Associação MÚSICA · EDUCAÇÃO E CULTURA
Património Documental

GIOVANNI GABRIELI

CANZONE E SONATE (1615)

Canzon II

for three Trumpets and three Trombones
(three Trumpets, Horn and two Trombones)

Canzon II

für drei Trompeten und drei Posaunen
(drei Trompeten, Horn und zwei Posaunen)

edited by / herausgegeben von
Bernard Thomas

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Gabrieli's 1615 collection is a unique publication that represents both a beginning and an end. On the one hand it is the first collection of instrumental music to exploit the new "dramatic" style developed in vocal music: it is noticeable how instrumental music in the early seventeenth century is stylistically several decades behind vocal music. On the other it is the last important collection of polychoral canzonas in the late sixteenth century tradition: it must be remembered that Venice went into an economic decline in the seventeenth century which must have affected the musical life there to the extent of making it difficult to assemble the forces required by works such as the 22-part Sonata XX. So in this respect the collection stands between the Renaissance and the Baroque: the idea of writing polychoral canzonas must have been considered somewhat old-fashioned in 1615, by which time composers were turning their attention to small-scale chamber works in a more or less virtuoso style for two or three violins or cornetts and bass, but the actual style of many of the works in the Gabrieli print is "newer" and more original than practically any other instrumental music written about this time. It must be remembered that Gabrieli had not published any instrumental music since 1597 (a few of his pieces were included in the Raverii anthology of 1608, but these are mainly fairly early works), and so the 1615 collection (which, after all, was posthumous—Gabrieli died in 1612) must represent a selection from all his work in this field after the earlier collection; Gabrieli was rather more cautious about publishing his work than most of his contemporaries.

The originality of the works in the 1615 volume can only be appreciated against a background of the development of the Venetian canzona around the turn of the century, by comparing Gabrieli's music with earlier collections by people such as Maschera (1584) or Viadana (1610). The basic character of many of Gabrieli's canzonas is essentially different from that of the traditional type: the genre which developed from the french chanson inherited some of the vocal model's lightness, especially features such as the initial rhythm with repeated notes, but Gabrieli's canzonas (or sonatas—there is no significant difference) often begin in a much more solemn vein, and gradually build up the rhythmic excitement, thus radically altering the character of the genre.

The main new feature of many of the 1615 pieces is a kind of "thematic" writing that is opposed to the old "continuous" structure based on successive points of imitation, which at its worst can produce music that is totally aimless. This idea of developing a single motive (or several in turn), which was a novel one in terms of the sixteenth century, during which time thematic development was a fairly rare phenomenon (though there are some examples, such as the bicinia by Lassus) can be found in most of the 1615 pieces, in varying degrees of subtlety, and on several different scales. On the formal level we find several works with a ritornello of some kind, again in varying degrees of complexity. Canzon IV is the simplest, presenting one theme (characteristically in triple time) for the tutti as a ritornello, and a sequential theme (that is "developed" to a considerable extent) for "solo" instruments. Several works use a short harmonic progression as a unifying factor: Canzon VIII, after a fairly traditional imitative beginning, presents a simple but striking four-chord progression that occurs fourteen times in the course of the work, marking off the various sections with contrasting material. Canzon IX is a remarkable piece that somehow stands in between the "ritornello" type and the ostinato bass aria of the early Baroque; there *is* a recurring bass motive (a simple cadential figure), but it occurs at intervals only, and thus takes on some of the function of a ritornello-motive in the way it punctuates the otherwise "continuous" texture of the work.

Gabrieli's interest in using a dominant or recurring theme does not always take the form of a ritornello, however. Canzon XVII is a unique example of one idea (a simple triad) being used throughout a piece, subject to various rhythmic variations and changes such as inversion. Sonata XVIII is an extraordinary case of the main theme, a slow, ricercar-like subject, being used throughout the work, mainly in the bass part while successively more brilliant and lively themes are added on top.

As well as this interest in producing works with a clear formal structure, Gabrieli's preoccupation with thematic development can be observed on a much smaller scale: many of the 1615 pieces show a strong interest in sequential writing, which was to become an important factor in Baroque instrumental music. The use of sequence is fairly rare in the sixteenth century (though it was very common in late fifteenth century music, notably in that by Obrecht and Isaac), and essentially is opposed to the balanced, motet-like imitative structure that dominates Renaissance music in its classical form. Three of the 1615 pieces are based almost entirely on a single sequential theme (Canzonas II, IV, IX)—in fact the three motives are very similar, and belong to a type used by Gabrieli in at least two other works. Canzona XI is based on a succession of themes, all of which are treated in imitation: many of these sequences are based on the circle of fifths which allows Gabrieli to modulate freely, thus anticipating one of the most basic procedures of late Baroque music. The composer often uses sequence as a dramatic device in tuttis: the classic case is where a tutti motive (often involving a dotted rhythm) is repeated several times a tone higher each time, producing a climatic drive to the cadence.

Another important aspect of the 1615 collection is a strong interest in new textures and types of scoring. This can be shown simply by the fact that every piece is scored for a different combination of pitches: the significance of this is not apparent until one considers that the majority of late sixteenth century music, including many Venetian canzonas, is written for a few standard combinations of clefs (i.e. ranges). Several of the 1615 pieces deliberately leave a gap in the middle of the texture: Canzon XVII has two high parts (range approx. c'—a'') and two bass parts F—c') in each of the three choirs. Canzon VIII very effectively exploits the contrast between a high and a low choir.

These are only a few of the special characteristics of the 1615 works that make them by far the finest pieces in their genre. Only lack of space prevents a fuller analysis of such aspects as Gabrieli's very personal harmonic style, and the great rhythmic vitality of this music.

PERFORMANCE

1. *Instrumentation*

Gabrieli's scoring in the 1615 collection, though somewhat more specific than in his other music, is still fairly scanty: only one piece (Sonata XVIII, scored for four cornetts and ten trombones) has a complete indication of what instruments should be used, and many pieces have no such directions at all. However, it is clear from what little information we have from Gabrieli's works as well as from surviving details or instruments used in St. Mark's, Venice, that the main instruments used were cornetts, violins (violas) and trombones. A complete survey of Gabrieli's instrument indications reveals one piece (a short introduction to a motet) labelled *fagotto*; otherwise all his specified parts are headed *cornetto*, *violin*, or *trombon*. This is not to say that these were the only instruments used: there is evidence that lutes, *chitarrone*, *lirone* (a bowed chordal instrument that was very fashionable in late sixteenth century Italy) took part in this music. But it is fairly safe to assume that these were mainly used as continuo instruments, and that the three instruments mentioned above were normally used for the melodic parts, with an occasional *fagotto* (curtal, or proto-bassoon) or *violone* for bass parts.

How does this information apply to a performance on modern brass instruments? First of all, the frequent balancing of cornett with violin shows how softly it was fashionable to play the cornett (and the trombone) around 1600; one surviving account praises a cornettist for being able to play with a closed harpsichord. Nowadays it is impossible to balance brass instruments with strings, so one has to make a choice of either brass or strings. There is much to be said for the view that an ensemble of trumpets and trombones (preferably without horns), provided that they are played without any "brassy" tone whatsoever, form the most satisfactory modern ensemble for this music. Reasons would include:

(1) Modern brass instruments are normally played with comparatively little vibrato, certainly less than strings. A continuous vibrato kills this music instantly.

(2) They are well suited to the resonant type of acoustic for which this music was written.

(3) Gabrieli's music needs precise, pointed articulation to sound at its best. Brass instruments fulfil this requirement.

2. *Style*

(a) Tempo

The editorial metronome markings may seem oppressively slow, but they are based on the wide range of note values found in some pieces, for instance Sonata XVIII. Also the rhythmic inventiveness of this music needs correspondingly lively articulation, which can only he achieved at a moderate tempo. It must be pointed out that in Gabrieli's day music was not divided into slow and fast movements to the same extent as it was later, and that a lively movement or section would have been brought to life by means of a pointed, dance-like style of articulation rather than by an extra-fast tempo. Even in pieces without any written fast notes a moderate tempo is suggested, mainly to help bring out expressive suspensions (Canzon I) or madrigalesque gestures (Canzon III).

(b) Rubato

Gabrieli's music was written at the turning point from the Renaissance to the Baroque, and it is suggested that in view of the almost madrigalesque nature of some passages in the 1615 collection slight liberties should be taken with the time at these points.

(c) Proportions

The relationship between duple and triple time given in each piece in this edition is based on the "correct" (i.e. in terms of Renaissance practice) meaning of the proportional time-signatures used by Gabrieli. However one of the side effects of the major upheavals in musical thinking that took place at the beginning of the seventeenth century was a new freedom in the interpretation of the proportional system, and though one can say that the proportions given in this edition are the theoretically correct ones, this does not necessarily mean that they would have been interpreted in this way at the time. But in Sonata XX there is a passage (bar 88) where one part goes into triple time before the others in such a way as to indicate that in this piece at least the "theoretical" relationship must be observed. In fact in practically all cases in the 1615 collection the strict application of the proportions produces tempi that are quite satisfactory musically, so it is suggested that they should be followed.

(d) Tonguing

Every note should be tongued. Although slurs were beginning to be used in string music at about this time (for instance in the violin sonatas of Biagio Marini) no equivalent in wind music can be traced until later. It must be remembered that wind-players of the time used a wider range of tonguing techniques than are found nowadays, including more than one type of "soft" double-tonguing.

(e) Dynamics

Only two pieces in the 1615 collection have any dynamic markings. In both of these such markings have two functions: (a) to emphasise the distinction between tutti and smaller groupings, and (b) for echo effects, normally between single instruments. There is no reason why dynamic effects of type (a) should not be applied to other works in the 1615 volume, though it is important to remember, particularly when performing on modern brass, that the dynamic range of the instruments used in Gabrieli's time was much smaller. Straight echo effects are comparatively rare in this collection, and when exact imitation does occur of a phrase presented by one choir, it is suggested that the contrast should be a spatial one, rather than dynamic.

(f) Balance

As far as possible choirs should be evenly matched. There is a common fallacy that this music requires "loud" and "soft" choirs, but Gabrieli's instrumentation, in spite of its scantiness, makes it quite clear that there should not be a dynamic contrast between the choirs. In some pieces Gabrieli deliberately matches the choirs by using identical ranges in corresponding parts and/or identical scoring in each choir. In others a contrast based on high and low choirs has been built into the music, which is made nonsense of if one choir is softer than another.

EDITORIAL METHODS

1. All scores are printed at the original pitch, regardless of the transposition (if any) of the brass parts. This may appear confusing to some, but it is hoped this step will make the scores useful for reference and conducting purposes.

2. Note values have been halved in all pieces (or sections of pieces) in duple time. and quartered in those in triple time.

3. All accidentals on the stave are original. To avoid cluttering up the score those repeating within the bar have been suppressed, except in those cases where this is likely to cause confusion as to what the original is. Editorial accidentals appear above the stave and apply to one note only. In the parts, however, no distinction is made between original and editorial accidentals; this is in order to save rehearsal time.

