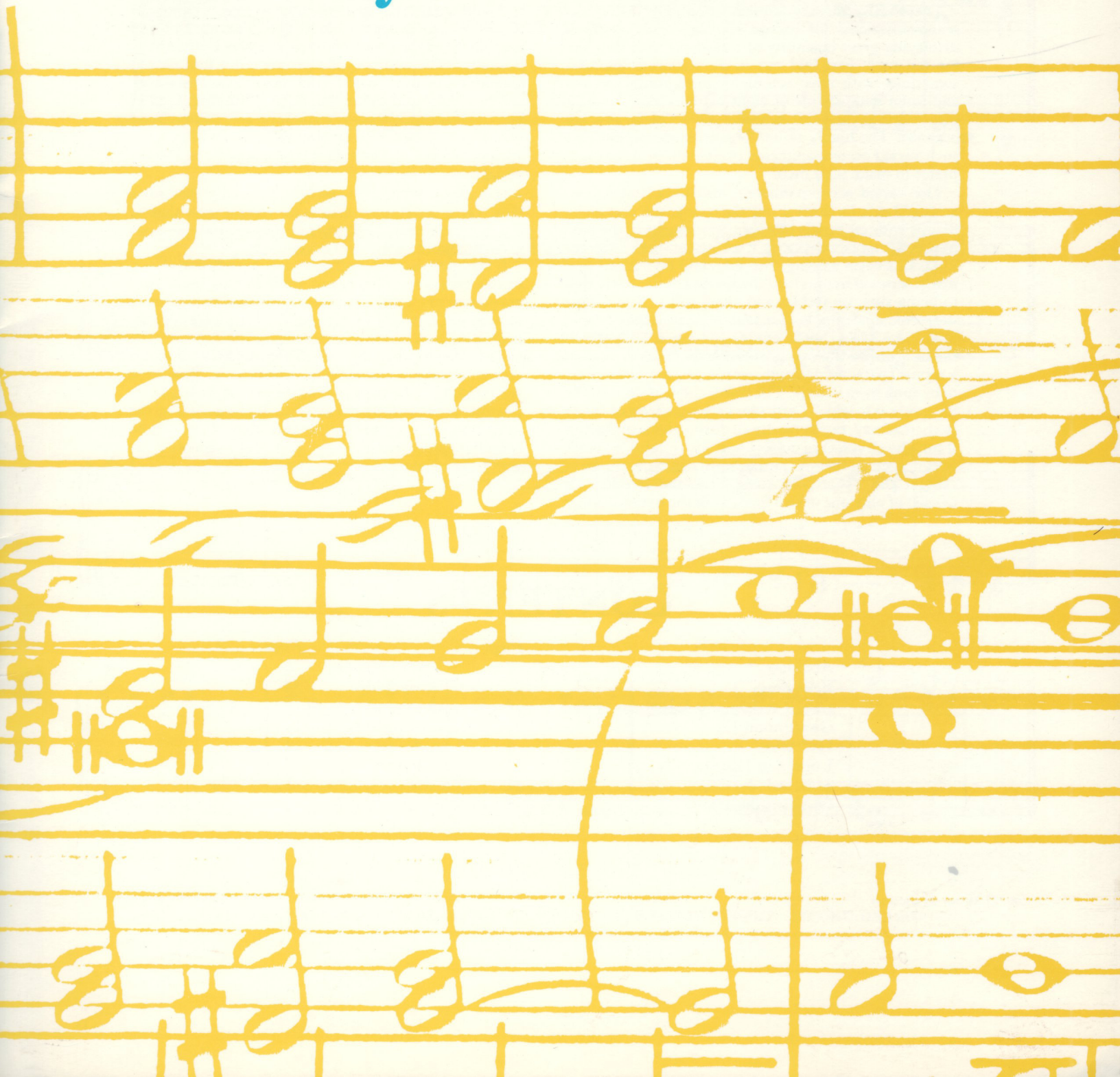
OXFORD MUSIC for organ

VARIED HYMN ACCOMPANIMENTS

by HENRY COLEMAN



The custom of varying the treatment of certain verses in the singing of hymns is one which has grown considerably of recent years. The revival of descants and fauxbourdons has helped to add interest, but there are many choirs where even the singing of a descant is beyond the technical ability of the singers; therefore some other form of variety is desirable if monotony is to be avoided. The monotony of unrelieved four-part harmony becomes very tiresome in a hymn of several verses, and although an enterprising choir may sometimes sing a verse in unison (as singing in octaves is generally called) this is almost invariably a loud verse (generally the last). As a rule, little harmonic invention is shown in the accompaniment, and the treatment consists in all the voices singing the tune as loudly as possible, accompanied by the organ with all stops drawn.

There exist already several collections of varied accompaniments for unison singing, many of them displaying great ingenuity of treatment. But they are for the most part laid out in an elaborate manner, sometimes with most scholarly contrapuntal devices and often with chords of eight or more notes, which place them beyond the technical powers of the average organist. The highly skilled organists who would find such varied accompaniments useful will in most cases prefer to make their own.

The varied accompaniments provided here are so arranged as to lie easily under the hands, and may all be played without pedals by slight adjustment of the bass part in a few places. They are set out for three different kinds of unison singing, and it should be noticed that many verses of hymns lend themselves particularly well to being sung by trebles and altos, softly. *It is neither suggested, nor desirable, that all three versions shall be used in any one hymn.* Some hymns contain a verse which seems to invite the use of trebles only, while hymns of a robust character demand a verse, or even two verses, to be sung by men only. The words themselves must be the guide as to which particular verses are treated in any particular way, but normally all doxologies are effective if sung by all voices in unison, and any refrains that may occur, such as the one in the third and sixth verses of 'Bright the Vision'. In some cases the refrain may consist of only one of two lines, as in the hymn 'Round the Earth a Message Runs' or 'Let us with a Gladsome Mind'. These lines may often be taken alone in unison, while the rest of the verse is sung in harmony.

The purpose of the three different versions published here, with suggestions for their use and accompaniment, may now be given.

No. 1. For use with trebles and/or altos (women) only, with women and children of the congregation, except where it is desired that the choir shall sing alone. In this case the congregation should be informed of the procedure before the hymn is begun. No. 1 accompaniment is not suitable for use with tenors and basses. There should be no 16 foot tone on the manuals and no pedal. This last suggestion in itself supplies a welcome relief.

No. 2. Suitable for use only when tenors and basses alone (or men in the congregation) are singing the tune: it should not be used when the upper voices are singing. Again, there should be no 16 foot tone used on the manuals, and the omission of pedal notes is often very desirable. The addition of a prominent 4 foot should sometimes be used to add brightness to the ensemble.

No. 3. Almost invariably to be used for loud singing, and the accompaniment is suitable for any combination of voices in choir or congregation. A fairly full organ, with occasional 16 foot tone on the manuals, and heavy pedal bass, is suggested.

It is often effective, when No. 3 is being used for a final verse, to employ a broader tempo than that of the rest of the hymn, particularly where the accompaniment contains a good deal of movement.

It is hoped that the intelligent use, as occasion arises, of the varied harmonies contained in this book, will encourage more effective and interesting treatment of hymns and metrical psalms, which constitute such an important part of our prayer and praise.

The whole question of organ accompaniment of the church service is one of great importance, and those who wish to make their part of the service as artistic as possible are referred to 'The Church Organist', by the same author and publisher as this book. In it will be found chapters dealing fully with every aspect of the problems involved.

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VARIED HYMN ACCOMPANIMENTS

HENRY COLEMAN

HYFRYDOL

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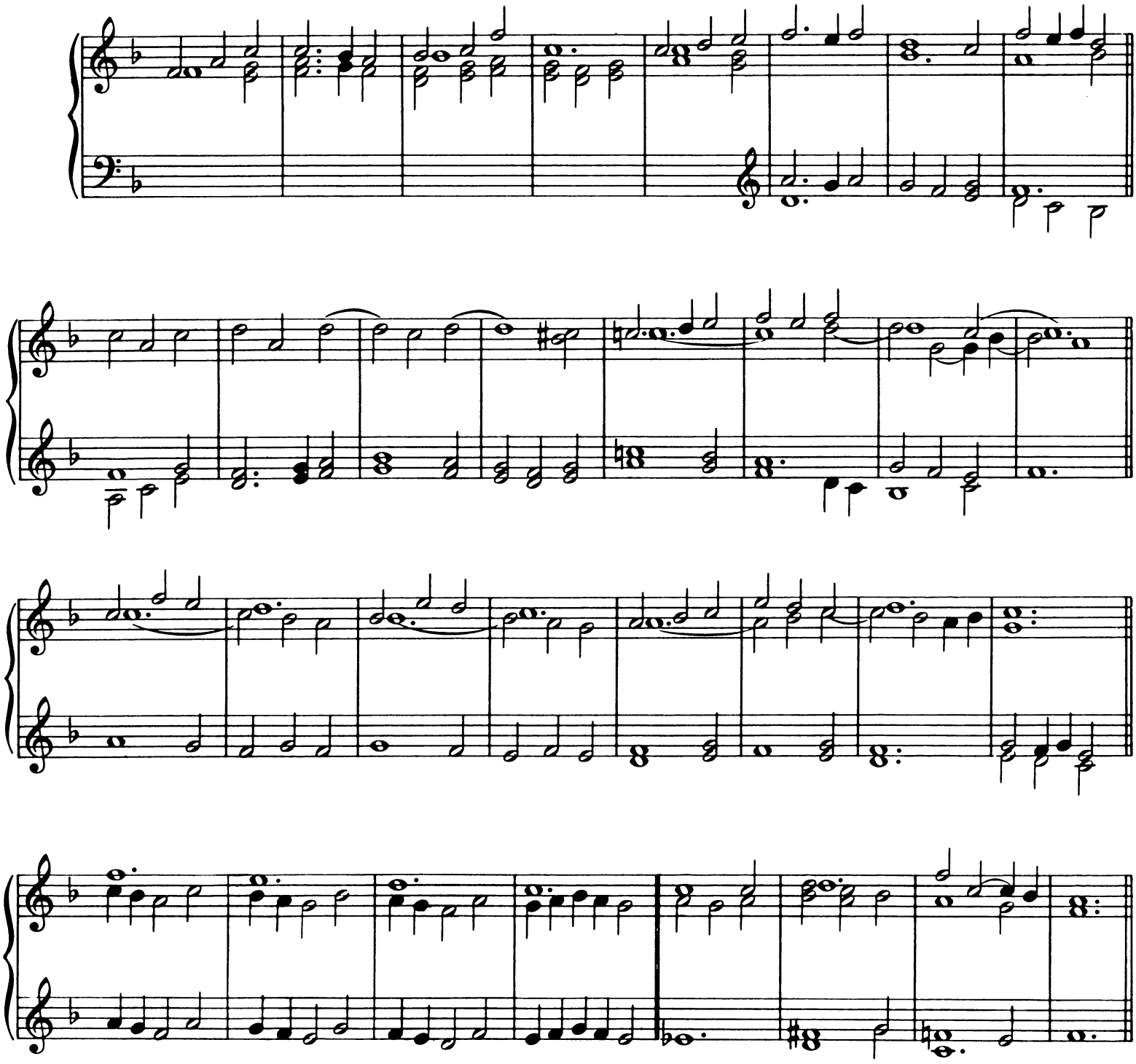

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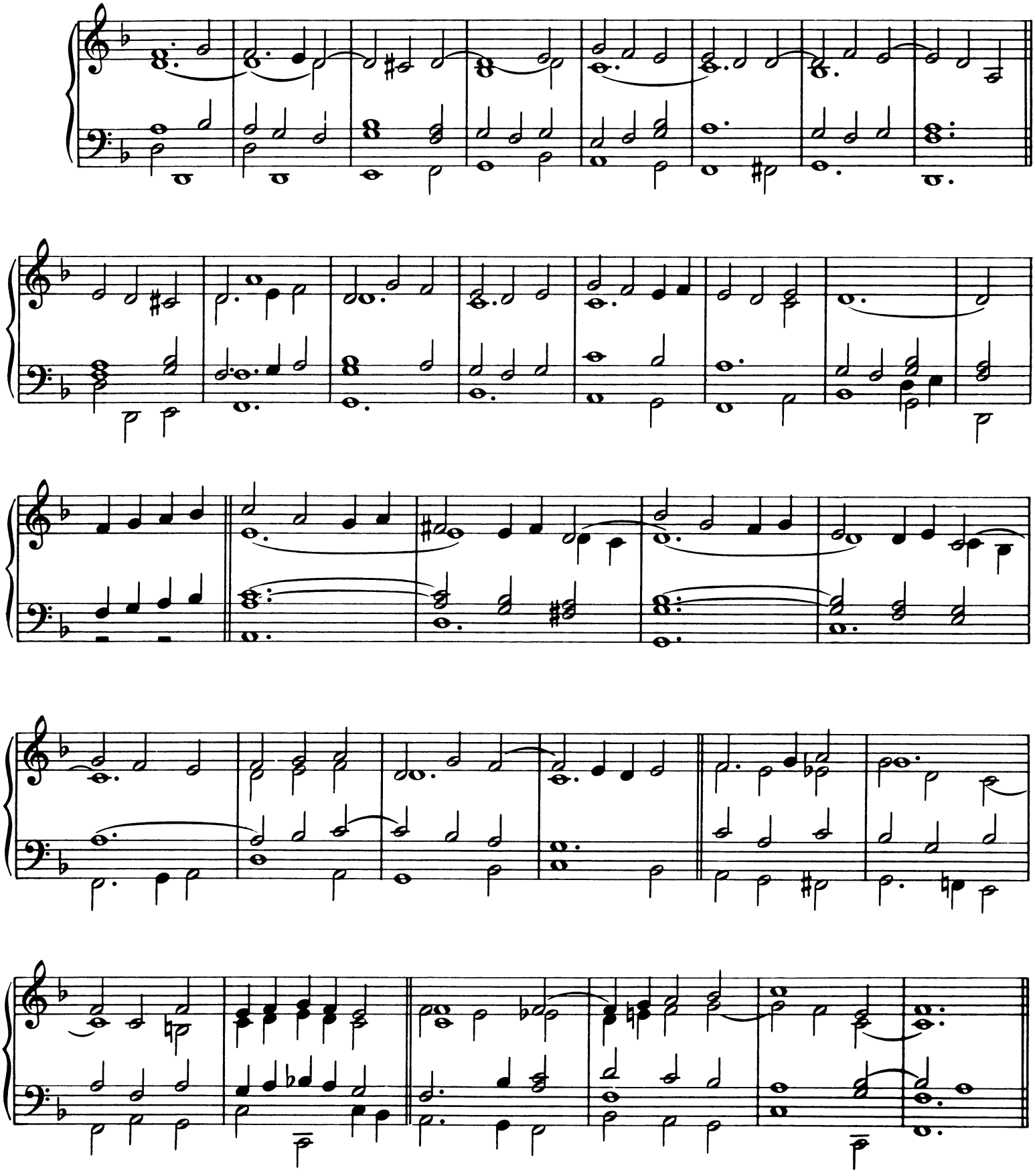

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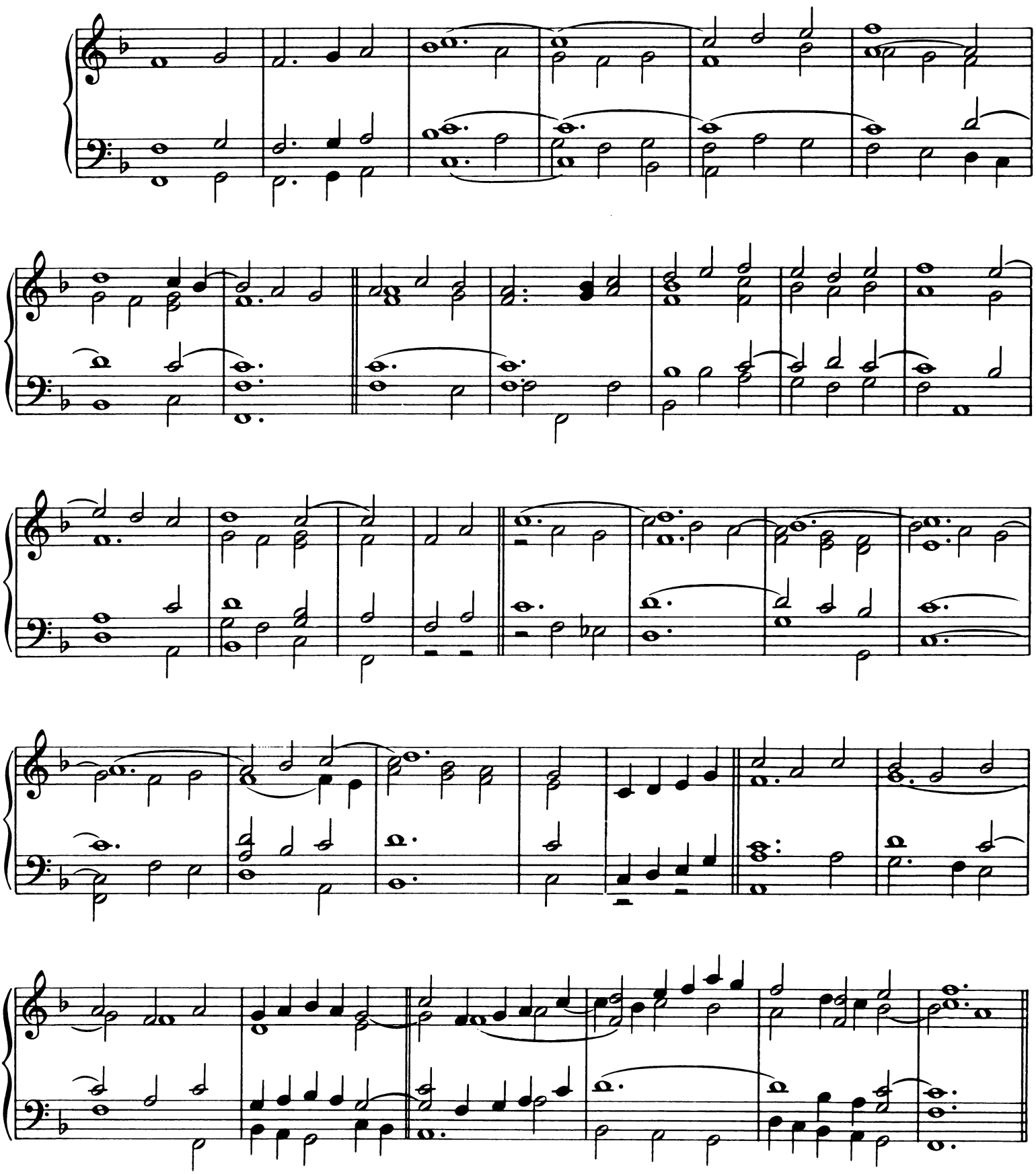

LOBE DEN HERREN

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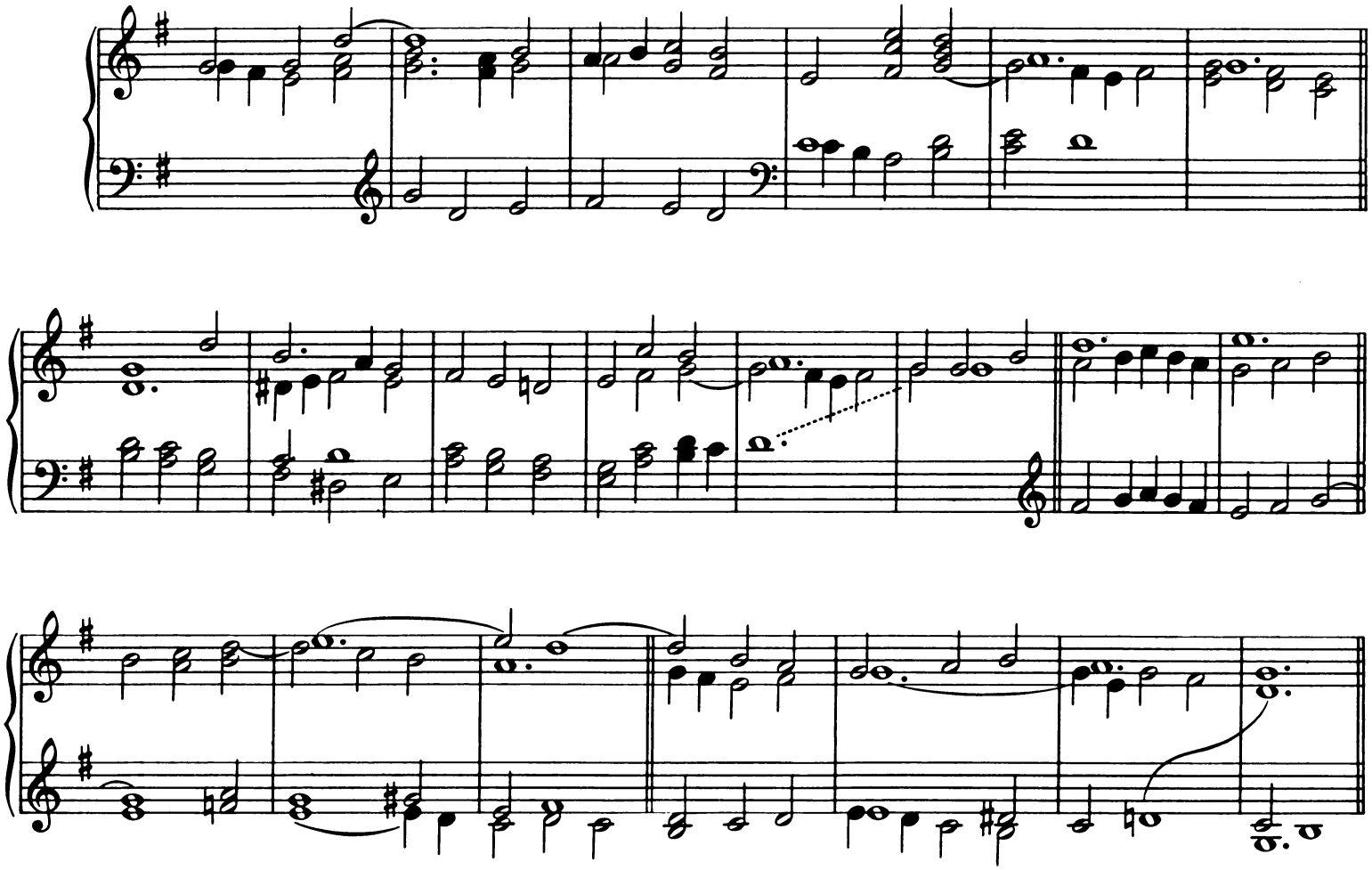

