Old Toronto Suite

four miniatures for eight trombones

Nicholas Francis

(1999)

Old Toronto Suite

About the music

The **Old Toronto Suite** was composed as a gift for Frank Harmantas, Professor of trombone at the University of Toronto and former Associate Principal trombonist of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, in my graduating year at the U of T. It is a series of four short reflections on the city of Toronto, gathered both from my own memories of a childhood there as well as from elements of the history of the city itself. Above all, this music is about memory and storytelling, and as such is by quite rapid turns light and frivolous, gentle and introverted, and sometimes outright moody. As the octet progresses, memories of previous movements appear–unexpected and certainly uninvited–and are subsequently repressed, as though having them in that way was somehow indecent and should be controlled.

The ***Prelude*** is pure nostalgia. It begins with a gentle motive which is expanded upon briefly and is soon interrupted by new material that hints at being a jazz waltz, but isn't really. A return of the opening material sends the movement to a gentle close. The ***Chorale*** pays homage to the thousands of very old trees that line Toronto's streets and fill its parks, many of which have been here much longer than any of us have. The ***Elegy*** remembers Allan Lamport, perhaps Toronto's most illustrious politician, who died in late 1999 and who, having been born in 1903, seemed to me to represent Toronto in the twentieth century better than anyone else. Indeed, he has been described as the man who dragged Toronto kicking and screaming into the twentieth century. The ***Ragtime*** meanwhile, in stark contrast to the first three movements, is an extroverted burlesque recalling bustling downtown Toronto during the optimistic 1920s. Loew's theatre is still in use today, renamed the Elgin, a name that was chosen because it had the same number of letters and two could be re-used on the sign.

–Nicholas Francis

to Frank Harmantas

Old Toronto Suite

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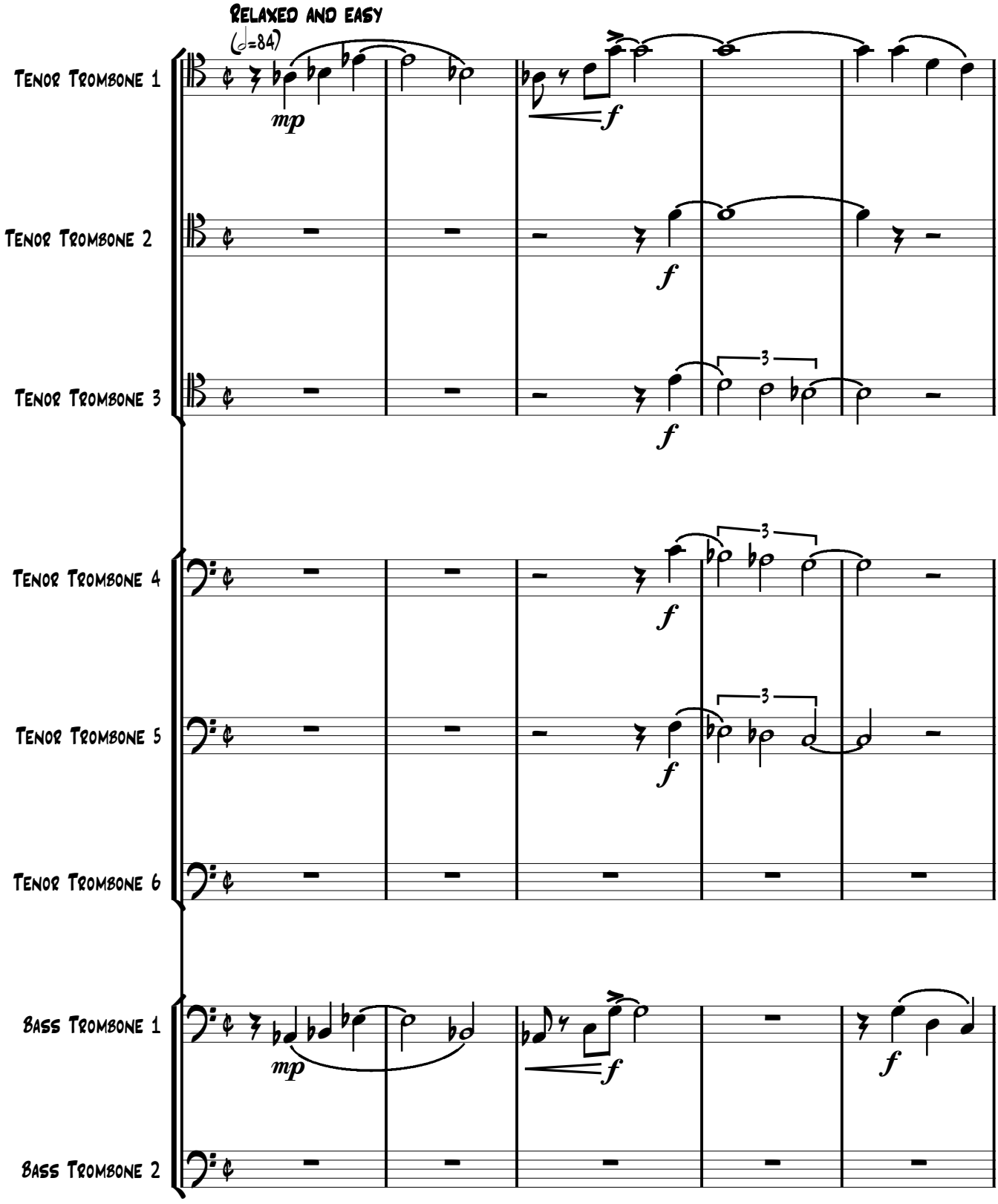
I. Prelude (a childhood memory)



