Solitaire

for microtonal sampler keyboard and soundfile
(or microtonal keyboards, fretless bass, and flute/oboe)

by
Kyle Gann
2009

Solitaire (2009)

Solitaire uses a just-intonation scale of 29 pitches; about 38 pitches are implied, but some of these are so close that substitutes are used instead. The piece is in E-flat, although no tonic chord ever appears. Harmonies are arranged around nine chords. Four of these are conventional IV, V, vi, and ii in E-flat major. Another is a major 7th on flat III. Three chords are built on the 7th, 11th, and 13th harmonics respectively, and a final on on the 7th subharmonic, 8/7. I made a chart of all possible chord successions and characterized them as "piquant," "subtle," "eerie," "weak," "intense," and so on, following these moods as the progression seemed to require. The private game alluded to in the title was to meander among these nine chords (and eight rhythmic patterns) moving as little as possible in register; to find as much variety as possible within extreme limitations, going deeper into the existing framework rather than outward from it.

The piece is notated in Ben Johnston's microtonal notation. FAC, CEG, and GBD are pure 4:5:6 triads. Flats lower a pitch by 24/25, sharps raise it by 25/24; + multiplies by 81/80, - by 80/81, *7* by 35/36, *L* by 36/35, ^ by 33/32, and 13 by 65/64.

The piece is gratefully dedicated to Robert Ashley, and inspired by his comment:

"Eventfulness is really boring."

Solitaire scale (pitches with asterisks are replaced by the closest substitute):

Pitch	Ratio to 1/1	Cents from 1/1
E♭	1/1	0
E13♭	65/64	26.8
Eb^	33/32	53.3
E*L*	15/14	119.4
F7+	35/32	155.1
F	10/9	182.4
F+	9/8	203.9
F*L*	8/7	231.2
F^	55/48	235.7*
G♭	6/5	315.6
G♭7^	77/64	320.1*
G13♭	39/32	342.5
G	5/4	386.3
G*L*	9/7	435
G^	165/128	439.6*
A♭7+	21/16	470.8
A♭	4/3	498
A♭^	11/8	551.3
B13♭7♭	91/64	609.4*
A*L*	10/7	617.5
B♭7	35/24	653.2
B♭	3/2	702
B♭^	99/64	755.2
C13♭	13/8	840.5
C7+	105/64	857.1*
C	5/3	884.4
C+	27/16	905.9
C*L*	12/7	933.1
C^	55/32	937.6*
D♭7	7/4	968.8
D♭	9/5	1017.6
D♭13	117/64	1044.4
D	15/8	1088.3
D*L*-	40/21	1115.5
D^	495/256	1141.5*
E♭7+	63/32	1172.7

to Robert Ashley:
"Eventfulness is really boring"

Solitaire

Still

♩ = 100

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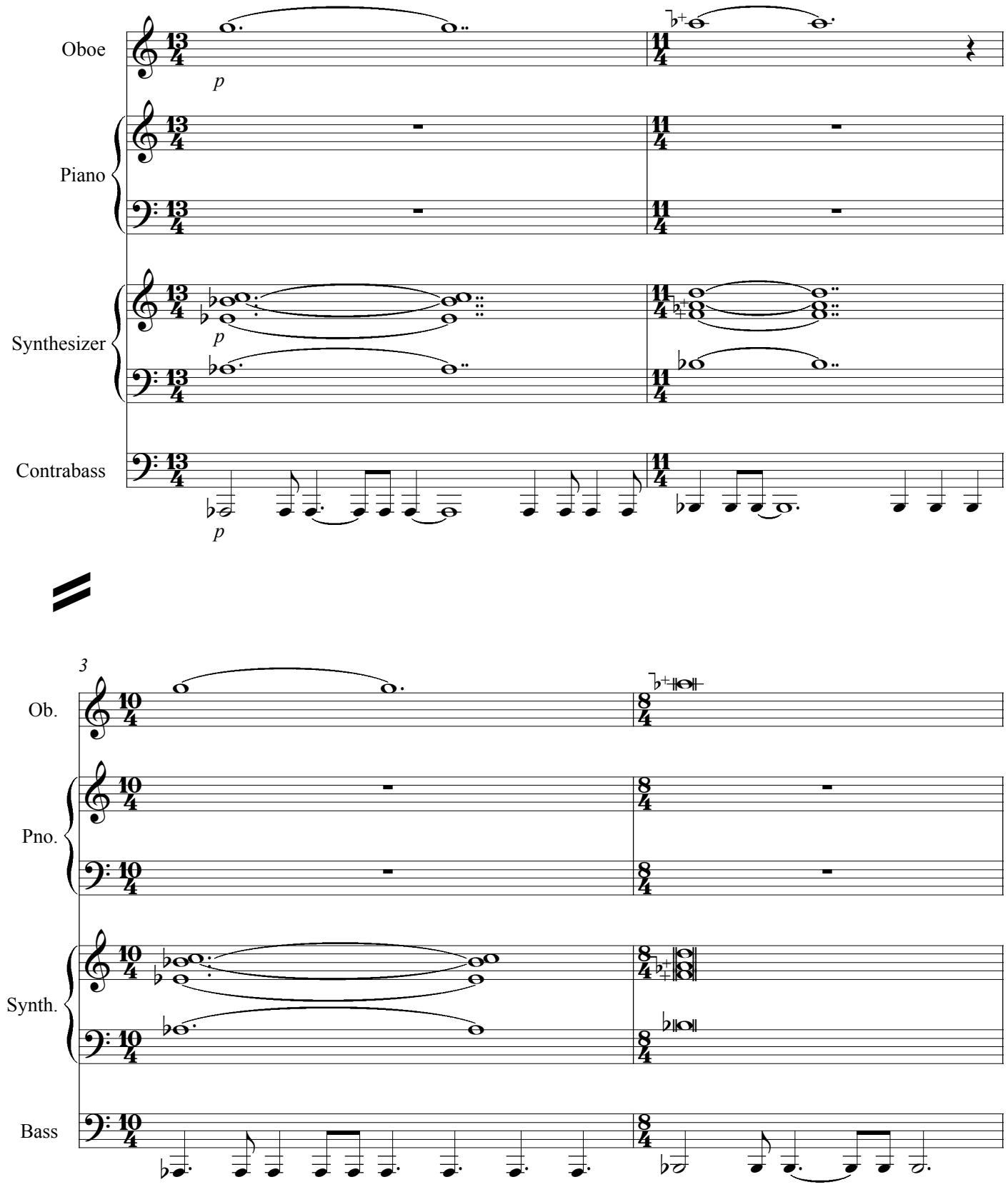
2009



