Twenty-Five Preludes

For Piano, Four Hands

CWV 19

Full Score

Composed by Hwaen Ch'uqi

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For Felice Kuan,
Gentle light amongst the shadows

For the Inca people,
Is not heaven, after all, a more worthy kingdom?

To my Father in Heaven,
Whose footstool is my dwellingplace!

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PREFACE

It is neither seldom nor with fool's exuberance that I readily refer to this work as one of the greatest that ever I have written - that, should I never complete or even begin another work apart from five cherished opera, I should be more than content in my compositional life. These include the Cello Sonata No. 1 (CWV 1), the song cycle entitled *First Love: A Divine Tragedy* (CWV 6), the Flute Sonata (CWV 9) this grand collection now in view, and the tiny but poignant *Bis Morgen* (CWV 33). All but the present work were born wholly out of crucibles of sorrow, but a word or two on the undertaking at hand will reveal a varied and colorful set of circumstances attending its inception.

The first of these factors came in the form of a true enchantress. With vim and fire, she danced into the tale of my life in that volume called 2004, chapter September, and the twelfth page thereof. The penultimate paragraph found me delivering a performance in the Lower Common Room of Harvard University's Adams House. The program included two works: Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* and the premiere of my Piano Sonata No. 1, CWV 8, whose composition had been completed a mere day earlier! With all the familiarity of long-held friends, she approached me afterwards and proclaimed emphatically, "I MUST play your music! When can I get a score?" In due course, I would secure her a draft of the Sonata, and, six months following our mutual introduction, we would meet again - presumably for a lesson on the sonata. She came armed with several scores, mine included, and once the tutorial had ended, she brought forward a series of pieces for piano four hands. The balance of the evening was spent reading and reading, laughing and reveling, I all the while marveling at the expert subtleties of her music and not in the least oblivious to her allure or lineaments. I at once resolved to compose for her - or rather, for us - a suite for four hands in the vein of Fauré's *Dolly.*

A year later, I encountered the second source of inspiration. It was a recording of Alkan's Twenty-Five Preludes, Op. 31. I was most taken by his unification of the preludes into a dramatic whole. This he achieves in three steps. First, the vast majority of preludes are overtly programmatic, both in title and in sonic picture. Second, the set is rounded out by a concluding prelude bearing the same key as that of the opening prelude. However, the most critical step is the internal arrangement of keys. Like the sets of preludes by J.S. Bach and Alkan's direct contemporary Chopin, they can be seen as pairs of preludes that alternate between major and minor modalities and which progress in sequence through the universe of keys. Bach's sets feature parallel modalities that move chromatically - C major/c minor, C-sharp major/c-sharp minor, etc. Chopin's set features relative modalities that move by ascending fifth - C major/a minor, G major/e minor, etc. Alkan makes use of the larger chromatic progression utilized by Bach, but the relationship within pairs is by ascending fourth - C major/f minor, D-flat major/f-sharp minor, etc. The result is a continuous and irresistible pull of the listener through very natural key relationships, even between the first of a pair and the latter of the pair preceding it. After all, what compelling relationship has C-sharp major to c minor (Bach) or G major to a minor (Chopin)? Indeed, the first time that I heard Alkan's set, I was struck with such sadness at its conclusion, partly because I had not noticed how deftly I had been led from one fleeting world to the next and partly because the final entry, though called *Prière,* felt more like longing or sorrow, as if to cling hopelessly to memory that must inevitably fade with the unrelenting passage of time. I immediately thought, "Why is this work so little known? And has any other composer taken up this most effective key scheme?" The yield of my research rendered me astonished, for though a composer here and there would produce a further set of twenty-five preludes, Alkan's model seemed to have been largely abandoned. "This," I thought, "is too powerful a model to remain a novelty discarded!" And so I resolved that, when the occasion would allow, I should resurrect and champion Alkan's template.

The final impetus for the present work was a very real need. Along with someone of kindred musical spirit, I had founded a piano duo whose aim it was to raise the stature of the genre from lighter fare or parlor music to that akin to the concert sonata or the profound symphony. We set about to find repertoire worthy of that calling, and we were not without some successes. However, the pieces that we drew out hardly reflected in either manner or scope the larger body of work whence they came. The vacuum of deep and substantive works was glaring, and we required something of true musical girth to jumpstart our duo. Naturally, it fell to me, the composer, to see if I couldn't fill the need myself. Only then did it occur to me that the three strands just presented could be fused into a single focus. Thus were laid the foundations for these Twenty-Five Preludes.

This work was premiered in Nyack, NY on the evening of Saturday, 20 March, 2010, the dedicatee and I at the keyboard. It would later be recorded professionally by my duo. The liner notes to that CD offer much in the way of background to each prelude and should thus be consulted. As well as some contrapuntal corrections and streamlining of textures, the present edition includes an Appendix wherein are found said notes. Following this Preface is a sprinkling of notes specific to composition or performance. These should be considered before embarking upon that great enterprise of learning. But two directives - that is, one prescription and one prohibition - I value so highly that I include them in the Preface proper.

It is possible, even musically effective, to select for performance a series of preludes, but it follows that doing so rips at the very warp and weft of the work's dramatic fabric. Though I subscribe very little to the notion of "following the composer's intentions," it is this composer's conviction that nothing short of a complete performance will convey the full extent of compositional craft or elicit from the hearer a true diapason of emotion. Added to this is the most important requirement that a complete performance be executed from memory. For only then will the work be transformed from a series of miniatures to an unbroken, unsoiled trajectory of the human soul.

Finally, I address something that must surely gain me a horde of antagonists. Apart from the visual distraction of the page turner and the aural distraction of the page turn, no sound from the stage irritates me more than the cuing sniff! First of all, it sounds childish, unrefined, even uncouth. But second, and really much more important, it ends up detracting from perfect rhythm itself. This is because the act of sniffing inevitably involves much more of the body than the otherwise insignificant and stationary nose, thus disrupting the natural courses and flows that the body was already experiencing. The result is a corporeal hiccup that must find release anywhere it can, and that release point is always the rhythm. Well, if you are a competently aware musician, you understand that that is merely the beginning of the domino effect! Now multiply this by the myriad number of times that this will undoubtedly occur during a piece or movement, and the result is, at best, unavoidable, musical stodginess or, at worst, well-worn, idiosyncratic discontinuities! Hence, inasmuch as I, a powerless composer, am able so to do, I unequivocally forbid use in my music of the cuing sniff, especially in chamber settings! There are other ways to effectively cue: avail yourselves of them!

And now, having dispatched to the musical world my little sermon, I take my leave, entrusting to your study and care a labor whose every dot and line and curve I have treasured so well, both in the figures that abound in the folowing pages and in the experiences that gave rise to every last one of them.

Hwaen Ch'uqi
August, 2017
Rochester, NY

PERFORMANCE NOTES

The most valuable key to success with this piece is to allow the music itself to dictate the physical aspects of its execution. For example, it is customary and generally advantageous for the *secondo* player to assume pedaling duties. However, a number of preludes include significant solos for the *primo* player, and, in such instances, it may be musically profitable for that player to temporarily take upon himself such responsibilities. Only take care to work out between yourselves the precise timing and movements of the feet.

Notes occurring at the same musical moment within both parts have been marked in red.

On the matter of choreography, this work is as much visual theater as it is aural gratification. Do not shy from the intimacy that the music often demands, nonetheless resisting at all cost the temptation to add to the display superfluous motion or superficial gestures. Remember that each physical key of the instrument bears much real estate, from its outer edge to the back of the fallboard. Where overlap occurs, be sure to utilize that full real estate; in fact, it may be necessary on occasion to mentally subdivide each key or registral area into two or even three equal partitions through which any of the four hands may deftly pass!

I. As I Gazed Into The Mountains Black

Underpinning this prelude is a very simple formula - namely, two full cycles of a twelve-tone row. While I harbor intense aversion to the use of so-called modern techniques for the sake of artistic "purity," (I am being quite generous here), I am certainly not above employing such a device within an otherwise tonal framework toward an evocative end. In this case, that end is utter terror. In addition, I will not hide the fact that this prelude is so placed within the set as a sort of "middle finger" to the academics - as if to say, "Yes, you see? I can demonstrate fluency in your tongue, which is more than can be said of you in mine! And now, having dared to so display my own prowess, I move on to truer music of the heart!"

mm.1-12, Secondo: The fermatas need not be of equal length, but they should last so long that each succeeding chord will strike fear into the heart of the hearer!

II. But I Loved You!

Fauré's *Dolly* and my own work find clearest intersection in this prelude. Consider the fifth entry of his suite, called *Tendresse.* Though mine departs markedly from the general tenor of *Tendresse* in its bitter rawness, there are nevertheless faint, textural commonalities between the two, and these should not be overlooked in the rendering of this prelude.

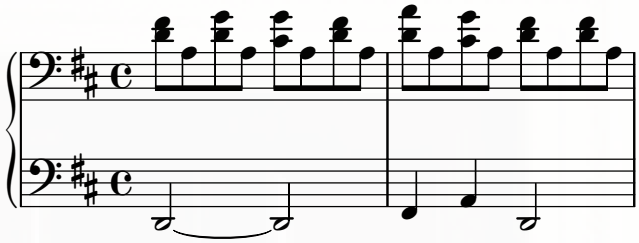
VII. I Was Glad When They Said Unto Me, Let Us Go Into The House Of The LORD

mm.21-30, primo: The exotic parallels are meant to affect the *tierce* stop of the organ. Therefore, the right hand should be played extremely *sotto voce* in such passages, the left hand presenting the actual melody. In this way, one might perceive - and even be somewhat discomfitted by - an aural sheen yet not fully grasp the technique at play. Compare, for reference, the middle movement of Saint-Saens' Piano Concerto No. 5, Op. 103.

m.24, primo: The c-sharp in the second beat of the right hand is purely theoretical. Except one has that rare access to c-sharp8, a c-natural should be played!

XIX. Rondo (In Memoriam Amadeus Mozart)

mm.94-97, secondo: A variant reading follows and should serve as an invitation for further experimentation/improvisation:



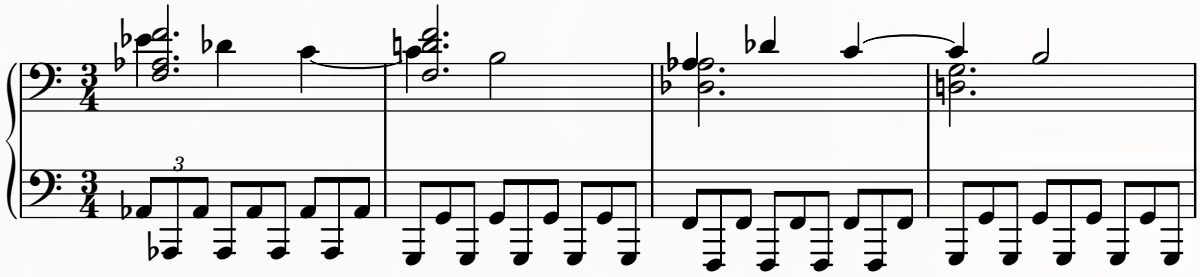
m125, primo: Familiarity with the genre in view should lead one to improvise an *Eingang* at the fermata.

XXIV. Upon My Journey To Damascus (Or, O Death, Where Is Thy Sting?)

The concurrent narratives here are three - even the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ; the conversion of Paul the Apostle; and an autobiographical sketch of one Hwaen Ch'uqi, hinging upon his own improbable salvation. Direct, musical correlation to the lattermost is well-detailed elsewhere, and though the titles give little indication, the bits of descriptive text strewn throughout the score as performance directives speak to the horror and wonder attending the Savior's death and triumph.

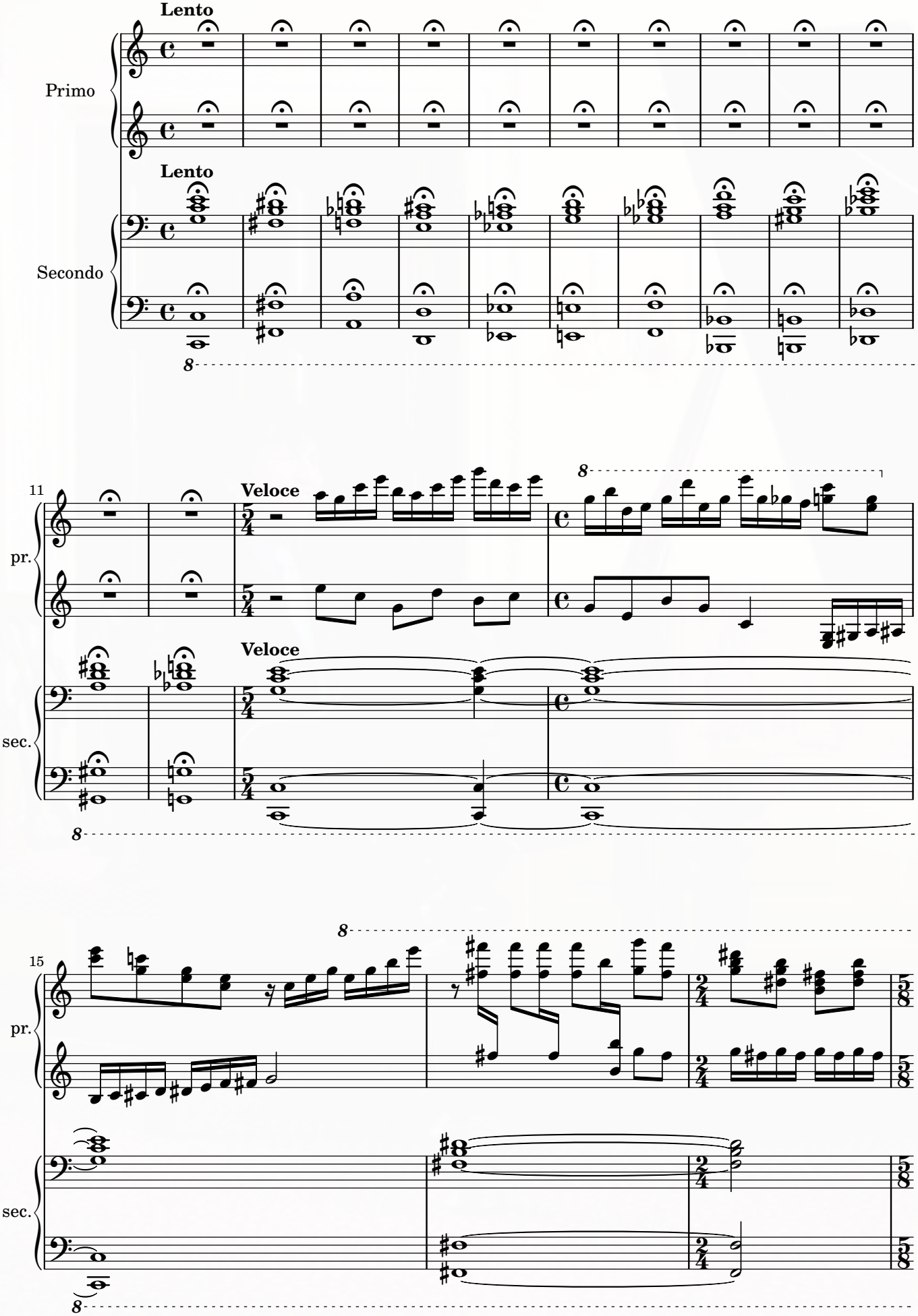
XXV. Please, Stay!

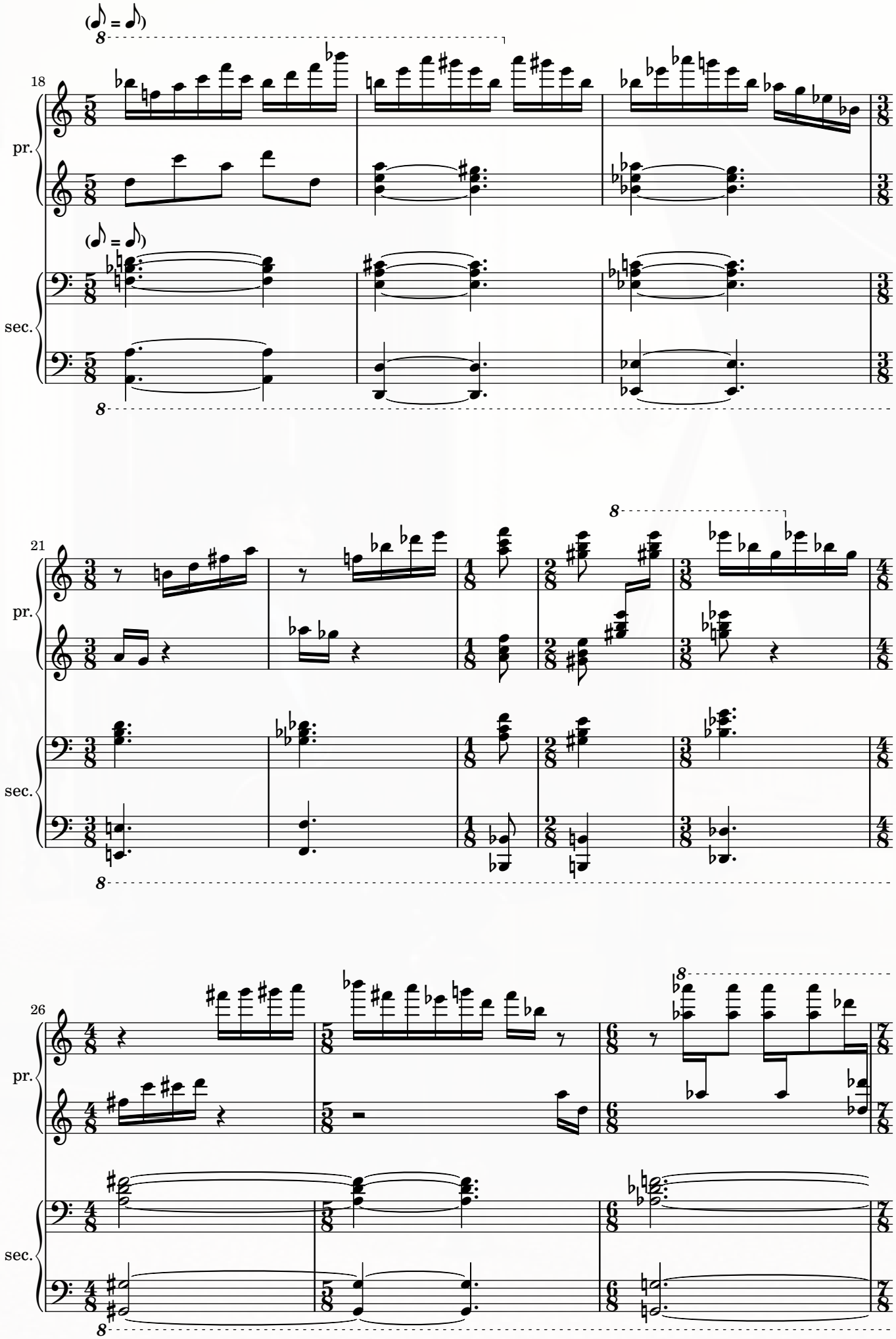
mm.27-30, secondo: A slight deviation that results in a longing suspension and resolution between the players:



mm.84-ff.: This ultimate evanishment into the mists of memory may, if so desired, be prolonged by the addition of measures.

I. As I Gazed Into the Mountains Black

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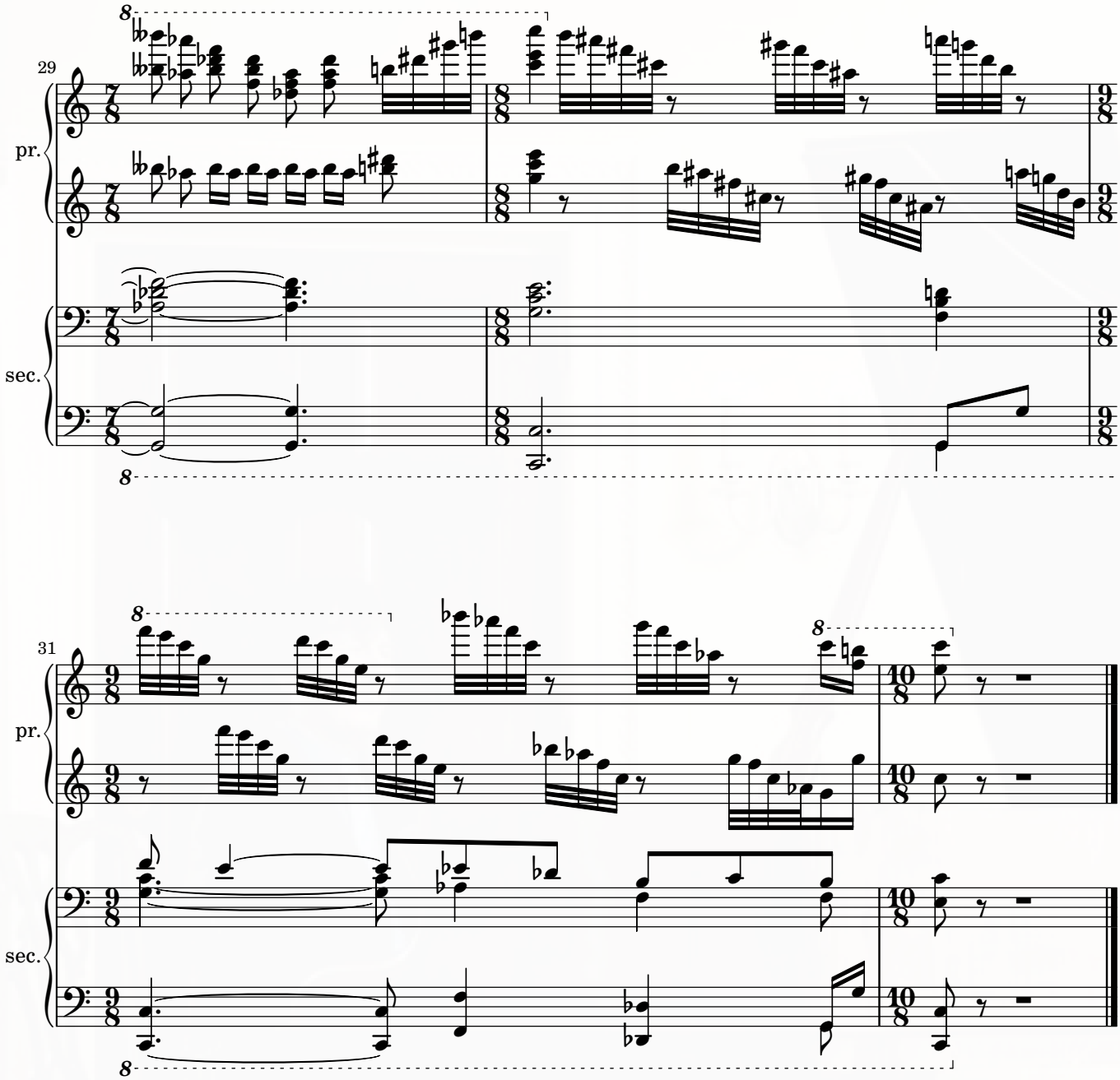
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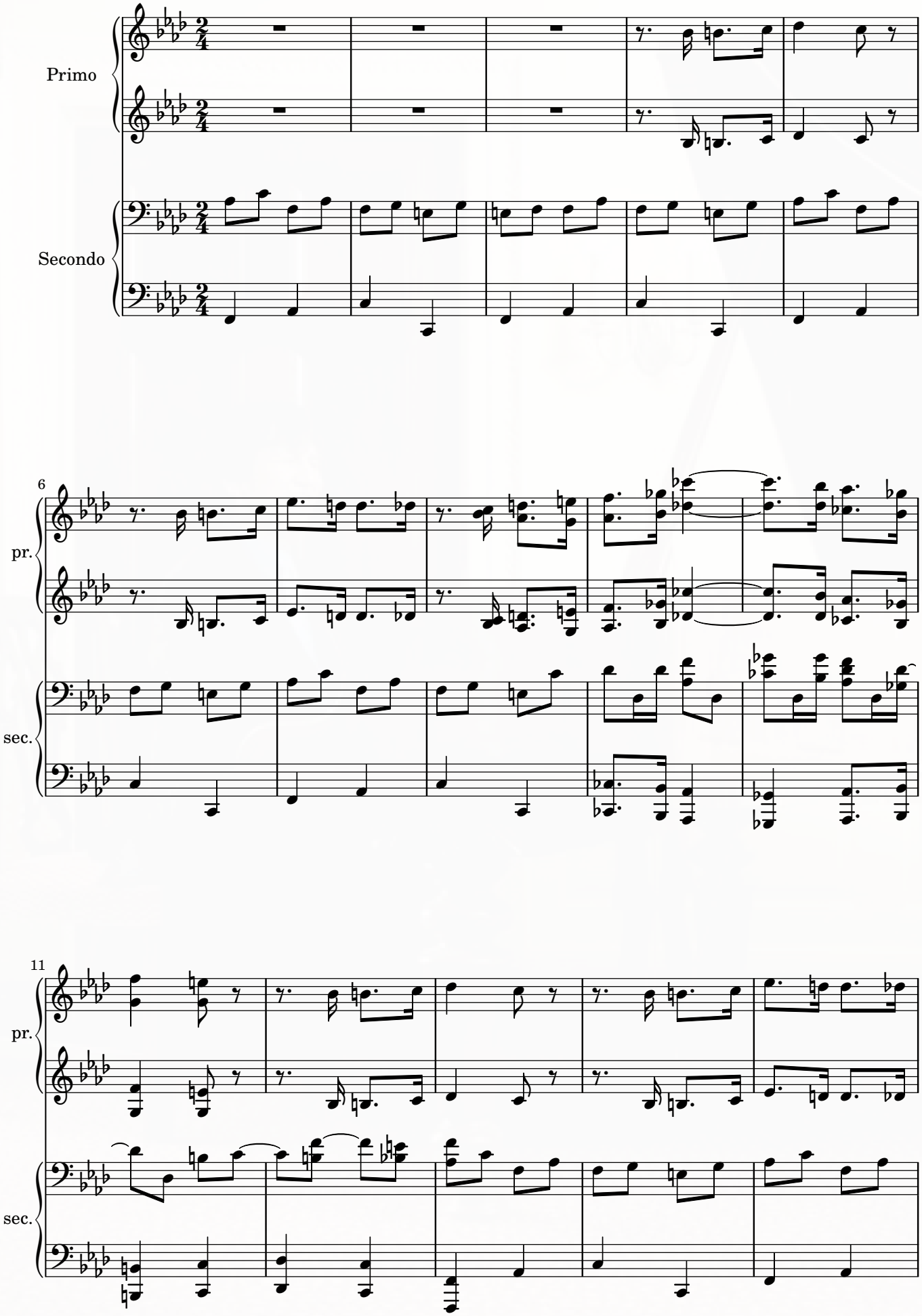
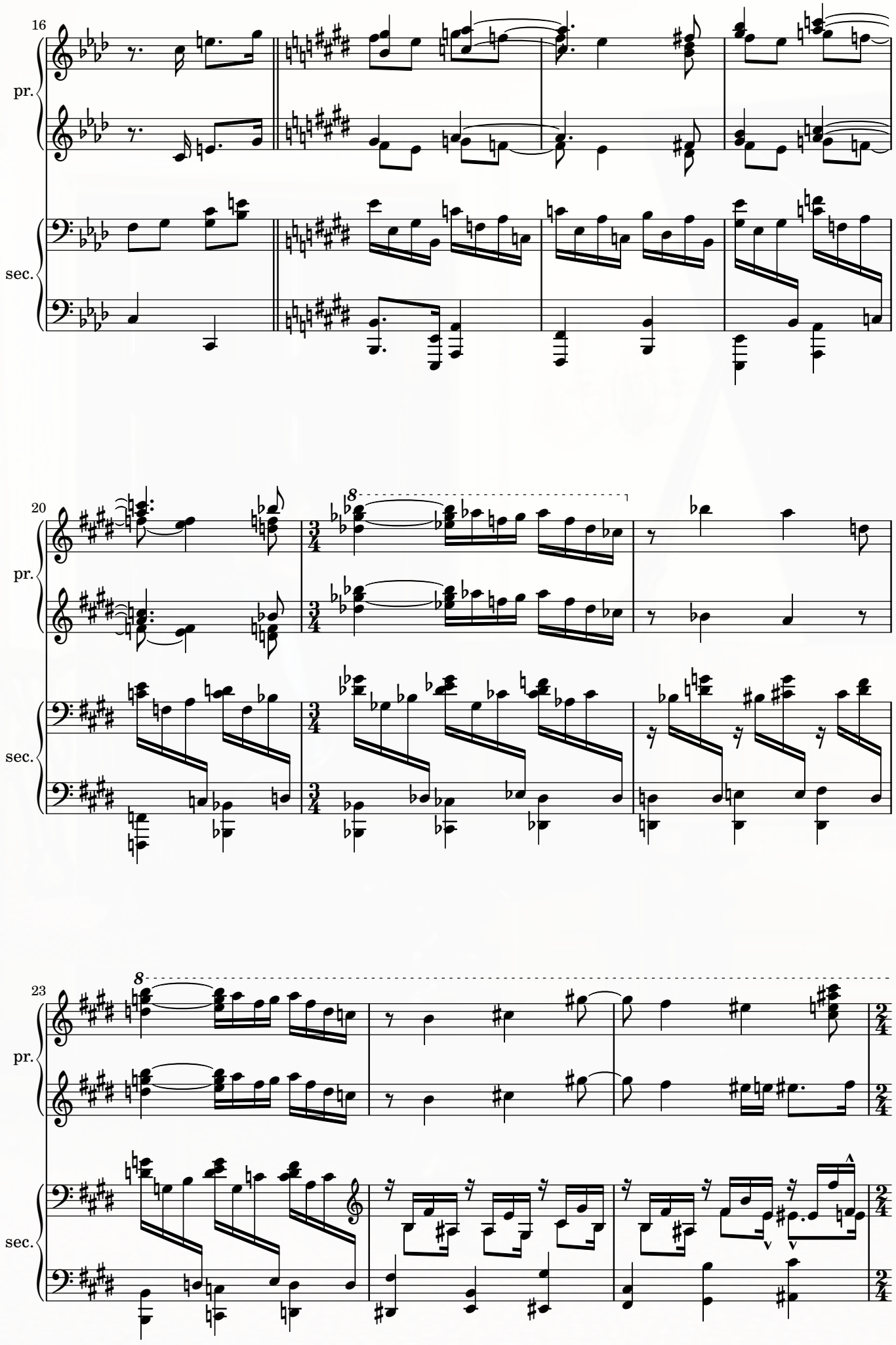
II. But I Loved You!

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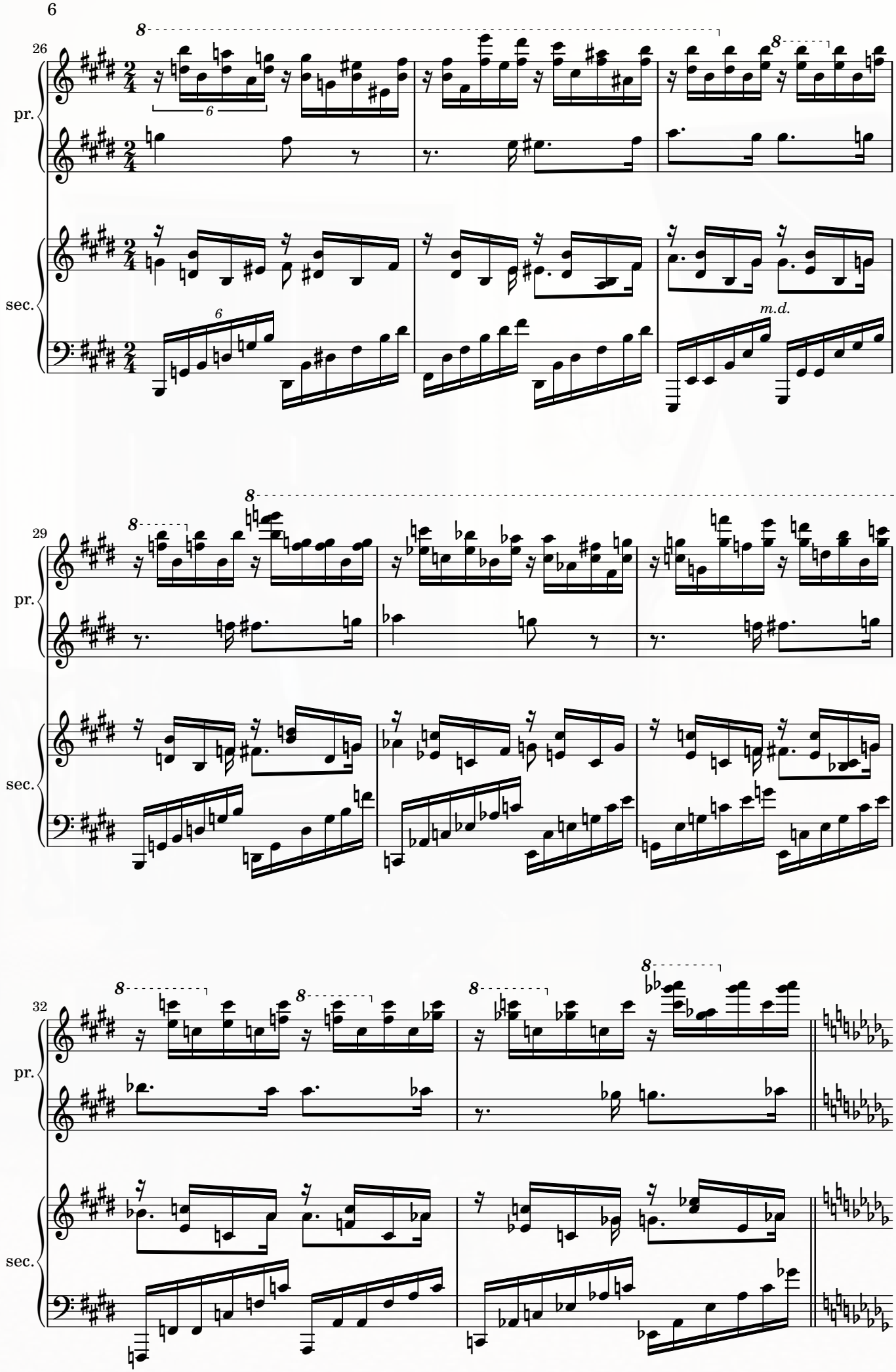
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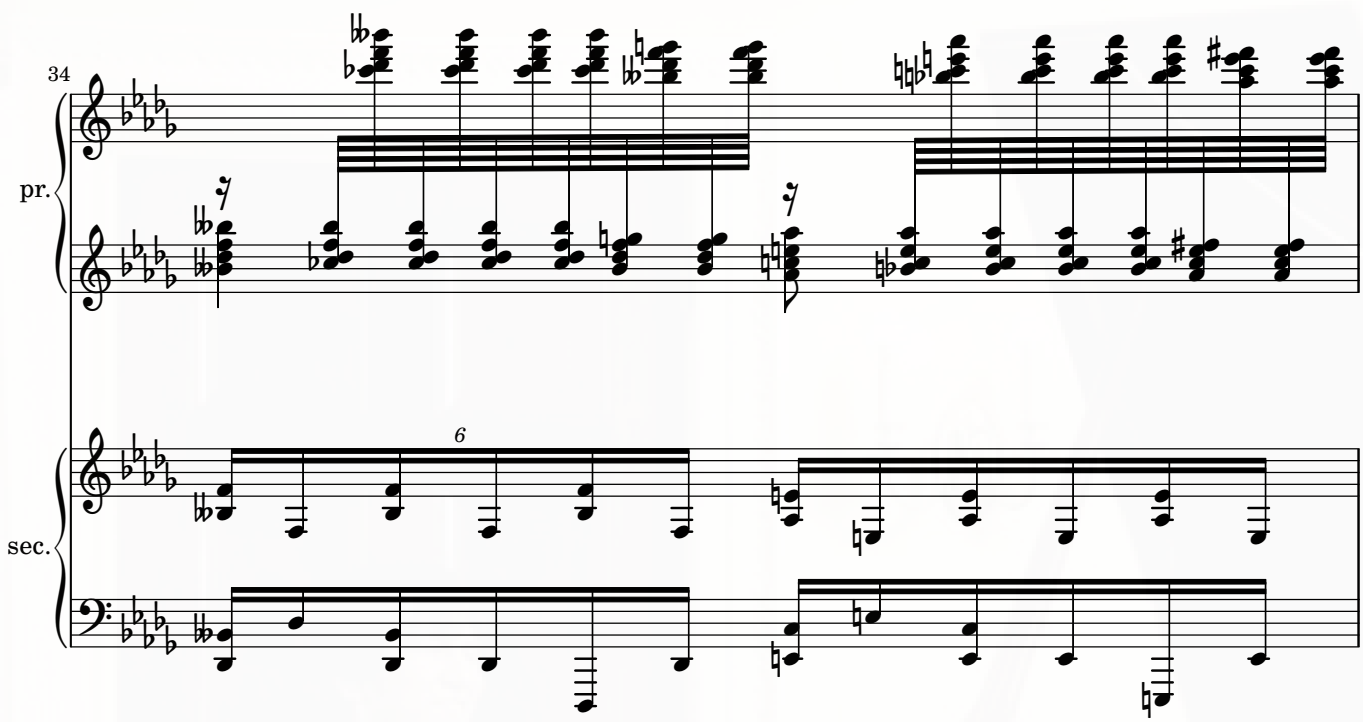
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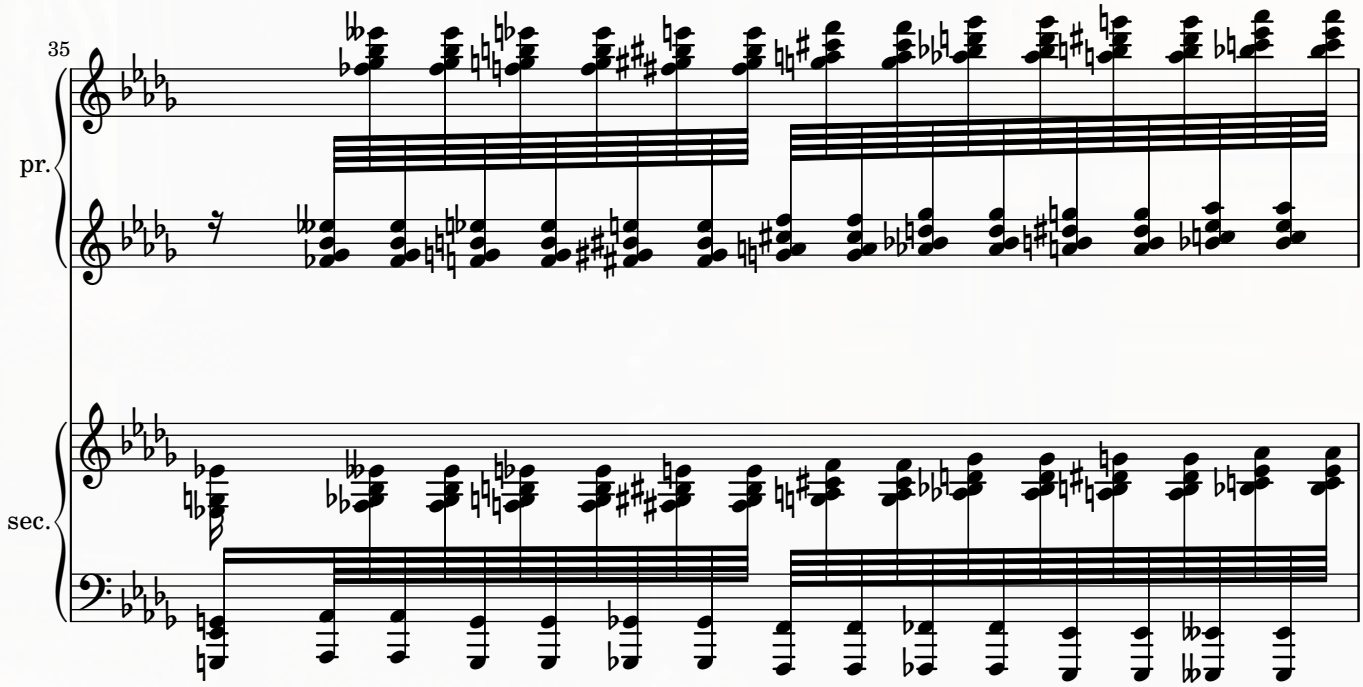
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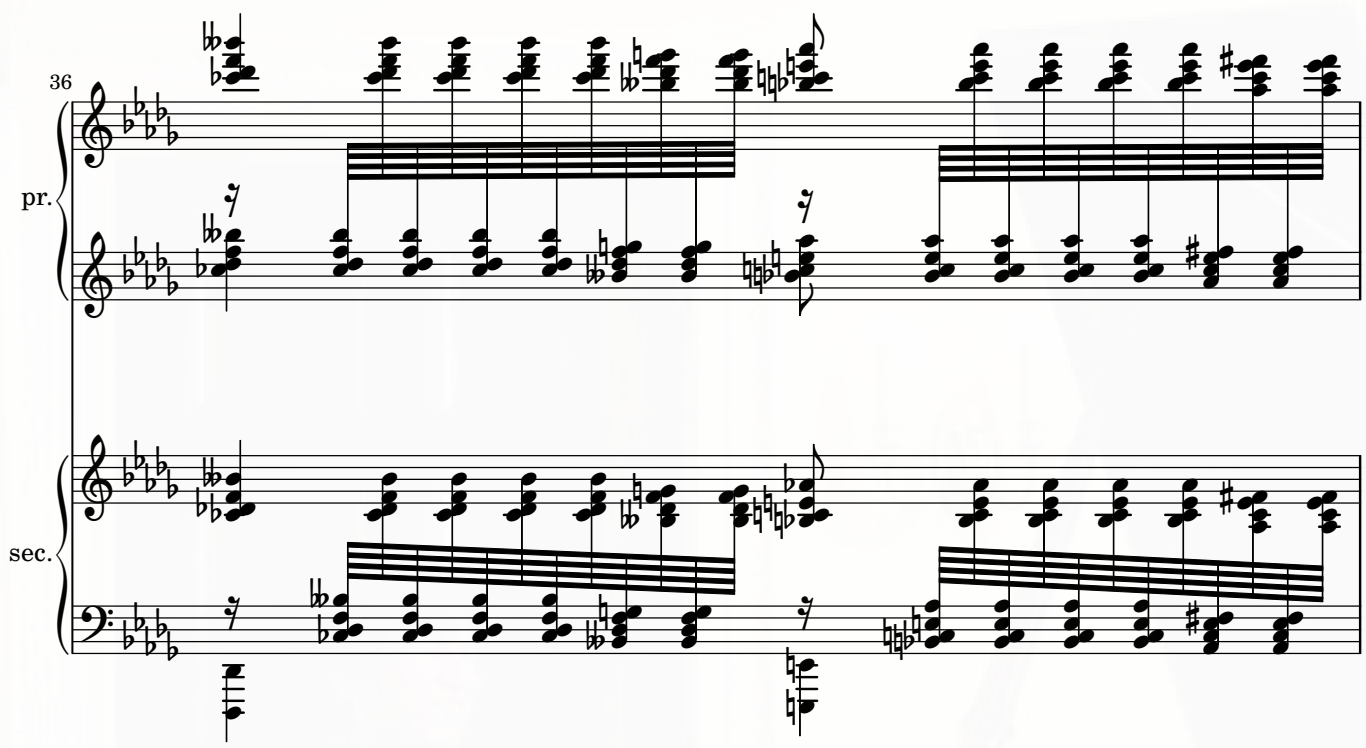
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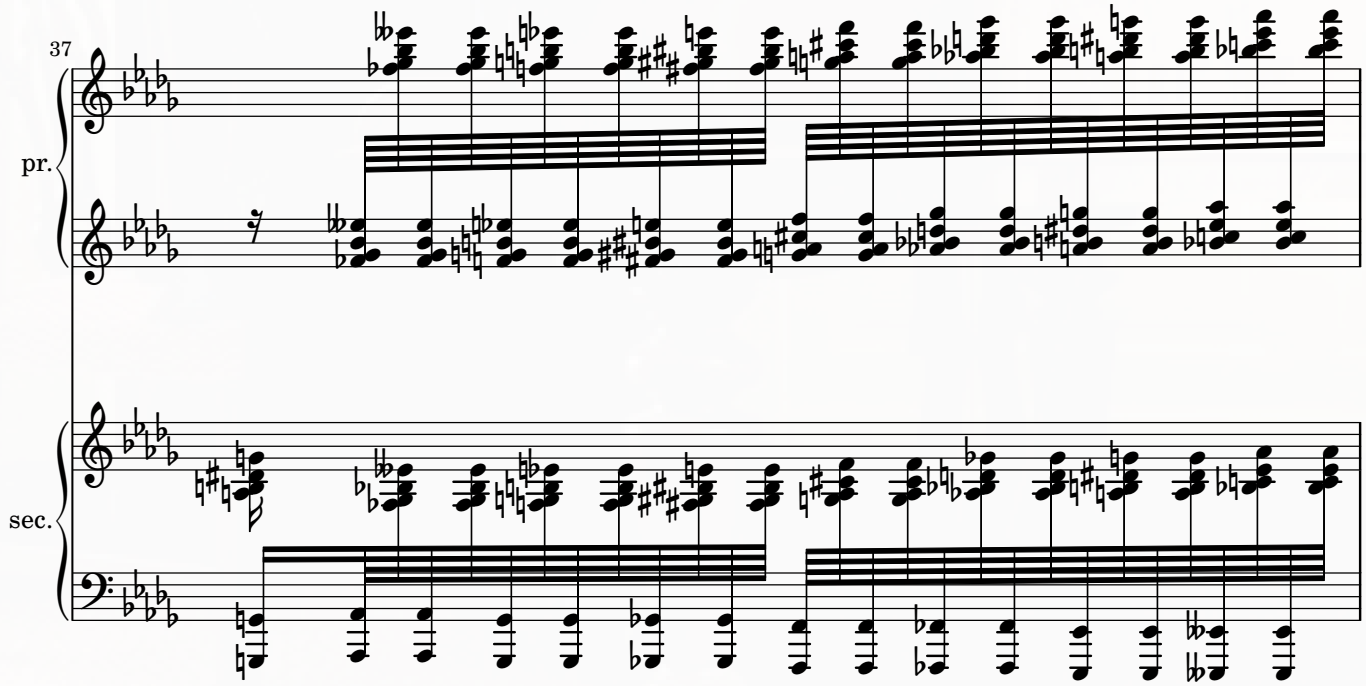
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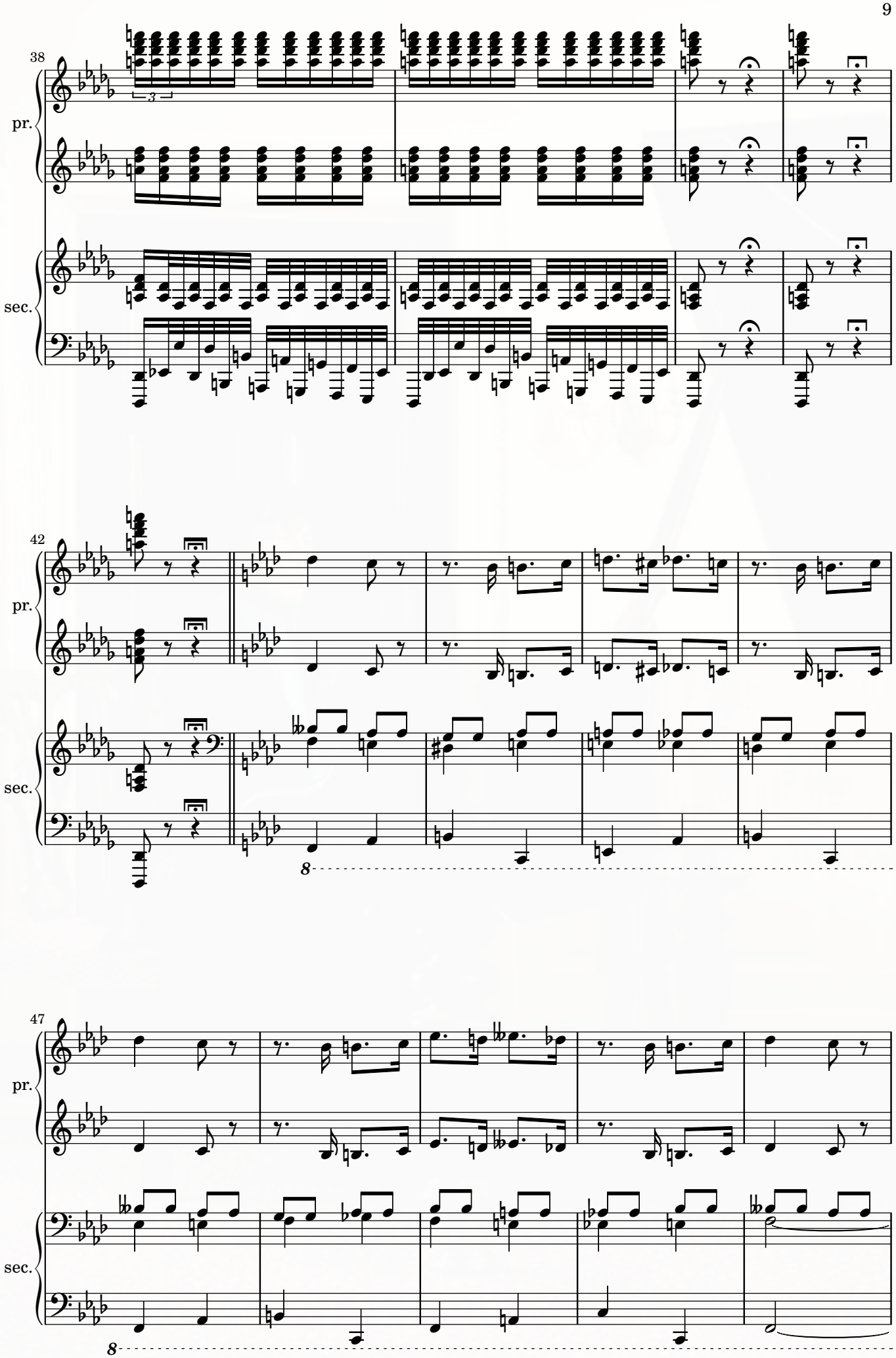
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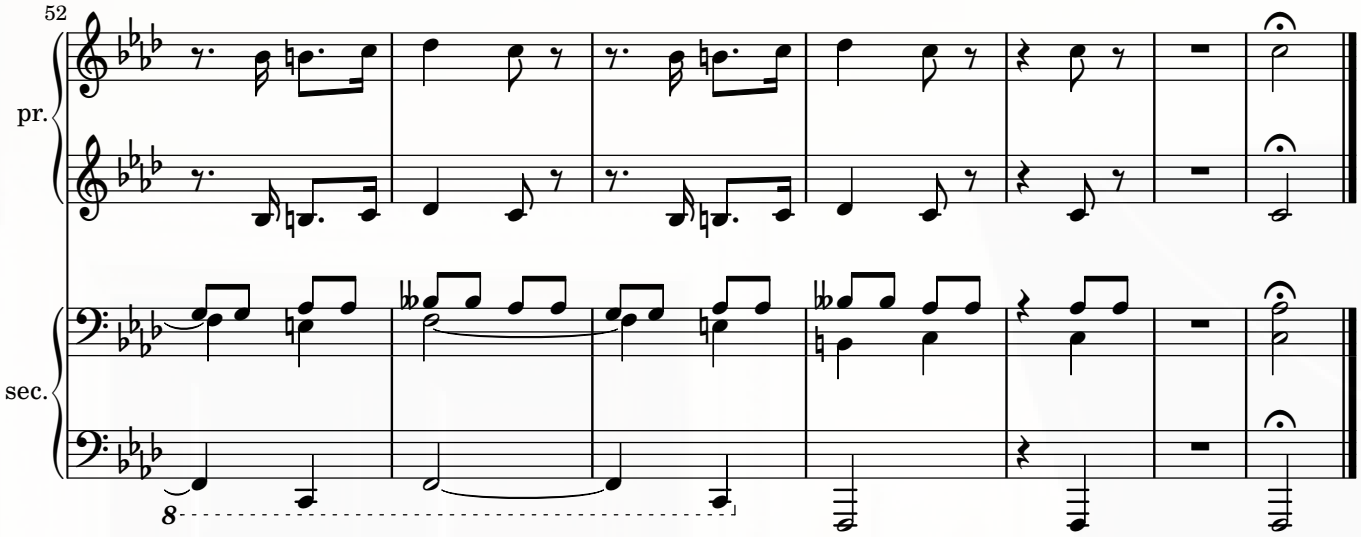
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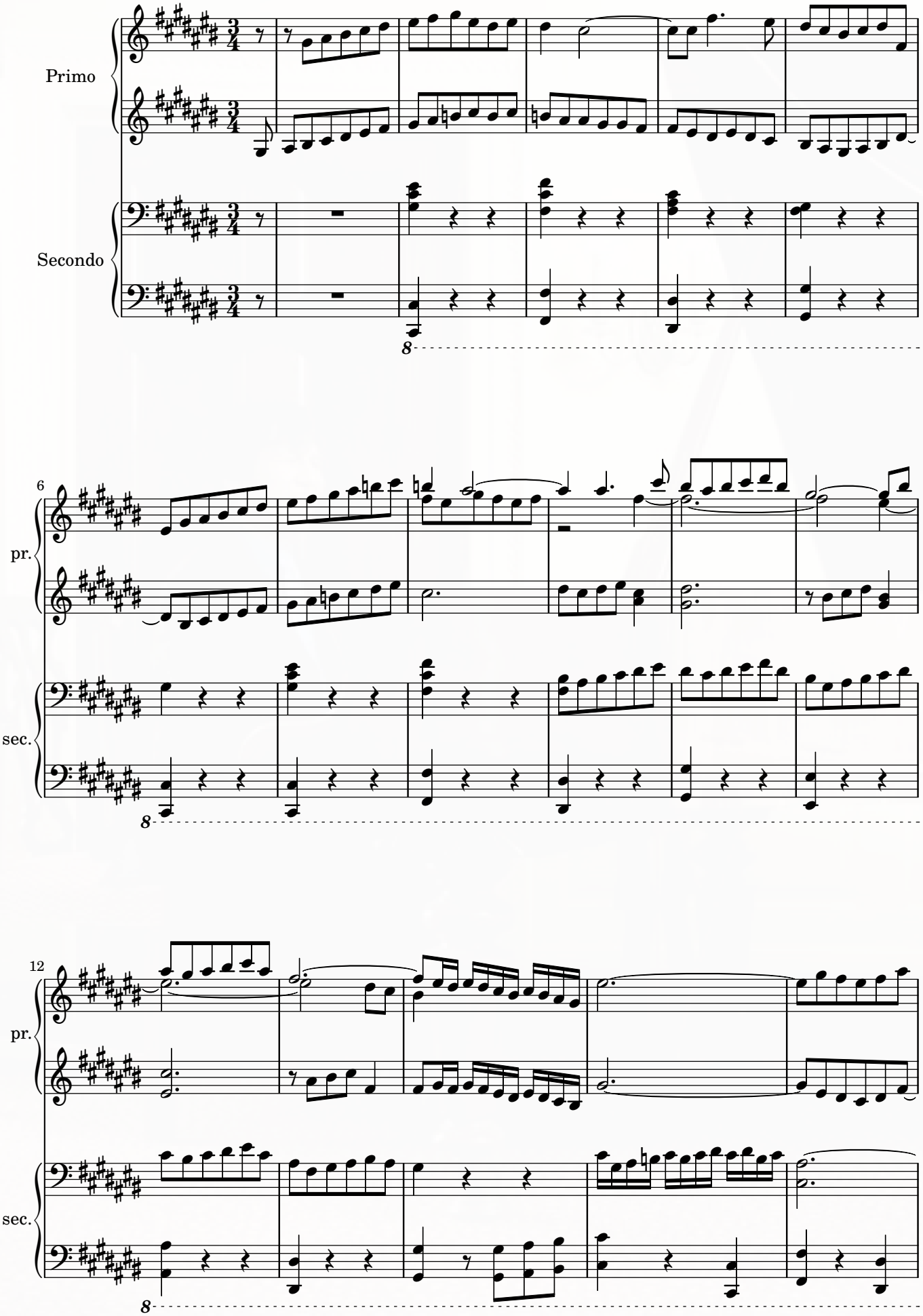

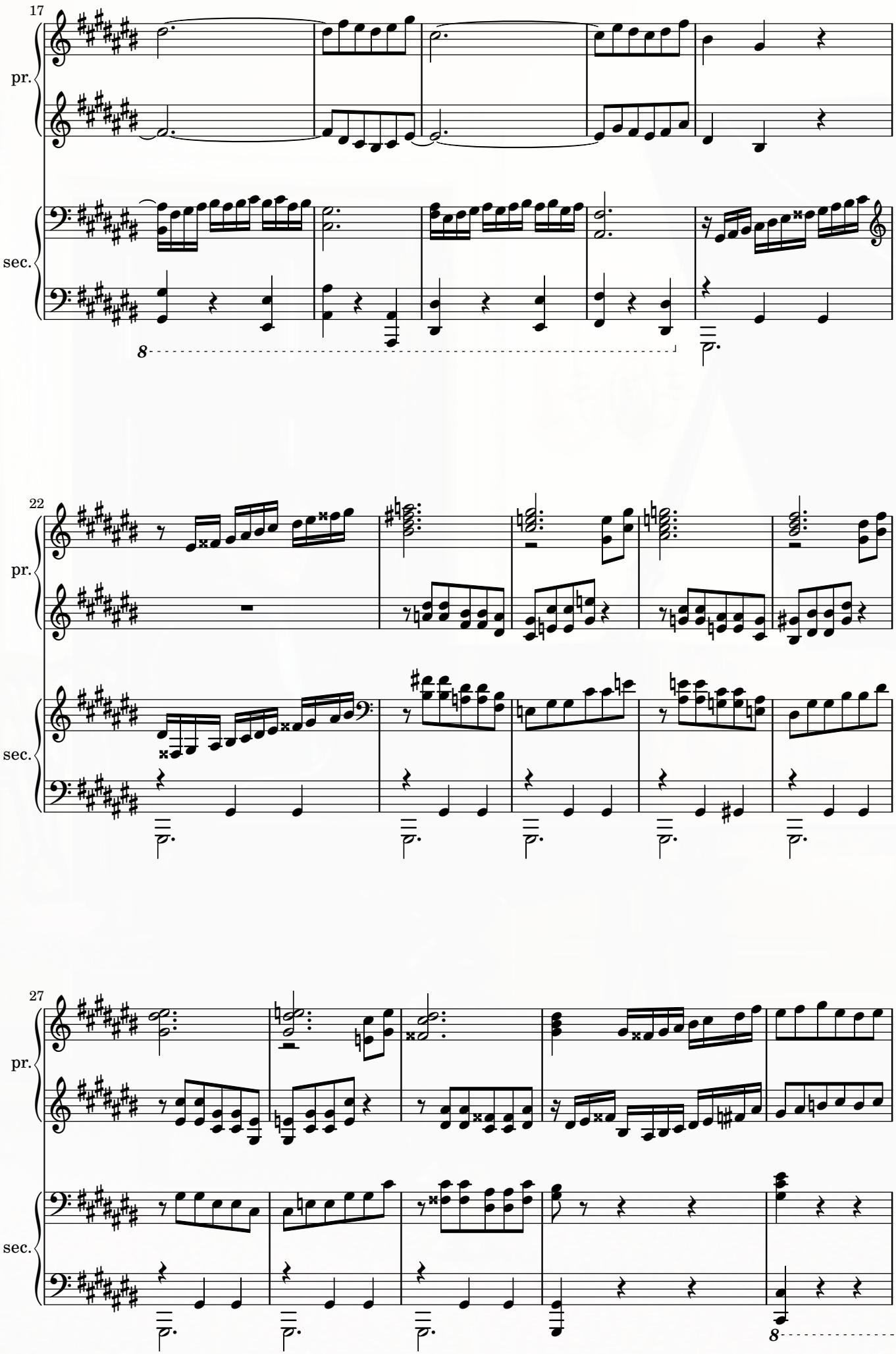
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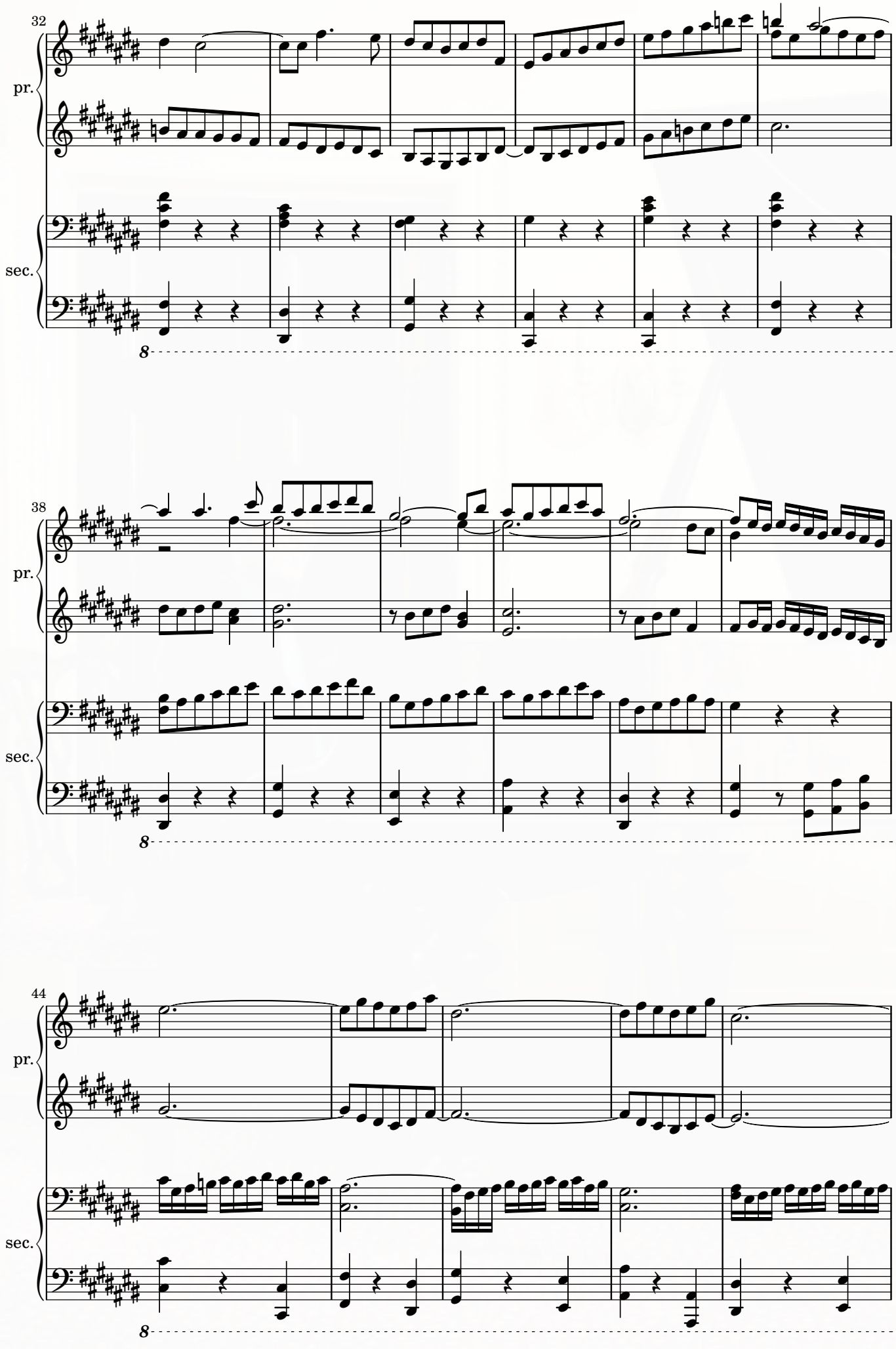
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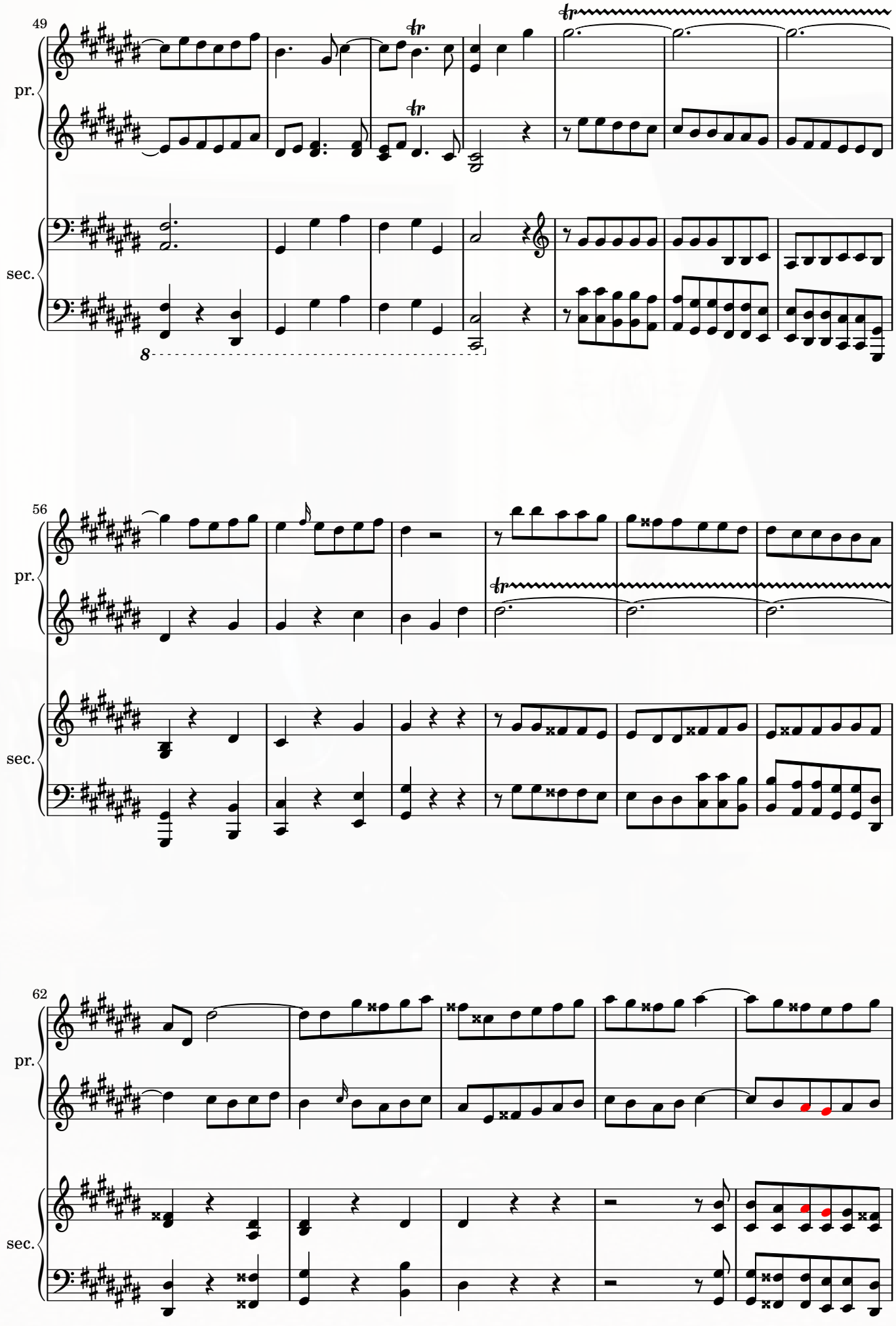
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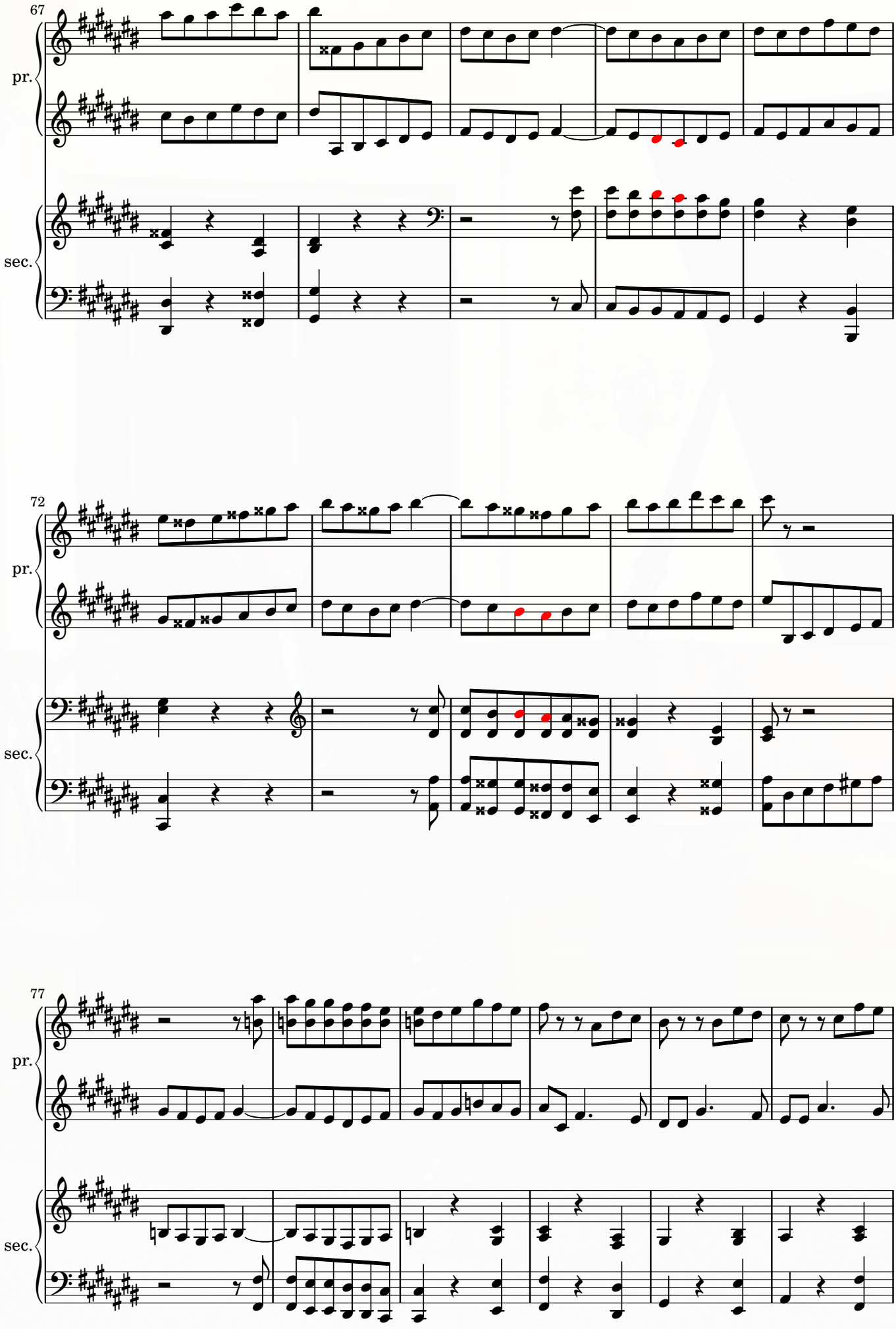
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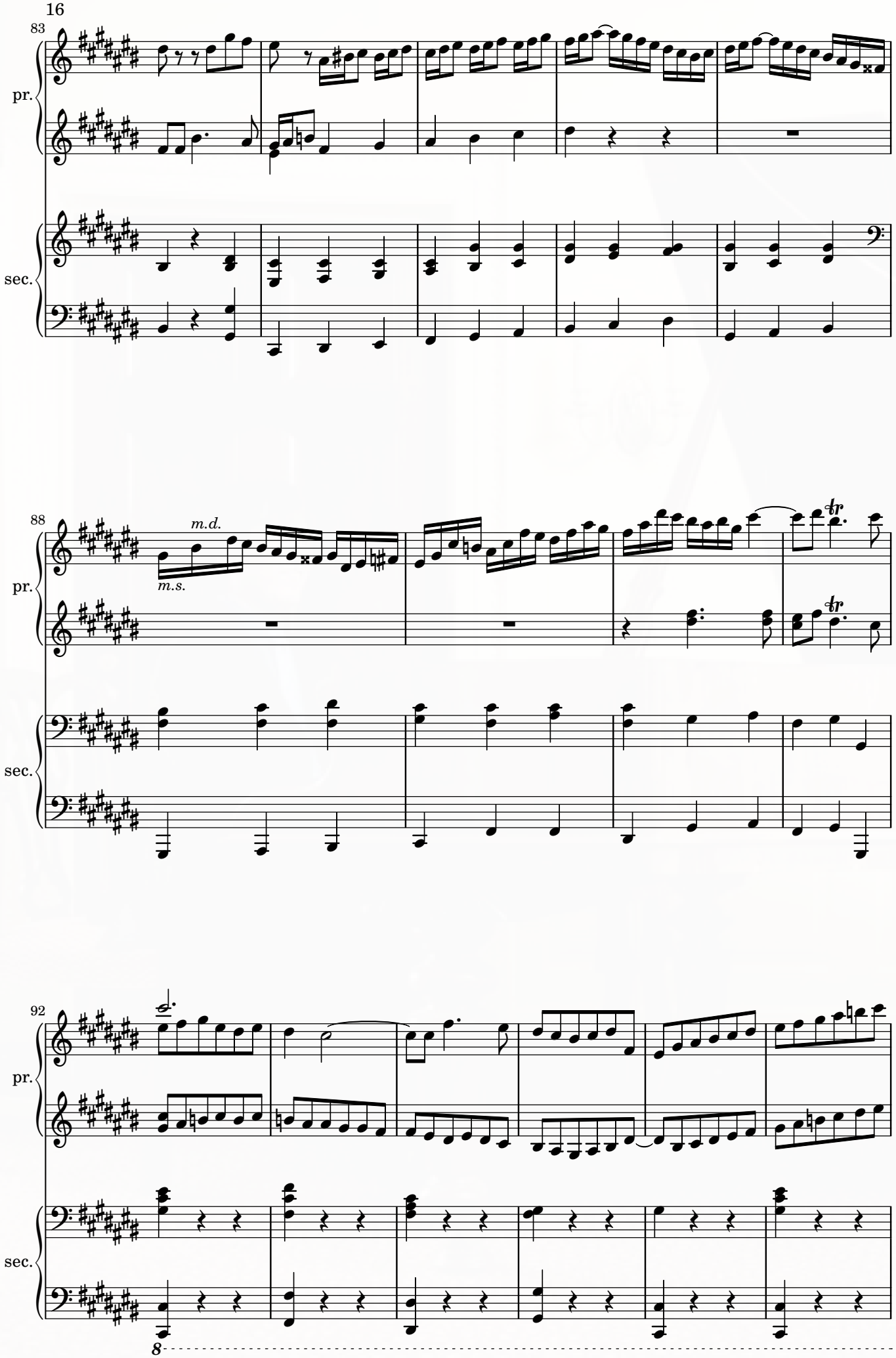
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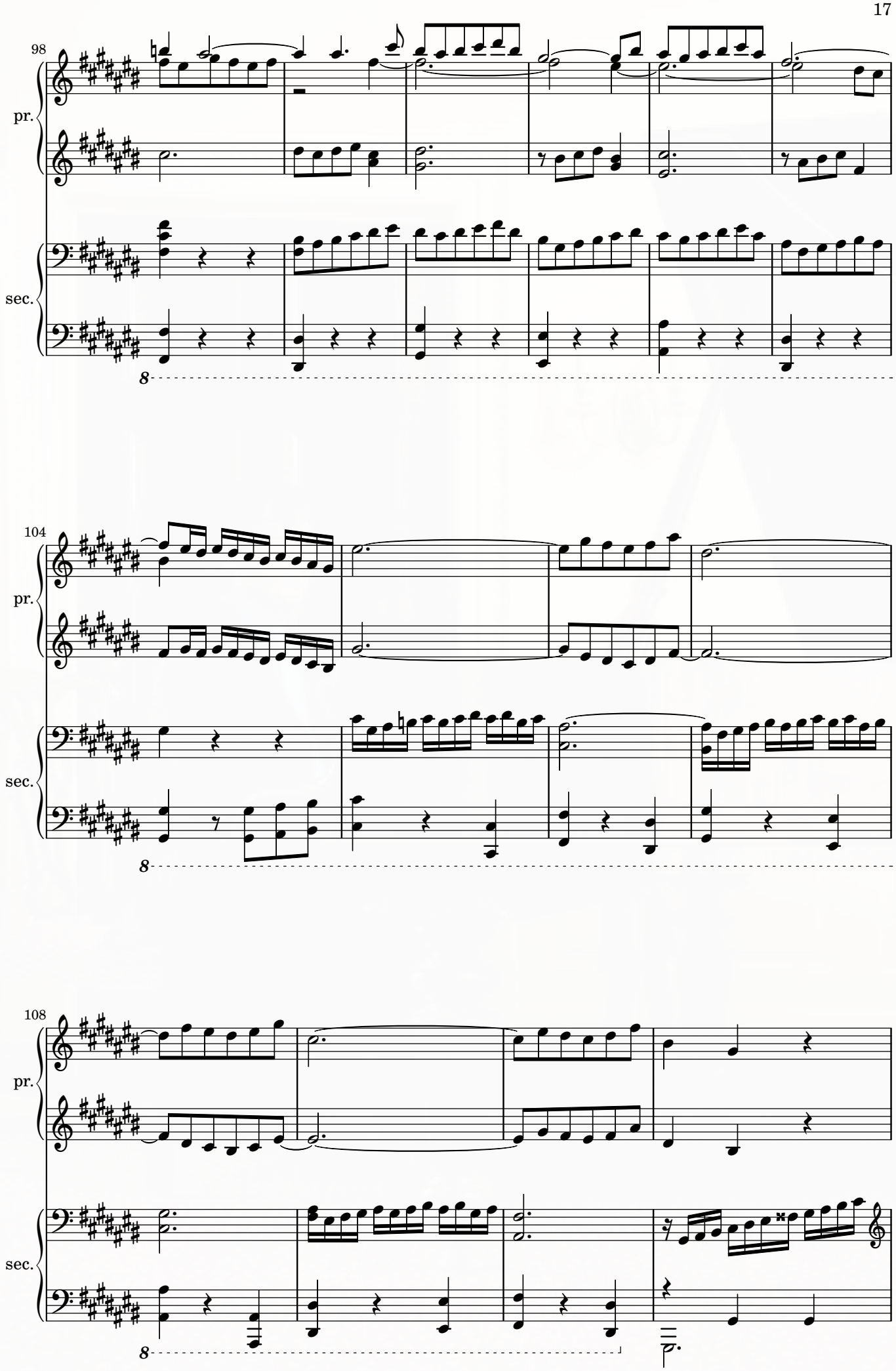
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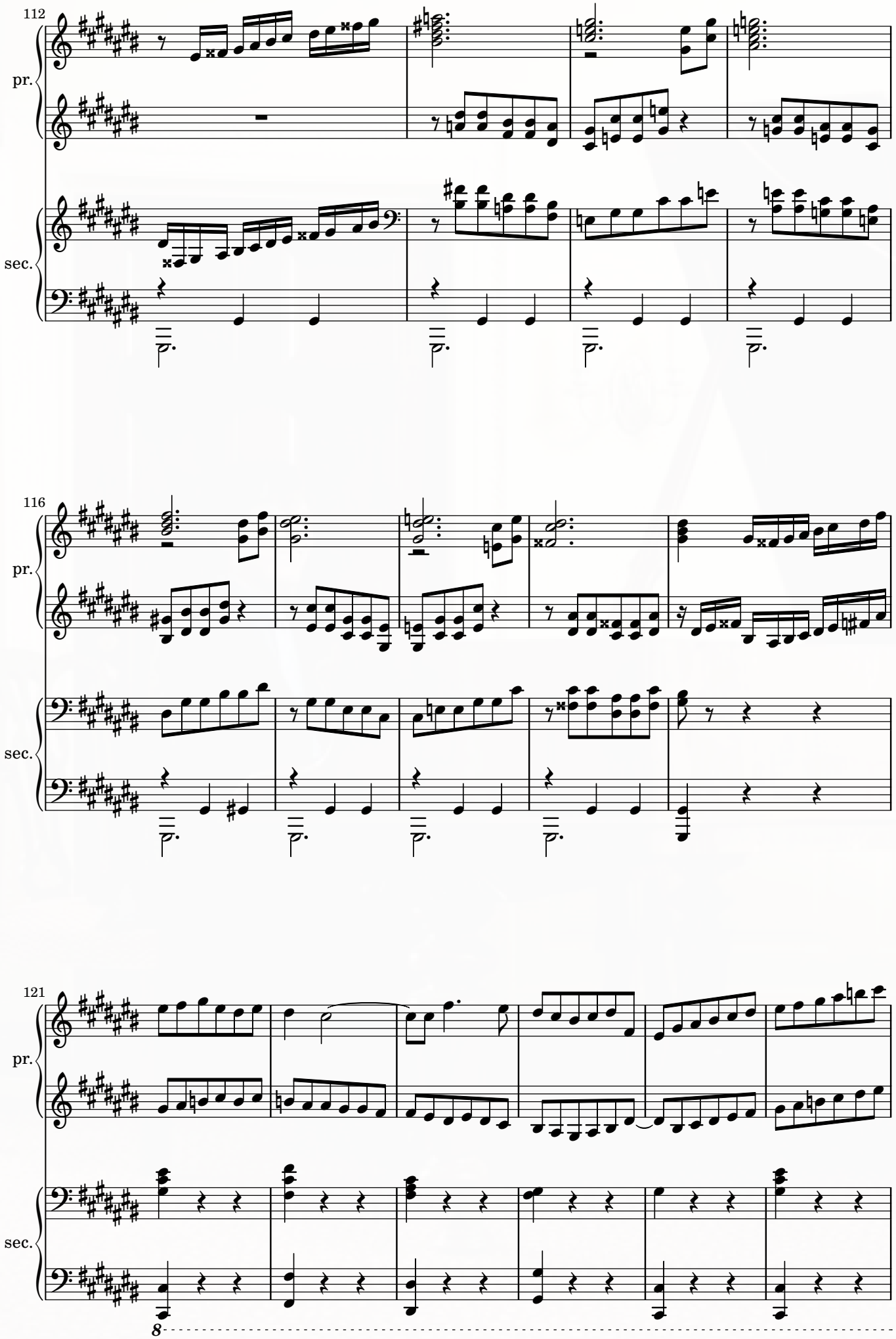
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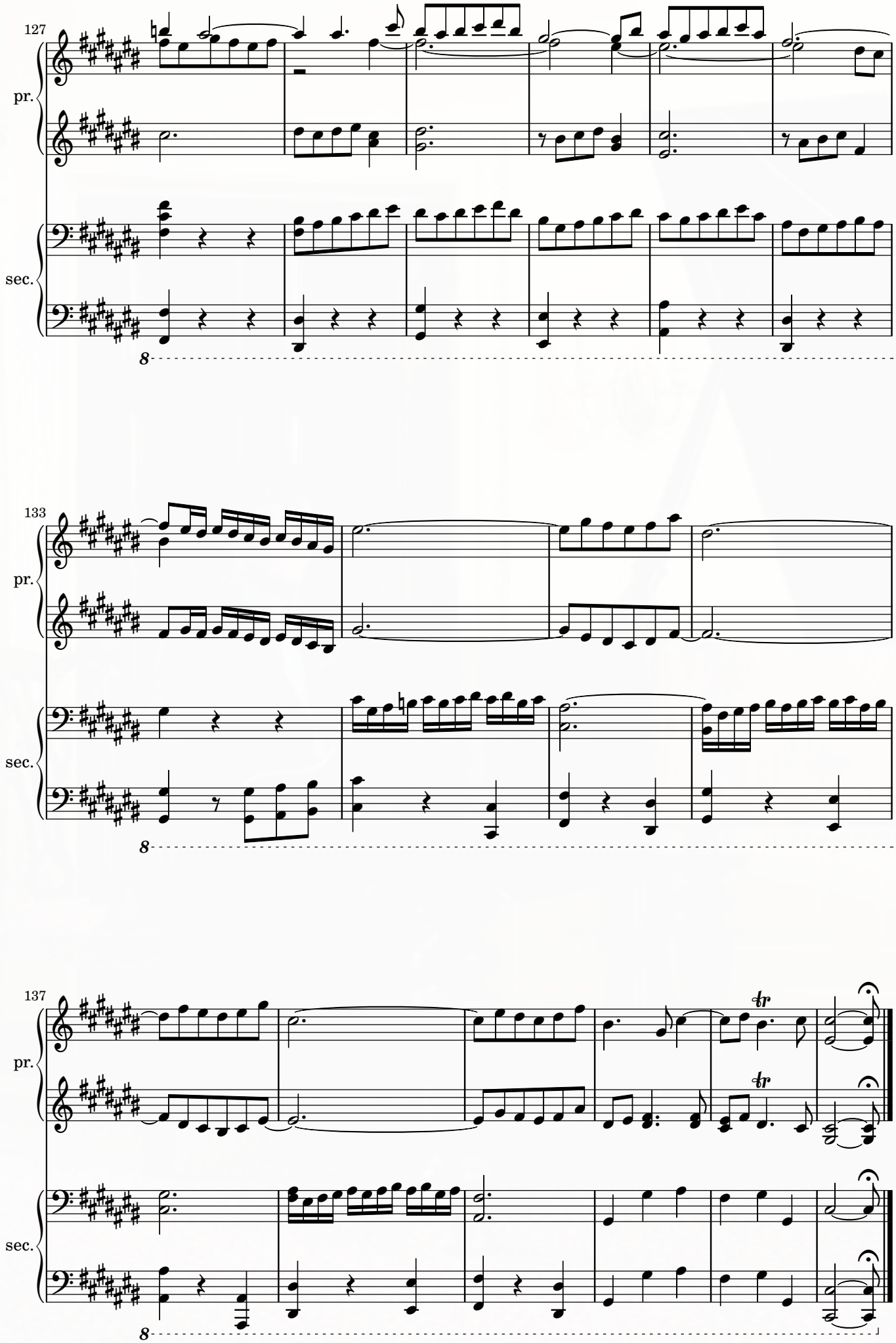
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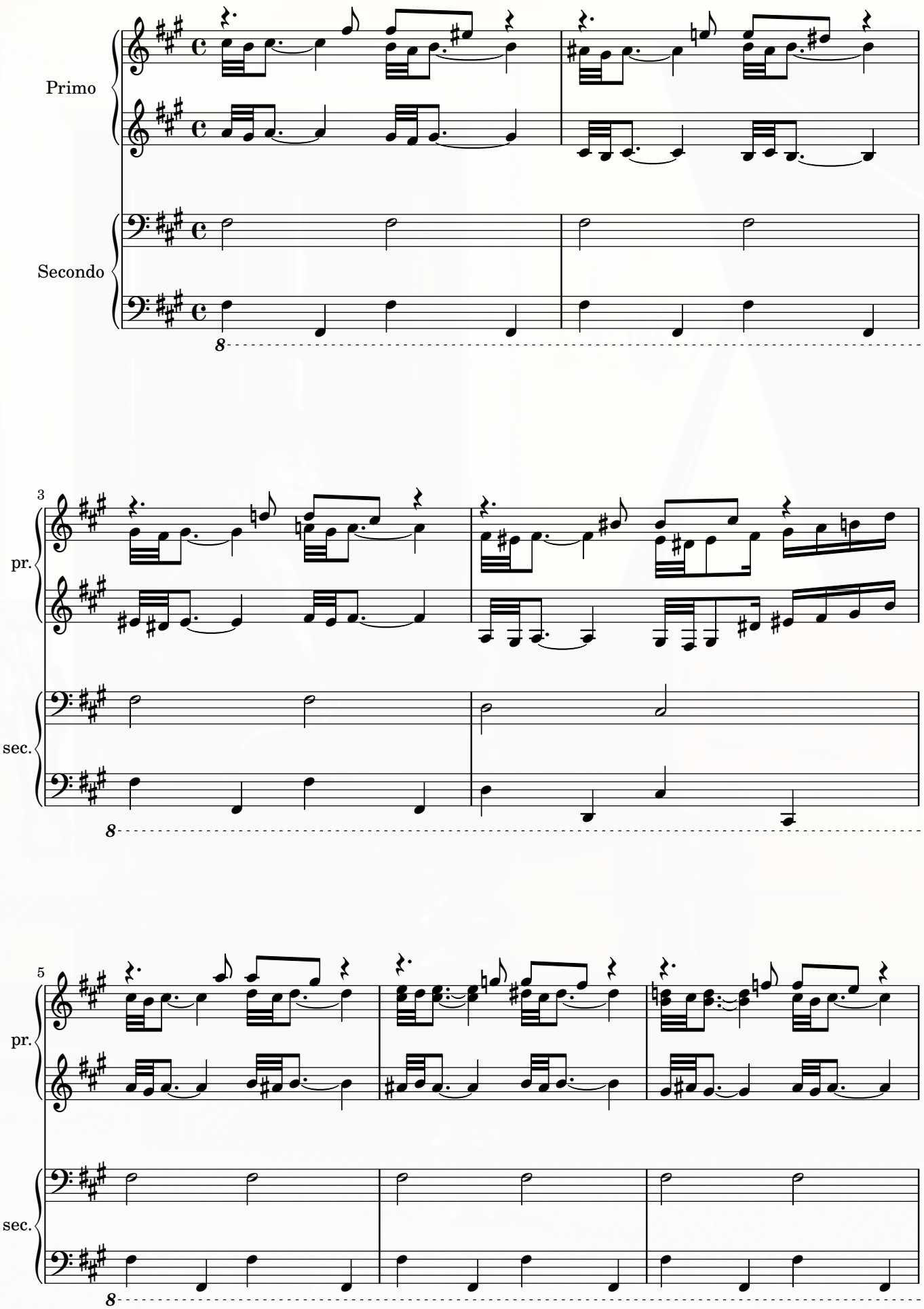

