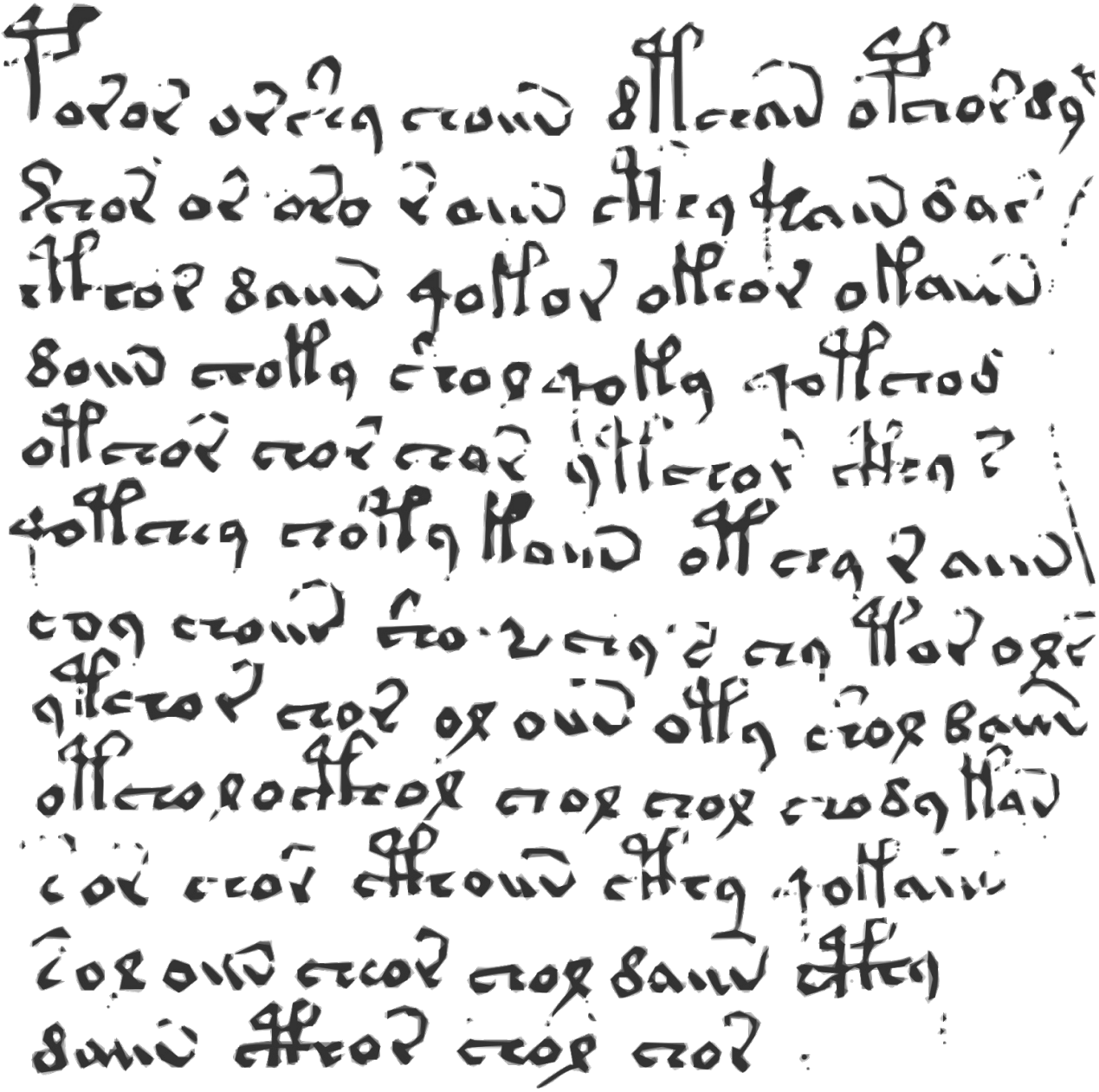
Xenoglossia

for solo organ



Benjamin R. Fuhrman

Program Notes

As a composer, it's rare to have a chance to write for the organ. It's also a slightly terrifying prospect as it's generally not covered in orchestration courses and the range of stops available can offer a range of timbres equivalent to an entire orchestra. In essence, it's like a foreign language for composers – confusing at first, but capable of subtlety and nuance in new and unconsidered ways.

So, that's how I decided to approach writing for it.

Xenoglosssia is the paranormal phenomena in which a person manifests an ability to speak and write in a language that they do not know, and cannot have acquired through normal study. Similar to if I were suddenly struck by lightning and then able to write Sumerian, I dove into writing for the organ, as if it were a newly acquired language. To do this, I ignored conventional ideas of melody, harmony, and rhythm to focus on creating drones, fluid lines, and masses of sounds. In keeping with the idea of manifesting a new language, I chose to focus the outer sections of the piece on different forms and permutations of the Ethiopian *Batti* scale [G, B, C, D, F, F#]. These weave in and out over a drone, changing and shifting in a mostly unmetered exposition before coming to rest. The central section takes the pitch set compliments of the *Batti* scale as it's basis, focusing on masses of sounds and their expansions before returning to the fluid material from the beginning.

-Benjamin R. Fuhrman

Biography

Born in Lansing, Benjamin Fuhrman is a graduate of the doctoral program in music composition at Michigan State University, where his primary instructors were Dr. Ricardo Lorenz and Dr. Mark Sullivan. He also holds a master's degree in music composition from Michigan State University, and a bachelor's degree in violin performance from Hope College, where his principal instructor was Mihai Craioveanu.

He has had works commissioned from a number of performers, including Drake Dantzler, Violet, Jeffrey Loeffert, Nathan Boggert, the H¬2 Quartet, the East Lansing High School Orchestra, REACH Studio Art, and the MSU National Superconducting Cyclotron Laboratory and Facility for Rare Isotope Beams, and has been performed throughout the world. His works are available on the Albany Records, Argali Records, Blue Griffin, Elmstreet, and SEAMUS labels.

He maintains an active role as a performer and teacher of composition and music technology at Oakland University. www.benfuhrman.com

Cover: Text in an unknown writing system from the *Voynich Manuscript*. Currently in the collection of Yale University.

