Nocturns

For Flute and Guitar

Nigel Morgan

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Nocturns

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About The Piece

The title refers to a sequence of night services associated with the Divine Office still celebrated in some monastic communities during Holy Week. The Nocturns are part of Matins, the first of the nine ‘hours’ of the office. They are celebrated as an extended meditation of antiphons, psalms and readings. On Maundy Thursday there are two Nocturns during which Psalms 69 -72 are intoned and passages from the Lamentations of Jeremiah read. At the conclusion of each psalm a candle is extinquished...

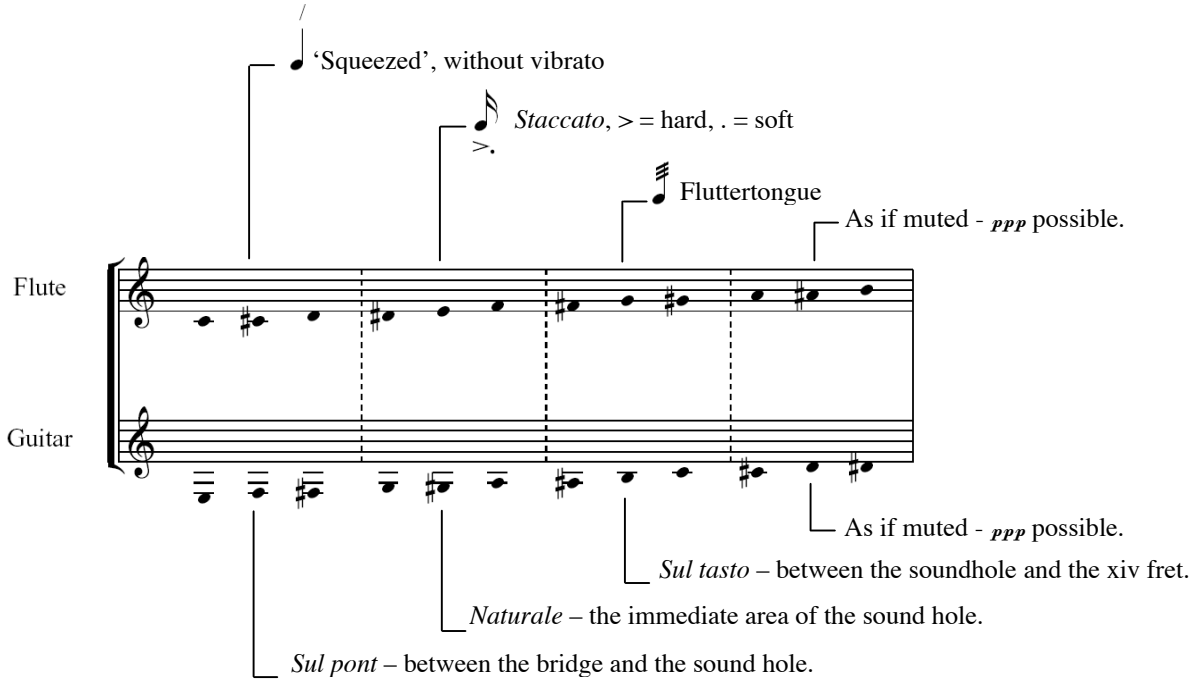
When I composed this work in 1972 I had not experienced for myself the special quality of the 'night office'. It was something I had only read about in devotional literature. The 'idea' captured and played on my imagination then as a 'context' within which music might be made and performed. During Holy Week 2005 I witnessed the Nocturns sung by the Benedictine sisters of Stanbrook Abbey in Worcestershire and in my diary wrote: *In the early hours the psalm tone is a single note. The words flow into one another and the acoustics of Pugin's chapel play tricks with the ears. Voices break into quarter and eighth tone clusters that reform themselves miraculously at the end of phrases.*

Nocturns was written for Tim Walker and Judith Pearce and first performed at the SPNM's 25th birthday celebrations at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. It has subsequently been performed many times by the composer and the Canadian flautist Richard Land for whom a companion work, *Matins* for solo flute, was written in 1974.

Performance instructions

Tempo and dynamics are left entirely to the discretion and imagination of the executants. In the *First Nocturn*, the metrical modulations will dictate the initial tempo.

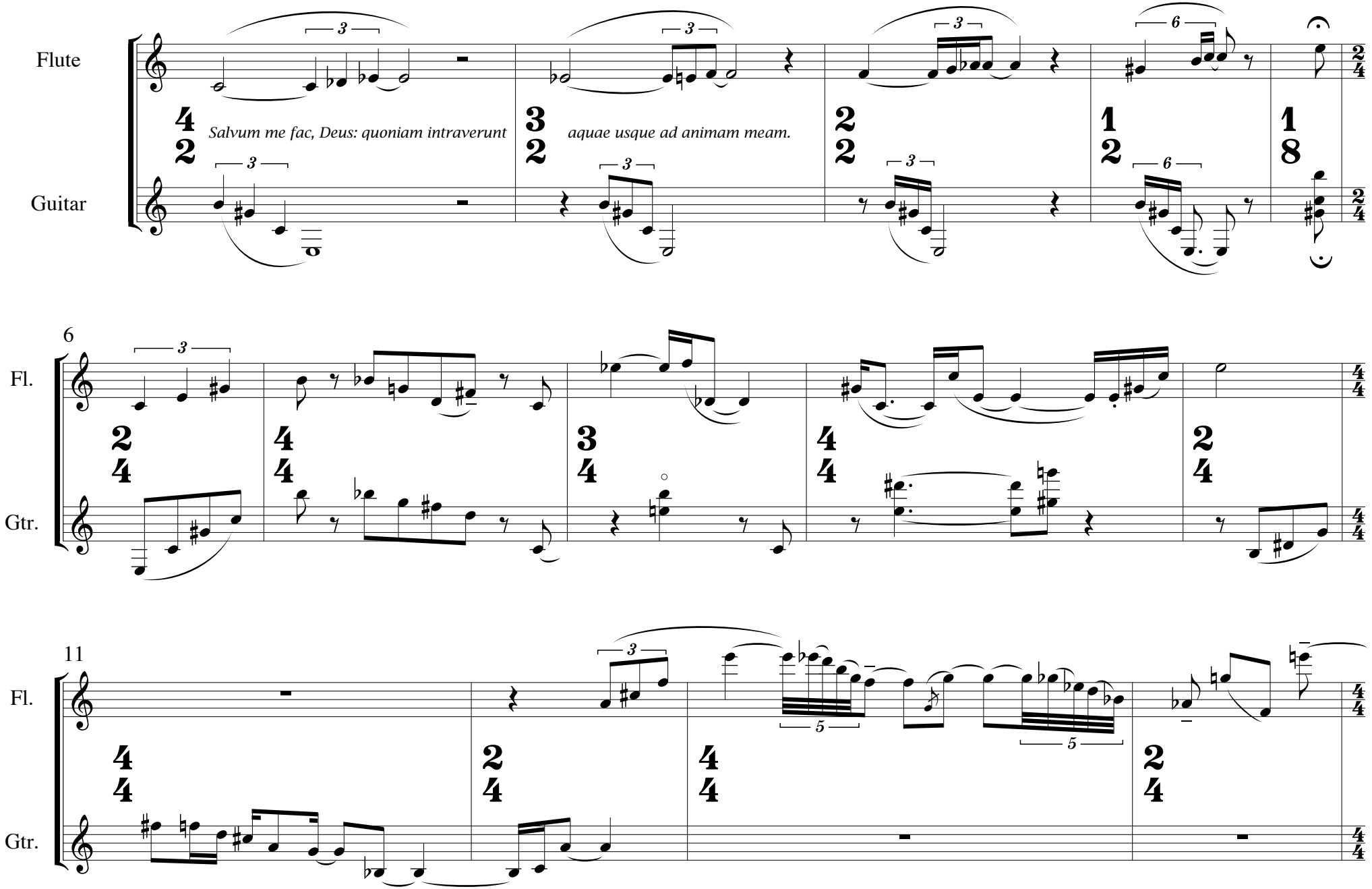
In the *Third Nocturn* the material for both instruments consists of four three-note rows. Each row has a specified mode or area of attack:

