"How Long Blues" Notes

By Jimmy Yancey
Transcribed and Arranged by Kristian Olsen
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The purpose of this document is to help distribute this wonderful piece to the world. But if you find this of use and would like to buy me a coffee (or chip in for boring website hosting fees), you can do so at buymeacoffee.com/kolsen.

General Notes

The "How Long Blues" was originally recorded (and written?) by Ida Cox with Papa Charlie Jackson in 1925. It soon became a popular blues standard with many artists recording their own versions of the piece.

What follows is the sheet music for Jimmy Yancey's version of the piece from the *Complete Recorded Works (1939-1950), Vol. 2* on Document Records (Track 16, Alternate Take), recorded in 1943, as can be heard here. Yancey recorded the piece several times, but this version is my favorite.

The first piece of sheet music below is a note-for-note transcription of the piece.

The second piece of sheet music is a slightly more playable version of it. Notable changes I made to the original include the following:

1) I standardized Yancey's left-hand pattern—in the original, Yancey uses a few slightly different patterns throughout;
2) I adjusted a few passages for playability (e.g., measures 10-11);
3) I re-wrote the ending so the piece ends in F—Yancey ends most of his pieces, including this one, with the same ending in the key of Eb, regardless of whether the rest of the piece is in that key.

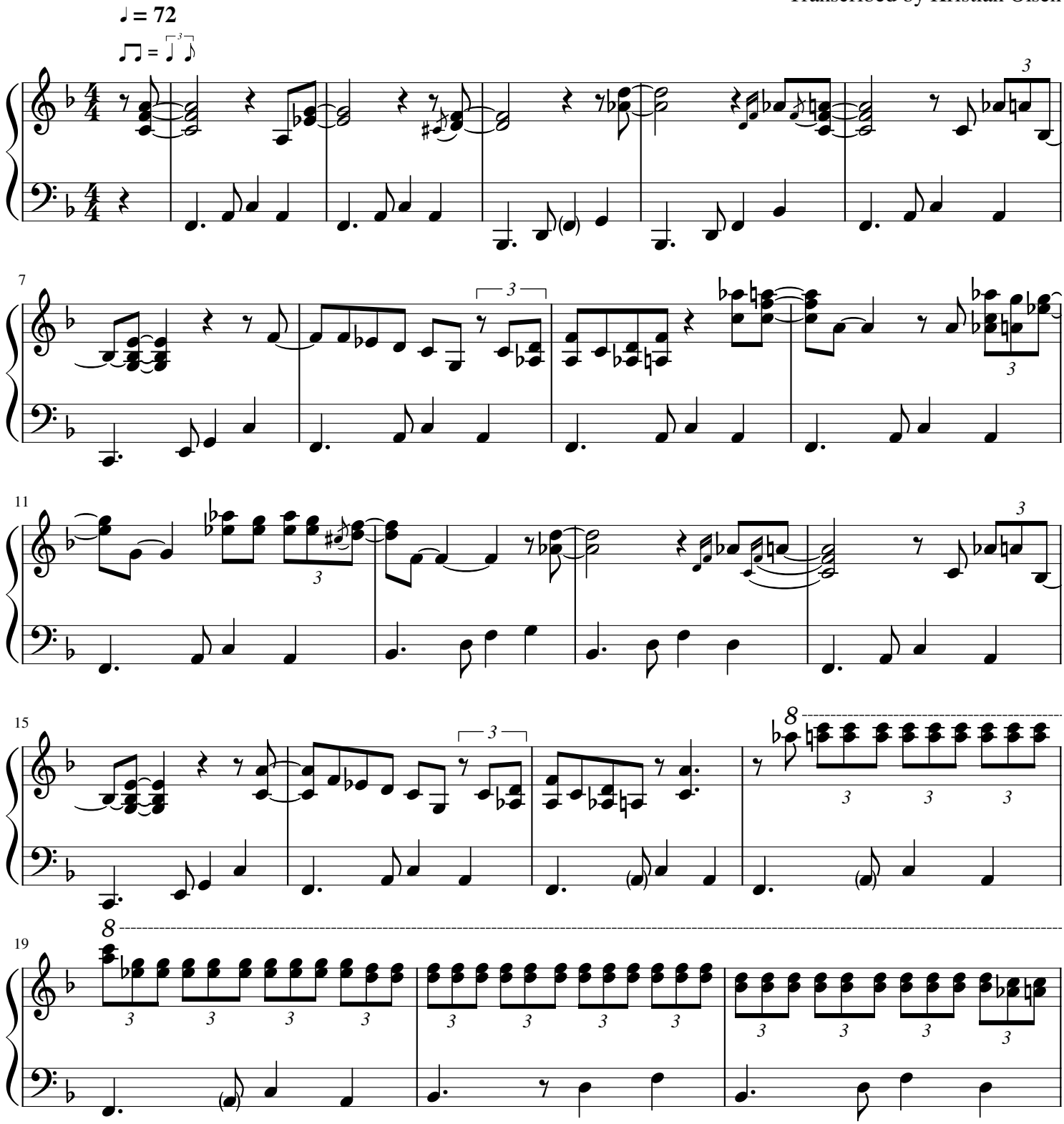
The result is, I hope, a piece that is faithful to the original score while also being a bit more comfortable and pleasing to play.