Xenoglossia

Benjamin R. Fuhrman

Out of Time

Organ

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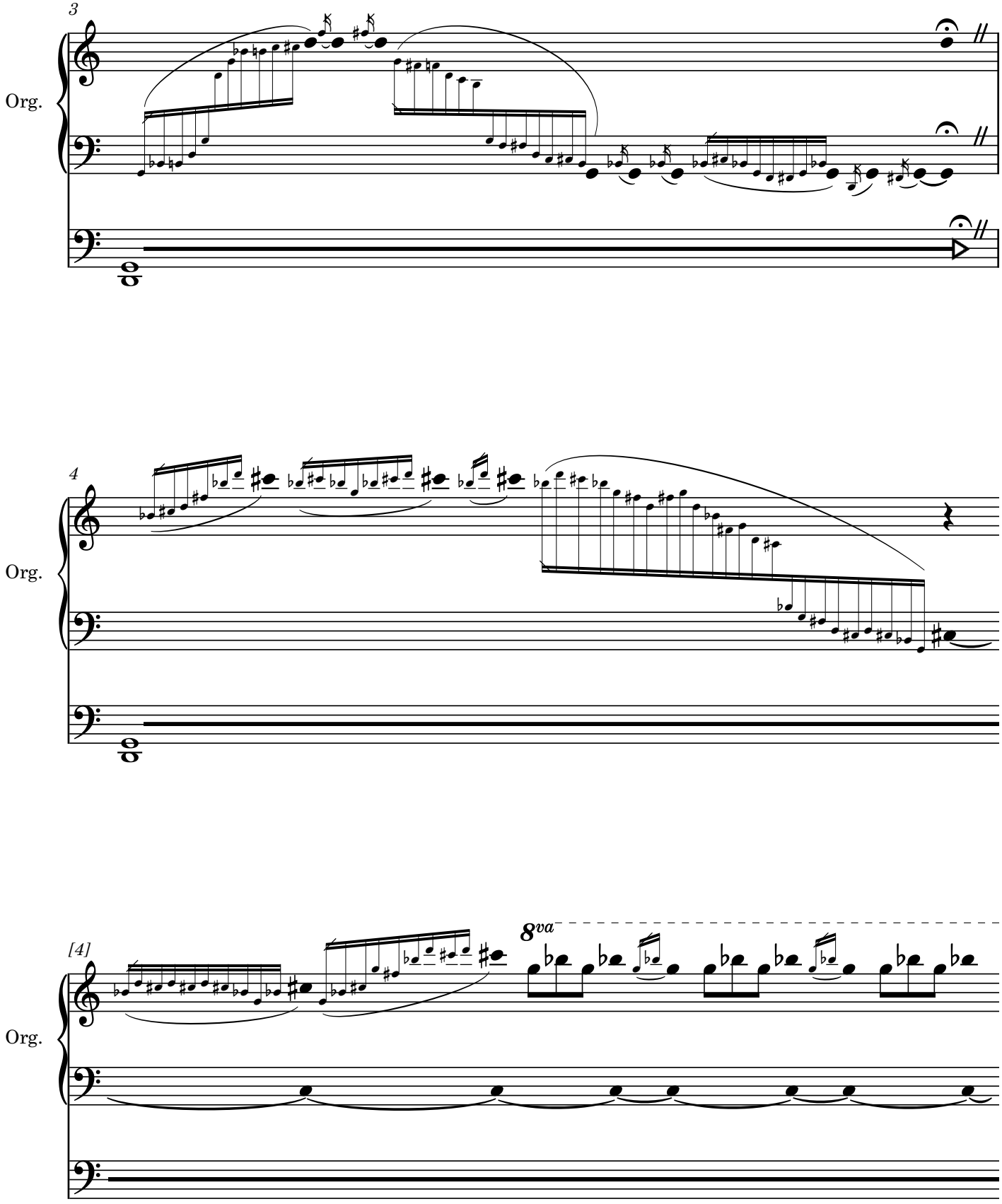
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