Stepping Out

for Saxophone Quartet

Minimum Overdrive
Midnight Reflection
Anonymous
An Easy Burden

David Kechley

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Recorded by the Empire Saxophone Quartet on
In the Dragon's Garden: Music by David Kechley
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To further facilitate successful performance of this work, program notes and a brief biography of the composer are included below.

BIOGRAPHY

Since the 1968 premiere of *Second Composition for Large Orchestra* by the Seattle Symphony, David Kechley has produced works in all genres which have been performed both nationally and internationally. Ensembles that have performed or commissioned Kechley's work include the Minnesota Orchestra, Boston Pops, Cleveland Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, North Carolina Symphony, Colorado Symphony, United States Military Academy Band, Kronos String Quartet, and the Minneapolis and North Carolina Guitar Quartets. His music is recorded on the Liscio Recordings, Albany Records, and Reference Recording labels.

Among Kechley's awards are a Fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation (1979), grants from the National Endowment for the Arts (1976, 1979), and a commission from the Barlow Foundation (1998). *Five Ancient Lyrics on Poems by Sappho* was first prize winner of the 1980-81 Shreveport Symphony Composers' Competition and *Concerto for Violin and Strings* won the 1979 Opus I Chamber Orchestra Contest for Ohio Composers. *In the Dragon's Garden*, a work for guitar and alto saxophone, was a winner of the 1994 Lee Ettelson Prize. *Lightning Images* received honorable mention in the 1994 ASCAP Nissim Competition and *Transformations: An Orchestral Triptych* was an honorable mention in that same competition in 1998. Kechley received Artist Fellowships from the North Carolina Arts Council in 1985 and from the Massachusetts Cultural Council in 1995. *Restless Birds before the Dark Moon,* a work for alto saxophone and wind ensemble, was the winner of the 2000 National Band Association, William D. Revelli Memorial Band Composition Contest. *Rush*, a new work for saxophone quartet, was given its international premiere at World Saxophone Congress XIII.

Born in Seattle, Washington, March 16, 1947, Kechley was educated at the University of Washington and the Cleveland Institute of Music. He presently teaches at Williams College.

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PROGRAM NOTES

Stepping Out is a four-movement work for saxophone quartet in which each of the movements is based upon a back-and-forth stepwise figure. Thus the title, *Stepping Out*, describes the gradually changing state of being in those who experience the work and is similar to such expressions as "mellowing out," "stressing out," "burning out," "chilling out," or even "pigging out." Hopefully, at the end of the work one feels satisfied, but with the feeling that one "cannot take another step." Of course, *Stepping Out* also has many other meanings including that of "going out on the town," etc. This is also quite appropriate.

Minimum Overdrive is so titled because of its clear minimalist influence as well as its rhythmic intensity. It begins with the stepwise figures in all the parts. The first two parts that enter, alto and soprano, state the specific ideas upon which nearly the whole work is based. An important relationship then develops between these opening ideas and the "funky" rhythms which follow.

Midnight Reflection is suggestive of those somewhat sparse, sometimes fragmented, but slightly nostalgic thoughts one often has in the nighttime or early morning hours. The long, lyrical lines grow from the stepwise material introduced by the soprano saxophone in the previous movement, but with the whole steps changed to half steps. Even the opening "clock like" figure which returns as a backdrop many times is made of steps displaced by octaves.

The triple meter and A-B-A form of *Anonymous* as well as its position among the movements appropriately suggests the minuet and trio so common in classical chamber music. However, its slightly crude counterpoint and repetitive nature remind one of a medieval motet. The stepwise figures are clearly the basis of this movement and come directly from the alto saxophone material which opens the entire work.

An Easy Burden also has a medieval connotation not because of its musical material, but because of its form. A "burden" in medieval terms refers to a repeated "chorus" or "refrain" which occurs between each "verse." This burden is strictly diatonic and "easy" to listen to; it contains phrases which still begin with the stepwise figures. Even the two verses which are slightly more adventurous and refer back to the opening movement do not stray far from home.

STEPPING OUT has been recorded by the Empire Saxophone Quartet. *In the Dragon's Garden: Music by David Kechley*, LCD 0802 2 from www.lisciorecordings.com, also includes *Valencia: Iberian Musings for Marimba and Saxophone Quartet, Driveline: A Powerwalk for Guitar and Alto Saxophone,* and *In the Dragon's Garden.*

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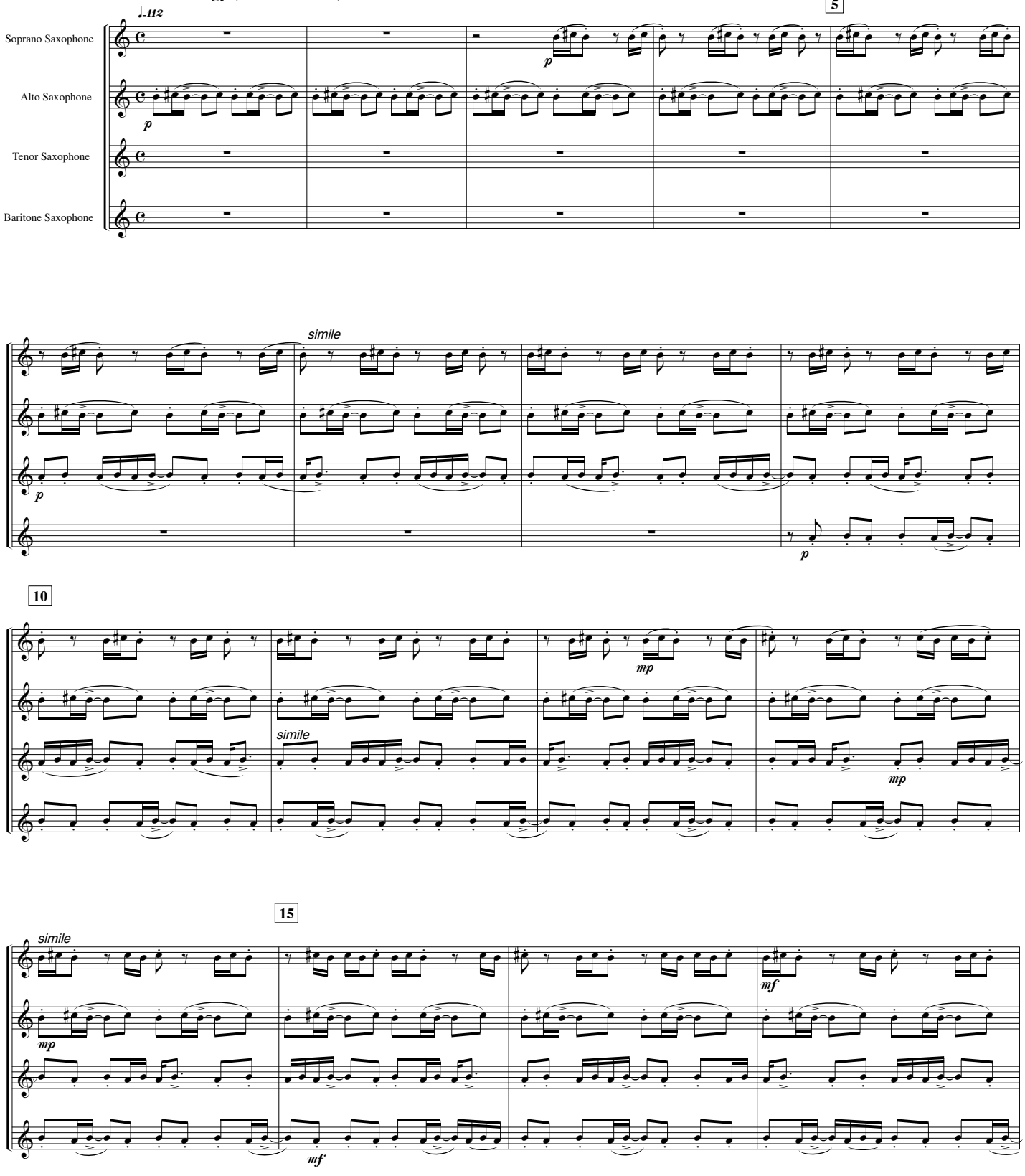
Stepping Out

