Essentials for Pianist Improvisers

Walter Norris

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PROLOGUE

When the young improvise intuitively, the reasons *how and why* are secondary; however, with passing decades when they and their aesthetic skills have matured, these reasons become an obsession. Nonetheless, there remains a facet of *how and why* that's unanswerable; yet, the reasons are truly vested in the realm of
Art and Philosophy.

Walter Norris Berlin, Germany www.walter-norris.de

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FOREWORD

Invested effort and lots of time: each of us recognizes these two factors as the ingredients of perfection. That's why athletes work out; chefs test new recipes, and musicians...? We rehearse. Literally, the word "rehearse" means to "repeat aloud," although originally the word meant to plow (hearse = plow) the same field over and over again (re = again). You, the musician reader, are consulting this book to further your own search for excellence, as part of your never-ending and personal quest for optimal training methods. Yet, it won't be enough if you just read the following pages: you will have to use this material! And to do that, you will need to put aside your current habits and enter Walter Norris' realm:

Much more than a "practice" room, his studio is an experimental laboratory. There is no place for plain repetition in his work: each run-through, each trial, is unlike the last. At least one variable is always purposefully manipulated to be different, whether a change of key, a crossing of hands, or another mood. Through concentrated, purposeful listening and active thought, new ideas for practice emerge. Each day becomes a voyage into uncharted territory. Move the melody to the bass line, play the entire passage without thumbs, count aloud whole bars, transpose the entire piece a half-step down or two octaves up: with a dose of flexibility, it isn't difficult to be inventive when practicing. And don't forget to move away from the keyboard and stretch. Watching Walter Norris practice makes you humble. No plowing and no "hearse" in his work, just the lively spirit of creative work. (Footnote)

If you catch this spirit, these pages will become an invaluable aide to you, a guide book that will lead you beyond the status quo of repetitious practice and towards a new repertoire of ways of listening to and performing music. Bon voyage!

Adina Mornell
Pianist and Professor of Instrumental Pedagogy
University of Music and the Dramatic Arts
Graz, Austria

(Footnote) This is an excerpt from Adina Mornell's article "Deliberate Practice and the Three Stages of Expertise" – copyrighted material is used only by permission of the author, currently in press in both the English and Polish languages.

In memory of my daughter Delia Grigsby

CONTENTS

PREFACE

After mastering the handicap-methods within these pages, pianist-improvisers will notice a greater degree of harmonic, intervalic and rhythmic security in their performances. Creative ideas occur more frequently to improvisers who feel secure with their musicianship and have mentally digested the programmed musical-data stored within the subconscious so that while playing, their music will be coordinated throughout the body. When one improvises, intervallic tones and harmonic progressions should surface from the mind as naturally as bubbles ascending from the depths of a freshly opened bottle of mineral water; then again, to feel so uninhibited, the right hemisphere of your brain must dominate the left.

Many are of the opinion that practicing technique causes one to become mechanical; quite the contrary, technique allows one to express themselves more convincingly. If the playing sounds inflexible, you are probably unable to sing with your improvised phrases in tempo, or sing inside-voice lines while playing rubato.

The word rubato means to rob the time. *Taking*, by means of tightening the note-value; and then *giving*, by slightly prolonging the value of the notation that follows. Another explanation would be to *pull* the time back; then *push* the time forward. Please keep in mind that all tones are either *going to* or *coming from* a point within all phrases as well as sections of music. Regrettably for many jazz pianists, rubato means an opportunity to execute fast ascending or descending runs at the end of each phrase. As a study for myself (page 39) I notated in 12/8 meter displaced accents on Chopin's F minor etude (opus posthumous no. 2); but be assured that by mastering this etude you will attain a rhythmic flow for all rubato and ballad playing; in addition, your awareness of tone distribution will be enhanced, thus enabling you to musically *speak* your phrased *messages* with meaning.

Musicianship, another word in need of explanation, enables one to understand music more thoroughly; I'll emphasize that performers possessing technique and musicianship are more capable of conveying communicative-ideas to their listening audience.

It is physically impossible for improvisers to play intervallic-skips or chord-progressions that are completely unknown to them. For an example; pianists who have improvised only diatonic/chromatic be-bop can not ad lib over modal harmonic-structures on their first attempt; usually weeks or months of practice is necessary since we are all creatures of habit. If a musician is challenged with music which is unfamiliar, extemporization is practically impossible and the reason is that their brain automatically creates a state of inhibition by sending alert-signals throughout the nervous-system. Both hands will actually flinch and literally rise, slightly, from *ivory* because their fingers are physically unable to continue depressing the keys; and unless they have alternative idea-patterns secured in their fingers, the music will abruptly halt. Anyone, mentally and physically forcing their hands to continue improvising music that is foreign will produce ridiculous, meaningless,

phrases. I'm not disputing the fact that we all play, on rare occasions, ideas never experienced before; but even the tones belonging to that inspired moment have been stored in the subconscious and tonal variations of and within those unique ideas have already been practiced. For this reason, the art of improvisation must be conditioned through training and the musical ideas must be molded and memorized; I can assure you that your practiced ideas will always be improvised differently in each performance.

On the other hand there are a few exceptional improvisers who have never found the necessity of practicing or enlarging their latent technical abilities and yet, play not only musically but even with an individualistic style. This is due to their intuitive understanding of music and although it may be their most valued asset, it is not without limitations. Their aptitude should encourage them to pursue instruction from an inspiring artistic-teacher; otherwise, their musical development eventually diminishes.

Improvisers need tools (harmonic and melodic) to handle the difficulties arising during the expansion of their extended solos. I've been told that Beethoven, when reaching his outer limits in an inspired fantasy, would abruptly arpeggiate any diminished-seventh chord, then follow with diminished-sevenths belonging to other tonalities. This allowed him to regain his composure, and after swimming through a series of these chords, return with the theme to complete his improvisation; give this some thought when you play his arpeggiated cadenzas. What makes this possible is that the diminished, our most compressed chord (built only of minor-thirds) creates an opening-effect when any diverse chord follows. After arpeggiating any diminished-seven, pause for a moment while sustaining with the pedal, then continue (in tempo) with any other type of chord, even belonging to a different tonality; it's a fool-proof device with warranty included. Such tools should be sought after, with a passionate curiosity, because these musical crutches are needed in emergencies. But do remember, in jazz the diminished-seventh must include some altered tones; play C dim.7 plus D dim.7 together and you'll have an altered diminished-sound. Otherwise the diminished-seven without altered-tones belongs to a style associated with the baroque, classical or romantic periods.

Practicing displaced accents with an electric metronome is most important. This discipline helps build a sense of inner-timing that permits the performer to play in a slightly broader dimension and evenly timed; eventually a rhythmical-stamp of individuality is achieved plus the ability to mold tones in all phrases. It is necessary to have timing from within so that your energy can be generated into the music; thus, a flexible lilt and pulse is obtained that feels rhythmically alive.

I urge pianists to practice all exercises softly, effortlessly and in a melodically expressive manner; Search with your senses, as you practice, for any muscle tension in the body and transfer that tension by means of sheer will-power into a warm state of relaxation. I caution the strong energetic personalities, who work many hours conquering difficulties of the keyboard, to exert themselves less because (within a period of five years) a state of mental and physical tension may develop that can be detrimental and even overshadow the technique sought after. Allow patience to be your keyword for all music and remember, if you don't practice with love in your heart it will be absent in the performance.

Dancers train in heavily knitted leg-stockings; your arms deserve the same care. Pianists should practice warmly dressed, with arms well covered, and enjoy a perspiring workout; however, remember to dry your body thoroughly and dress again in dry clothing; always, I change completely before returning to play the second half of a concert. Poor blood circulation, from overworked arms and hands, can cause tendonitis and muscle problems. When muscles become slightly swollen, the capillaries contract and your muscles become undernourished due to the reduction of blood flow. There is little warning when tendonitis or a muscle spasm strikes and there is never complete recovery since the problem always returns, depending on the amount and difficulty of work involved; your body never forgets or forgives. I'll give a hypothetical situation; playing in a loud rhythm section, accompanying three or more solo instrumentalists on an old piano with a difficult unregulated action, for endless hours in an unventilated, cold and damp cellar; physical problems will arise from such abuse within fifteen years or less. You must pace yourself throughout life and bear in mind that with age, creativity increases; then you may wish you had taken better care of your health.

Since it is often difficult for improvisers to be accepted by great teachers, this book is a means of strengthening technique and it's my sincere hope that these exercises will bear fruit. You may skip around and practice any pages, since this is not written with a linear concept, but particular attention should be paid to the relaxation exercises on page one and especially at the top of page two.

Even though composers have tried all combinations of intervals and harmonic-sequences, our subconscious constantly digests music of today and the past; therefore, fresh possibilities will continue to manifest. I feel the best way of finding new potentials within traditional music will be through coordinating music, physically and mentally, throughout the body. The following is just one such example of coordination: Art Tatum improvised while conversing with a friend seated close by; his enunciation and playing were entirely free of inhibition; among all traditional piano styles in history, his was truly unique. For the fresh musical ideas your imagination constantly seeks, training and exercise is needed; inspiration must never be waited for, it's icing on the cake. But to receive inspiration, you must be musically prepared or the quality of your inspired-idea will sound shallow and superficial.

I want to emphasize that all theoretical rules of counterpart and methods for mastering the keyboard are applicable to piano improvisation; no classical rule exists that can not be integrated within the world of extemporization; even so, tools should be selected, intuitively, that are best suited for you.

Few joys equal the excitement of discovering a musical idea while improvising, or finding an interesting piece of music when sight-reading. If you feel uncomfortable with reading, as improvisers often do, then play the notation very slowly so that you'll listen more thoroughly to the music that's being transferred from the printed page. If you feel threatened by your inability to read, then your attention is focused on the incapability instead of the music you are trying to comprehend.

Many are of the opinion that the inspired moment produces the best idea. I'll disagree; that moment should inspire you to work and develop your idea until it can no longer

be improved on. Writers of literature will scream, repeatedly, the word *ink* whenever they read a sentence or paragraph that, to their senses, seems worked on. I think if the idea sounds worked on, or over-worked, then it hasn't been prepared enough to achieve the quality-level of aesthetic art. There is an interesting documentary of Charlie Chaplin; a few of his co-workers were interviewed and they explained his manner of filming; he often shot scenes well over a hundred times and each take was changed, to some extent, until he was satisfied. Chaplin's films will always remain classic. I'll also mention that Charlie Parker's photographic mind enabled him to structure solos, even with slight variations, that he later performed in concert; his was a mind that never rested.

Writing this book has been as much a *love of labor* as it's been a *labor of love* for it represents the way I practice and think; each time I use these tools, on any idea, I'm able to automatically change that fragment slightly because of the accumulated material I have absorbed during my long life plus the fact that I truly enjoy searching for musical possibilities. Consequently, I practice a bit differently each day, now that this is my seventy-fifth solar orbit, but then, each day should be a slight variation of the same beautiful theme.

Walter Norris Berlin 2007

Postscript: In 1992 while I was with Concord Jazz, I wrote the title 'Sunburst' for my quartet recording featuring, Joe Henderson. On 'Hues of Blues' in 1995 with George Mraz, I was asked to record a title alone, so I improvised 'Afterthoughts' using the harmonic progressions of 'Sunburst.' In 2006, I re-wrote the melody (pages 181-186) and recorded 'Reflective' in duo with Putter Smith for my label, Sunburst Recordings, Inc. I always change a few tones each time I practice my compositions or arrangements, even on the day of a concert, and 'Reflective' is the result of these past fifteen years of re-working 'Afterthoughts.' I rarely use pedal markings because I pedal differently on each instrument; yet, my intention is to sustain tones until I'm intuitively impelled to release them.

For jazz improvisers, in need of knowledgeable listeners, night clubs may be the best venue. For the past quarter-century, Japanese pianist, Hisayuki Terai has taught students (during afternoons) in his OverSeas Club of Osaka where he also performs nightly; with students attending the evening's event, the club truly functions as a music society for musicians. Another club that impresses me is the A-Trane in Berlin where Sedal Sardan's policy has included, for eleven years, Monday nights featuring pianist/researcher, Andreas Schmidt; also, late Saturday night sessions until dawn. Musicians, in every city, need to form a society where they can perform (nightly, weekly or monthly) for an audience that is concerned with unadulterated music.

ADDENDUM

The brain is designed to solve problems. All that we have experienced is stored in the subconscious and after digestion, solutions (ideas included) surface to the conscious mind. When teachers tell students that his or her proposal is impossible, they should also explain that it is important to continue searching for possible resolutions; because these students, years later, will form (hopefully) a positive habit for problem-solving. My teacher assigned Chopin's Etude opus posthumous, in F minor, and after a week of practicing displaced-accents, hands separately, I asked if I should try singing the bass while playing the treble clef notation. She advised that I sing bass and treble lines separately and assured me that maintaining an exact timing of six notes against eight, in 4/4 meter, while singing the bass and playing the treble stave simultaneously was impossible. Many years later I wrote this etude in 12/8 time (page 39) and as a result I'm able to sing bass and play treble, or the reverse, mathematically correct. Whenever told that something is impossible, continue working and with curiosity; eventually, the solution will arrive.

One evening in Berlin, I intuitively played 5/4 and 4/4 meters together, as notated on page 37; but to play once accurately and then experience fifteen failures before success returned, was so frustrating. Figuring the mathematical solution on stave notation goes to saxophonist, Gregoire Peters, my stepson; however, years passed before I could incorporate the meters of 3/4 with 5/4 and 4/4, since 5/4 is not divisible by 3/4; but unquestionably, 4/4 by 3/4 is; so my problem was solved. I work without expectations; my ego remains on the sideline.

I've enclosed an example, in the meter of 13/8, for 'from another star' that is made more flexible by displacing, in alternate measures, the 3/8 unit within the 13/8 rhythmic-pattern; in addition, there's an exercise for playing treble and bass staves of *'from another star'* unsynchronized.

Neurons, the primary cells of the nervous system, do not replace themselves and this is why our feelings and ideals are the same when young as in later years; however, these neurons connect with other cells as we develop. In learning music, I believe an emphasis should be placed on reinforcing the circuitry of hearing and memory with the motor cortex so that our physical coordination, when performing, is more secure. Strong nerves are required for practicing the handicap methods in this book but I assure you the wiring-system in your brain will be thoroughly developed as a result of your endeavor.

I submitted a part of this book to Hochschule der Künste-Berlin in 1984 to exemplify my approach to teaching and justify my newly appointed position as guest professor for piano improvisation. Understandably, a few objected to jazz being established in the curriculum. I understood and agreed, but only on two points; some of their classical students, with more than enough repertoire to memorize, could be tempted to enter my classes, thinking improvisation would be less demanding. But of even greater concern was that jazz would soon be followed with rock and pop. In 1992, the piano department returned my book with pages well worn. Notwithstanding, the book had served its purpose and I remained in

my *ivory tower* until retirement in 1994. There had been an offer from a publisher in 1985 but I declined, because in the hands of inexperienced or unprepared students, practicing 'Essentials' could be detrimental. Still, a few pianists argued that I should make the book available; even so, what really changed my mind was the conversation with a friend who had resided in Weimar during the seventies; she had taken the golden opportunity of attending a seminar given by the pianist virtuoso, Sviatoslav Richter. His demonstration of developing technique was no less than awesome; he began by taping a small lead-weight to each finger and then proceeded to play a fugue from Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier. Of course, such gymnastics are harmful to muscles and tendons, but he, being rather large and physically powerful, survived this self-imposed torture; on the other hand, being so privileged, he always had the services of physical therapists at home and on tours abroad.

Some of the handicap-tools in this book are mine, nonetheless, most all were acquired when I studied with Heida Hermanns (1906-1995) at Manhattan School of Music in New York. Yet, the lineage of this information would have come from her studies with Egon Petri (1881-1962) - Artur Schnabel (1882-1951) – Carl Friedberg (1872-1955) – Isabella Vengerova (1877-1956) at Hochschule der Künste-Berlin during the nineteen-twenties. Petri had studied with Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924); Schnabel and Vengerova with Theodor Leschetitzky (1830-1915) and Friedberg with James Kwast and Clara Schumann. However, the doors releasing my musical expression through the piano, as an instrument, were opened by Linda Kessler-Ferri, now residing in New York City, who studied with Heida Hermanns, Verna Brown, Artur Balsam and Joseph Prostakoff.

I urge you to read the following books for a better understanding of music and the improviser's mind; 'The Art of Piano Playing by Heinrich Neuhaus; 'Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain' by Dr. Betty Edwards; 'Music and the Mind' by Anthony Storr; 'Temperament' by Stuart Isacoff; 'Style and Idea' by Arnold Schoenberg; 'Mozart' by Wolfgang Hildesheimer; 'Musicophilia' by Oliver Sacks and 'My Stroke of Insight' by Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor, Ph.D.

I am grateful to Alvaro Is-Rojas, formerly at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, for his laudable explanation concerning the Circle of Fourths and Fifths as was analyzed in the early eighteenth century; and his analyses at the end of my transcription for Mozart's Gigue in G major.

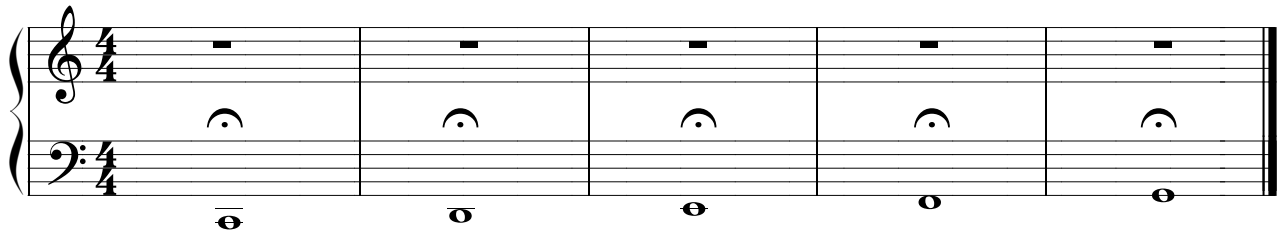
As a reminder, you will notice in the compositions that I use an abbreviation for the right hand, **m.d.=** mano destra and for the left hand, **m.s.** = mano sinistra.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

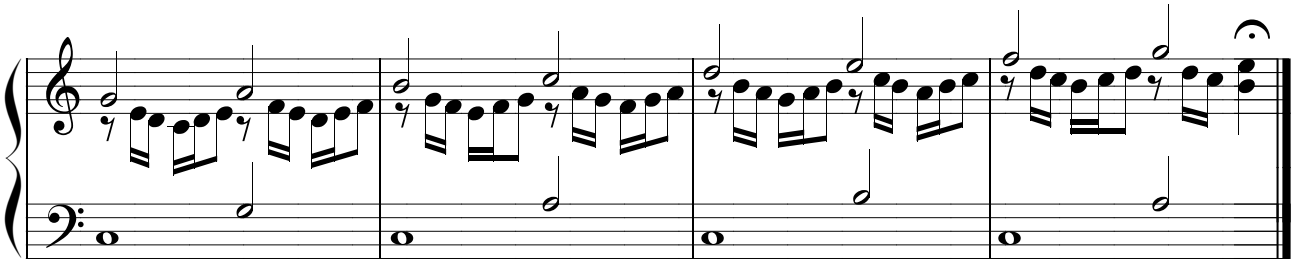
I feel indebted to everyone I've ever known because I always learned something of value from each even if I chose not to follow a few of their enlightening examples. Musicians from all continents have inspired and contributed a wealth of information and my moral fiber, fortunately, absorbed everything. I'm especially grateful to have lived in what may be the most liberal and musically advanced period in history; and since music is physics as well as the purest form of abstract thought, its evolution will continue through the creativity of artists.

RELAXATION EXERCISES

1. **INHALE**.....Look up; avoid straining the eyes; your head should remain level; close the eye-lids and continue looking up. *If this feels uncomfortable just close the eyes normally.*
2. **EXHALE**.....Hold the eye and eye-lid position. After exhaling, continue holding this fixed eye position. Wait approximately twenty seconds and you will experience the same sensation as when you are chest-deep in the ocean, at seashore, and as small waves pass, you are bodily lifted up; but after each wave passes, your feet once again settle on the ocean floor.
3. Play and hold each key depressed. Allow the activated string vibrations to enter your body and mind; be consciously aware of this sensation.

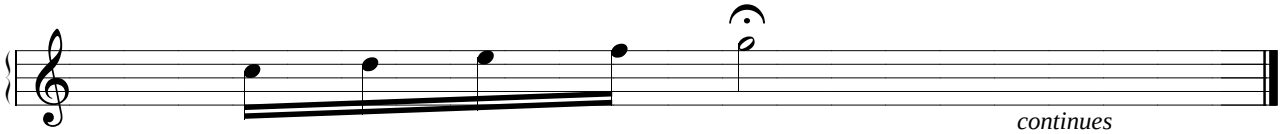


4. As you play the exercise below, concentrate only on the breathing example **(INHALE** and **EXHALE)** as explained above.



5. **IMPROVISE** only on black-keys, in tempo or rubato, but concentrate only on your breathing.

6. **REPEAT** breathing instructions from the first exercise and after inhaling and exhaling, play five tones as passively as possible; without any physical or mental effort.



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7. Play the tone E (a major 10^{th} above middle C) with the third-finger of your right hand and keep this key depressed while performing the following breathing exercises. As the sound decays, silence will naturally follow before you are ready to depress the next key.

A. Inhale and as you slowly exhale; imagine warmth in your third finger.
B. Inhale and as you slowly exhale; imagine warmth in your right hand.
C. Inhale and as you slowly exhale; imagine warmth in your right wrist.
D. Inhale and as you slowly exhale; imagine warmth in your lower arm.
E. Inhale and as you slowly exhale; imagine warmth in your elbow.
F. Inhale and as you slowly exhale; imagine warmth in your upper arm.
G. Inhale and as you slowly exhale; imagine warmth in your right shoulder.
H. Inhale and as you slowly exhale; imagine warmth in your neck.
I. Inhale and as you slowly exhale; imagine warmth in your brain.
J. Inhale and as you slowly exhale; imagine warmth throughout your body.
K. Now you may play another tone and repeat the same breathing procedures in the above ten steps. After practicing this exercise for a few months, daily, you will actually feel the warmth inside your body.

METRONOME MARKINGS FOR INCREASED TEMPO

The metronome markings apply to scales as well as all technically difficult passages. If you sense any tension in the body, then start again at the first level; 76 = four ticks.

Met. one-tone = 76 = four ticks: (hands separate)
" 84 "
" 92 "
" 100 "
I. " 108 "
" 116 "
" 126 "
" 138 "

Met. one-tone = 72 = three ticks: (hands together)
" 80 "
" 88 "
" 96 "
" 104 "
II. " 112 "
" 120 "
" 132 "
" 144 "

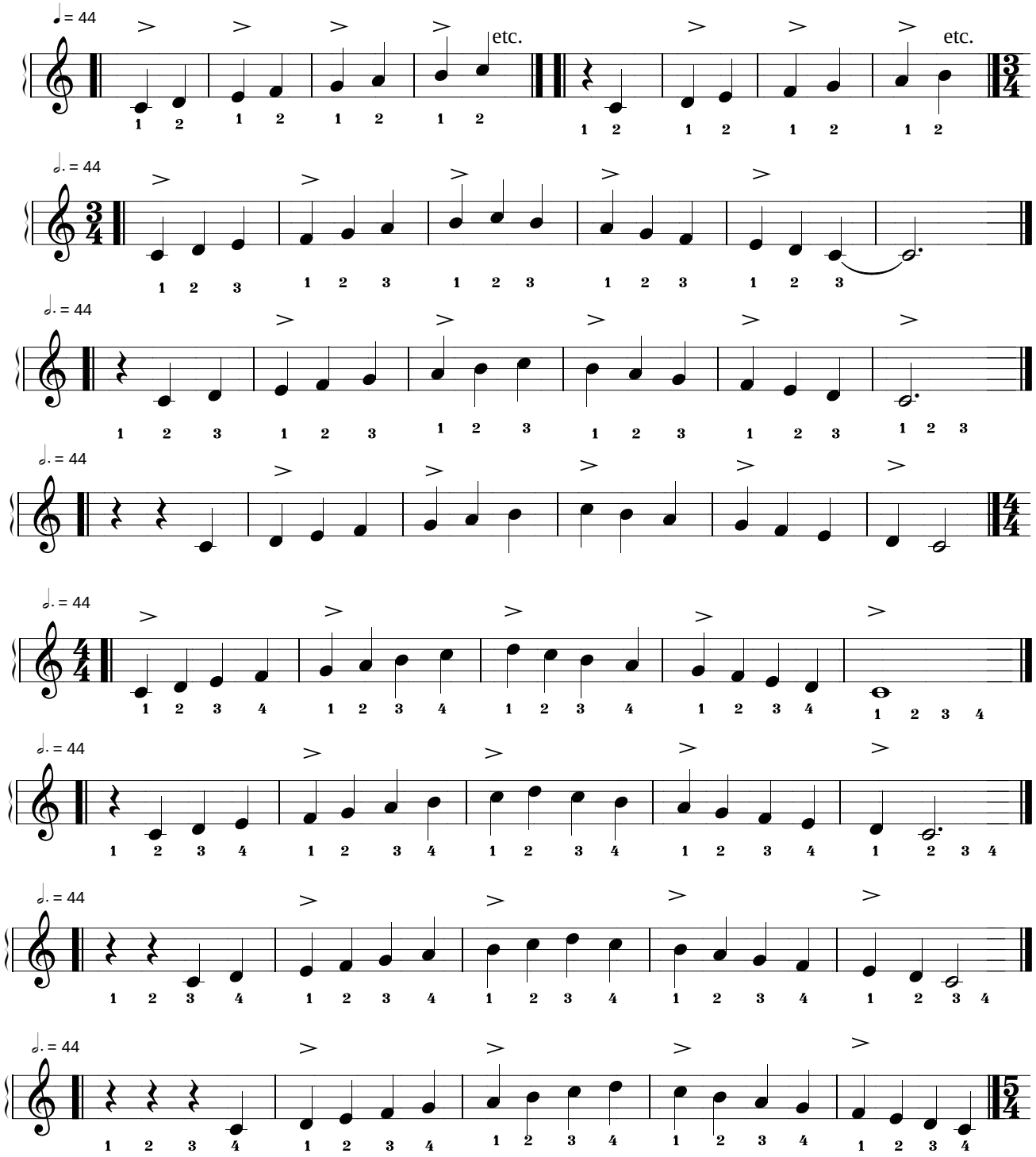
III.

