Steps to Harmony

by

Nicholas Palmer

BASS
Volume 1

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SERIES CHARACTERISTICS

1. **Part independence:** Each voice part is written to harmonize with the others, while retaining a distinct, melodic character of its own.

2. **Key independence:** No single key is favored. Each page is in a single key, to allow continuity between the exercises. However, the key changes with every page. The intention is to create an arbitrariness as to the location of DO, so that singers will be equally comfortable in any key. This is the main advantage of movable over fixed DO. We expect that students will quickly learn to follow the stepwise sequence of notes, rather than identifying DO with any particular line or space.

3. **Time signature independence:** A variety of time signatures is used from the outset.

4. **Starting pitch:** For your convenience, each voice part in each exercise begins on DO. That should allow your students to sing one exercise after the other without having to stop to establish a new tonal center. It also means that your students do not have to know key signatures to use this series.

   The exercises are presented without solfège syllables to teach the students to rely on the notes alone. We recommend against having the students write in the notes' solfège syllable names prior to singing.

5. **Versatility:** The exercises were composed to be used as unison, two-part, and/or three-part compositions. In unison, every line can be used. For two-part singing, the first and second lines of each system are written to go together (partner melodies). For three-part singing, all three lines can be sung simultaneously.

PROGRESSION

The first volume is totally stepwise and diatonic (no skips, no accidentals).

Beginning with quarter notes, the volume gradually adds rhythmic diversity and complexity with a new rhythmic element being added after every few pages. At the point where a new rhythmic value is introduced, a page is devoted to the new note value (see page 8). At the upper left is a description of the new note. On the upper right side of the page is a description of how that note value compares with others, previously learned. The first line of the page gives "chanting" values that can be used to help the student conceptualize the rhythm. Trios on this page can be chanted, allowing students to develop a feel for the new note without pitch concerns. Such pages can also be clapped, tapped, etc.

By the end of the first volume, all rhythmic values, from whole notes and rests through 16th notes and rests are in regular use. The sixteenth notes, however, are optional, and not necessary for proceeding to the next volume(s). Each volume will include a section labelled "Upper Grades." This will review the concepts learned in the current volume in the context of sixteenth note rhythms.

By gradually expanding the singer's musical "vocabulary," this series can elevate the student's music reading skills to a high level of competence.

KEY WARMUPS

Combining our limited, one octave range with a variety of key signatures means that DO will sometimes occur high in the range, sometimes low, and sometimes in the middle. To help students adapt to scalewise singing from these various locations of DO, we have provided two pages of "Key Scales," starting from every potential location of DO within the allowed range. "Key Scales (Upward)" is intended to prepare students for singing the scale when DO is low in the range; "Key Scales (Downward), for when DO is higher.

If your students can easily sing the solfège scale up and down, the Key Scales sheets will not be necessary. If they do need help in scale singing, the Key Scales sheets should prove useful.

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Key Warmups (Upward)

C

G

F

D

B♭

A

E♭

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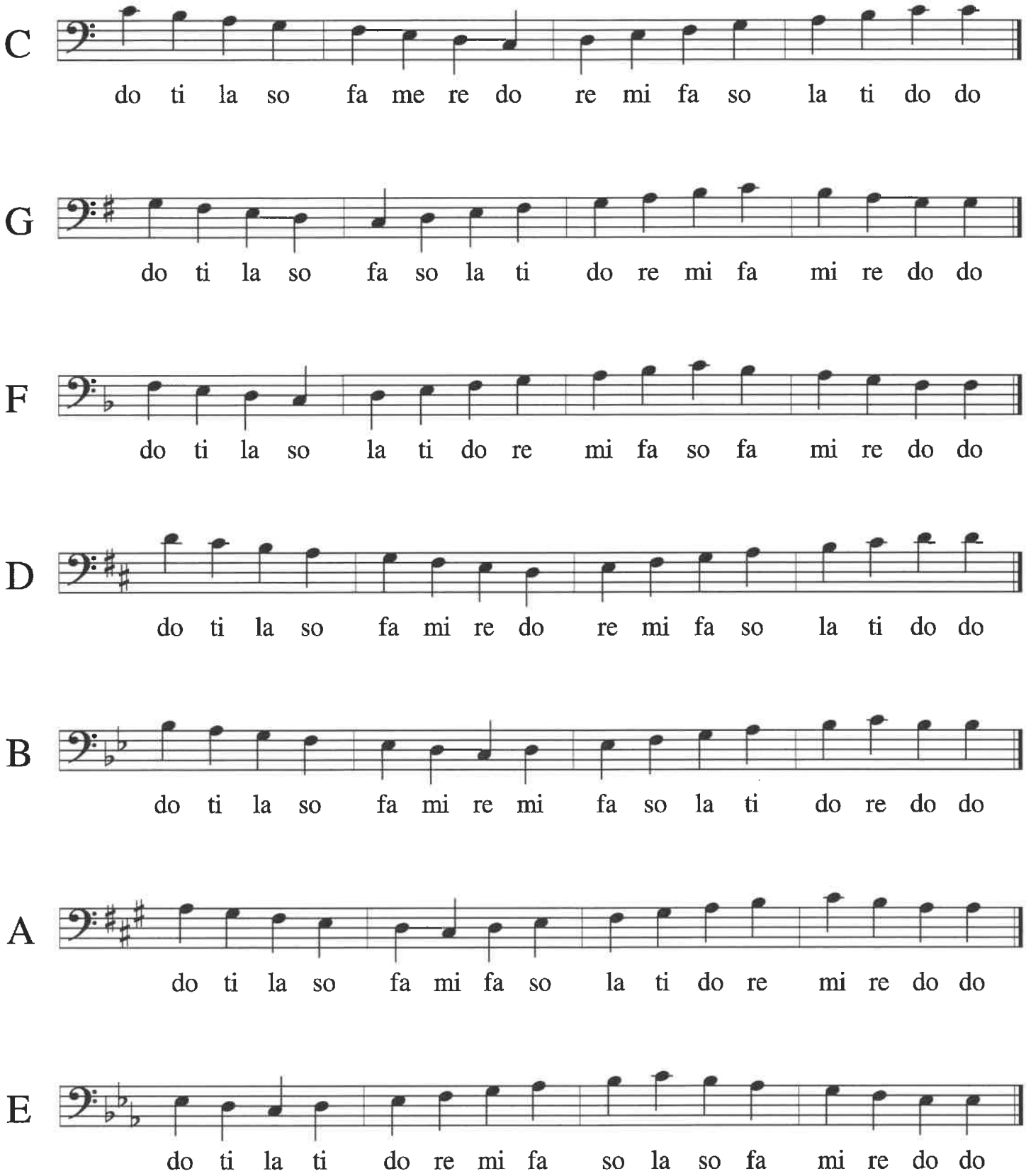
Key Warmups (Downward)



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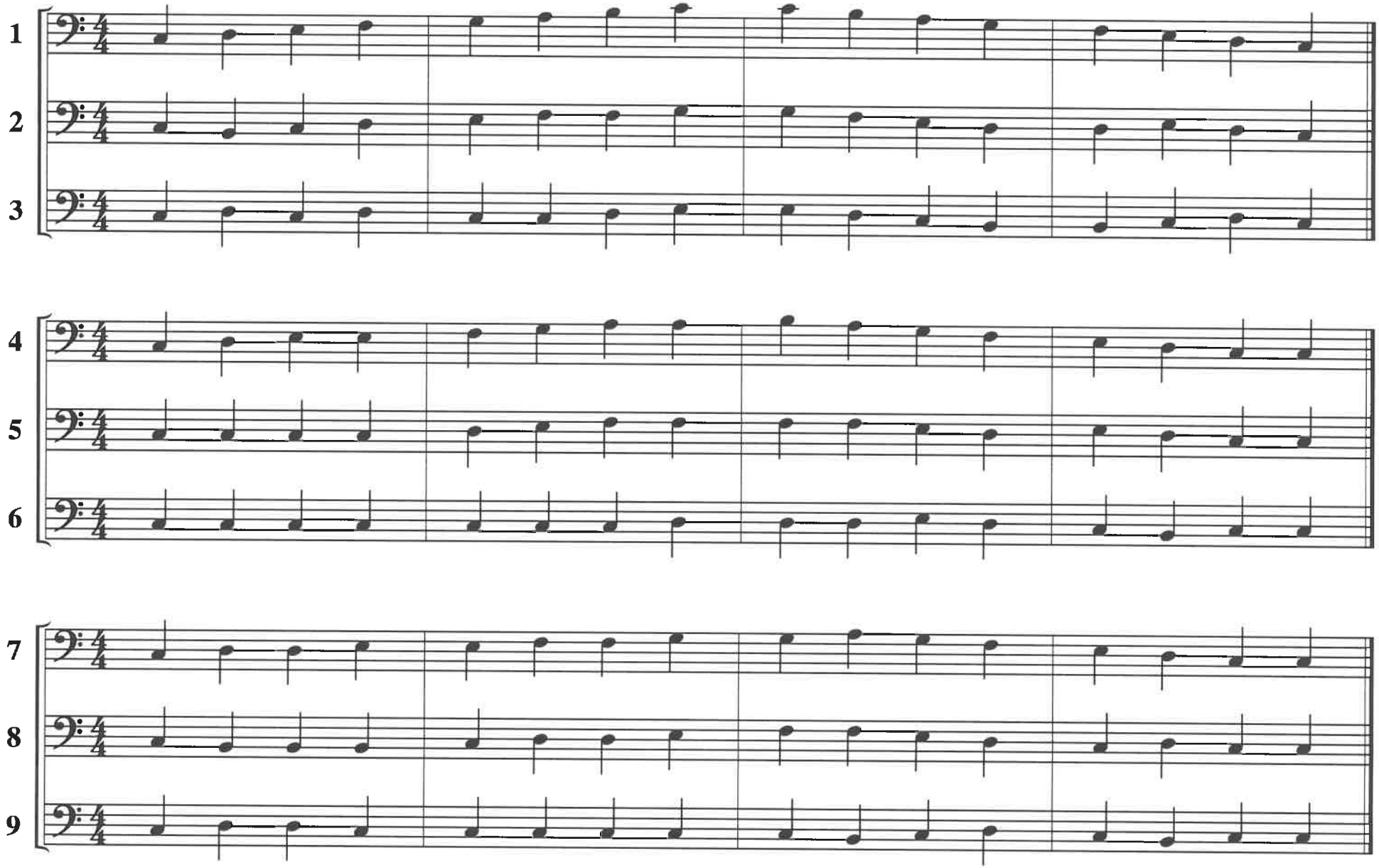

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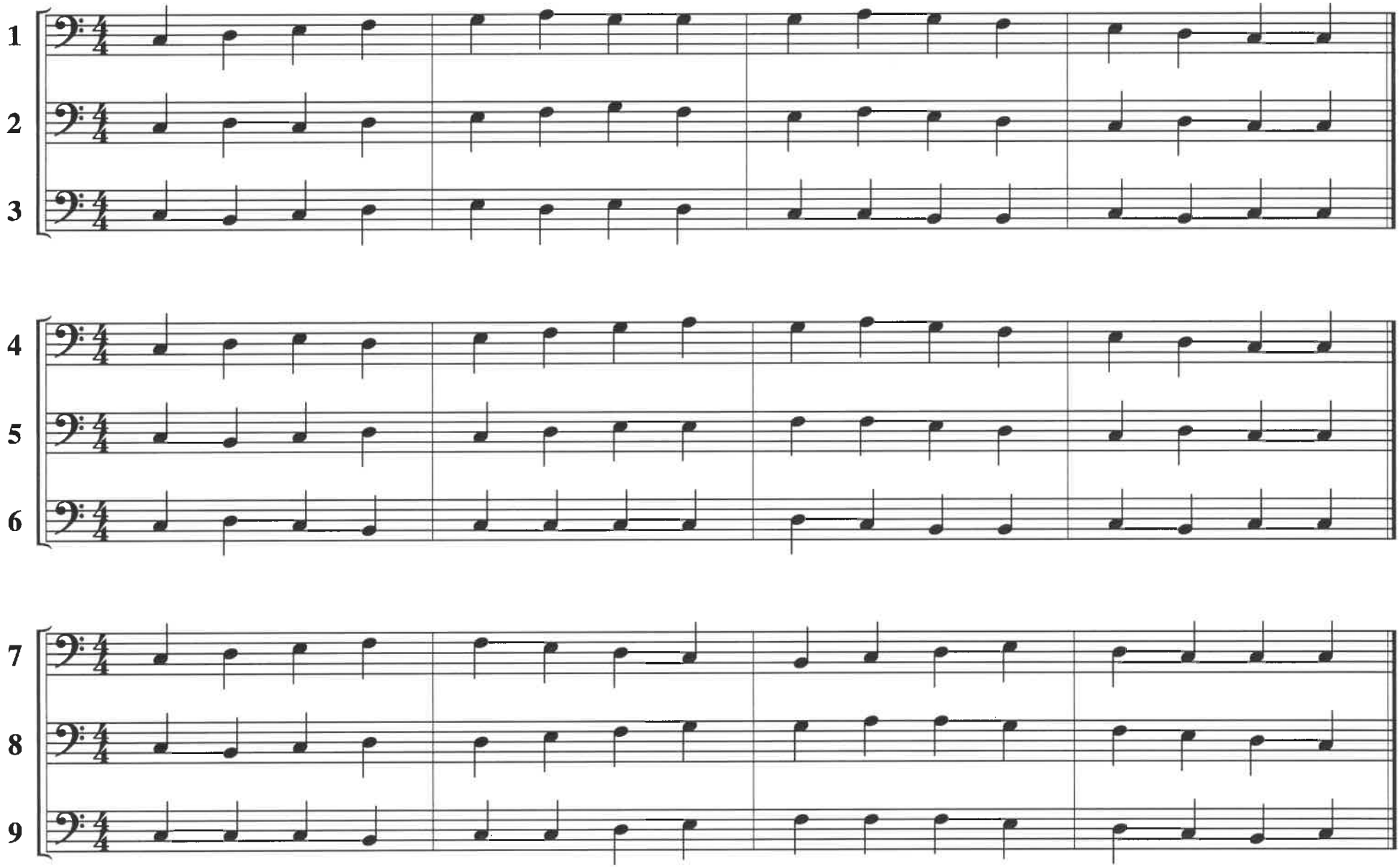

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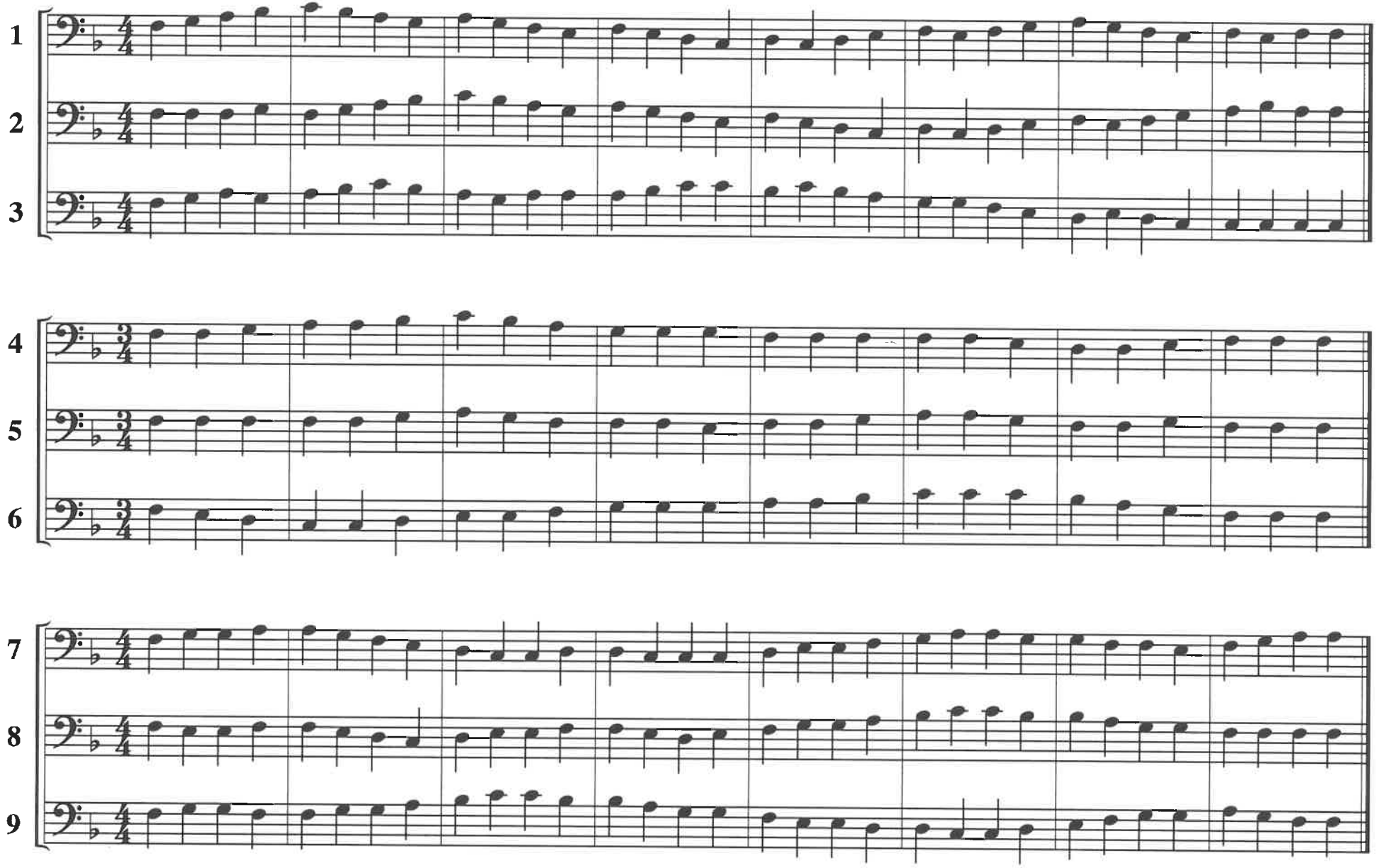

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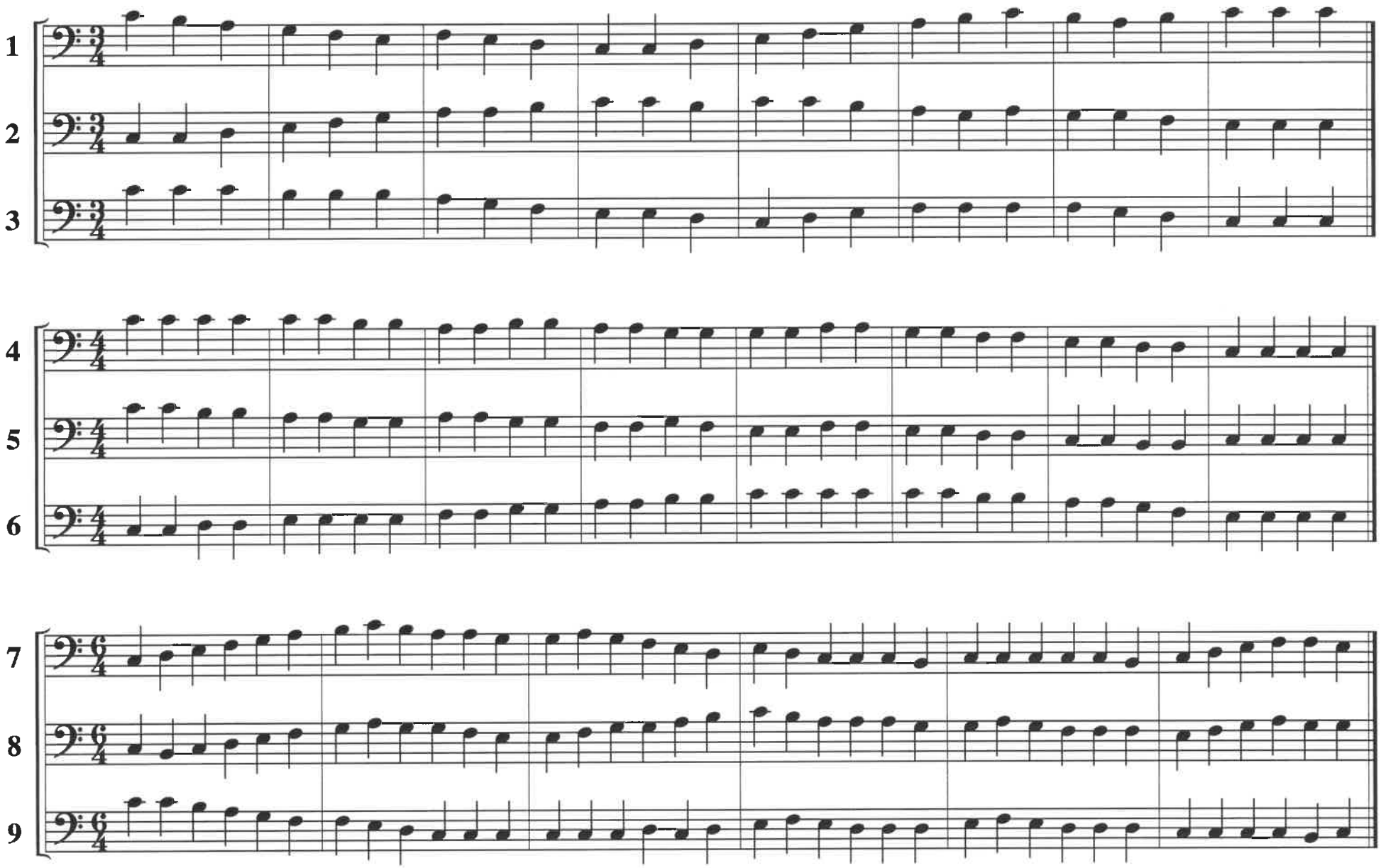

