J. S. Bach

Goldberg Variations

BWV 988

For Guitar Ensemble

Transcribed and Engraved

by

Steve Shorter

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For

Eli Kassner
and
Glenn Gould

from

The Guitar Society of Toronto Orchestra

Table of Contents

Introduction 4
Aria 5
Variation 01 11
Variation 02 13
Variation 03 Canon at the Unison 15
Variation 04 17
Variation 05 19
Variation 06 Canon at the Second 21
Variation 07 At the tempo of a Giga 23
Variation 08 25
Variation 09 Canon at the Third 27
Variation 10 Fughetta 29
Variation 11 31
Variation 12 Canon at the Fourth 33
Variation 13 37
Variation 14 41
Variation 15 Canon at the Fifth 45
Variation 16 Overture 49
Variation 17 53
Variation 18 Canon at the Sixth 55
Variation 19 57
Variation 20 59
Variation 21 Canon at the Seventh 63
Variation 22 65
Variation 23 67
Variation 24 Canon at the Octave 71
Variation 25 75
Variation 26 79
Variation 27 Canon at the Ninth 83
Variation 28 85
Variation 29 89
Variation 30 Quodlibet 93
Table of Ornaments 95
Acknowledgements 96
Copyright 97
Errata 98

Introduction

The motivation behind this transcription and re-engraving of these Goldberg Variations is a simple one; to make available to guitarists one of the great treasures of Baroque art. In that quest, a single value has come to dominate this work

1) to preserve and render as accurately as possible the structure(s) of Bach's work in the context of a modern guitar ensemble and a standard instrument.

The "standard" guitar being considered has 19 frets and is in dropped D tuning. ie. strings are tuned DADGBE. The original key is preserved throughout the transcription, as it is easily accommodated and serves the original intent most faithfully.

Starting from this foundation, whatever resources were assembled that the structures demanded. In general it could be stated that each voice that is present in the variation has its representative as a single instrument in the ensemble. The resulting work therefore contains 13 variations for 2 guitars, 13 variations for 3 guitars and 4 for 4 guitars.

While the clavier is dissimilar to the guitar in many ways, the Goldberg Variations are unsurprisingly quite sympathetic to it. Both the clavier and guitar are plucked chordophones, subject to similar acoustic profiles of volume and sustenance.

Most of the original structure(s) can be preserved through octave transposition when carefully considered. In the few instances where this is not possible, alternatives were developed and documented. Bach's instrumental works are of such a quality that they can often be considered as "generic music": they transcribe well for instruments other than the target of its original composition. That is mostly the case with the Goldberg Variations. To the extent that there may be variations that are idiomatic to the keyboard, they have been accommodated as much as possible and are included for completeness.

Guitar fingering is interperative and personal, particularly for music not initially conceived for guitar, so this work is presented with no guitar fingering. All slurs are phrasing slurs and appear as in the original.

The Aria has two versions presented. Version 1.7e is for two guitars in standard tuning, version 1.8 is for three guitars in dropped D tuning.

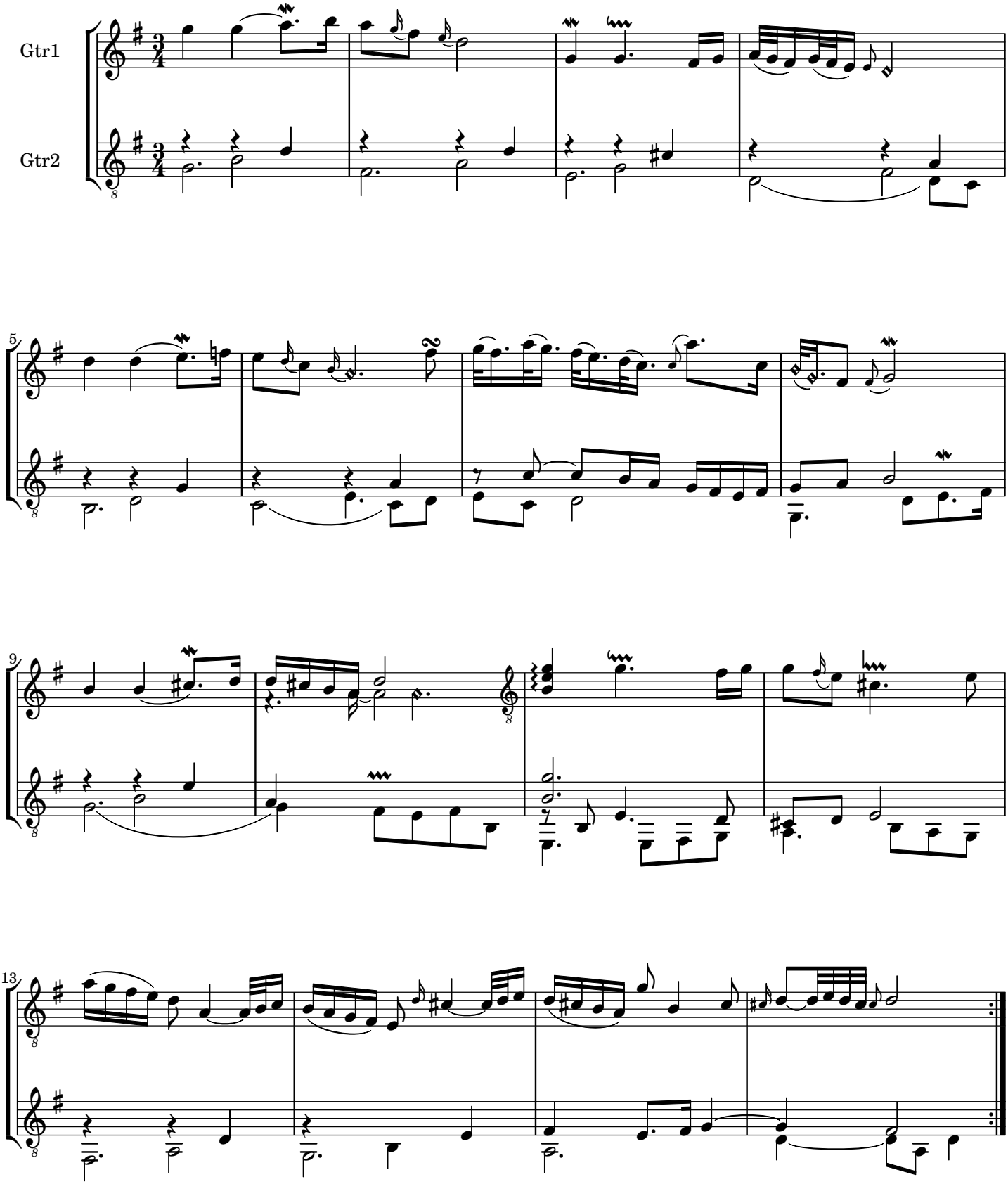
Finding a reliable authority for Goldberg Variations, BWV 988, is problematic as discussed by Erich Schwandt[1]. The source materials from which this transcription is derived are the Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe, Band 3, the facsimile of Bach's own copy ('Handexemplar') of the first edition, and the results of the OpenGoldberg project. These documents are in the Public Domain and can be consulted at the International Music Score Library Project:

http://imslp.org/wiki/Goldberg-Variationen,_BWV_988_(Bach,_Johann_Sebastian)

[1] http://scholarship.claremont.edu/ppr/vol3/iss1/2

Aria

1.7e



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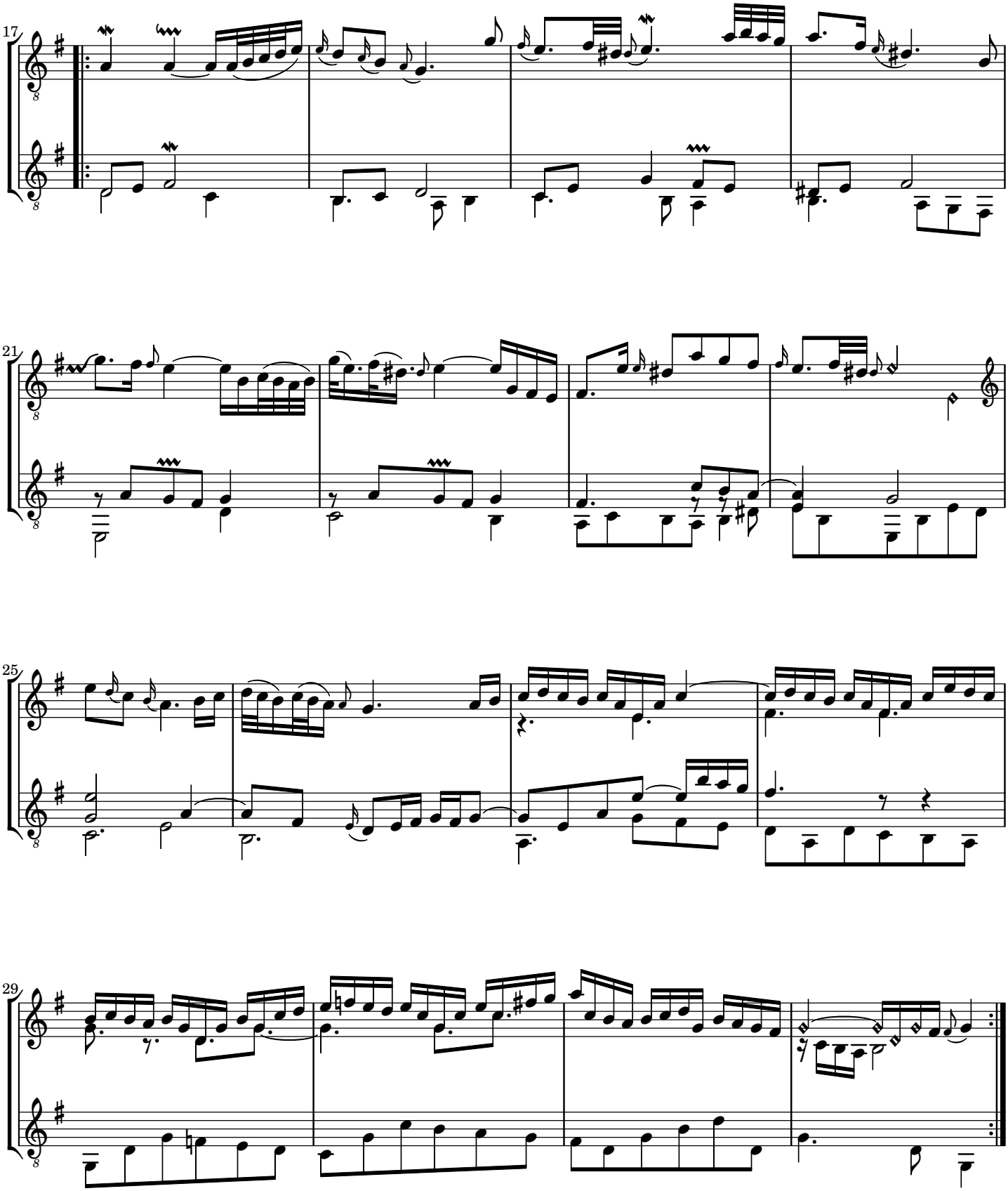
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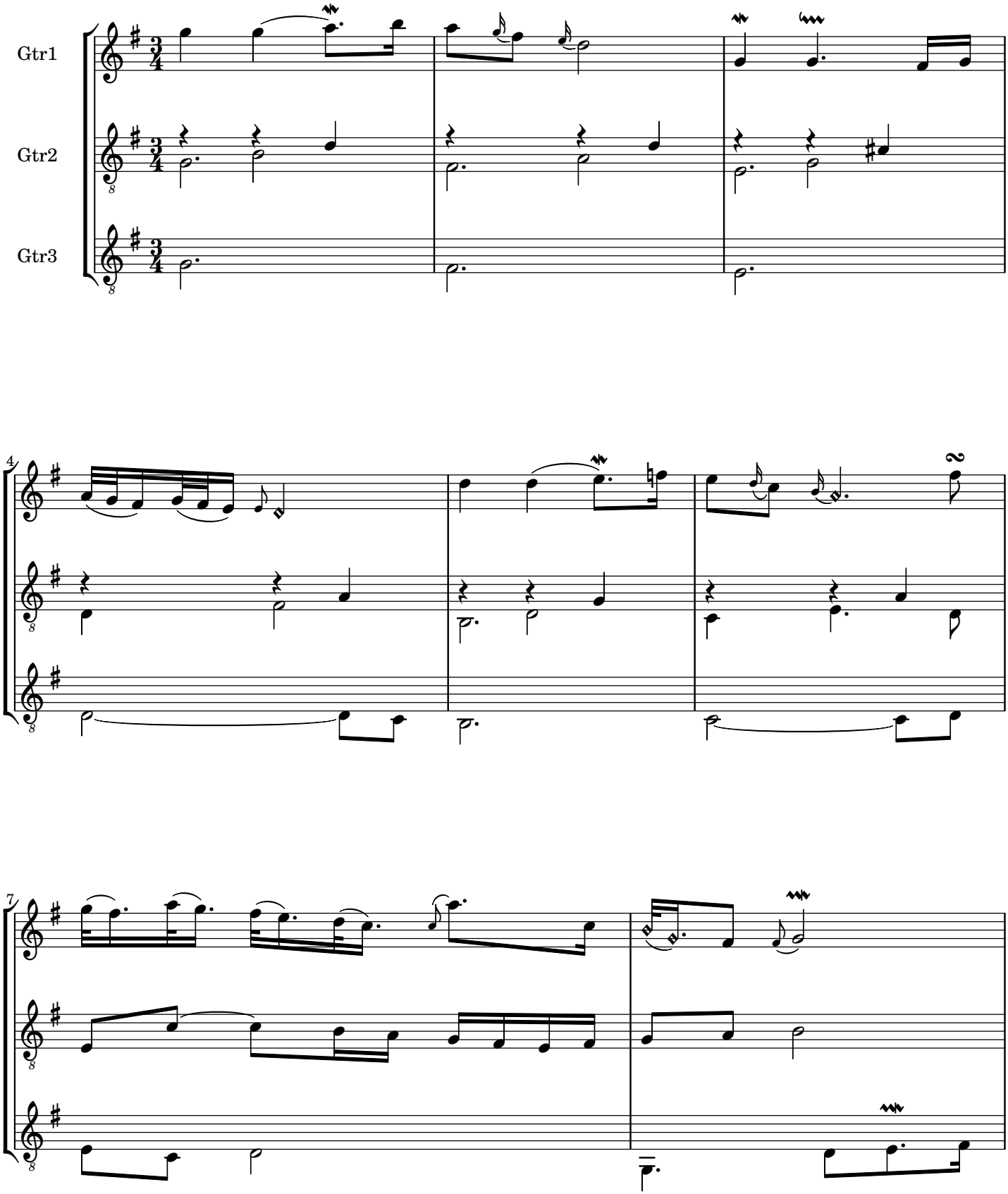
Aria

1.8



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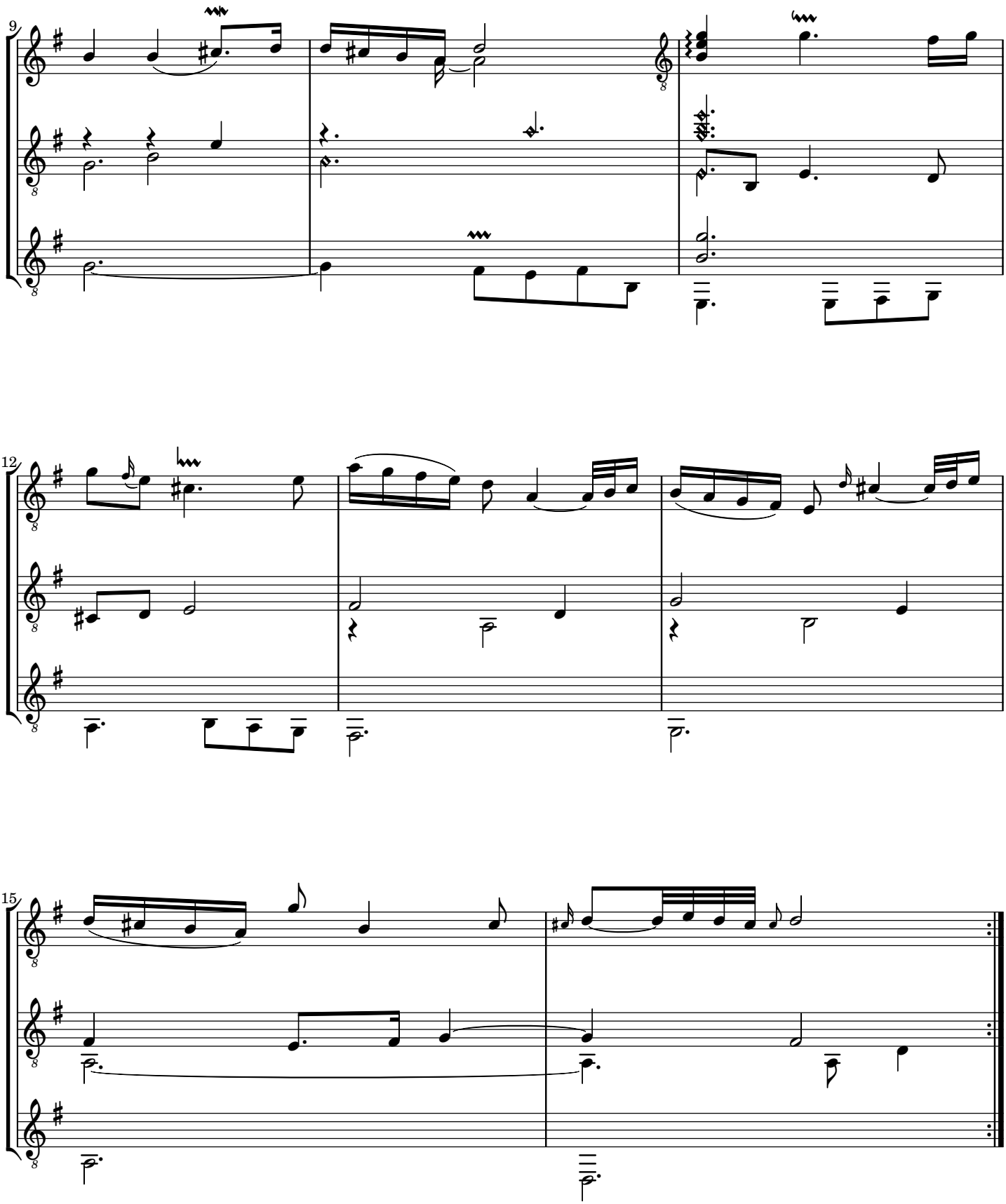
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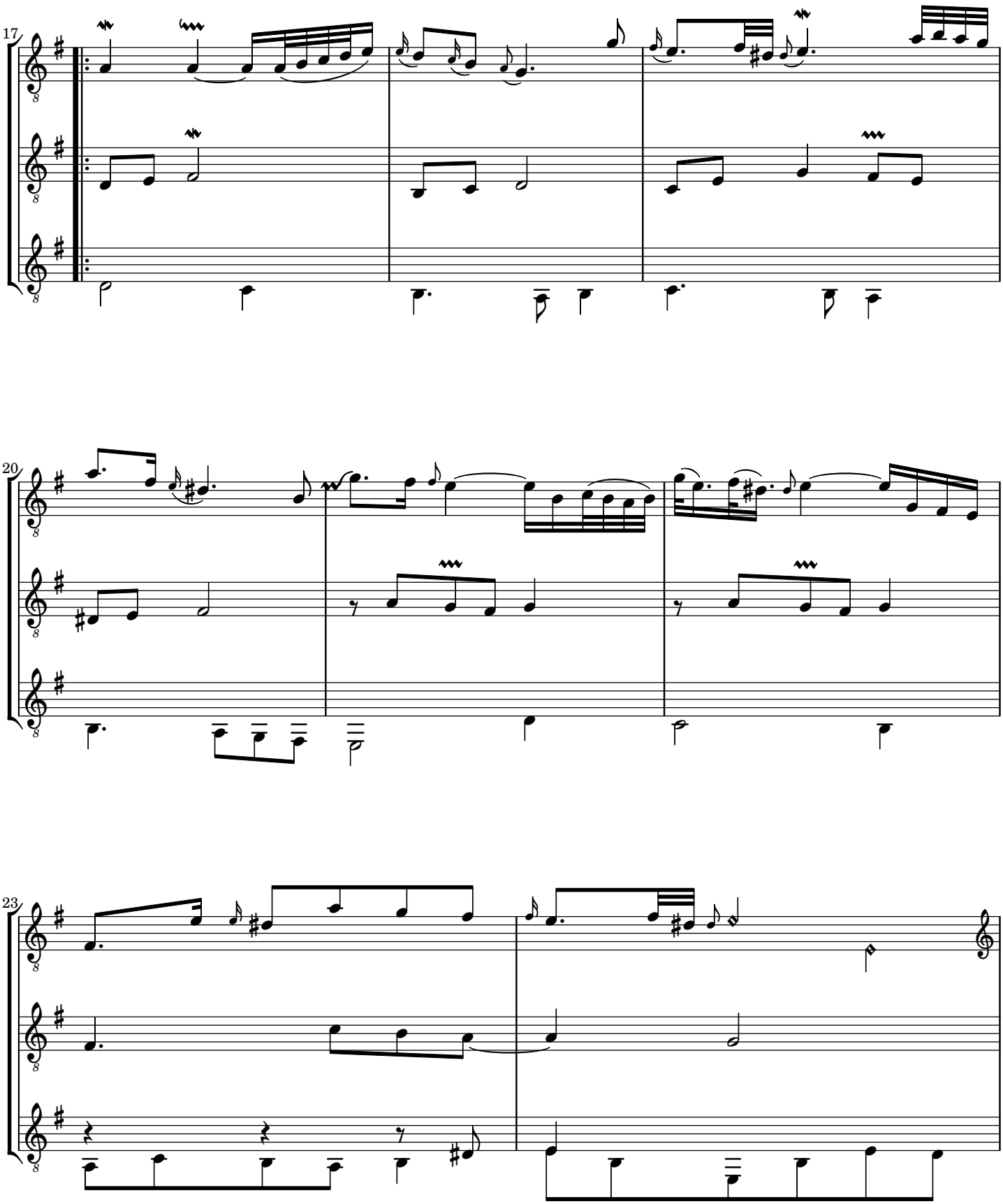
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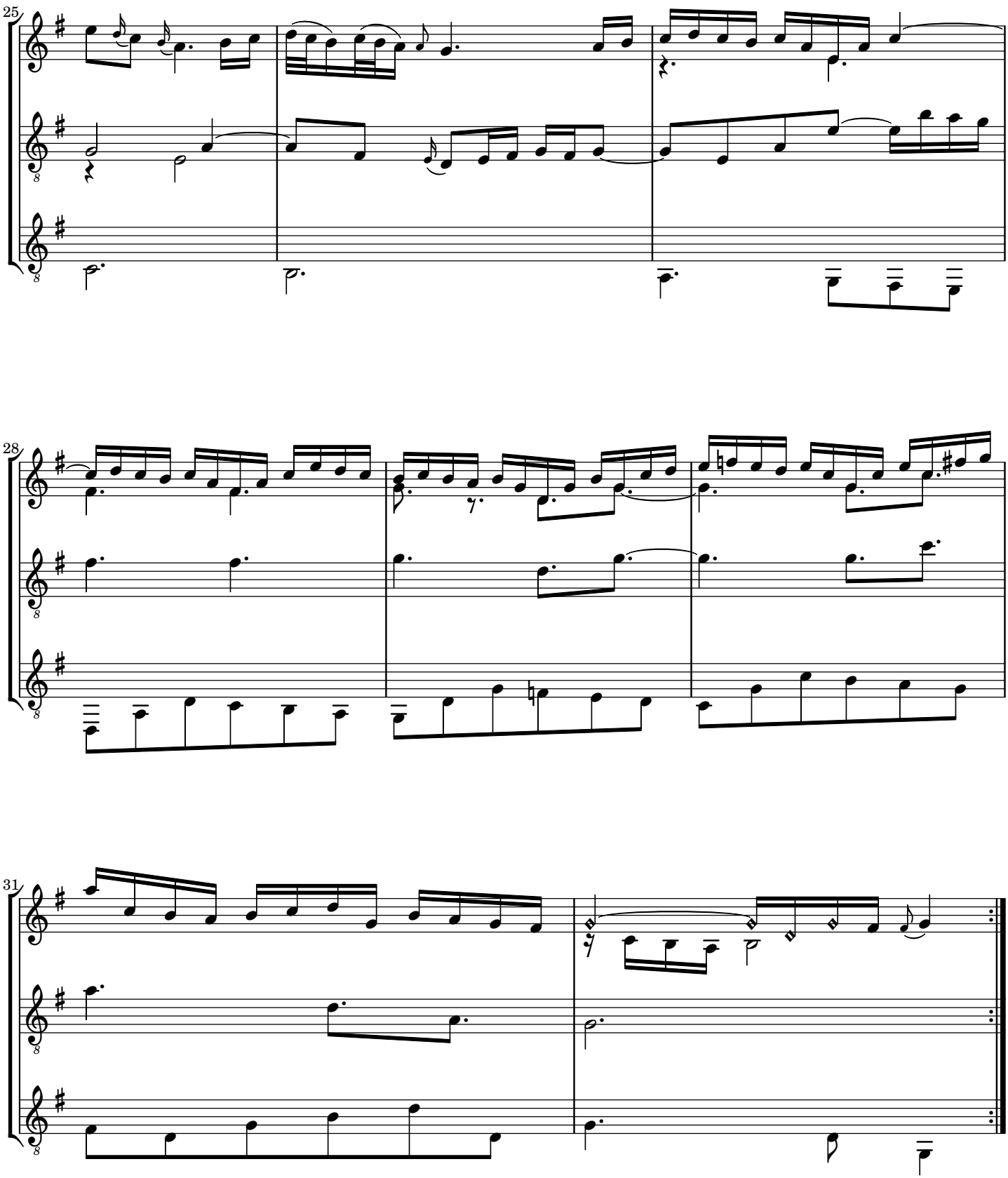
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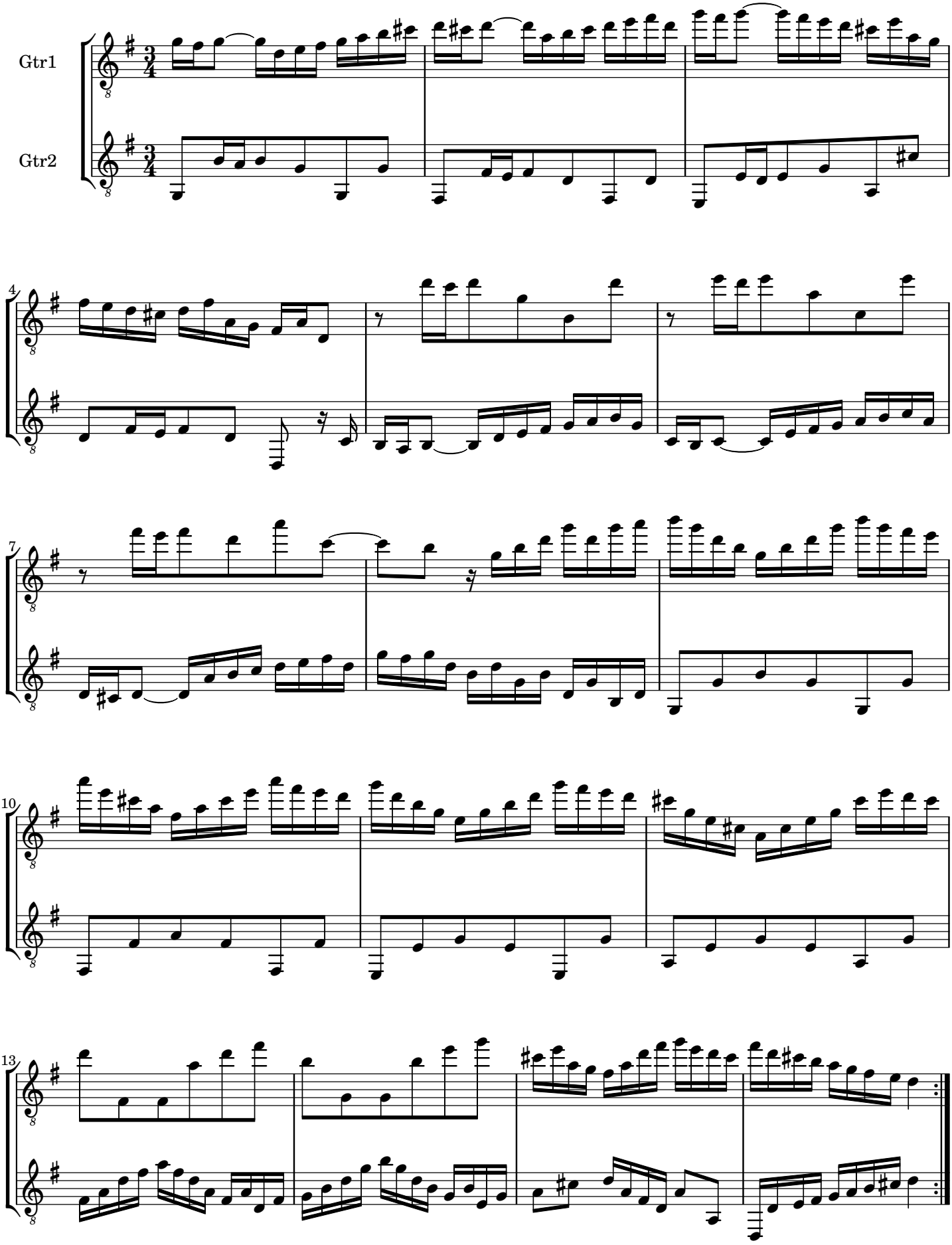
Variation 01



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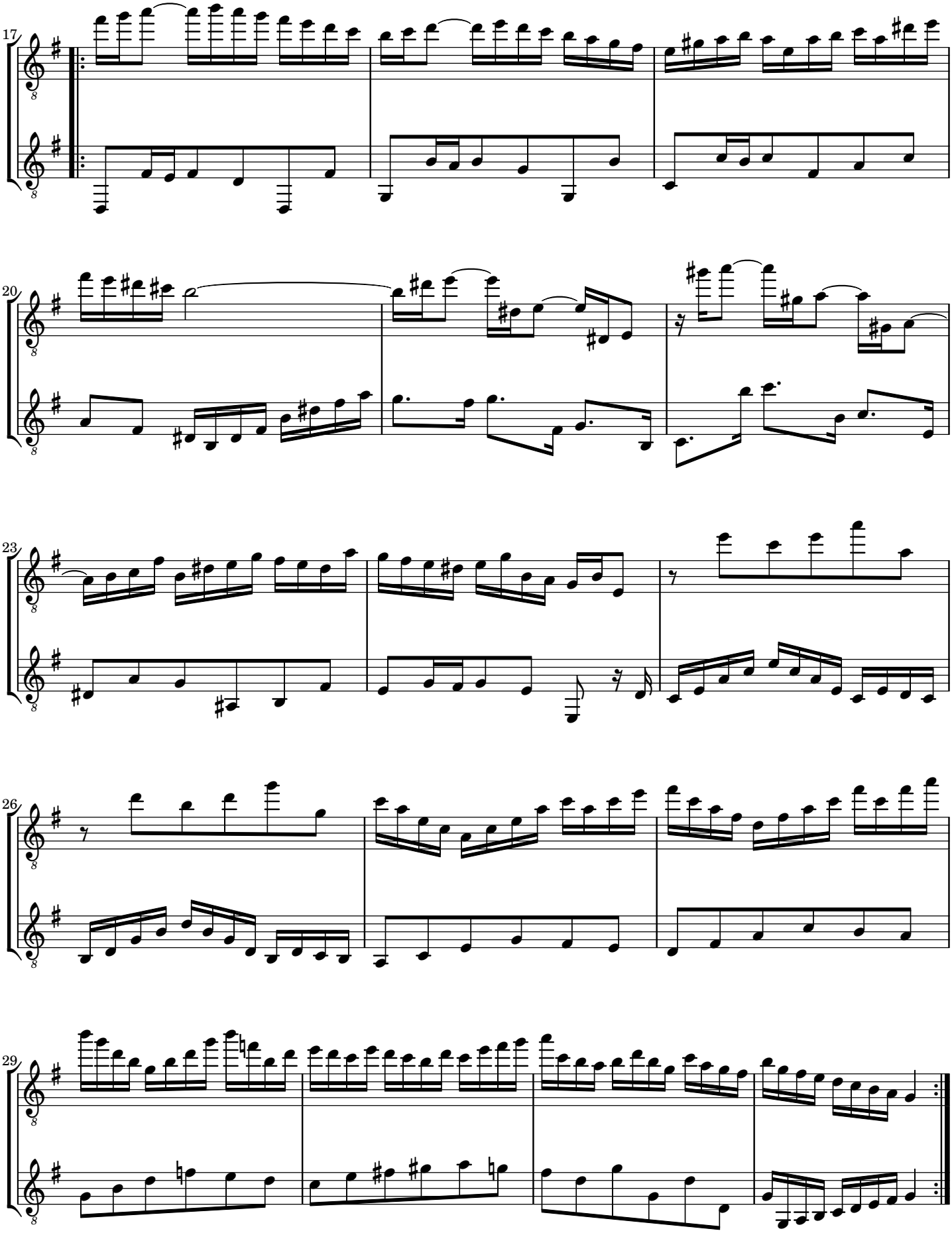
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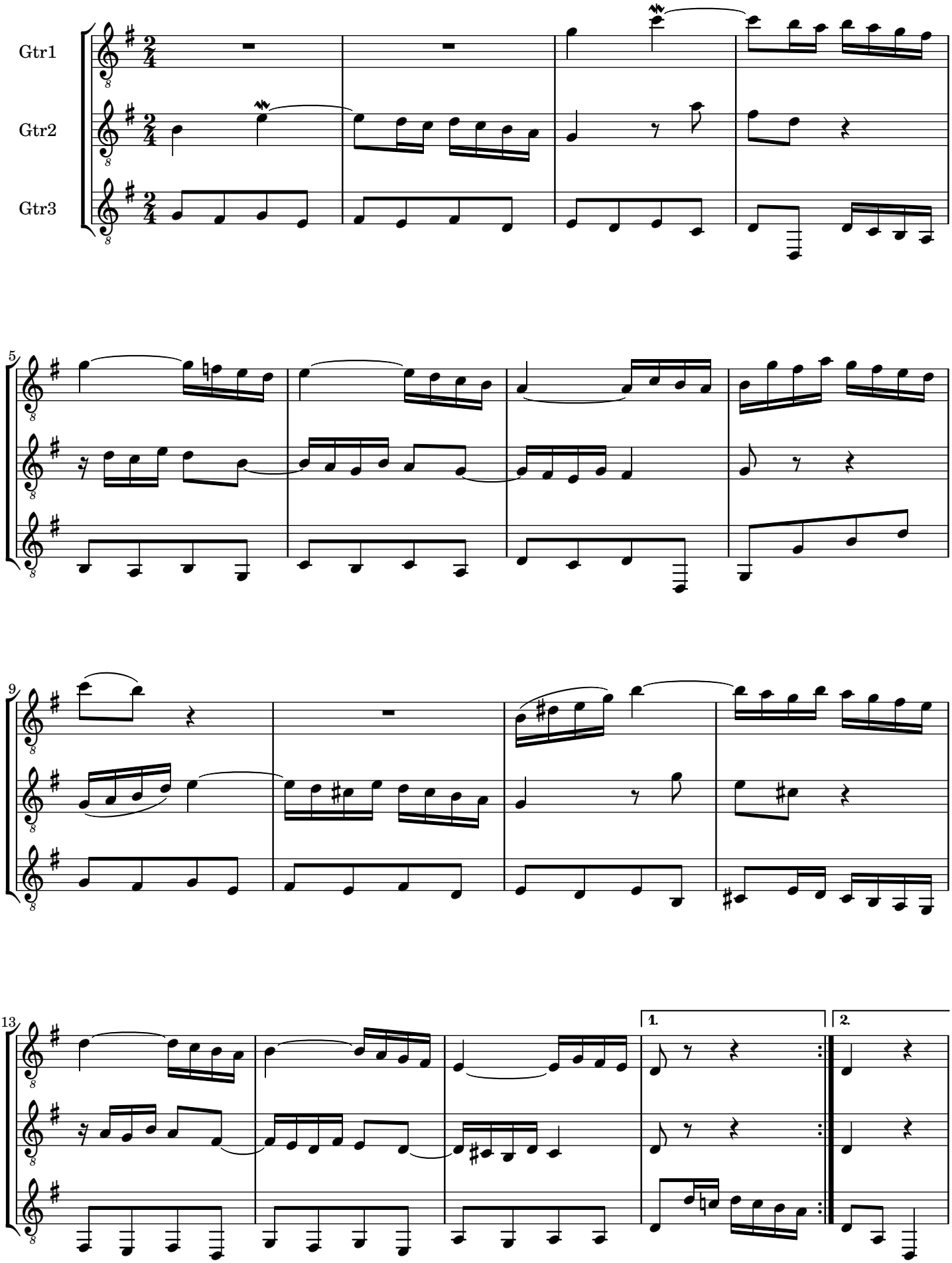
Variation 02



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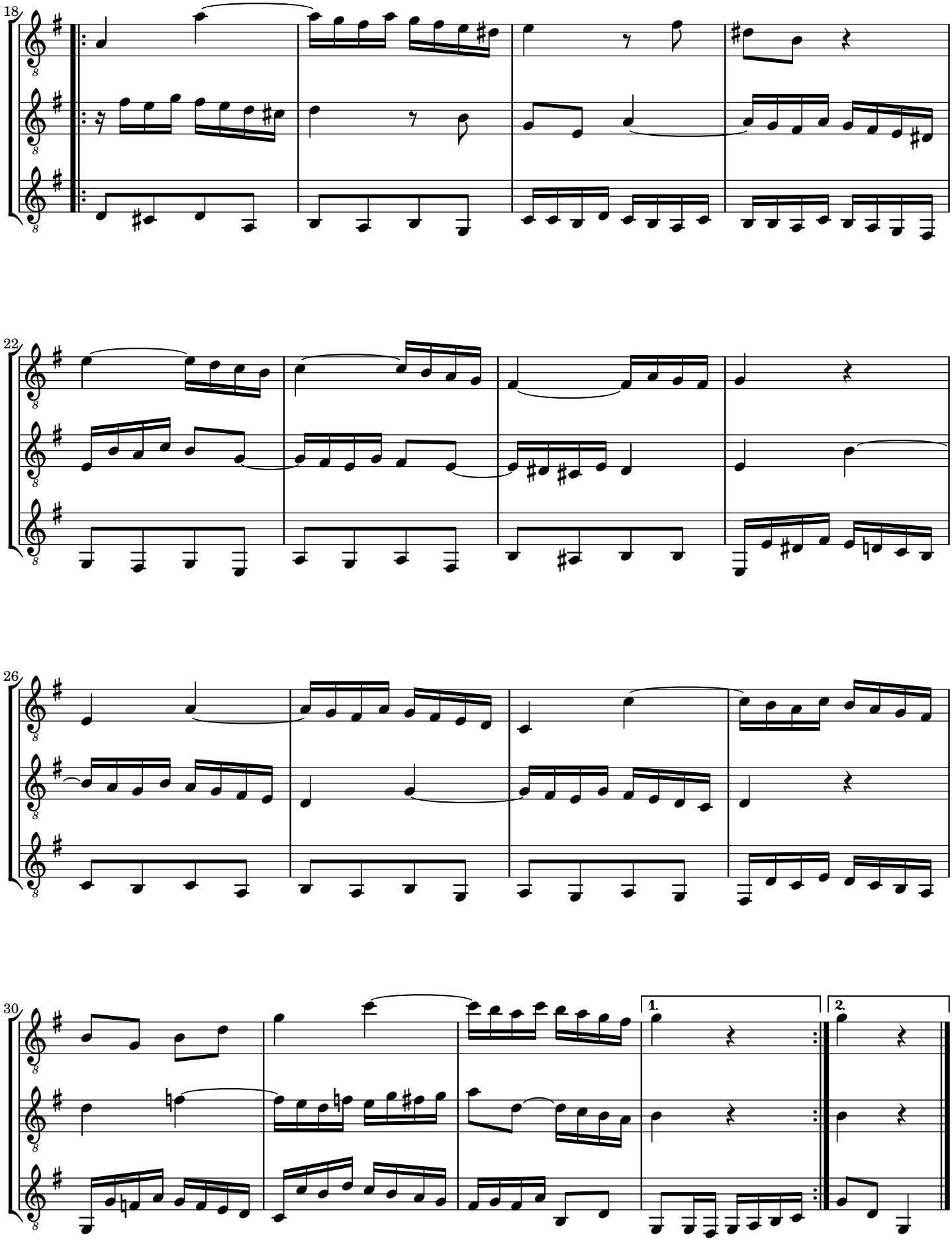
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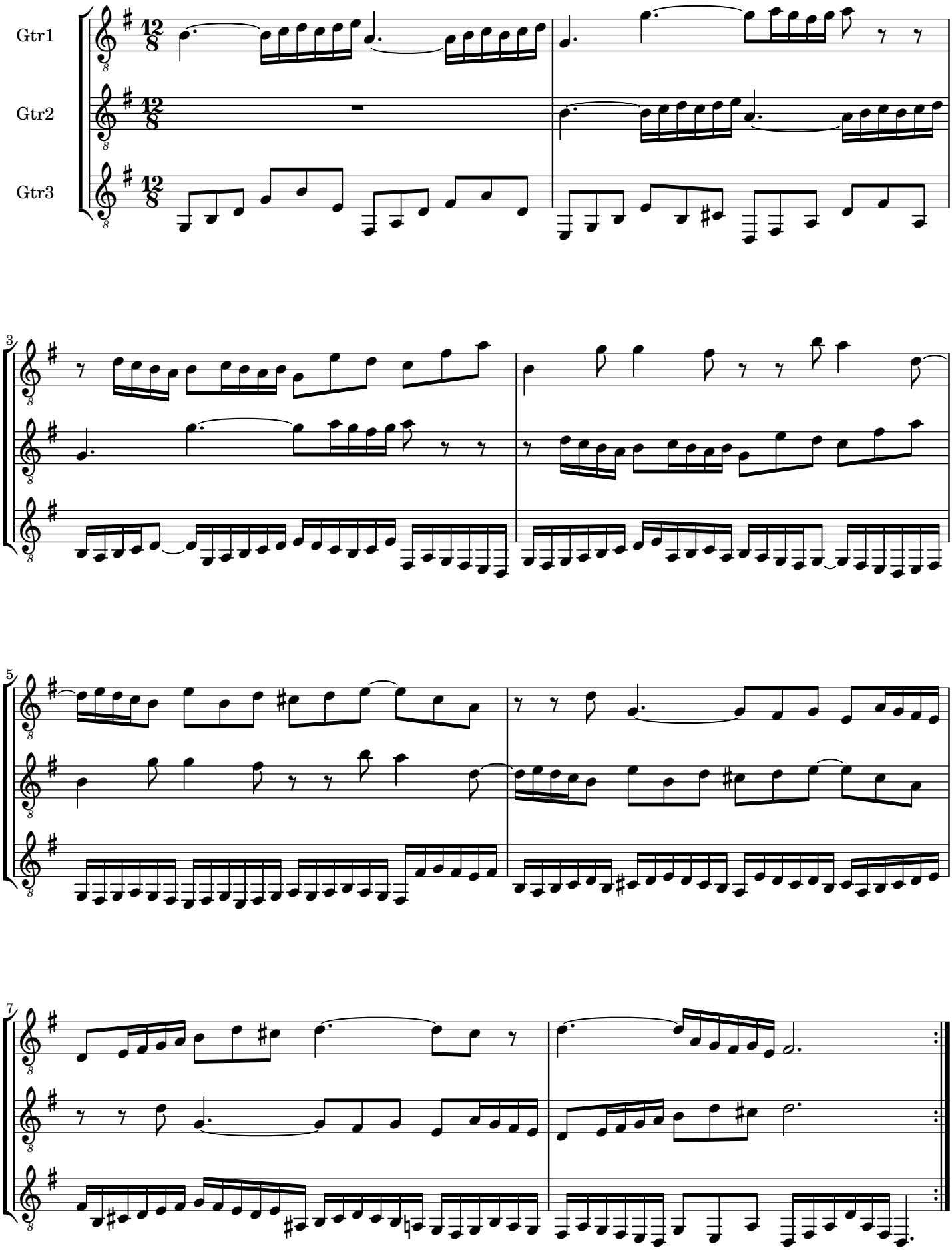
Variation 03