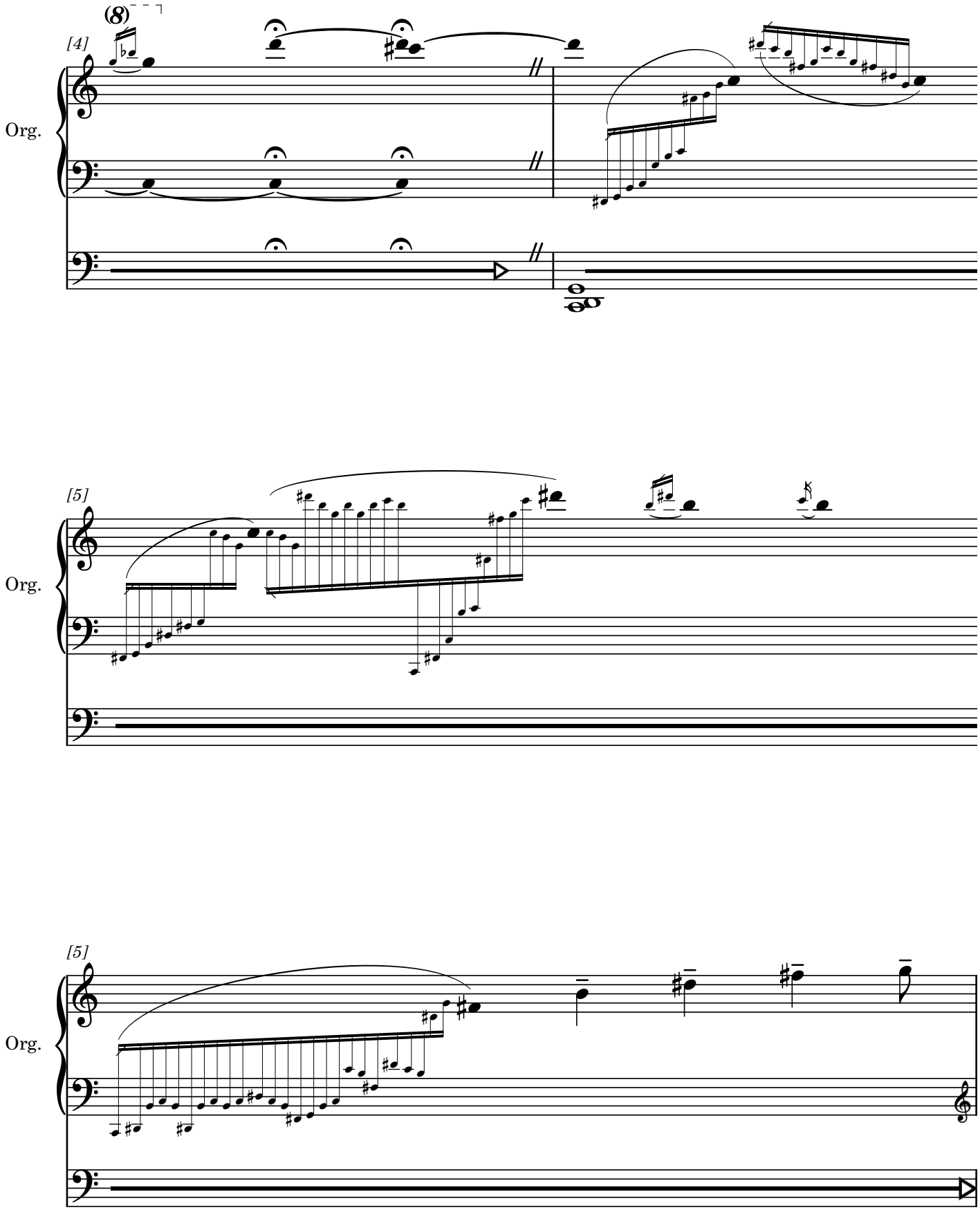
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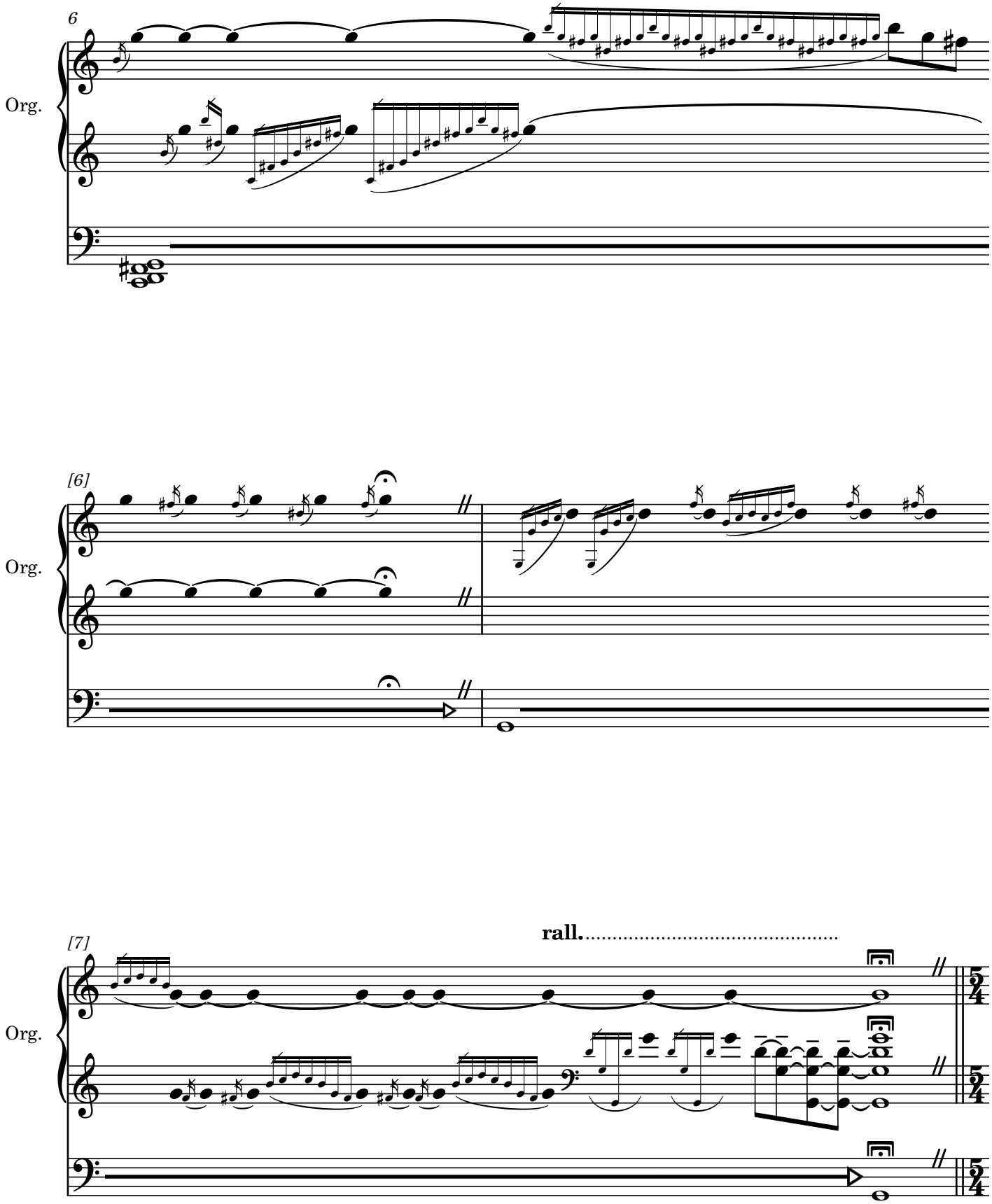
