AT EVERY INSTANT, SEEING REASON TO BELIEVE AS MUCH, AND NOT BEING ABLE TO SATISFY HIMSELF OF THE CONTRARY, HE SHOULD CONCEIVE HIMSELF TO BE SO.



concert intervention for wind quartet (fl,bcl,lp,bsn) + CCTV Camera(s) & microphones
and quartet (vn,vc,hp,pno) + video & electronics

Raphaël Belfiore
2022 — 23

dedicated to Ensemble Proton

program notes

— First part:

During the moments leading up to a concert, the audience's behavior is recorded by a video surveillance system and four wind instruments in which small microphones have been inserted. The captured sounds are naturally filtered by the instruments, making their respective resonating frequencies appear. These can be changed by silently fingering different notes on the instruments. By means of this method, the musicians play a strict musical time code for the video in which every minute is marked by a unison.

— Second part:

A quartet of string instruments accompanies a publicly presented timelapse of the first stage's audio and video recording. What is heard in the hall is listened to by the performers via headphones, thereby isolating them from each other. Unable to synchronise, they present in real time the harmonic structure of the timecode according to their internal time consciousness.

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My ambition is here is to think the nature of the public concert and its historical transformations through a musical piece. I consider the concert as an "apparatus", that is, a situation determining and orienting public behaviors in order to make possible as well as regulate a certain type of private musical experience through different procedures and rituals.

Public concerts such as the one including this piece usually involve a complex situation in which the attention of all participants is cast in various directions. During musical performances, members of the audience not only pay attention the musical actions performed on stage, but also everything else that constitutes the performers' behaviour, who are in turn watching themselves in order to conform it to the situation. Conversely, the audience watches itself as individuals and as a group to avoid revealing their presence.

The complex of attention is reconfigured during the non-performance parts. The musicians watch themselves in order to withdraw from the center of focus and the observers in turn manifest themselves by enacting audience specific behaviours like applauding, exchanging or criticizing, which involves other kinds of attention.

Such a clear distinction between the social time of the audience and the musical time of the performance was not always the case and is therefore the product of a historical differentiation. More particularly, the idea of the public concert originates in the ideals of the Enlightenment and its emphasis on the individual. Music tends to no longer be just a part of institutional ceremonies under patronage, but also a transfer of meanings to a group of anonymous people, each one being considered equally capable of individual listening and interpretation.

From this comes that the musical rituals are progressively consolidated and that music manifests itself as autonomous "works" whose increasingly complex content requires a high degree of virtuosity for the performers and of attentiveness from the audience. This then leads to the rituals of the concert being consolidated to avoid the "disturbance" that everyday behaviours impose on a pure inner experience of the music. From this comes that the structuring principle of the modern concert ritual is a form of constant self-monitoring by all parties involved, which is very strongly felt by any outsider visiting a "classical" music concert.

This idea of self-monitoring is in fact the operating principle of any kind of surveillance procedure. Indeed, it is not so much to observe at all times and in all places those who are surveilled, but rather that they believe themselves to be potentially surveilled, regardless of whether this is actually the case or not, leading them to oversee themselves independently for an undefined other. This principle, which can be considered fundamental to any kind of performance is what is expressed in the title of this work. It is taken from the first of the much-quoted and rarely read "Panopticon Letters" by British philosopher Jeremy Bentham :

> "*It is obvious that, in all these instances, the more constantly the persons to be inspected are under the eyes of the persons who should inspect them, the more perfectly will the purpose of the establishment have been attained. Ideal perfection, if that were the object, would require that each person should actually be in that predicament, during every instant of time. This being impossible, the next thing to be wished for is, that,* at every instant, seeing reason to believe as much, and not being able to satisfy himself to the contrary, he should conceive himself to be so."

More concretely, the primary aim of this work is to create a model of this operating principle as well as its dual outcome, that is, the private experience of the music within the public experience of the concert. To do this, the common technical surveillance system of our times is used as a metaphor.

The visual aspect of the concert and by extension the totalizing and not only auditory character of its experience is thus emphasized. In addition, the surveillance images also have the particularity of having an embedded timecode, enabling temporal orientation for the viewer. This idea, converted from the visual to the sonic, is used in the work as a support for two different temporalities. On the one hand, public and therefore conventionally objective temporality is recorded by the wind instruments which capture and give musical form to the audience's behavioural surplus in a chronometric way.

Subsequently, the resulting recording, as a document of the regulated and regulating social temporality of the concert, is used in such a way as to reveal it as a condition of possibility of the musical work which at the same time distorts and "colors" it. Indeed, the piece (and possibly all others) exists only by virtue of the non-musical dimension of the situation that complements it.

The accompanying piece for quartet of string instruments attempts to effectively realise a model of this interplay. In it, the documented public temporality of the concert provides the means for the performers' necessary isolation. It therefore literally allows for the sharing of multiple subjective experiences of musical time. These are made audible by the playing of a score in which the performers act as 'subjective chronometers'. They therefore constitute a second, musical mirror of the concert audience on stage in that they are individual listeners whose activity only makes sense as a group.

The musical result of the contact of external-public and internal-private temporalities is composed in view of the phenomenological characteristics of the experience of things in time. The represented past period, according to the effects of "temporal perspective", is contracted, while the present experience is lived as unity, even though it is in gradual flux at every instant.

PART 1 (RECORDING)

instrumentation

Flute

Lupophone (without mouthpiece)

Bass Clarinet (without mouthpiece)

Bassoon (without mouthpiece)

(+ microphones and headphones)

duration: minimum 15 minutes

situation

Before the concert, the wind quartet records the sound of the arriving audience with microphones inserted in the tube of the instrument. A surveillance camera also records the situation.

Ideally, the recording lasts from the moment the first people arrive until the ensemble takes the stage.The quartet performs a score lasting 10 minutes, which is repeated as many times as necessary.

No special acting or ways to "enhance" the normal situation are needed.

playing technique

A very sensitive microphone is installed inside the instruments. It captures the surrounding sounds transformed by the resonance of each instrument. This resonance can be modified by carefully fingering different pitches. The fingered note does not always correspond to the pitch heard through the microphone. No blowing into the instrument is necessary.

The musicians orient themselves in time with a stopwatch and are equipped with headphones allowing them to monitor the outcome of their activity.

PART 2 (PERFORMANCE-SCREENING)

instrumentation

Violin

Violoncello

Harp

Piano

(+ headphones and devices with screens)

duration: exactly 10 minutes

situation

During the concert, and not necessarily directly following the first part, the audiovisual recording (surveillance camera + wind quartet) is displayed to the audience at an accelerated rate in order to last 10 minutes. At the same time, the second quartet plays a score whose pitches are organised identically to that of the first quartet at real speed, i.e. 1 loop = 10 minutes.

Despite the preservation of the previous structure, each musician is isolated and plays an individual part, without synchronisation with the other members of the quartet.

playing technique

Each musician is equipped with headphones (the same as the other quartet) and a tablet or other device able to play a video. The scores to be played during the concert are conveyed to each performer individually in the form of a small score changing over time. Throughout the performance, each musician wears headphones in which the wind quartet's recording is projected at a relatively high volume, preventing them from hearing each other.