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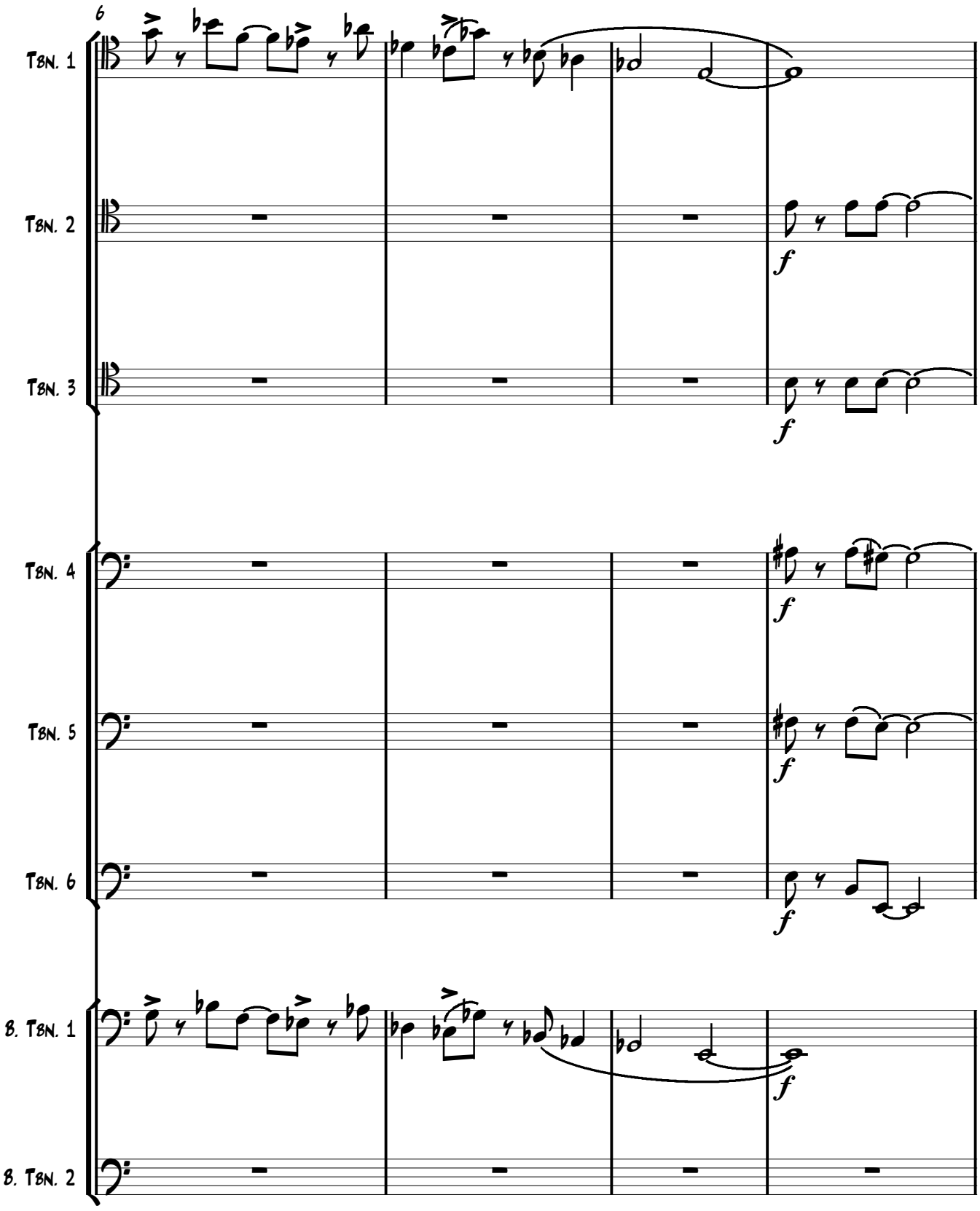
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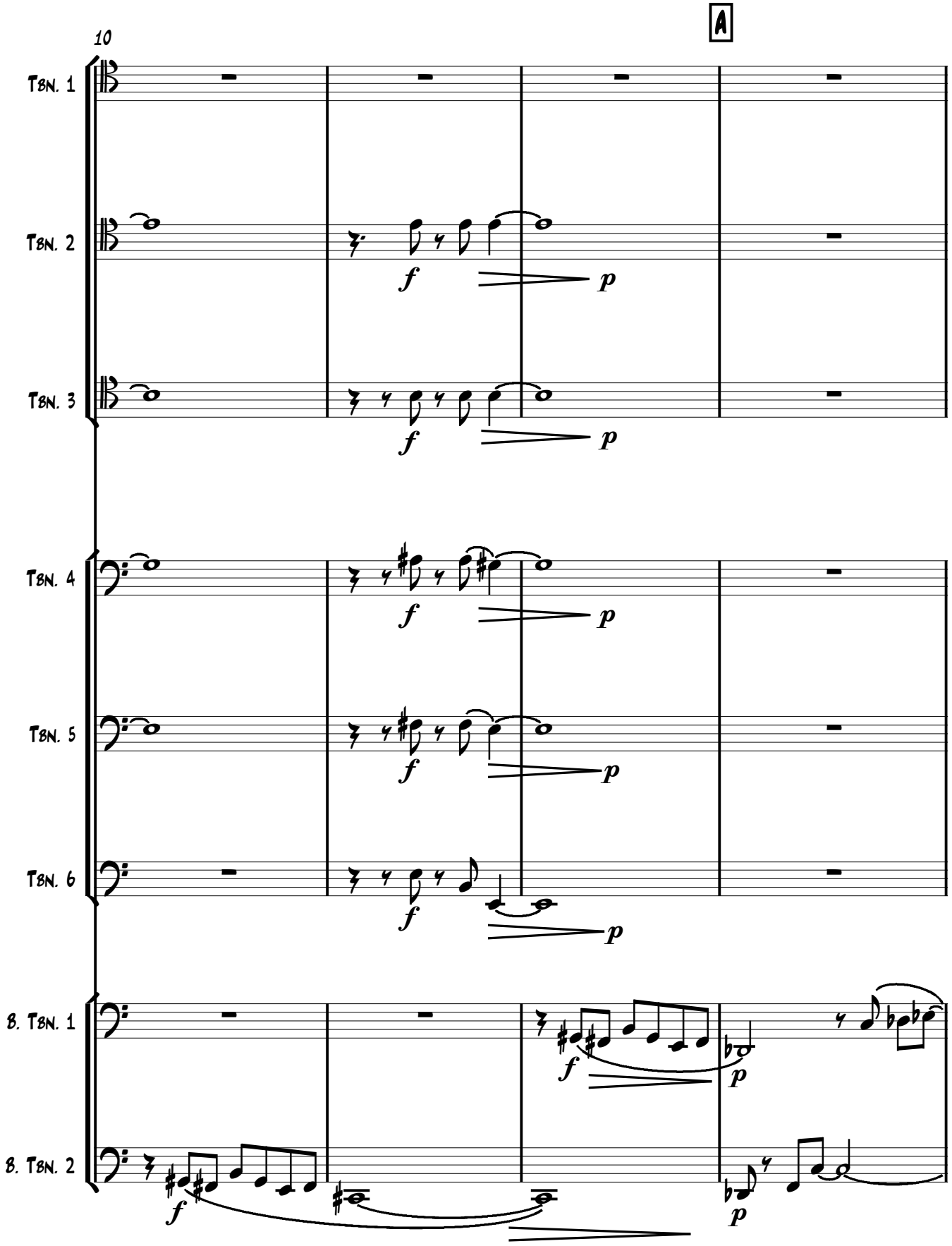
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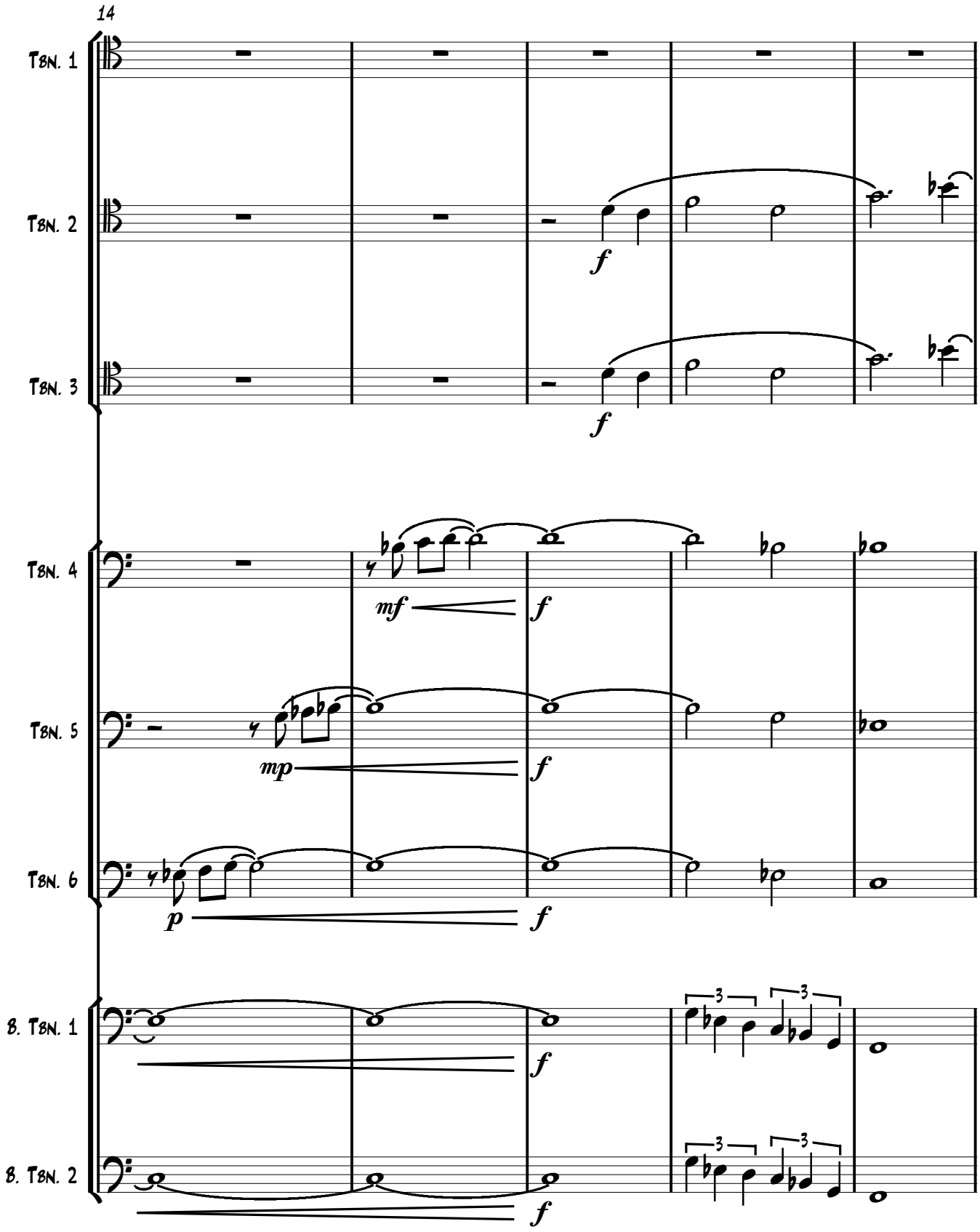
