Four Duets

from the Clavierübungen Book III

BWV 802, 803, 804, 805

J. S. Bach

For Keyboard

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This edition 17 February 2014.

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Four Duets, from the Clavierübungen Dritter Theil

The third book of J. S. Bach's Clavierübungen was published in 1739. It contains twenty-seven pieces. Just after the Chorale Preludes and before the final Fugue, there are four Duets, BWV802, BWV803, BWV804 and BWV805.

They are not necessarily for organ; they are just as at home on any keyboard, however, they are mostly known to organists. They are, basically, two-part inventions; but they were written nearly twenty years after the *Inventions*, and are bigger and musically more ambitious.

The Four Duets seem oddly placed within the *Clavierübungen Dritter Theil*, where the other pieces are all for organ and have religious themes. It would seem unworthy for Bach to have put them in just to make up the number of pieces to 27 (i.e. three cubed), but no very convincing explanation is known.

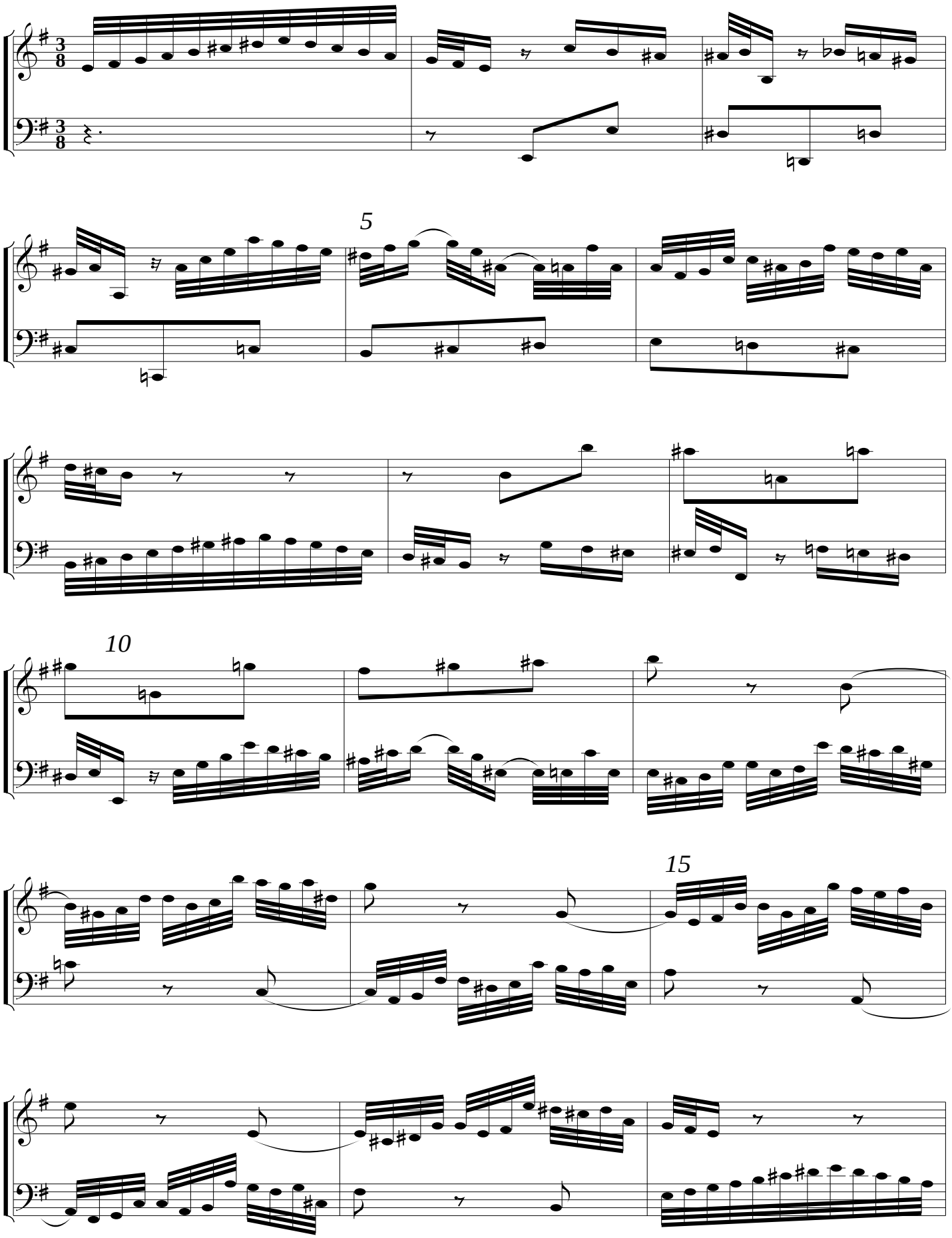
They might represent the four daily prayers: morning, evening, before the meal, and after the meal. But the Duets do not seem convincingly characterised as morning, evening and so on. Anton Heiller suggested they might represent four elements: heaven, air, water, and earth. But how this fits in to the *Clavierübungen Dritter Theil* is not clear, and, again, they are not convincingly so characterised; for comparison, the variations 2,3,4,5 of the last movement of Beethoven's Op 109 are very clearly air, fire, water and earth. In any case, the Duets are Bach's addition to his output of Two-part Inventions.

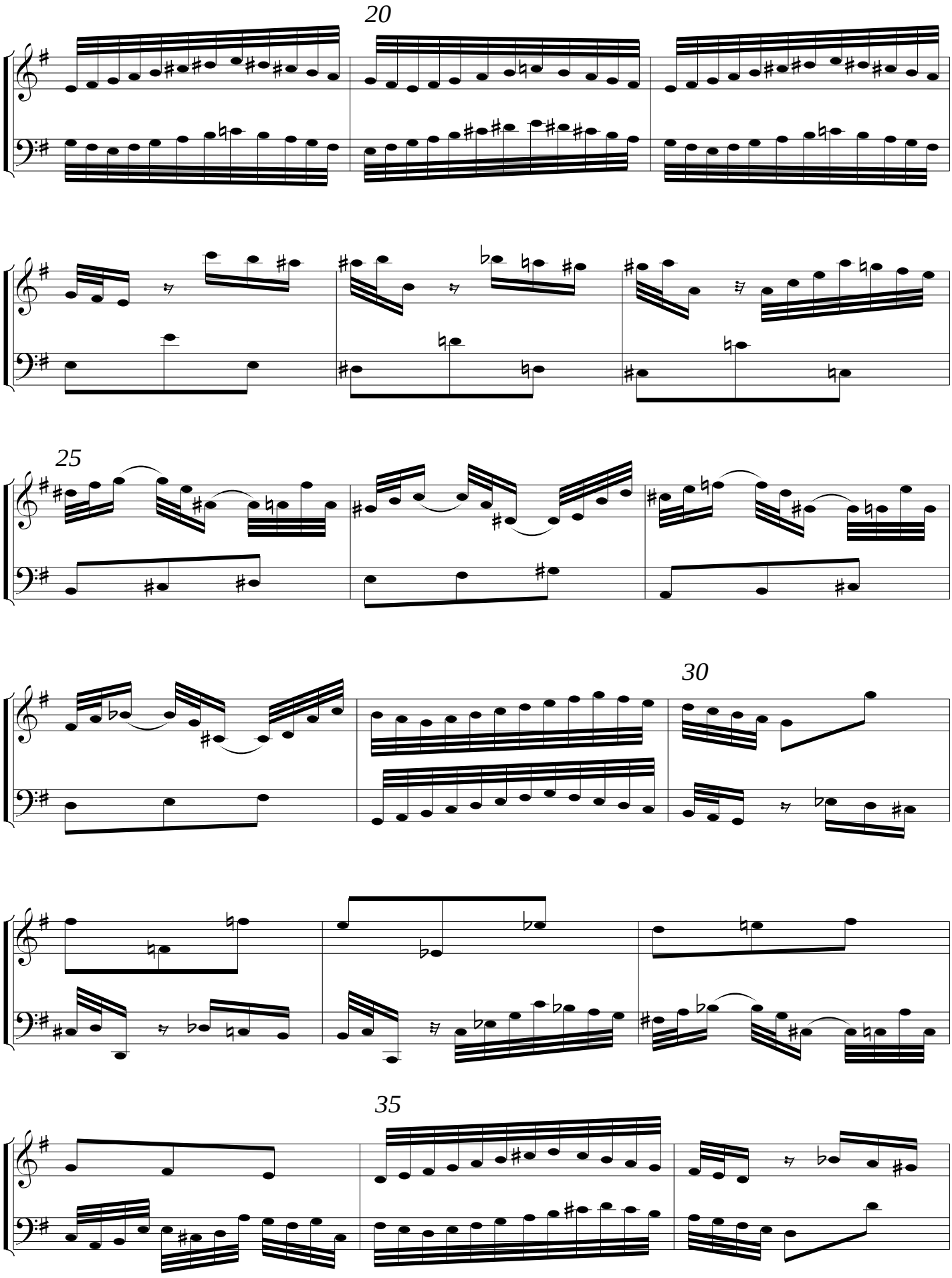
In the Bach-Gesellschaft edition, the trills are marked with individual symbols as described in *Clavierbüchlein für Wilhelm Friedeman Bach* (in the section *Explication unterschiedlicher Zeichen*), but because of limitations of my typesetting-software *muscript*, the trills are all homogenised here to a ***tr*** symbol.

