Harp Chaconne

étude for piano or harp solo

Music by
Vanessa McClintock

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Harp Chaconne
(Harmonic Étude)
by Vanessa McClintock

Harp Chaconne was conceived as the first part in a series of études on harmony and technique. The title may be misleading in that this is not a work necessarily for harp; rather, the title is in reference to the progression of chords that are played with arpeggios.

The chaconne part is just that, a chordal progression that covers the complete cycle of fifths within a single major key: I – IV – iii – vi – ii – V, with one chord per one half 12/8 measure—one up and one down. It concludes with a recap of the progression in the final two measures.

There are multiple versions of *Harp Chaconne.* In one, the sequence follows the more common of the twelve keys first, with one additional duplicate: F# to Gb. In the other, all twelve keys follow the Circle of Fifths, with one additional duplicate: F# to Gb. Two others have just flats and just sharps, each with a progression of flats and sharps, respectively.

In addition, there are guidelines for homophonic chords (flat) rather than with arpeggios, and rhythmic variations, such as dotted notes instead of even eighths.

When the students learn the first set, in the Key of C, they can progress to each of the other keys. Fingerings will differ from key to key, but the sound of the harmonic progressions will become quite clear, and possibly indelible, in the students' ear.

Please do not be deceived by the apparent simplicity of the work on first impression. Though this étude can be played by the beginning student in the easier keys, it will prove to be increasingly difficult to match the ability of the student: the greater the proficiency of the student, the greater the awareness of the subtleties. This is especially true for the rhythmic variations in another set.

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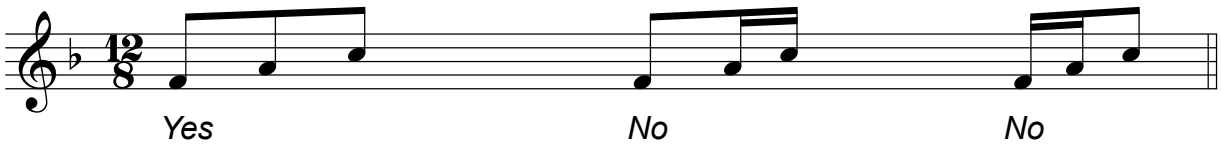
Harp Chaconne is a study in arpeggiation and harmony, while allowing for development in technique. The étude is to be played (except where noted) with alternating hands for every three notes (chord) as it follows the circle of fifths within its own harmonic key.

Teachers (and students) are encouraged to supply optional fingerings, as deemed necessary or preferred. Fingerings may not be as straight forward as one might initially think.

CAUTION: These études are in 12/8 meter and must be executed so the rhythm is consistent. Be careful not to play the three eighth notes as an eighth and two sixteenths in 4/4 time. However, students are encouraged to try various meters and rhythms.



The student may play the études in the order written or by mixing up the order. For example, play by order of adding one flat (or sharp) in the key signature: F, Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, Gb or G, D, A, E, B, F#. Try following a progression of whole tones: F, G, A, B, Db, Eb, F; then Gb, Ab, Bb, C, D, E, Gb. Try progressing by half steps, up or down.

Have the student say aloud each chord number or letter name as it is played: I, IV, iii, vi, ii, V, I. In the key of F: F, Bb, a minor, d minor, g minor, C, F, etc.

Experiment with dynamic markings. Alternate piano and forte, or vice-versa. Alternate crescendi and decrescendi.

Look for two companion studies, Arpeggio Variations and Chord Variations, plus three short and lyrical works that put Harp Chaconne into actual use: *The Faith of a Child, The Hope of a Child,* and *The Love of a Child*.