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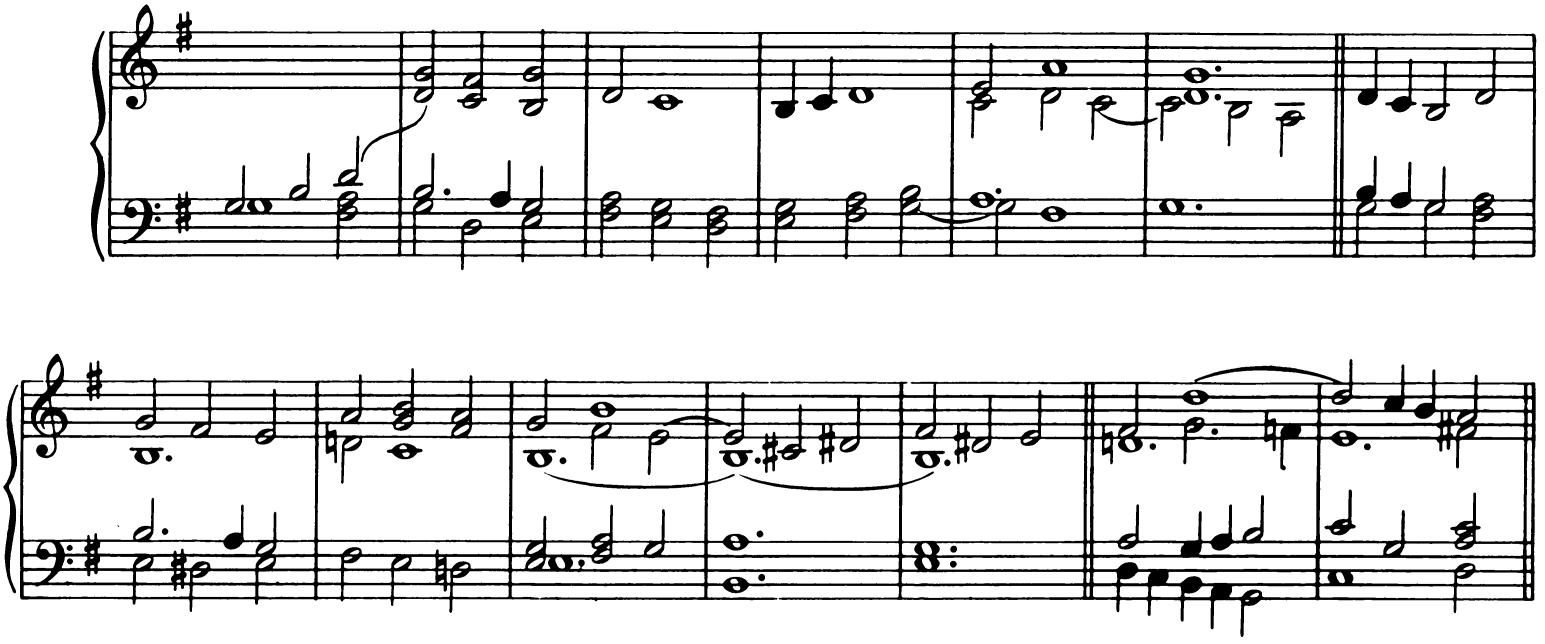

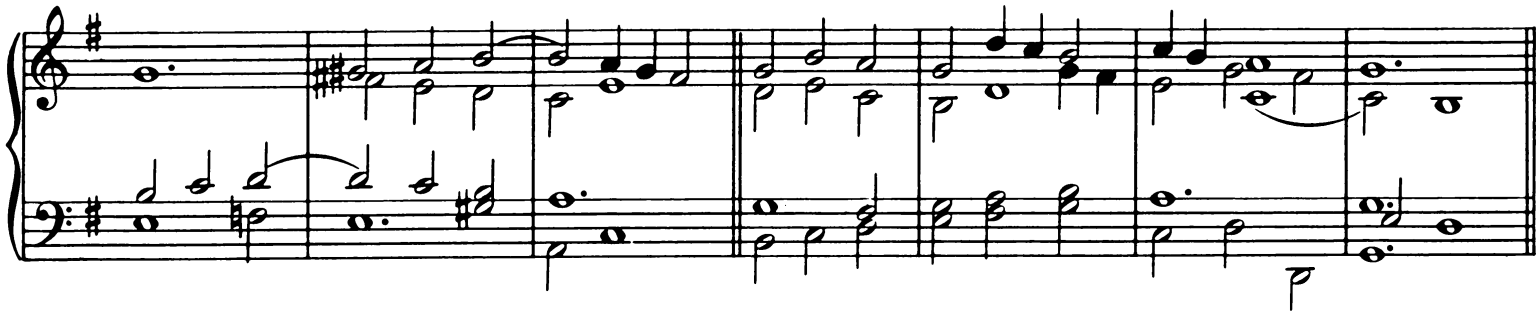

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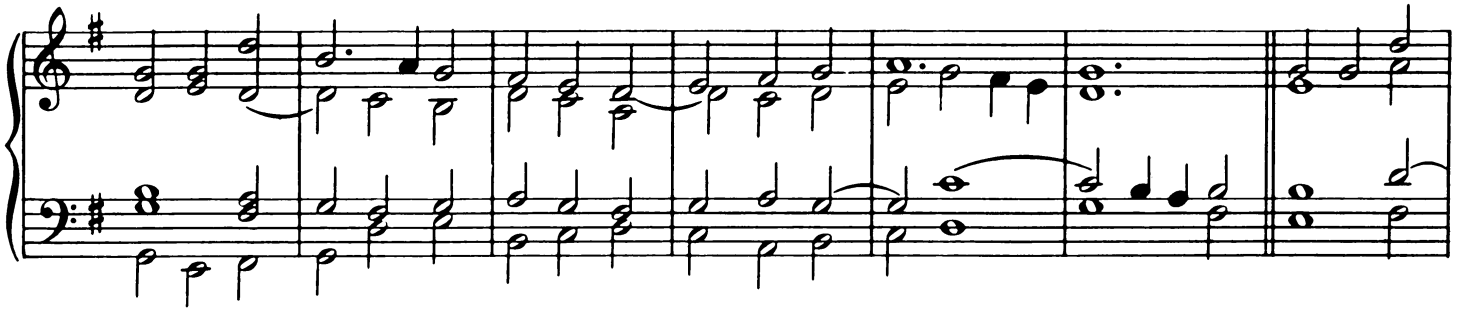

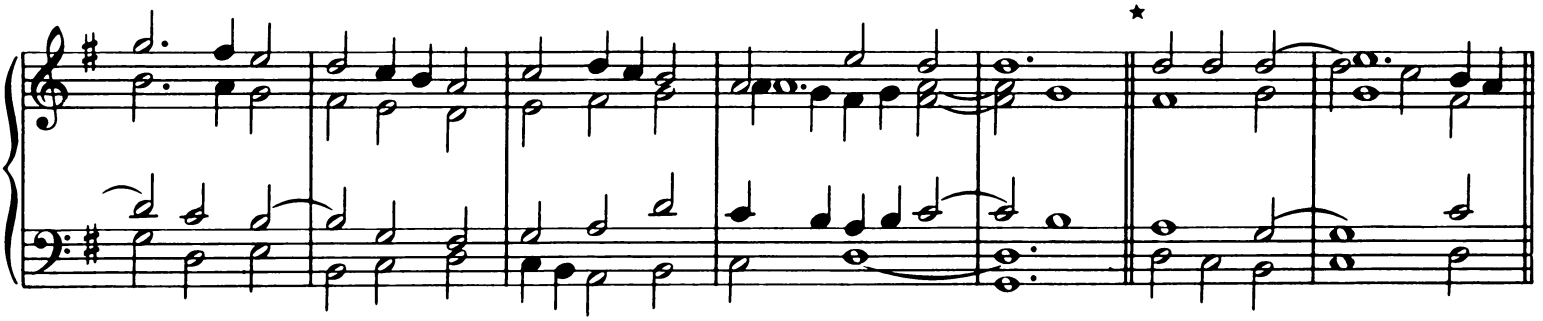

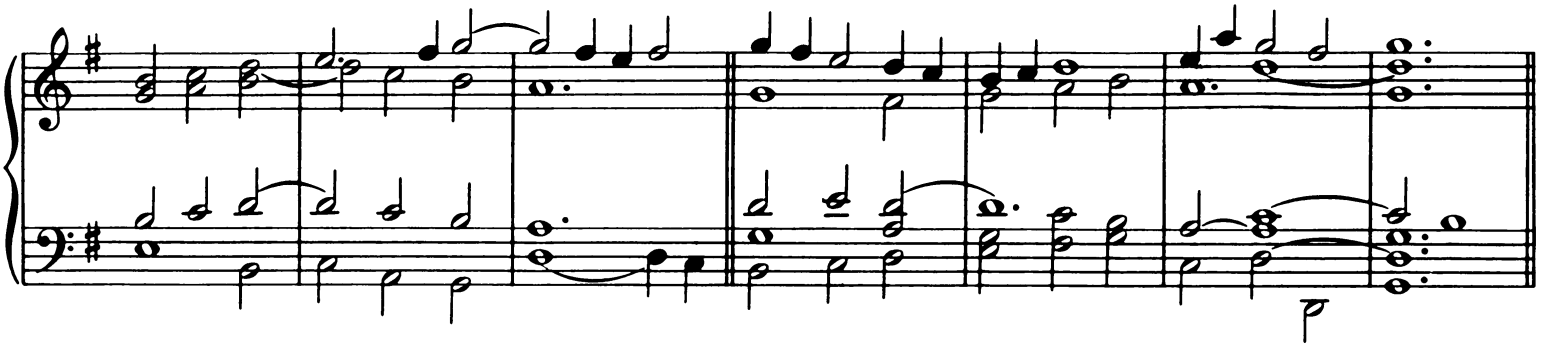

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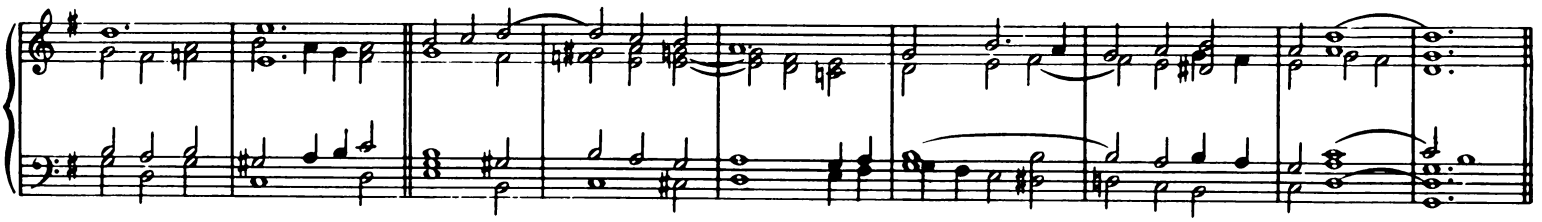

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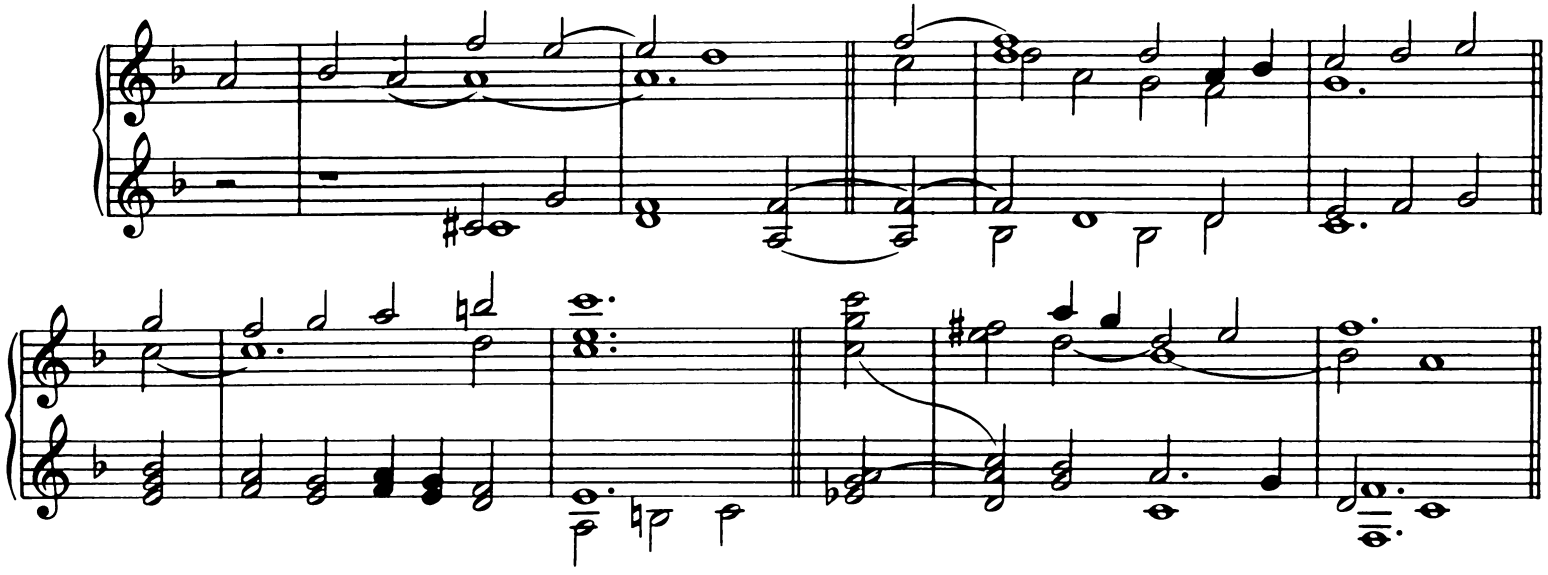

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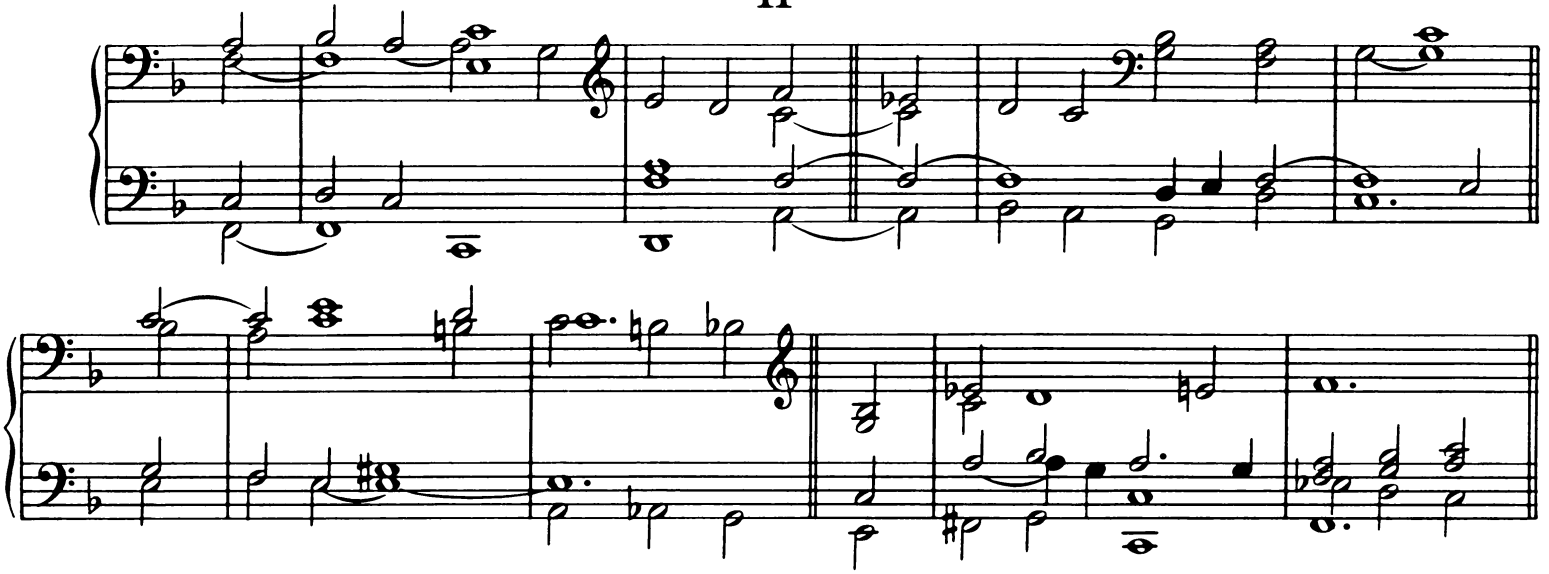

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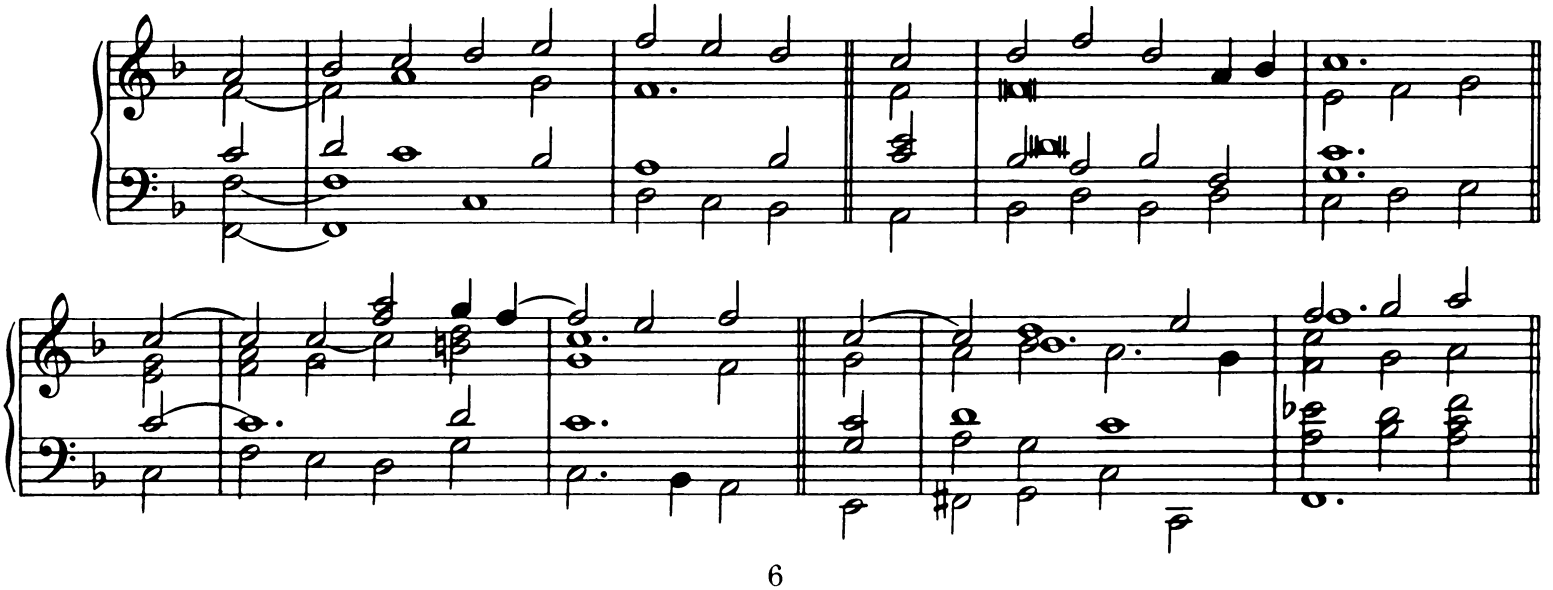

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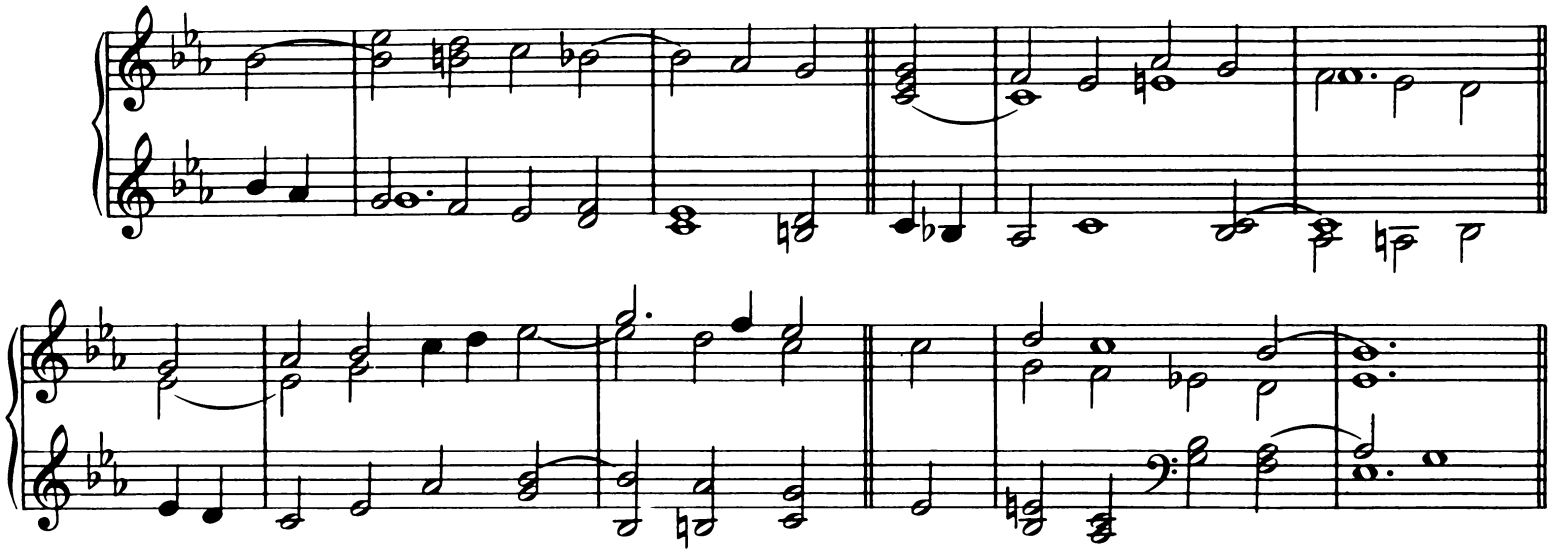

