In the back of my mind

J. Simon van der Walt 7/9/07

for three flutes and clarinet choir

In the back of my mind

Overview

- *In the back of my mind* is for three flutes and clarinet choir, devised for the Scottish Flute Trio and the clarinets of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, for a performance on 8 November 2007
- At the time of writing, the exact number of clarinets is unknown; this draft assumes fourteen players
- The lineup of clarinets is open, but the intention is to have as wide a variety of instruments as possible on stage. Here is an example lineup of fourteen players;
  - Eb clarinet - 2
  - Bb clarinet - 4
  - A clarinet - 3
  - Basset horn in F - 1
  - Eb alto clarinet - 1
  - Bb bass clarinet - 3
  - … if even more obscure instruments can be obtained, then this the chance to use them!
- Whoever is felt to be principal and sub-principal of the clarinet choir should probably take the parts for clarinet 7 and clarinet 1 respectively. (The clarinet 7 part *must* be played on a bass clarinet.) Clarinet 8 also has some small additional duties to perform.
- The flautists all play standard concert flutes
- There is no complete score for the work; it is a jigsaw puzzle of musical and theatrical gestures, intended to be rehearsed and performed under the direct instruction of the composer.
- The musical building blocks are, in the order in which they appear in the work;
  - *Ascending material* - three scales to be memorised by all clarinetists, and played in a variety of improvised ascending patterns according to the written guidance
  - *Sick Puppy* - a limping melodic gesture of wide intervals, to be played by three concert flutes in a written-out heterophony
  - *The 11-7-11-7-5-3-9-7 March* - it would be pointless to notate this work, the composer will teach it to all the players at the first rehearsal. Players might wish to memorise that sequence of numbers now
  - *Sick Puppy Variations* - a notated passage for three flutes and bass clarinet (clarinet 7)

Costume

- It is not essential for the clarinets to wear anything in particular, although if there were the time and energy to provide them all with red socks and scarves, that would not be inappropriate
- The three flutes should either wear the complete SHAM costume of spray-painted suits and hanging basked liner hats, or just the hats. If not wearing the suits, they will need to wear a garment with pockets big enough to accommodate a folded sheet of A4 paper.

Directions

- Flutes and clarinets enter. Clarinets take up positions in two rows upstage as in stageplan. Flutes stand near triangle at A, in a line facing audience. All players stare fixedly. Silence.
- Conductor enters, sets up deckchair as diagrammed. Still silent staring from all players.
- When ready conductor gives a single crack of the slapstick which is…
- **Cue 1**
  - Flutes sit on floor in triangular formation, facing inwards. Do not play.
  - Clarinets commence. Clarinet 1 leads off playing 'Ascending material', scale 1 as indicated. Clarinet 2 starts immediately after clarinet 1; then clar 3 etc, continuing down one line and back up the other until all are playing scale 1.
- **Cue 2** (single crack of slapstick)
  - Flutes still do not play
  - Clar 1 moves to scale 2. Once clar 1 has changed scale, clarinet 2 changes to scale 2. Etc, one at a time down and up the line again until all are playing scale 2.
  - It is essential that all players **wait** until the player before them has changed scale; there should be an audible sense of crossing over from one scale to the other, not a simultaneous change by all players
- **Cue 3** (single crack)
  - Without being in any particular hurry to do so, flutes take out of their pockets the music for 'Sick Puppy', place on the floor in front of them and, on the lead of flute 1, start playing
  - Meanwhile clarinets move to scale 3 one at a time as before
- **Cue 4** (two cracks)
  - Clarinets all stop immediately
  - Flutes continue; 'Sick Puppy' tune is heard clearly
- **Cue 5** (single crack)
  - Flutes stop playing wherever they are. Take music, screw it up into a ball, put it back in pocket
  - Clar 1 leads off with scale 1 again, which is passed as before. However, as soon as clar 8 starts playing, clar 1 moves to scale 2. The move to scale 2 passes down the row as before…
  - When it gets to clar 8, she changes to scale 2, but clar 9 does not; clars 9-14 carry on with scale 1. (At this point clars 1-8 have scale 2)
  - As soon as clar 8 has changed scale, clar 1 initiates a move to scale 3. This only gets as far as clar 4, so finally;
    - Clar 1-4 have scale 3
    - Clar 5-8 have scale 2
    - Clars 9-14 have scale 1
  - **Cue 6** (no slapstick)
    - At some point during the above, when the flutes feel ready (there is no audible cue), the three flutes stand and walk upstage between the two rows of playing clarinets, turn, and face downstage.
  - **Cue 7** (two cracks)
    - All tacet. All stare fixedly. Long pause.

- **Cue 8** (single crack)
  - All clars pick up again immediately where they had left off; three simultaneous scales
  - Flutes commence 11-7-11-7-5-3-9-7 march downstage
  - Clars play alternating dynamics; that is, for the first count of the march (11) they play fortissimo, on the second count (7) they play pianissimo, on the third count (11) they play fortissimo again…
  - … ending pianissimo as…
  - … the flutes do the bisbigliando turn to face upstage at the end of the march
- **Cue 9** (no slapstick)
  - Flute 1 stops, all flutes and clarinets stop. Medium length pause.
- **Cue 10** (single crack)
  - The flutes march up again in the same pattern, but this time the clarinets play the downbeats and the bisbigliando for the turn
- **Cue 11** (no slapstick)
  - Clar 1 cues all to stop
  - Another pause for staring
- **Cue 12** (no slapstick - instead…)
  - … the conductor exits, carrying the deckchair
  - The instant the conductor moves, all the other players do so as well. In a brisk and matter-of-fact fashion, somewhat noisily;
  - All clarinets exeunt except clar 7 (bass)
  - Clar 7 goes to sit in the fourth chair
  - The three flutes walk downstage, remove their hats and place them on the floor in a triangular formation, then go to sit in the other three chairs
- **Cue 13** (no slapstick)
  - Three flutes and clar 7 play the 'Sick Puppy' variations
- **Cue 14** (no slapstick)
  - Clar 7 runs out of music, and goes to stand slightly upstage of and behind the three flutes
  - This is the cue for the rest of the clarinets to re-enter, and form up in two lines behind the flutes, this time standing quite naturally, not staring particularly
  - Flutes carry on playing until they hear all the clarinets have assembled, then…
  - Stop playing, take the crumpled sheets out of their pockets, smooth out and place on music stand, but do not play
  - Another silent pause
- **Cue 15** (two cracks are heard offstage)
  - That is the end of the piece. Audience are unlikely to applaud, but flutes should stand anyway, all bow, call on conductor for bow etc.

Duration

~9-10 mins

Rehearsal plan

Well before rehearsal period starts, *Ascending Materia*l is distributed to all clarinetists, who are under the strongest possible instruction to study and memorise the material thoroughly. *Sick Puppy* and *Sick Puppy Variations* also distributed to the relevant players for private study as required. All players should have memorised the sequence 11-7-11-7-5-3-9-7 before the first rehearsal.

Rehearsal 1, 90 minutes	
10 mins	General explanation from composer
	Practice standing still and staring fixedly at audience
	Practice standing still normally
20 mins	All clarinets and flutes learn 11-7 march together
20 mins	Go on to rehearse as it appears in the piece…
	… including contrasting dynamics section for clarinets (with bisbigliando for now instead of ascending material)
10 mins	Rehearse cues 6 through 11 twice
30 mins	Rehearse 'Ascending Material' section with all clarinets. *Flutes not needed*

At some convenient time between the first and second rehearsals, the three flautists should rehearse *Sick Puppy* together. Clarinet 7 (bass) must also arrange to join with the three flautists at some point for rehearsals of the (rather difficult) *Sick Puppy Variations*.

Clarinetists should continue to become more familiar with the *Ascending Material*, making it part of their regular practice routine.

Rehearsal 2, 60 minutes	
15 mins	Block/walk through entire piece, no instruments, learning slapstick cues
20 mins	Rehearse cue by cue, in order, with instruments
15 mins	First run through, stopping as needed
10 mins	Run complete piece

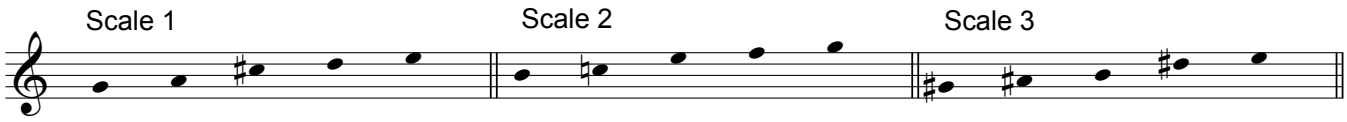
A final 20-30 minute troubleshooting-and-run-through session on the day of the concert completes the rehearsal period.

Clarinet in B♭

In the back of my mind

Ascending Material

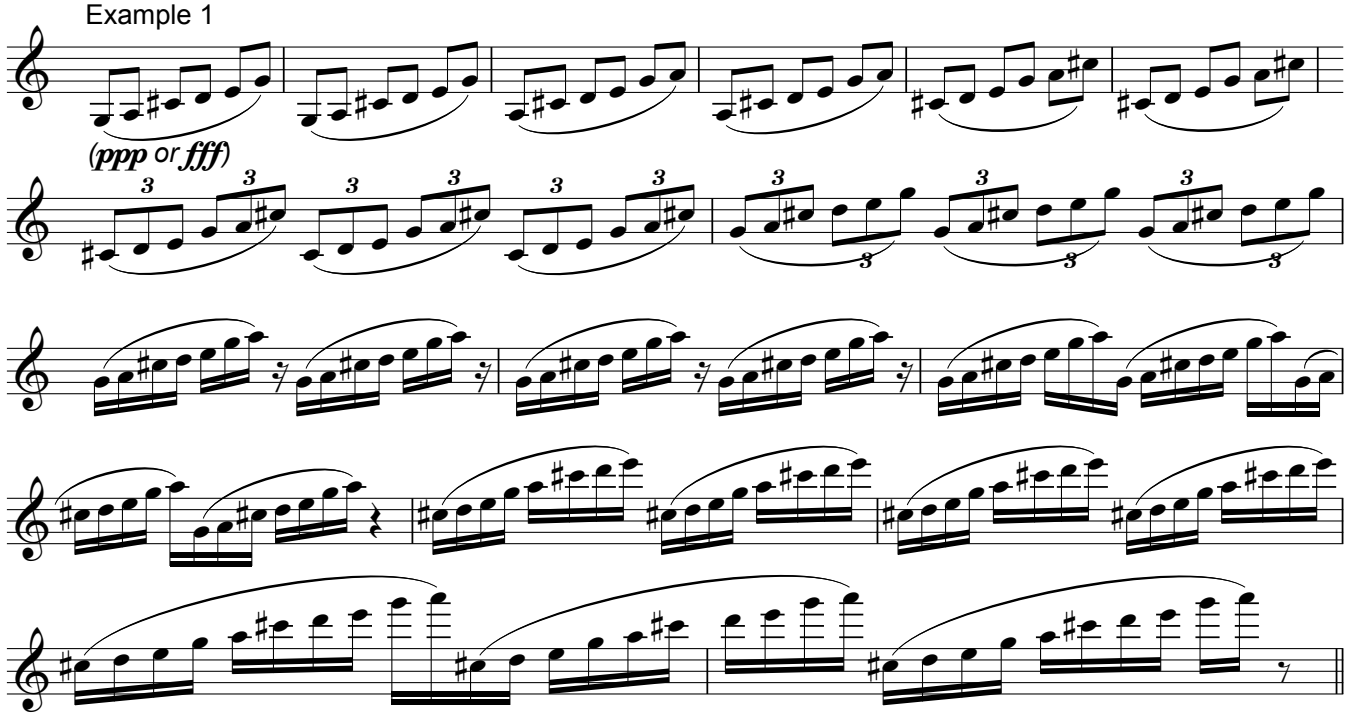
In this section your job is to be ready to improvise ascending phrases using one of three scales, over the full range of your instrument, at a tempo of crotchet = 120, using a mixture of quavers, triplets and semiquavers, at a dynamic of either ppp or fff. Here are the three scales;



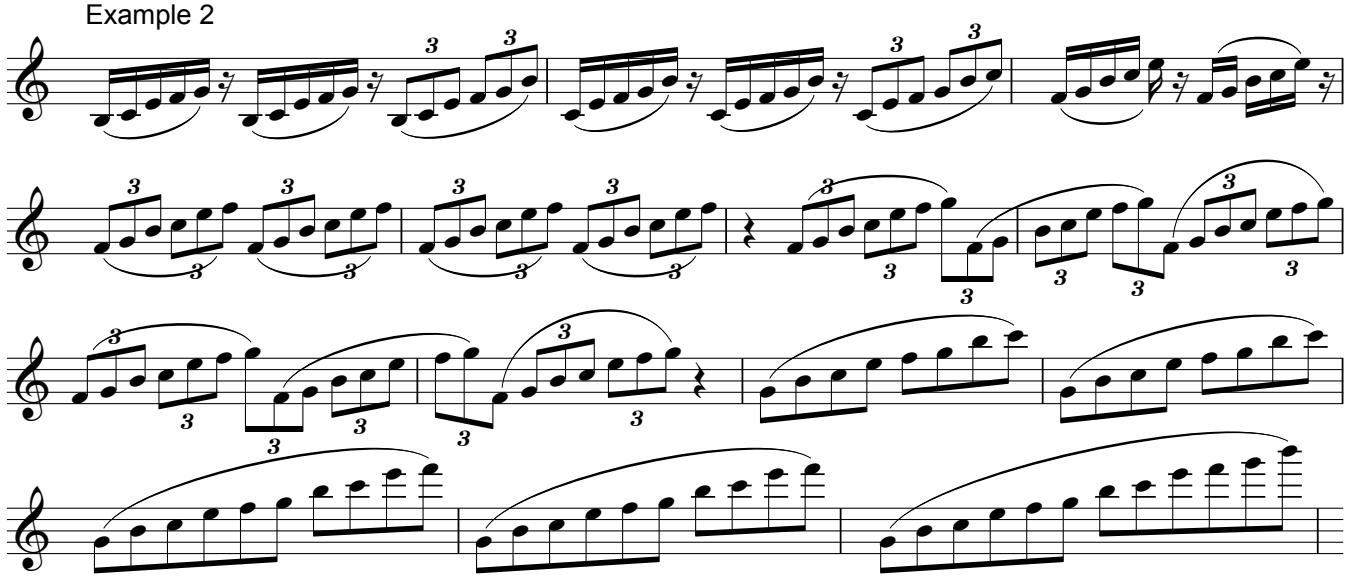
Below are three examples of the sort of phrase which you are expected to be able to produce with complete ease and confidence, without reference to any notation. (Players of eg bass clarinets and basset horns should use lower notes also, but need not perhaps venture as high as the given examples!)

♩ = 120

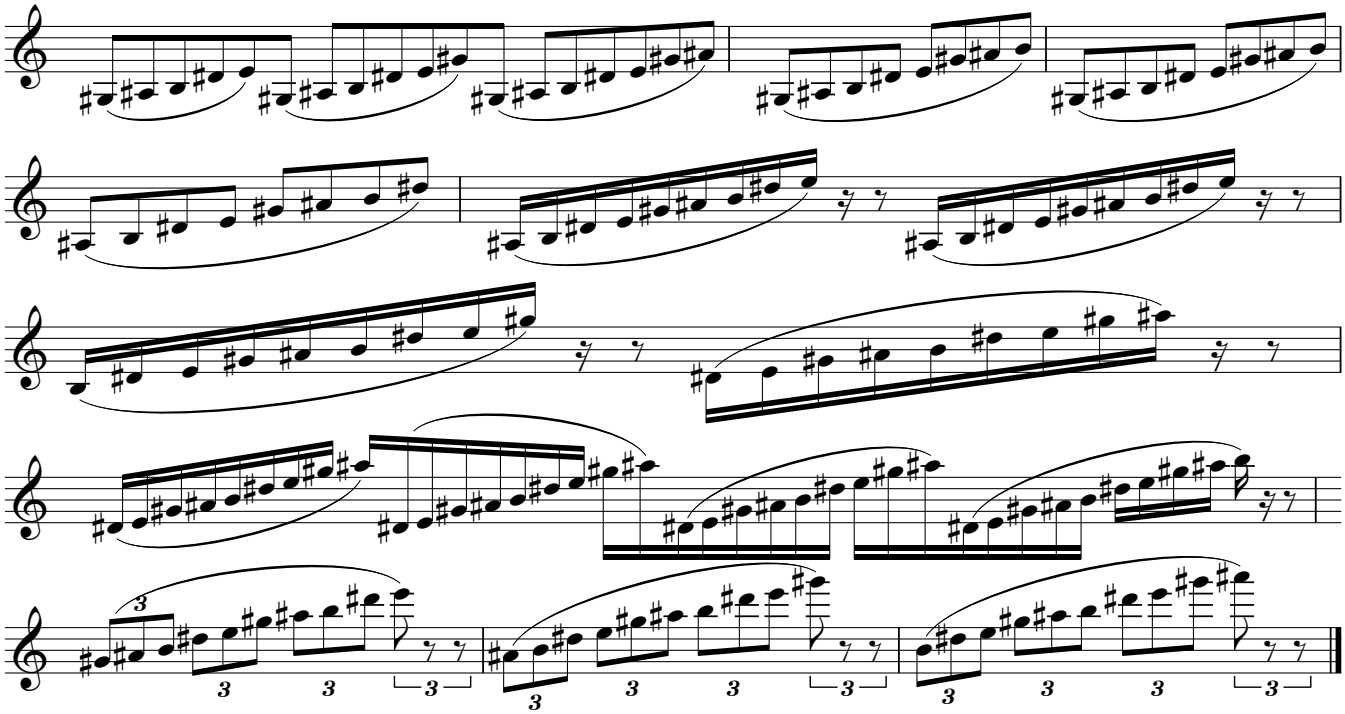
Example 1



Example 2



Example 3



Clarinet in A

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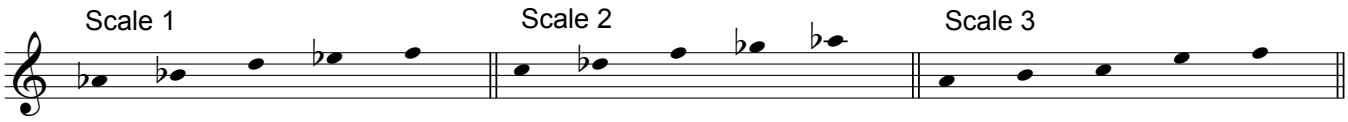

