Colin Broom

Music for Desks, Part I – *"Scissors"*

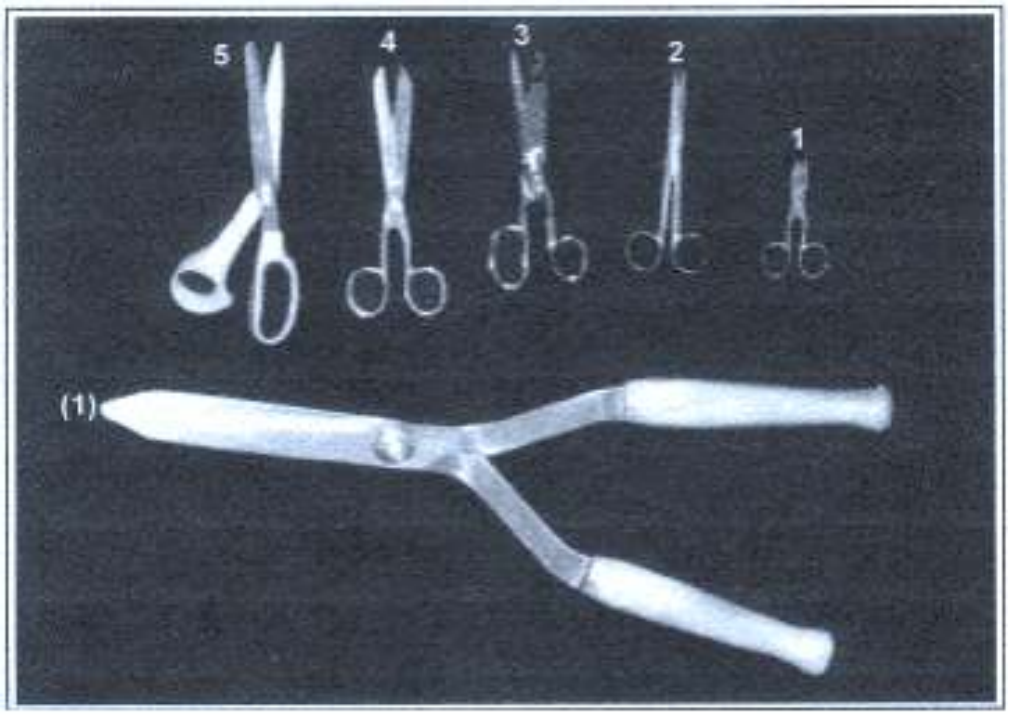
I've always thought of myself as something of a frustrated percussionist. Although I did study percussion for a couple of years at university, it quickly gave way to composition. Nonetheless, I'm a natural tapper/clicker/triggerer of whatever makes a sound when I'm sitting about. It's not really a nervous habit, it's just tapping out patterns is something I've always done.

And that's where Music for Desks part 1 came from. Back in 1998, while idly playing with a pair of scissors (as you do), I became more and more interested in the sound they made. It was every bit as precise as a hit on a drum, but in some ways more interesting because of the friction between the blades, and it was a little unsettling.

I then proceeded to gather up all the scissors in the house to try them out. Nail scissors, hair scissors various types of office scissors, and finally, taking things to what I felt was the logical conclusion, a pair of well-oiled garden shears - "bass scissors". The piece came together fairly quickly and was written in a couple of days.

It was called part 1, as I was then considering writing two more movements, using other office equipment. 5 office desks, Computer keyboards, rulers, staplers, hole punches and gas-lift chairs were all things I was considering. What put me off this at the time was partly the practicalities of performance of such a piece and also other pieces just took over and my focus moved elsewhere (finding a venue with 5 office desks readily available for example).. The idea's still there. Maybe one day.

Performance notes:



The original scissors used for *Music for Desks:*

Player 1:	Very small, nail scissors or similar (Player 1 doubles on garden shears)
Player 2:	Medium/small scissors, perhaps like those a hairdresser would use.
Players 3 & 4:	Medium/large general purpose scissors, but all metal – no plastic.
Player 5:	Large office scissors with plastic handles

Couple of points to note:

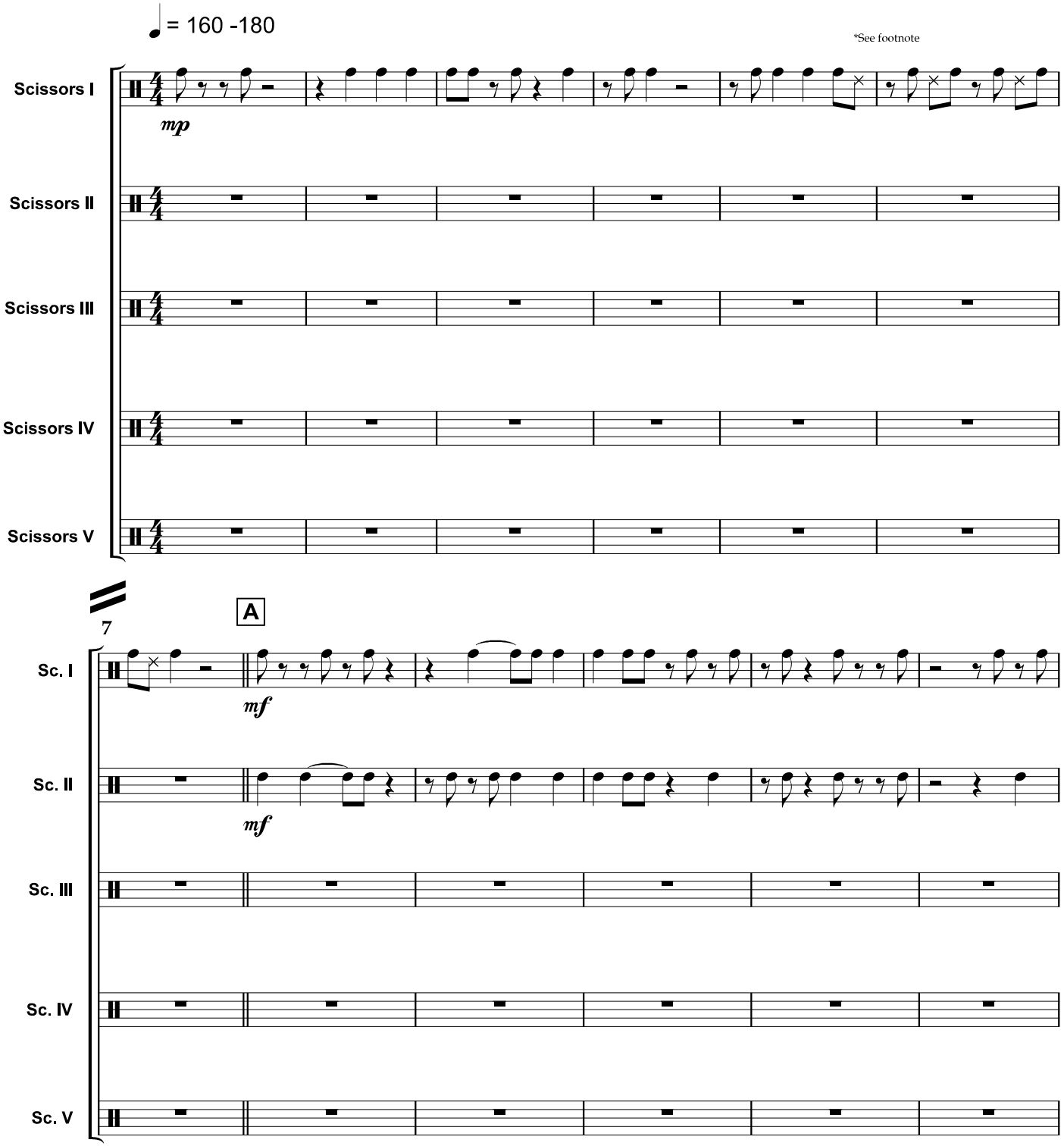
i. The garden shears should be kept out of sight from the audience until they are to be played.
ii. Ensure all scissors are well-lubricated, especially the shears.
iii. Playing garden shears is actually quite physically demanding. Players might want to consider rehearsing with smaller scissors until nearer the time of performance, to avoid RSI or similar injury.
iv. The piece needs to be amplified. Player 1 should be especially careful of the proximity of the shears to the microphone, both for safety and for reasons of not angering the sound engineer.