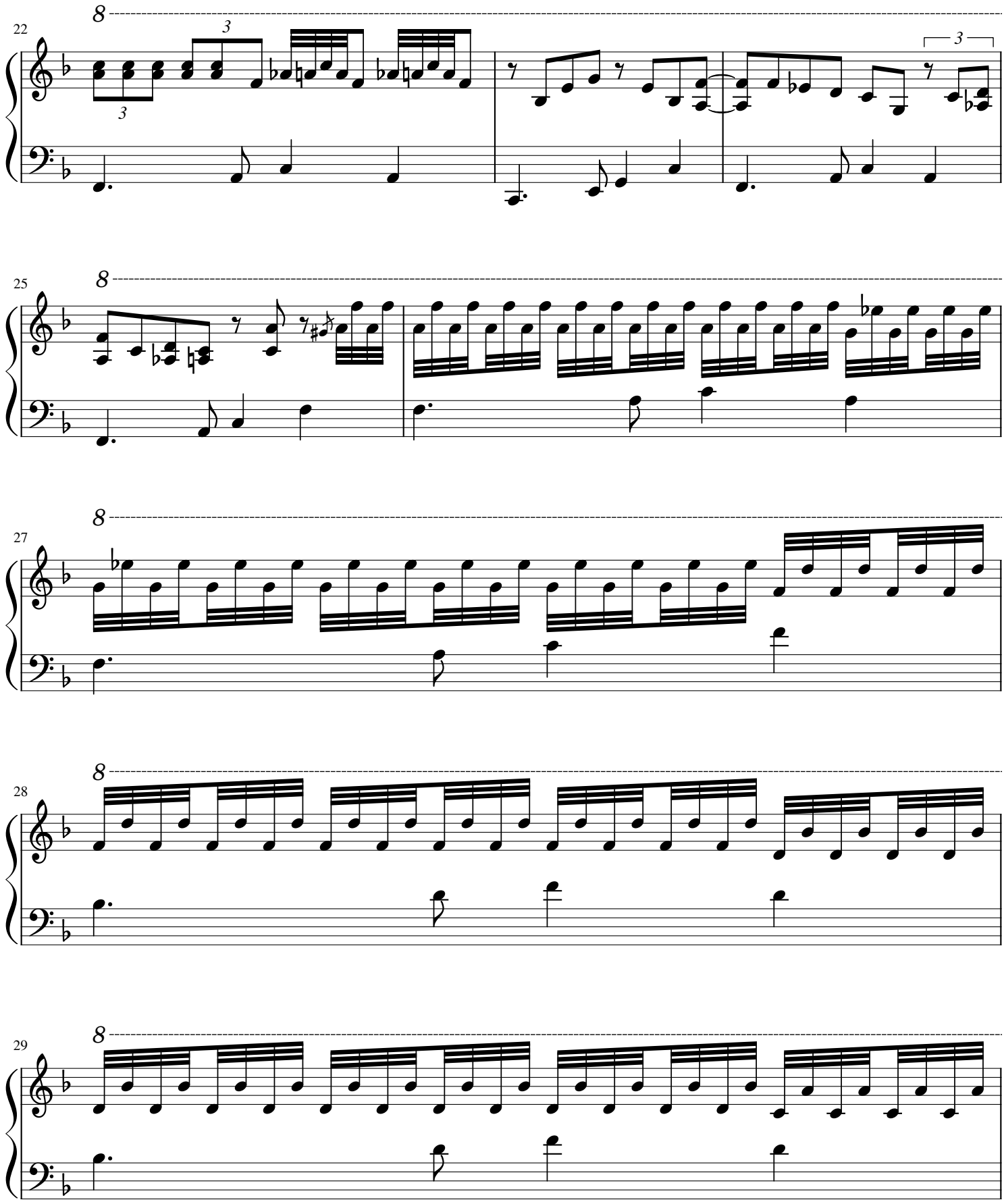
I have left out articulation and pedaling in these scores. Listen to the recordings and copy, or use whatever sounds good to you.

As always, this sheet music is meant only as a guide to your own exploration of the piece. Make changes freely, and do whatever sounds good to you. When I play the piece, I don't exactly follow either piece of sheet included here, preferring instead to mix a few of Yancey's verses with some improvisation, as demonstrated here.