The score they play is a series of loops of 2 sounds, initially a second apart. Unable to hear each other and therefore unable to synchronise, the musicians have to play these loops by orienting themselves in time with their personal temporal intuition, without the help of a timekeeping device. The expected result is a very complex and irrational rhythmic structure that only non-players can hear. The overall pitch structure is preserved by the use of video scores. These function as personal conductors, presenting the different loops to the musicians in an organised manner.

notation:

— Violin / Cello

s.p. / *s.t.* = sul ponticello / sul tasto

m.s.p / *m.s.t.* = molto sul ponticello / molto sul tasto

 = gettato

— Piano

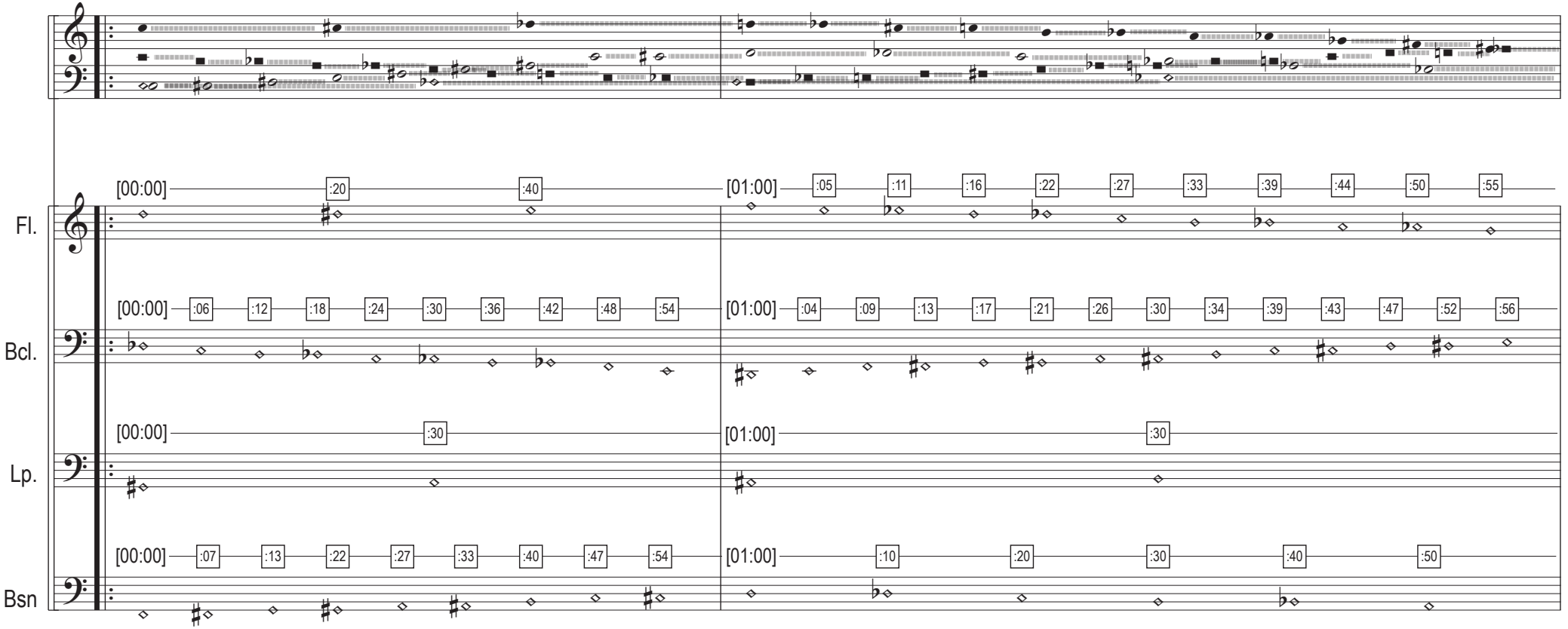
 = sustain pedal

1/2 = half pedal

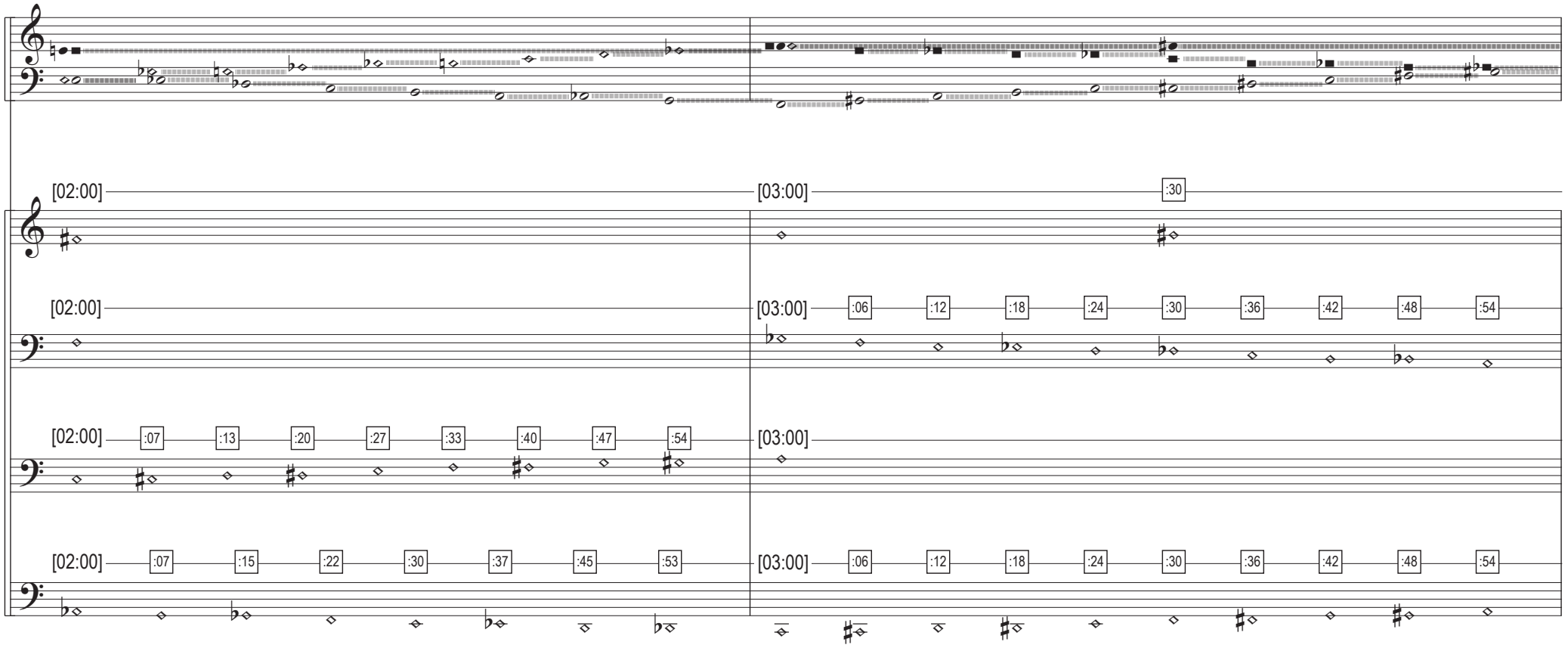
PART 1 : WIND QUARTET - TABLATURE

important notes:
This part of the work is played during the moments leading up to the concert. All players are equipped with a stopwatch and headphones allowing them to hear in real time the result of their actions. The timing should be as precise as possible. It is also important that the sounds of the pressing or depressing of the keys is as quiet as possible. All transitions should be as legato as possible.