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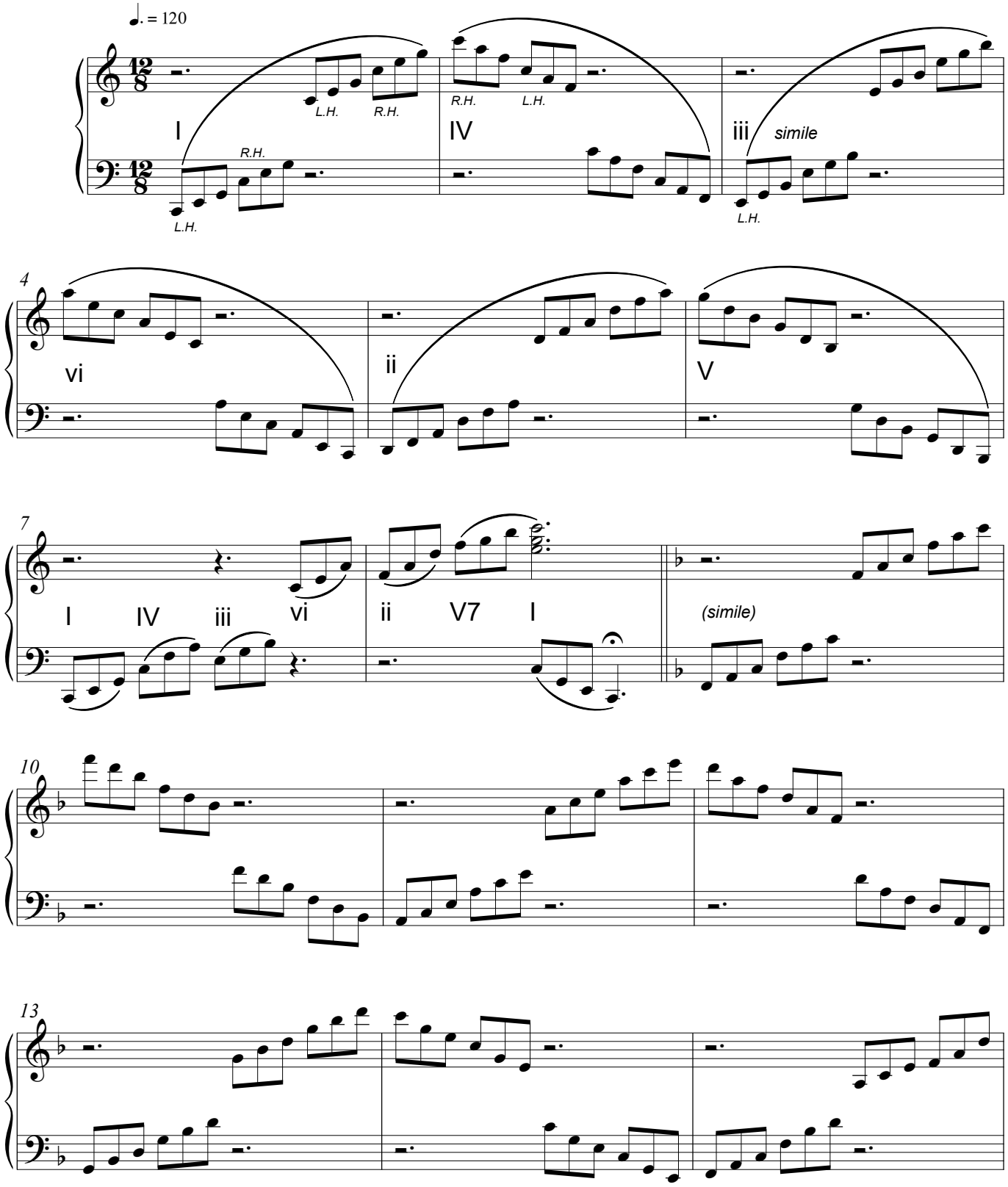