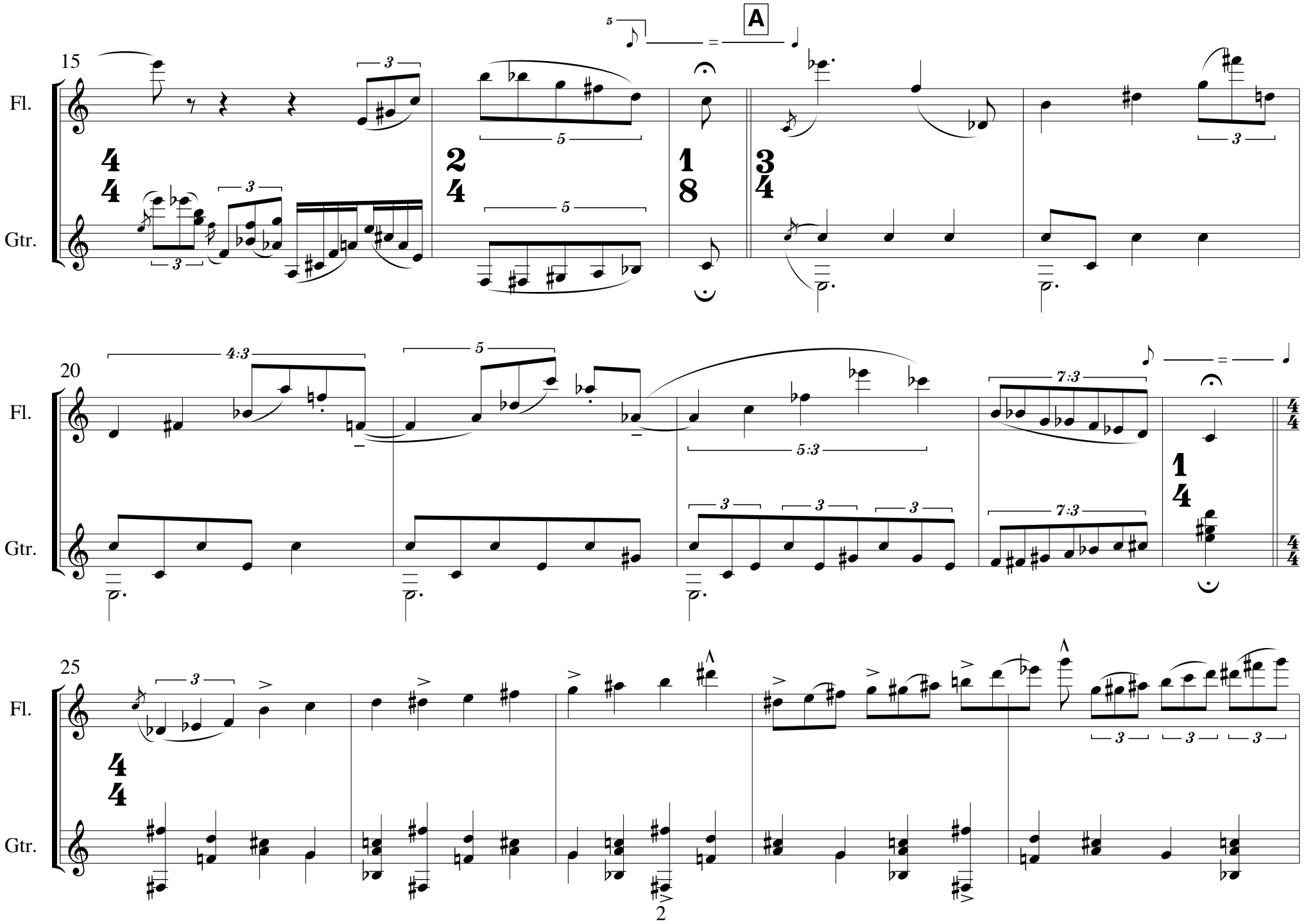


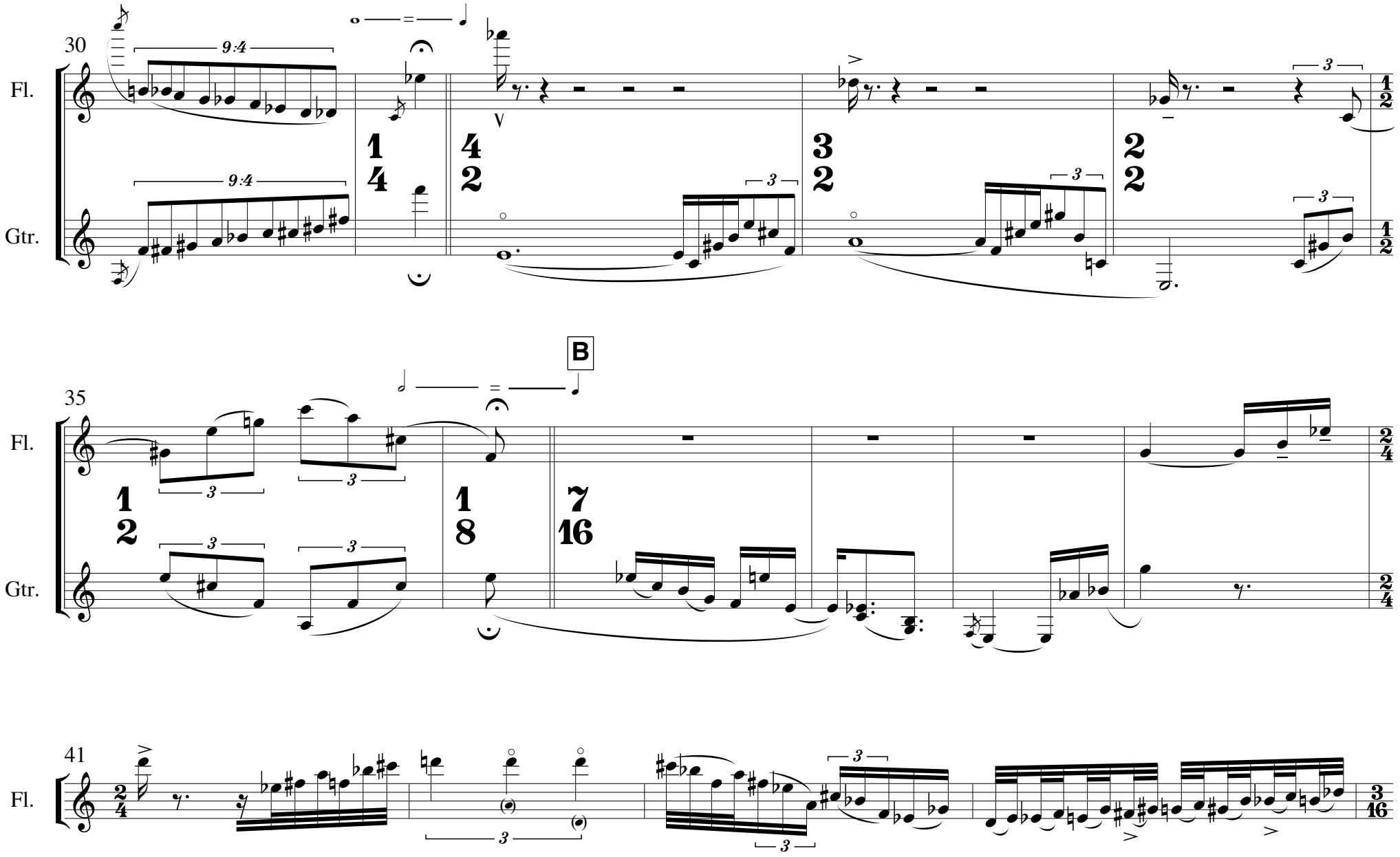
Between ▷◁ the mode or area of attack is not specified.

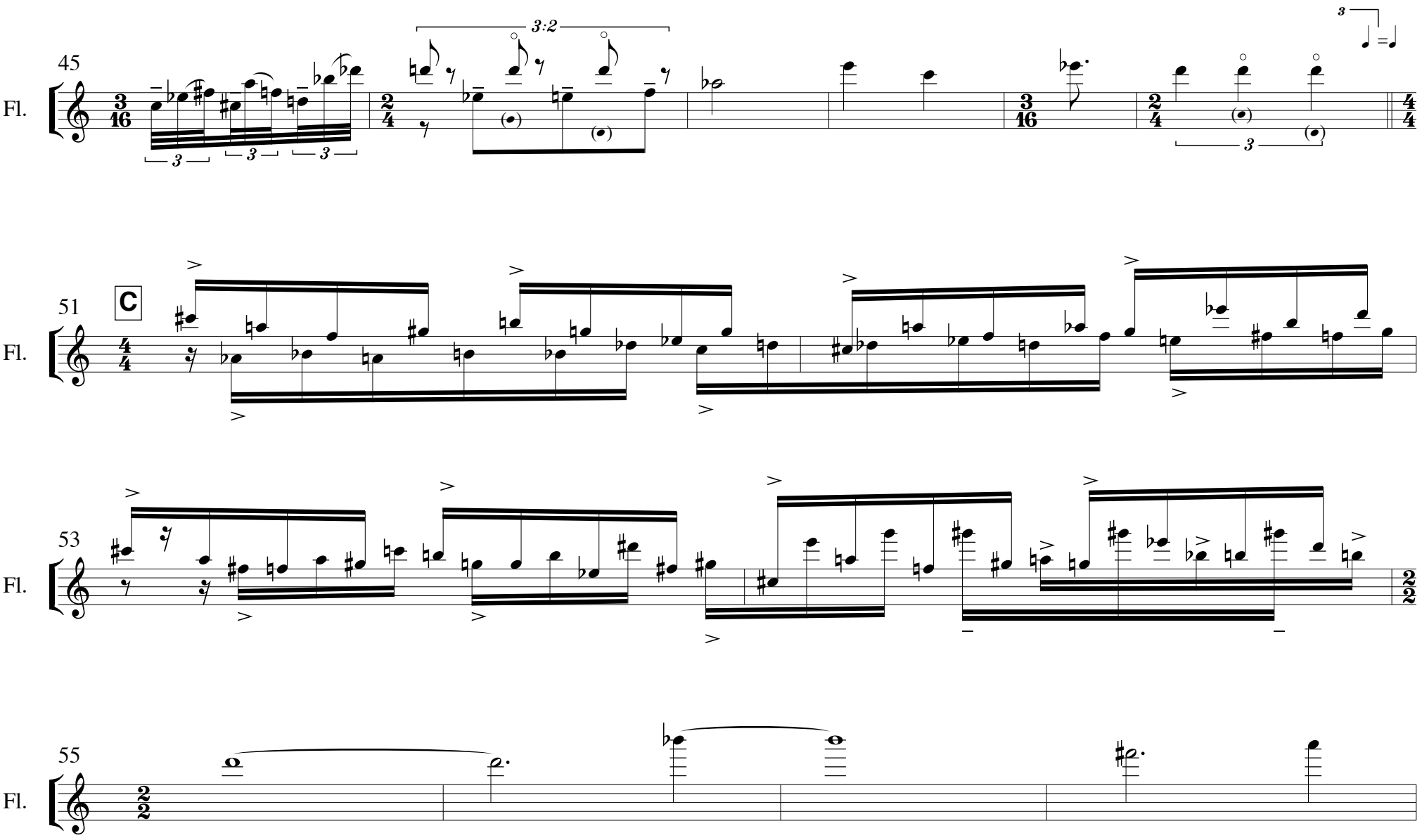
The guitar part is notated an octave higher than it sounds.

