st359.1.77

sumtone

:

michael edwards

a new precision mechanism is governing the city

for guitar and mandolin

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a new precision mechanism is governing the city relates to the *Hidden Cities 5* (Berenice) section of Calvino's *Invisible Cities*:

> "I should tell you of the hidden Berenice, the city of the just, handling makeshift materials in the shadowy rooms behind the shops and beneath the stairs, linking a network of wires and pipes and pulleys and pistons and counterweights that infiltrates like a climbing plant among the great cogged wheels (when they jam, a subdued ticking gives warning that a new precision mechanism is governing the city). Instead of describing to you the perfumed pools of the baths where the unjust of Berenice recline and weave their intrigues with rotund eloquence and observe with a proprietary eye the rotund flesh of the bathing odalisques, I should say to you how the just, always cautious to evade the spying sycophants and the Janizaries' mass arrests, recognize one another by their way of speaking..."

What I'm attracted to here is the dualism of the just and unjust citizens—something not unfamiliar to our present predicament of, for example, outlandishly overpaid rogue bankers versus oppressed sweatshop wage slaves—and in particular the mechanistic aspects of this hidden city as reflected in the mechanistic construction of my piece. It was created with my *slippery chicken* algorithmic composition software, which I've been developing since 2000, in particular here the combination of small, simple rhythmic units into larger, sometimes repeating sequences by means of an algorithmic technique I call *rhythm chains*. Each part of the algorithmically-created two-part counterpoint in the piece itself contains three voices, identified by register and playing technique (stopped, harmonic, and normale). The entry and eventual domination of the third voice in each part progresses over the duration of the six-minute piece; thus the whole creates a six-part counterpoint of slowly exchanging lines via a foreground of fast, intricate, and quite delicate yet rhythmically charged forward movement.

Notes

Duration at the indicated tempo: 5:52.5

Accidentals carry throughout the bar but only apply to a single octave/staff; they are repeated for clarification as deemed necessary.

Cross noteheads indicate stopped ("pizz.") notes.

Diamond noteheads indicate the sounding pitches[1] of artificial harmonics, created from the note stopped an octave below.

It is clear that the close interweaving of normal, stopped, and both artificial and natural harmonics presents some considerable, if not (given the fast tempo) insurmountable difficulties. The players should use their interpretive discretion to not allow the technical challenges to interrupt the forward flow or to distract from the gently rhythmically bouncy character of the piece: where necessary, harmonics may be played as normal notes, albeit with a 'harmonic' character (more ringing and translucent in tone). As long as three different characters of notes emerge—and thus three different lines in each part, as differentiated through register also—considerable liberties may be taken where necessary. These characters may be further distinguished by plucking closer or further away from the soundhole, as deemed appropriate by the players; and harmonic and normal notes may ring on over subsequently indicated rests.

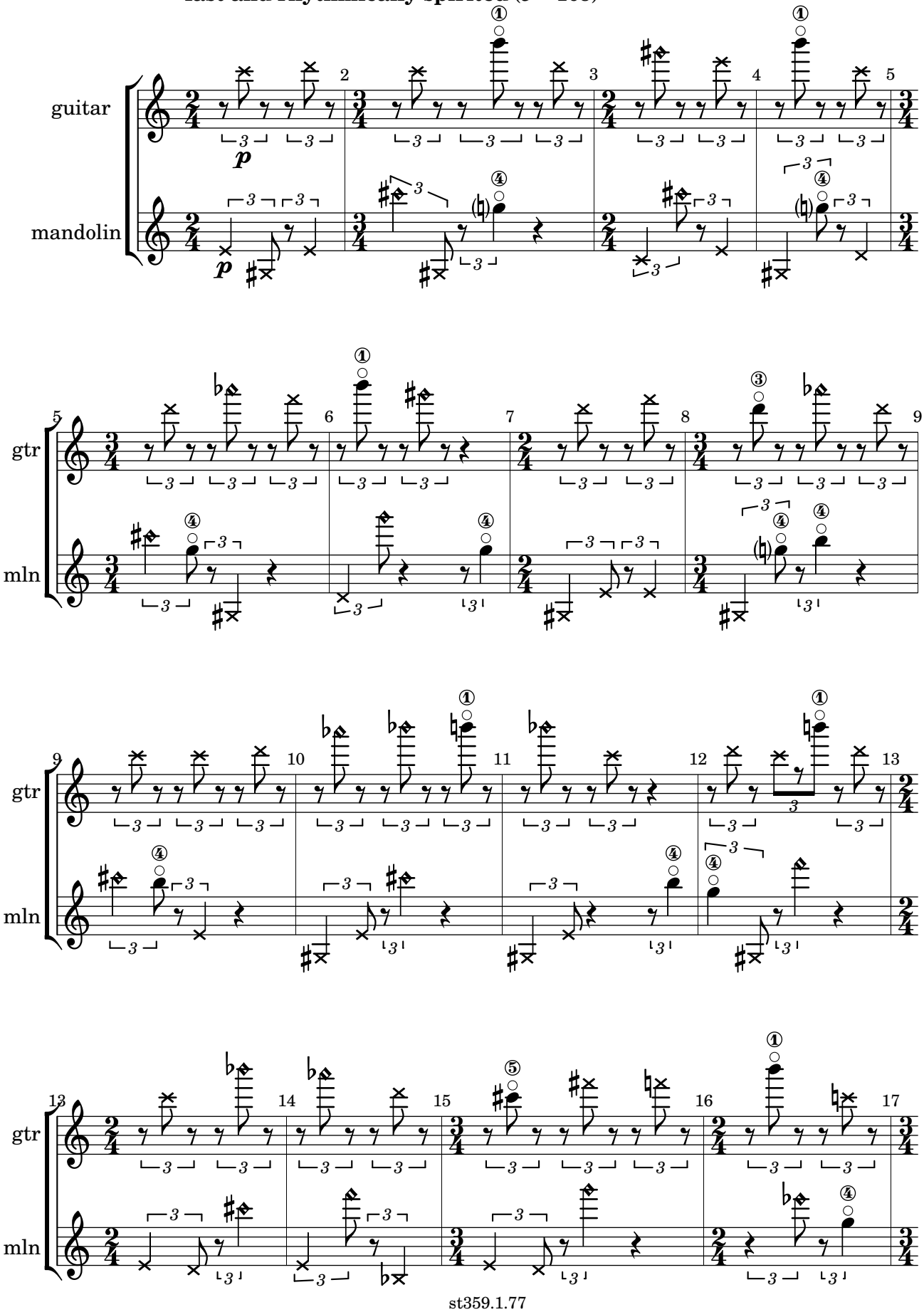
For more details about the performance of this piece, please send email to info@sumtone.com or write to the address at the front of the score.

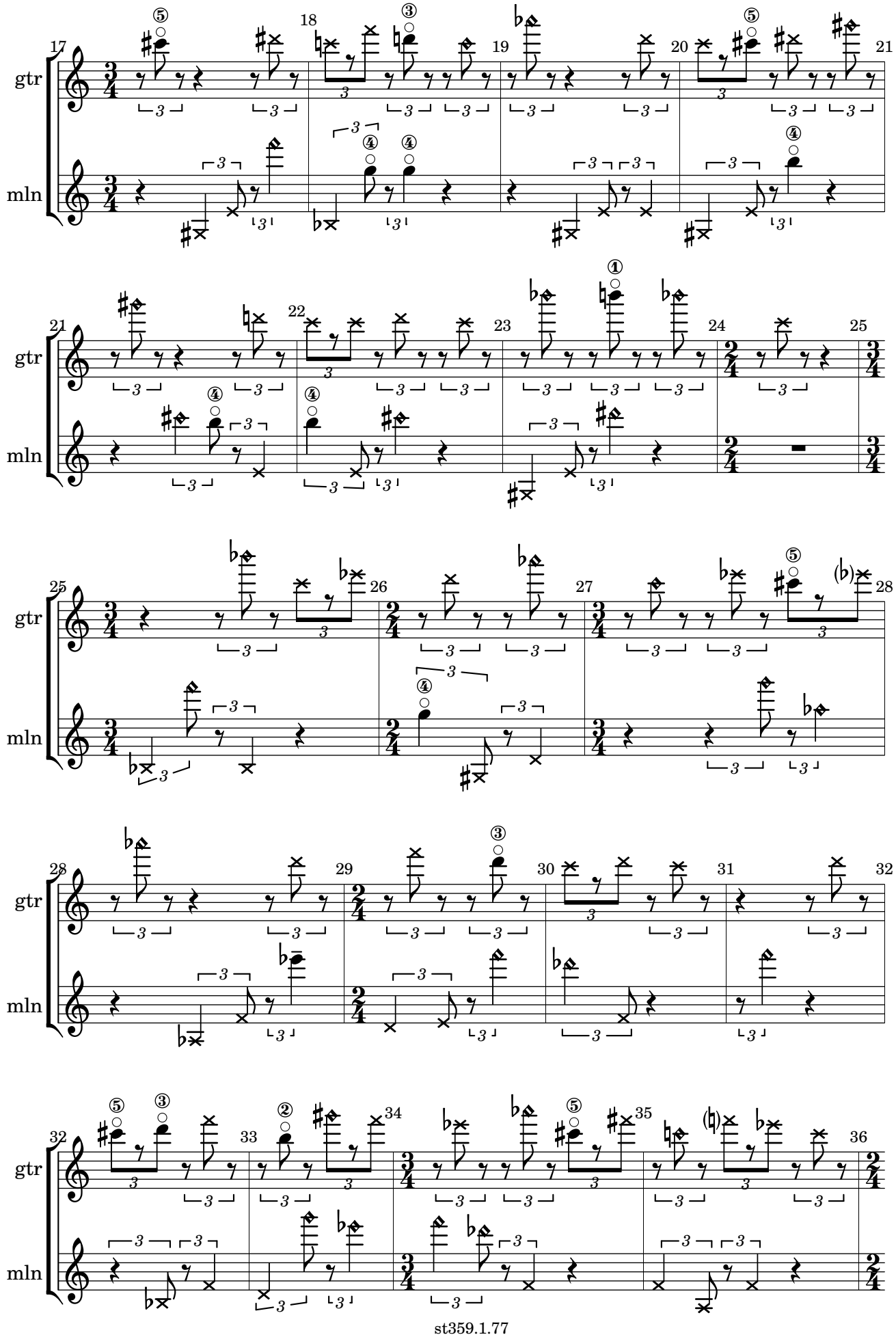
[1] Or rather, like all guitar notes, the written pitch is an octave above actual sounding pitch.

a new precision mechanism is governing the city

michael edwards 2013

fast and rhythmically spirited (♩ = 168)