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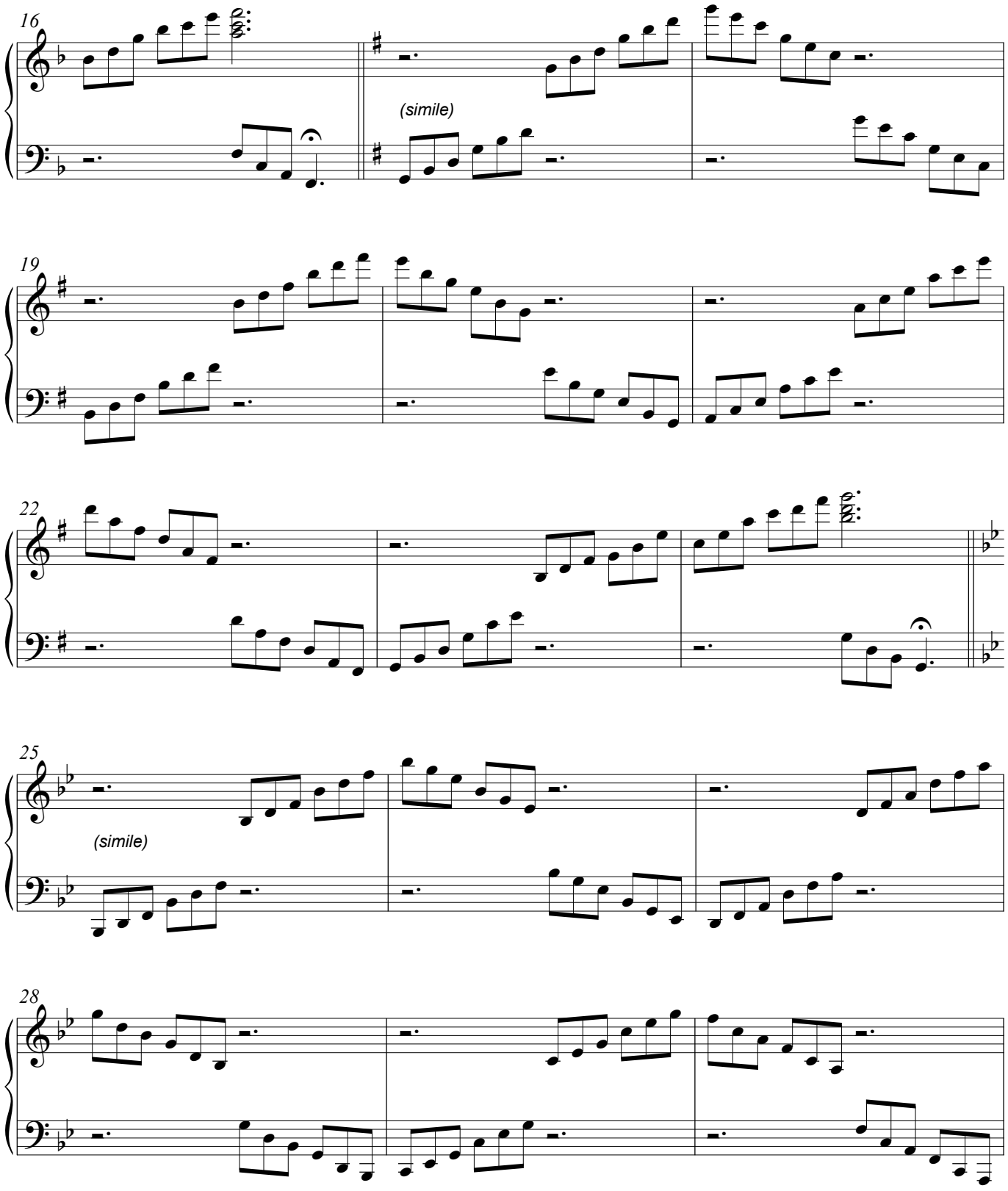

