Sinfonia

from "Die sieben Worte Jesu Christi am Kreuz"

(Dresden 1645)

by Heinrich Schütz (1585 - 1672)

arranged by Klaus Bjerre for 5 horns in F

with optional solo duets of violins, flutes, oboes, or horns and an optional guitar continuo

This is the Sinfonia of a cantata. The original setting was for SATTB viols. Here these viol parts have been set for 5 horns in F. The original key of E minor concert has been kept. Settings for brass and woodwind quintets are in the planning. All versions will be compatible for performances in larger mixed ensembles.

This Sinfonia has a great beauty in its own right. However this arranger cannot avoid hearing improvisations and embellishments when working with music of this era. The solution has been to add an optional solo duet. This duet can be pairs of violins, flutes, or oboes. Mixed duets certainly would work beautifully, if the balance situation is considered. An oboe on the first solo part and a flute on the second would not be a good idea. As wouldn't a performance with one soloist only.

Another potential solo pair might be two horns. A two part score for such solo horns is provided. The 1st soloist will have to play a trill between high B natural and high C#. Were this arranger to play that part, he would take his G descant horn. The option of horn soloists can only be applied with two horn players. A horn entering a mixed soloists' pair would be a bad idea.

For the 5 quintet horns no parts are provided, only a 2 page score. The first horn will have to manage a few A's just above the staff, but the part is not suicidal for the player. In accordance with the notation practise of this early renaissance era no dynamics or articulations are given. The performers should not misjudge this as an opportunity to play dull run-of-the-mill notes. The contrapuntal texture calls for a great mutual respect. Especially up-beat notes, wherever they may be placed in the bar, should be played detached, and an emphasis should be given to the following longer main note. If this piece is performed as a quintet, the playing style should be less legato/tenuto, than when soloists are added.

The guitar continuo part can be played from the notes in the staff or from the chord symbols. Attention should be paid to the avoidance of the lowest guitar note descending below the line of the 5th horn part.

Would this arranger protest a symphonic horn section performing this arrangement asking their harp colleague to perform the continuo part? Hardly! A modern grand piano as continuo instruments would constitute an overkill, whereas a well reading pianist might very well perform the solo voices from the oboe soloist score.

This arrangement can be used free of charge, but a postcard or an e-mail reporting on readings and performances would be nice.

Klaus Bjerre
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Quintet for 5 Horns in F
with optional solo duet
(violins, flutes, oboes, or horns)
and optional guitar continuo

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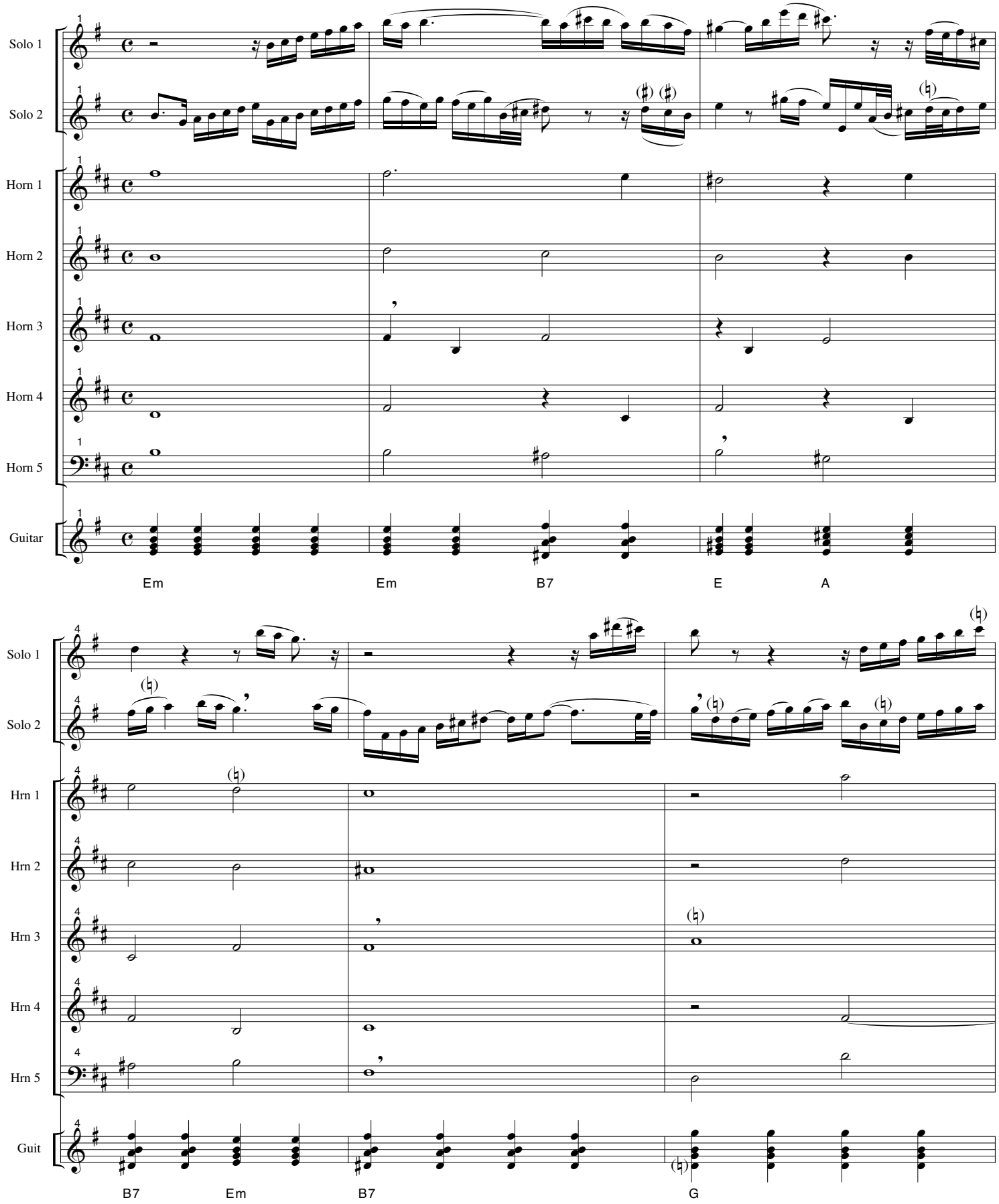