(approximate resulting pitches* / Fl. = ● / Bcl. = ■ / Lp = ○ / Bsn = ◇)



*Enharmonic spellings do not imply identical pitches but are used to show the direction of the lines.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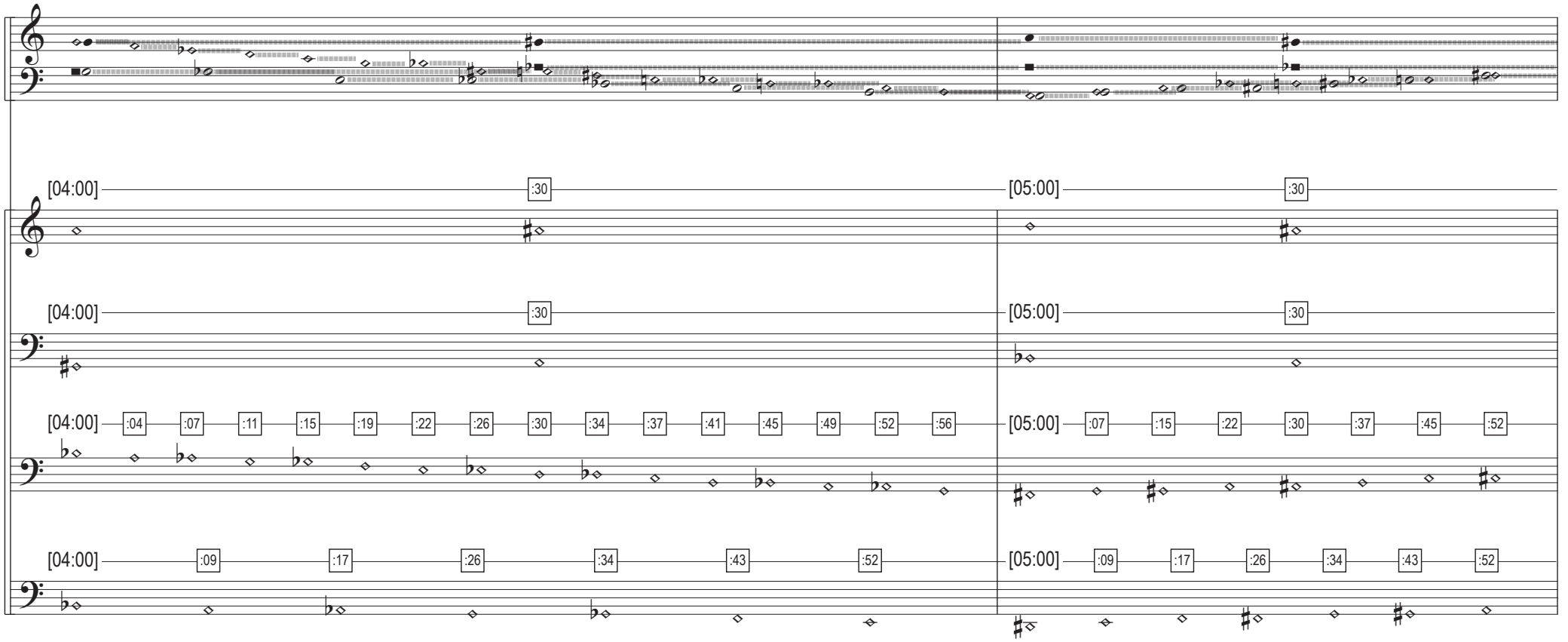