I. Minimum Overdrive

With Great Energy (but not too fast)

David Kechley



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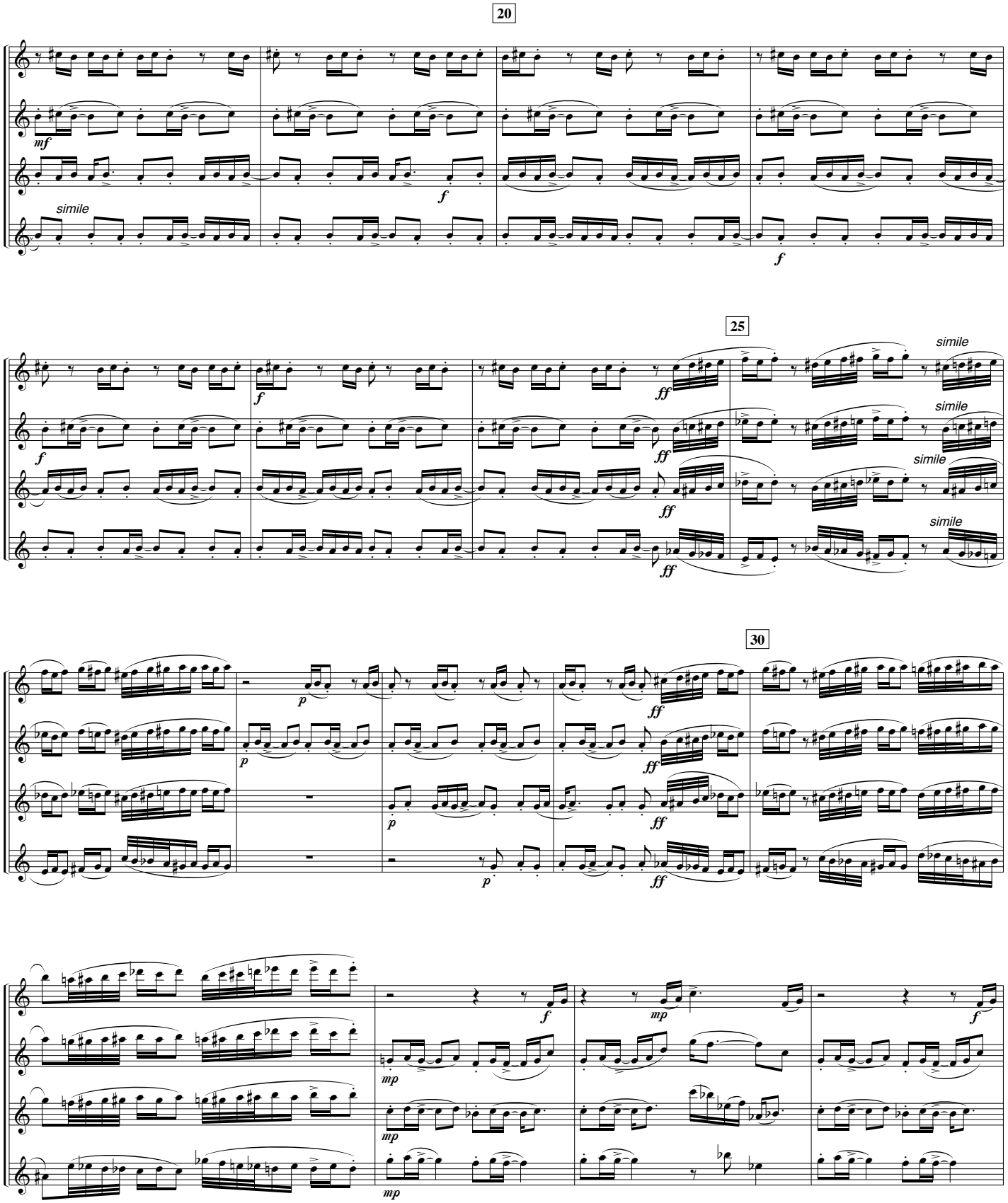

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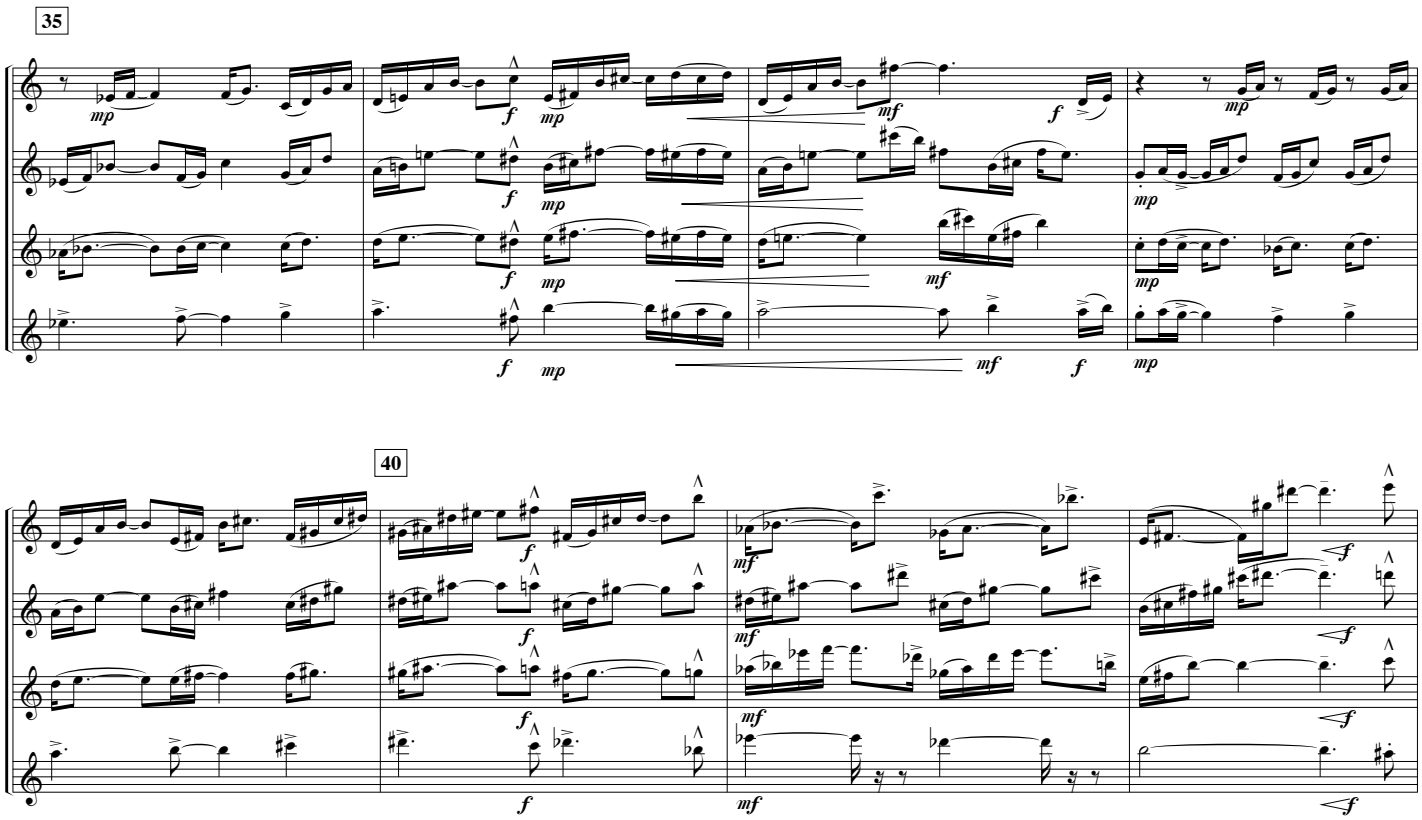