Roslyn Tureck has recorded these Duets on the piano. They are published here because they deserve to become as well known to all keyboard players as the earlier Two-part Inventions already are.

Peter J Billam
www.pjb.com.au

Duetto I.

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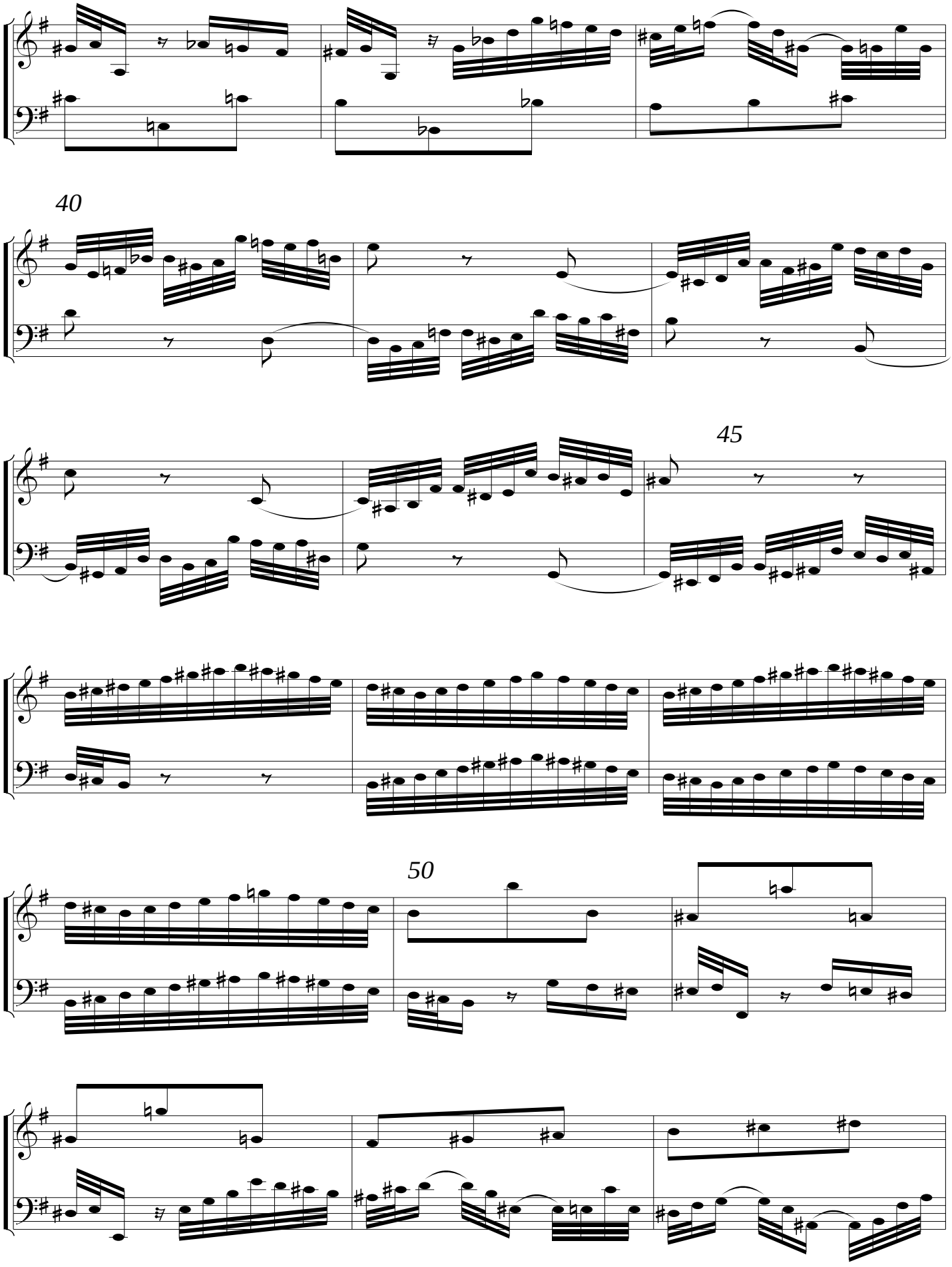
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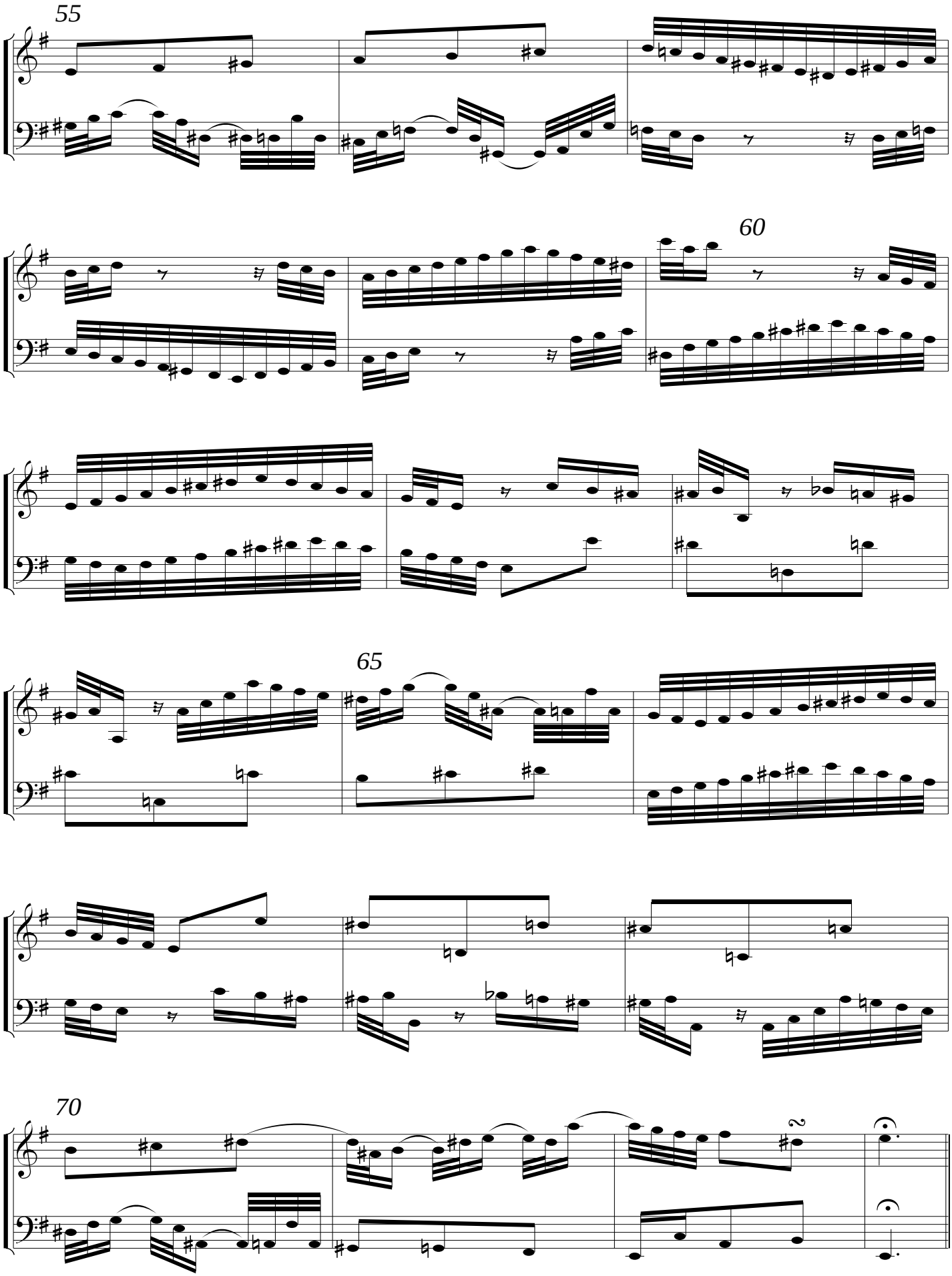
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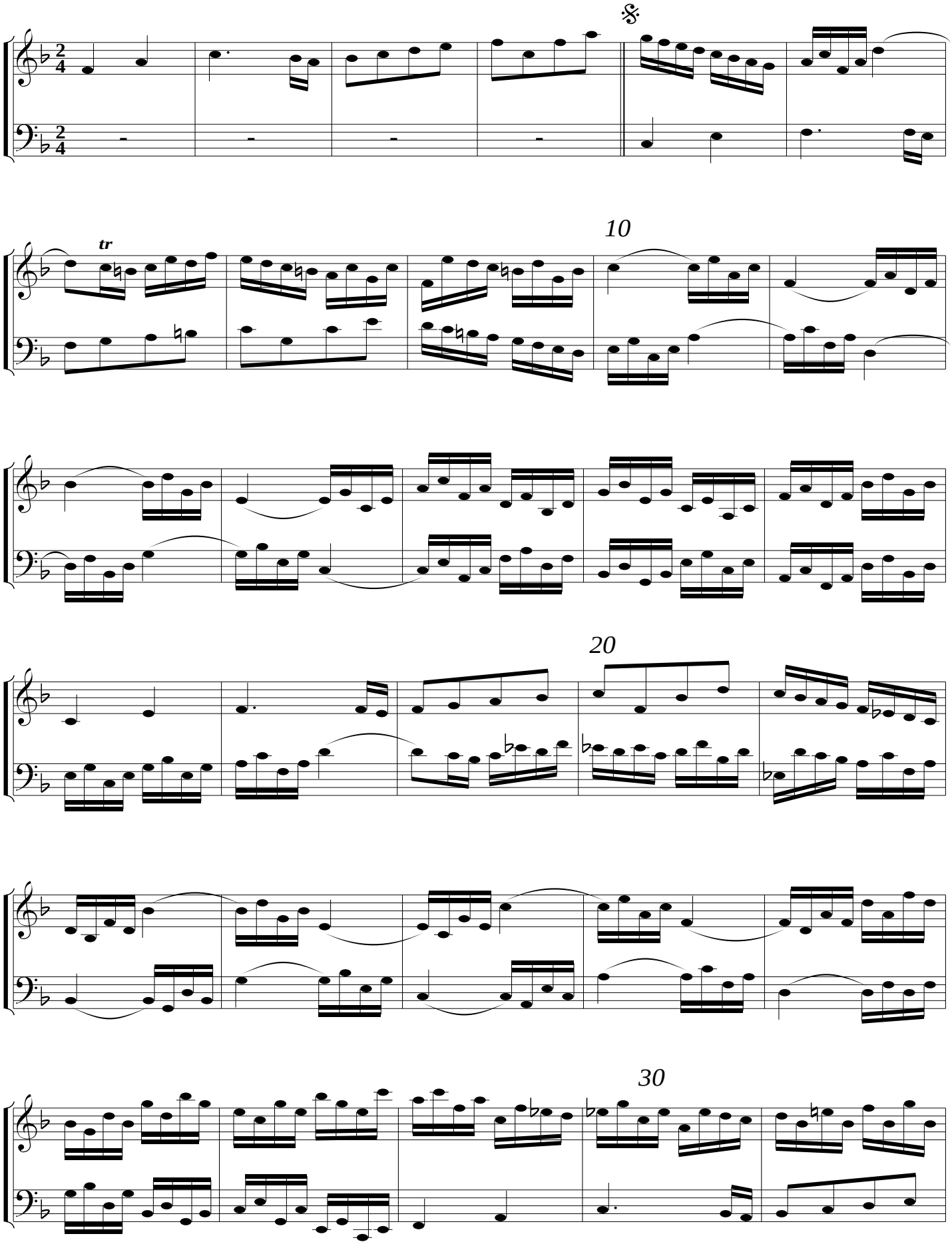