Met. one-tone = 76 = two ticks: Hands together and use metronome markings for I.

IV.
Met. one-tone = 72 = one tick: Hands together and use metronome markings for II.
Continue with Met. two-tones = 76 = one tick; afterwards, Met. three-tones = 72 = one tick.
The above exercise allows you to increase tempo with minimal muscle-tension.

DISPLACED ACCENTS

Always accent with the metronom's tick, which is on the first count of each measure. Tempo: met. one tick = 40 or 44. Always count aloud. Numbers are beats, not fingering. Each example should be extended for three (3) octaves. You must have a C. L. Hanon book for correct scale fingering.



play displaced accents as melodically as you can imagine

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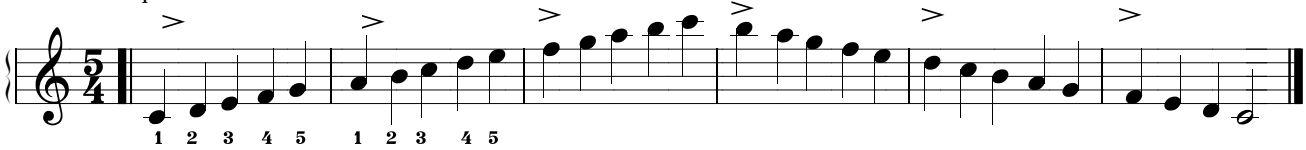
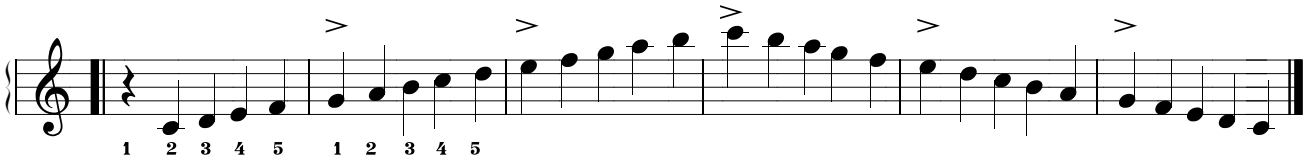
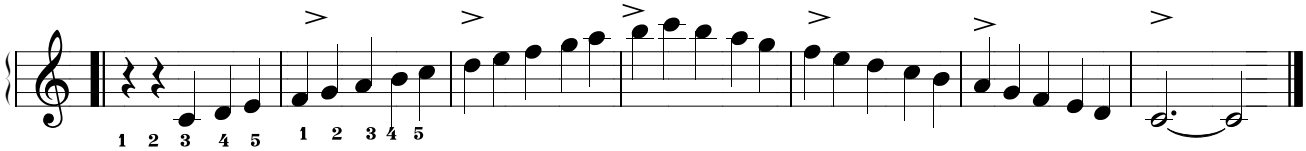
(displaced accents) **REMINDER:** play displaced accents as melodically as you can imagine

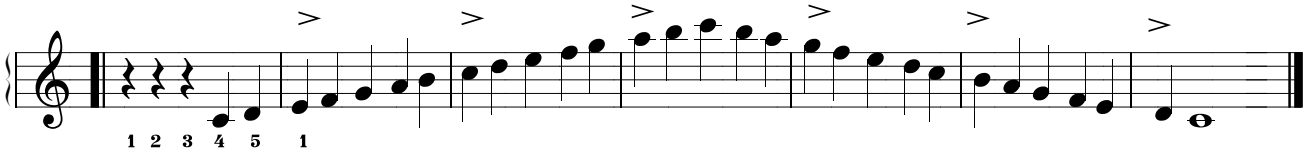
met. five quarter notes = 44 = one tick

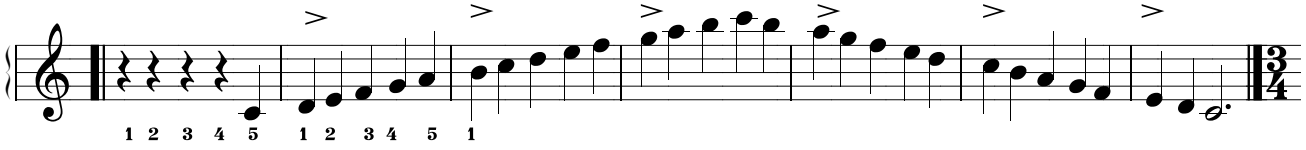


these numbers are for counting quarter-beats and do not pertain to fingering





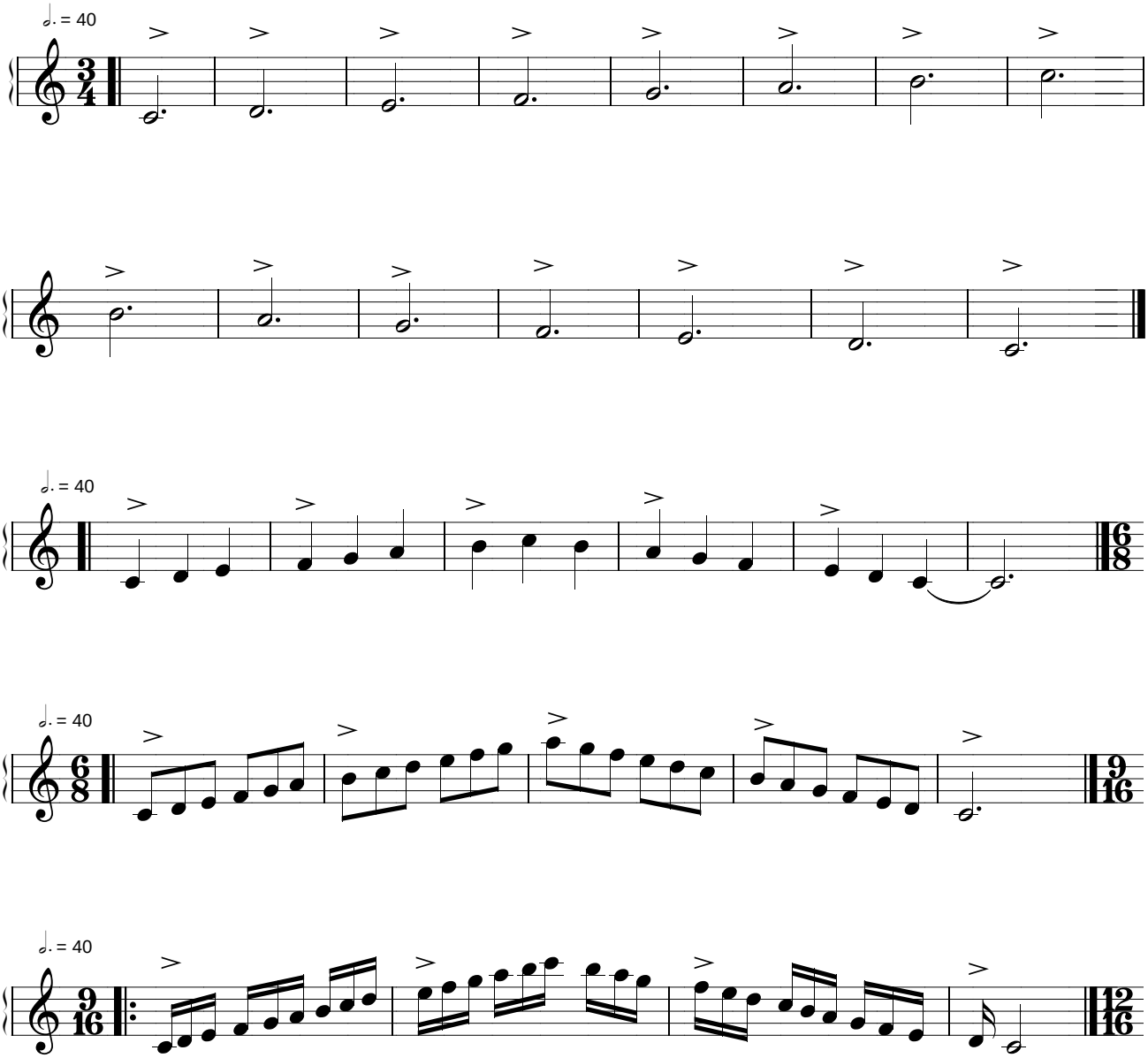




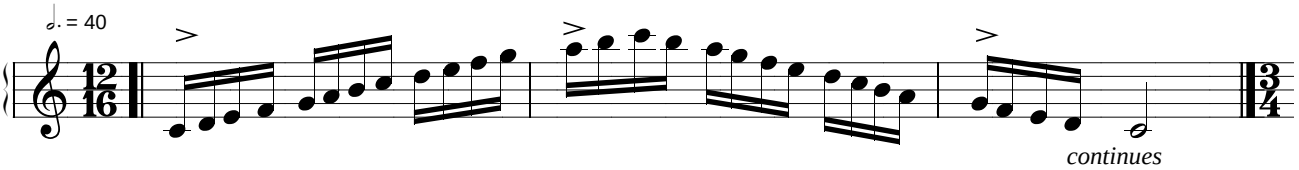
continue with DISPLACED ACCENTS in 6/8, 7/8, 9/8 and 11/8 meters

Practicing DISPLACED ACCENTS enables you to mold and shape the sound of any phrase musically. After a few years of practice you will be unable to execute a phrase unmusically.

DOUBLING TEMPOS



Whenever you become aware of any **tension** you must begin again at the top of this page. Place a champagne cork between your teeth and keep it there while playing; this helps to neutralise tension; let your jaw hang but breath through the nose.



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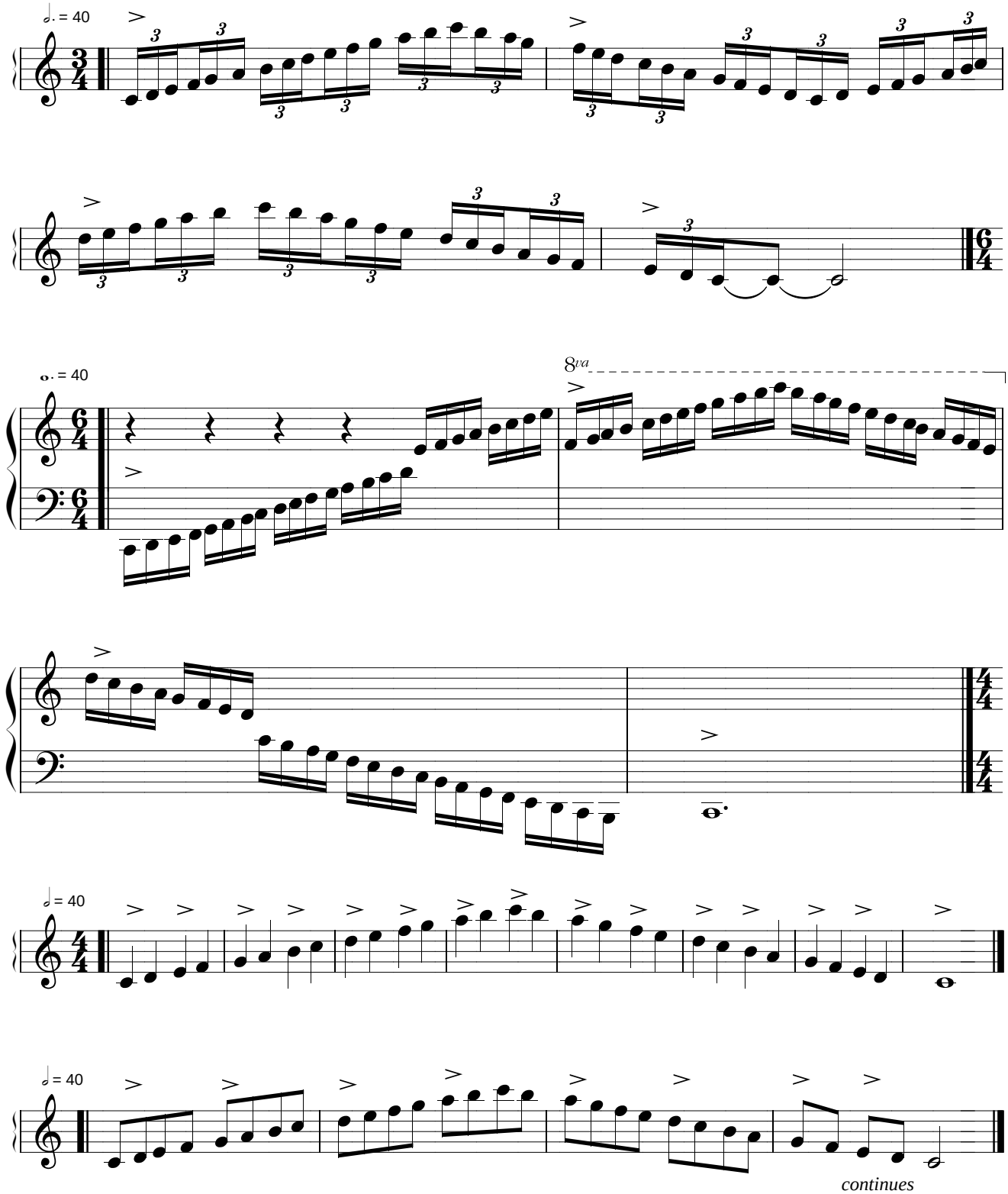

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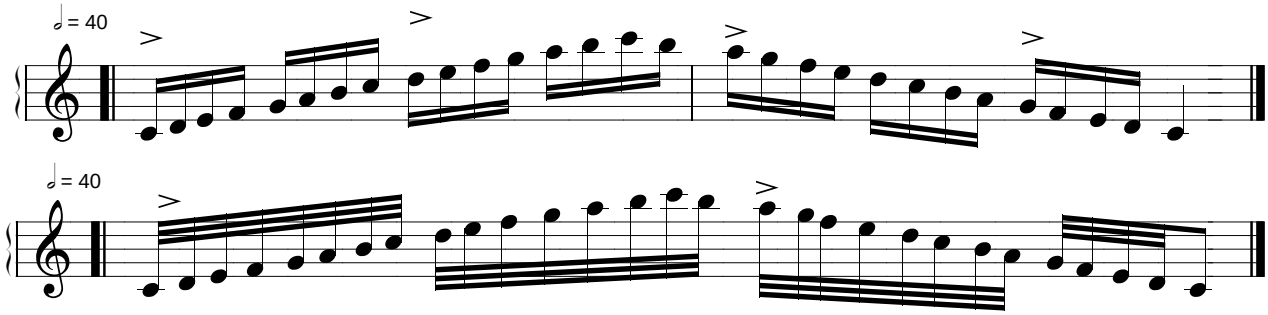
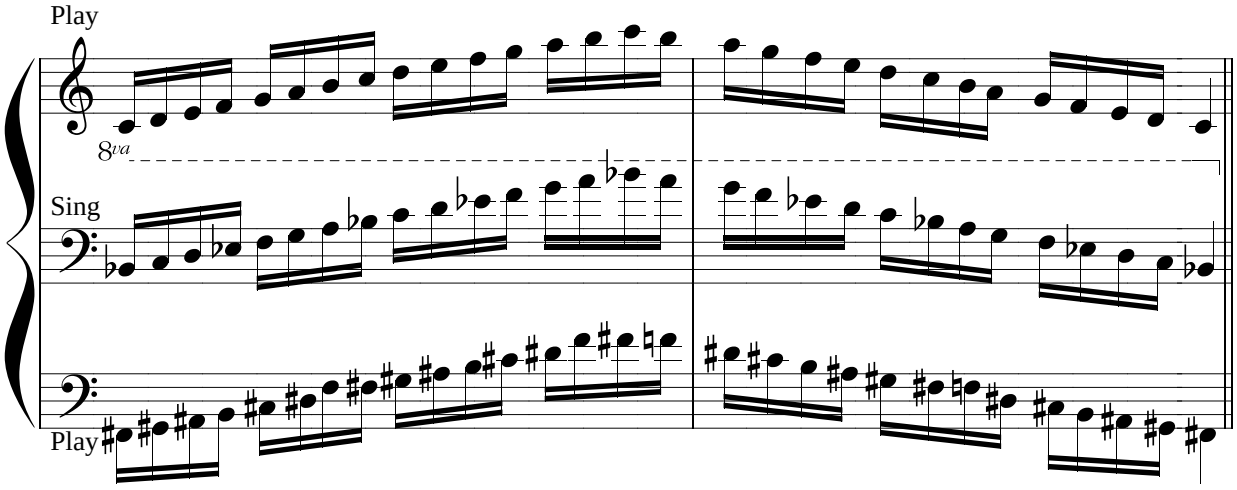


To relieve arm-tension: stand and place the palms of both hands flat on the piano bench; point your fingers towards yourself and straighten arms; hold this position as you step back approximately six inches with your right foot and remain a full minute. This stretches the muscles on the under side of your lower arms and can also help you to avoid a muscle spasm.

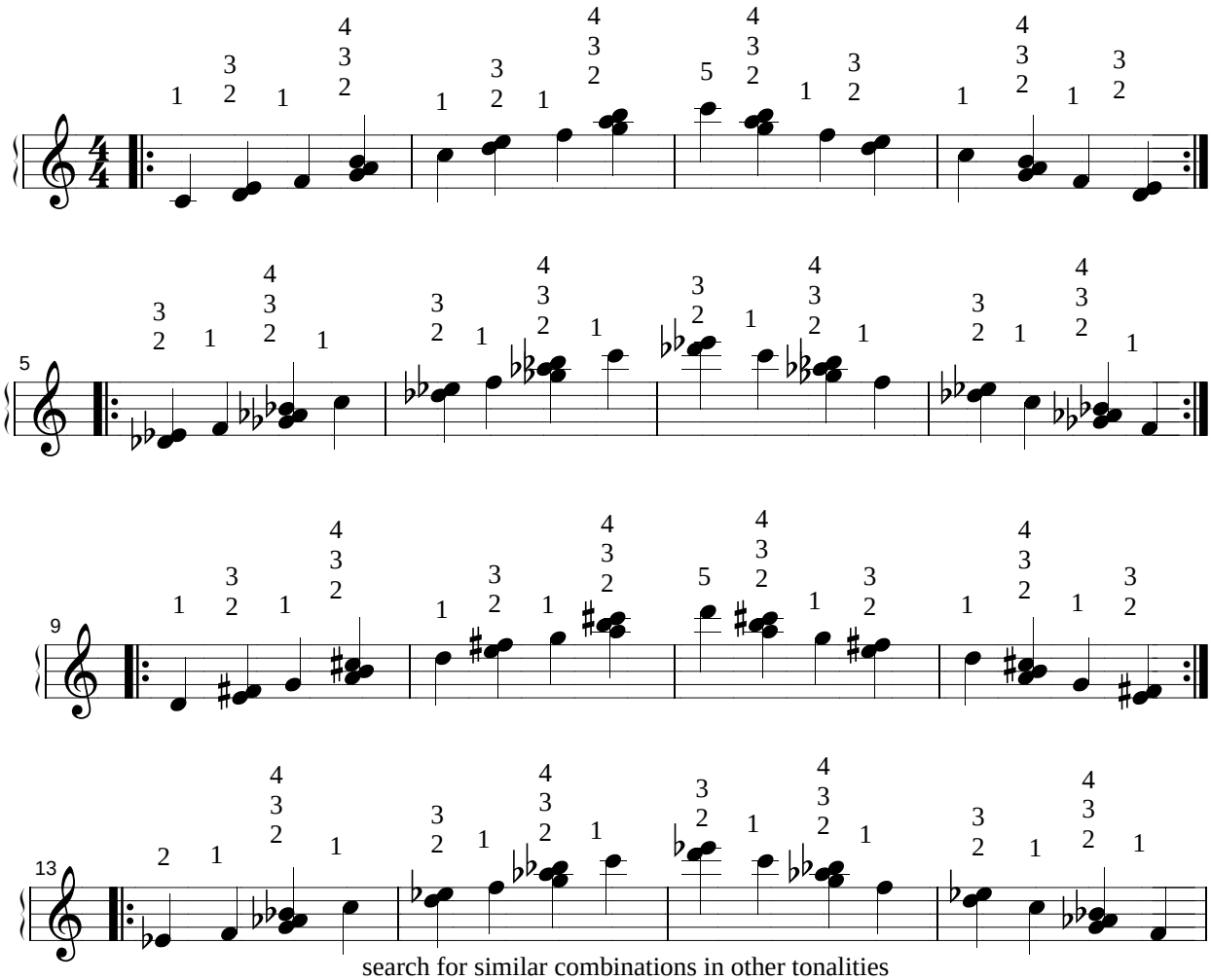
SCALE COMBINATION

1. Play the C major scale with your right hand while singing aloud the Bb major scale.
2. Play the Gb major scale with your left hand while singing aloud the Bb major scale.
3. Play the C and Gb major scales together while singing the Bb major scale.
4. Continue in all tonalities; try other scale combinations.

Concentrate on intonation. Skip an octave if the range becomes difficult for your voice. If you experience difficulties singing a Bb major scale while simultaneously playing C and Gb major scales, then sing A major instead of the Bb major scale. The 2nd stave is sung an octave higher than notated. This exercise develops your intonation and it also programs scales more deeply in your subconscious.



Scale Blocking

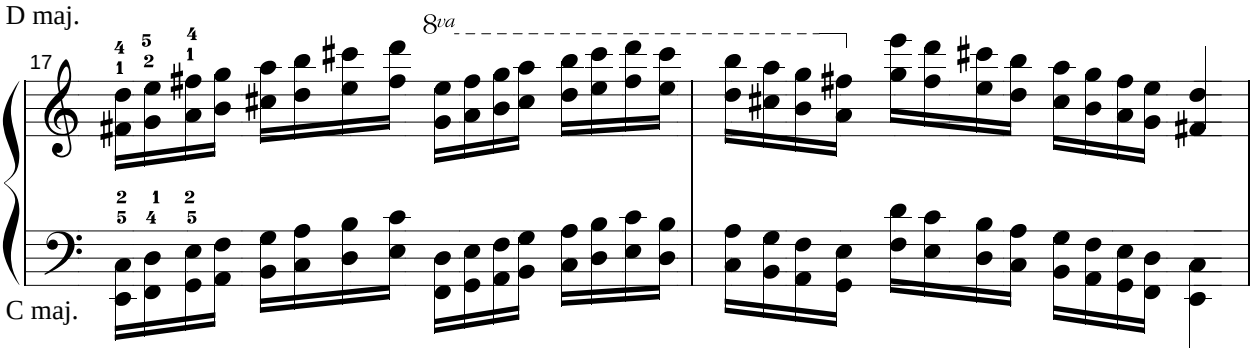


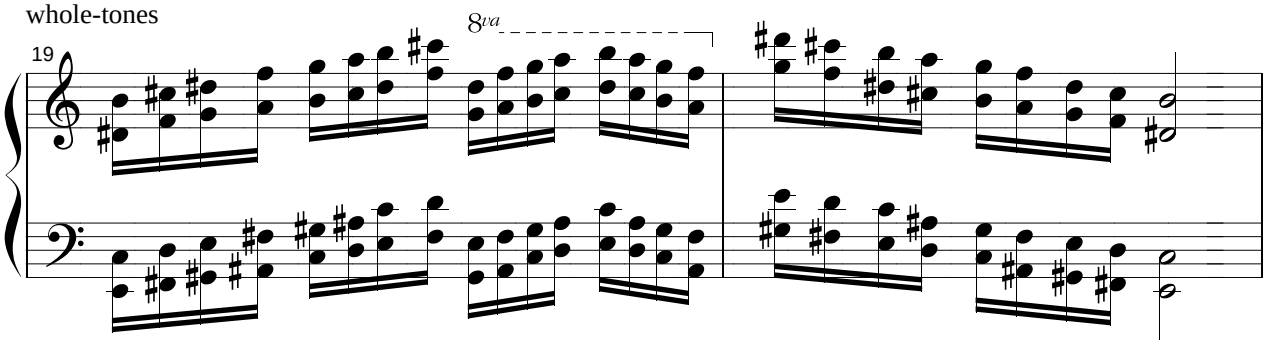
search for similar combinations in other tonalities

Remarks concerning the notation of accidentals: the 3rd, 5th or 7th interval should be notated within the tonality of the chord; altered tones should be sharp if the following note ascends or flat if the following note descends. In contemporary music, when the following tone ascends, an accidental for the preceding tone is a sharp; if the following tone descends, the accidental for the preceding tone is a flat. In notation without bar-lines, accidentals should apply only to the specified note. Piano notation (for easier reading) is to be written as clearly as possible; so I try to avoid using double-sharps and double-flats as well as E#, B#, Cb and Fb, because the sound is more easily comprehended (F,C,B,E) when using naturals; however, I'll transpose the enharmonic chord or phrase a minor 2nd (up or down) and choose notation by its appearance. Example: in the tonality of Eb, I'll prefer the notation of Fb, Cb, Eb, Ab instead of E, B, Eb, Ab; minor 2nd transposition: F, C, E, A = F ma7 or Eb, Bb, D, G = Eb ma7. In orchestra scores, all notation must be theoretically correct (double-sharps, double-flats) especially when analysing tones within the score for transposed instruments. Also, if there are two or more successive tones, within a single line, I use the tonality of the harmony the tones imply. Whenever possible, I reduce the number of accidentals within a measure; when space is urgently needed, I use D# to E (one accidental) instead of Eb to E natural (two accidentals) because measures, less cluttered, are visually cleaner. The final question; is the notation comfortable to the eye and will the written notes sound the way they look?