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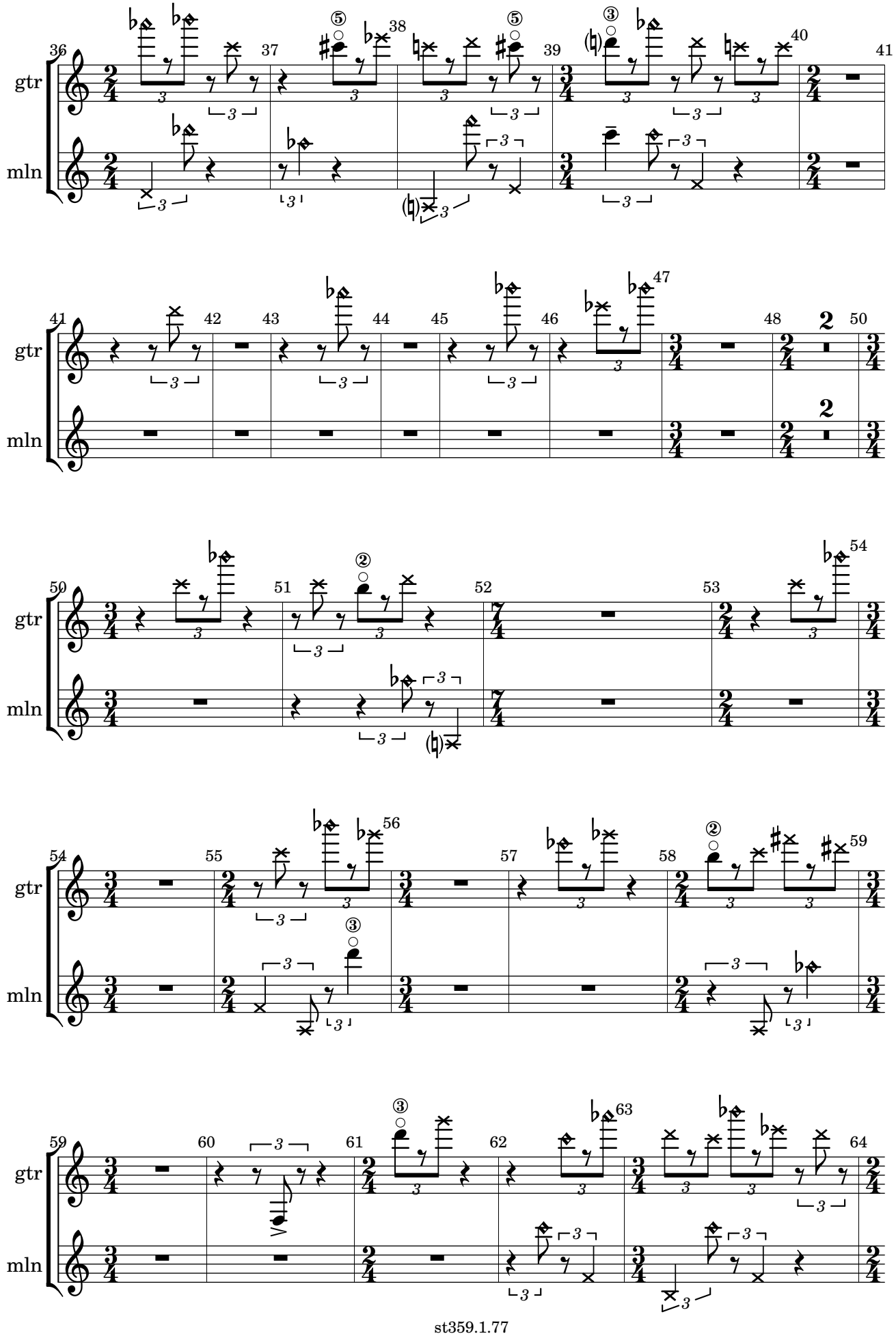
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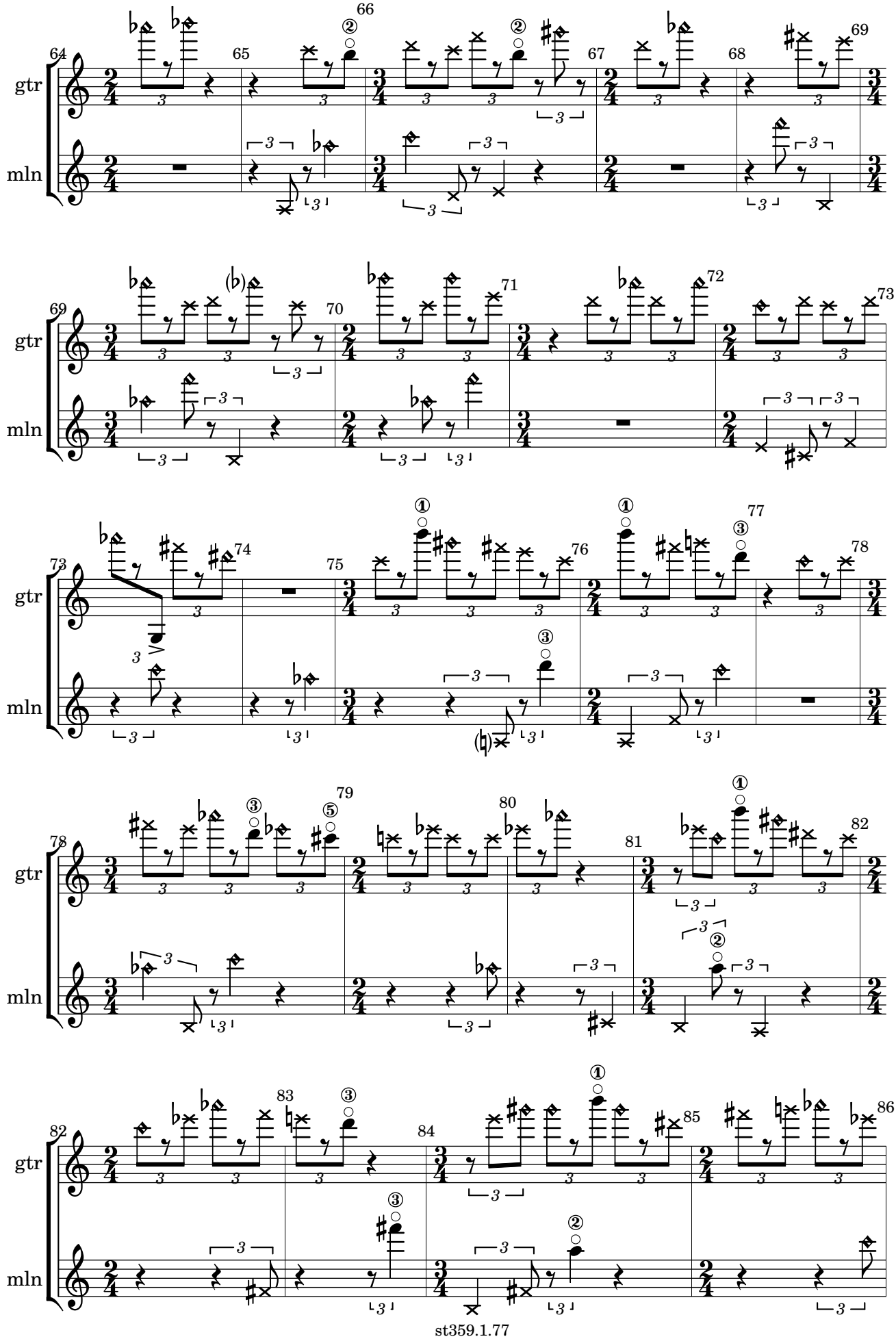
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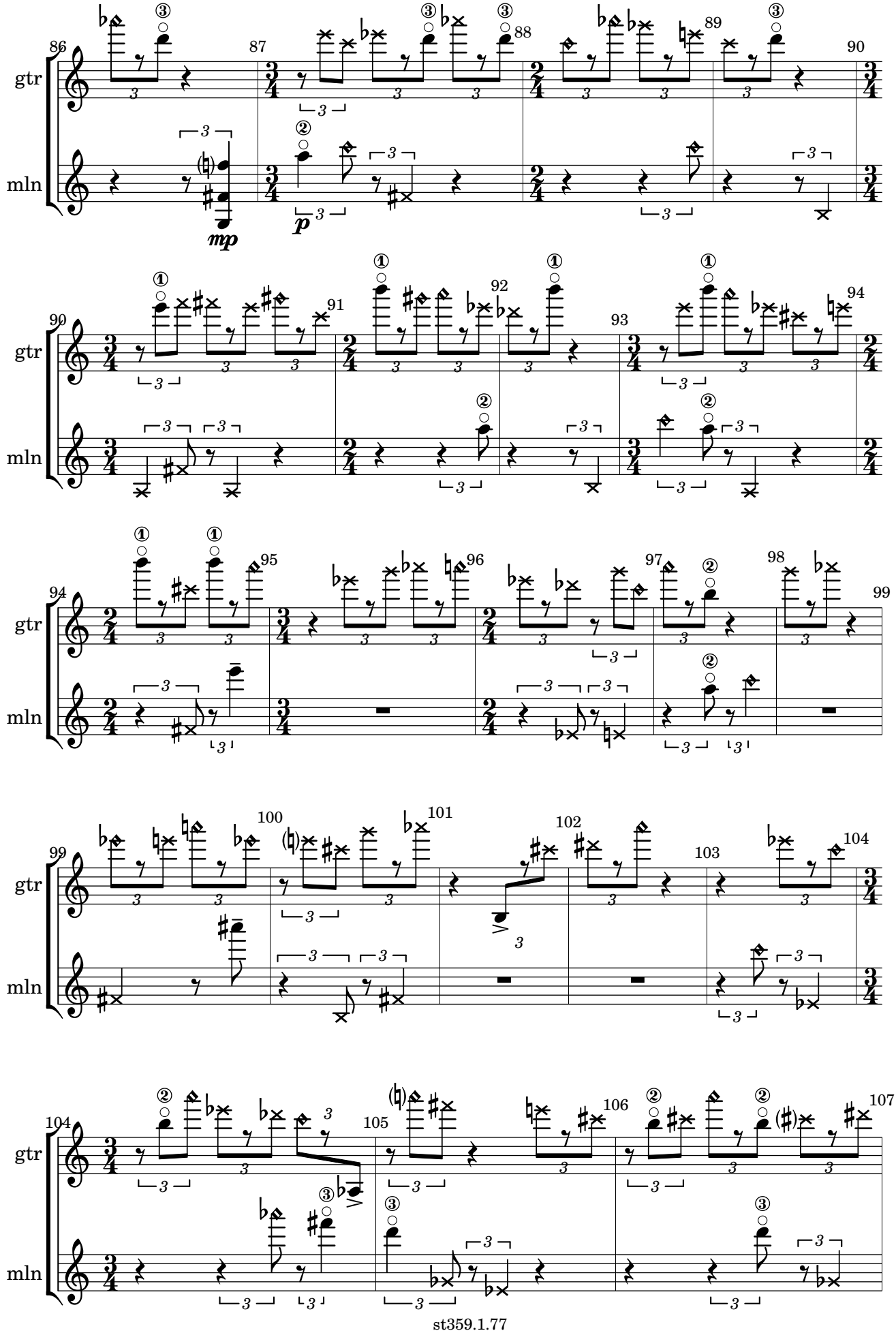
