The Eight Pawners

(8 Pooners)

for Steven Klimowski

Dennis Báthory-Kitsz

Westleaf Edition W9310

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8 Pooners, Version 0.0

To Be Performed Outdoors on a Warm Summer's Eve

Dennis Báthory-Kitsz
1993

for Steven Klimowski

Dress: Formal black dress pants only. No shirt, no shoes, no hat.
Performance Area: Downstage left, boiling cauldron and large wooden spoon. Upstage center, pillows and hand towels. Downstage right, crystal decanter.
Additional props: Marionette frames, scissors or razor blade, long wooden matches, many additional poor reeds, clarinet tools, colander, paperboard boxes with cotton batting, bellows (optional), score stakes (optional).

I.

Performer enters stage/performance area with a shuffle-step, carrying clarinet parts on two sets of strings as with a pair of marionettes; in fact, marionette frames would be the ideal choice. P makes the parts dance, whistling and humming and chirping and using all sorts of mouth sounds to animate them. Some (indeed, many) of the mouth sounds should imitate words or, better, be in Burnsch or some other private language of P's preference. P finally lifts the clarinet bits high upon their strings and, with razor or scissors in mouth, cuts the strings one by one, allowing the pieces to drop upon strategically placed pillows. Back to the audience, P tosses the frame parts and bits of string nearby but out of the performance focus. Now lovingly, P kneels beside the pillowed clarinet parts, caressing and kissing each piece to sleep, and draws a small hand towel over each one, while audibly humming Sermisy's *Allez Souspirs*.

II.

Rising in a jump and clapping hands together several times in the manner of a magician, Performer spins and "awakens" the clarinet parts, whisking off the towels and pulling the pillows from underneath them. The parts roll into a neat pile as the pillows scatter everywhere. Drunkenly chanting snippets of the Mozart *Clarinet Concerto* to the text of the opening stanza of *The Waste Land*, P lifts each part from the ground with a fancy spin, interrupting the chant momentarily with a high-voiced "one," "two," "three," etc., and assembles that part with its neighbor, until a complete clarinet is created and displayed to the public with a sneering, whimpering voice and smile—almost a disdainful "aha." Chanting continues, however, almost *sotto voce*.

III.

Important note at this point: No sleight-of-hand is to be involved; Performer must use the *same* clarinet—a wooden instrument, never plastic—for the actual playing in Pooner V and elsewhere, as well as the actions and activities in all previous and subsequent Pooners. P, having completed the assembly of the clarinet, spins it handily a few times like a drum major or gunslinger, and slowly ceases chanting while alternating (and increasing) honk-like tuning segments. "Tuning" takes place all over the range of the instrument, getting faster and faster as P pulls out new reeds, tries them (quickly into the clamp!), squawks with them, runs to another part of the stage/performance area, and tosses them away. After several frenzied minutes of this, the process slows down as the satisfactory reed is found.

IV.

Sagging, swinging and wilting slightly, Performer begins to blow long, sweet notes in the middle of the throat register, eventually playing chromatic notes around those which begin the score on the page following this text. This score is performed with an *ad lib* texture yet with rhythmic accuracy, somewhat honking on the repeating G's. After a few minutes of circling the starting pitch with long but ever-shortening notes—and also while physically circling the stage (or boundary of the outdoor performance area)—P plays the notated score itself, gaining bodily energy and moving from place to place; for memory aid, small stakes displaying score segments may be stuck into the ground or placed on the stage (no ordinary music stands will do) but none of the main action or staging should be out of view because of them. If they are used, P's dancelike activities should weave in and around them, as if they were cacti or other sharp brush.

V.

Having finished the notated performance, Performer lets the last note repeat and sag, eventually copying that sagging by letting P's body sag (at first upon one leg if possible, like a stork or perhaps an African bush hunter) to the floor/ground. Eventually P is blowing long, mournful (but still somewhat honkish) throat-register notes into the air. P's back is at last on the ground, knees bent, head turning with the instrument from side to side, each note representing one breath.

VI.

