"Hesitatin' Blues" Notes

By Little Brother Montgomery
Transcribed and arranged by Kristian Olsen
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General Notes

What follows is a transcription of Little Brother Montgomery's piano introduction to "Hesitatin' Blues," along with an expanded solo-piano arrangement based on that opening material.

Little Brother's recording—which includes several sung verses—appears on the little-known Takoma Records release *Chicago Breakdown*. The album is a personal collection of blues performances recorded by Normal Dayron in Chicago in the early 1960s, captured in apartments, basements, and small clubs. Little Brother appears on two tracks. His version of "Hesitatin' Blues" from this album can be heard on YouTube.

"Hesitation Blues" is an early 12-bar blues whose origins are somewhat unclear. Billy Smythe and Scott Middleton published a version in 1915, and W. C. Handy published another the same year under the title "Hesitating Blues." A superb interpretation was later recorded by Jelly Roll Morton in 1938 for his Library of Congress sessions. The song traditionally includes vocal verses, though the lyrics vary widely from version to version—and are often quite bawdy.

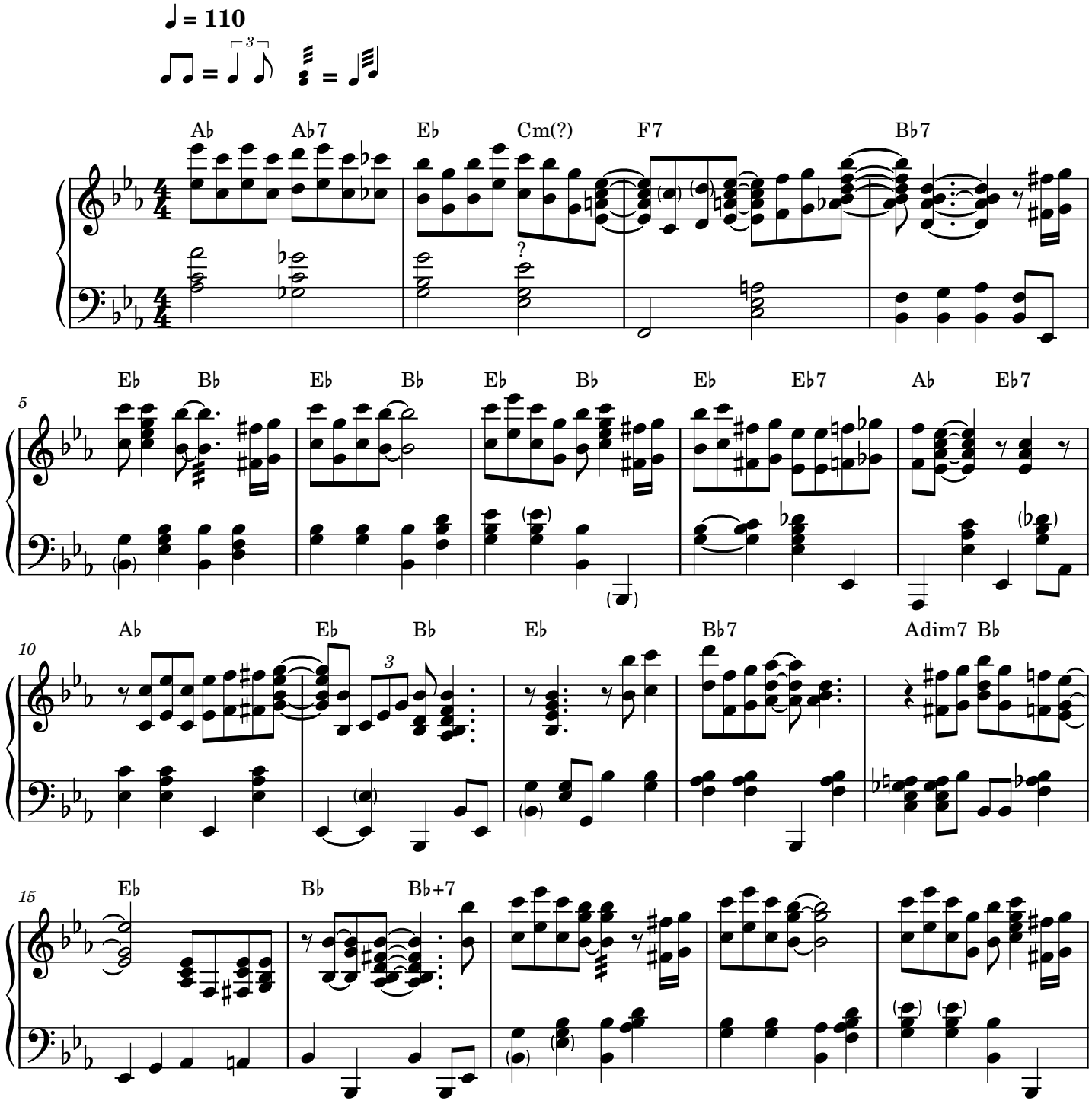
Little Brother's rendition on *Chicago Breakdown* opens with a two-verse piano introduction, which I have transcribed note-for-note below. I've also used that introduction as the foundation for a fuller solo-piano arrangement, included here as sheet music. A recording of my arrangement is available on my YouTube channel.

