The Harmonious Blacksmith

A set of variations
on a tune
either arranged
or composed
by the **world famous** and *illustrious* composer
MR. George Frideric Handel
composer of such noted works as
Sonatas for the Recorder

The **W**ater **M**usick
(much beloved of **his Majesty**
George

etc., etc.

And now, *newly set*
and gingerly edited
and *arranged*
expressly for
the *Adirondack Baroque Consort*
Oldest ***E***arly ***M***usic ensemble in the *New World*, etc., etc.
by the noted tunesmith and composer
and member of that **august** *ensemble*.

The Harmonious Blacksmith

In one of his sonatas for harpsicord, Handel includes a movement that is a set of variations. At the beginning of this movement, the title "The Harmonious Blacksmith" is printed. This suggests that Handel was using an existing tune by that name. However, no other source for the tune has been found, prompting some to wonder if the tune is Handel's. There are different theories:

1. The tune is original with Handel.

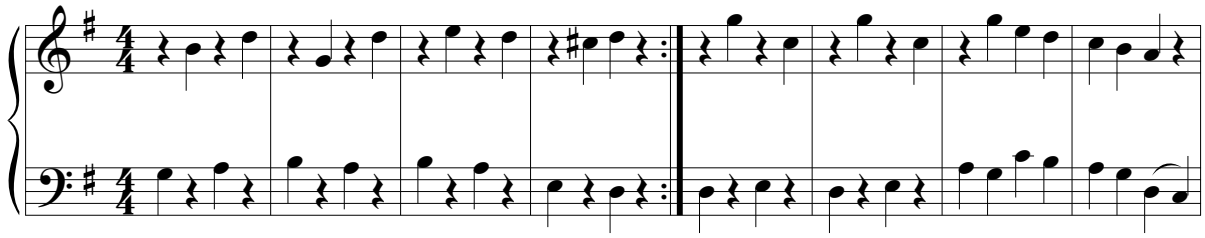
2. The tune is an existing tune, other sources for which have simply not yet turned up.

3. The tune was written by a student of Handel who also happened to be a blacksmith by trade.

The way the movement is given this extra title would lead one to suspect that Handel is giving credit to the tune as not being his. While it is certainly true that Handel never met a good tune he did not steal, he may in this case have assumed the tune was well enough known that he felt he had to name it.

Is the tune in Handel's style? Feel free to ask a musicologist when you have a chance.

It seems we may not know for sure until that necessary source turns up, but one can see a kind of tone painting in the structure of the tune that simulates the hammering of the blacksmith. In its simple form, the tune sounds almost like the ringing of the hammer and a harmonious echo. Such a wonderful touch suggests the composer was an artist inimitable, and may support the idea that the tune is Handel's. You can see here the basic structure of the tune which shows this tendency:



(etc.)

Whatever the truth may be, "The Harmonious Blacksmith" is one of Handel's most popular tunes.

I thought it would be a novel idea to write an arrangement that takes advantage of an early music ensemble's instrumentation. This arrangement was written for recorders, viola da gamba, and keyboard -- harpsichord or piano. The pianist must play always softly and very detached.

For those recorder ensembles that do not have a gamba or keyboard as a regular part of their ensemble, I hope that producing some pieces of this type encourages them to rectify this shortcoming. Adding merely these two instruments to a recorder ensemble increases the potential of the group enormously.

This piece will, at first blush, appear quite daunting to many amateurs, but there is really little in this piece that demands a great deal from any of the musicians. True, it will take a certain amount of time to rehearse and prepare, but it is in this effort to get at the essence of music which hold the true rewards. If this piece encourages a group to reach for more of their true potential, it will have been well worthwhile.

The original piece is a keyboard piece. When making this arrangment, I chose to make some changes in the music to make it fit better on recorders. I hope that you all enjoy preparing and playing this piece as much as I have enjoyed arranging it! -- JWO

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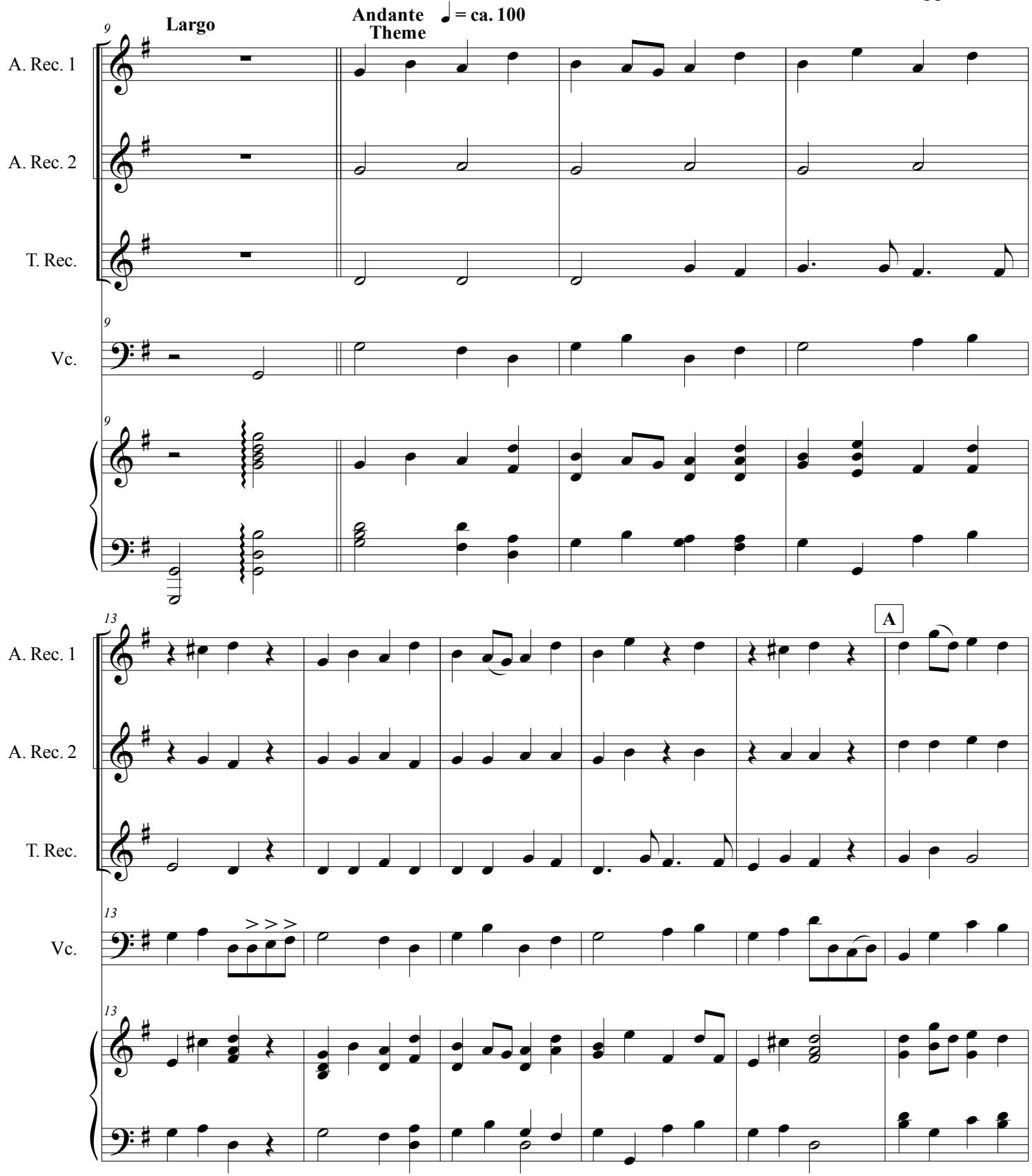
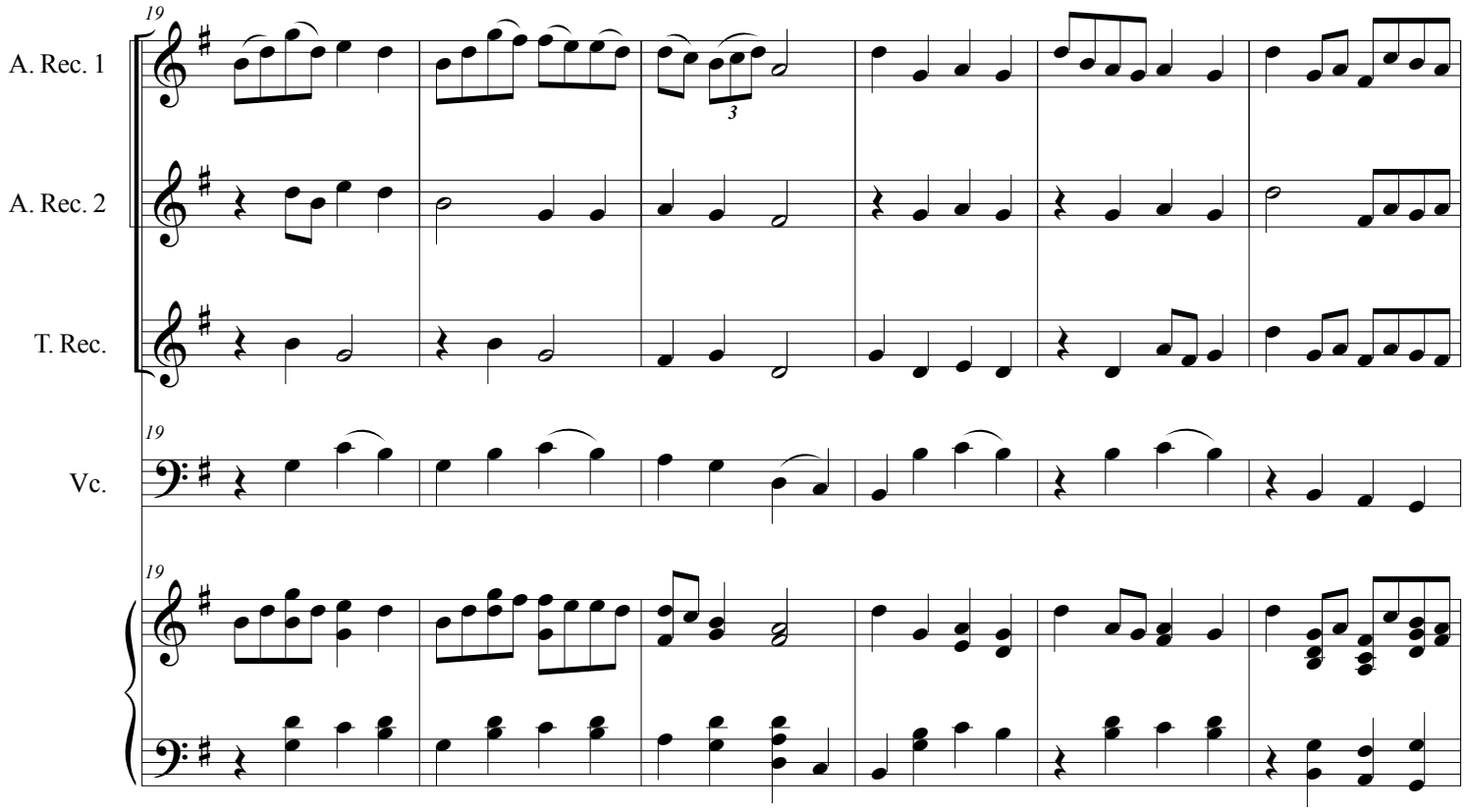
The Harmonious Blacksmith

