J Simon van der Walt

El laberinto

for voice, bass clarinet and general MIDI

Composers's note

This piece revisits and recontextualises material originally written in the late 90s for an installation, later rearranged for the latin soul band El Cometa Allstars.

The world has changed a lot since then, and I feel much less comfortable about my place in it. Was I only able to become a 'composer' thanks to the the middle class white male privilege that gave me the confidence, agency and status to do so? Is there any value to my work, or is it just a self-indulgence? Am I privileged to be able to even ask that question?

The writing for the voice and clarinet is inspired by a tradition of wordless virtuoso unison lines most commonly associated perhaps with Carnatic/jazz fusions. The accompaniment makes self-consciously nostalgic use of General MIDI sounds in a Standard MIDI File, rewinding back to those naively happy days of plain text, ISDN dialup and minidiscs.

Notes to the performers

It's up to you how you choose to play back the midi file. I personally quite like the way it plays back when imported into MuseScore 4, but there are lots of other options that you could try. One way to amplify it might be a line-in to an amusingly retro old-school ghettoblaster, but a through a PA would be fine as well.

I have only given the barest hints of syllables to sing the melody to. Given the text and background of the piece, LatinX sounding vocables would be great!

For the bass clarinet, I again only hint at the articulation: basically it's a straight 8s jazz feel, with notes at the ends of phrases short. The singing at the end of the end of the piece should sound an octave below where it is written.

The whole-tone dyad between the voice and clarinet 4 before letter C is correct, not a mistake.

The notation of the midi parts is given as a guide. As well as the midi file, an audio demo is supplied that includes the melodic material.

(A longer version of the piece with additional material also exists, available on request. But I quite like the brevity of this version.)