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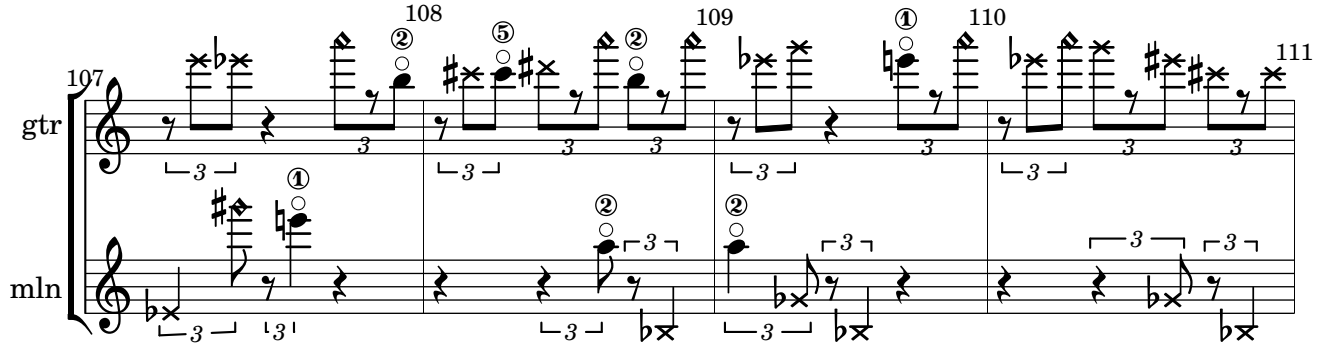
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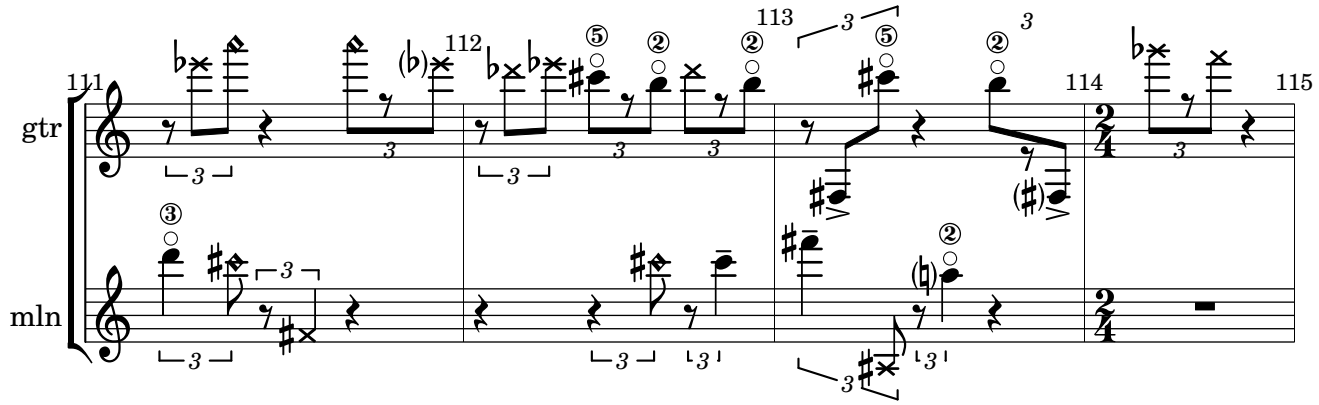
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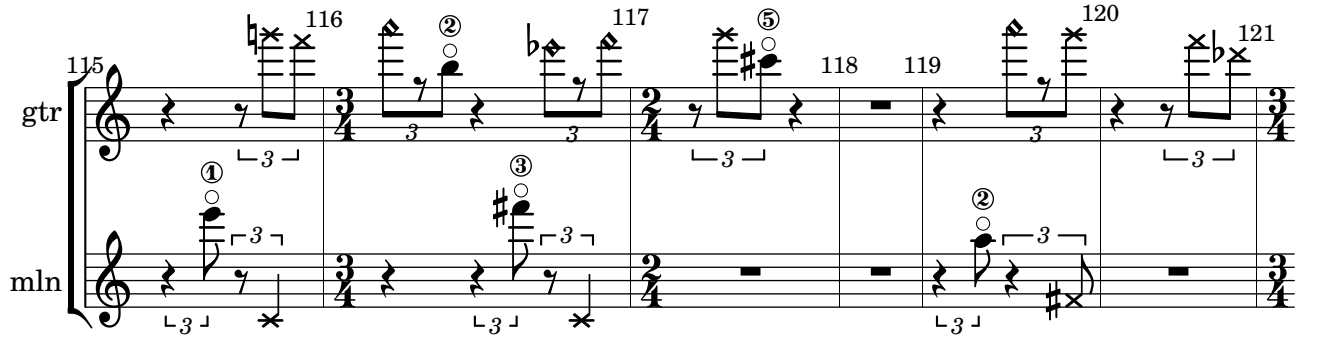
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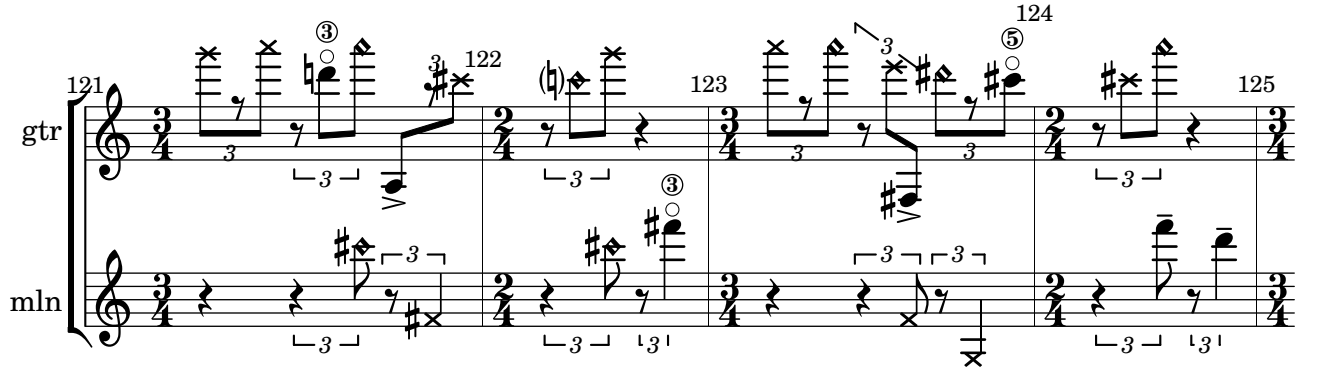