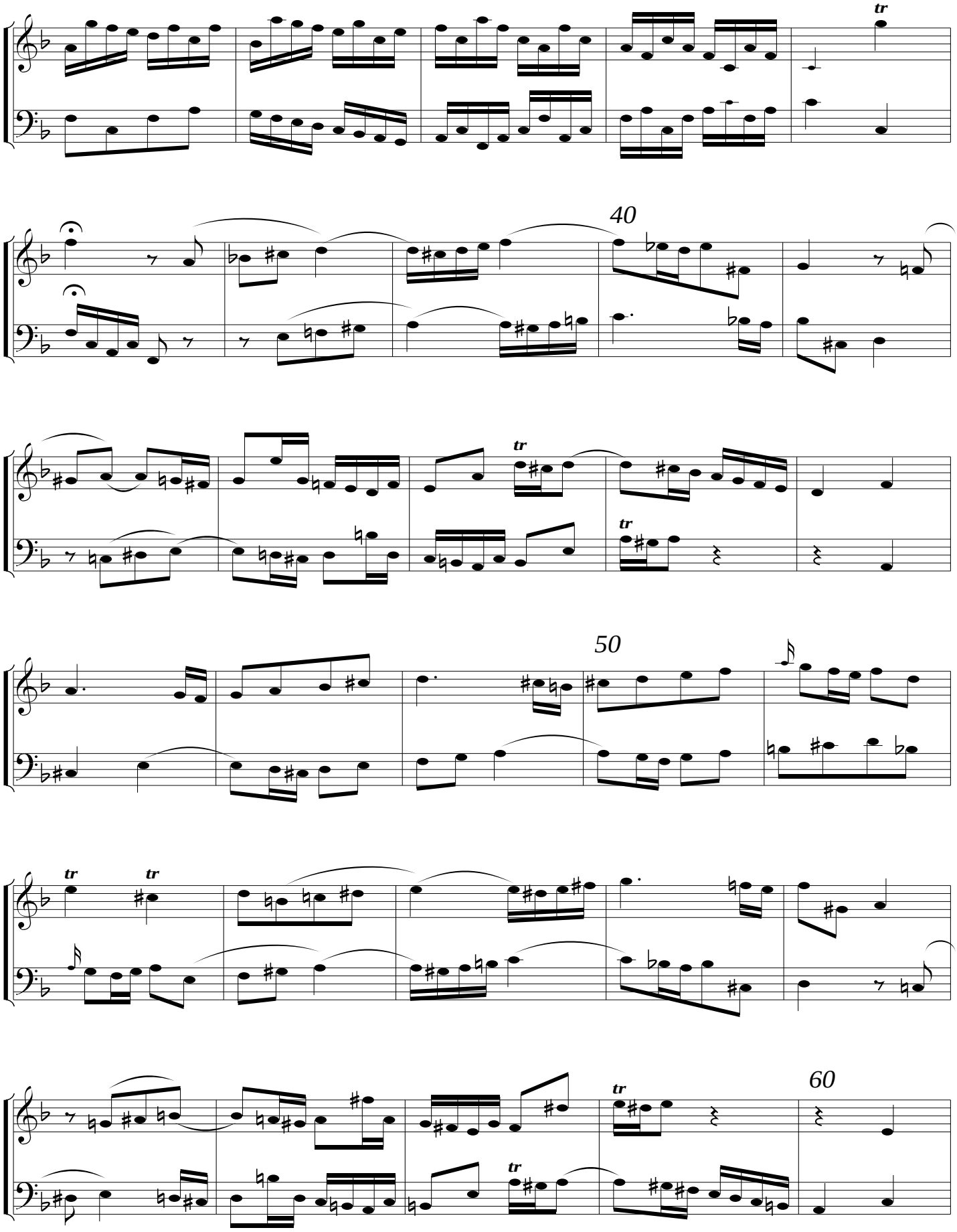
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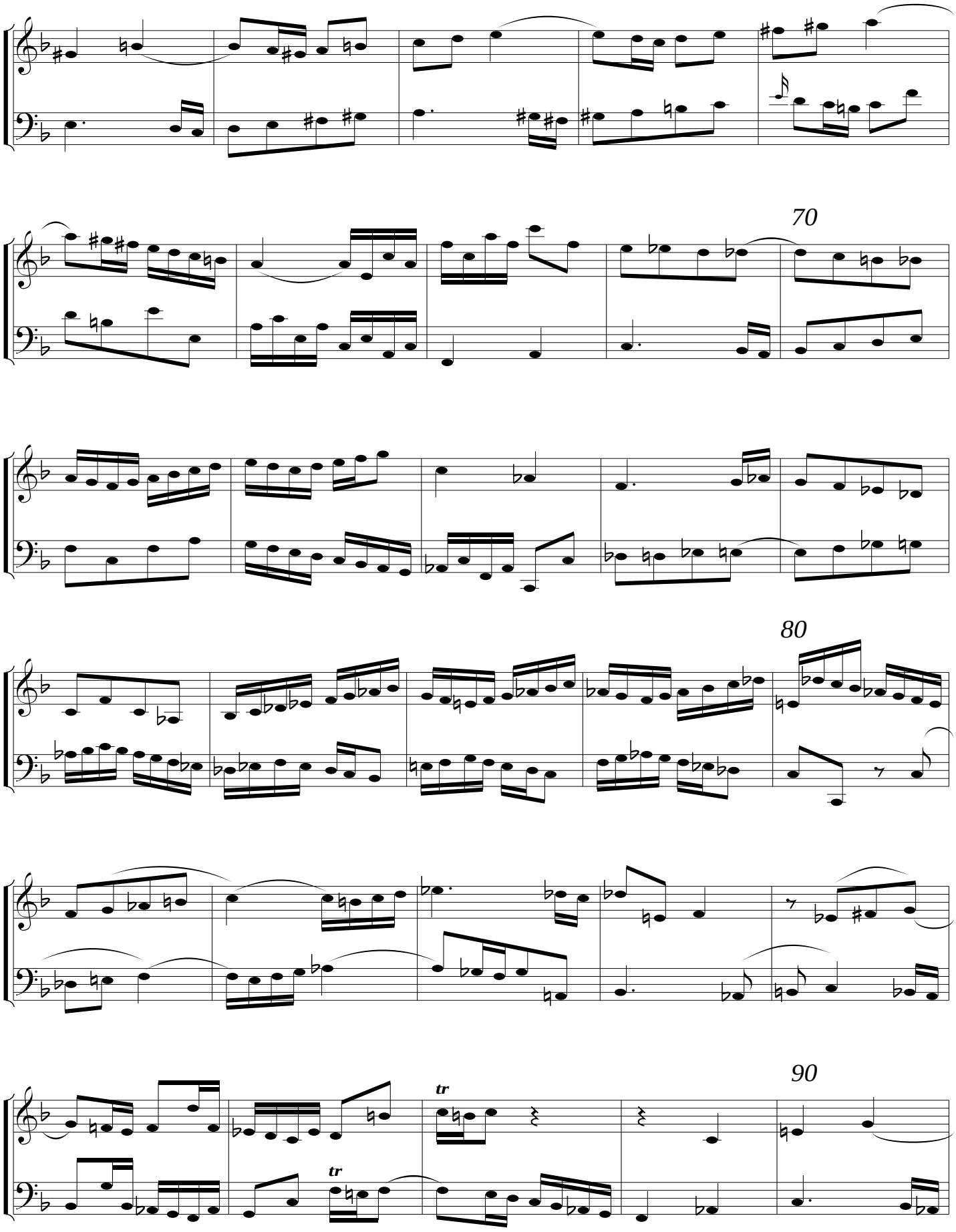
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