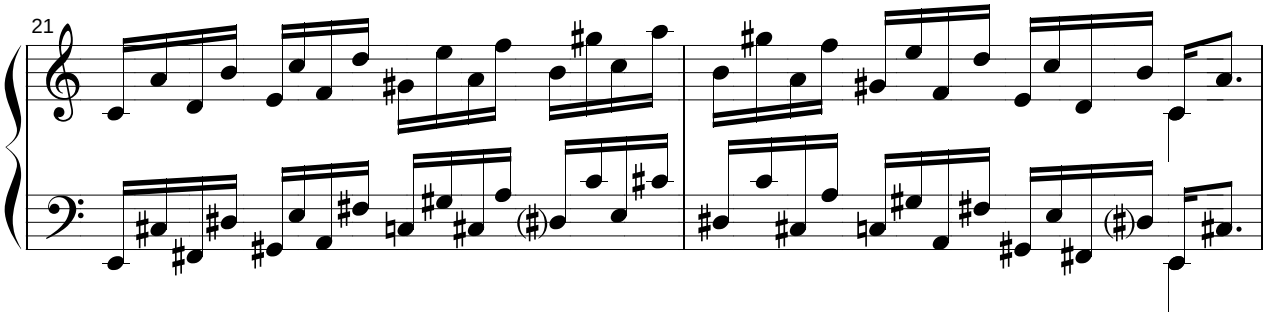
DOUBLE-SIXTH SCALES

1. Play the right hand and sing the soprano voice-line
2. Play the right hand and sing the alto voice-line
3. Play the left hand and sing the tenor voice-line
4. Play the left hand and sing the bass voice-line
5. Play the alto, tenor and bass while singing the soprano
6. Play the soprano, tenor and bass while singing the alto
7. Play the soprano, alto and bass while singing the tenor
8. Play the soprano, alto and tenor while singing the bass





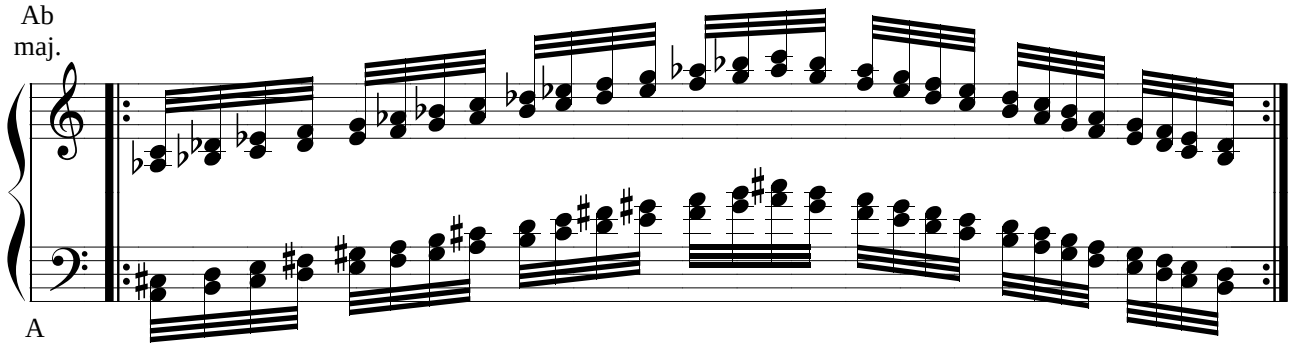
broken double-sixth harmonic-minor scale in A and C# (make other scale combinations)



DOUBLE-THIRD COMBINATIONS

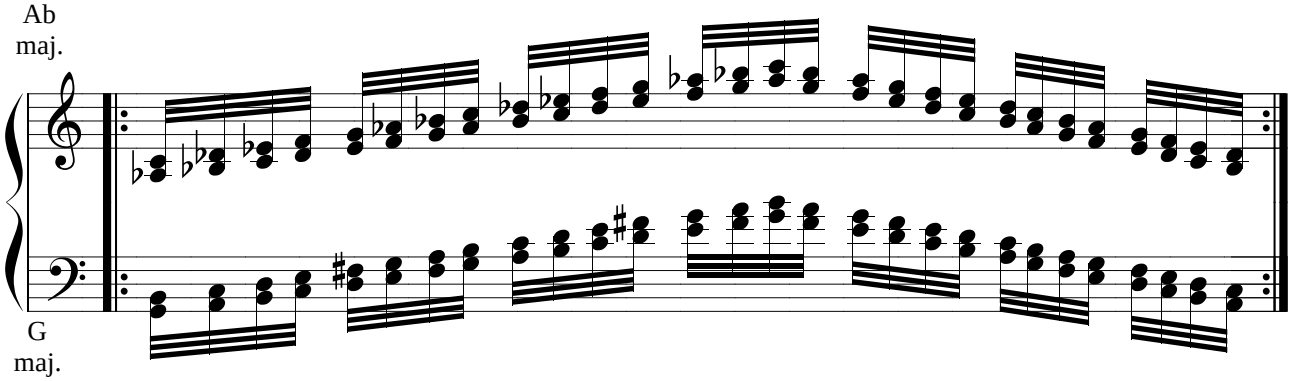
I have notated only a few scale combinations that I have experimented with; but as mentioned before, you must have the complete C.L. Hanon (or another scale book) as a reference for correct fingering.

Ab maj.



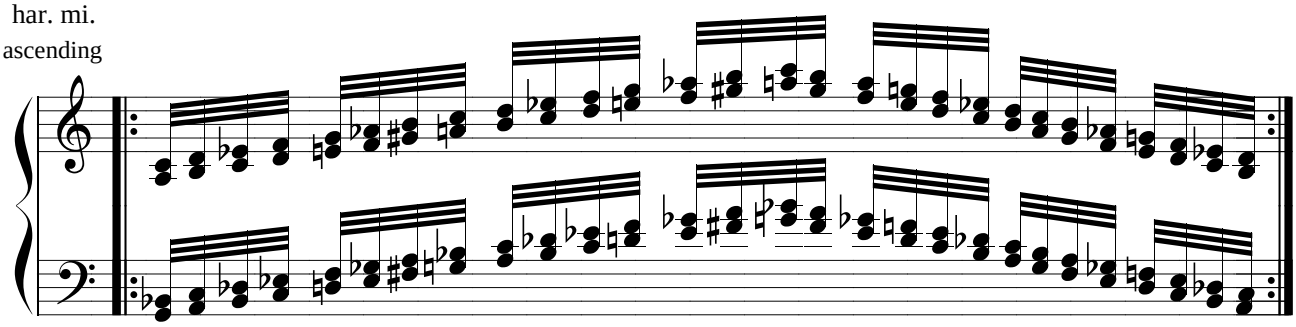
A maj.

Ab maj.



G maj.

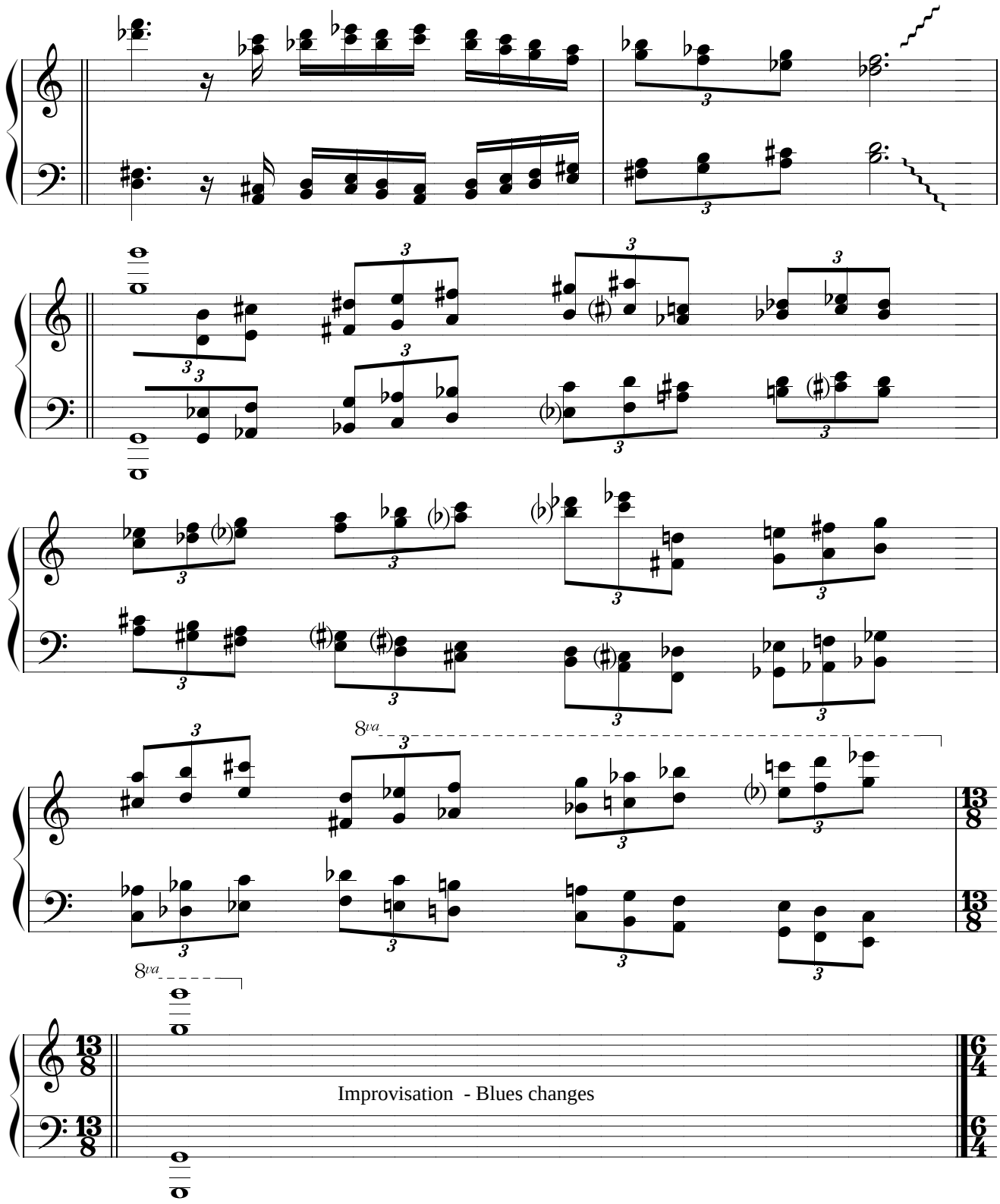
C har. mi. ascending



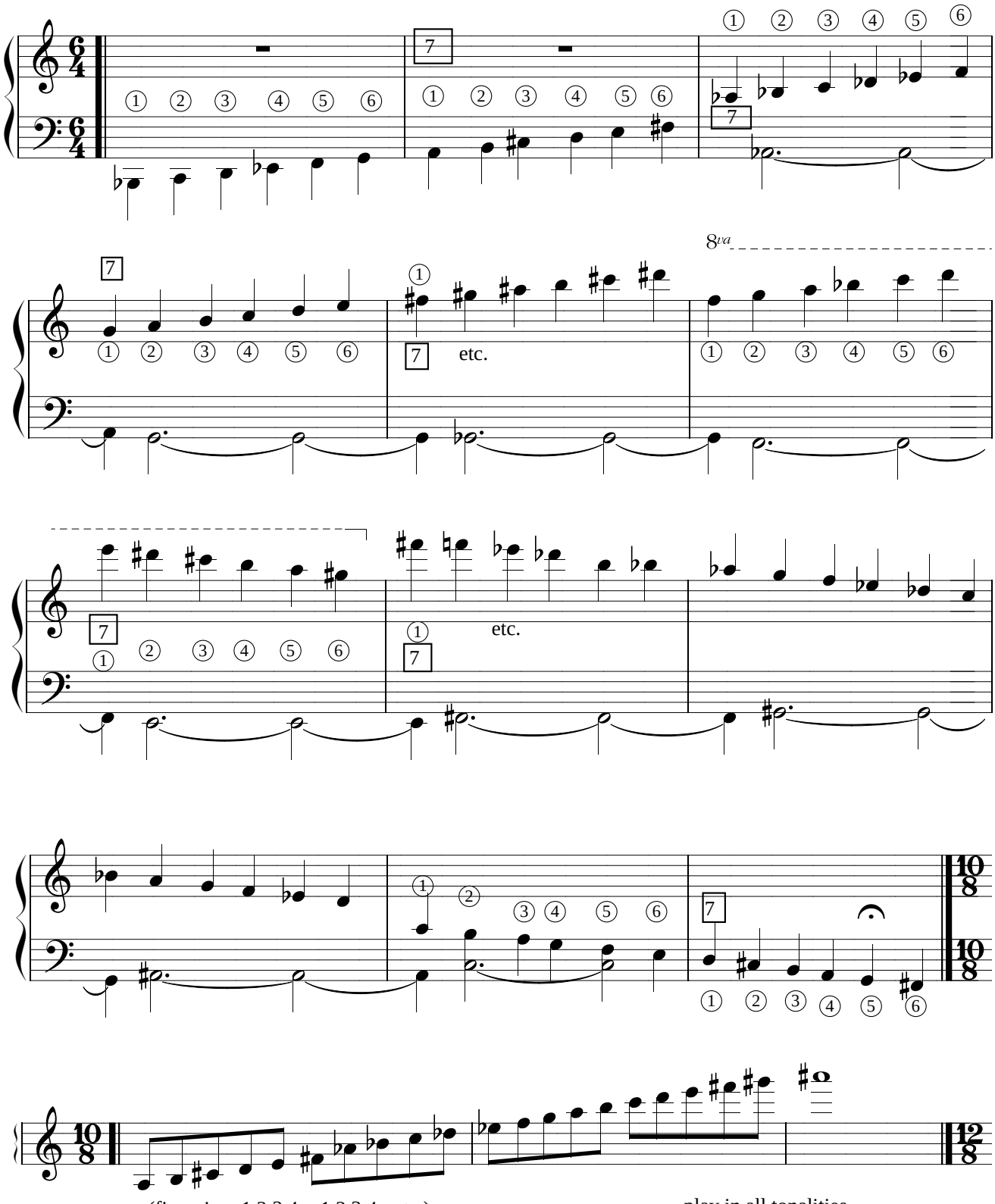
Bb har. mi. ascending

experiment with other scale combinations

The following example is from the title Enkephalins, recorded on Winter Rose (CD 3067-2) for ENJA Records; it is also included within the title Sunhazed, recorded on From Another Star (CD2001-2) for Sunburst Recordings, Inc. This sequence resulted after practicing scales in double six and double thirds.



The following example consists of the first six (6) intervals of a major scale; however, the first degree of each major scale is actually the seventh (7) degree of the preceeding scale. Below is an introduction to the title, 'Orchids 'n Green' which was recorded on Hues of Blues (CD-4671) for Concord Records, Inc. Notice that the 1st tone of each measure descends chromatically as the scale ascends; but when decsending, the 1st tone of each measure ascends in whole tones.

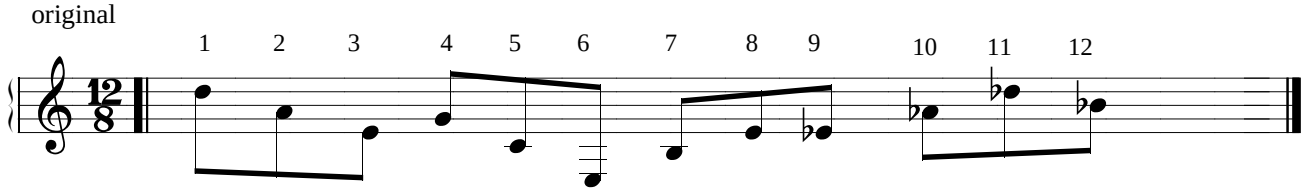


(fingering; 1 2 3 4 - 1 2 3 4 - etc.)

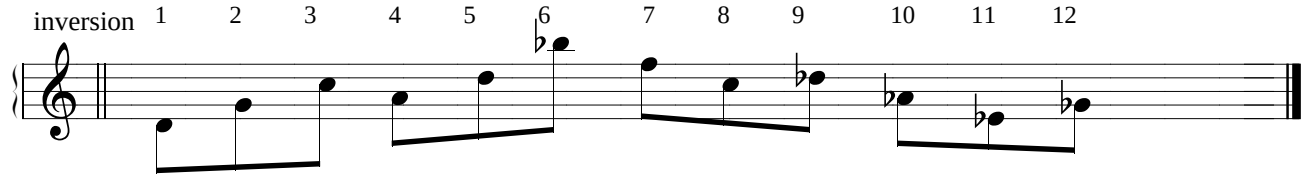
play in all tonalities

IDEA FRAGMENTS

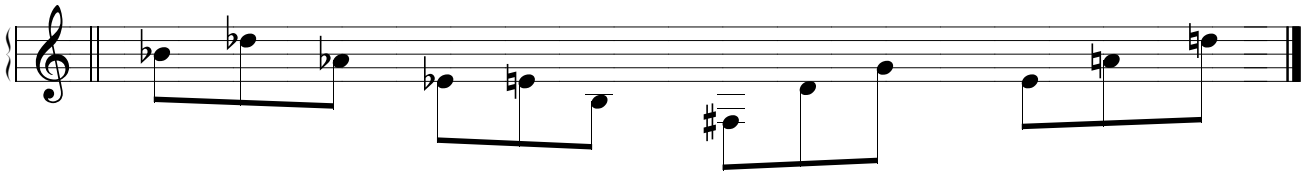
original



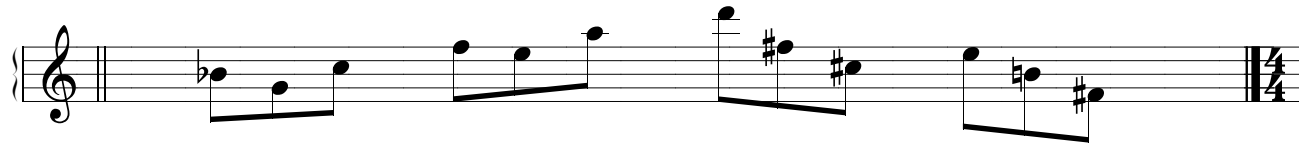
inversion



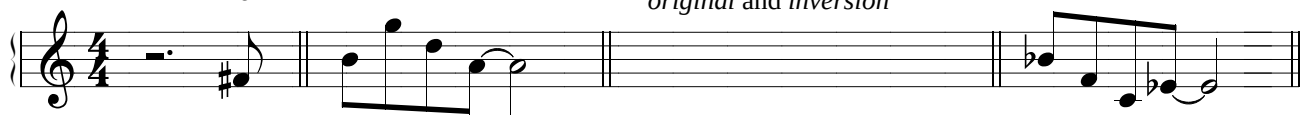
retrograde



retrograde inversion



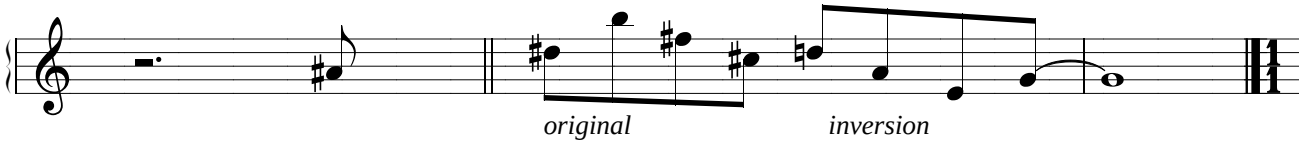
original



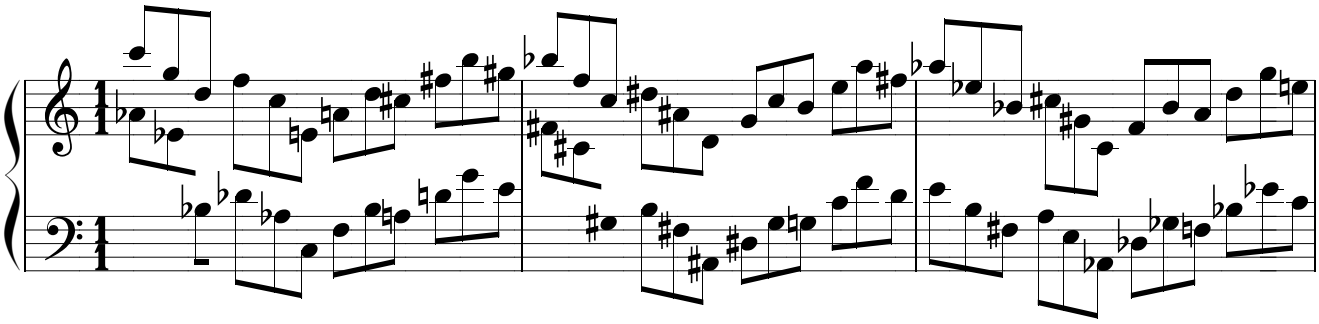
the following tones were chosen from the above *original* and *inversion*

inversion

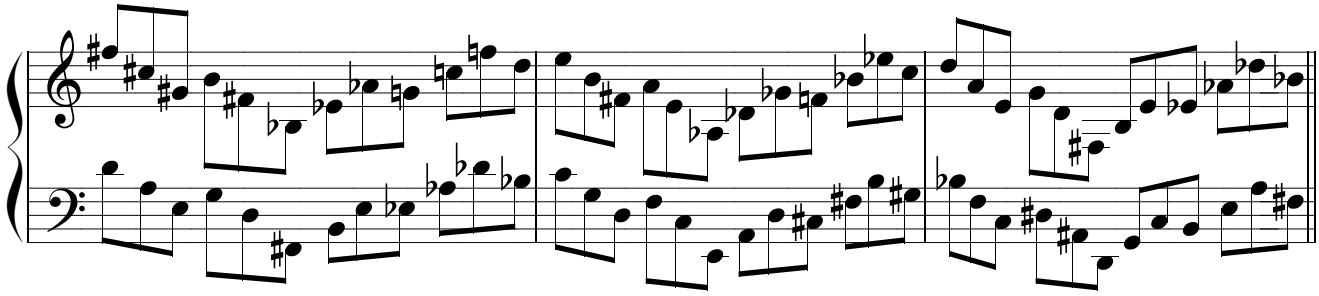
the following is the opening phrase of 'Enkephalins' (this title was renamed as Sunhazed) transposed a major 3rd higher; it is taken from the original and inversion of the above example



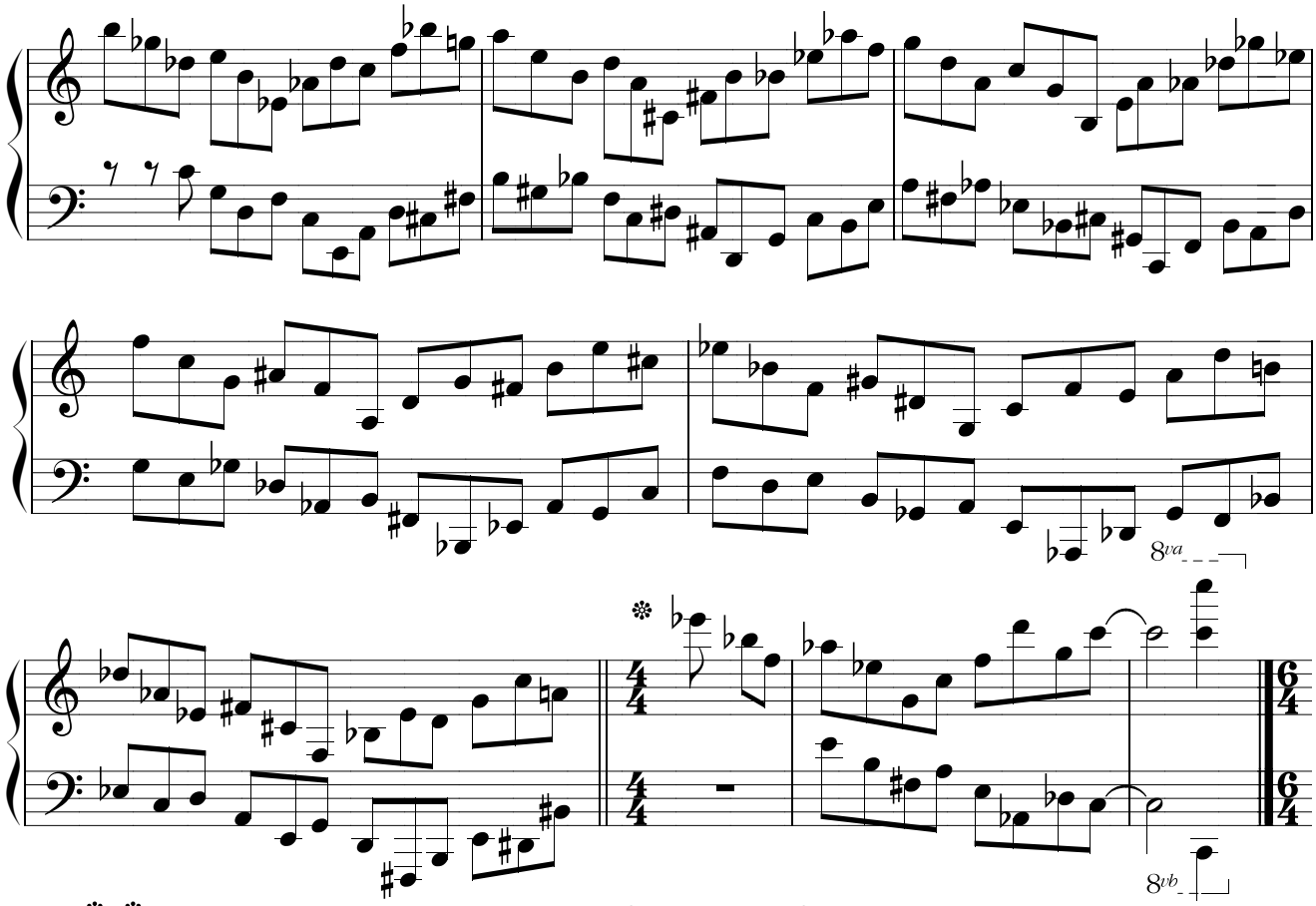
the following is the original from page 13 in major-tenths; you should continue in sevenths, major-sevenths, flatted-ninths and sharped-ninths



enharmonic notation is used to minimise the number of accidentals



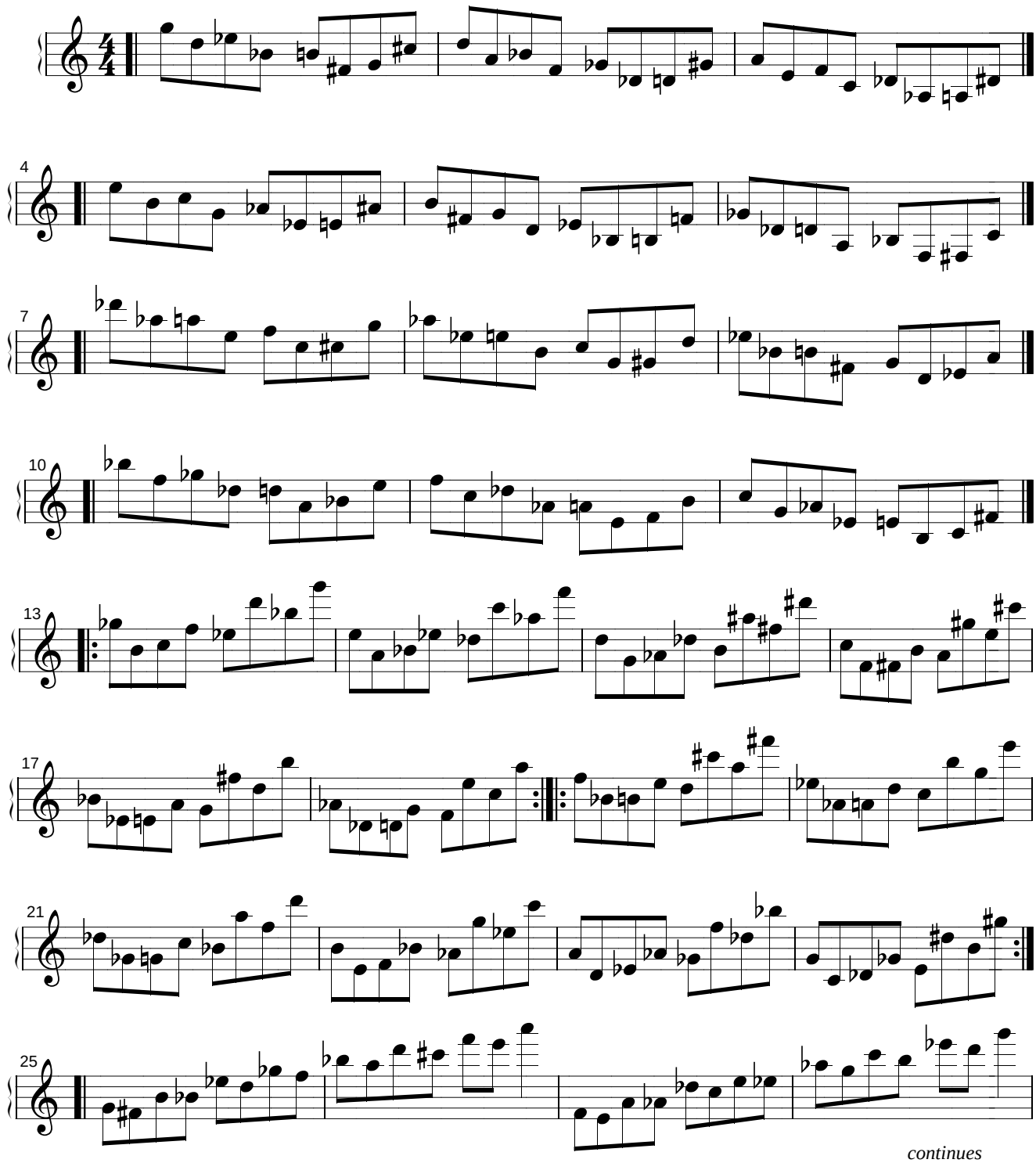
UNSYNCHRONIZED: phrase in the bass-clef is delayed; it begins two eight-notes later than the treble-clef