September 1997
(Revised Aug. 1998, March 1999)

Music for Desks

I - "Scissors"

Colin Broom



*A cross notehead (player 1 only) indicates making a sound by quickly opening the scissors as wide as they will go.

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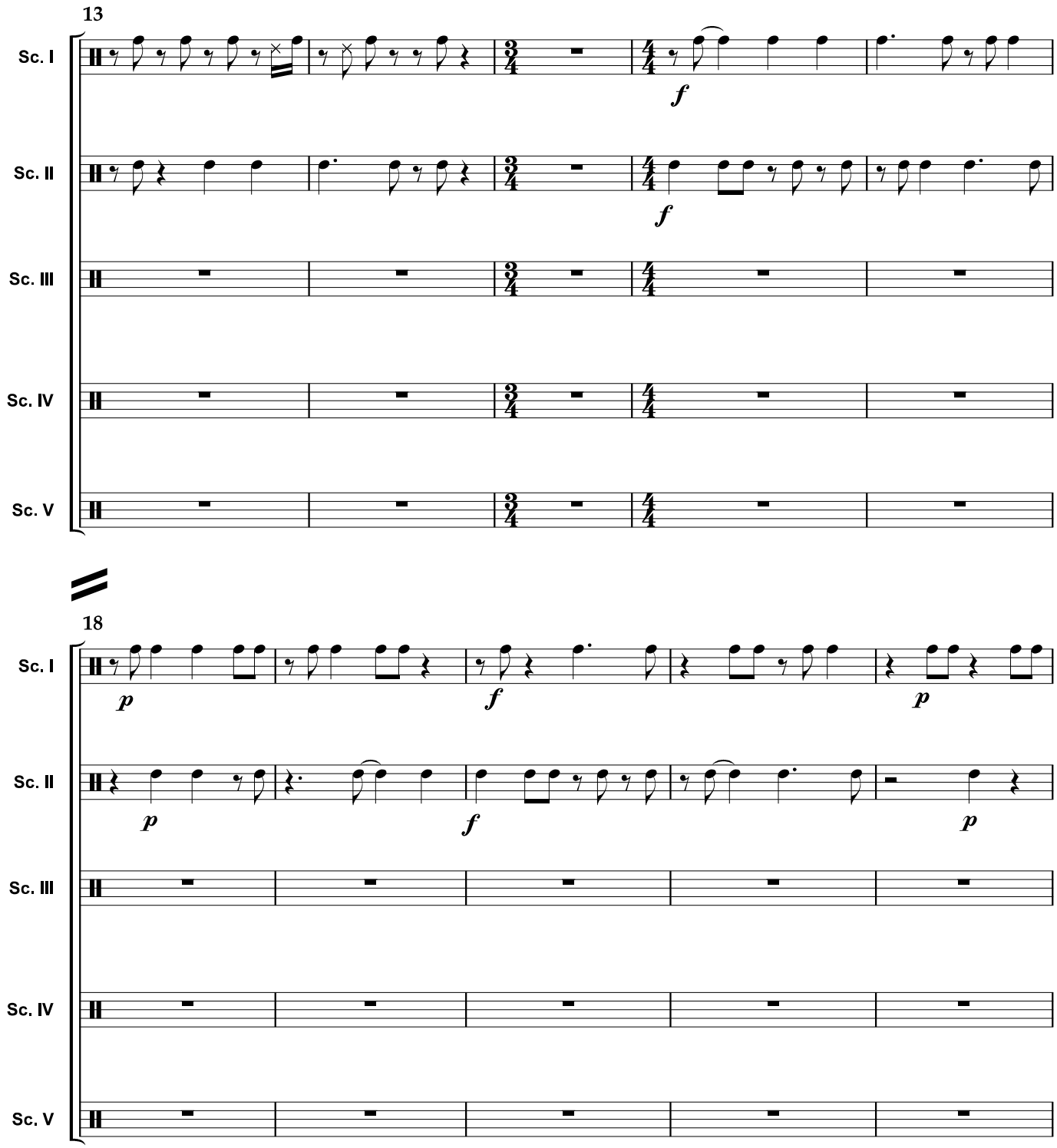

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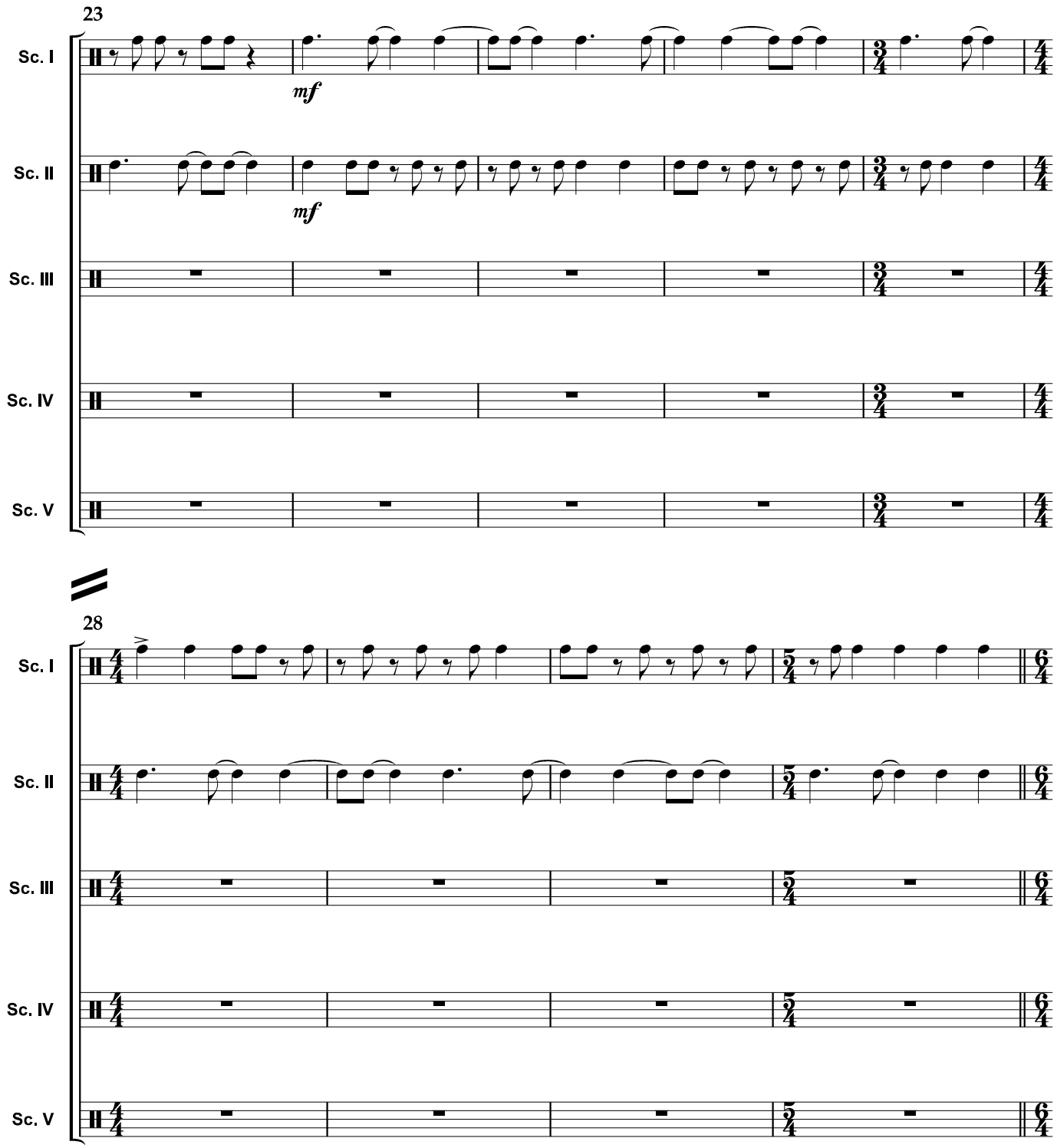

