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Chamber Work

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CHAMBER WORK

(TITLE)

BY

LARRY SIMPSON

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1975
YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE

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1. Statement of Purpose

This piece is the first large scale work I have attempted. As such, it was my primary concern to deal with the problems of composing for a large number of performers in a larger form. In brief, I approached the work as an experiment in 'thinking symphonically'. This was the singular motivation for the work, and I retained the idea throughout its conception and construction.

The idea of seeing if I could 'think symphonically' dominates every aspect of the piece. By going ahead with that purpose in mind, I was left free from worrying about any experiments with the musical fundamentals of melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic construction. Instead I was able to pinpoint my concern on setting a specific melody, harmony or rhythm into a semi-symphonic medium. I believe that on the first try in 'thinking symphonically' this was plenty to be concerned with, and in this context I believe the experience of writing this work was a success.

2. The Analysis

A. Explanation of the Hybrid Instrumentation and Title

The piece is called a chamber work and is written specifically for forty-two performers. This includes representatives of a basic classical orchestra with the addition of four saxophones: two $E^{\flat}$ Alto, one $B^{\flat}$ Tenor and one $E^{\flat}$ Baritone.

I am not at all embarrassed to admit that when I started I was intimidated by the idea of writing a symphony for an orchestra. The terms "symphony" and orchestra constituted the ultimate in material bigness to me in music. Frankly, I did not know if I could cope with my own imagined concept of big;

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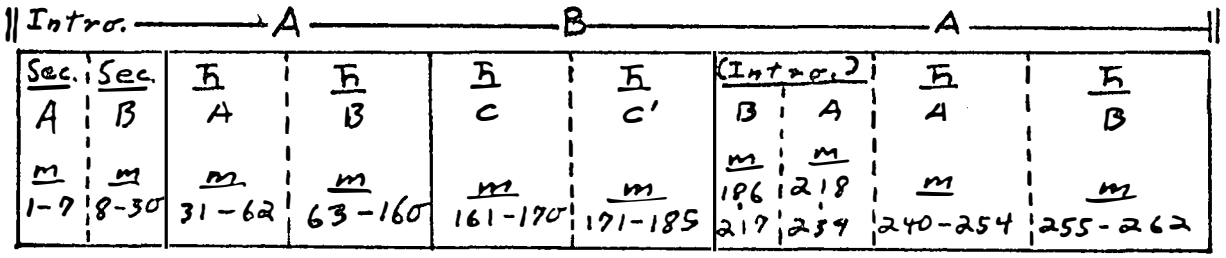
whether I could pull it off. So I added the saxophones and called it a chamber work. This did help me to imagine the piece as a whole on a smaller scale. I could mentally visualize a chamber piece for a large chamber ensemble. I could not visualize a symphony for an orchestra. But It was a good trick that worked.

There is another reason for my use of the saxophones. The school I formerly went to was band oriented. After spending three-and-a-half years listening to legitimate symphonic-orchestral literature in a symphonic band setting, it is easy for me to hear such things as soprano saxophones, baritone euphoniums, and E^{b} contra-alto clarinets in a large scale environment. This further facilitated my not thinking in terms of an orchestra.

B. Form

The ground plan form of the piece is ternary with introduction. Below is a diagram of the basic form (measure numbers inclusive, $\bar{h}$ = theme).



Transitions overlap the sections.

This diagram is the broadest formal analysis I see as possible. It is a way of representing the succession of major occurrences in the music. It must be viewed in a larger perspective.

Two of my first concepts for a form were that of a suite and sonata-allegro. The suite seemed a good choice for a large single movement, but I was not interested in using the traditional dance forms as dictates for rhythmic and modal ideas; for example, a minor mode Sarabande in three with

the second beat stressed and no dotted rhythms. Sonata-allegro was ruled out because I did not want an absolute development in the middle of only two themes. Also, the sonata-allegro implied too strongly both a piece which would need other movements and an accepted key arrangement limited to the tonic-dominant relationship.

I wanted to use a number of primary musical ideas which could be developed and repeated in different, though not unrecognizable ways. So I did this settling on a basic arch form.

I still thought a suite-like movement would keep up interest on listening. By suite-like, I mean the idea of several different events at different tempi.

So, in terms of development, I left myself a free hand in that I could either directly modify previously stated material (this even happens in reverse) or I could introduce new material which might only be reminiscent or other, more noticeable events.

An example of the first would be the opening horns statement in the B section of the introduction in measure nine through fourteen. The second horn part is actually playing a modified version of the five-note cell which the trombones and horns expose in its entirety in measures one hundred forty three through one hundred fifty one, a sort of development in reverse.

An example of the second idea is the trio between oboes, clarinets and bassoons between measures one hundred ninety six and two hundred seventeen. In my mind this is reminiscent of the ascending oboe figures in theme C, section B. Also the bassoon statement in measure one hundred fifty nine is only reminiscent of the scalar runs at the end of the introduction. But this statement is then modified and developed, in the strings primarily, between measures two hundred three to the return of theme A at letter H. (page fifty).

By giving myself such freedom in developmental terms, I feel that a sufficient amount of continuity is maintained within the piece, while there is always enough almost new material added so as to not become uninteresting.

One final note on form: there is obvious transitory material between the major thematic ideas. I used these areas for some of the development. I felt this too helped in not hearing the piece in a strict arch form.

3. Harmonic Syntax

The piece is a tonal, or semi-tonal one. Without going into a long discussion on paper of my personal style, suffice to say that with this work I was totally concerned with the sheer weight of logistics in completing a work this size. I felt the more material I would manipulate that I was totally familiar with, the easier going it would be. So from the start I stuck with concepts of tonality and thematic construction that I felt most able to handle. I was never out to make any revolutionary musical statements.

This is not to say that my musical intent was not sincere. The saxophone chorale at the start and the alto saxophone and violin soli in the B section I like very much. I think the chorale is effective, and I think I got exactly the feeling of improvisation I wanted out of the section B soli. I do feel that the theme B part in Section A is weak. Overall, I can go a long way in handling this large an ensemble effectively.

In closing, I can say that completing a work this large has been an invaluable learning experience, and it has given me the confidence to tackle other larger scale works in the future.

Chamber Work

thesis for large ensemble

by

Lazy Simpson

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Instrumentation

Parts

2 Flute (+ Picc.)

2 Oboe
2 B♭ Clarinet (+ Bass Cl.)

2 Bassoon (+ Countra bassoon)
2 French Horn

2 E♭ Alto saxophone
1 B♭ Tenor "

1 E♭ Baritone "
2 B♭ Trumpet

2 Trombone (II = Bass Trombone)
1 Tuba

1 Piano
8 Violin

4 Viola
4 Cello

2 Bass
4 Percussion (Timp. + 3 Perc.)

42

marimba
xylophone

* Score in C.

Snare Drum
tom-tom

p = soft stick
p = hard stick

Bass Drum
Suspended cymbals

tam-tam

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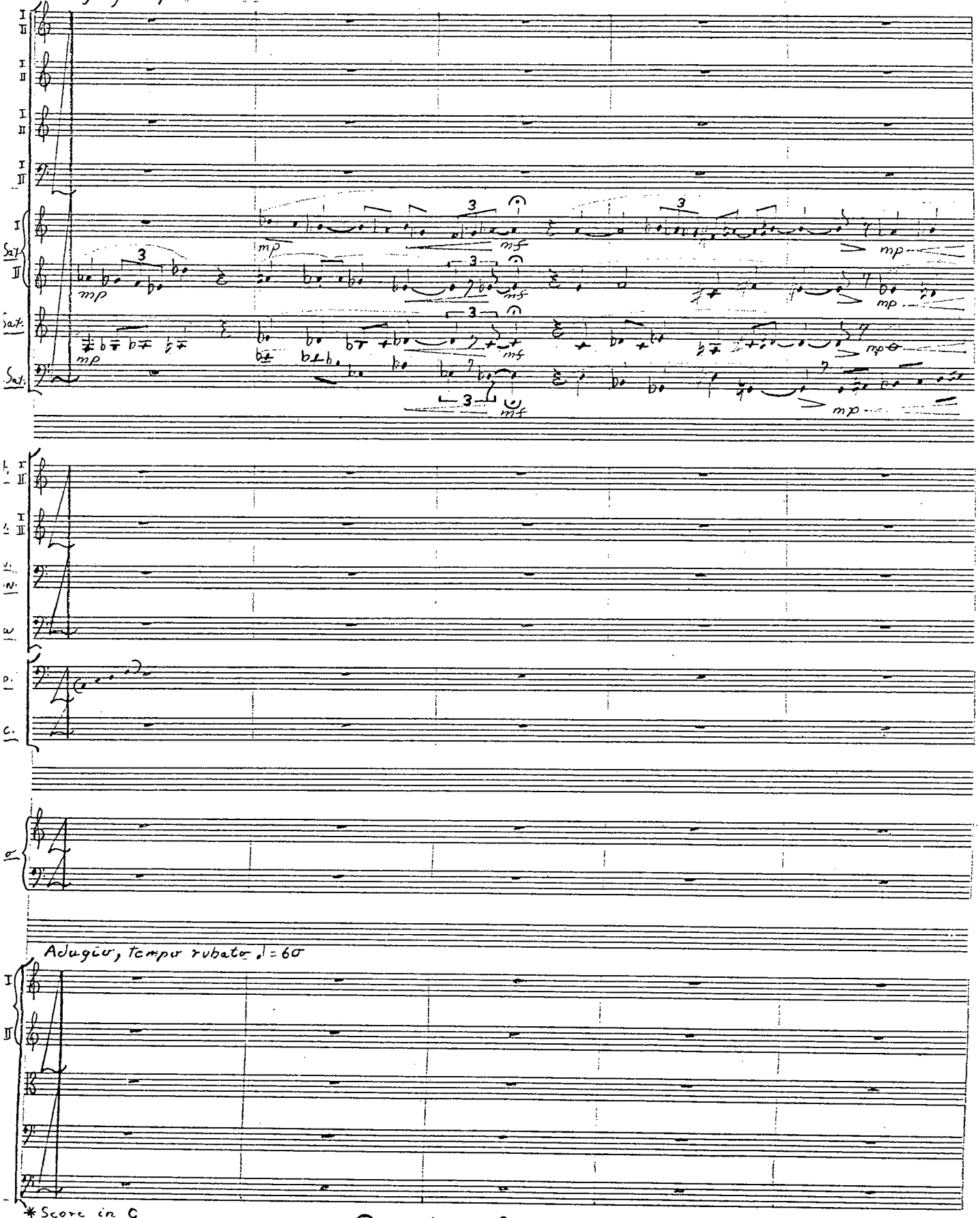
Chamber Work

by Larry Simpson

*Adagio, tempo rubato ♩ = 60



Adagio, tempo rubato ♩ = 60

*Score in C

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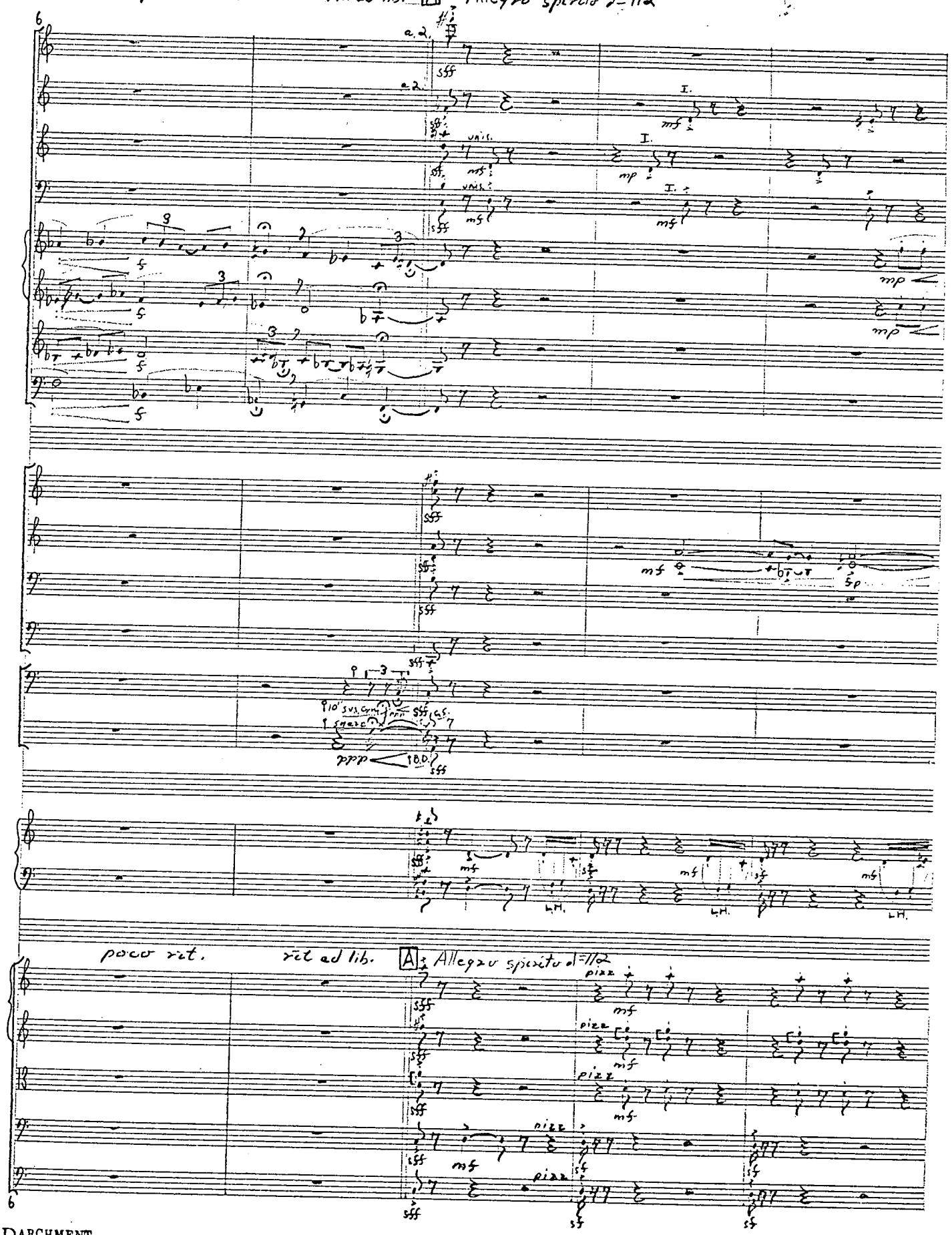
poco rit. rit. ad lib. A Allegro spirito ♩= 112



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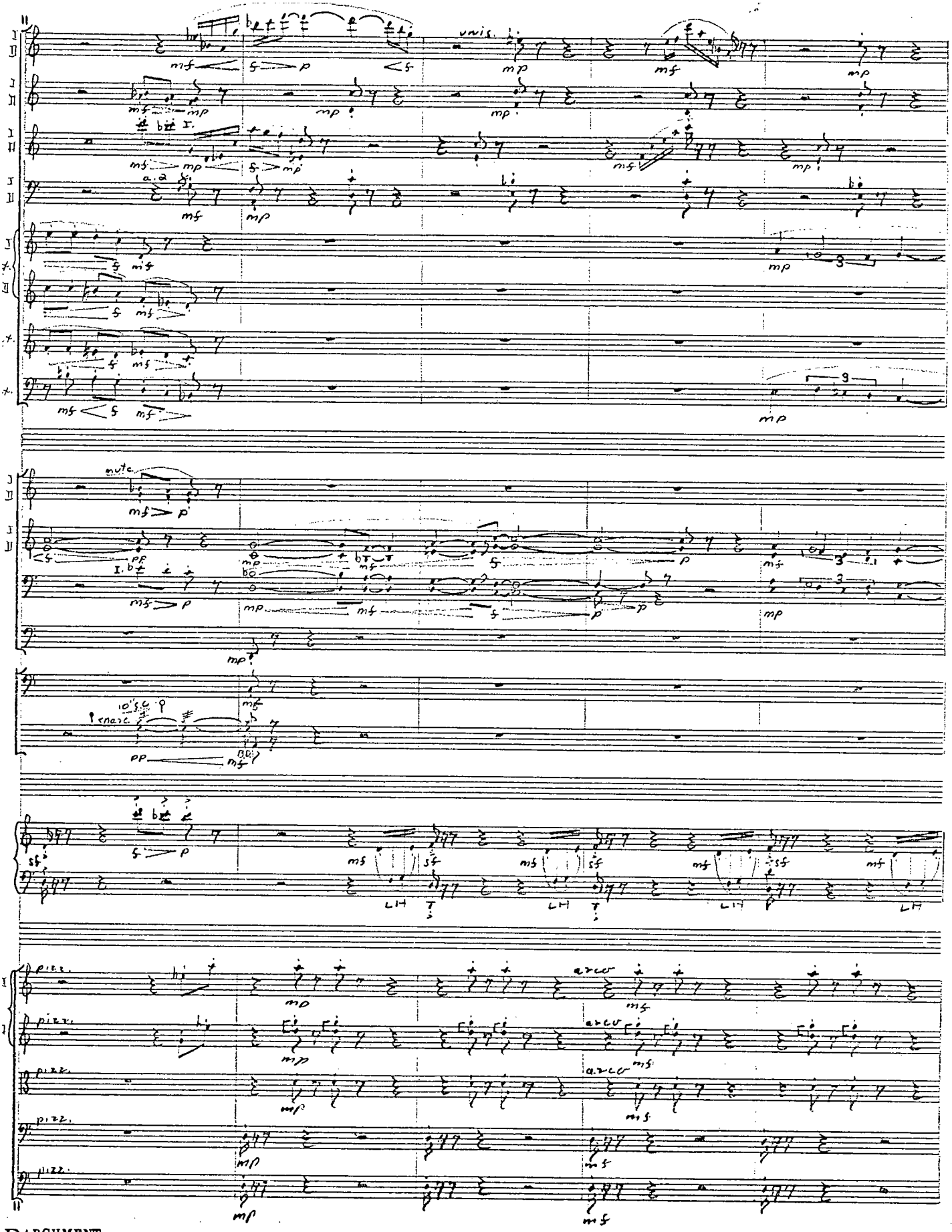

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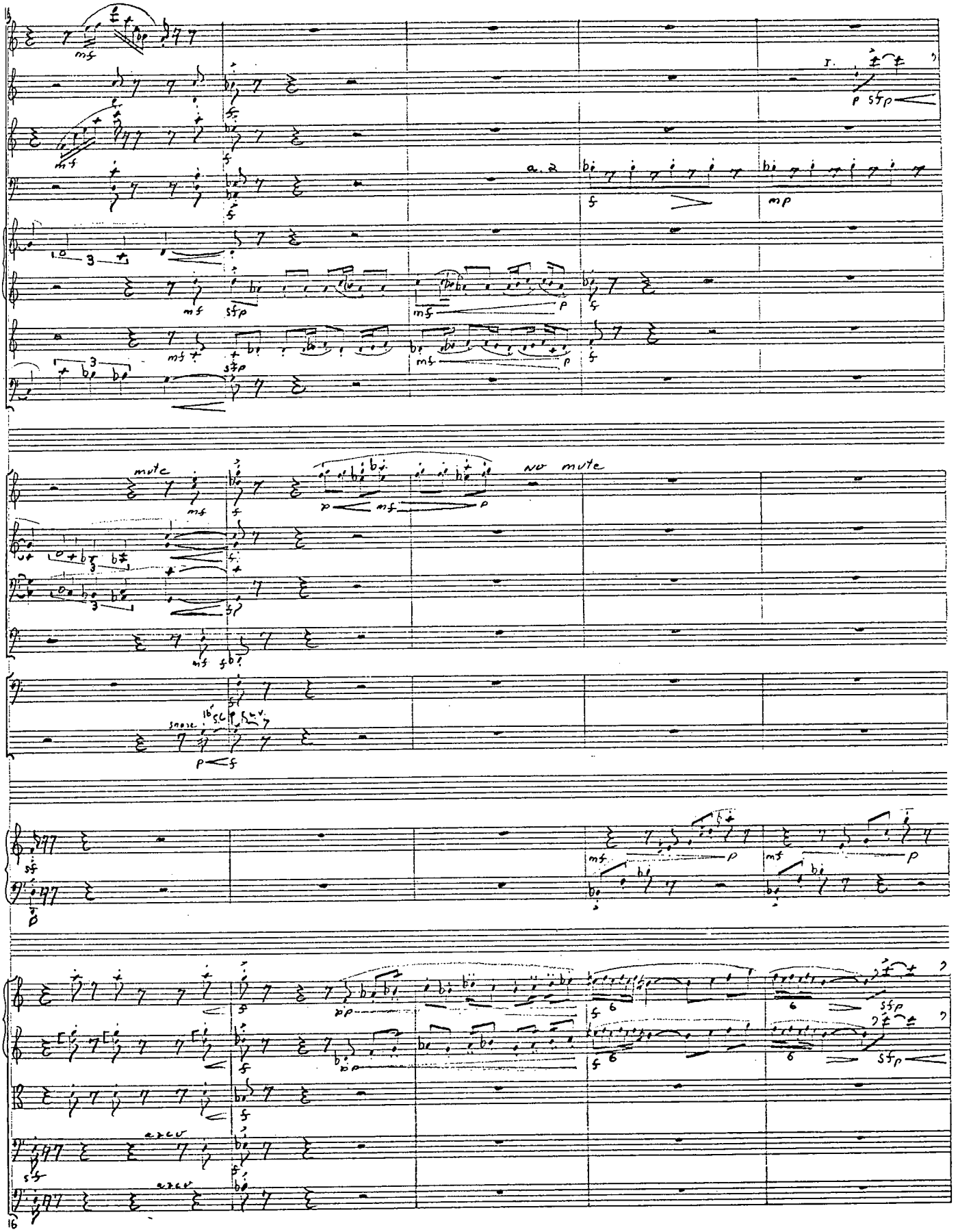

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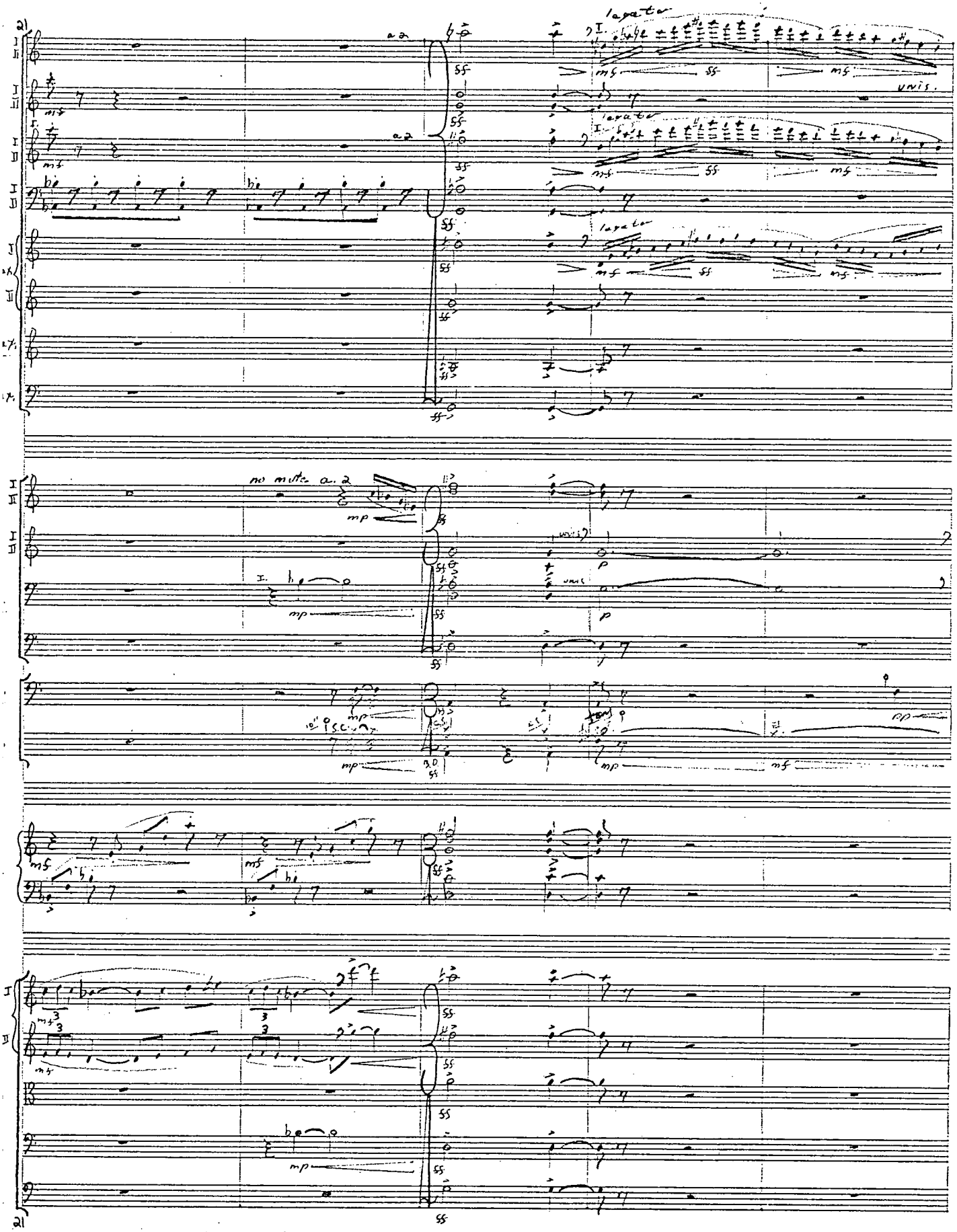

