John Jenkins (1592-1678)

Jenkins was born in Maidstone, Kent, and died at Kimberley, Norfolk. Little is known of his early life. The first positive historical record of Jenkins is as one of the musicians who performed the The Triumph of Peace masque in 1634 at the court of King Charles I. The English Civil War that broke out in 1642 forced Jenkins, as it did many others, to migrate to the rural countryside. During the 1640s he was employed as music-master to two Royalist families.

Around 1640 Jenkins revived the In Nomine, a series of variations based on a traditional plainsong theme and much beloved by viol players, except the musician who has to play the theme. In the 1650s Jenkins wrote more than 70 fantasias for viol consorts.

Jenkins played the lute and was a virtuoso lyra viol player. After the Restoration he obtained a place as a musician to the Royal Court. The aged Jenkins played the lyra viol for King Charles II, who wryly complimented him that he did "wonders on an inconsiderable instrument". Roger North wrote: Tho' he for many years was incapable to attend, the Court musicians had so much value for him, that advantage was not taken, but he received his salary as they were paid.

Jenkins was a long-active and prolific composer whose many years of life, spanning the time from William Byrd to Henry Purcell, witnessed great changes in English music. He is noted for developing the consort fantasia for viols, being influenced in the 1630s by an earlier generation of English composers including Alfonso Ferrabosco the younger, Thomas Lupo, John Coprario and Orlando Gibbons.

Jenkins composed numerous 4, 5, and 6 part fantasias for viol consort as well as almans, courants and pavanes, and he breathed new life into the antiquated form of the In Nomine.

He was less experimental than his friend William Lawes; indeed, Jenkins's music was more conservative than that of many of his contemporaries. It is characterized by a sensuous lyricism, highly skilled craftsmanship, and an original usage of tonality and counterpoint.

His biographer North wrote of him:
he was certainly a happy person, … of an easy temper, superior in his profession, well accepted by all, knew no want, saw himself outrun by the world, and having lived a good Christian, died in peace.

Jenkins is buried in the nave of St. Peter's church, Kimberley, Norfolk, with this inscription:

Under this Stone Rare Jenkins lie
The Master of the Musick Art
Whom from the Earth the God on High
Called up to Him to bear his part.
Aged eighty six October twenty seven
In anno seventy eight he went to Heaven.
In God We Trust.

(Adapted from Wikipedia.)

Preface to this Edition

The present edition of Jenkins Fantasias for four, five and six viols is based on British Library manuscripts. Though not a scholarly edition, the parts have been carefully corrected and have been read several times for errors.

It is presented with the blessing of Andrew Ashbee who edited the Faber editions of same, and this edition uses his and Meyer's numbering system so parts may be compared easily. A great deal of credit is due Mr. Ashbee for consulting so many sources and for his immense knowledge of Jenkins and his times.

My thanks are due to Atlanta viols players who have helped proof read the website editions: Emily Stevenson, Paul Miller, Marian Burge, Stephen Morris, Greg Armijo, Susan Patterson, Pam Woodcock, Jorg Voss, Brian Bishop and Joyce Clinkscales. Special thanks are due Joyce, Librarian of the Emory Heilbrun Music and Media Library, for her help in obtaining microfilms of the original manuscripts.

The present edition is presented in the spirit of the several copyists who felt that Jenkins's music should be available to as many people as possible, for their immense musical enjoyment and to spread around the genius of the composer John Jenkins. What better way to do this in modern times than by the internet?

Martha Bishop, July 2010

Printing Instructions

This pdf is one of two, which together comprise the part books for the 4-part fantasias (unbarred version) and pavans of Jenkins made available by Martha Bishop.

Each part book can be printed separately: as a single-sided document or as a duplexed document. The page size can also be larger than 8.5 by 11 inches.

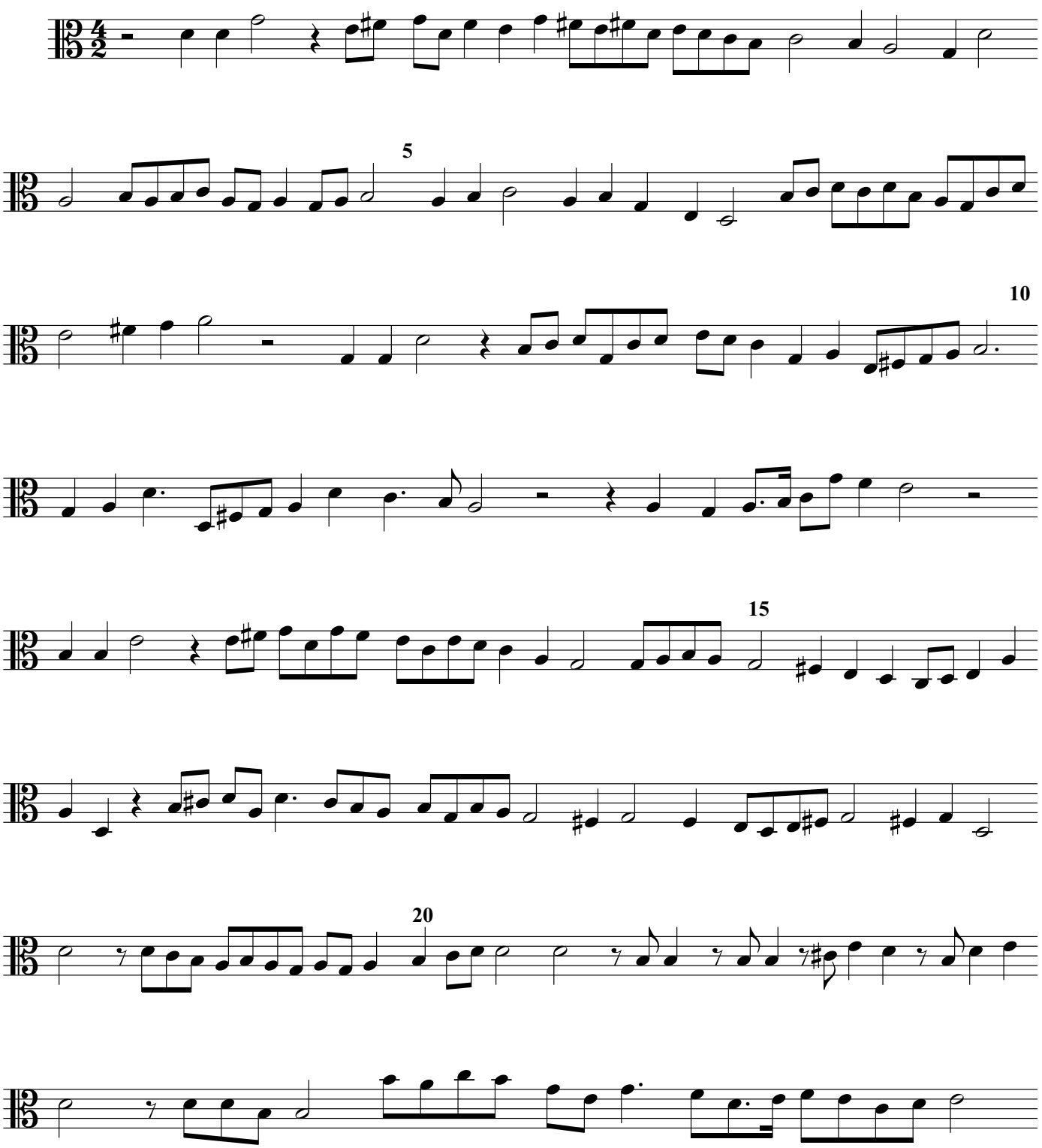
Most copy centers will be able to print duplex on normal letter-size paper. The part books can also be duplexed on a larger size paper to make reading easier.

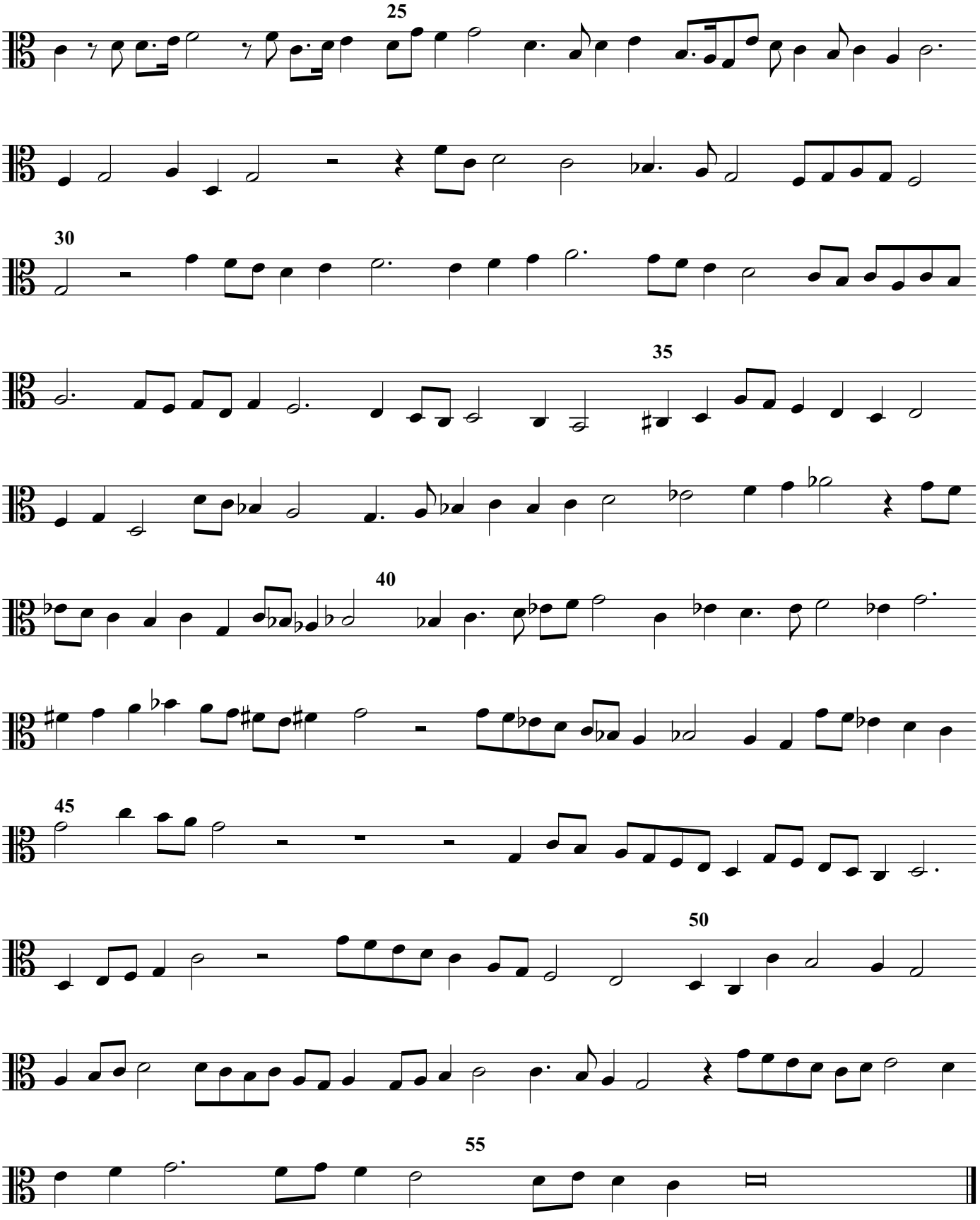
In addition to the part books, another pdf is provided which can be printed on heavier paper to make covers. This pdf is designed for larger pages so that the covers can be cut down to letter size to allow the cover picture to extend to the edge of the page if desired. Although the covers are in color, this pdf can also be printed as a black and white document.

As a last step, assemble the documents and spiral-bind them.

Fantasia No. 1

John Jenkins (1592-1678)
Edited by Martha Bishop

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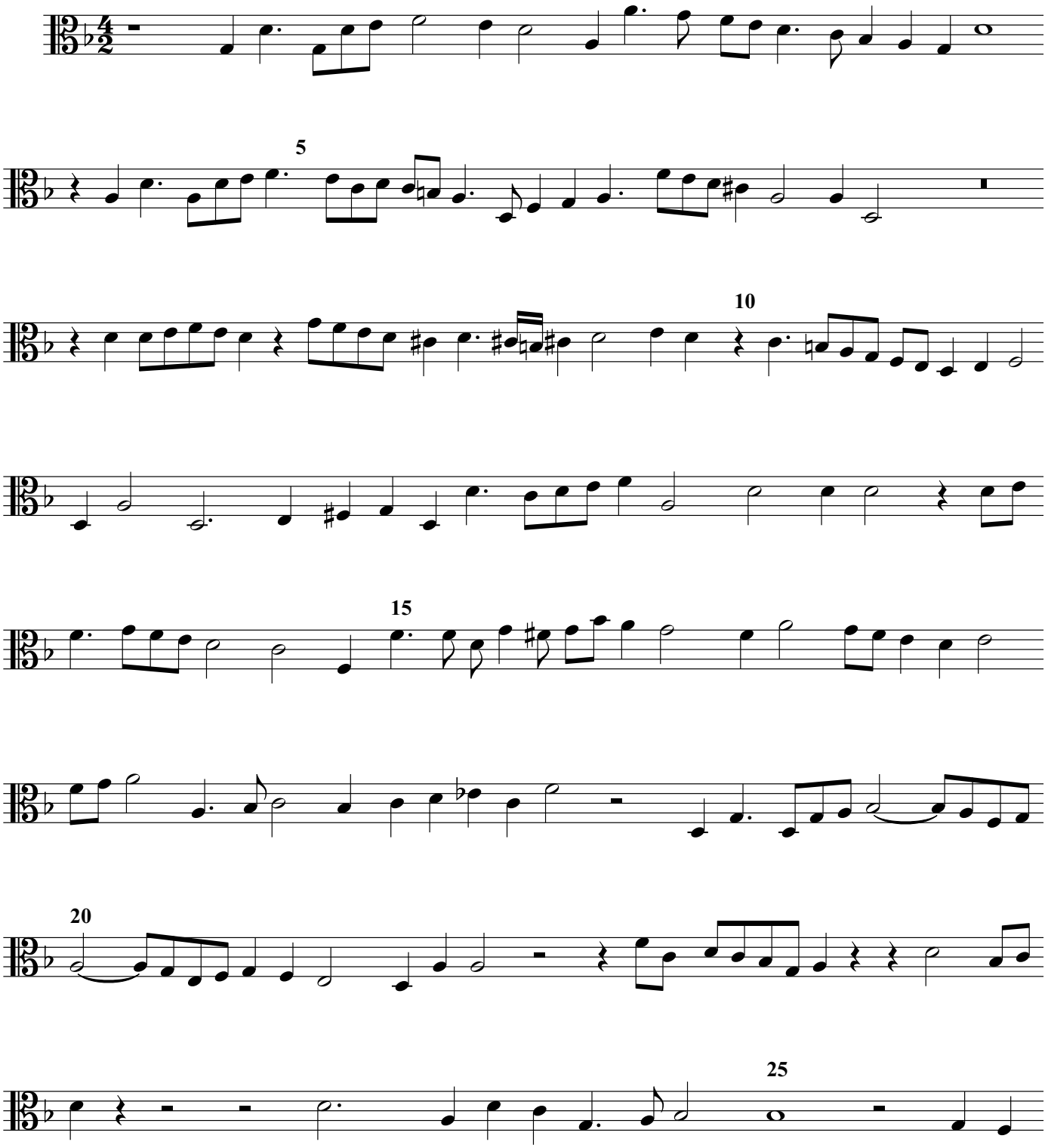
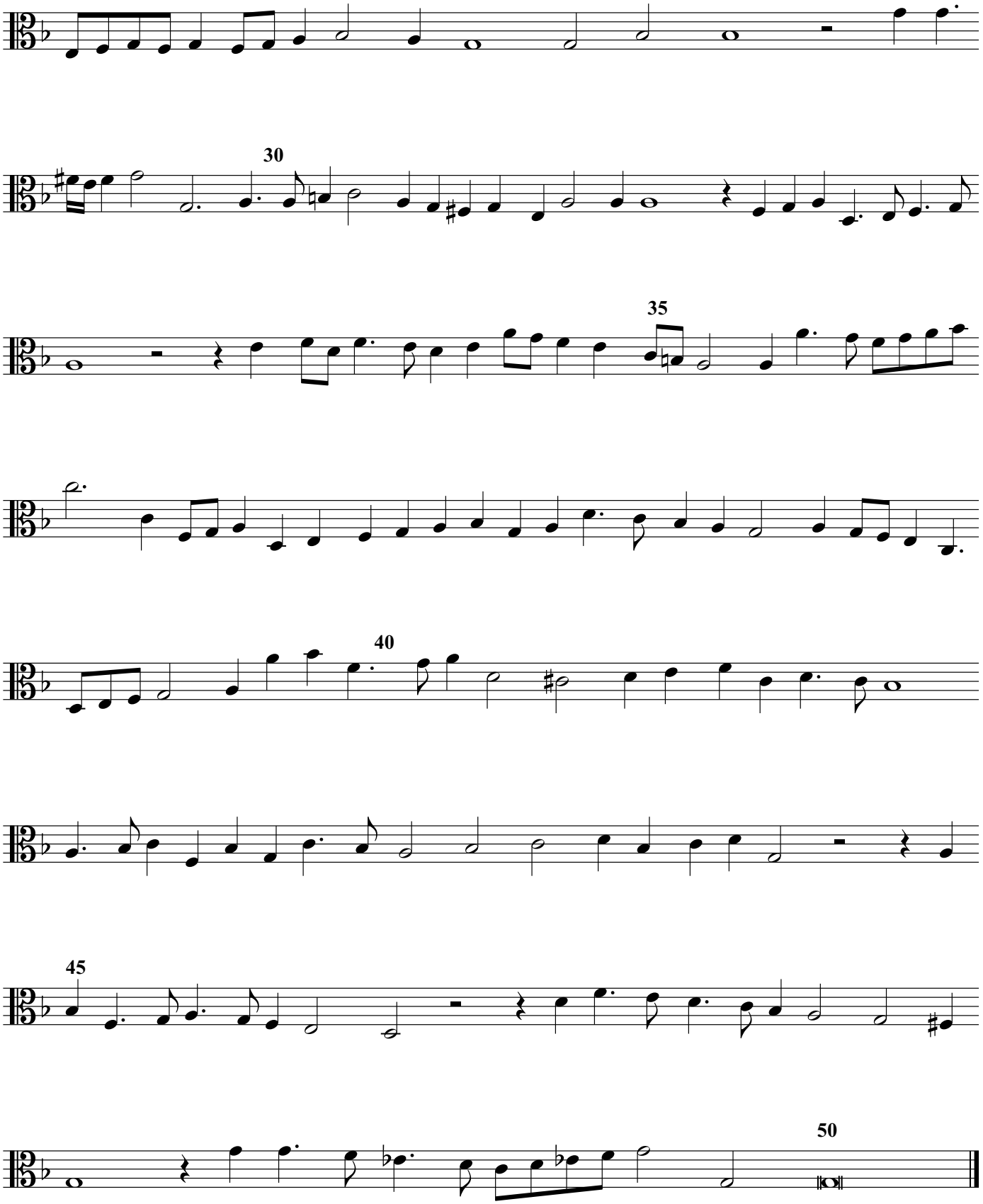
Edited by Martha Bishop