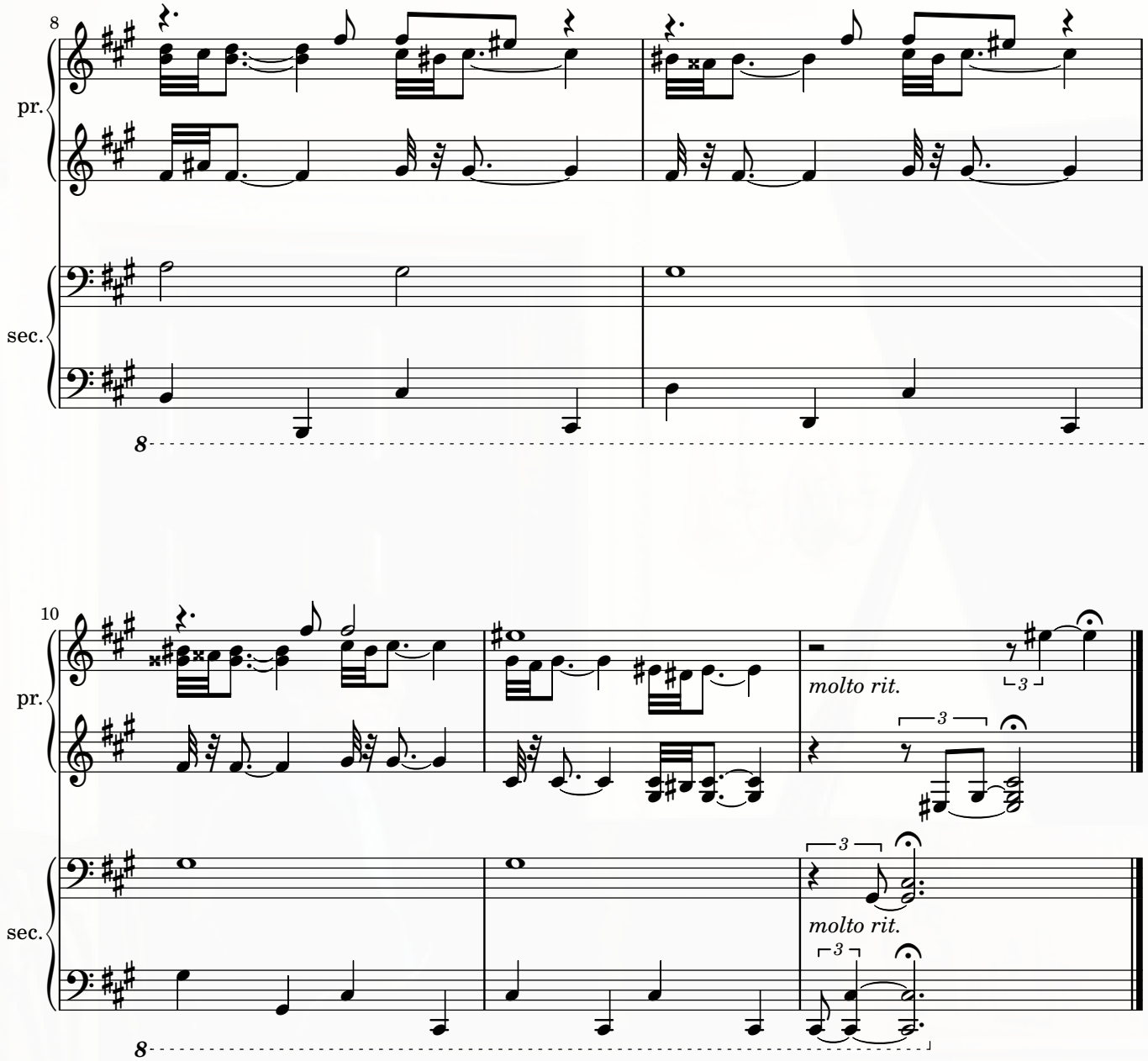
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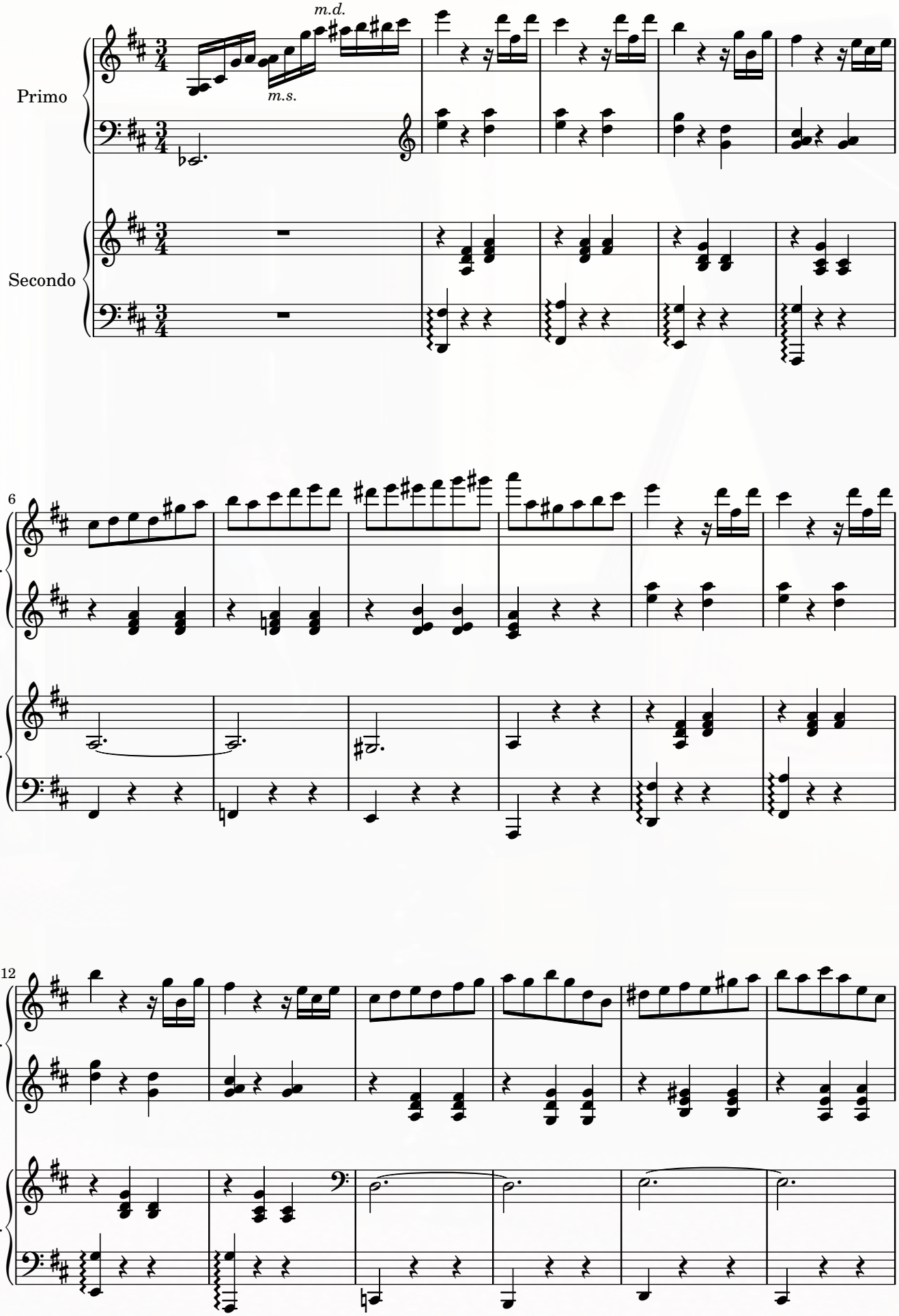
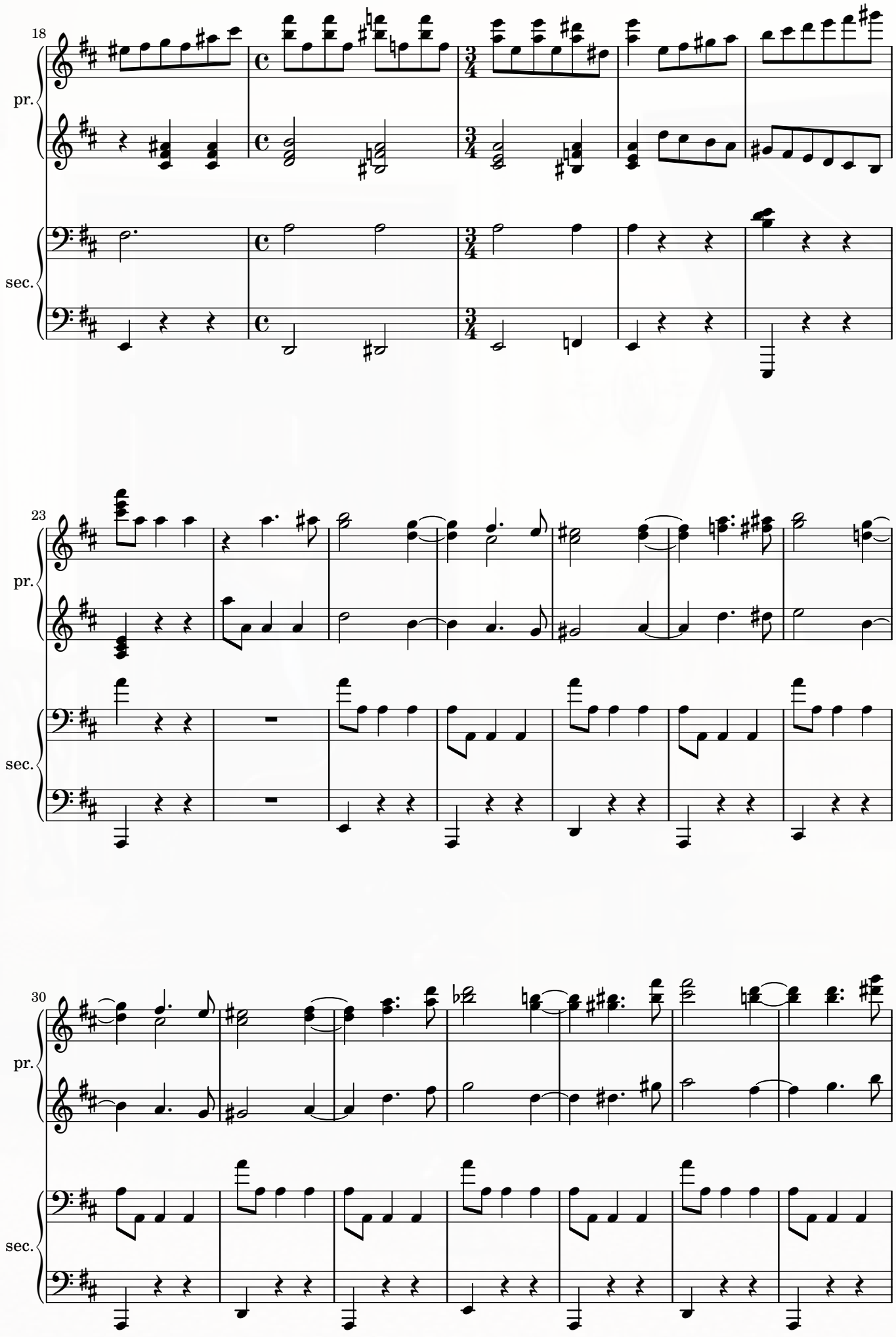
V. Valse-Coquette

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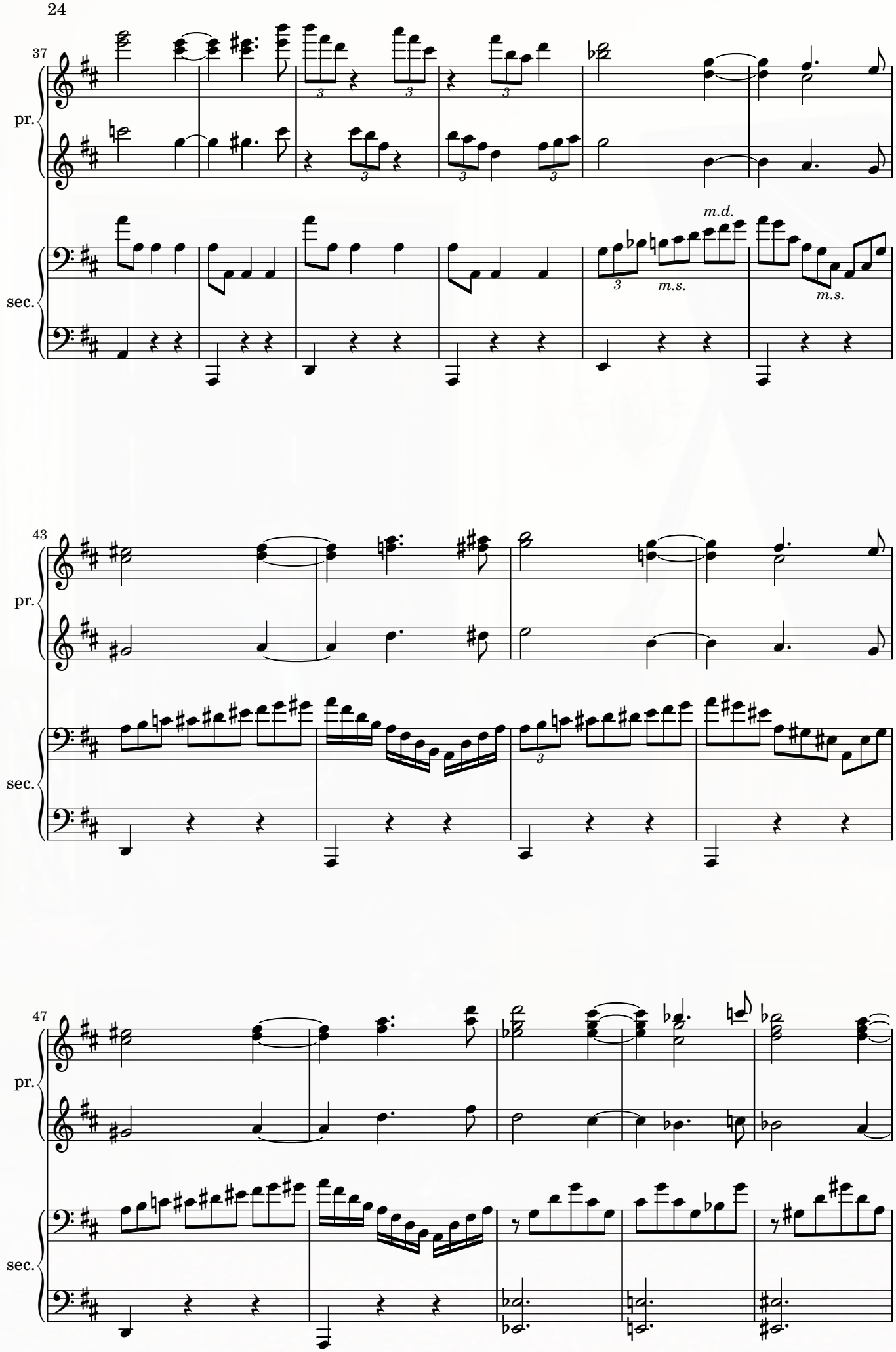
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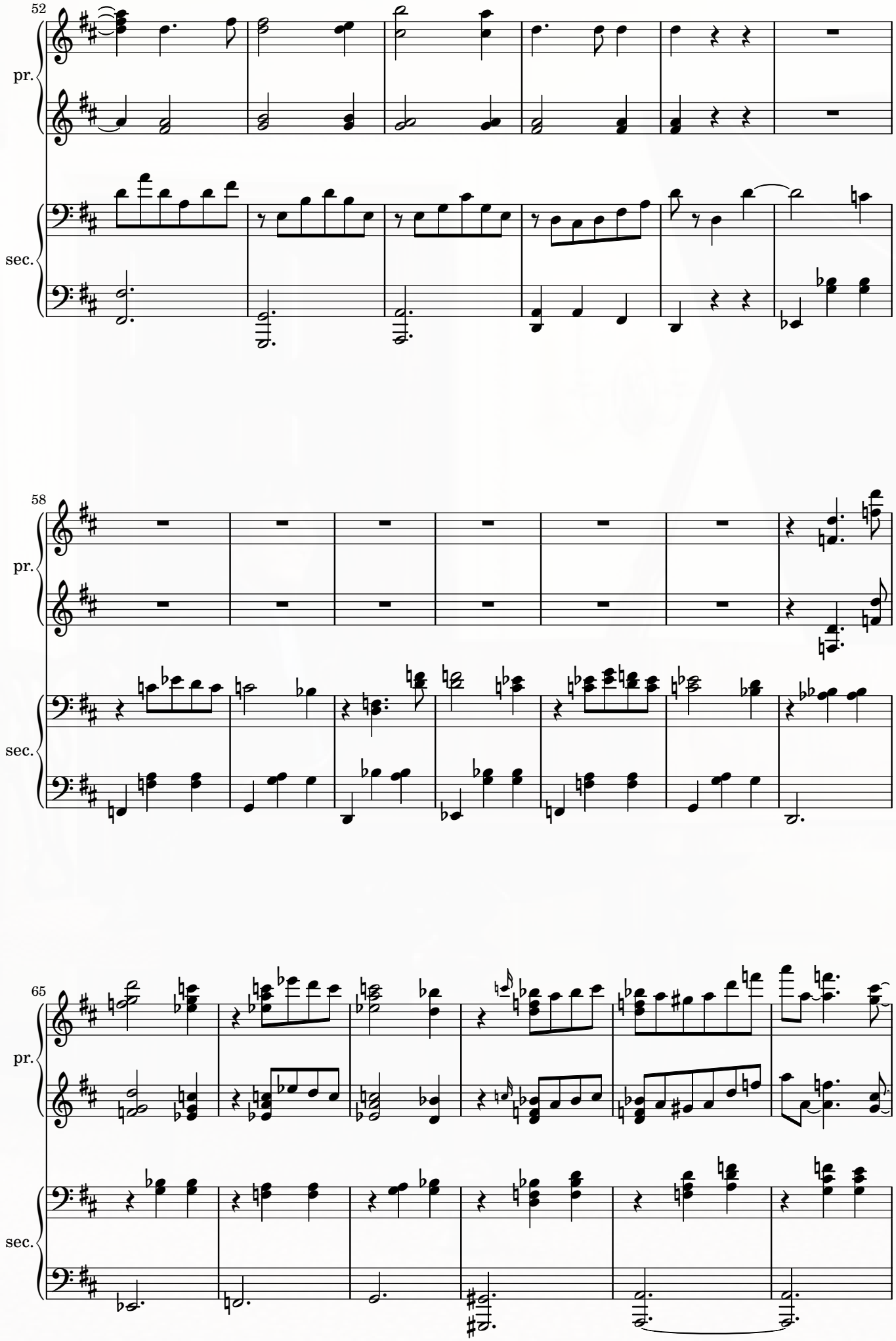
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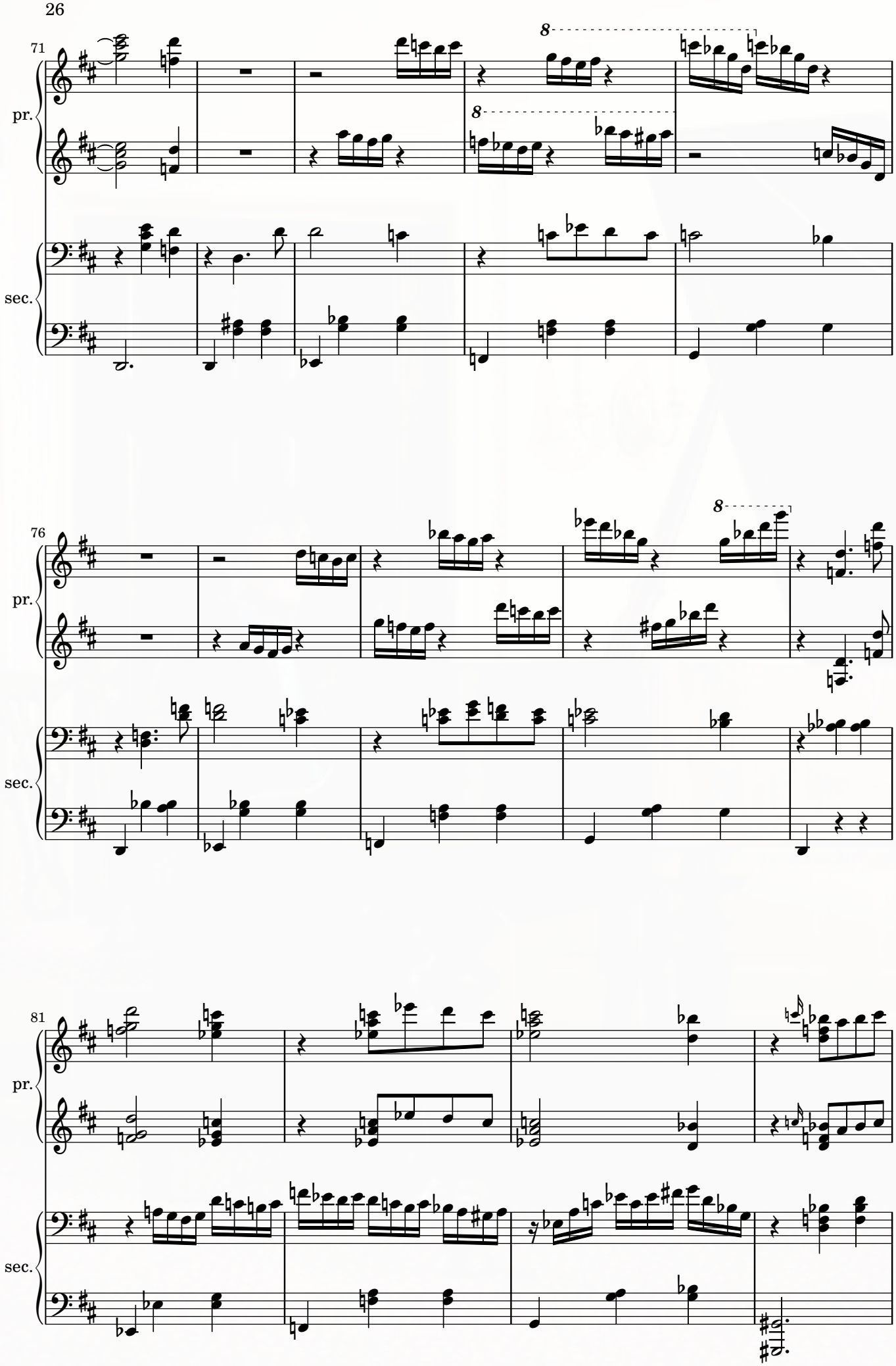
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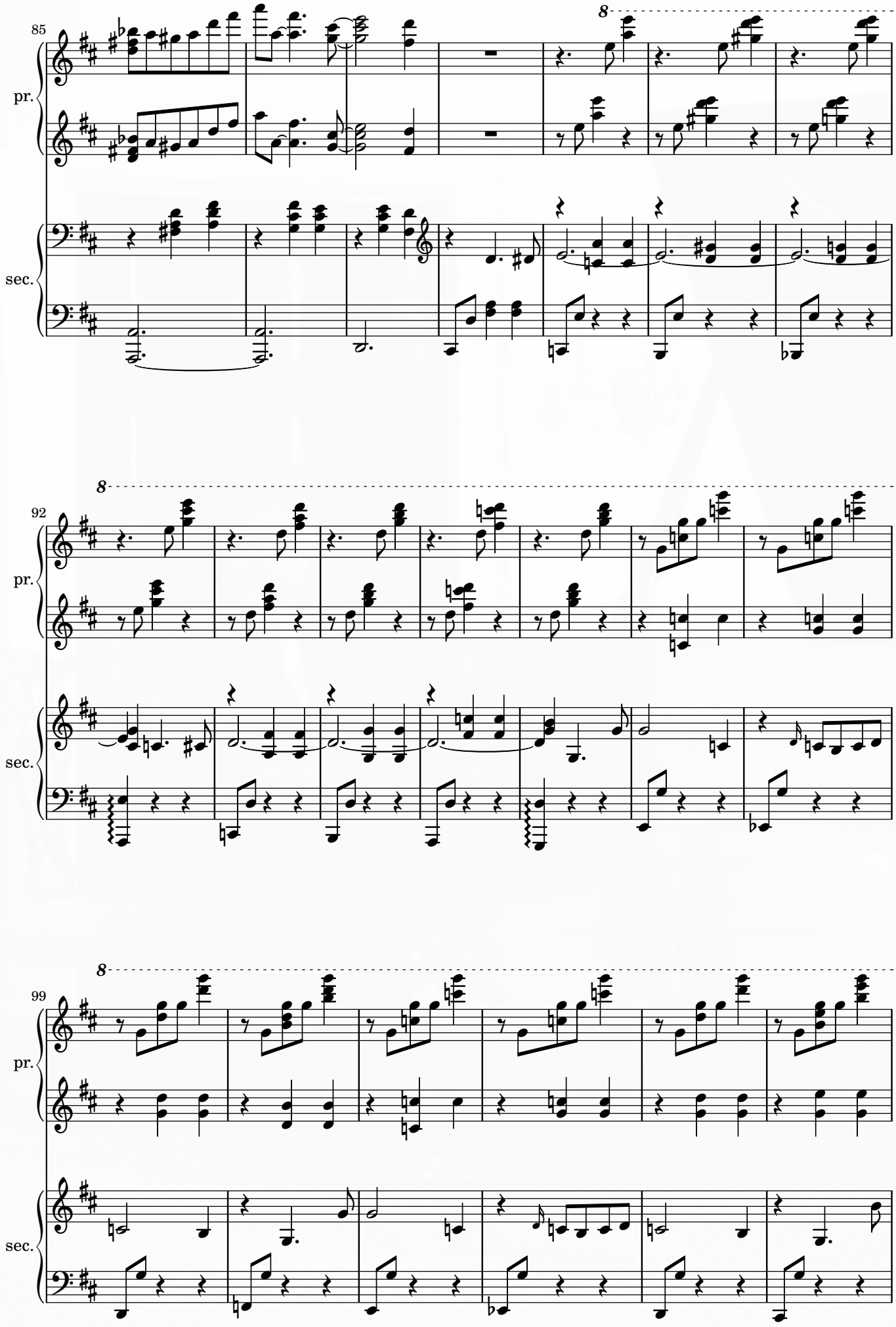
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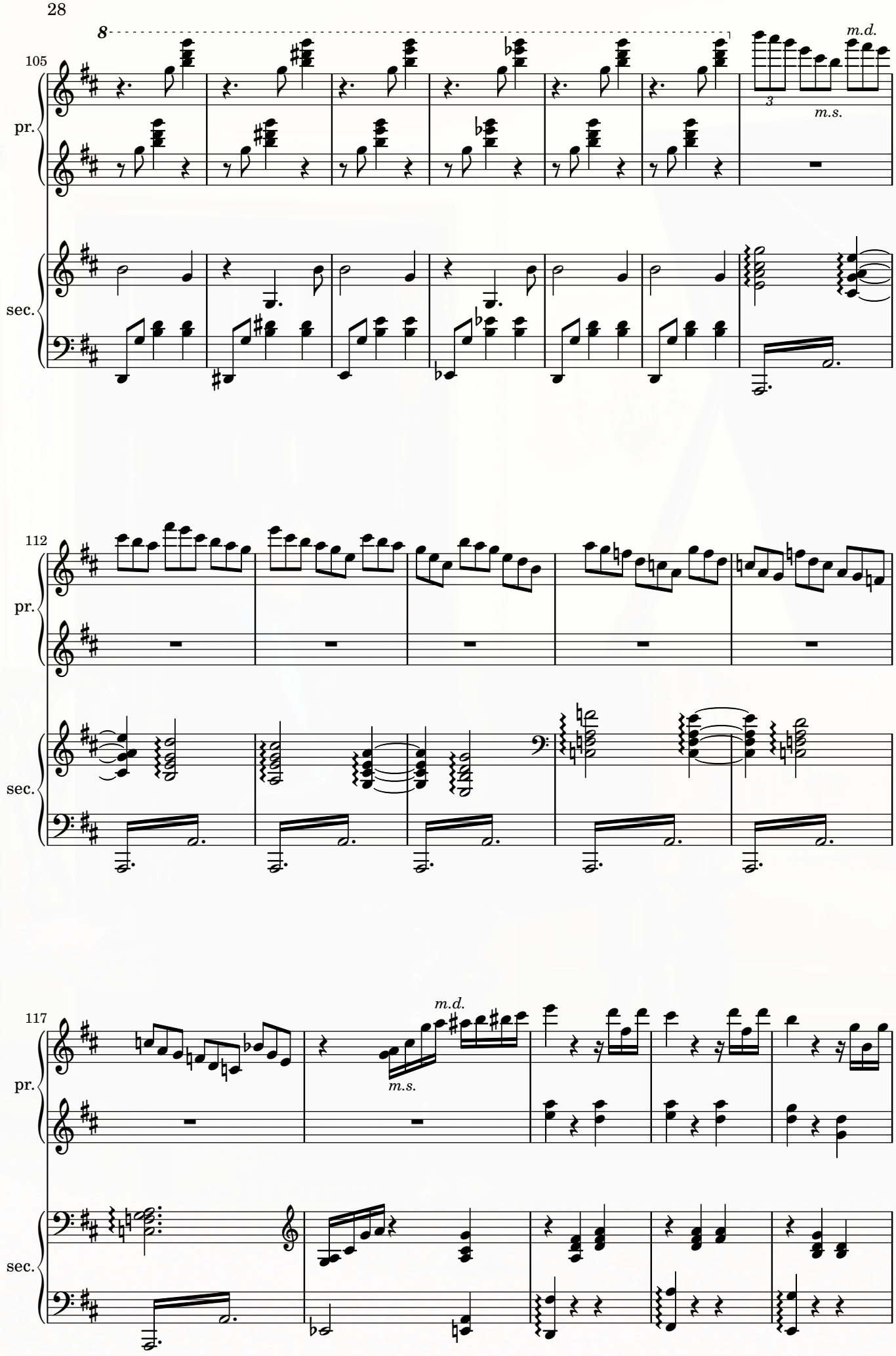
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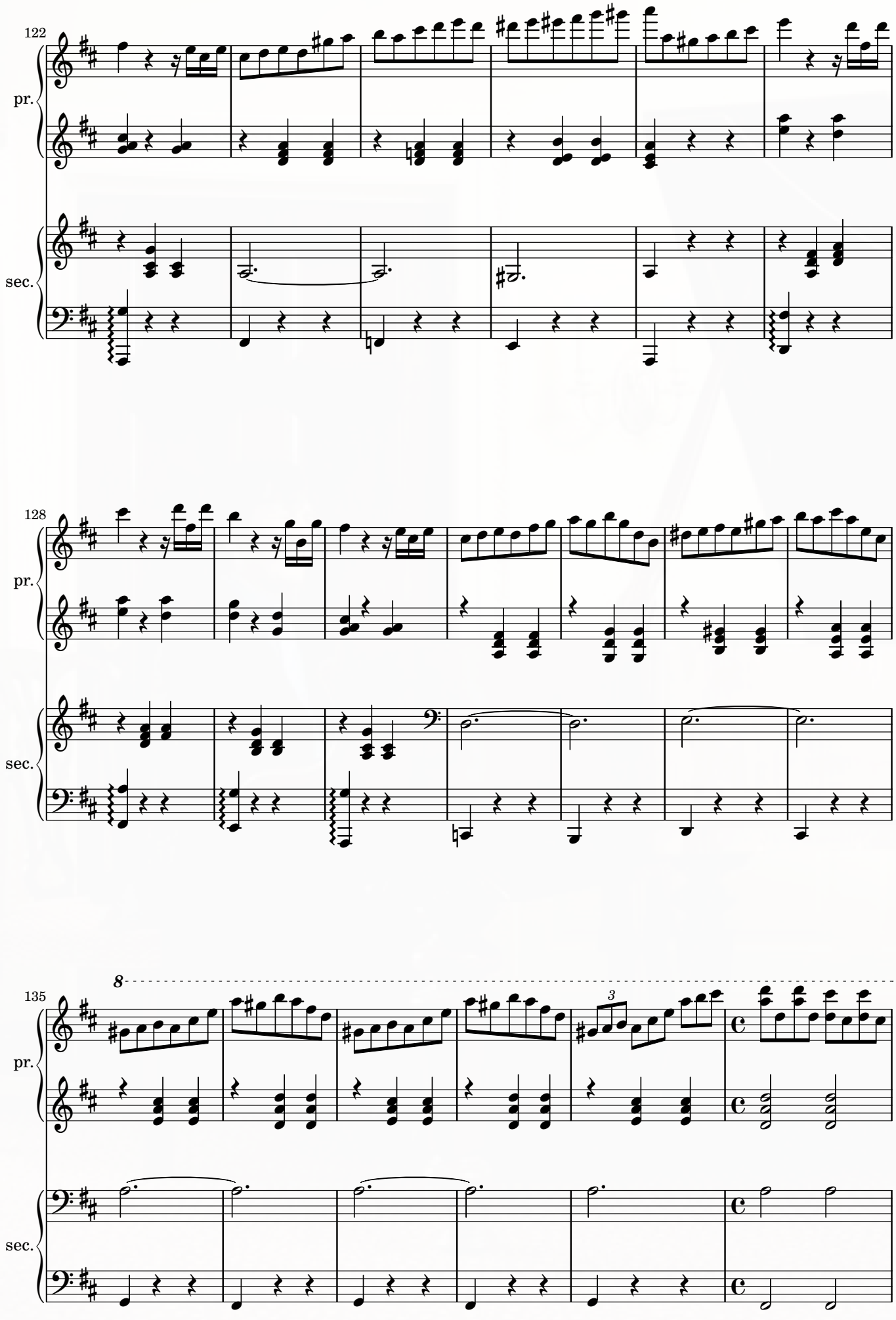
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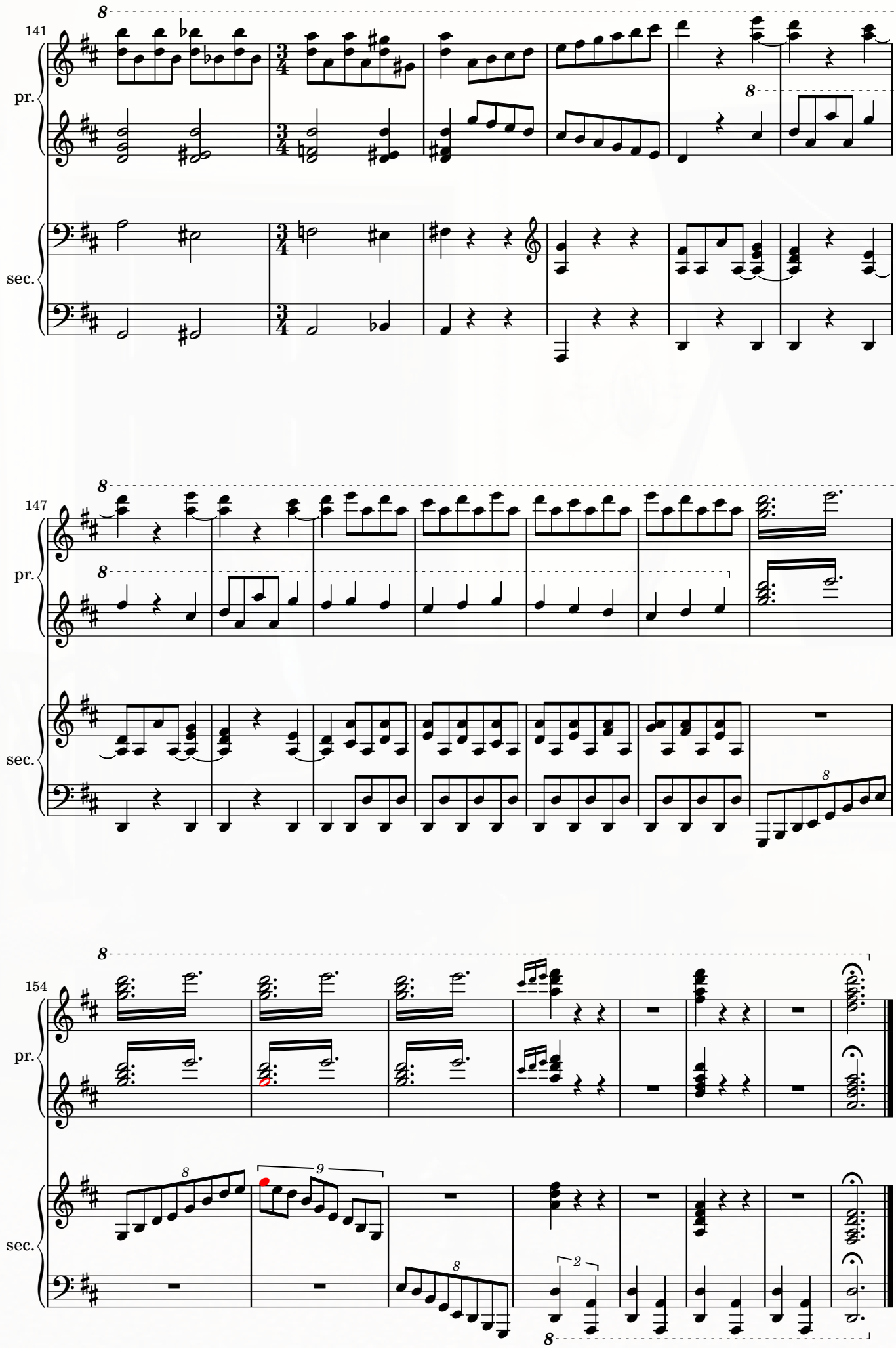
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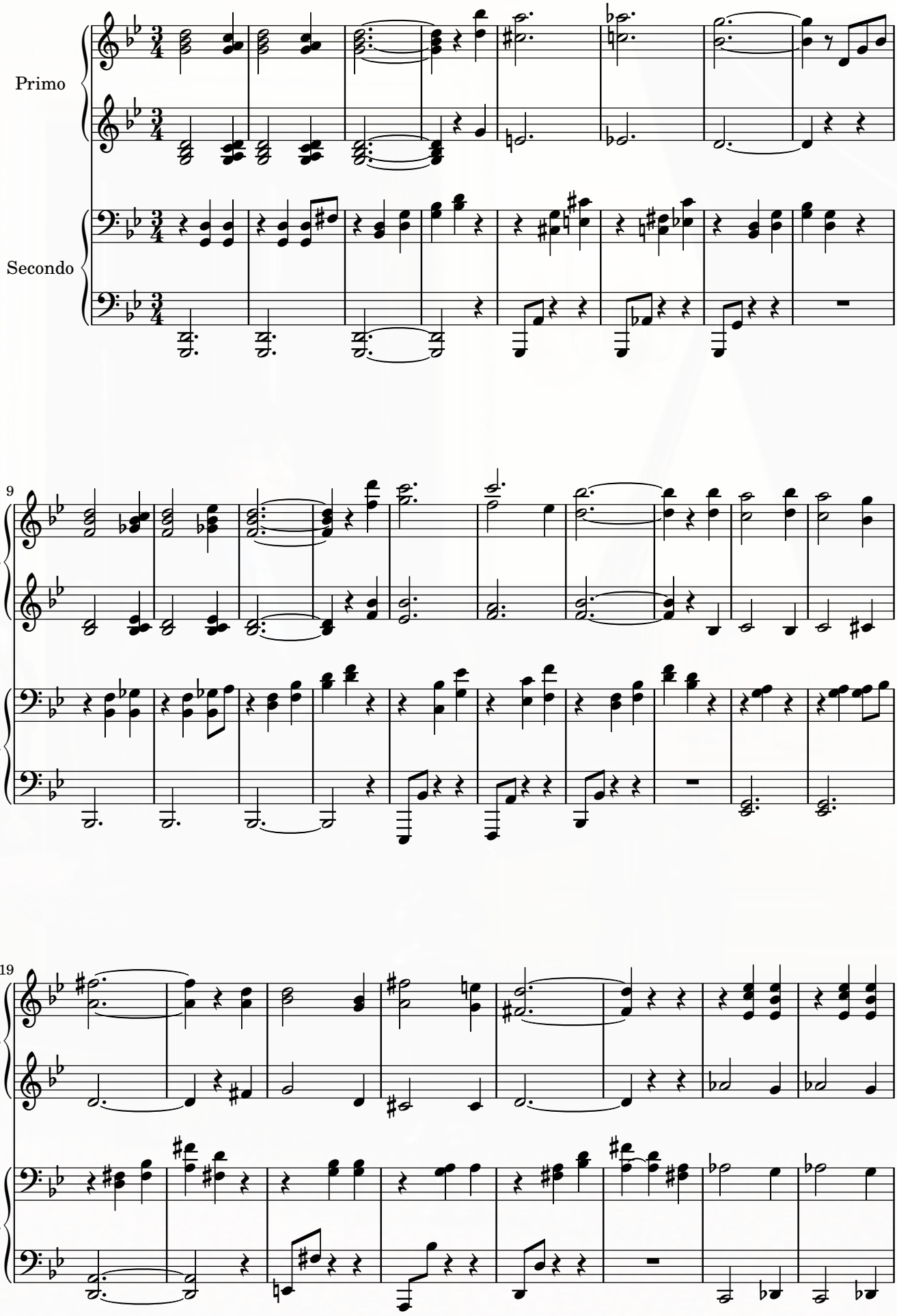
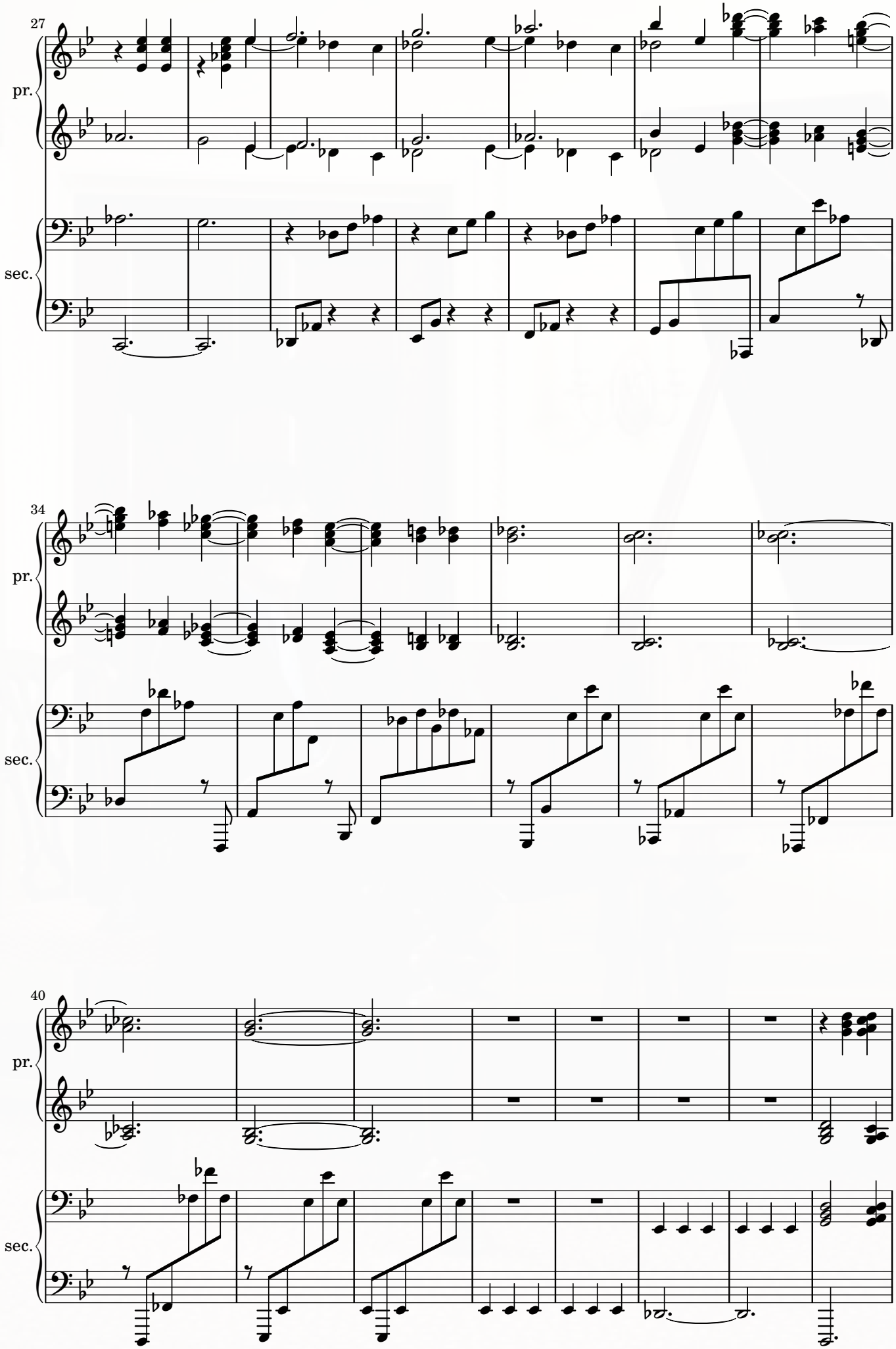
VI. A Dolly Forsaken

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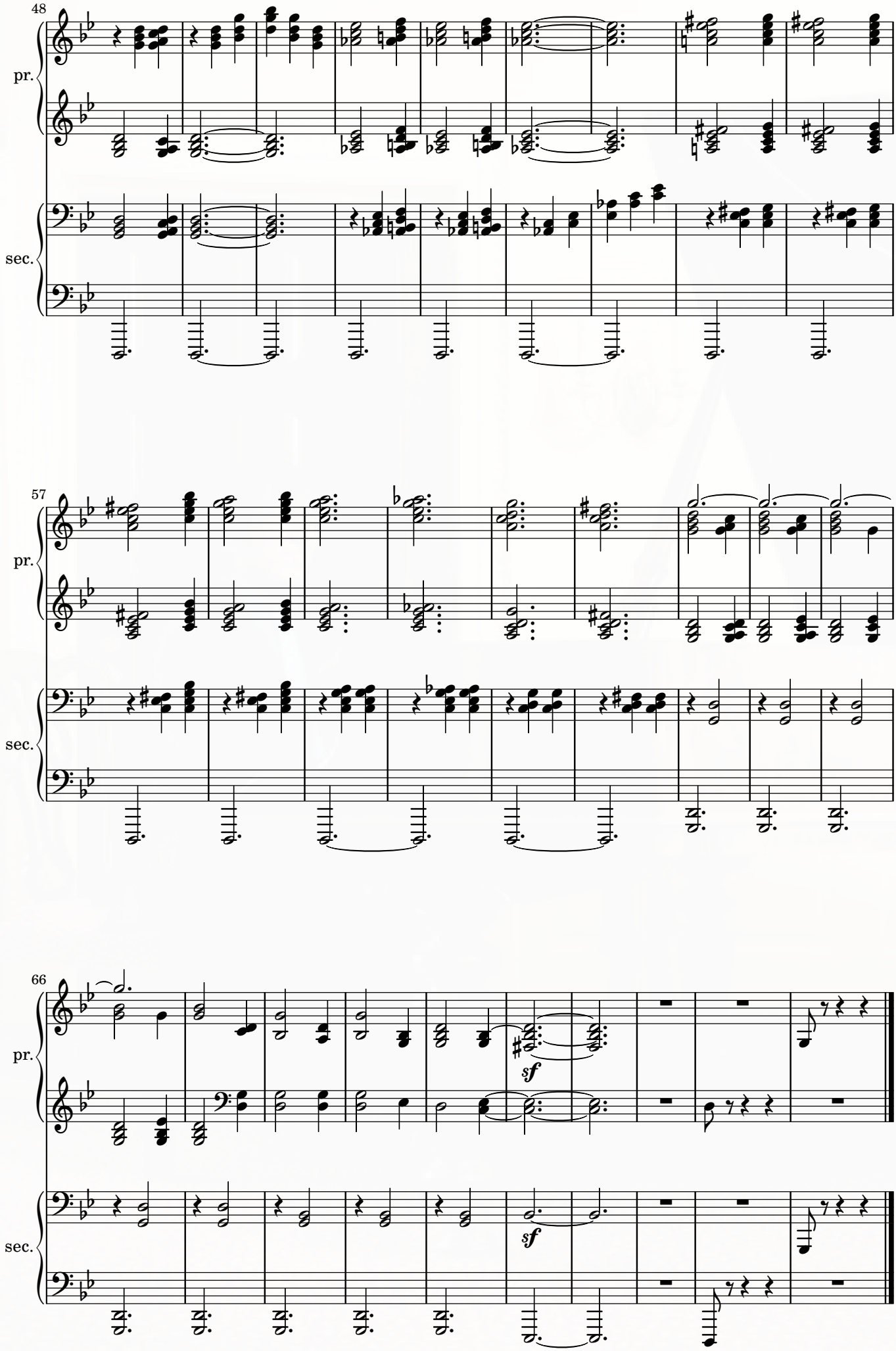
48
pr.
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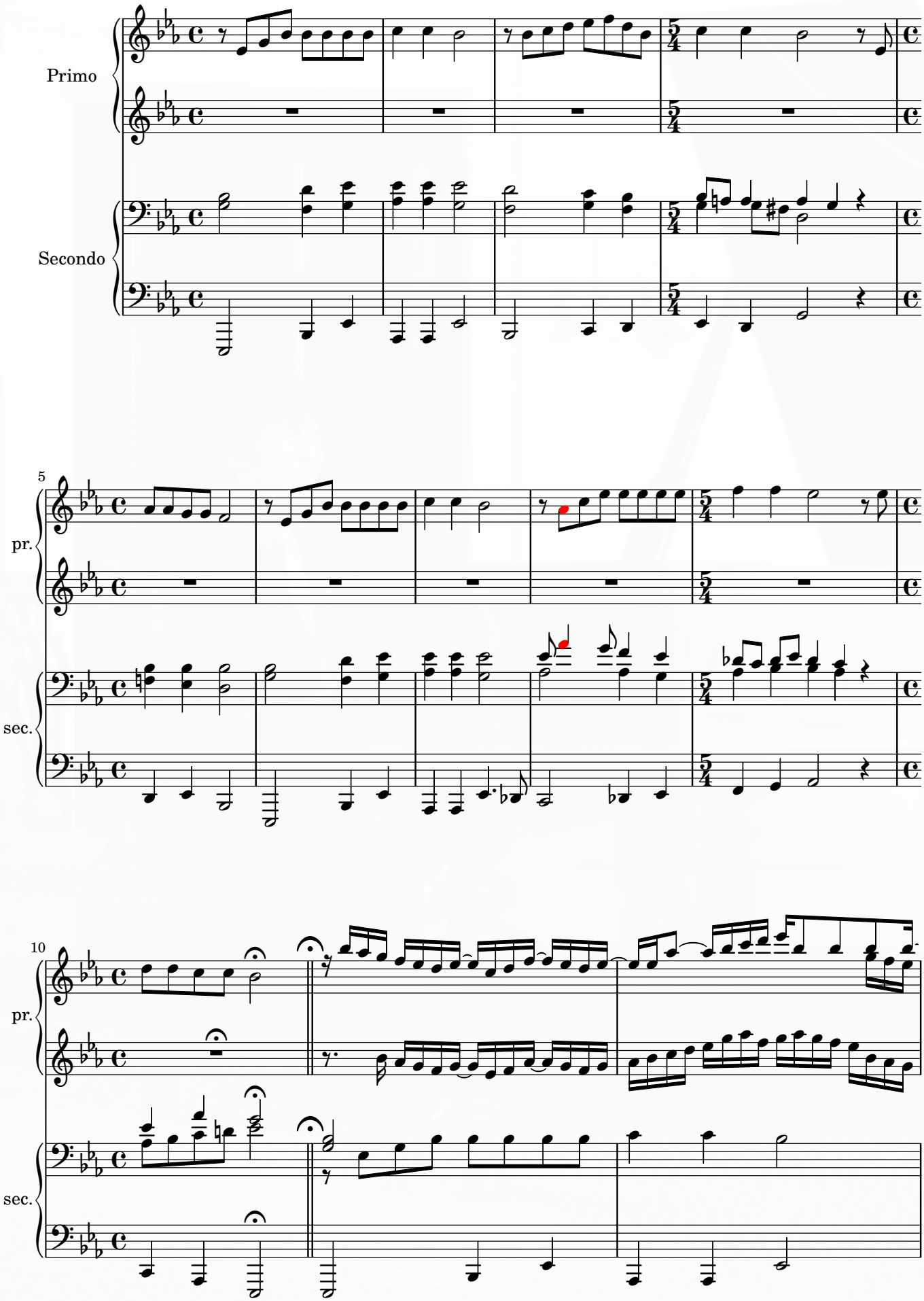
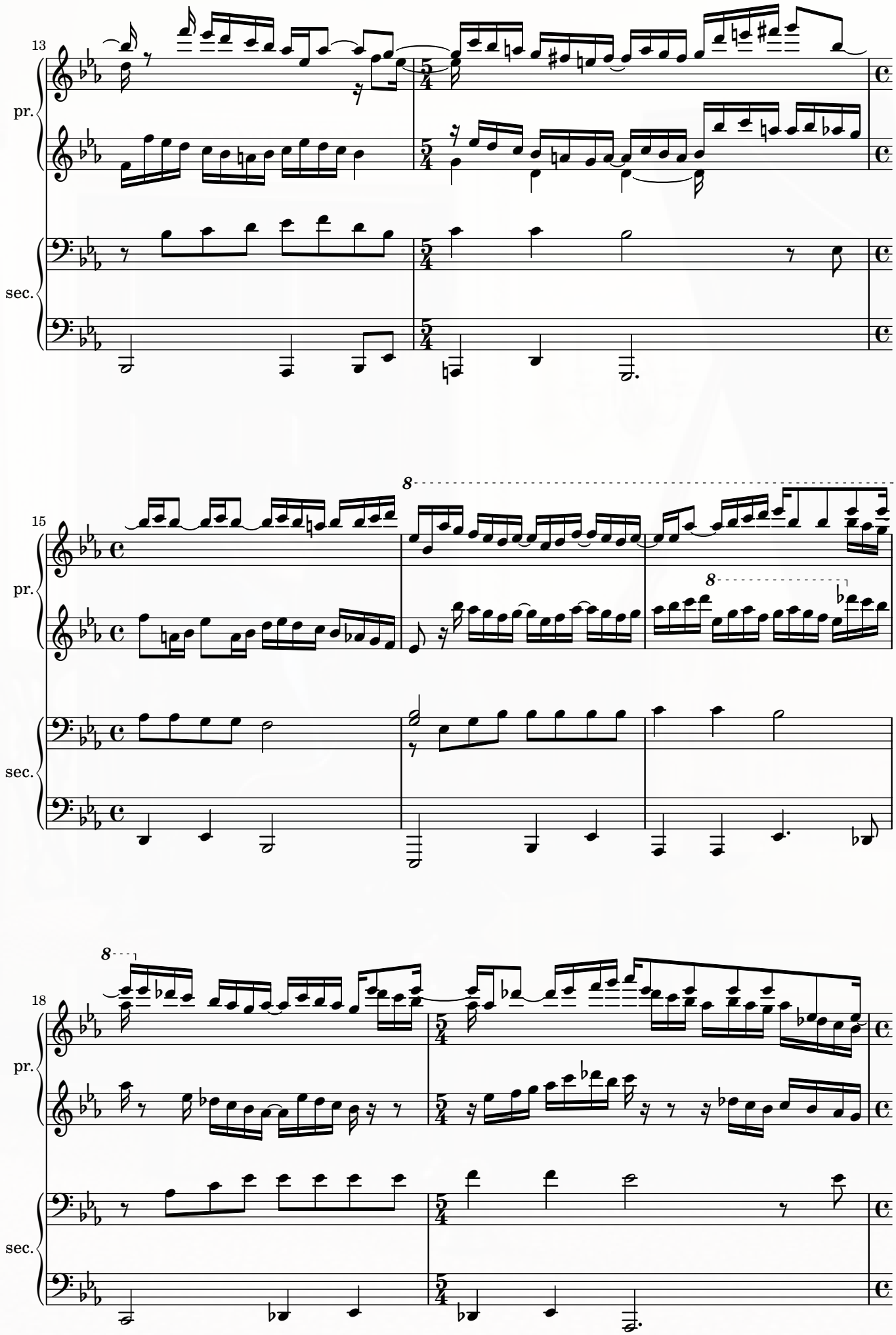
sec.
66
pr.
sf
sec.
sf