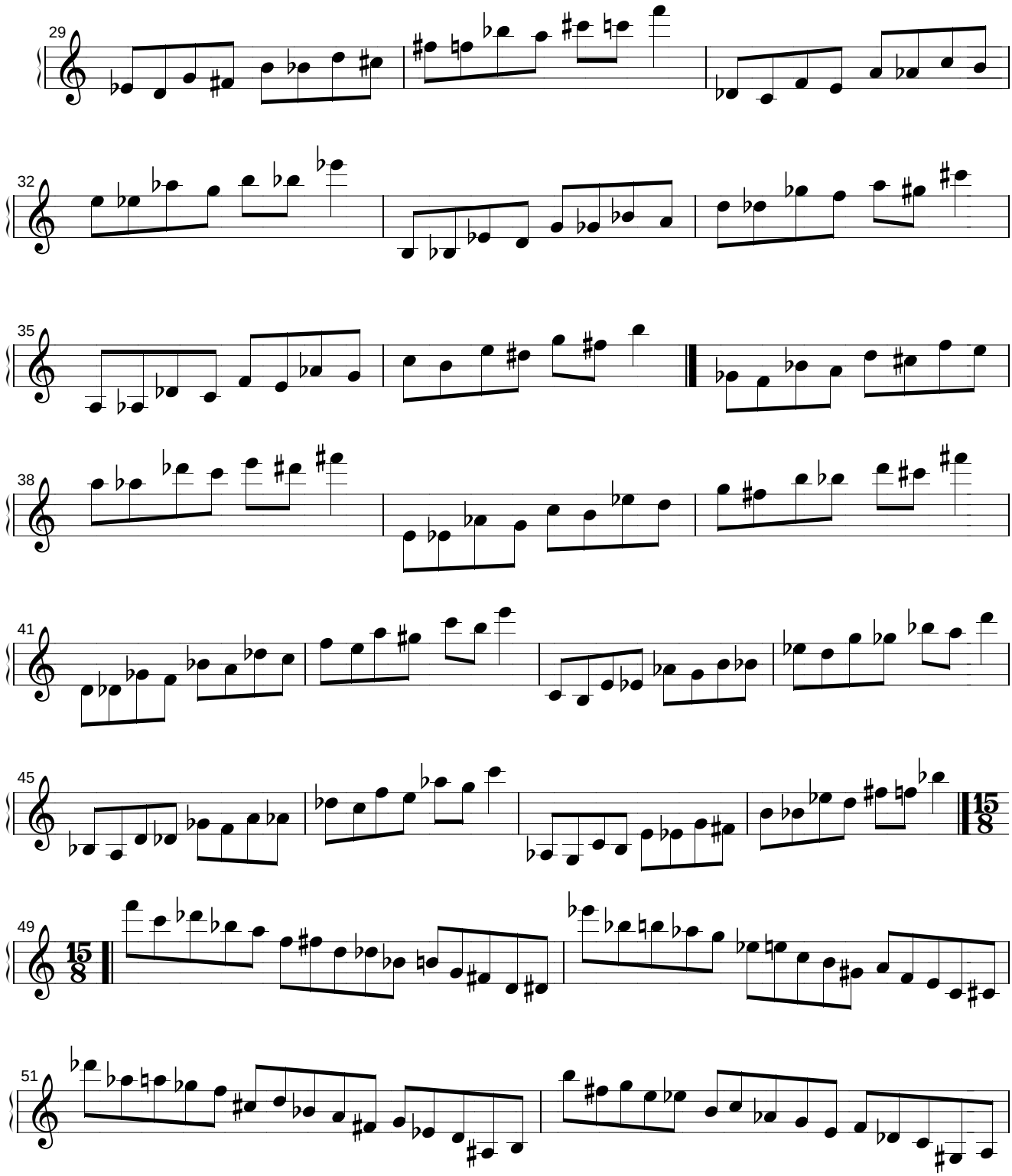
❊ ❊ **UNSYNCHRONIZED PHRASE:** used for the ending of Aladar Pege's composition, 'Spider Web' (CD-4671) Hues of Blues on Concord Jazz, Inc.

Idea Fragments for "Synchronicity"

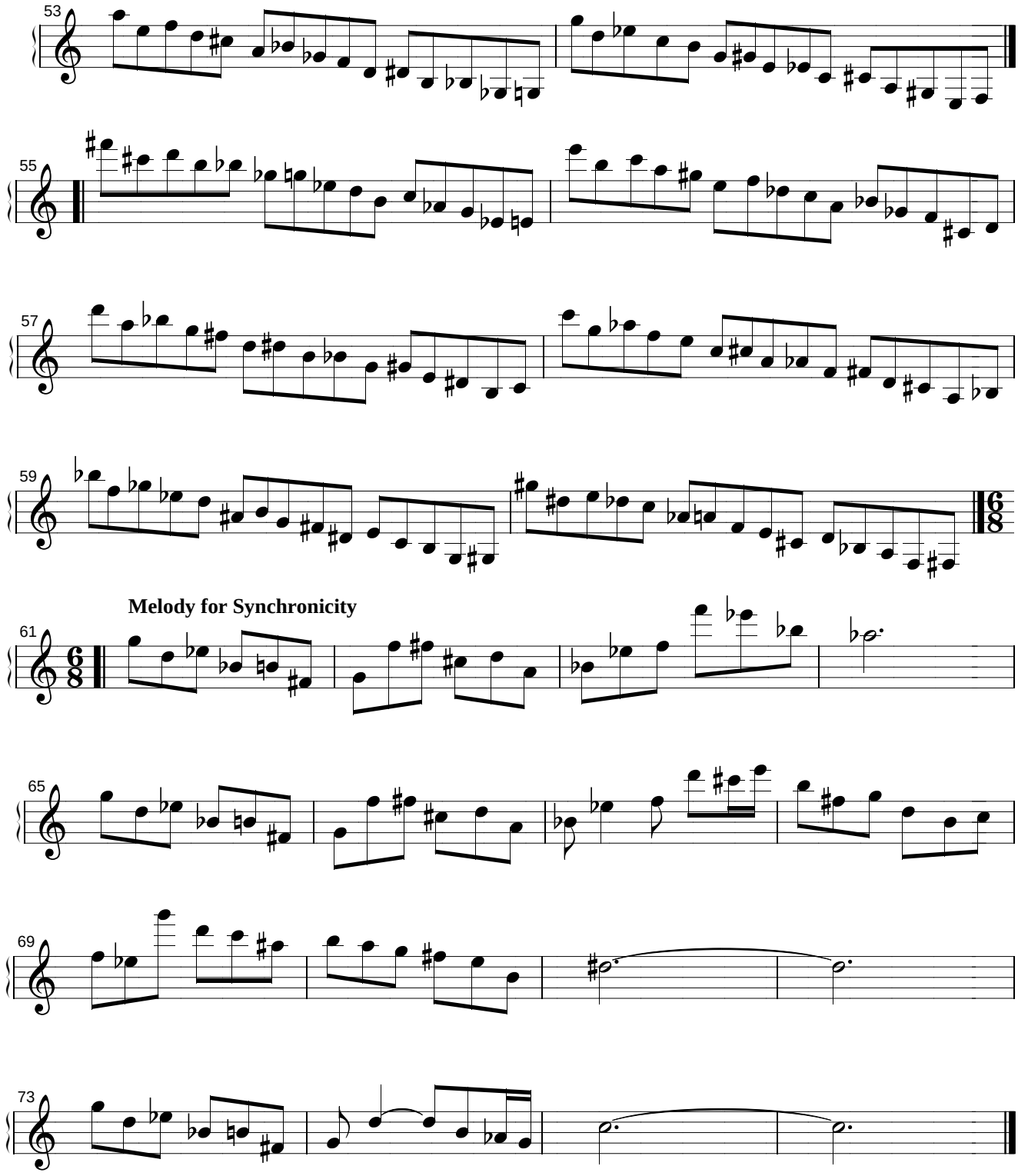
'Drifting' 2044-2 enja



continues



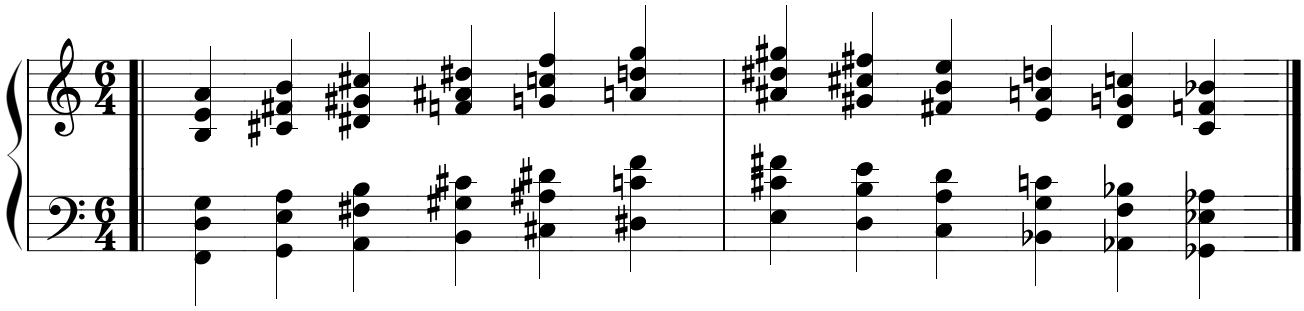
continues



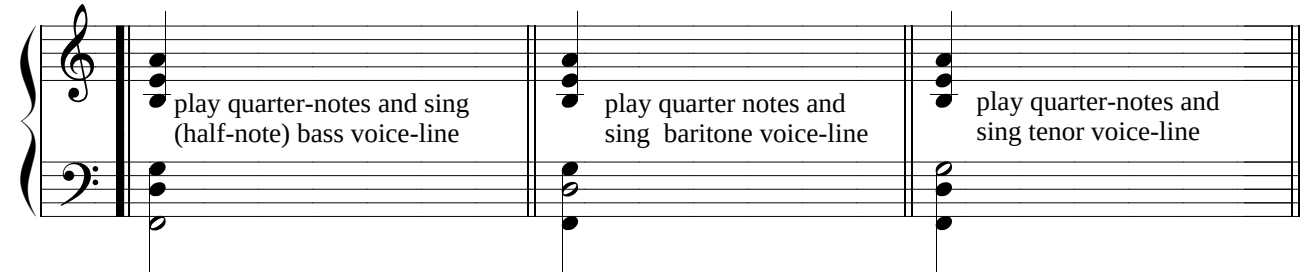
The above melody for Synchronicity, taken from measure 21, changed slightly as I edited and played these exercises. By mentally digesting the intervals, these tones surfaced as an idea; thus, a better solution was achieved. This is my objective as I practice and edit all exercises.

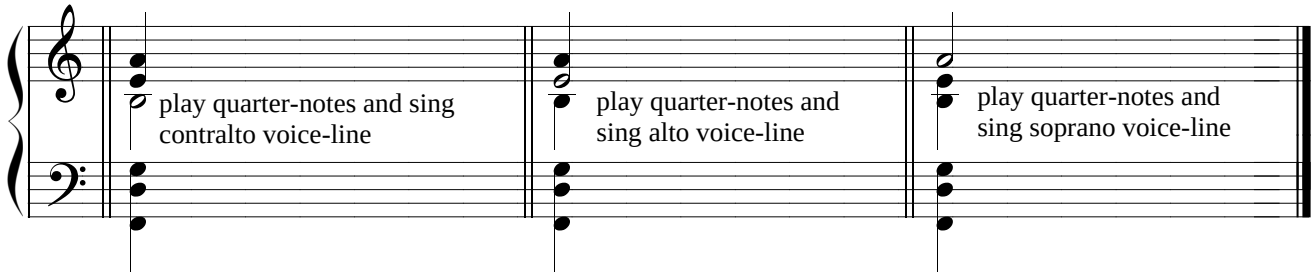
PRACTICING CHORDS

Play the first chord of the exercise below and keep the keys depressed as you sing each interval vertically; pronounce the letter-name of each interval that you sing. This procedure pertains to all chords.

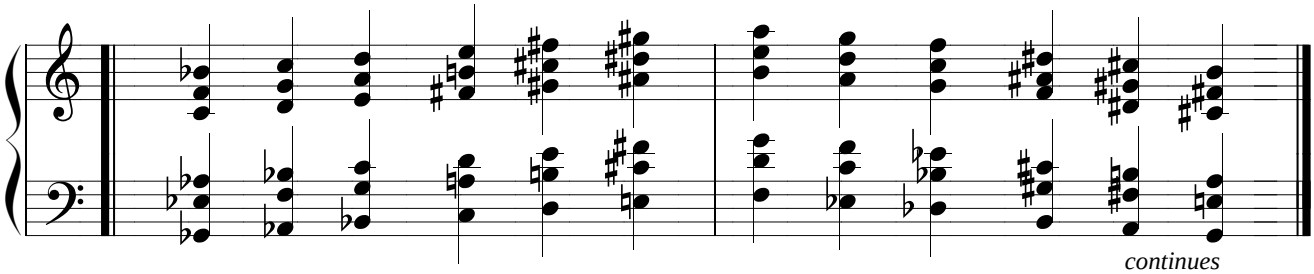


half-notes in the following exercise are to be sung; quarter-notes are to be played



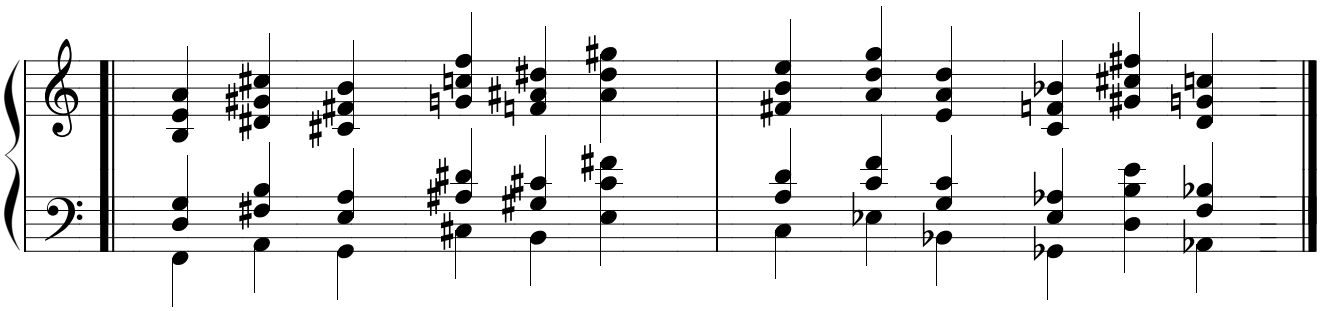


Sing the bass voice-line while playing tones in the baritone, tenor, contralto, alto and soprano of each chord; continue this procedure and sing each voice-line horizontally. This handicap-method helps you hear each voice-line within all chords more thoroughly.



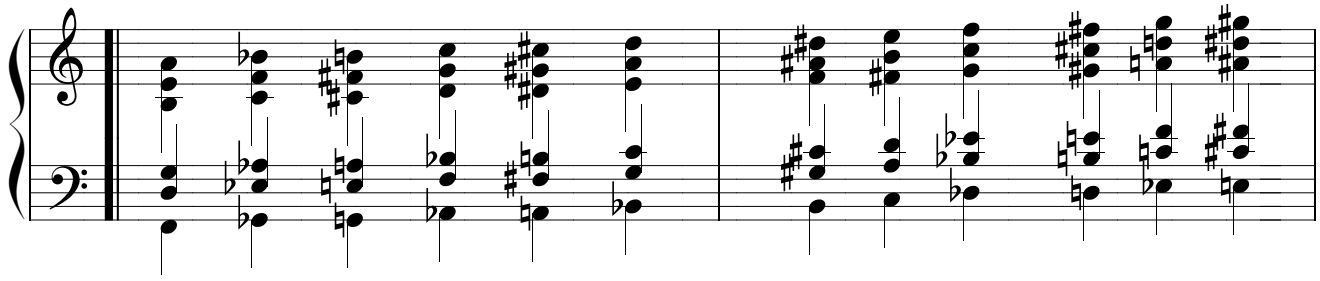
continues

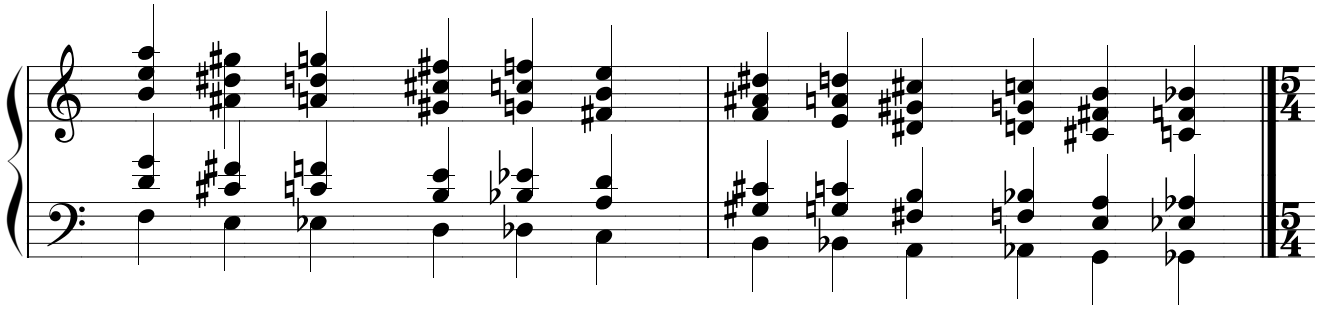
This example of intervalic-skips is more difficult than the following chromatic minor 2nds which is one reason why practicing 3rds, 4ths and other skips is so necessary. Be assured that ***ideas*** will arrive eventually but not before a level of technical maturity is achieved.