How Long Blues

Jimmy Yancey
Version from "Complete Recorded Works (1939-1950), Vol. 2"
Document Records - Track 16, Alternate Take
Transcribed by Kristian Olsen

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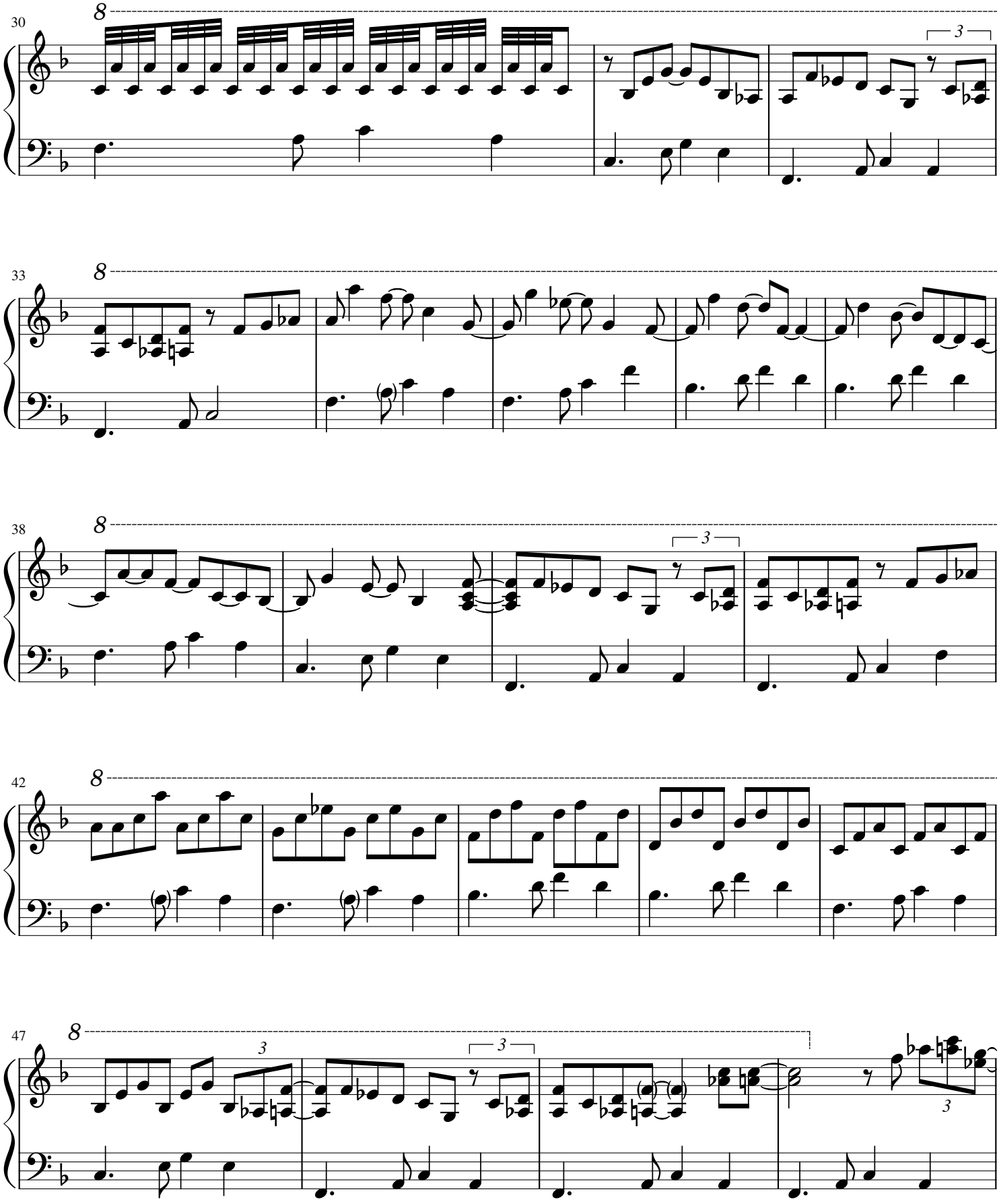
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