WOODWINDLY

Blaydon Races

TRADITIONAL, ARR. HUGH LEVEY

CLARINET QUARTET

SCORE & PARTS

Blaydon Races

TRADITIONAL (NORTHERN ENGLAND)

The town of Blaydon lies a few miles west of Newcastle in the north east of England and would have been rural when it became the scene of a famous horse race in the 19th century, immortalised in the words of this song. It tells the tale of a group of men and women on a day trip to the races on 9th June 1862 and the mishaps they had along the way; a wheel flying off the bus, someone getting a broken nose, and torrential rain that made everything muddy. The words were written by local music-hall performer Geordie Ridley in the same year. Although the story was not based on a specific series of real events, it paints the scene of what race day was like, with all its fun, jollity and mishaps.

Blaydon Races has become a local 'national anthem' for the people of north east England, especially around the city of Newcastle and the town of Gateshead. Locals sing this song in their 'Geordie' dialect on many occasions, including the soccer matches of Newcastle United Football Club. It is also the Regimental Song of The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers .

We have been unable to identify who wrote the tune. It is unlikely to have been Ridley, because the earliest known publication of the words in 1863 indicates that it should be sung to an tune called "Brighton". This arrangement captures the joyfulness and chaos of the 1862 trip. The four verses have different arrangements, with Clarinet 1, Clarinet 3 and the Bass Clarinet each getting the tune. Clarinet 2 has a lot of fun too with counter-melodies and some instrumental gymnastics in the last verse. Like their journey, the arrangement starts off in good spirits, but there are unexpected key-changes, mimicking the carriage's lurching and rolling. It all whips up to a fast and furious end.

Duration—2 minutes 45 seconds to 3 minutes

PERFORMANCE NOTES

The tempo markings are for guidance, but momentum should be built throughout the piece. Pay particular attention to the dynamics which help ensure the correct balance between the instruments and also to the articulation which gives this song its character. I am sure you will enjoy playing it.

Cover images: (1) Horse Racing drawing, English c.1850, Unknown author, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons, (2) Clarinet, Yamaha Corporation, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

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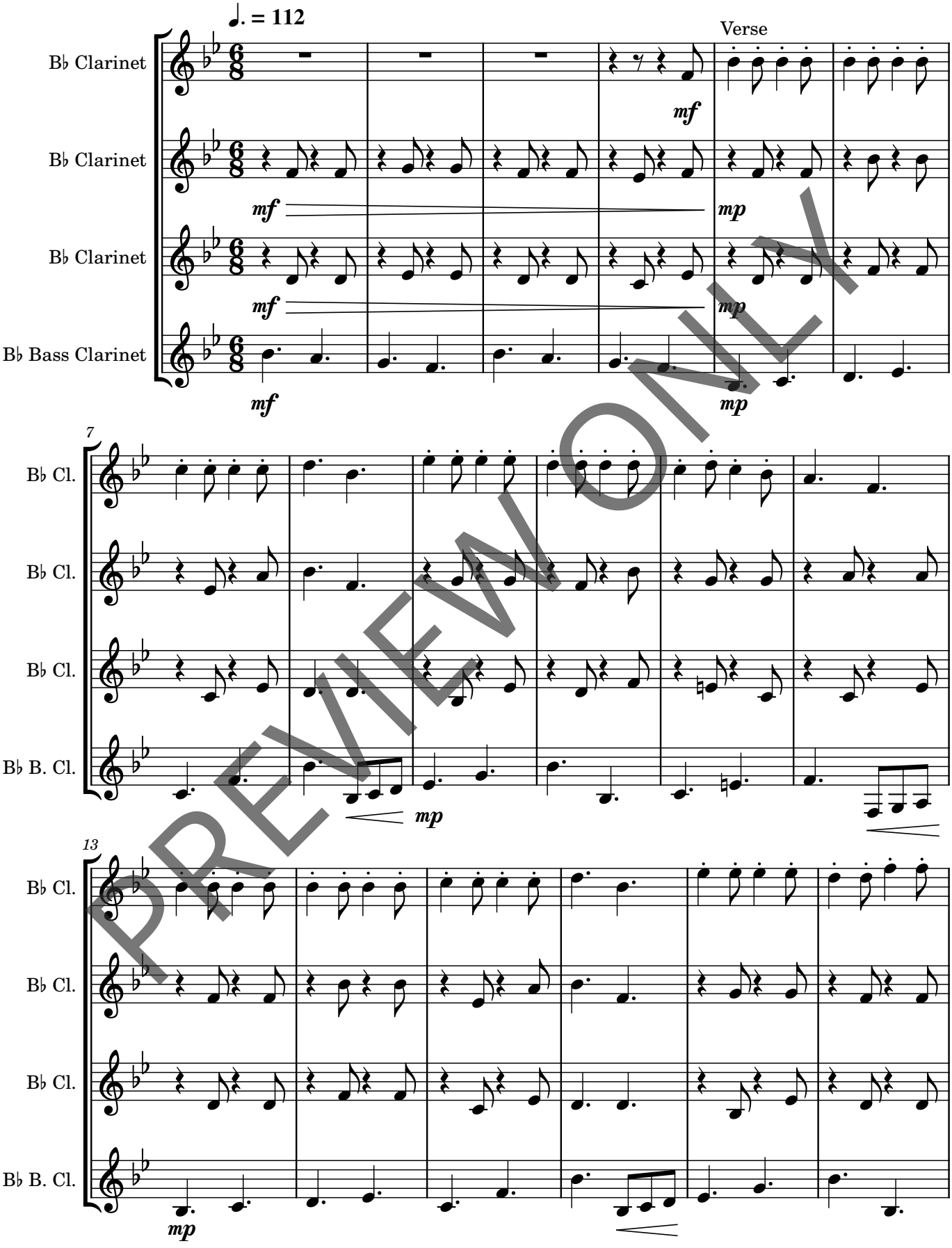
PREVIEW ONLY