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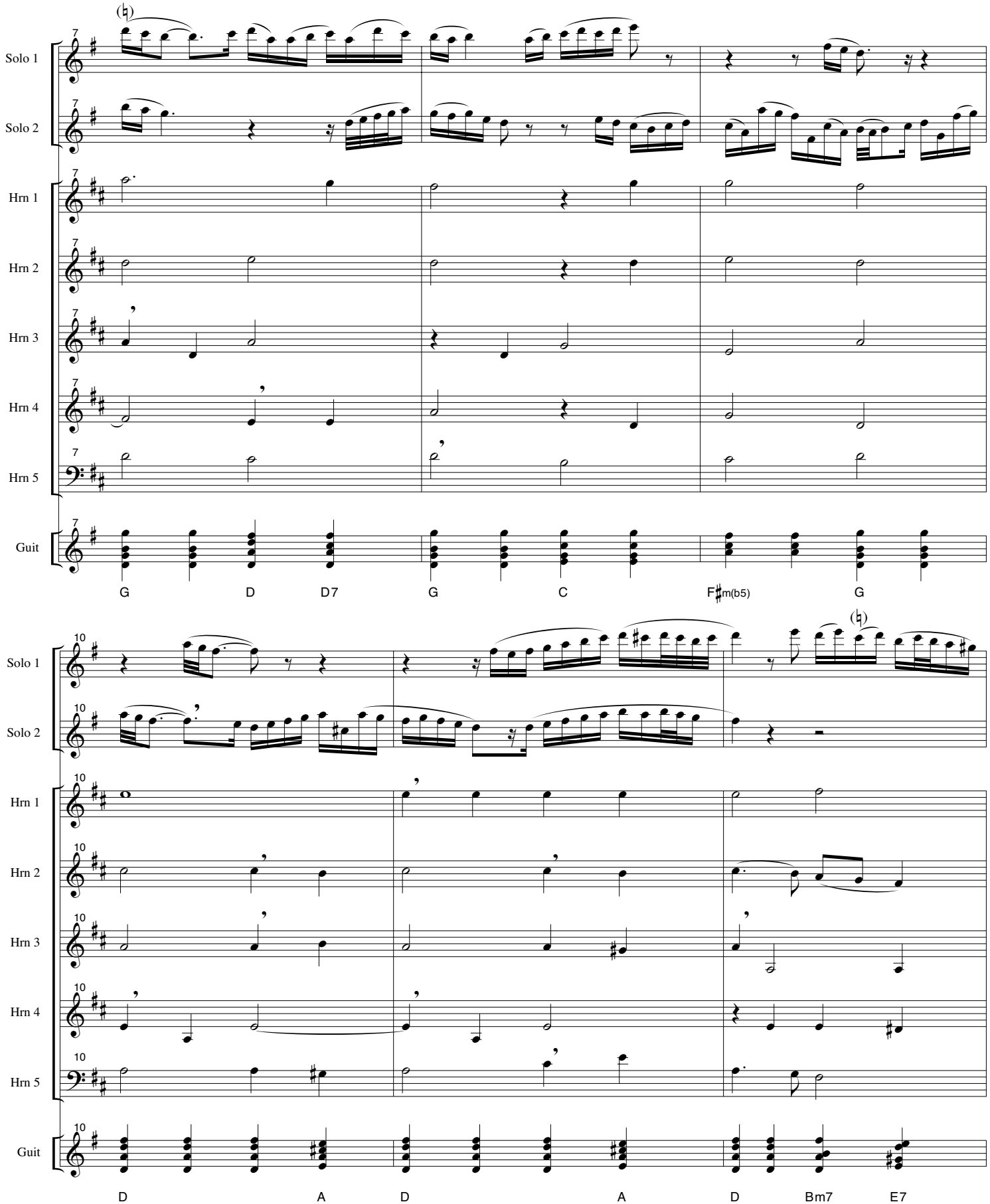

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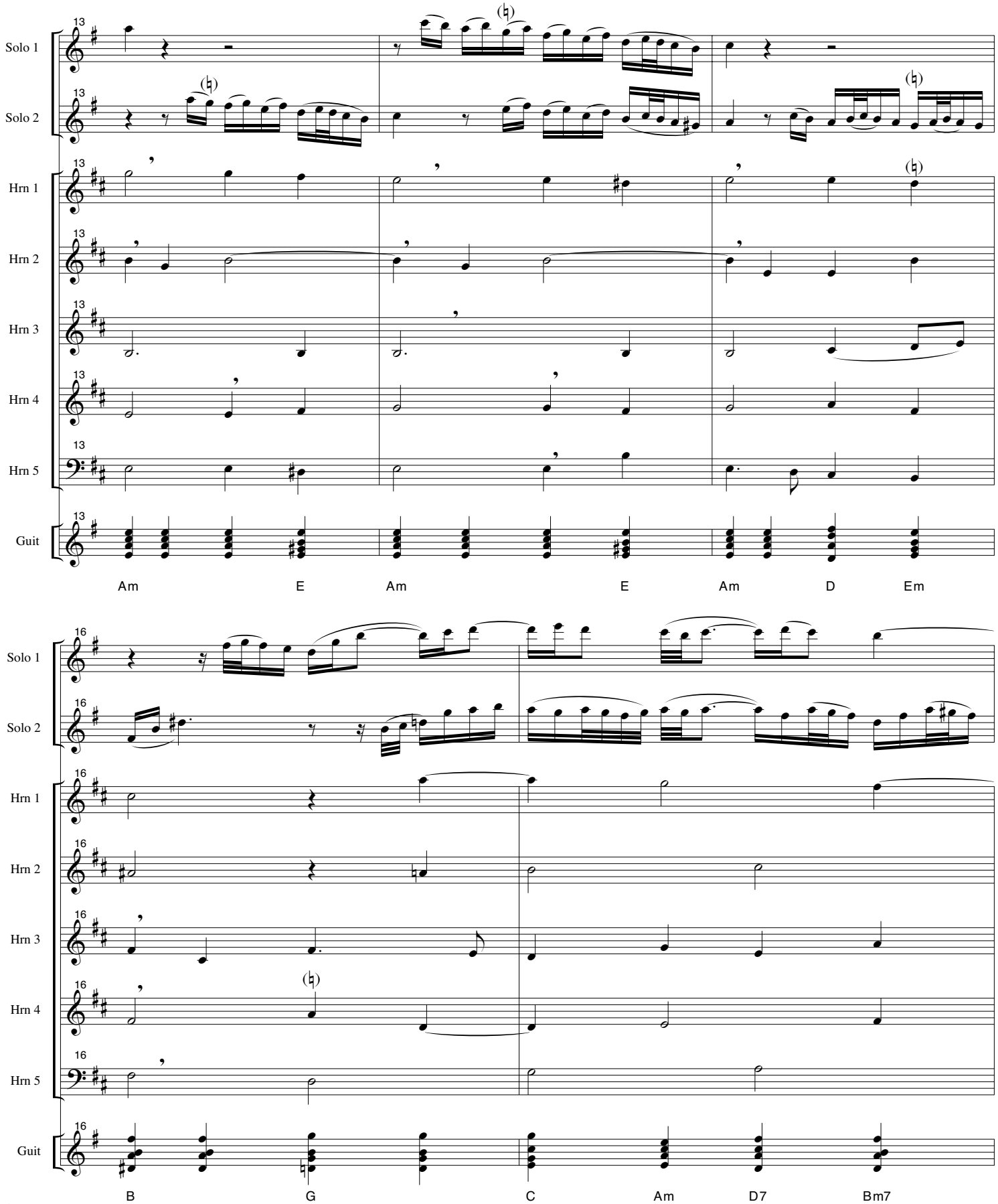

