Paul Archbold

a little night music

for oboe and live electronics

Music Extracts
(used with permission)

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a little night music recalls one of my nightmarish visions as a child. From the insistent and piercing scream of the opening to the unearthly oboe multiphonics and exotic dawn chorus of the close, the work was written to exploit the virtuosity of the commissioner, oboist Christopher Redgate. The work builds on a research collaboration to realise contemporary works for oboe and live electronics with new computer technology, and create new work and exploits the 'extended techniques' developed by Redgate: the extreme high register, quarter-tone fingerings, sustained multiphonics and circular breathing.

The melodic writing adapts the constructive techniques of my earlier work *Traces*, employing quarter-tone pitch-class-sets related to the interval set <1,1,2,3>. A melody is created from overlapping these sets which resembles a keening lament of narrow range. In the second half of the work the sustained multiphonic sonorities are unfolded as a pitch resource for short chromatic flurries suggesting exotic birdsong.

The work builds on several years of my research into the Max/MSP programming language. The computer program I developed is used to capture and process brief fragments of the oboe line and create a dense chorus of simulacra and distorted replicas. A particular feature of this program is the control architecture that allows fragments to be employed in a precisely co-ordinated and interactive performance.

a little night music was commissioned by Christopher Redgate with funds from the Britten-Pears Foundation and first performed in the British Music Information Centre's 'Cutting Edge' Series at The Warehouse in London on 21 October, 2004. It has received six further performances including at the RADAR festival, Mexico City on 21 April, 2005 and the Randspiele Zepernick in Berlin on 1 July, 2007, and was broadcast on Mexico Radio.

a little night music has been recorded for issue on the Metier label in 2009.

Live electronics

The live electronics is implemented by a Max/MSP patch available from the composer.

Minimum specification:

MacBook Pro, 2.4 GHz Intel Core Duo, 2 GB RAM
Apple OS X 10.4.11 or later
Max/MSP 4.6.3 or later
MIDI fader box with at least 16 faders (e.g. Peavey 1600X)
MIDI keyboard (at least 2 octaves)
MIDI interface with at least 2 ports
Audio interface (1 input, 4 outputs preferred)
1 microphone for oboe (e.g. DPA IMK 4061)
IRCAM Spat, spatialiser program (optional)
Diffusion over at least 4 speakers, surrounding the audience, is preferred

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Performance notes - live electronics

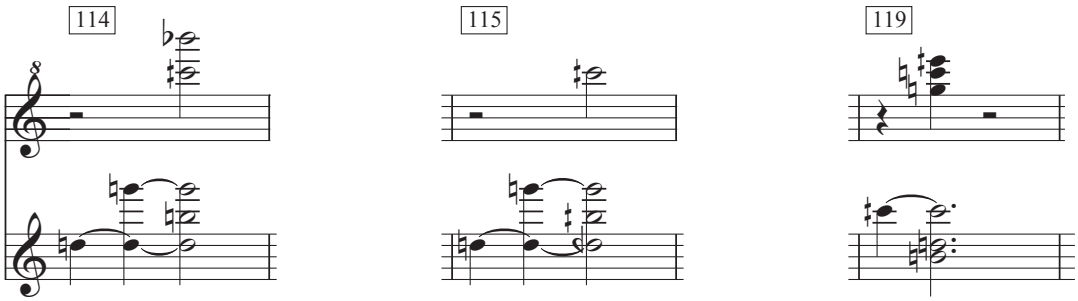
The live electronics requires 8 variable delay lines with microtonal pitch shift, three feedback loops and varispeed sample playback. A Max/MSP patch is available to realise the system on a computer attached to a MIDI keyboard (minimum 2 octaves) and a MIDI-based fader unit with 16 faders (e.g. Peavey 1600x). The work can be diffused over two speaker channels, but eight is preferred.
The live electronics should be synchronised precisely with the oboe part.

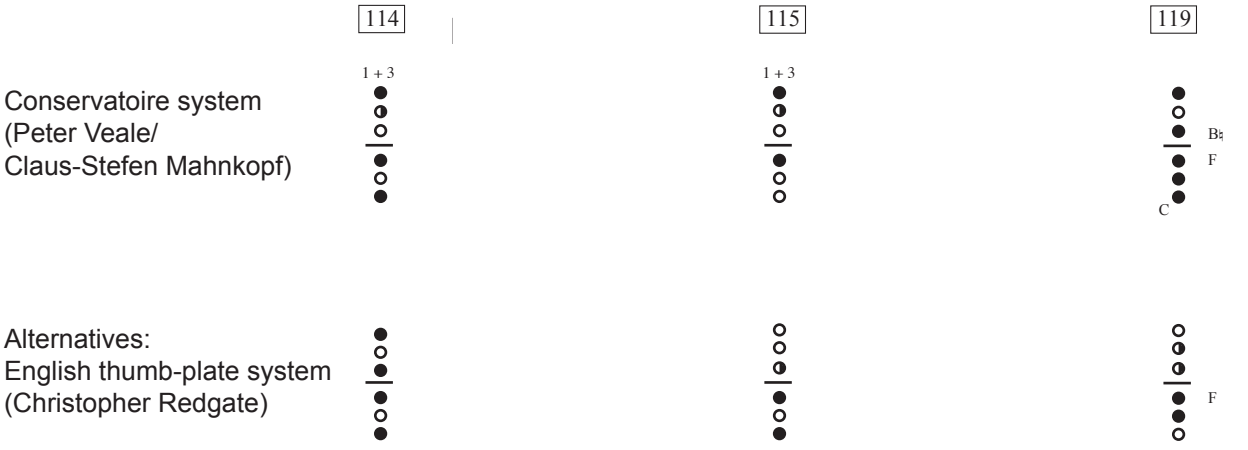
Performance notes - oboe

a little night music is written for a Conservatoire oboe. The recommended multiphonic fingerings are taken from Peter Veale and Claus-Stefen Mahnkopf *The Techniques of Oboe Playing* (Bärenreiter: Kassel, 1994). Boxed numbers in the score refer to the numbered fingerings in this book.
For oboes with a different system, alternative multiphonics can be substituted that preserve the harmony of the sonorities as much as possible. Christopher Redgate has created the alternative fingerings for the English thumb-plate system.

The pitches notated here follow the examples in Veale/Mahnkopf: not all the pitches are of equal significance, so the lower stave only is notated in the score.

Bar 141 - 146
These multiphonics should develop slowly from a single note, becoming more complex.