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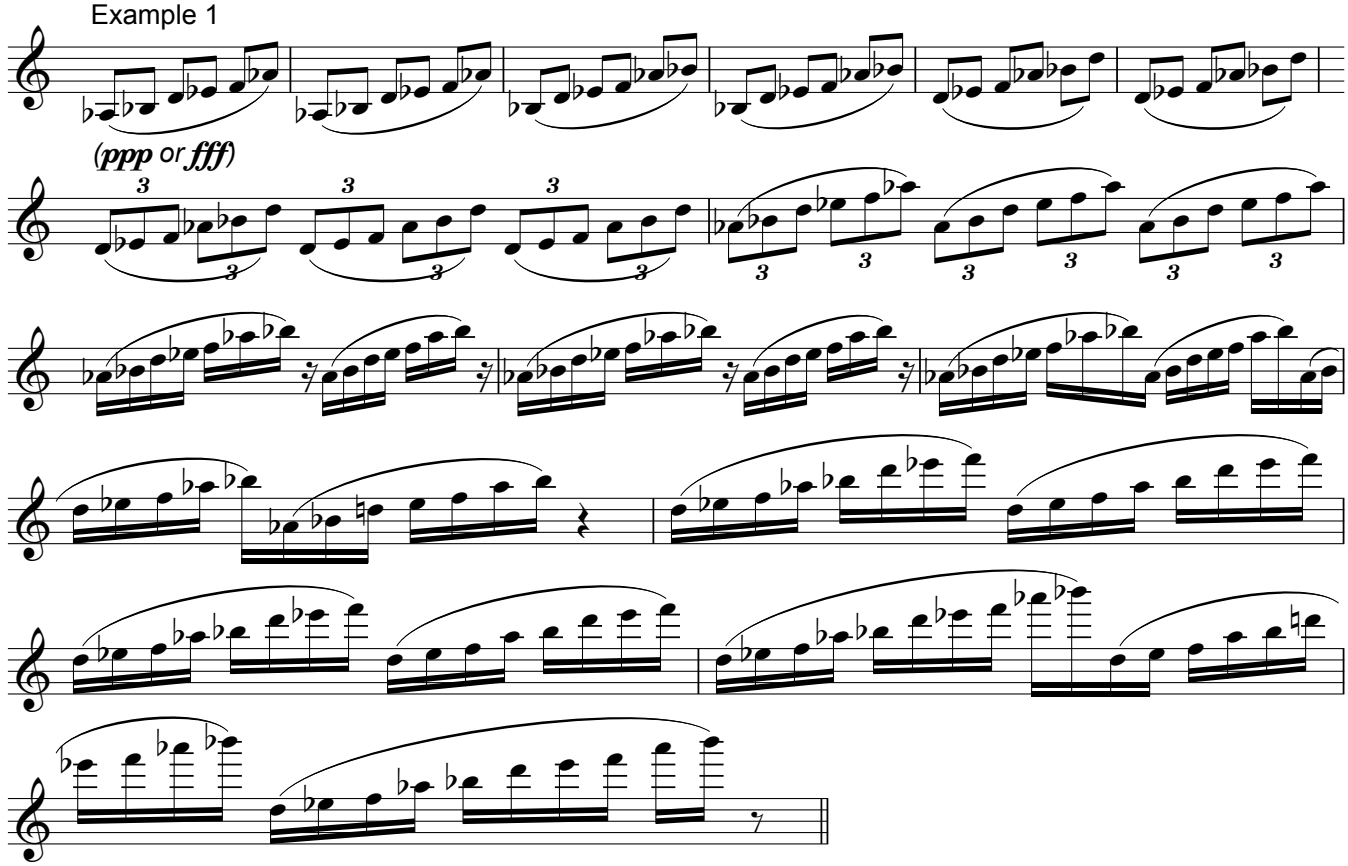

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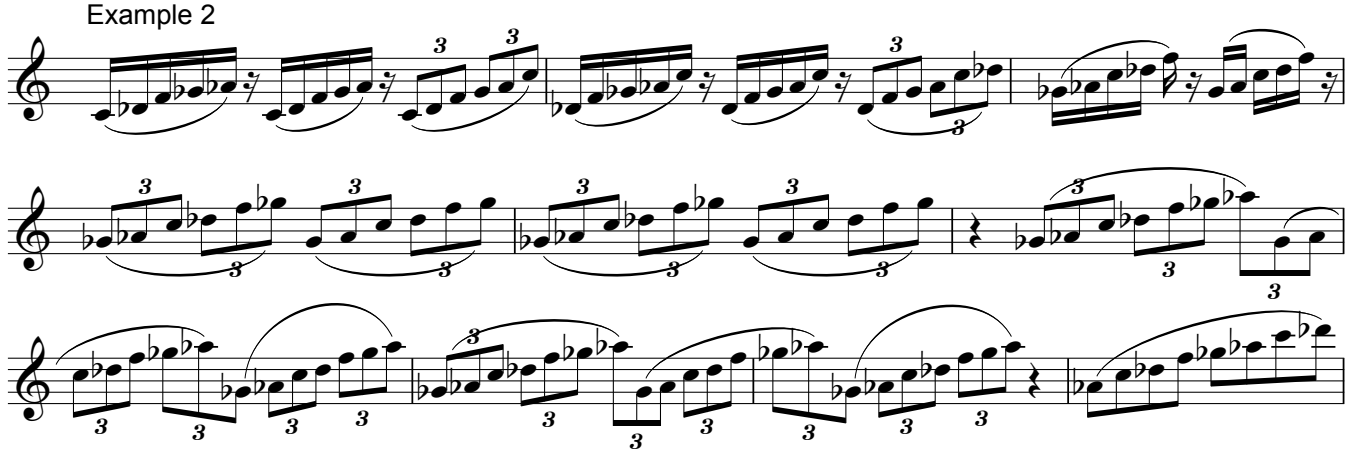

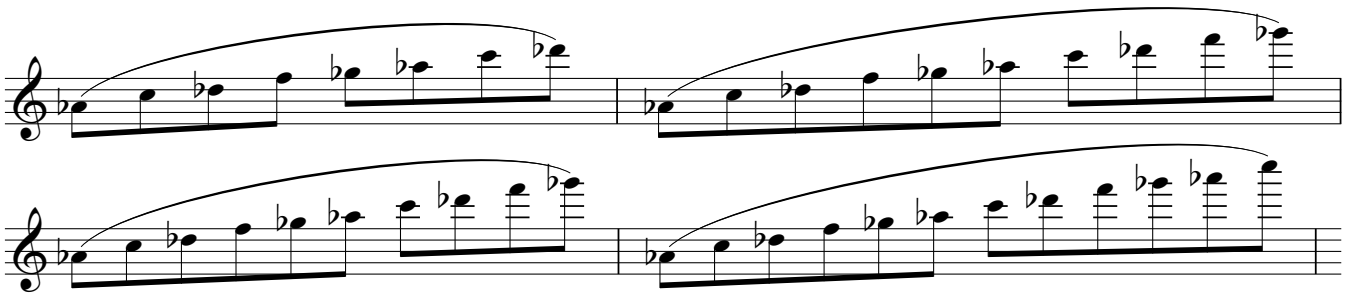

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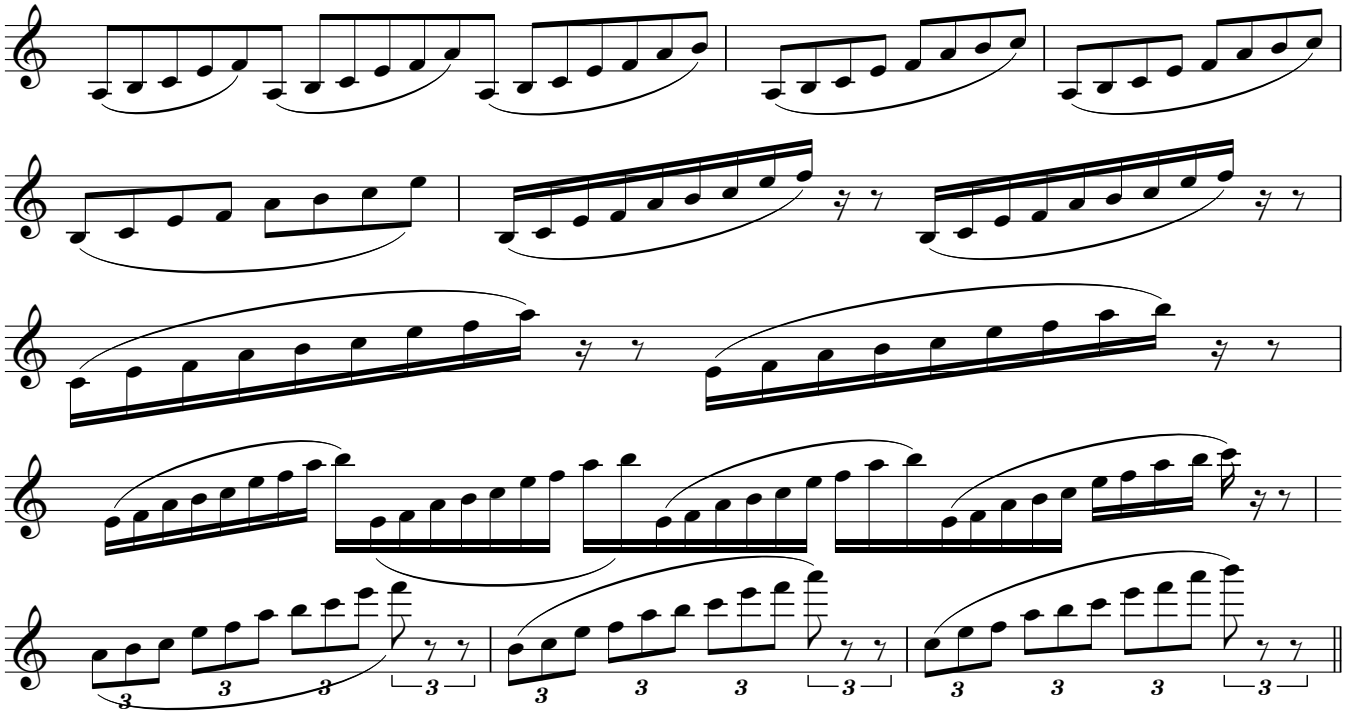

Clarinet in E♭

In the back of my mind

Ascending Material

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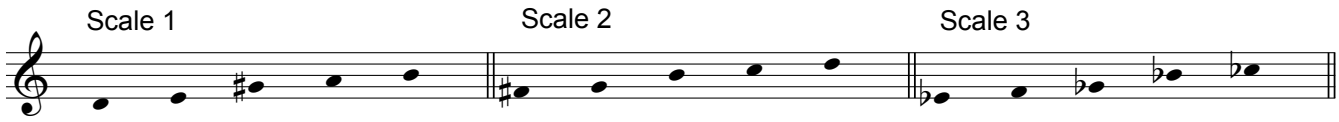

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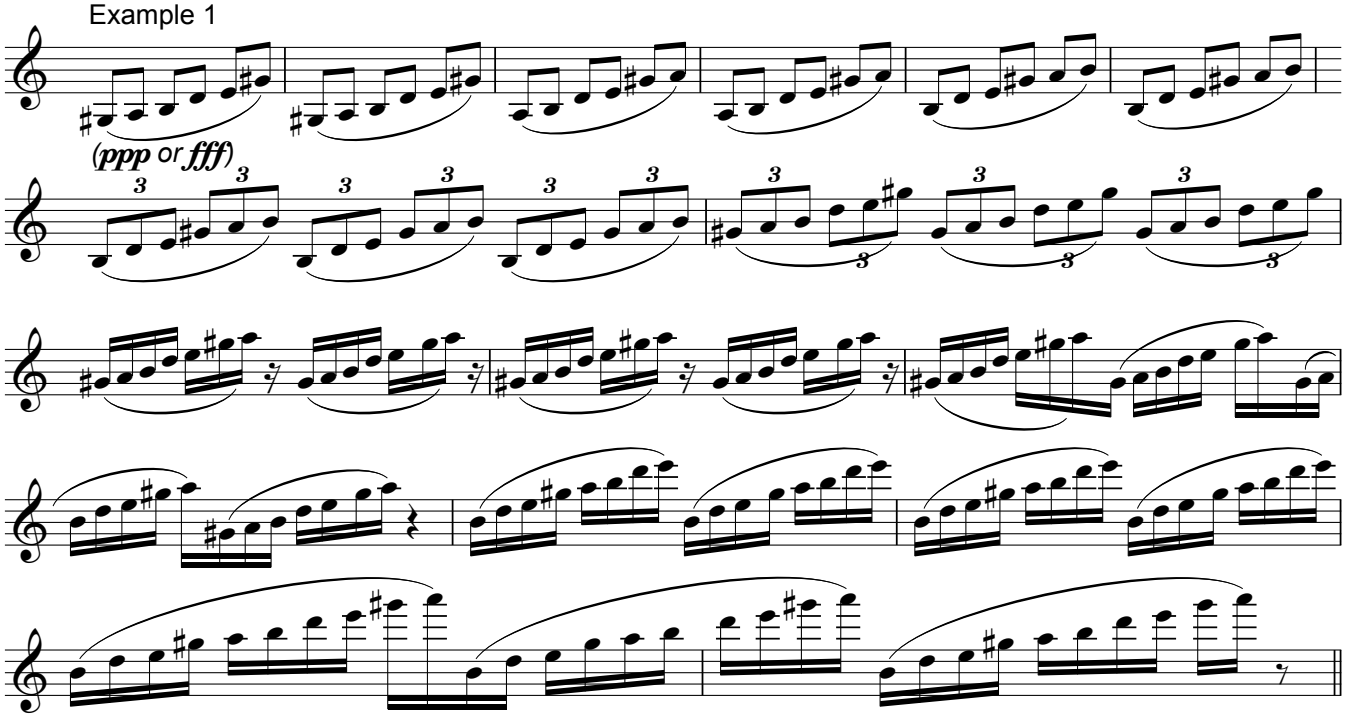

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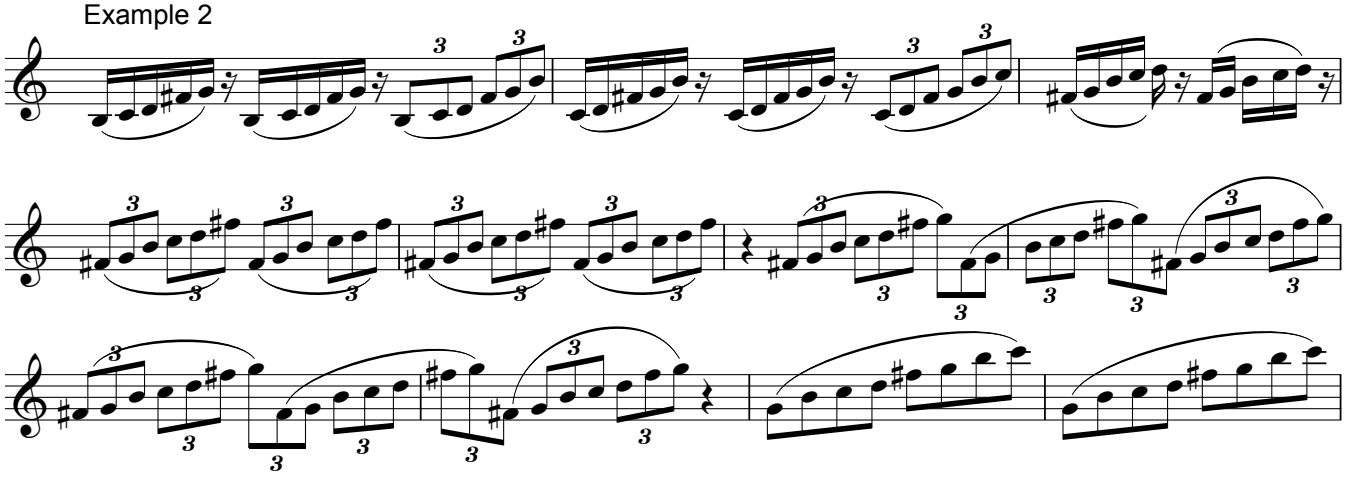

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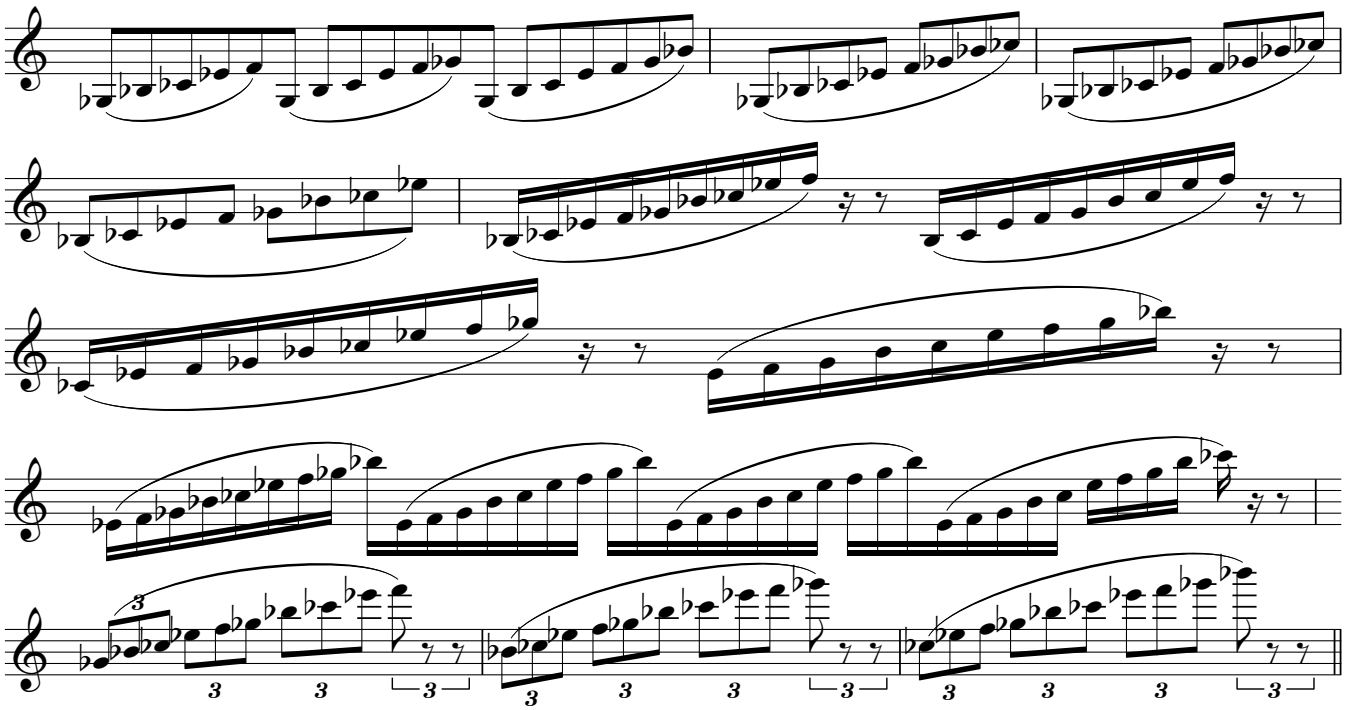

Clarinet in F

In the back of my mind

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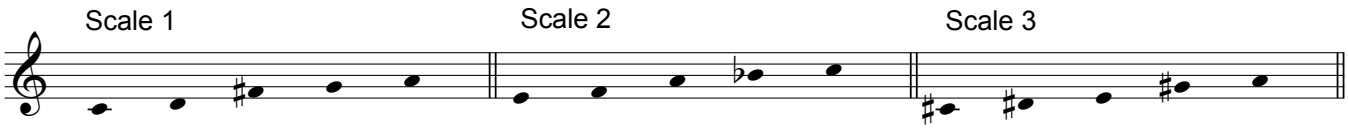