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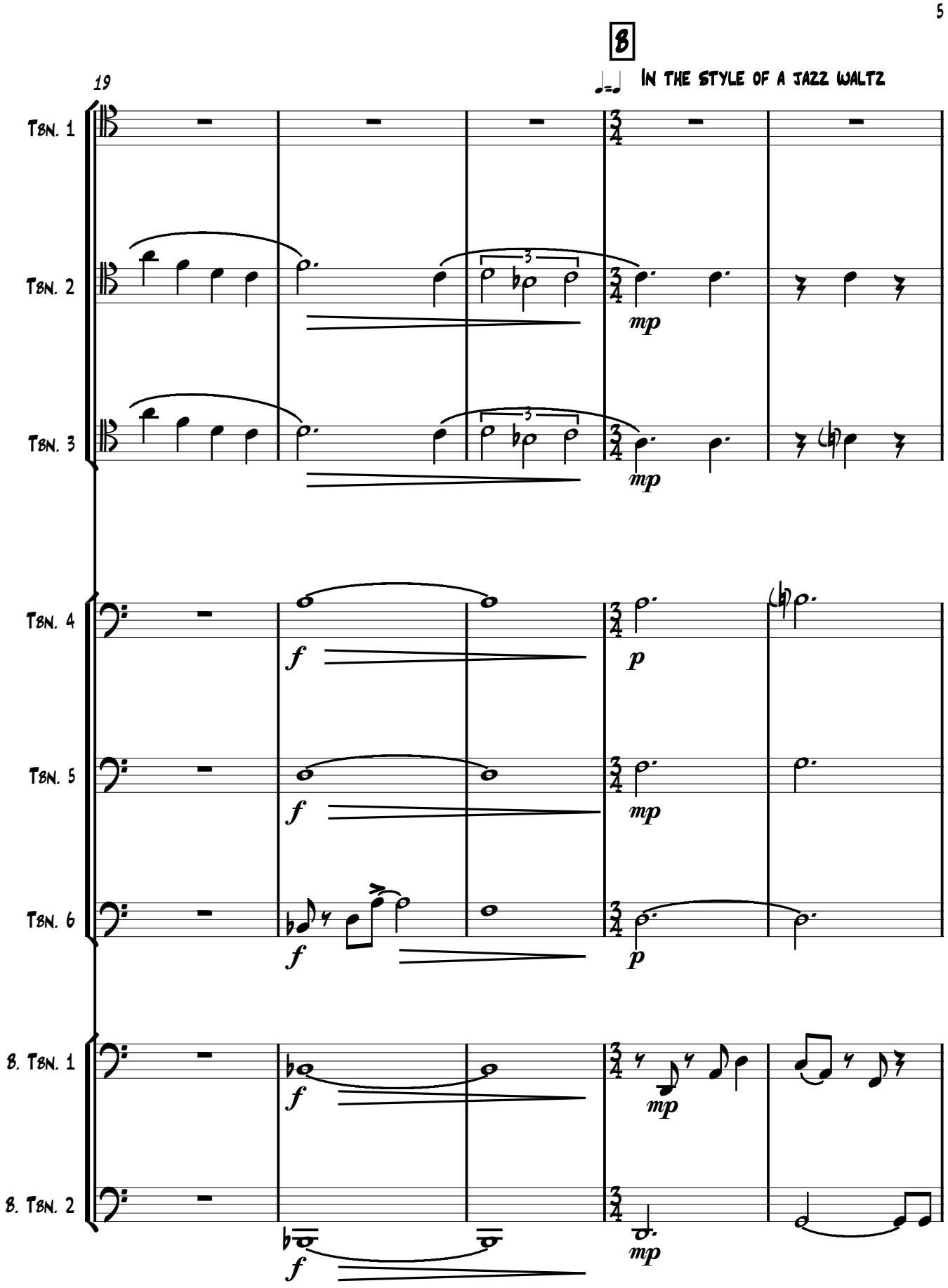
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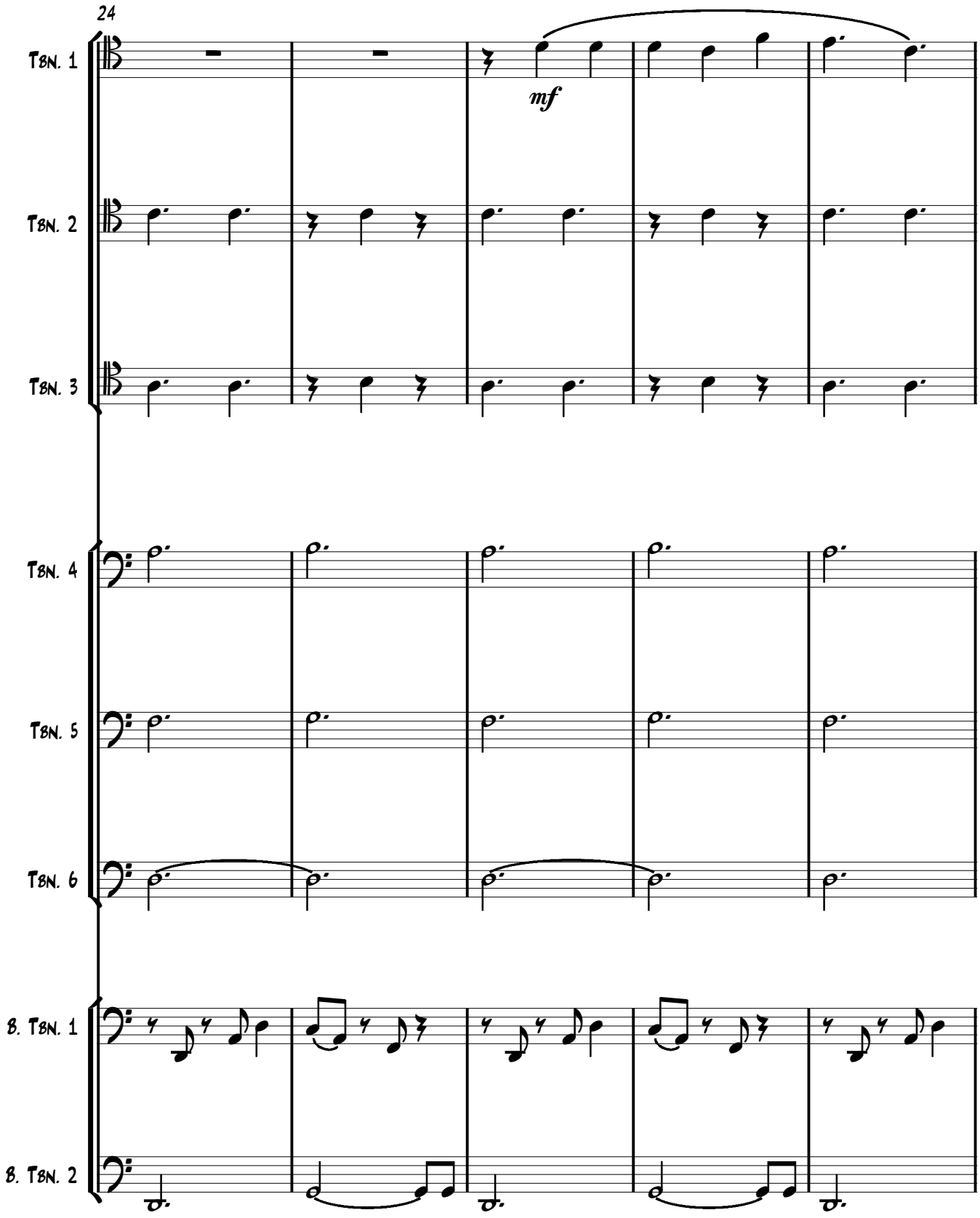
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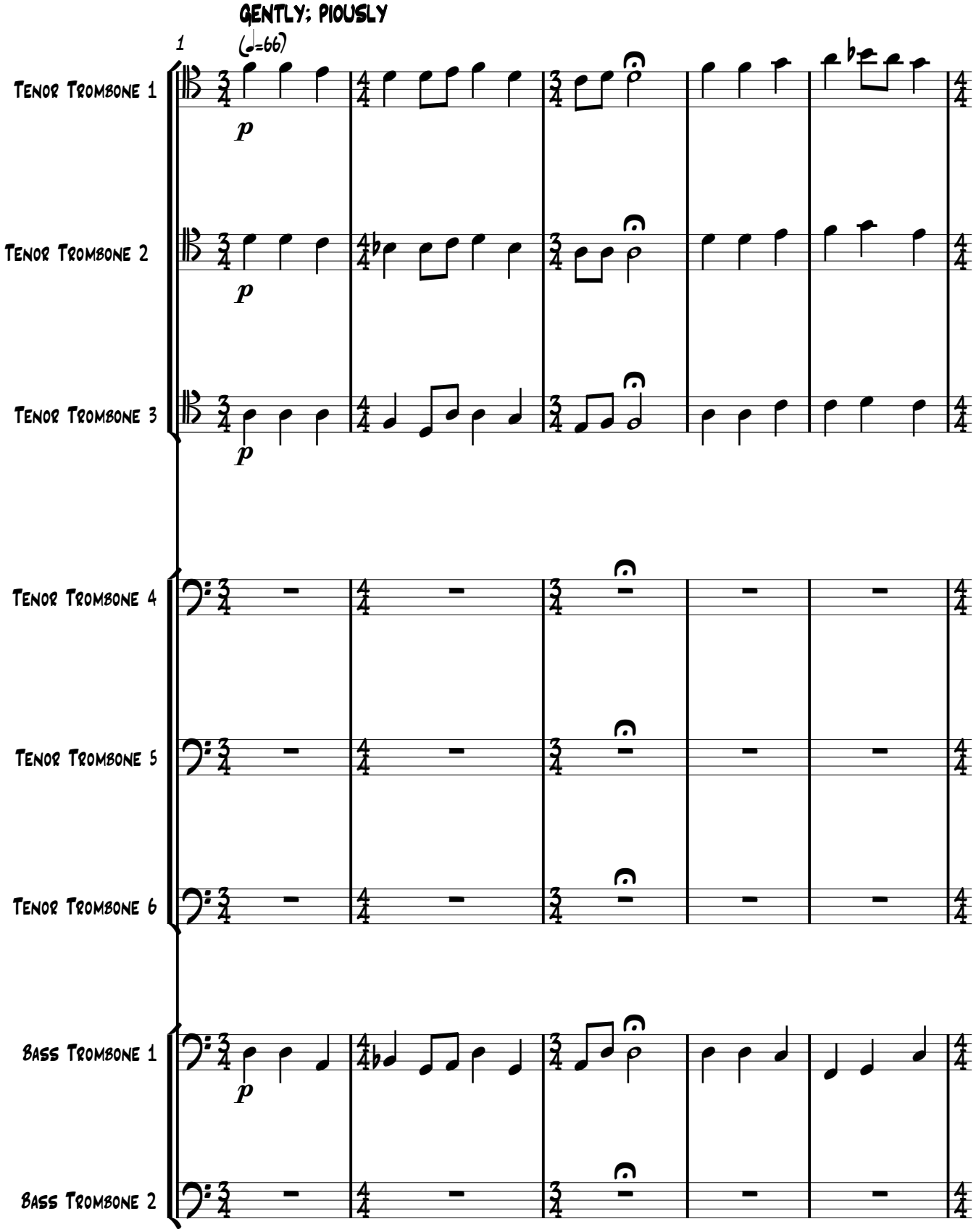