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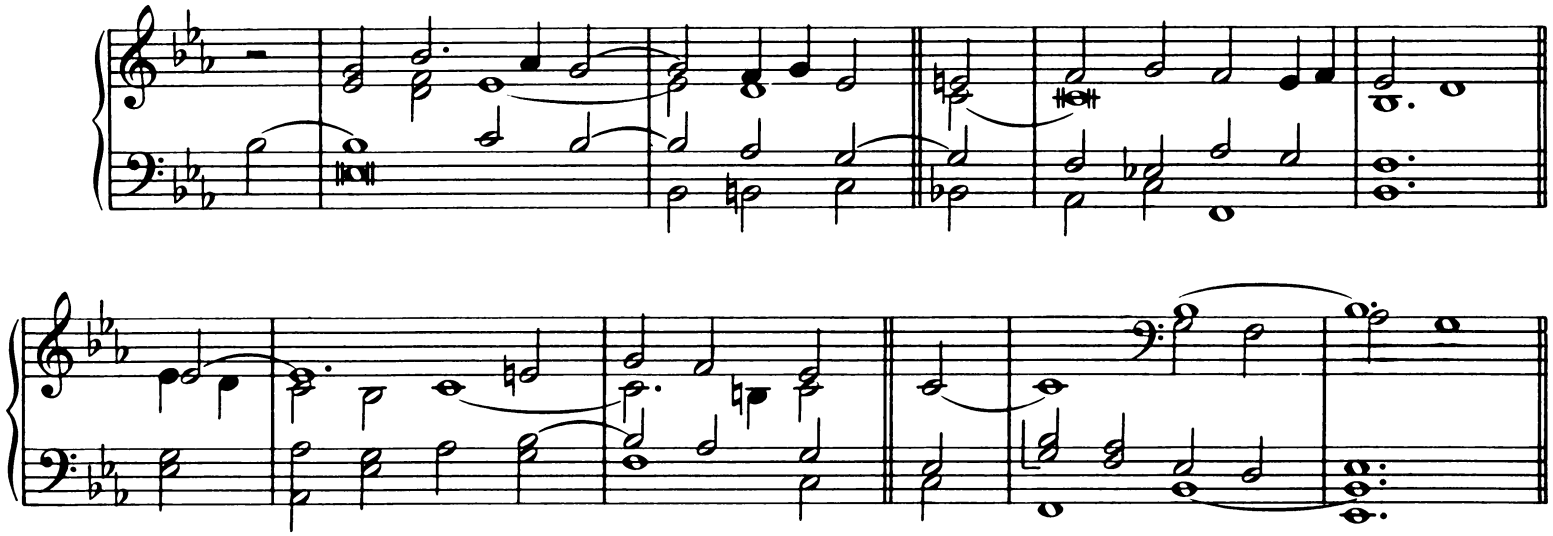

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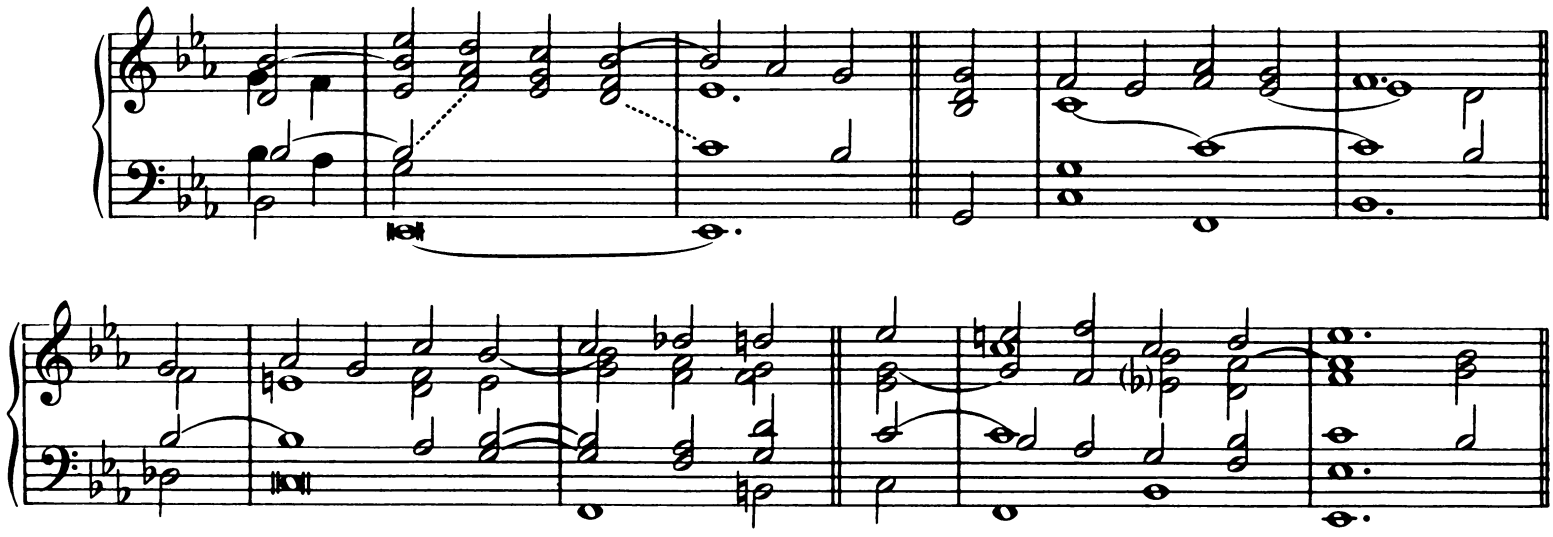

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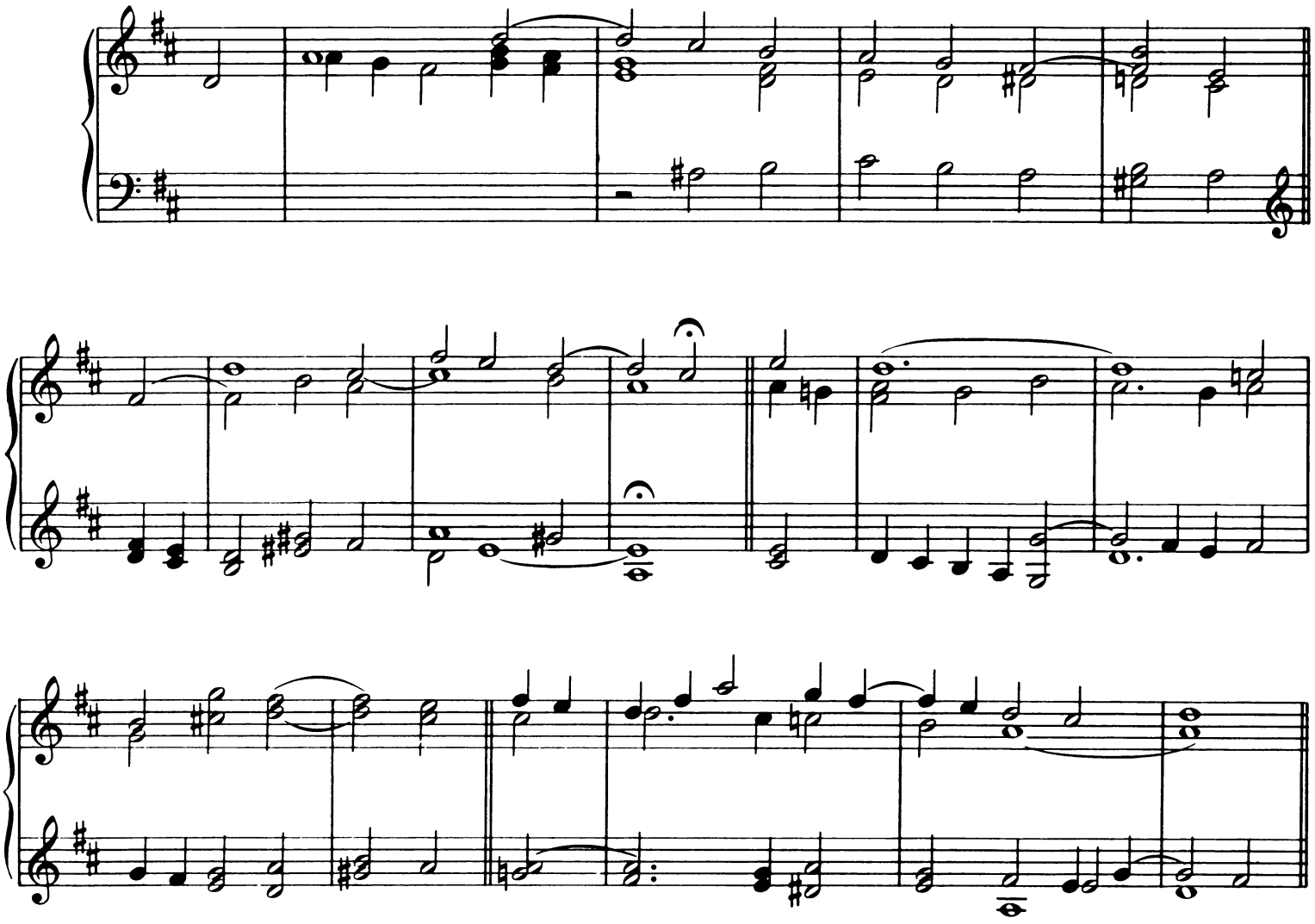

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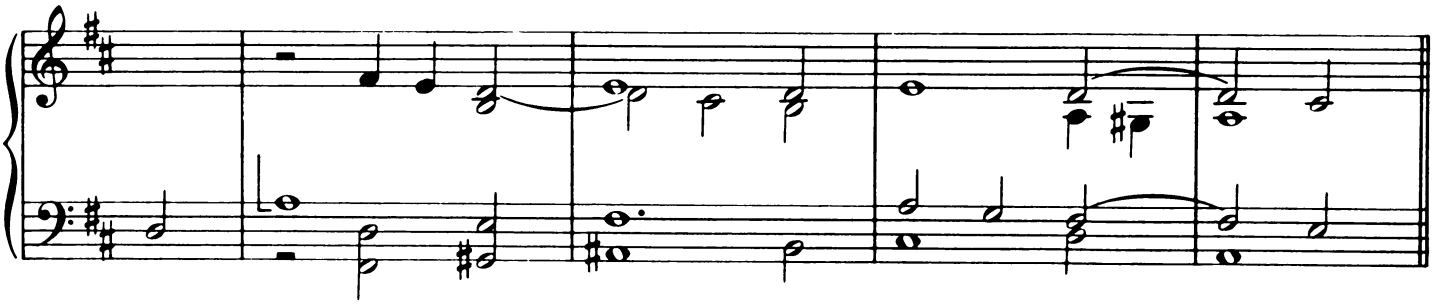

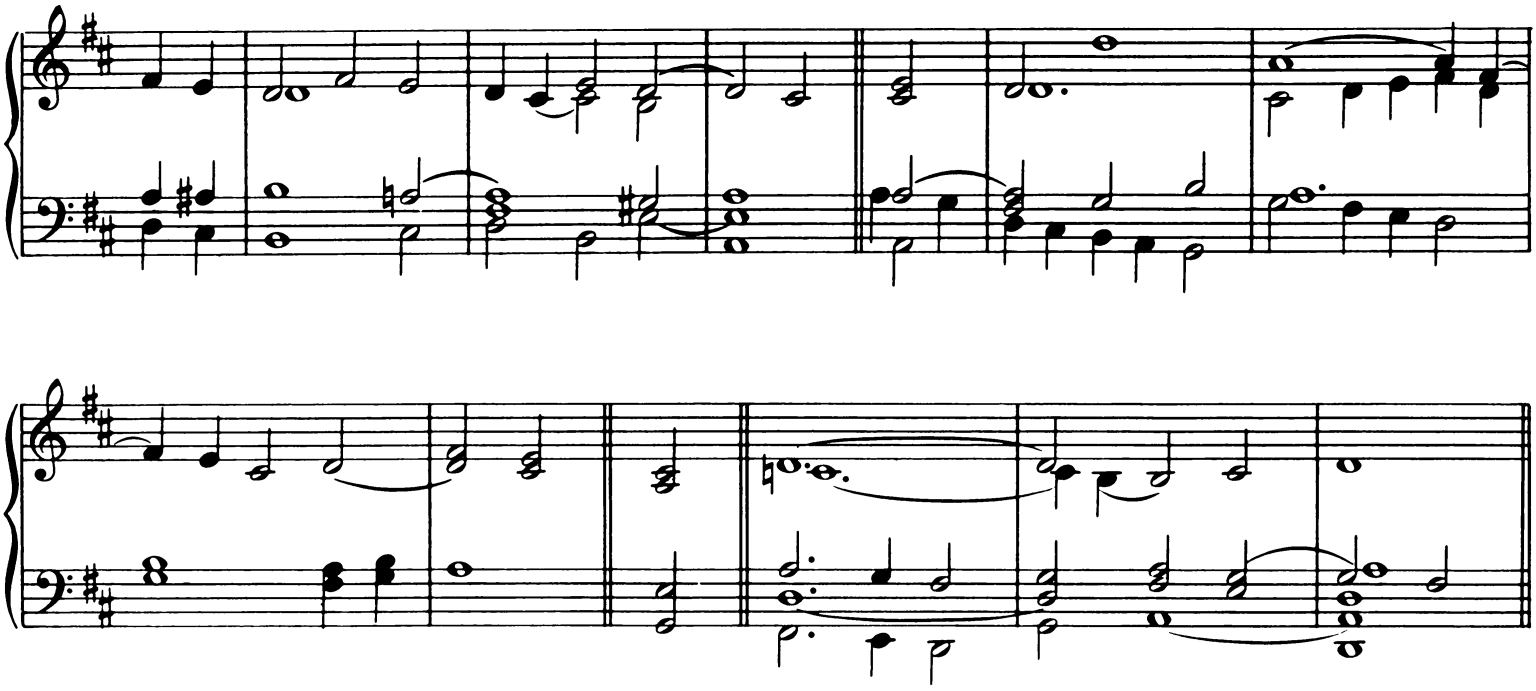

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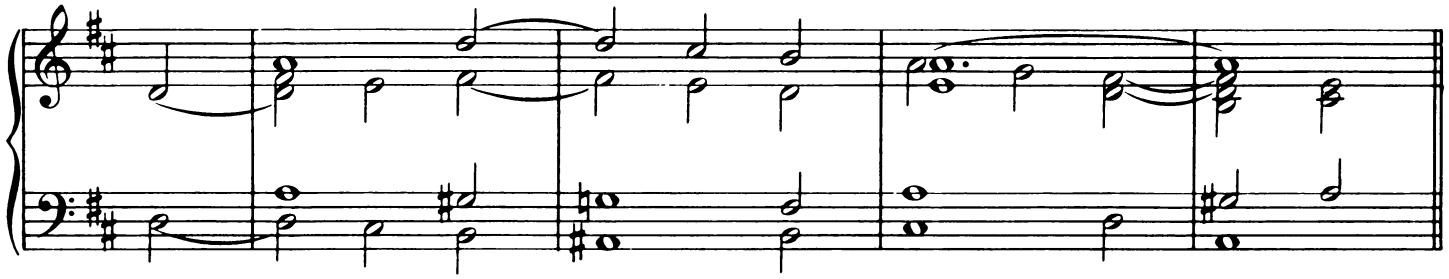

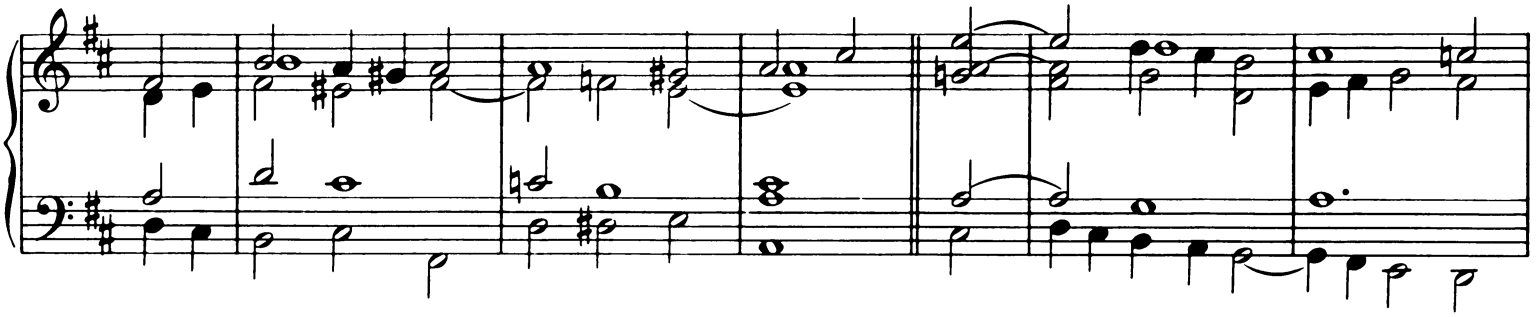

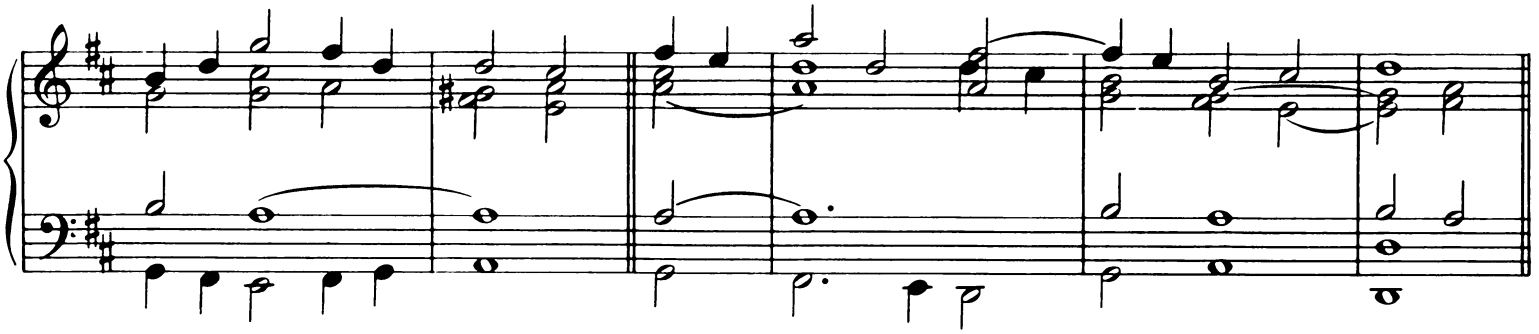

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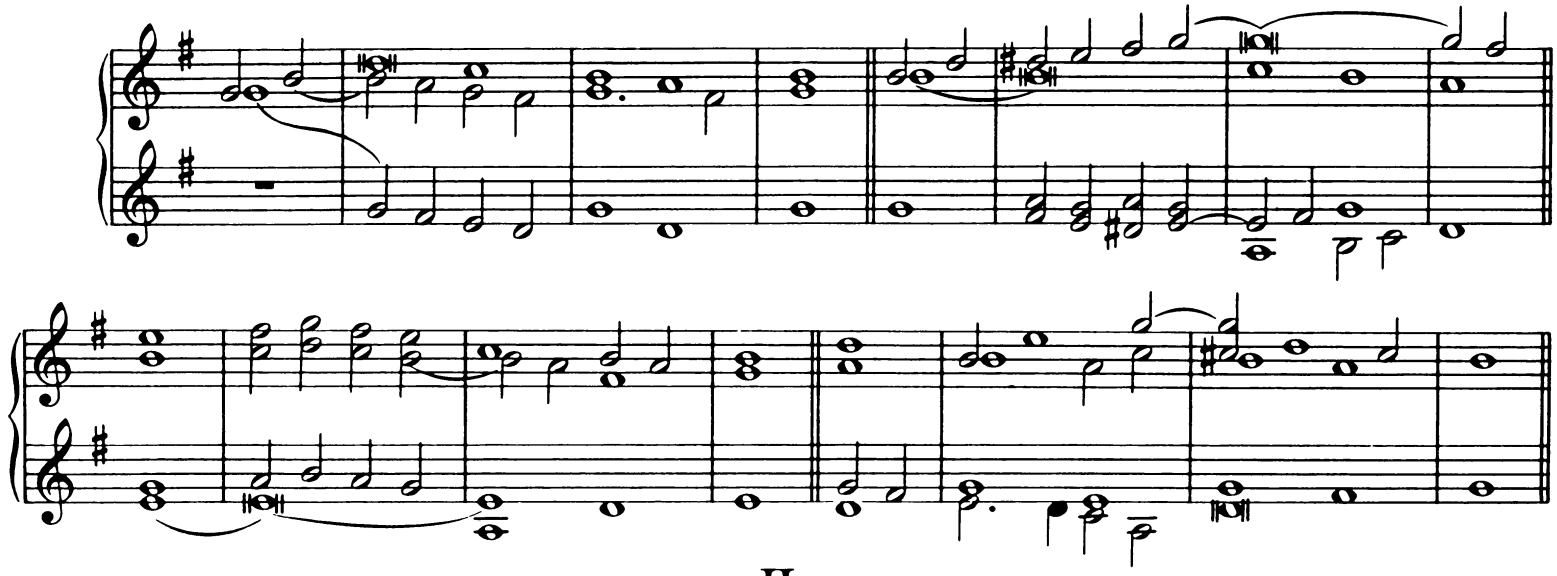

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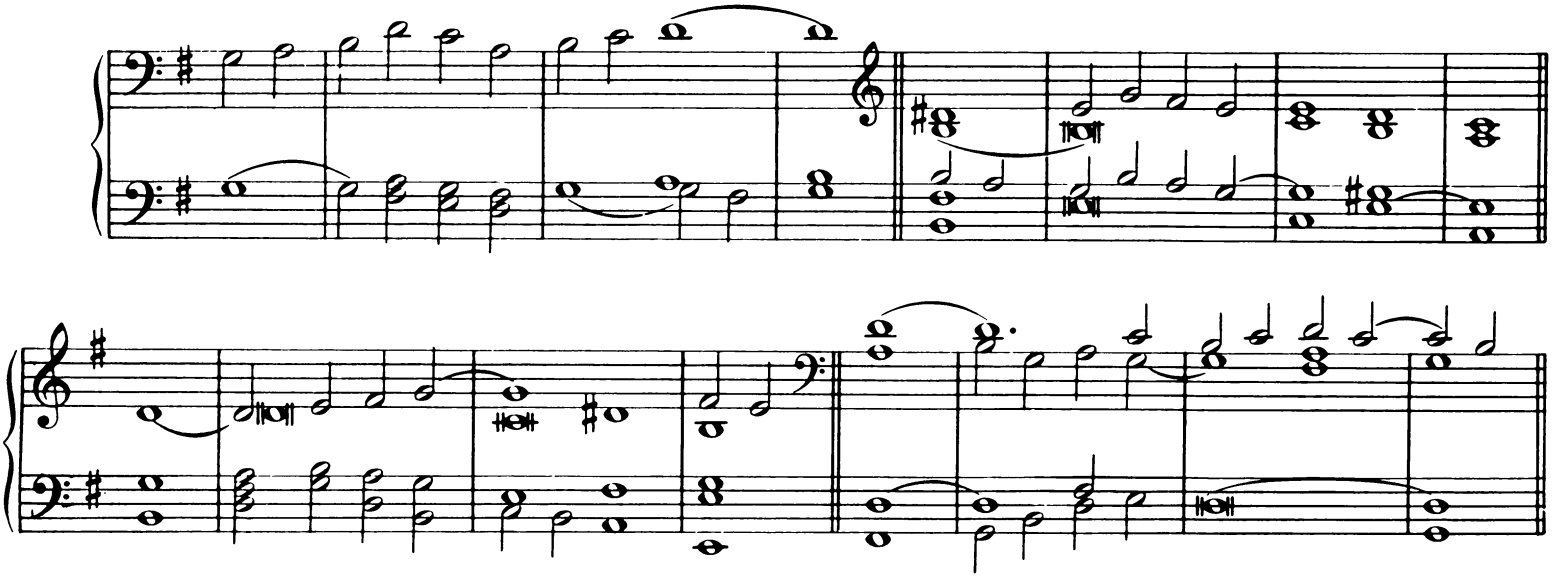