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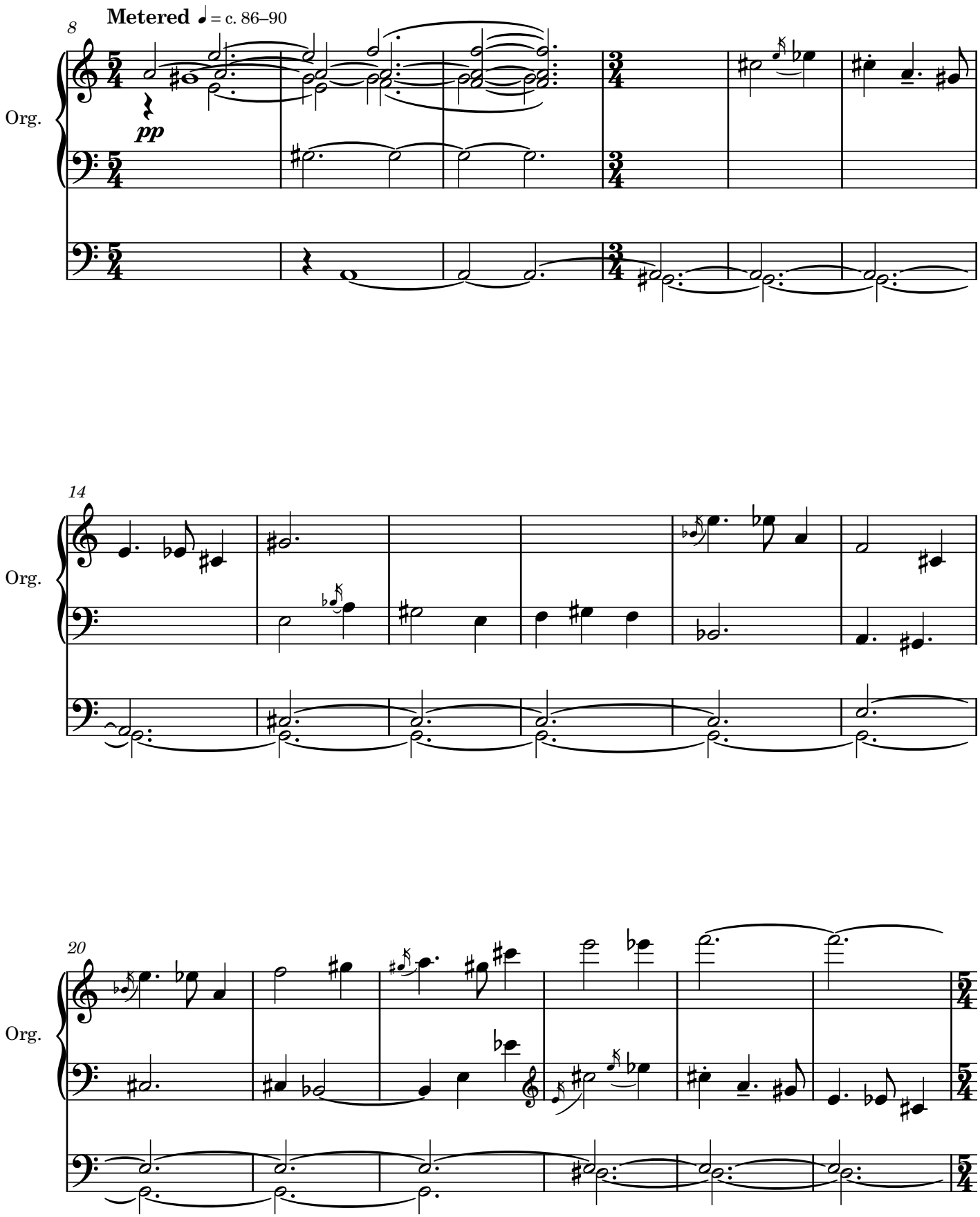
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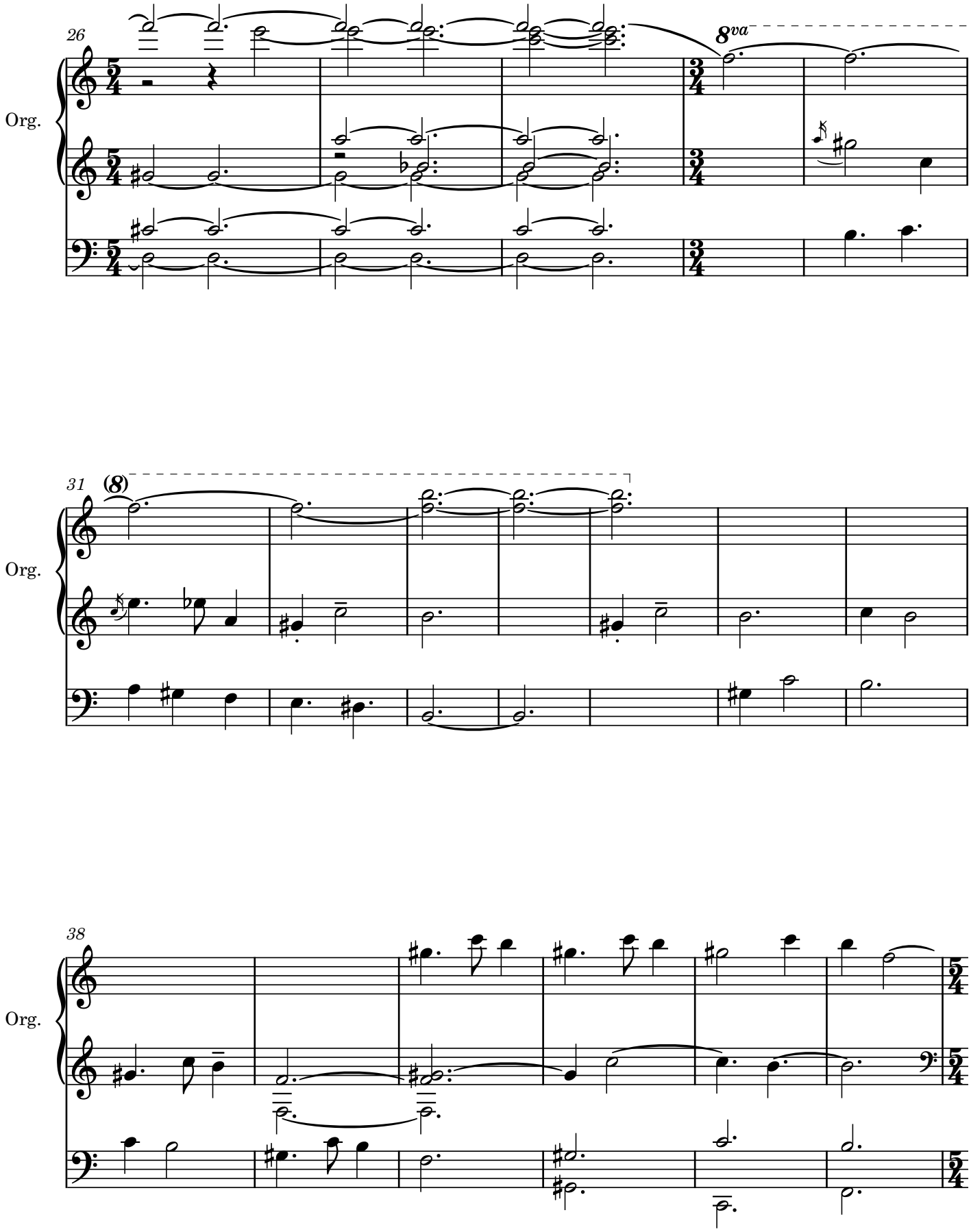