VII. I Was Glad When They Said Unto Me, Let Us Go Into The House Of The LORD

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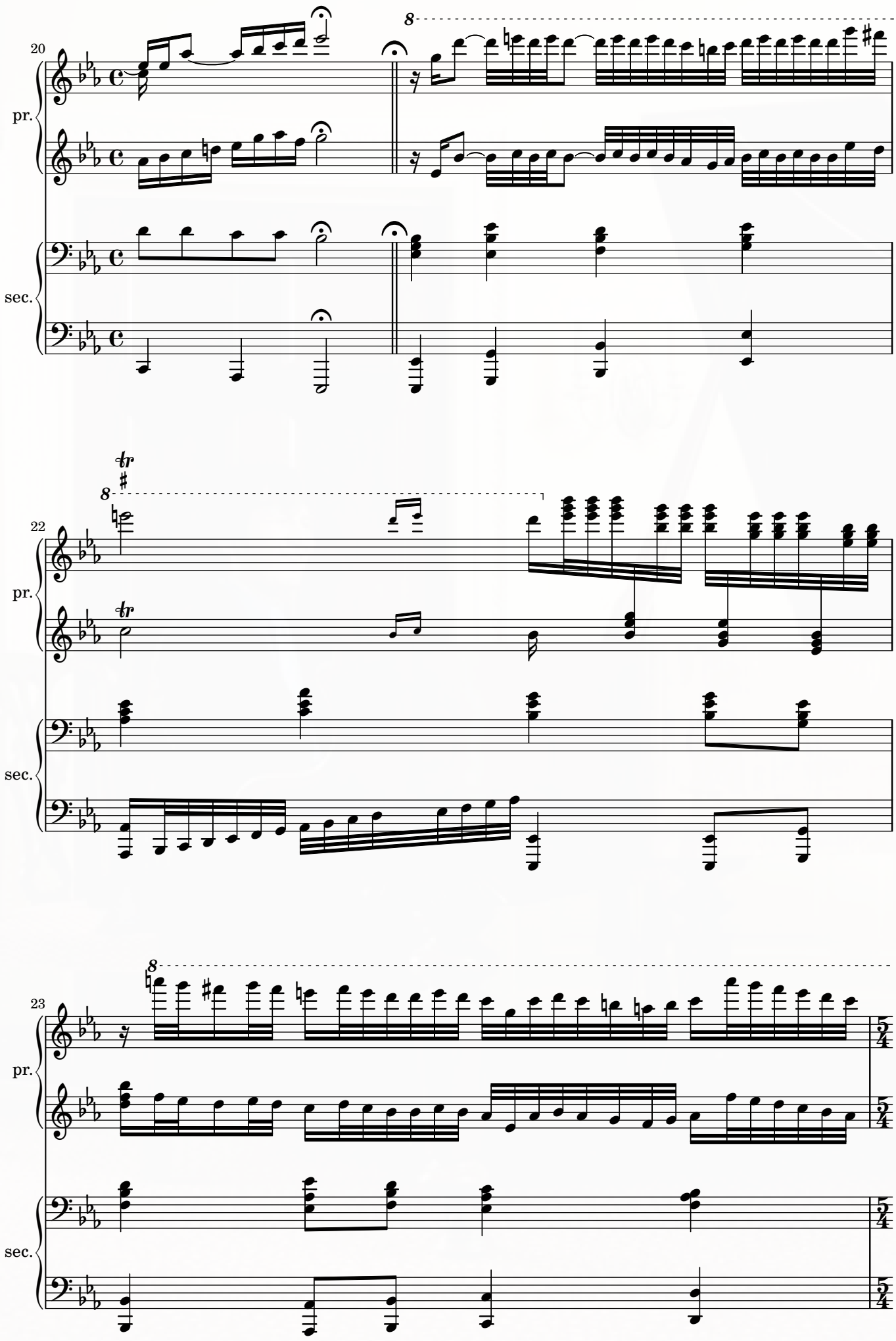
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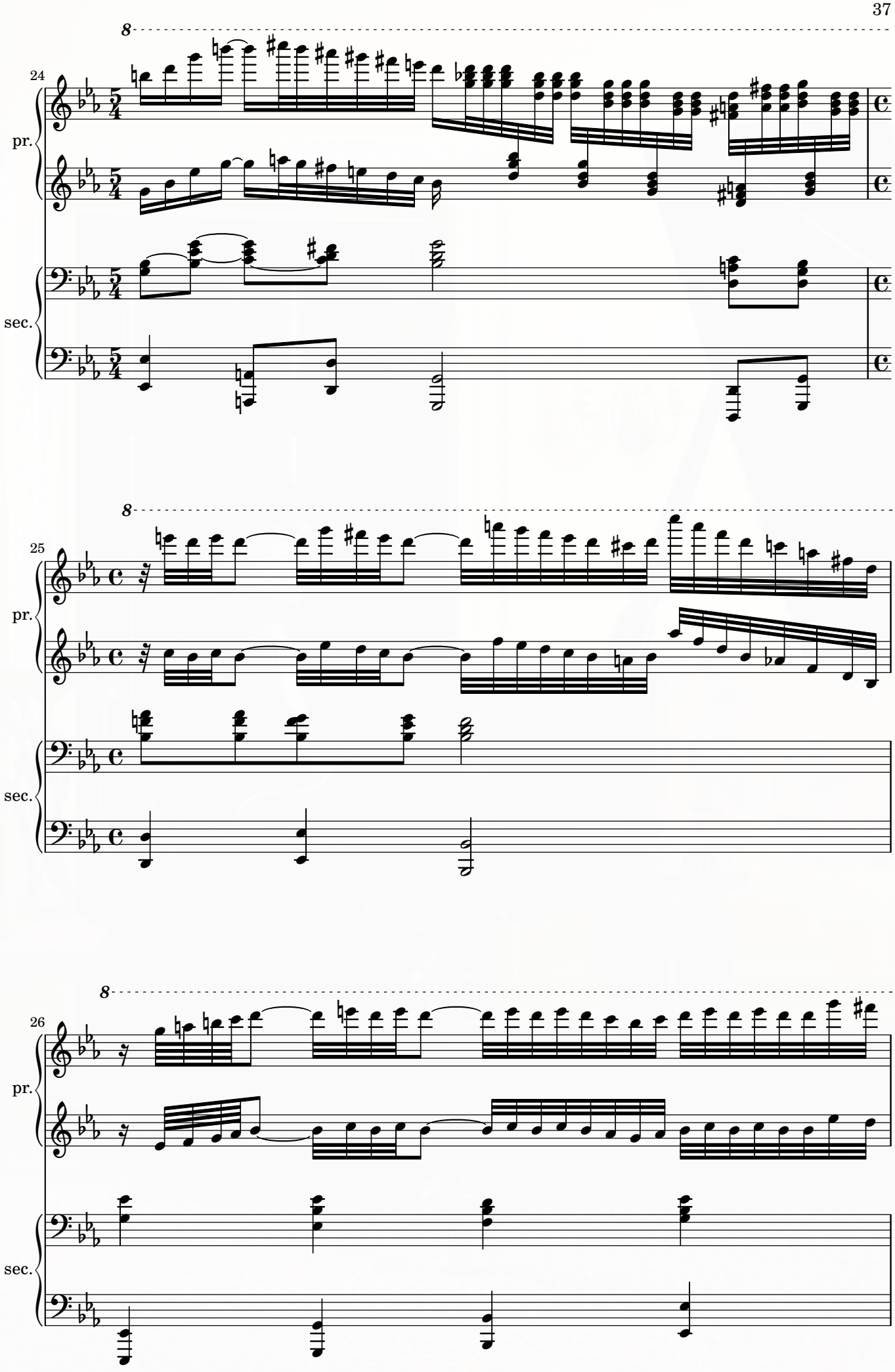
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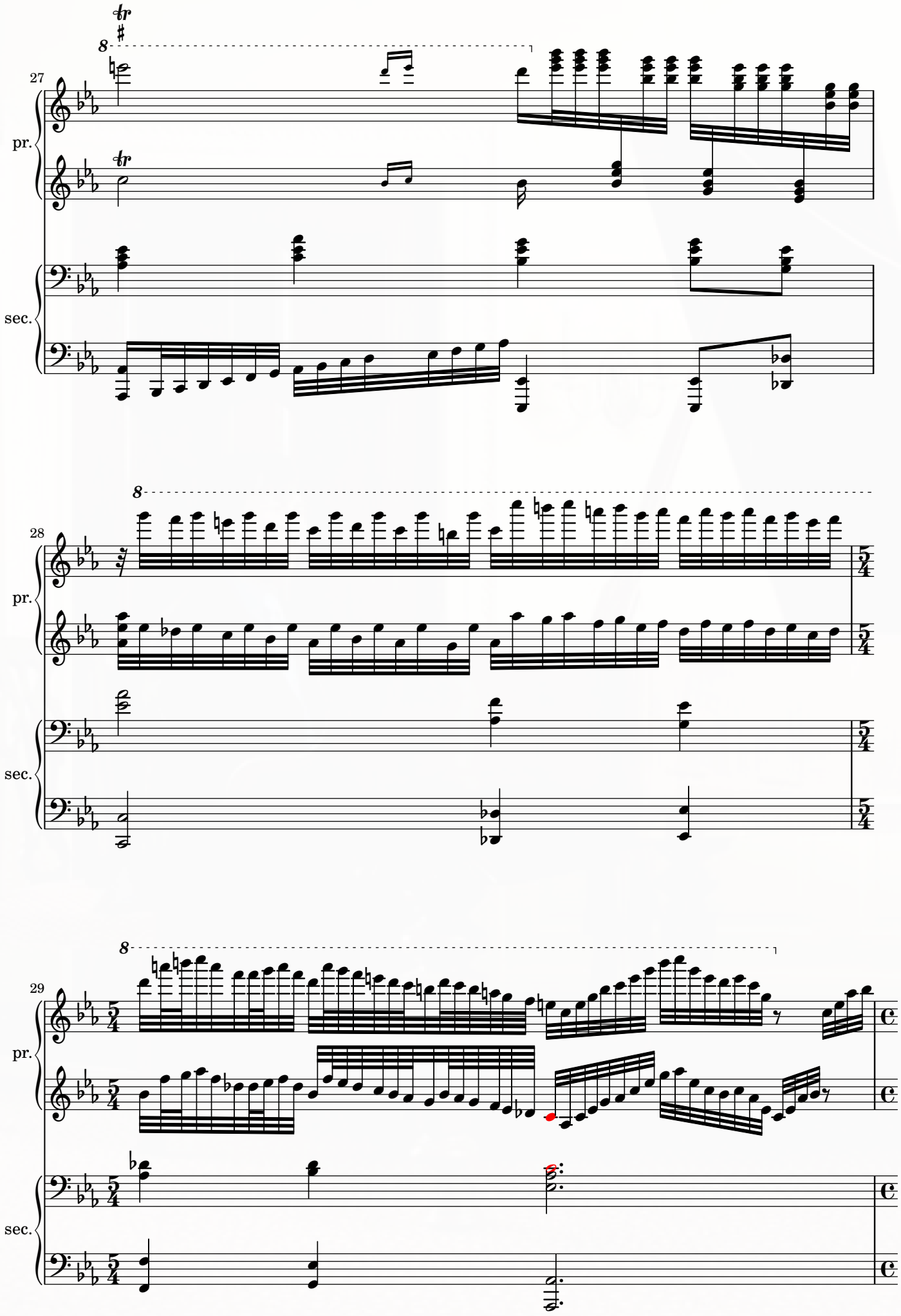
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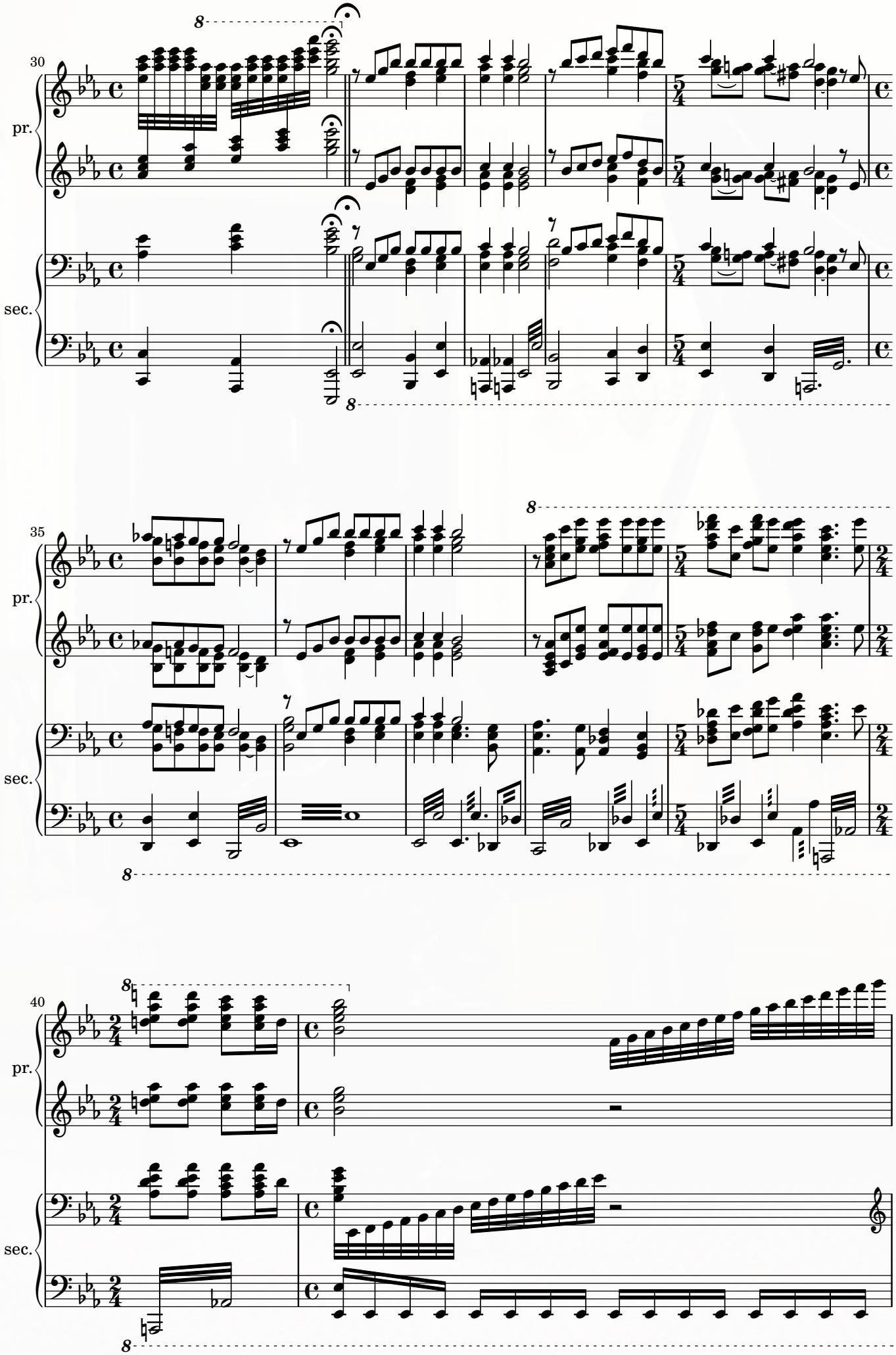
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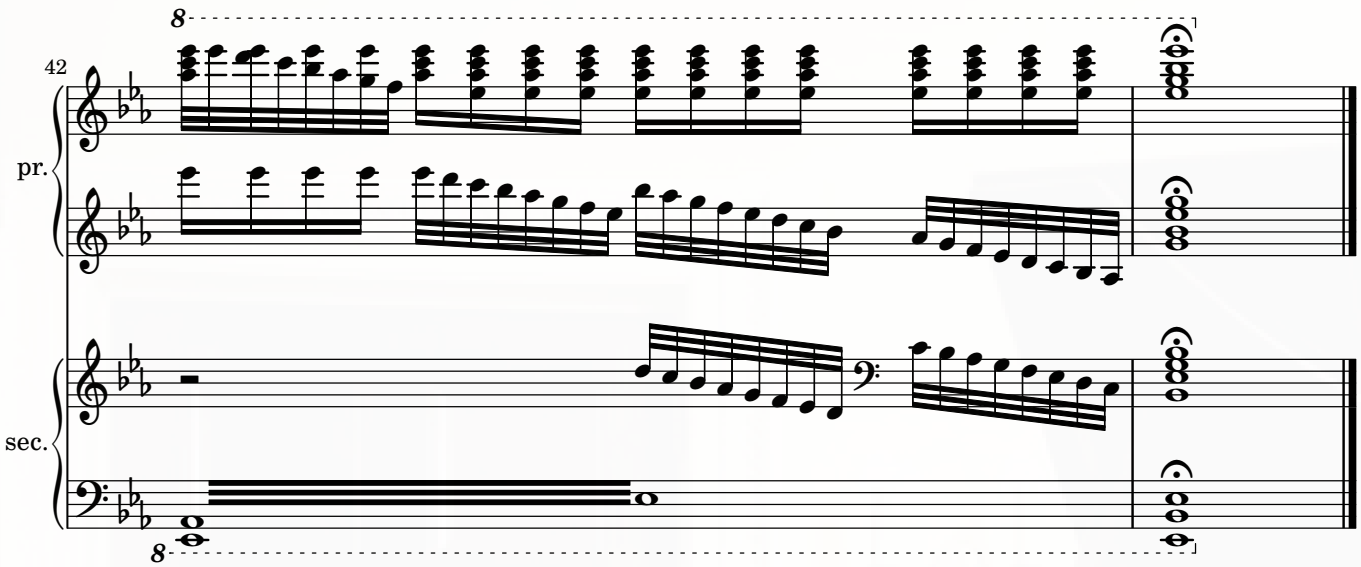
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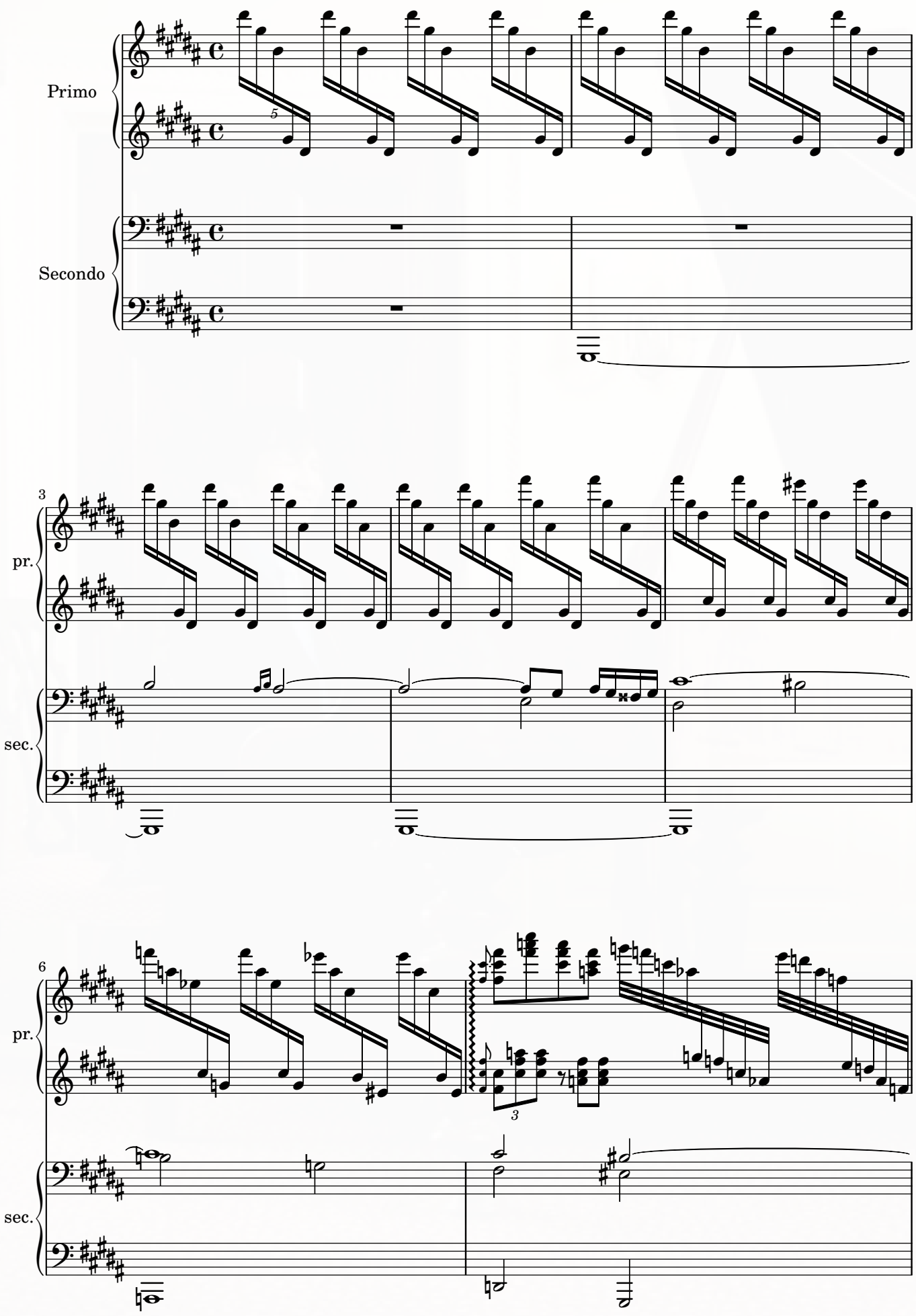
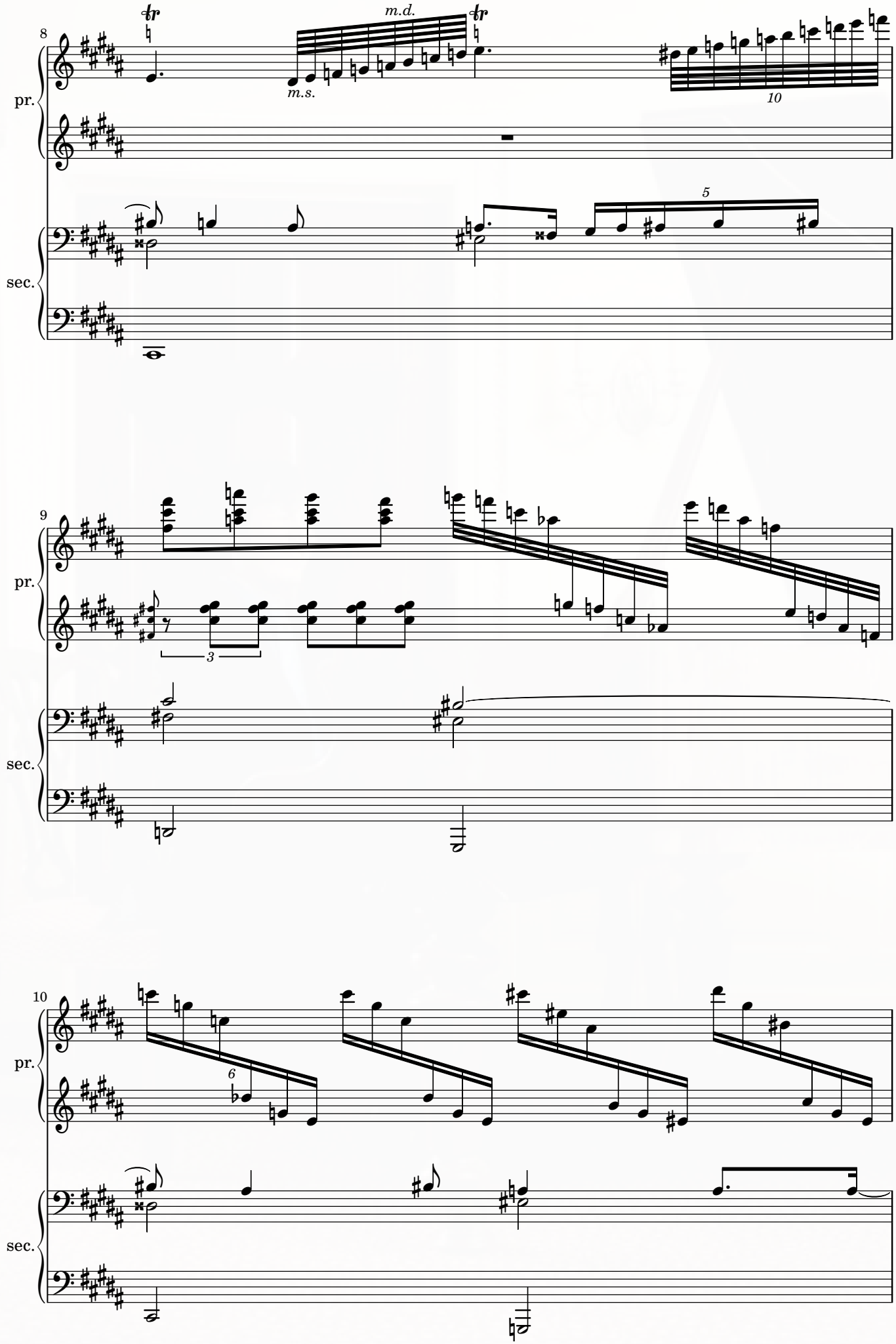
VIII. In Exile

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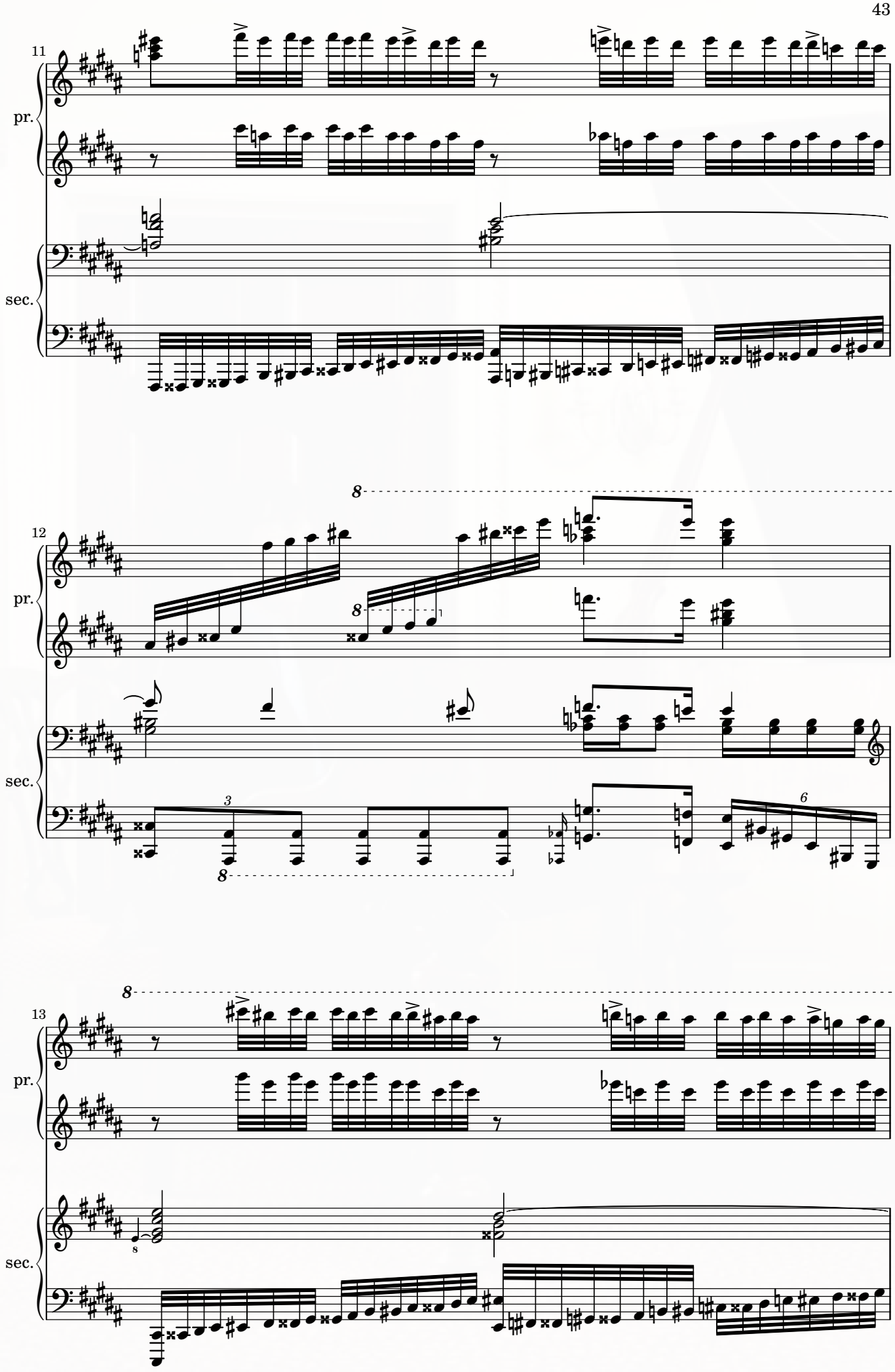
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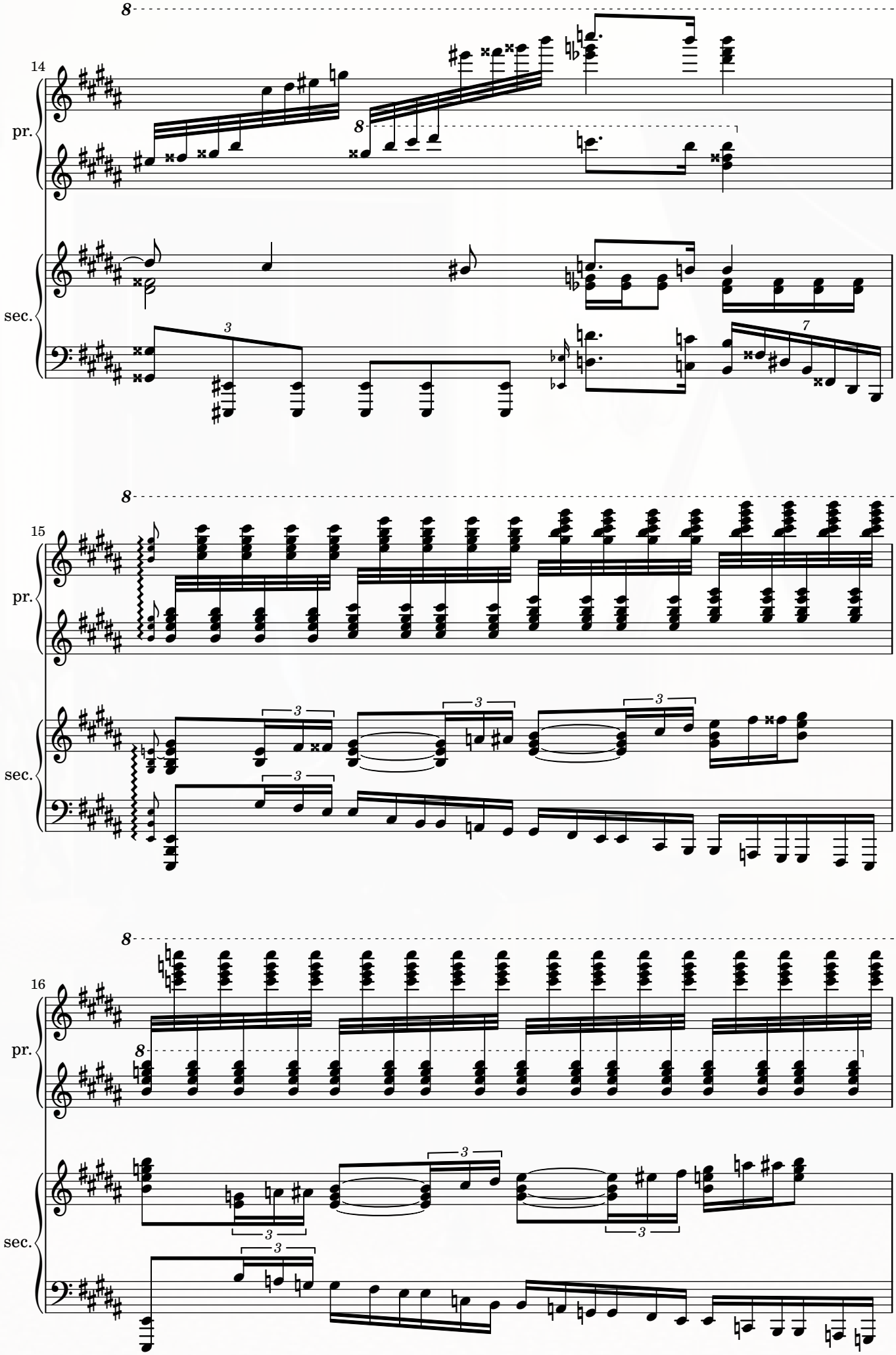
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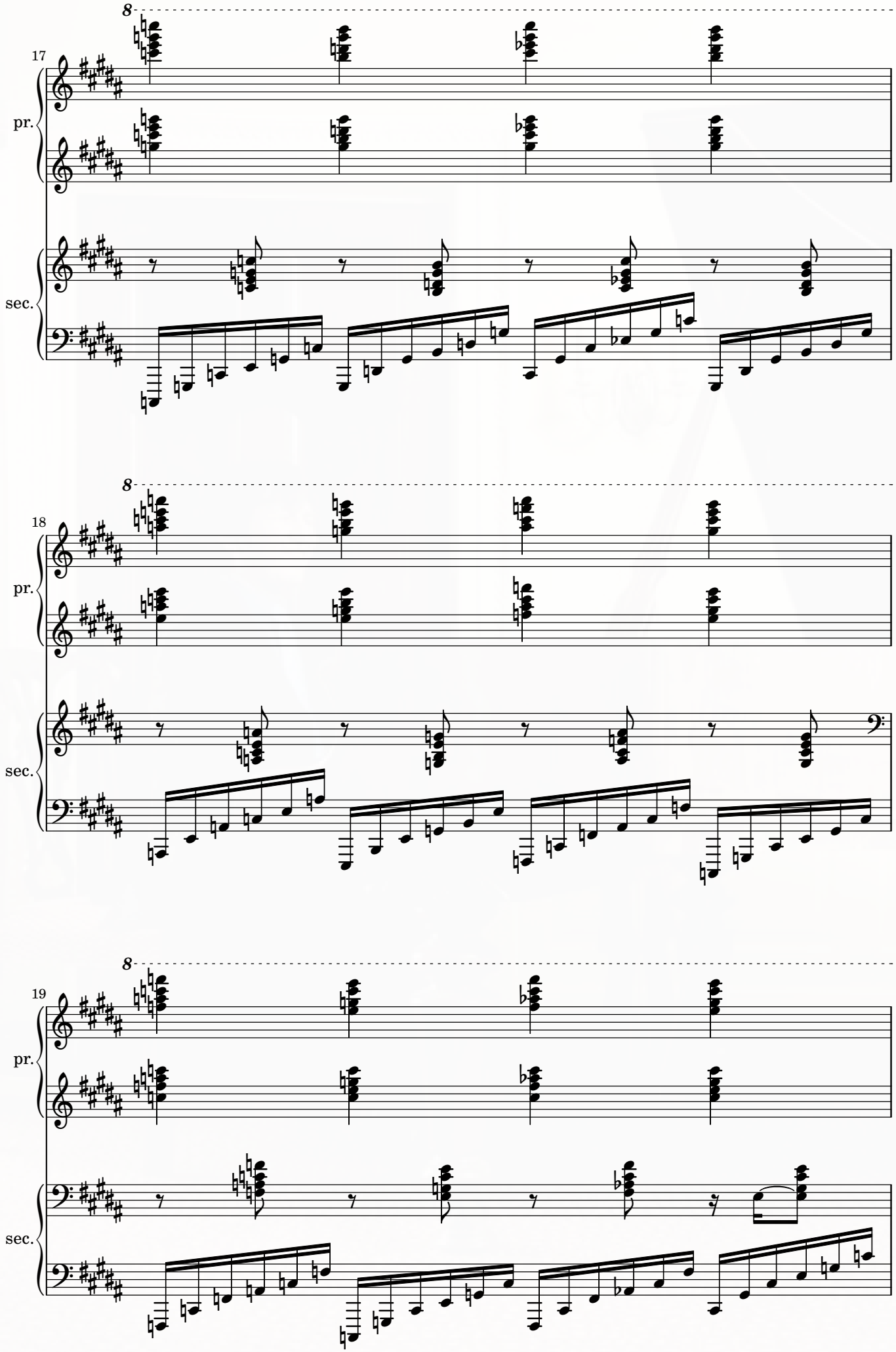
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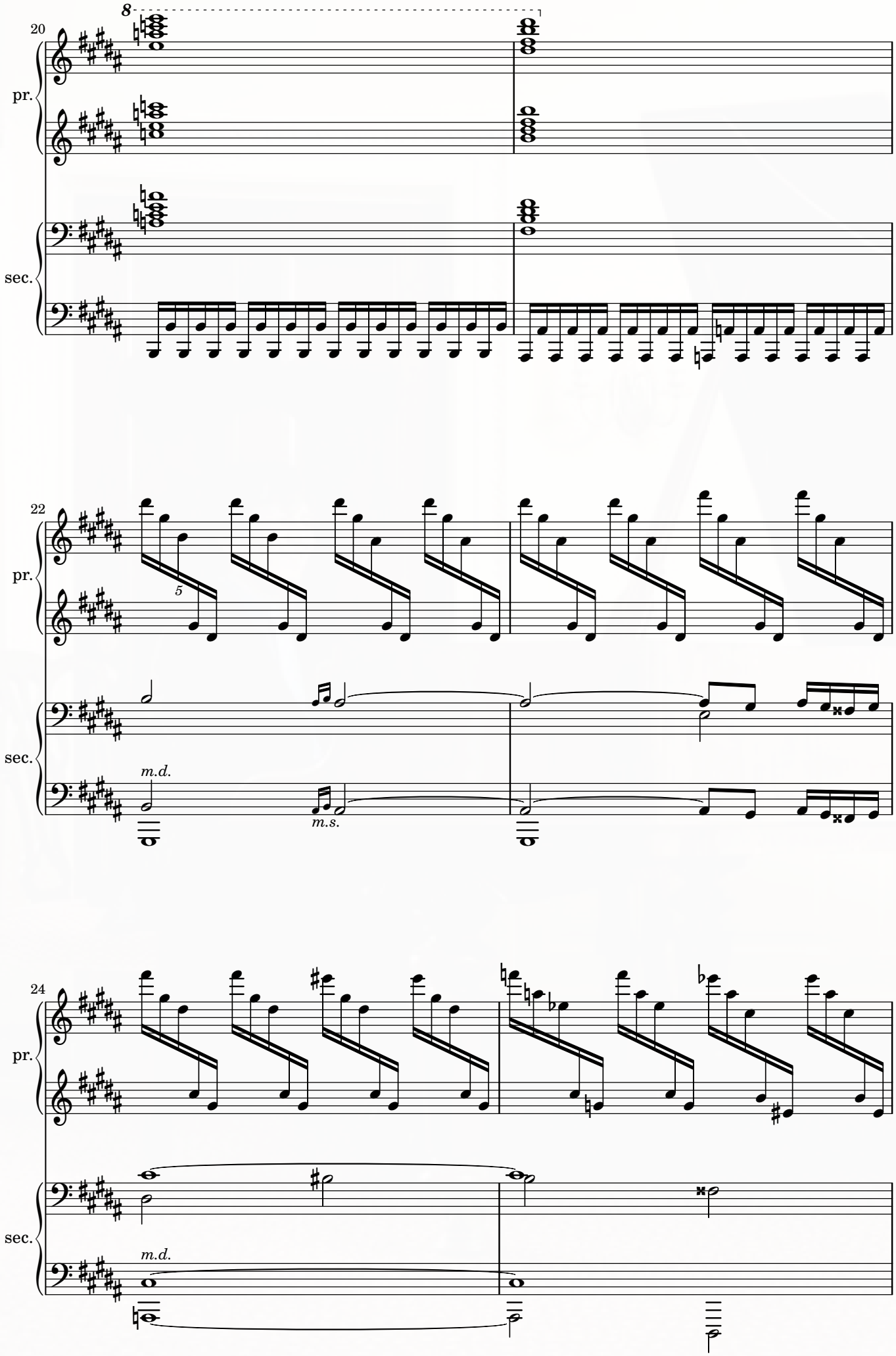
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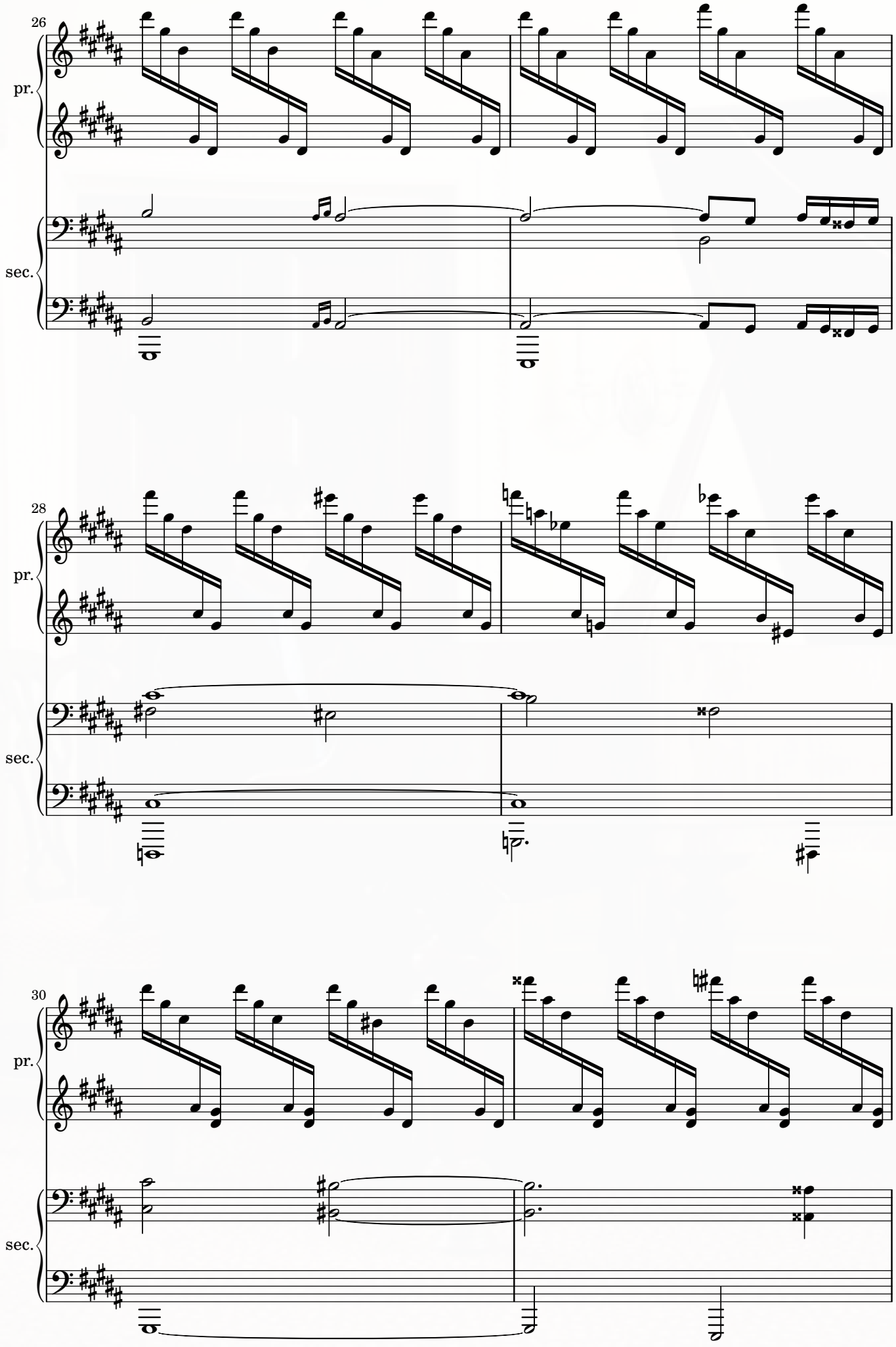
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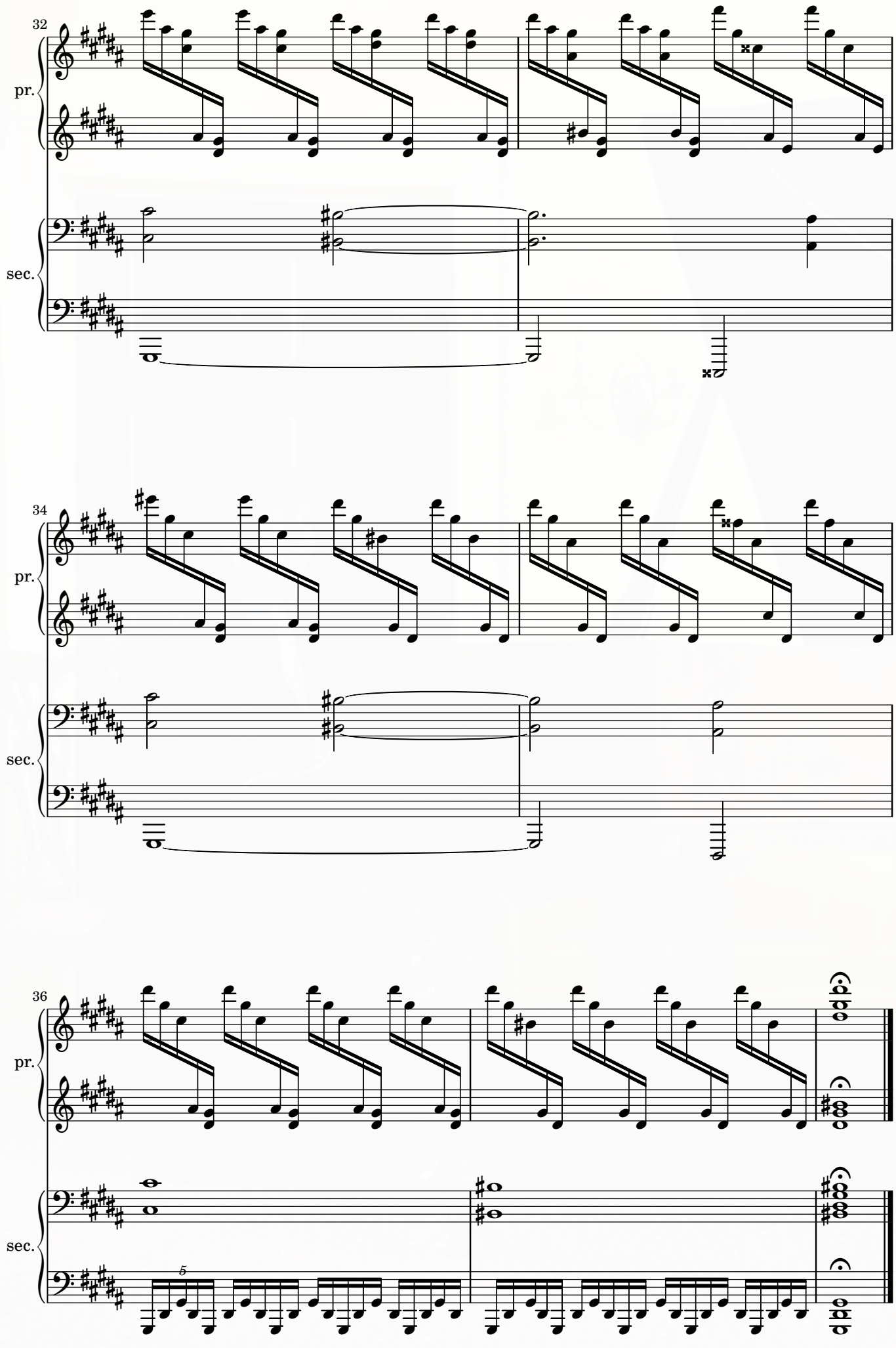
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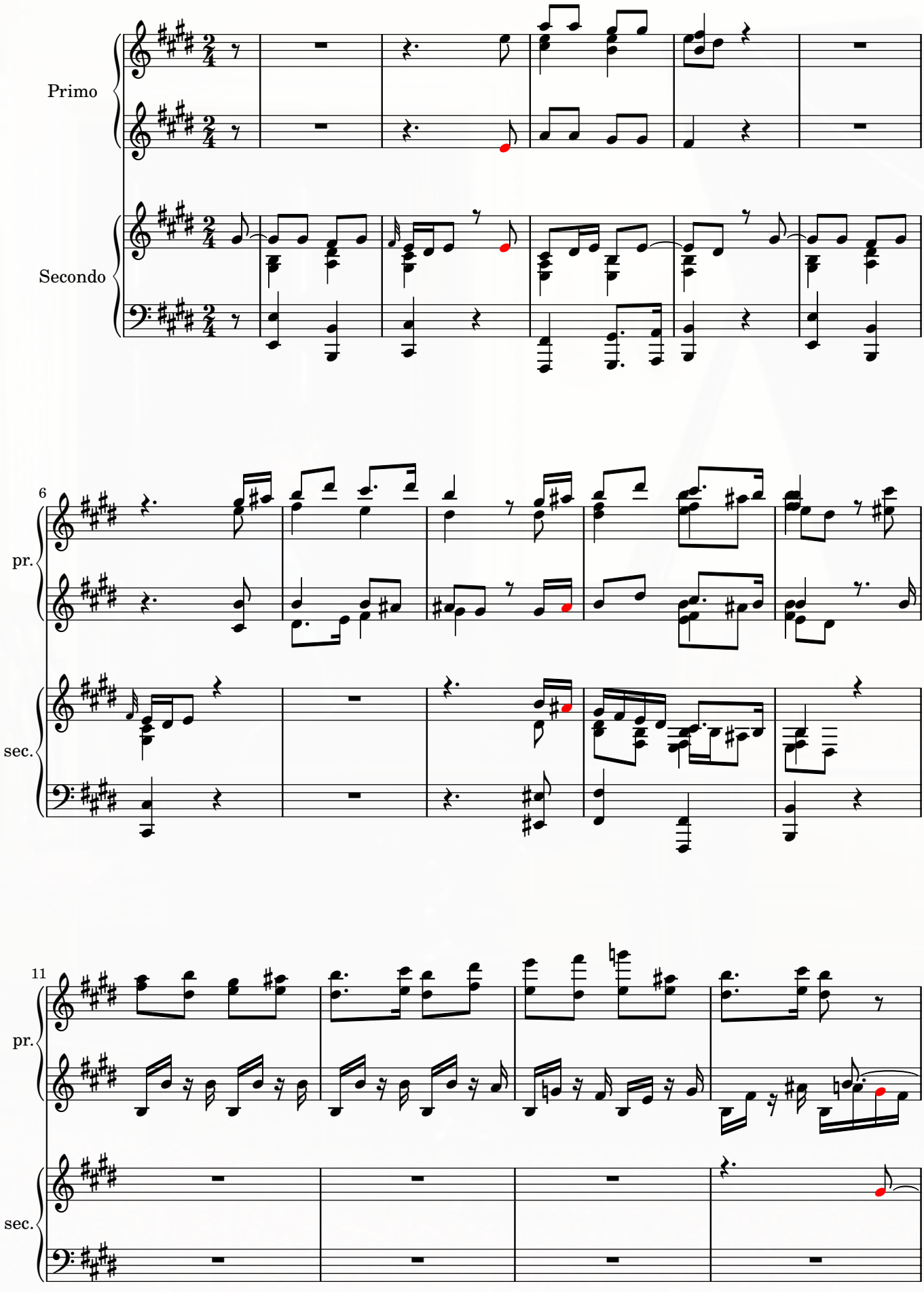
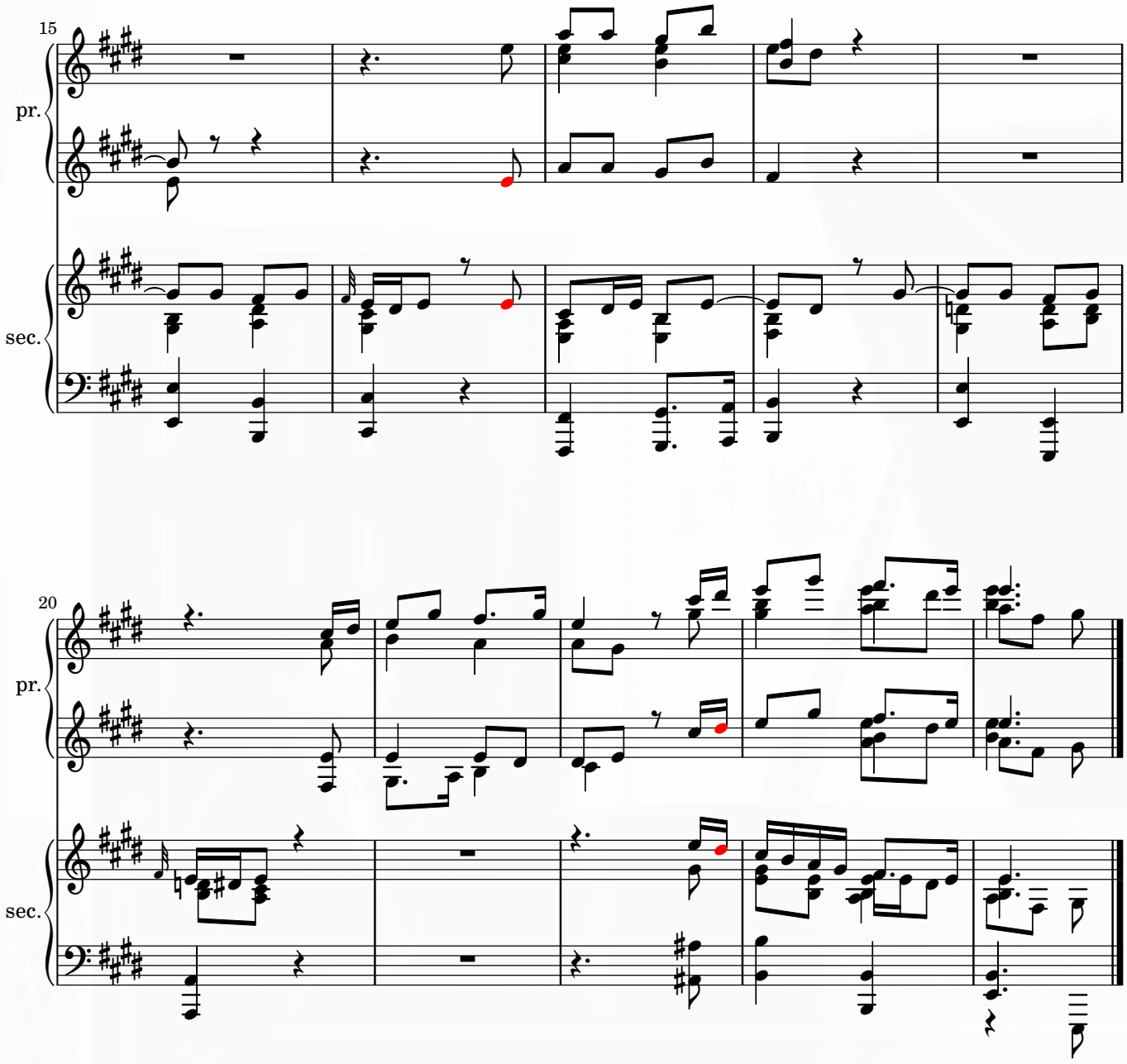
IX. Song Without Words

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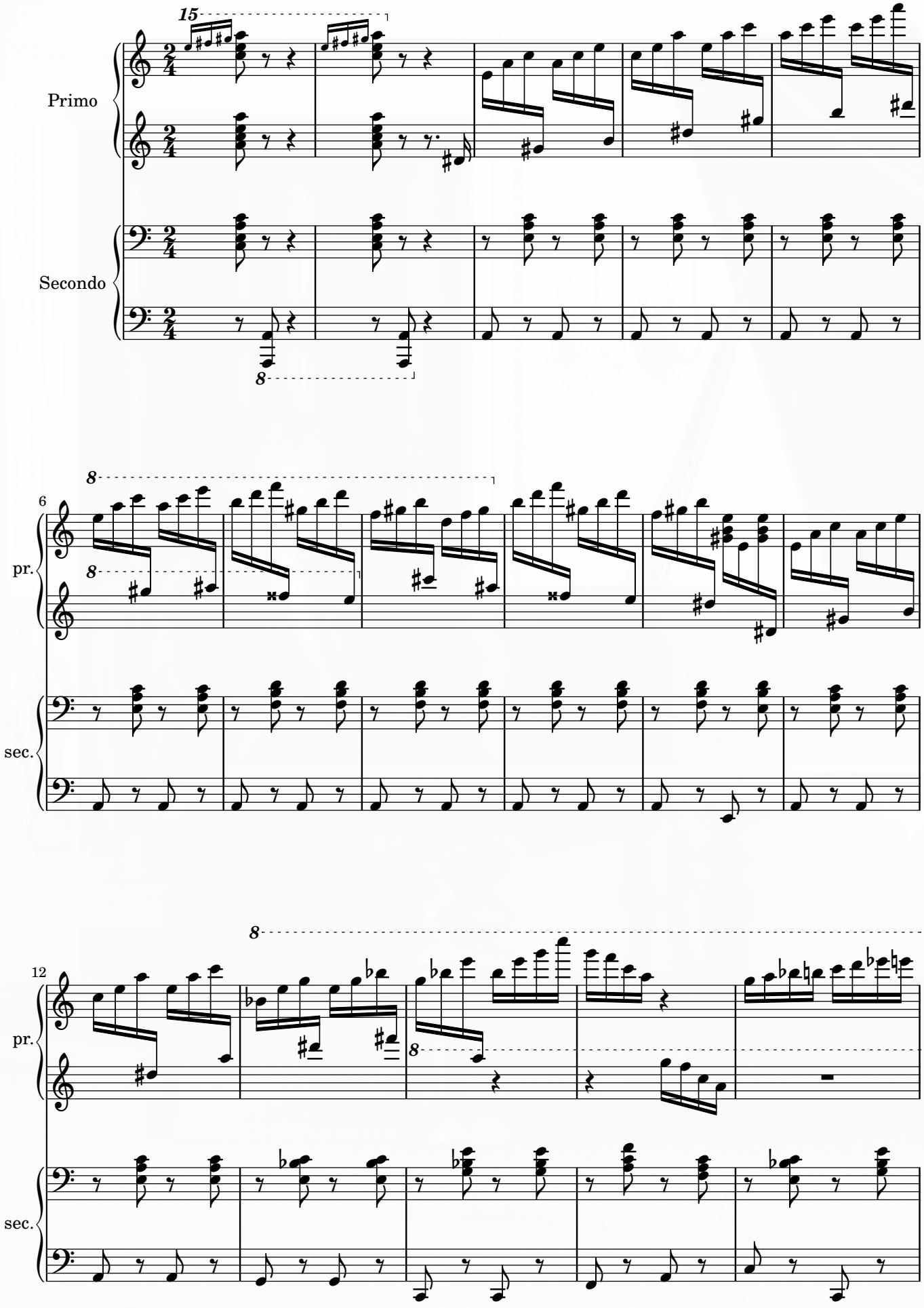
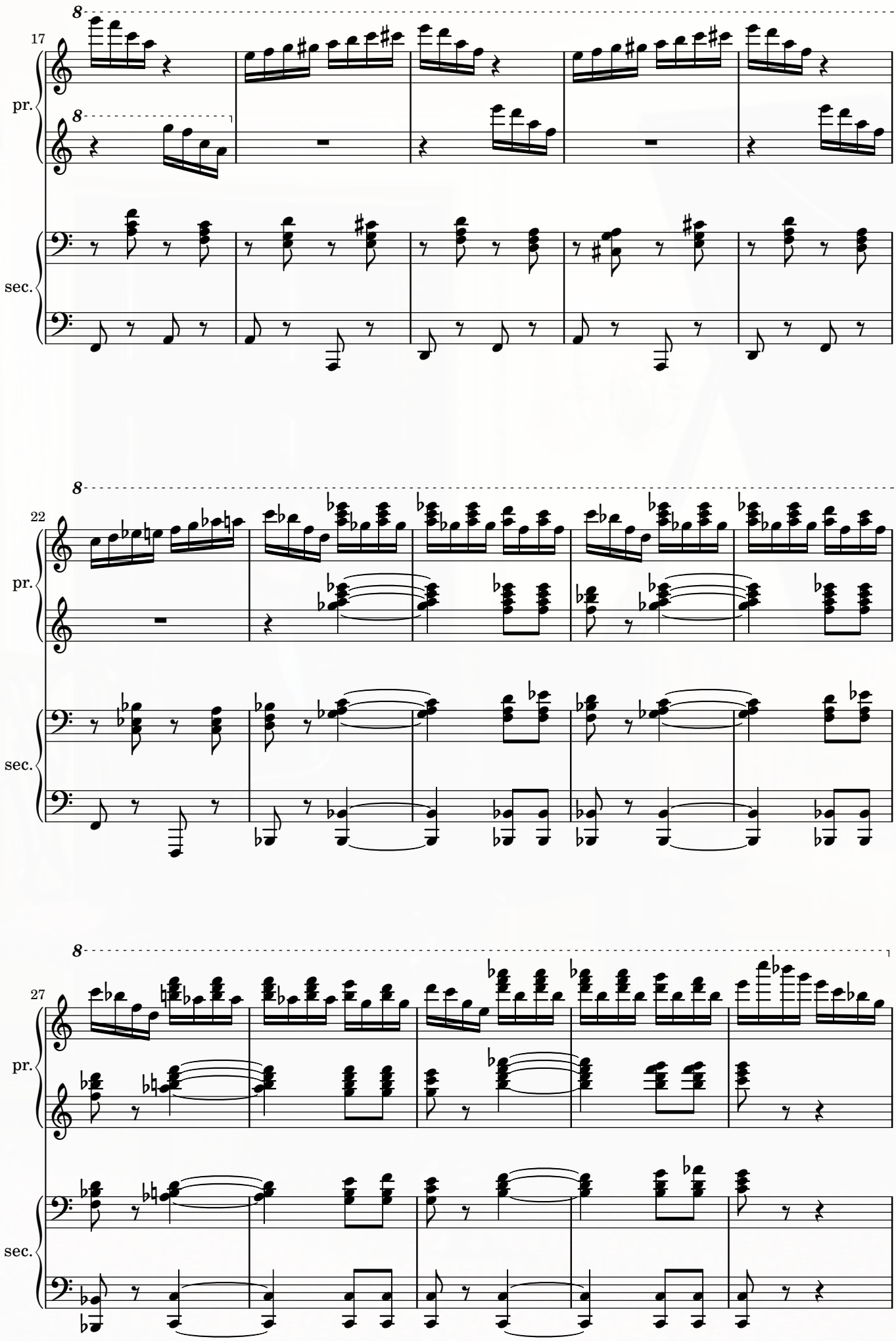
X. The Chase