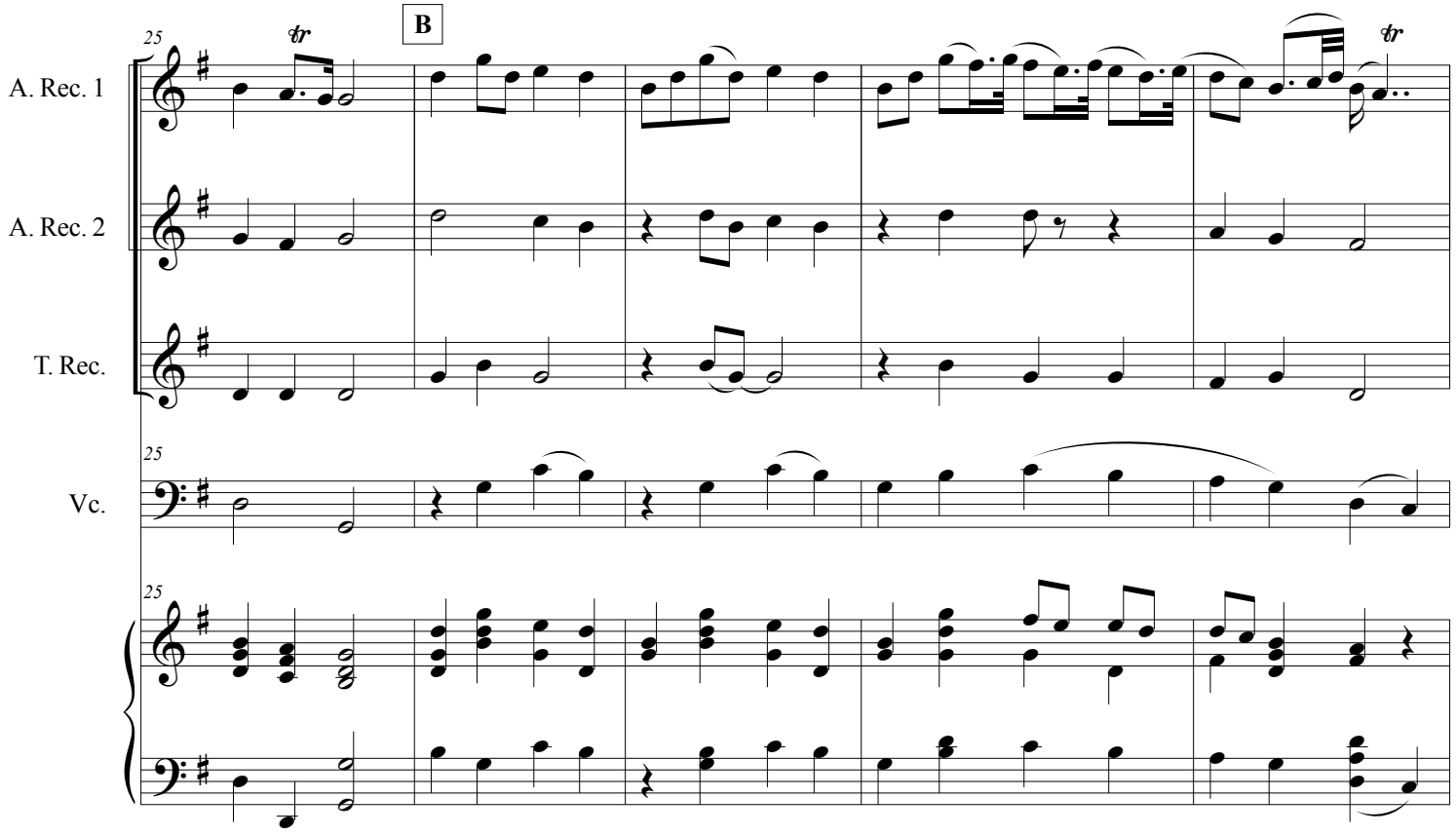
arranged for the Adirondack Baroque Consort

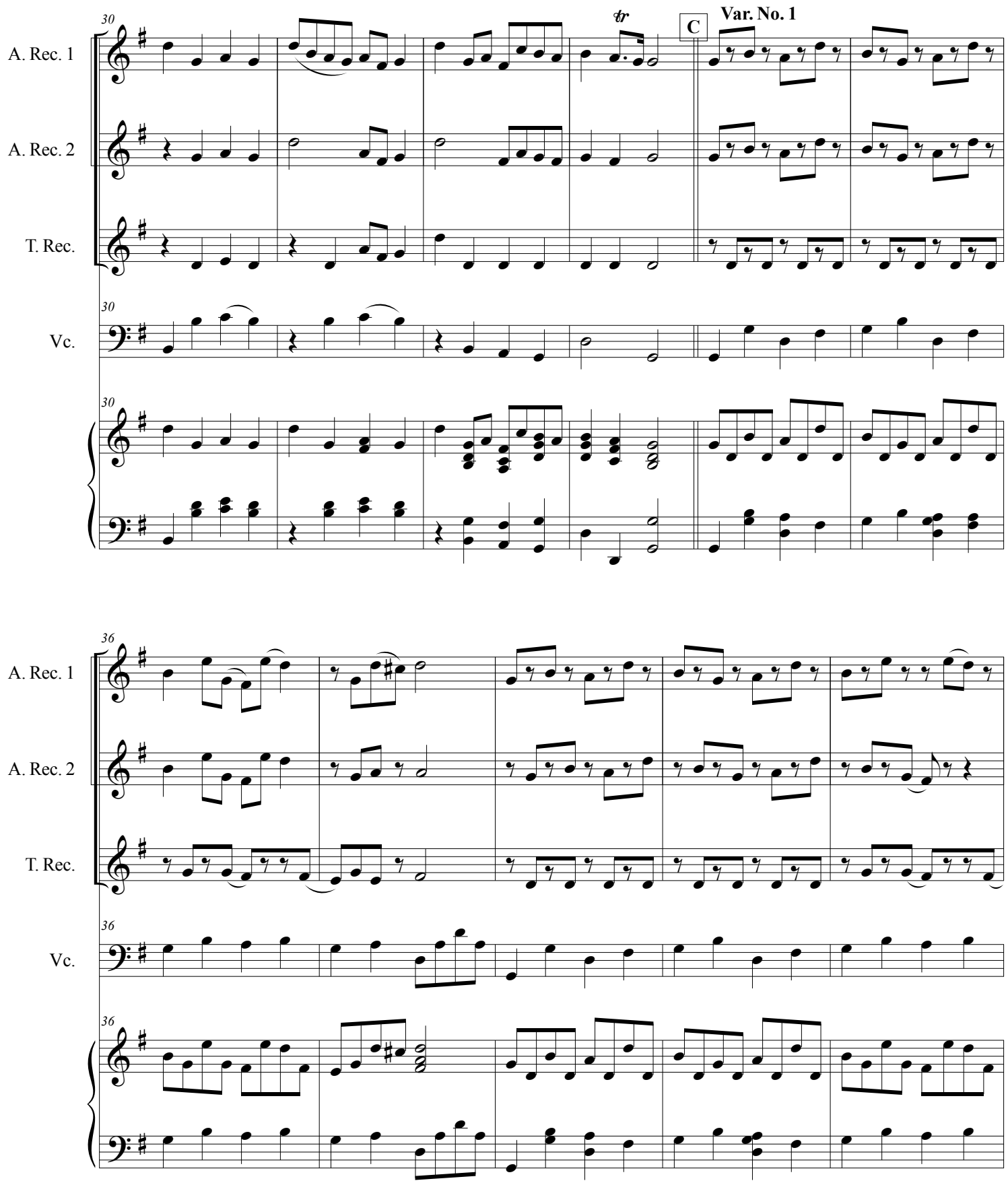
George Frideric Handel
arr. James Oppenheimer