Canon at the Unison



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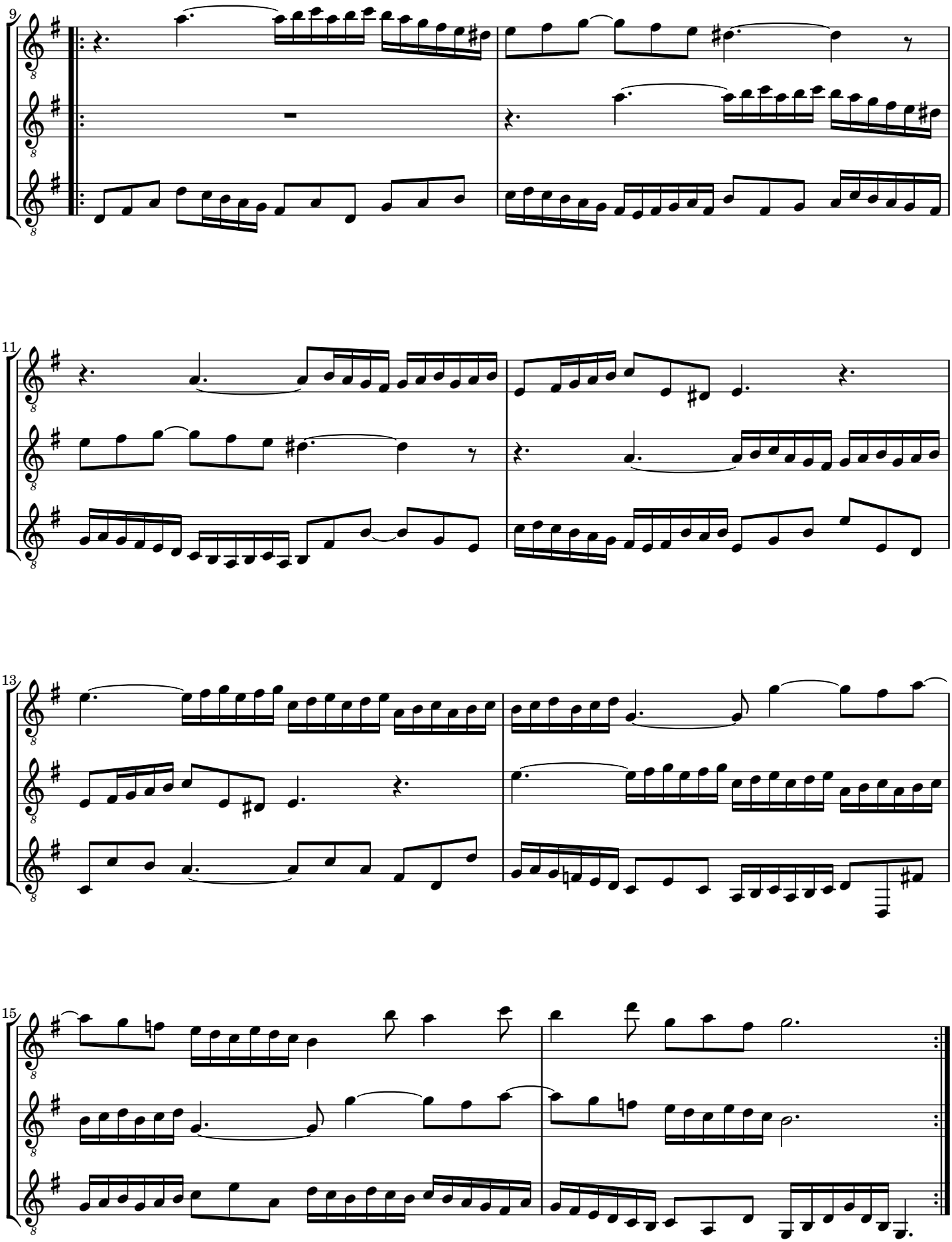
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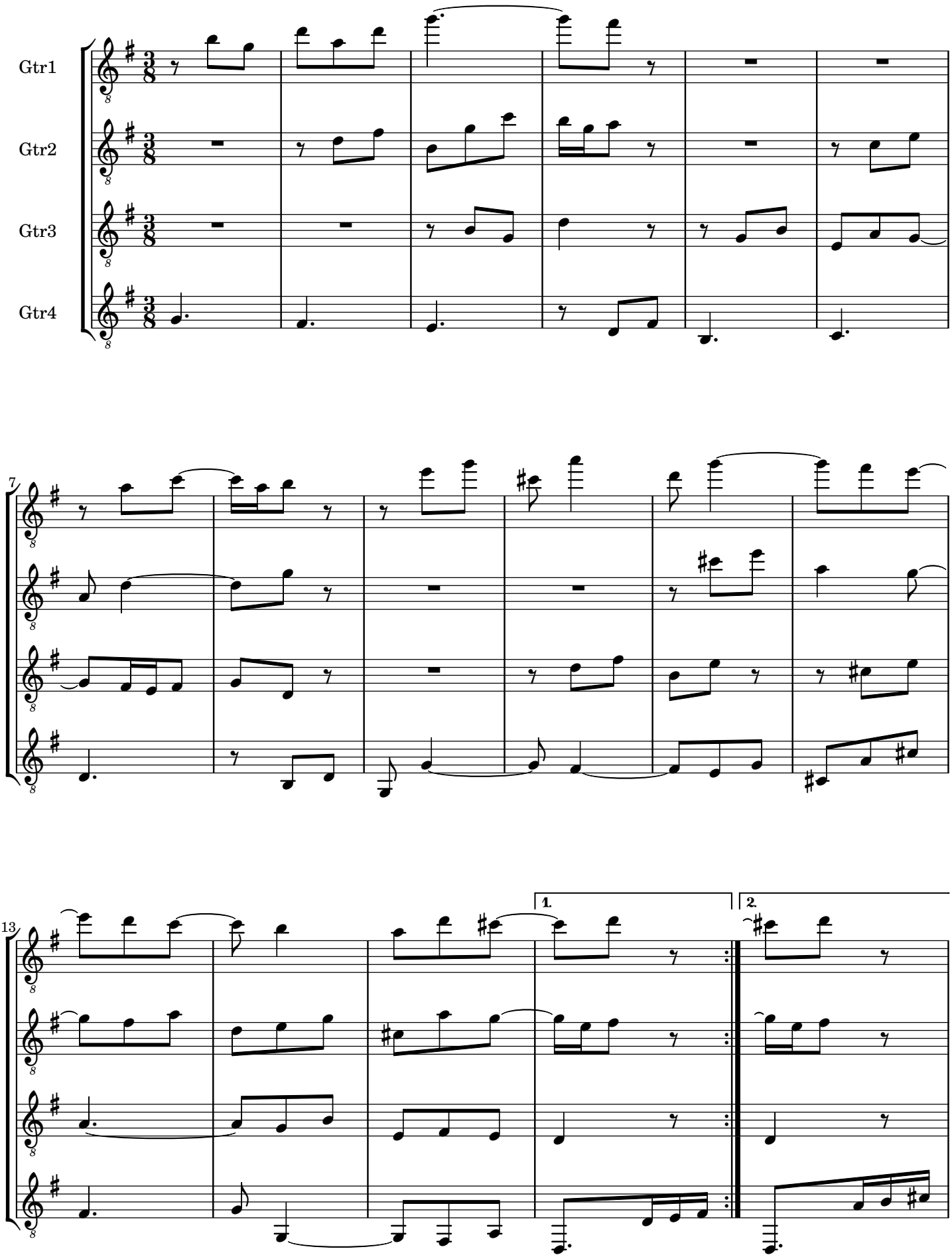
Variation 04



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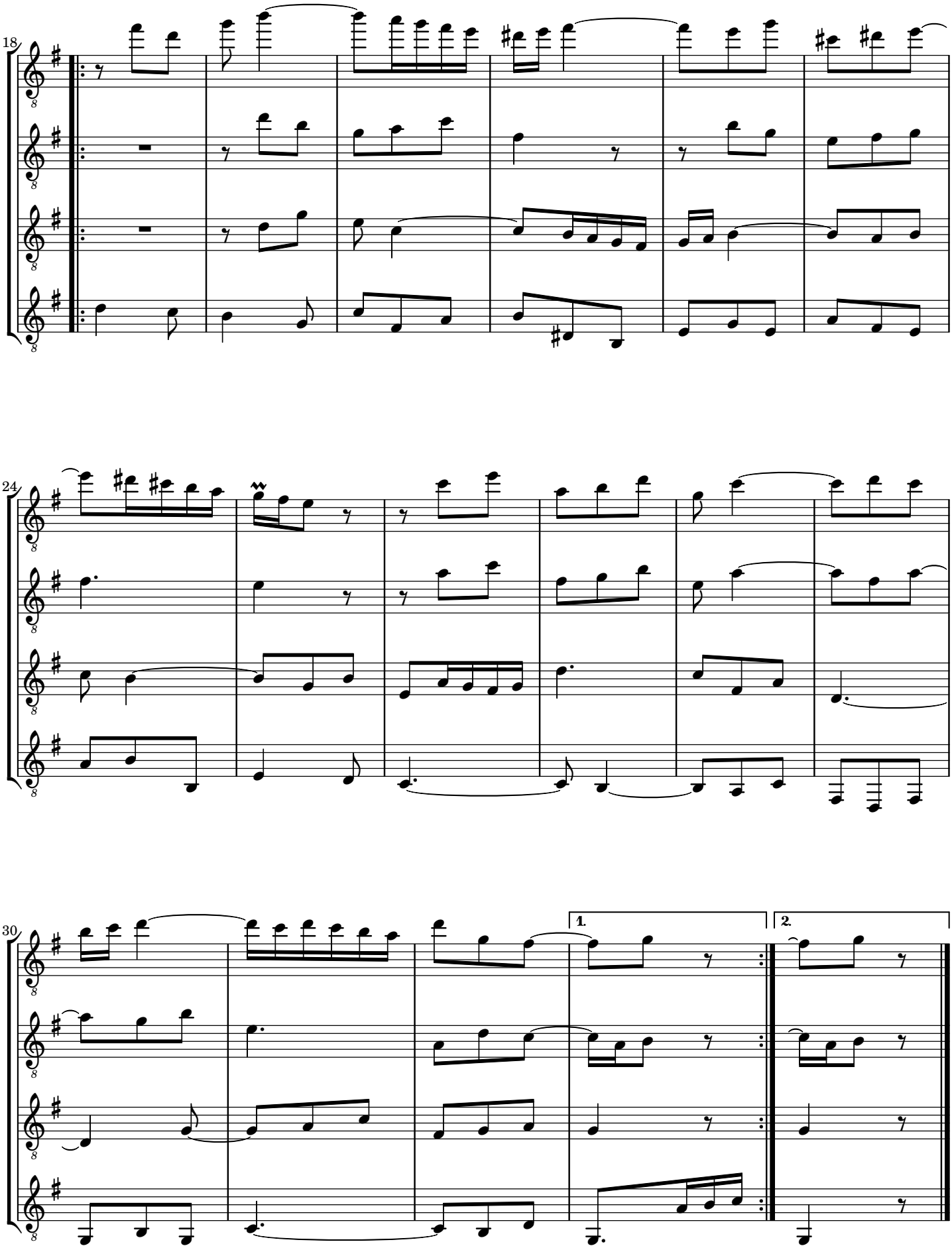
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1.
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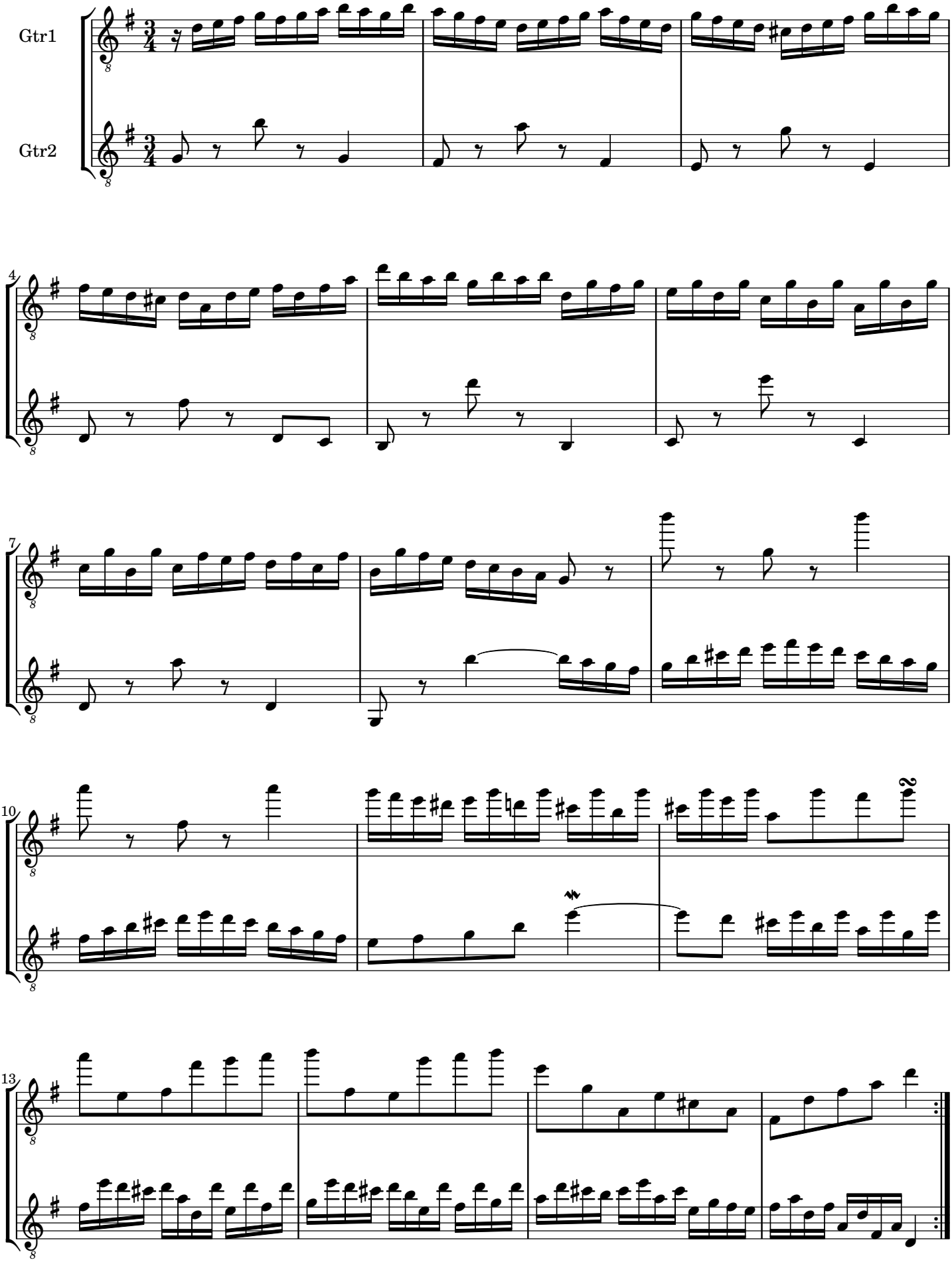
Variation 05



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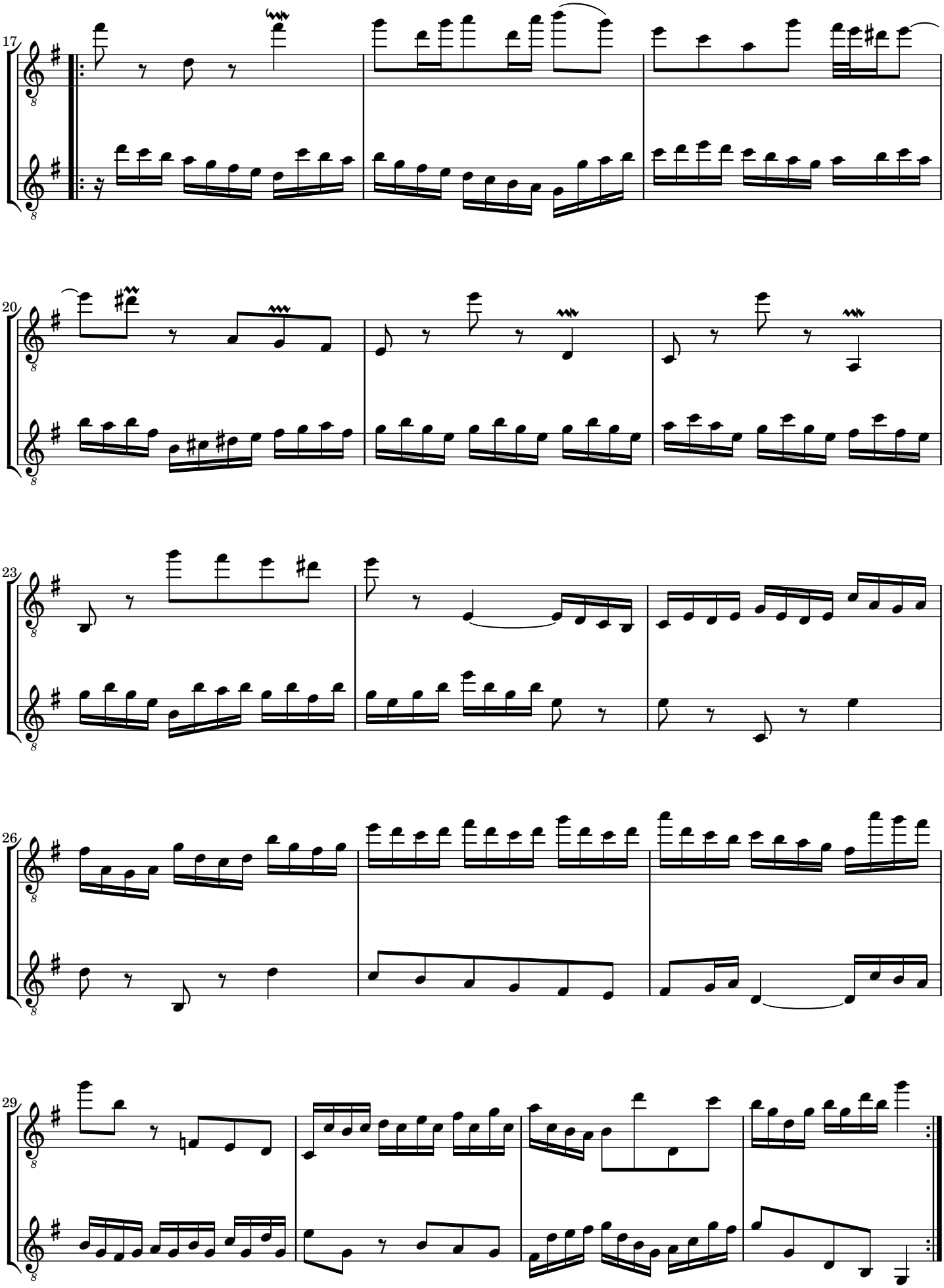
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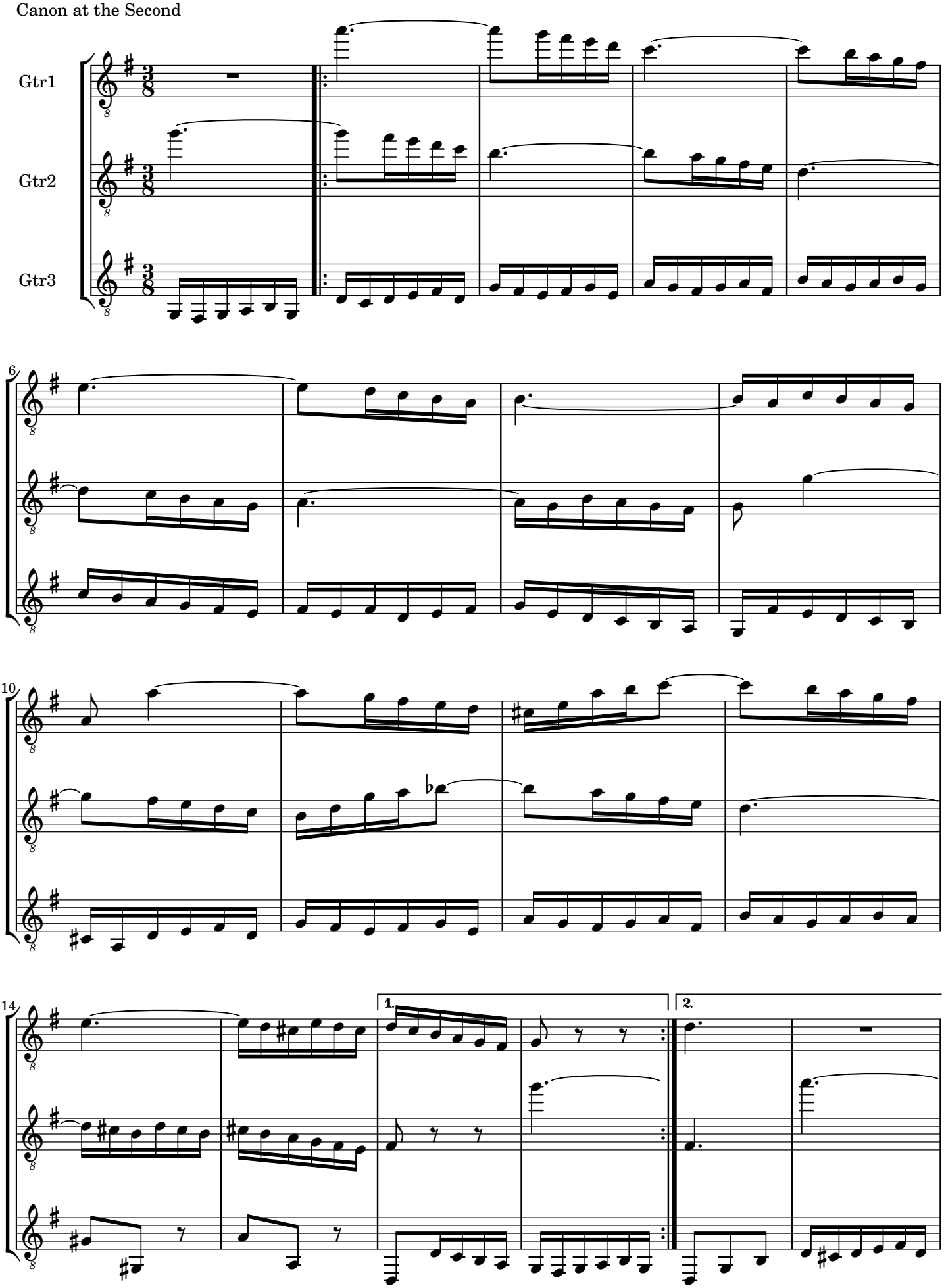
Variation 06

Canon at the Second



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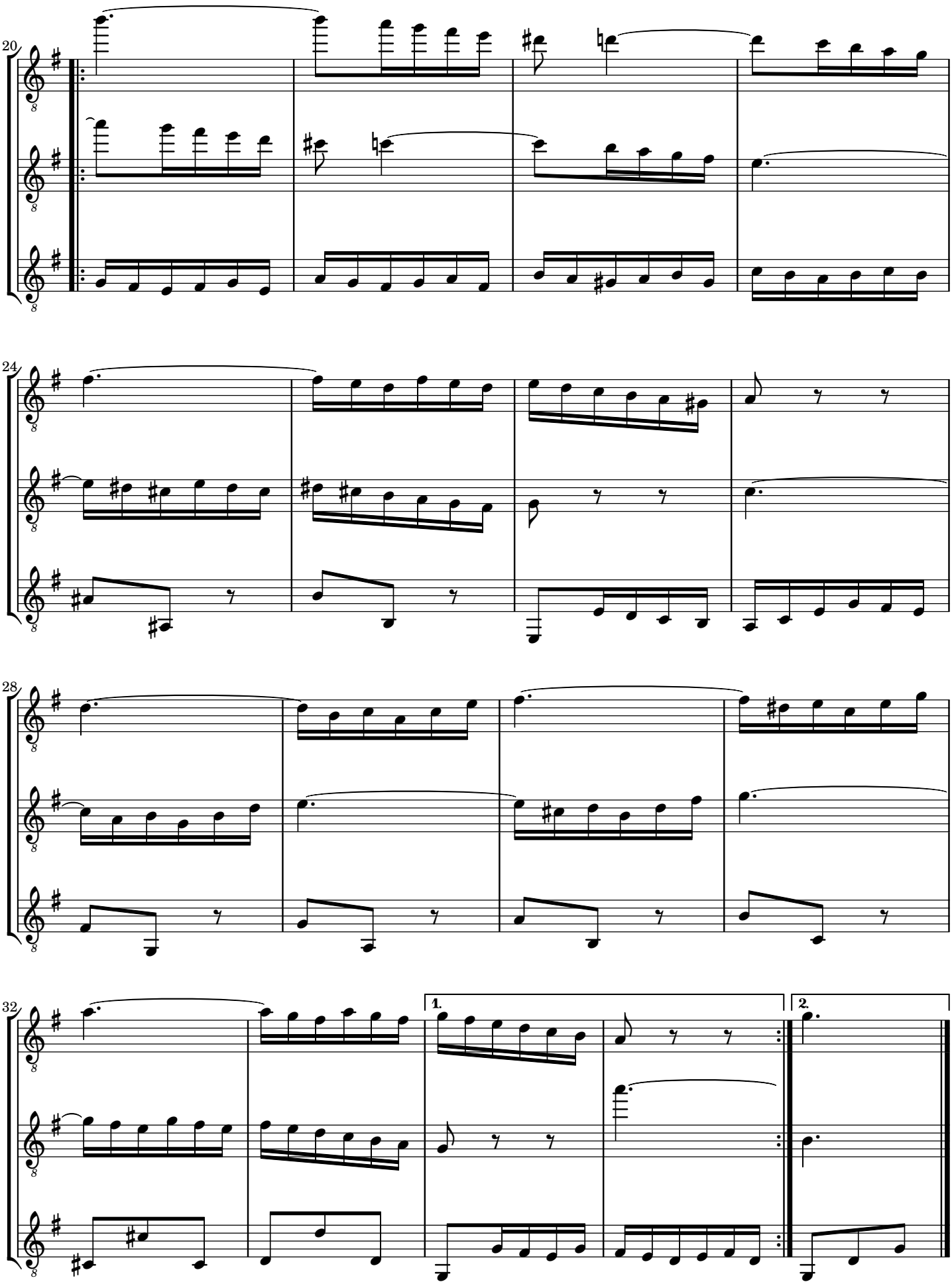
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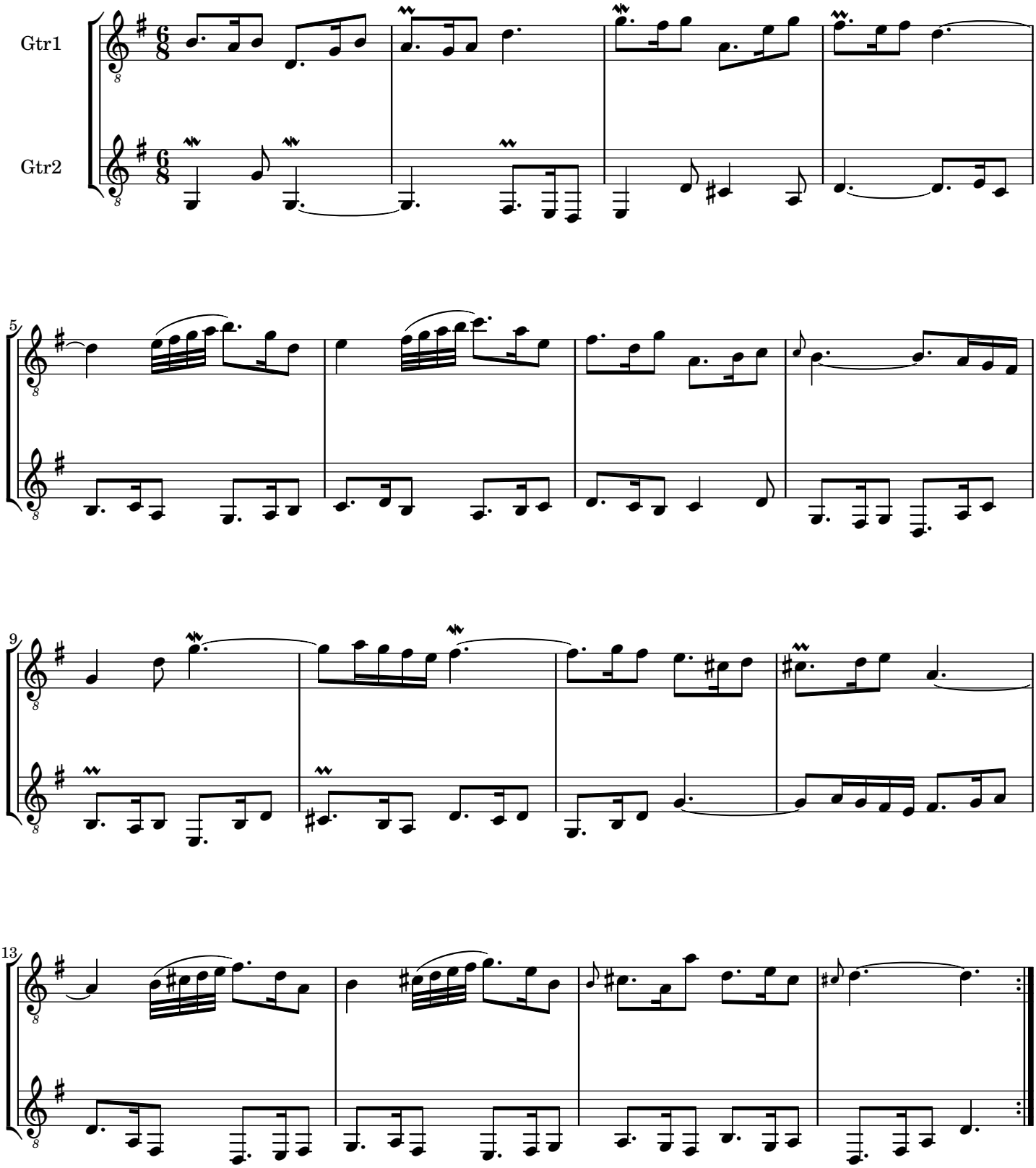
Variation 07

At the tempo of a Giga



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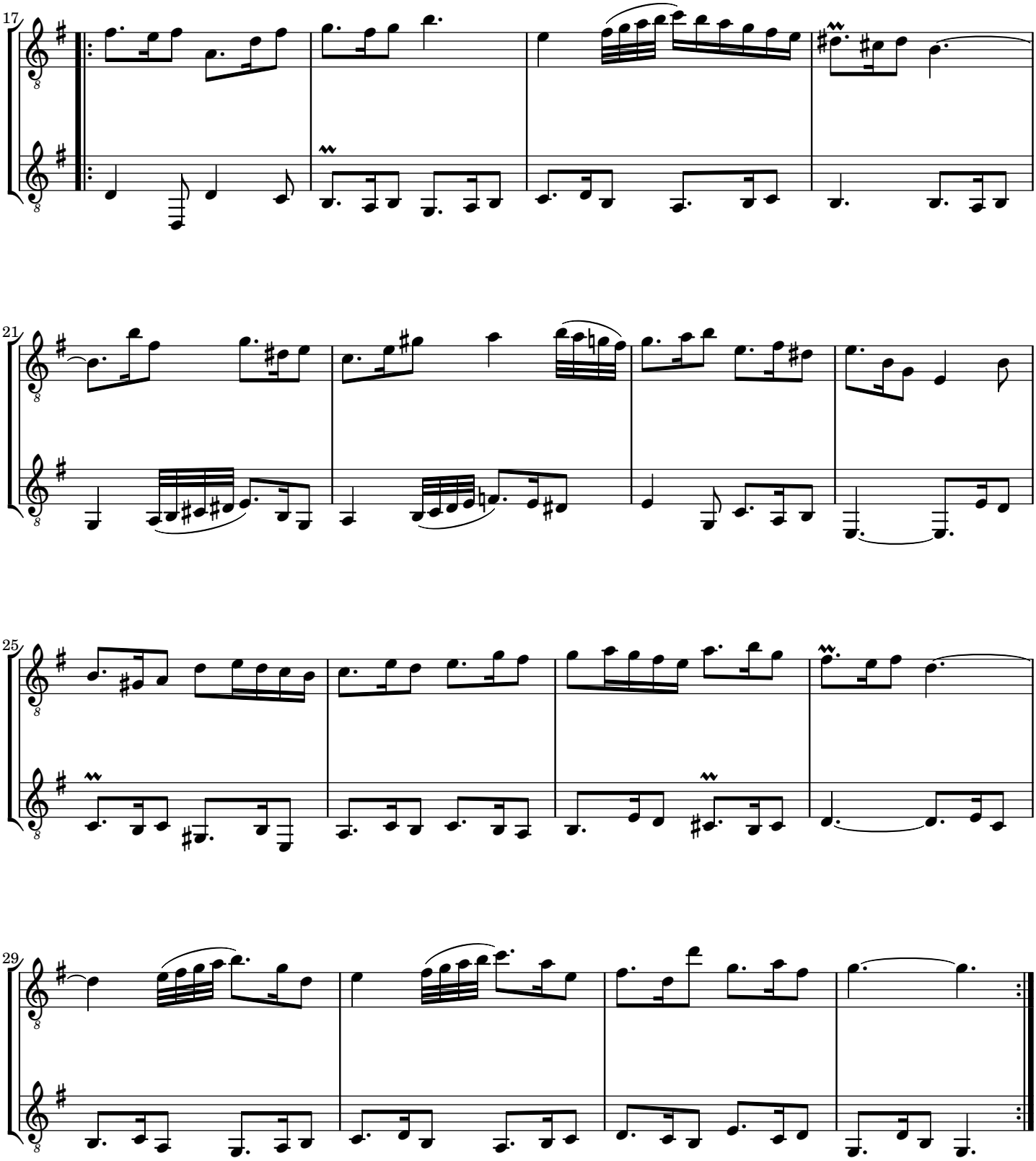
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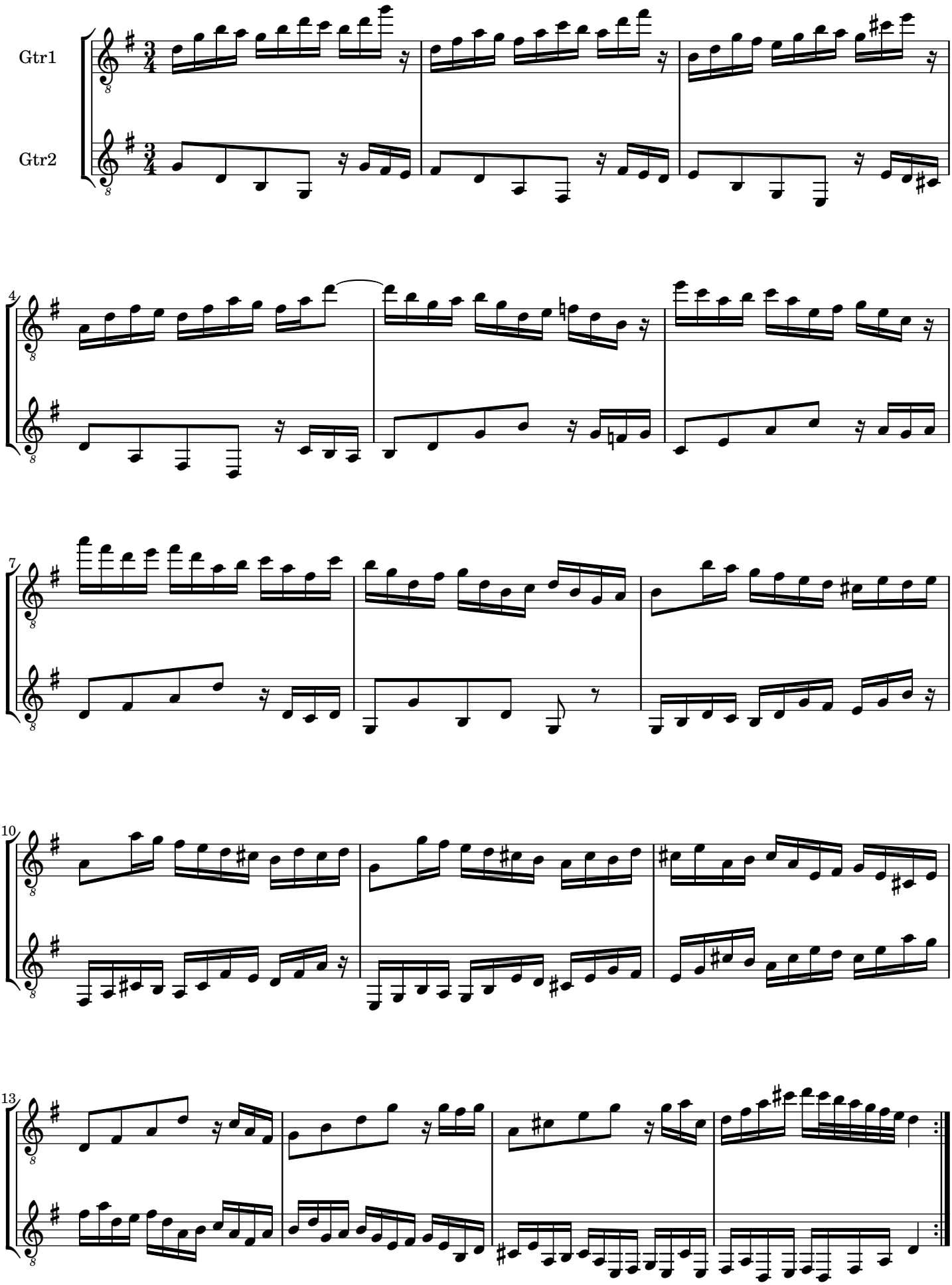
Variation 08



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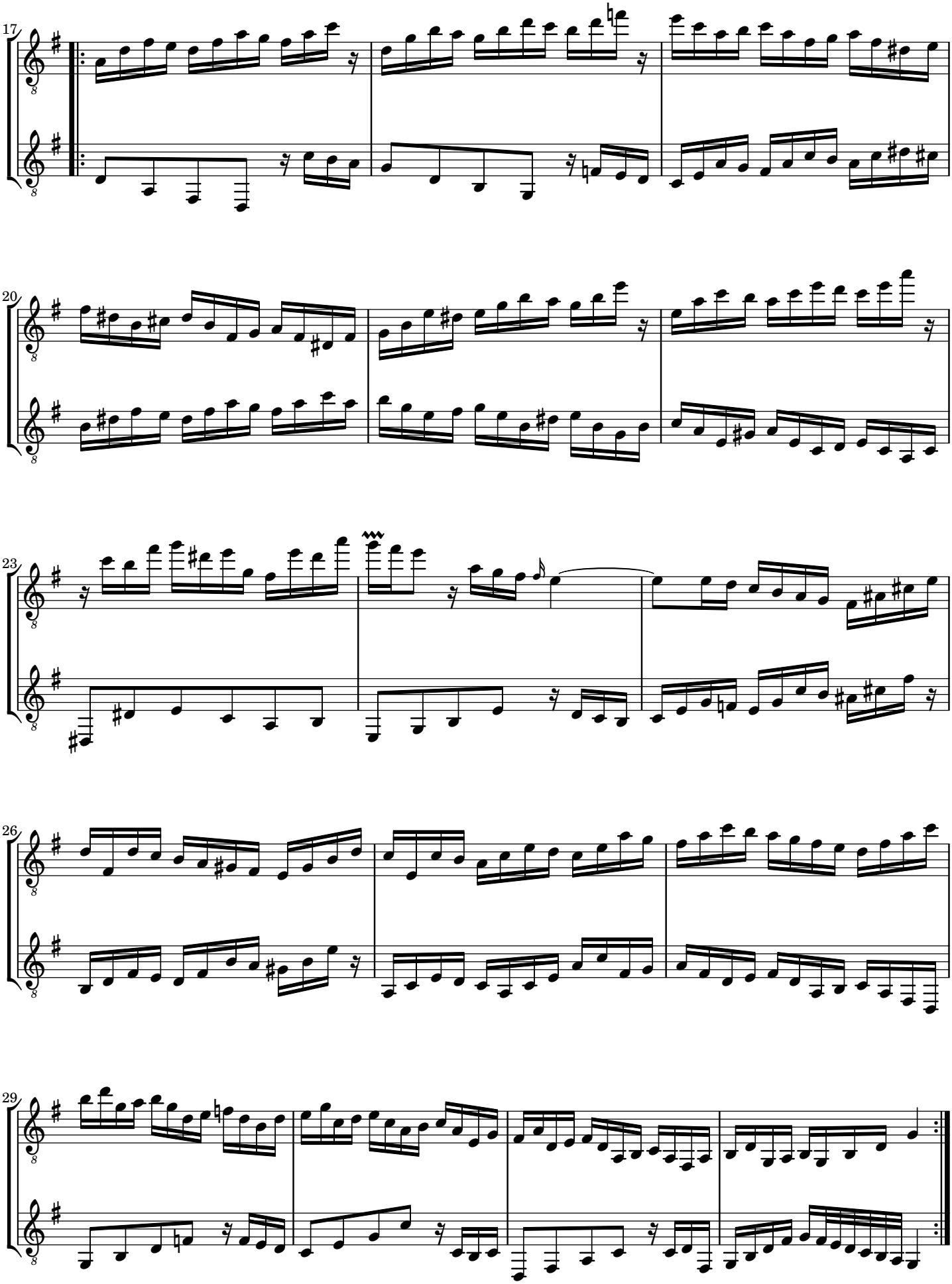
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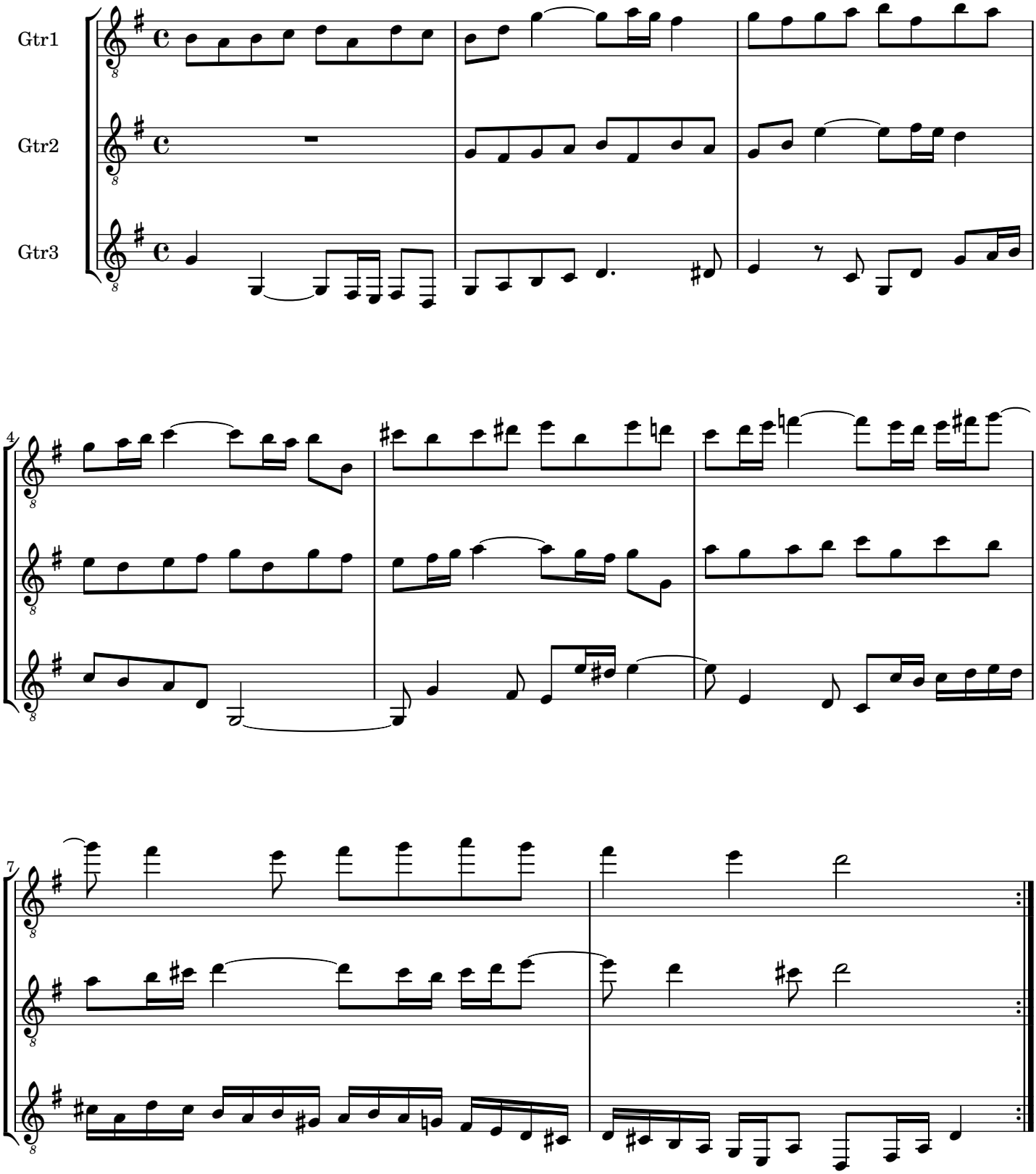
Variation 09