4. The original instrumentation (if any) is not given in the score, but is detailed in the separate introduction for each piece.

5. Some commas have been supplied to suggest phrasing. It must be emphasised that these are not breath-marks, nor do they indicate any particular degree of gap between two notes. They are simply a warning that some sort of break is required.

6. All other editorial additions appear in brackets, for instance the metronome markings.

7. The original *basso continuo* has not been included in this edition, on the assumption that it will be of little use for performances with brass instruments. It simply gives the lowest sounding part at any time, so it is clear that a continuo part can easily be played from the score.

CANZON II (1615)

This is in some ways one of the most complex of the 1615 pieces. The first few bars contain several features quite typical of Gabrieli: (a) a "double" subject of which the first half is (b) sequential, being based on a small motive used in several other works (such as Canzon IV); the second half is composed of (c) the dotted rhythm plus upbeat used repeatedly in the late works. In addition the pairing of voices so typical of the composer's interest in variation of texture is found in this work right from the start. The constant shifting of the patterns made by the two motives make this work the most satisfying of those with the sequential type of theme. The second motive with its pronounced rhythmic impetus provides points of strength when treated homophonically (e.g. bar 11).

It has been shown in the General Introduction how the ritornello principle (in the widest possible sense) is an important factor in the 1615 collection. In spite of the complex texture produced by the various permutations of the two motives of the opening section, the whole of the work falls into "ritornello" sections (i.e. using the initial motives) and episodes (passages introducing new material). The composer does not make breaks between these sections—this would spoil the kaleidoscopic texture he is building up—but they are perfectly audible, even though the main themes are subject to considerable variation, for instance in bar 62, where the second one appears in triple time. The main difference between the main sections and the episodes is a rhythmic one, since the latter are written in a much freer and more relaxed rhythmic style, contrasting with the metrical feeling of the opening material.

No instruments are specified in the original. The brass parts have been transposed down a tone.

Bernard Thomas
London, 1972

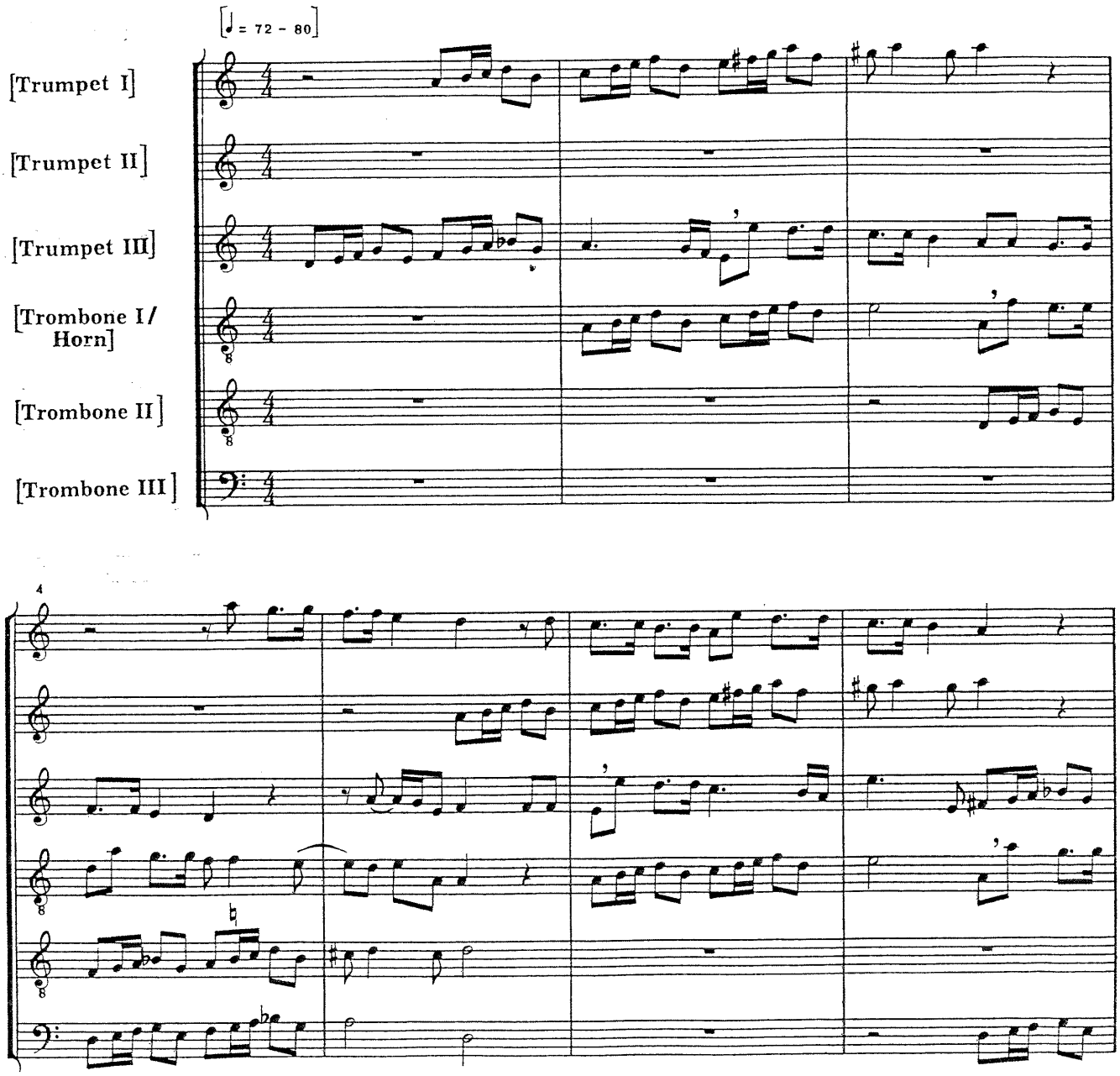
Canzone e Sonate (1615)

Canzon II

for
3 Trumpets and 3 Trombones

(3 Trumpets, Horn and 2 Trombones)

Giovanni GABRIELI



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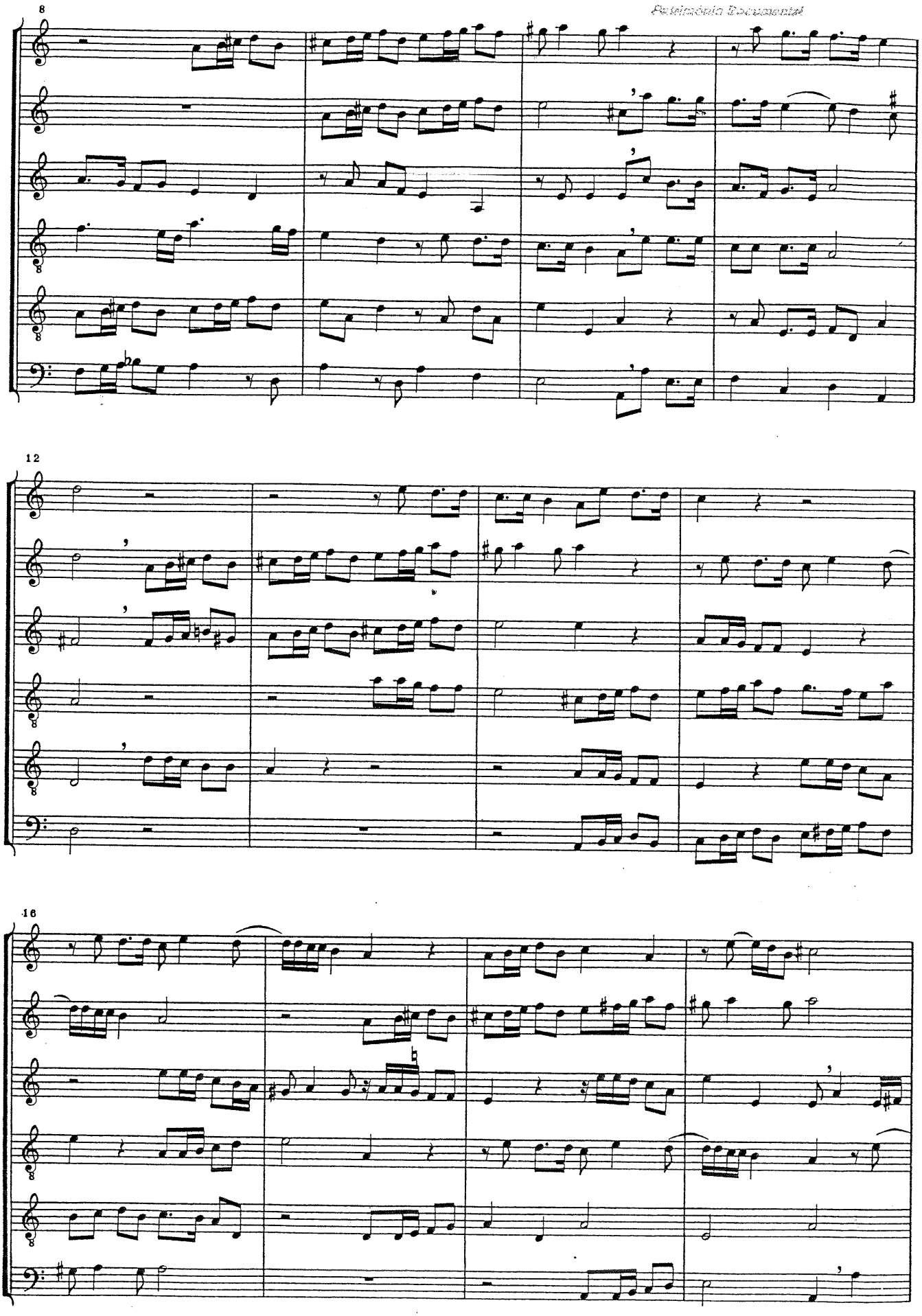

