Welcome to The Ocean County Center for the Arts
Access Arts Series at The Strand

Sunday, November 12, 2006

Lakewood resident and Citizen of the Year 2006, **Maestro Wilbur Wittemann** introduces the greater Lakewood arts community to special guest **Ron Benvenisti**, a world class keyboardist who will be speaking and performing (with Wilbur on Trumpet) on music's ability to break cultural boundaries, as well as a special presentation on "The Torah's Music".

1: Breaking Cultural Boundaries

A traditional Jewish melody to Psalm 126, as sung before Grace After Meals at the Sabbath table. This melody is attributed to Josef Rosenblatt, (1882-1933) a Ukrainian born Cantor and Composer, however there is some confusion as to whether this melody for "Shir Hama'alot," which is probably the one most commonly sung in American homes, was composed by Rosenblatt or by another famous *chazzan*, Pinchas Minkowsky, who was the Chief Cantor in Odessa. The tune is representative of the musical influences popular around the turn of the 20th century: an amalgam of blues, jazz and the revolutionary harmonic influences Chopin while still being faithful to the traditional qualities of Jewish Liturgical Music.

The melody and harmonic structure lend themselves to a variety of contemporary interpretations. For our exercise in "breaking cultural boundaries", we will demonstrate the ease with which this staple of Jewish liturgy translates to Afro-Latin Jazz, a seemingly polar extreme. The melody and harmonic structure remain unchanged. It maps perfectly into the Salsa style. The tune was simply orchestrated and arranged in the new style.

To demonstrate, Ron has programmed some of the arrangement into his keyboard, and he and Maestro Wittemann will play along with it live.

2: Torah Music - "The Bible Sings?"

There is a Kabbalistic tradition (Jewish mysticism) where each letter of the Hebrew Alphabet represents a note in the diatonic (7 note) scale. What if the sequence of letters in a Biblical passage were mapped to those notes? What would it sound like? This has been a focus of mine for several years. The Jewish assumption is that the Bible is a divine document, written by G-d. Wouldn't be interesting to see what this "sounded" like? Would Genesis actually sound like the soundtrack of the Creation?

According to the tradition, the letters are only mapped to the 7 notes of the scale (ABCDEFG), but there are actually 12 notes if you include the sharps and flats. I have resolved this problem by including, what are called the 5 final letters in the Hebrew Alphabet, so that the mapping of the notes conforms to the full scale. Prior to the mapping of the 5 "accidentals", as they are called in musical terminology, the music derived from the text seemed disjointed and inaccessible. Only when the accidentals were also mapped did the text come alive with music that could be accessed and appreciated. It is this technique that will be demonstrated in the sound examples played today: The text of Genesis, Psalm 1, Moses' Song of the Sea, and three variations from the Book of Lamentations.