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♩ = 120

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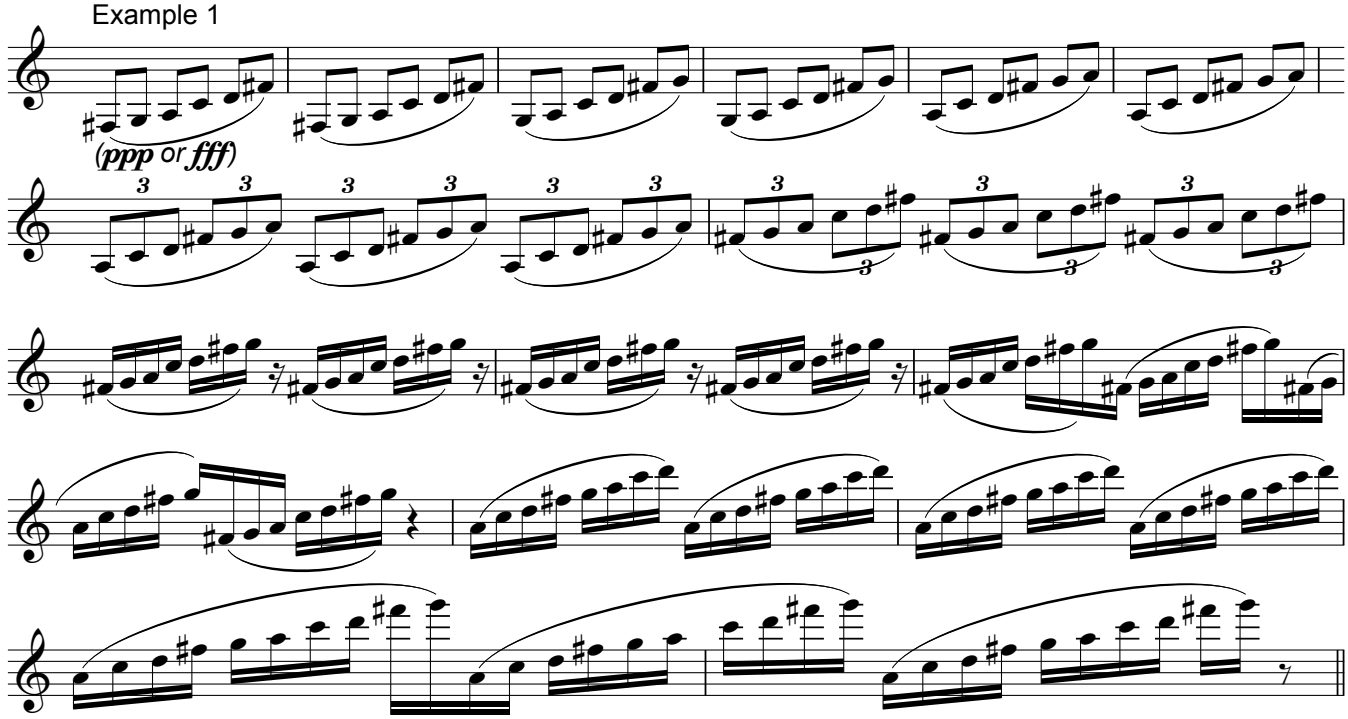

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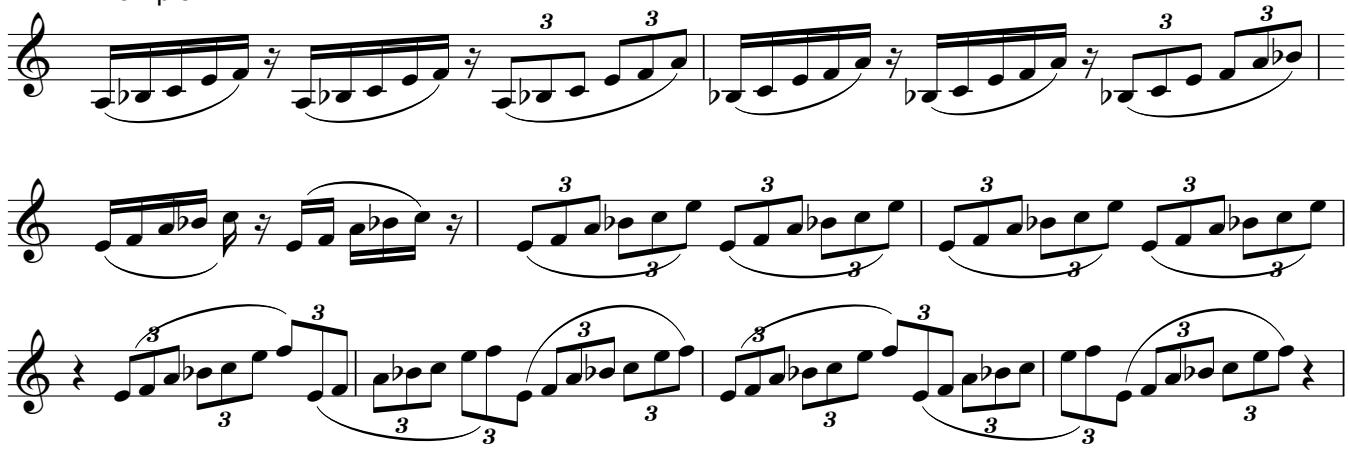

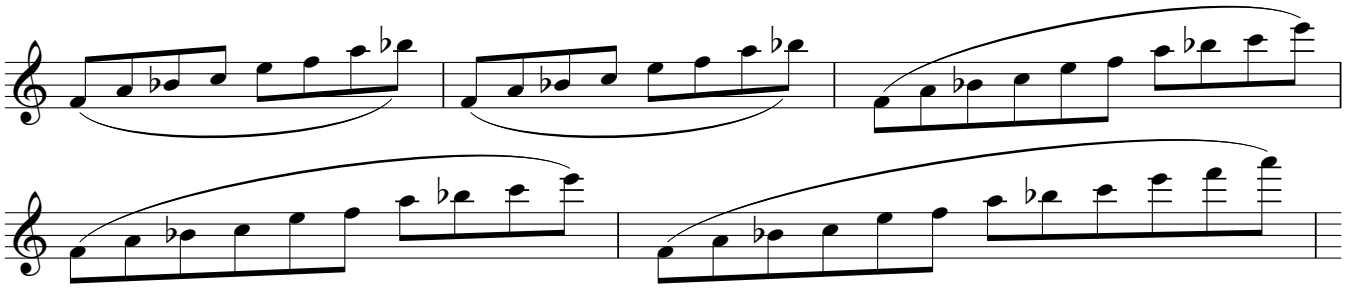

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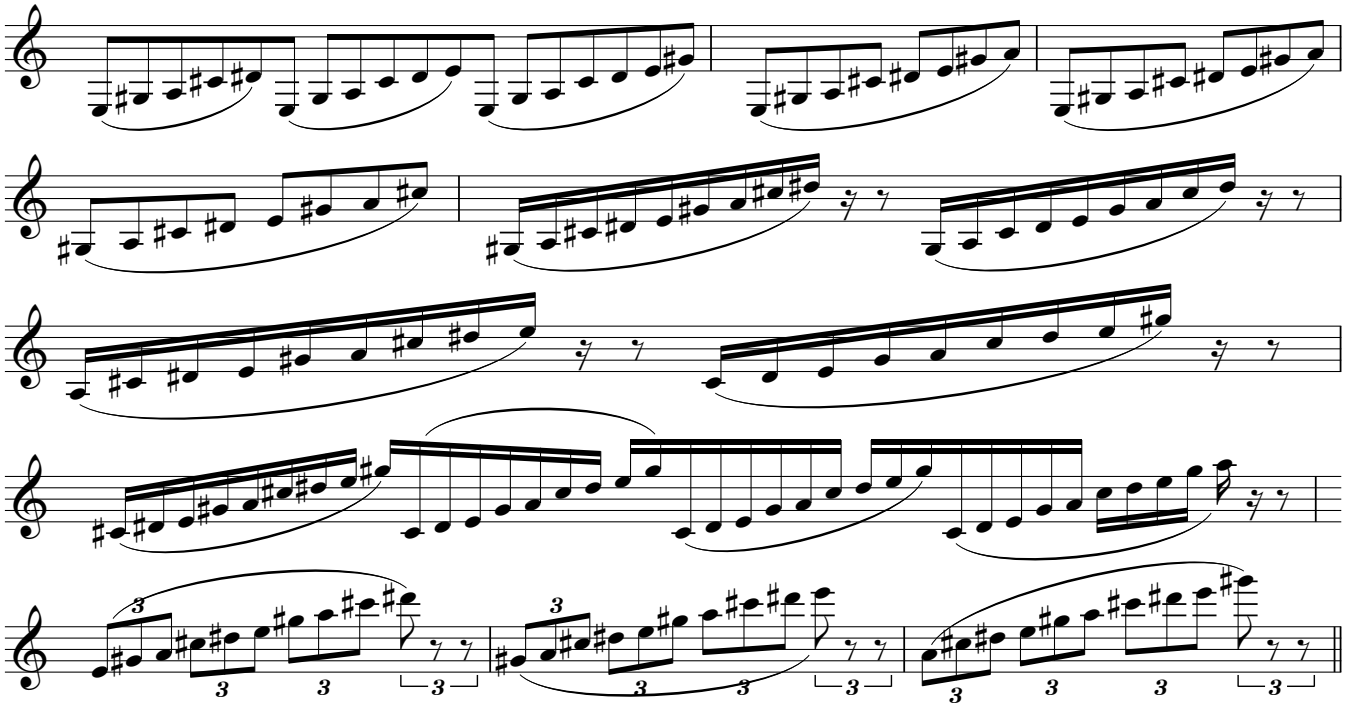
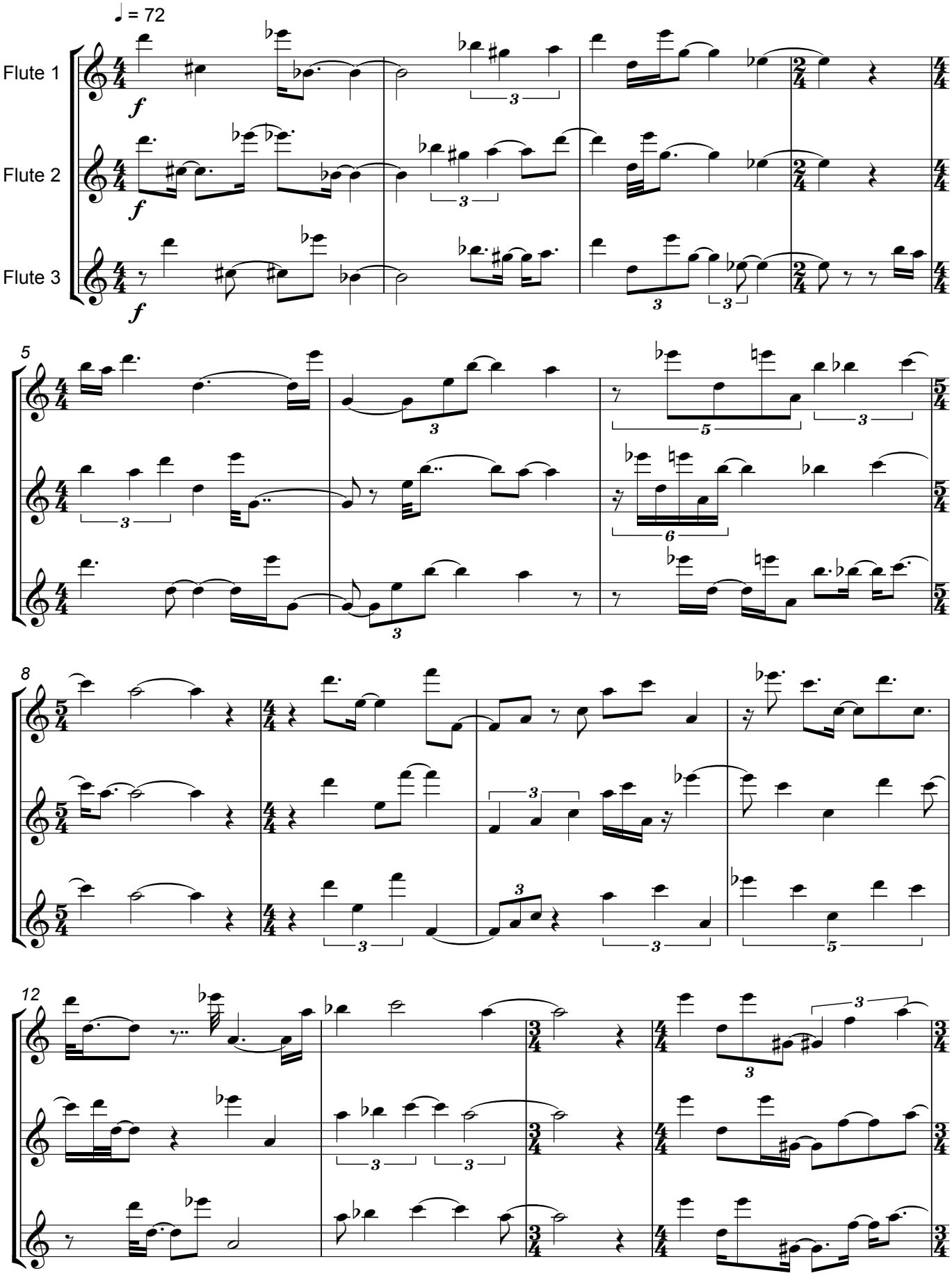
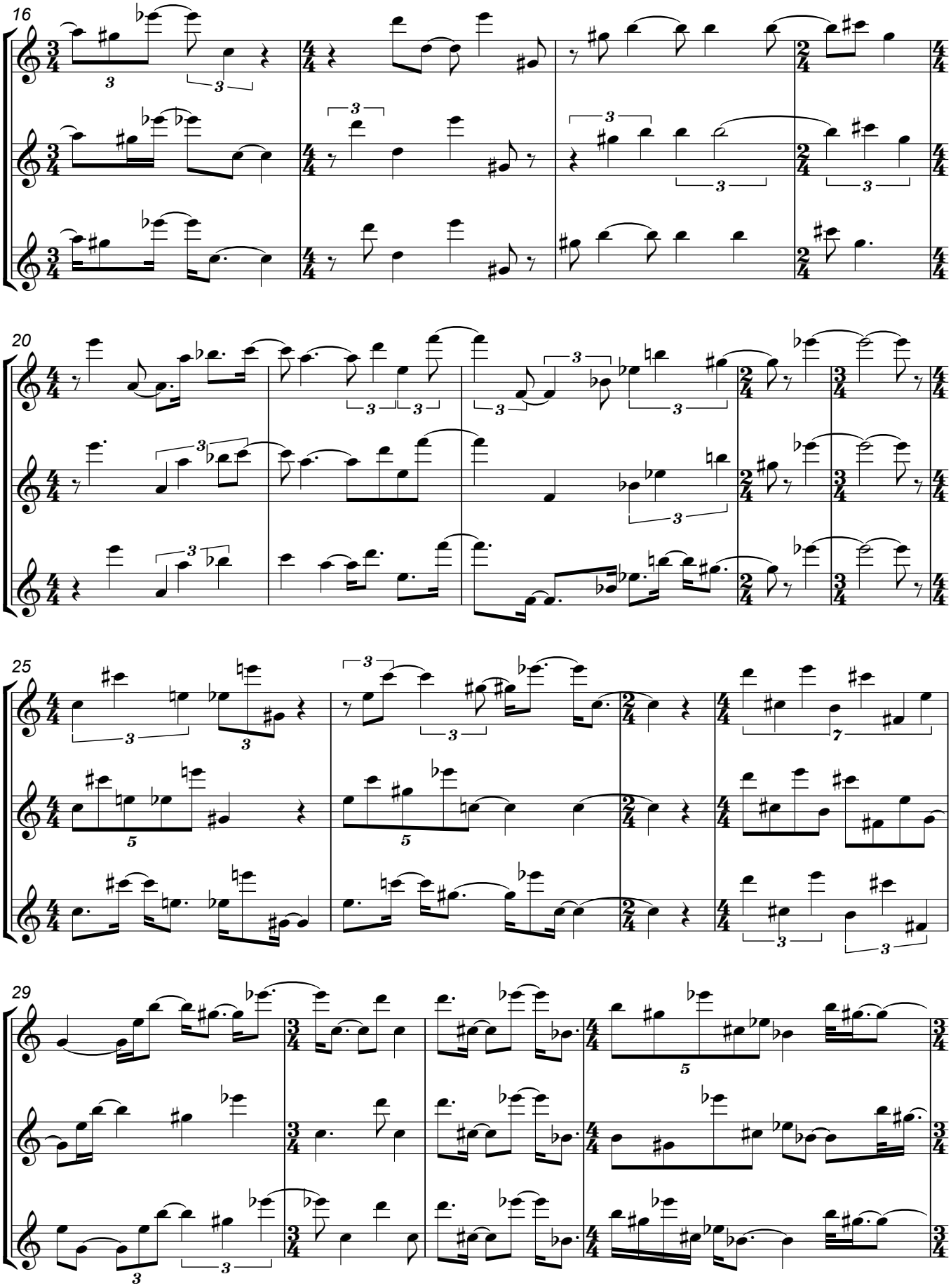


Sick Puppy

Loud and impassioned. At first you will be drowned out by the clarinets; when they stop you might like to take the foot off the volume pedal a bit, but keep the intensity.