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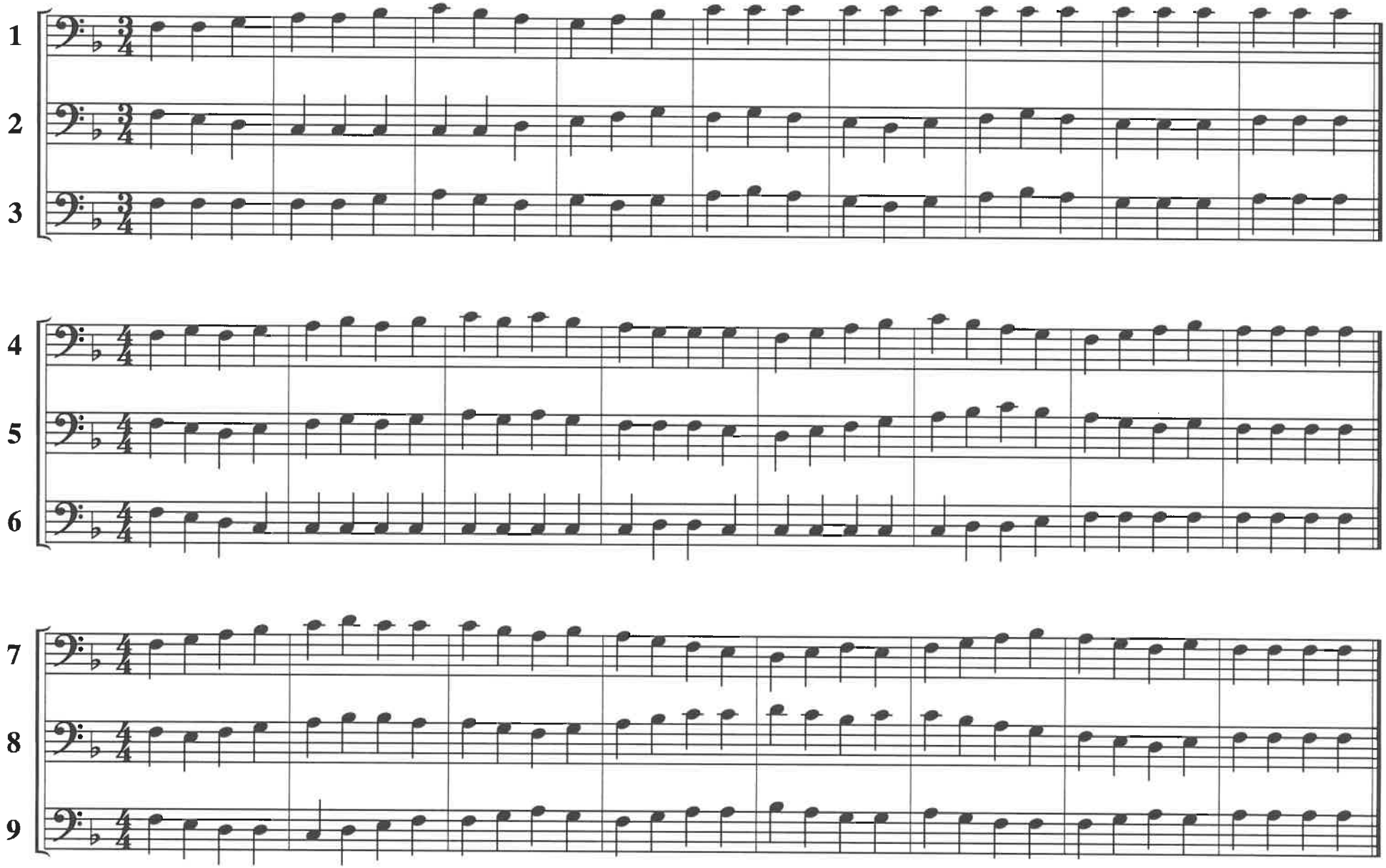

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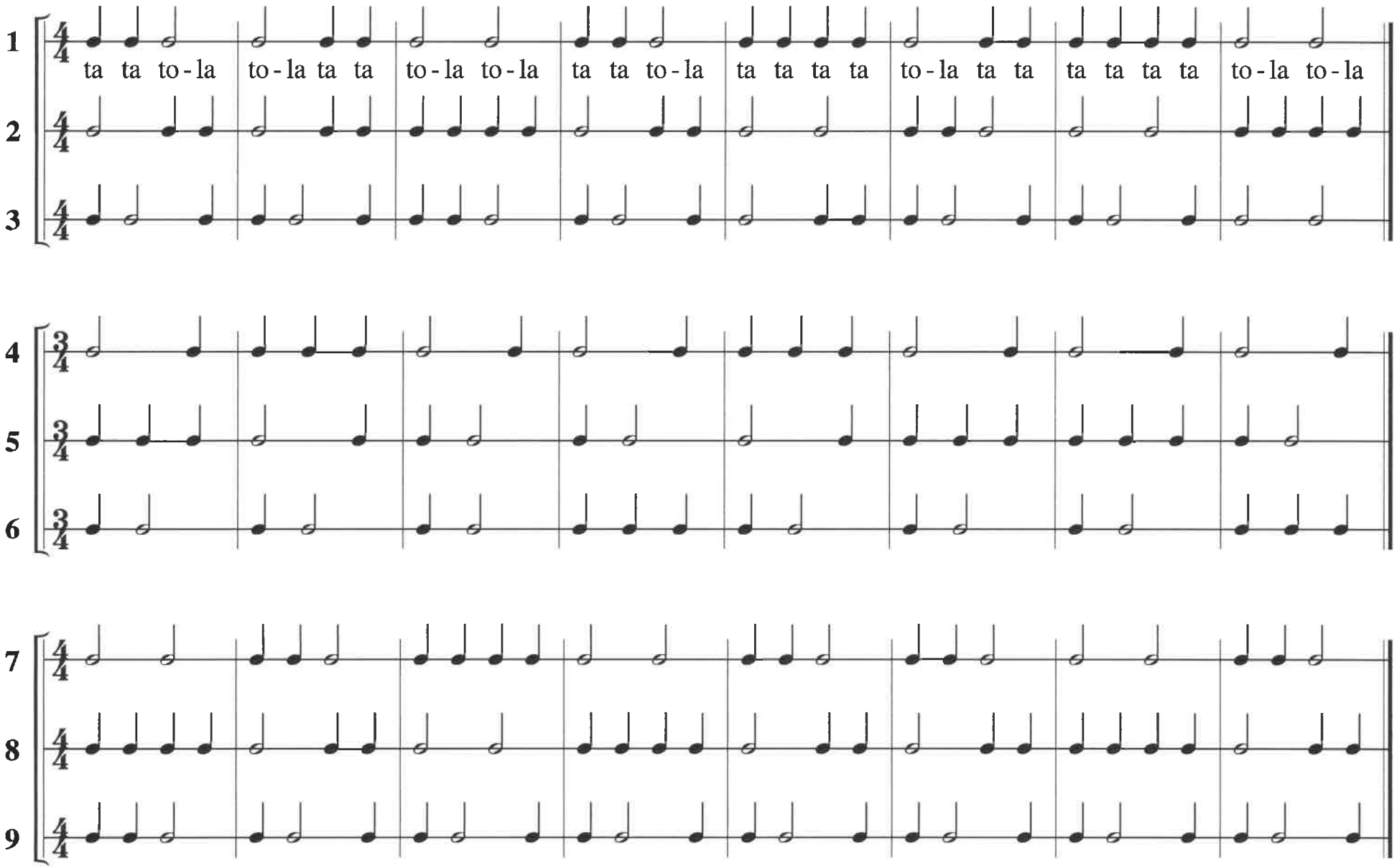
The HALF NOTE (𝅗𝅥) gets two beats.

𝅗𝅥 = ♩ + ♩



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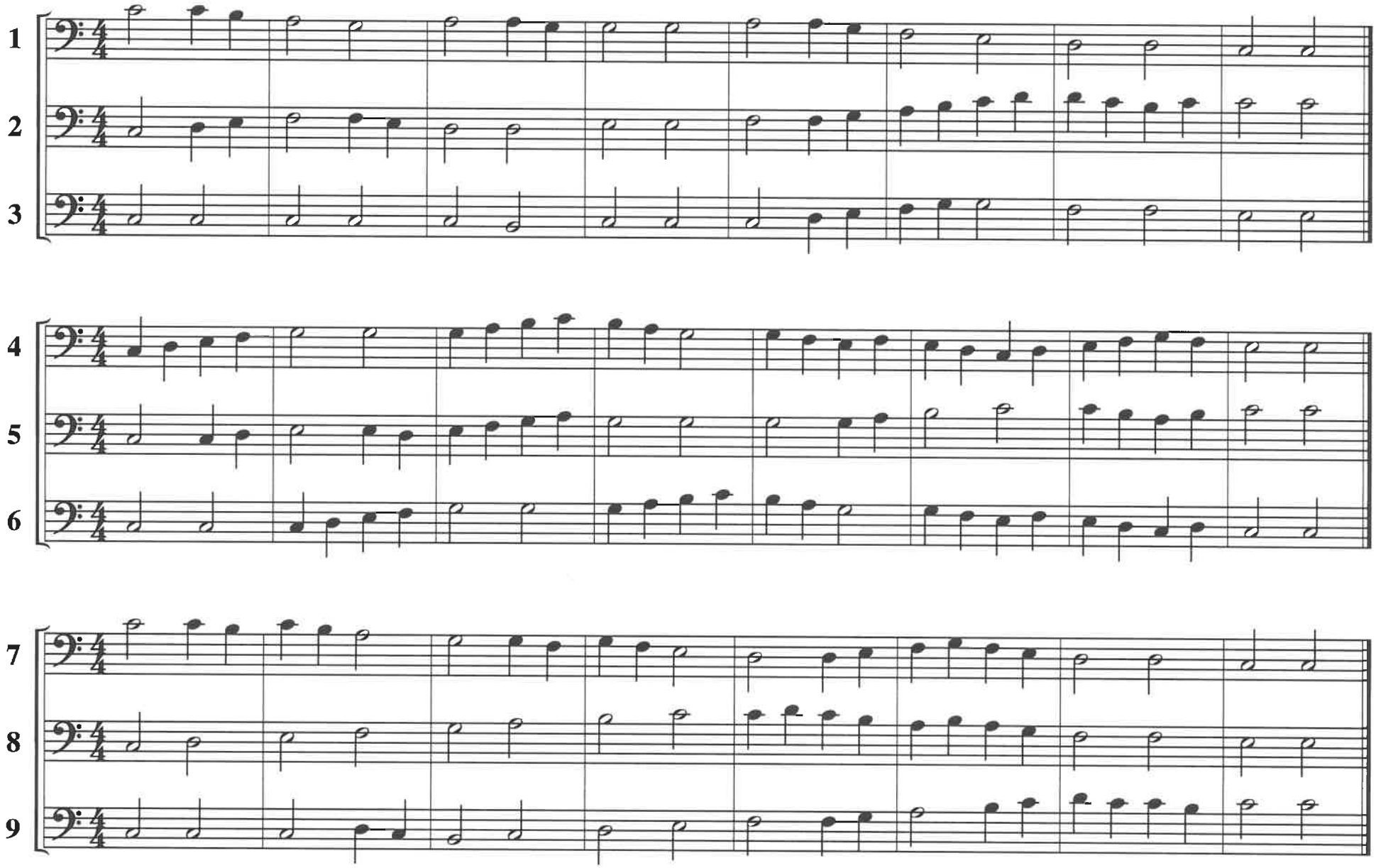

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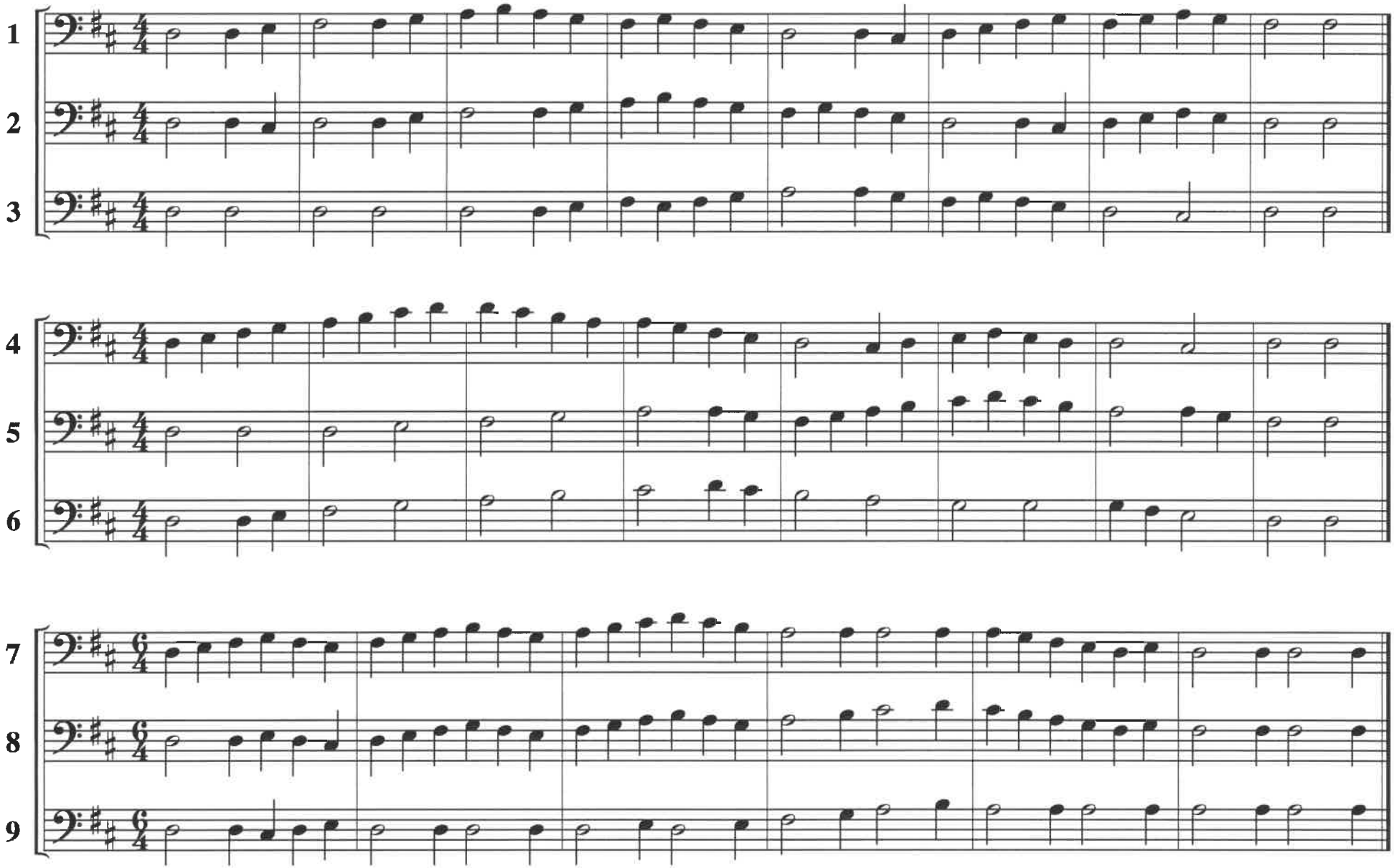

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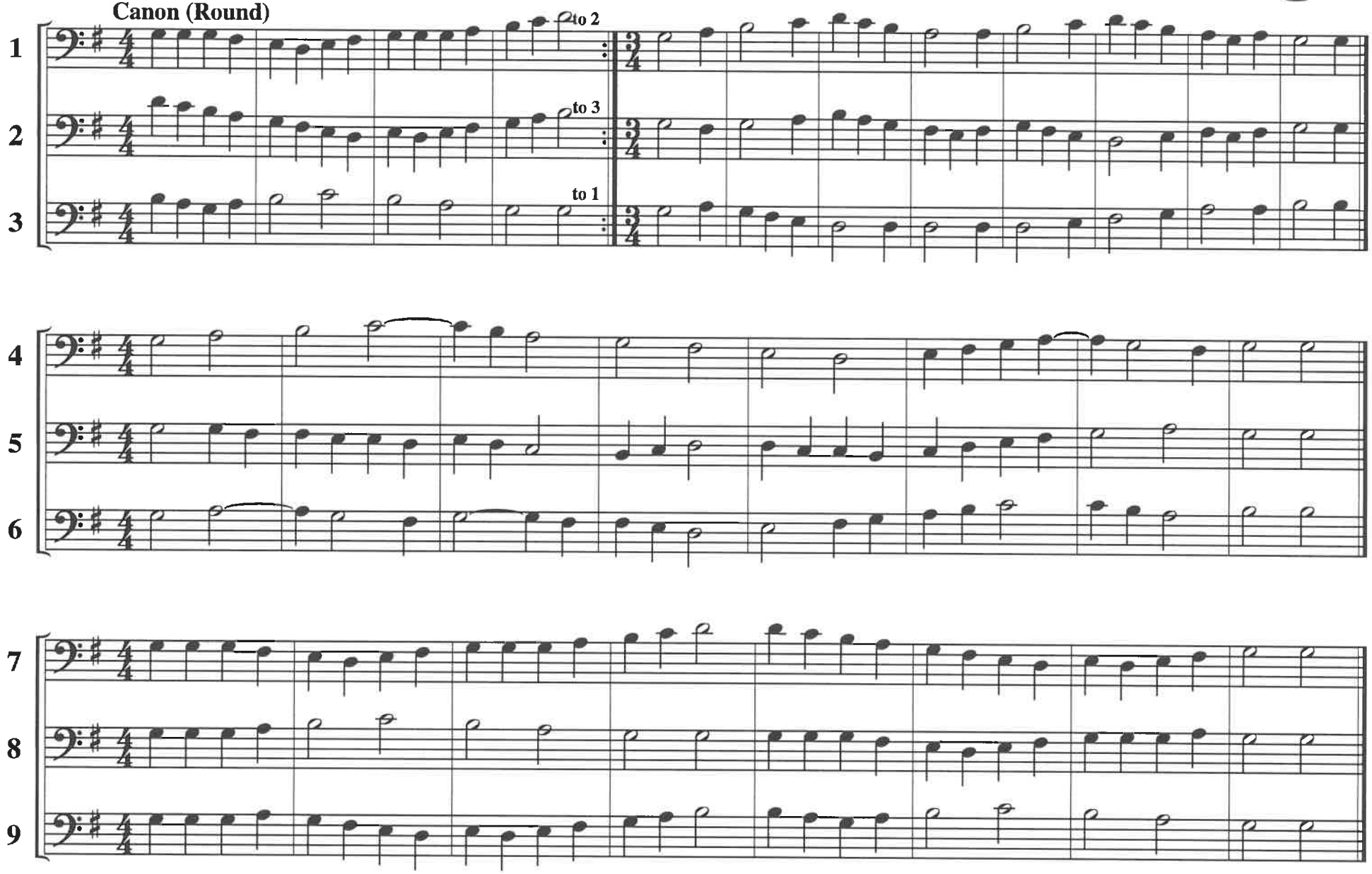
Canon (Round)



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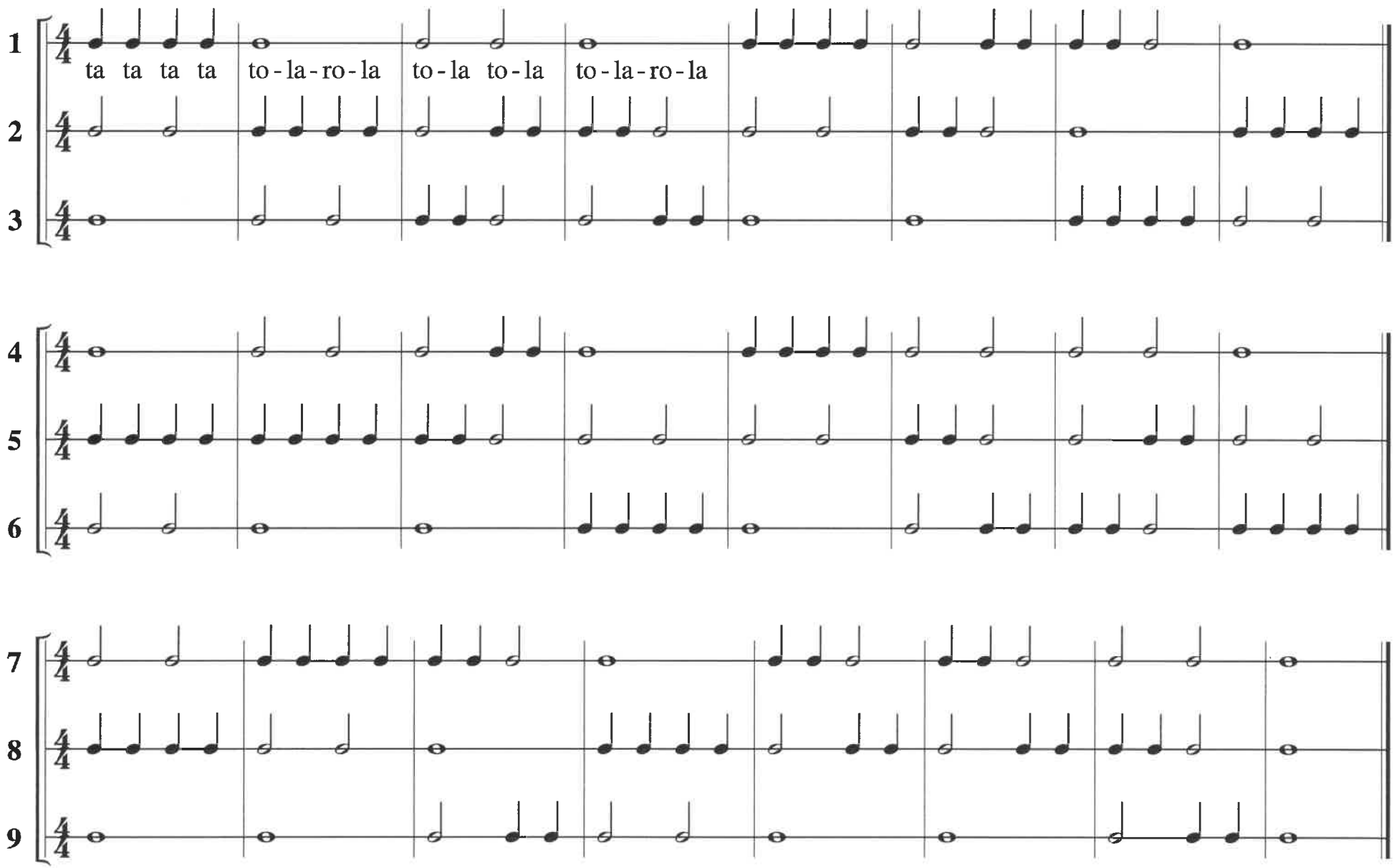
𝅝 = ♩ + ♩ + ♩ + ♩