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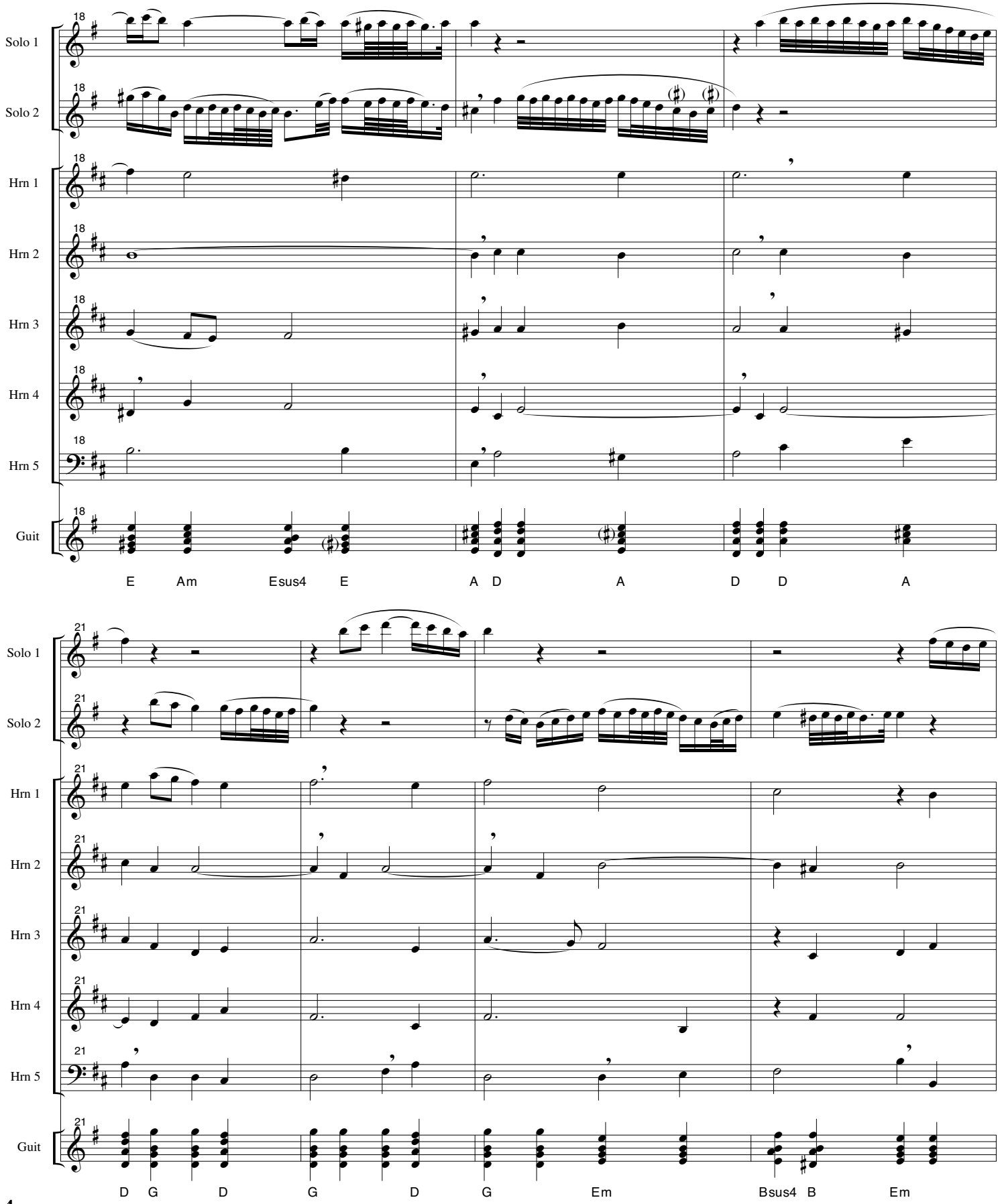

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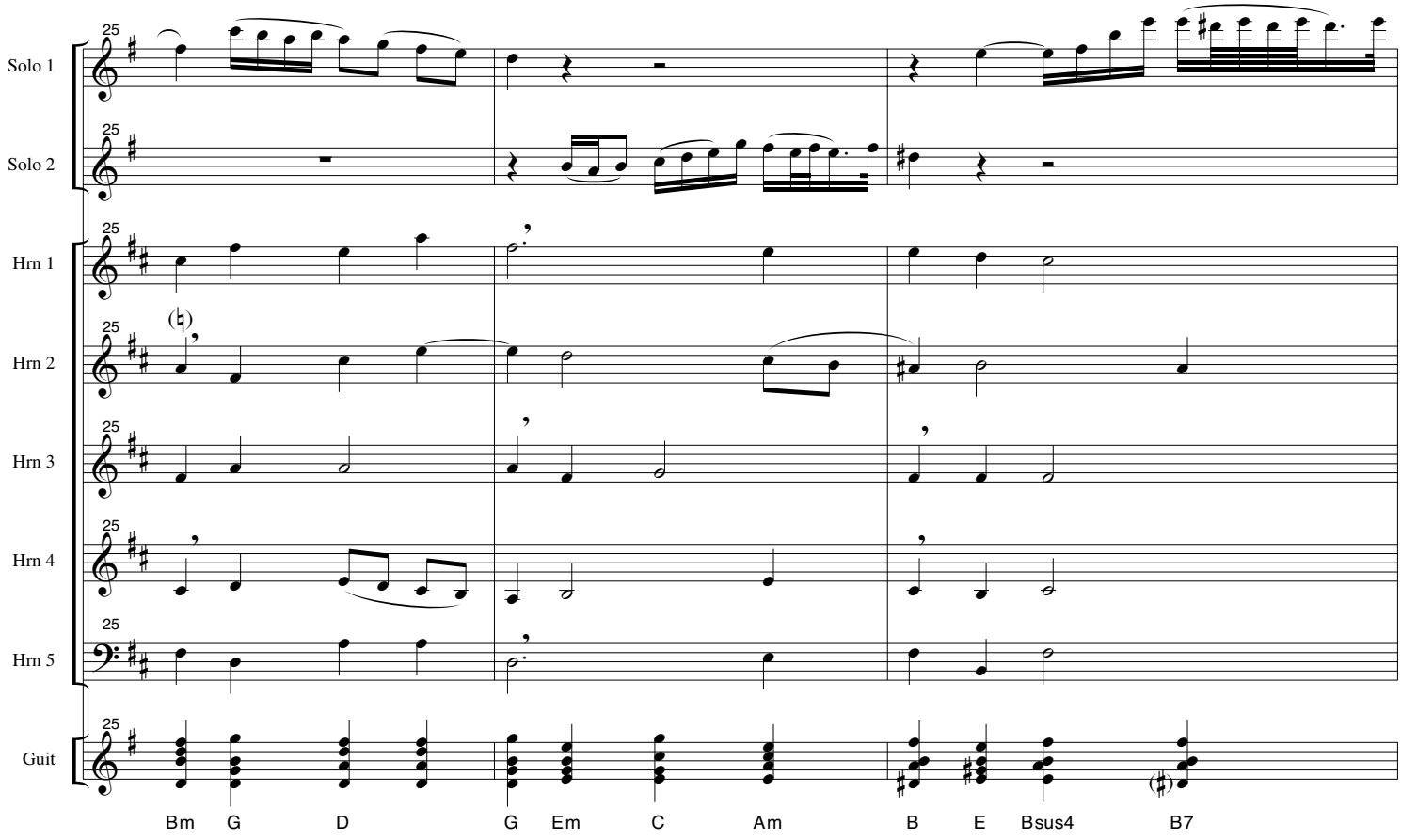