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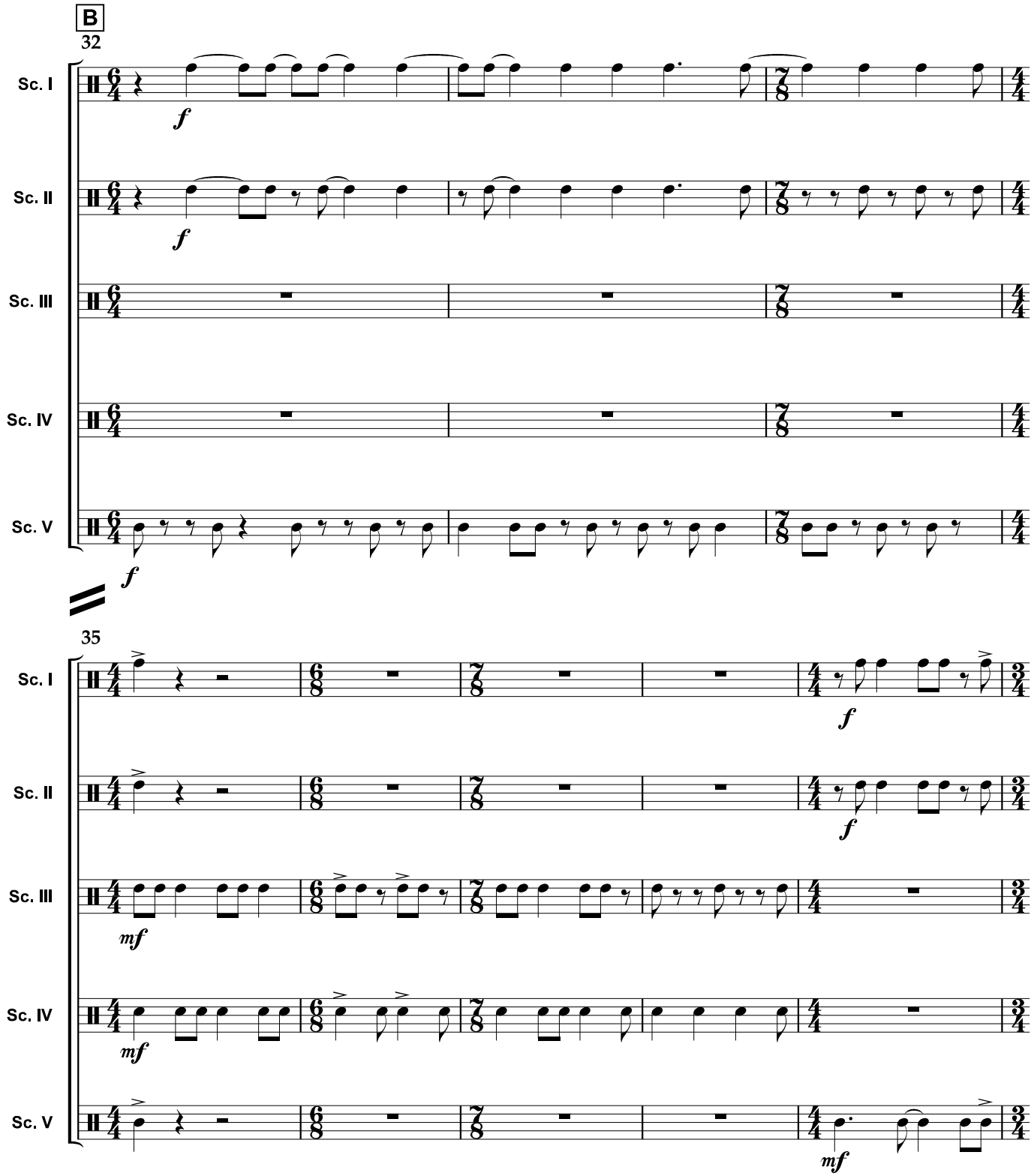

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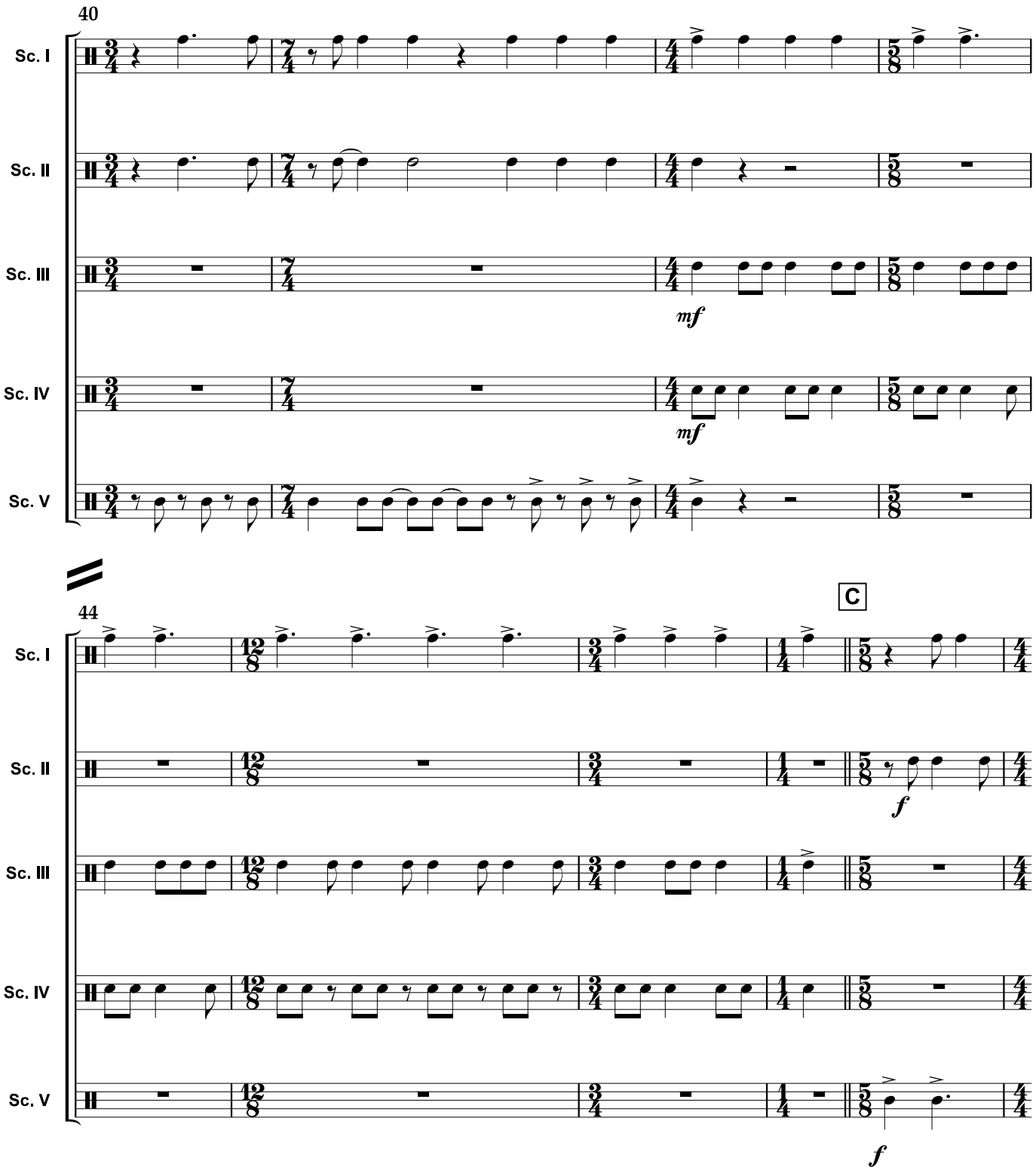