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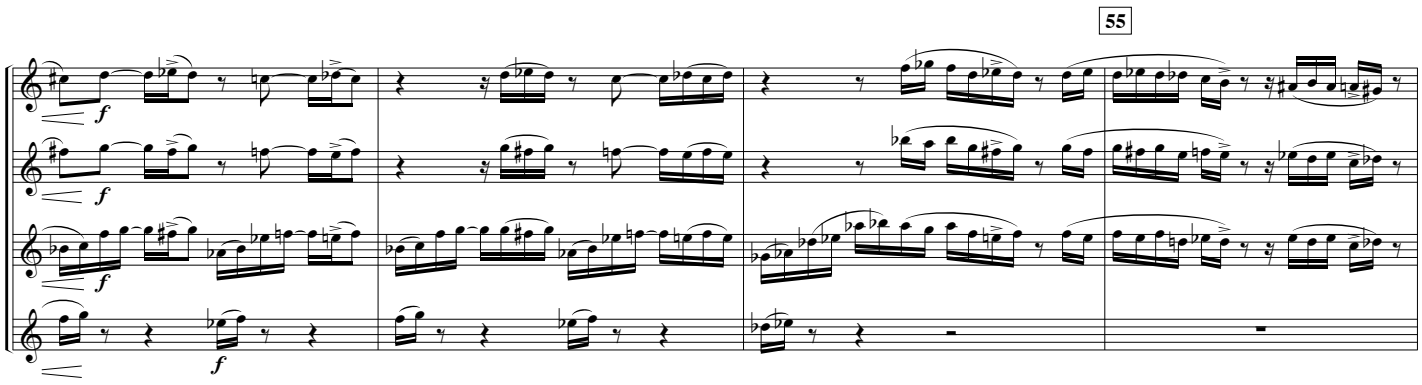