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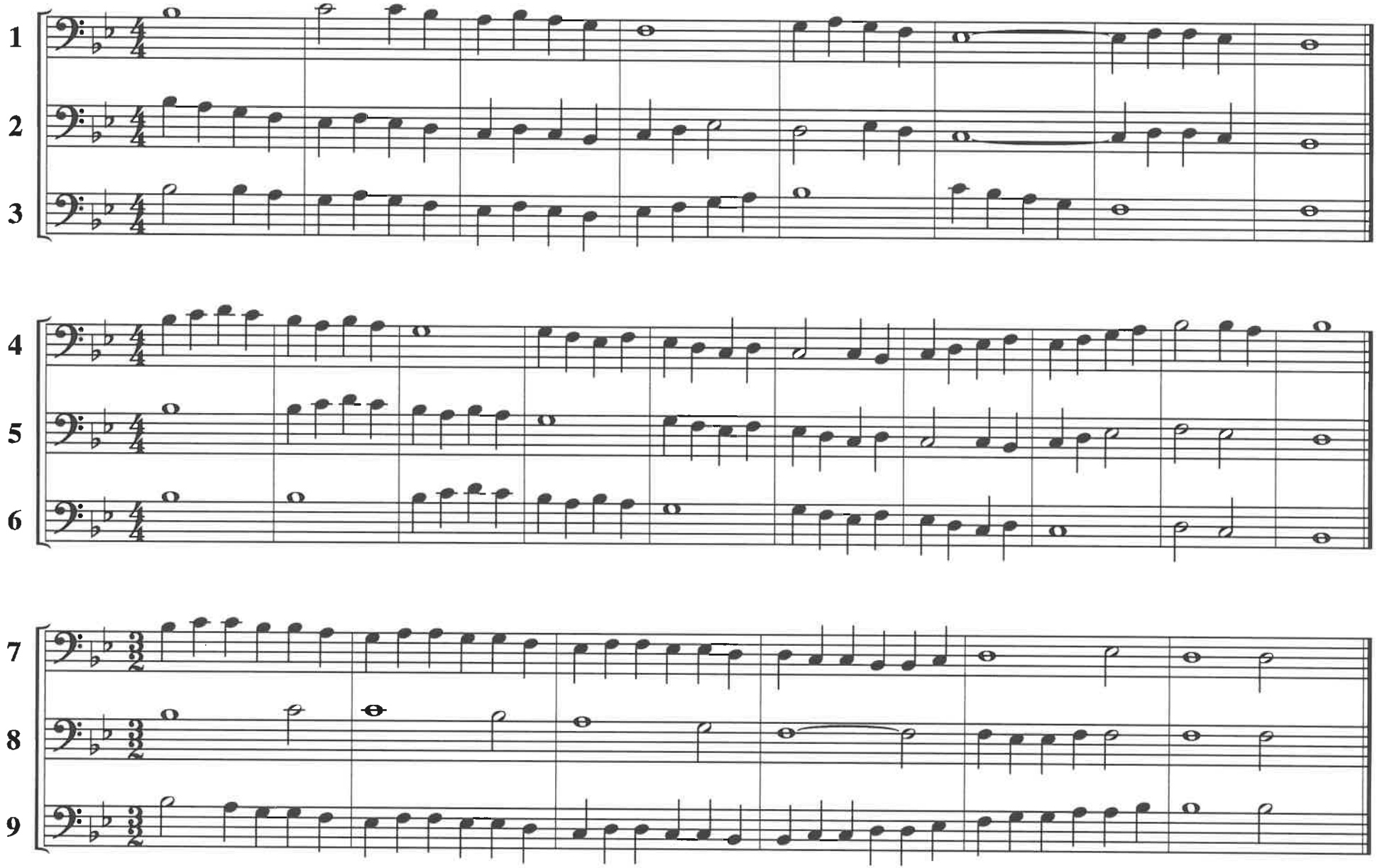

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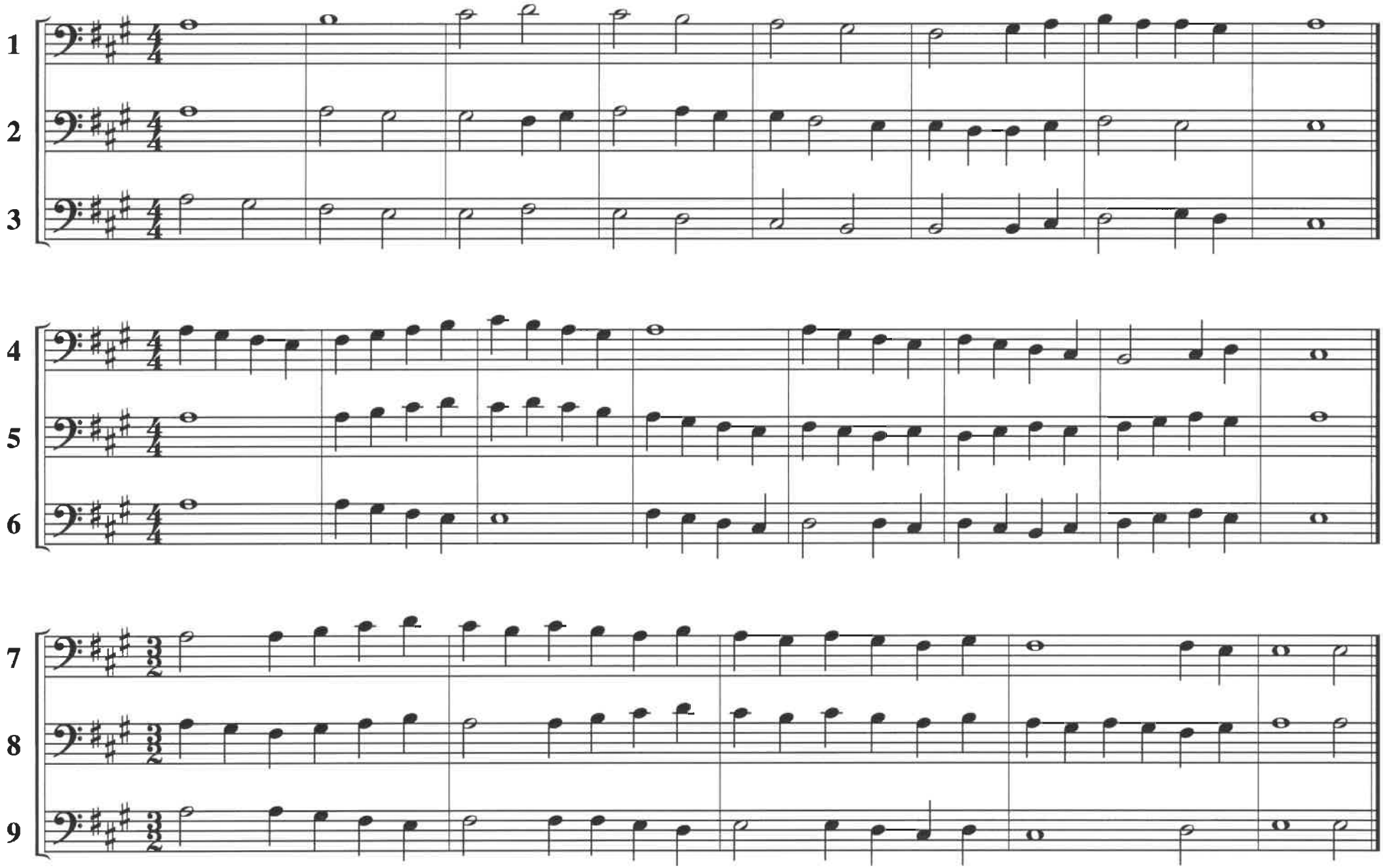

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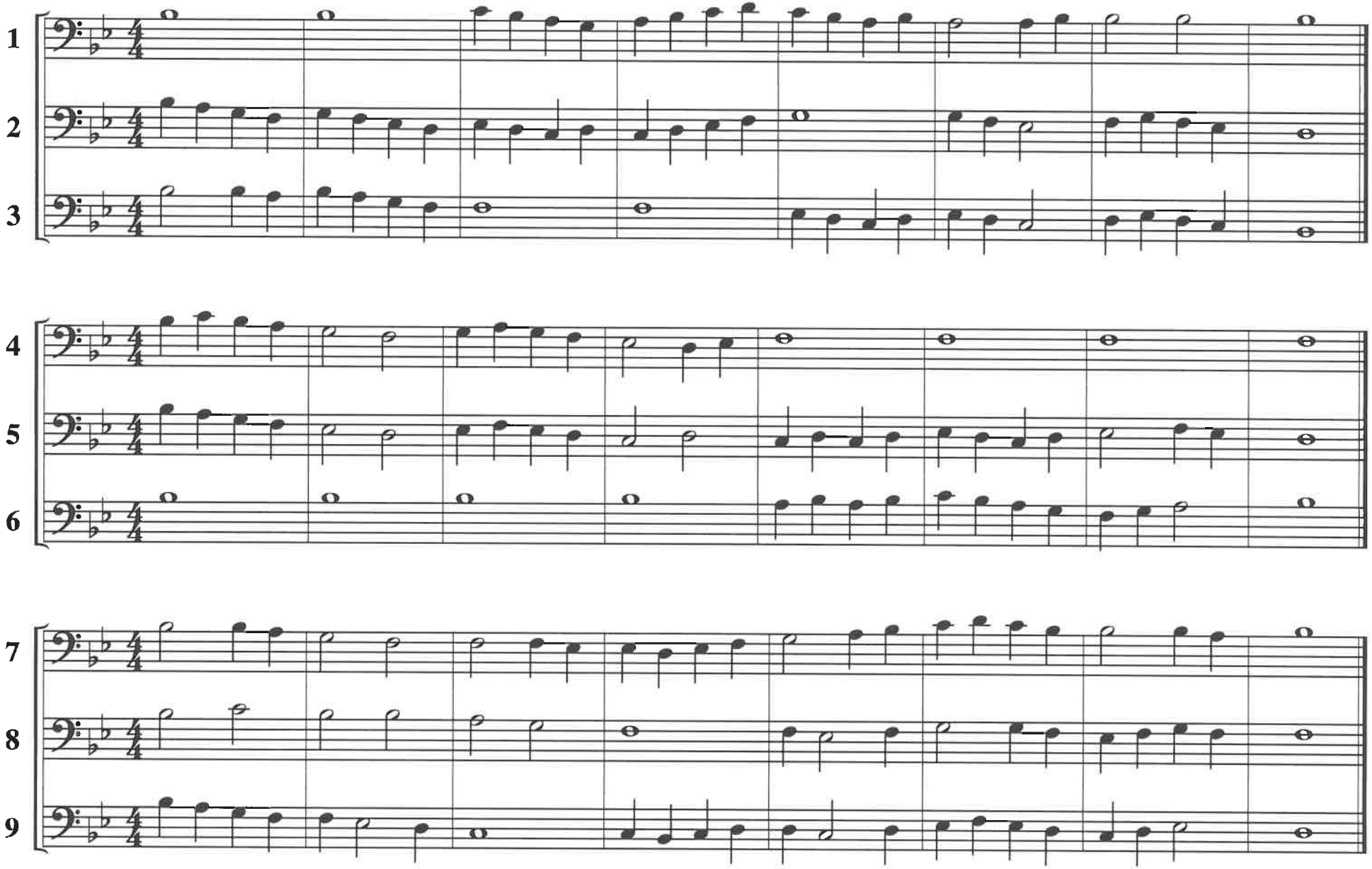

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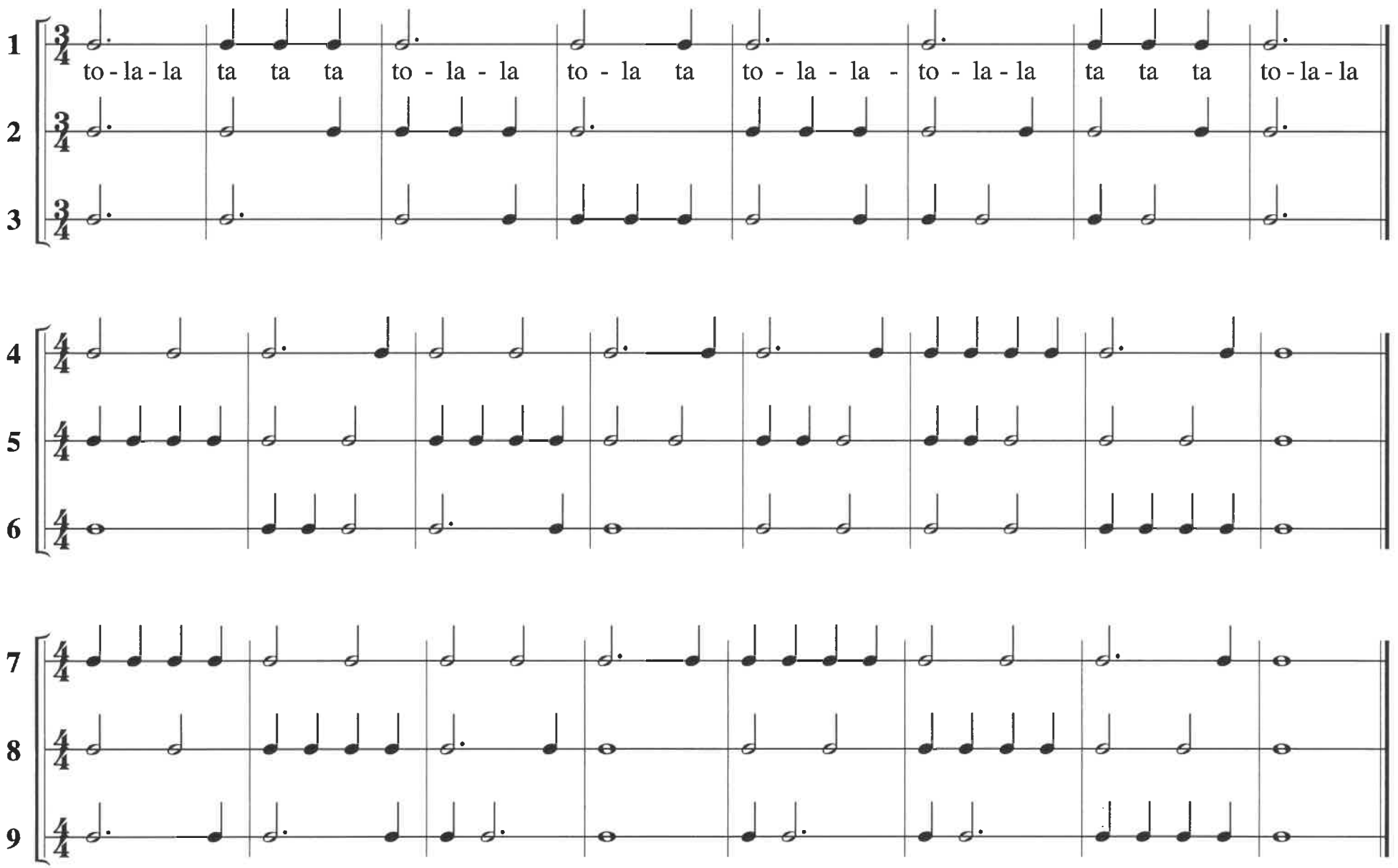
The DOTTED HALF NOTE (𝅗𝅥.) gets three beats.

𝅗𝅥. = 𝅘𝅥 + 𝅘𝅥 + 𝅘𝅥



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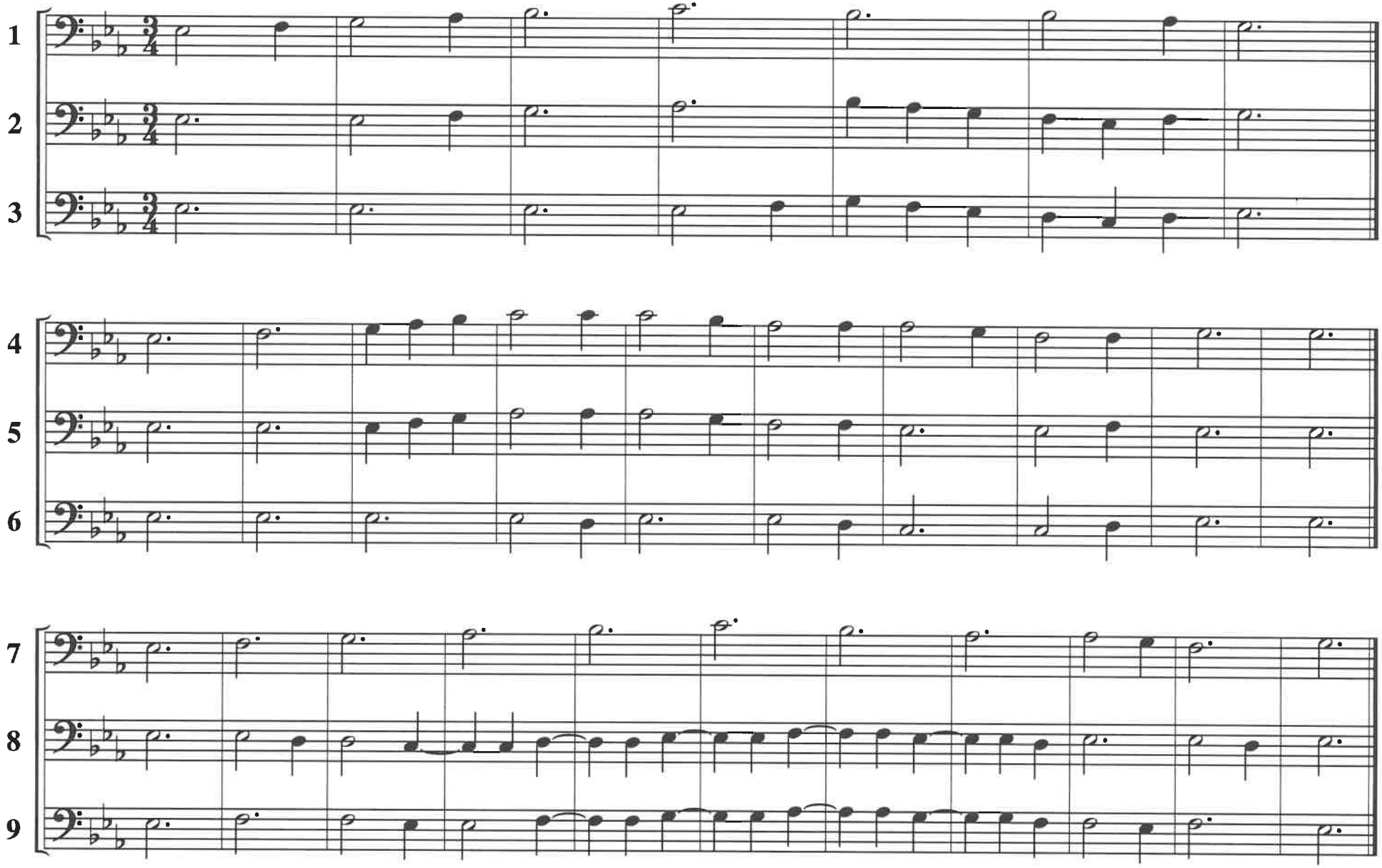

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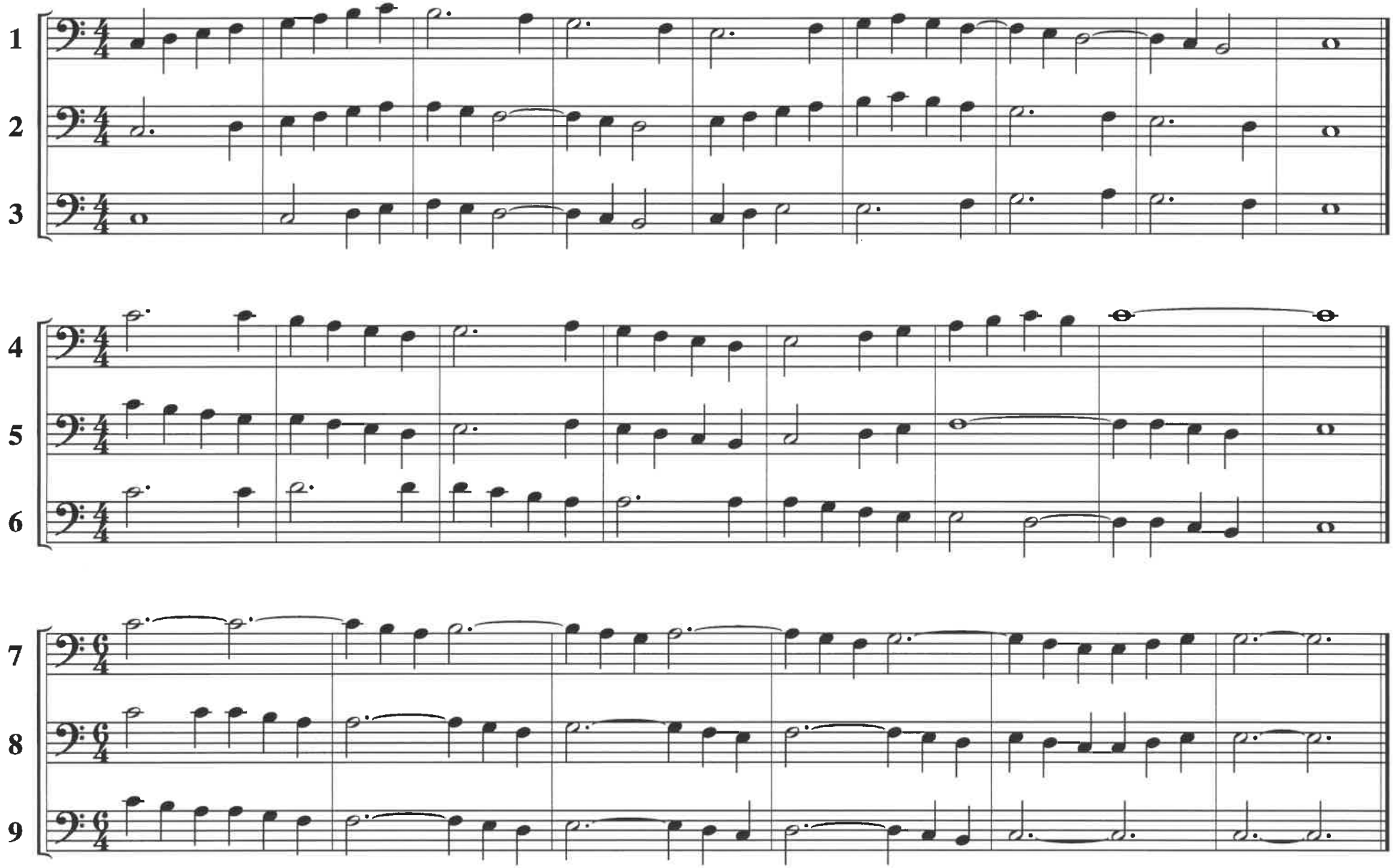