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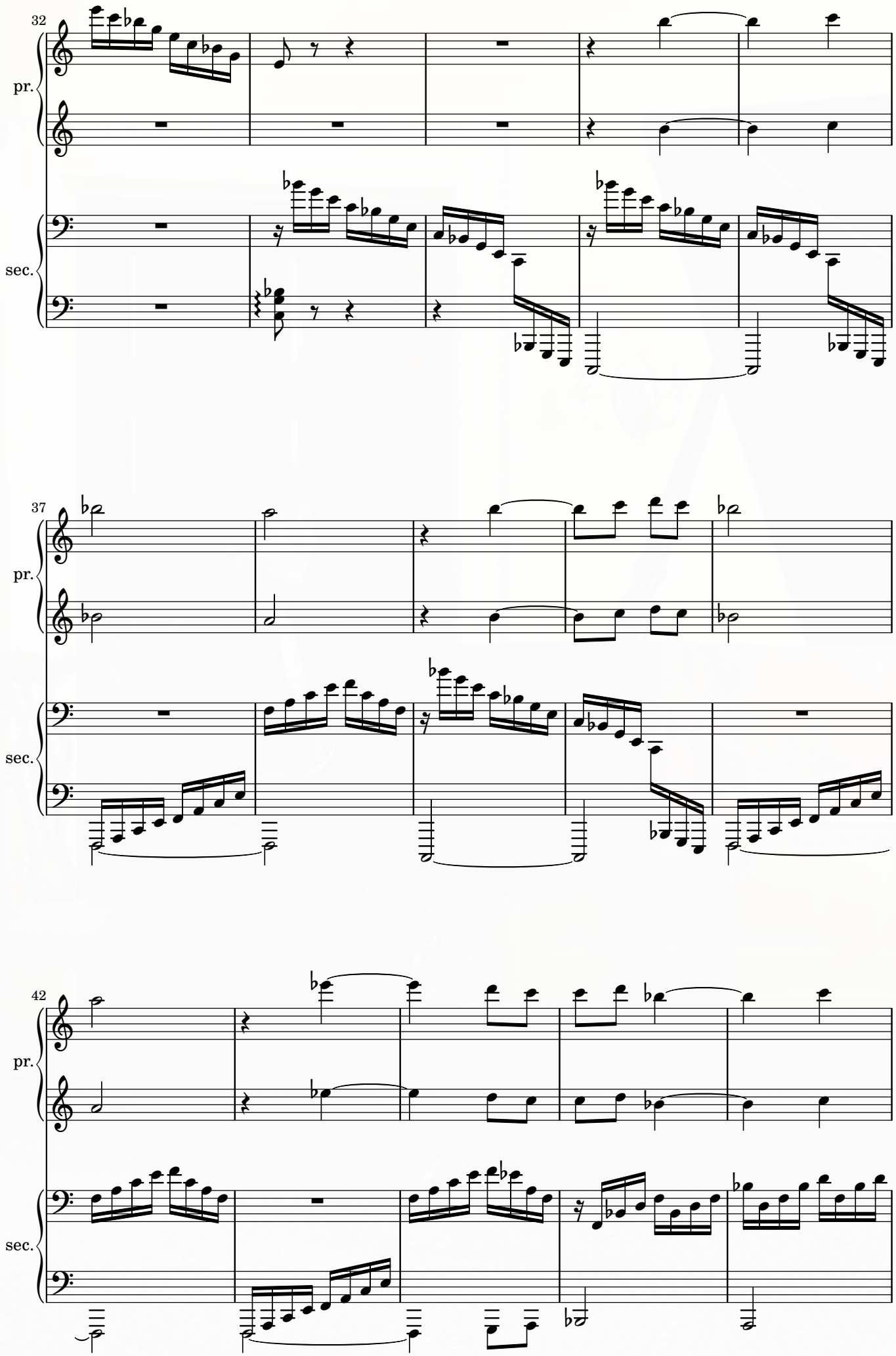
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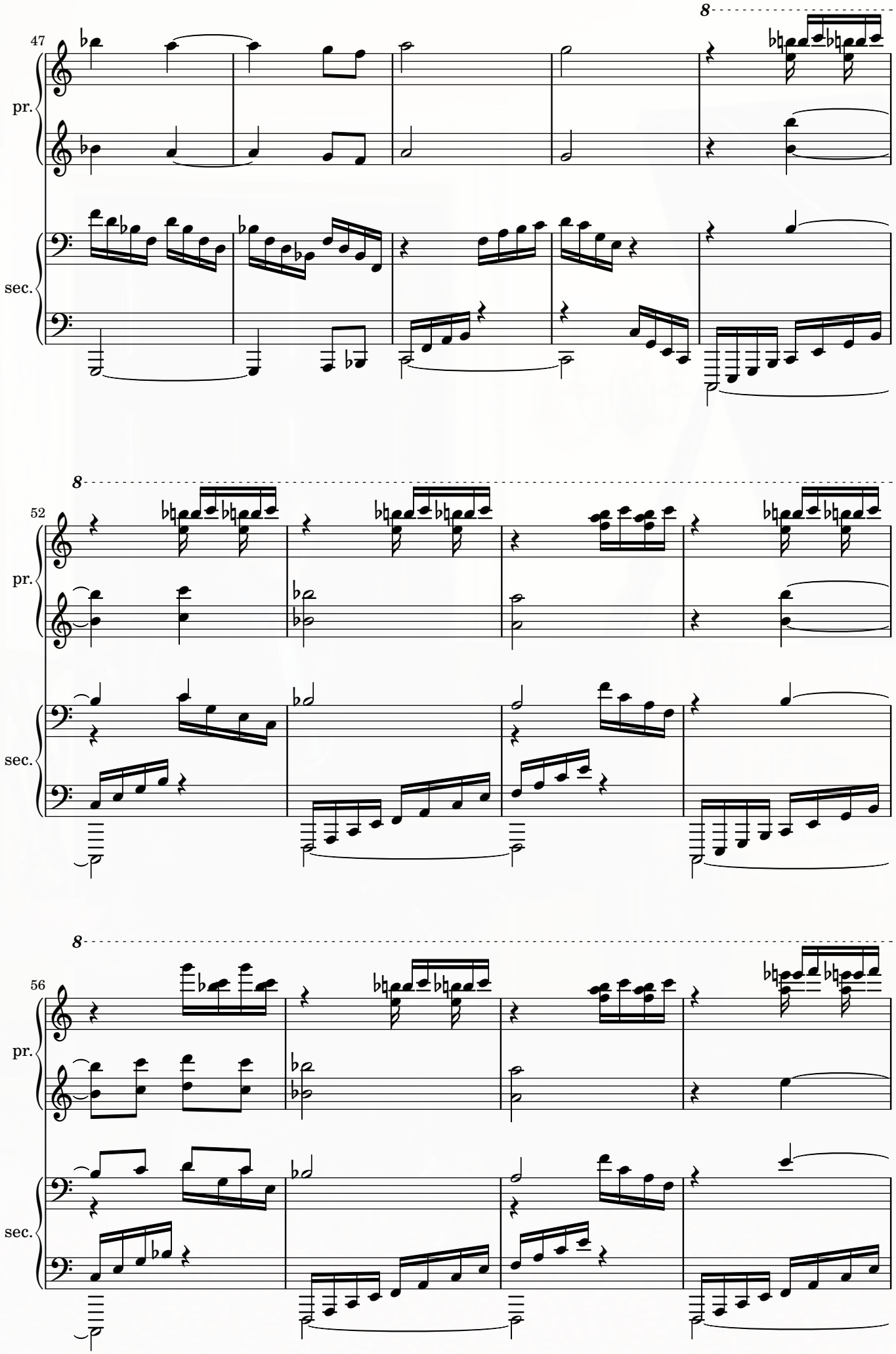
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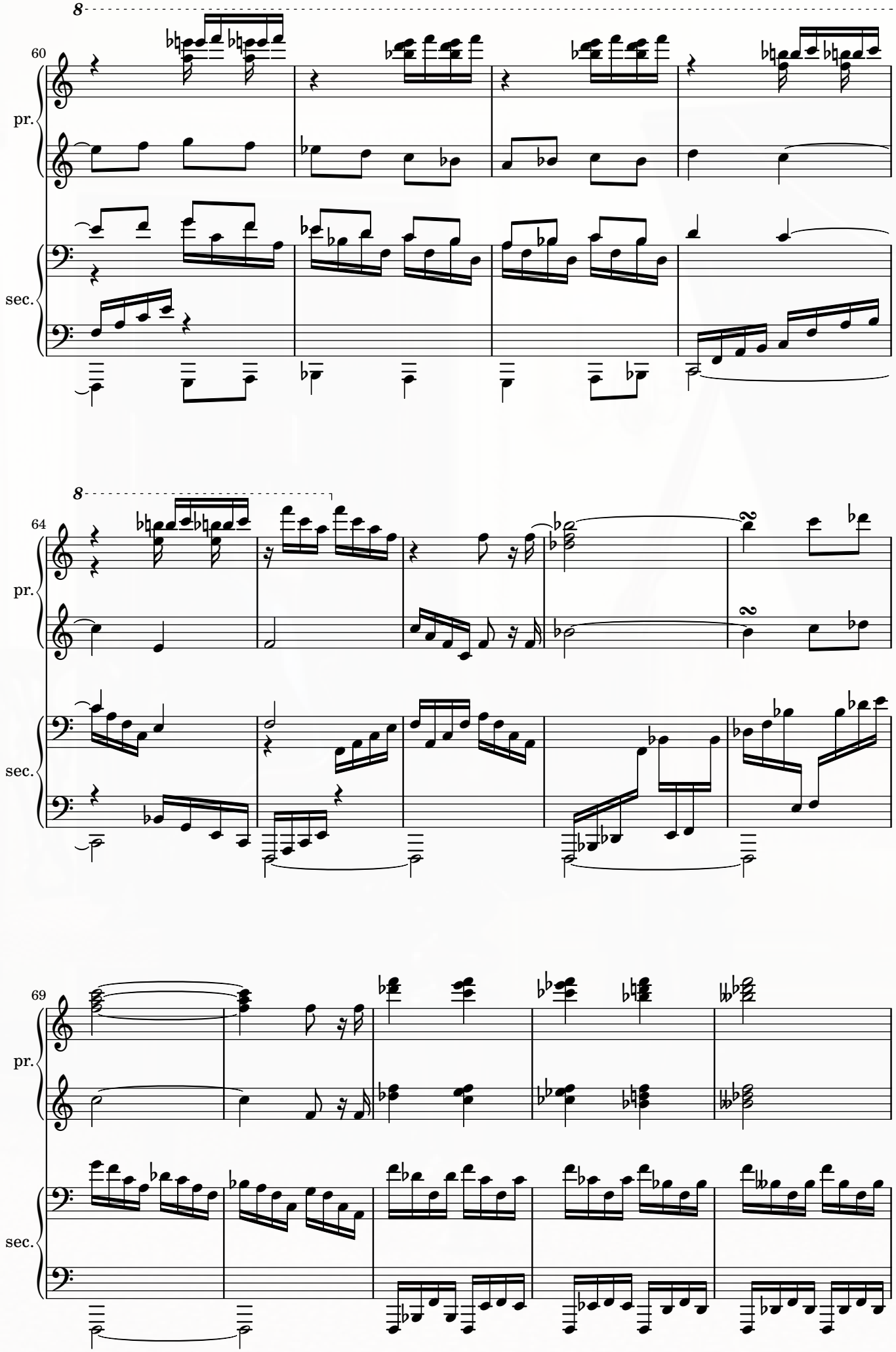
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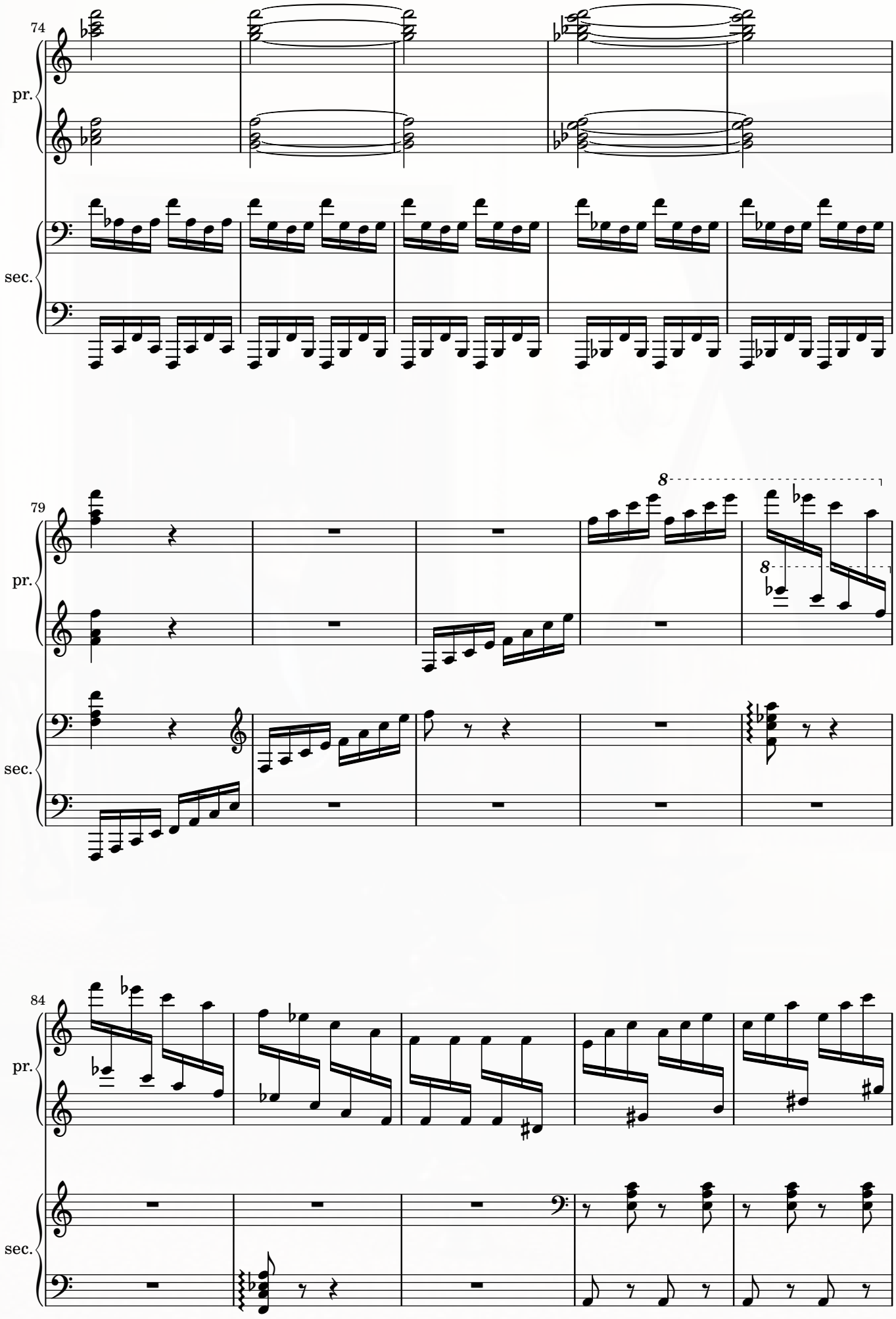
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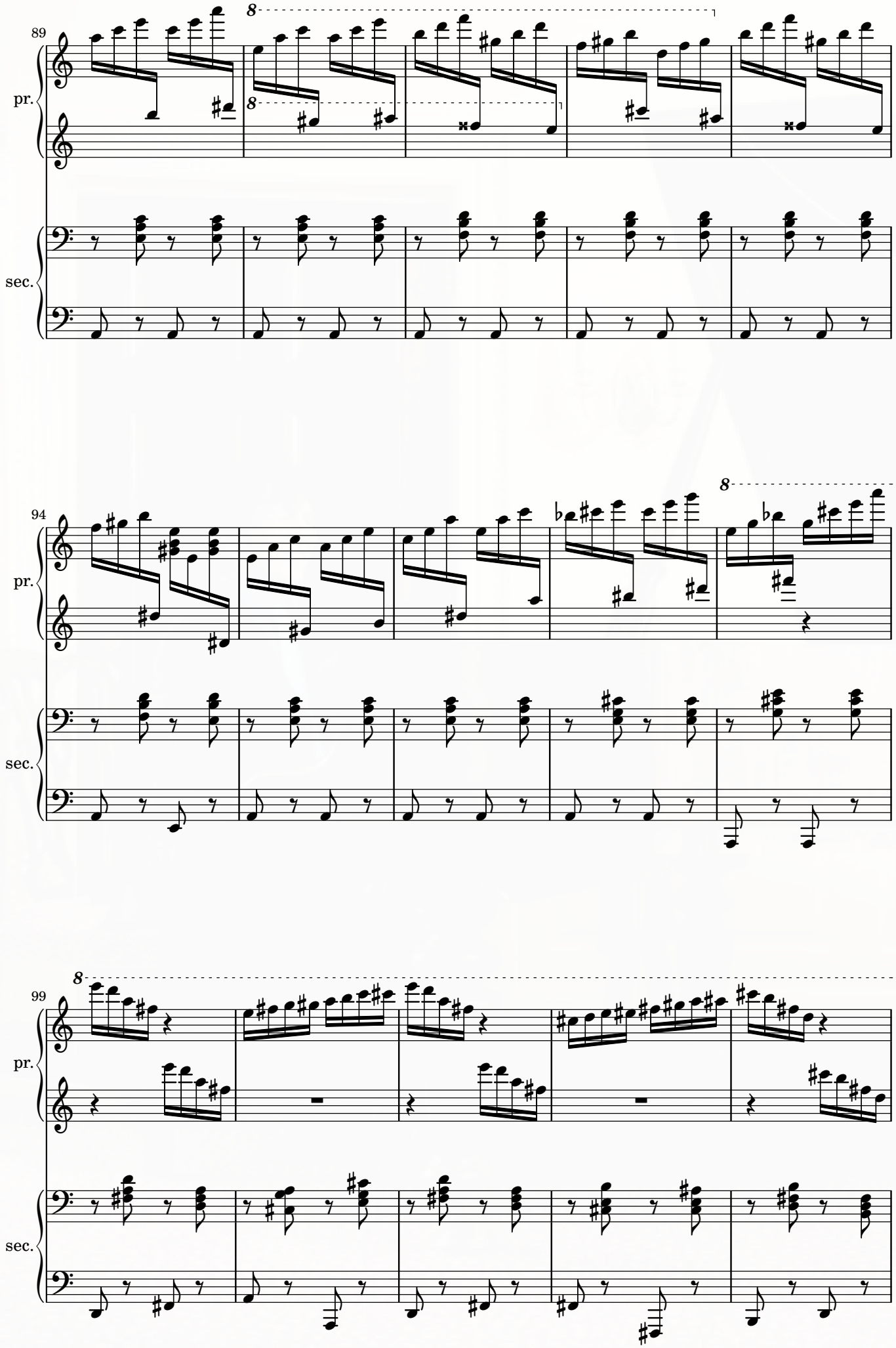
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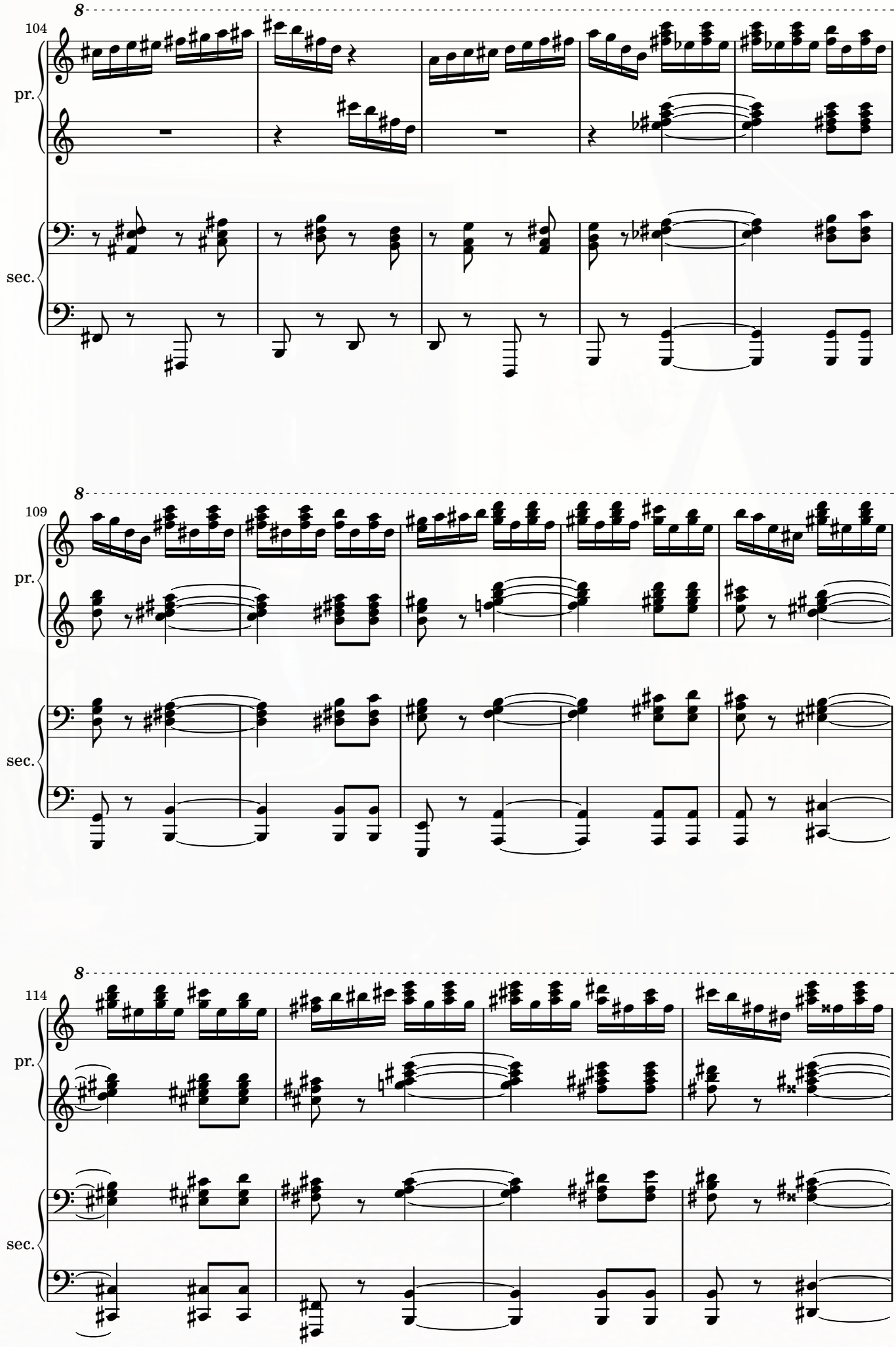
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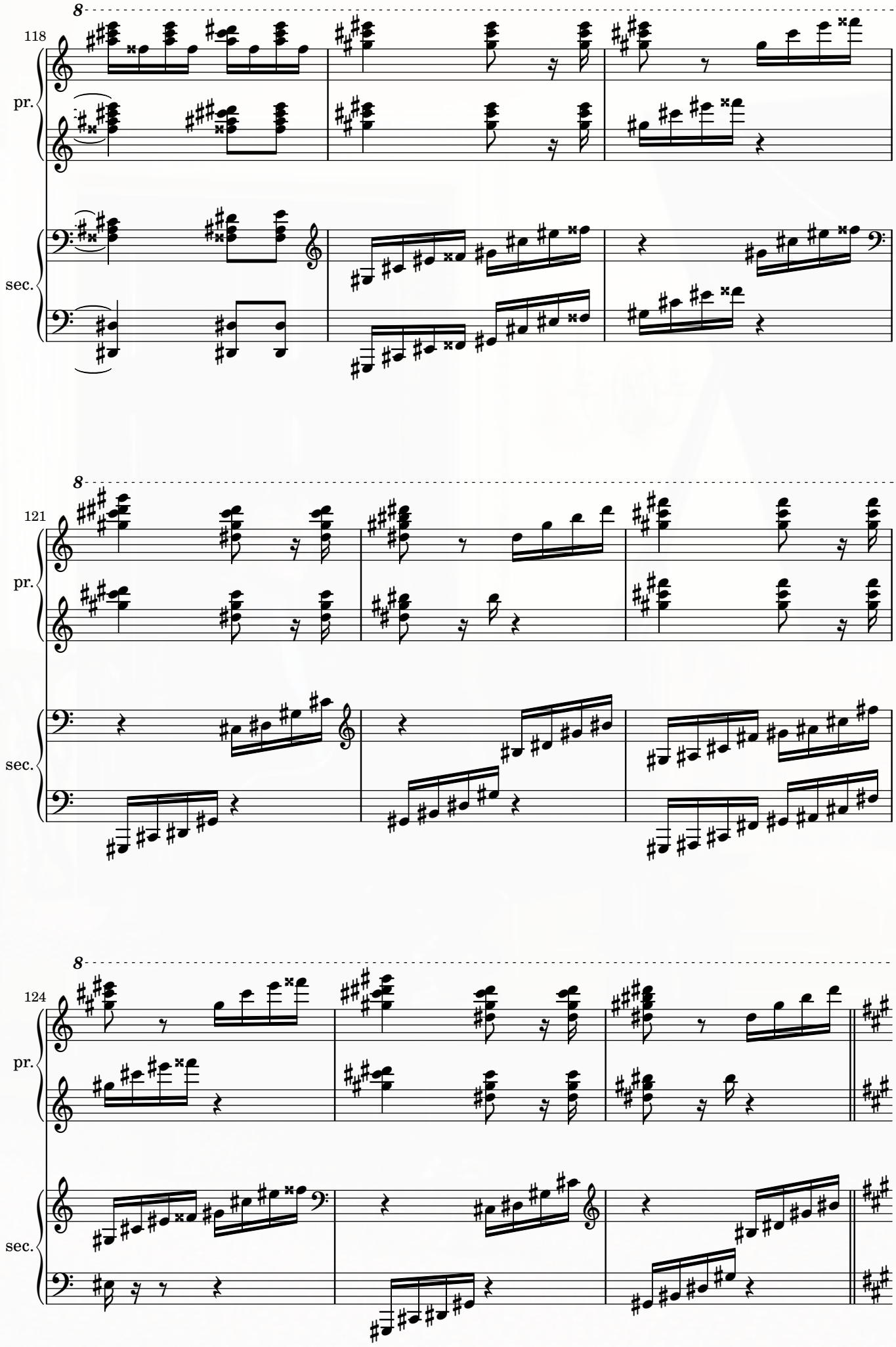
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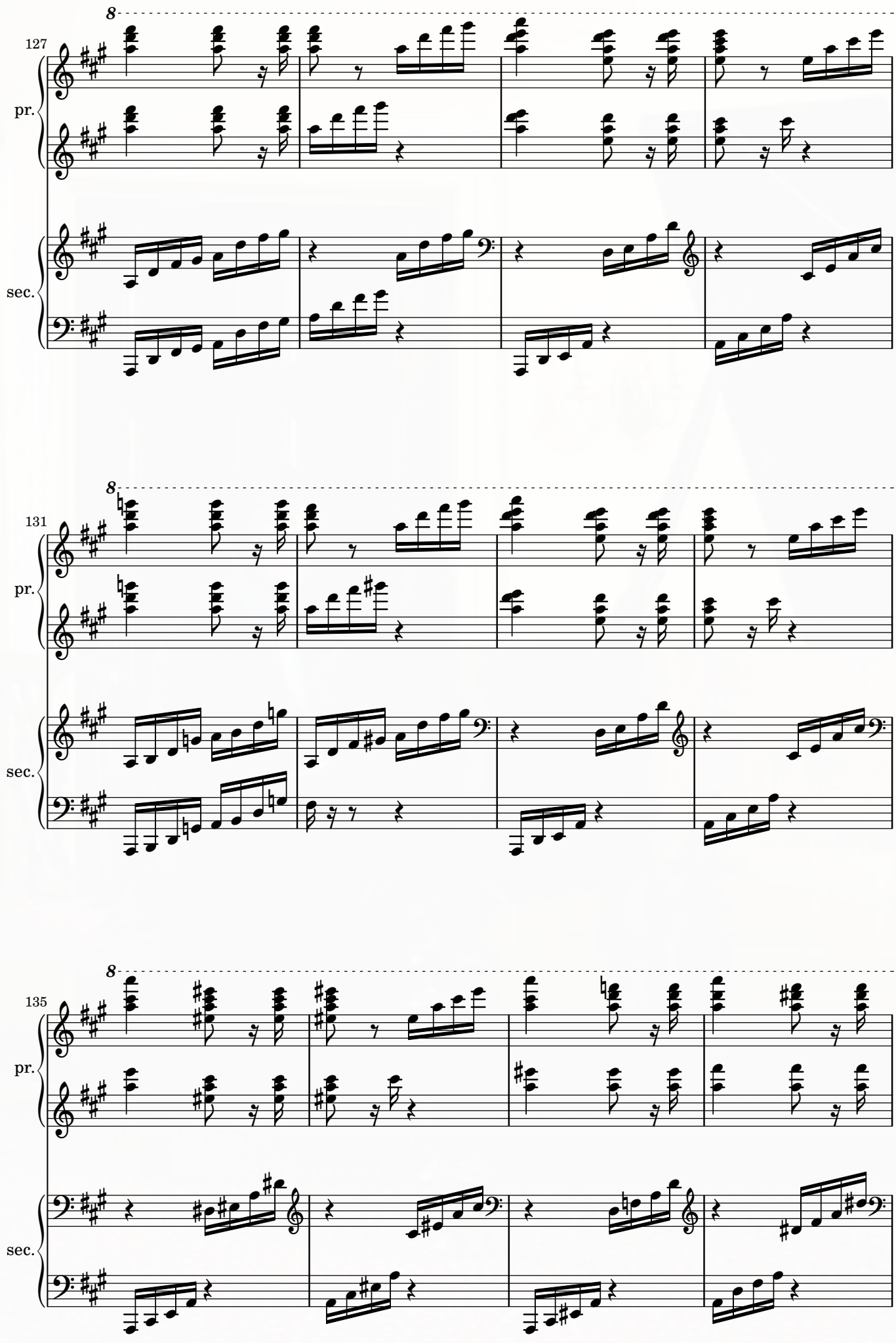
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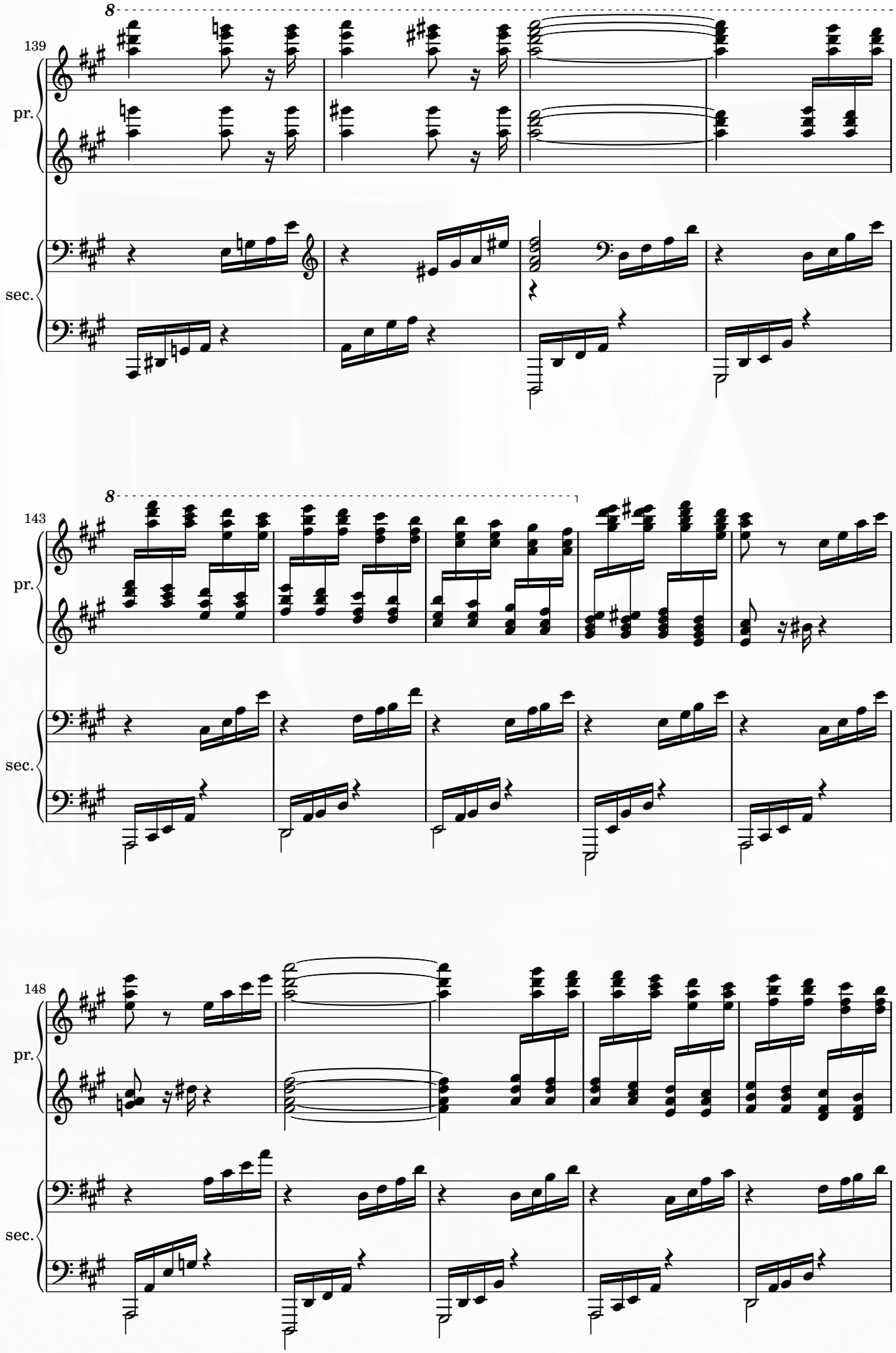
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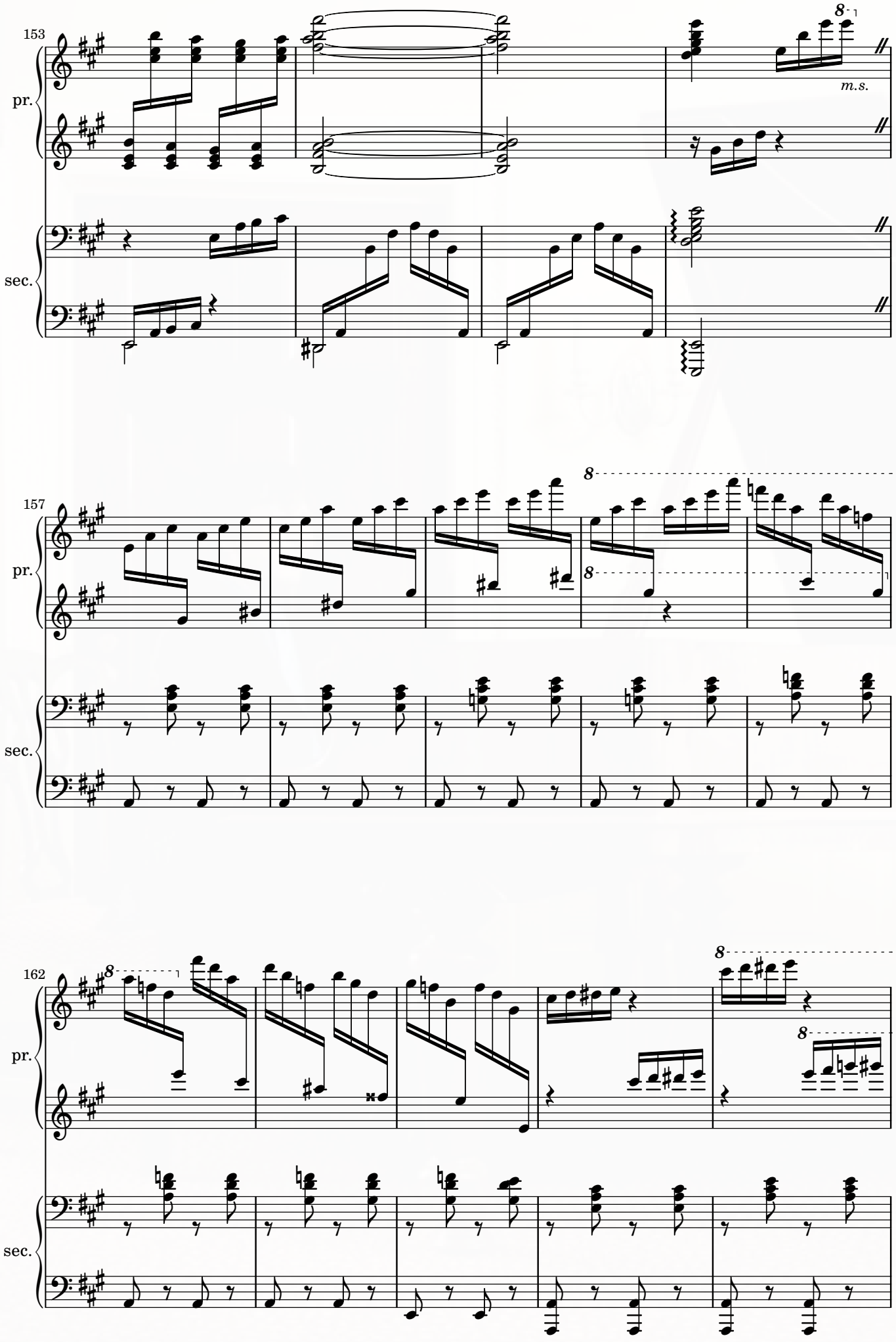
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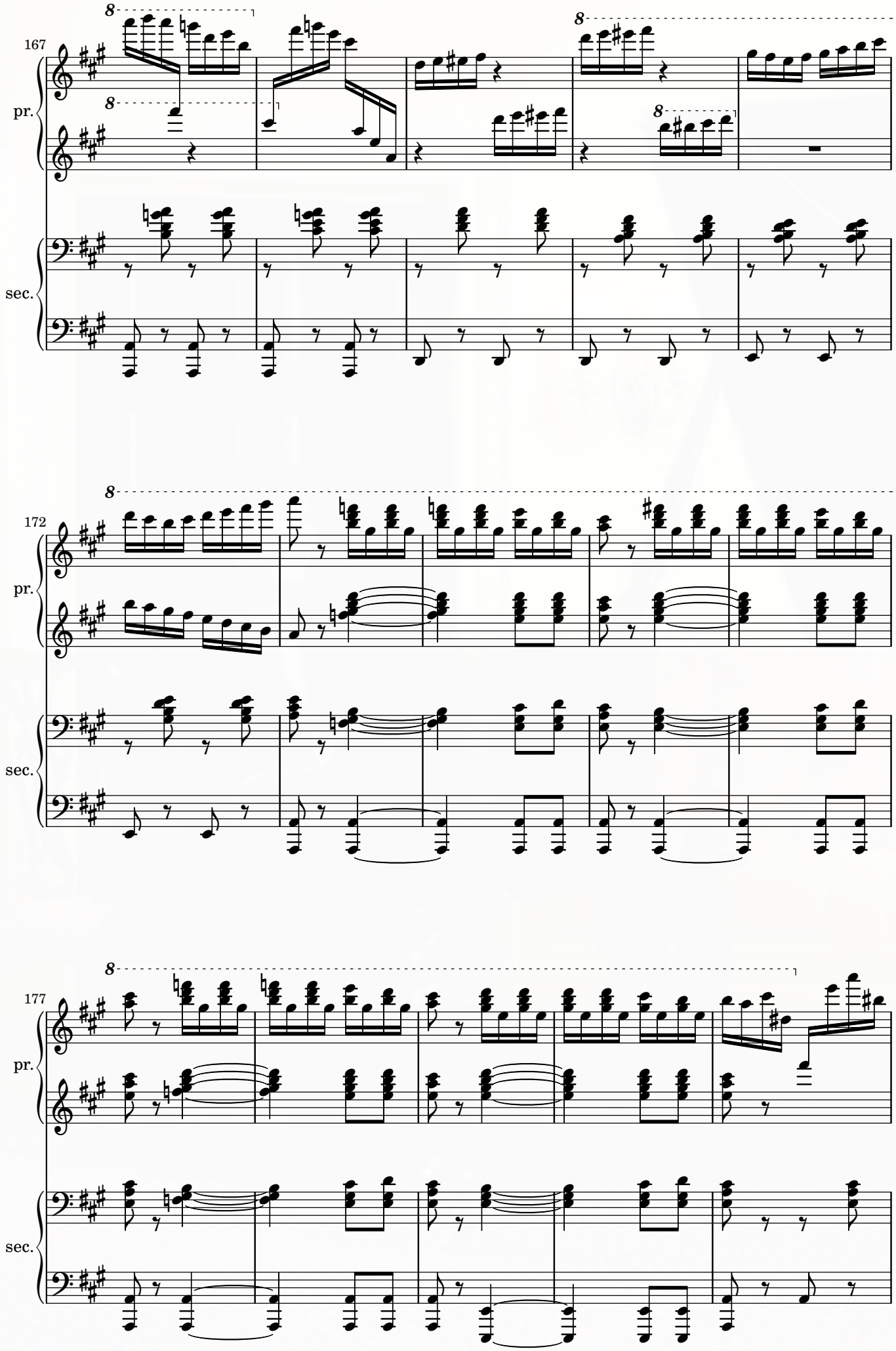
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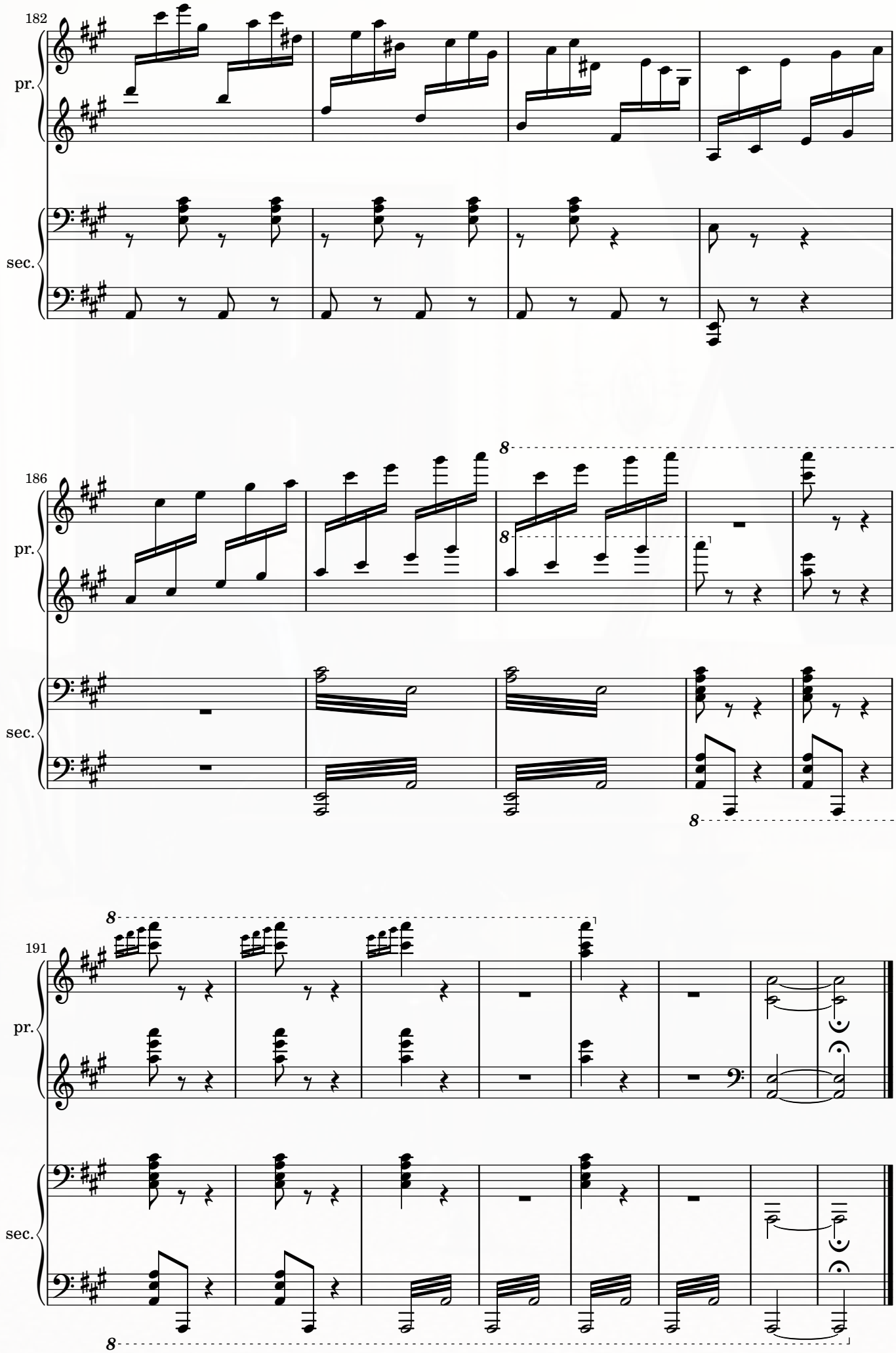
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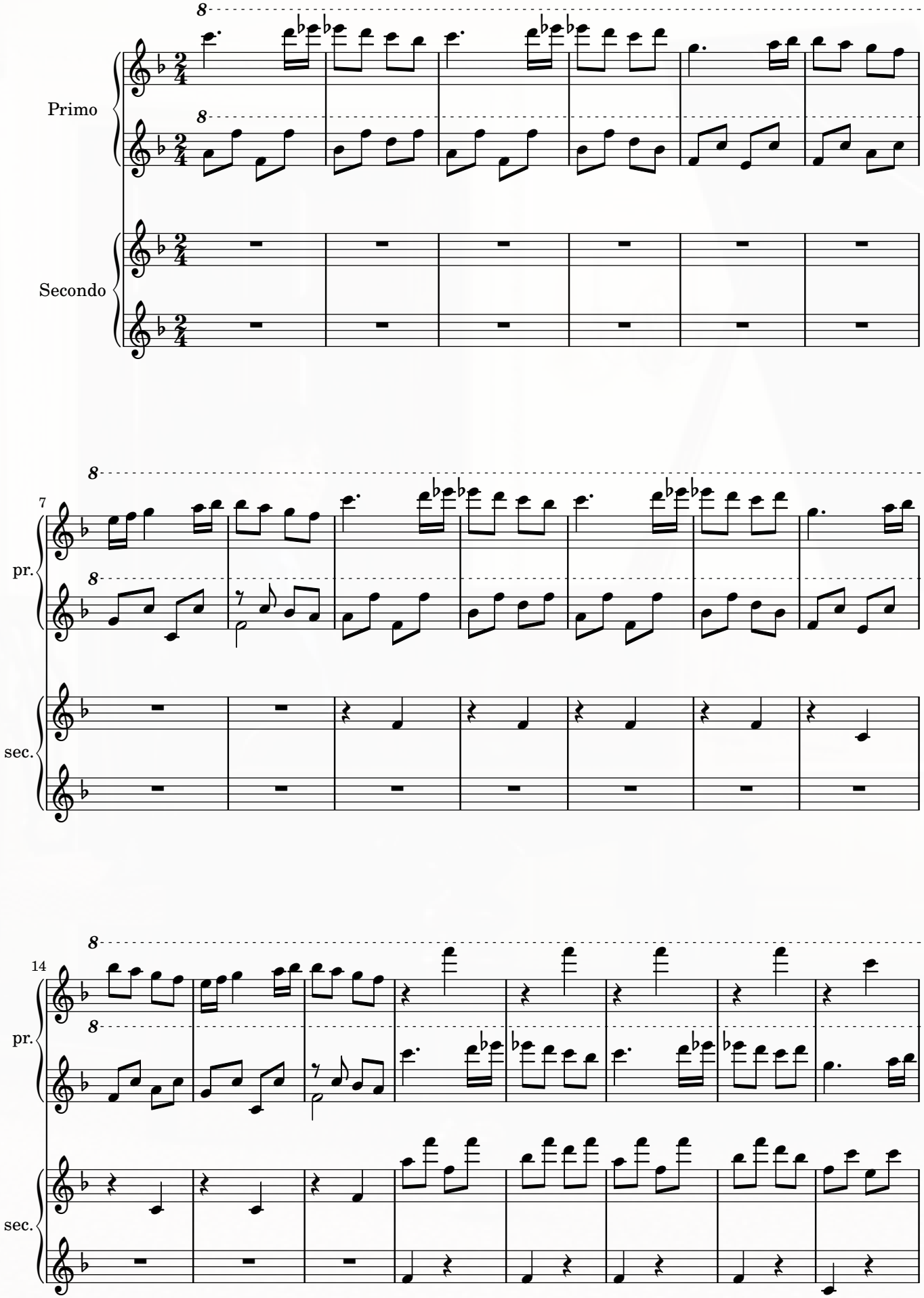
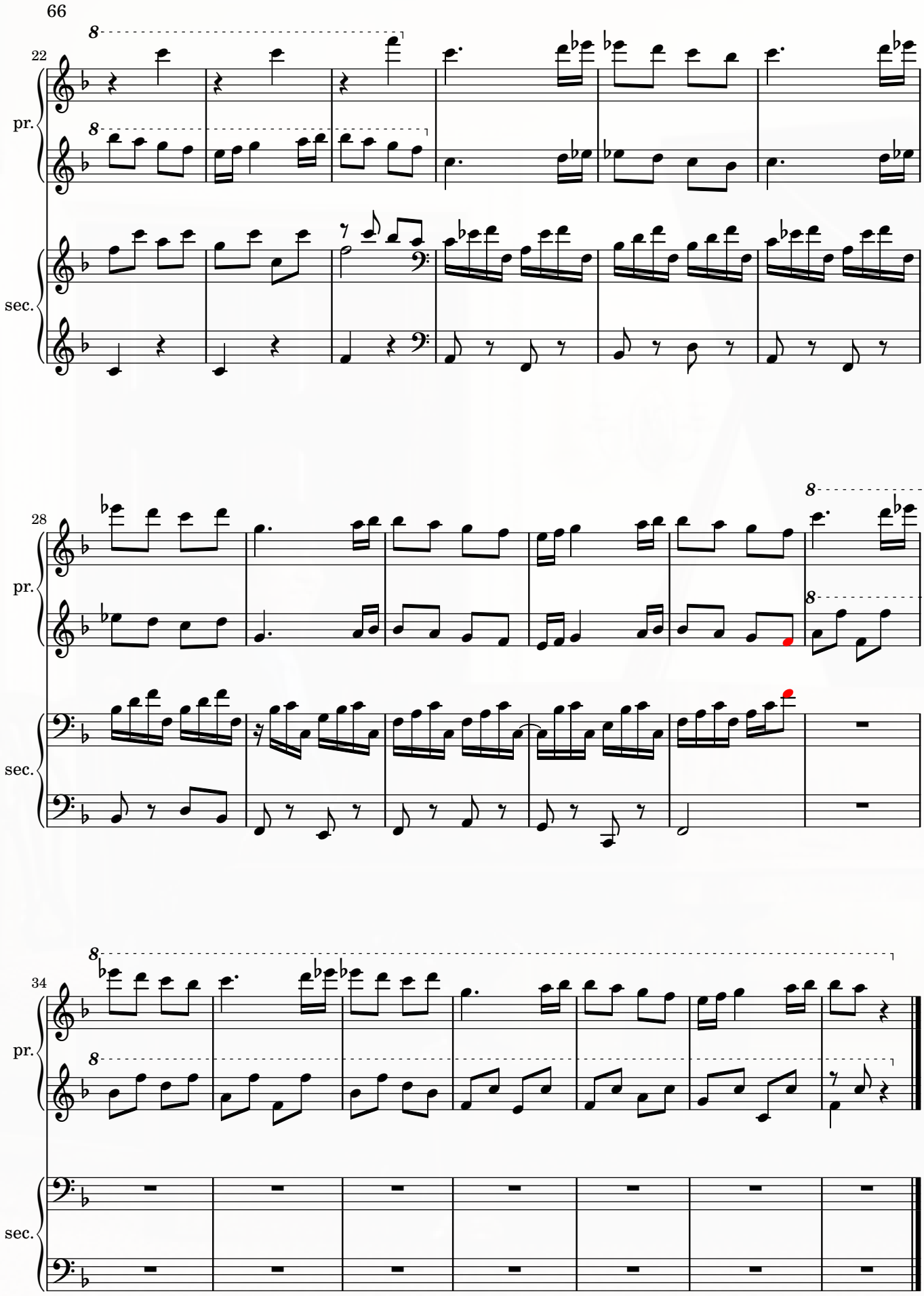
XI. The Musical Box

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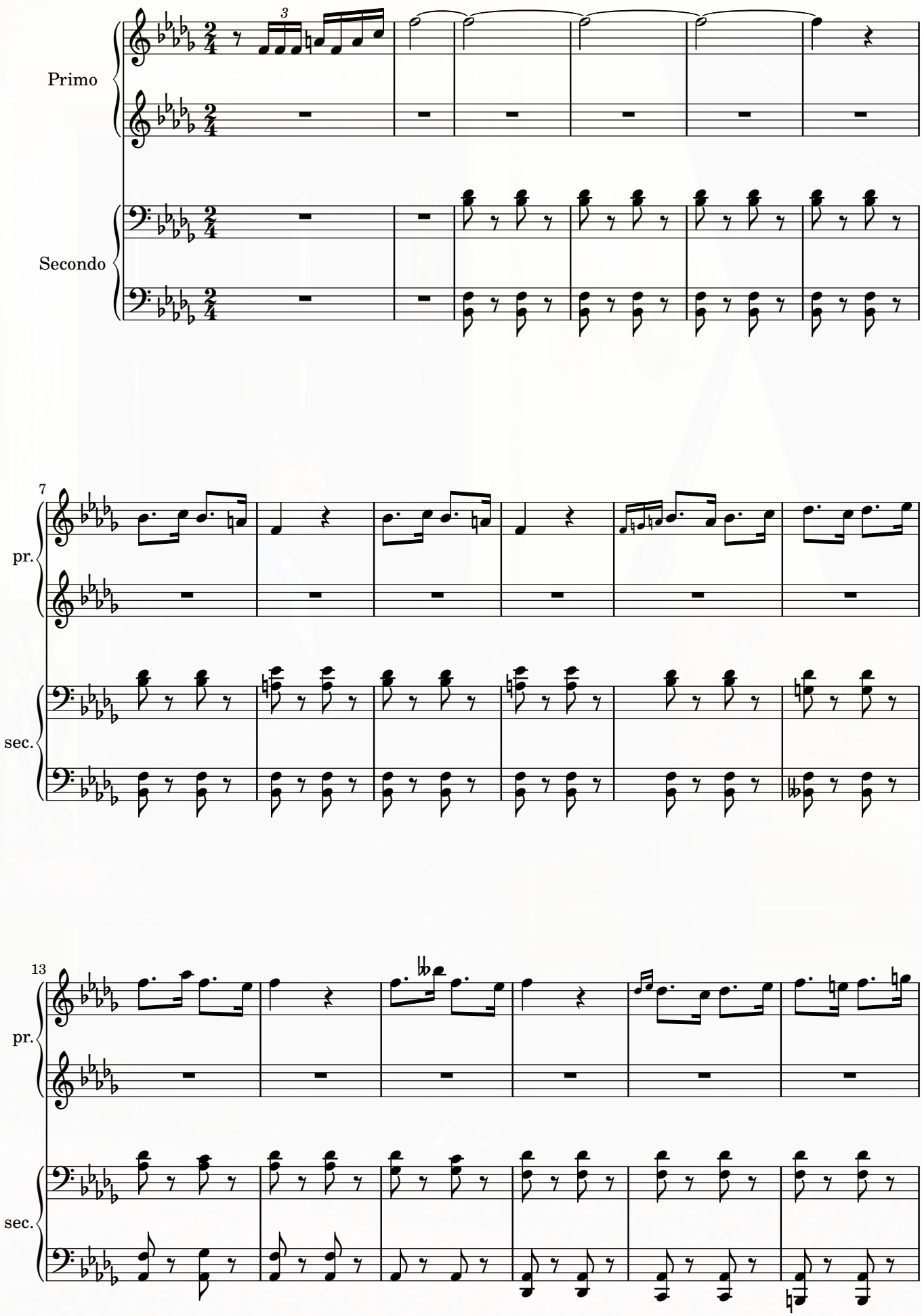
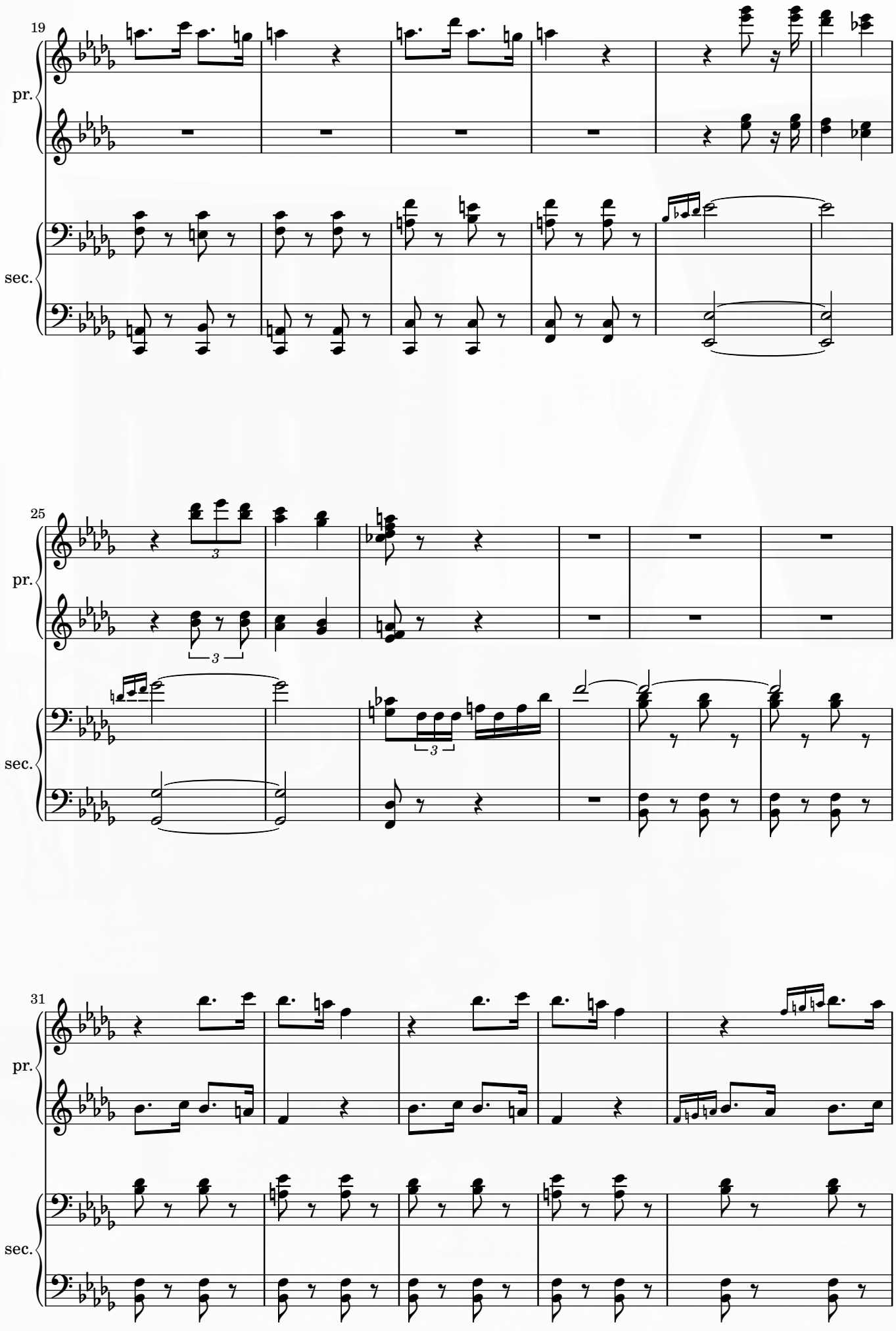
pr.
sec.

XII. March

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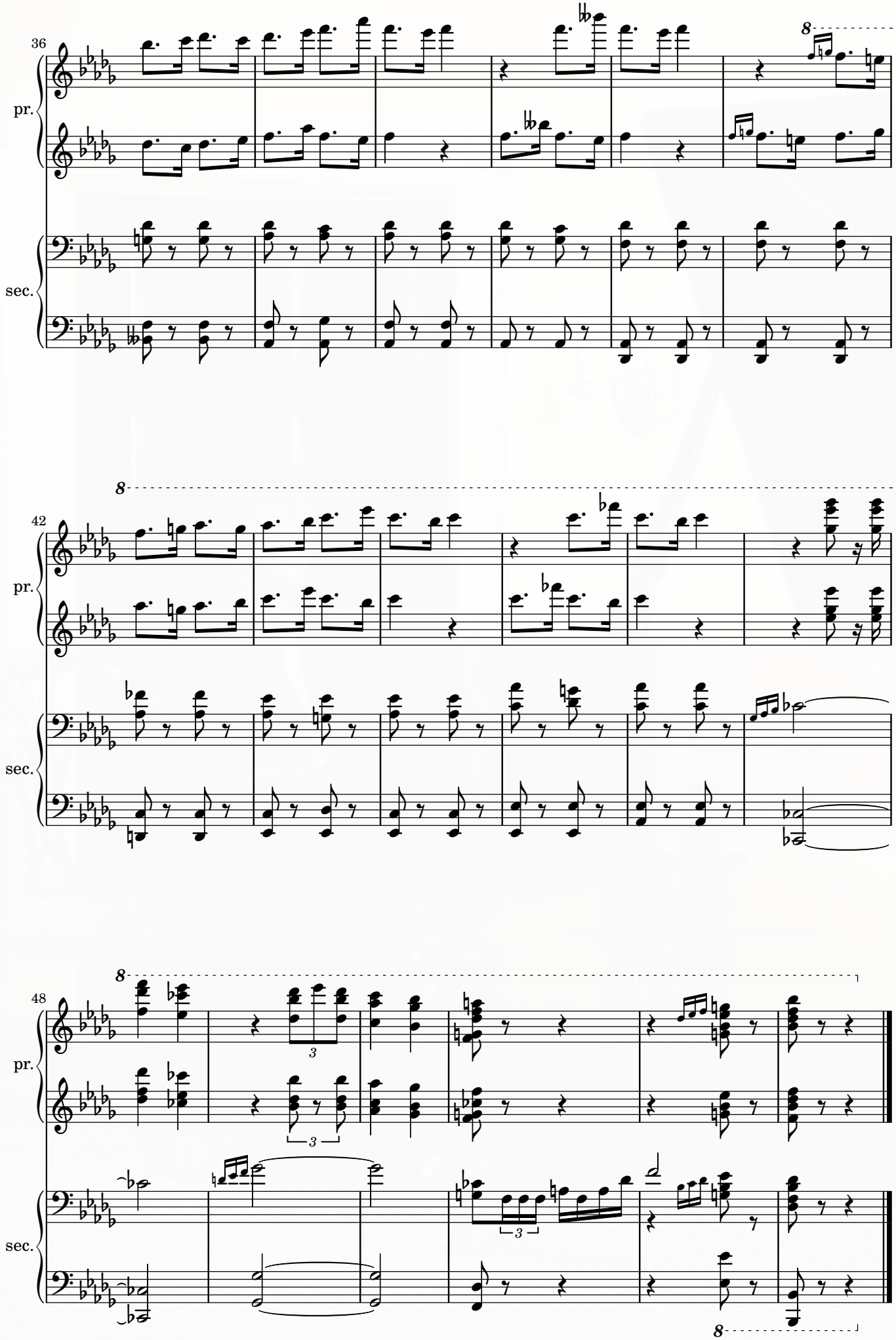
36
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sec.
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48
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sec.
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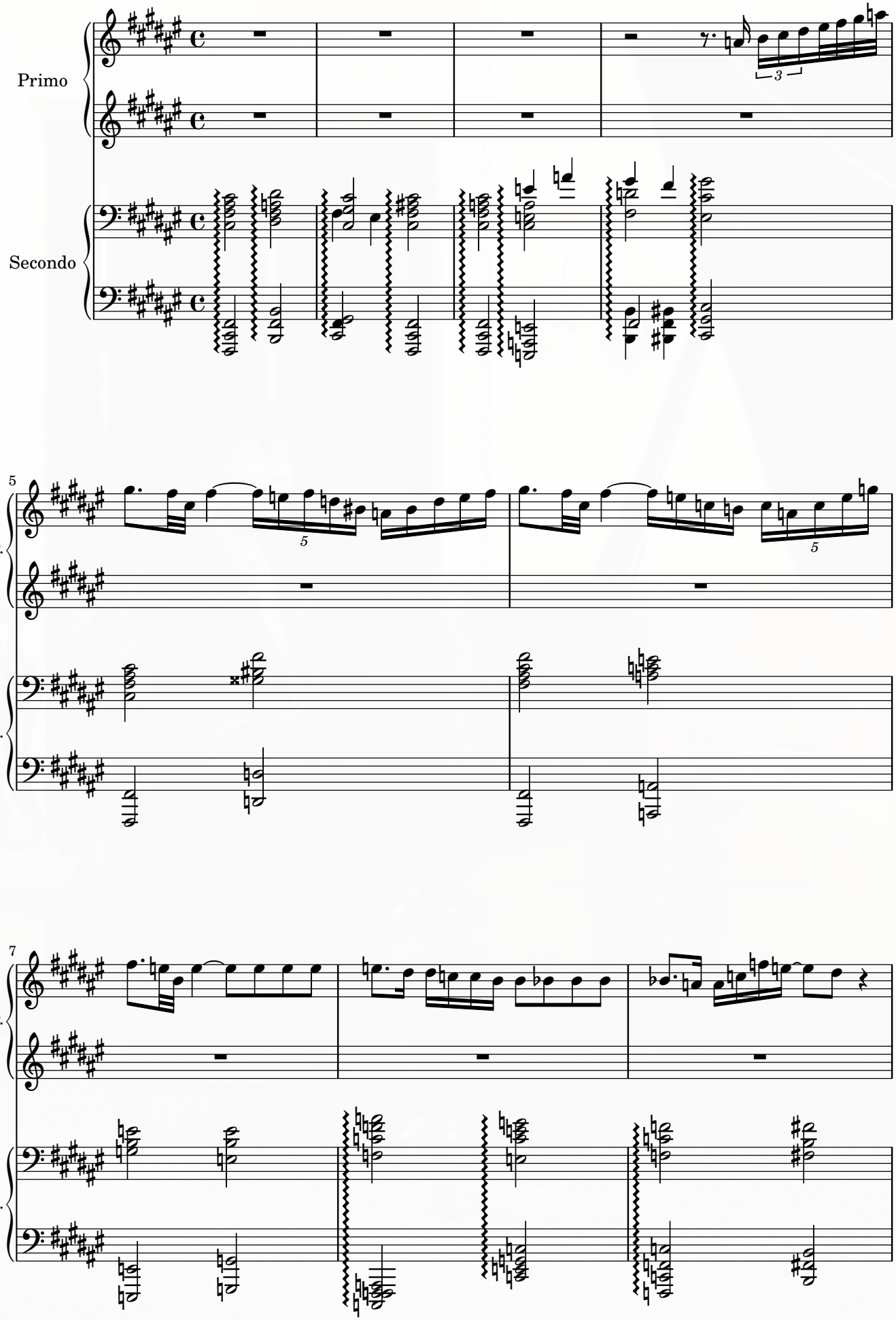
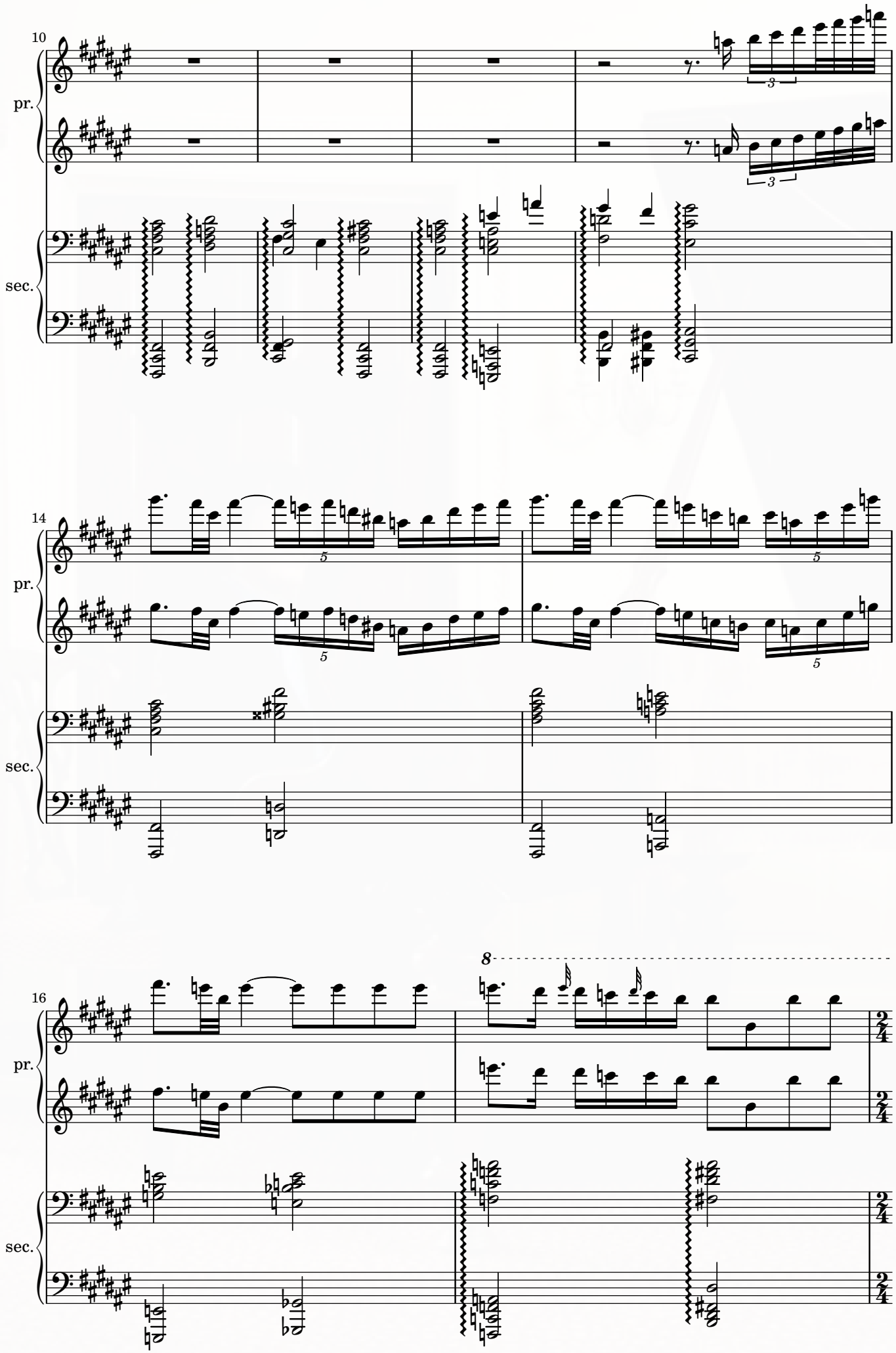
3
8

XIII. From The Depths My Tears Ascended




10
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sec.
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14
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16
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8
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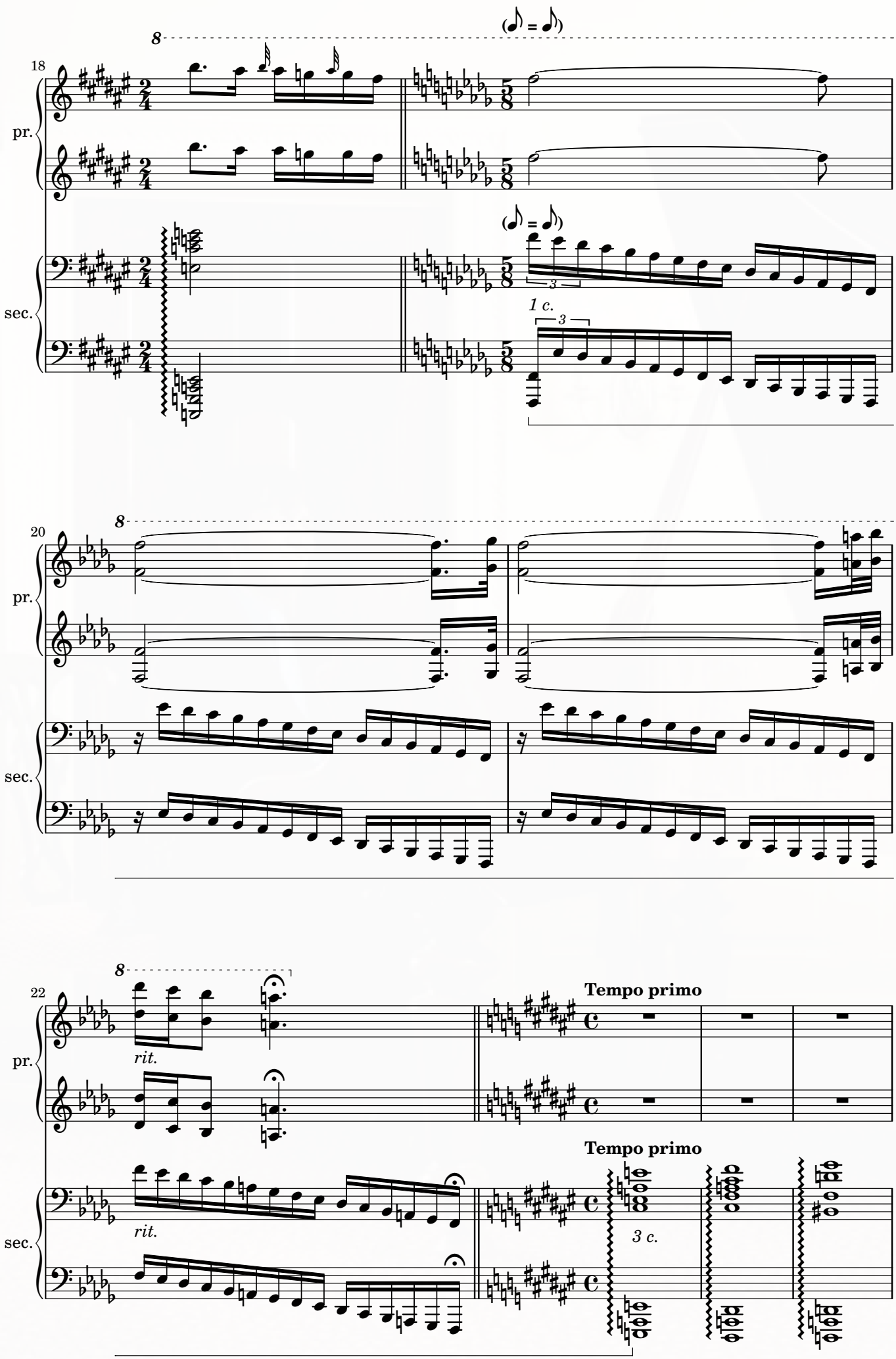
2/4


18
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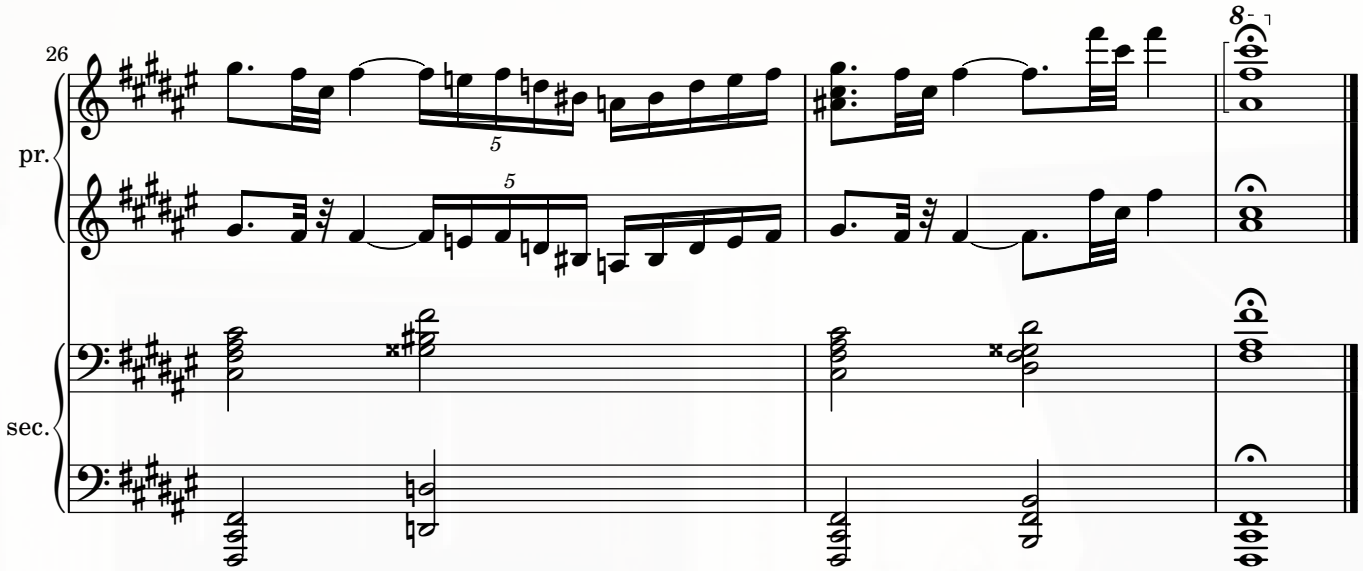
1 c.
3
20
22
rit.
Tempo primo
3 c.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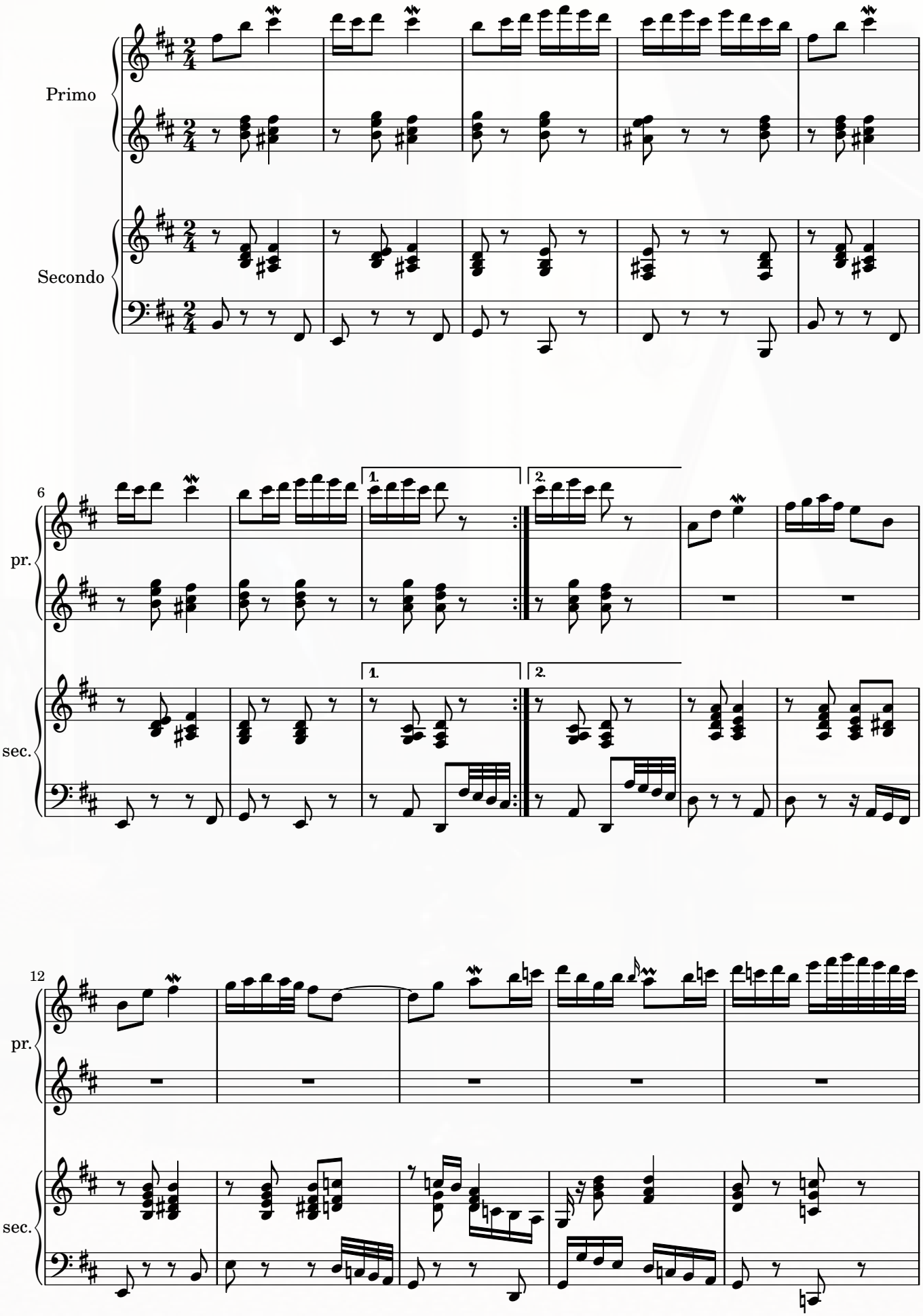
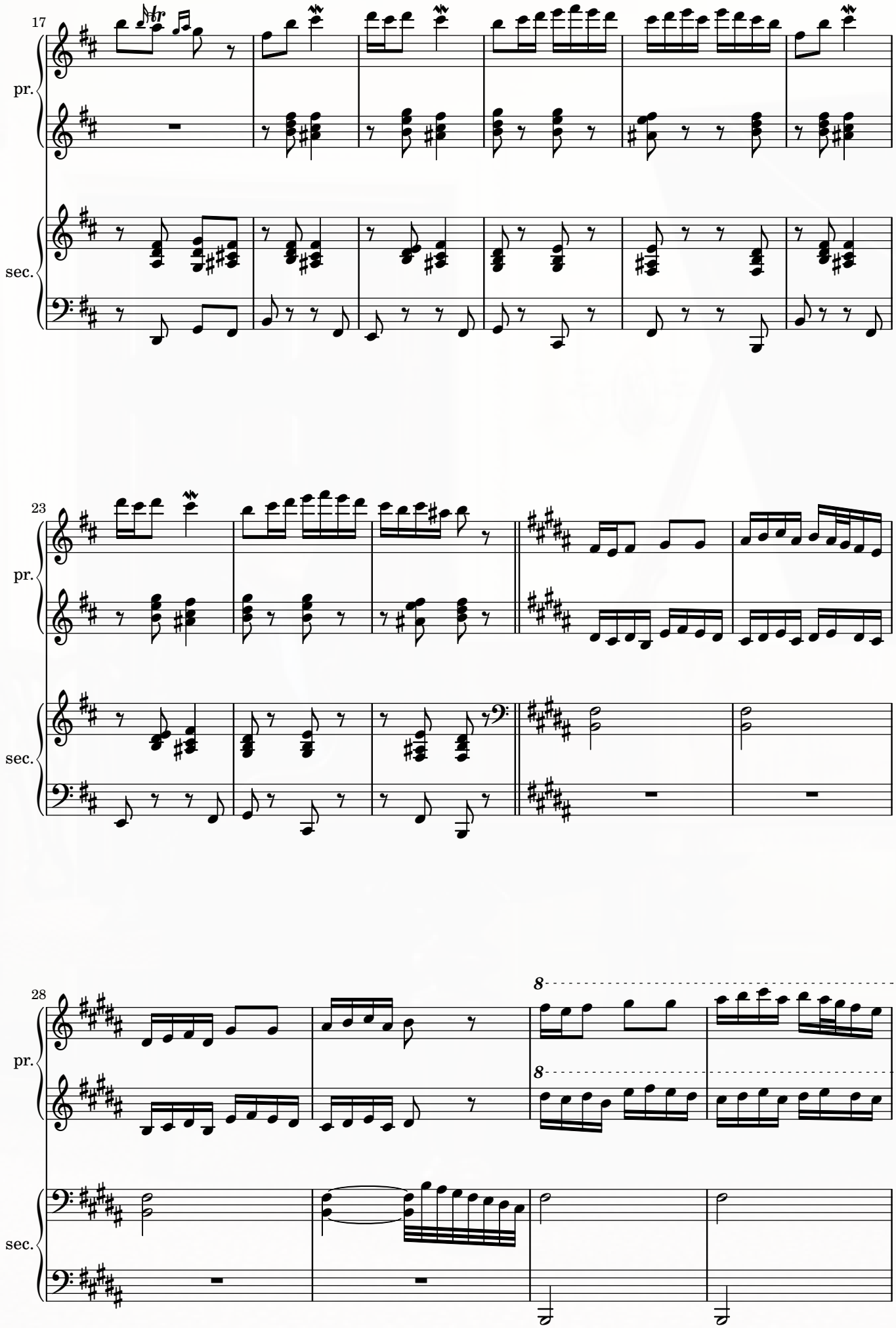
XIV. Gavotte