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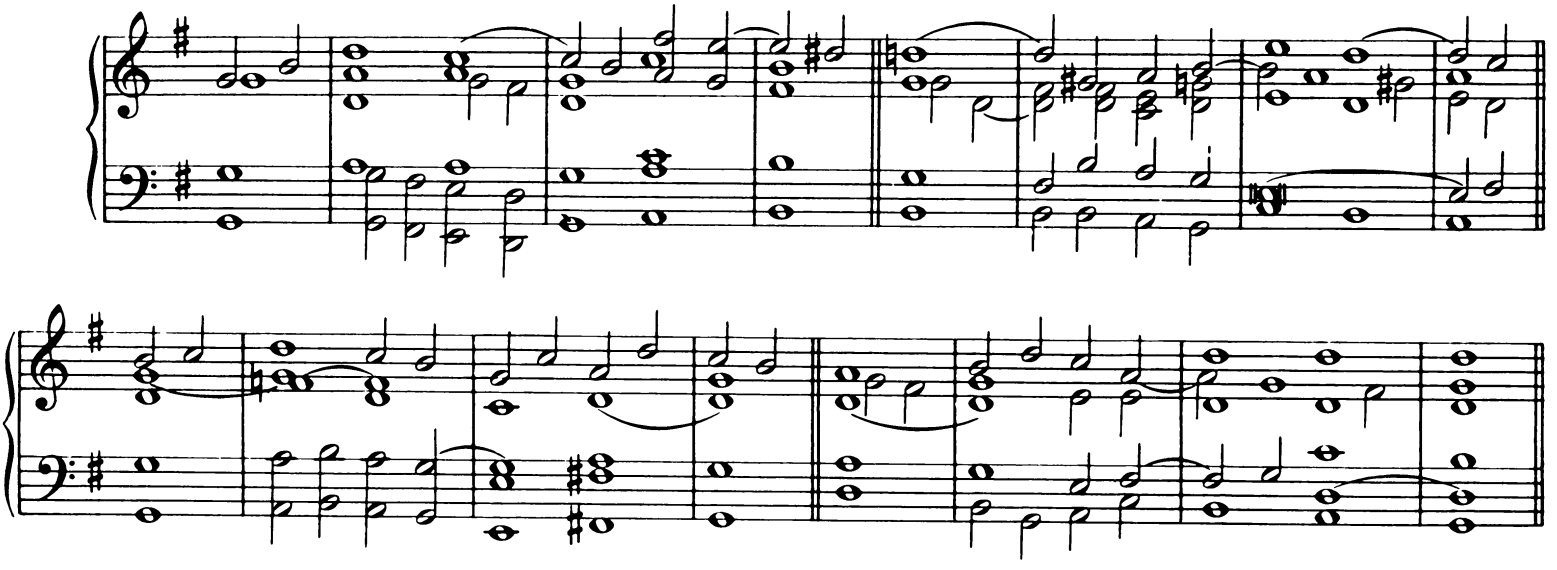

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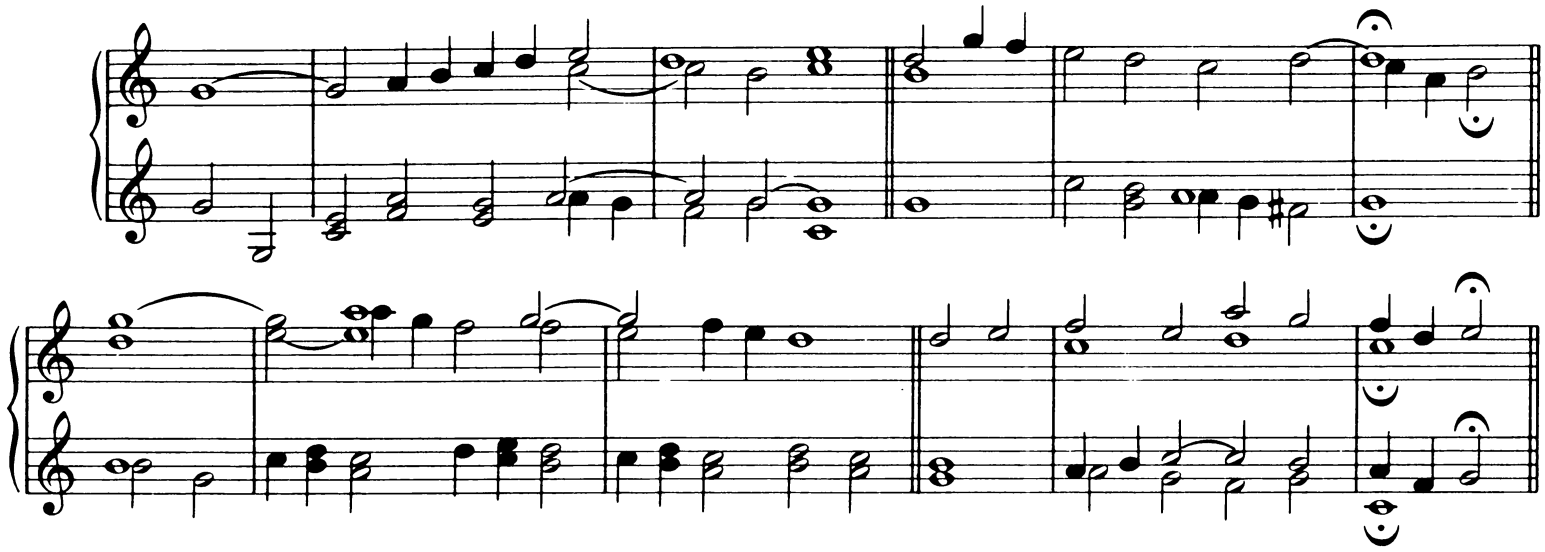

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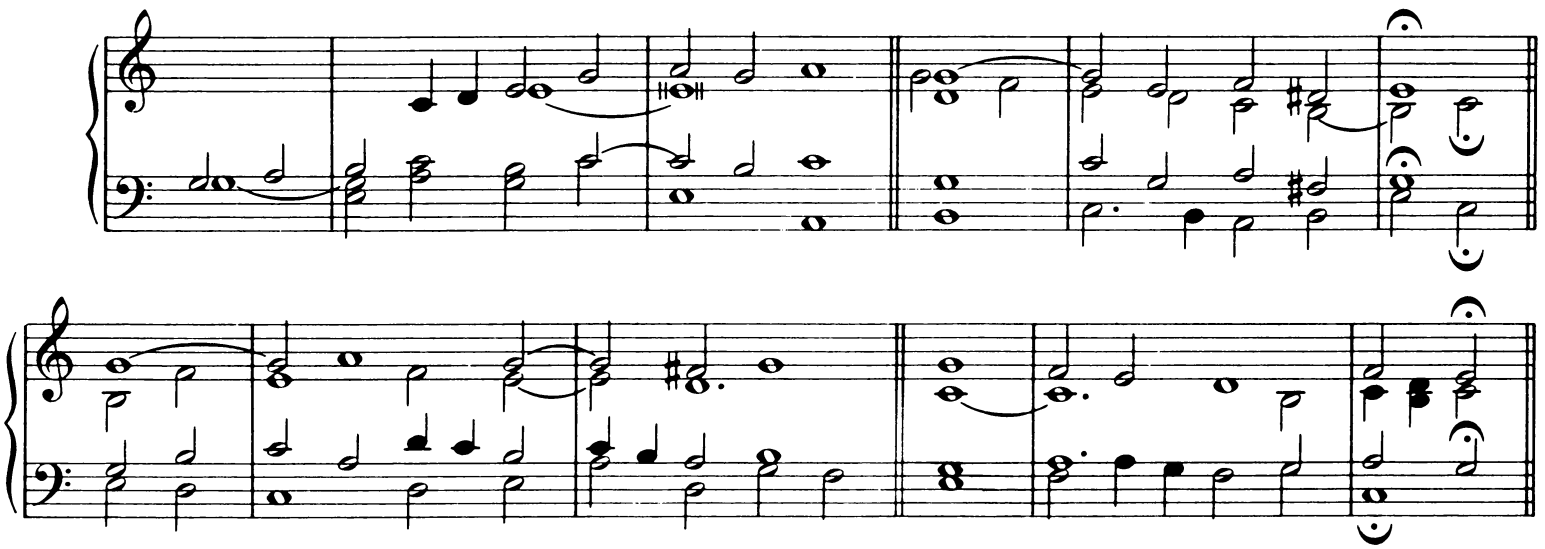

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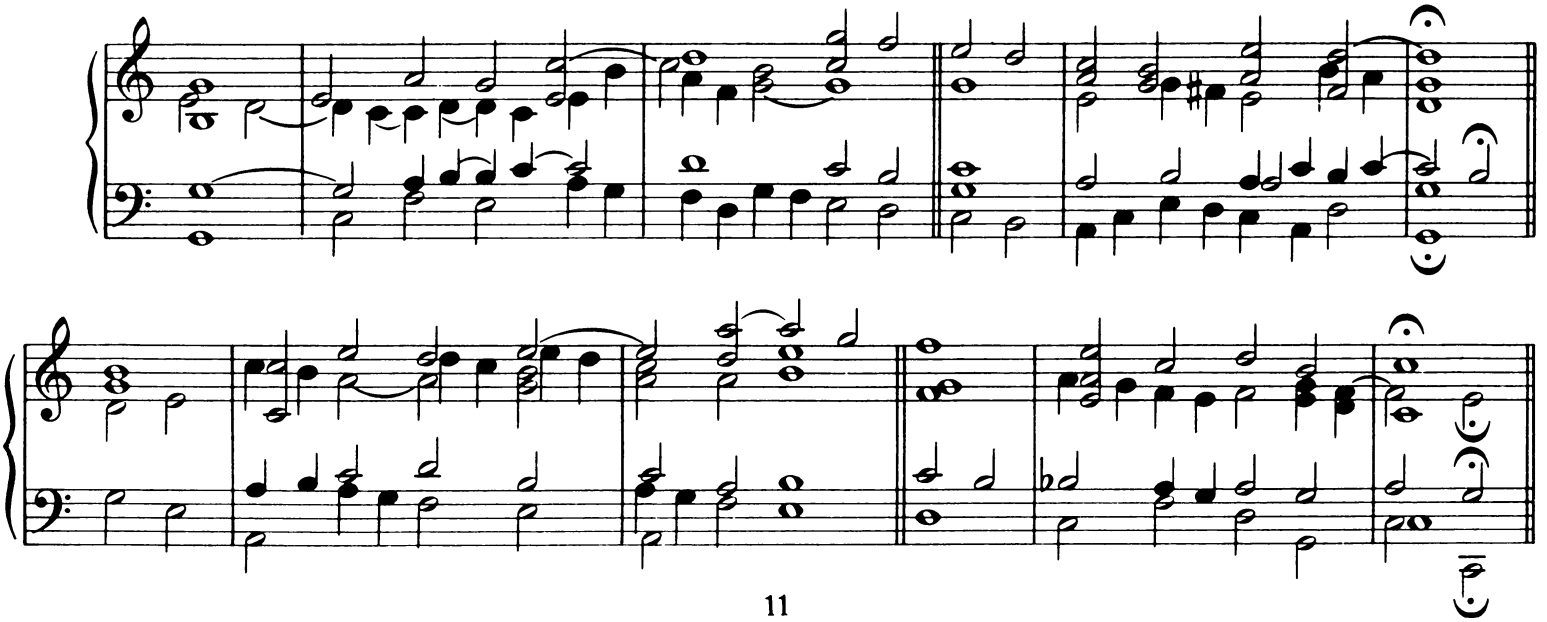

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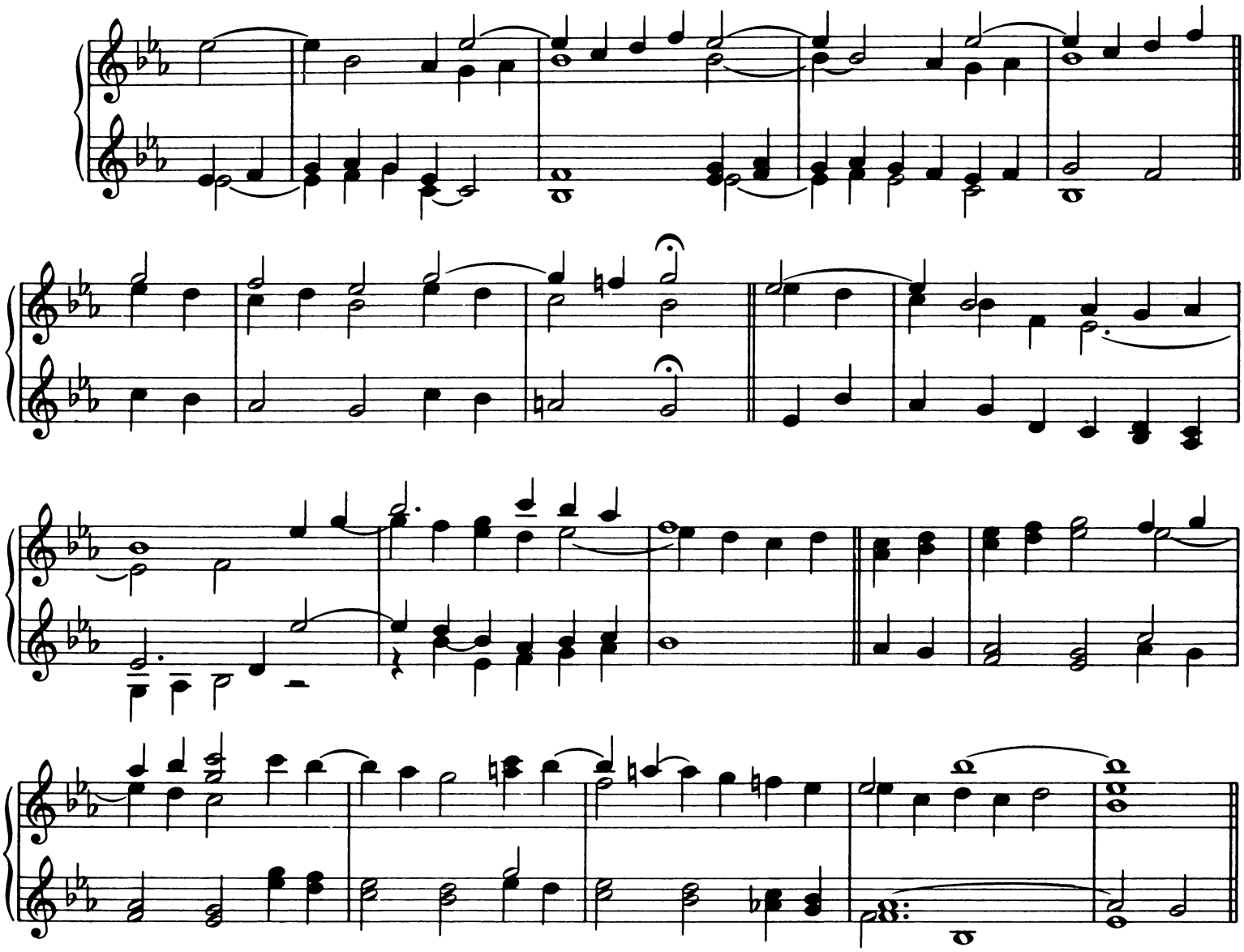

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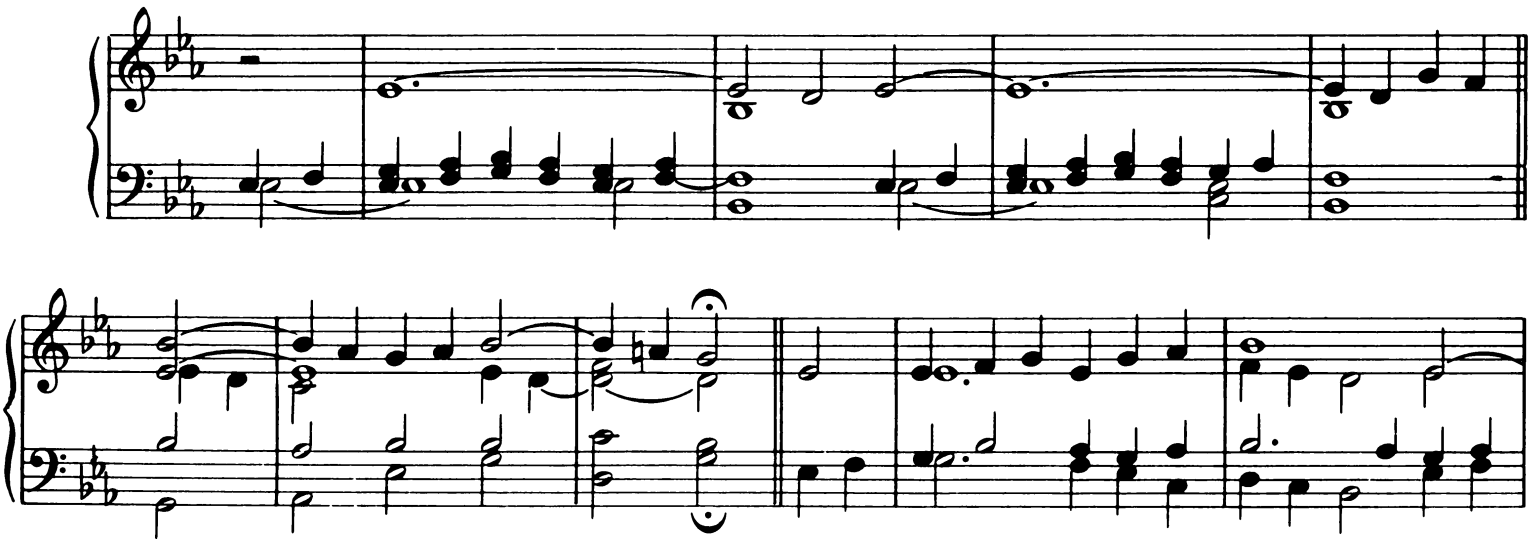

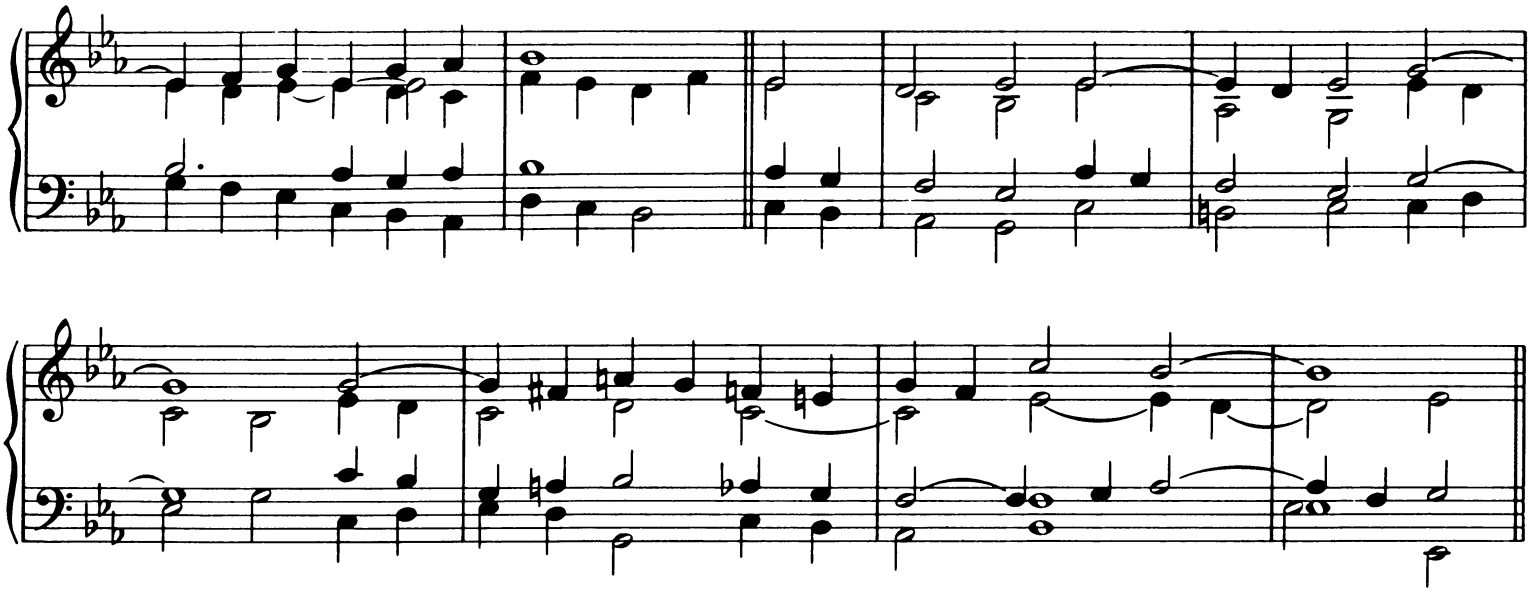

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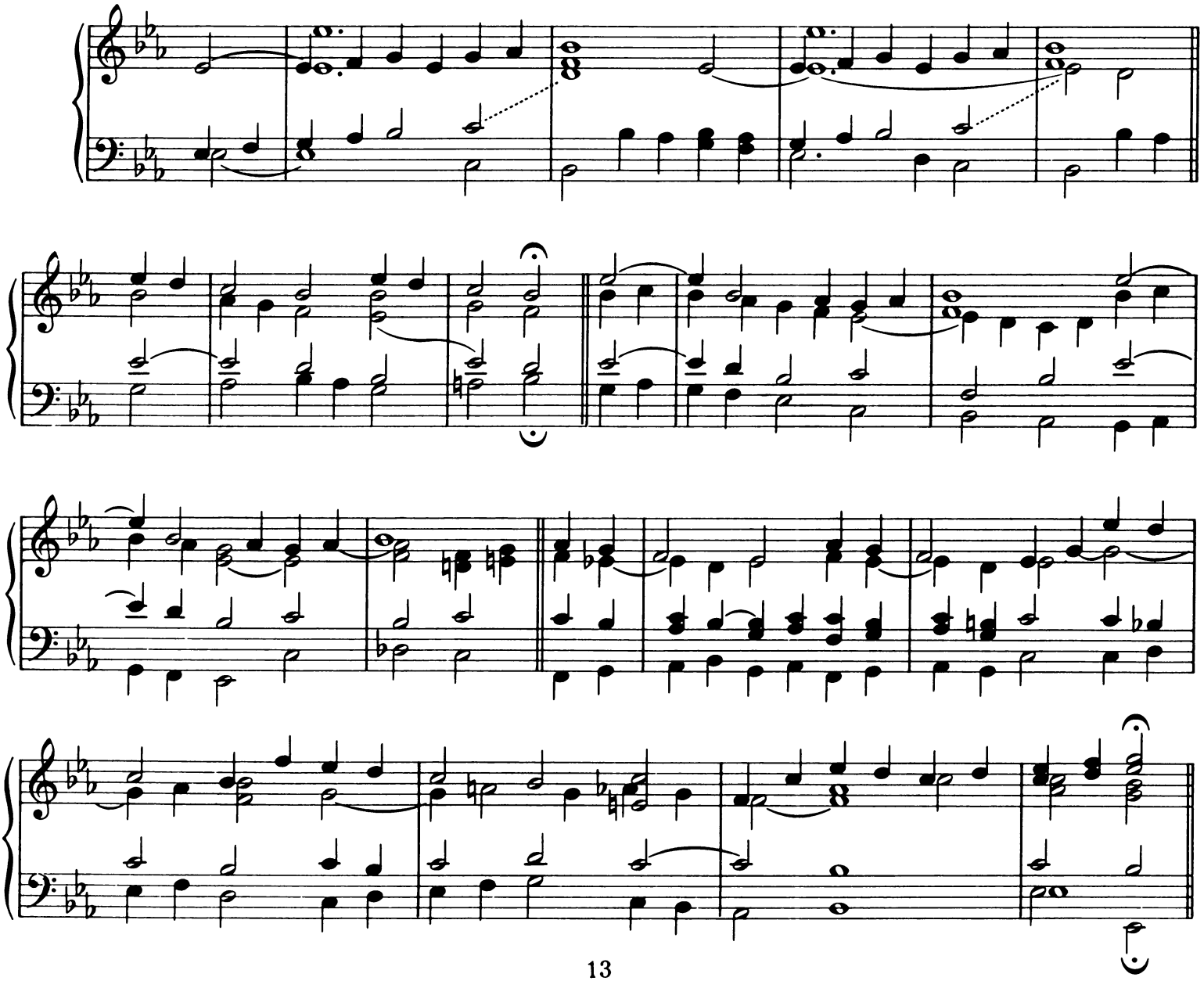