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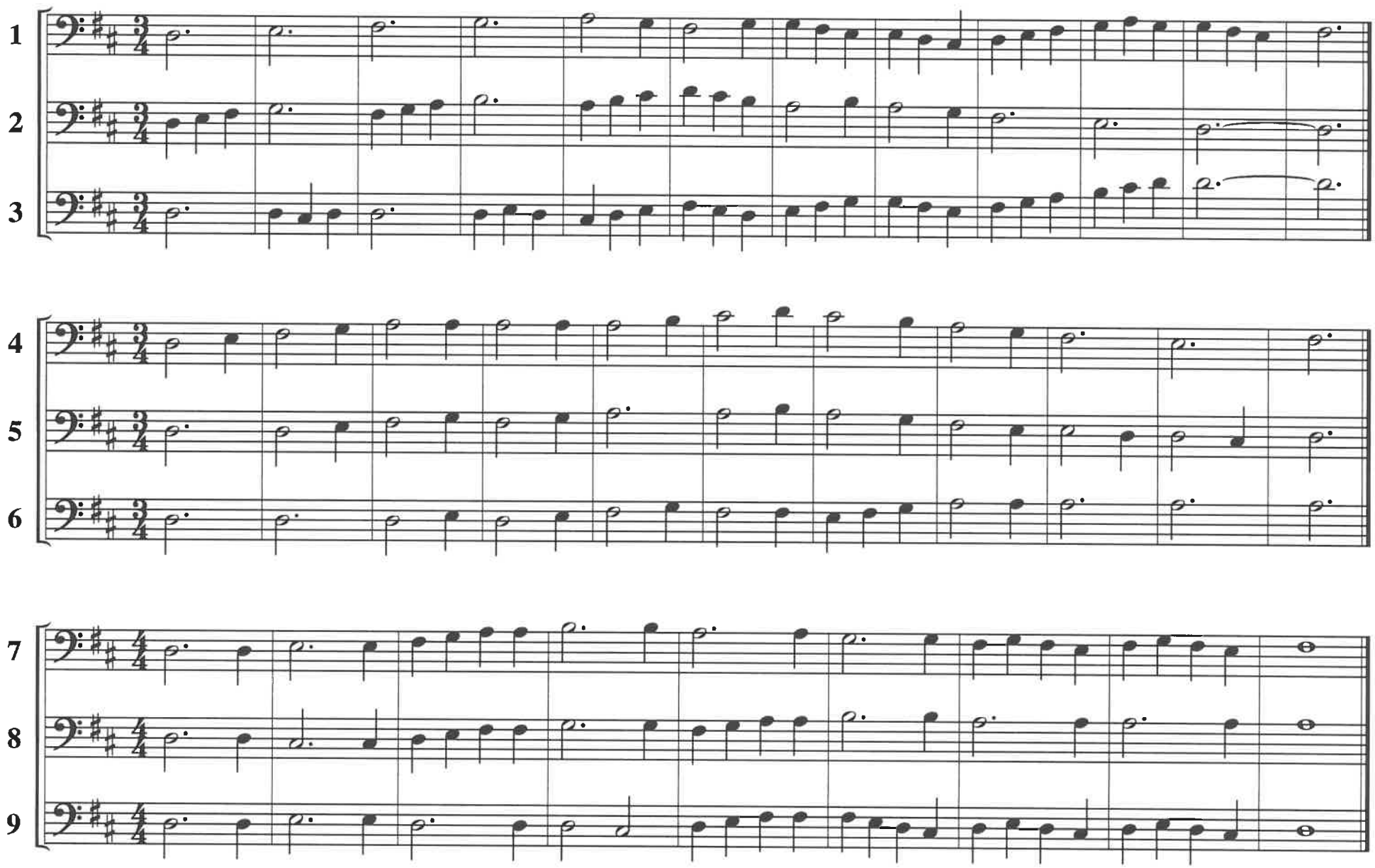

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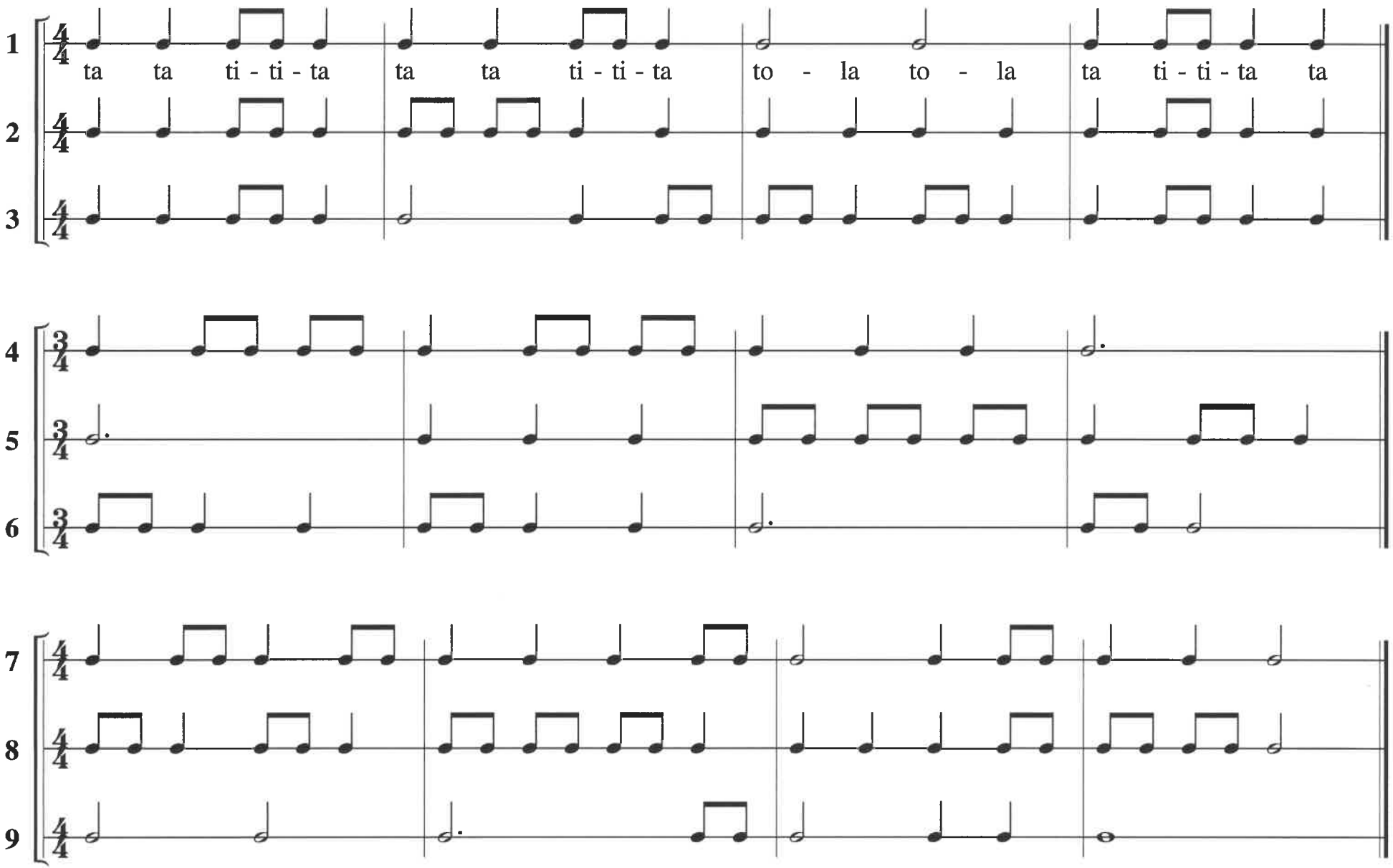
A pair of EIGHTH NOTES (♫) gets two beats.

♫ = ♩



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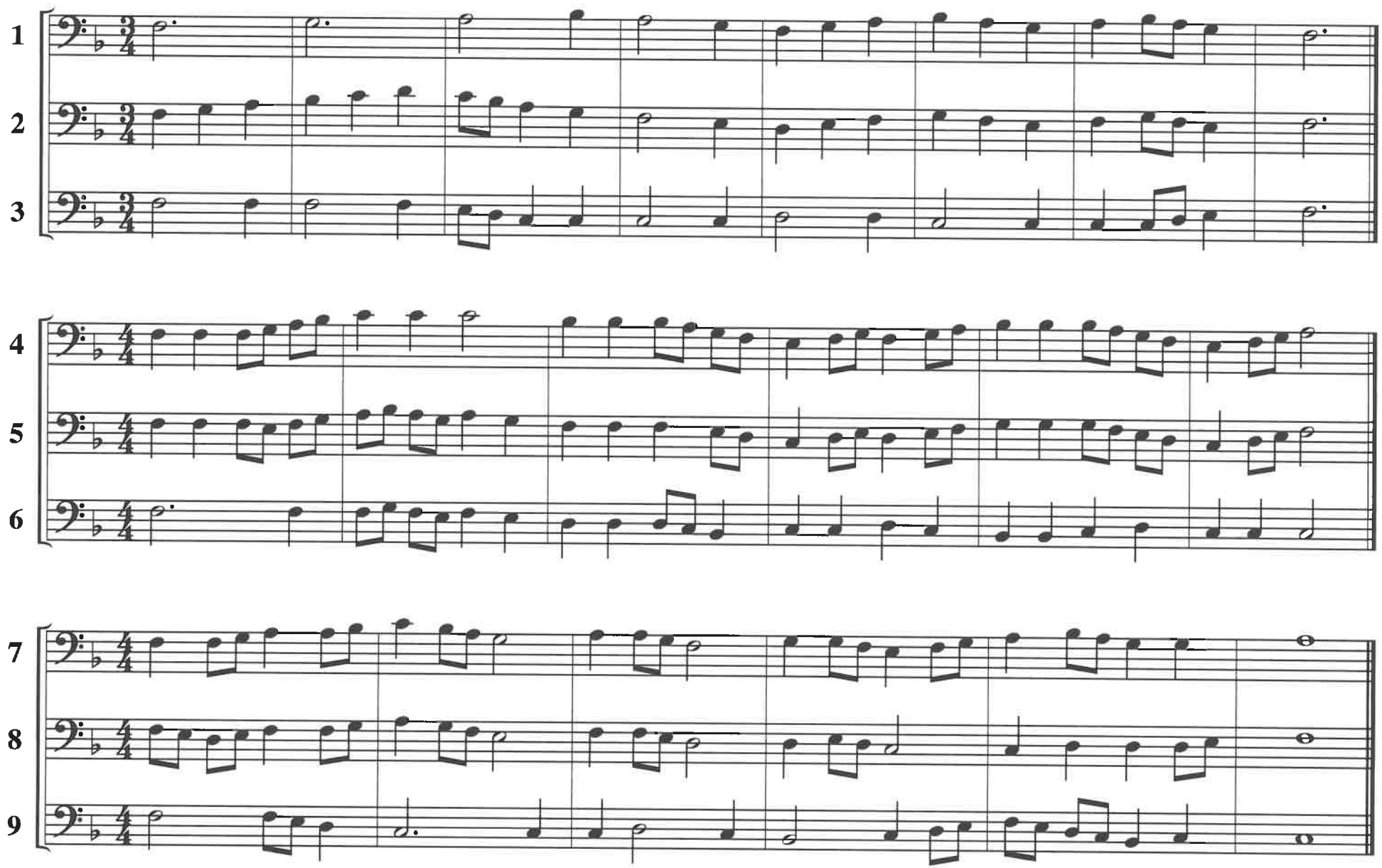

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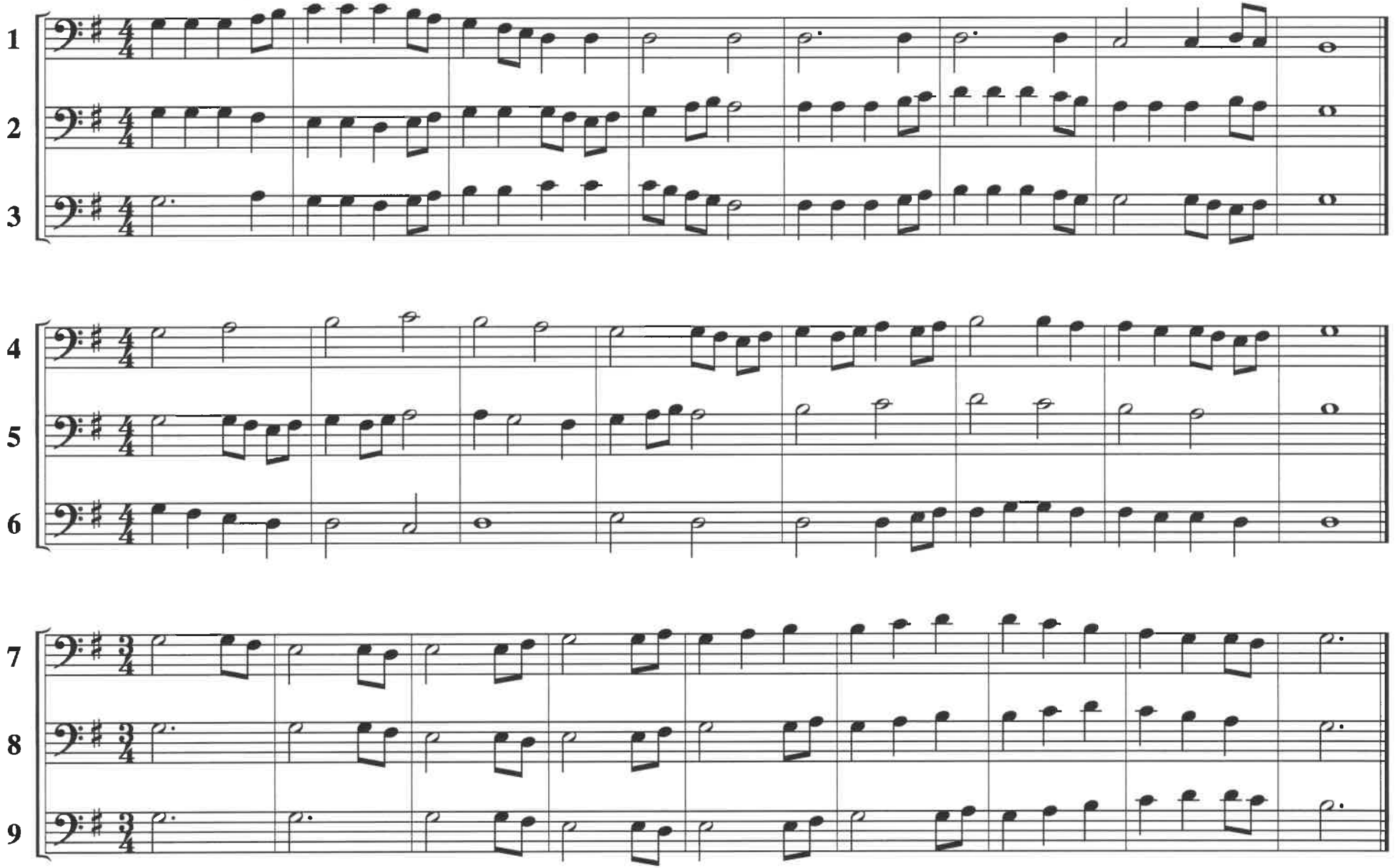

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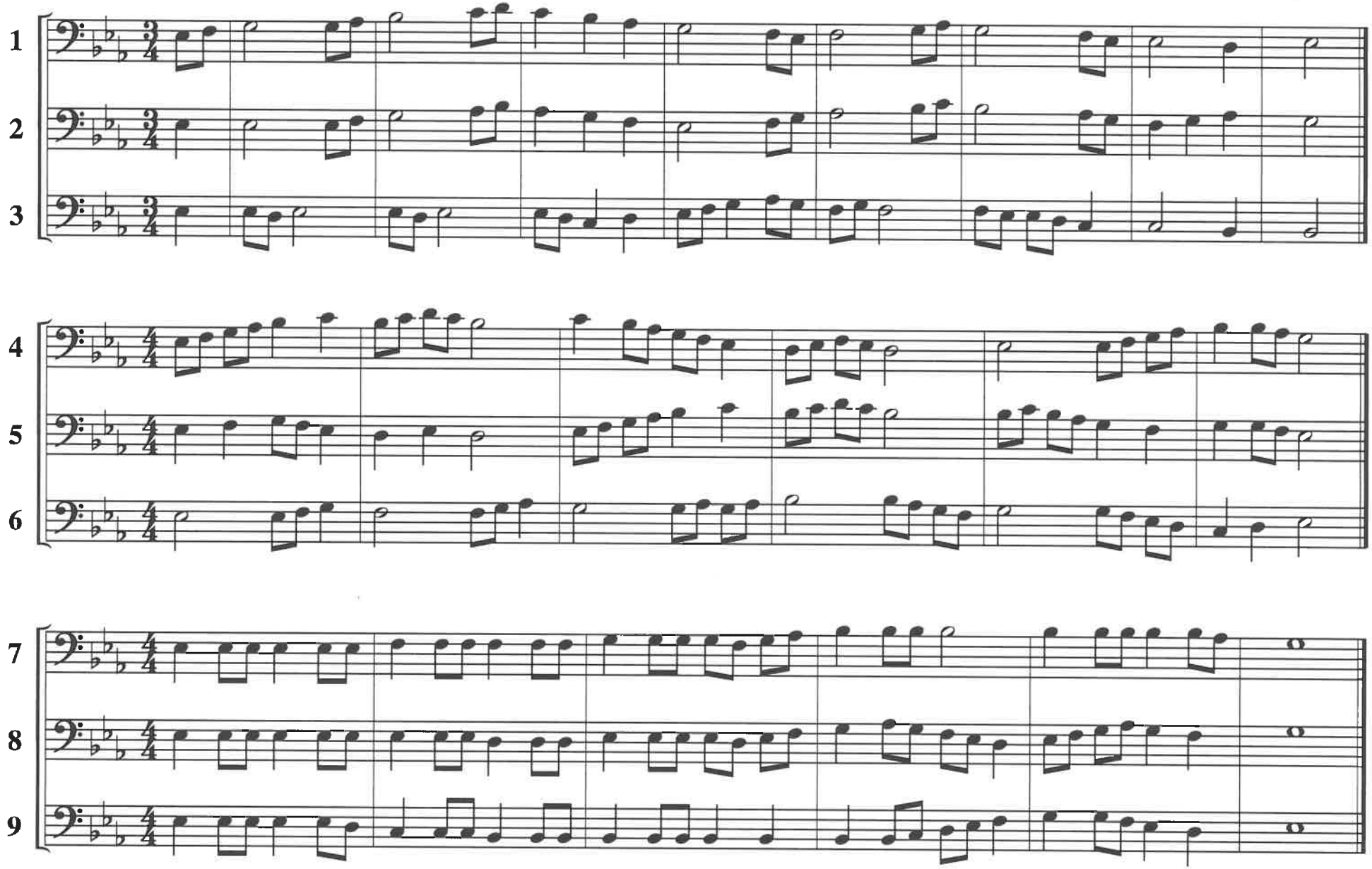

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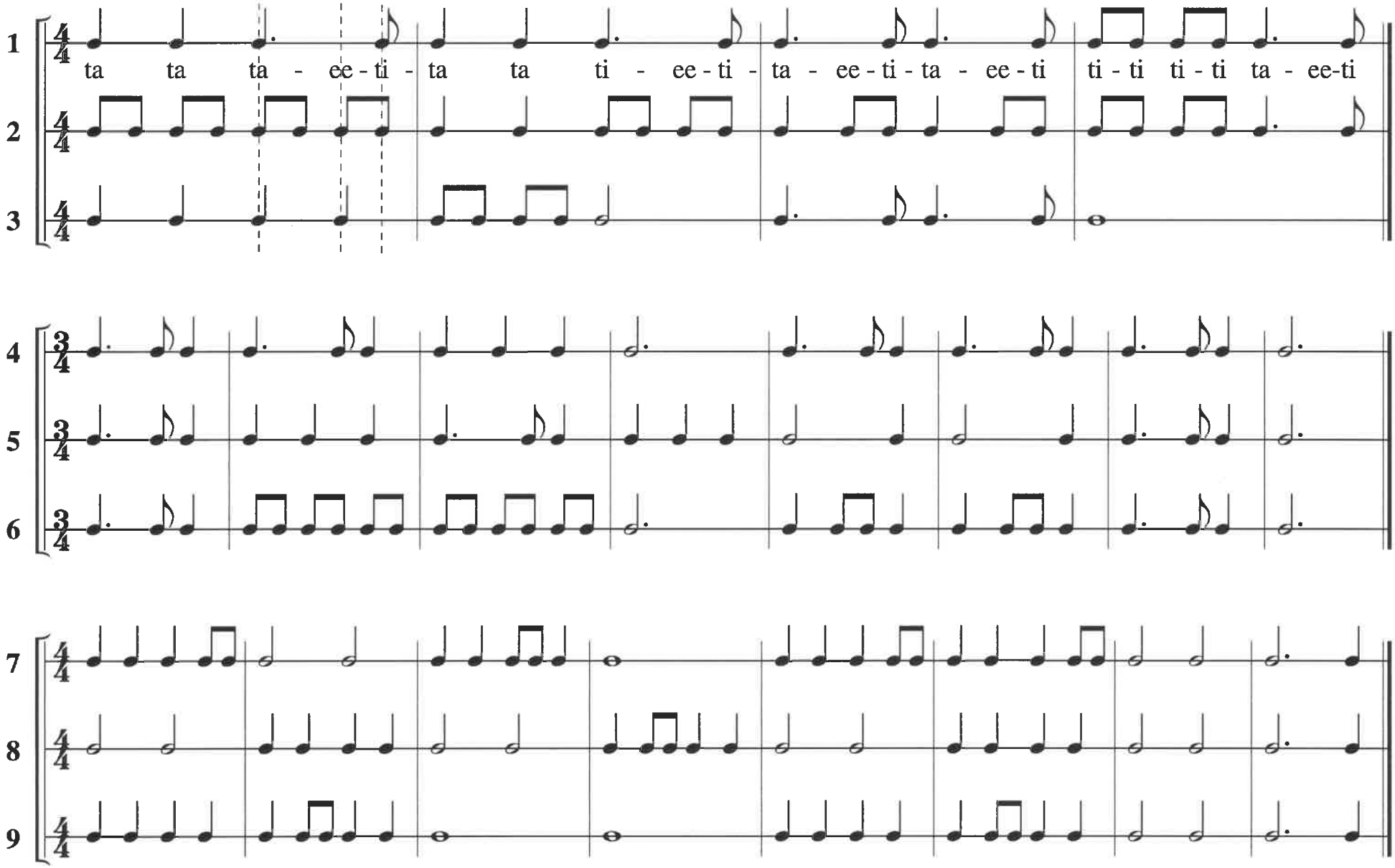
The DOTTED QUARTER NOTE (♩.) gets $1\frac{1}{2}$ beats.