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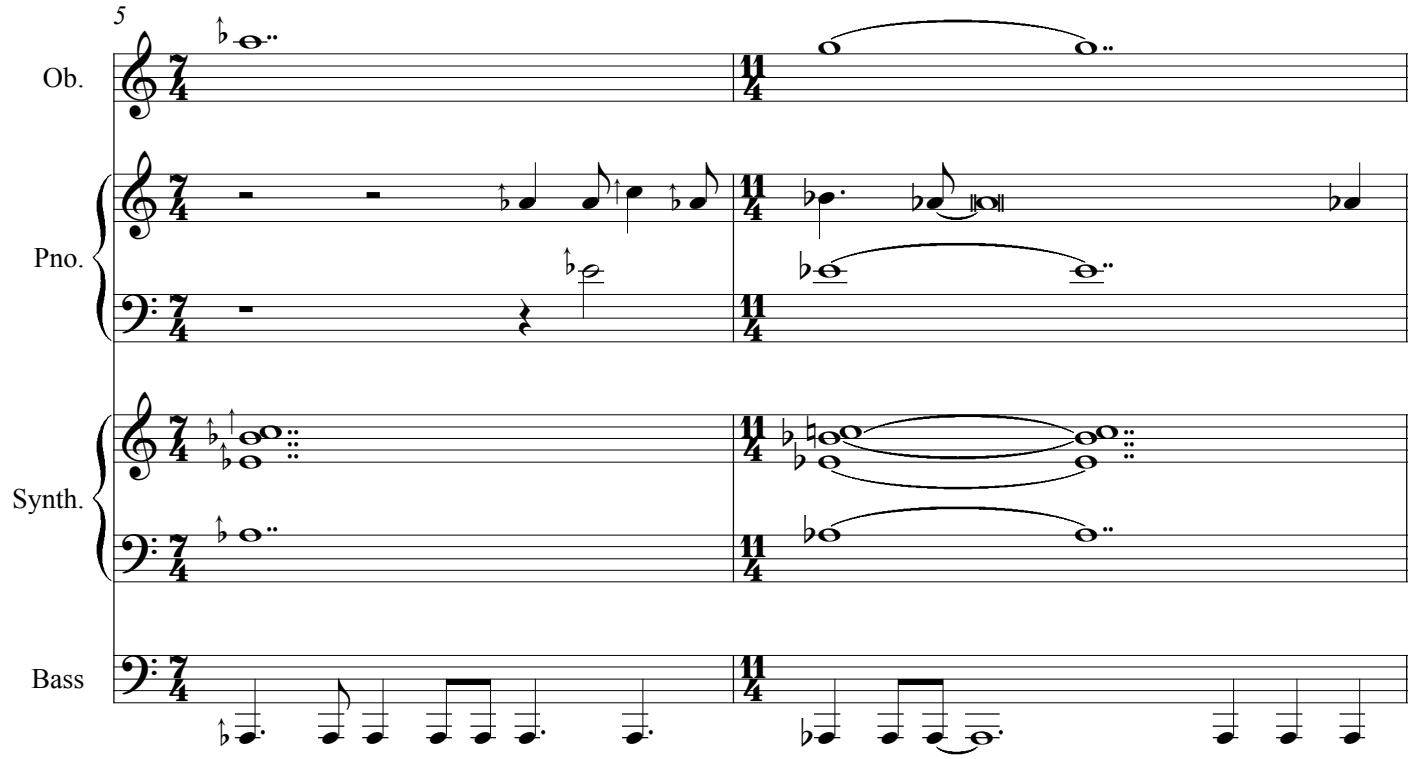
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Synth.
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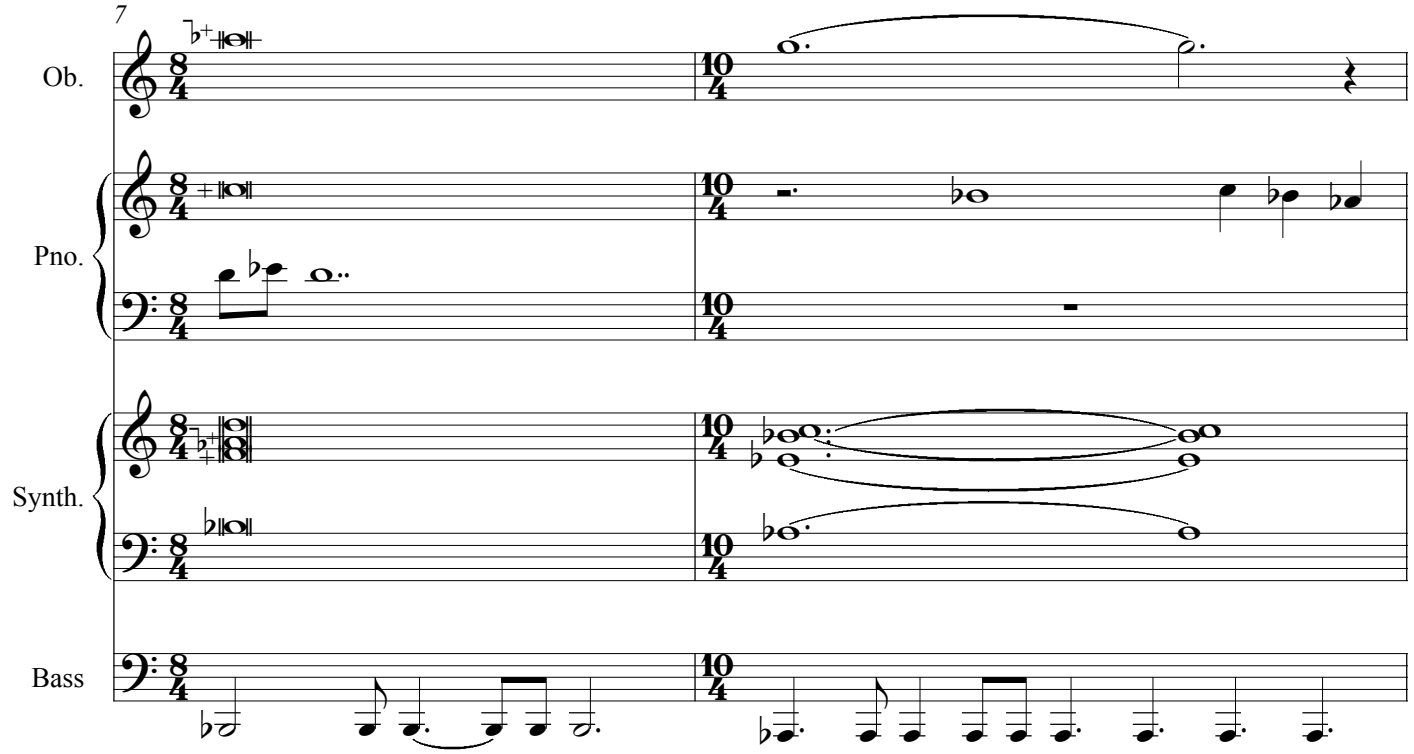
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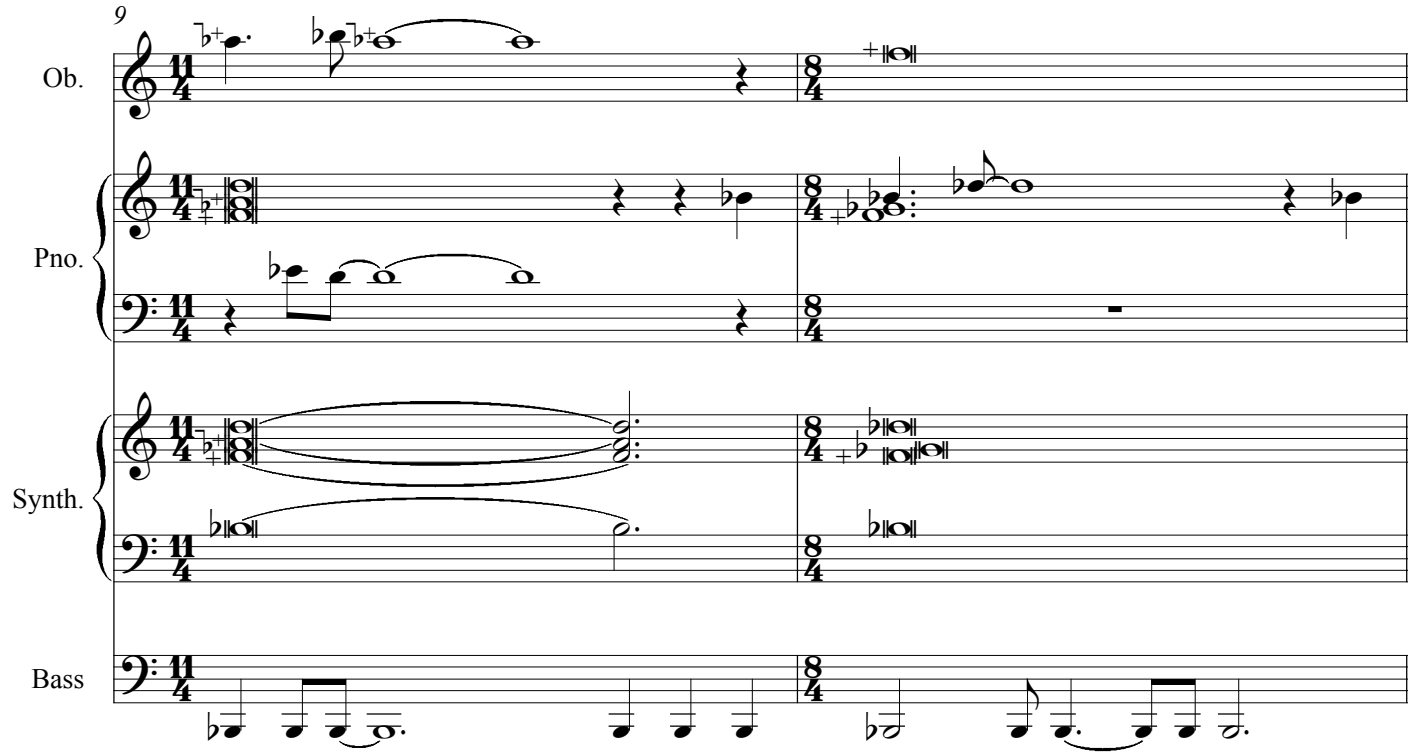
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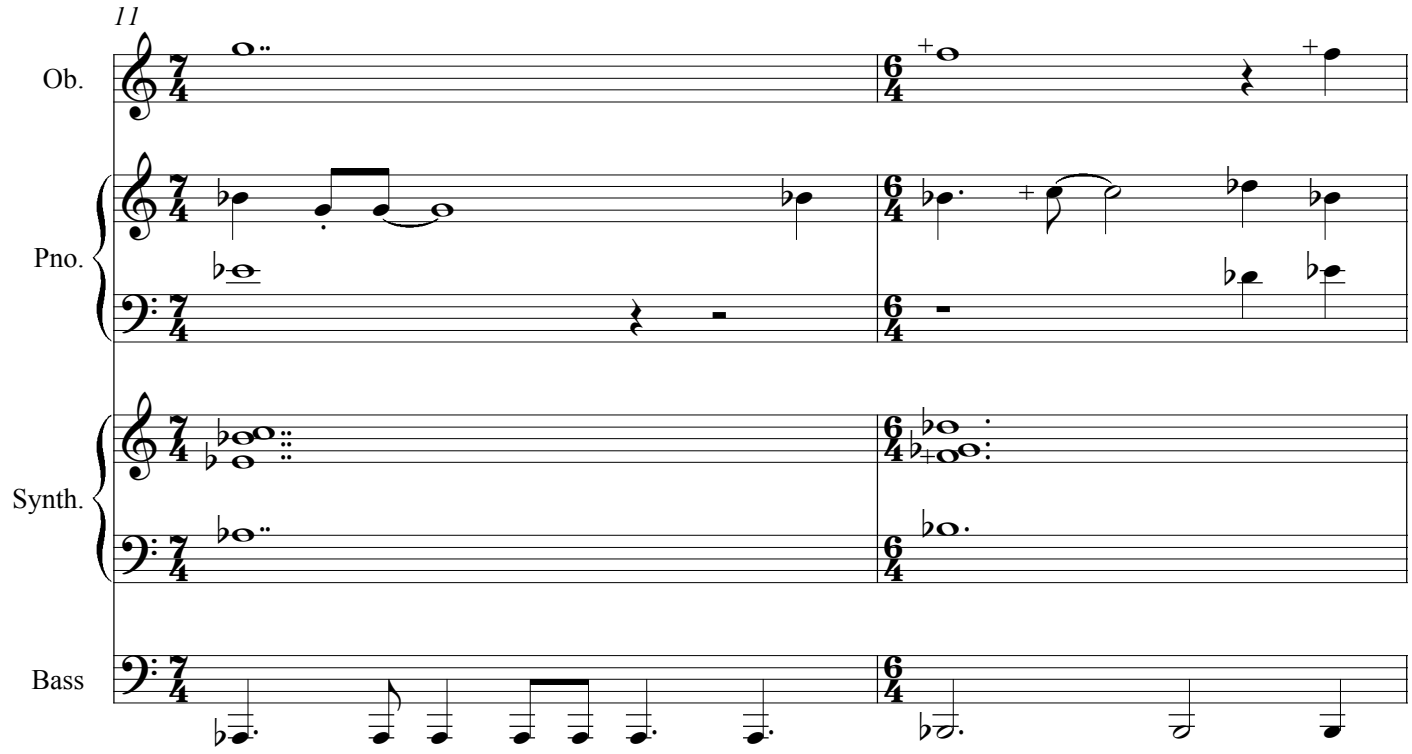
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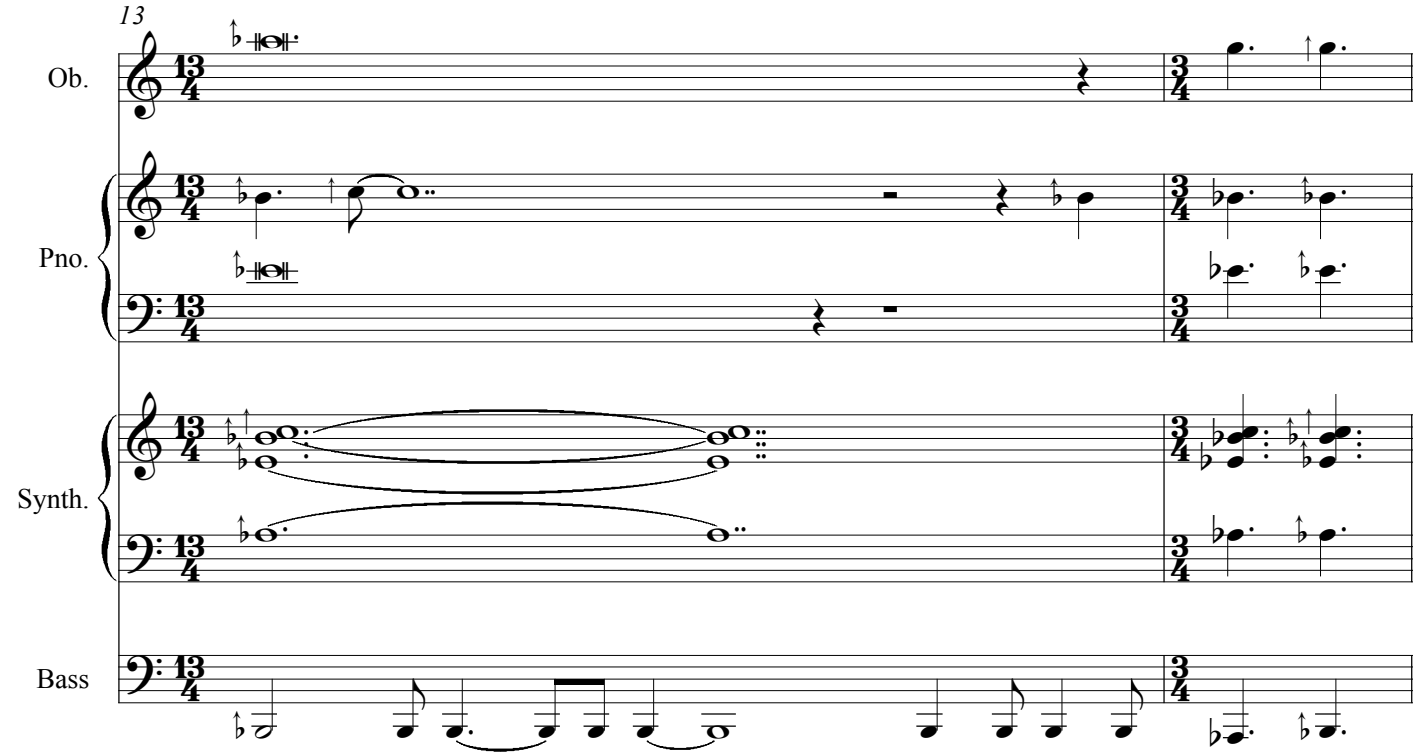
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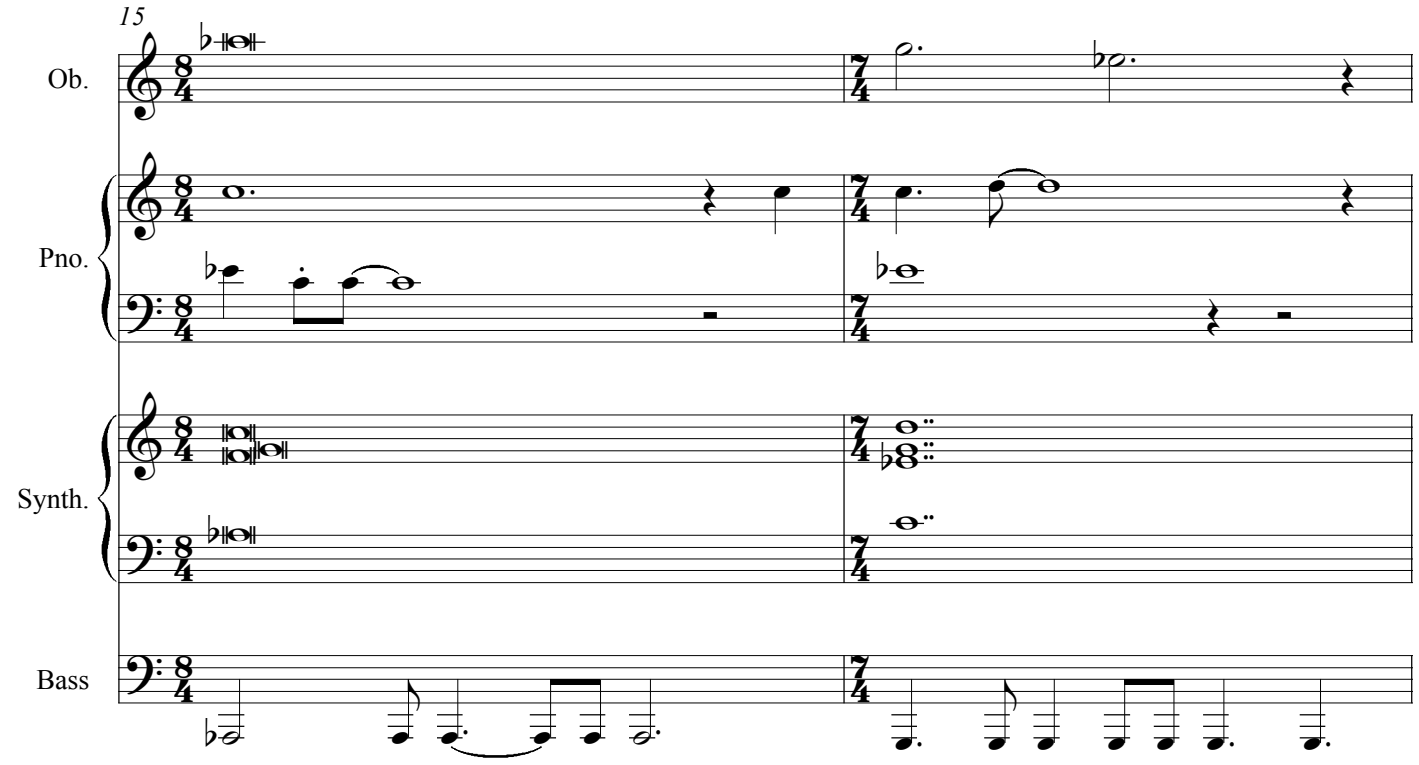
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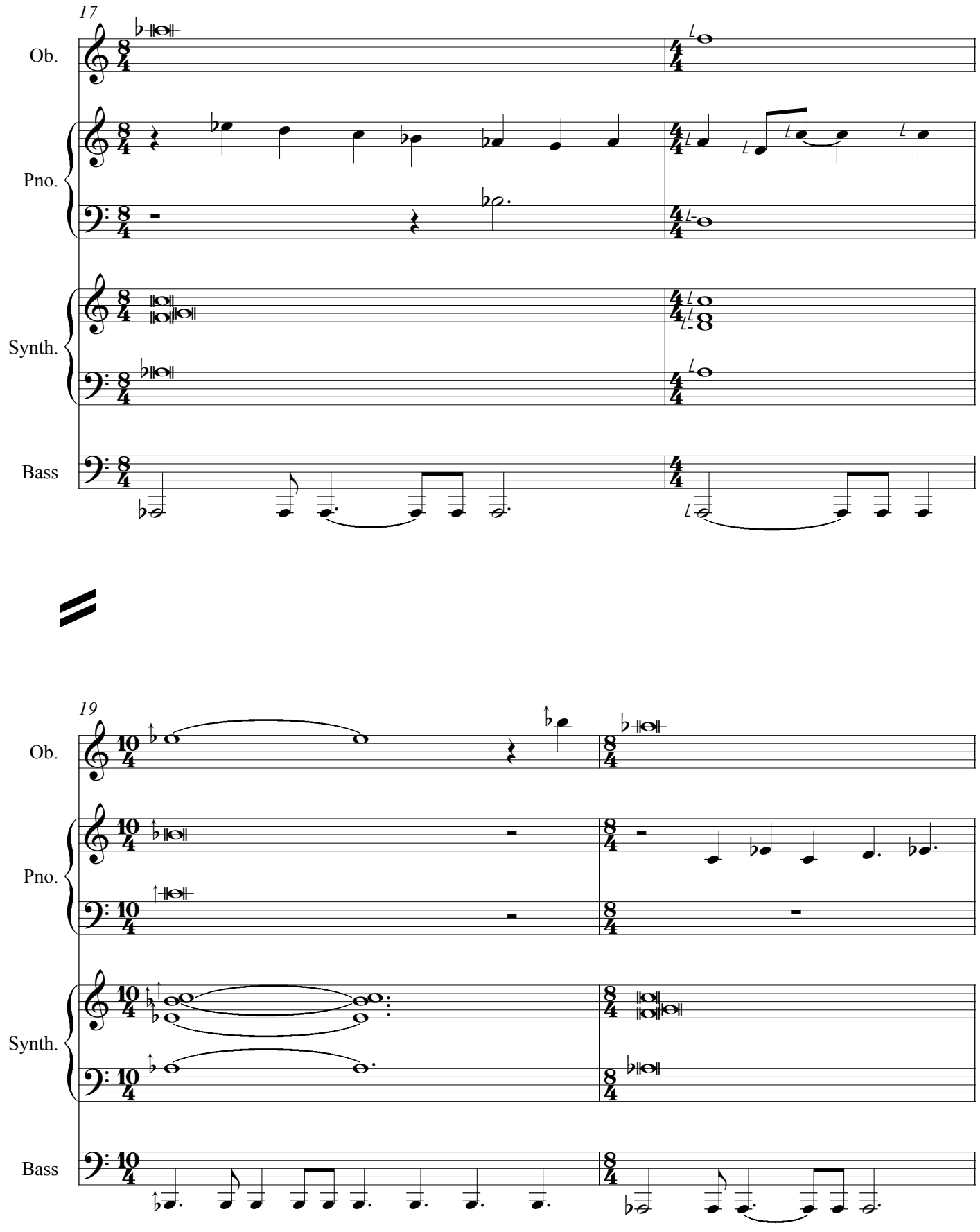
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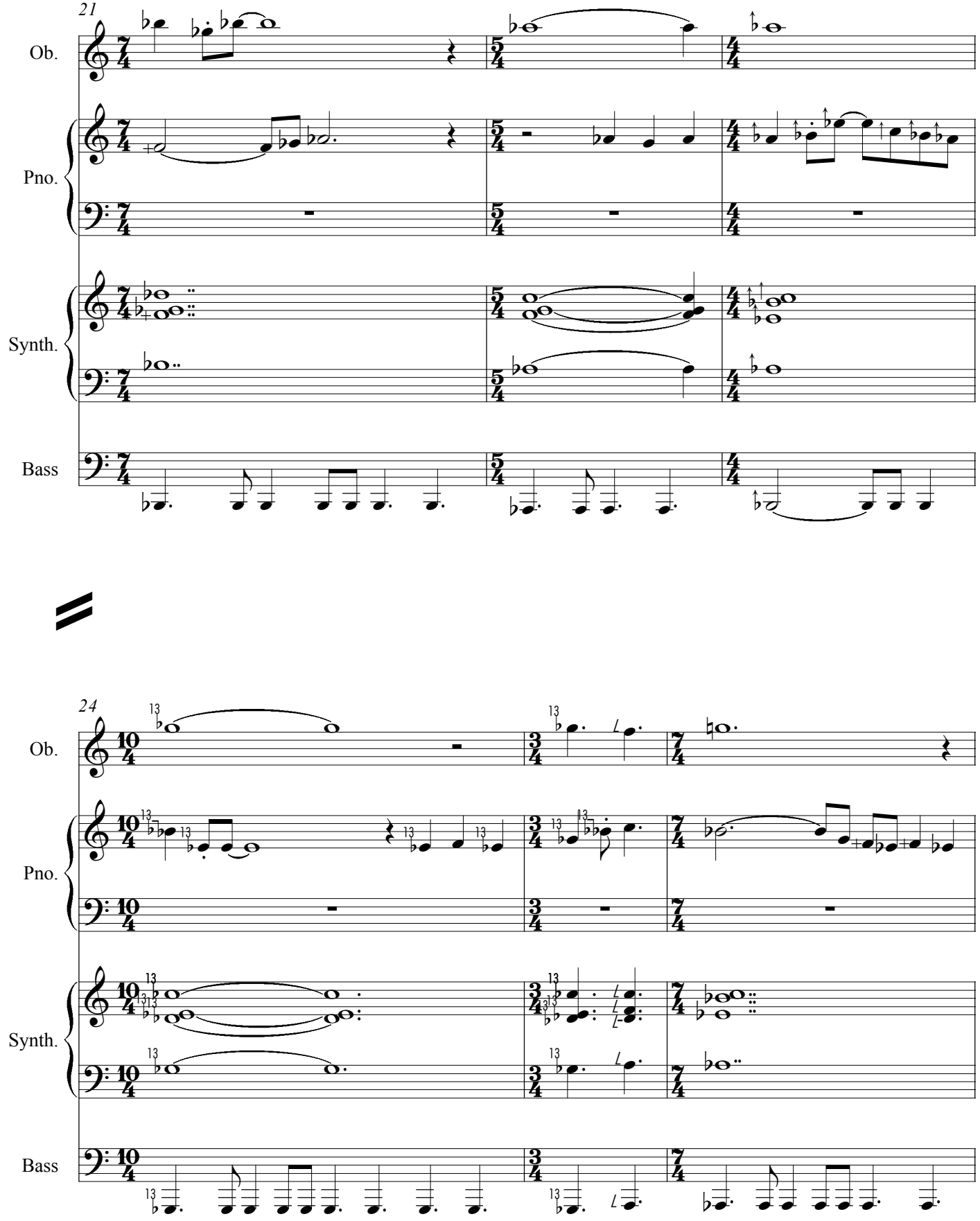
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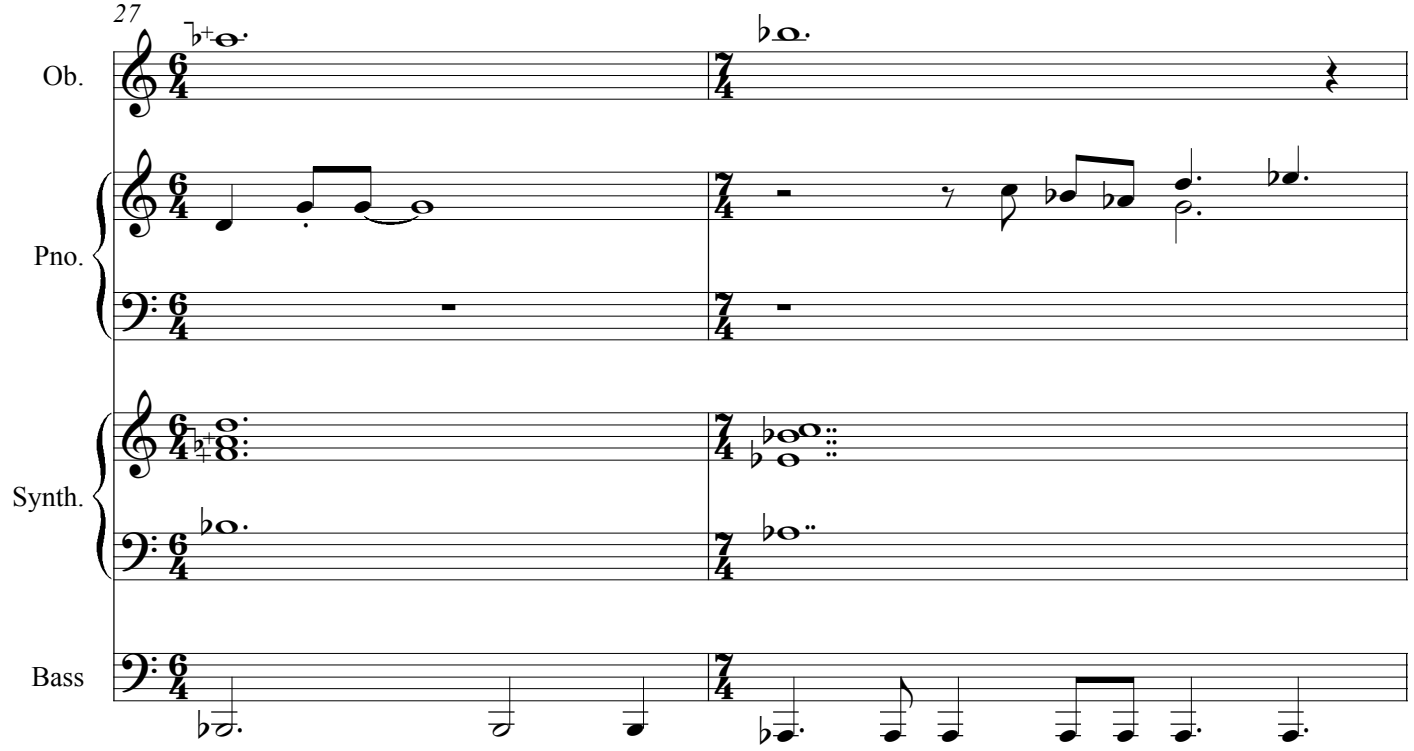
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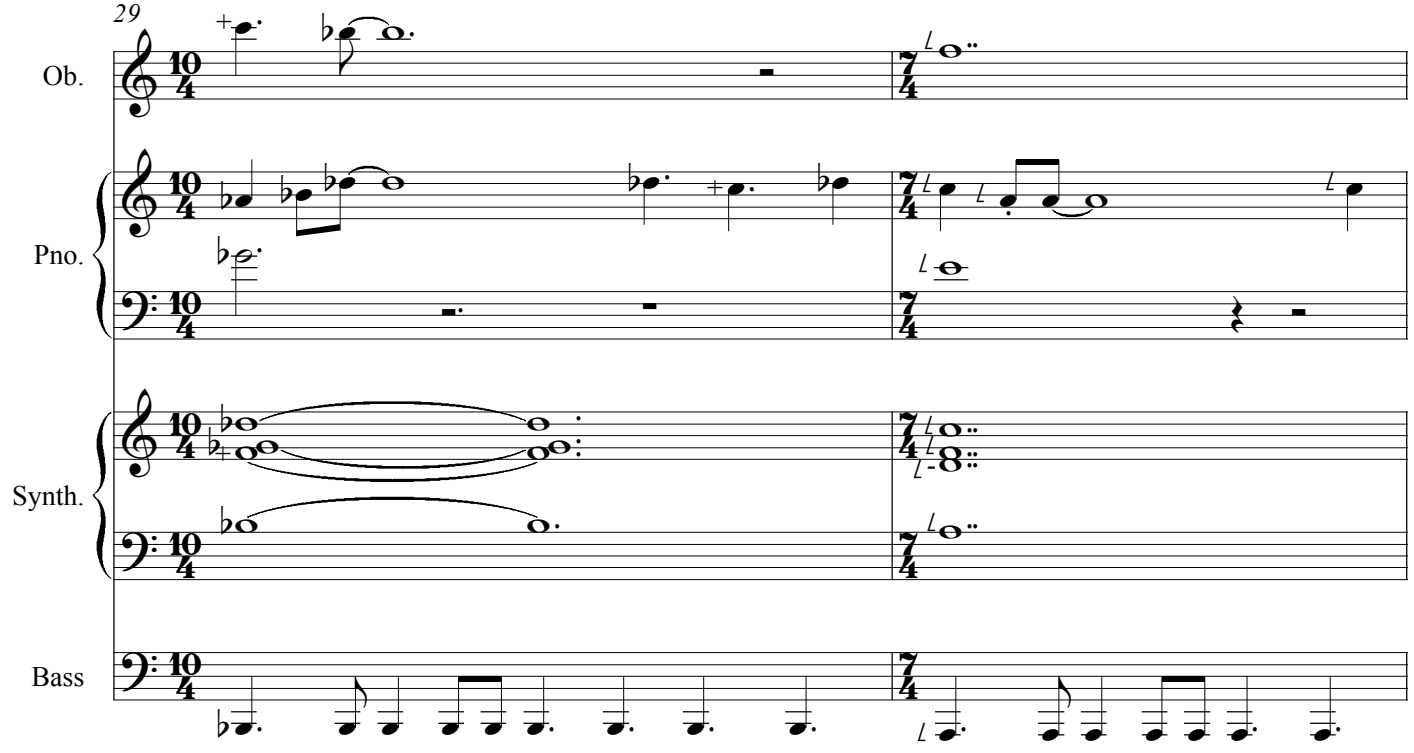