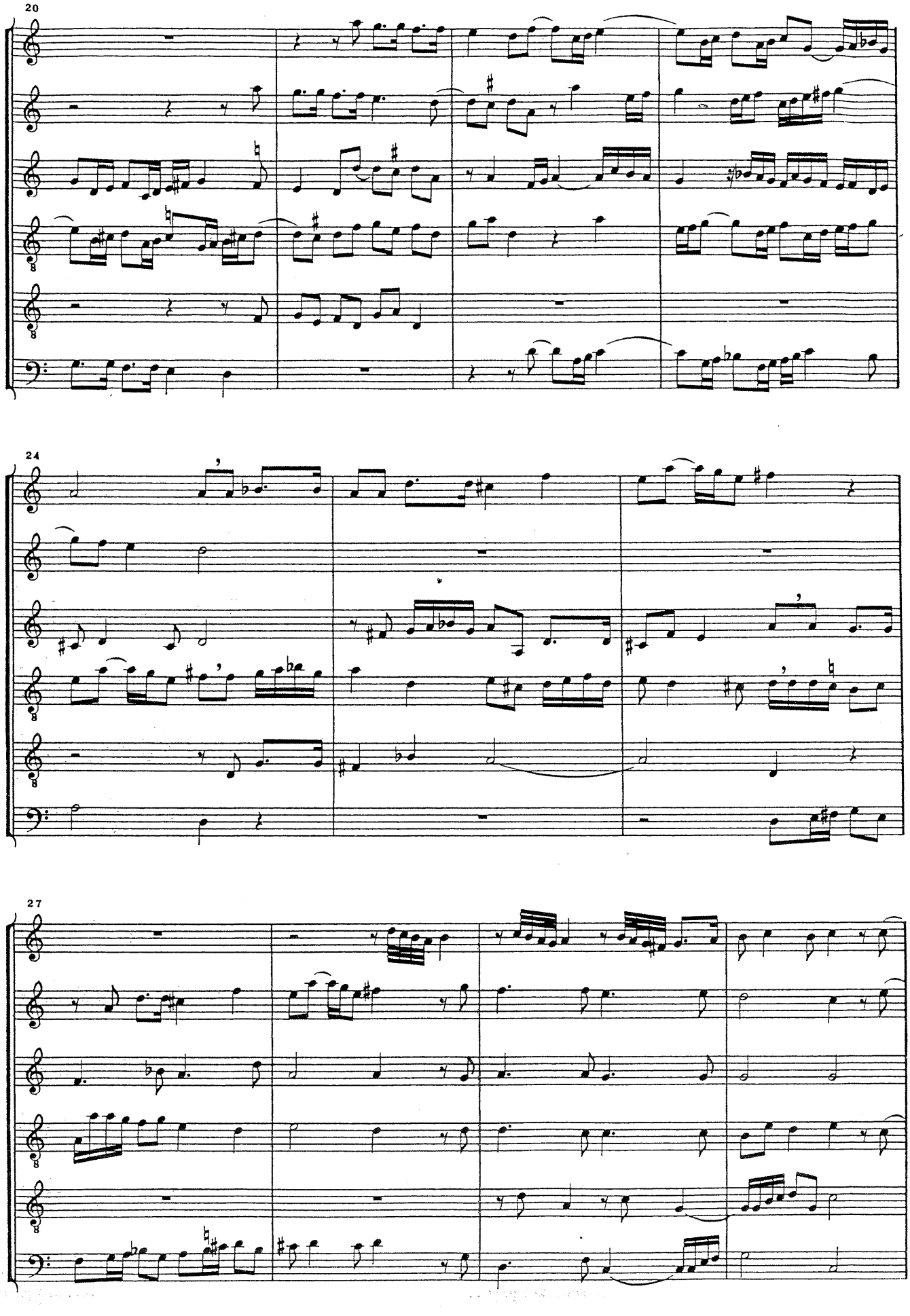
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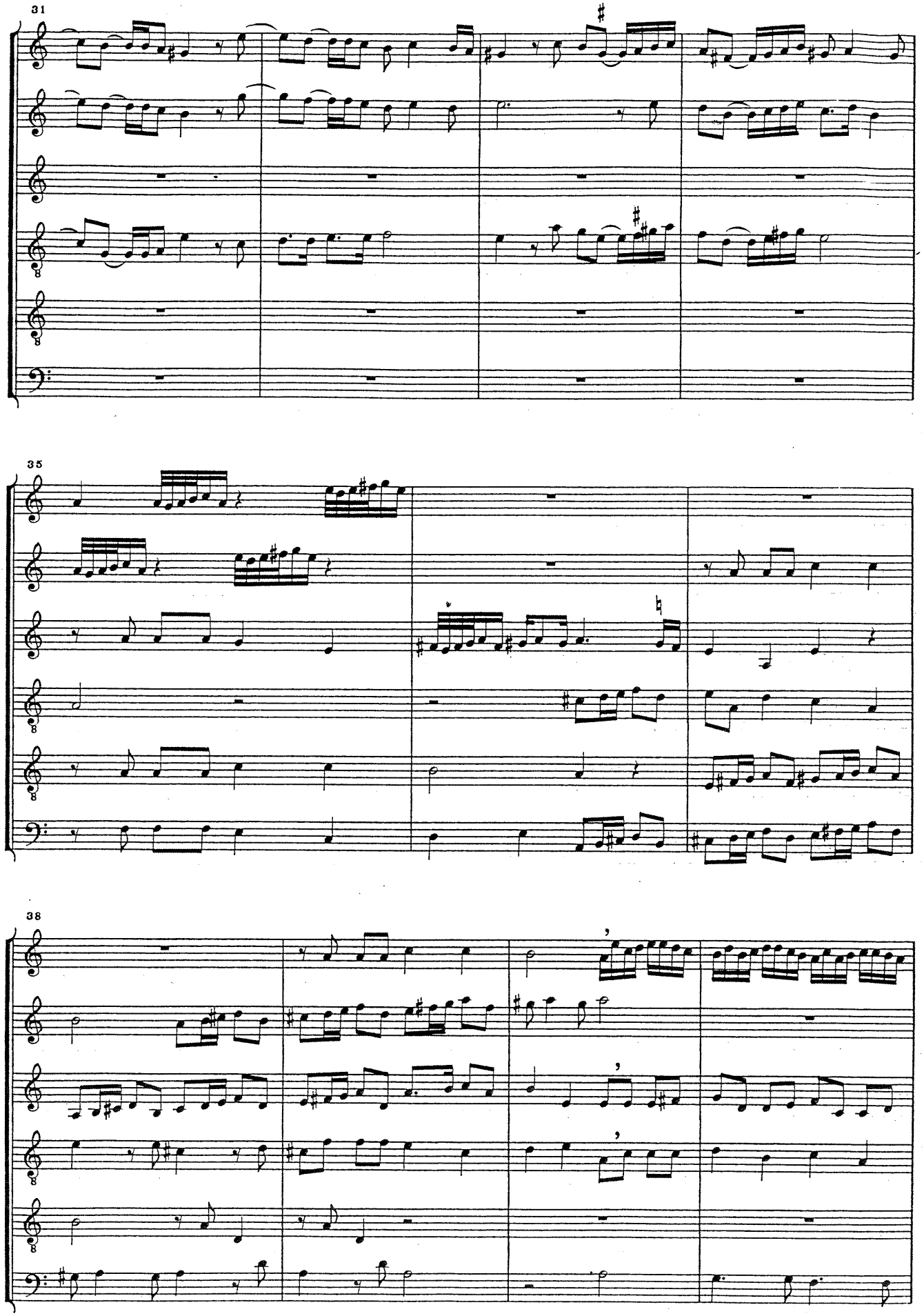
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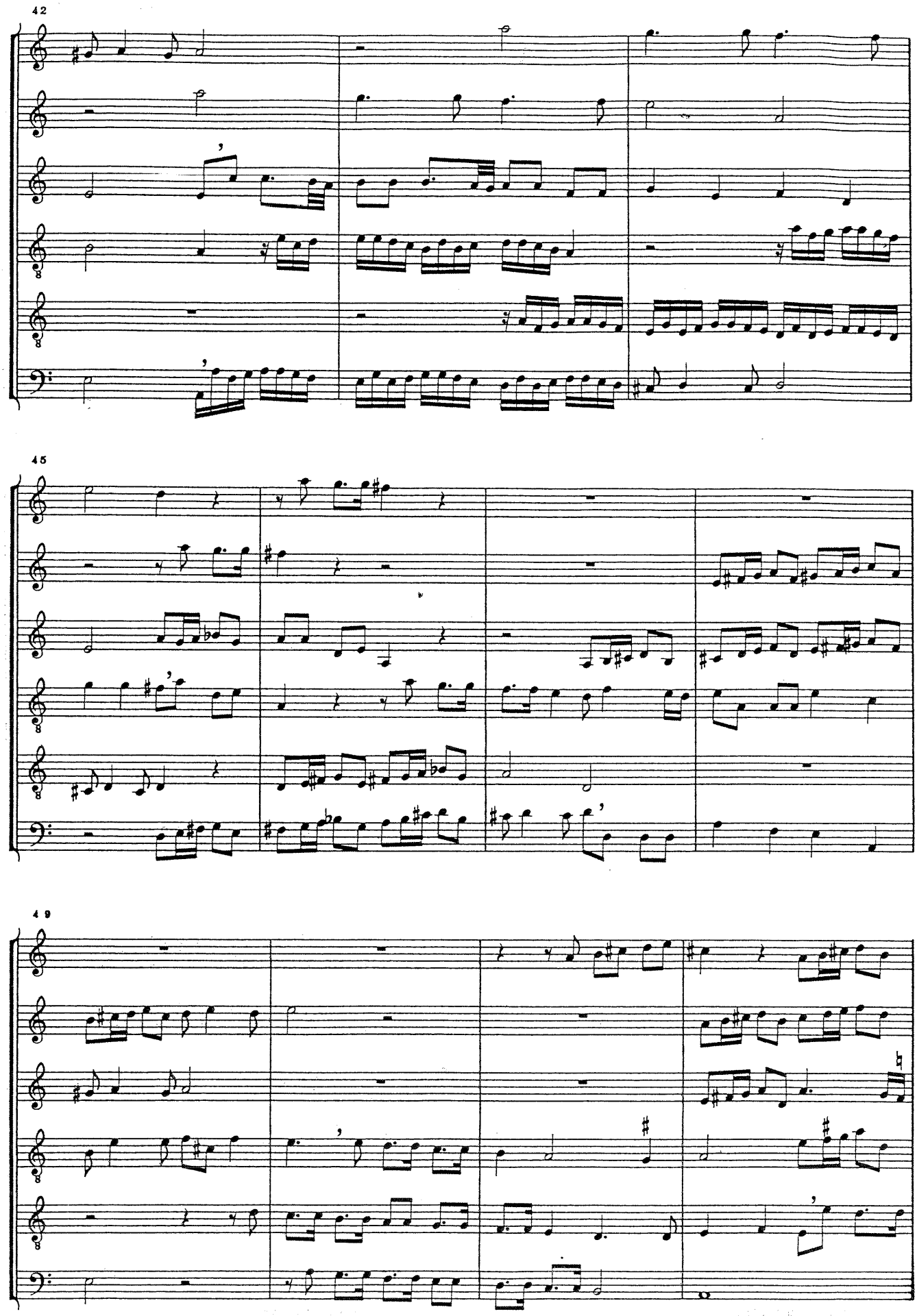
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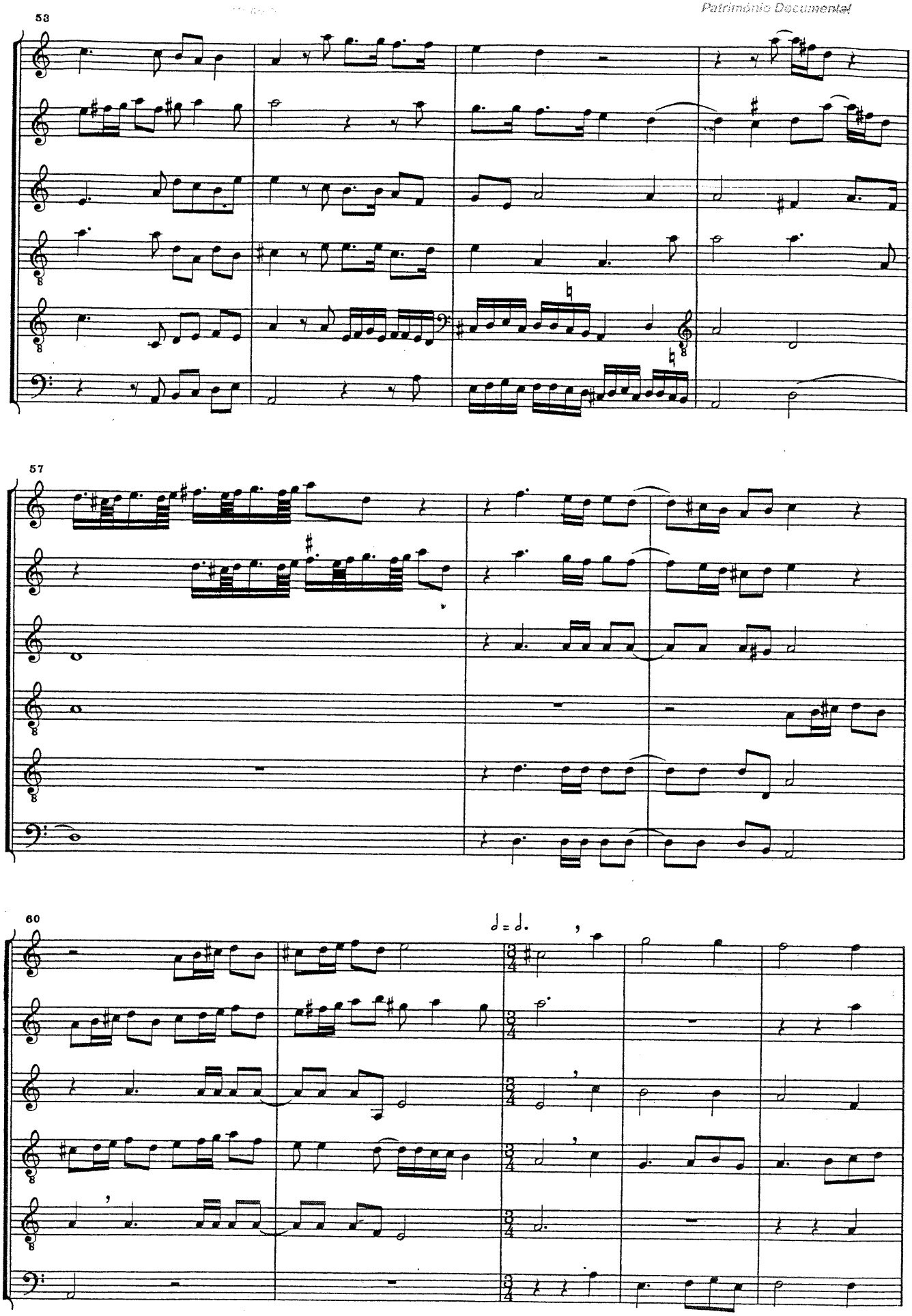