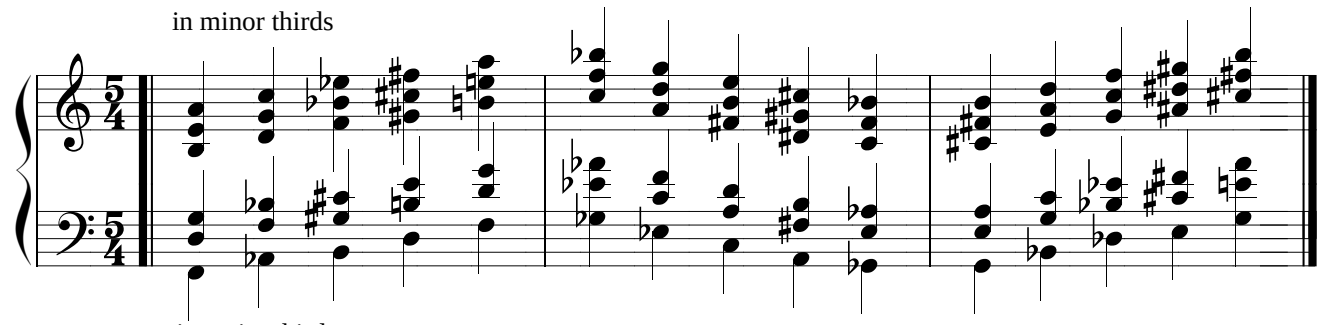
chromatic in minor seconds

enharmonic notation for visual clarity

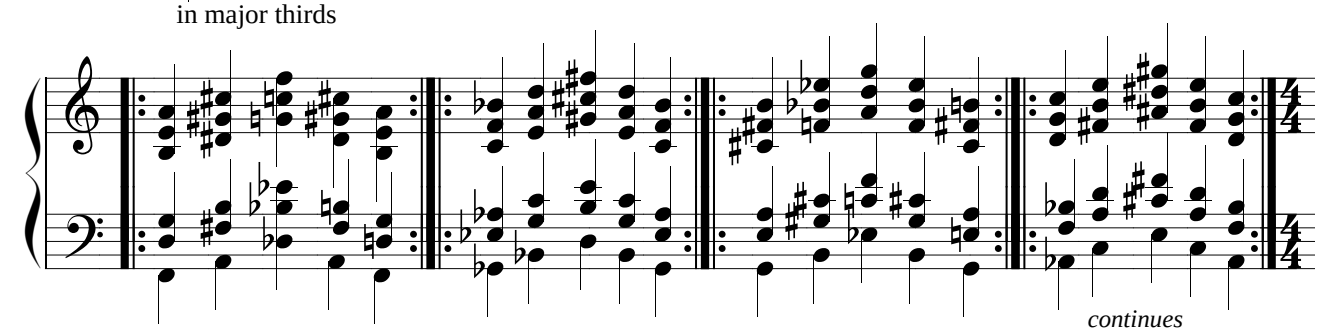




in minor thirds

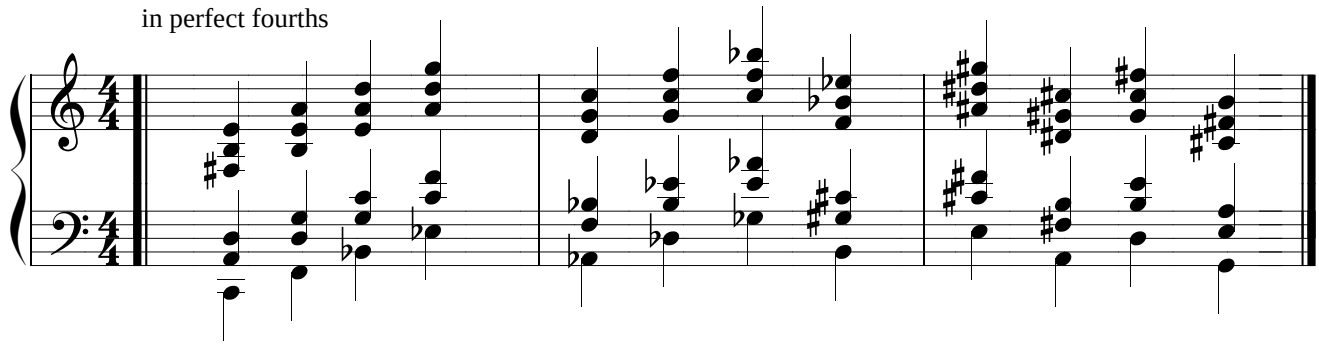


in major thirds

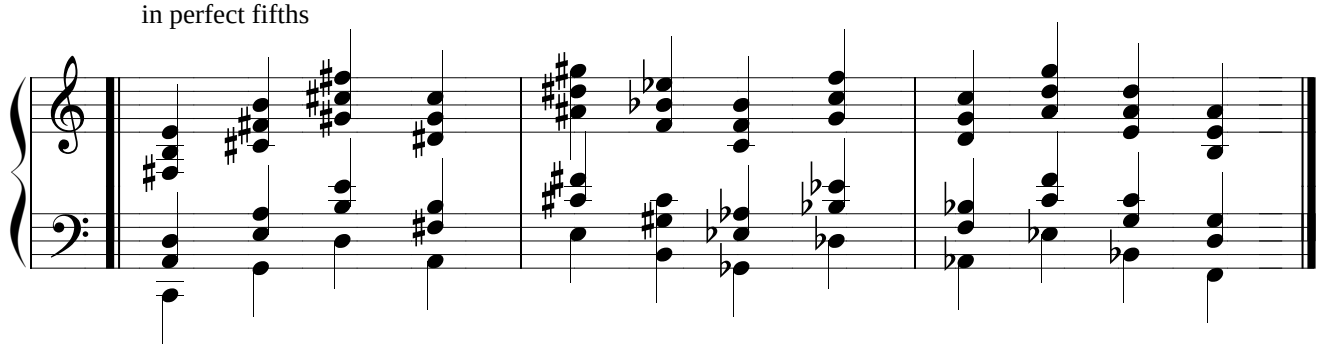


continues

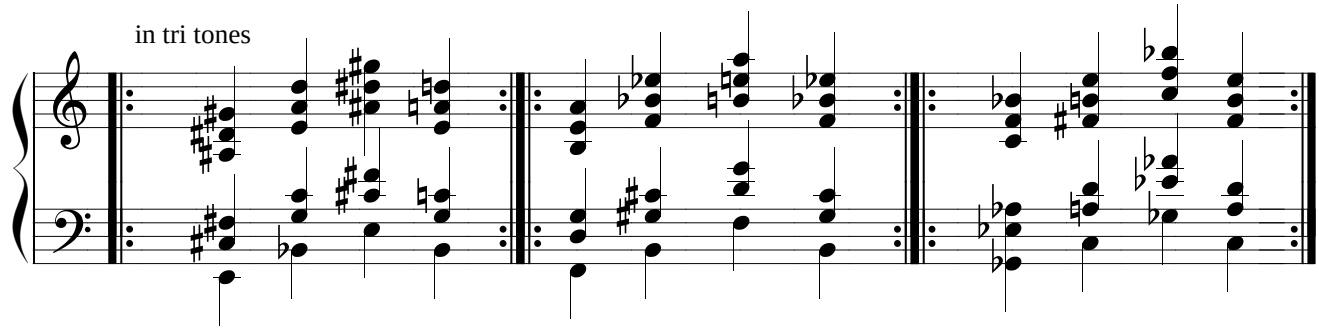
in perfect fourths



in perfect fifths

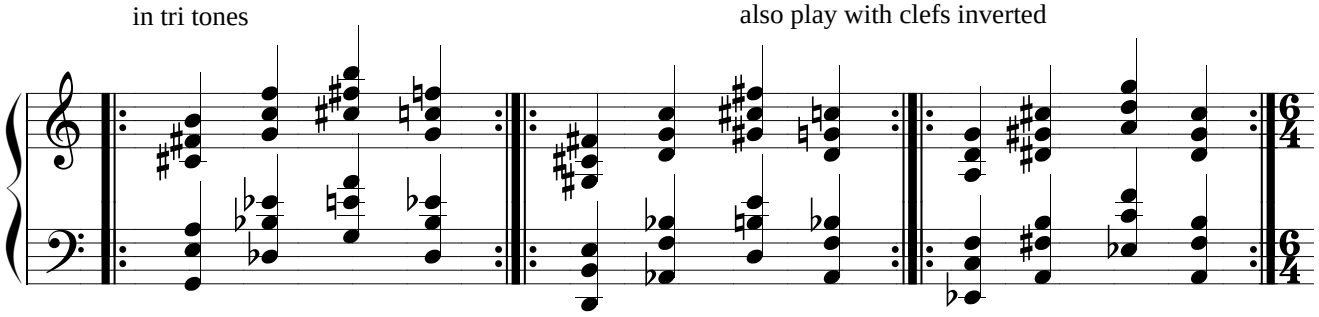


in tri tones



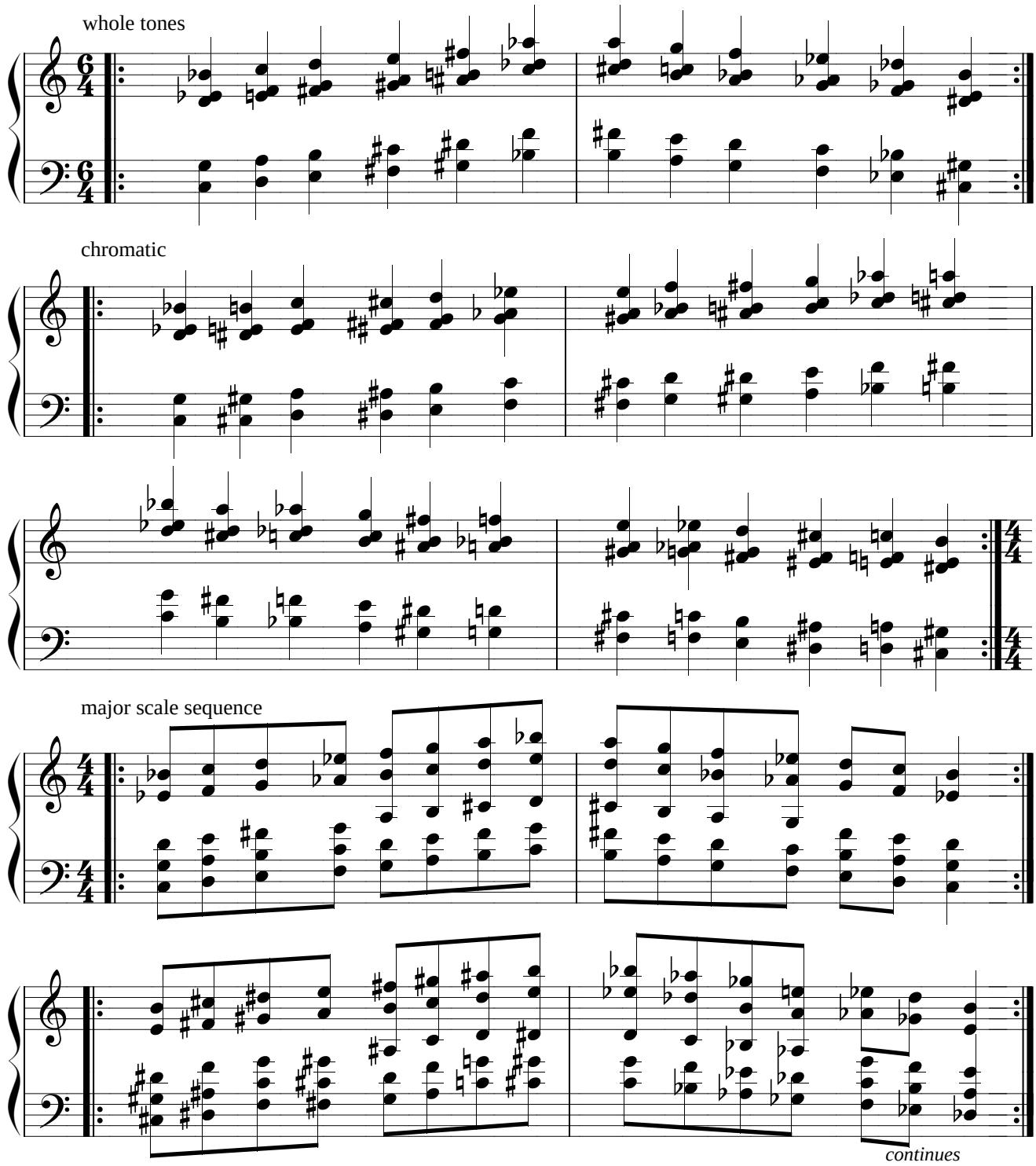
in tri tones

also play with clefs inverted



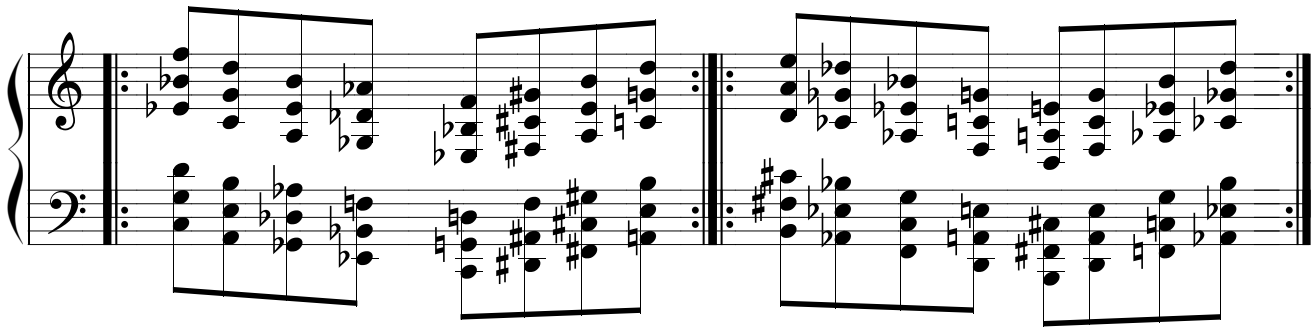
continue with major and minor-sixths plus dominant and major-sevenths

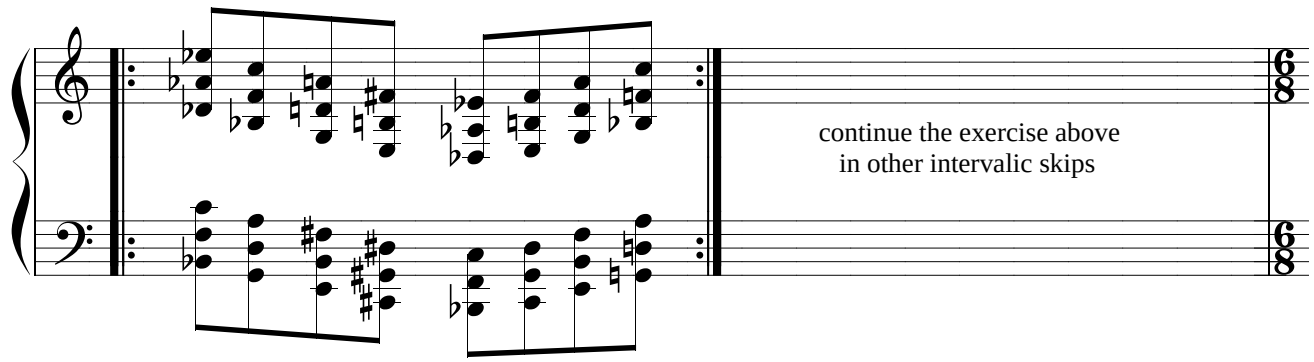
MINOR 9th CHORDS



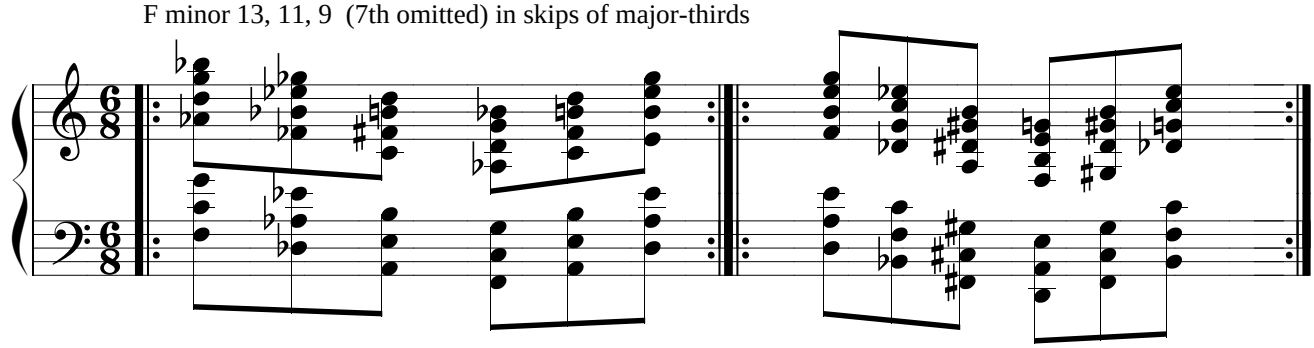
experiment with other modes

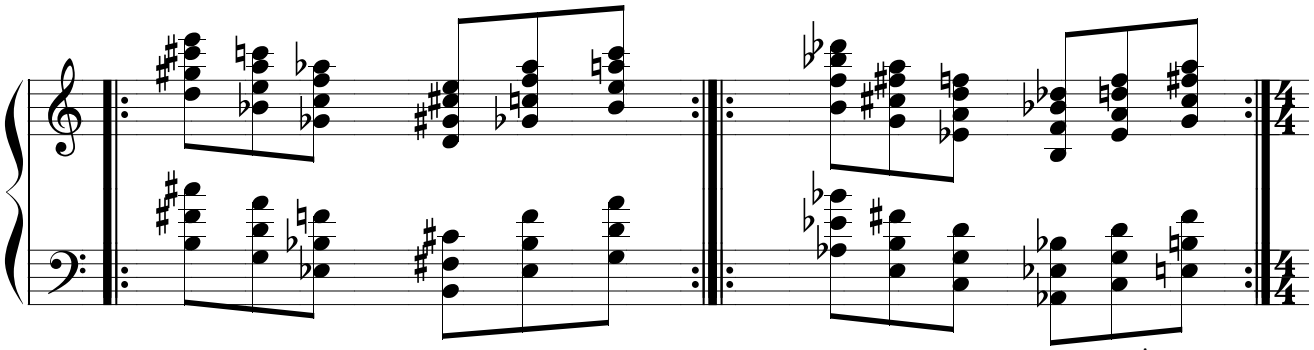
C minor 11, 9, 7 in skips of minor-thirds





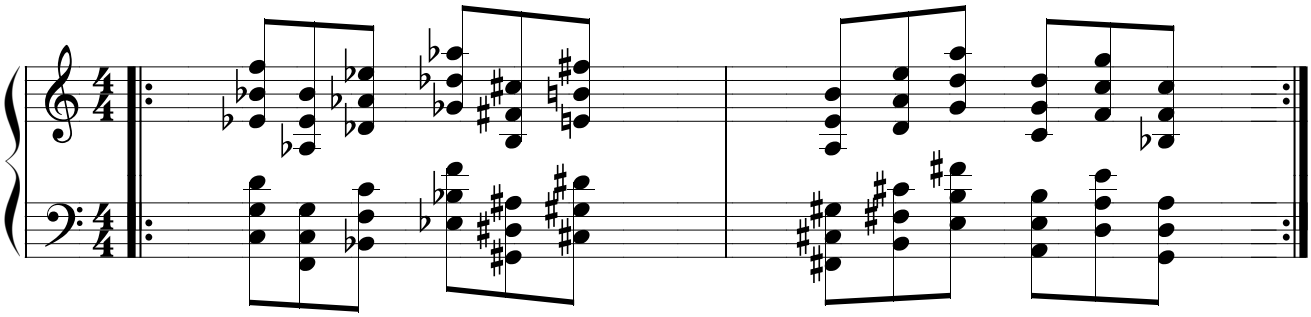
F minor 13, 11, 9 (7th omitted) in skips of major-thirds



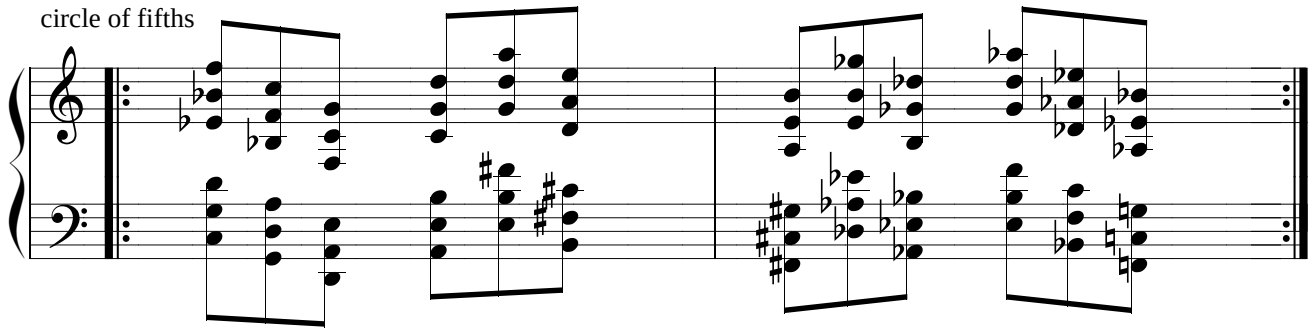


continues

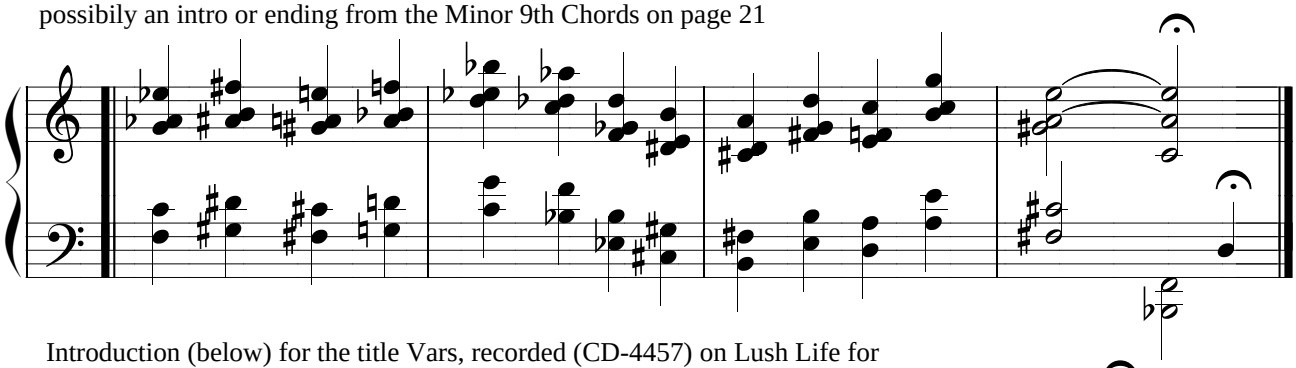
F minor 13, 11, 9 (7th omitted) in a circle of fourths



circle of fifths

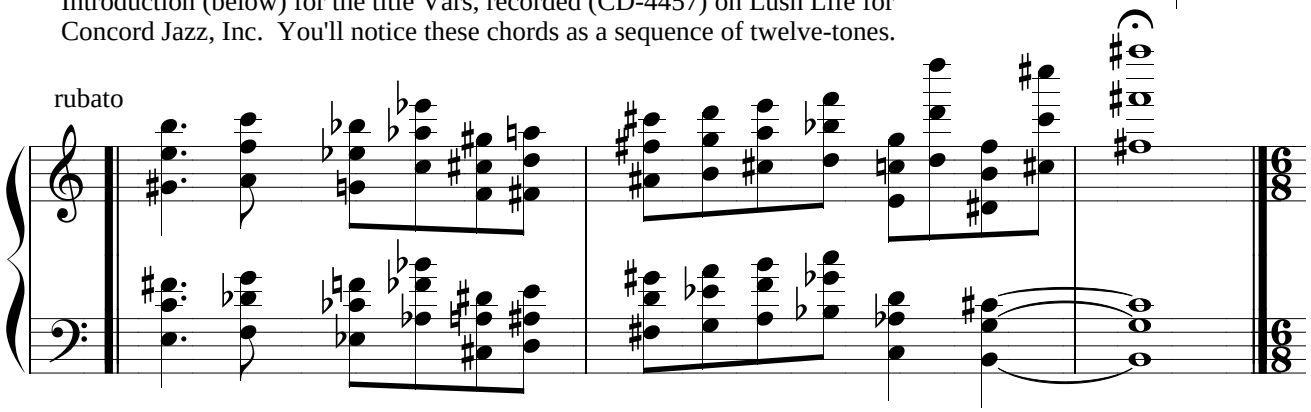


possibily an intro or ending from the Minor 9th Chords on page 21



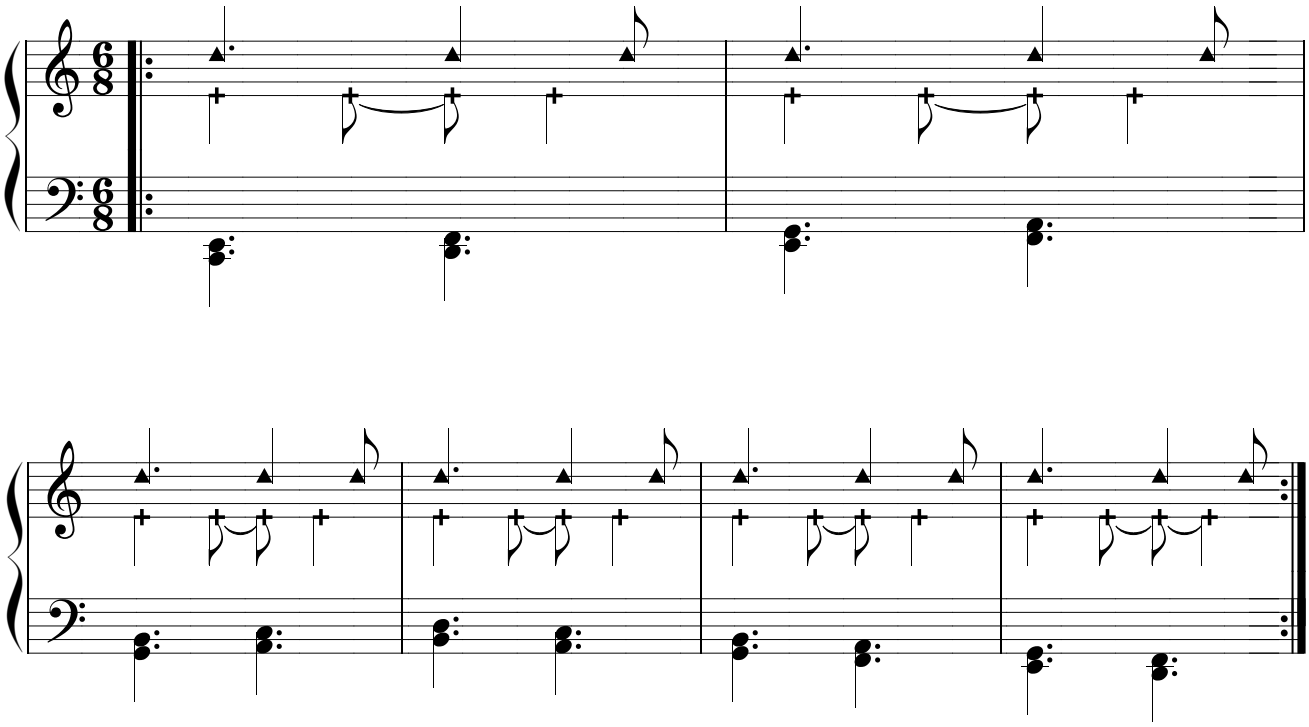
Introduction (below) for the title Vars, recorded (CD-4457) on Lush Life for Concord Jazz, Inc. You'll notice these chords as a sequence of twelve-tones.

rubato

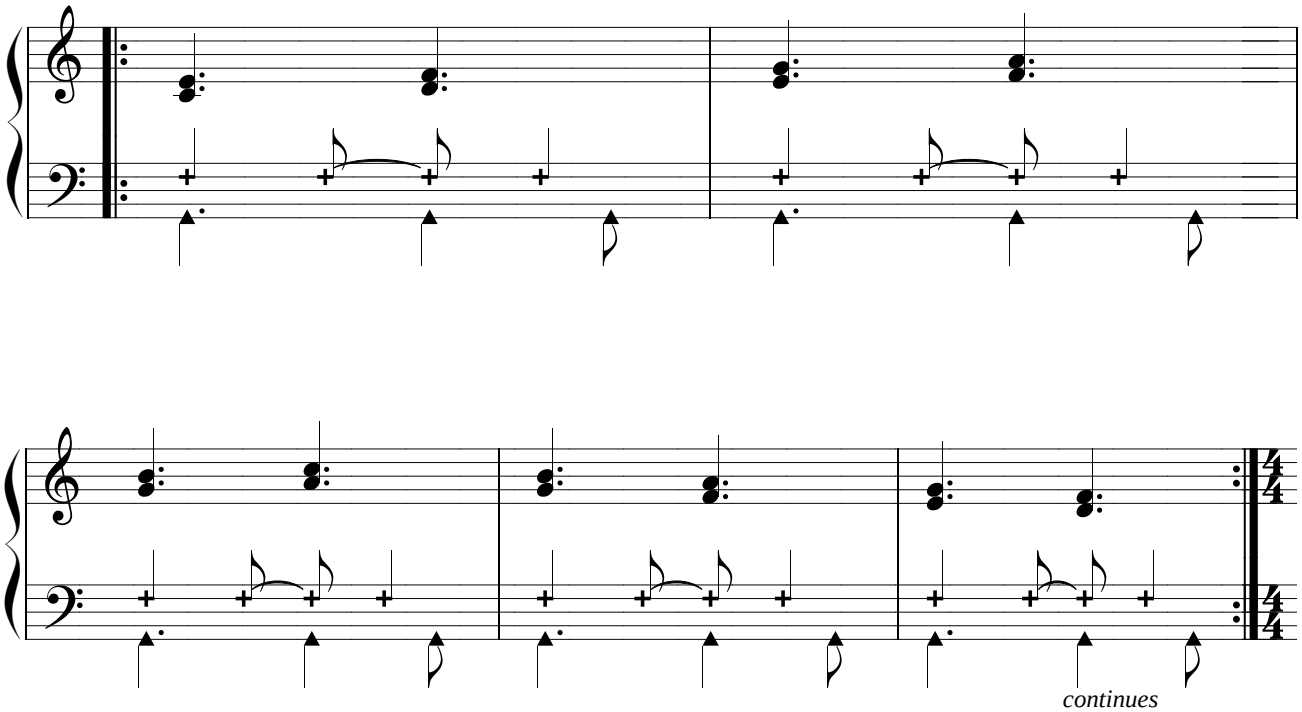


Rhythmic Coordination

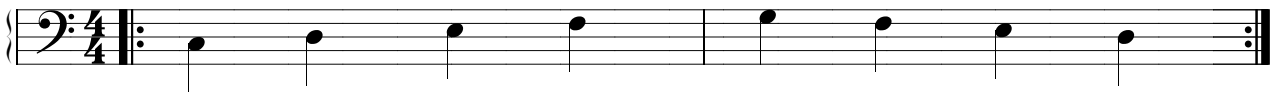
Notation for the soprano-line in treble clef pertains to the right foot. Notation for the alto-line in treble clef pertains to the left foot. Notation for bass clef is played with the left hand.