The Harmonious Blacksmith



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Vc.
tr
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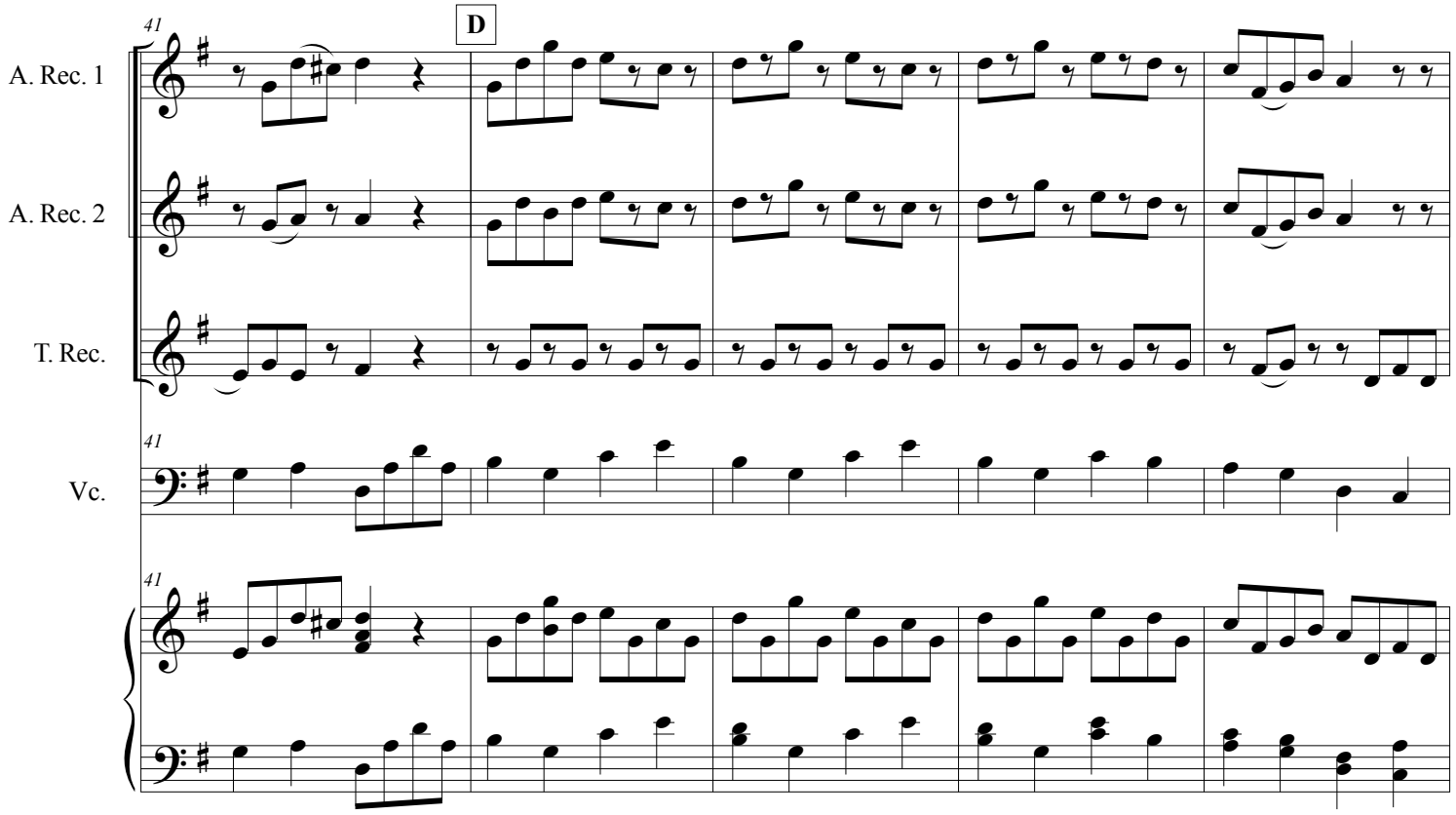
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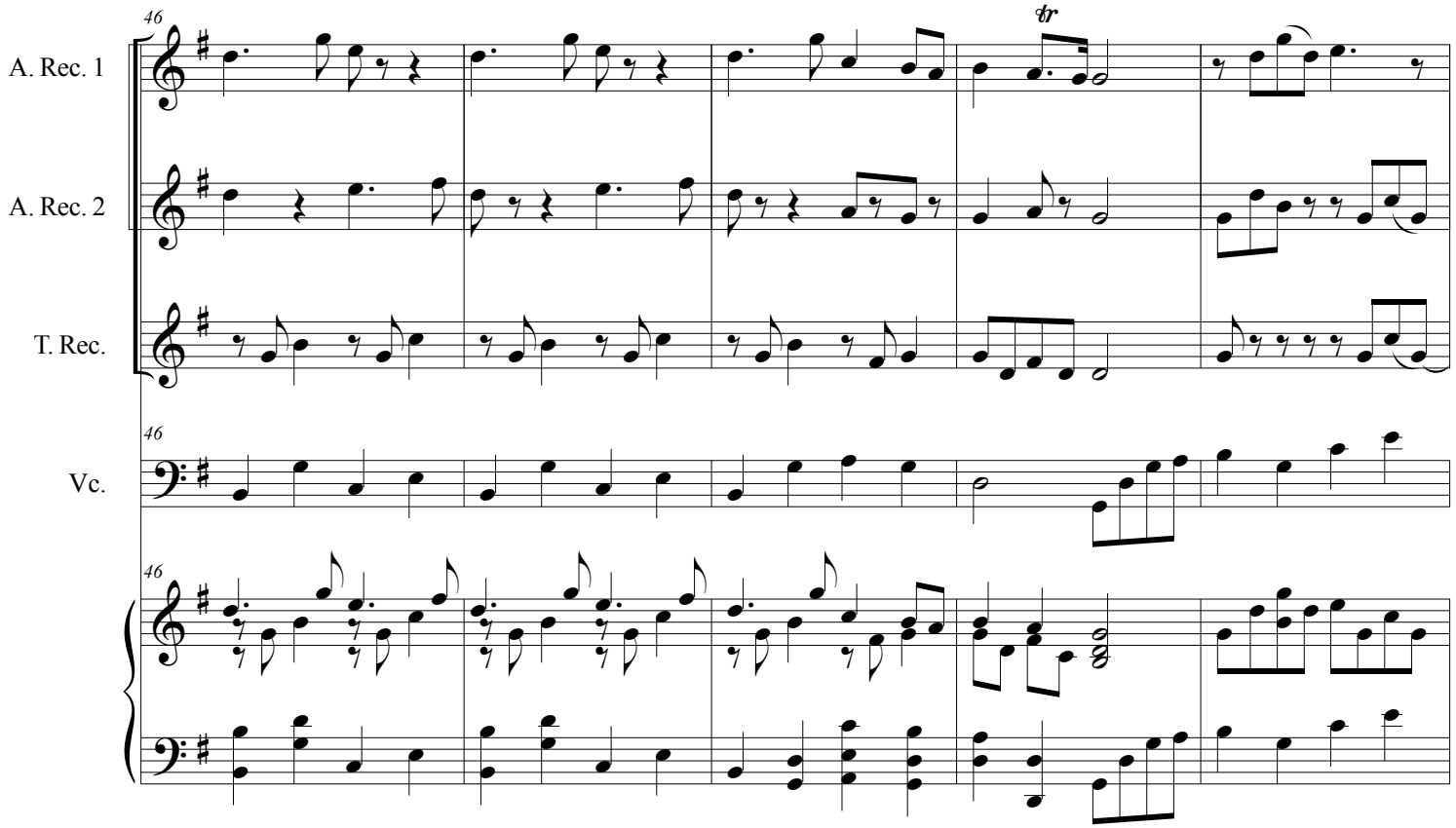
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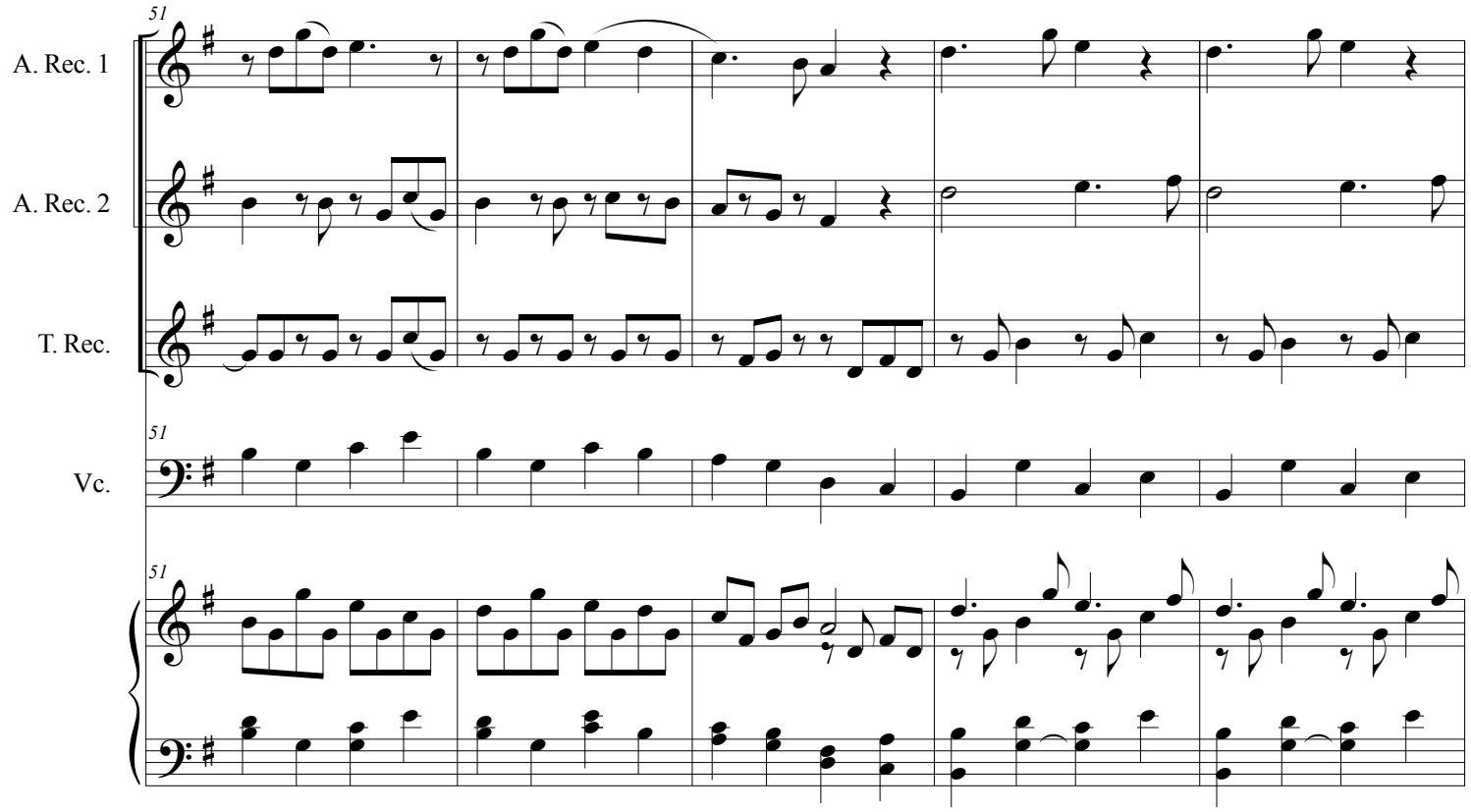