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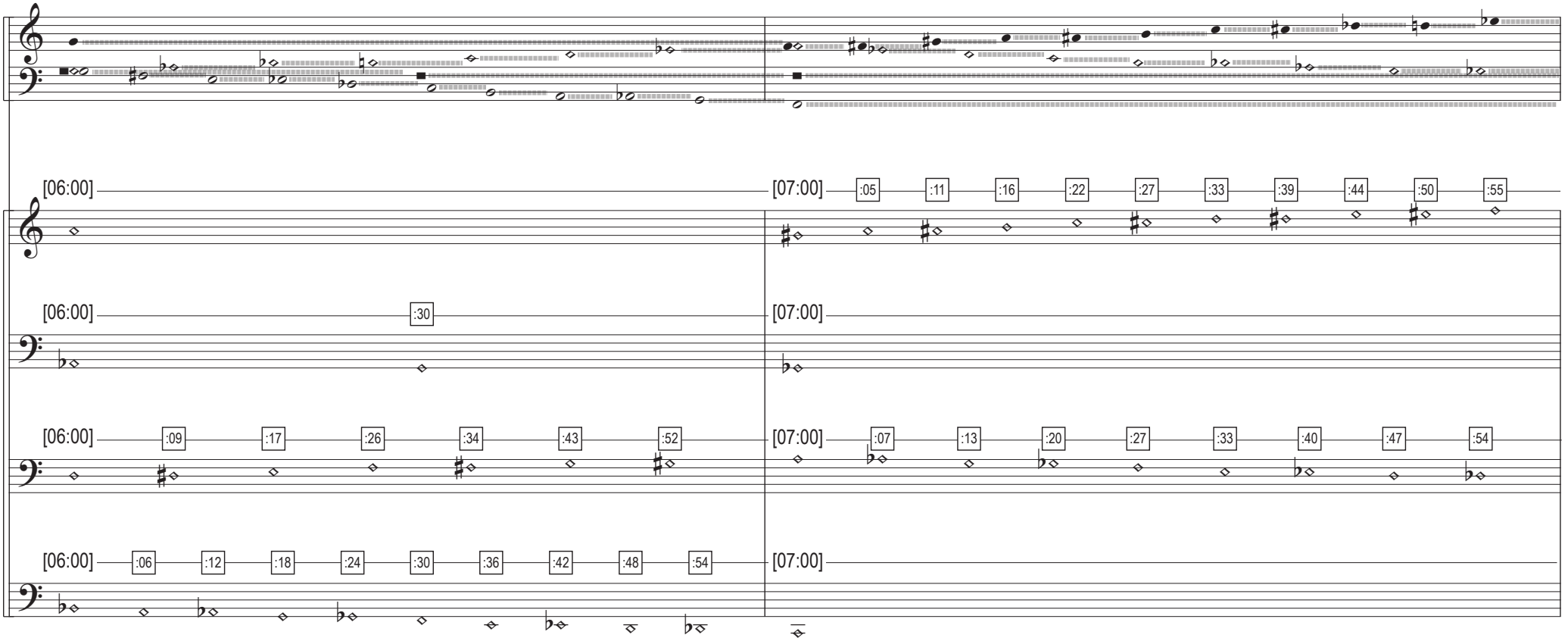
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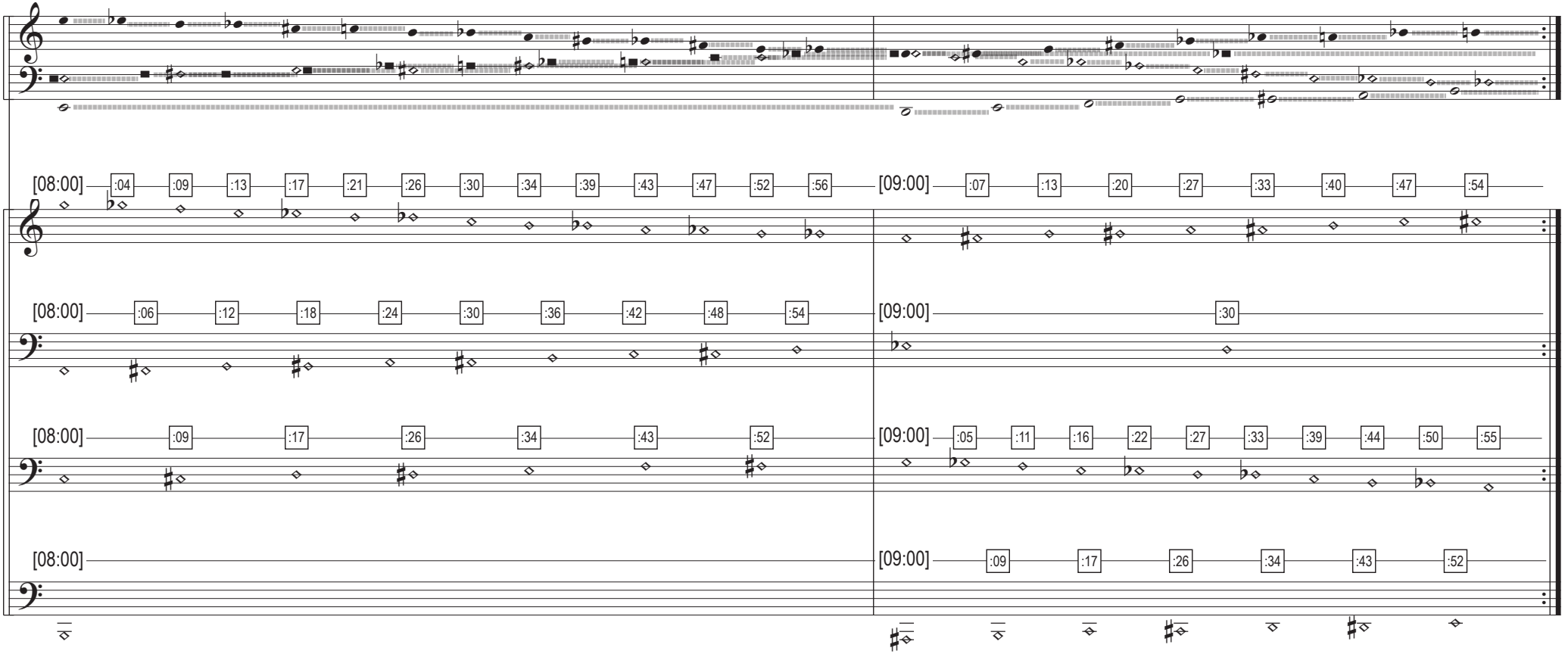
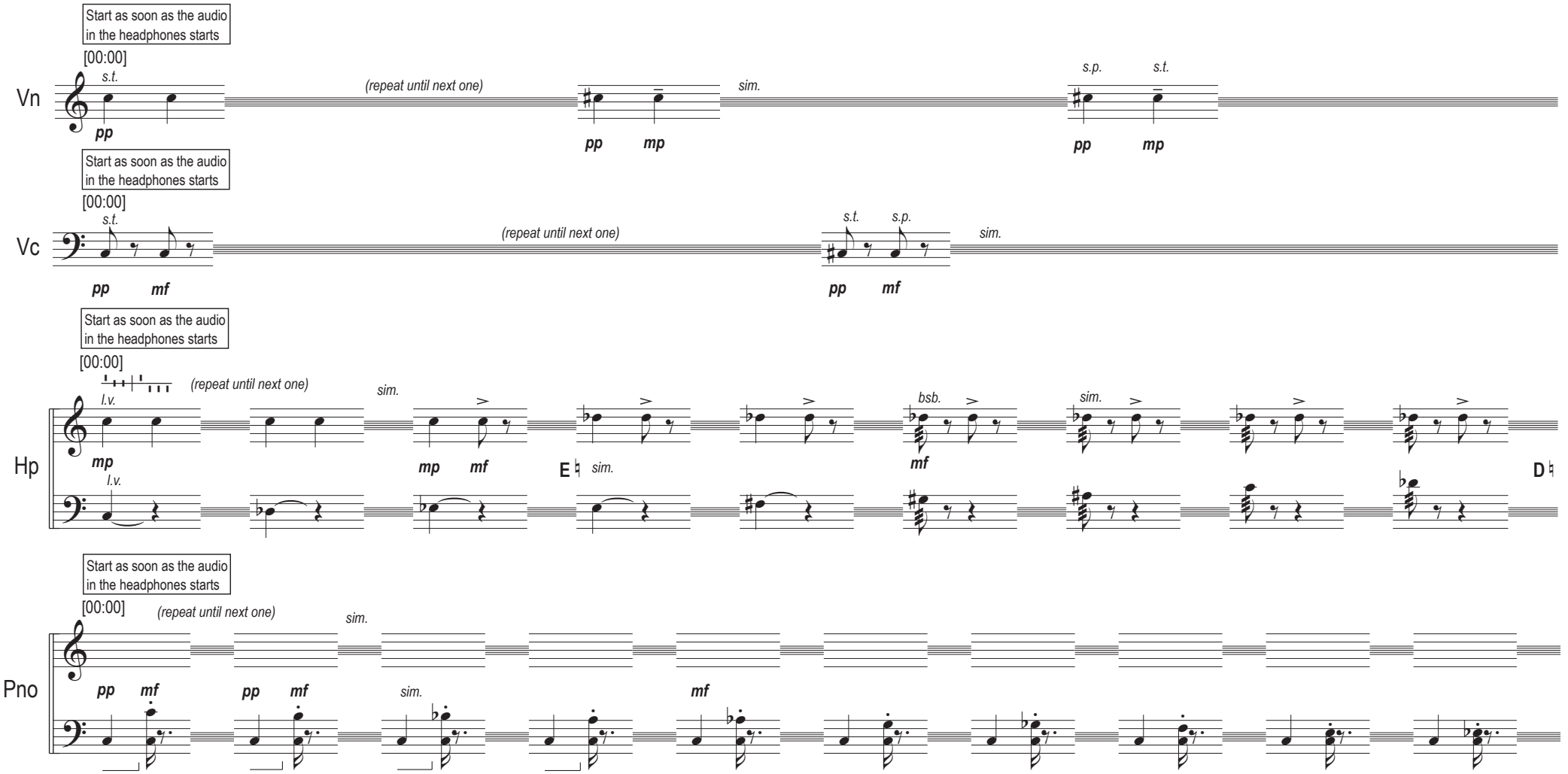