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John Jenkins (1592-1678)
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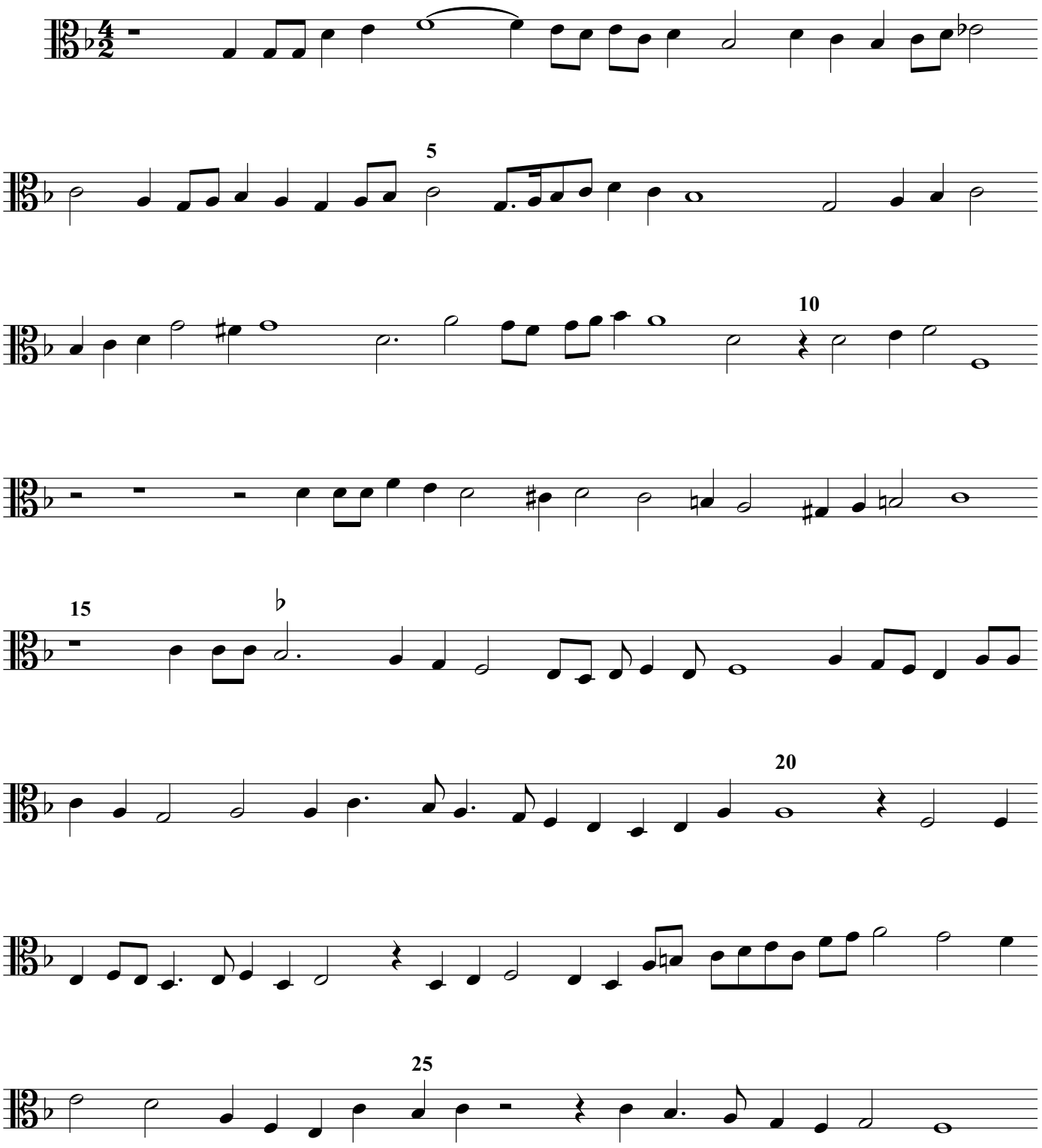

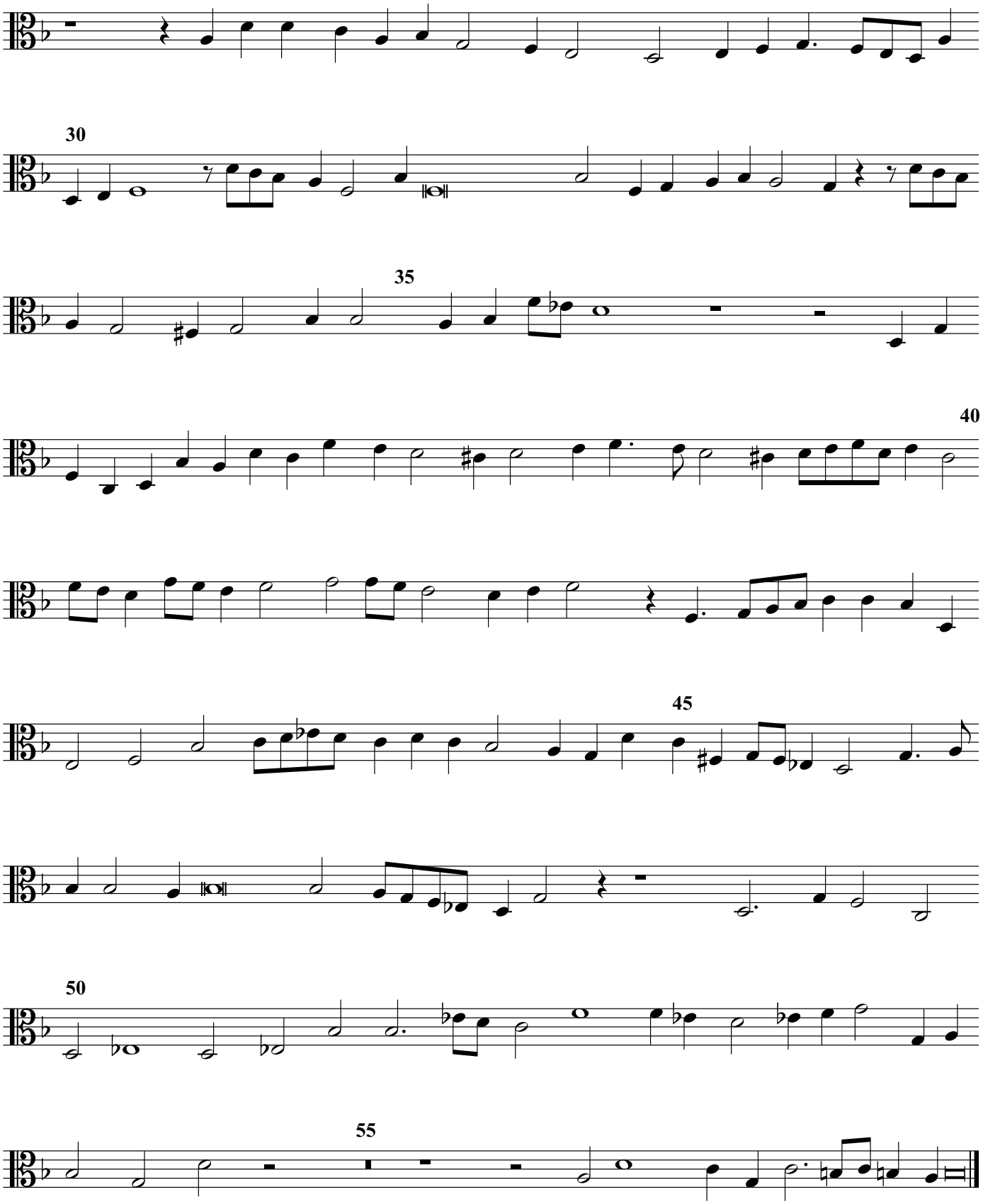
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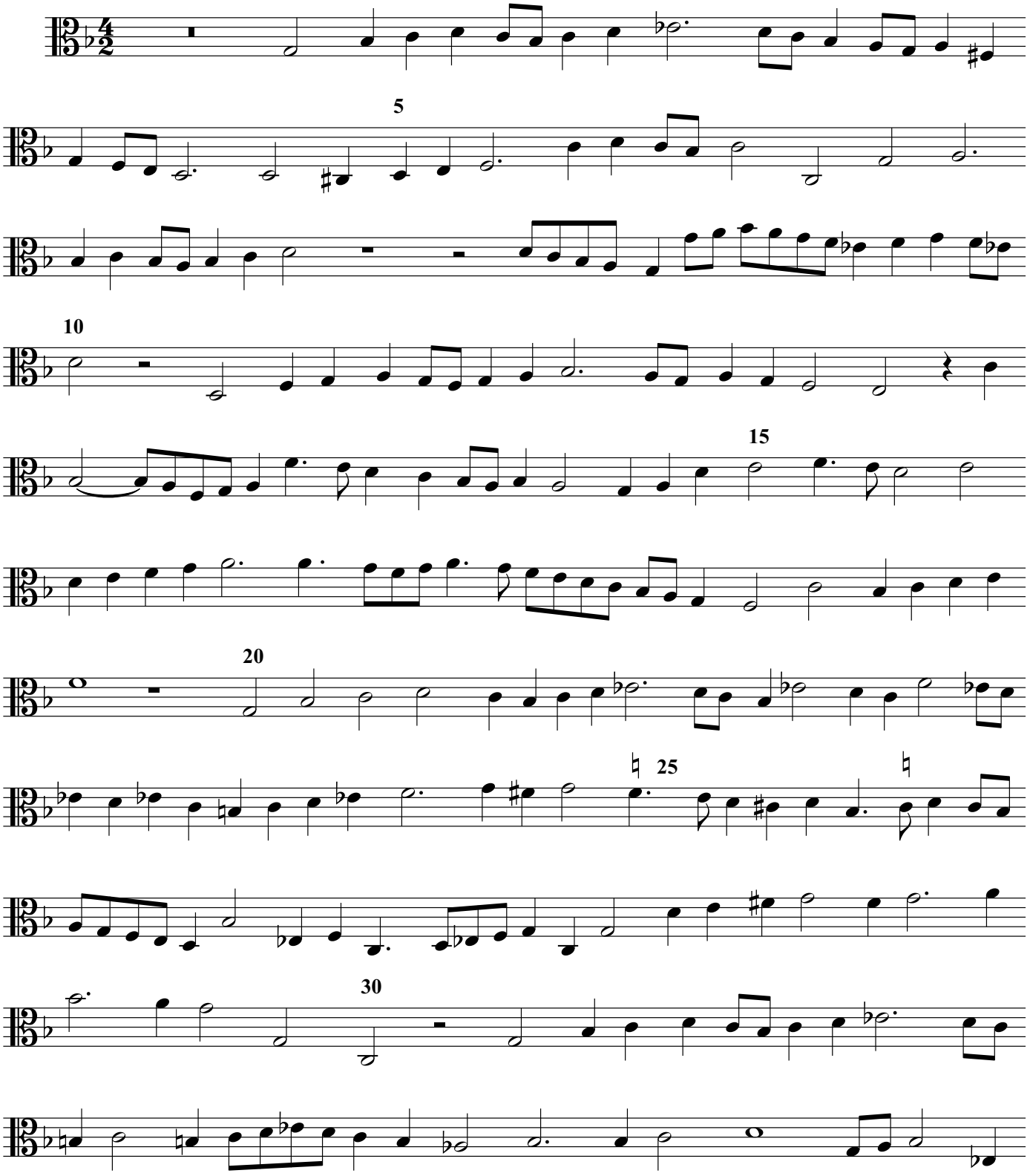
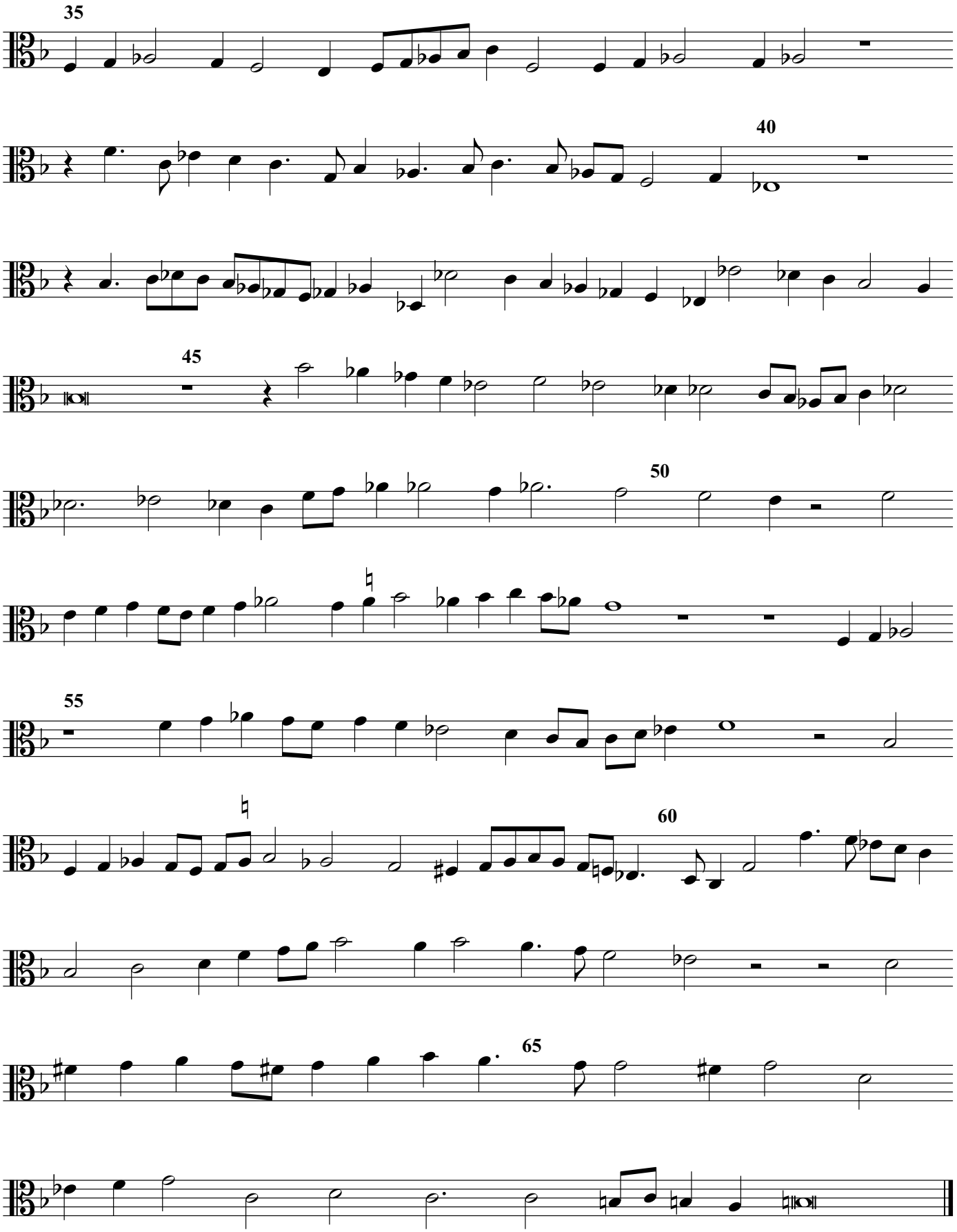
John Jenkins (1592-1678)
Edited by Martha Bishop