The EIGHTH NOTE (♪) gets one half beat.

♩. + ♪ = 𝅗𝅥 = ♩ + ♩



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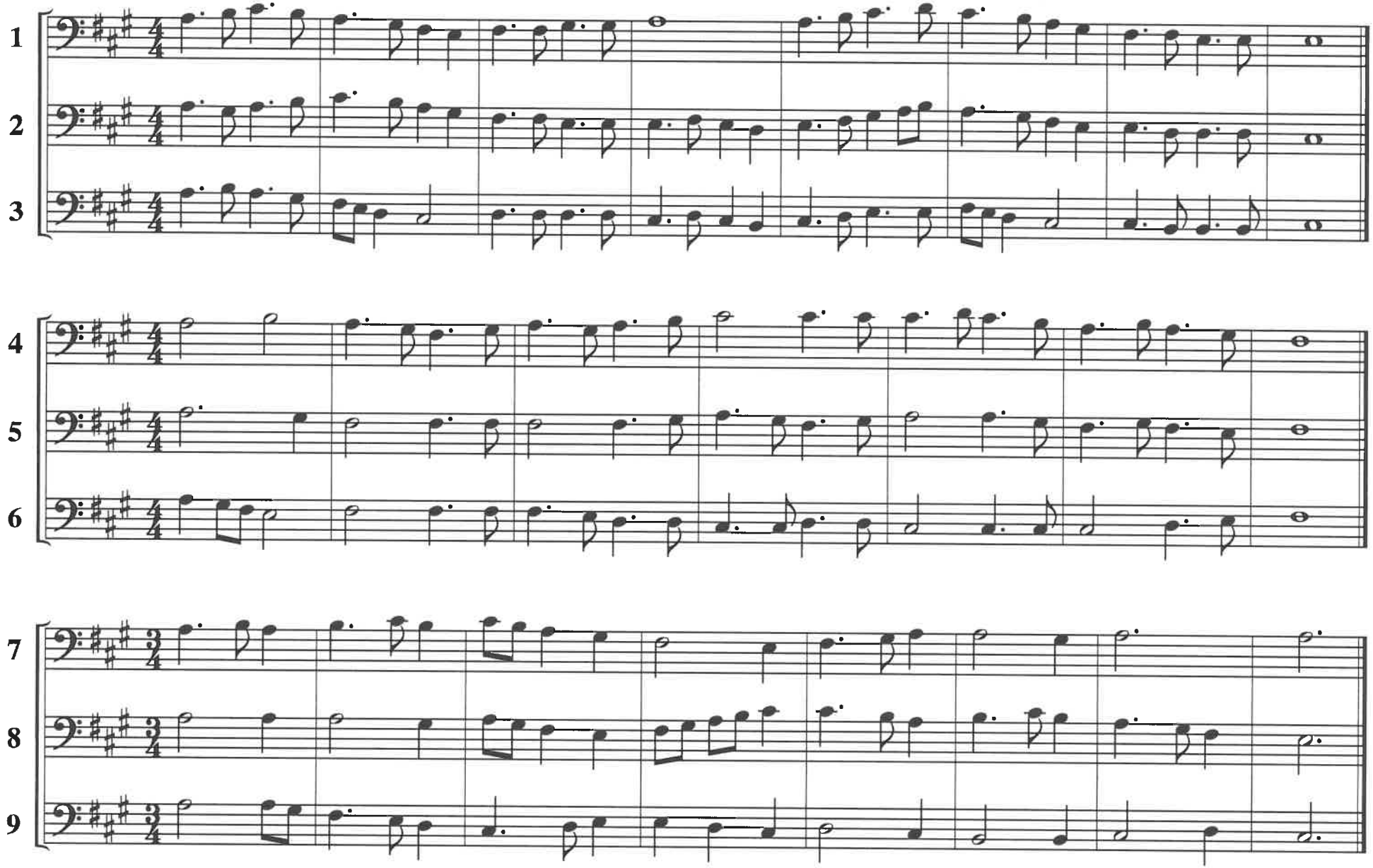

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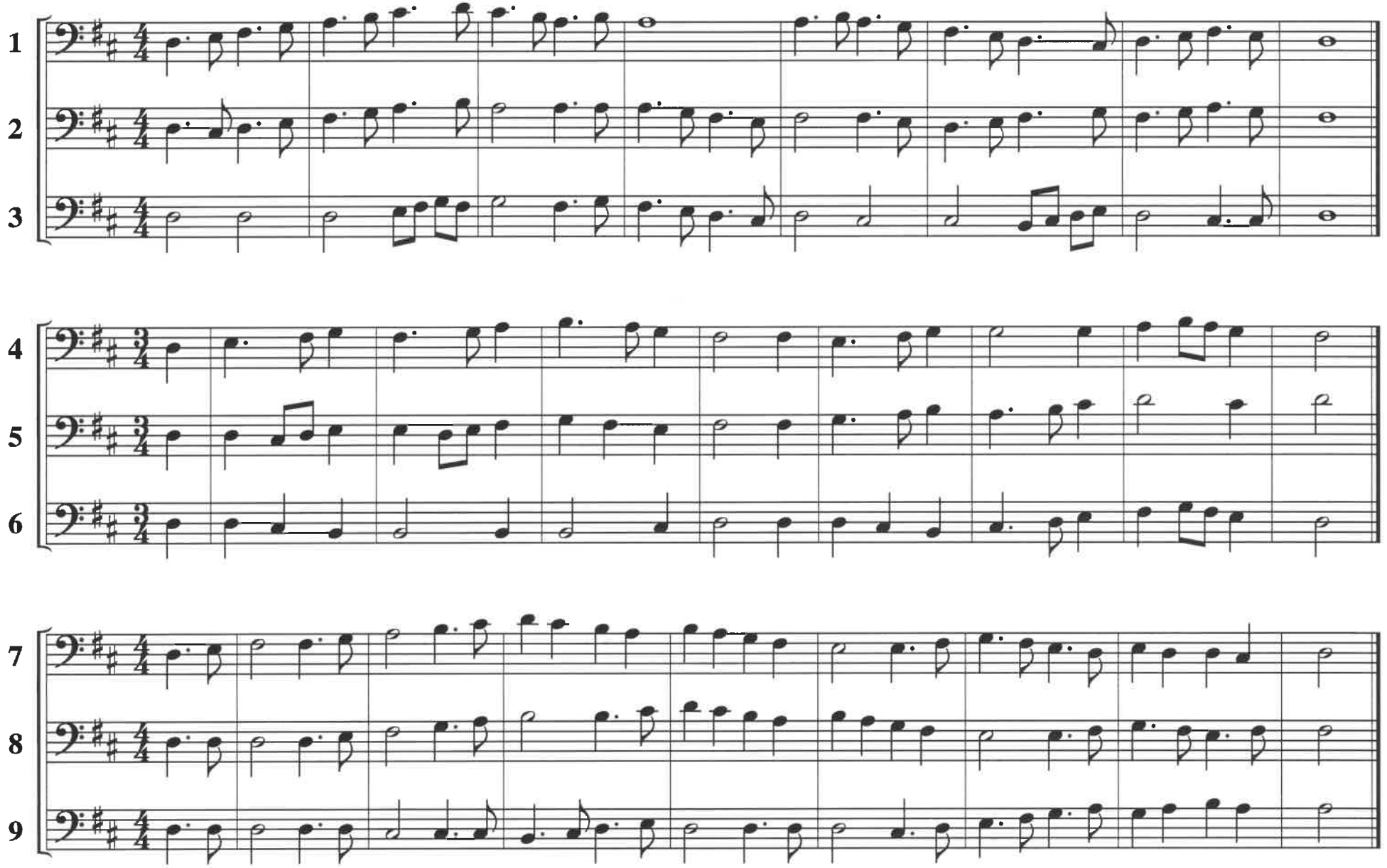

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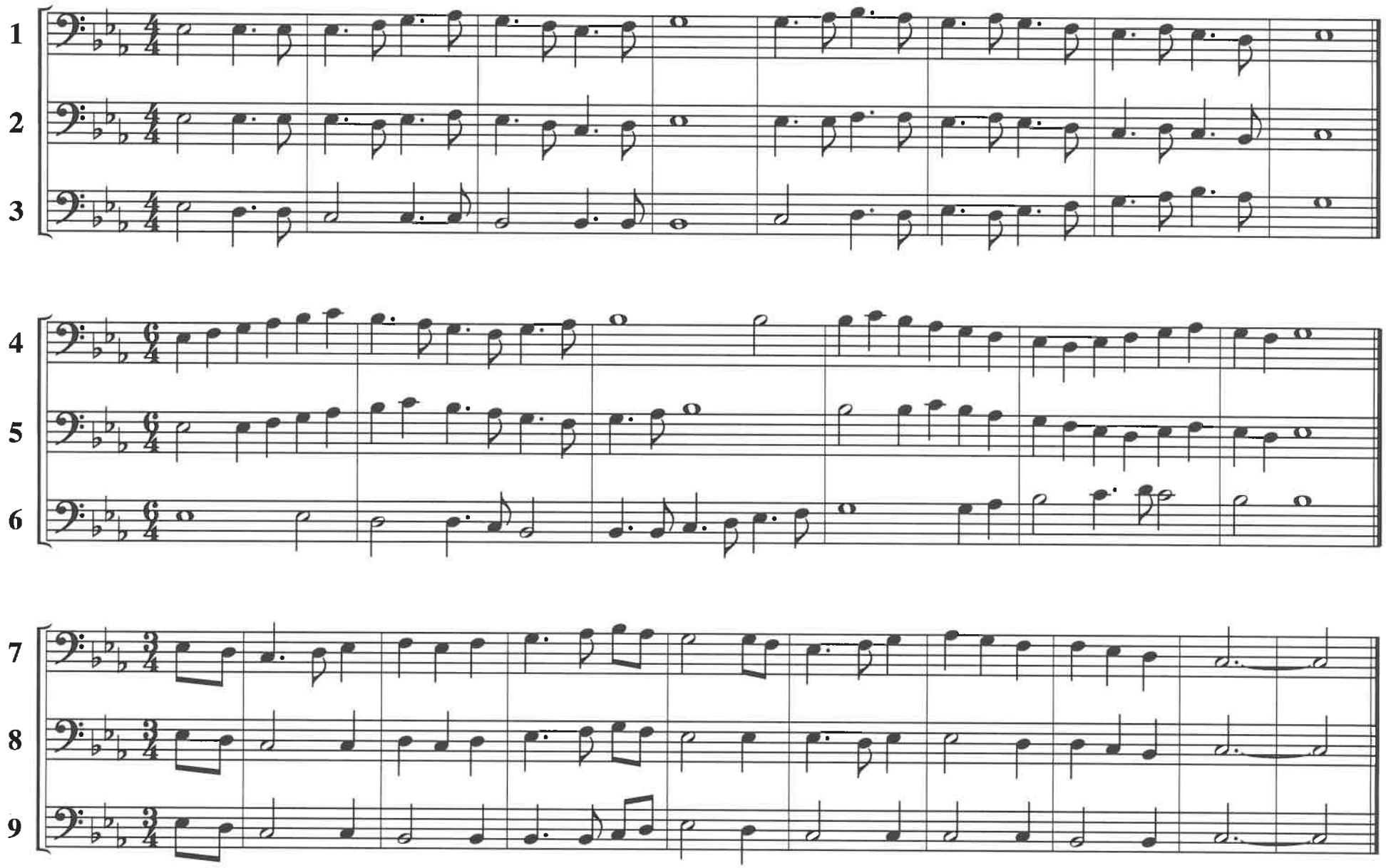

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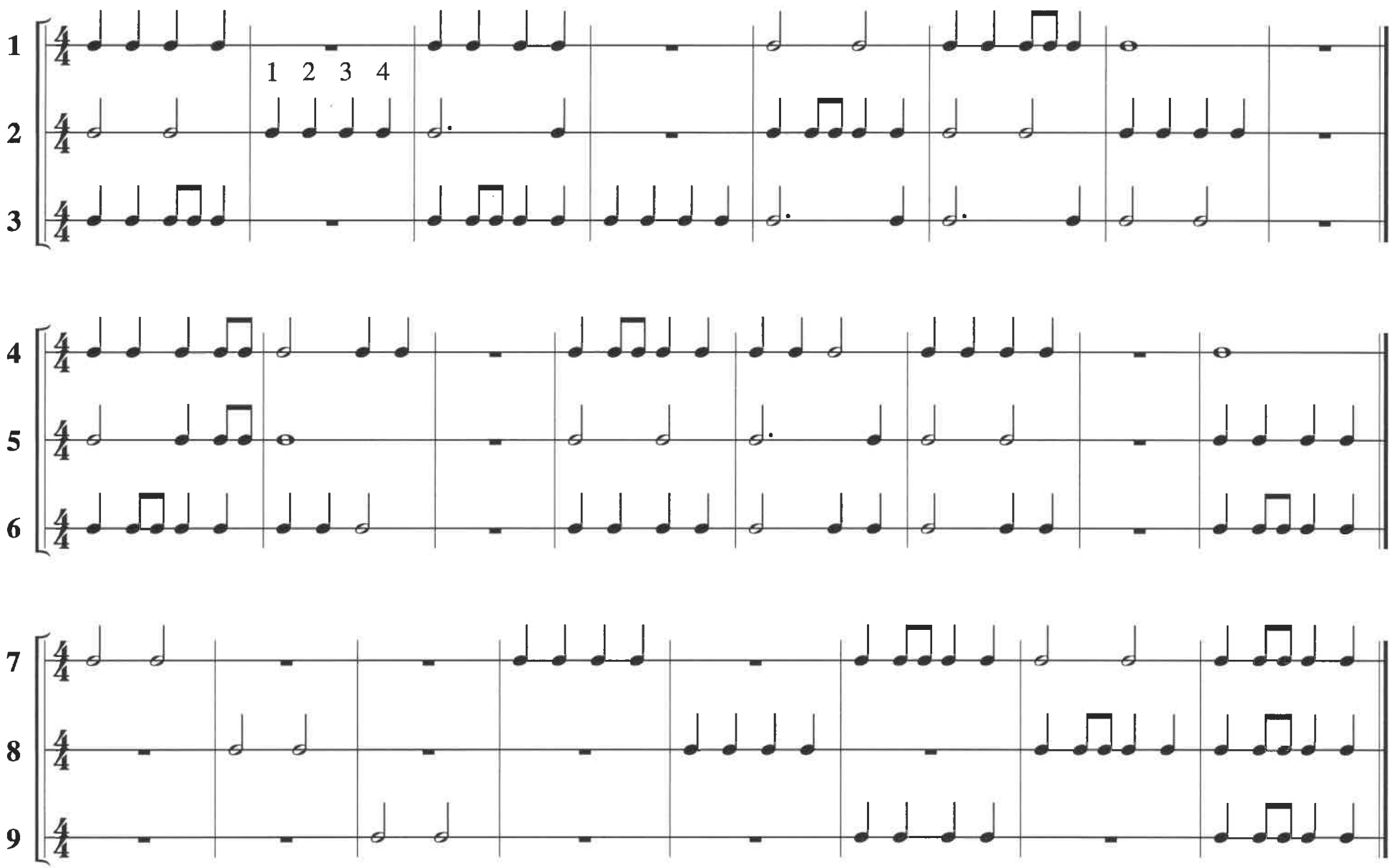
The WHOLE REST (𝄻) gets four beats.

𝄻 = 𝅝 = 𝅗𝅥+𝅗𝅥+𝅗𝅥+𝅗𝅥



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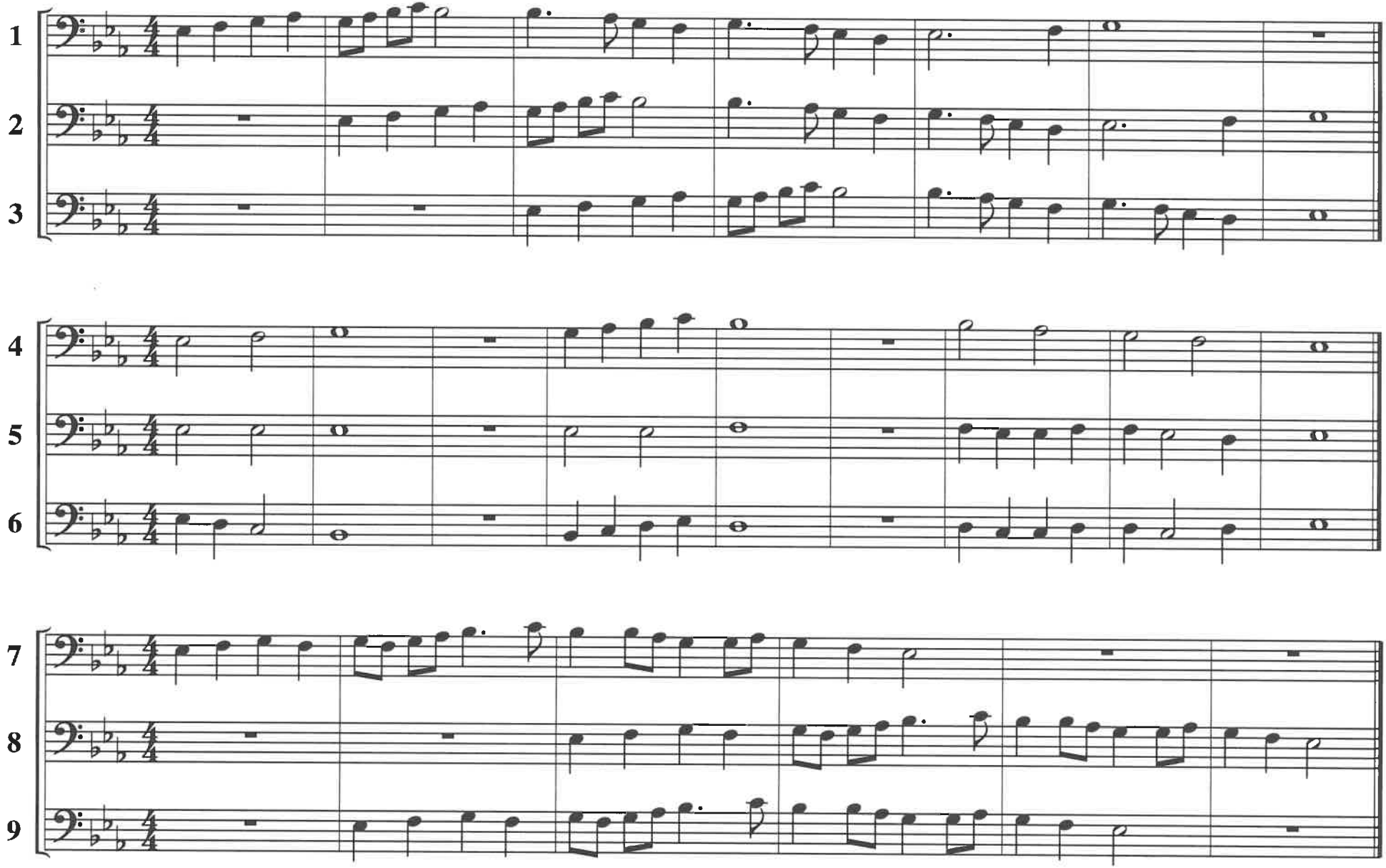

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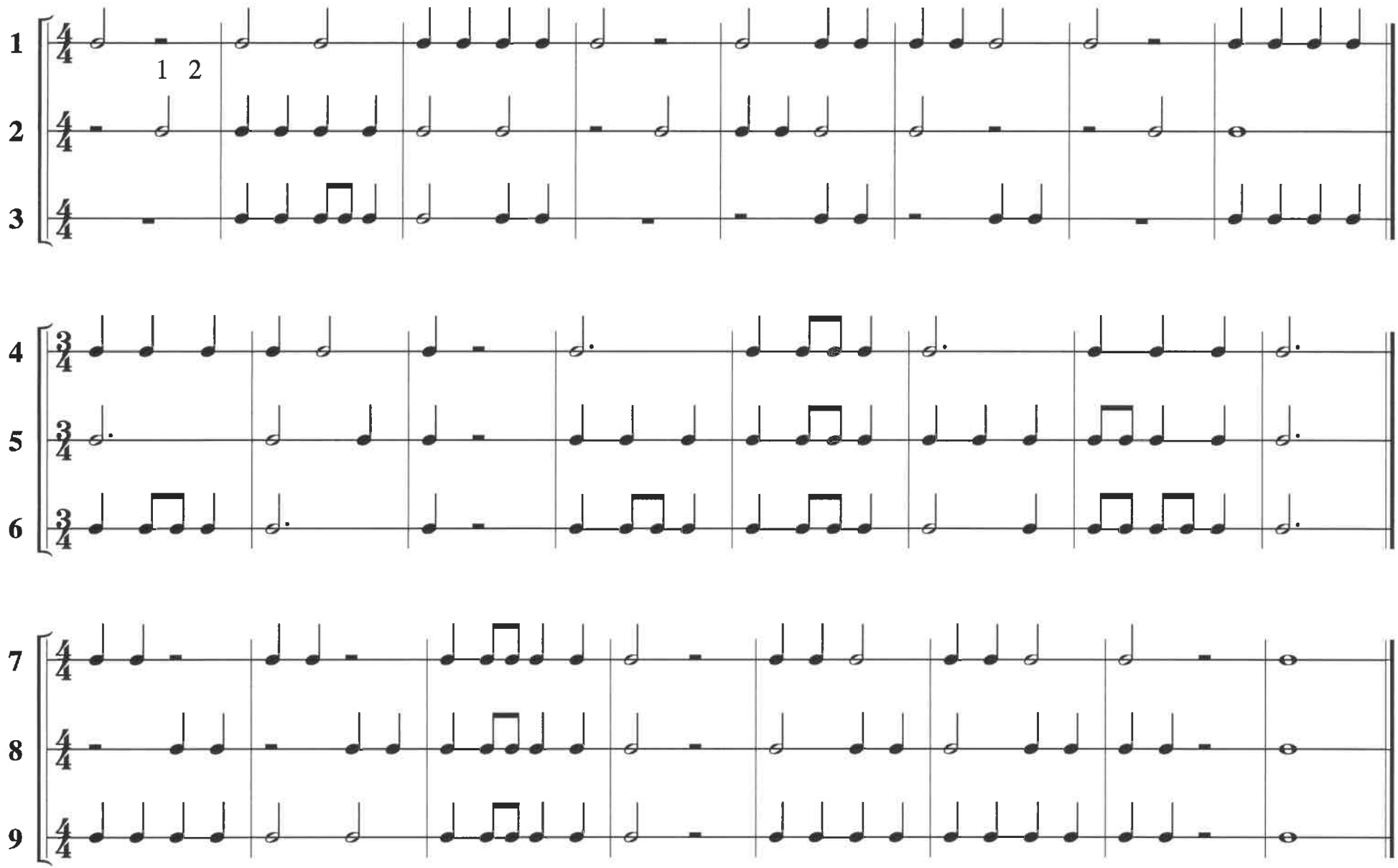
The HALF REST (𝄼) gets two beats.