Notation in treble clef is played with the right hand. Notation for the tenor-line in bass clef pertains to the right foot. Notation for the bass-line in bass clef pertains to the left foot.



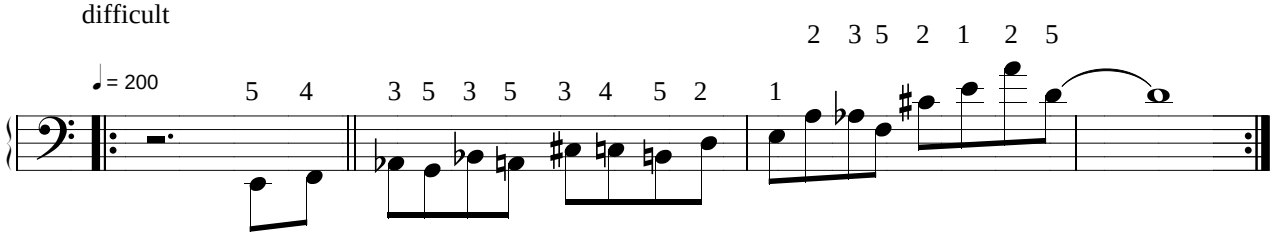
continues



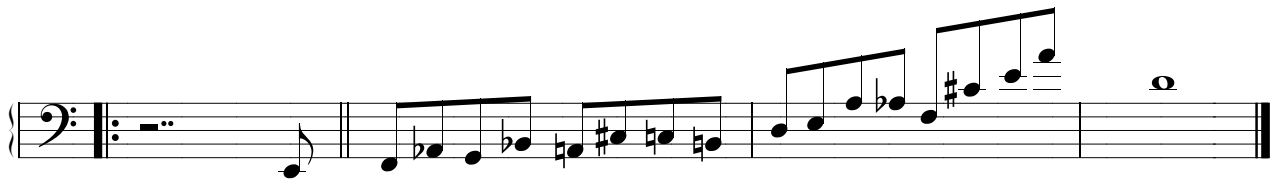
play the above with your left hand and make a circle clock-wise with the right foot plus a circle counter clock-wise with the right hand simultaneously

play the above with your right hand and make a circle clock-wise with the left foot plus a circle counter clock-wise with the left hand simultaneously

difficult



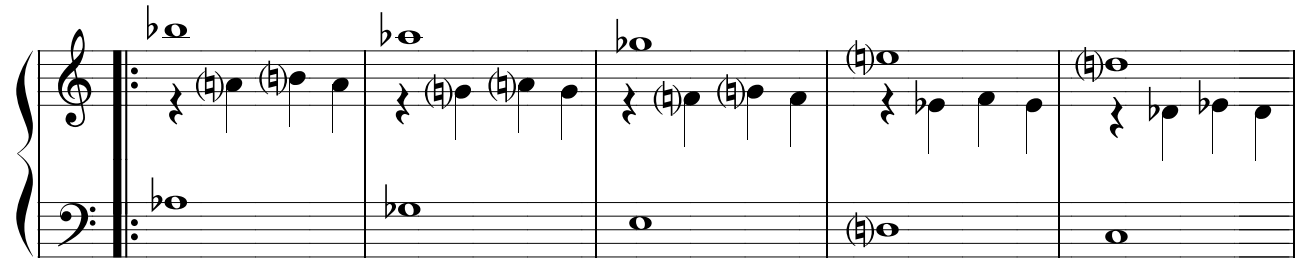
Play the above with your left hand while making a circle counter clock-wise with the right foot plus a circle clock-wise with the right hand and tap your left foot (toe and heal) simultaneously. Try other fingering. Do the same procedure with the exercise below.

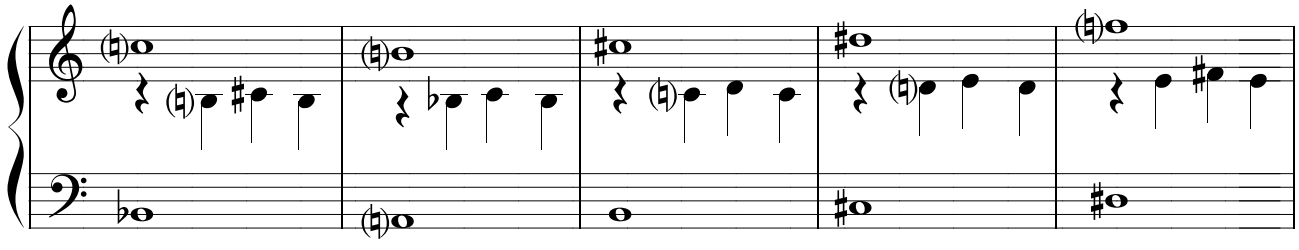


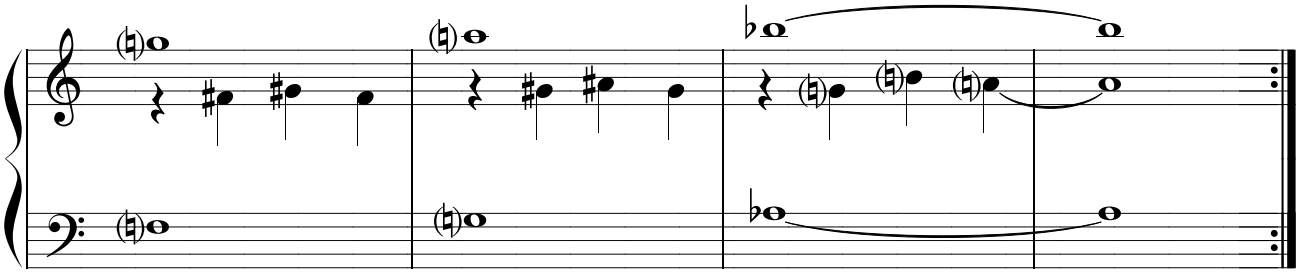
also try to make a figure eight counter clock-wise with the right hand plus a figure eight clock-wise with the right foot simultaneously

FOR INTONATION AND PERFECT PITCH

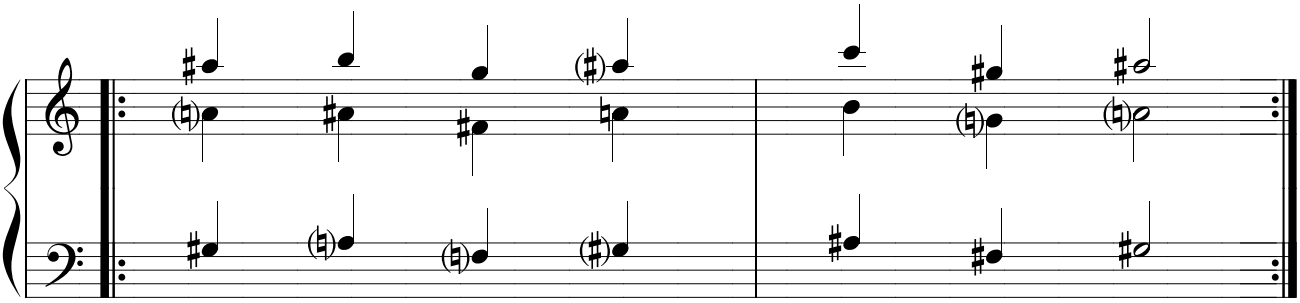
Play whole notes; sing and name tones in the alto. Sing soprano;
play bass and alto. Sing bass; play soprano and alto.





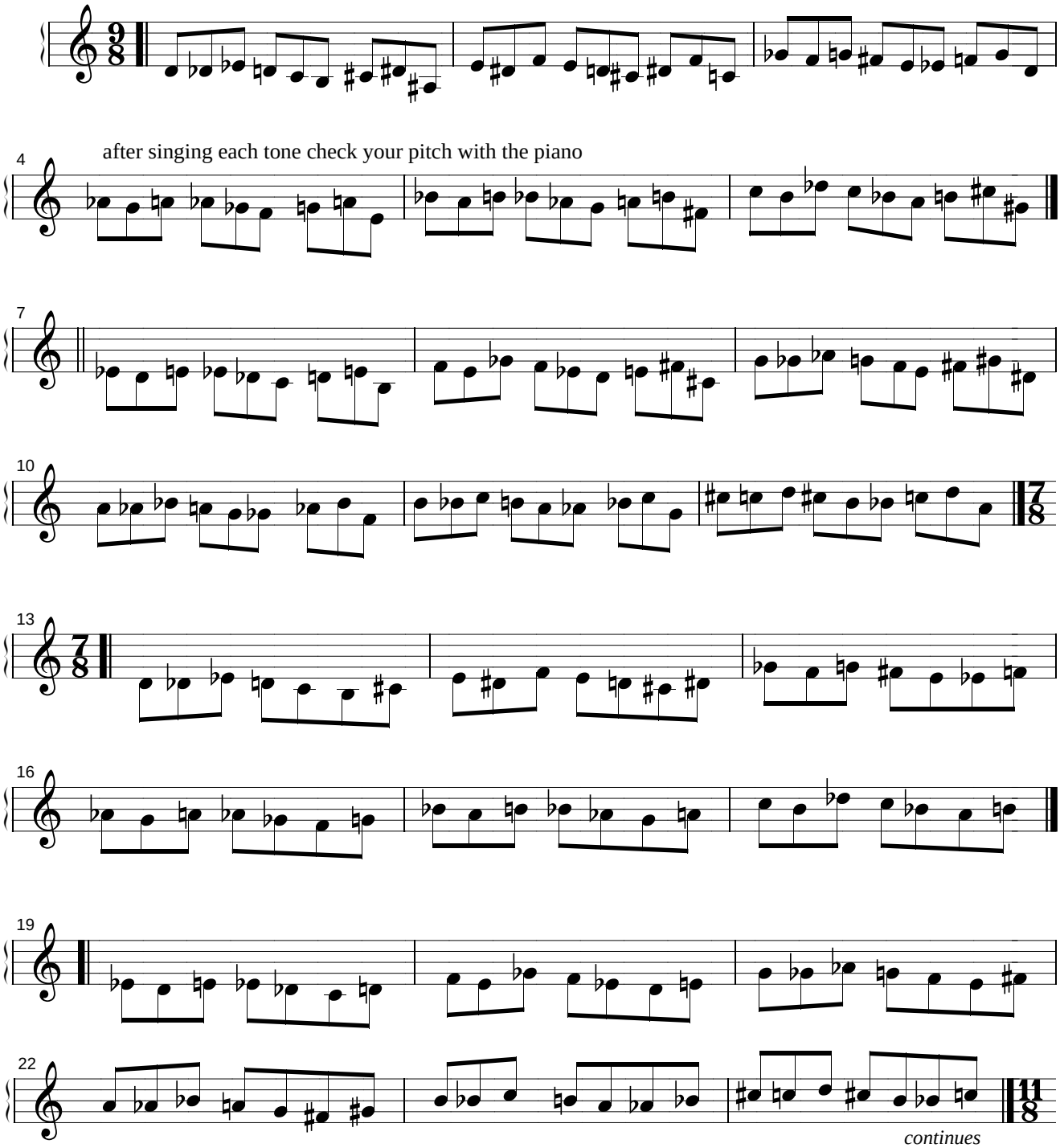


play soprano and tenor while singing the alto simultaneously



continues

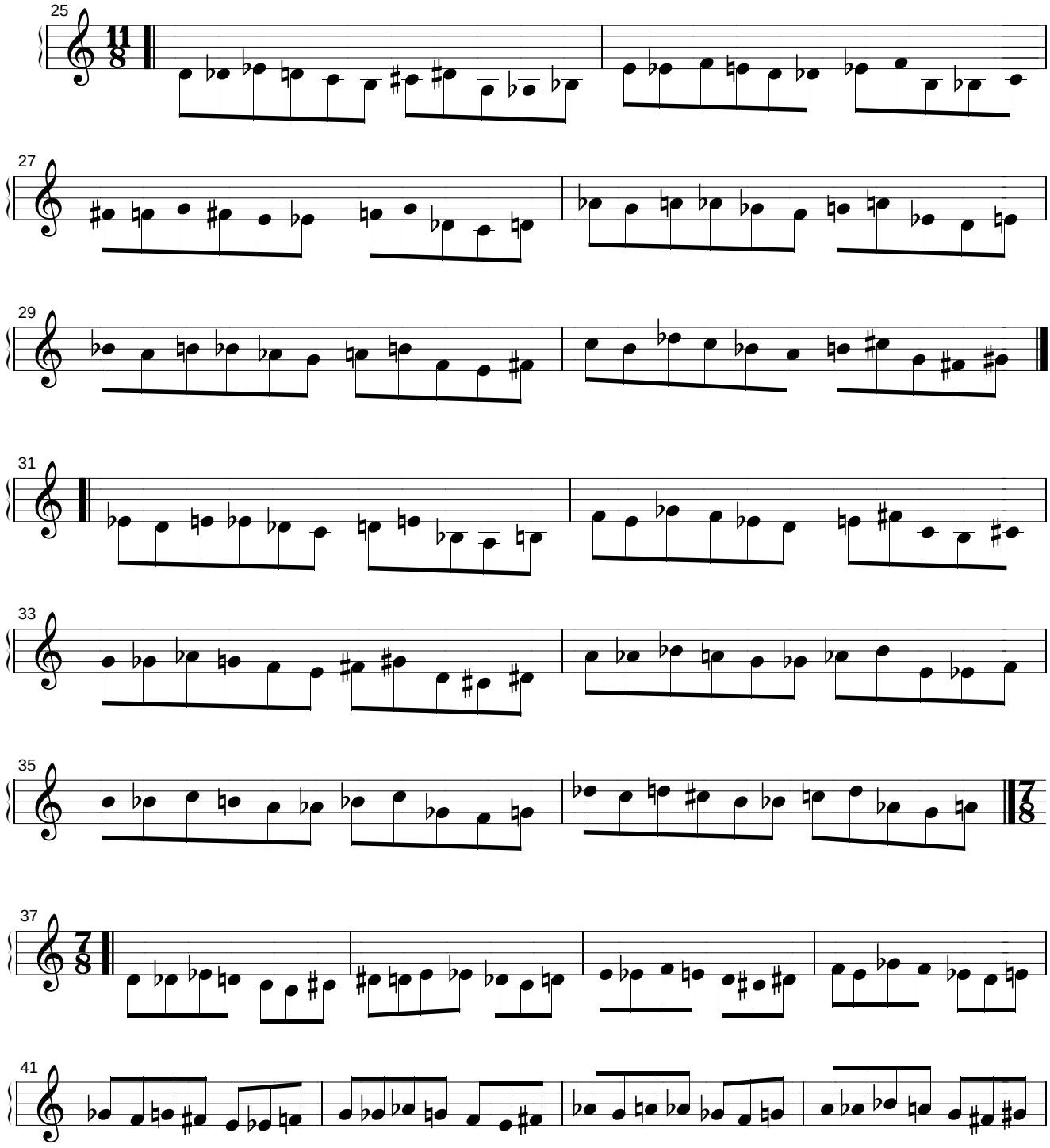
If you have perfect pitch you should practice these exercises in order to maintain your ability; especially if you are performing on pianos tuned from A-440 to A-446. After seven years of constantly working in studios with sharp tuning and night clubs where pianos are tuned flat or artifically by a tuning-machine, my sence of pitch became a minor 2nd flatter. I must sing intervals daily in order to keep my pitch at A-442.



continues

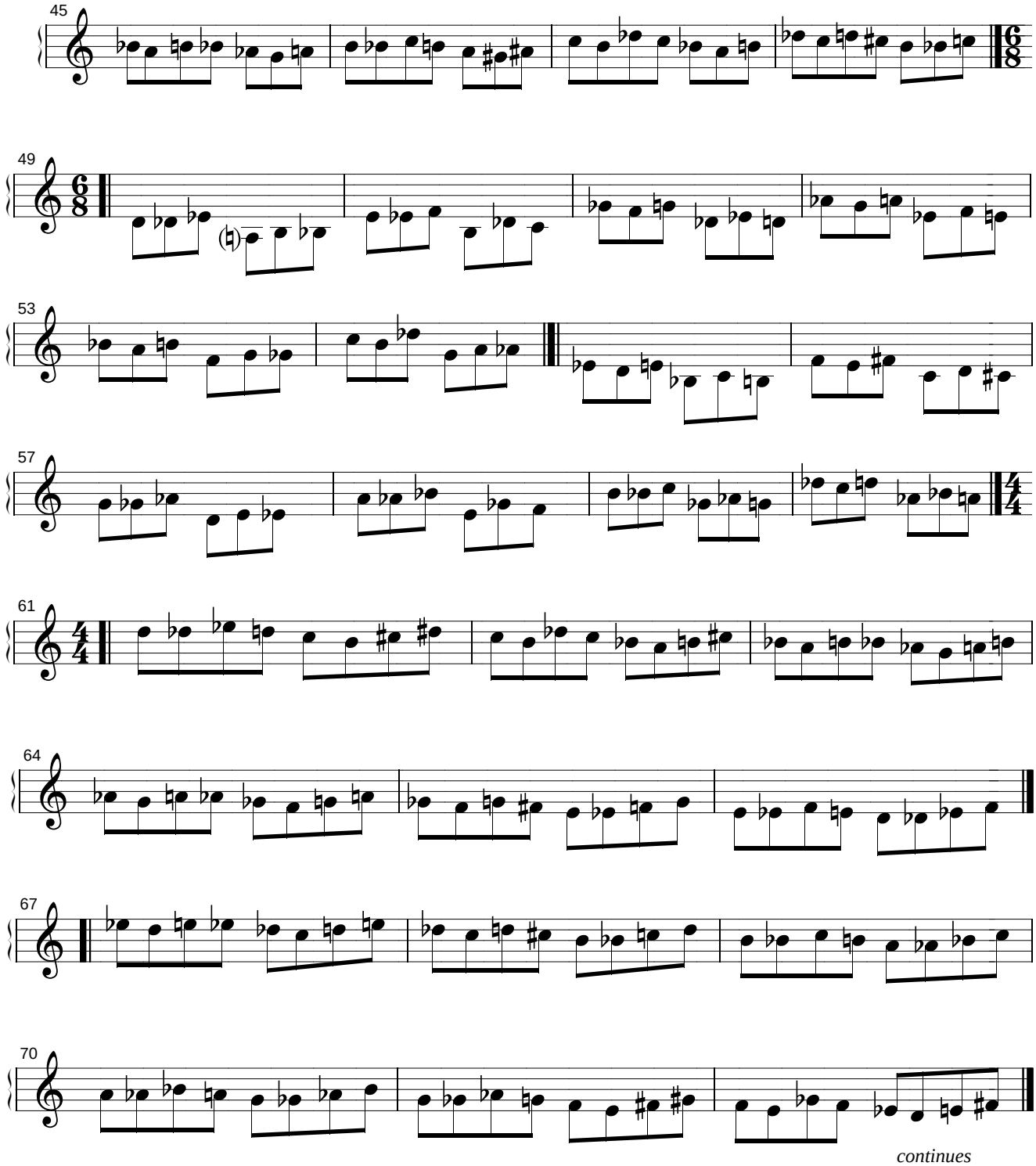
Although the objective of ear training is perfect pitch, the purpose is also to develop and reinforce the nuro circuitry between your sence of hearing (lymbic system) and the motor cortex. When it is connected, after years of experience, you'll automatically move your fingers, while singing, on an imaginary keyboard.

after singing each tone check your pitch with the piano



continues

by now you should be able to sing at least 3 measures
without checking your intonation with the piano



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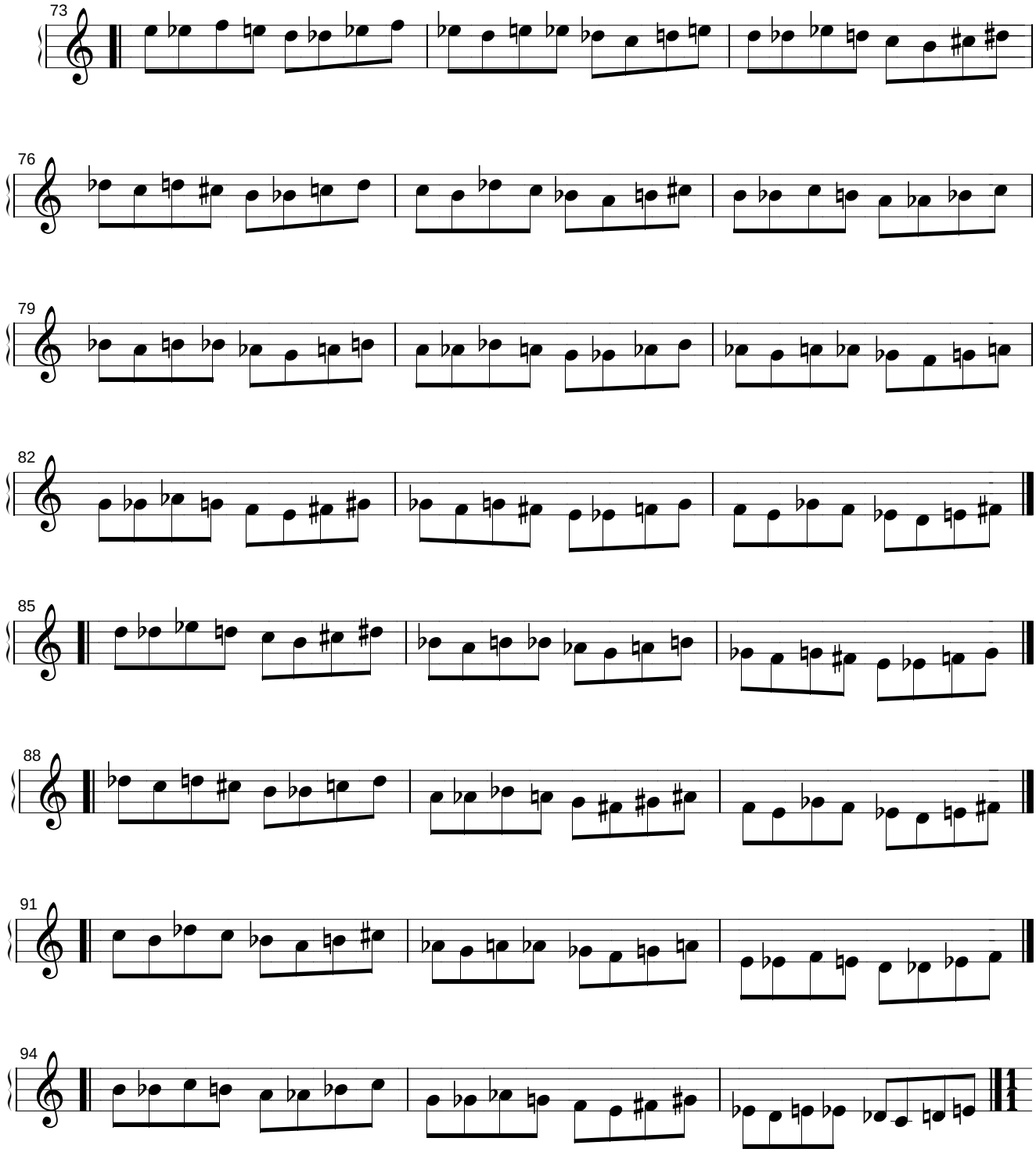

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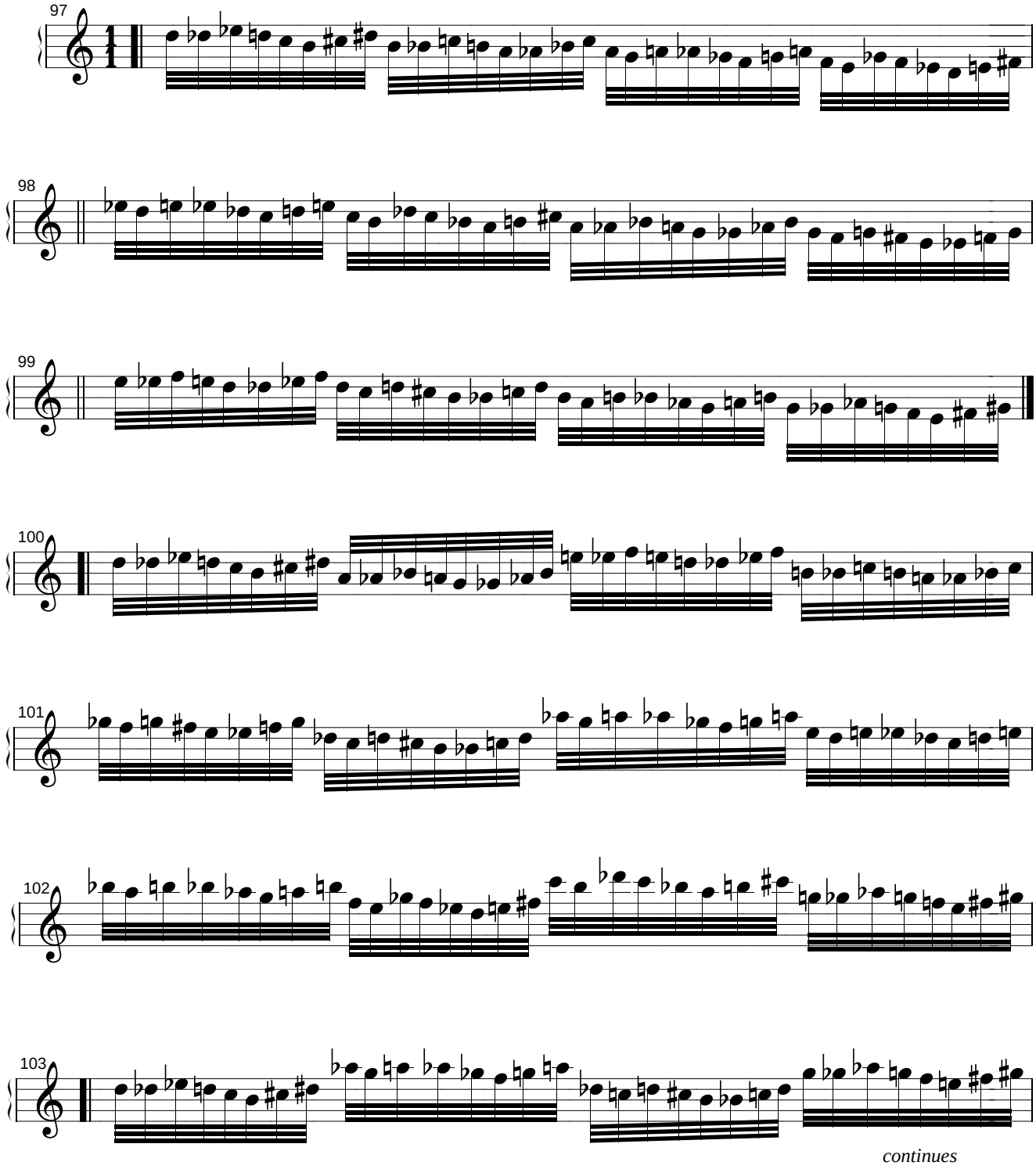