Performer rolls over, writhing sideways toward a nearby cauldron which has been heating since before the performance's outset. During this writhing, P begins to dismantle the clarinet, dispatching the bits in the direction of the cauldron, and finally lifting the lot chest-high. Playing, however, continues through all of this until only the reed and mouthpiece remain, the parts held together by P's one hand and their pitch changed with the other. With a final, screaming honk, P jumps up quickly and dramatically disassembles each and every screw, key, pad, ring, etc., dropping each piece into a steaming caldron of water while emitting nasal *whoop*s and *whee*s and *yee-haa*s. P stirs the parts, lifting them up on a massive wooden spoon, examining them carefully for texture and tasting them. As each taste seems to become agreeable, P lifts out that part and sets it upon a drying rack. Floating bits of reed, pad, glue, etc., are skimmed off the top of the soup, and in the last stage, the metal keys, screws, etc., are scooped up from the bottom and drained—together with the floating parts—in a colander.

VII.

Performer quickly carries the clarinet parts to the opposite end of the stage/area and arranges the parts in a pyre (as if fitting together a puzzle) and douses them with a spiral of white gasoline poured from a crystal decanter, smashing the decanter into the pyre as in a toast; indeed, P may call out toasts in a variety of personal languages. P, suddenly silent and slow, uses wooden matches to light the pyre, while beginning to chant alternate verses of *Dies Irae* and *Victimae Paschali Laudes*. When the pyre is at last merrily burning on its own, P faces the audience and sings part of (or improvises on) the notated score played in Pooner V until the fire has burned to embers; a chorus of acolytes may enter from the audience to stir the fire from time to time so that the burning goes quickly, and a bellows may be mounted nearby to assist.

VIII.

The pile of ashes and embers are stirred by Performer and returned to the now-cooling cauldron, stirred some more in silence, retrieved and rinsed through the colander. P pulls on white gloves, and the individual melted pieces and chunks of charcoal (if any) are individually blown dry and boxed in small, white paperboard cartons containing a nest of cotton batting. P takes the boxes and distributes them, with a Burnsch blessing, to the audience, and—without pause—begins to clean the stage/performance area. The pillows and hand towels are stacked in a circle, close to the audience, and P burns the remainder of the score and props, spreads the ashes, dumps the cauldron, and walks quickly away. This last is done in silence and into the darkness after twilight.

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8 Pooners (Part V/VII Notated Section)

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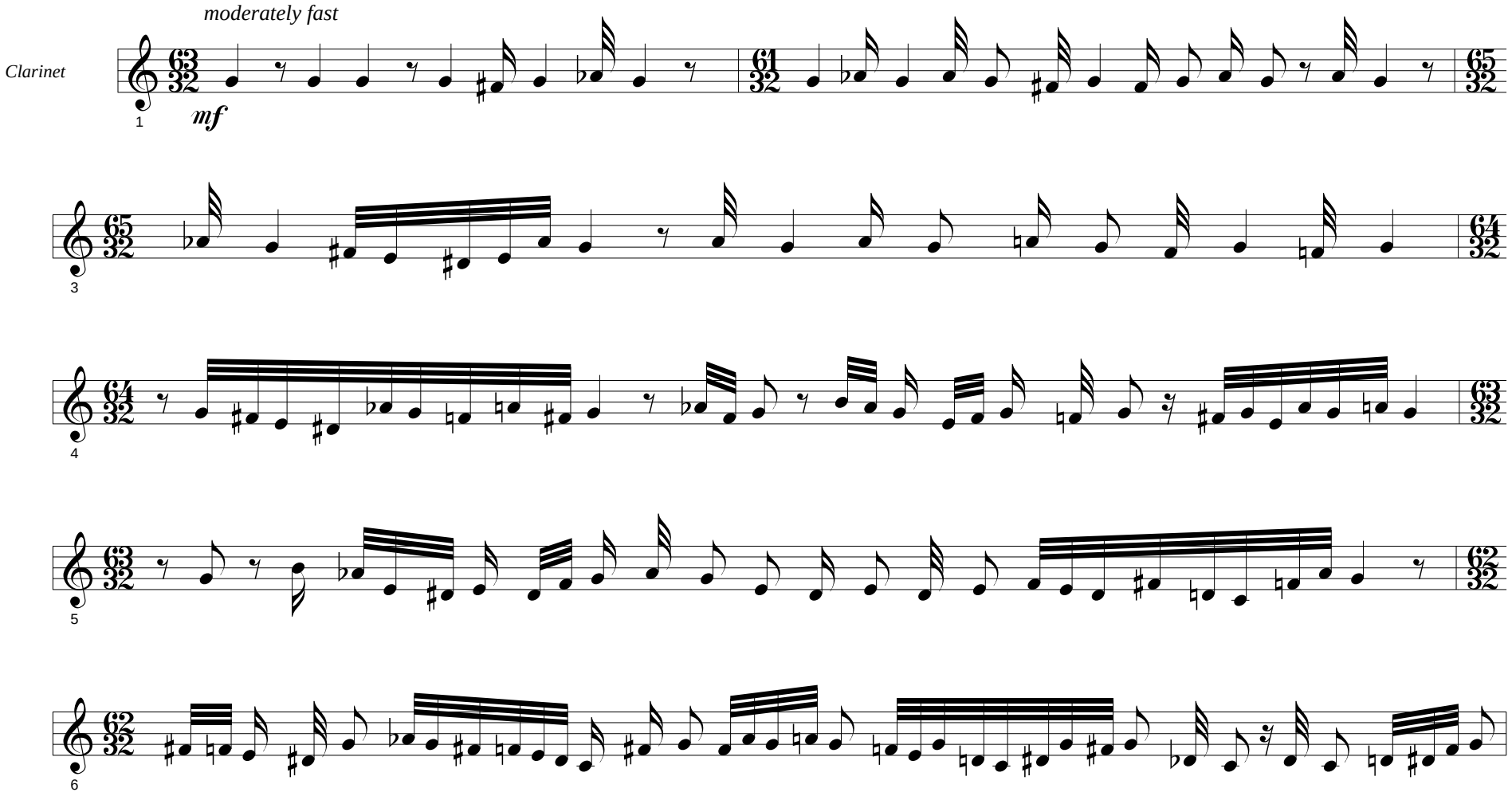