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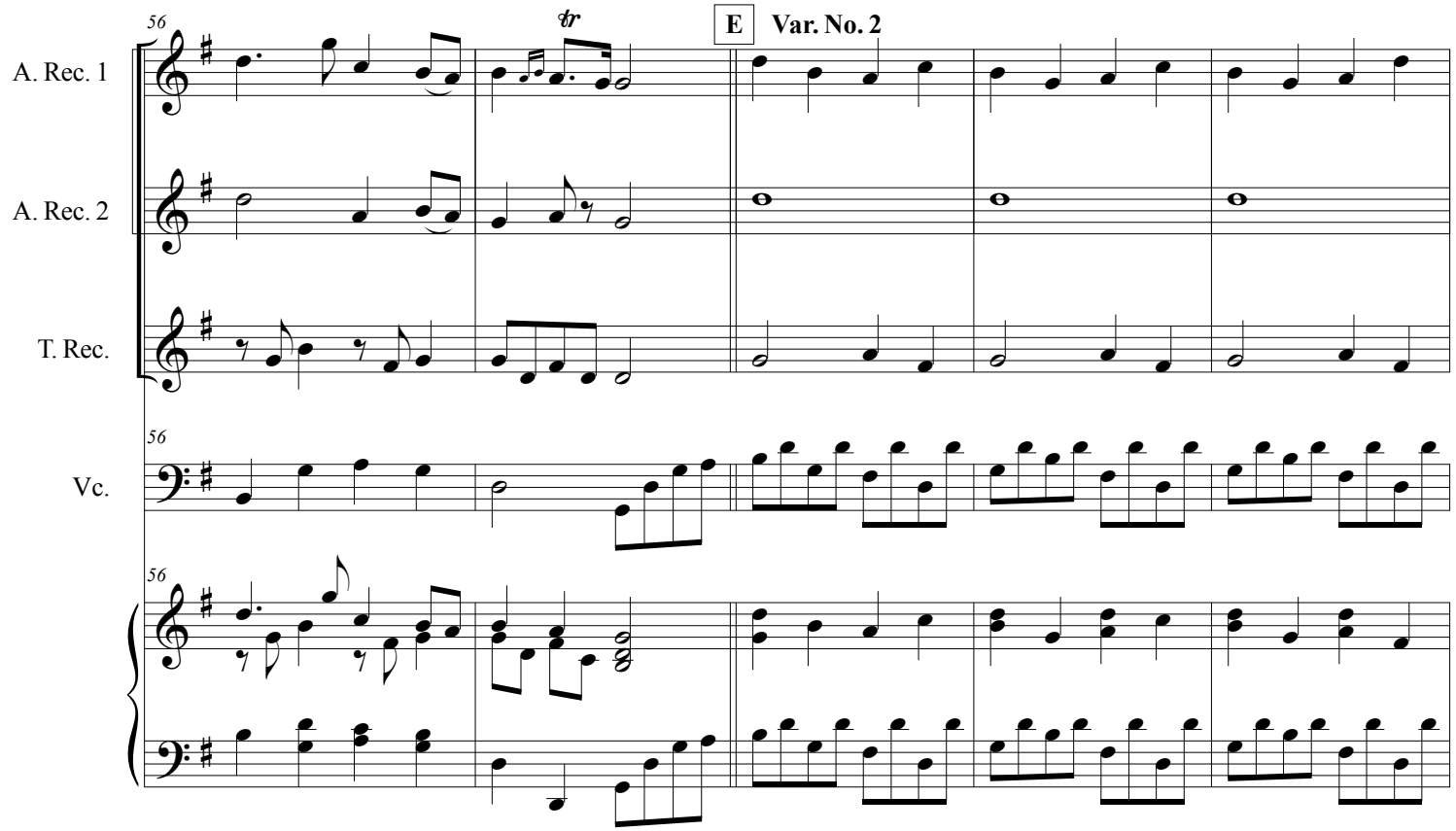
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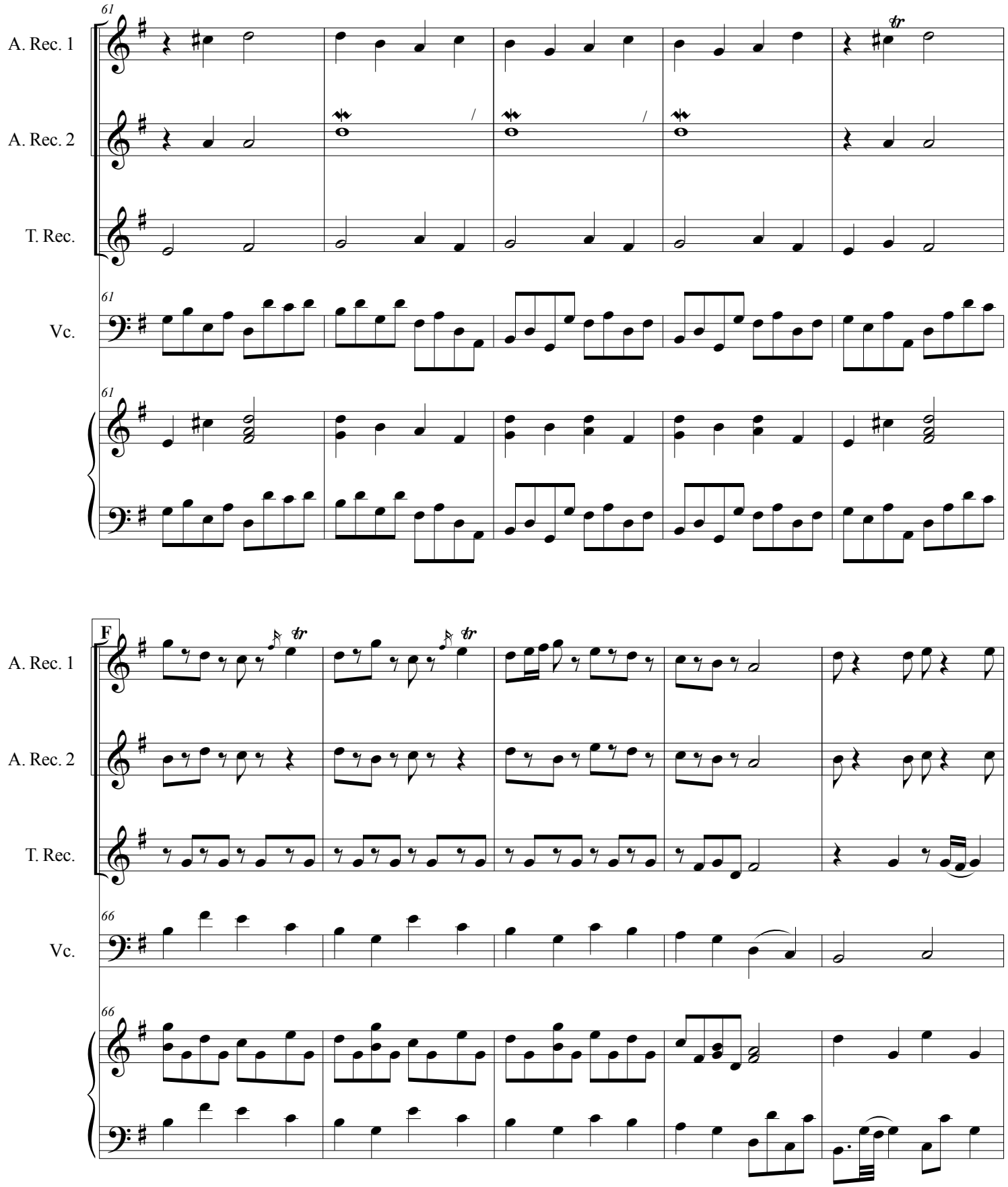
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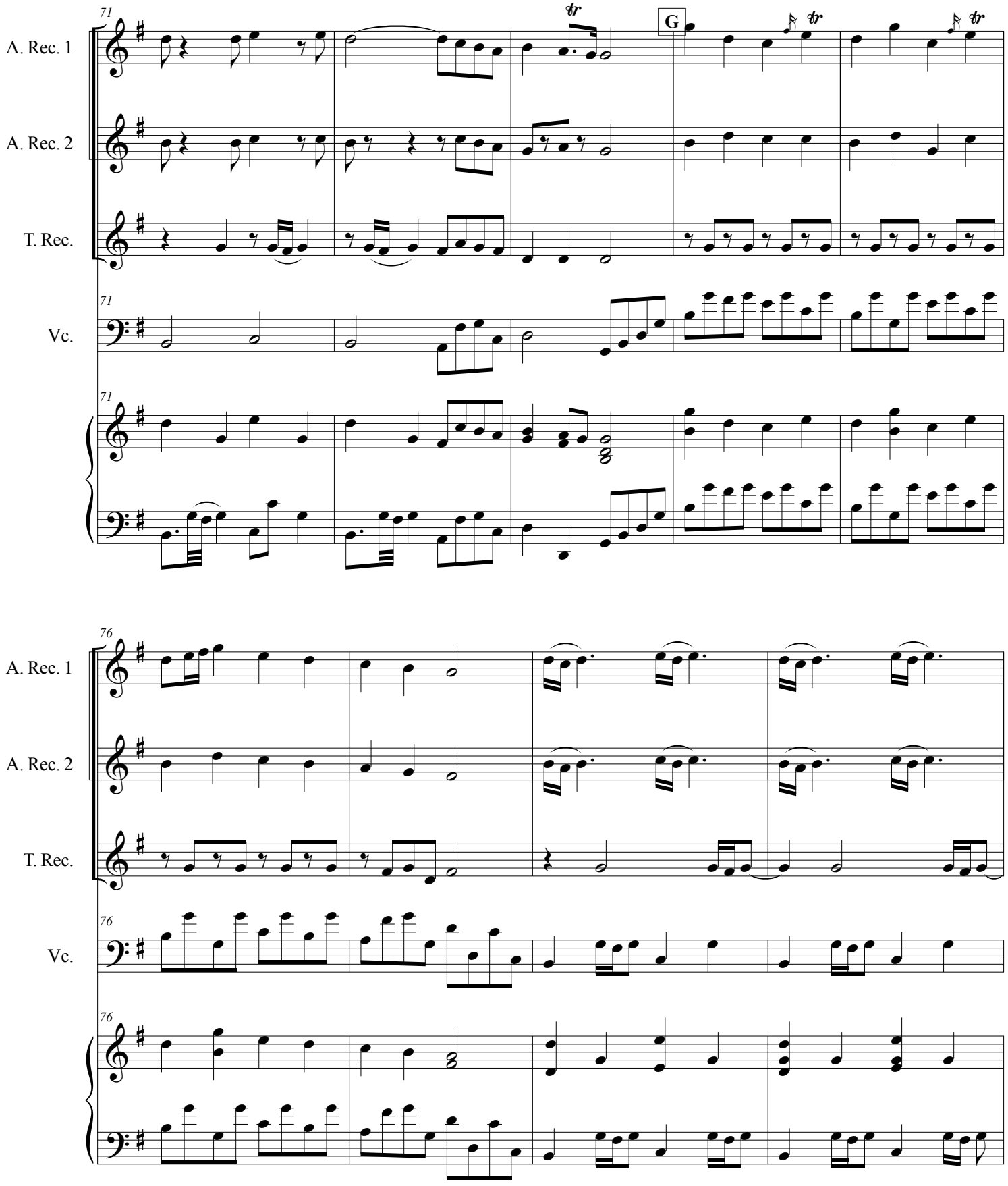
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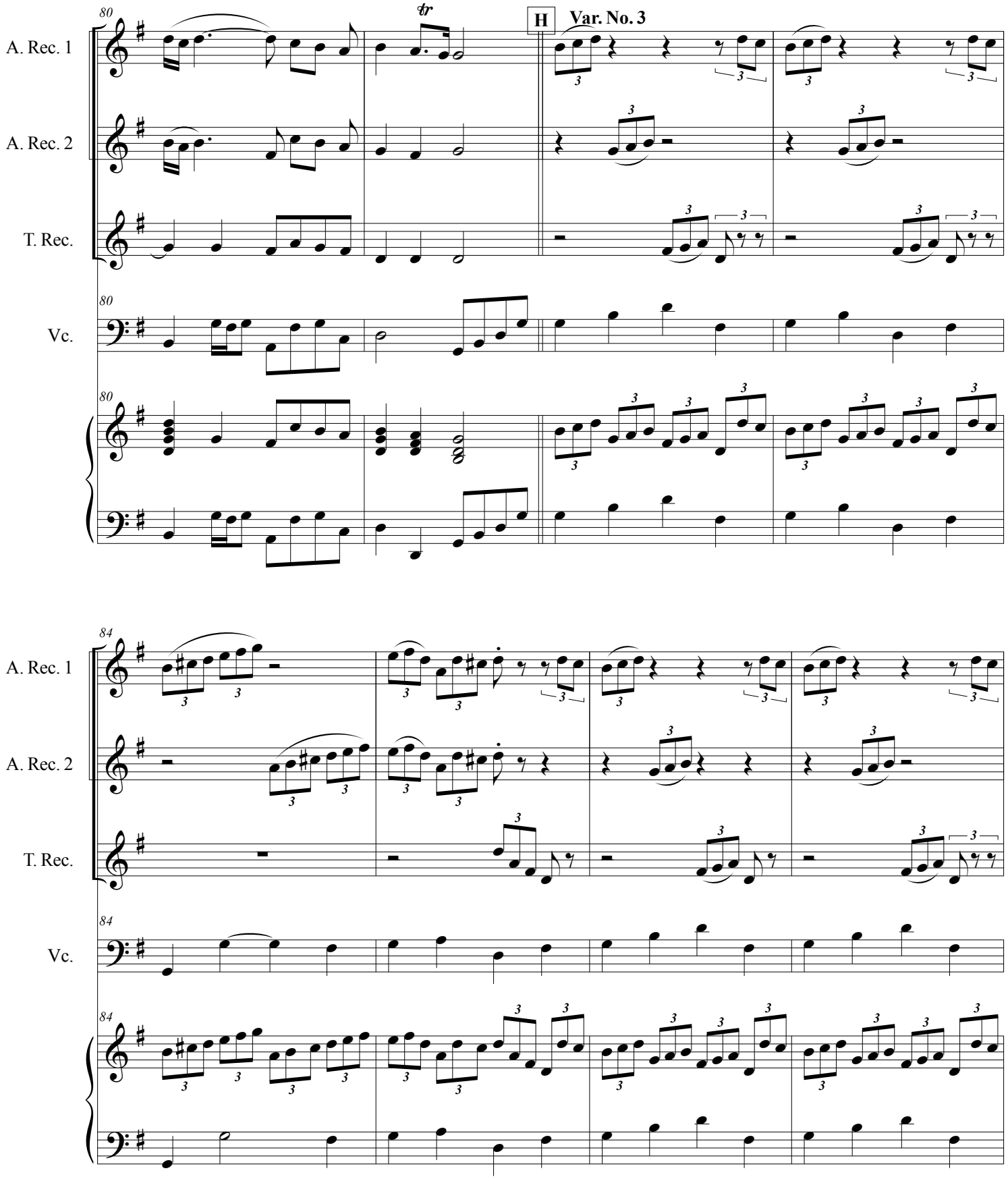
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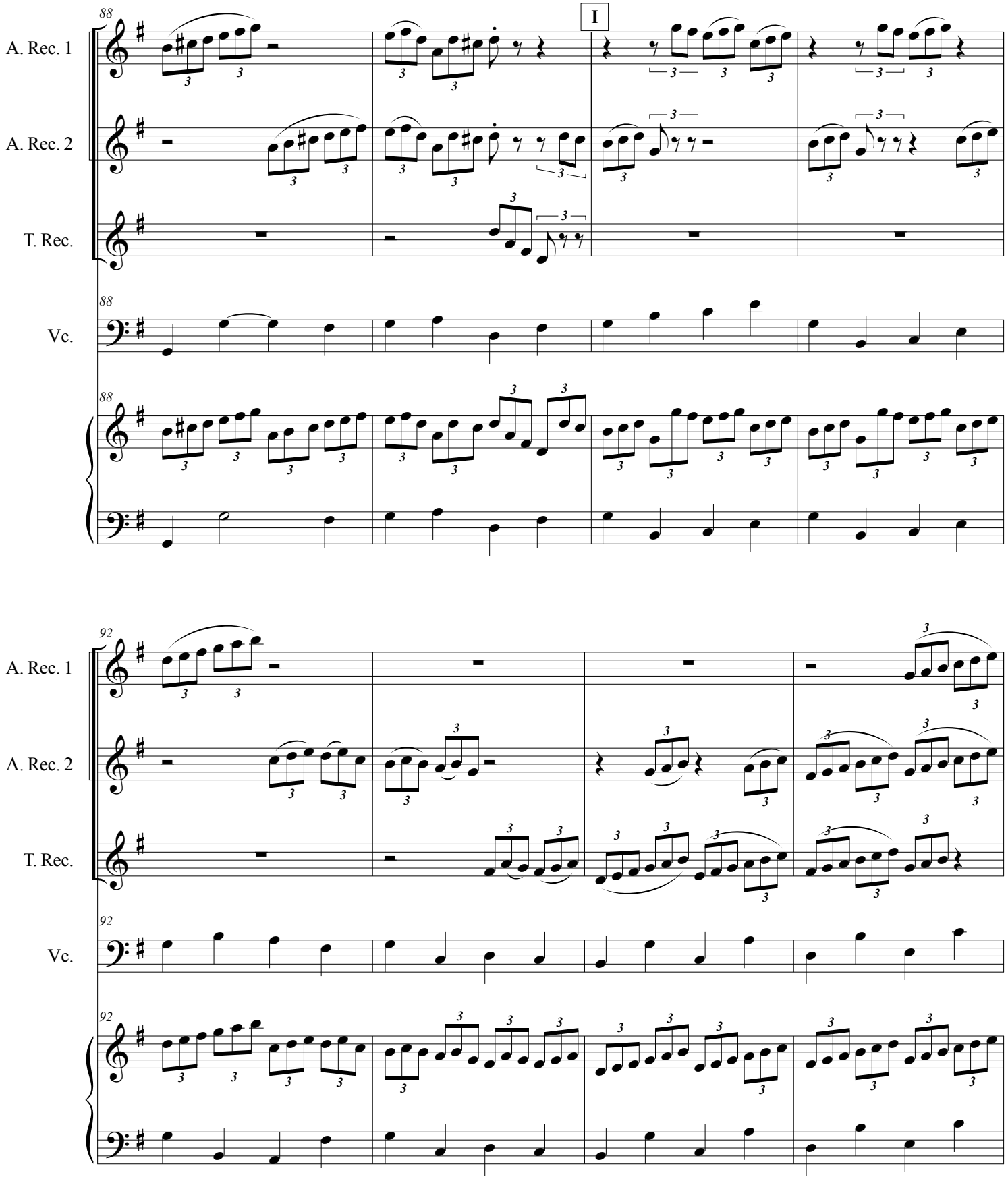