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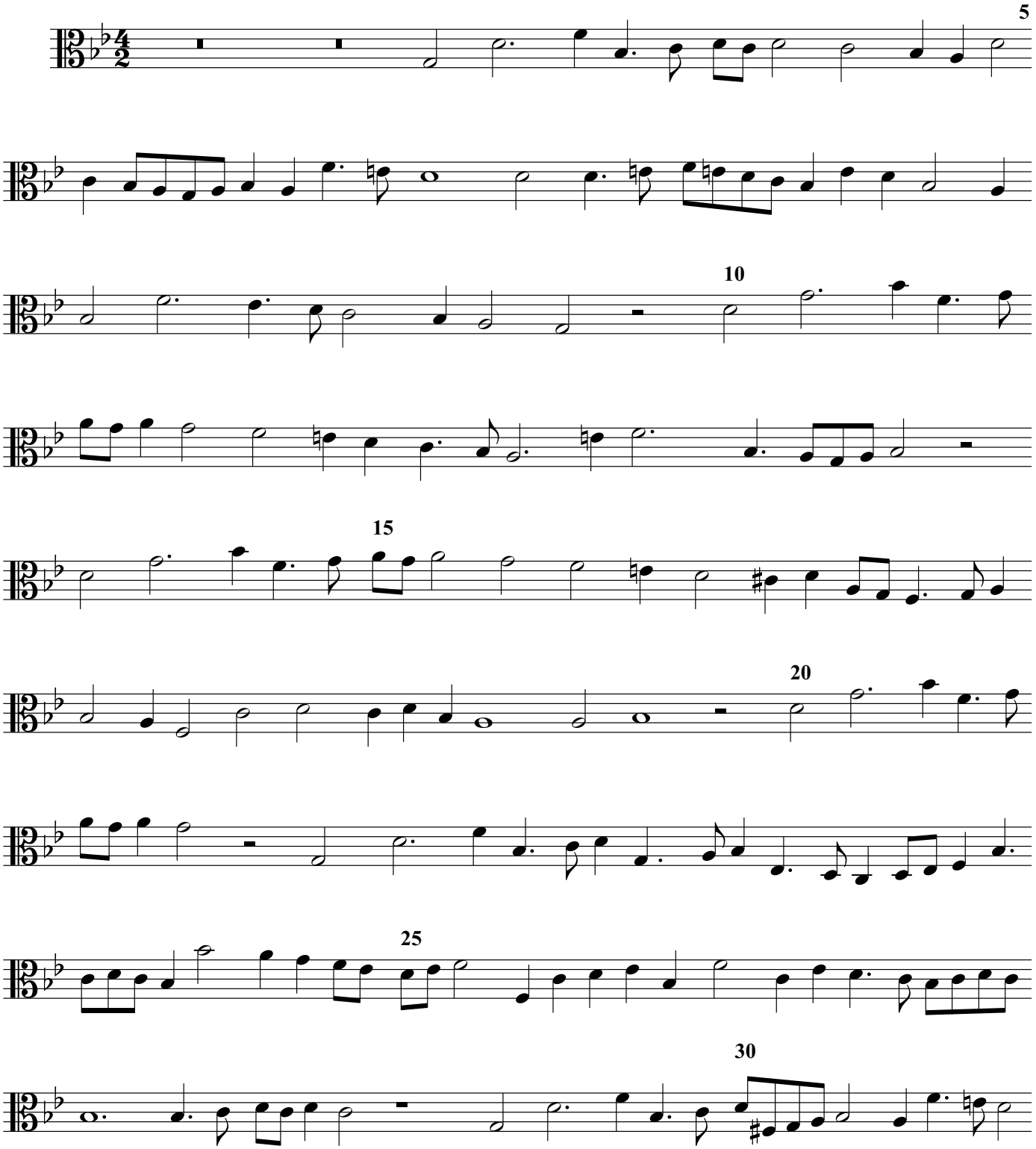
John Jenkins (1592-1678)
Edited by Martha Bishop



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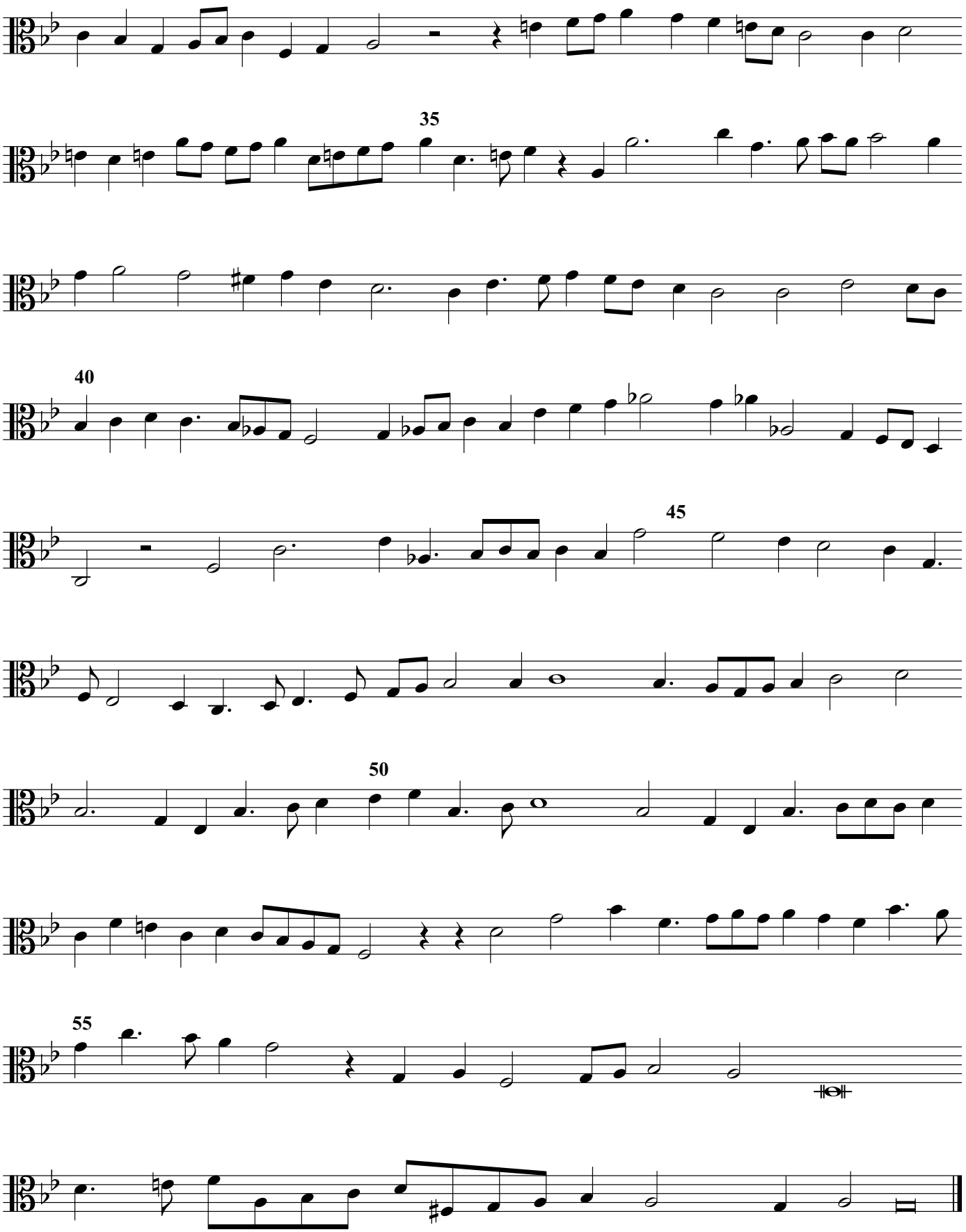

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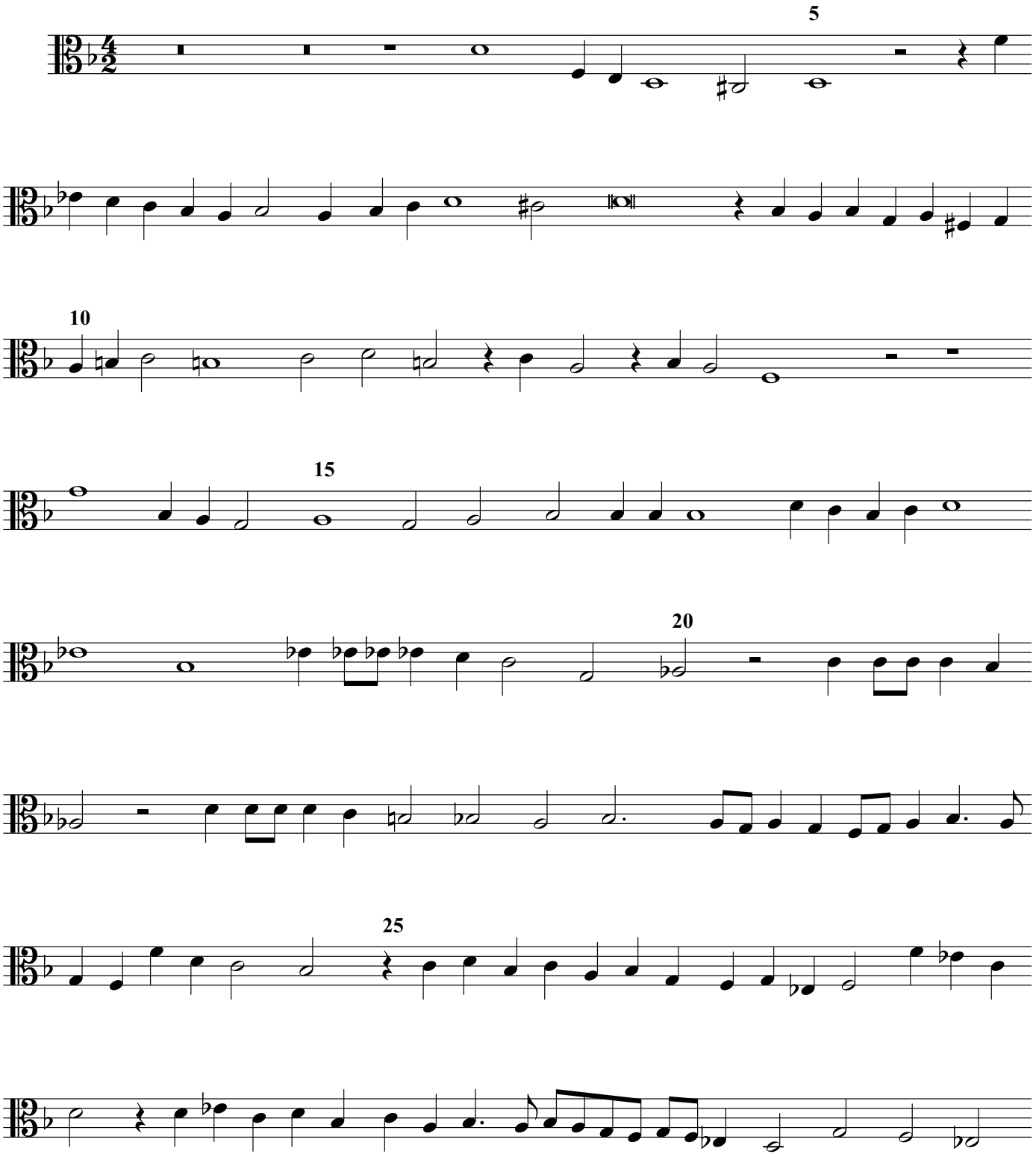
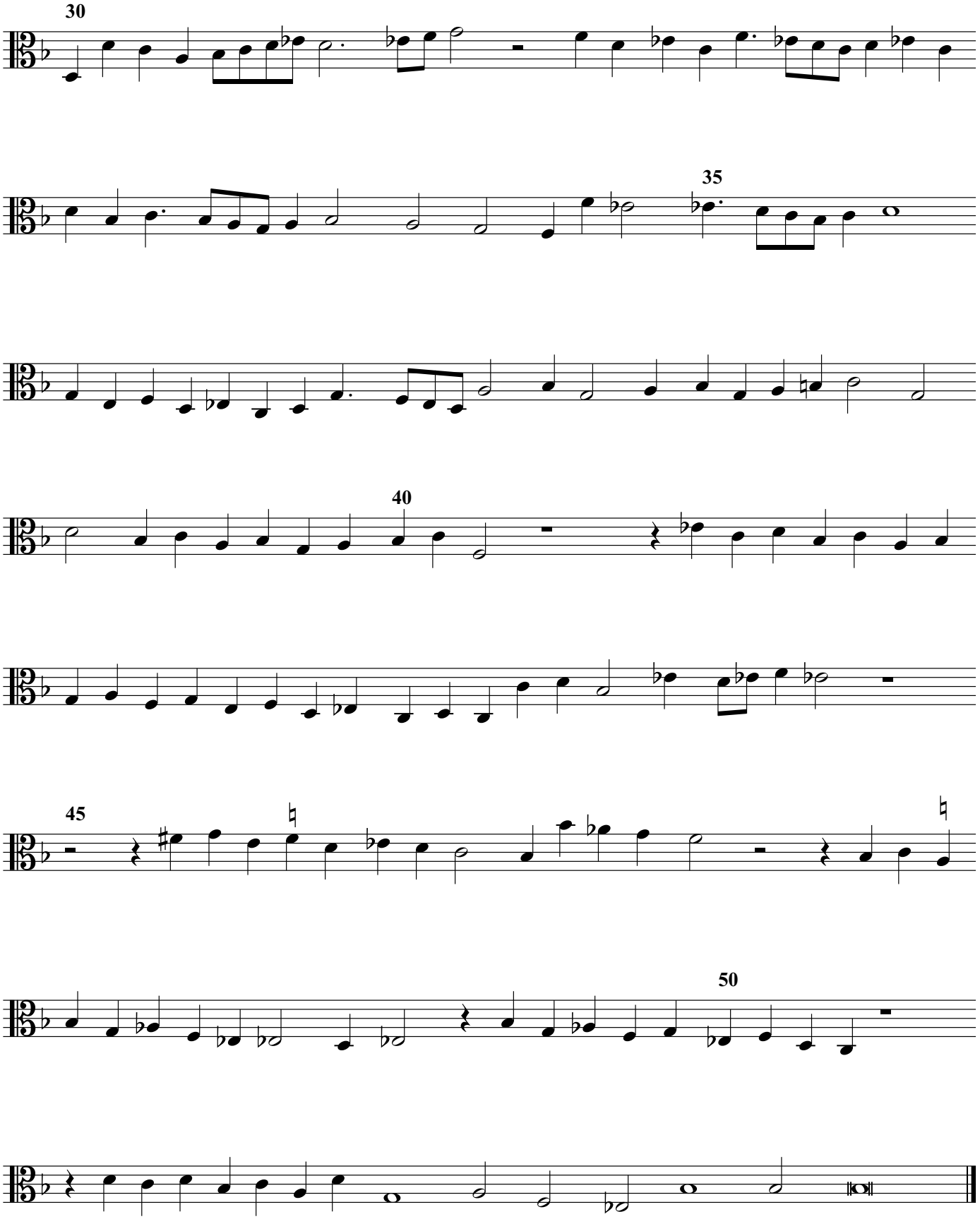
John Jenkins (1592-1678)
Edited by Martha Bishop