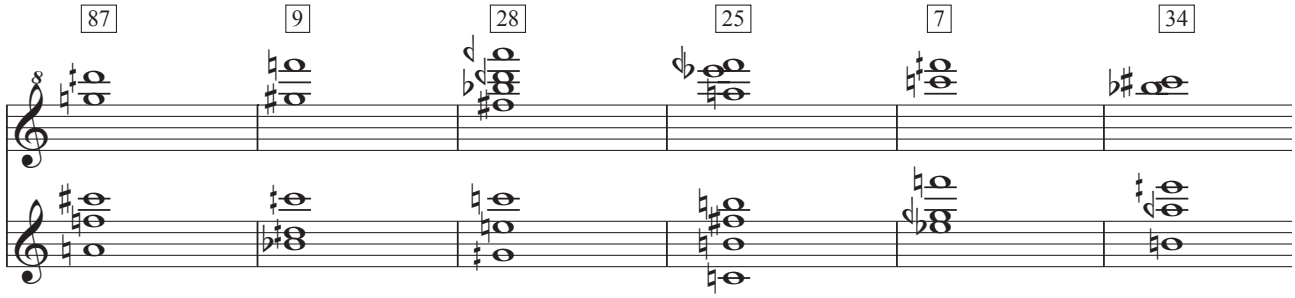


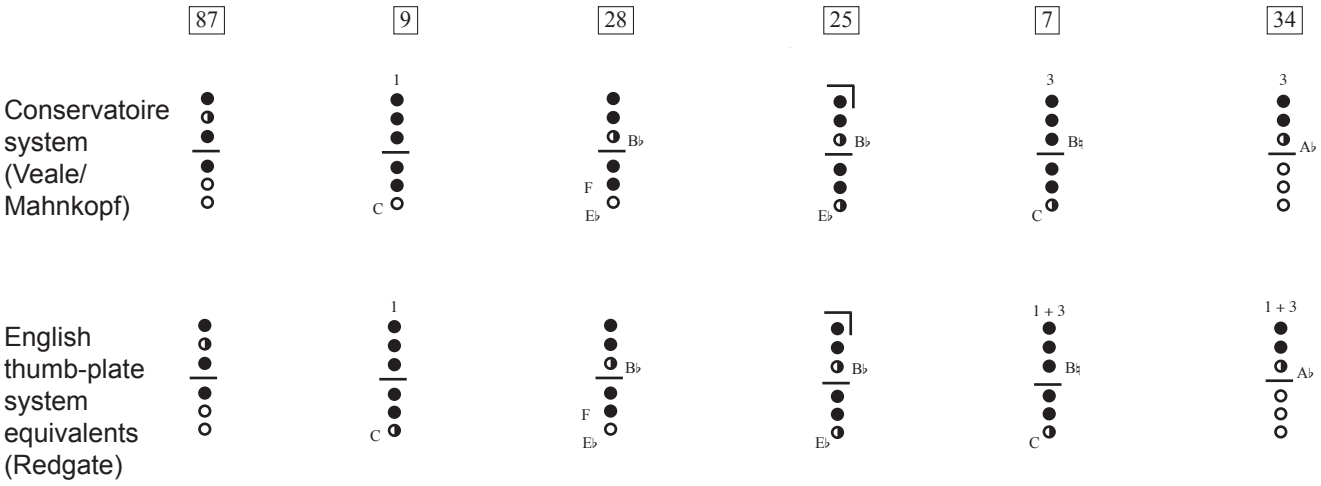


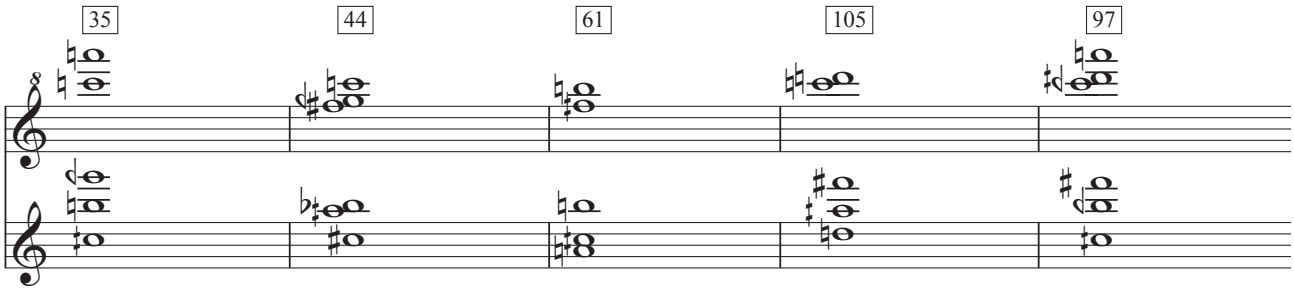
Conservatoire system
(Peter Veale/
Claus-Stefen Mahnkopf)

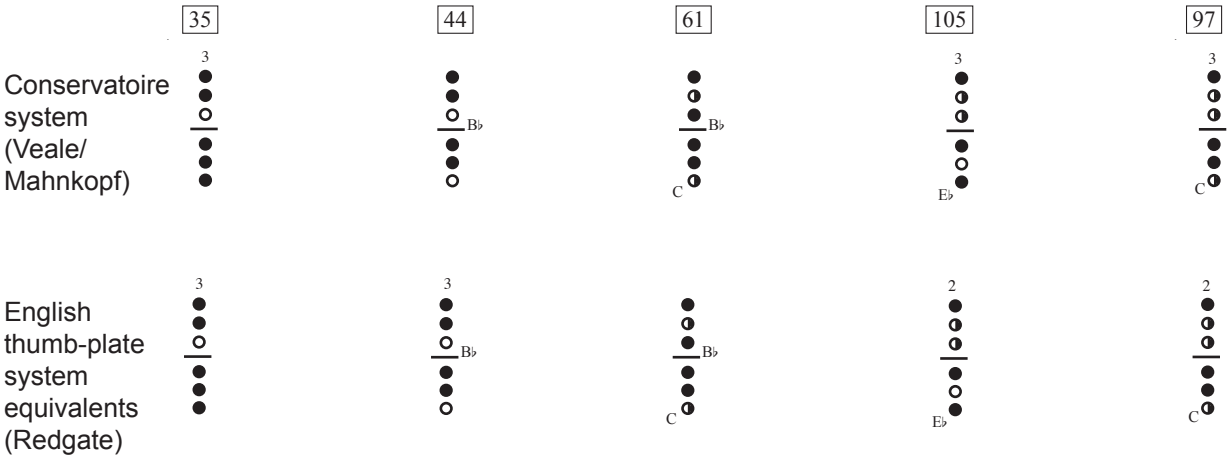
Alternatives:
English thumb-plate system
(Christopher Redgate)

