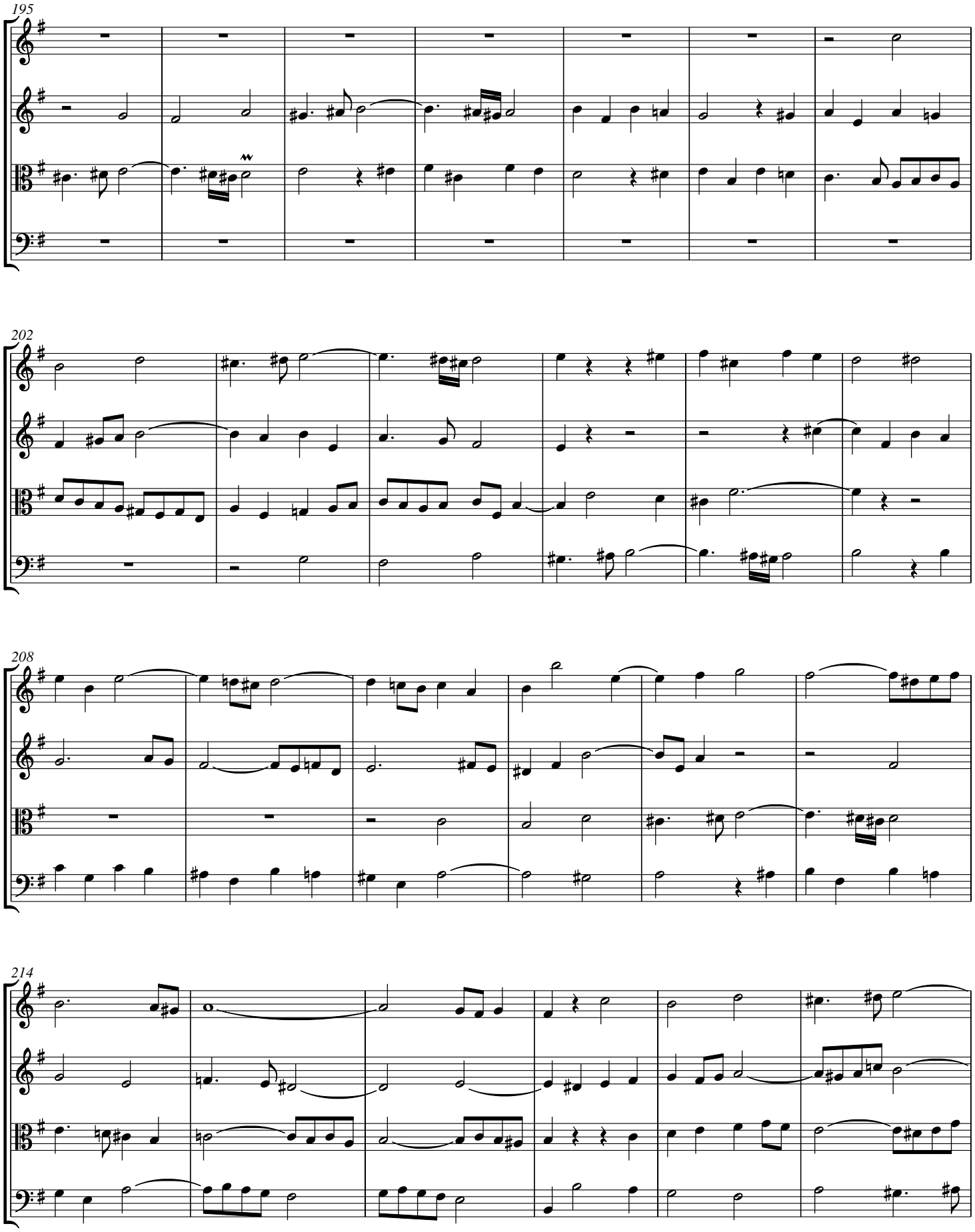
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