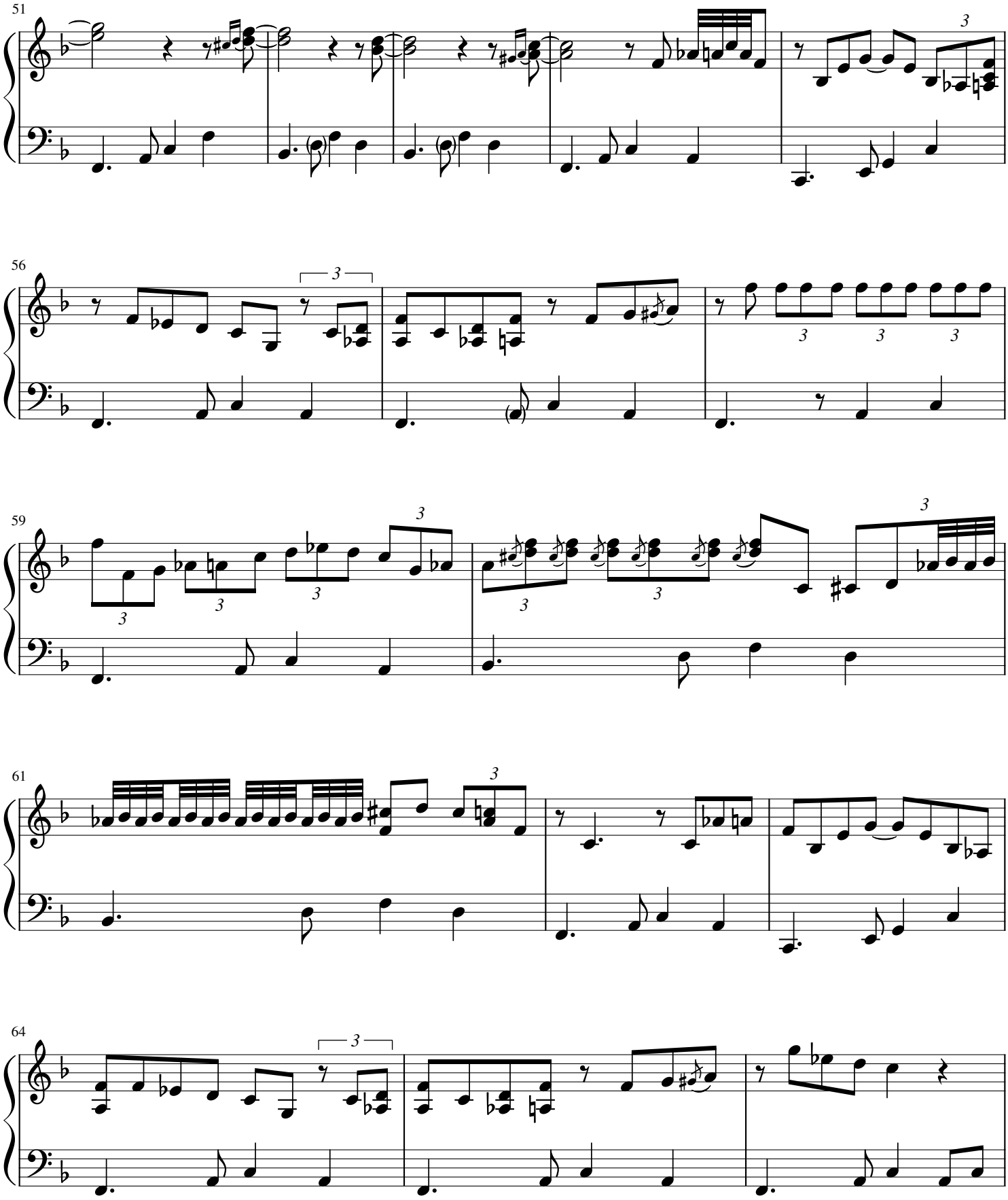
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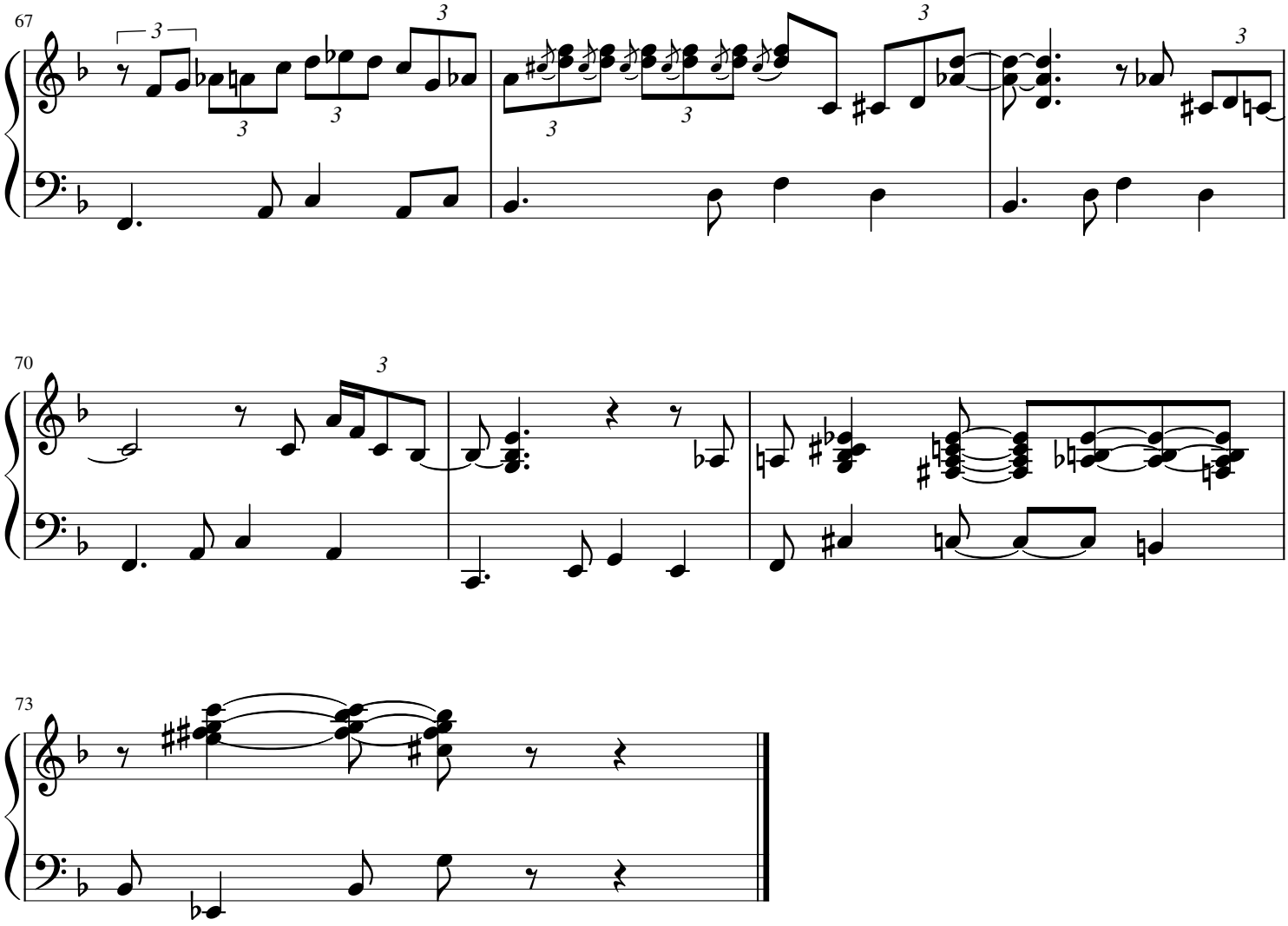