Blaydon Races

Lyrics: Geordie Ridley

Traditional (arr. Hugh Levey)



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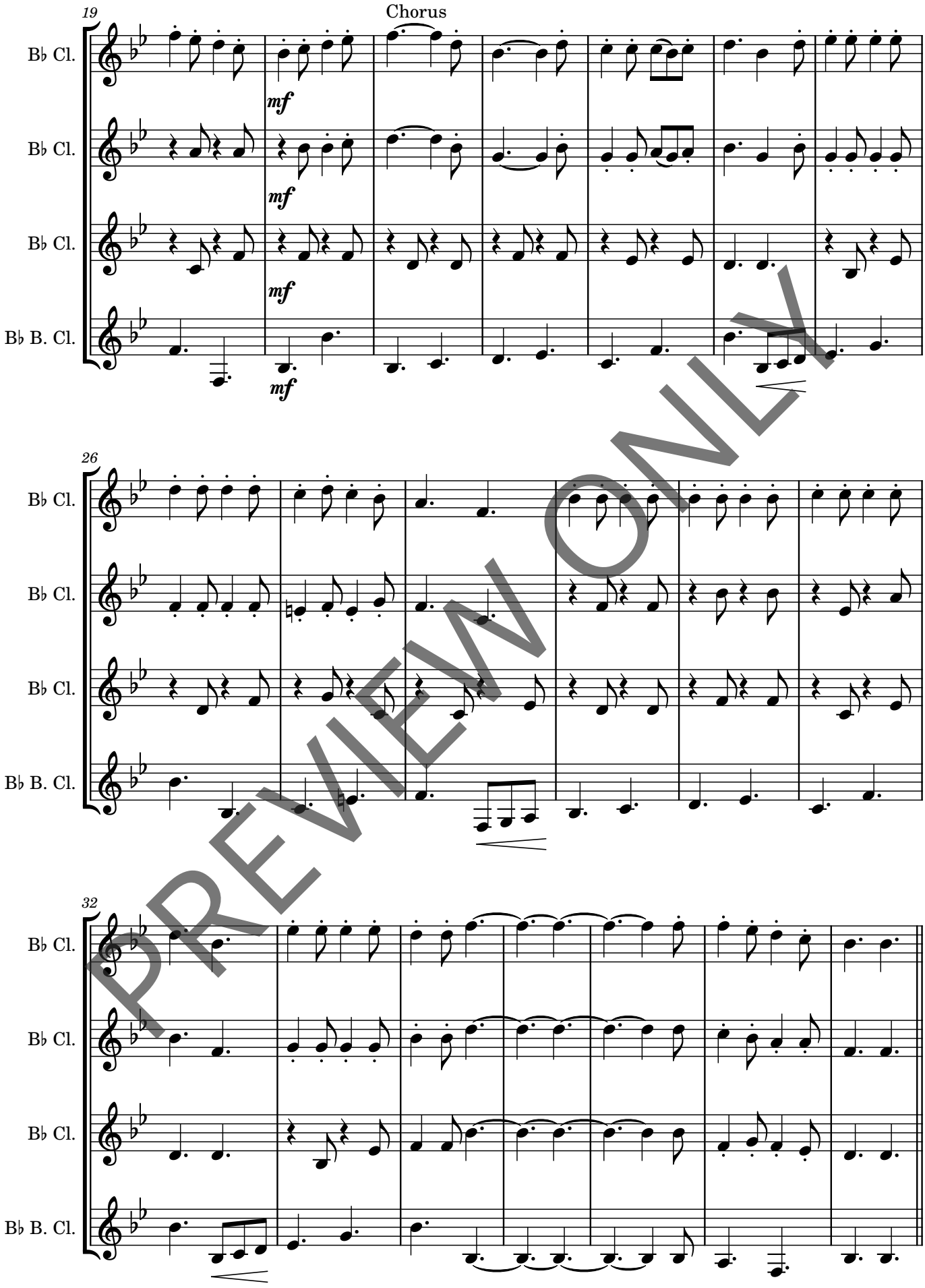