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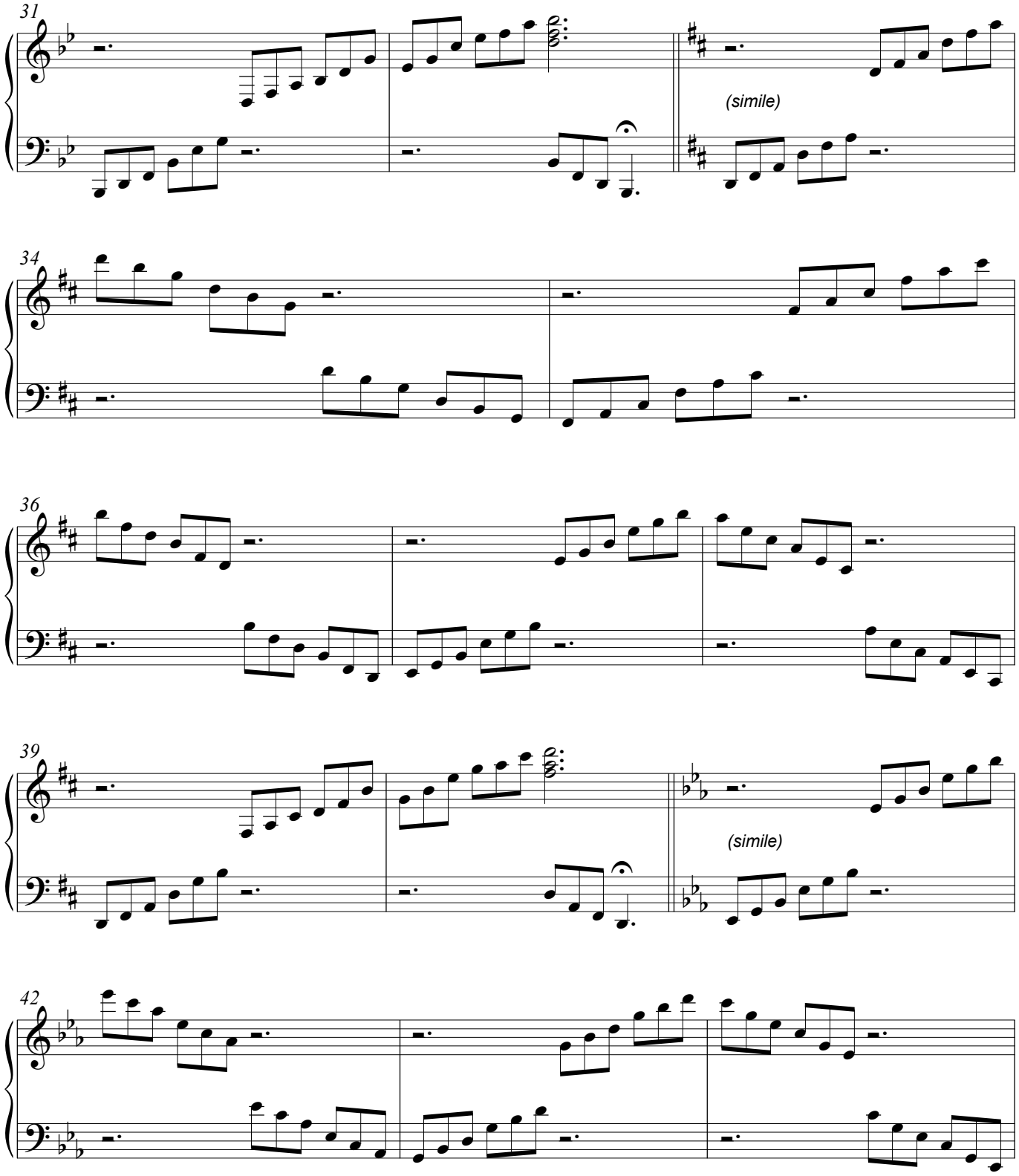