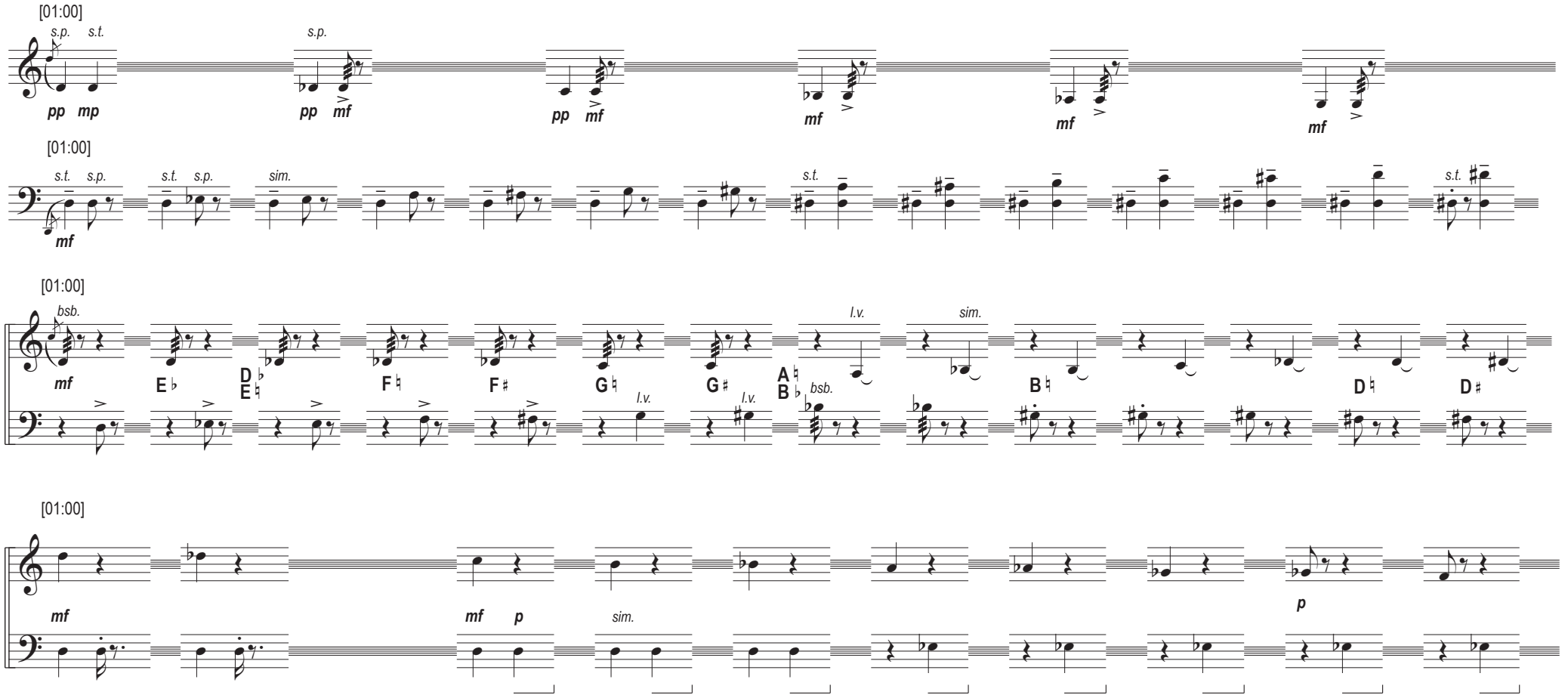
Basel, March 2023

PART 2 : STRING INSTRUMENTS QUARTET - OVERVIEW SCORE*

important notes:
During this part of the performance, each performer listens via headphones to the recording made by the previous quartet and at the same time performs the following score.
It is presented in the form of repeating cells of two sounds. Each quarter note corresponds in theory to one second. However, no way of measuring time should be used. From an initial countdown, each performer plays these notes continuously without being able to listen to oneself and the others. It is thus impossible to synchronize with them. However, all should continuously play what they think is exactly one-second intervals, adapting their speed if they feel like they go too slow or too fast. This is not about rubato or musical expression, but about expressing as accurately as possible a subjective perspective on an objective convention.
*This score is not intended to be performed in this form. The actual performance material is a "score-follower" type video of the separated instrumental parts changing over time.

♩ = 1 sec (felt not measured) / each page = 1 min.