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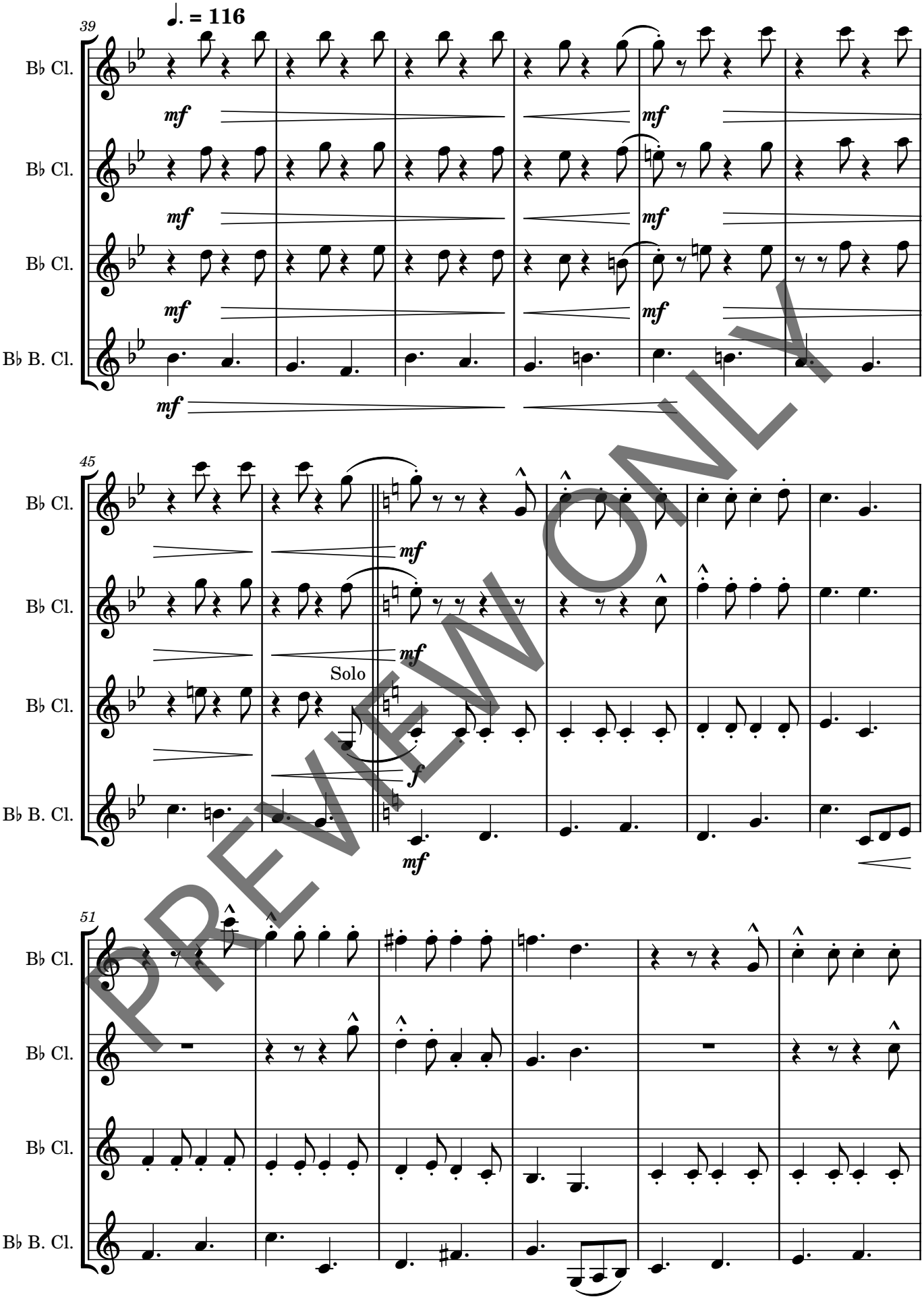