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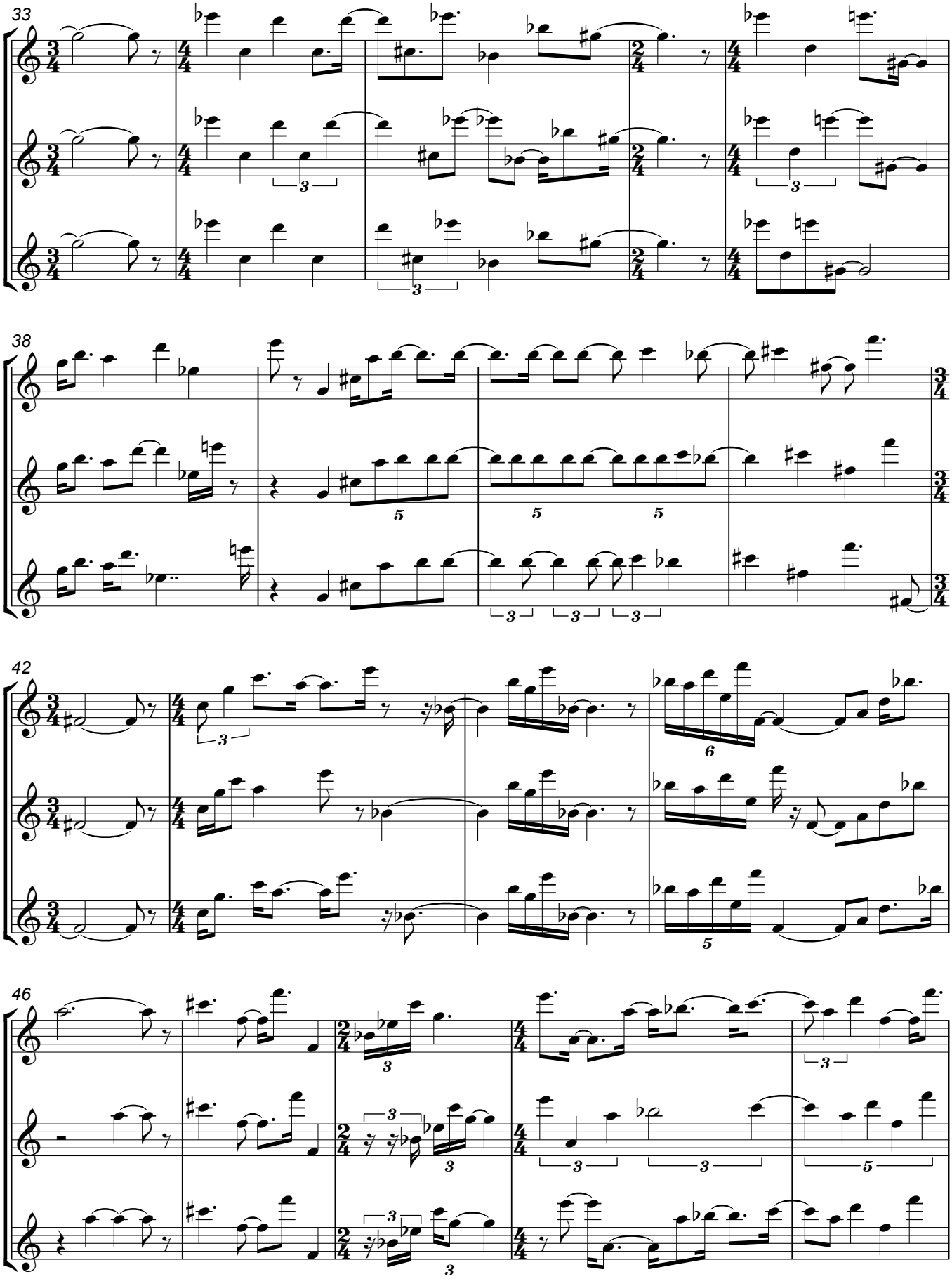
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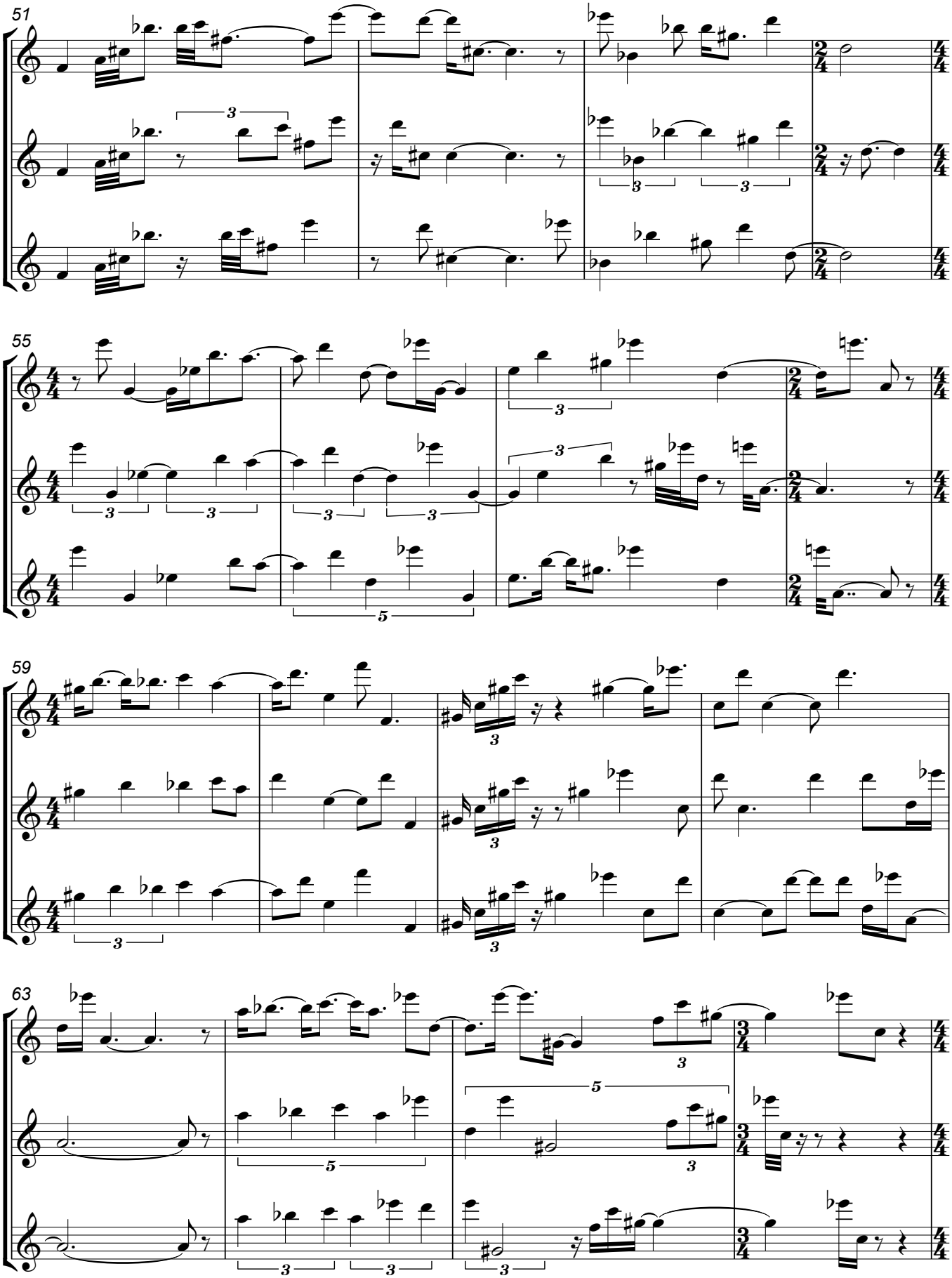
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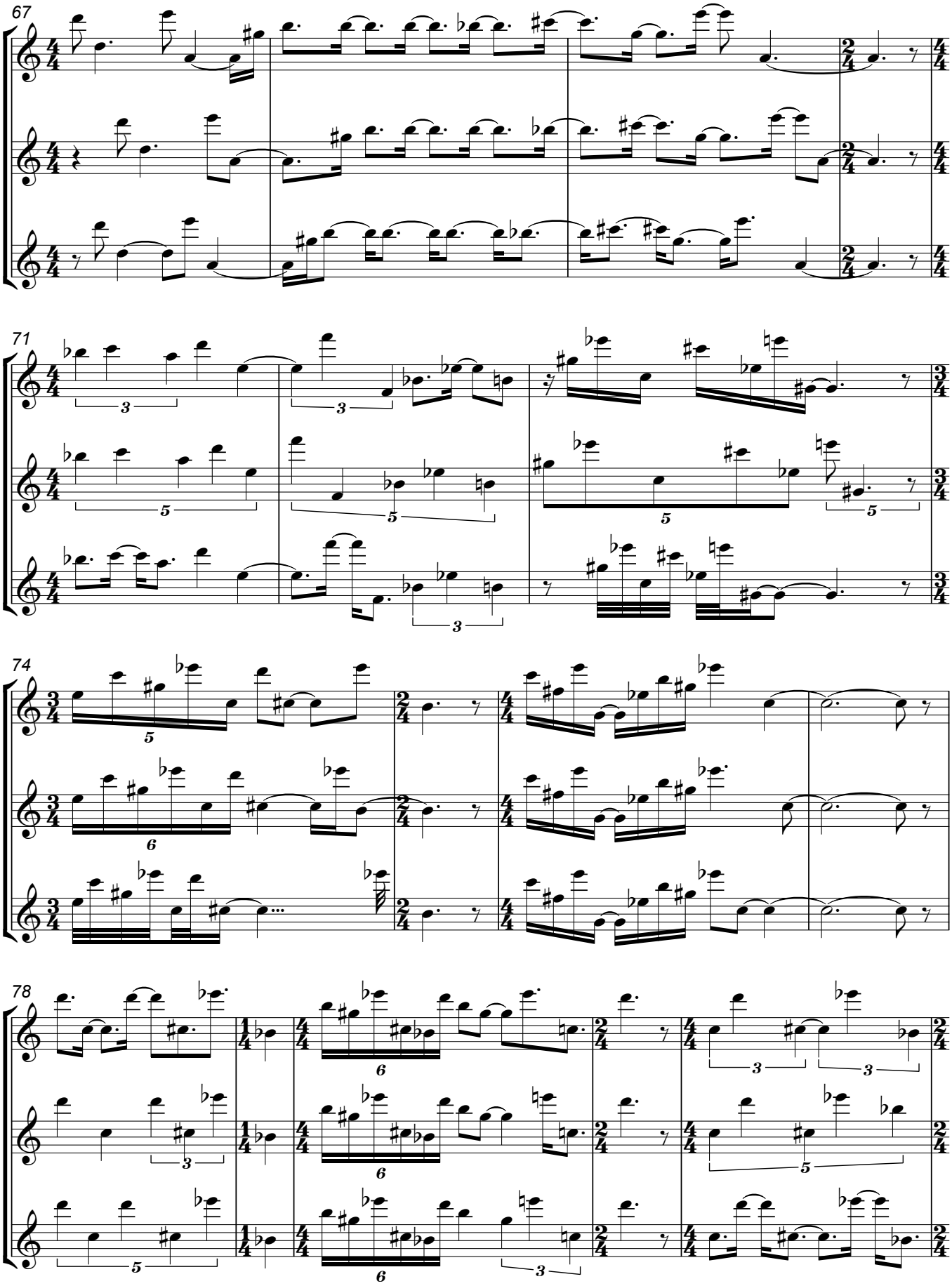
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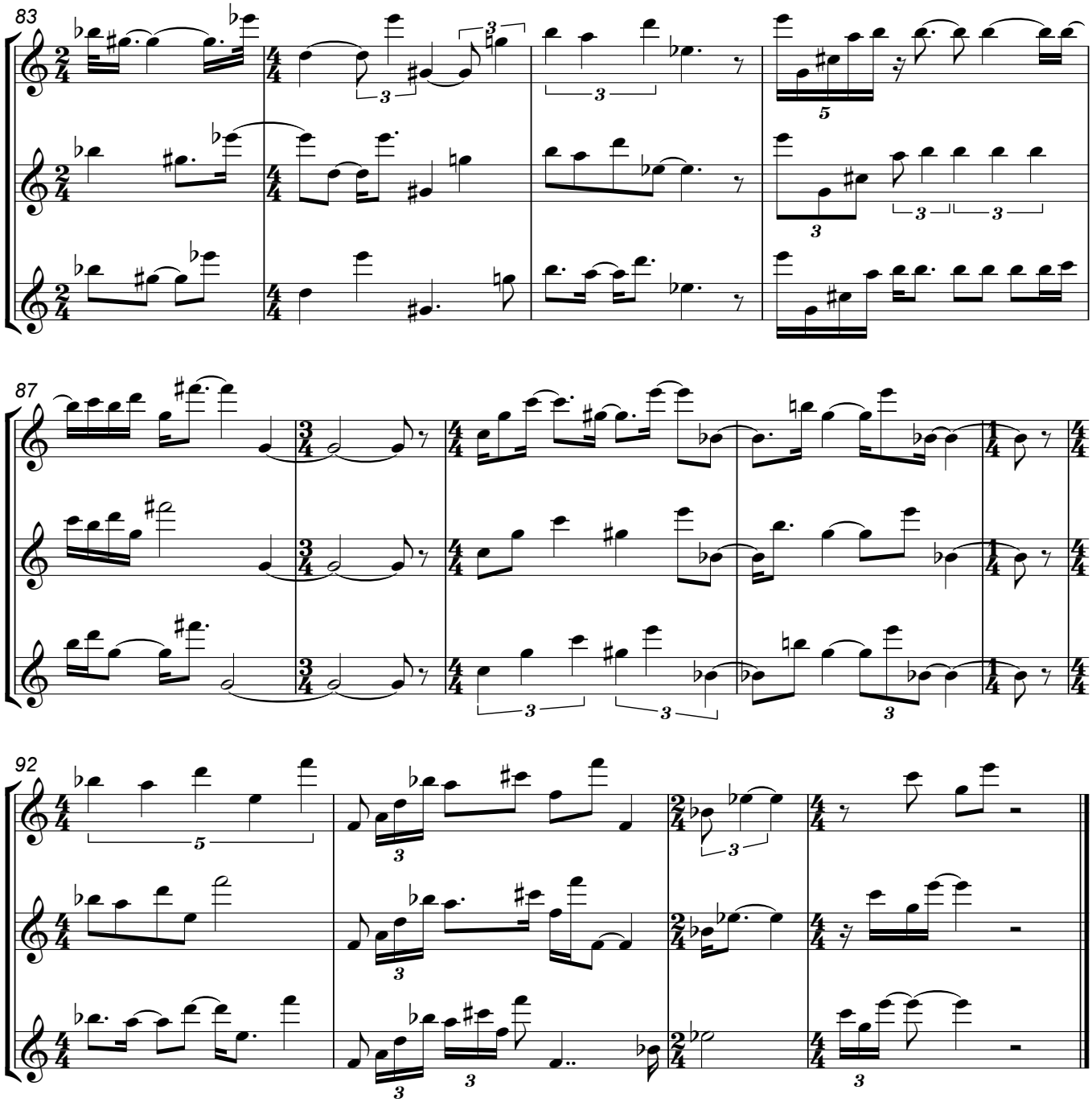
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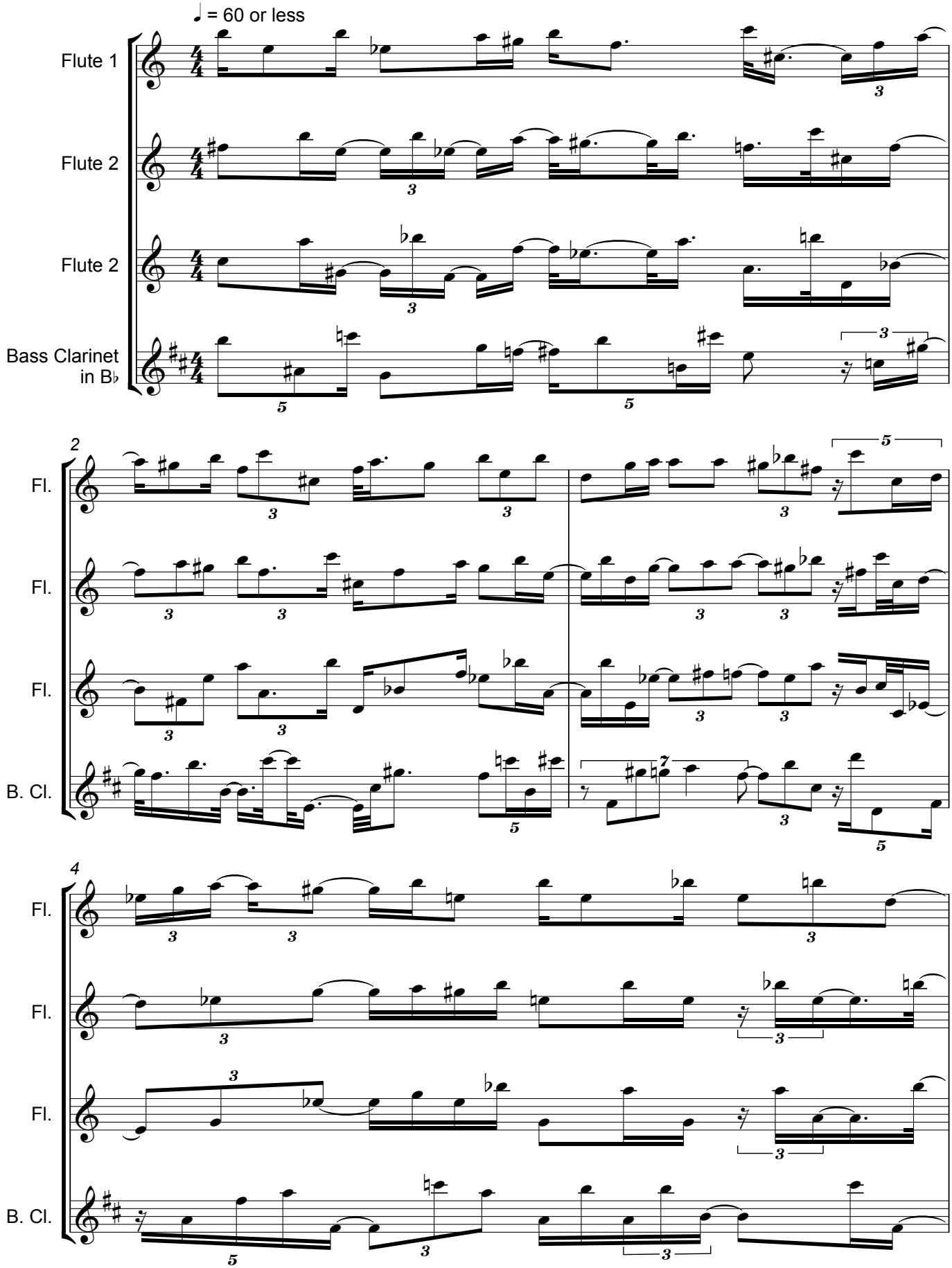
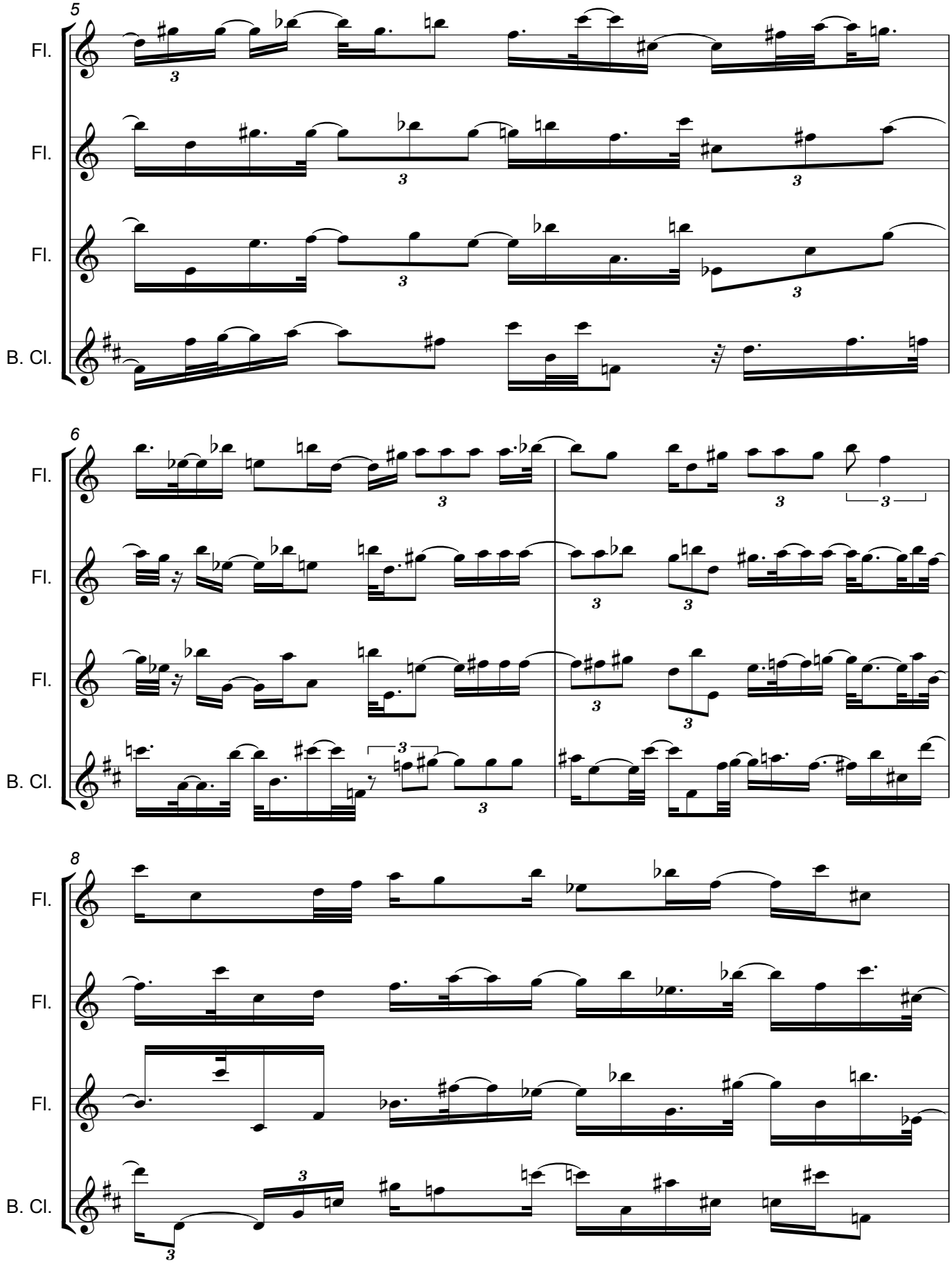
Sick Puppy Variations