𝄼 = 𝅗𝅥 = 𝅗𝅥+𝅗𝅥



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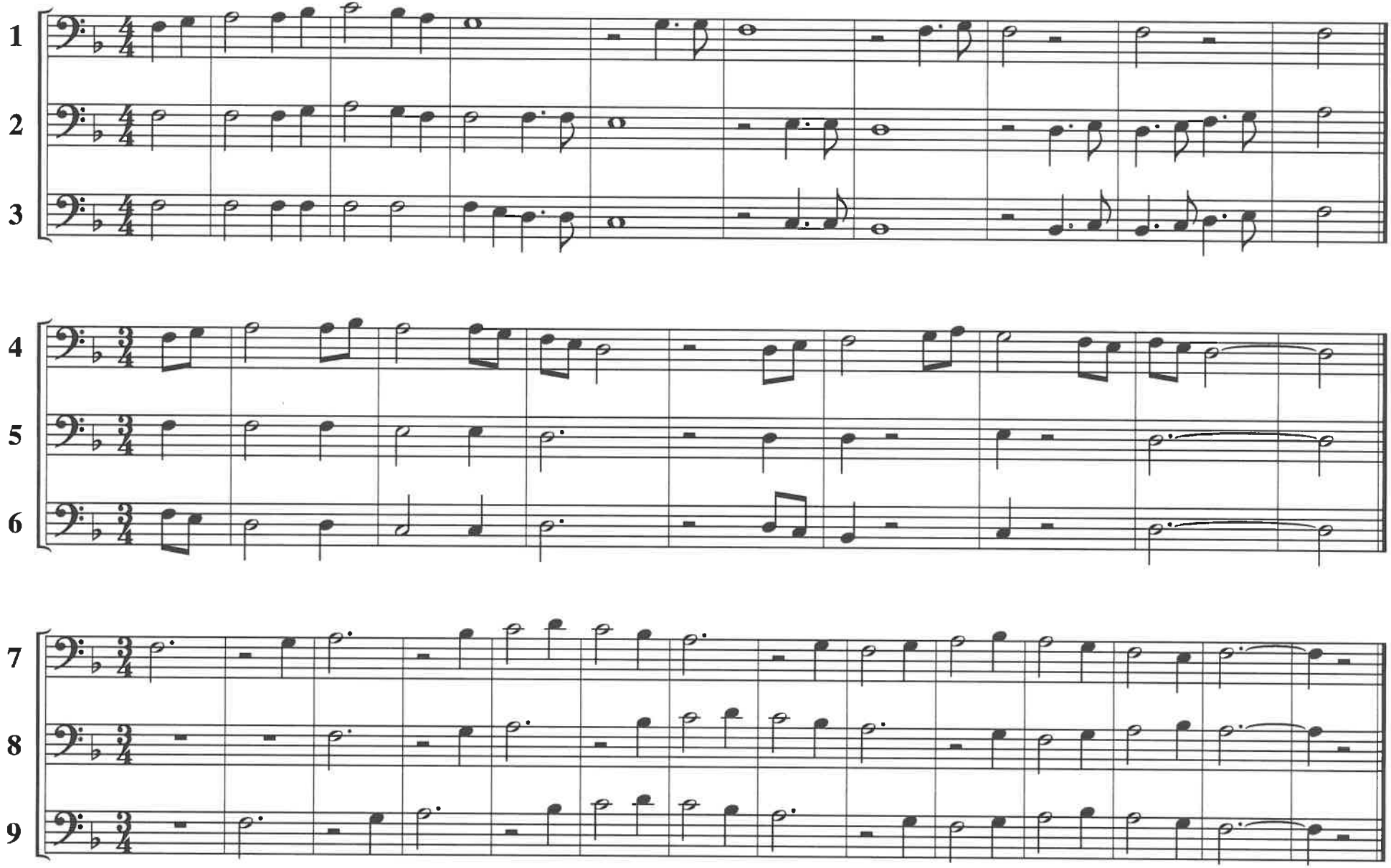

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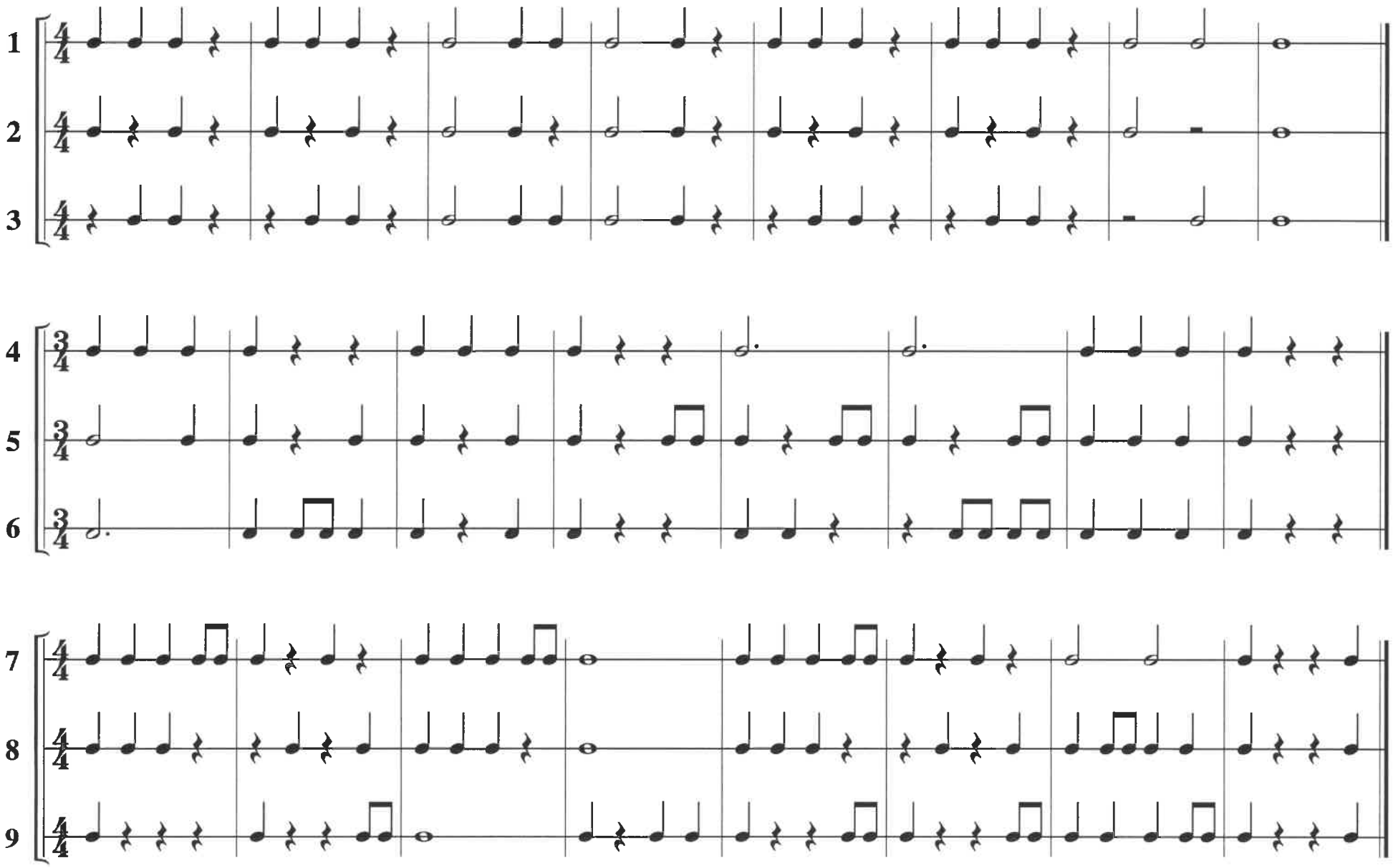
The QUARTER REST (𝄽) gets one beat.

𝄽 = ♩



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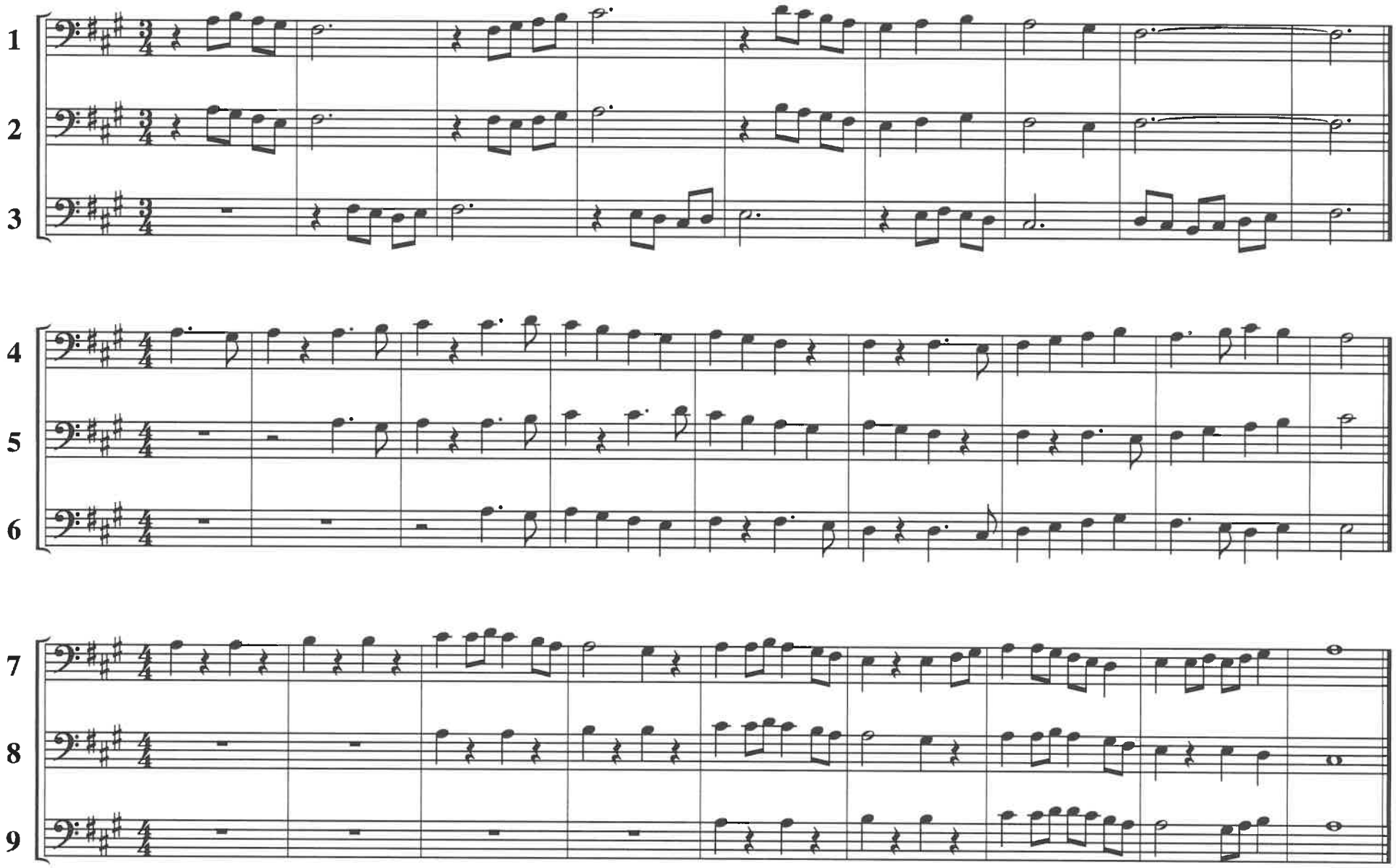

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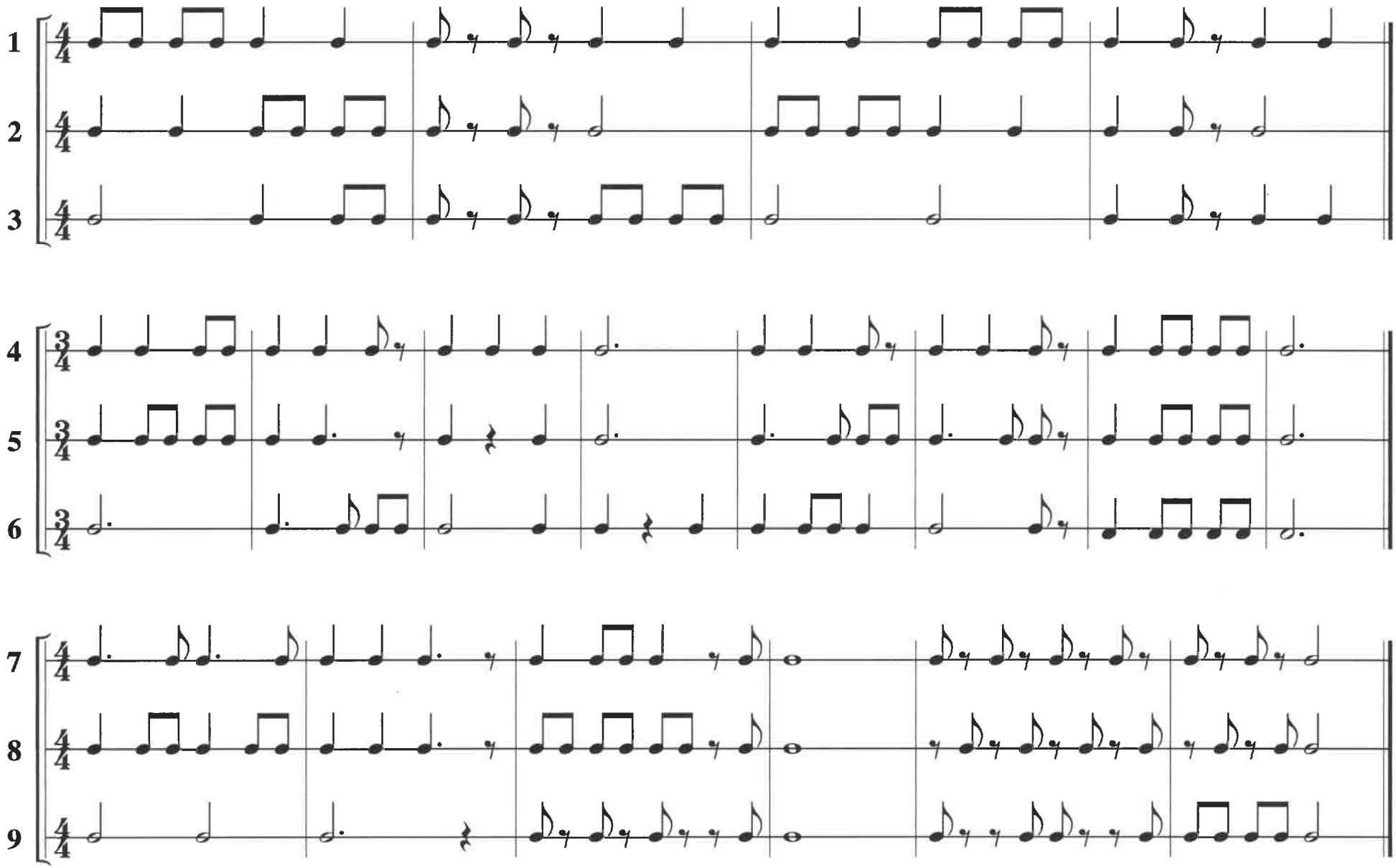
The EIGHTH REST (𝄾) gets one half beat.

𝄾 = ♪



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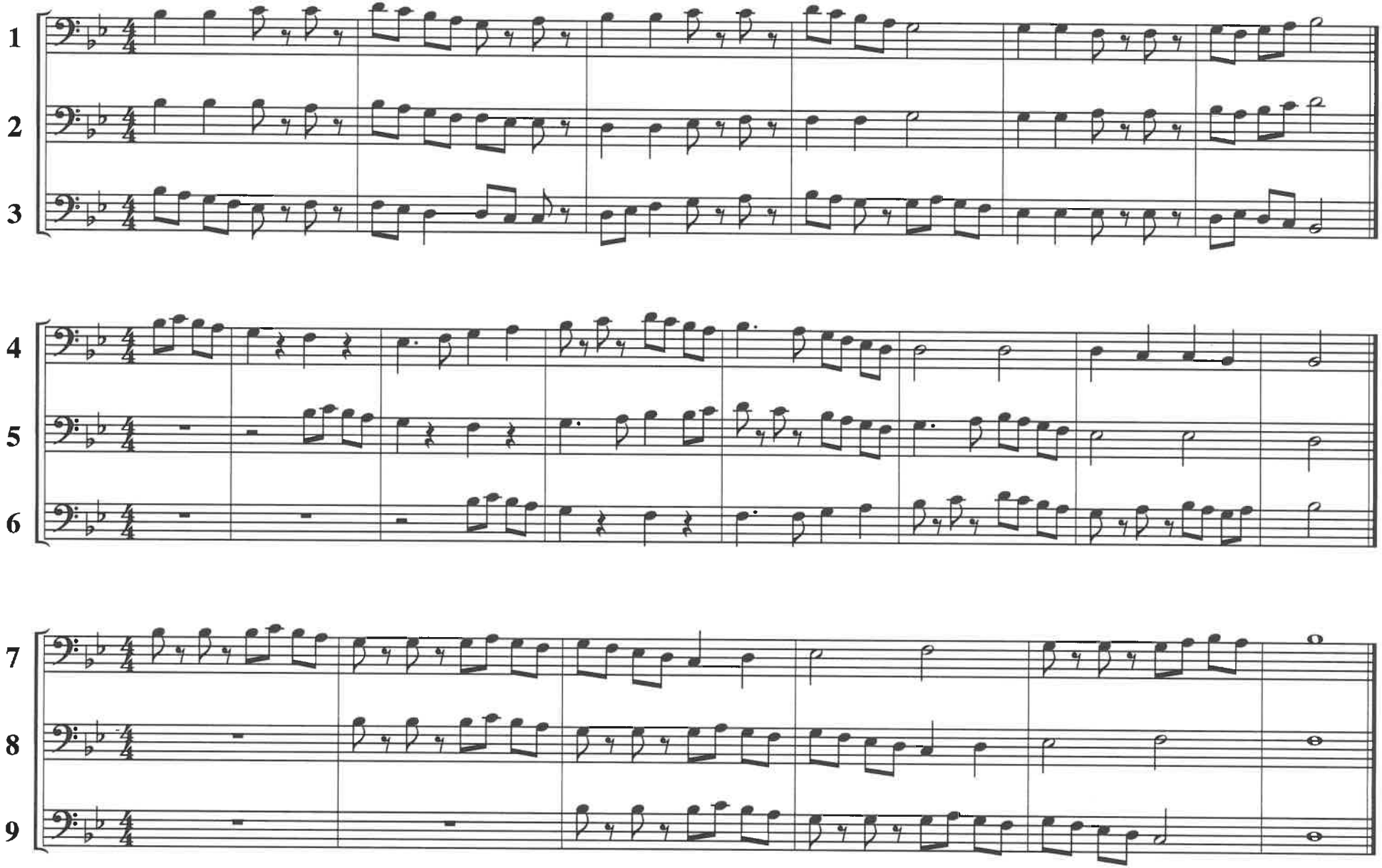

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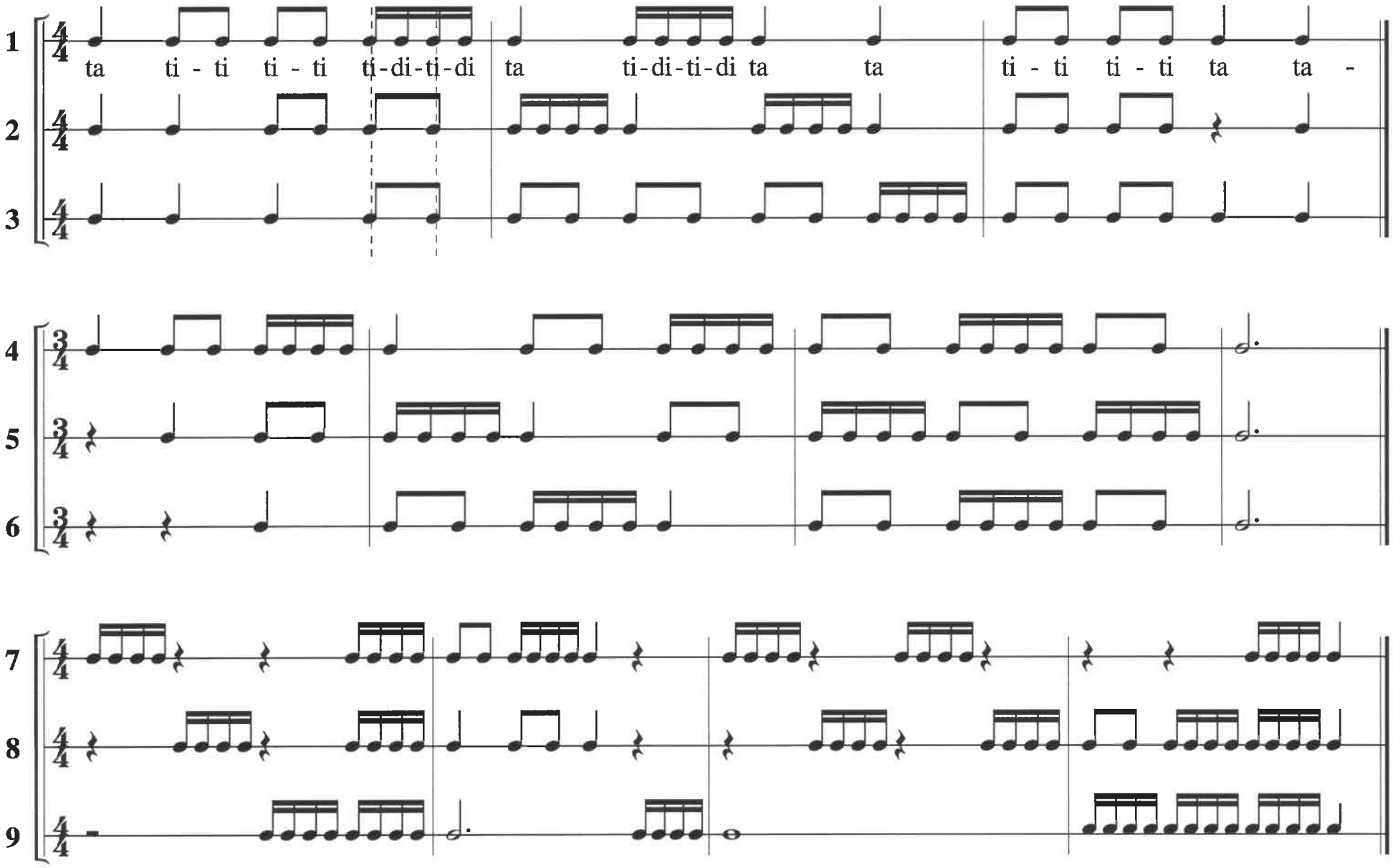
Four SIXTEENTH NOTES ( ) get one beat.