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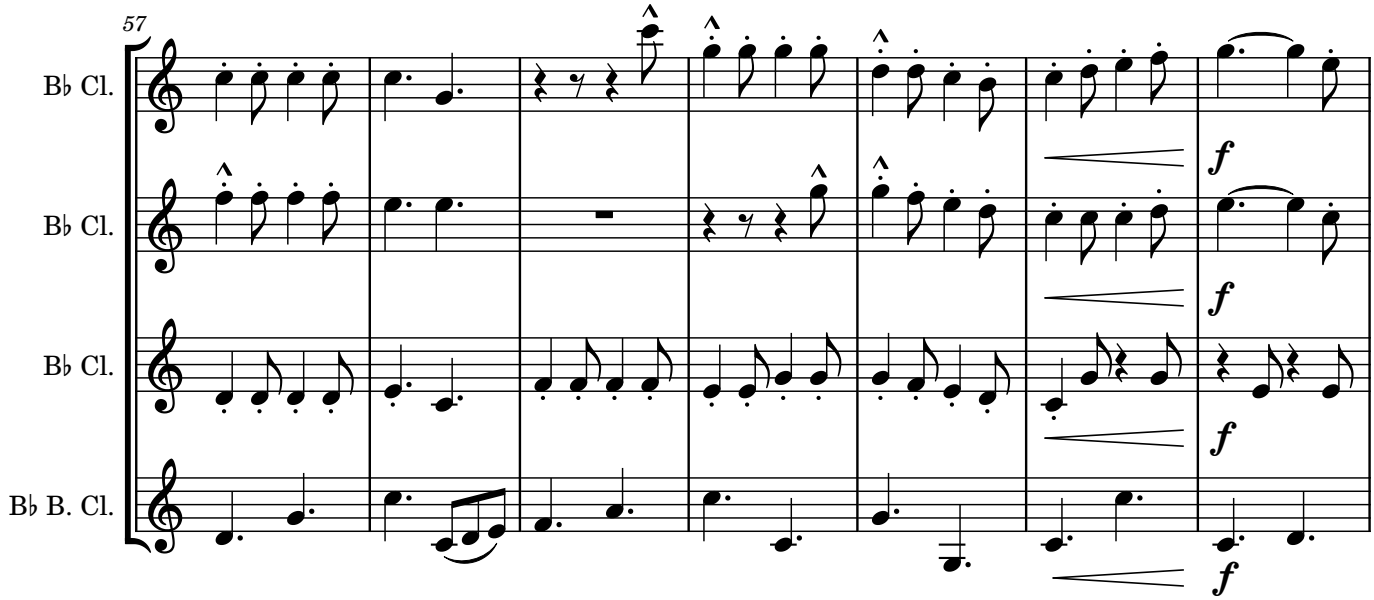