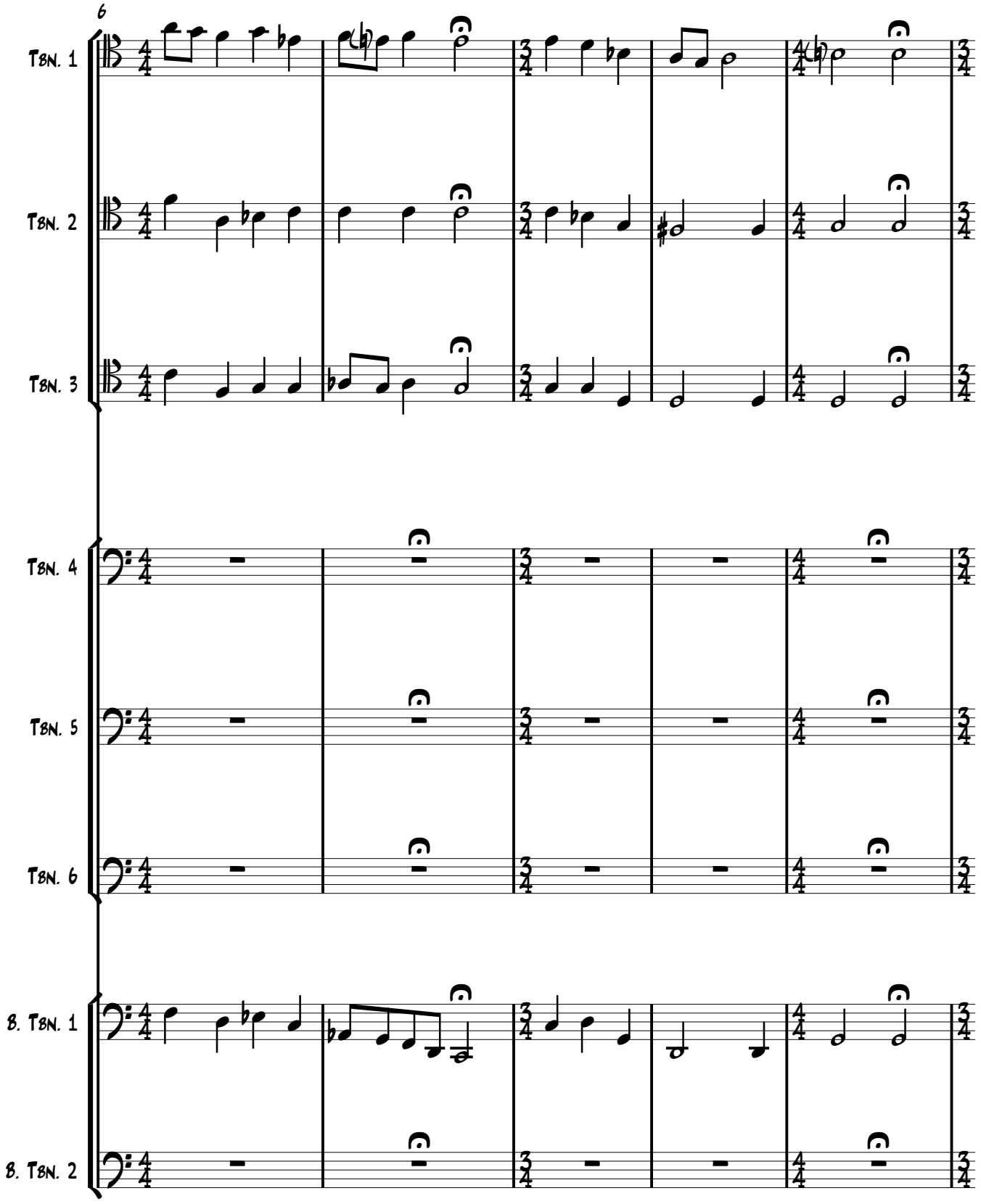
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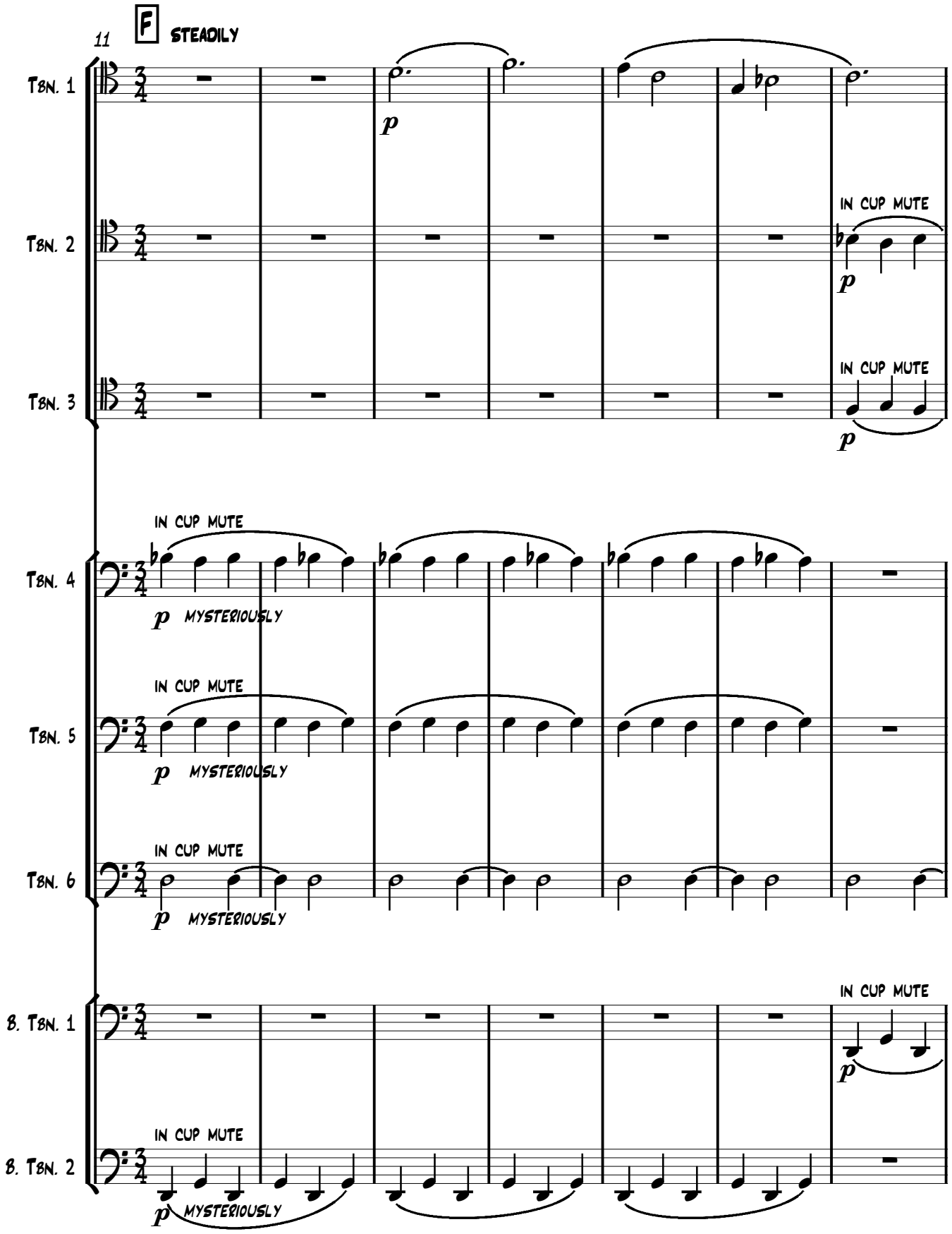
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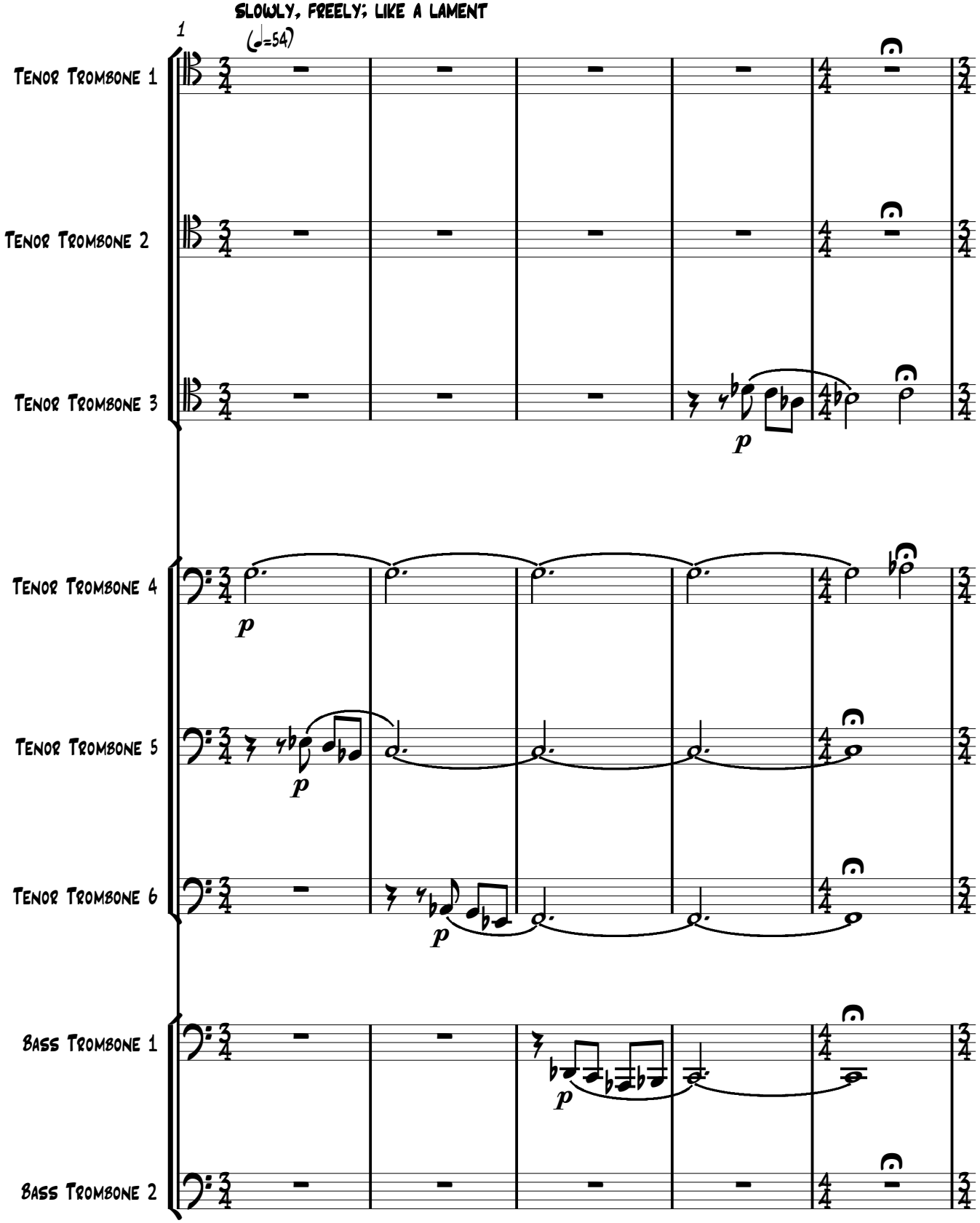
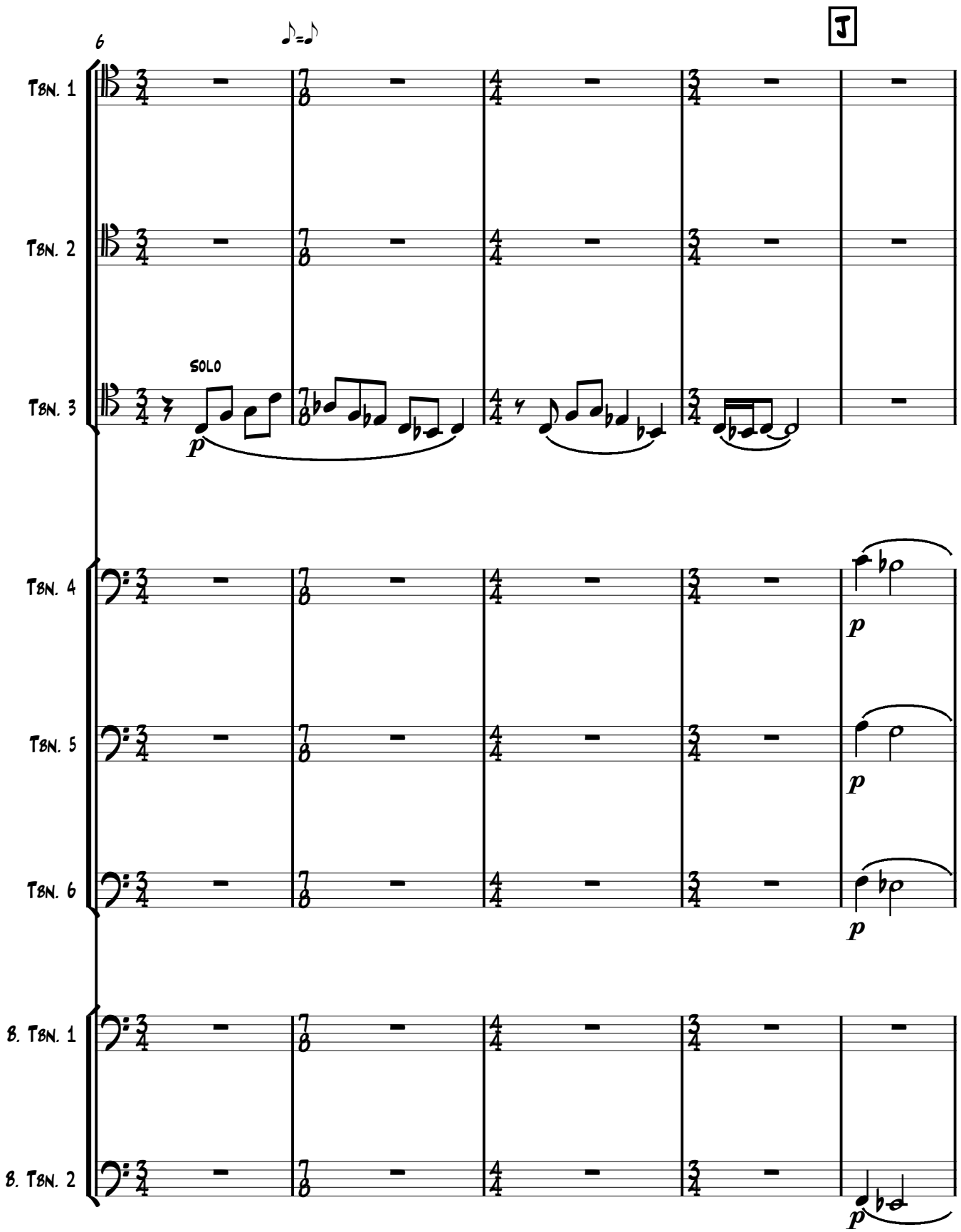
III. Elegy (In Memoriam Allan Lamport)