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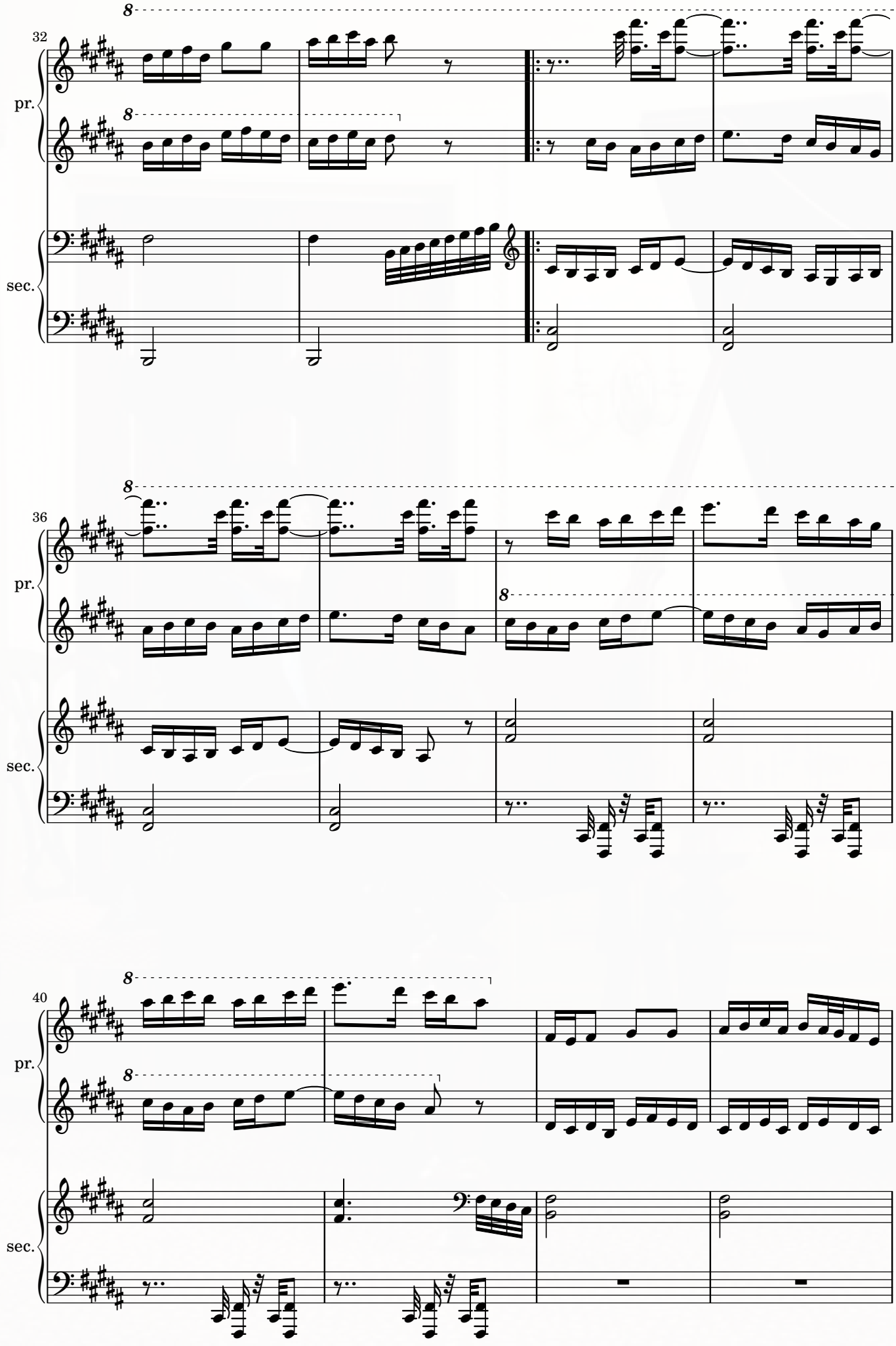
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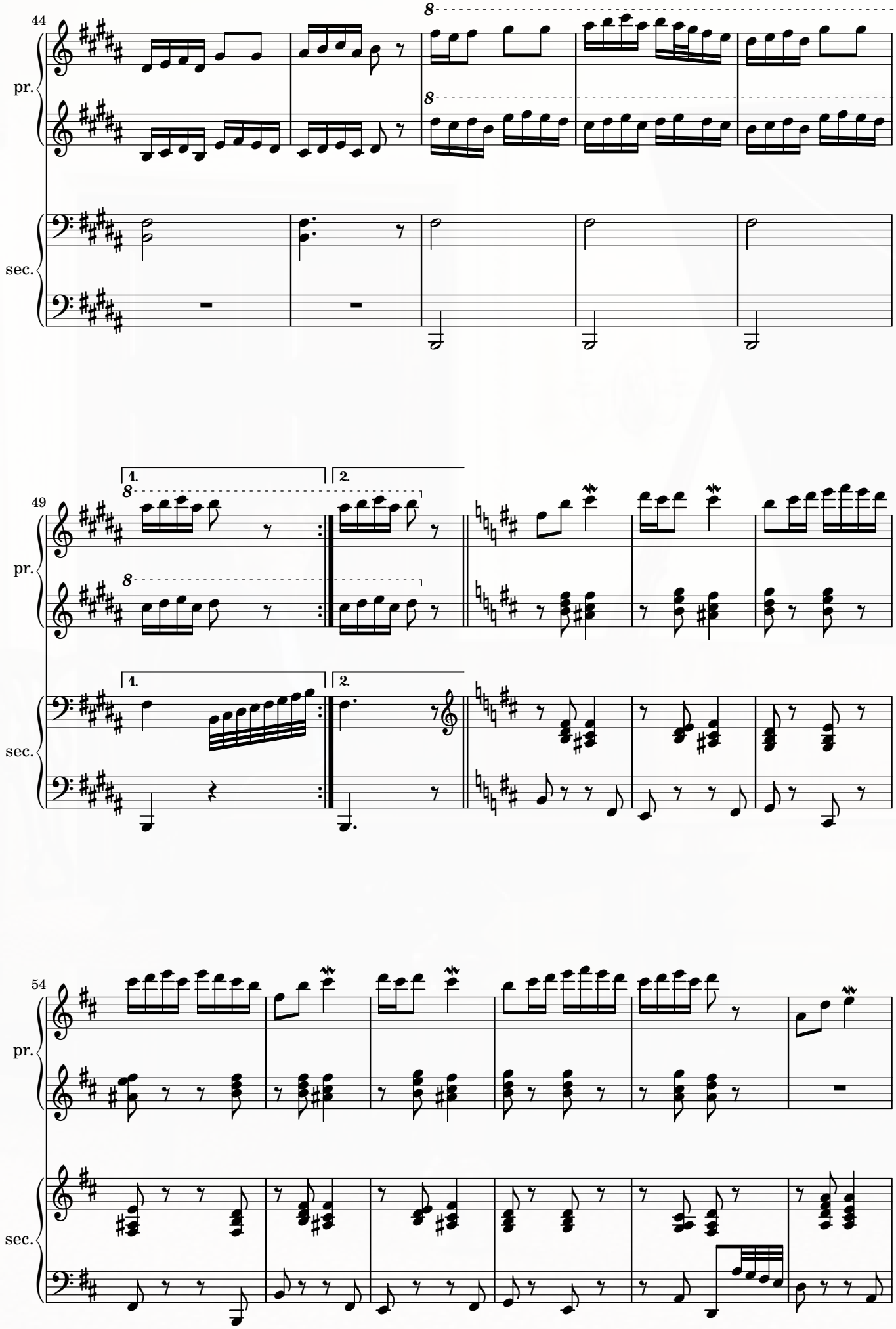
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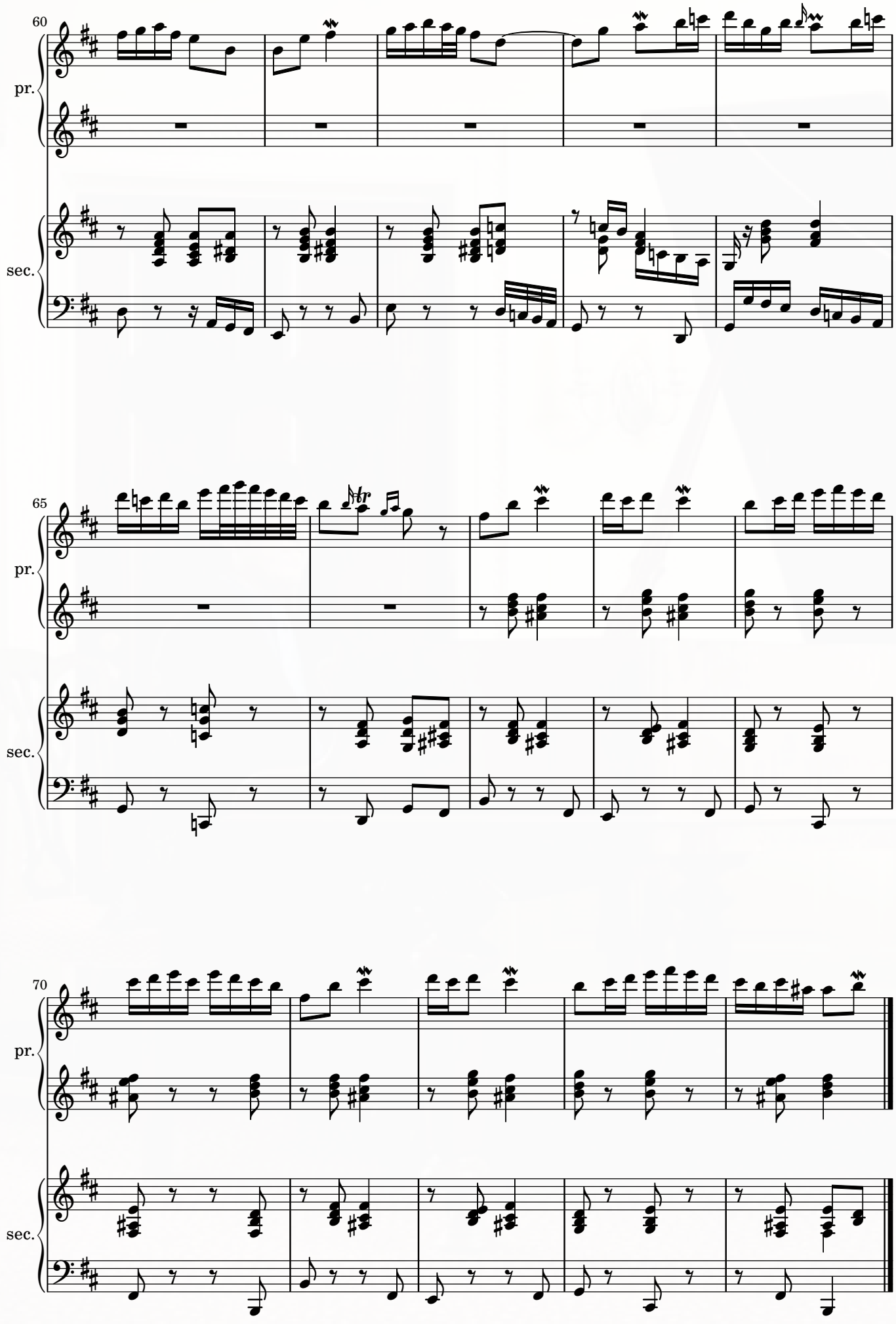
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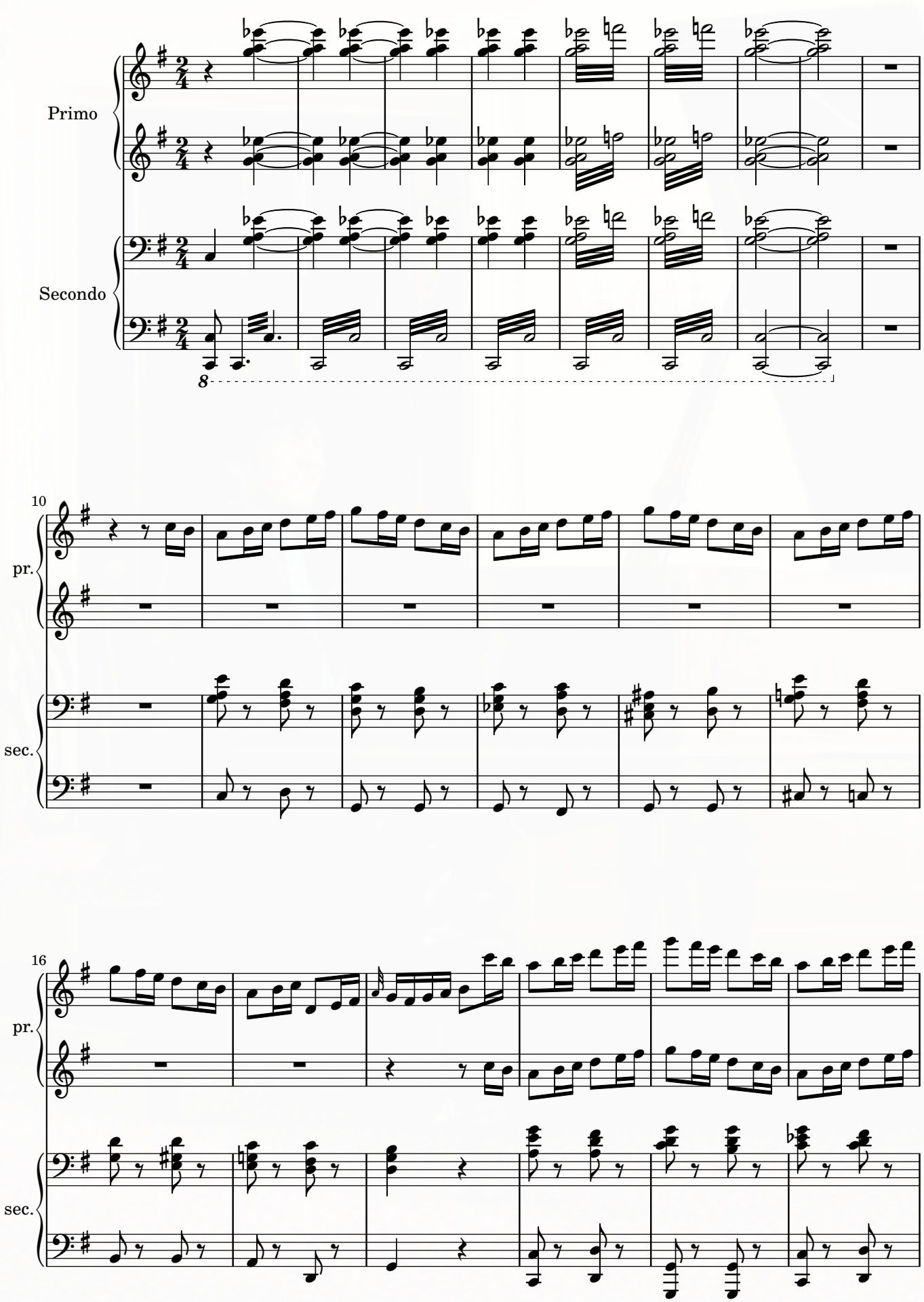
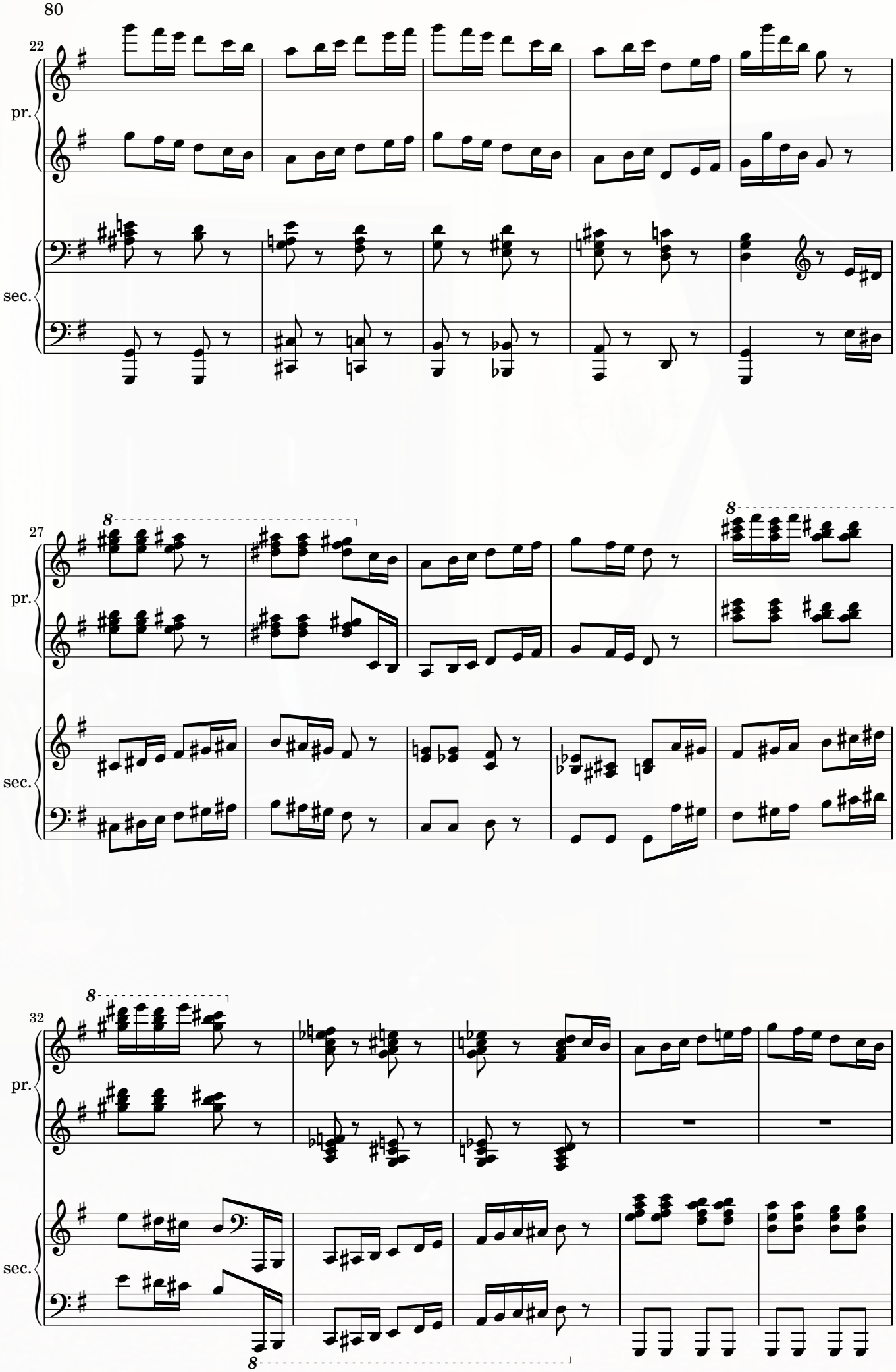
sec.

XV. Trepak
(In Memoriam Petr Tchaikovsky)

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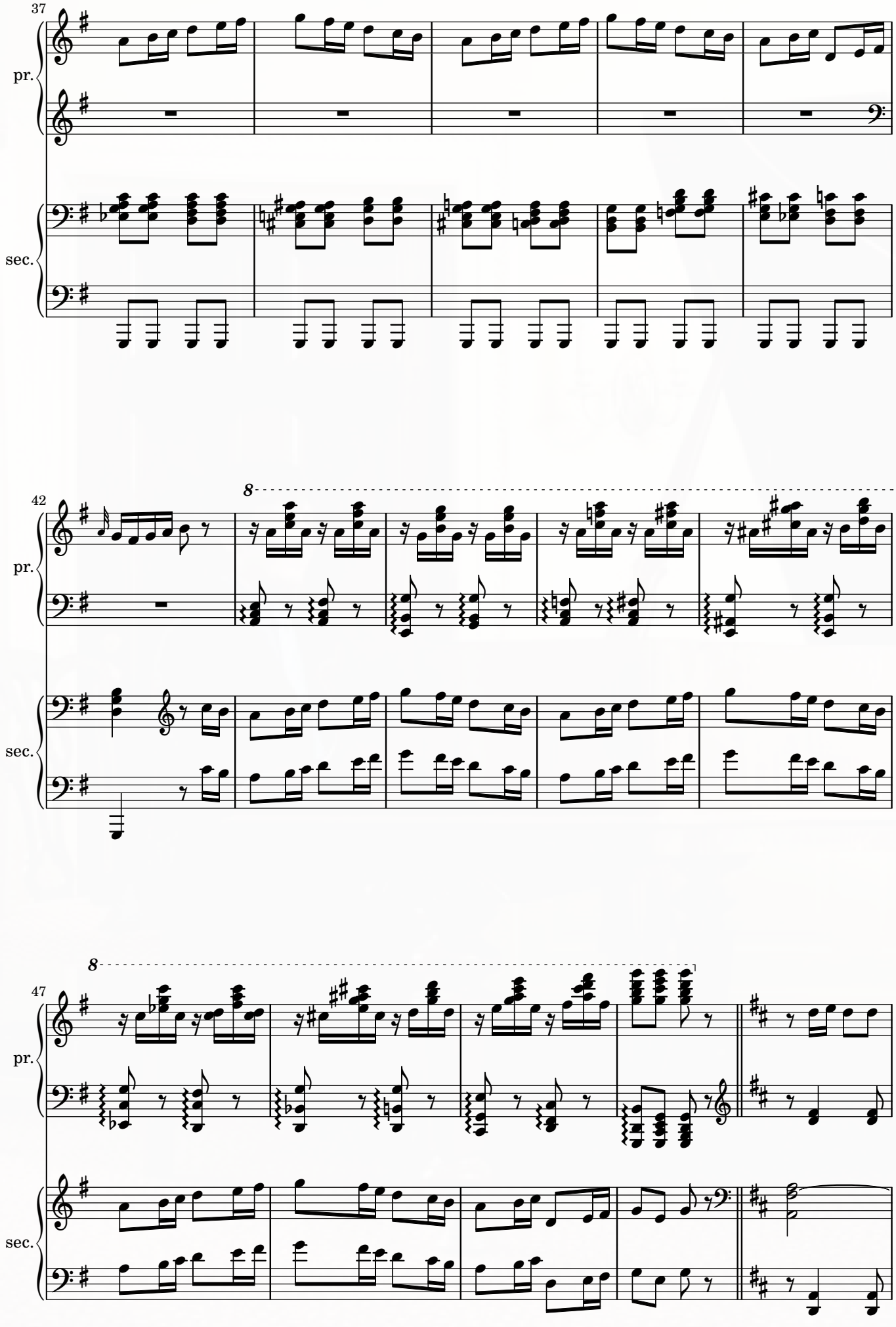
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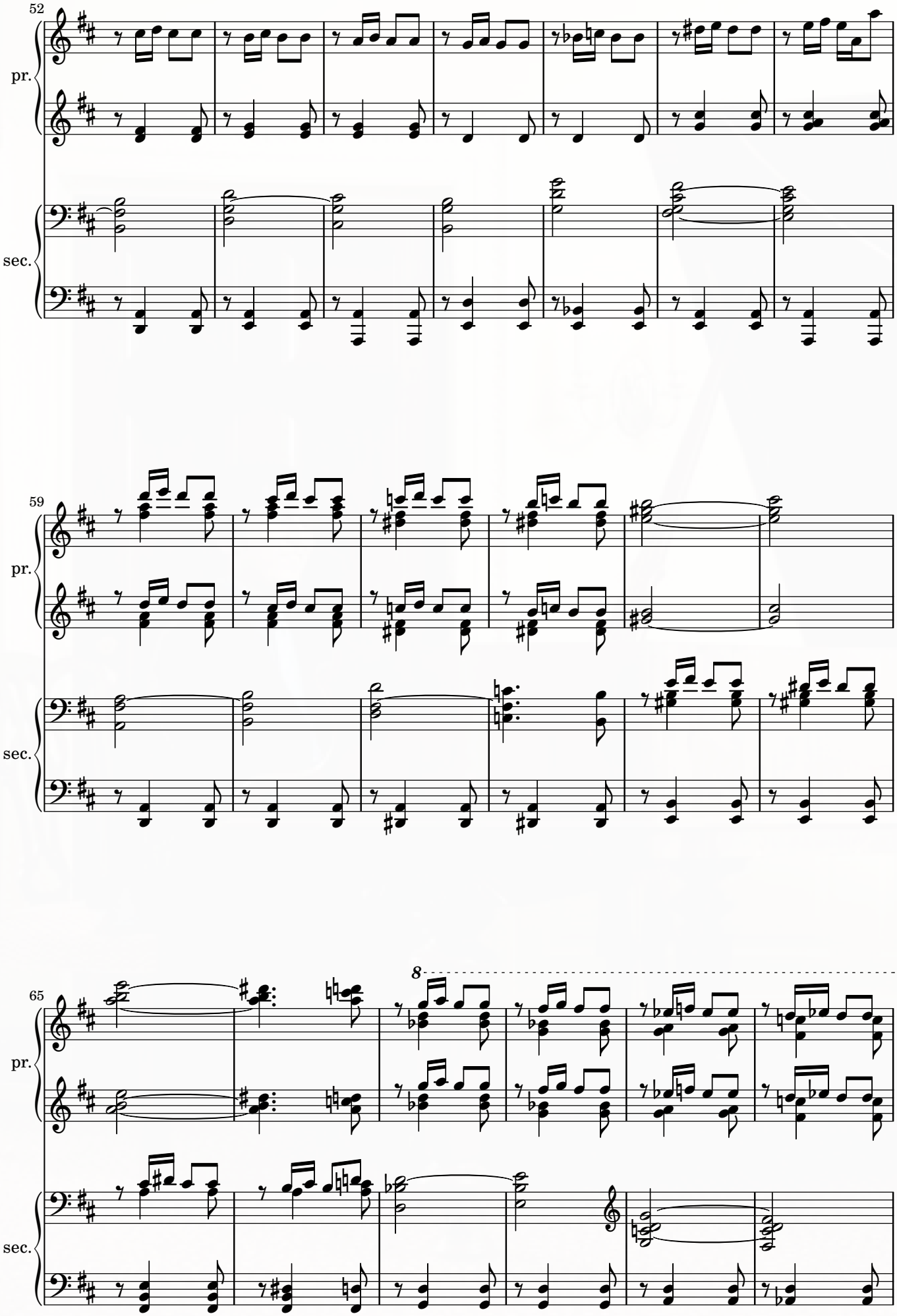
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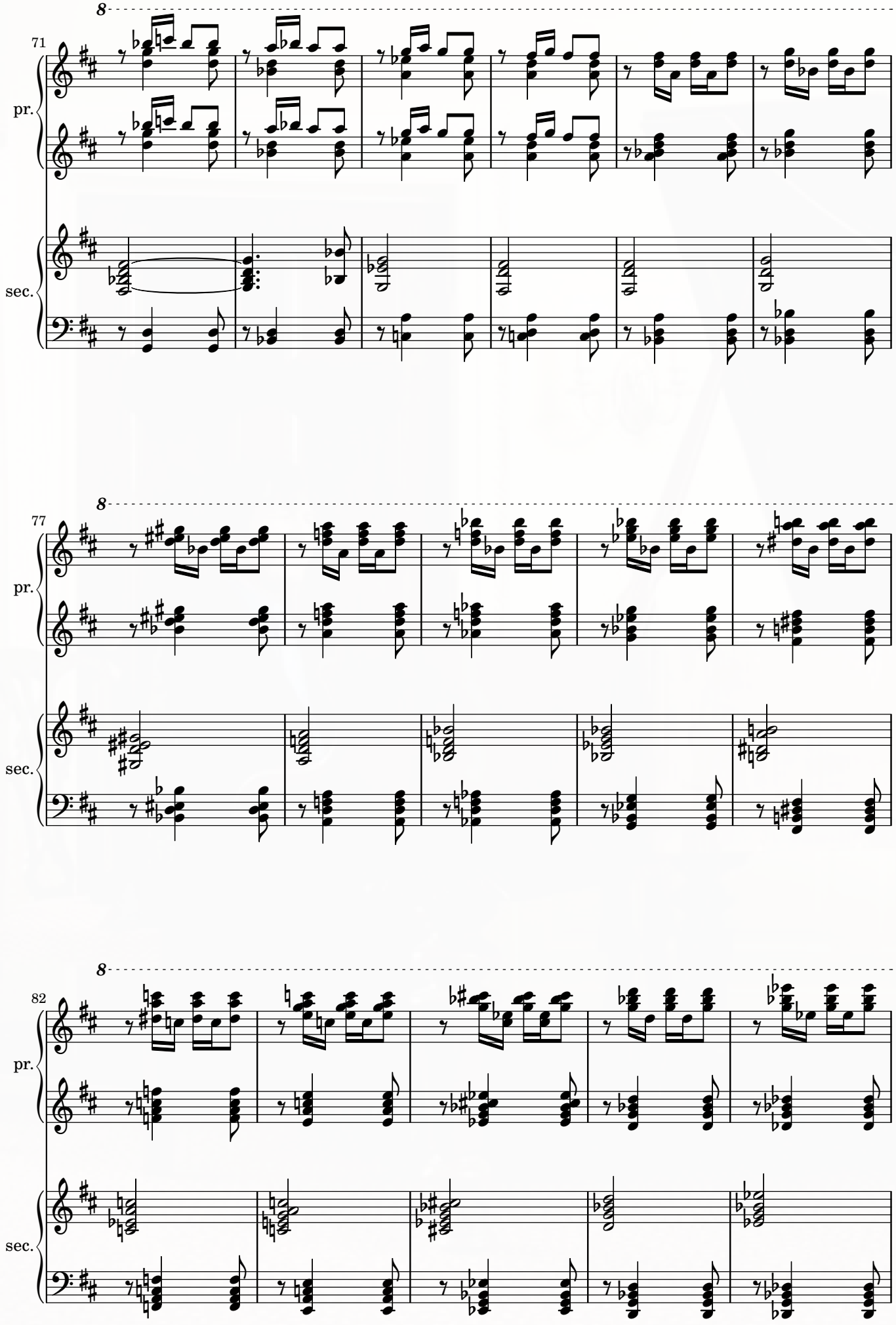
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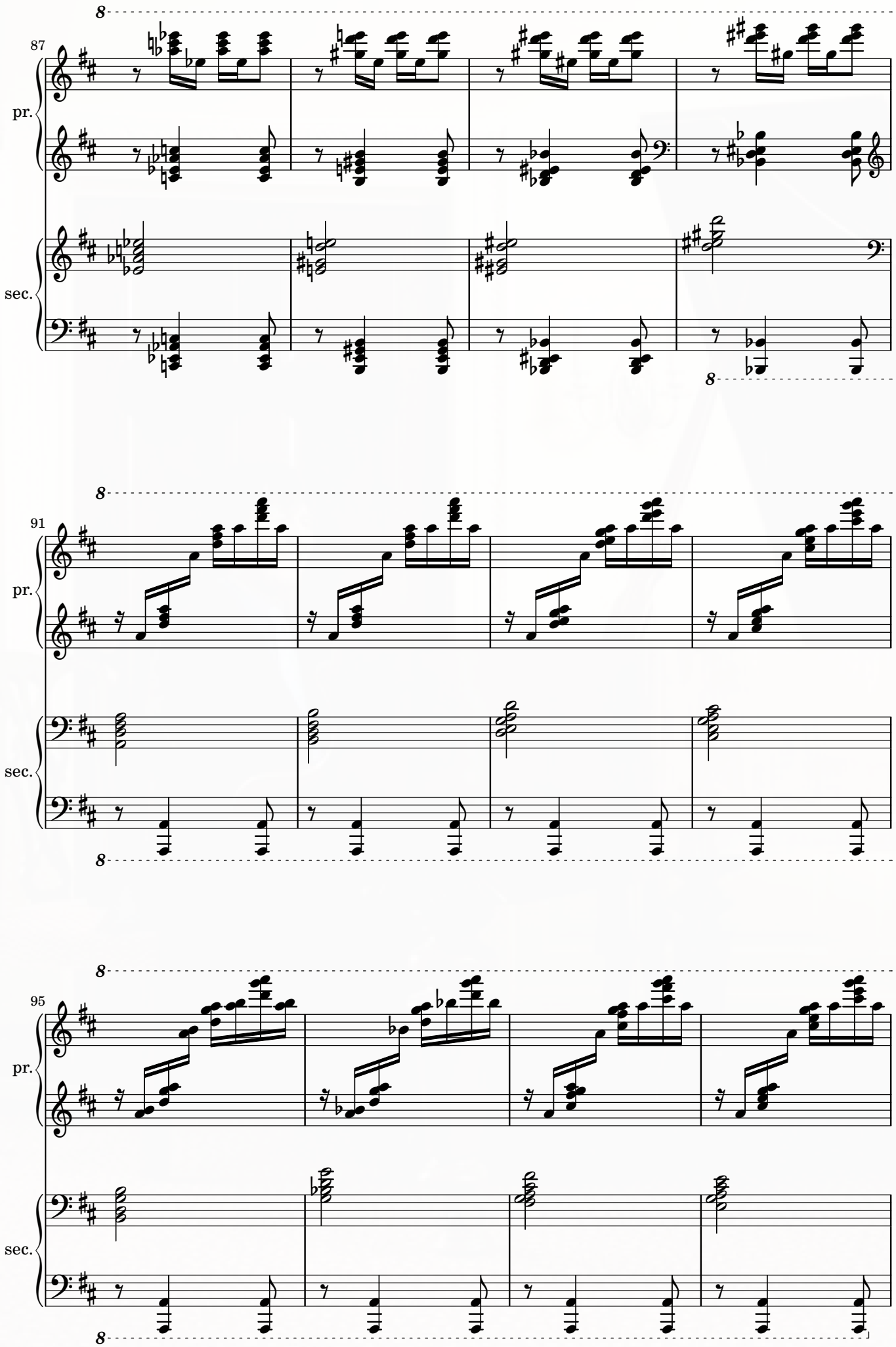
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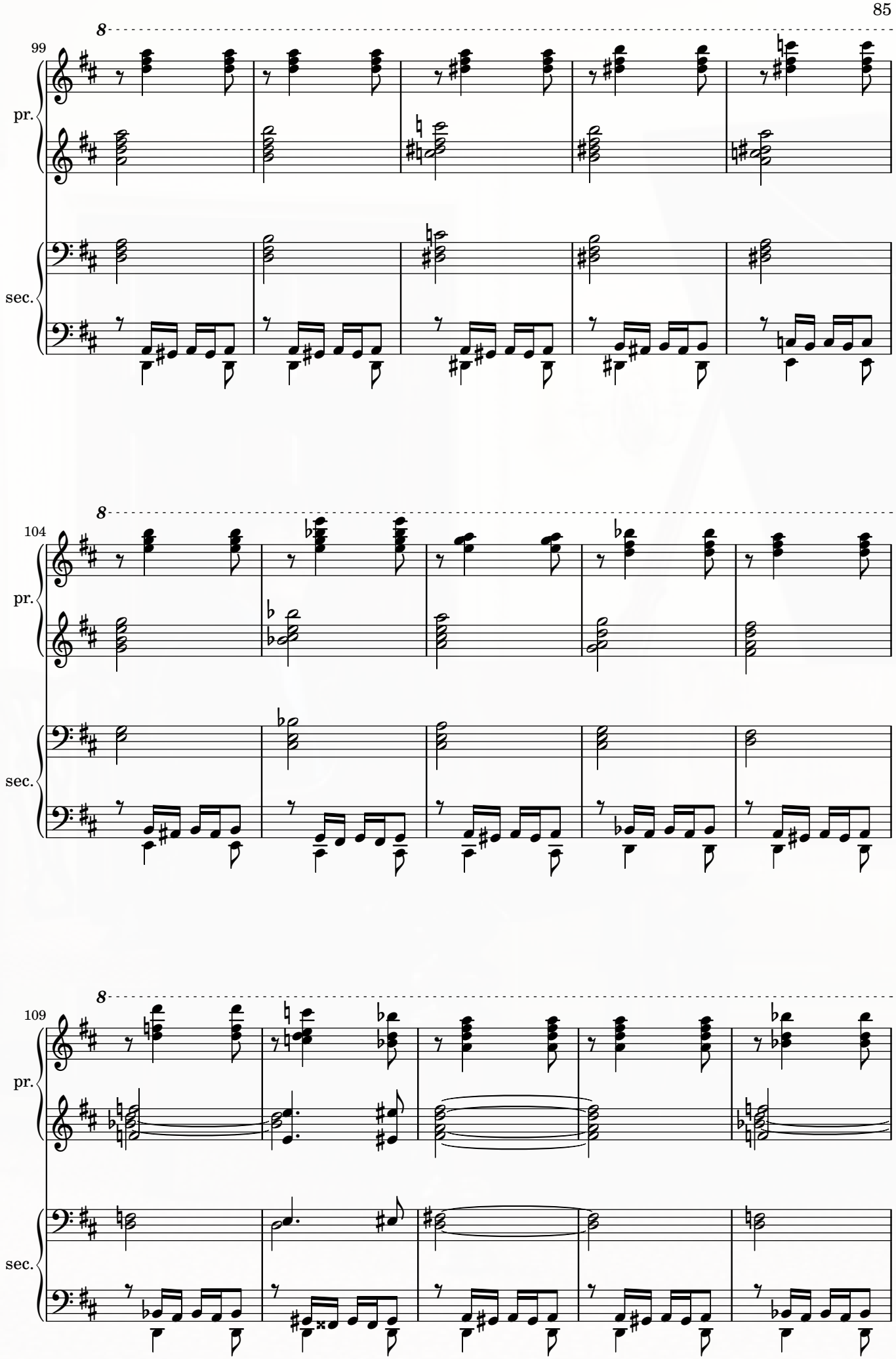
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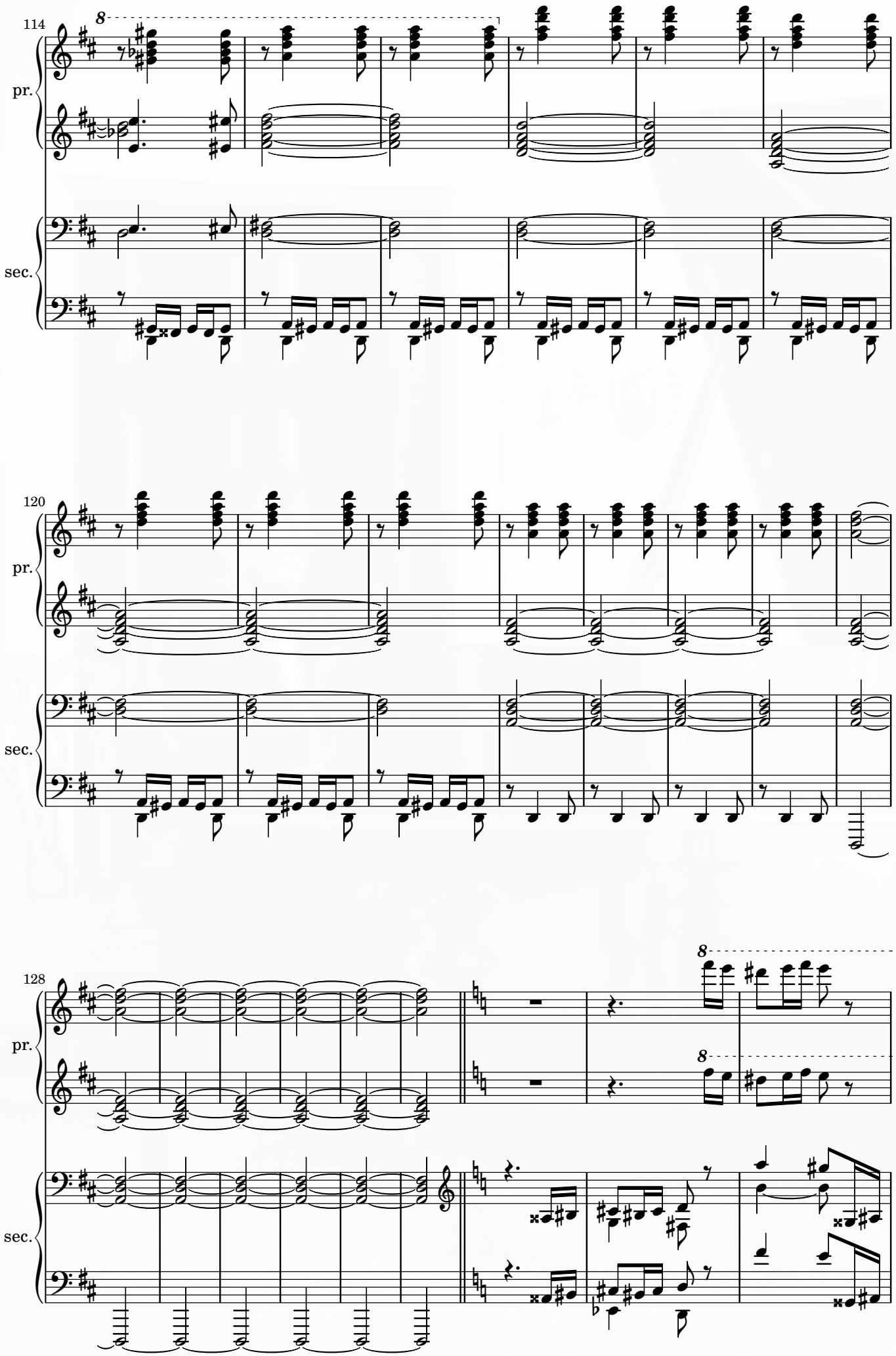
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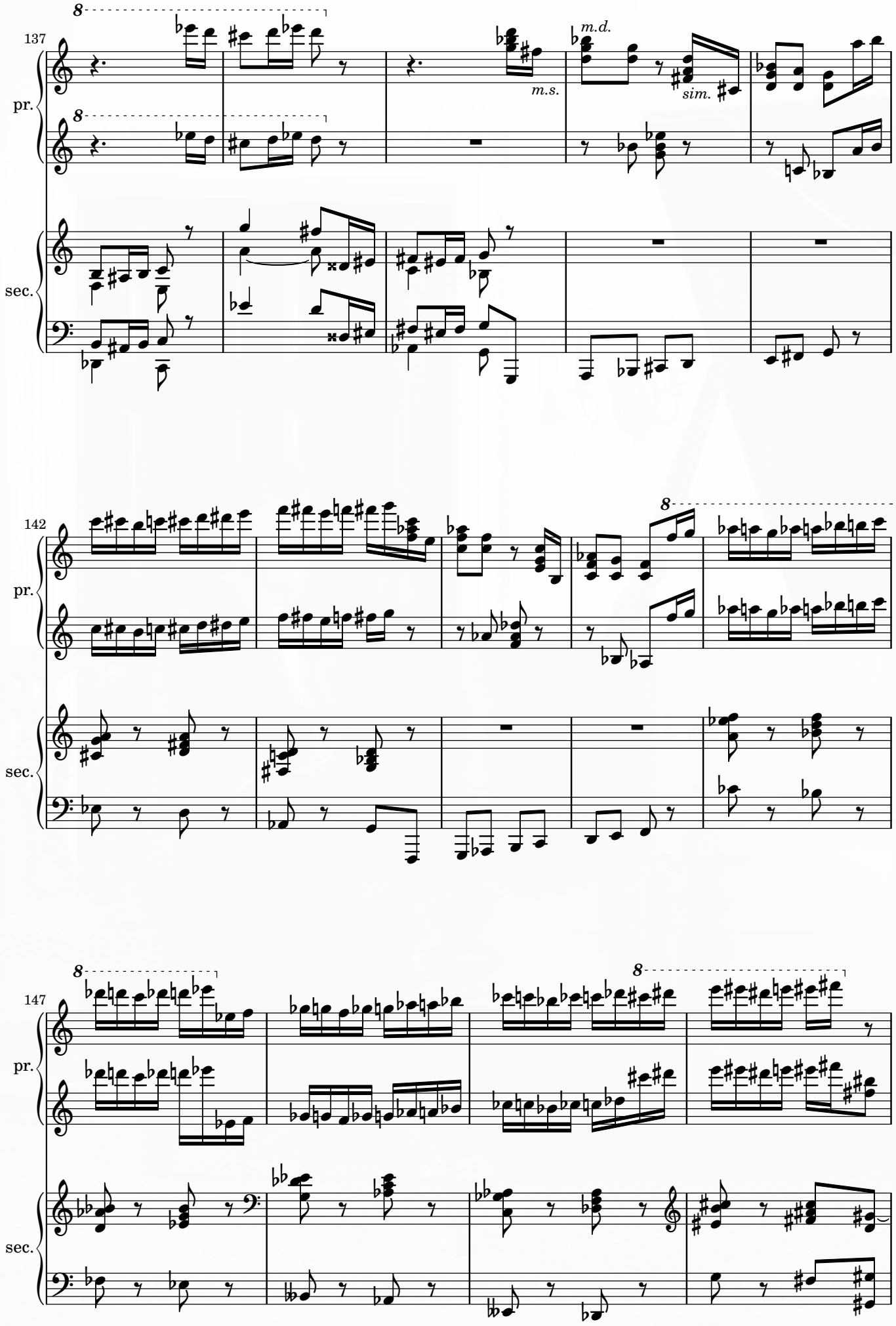
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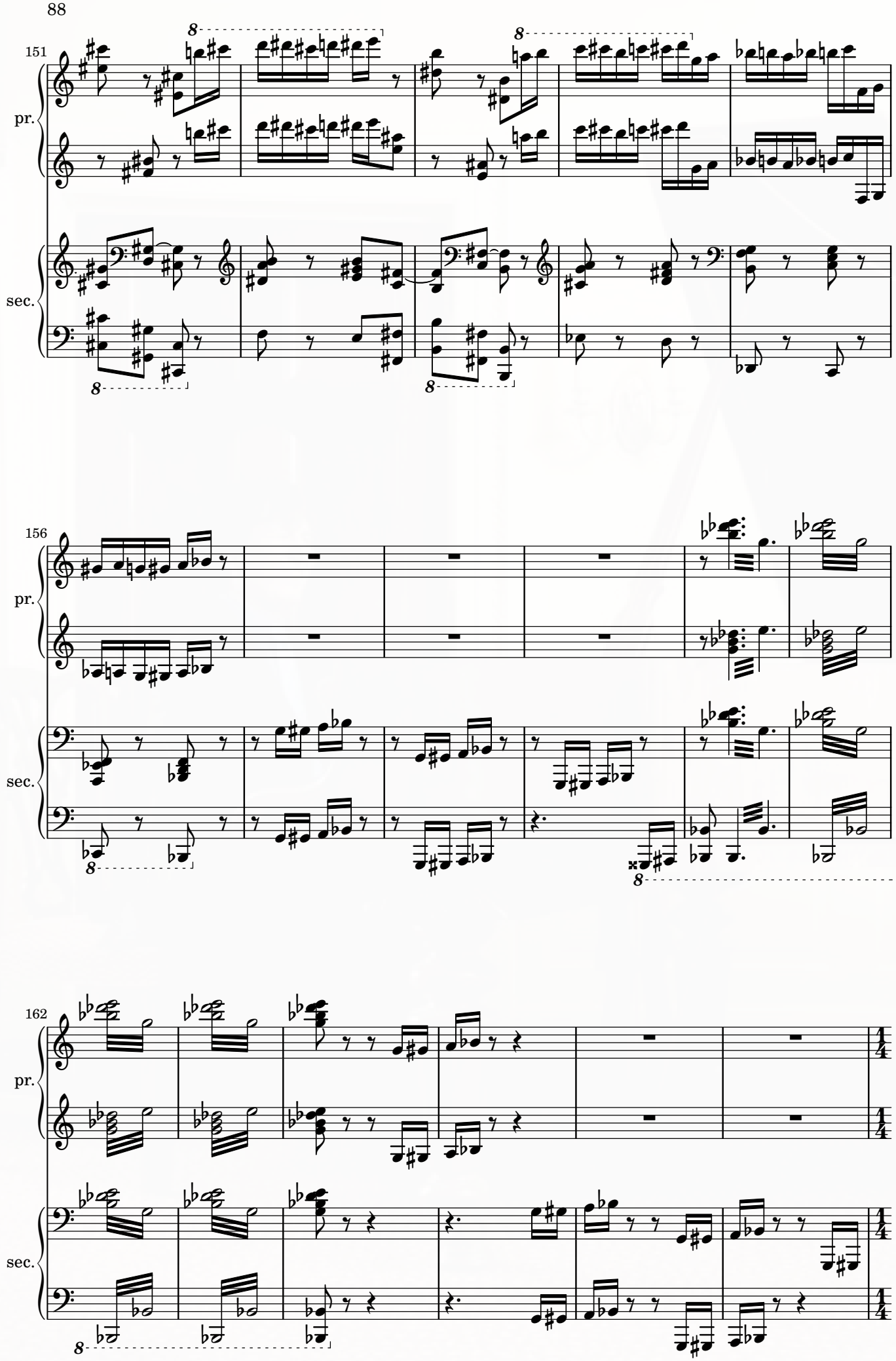
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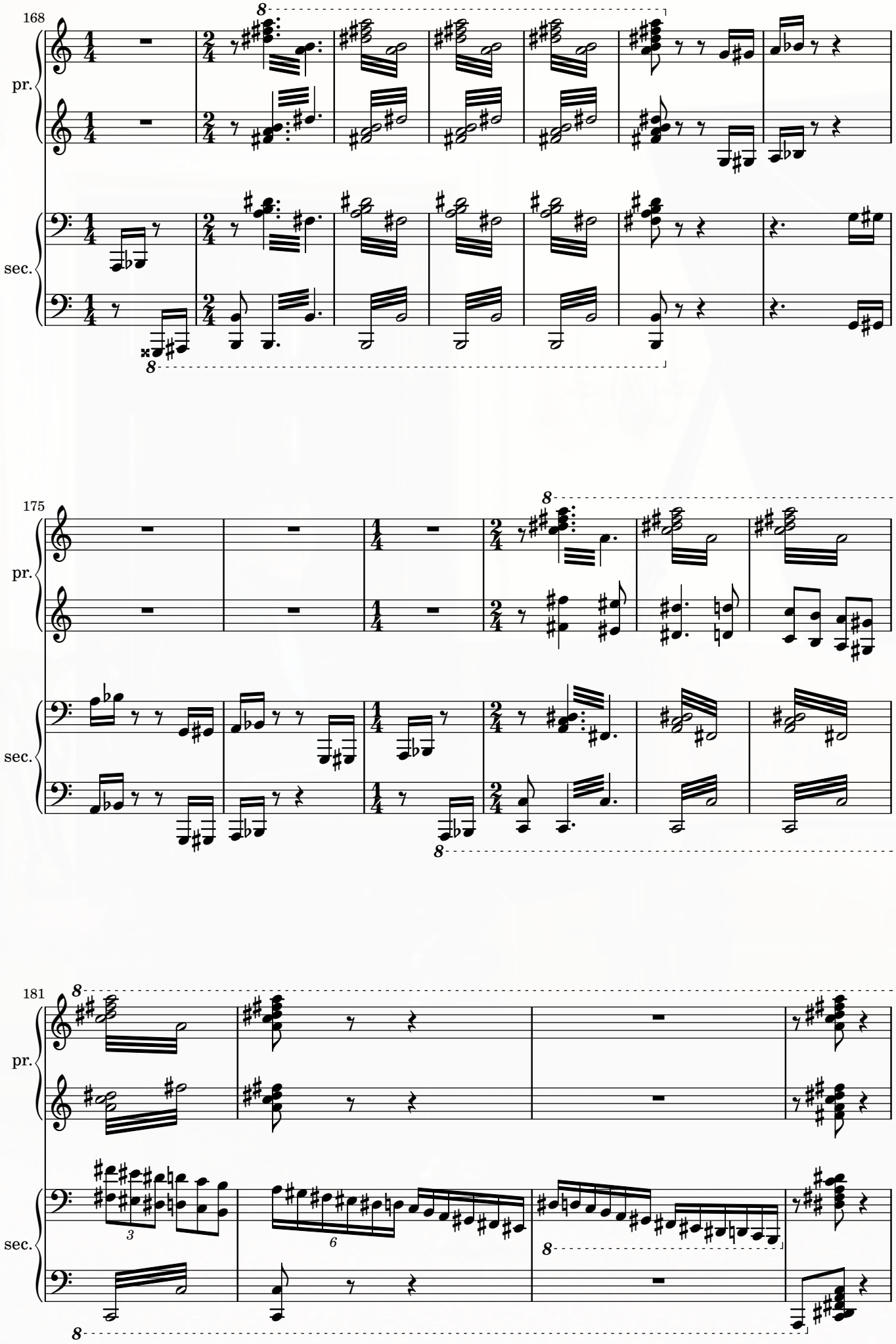
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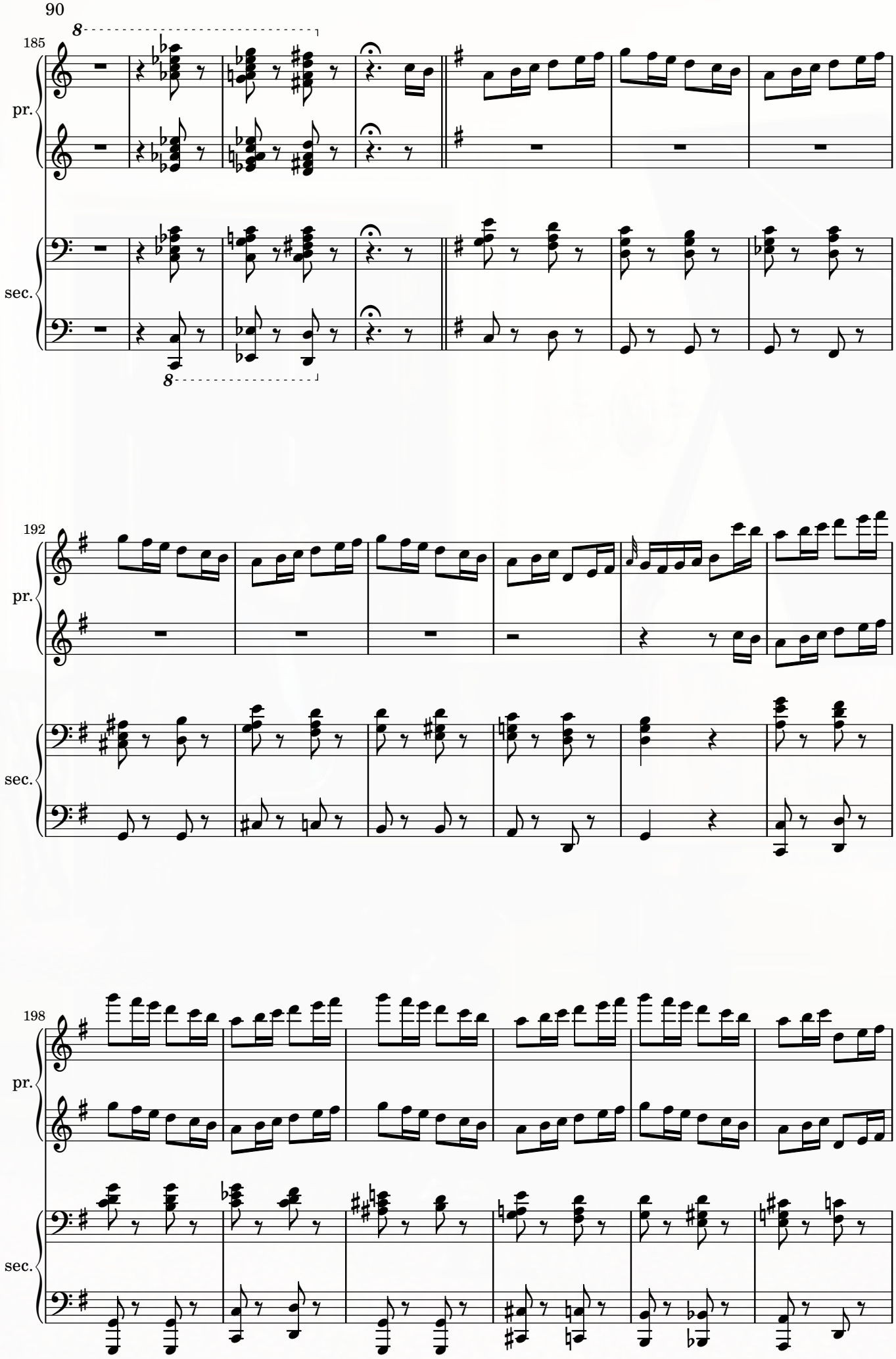
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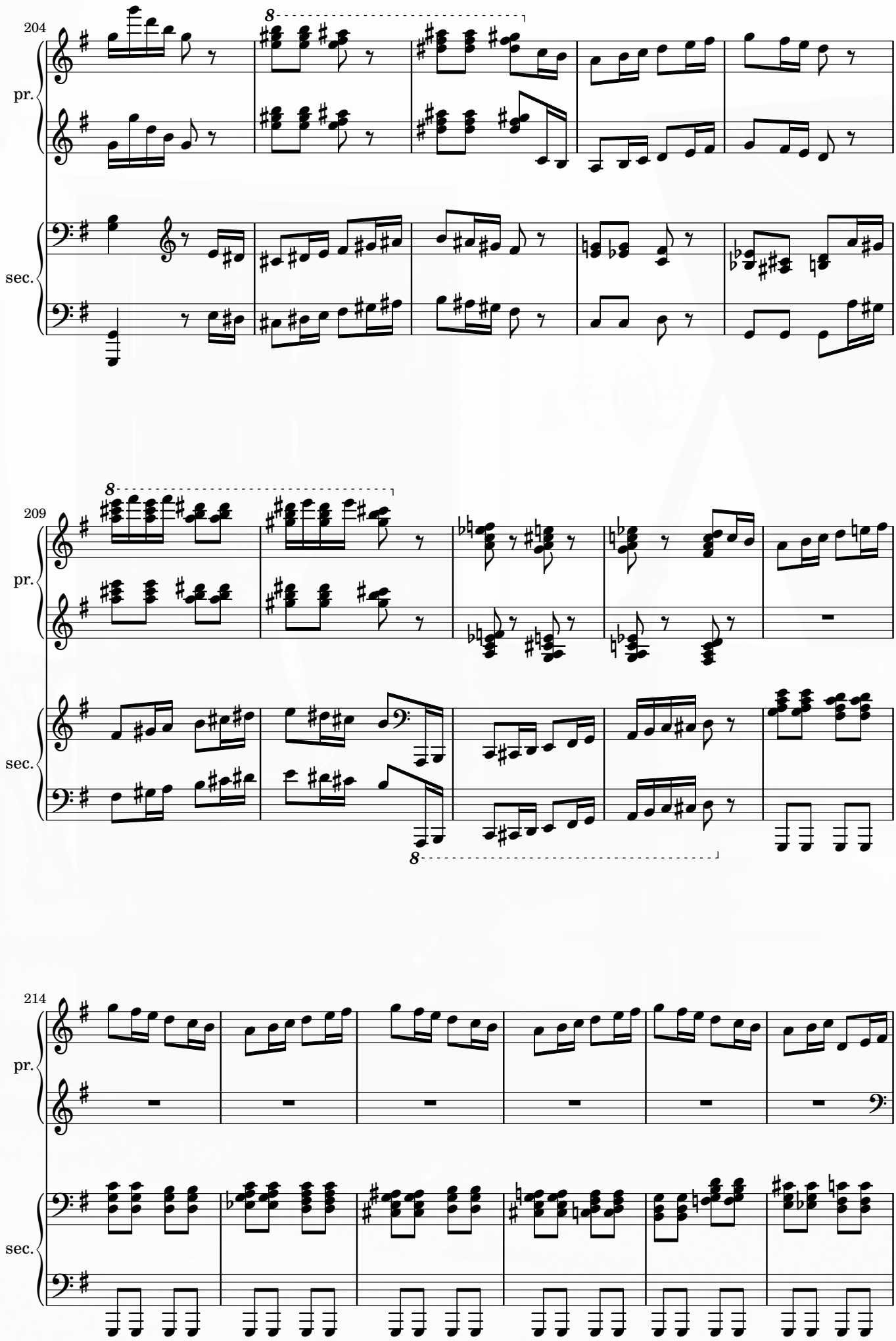
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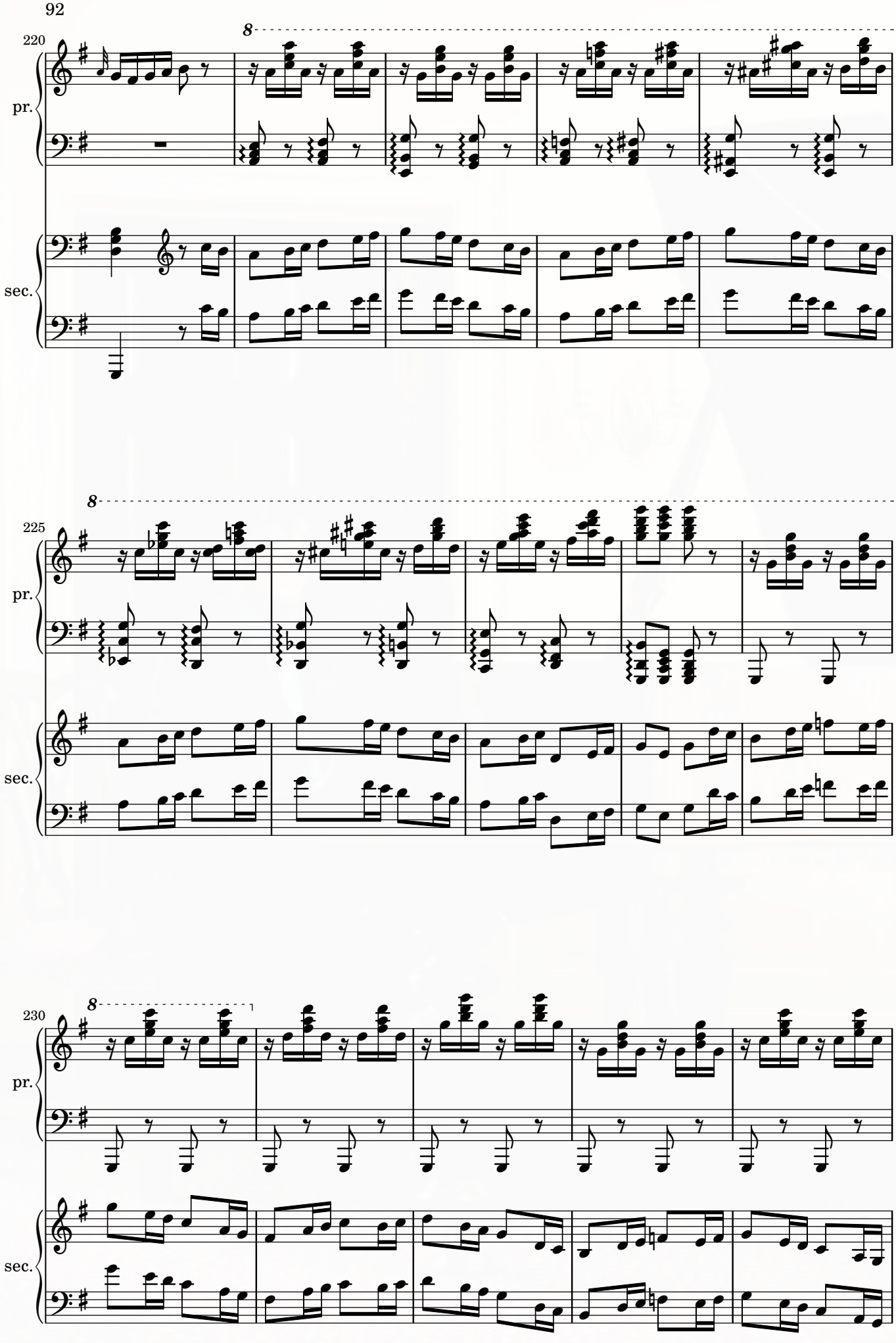
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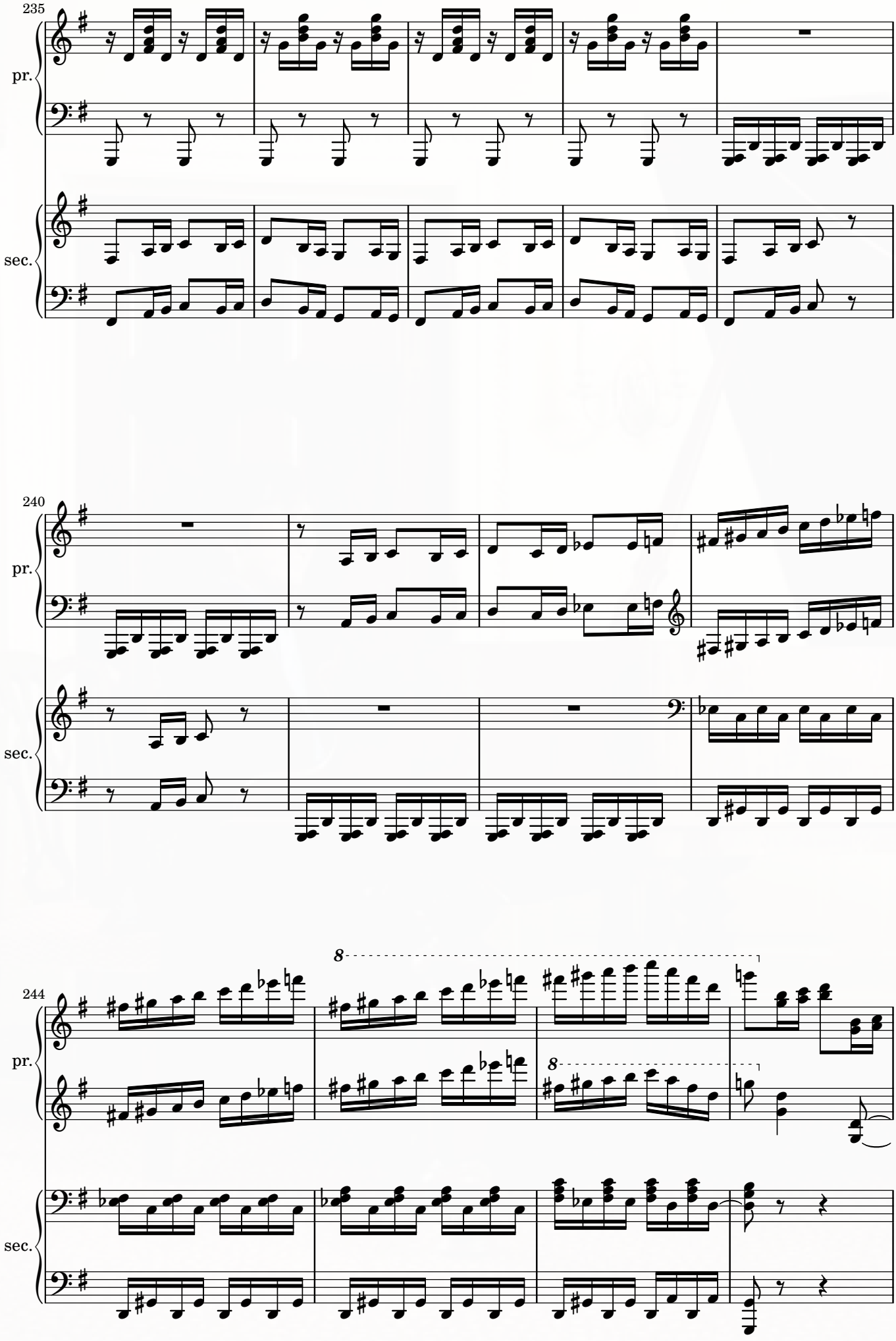
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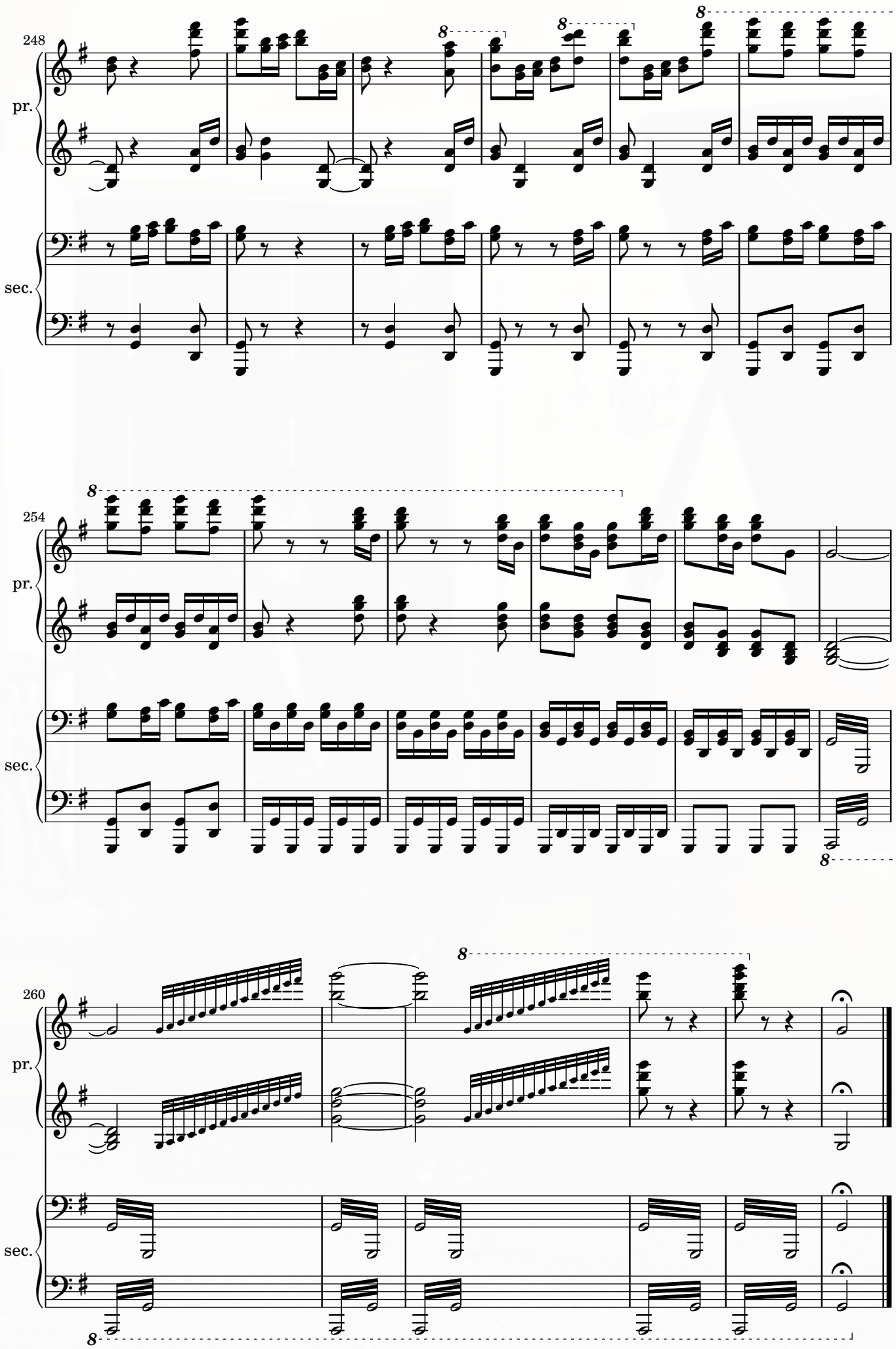
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260
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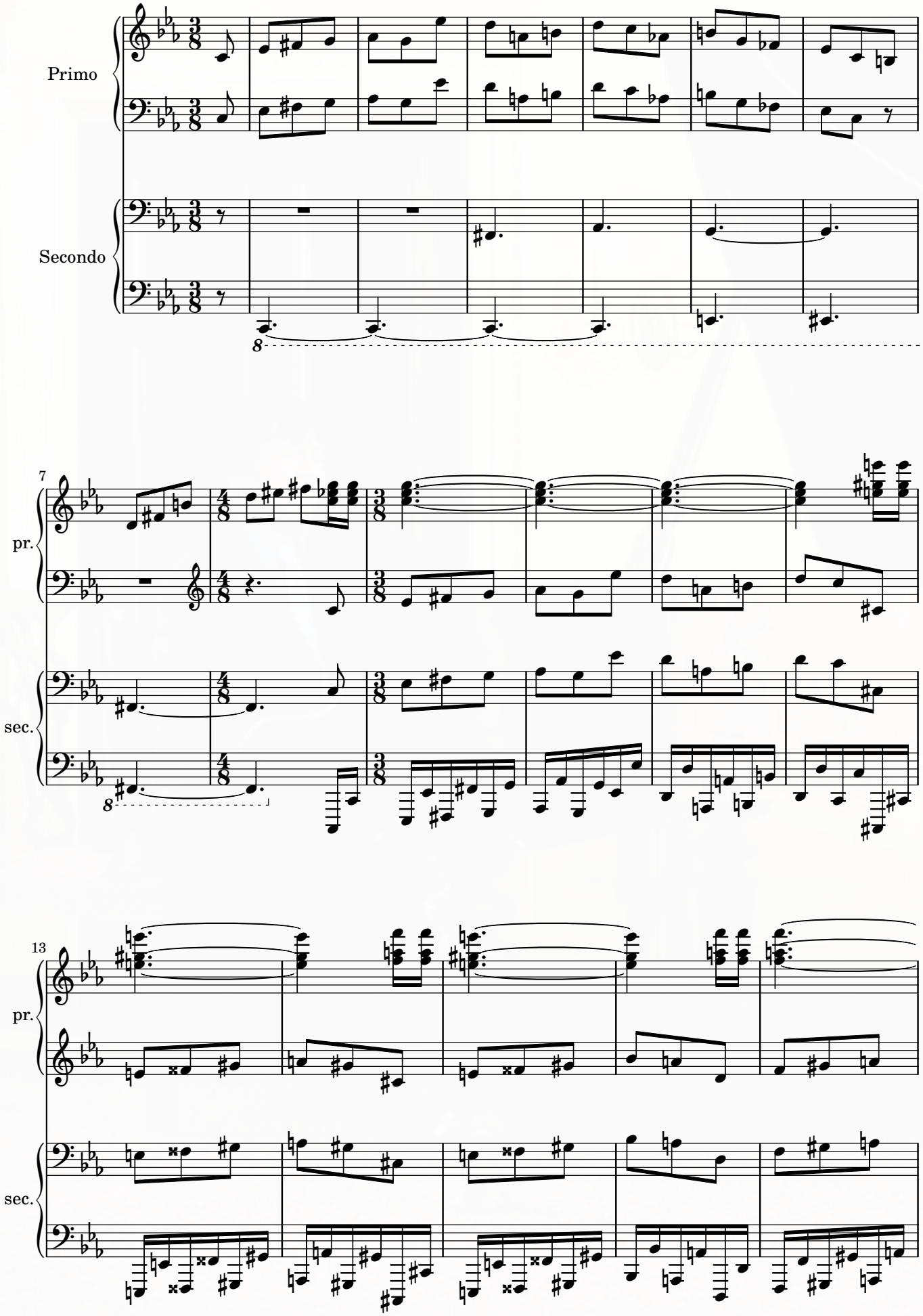
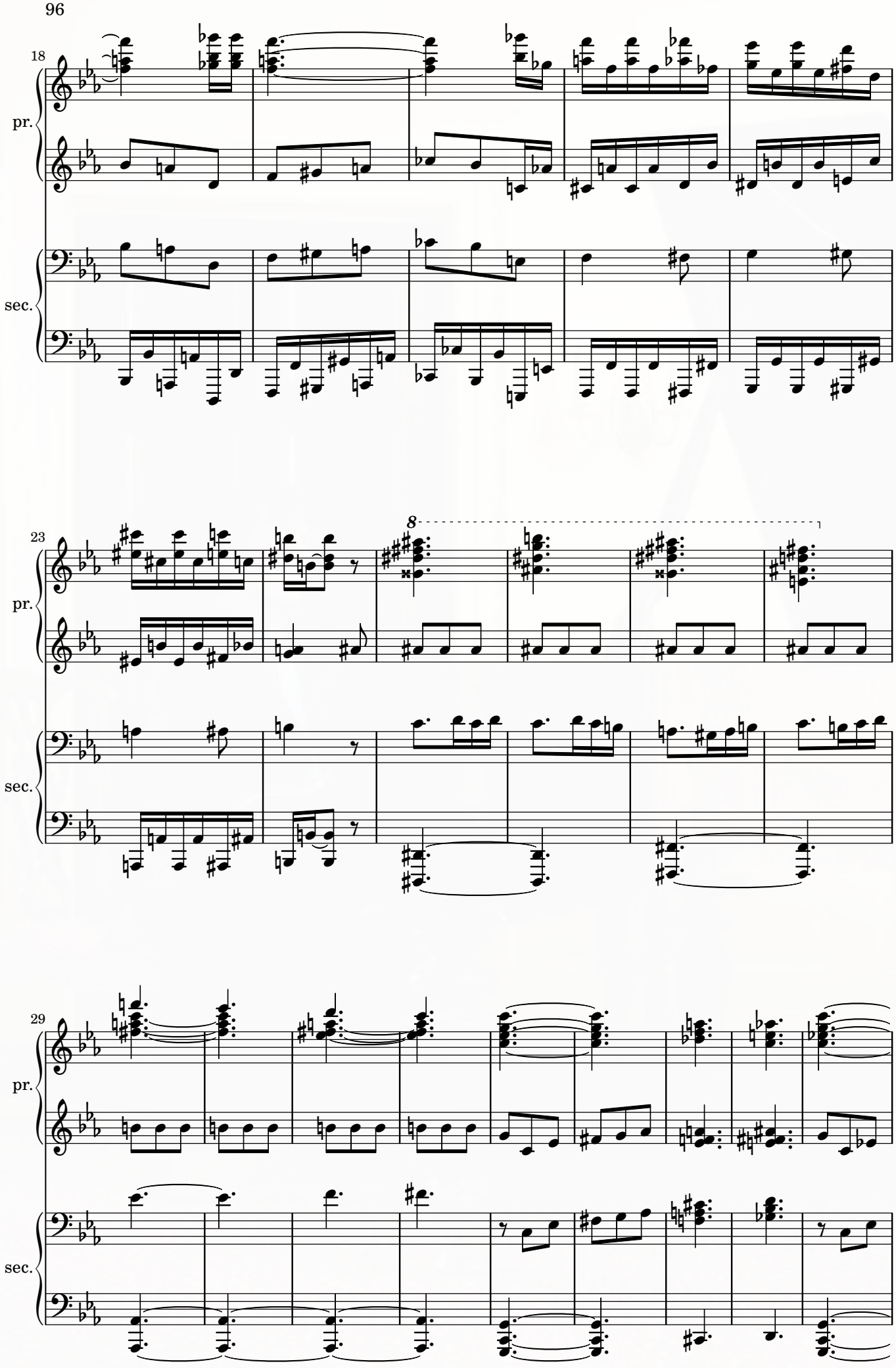
8