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Fl.
Fl.
Fl.
B. Cl.
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Fl.
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8
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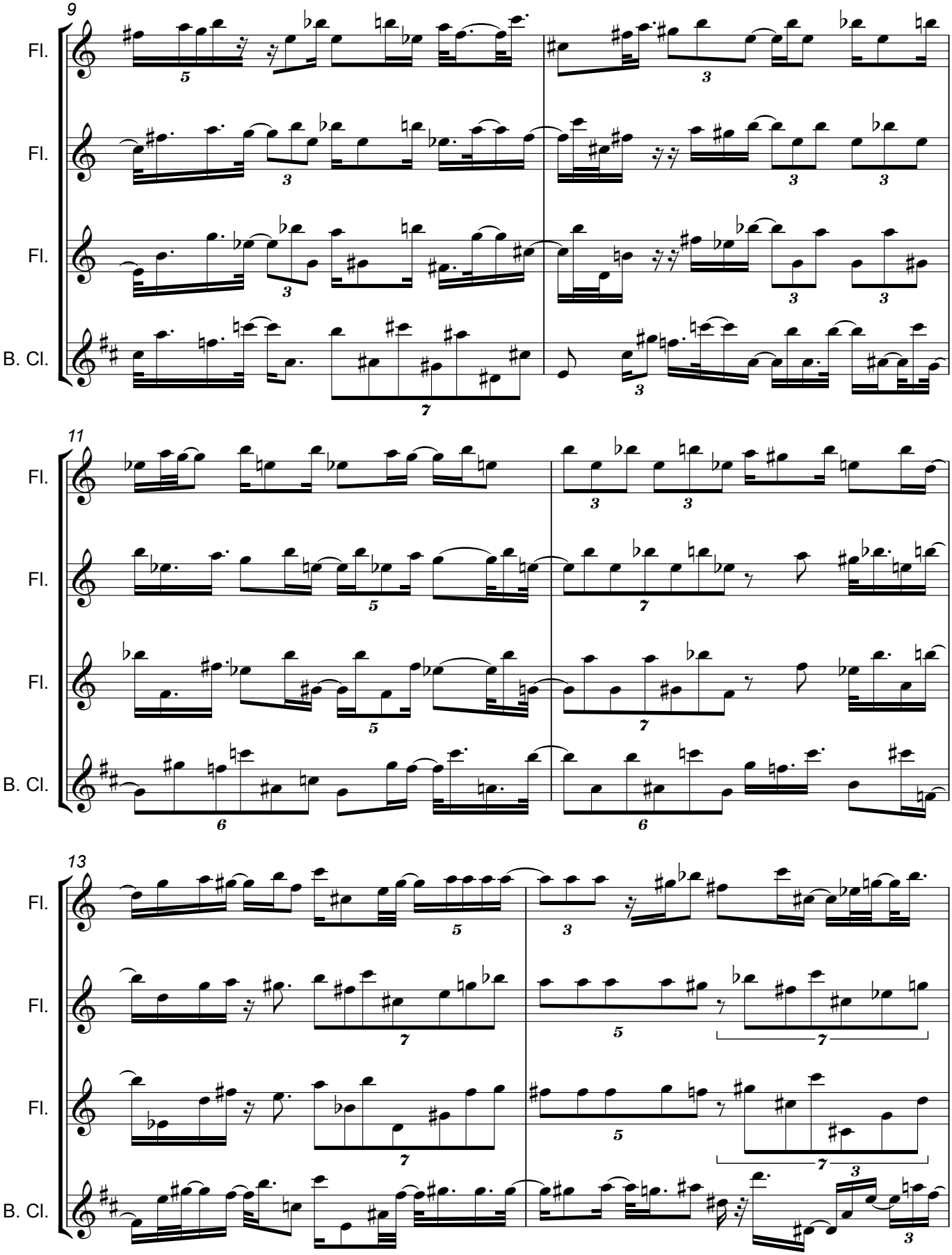
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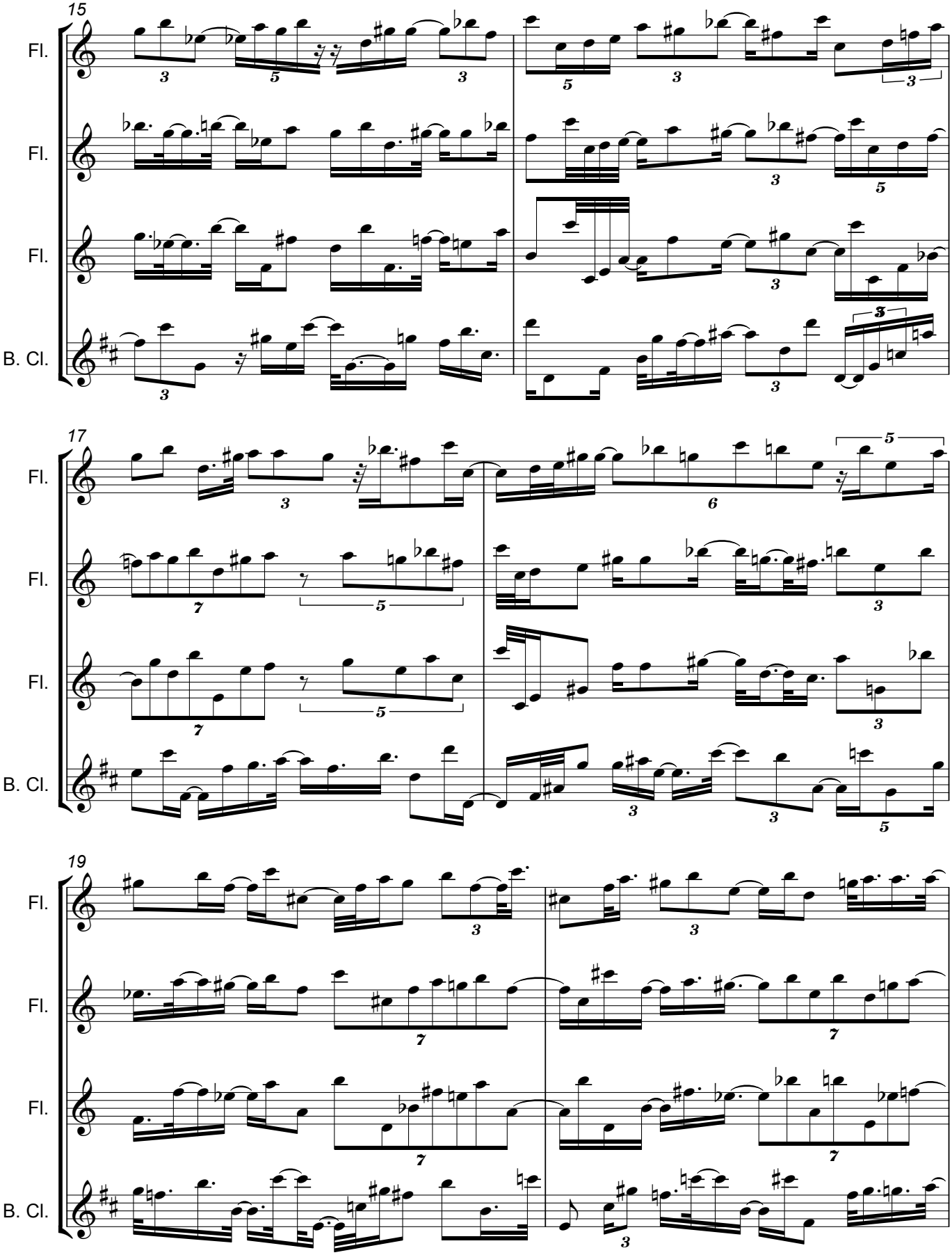
B. Cl.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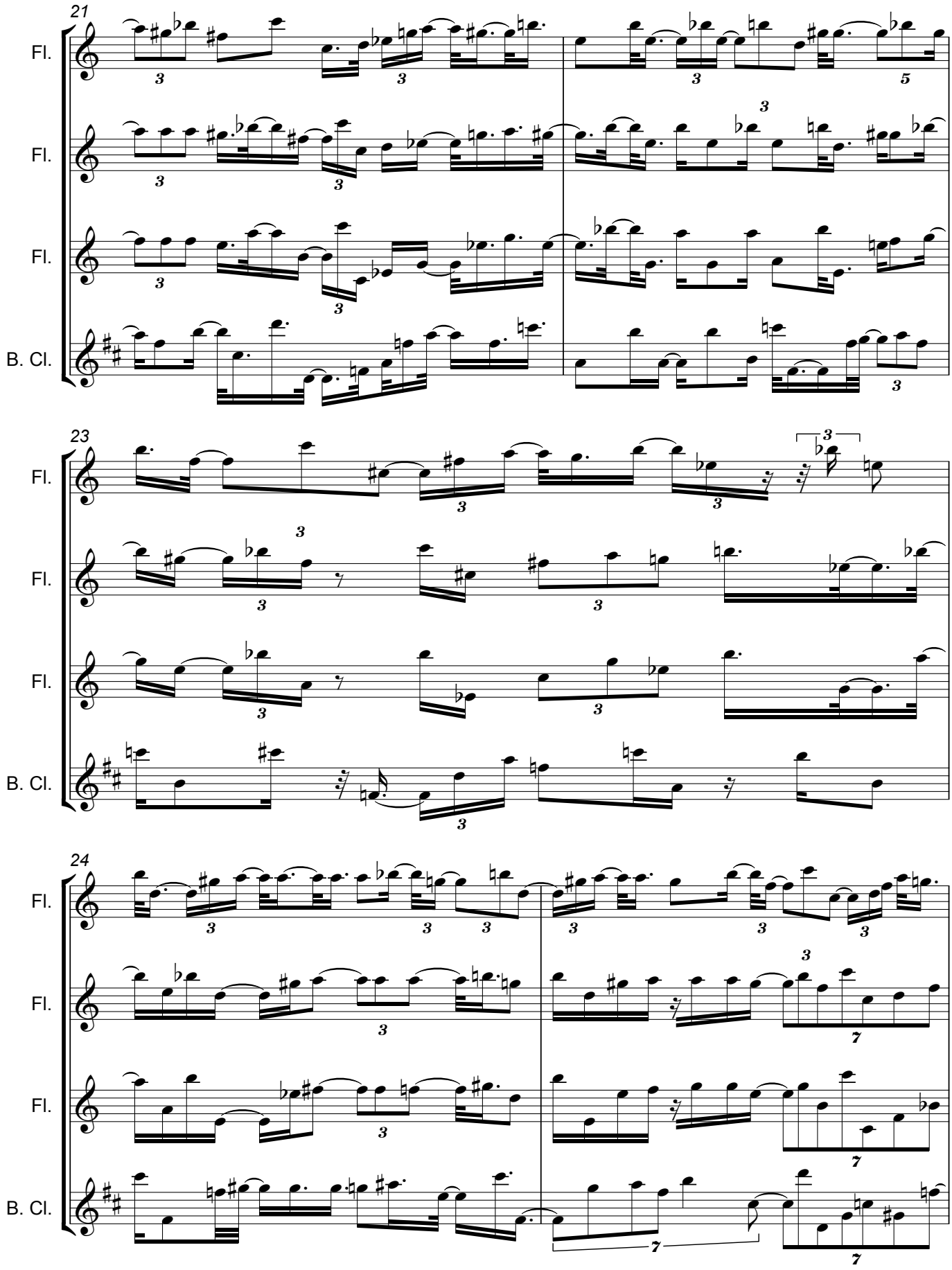
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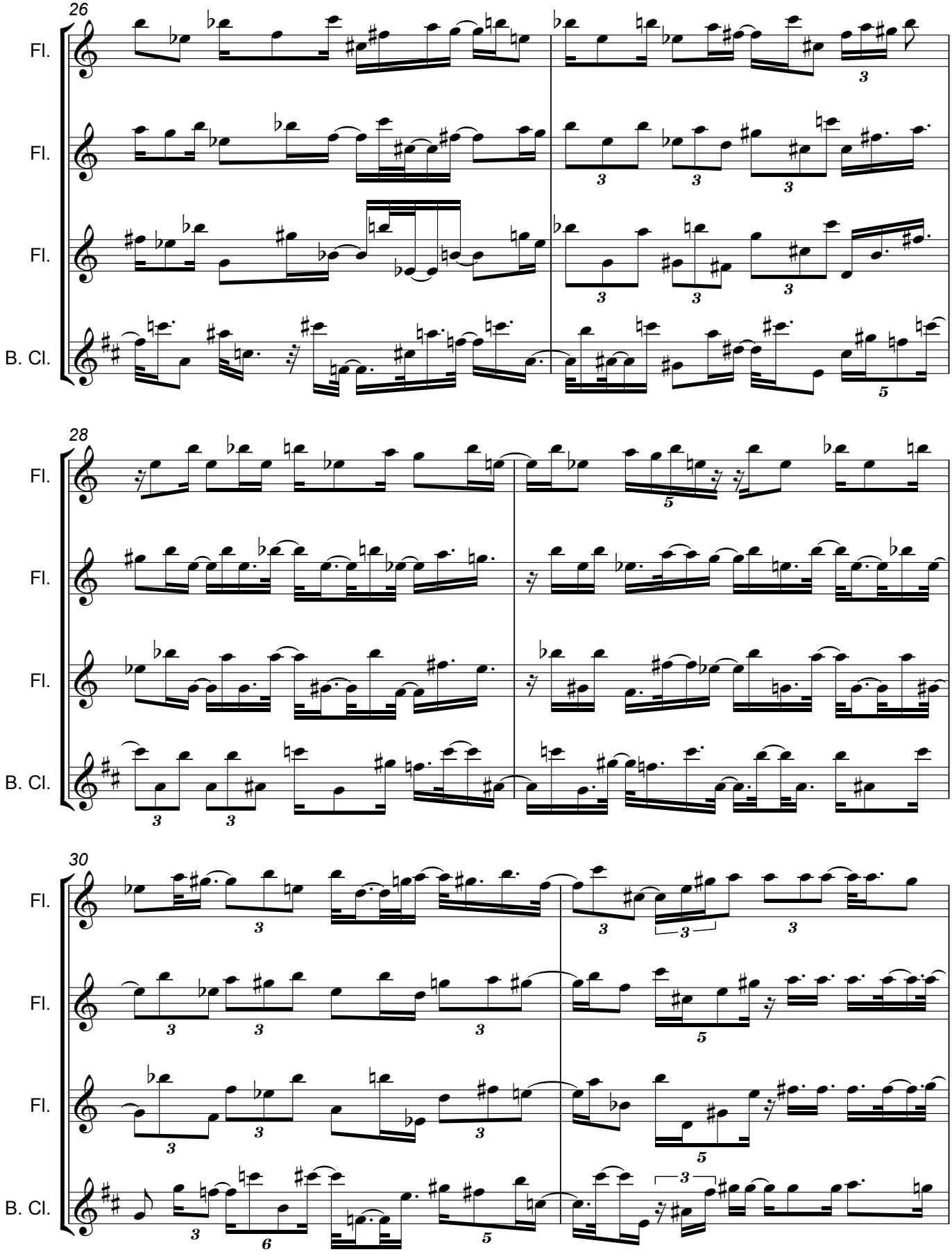
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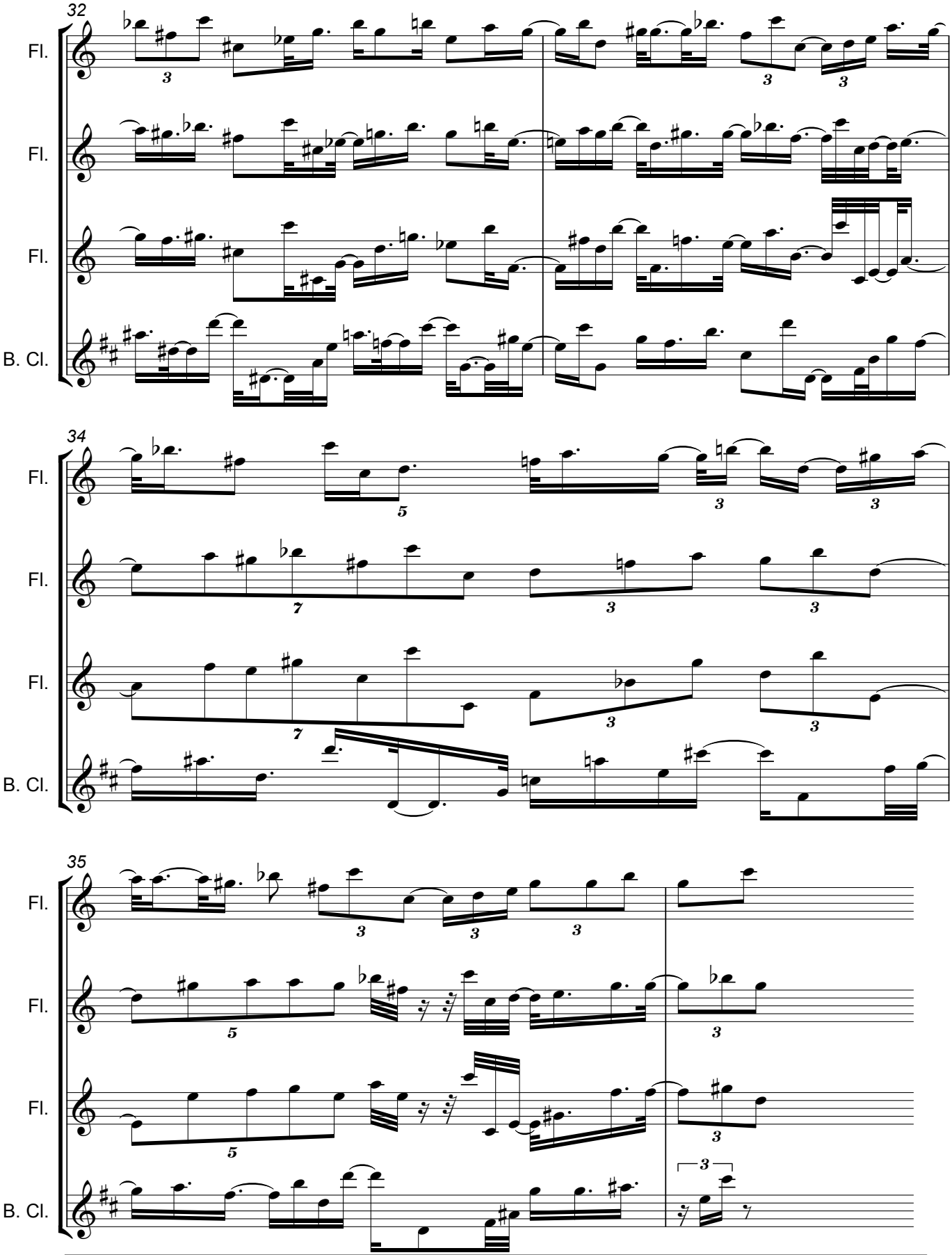
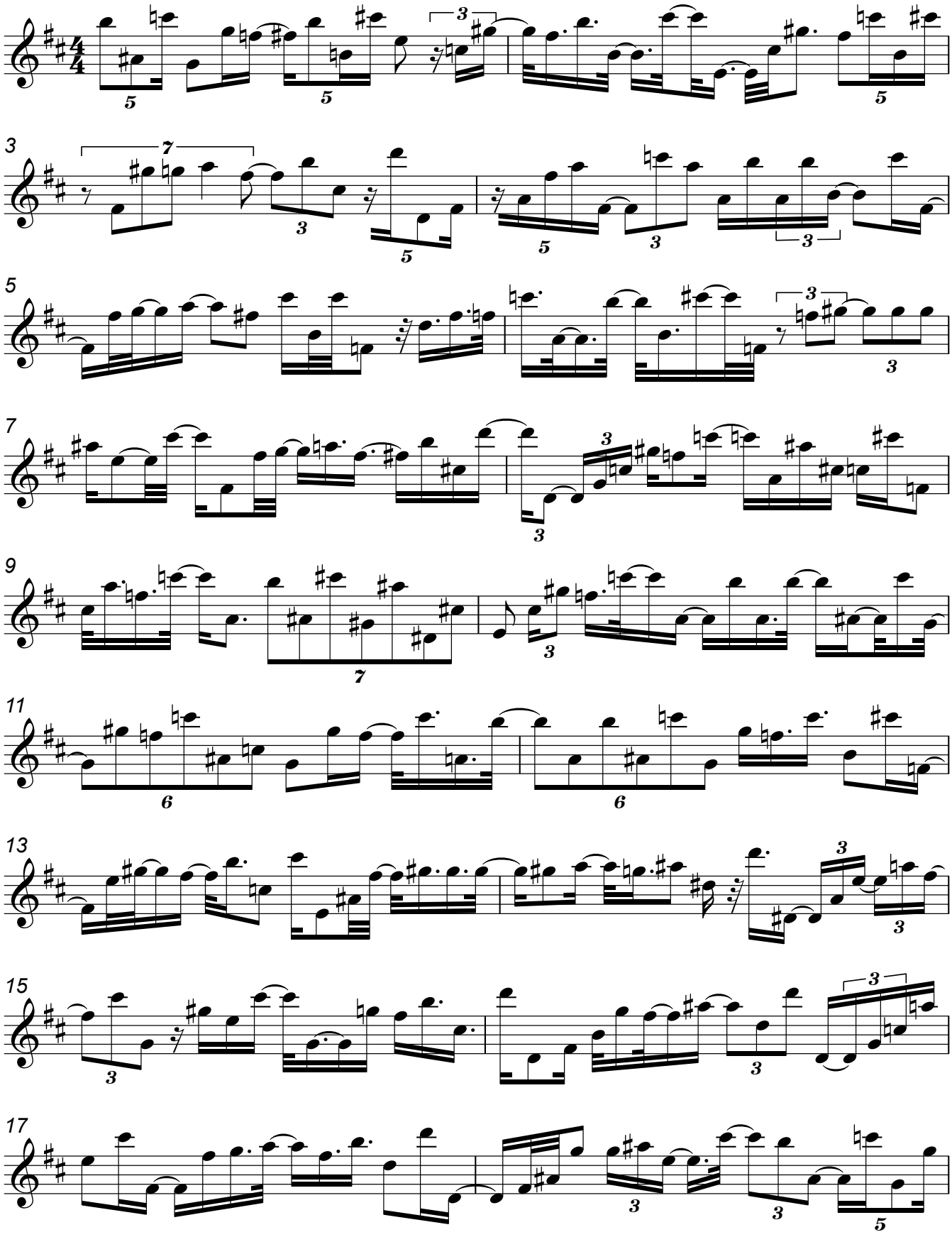