Duration 2'45
JSvdW 2023-07-16

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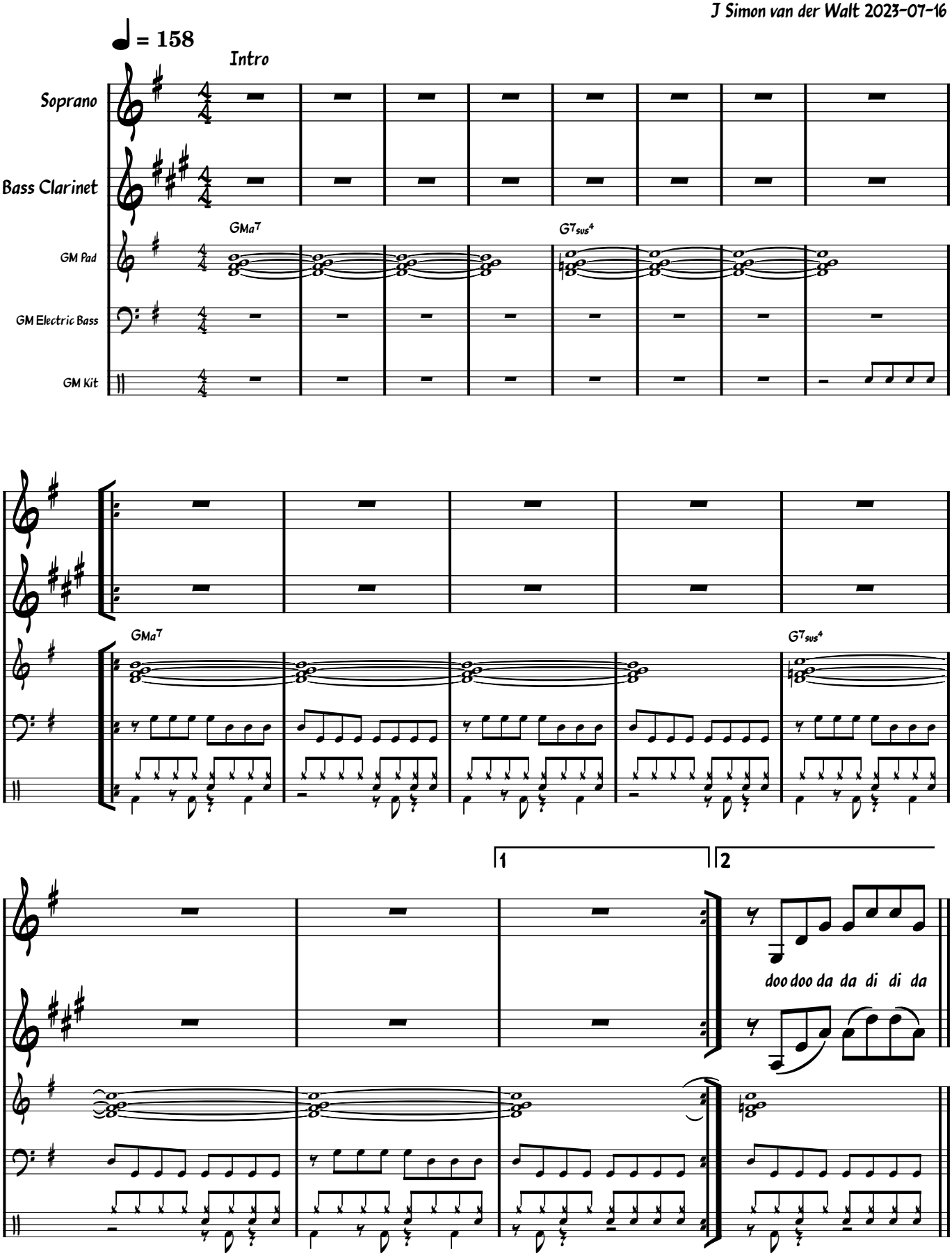