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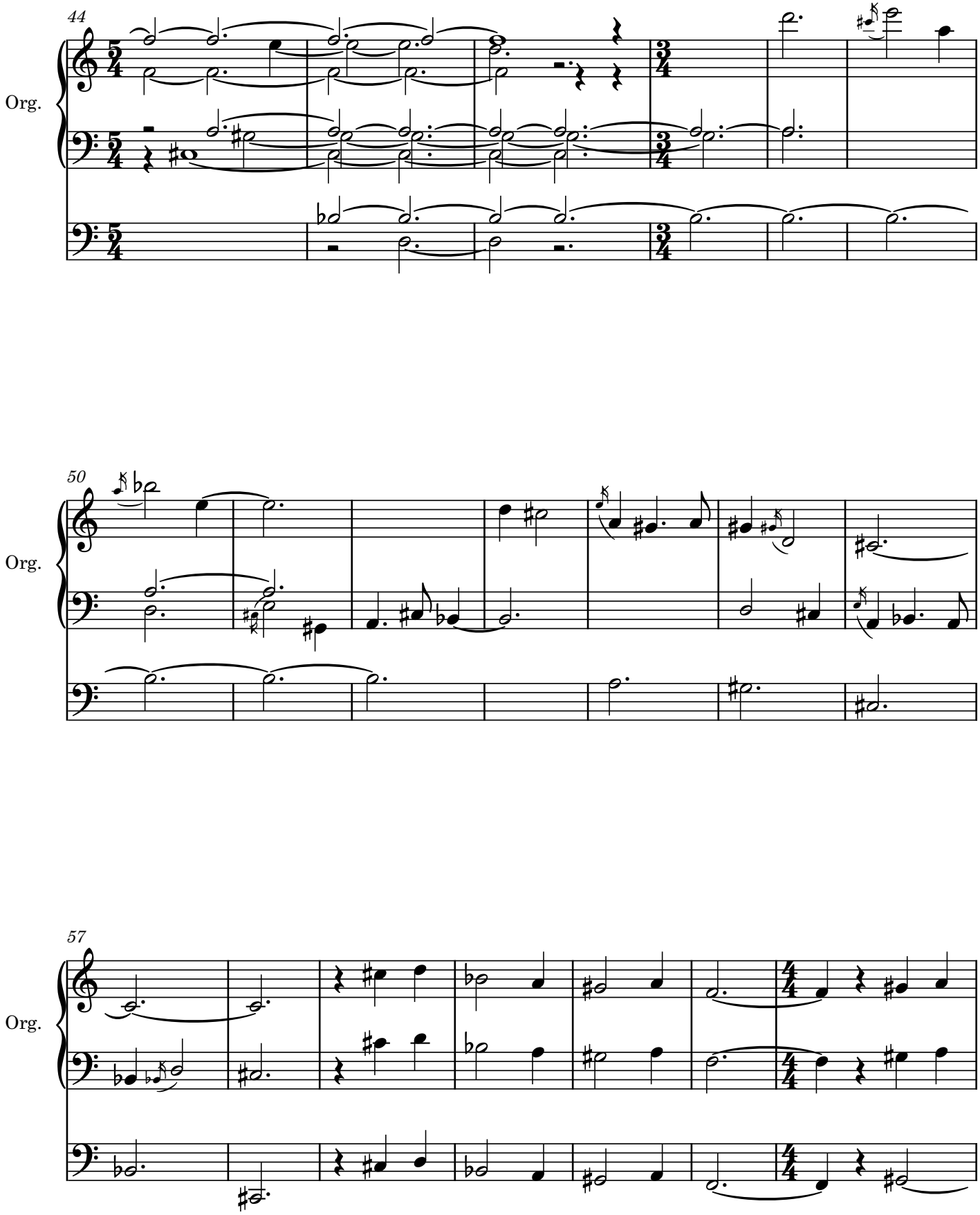
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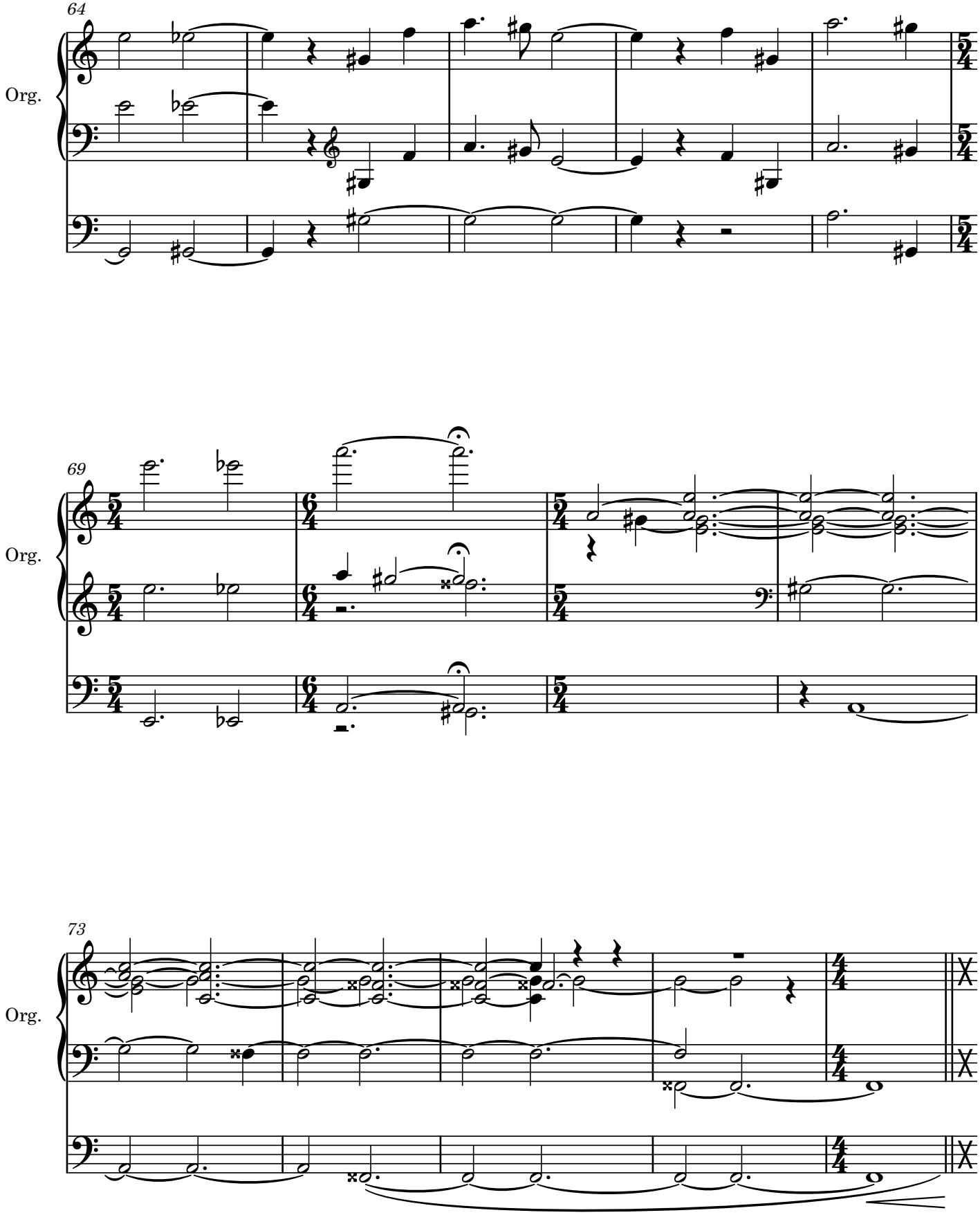