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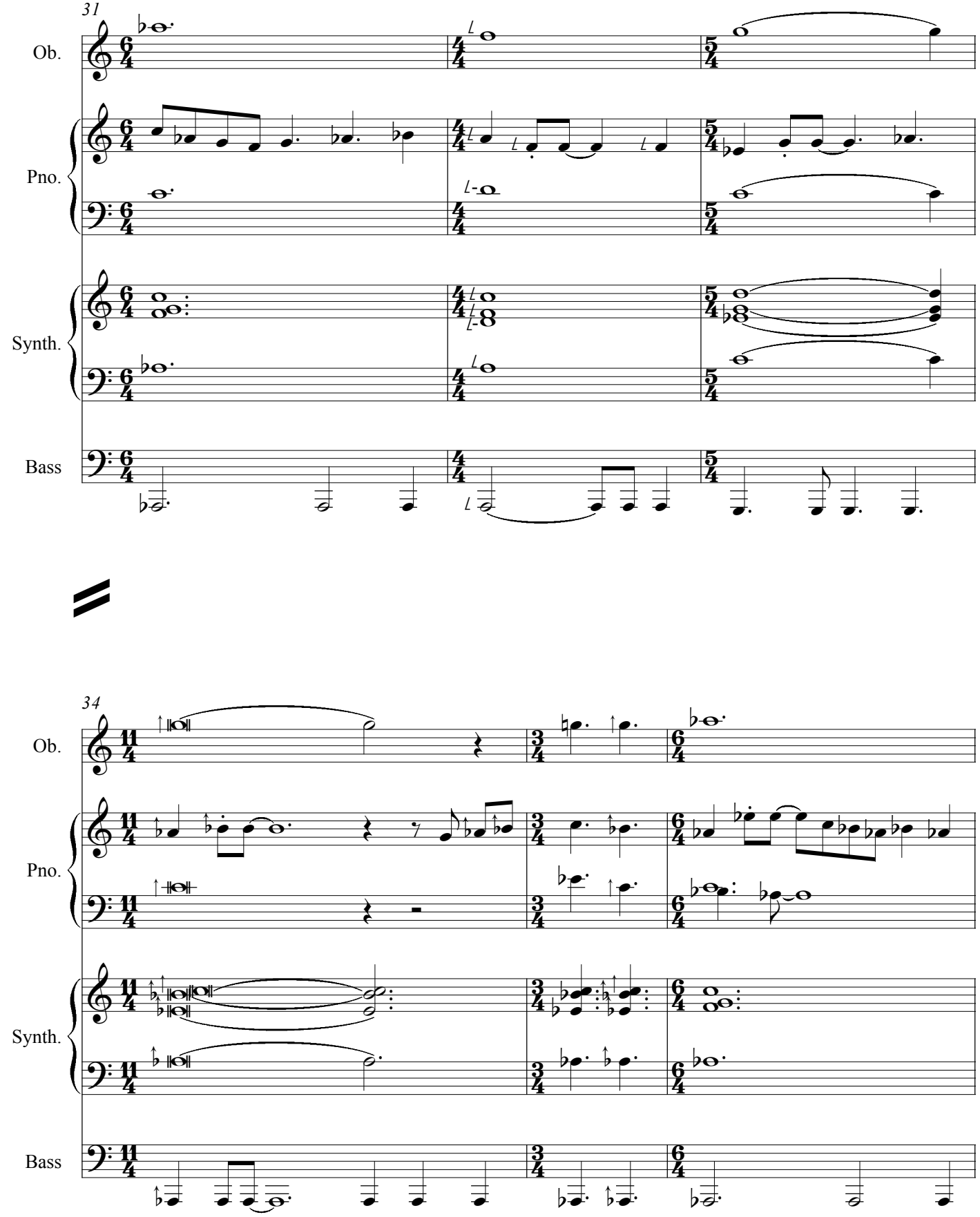
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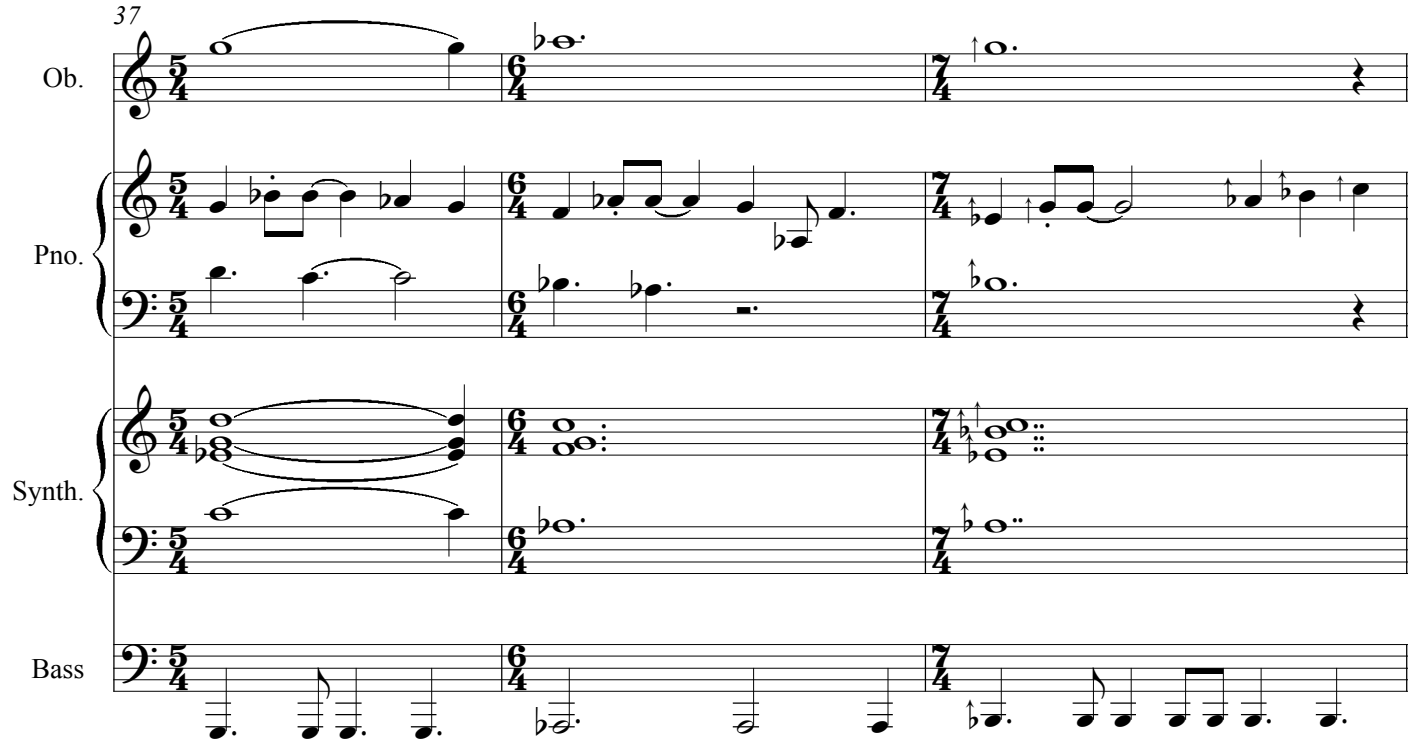
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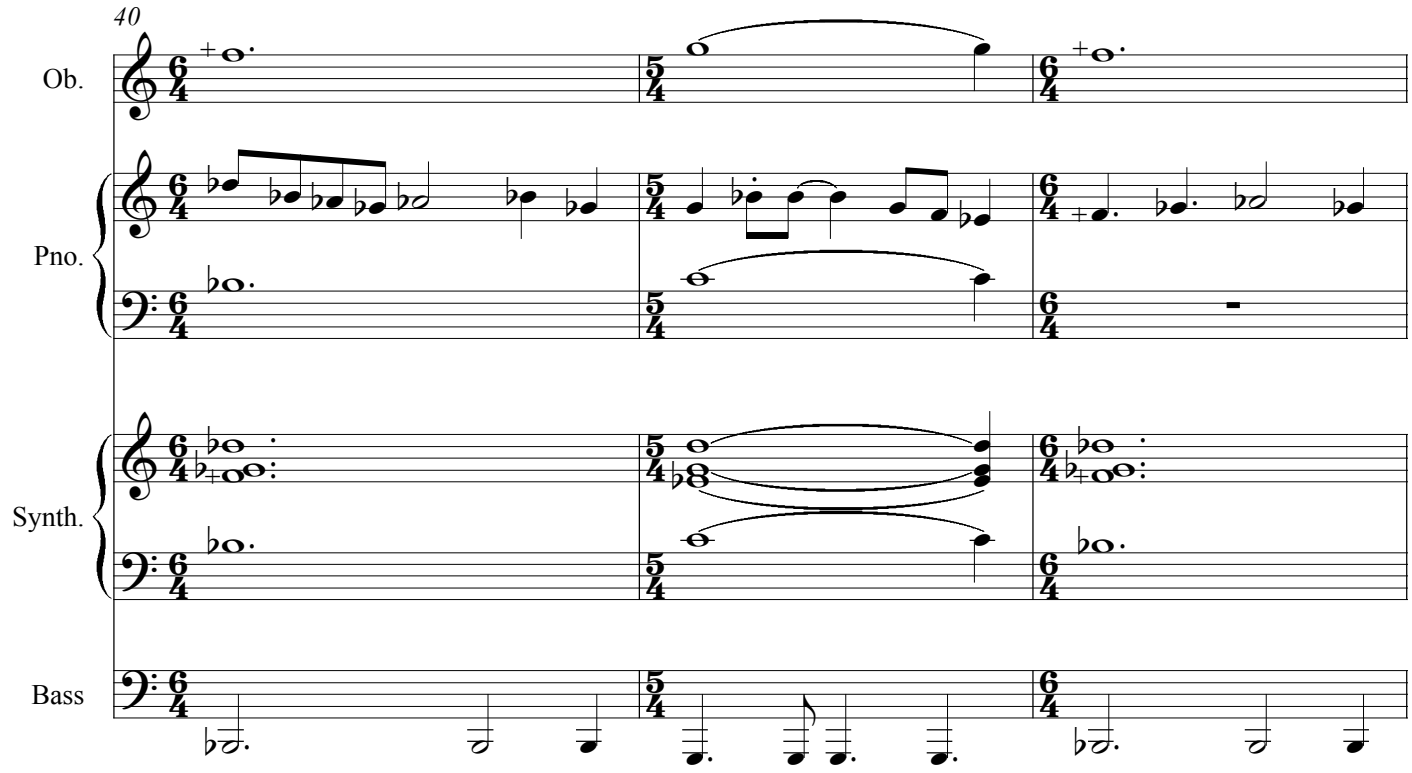
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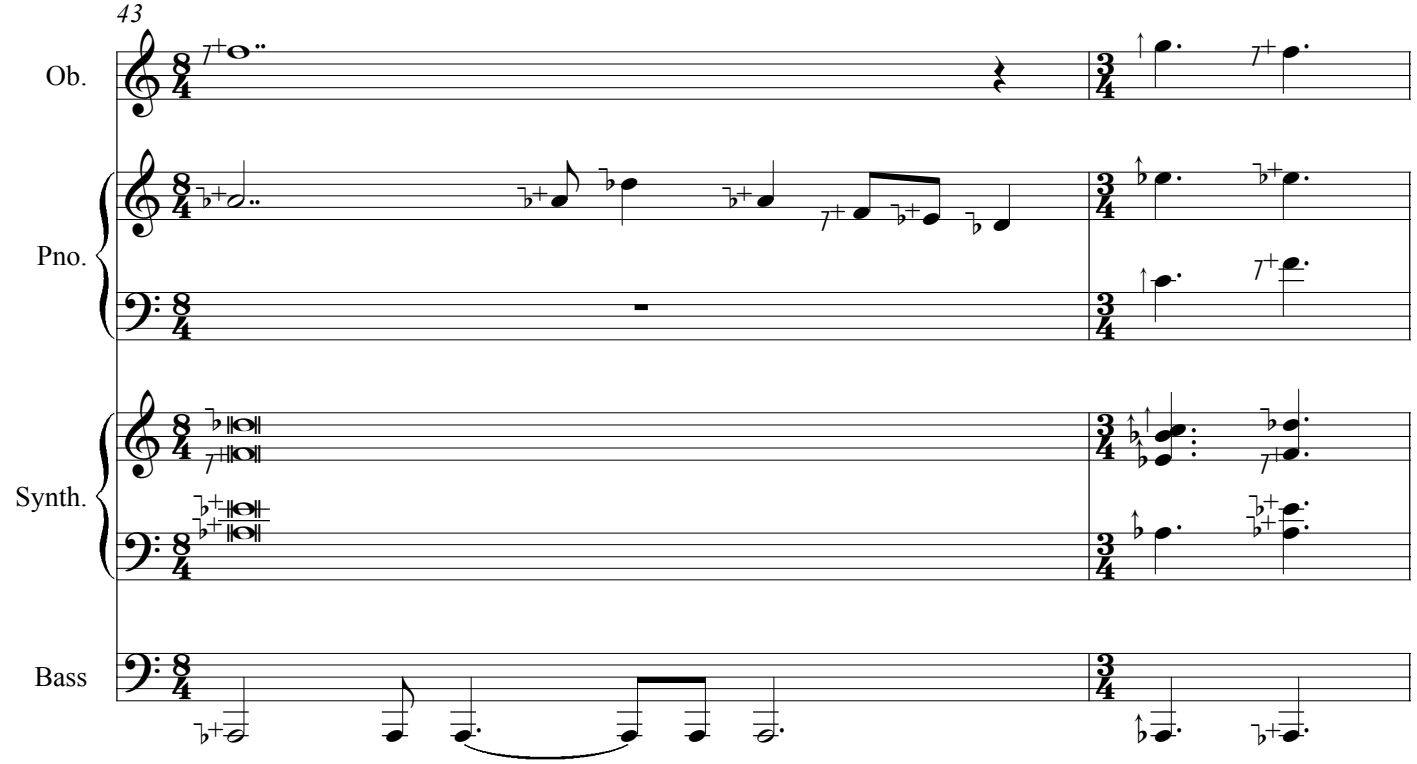
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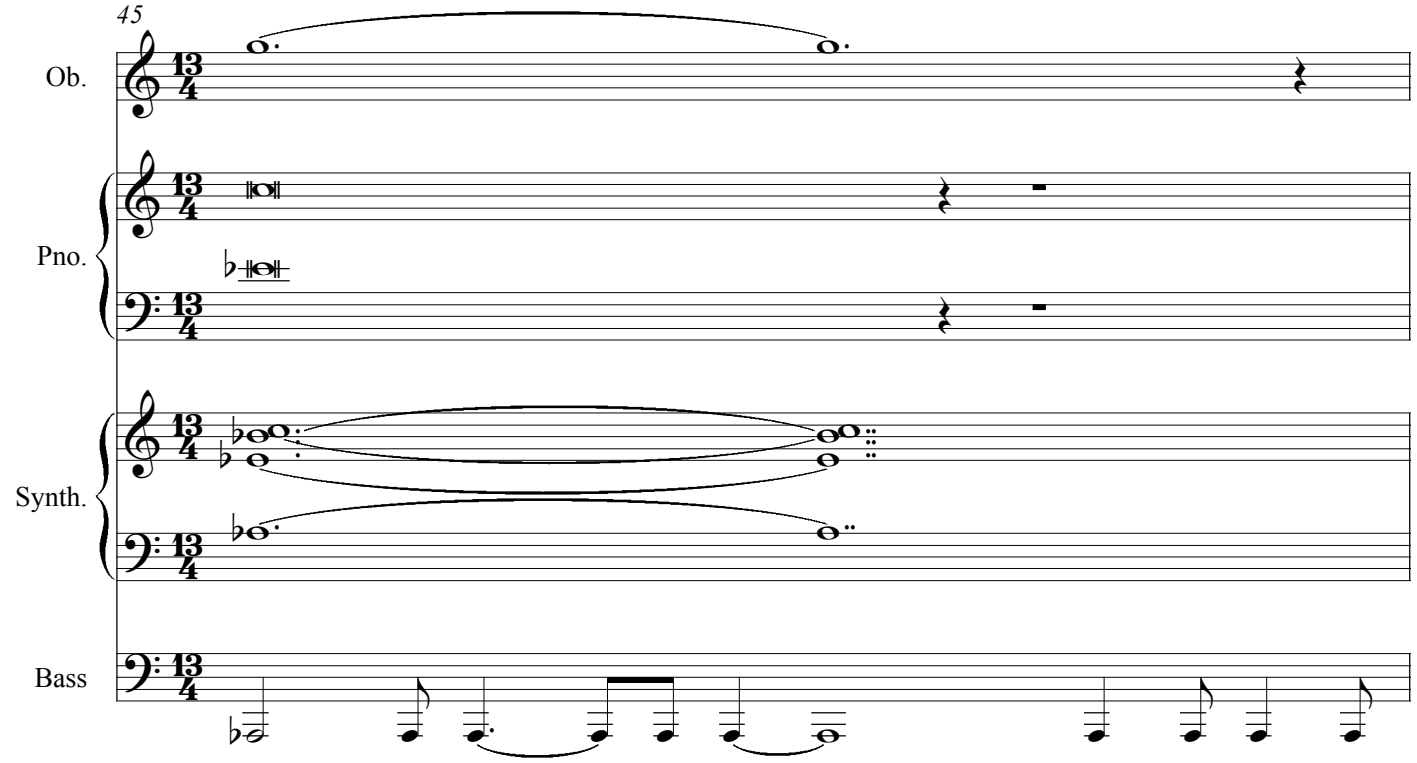
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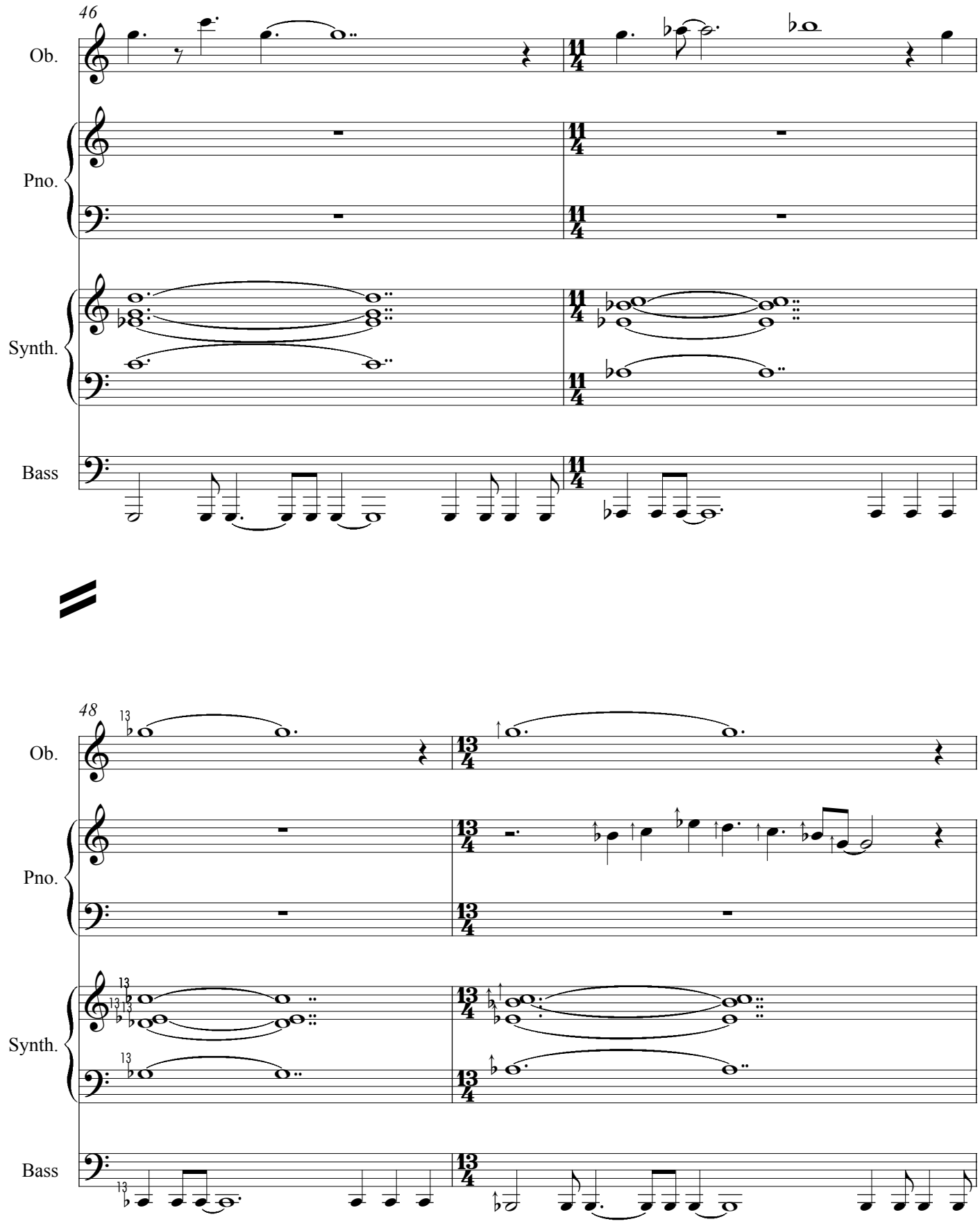
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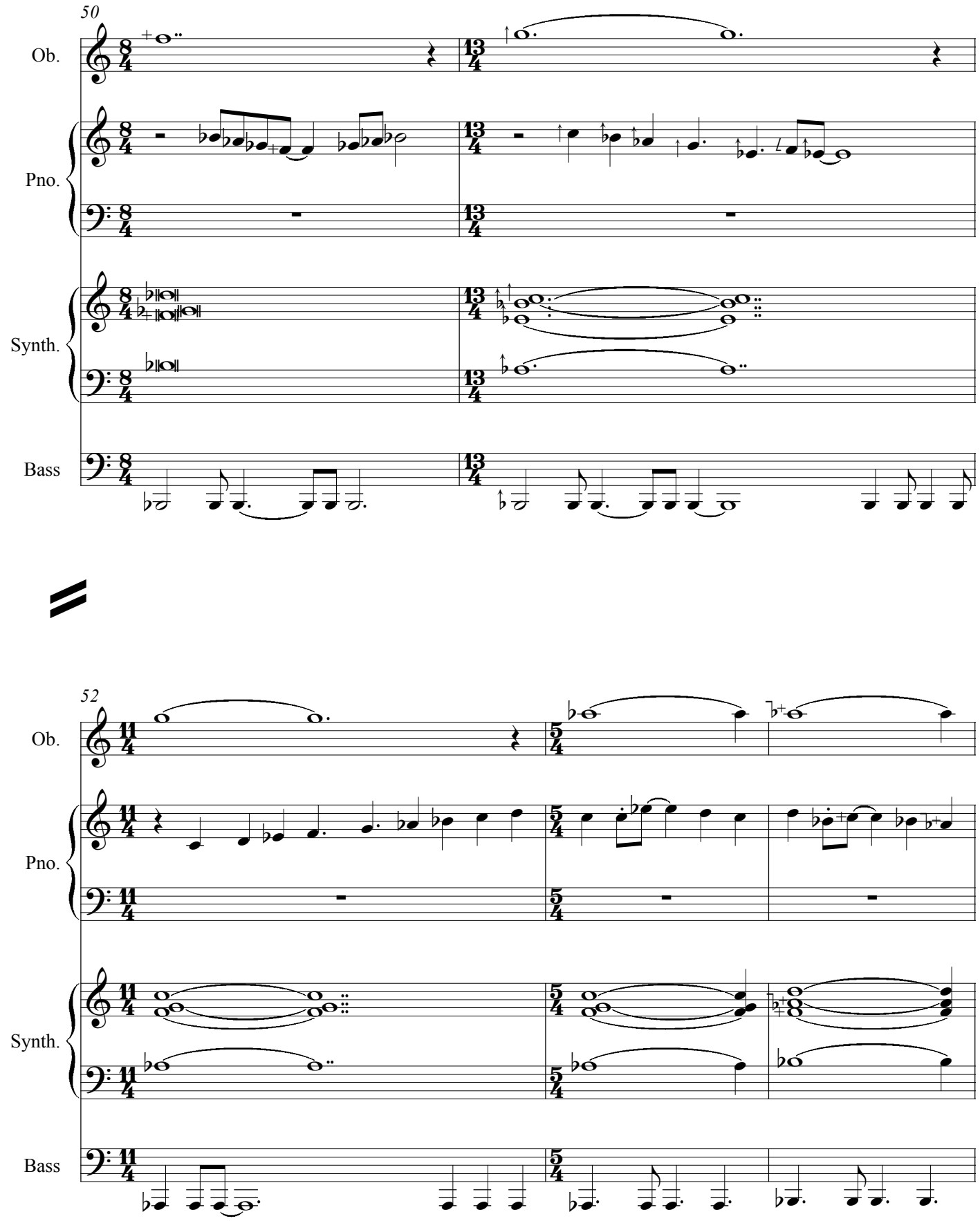
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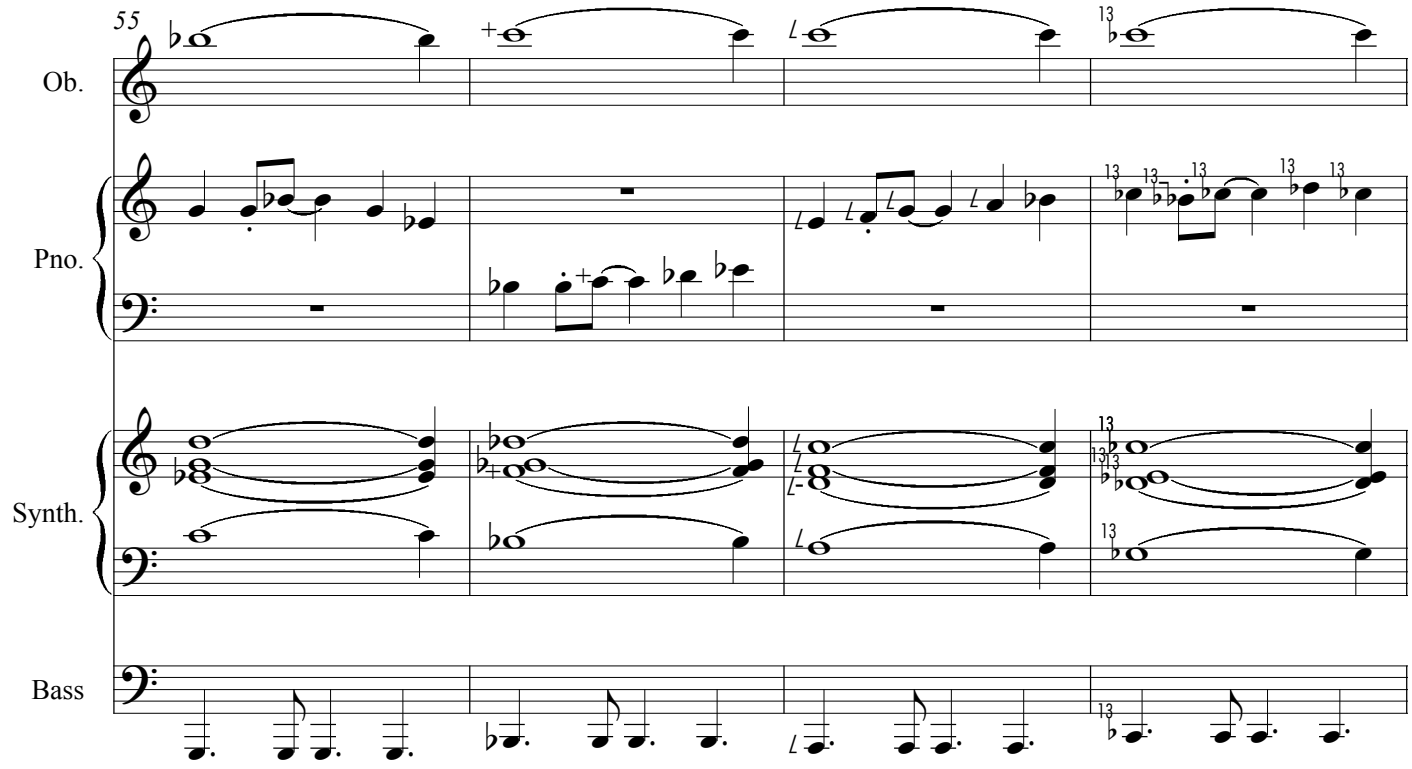
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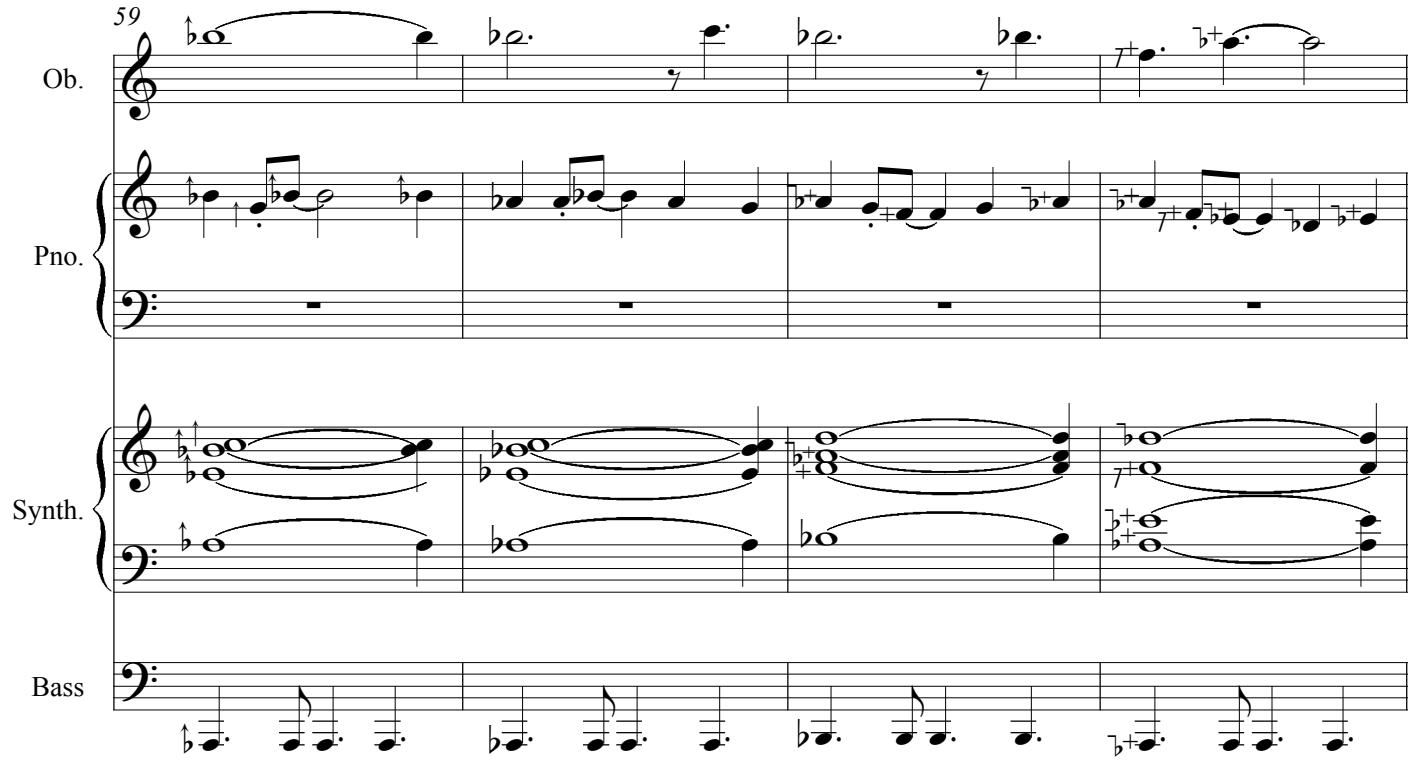
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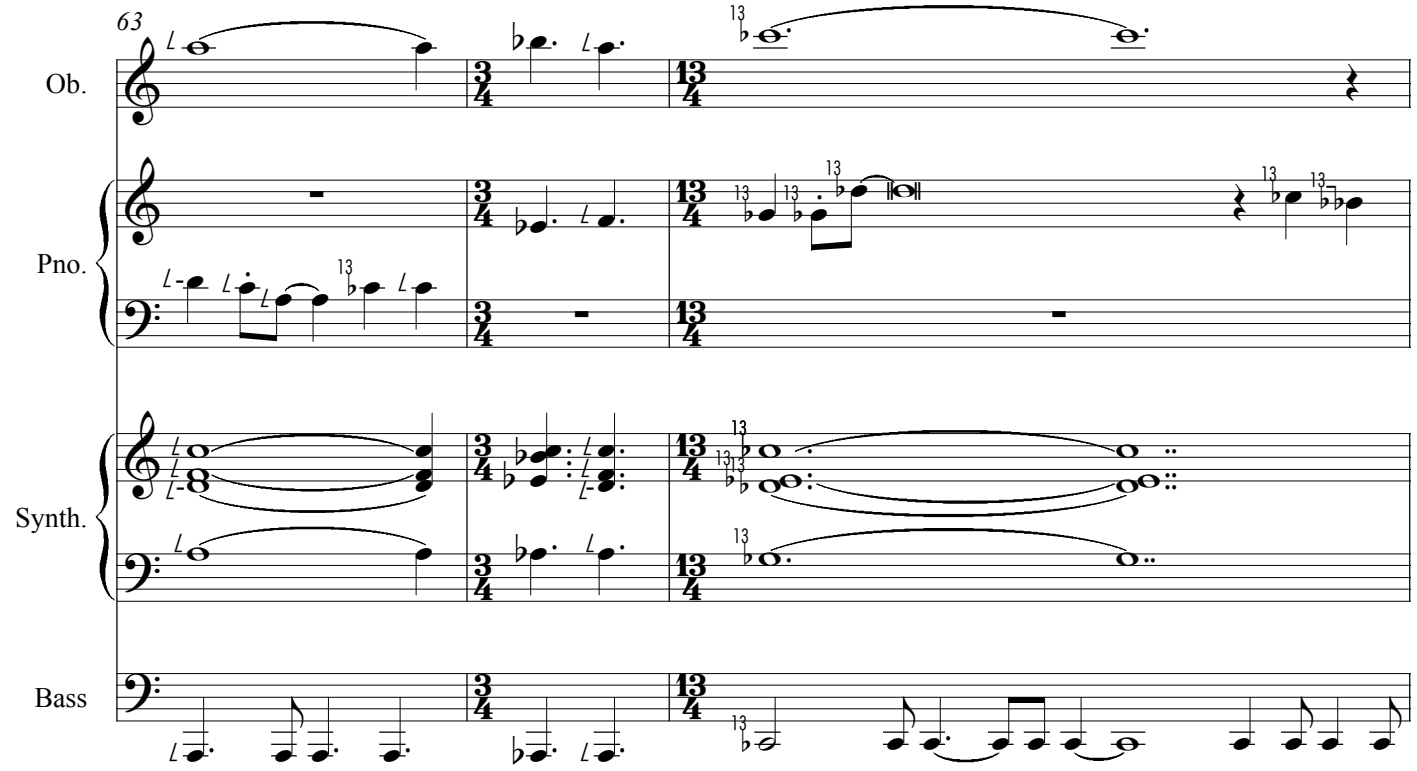
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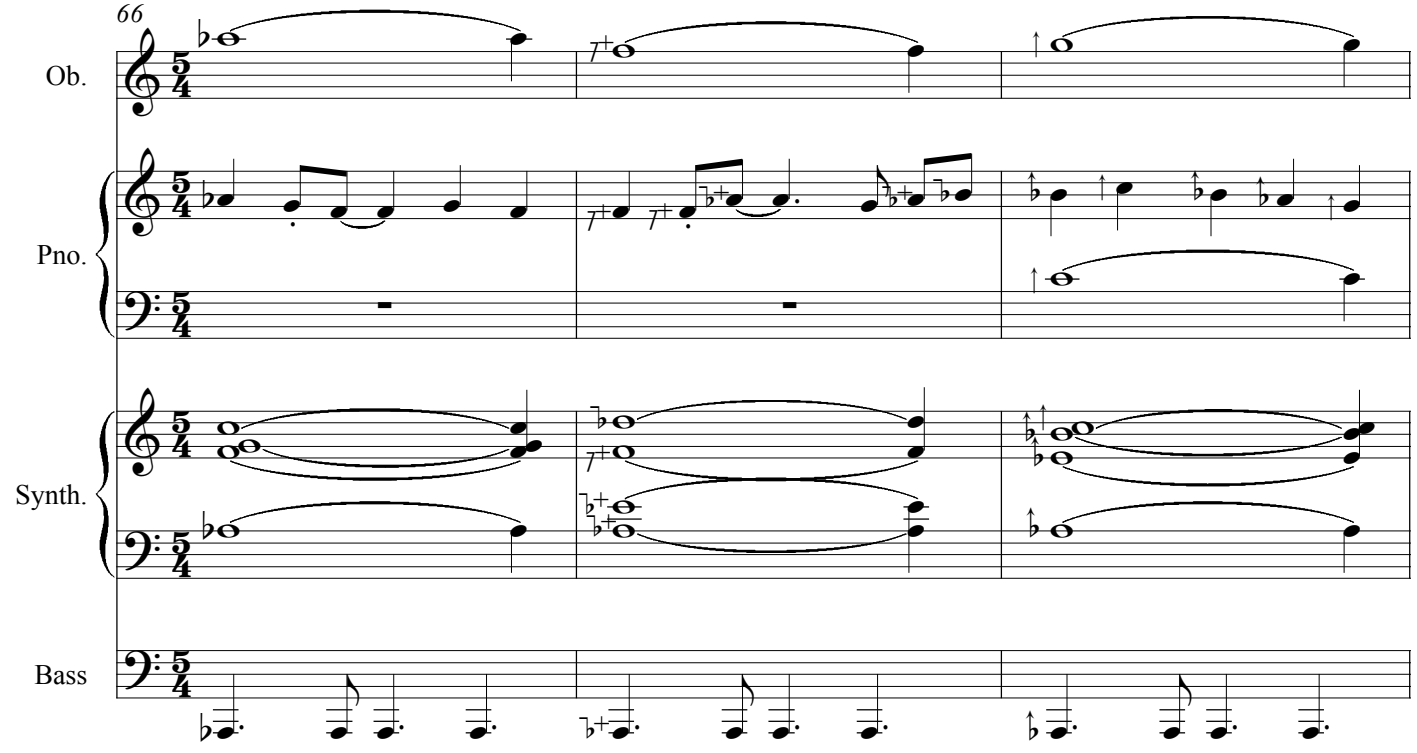