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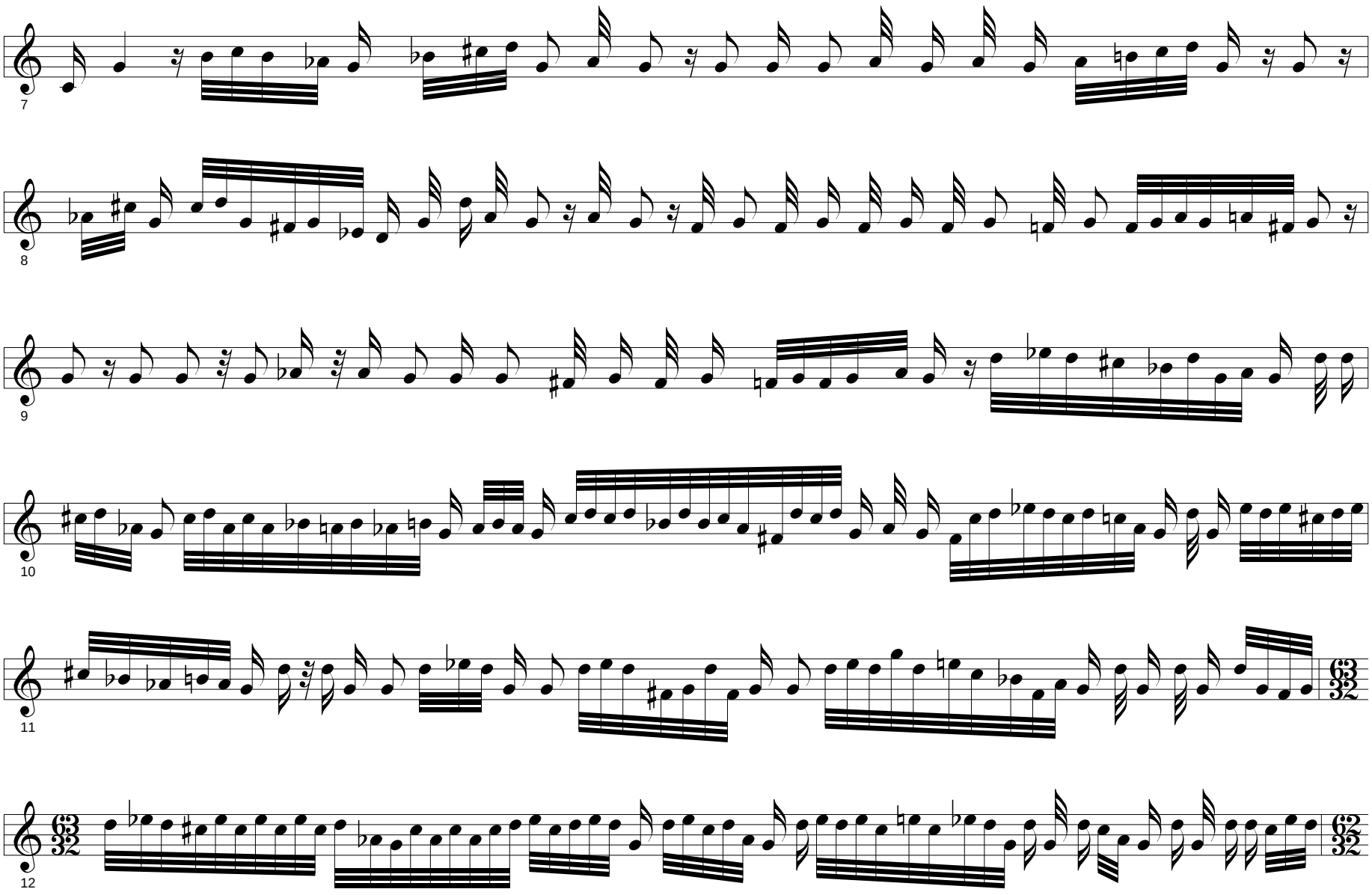