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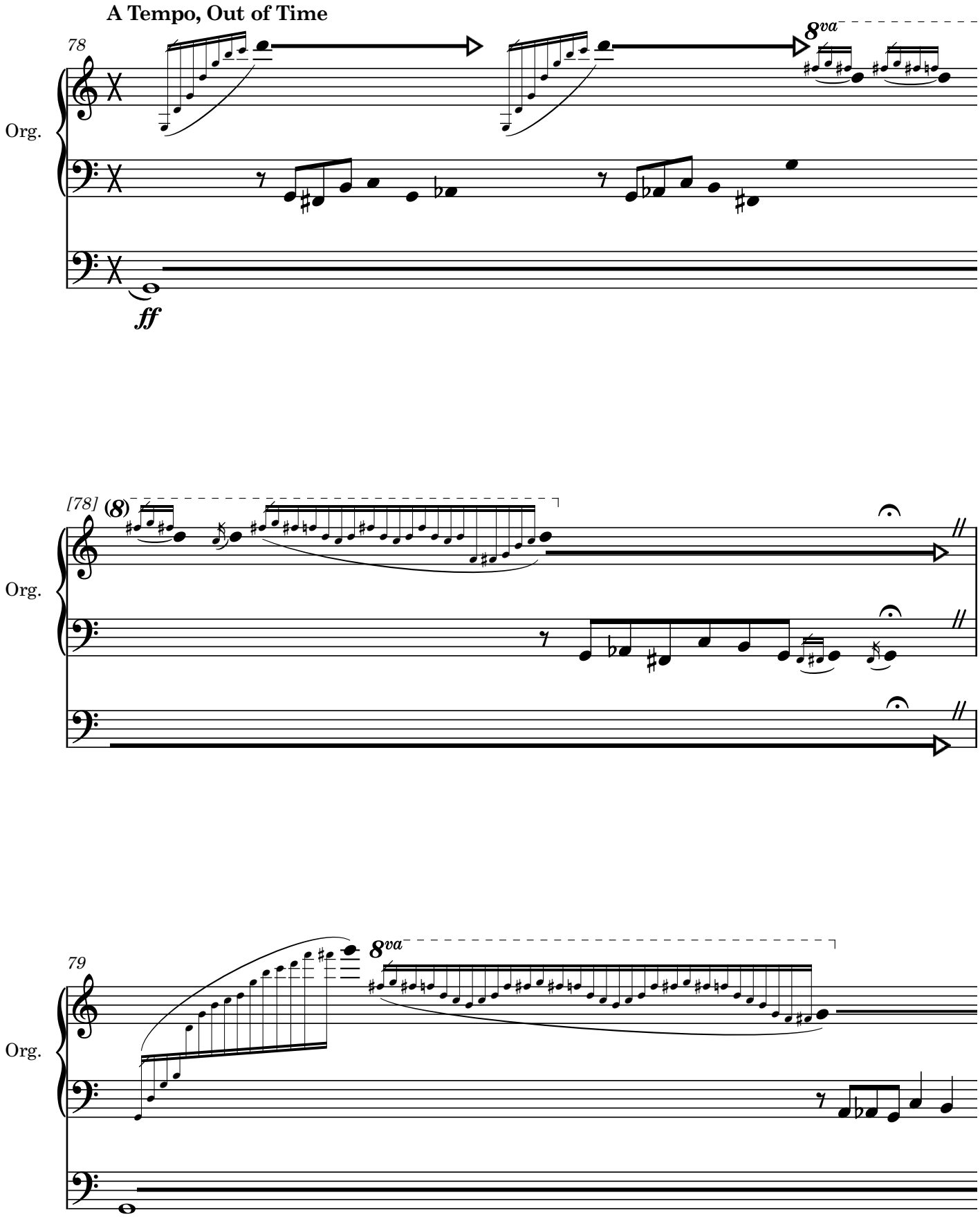
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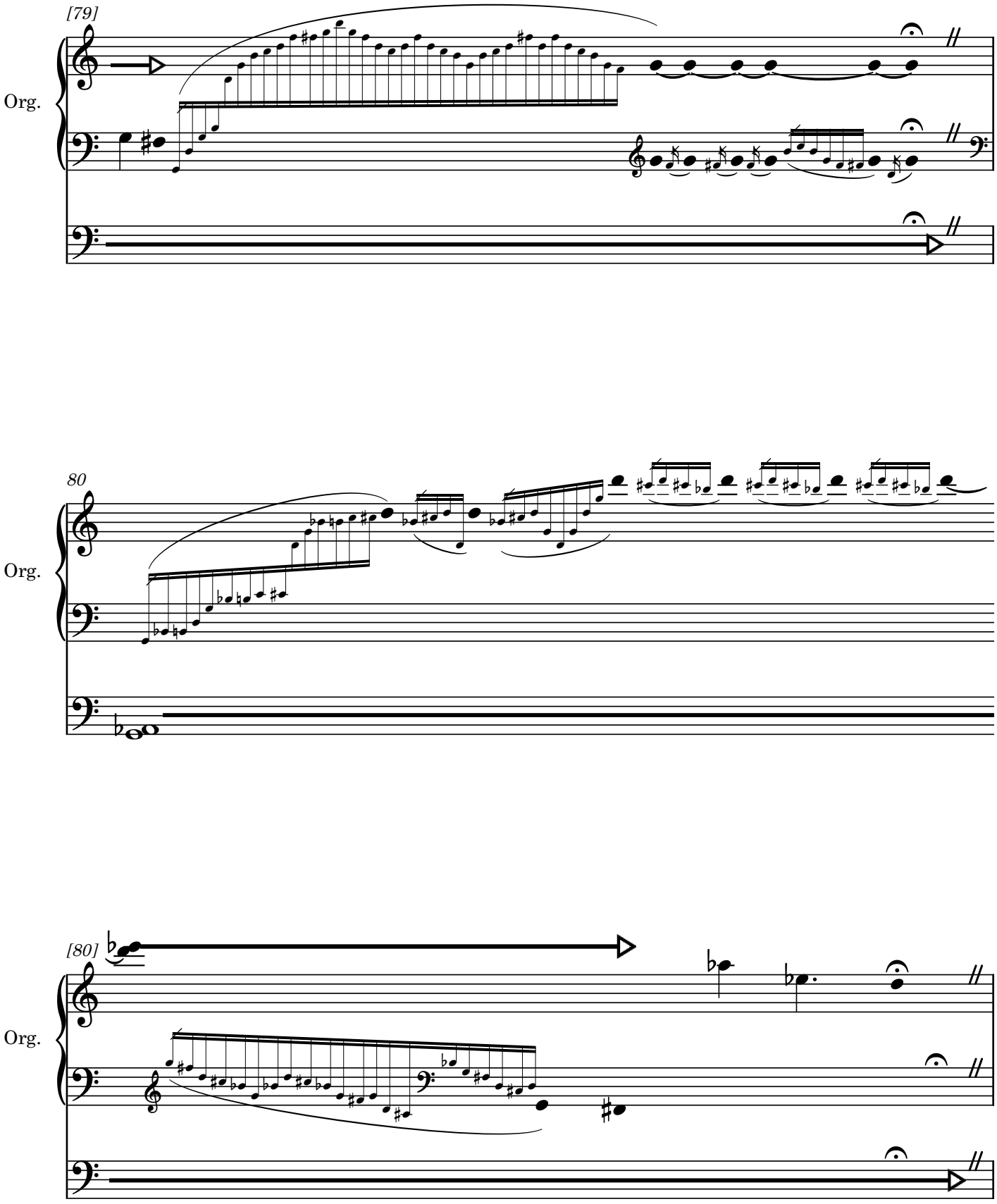