Canon at the Third



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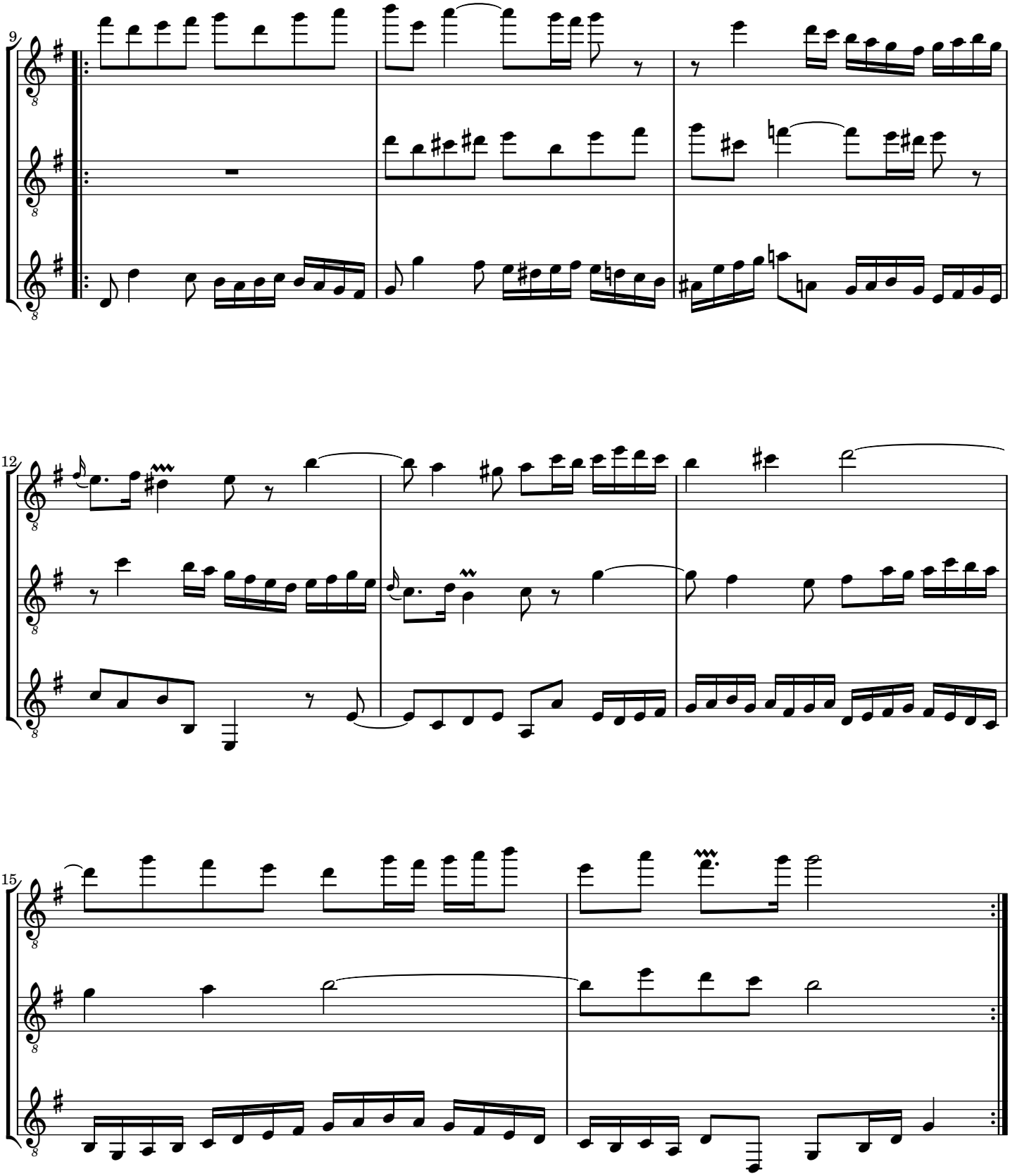
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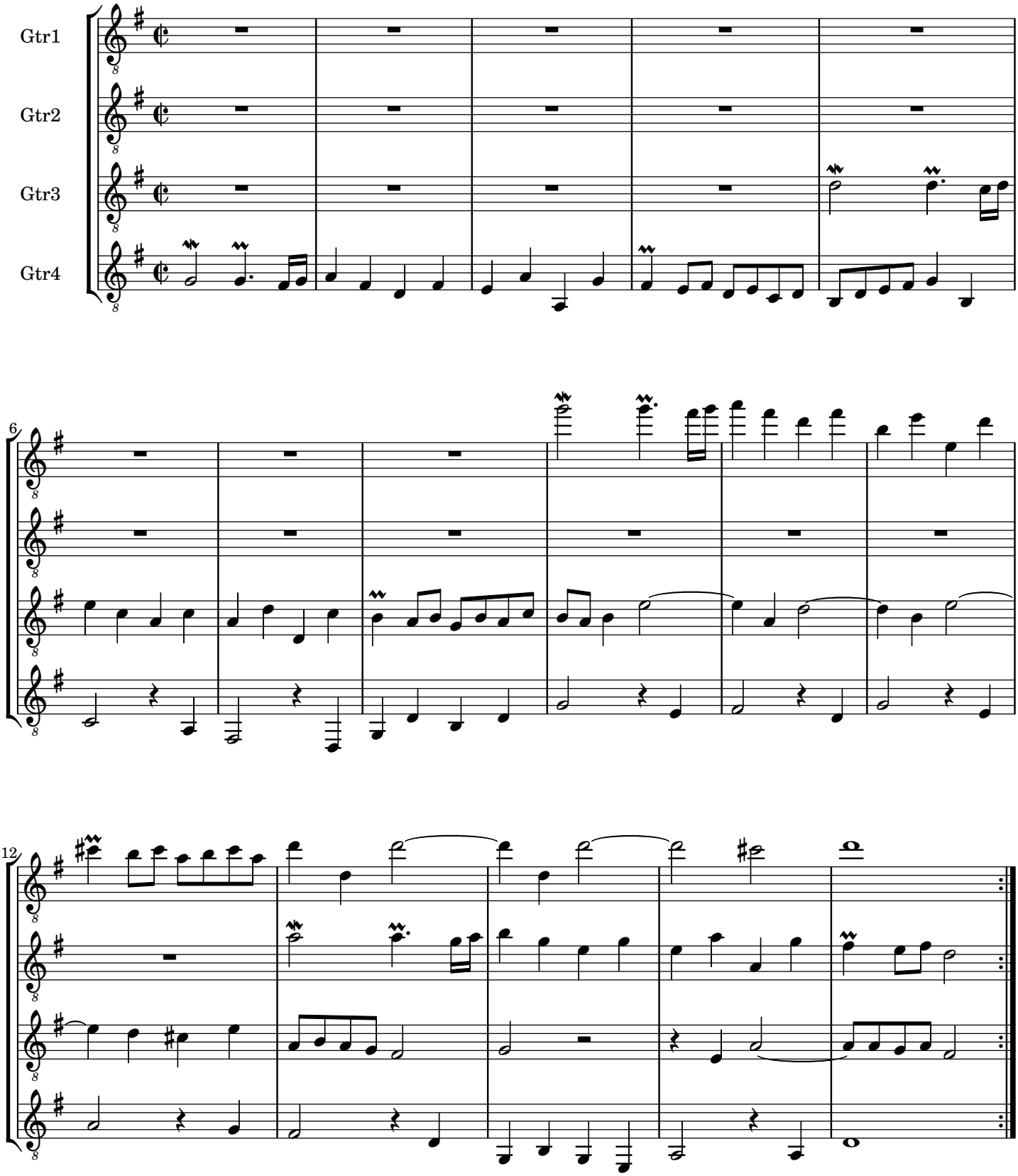
Variation 10

Fughetta



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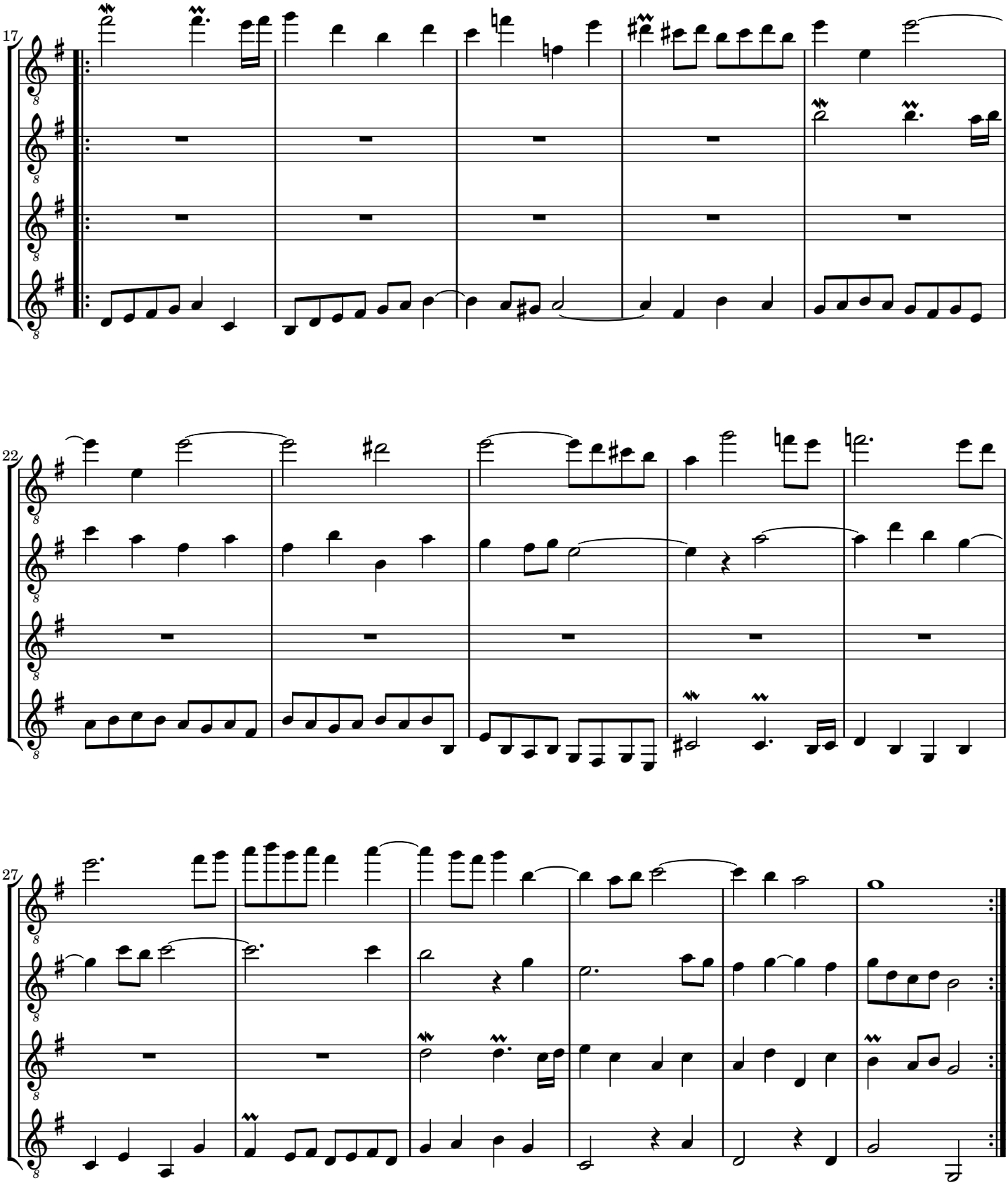
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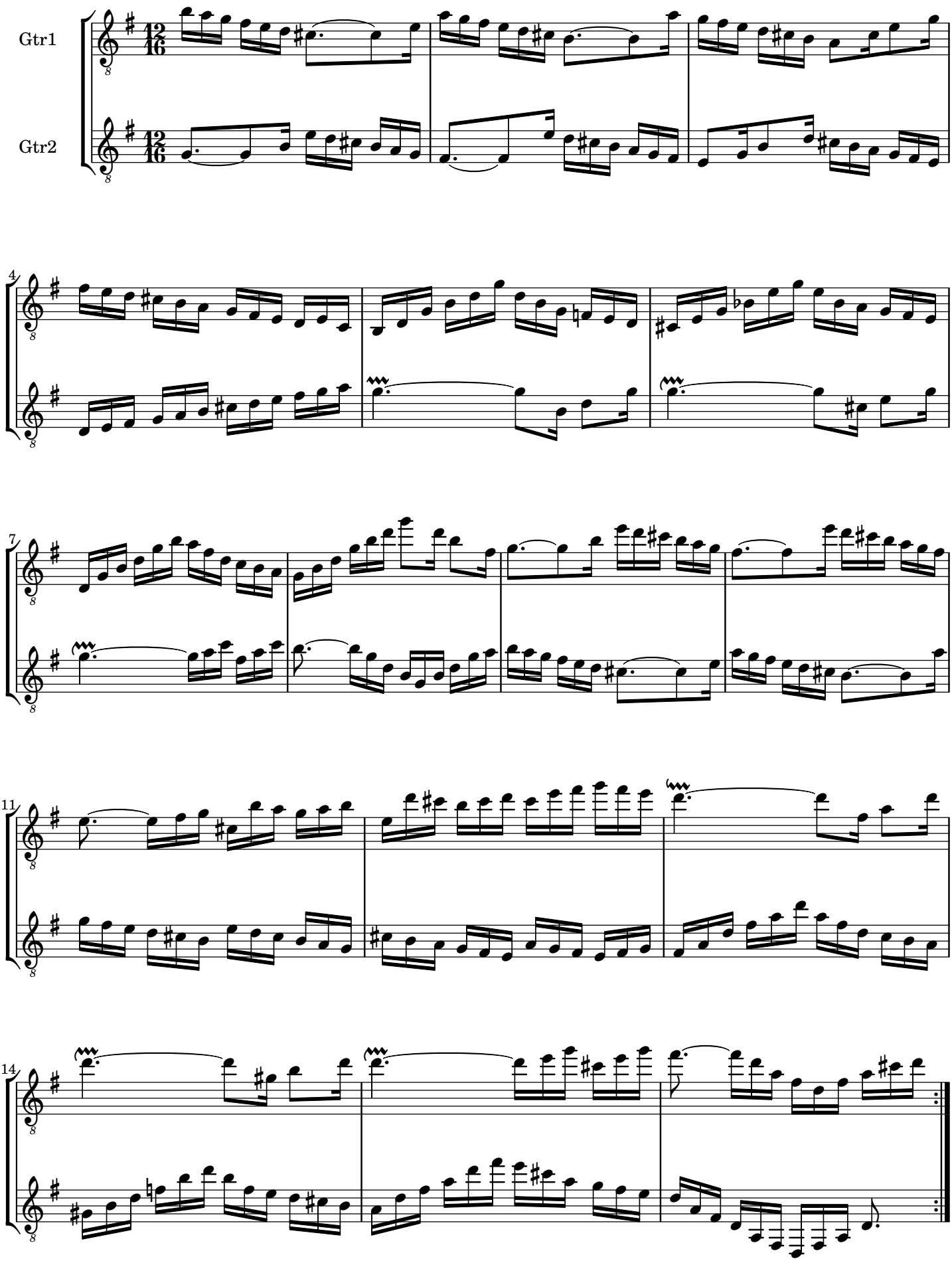
Variation 11



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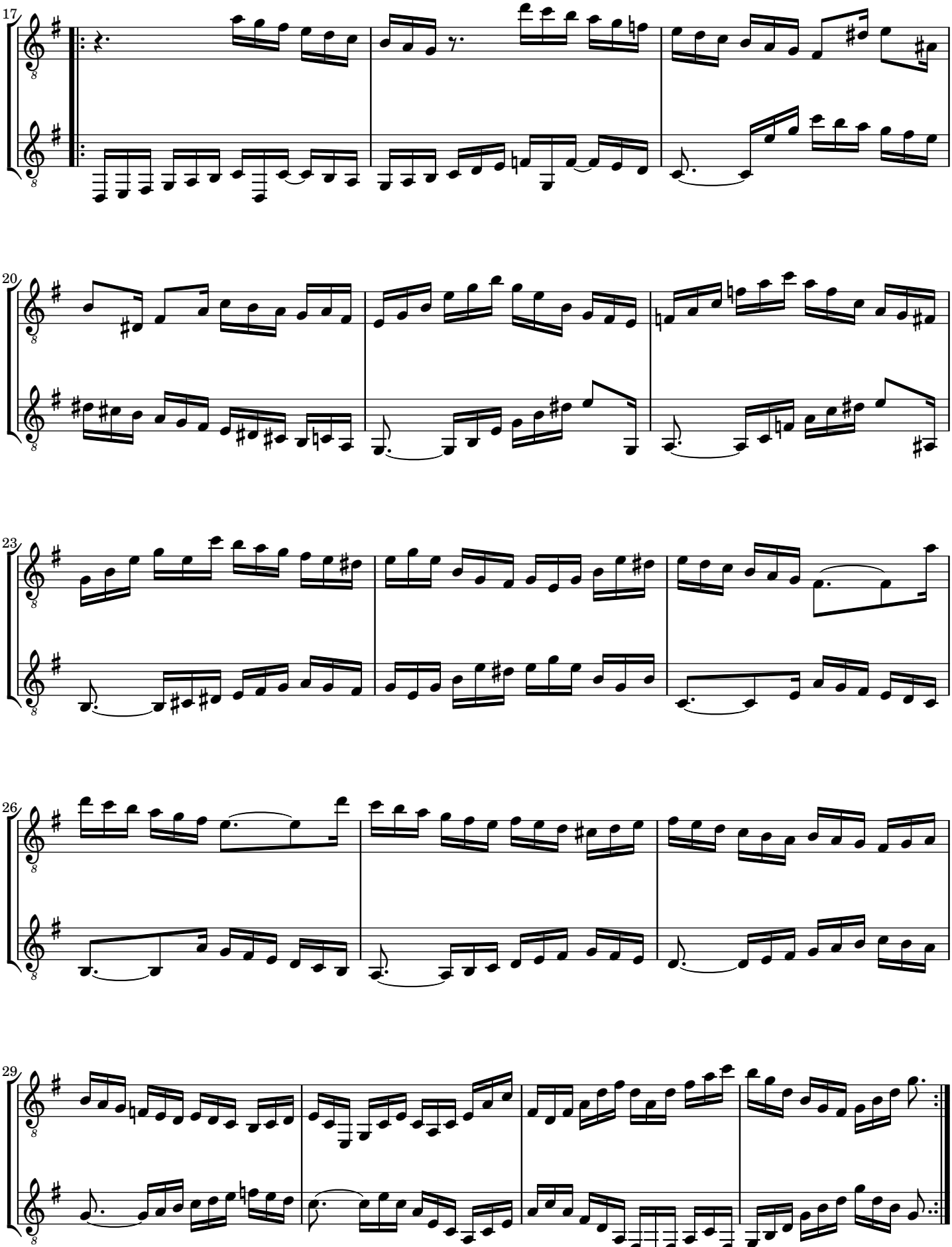
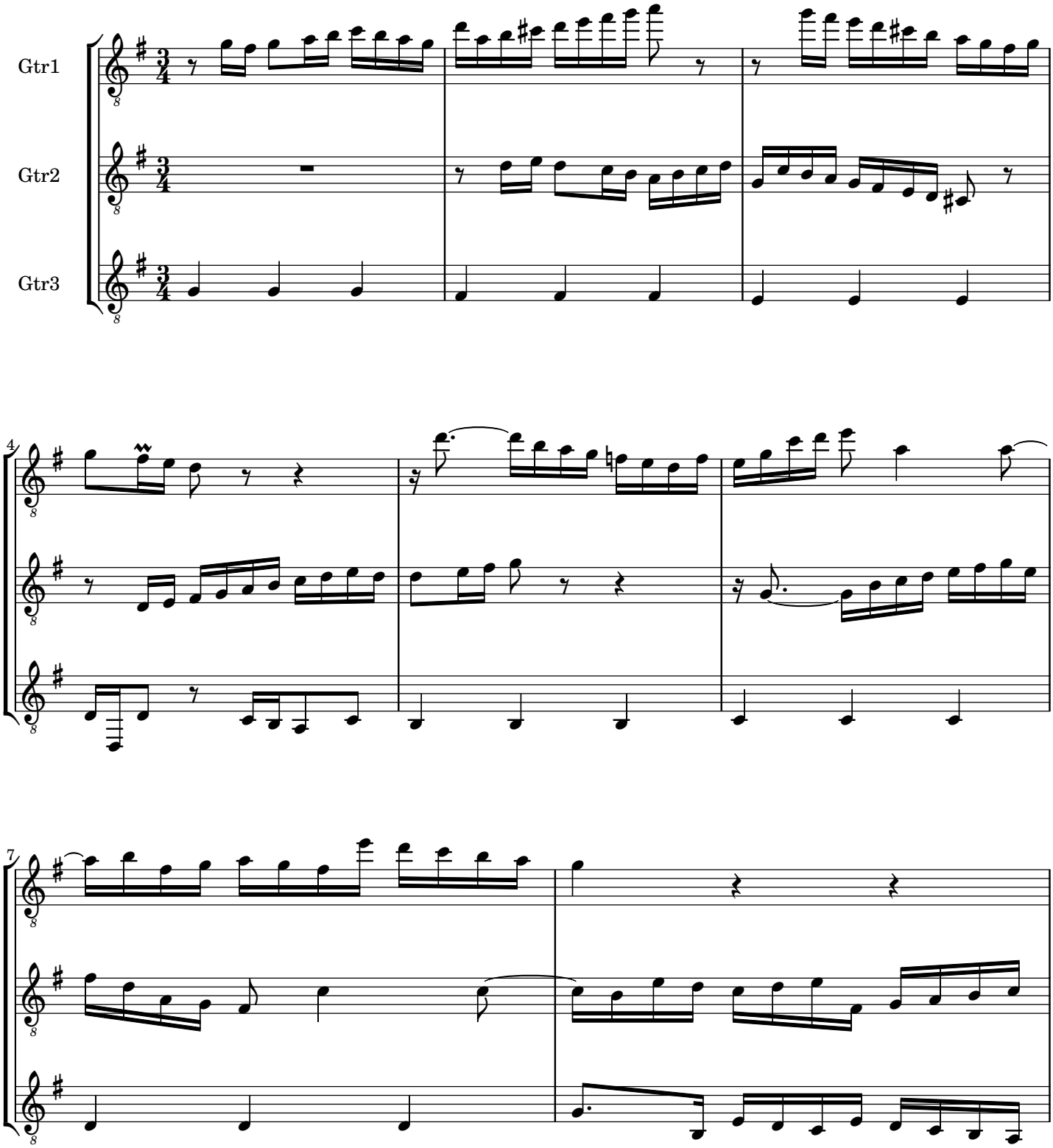


Variation 12

Canon at the Fourth



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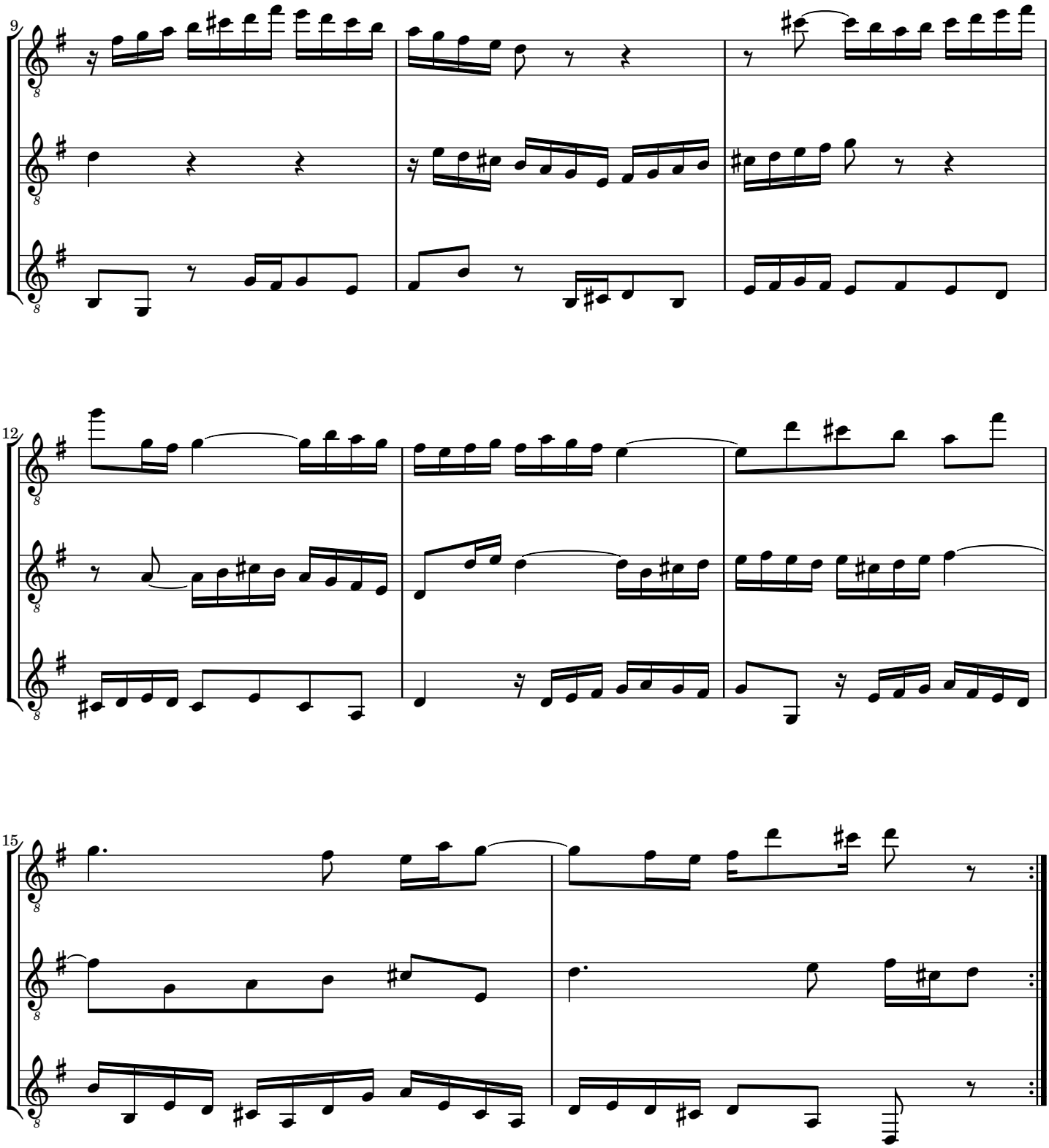

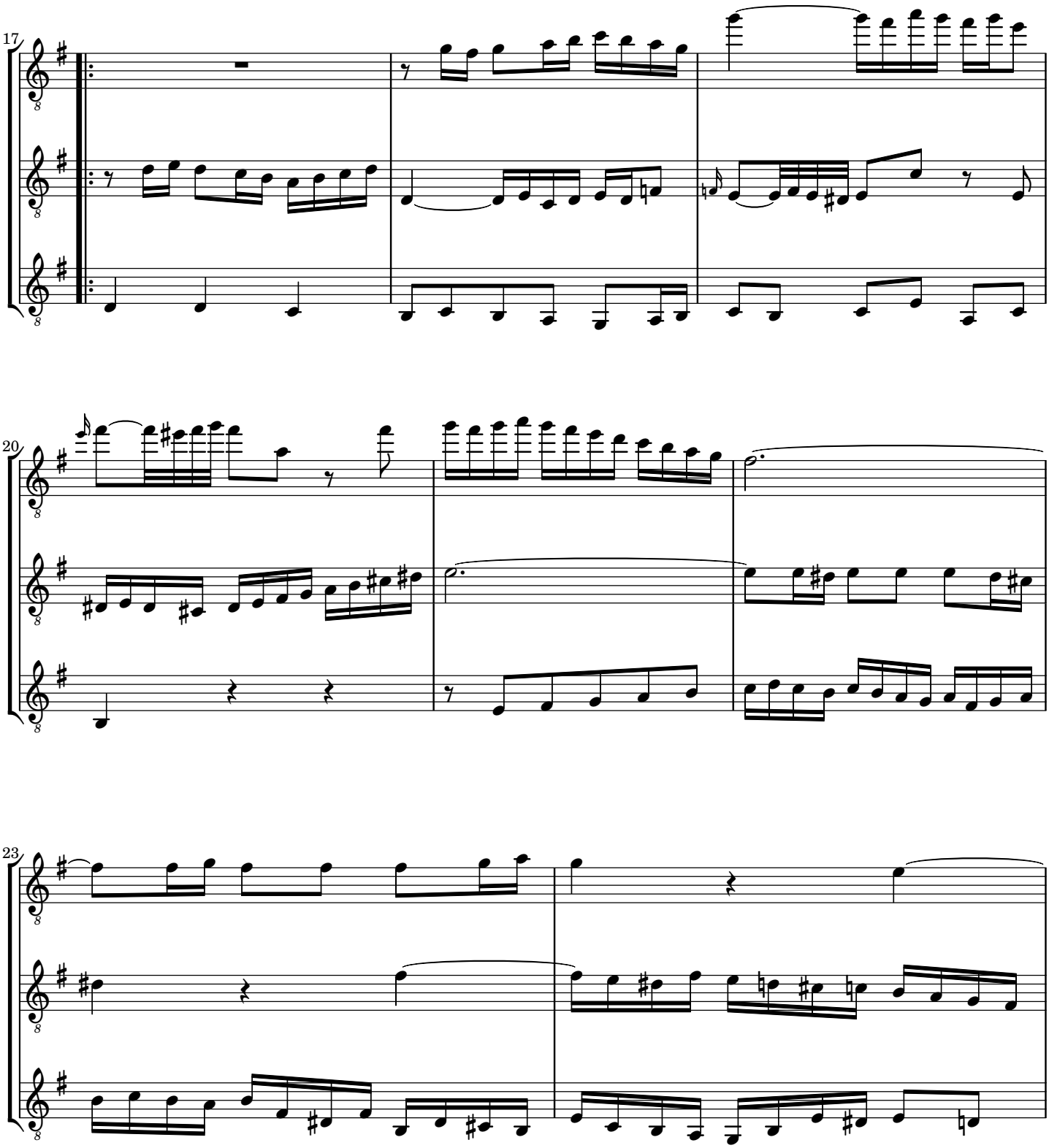
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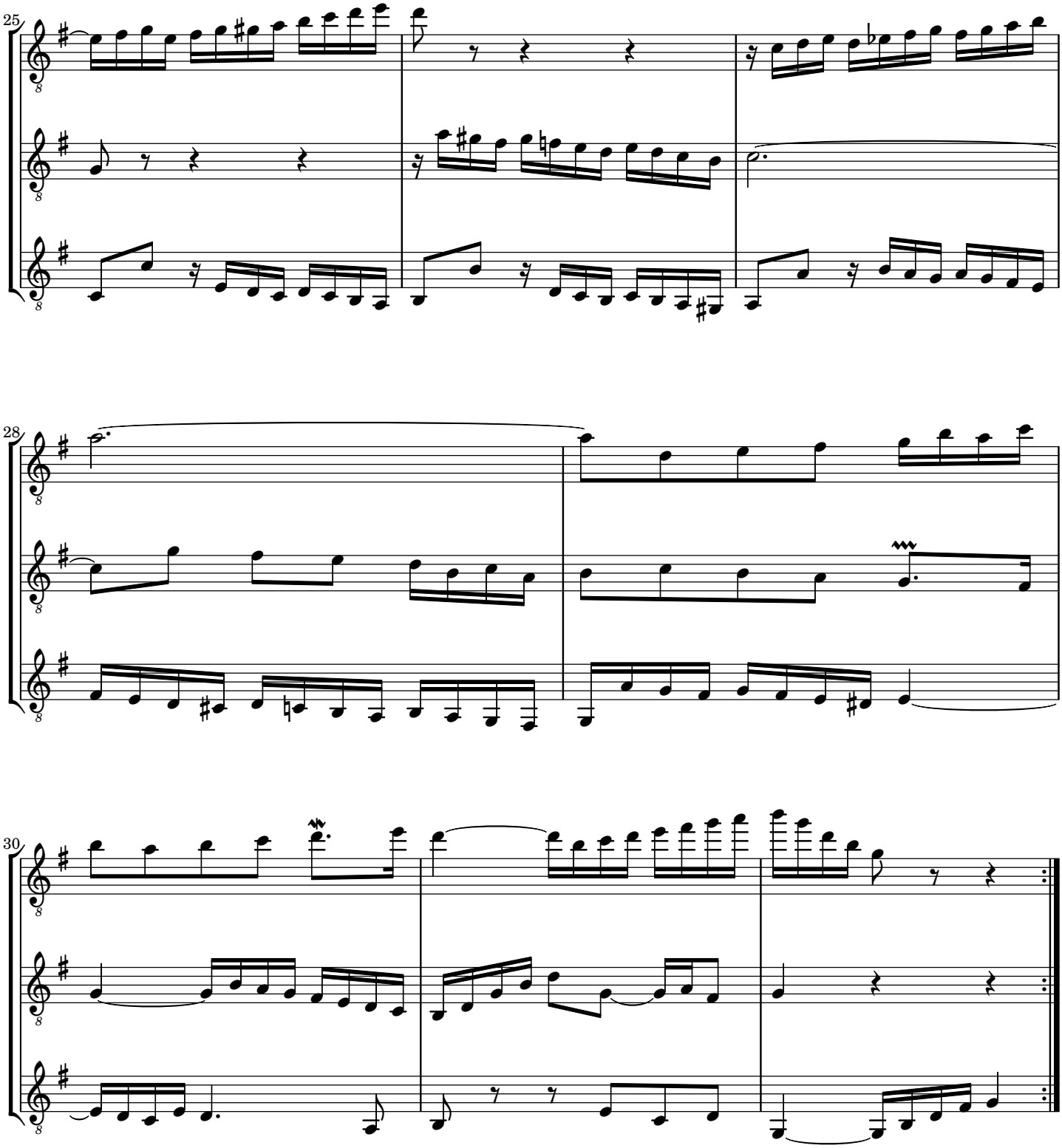
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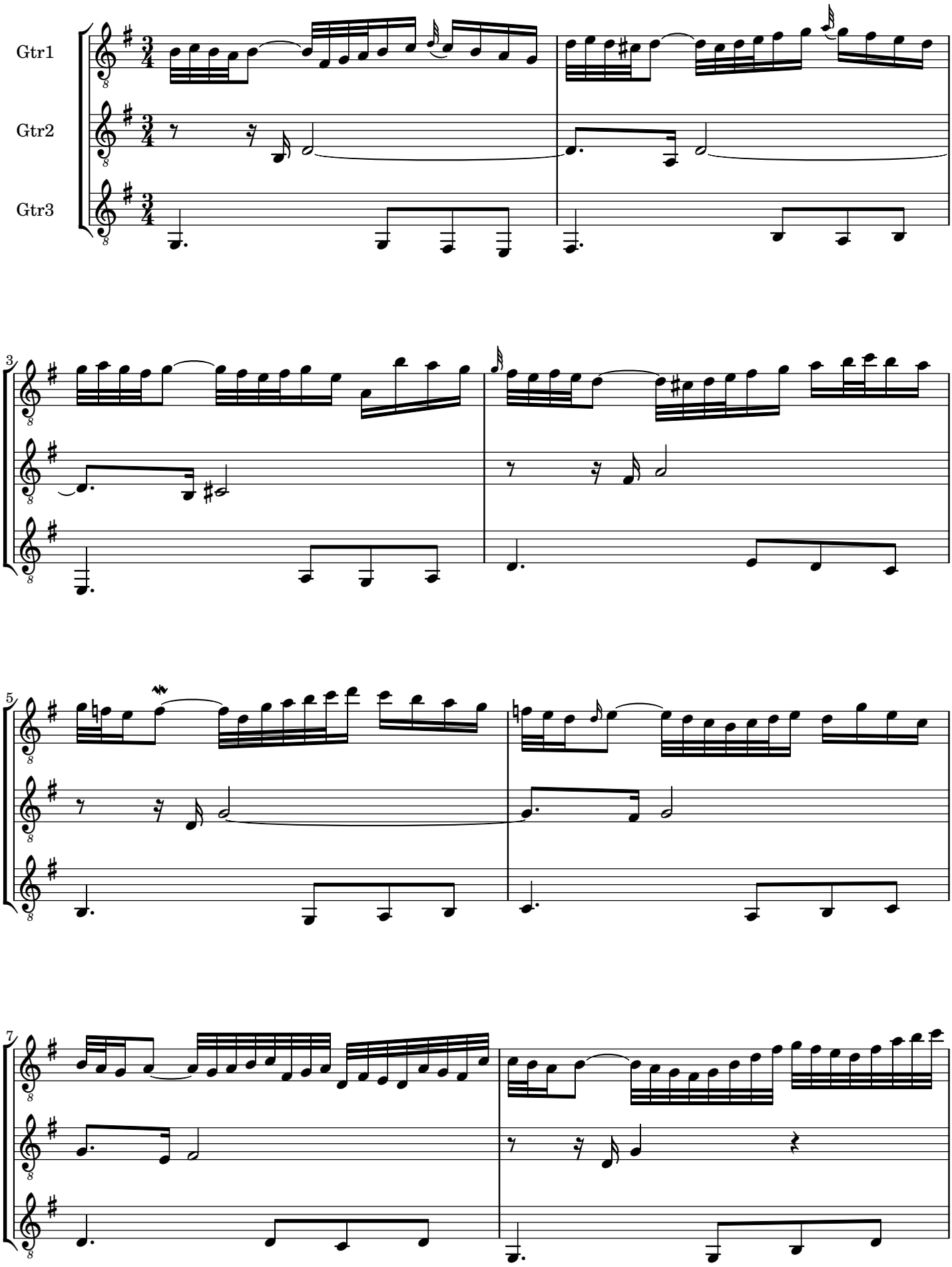
Variation 13