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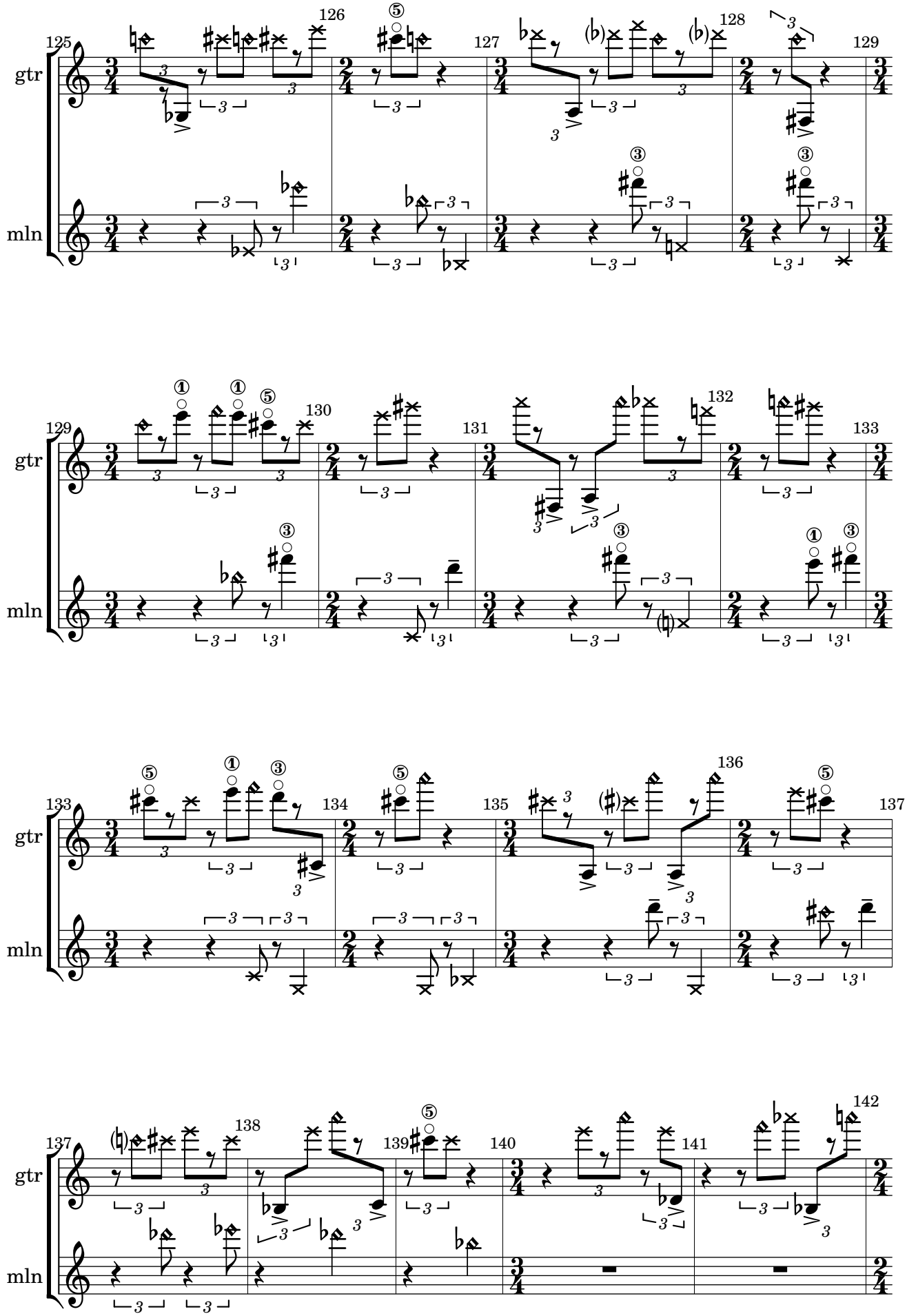
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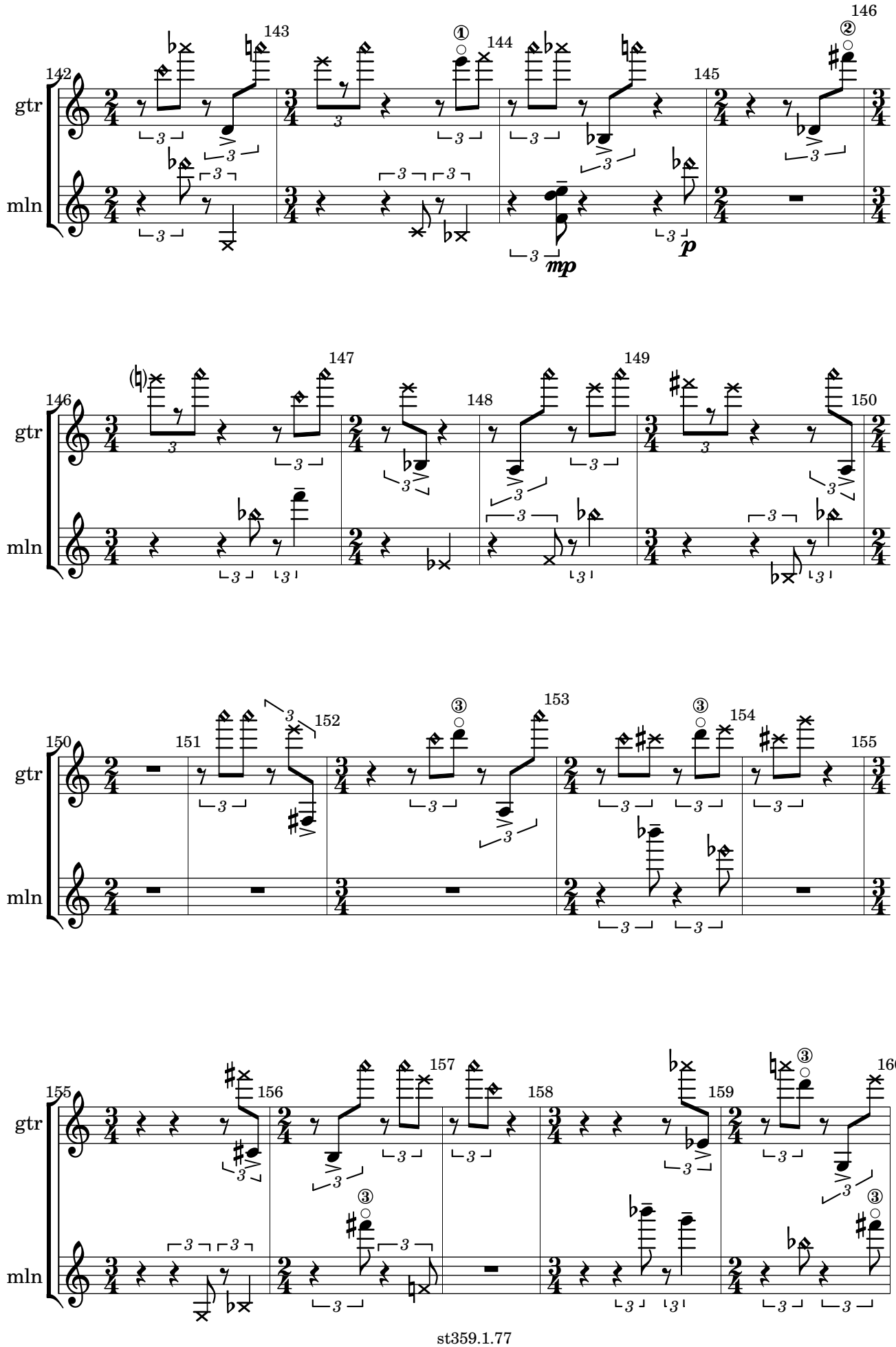
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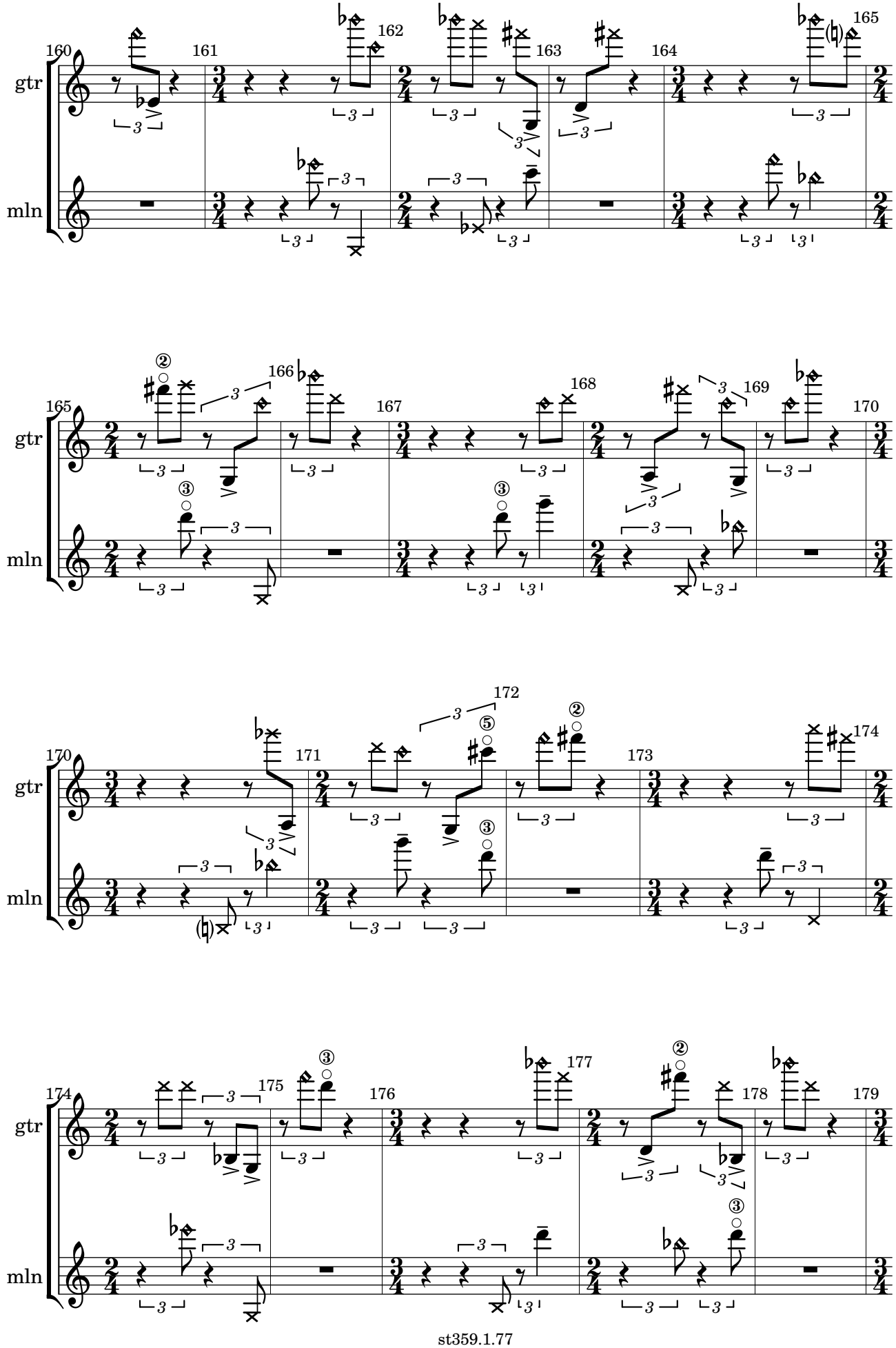