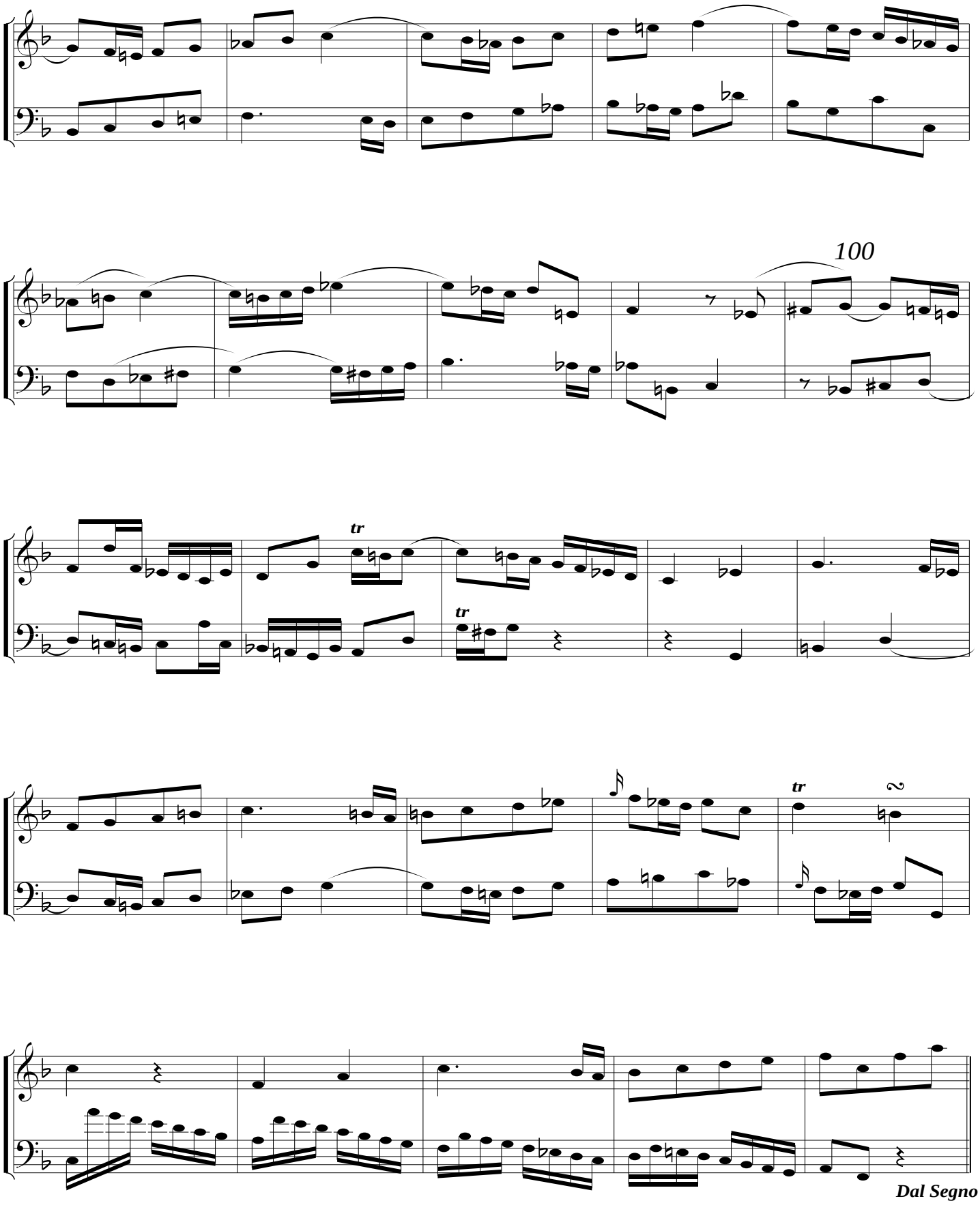
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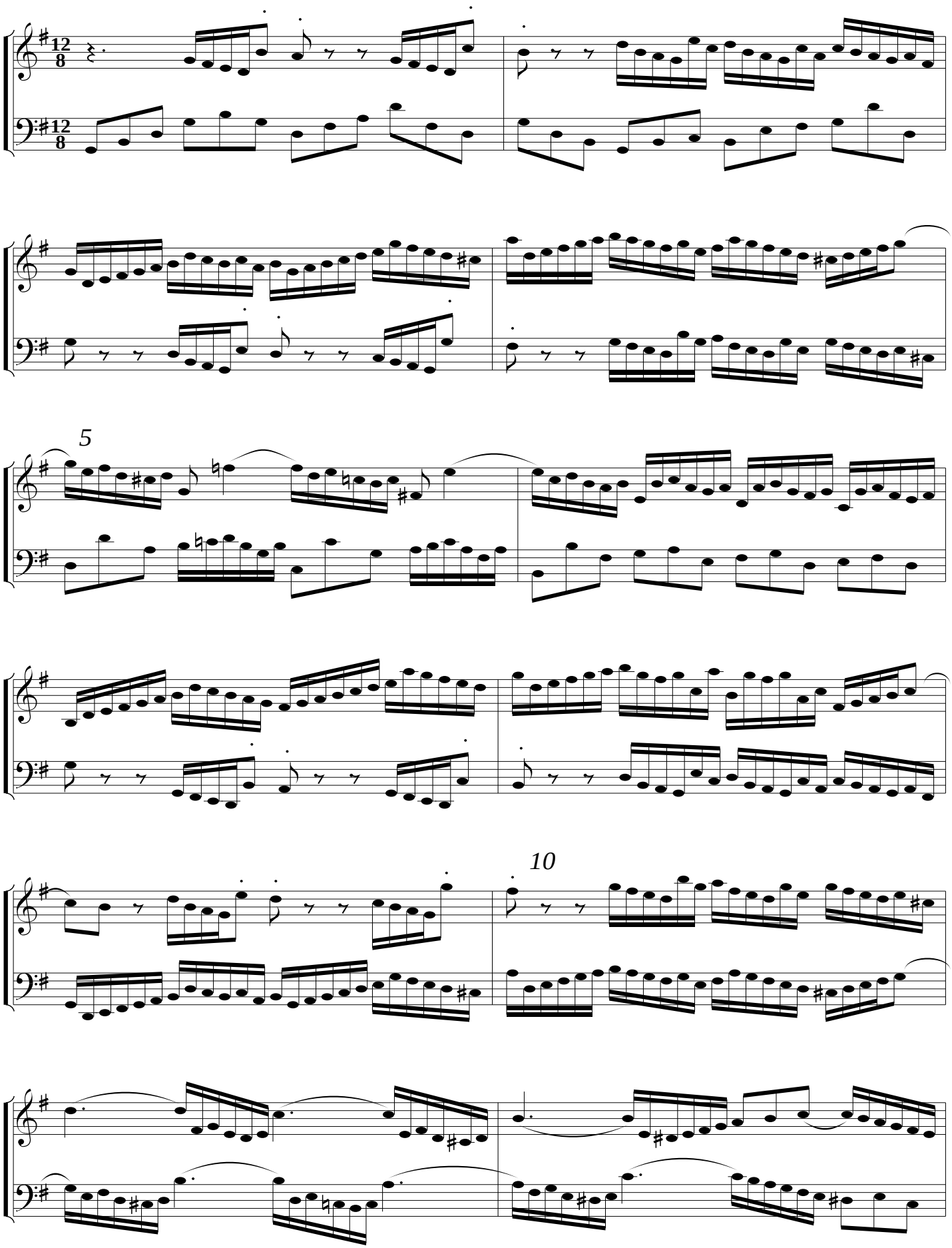