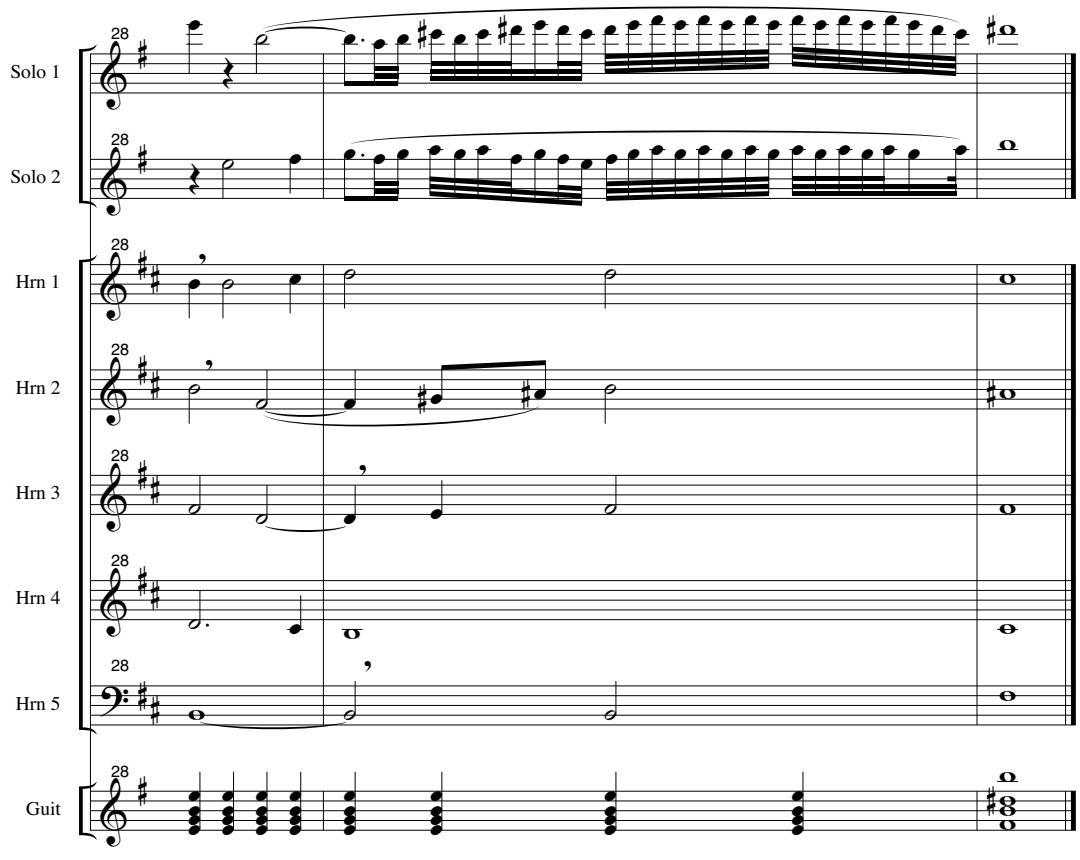

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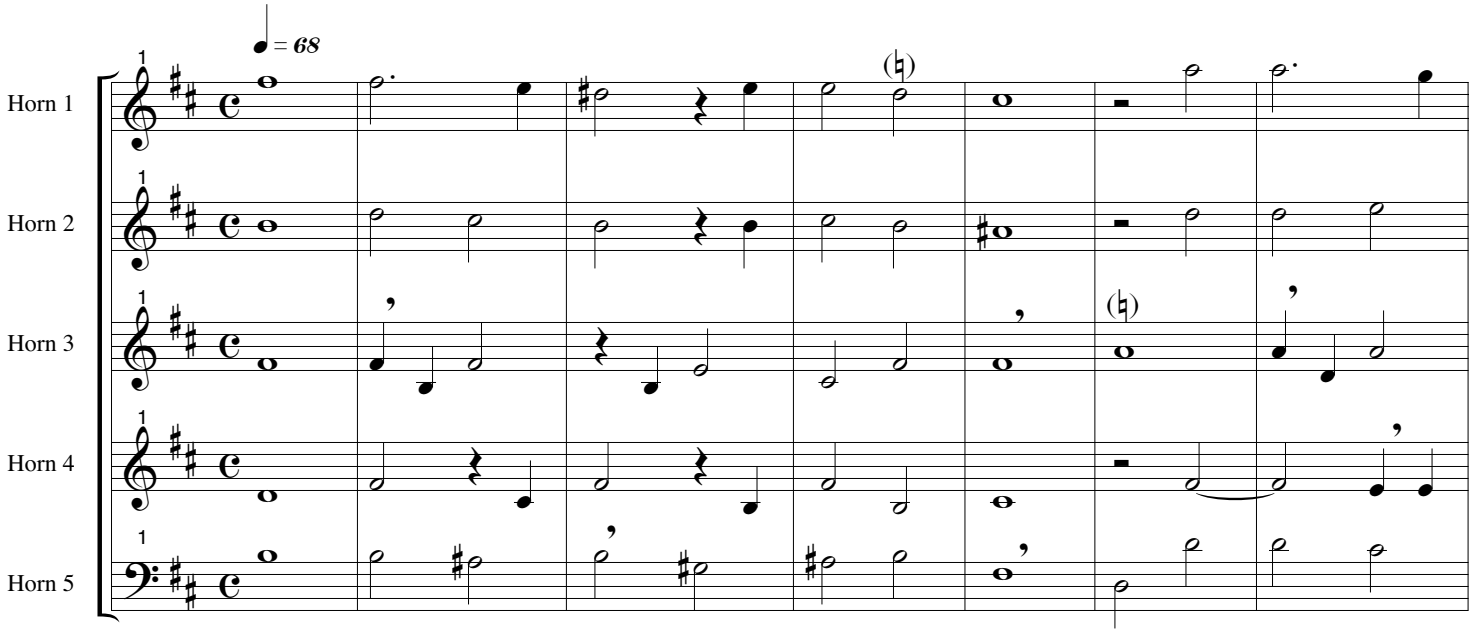