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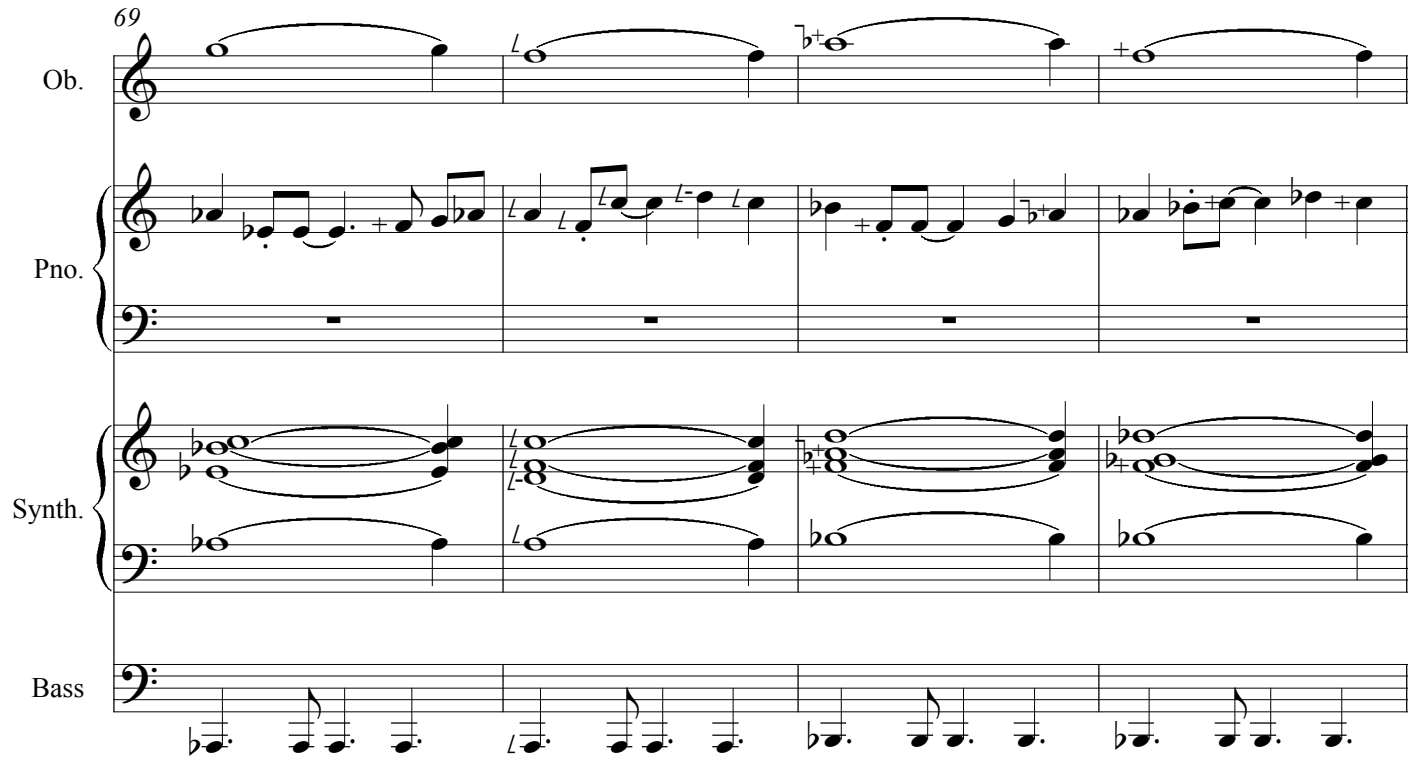
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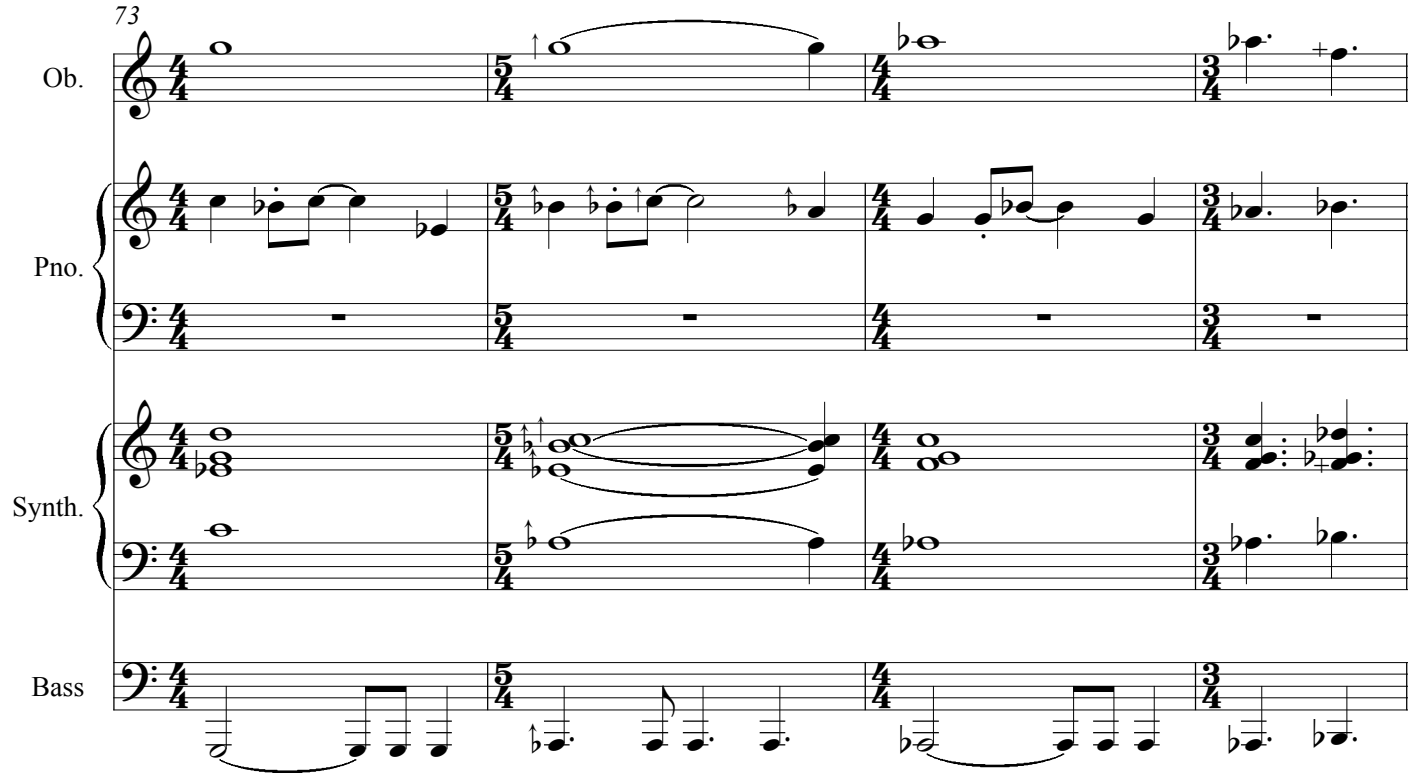
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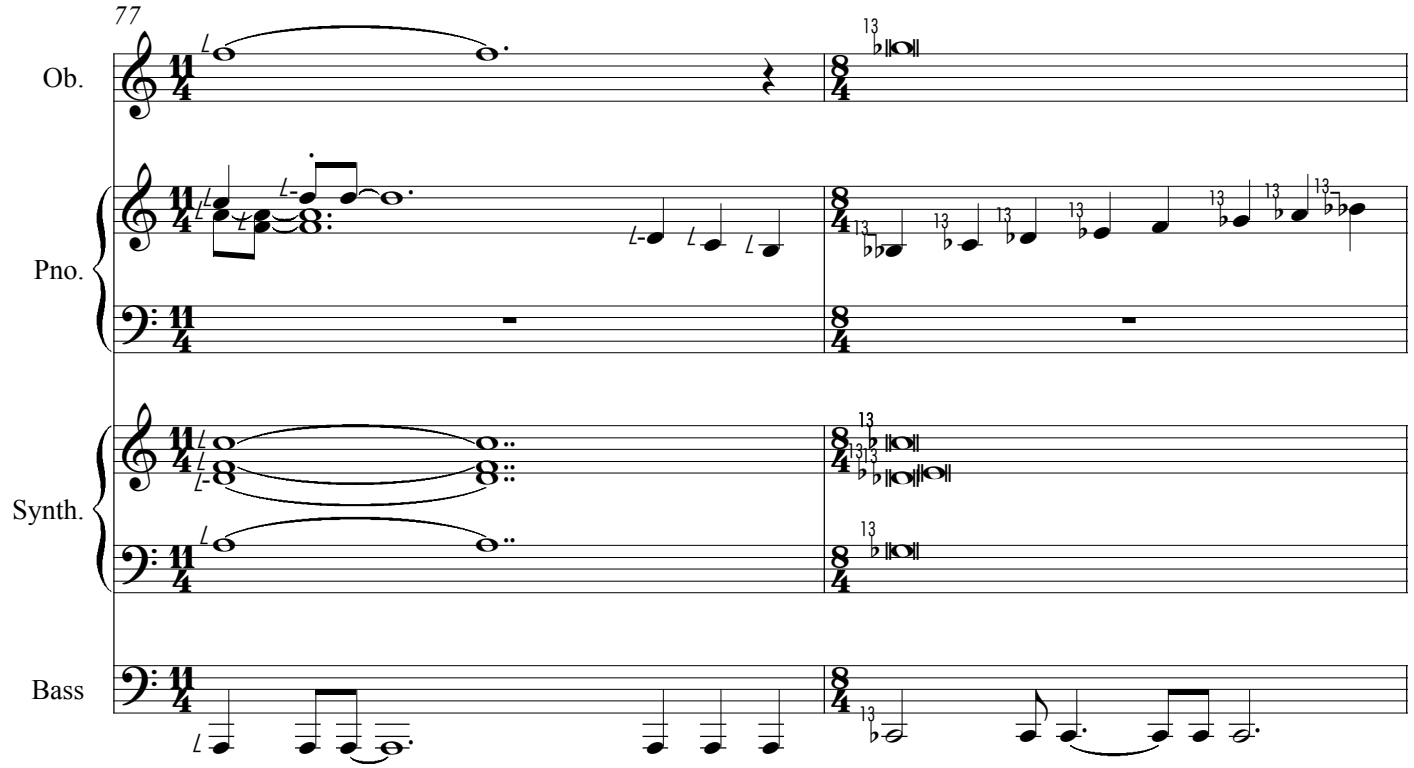
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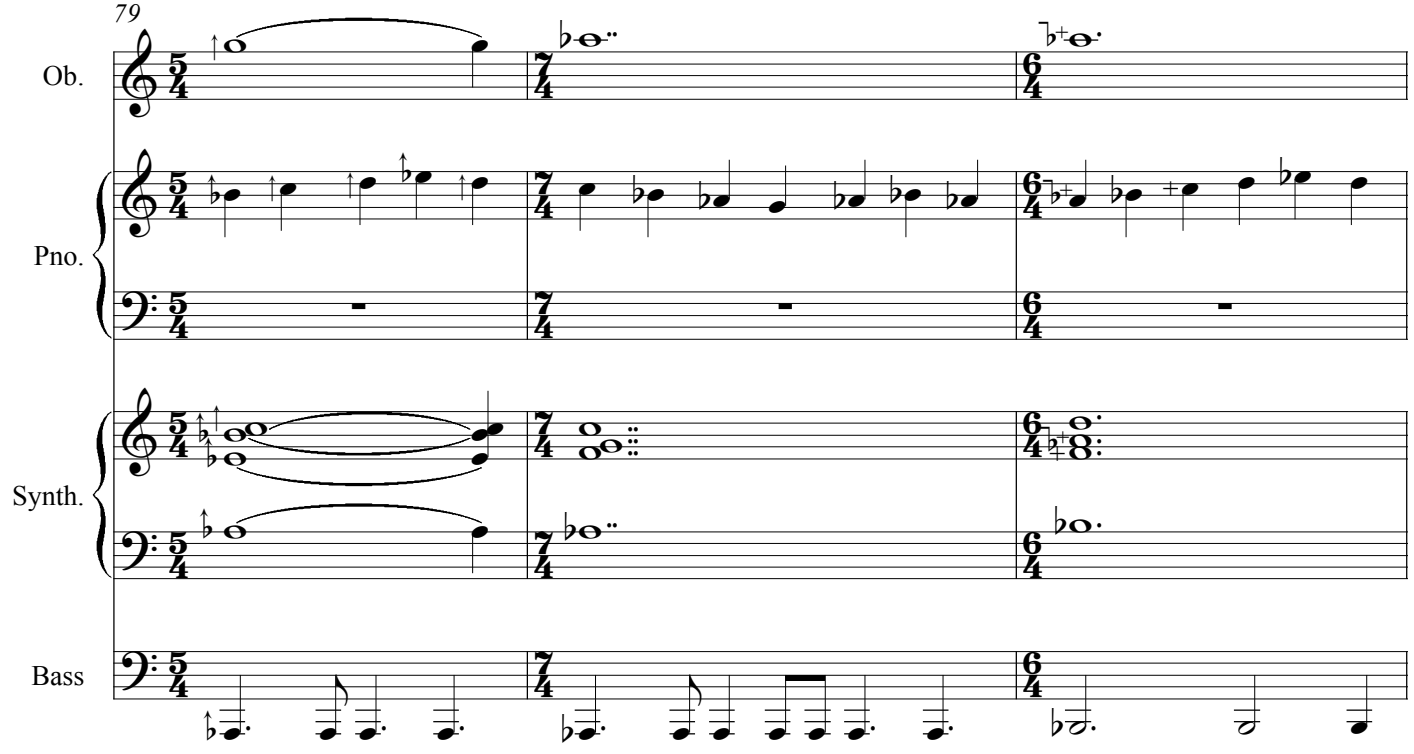
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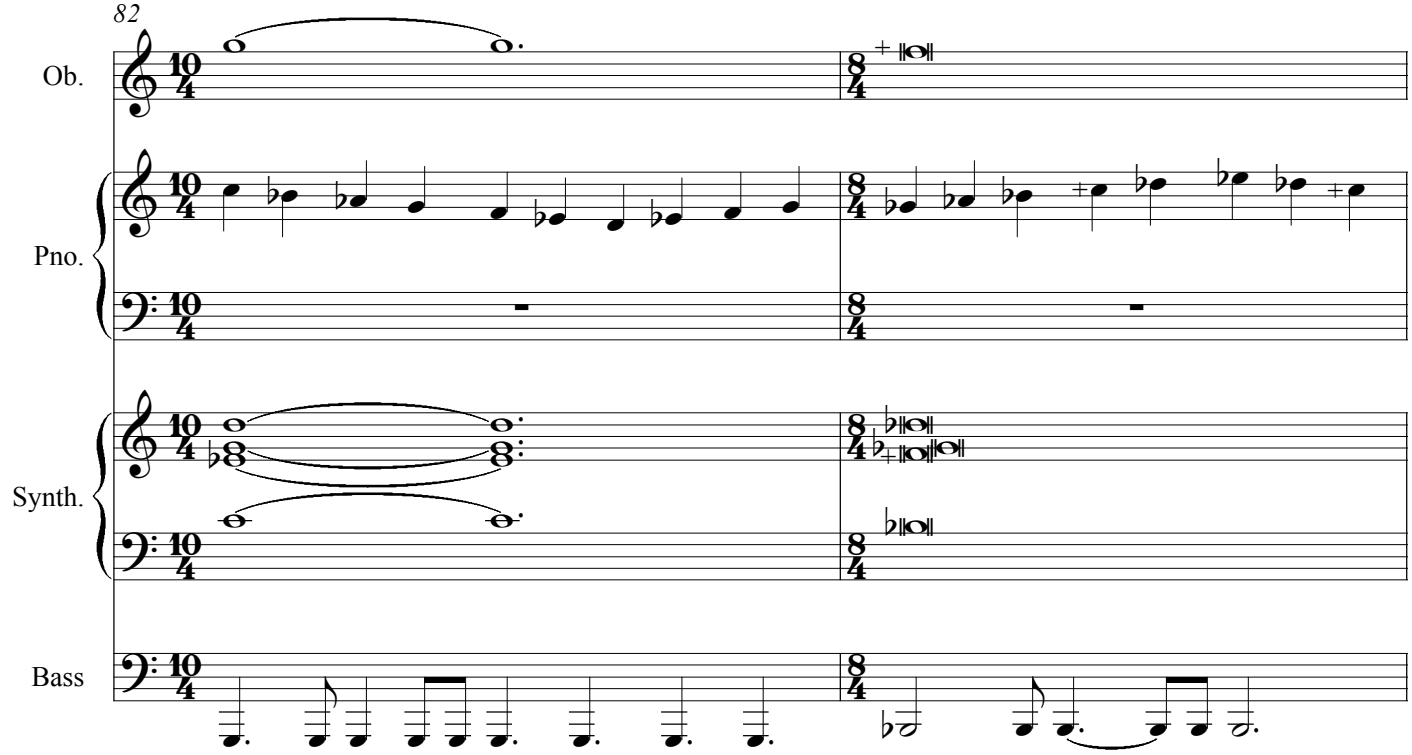
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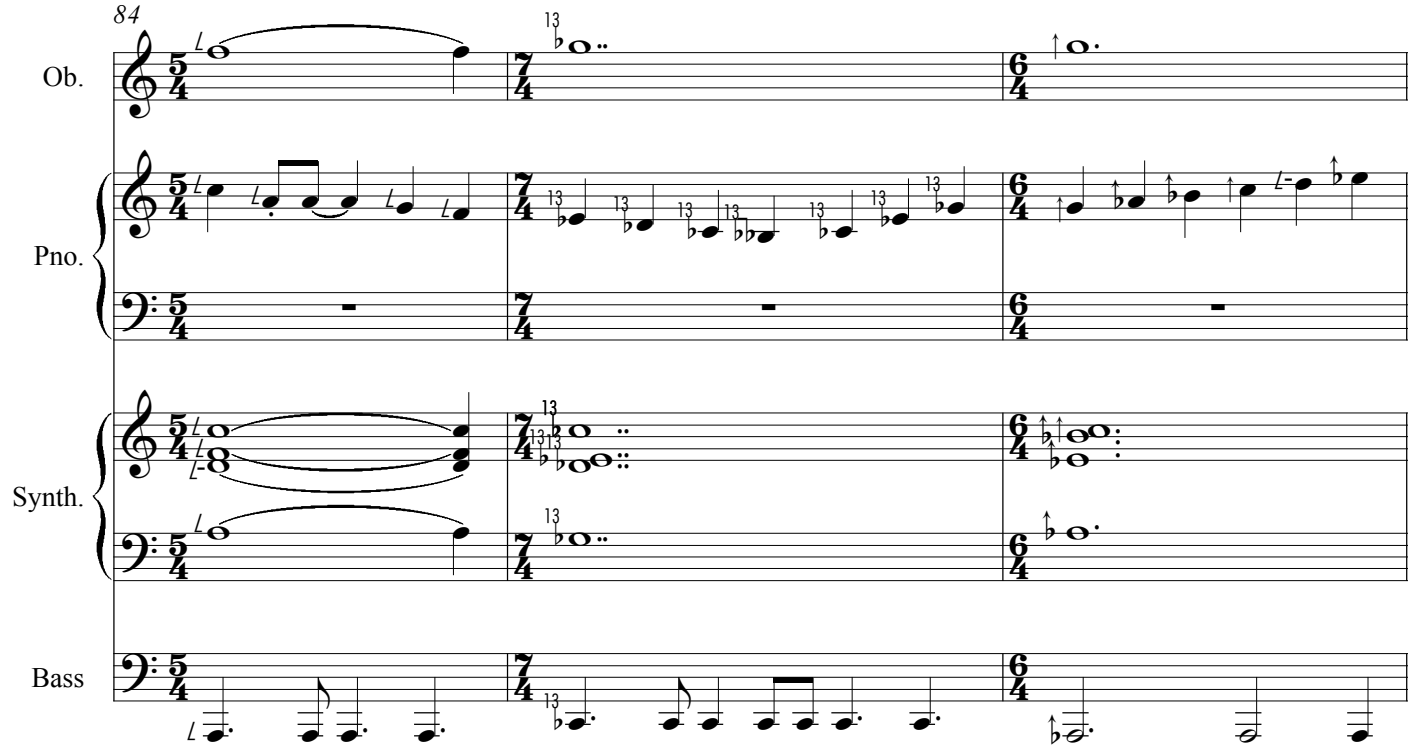
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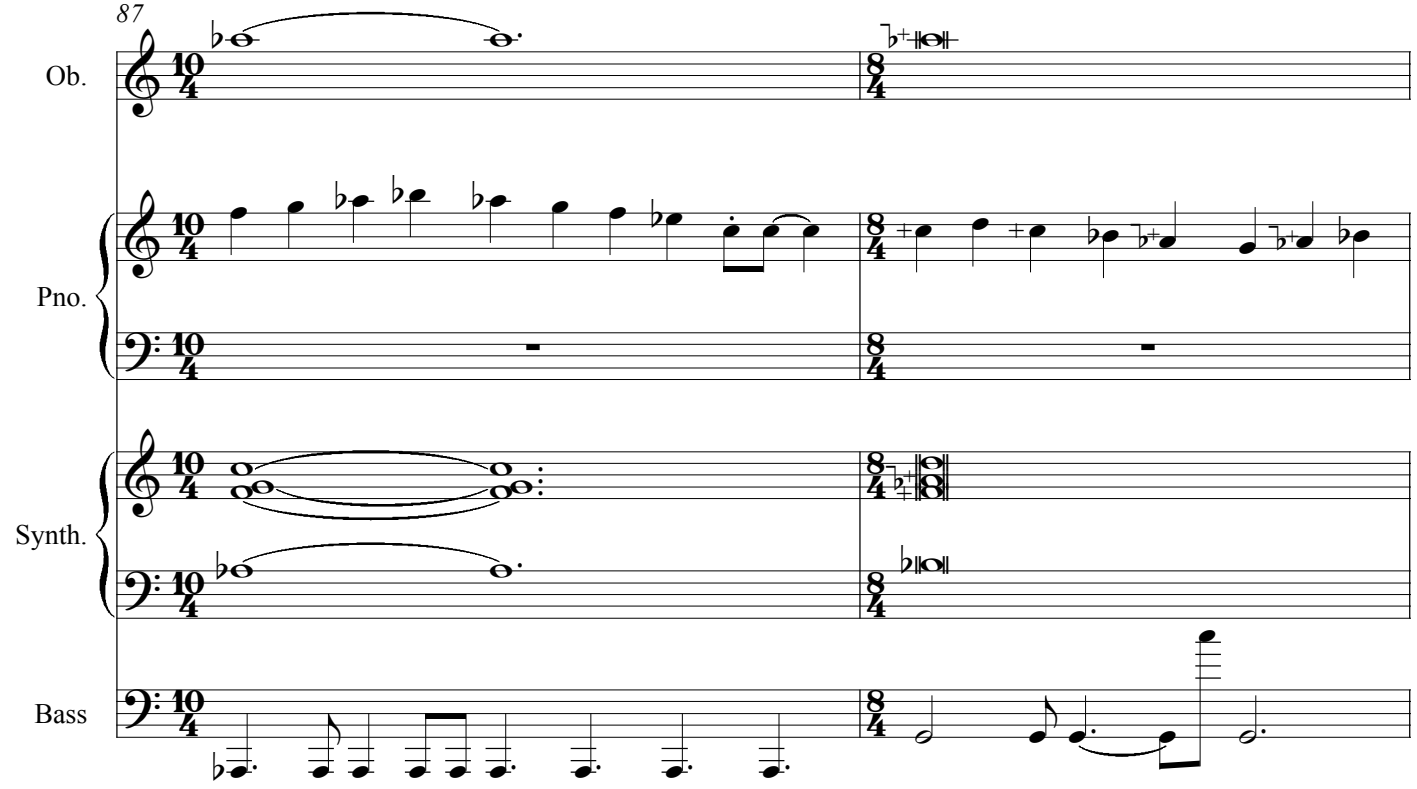
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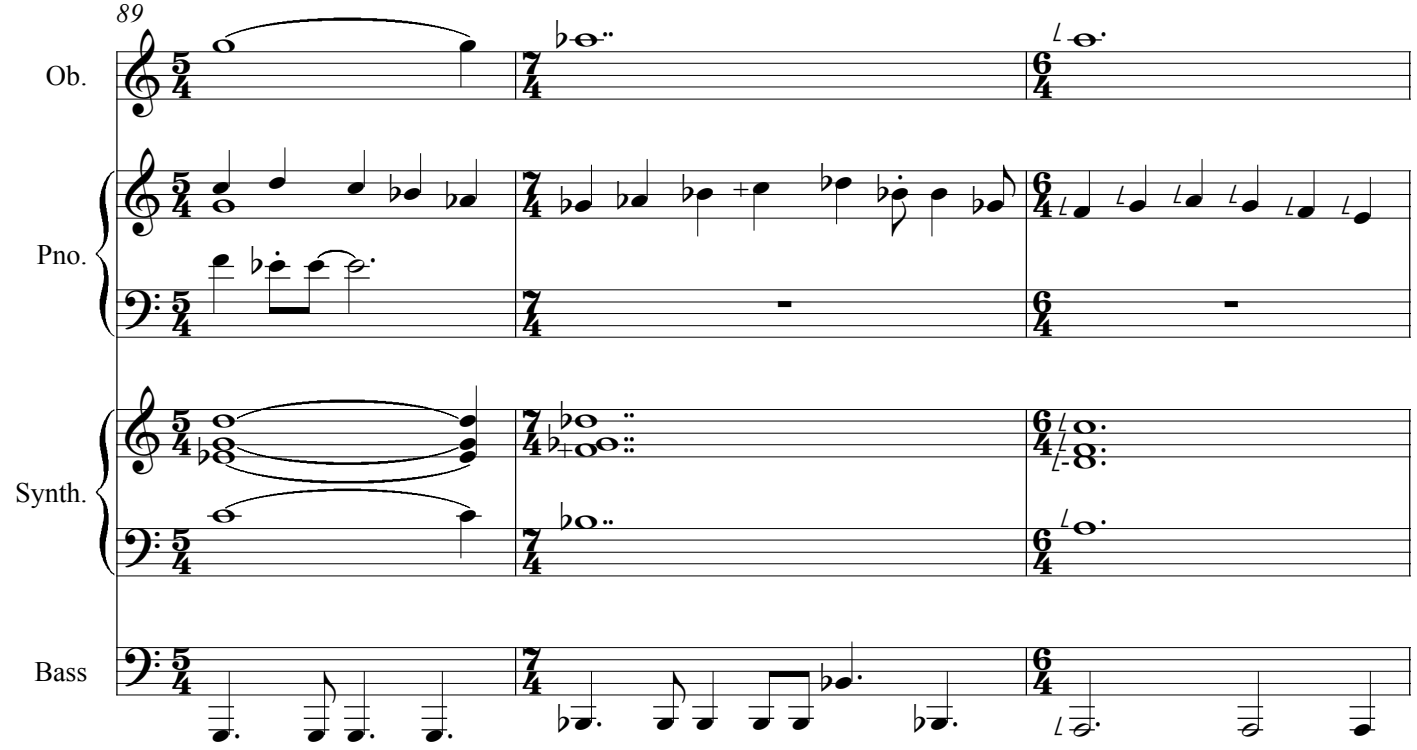
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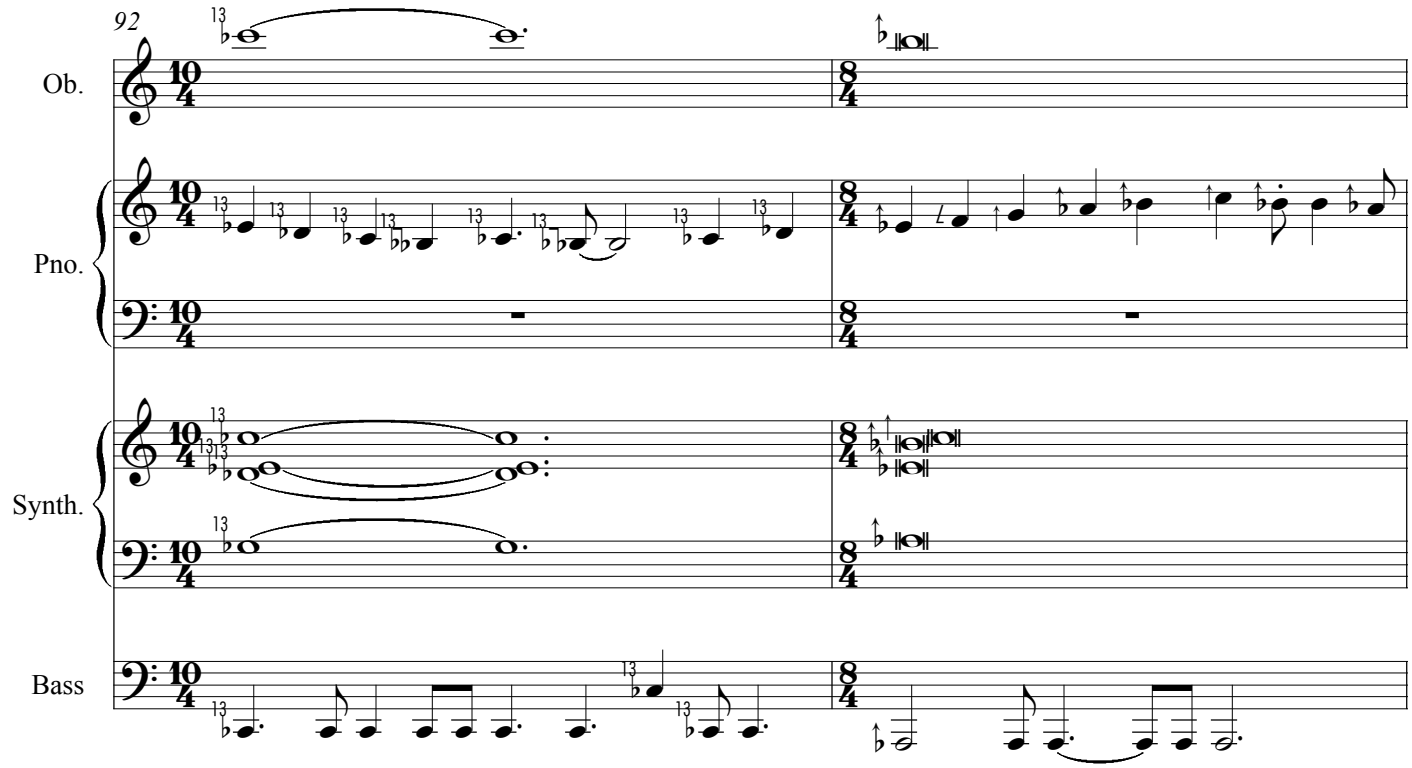
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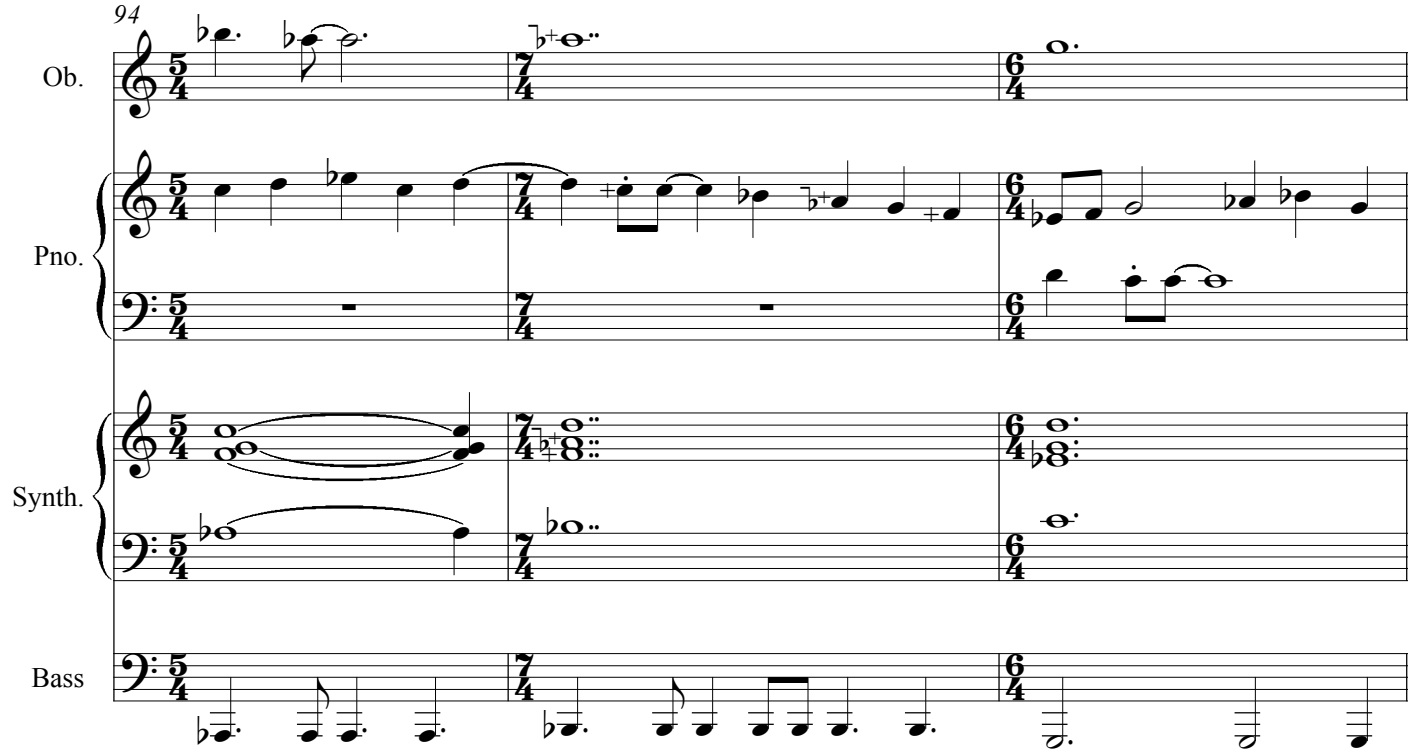
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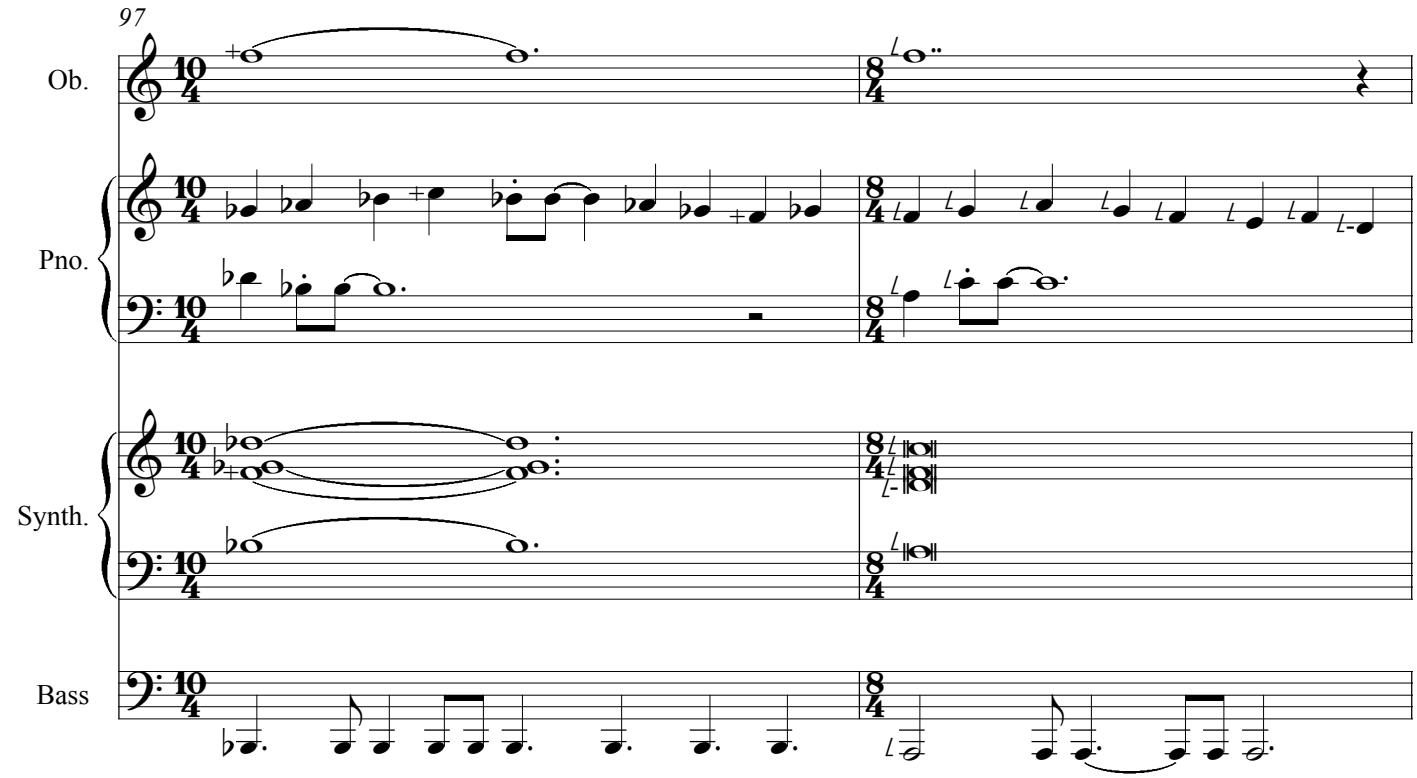