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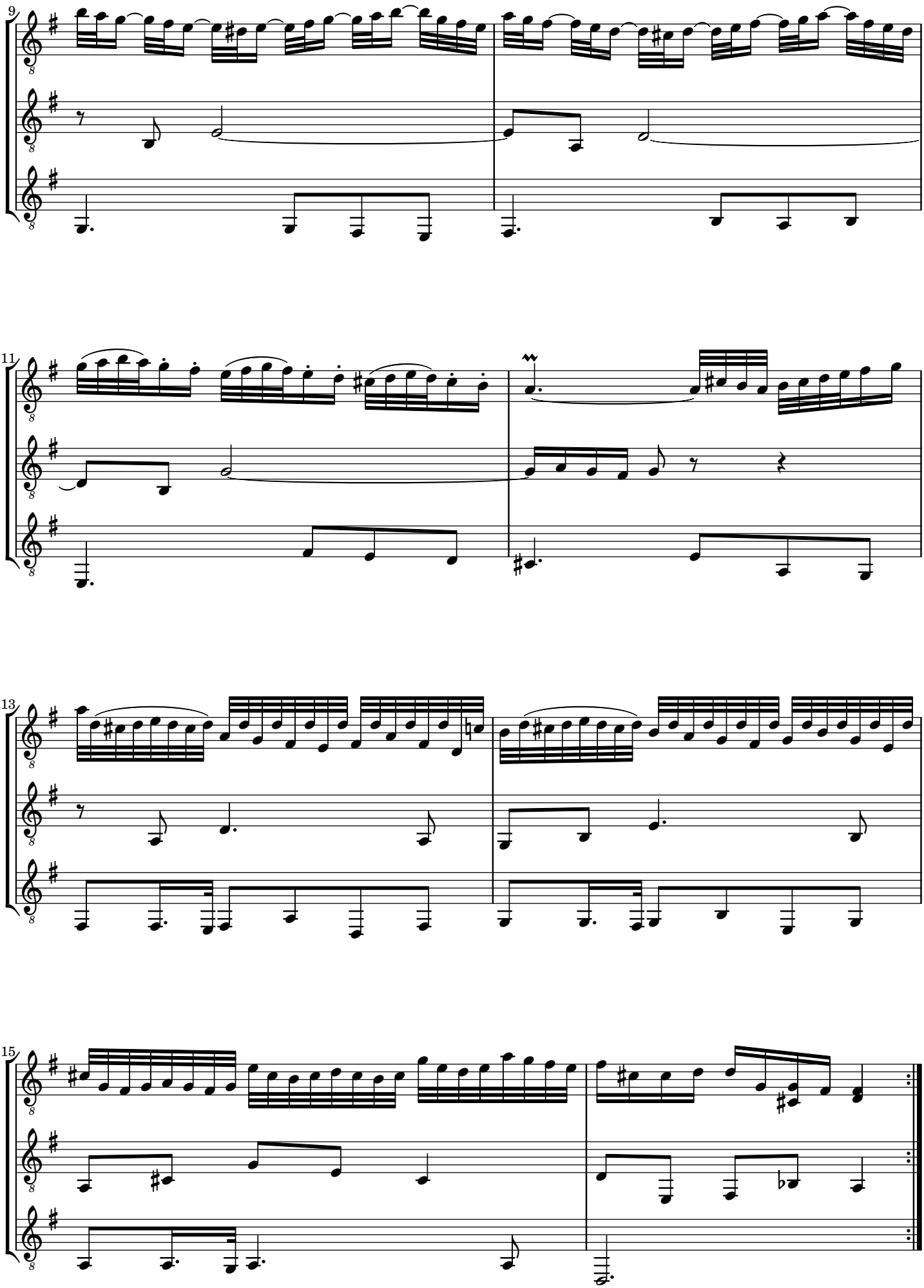
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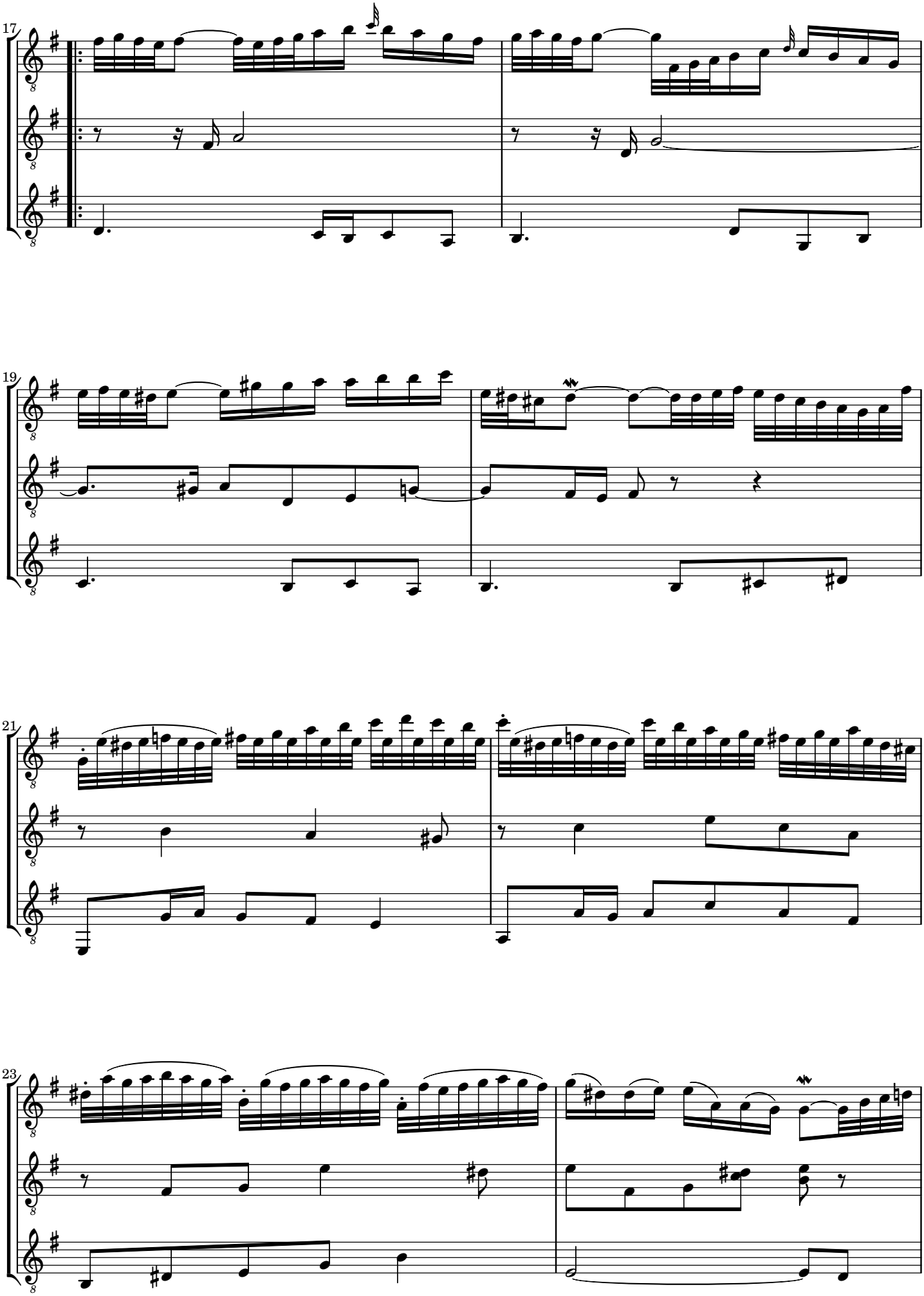
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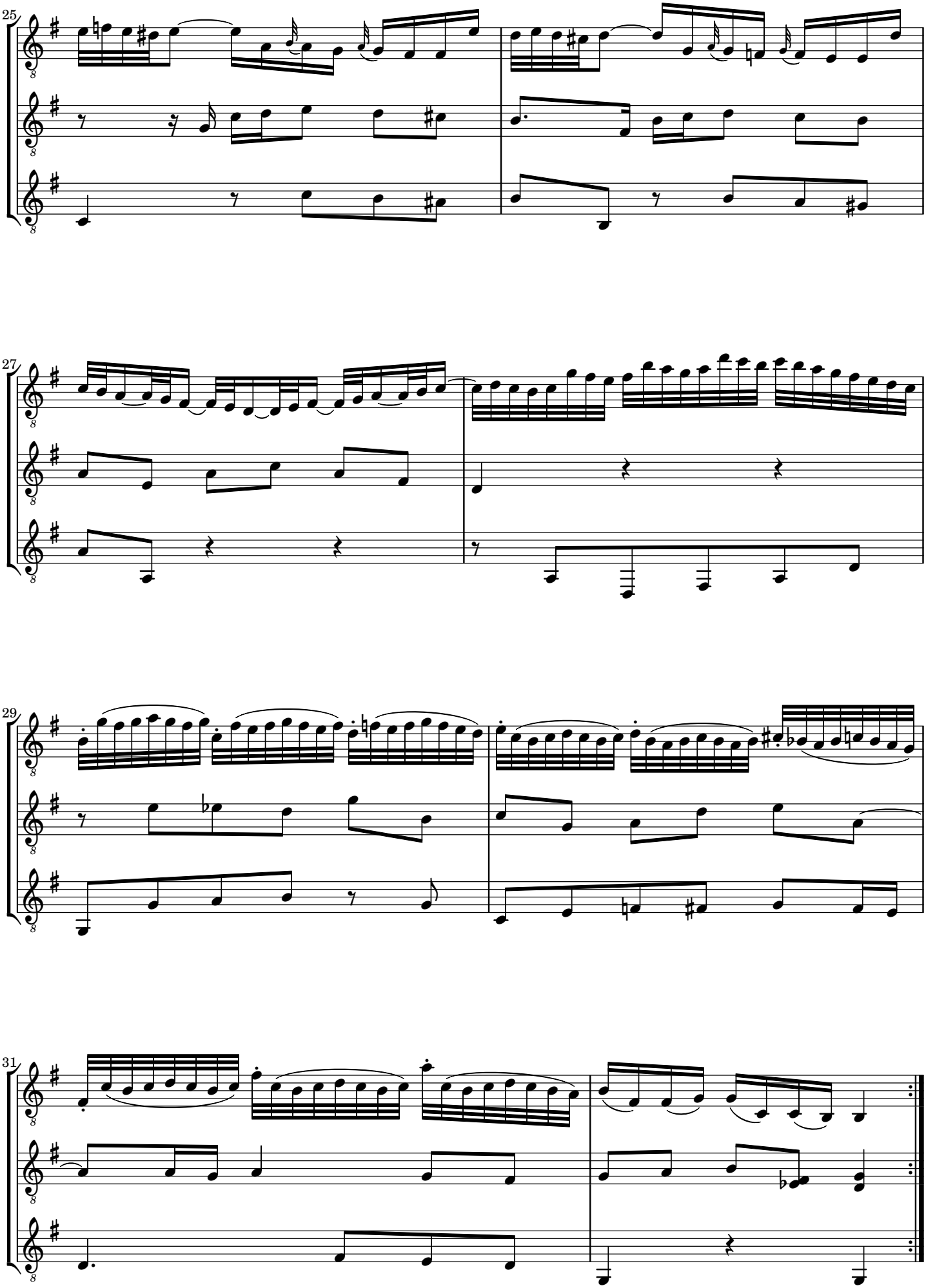
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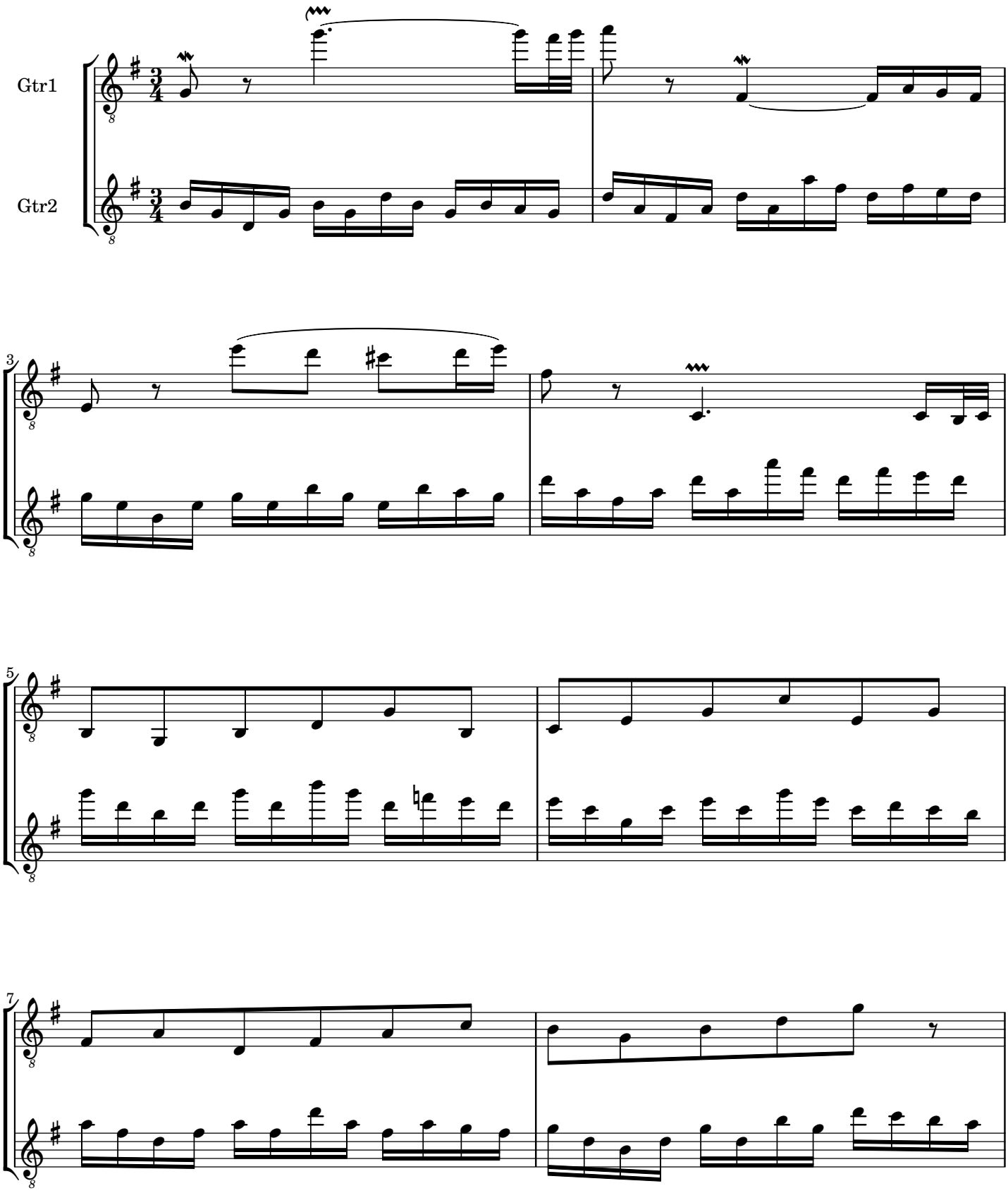
Variation 14



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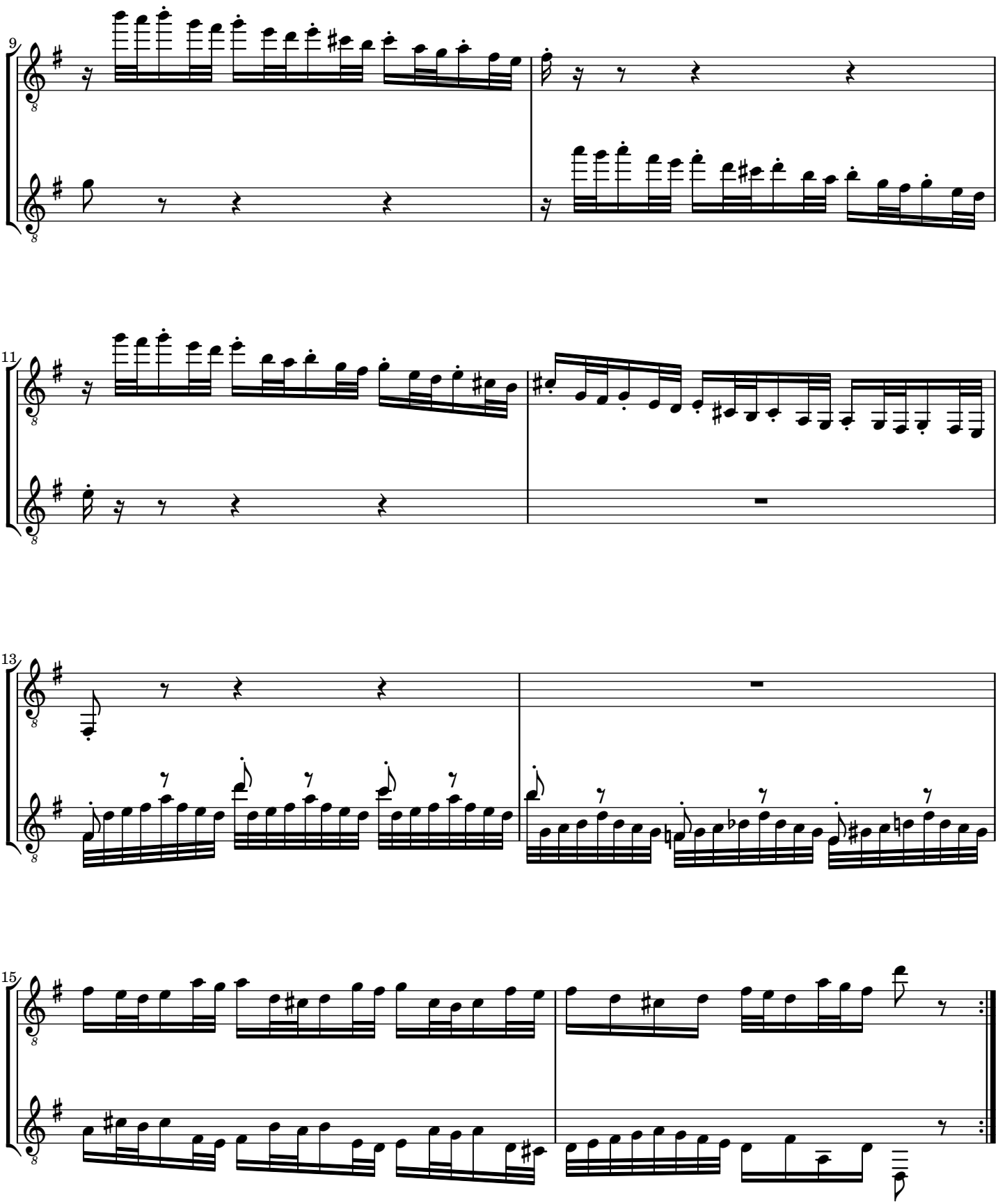

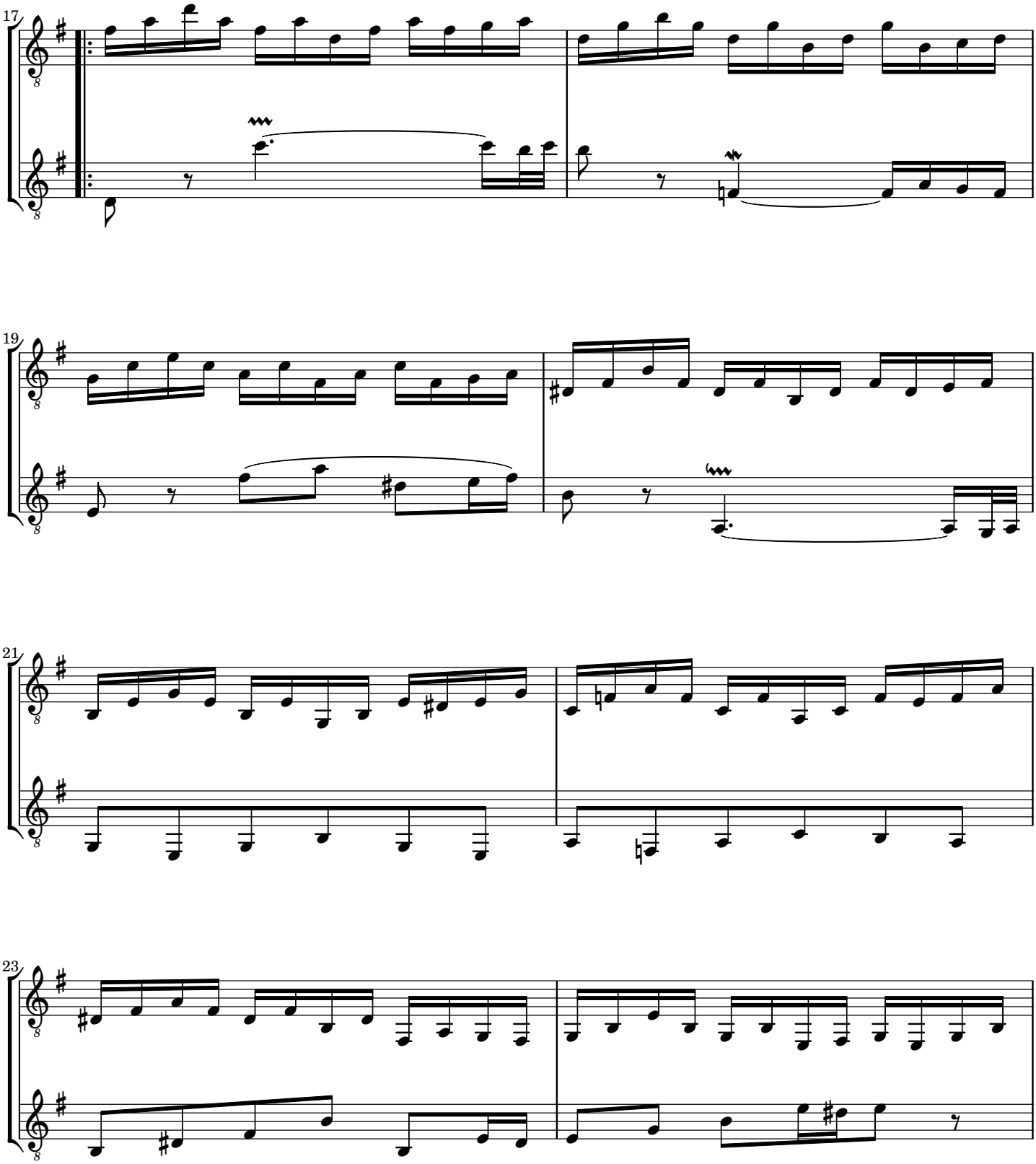
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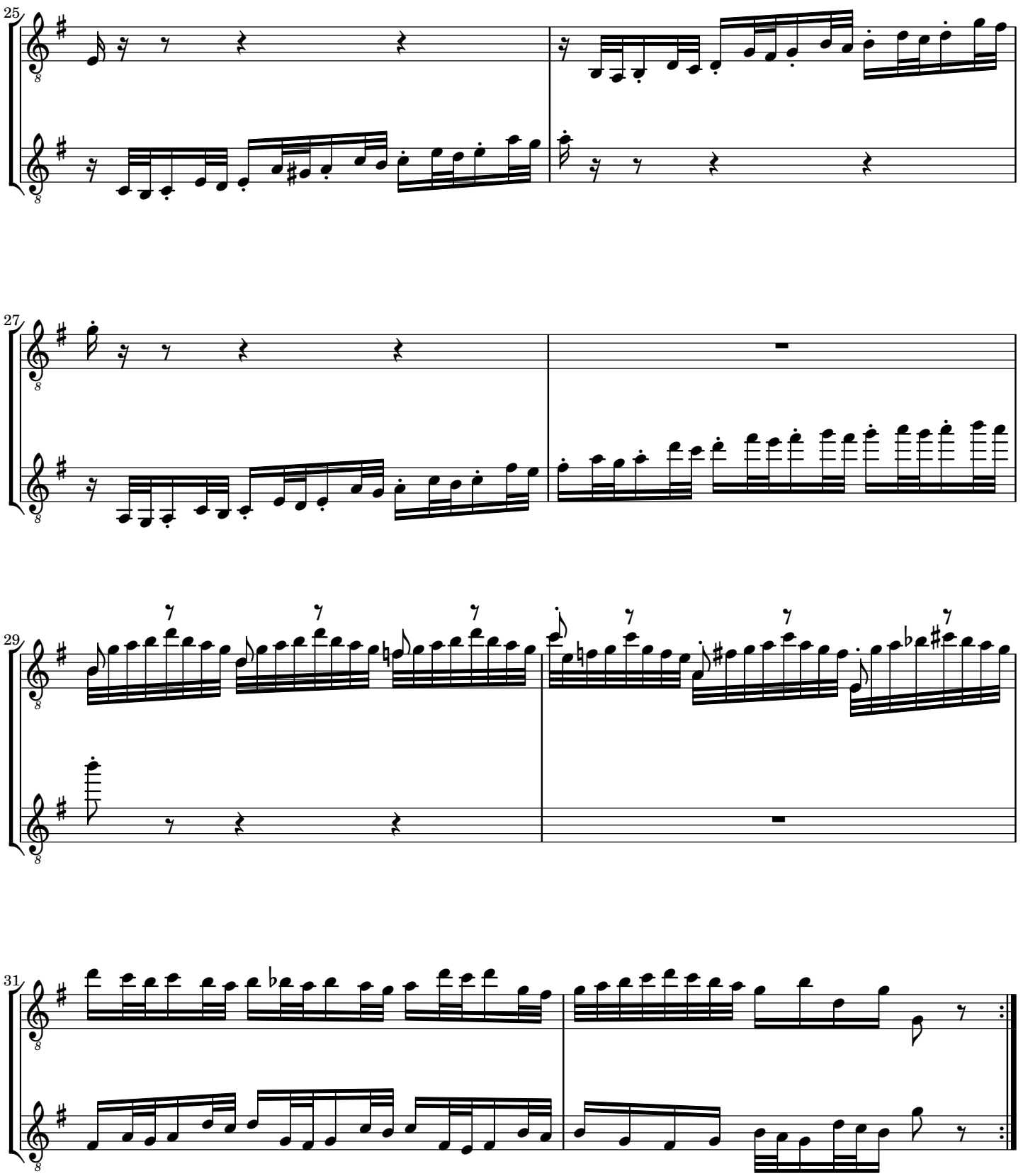
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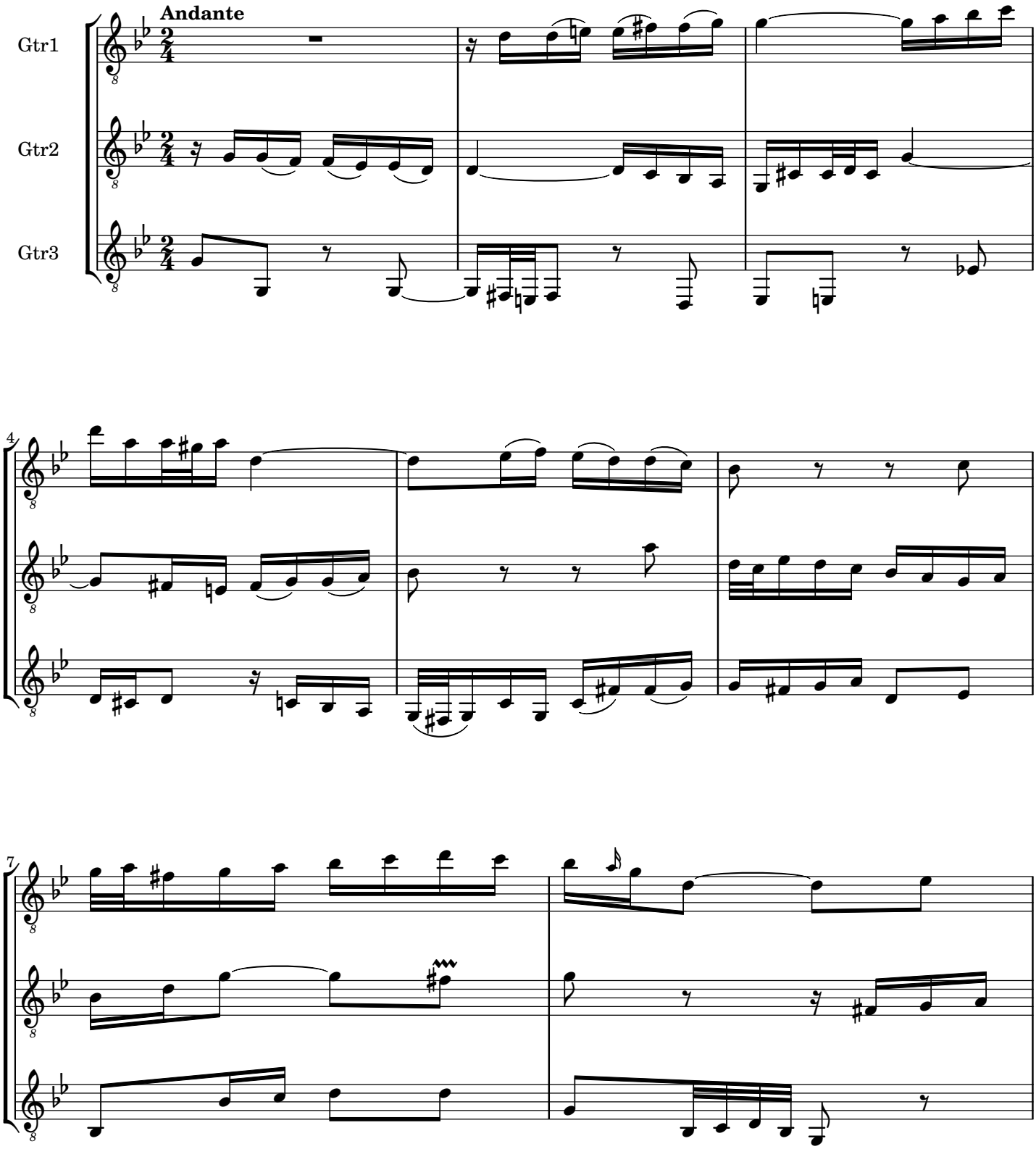
Variation 15

Canon at the Fifth



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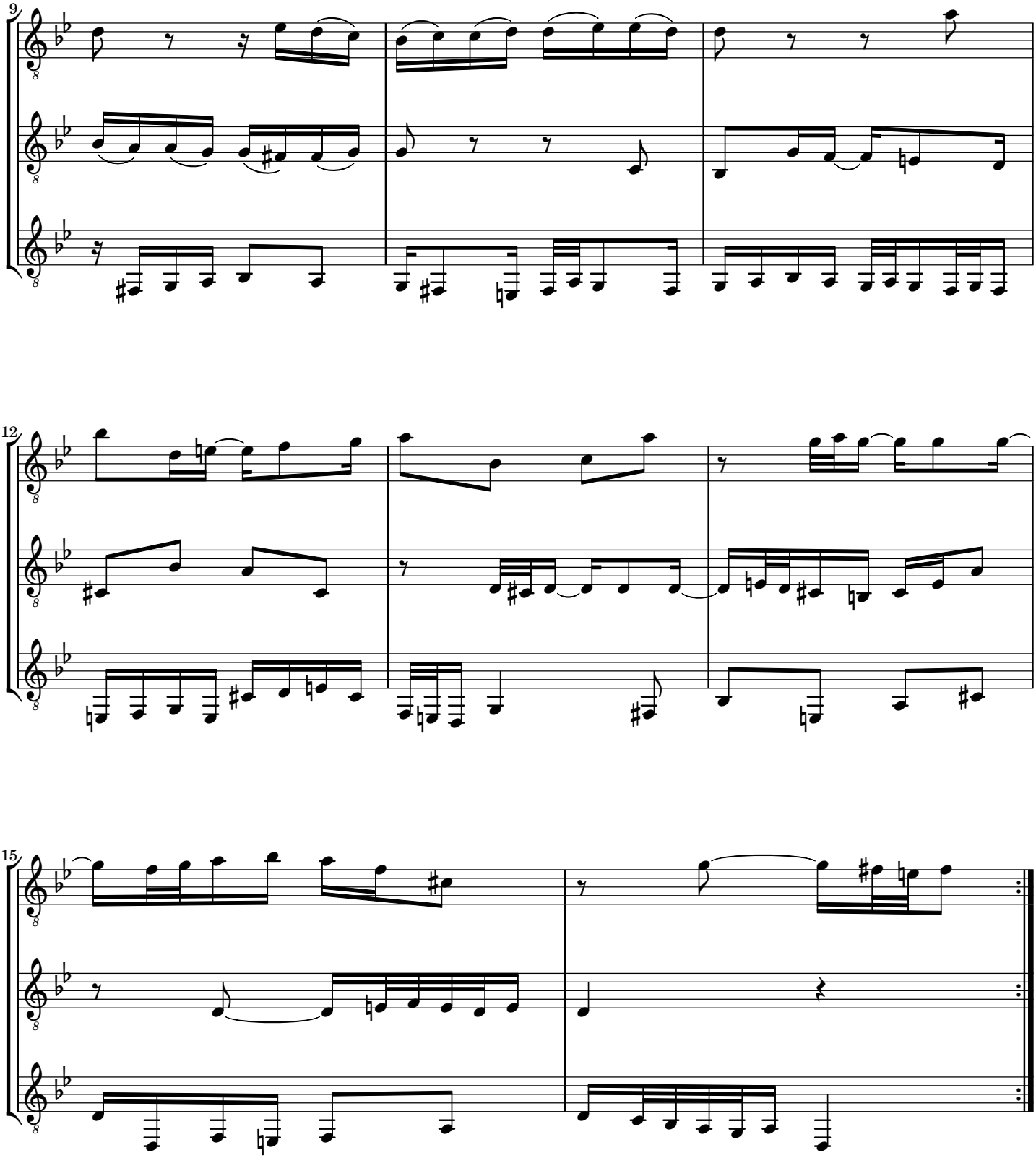
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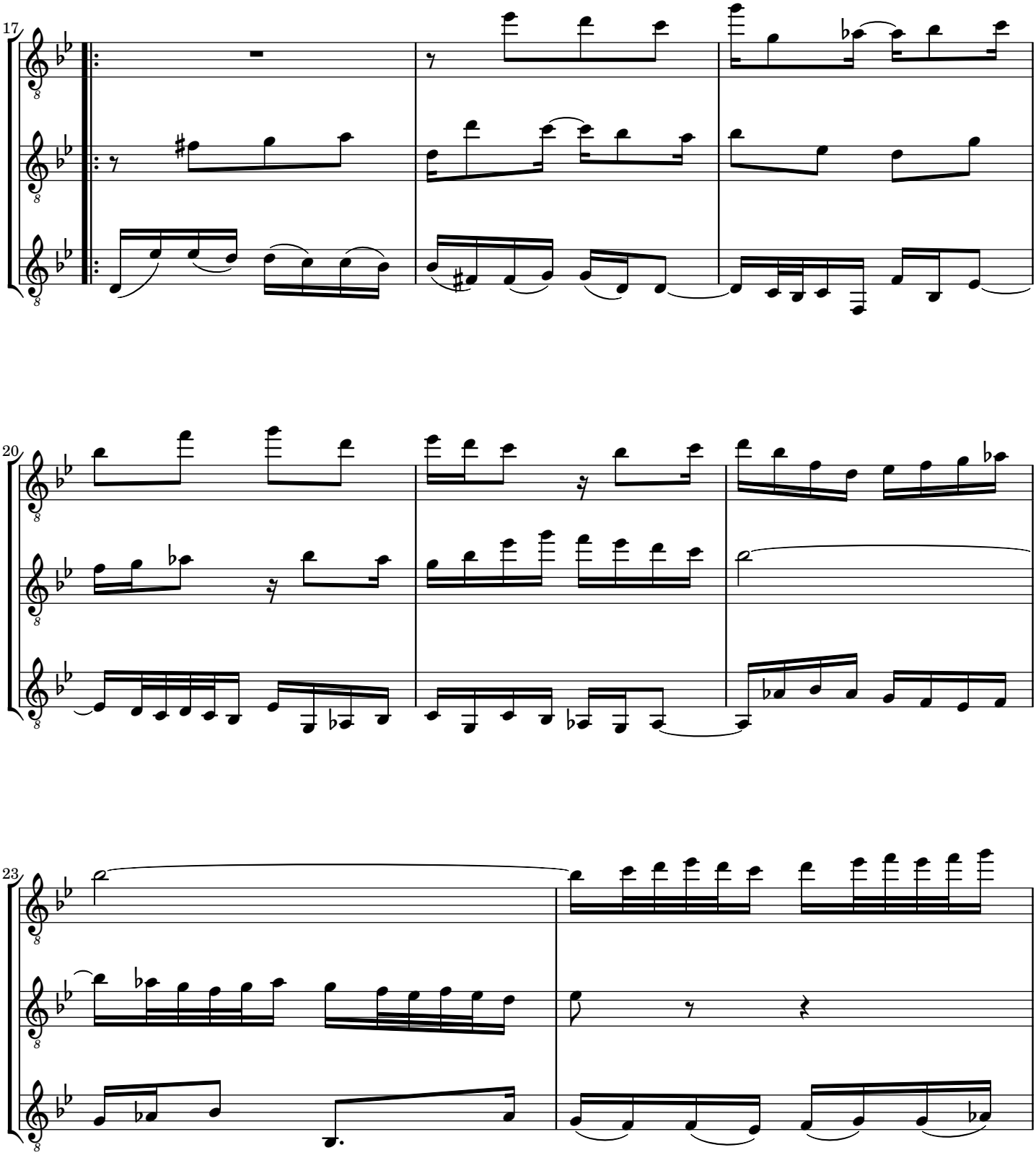
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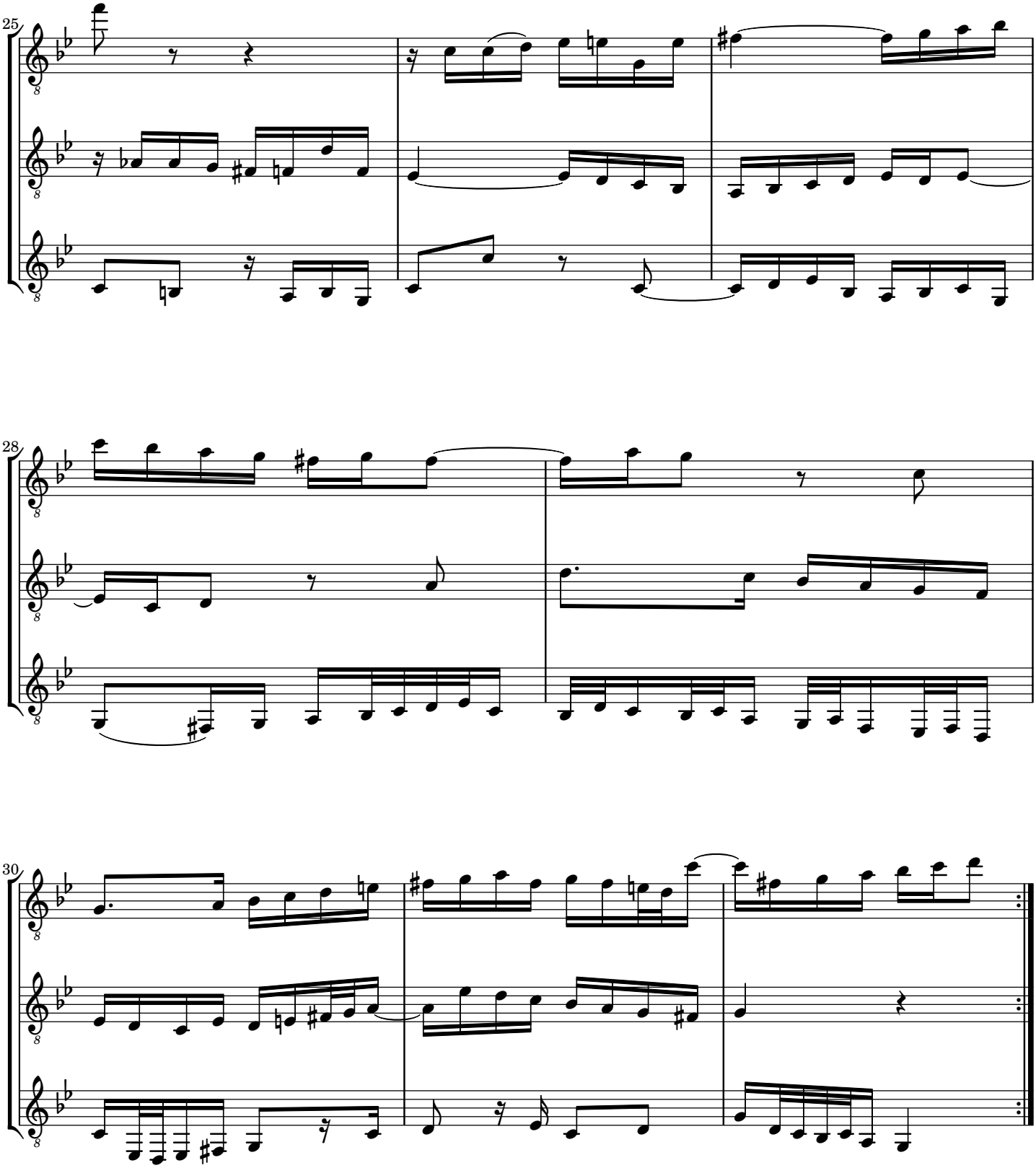
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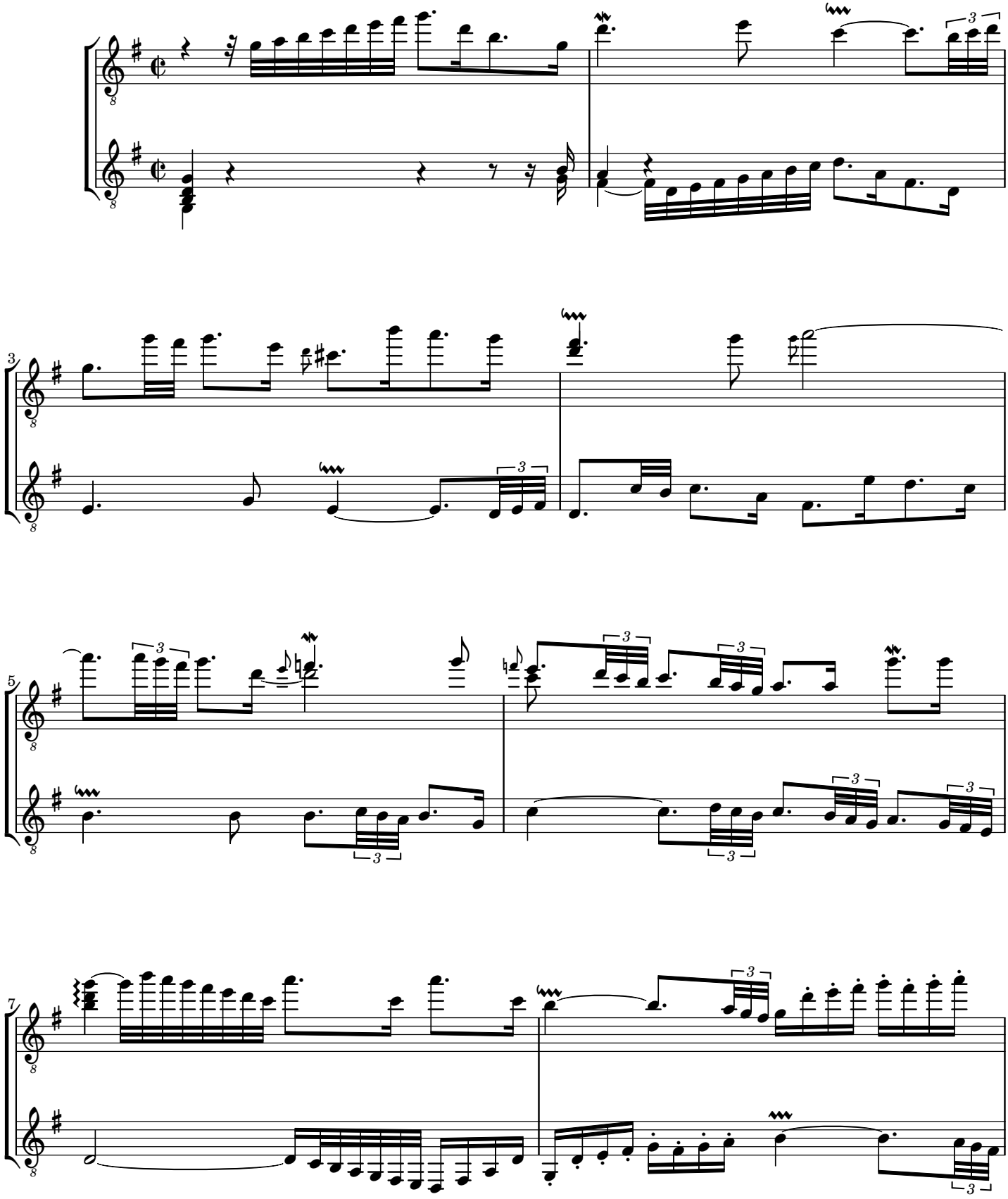
Variation 16