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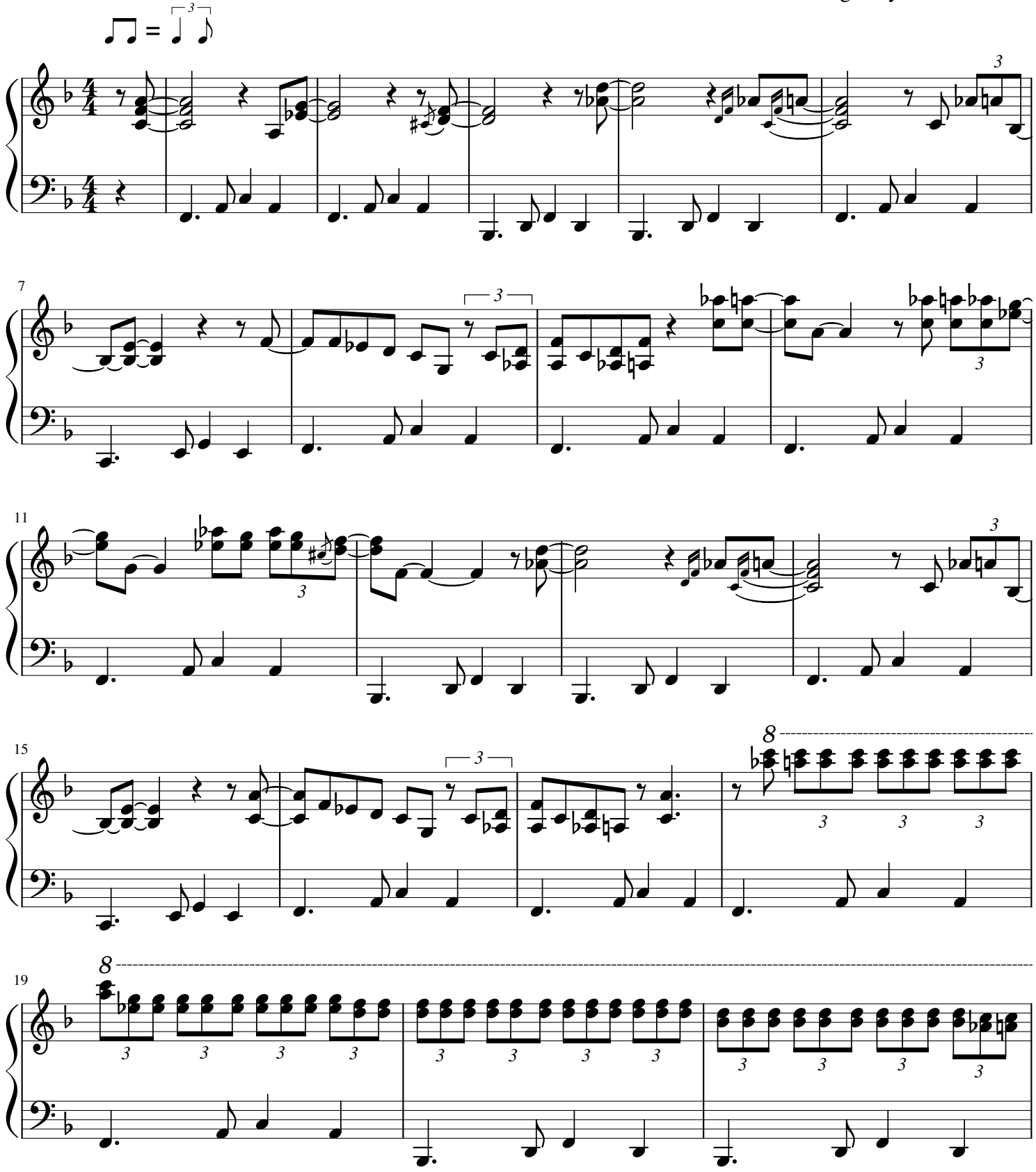

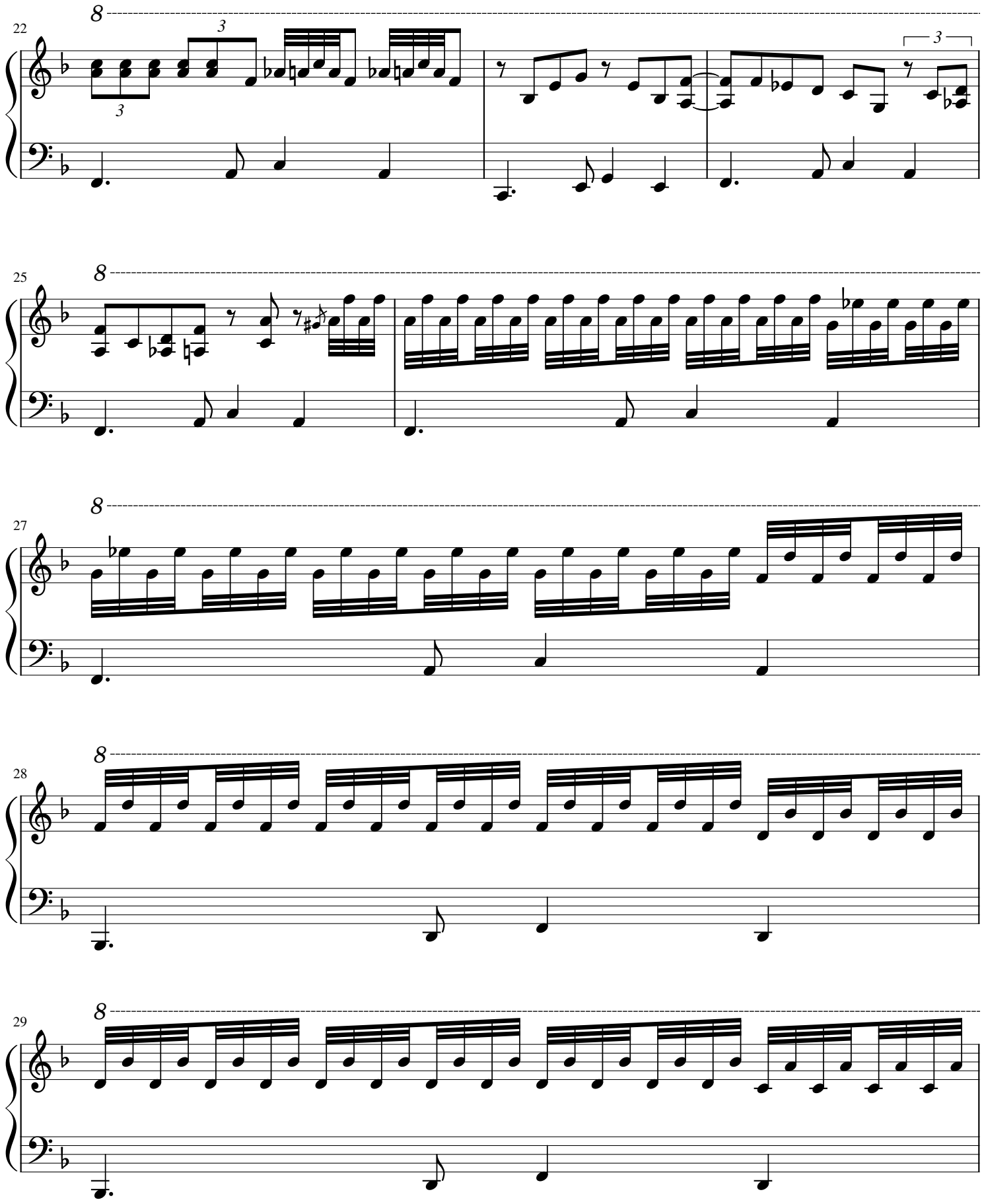
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