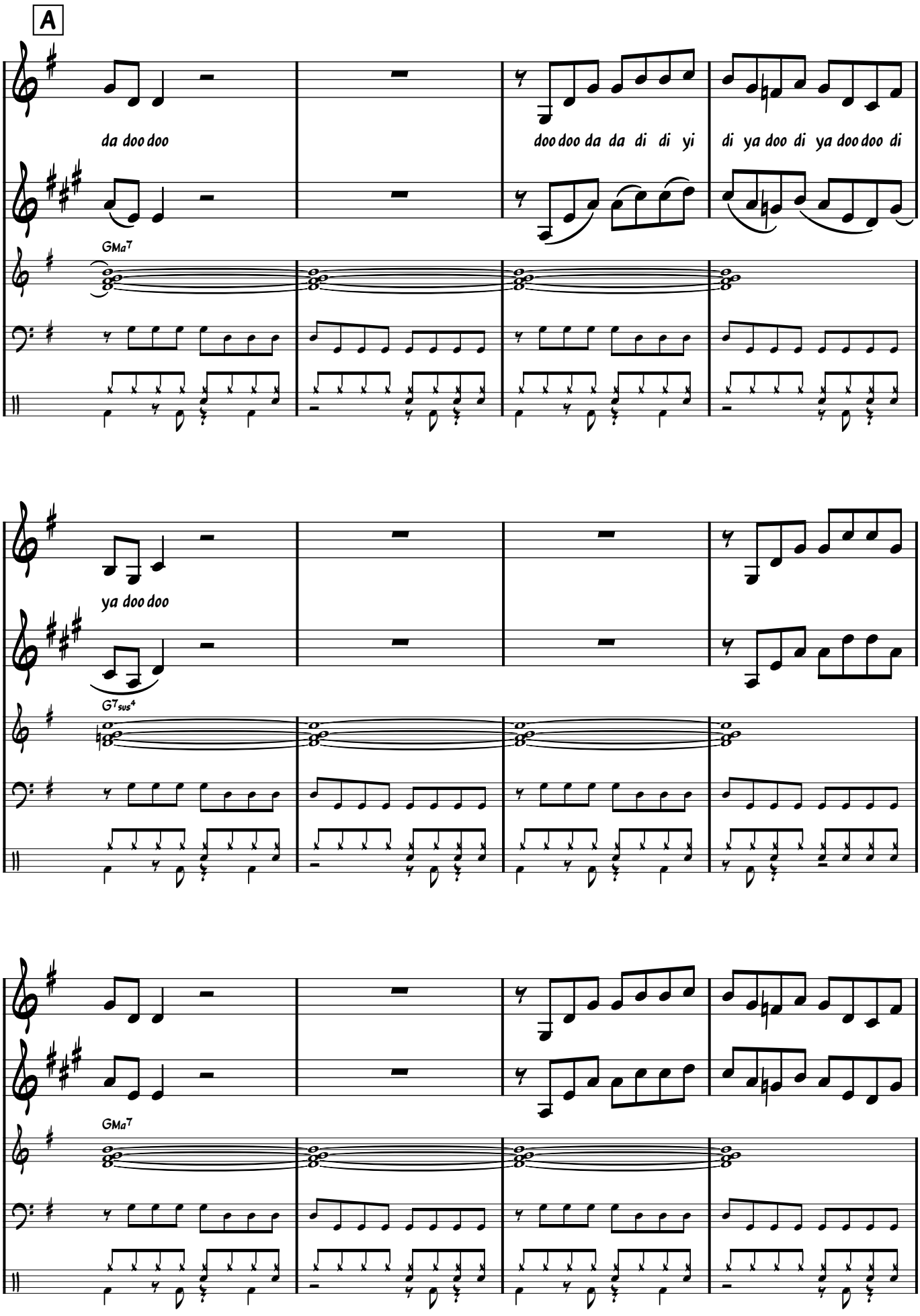
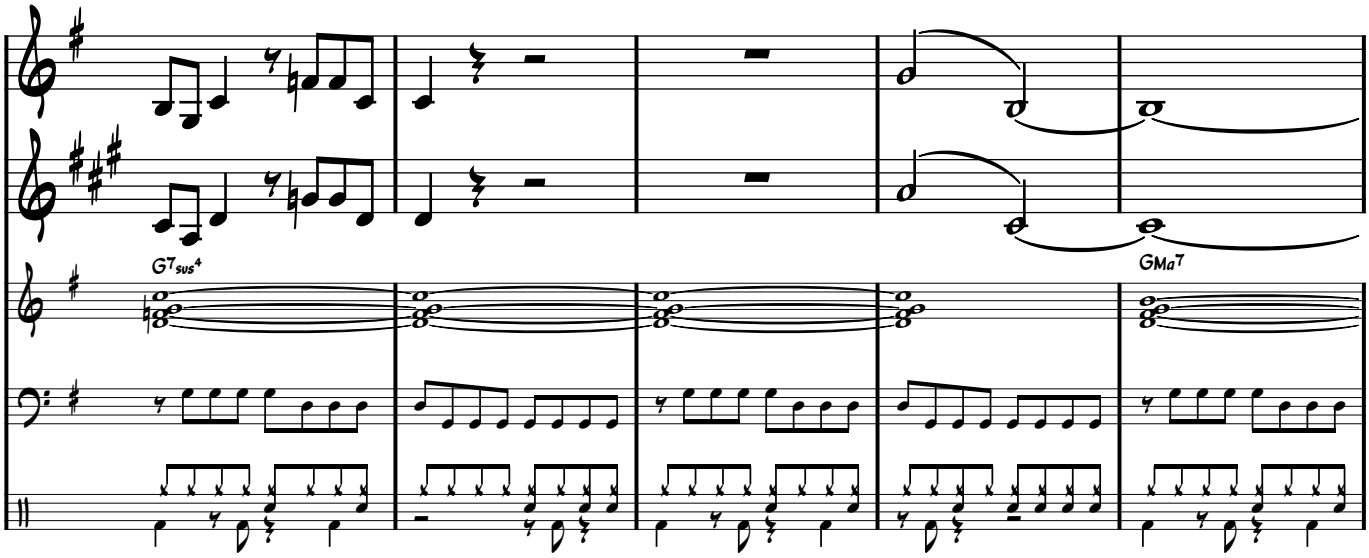