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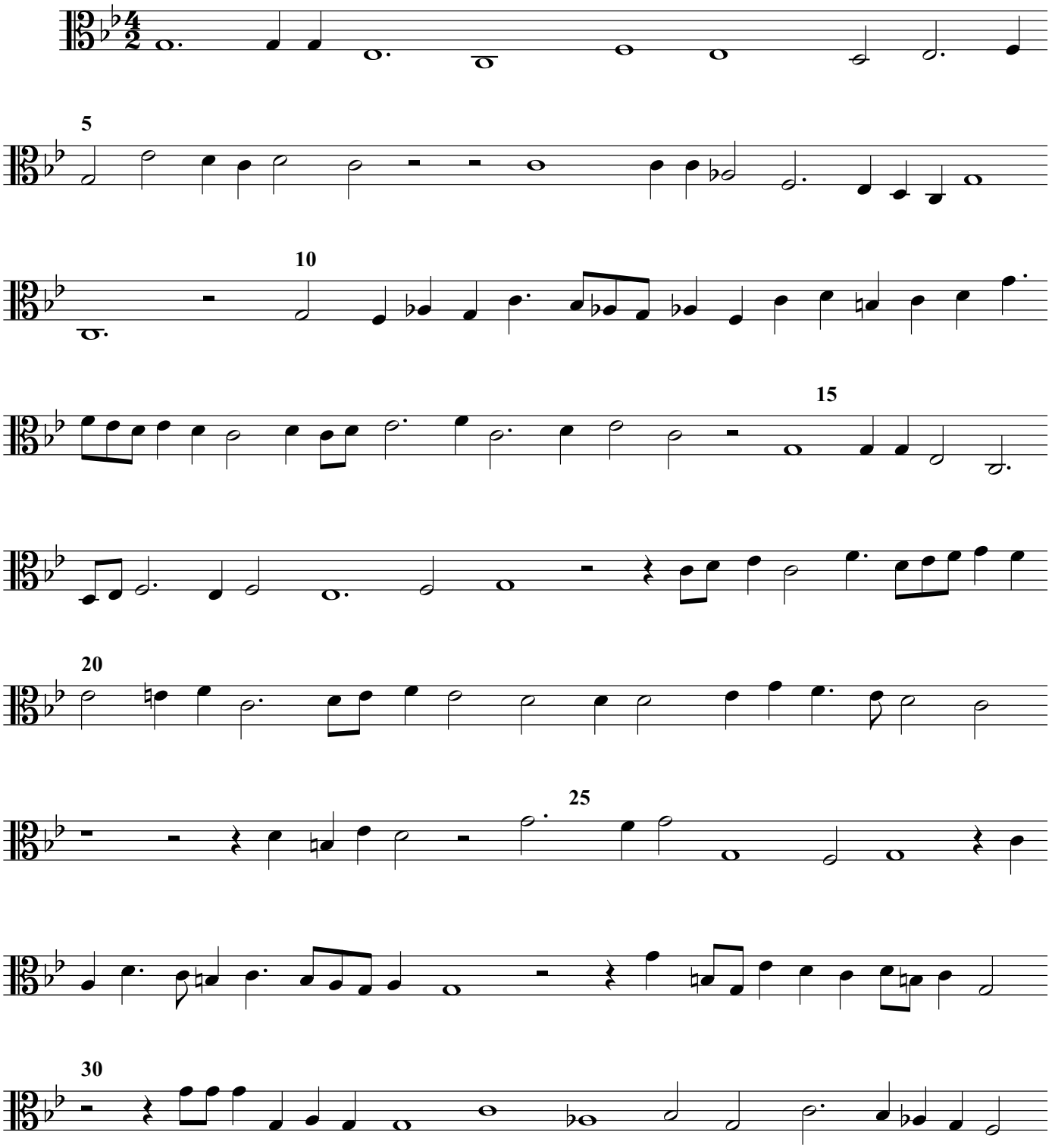

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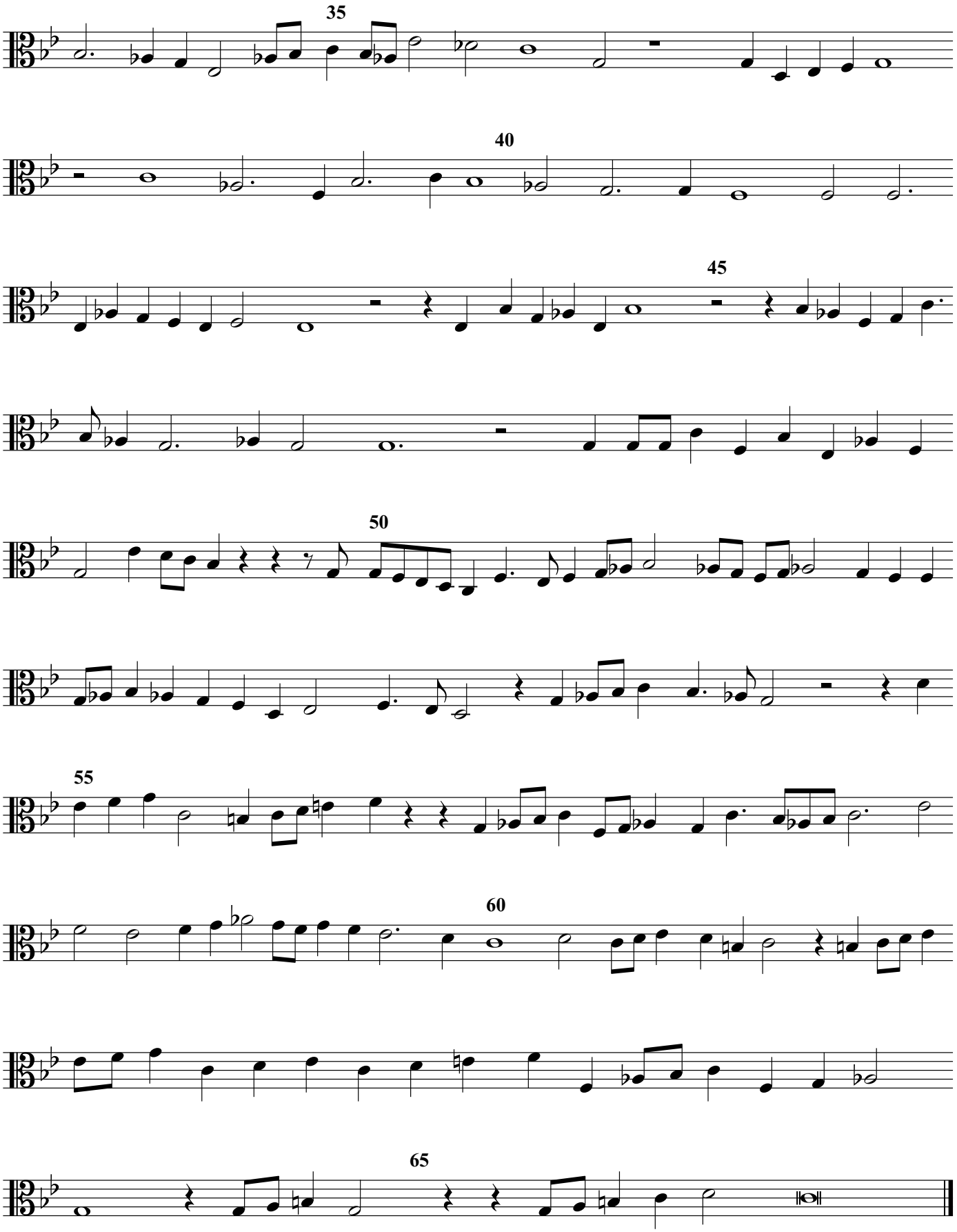

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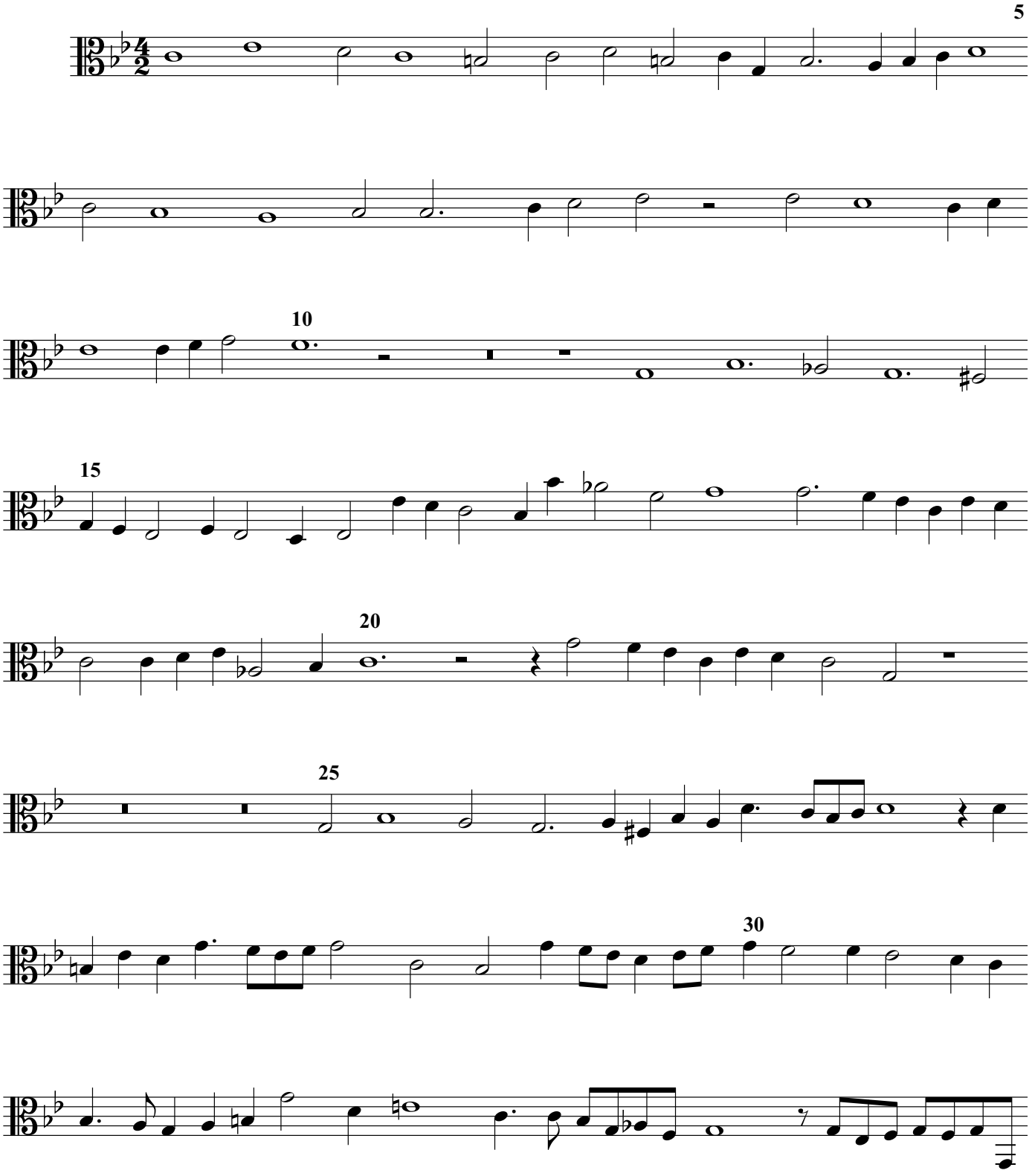

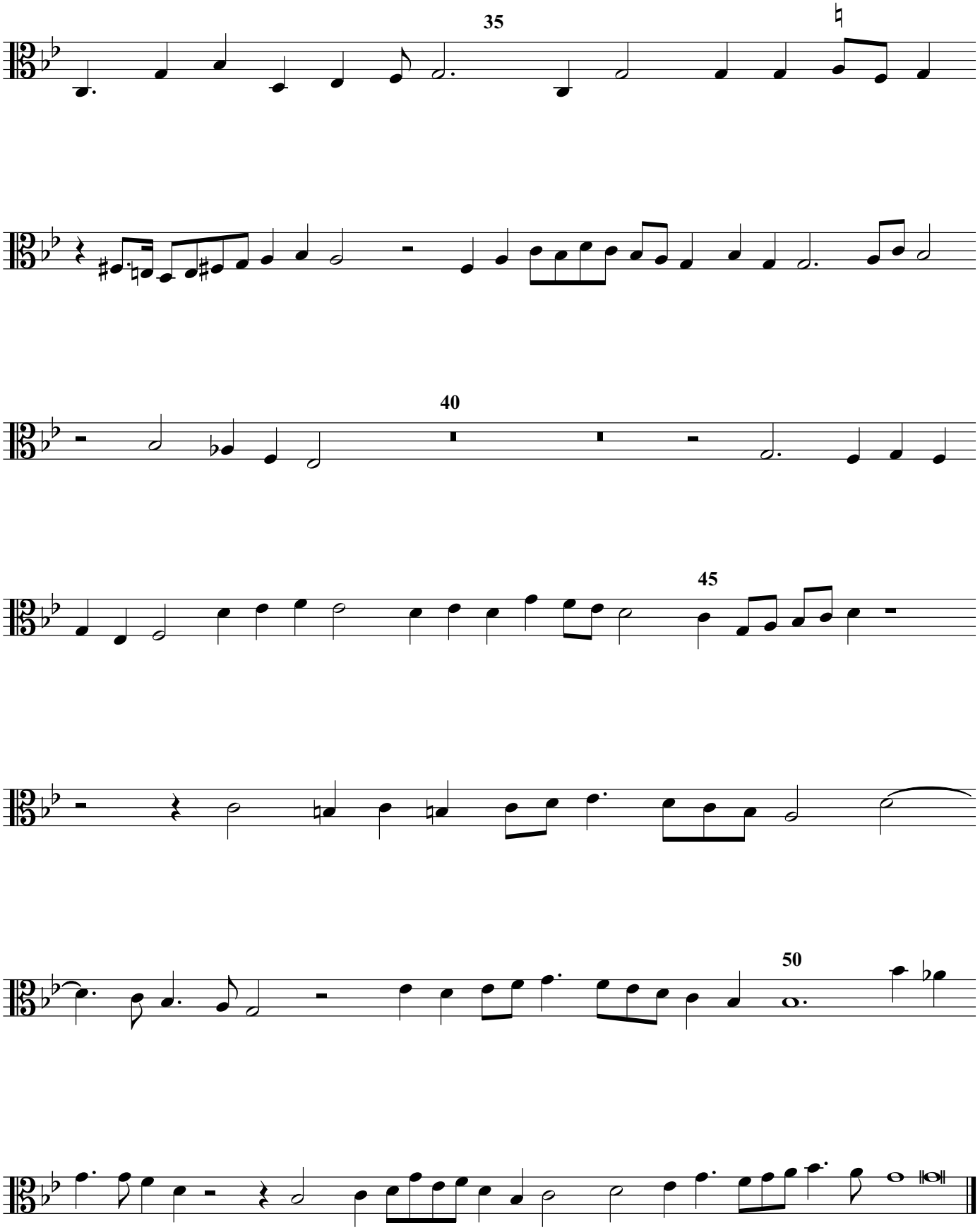
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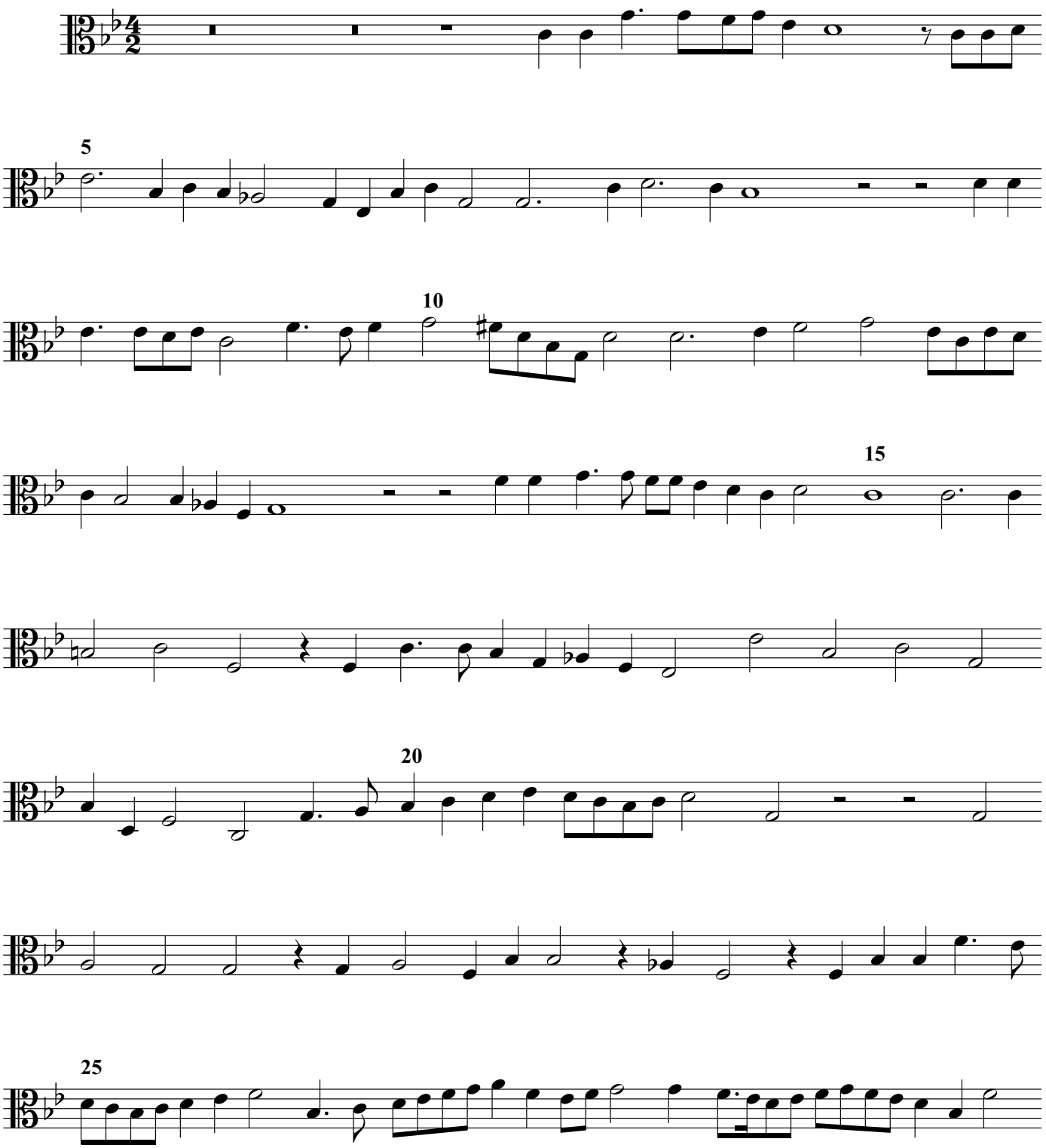