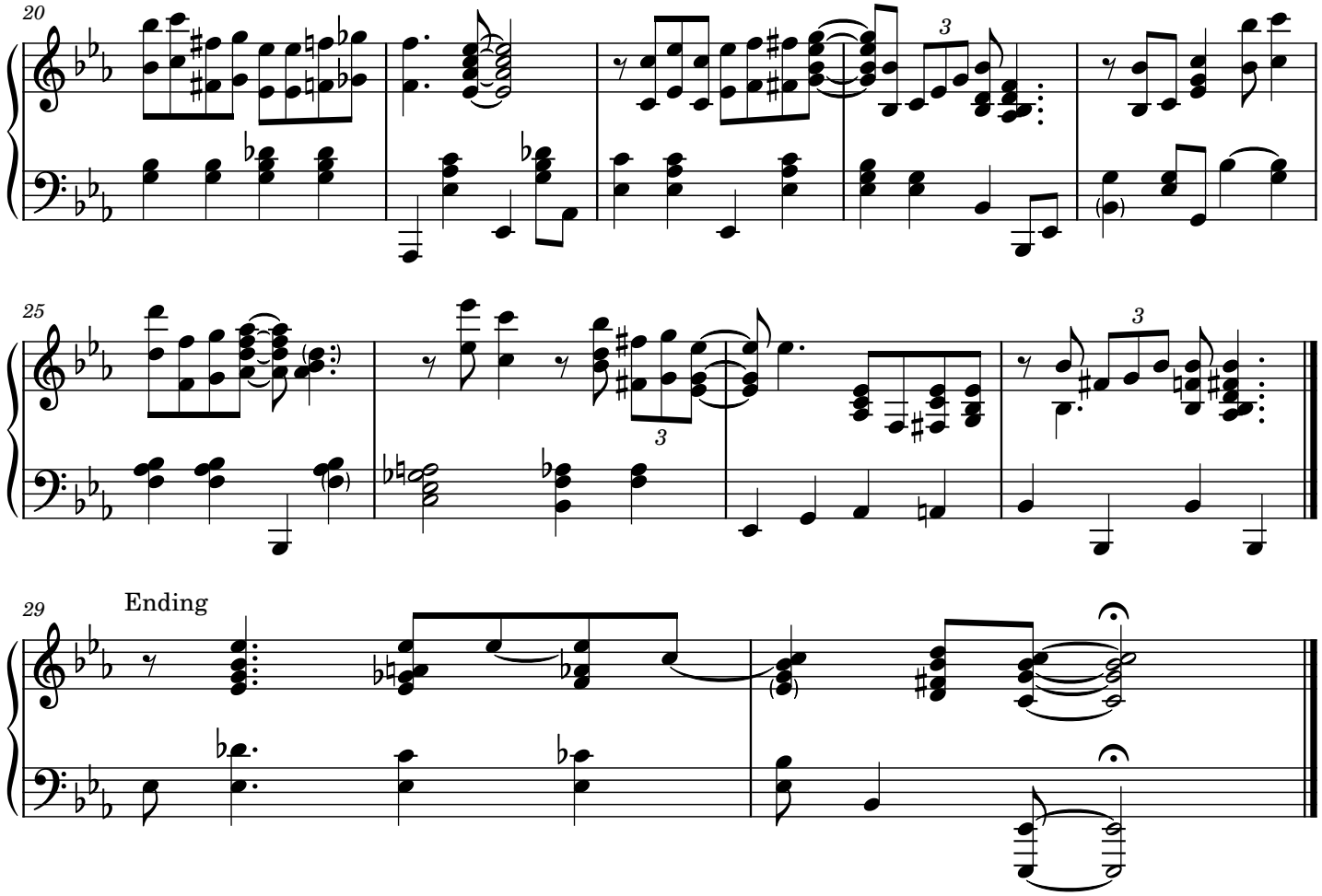
Note: I have mostly left out articulation and pedaling in these scores. Listen to the recordings and copy, or use whatever sounds good to you. Notes marked in parentheses are ones that I'm not sure are present in the original recording, but they'd make sense if they were there.