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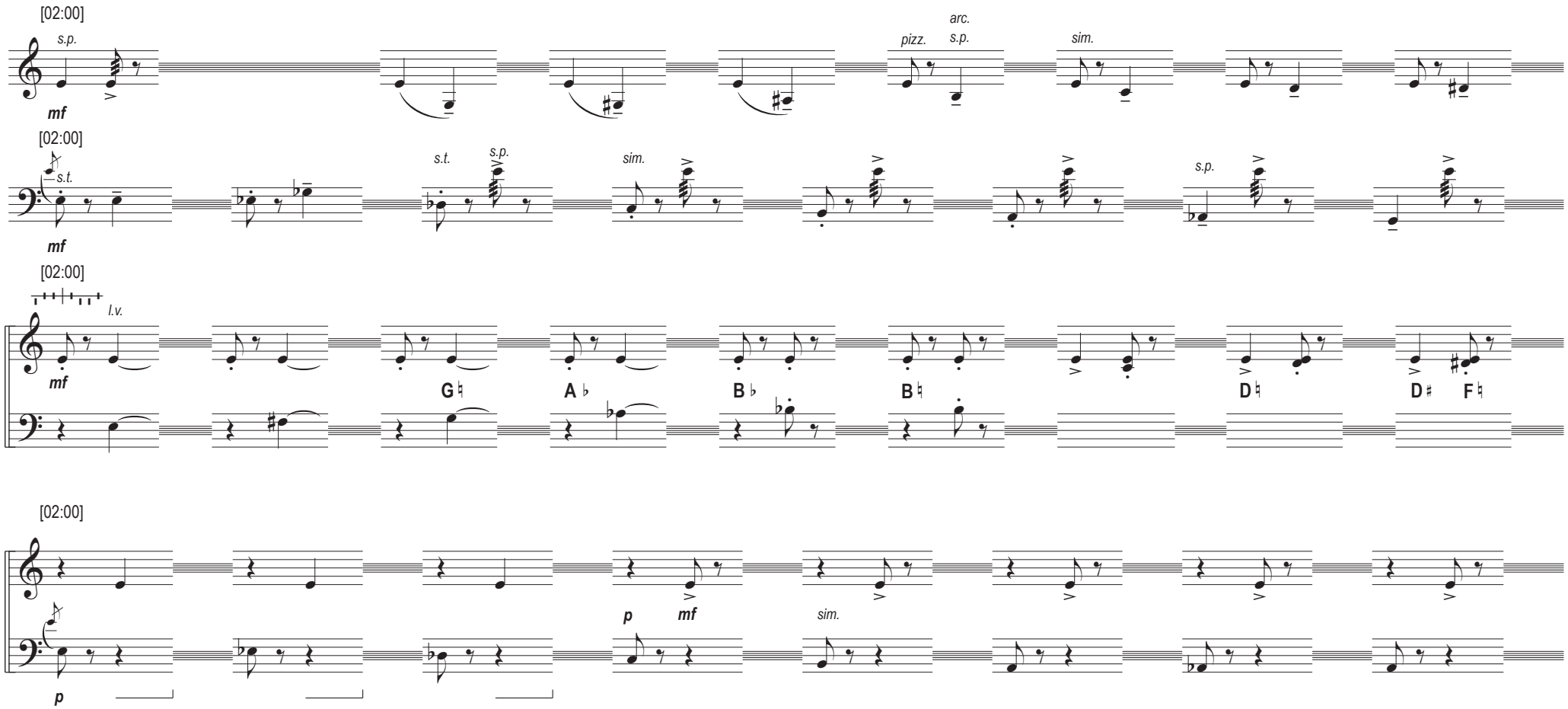
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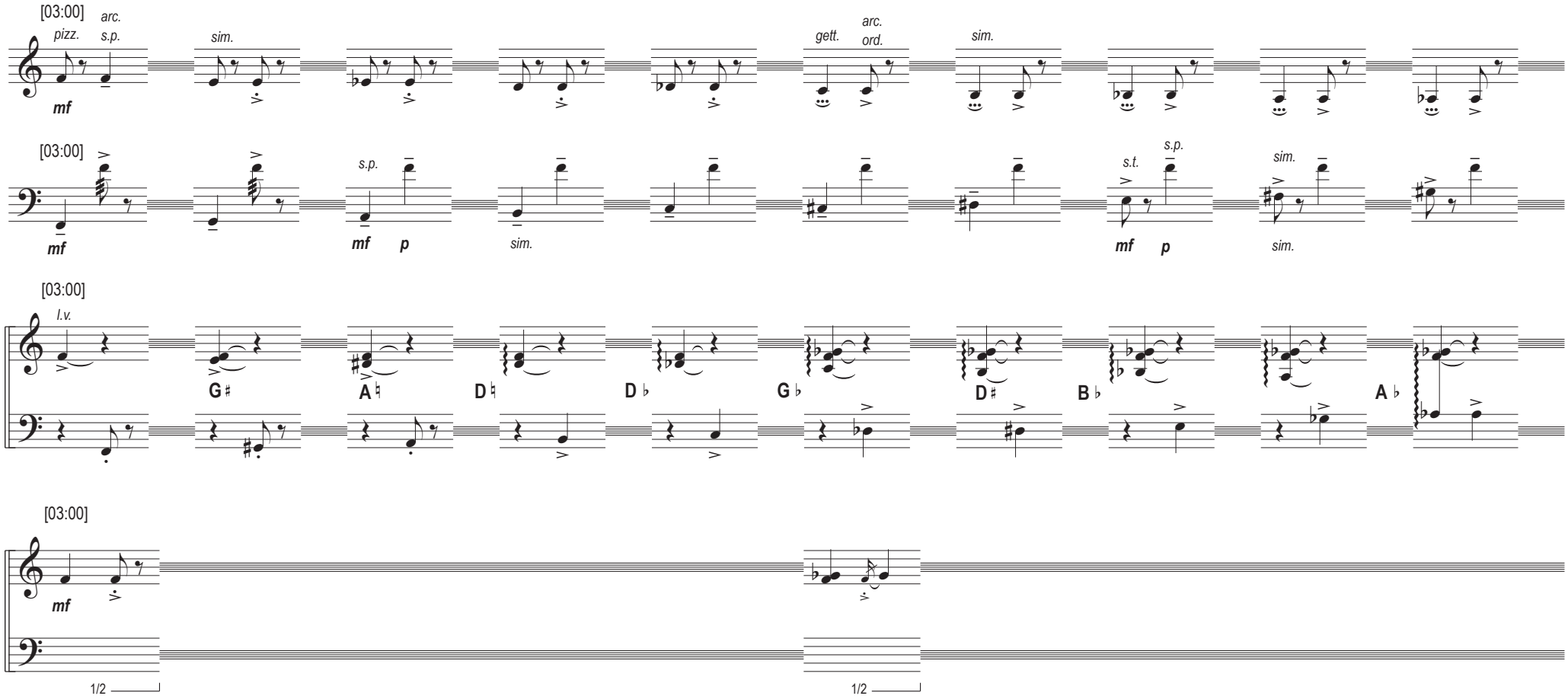
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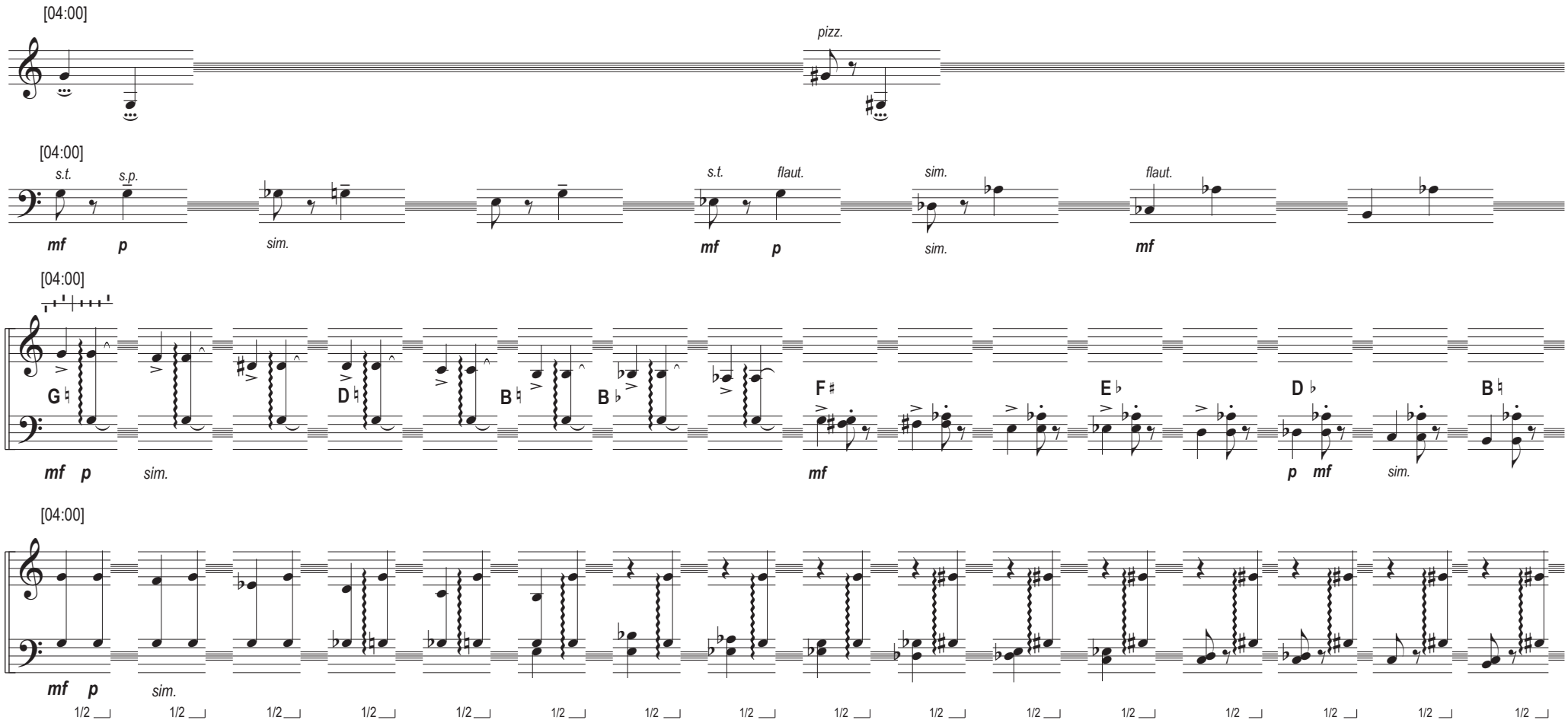