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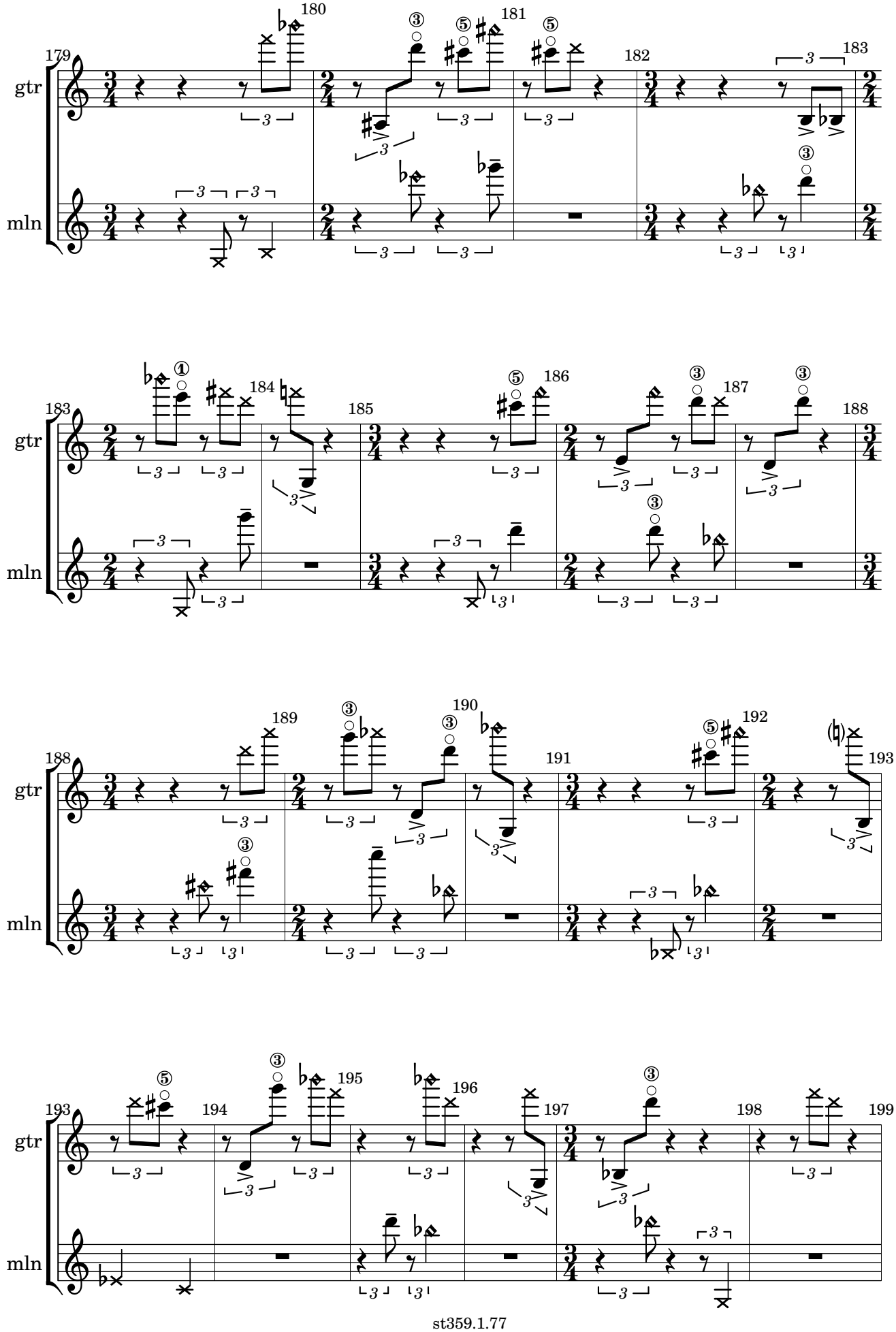
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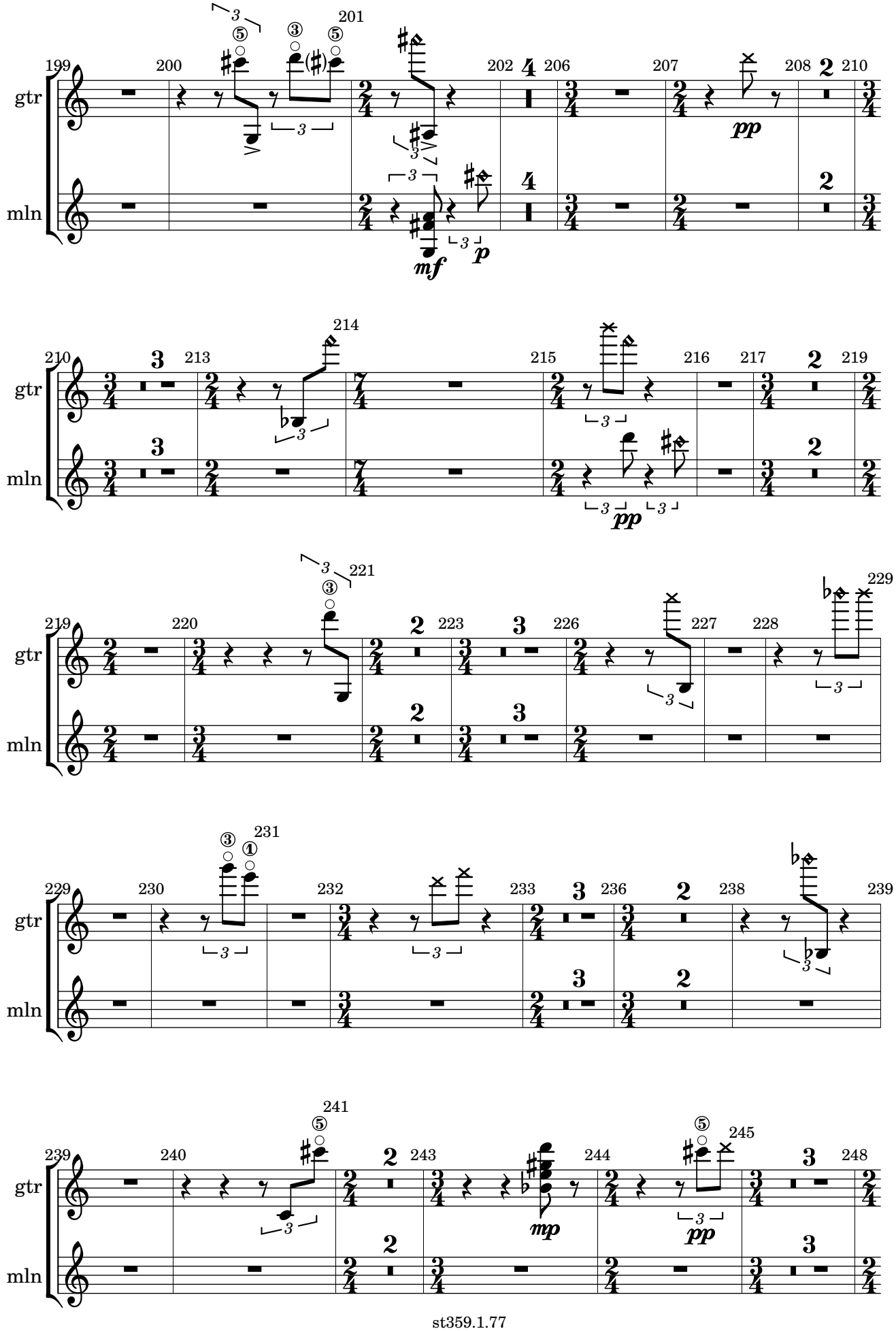
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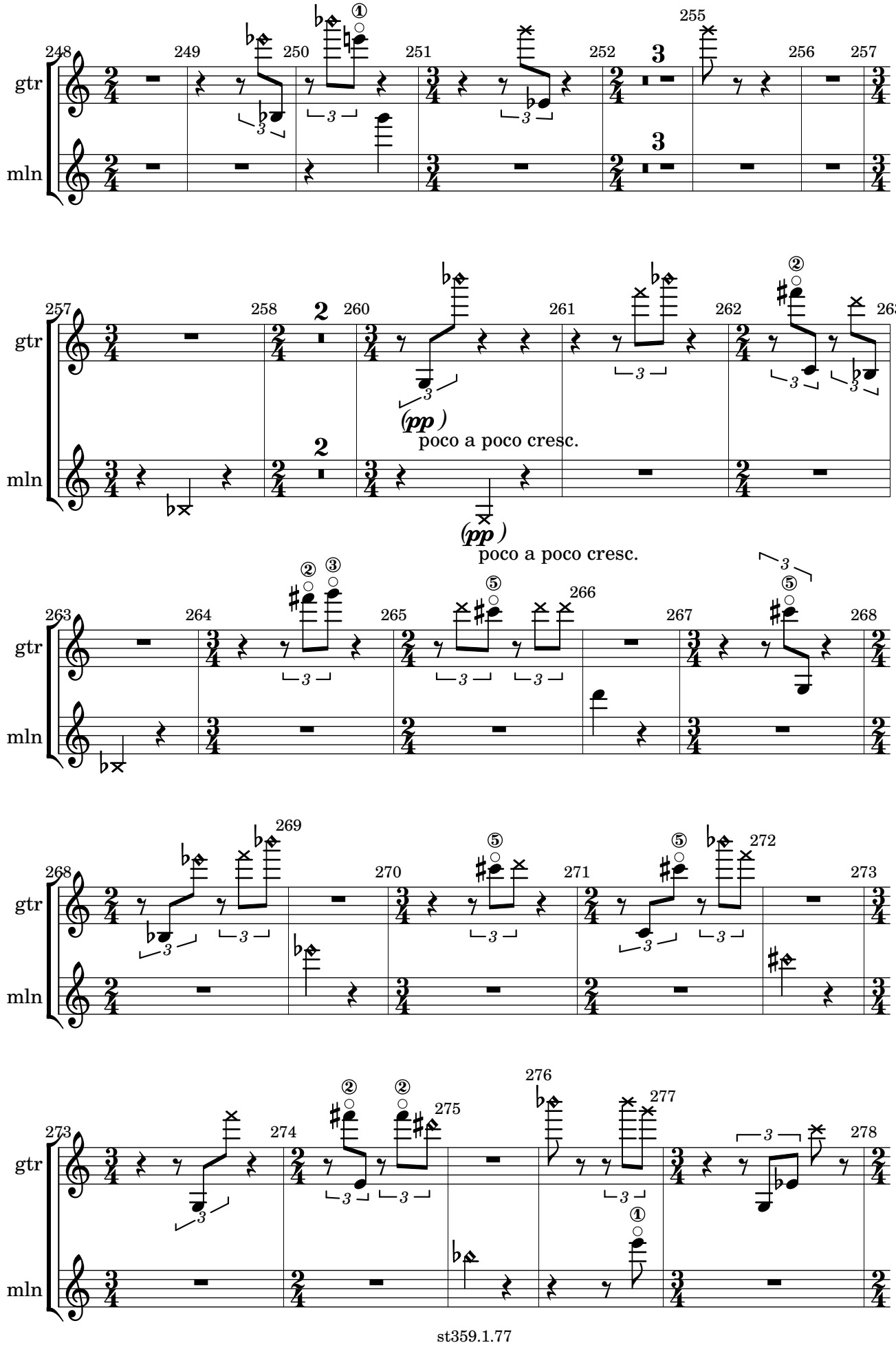
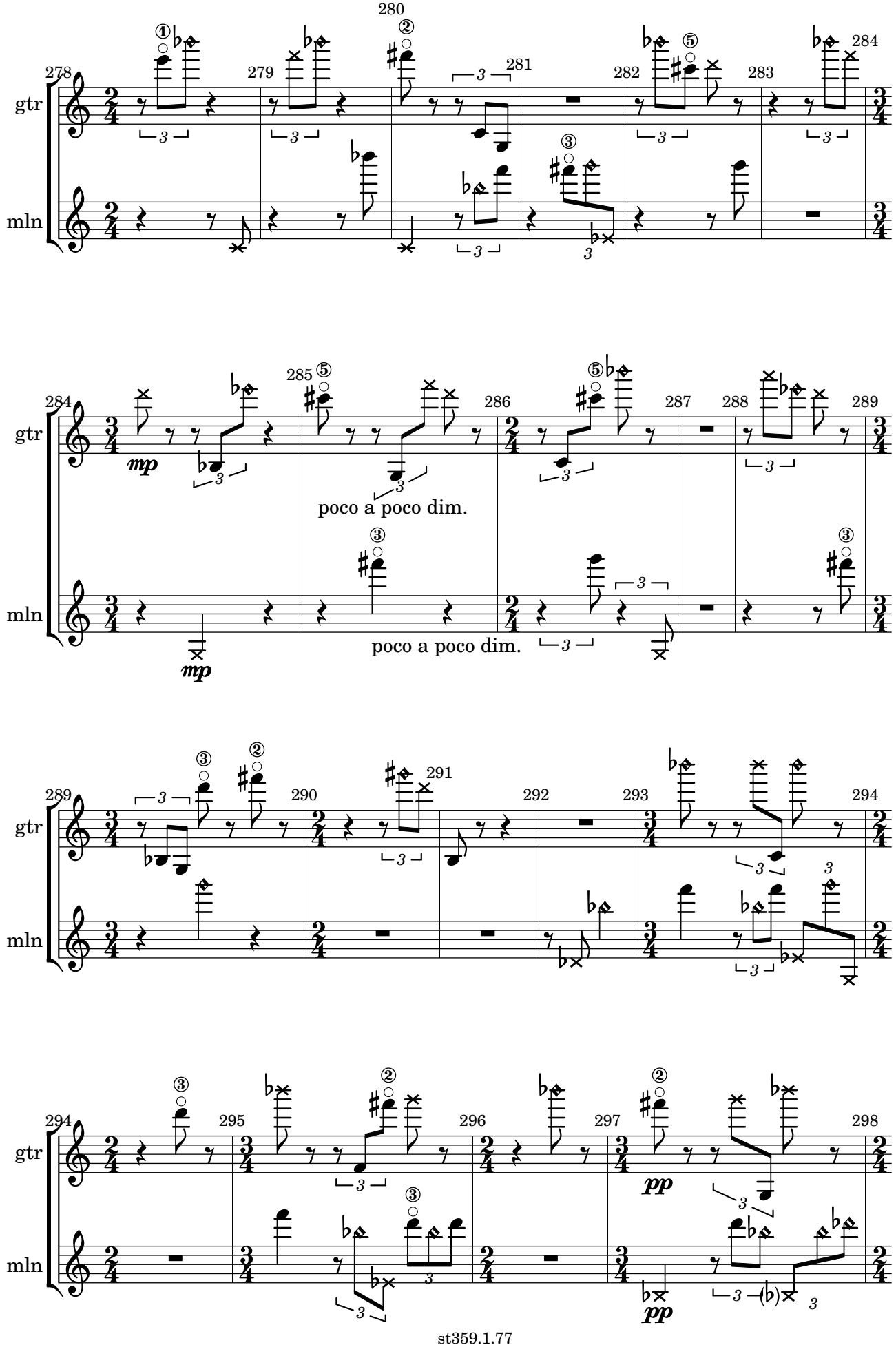