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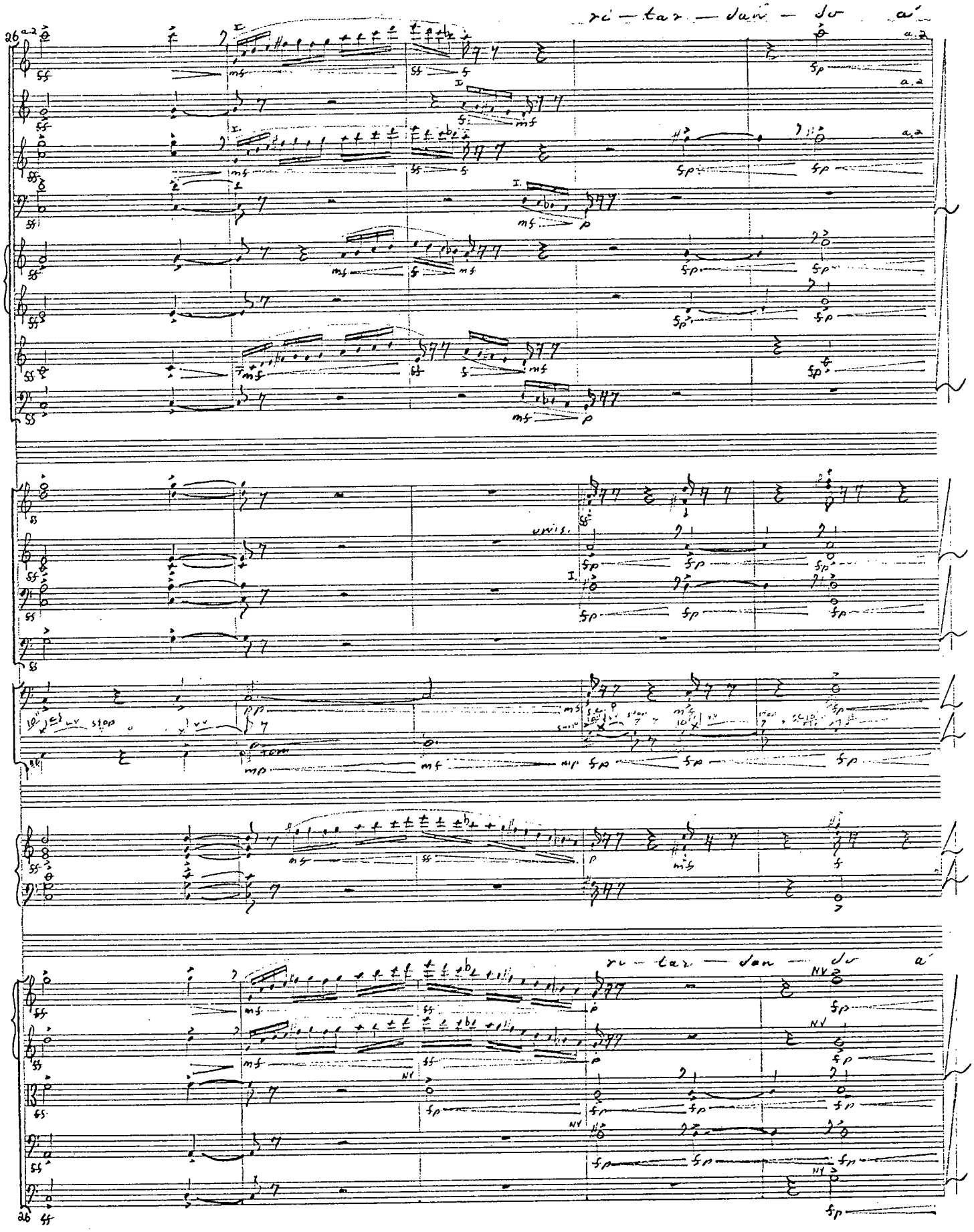

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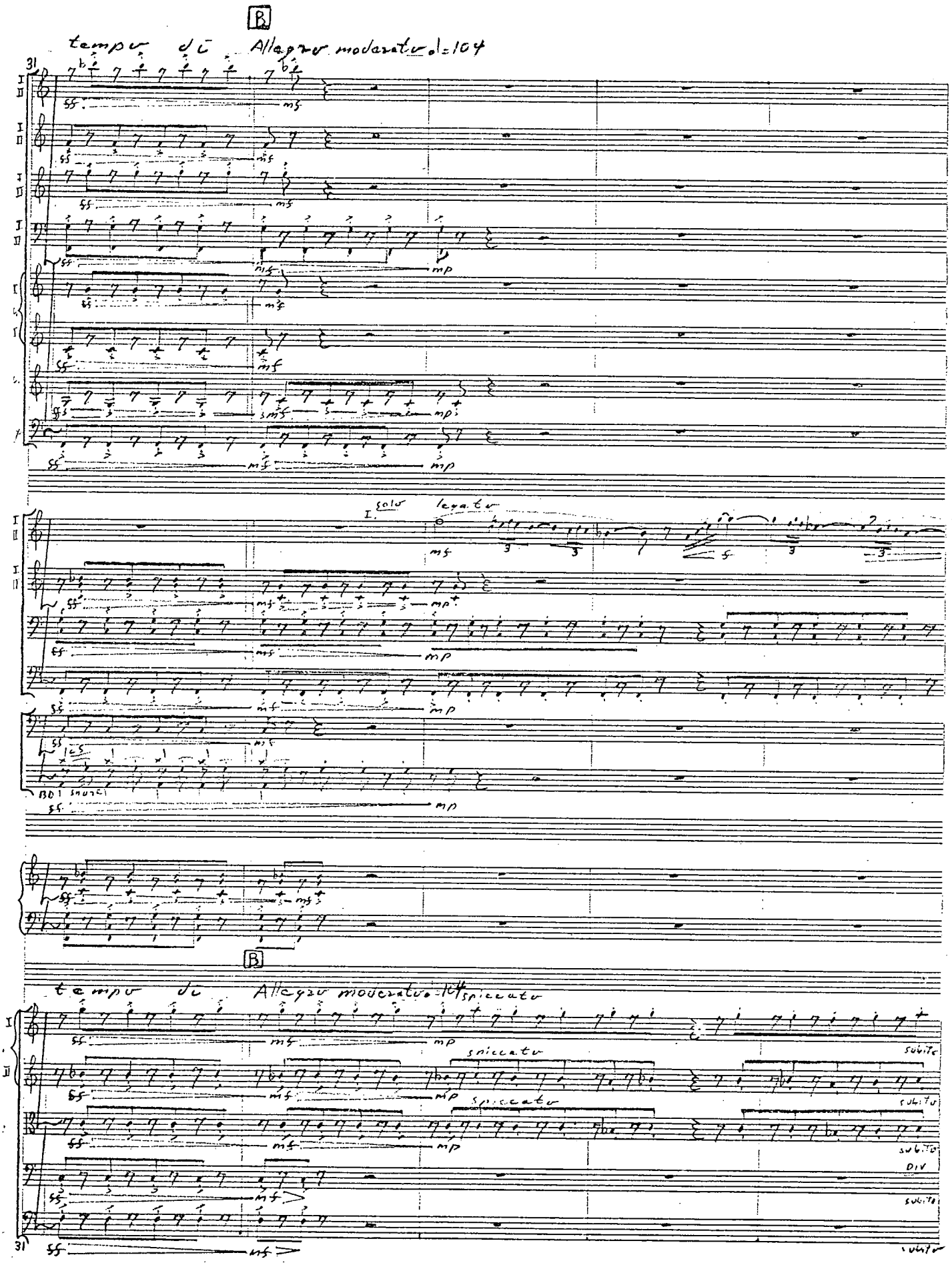

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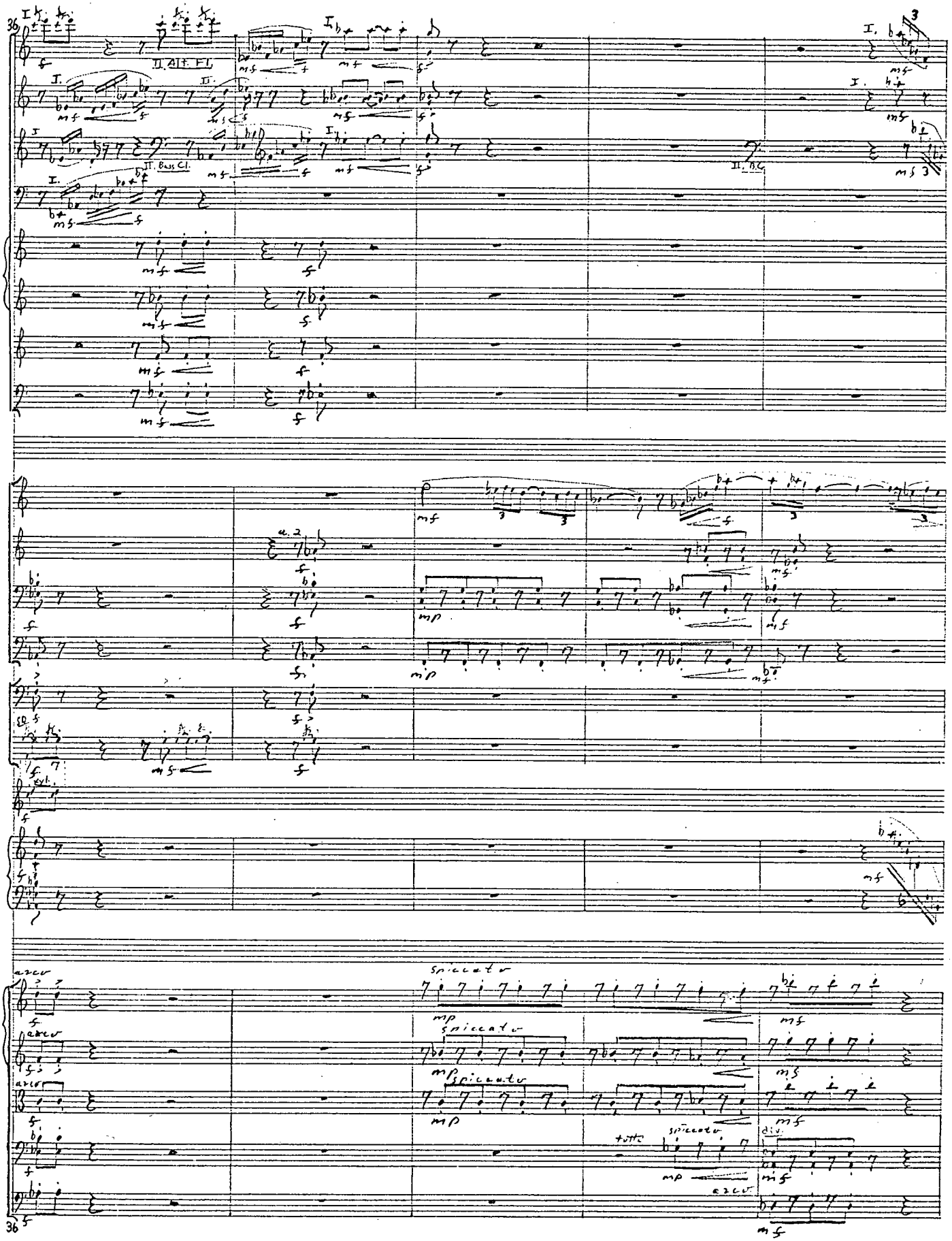

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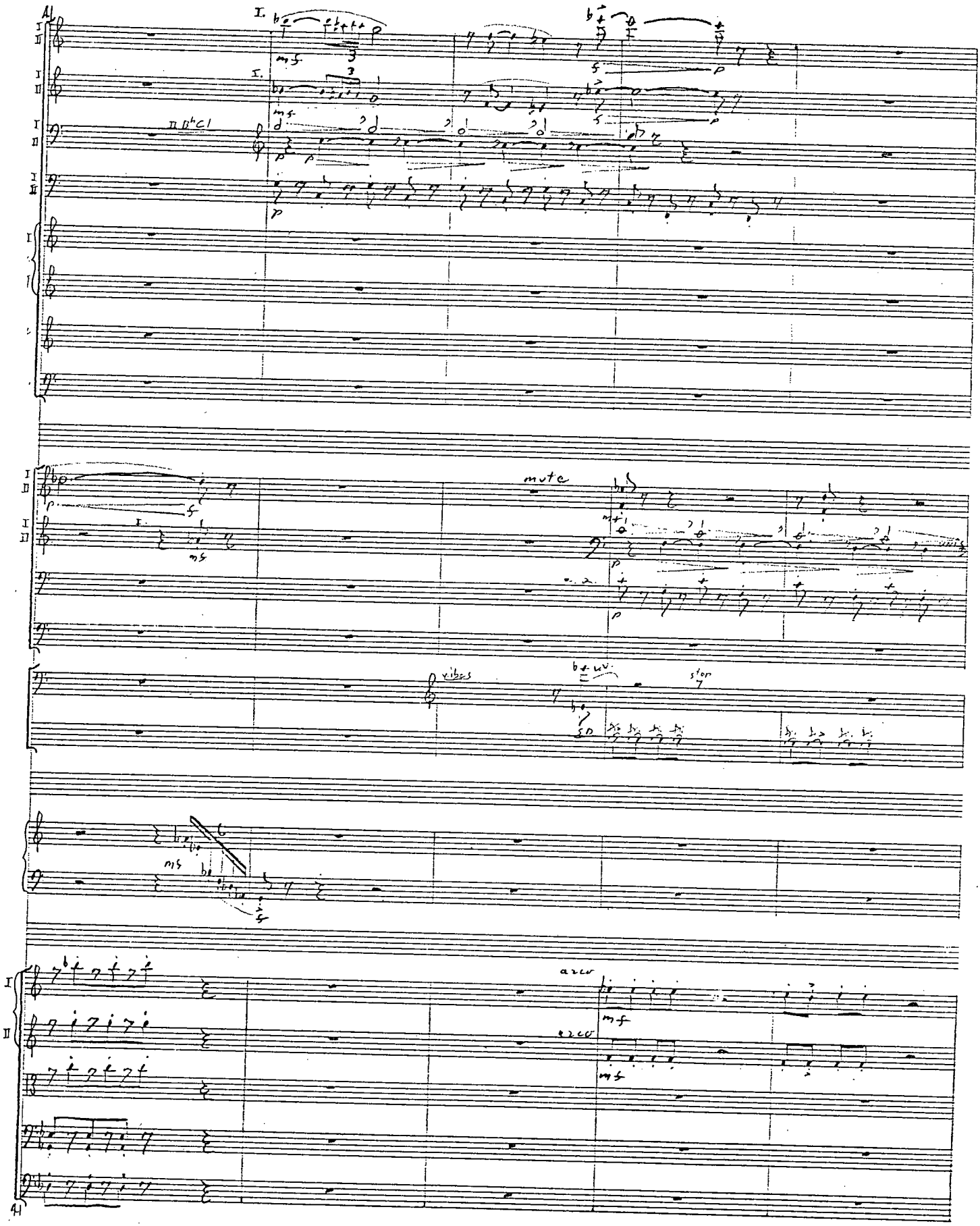

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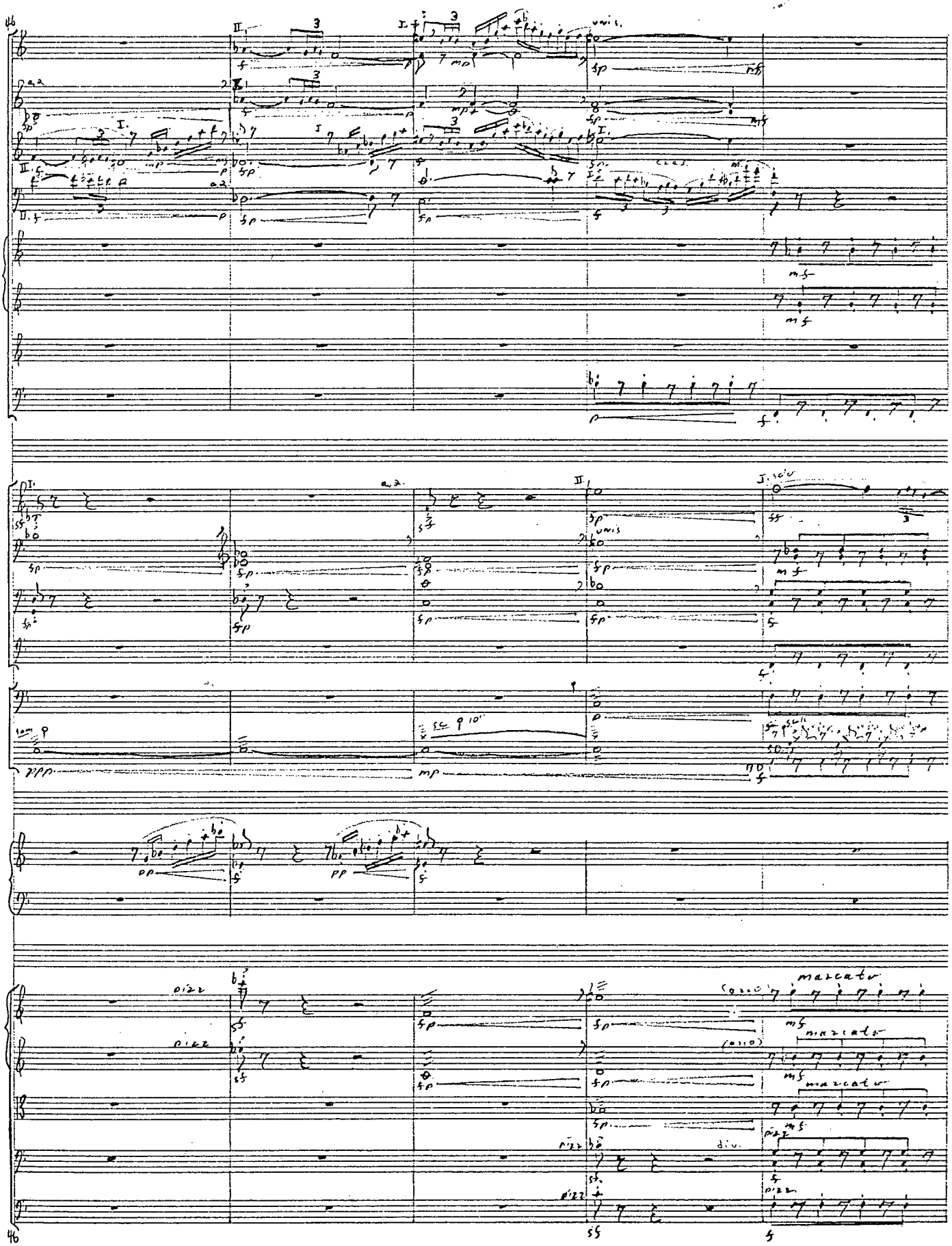

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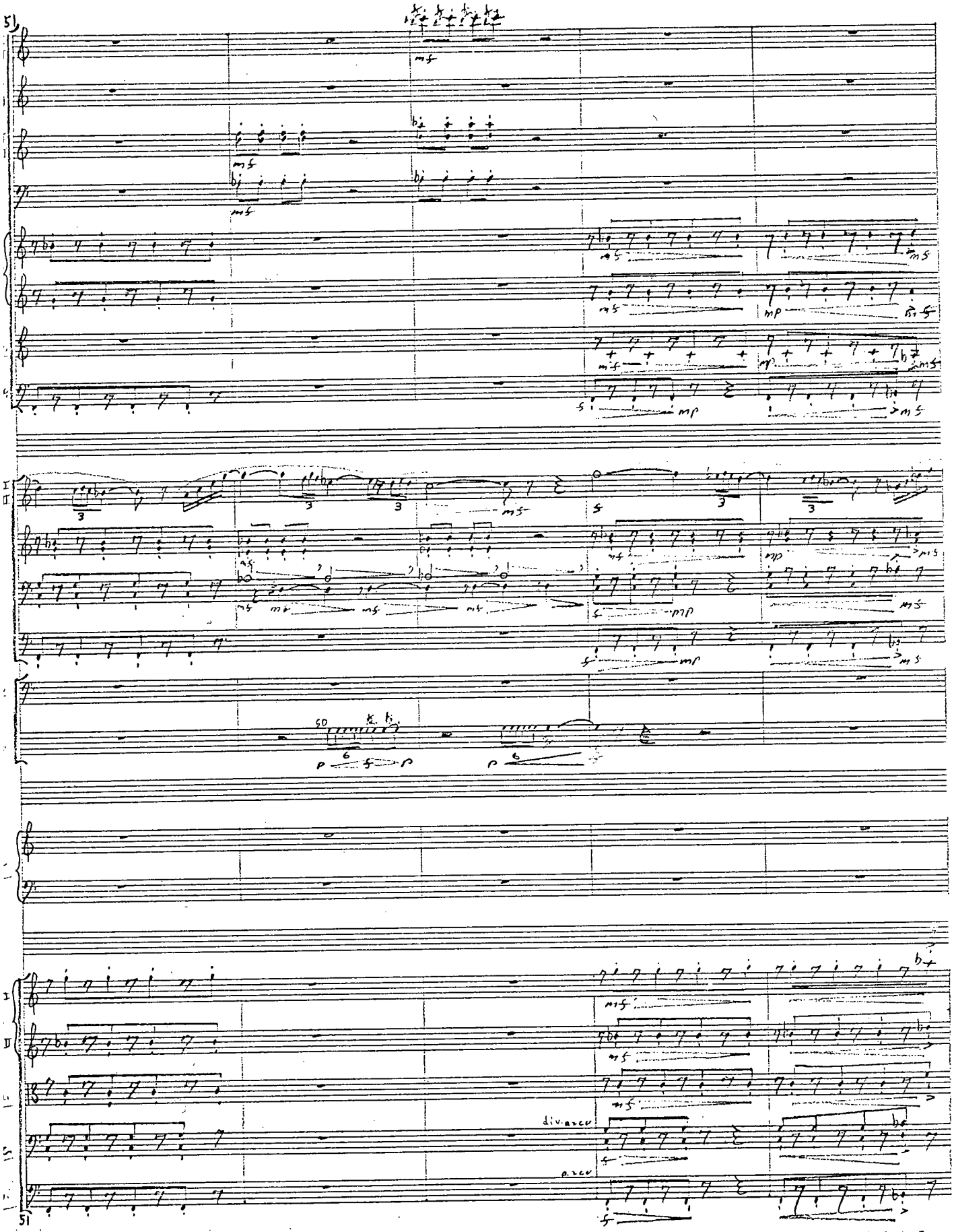

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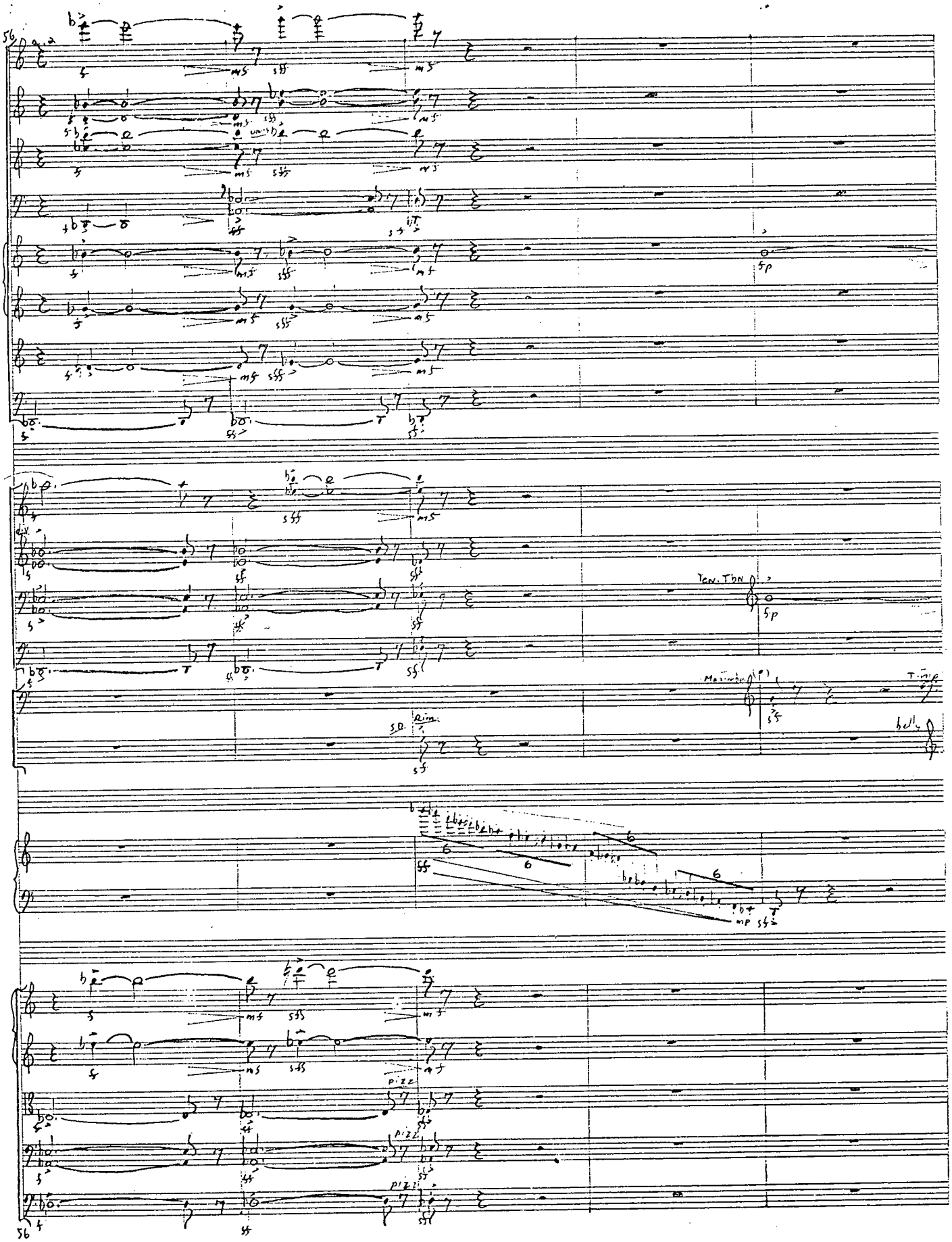