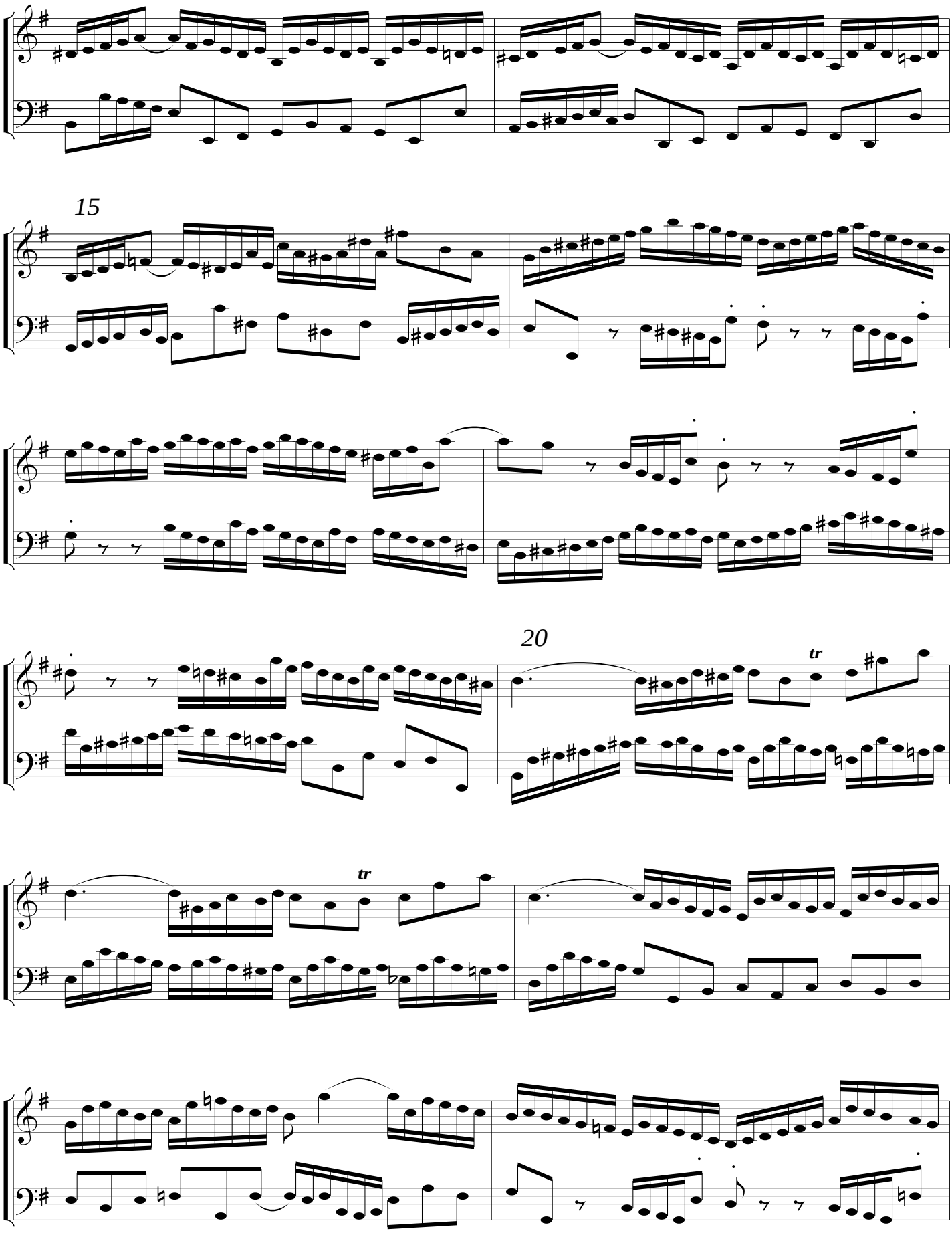
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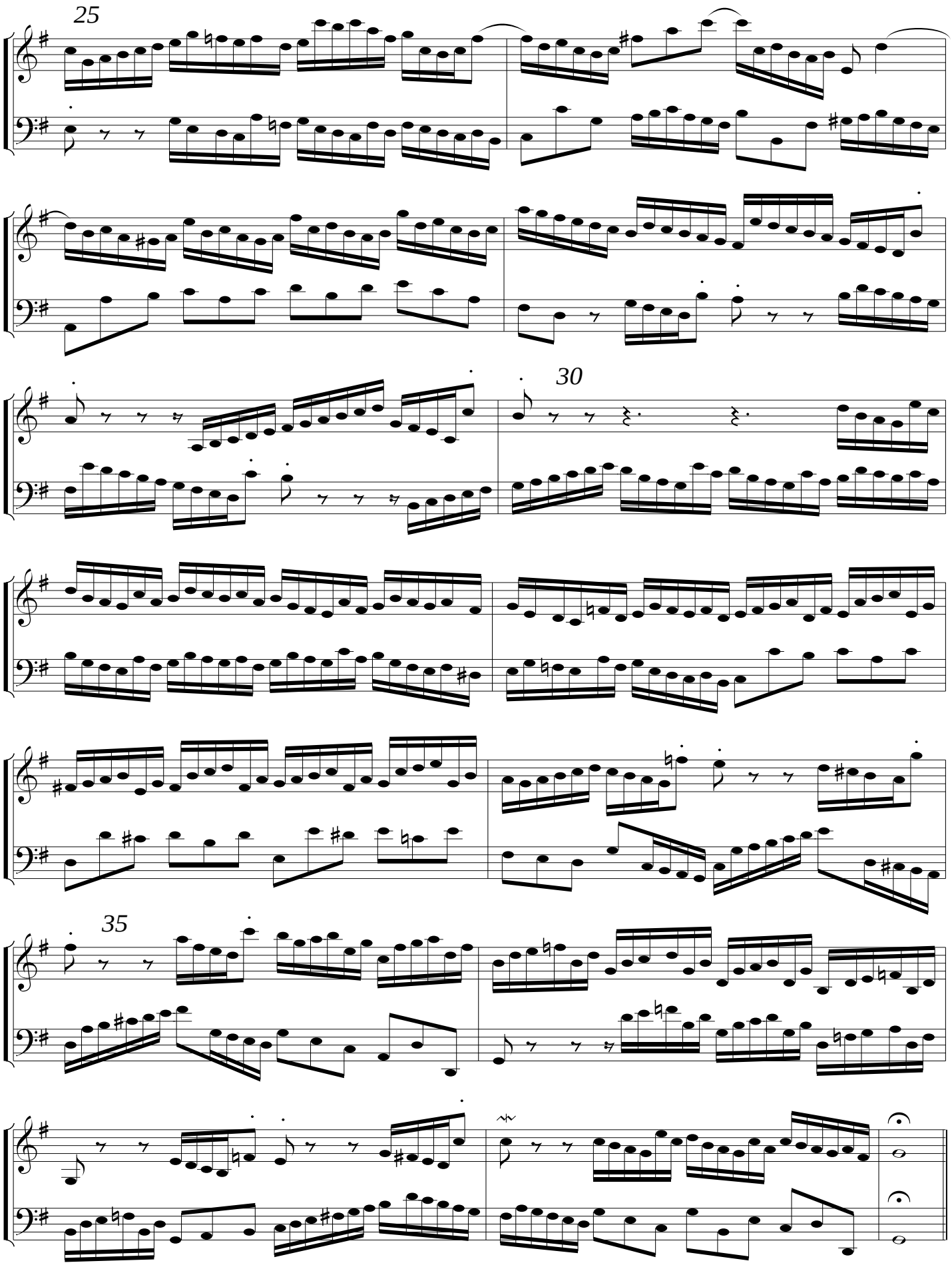
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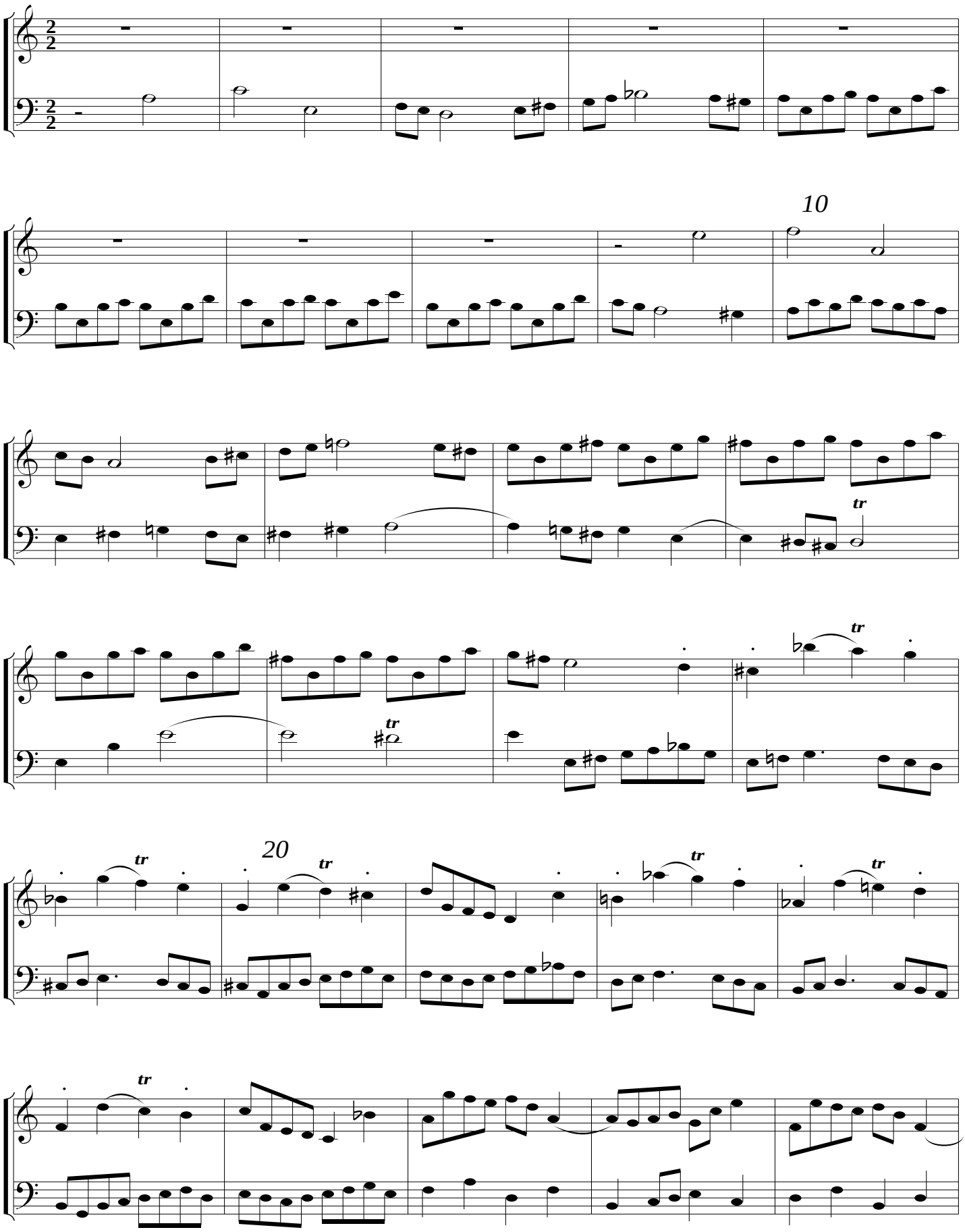