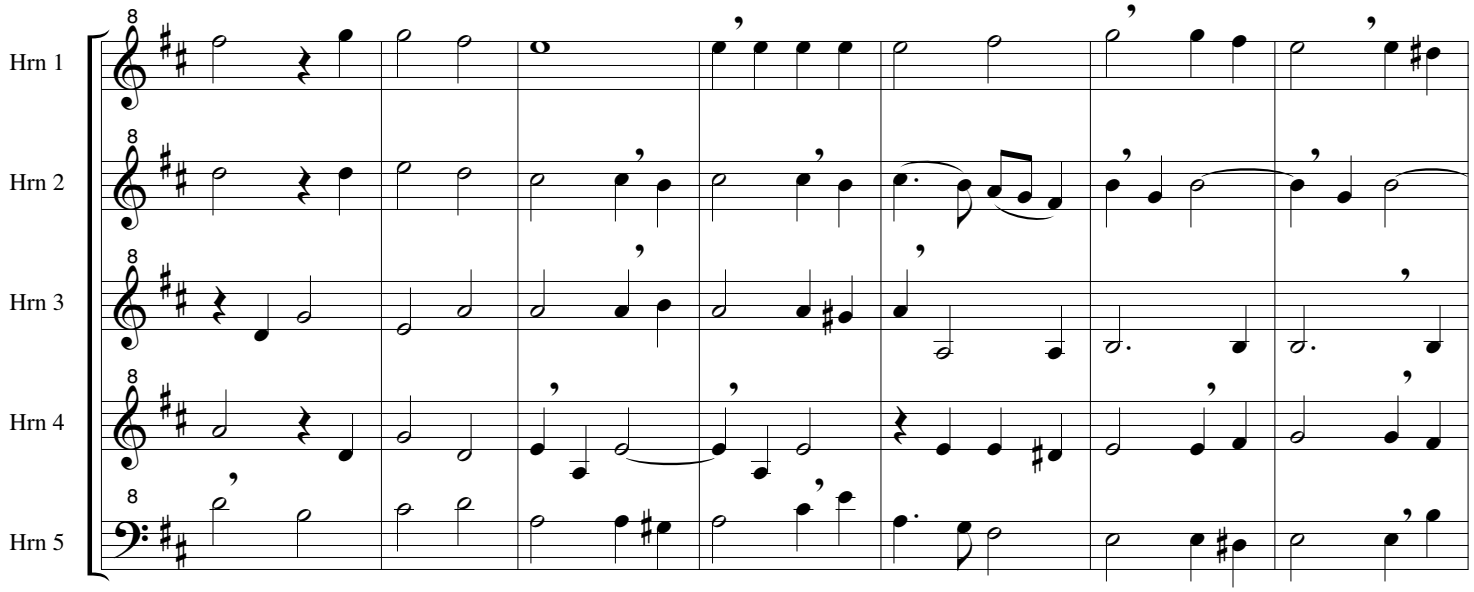

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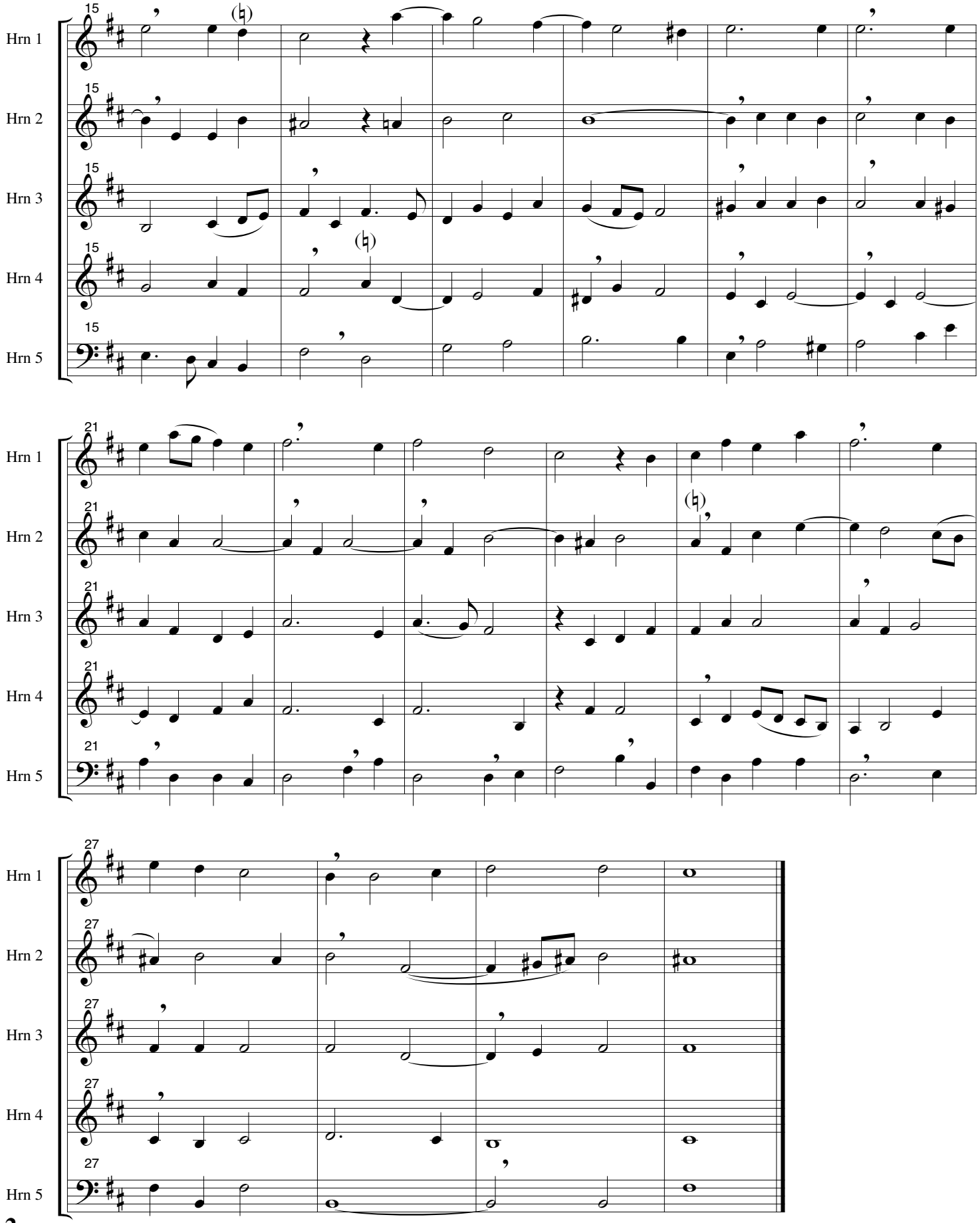