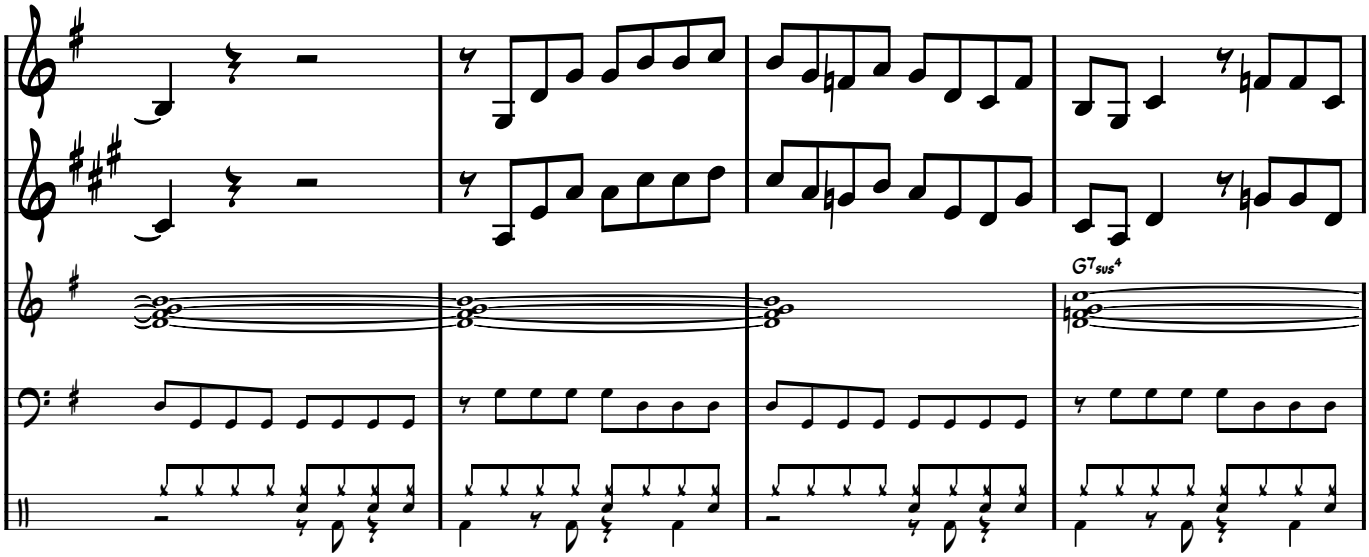
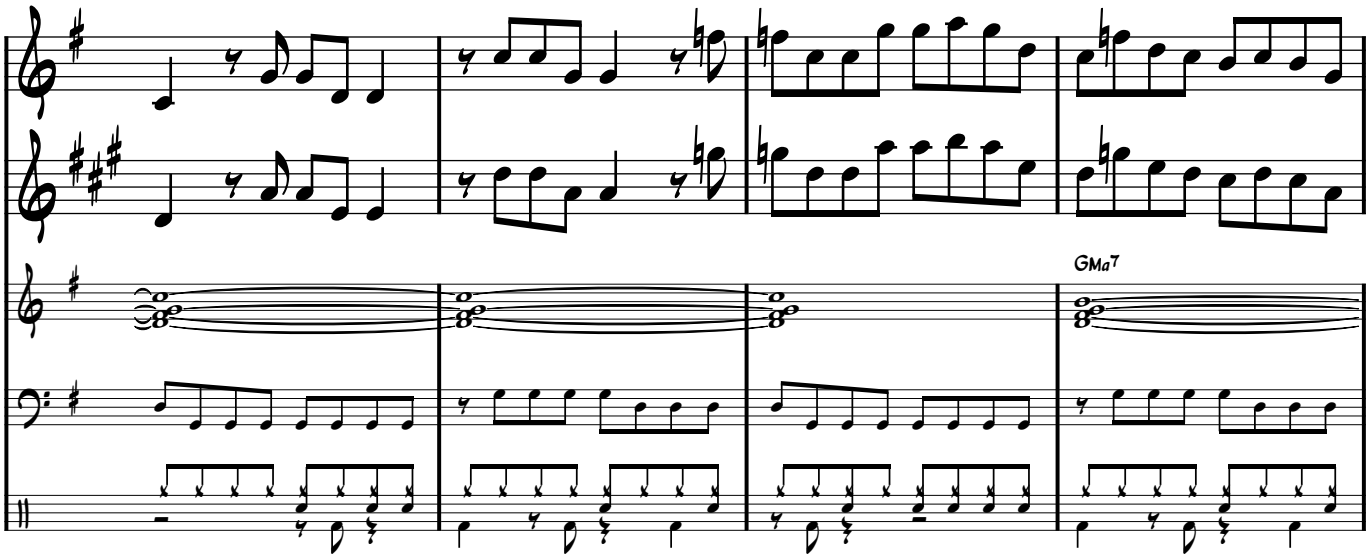
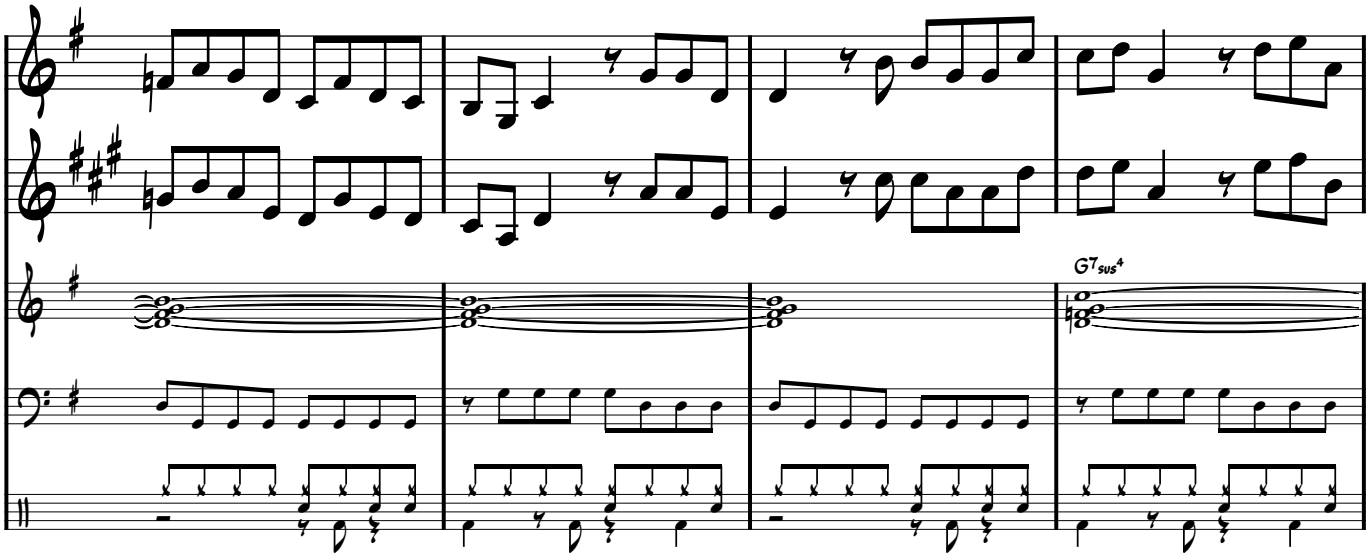