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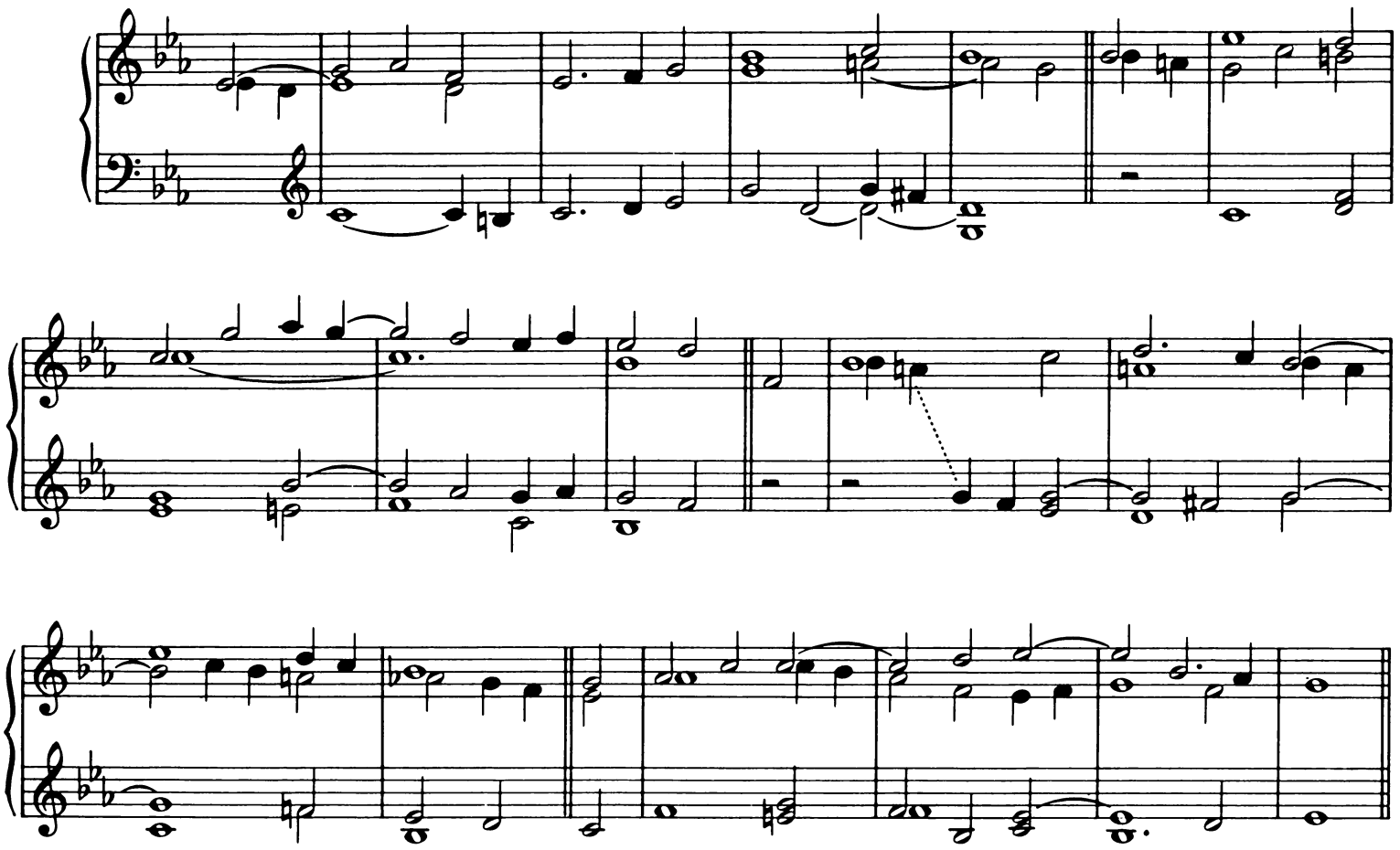

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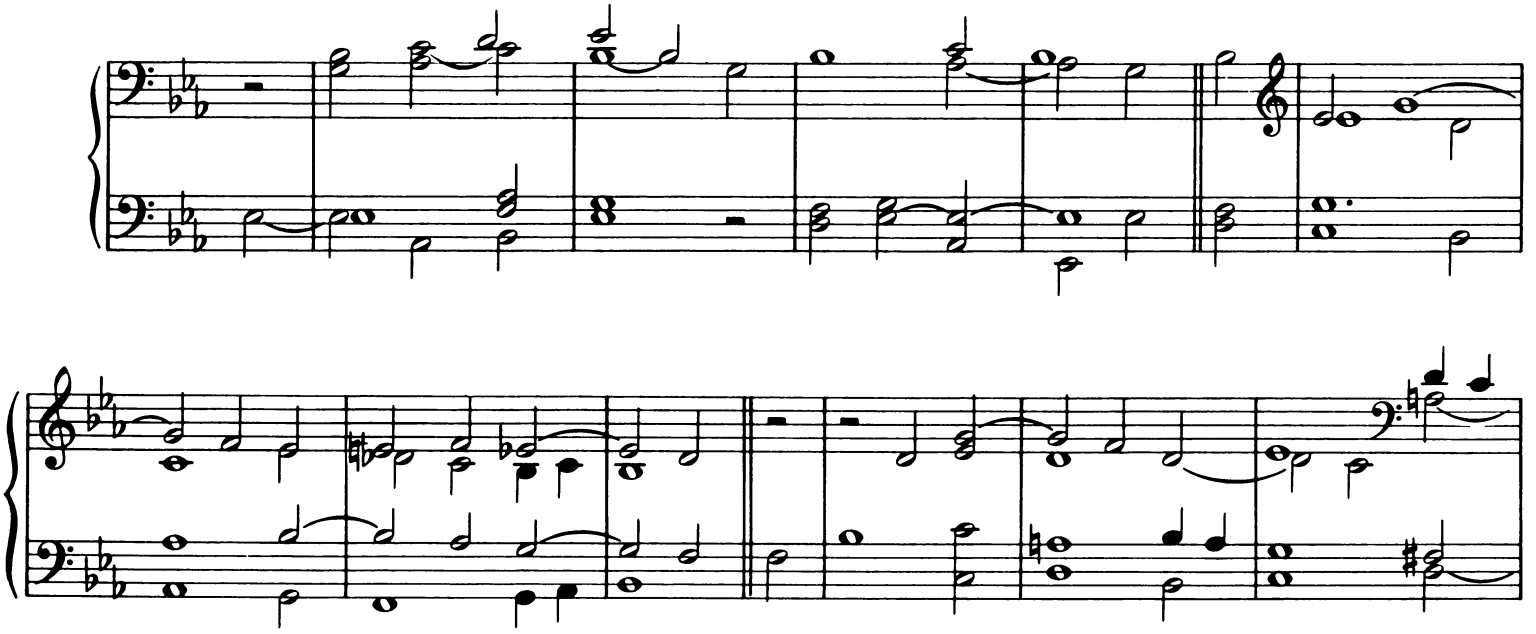

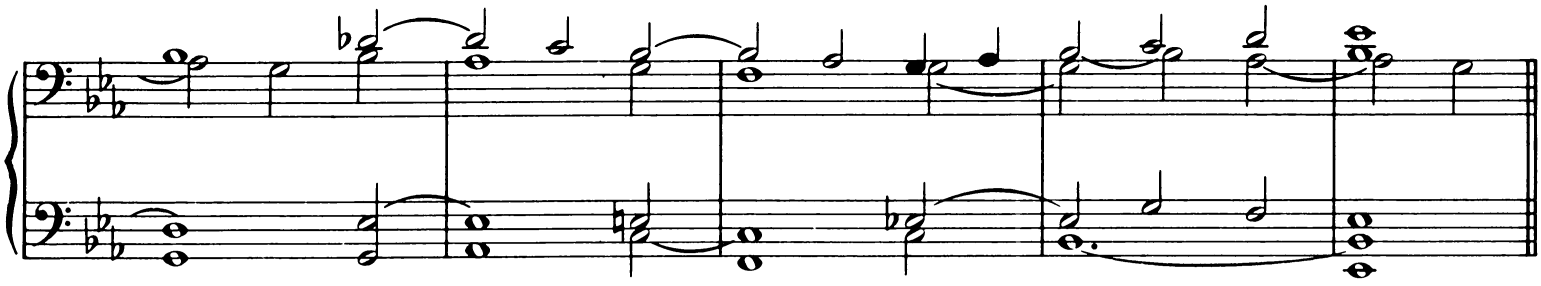

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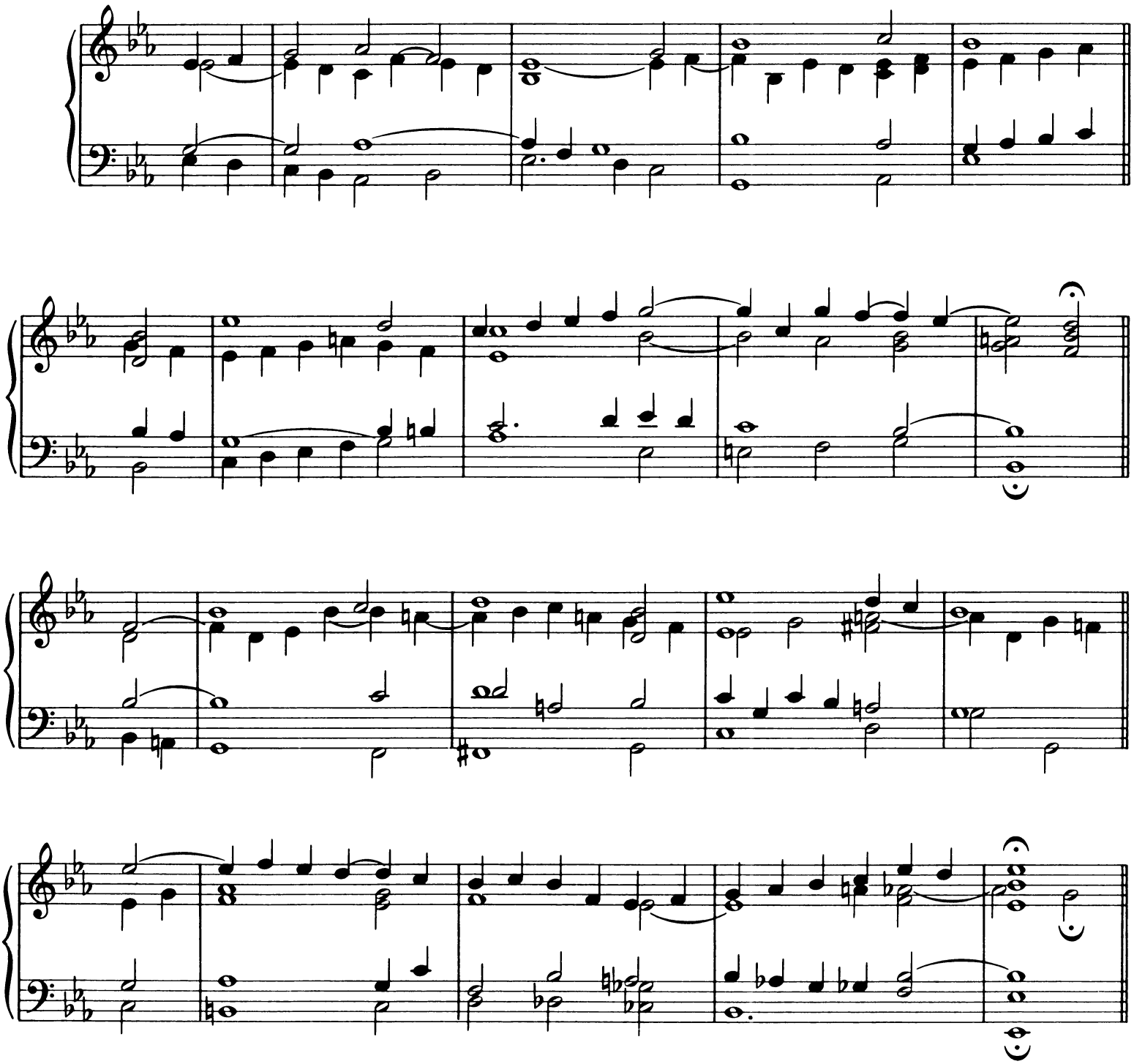

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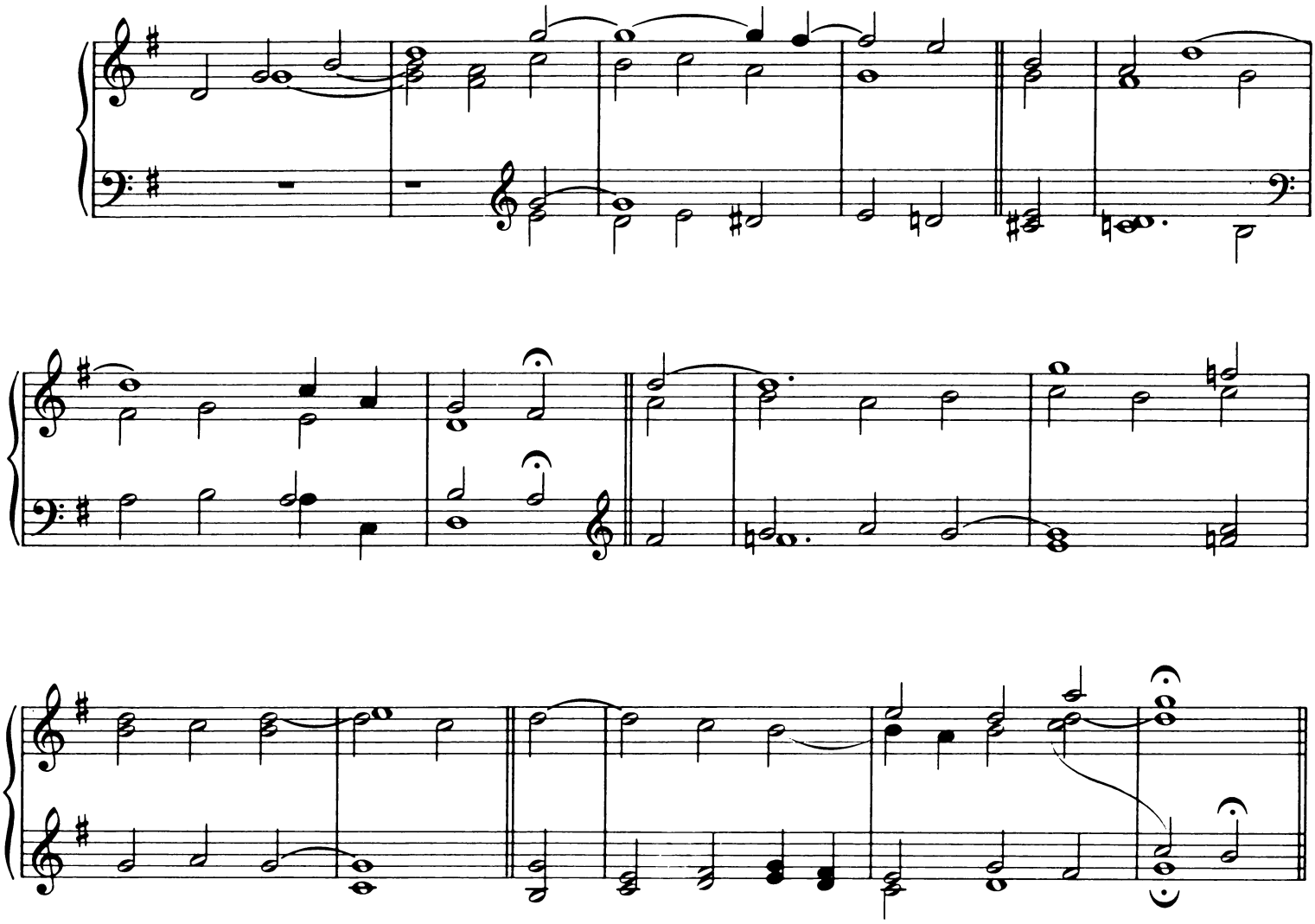

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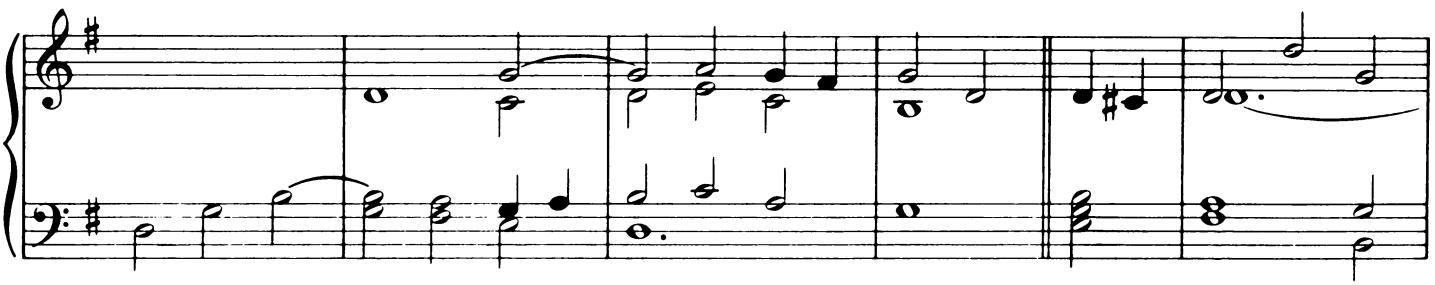

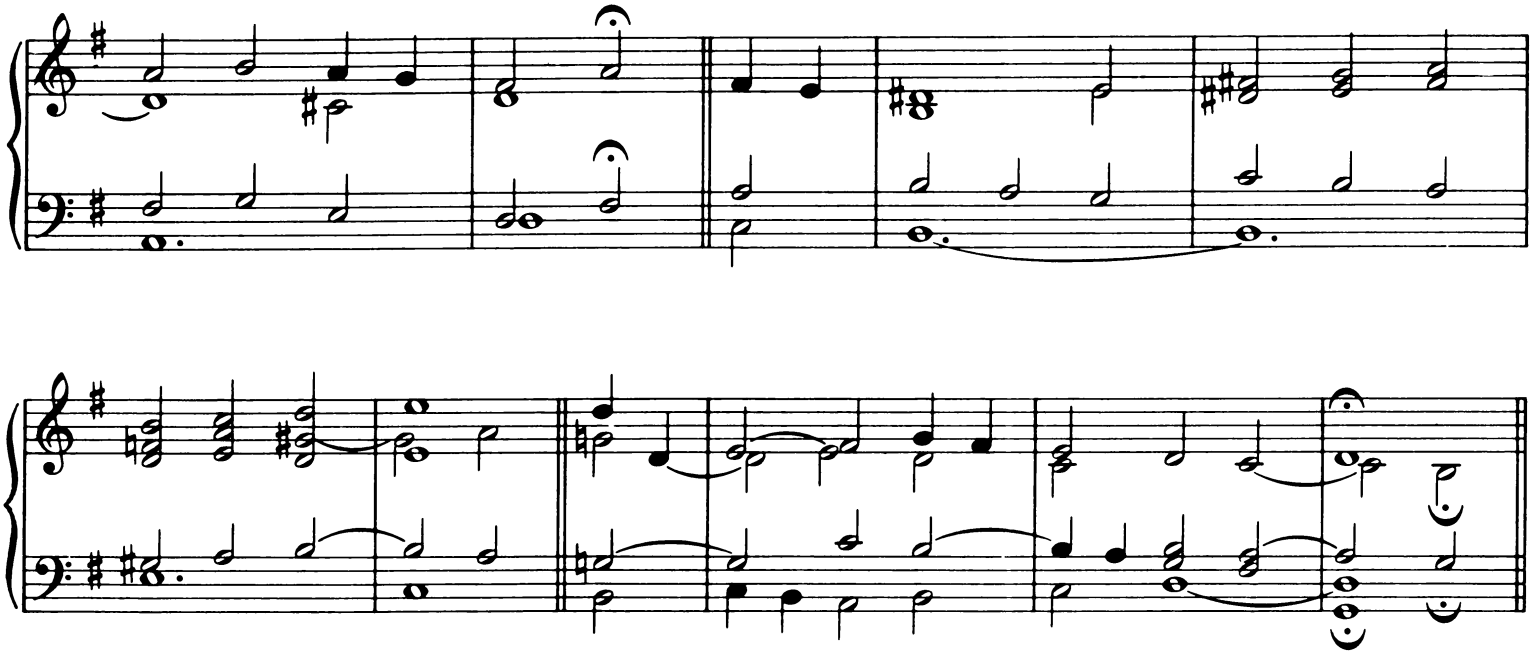

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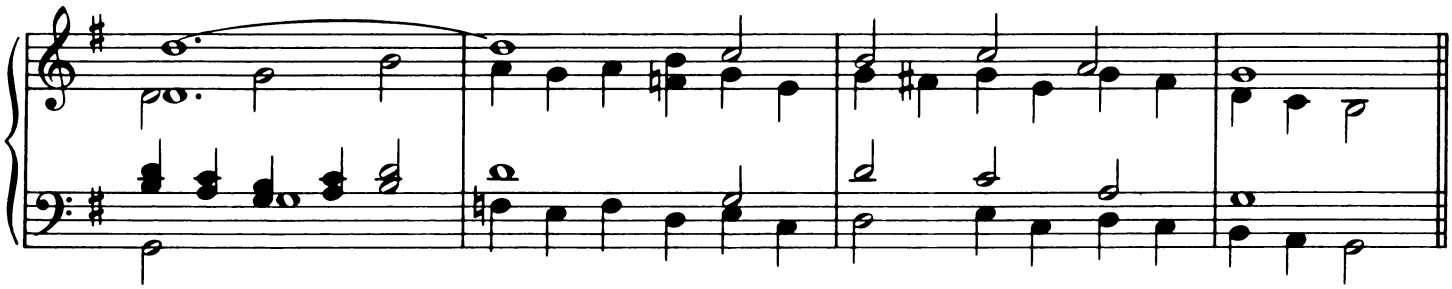