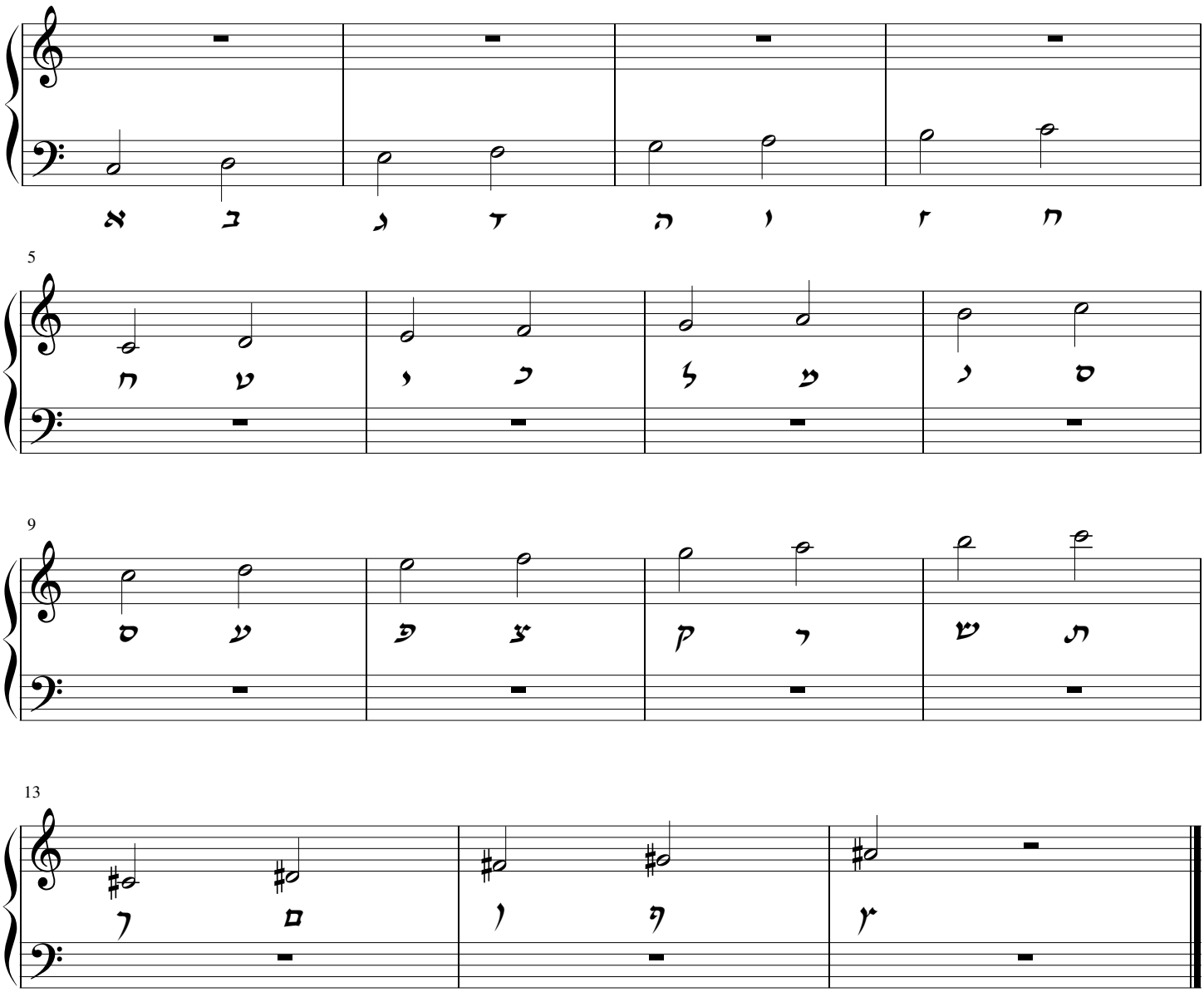
To hear more, please go to **www.soundassets.com**

Genesis represented as a straight letter sequence:

בראשיתבראאלהיםאתהשמיםואתהארץוהארץהיתהתהוובה
וחשךעלפניתהומורוחאלהיםמרחפתעלפניהמיםויאמרא
להיםיהיאורויהיאוריראאלהיםאתהאורכיטובויבדלא
להיסביולהאורובילחשךויקראאלהיםלאוריוםולחשךקר
יאמראלהיםיהירקיעבאלילהויהיערבויהיבקריוםאחדו
תוהמיסויהימבדילבילמיסלמיסויעראלהיסאתהרקיעו
יבדלביולהמיסאשרמתחתלרקיעוביולהמיסאשרמעללרקיעו
יהיכלויקראאלהיסלרקיעשמיסויהיערבויהיבקריושנ
יויאמראלהיסיקוולהמיסמתחתהשמיסאלמקוסאחדותראהה
יבשהויהיכלויקראאלהיסליבשהארץולמקוהמיסקראימ
יסתדשאהארץדשאעשבמזריסויראאלהיסכיטובויאמראלה
יעזרעעץפריעשהפרילמינואשרזרעובועלהארץויהיכלו
תוצאהארץדשאעשבמזריעזרעלמינהוועץעשהפריאשרזרע
ובולמינהוויראאלהיסכיטובויהיערבויהיבקריושלי
שיויאמראלהיסיהימאורתברקיעהשמיסלהבדילביולהיומו
ביולהלילהויהיולאתתולמועדיסולימיסושניסוהיולמאו
רויהיכלויעראלהיסאתשניתברקיעהשמיסלהאירעלהאר
המארתהגדליסאתהמאורהגדללממשלתהיומואתהמאורהקט
ולממשלתהלילהואתהכוכביסויתואתסאלהיסברקיעהשמי
סלהאירעלהארץולמשלביומובלילהולהבדילביולהאורוב
יולהחשךויראאלהיסכיטובויהיערבויהיבקריוסרביעיו
יאמראלהיסישרצוהמיסשרץנפשחיהועוף־יעופפעלהארקע
רסיאתהתניניסהגדליסואתכלנלפניתקיעהשמיסויבראאל
קכנפלמינפשהחיההרמתאשרשרצוהמיסלמינהסואתכלעו
הויראאלהיסכיטובויברדאתסאלהיסלאמרפרוורבוומל
אואתהמיסבימיסוהעוף־ירבבארץויהיערבויהיבקריוסח
מישיויאמראלהיסתוצאהארץנפשחיהלמינהבהמהורמרוח