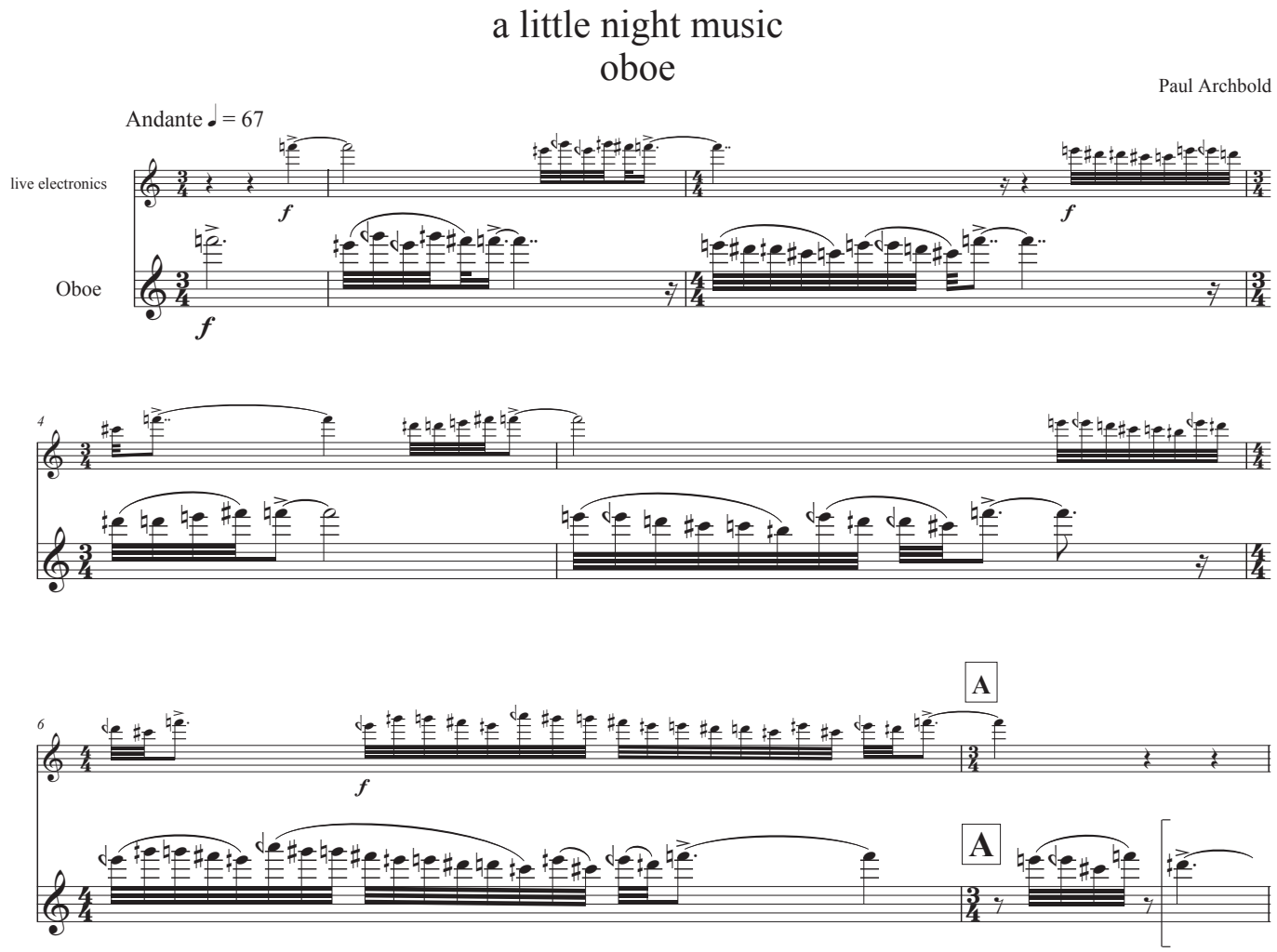
Bar 236 -315. These multiphonics are harmonically significant. The duration here is approximate: multiphonics should emerge and fade within the bar.