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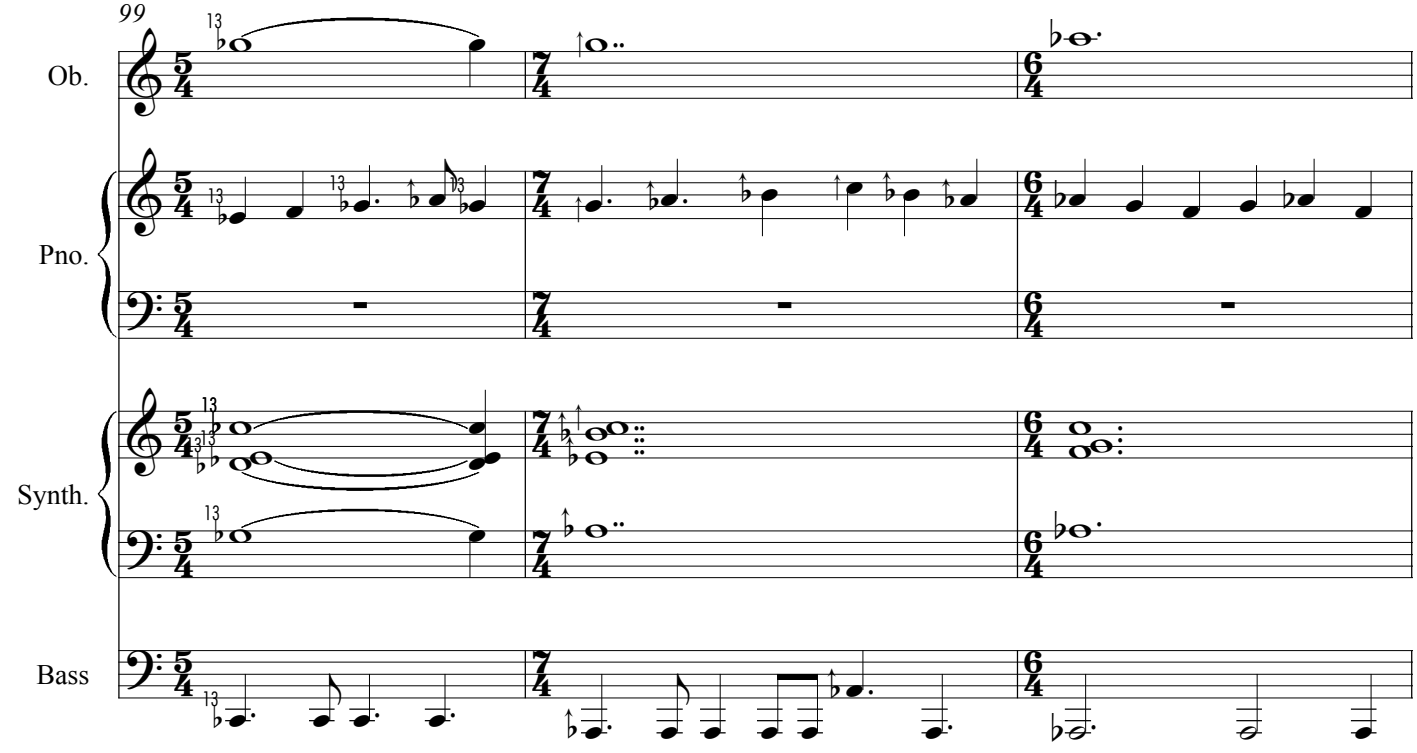
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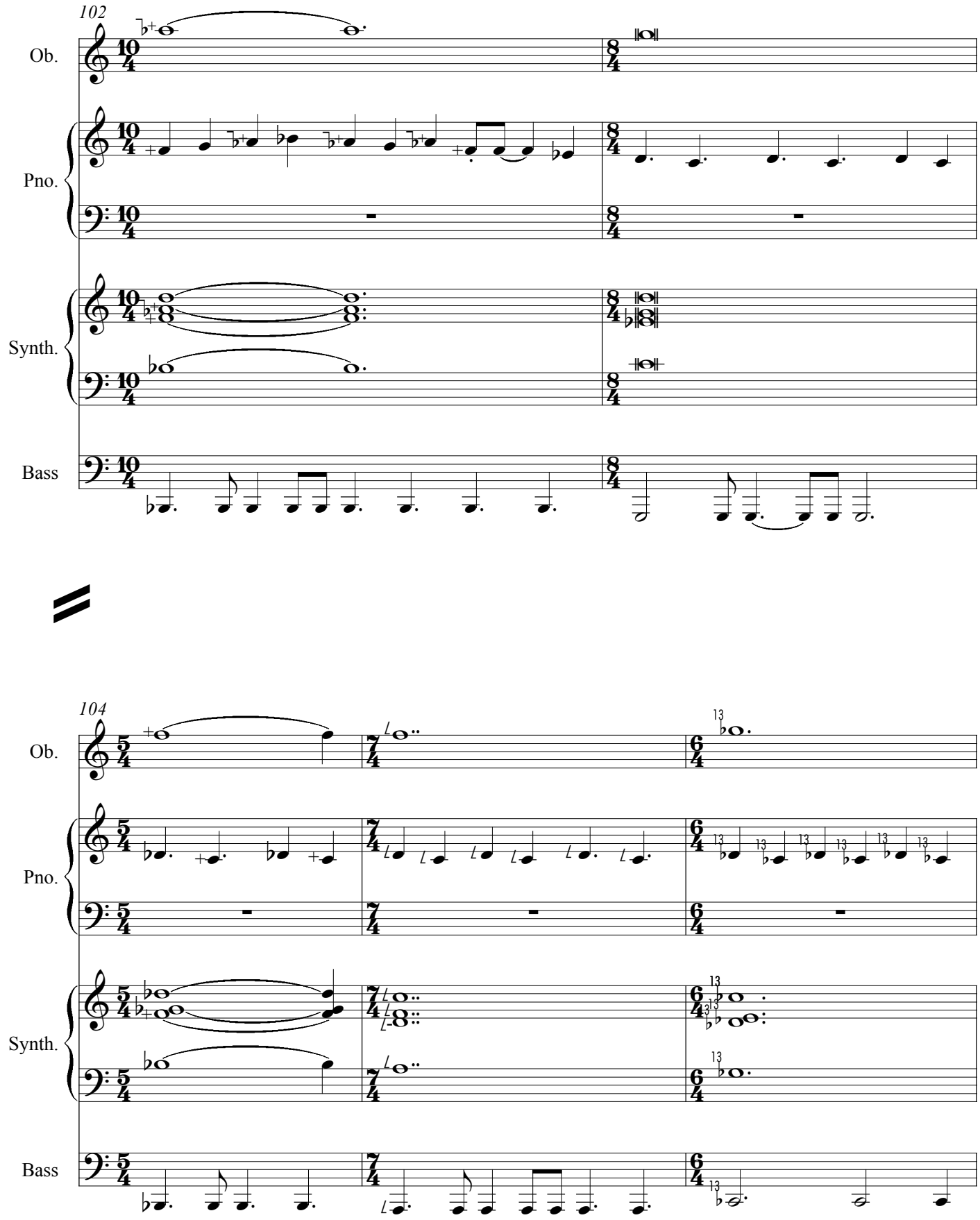
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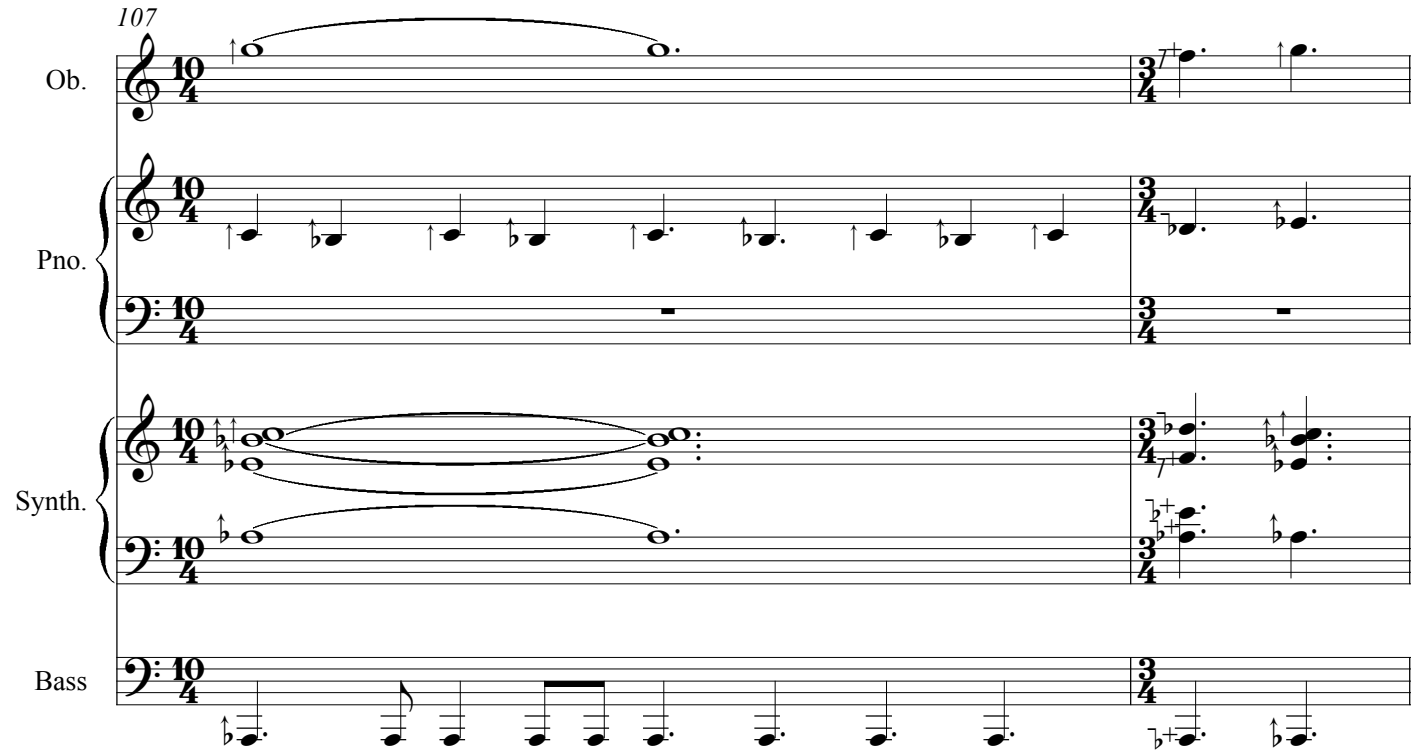
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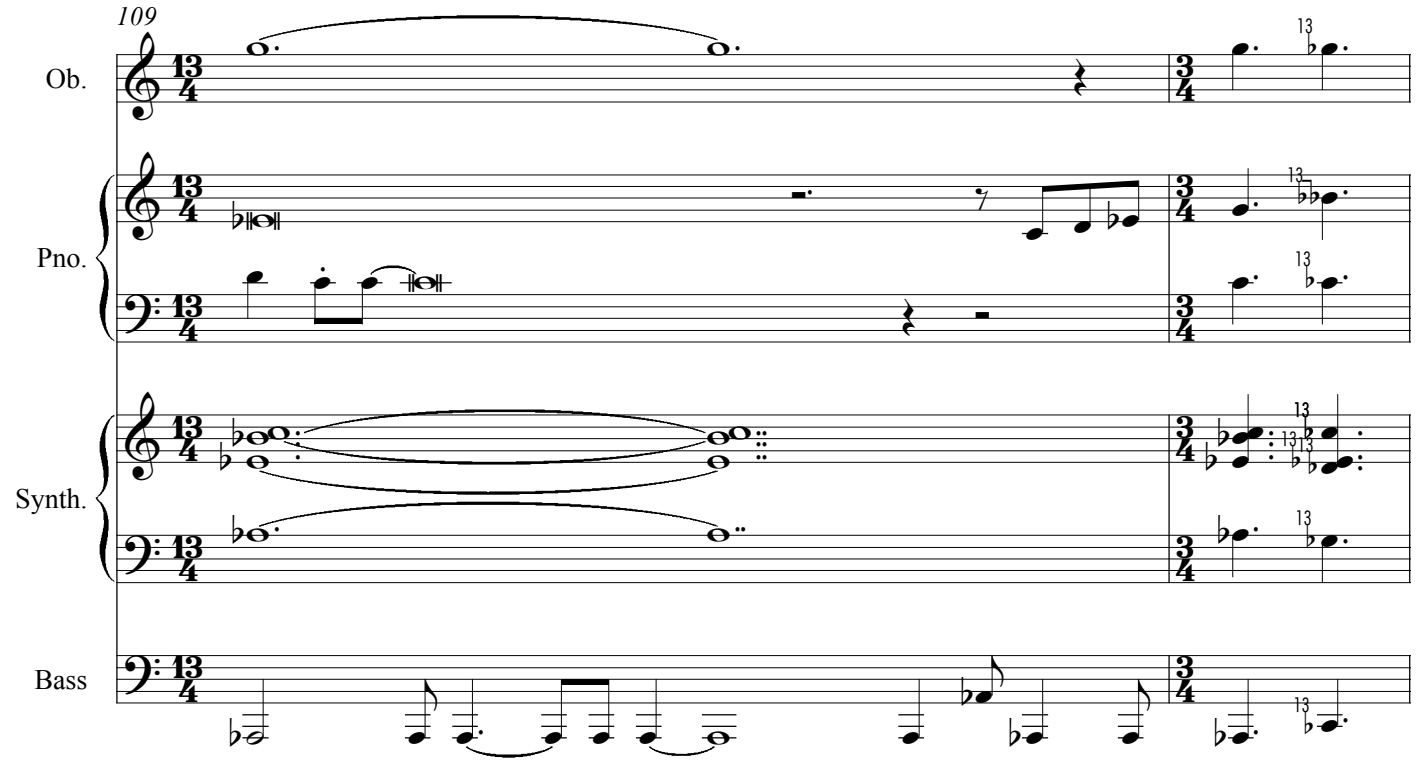
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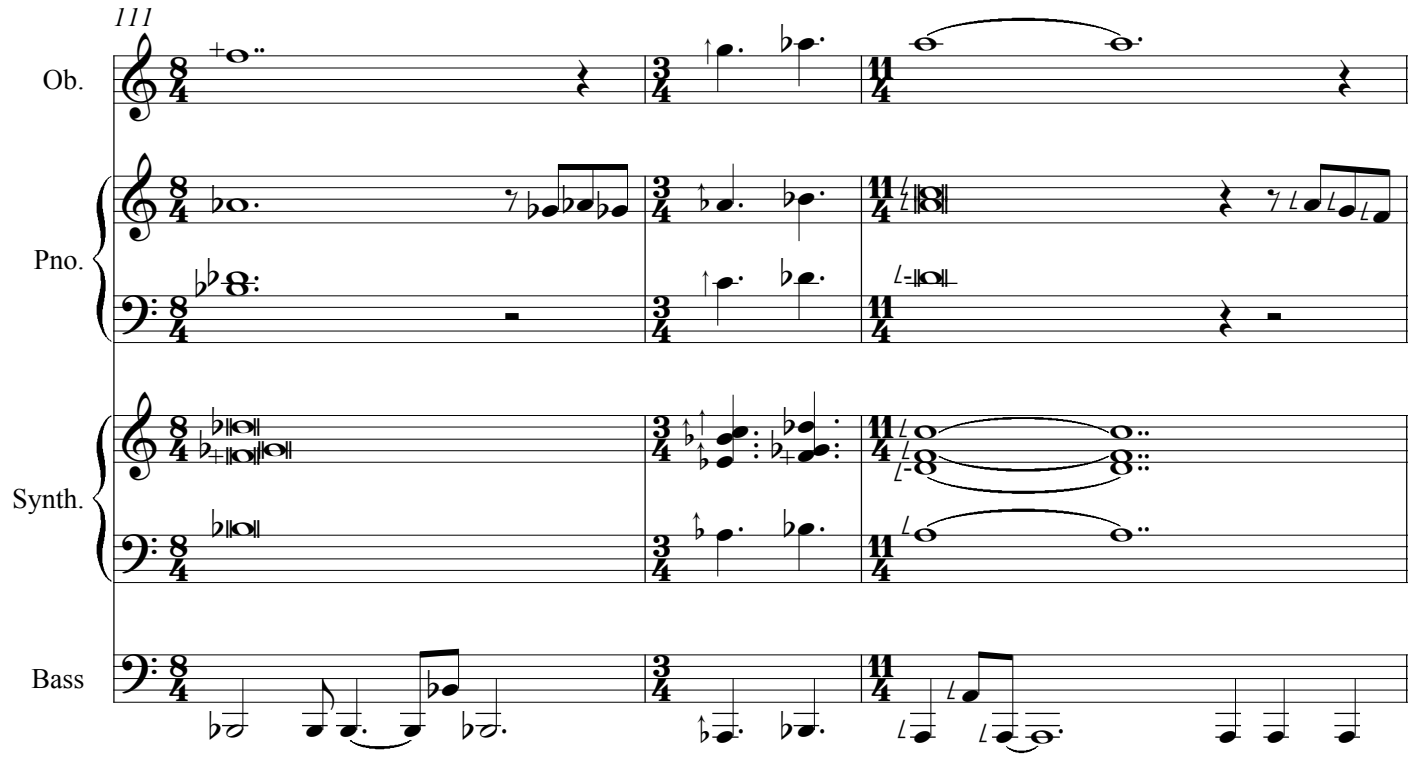
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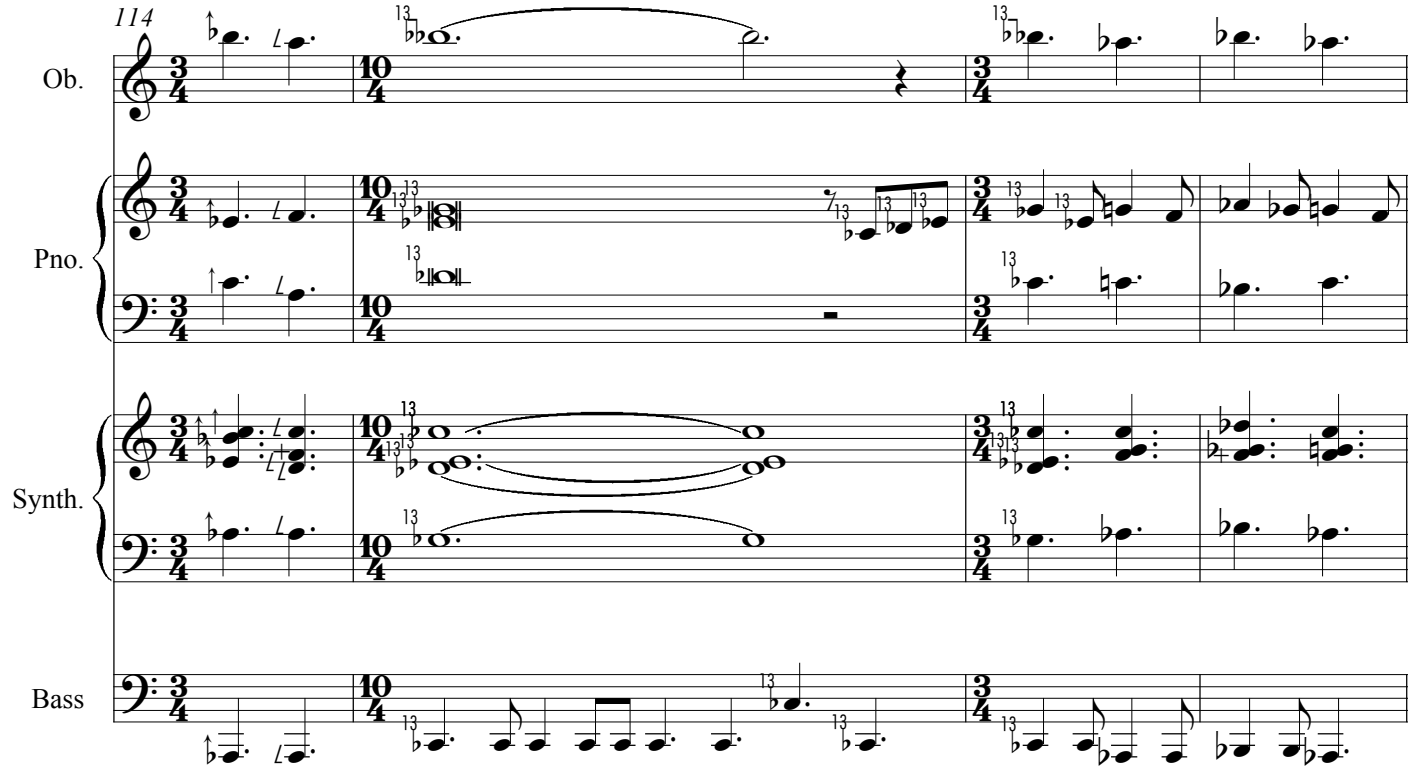
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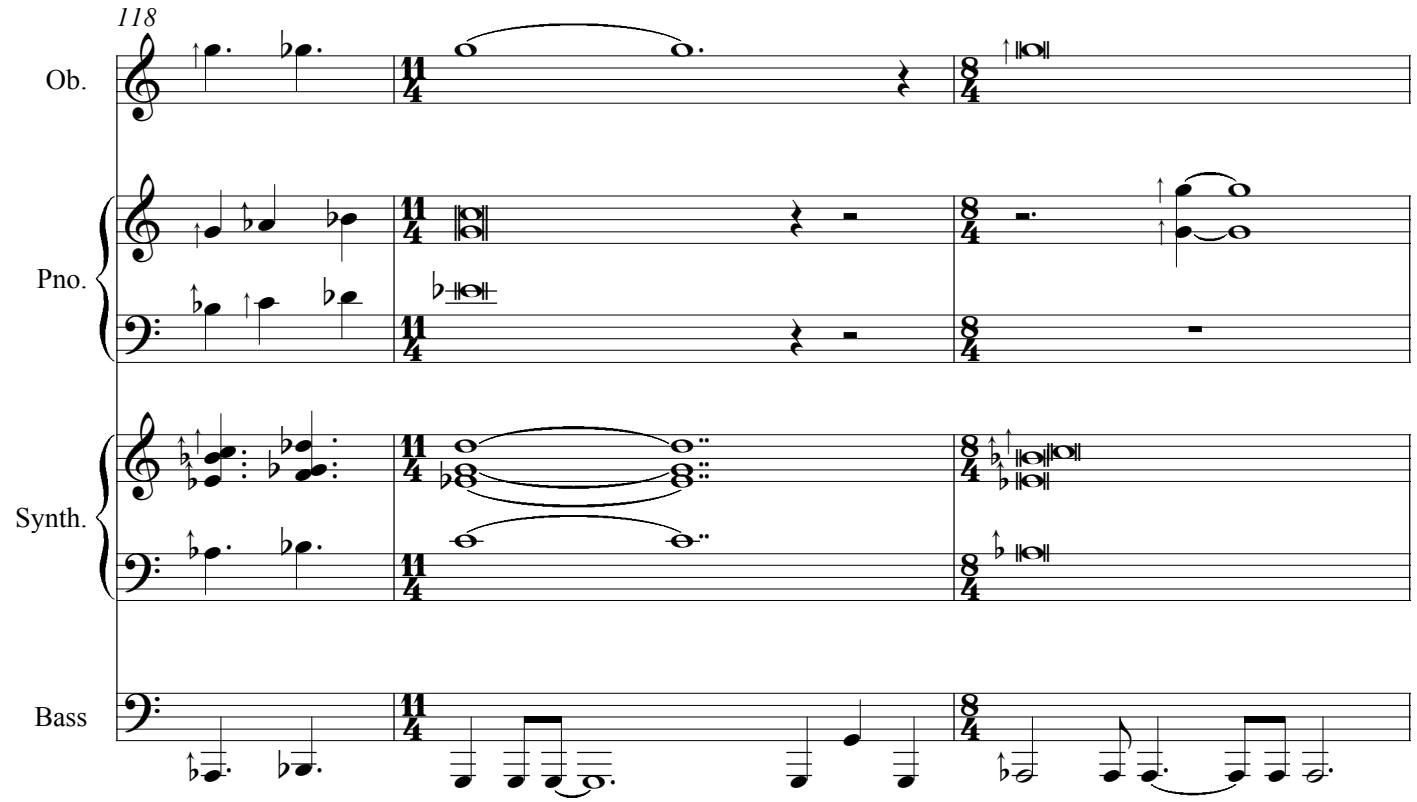
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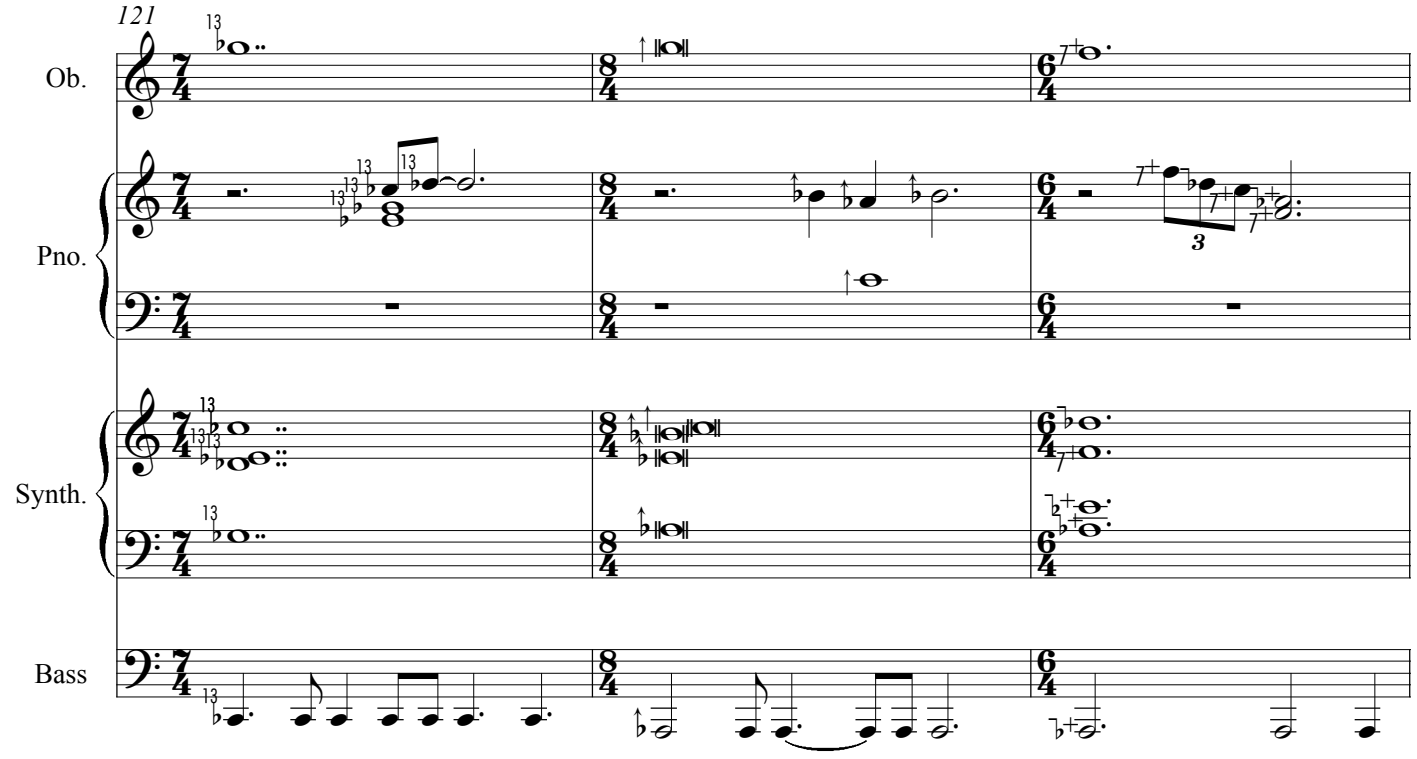
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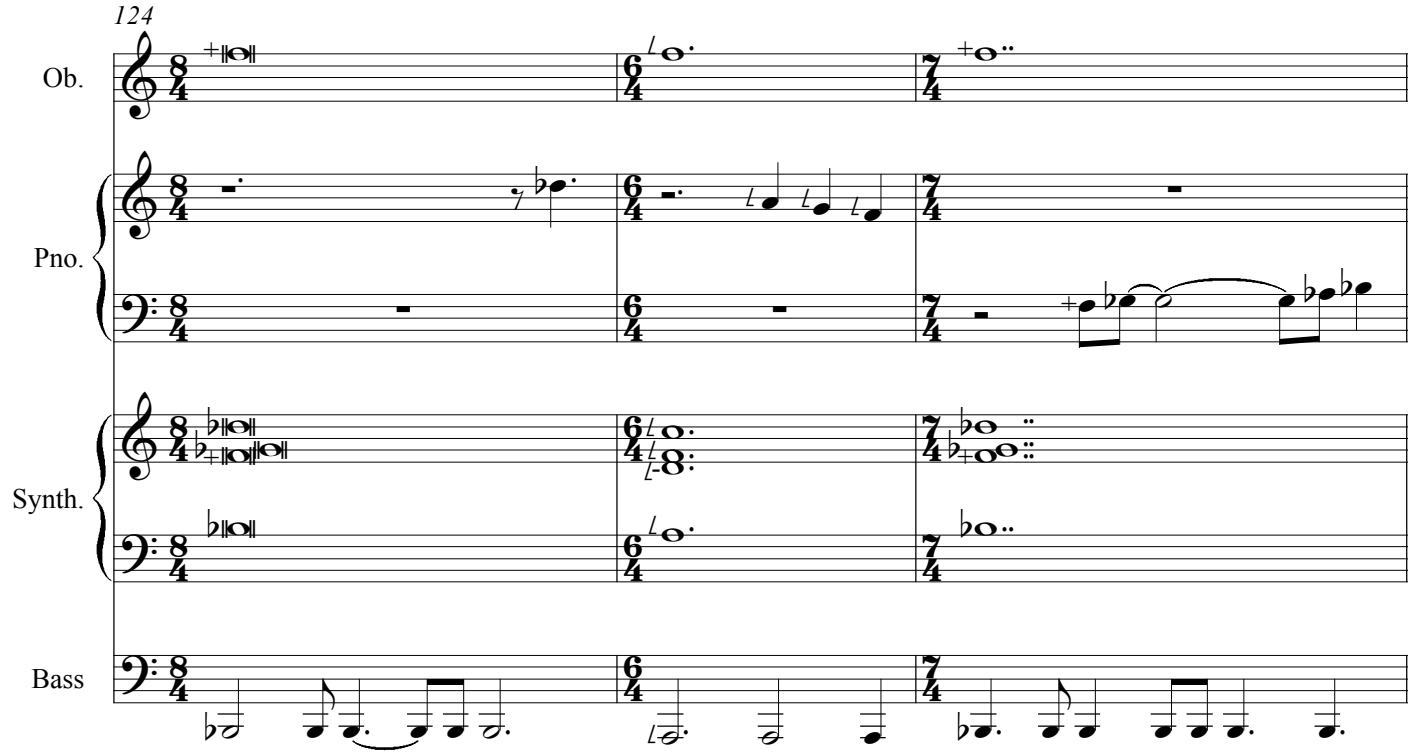
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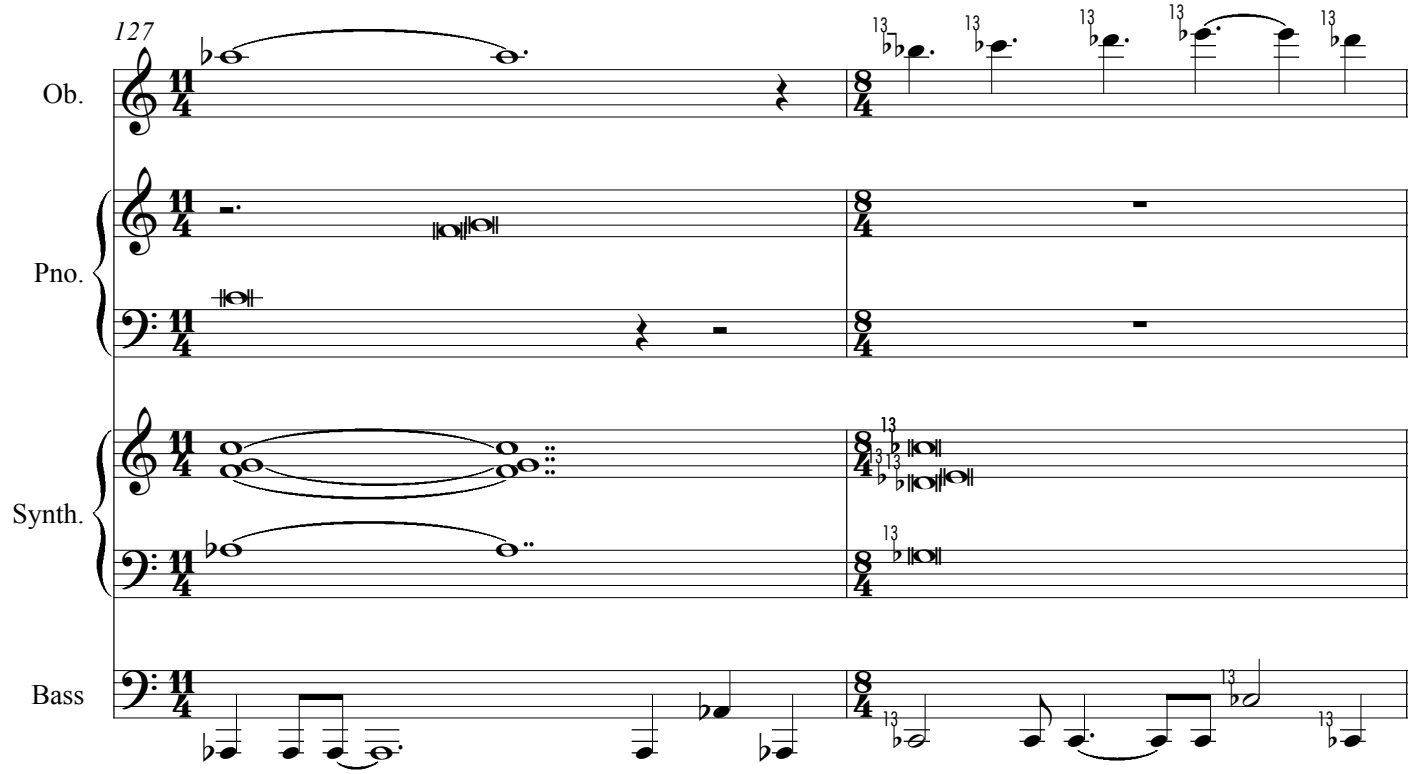
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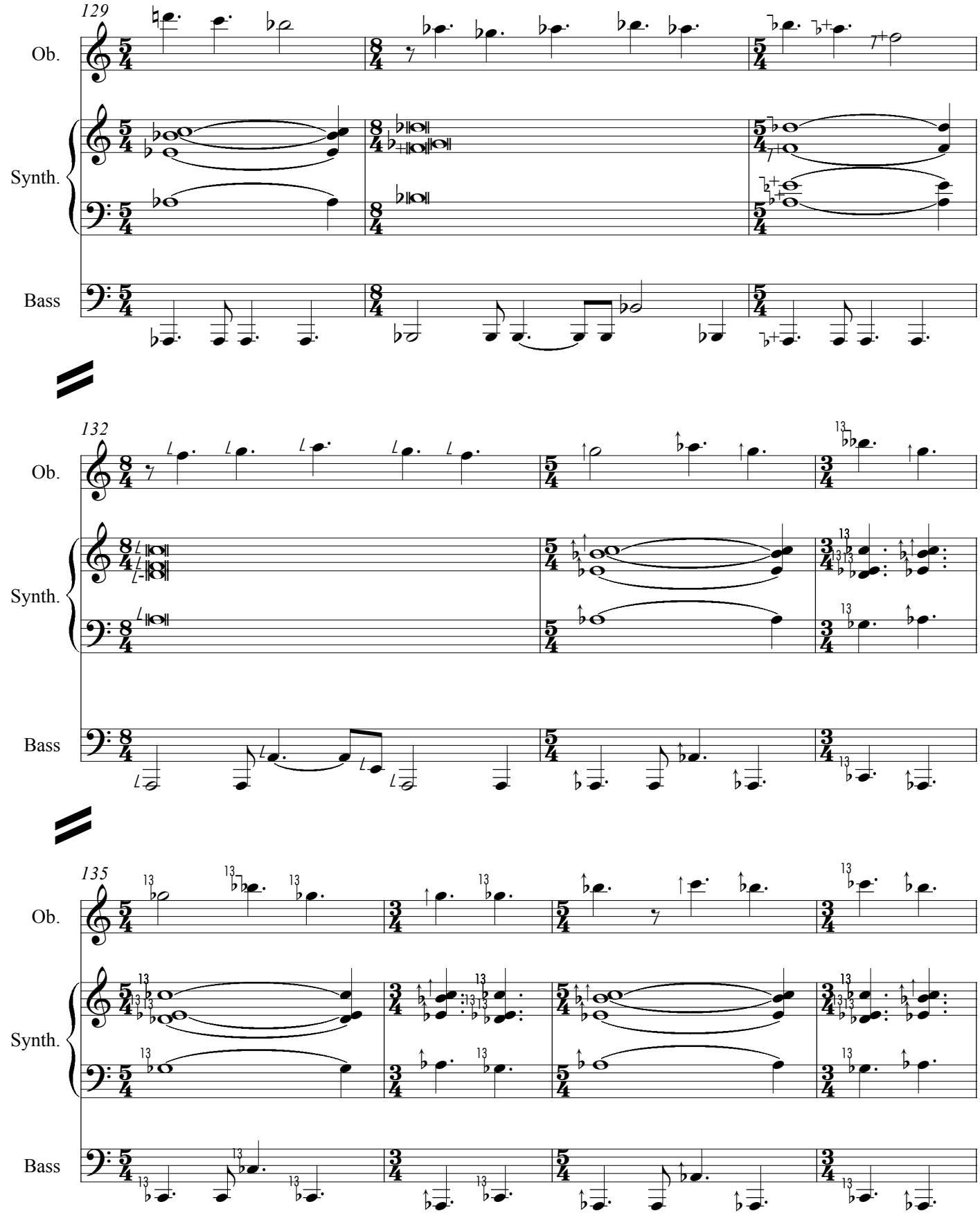
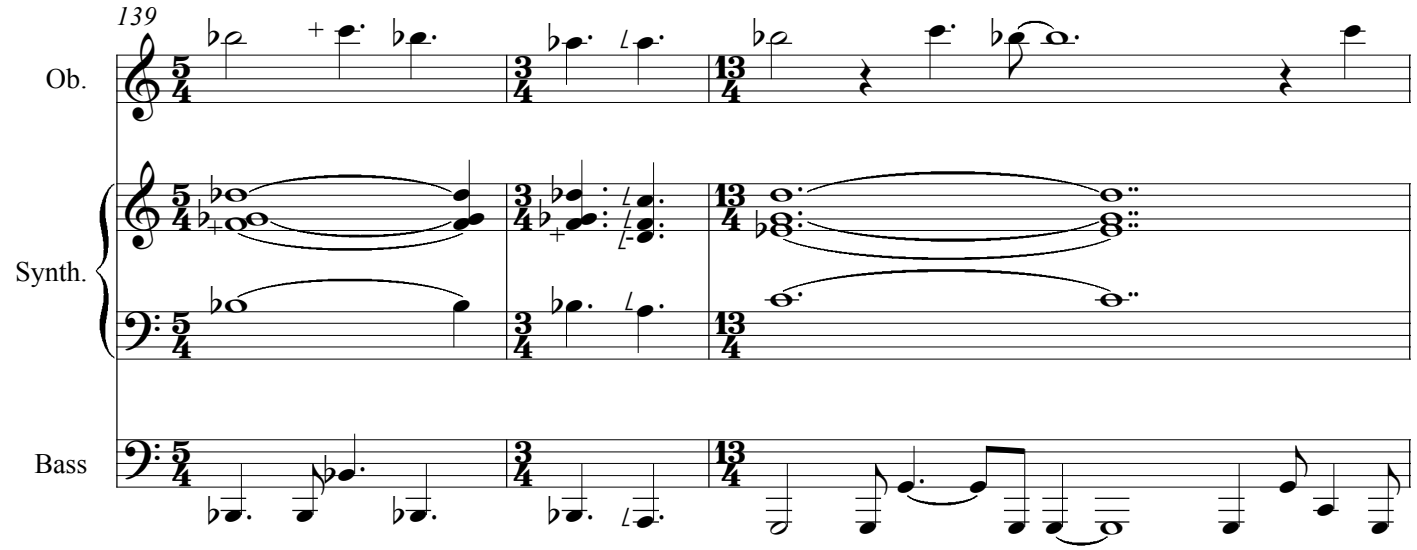
Bass