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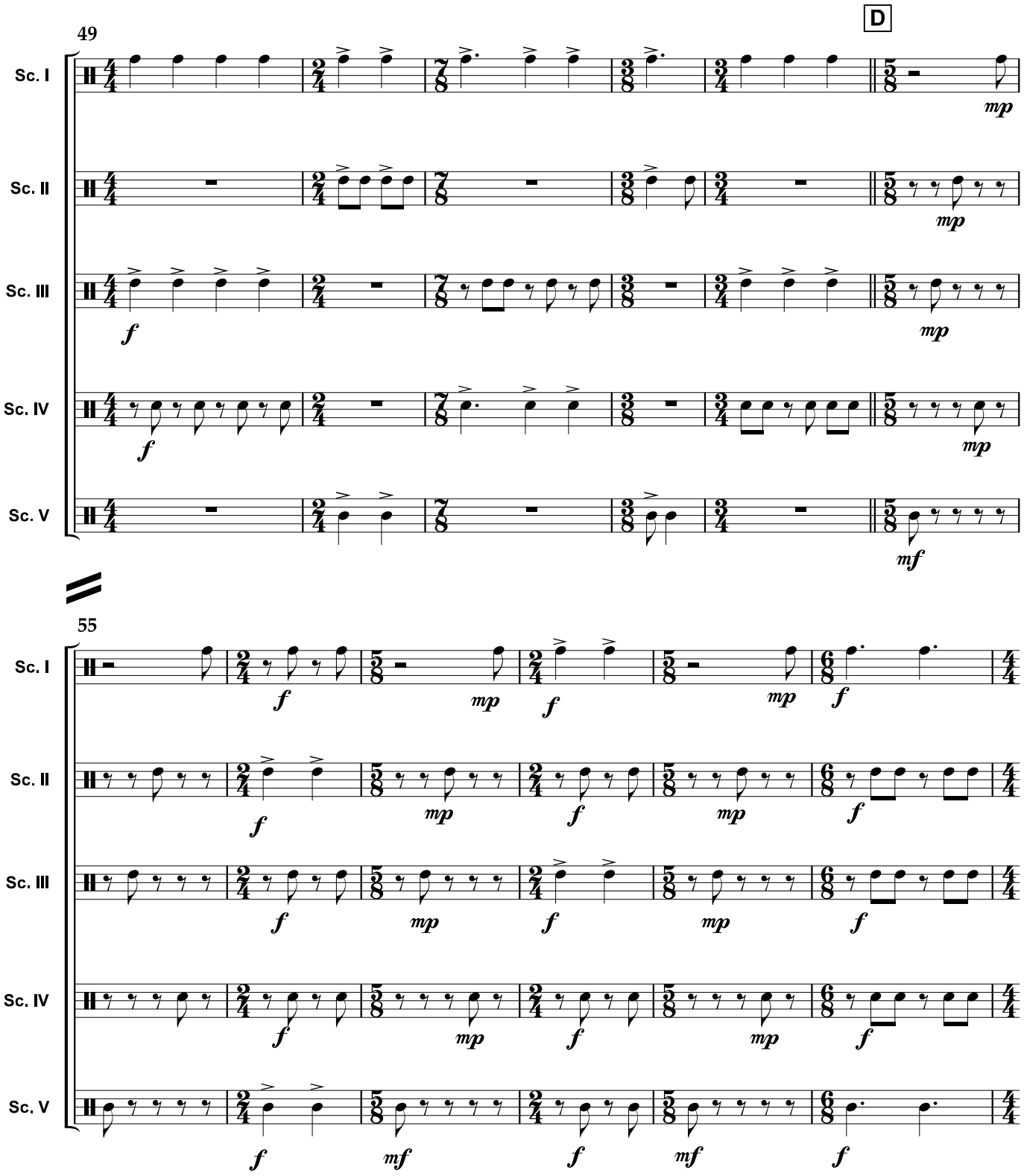

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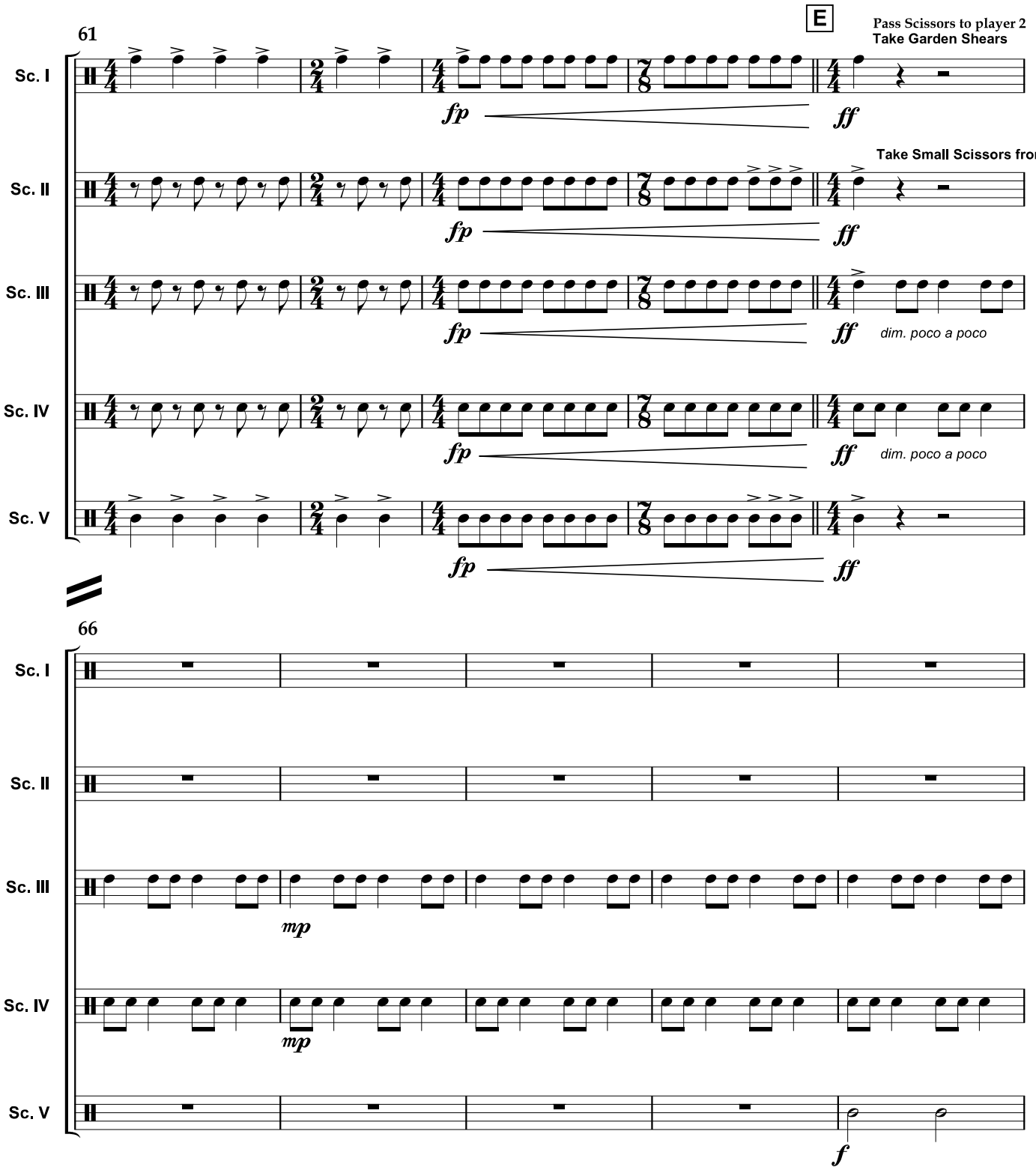