Overture



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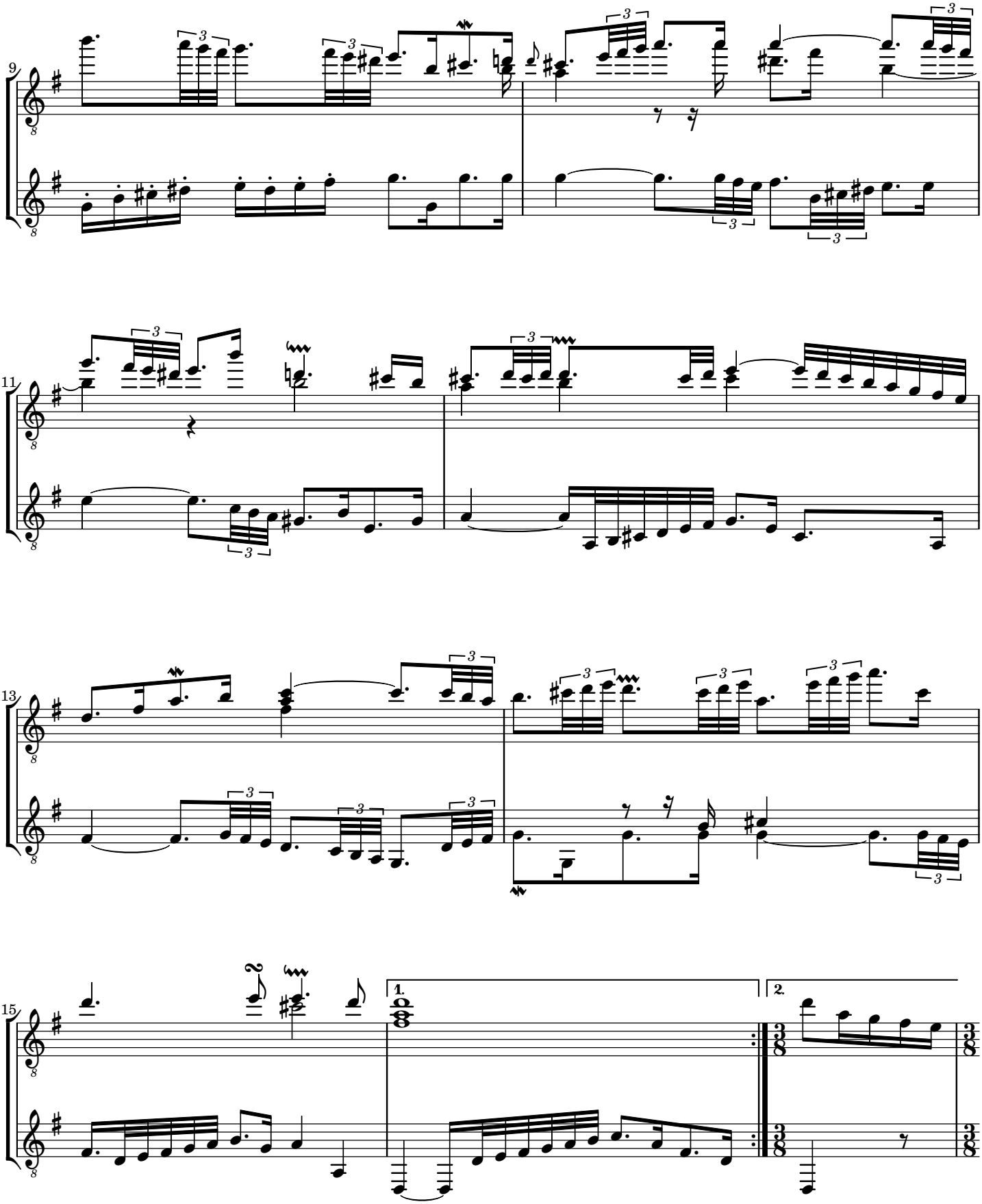
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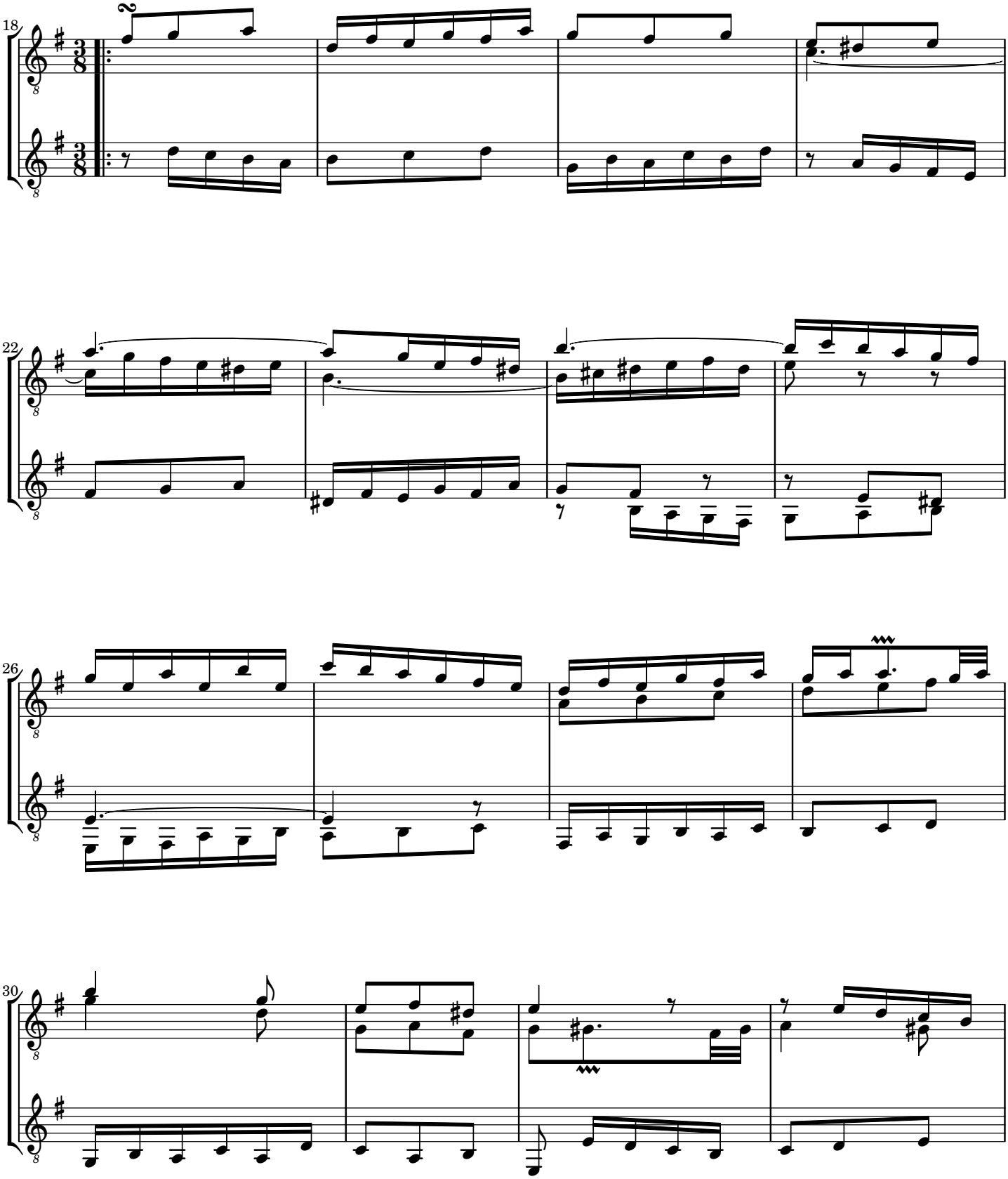
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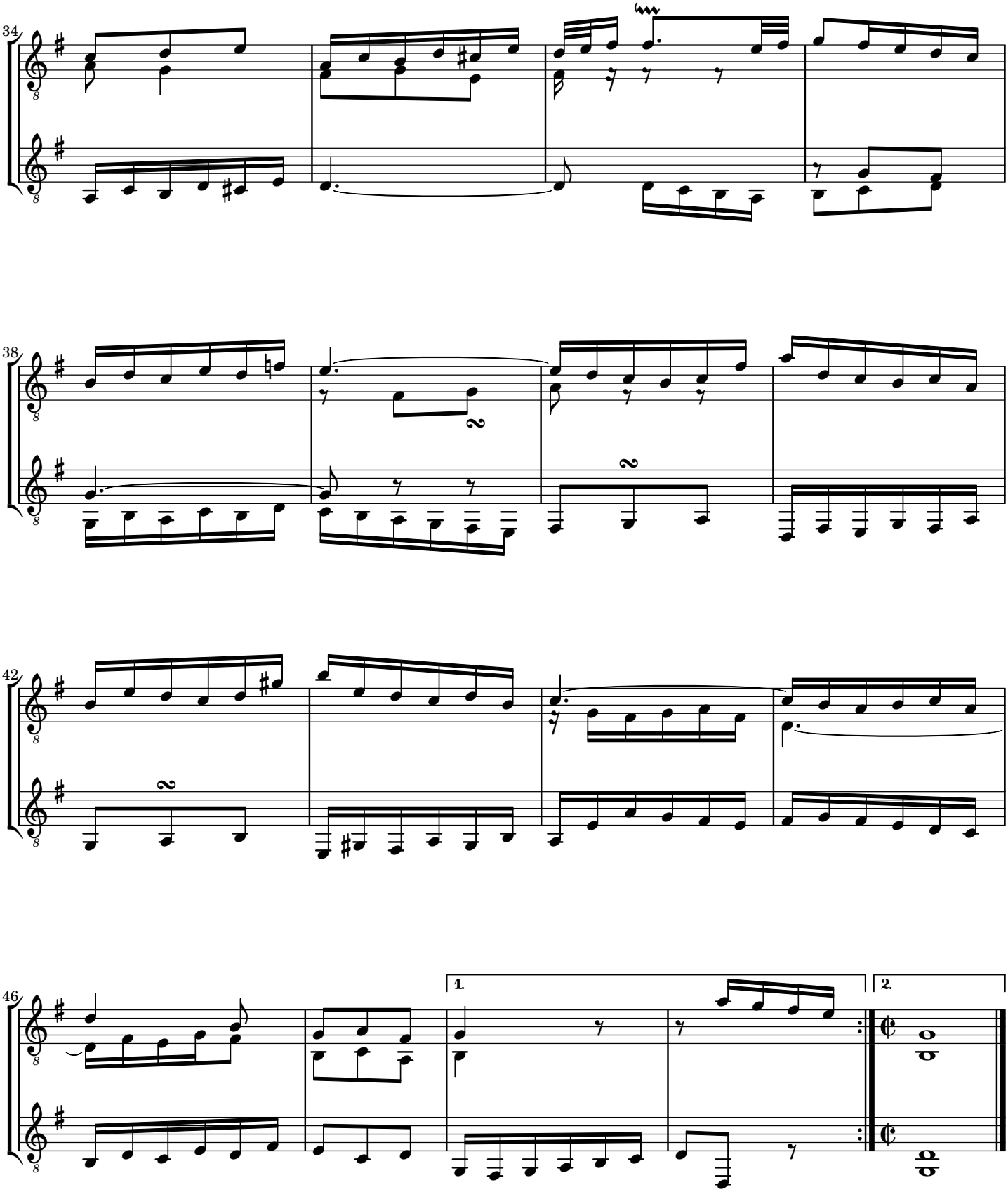
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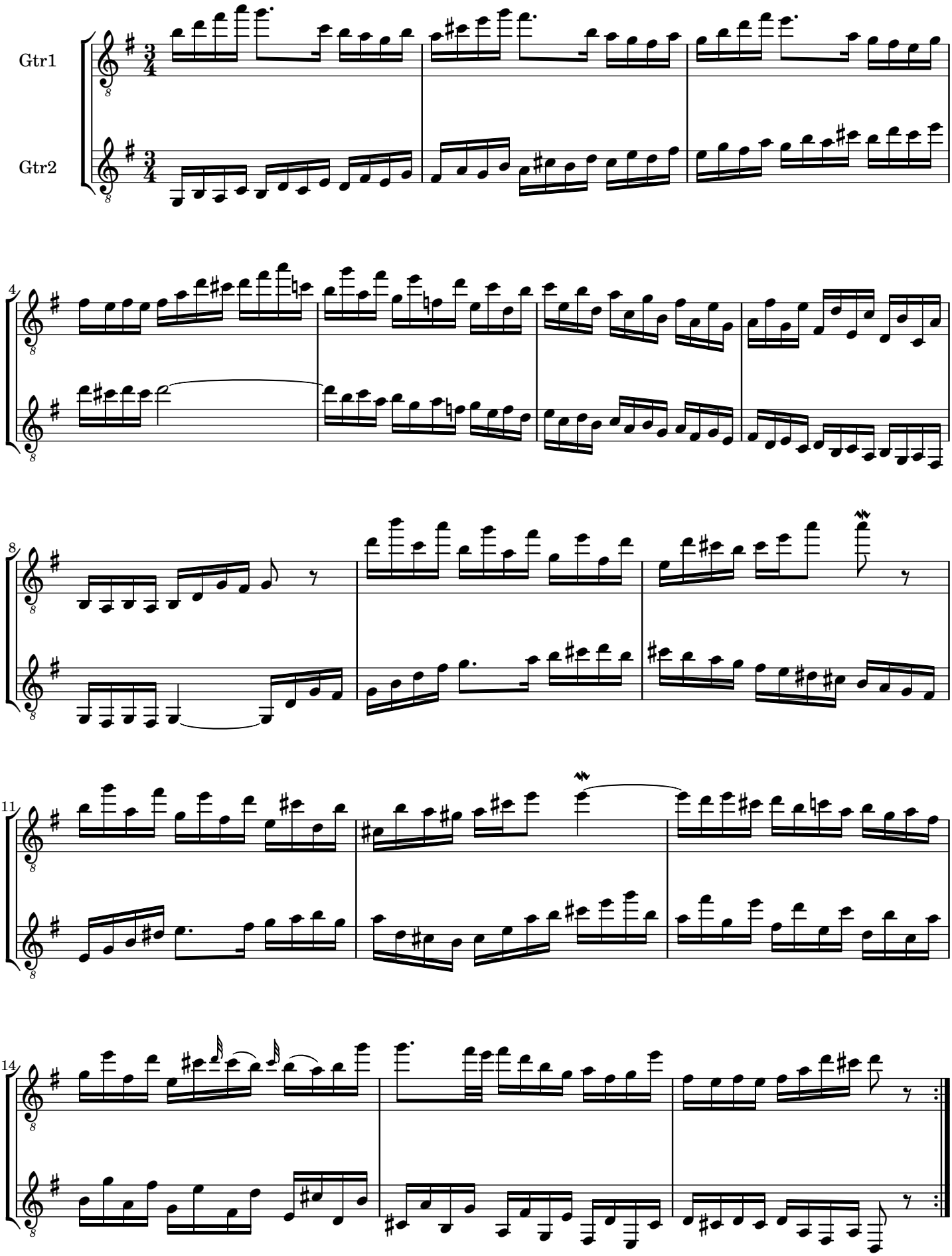
Variation 17



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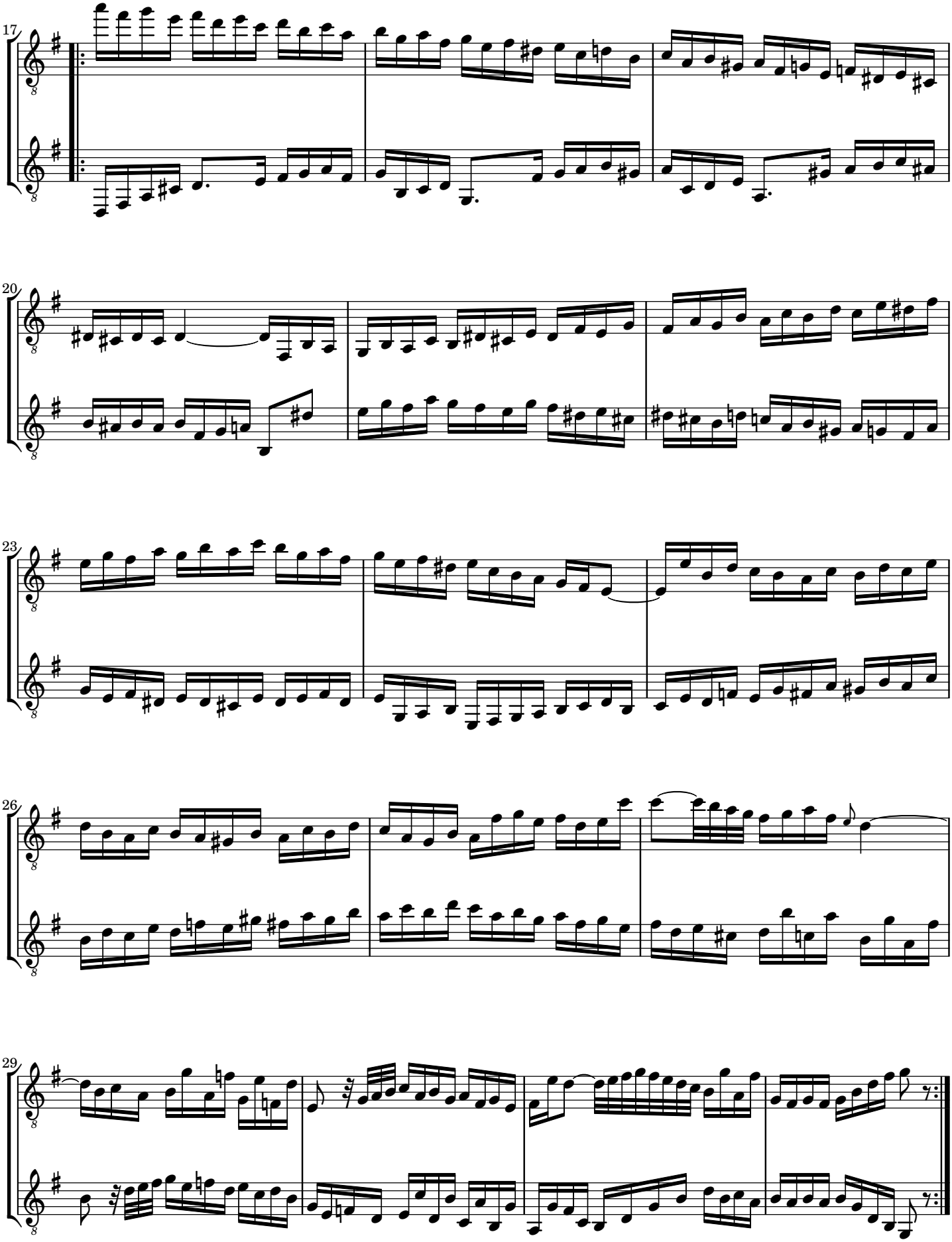
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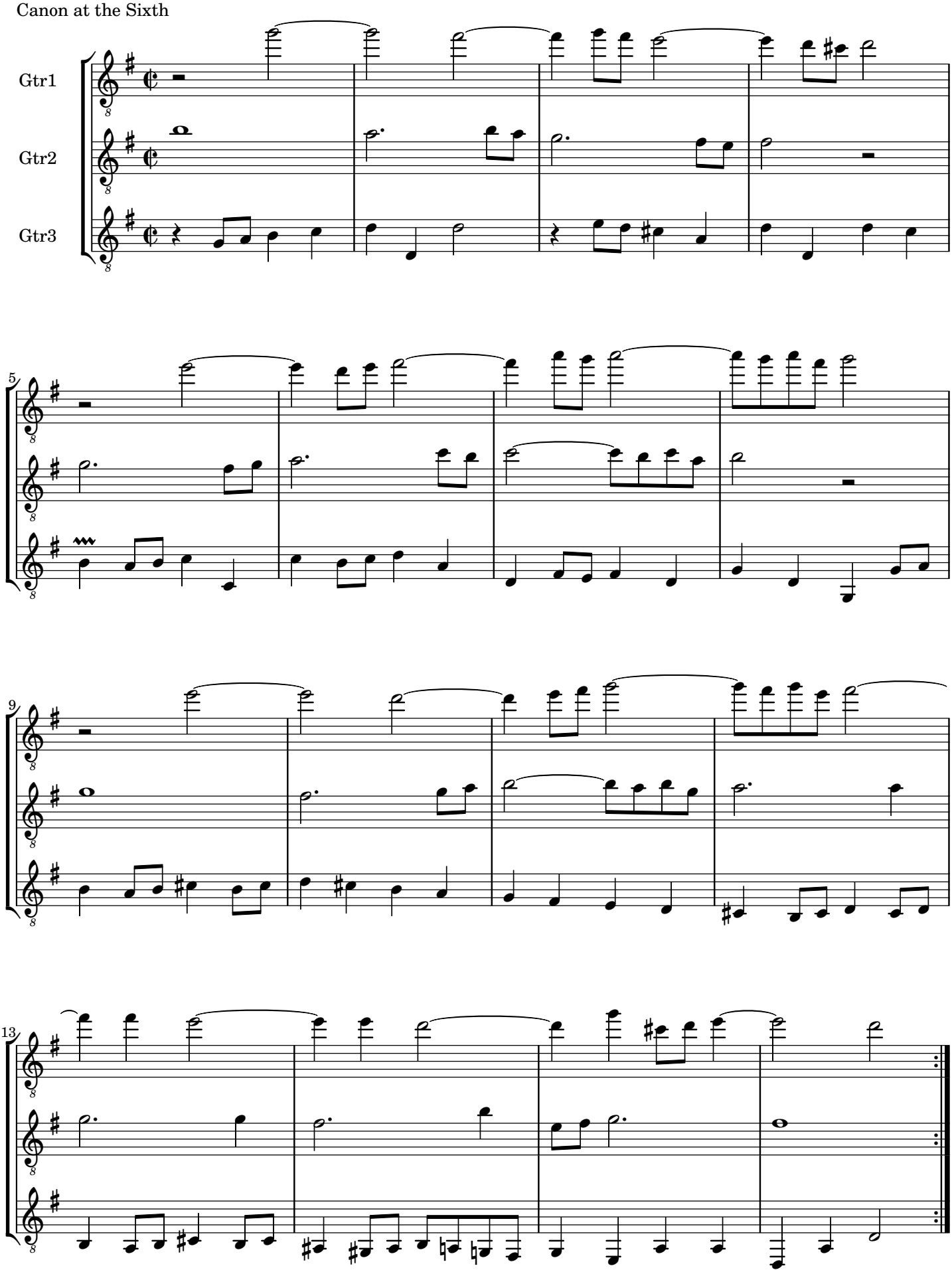
Variation 18

Canon at the Sixth



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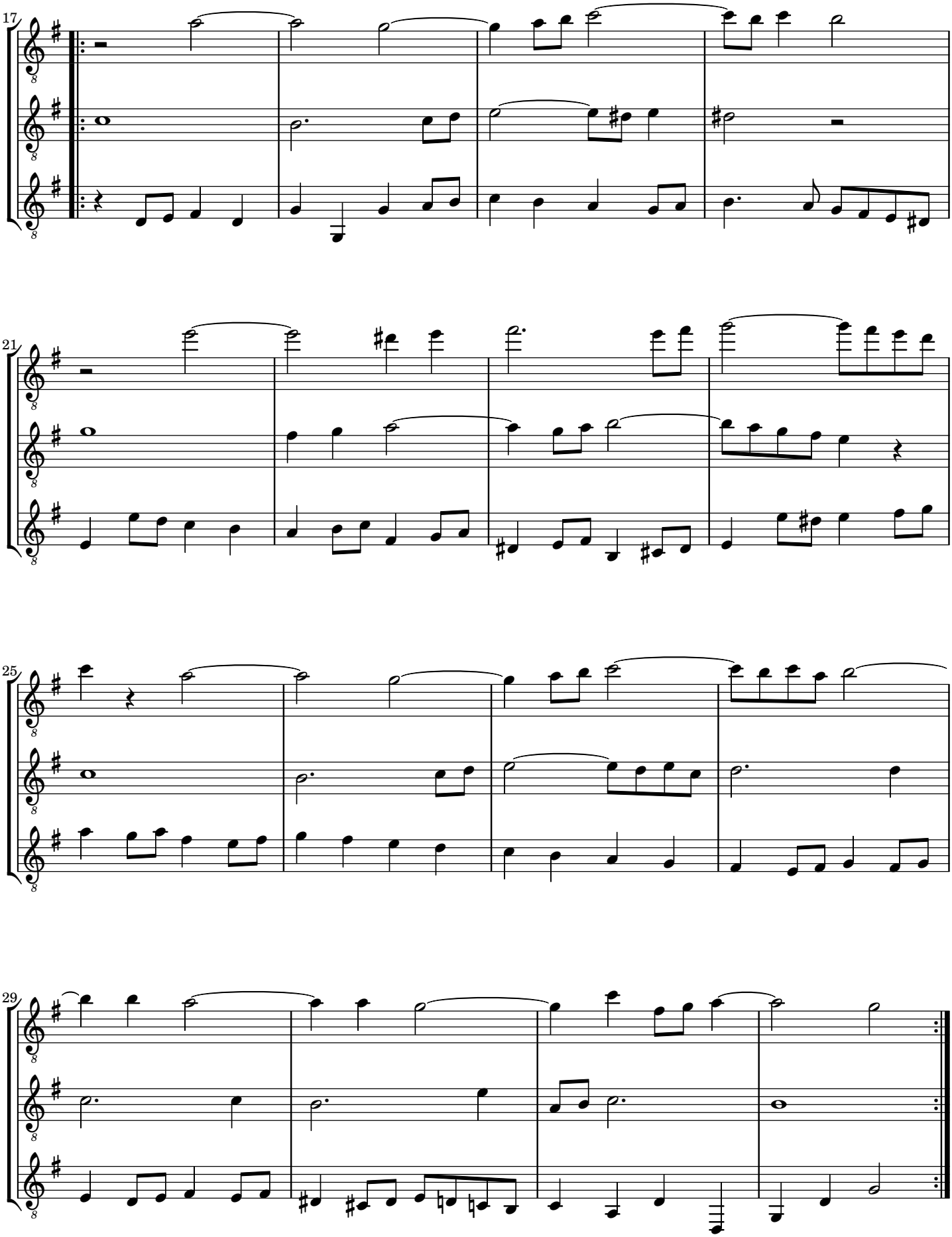
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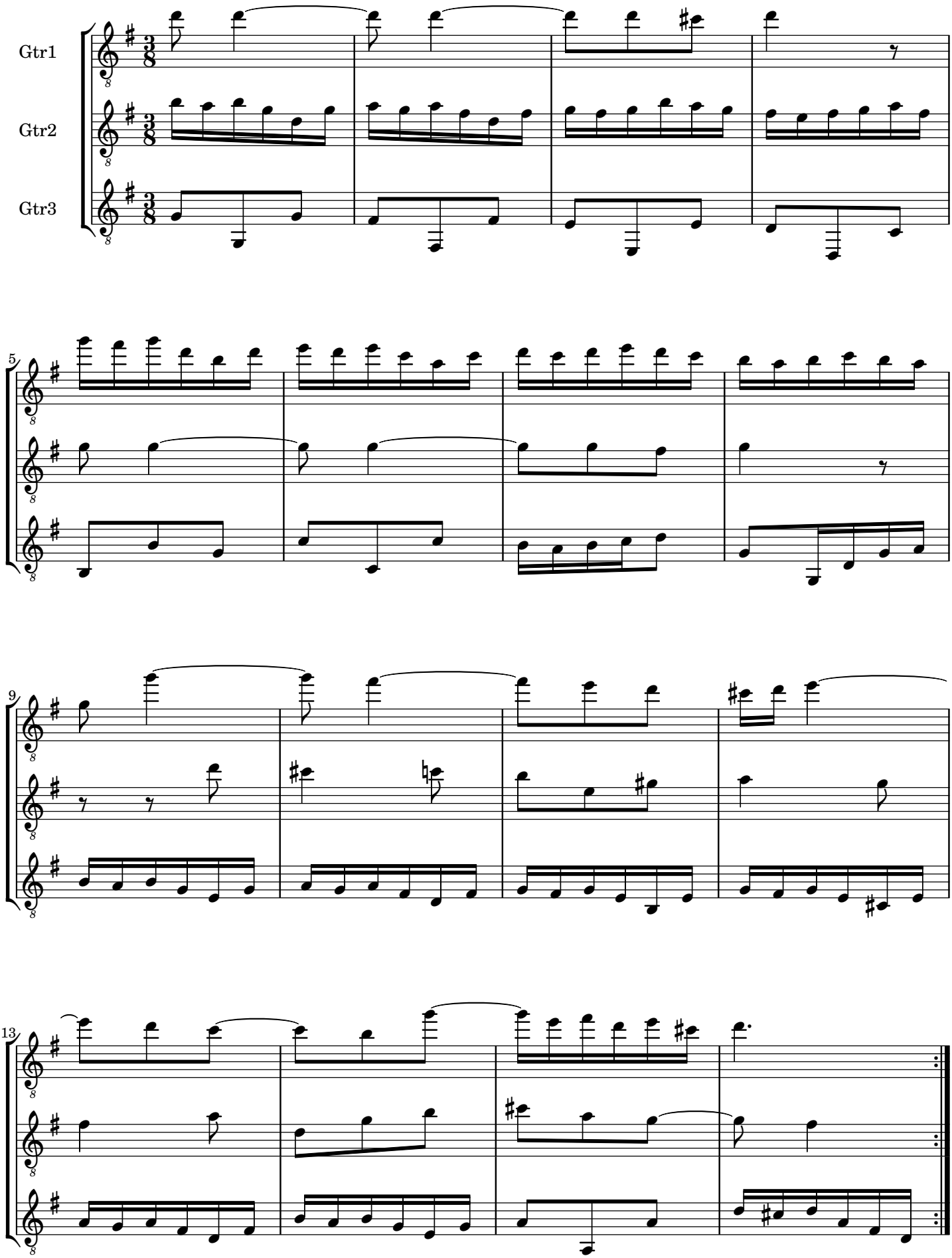
Variation 19



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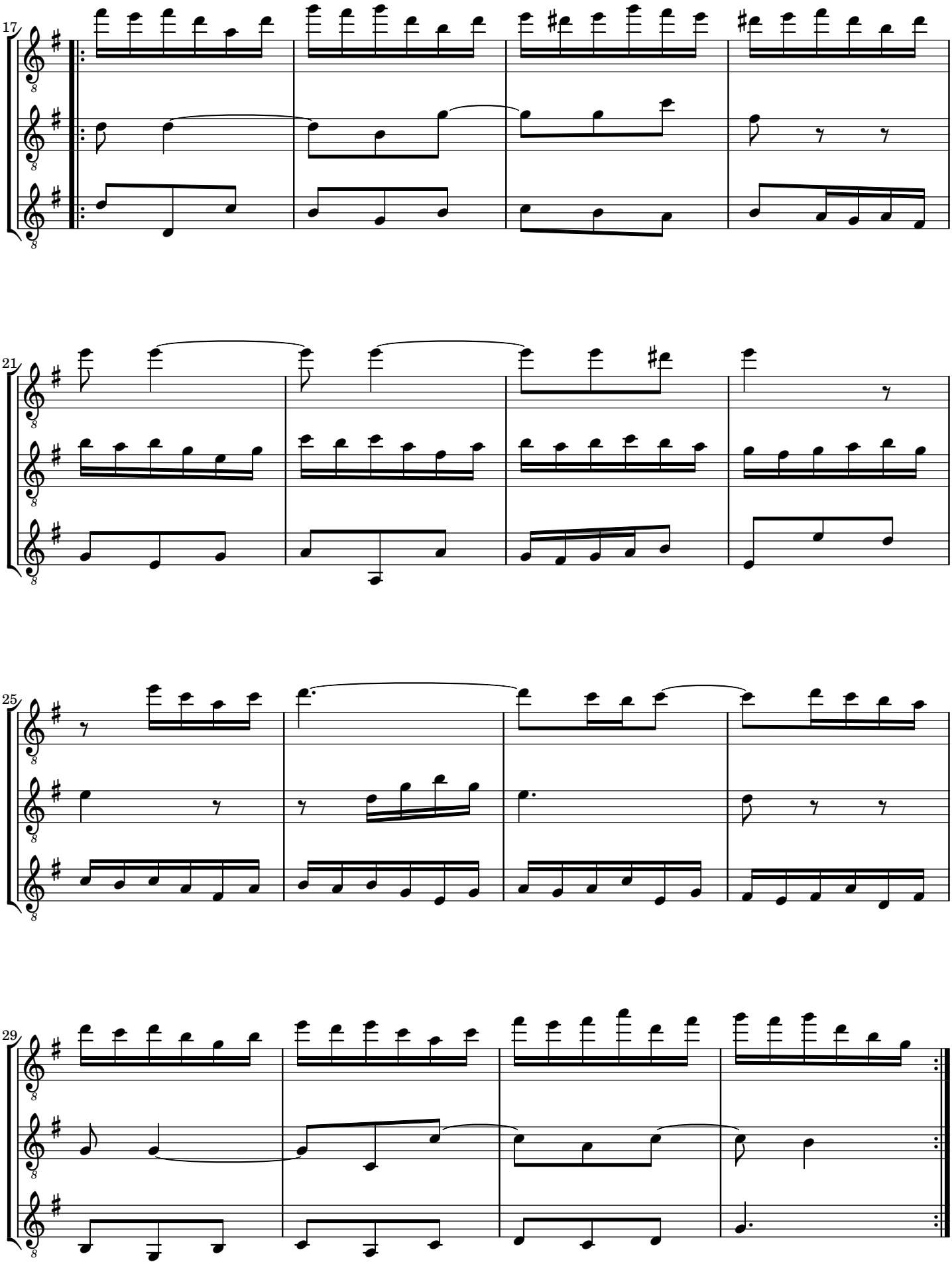
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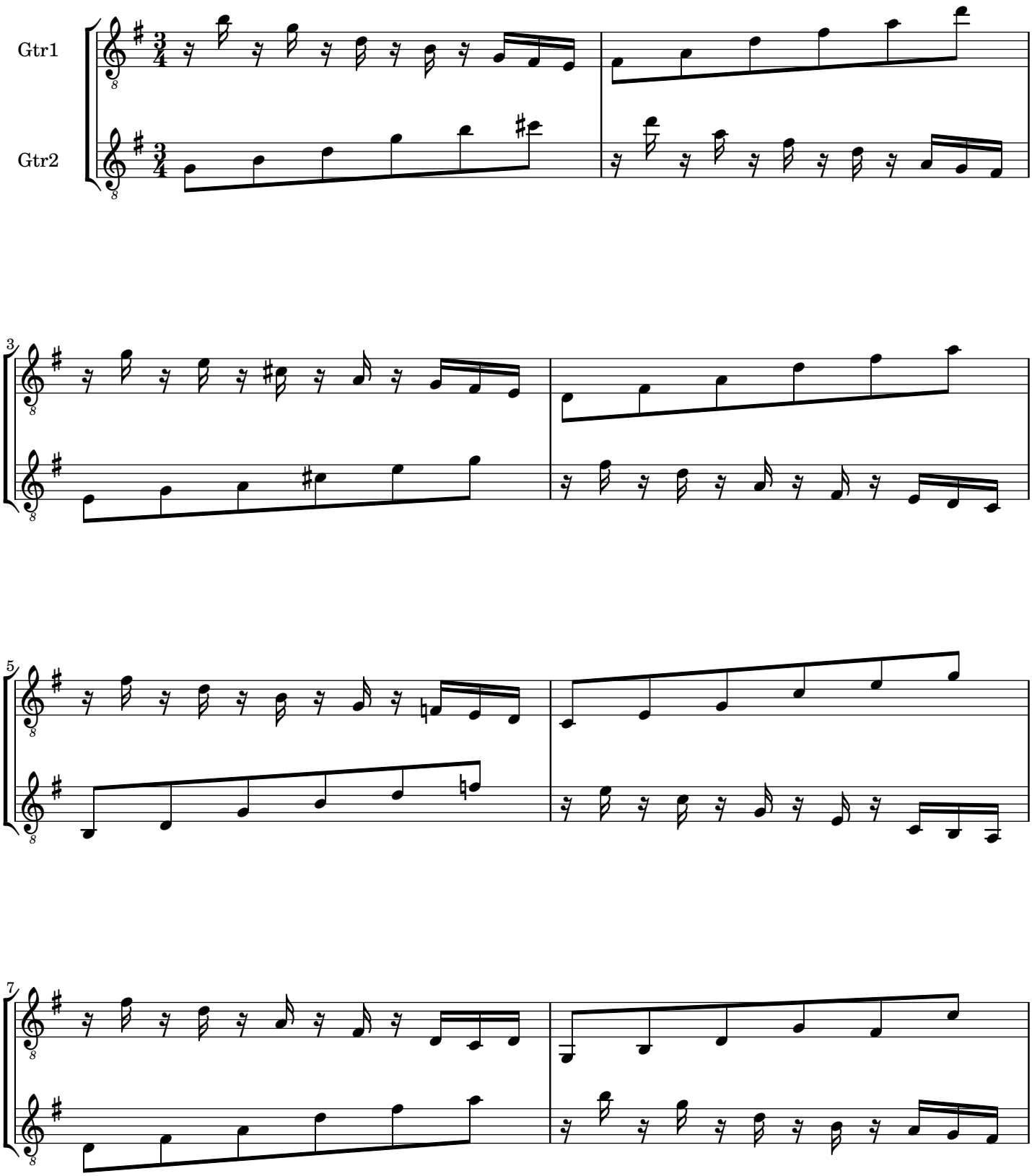
Variation 20



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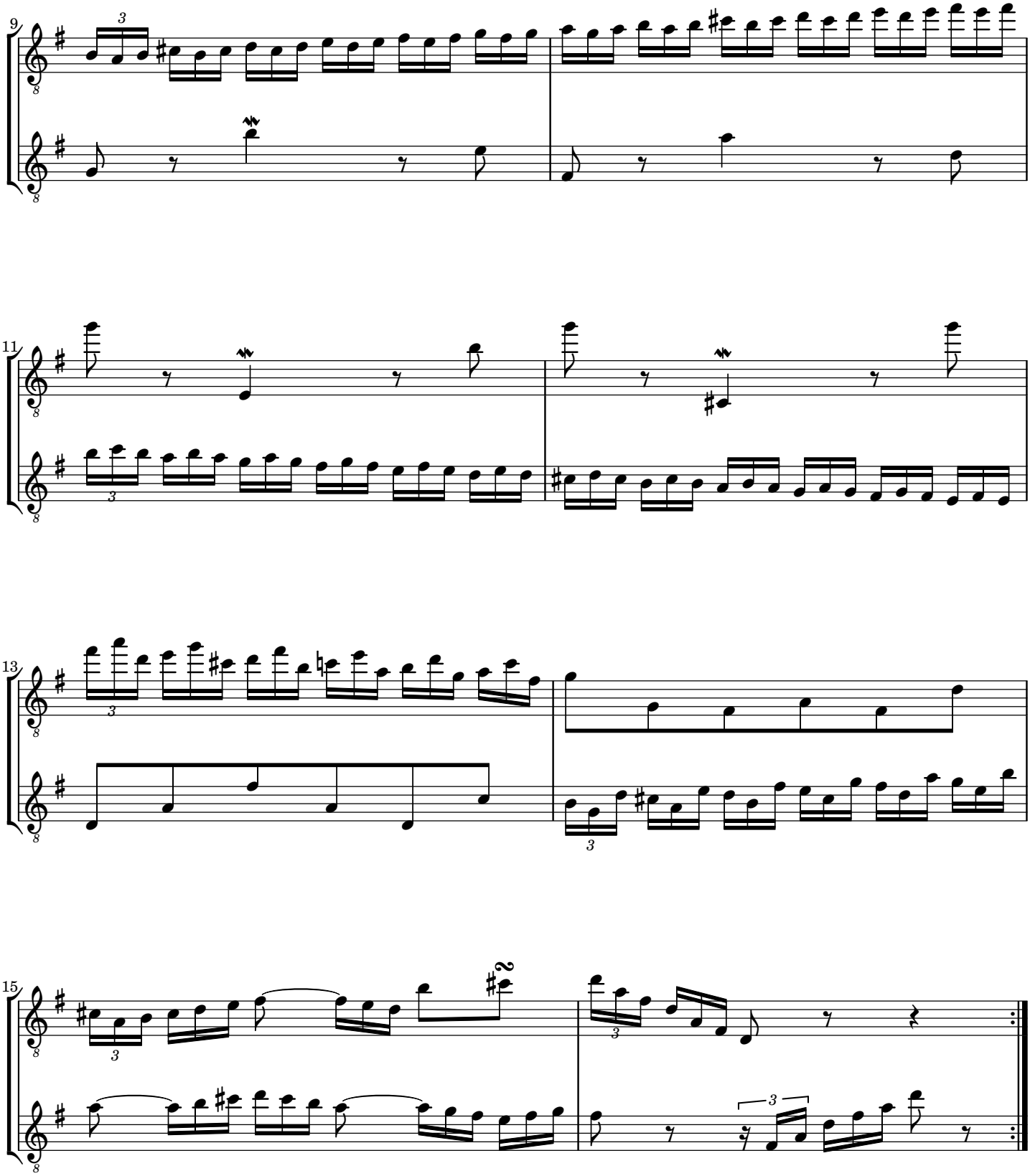
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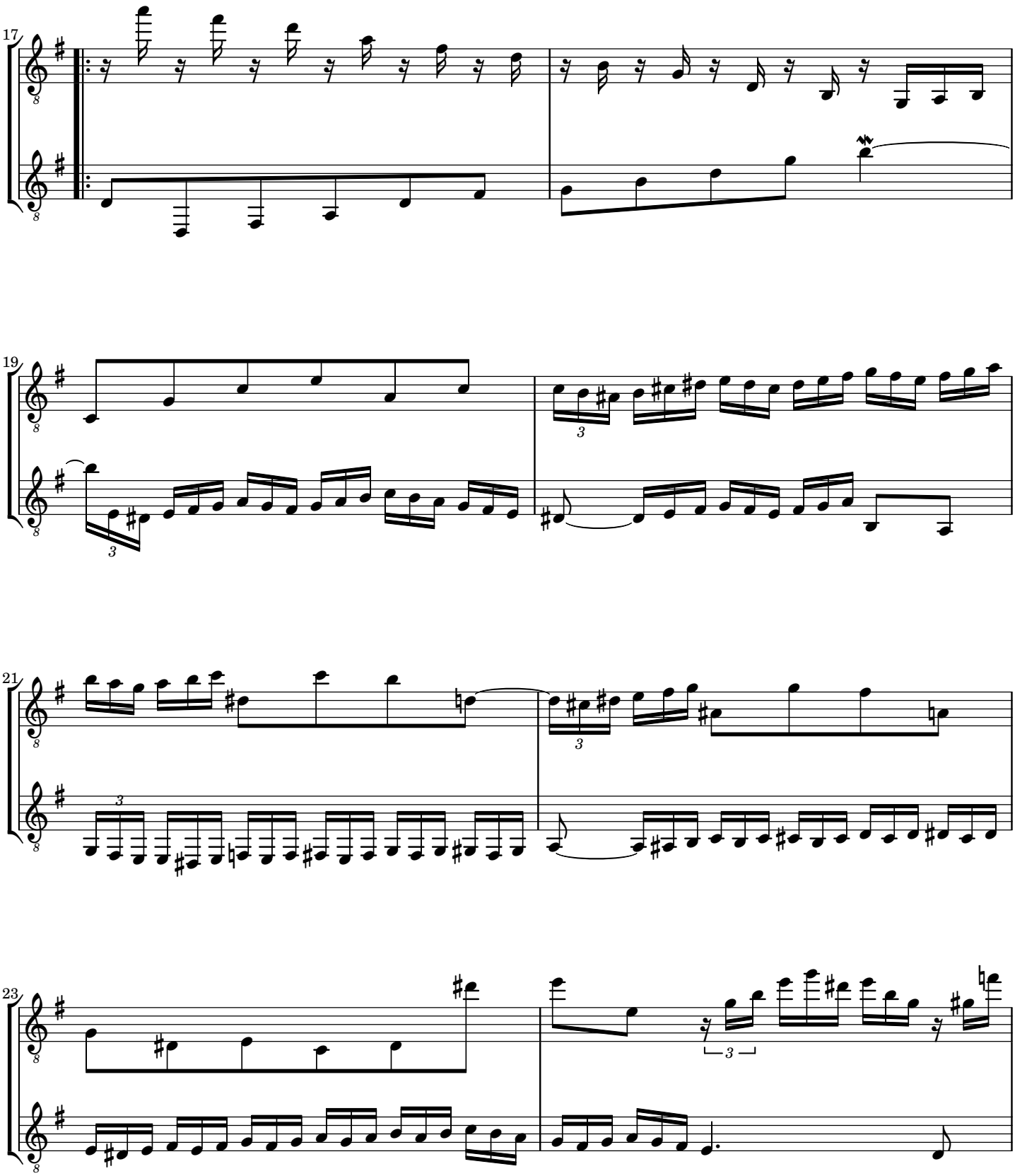
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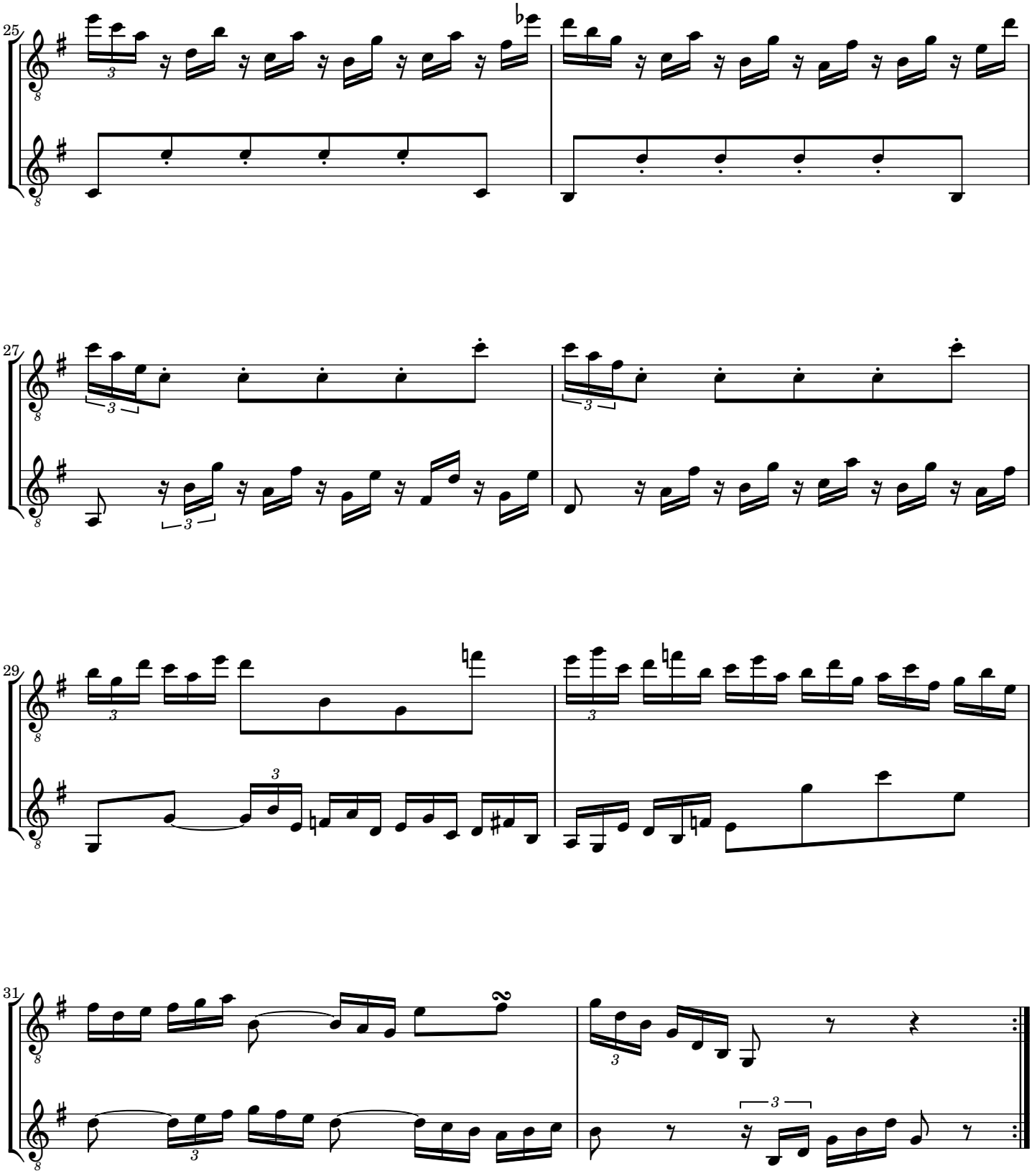
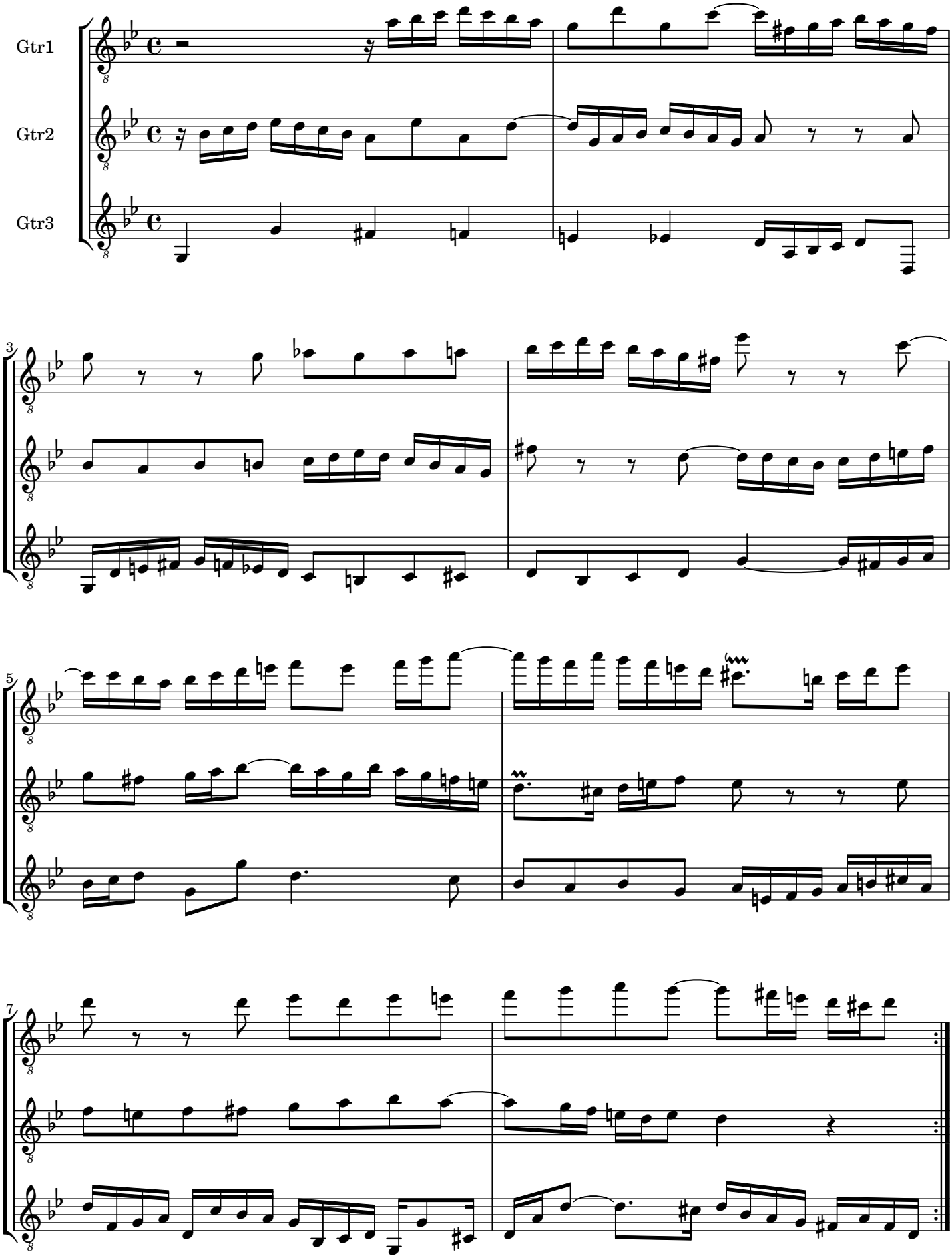