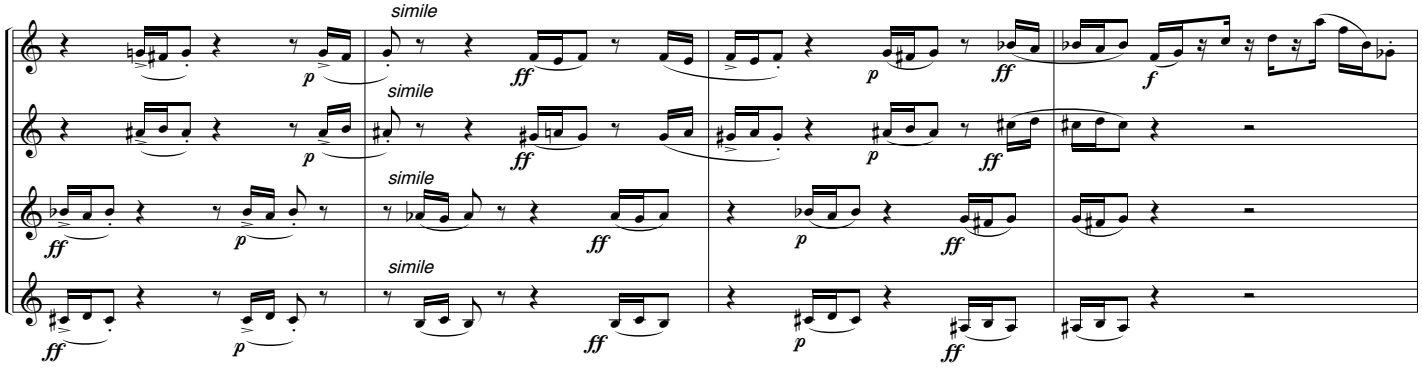

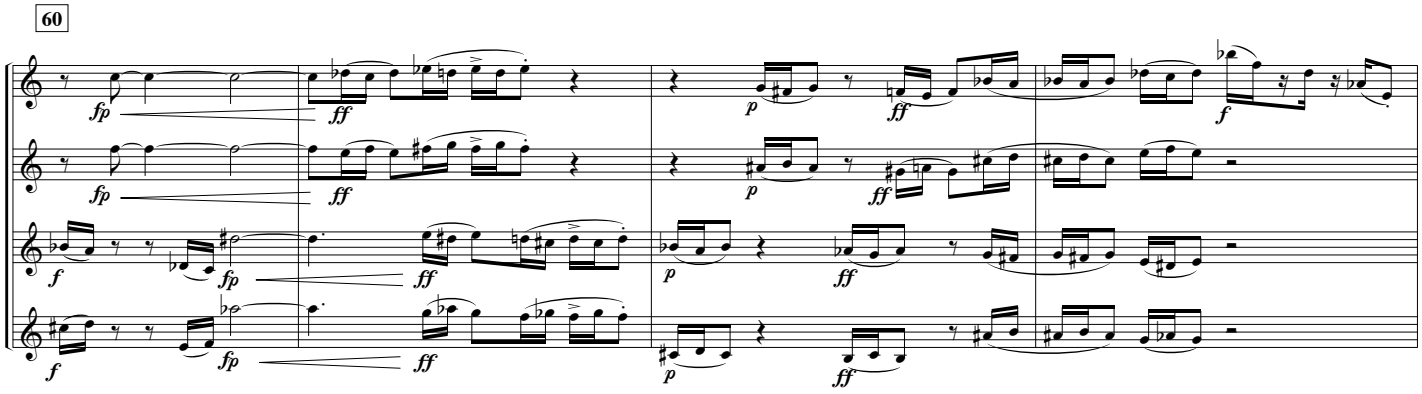

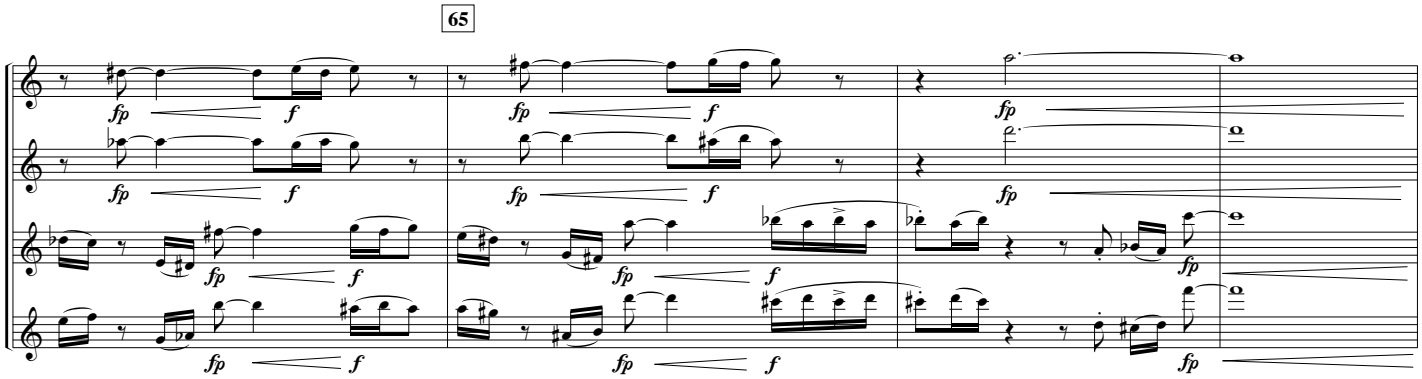

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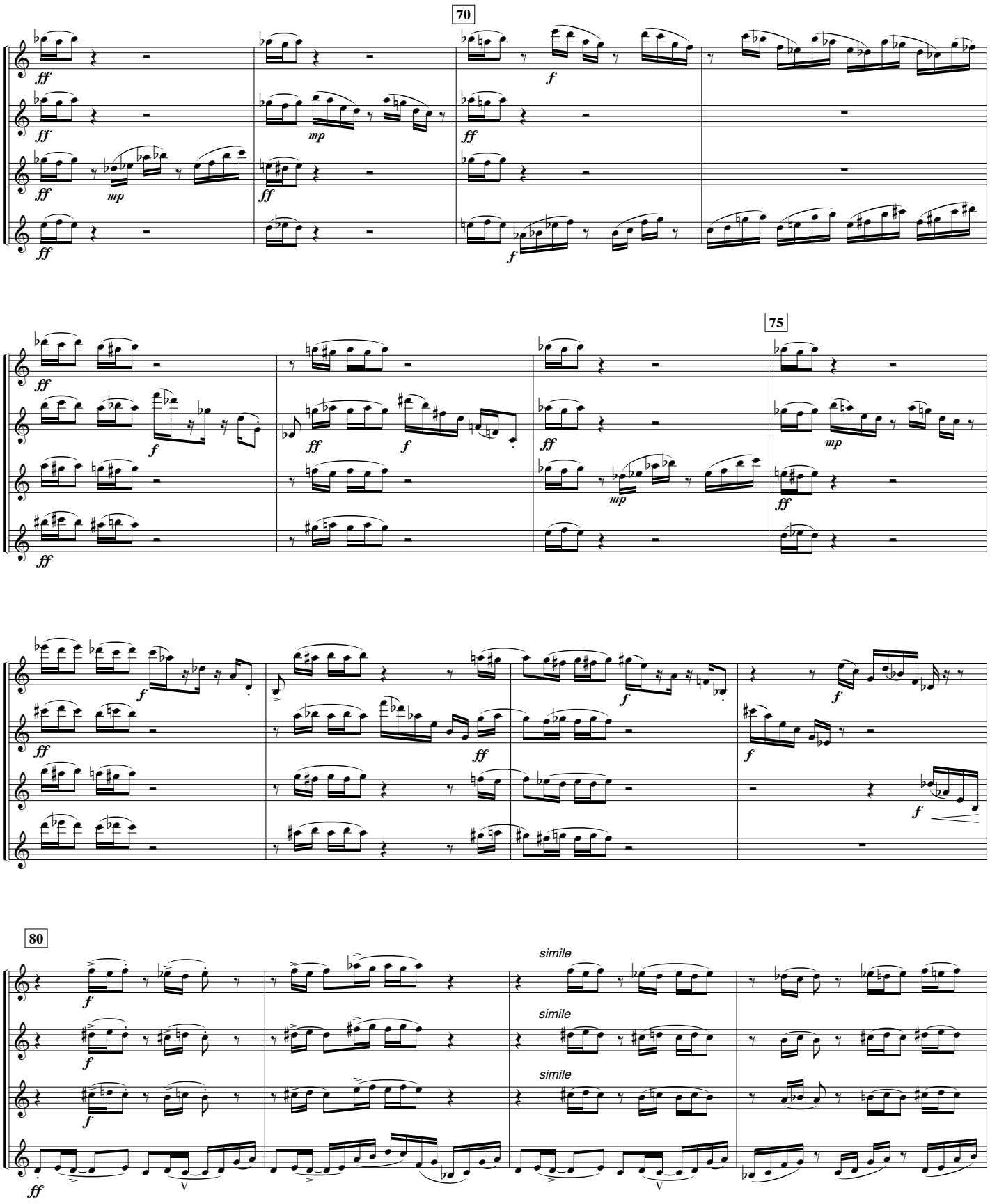

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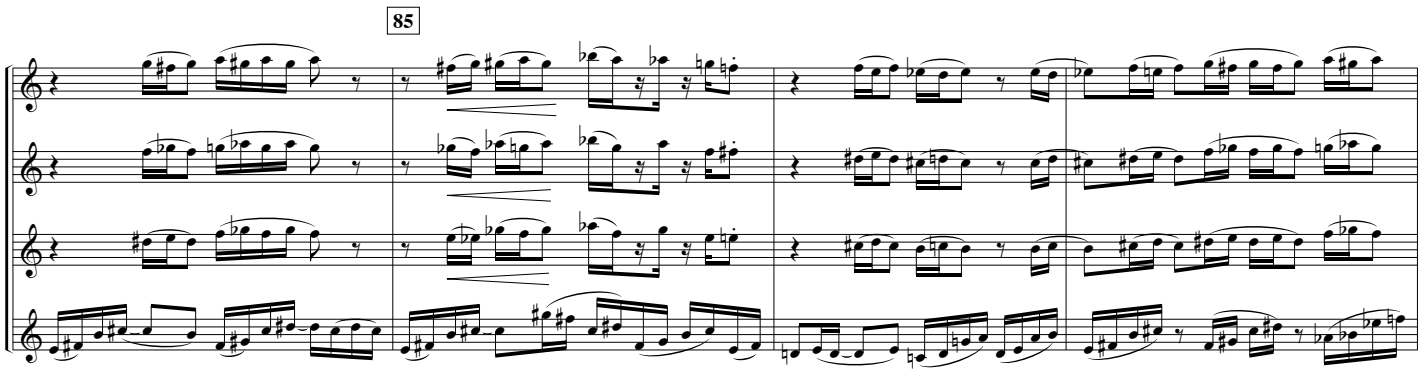