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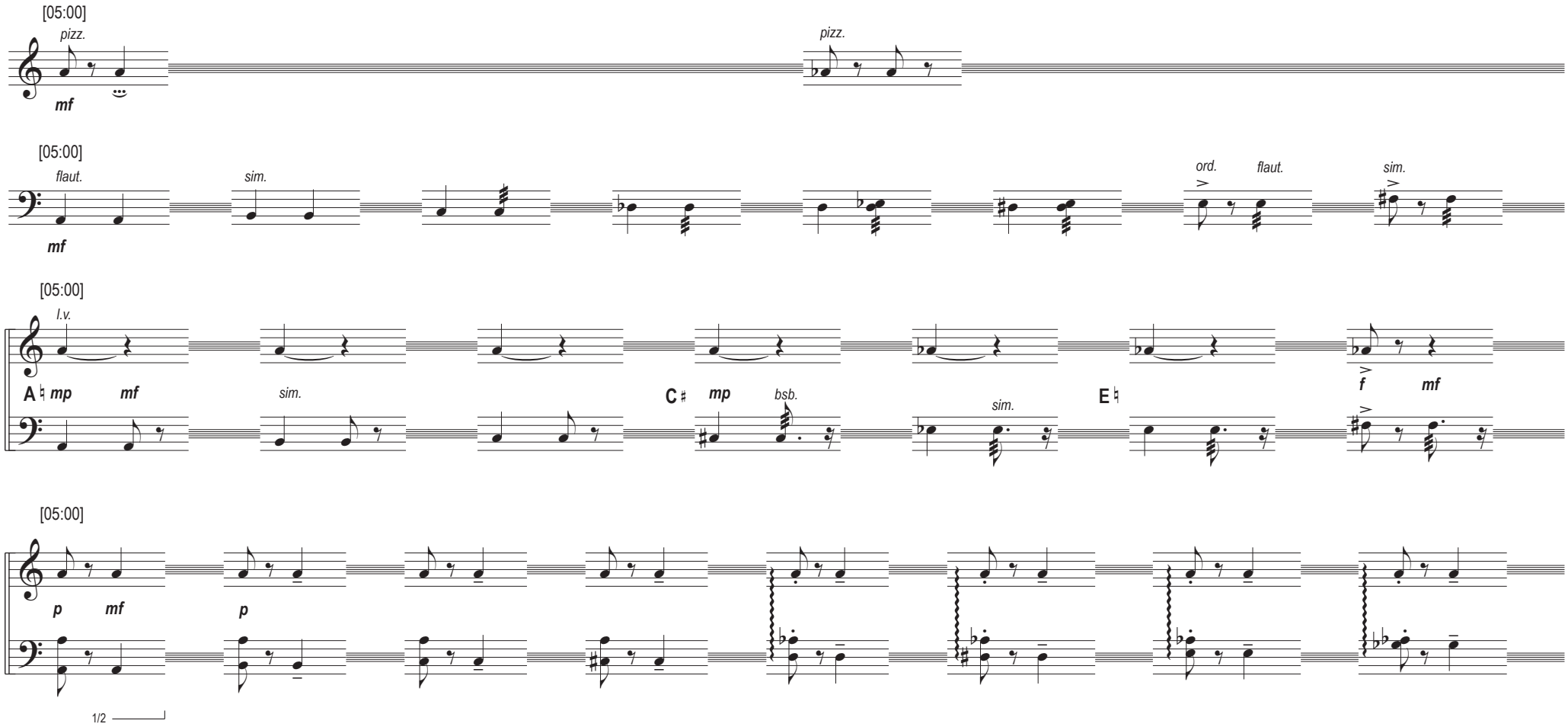
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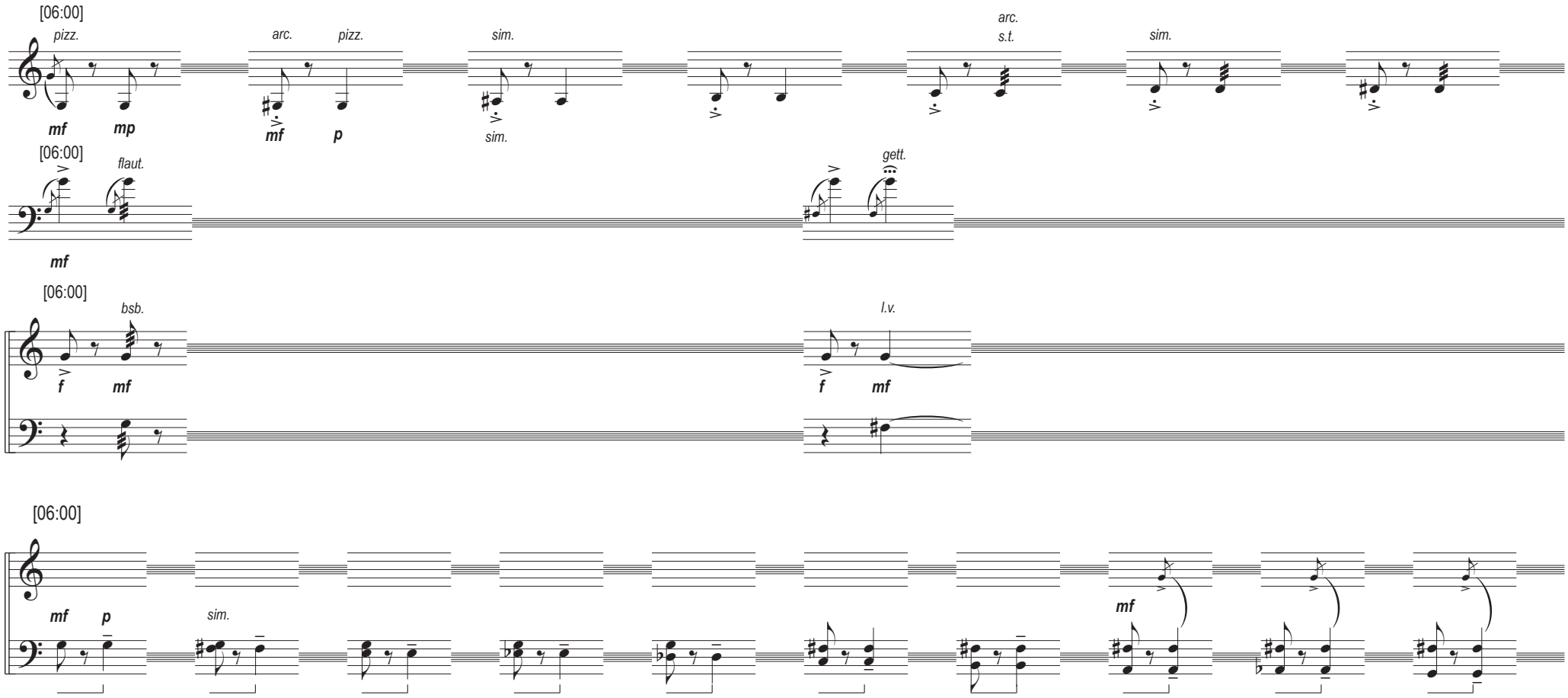
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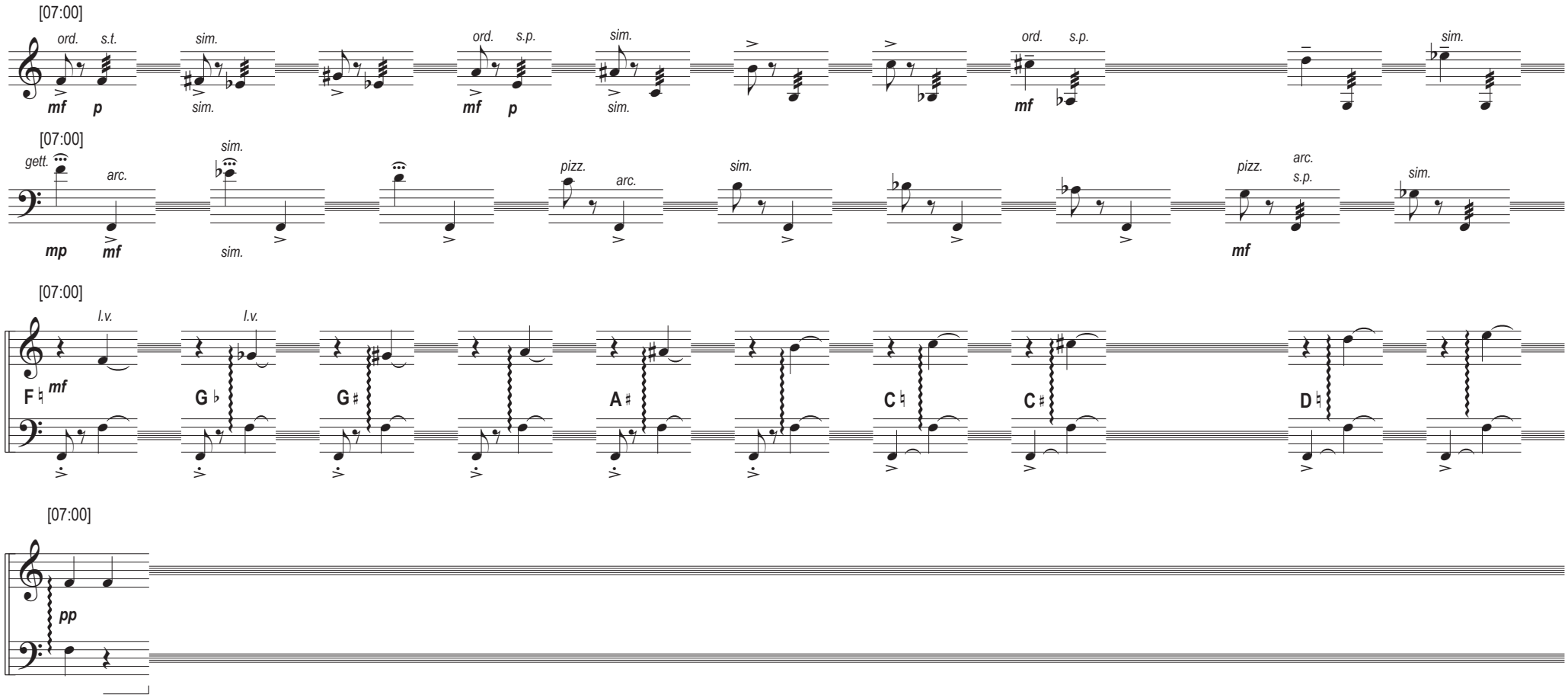