Variation 21

Canon at the Seventh



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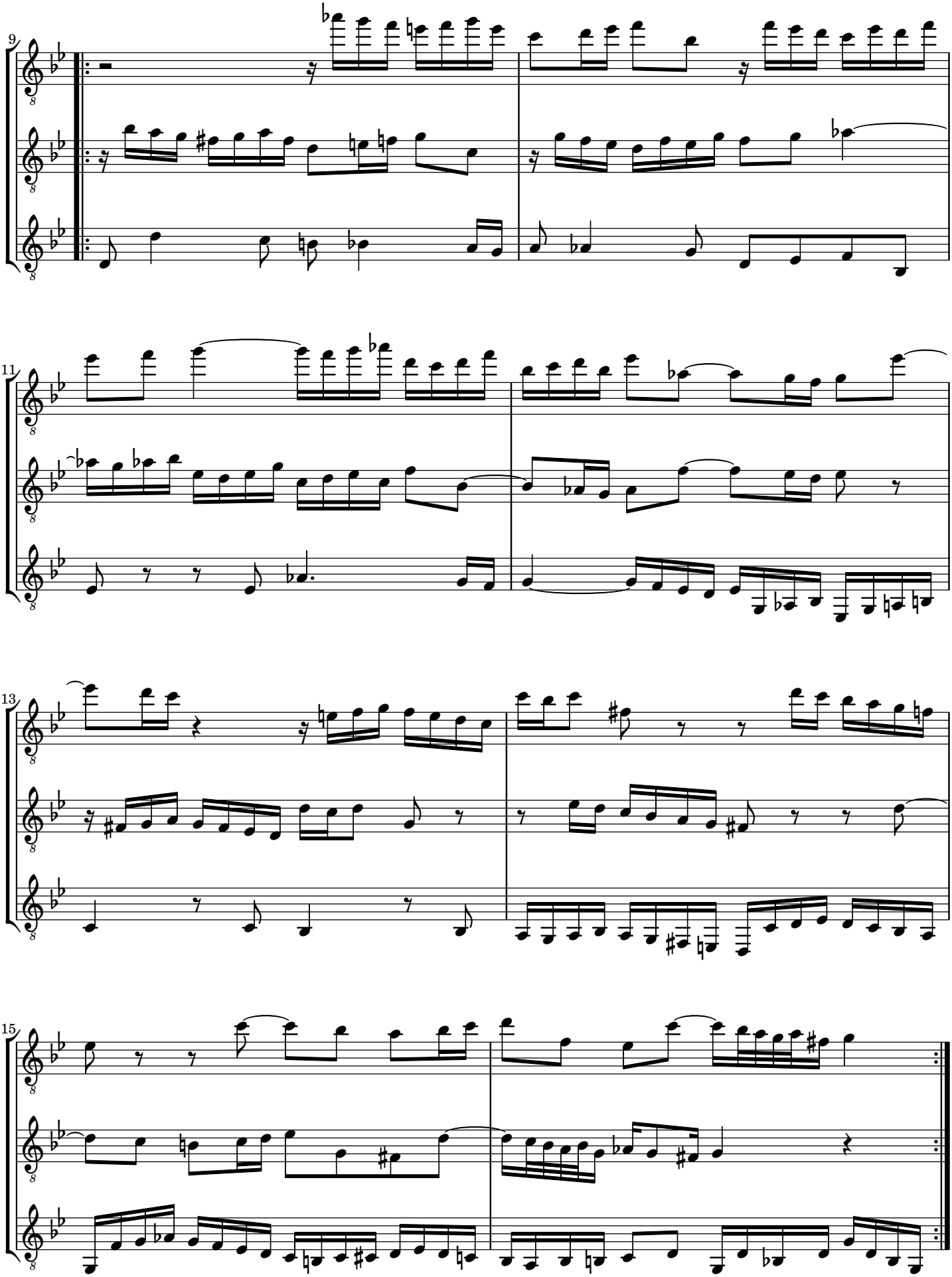
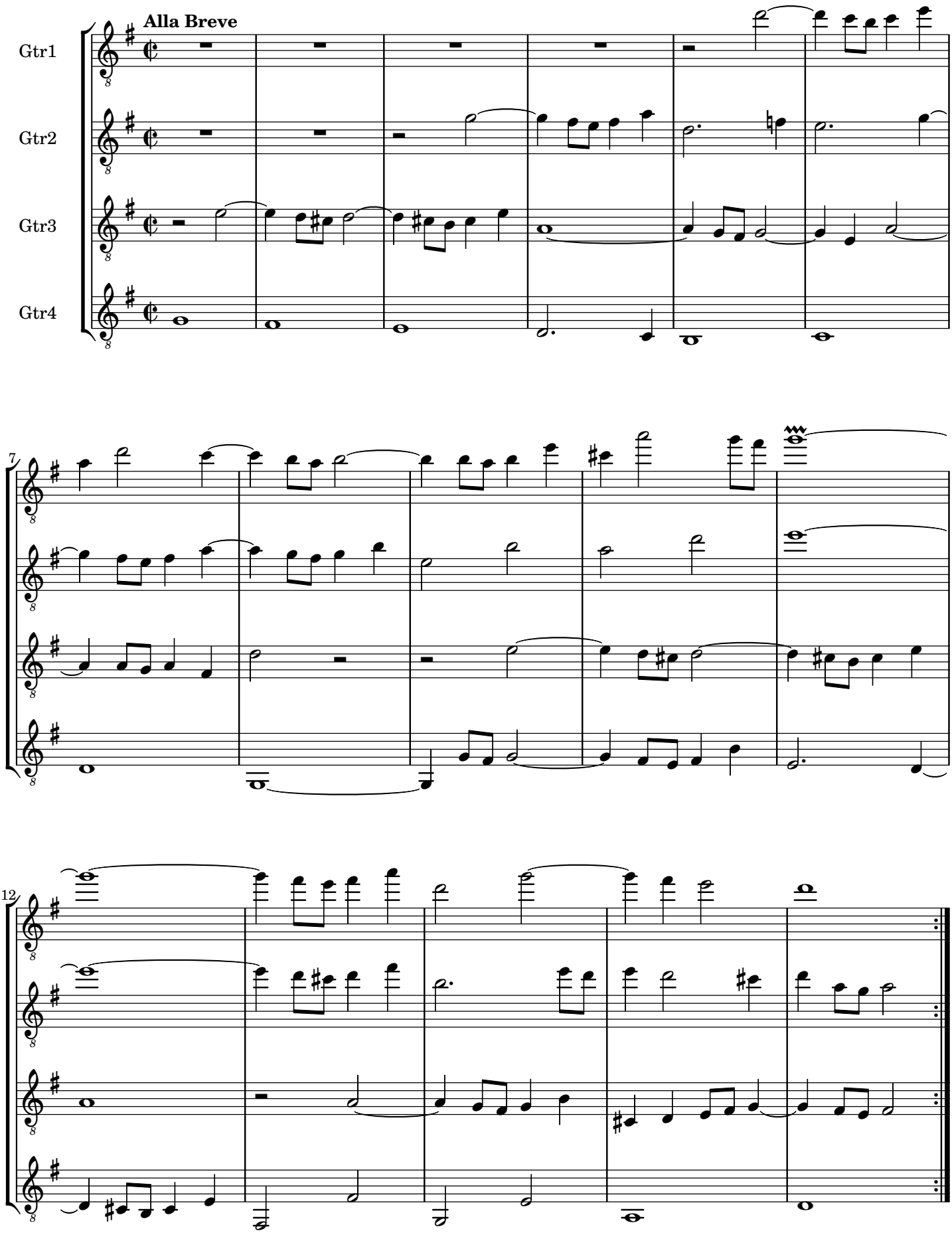


Variation 22



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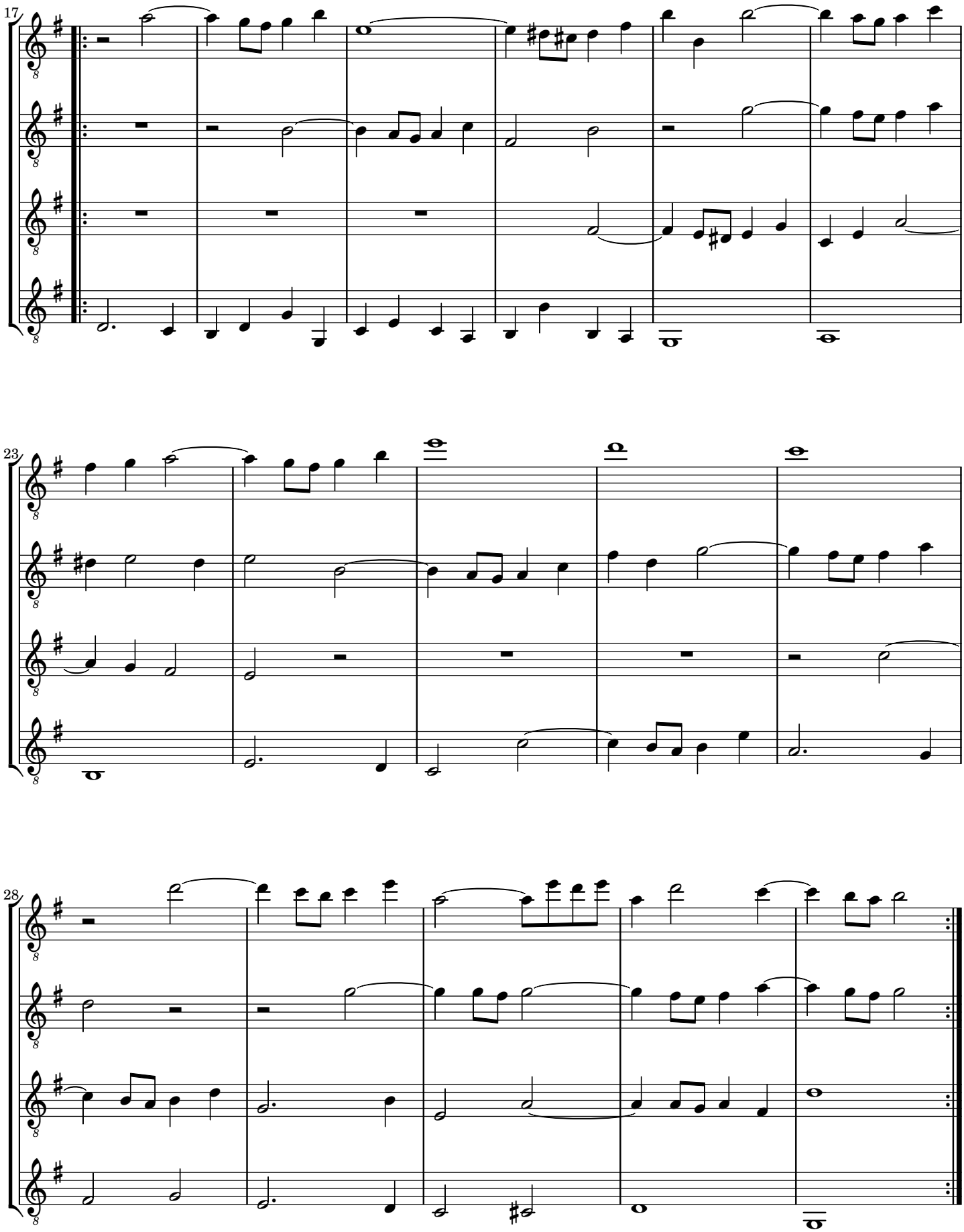
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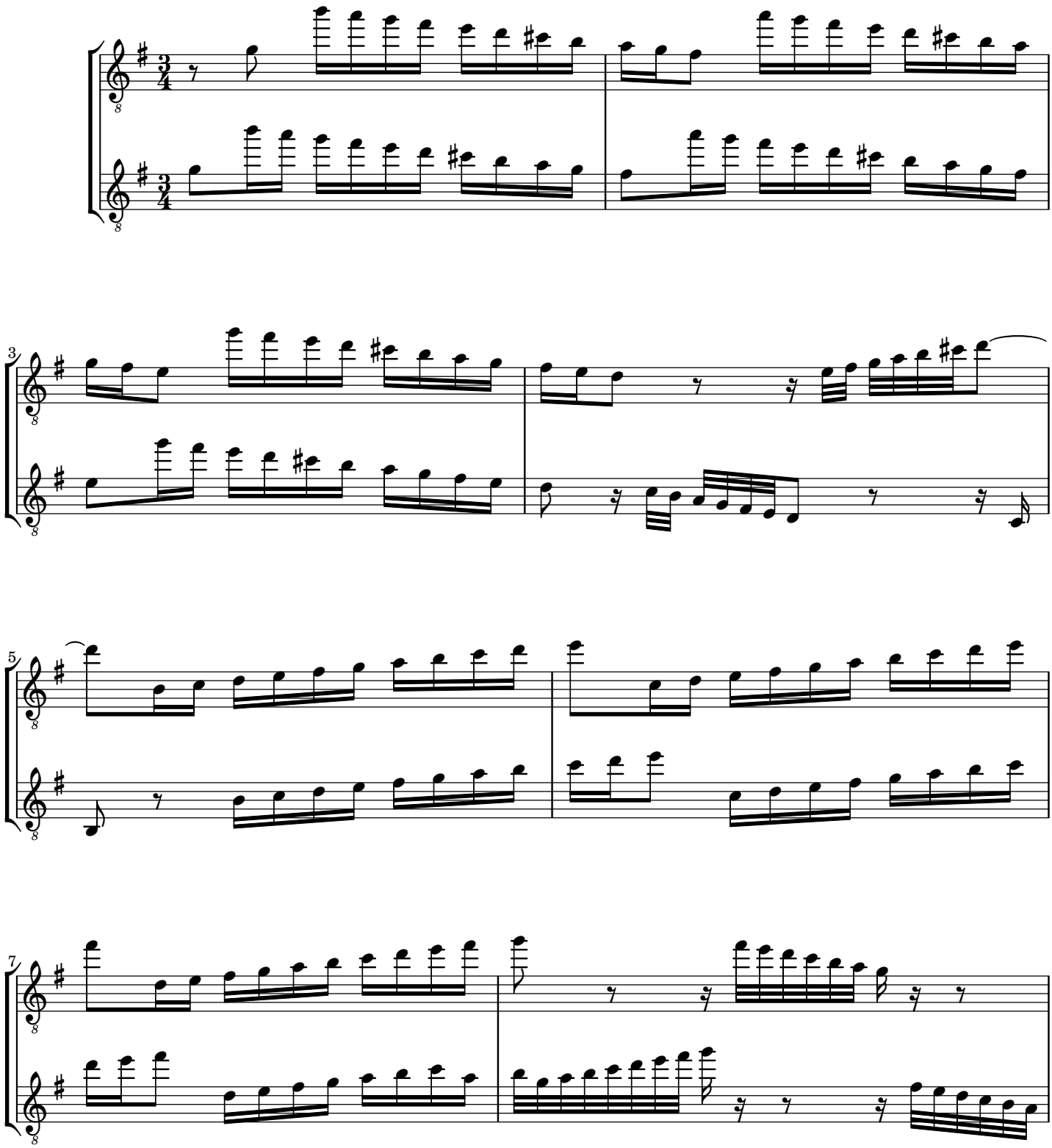
Variation 23



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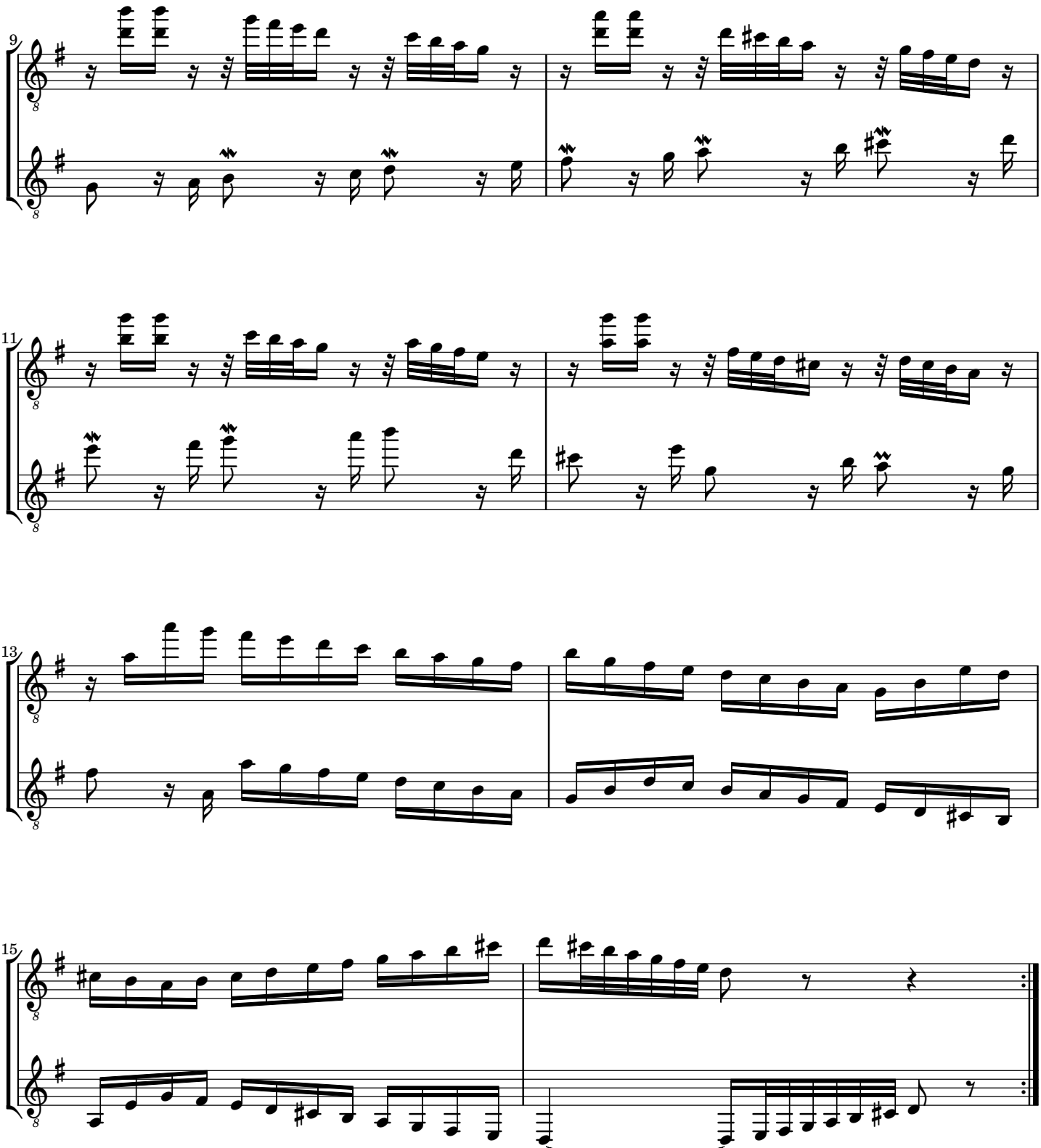

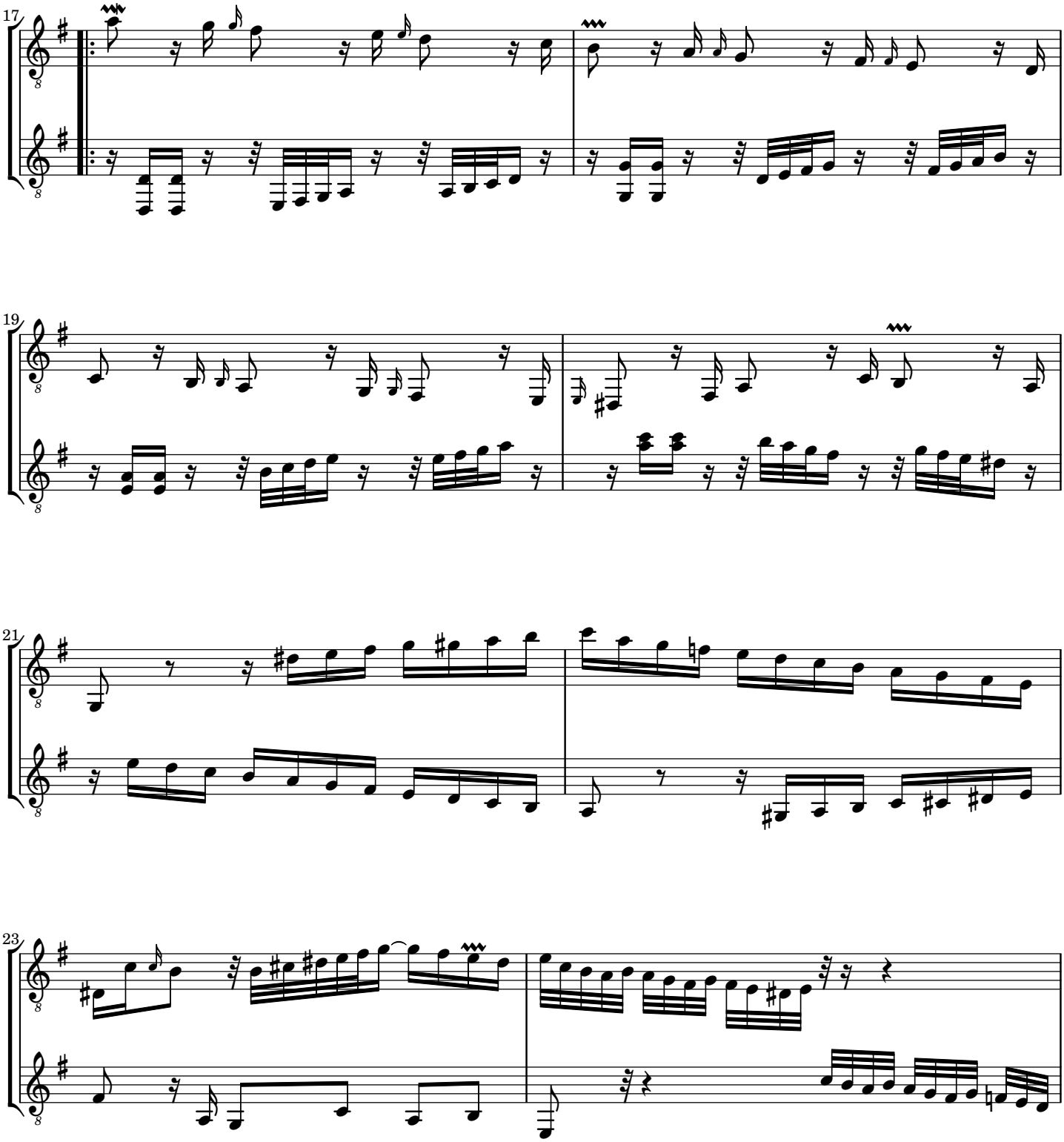
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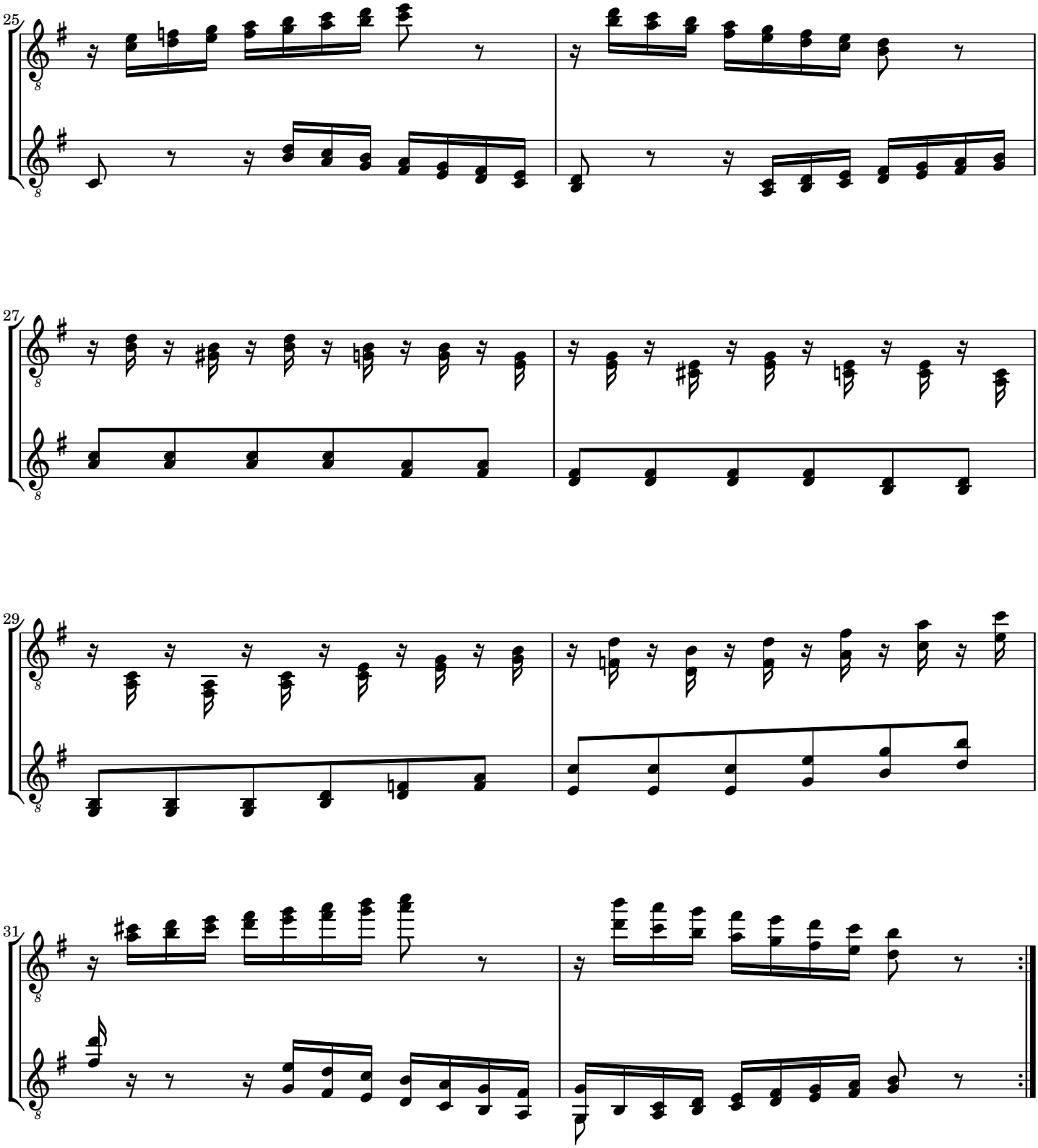
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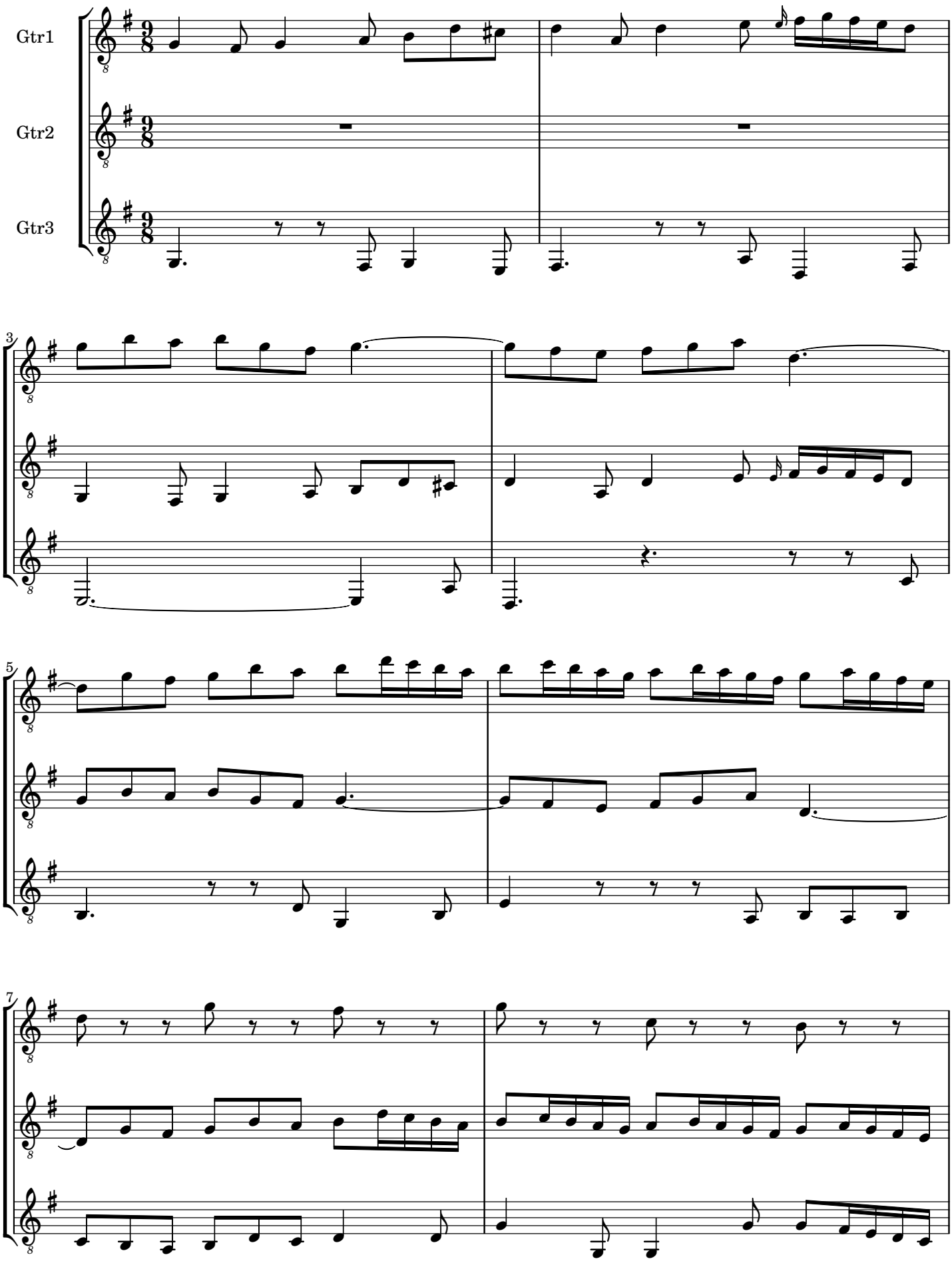
Variation 24