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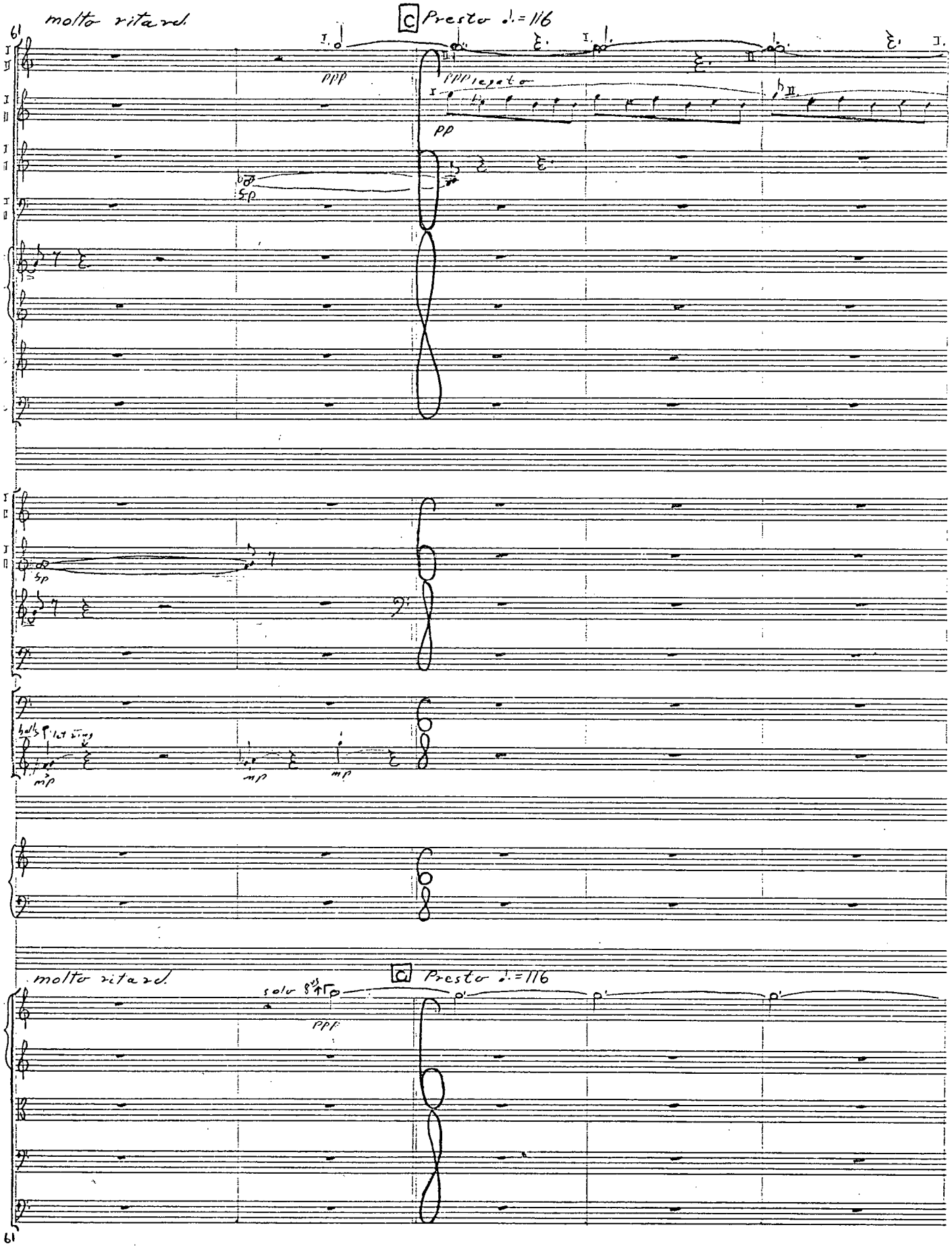

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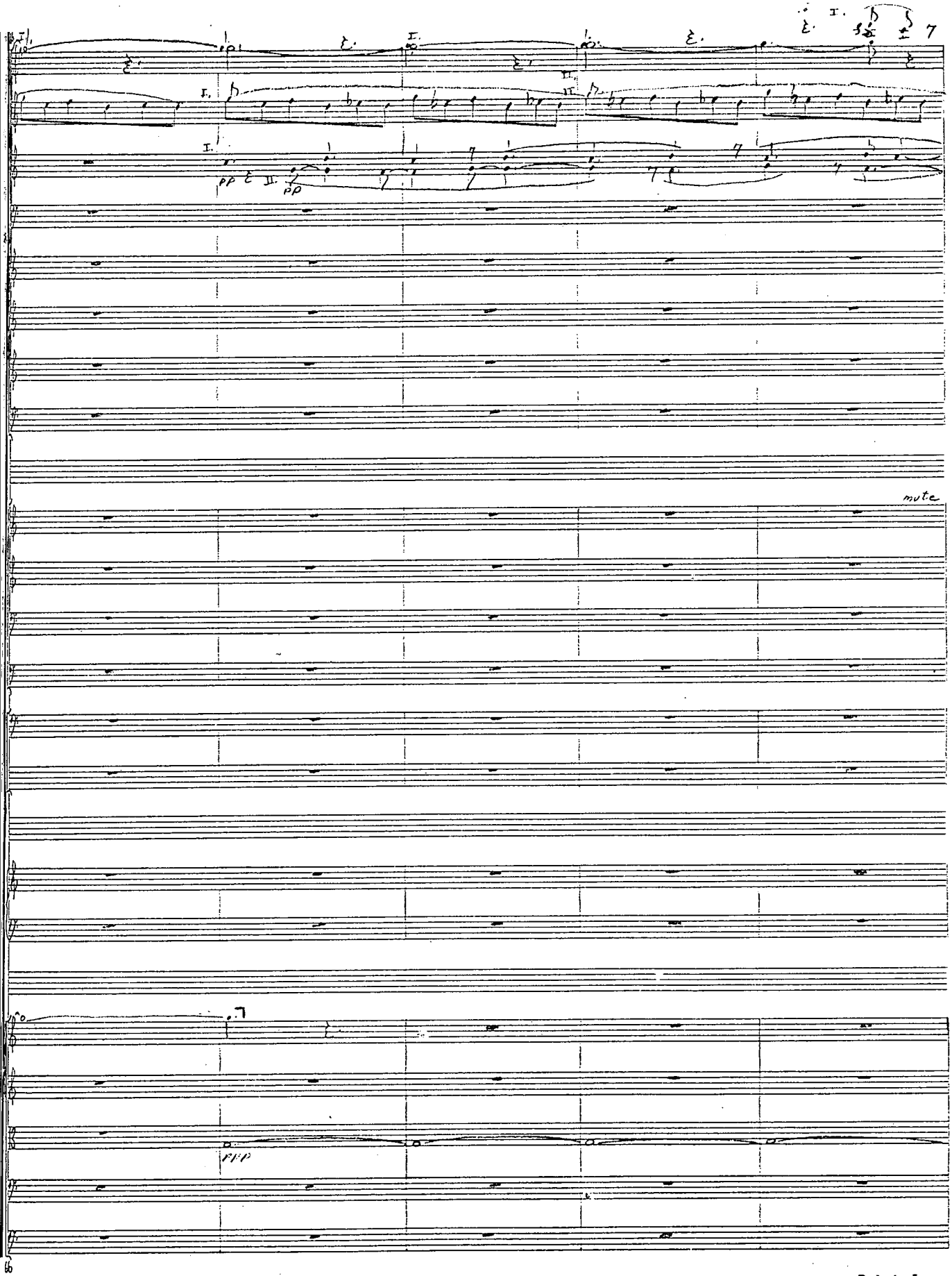

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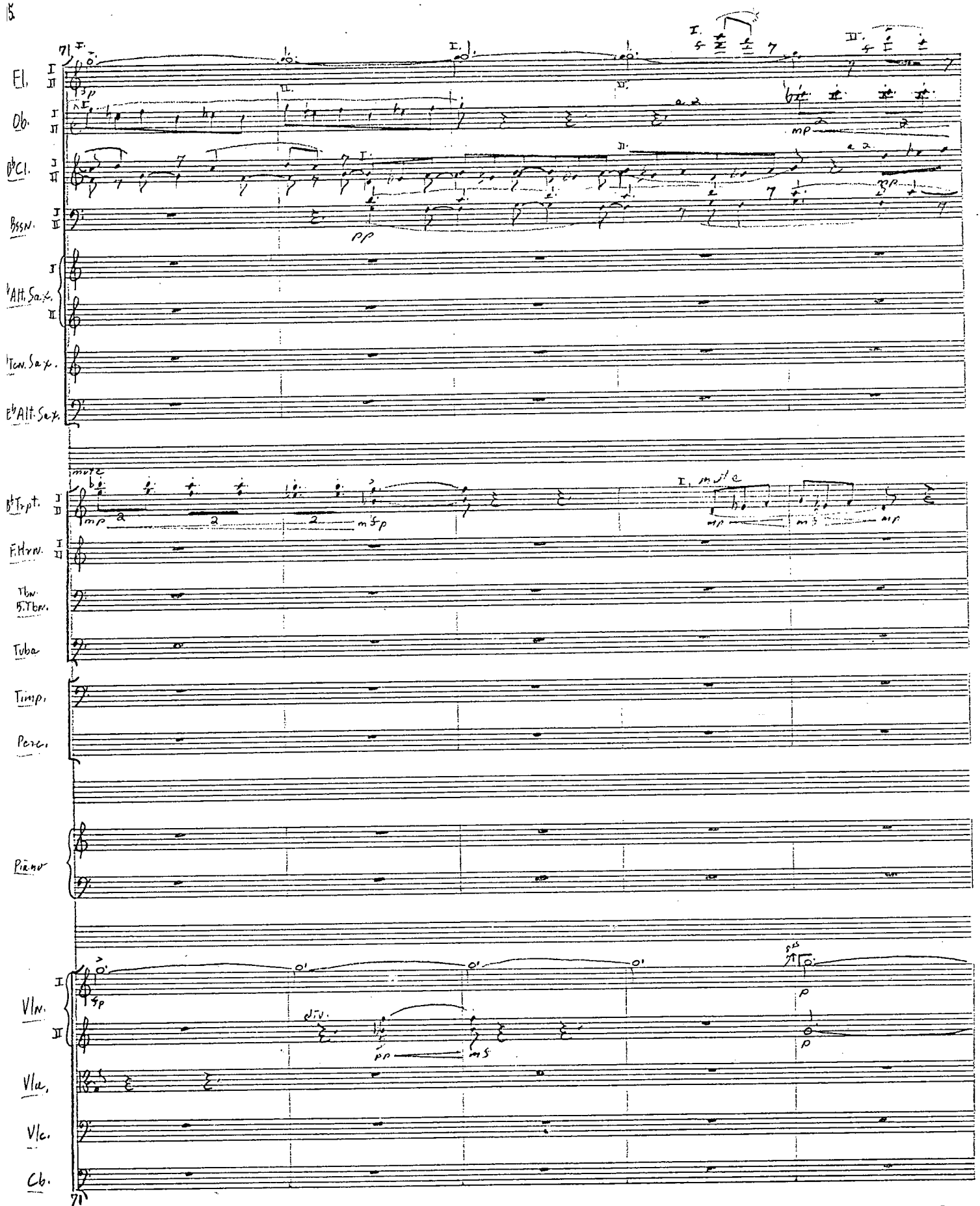

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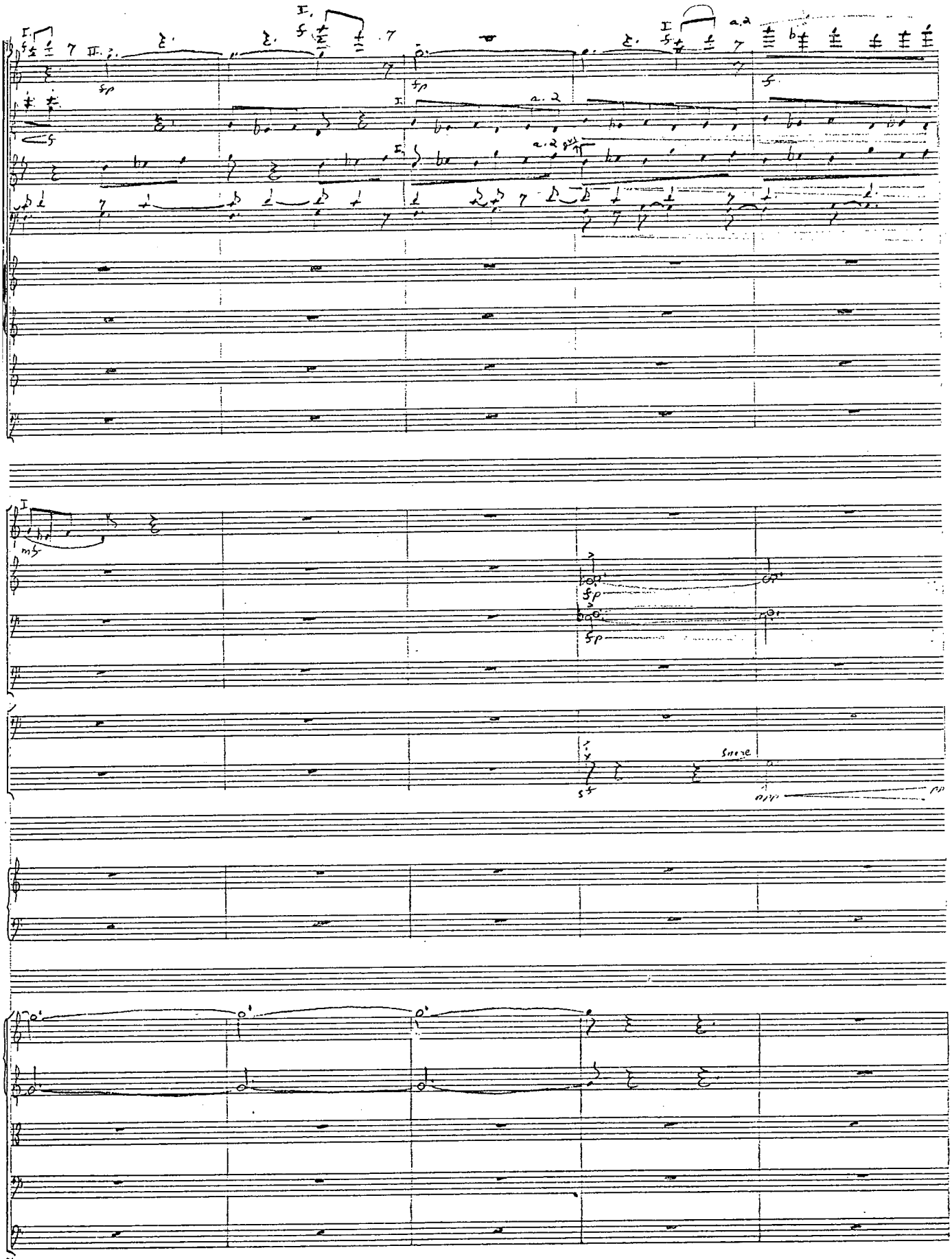

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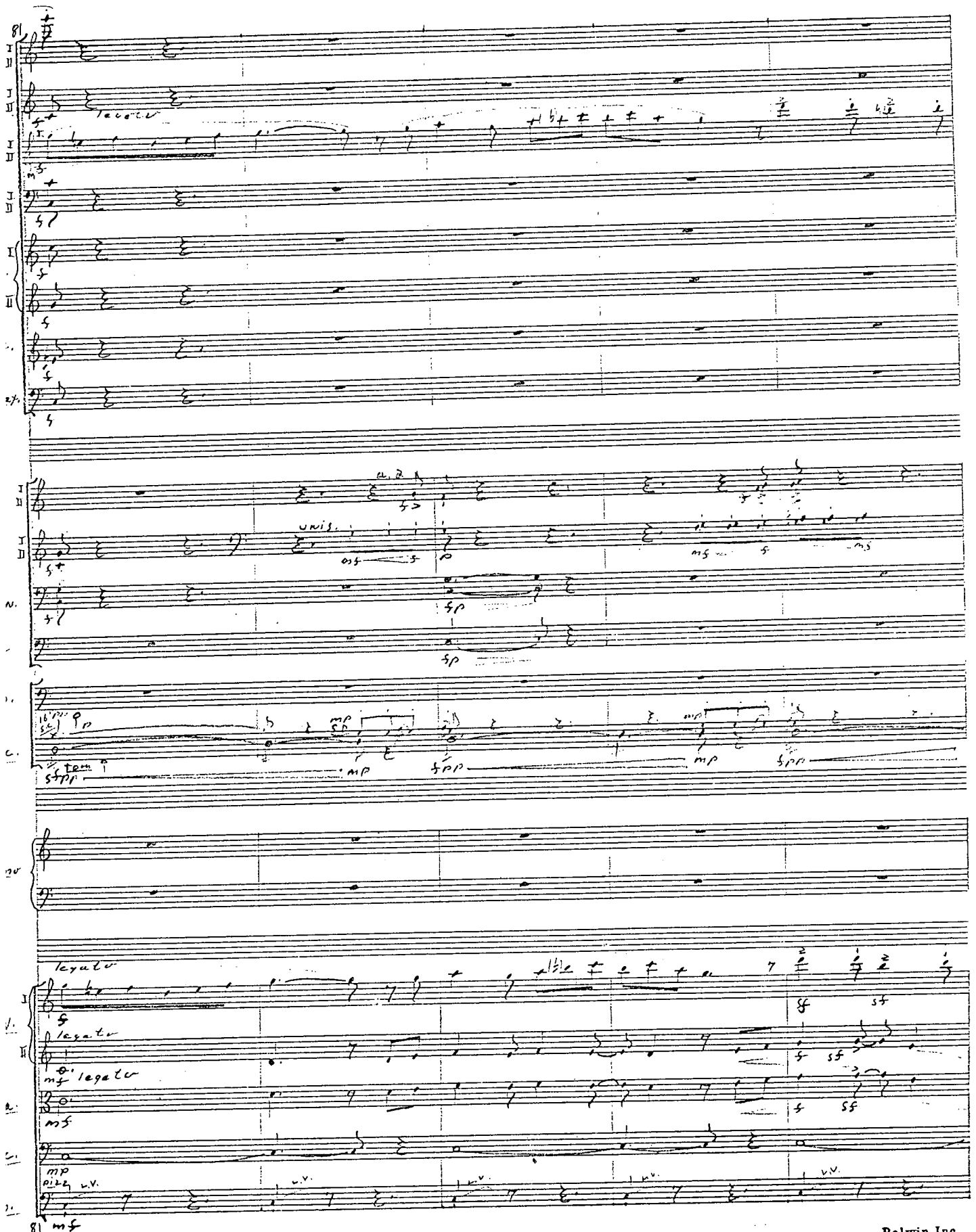

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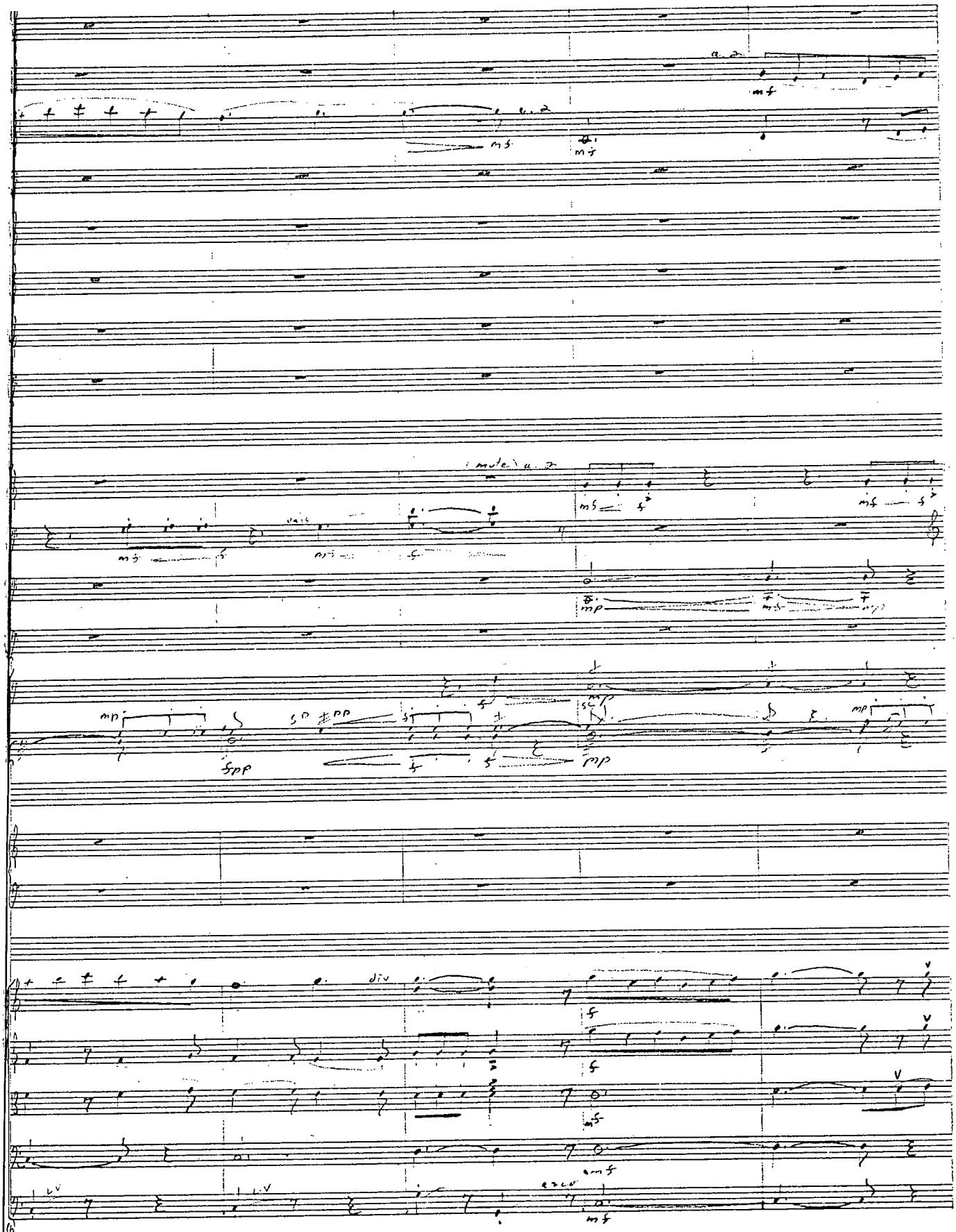

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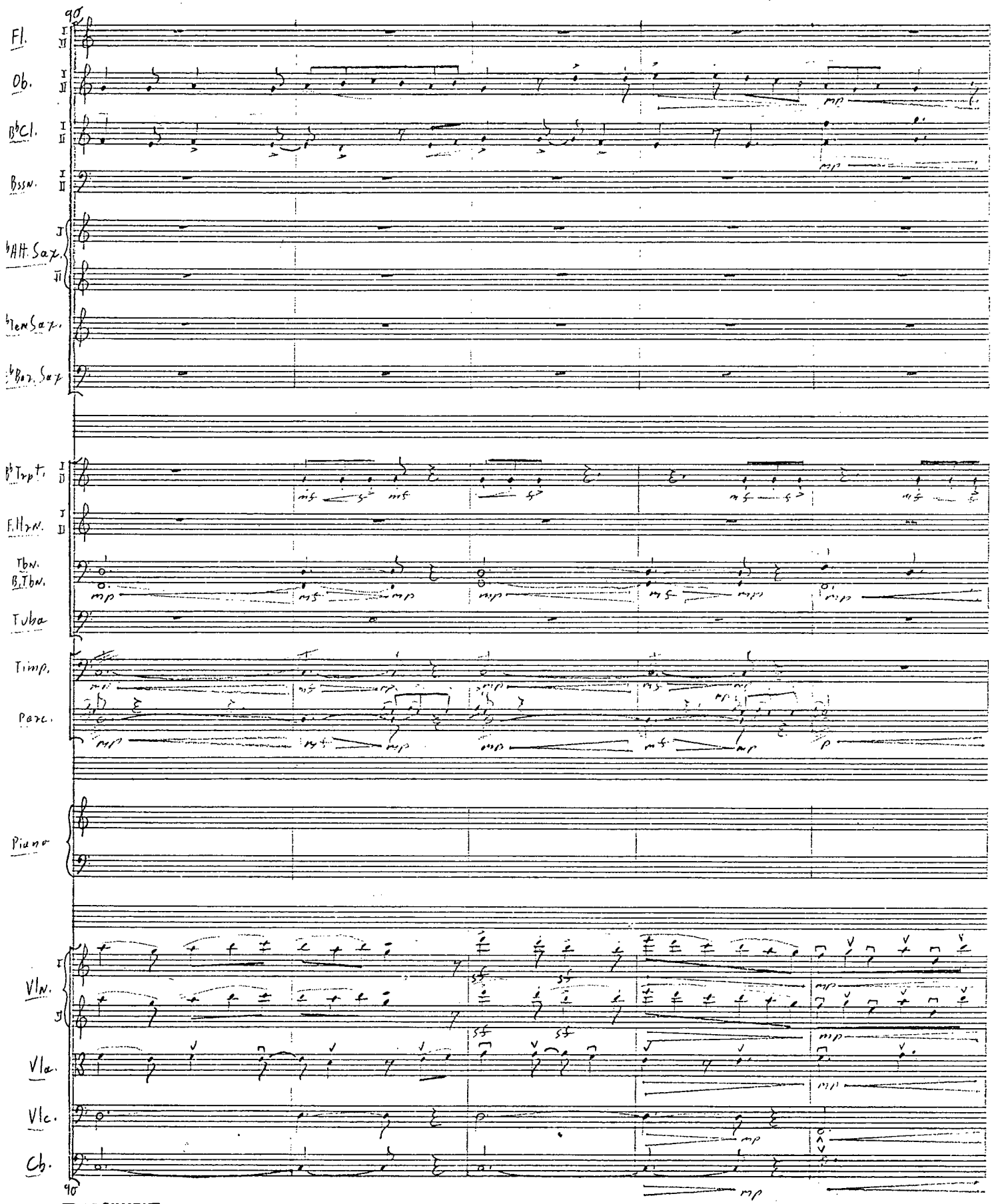