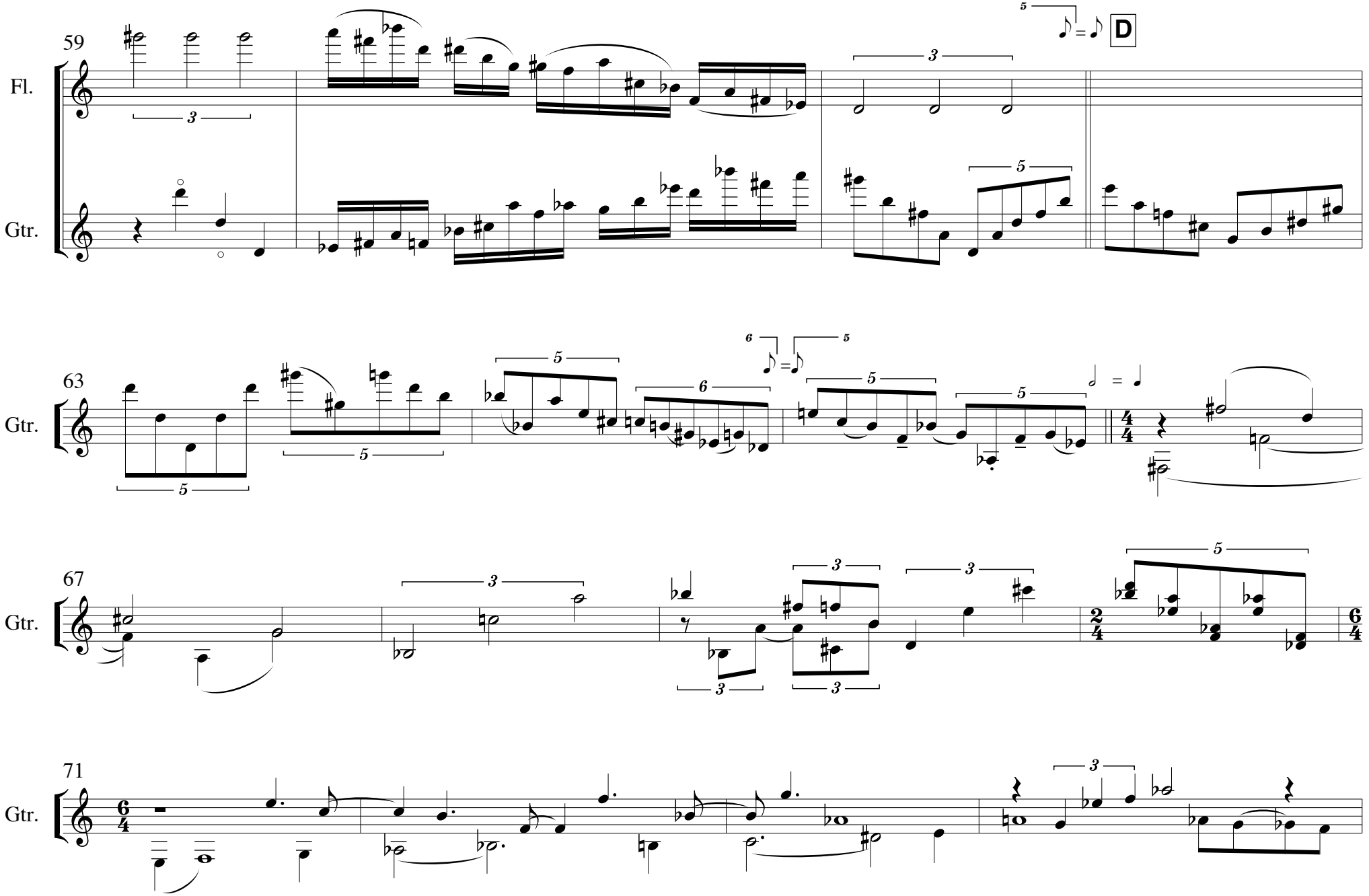
First Nocturn

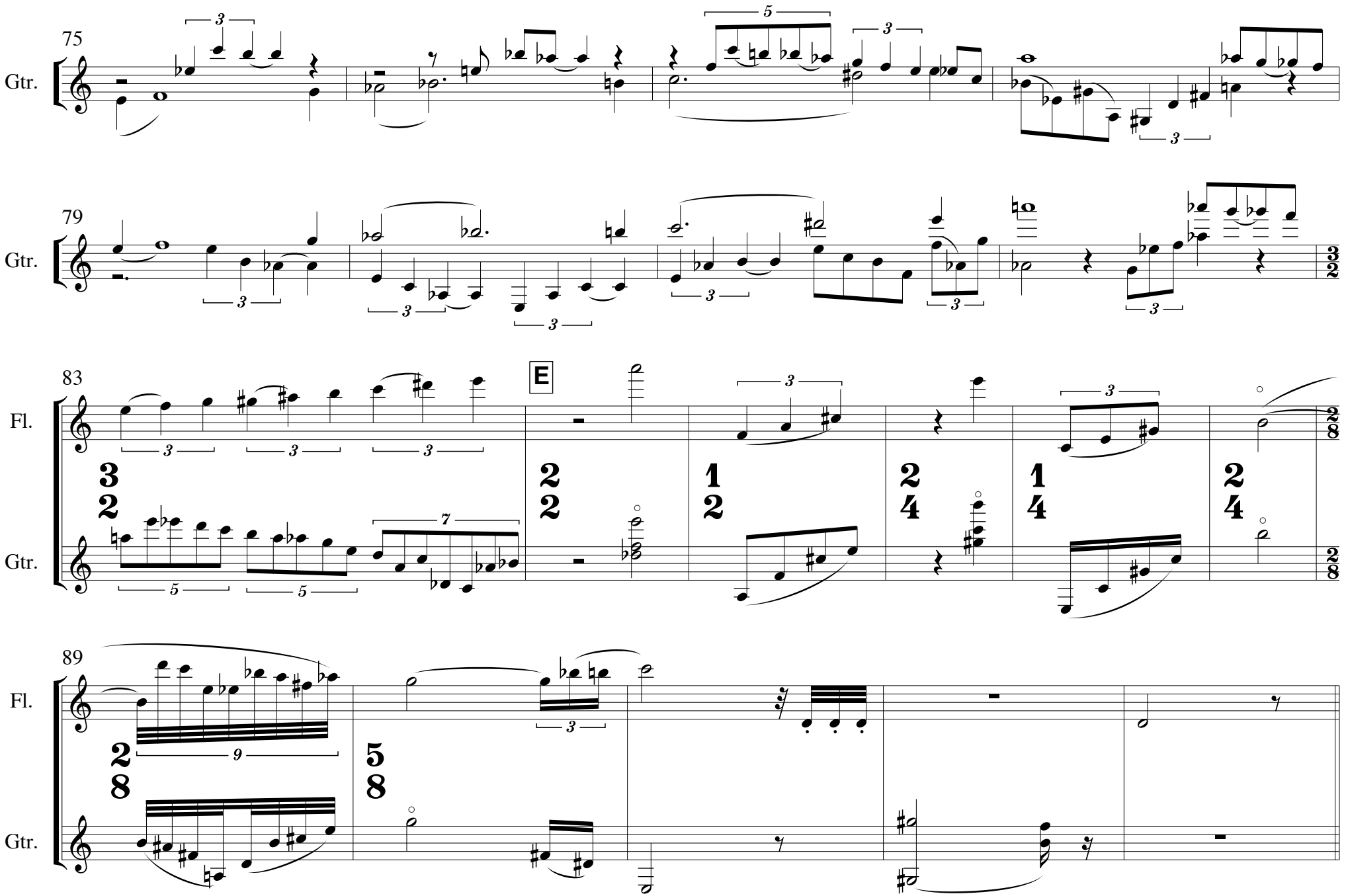



A
15
Fl.
Gtr.
20
Fl.
Gtr.
25
Fl.
Gtr.


30
Fl.
Gtr.
9:4
35
B
41


45
Fl.
3:2
51
C
Fl.
53
Fl.
55
Fl.


59
Fl.
Gtr.
D
63
Gtr.
67
Gtr.
71
Gtr.


75
Gtr.
79
Gtr.
83
E
Fl.
Gtr.
89
Fl.
Gtr.

Second Nocturn

97

Flute

Guitar

Deus, in adjutorium meum intende: Domine, ad adjuvandum me festina.