XVI. The Apparition

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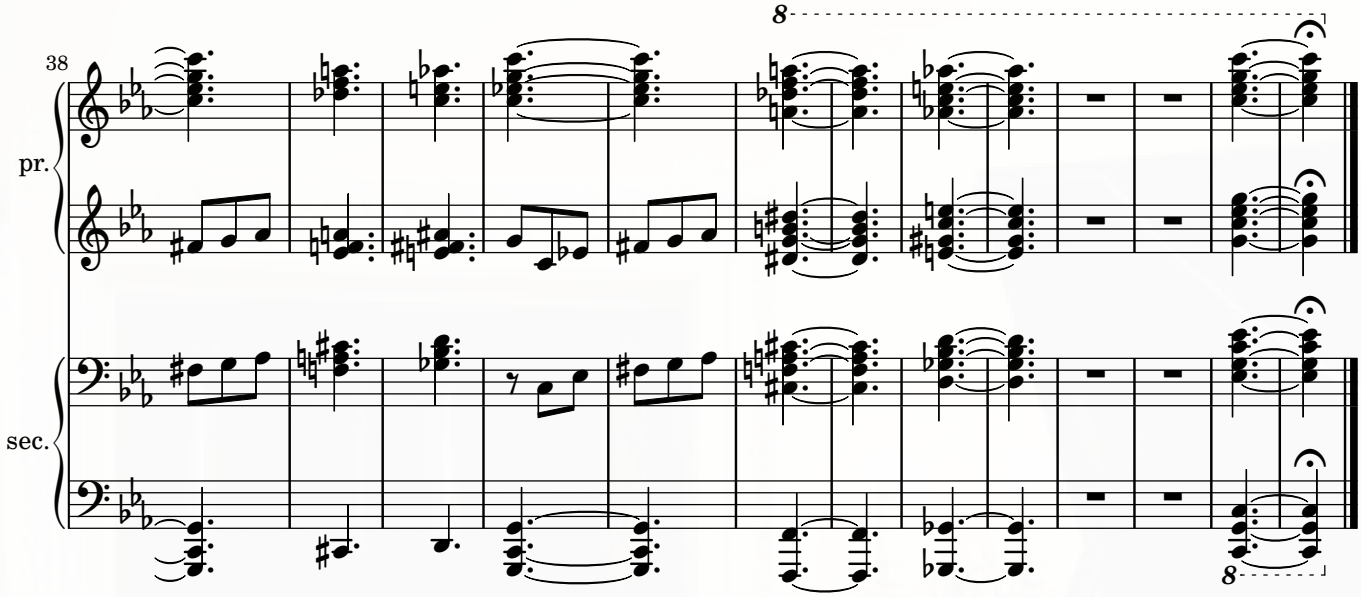
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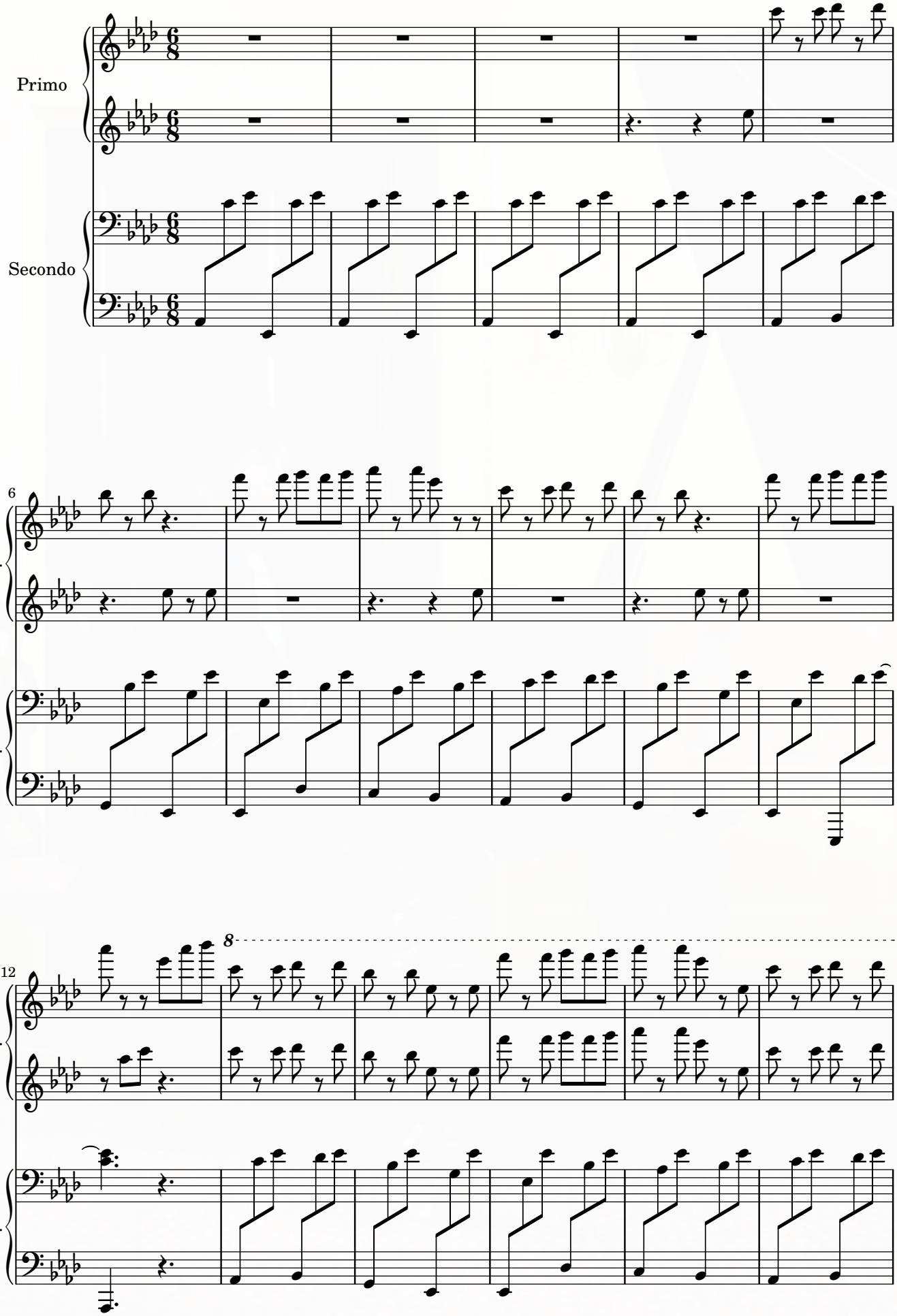
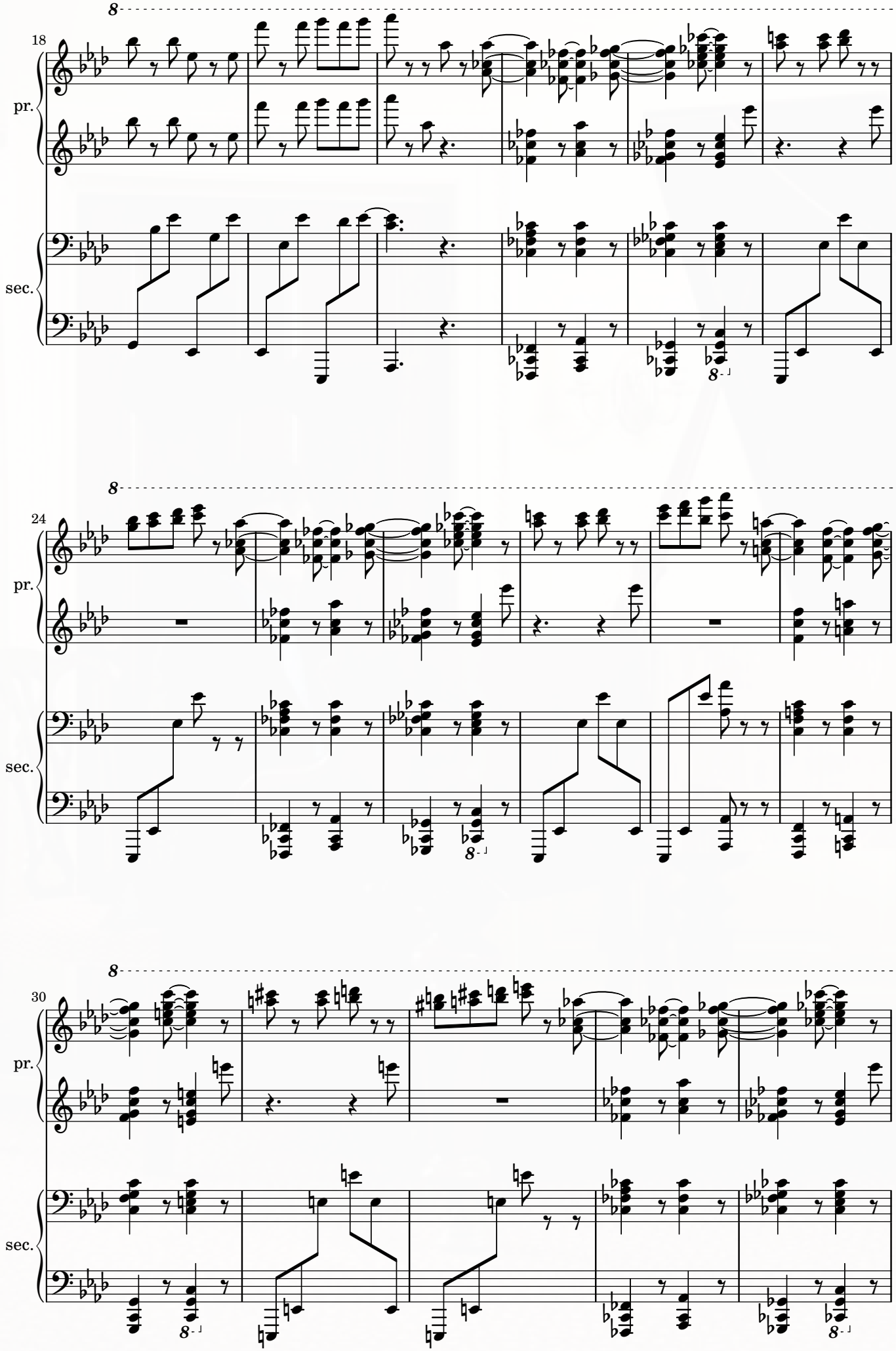
XVII. Tarantella

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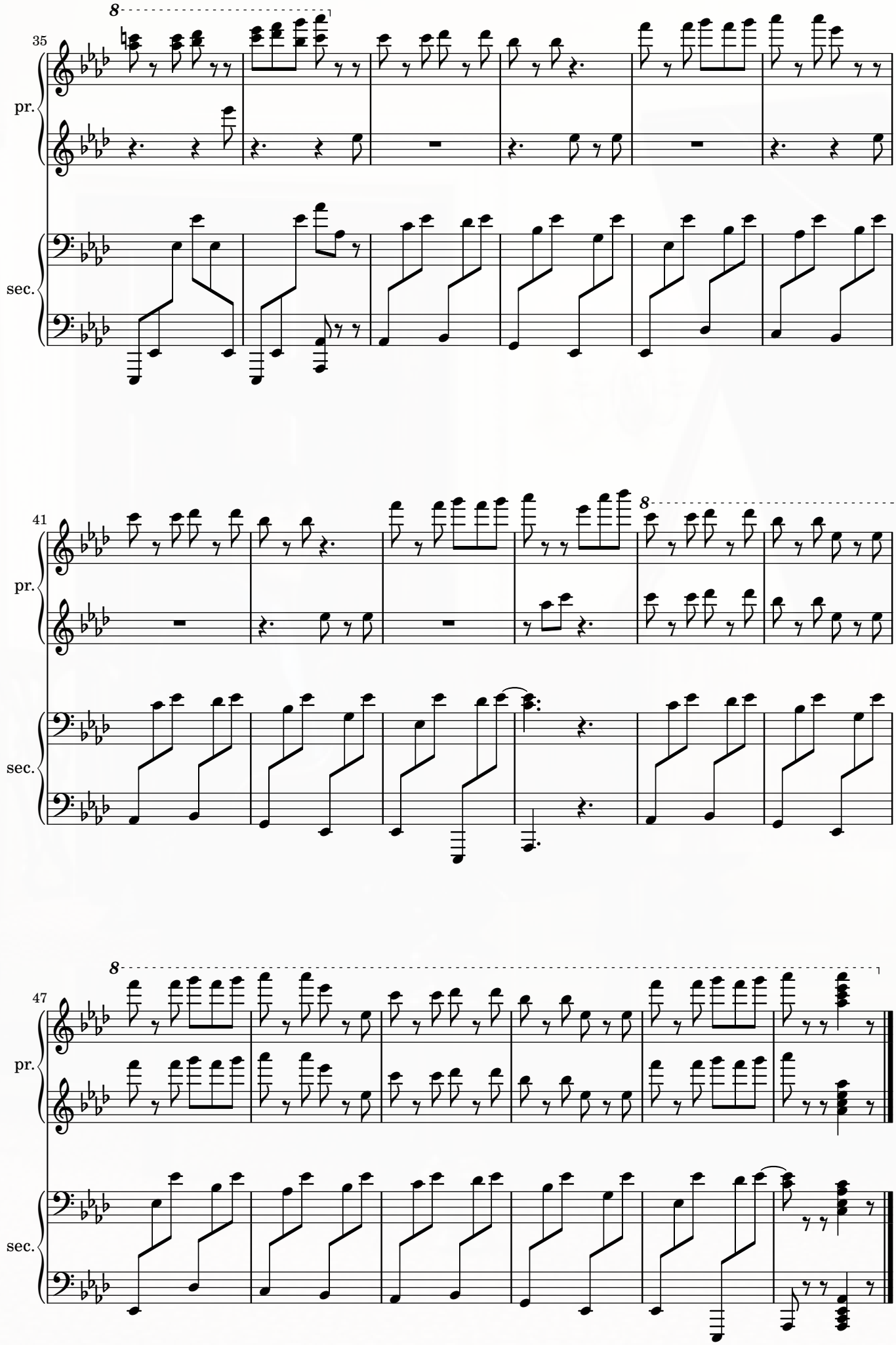
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41
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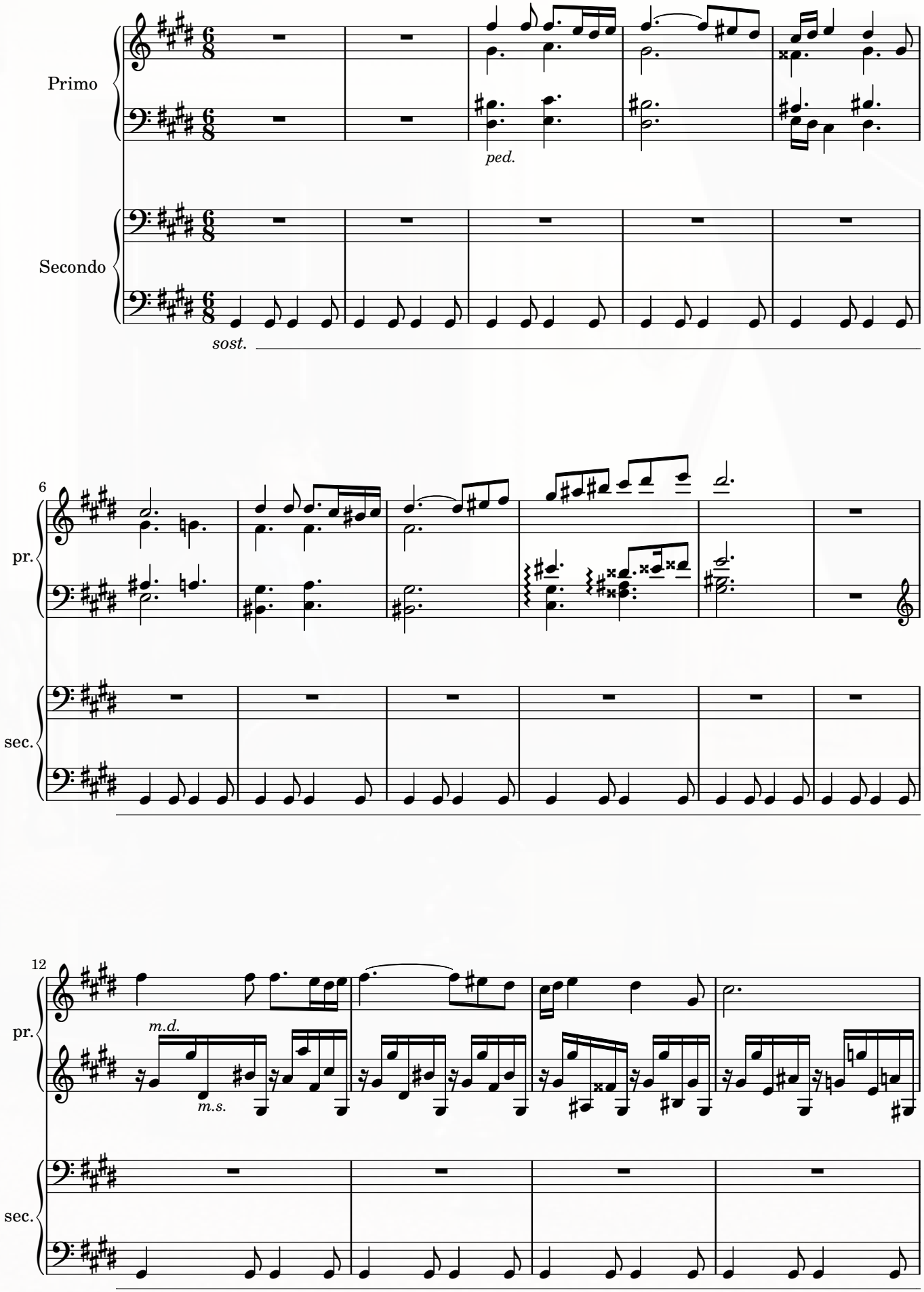
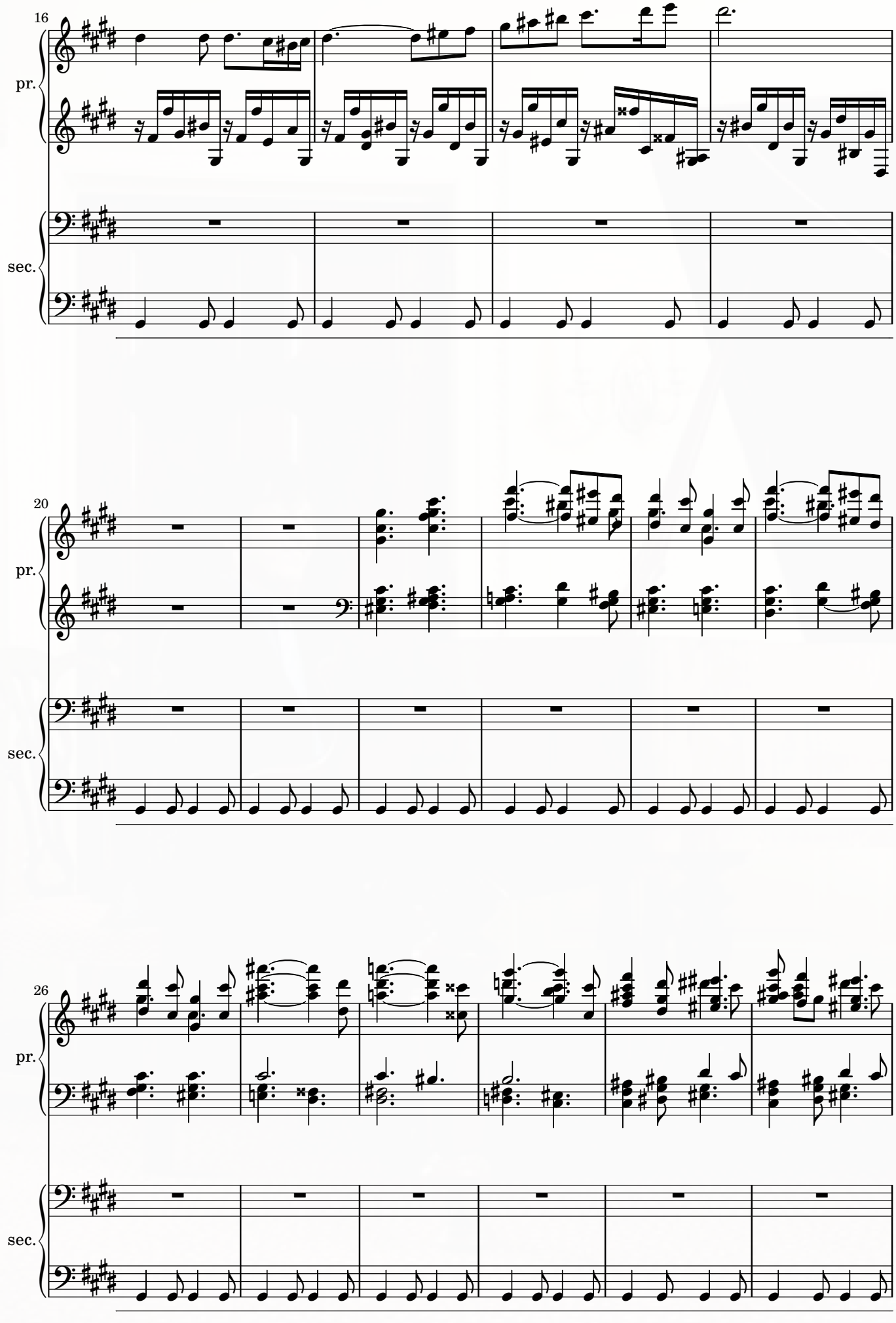
XVIII. Elegy

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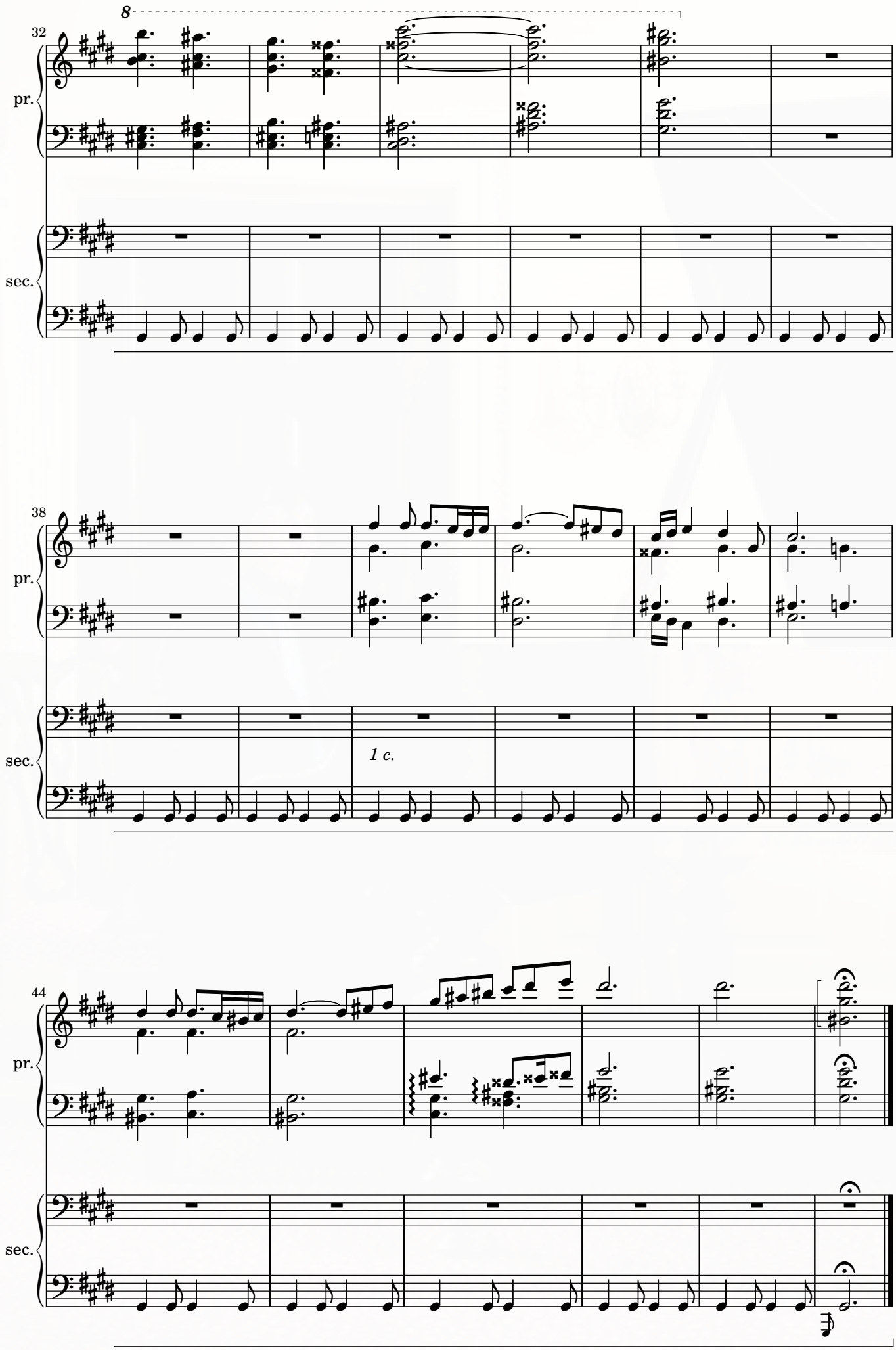
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32
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38
pr.
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1 c.
44
pr.
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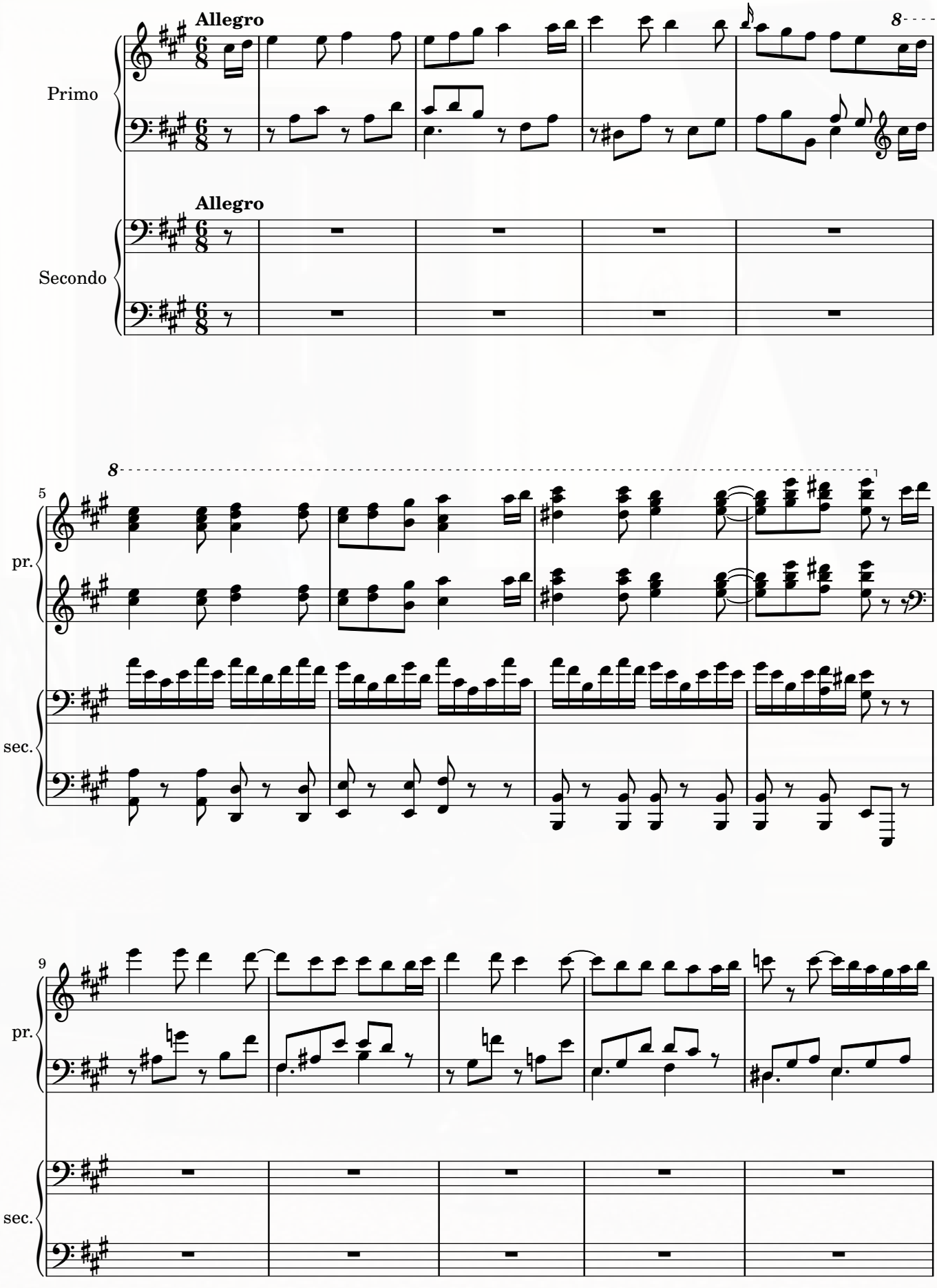
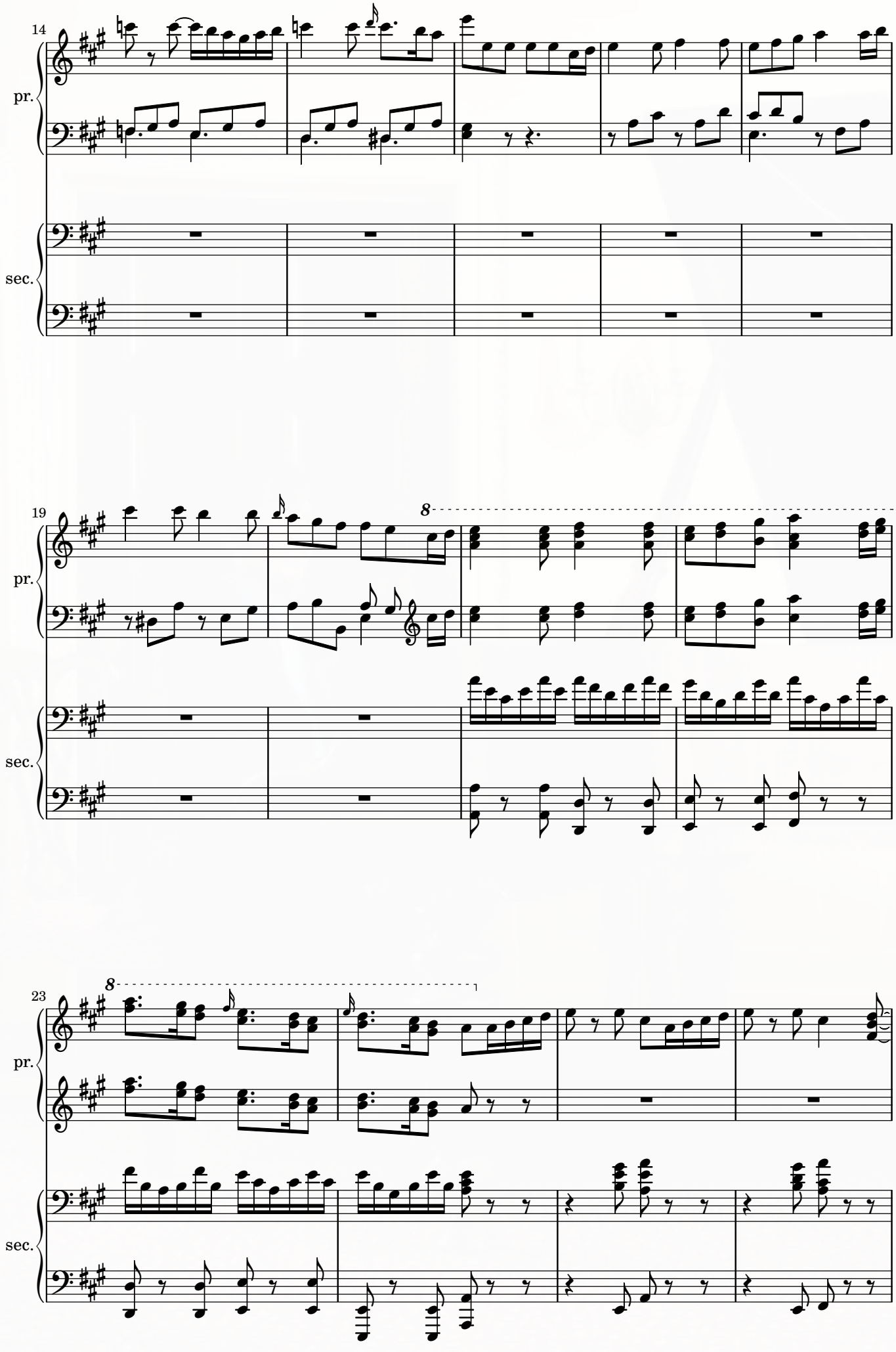
XIX. Rondo
(In Memoriam Amadeus Mozart)

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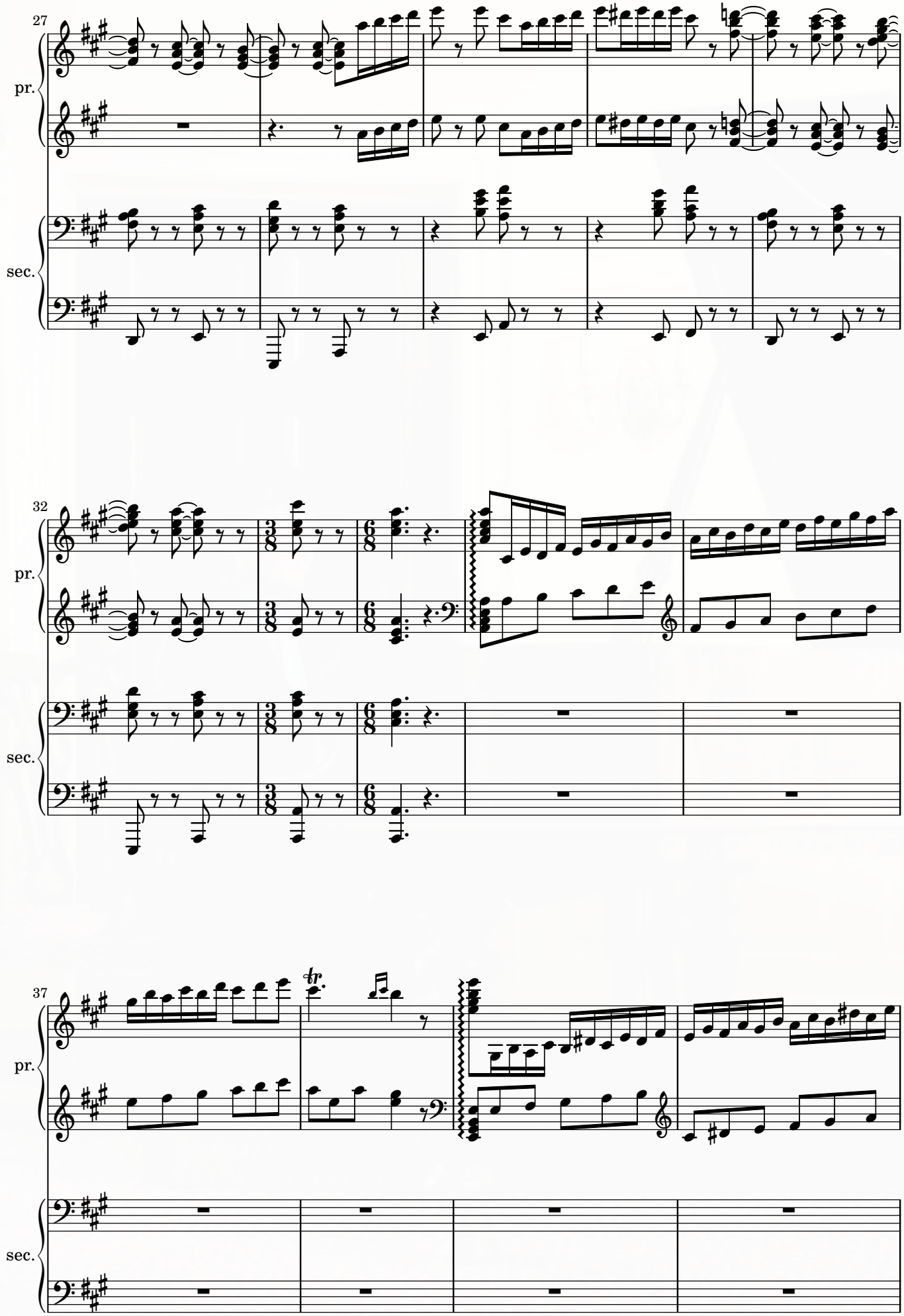
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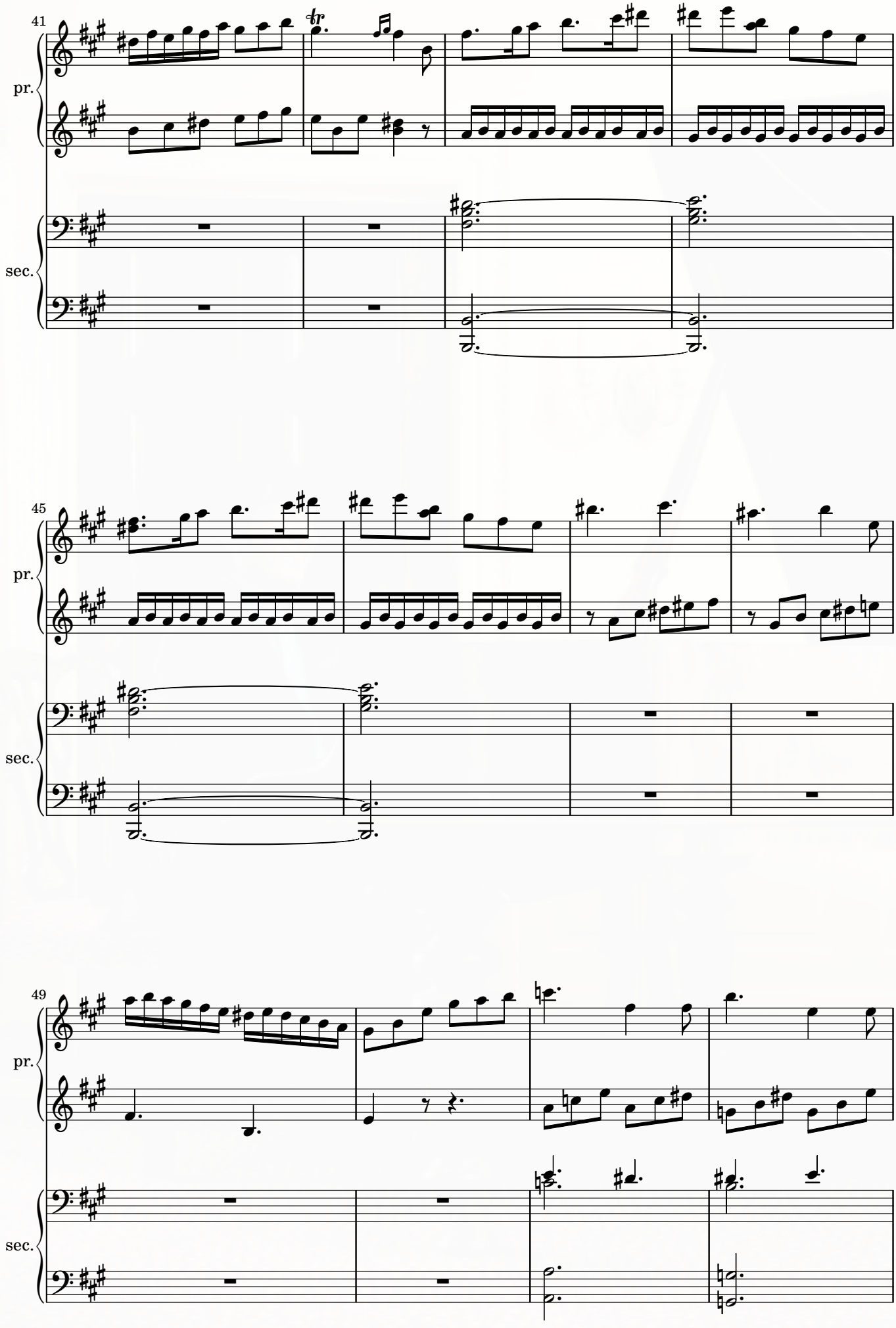
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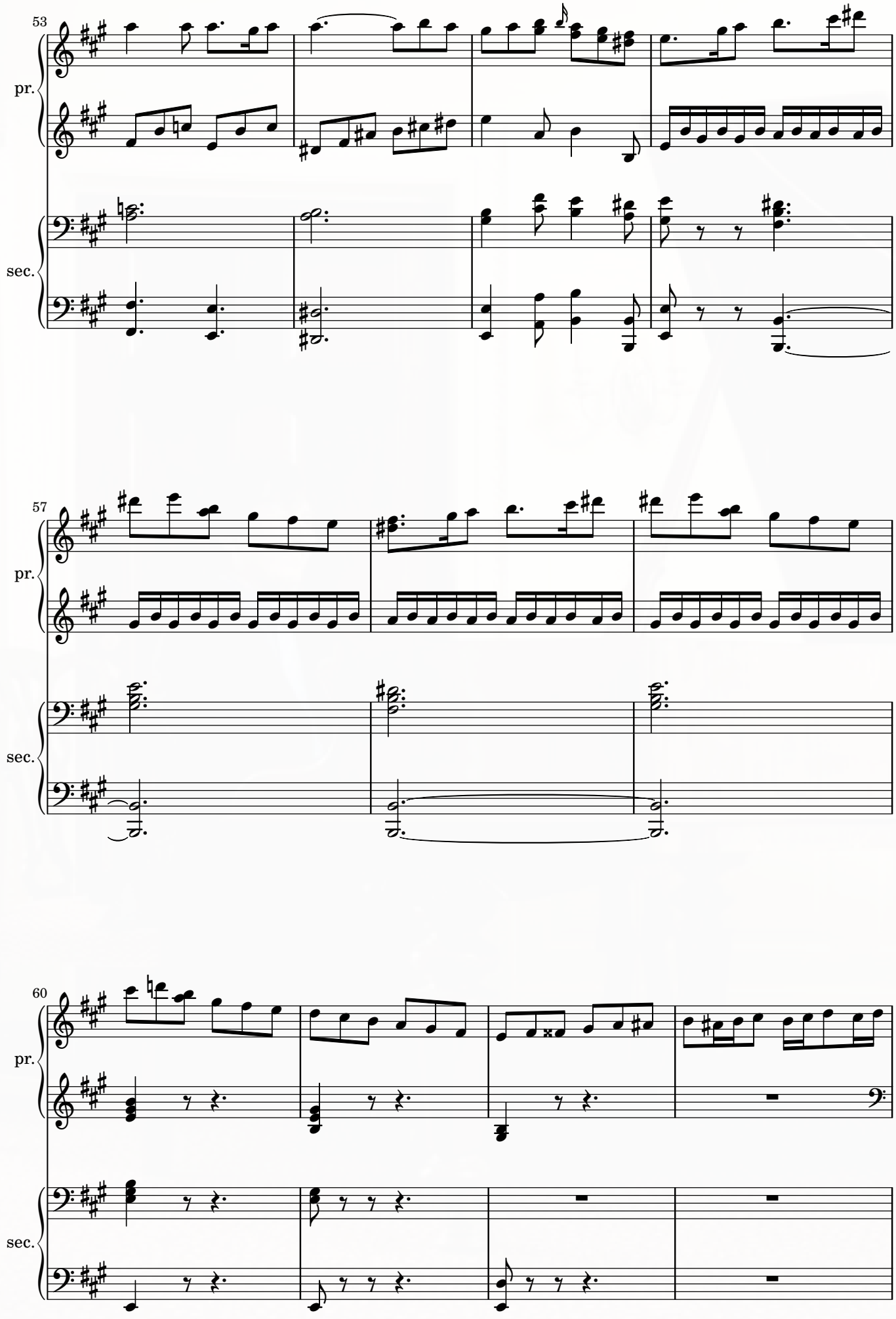
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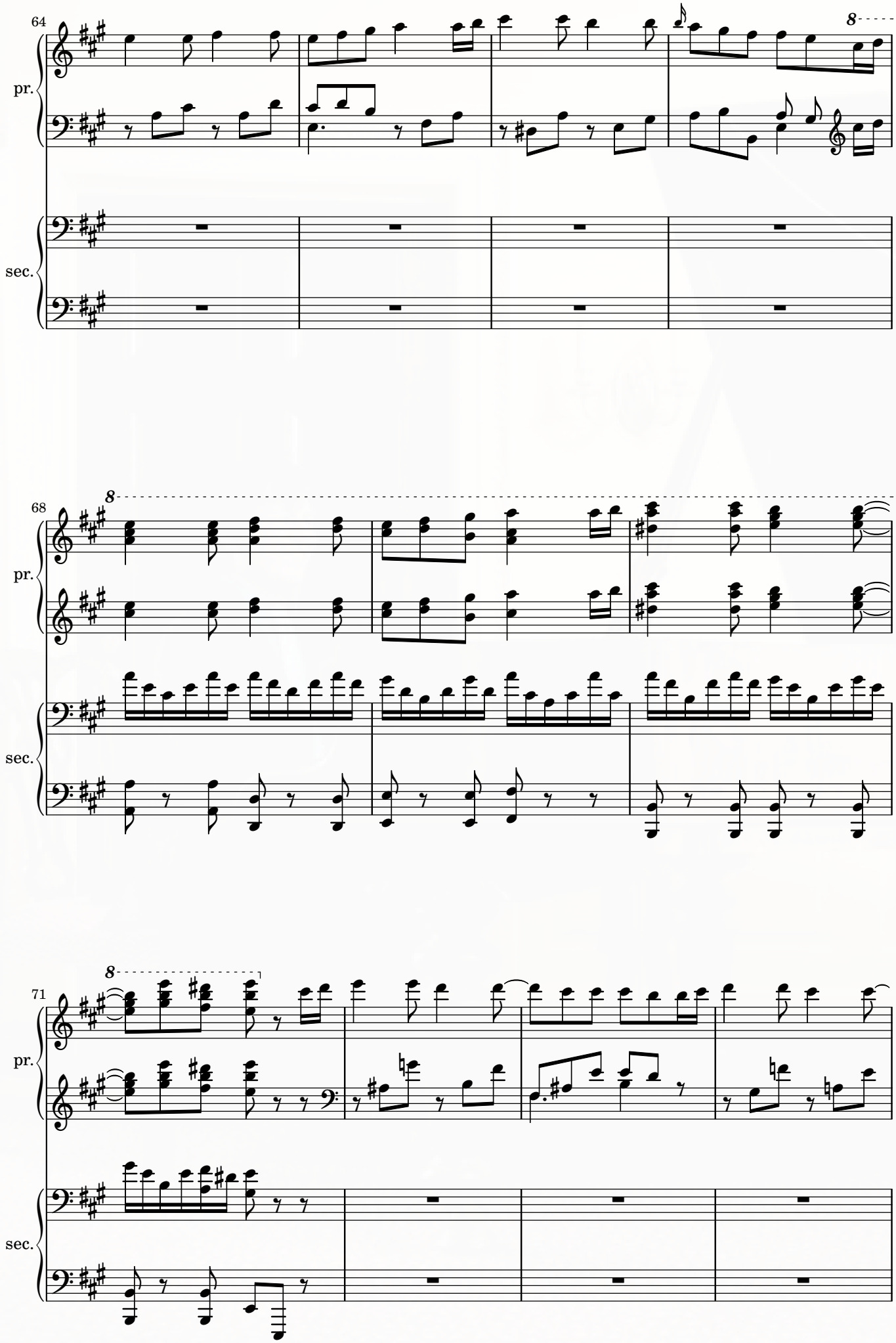
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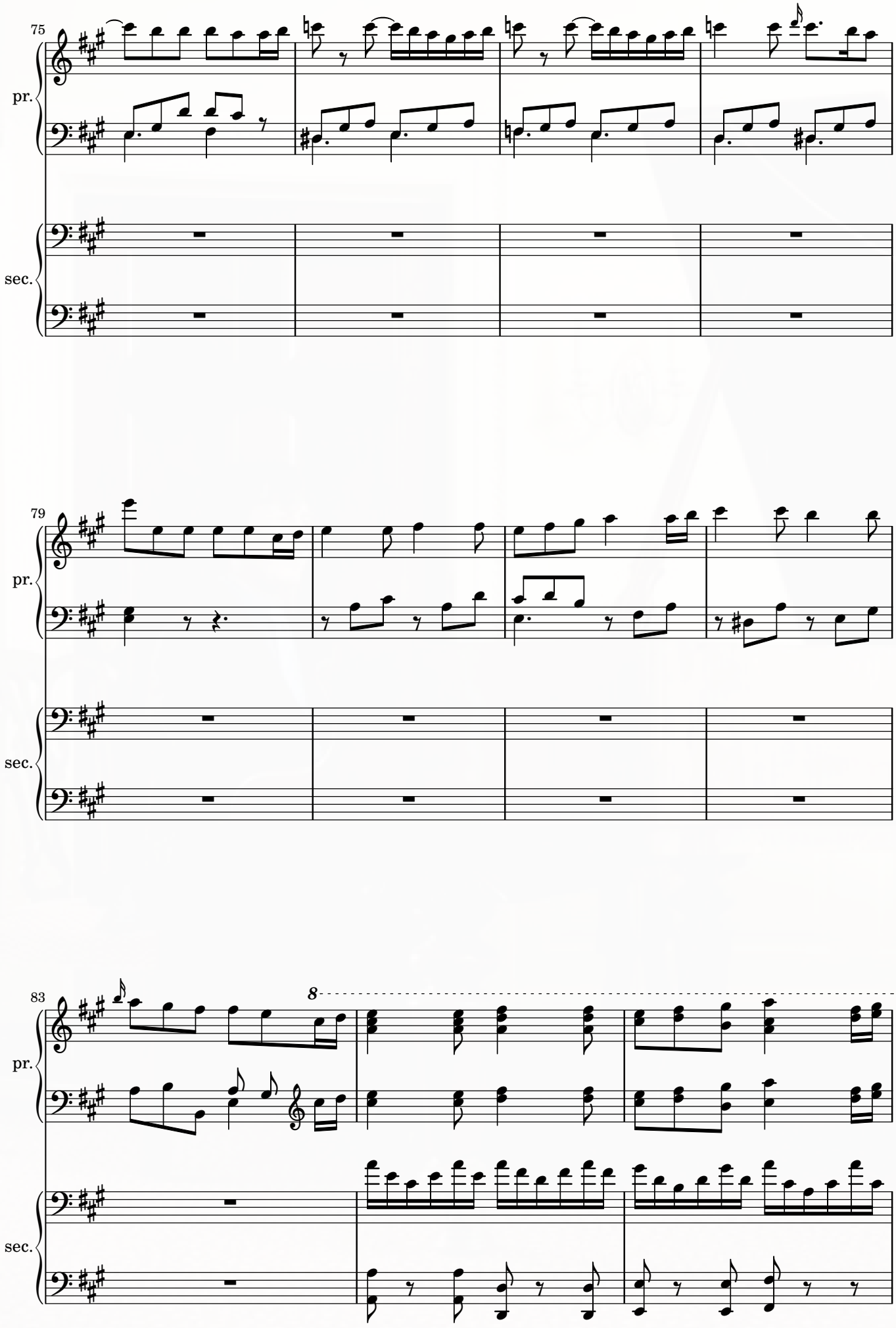
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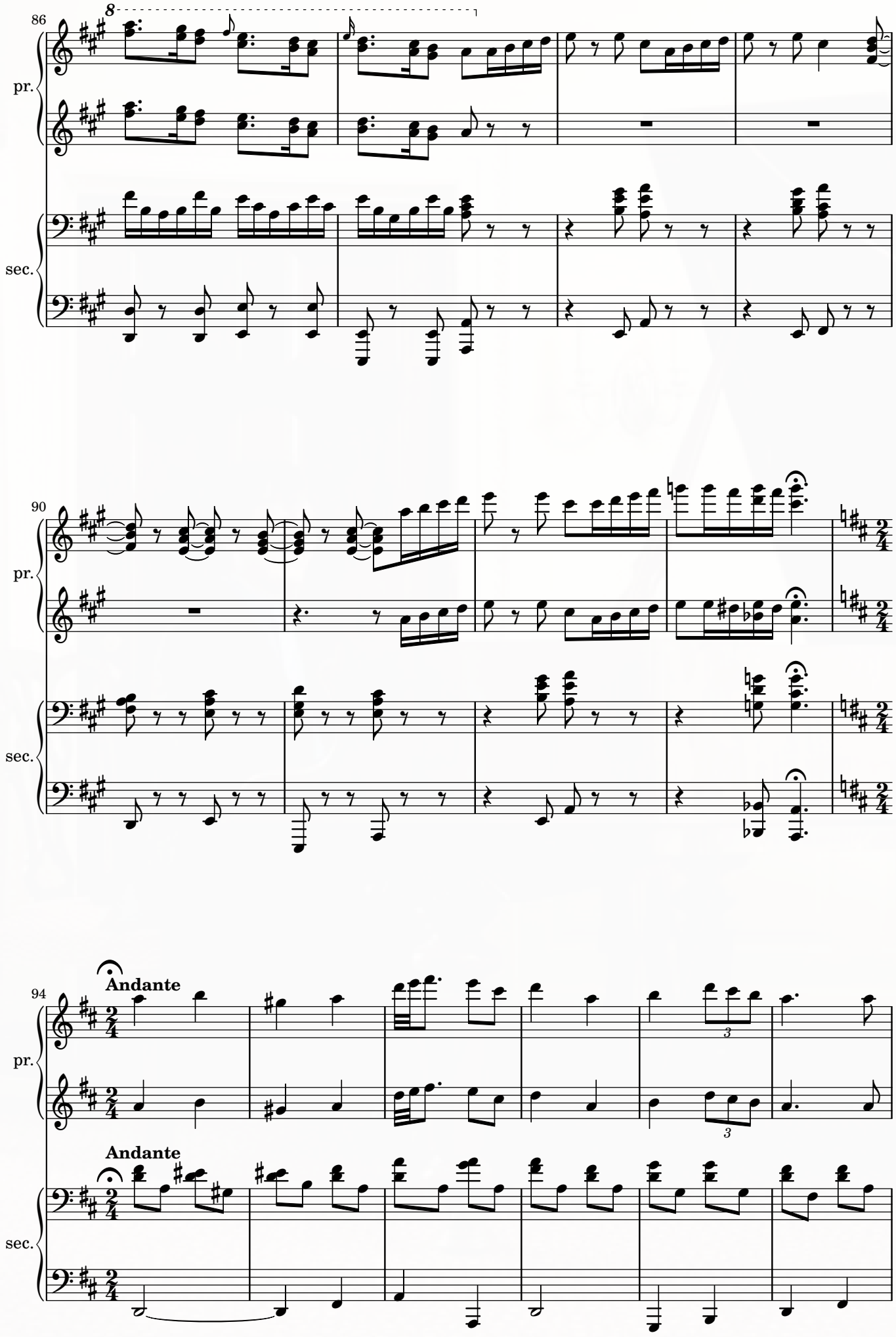
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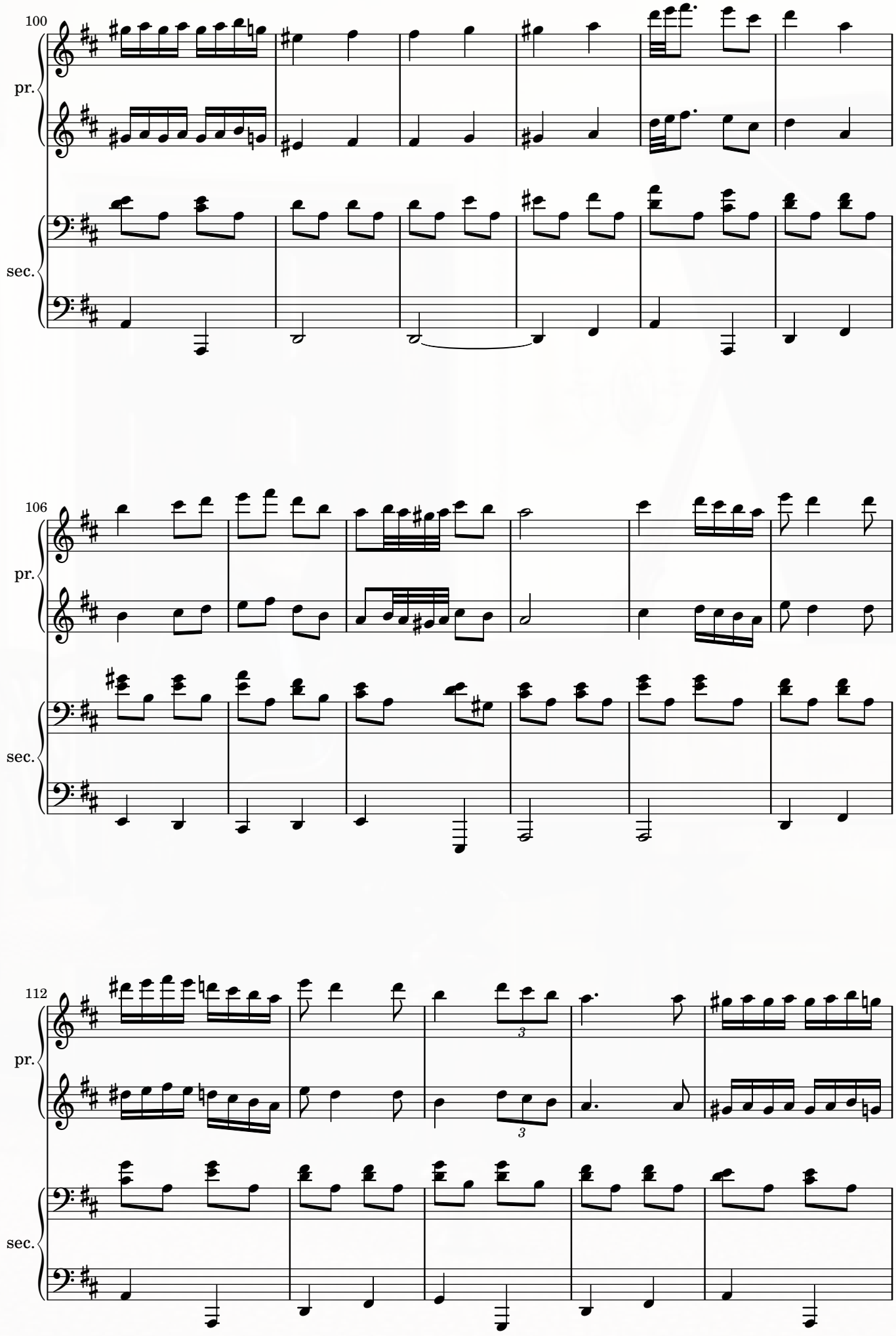
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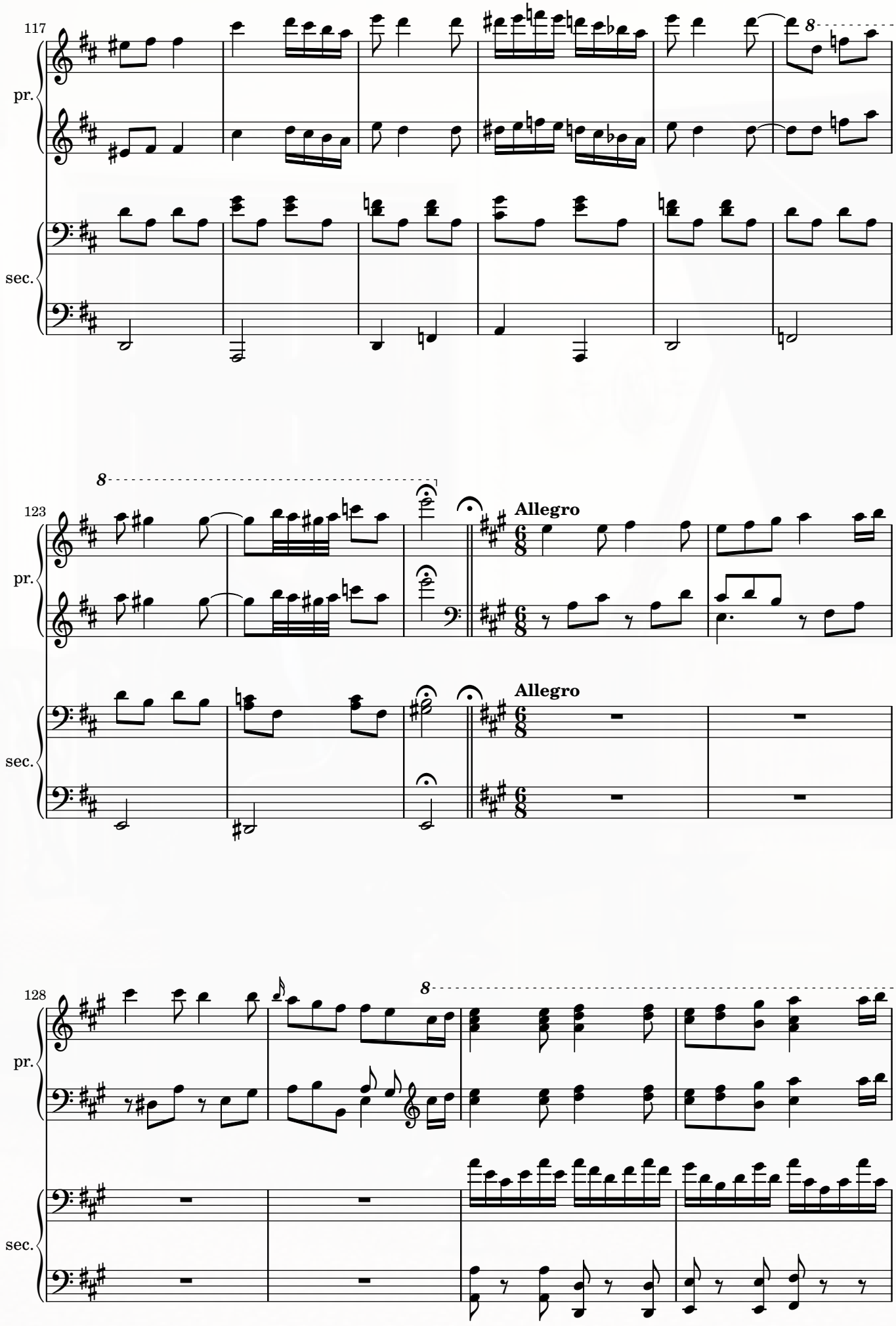
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sec.
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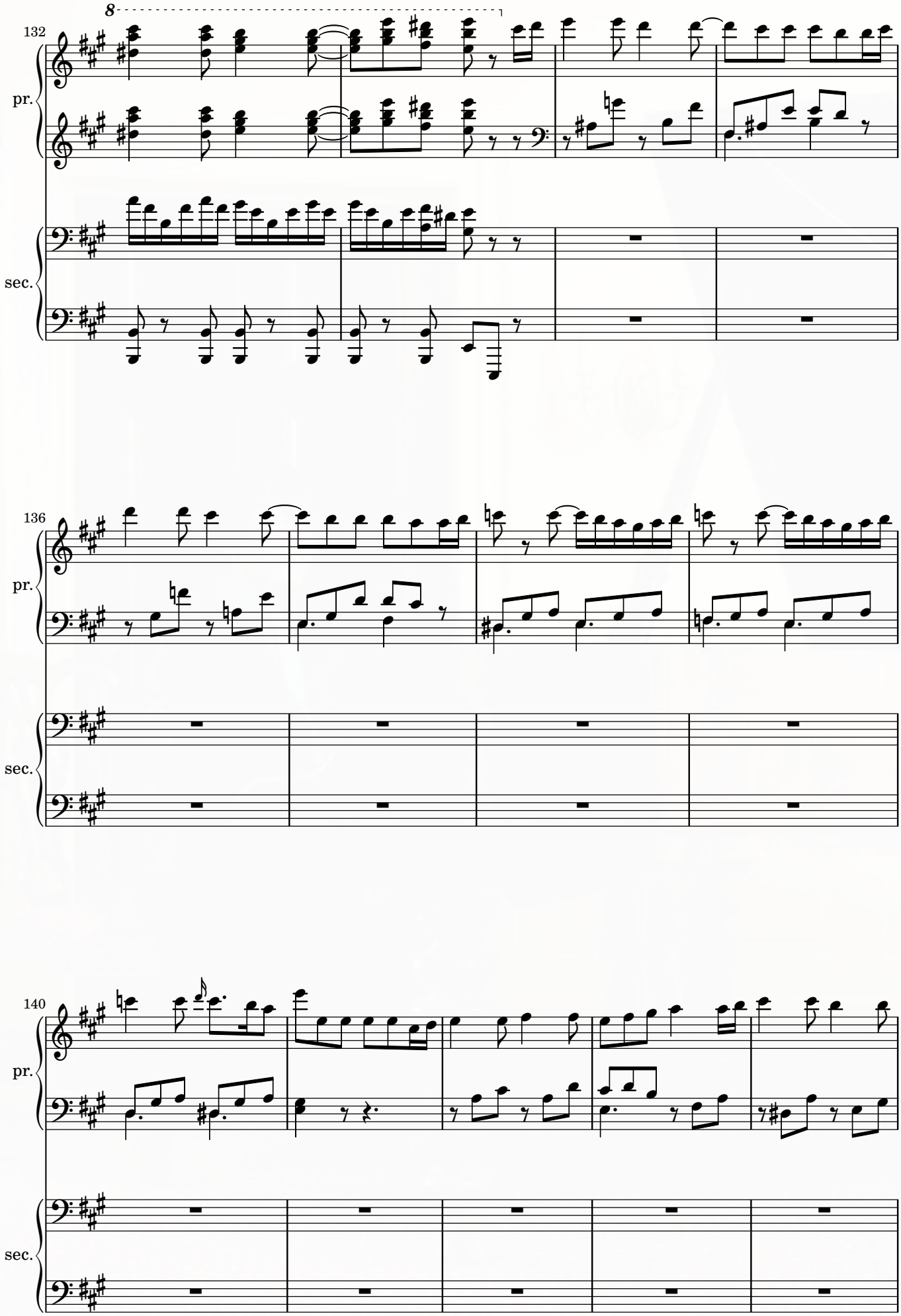
Allegro
Allegro
128
pr.
sec.
8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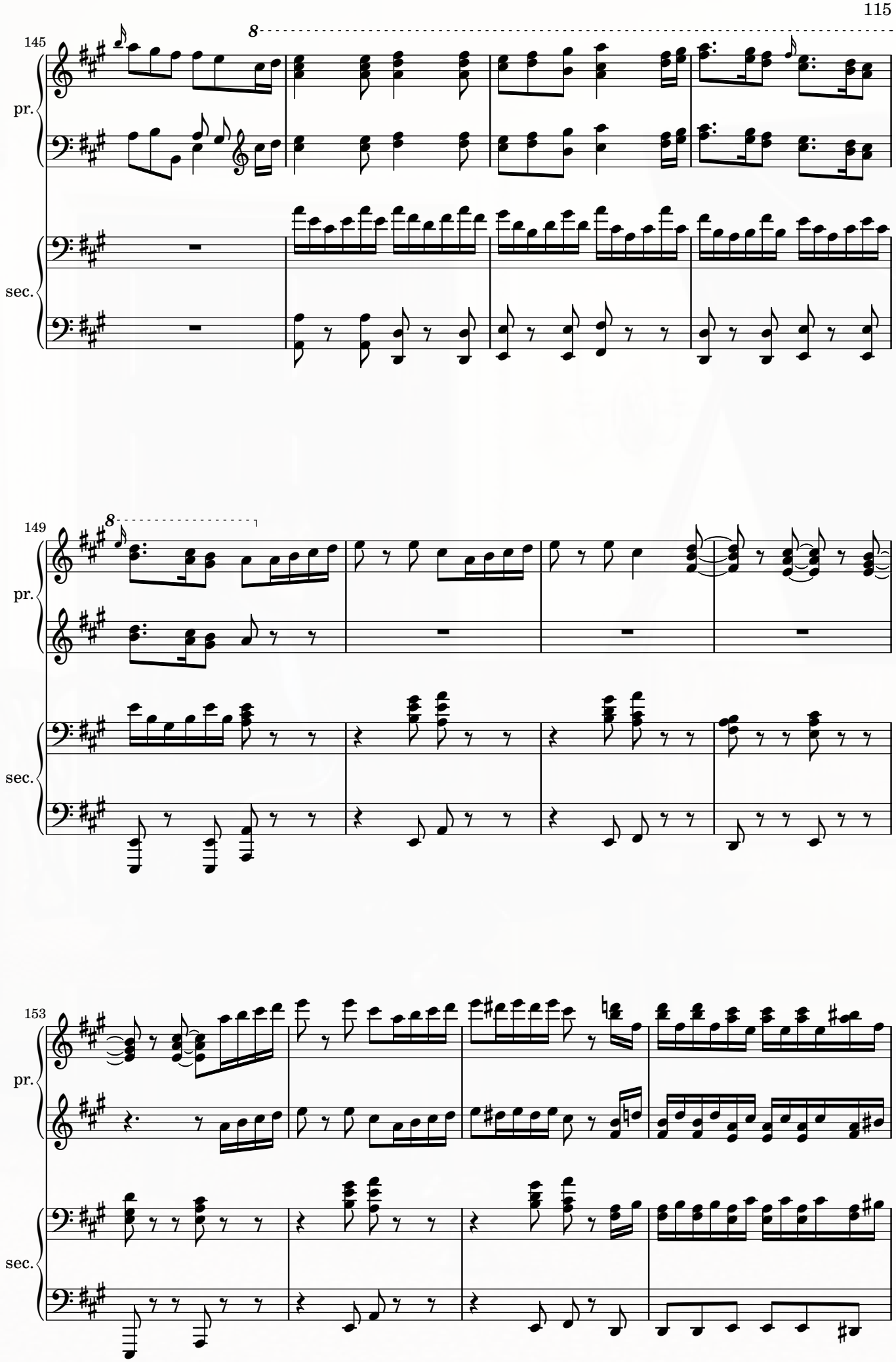
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149
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sec.
153
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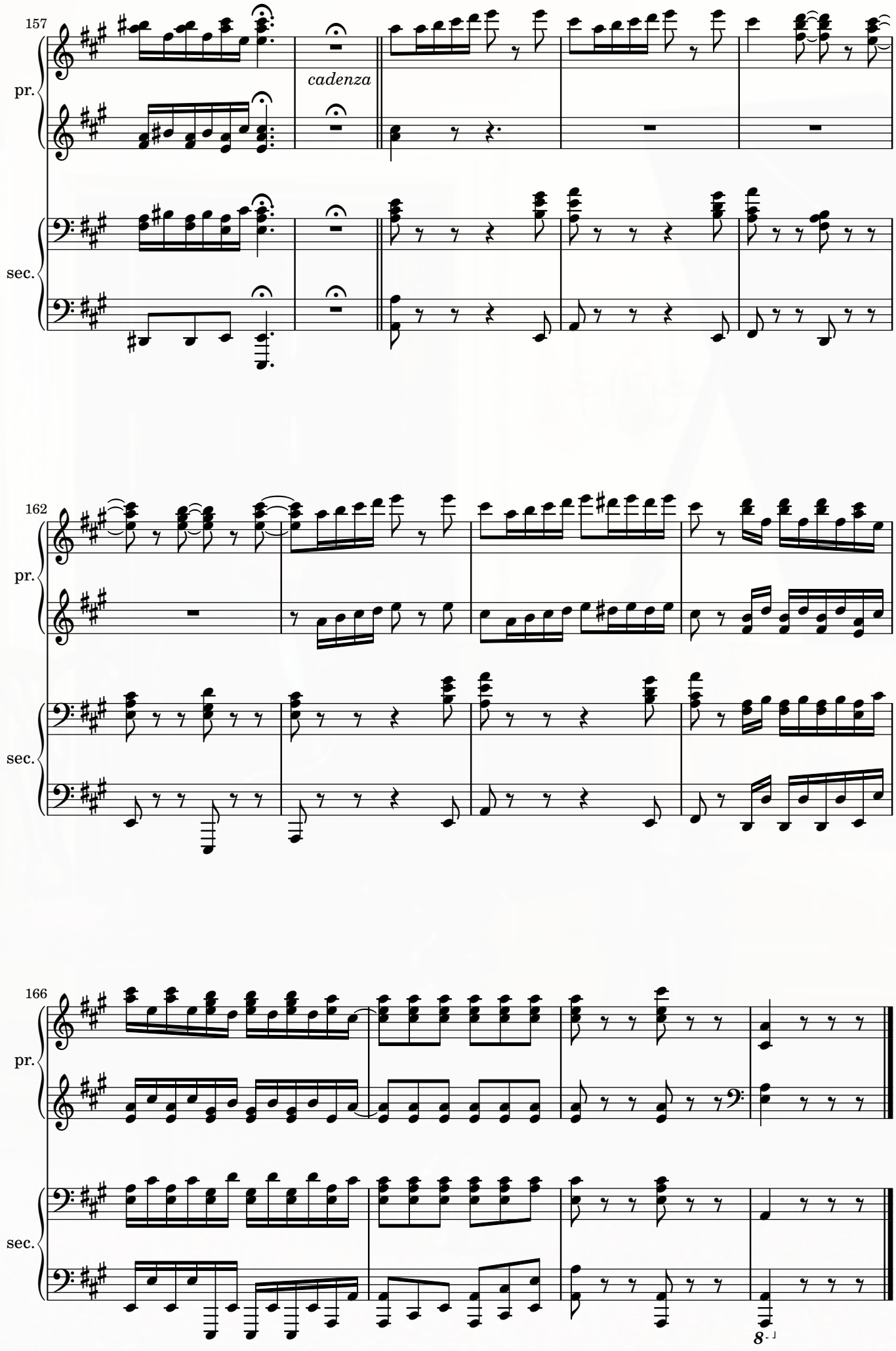
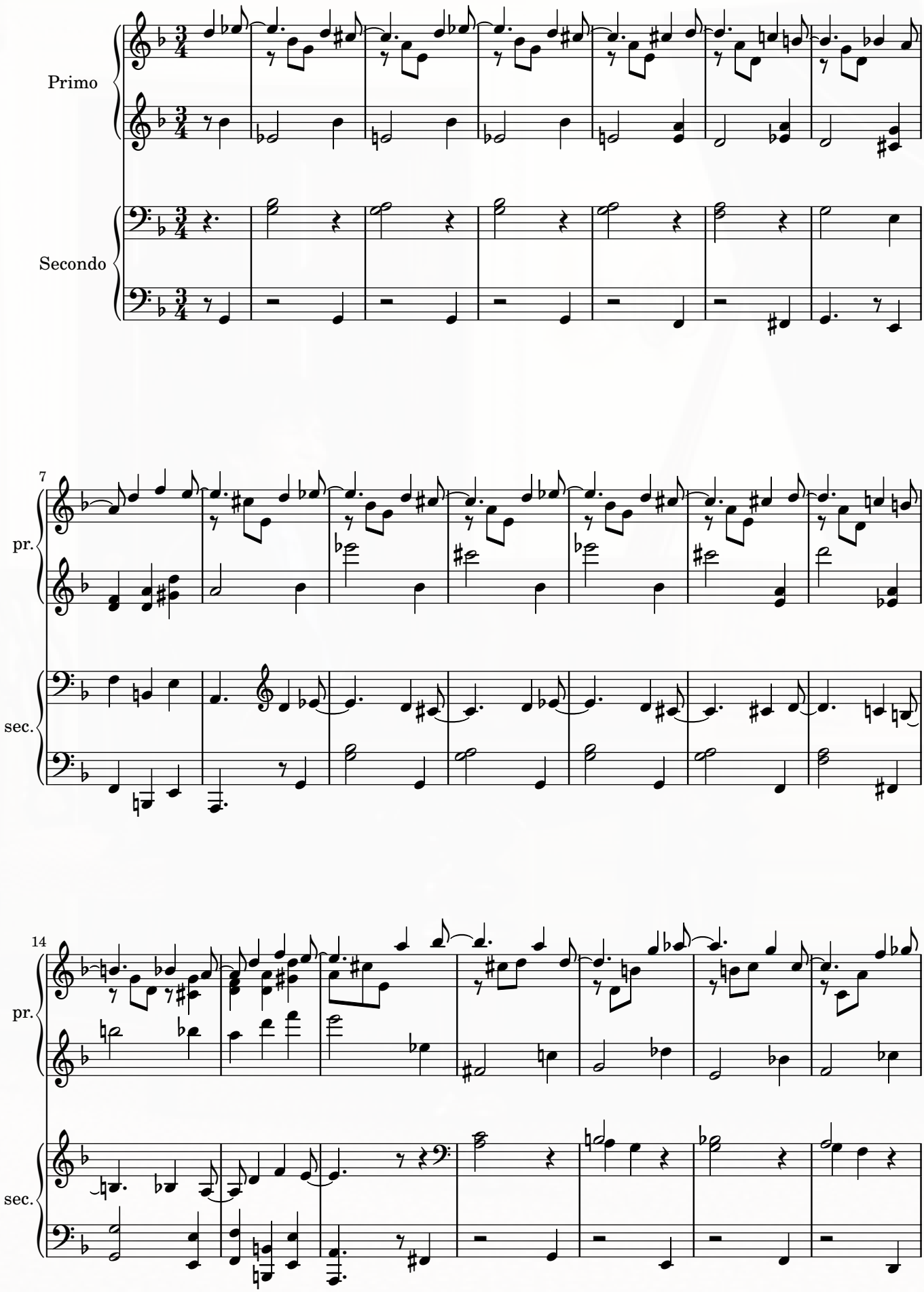
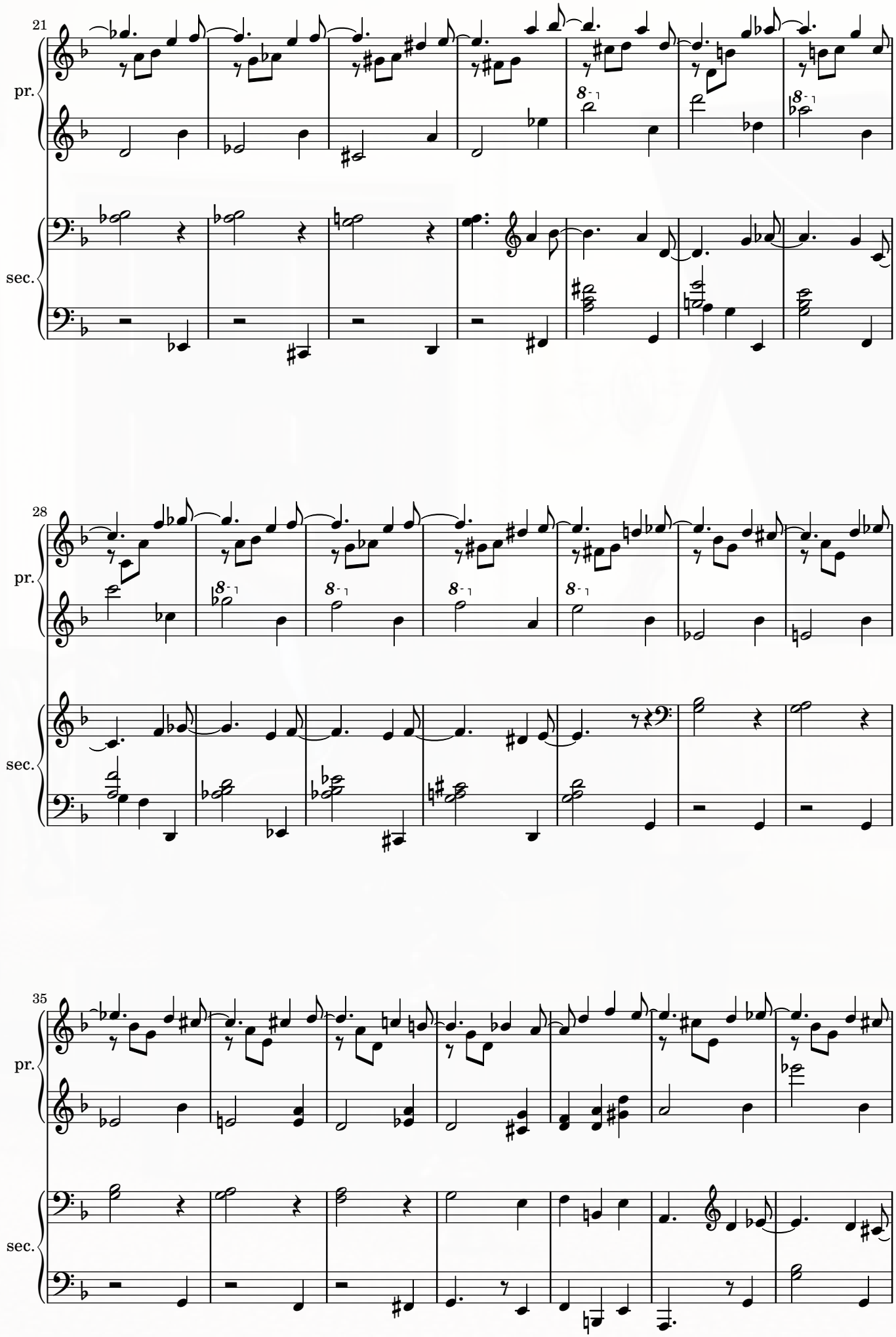
sec.