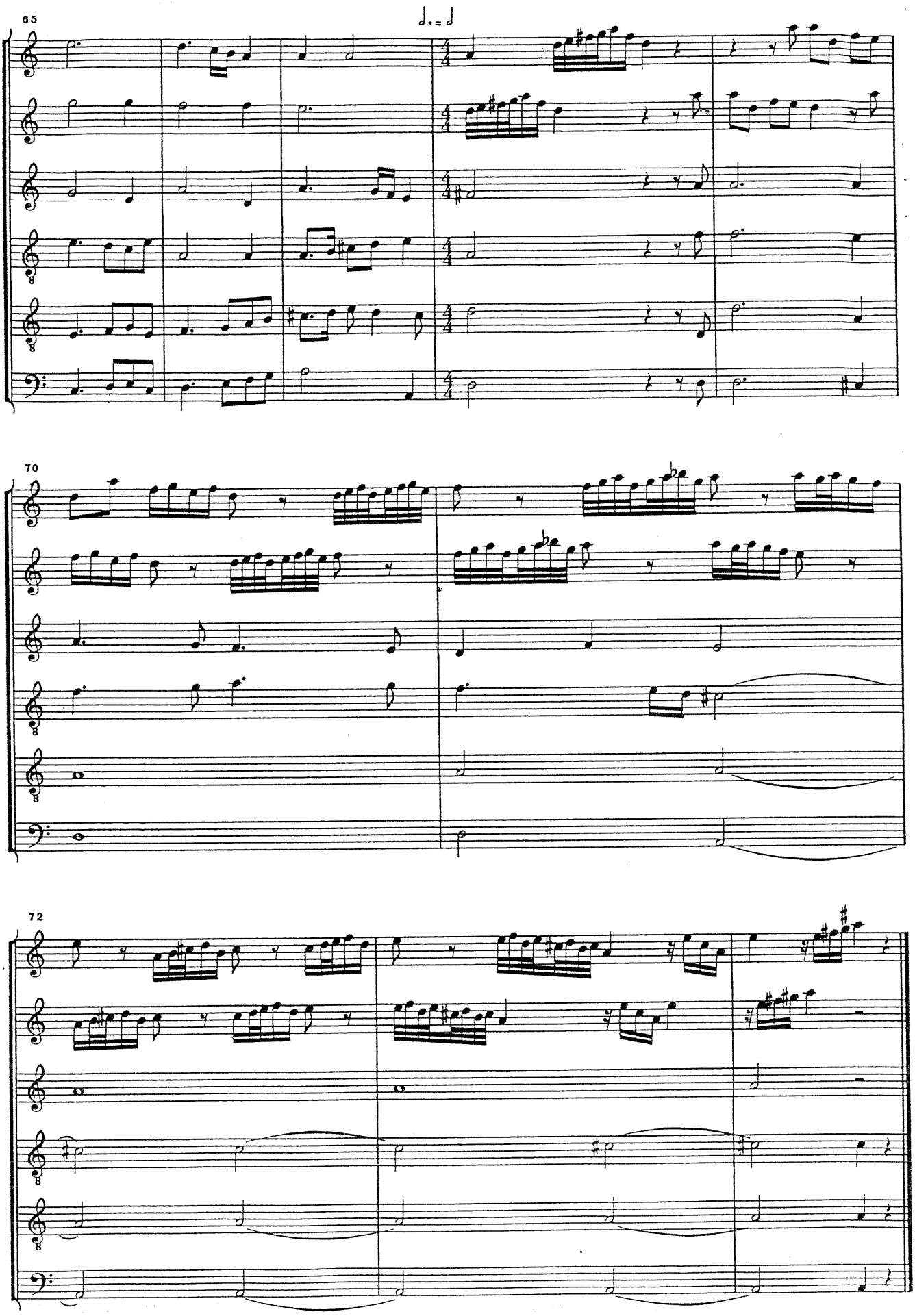
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HORN in F

GIOVANNI GABRIELI

CANZONE E SONATE (1615)

Canzon II

for three Trumpets and three Trombones
(three Trumpets, Horn and two Trombones)

Canzon II

für drei Trompeten und drei Posaunen
(drei Trompeten, Horn und zwei Posaunen)

edited by / herausgegeben von
Bernard Thomas

BREITKOPF & HÄRTEL
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Canzone e Sonate (1615)

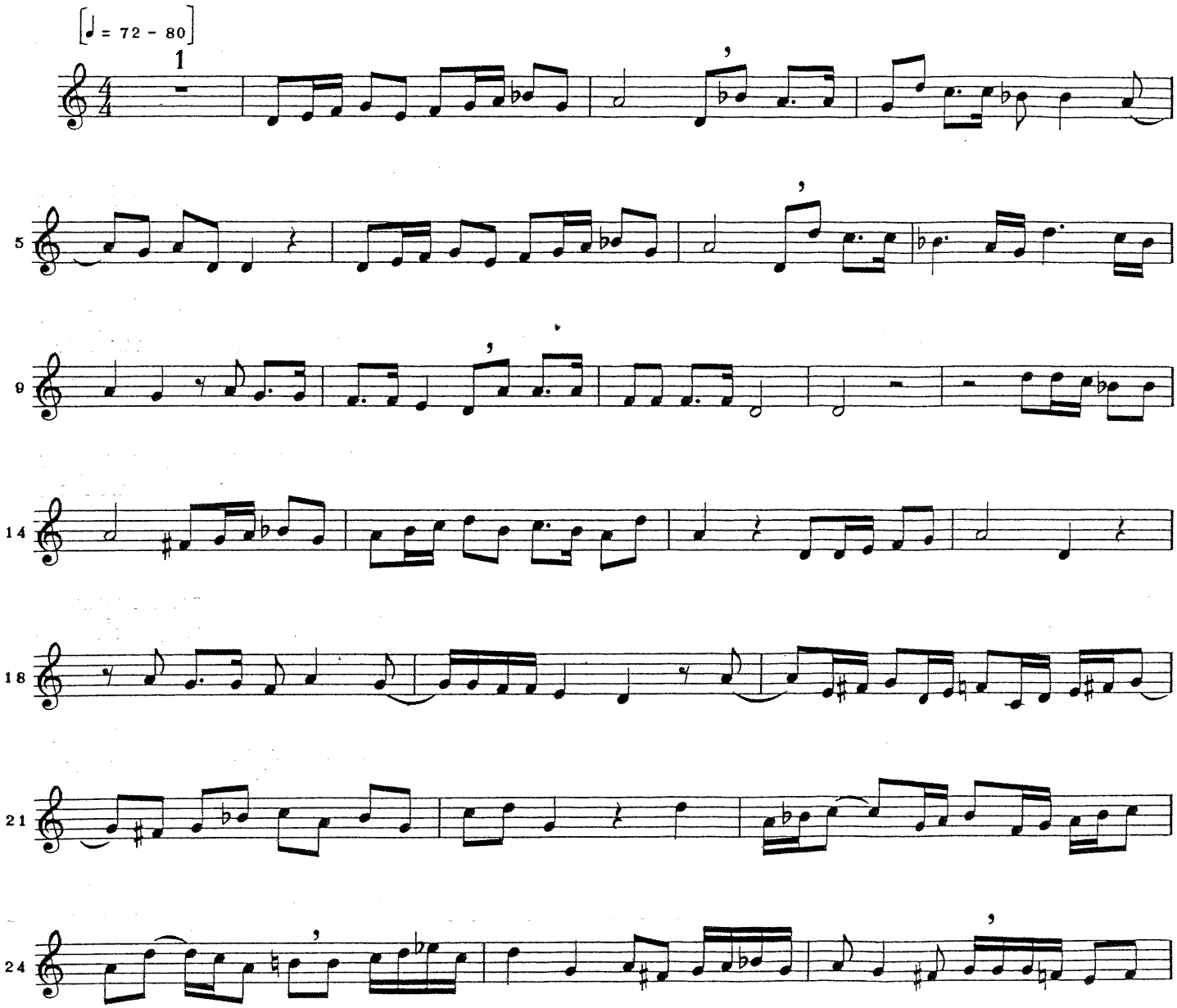
Canzon II

for
3 Trumpets and 3 Trombones

(3 Trumpets, Horn and 2 Trombones)