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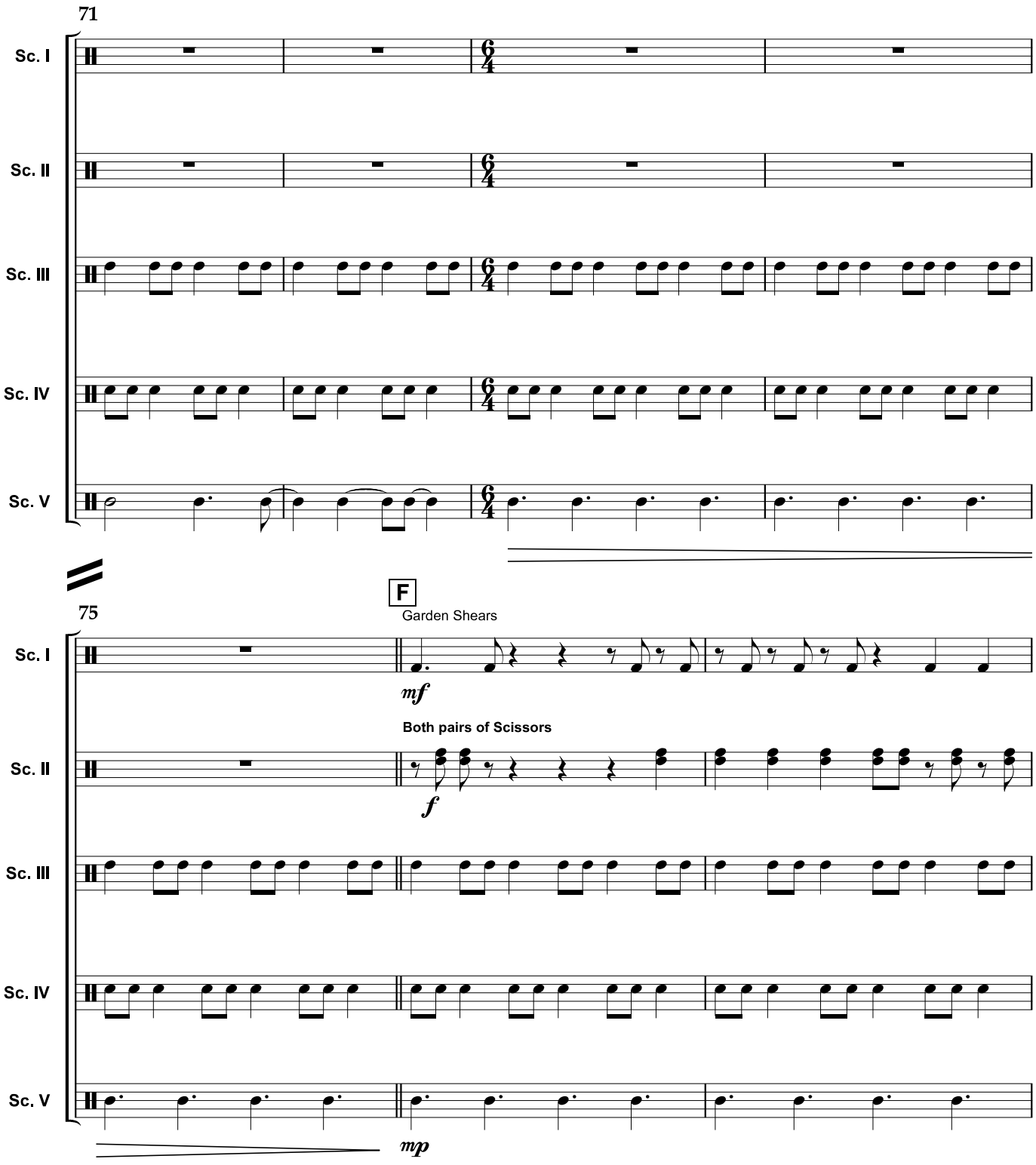

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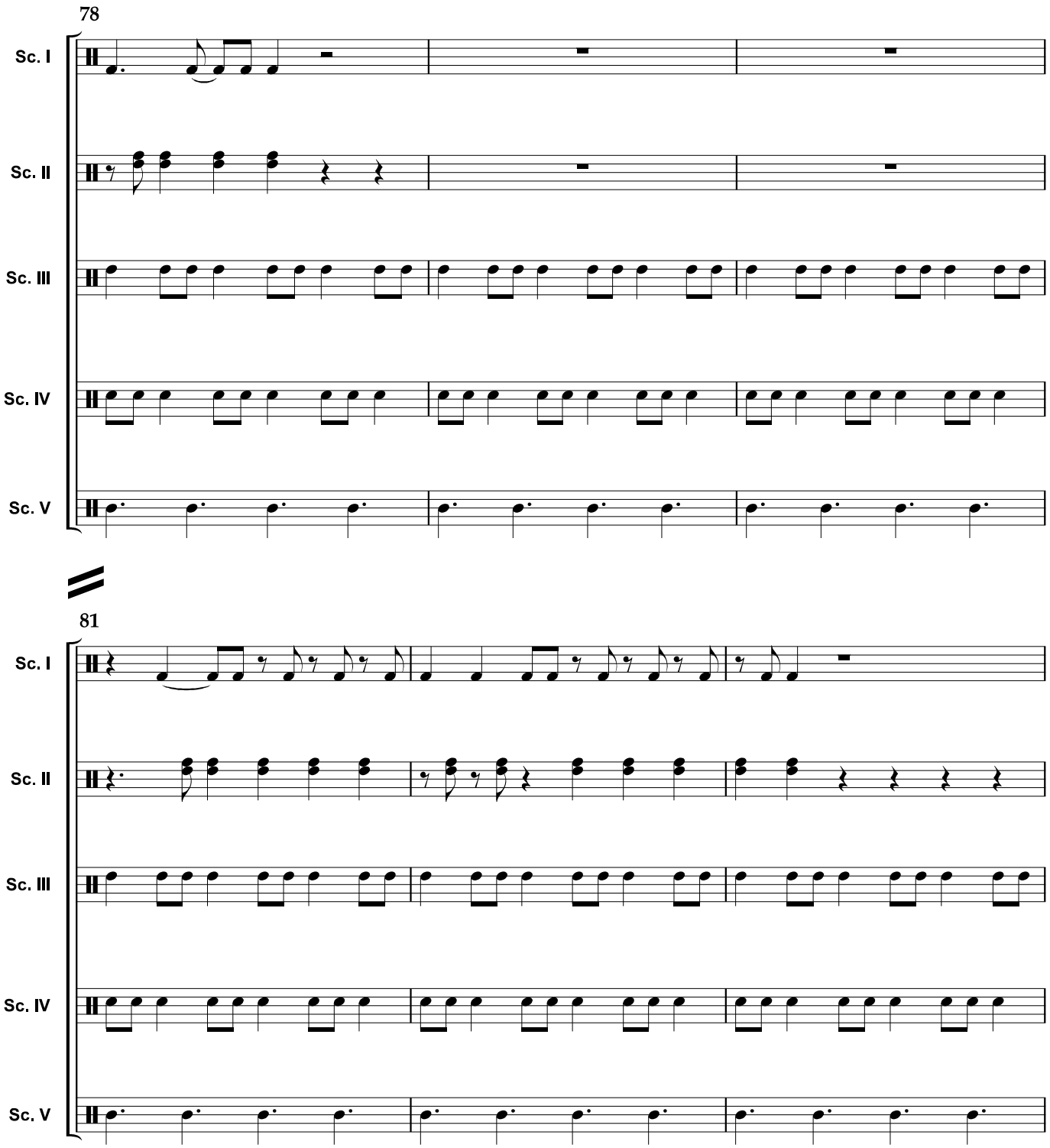

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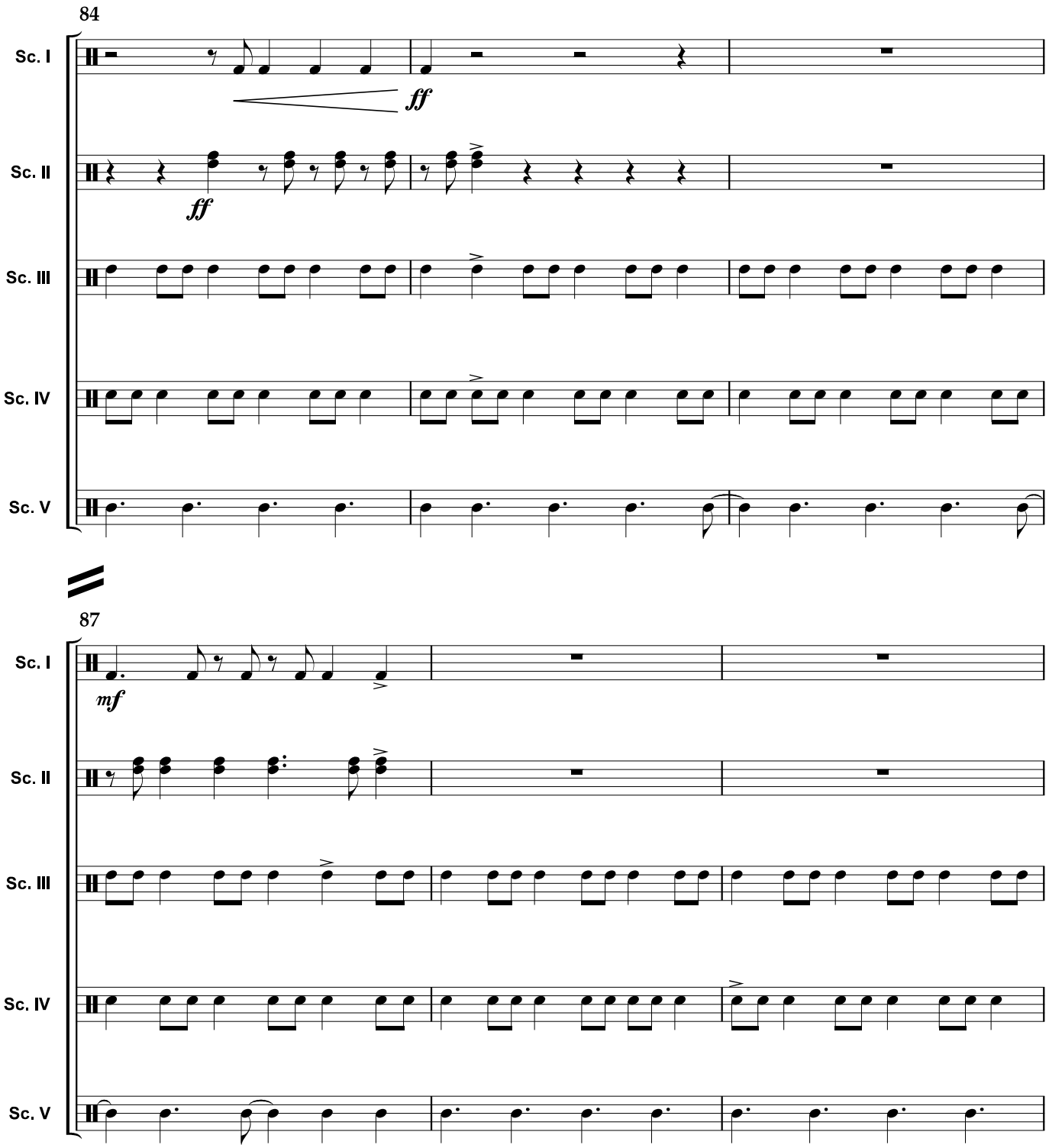