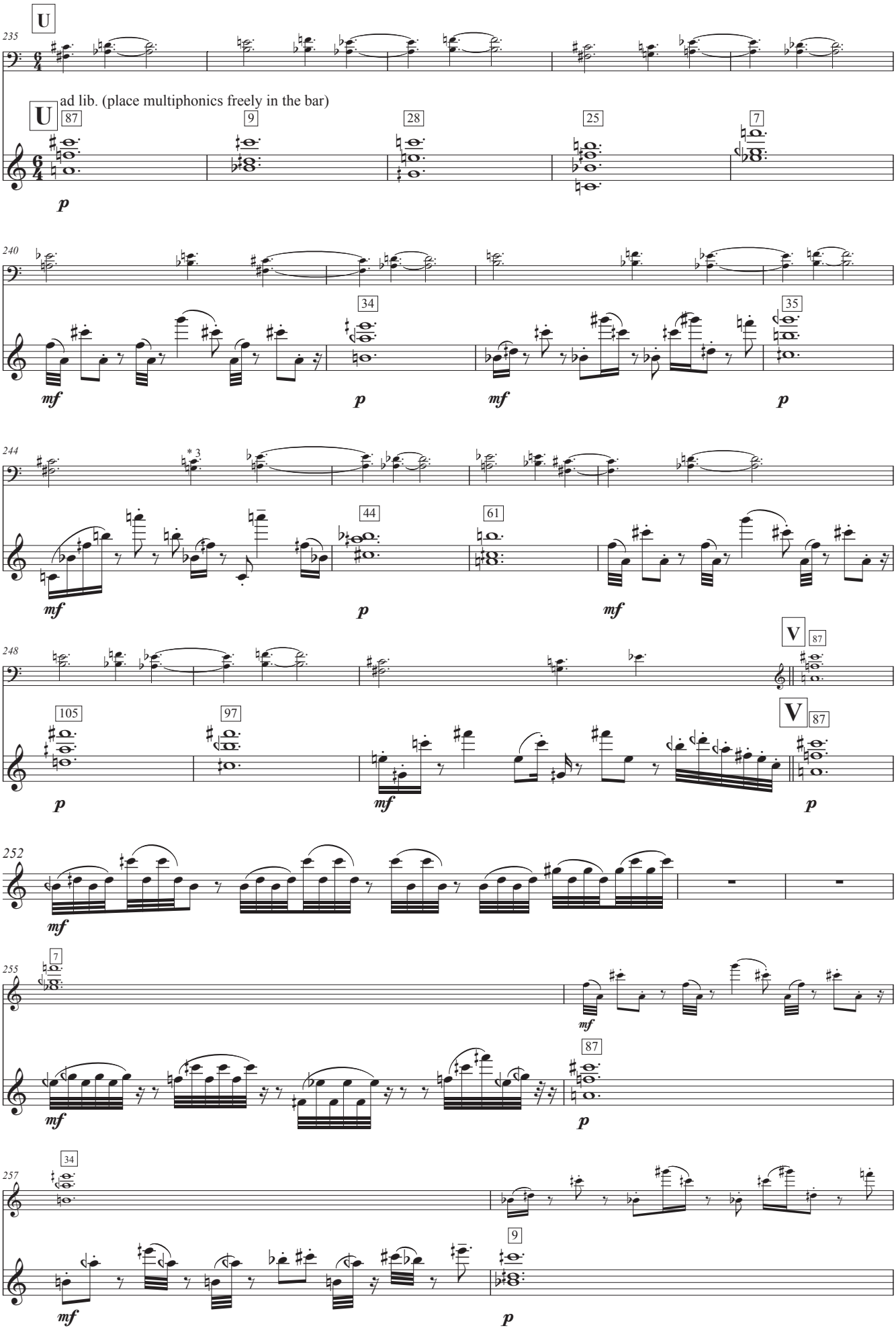




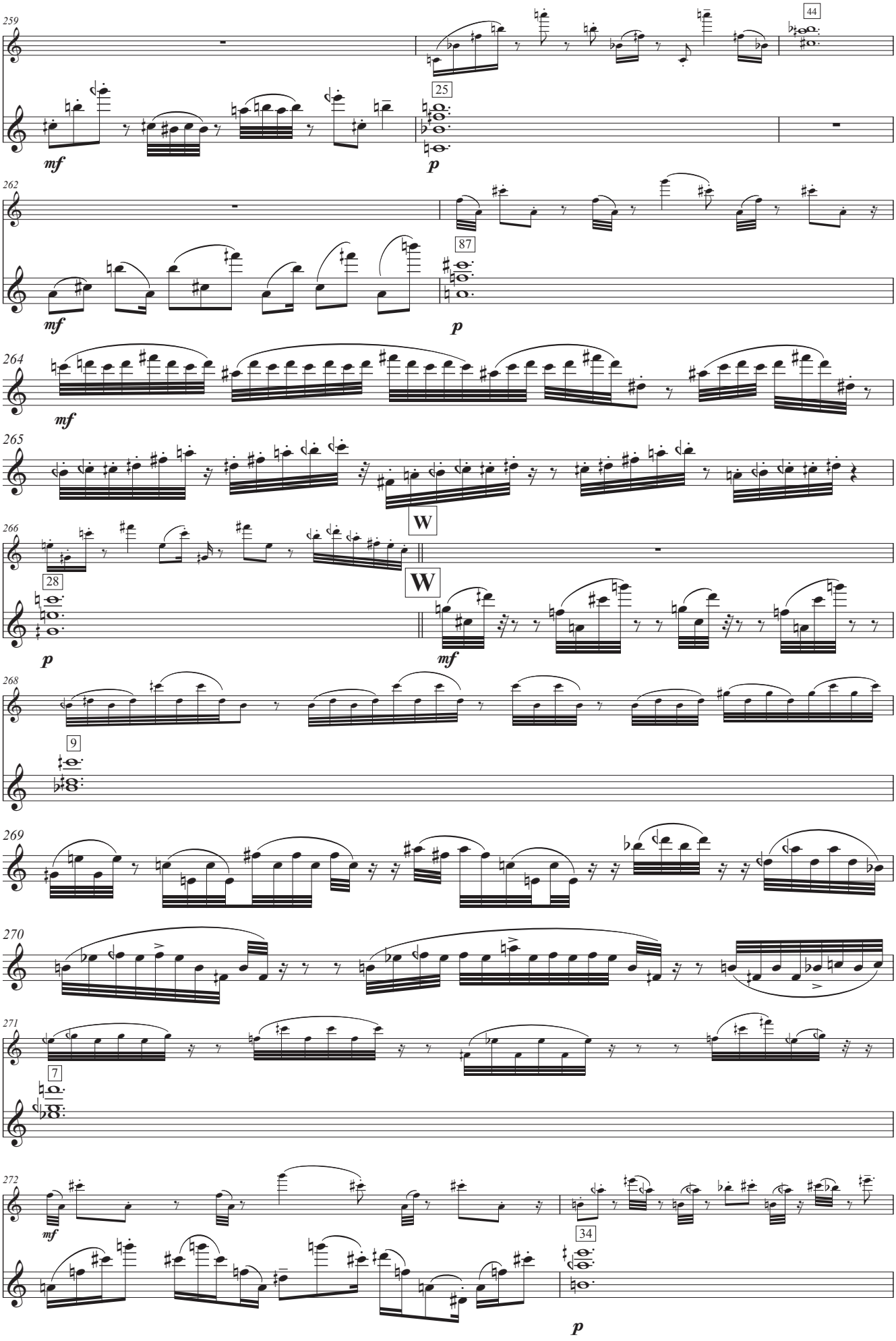




Music Example 1 (opening section, b 1-7)



