

interspersed sometimes with weeds and brambles (2013)

James Saunders

In *interspersed sometimes with weeds and brambles* the interaction of the players is governed by rule-based cueing and develops my interest in group behaviour as an organising principle. Players make sounds in response to those made by other ensemble members, either by interrupting sustained sounds, or using short sounds as triggers. The relatively consistent sound world, comprising veiled harmonics created by a movable preparation of the instruments, is occasionally interrupted by noise sounds. The title is taken from the preface to Samuel Johnson's 1765 edition of the collected plays of Shakespeare.

*interspersed sometimes with weeds and brambles* was commissioned by the Philharmonie Luxembourg for the Arditti Quartet and first performed by them at Rainy Days, Luxembourg, on 1 December 2013.

## instrument setup

Prepare each instrument by threading a thick cocktail stick between the strings such that it passes above I and IV, and below II and III (see photos). Equivalent light pieces of wood may be used, such as a coffee stirrer, skewer, chopstick or piece of thin dowel. The size of the wood may be scaled to suit the instrument. When a string is bowed lightly, the wood must resonate the other strings. The stick preparation should be placed approximately midway between the bridge and the end of the body at the start of the piece.



## playing instructions / performance indications

Duration is variable.

Each player selects a set of pages sufficient to cover the required performance duration. More than one player may use each page, and pages may be repeated if necessary.

Players independently work through their first pages according to the cueing systems indicated below. On completion, players move independently to the next available page. Sections between repeat marks may be optionally repeated any number of times. Where repeats overlap, any of the three possible units may be repeated (A-C, B-D or B-C):

A	B	C	D
' :	' :	' :	' :
-	-		

Each line on the stave represents a string, read I-IV from top to bottom. Note heads represent three different types of sound:

● Bow with light pressure between the stick preparation and the nut (i.e. over the fingerboard – see photo above).

◇ Bow with light pressure between the stick preparation and the nut, damping strings lightly with left hand between bow and nut.

[ ● ] [ ◇ ] As above, or optionally substitute notated sound with any bowed wood noise (body, scroll, tailpiece, pegs etc. or other wooden objects). If repeated, either the notated or substituted sound may be played, regardless of previous choices.

Duration of each sound is either sustained or short depending on the current cueing system (see below).

At the start of each page, the stick preparation is moved either towards the nut (↑) or towards the bridge (↓) to alter the sound. The distance moved may be of any practicable length such that it is large enough to make a discernible change to the sound.

Dynamics are generally very quiet, determined by the weight and speed of bow necessary to make the stick preparation resonate the other strings. On each page, players may optionally choose to play one sound slightly louder, maintaining this volume each time it is played on this page.

### **cueing**

The piece uses two cueing systems to sequence the notated sounds. Sounds are played in order as determined by each player's current page.

Players may switch between either cueing system at any point; they do not need to indicate this explicitly to other players.

The cueing systems may therefore operate sequentially or simultaneously in any proportion.

All responses to cues must be articulated as quickly as possible.

#### 1. long sounds, interruptions, hocketing

One player plays a sustained sound.

Other players may interrupt with a sustained sound, causing the player currently playing to stop.

The player currently playing may stop at any time; then any player may start

If two or more players start or interrupt simultaneously, they may both continue playing until interrupted, or stop at any time.

#### 2. short sounds, triggers, chains

Each player selects another player.

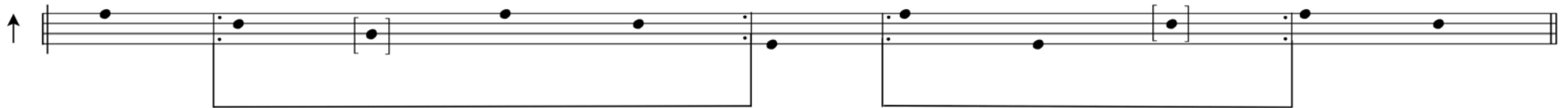
Each player makes their next sound as soon as possible after their chosen player begins a sound.

The player then selects a different player and repeats.