Hebrew Aleph-Beit Note Mapping

Ron Benvenisti



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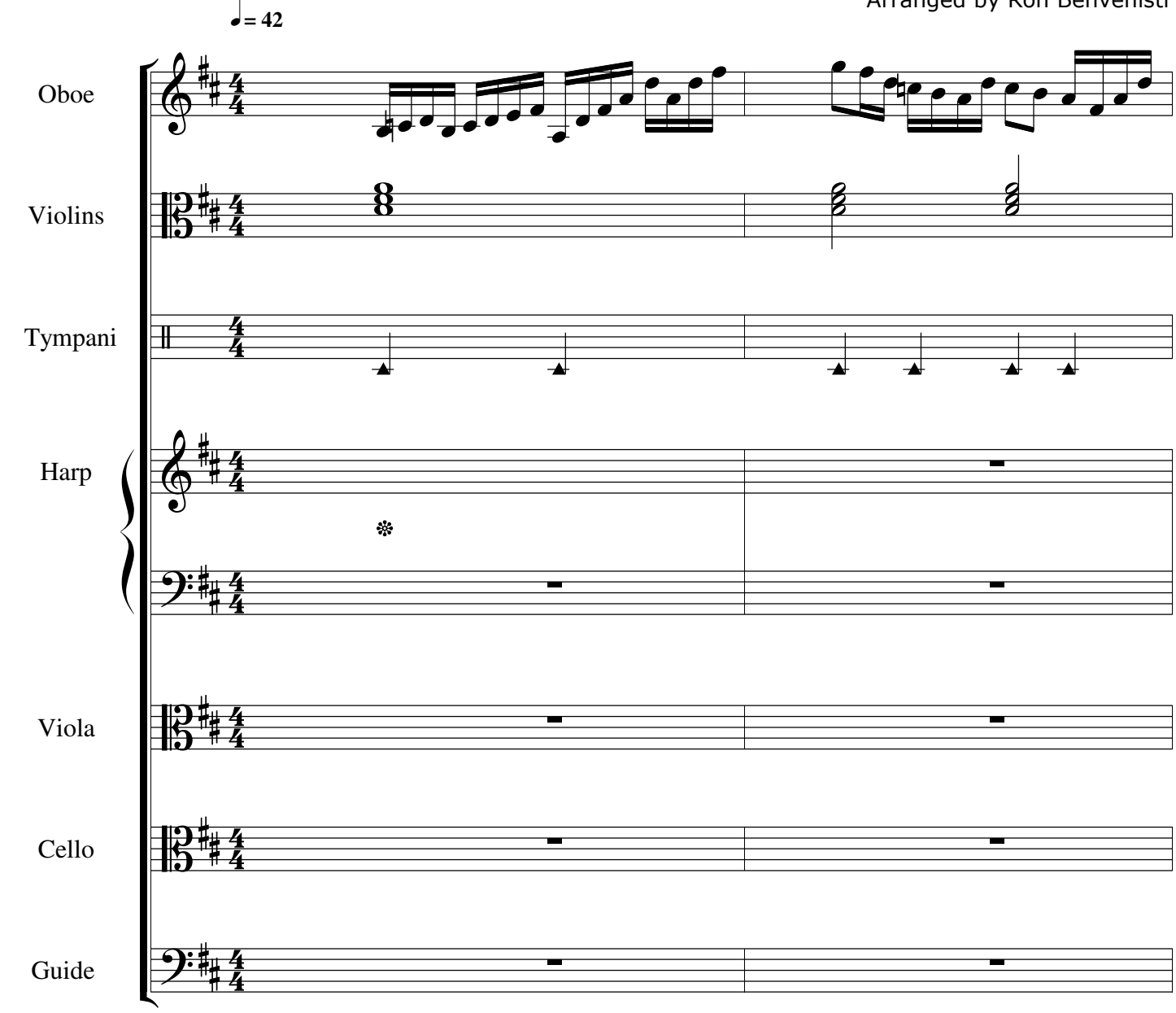
Genesis 1-256 D S6