As always, this sheet music is meant only as a guide to your own exploration of the piece. Make changes freely and play it in whatever way moves you.

Hesitatin' Blues

Little Brother Montgomery
From "Chicago Breakdown" (Tacoma Records), 1963
Transcribed by Kristian Olsen

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Ending

Hesitatin' Blues

Little Brother Montgomery
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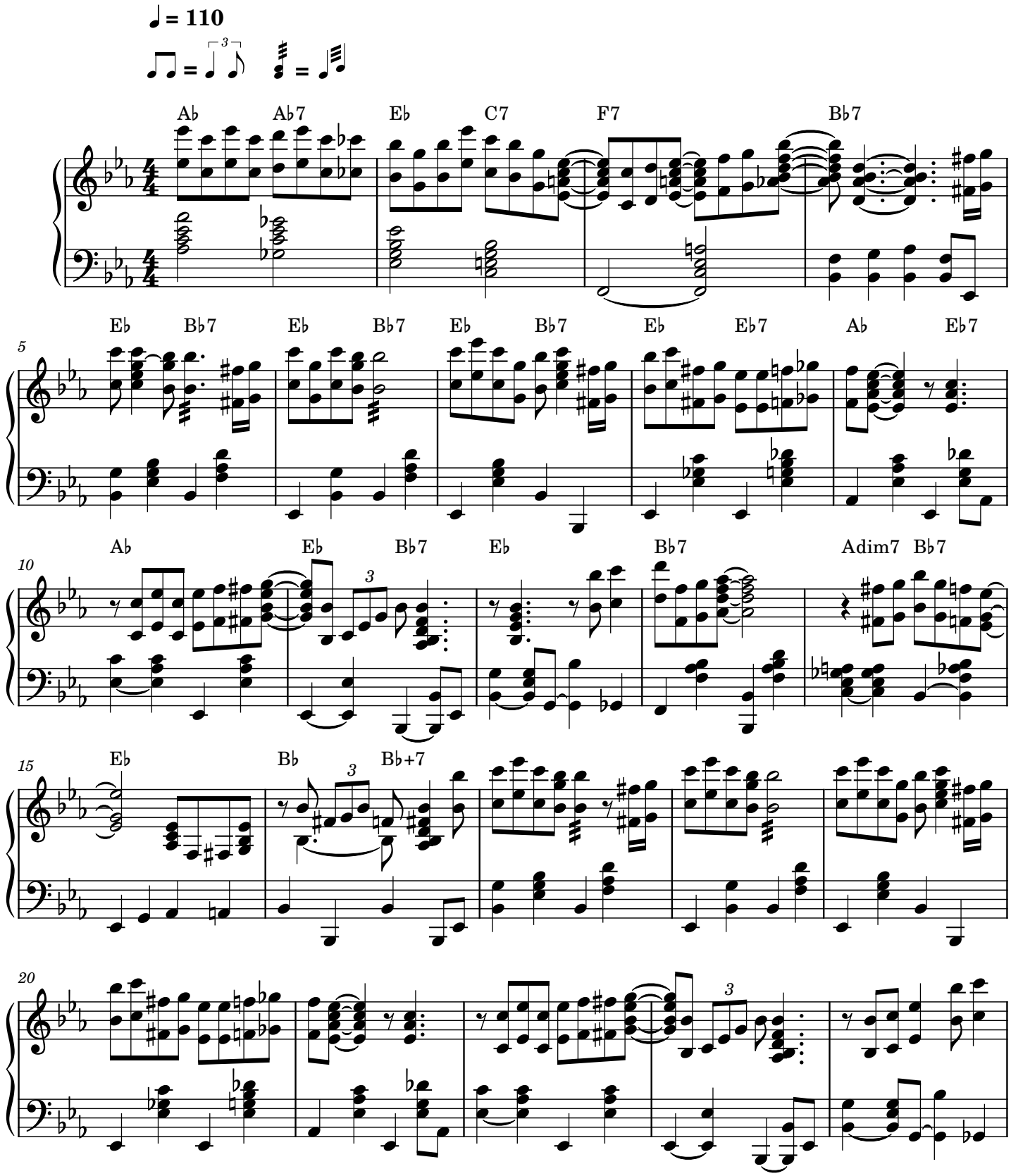