If nobody is playing, any player may make a sound.

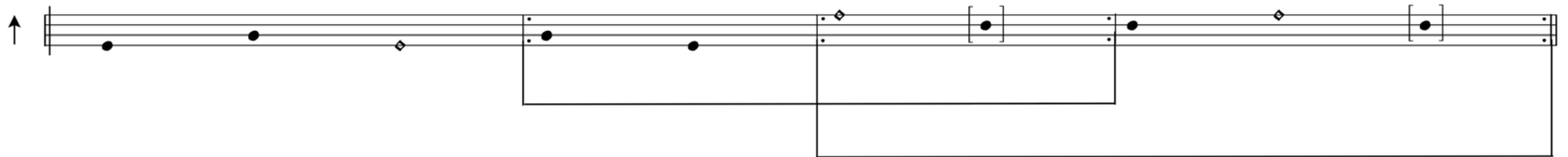
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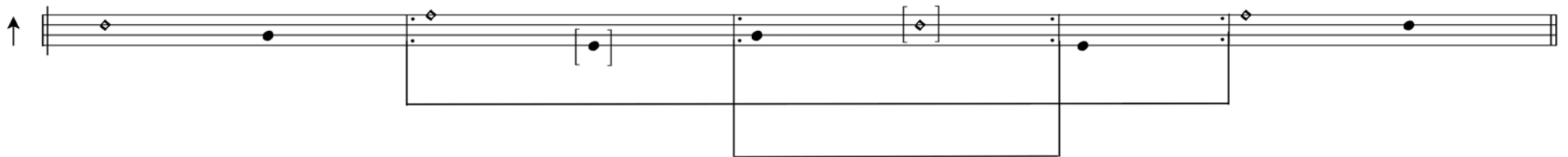
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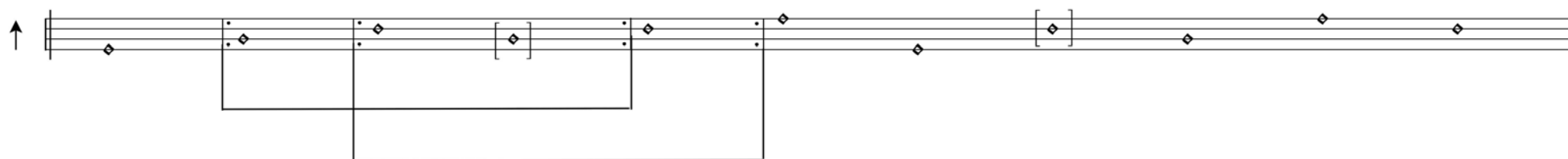
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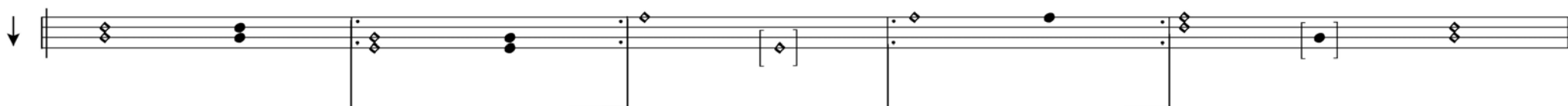
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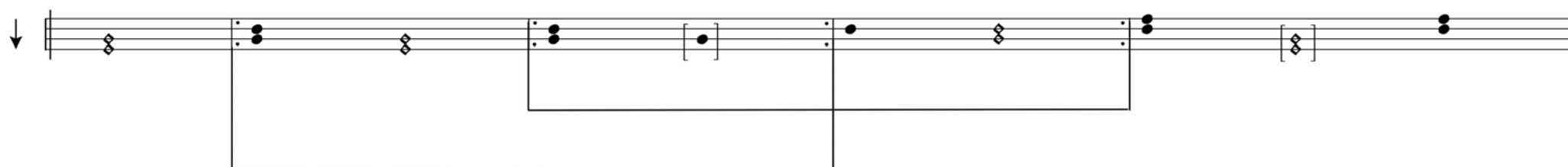