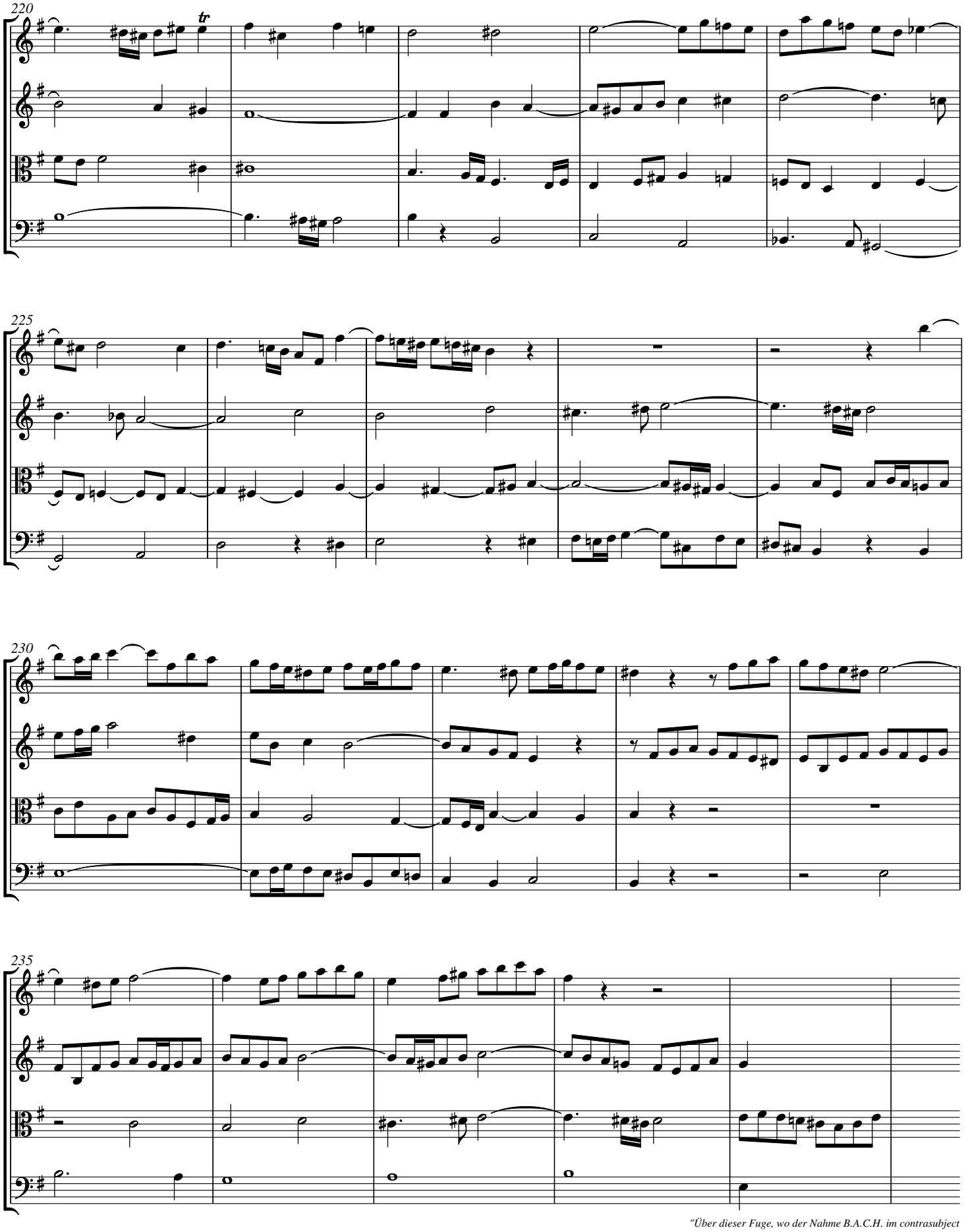
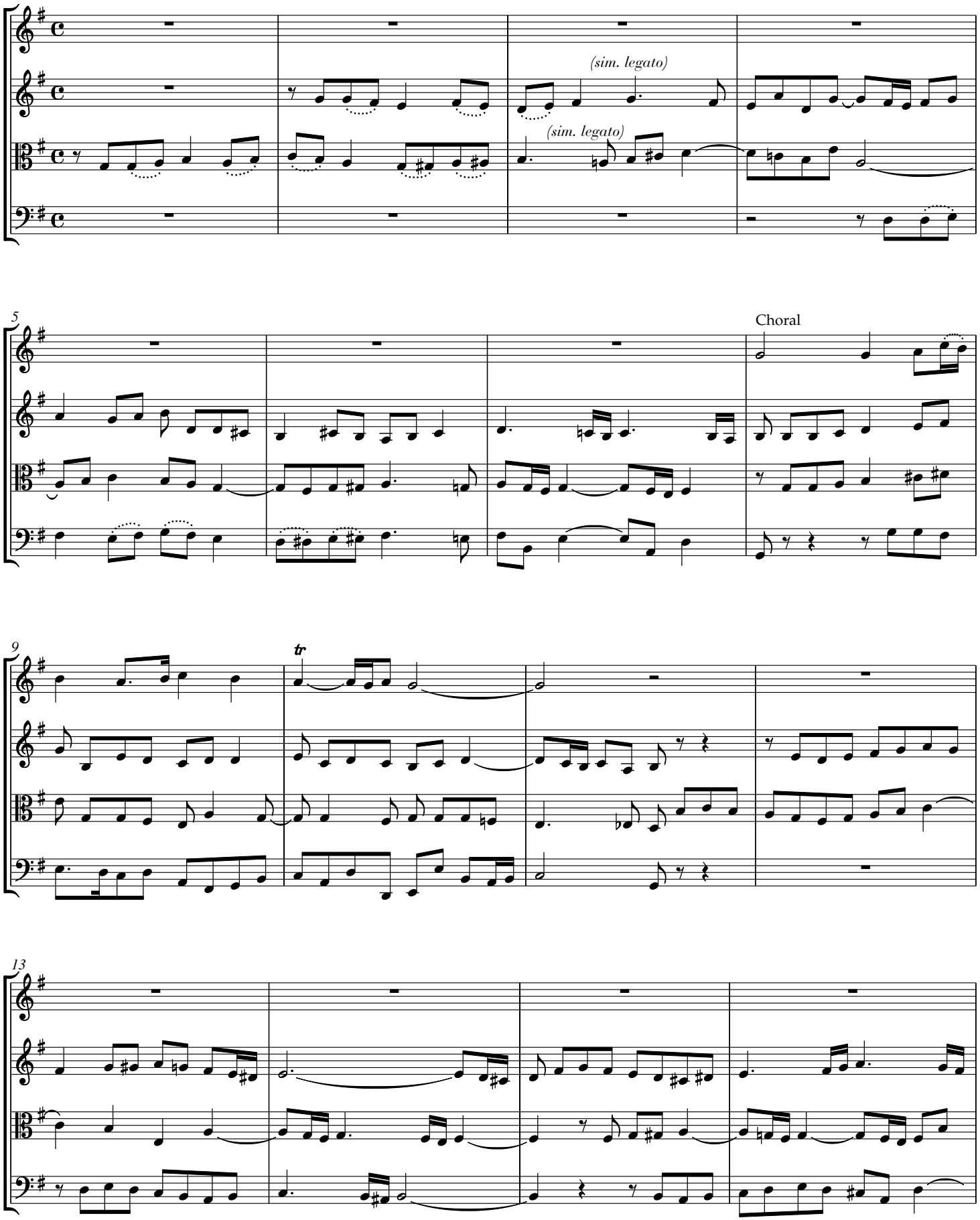