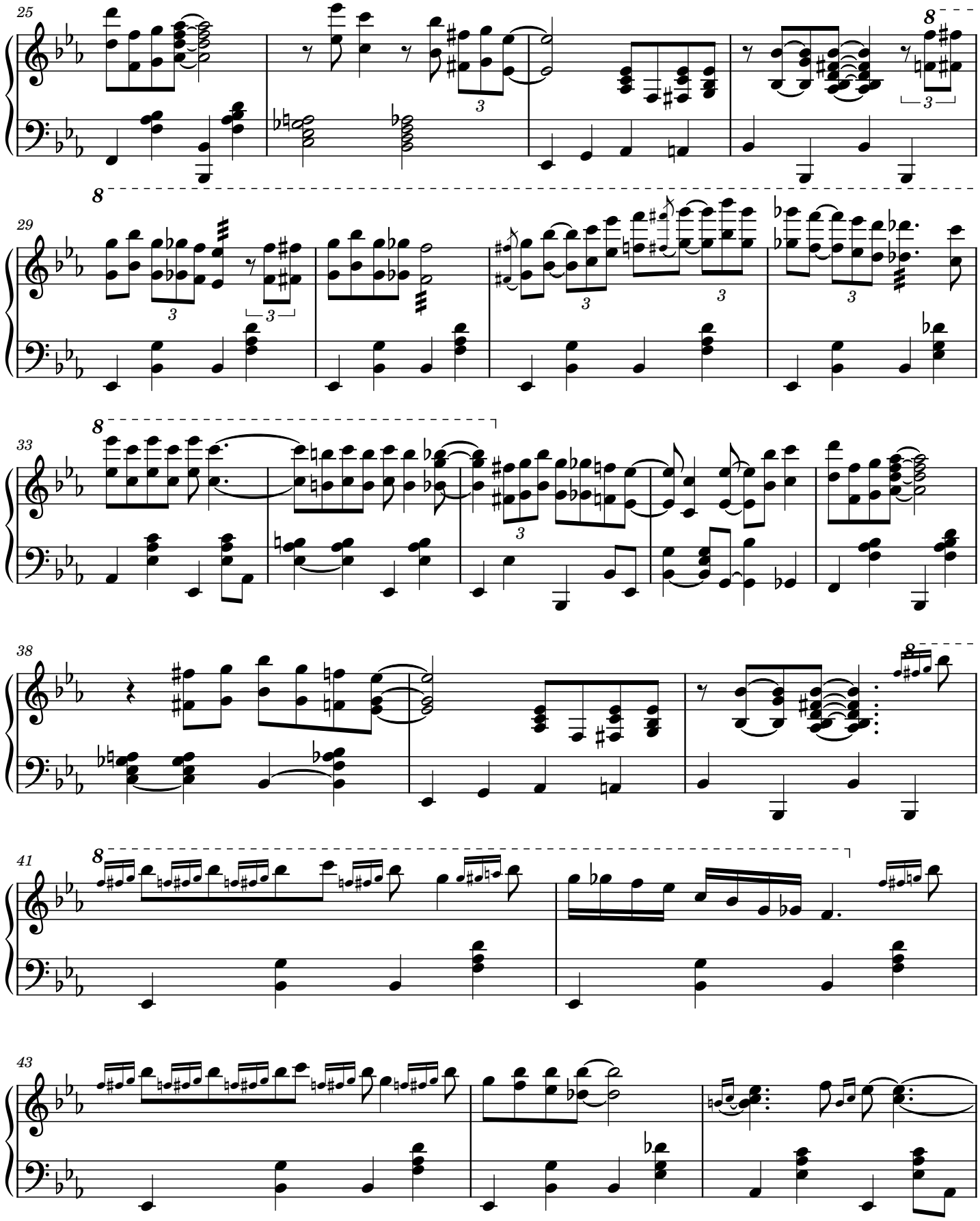
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