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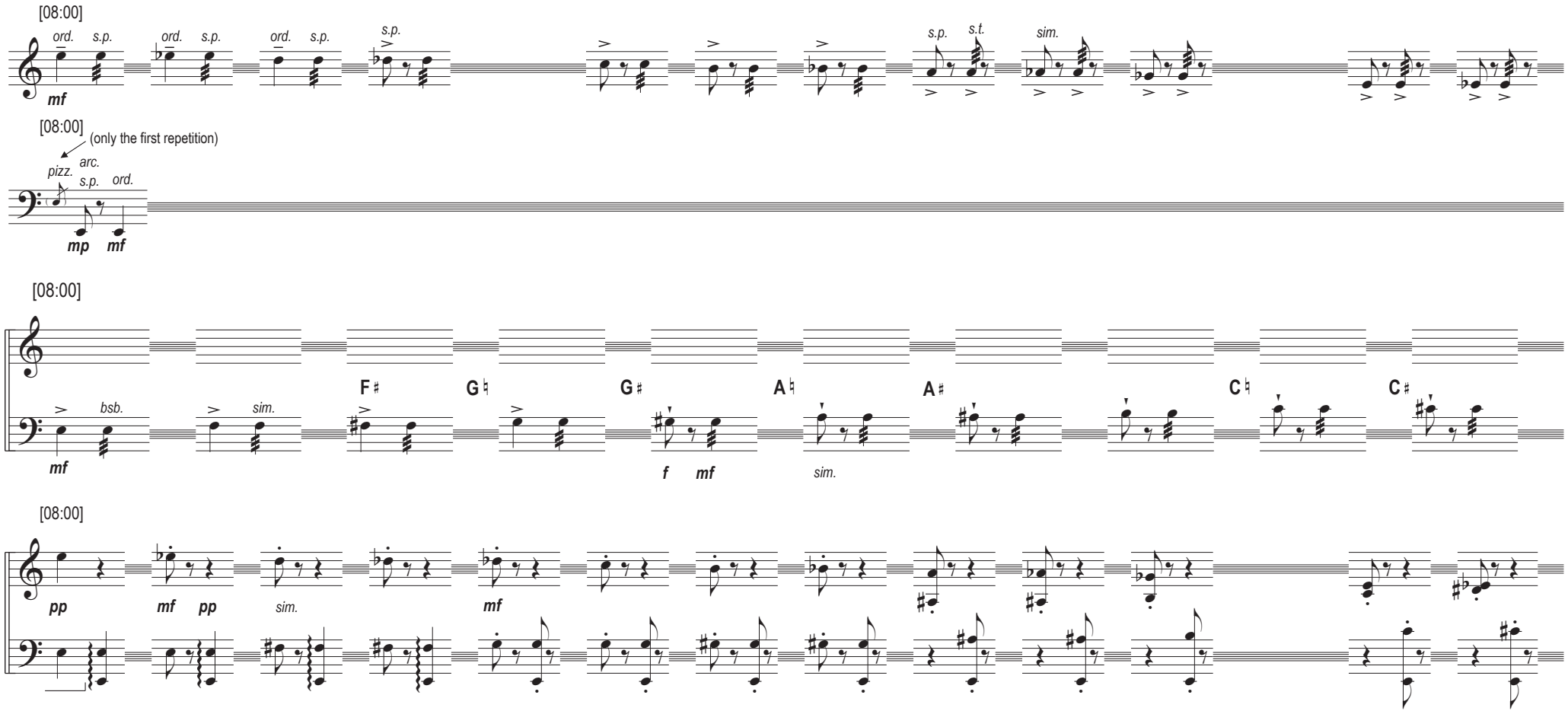
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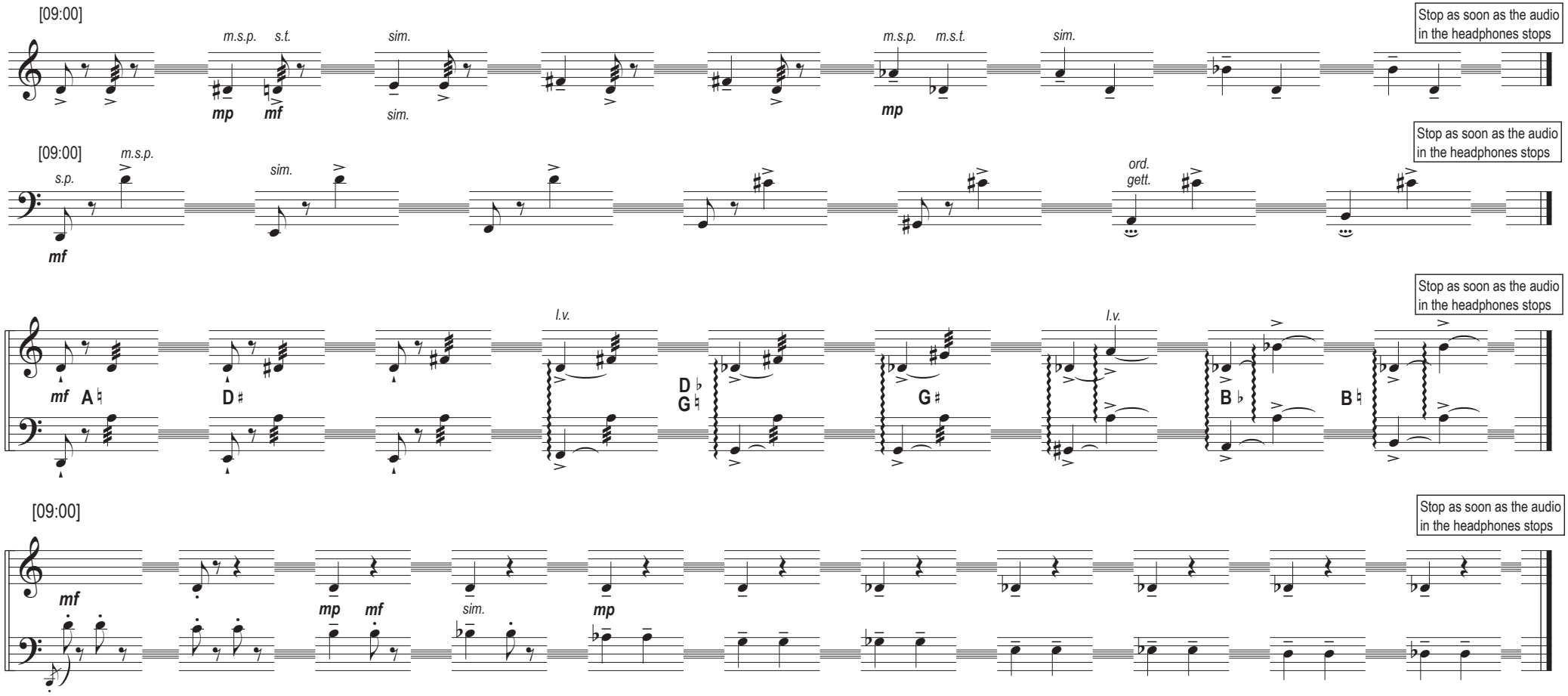

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