129
Ob.
Synth.
Bass
132
Ob.
Synth.
Bass
135
Ob.
Synth.
Bass


139
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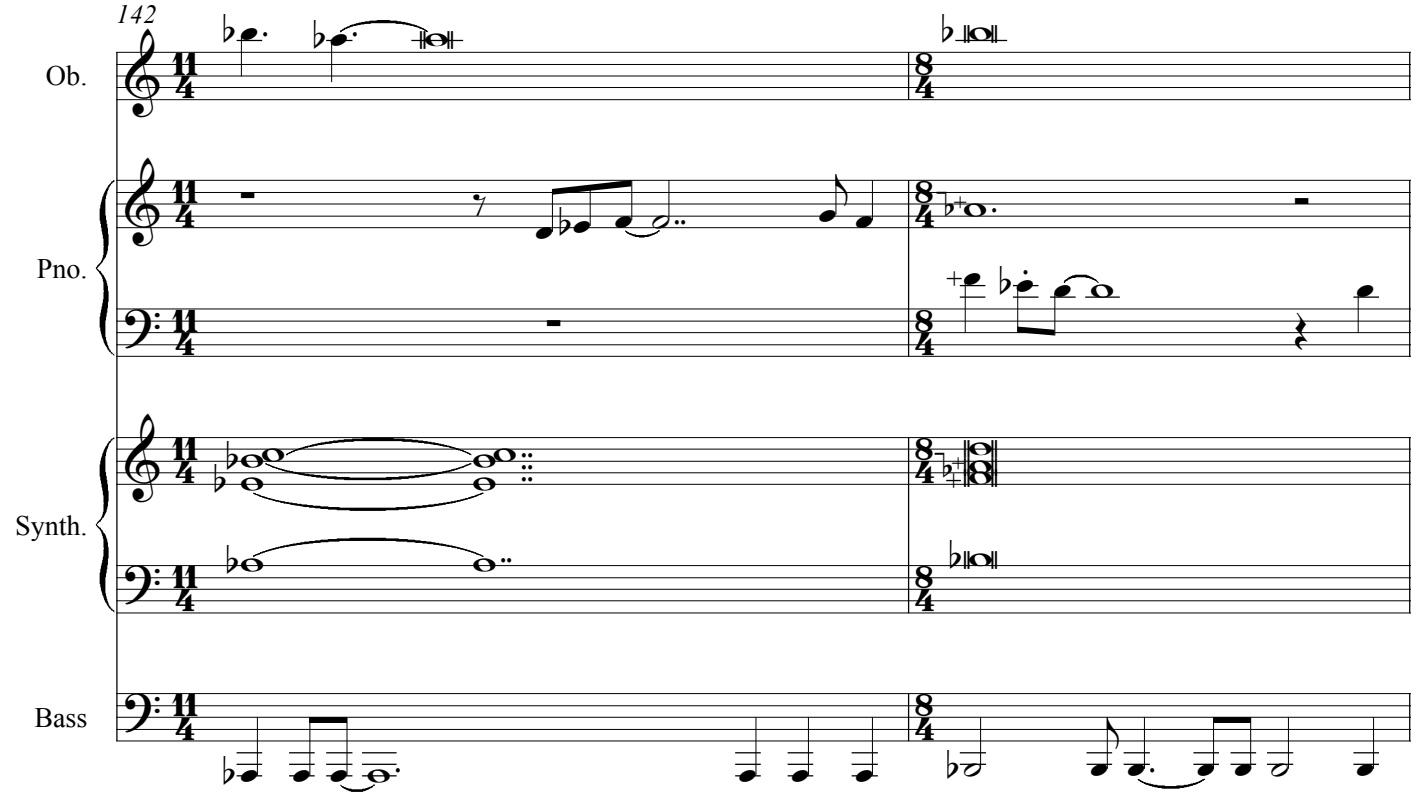
142
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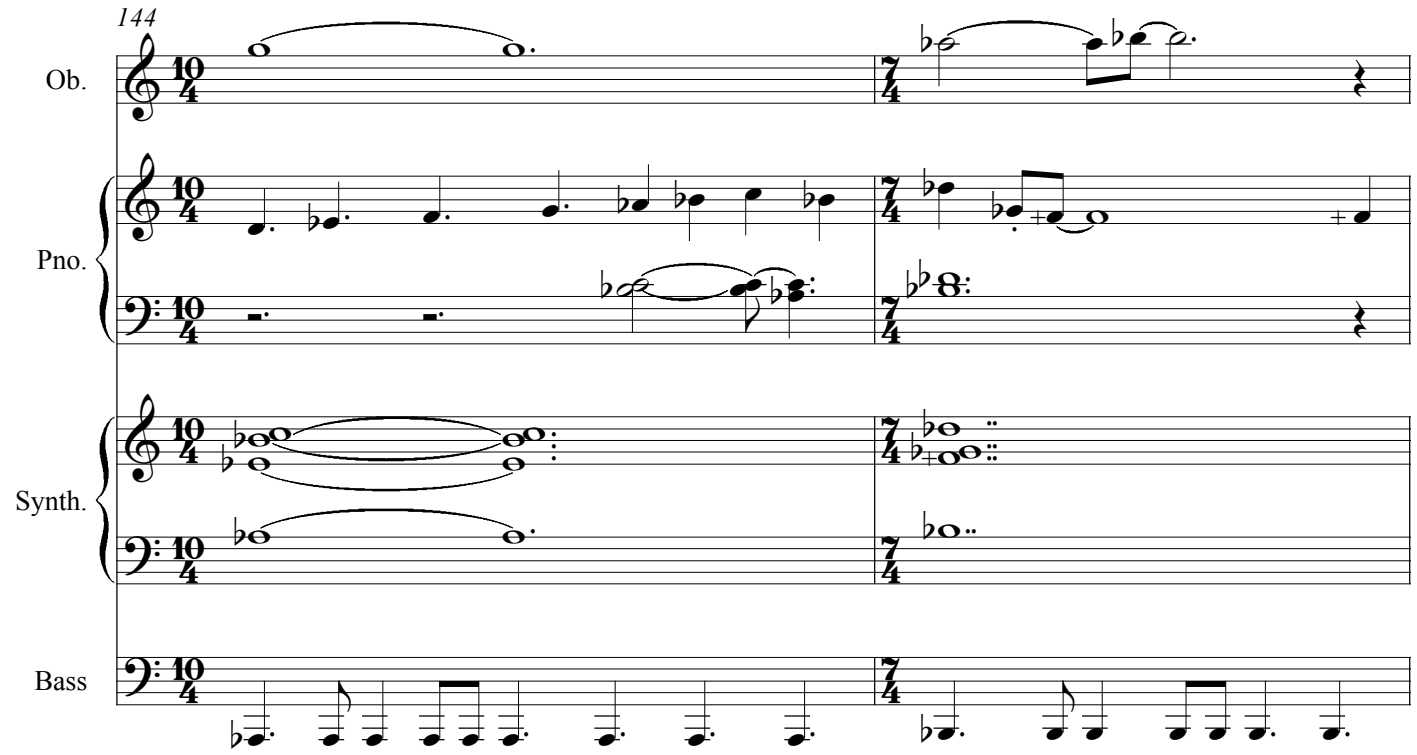
144
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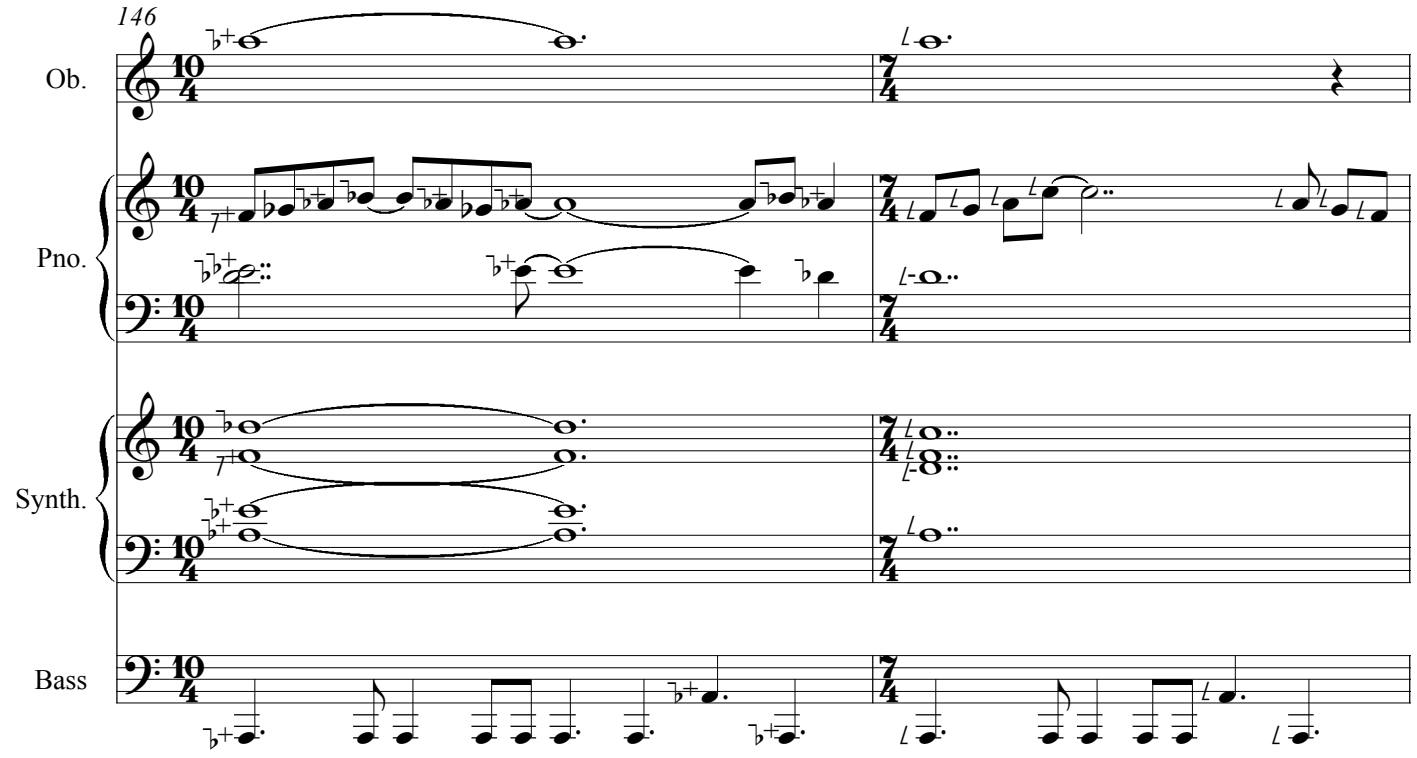
146
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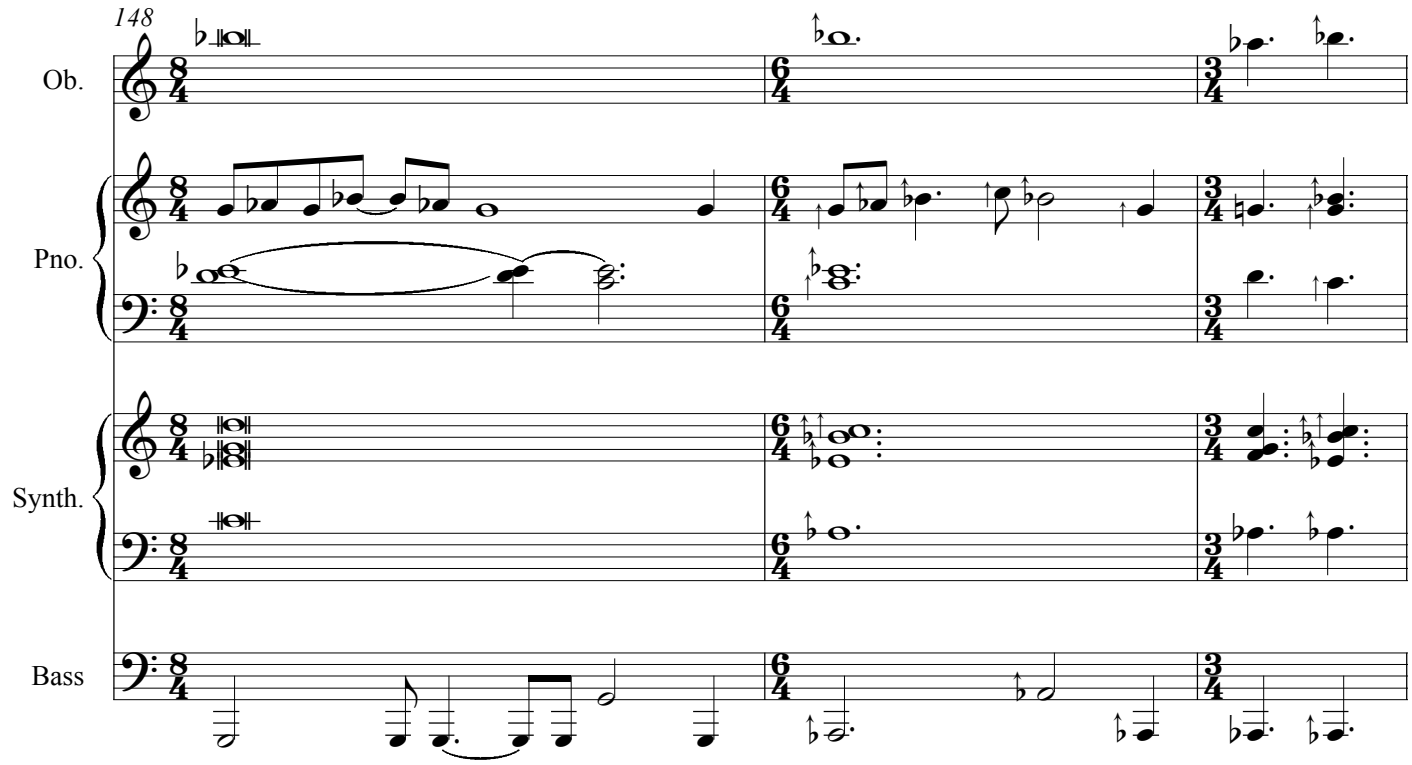
148
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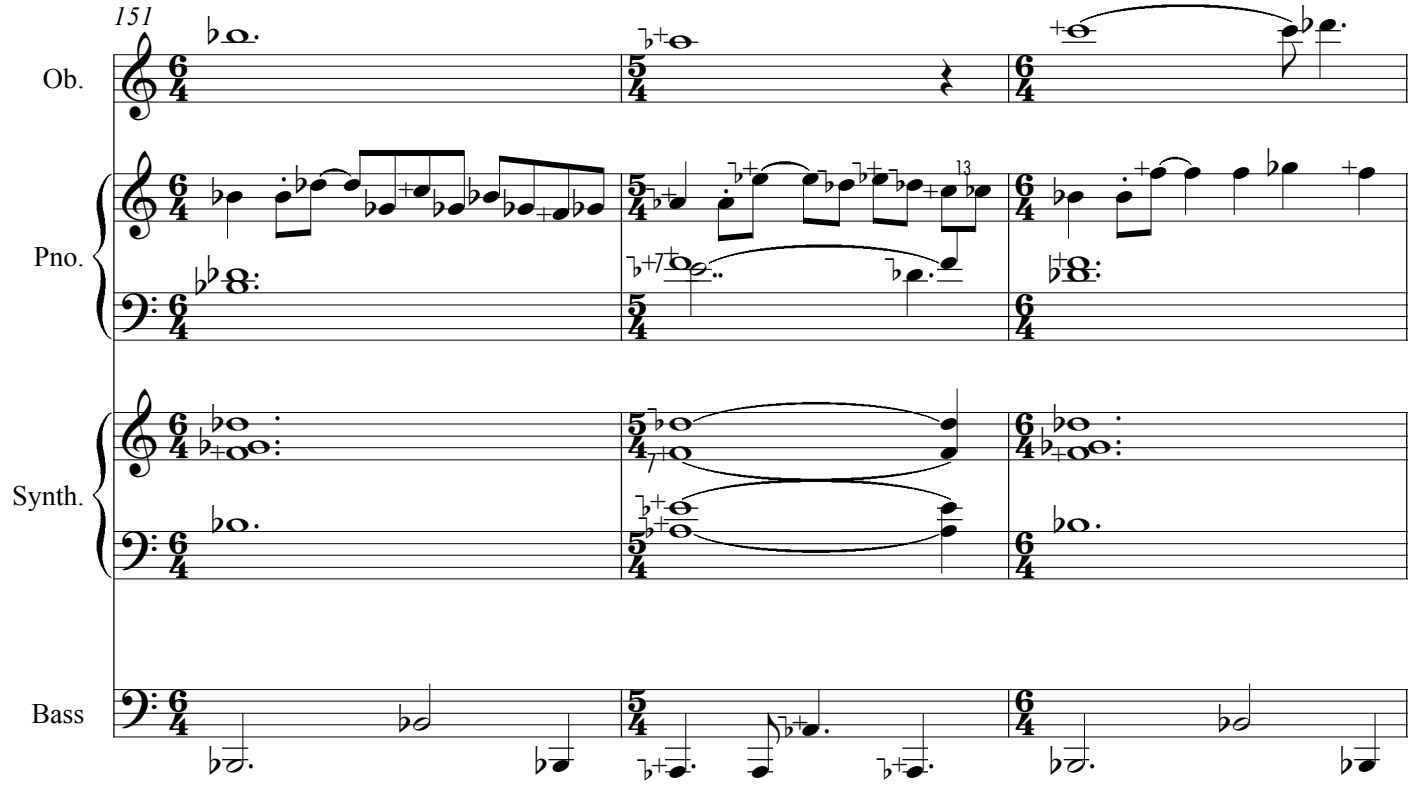
151
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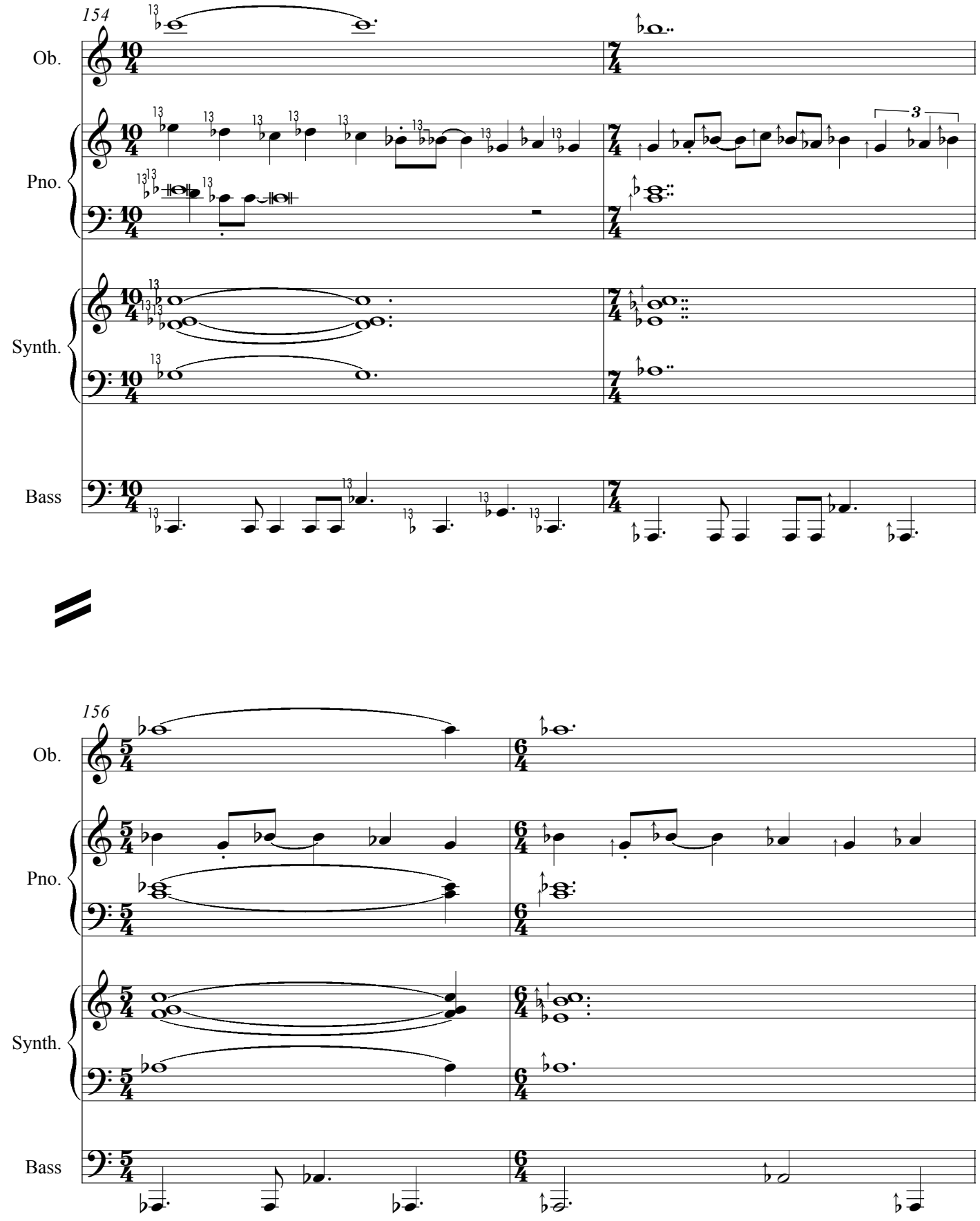
154
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Pno.
Synth.
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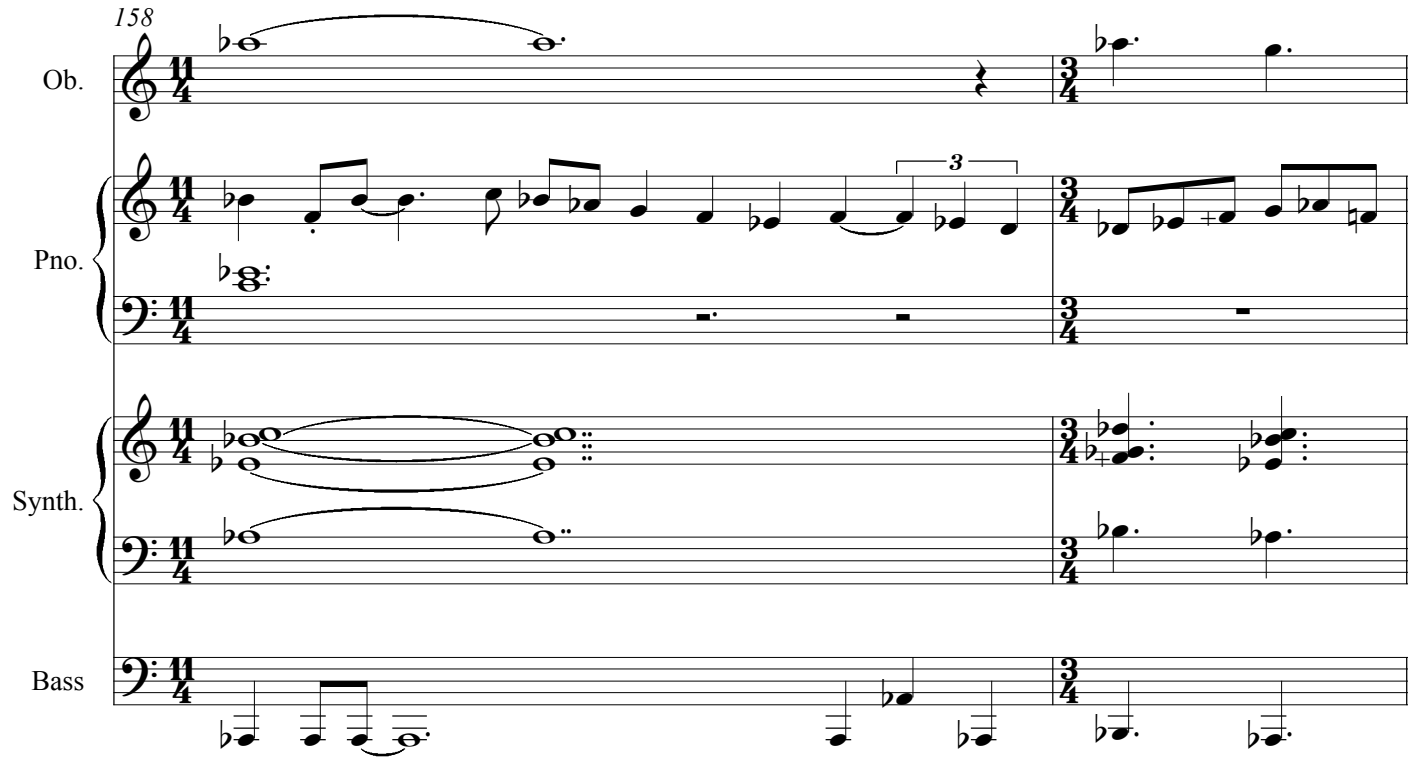
156
Ob.
Pno.
Synth.
Bass