Ah, we seem to have run out of music; or perhaps patience. The flutes should go back to the beginning and start again. Clarinet 7 goes and stands behind the flautists, which is the cue for the rest of her band to assemble onstage. Once this has happened, the flutes stop wherever they happen to be, take out the crumpled sheets of the original *Sick Puppy*, smooth out somewhat, and place on the stand, but do not play. Two offstage cracks of the slapstick signify the end of the piece; relax, and take bows as normal.

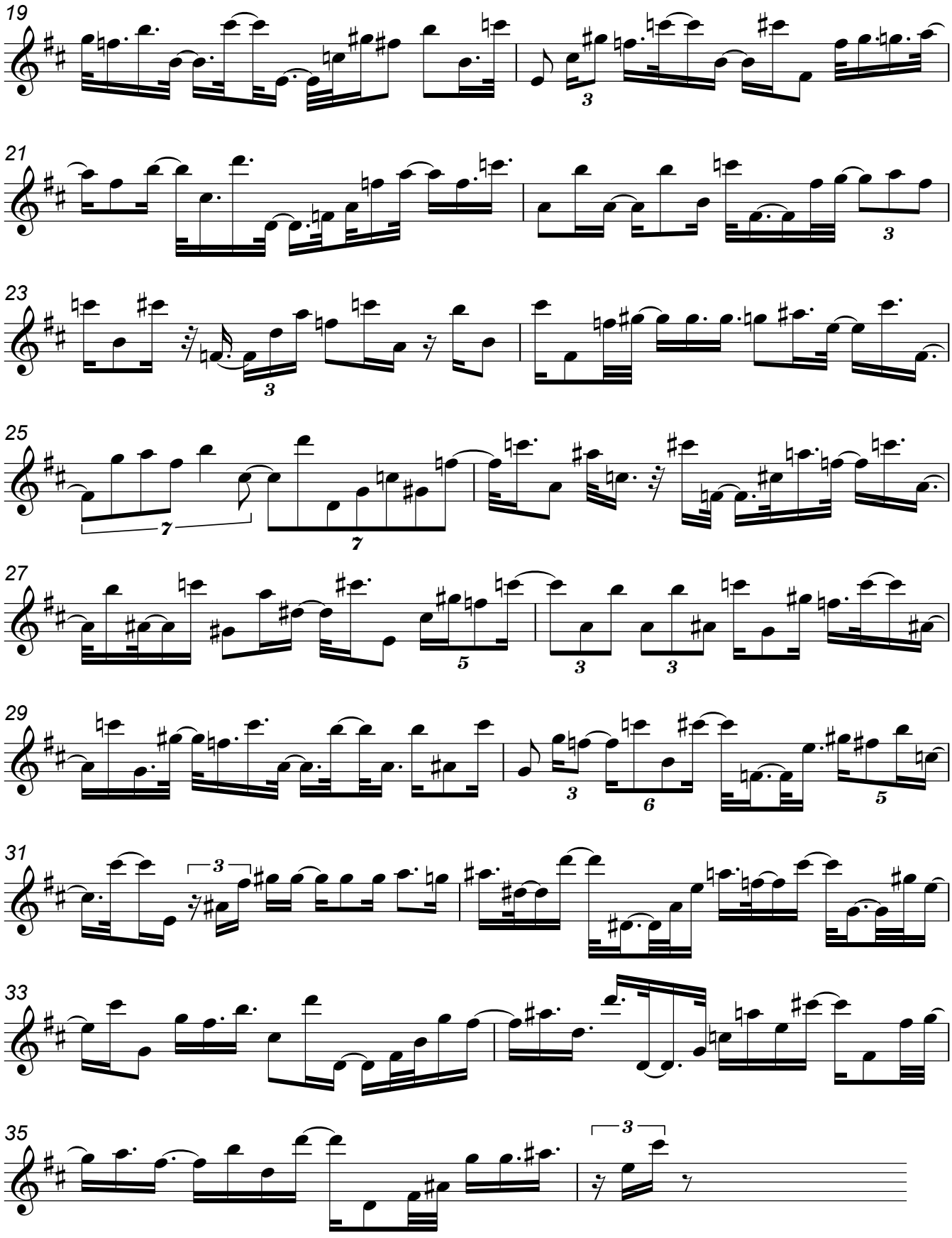
Bass Clarinet in B♭
(Clarinet 7)

Sick Puppy Variations

♩ = 60 or less



Bass Clarinet in B♭

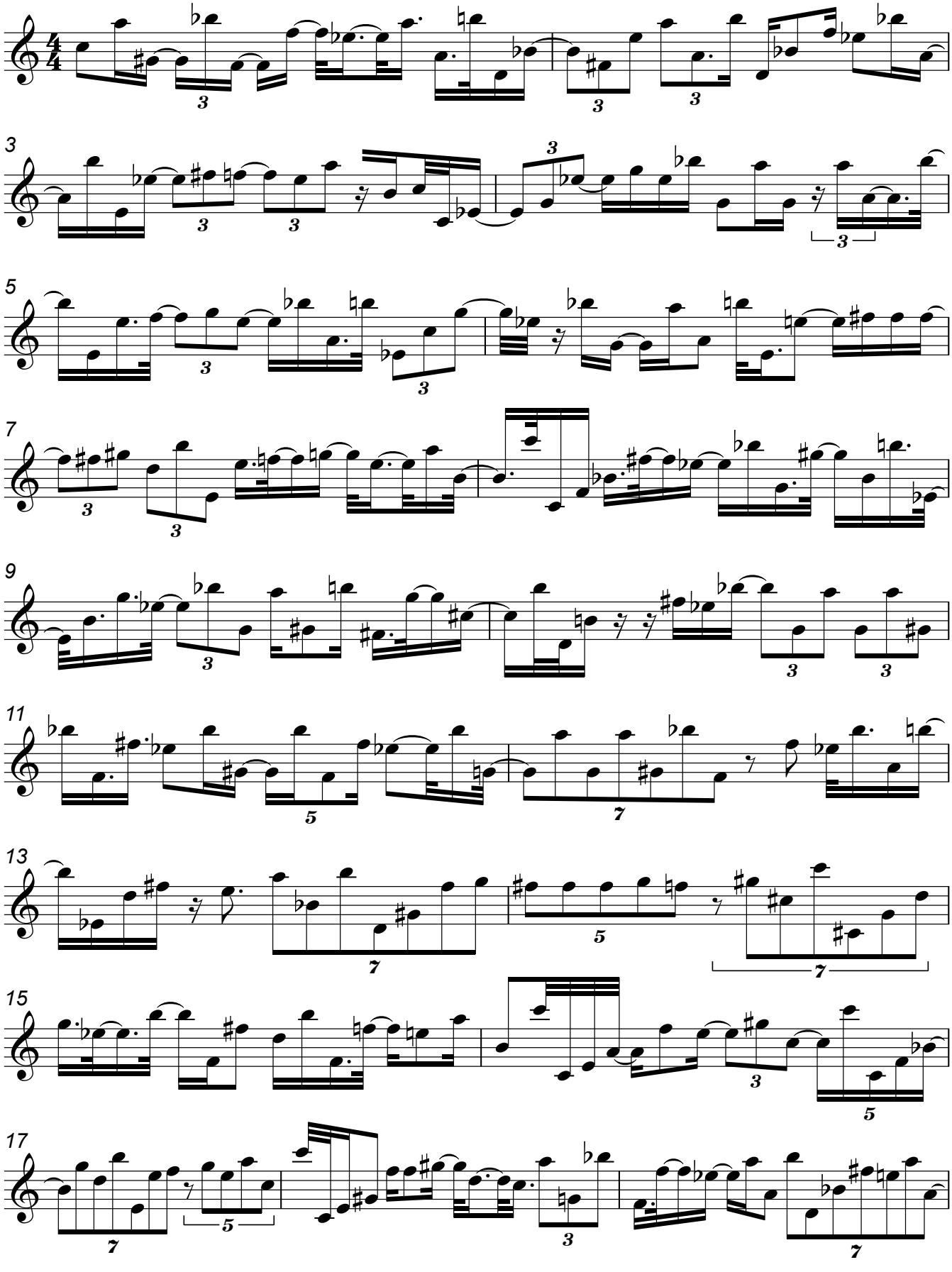


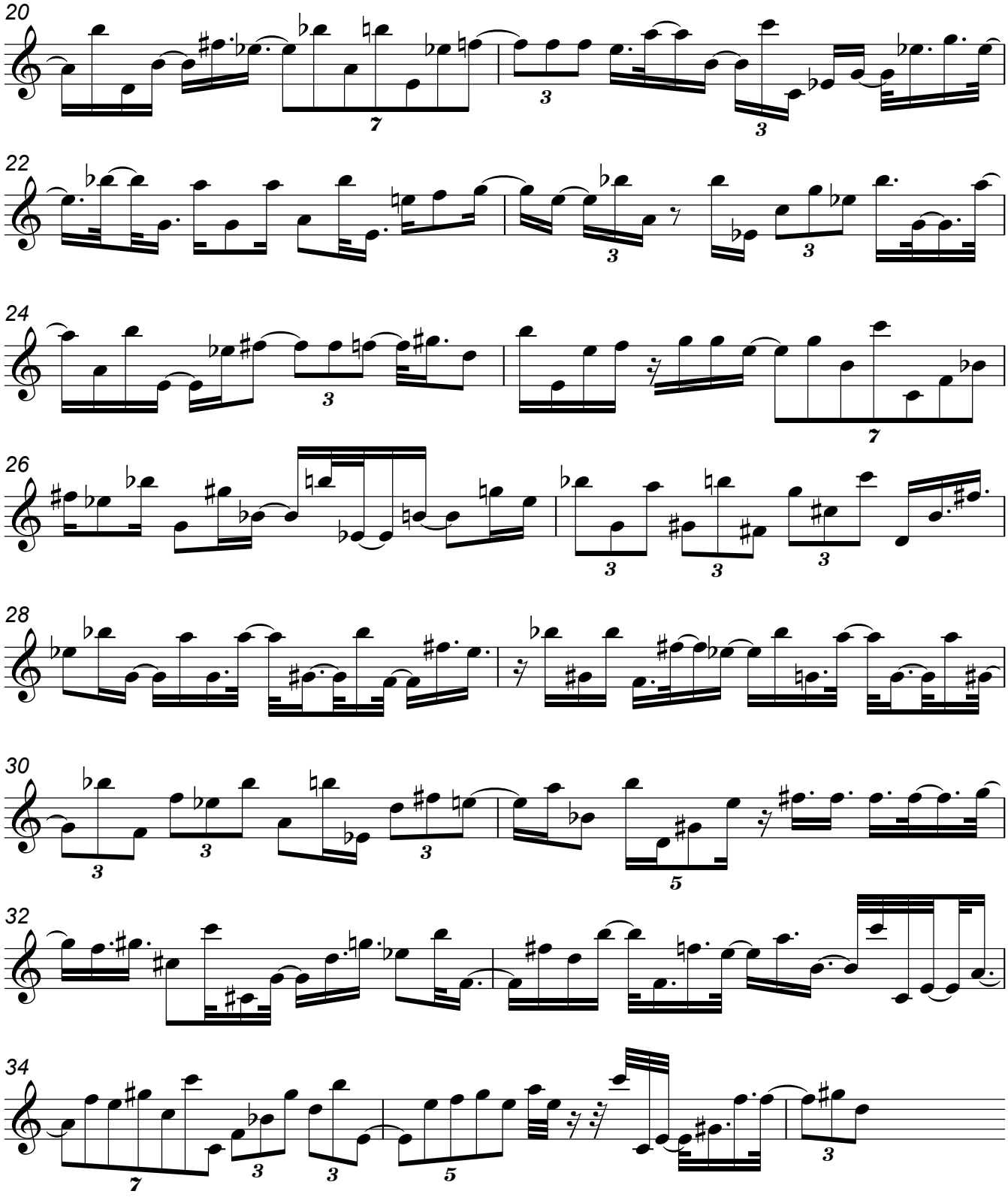
Ah, we seem to have run out of music; or perhaps patience. The flutes should go back to the beginning and start again. Clarinet 7 goes and stands behind the flautists, which is the cue for the rest of her band to assemble onstage. Once this has happened, the flutes stop wherever they happen to be, take out the crumpled sheets of the original *Sick Puppy*, smooth out somewhat, and place on the stand, but do not play. Two offstage cracks of the slapstick signify the end of the piece; relax, and take bows as normal.