157
pr.
cadenza
sec.
162
pr.
sec.
166
pr.
sec.
8

XX. Why?
(In Memoriam Johannes Brahms)

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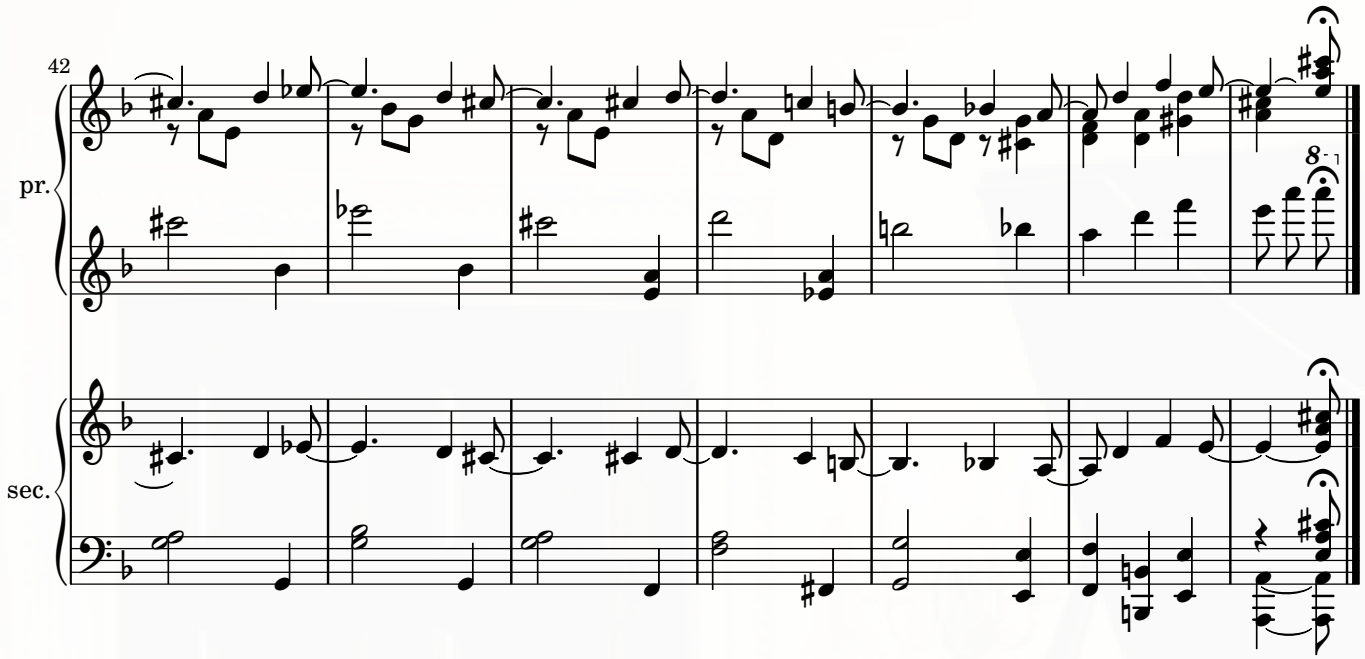
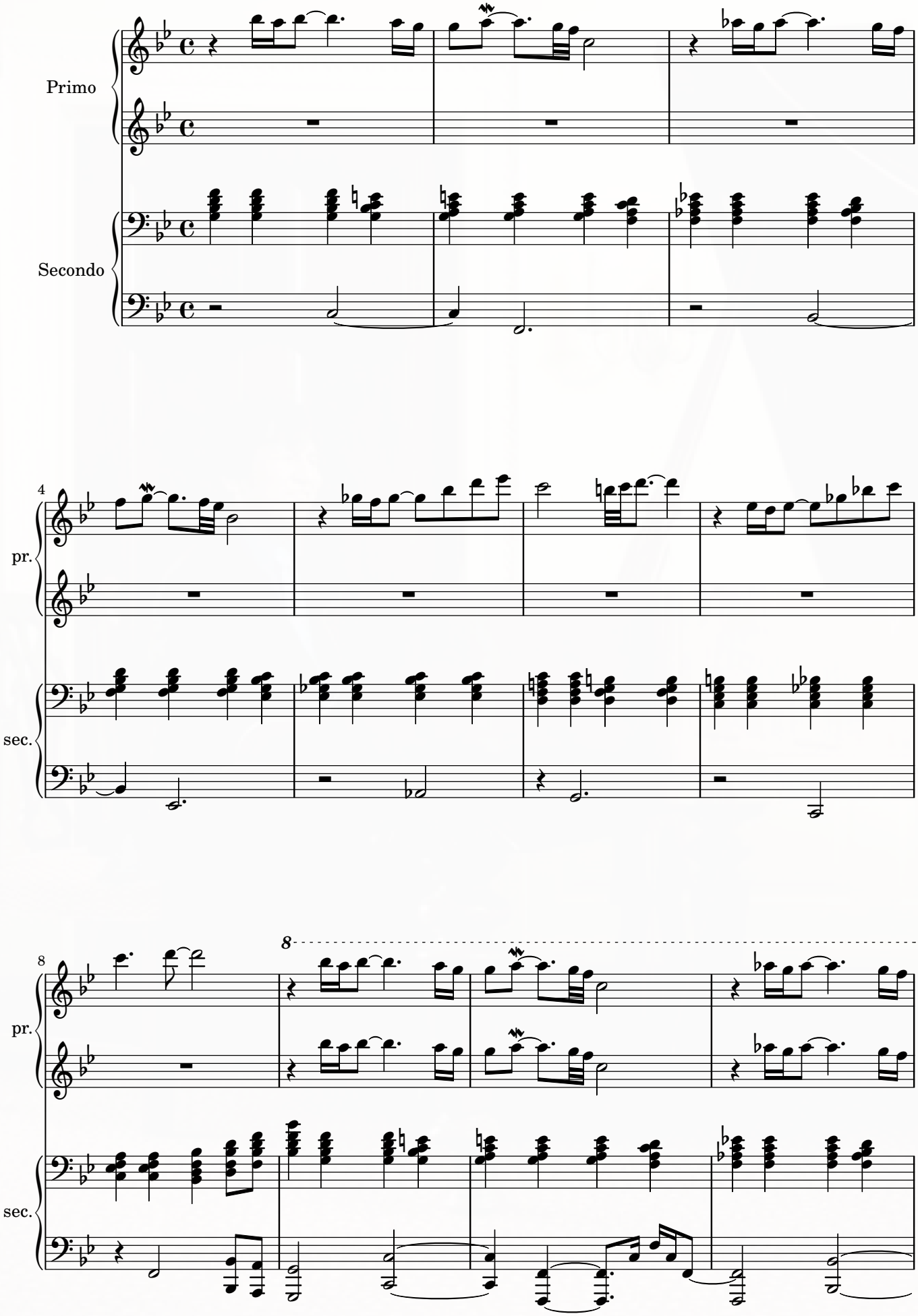
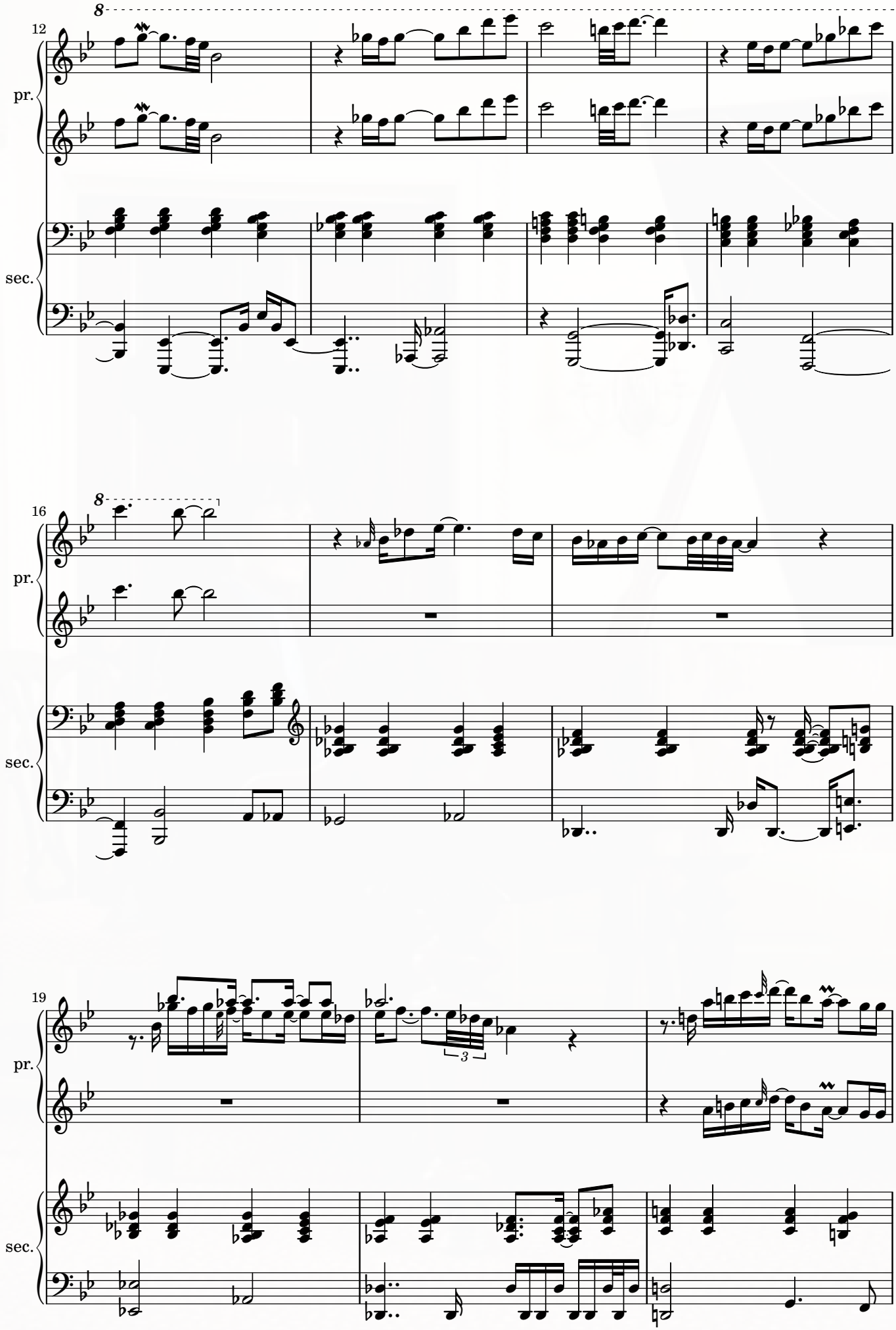

42
pr.
sec.
8

XXI. Confession

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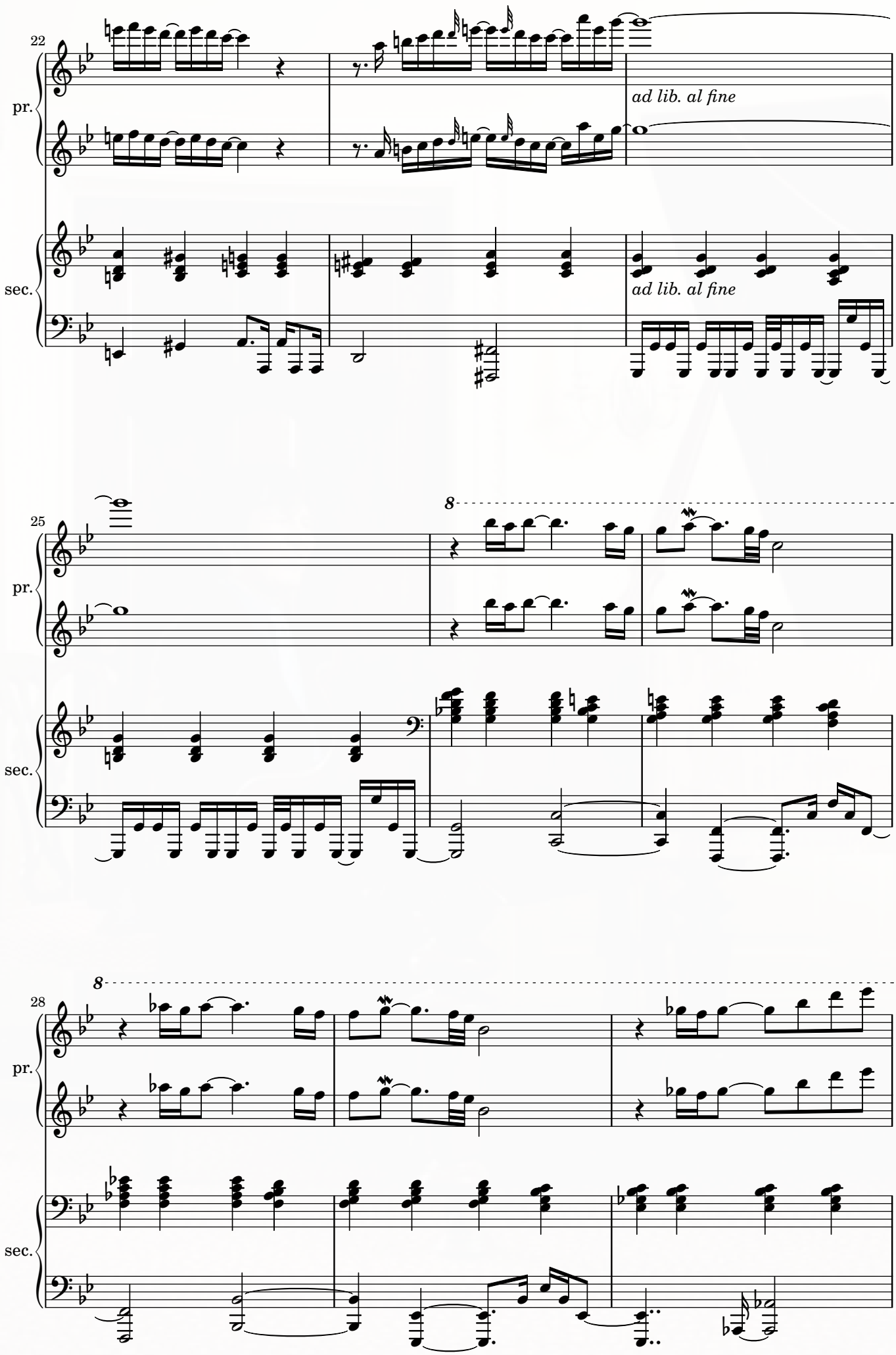
sec.
19
pr.
sec.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sec.
ad lib. al fine
ad lib. al fine
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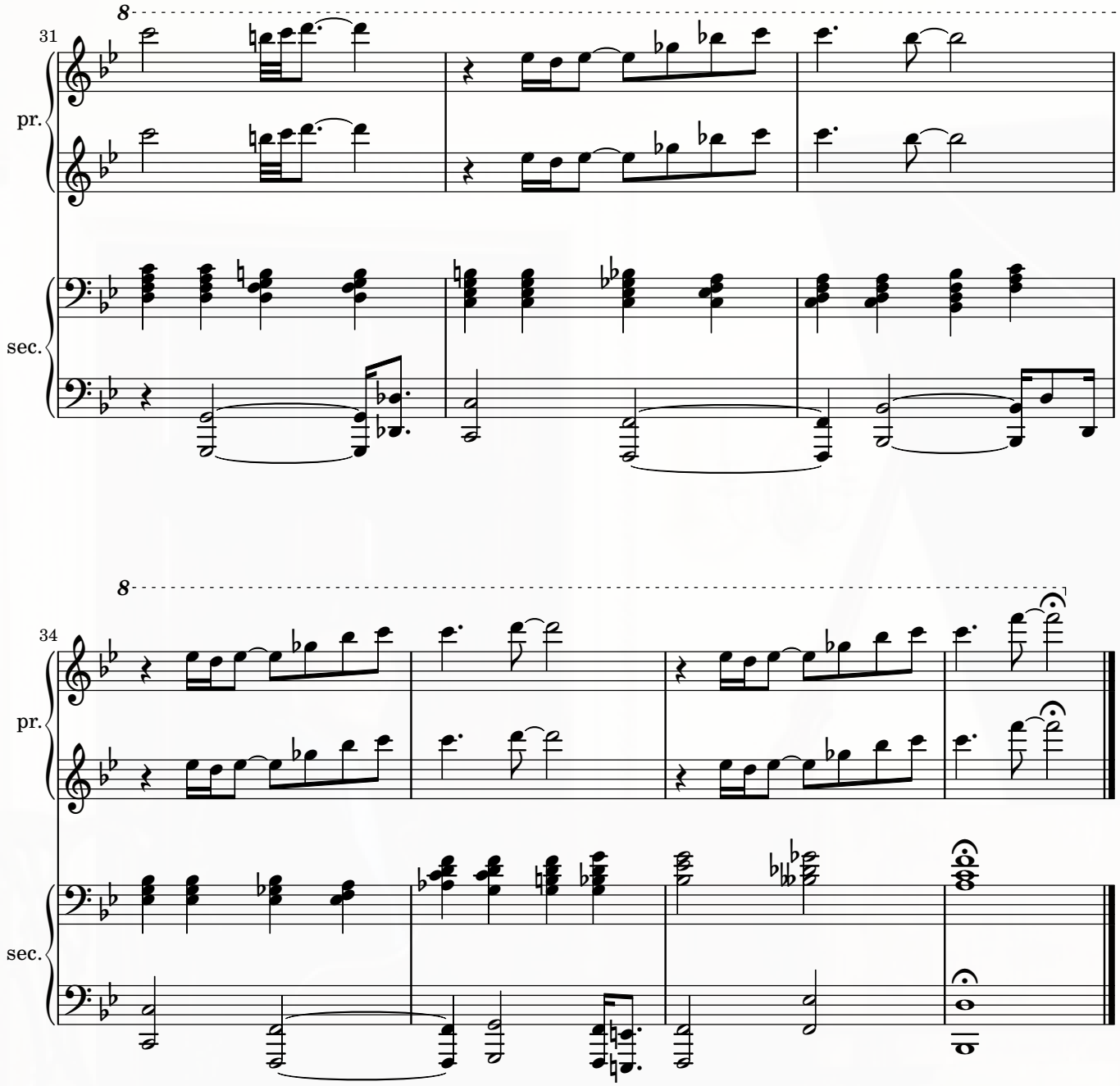
pr.
sec.
8
28
pr.
sec.
8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31
pr.
sec.

8
34
pr.
sec.

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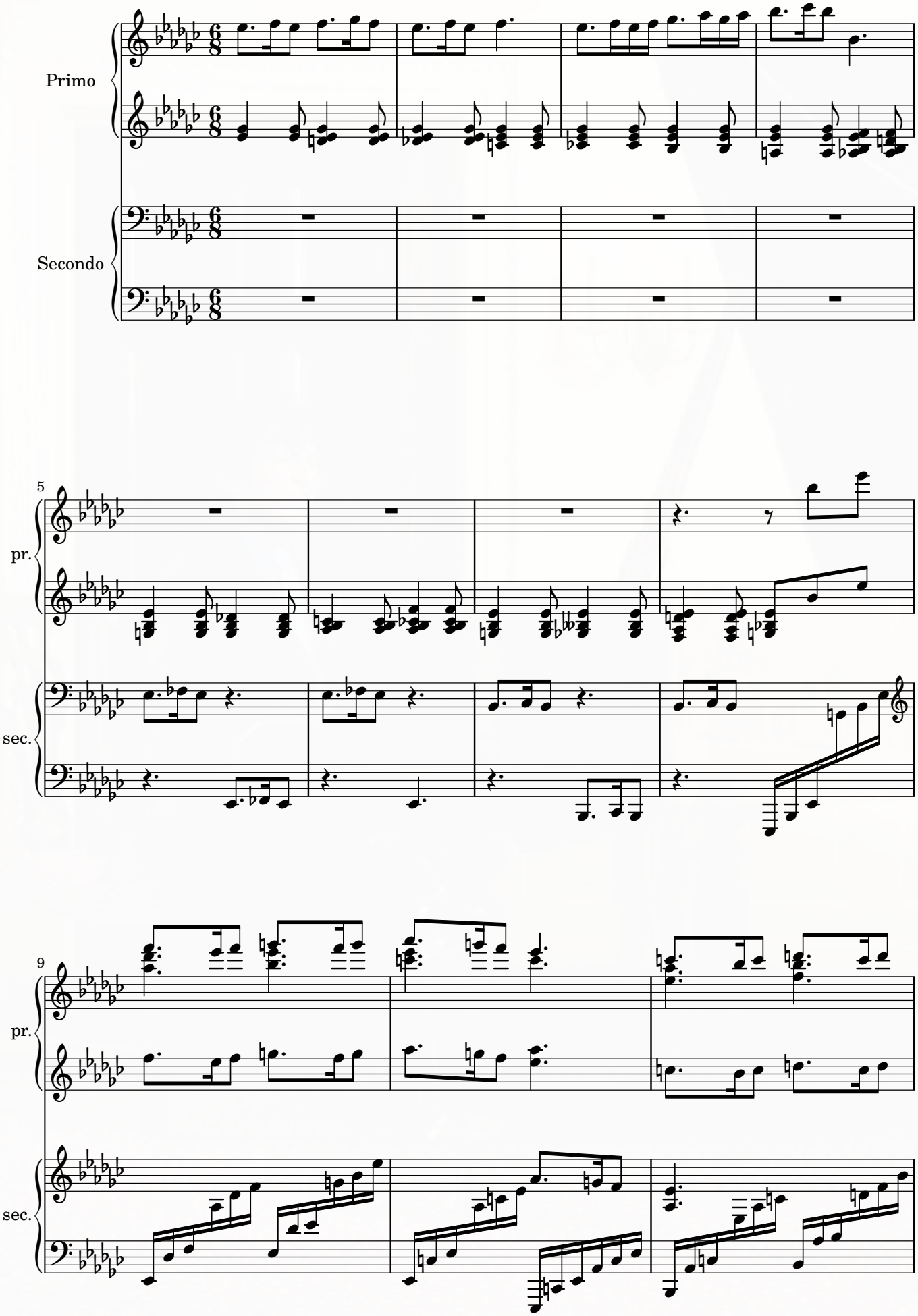

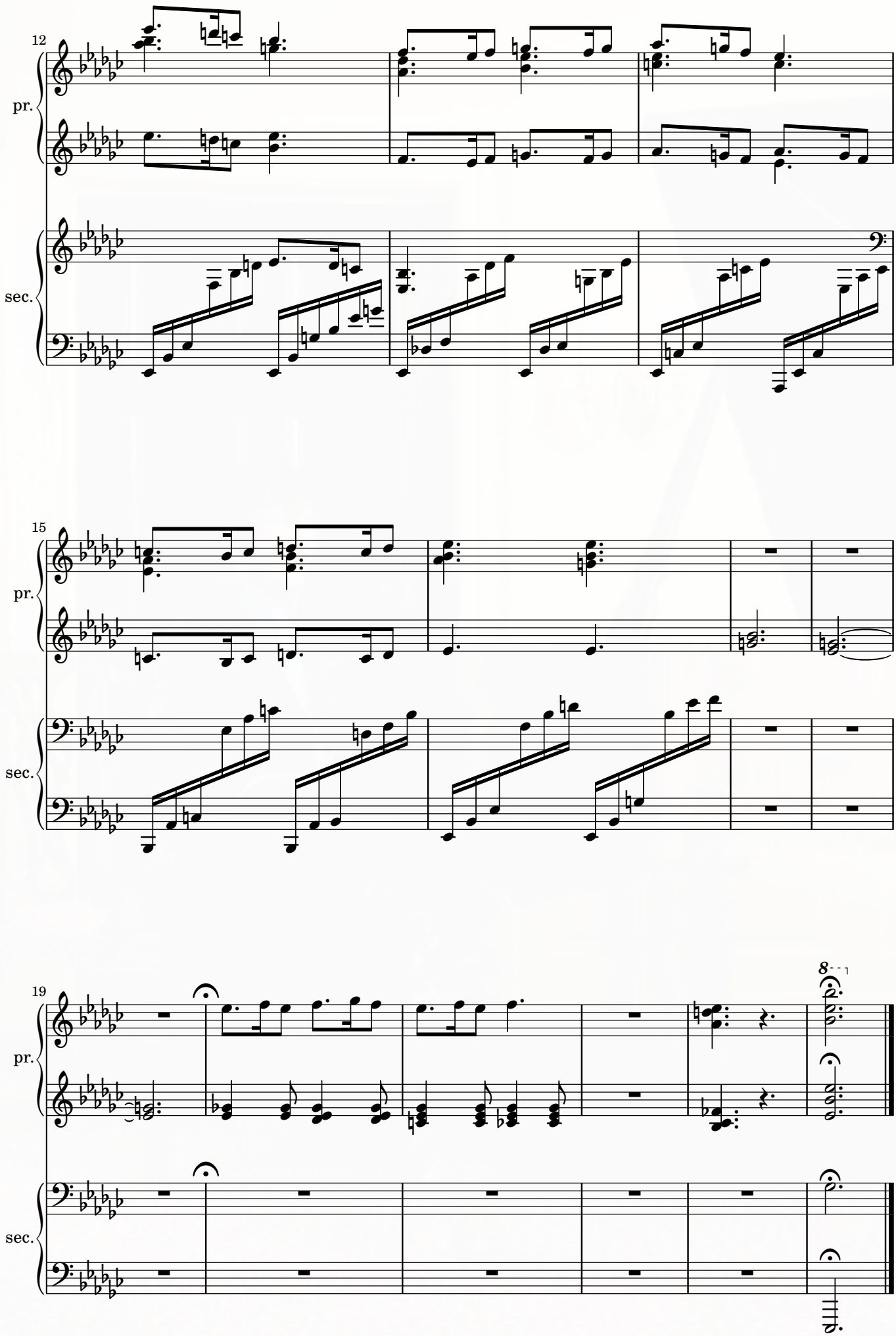
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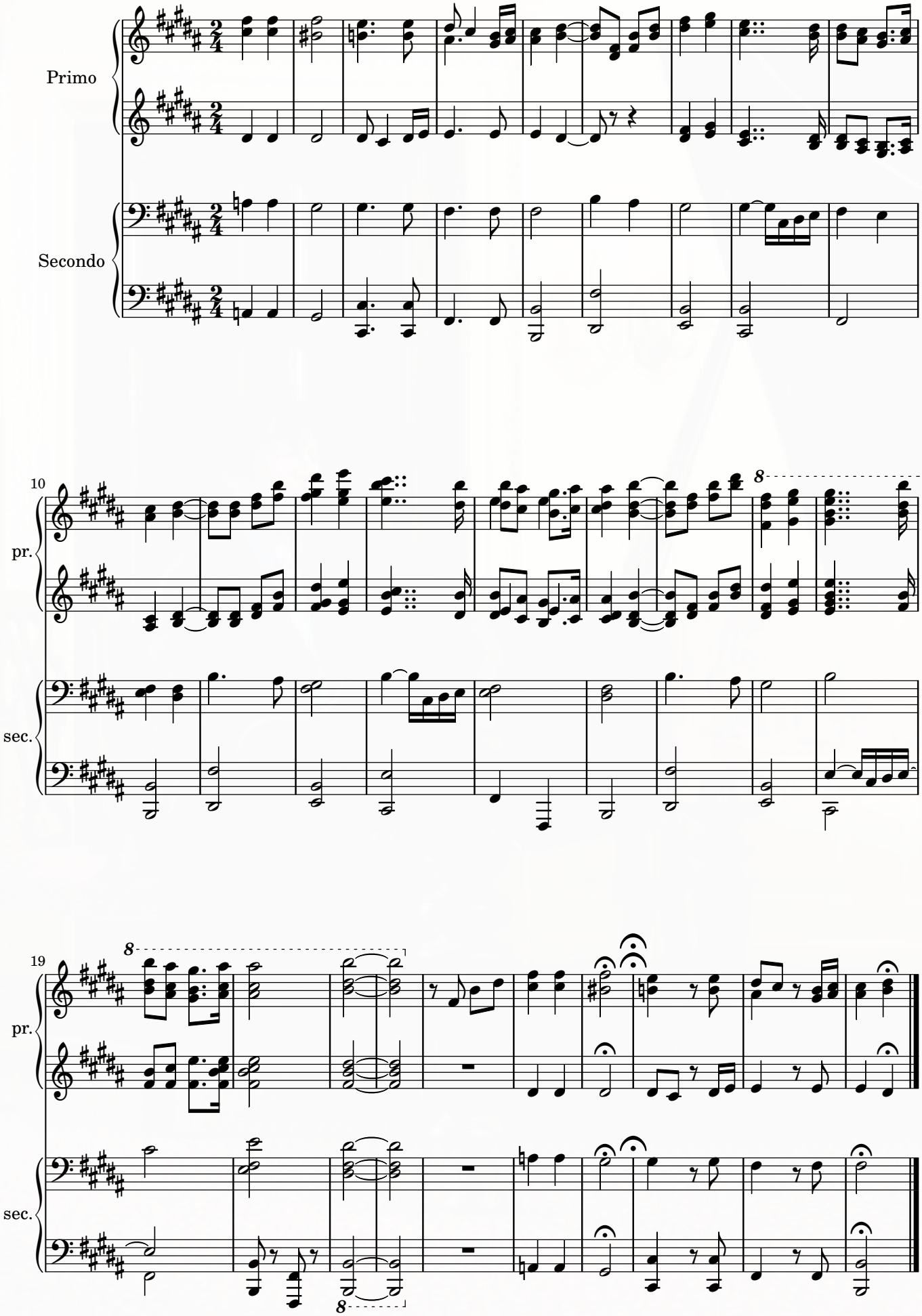
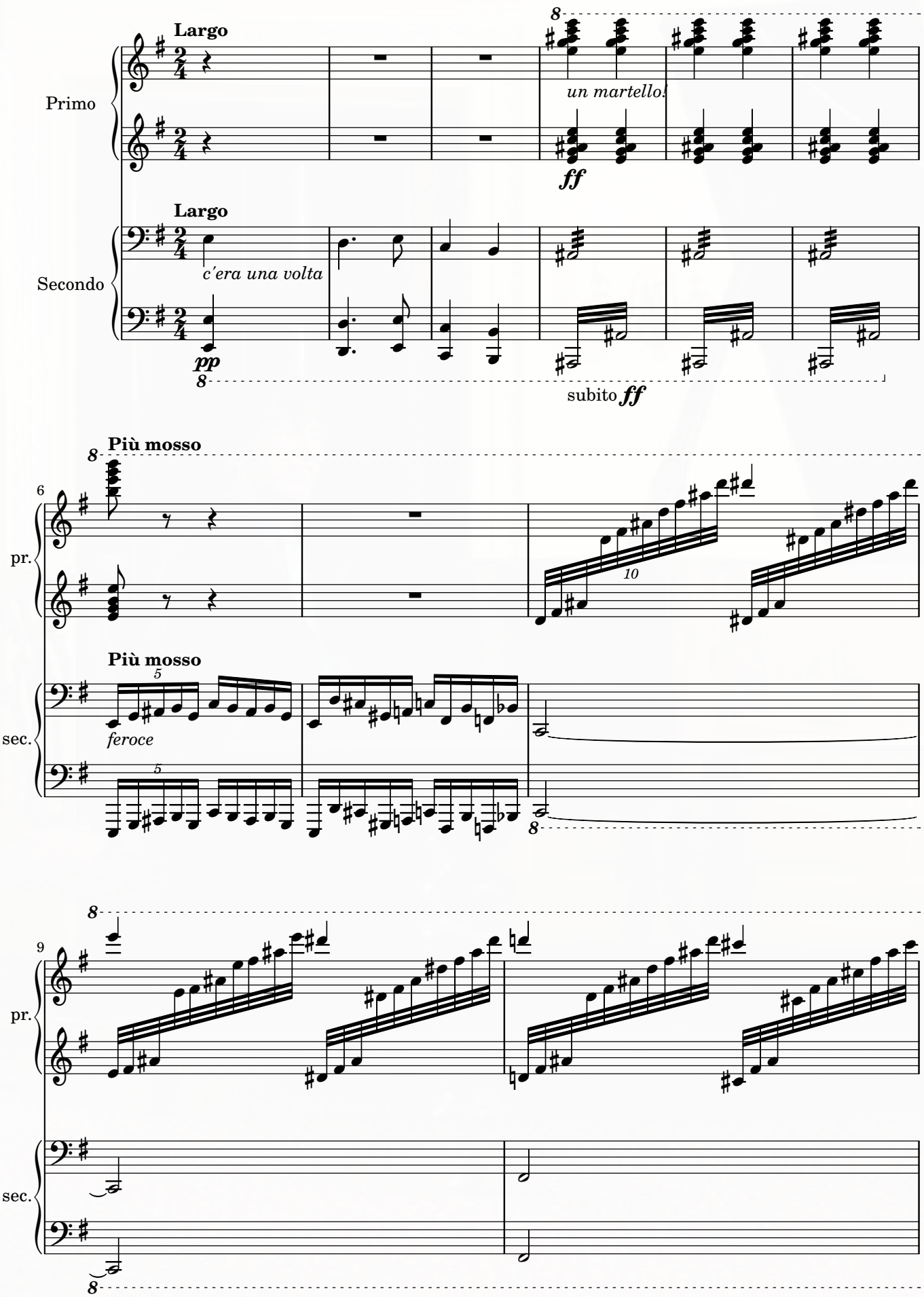
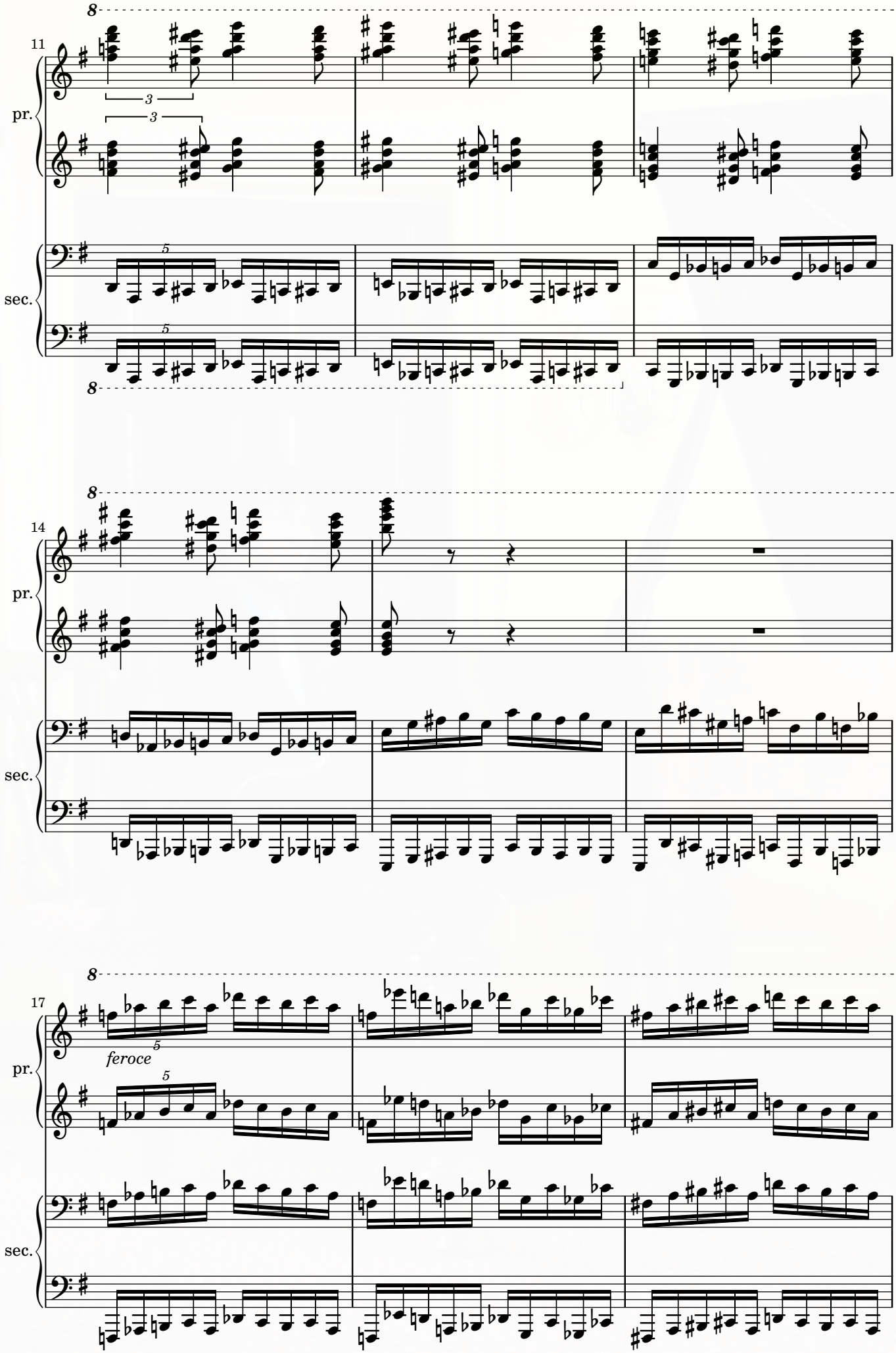
15
pr.
sec.
19
pr.
sec.
8

XXIII. Supplication



XXIV. Upon My Journey To Damascus
(Or, O Death, Where Is Thy Sting?)

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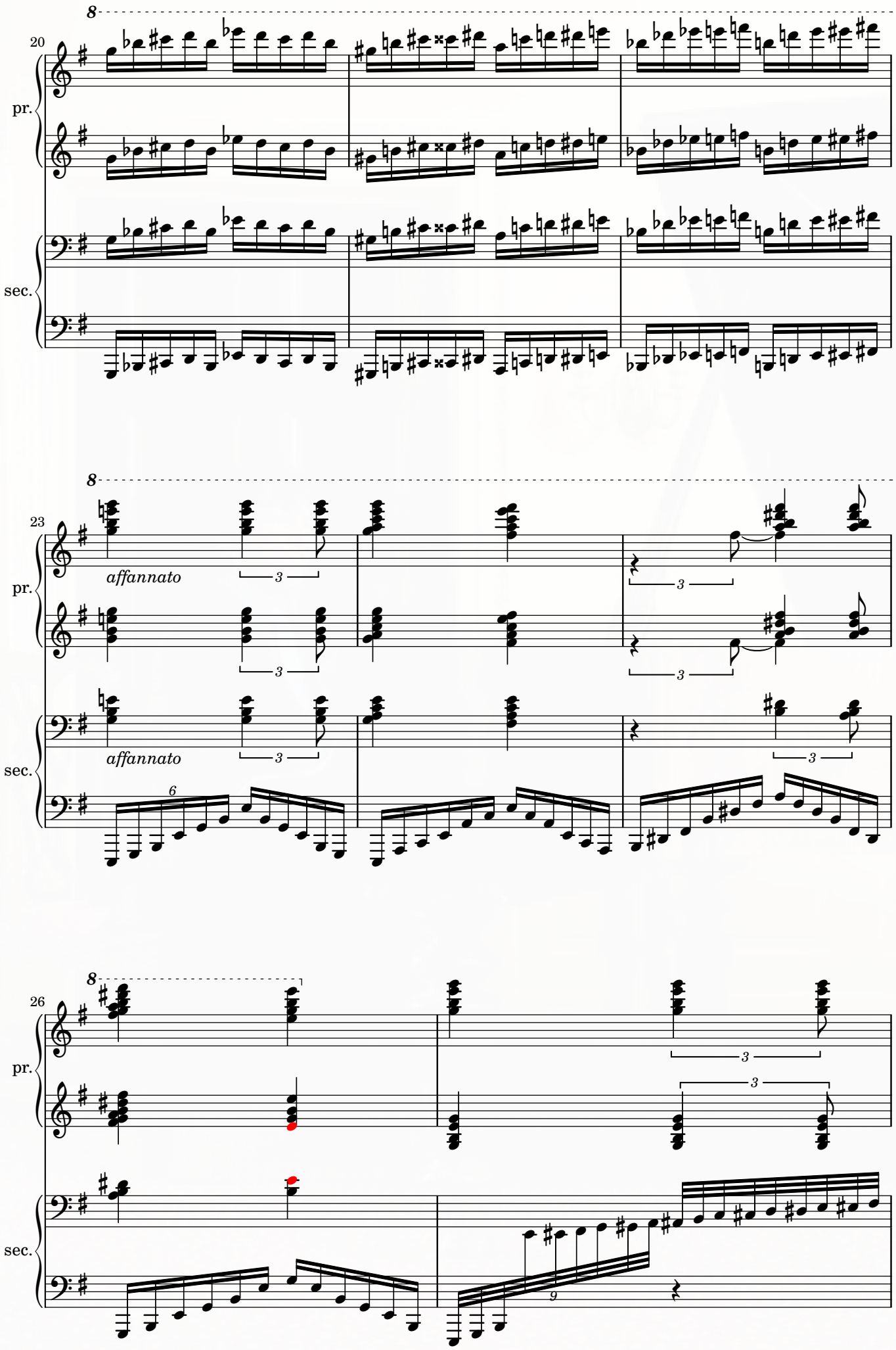
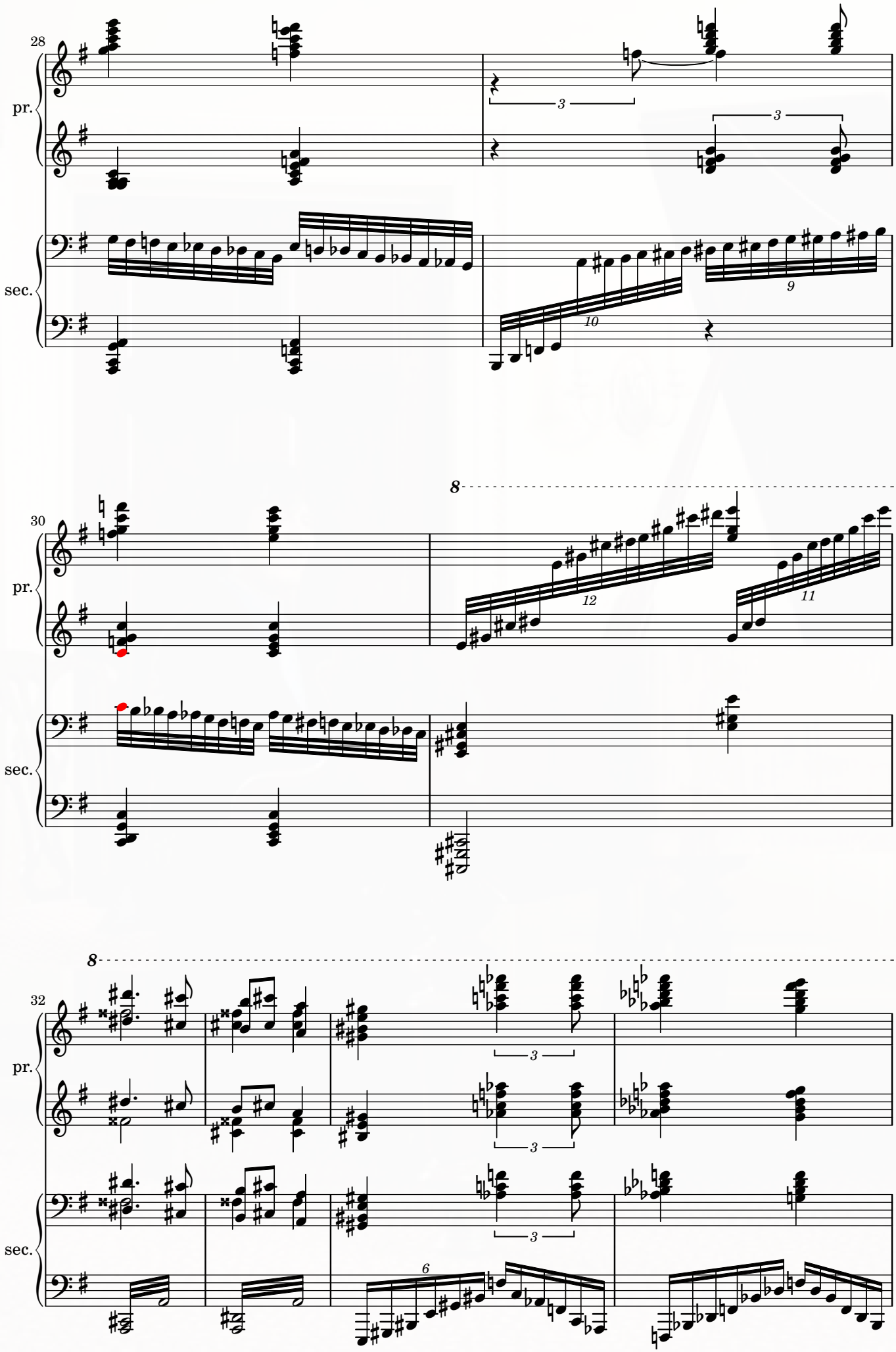
pr.
sec.
14
pr.
sec.
17
feroce
pr.
sec.


8
20
pr.
sec.
8
23
pr.
affannato
3
affannato
sec.
6
8
26
pr.
3
3
sec.
9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pr.
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3
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8
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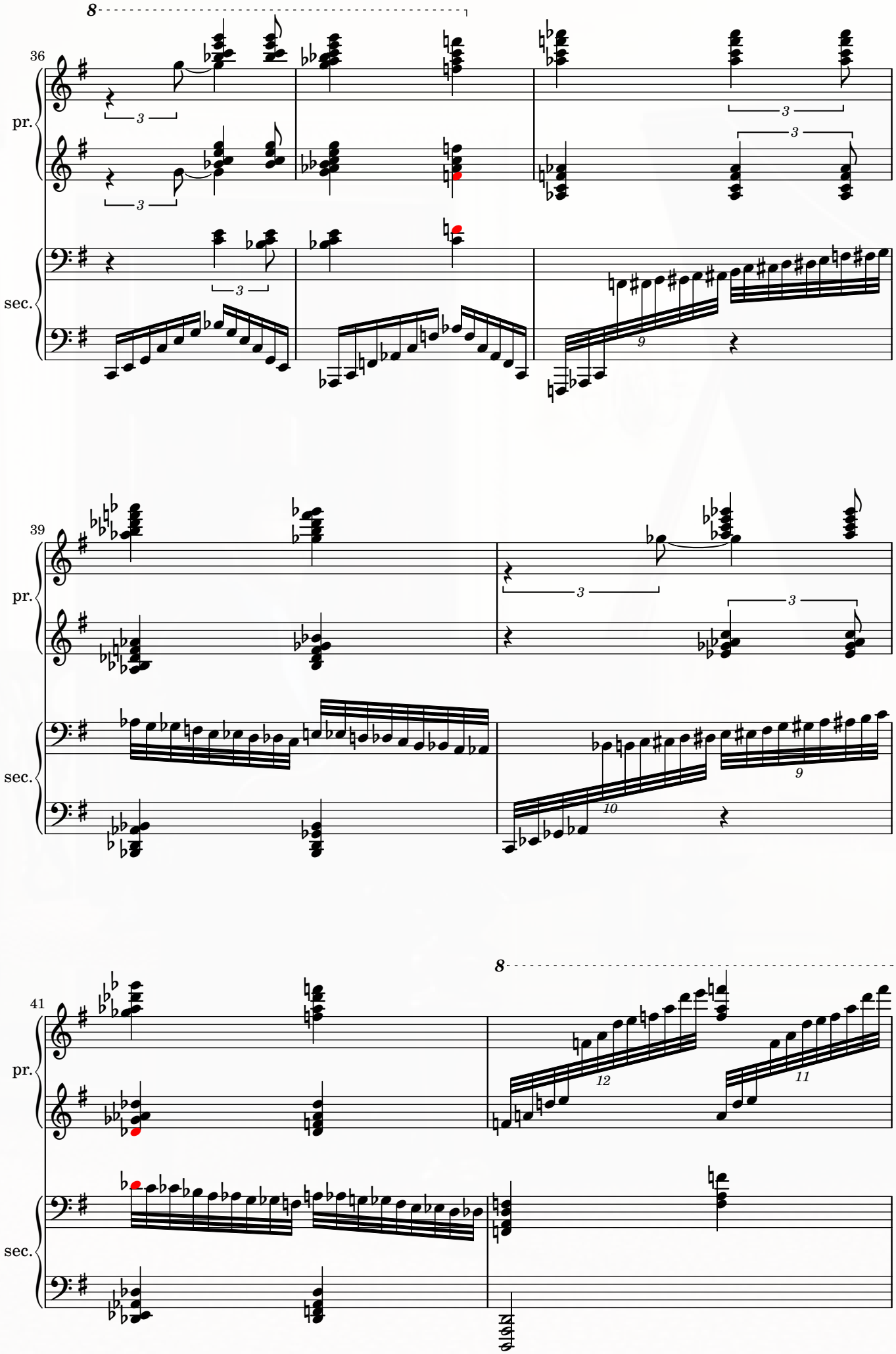
3
3
6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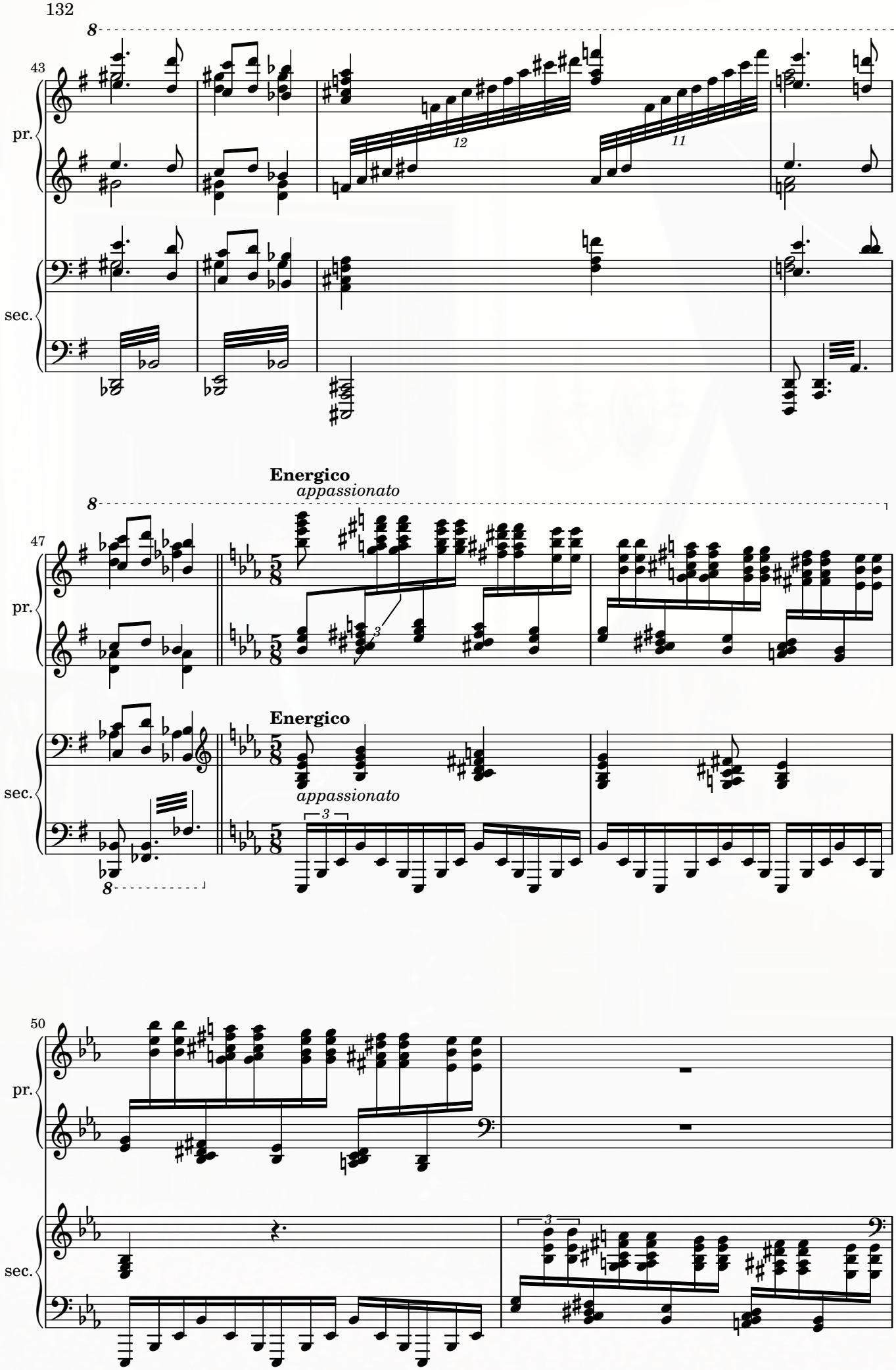
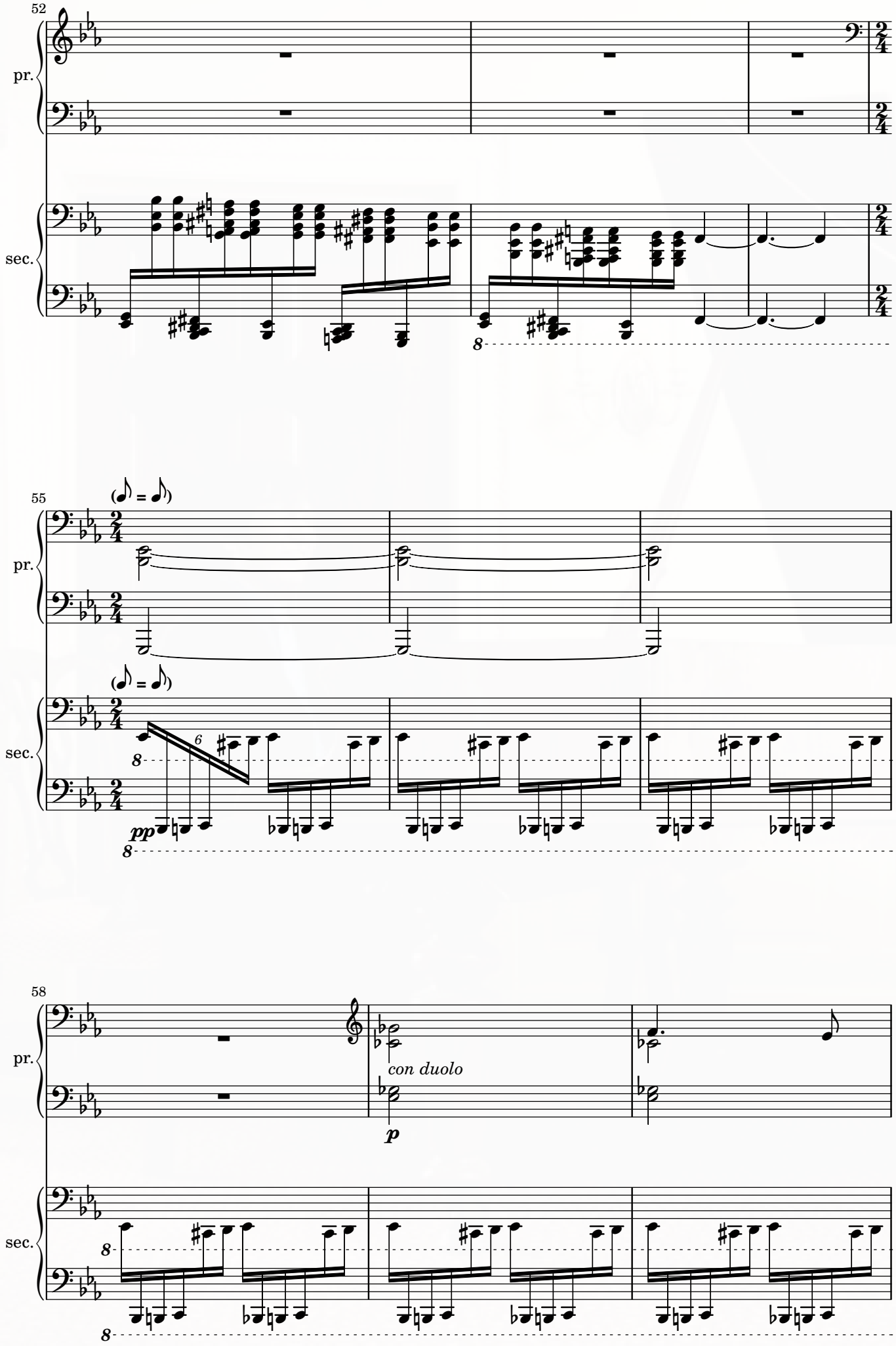
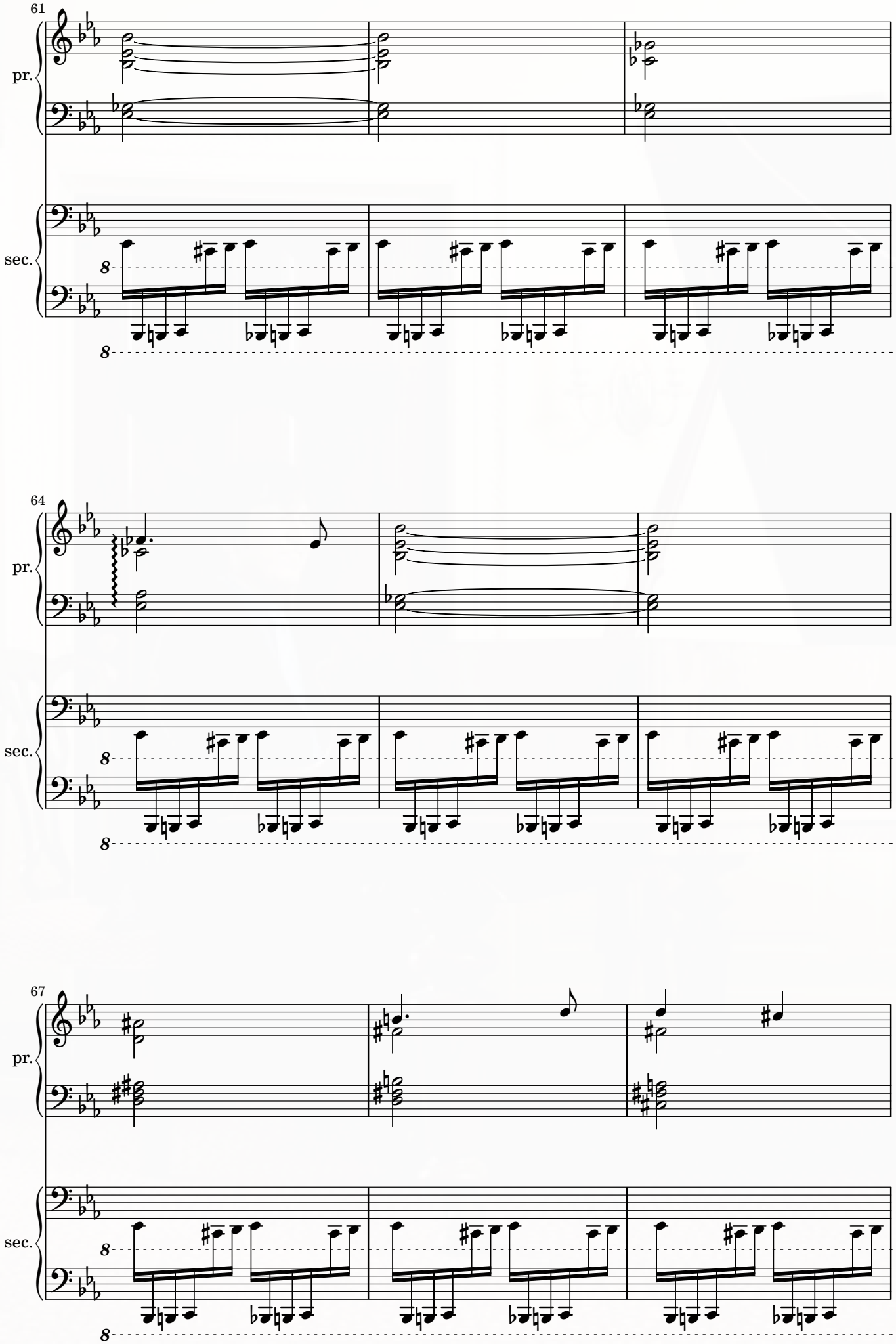
pr.
sec.
41
pr.
sec.