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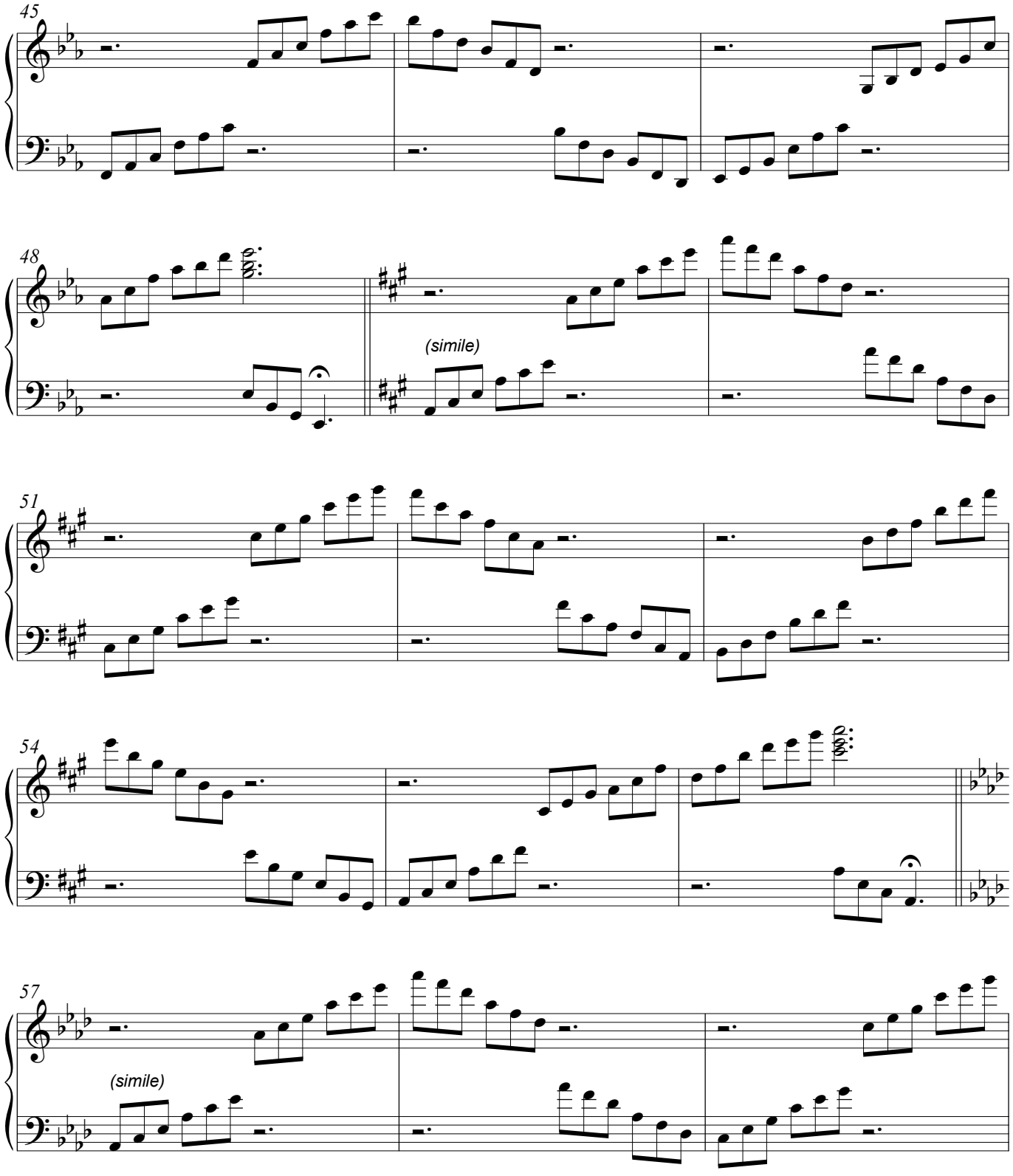