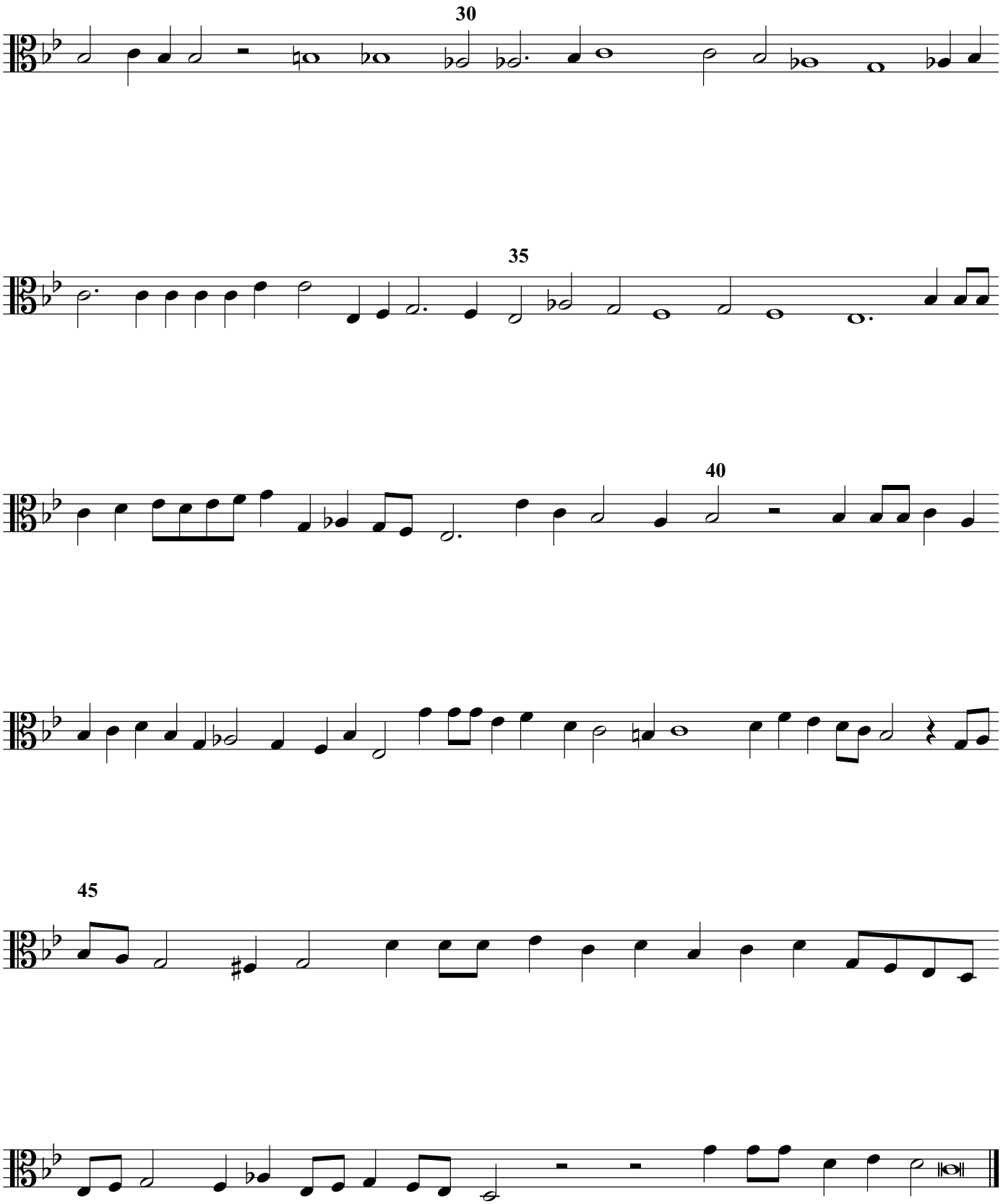
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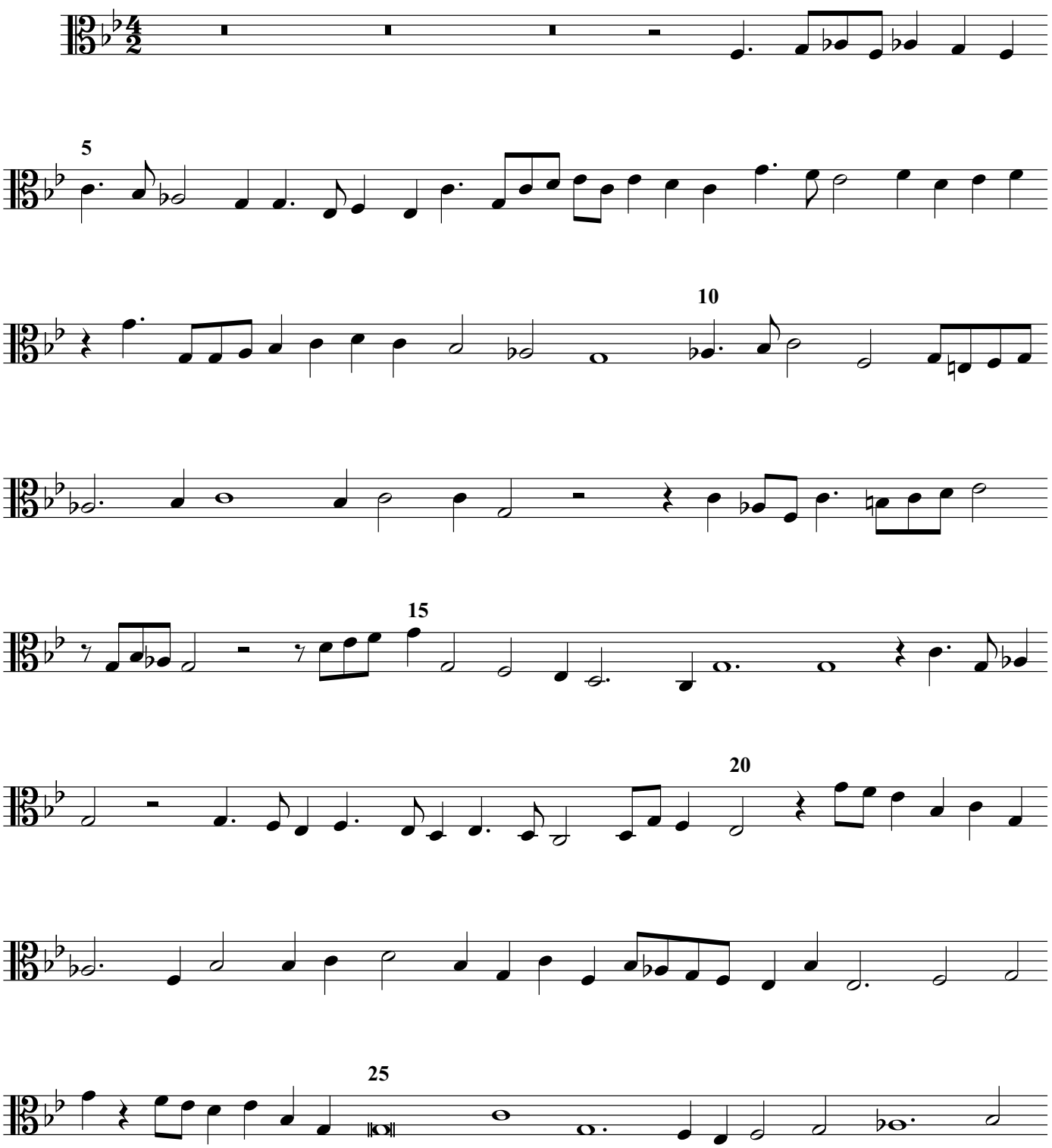

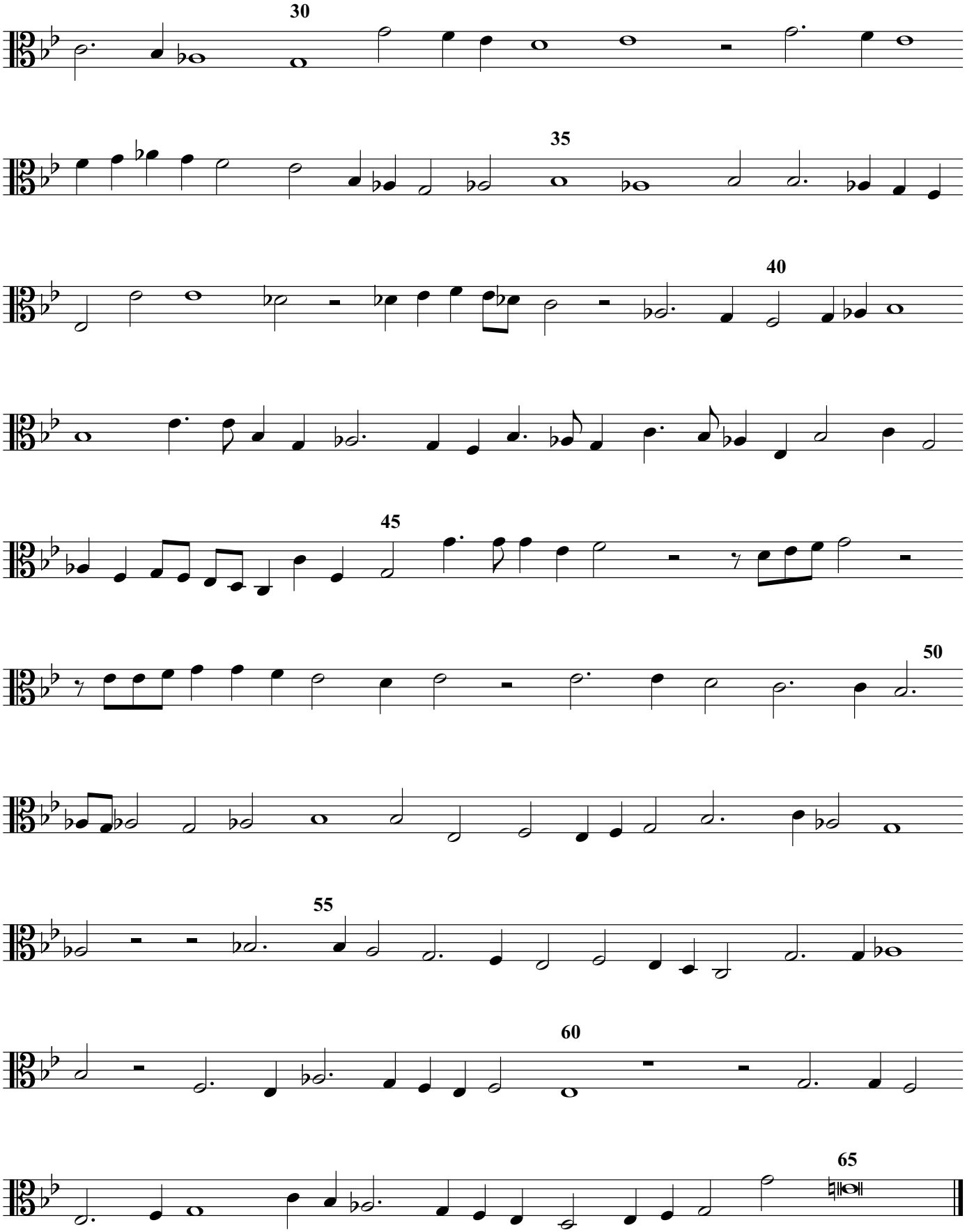
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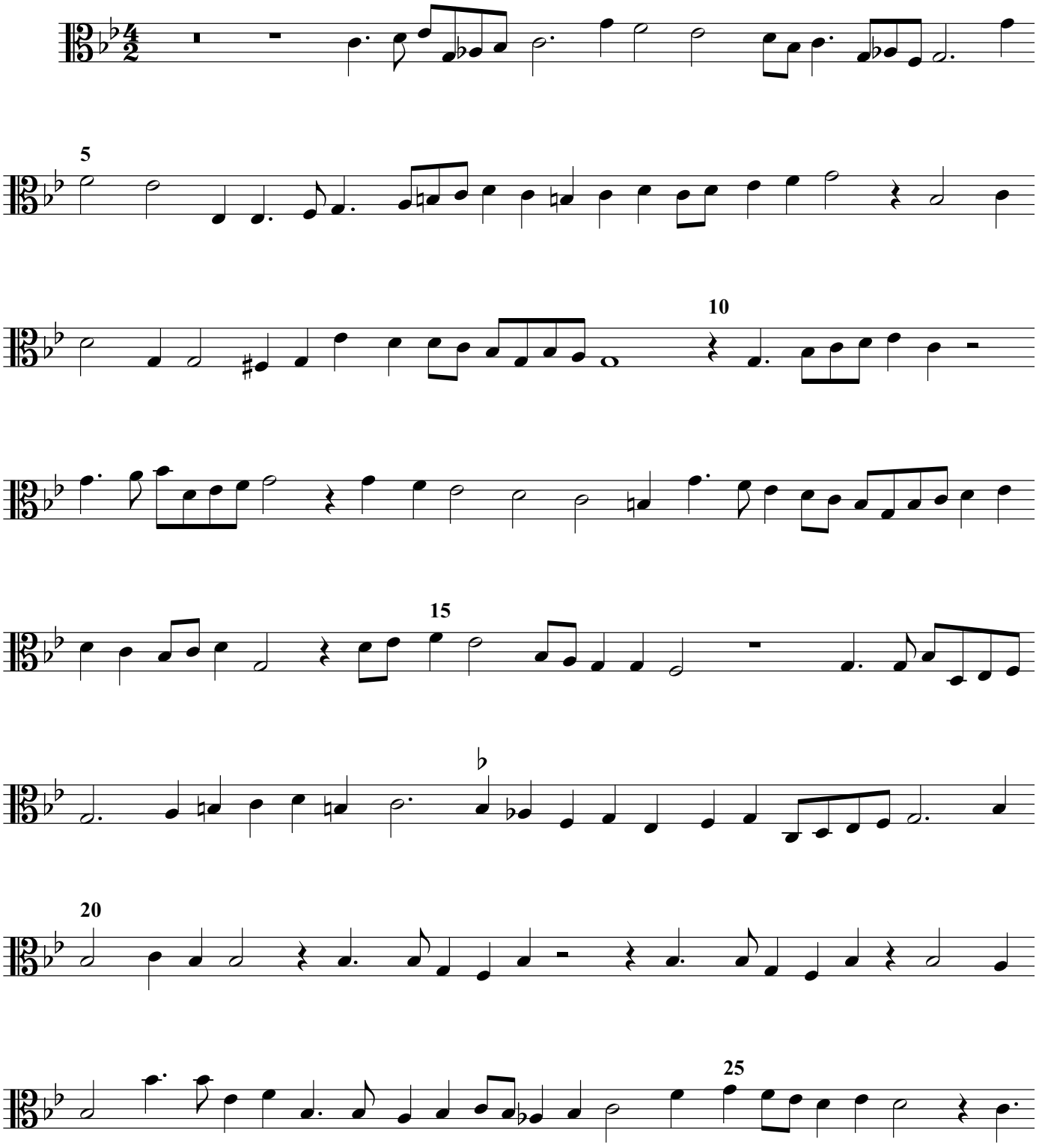