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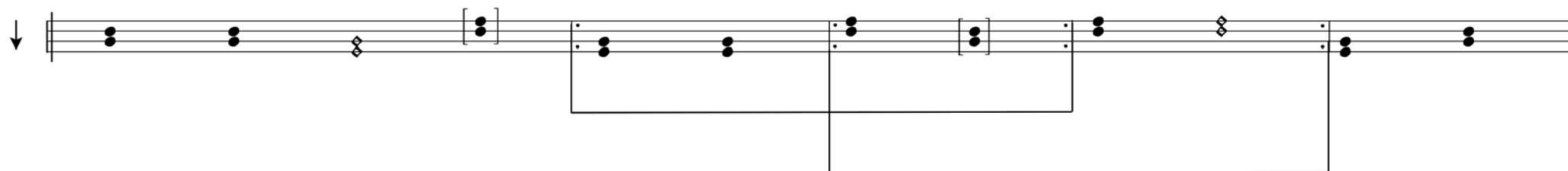
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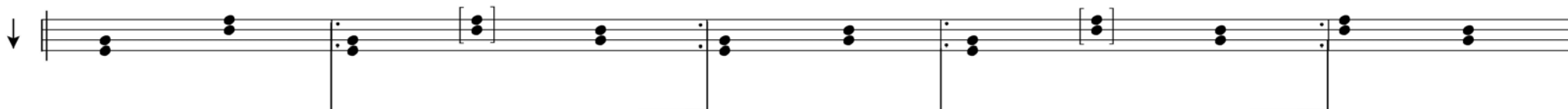
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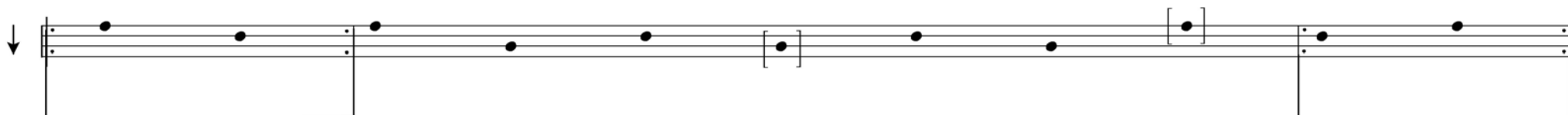
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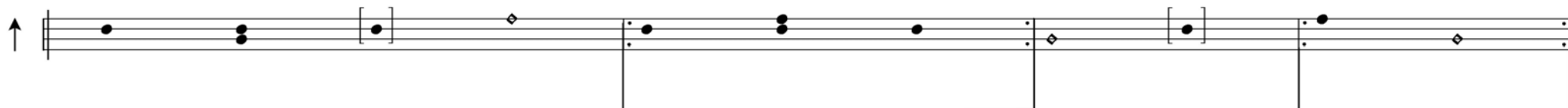
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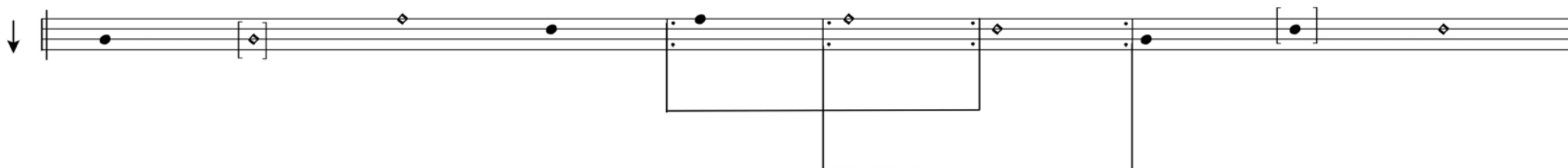
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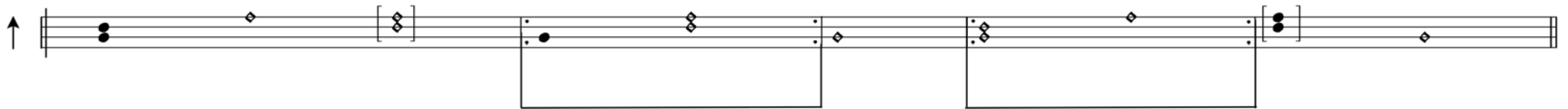