Horn in F
(Alternative to Trombone I)

Giovanni GABRIELI



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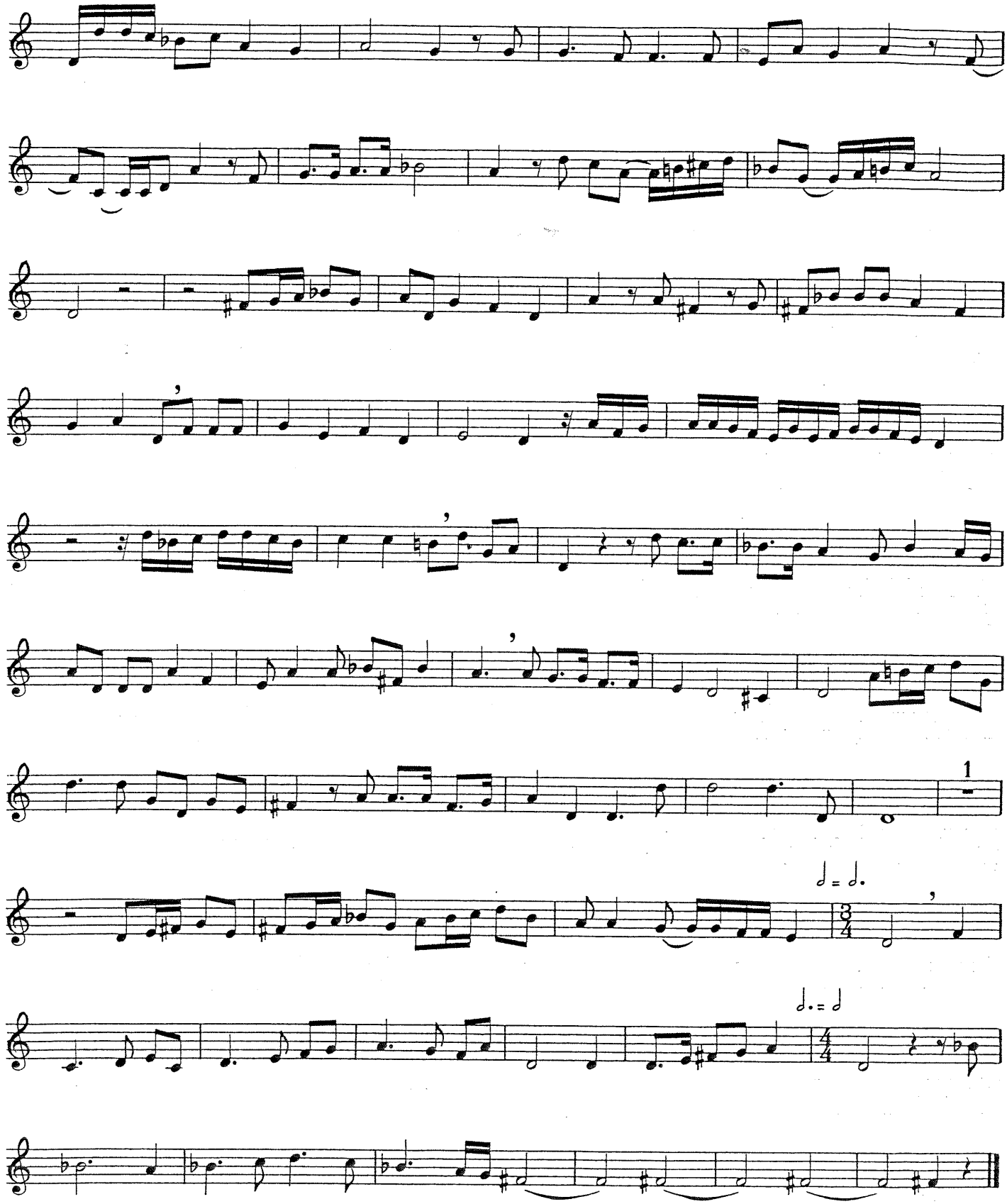
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TRUMPET I in B♭

GIOVANNI GABRIELI

CANZONE E SONATE (1615)

Canzon II

for three Trumpets and three Trombones
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Canzone e Sonate (1615)

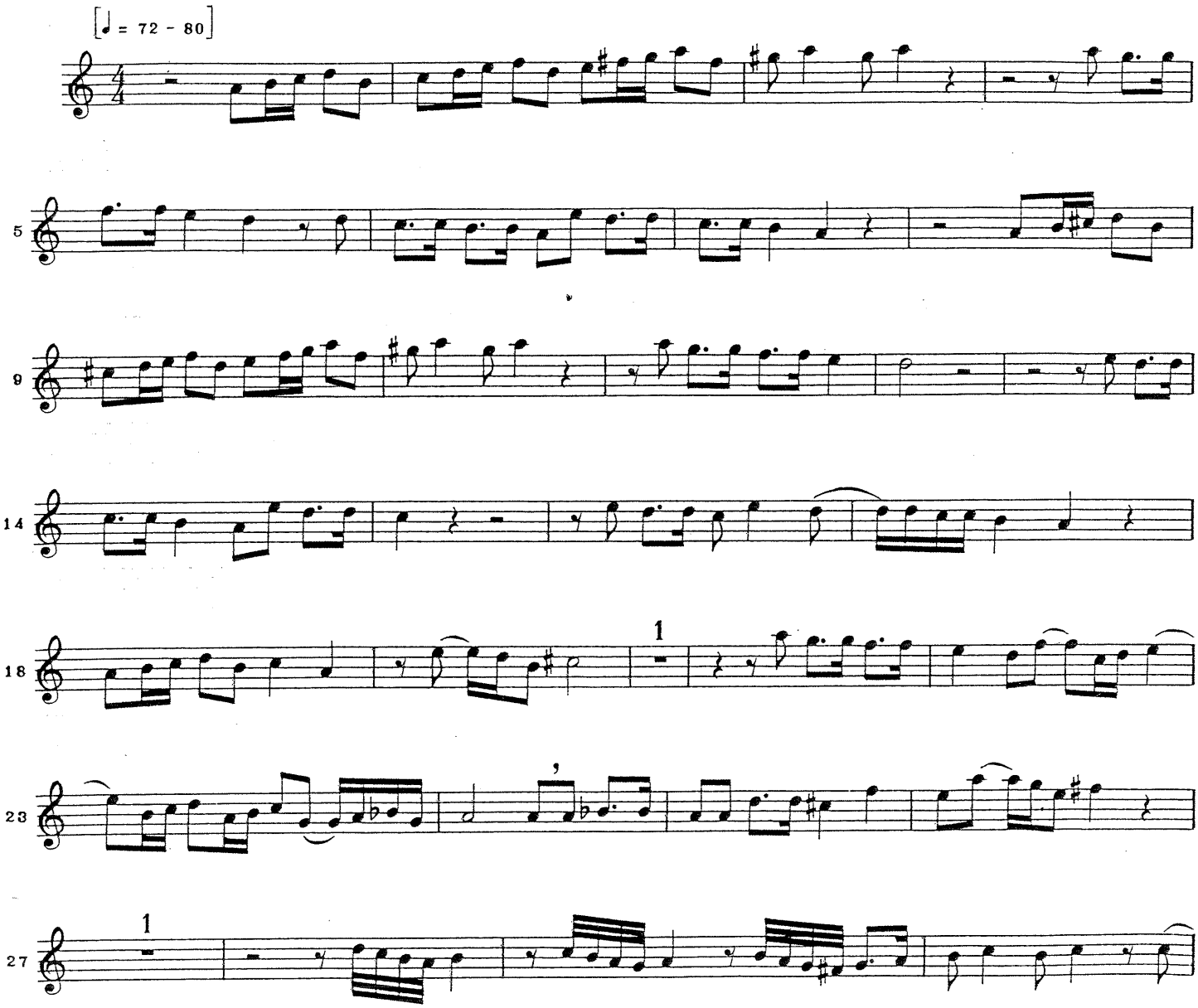
Canzon II

for
3 Trumpets and 3 Trombones

(3 Trumpets, Horn and 2 Trombones)

Trumpet I in B♭

Giovanni GABRIELI



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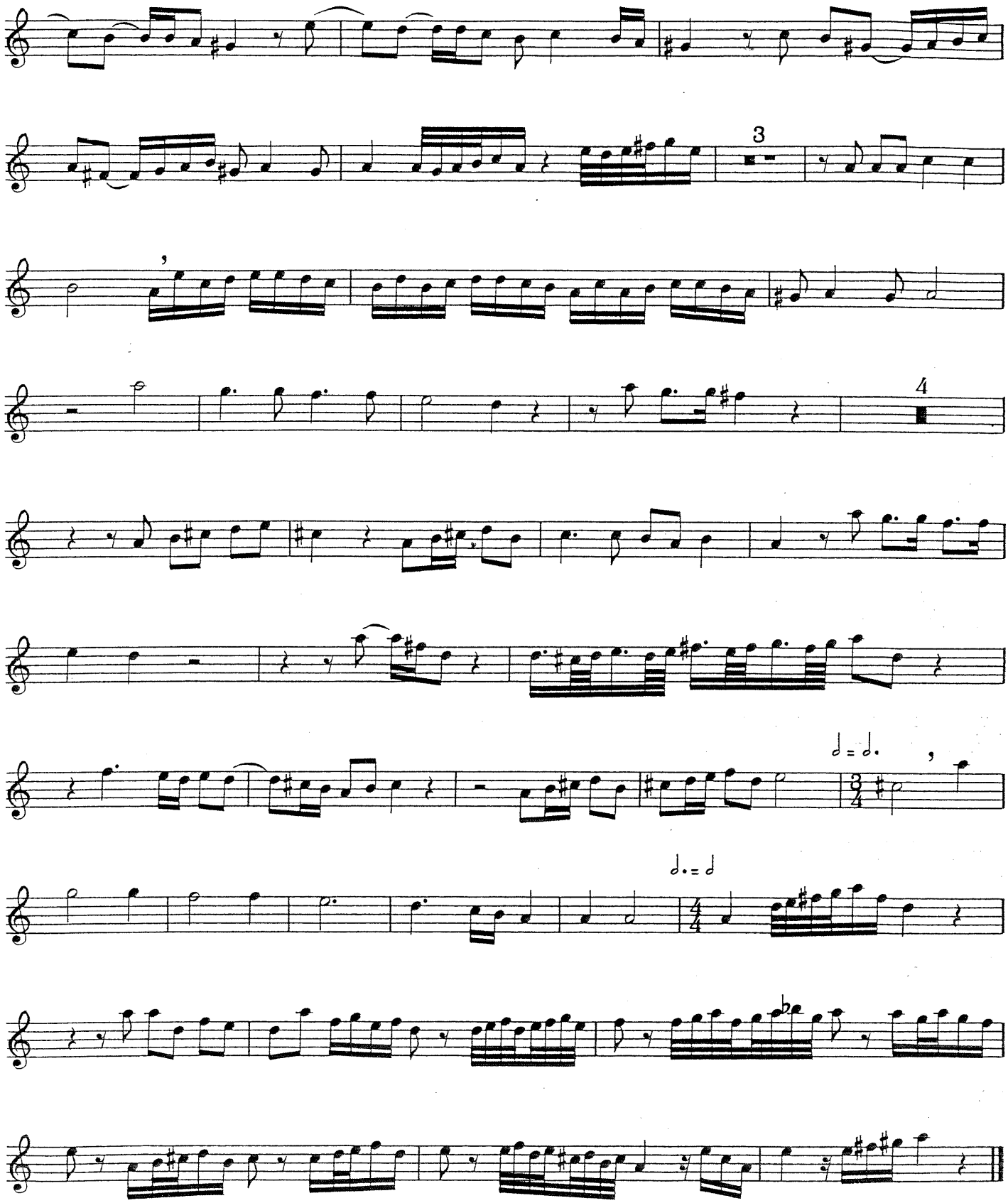
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TRUMPET II in B♭