Flute 3

Sick Puppy Variations

♩ = 60 or less





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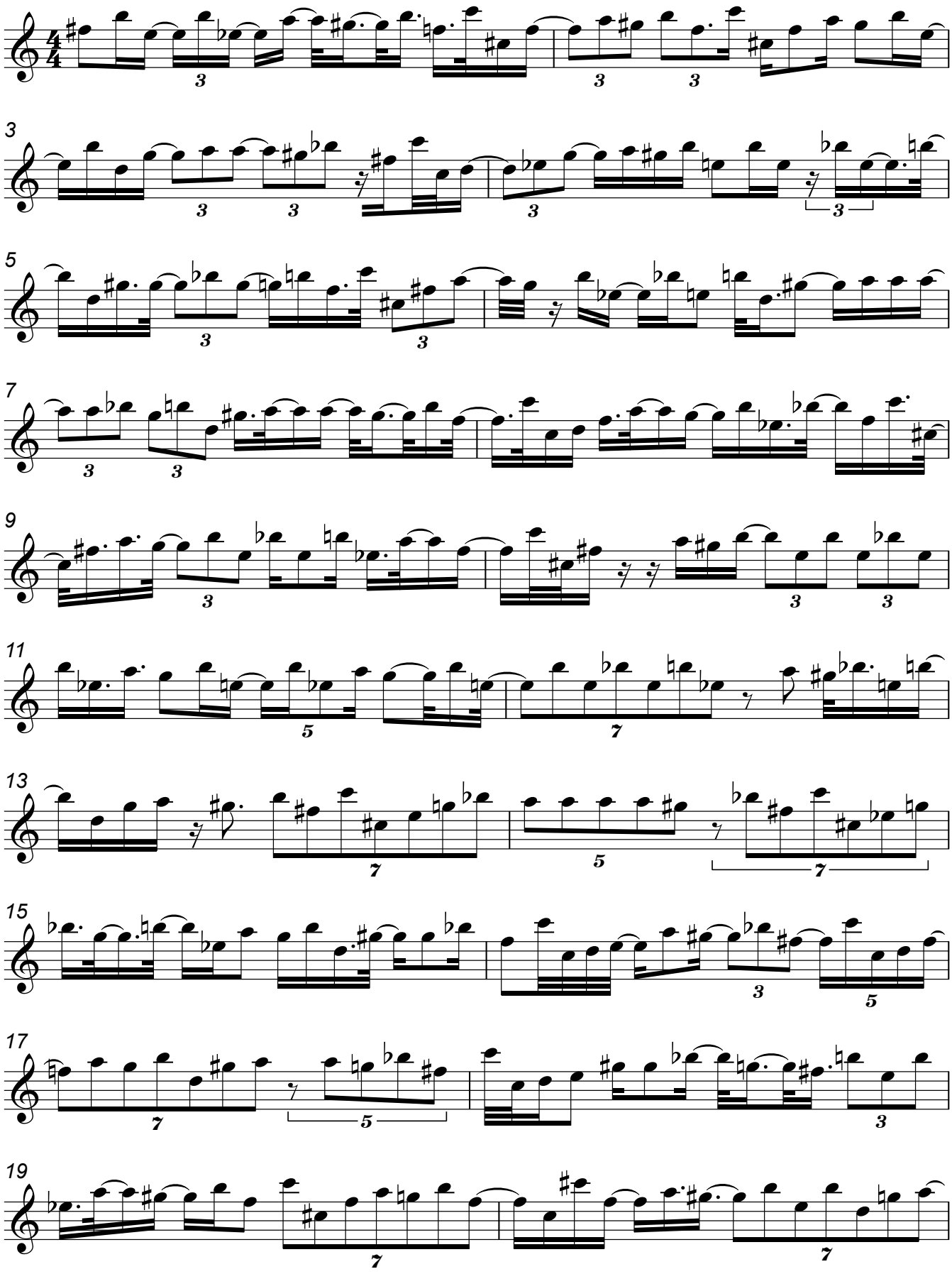
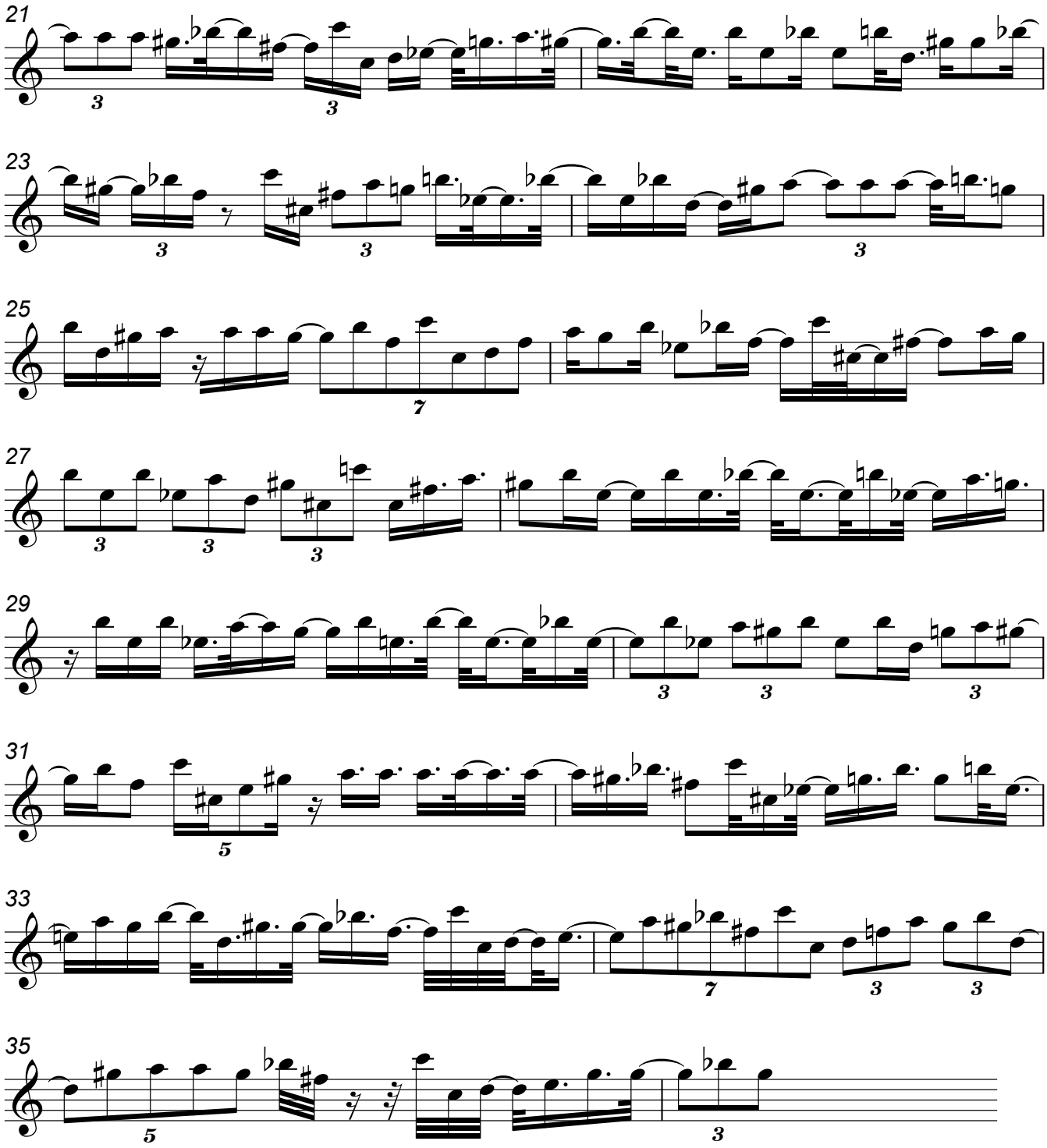
Flute 2

Sick Puppy Variations

♩ = 60 or less





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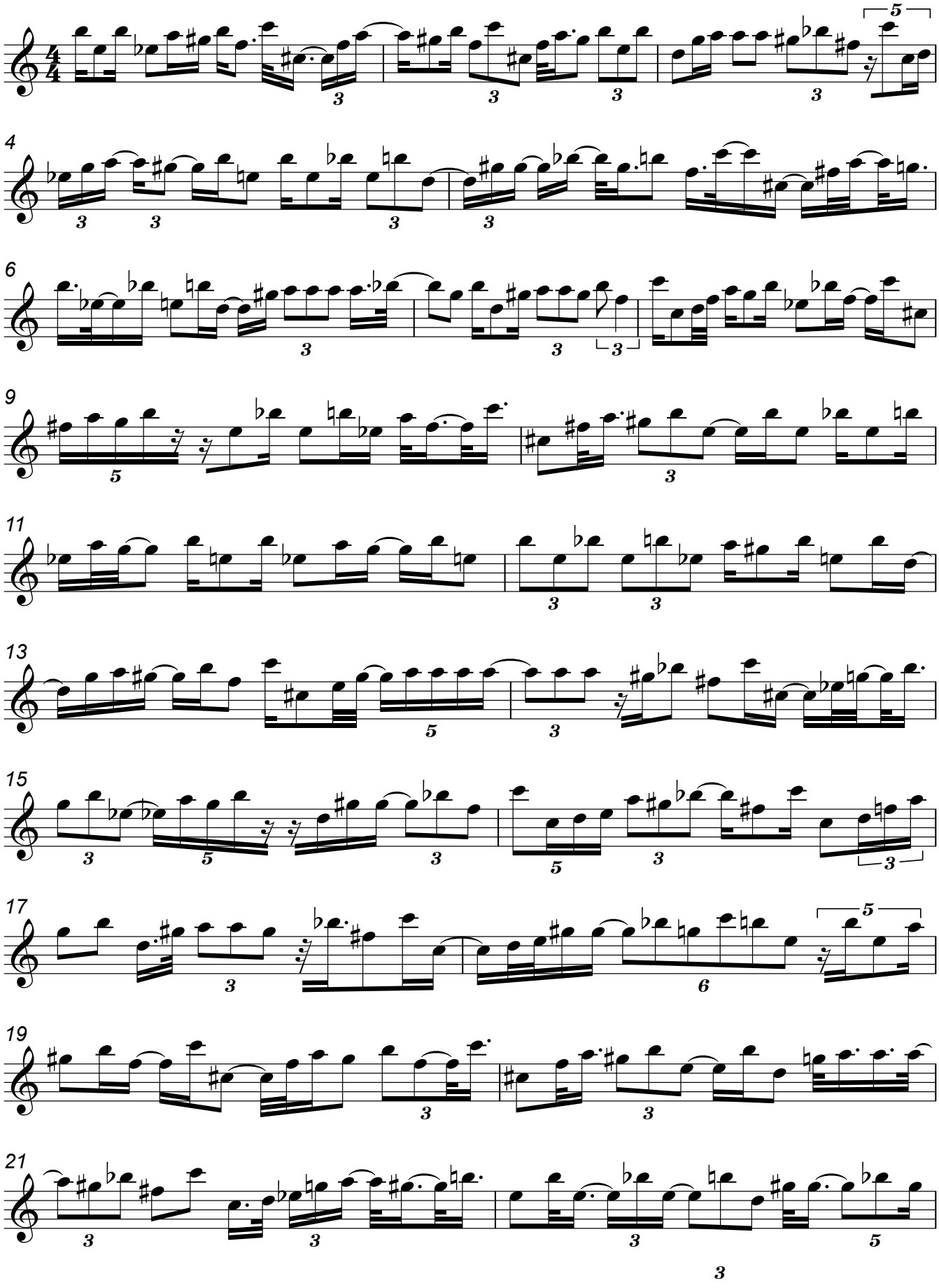
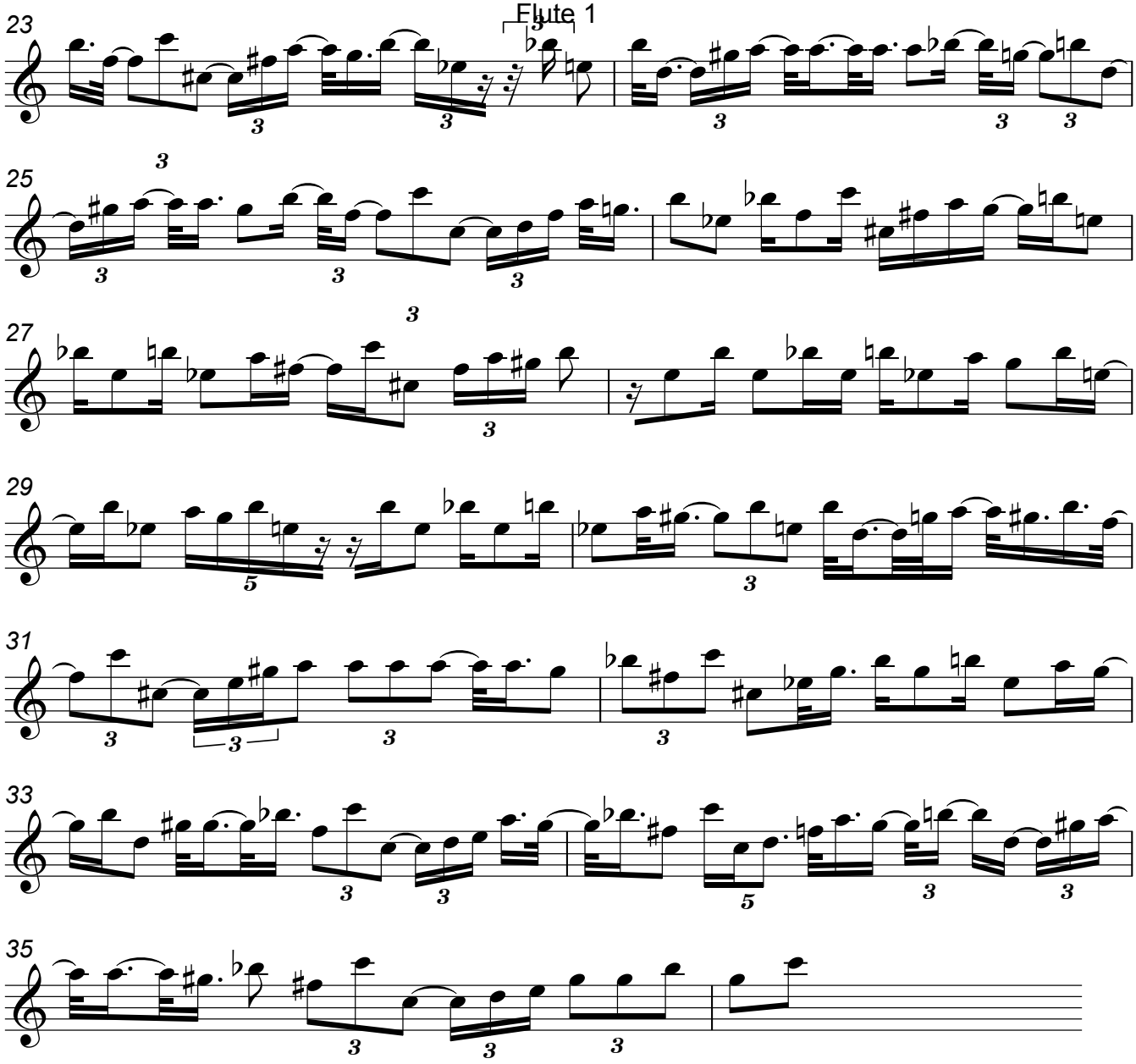
Flute 1

Sick Puppy Variations

♩ = 60 or less





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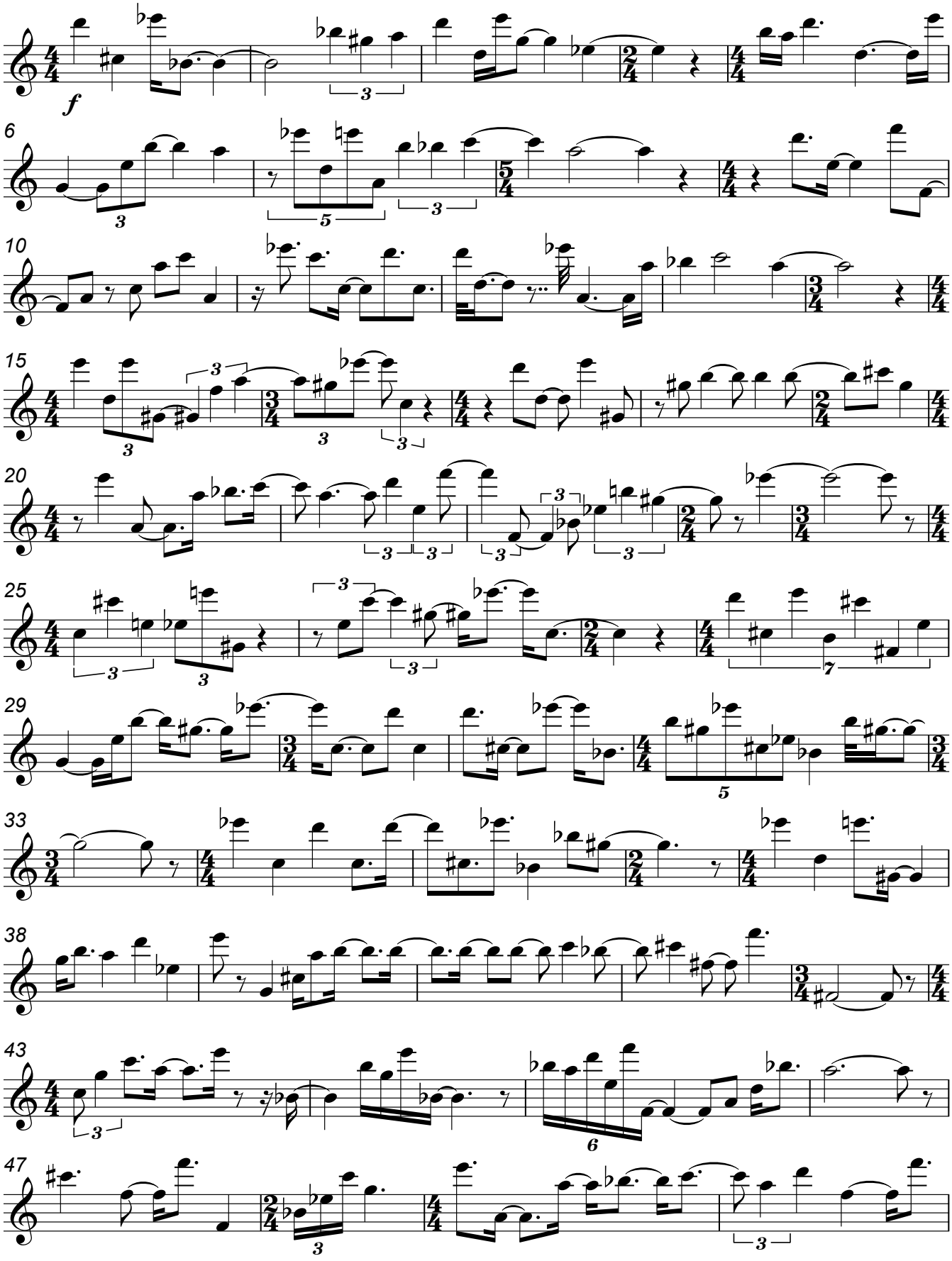
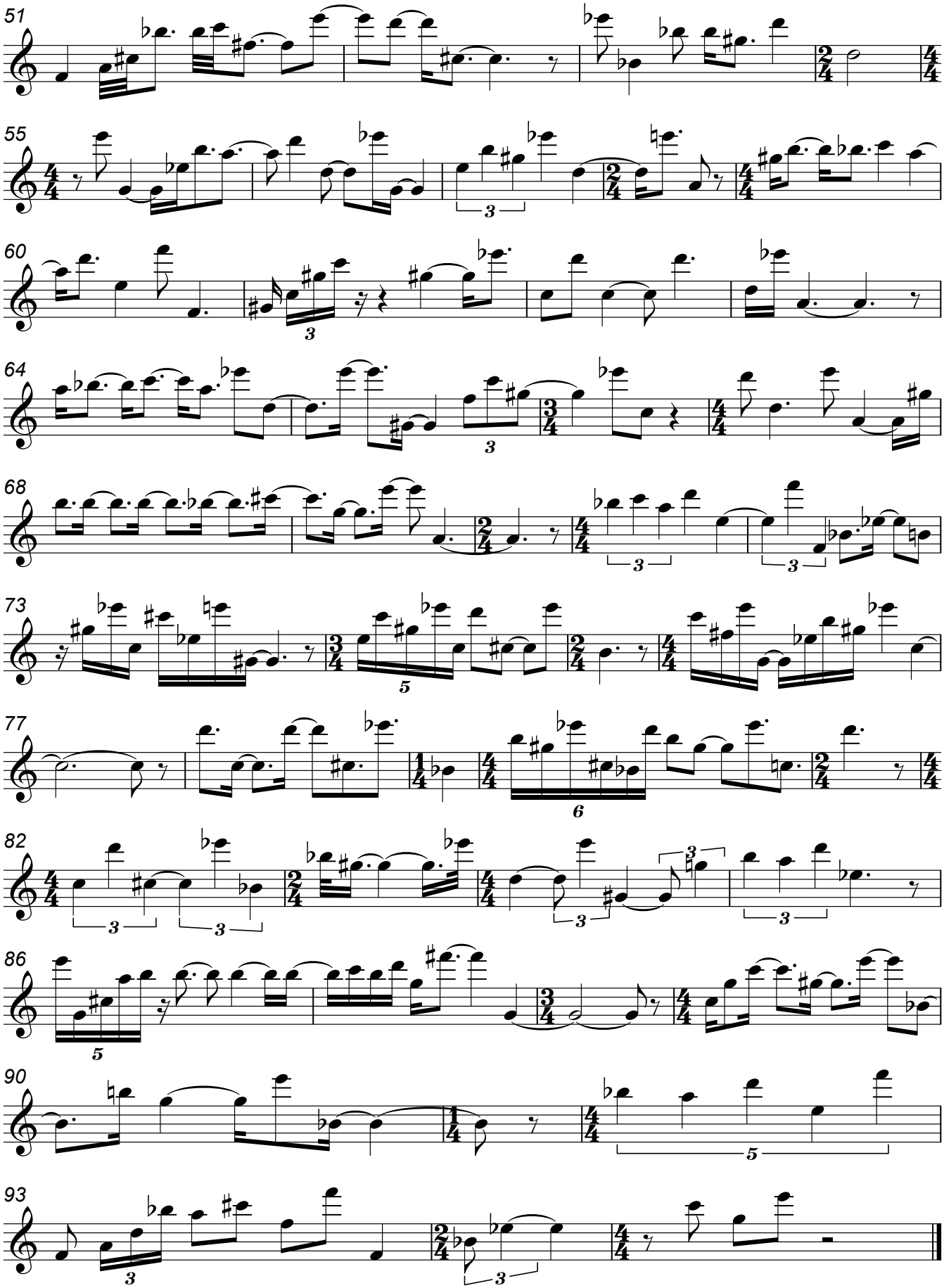
Flute 1