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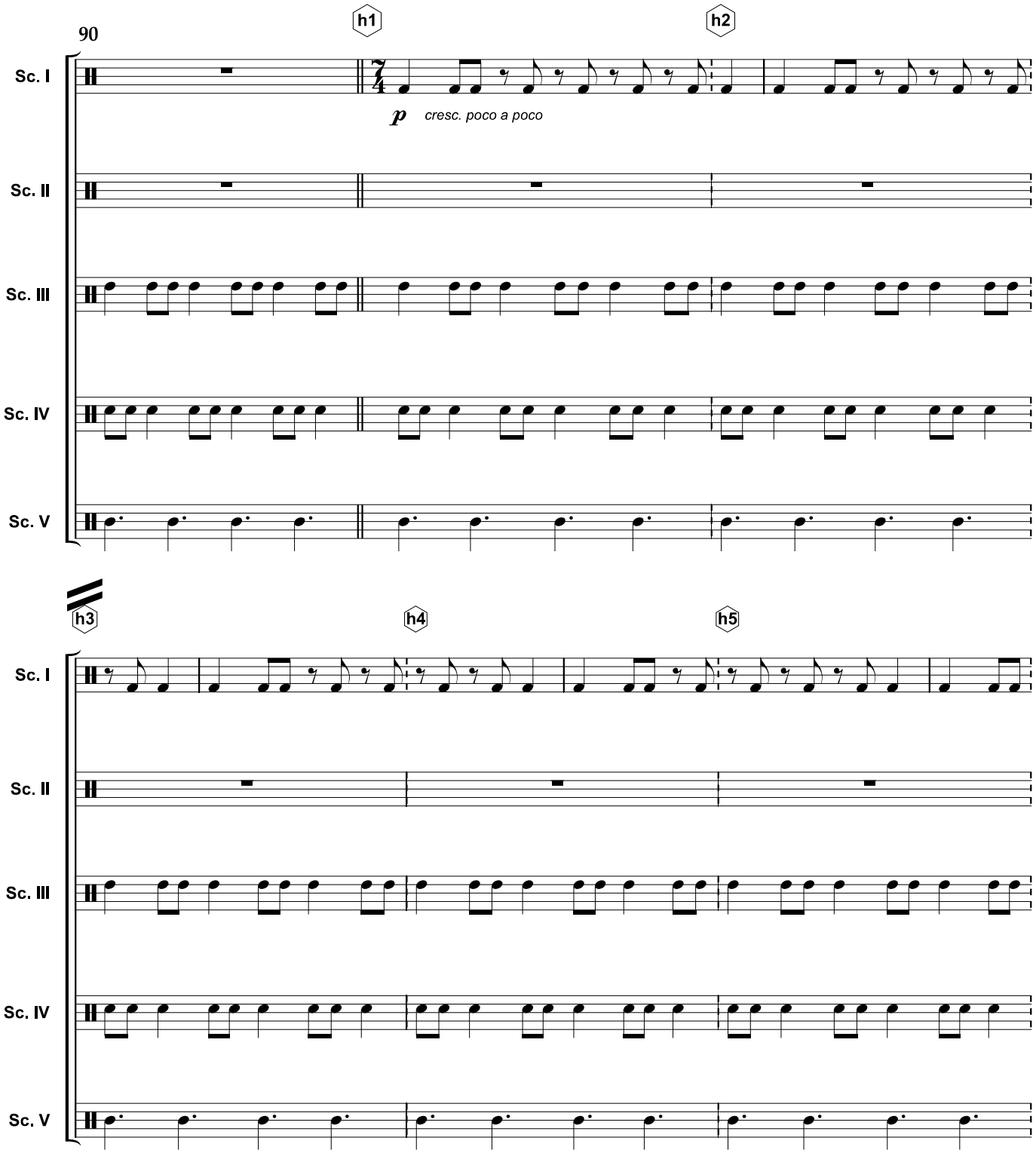

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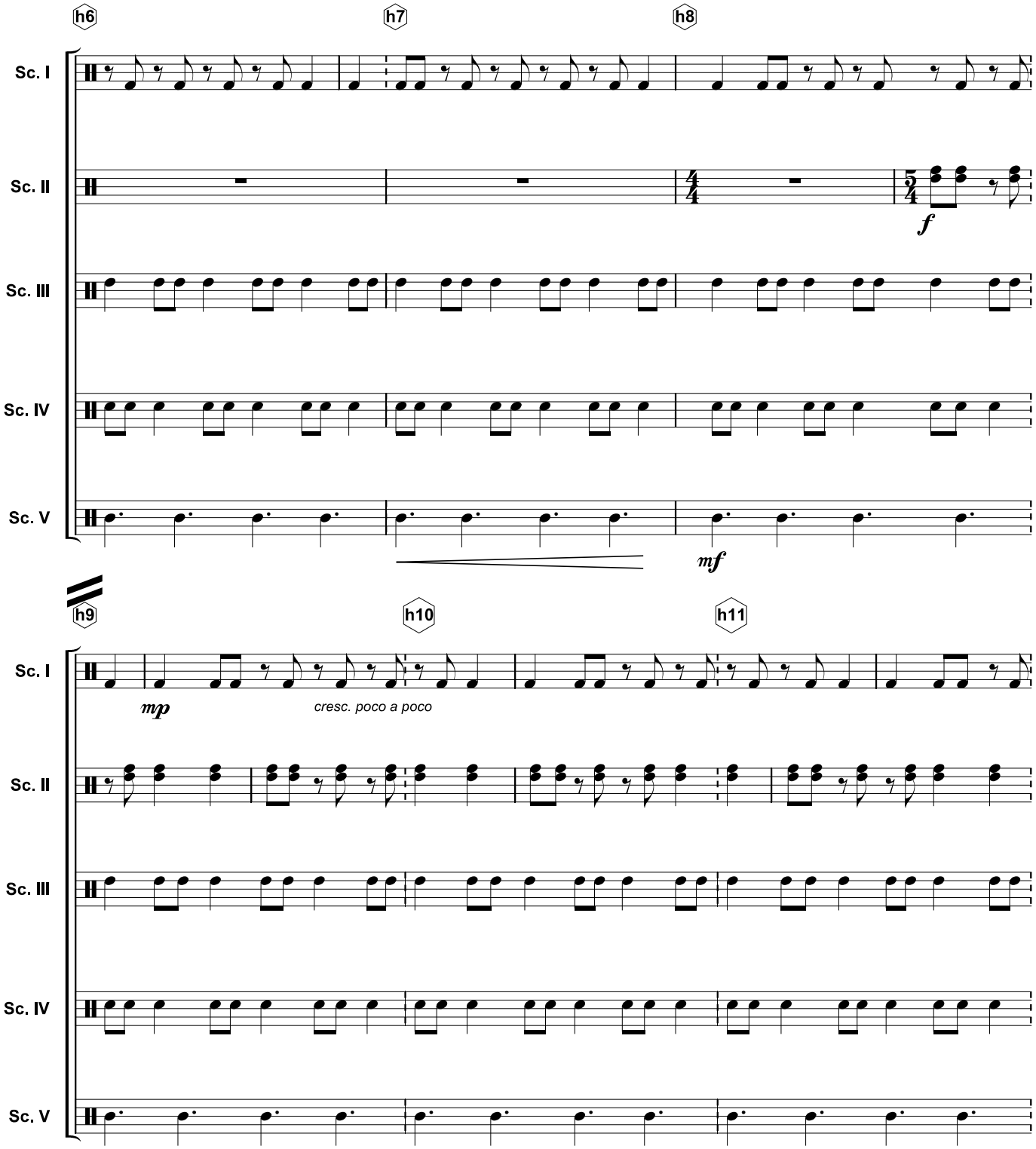