Grave, Glorioso

Torah Text
Arranged by Ron Benvenisti



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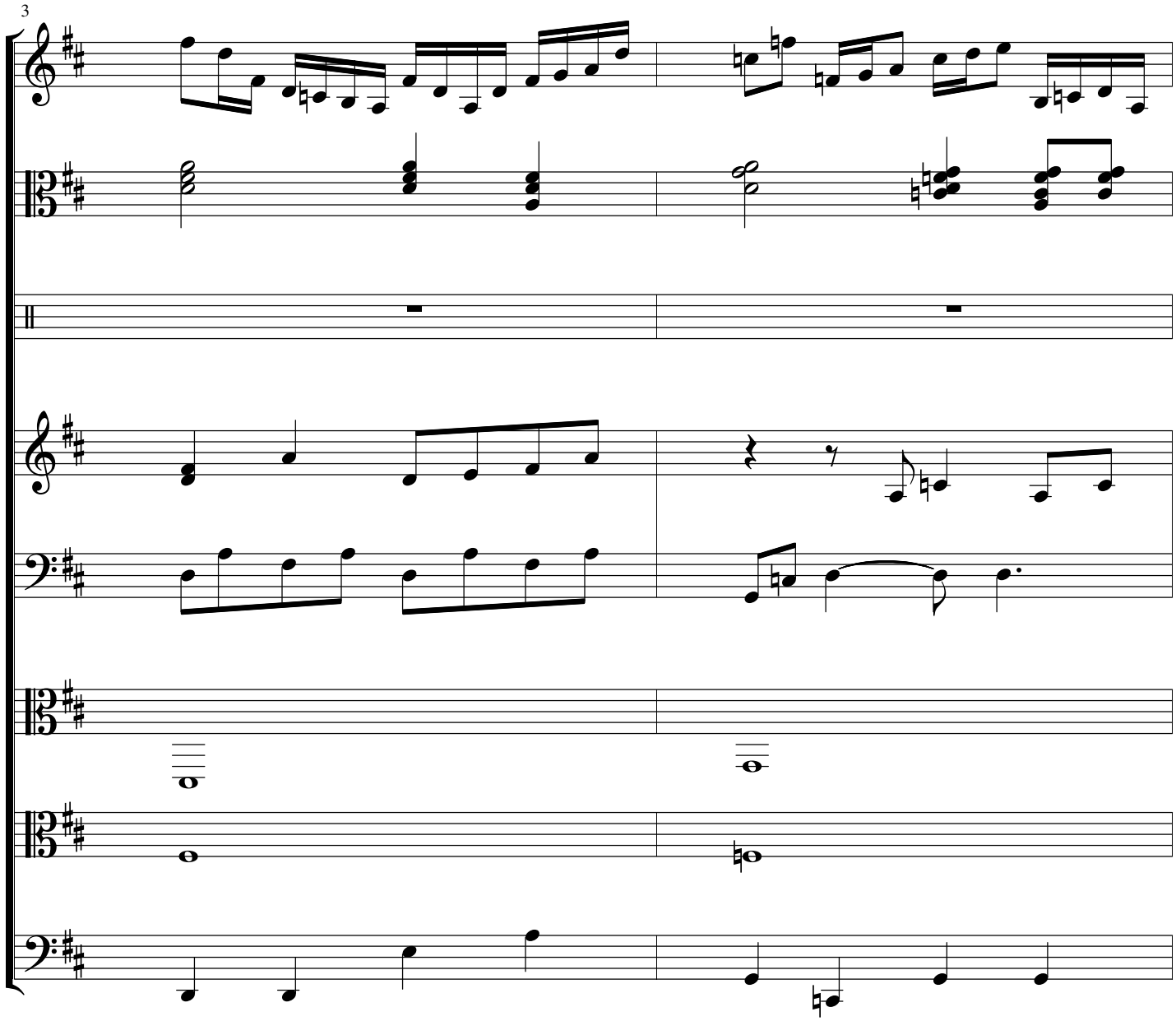