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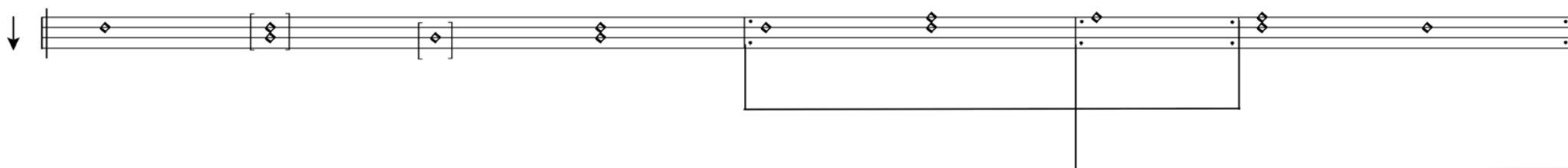
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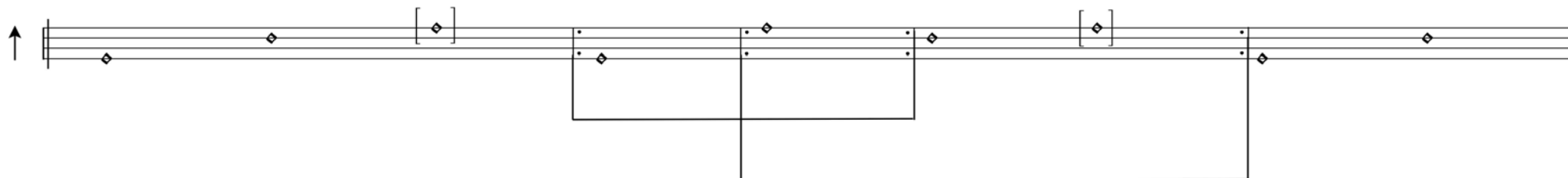
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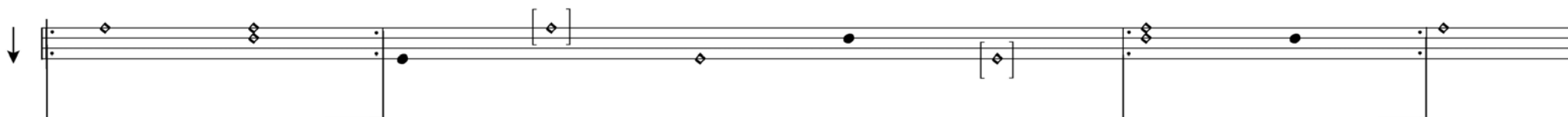
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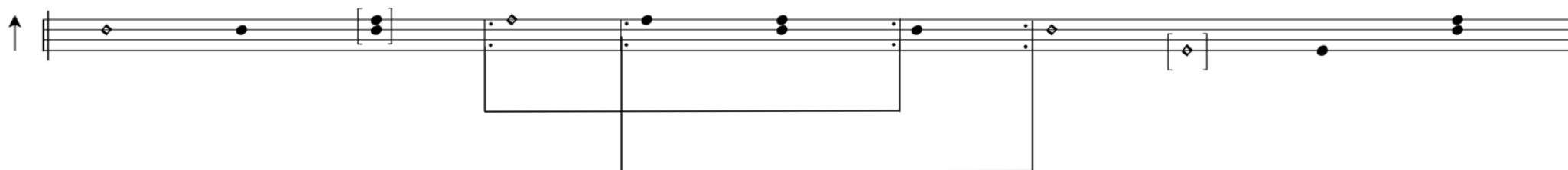
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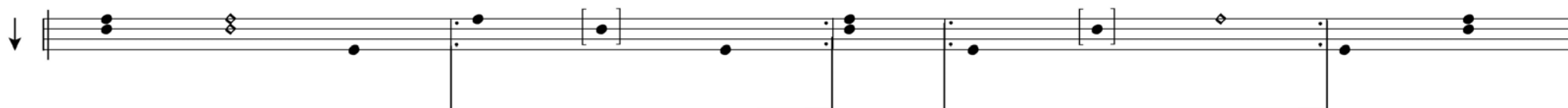