158
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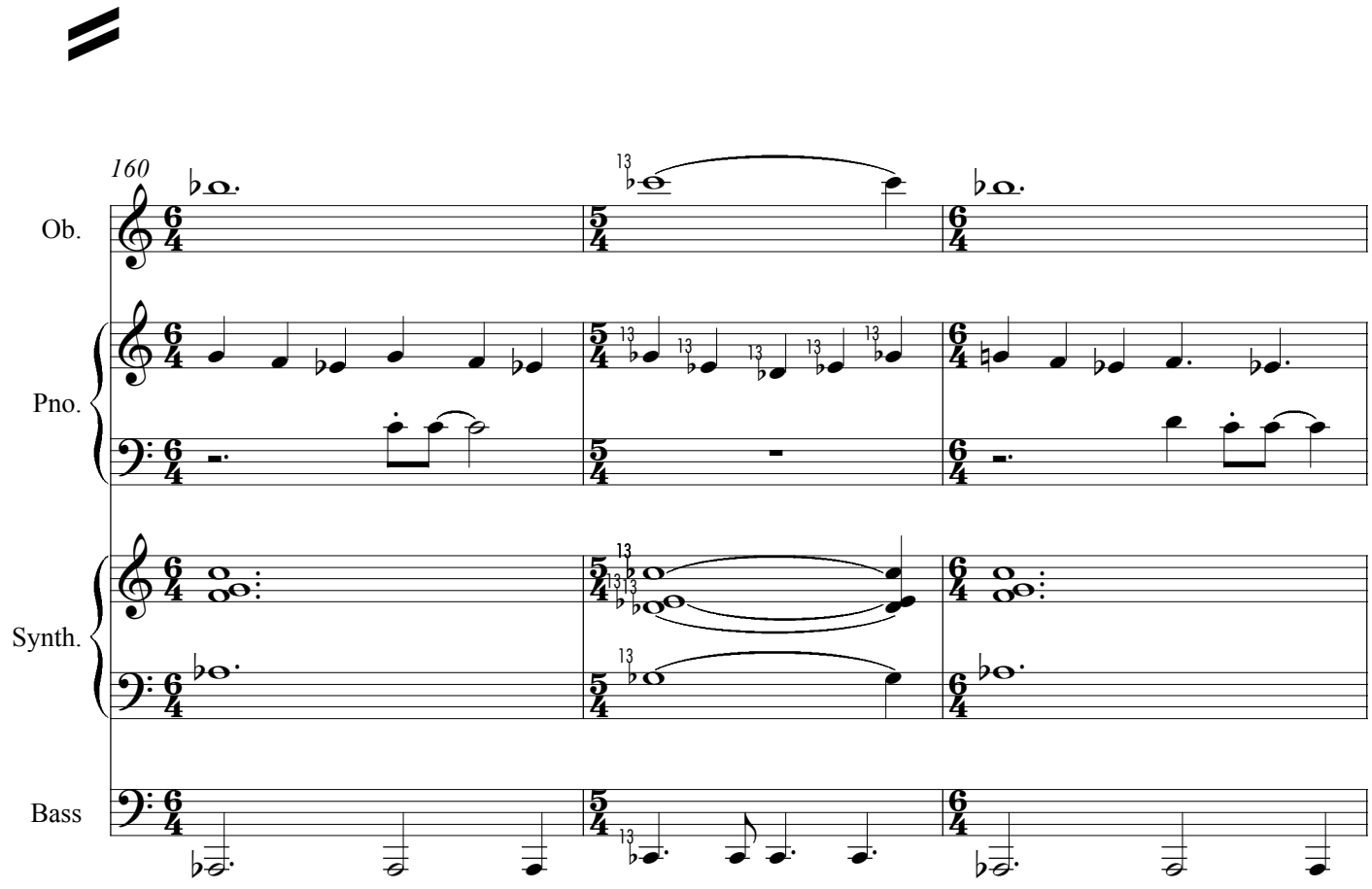
Pno.
Synth.
Bass
3


160
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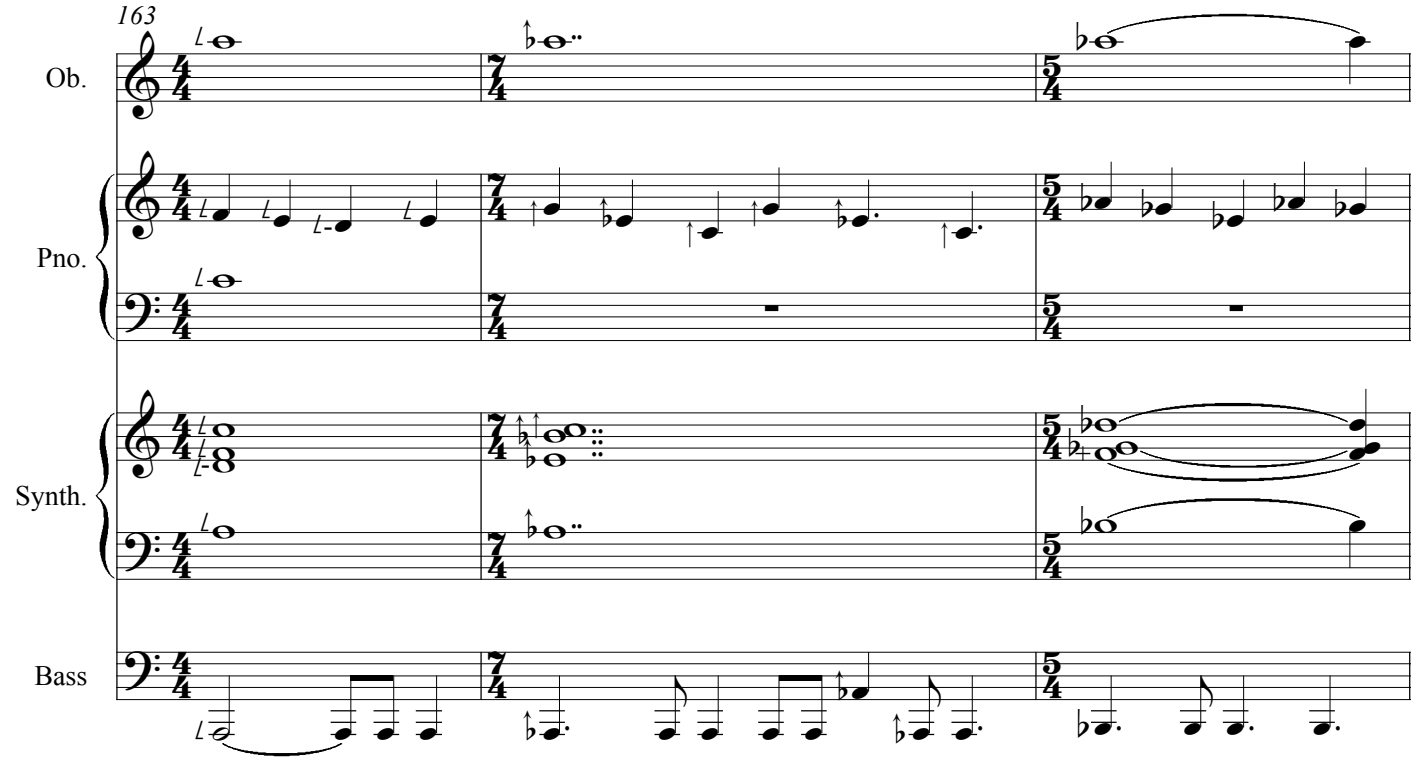
Pno.
Synth.
Bass
13