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2 solo violins,
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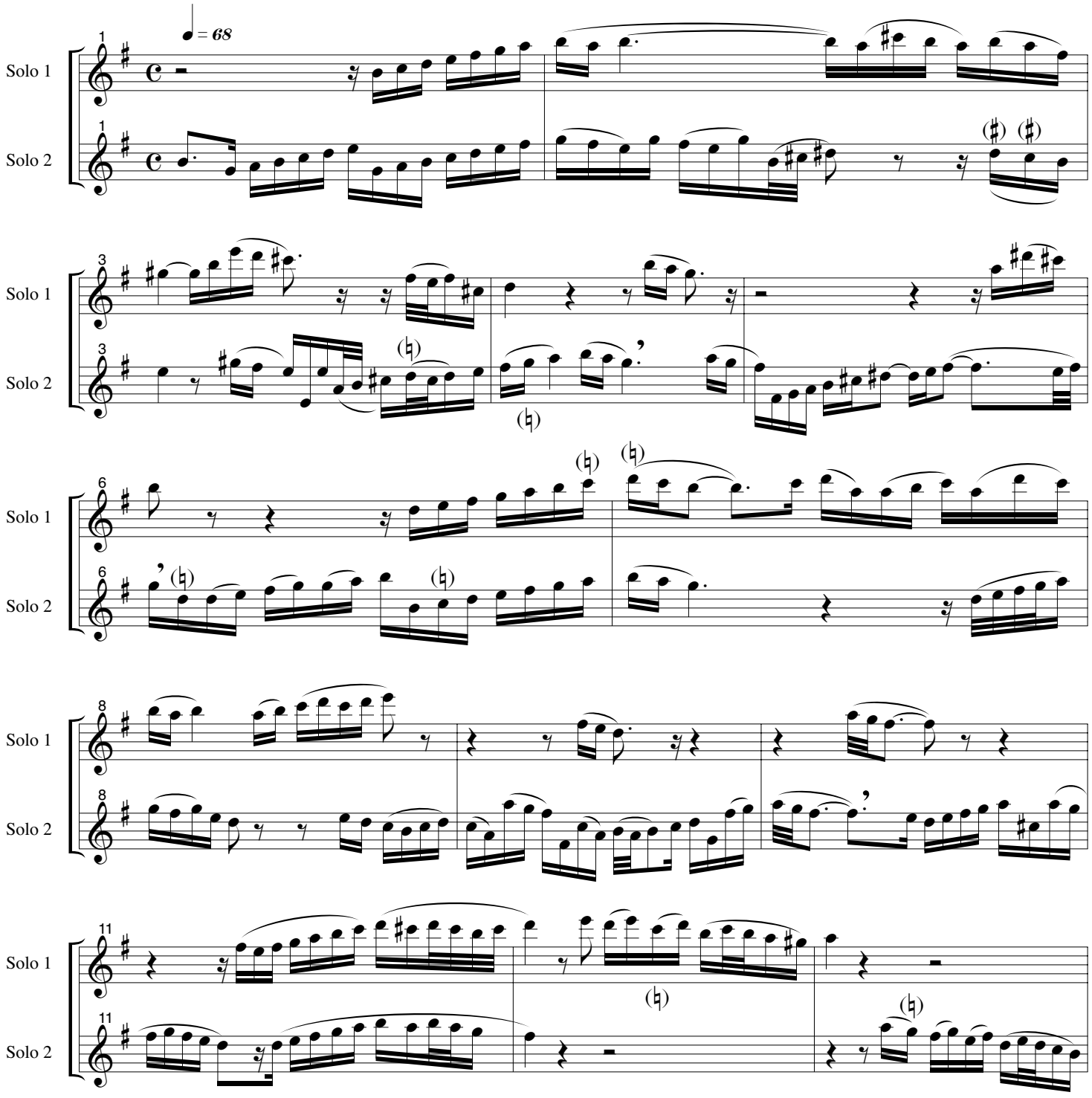

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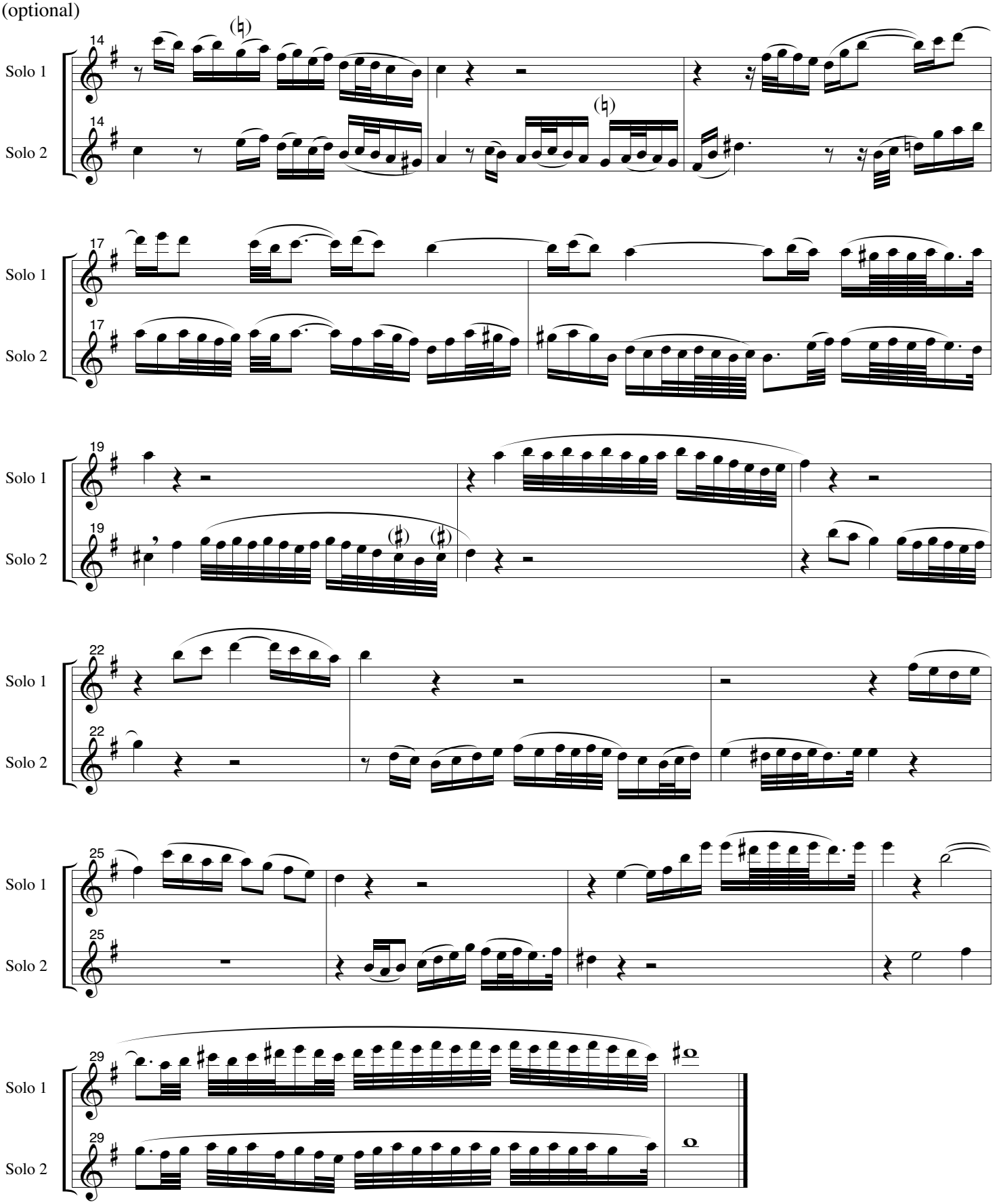