Music Example 2 (final section, b 235-340)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264
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265
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mf
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271
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272
mf
34
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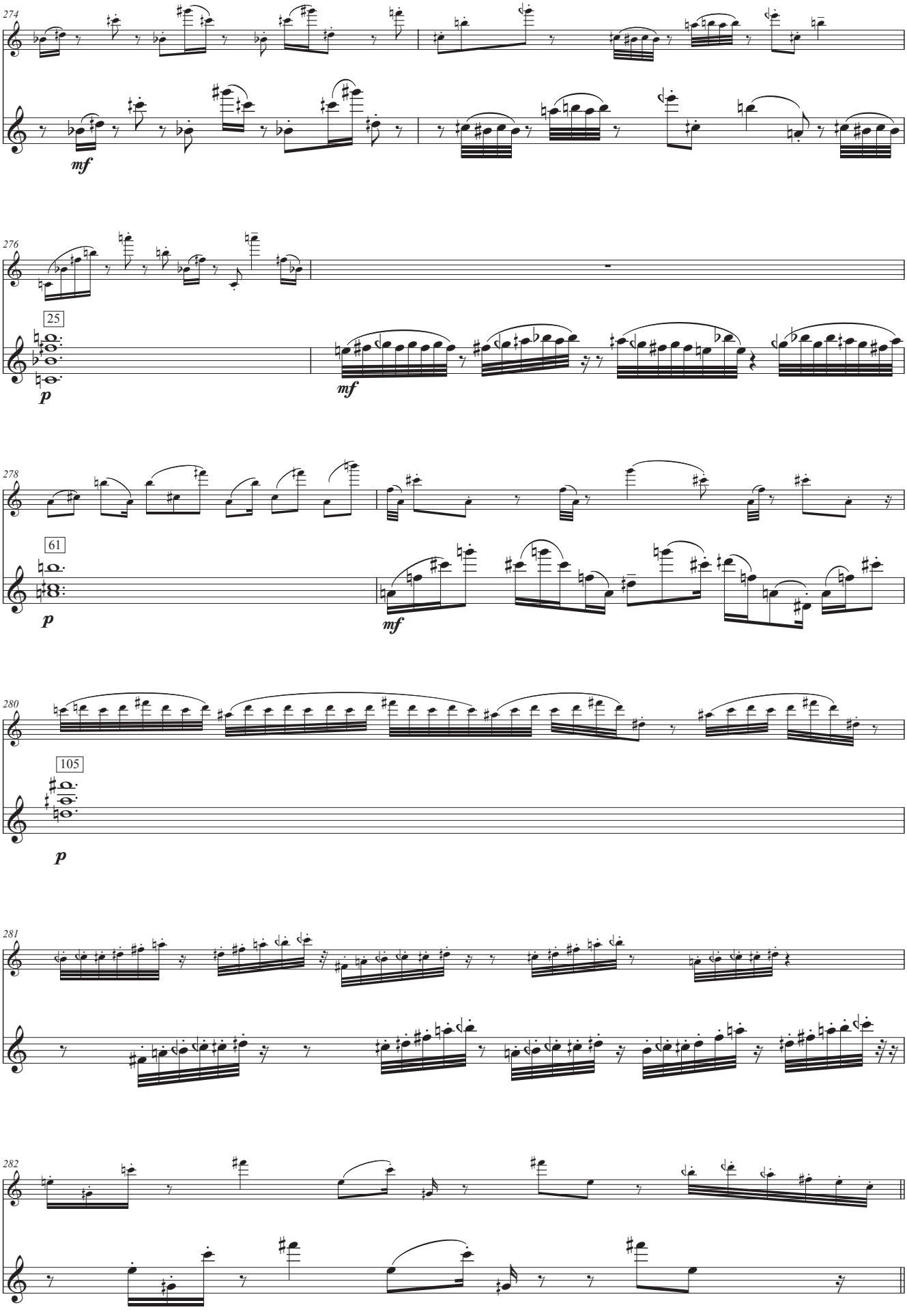
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mf
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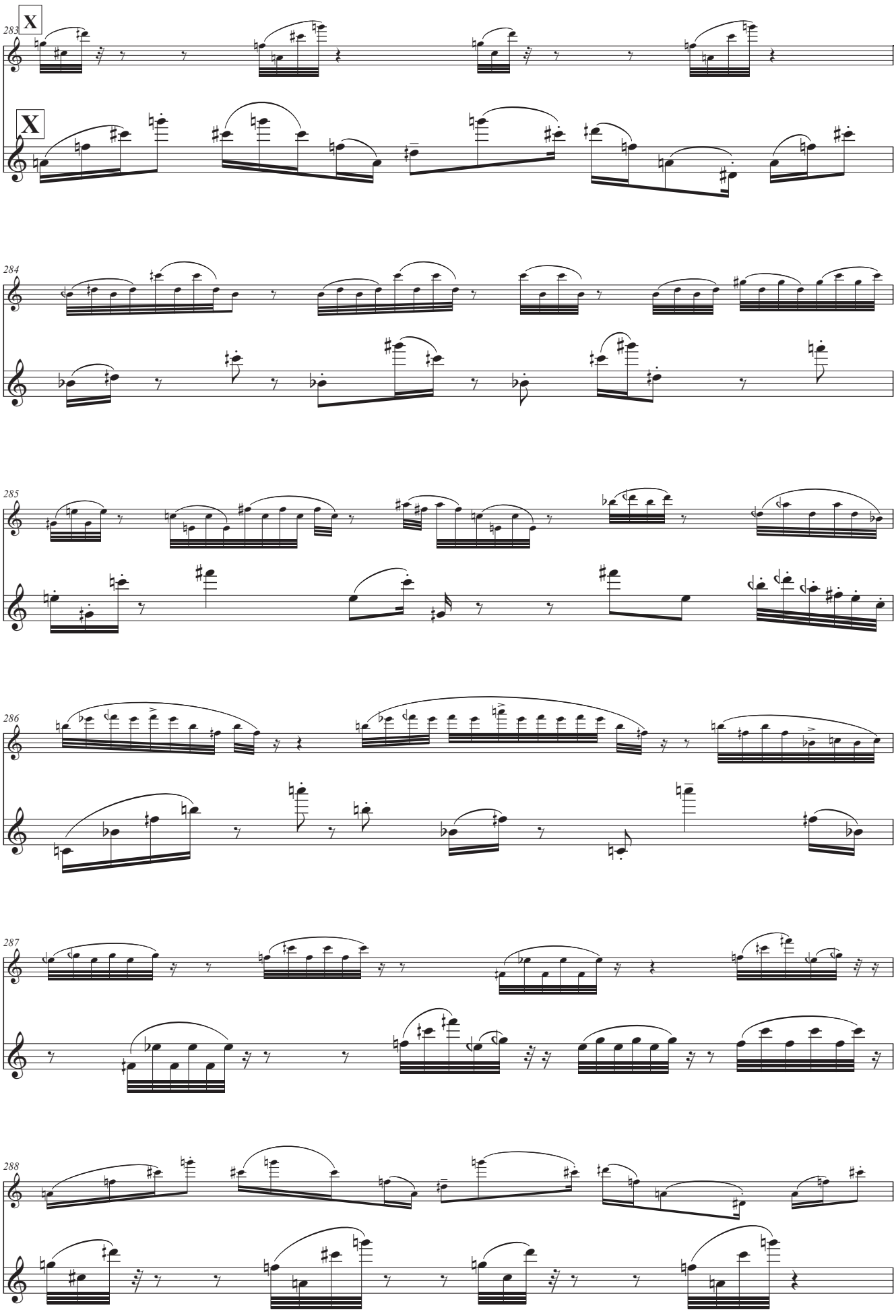
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X