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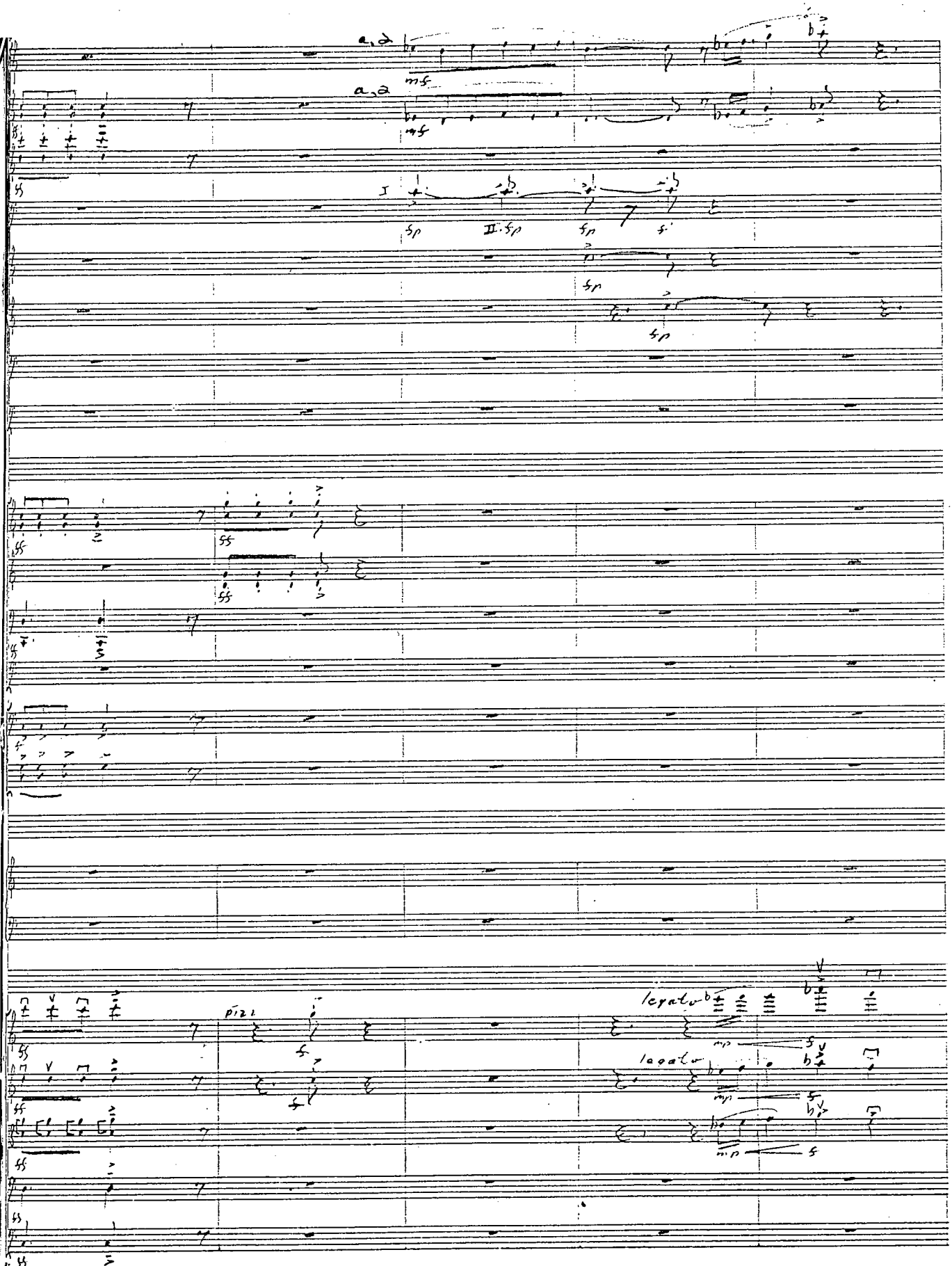

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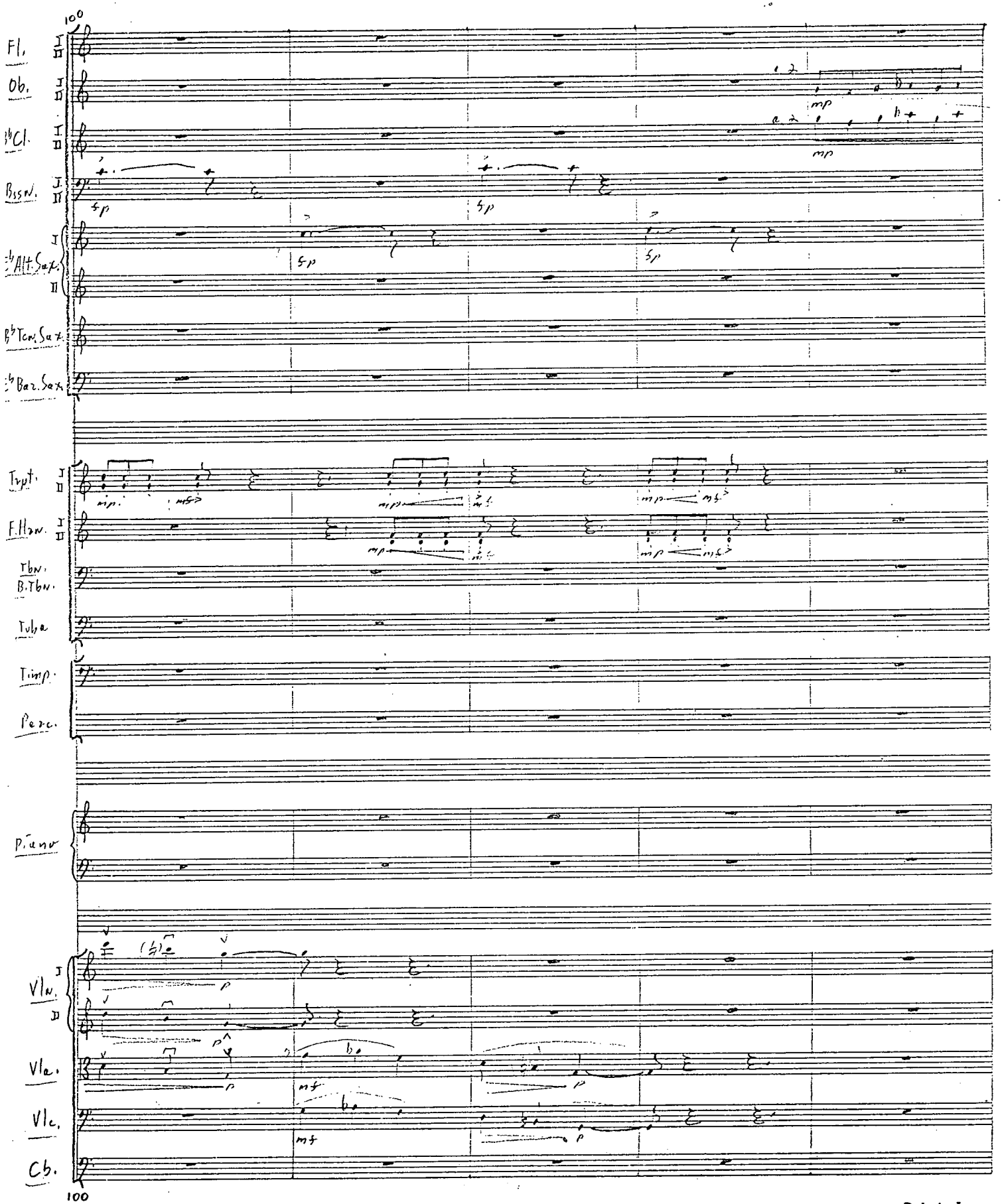

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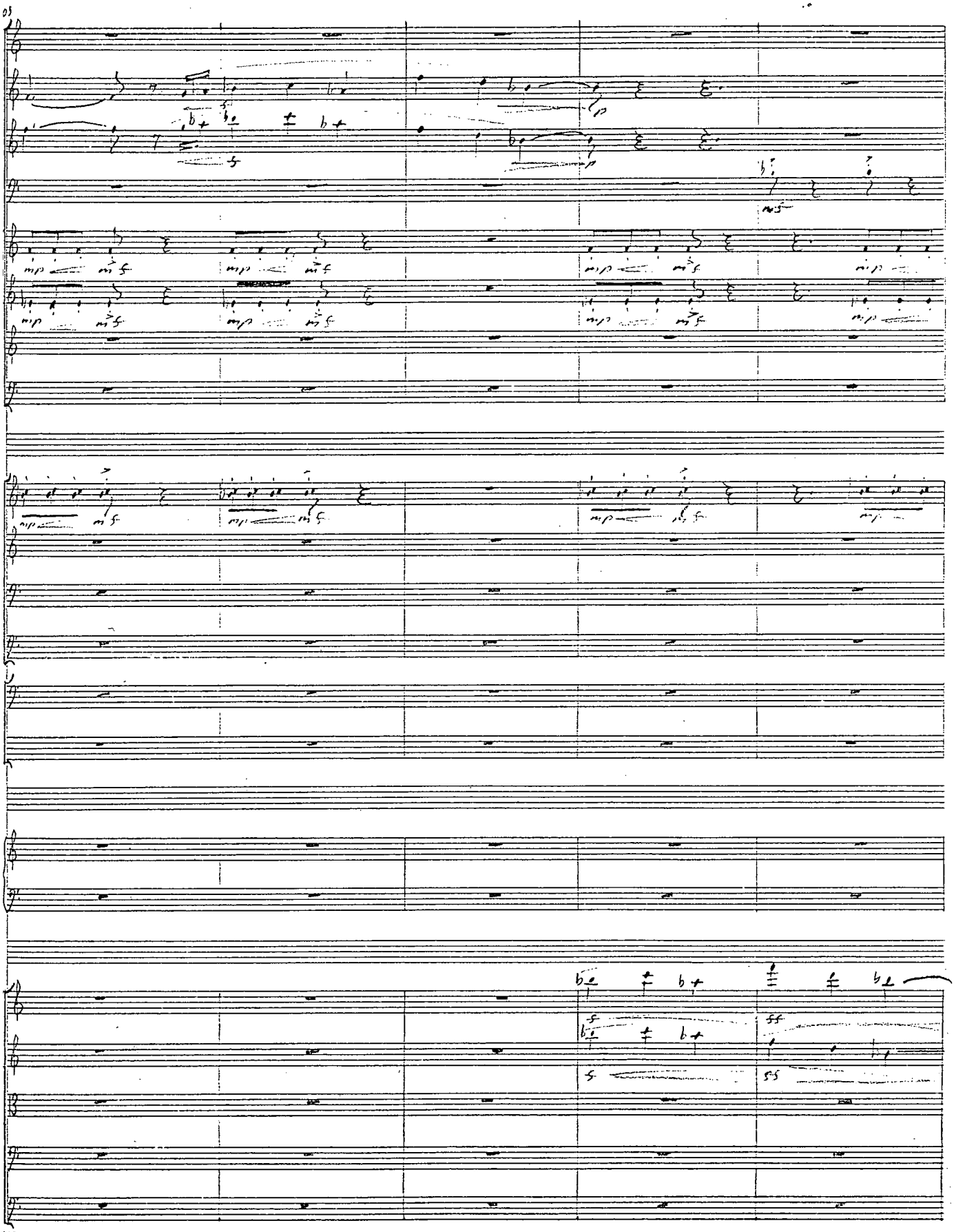

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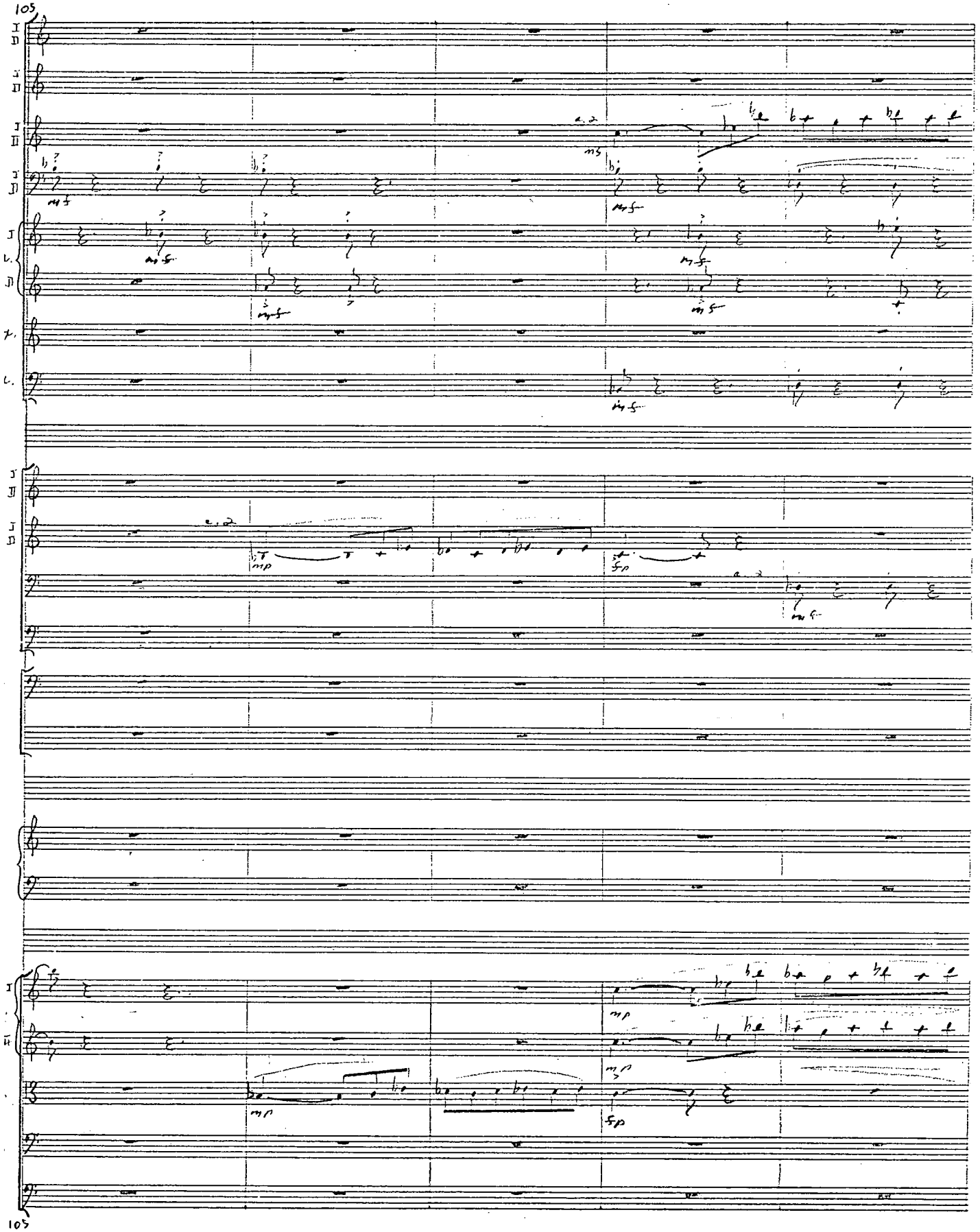

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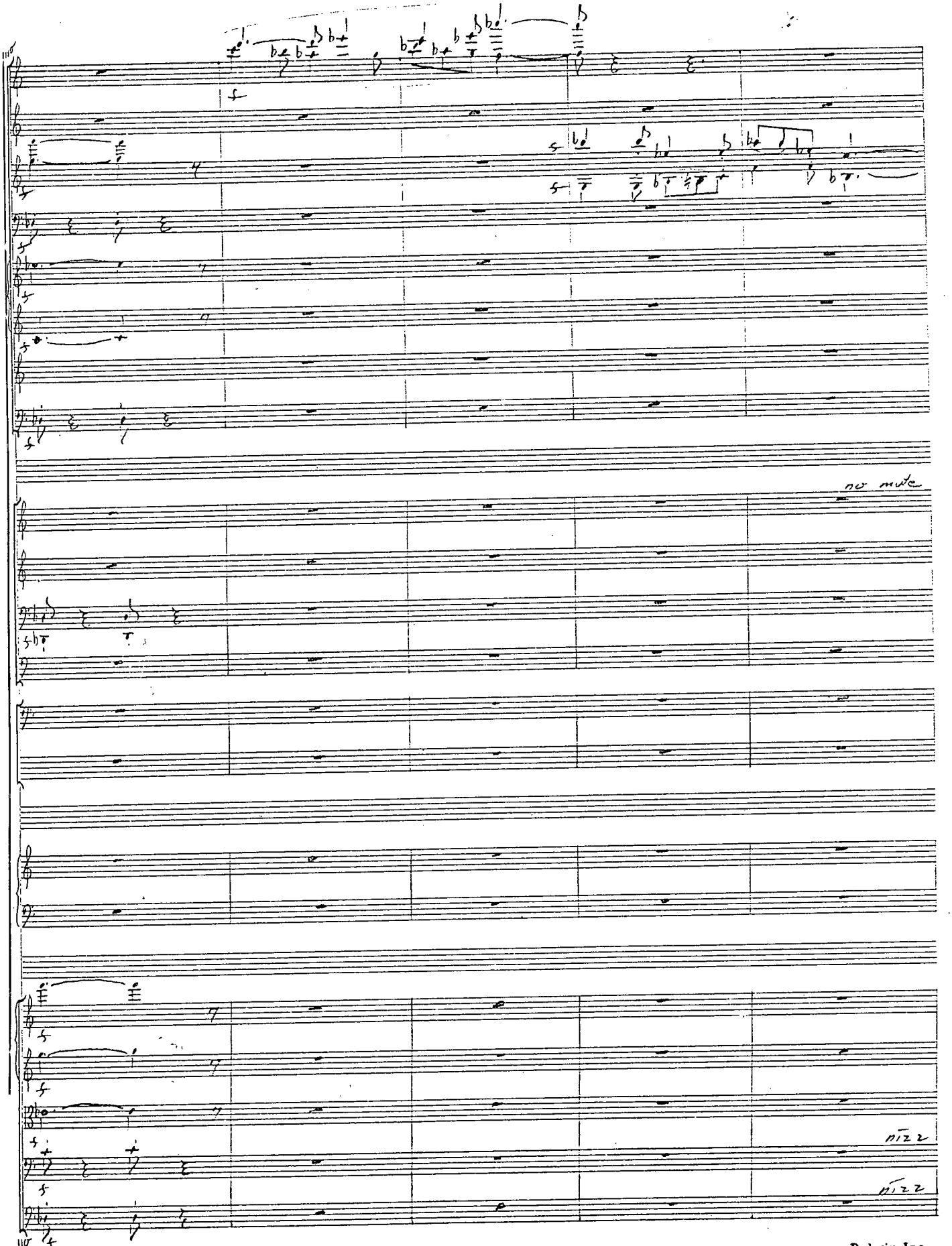

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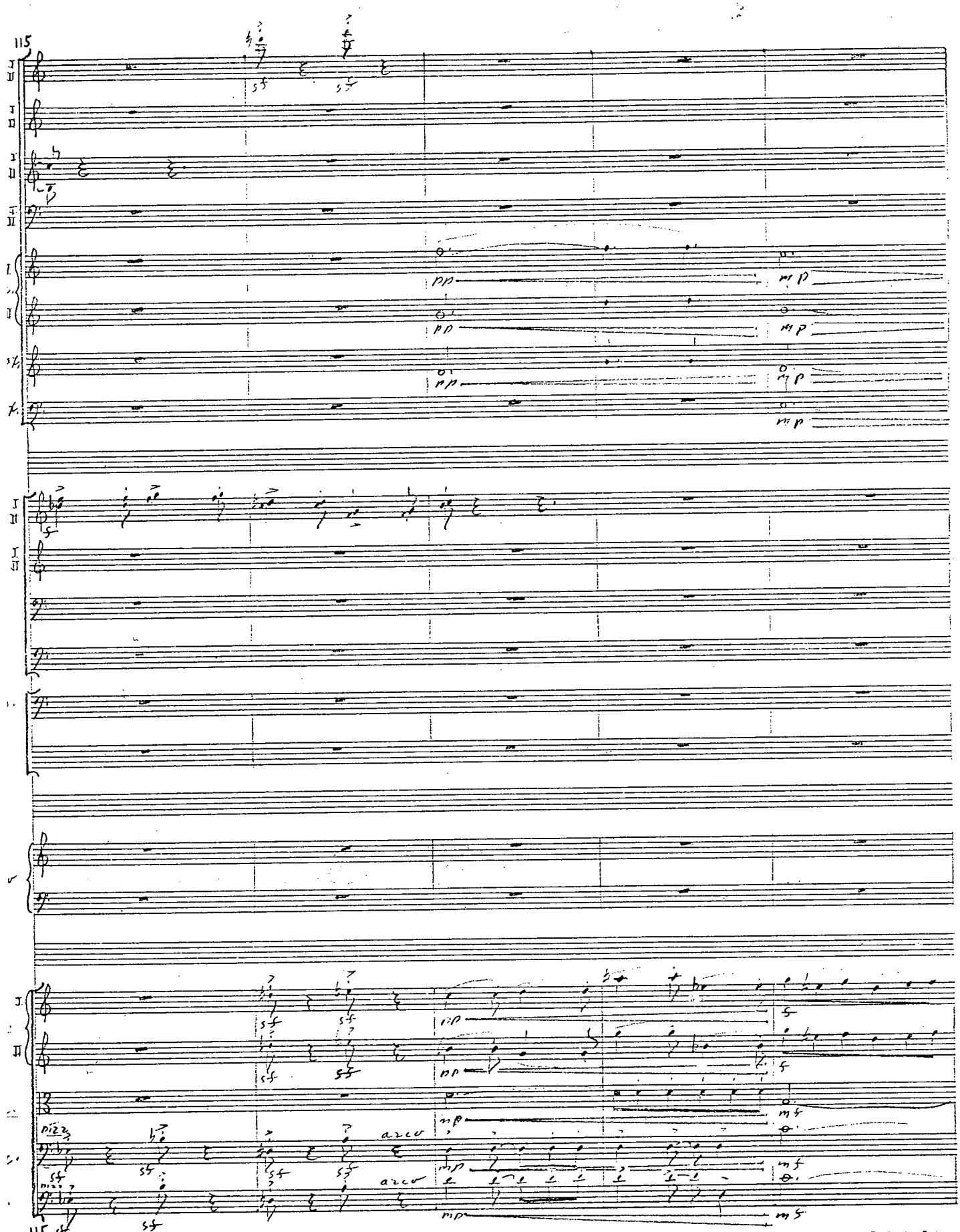

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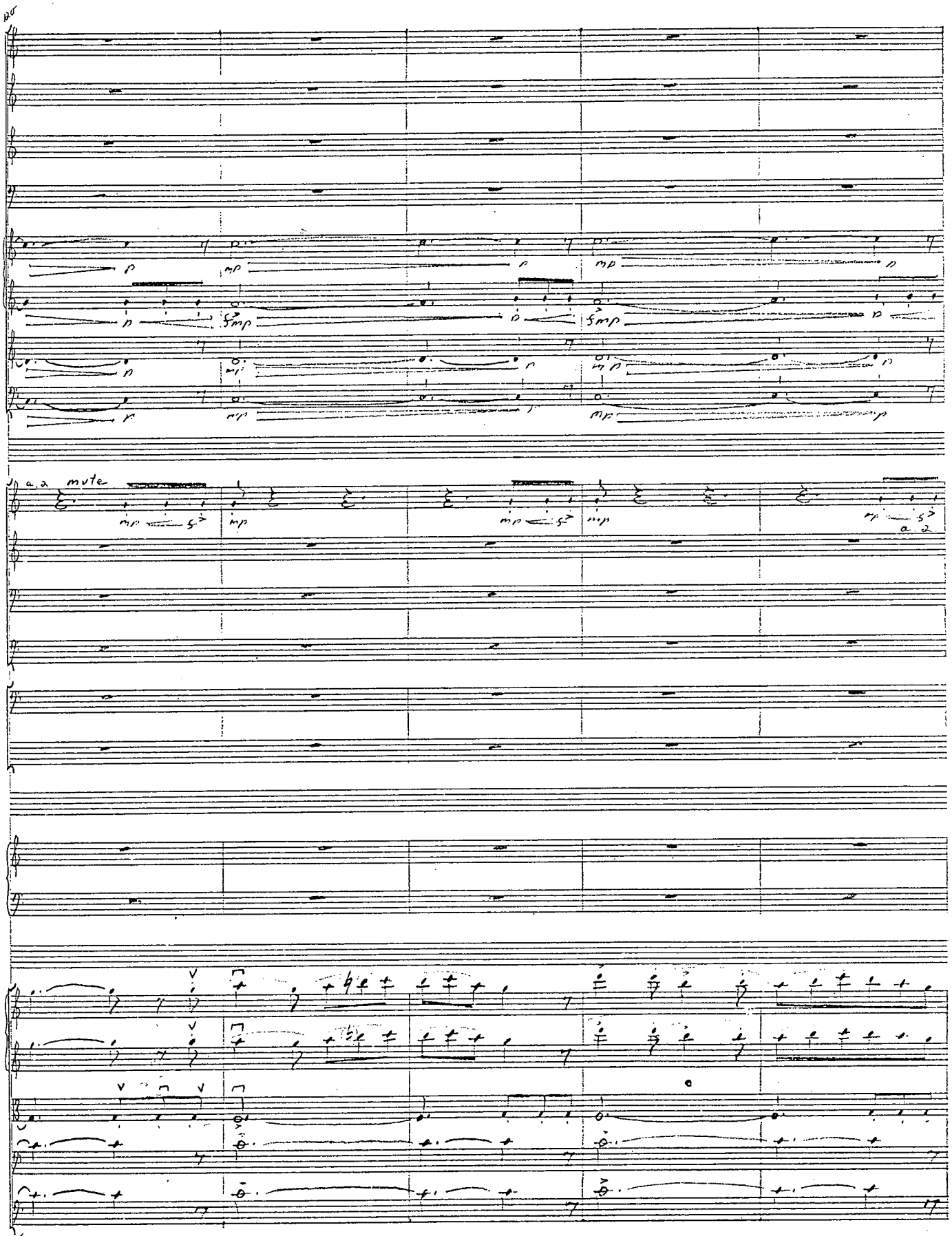