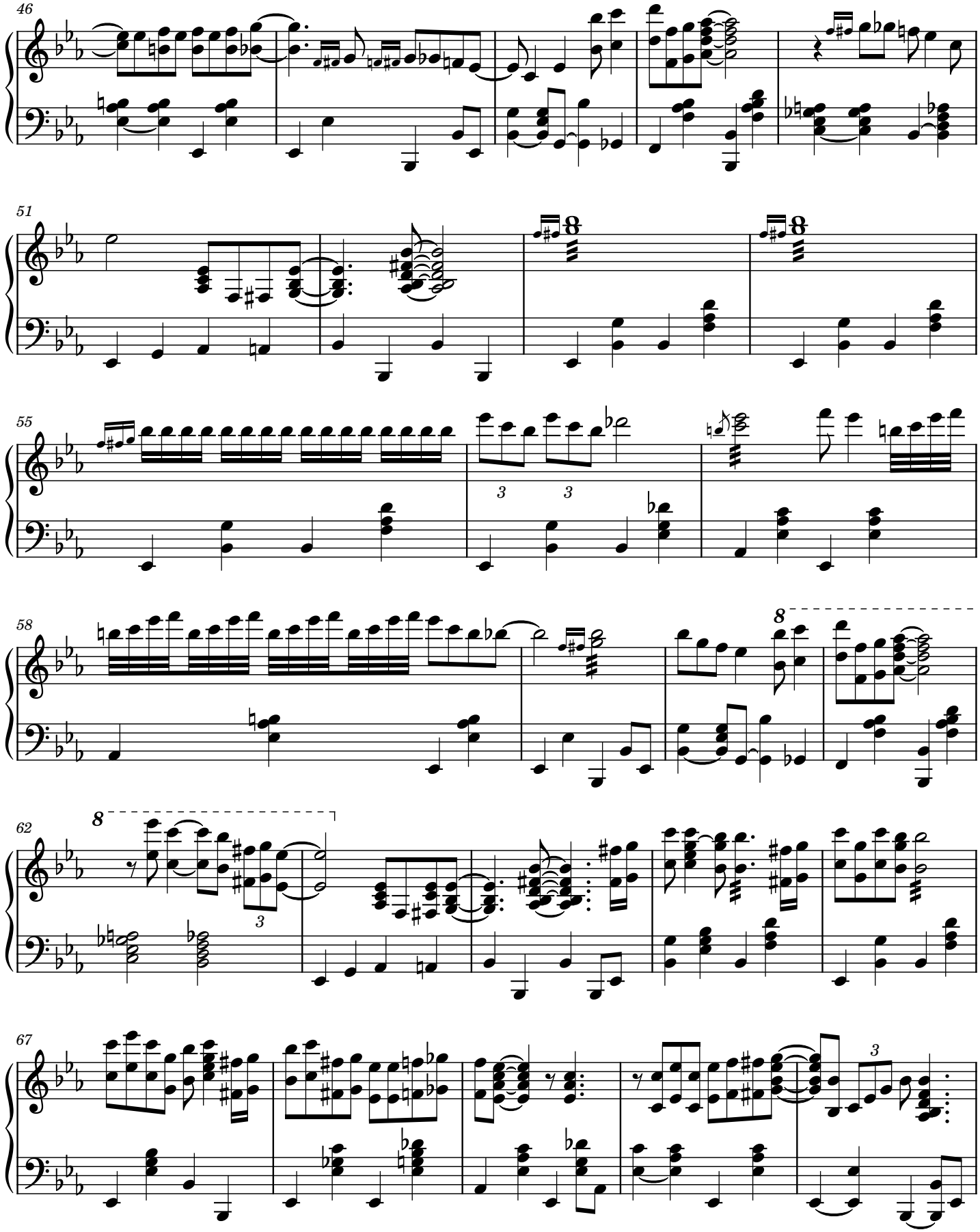
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