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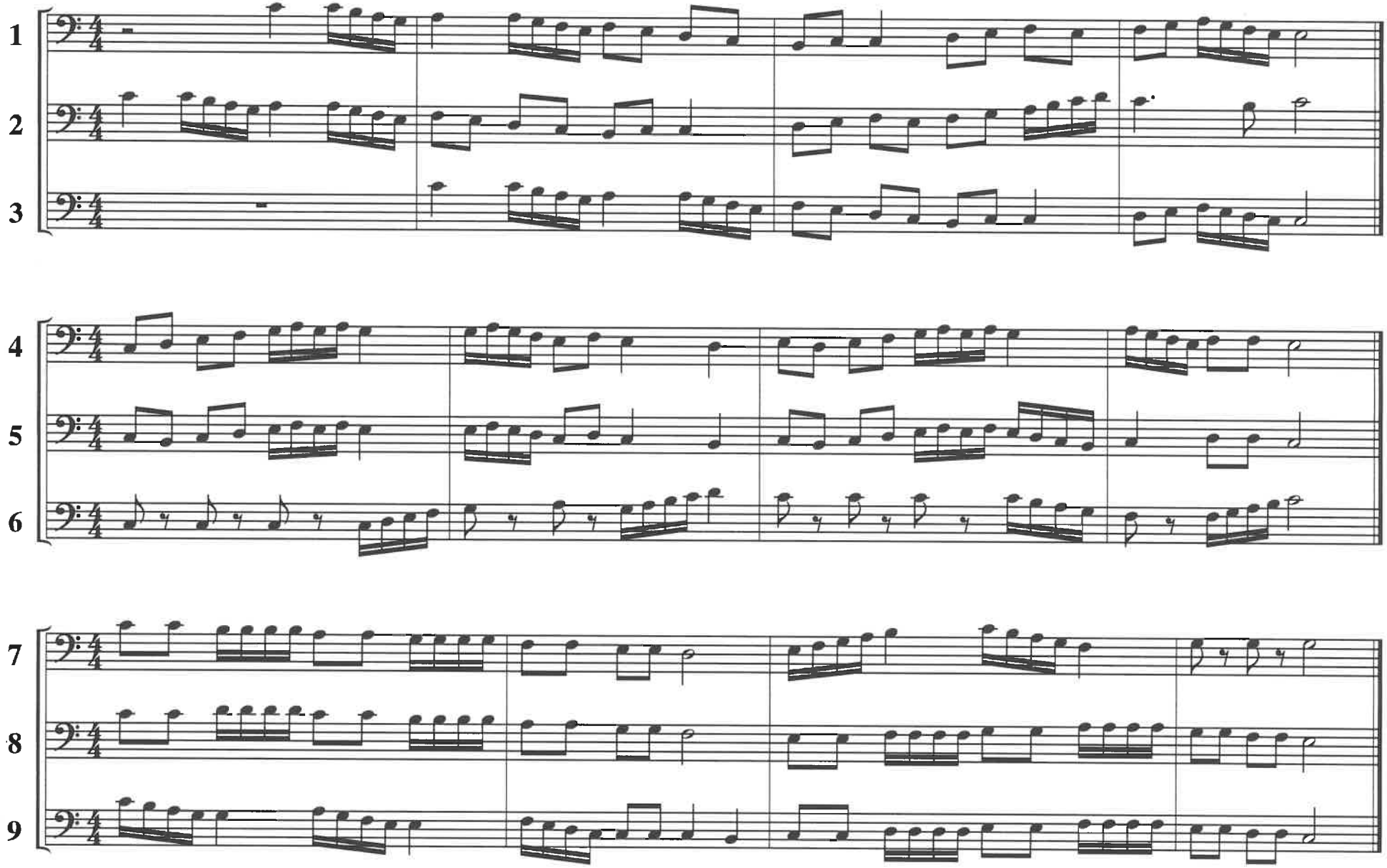

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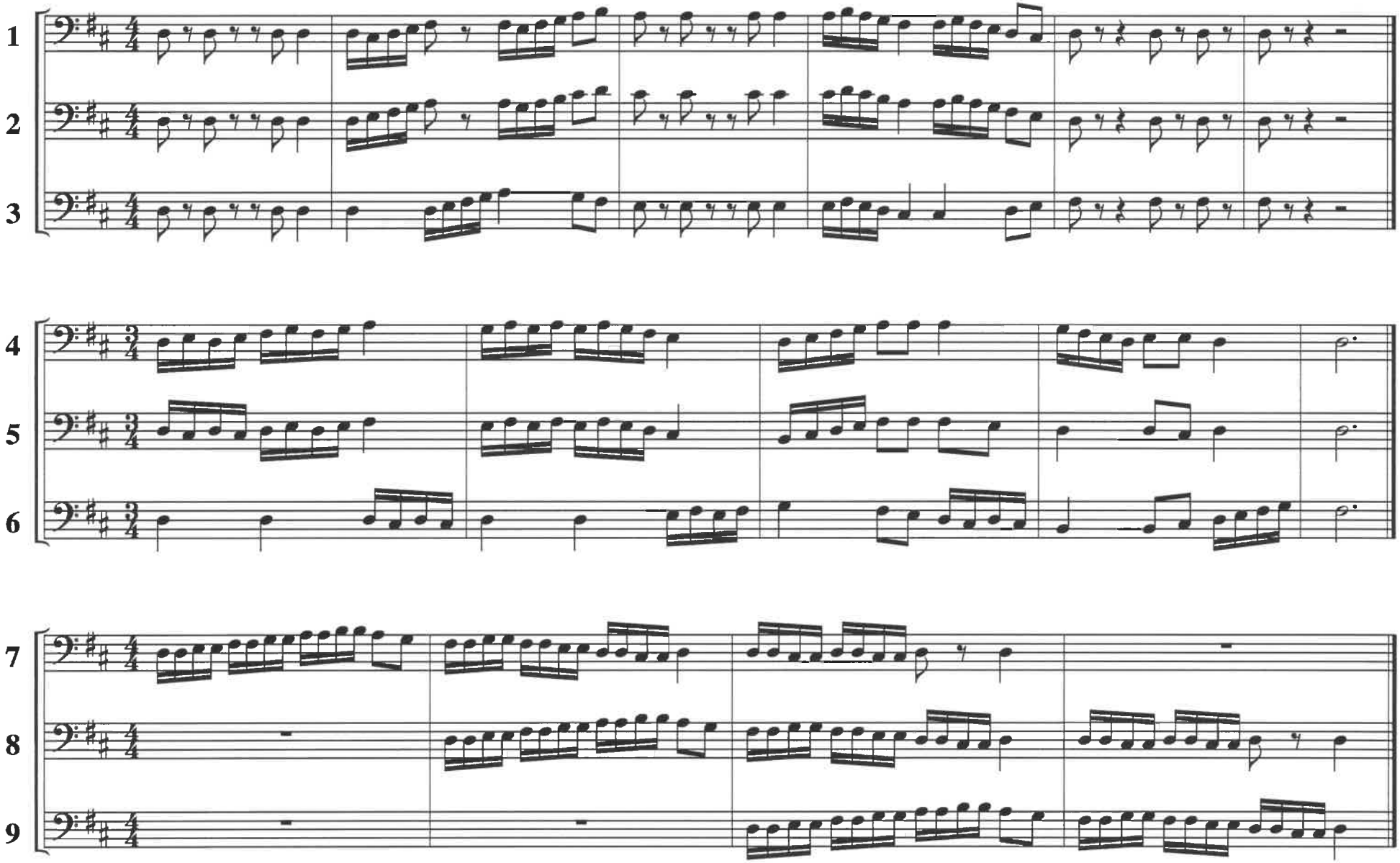

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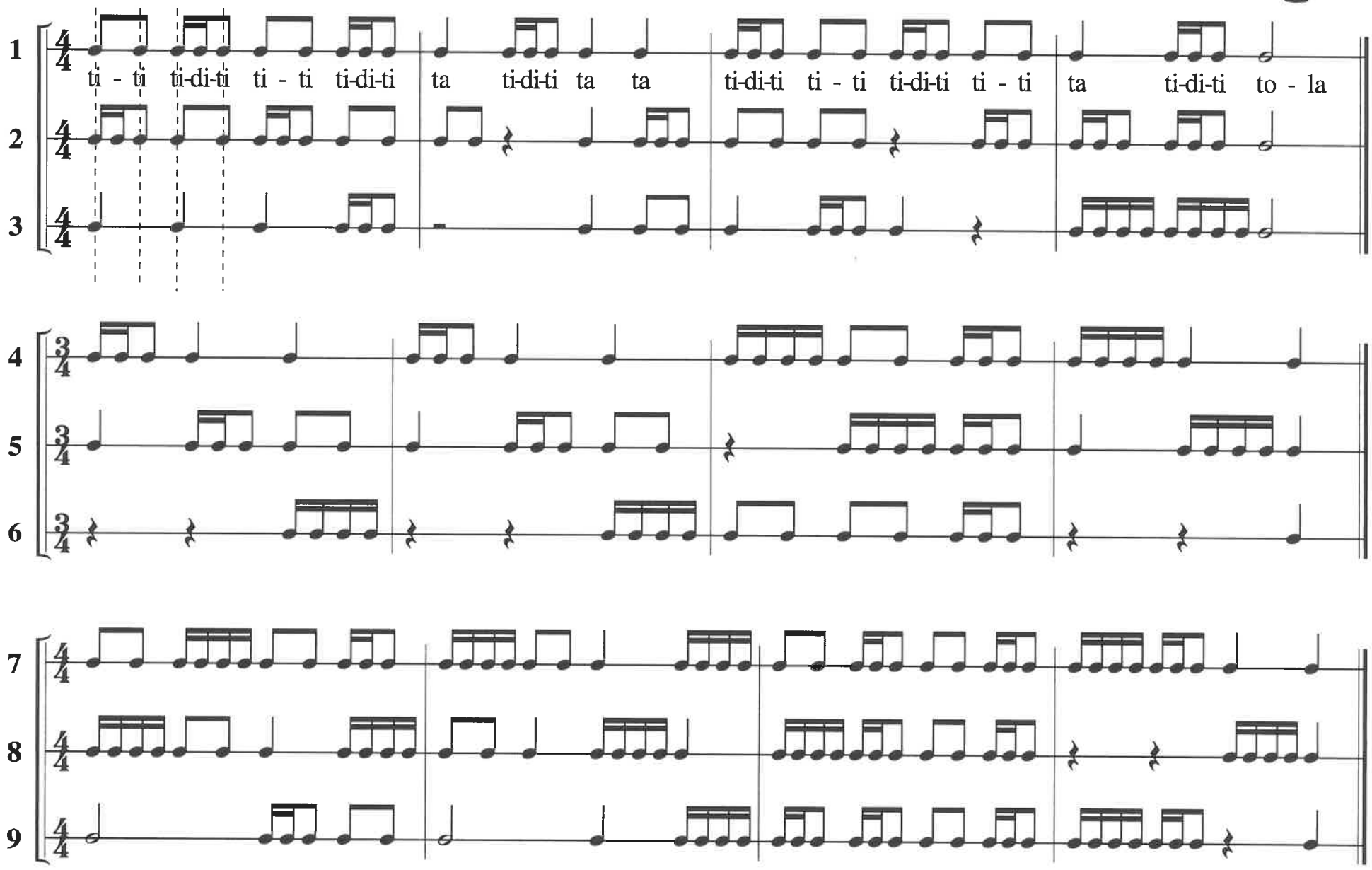
Two SIXTEENTHS and an EIGHTH get one beat.



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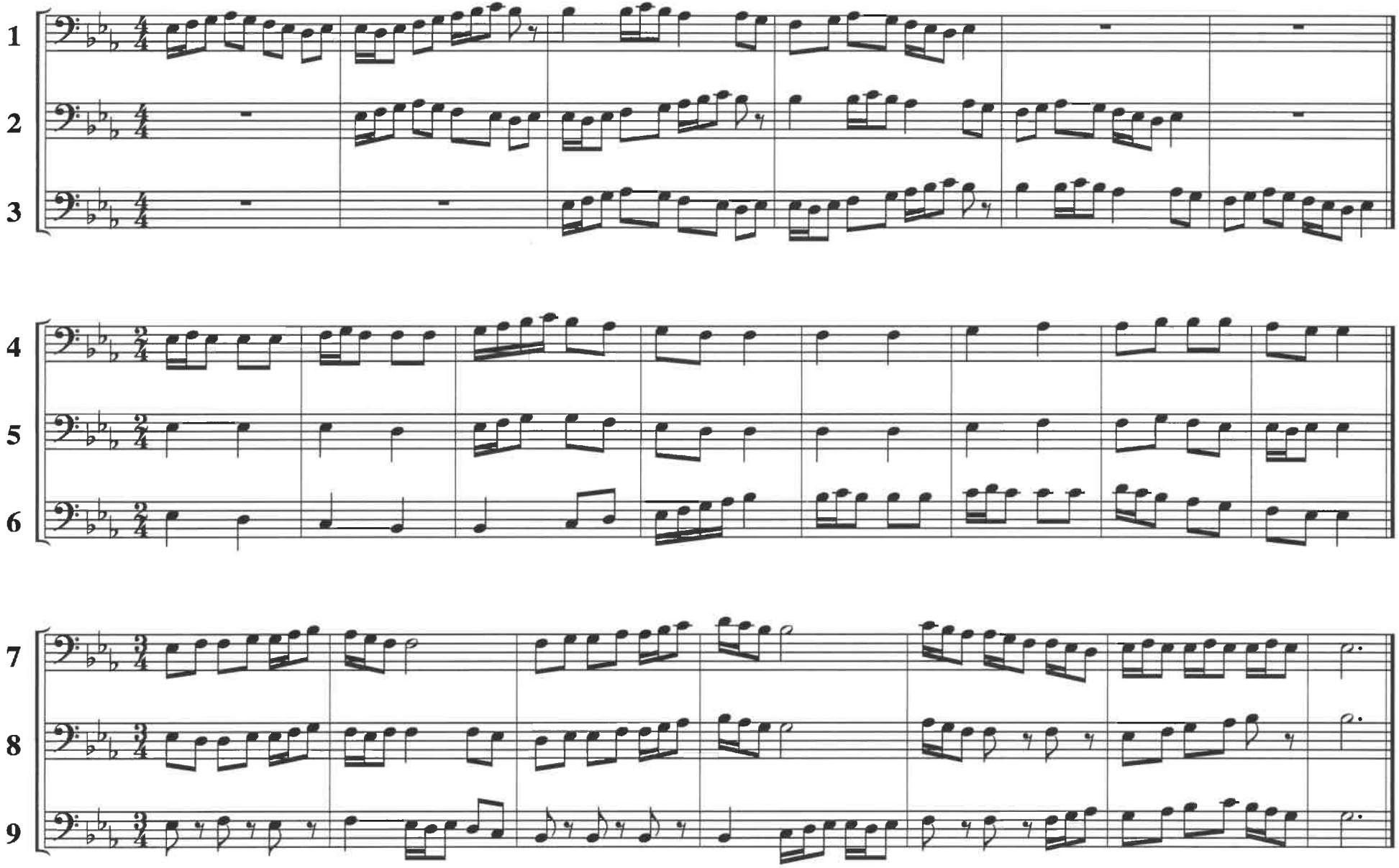

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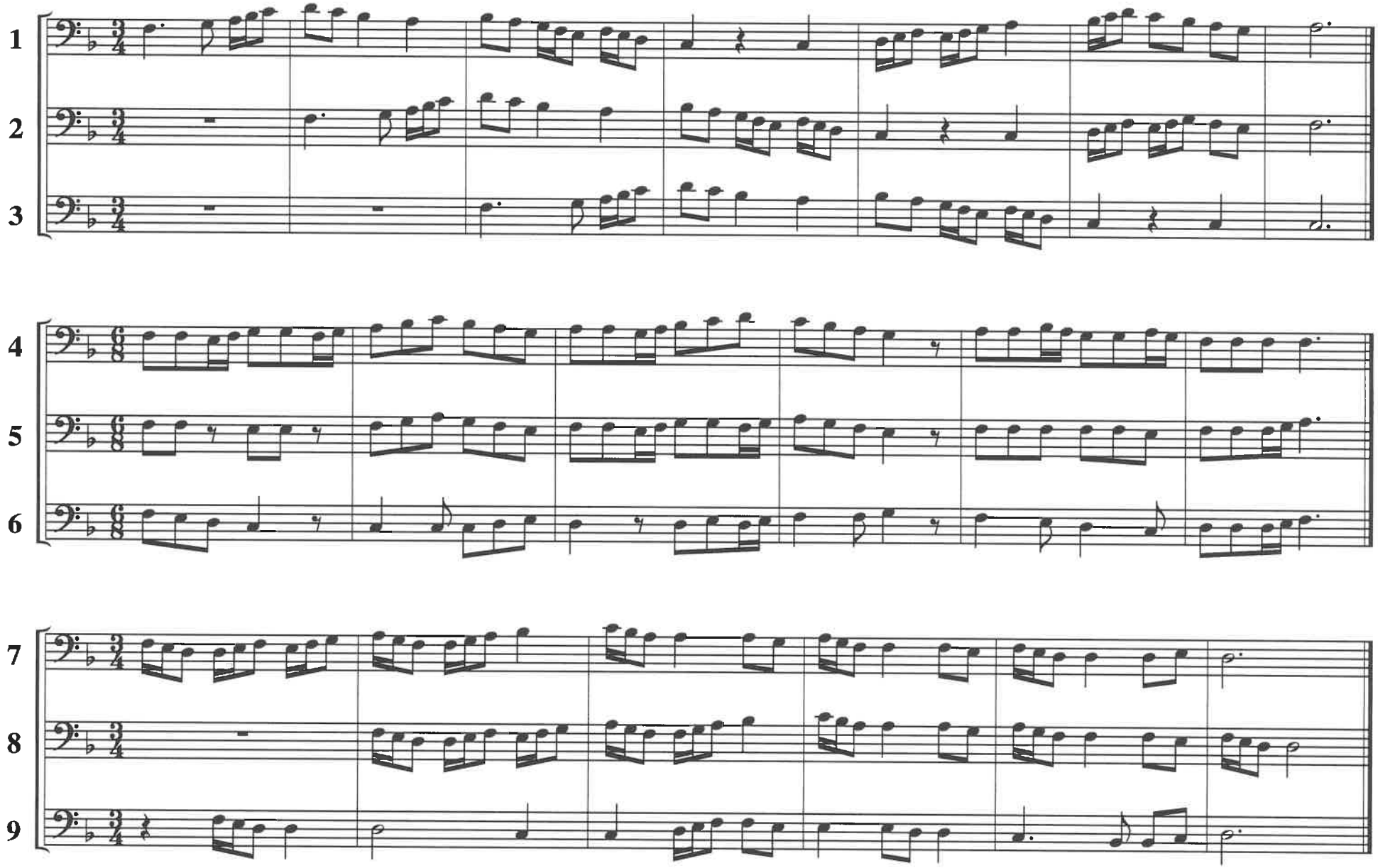

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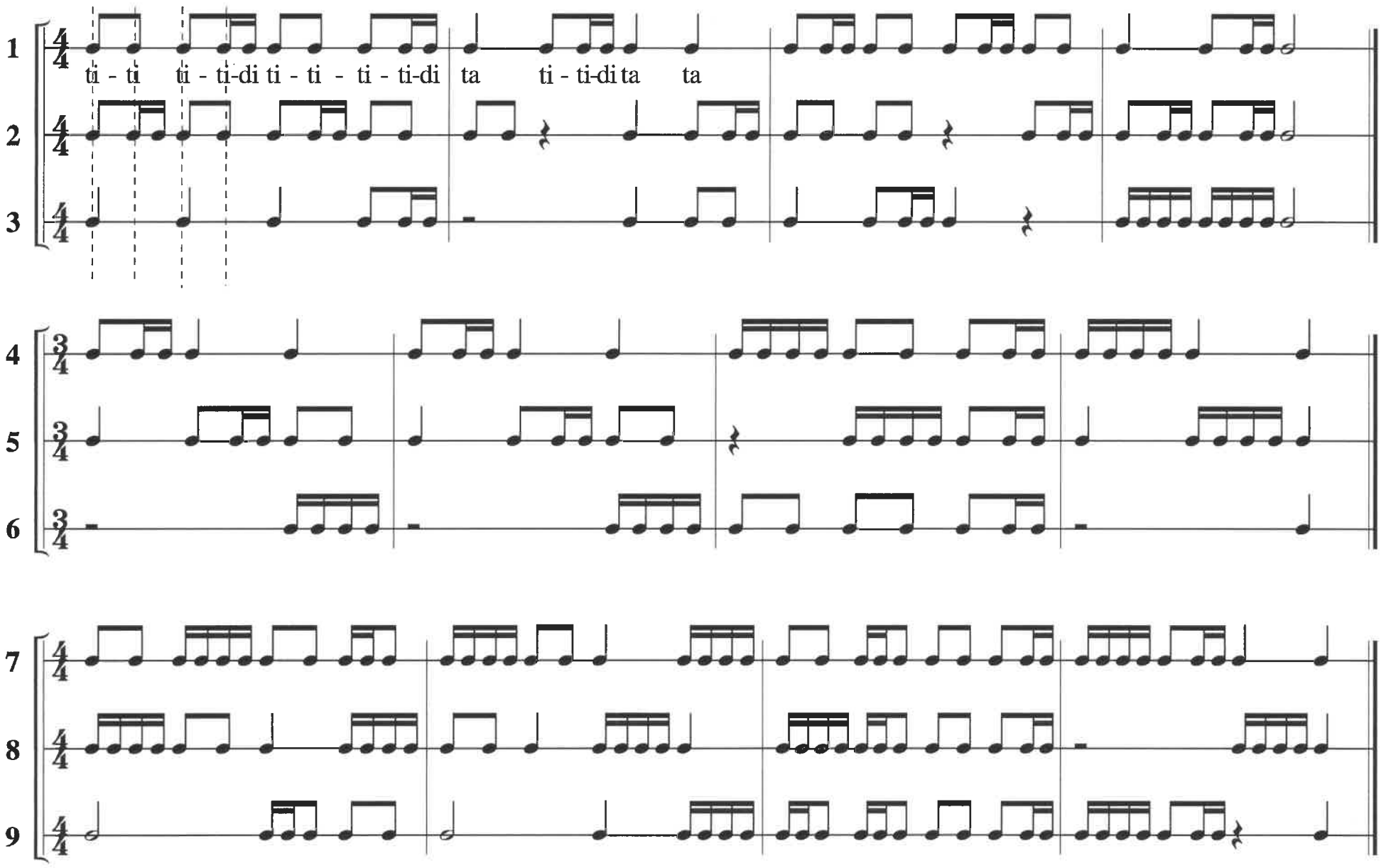
An EIGHTH and two SIXTEENTHS get one beat.