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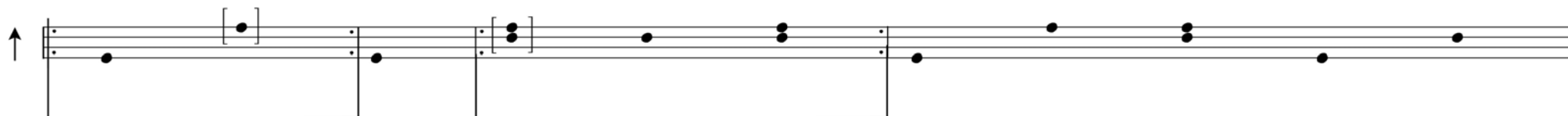
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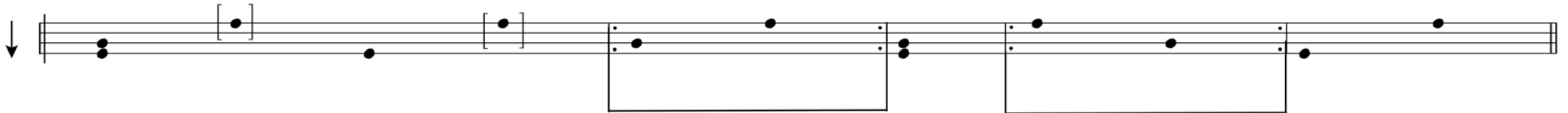
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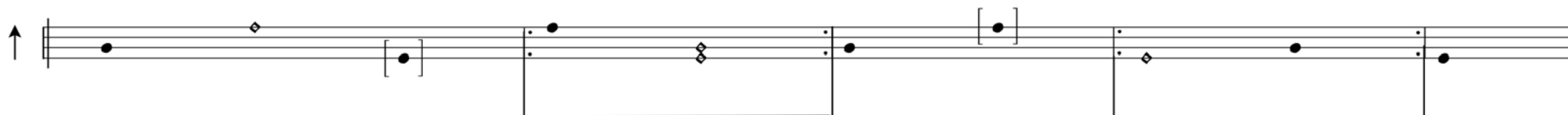
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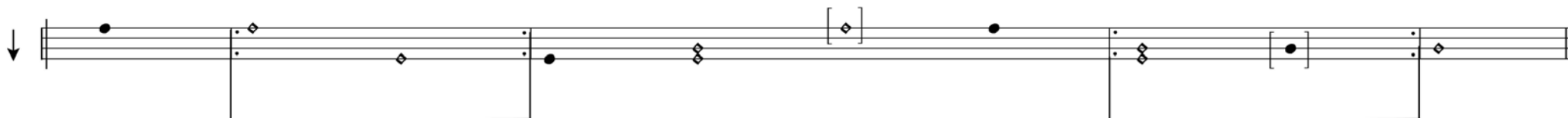
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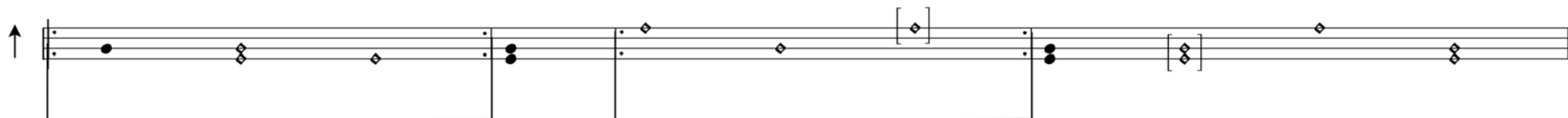