gtr
mln
(pp)
poco a poco cresc.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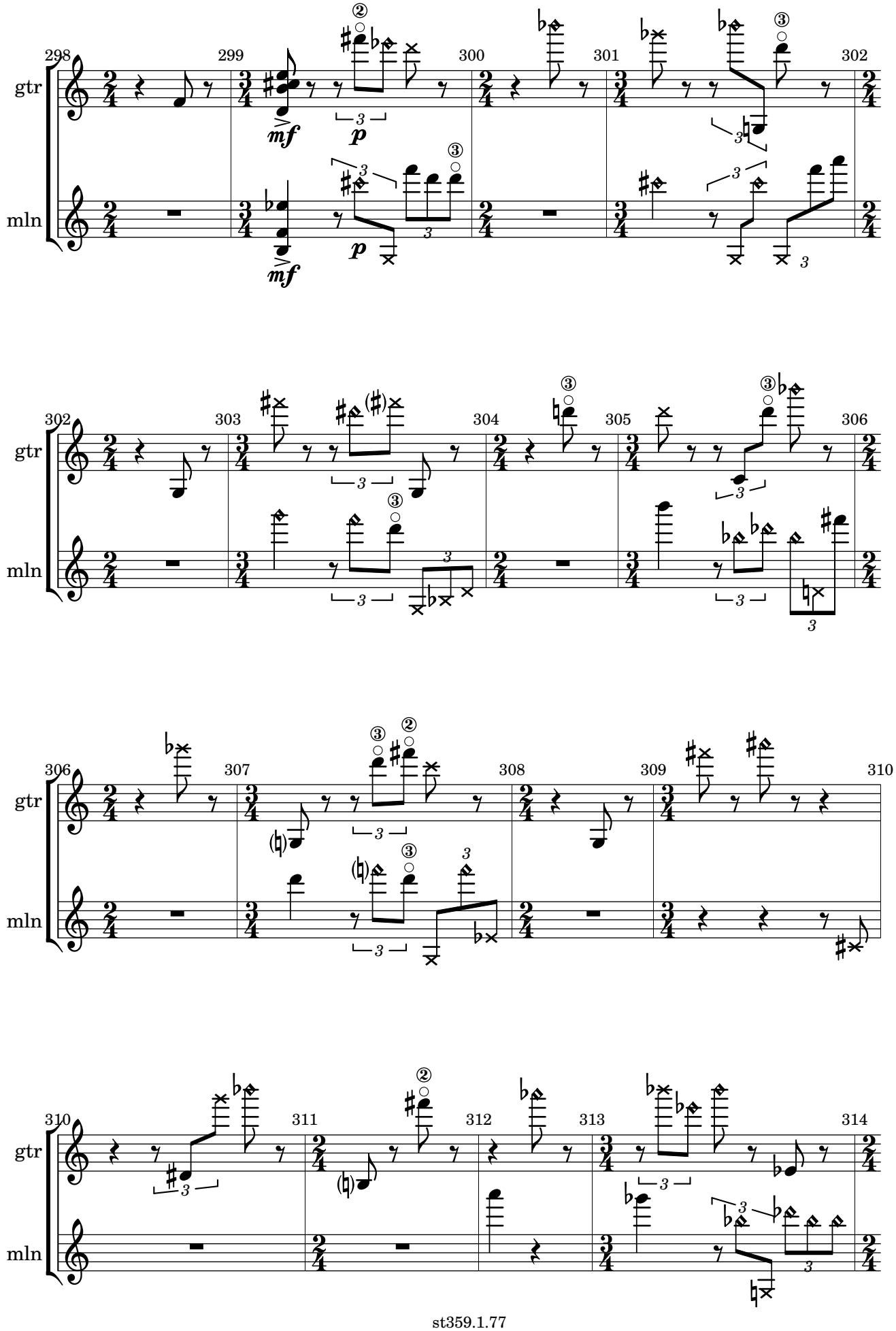
mp
poco a poco dim.
poco a poco dim.
pp
pp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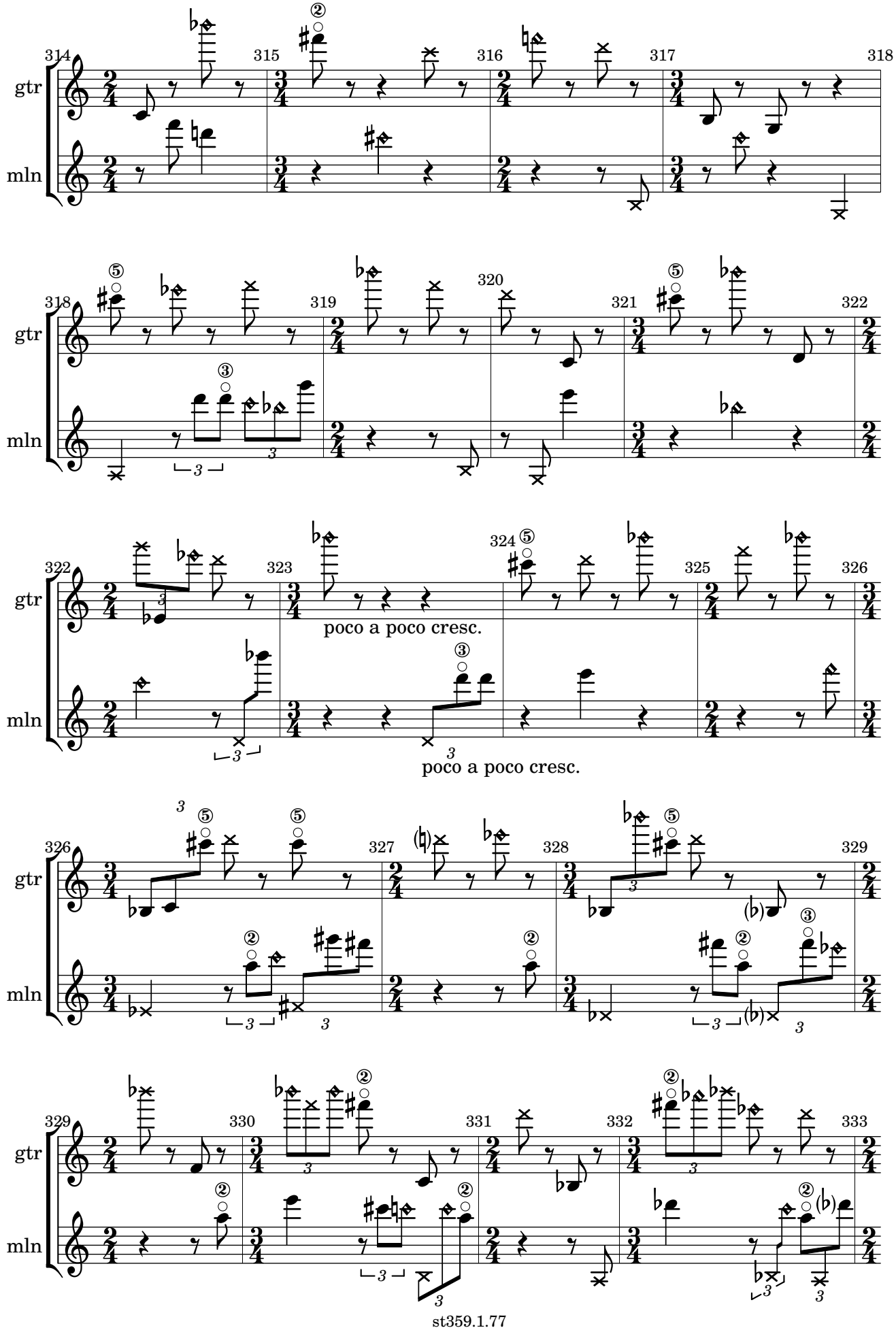
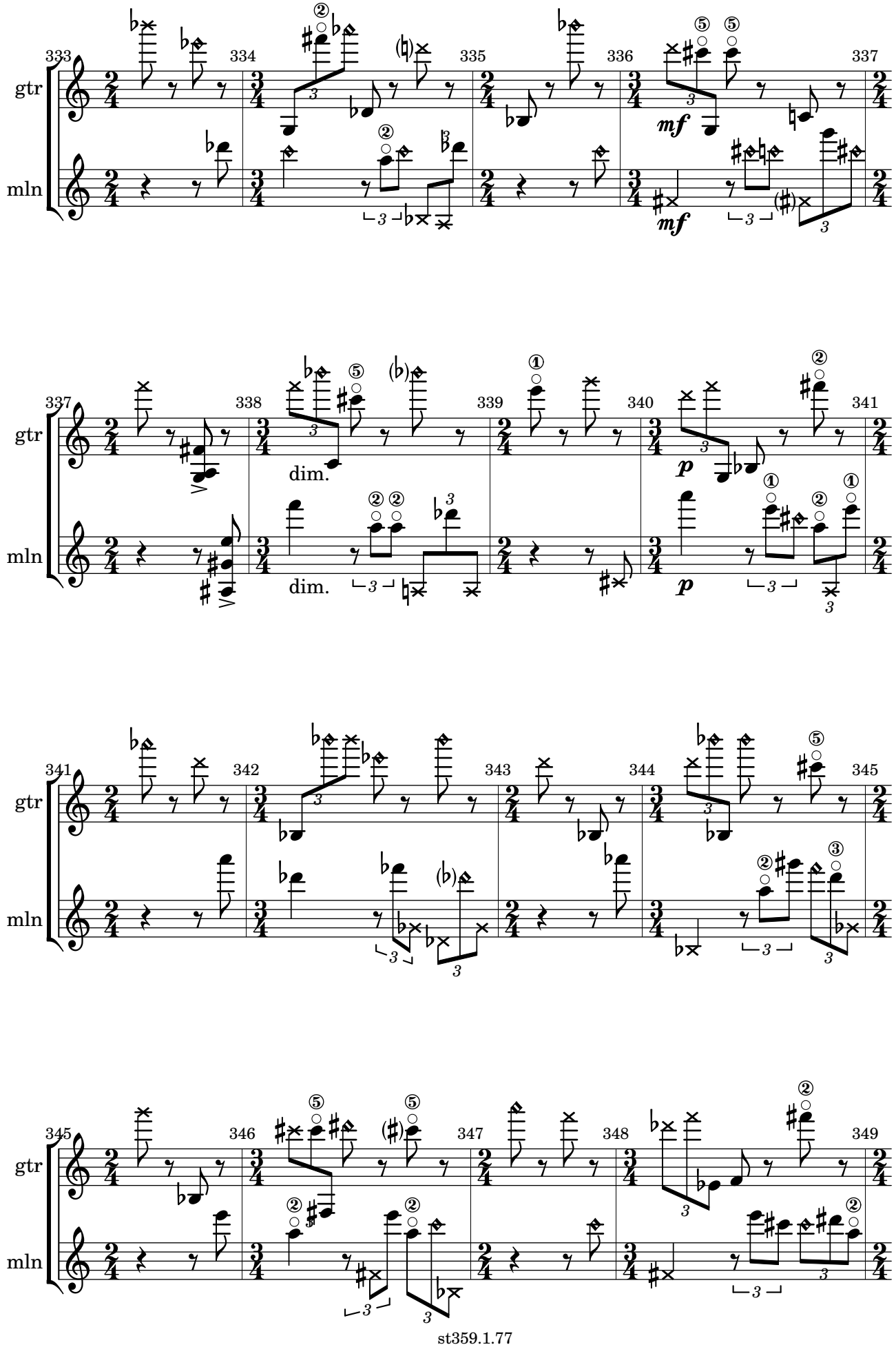