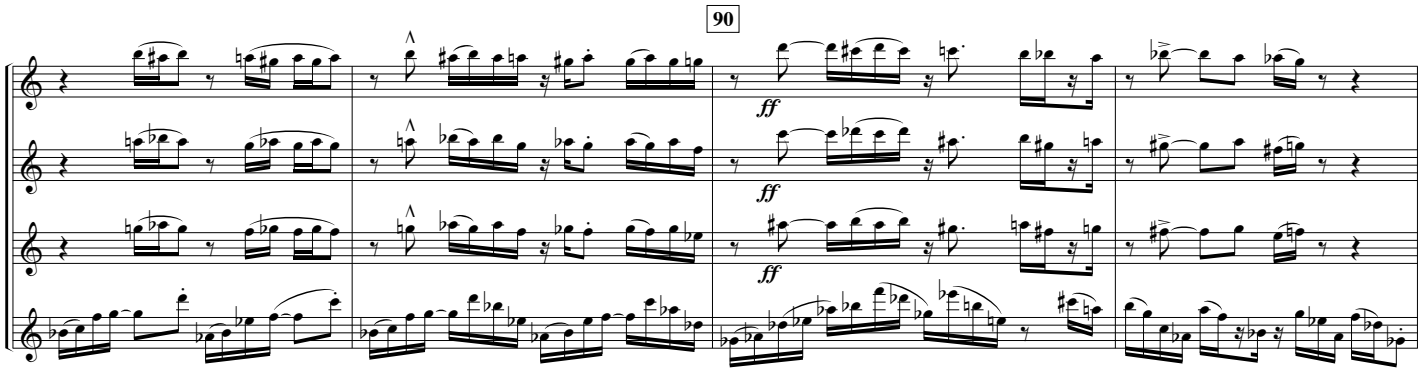

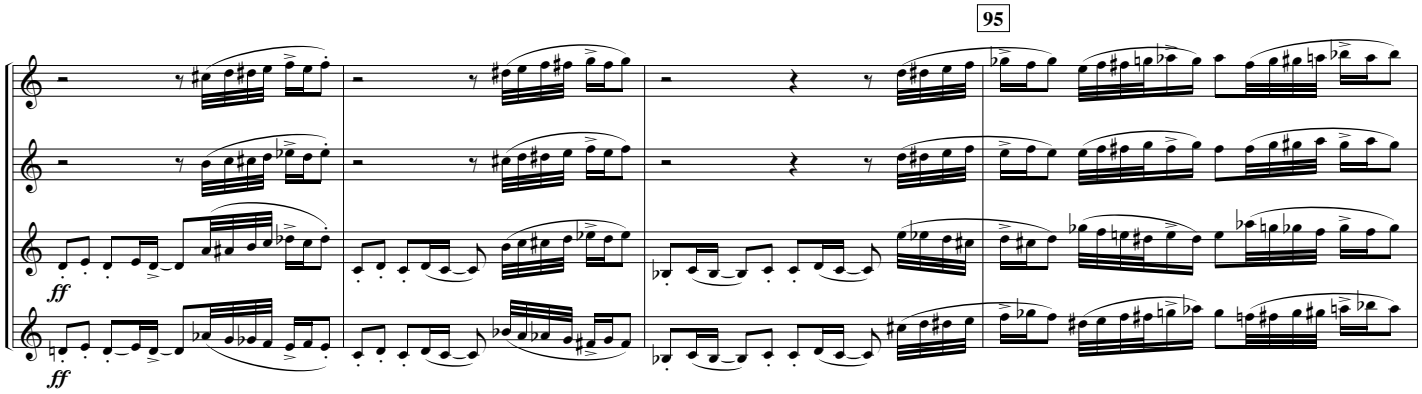

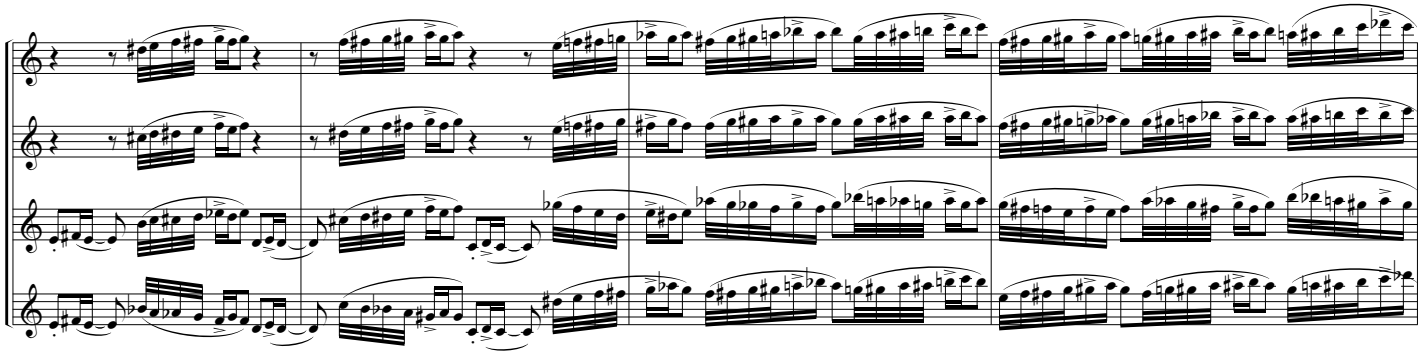

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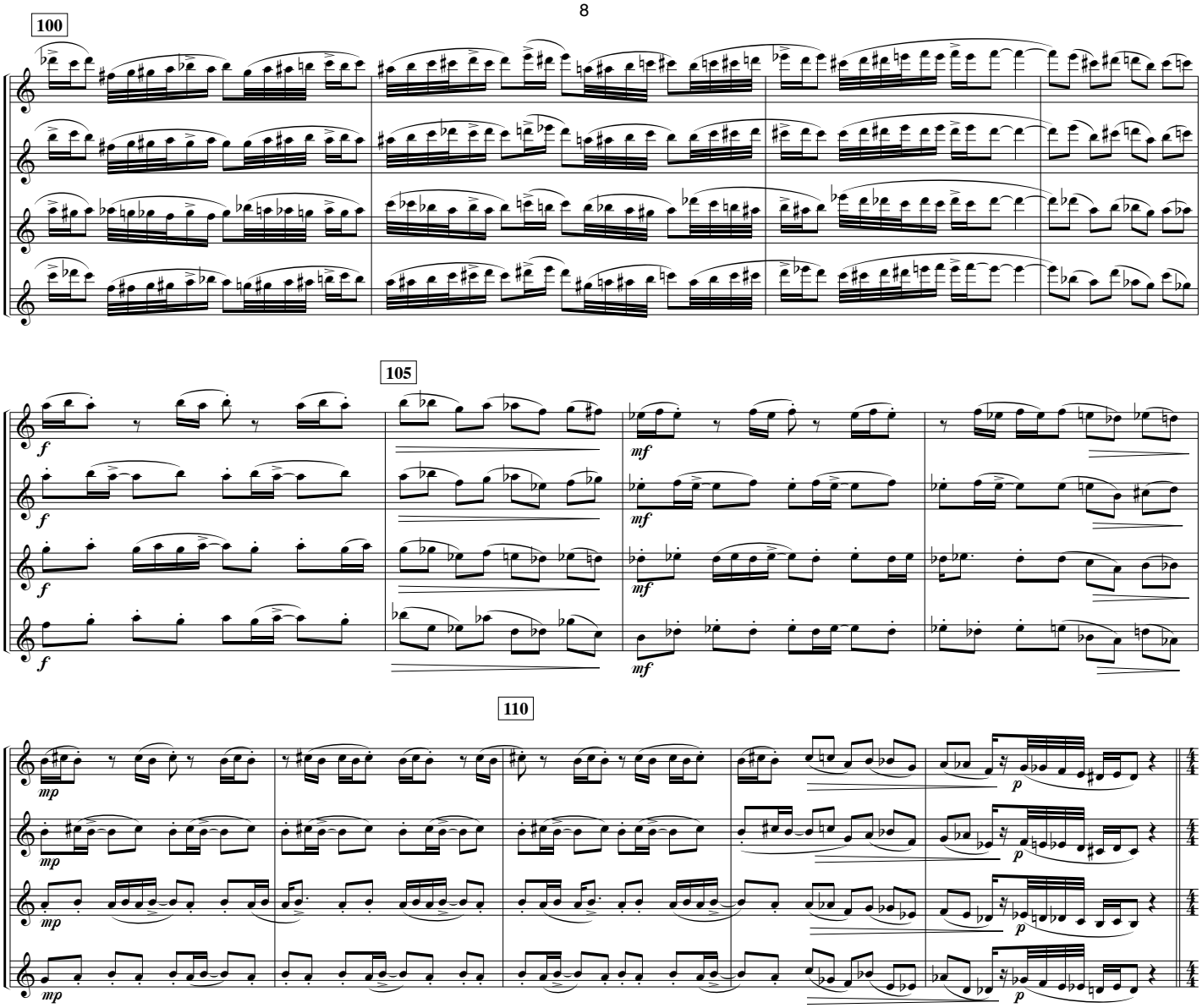