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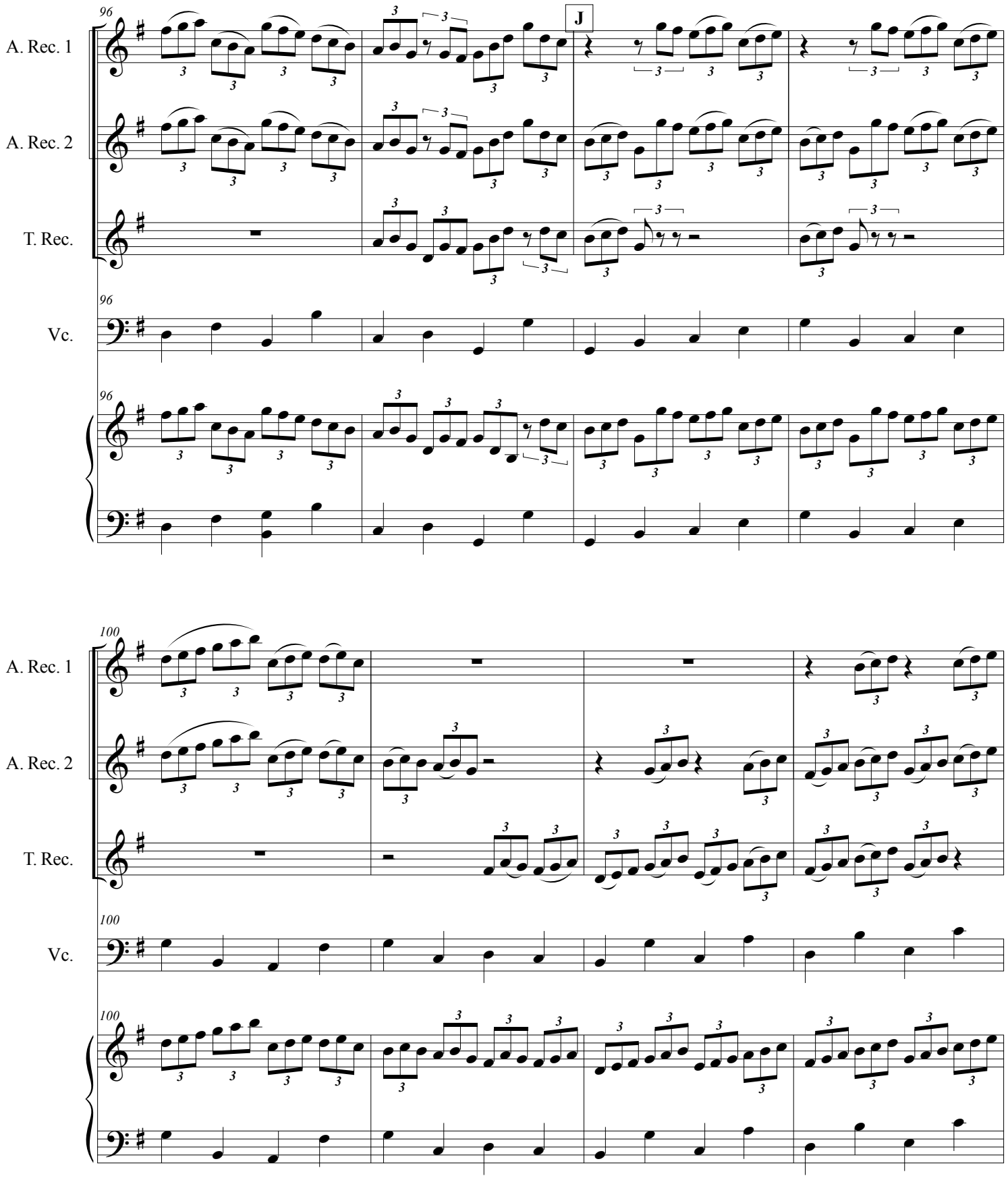
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Vc.
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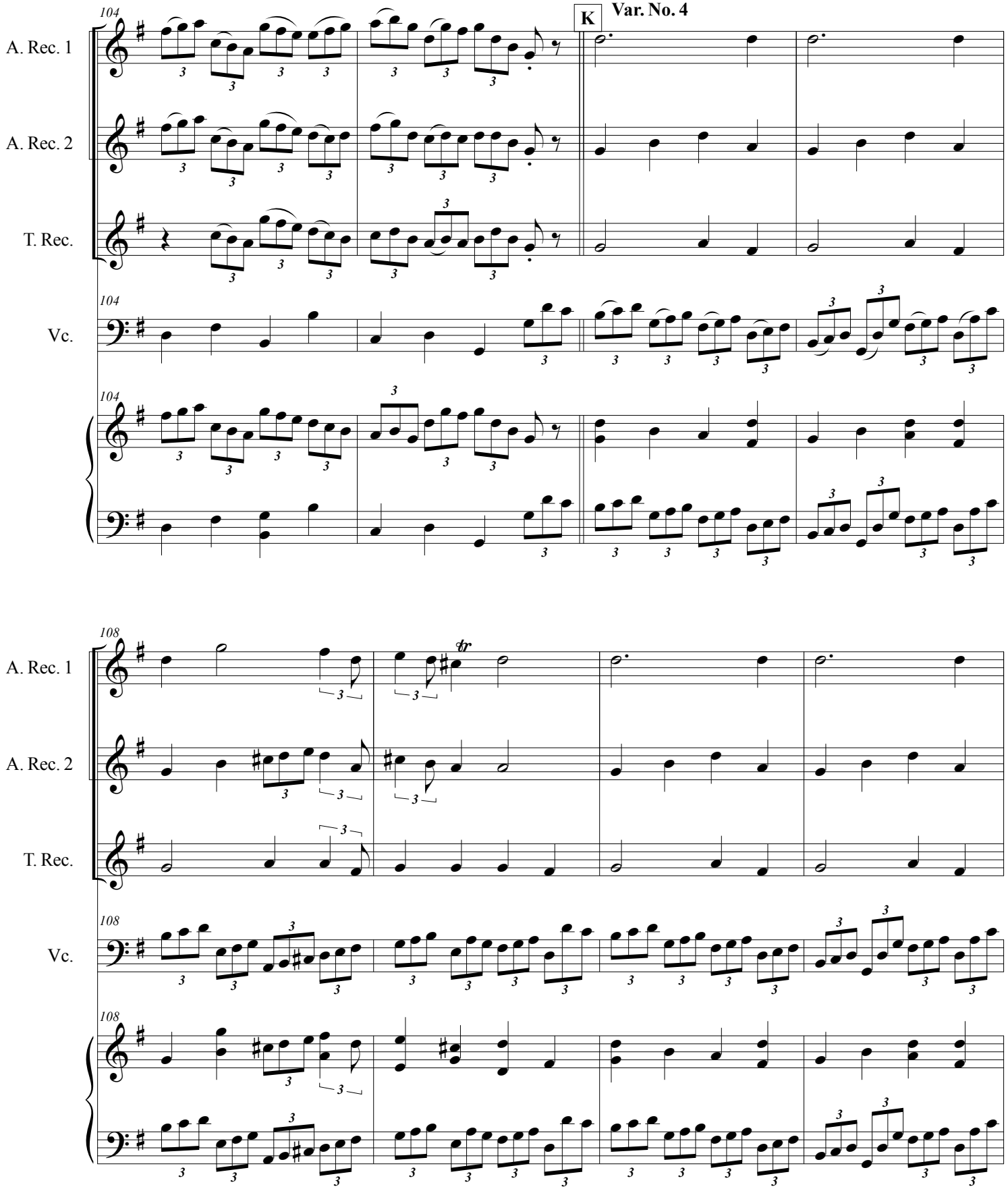
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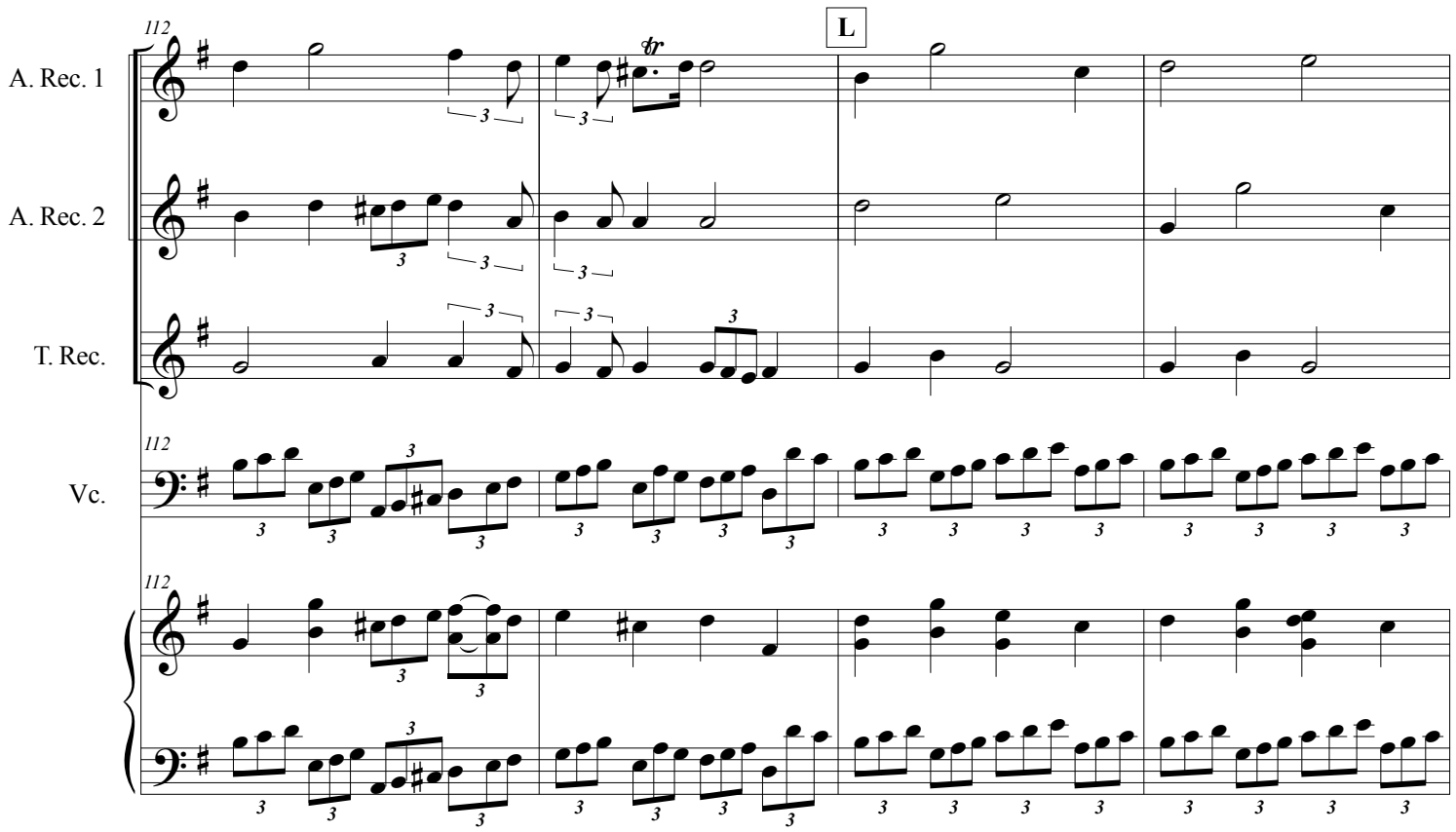
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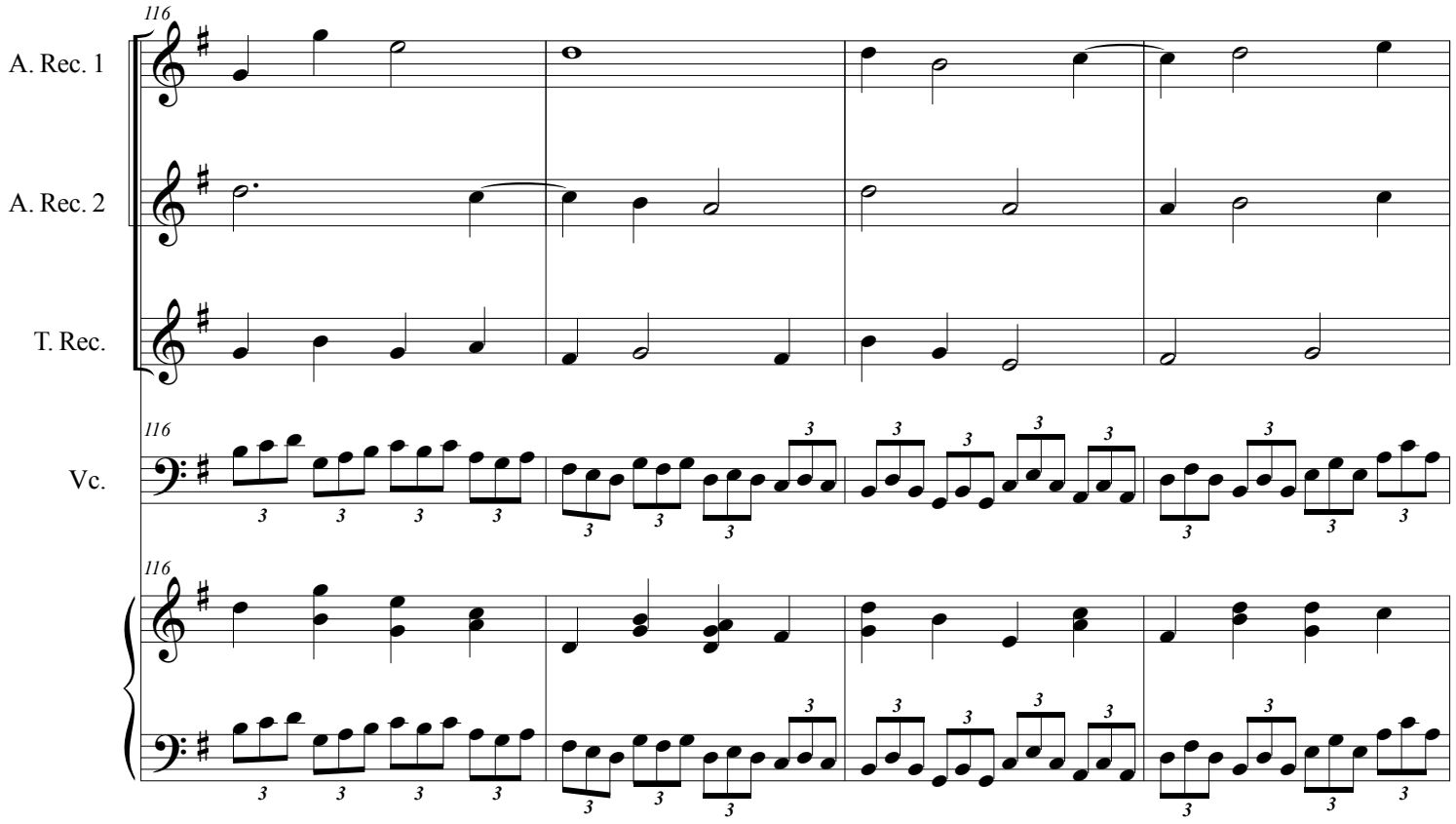