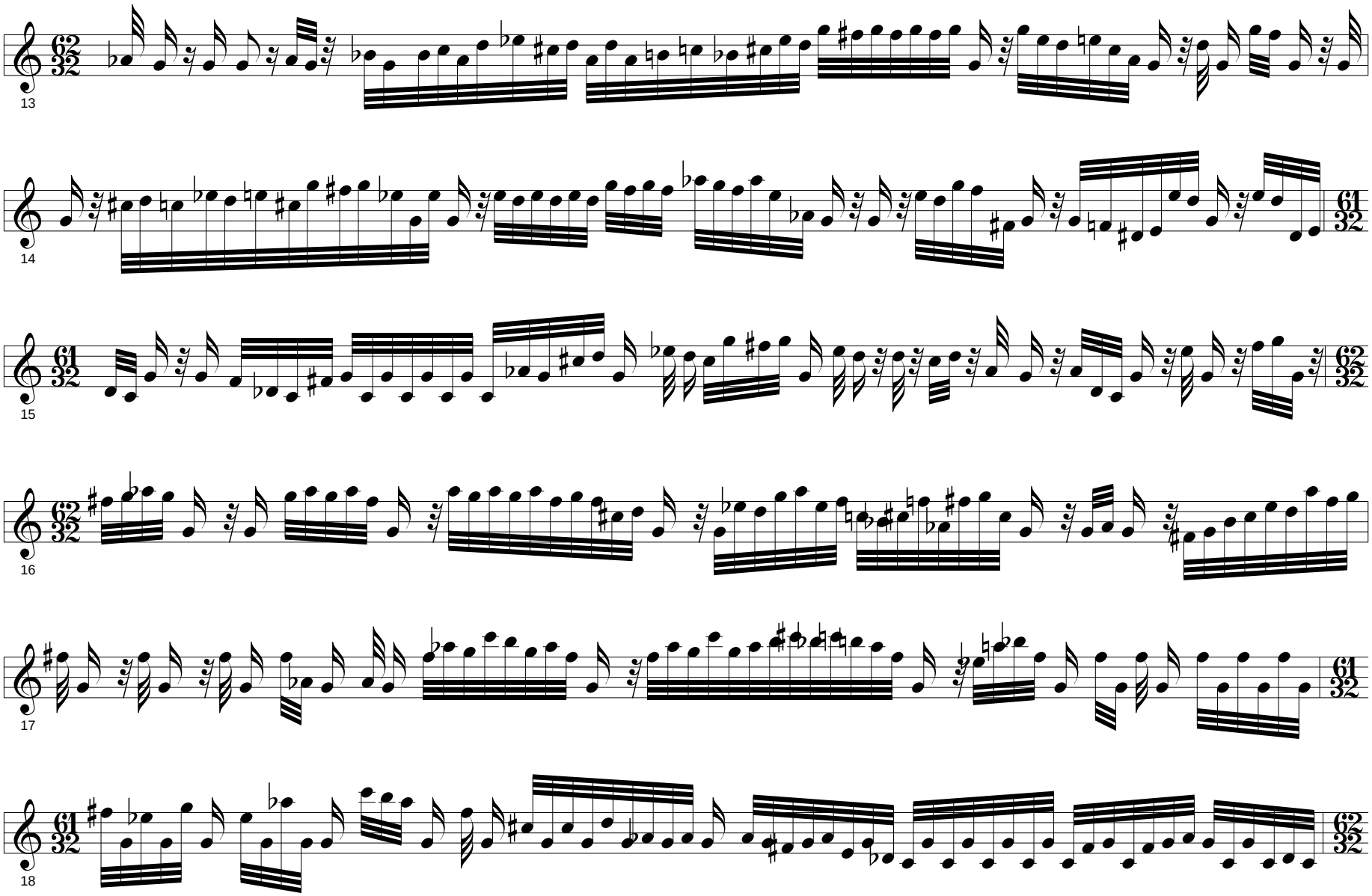