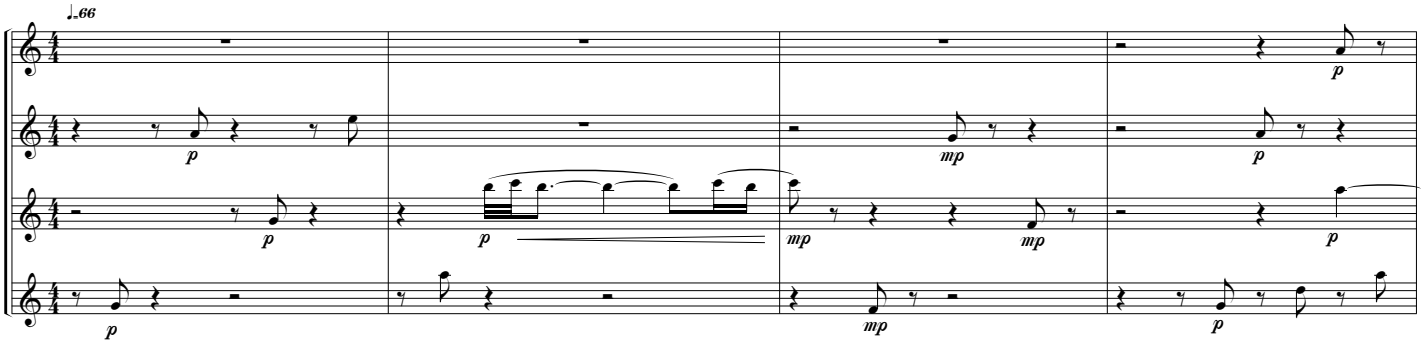


II. Midnight Reflection

Slowly and Expressively



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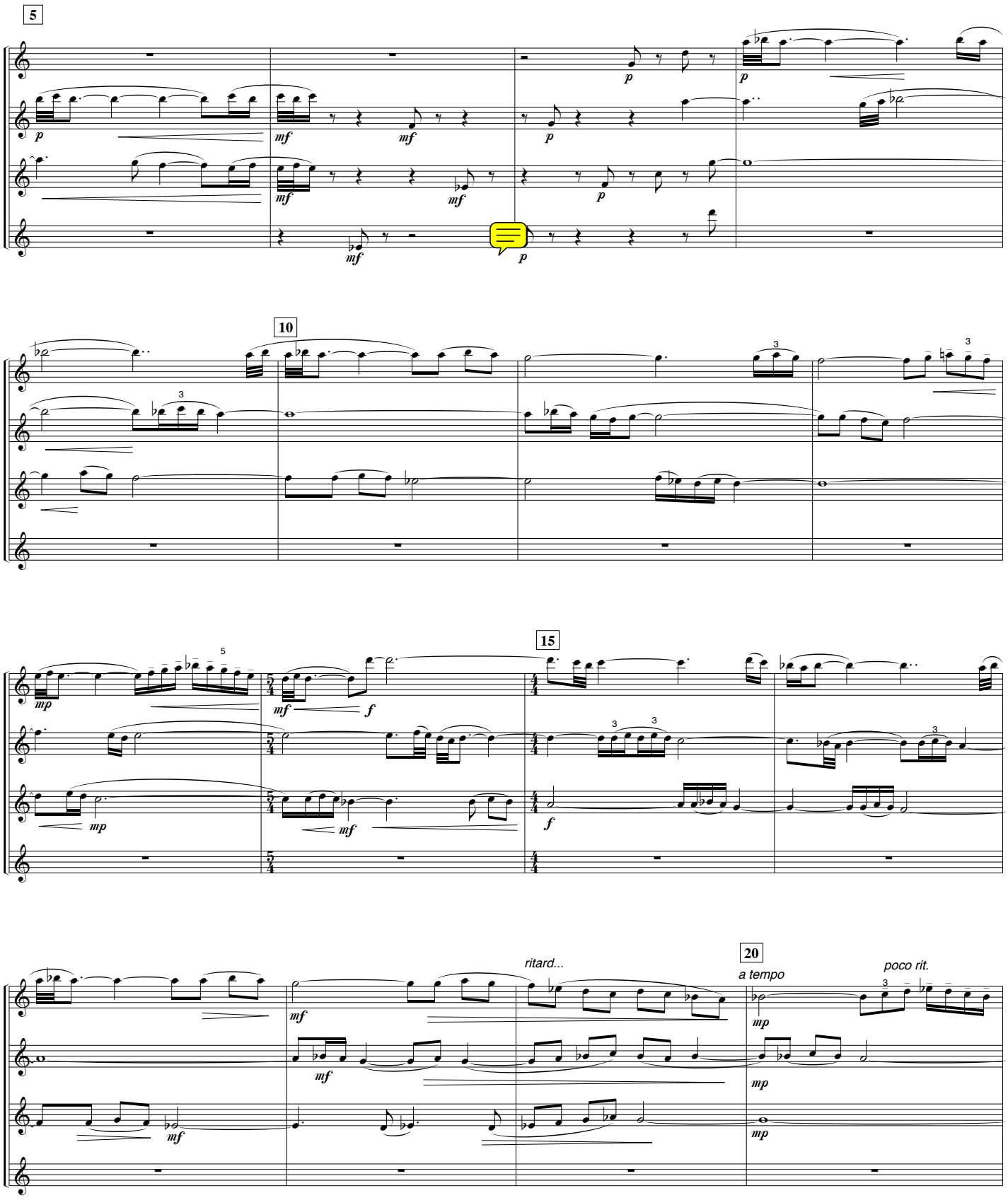