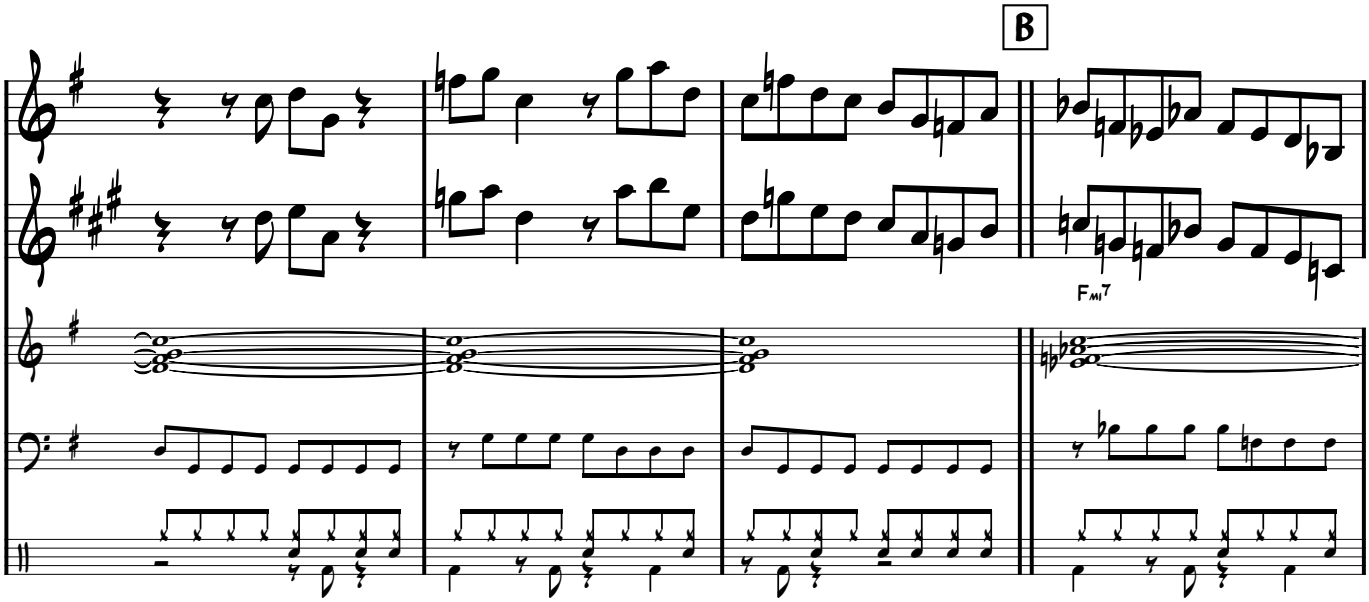

A
da doo doo
doo doo da da di di yi
di ya doo di ya doo doo di
GMa7
ya doo doo
G7sus4
GMa7