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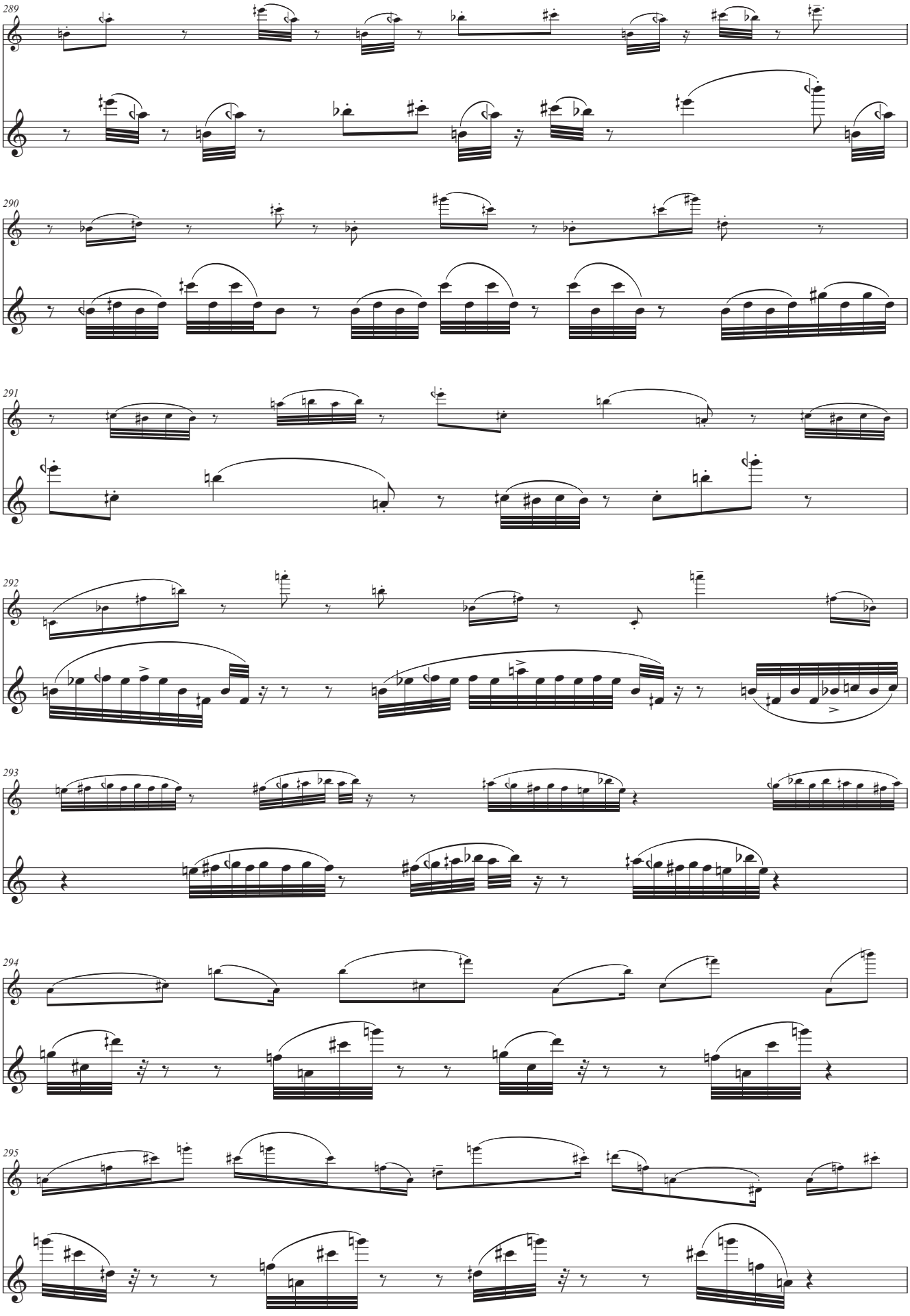
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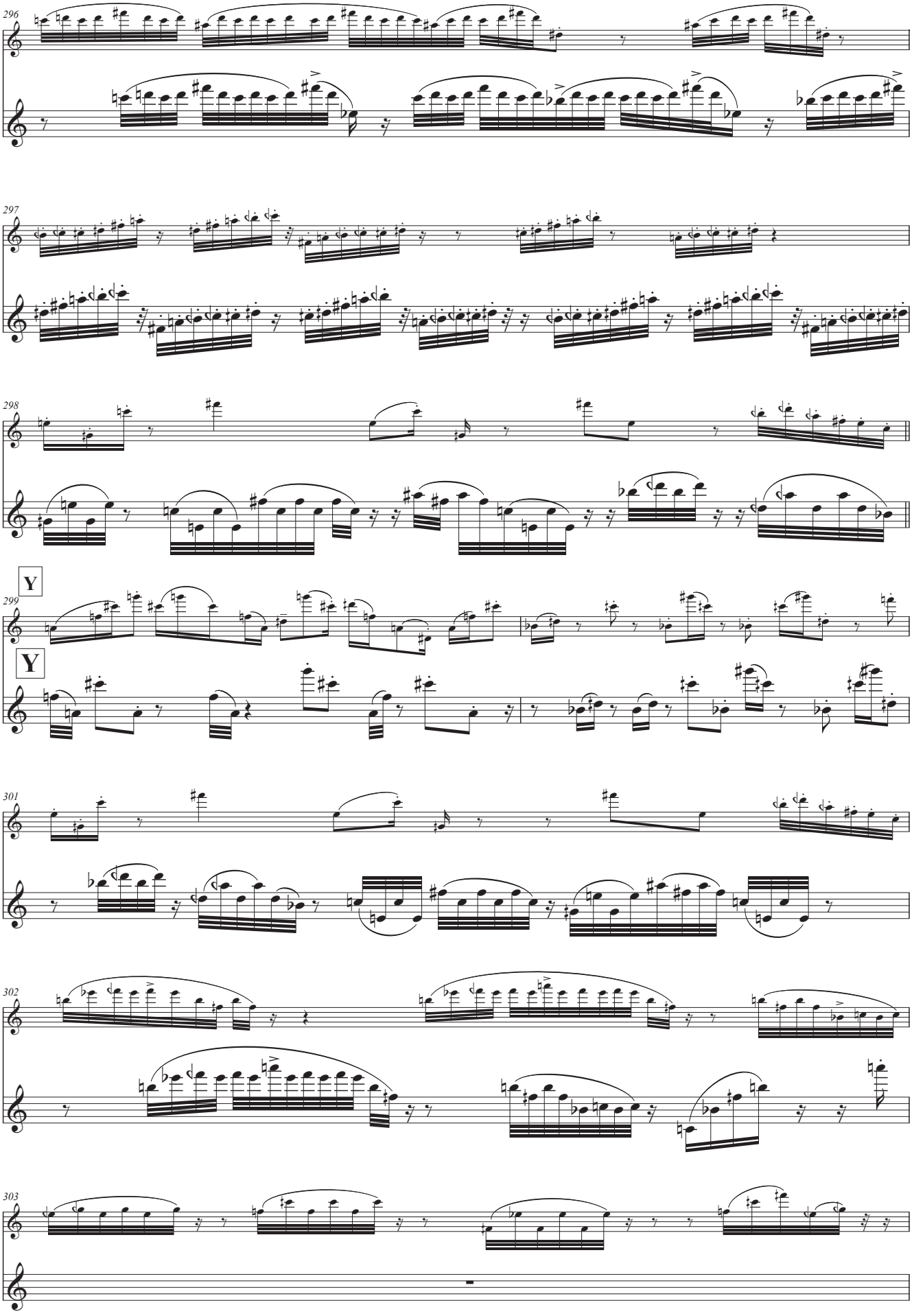
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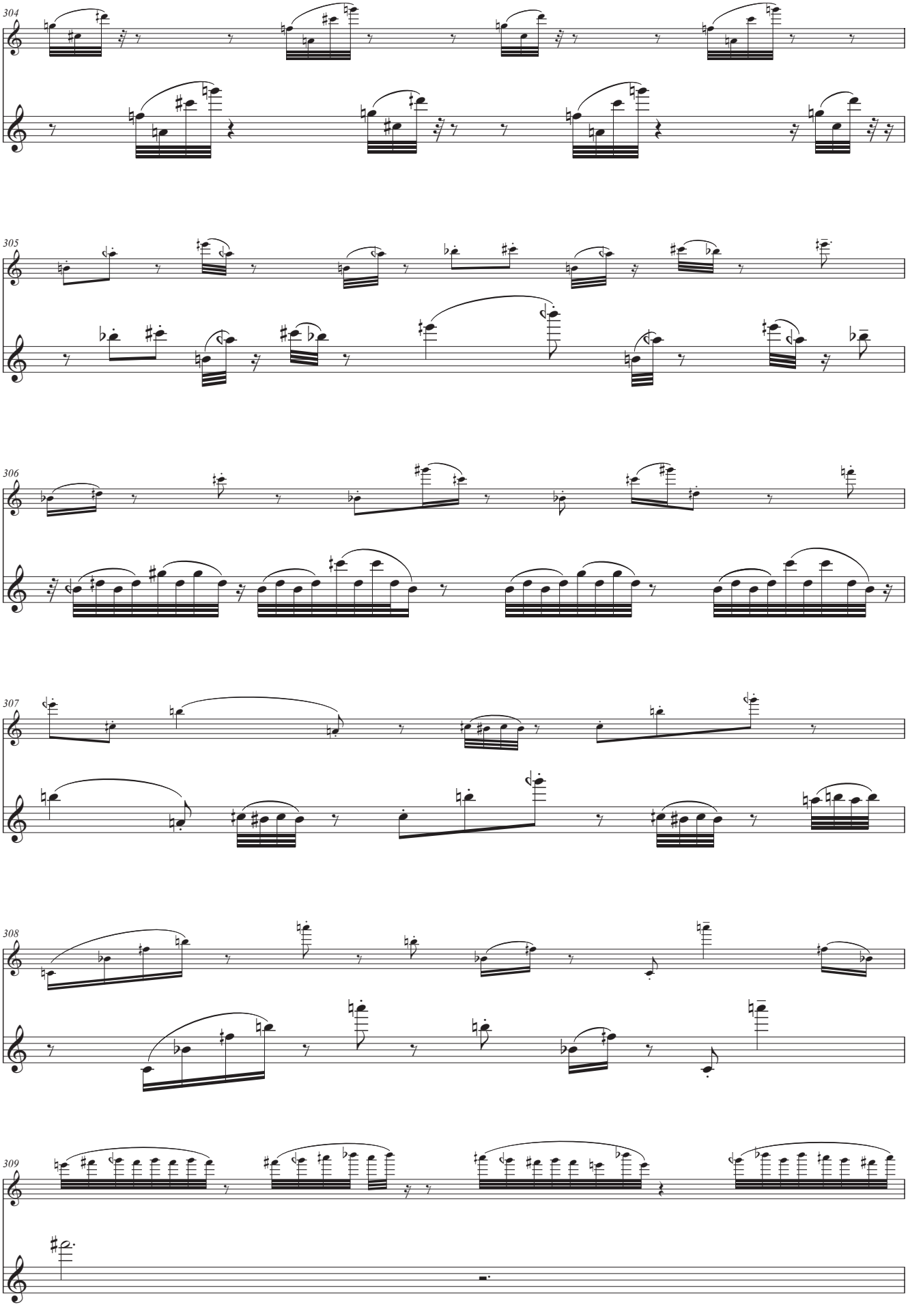