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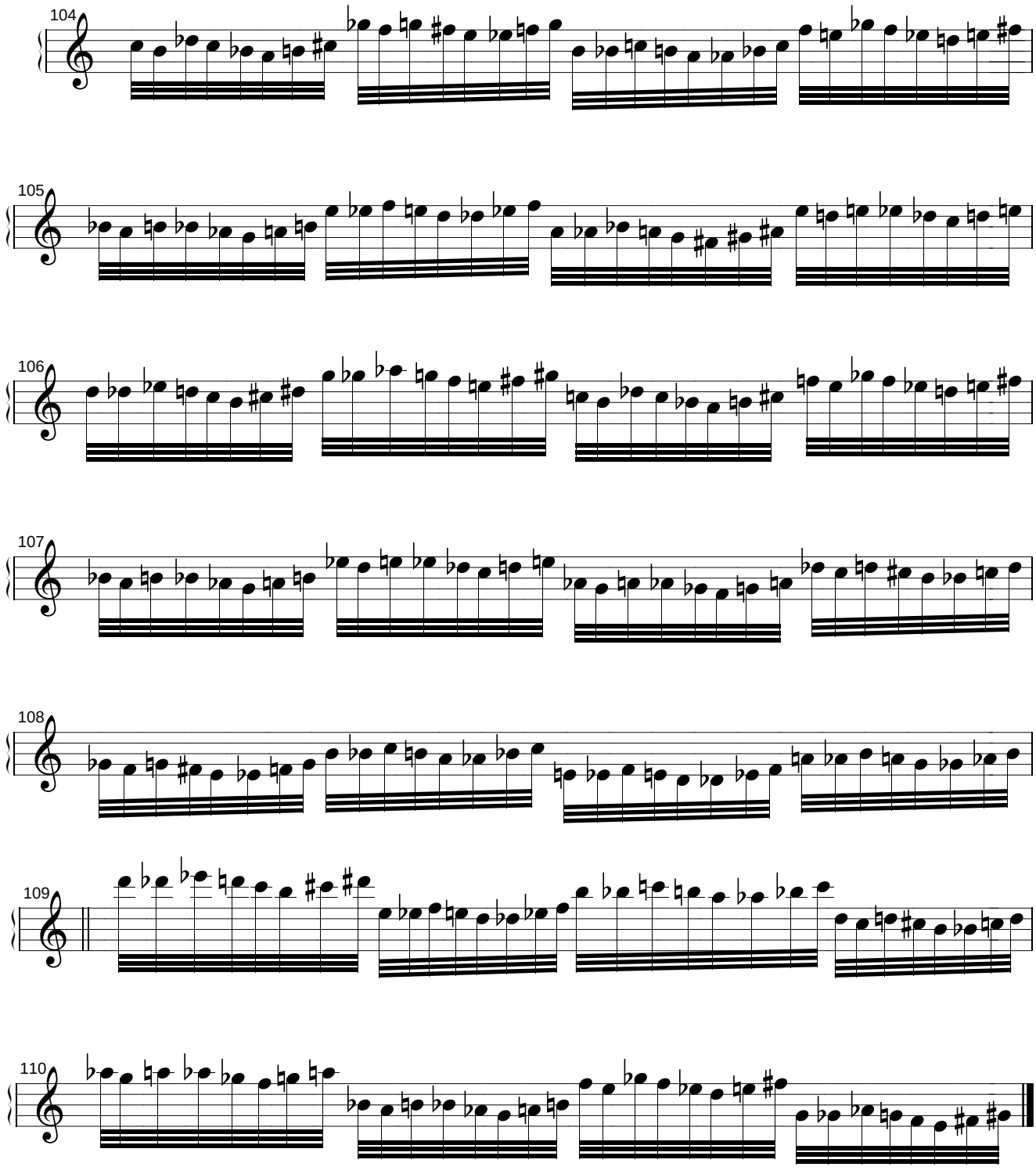
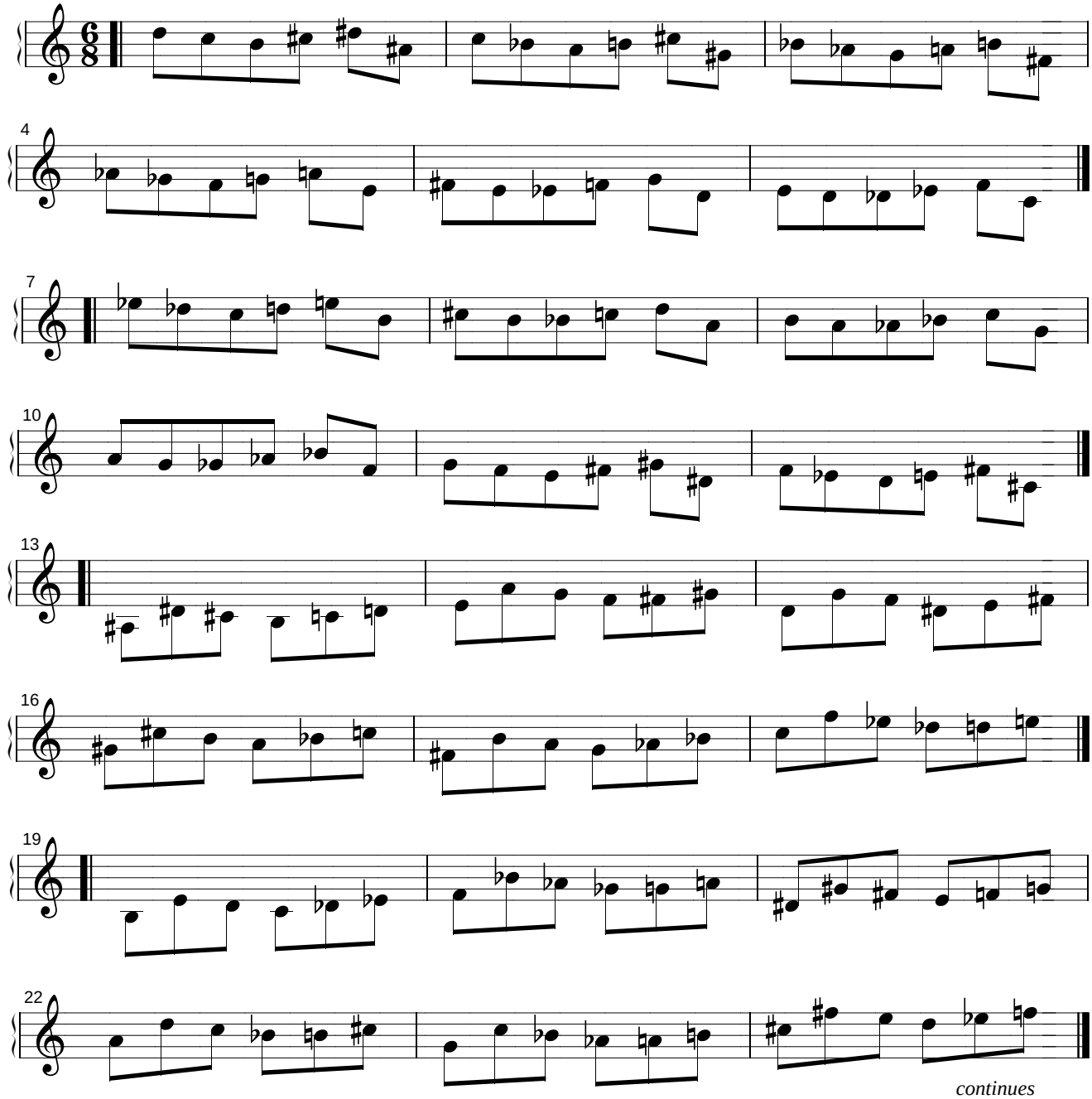

104
105
106
107
108
109
110

Reed and brass instrumentalists practice single-line patterns; likewise, pianists must work hands seperately with such patterns. When improvising hands together, your right hand is influenced by chord voicings of the left hand; read about overtones on pages 170-175 and keep the right hand solo-line independent of the dominating, lower string, vibrations in your left hand.



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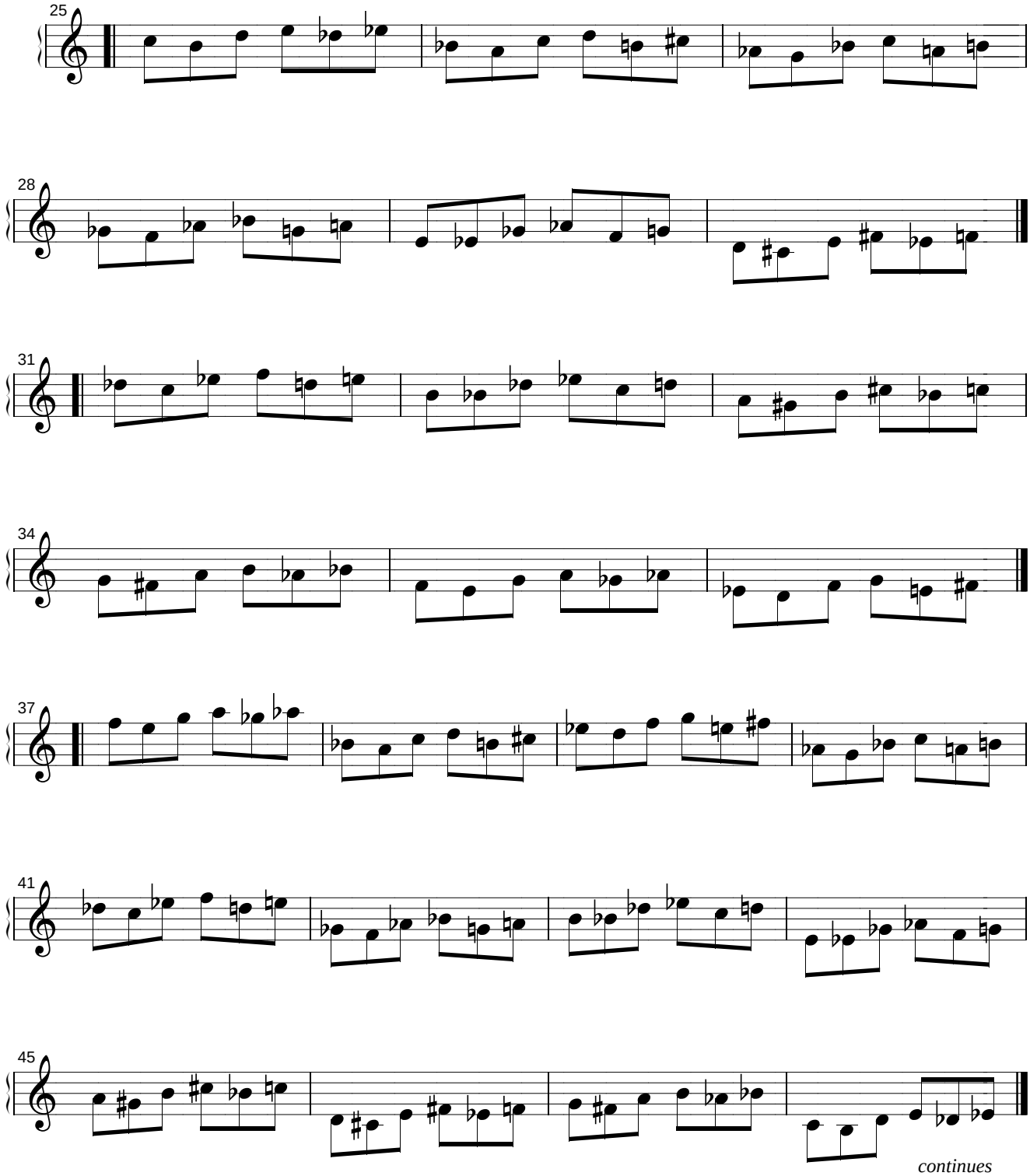

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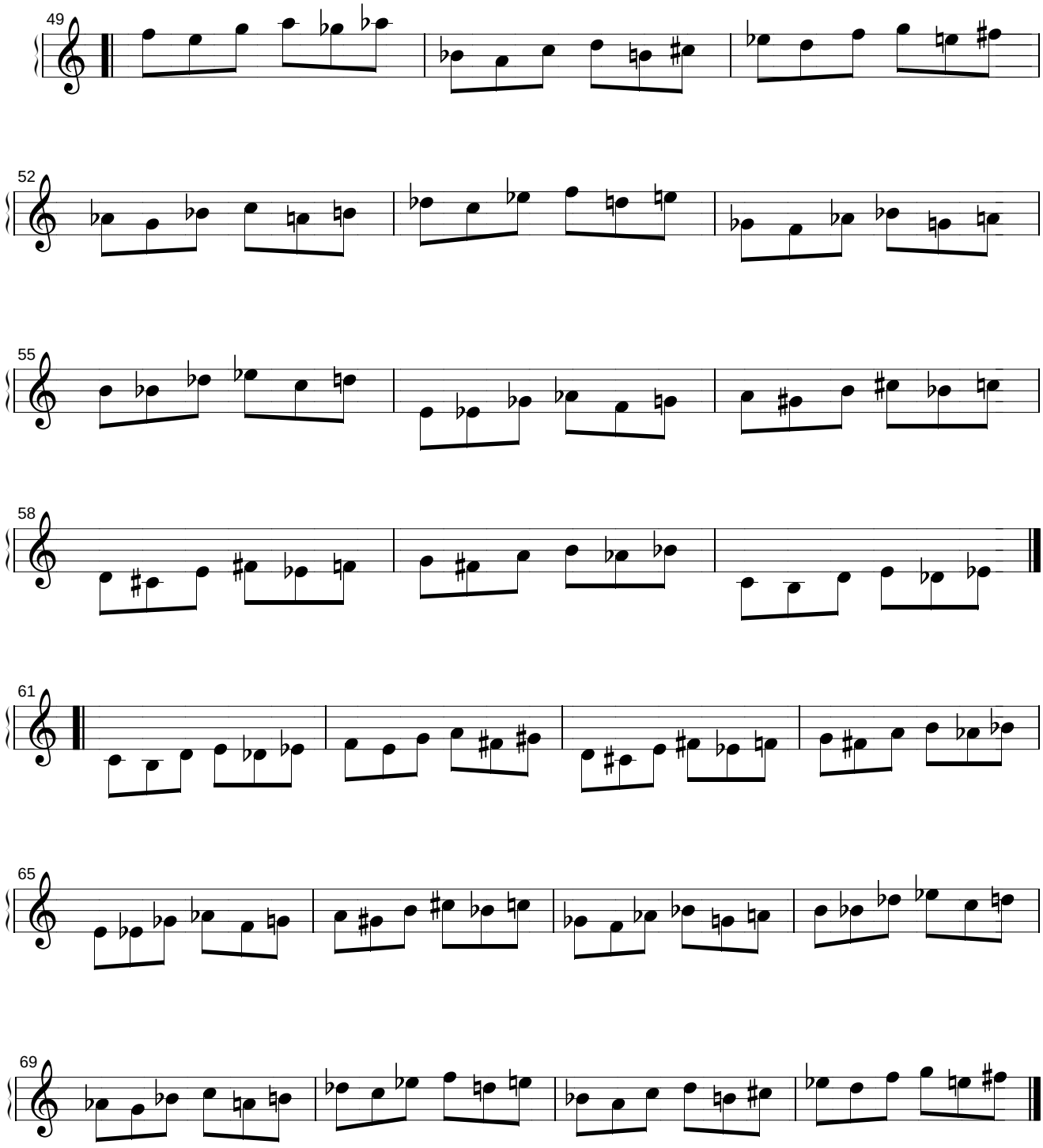

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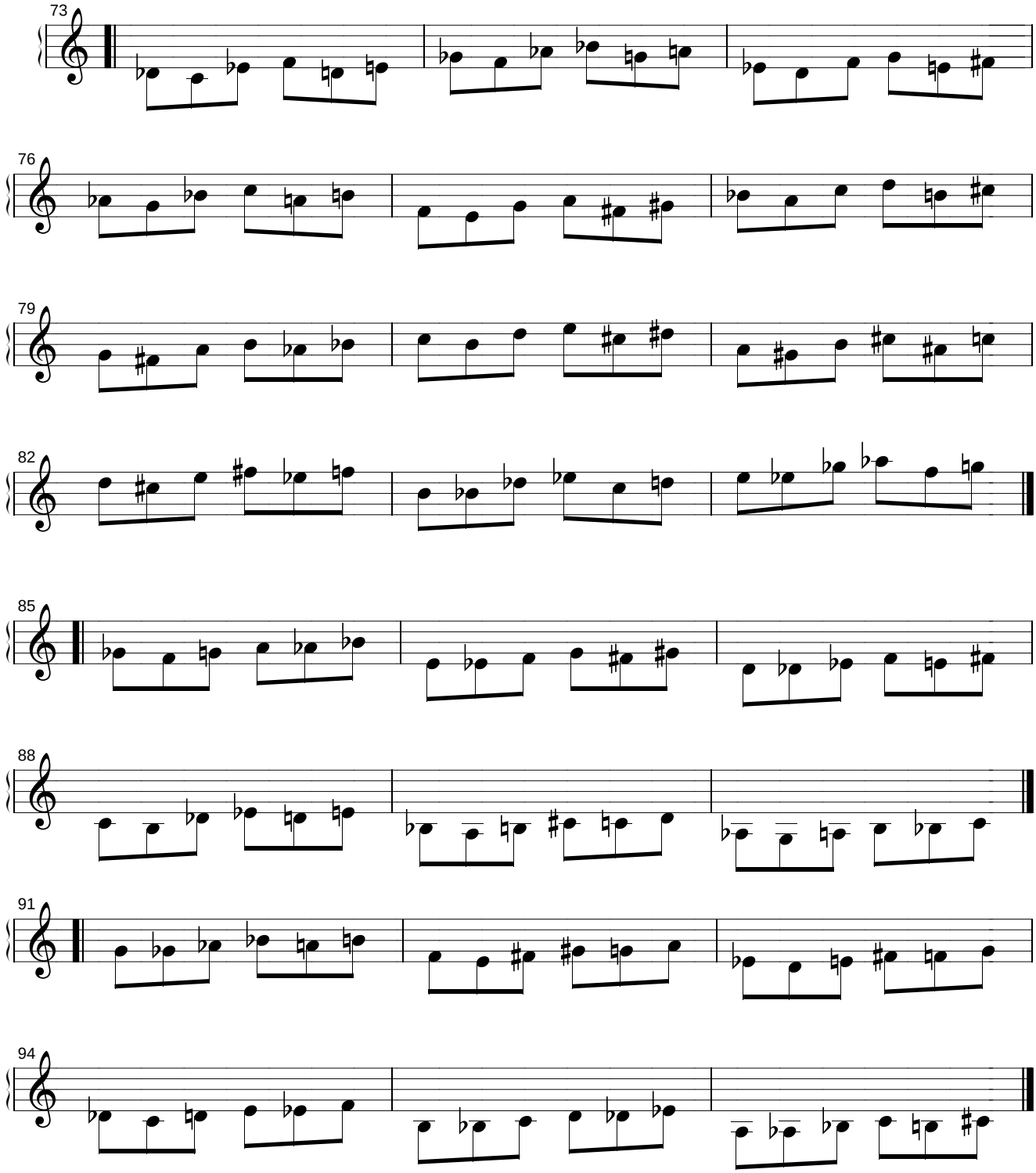
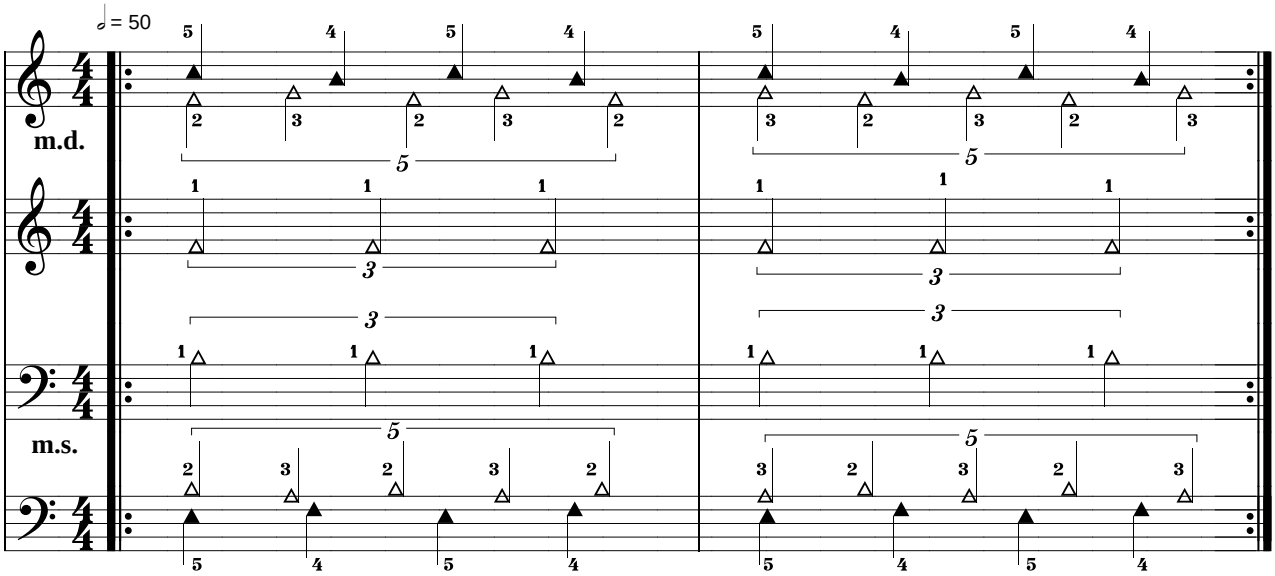

73
76
79
82
85
88
91
94

Polyrhythmic Pattern for Finger Coordination

5 against 4 & 3 simultaneously — W. Norris



This exercise should be practiced hands seperately; all voices are to be played in tempo simultaneously. However, the notation above is to discourage playing this exercise on the piano because of weight-resistance in the key-shanks; instead, execute the above on a felt covered table and only for a very few minutes. Nevertheless, I did record this pattern as a piano introduction for 'Touch of Jade,' on Elements 'n Motion SRCD 2002-2 Sunburst Recordings, Inc. **WARNING:** This exercise can cause tendonitis.

1.	execute and count aloud the 4 quarter-notes in soprano	(1st stave)	1 2 3 4	right hand
2.	execute and count aloud the 5 half-notes in alto	"	1 2 3 4 5	"
3.	execute and count aloud the 3 half-note triplets in contralto	(2nd stave)	1 2 3	"
4.	execute and count aloud the 3 half-note triplets in tenor	(3rd stave)	1 2 3	left hand
5.	execute and count aloud the 5 half-notes in baritone	(4th stave)	1 2 3 4 5	"
6.	execute and count aloud the 4 quarter-notes in bass	"	1 2 3 4	"
7.	execute, count aloud and sing the 5 half-notes: C E G Bb C /' D C Bb G E *			both hands
8.	execute, count aloud and sing the 4 quarter-notes: C E G Bb / C Bb G E *			"
9.	execute, count aloud and sing the 3 half-note triplets: C E G / Bb G E			"
10.	execute and sing a melody in 5/4/ meter			"
11.	execute and sing a melody in 4/4 meter			"
12.	execute and sing a melody in 3/4 meter			"

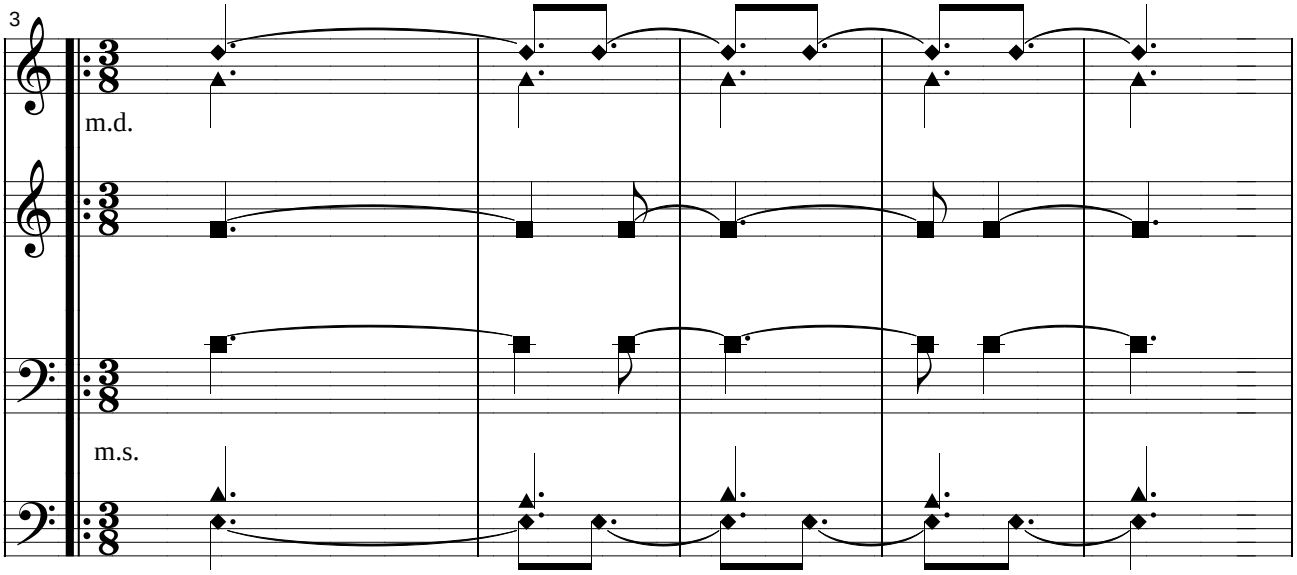
---

* 7. The intervals, C E G Bb C ascend to the diagonal-slash and then descend with D C Bb G E.
* 8. The intervals, C E G Bb ascend to the diagonal-slash and then descend with C Bb G E.