43
pr.
sec.
12
11
Energico
appassionato
47
pr.
sec.
3
Energico
appassionato
3
50
pr.
sec.
3


52
pr.
sec.
8
55
(♪ = ♪)
pr.
(♪ = ♪)
sec.
6
8
pp
8
58
pr.
con duolo
p
sec.
8
8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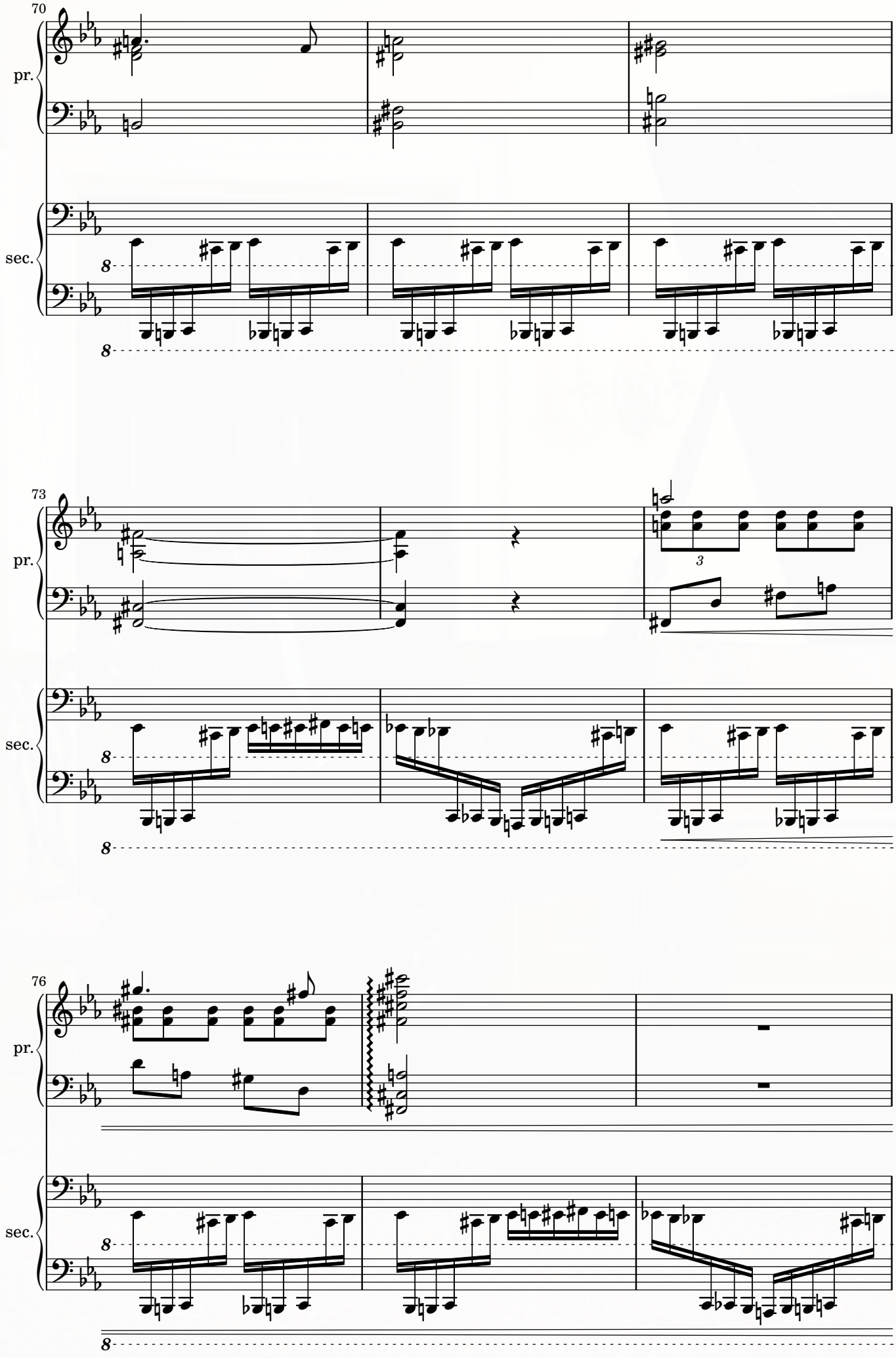
pr.
sec.
8
8
64
pr.
sec.
8
8
67
pr.
sec.
8
8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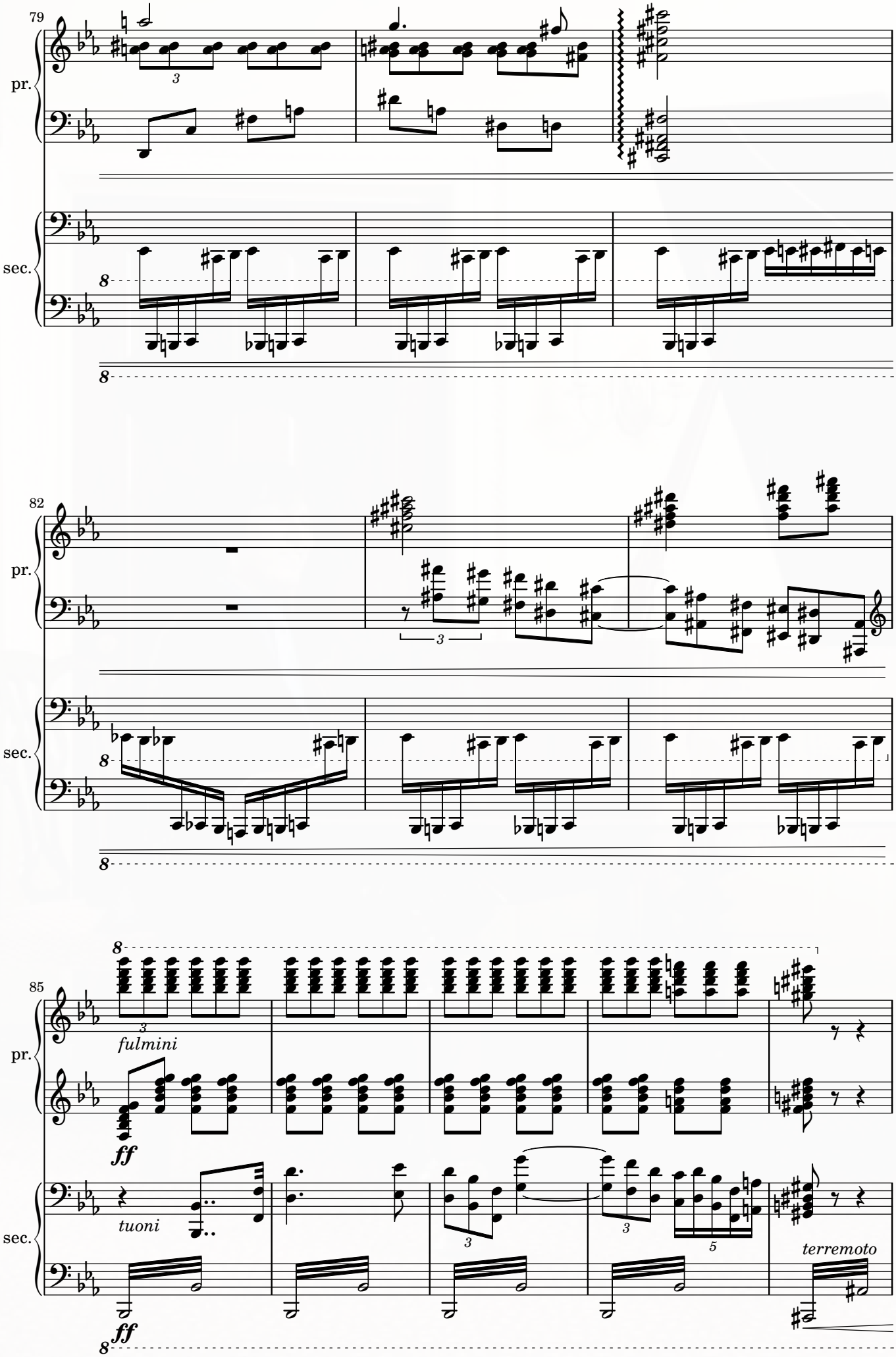
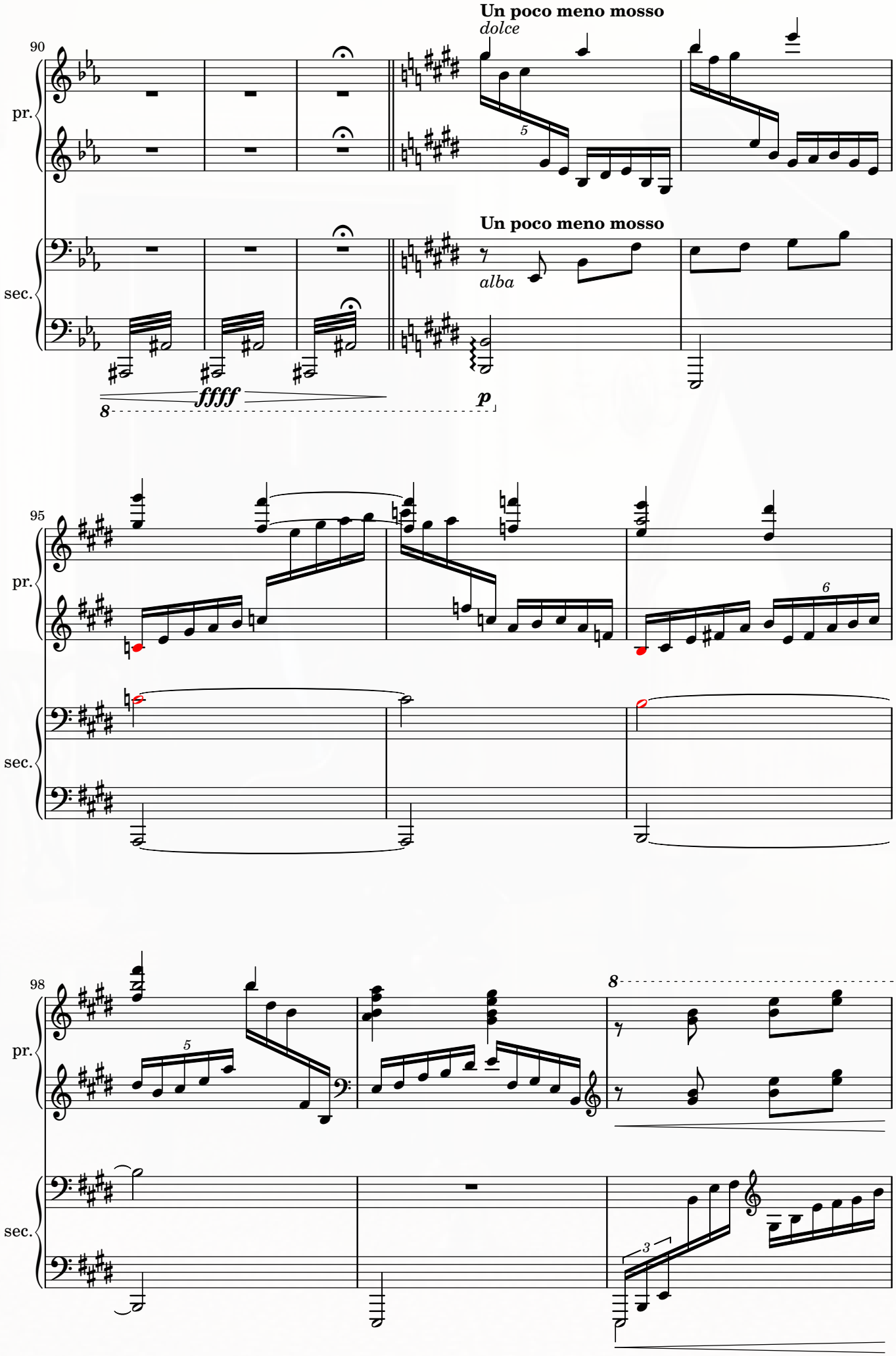
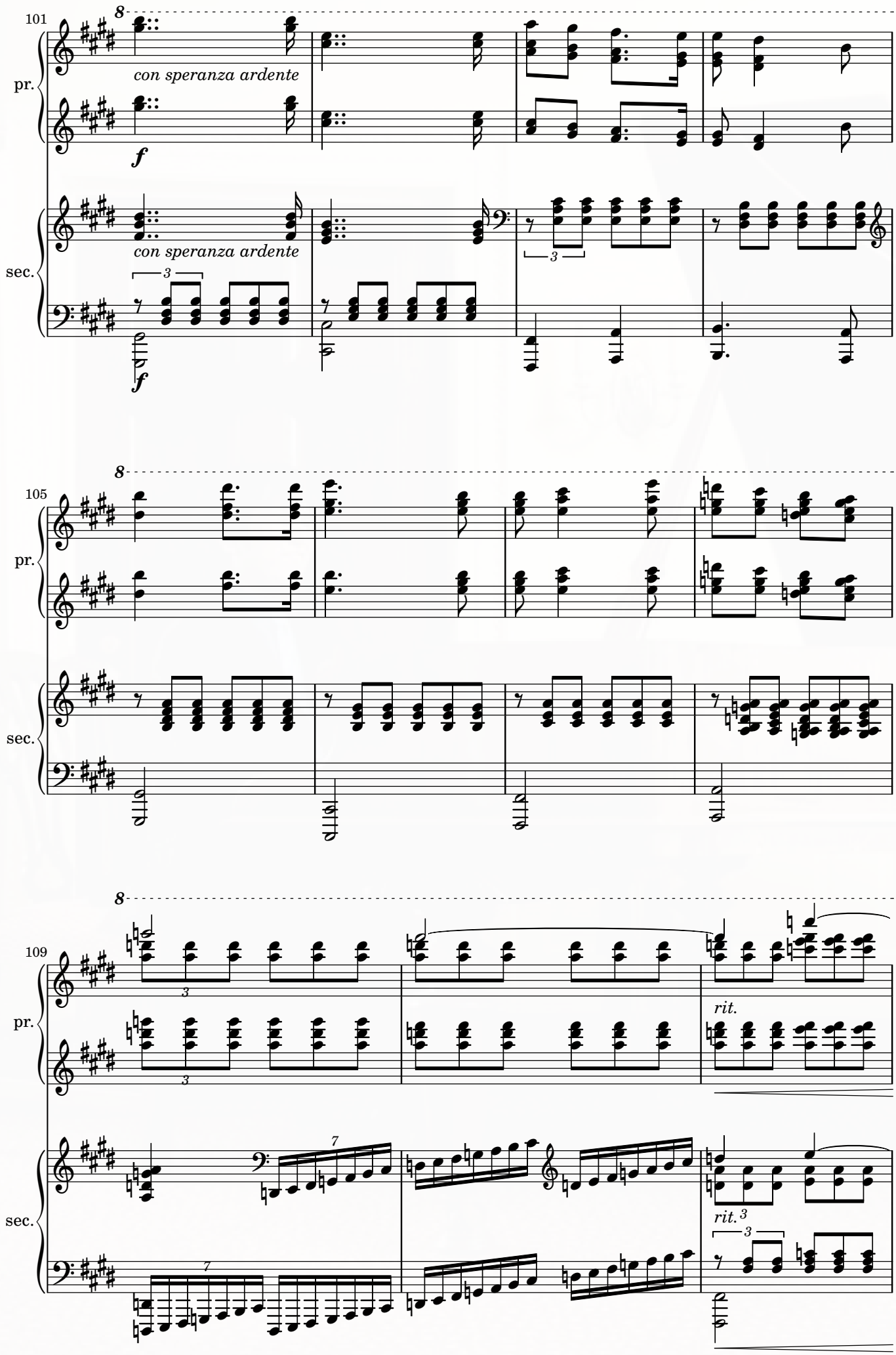
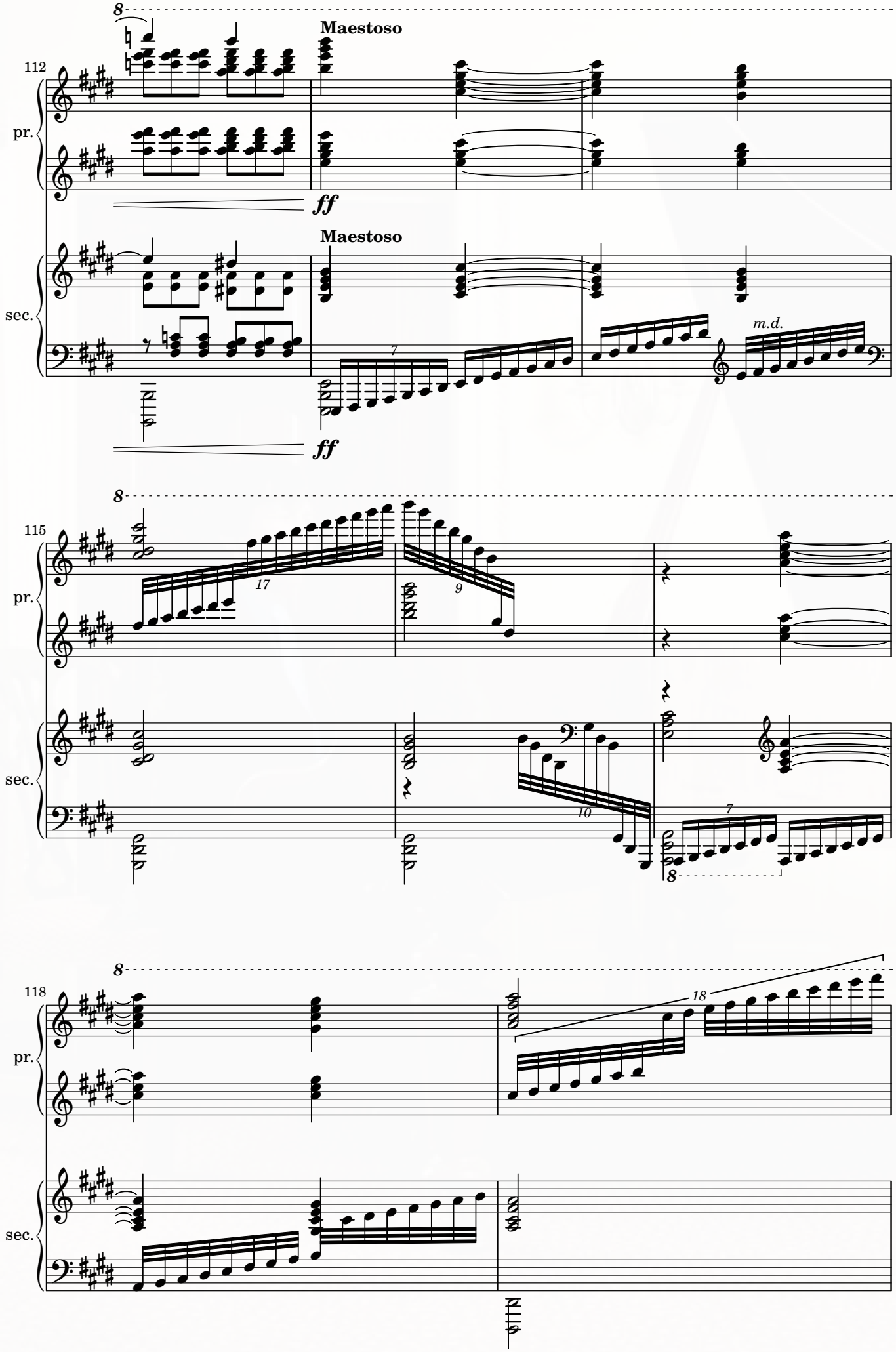
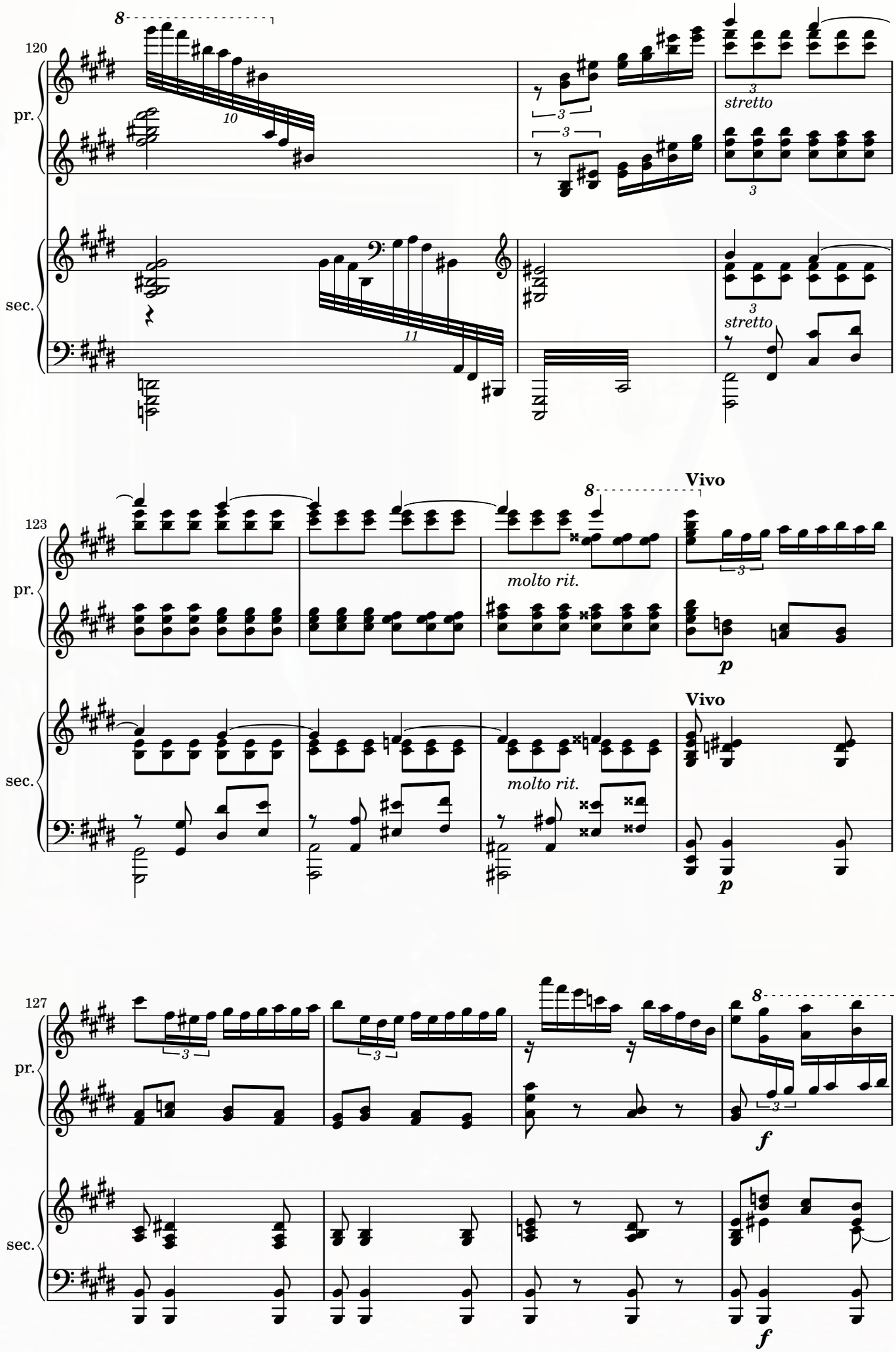
pr.
sec.
8
8
73
pr.
sec.
3
8
8
76
pr.
sec.
8
8

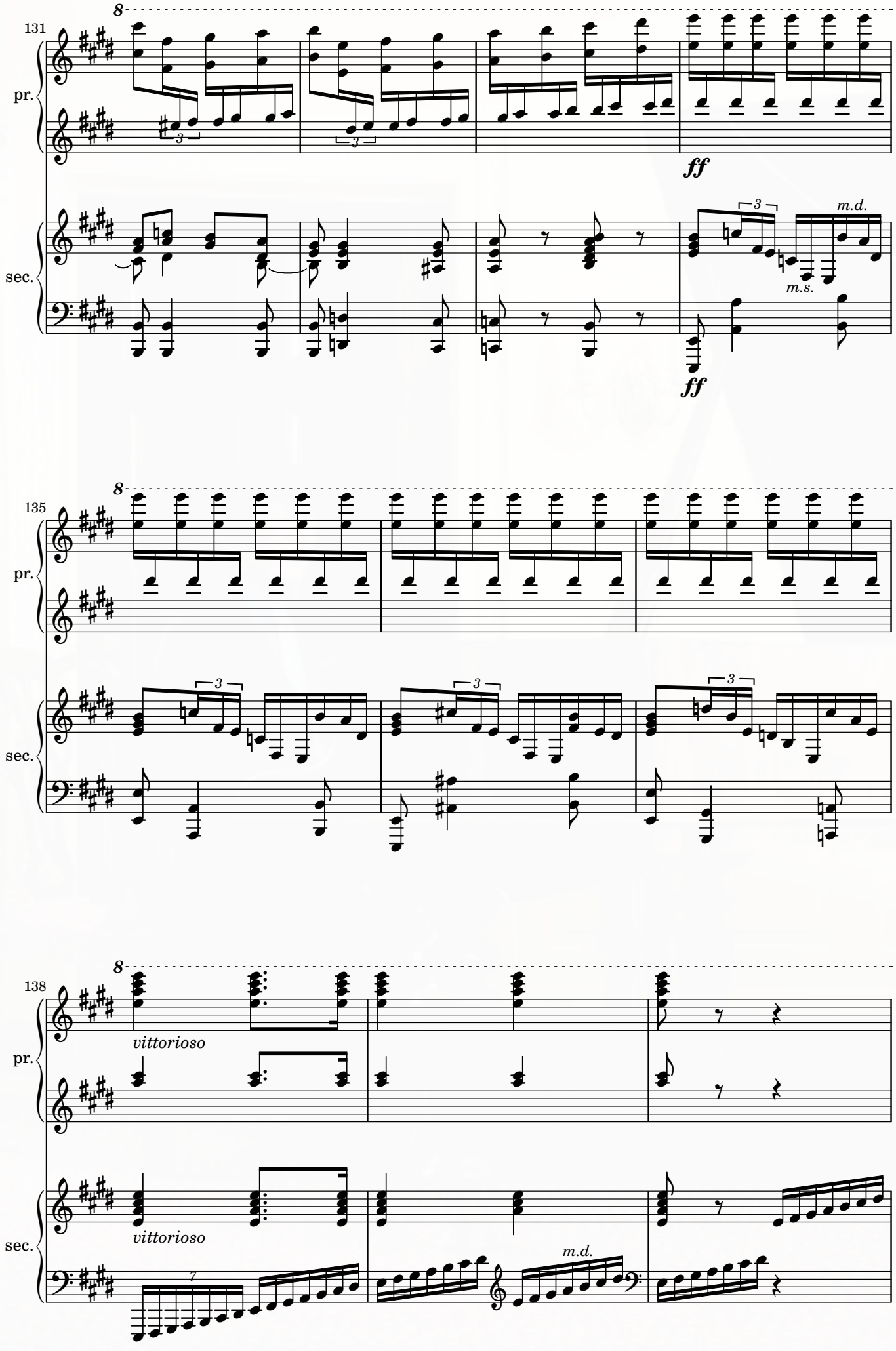

79
pr.
sec.
82
pr.
sec.
85
pr.
fulmini
ff
sec.
tuoni
ff
terremoto

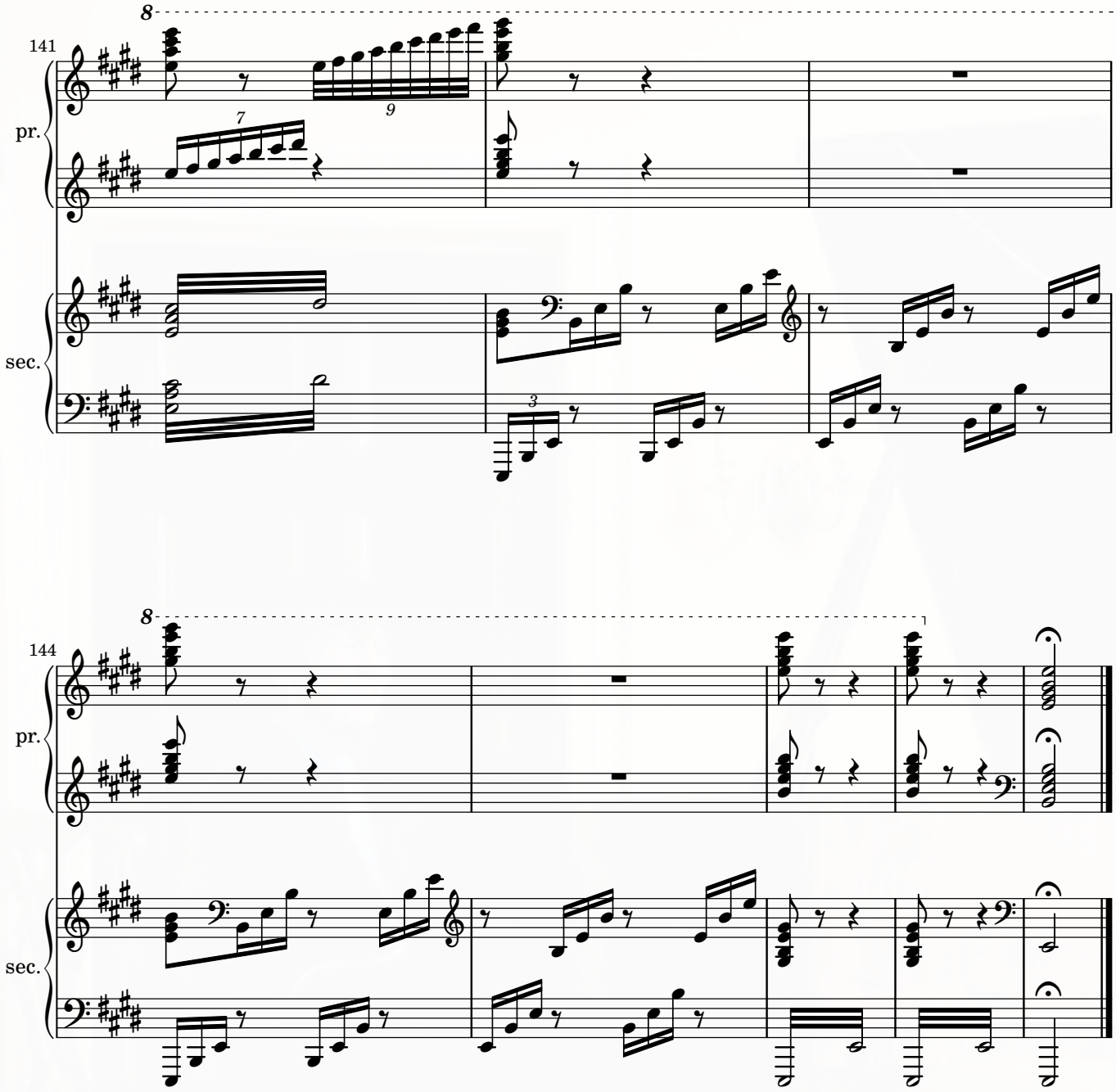

Un poco meno mosso
dolce
90
pr.
sec.
Un poco meno mosso
alba
ffff
p
95
pr.
sec.
98
pr.
sec.


101
pr.
sec.
con speranza ardente
con speranza ardente
f
f
105
109
rit.
rit.


112
pr.
sec.
Maestoso
ff
Maestoso
ff
m.d.
115
pr.
sec.
118
pr.
sec.

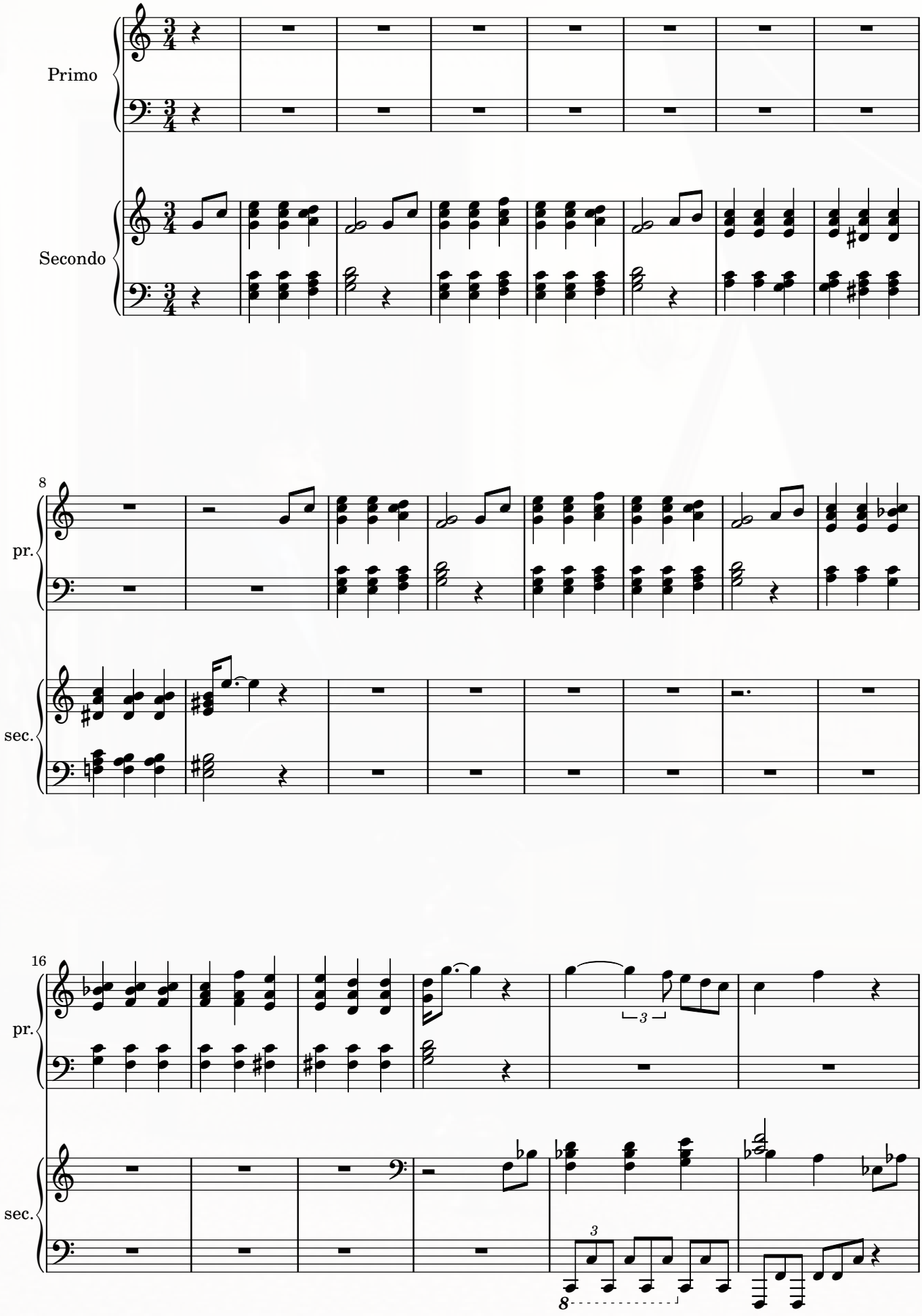

120
pr.
sec.
8
10
11
3
stretto
123
molto rit.
Vivo
p
127
f

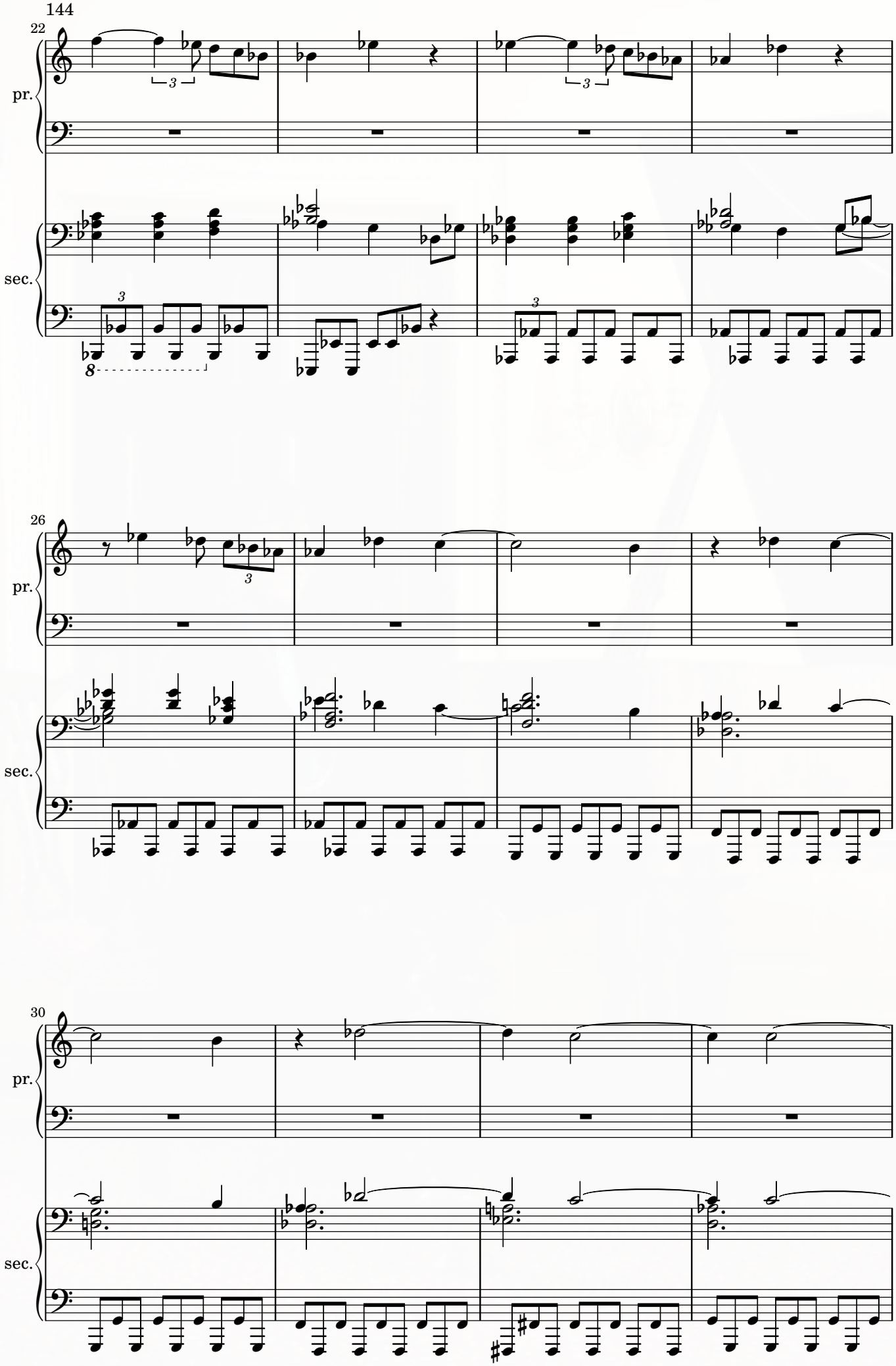

131
pr.
sec.
8
3
ff
m.d.
m.s.
135
138
vittorioso
7


141
pr.
sec.
8
7
9
3

144
pr.
sec.
8

XXV. Please, Stay!

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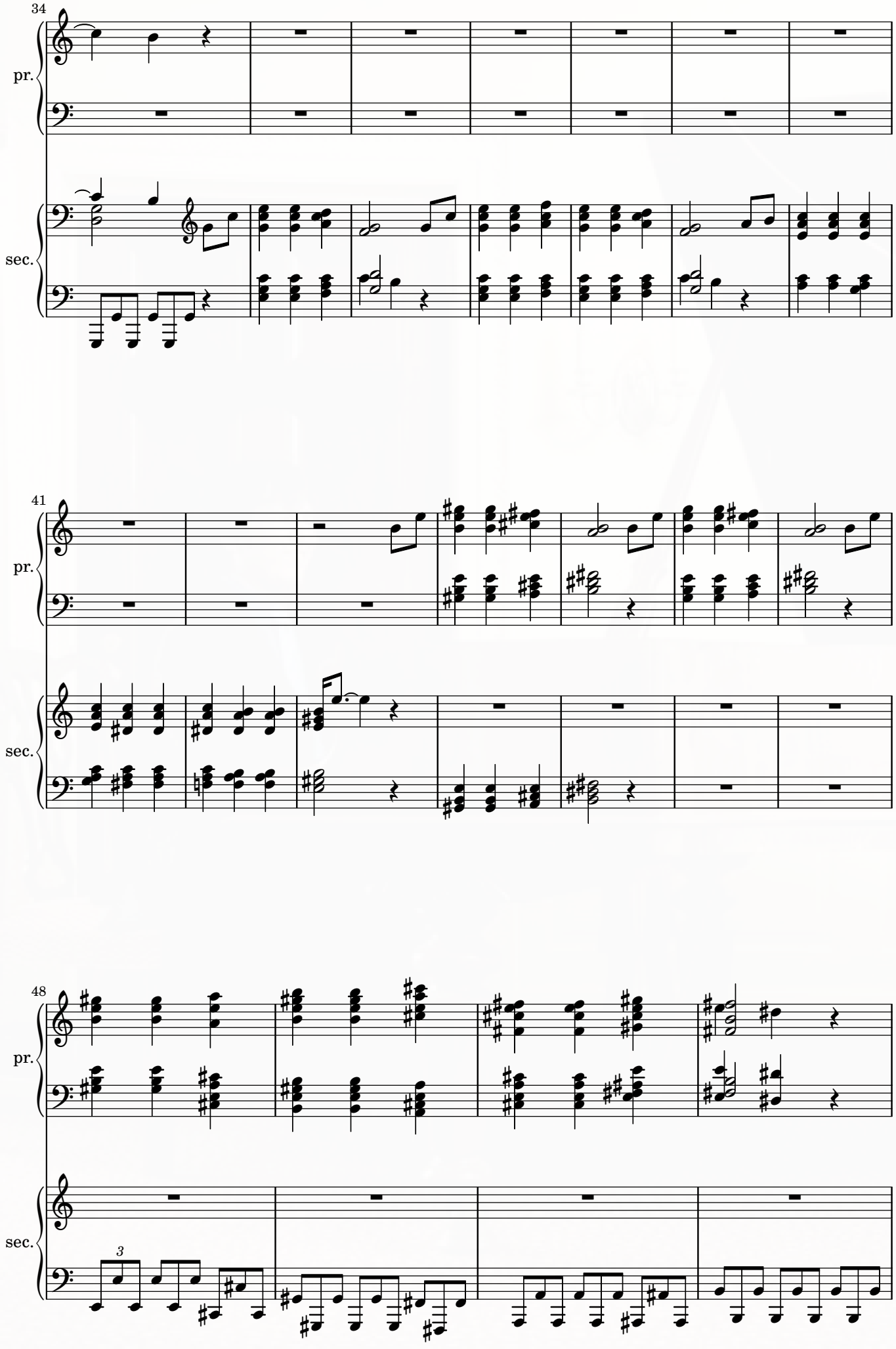
sec.
26
pr.
sec.
30
pr.
sec.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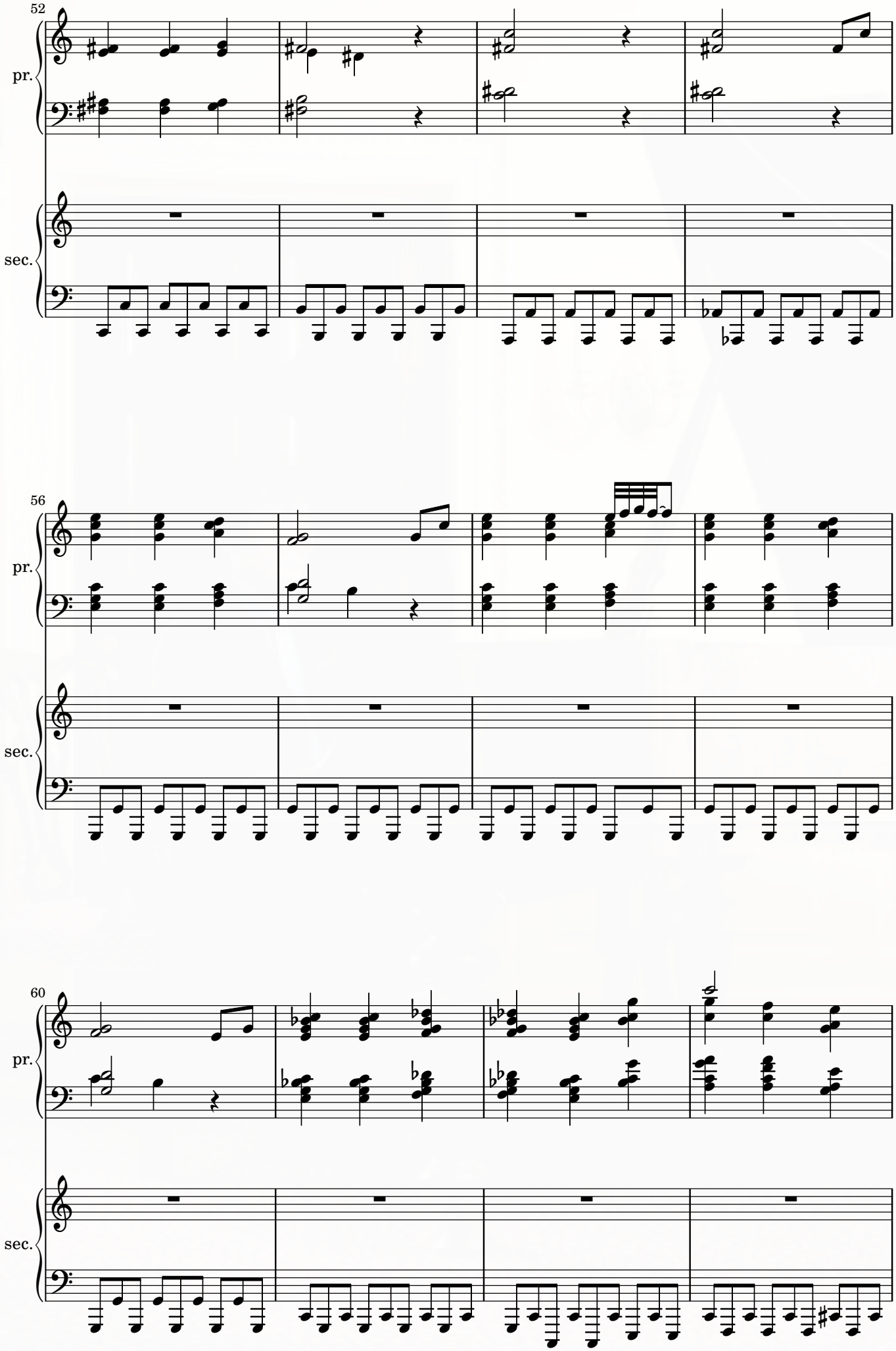
pr.
sec.
41
pr.
sec.
48
pr.
sec.
3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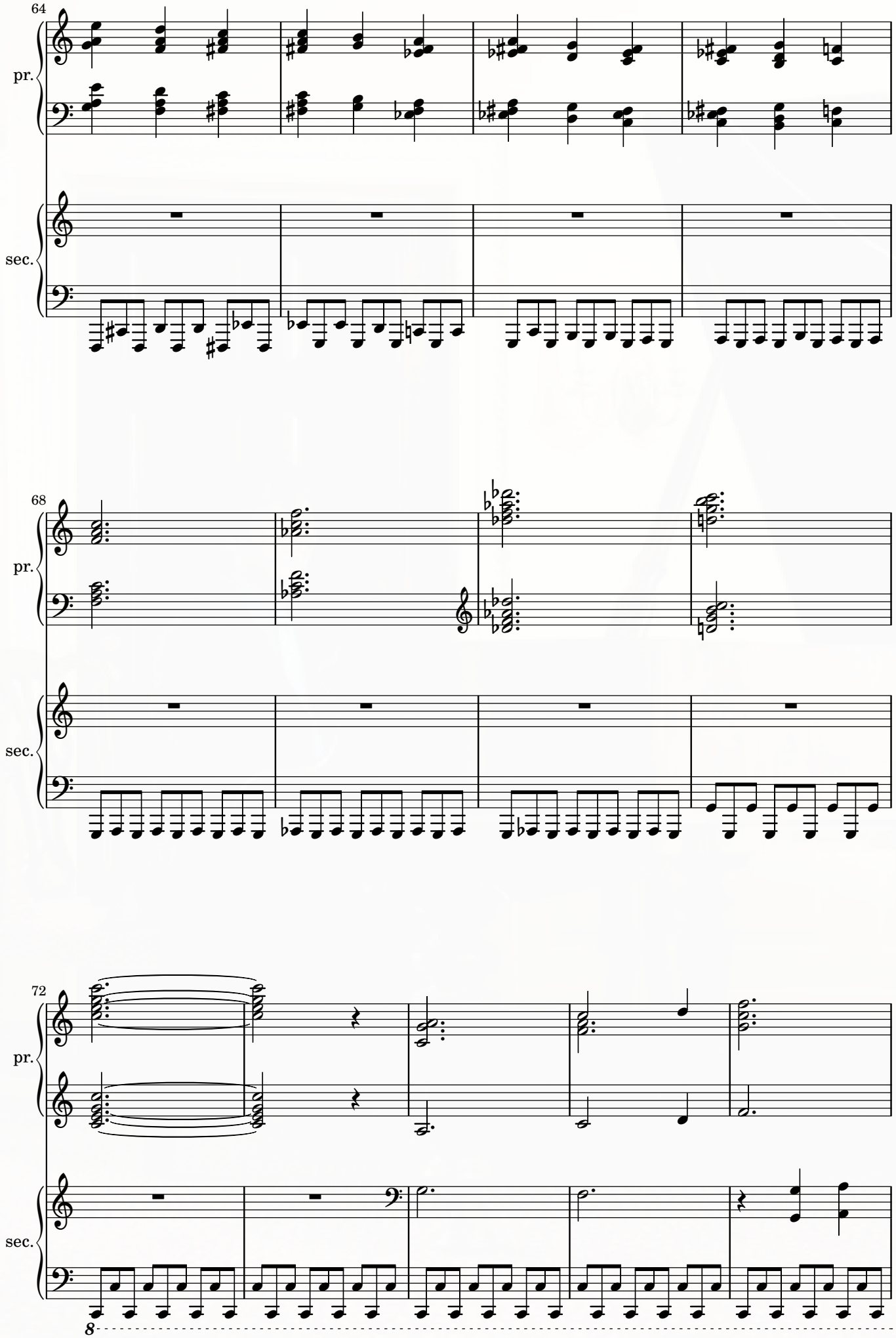
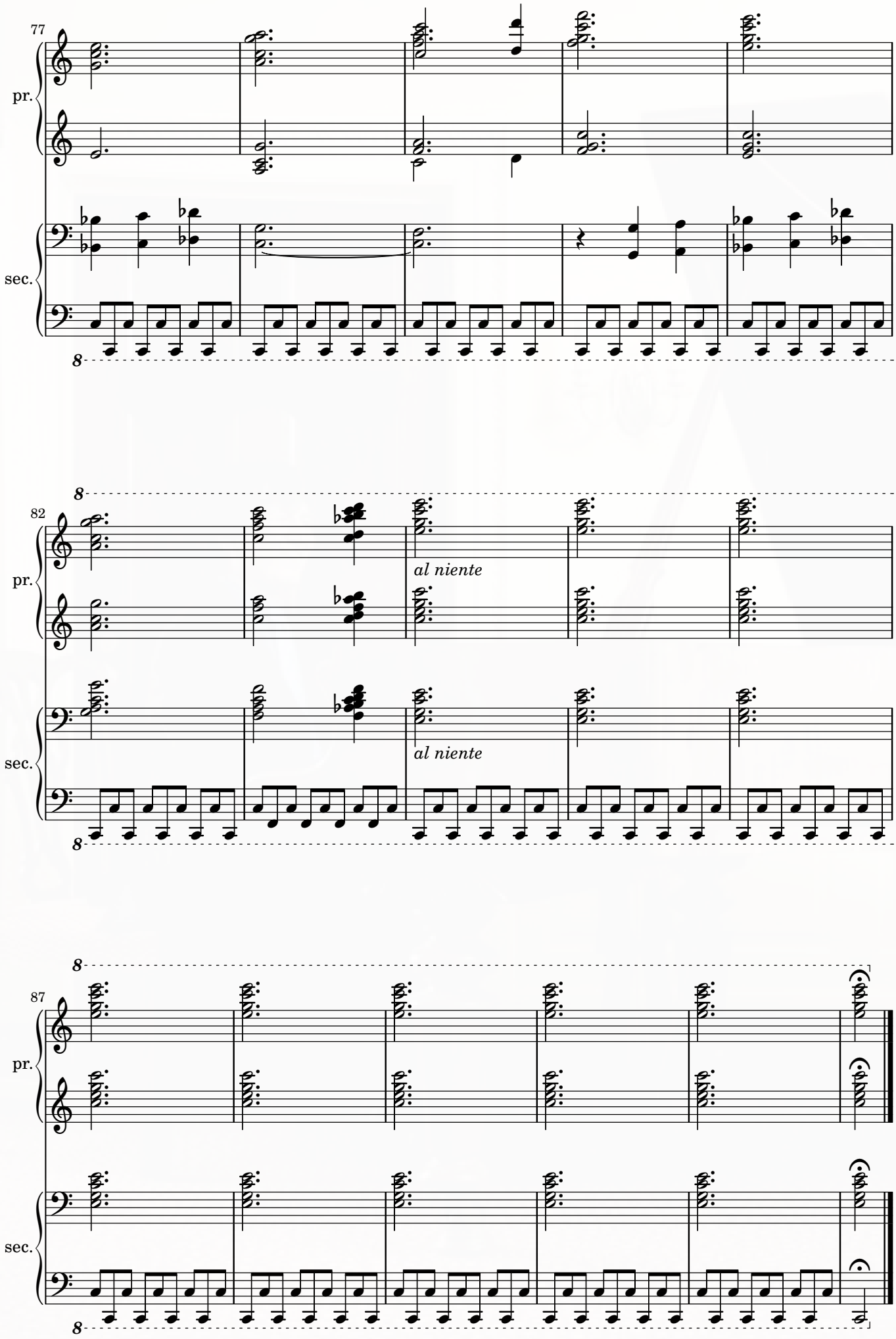
pr.
sec.
56
pr.
sec.
60
pr.
sec.


64
pr.
sec.
68
pr.
sec.
72
pr.
sec.
8


77
pr.
sec.
8
82
pr.
sec.
8
al niente
al niente
87
pr.
sec.
8

APPENDIX

FROM THE LINER NOTES TO THE RECORDING OF THE PRESENT WORK

This recording is dedicated, with deepest affection, to Victor Elmaleh, without whose kindness this seed of an idea would not have been brought to flowering fruition.

Twenty-Five Preludes, CWV 19

It is not my intention to duplicate within these pages that which has already been laid out in the Preface to the score of the Twenty-Five Preludes, much of which is technical in nature. Rather, I here set forth - howsoever I feel at liberty to do, and at the behest of not a few voices - an accounting of each prelude, with an eye toward the autobiographical inspiration of many and as a lover and proselytizer of classical music in general. (To this latter consideration, nothing would give greater pleasure to this writer than the report that further musical investigations, perchance into literature here cited, were made and bore lasting fruit.)

I should at the outset, however, wish to address two matters of supreme caution. First, the descriptions which follow are intentionally omitted from both score and concert program, for it is my conviction that these preludes, whether in part or in sum, are wholly legitimate apart from any extramusical information. It is by this very method that I assess even works from the vocal genres, from the Lied to the opera - that is, if I shall not be moved by the fabric of interweaving melody and accompaniment, then knowledge of the text shall hardly raise my estimation thereof. Why then are descriptive titles given at all? They are meant as mere hints, to make translucent what might otherwise seem turbid. (By the same token, is not a vision dimly perceived all the more opaque? And so the heart and the aural imagination must be ever more engaged.) But I have thought this once to lift - with discretion, of course - the proverbial veil, regarding these disclosures with the same significance as trivia surrounding one's favorite pop song: For, in such a context, knowledge of a particular song's genesis rarely disturbs one's own associations with it. Second, transparency must not and shall not trump prudence where others are concerned. Some things simply cannot be known on this side of Heaven; still other matters may not yet have been seen to their final ends. And this, cliché as it may be, is exactly where instrumental music - i.e., music without a vocal line and its obligatory text - is most efficacious, for it "speaks" when words are inadequate or even inappropriate. And so, dear reader, I beseech your patience and understanding regarding any circumspection which you might perceive on my part.

I. As I Gazed Into The Mountains Black

Awed at first by the grandeur and majesty of the mountains, the little child becomes aware of the storm clouds fast enveloping them. He marvels that he cannot hear the thunder which must surely be terrifying their inhabitants, nor can he see the mountain folk fleeing for cover. The vividness of his own imagination paralyzes him until, at last, his primal fear compels him to turn and flee, not looking back till he has shut behind him the door of safety.

II. But I Loved You!

Many have naturally inquired as to the identity of the girl here lamented. She shall remain unnamed. Only I shall say that she appears once more, at the conclusion of this work. A romance ended, no matter how brief, leaves at least one party desolate, and oh how arresting and tragic is the quiet resignation with which this prelude concludes!

III. Elation

One of the first works of classical music to which I was introduced was Telemann's Concerto for Three Violins and Orchestra, TWV 53:F1. The opening and recurring pronouncements of the first movement, rendered by the orchestra, were to my five-year-old ears - which had never before heard sounds produced by bowed strings, and which had just been exposed to the notion of more than five tones per scale - as rompings of joy and cascades of ecstasy. Though styled more in the manner of a *concerto grosso* by one of Telemann's contemporaries (and my favorite composer), J.S. Bach, this prelude attempts to capture that ineffable experience of a true initiate to Western music.

IV. Lament

There is here no narrative to relay; simply it is sad - and ends without resolution.

V. Valse-Coquette

The latter half of the title refers to the dedicatee of this magnum opus, speaking less to her general character than to a singular incident which I had the pleasure of witnessing. One evening, she took up a volume from the piano and began to page through it. Presently, she found a tango by Manuel Ponce, the title being translated "Despite All." Without pause or emotional encumbrance, she performed the work at sight! This word I do not use lightly, for, in addition to a flawless realization of those things notated, her nuances of touch and time were delivered with such facility and delicateness as to conjure for a moment the very spirit of Carmen!

VI. A Dolly Forsaken

Among the 24 gems of Tchaikovsky's *Children's Album,* Op. 39, are three which appear to form a sort of narrative surrounding a doll. They include "The Sick Doll," "The Doll's Funeral," and "The New Doll"; nos. 6, 7, and 9 respectively. No child was ever deprived of sheer delight whose curriculum drew from these tiny fancies: To this, I do personally attest. It is no accident that the key of this prelude corresponds to that of the "trilogy's" opening. My small contribution, however, assumes the dolly's perspective as her owner and friend, a little girl, grows older and, at length, abandons her.

VII. I Was Glad When They Said Unto Me, Let Us Go Into The House Of The LORD

Indeed, I was very glad as a child to regularly enter the church, though it was hardly for reasons of spiritual nourishment. The organist, who would later become my English teacher in high school, was both humble and brilliant and never failed to produce magnificent and copious specimens for the preludes, even I would lobby my father for early entrance. And in the service itself, how I did bask in the soaring melodies of those German and Swedish chorales! Thus began my love affair with the organ and its literature.

The text of Psalm 122, whence this title is drawn, has enjoyed (or perhaps endured) a long tradition of vocal settings - albeit, not always in its entirety. Among my favorite settings are the motet by Alessandro Scarlatti, full of mellifluous writing; the violin-dominated treatment by Biber (C. 9); and the expansive, practically operatic rendering by Zelenka (ZWV 90). (It should be noted that these, and many other settings, are to be found under the Latin incipit, *Laetatus sum,* derived from the opening of the corresponding Psalm 121 of Jerome's Vulgate.) I have chosen for my vehicle of expression the Baroque form known as the *chorale partita.* In this case, the opening chorale melody is my own. The following variations evoke by degrees the grandeur and power of the great pipe organ.

VIII. In Exile

All children, no matter how mature, are ever subject to unfounded certainties. I arrived to the United States at the age of five, broken-hearted and alone. That I had a new family was of no comfort to me. I immediately determined that, as I had spent my first five years in Perú, I should spend my next five - and only five - in the United States, returning to my beloved homeland on the anniversary of my arrival. Thus resolved, I oriented every sphere of my life accordingly.

As the date approached, I began with waxing eagerness to tell others of my impending departure. "But how shall you go?" I was asked. "Who will bring you to the airport? And how shall you pay for your ticket?"

On and on the questions came, but I had an answer for each one, and there was no inkling of doubt within my breast.

At last, the day arrived. With a small duffle bag packed and ready at my side, I sat on the front step of the porch and waited. I took my meals with great reluctance, hurrying back to the porch at once lest I should miss my transport. As dusk drew nigh, my confidence increased all the more, for it meant that I had only a little while longer to wait. Even after the eldest had retired to bed, my conviction did not waver. I merely sat on my bed in the attic, straining to hear any signs of my sure and impending rescue.

But perhaps a quarter hour to midnight, an unexpected anxiousness began to steal over my soul - quietly at first, but quickly rising to the tenor of alarm. And then, the church clock struck midnight! Oh how I wept, even I cannot convey it! For five years, I had taken on the role of a yearning pilgrim (- nay, captive), whose heart's gaze was fixed upon his land of nativity. This prelude opens with that final stroke of the clock and proceeds with an anguish so unutterable!

IX. Song Without Words

This memory shall remain sealed. Its bittersweet aspect is nevertheless manifest.

X. The Chase

One can almost hear the cries, "Ready! Set!" And then the game of tag begins.

XI. The Musical Box

It is not seldom that the question of my musical beginnings is put forward to me. As has already been stated, my coming to America was not under the brightest of circumstances. To this day, I recall with great vividness walking about the inner and outer borders of my new residence, calling out to my friends from the orphanage and hearing no response. The sounds of the great Andean birds were gone, and I could speak to no one. I did the only thing which I knew to do: I cried.

Louder and louder my sobs grew until I, in the basement, could be heard from the third floor attic or even down the street! My new father tried in vain to calm me, presenting me with a host of toys. One day, as he was yet rummaging through the toys, his foot happened to make contact with a music box that was resting on the ground. It began to play. It would be untrue to say that I had never heard music before. In fact, my life in Perú had been quite regularly punctuated by it, but the bulk of that exposure was accompanied by sheer terror, as it had everything to do with the Shining Path and its brutality. How shocking then it was that those high and shimmering tones, produced by pins against a metal comb, should not only arrest but even enrapture me! (The wording of this title pays homage to my father, whom I would quietly come to respect and whose British heritage became for me a point of deep reverence.)

XII. March

Once I "discovered" music, it became my sole companion and my sanctuary, and so it is no surprise that I revered and trusted no one more than my first piano teacher. I always looked forward to her performances at the close of each student recital, and, when I was to give my first solo recital, I asked if she would not play something as well. She acquiesced, performing the suite *Scenas Infantis* (Scenes From Childhood) by Octavio Pinto. For decades, until the magnetic tape at last would yield to age and snap, I would listen rather incessantly to the cassette recording of that performance. The third movement of *Scenas Infantis* is a march, beginning, as so many marches in the repertoire do, with a trumpet call. Mine is no different.

XIII. From the Depths My Tears Ascended

If this title will strike a chord of familiarity within some of my readers, they need only turn to Psalm 130, whose opening two verses in the King James Version read:

> Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.
> Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.

This Psalm has known an even greater latitude of treatment than the Psalm previously addressed. Several factors have contributed to this, but two in particular resonate with this composer. First, and most apparent to the student of composition, such a text invites intense chromatic exploration, resulting in a well of expressive vocabulary not otherwise available. Second, there seems to me to have been by many a composer a misappropriation in meaning of the Psalmist's cry, from a plea for the remission of sins to a general bewailment of one's own plight - in other words, a focal shift from God to self. A broader compositional appeal is only to be expected when, for example, consideration is limited to the first two verses of the Psalm. This composer is guilty of no less a deed, turning once again to the ever present - if often latent - pathos of his childhood.

But now must be revealed an even greater flagrancy. For while the title seeks to liken incongruencies, the very music lays, by way of graphic illustration, denotive claim to still another Psalm, analogizing Israel's captivity to my own. (See Prelude VIII.) The text, taken from Psalm 137, reads as follows:

> By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.
> We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.
> For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song;
> and they that wasted us *required of us* mirth, *saying,* Sing us *one* of the songs of Zion.
> How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land?
> If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget *her cunning.*
> If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth;
> if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy. (1-6)

The harps, though retired, cannot help but sound, the breezes themselves taking up the exiles' lament and drawing out sorrow from the strings! And how the air is rent with mourning!

I would not leave this discussion without recommending for examination a few - more "redeeming" - settings, of each Psalm, several of which are relatively recent additions to the musical canon. Regarding Psalm 130, there is a bit of an unusual setting by the Estonian composer, Arvo Pärt. Titled *De Profundis* (again, from the Latin Vulgate), it manages to be both haunting and weighed down by a certain oppressiveness, a bass taking vocal pre-eminence. Another setting is found nestled in the *Requiem Mass* of the choral composer, John Rutter. Though much of the mass is sung in Latin, it does include two Psalms in English, the first being "Out Of The Deep." Finally, perhaps the most pithy utterance of this Psalm known to me is found in the *St. Luke Passion,* BWV 246. The catalogue designation suggests authorship by J.S. Bach, but it is now widely accepted that he did not compose the work. (Nevertheless, it is not without his musical fingerprints.) Toward the end of the Passion is a simple but moving setting of the first two verses, begun *Aus der Tiefe rufet ich.* It should be no surprise that Psalm 137, replete with such rich poetry, has given rise to innumerable settings. From the vast body of British psalmody comes a plaintive and stirring setting, an Anglican chant, by the nineteenth-century composer and organist George Mursell Garrett. Turning to a slightly earlier age, we pluck from the harvest of German chorales. Luther's original hymnal contains a paraphrase of Psalm 137, *An Wasserflüssen Babylon.* Its accompanying chorale, more windy than most, serves as fruit ripe for compositional development. In his cantata, *An Wasserflüssen Babylon,* Franz Tunder presents in microcosm so pungent an emotional world. Generally, the vocal line follows the contour of the original chorale; however, at the words *da weinten wir* [there we wept], Tunder takes us on a wild departure so colorful that it simply must be heard to be believed! Finally, having until now danced gingerly about his name, and given the immediate context, one can resist certain temptations only so long - e.g., to reference with highest esteem the works themselves of J.S. Bach. His chorale prelude for solo organ, BWV 653, establishes an accompanimental foundation -- built almost exclusively from snatches of the chorale -- upon which the chorale in full blossoms and blooms, splendidly arrayed: truly, a wonder!

XIV. Gavotte

Once again, and certainly not for the last time, I turn for inspiration to the Baroque era, recalling one of its characteristic dances.

XV. Trepak: In Memoriam Petr Tchaikovsky

The *trepak* is a lively Ukrainian dance, certainly popularized - at least in stylistic music - by Tchaikovsky in his ballet, *The Nutcracker,* Op. 71. After so much raw emotion from the previous preludes, one needs a spirited dance to buoy, if not enliven, the troubled heart!

XVI. The Apparition

One of my dearest friends and I have always had an affection for Mickey Mouse. She once found a little cartoon called "Mickey Mouse: Haunted House." It was not long before we had memorized every aural and visual nuance, and we delighted to reenact, in our own quiet way, the various goings-on. Though evocative of darker things, the music actually represents a deeply-cherished memory. Once again, the choice of key for this prelude is not incidental, matching that of the cartoon's central music.

XVII. Tarantella

A *tarantella* is an old Italian dance.

XVIII. Elegy

The writing of melancholic music comes naturally, I suppose, to most composers - even without inducement.

XIX. Rondo: In Memoriam Amadeus Mozart

Styled after the *concerto rondo* form, this prelude closely models the final movement of Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 9, K. 271. As with any concerto of the period, there are structural places -- namely, the *Eingang* and the *cadenza* - where the soloist is expected either to improvise or to present pre-composed material. In this recording, the soloist's role has been assumed by Ms. Niekawa, and the areas aforementioned demonstrate her own gifts as a composer!

XX. Why? (In Memoriam Johannes Brahms)

Here again is presented childhood imagery. But this is not that ceaseless "why" of curiosity with which every child seems bound at one time or another to barrage his parents. This is less carefree, perhaps even burdened. It may be closer to the *Bittendes Kind (Pleading Child),* the fourth entry in Schumann's *Kinderscenen (Scenes From Childhood),* Op. 15. This prelude is much less sunny, ending, as does its template, without resolution.

XXI. Confession

There is a most peculiar moment which occurs in the heart just before one is about to profess to another his love. He has wrestled within himself, assaying this way and that the case, weighing, measuring, accounting in all points. It may be then that he dares to confide in another, who, more likely than not, will bolster and compel with fresher arguments and "impenetrable" sureties. At last well-armed, save for a chink about the left breast, he approaches the object of his contemplations. This prelude is about that moment of certainty which is not!

XXII. Sicilienne

This recalls another ancient dance. A most beautiful example of the dance, given under the Italian *Siciliano,* is the opening movement of the Sonata No. 4 for Violin and Keyboard, BWV 1017, of J.S. Bach. Here is a humble miniature.

XXIII. Supplication

A cause is pleaded. Four times, the petition is lodged, each rising with greater despair than the last. No more certain of the outcome than at the first, the suppliant commends his case in faith to God.

XXIV. Upon My Journey to Damascus (Or, O Death, Where Is Thy Sting?)

Embedded within every usual musical work, no matter the scope thereof, is a drama whose narrative entails a conflict which must, through various pulls and tensions, burst into climax and afterward cadence with some measure of aesthetic satisfaction. I propose to you that this, then, is that point of culmination. Whereas other preludes from this set recall singular vignettes or affects, this penultimate entry brings to bear several episodes or states in a progressive but disjunct piece of true autobiography - begun, as are so many beloved tales, with a hushed "Once upon a time,".

Without warning, the hammer is heard, striking again and again the yielding skull of a supine child, seven times before the ear is shifted momentarily to a darkened dance of unequal step. There is in the crooked gait and brazen rumble the unmistakable presence of wickedness, of a demon in apparent triumph. The mother's wail rises briefly above the tumult, only to be overpowered by a great cacophony, even the union of the dance and the murderous blows. How breathtaking is that synchronization with which the father assails his son, as if himself possessed. The spirit then is left exposed, writhing at first in blatant glee, but presently attaining an air of desperation - clutching, then clinging, and finally clawing at the air, screaming with fury at his loss of the child.

…

At last, a melody is perceived. It is full of yearning, of a child buffeted and alone. It is not, as many presume, the cry of an orphan. It is the weeping of one wrested from and longing for the land of his nativity. Though he comes to know many successes, many admirers, many blessings in the new land, they are overshadowed by throes so deep that music alone becomes his solace. Beneath the wretched air surges an ocean so tempestuous, the waves of inflictions, both physical and spiritual, first collecting, then cresting, then crashing against the shores in manifestations of self-hatred till, unable and unwilling any longer to live, he finds himself at an open window. It beckons to him, and he, resolved and with no regard to the chilling depths, assumes his place within the frame. Now at its most discordant state, the music hurtles headlong, carrying on its wings his very will!

But his will, it turns out, is not God's will. For though he has so committed to do, not every muscle has relaxed, nor every tendon abandoned his duty. But does he yet thank God? No. In fact, his heart is now as stone, obdurate and cold. True, the ocean has subsided, or perhaps only the icy surface is seen. Atop is heard a faint song. It is searching, barely alive but bent upon finding something, some answer for its existence. Daily - nay, hourly - he reads from the Psalms, aimlessly but continually. Suddenly, his attention is aroused. "Cast me not away from thy presence;" he reads, and, in another place, "The sacrifices of God [are] a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." In a flash, he is given to see his true condition, not as one oppressed by earthly circumstance, but as one stained through and through, under the dominion of God's enemy, under God's curse, and hence in danger at any moment of being cast away, as it were, from His presence! The music explodes with mingled terror and hope. Prostrate, and clinging for his life to a holy promise not to be despised if he will indeed seek Him, he trembles for several days, within and without, pleading the Psalmist's words:

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness:
according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.
Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.
For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin *is* ever before me.
Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight:
that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest.
Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.
Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts:
and in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom.
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Make me to hear joy and gladness; *that* the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice.
Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. (1-9)

But one day, in a most quiet fashion, he perceives that his true captivity has been turned. Dawn itself arises as a Phoenix from the music's pages, and the realization of his salvation swells to a joy uncontainable! He bursts into a new song, a song which, aforetime, could never have been conceived!

The final portrait shimmers with great assurance. There is pictured a battle, Jesus the Christ at the head of a throng victorious. Hear the cannonballs fly and whirr and devastate. Hear the trumpets' fanfare declaring the glory of the LORD. And hear at last the vanquishing charge, this little author somewhere in the ranks -- perchance between David and Asaph, or between Luther and J.S. Bach!

XXV. Please, Stay!

And now, having traversed over the course of this opus many styles and forms, sounds and colors, joys and sorrows, it is time to bid farewell. I imagine that most artists imbue their work with more than one layer of meaning -- i.e, a private layer vs. a public layer. Byrd and Shostakovich, for example, are often cited as composers who, given the religious and political dangers of their respective times, felt compelled to shroud within their music the full extent of their messages. This final prelude, though hardly written in such a crucible, nevertheless knows three different layers.

The first farewell is bidden to the unnamed beloved. It is written as a literal conversation between the two pianists - at times, in dialogue; at others, in harmonious overlay. In either case, the lovers' voices are reserved, almost muted. Periodically, their reminiscences take on a despairing hue, deepened by the stillness of the world around them. This farewell is not bitter. It is not even desired by either party. But they must bow to greater forces. Nightfall approaches, and the two are painfully aware that their time is now running out. In a last burst of emotion, they embrace in a torrent of tears and say good-bye. As they part, their voices linger in each other's ears, echoing, and dying to nothing.

The second farewell is directed to the listener, from composer and performer. The bond between effective musician and affected audience is unspeakable, indescribable, and brevity of contact intensifies this all the more. A concert completed, and a journey fulfilled, the voyagers must take leave one of another, not knowing whether they shall ever meet again. In a way, this farewell is more bittersweet than the first, for lovers, once broken, rarely meet again.

But perhaps most difficult is the third farewell, from the composer to the composition - that is, to the process by which the work was quickened. Indeed, he knows the work more intimately than anyone, having felt every curve, every sinew, every expanse of emotion before it was ever committed to paper. It is not enough to have once lived these emotions. In order to select those experiences which he would set, he had to relive many memories, to agonize over the best means of representation, to discard fully-formed candidates which, by the time of their completion, had become as dear to him as those which he would keep. And then, when the last barline is placed and the pen lowered, that closeness is gone. It cannot be resurrected, only relived; and though the degree of difference might seem small, the gulf between them is immense. He dares not ascertain the measure of that void lest it should forever break his heart: He merely bids farewell, turns, and walks away, leaving the fruits of his treasure for others to taste.