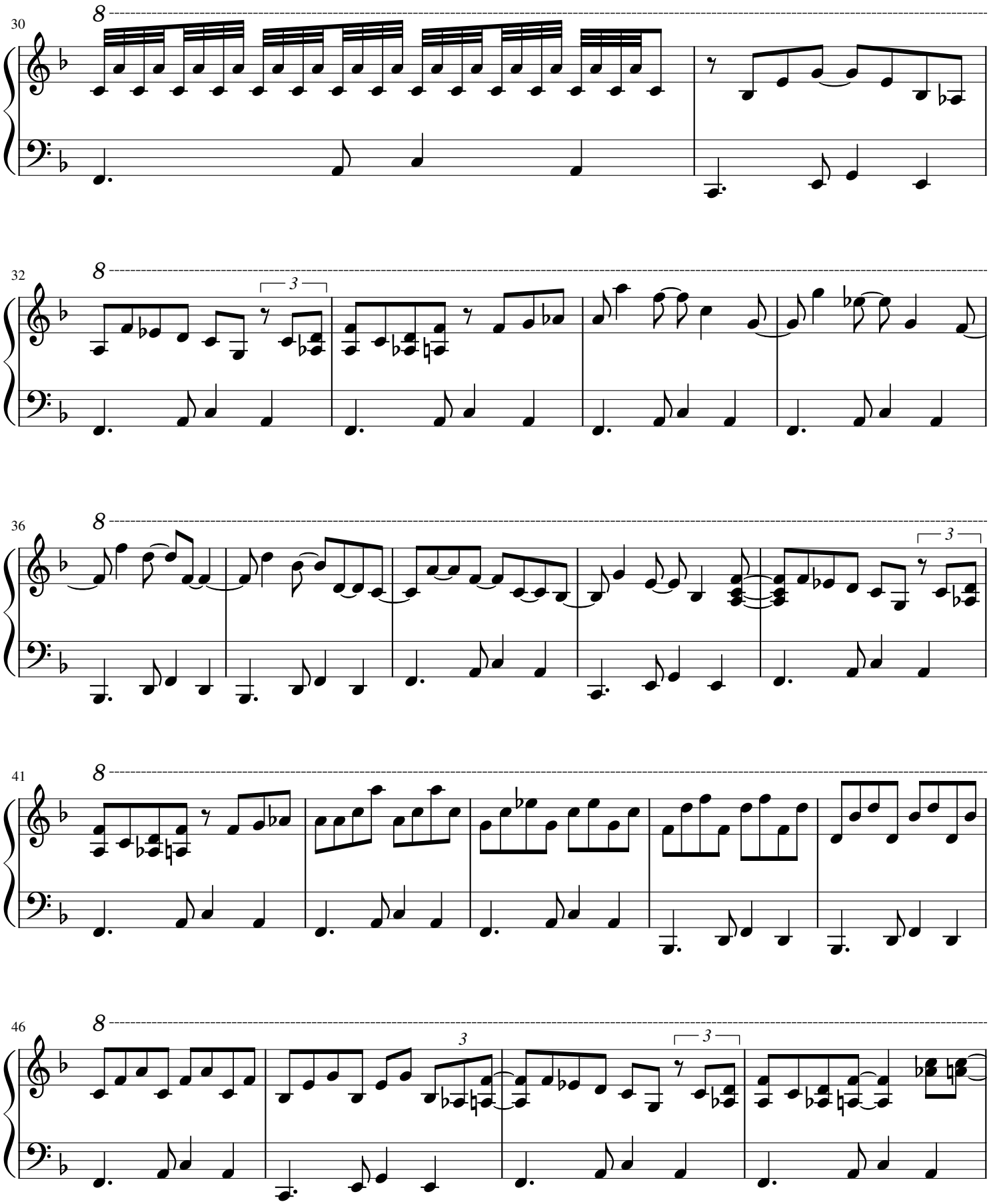
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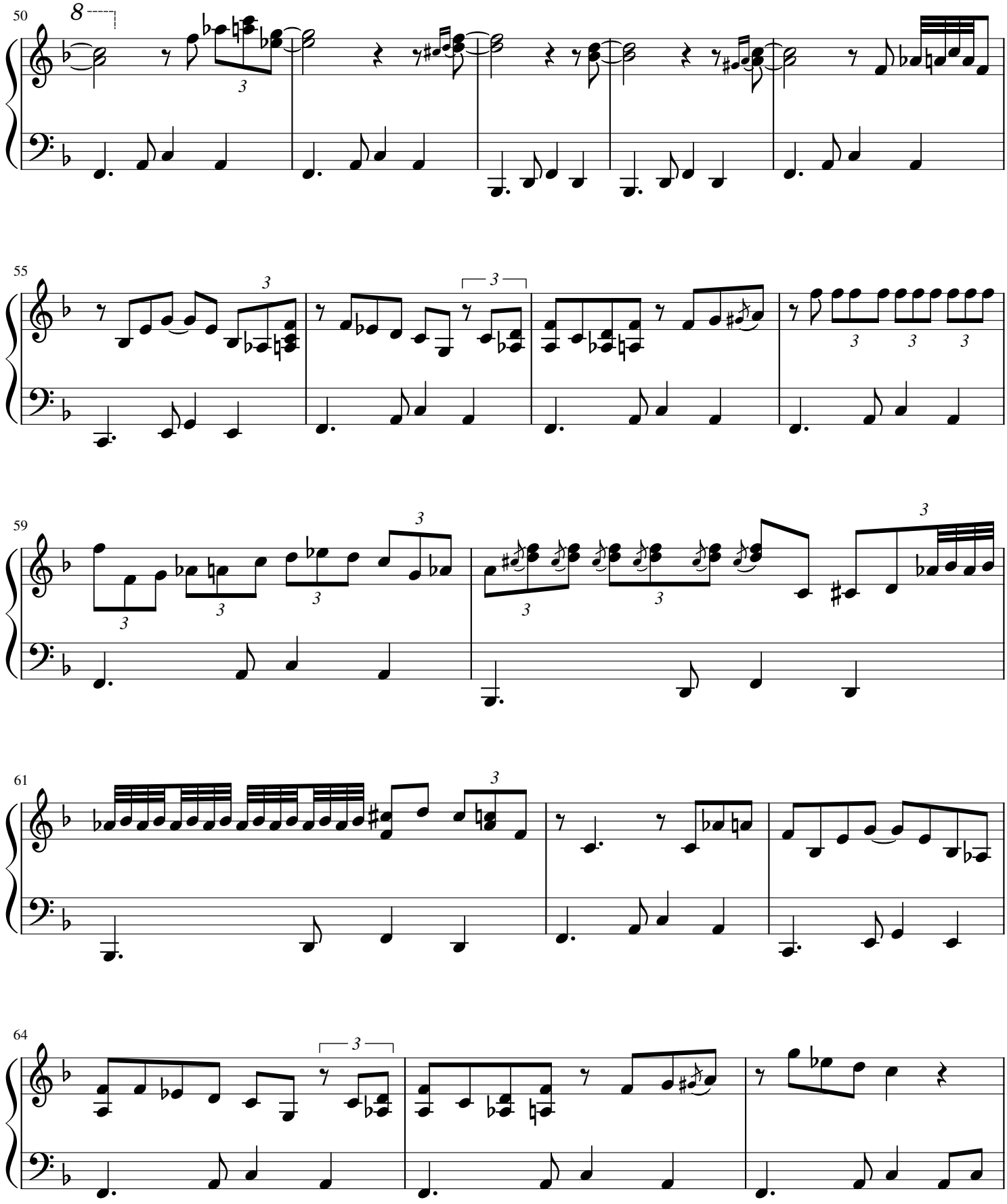