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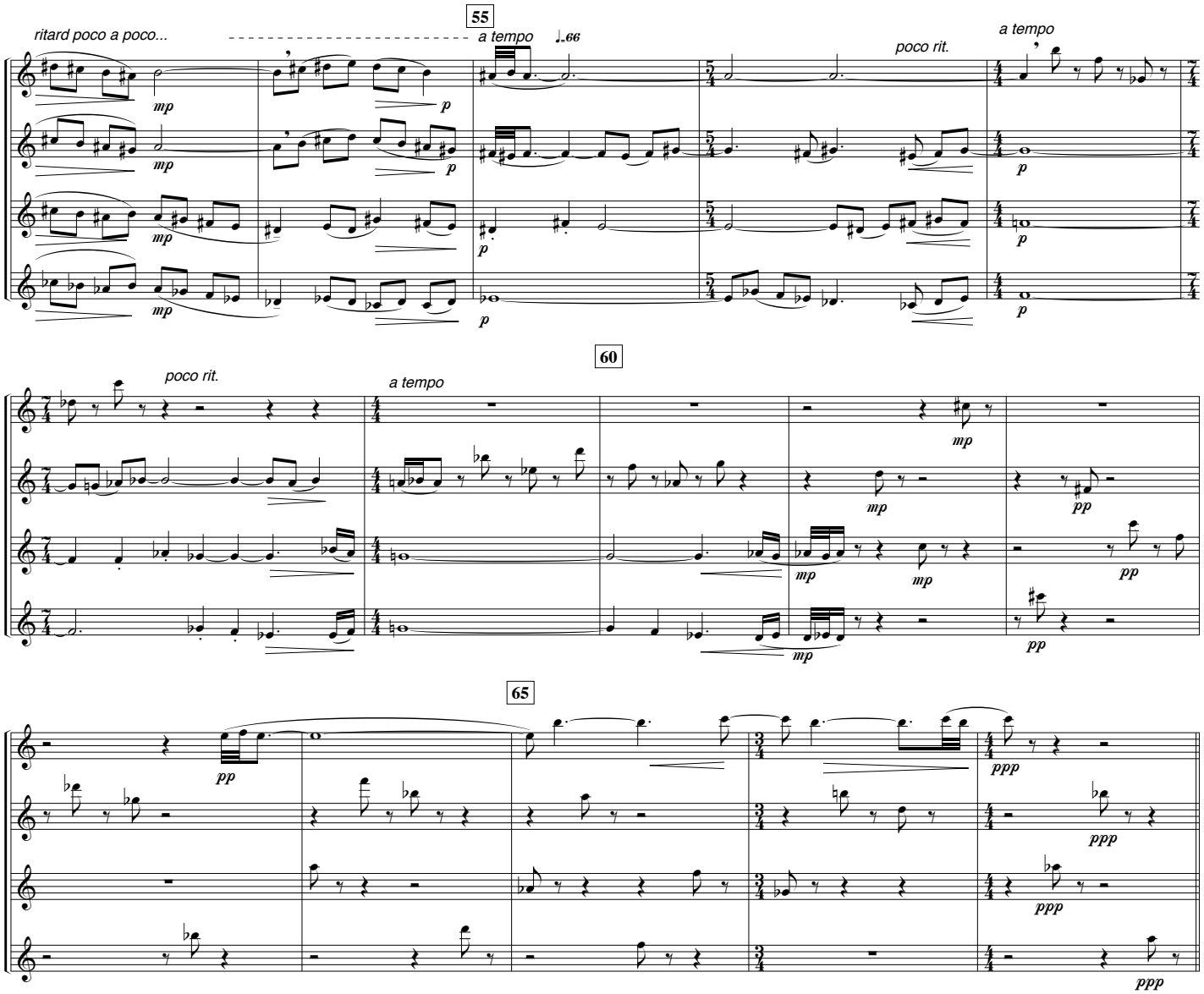
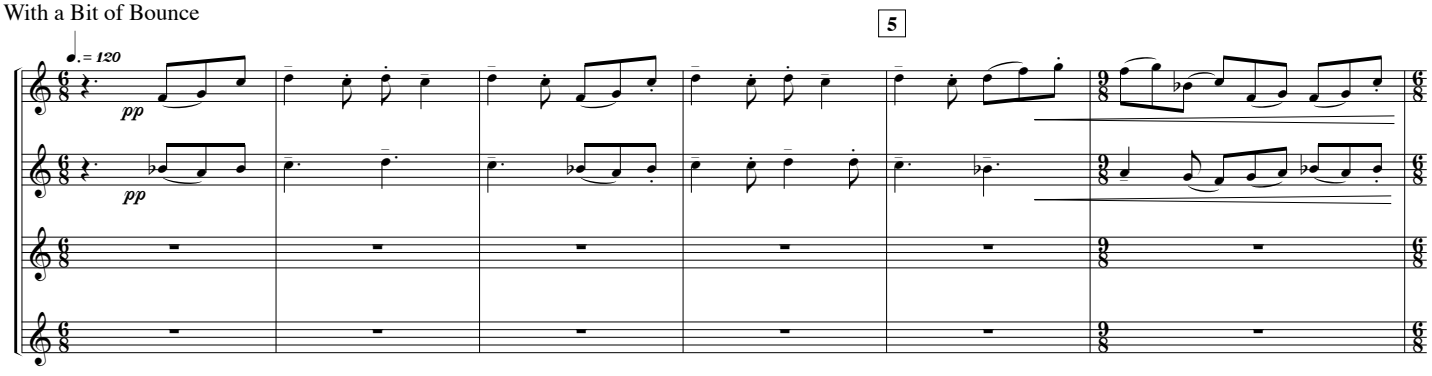