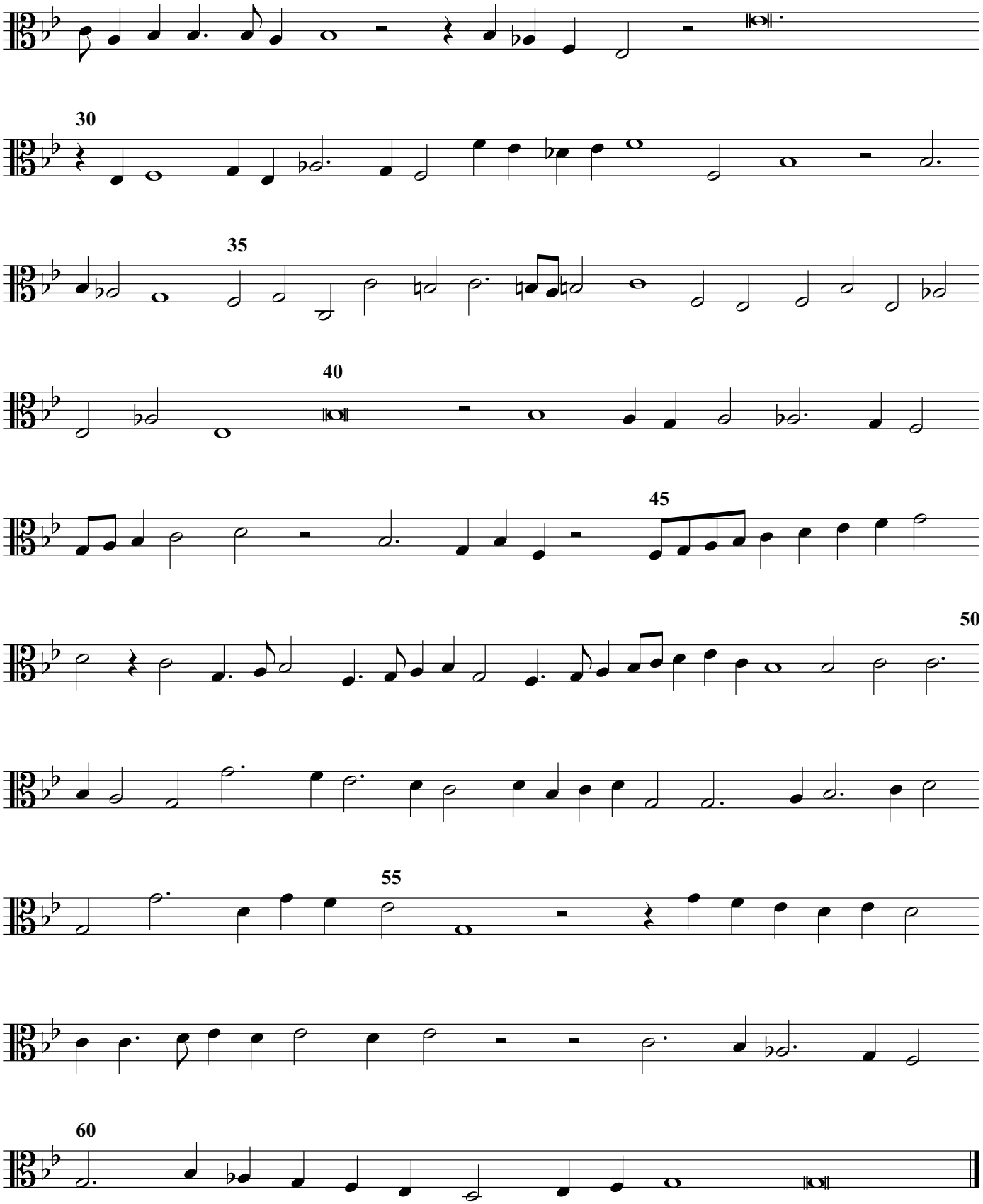
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John Jenkins (1592-1678)
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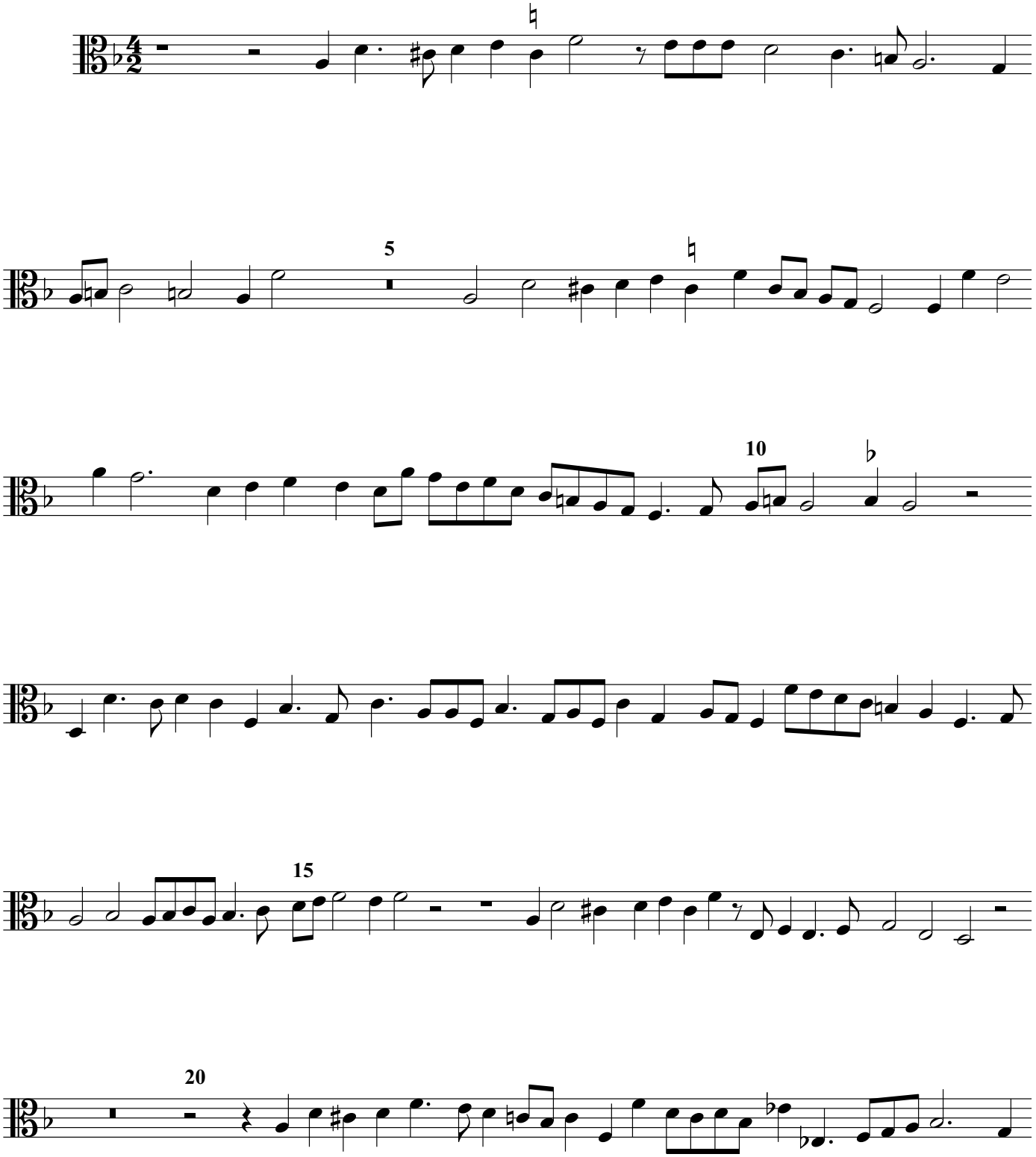

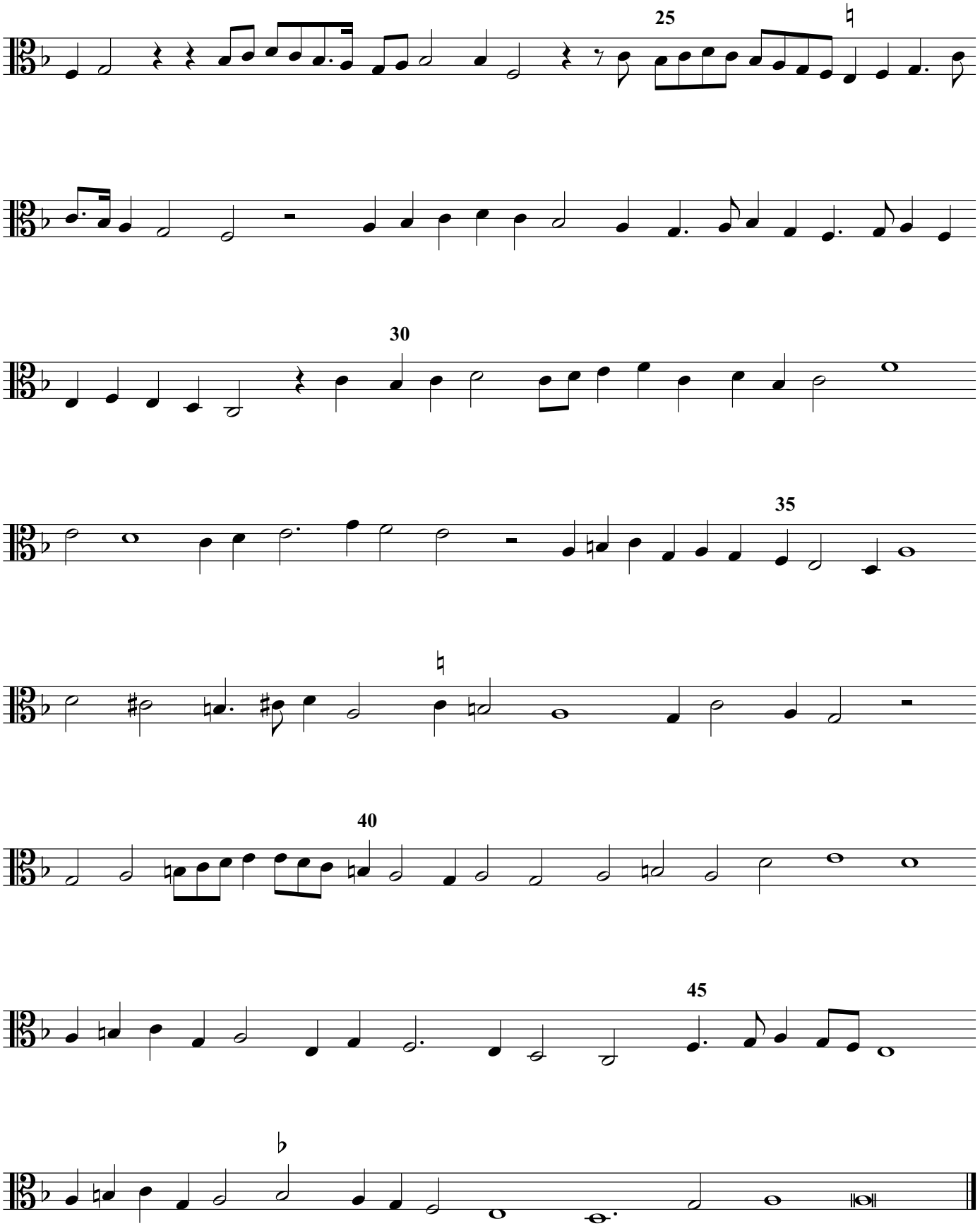
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John Jenkins (1592-1678)
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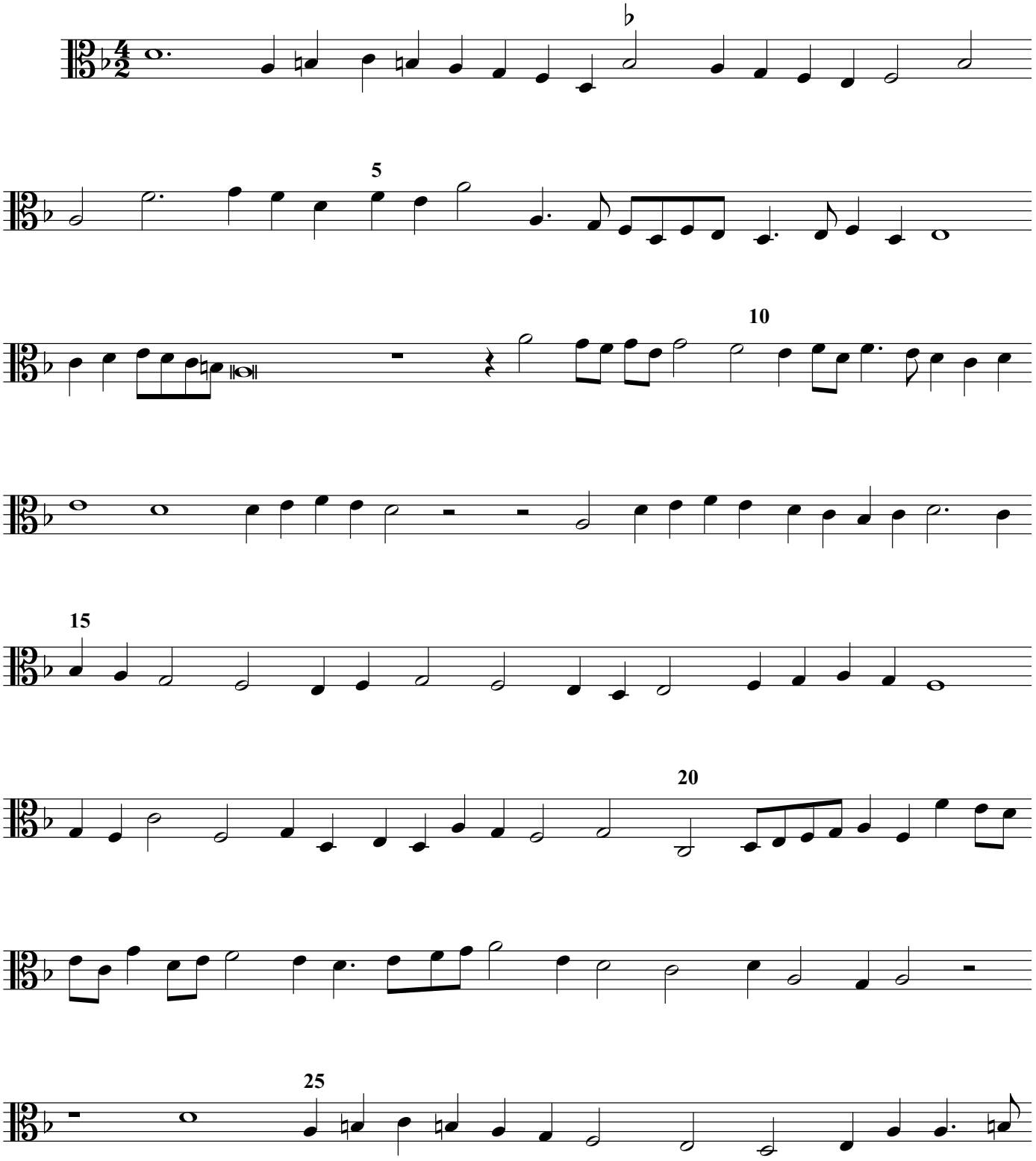