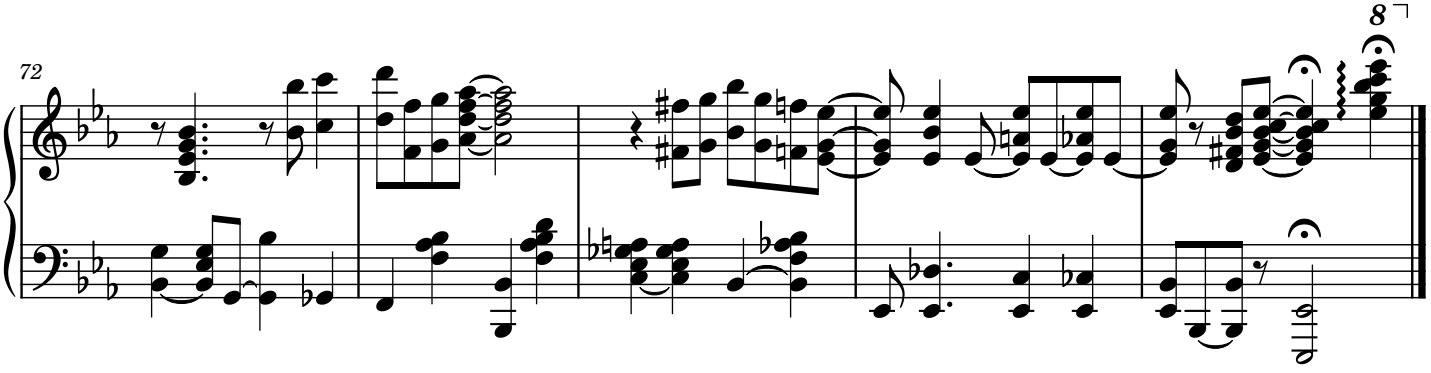
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