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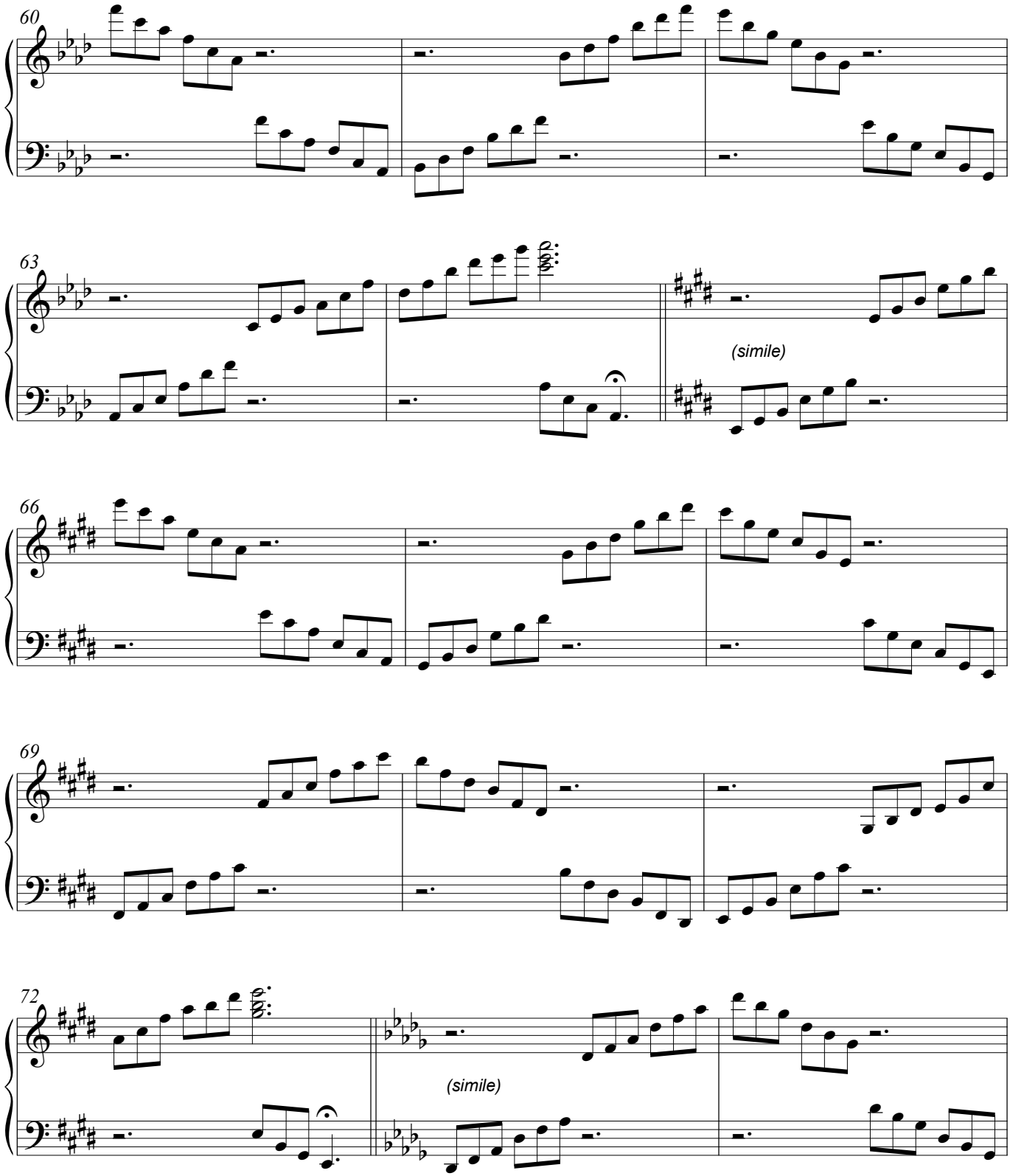