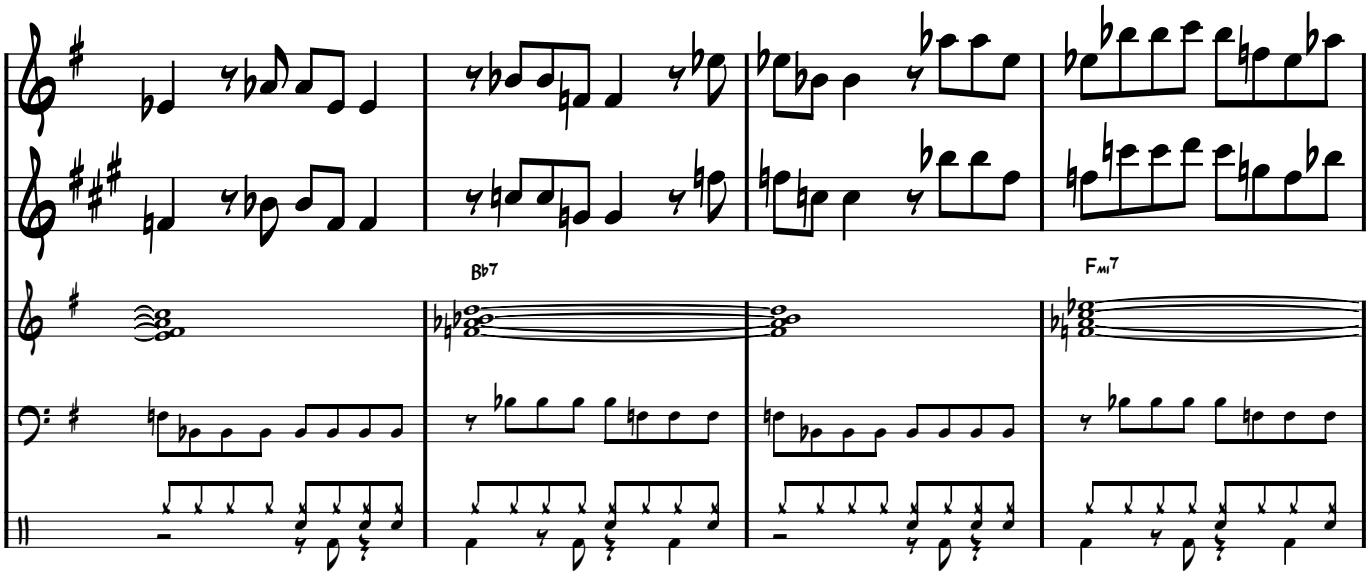

G7sus4
GMa7

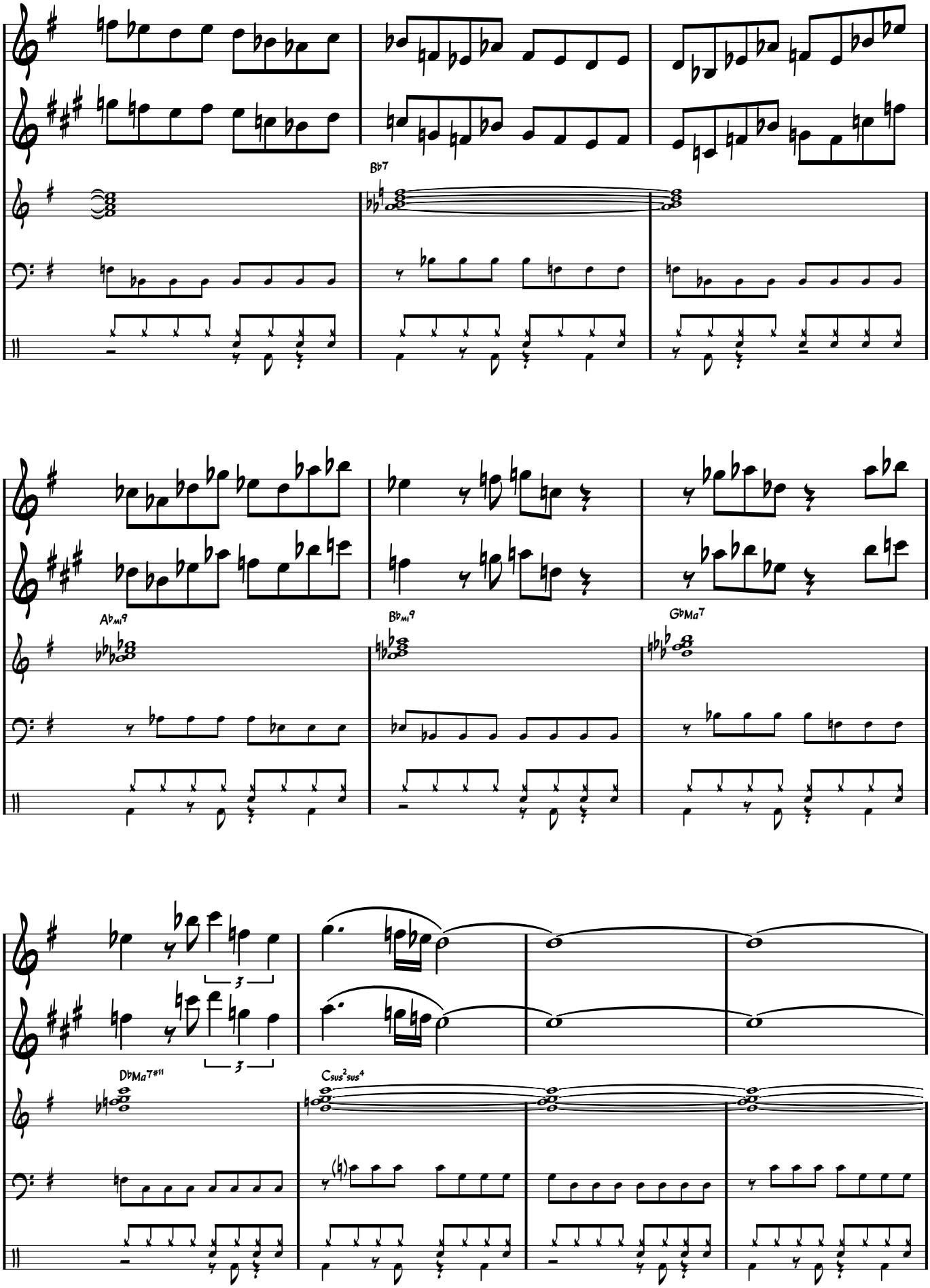

G7sus4

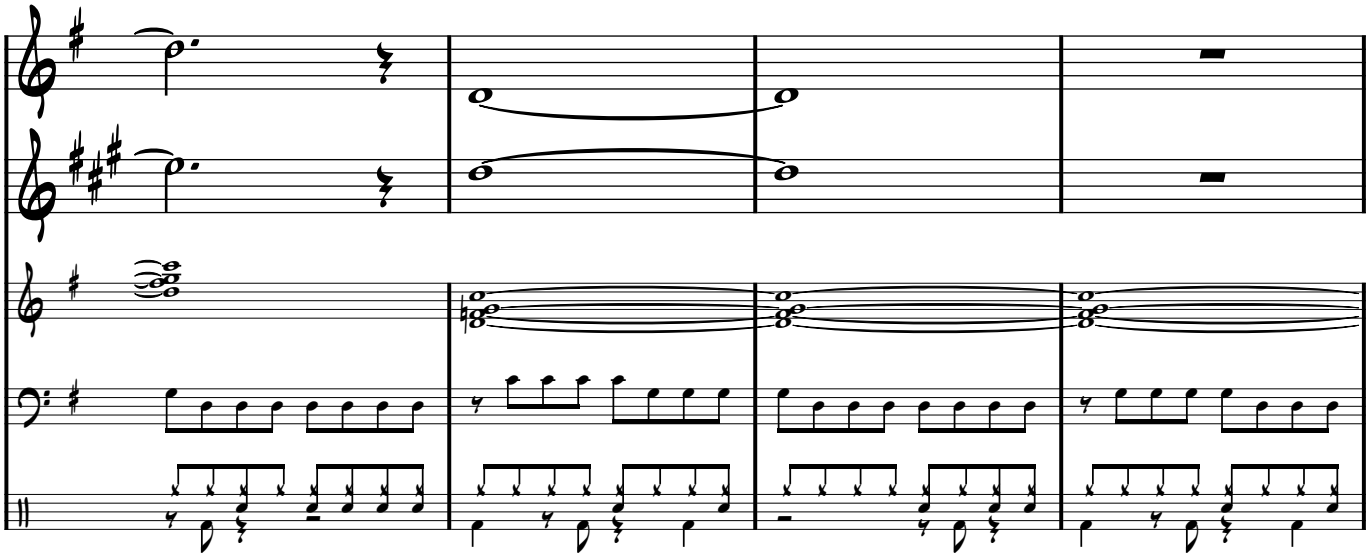

GMa7


G7sus4

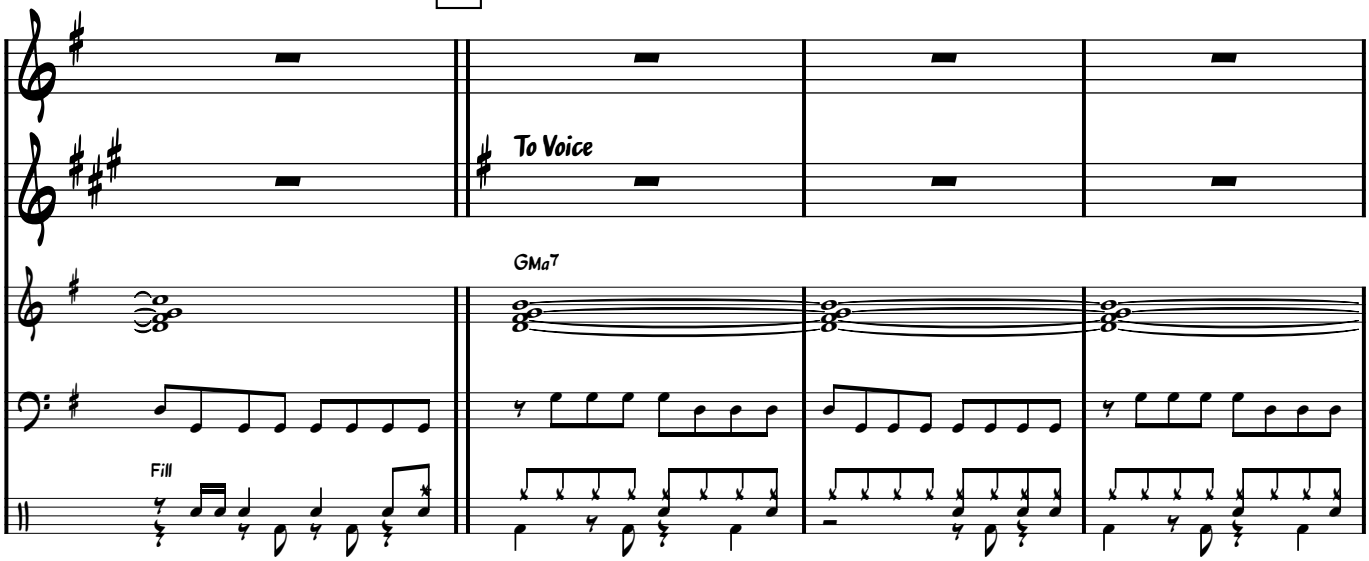