GIOVANNI GABRIELI

CANZONE E SONATE (1615)

Canzon II

for three Trumpets and three Trombones
(three Trumpets, Horn and two Trombones)

Canzon II

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Canzone e Sonate (1615)

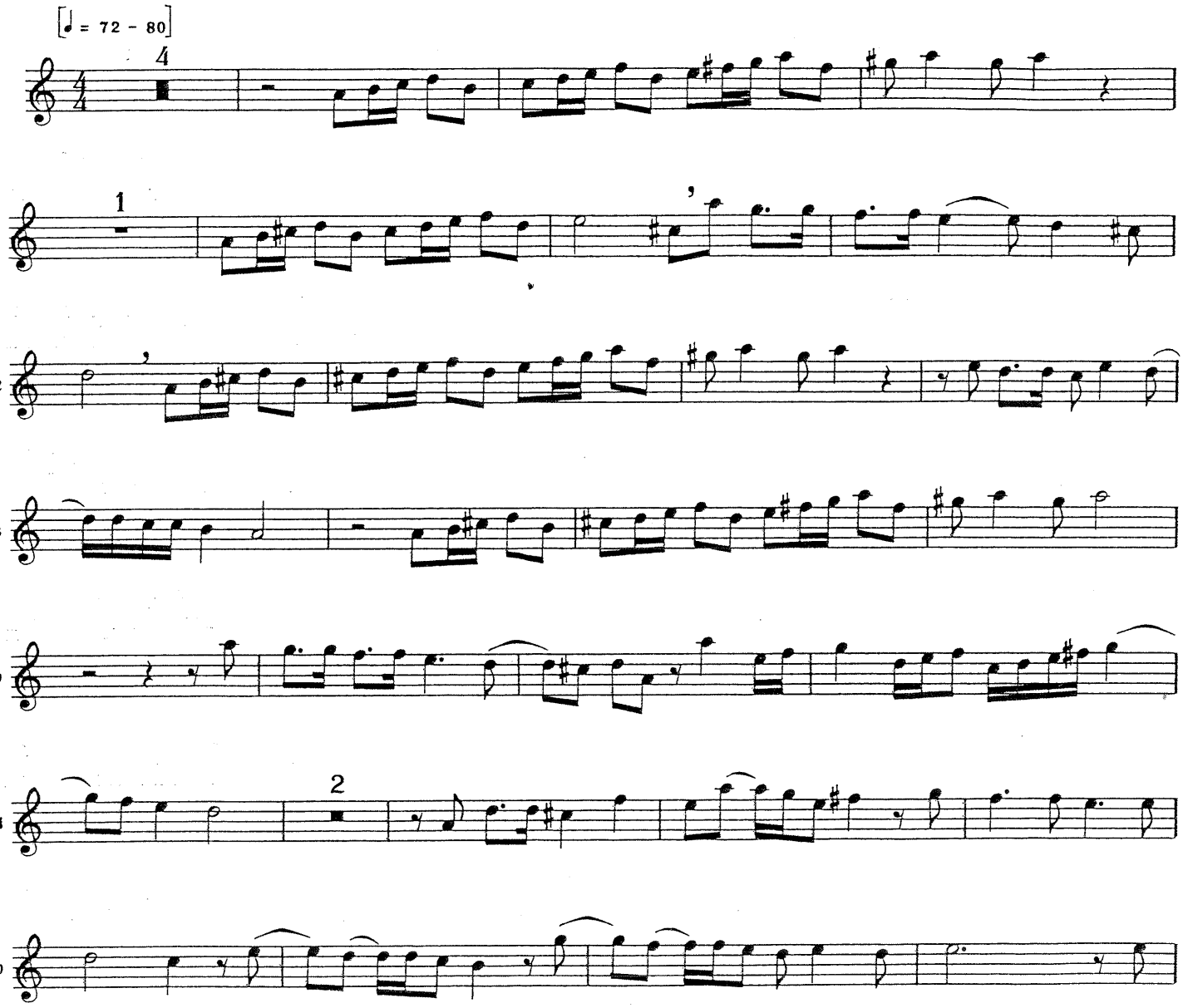
Canzon II

for
3 Trumpets and 3 Trombones

(3 Trumpets, Horn and 2 Trombones)

Trumpet II in B♭

Giovanni GABRIELI



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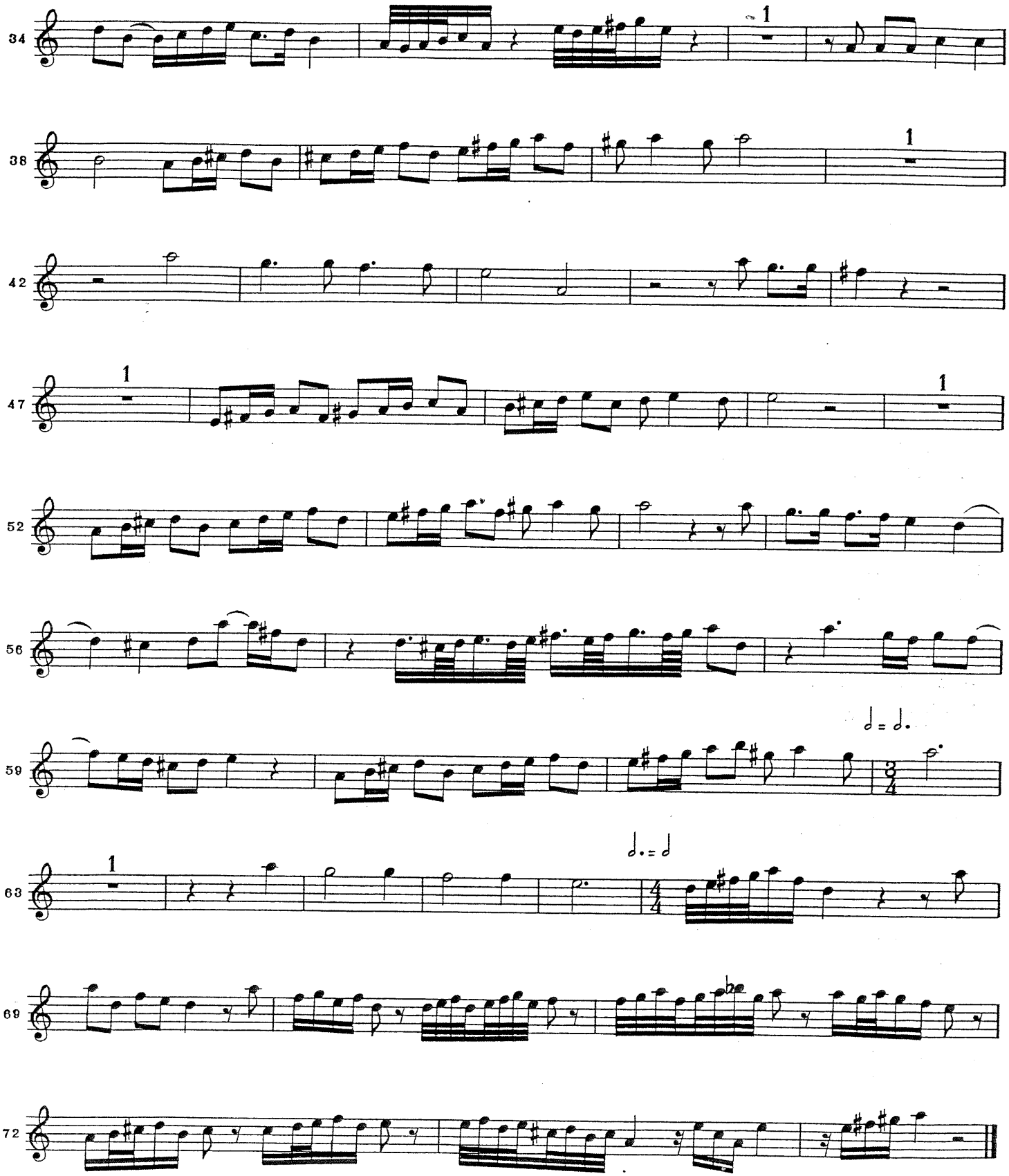
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TRUMPET III in B♭

GIOVANNI GABRIELI

CANZONE E SONATE (1615)

Canzon II

for three Trumpets and three Trombones
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Canzon II

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Canzone e Sonate (1615)