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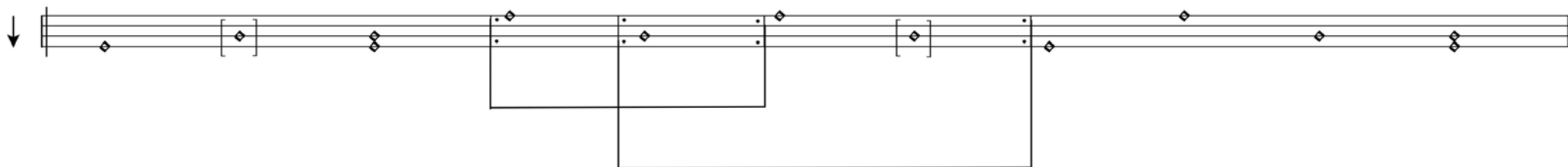
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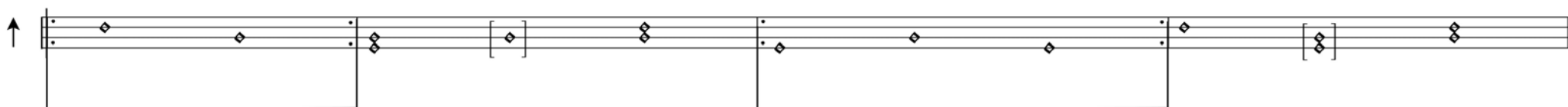
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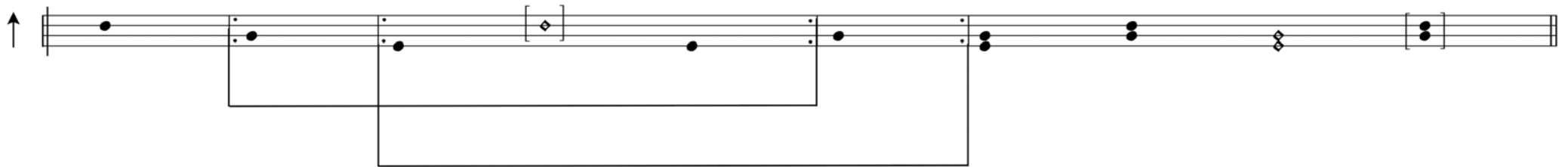
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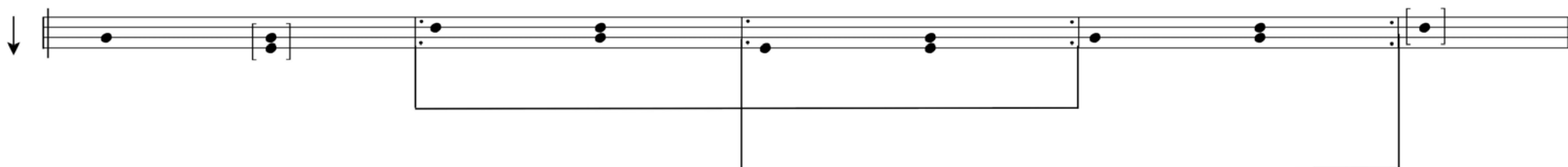
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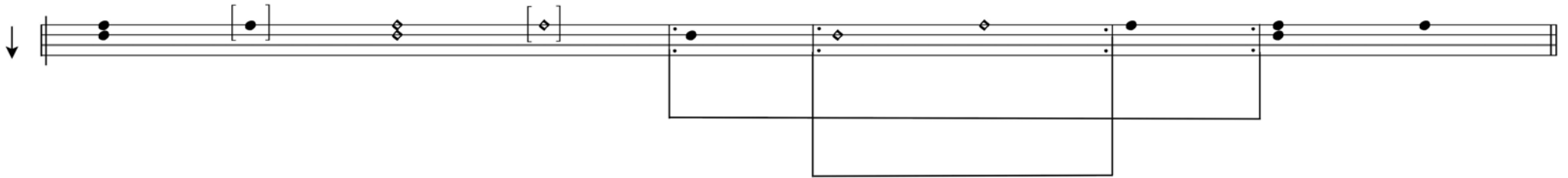
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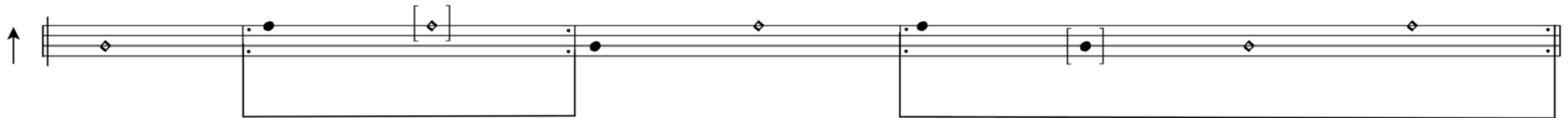