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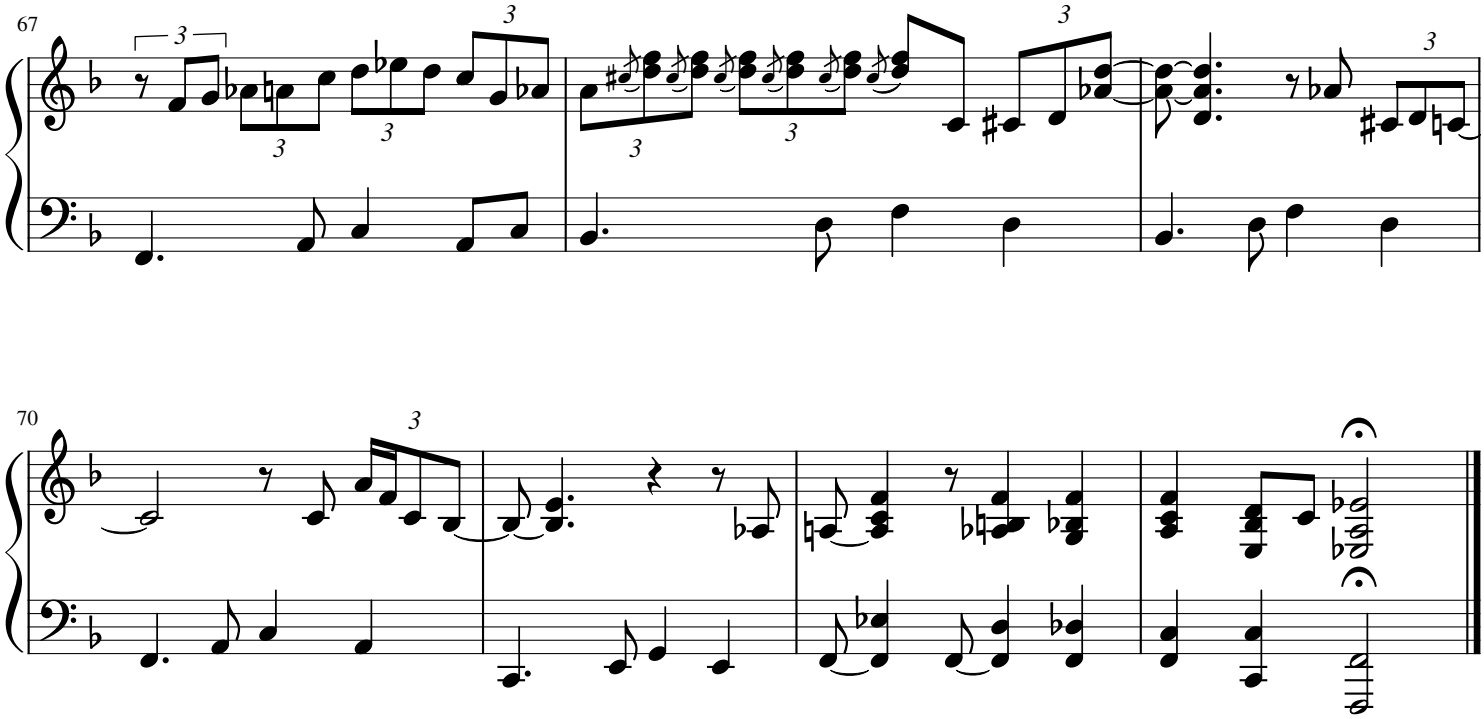
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