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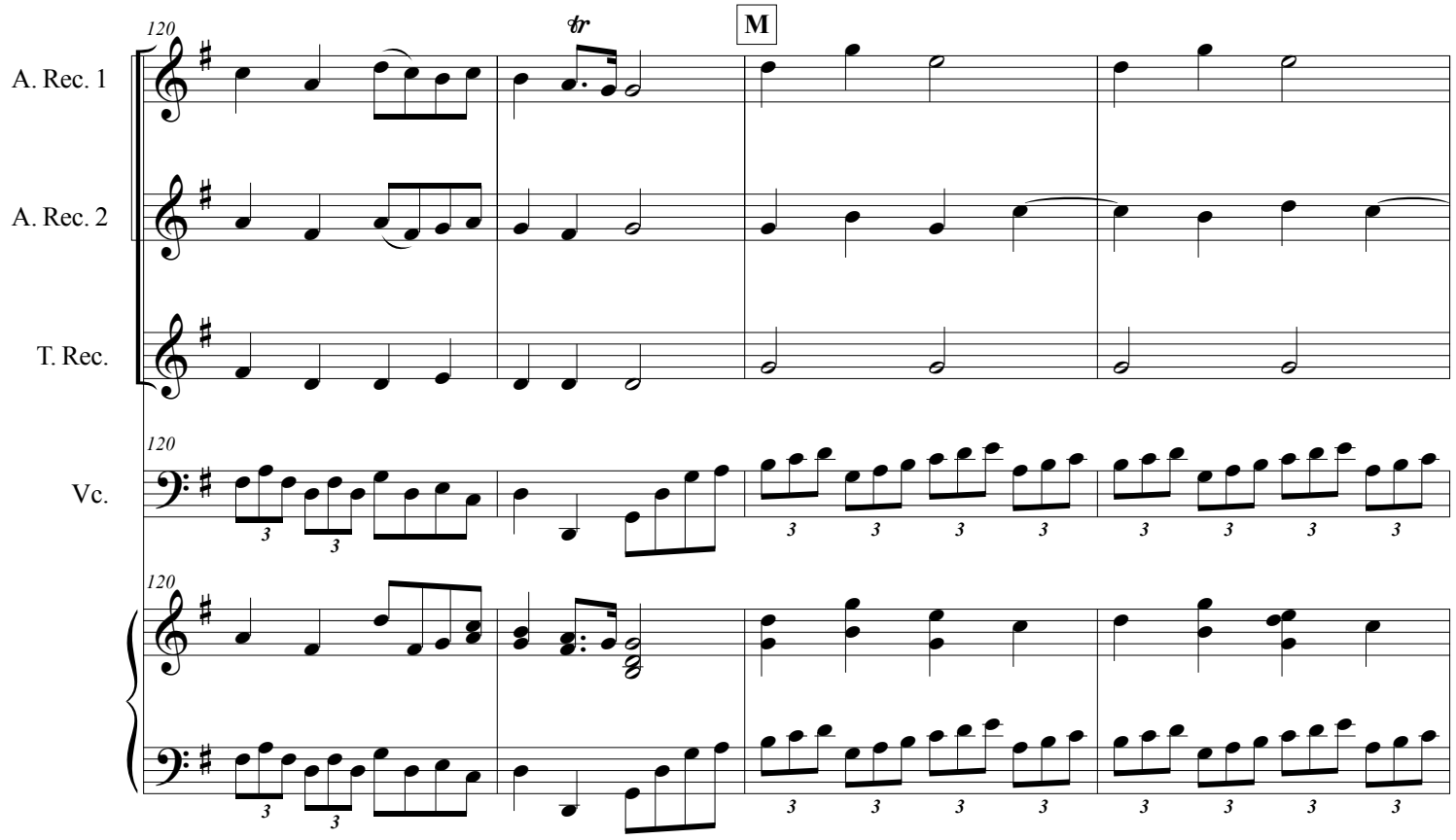
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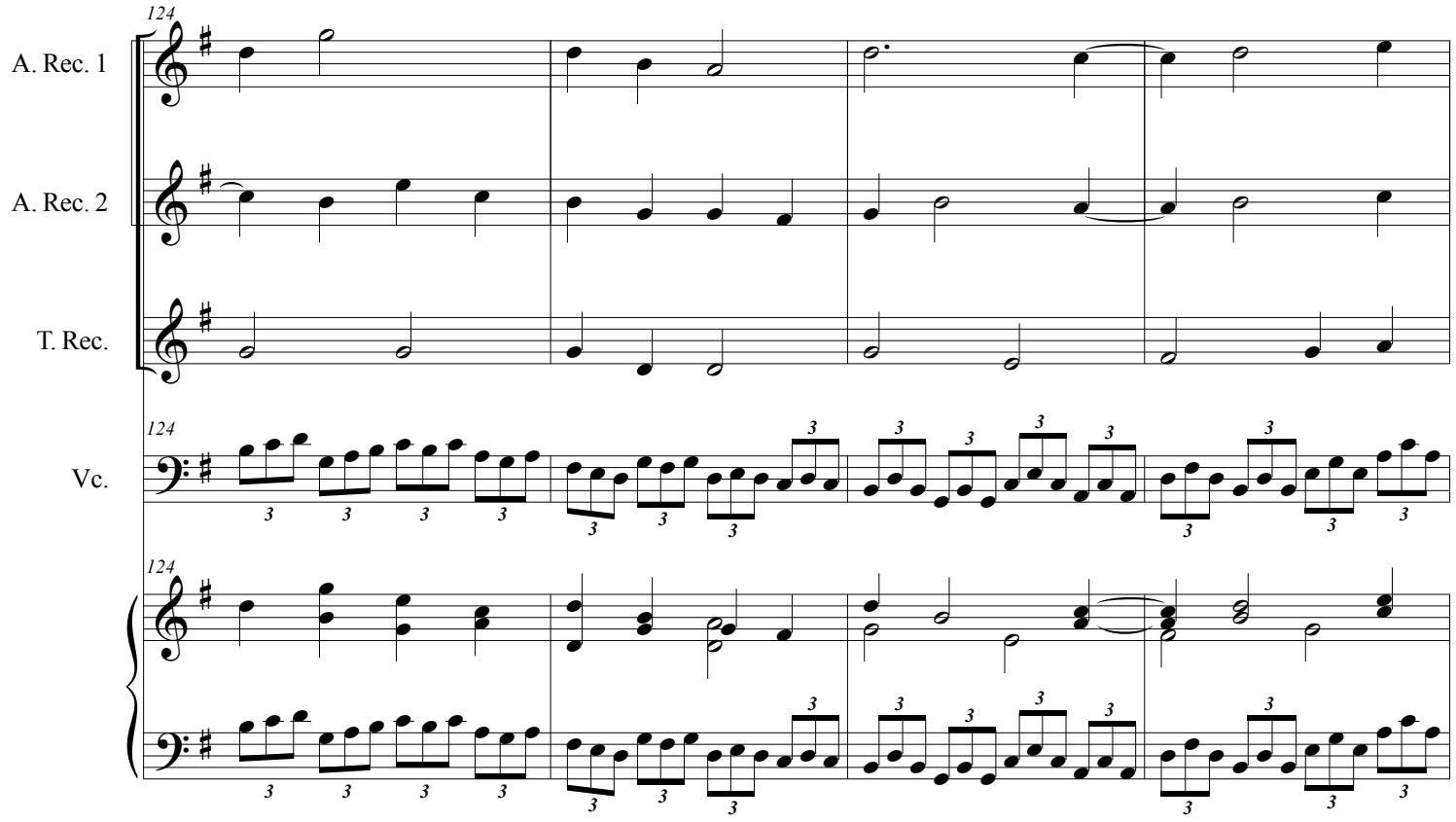
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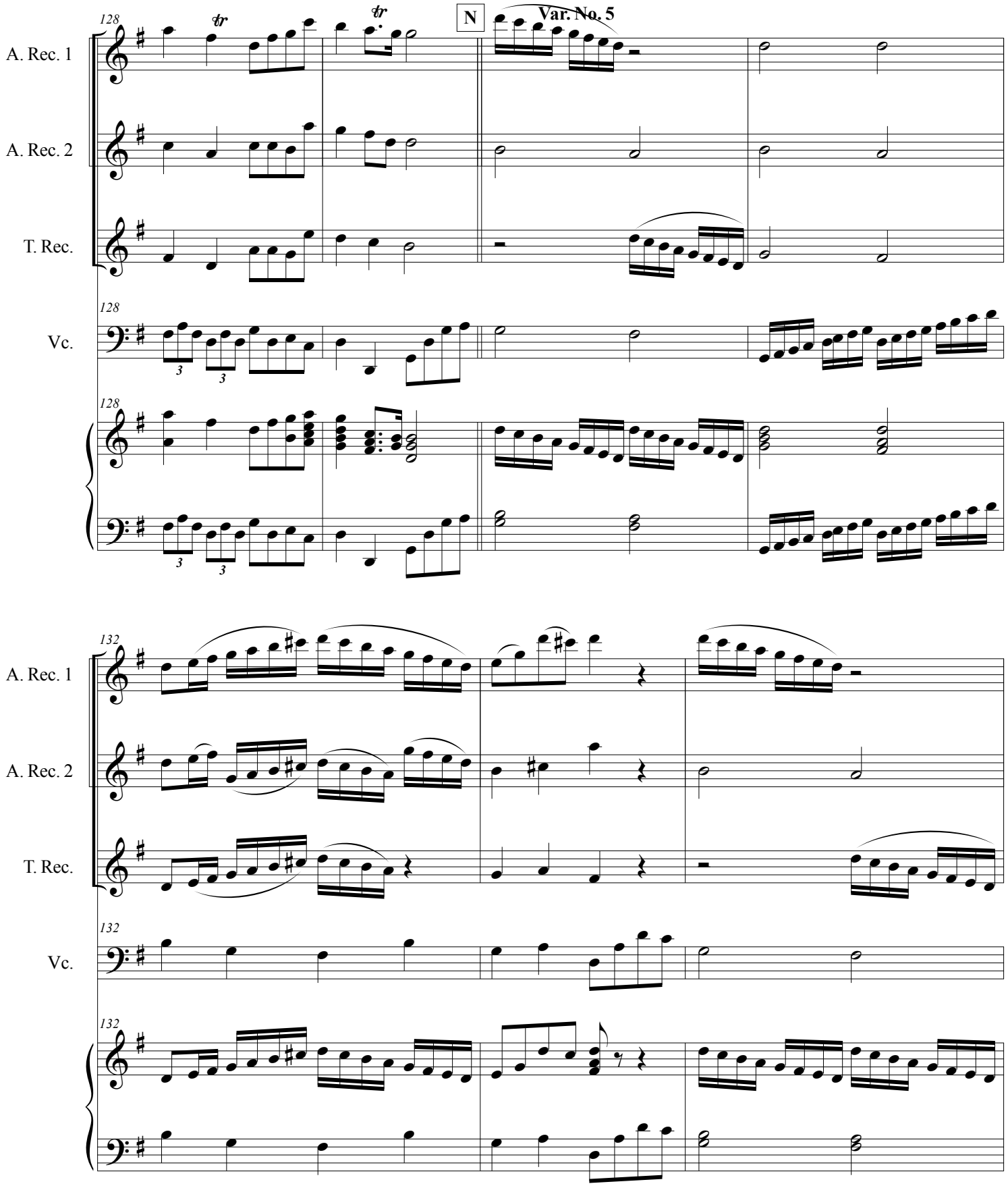
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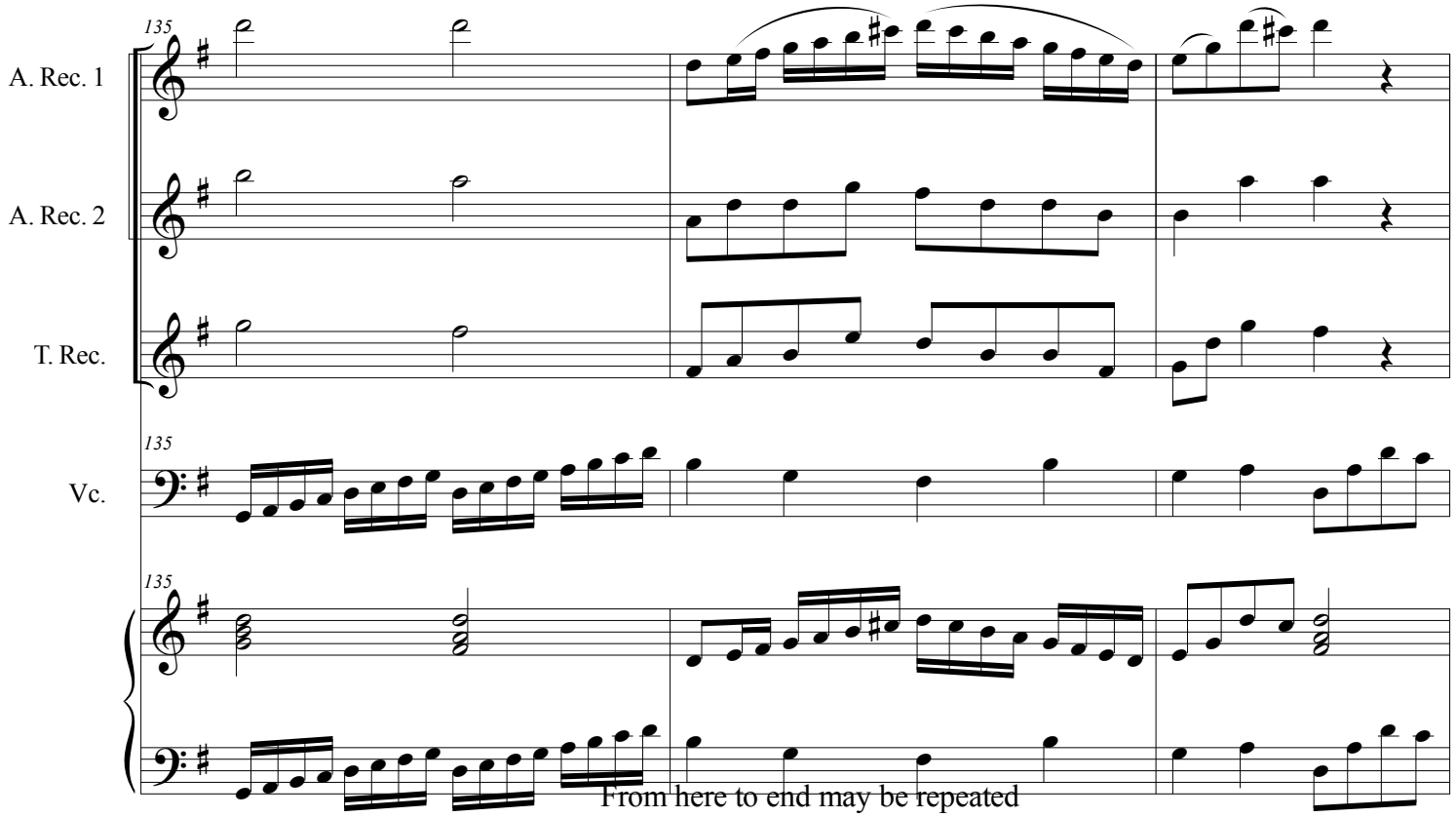