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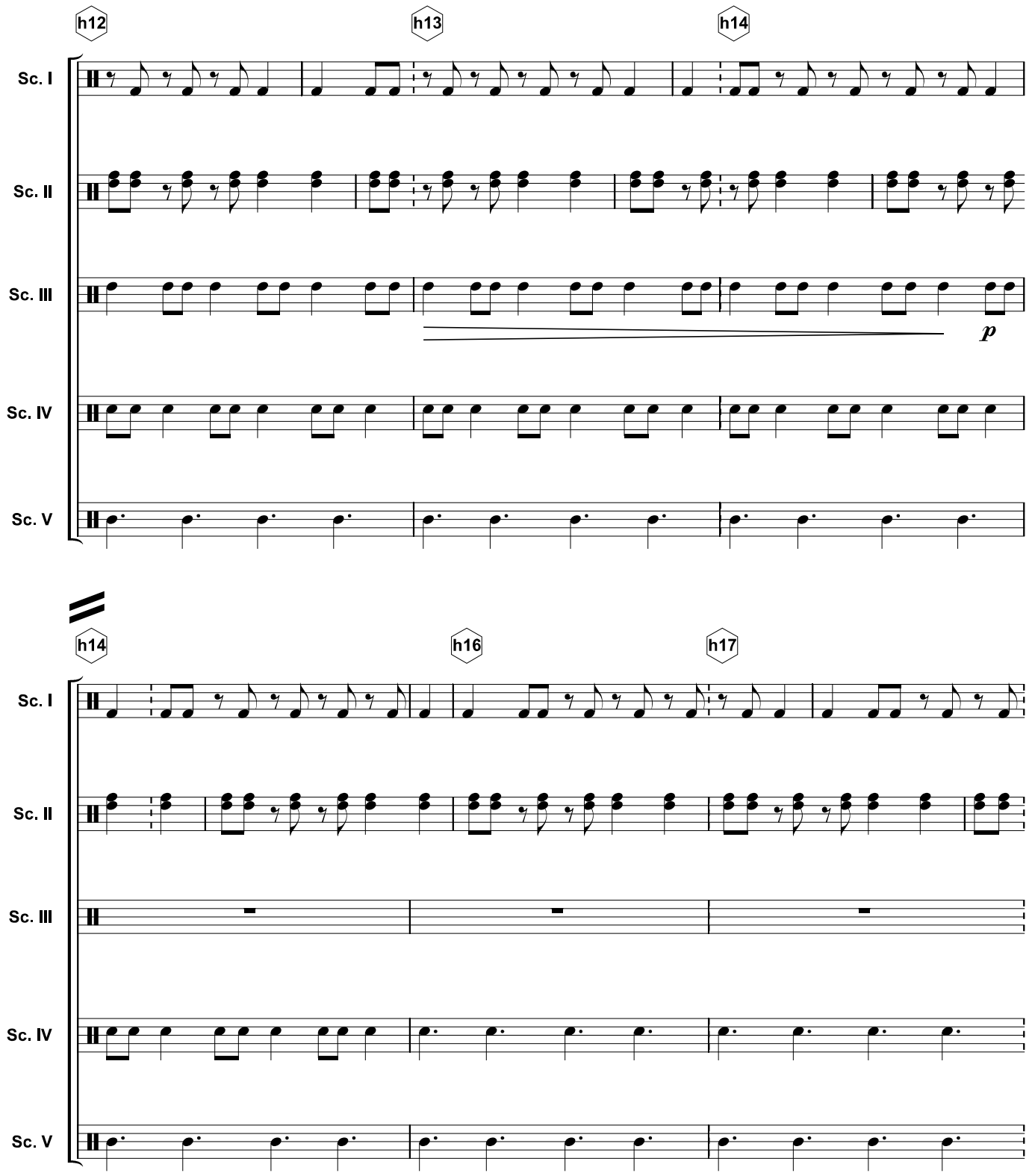

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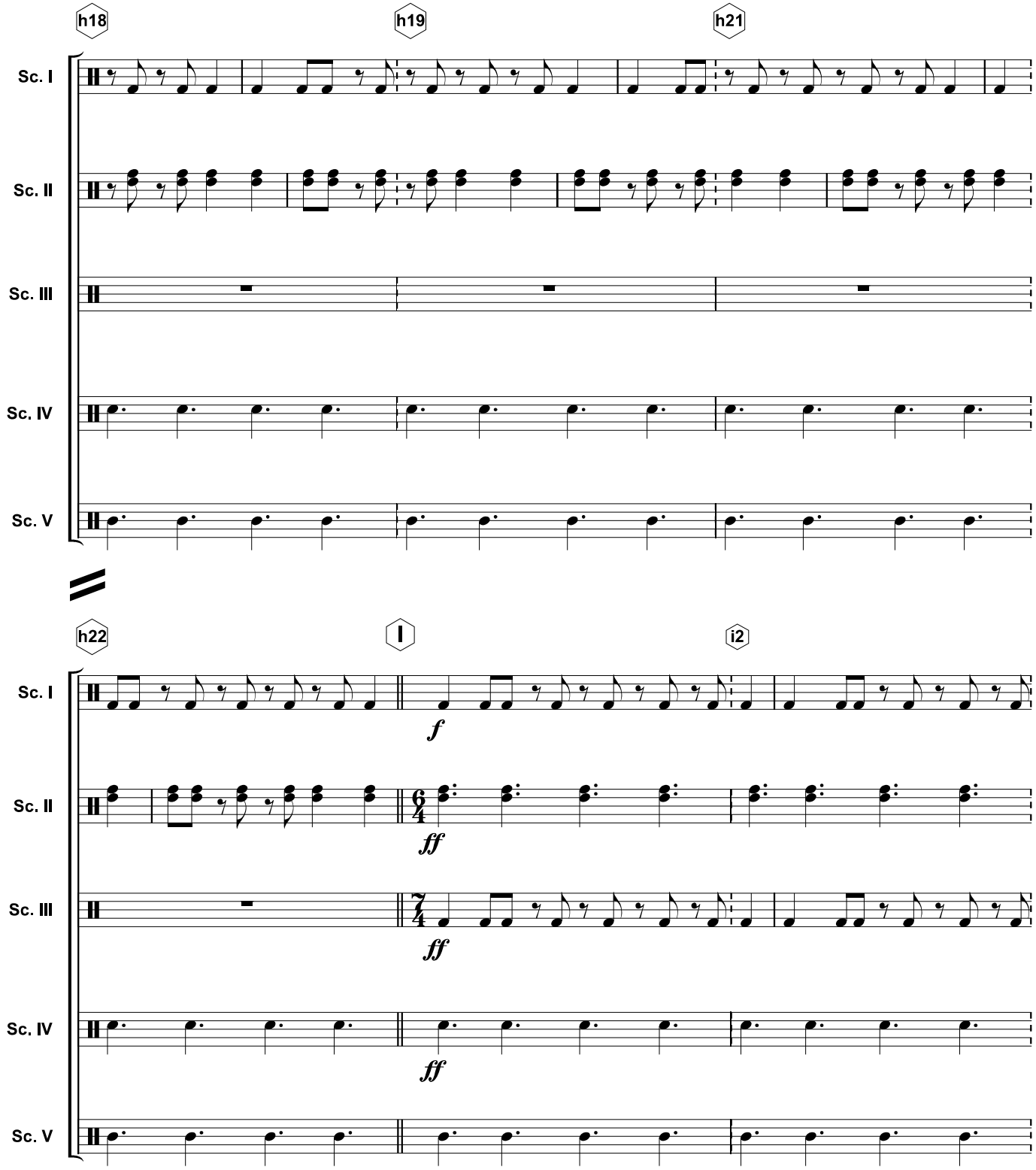