B
Fmi7

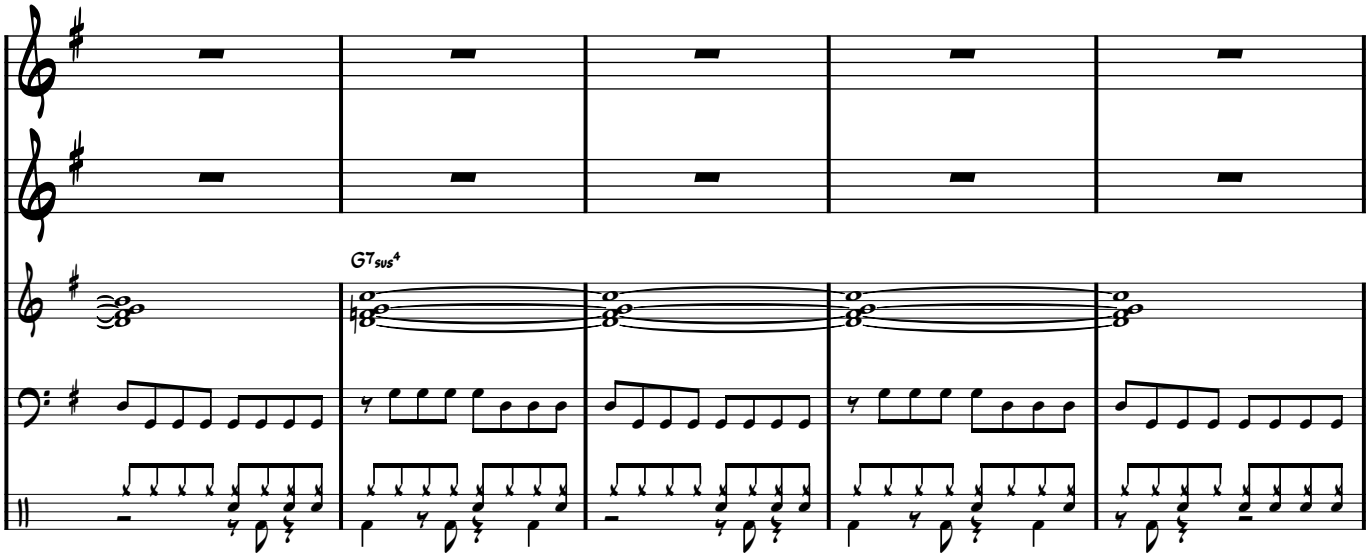

Bb7
Fmi7

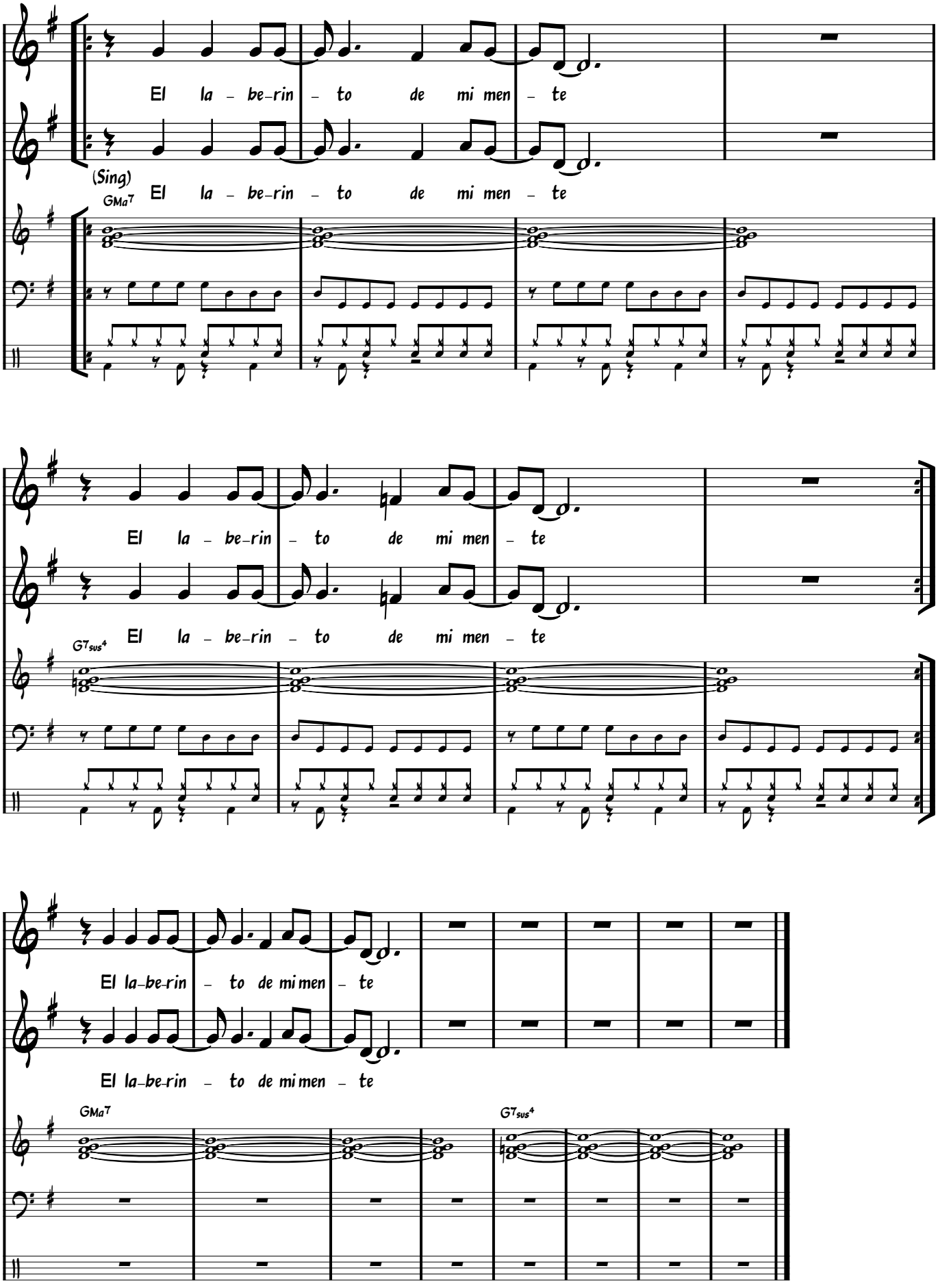

B♭7
A♭mi9
B♭mi9
G♭Ma7
D♭Ma7♯11
Csus2sus4



C






El la - be-rin - to de mi men - te
(Sing)
El la - be-rin - to de mi men - te
GMa7
El la - be-rin - to de mi men - te
El la - be-rin - to de mi men - te
G7sus4
El la-be-rin - to de mi men - te
El la-be-rin - to de mi men - te
GMa7
G7sus4