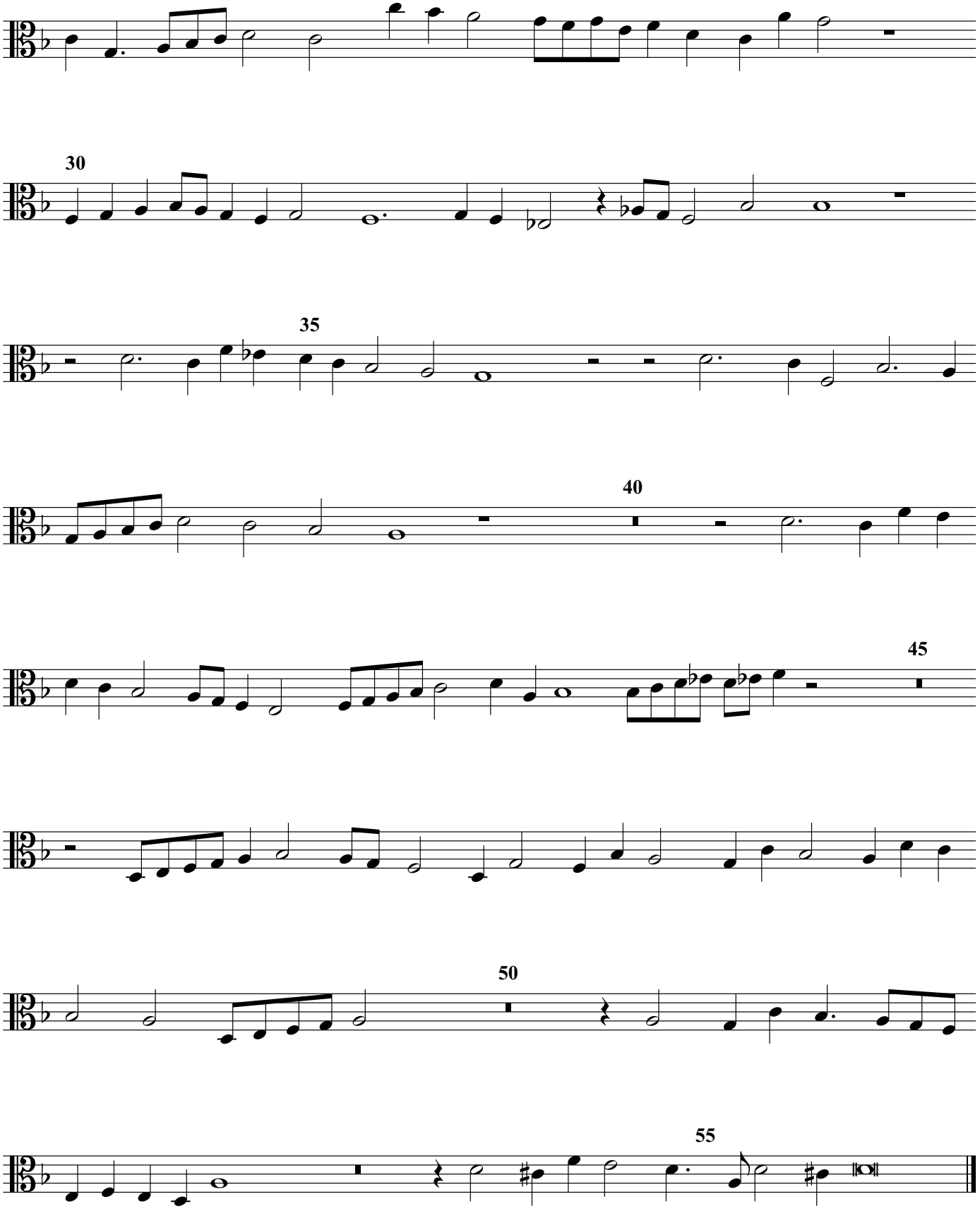
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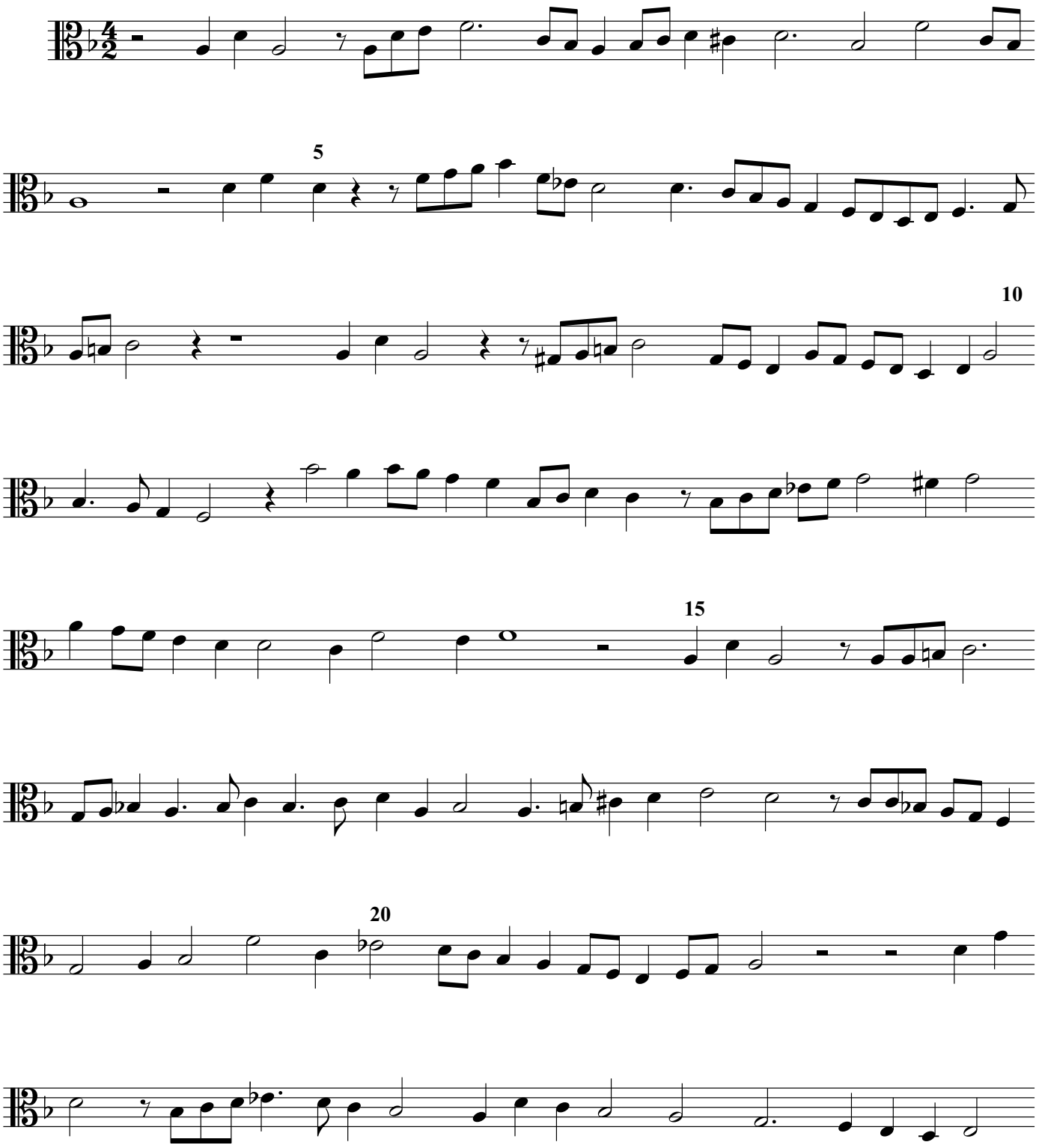

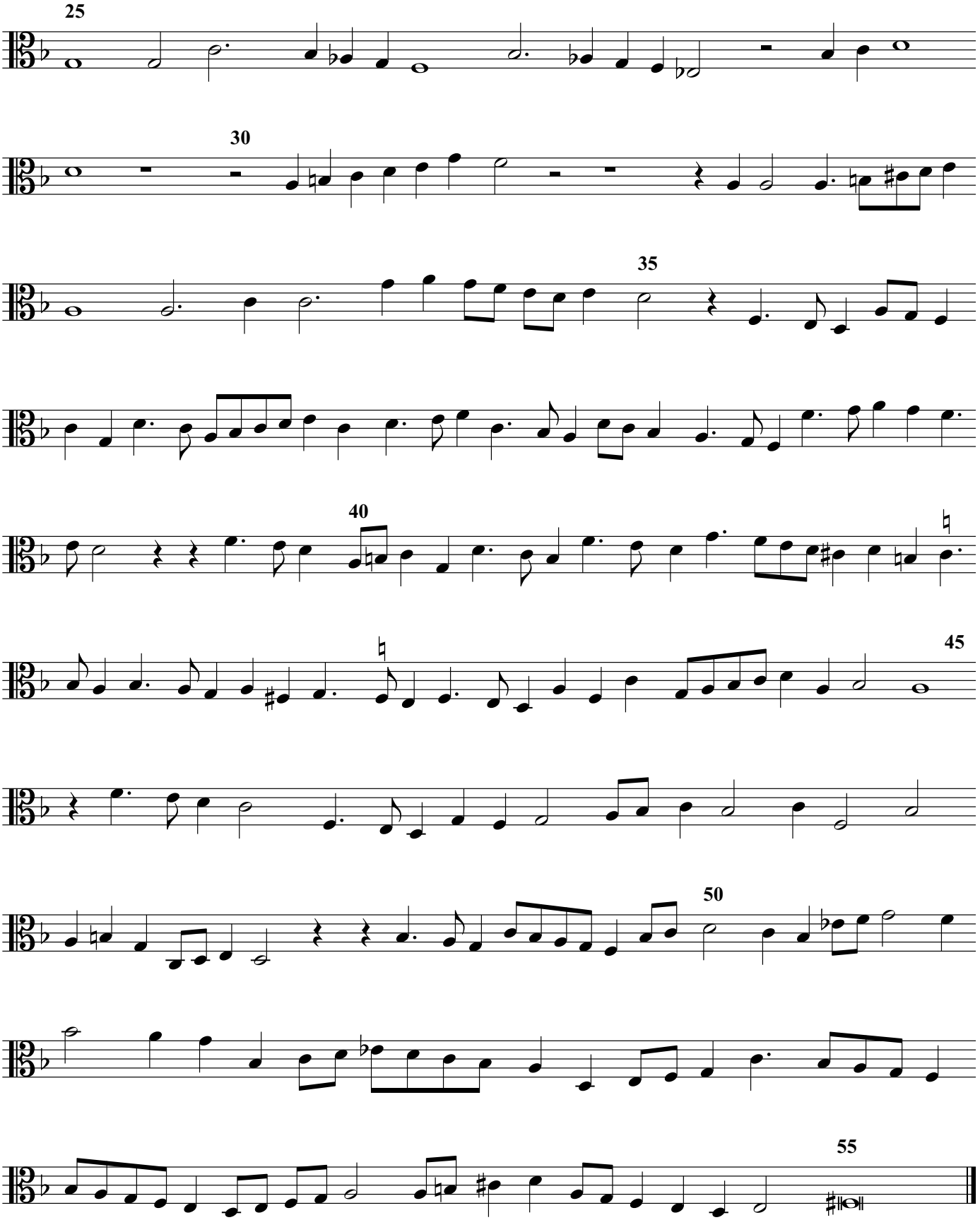
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John Jenkins (1592-1678)
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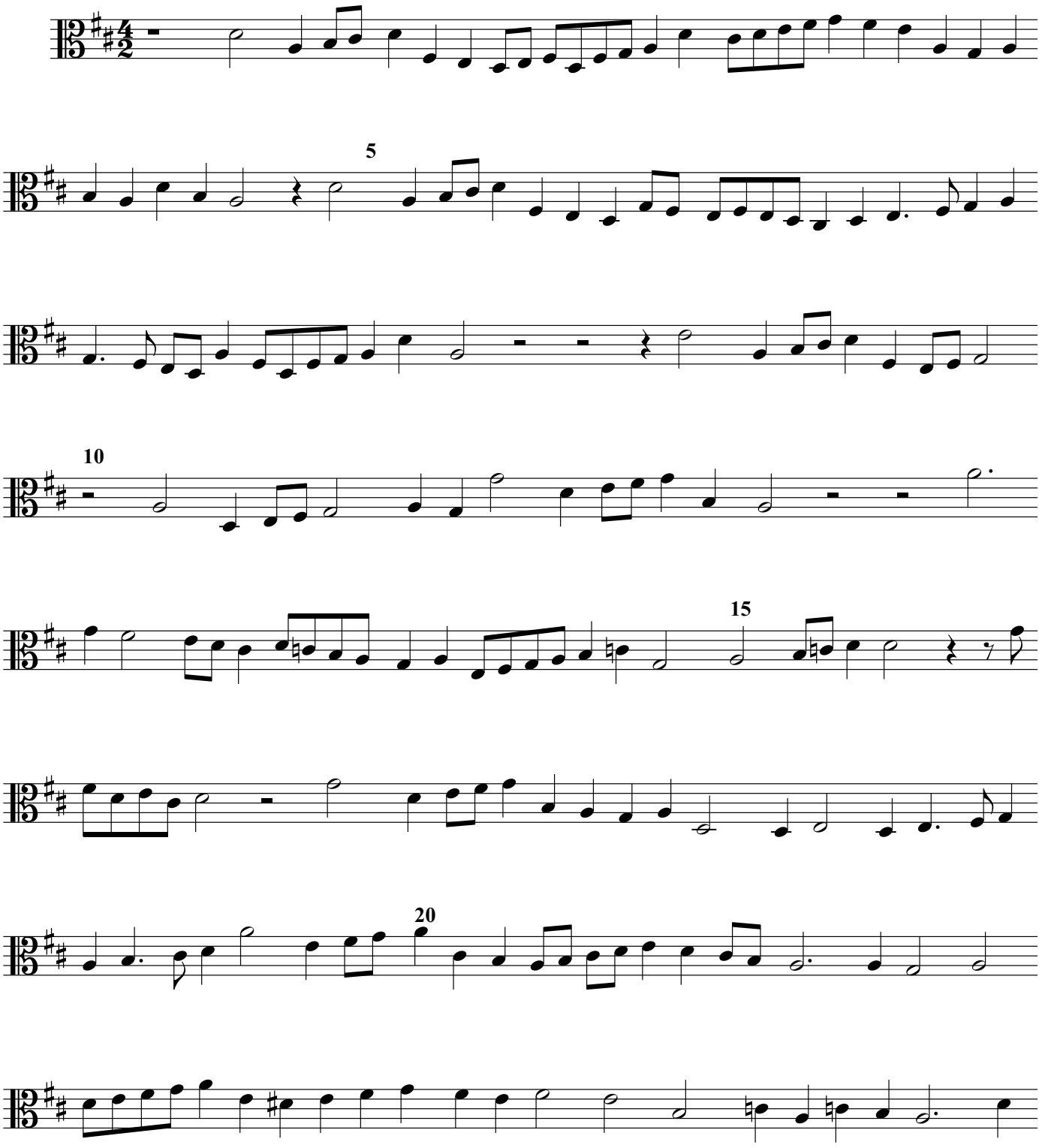