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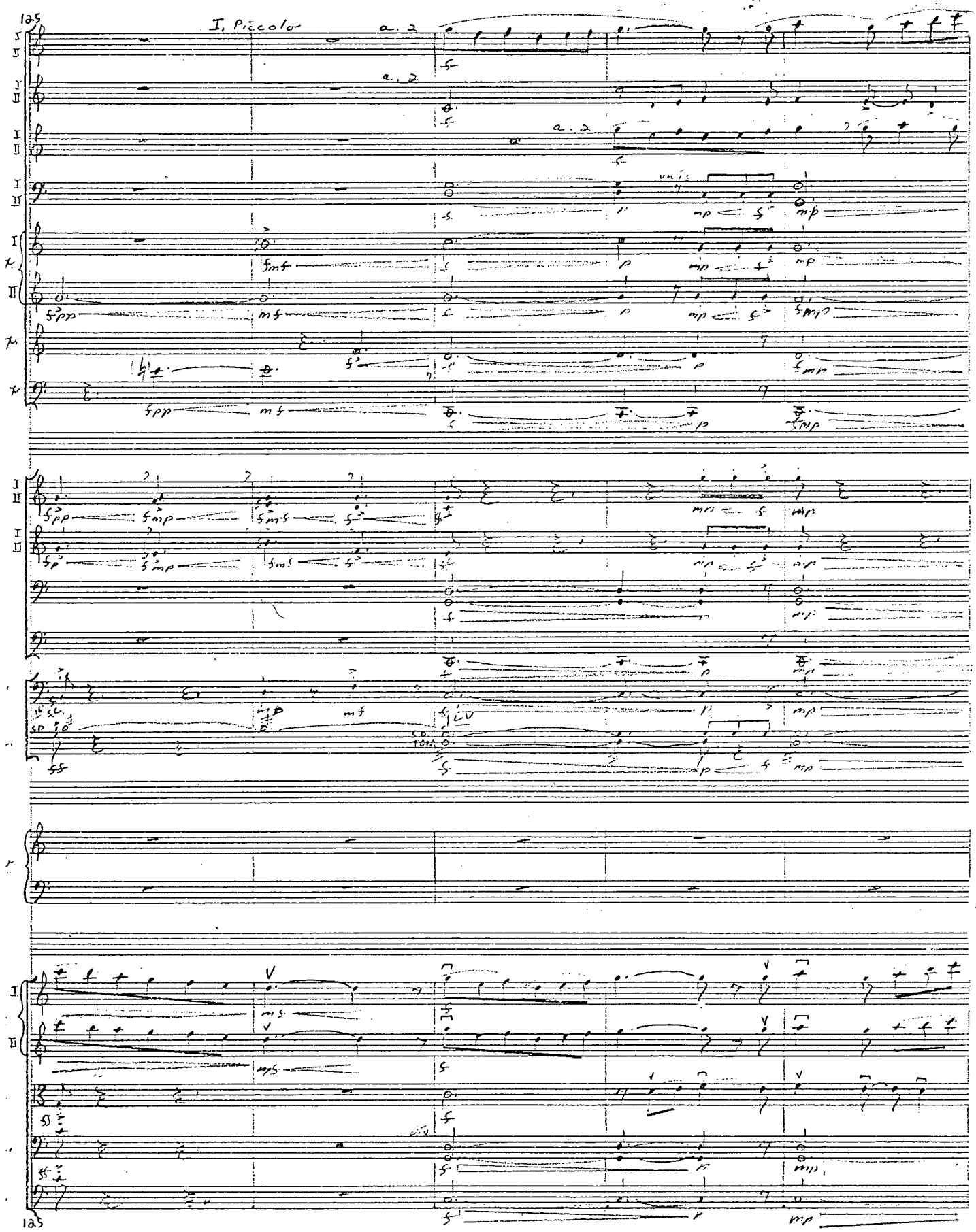

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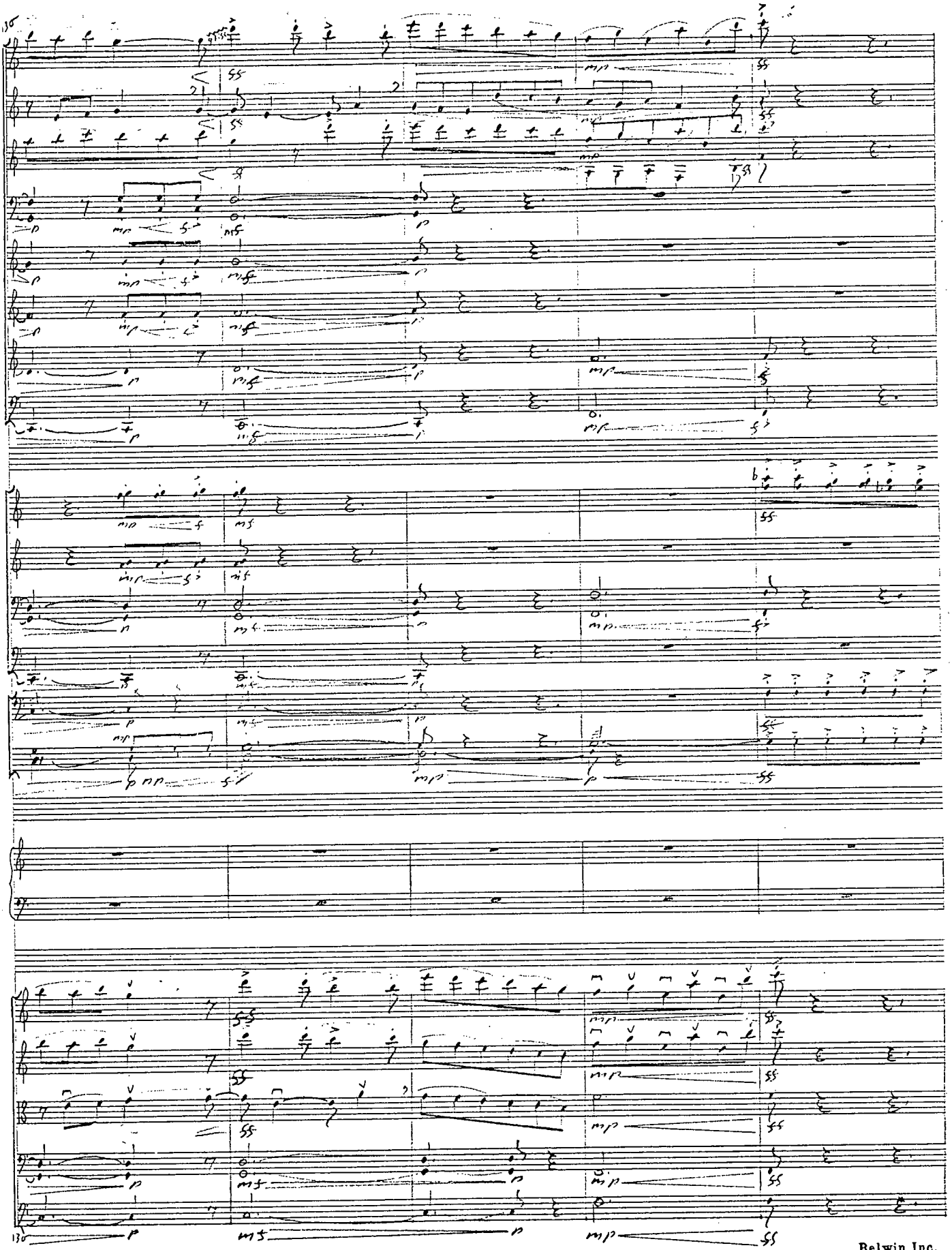

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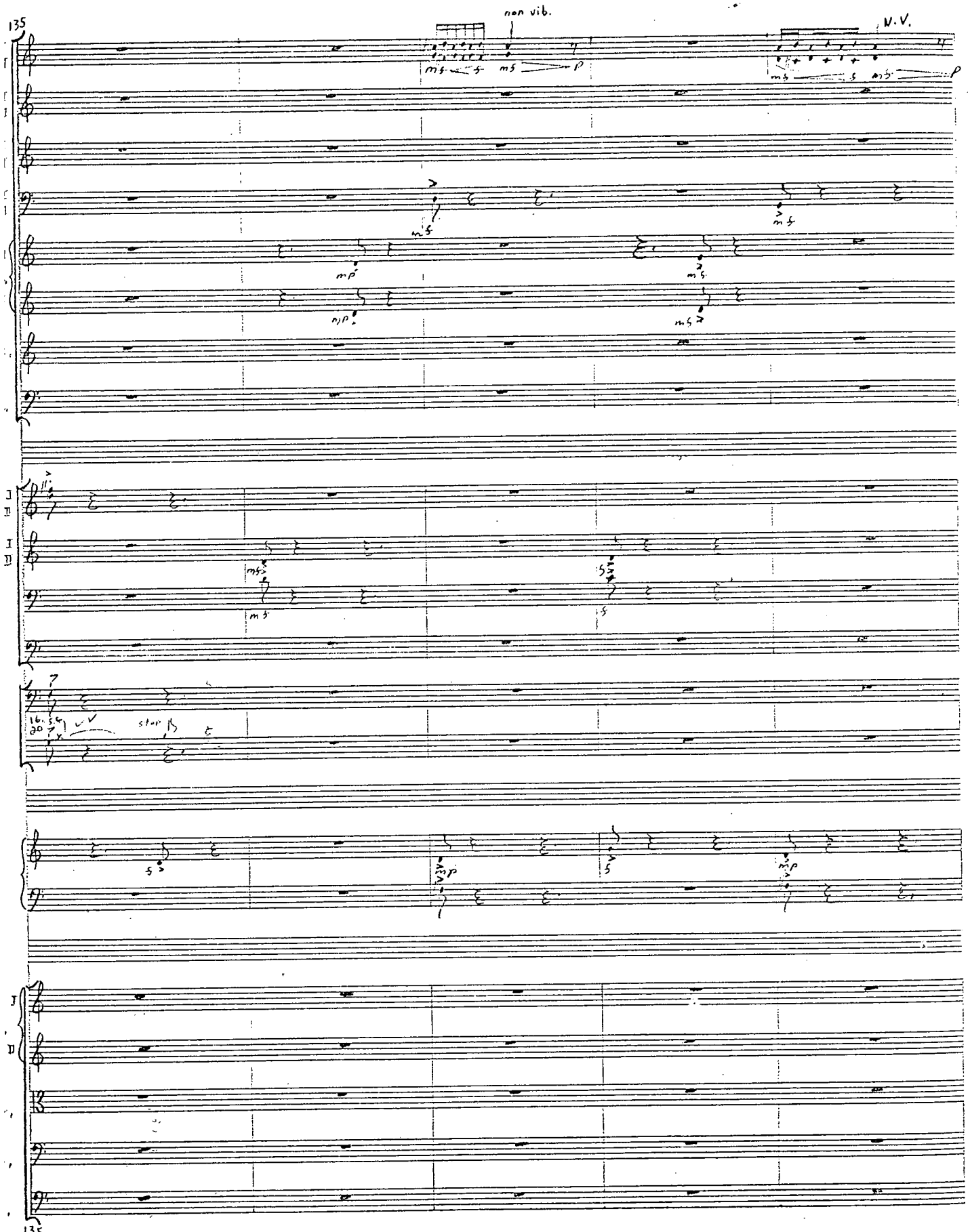

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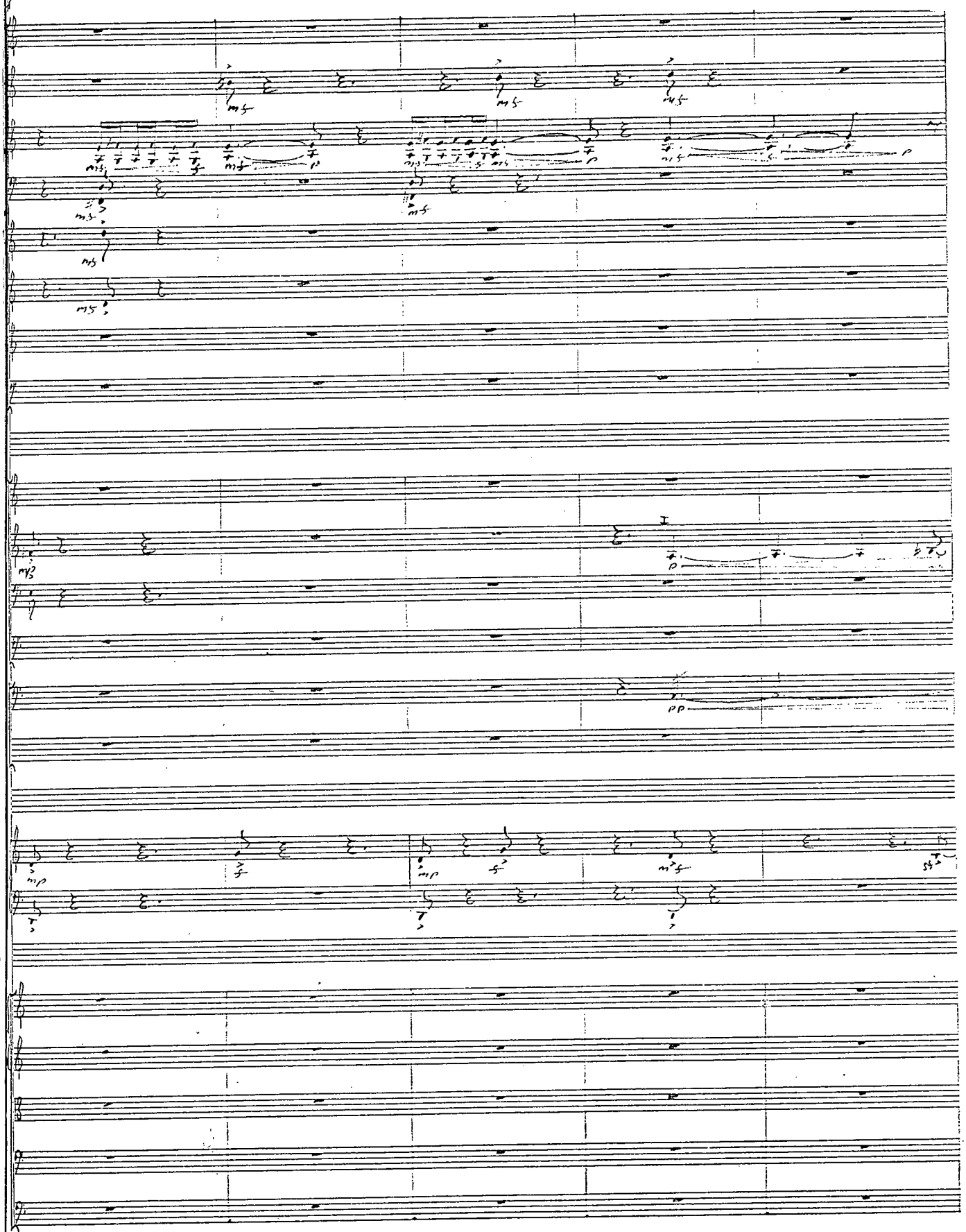

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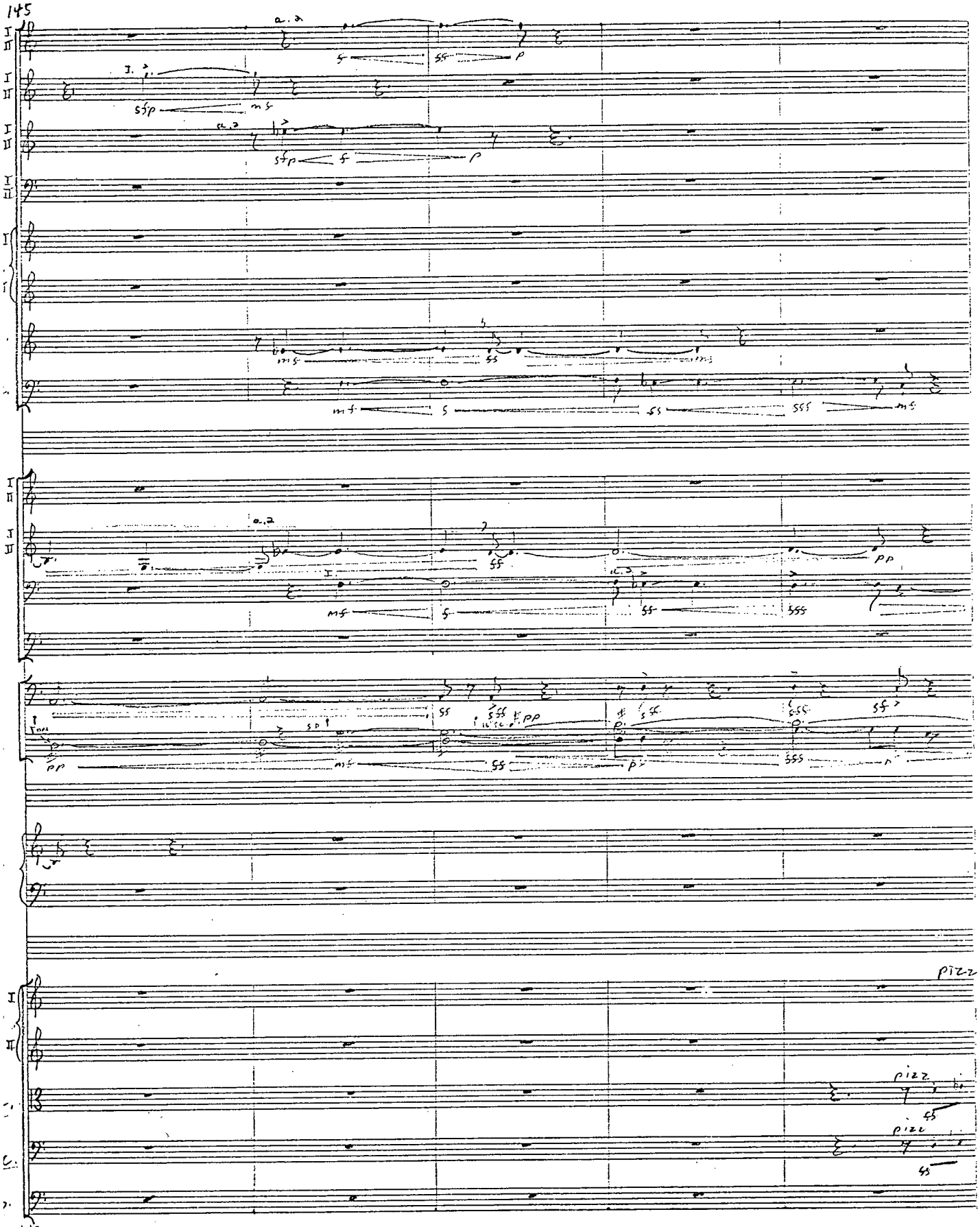

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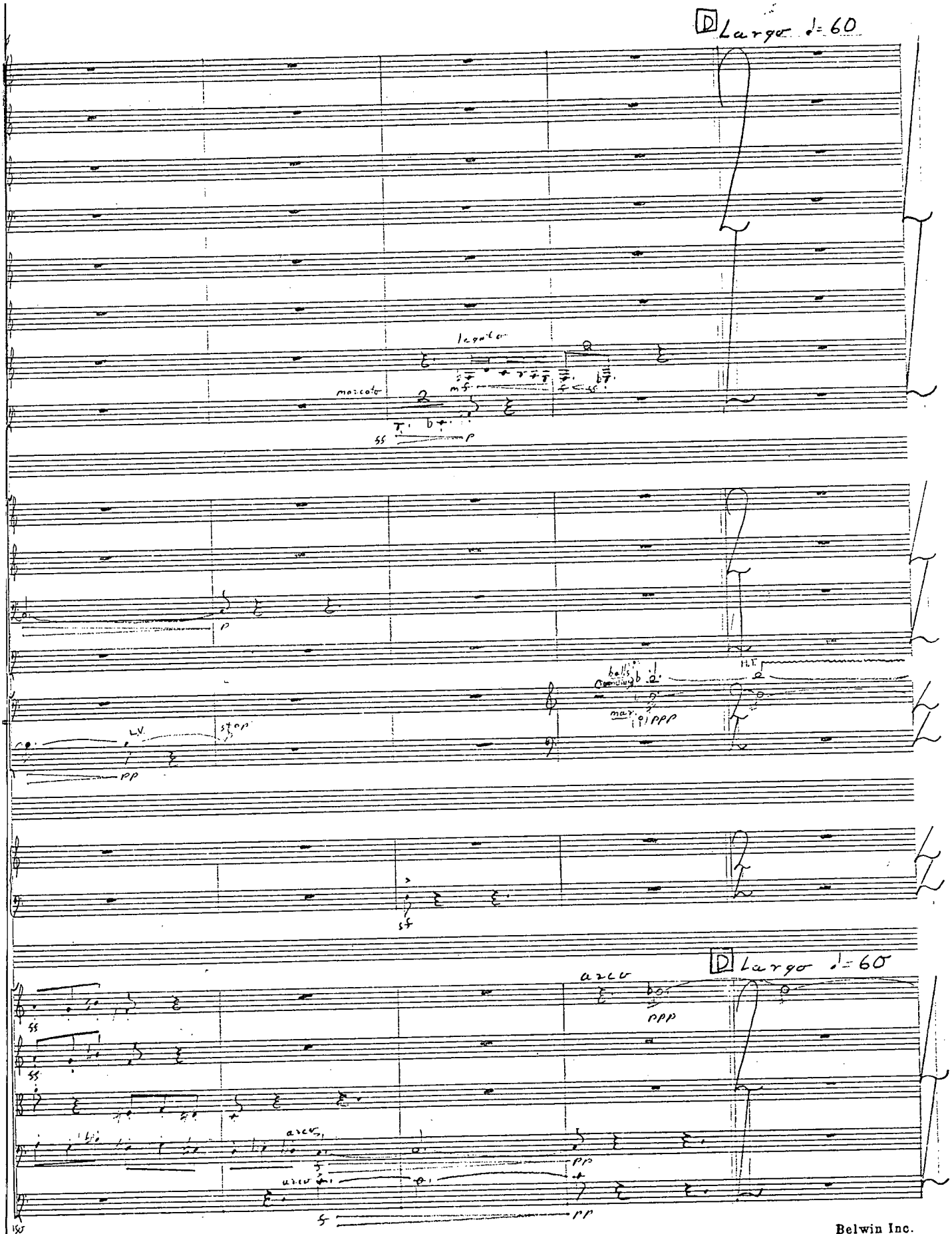

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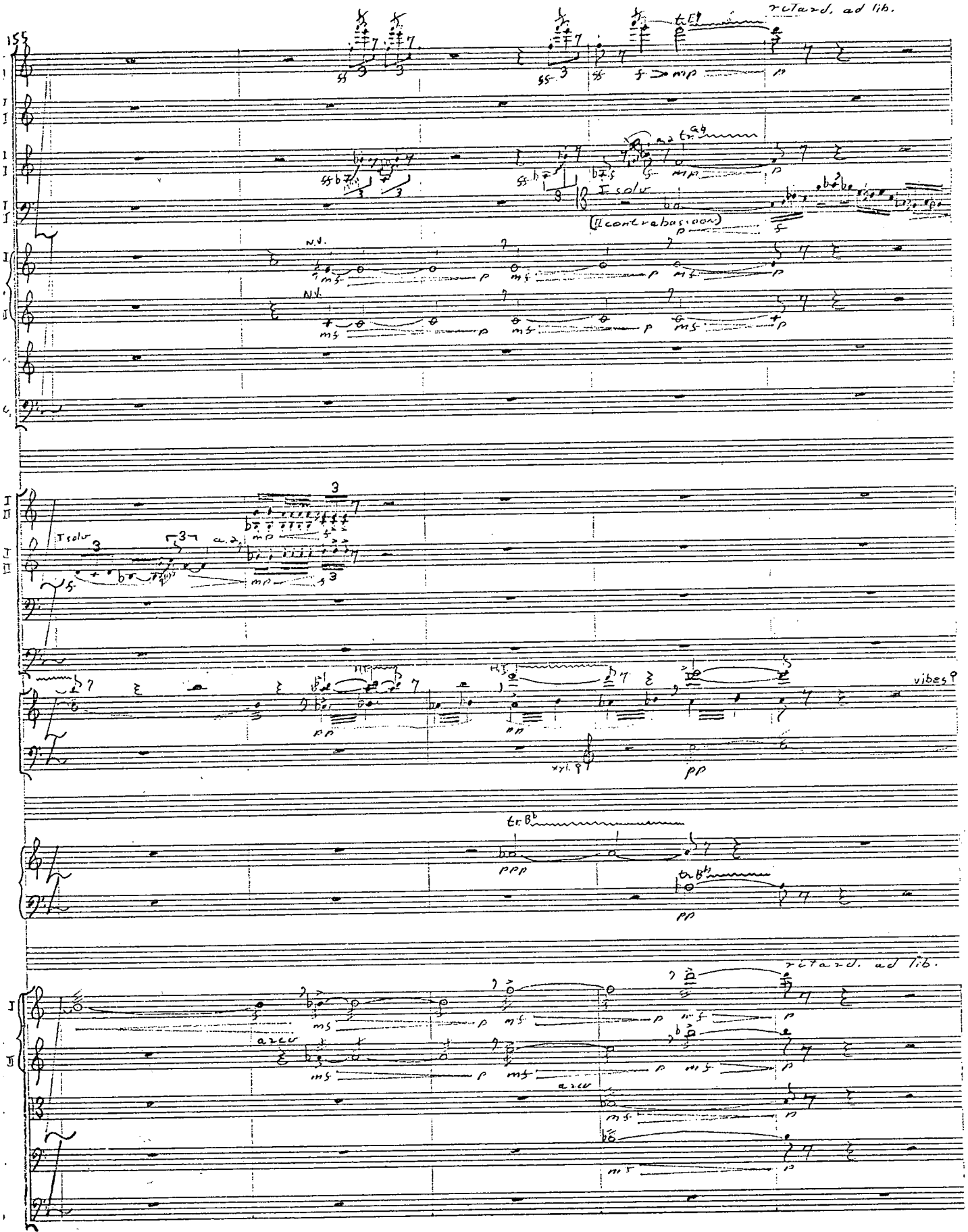