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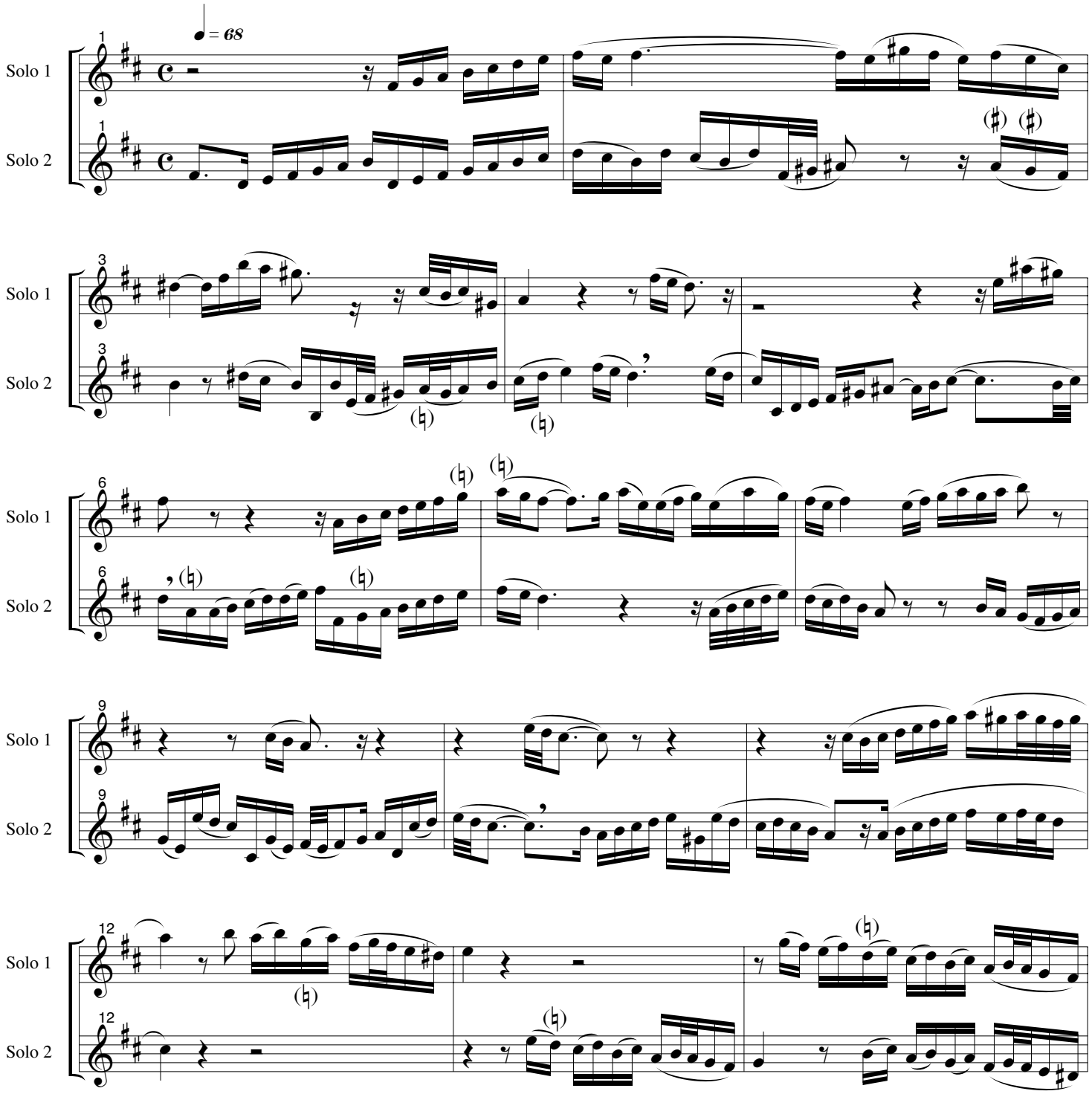