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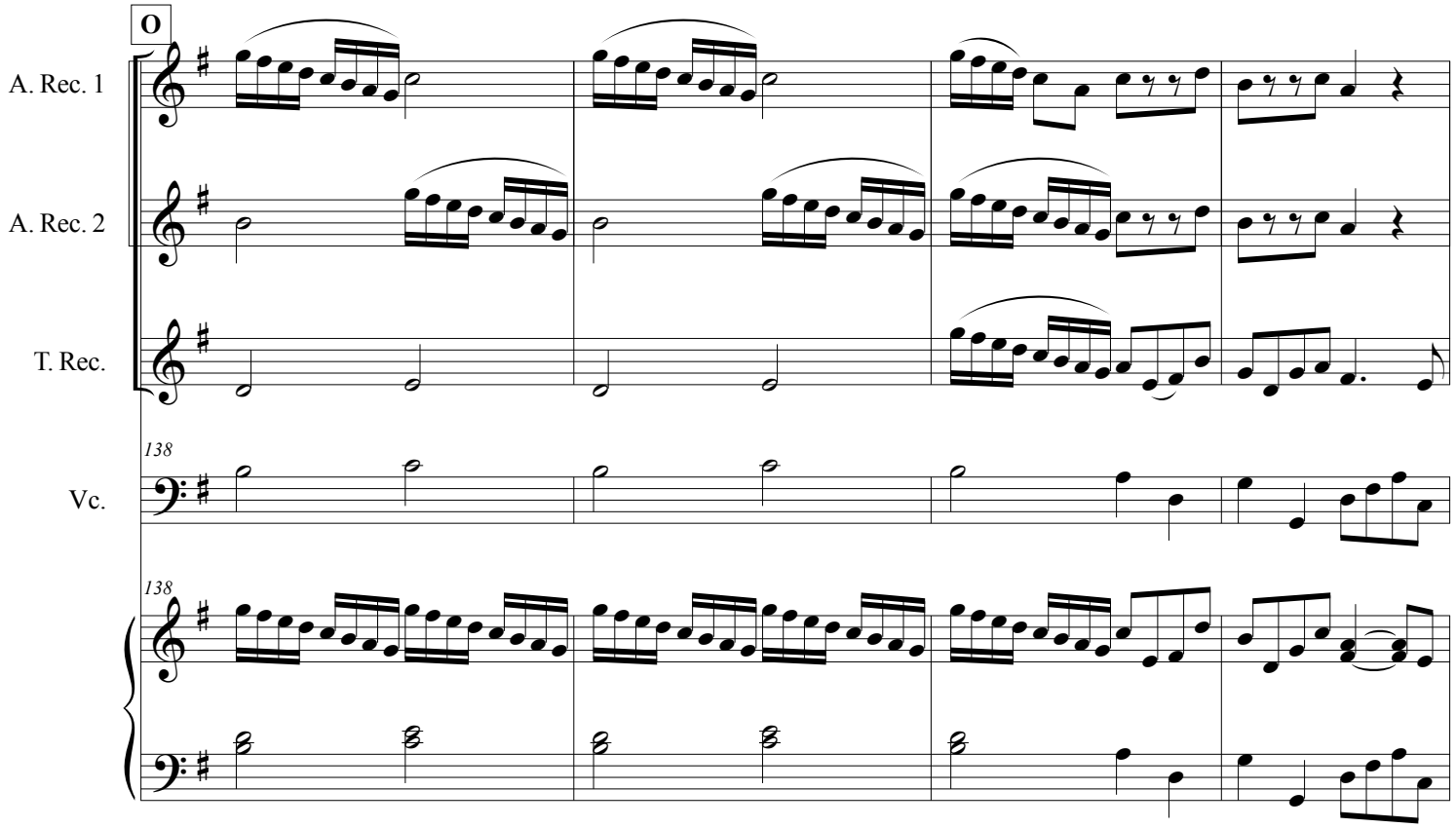