101

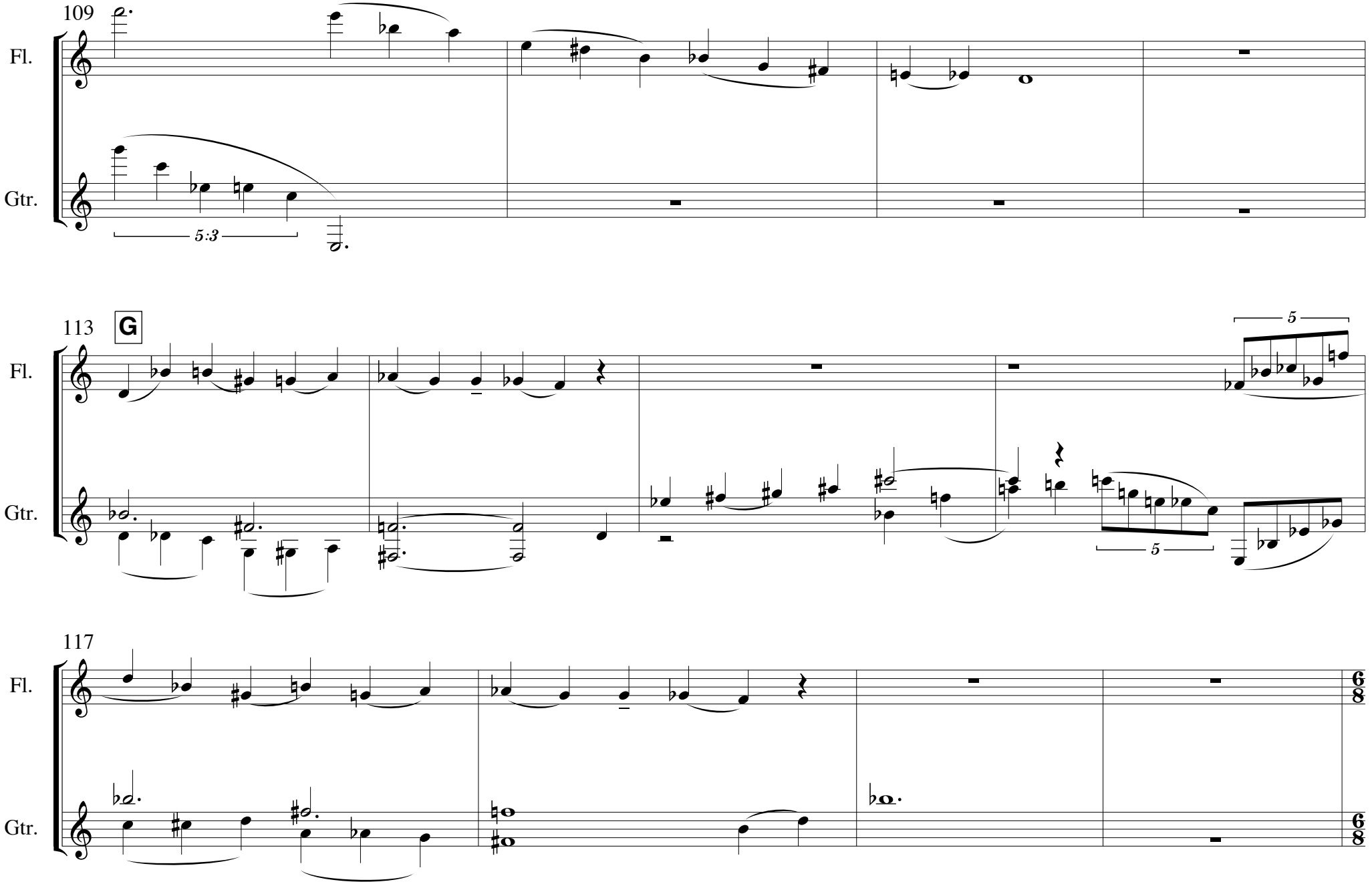
Fl.

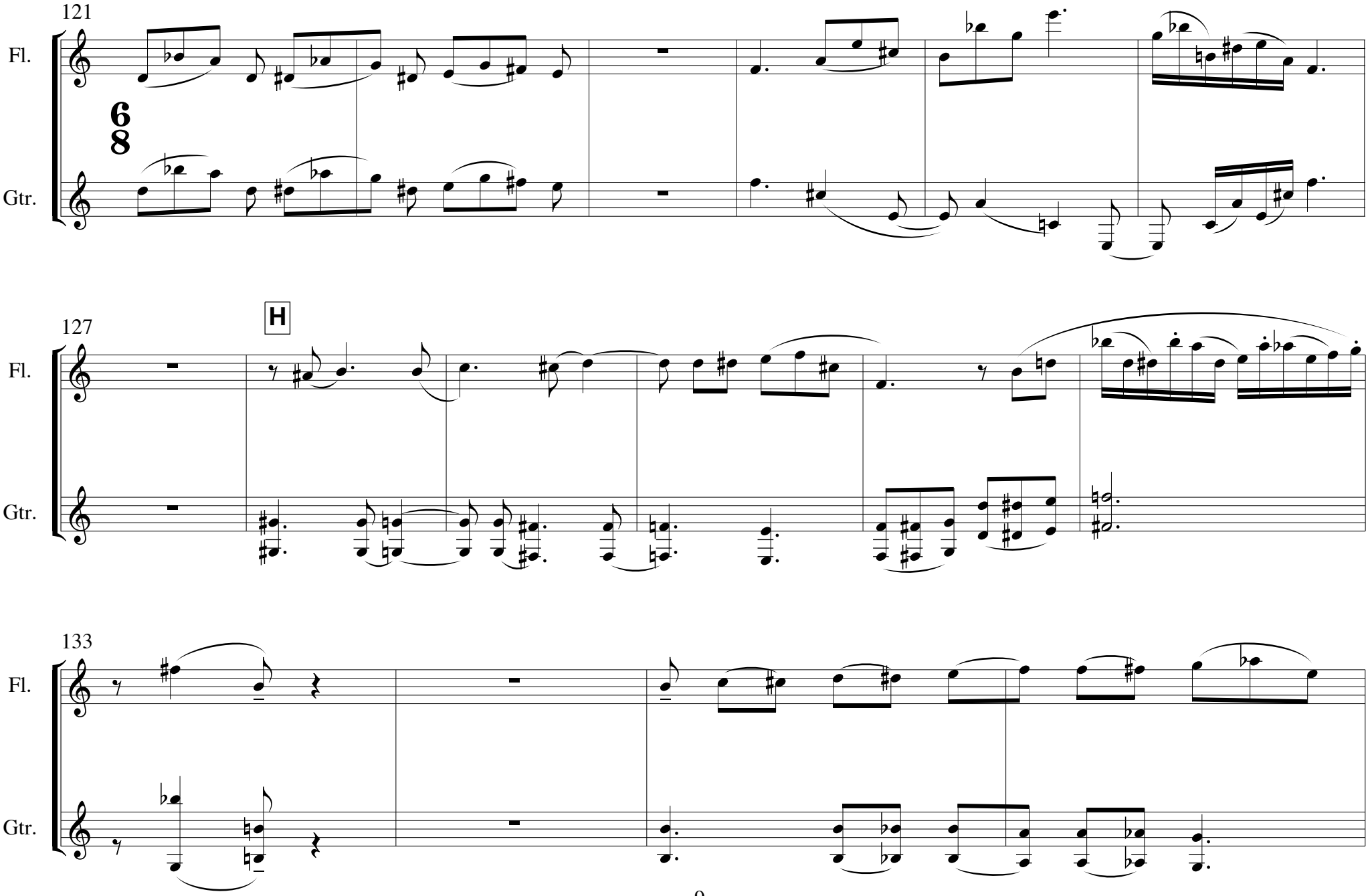
Gtr.