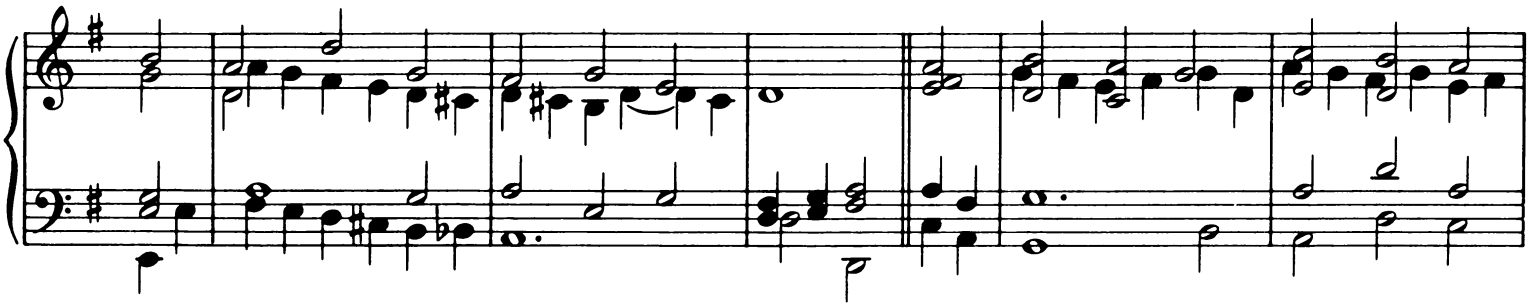

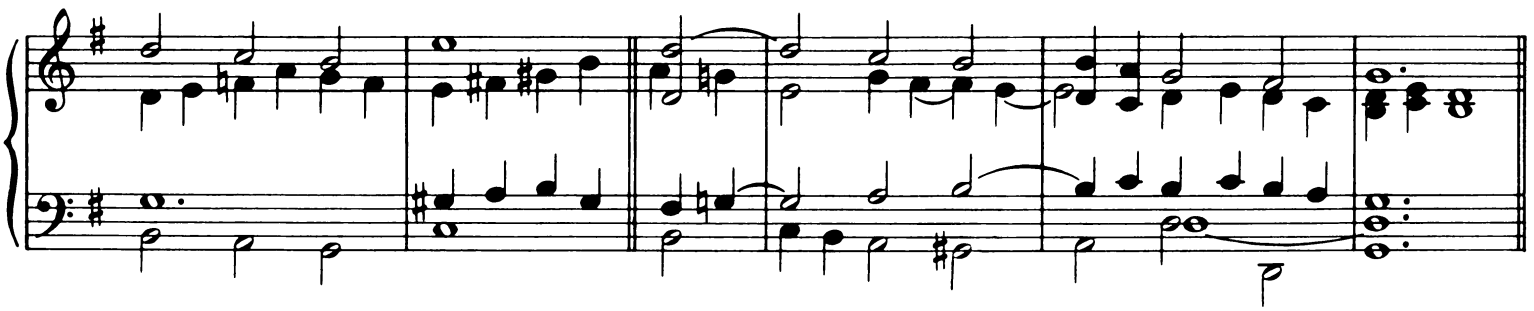

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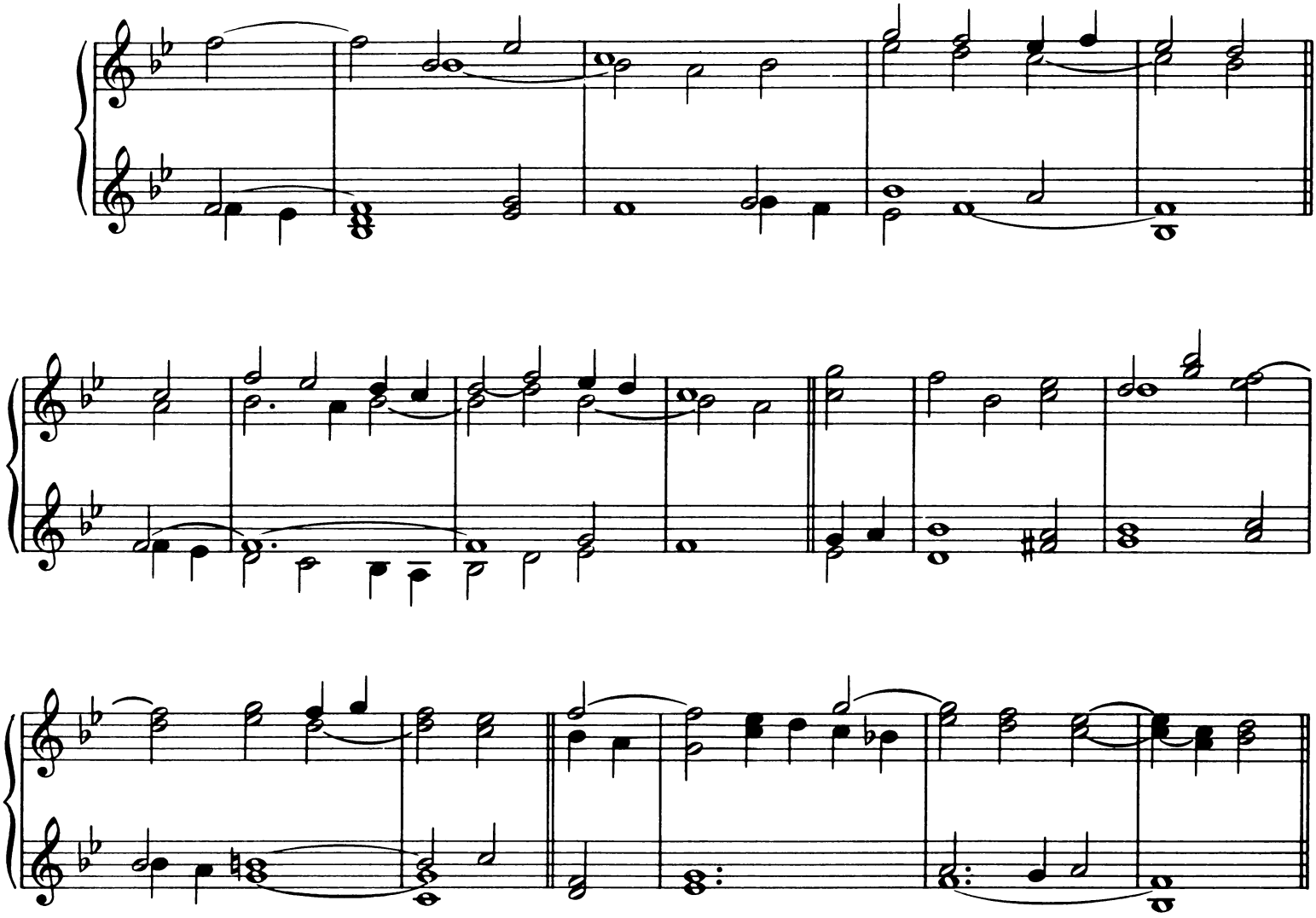

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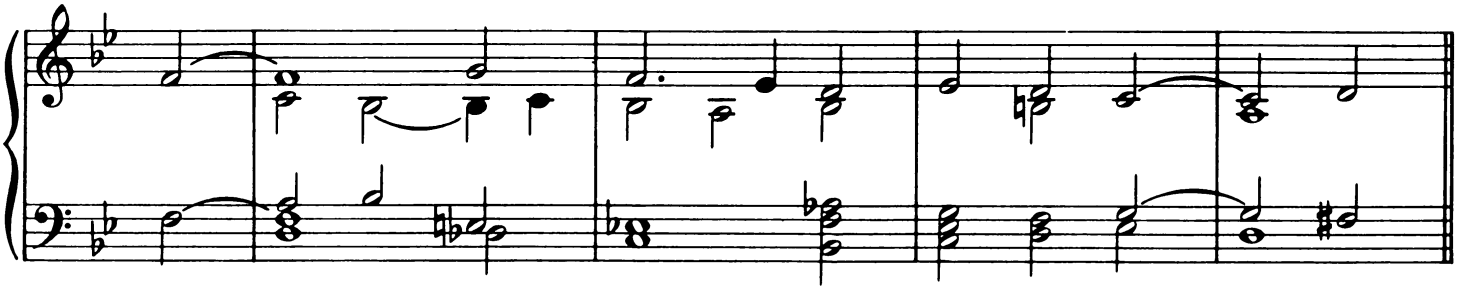

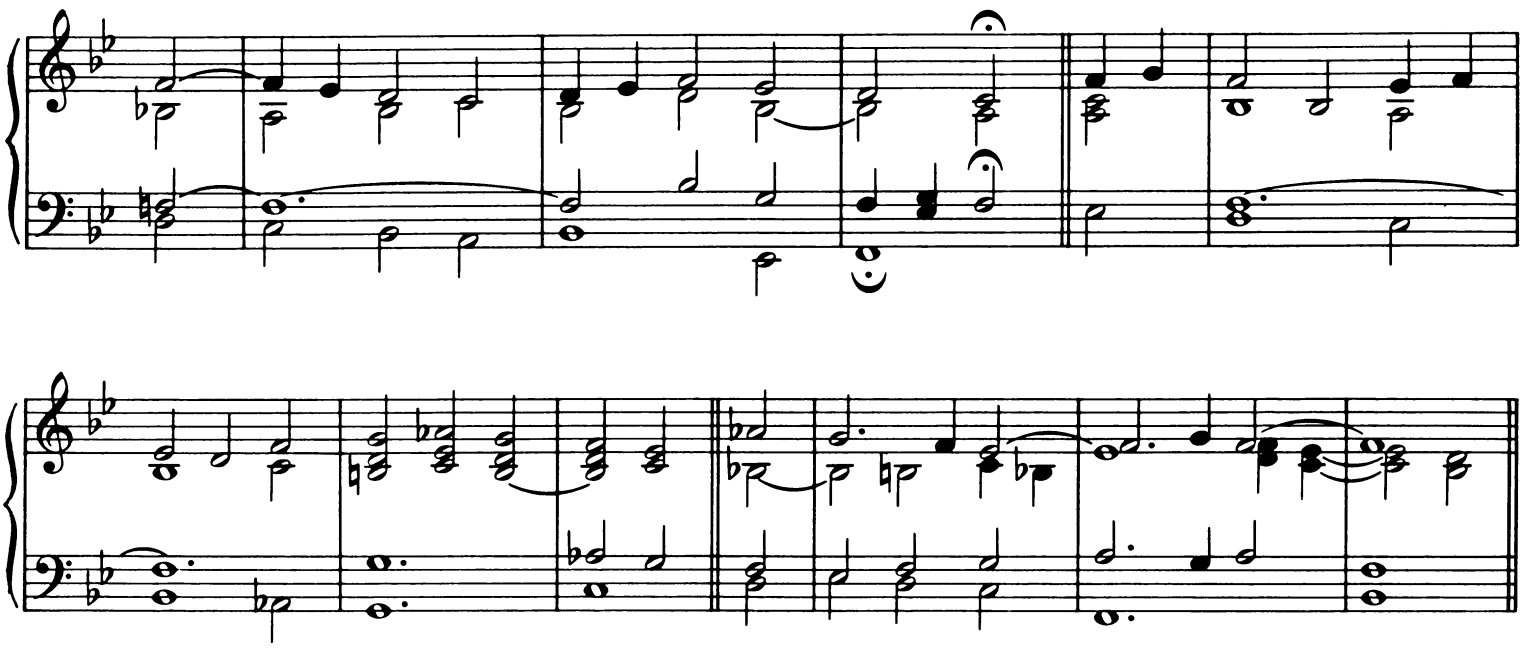

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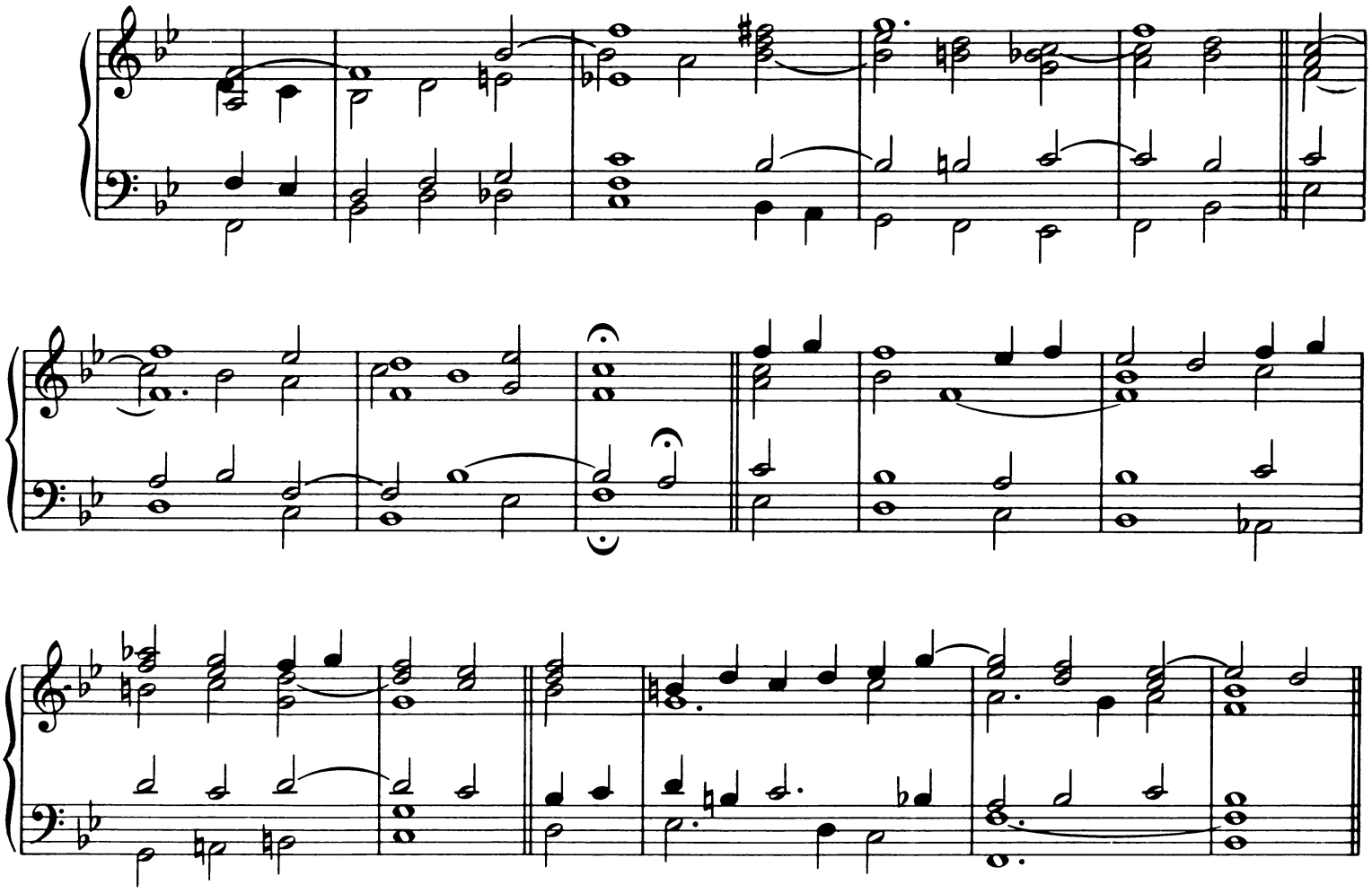

MARTYRDOM

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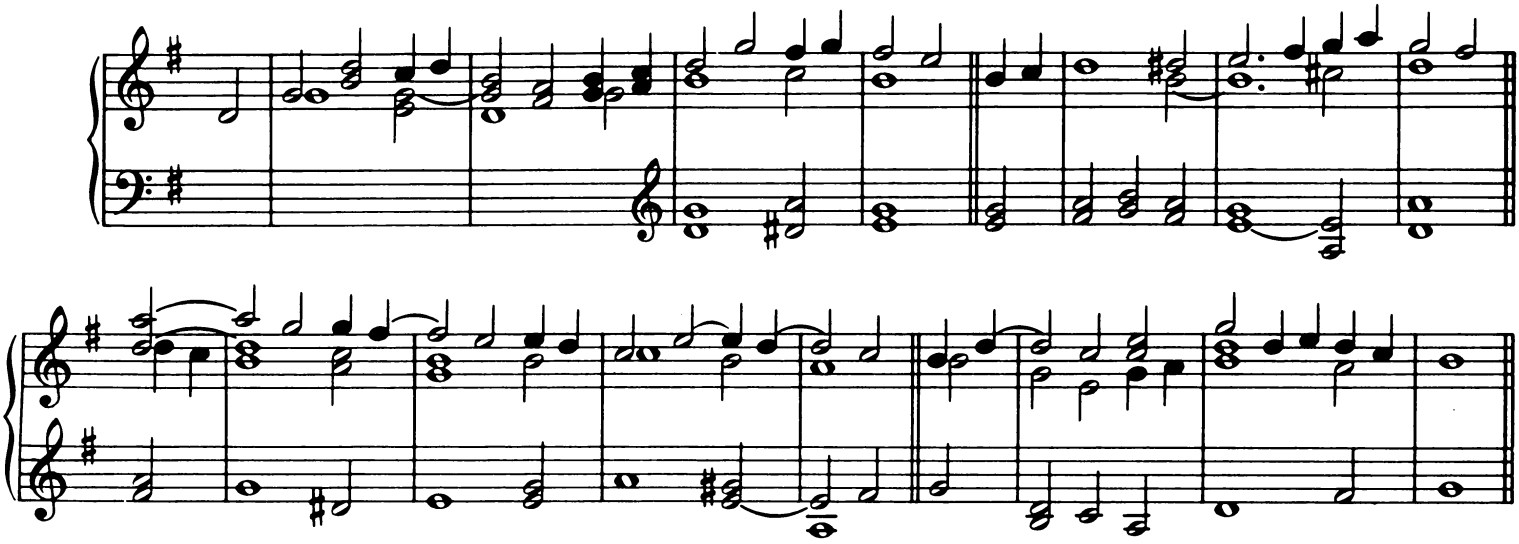

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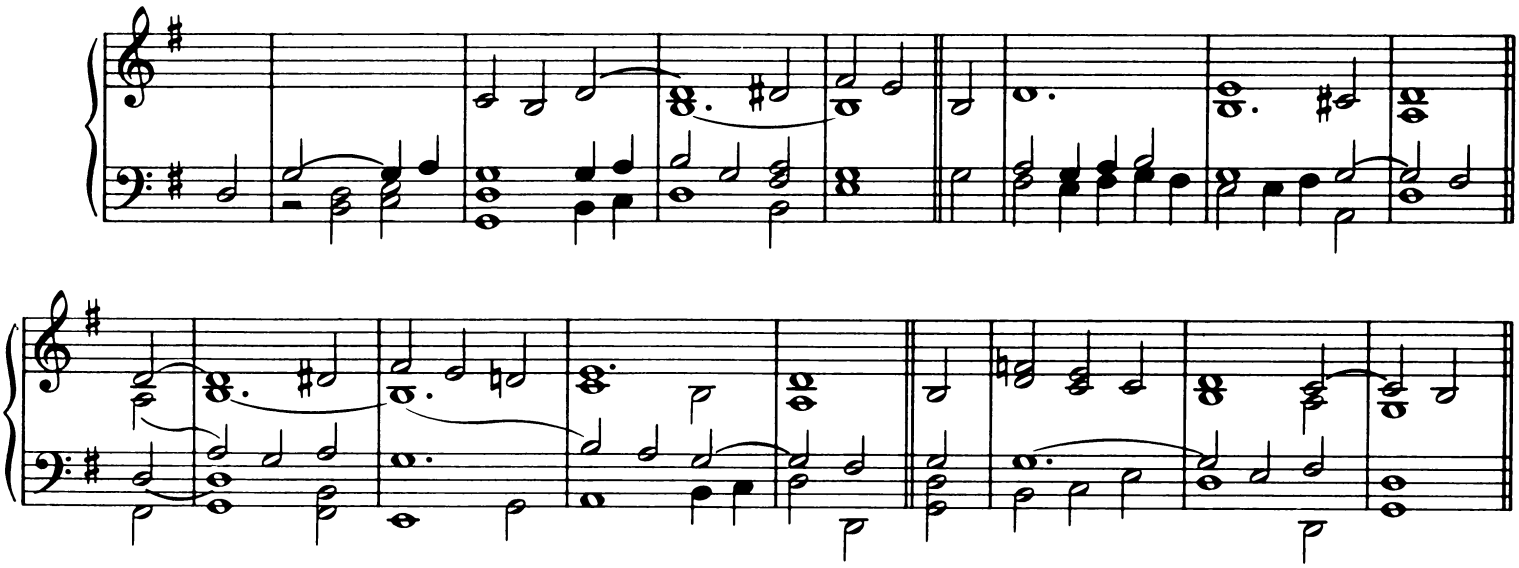

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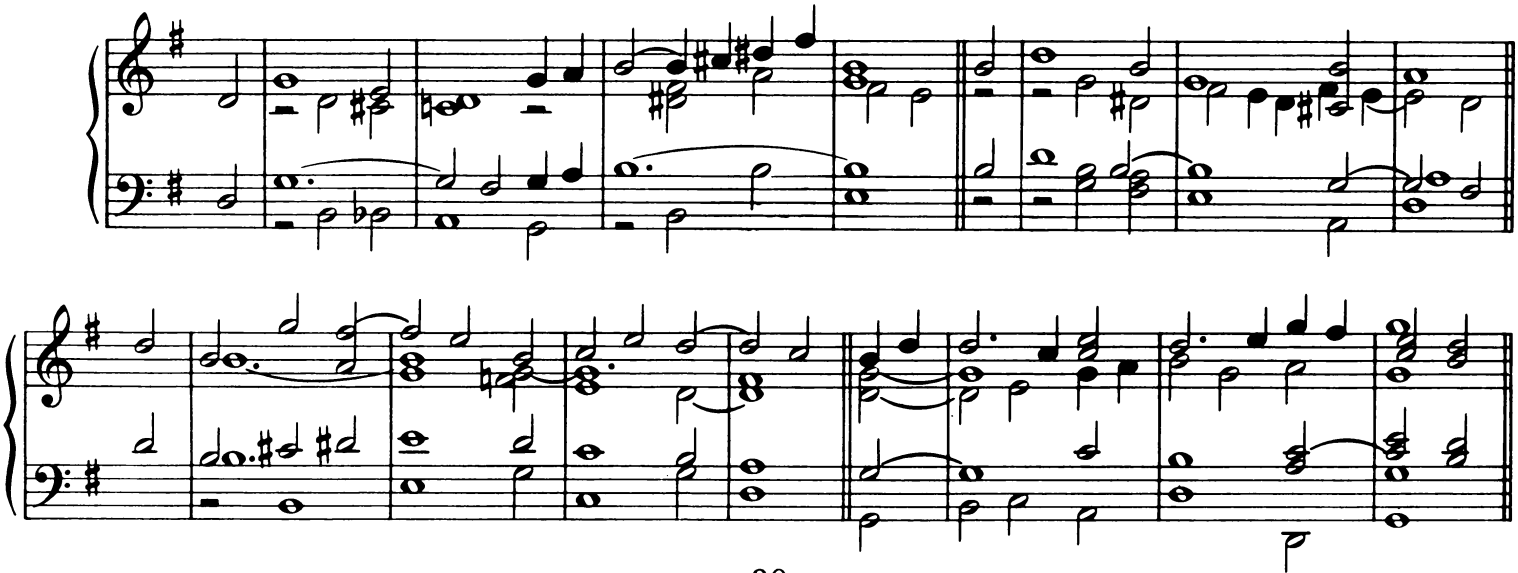