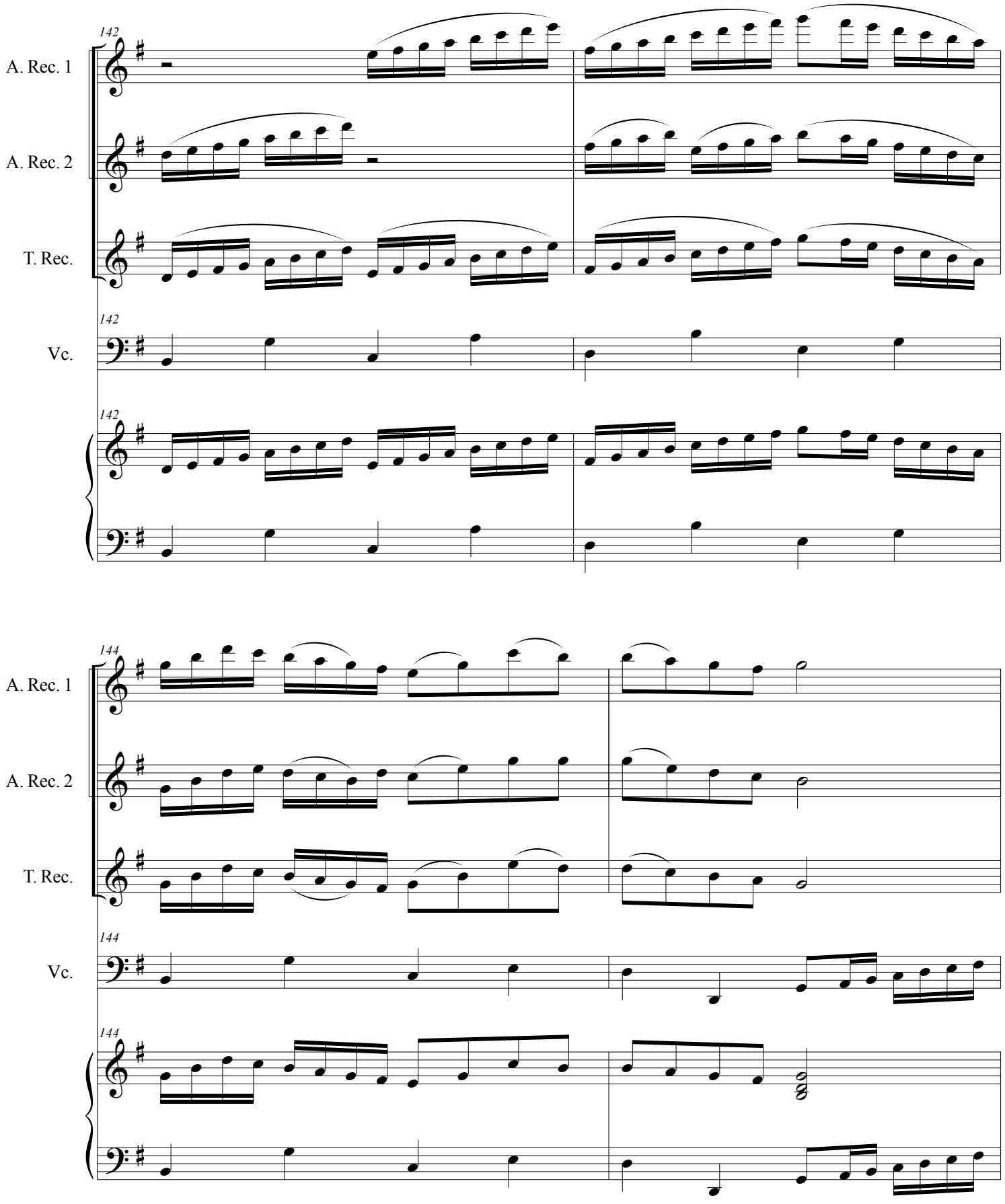
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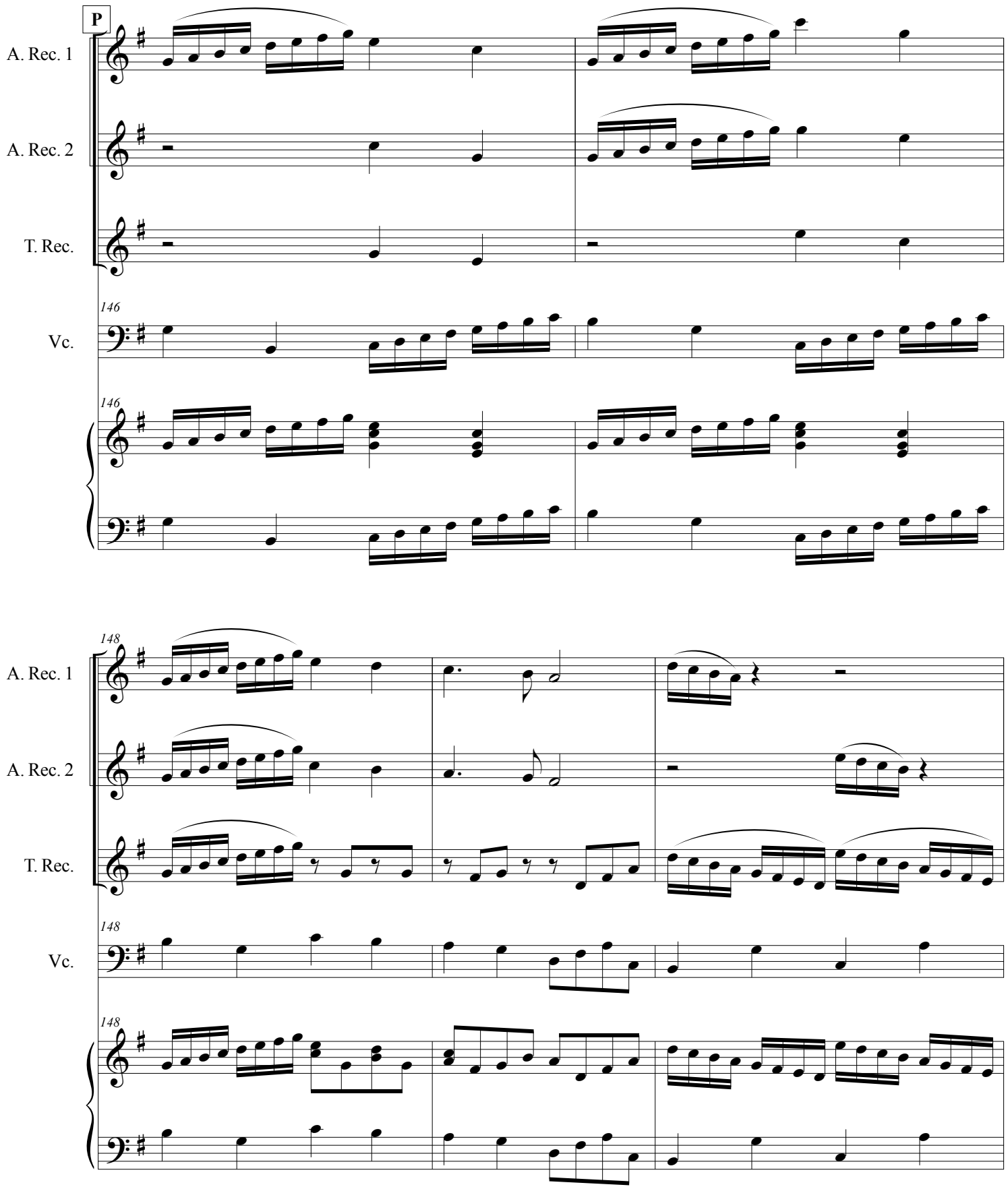
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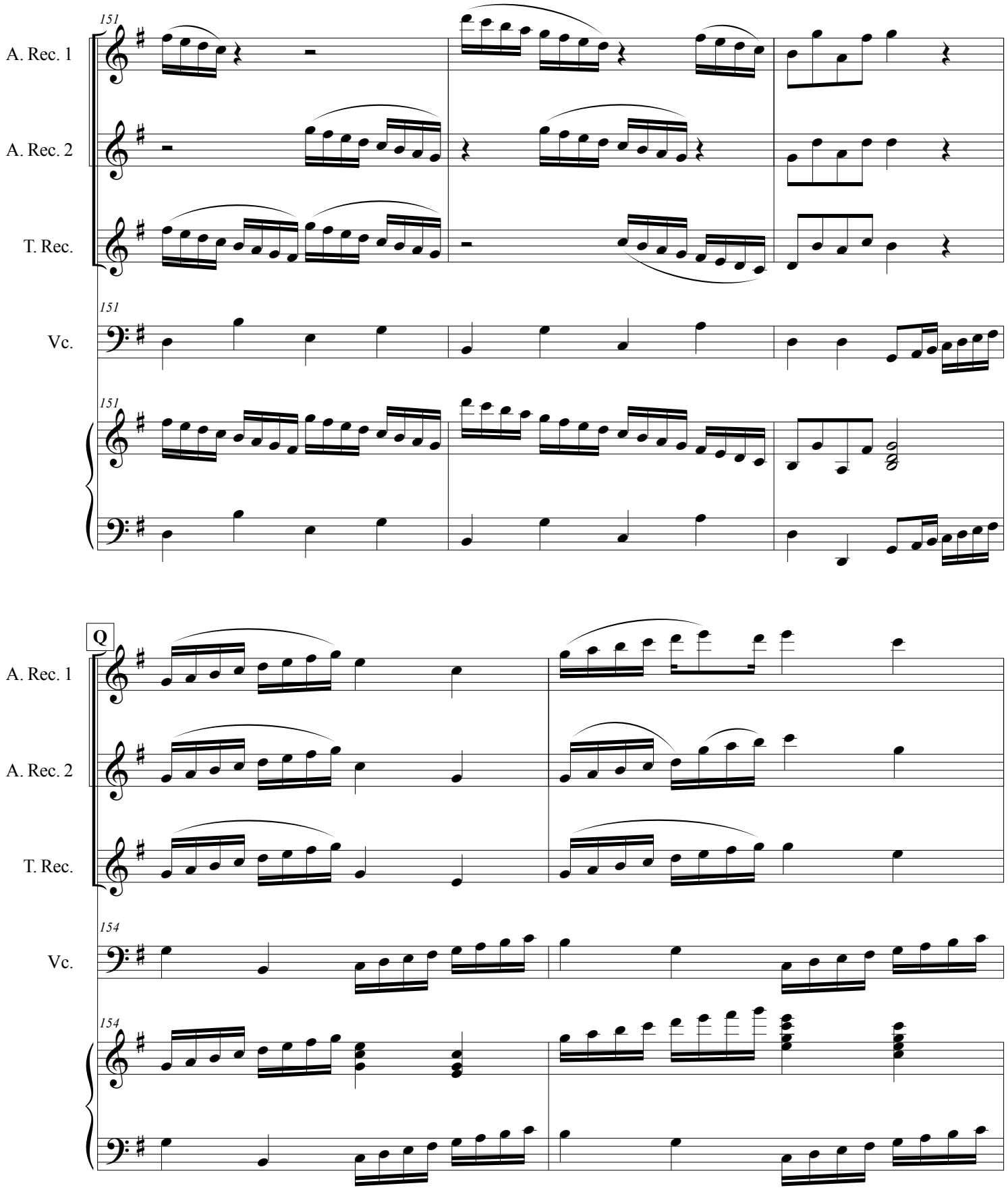
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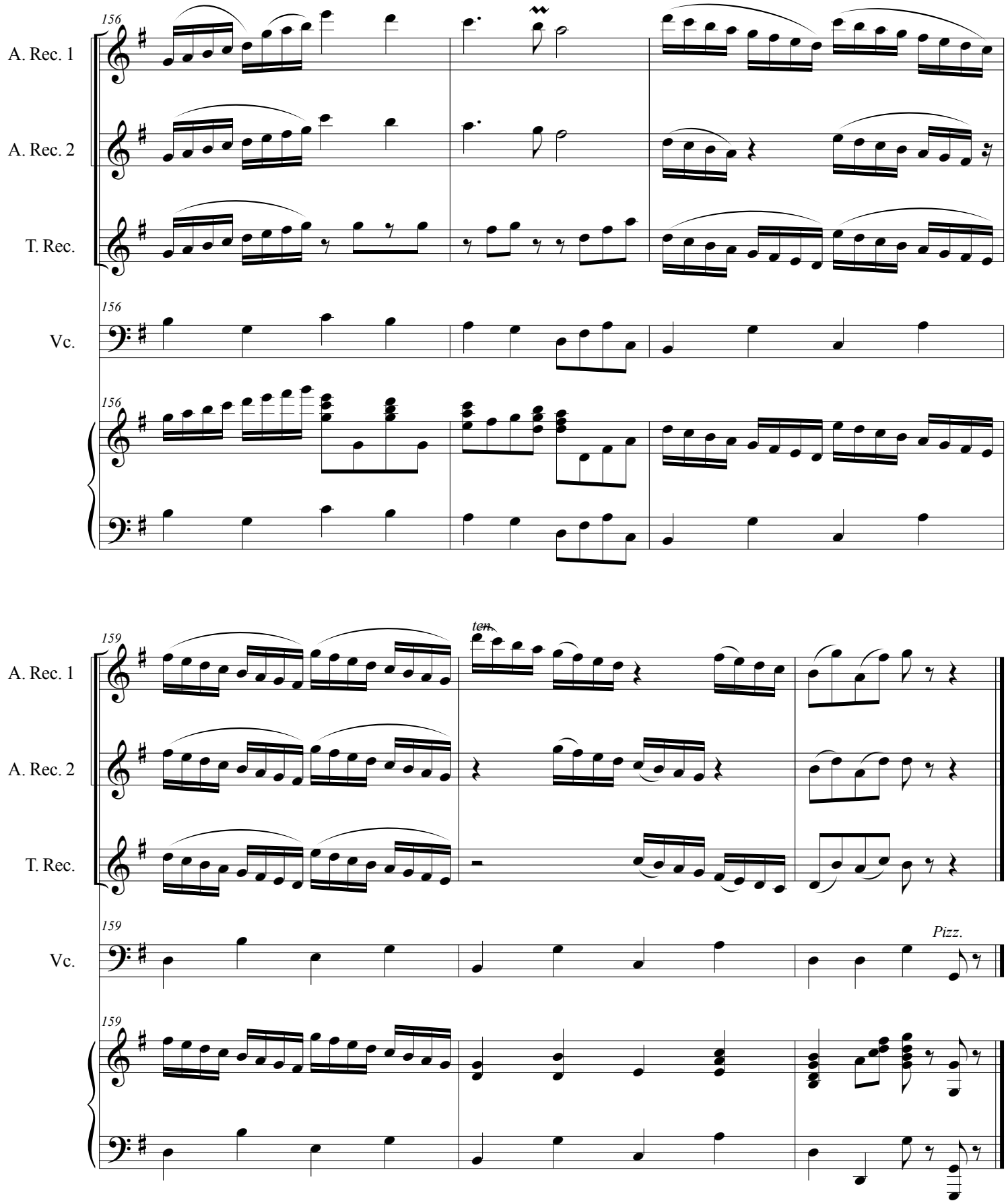
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Vc.
Pizz.
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