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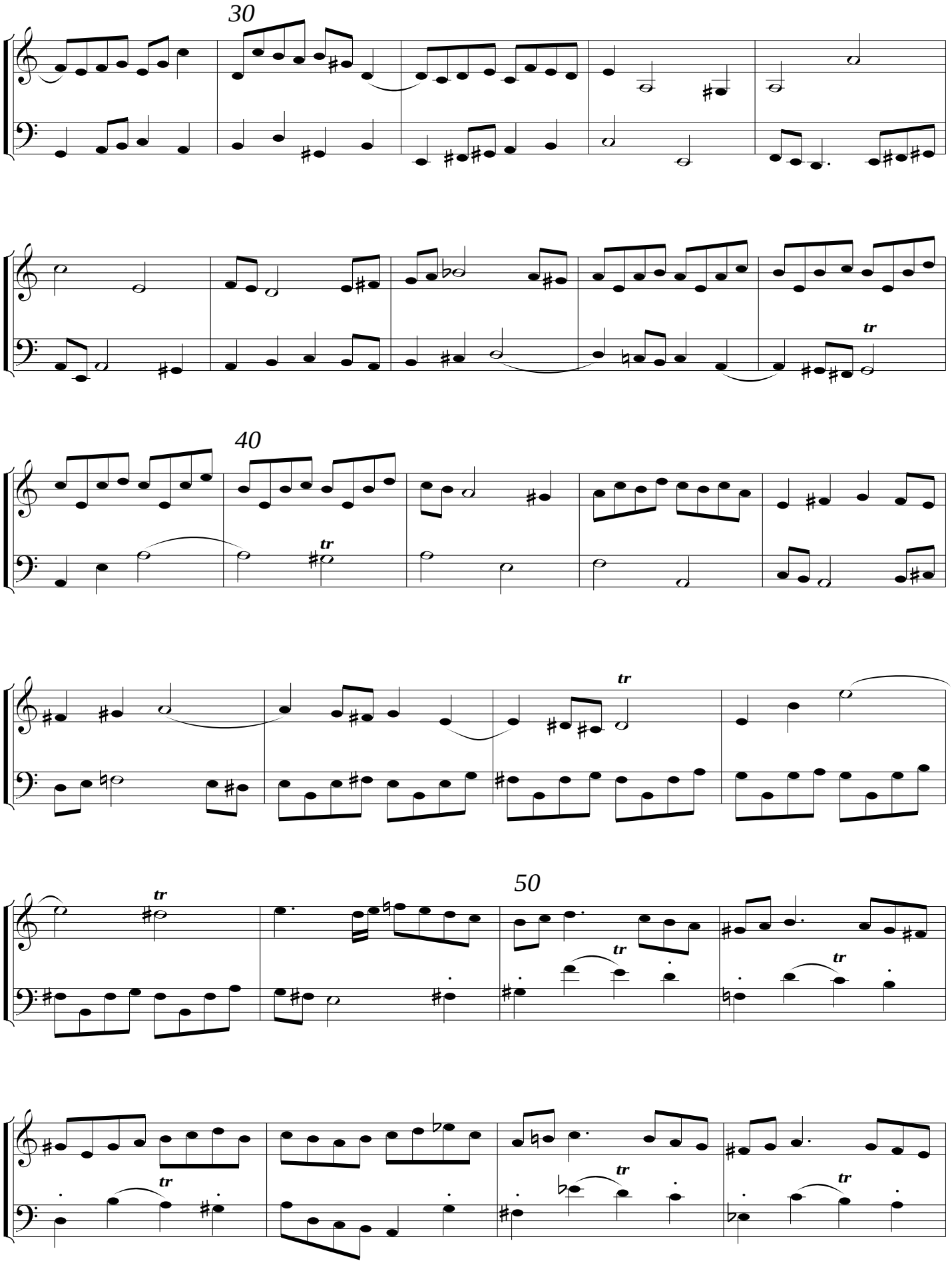
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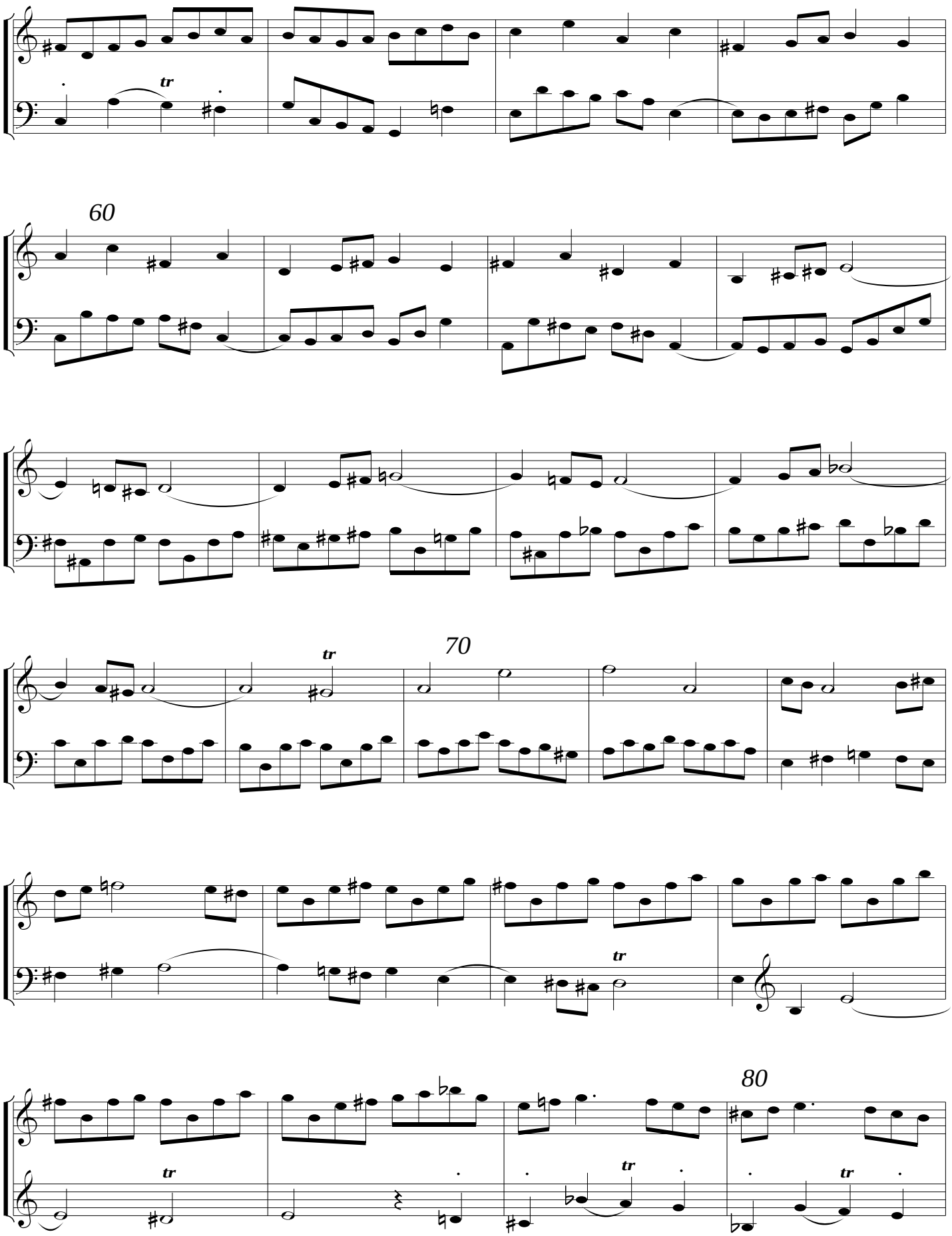
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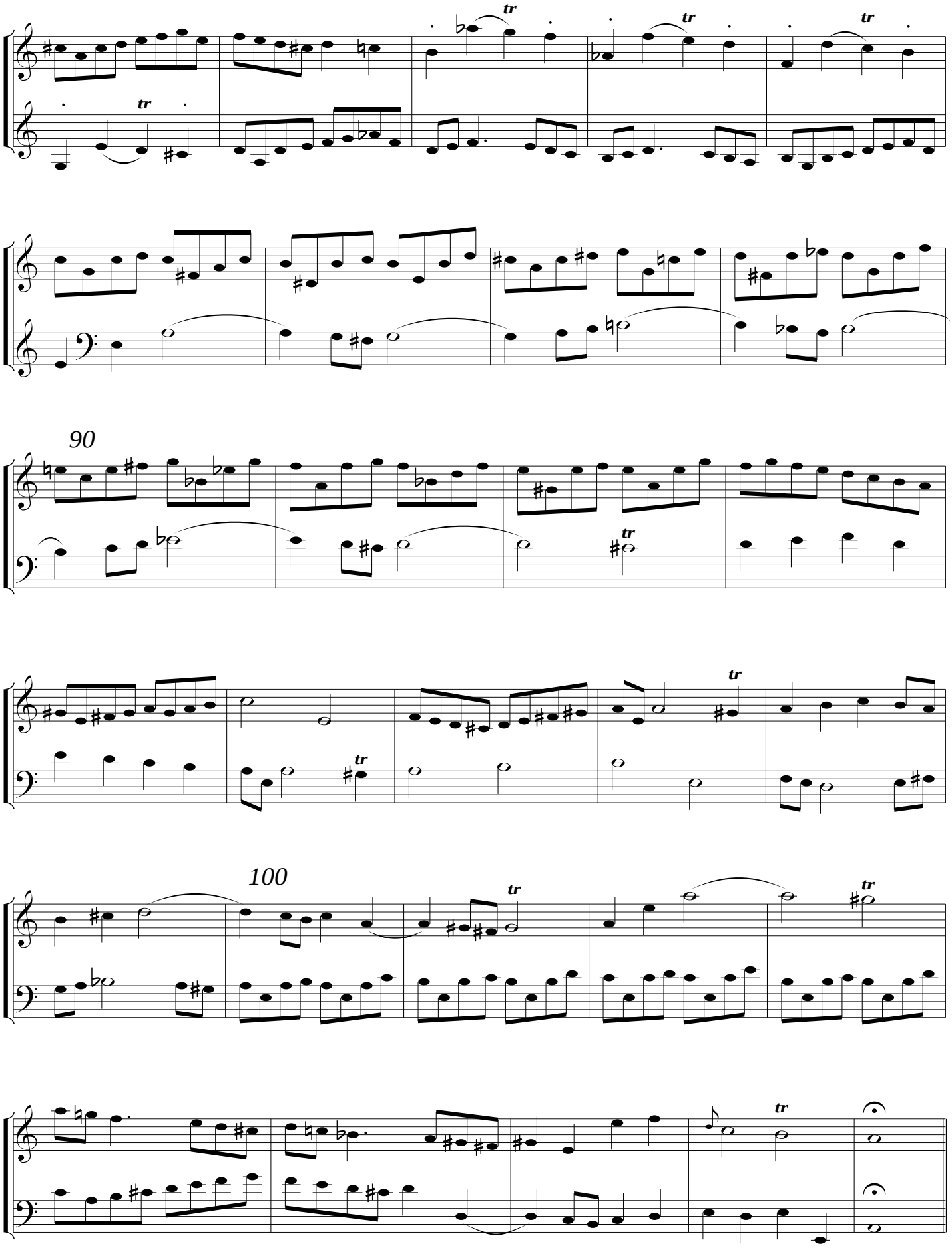
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Peter Billam was born in London in 1948, studied piano, and lived in Switzerland from 1973 to 1983, where he studied composition, classical guitar, flute and voice, worked as Musical Director of the *Théâtre Populaire Romand*, and as recording engineer, record producer and computer programmer. He moved to Tasmania in 1983, lectured in composition at the Conservatorium, conducted recorder ensembles and choirs, studied recorder, voice and harpsichord. He founded **www.pjb.com.au**, becoming the first composer to sell scores on-line, with on-line delivery, taking scores from Composer to Performer in one immediate step. *Www.pjb.com.au* offers a new approach to music publishing. These pieces are **written to be read, made to be played !**