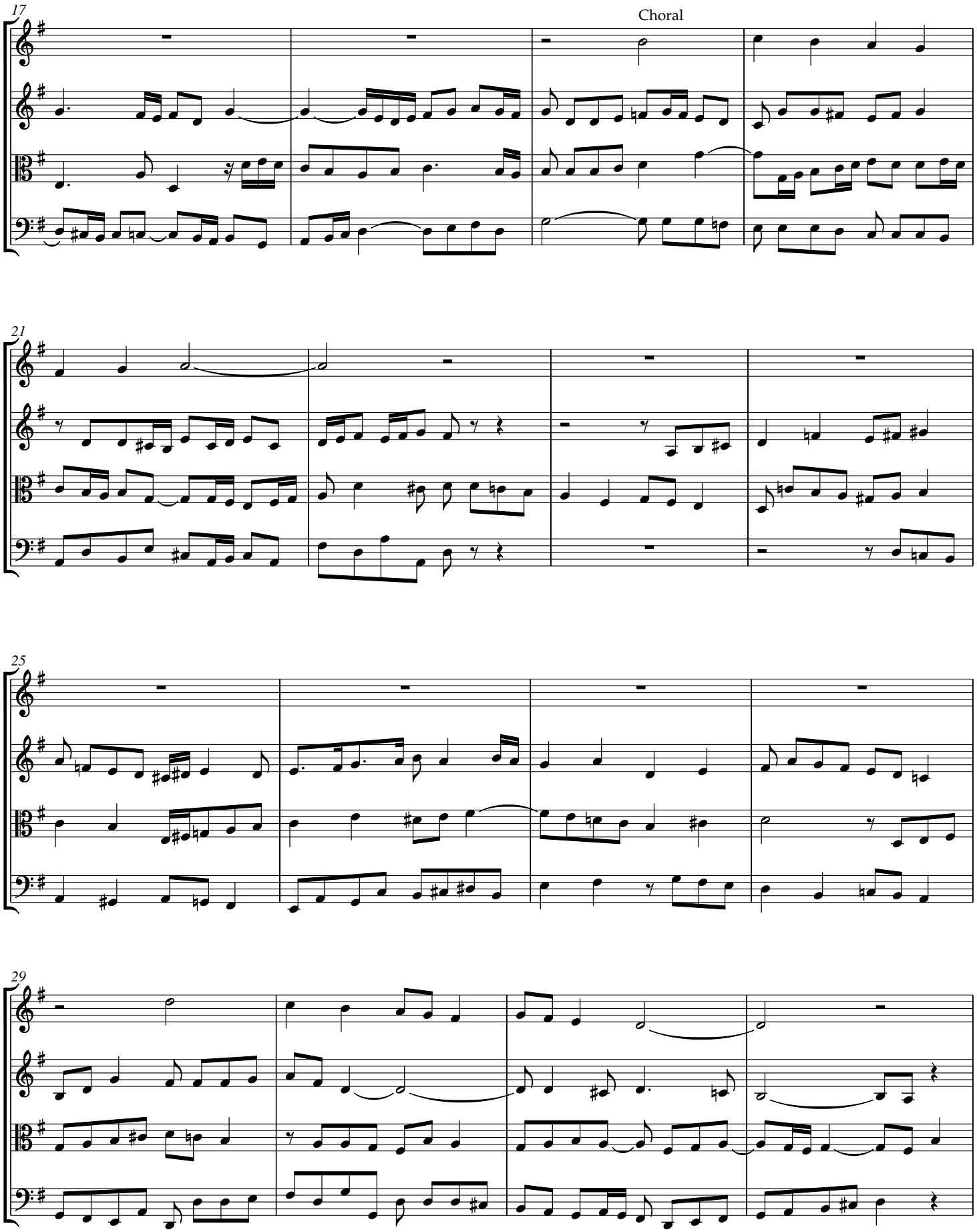
"Über dieser Fuge, wo der Nahme B.A.C.H. im contrasubject angebracht worden, ist der Verfasser gestorben."

(Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach)

CHORALE PRELUDE

Vor deinen Thron tret' ich hiemit

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Choral
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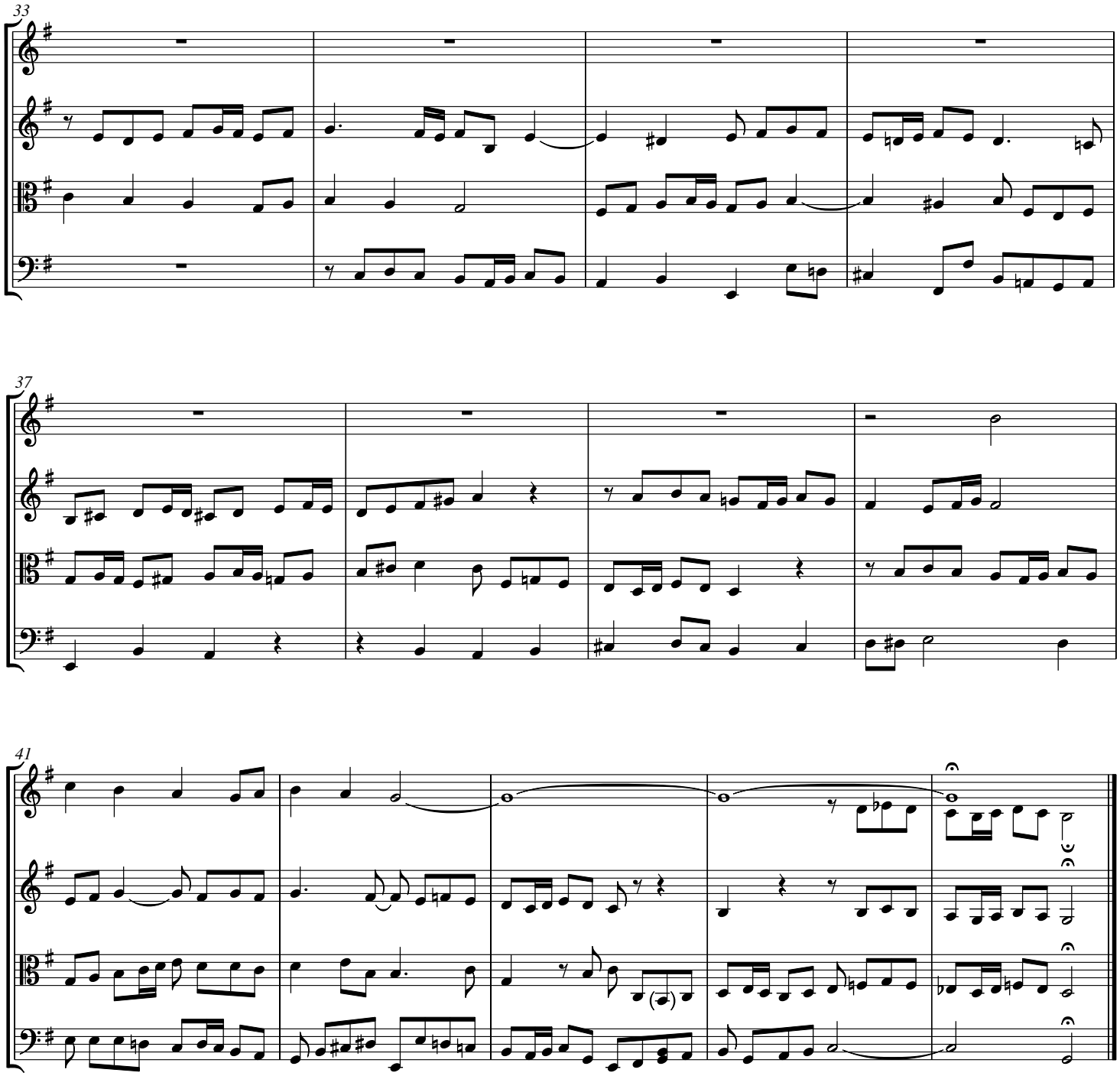
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