III. Anonymous

With a Bit of Bounce



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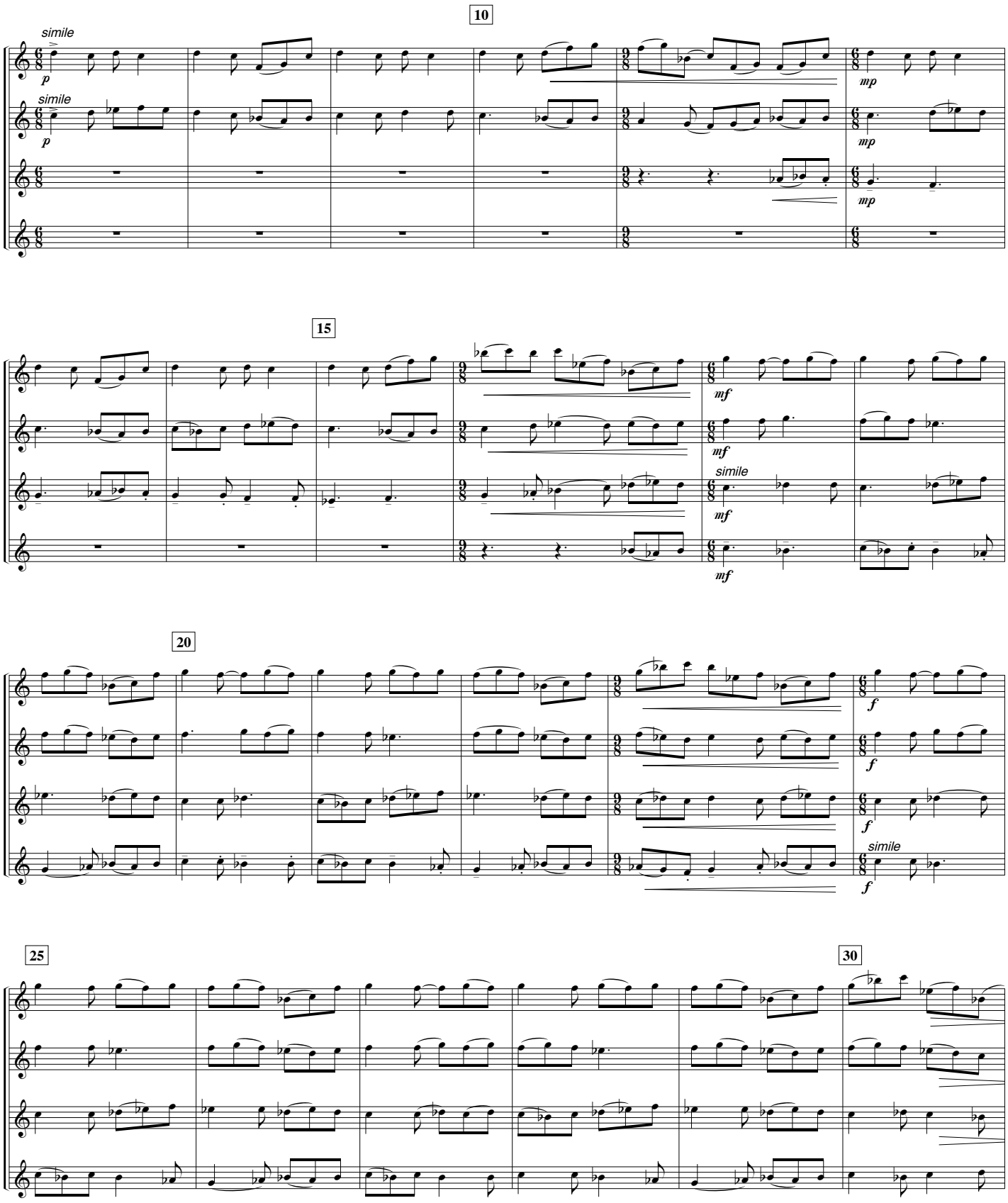

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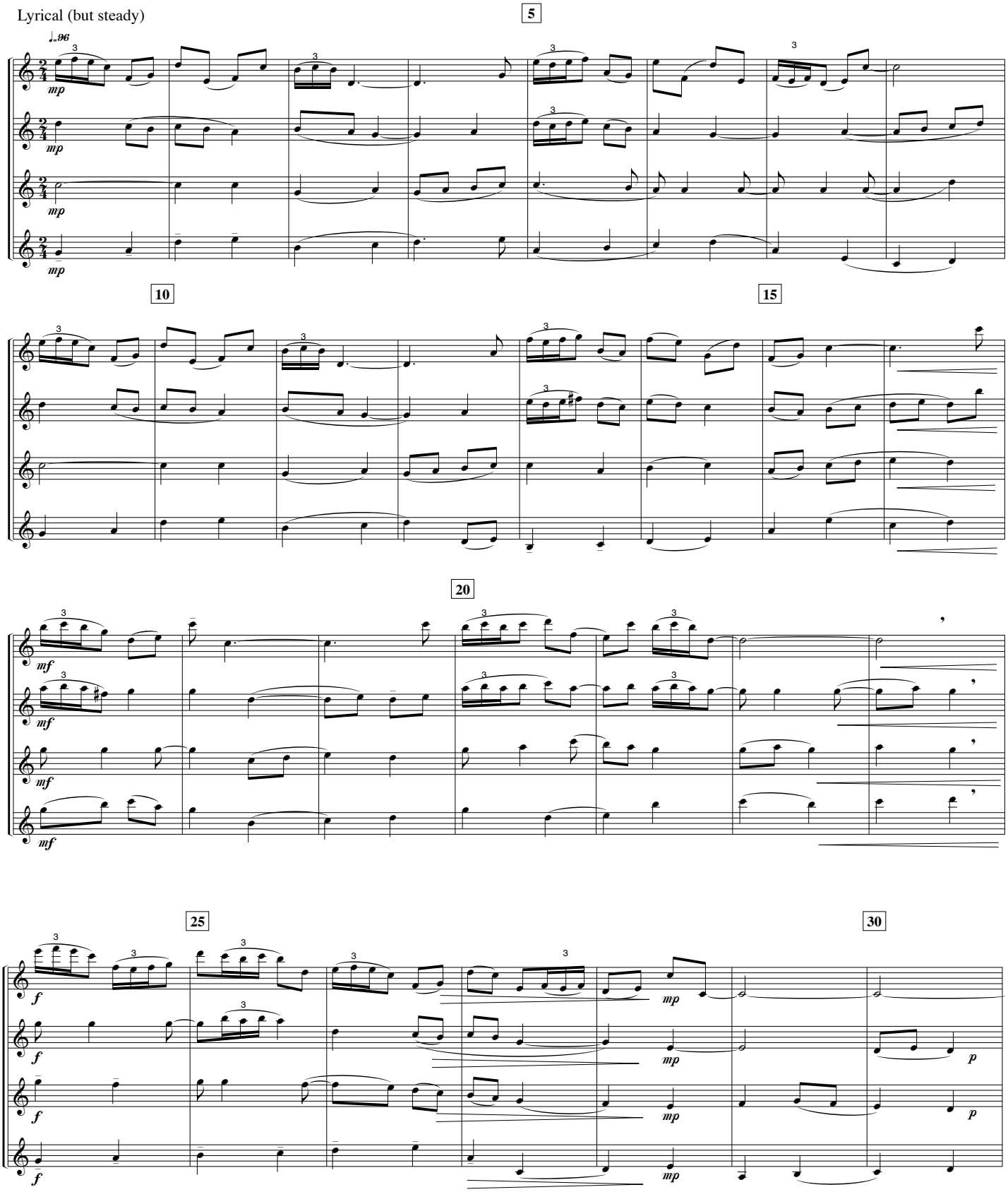
IV. An Easy Burden

Lyrical (but steady)



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