gtr
mln
poco a poco cresc.
poco a poco cresc.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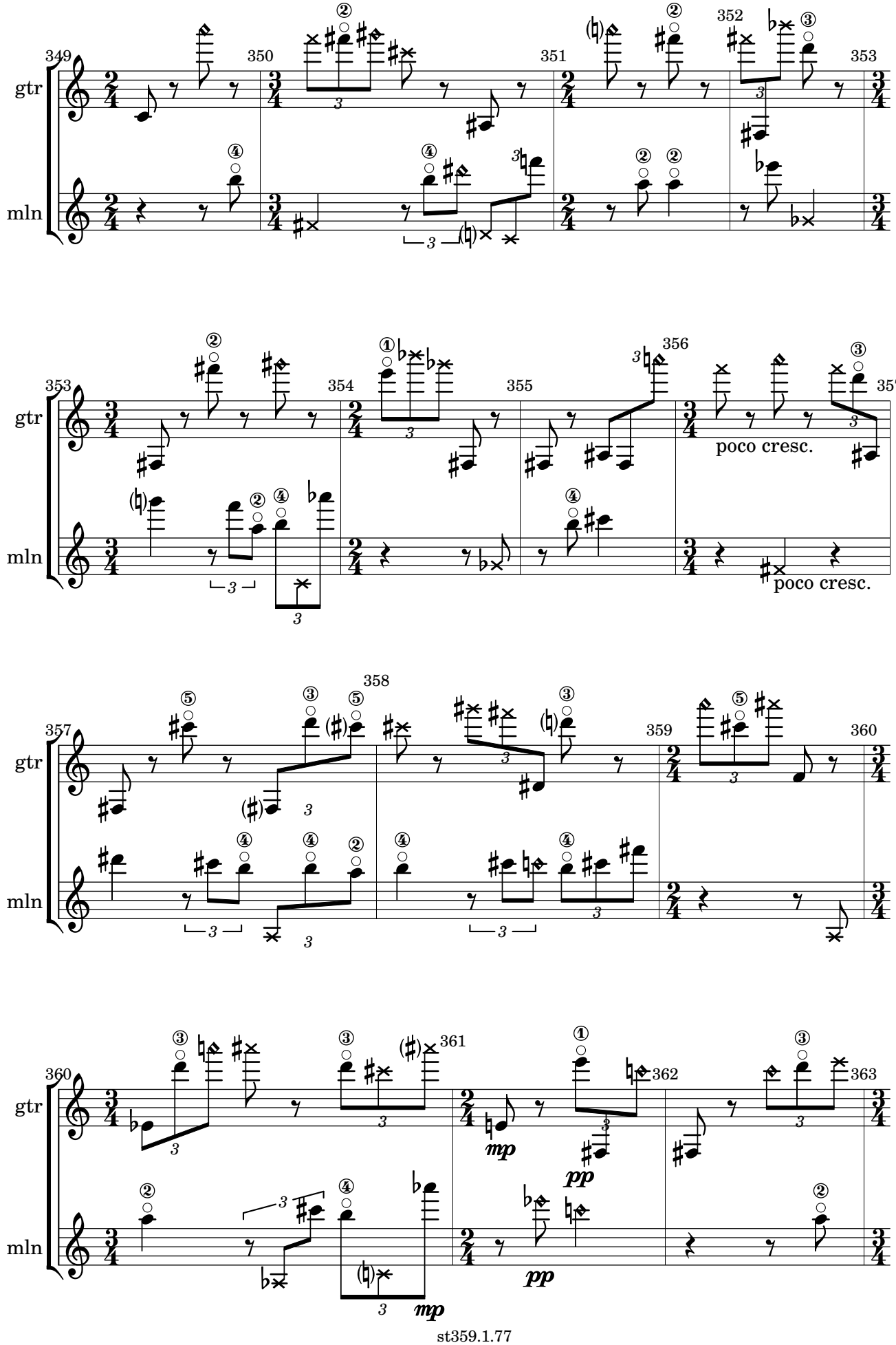
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poco cresc.
poco cresc.
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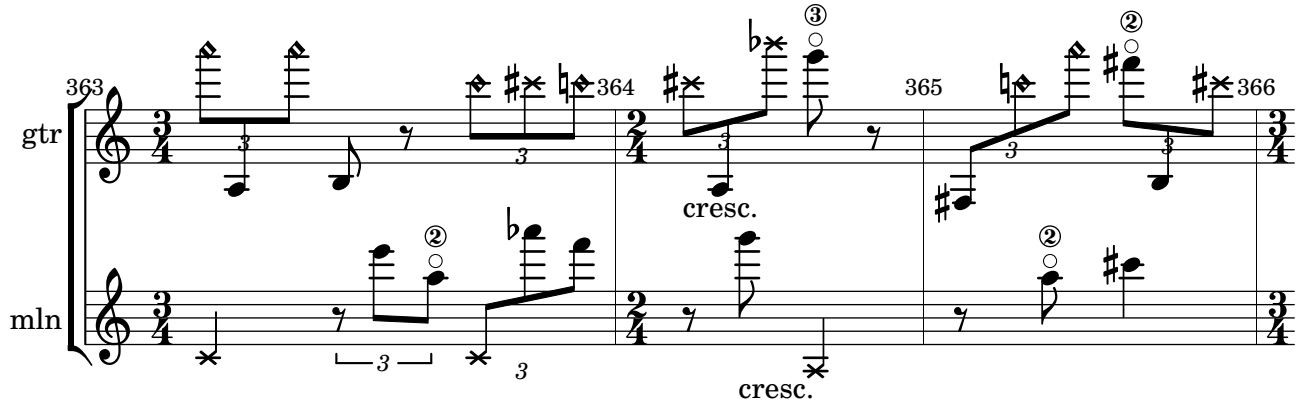
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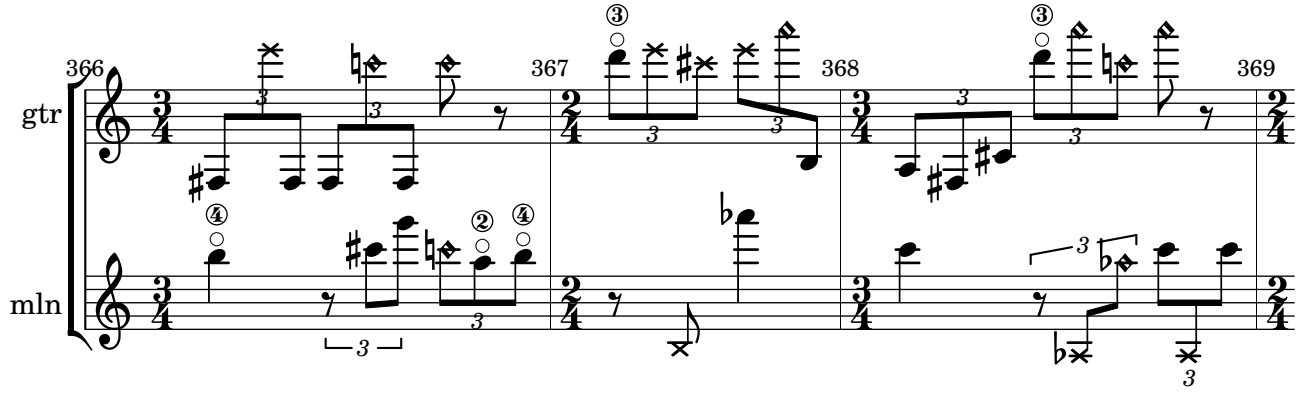
cresc.
cresc.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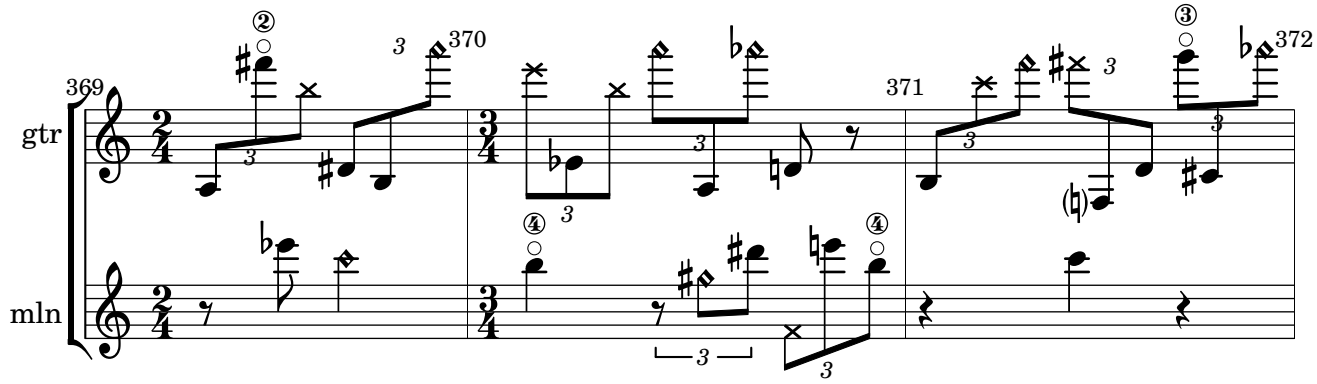
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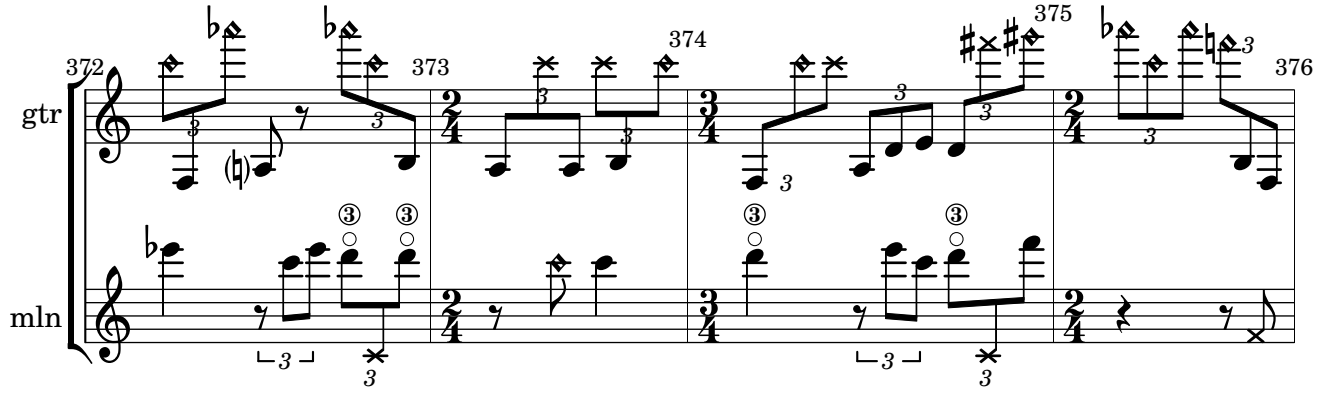