Canon at the Octave



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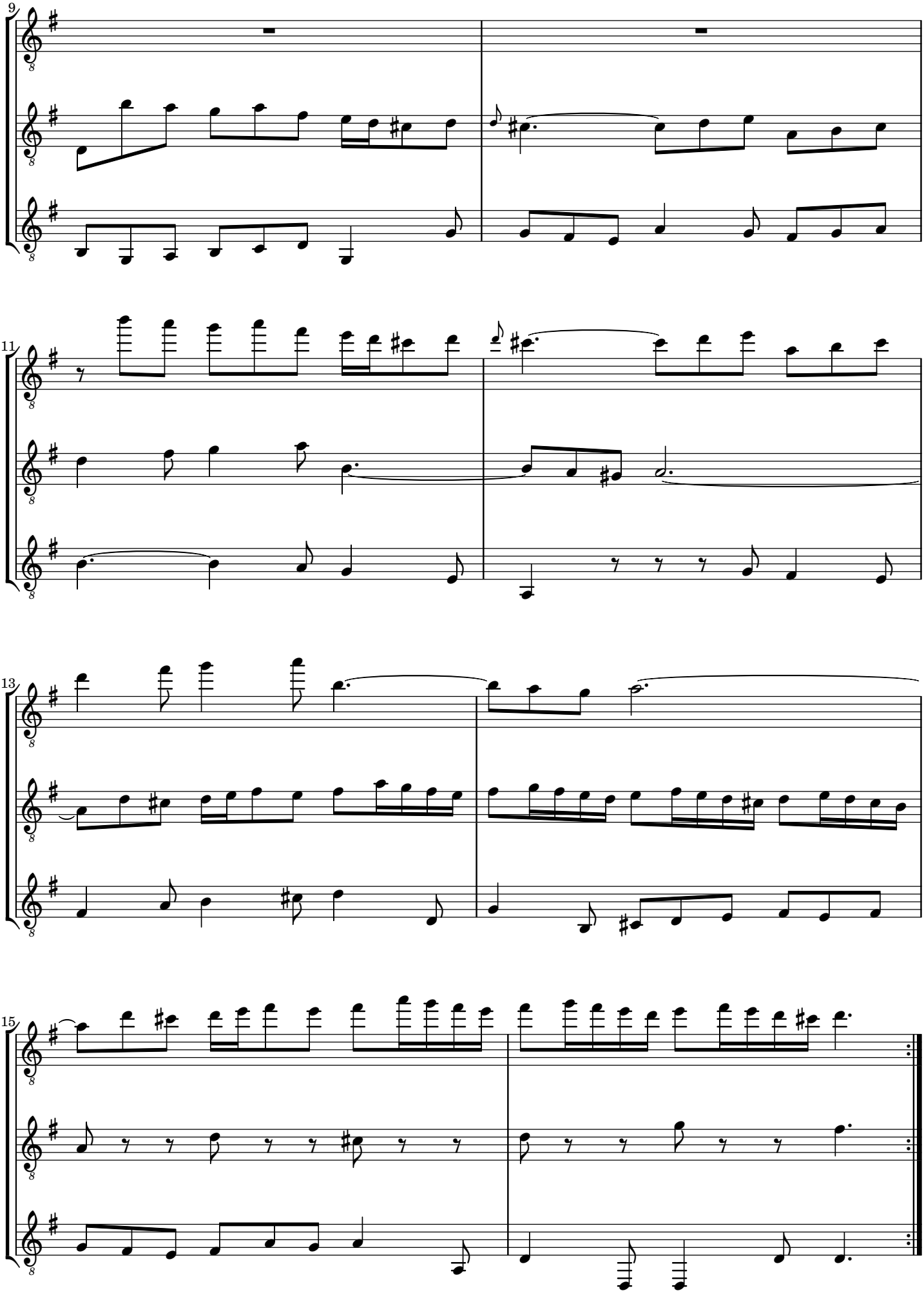
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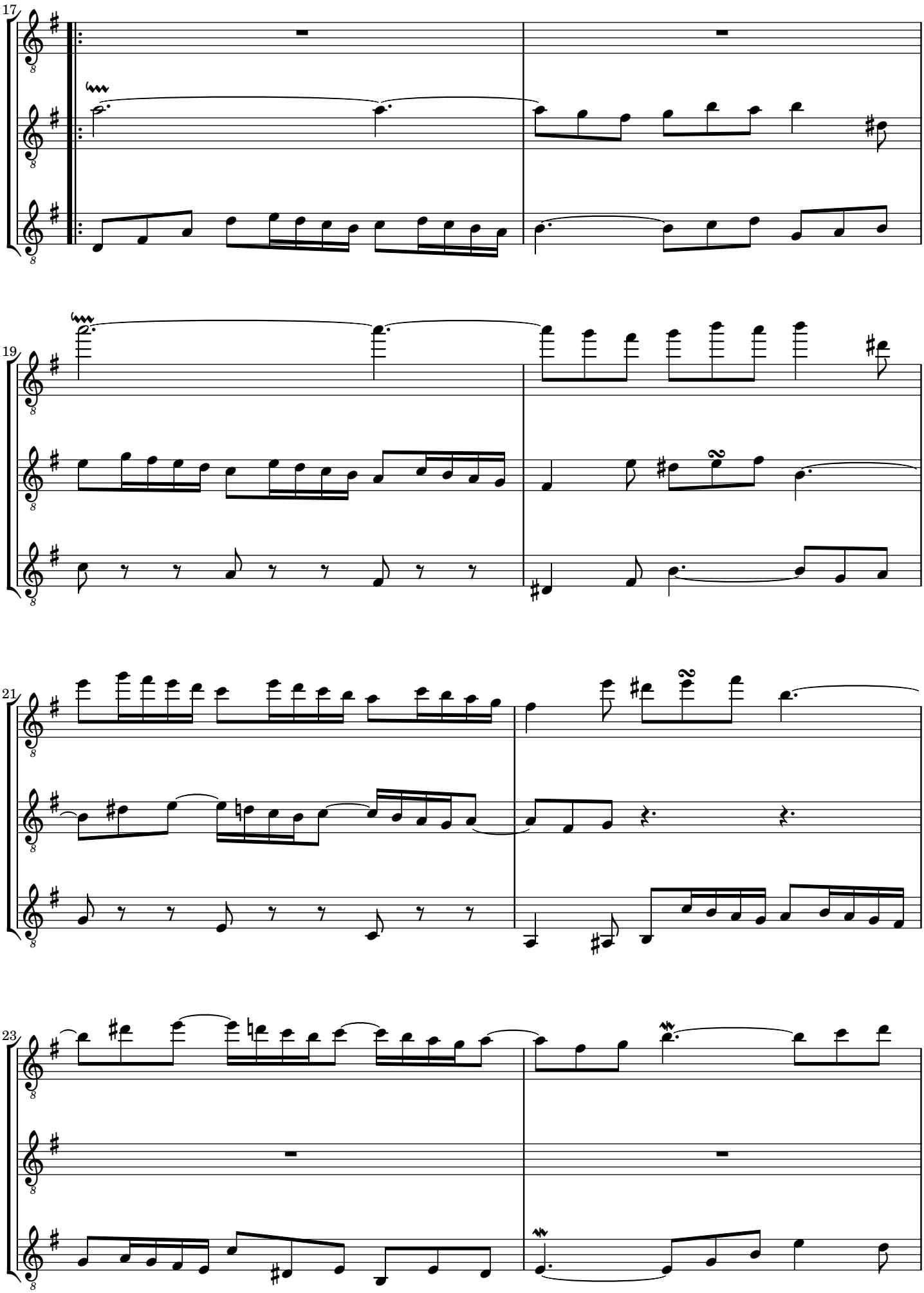
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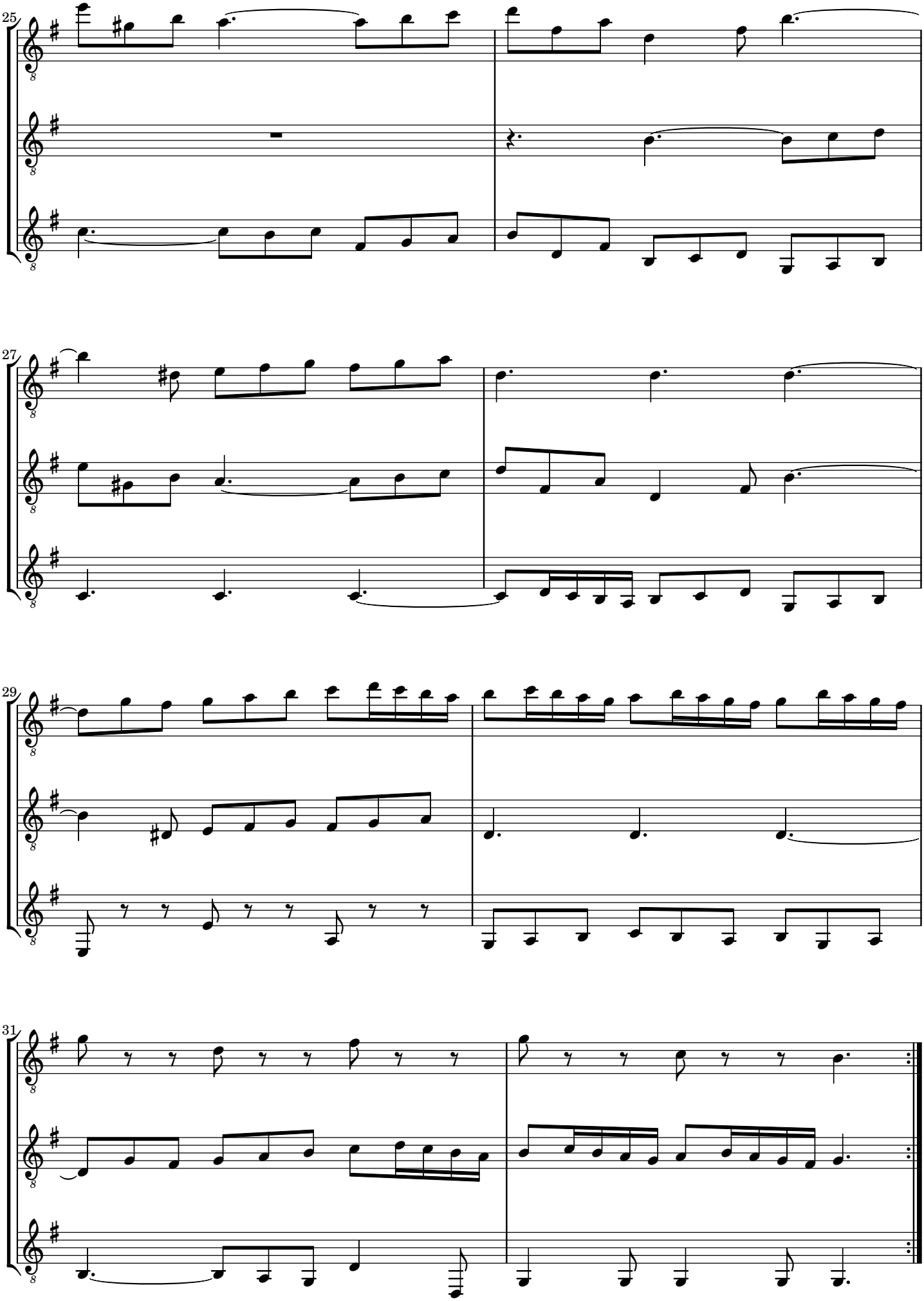
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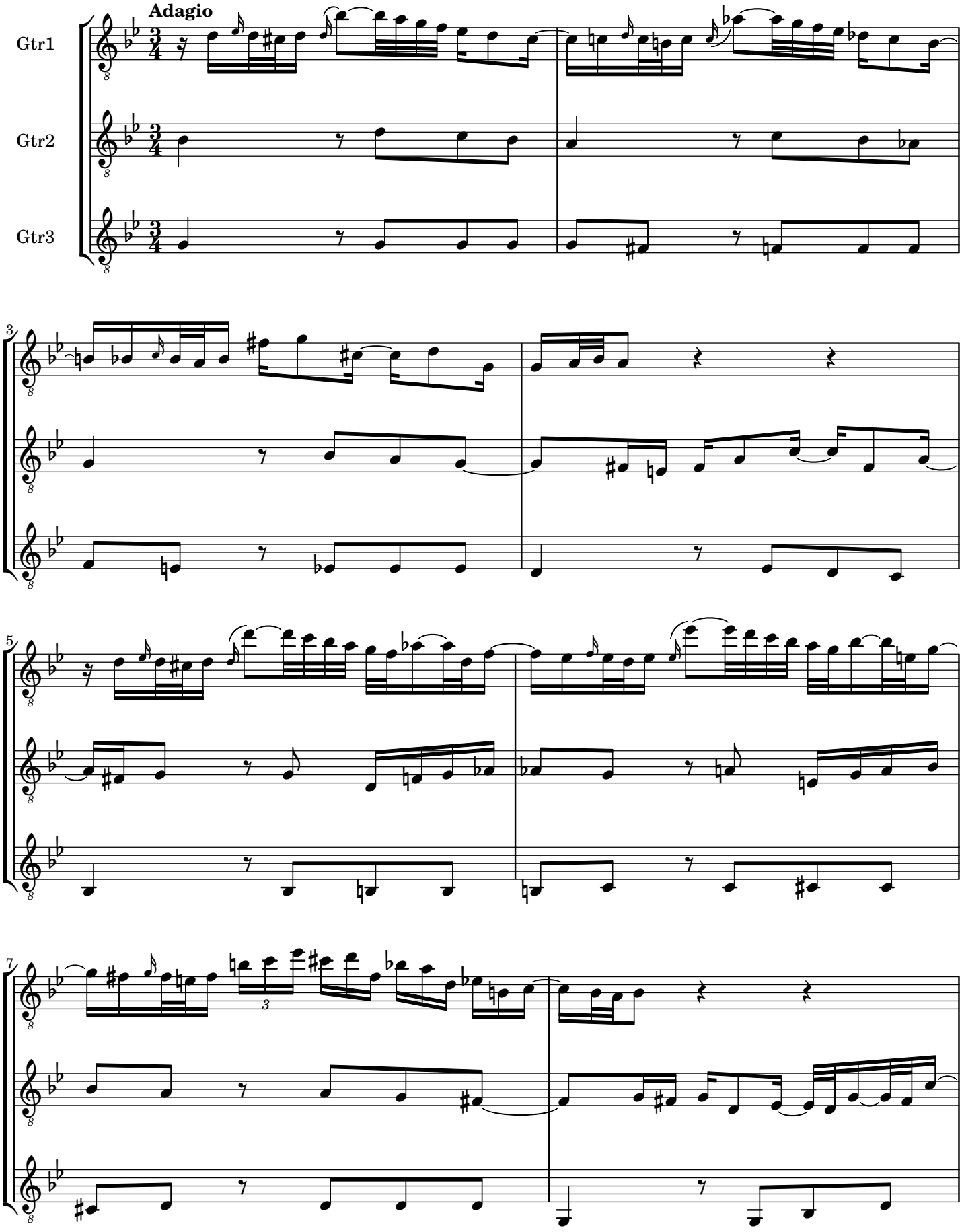
Variation 25



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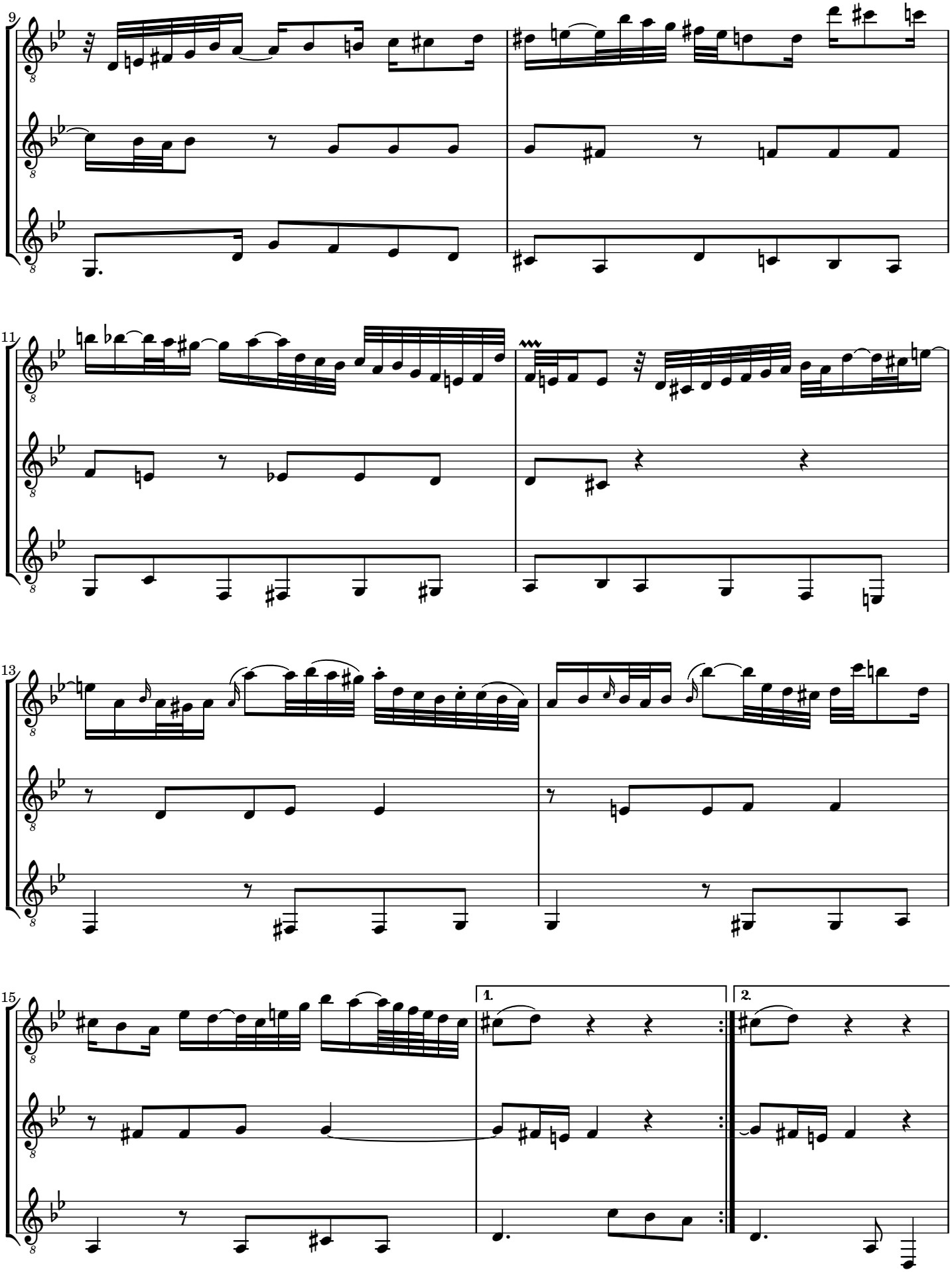
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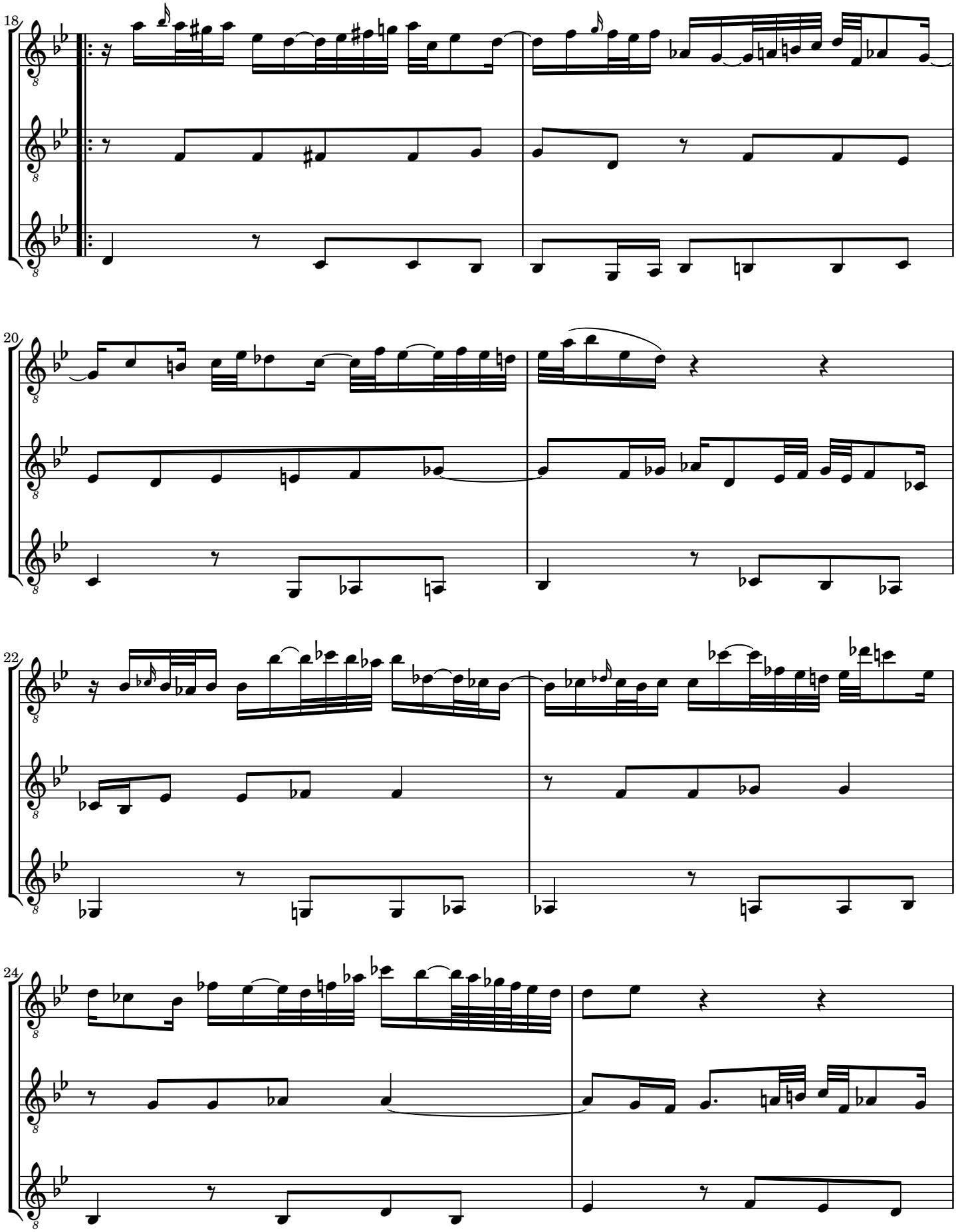
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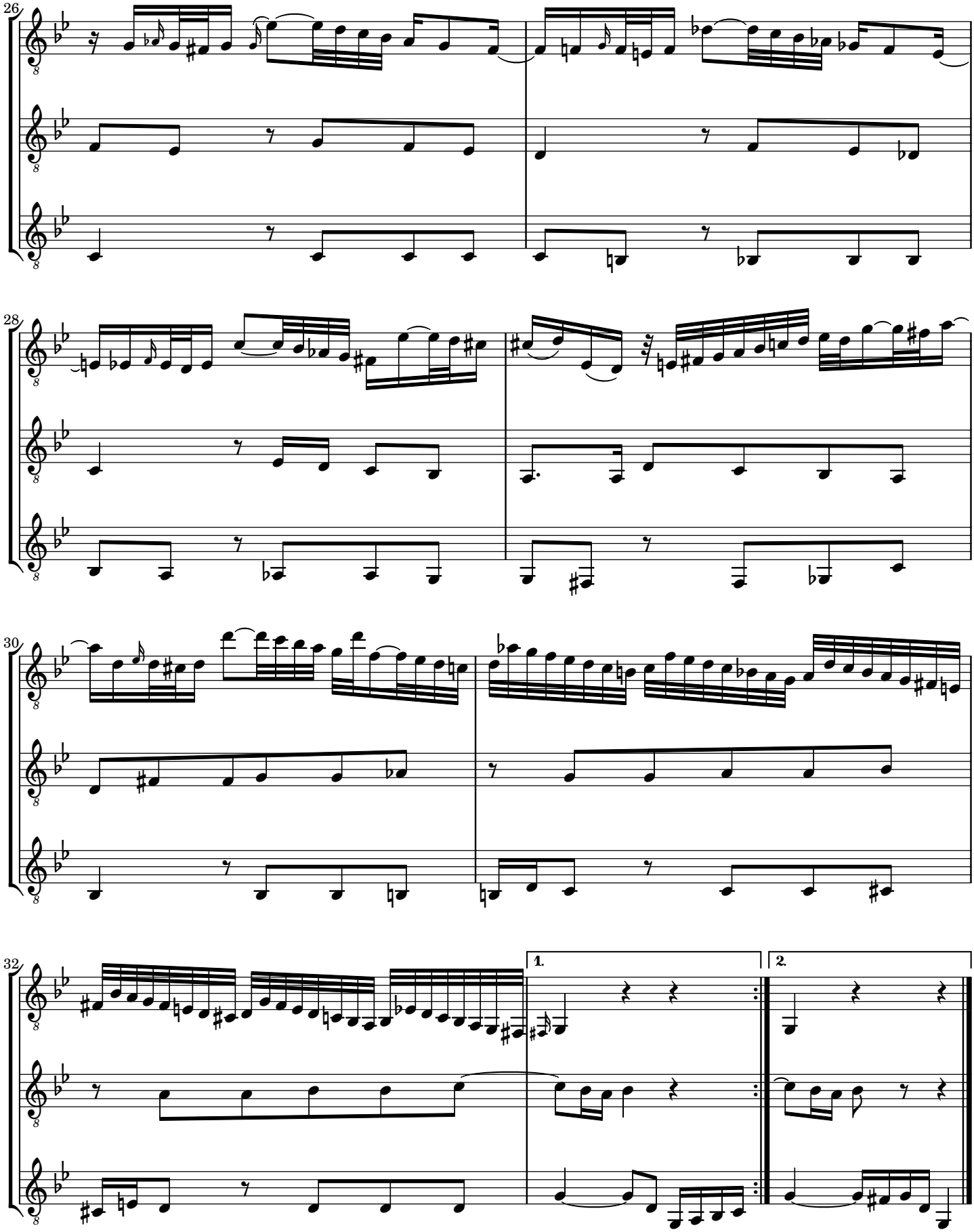
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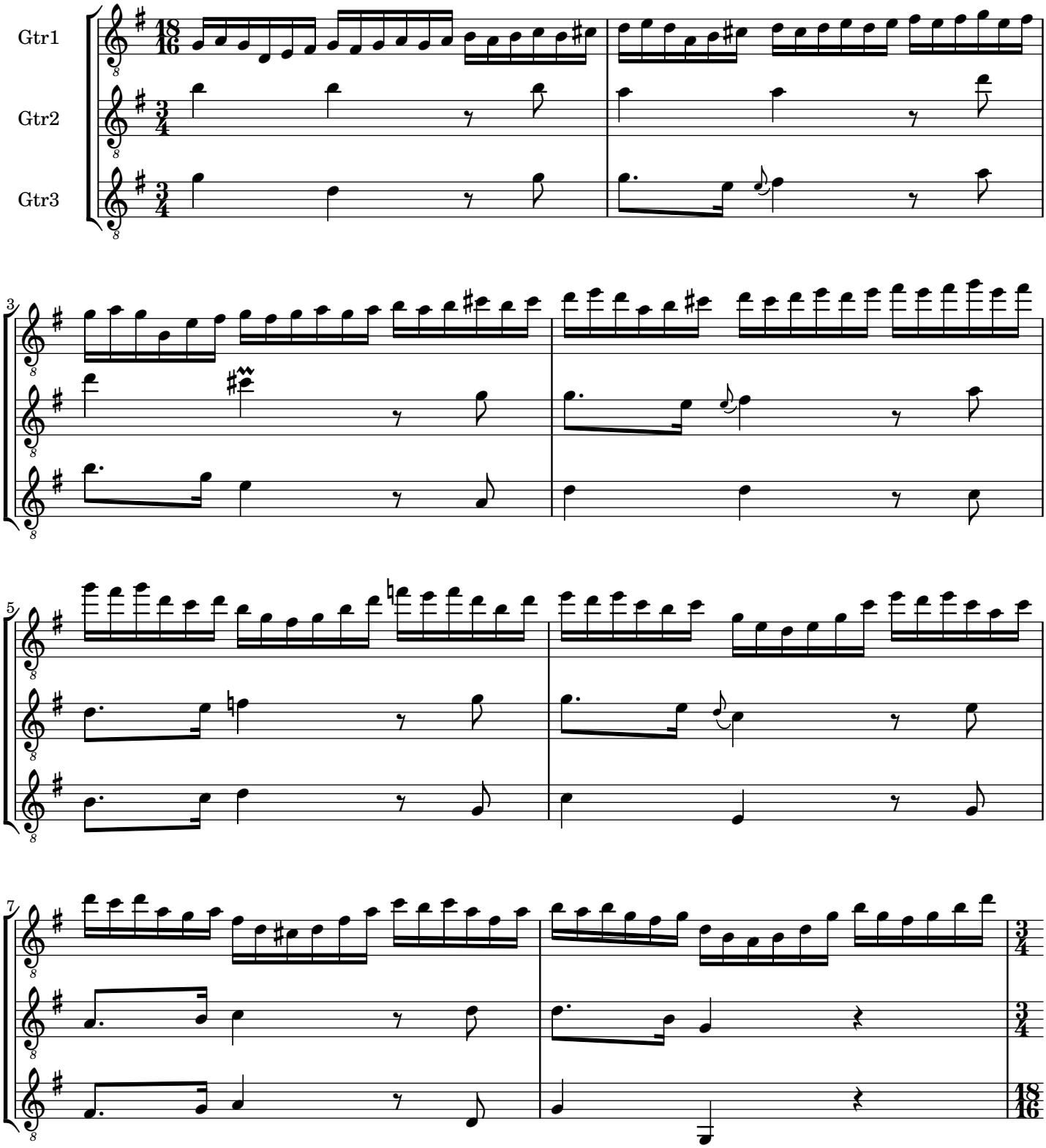
Variation 26



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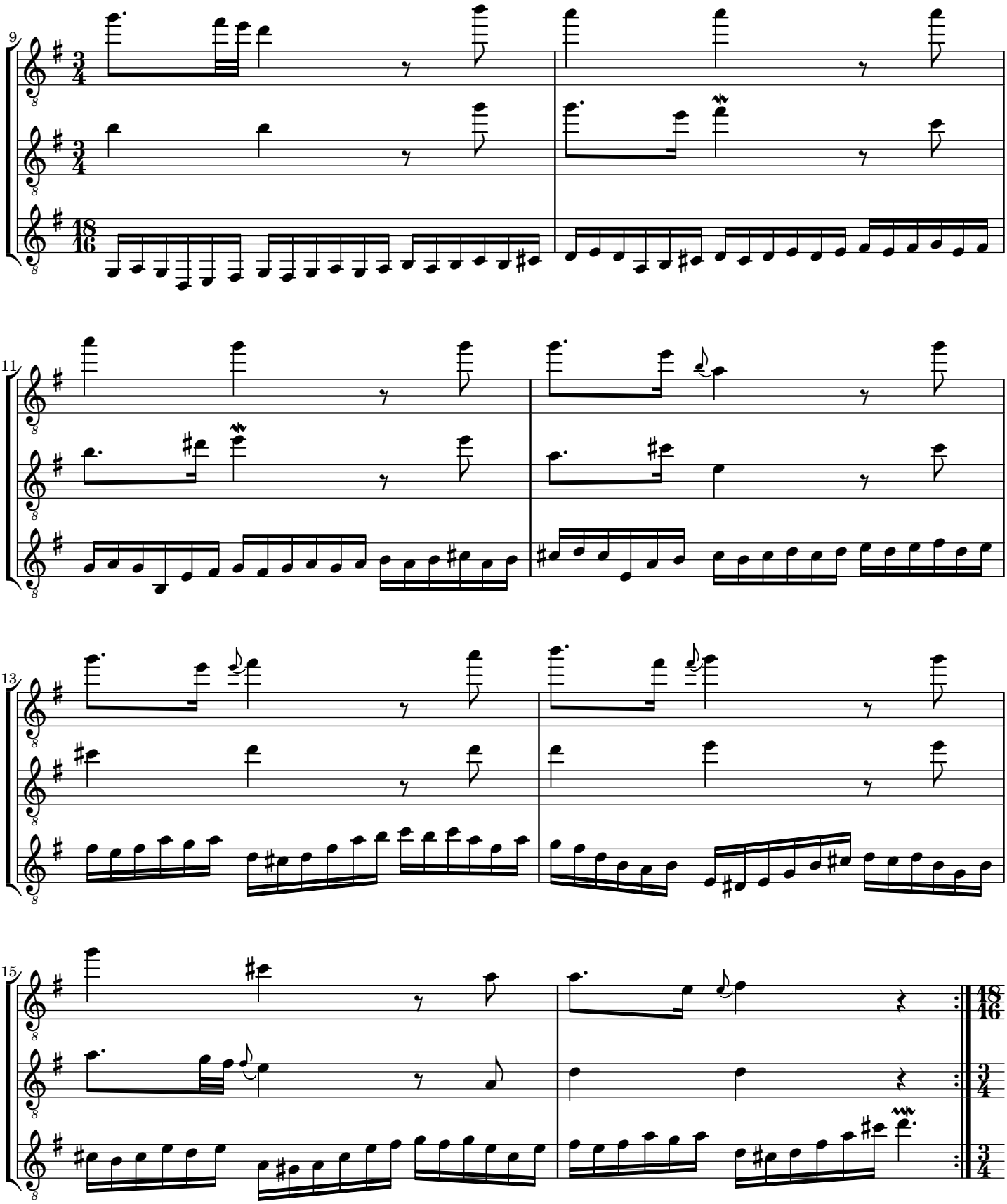
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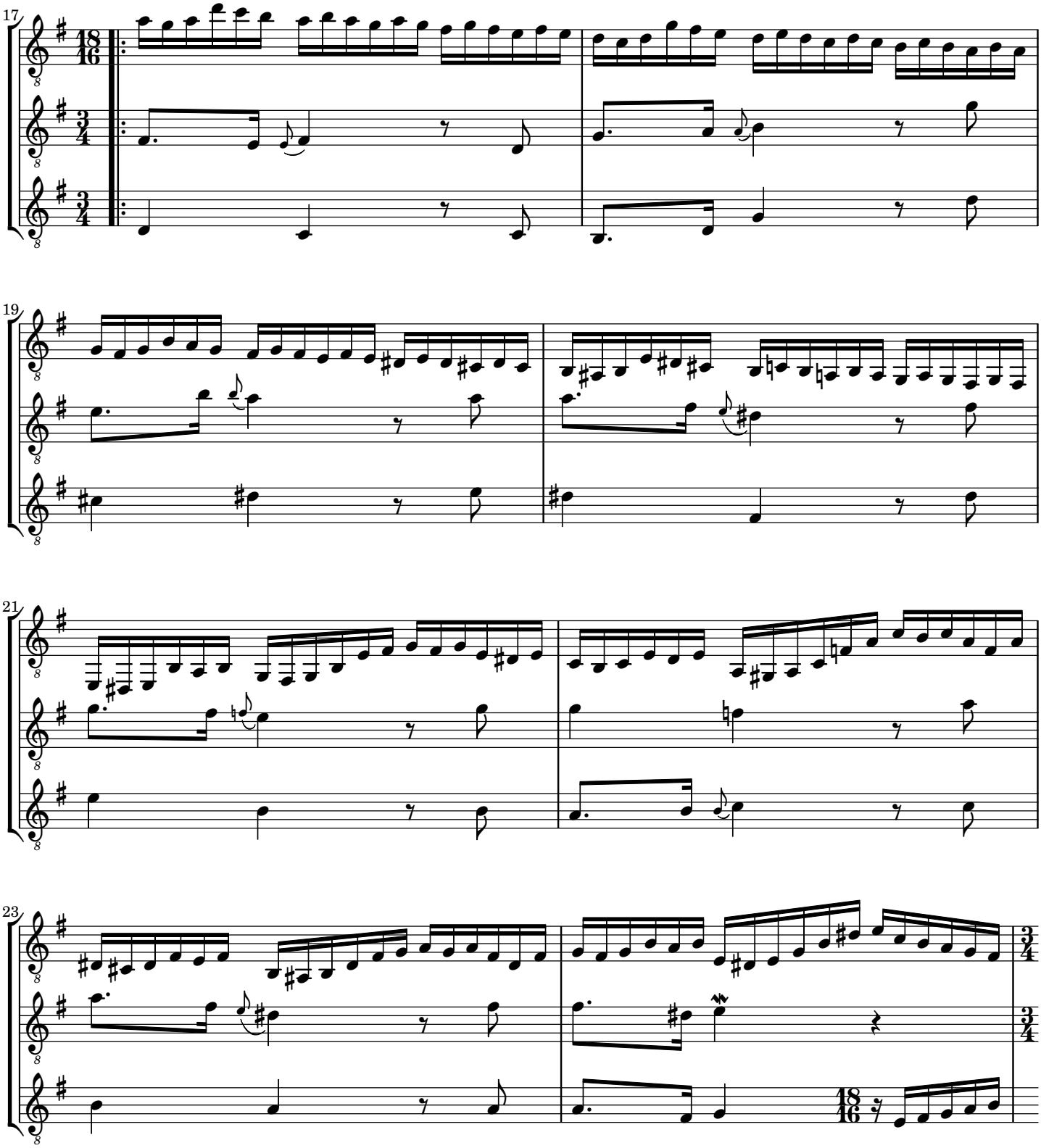
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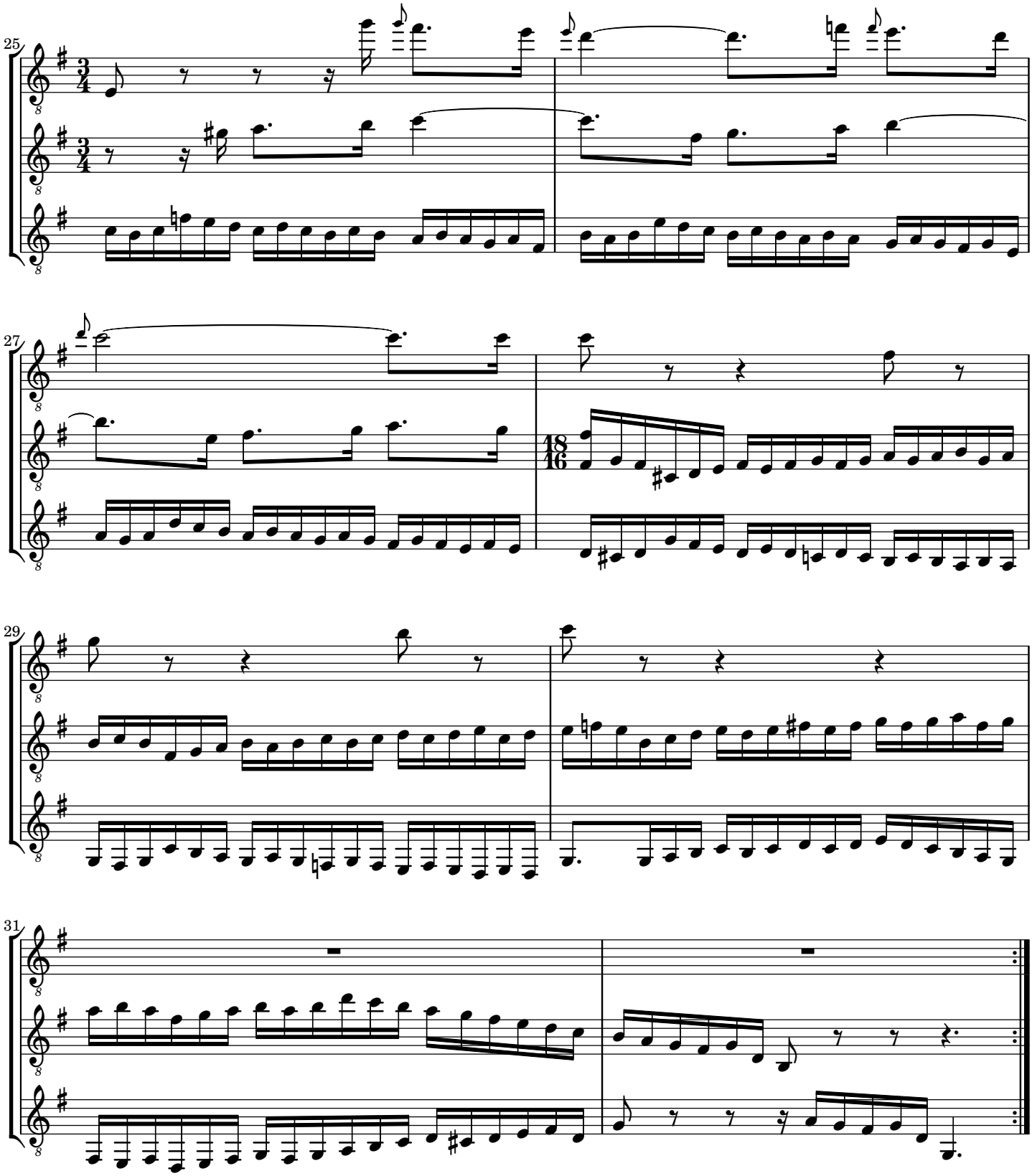
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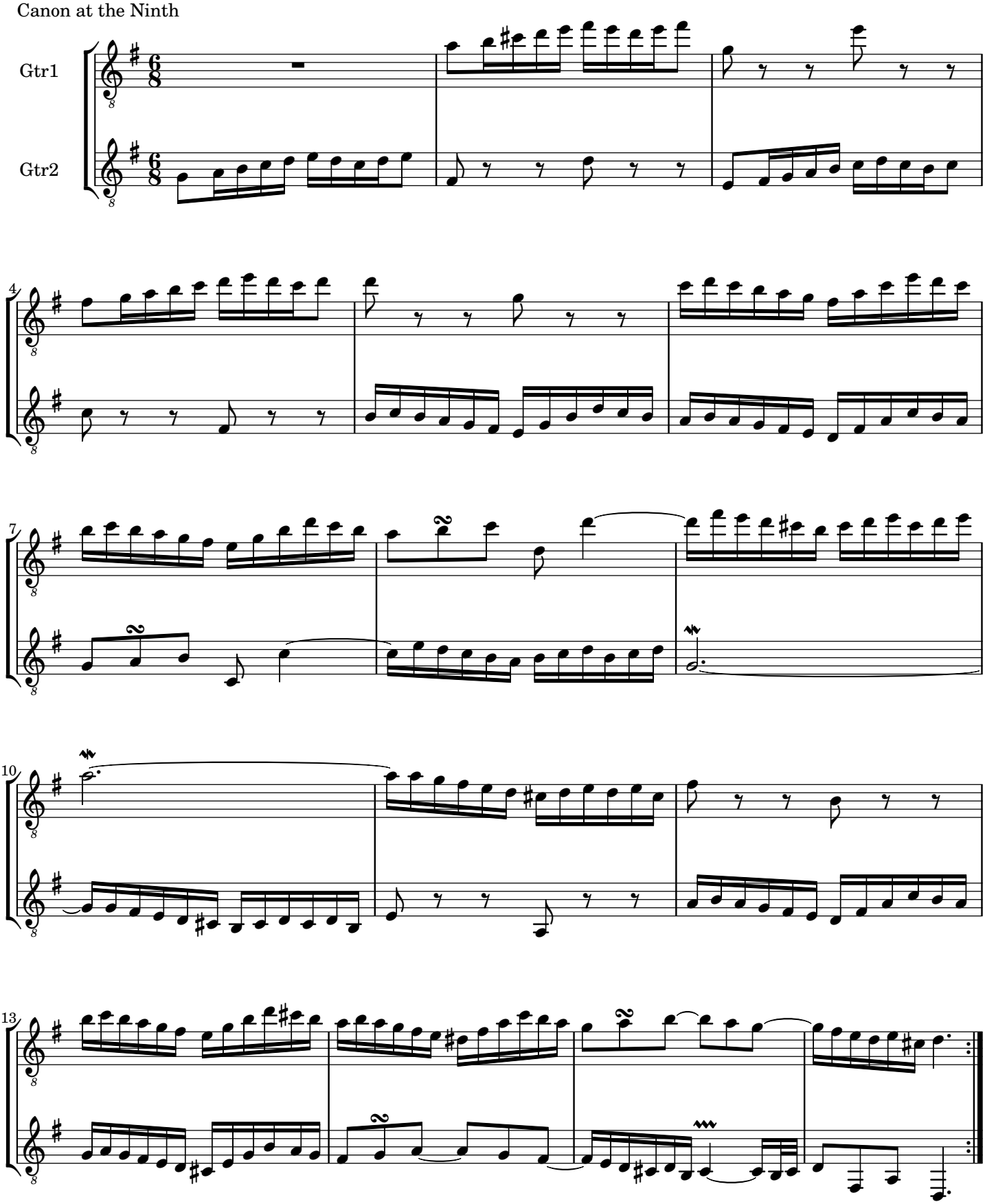
Variation 27

Canon at the Ninth



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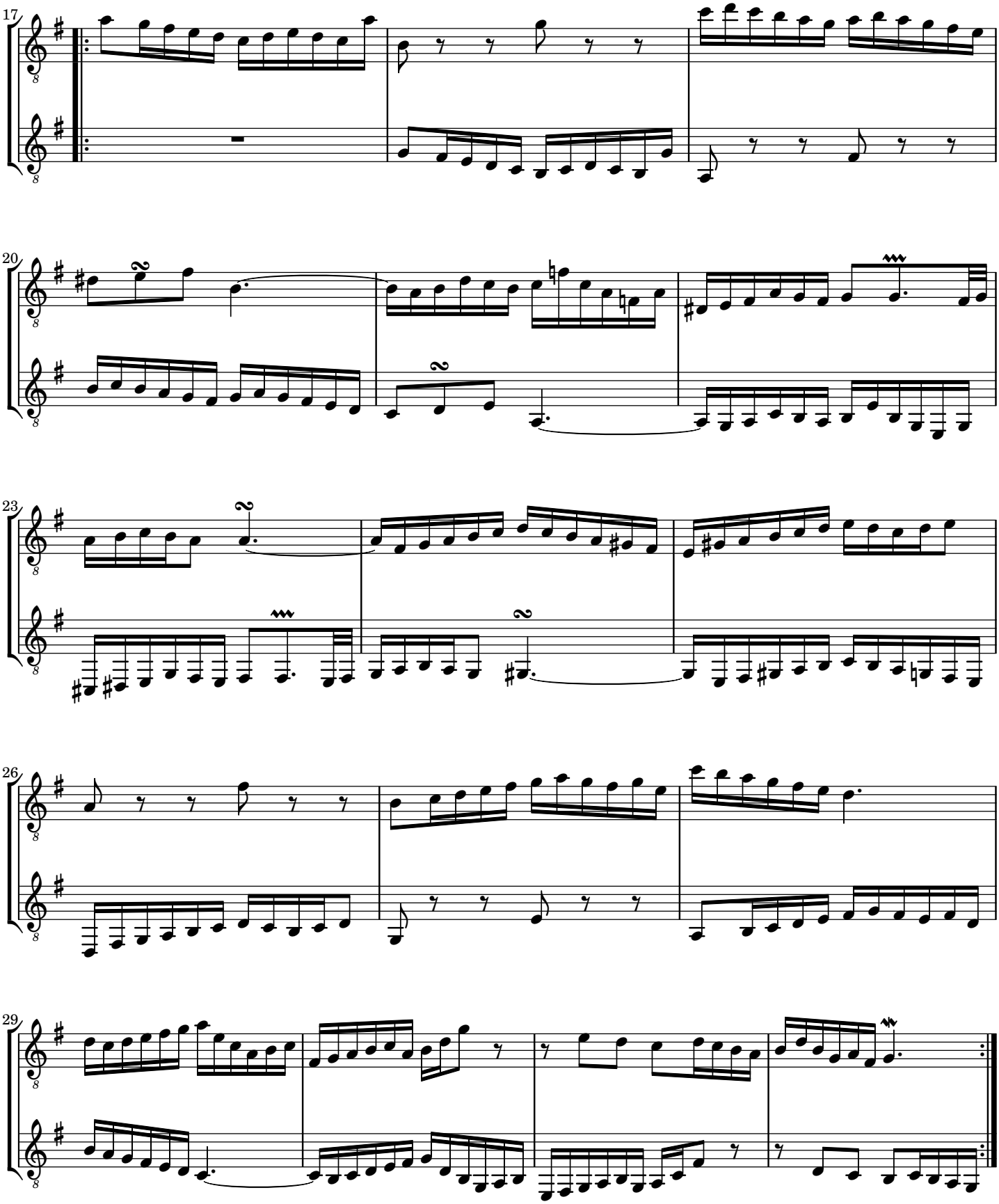
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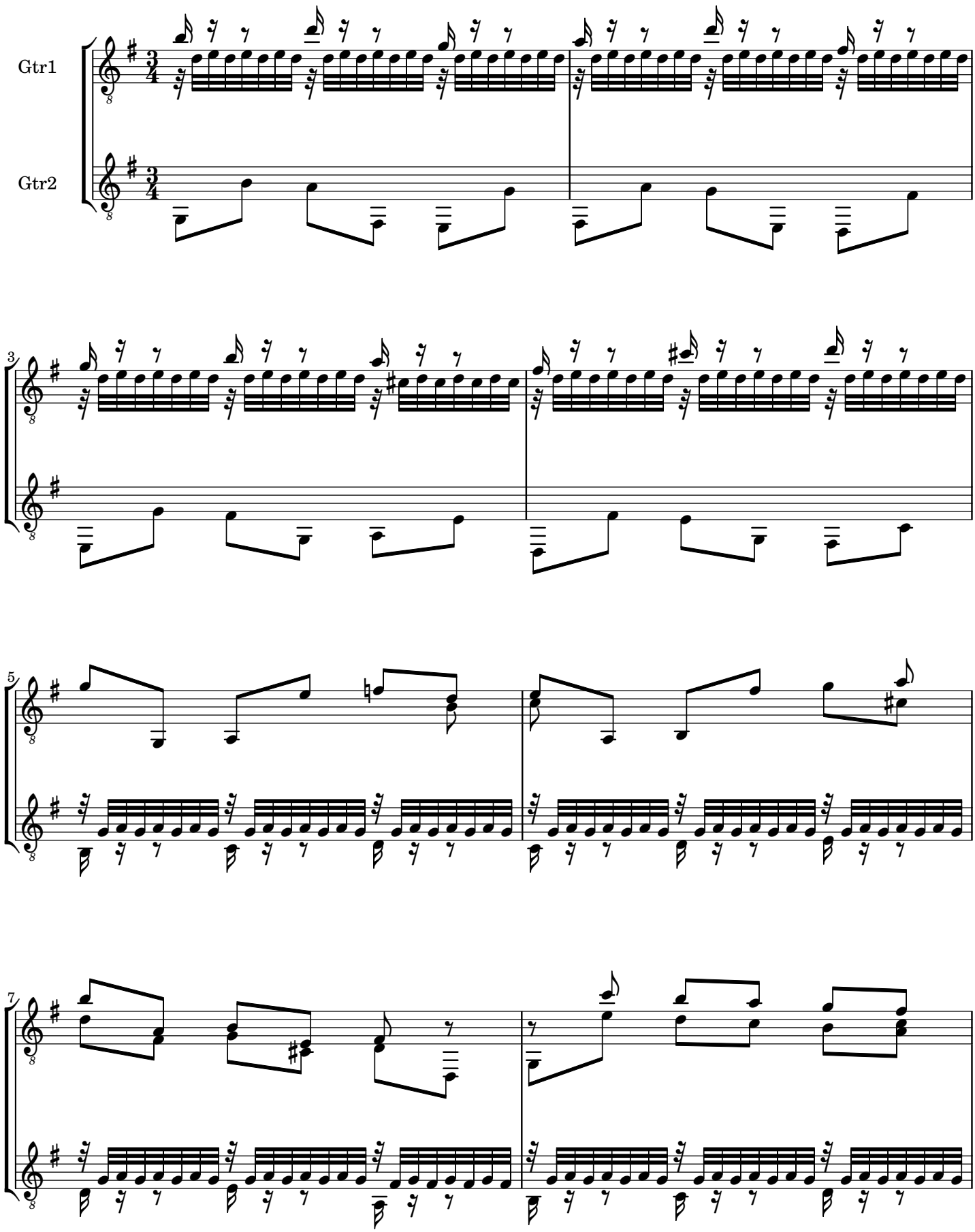
Variation 28