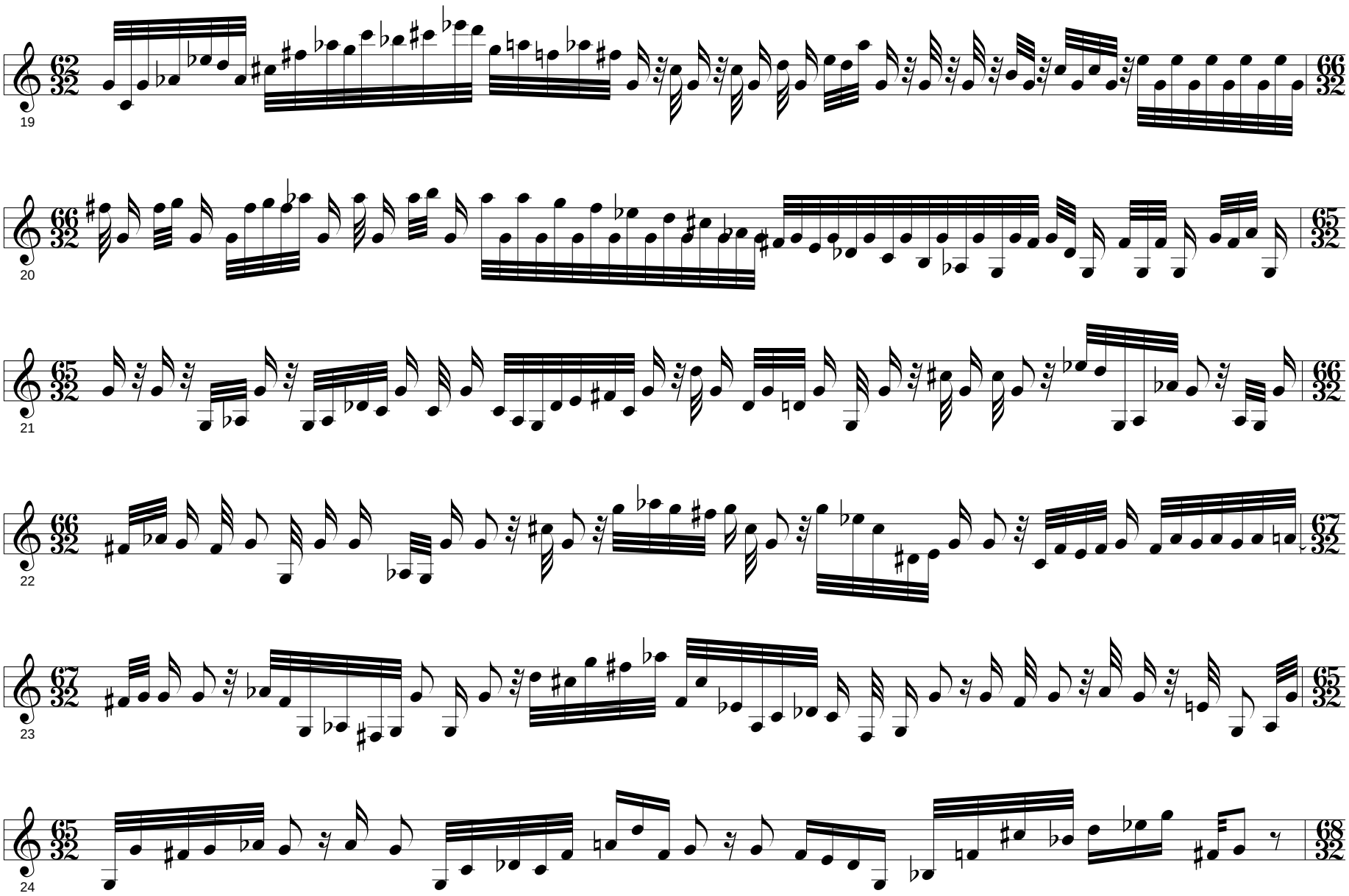

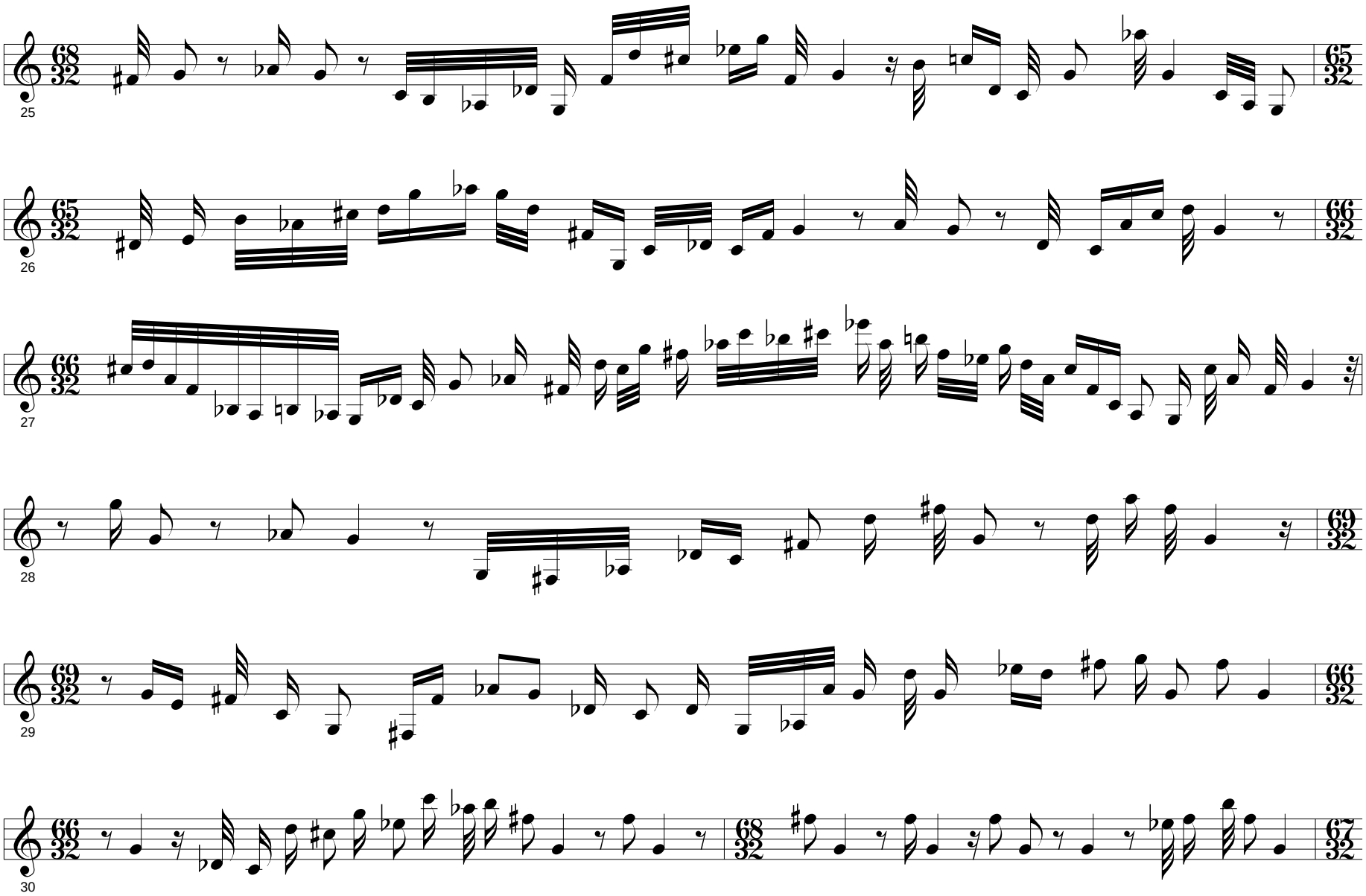