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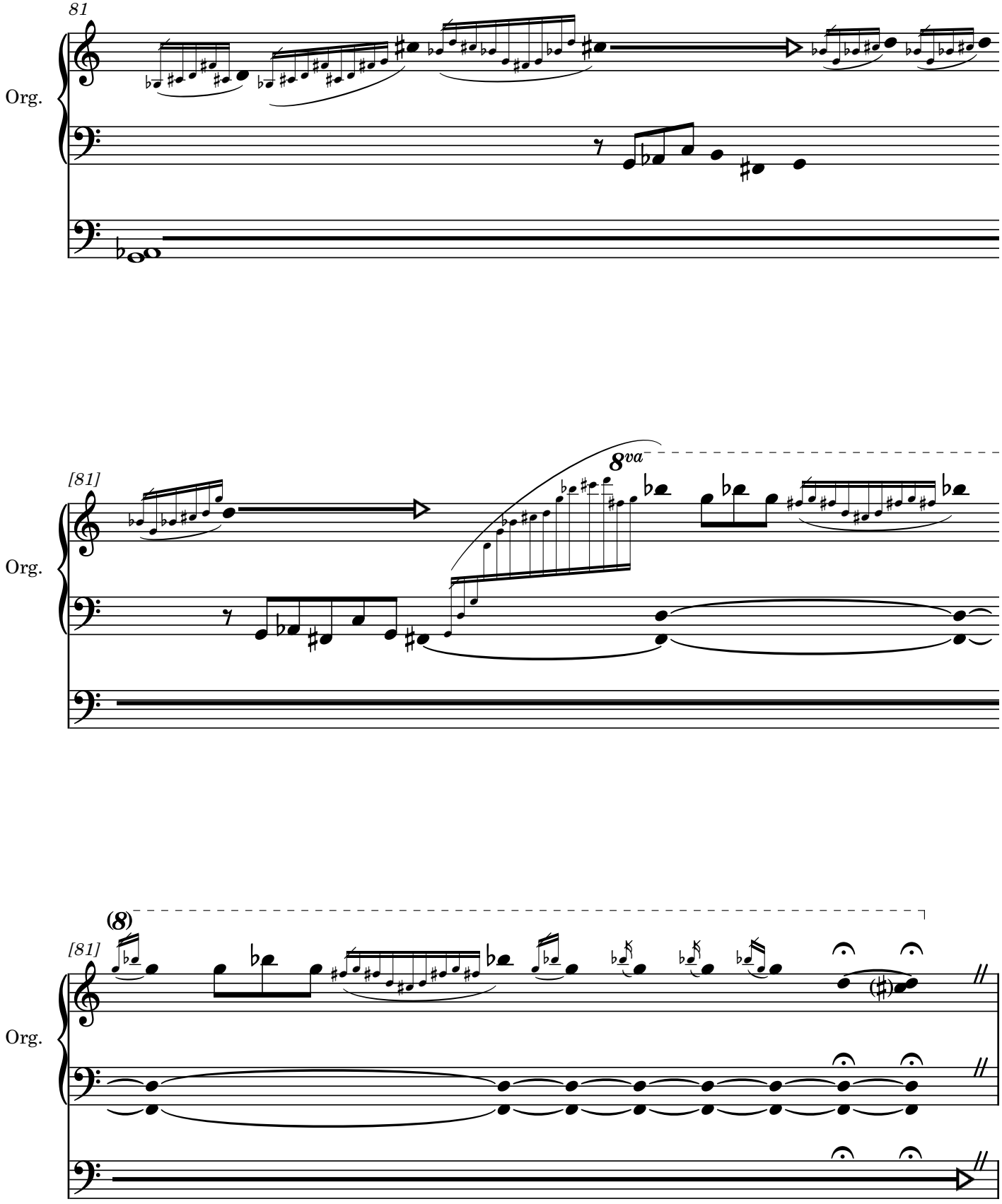
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