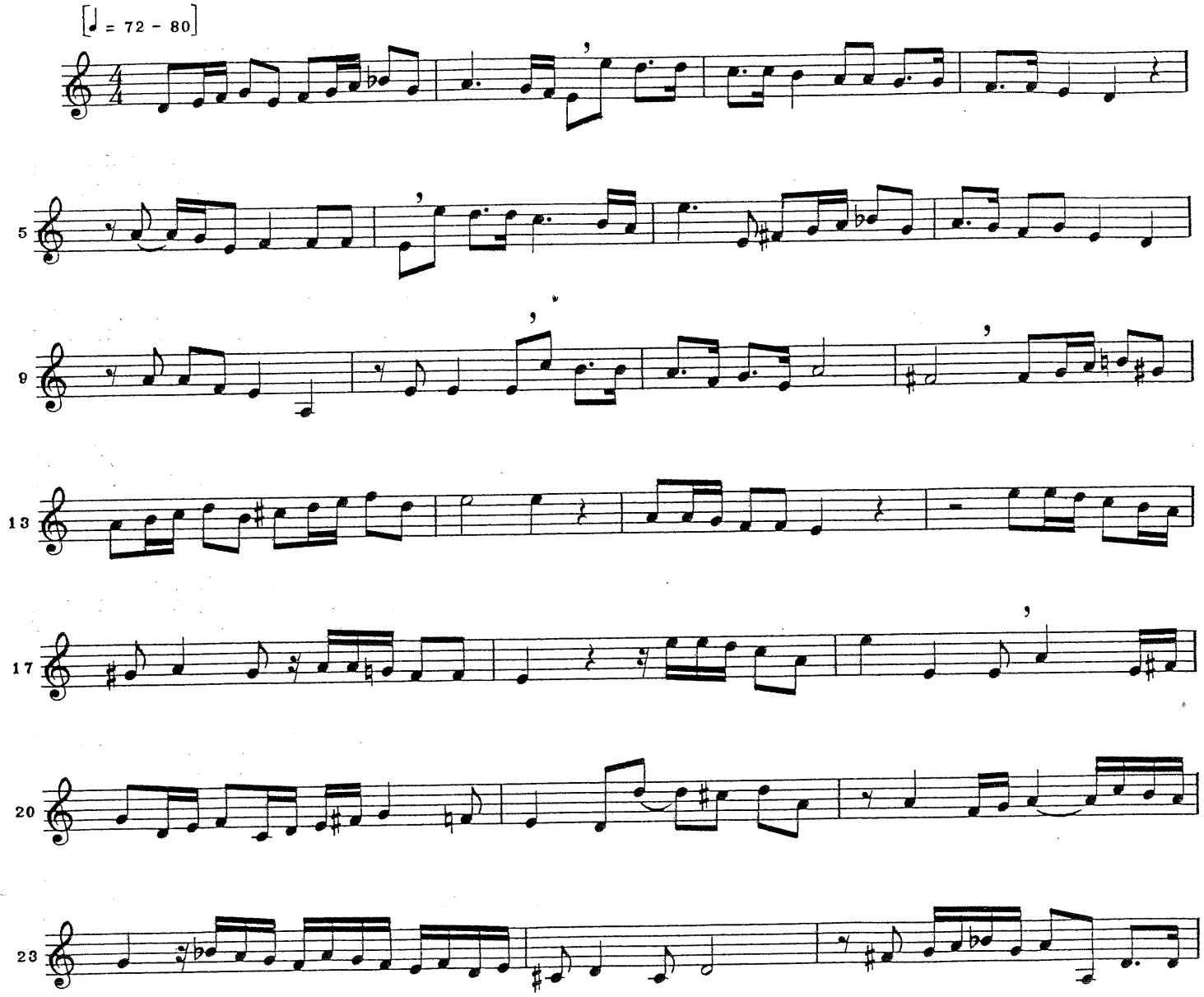
Canzon II

for
3 Trumpets and 3 Trombones

(3 Trumpets, Horn and 2 Trombones)

Trumpet III in B♭

Giovanni GABRIELI



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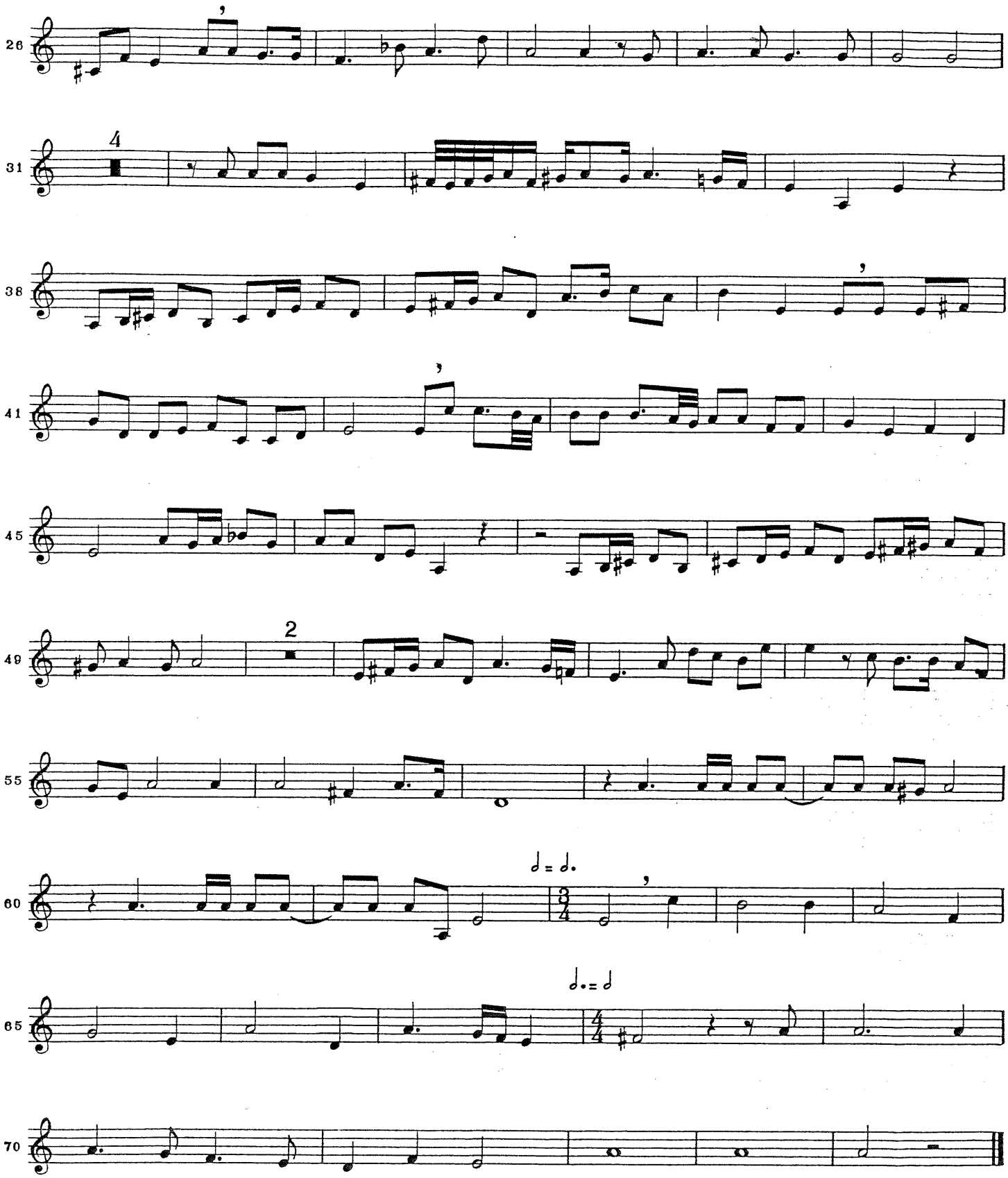
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TROMBONE I

GIOVANNI GABRIELI

CANZONE E SONATE (1615)

Canzon II

for three Trumpets and three Trombones
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Canzon II

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Canzone e Sonate (1615)

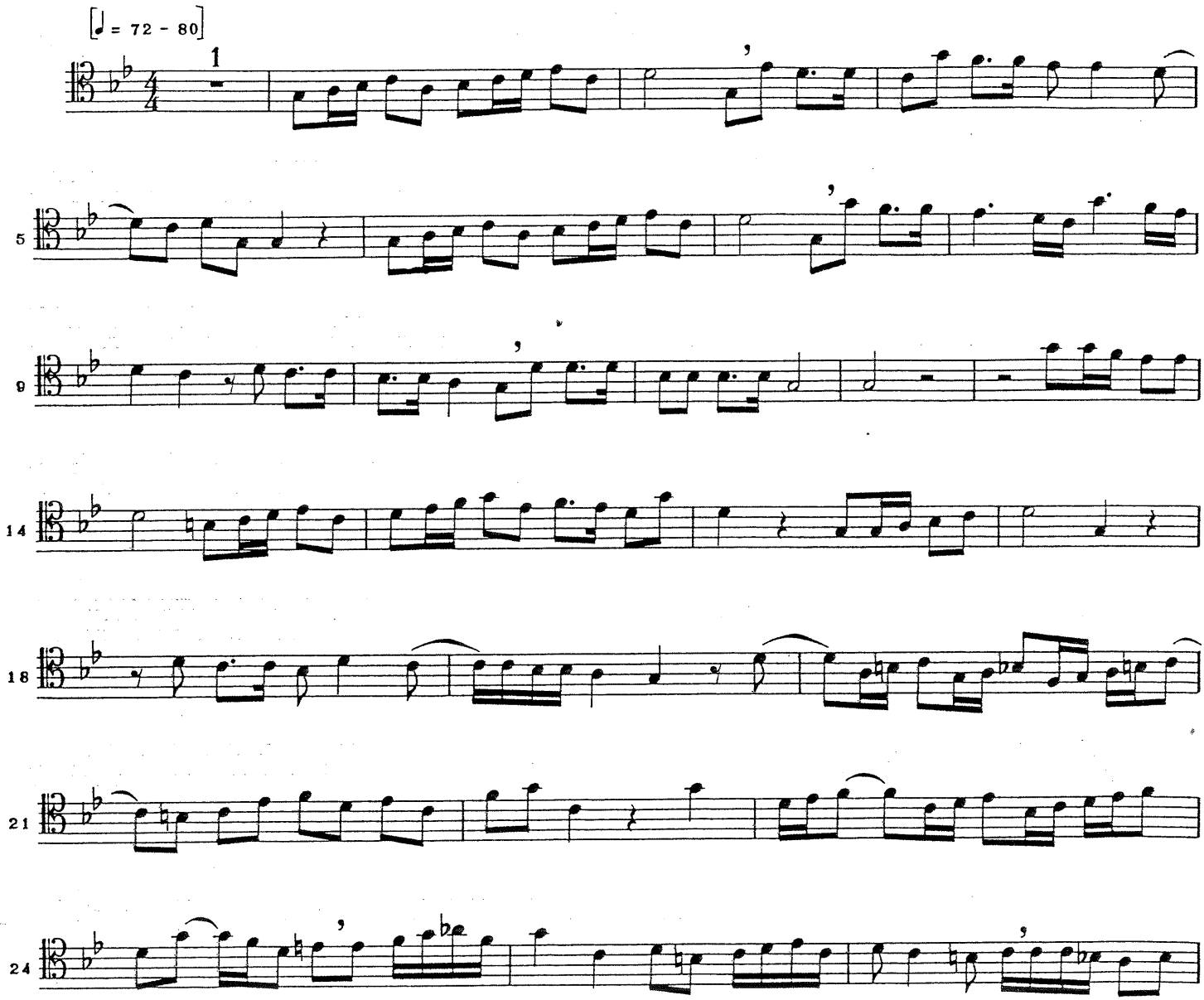
Canzon II

for
3 Trumpets and 3 Trombones

(3 Trumpets, Horn and 2 Trombones)