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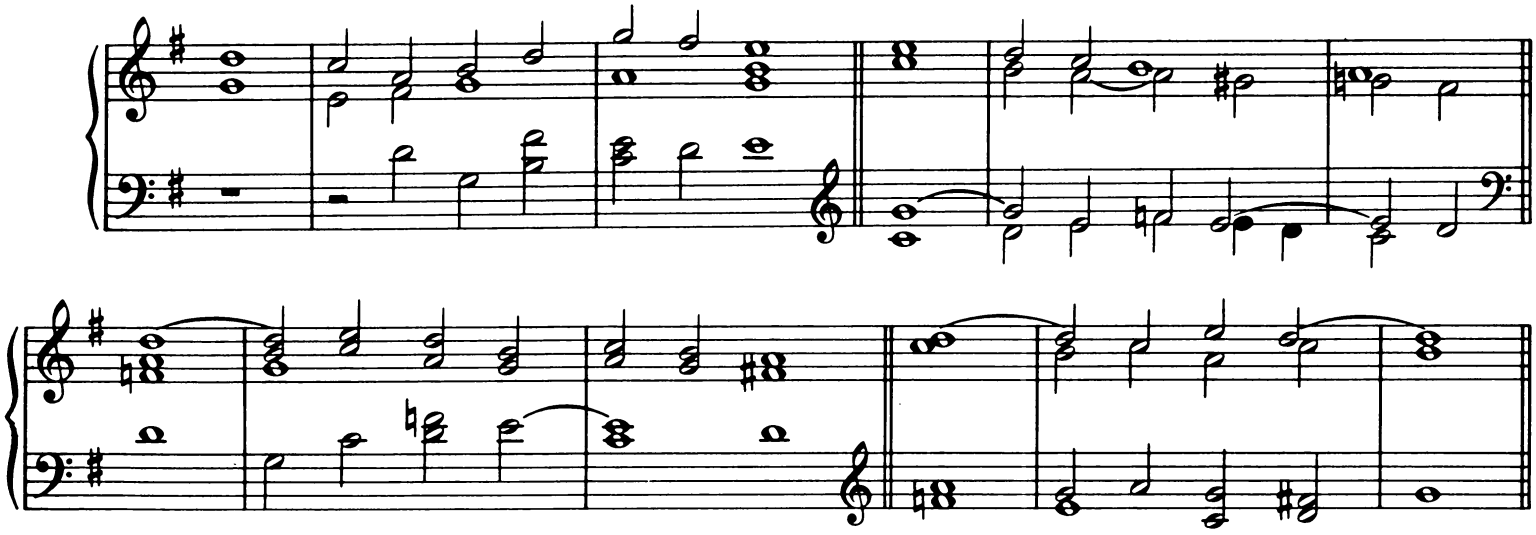

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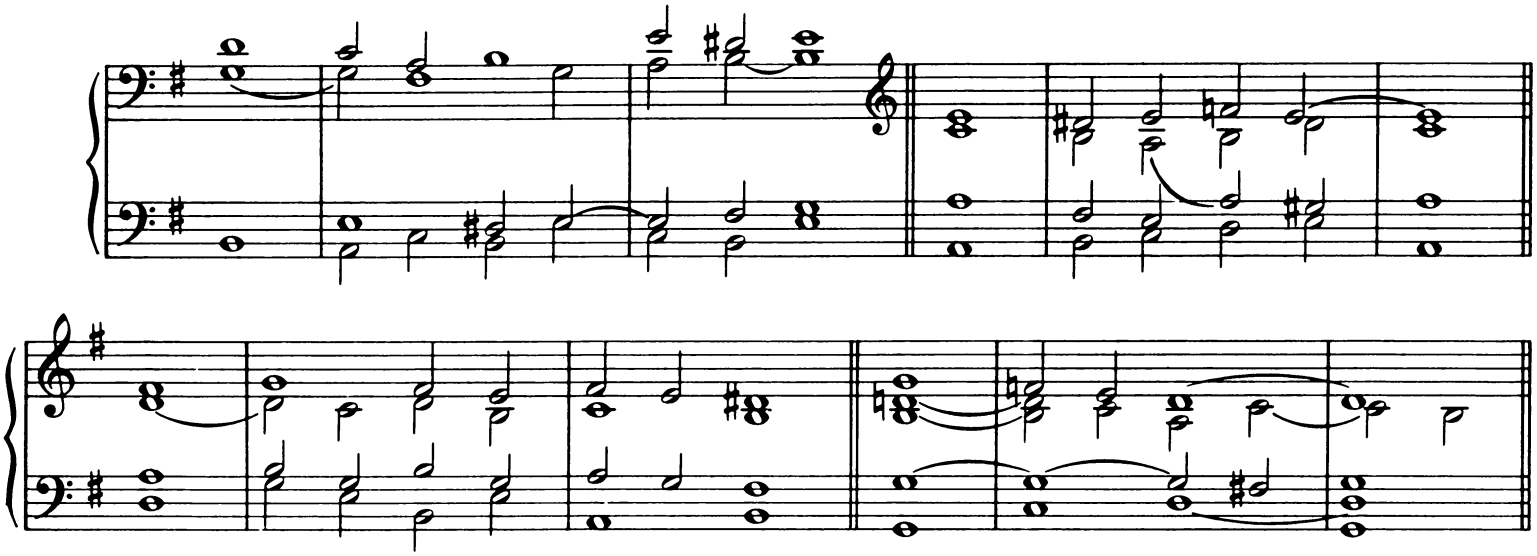

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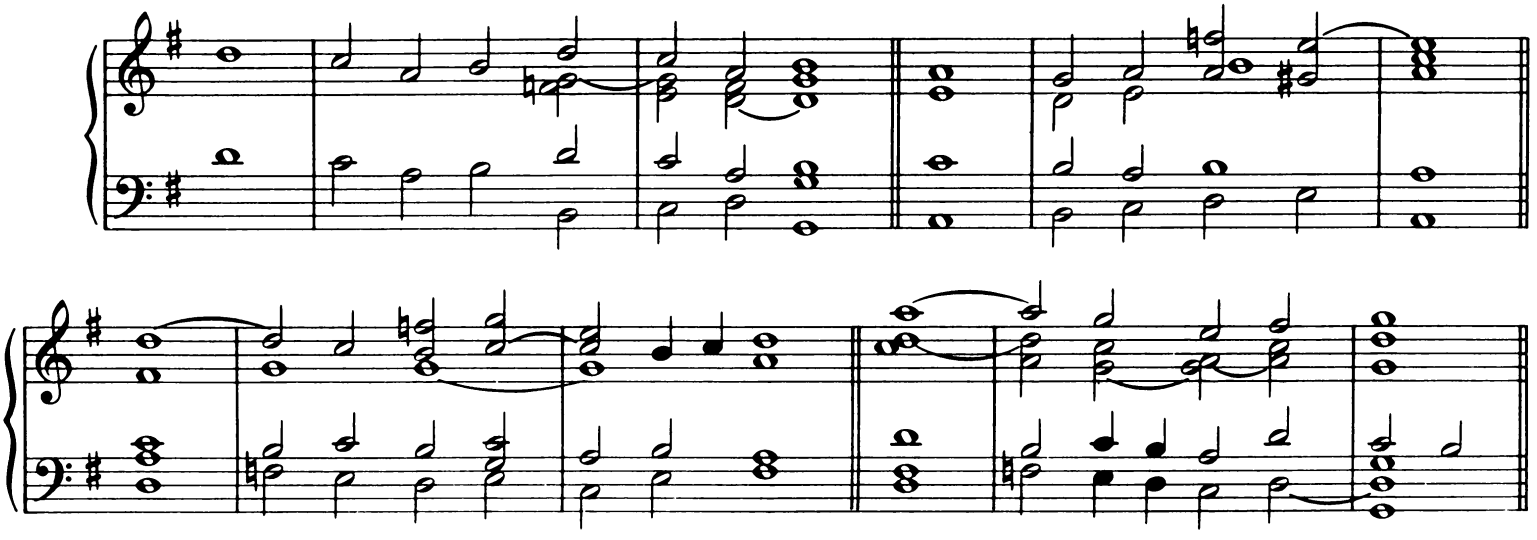

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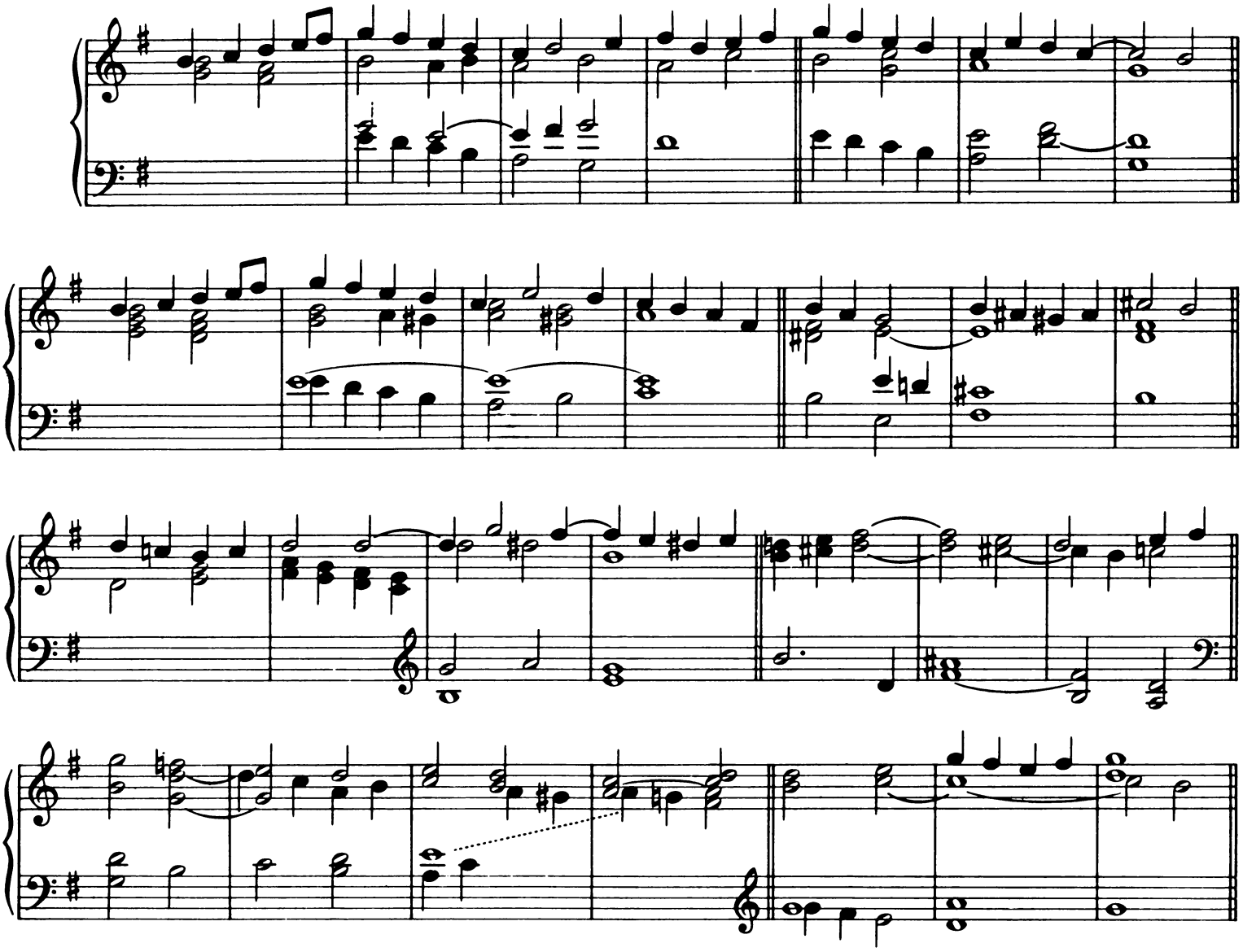

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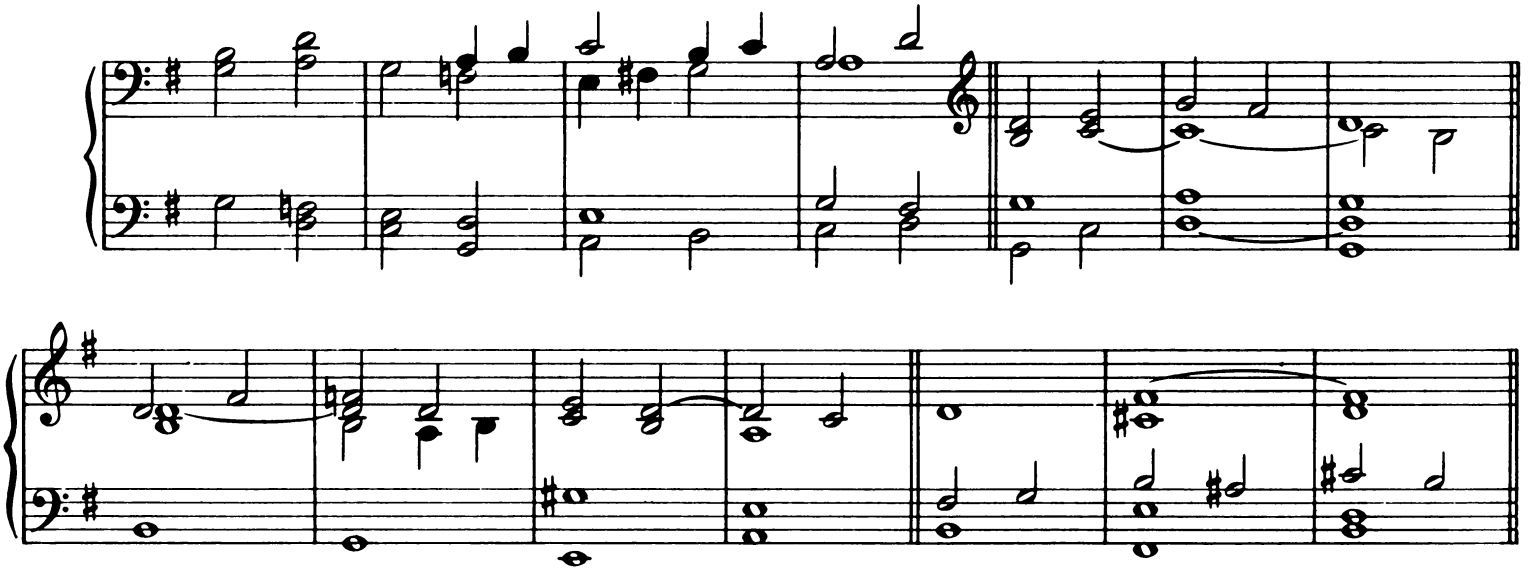

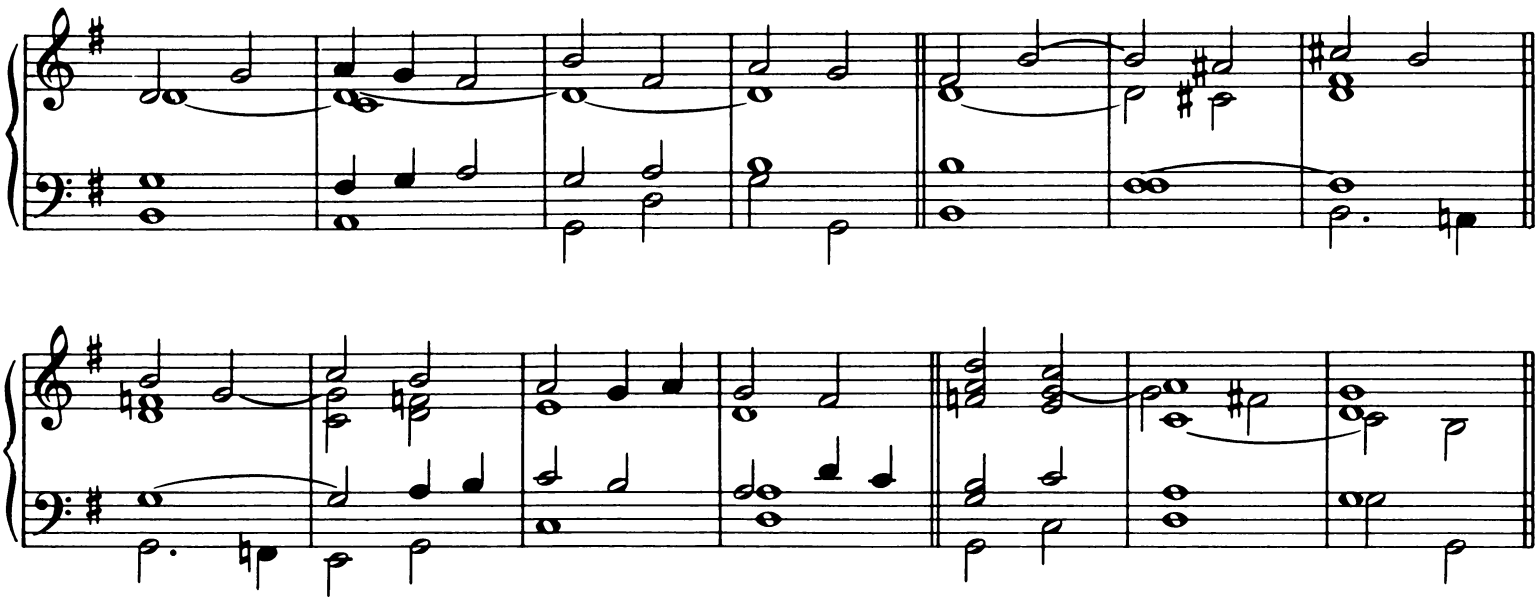

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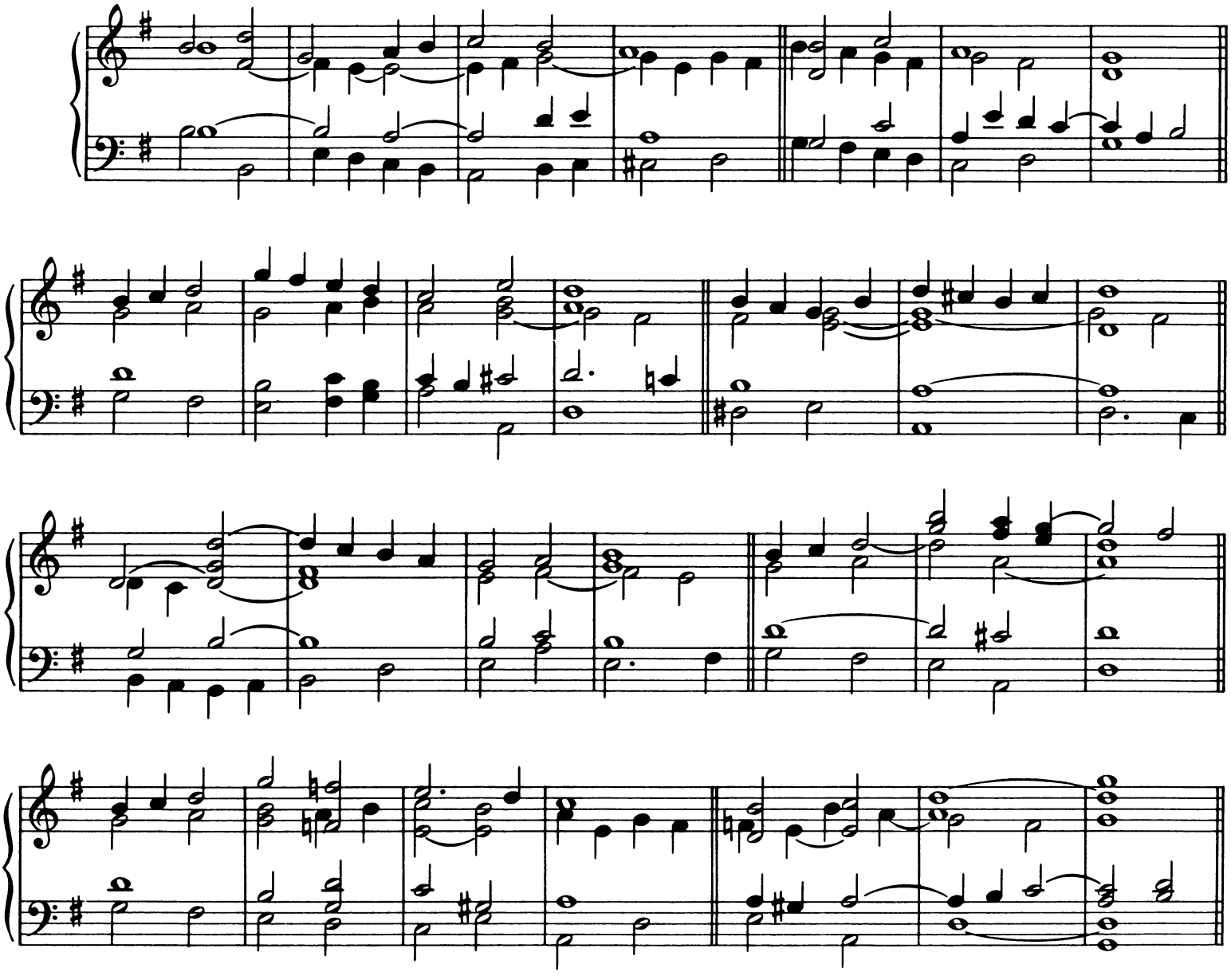

RHOSYMEDRE

(LOVELY)