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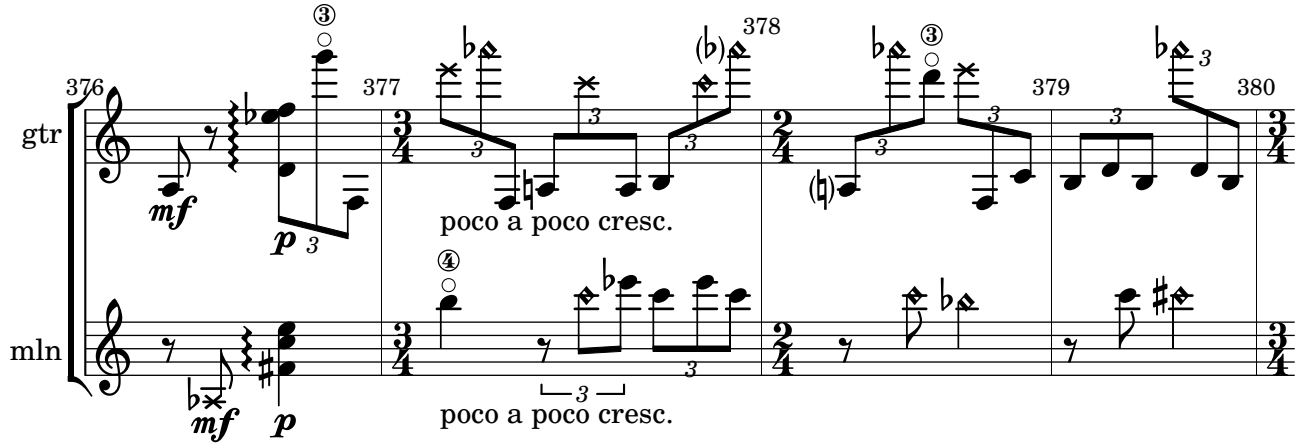
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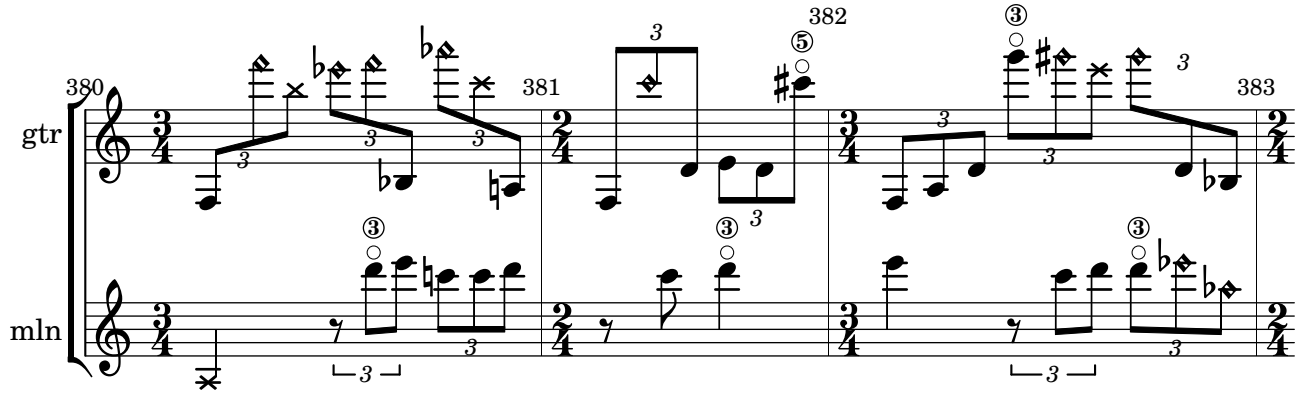
poco a poco cresc.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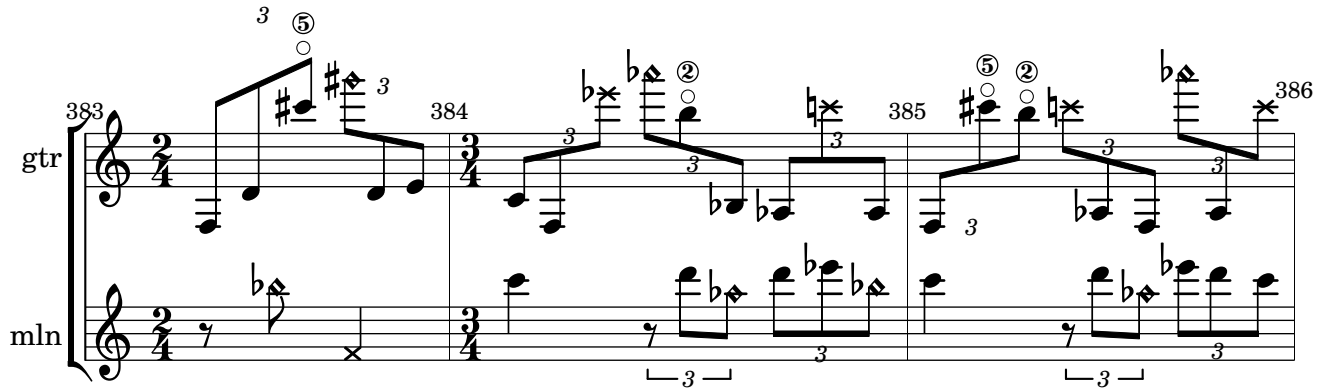
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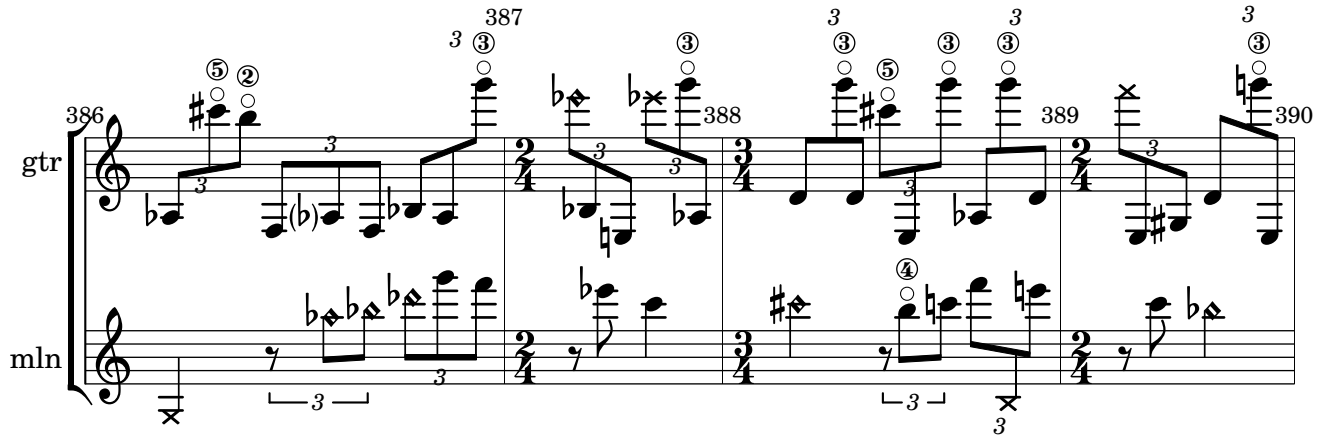
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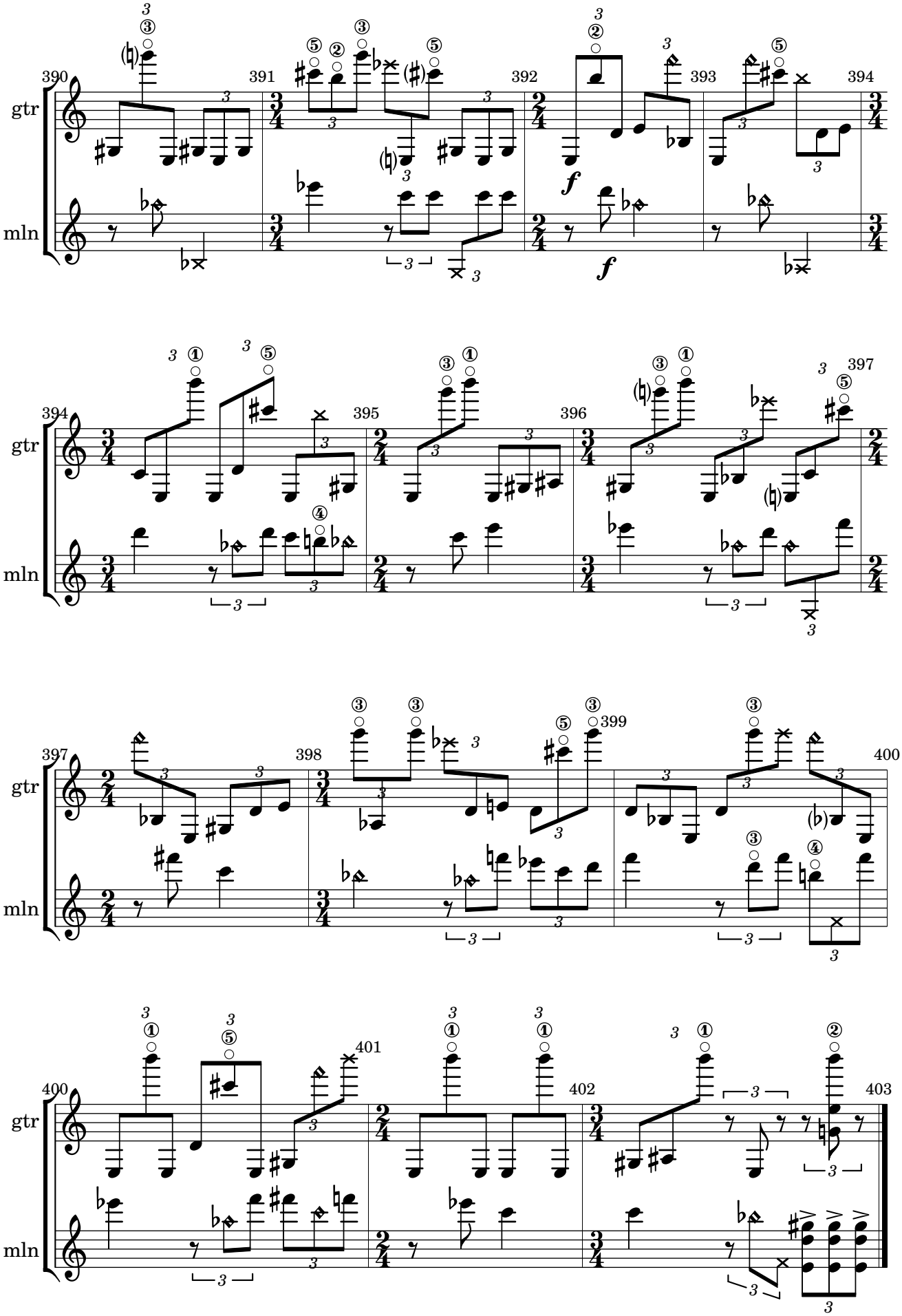
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