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Arrangements include: By J. S. Bach: *Trio BWV 655*, piano and flute; *Vor deinen Thron BWV 668*, piano; *Fugue in F minor BWV 689*, SATB recorders; *Four Duets BWV 802-5*, keyboard; *Flute Sonata BWV 1031* transposed into G major for alto recorder and keyboard; *Flute Sonata BWV 1032* completed by Peter Billam for flute and keyboard, also in C major for alto recorder, and in G major for descant; *Ricercare a 3, from the Musikalisches Opfer* for keyboard; *Ricercare a 6*, for sSATBG recorders, or strings, or two keyboards; *Fuga Canonica in Epidiapente* for keyboard and melody instrument; from the *Art of Fugue*: *Contrapuncti 1*, *4* and *9* for keyboard, and *Contrapunctus 14* as completed by D. F. Tovey, for keyboard, or for SATB recorders, or for strings; *Passacaglia and Fugue in c* for piano four hands; *Chorales with Descant* for melody instrument and piano; *Cello Suites I*, *II* and *III* for flute or alto recorder, *Forty Chorales* for piano, *Der Geist hilft* for SATB-SATB recorders. By Johannes Brahms: *Fugue in Ab minor for organ*, for SATB recorders and gamba, in A minor; *Choralvorspiele for organ* plus settings by Isaac, Bach, Praetorius, recorders. *John Carr, Divisions on an Italian Ground*, flute or recorder and guitar. By G. F. Händel: *Concerto Grosso in A minor* op 6 no 4, harpsichord and recorders; *Recorder Sonata in Bb* no 5, in G for tenor recorder and keyboard. *Claudio Monteverdi*, *Ecco Mormorar l'Onde*, SSATB recorders. By Arnold Schoenberg: *Verklärte Nacht* for piano. By Franz Schubert: *Four Songs*, voice and guitar; *Dances*, recorders and guitar, *Dances*, piano 4 hands. *Scriabin, Two Preludes op.67; Five Preludes op.74*, piano. *Telemann, Twelve Flute Fantasias*, recorder. *John Wilbye, Draw on sweet Night*, SSATTB recorders, and for flute choir. *Twelve Italian Songs*, voice and guitar; *Fourteen Folk Dance Tunes*, recorder and guitar; *Bushband Dances*, violin, piano accordeon and banjo; *Easy Classical Pieces*, Bb trumpet and piano.

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