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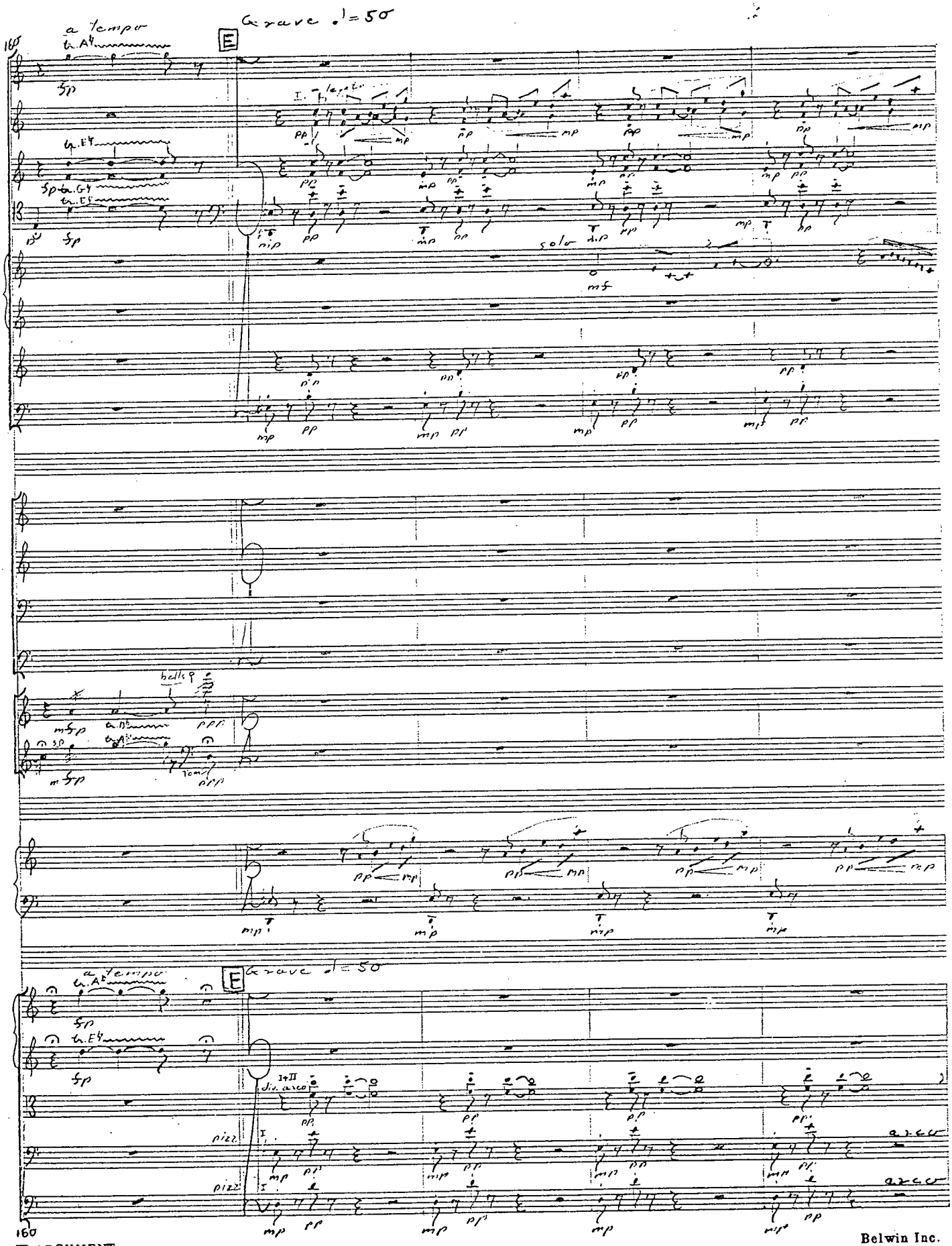

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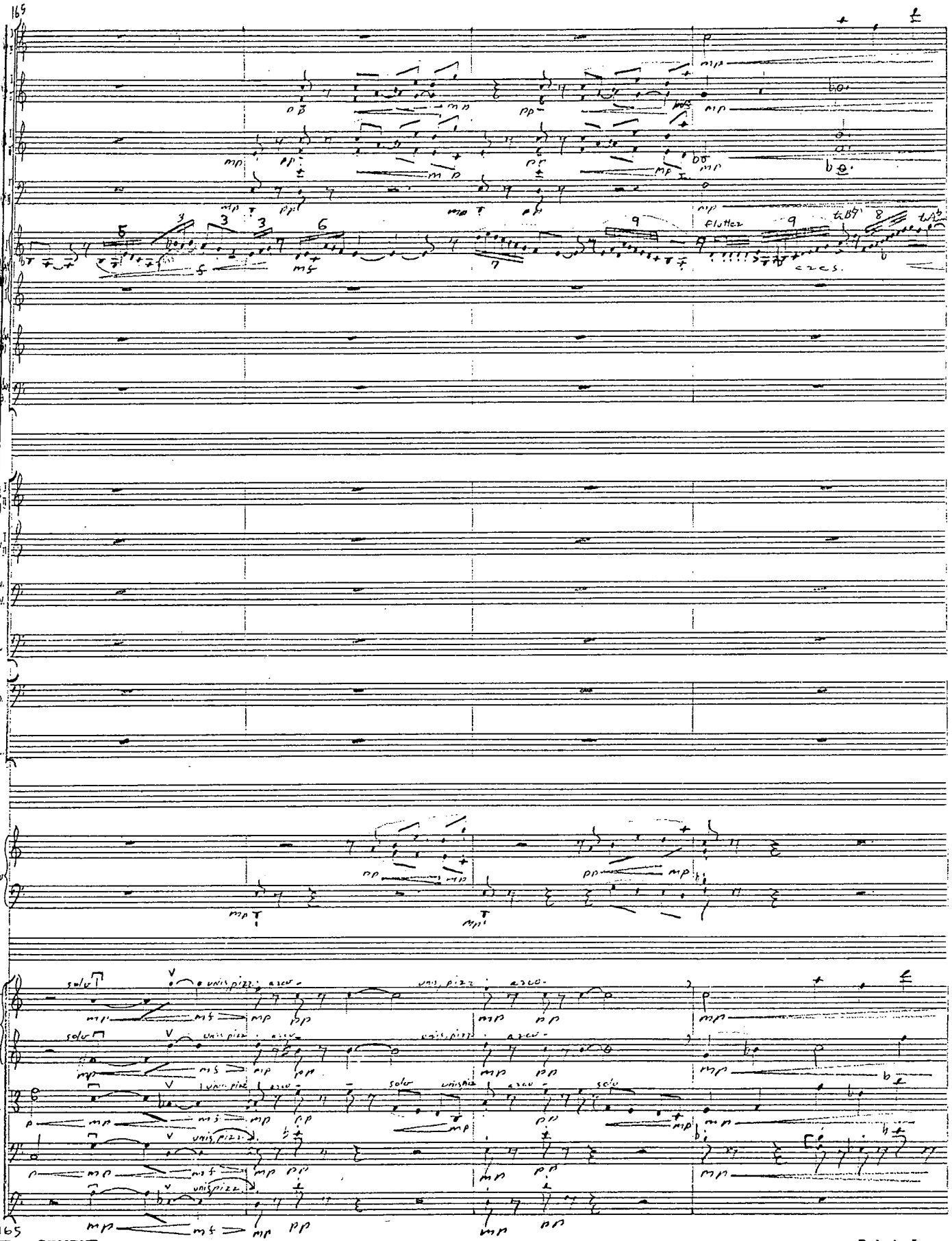

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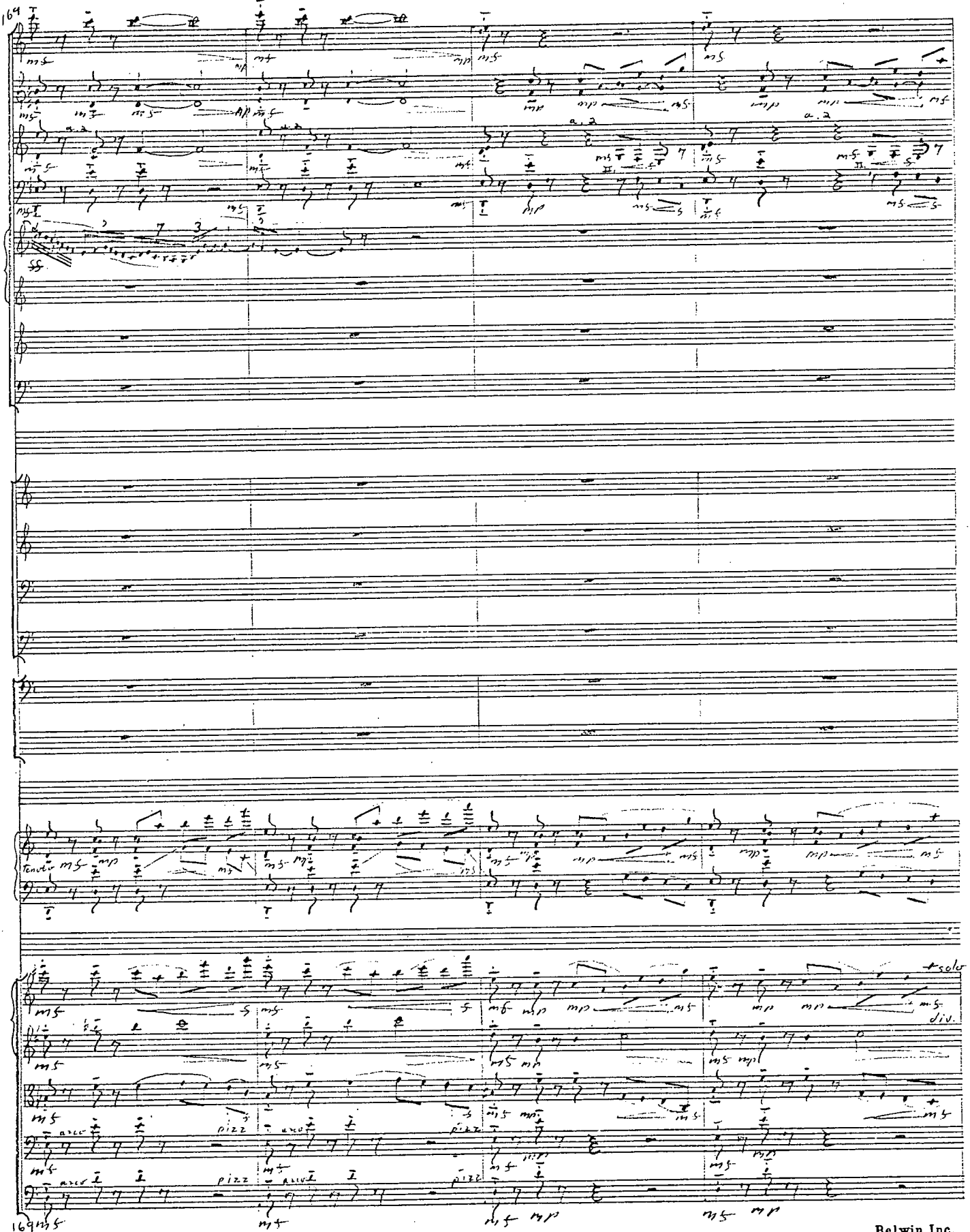

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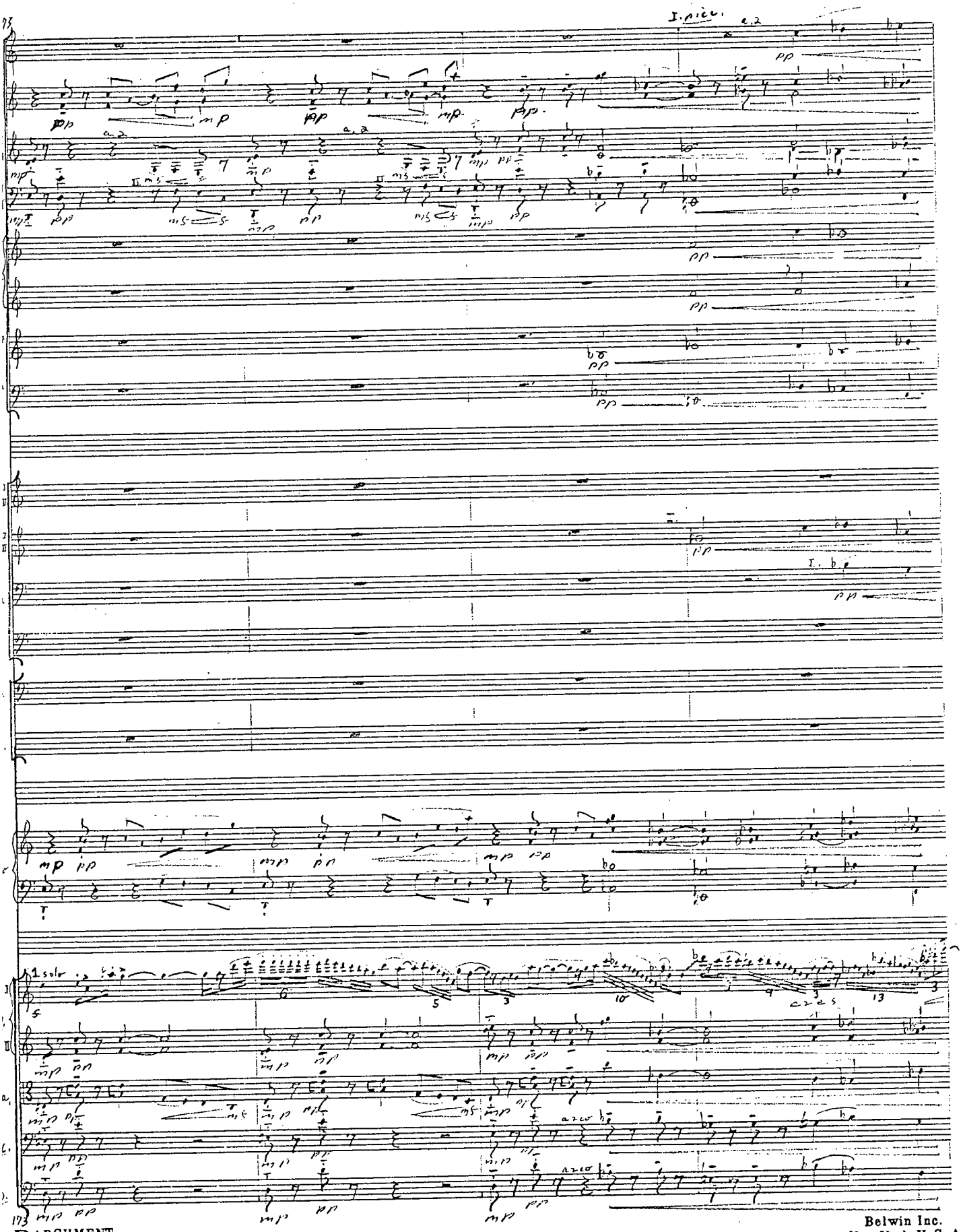

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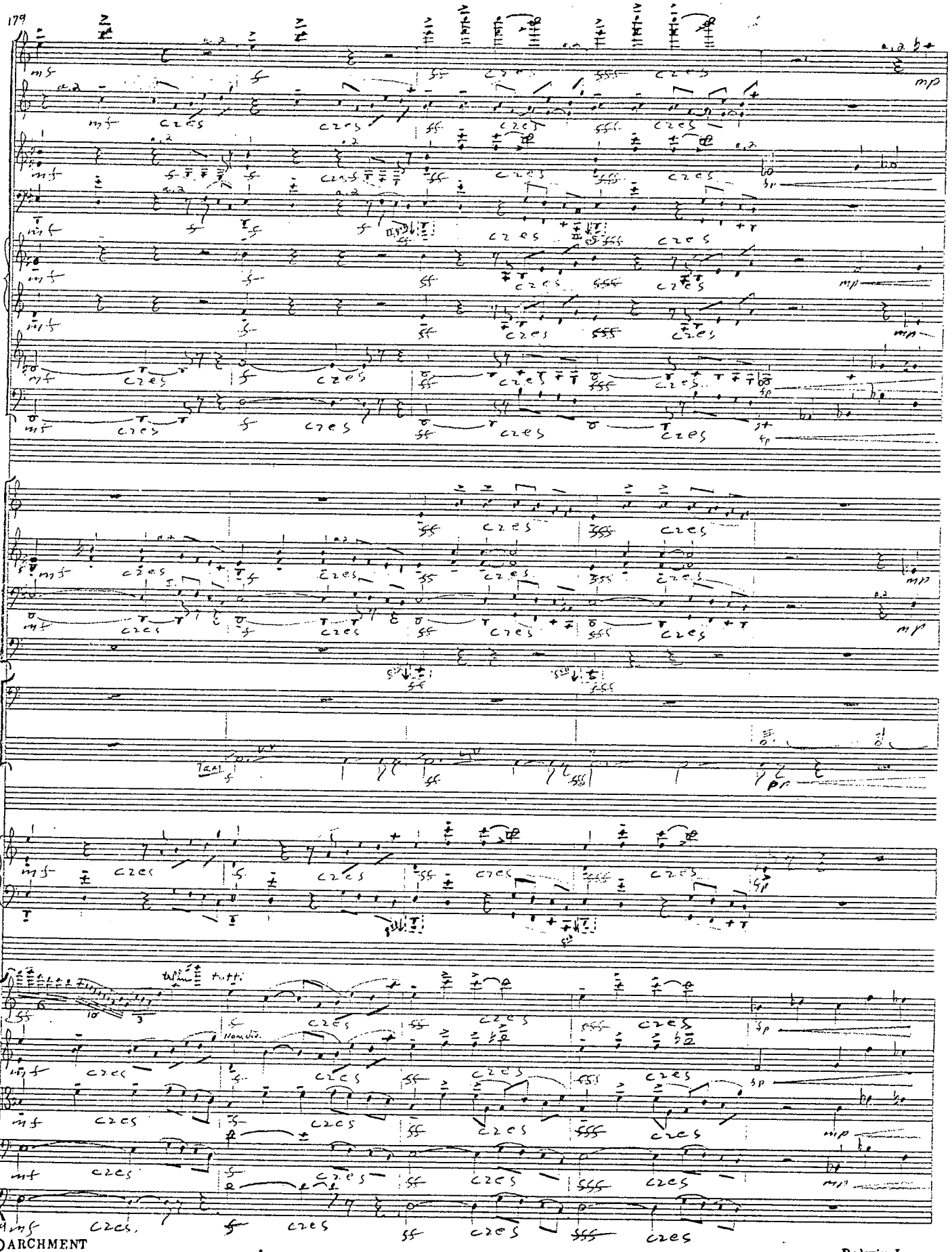

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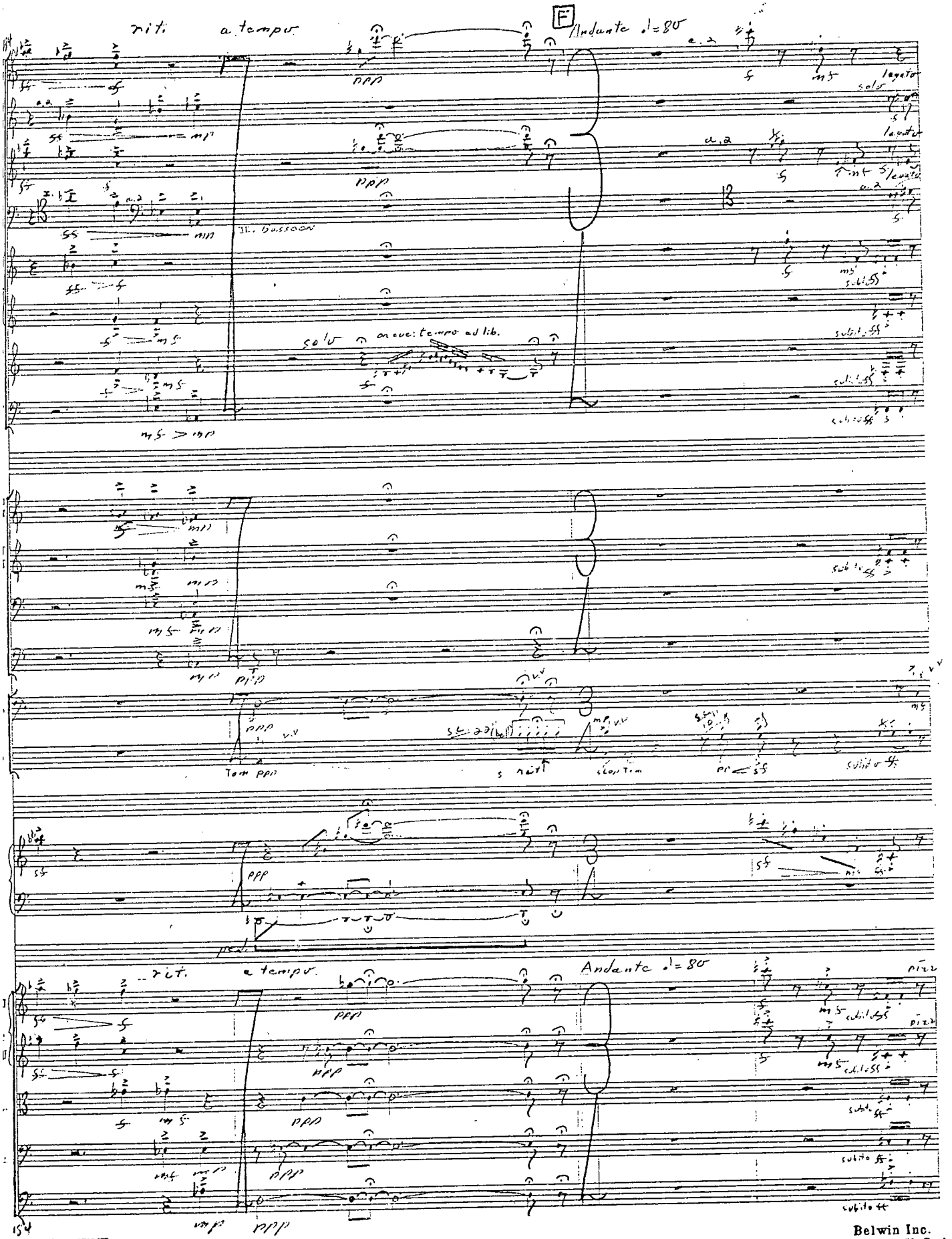

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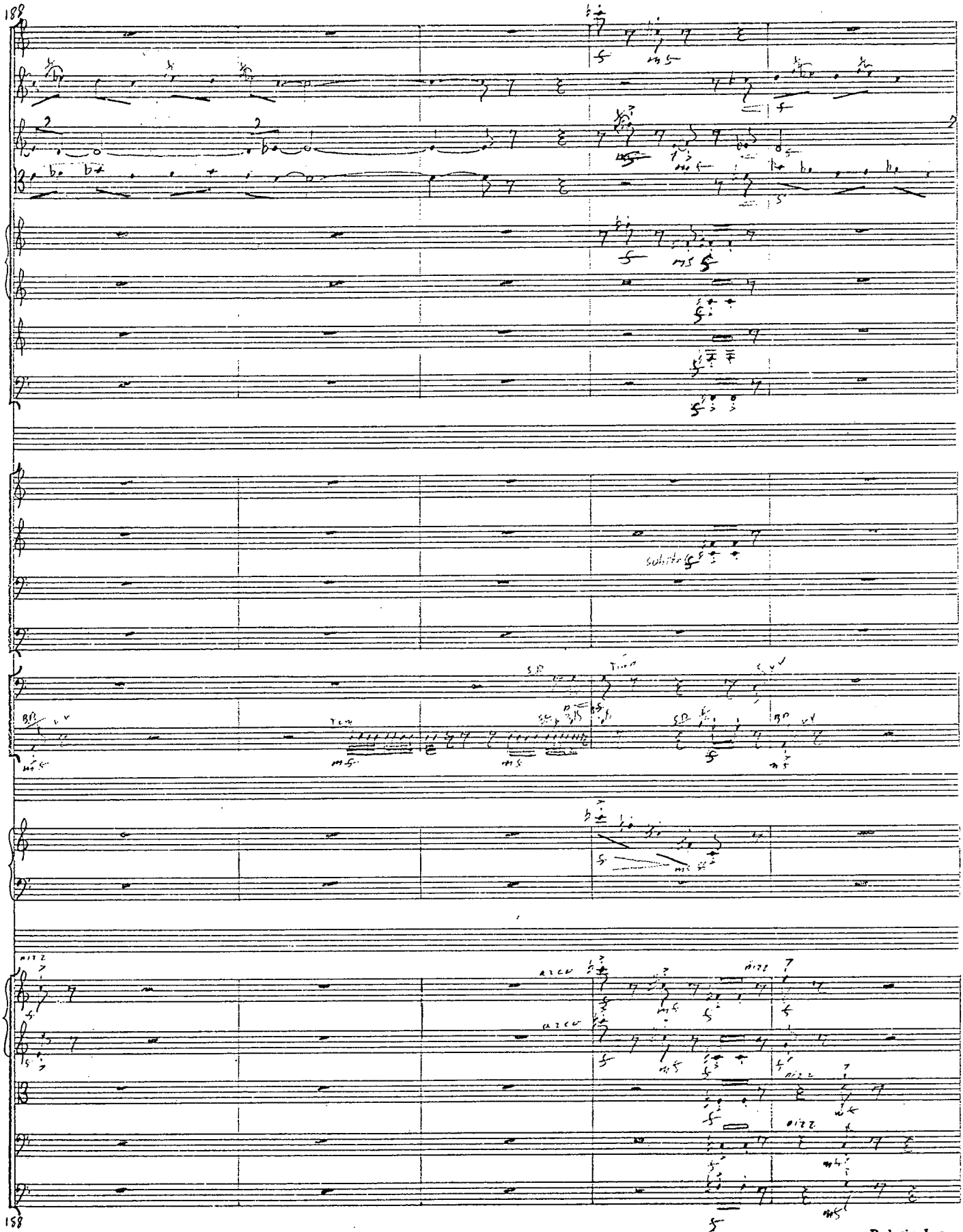