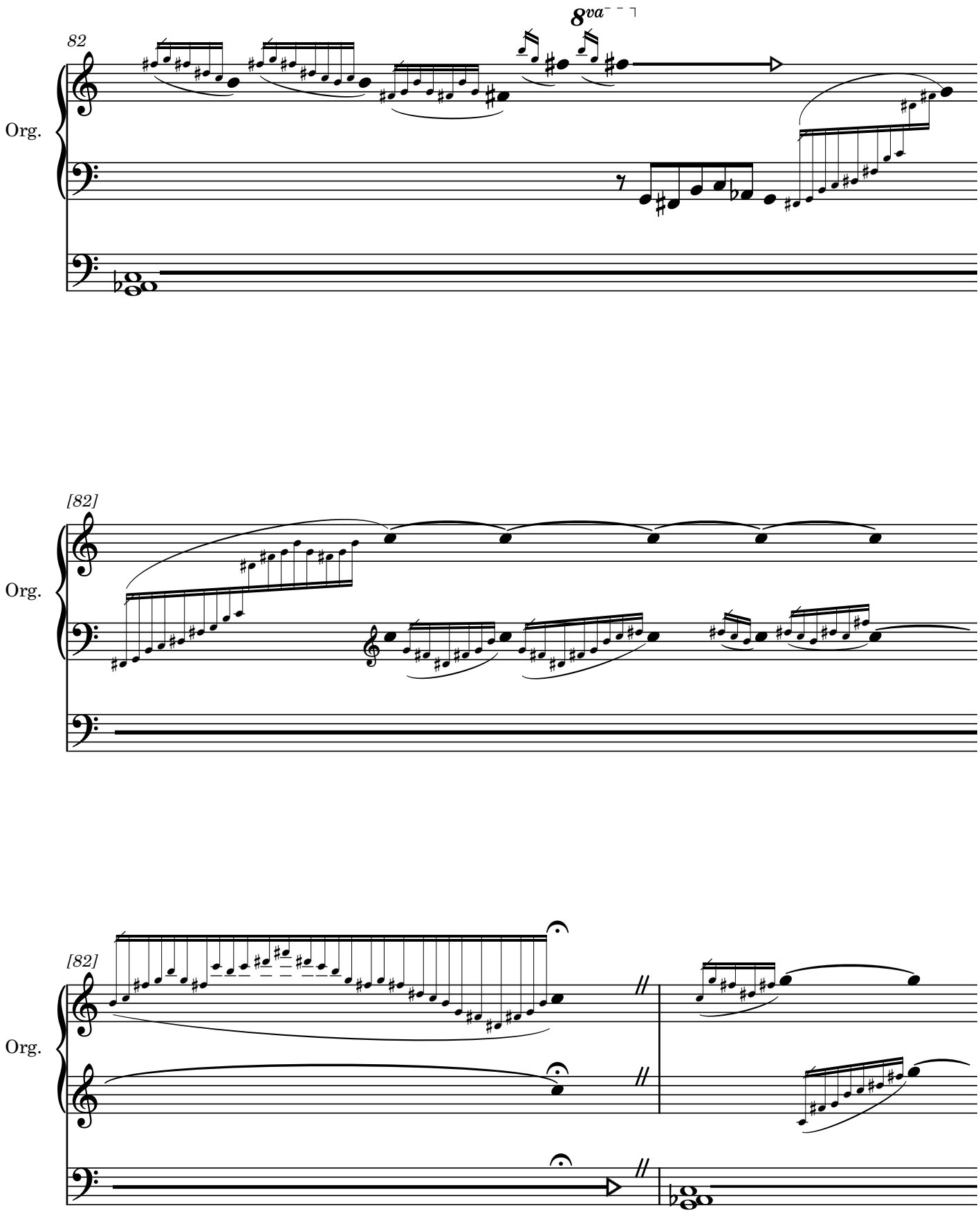
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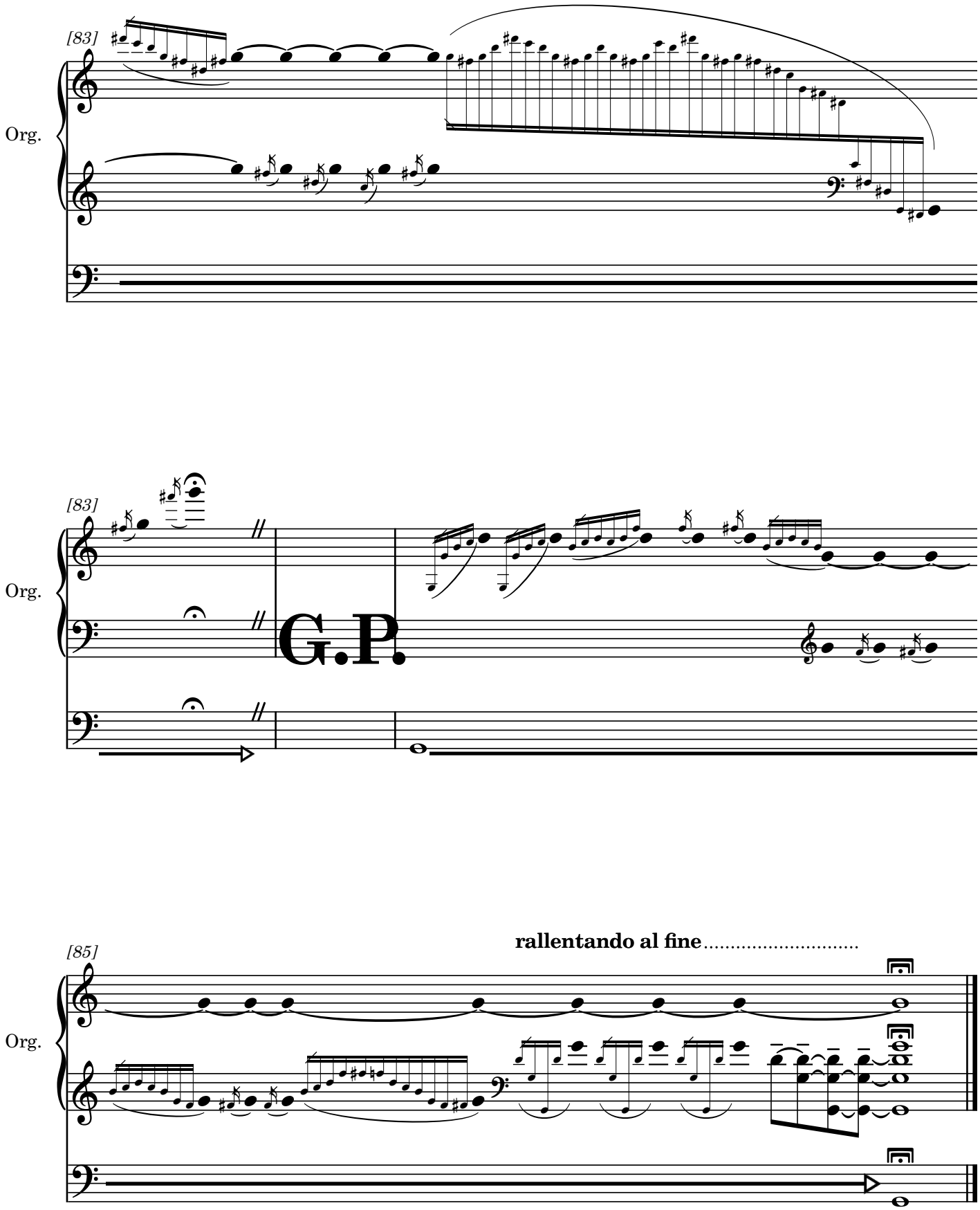
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