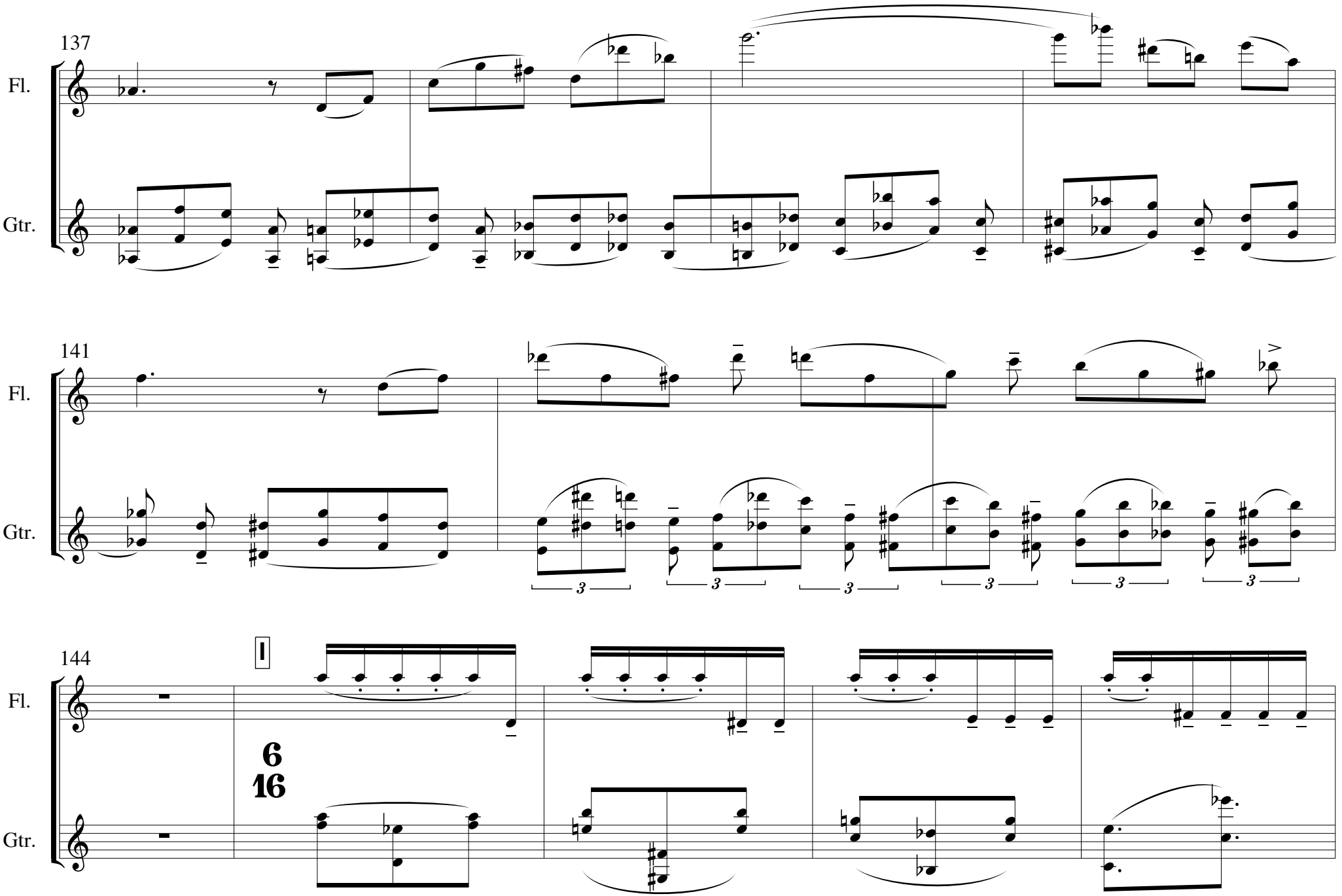
105 **F**

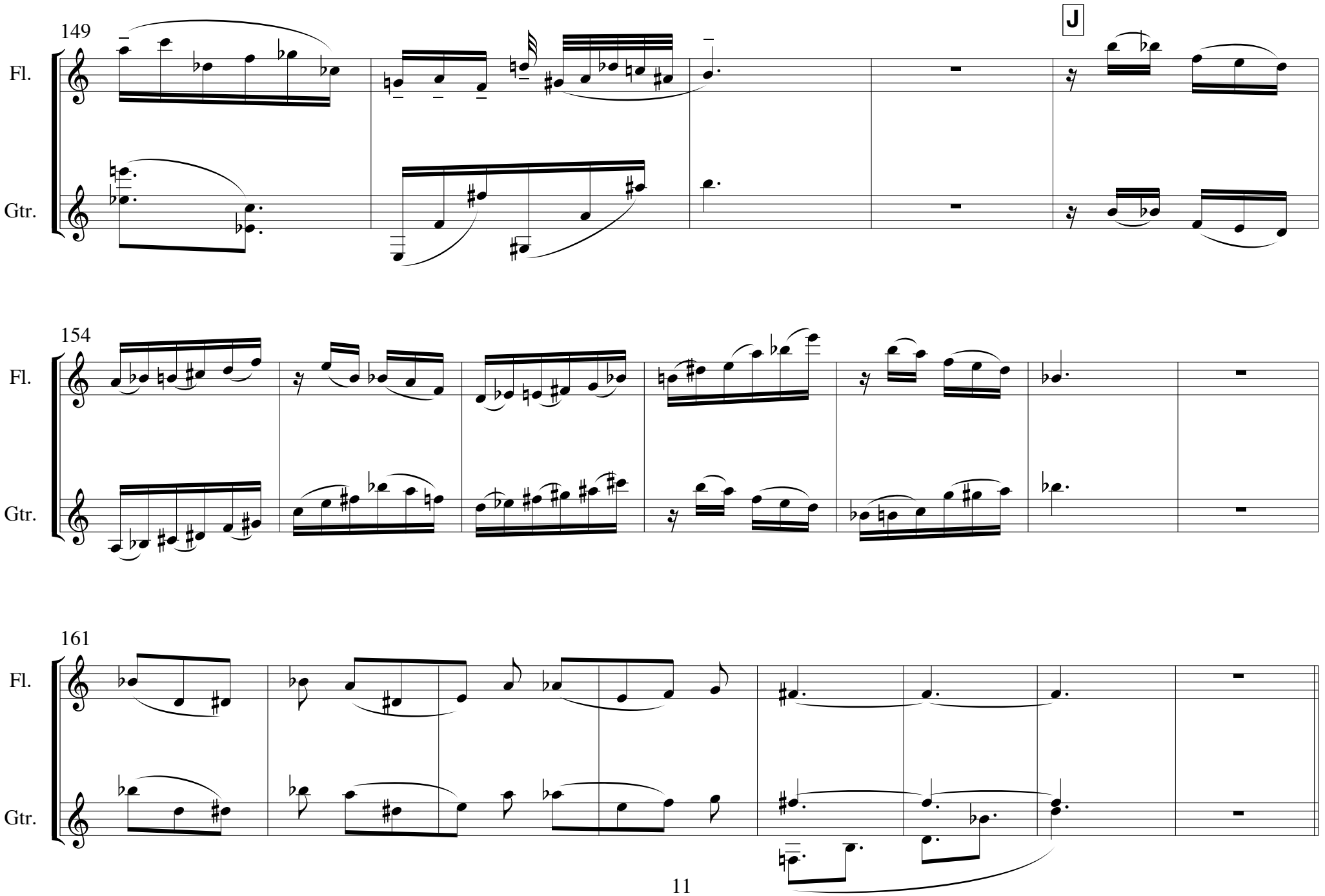
Fl.

Gtr.