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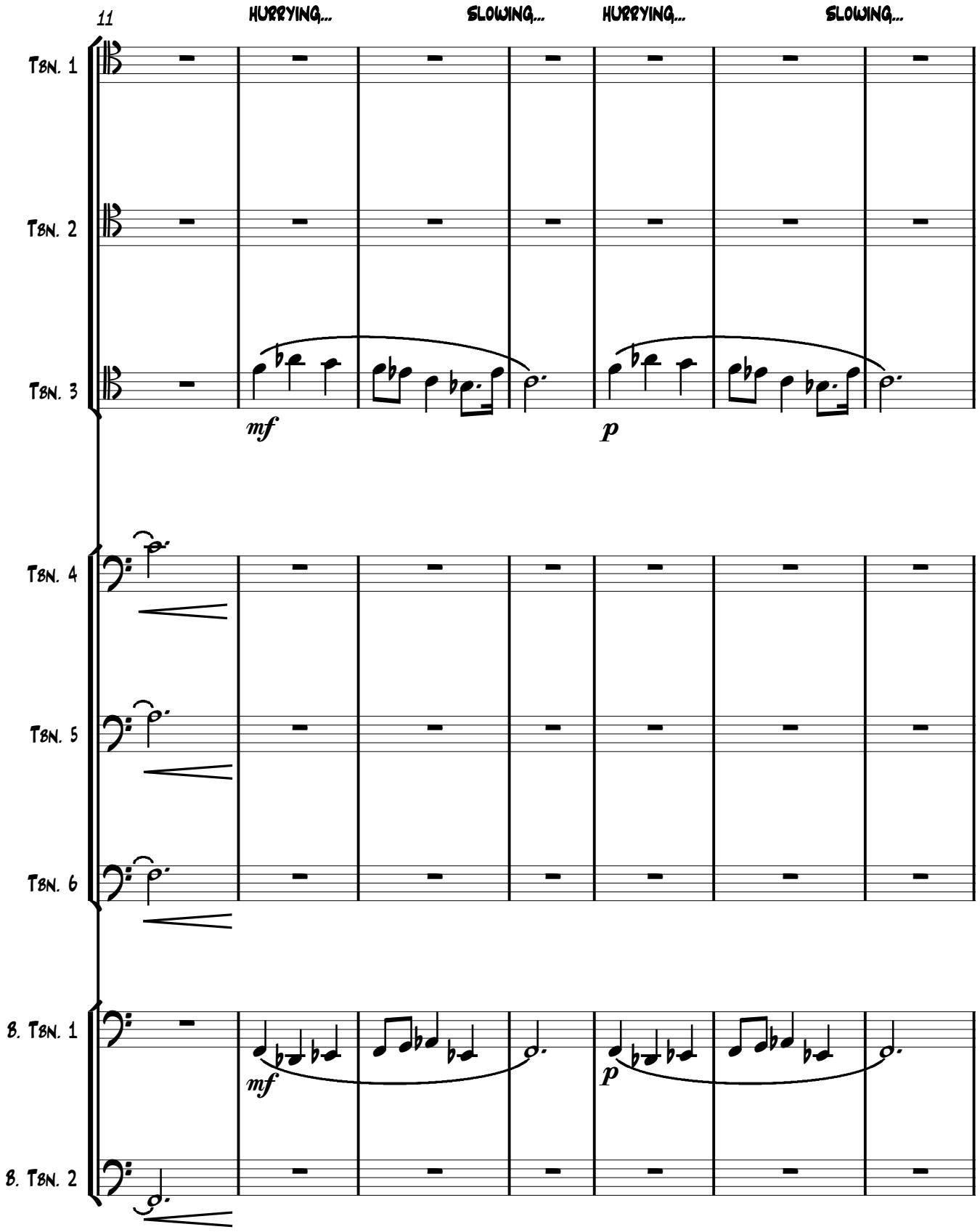
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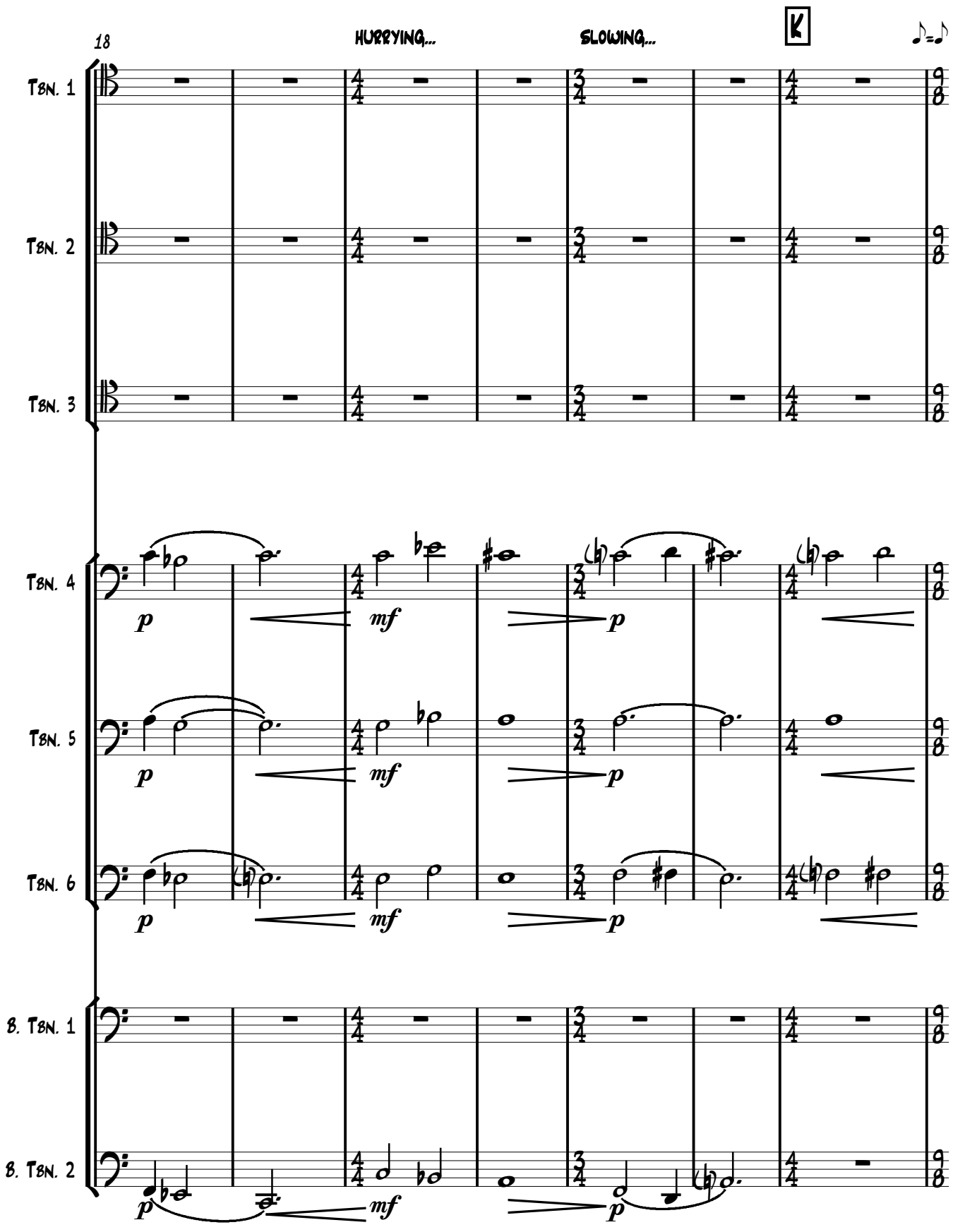
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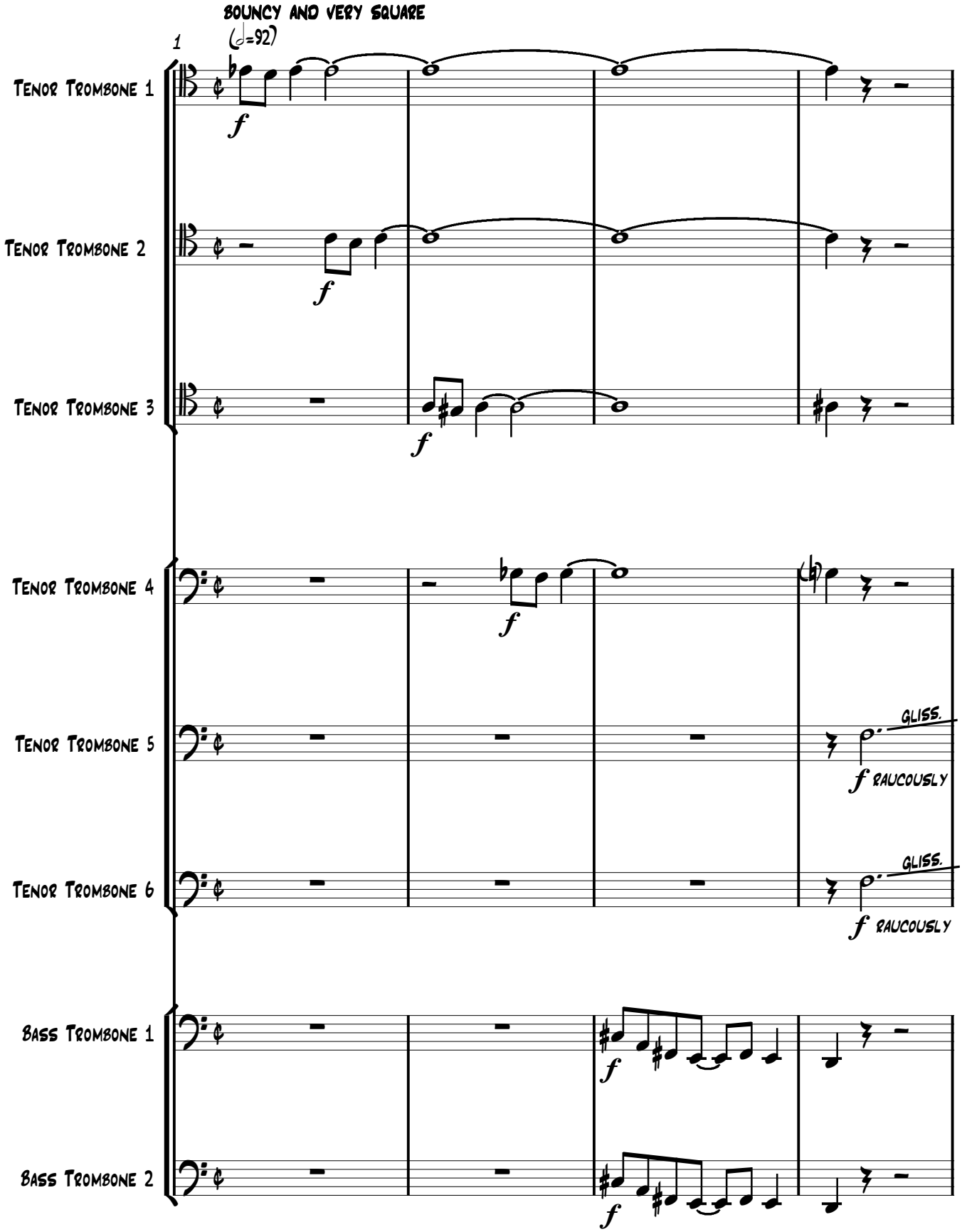
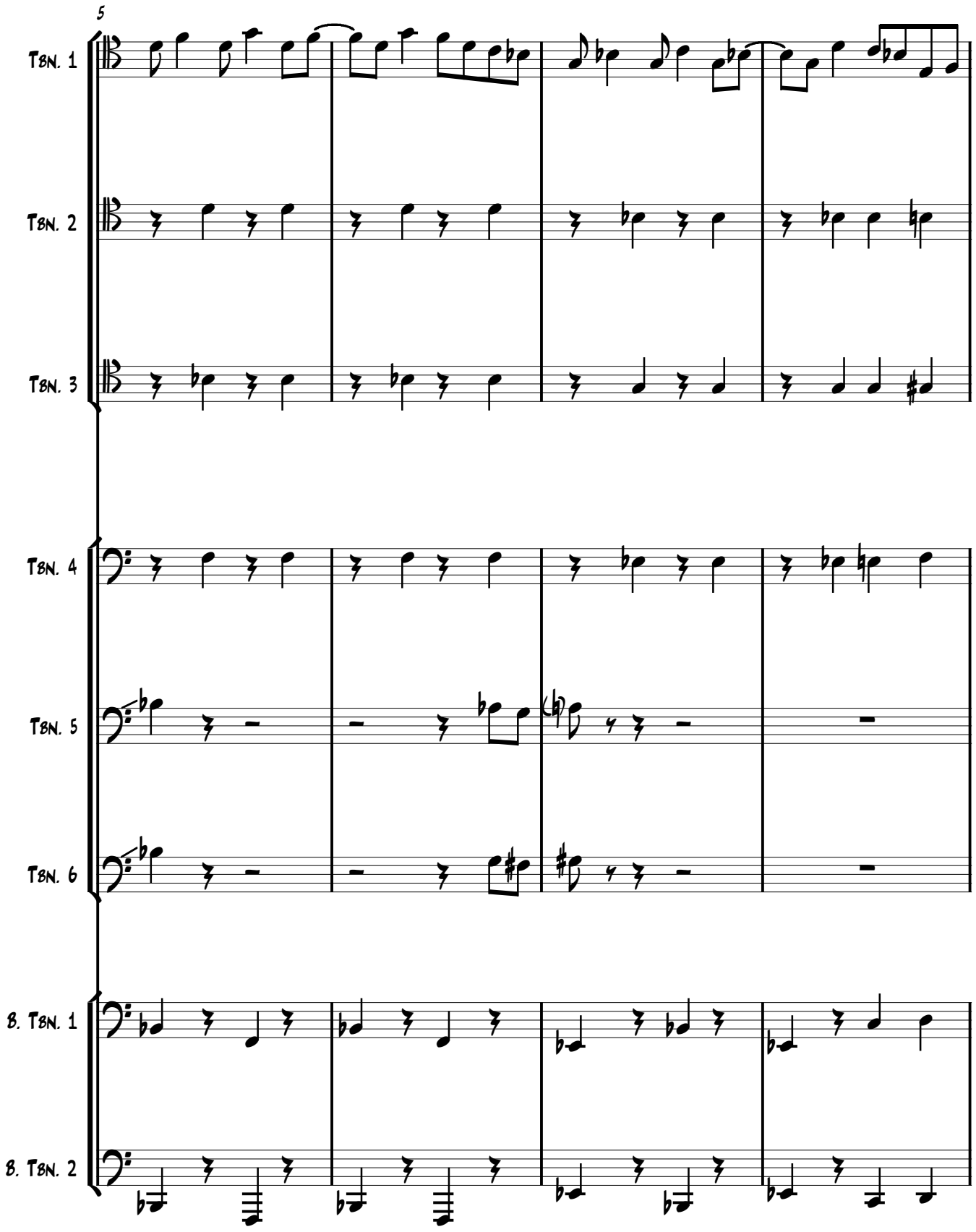
IV. Ragtime (Loew's Theatre Follies, 1928)