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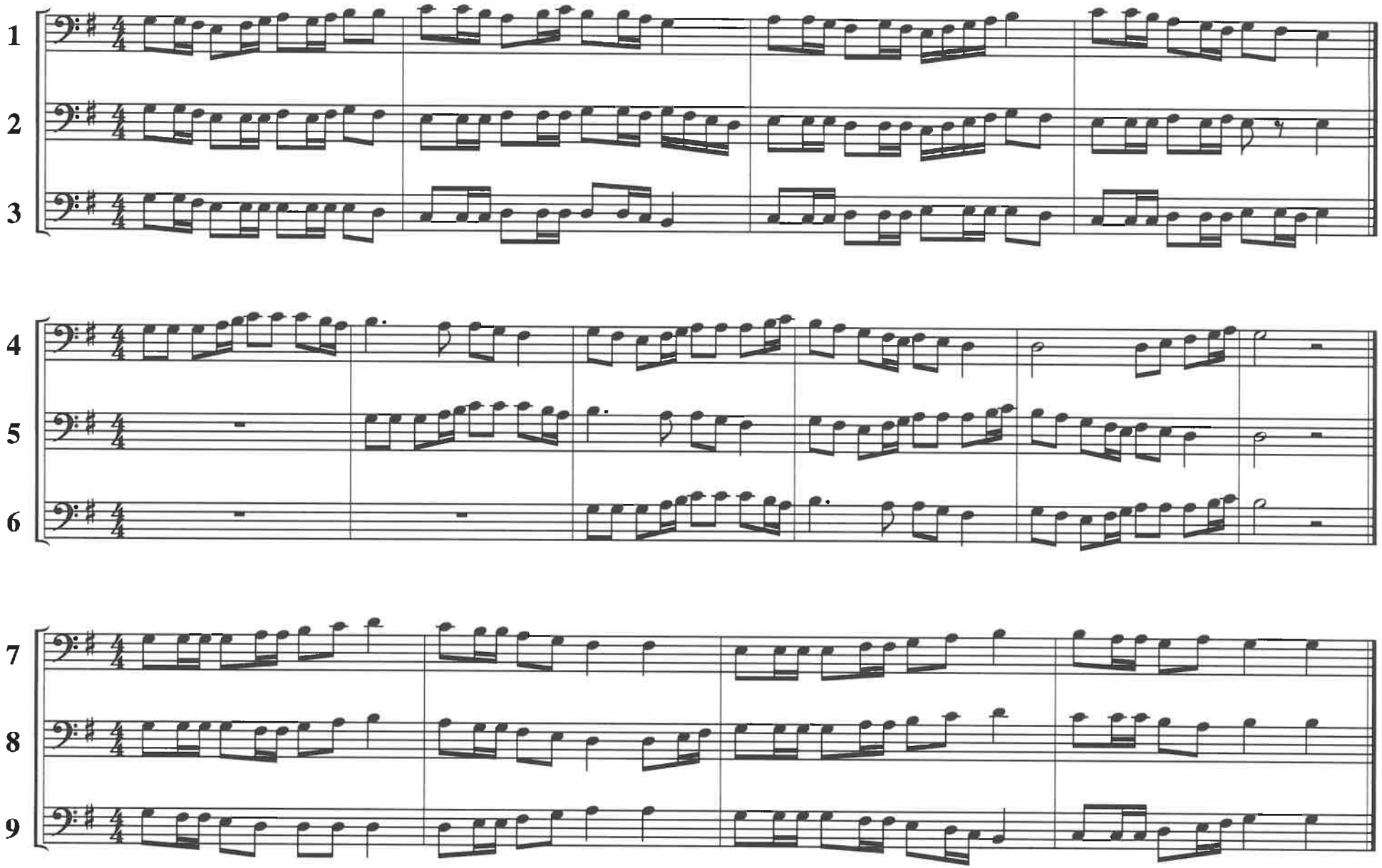

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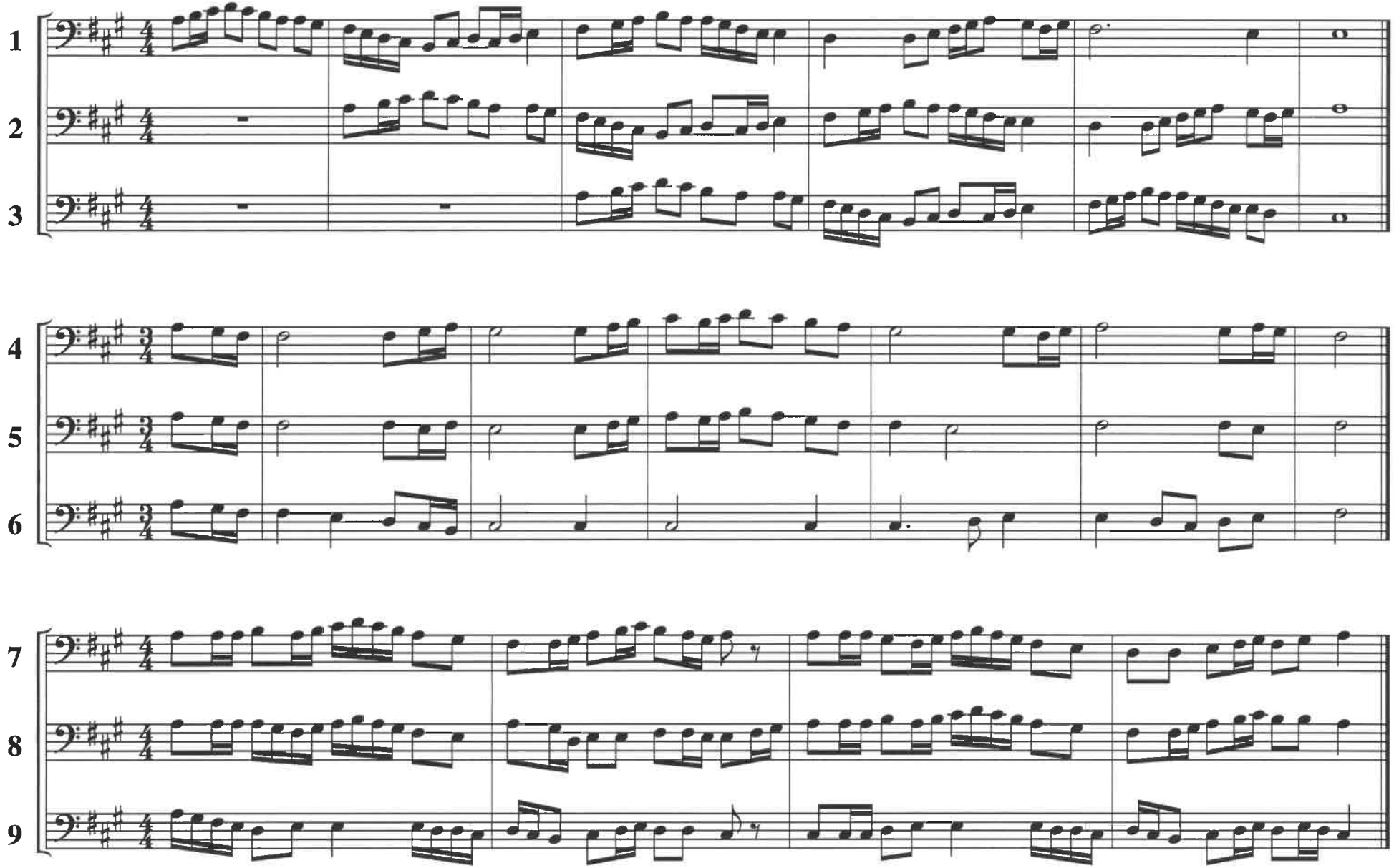

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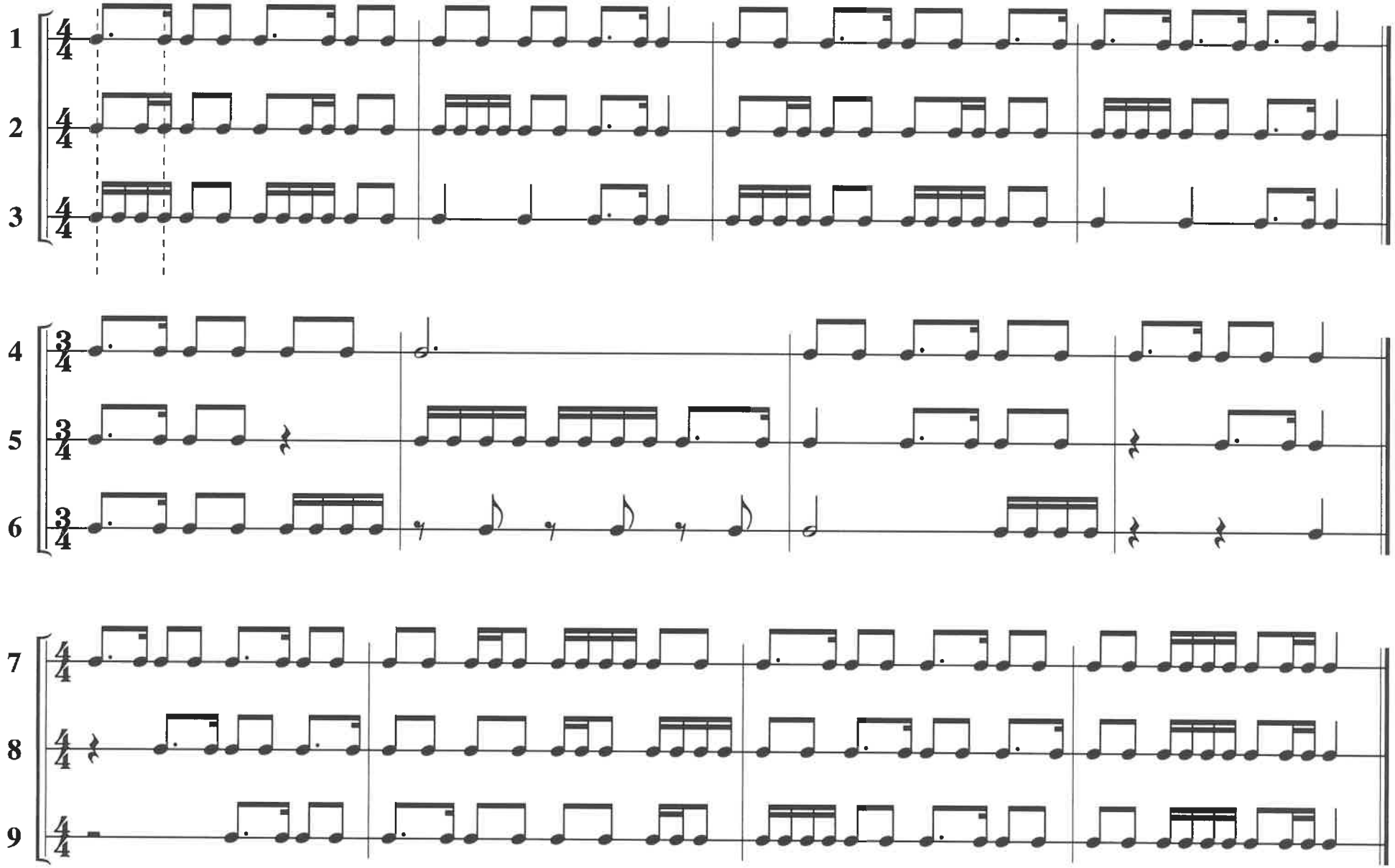
A DOTTED EIGHTH and SIXTEENTH get one beat.



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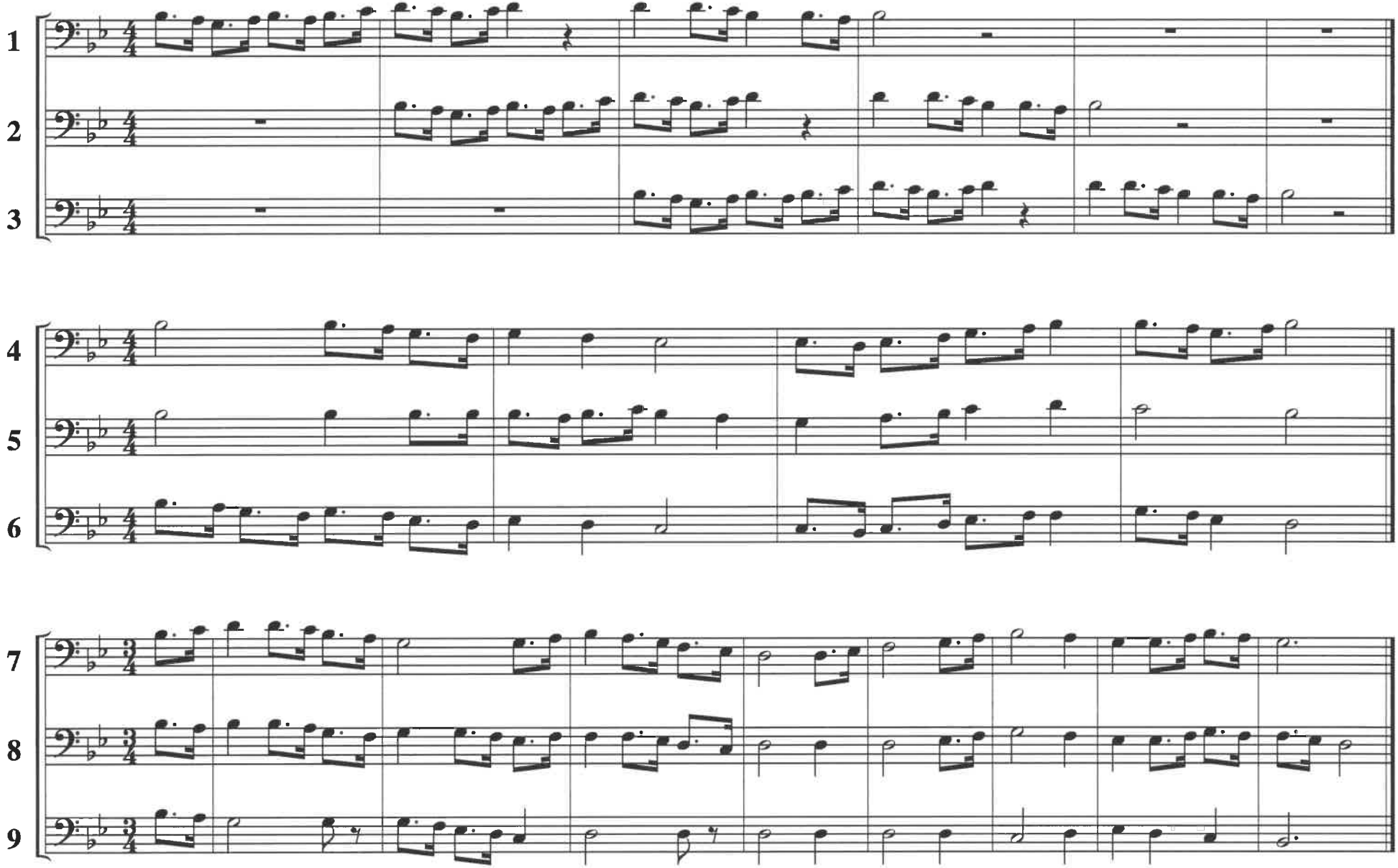

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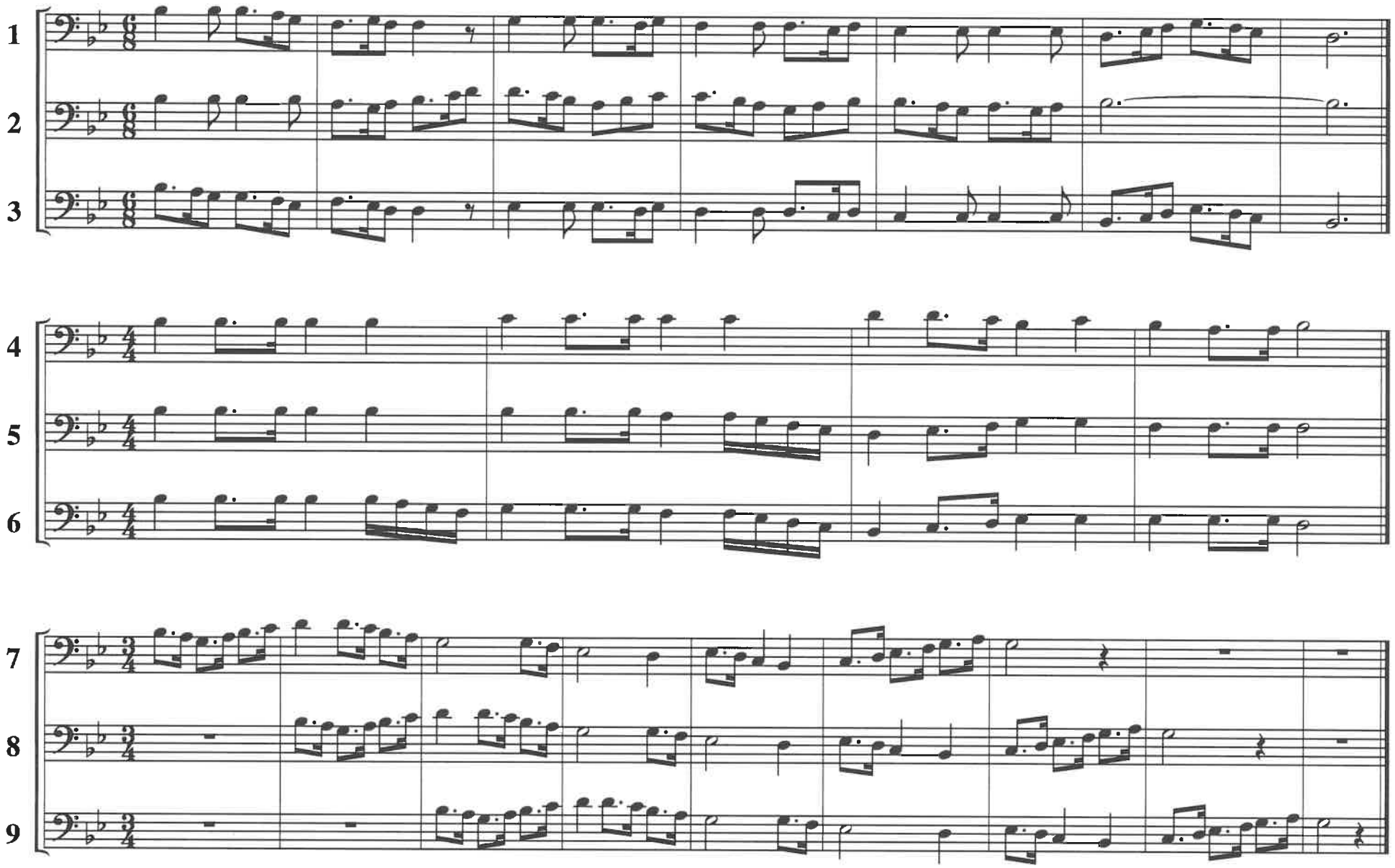

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