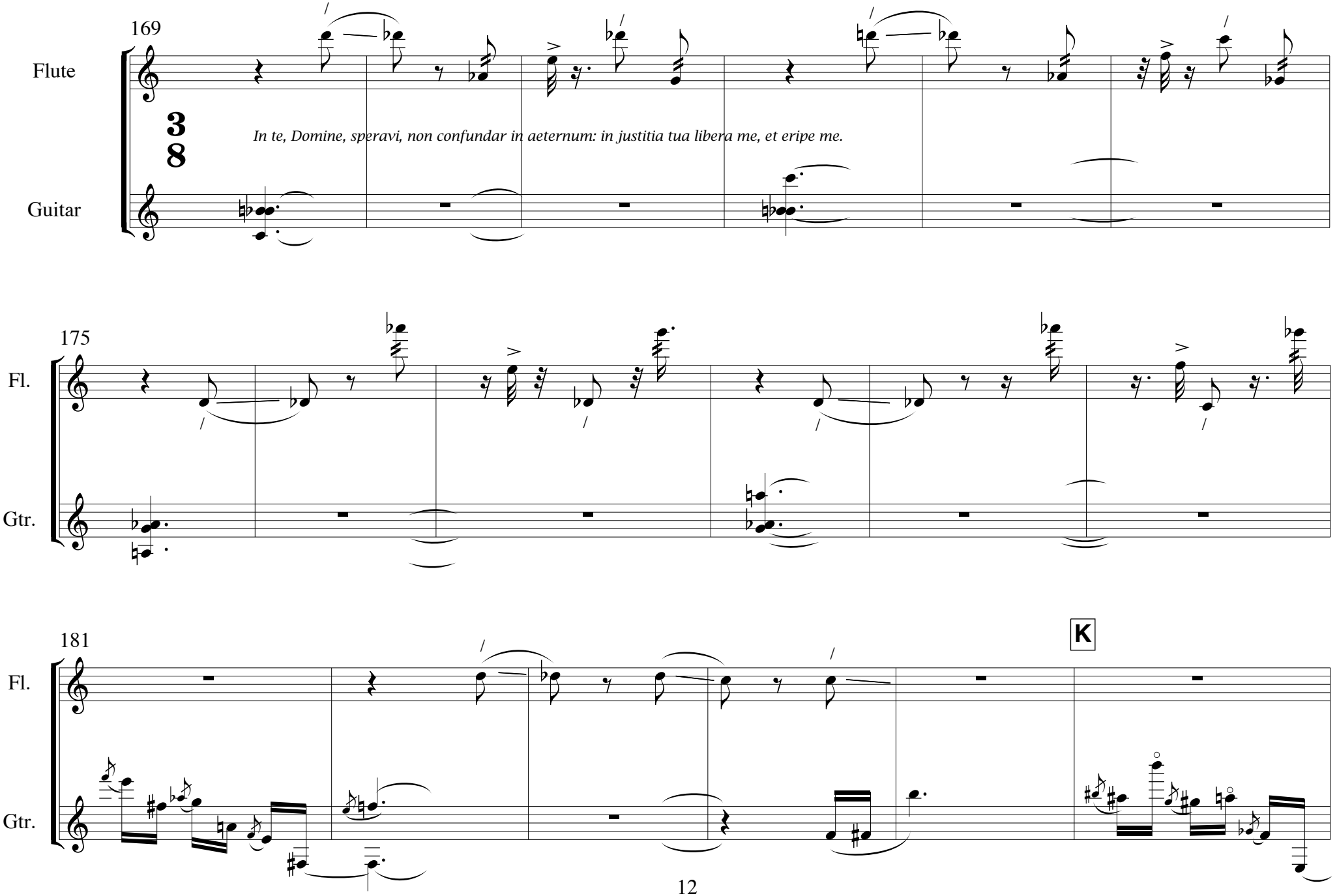

109
Fl.
Gtr.
5:3
113
G
Fl.
Gtr.
5
5
117
Fl.
Gtr.

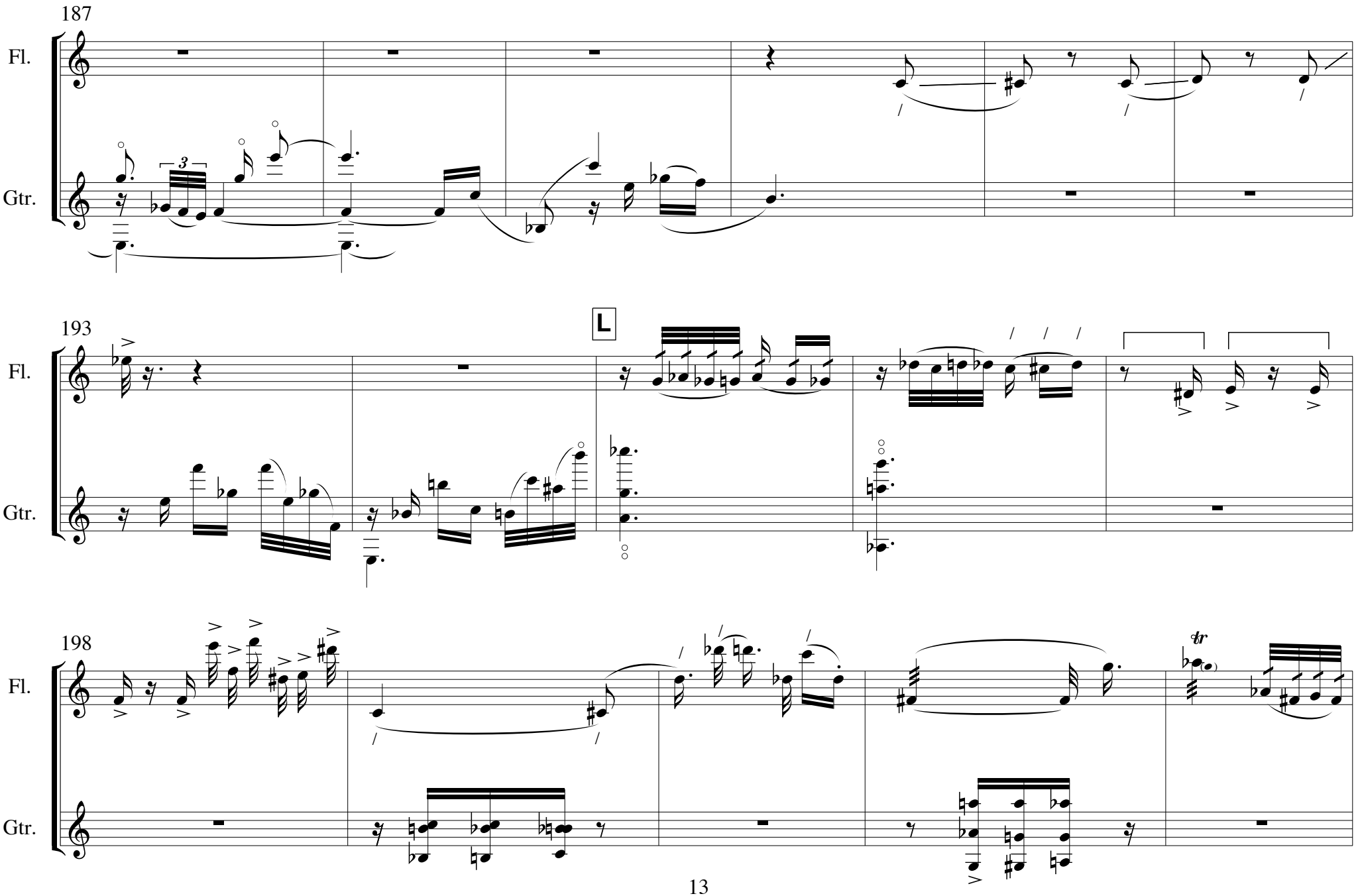

121
Fl.
Gtr.
6
8
127
H
Fl.
Gtr.
133
Fl.
Gtr.

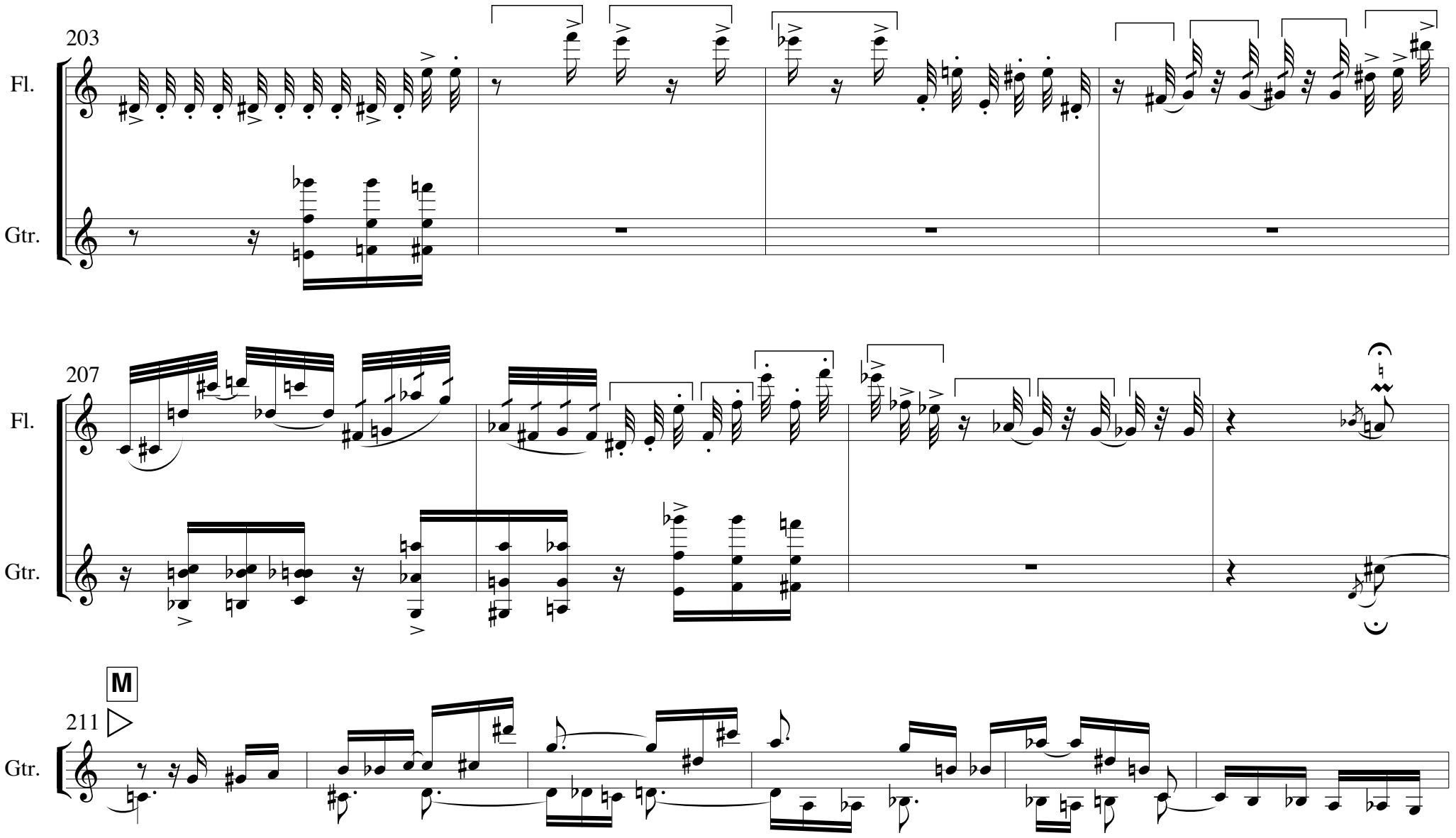

137
Fl.
Gtr.
141
Fl.
Gtr.
144
I
6
16
Fl.
Gtr.

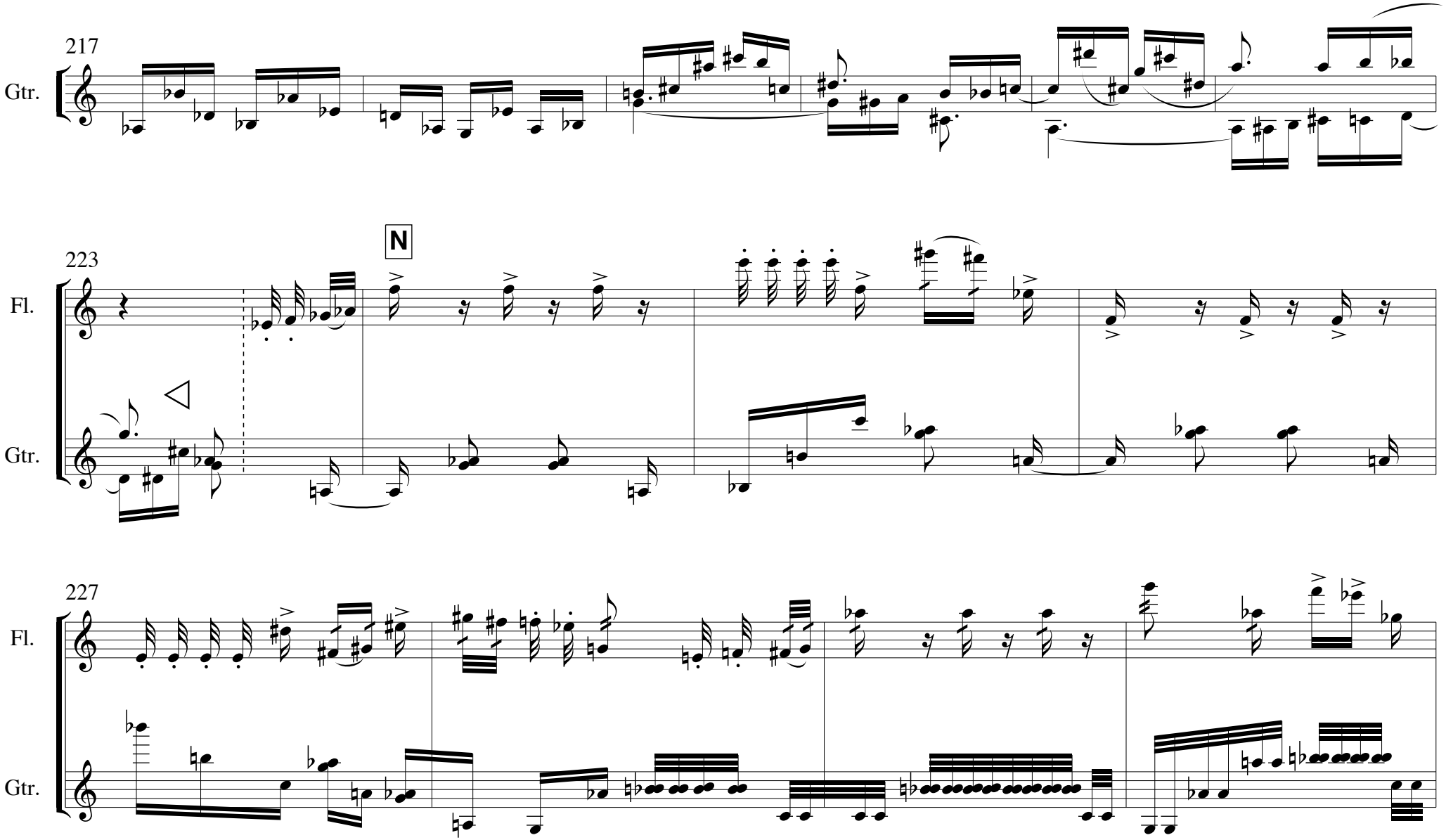

149
J
Fl.
Gtr.
154
Fl.
Gtr.
161
Fl.
Gtr.

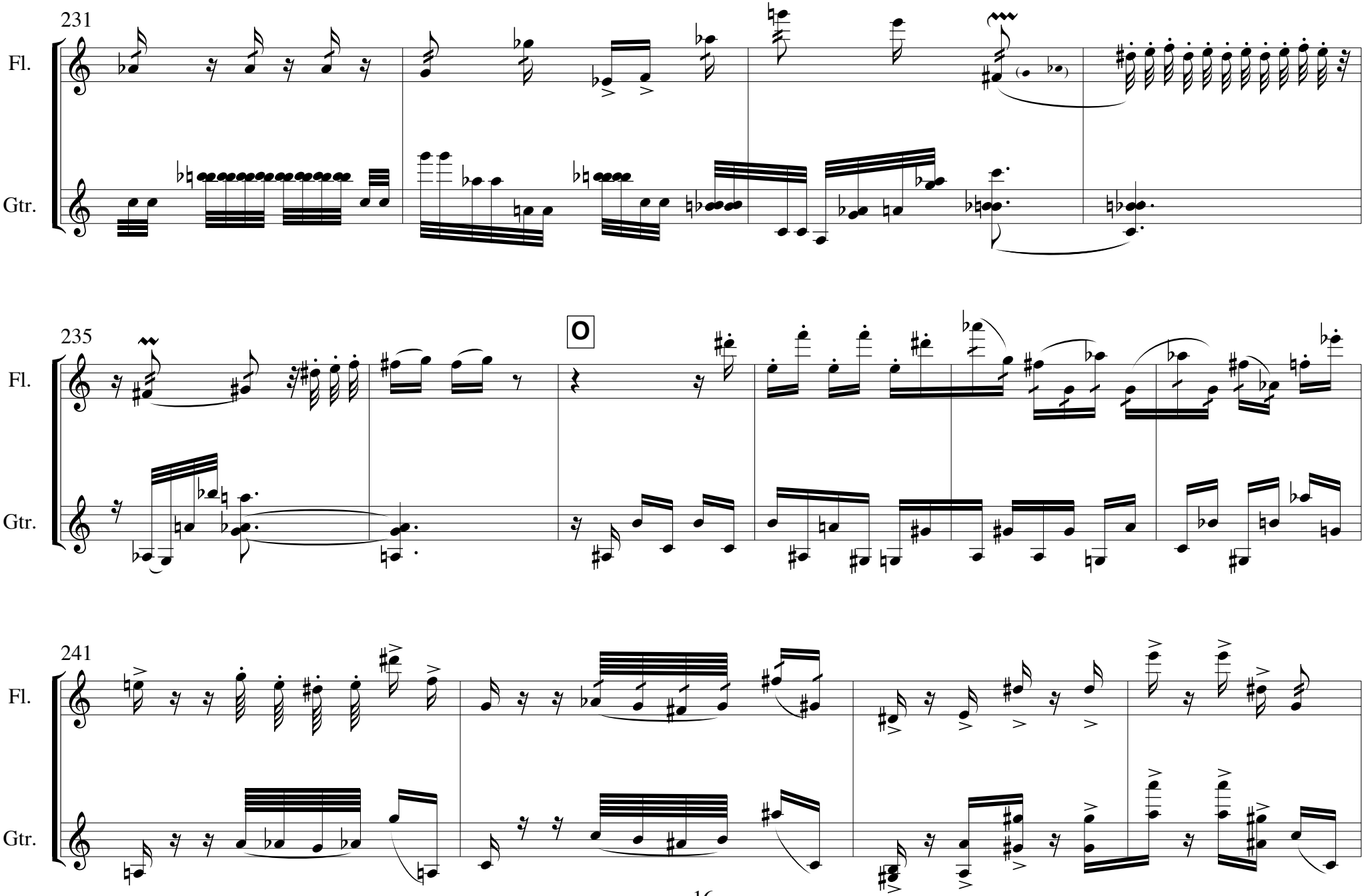
Third Nocturn

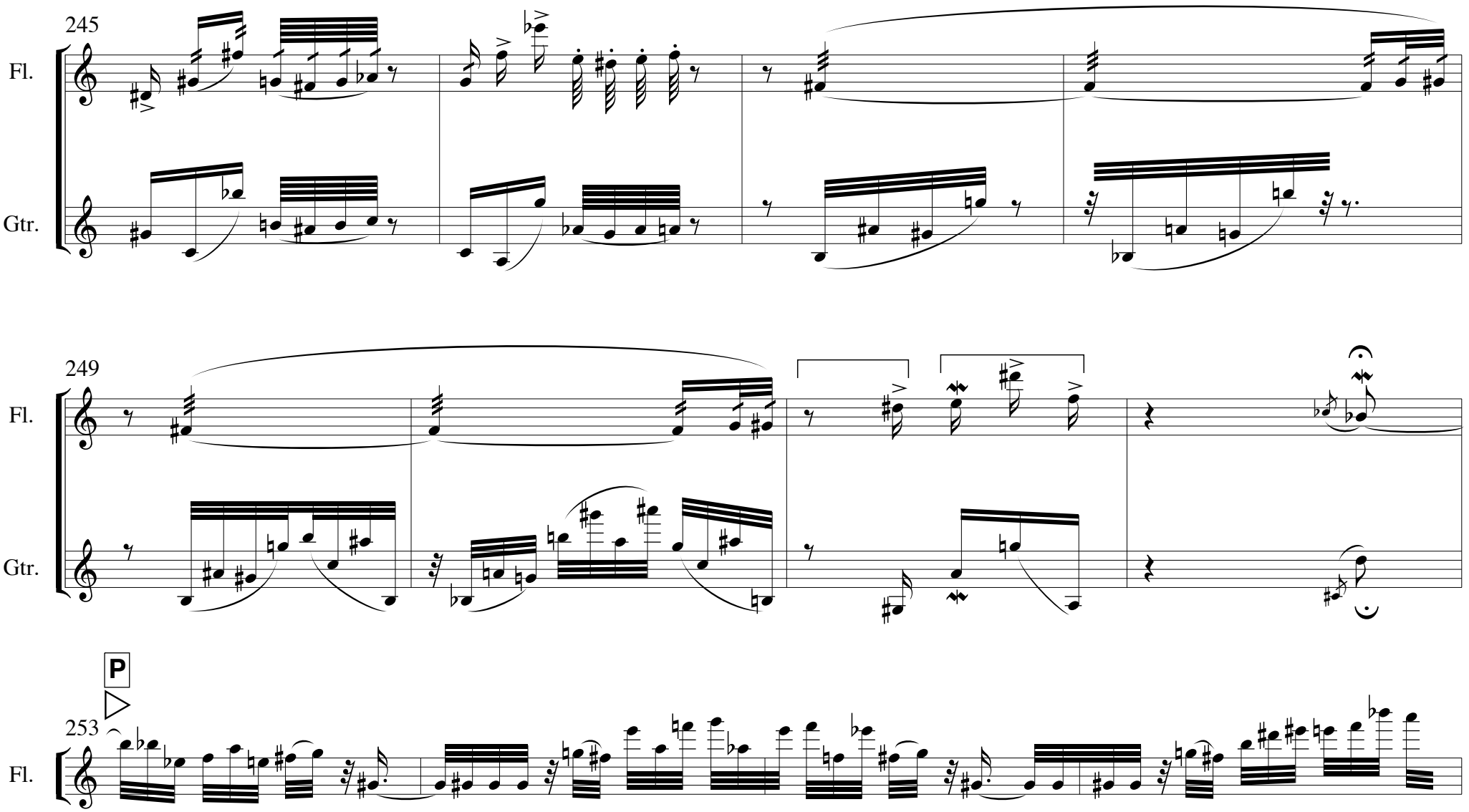


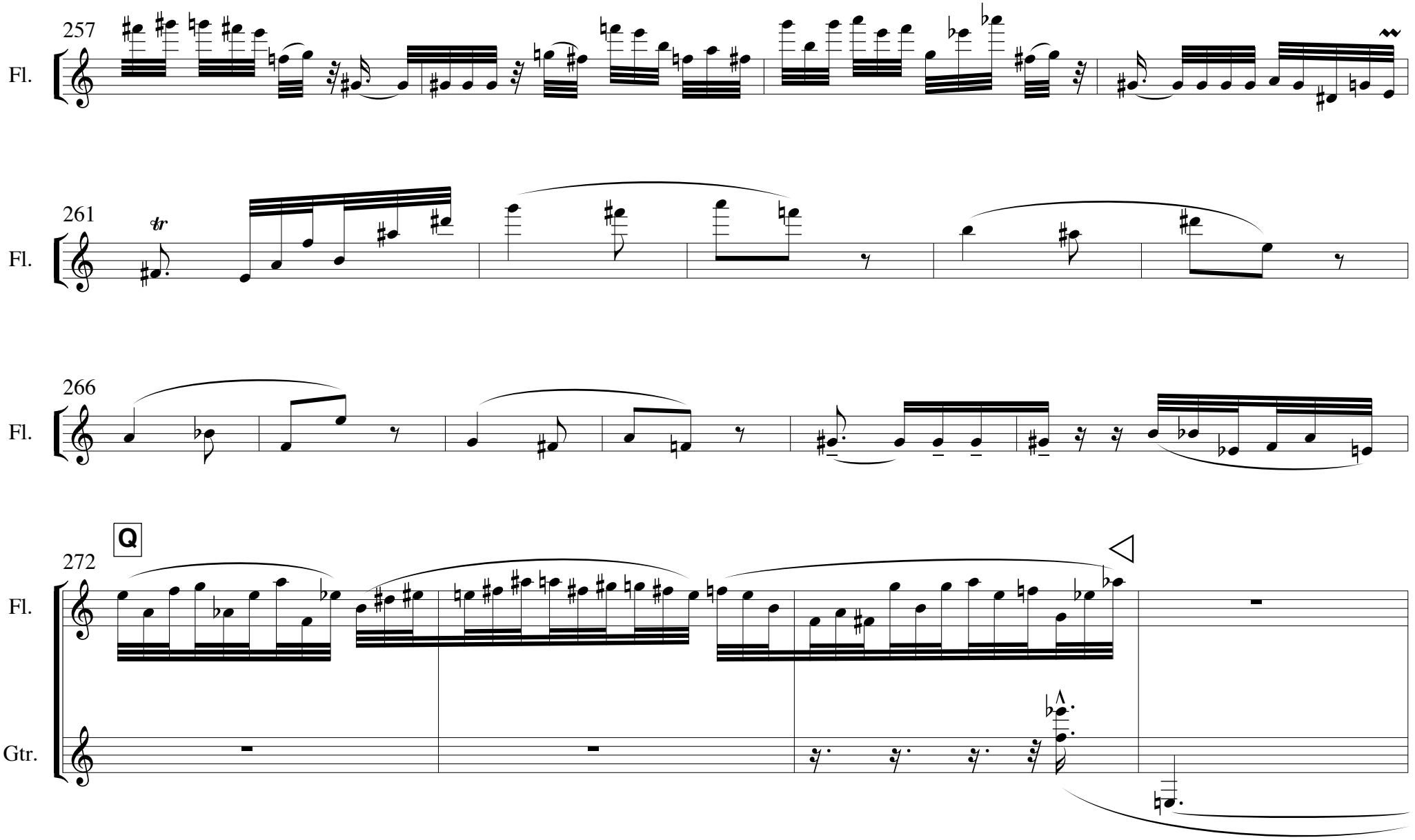