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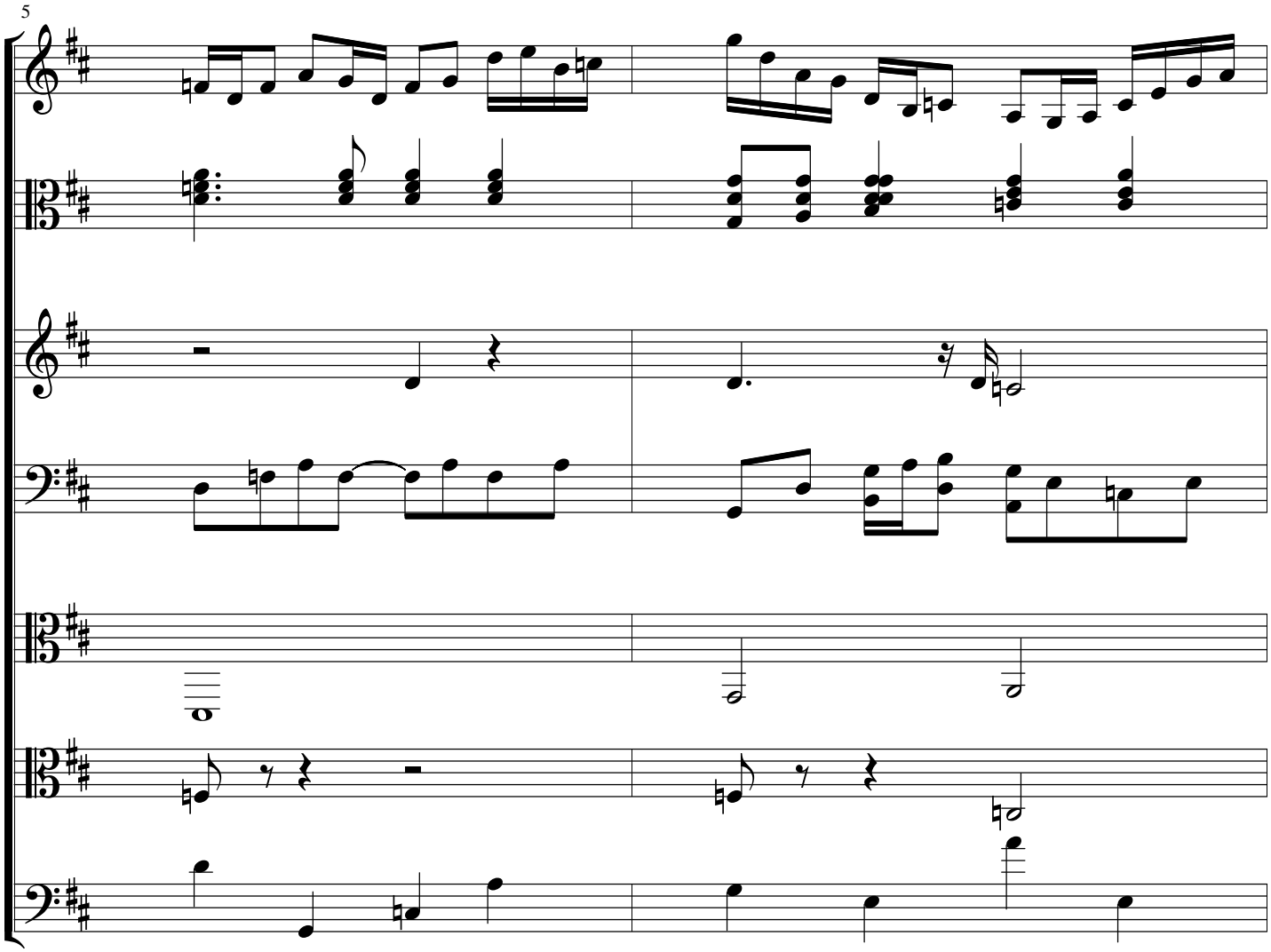

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