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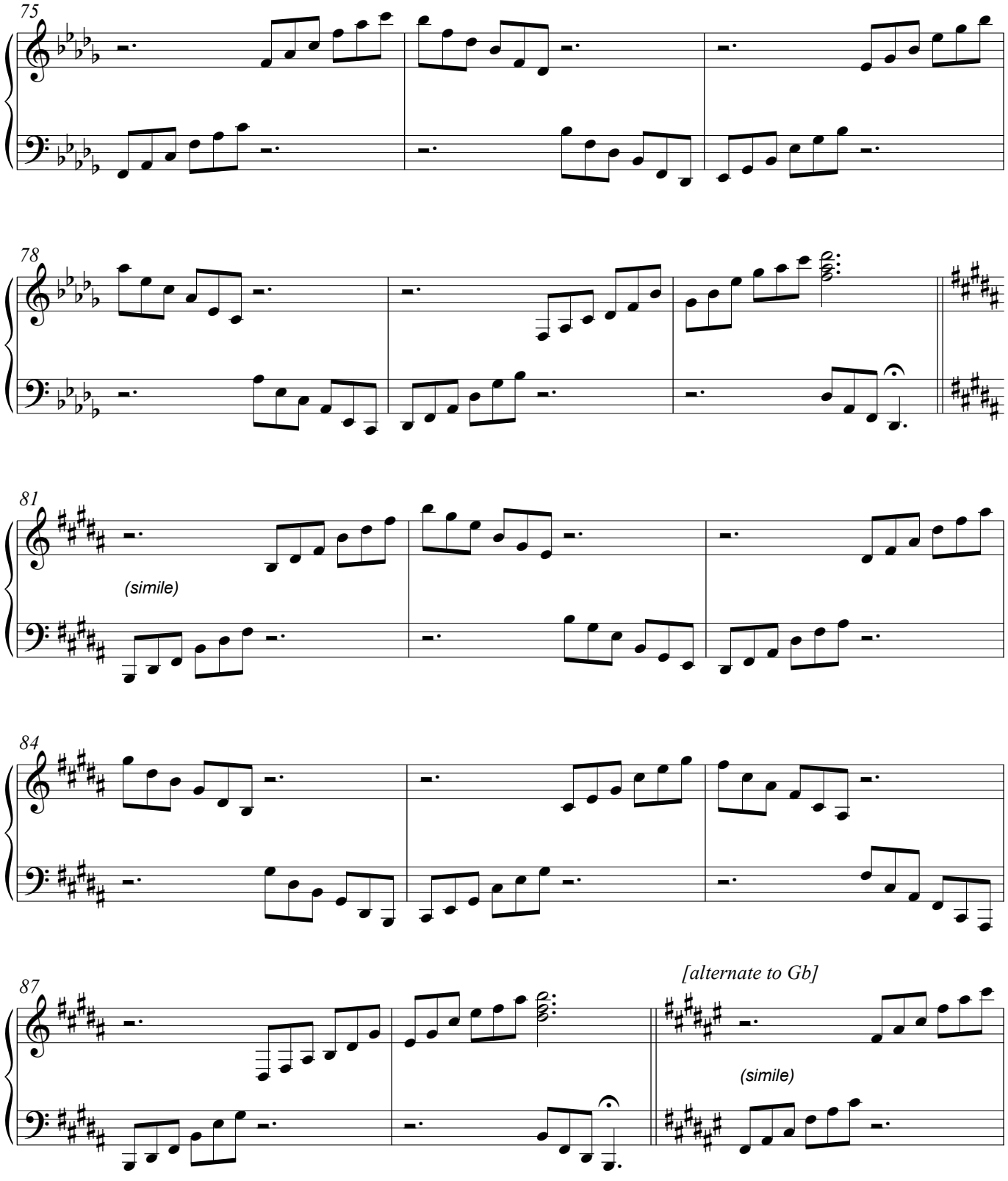