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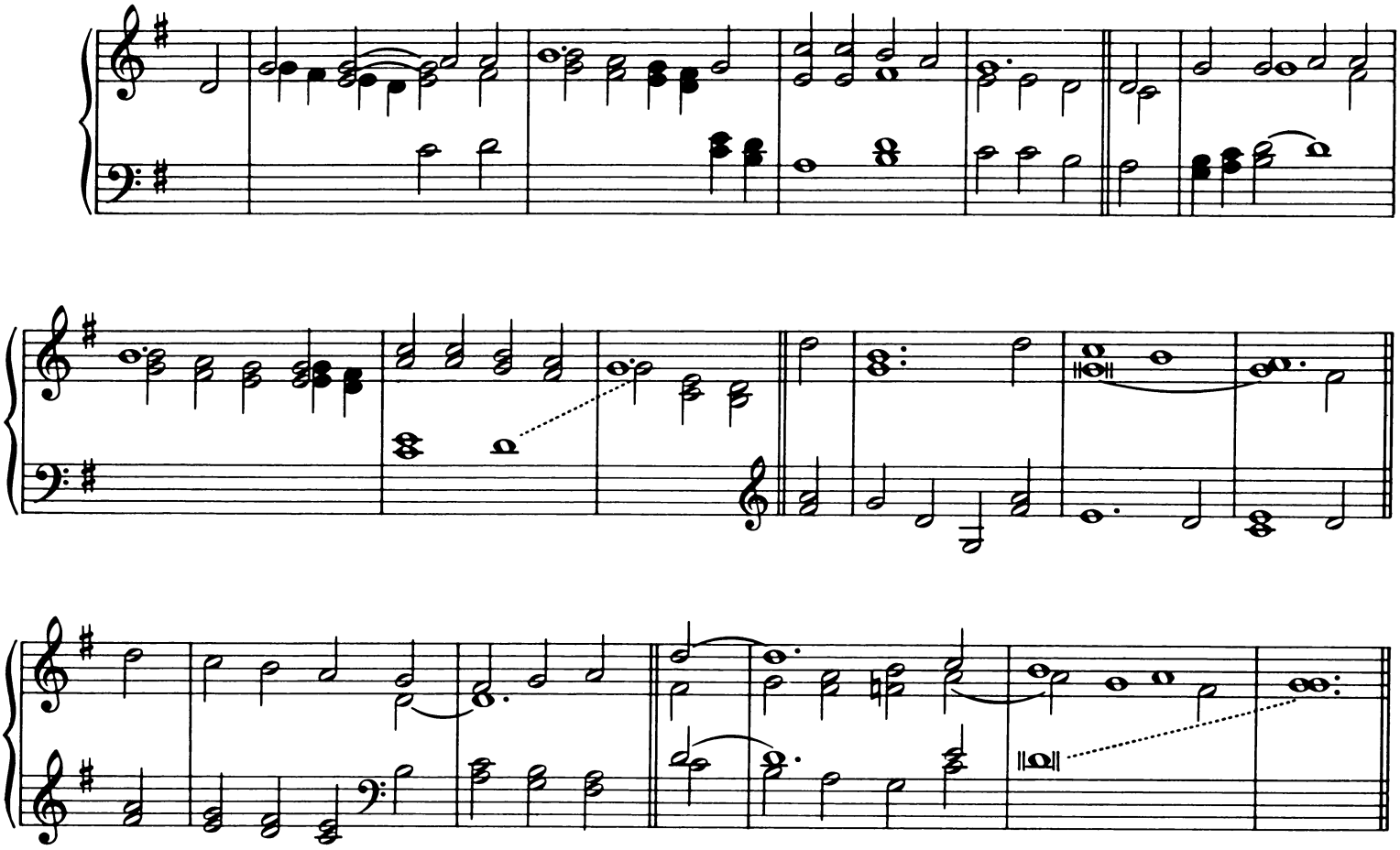

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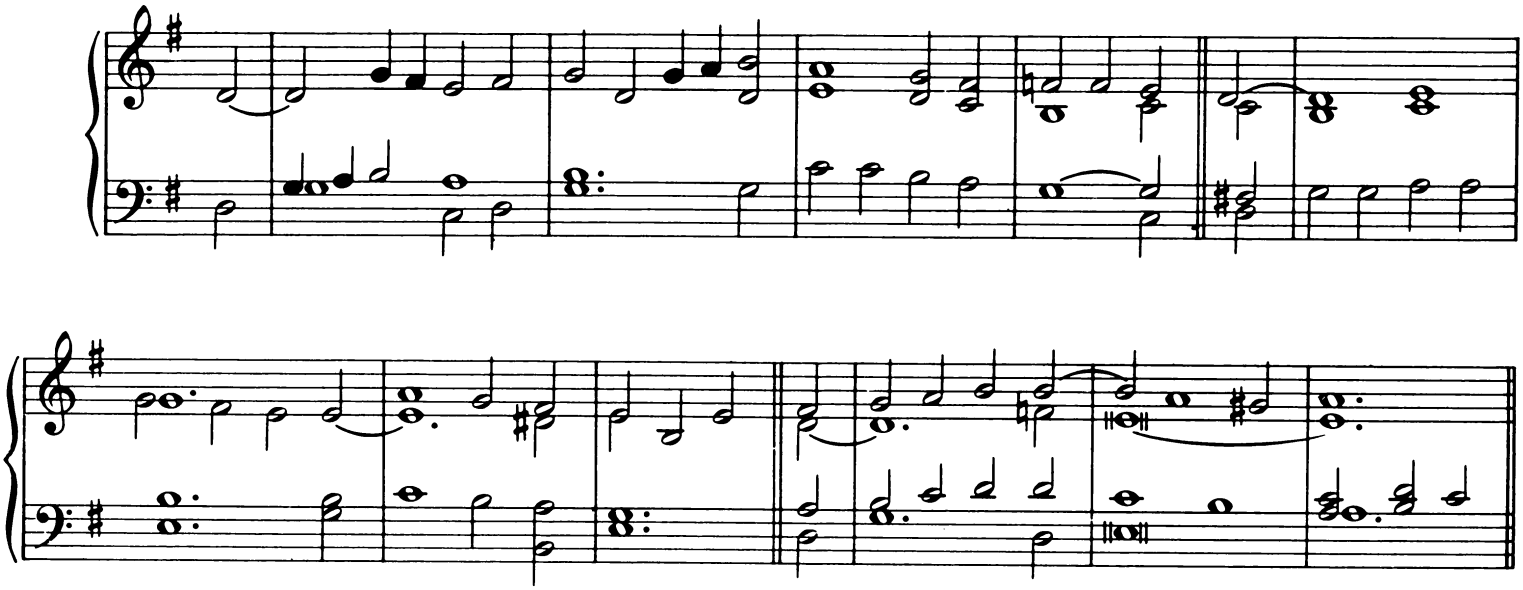

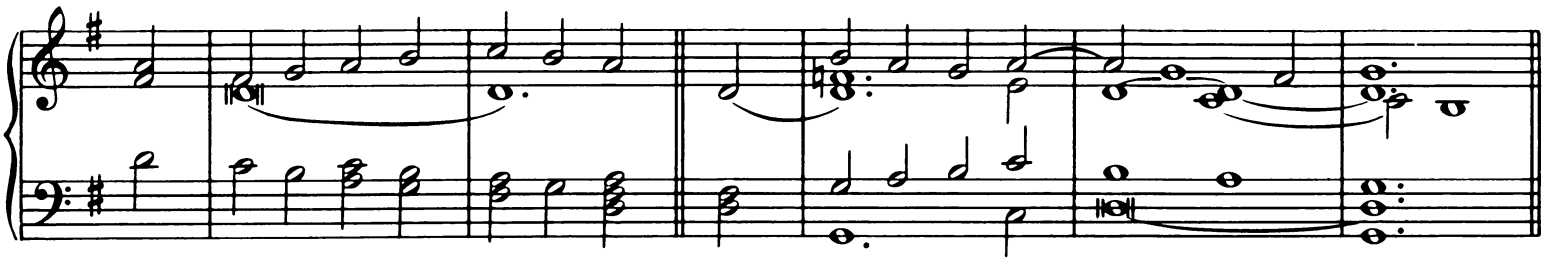

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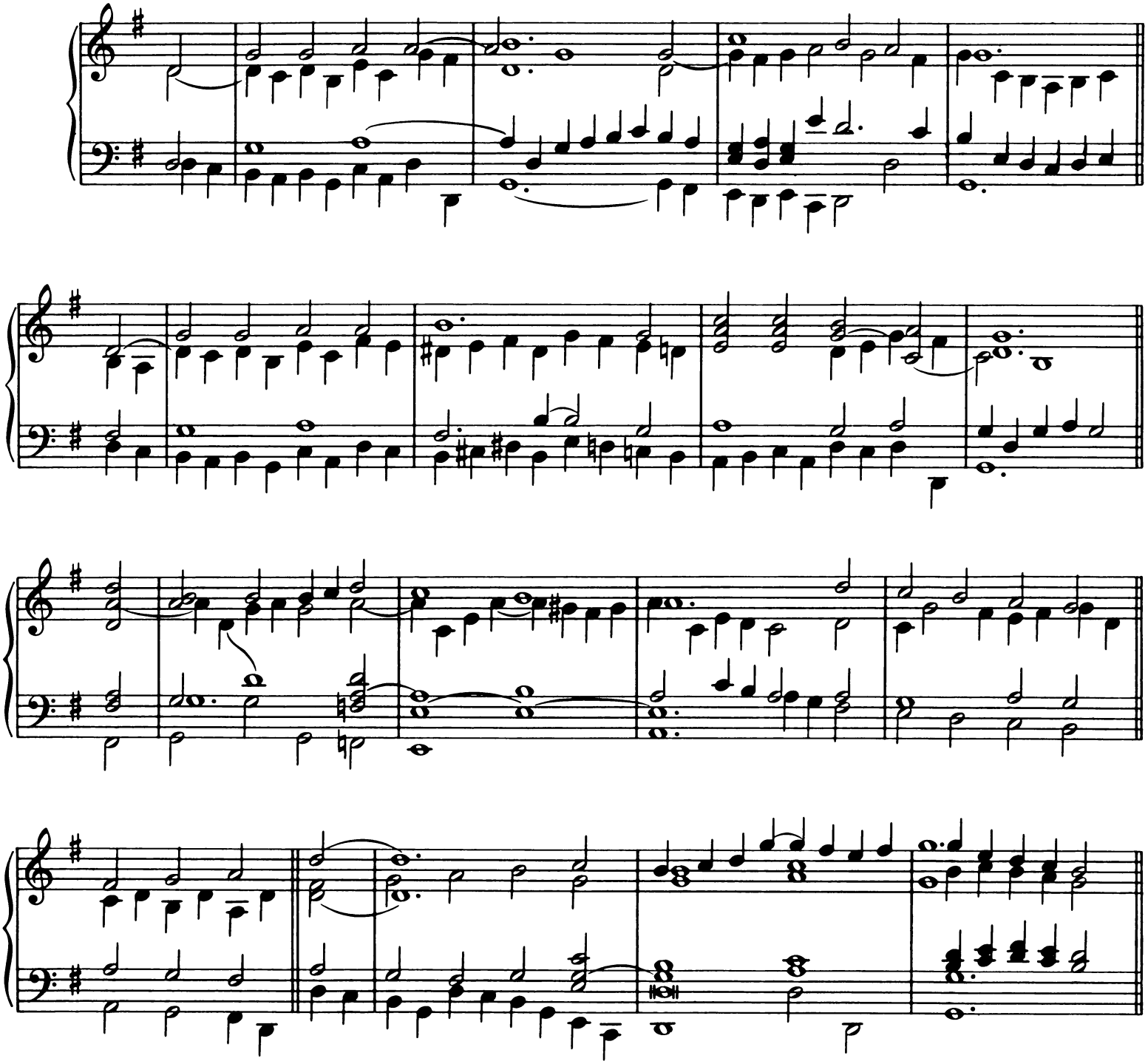

SURREY

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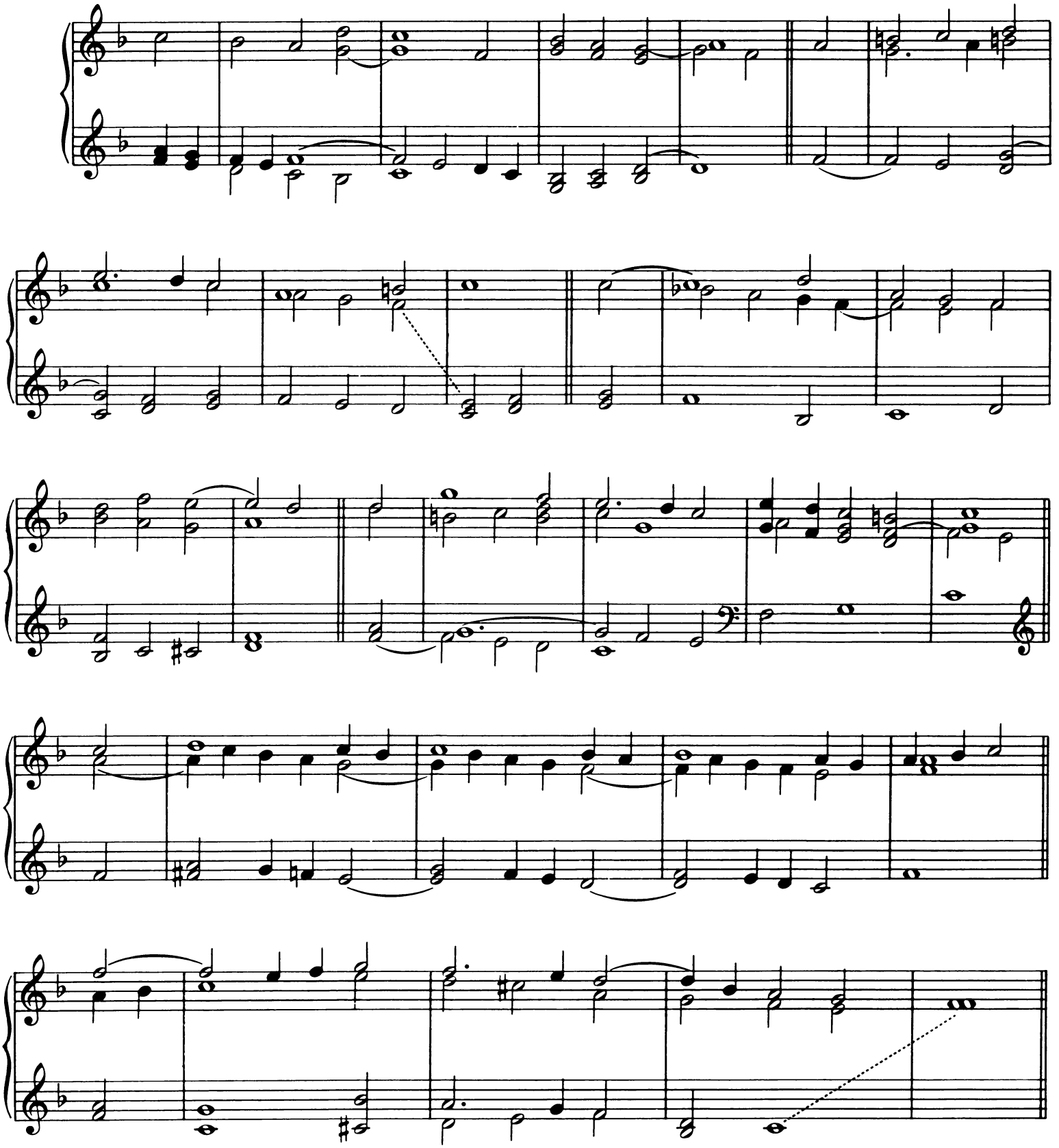

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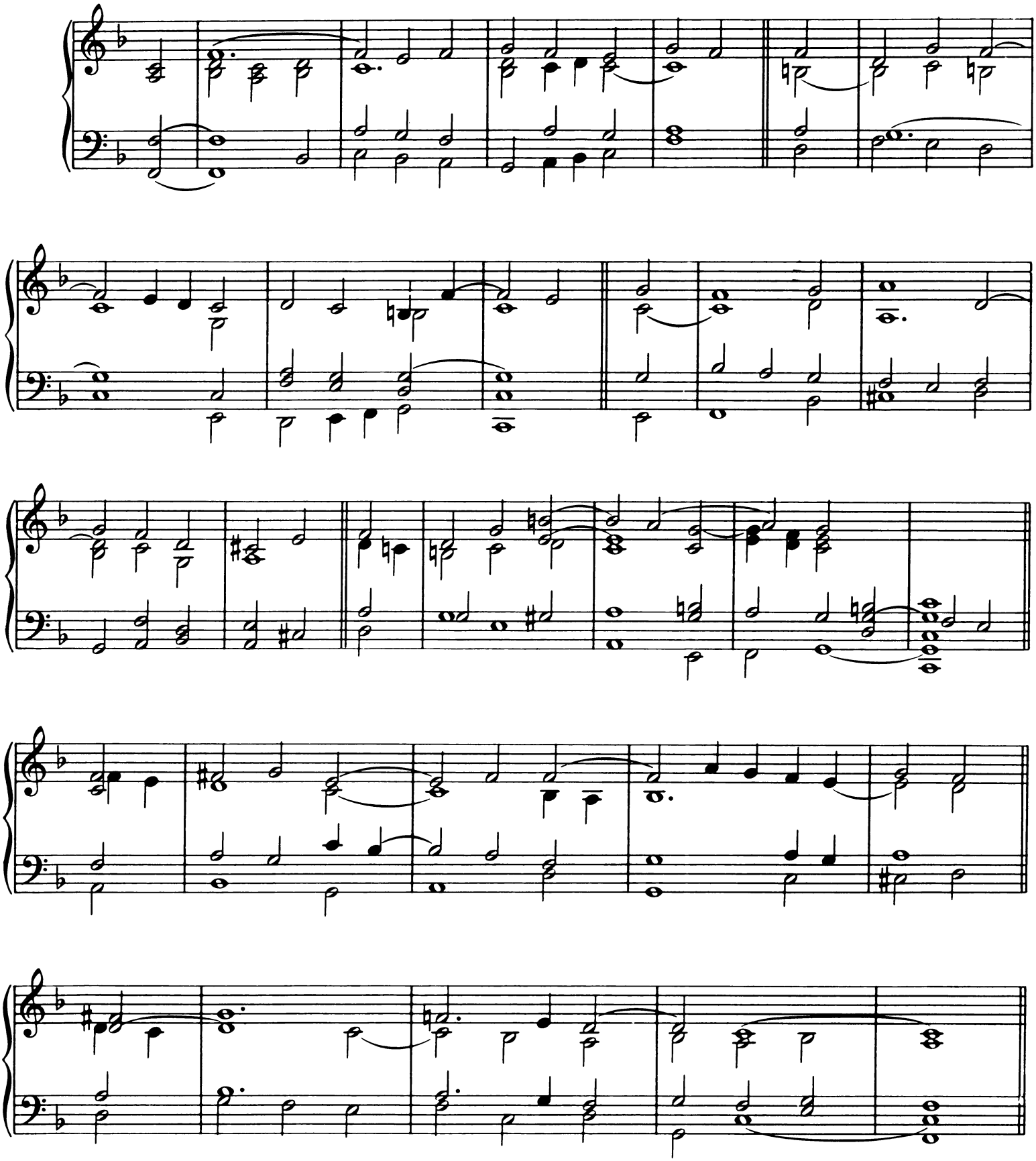

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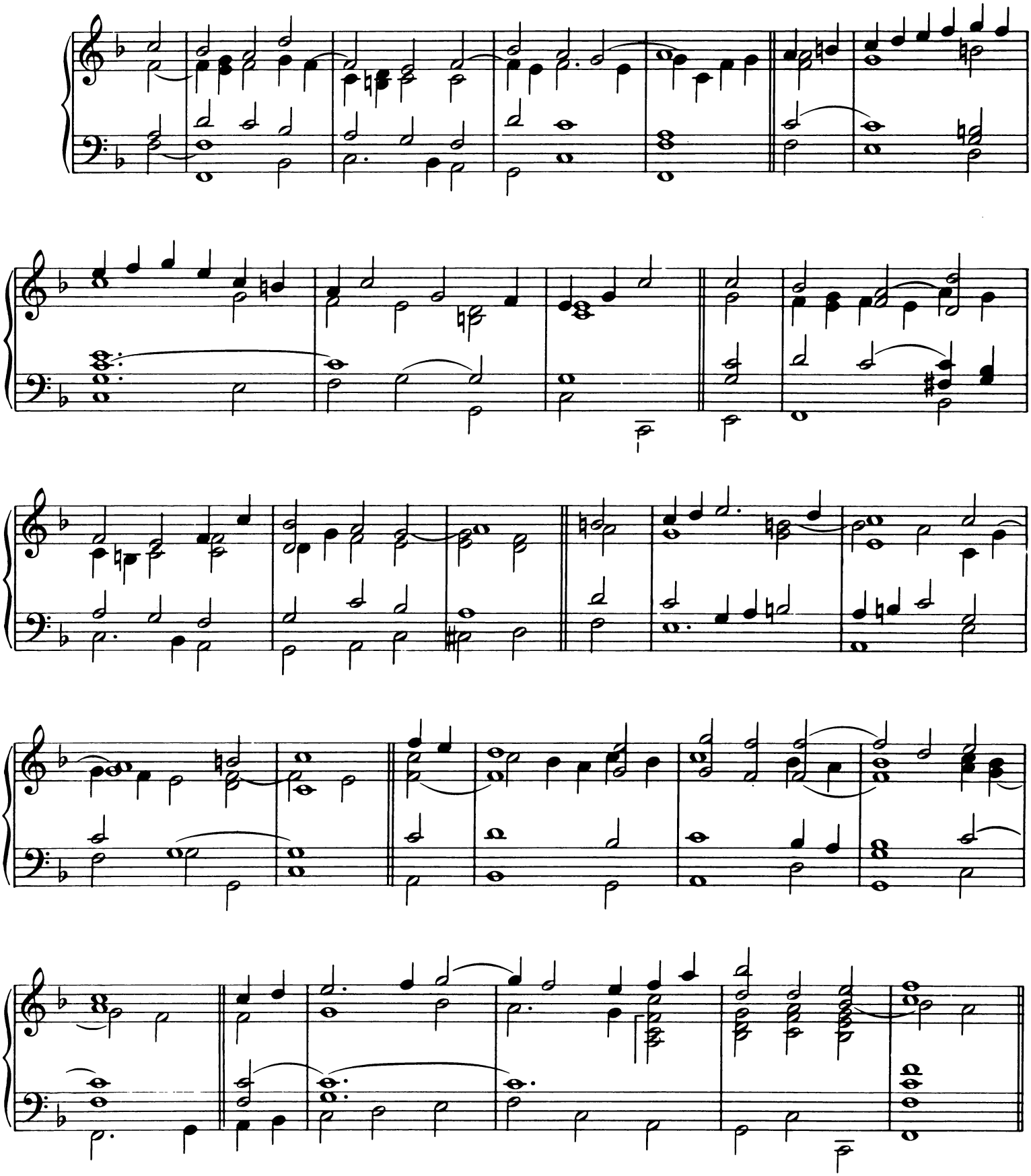

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