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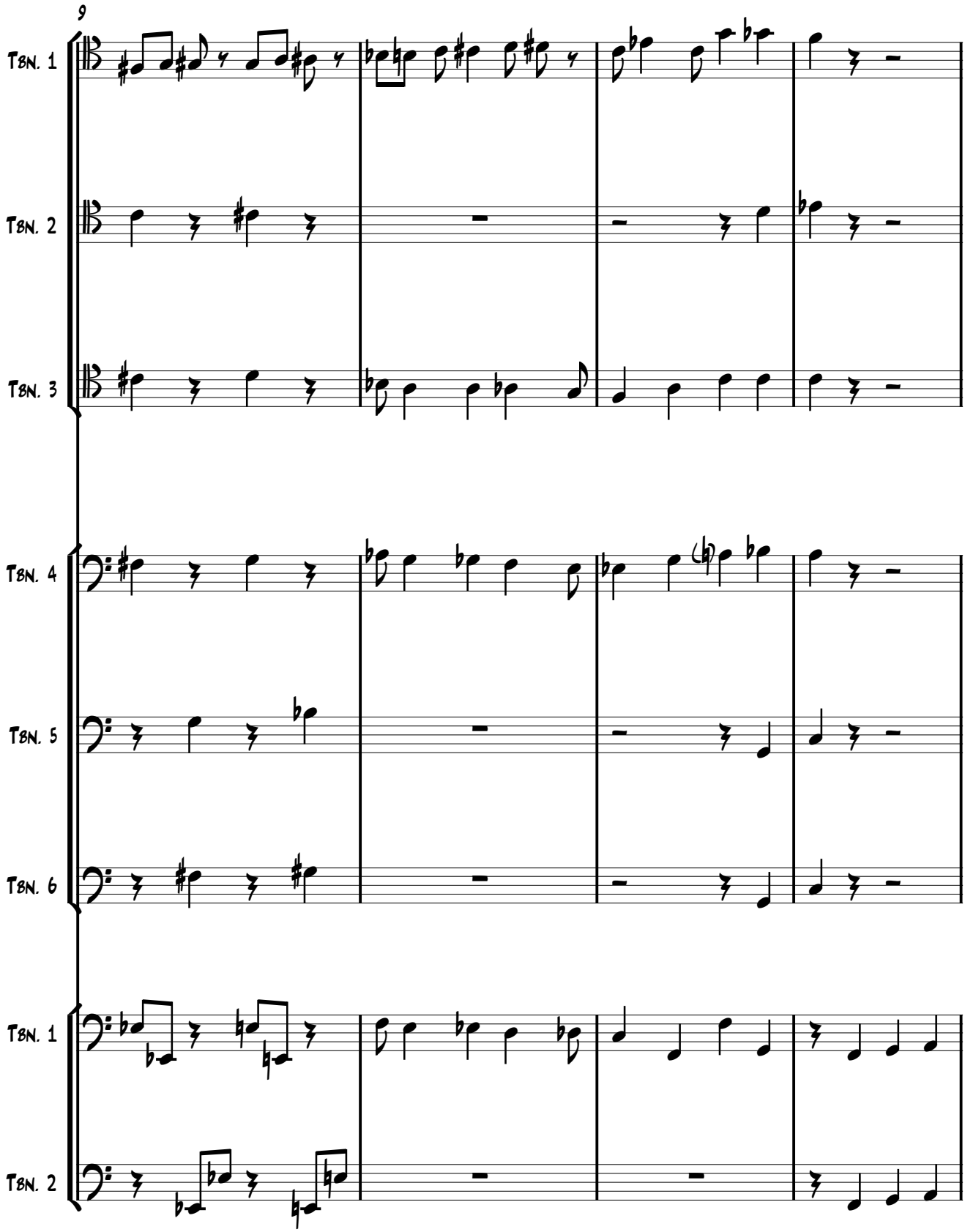
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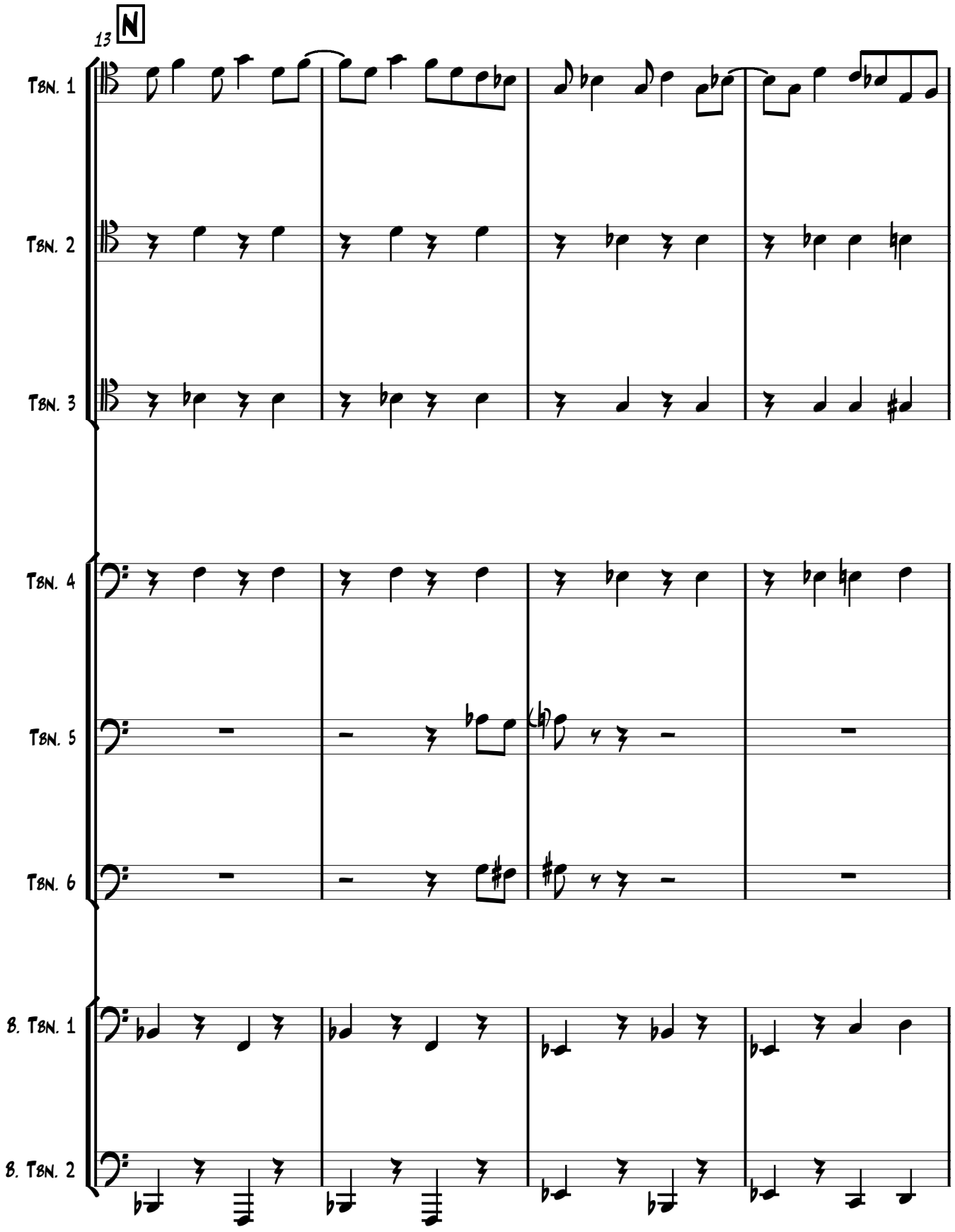
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