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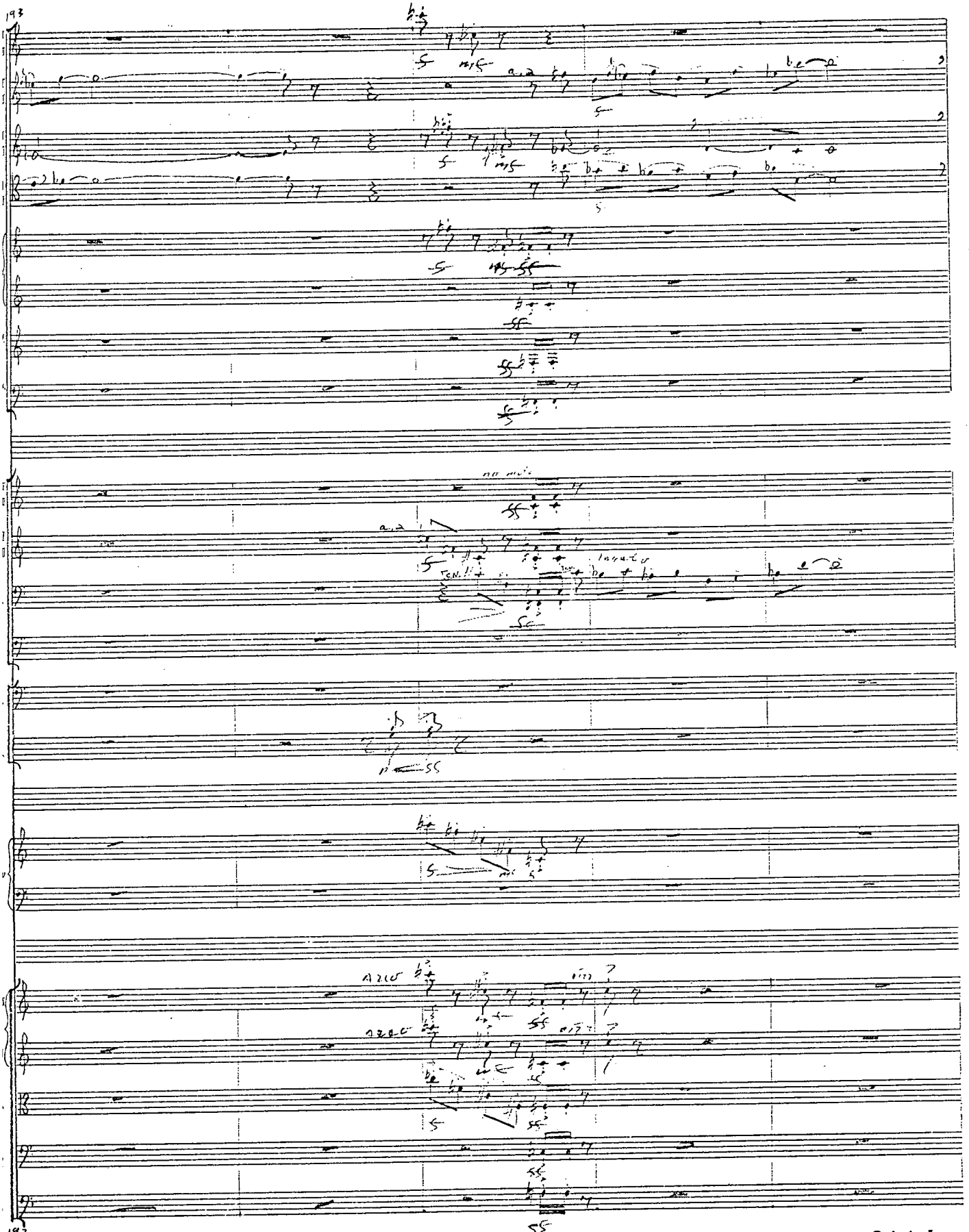

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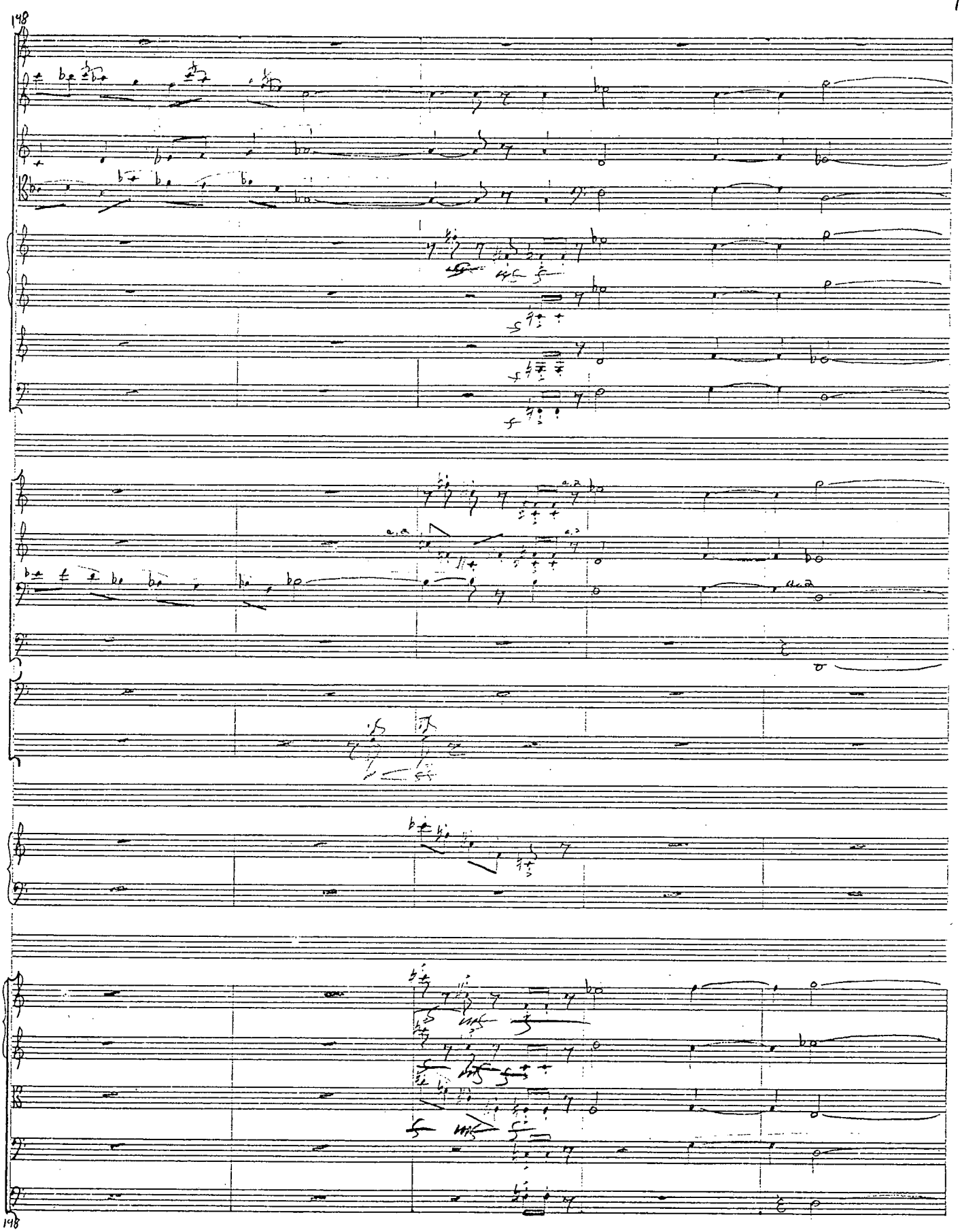

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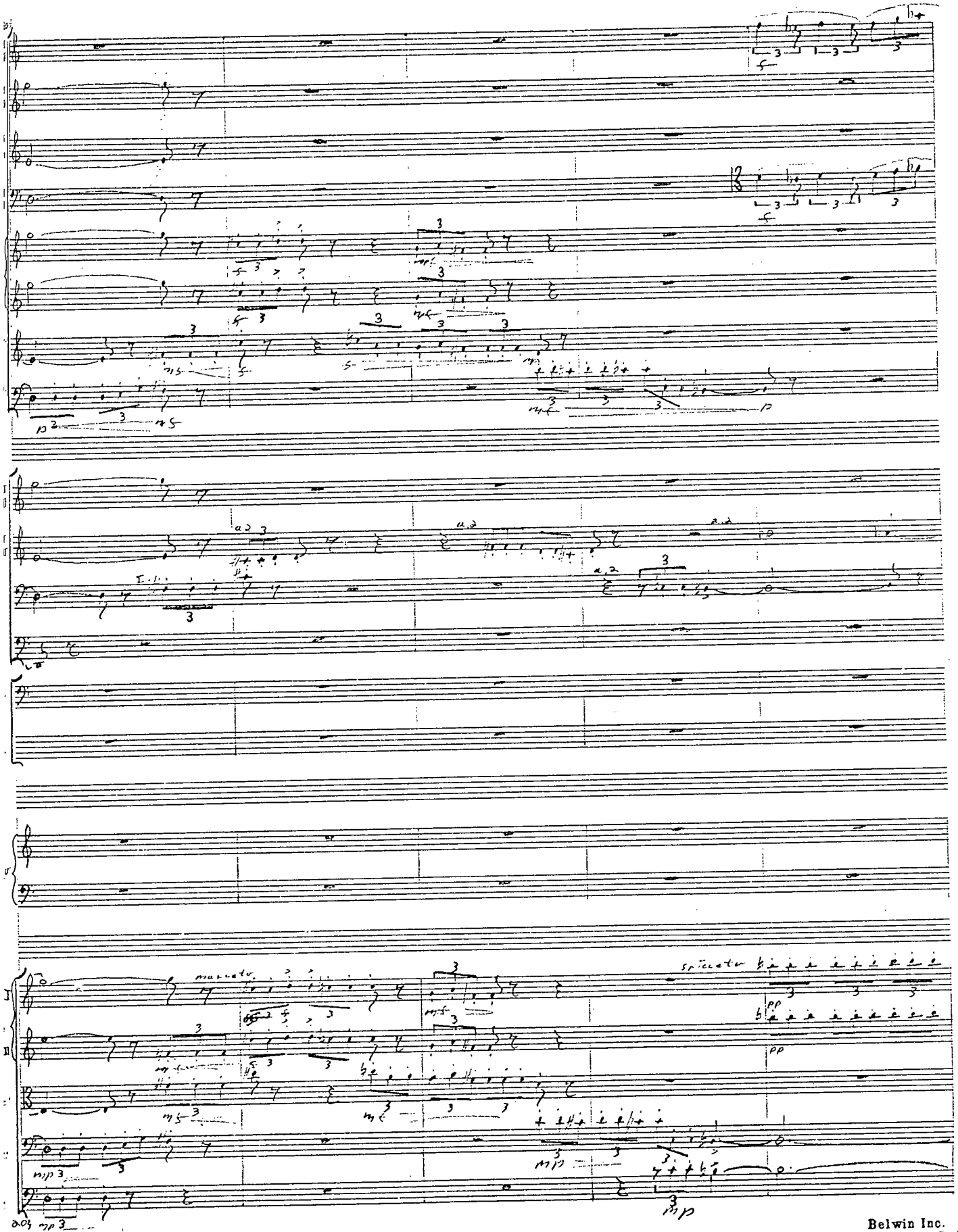

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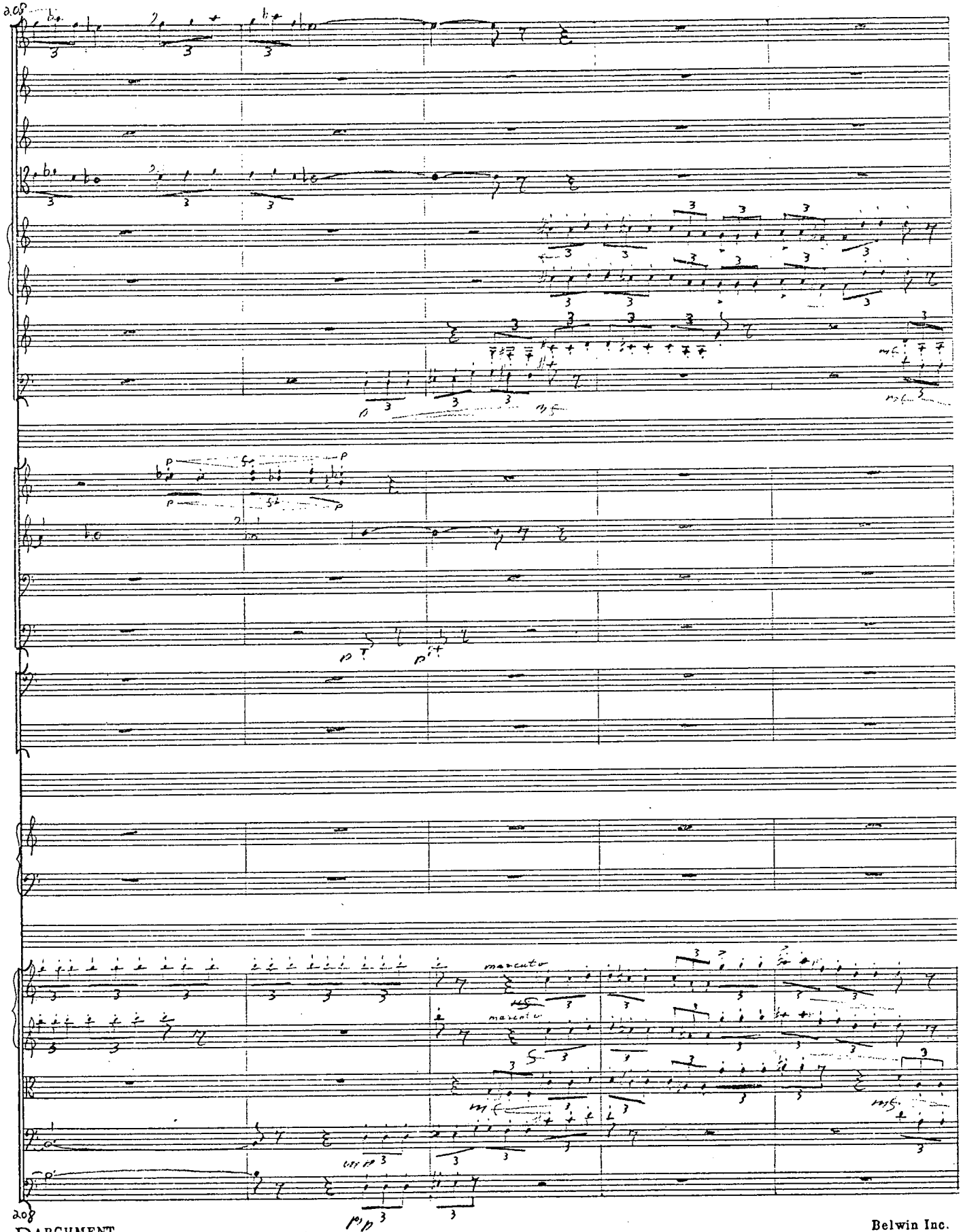

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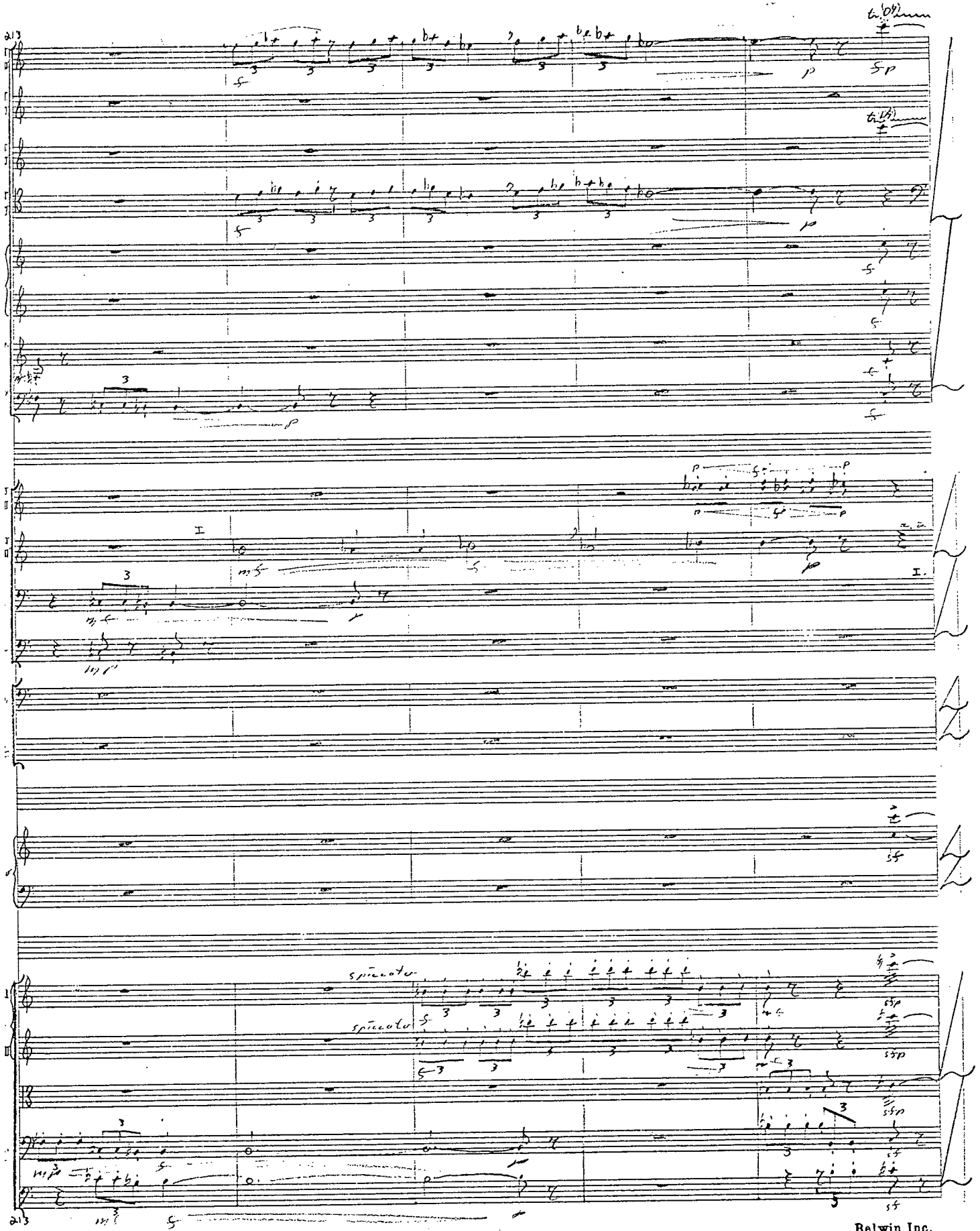

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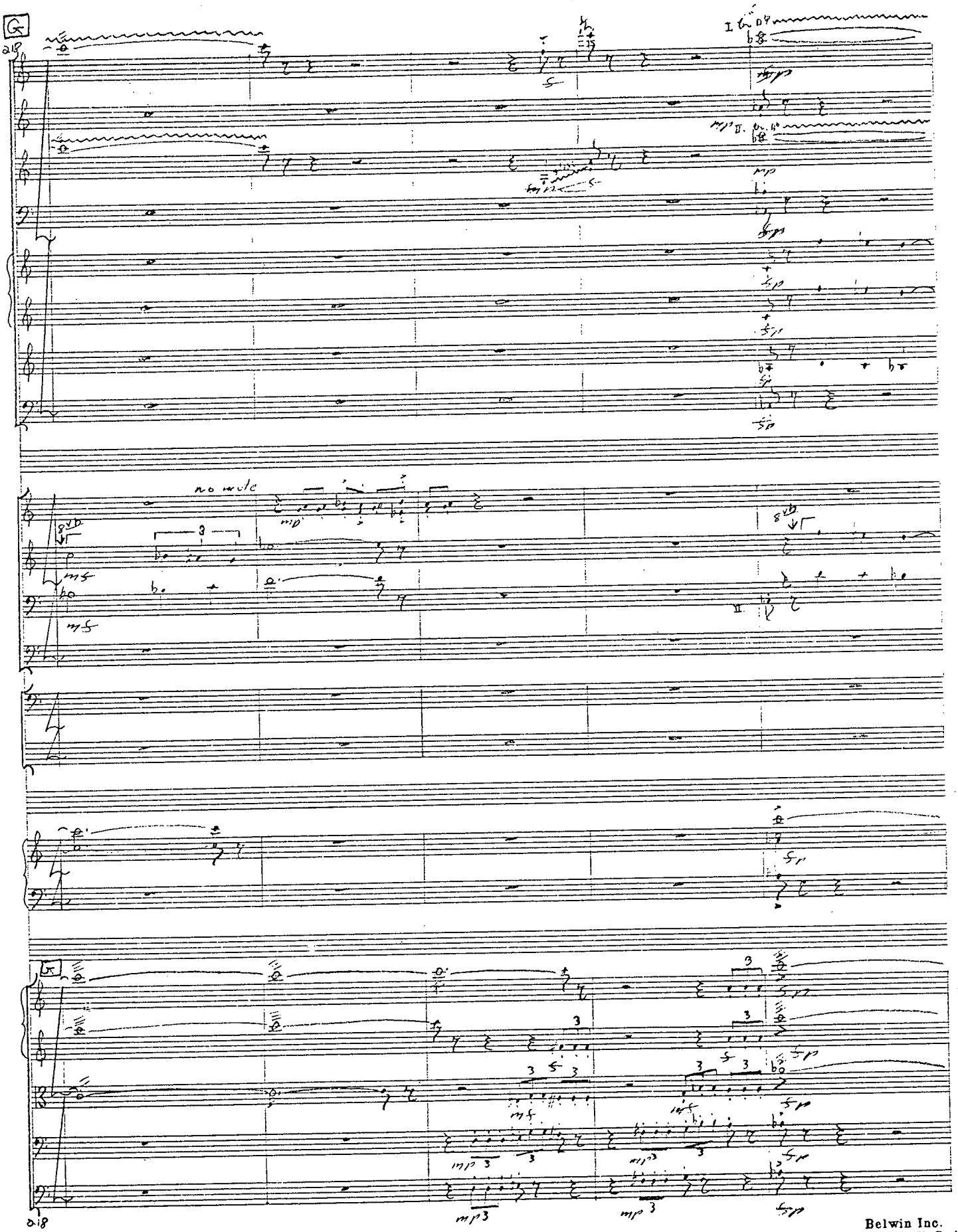

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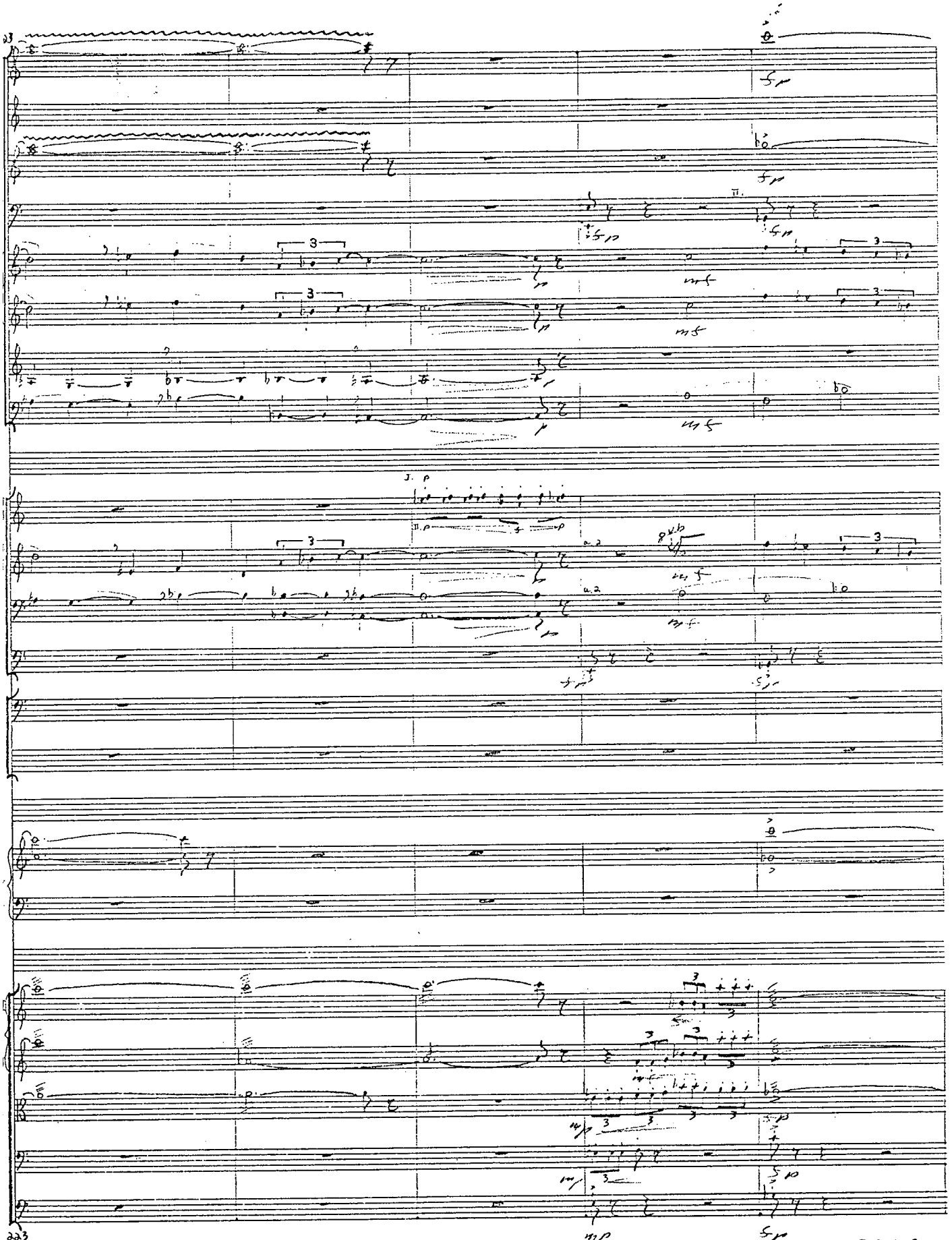