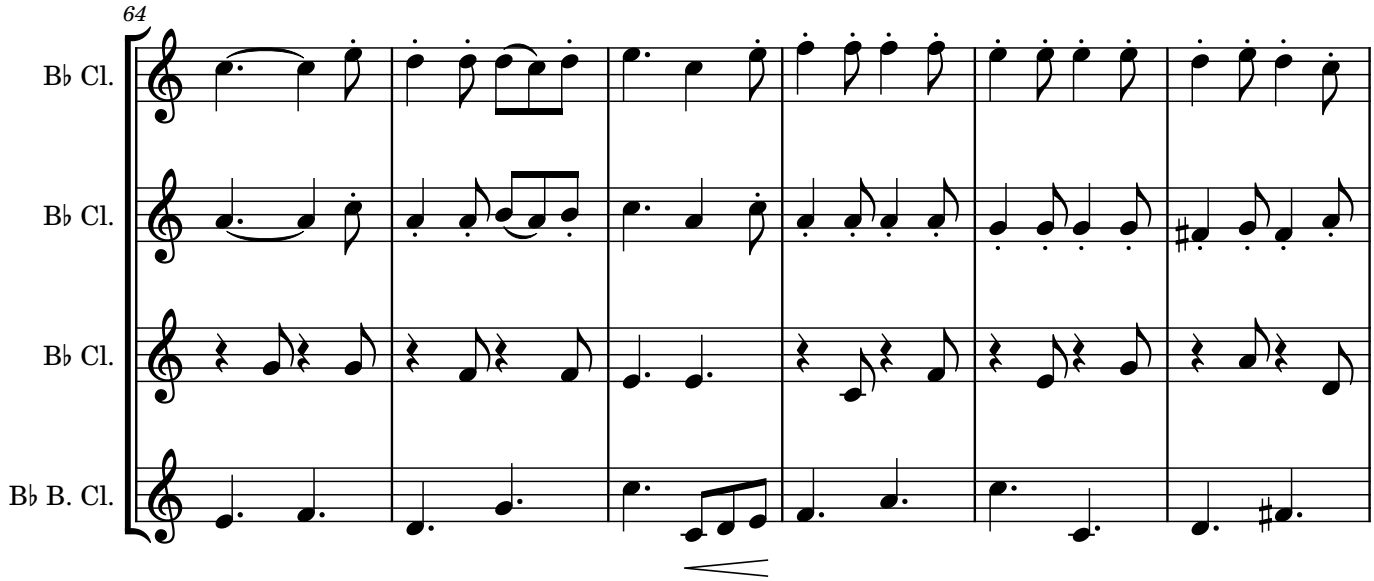

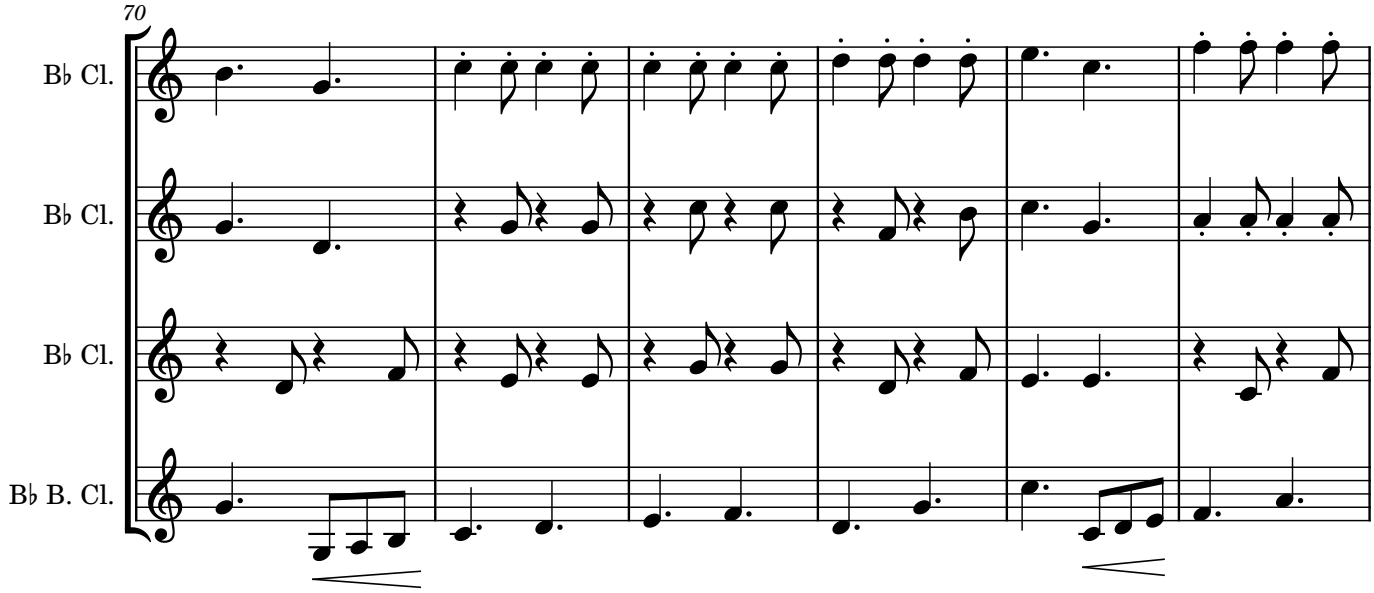

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