Trombone I

Giovanni GABRIELI



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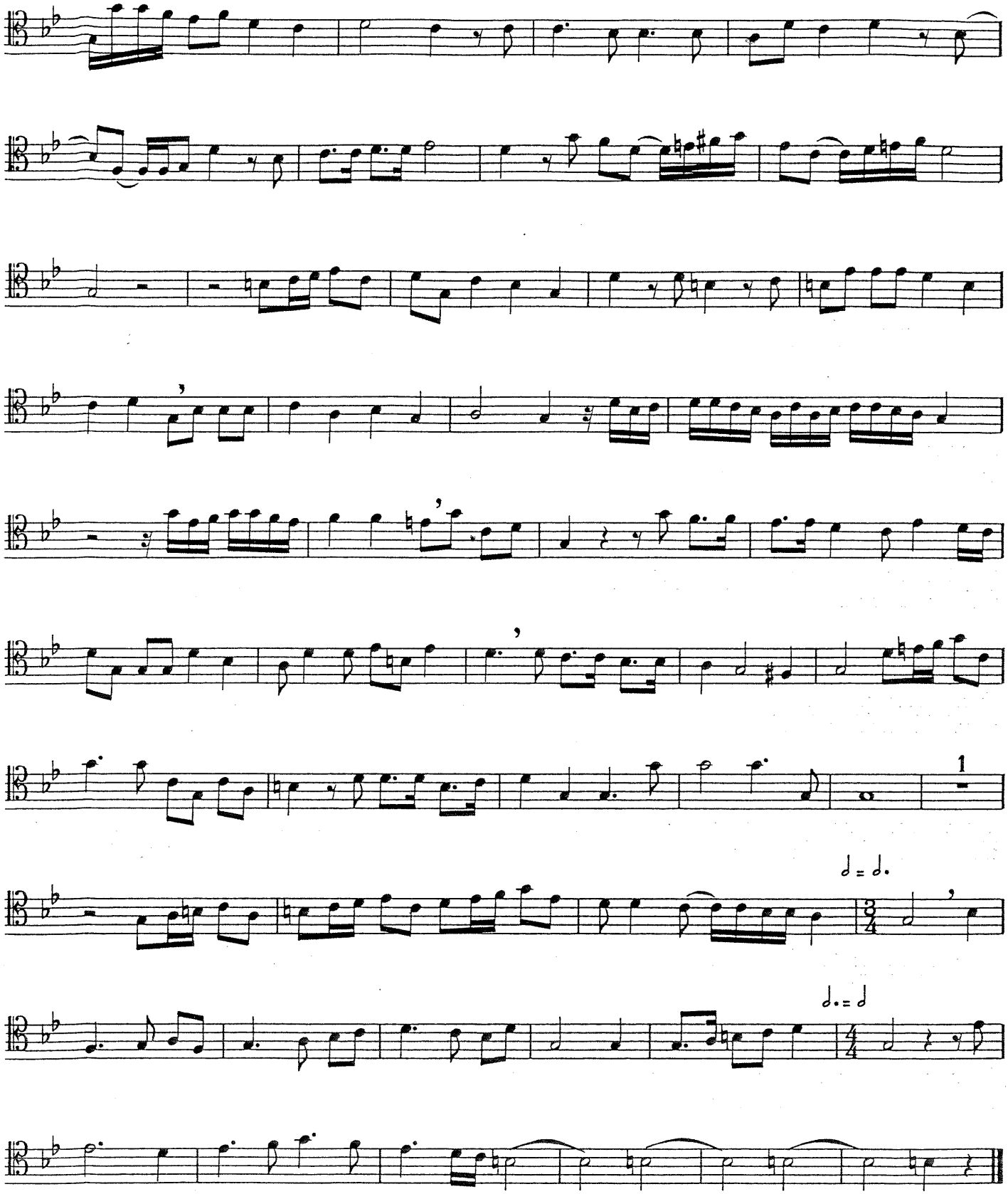
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Canzone e Sonate (1615)

Canzon II

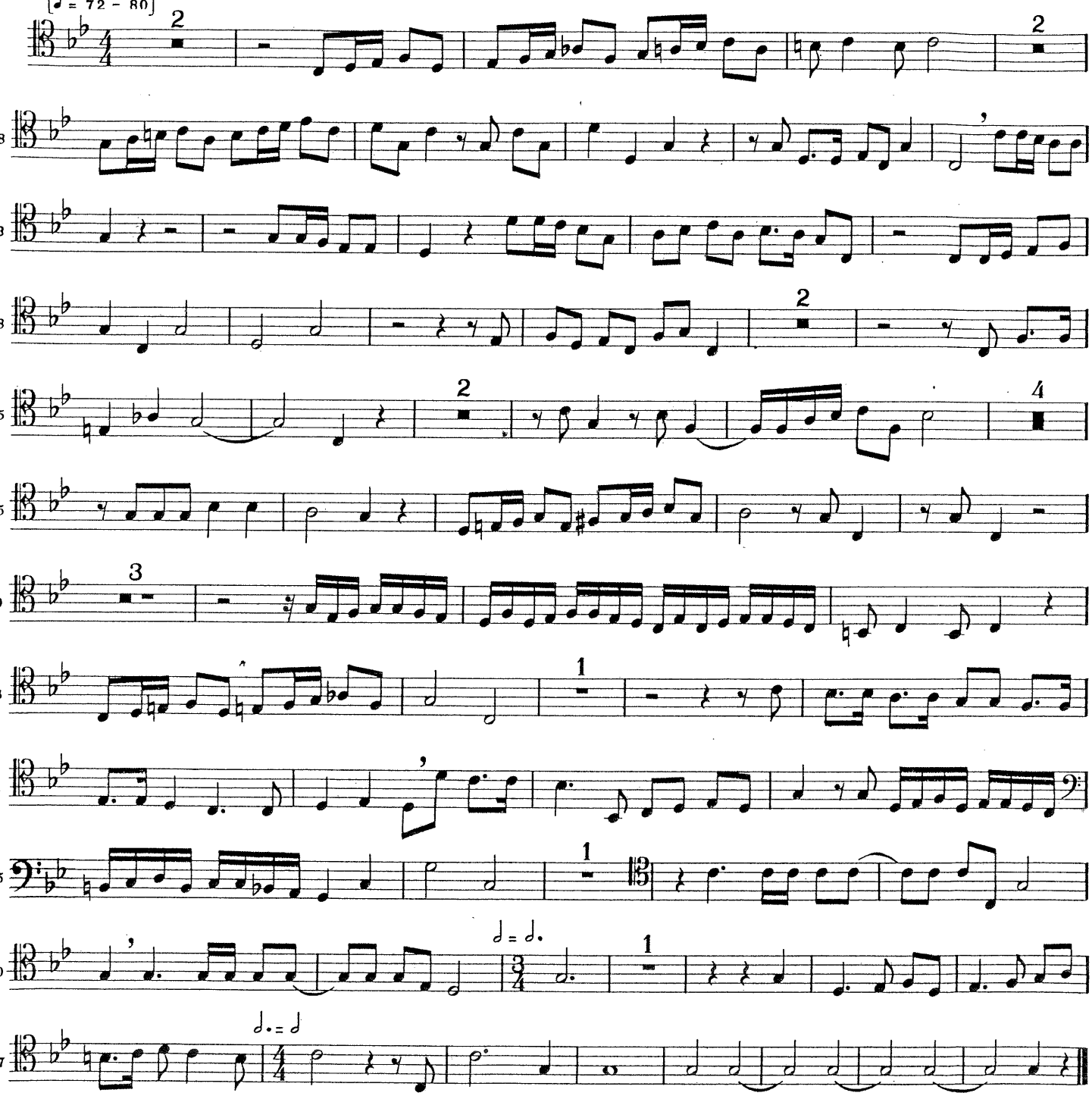
for

3 Trumpets and 3 Trombones

(3 Trumpets, Horn and 2 Trombones)

Trombone II

Giovanni GABRIELI



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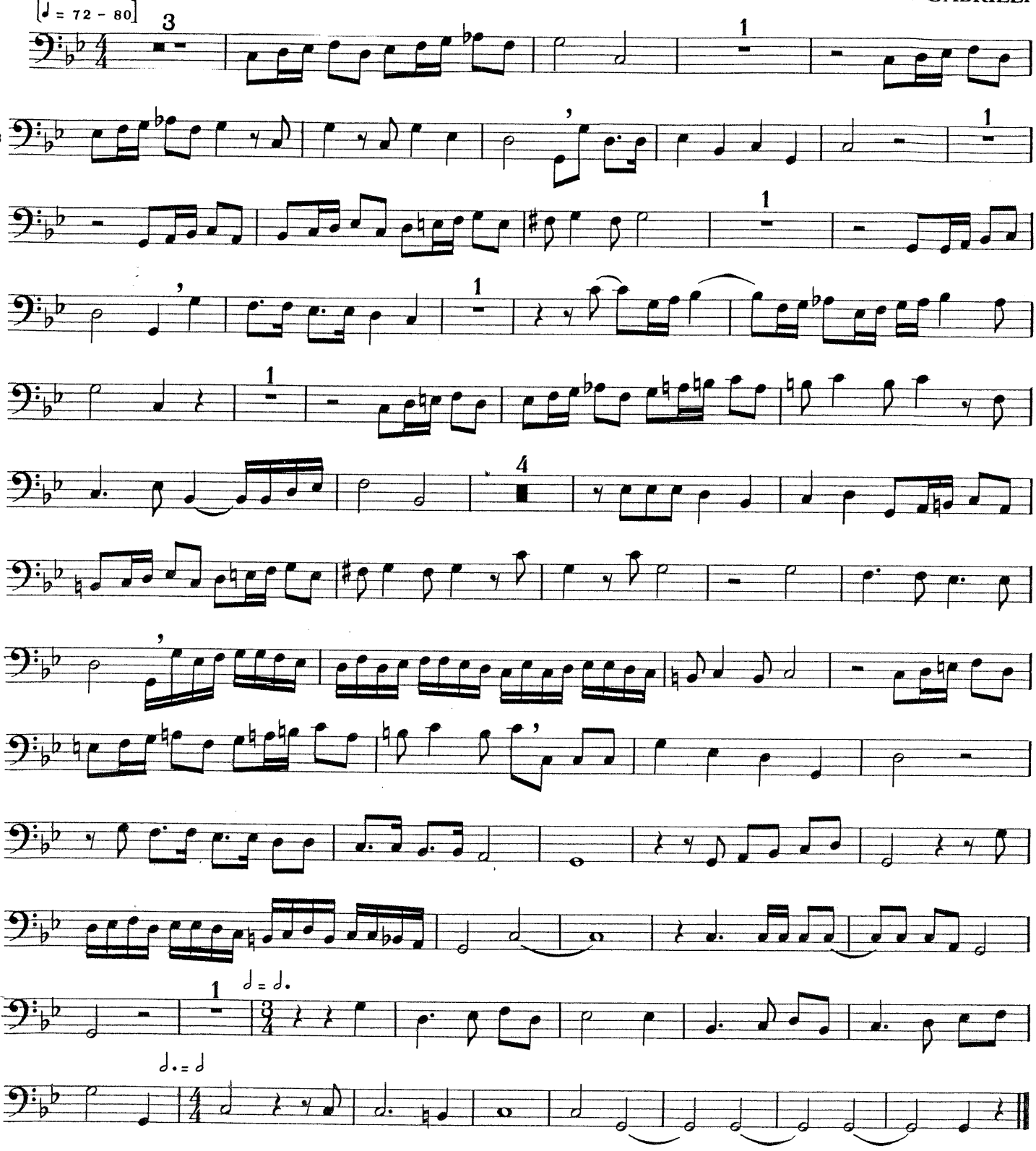
Canzone e Sonate (1615)
Canzon II
for
3 Trumpets and 3 Trombones
(3 Trumpets, Horn and 2 Trombones)

Trombone III

Giovanni GABRIELI



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