187
Fl.
Gtr.
193
L
Fl.
Gtr.
198
tr
Fl.
Gtr.

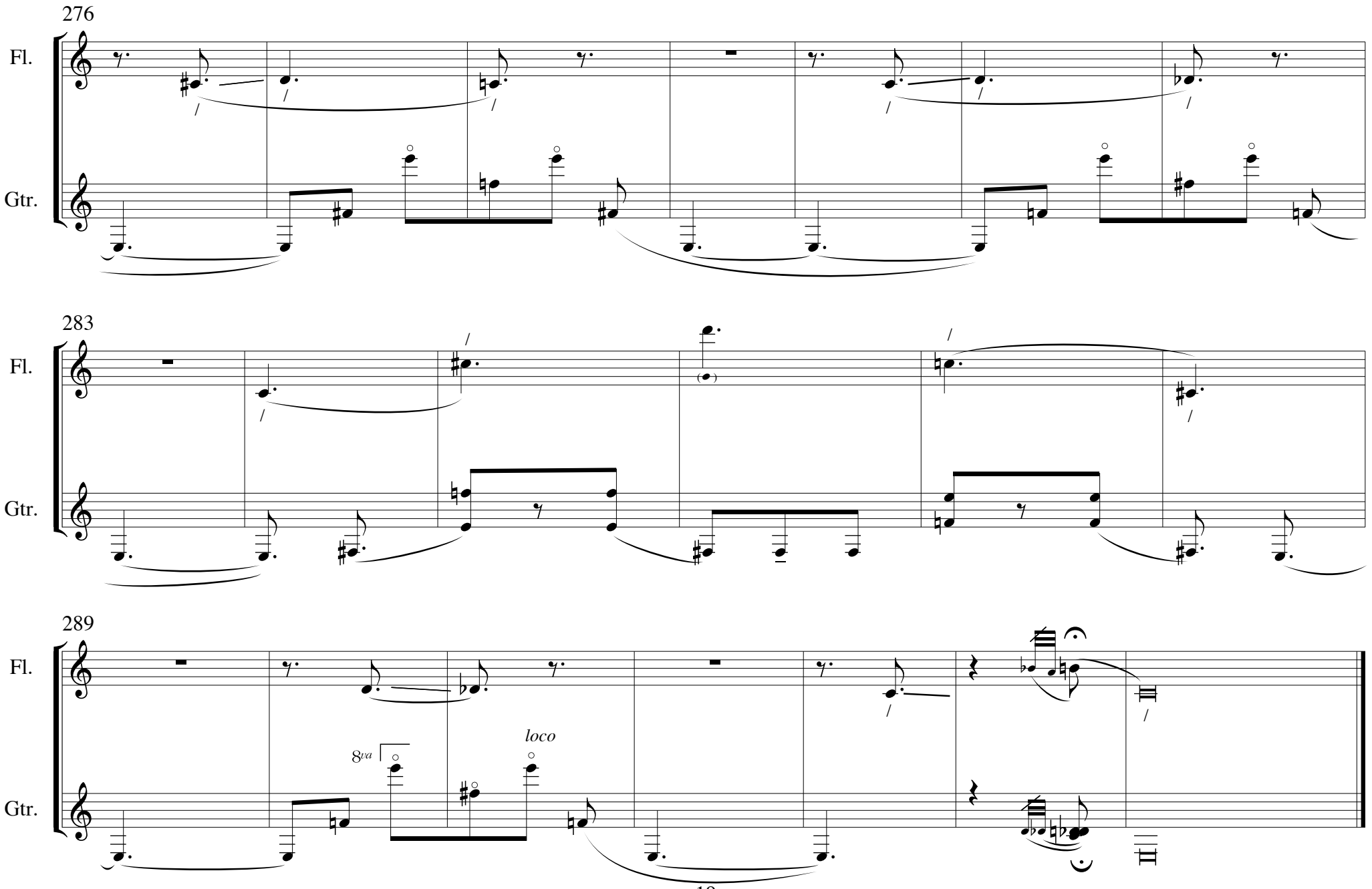

203
Fl.
Gtr.
207
Fl.
Gtr.
M
211
Gtr.


217
Gtr.
223
N
Fl.
Gtr.
227
Fl.
Gtr.


231
Fl.
Gtr.
235
O
Fl.
Gtr.
241
Fl.
Gtr.


245
Fl.
Gtr.
249
Fl.
Gtr.
P
253
Fl.


257
Fl.
261
tr
Fl.
266
Fl.
Q
272
Fl.
Gtr.


276
Fl.
Gtr.
283
Fl.
Gtr.
289
Fl.
Gtr.
8va
loco

First Nocturn

Psalm 68. *Cry from the depths of sorrow*

2. Save me, O God,
   for the waters have risen to my neck.
3. I have sunk into the mud of the deep
   And there is no foothold.
   I have entered the waters of the deep
   And the waves overwhelm me.

Second Nocturn

Psalm 69. *Prayer of trust and appeal*

2. O God, make haste to my rescue
   Lord, come to my aid!
3. Let there be shame and confusion
   on those who seek my life.

Third Nocturn

Psalm 70. *Prayer in old age*

1. In you, O Lord, I take refuge
   let me never be put to shame.
2. In your justice rescue me, free me:
   pay heed to me and save me.