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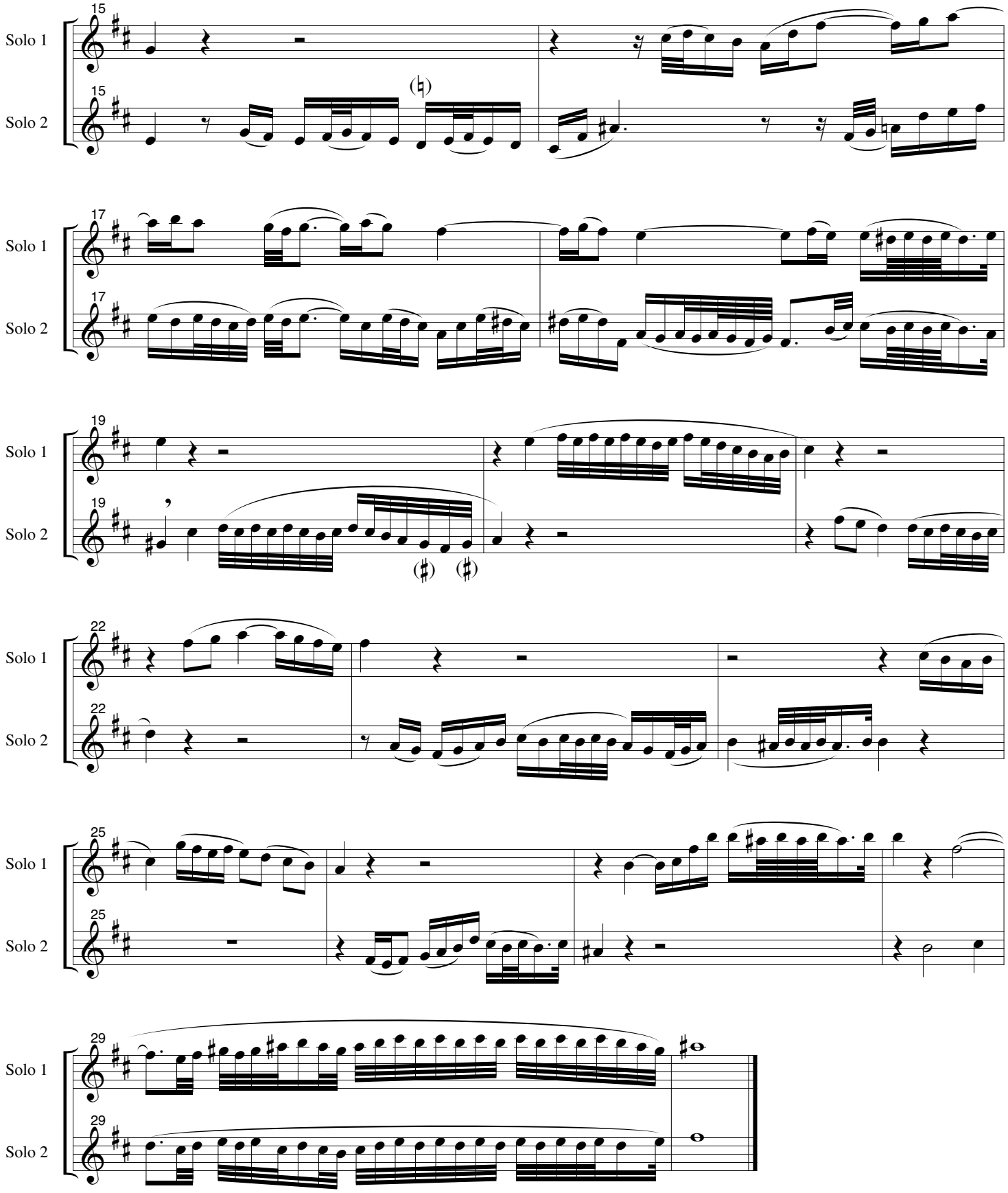

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Guitar continuo
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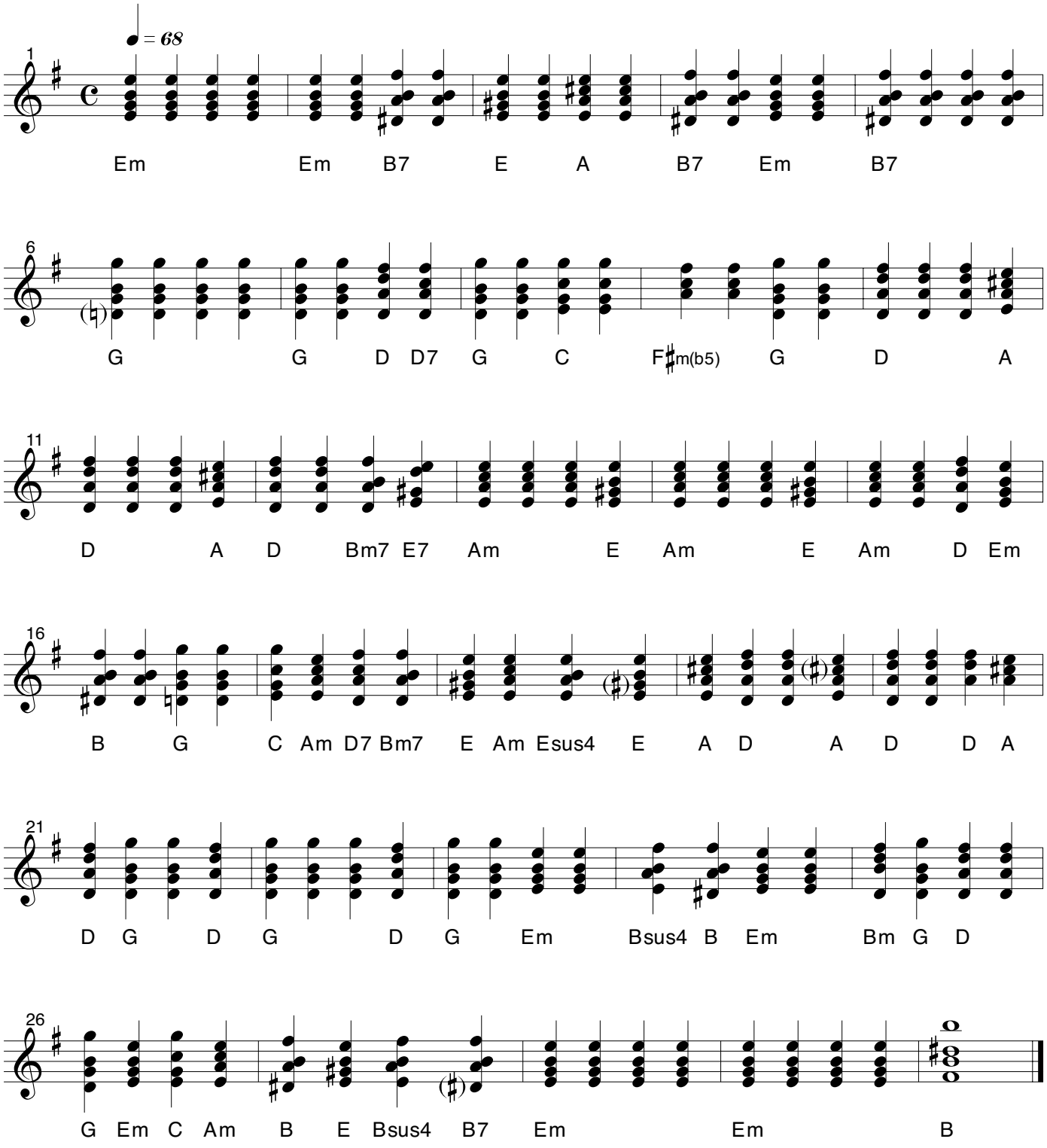

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