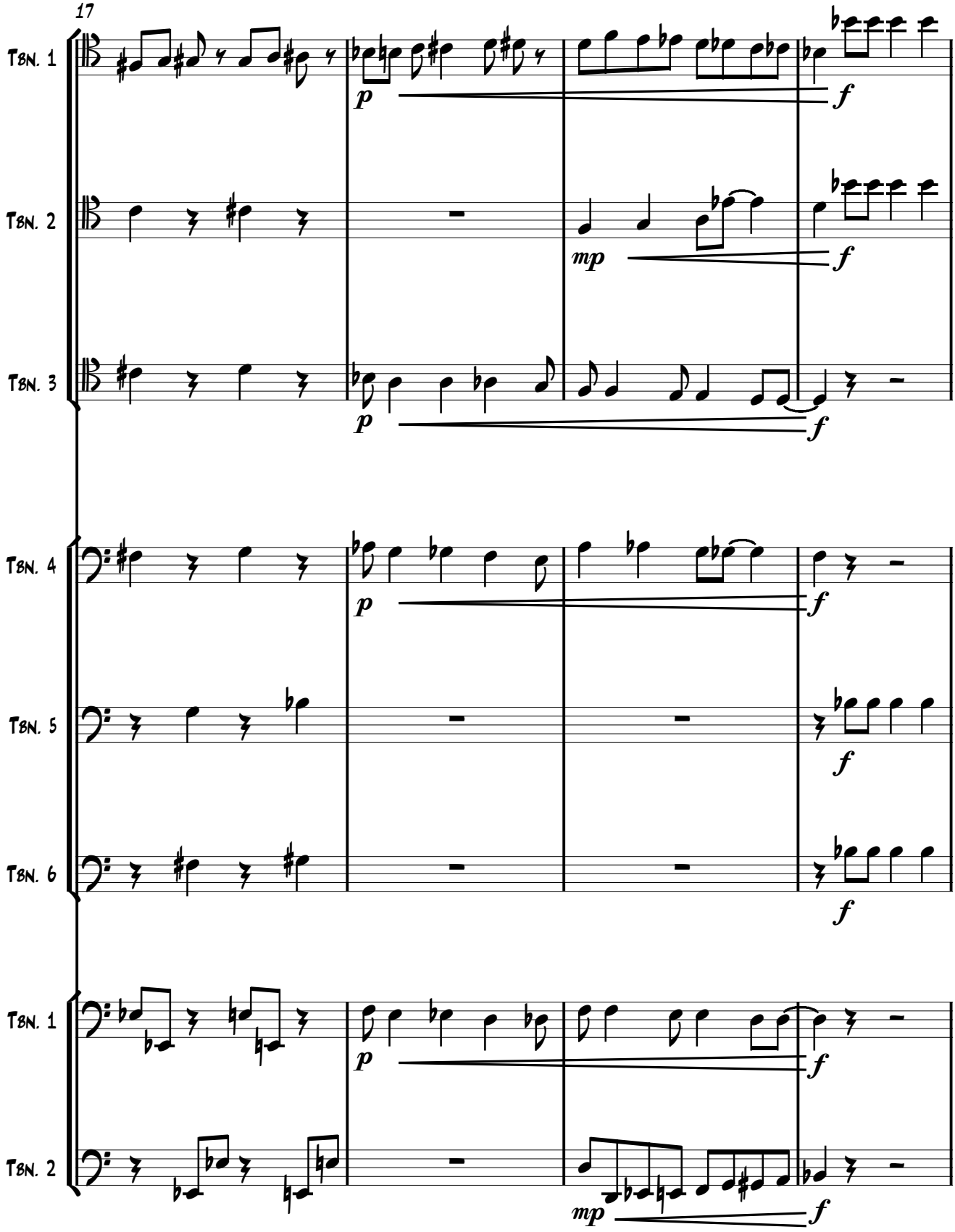
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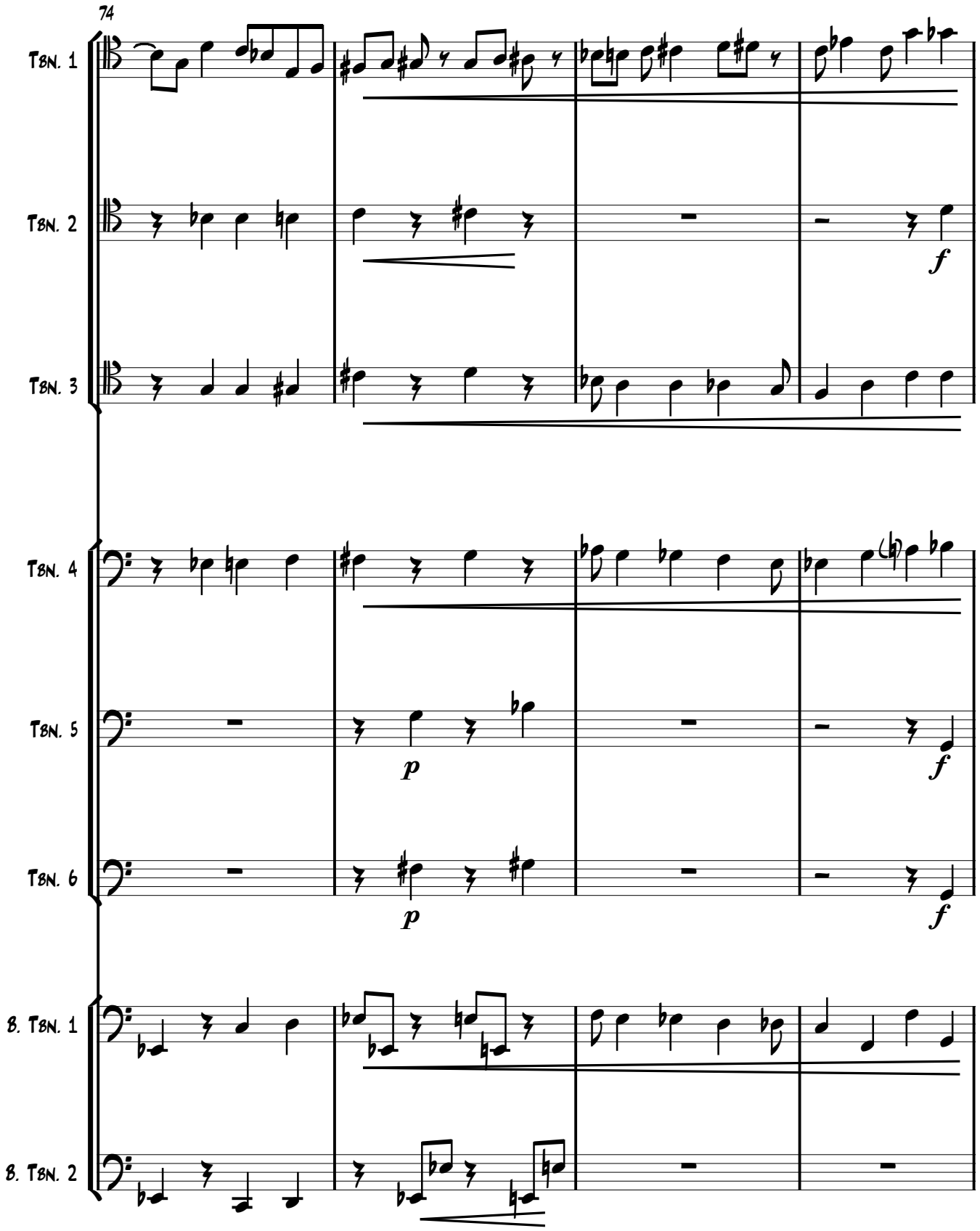
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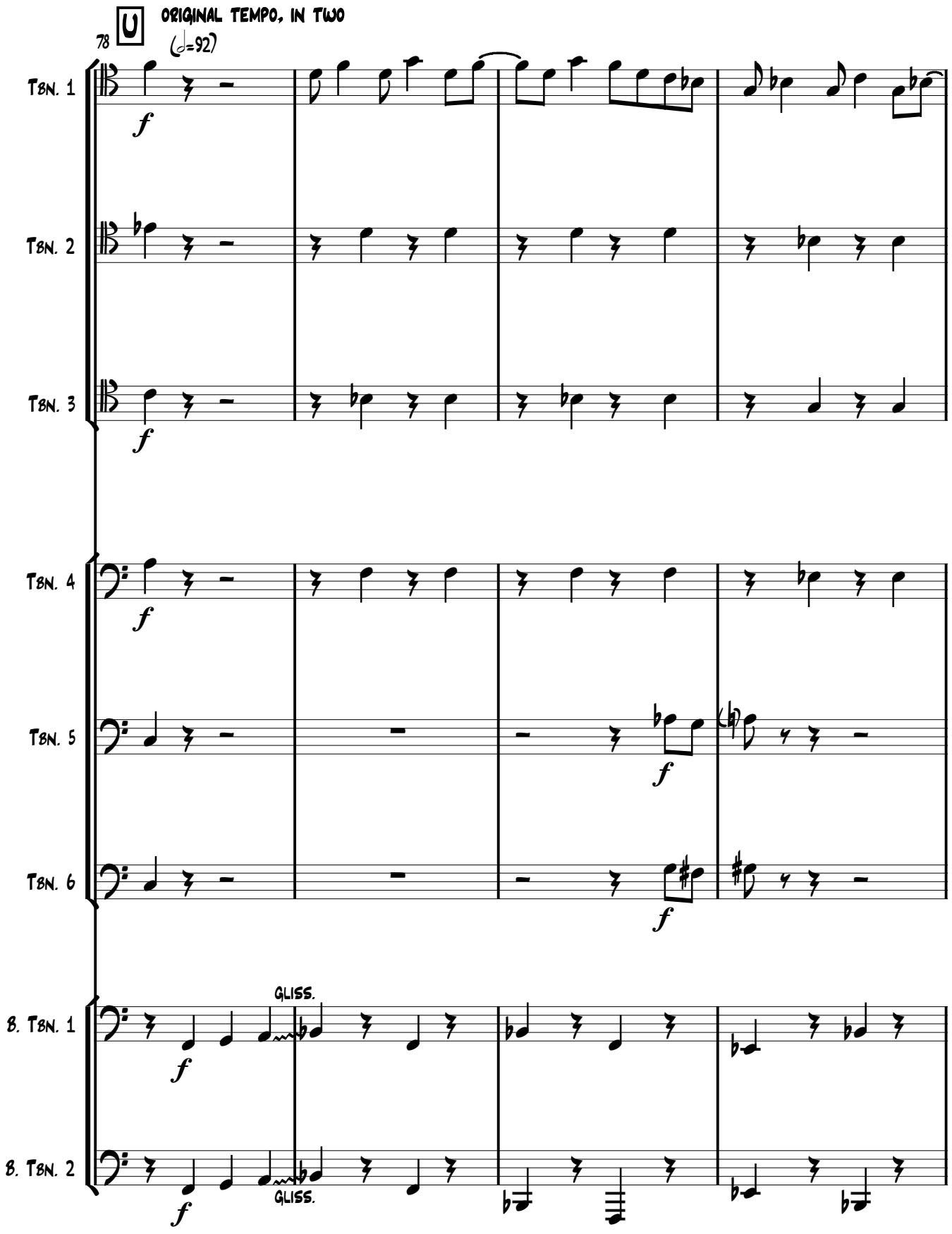