163
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Synth.
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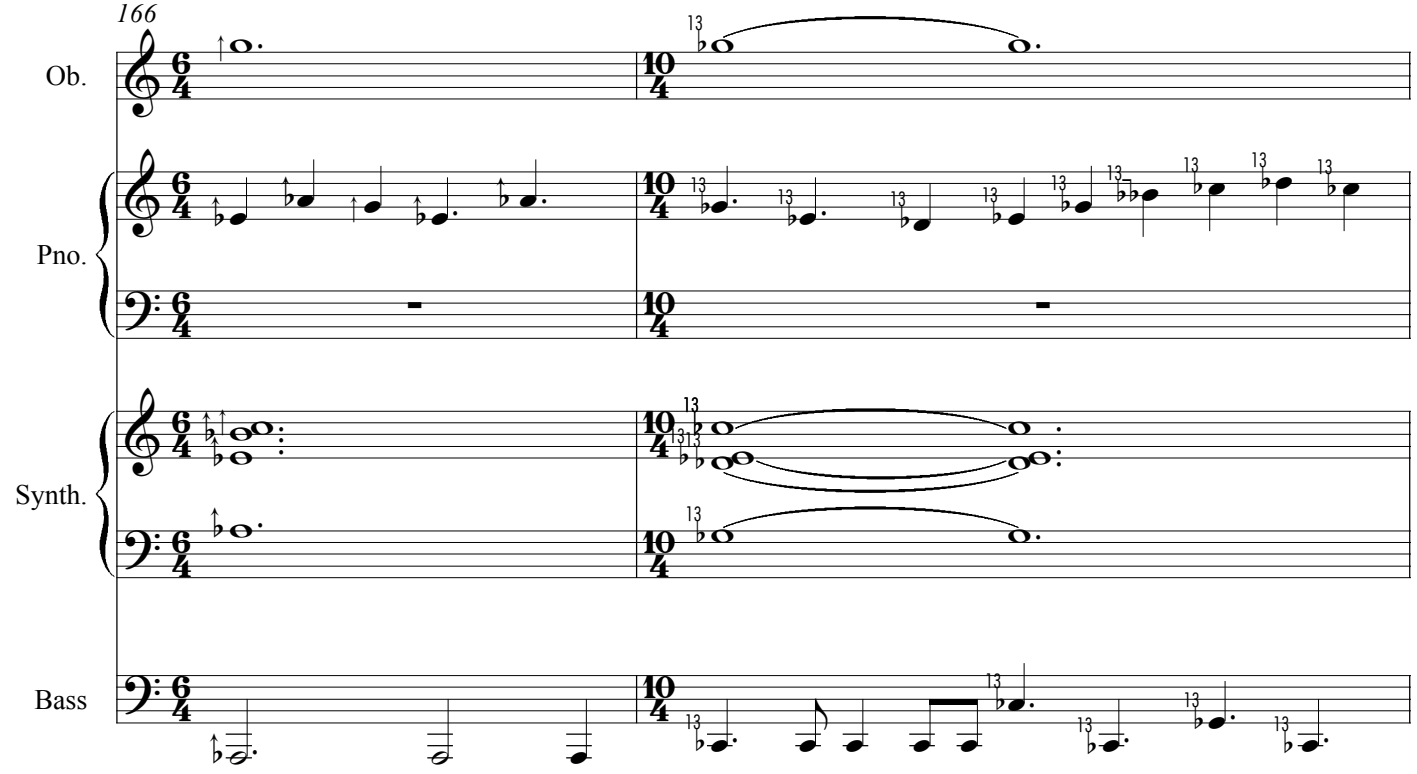
166
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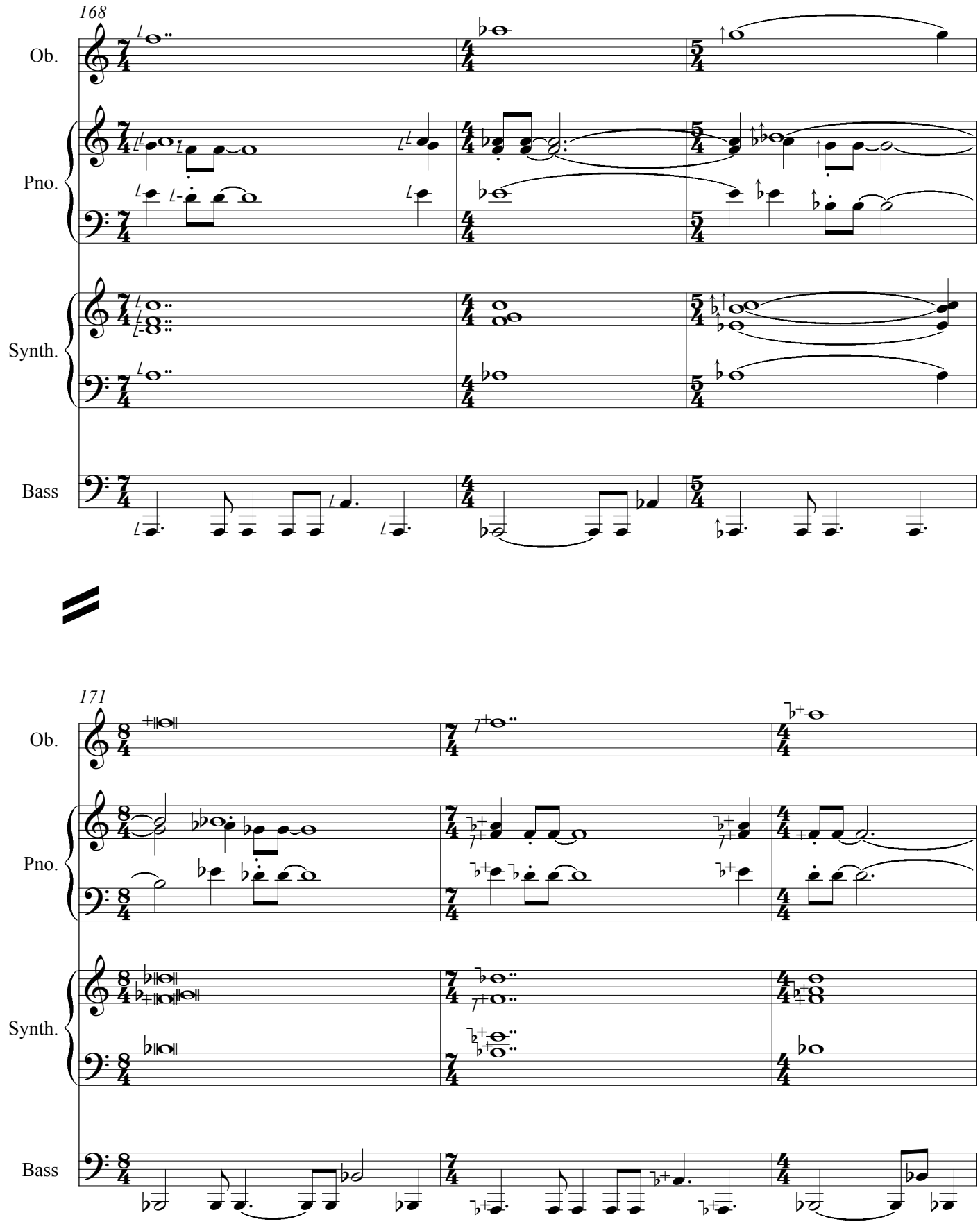
168
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Pno.
Synth.
Bass
171
Ob.
Pno.
Synth.
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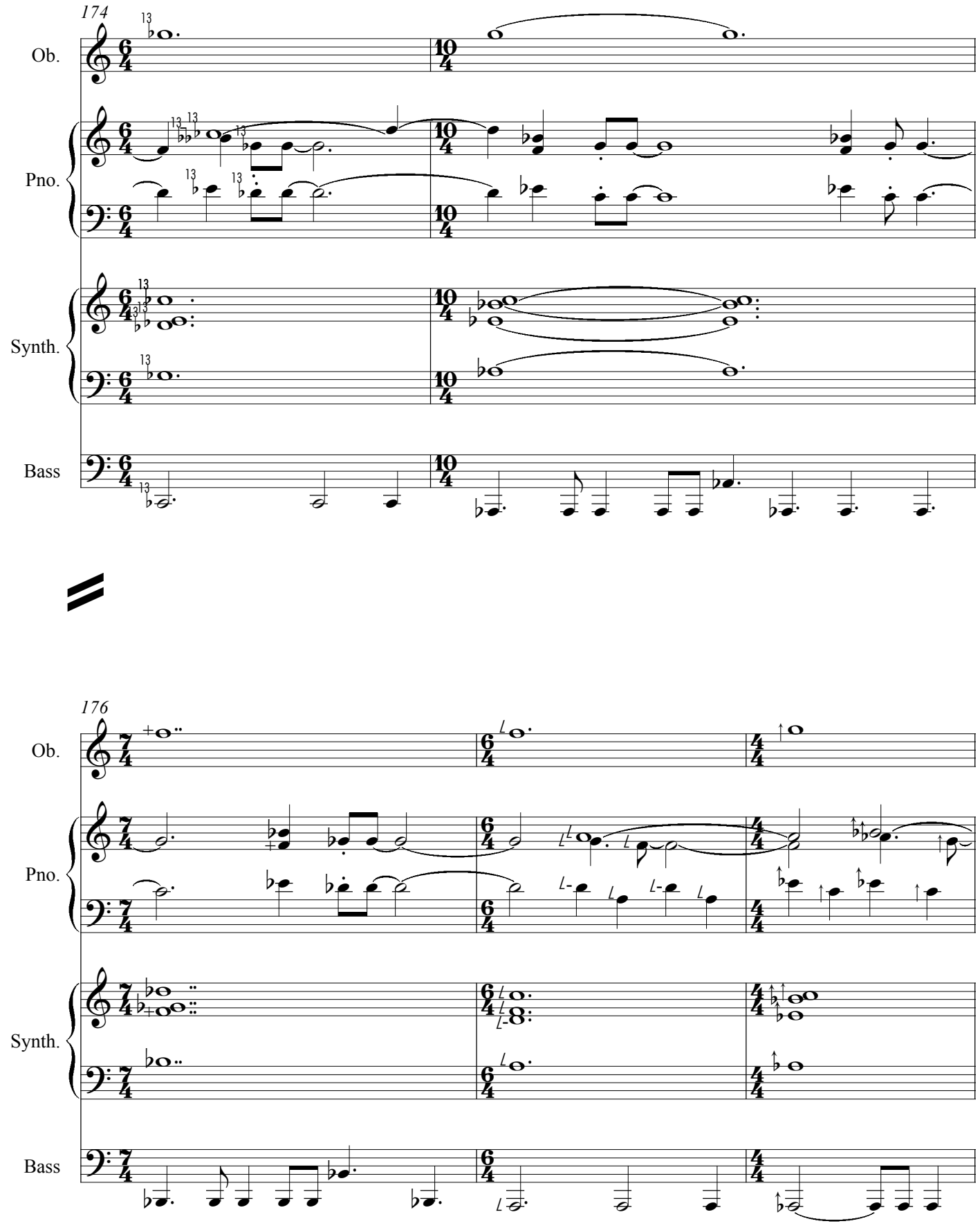
174
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176
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Pno.
Synth.
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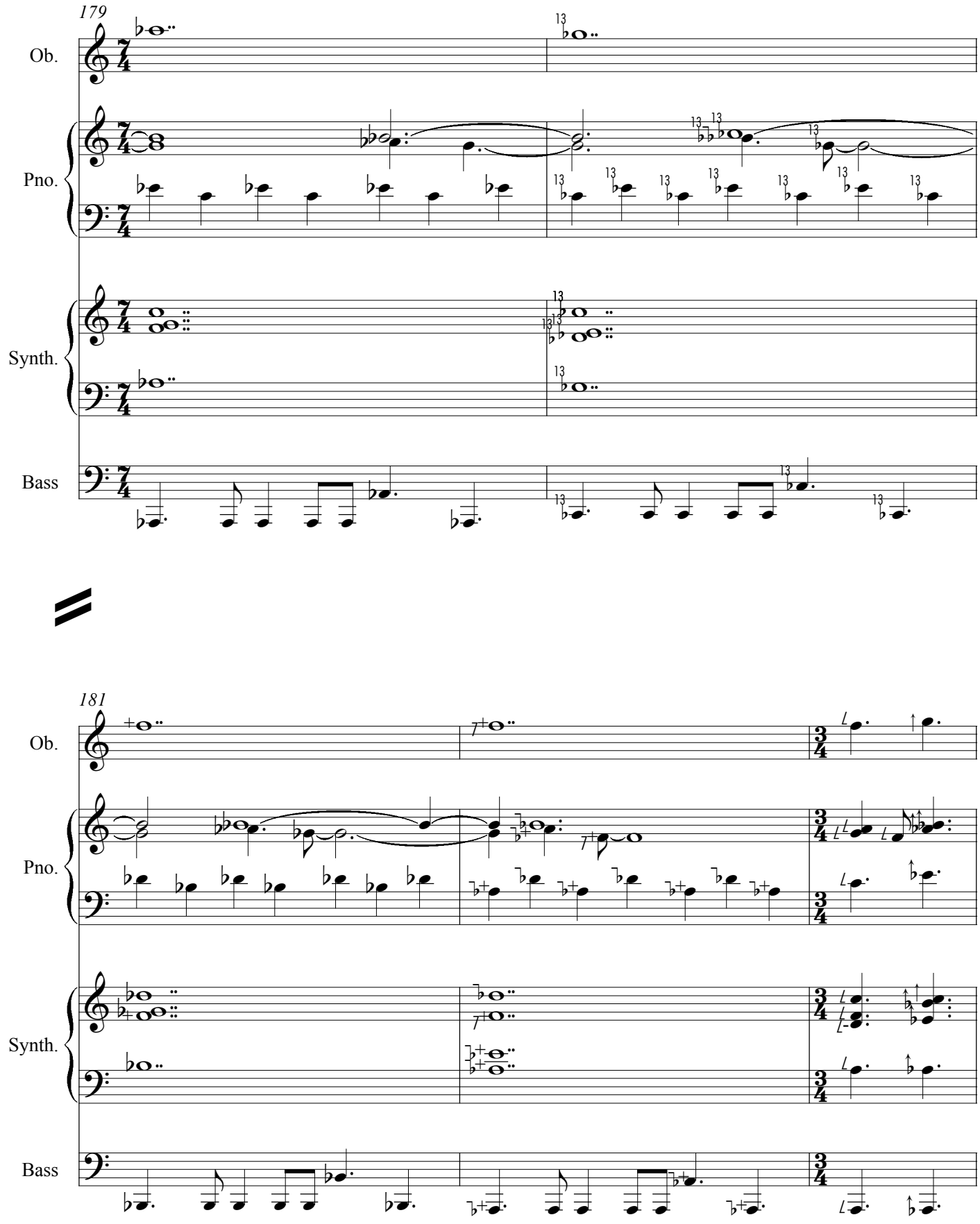
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181
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Pno.
Synth.
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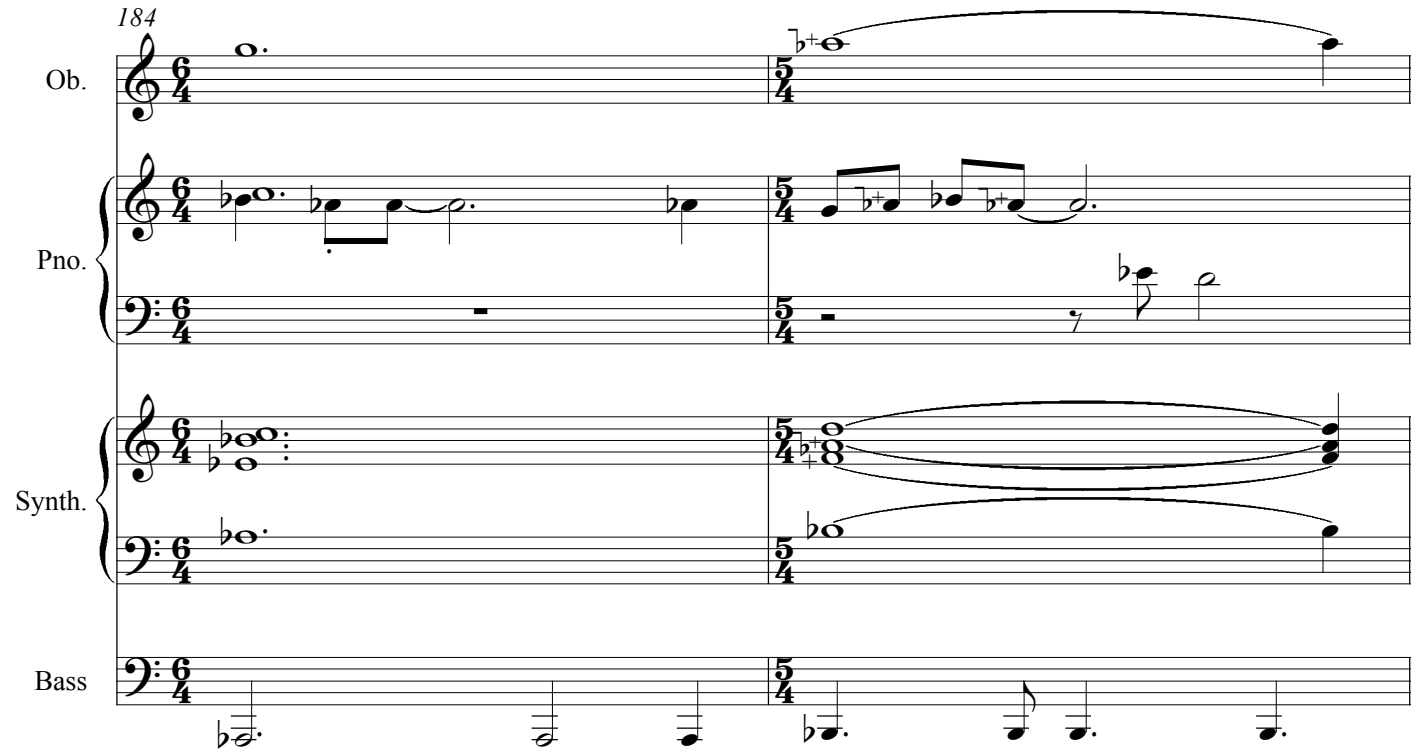
184
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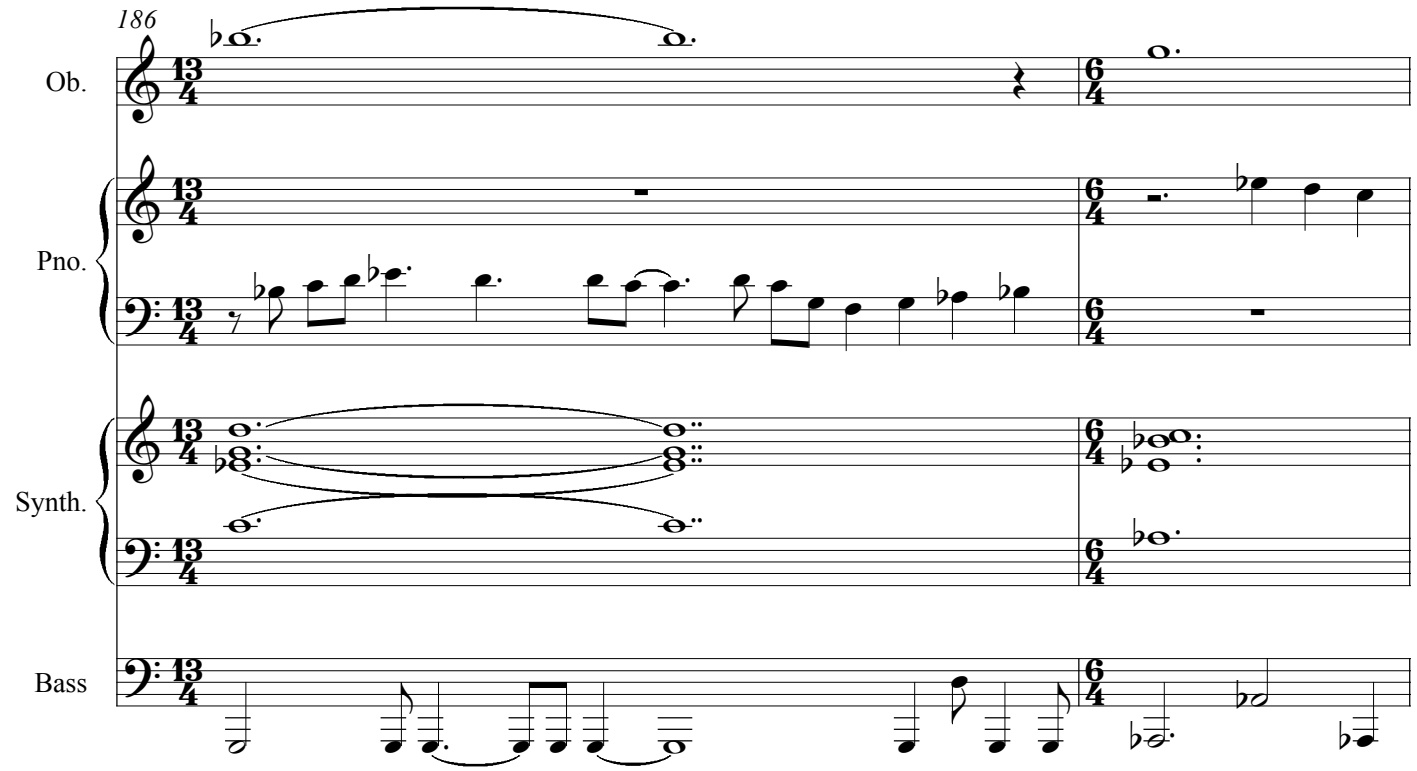
186
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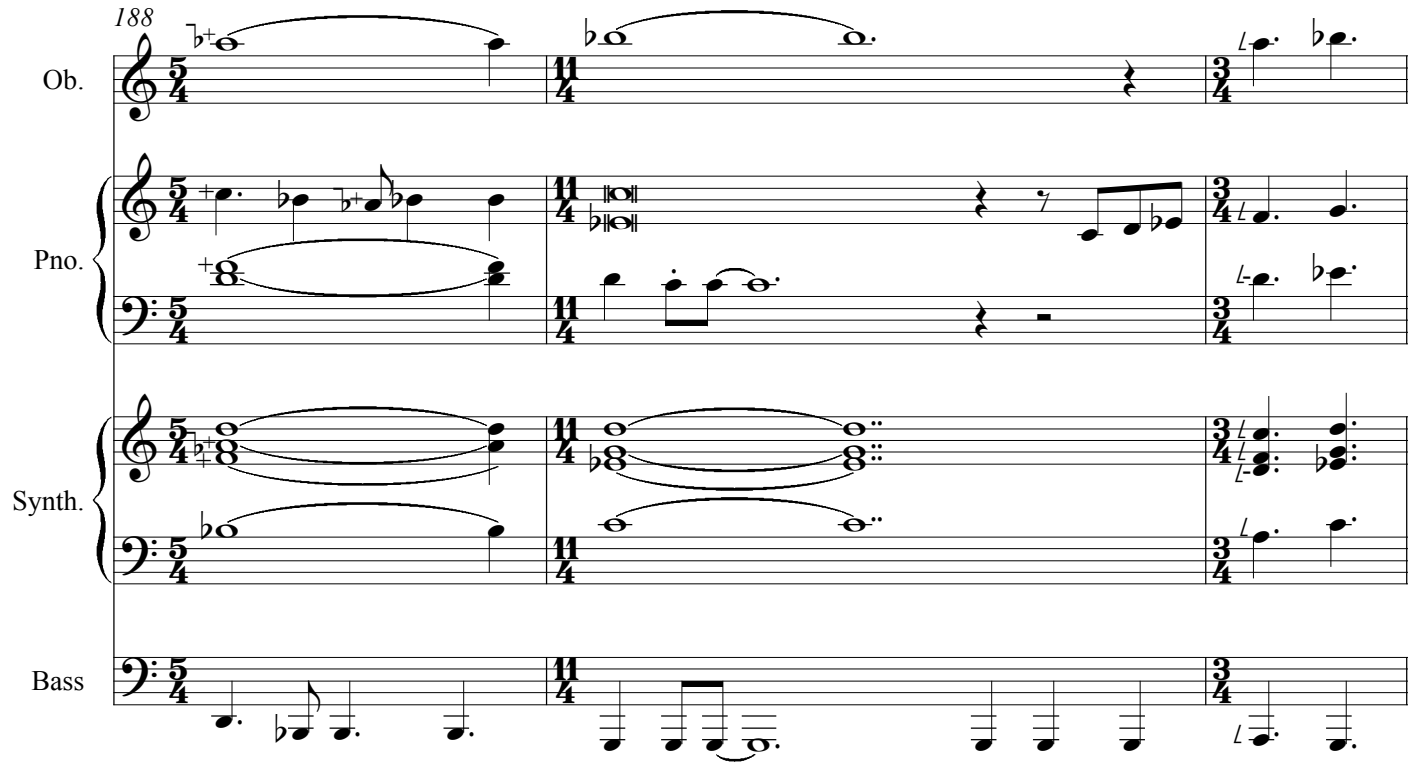
188
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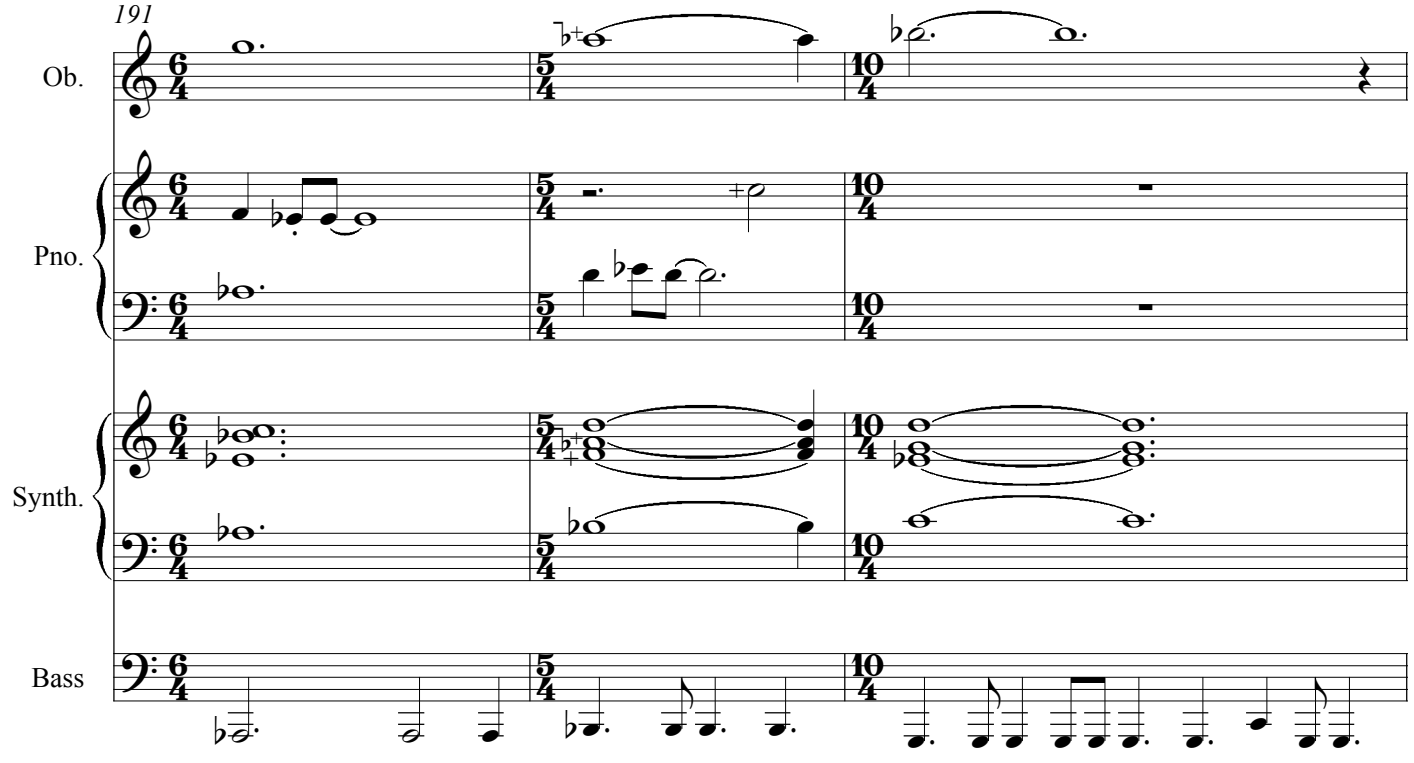
191
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Pno.
Synth.
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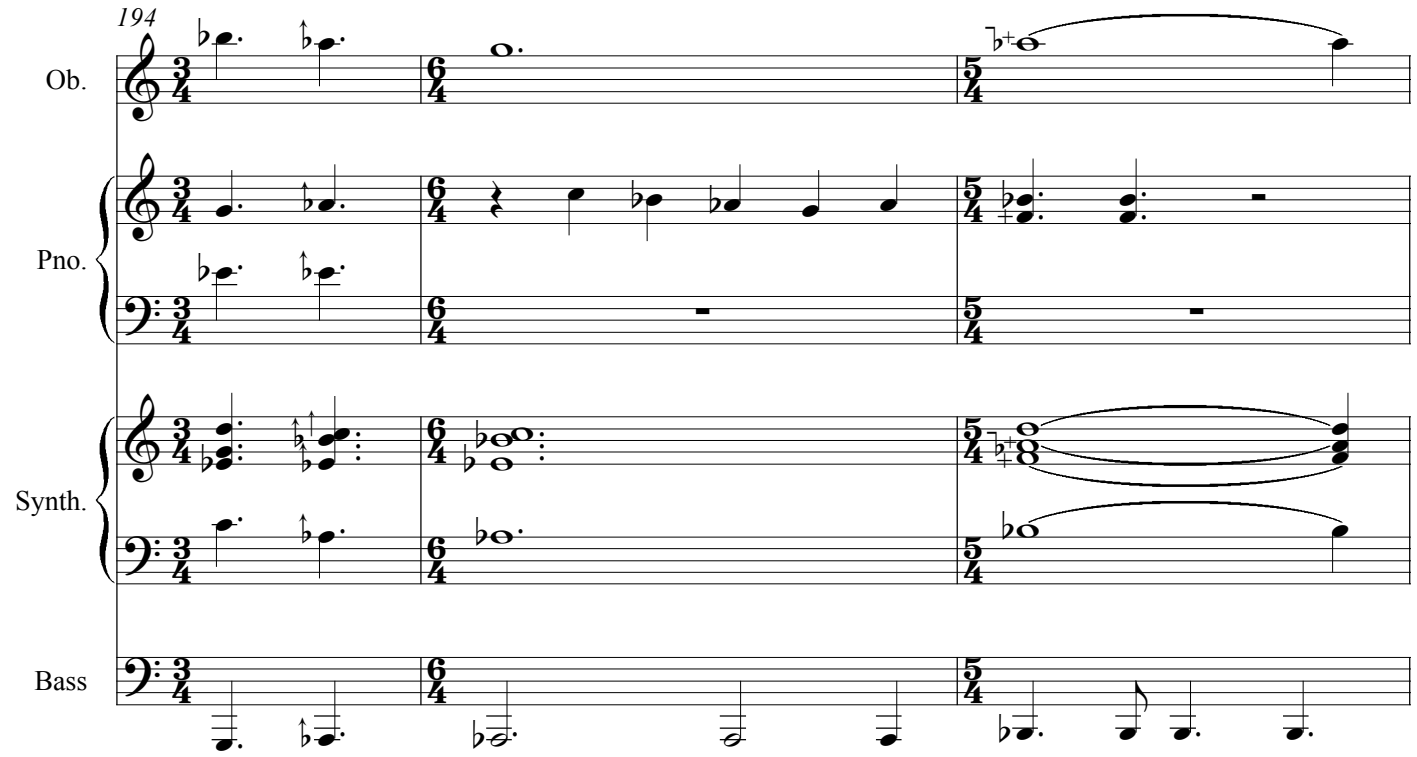
194
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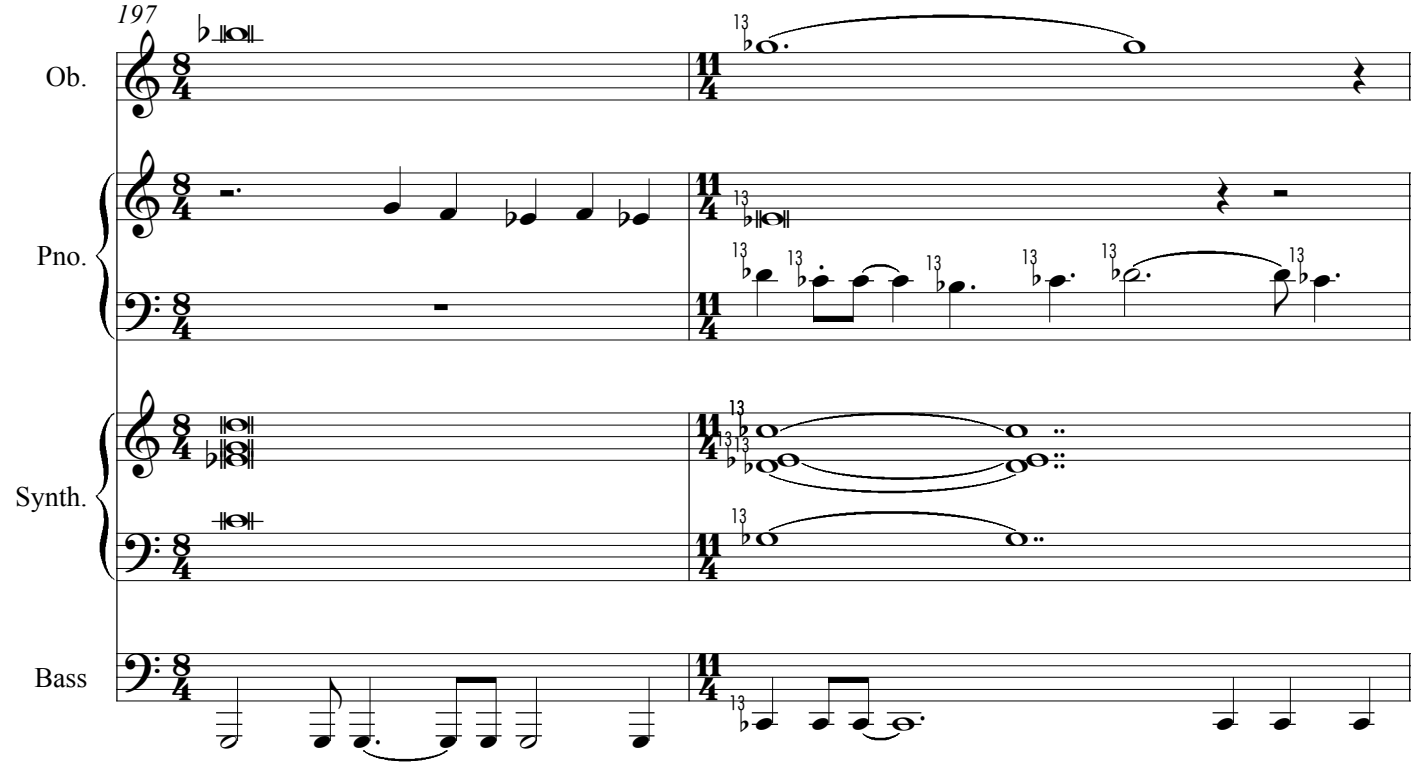
197
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Pno.
Synth.
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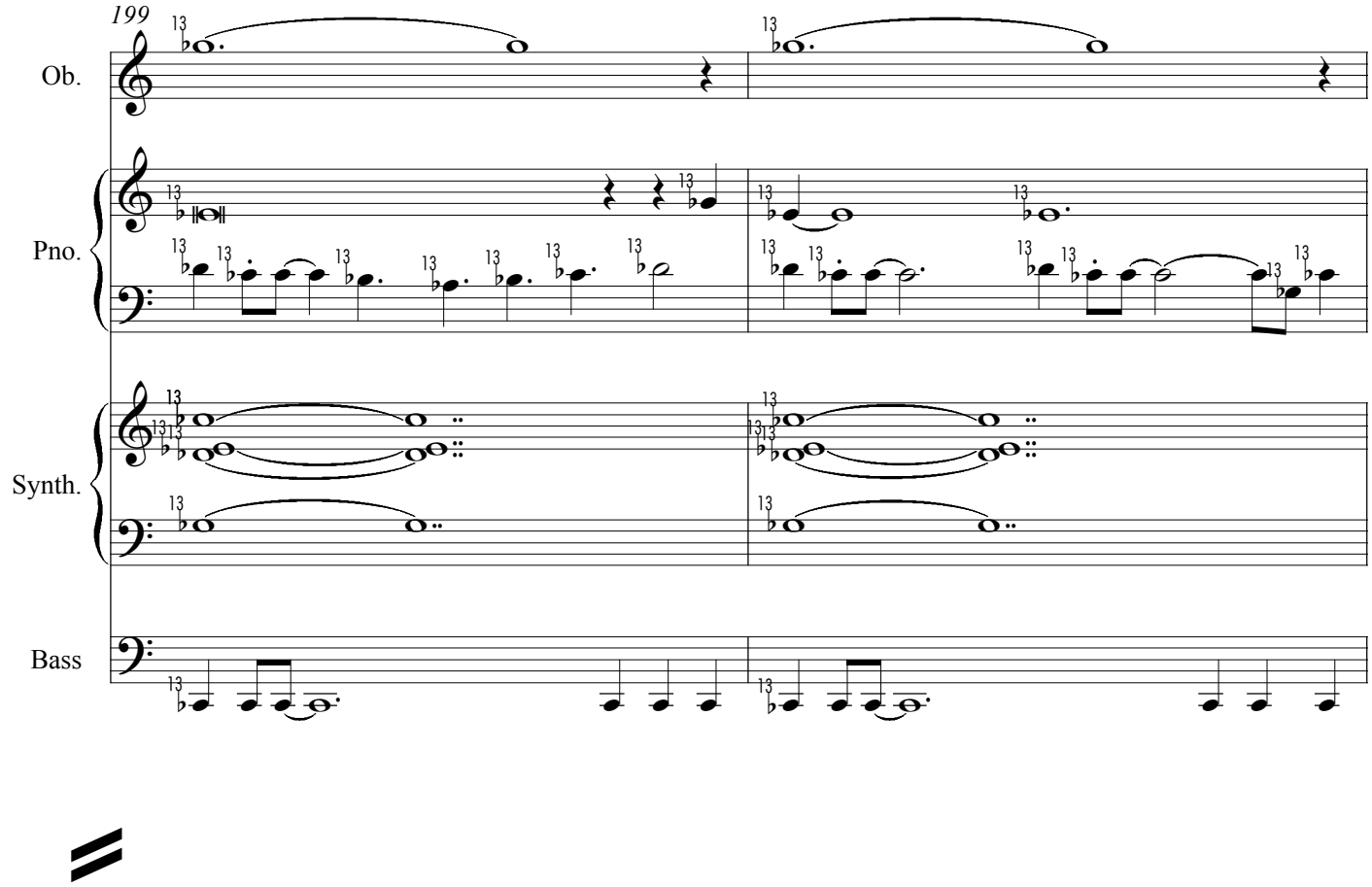
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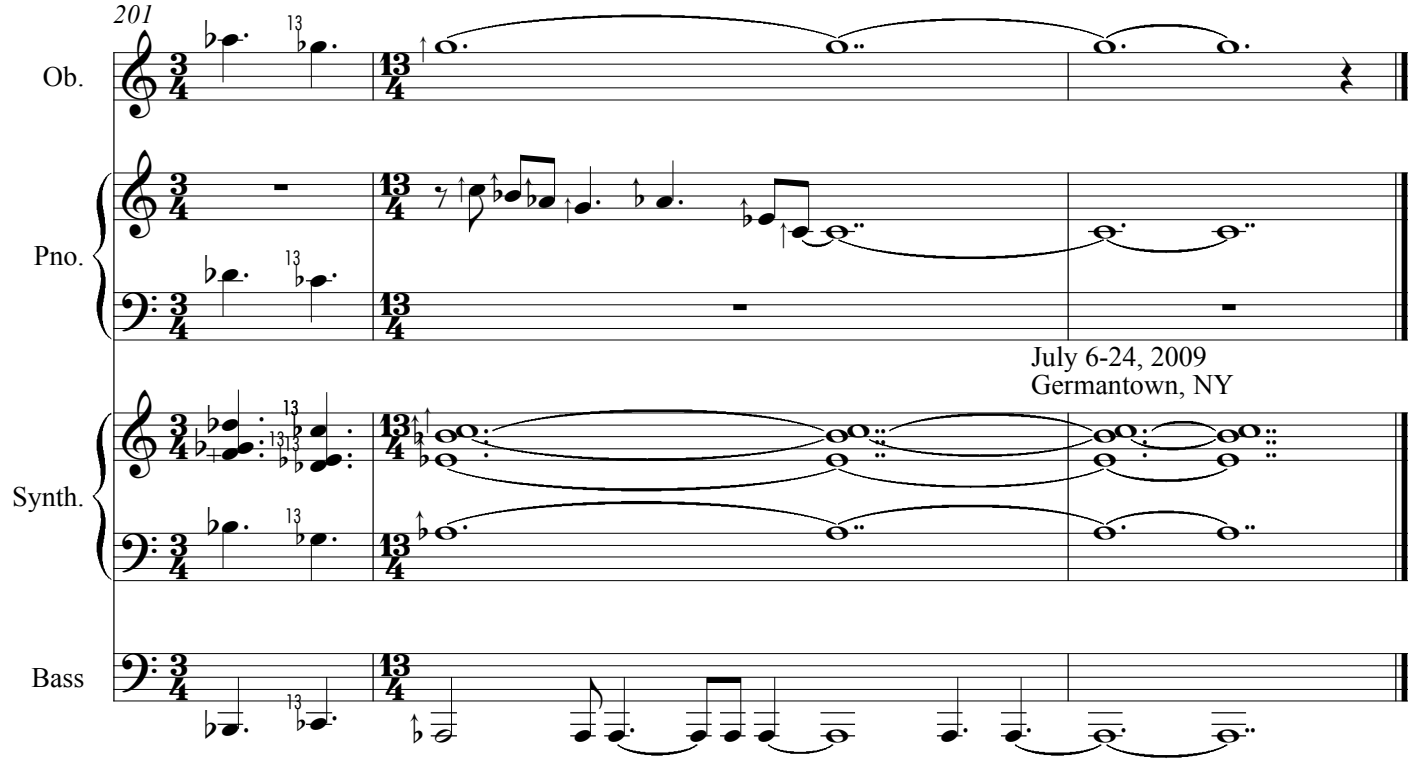
201
Ob.
Pno.
July 6-24, 2009
Germantown, NY
Synth.
Bass