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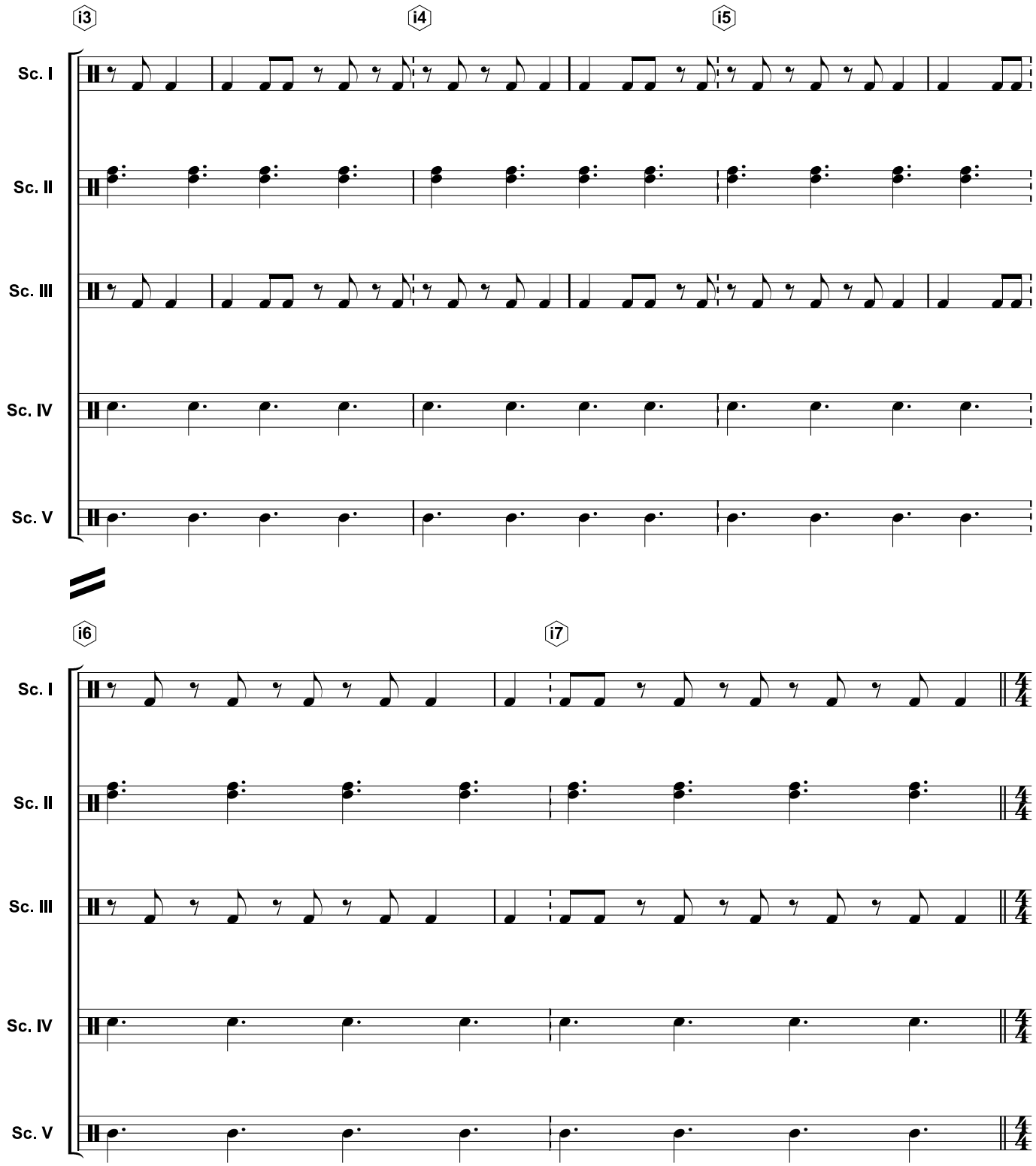

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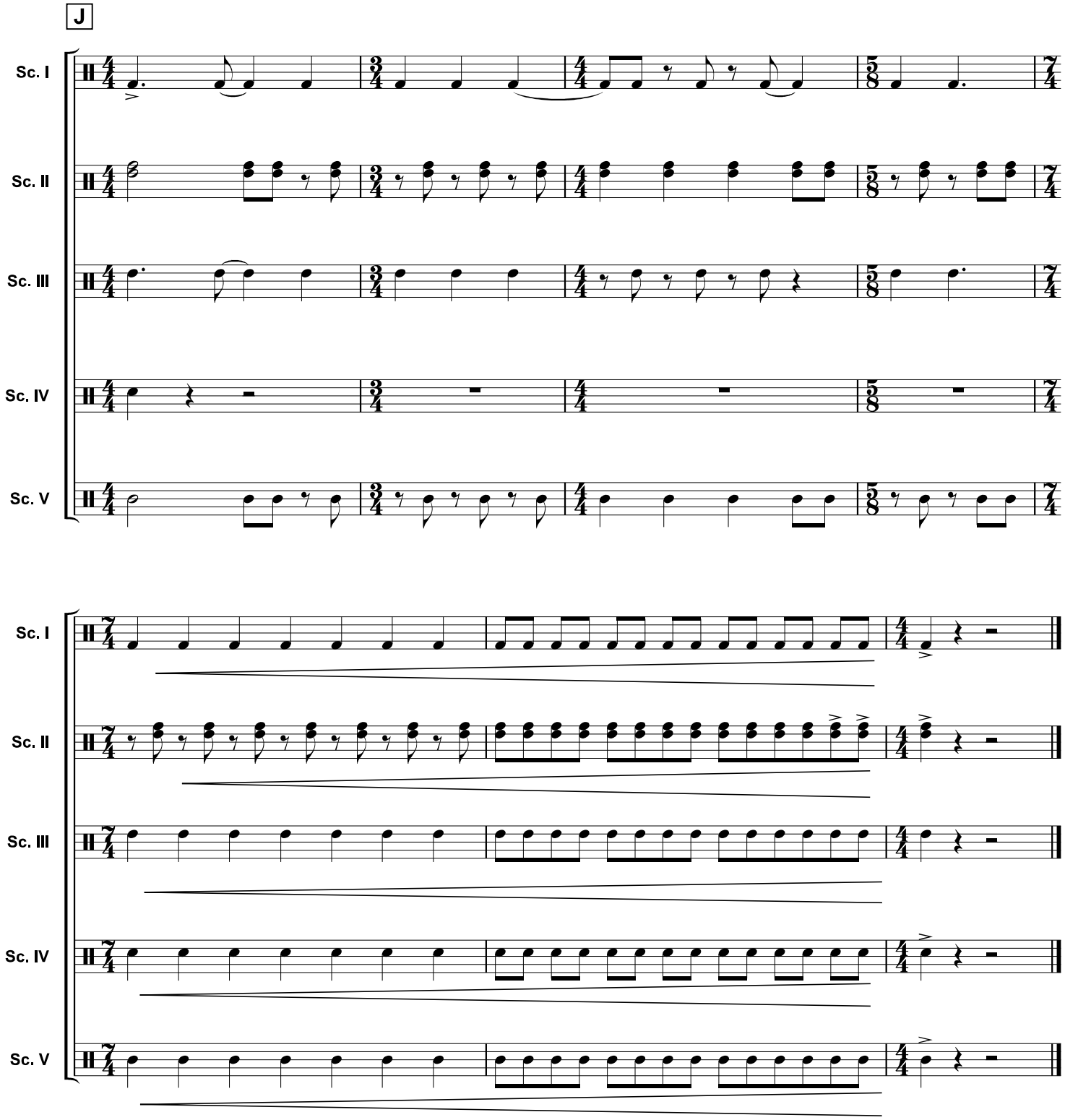

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