Sick Puppy

Loud and impassioned. At first you will be drowned out by the clarinets; when they stop you might like to take the foot off the volume pedal a bit, but keep the intensity.

♩ = 72




51
55
60
64
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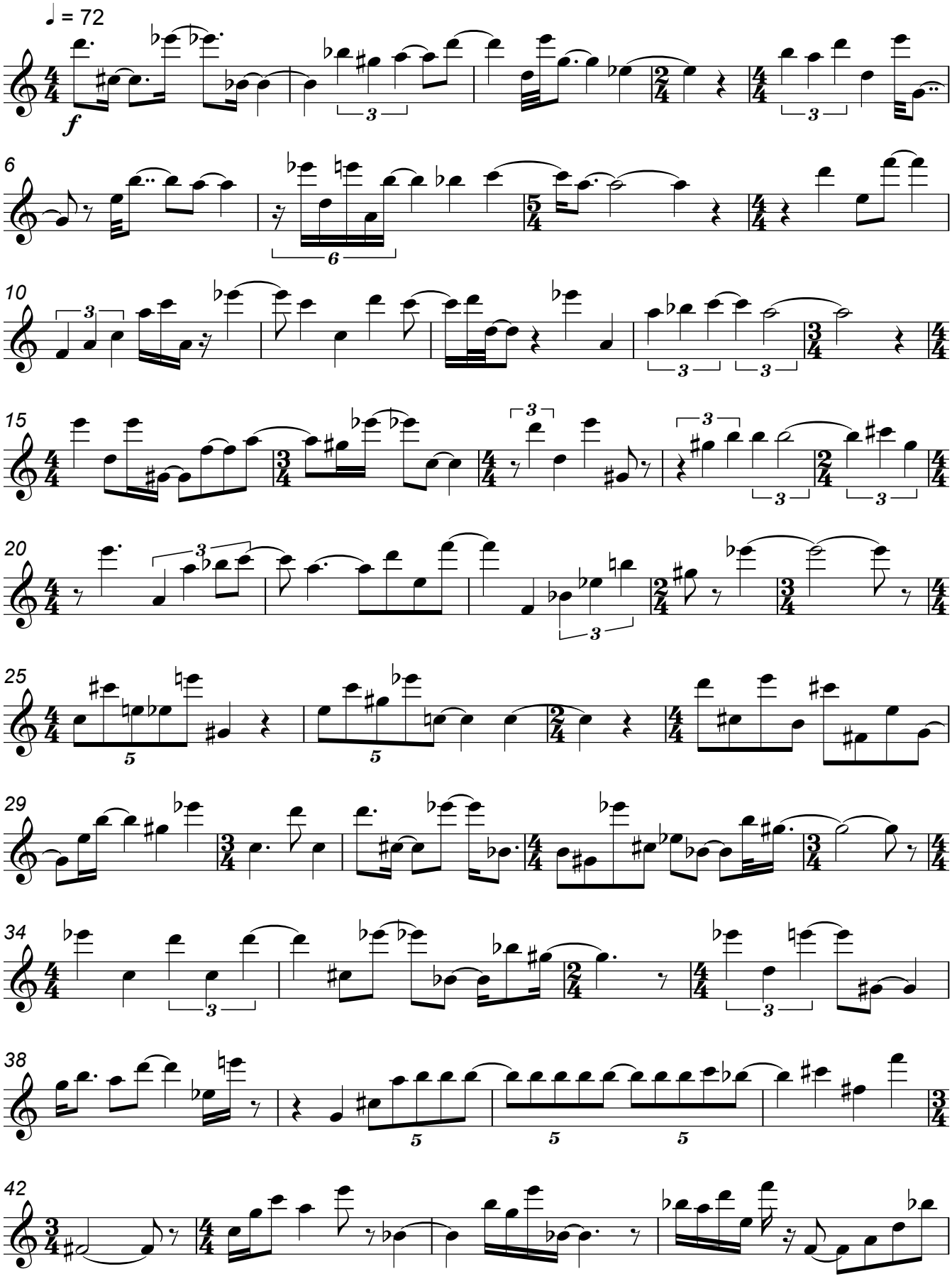
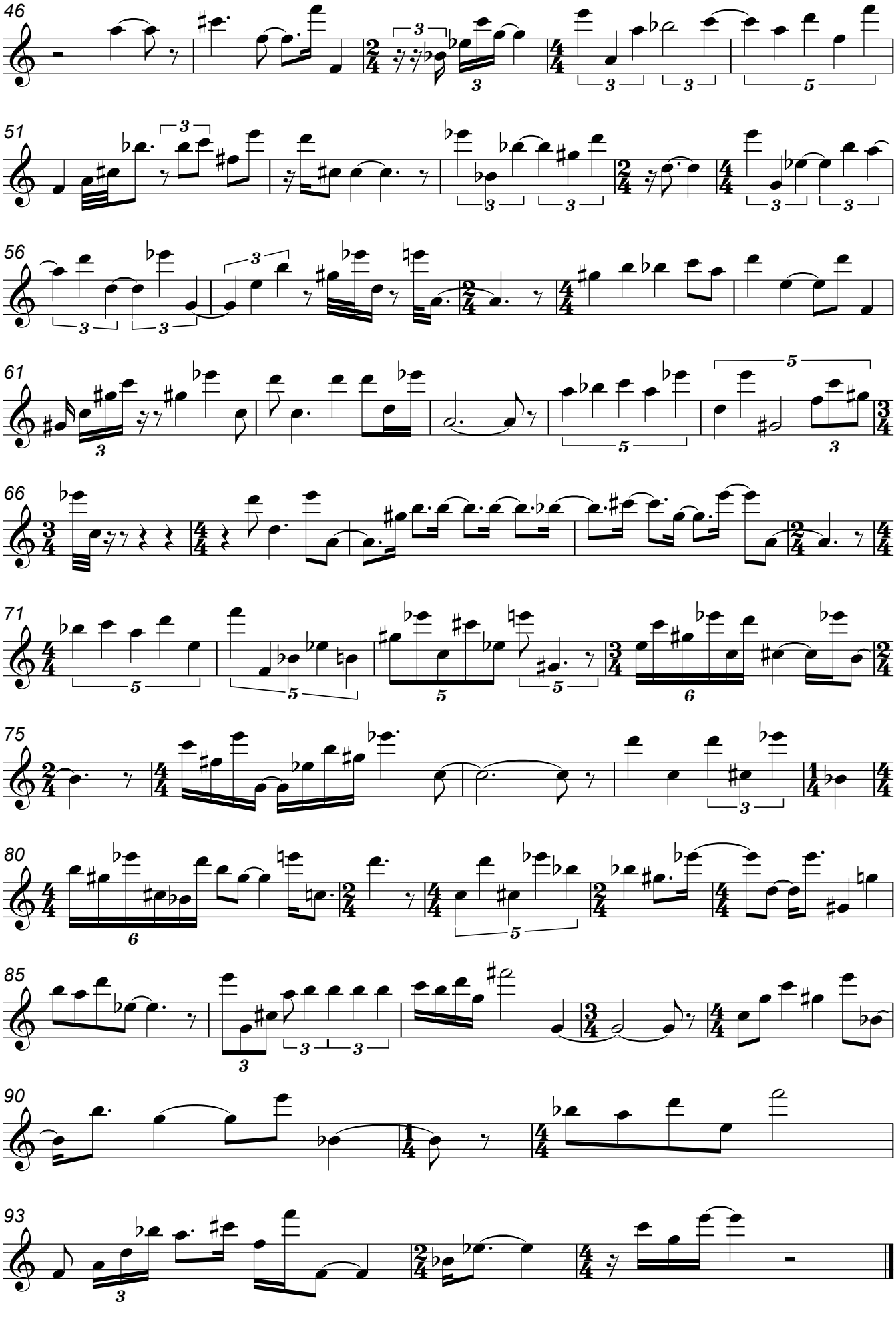
73
77
82
86
90
93

Flute 2

Sick Puppy

Loud and impassioned. At first you will be drowned out by the clarinets; when they stop you might like to take the foot off the volume pedal a bit, but keep the intensity.

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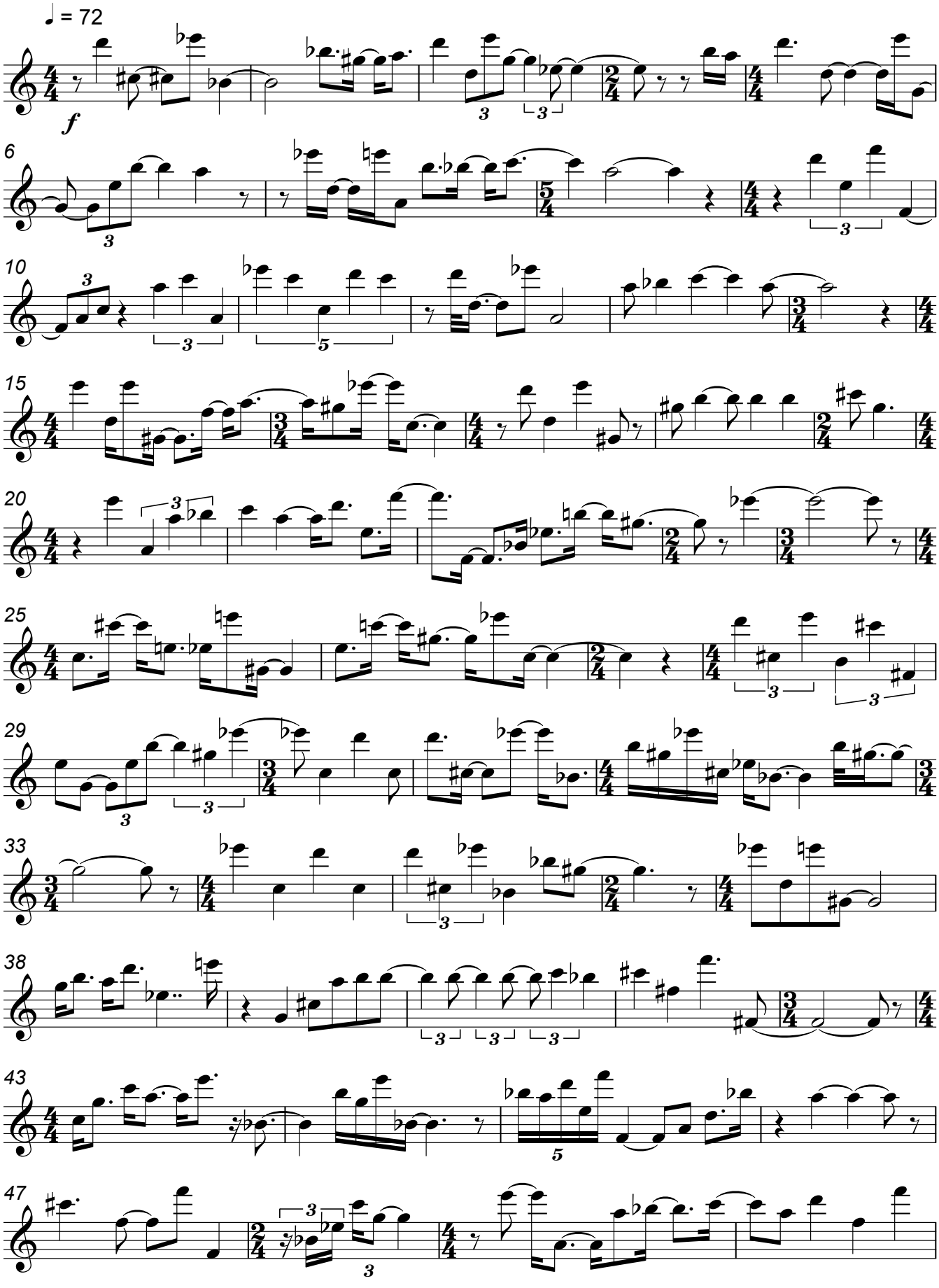
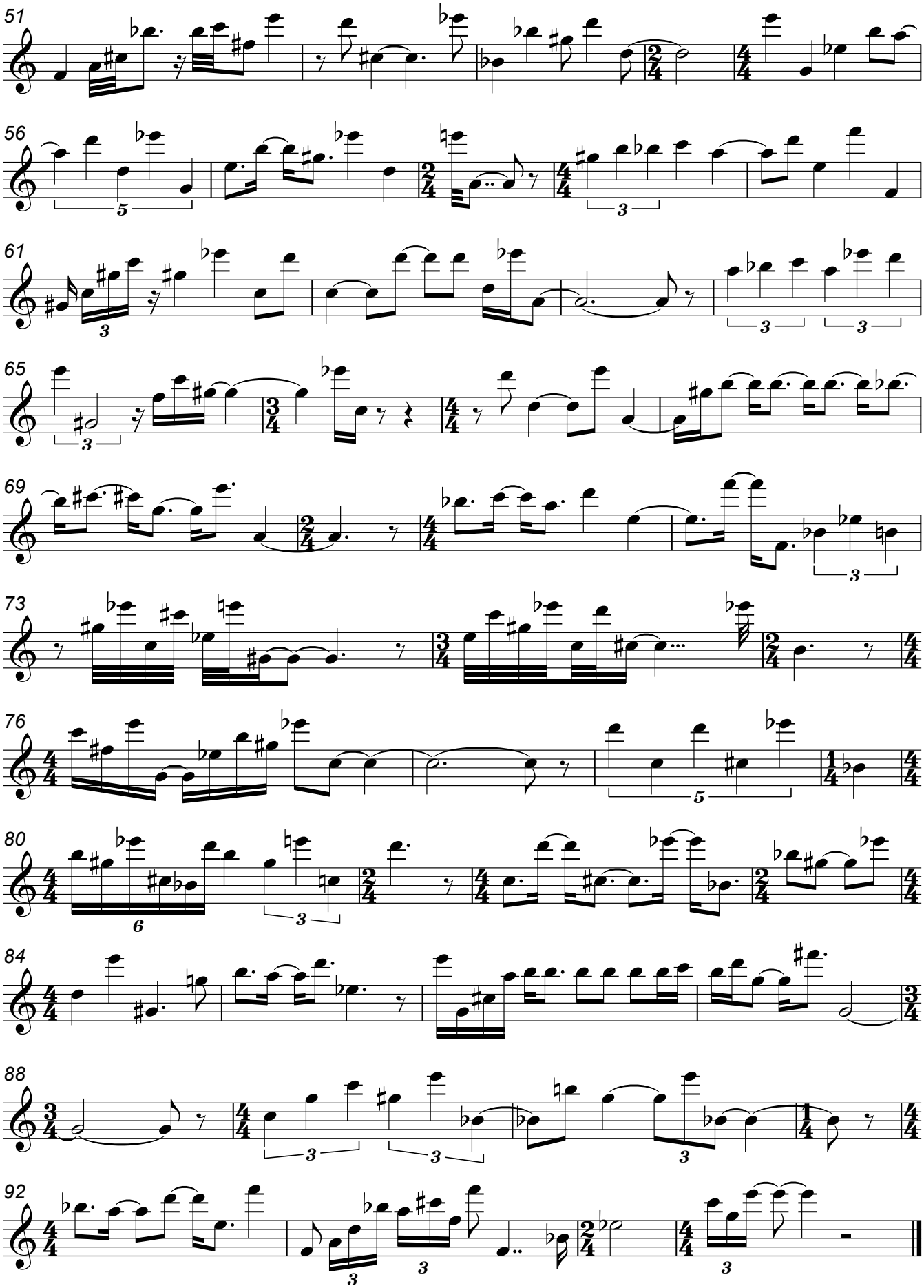
Flute 3

Sick Puppy

Loud and impassioned. At first you will be drowned out by the clarinets; when they stop you might like to take the foot off the volume pedal a bit, but keep the intensity.

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