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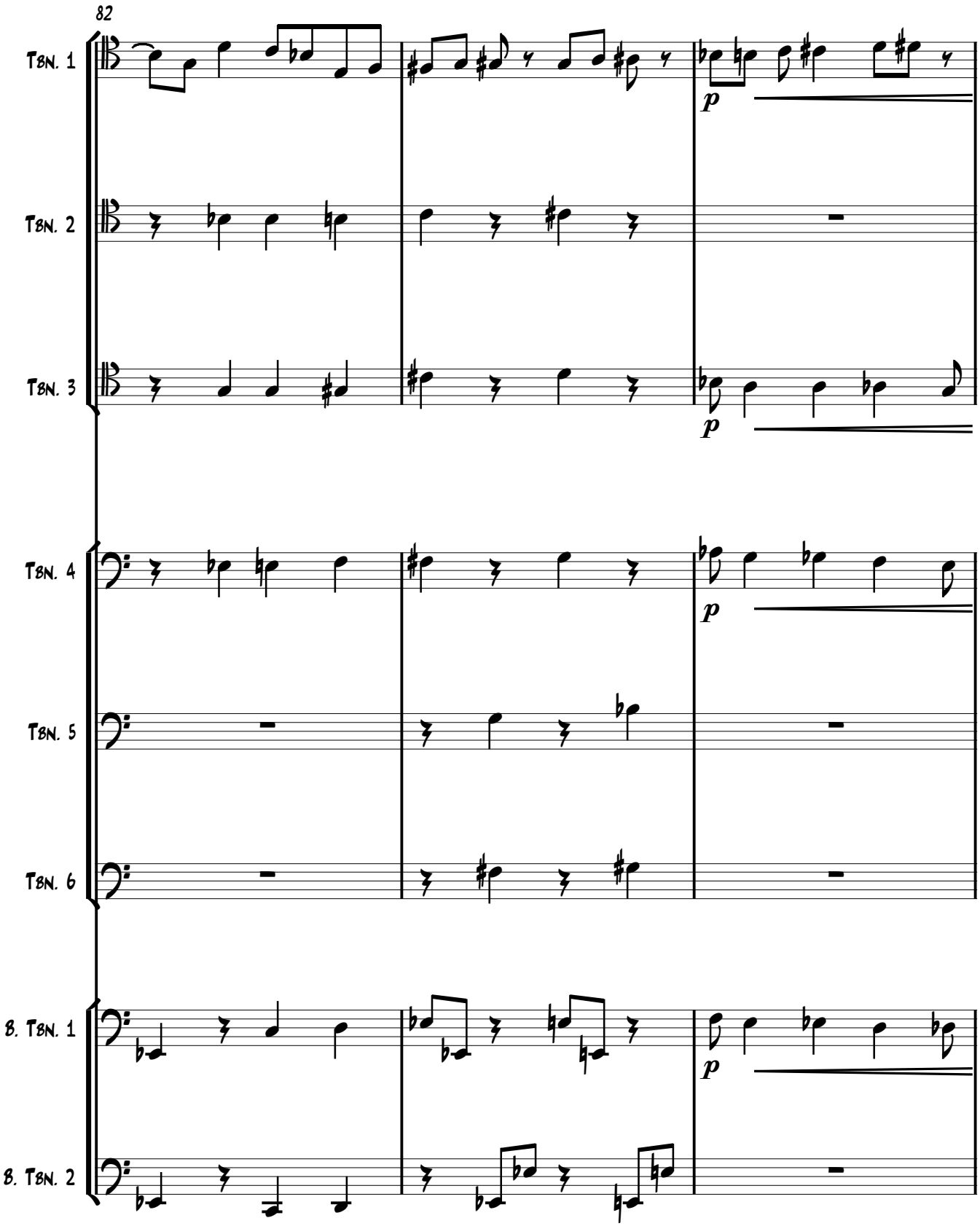
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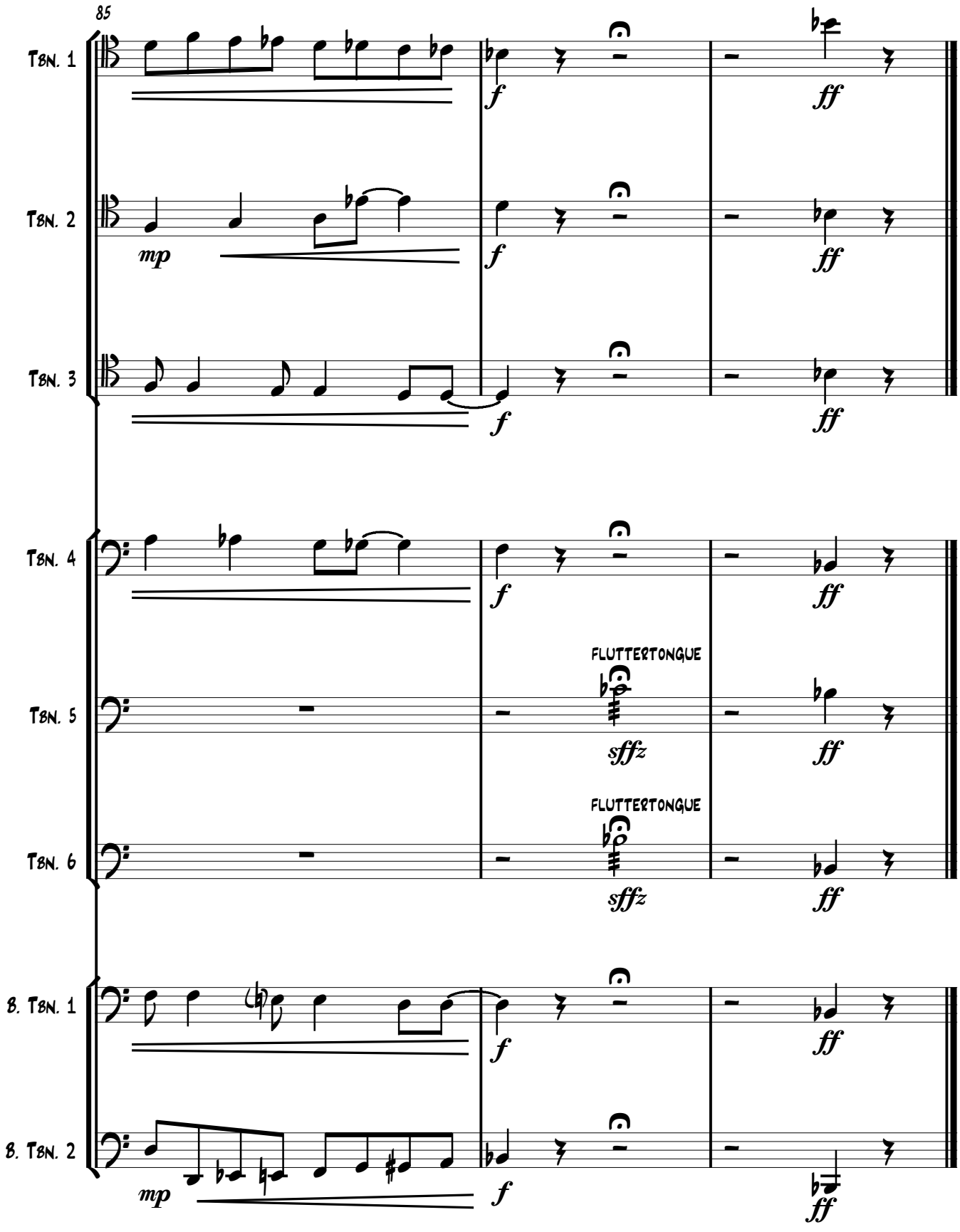
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