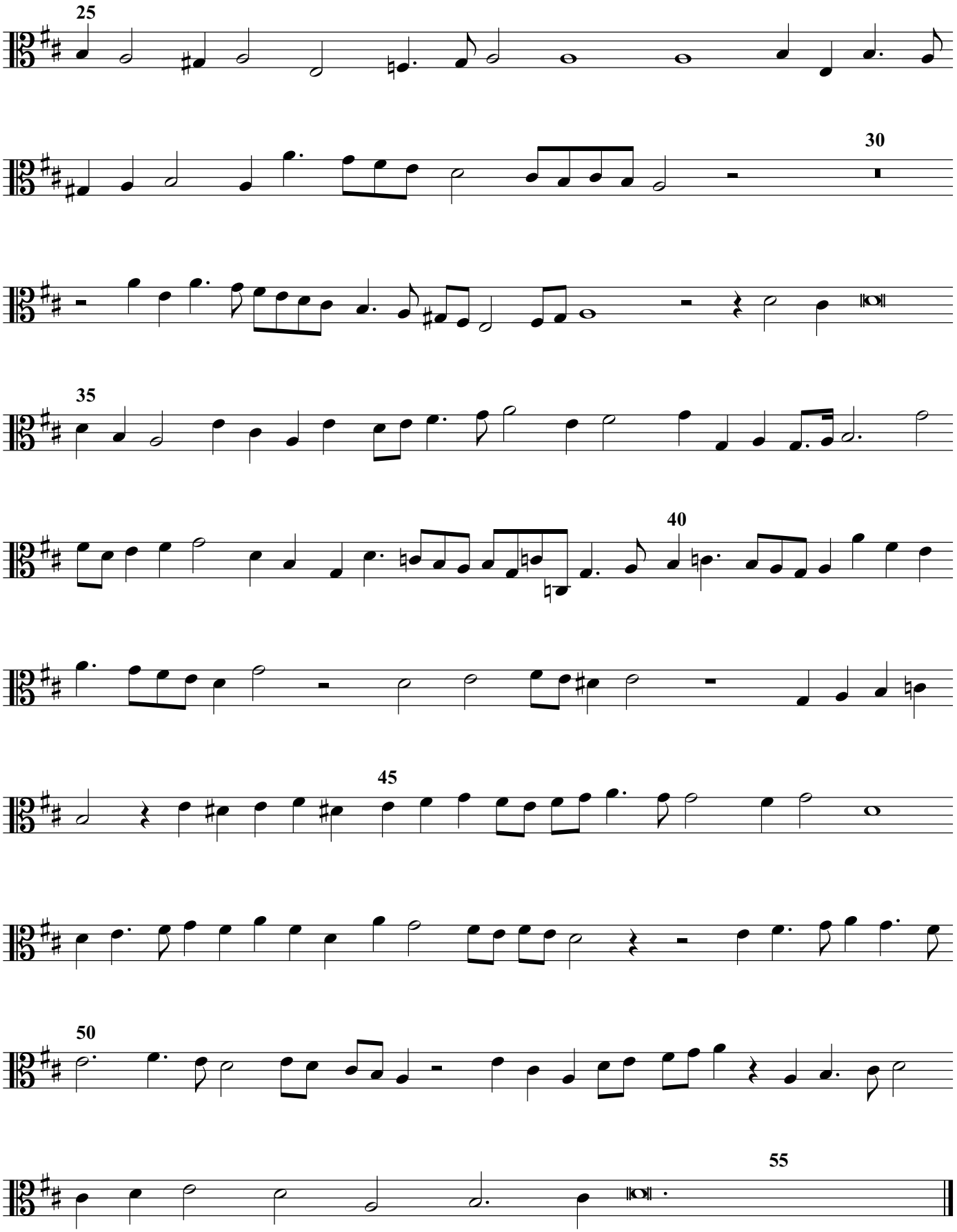
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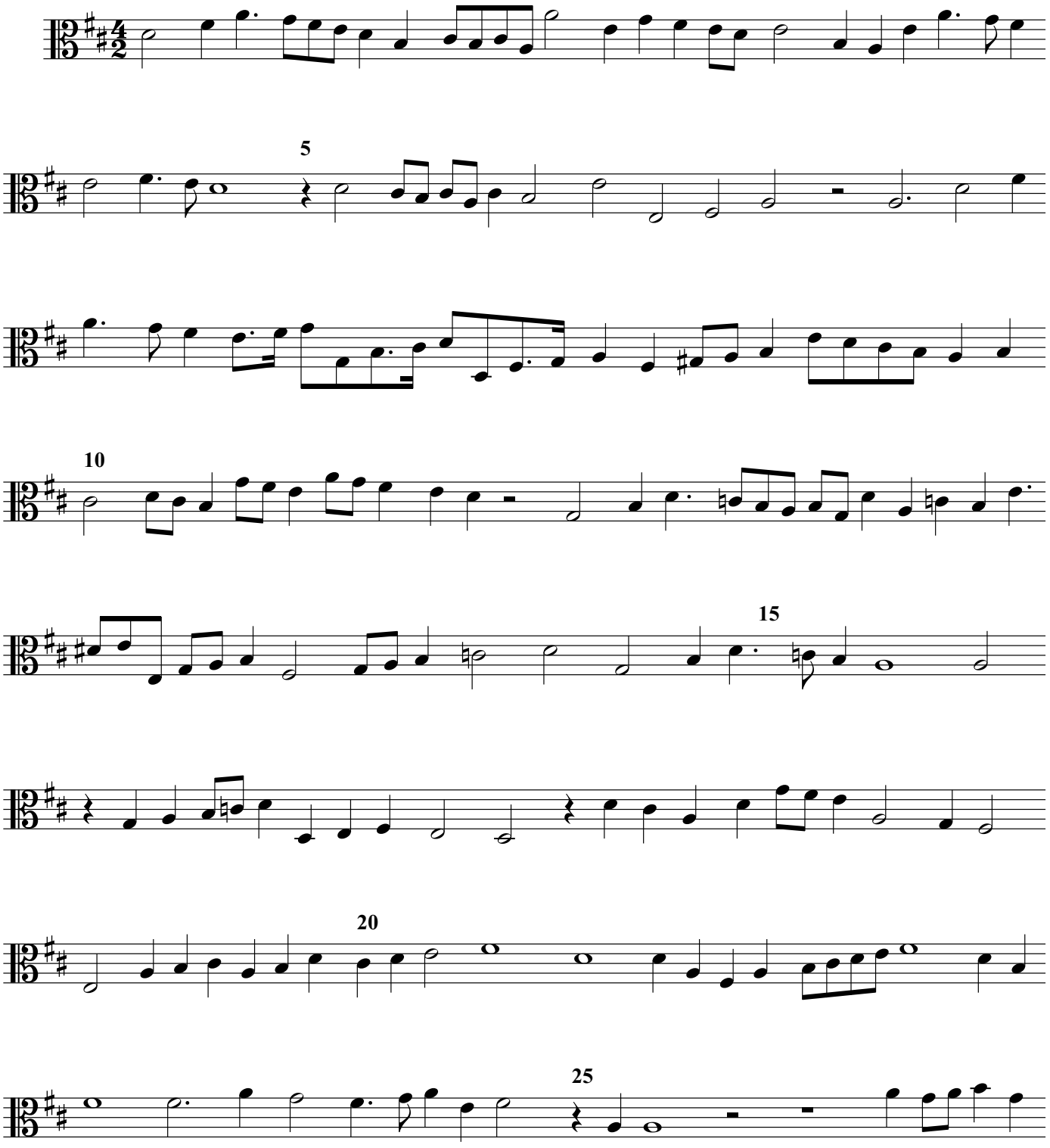

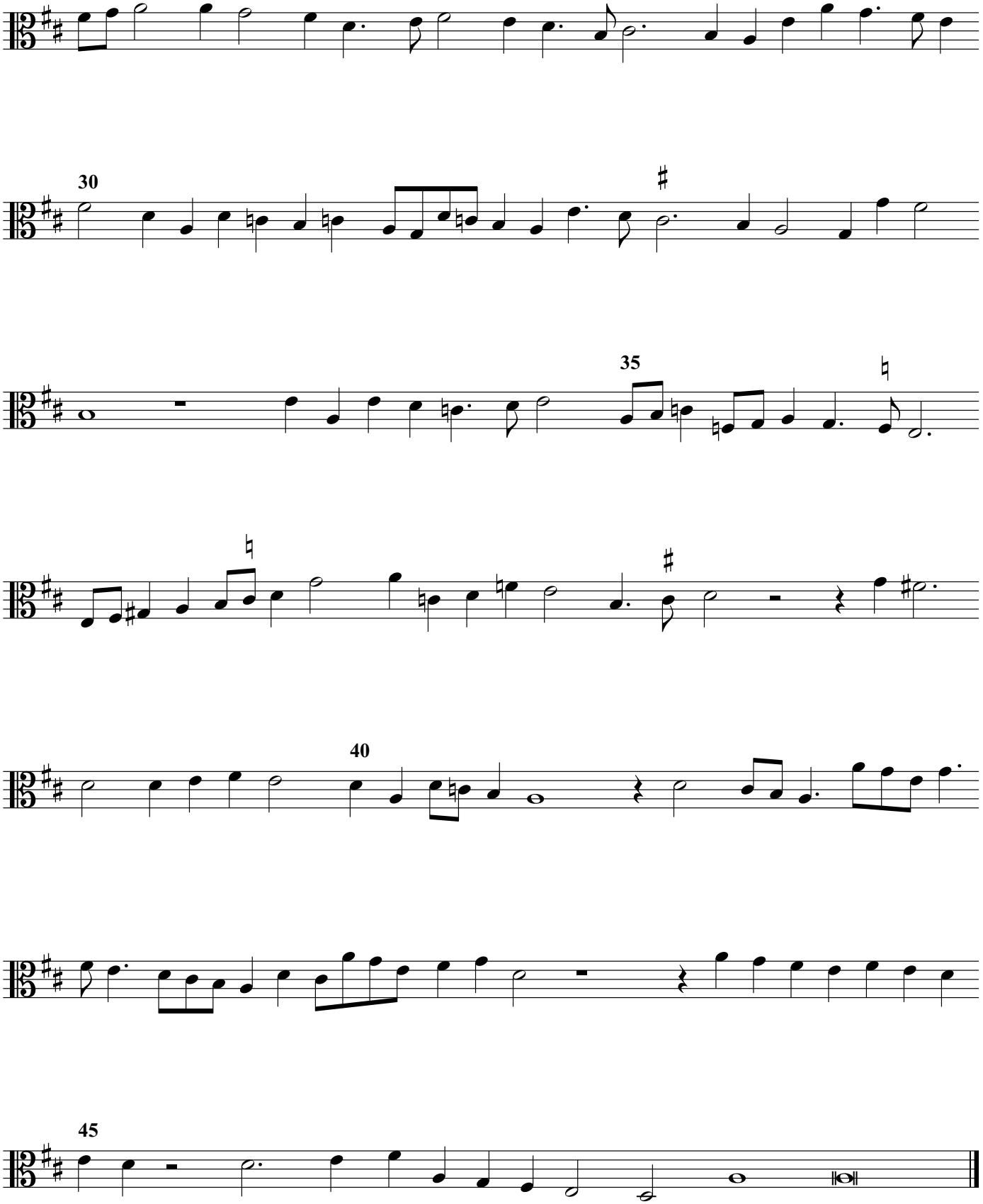
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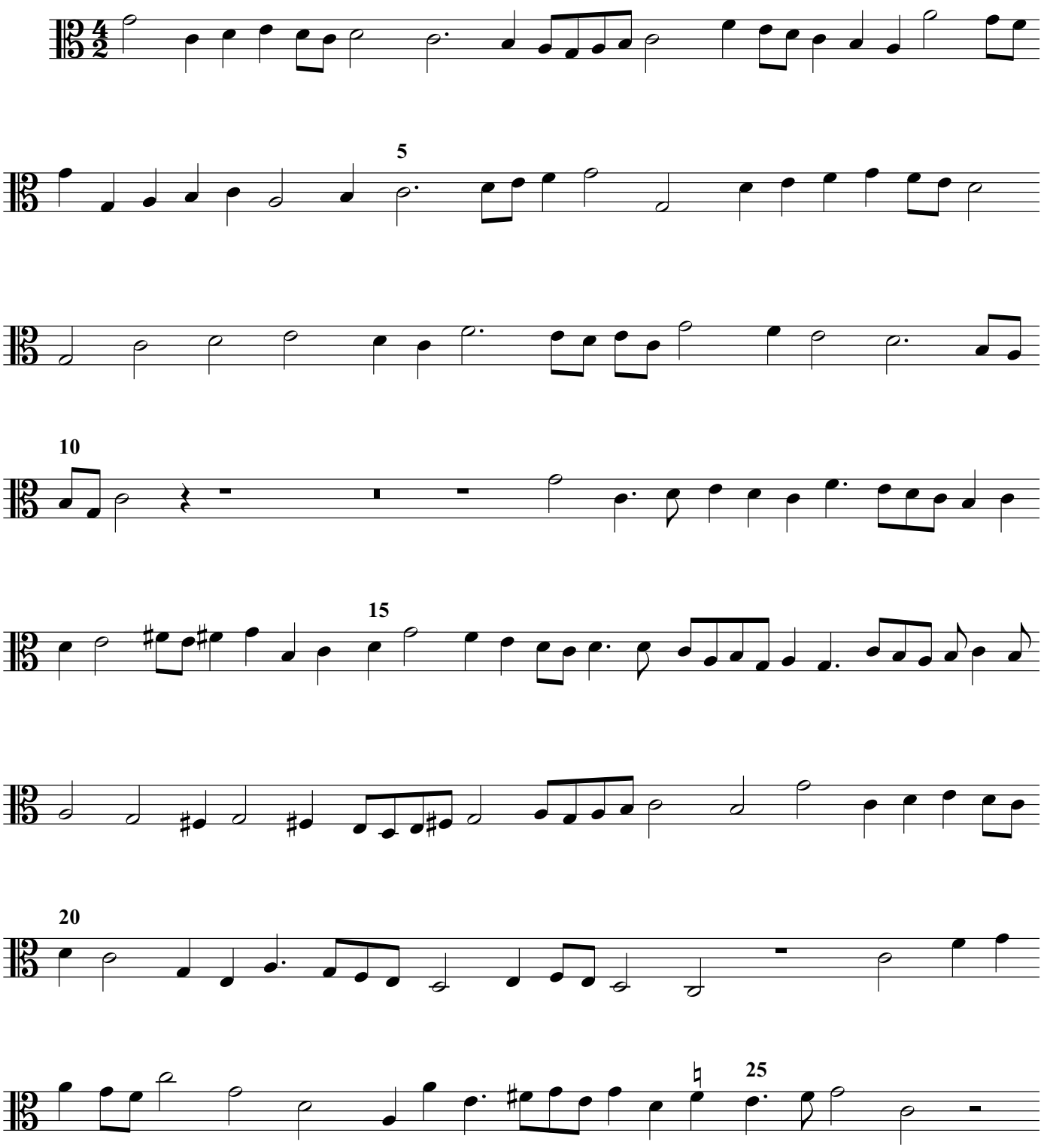
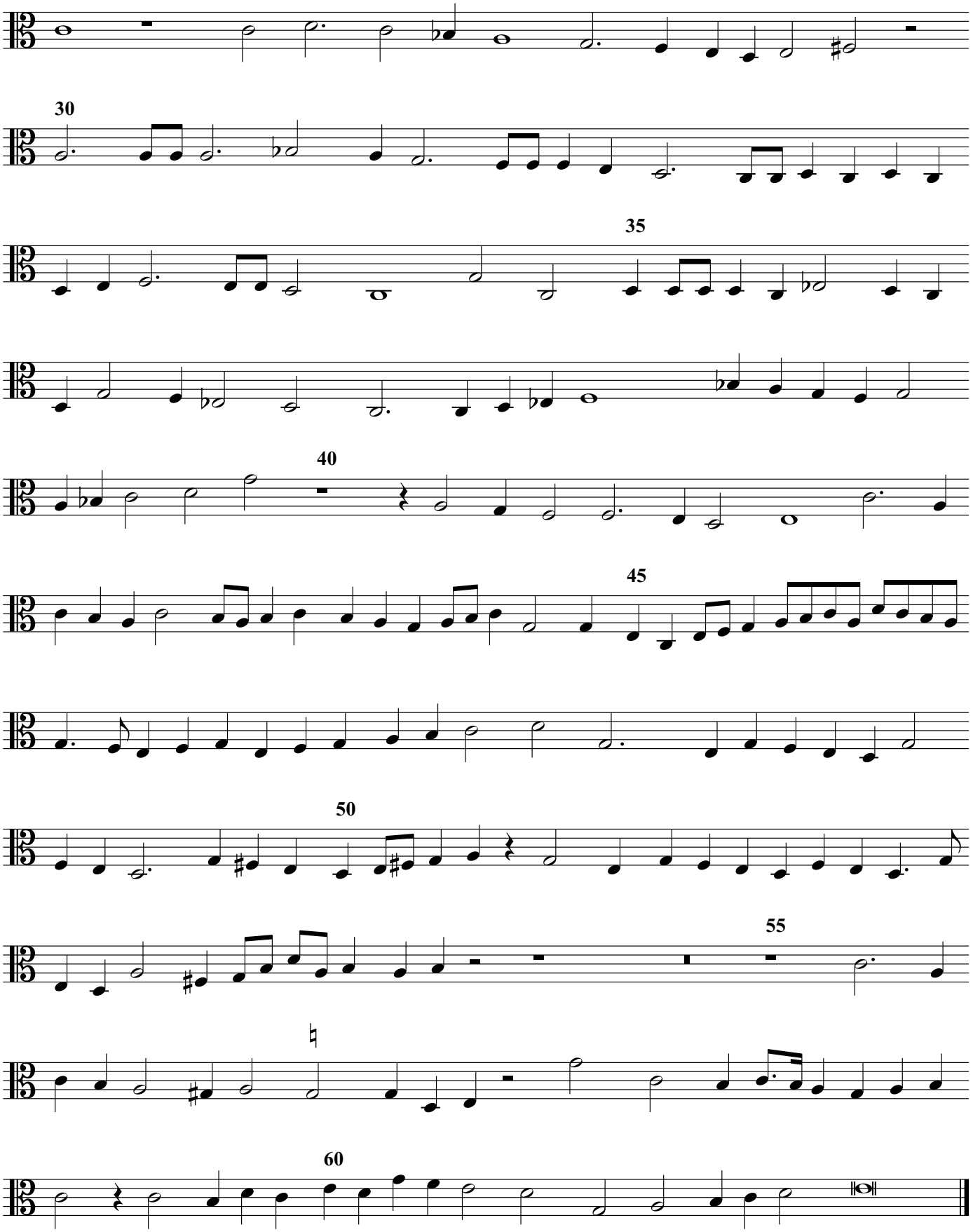
Jenkins No. 17 Tenor viol 2