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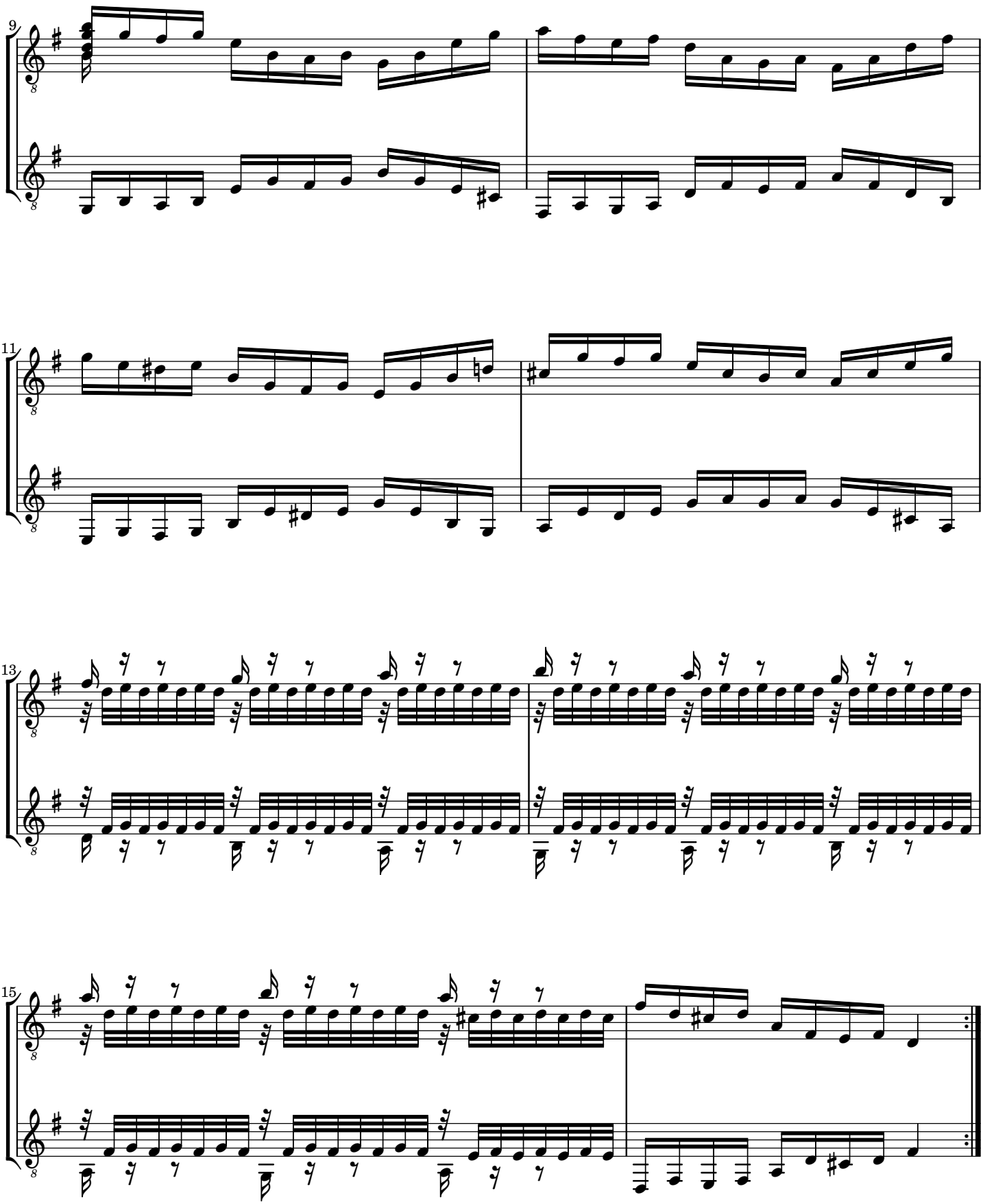
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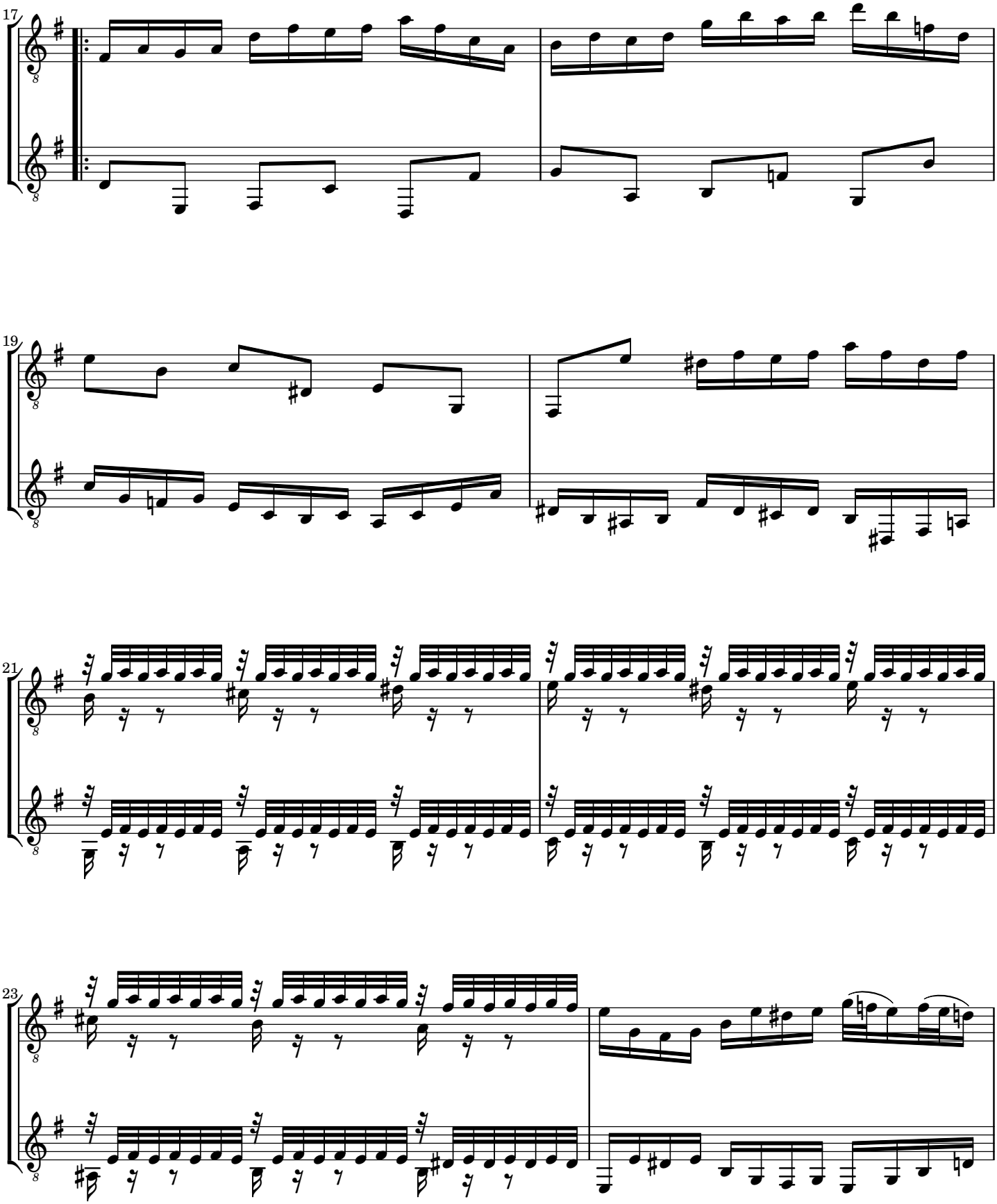
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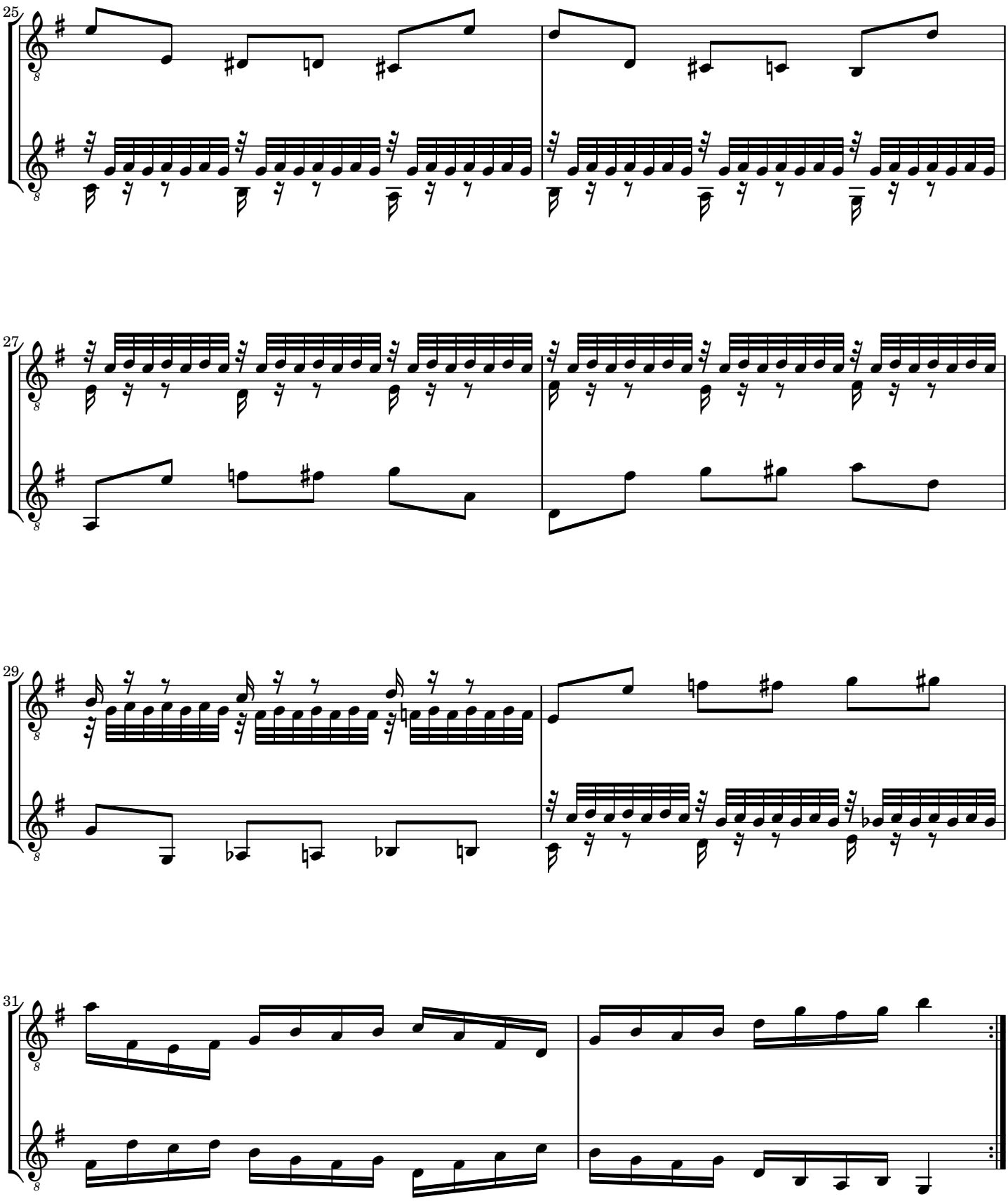
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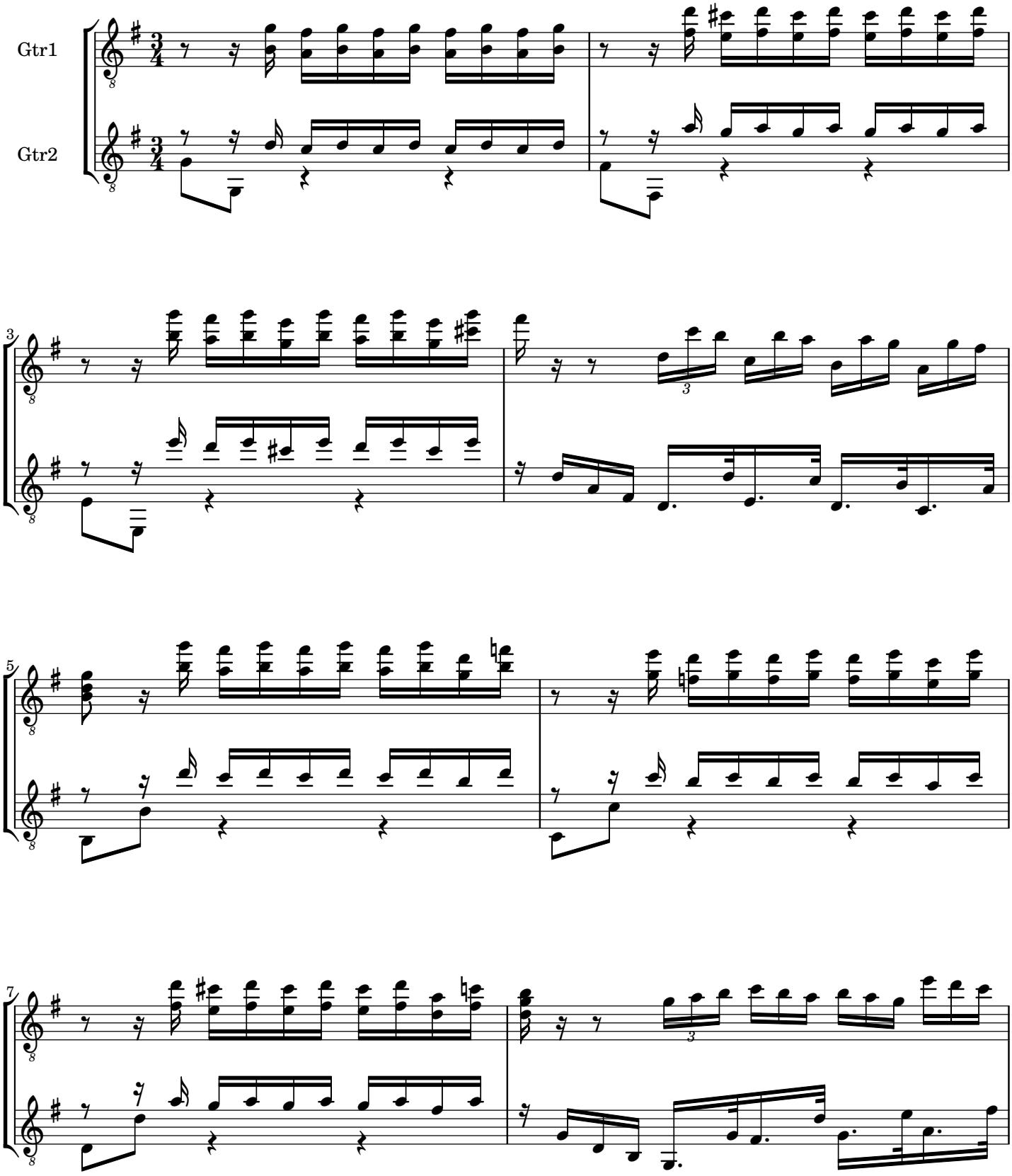
Variation 29



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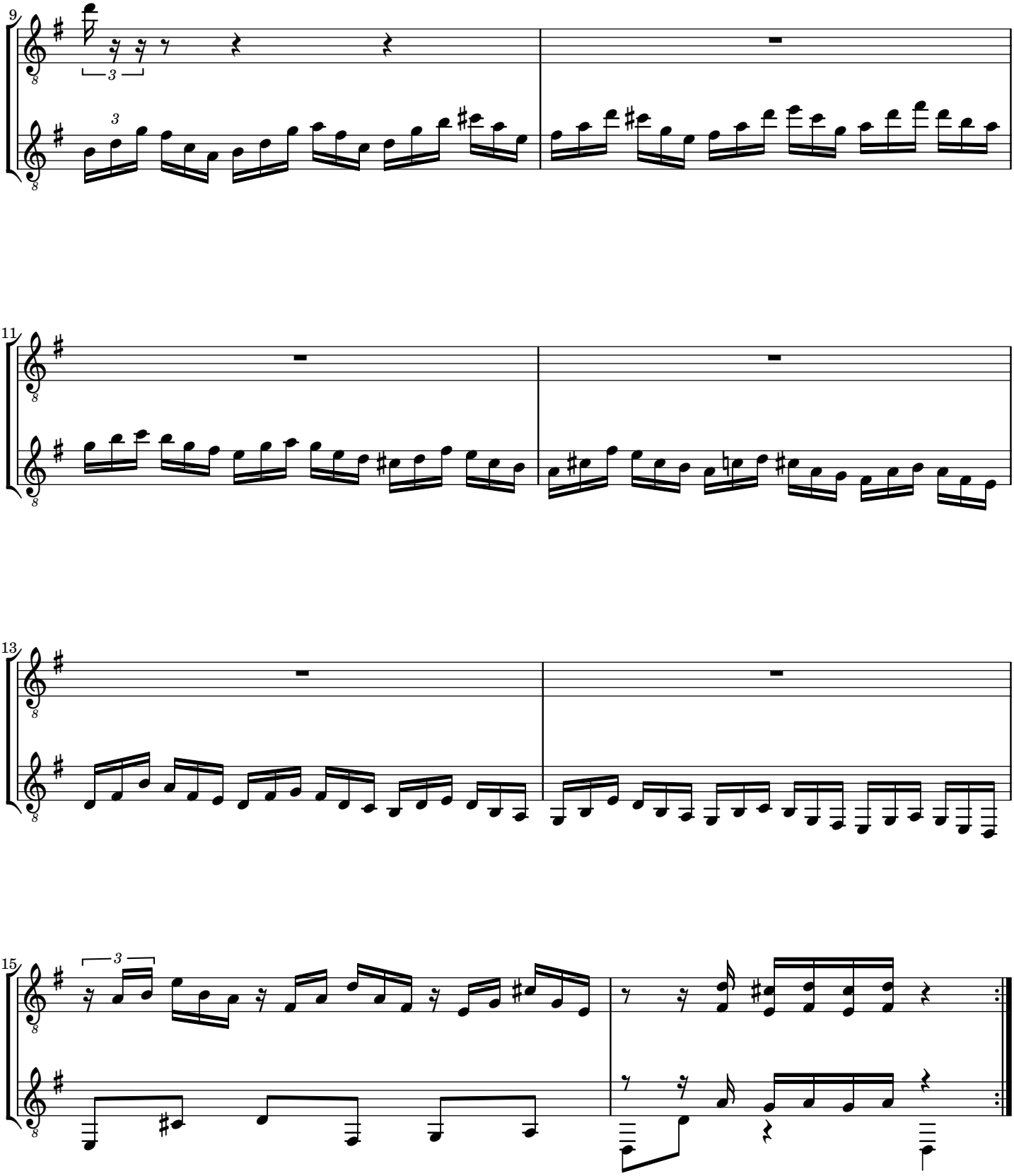
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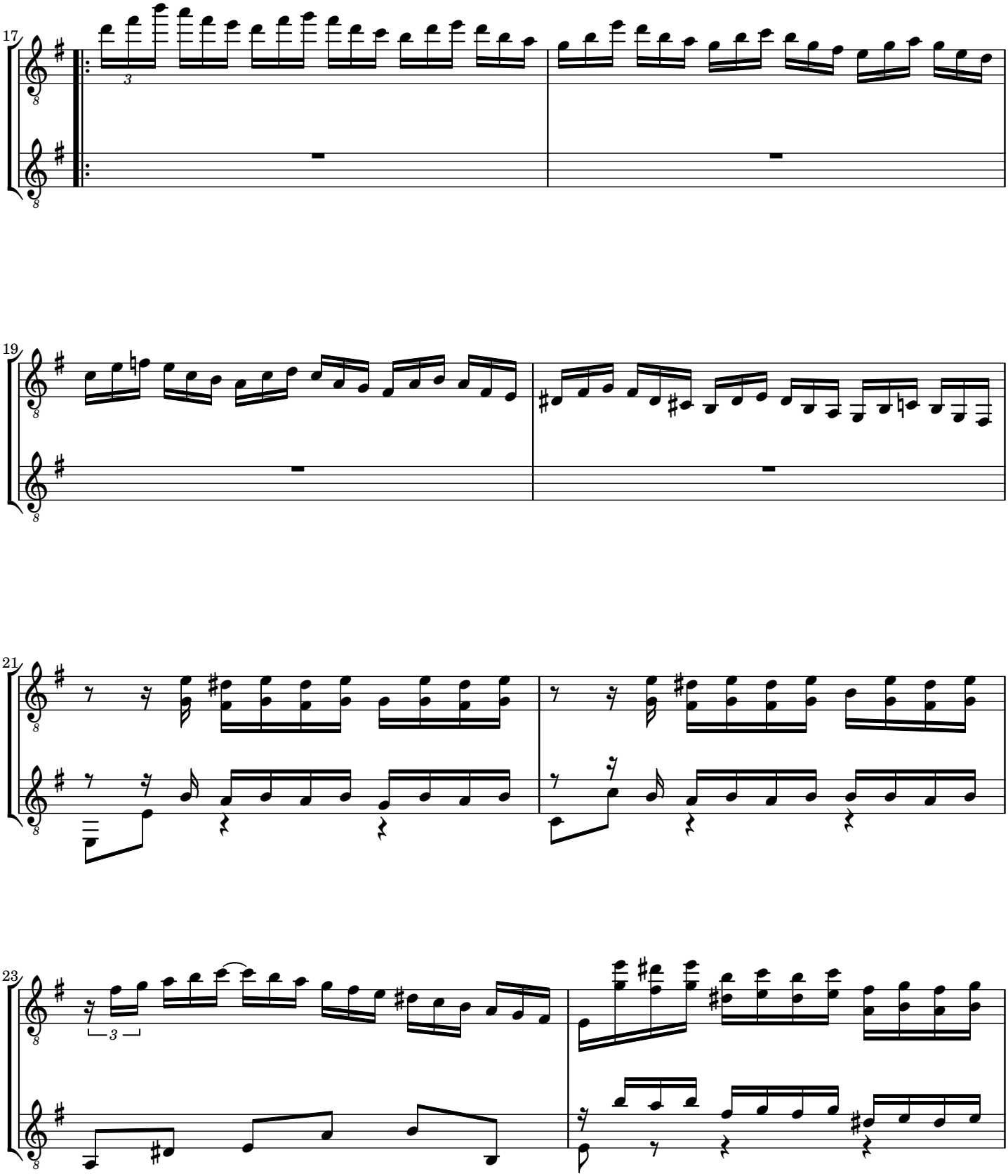
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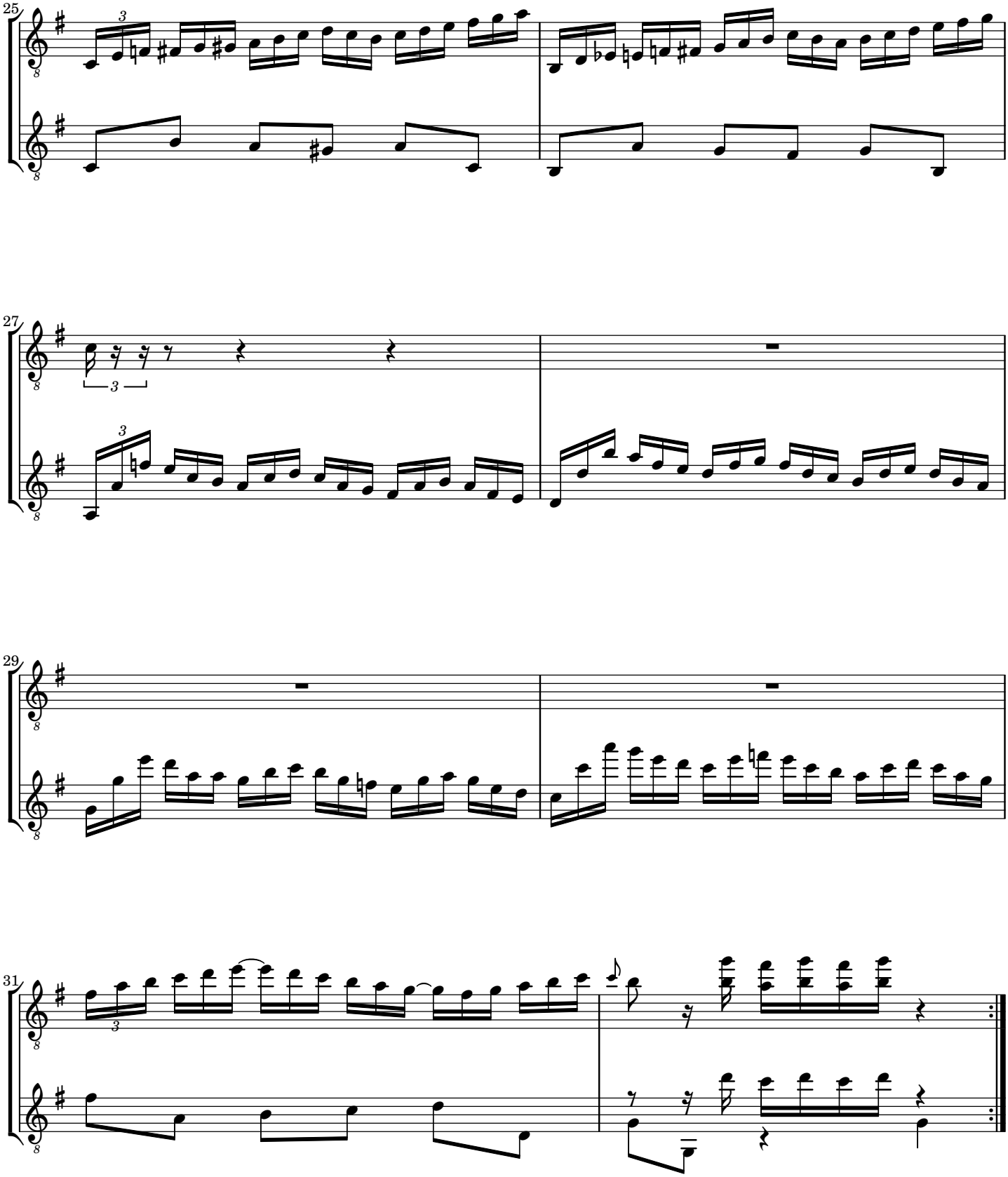
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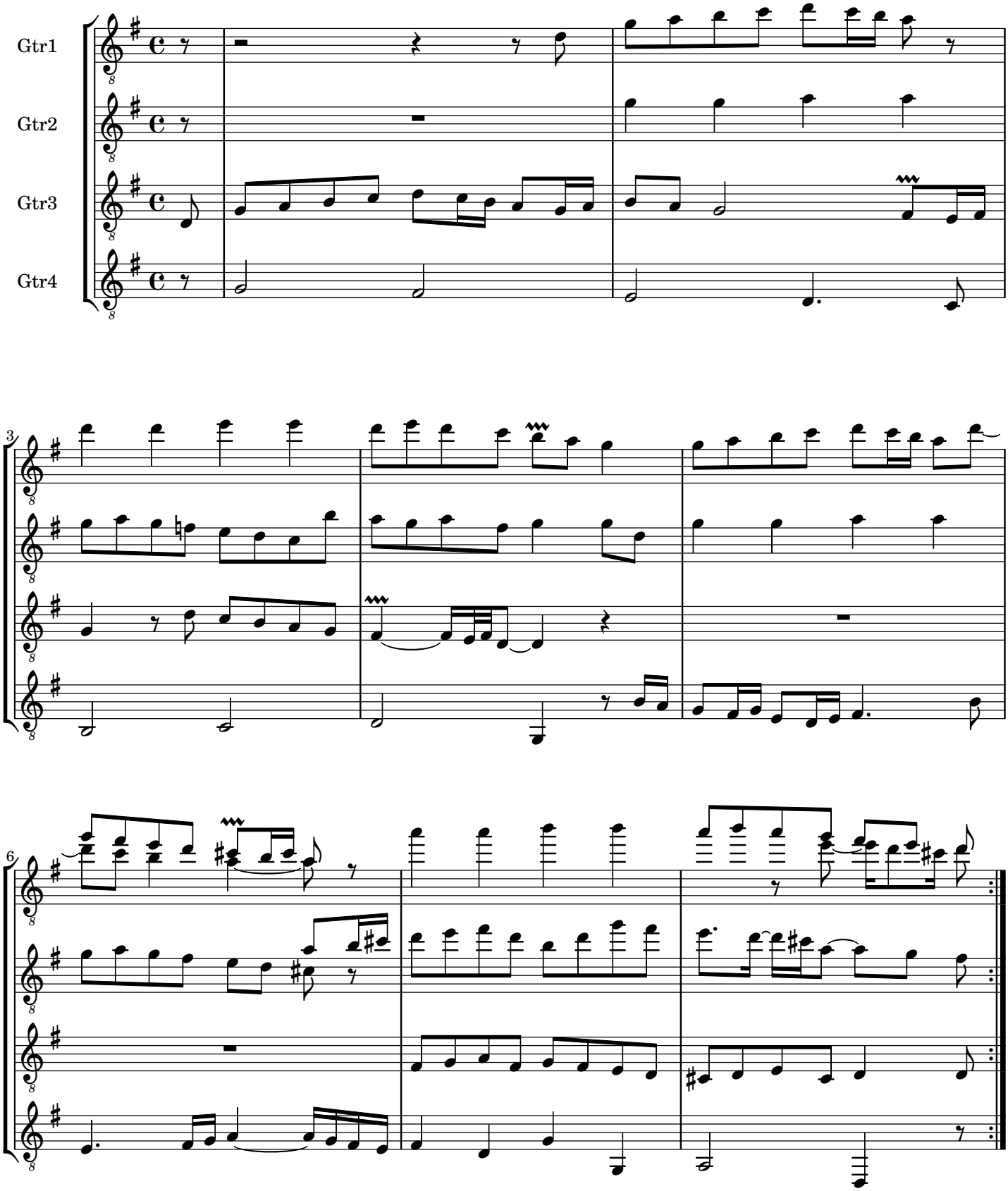
Variation 30

Quodlibet



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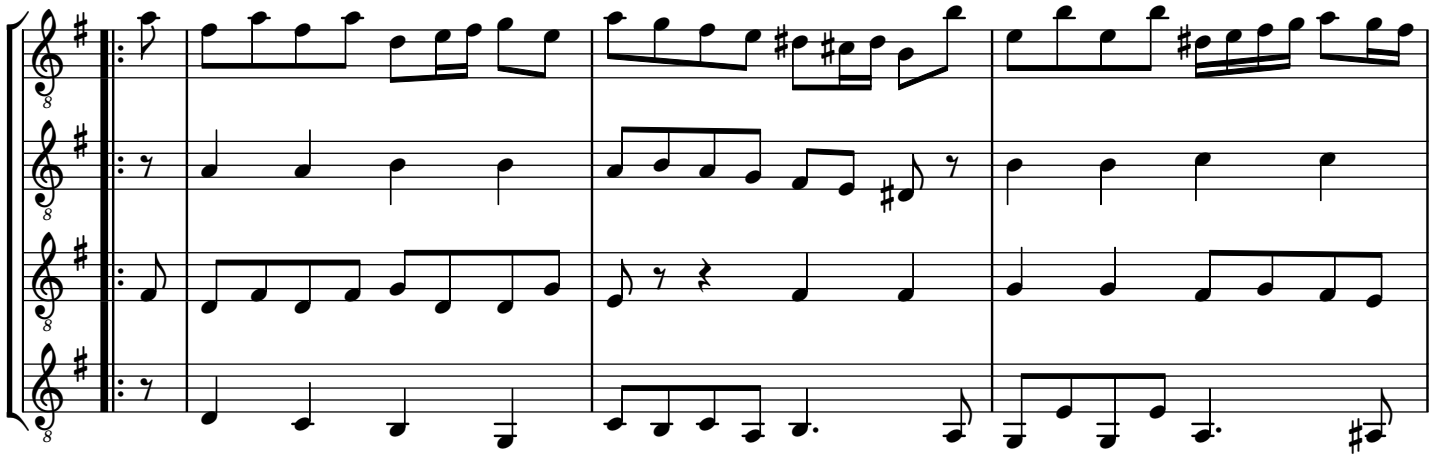
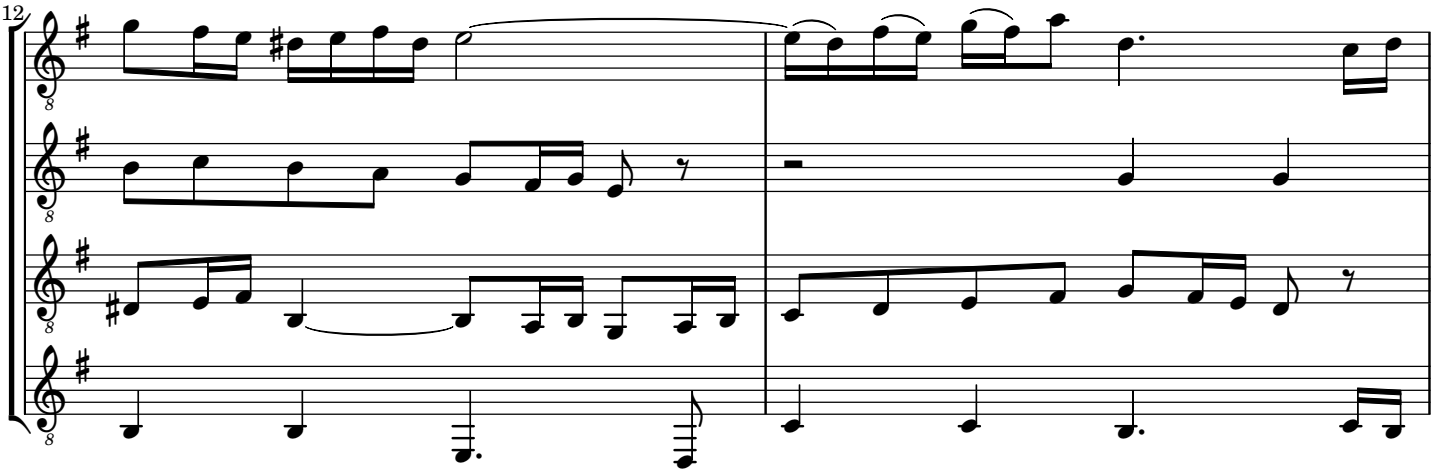
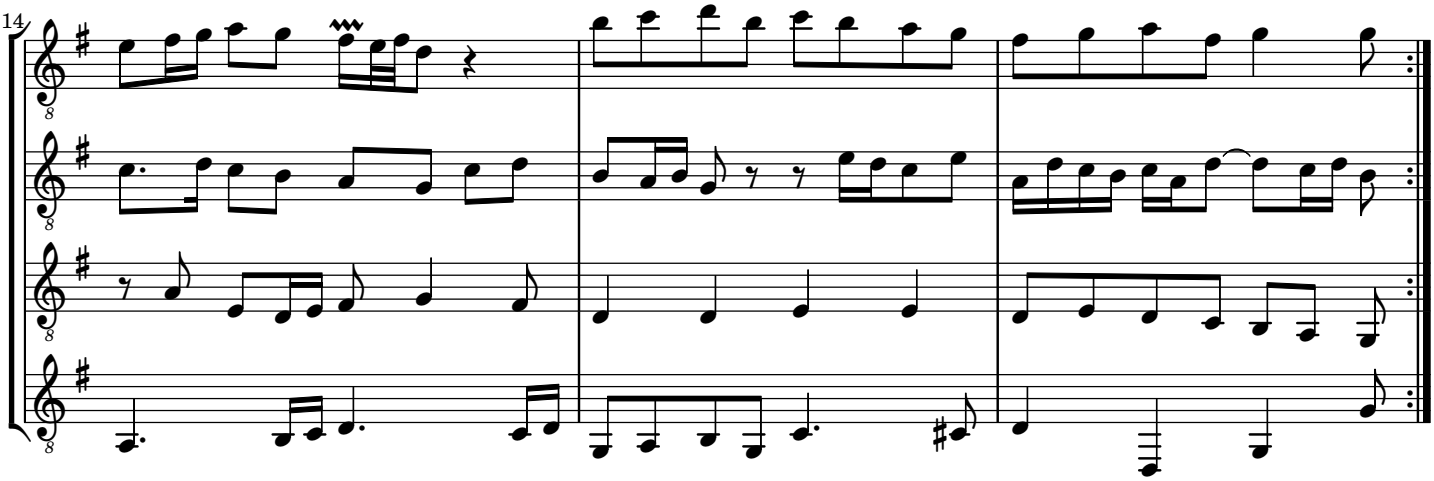


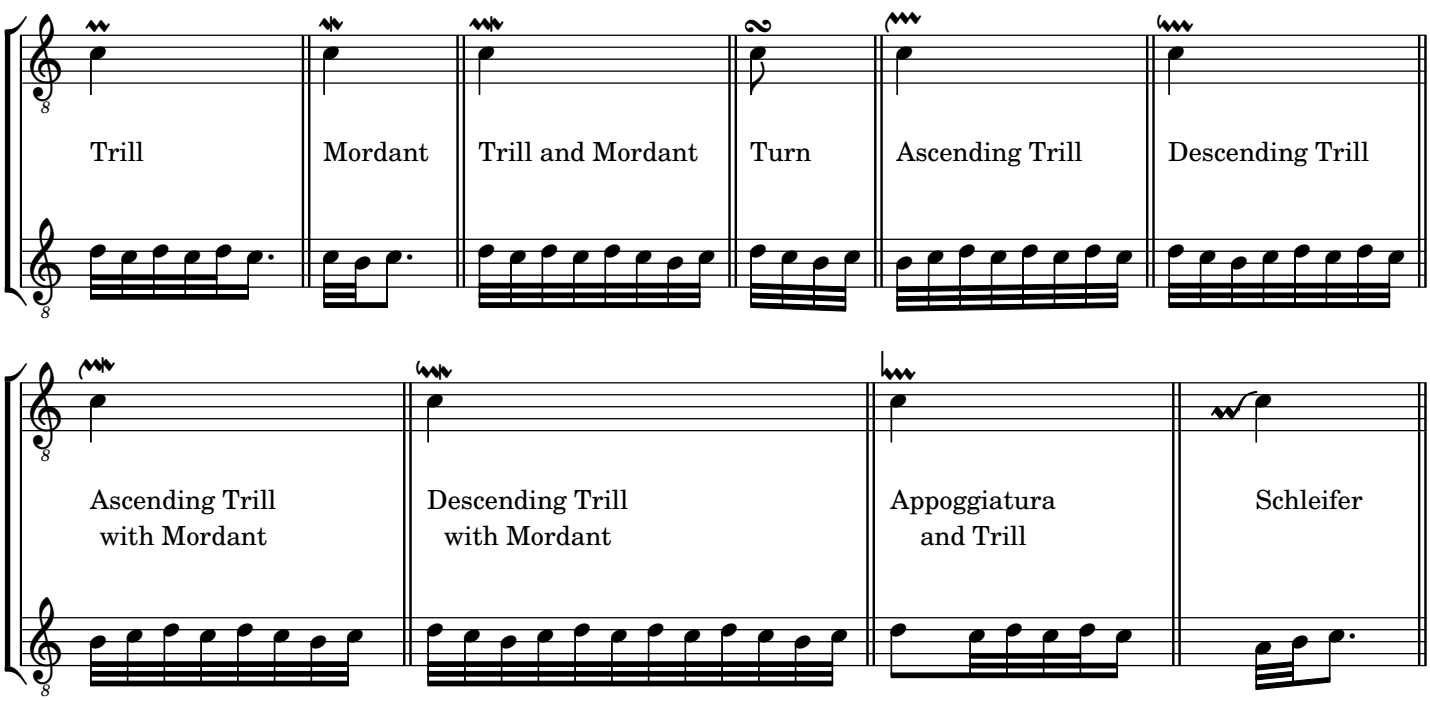




Aria da Capo e Fine.

Table of Ornaments

This table of ornaments is taken from J. S. Bach's "Klavierbüchlein für Wilhelm Friedemann Bach", written for Bach's eldest son. It was meant to be schematic rather than literal. Ornaments in this period were typically improvised. Even when notated the length of the ornament and its articulation was dependent on its context and the performers preference.



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Acknowledgements

This work is the product of a long chain of dependencies, beginning with the great master himself, J. S. Bach. The technological and social advances that have accrued since that time have allowed the creation and distribution of these Goldberg Variations on the scale that is now possible. Of particular importance is the GNU/Linux operating system, the LilyPond engraving system, the Internet, and the new model of network property upon which these things are all dependent.

The transcription and engraving of these Goldberg Variations is the work of Steve Shorter. Thanks is also due to Shayne Grey and Tim Smith for early error corrections, and to the Guitar Society of Toronto Orchestra for creating an inspired and dynamic forum for guitar performance. It was in that forum that these Goldberg Variations for Guitar Ensemble were first imagined and performed.

This work is based on source material from the MutopiaProject http://mutopiaproject.org

Special thanks to sync.com

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Aria	JD Erickson (2007)
Variation 1,2	JD Erickson (2007)
Variation 18	Benjamin Esham (2007)
Variation 3 - 17, 19 - 30	Hajo Delzelski (2008)

Errata

* Aria - bar 23, missing Schleifer

* Variation 27 - bar 23, "c#" not playable under given intstrument limitations

* Variation 23 - bar 31, "c" not playable under given instrument limitations

All other errata should be sent to steve@linuxsuite.org

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