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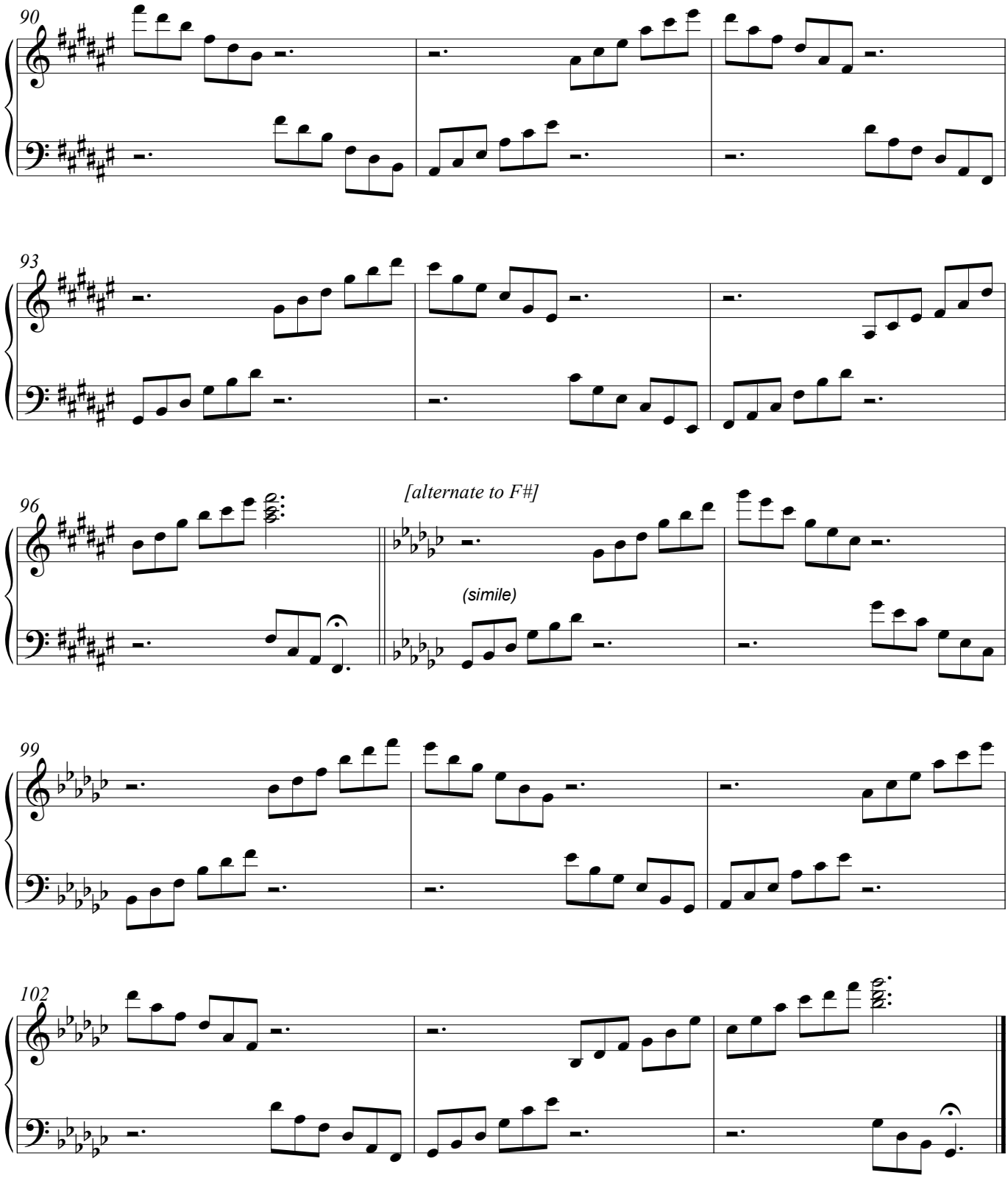

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