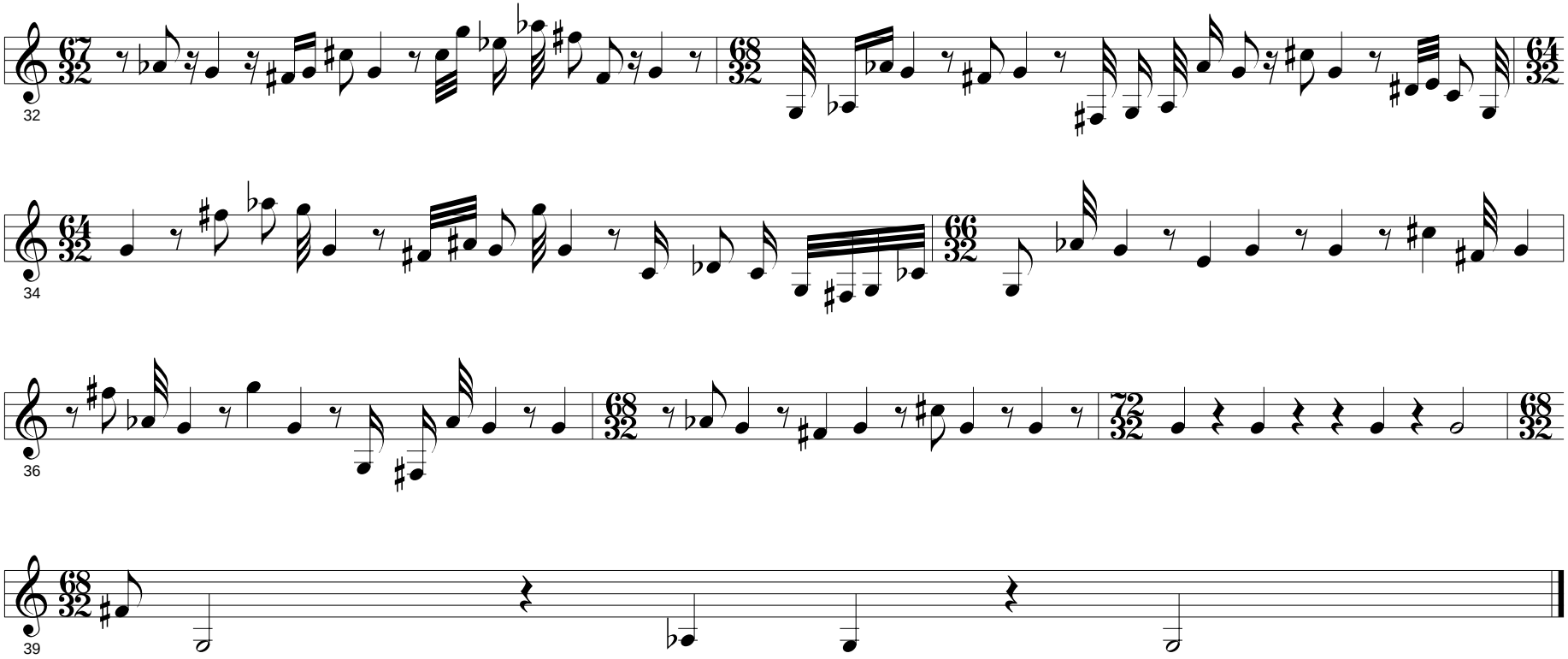
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