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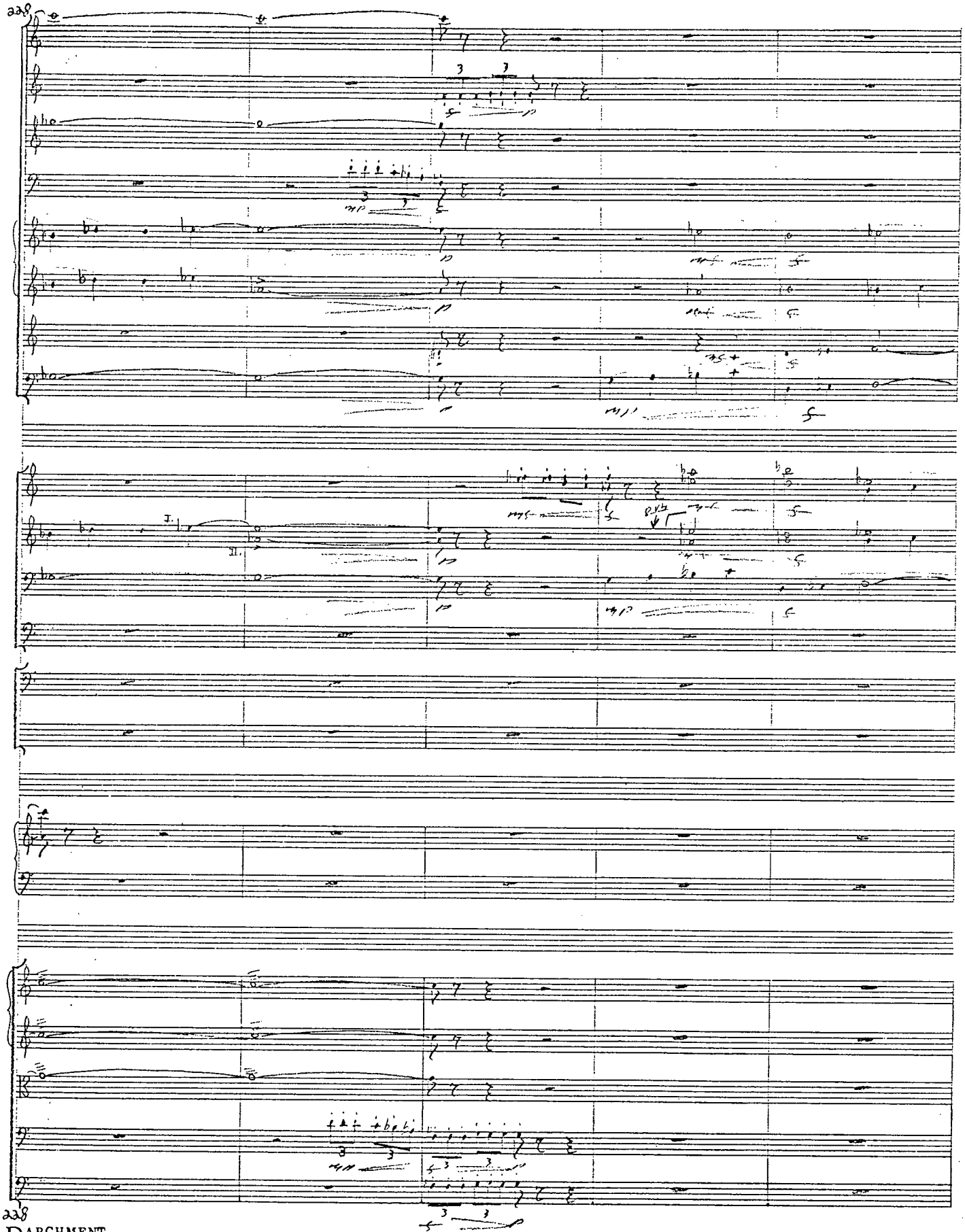

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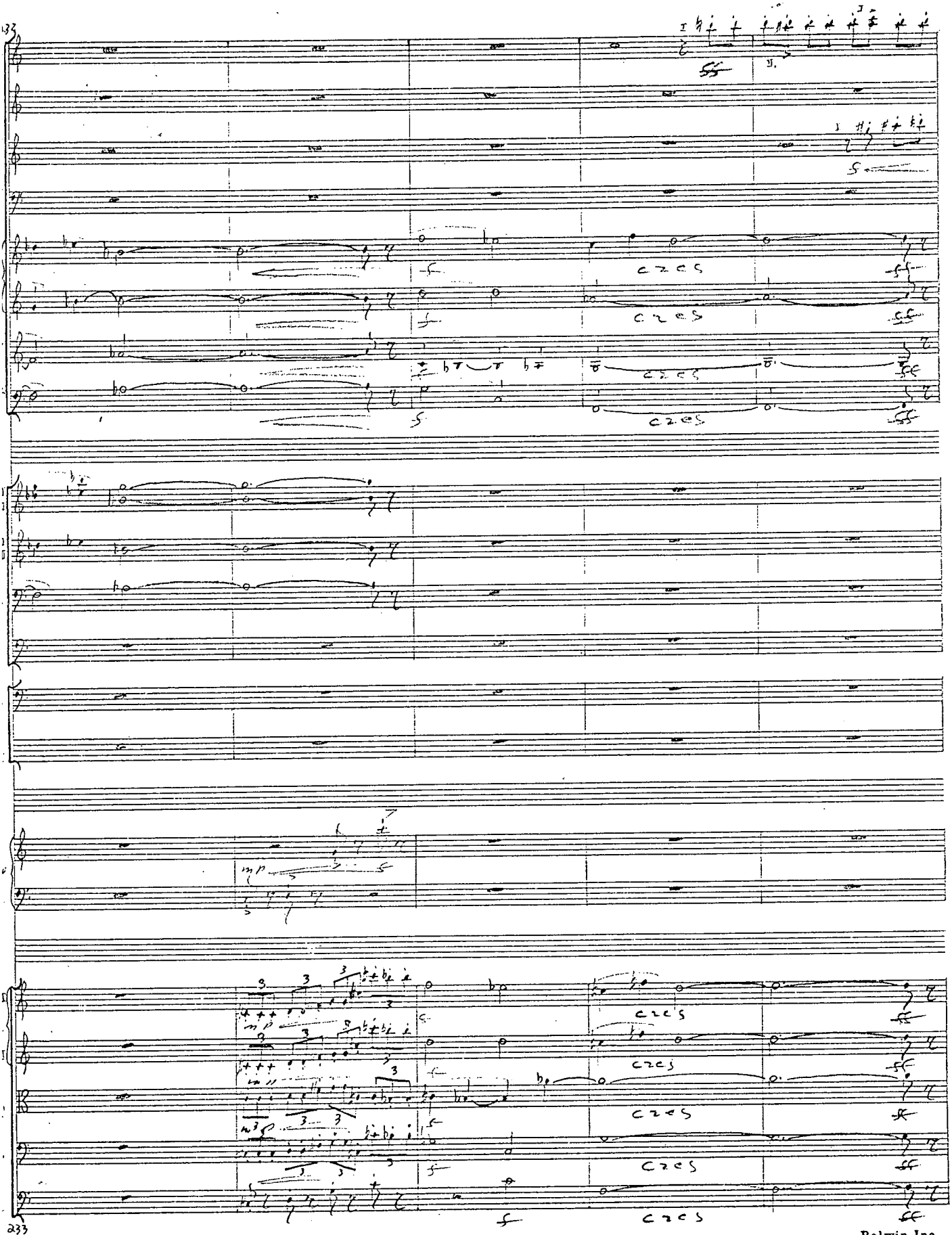

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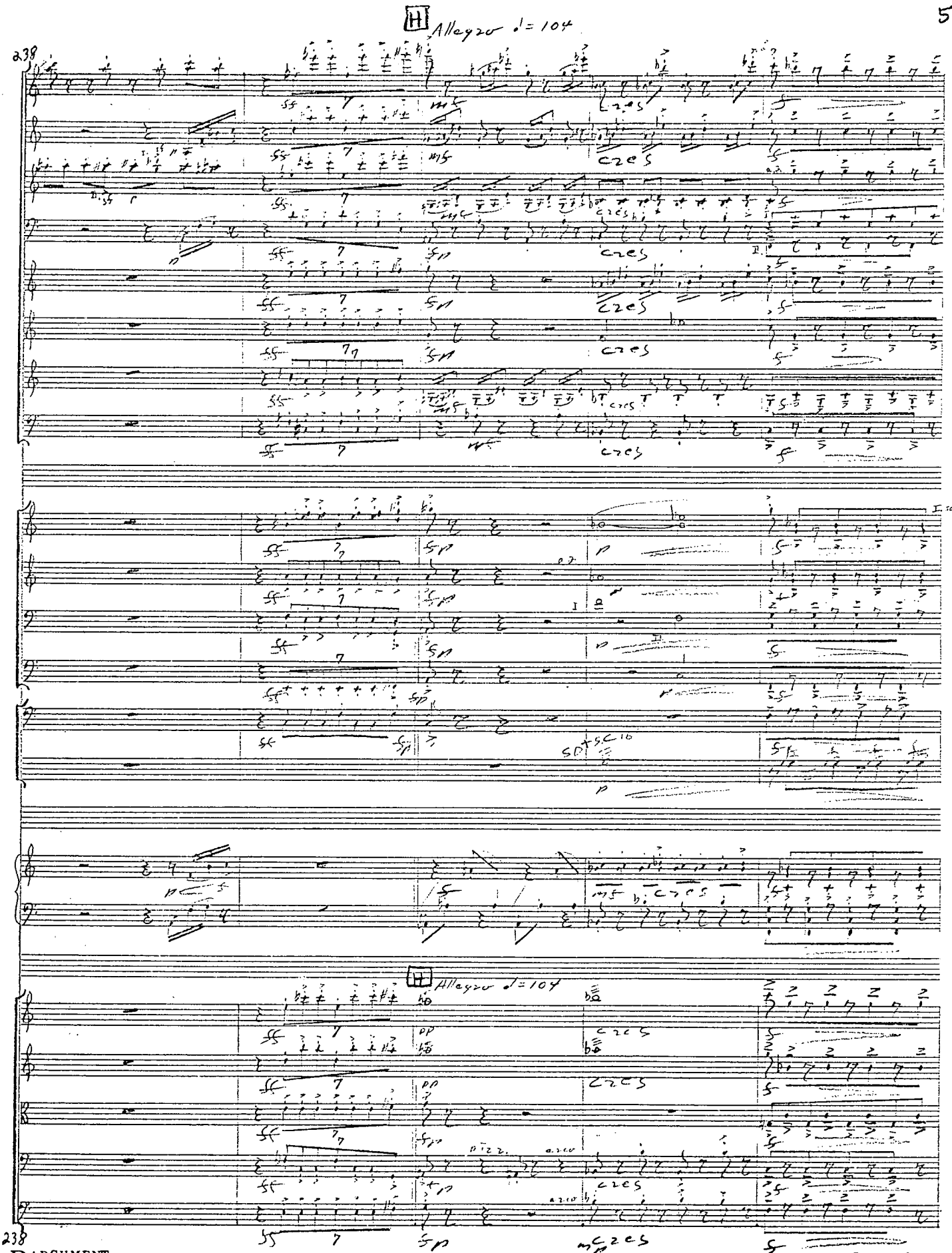

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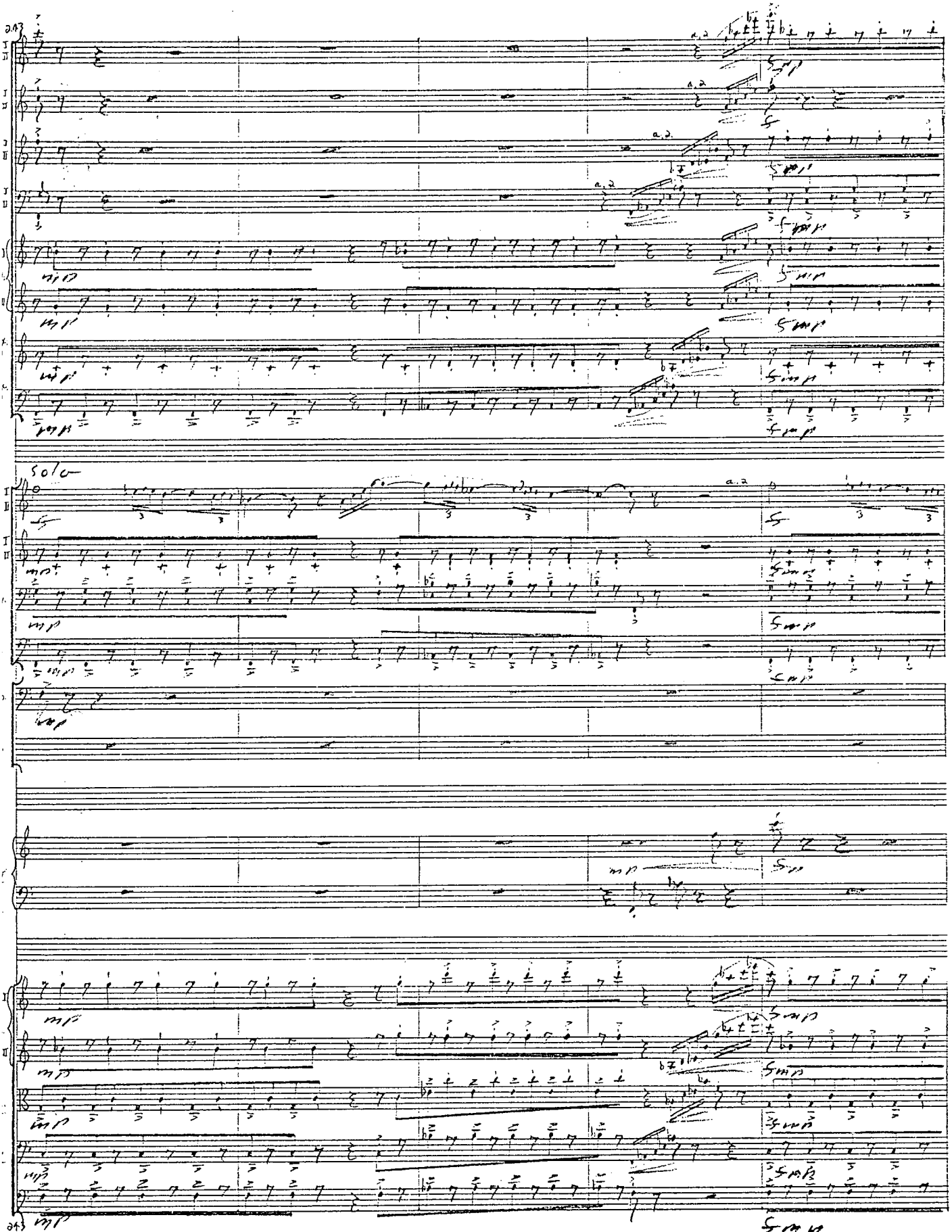

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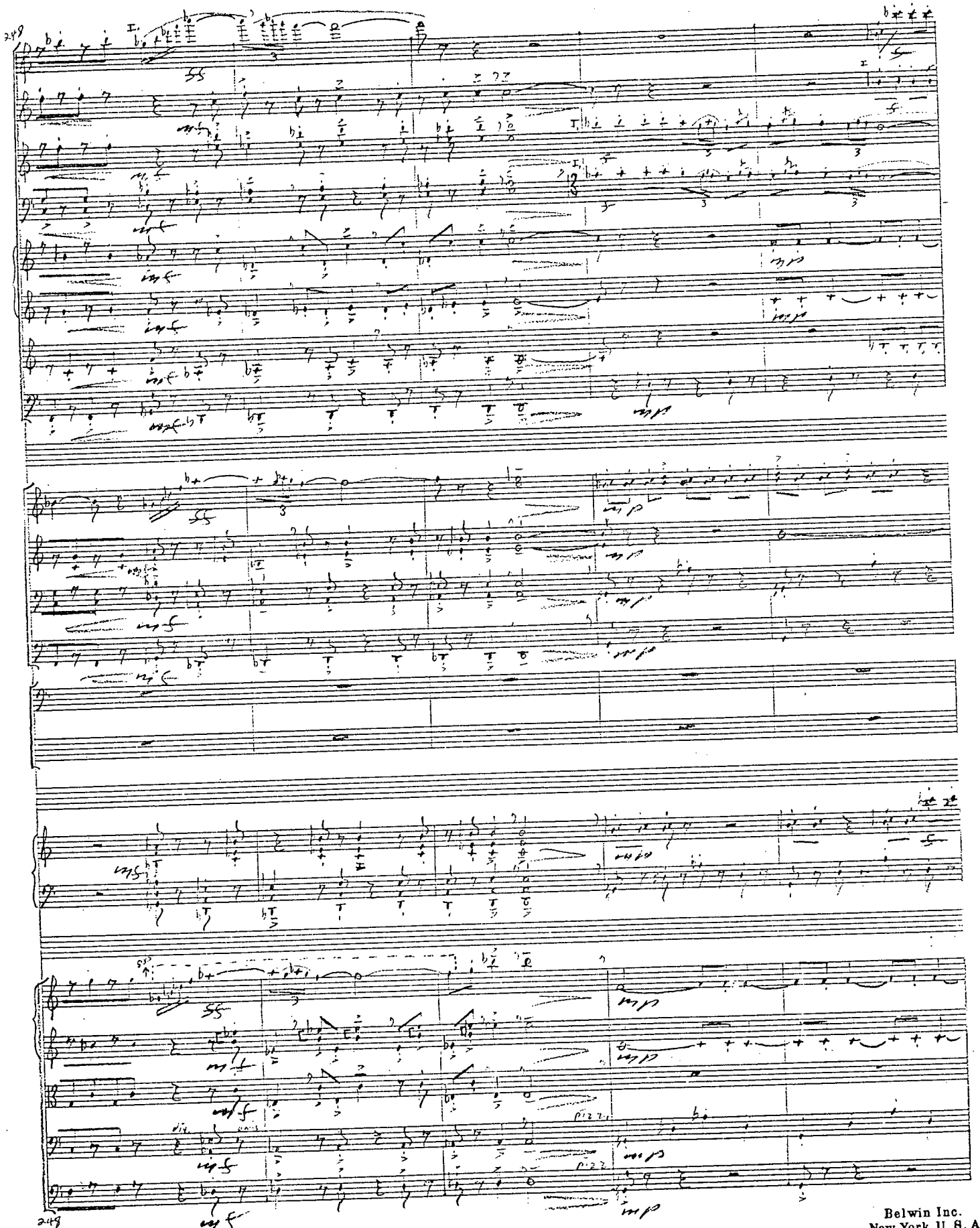

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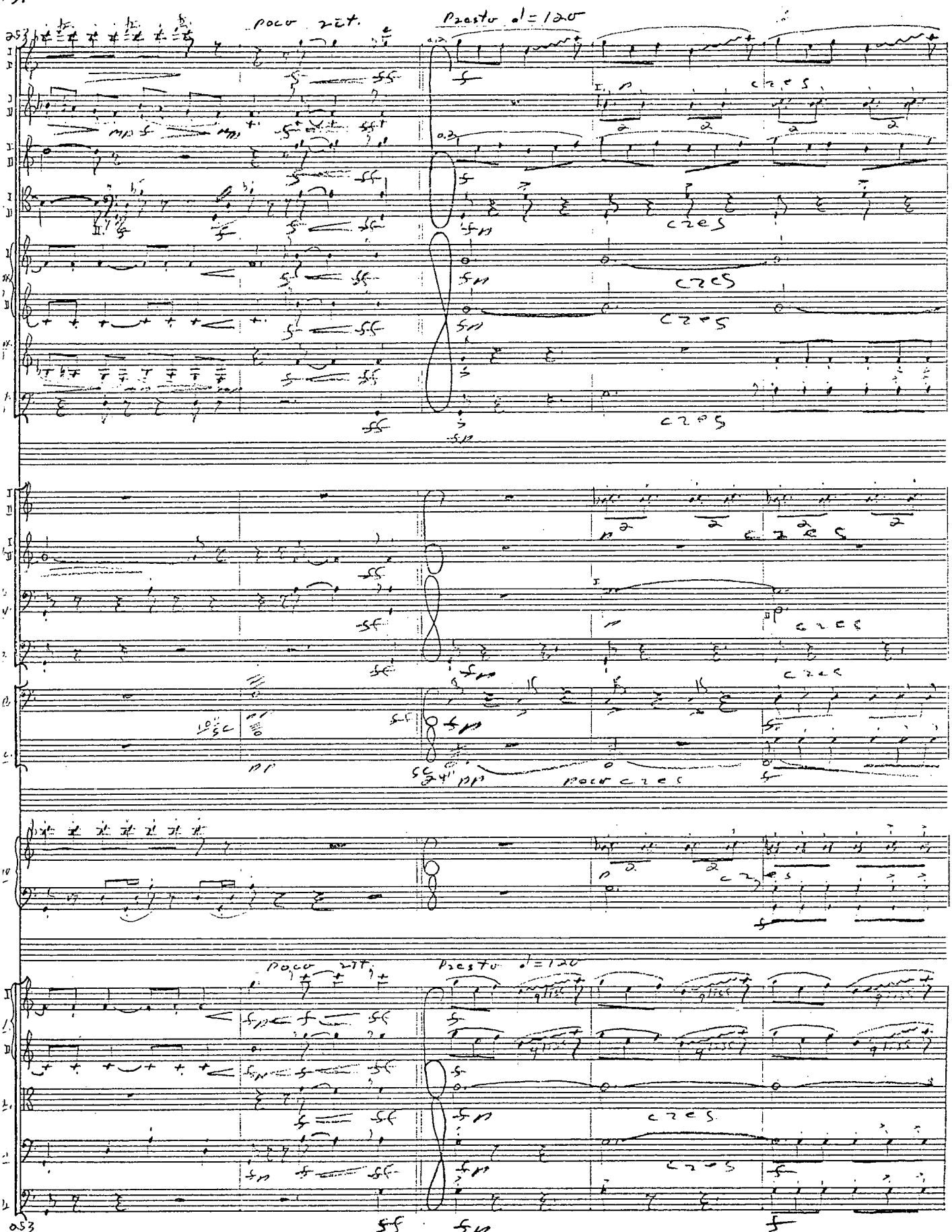

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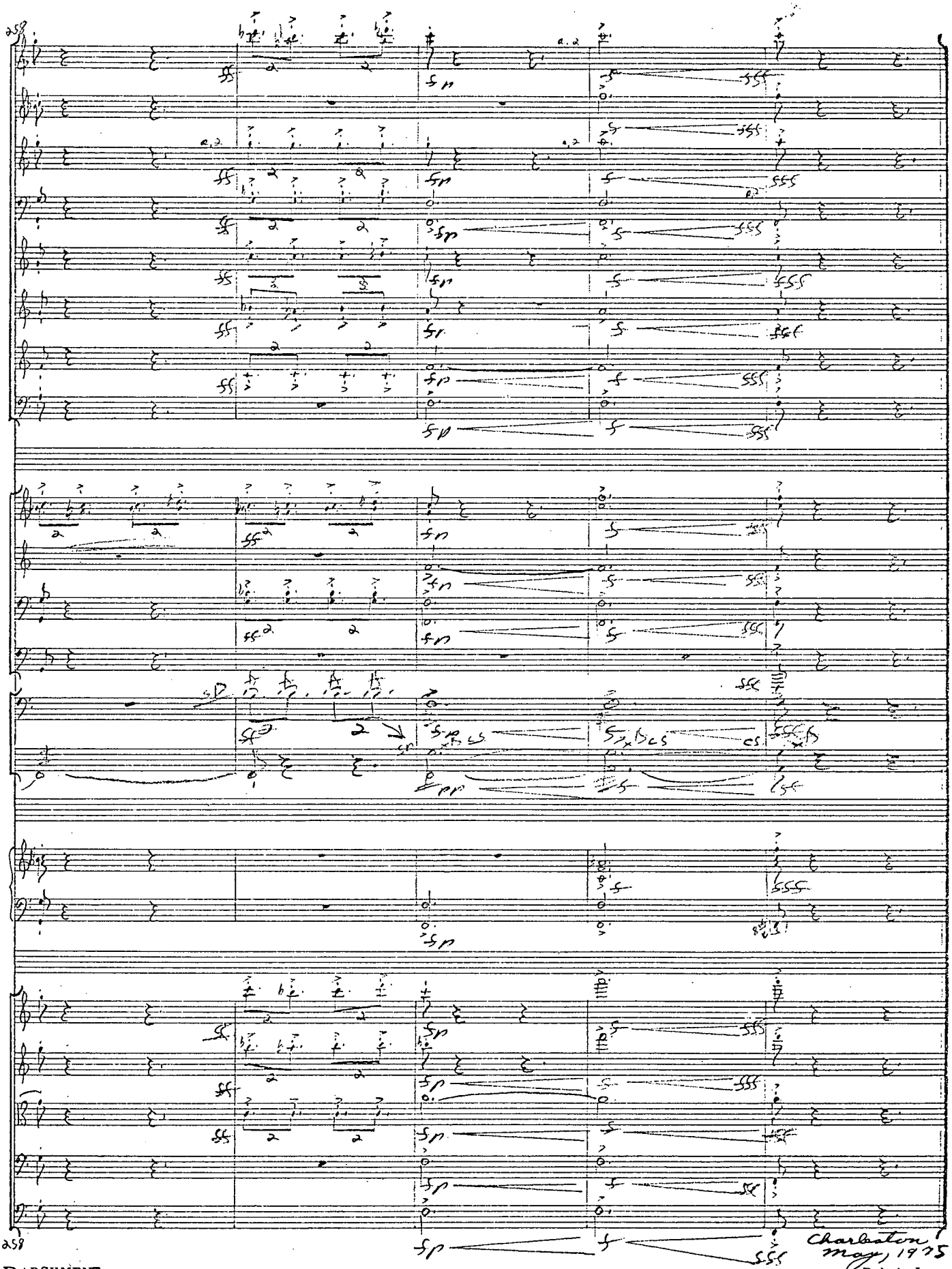

Charleston
May, 1975

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