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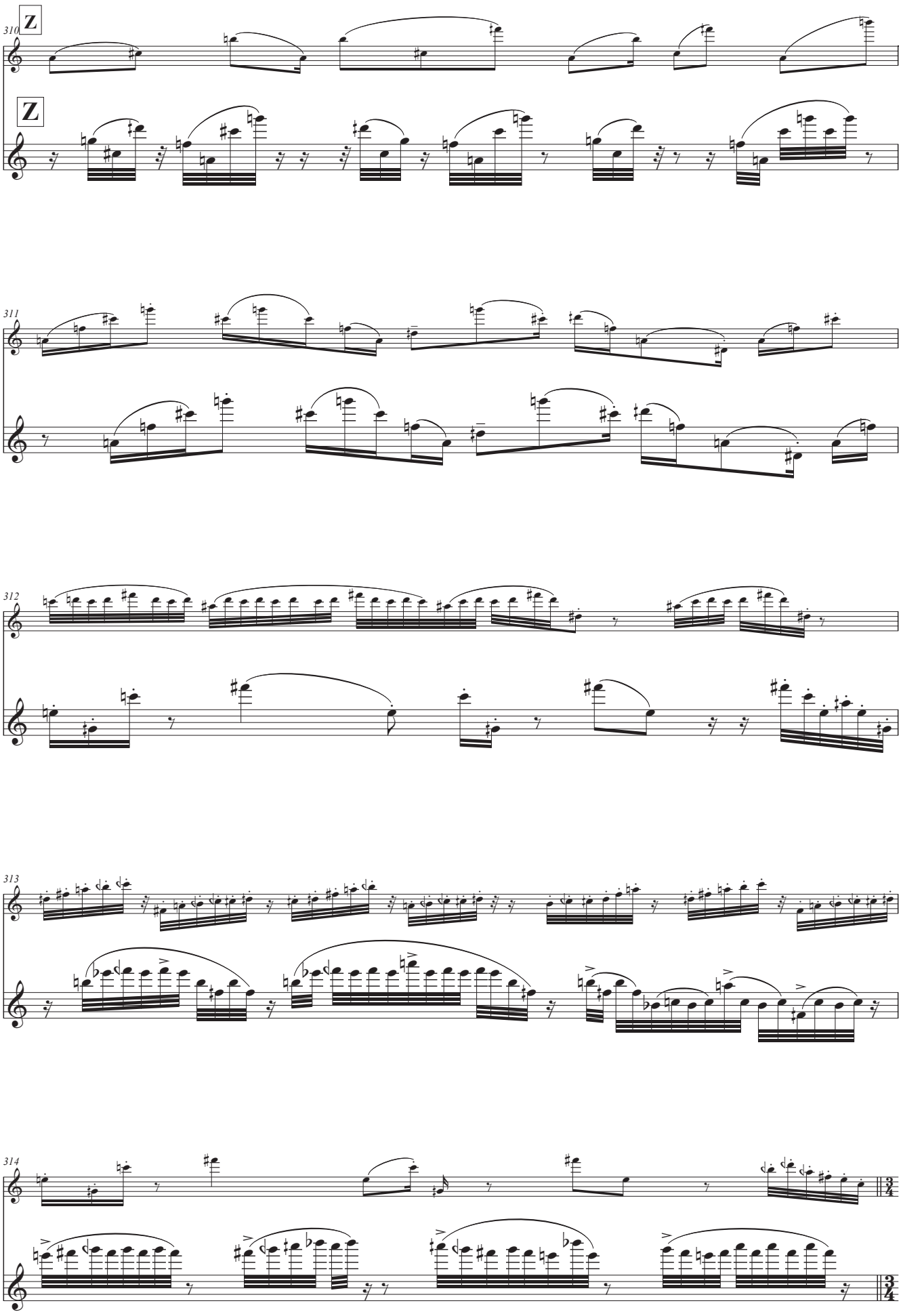
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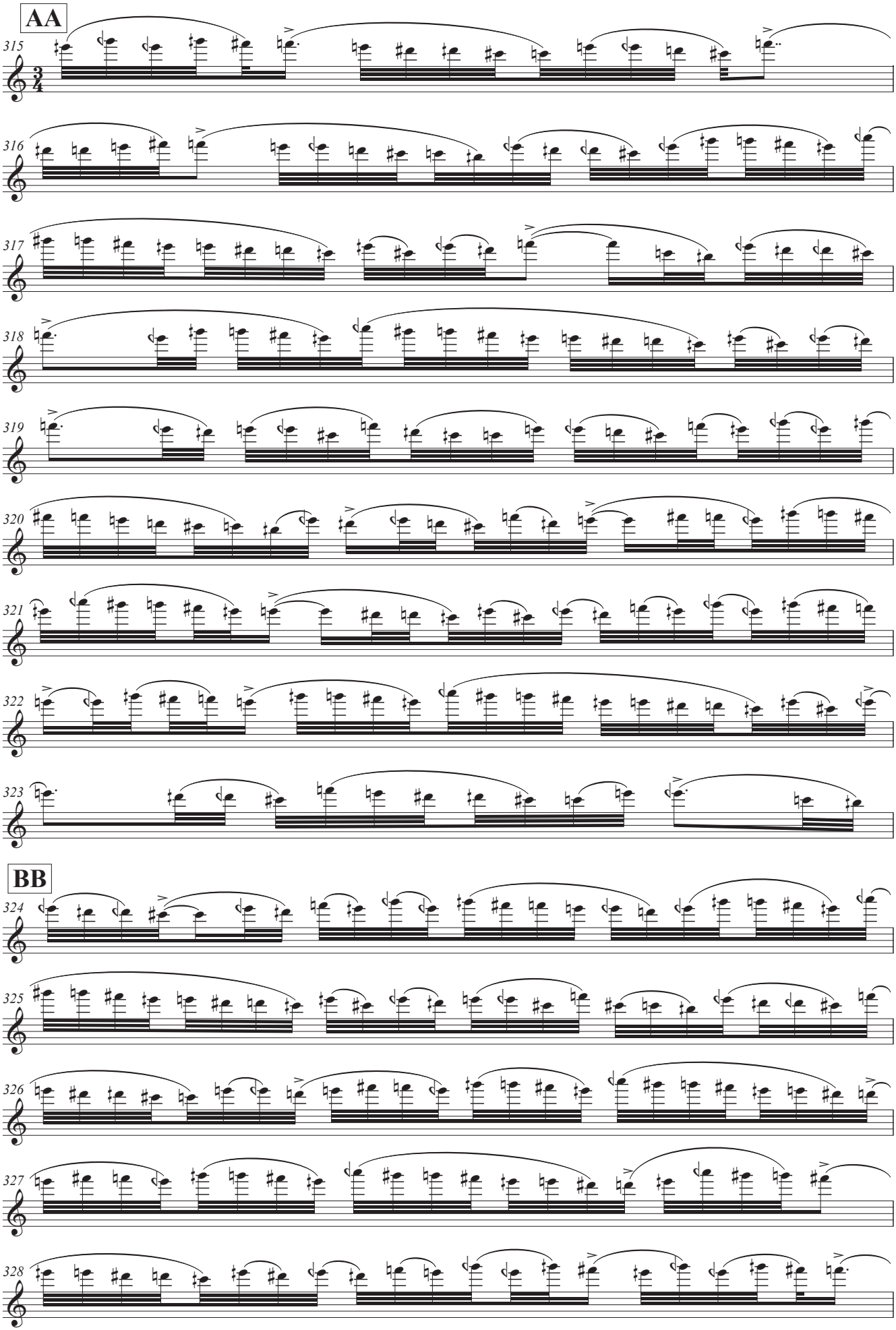
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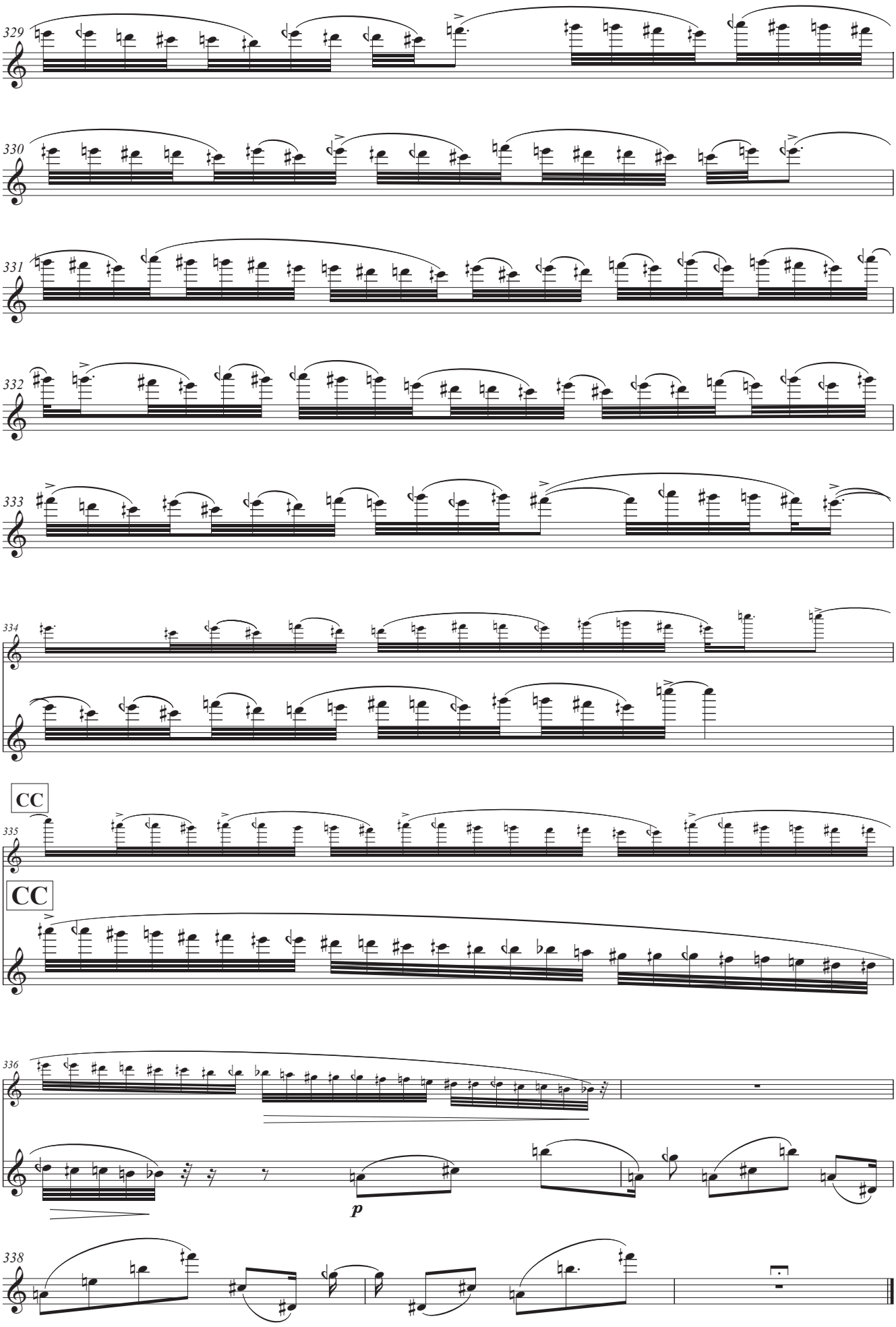
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