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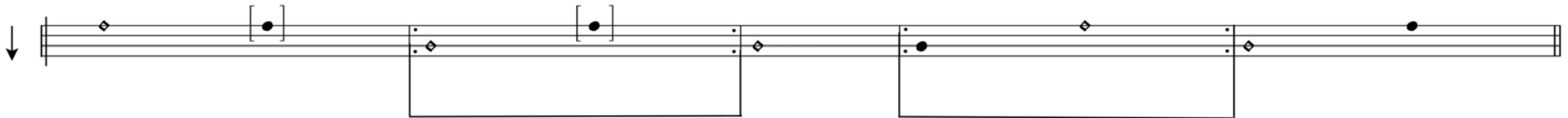
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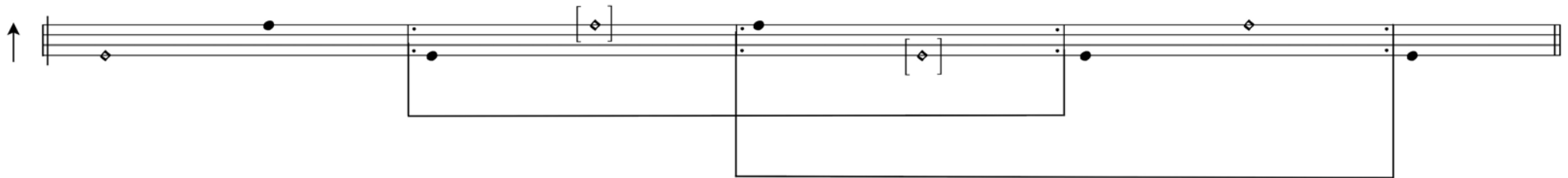
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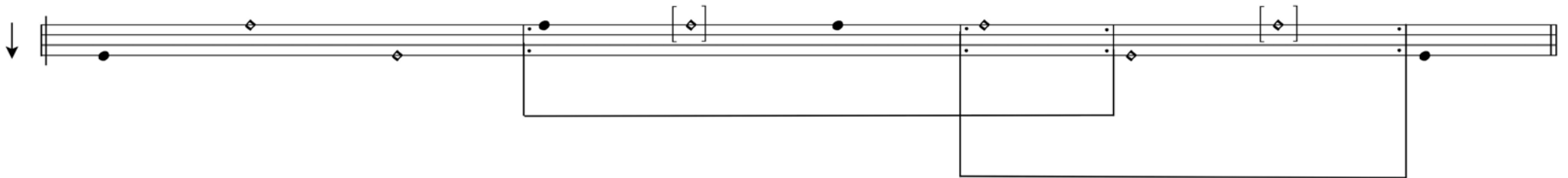
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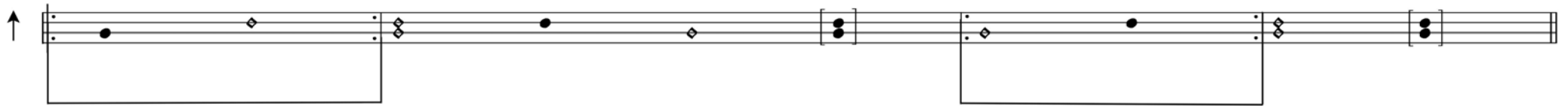
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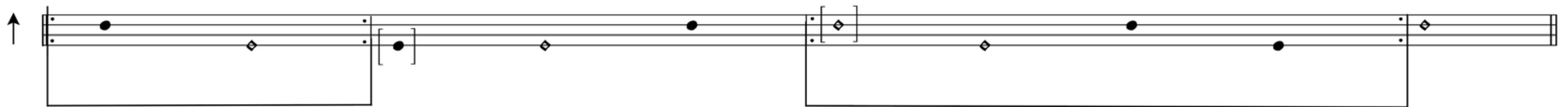
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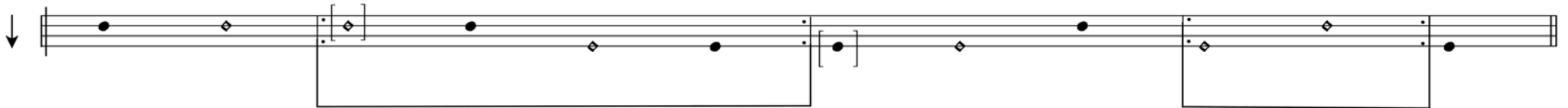
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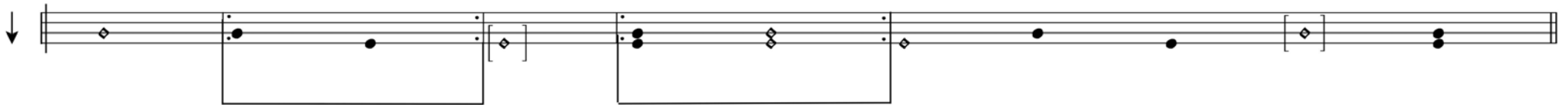
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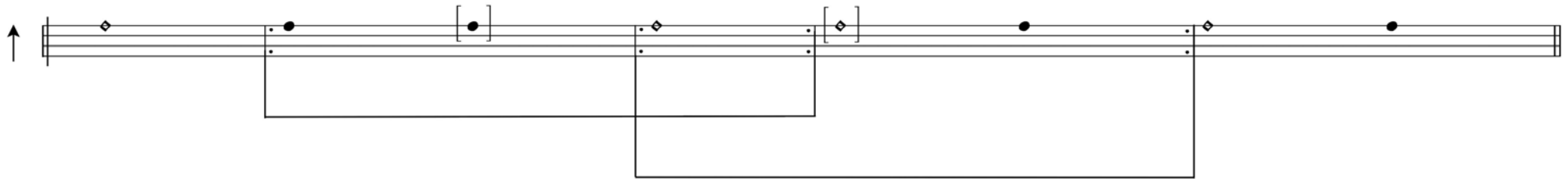
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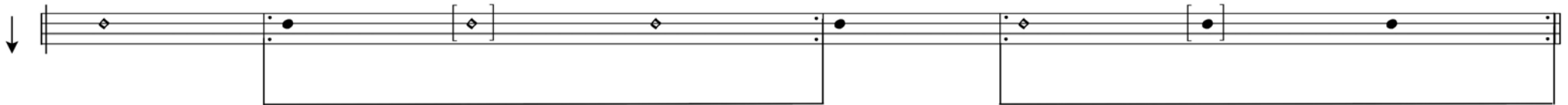
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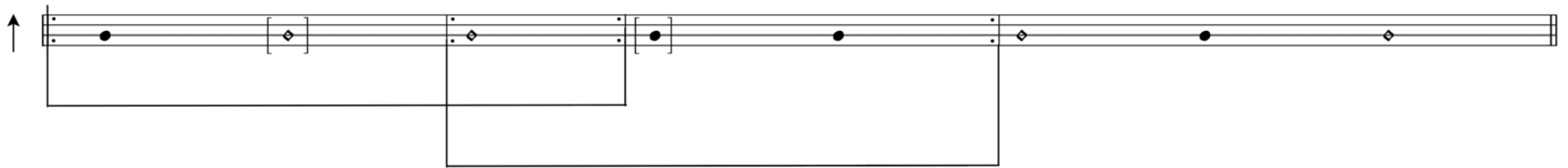
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