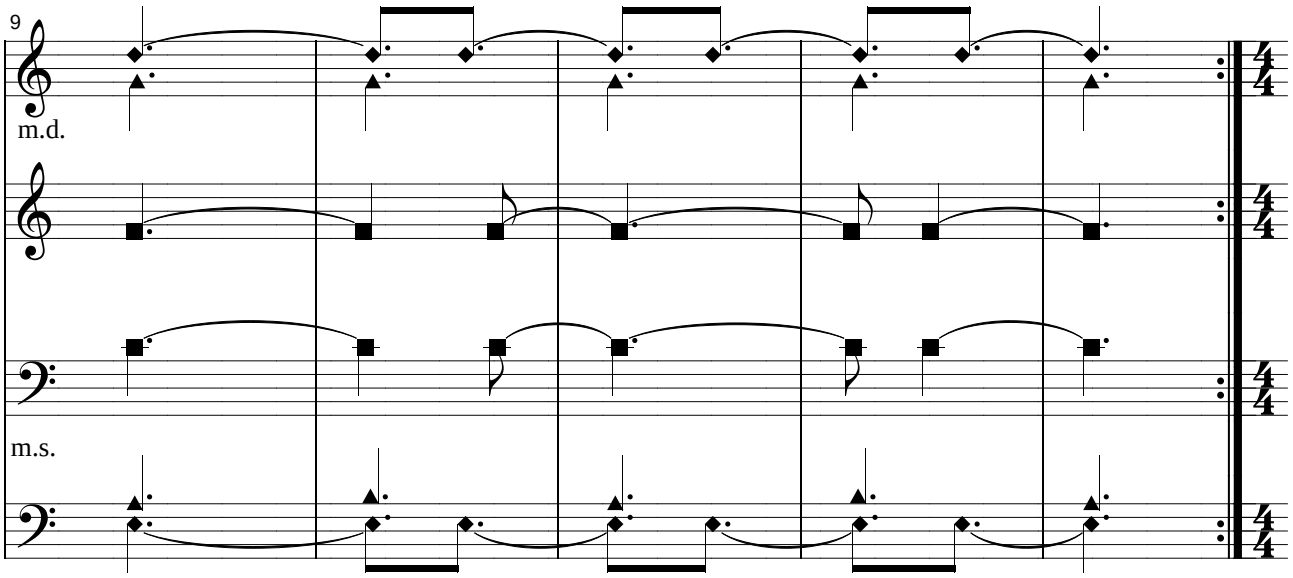
Even more difficult than the above, is to execute the left hand while rotating your right foot and right hand in contrary motion; next, execute the right hand while rotating your left foot and left hand in contrary motion: next, instead of circles, try figure-eights (hand and foot) in contrary motion.

continues

The rhythmic notation for this exercise, in 3/8 meter, is nearly correct but as an approximation, it will condition you for the correctly notated Polyrhythmic exercise, in 4/4, on the preceeding page; be sure and count aloud. The mathematical problem in notating this pattern is that 5/4 is divisible by 4/4 but not 3/4; as a solution, I divided 4 by 3.



MRI morphometry-technology shows within minutes, the changes occuring in the motor cortex when practicing simple five-finger exercises; MRI has never examined the complexity of this polyrhymic example.



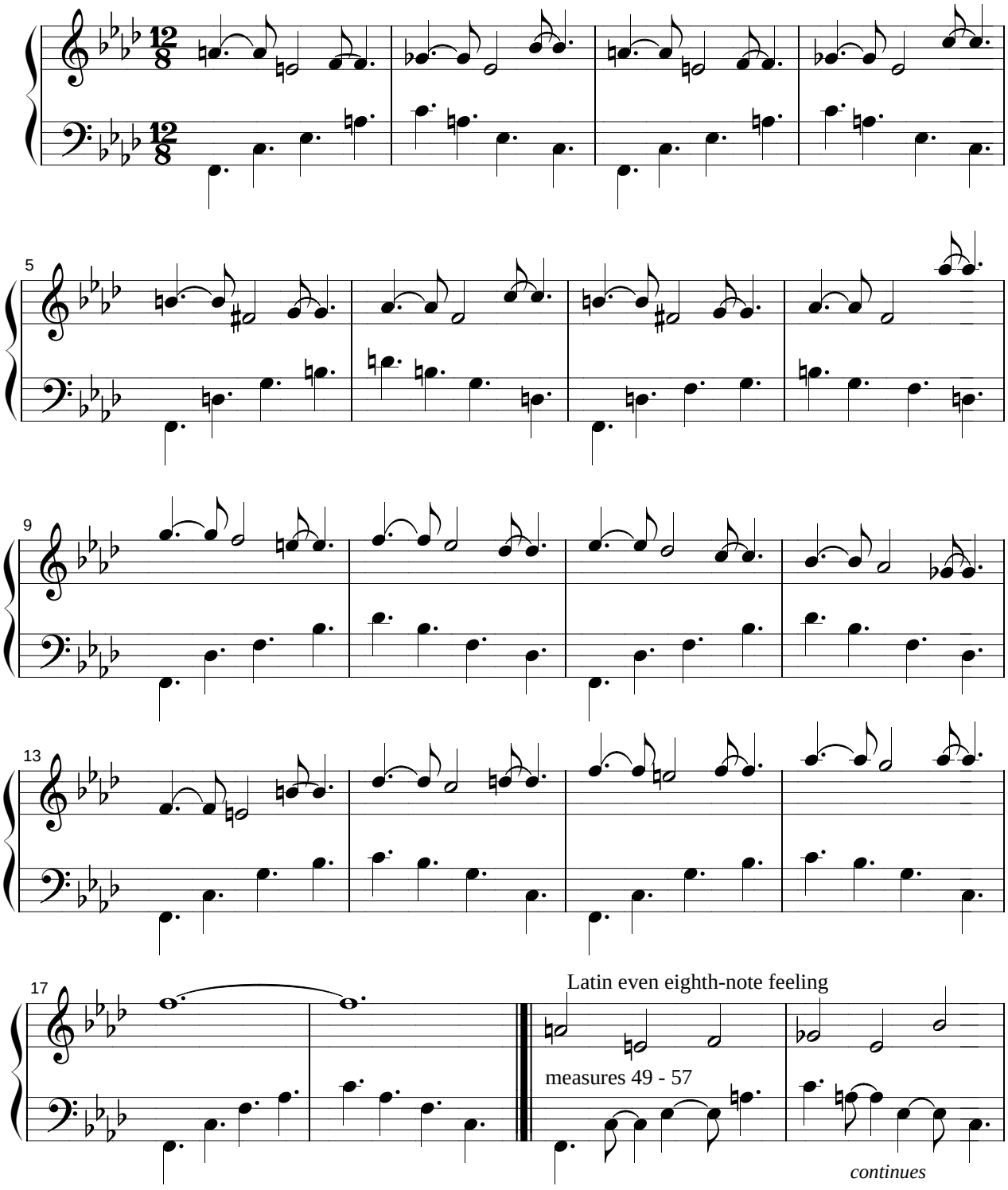
WARNING: this exercise can cause tendonitis

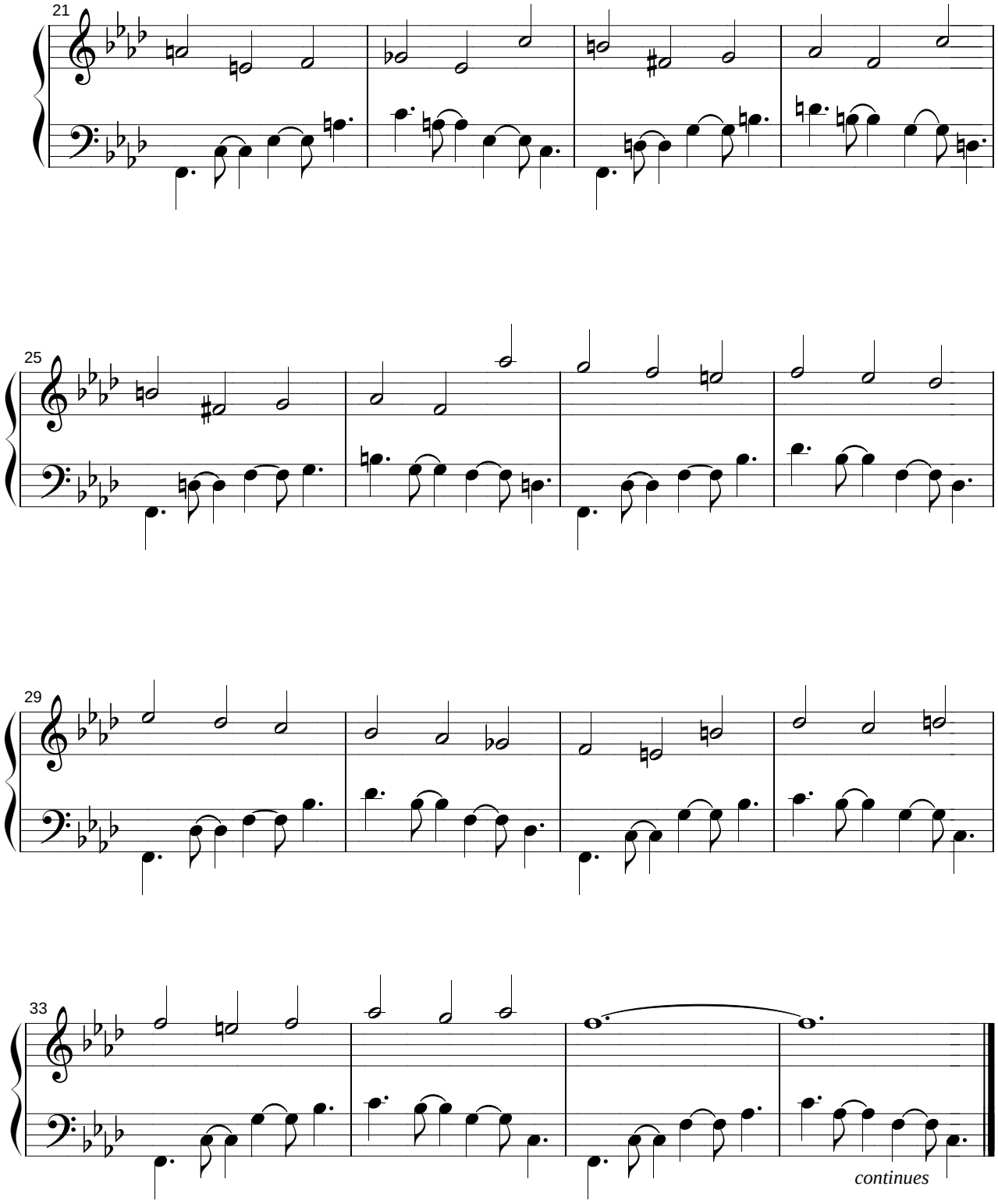
F. Chopin Etude opus posthumous no.2

measures 49-57

F. Chopin

African triplet feeling

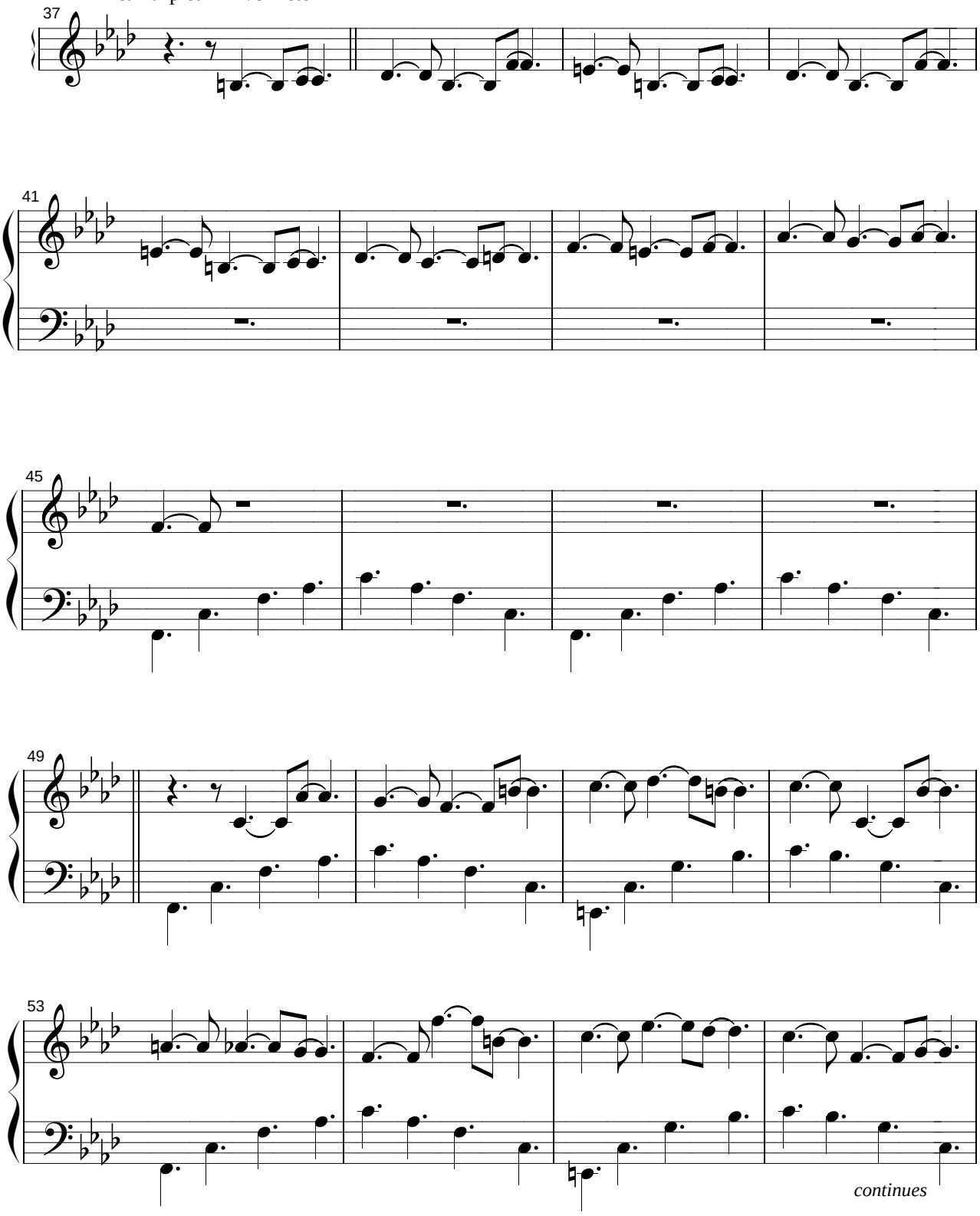


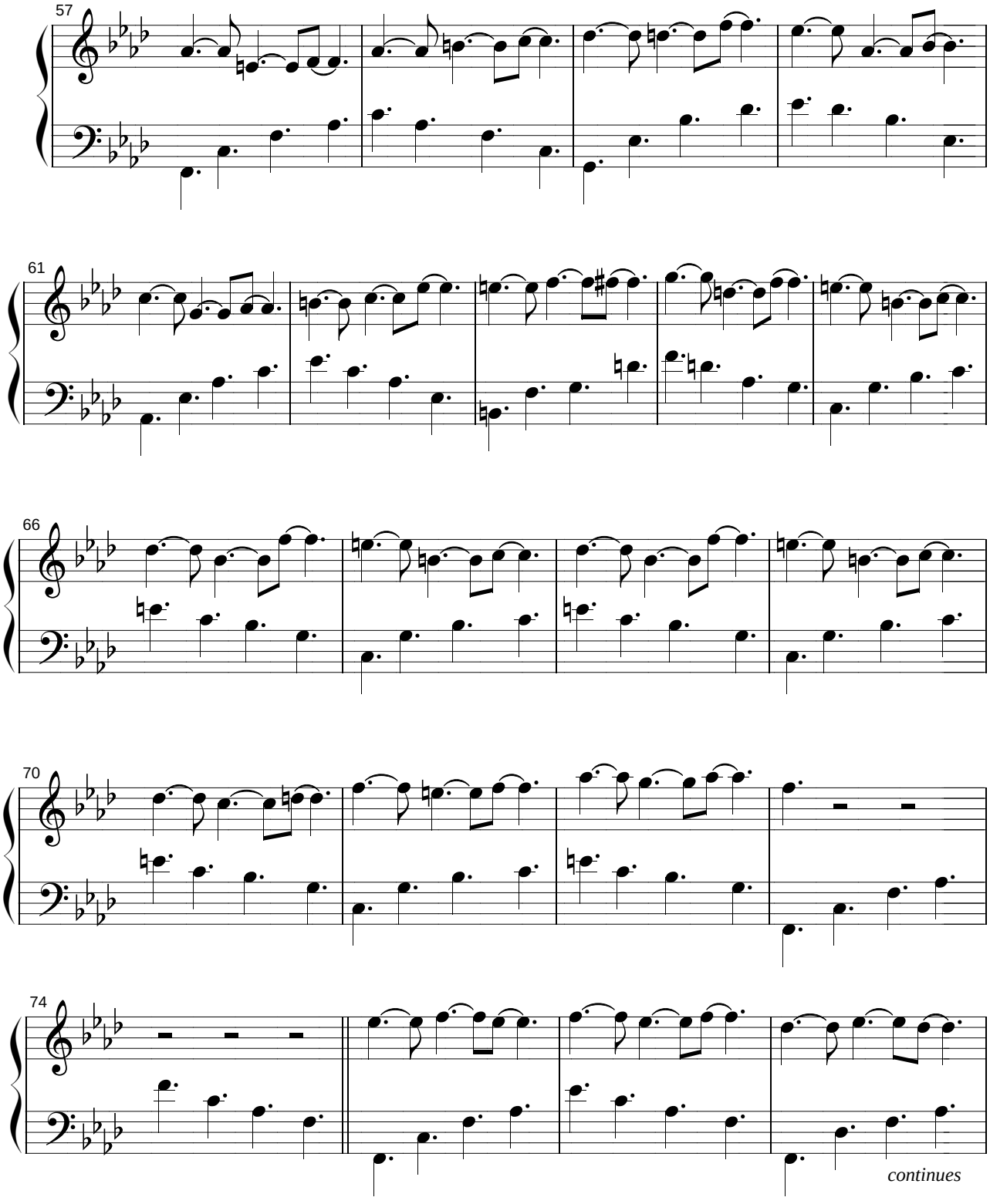


continues

Chopin Etude opus posthumous no. 2

African triplet in 12/8 meter





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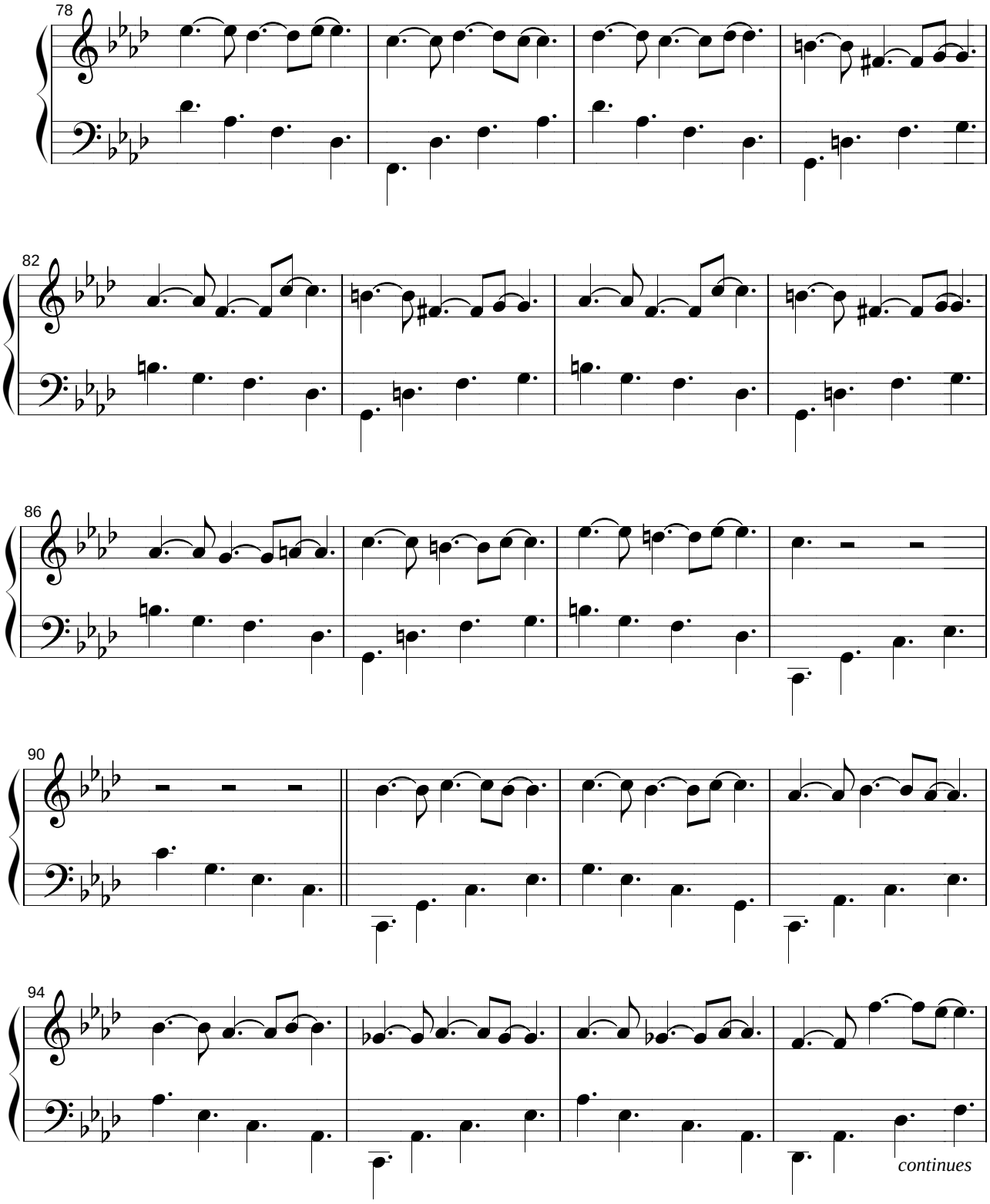
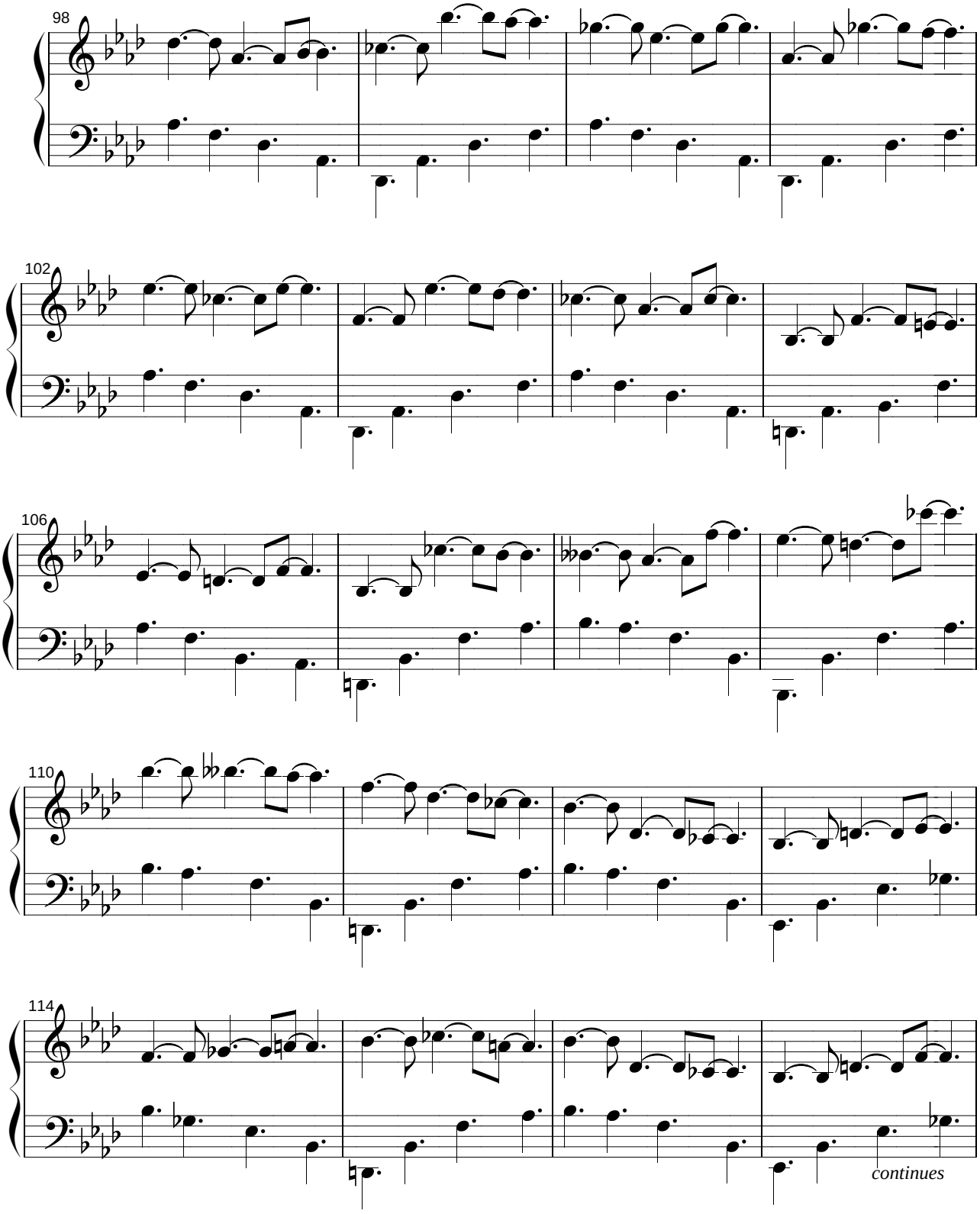
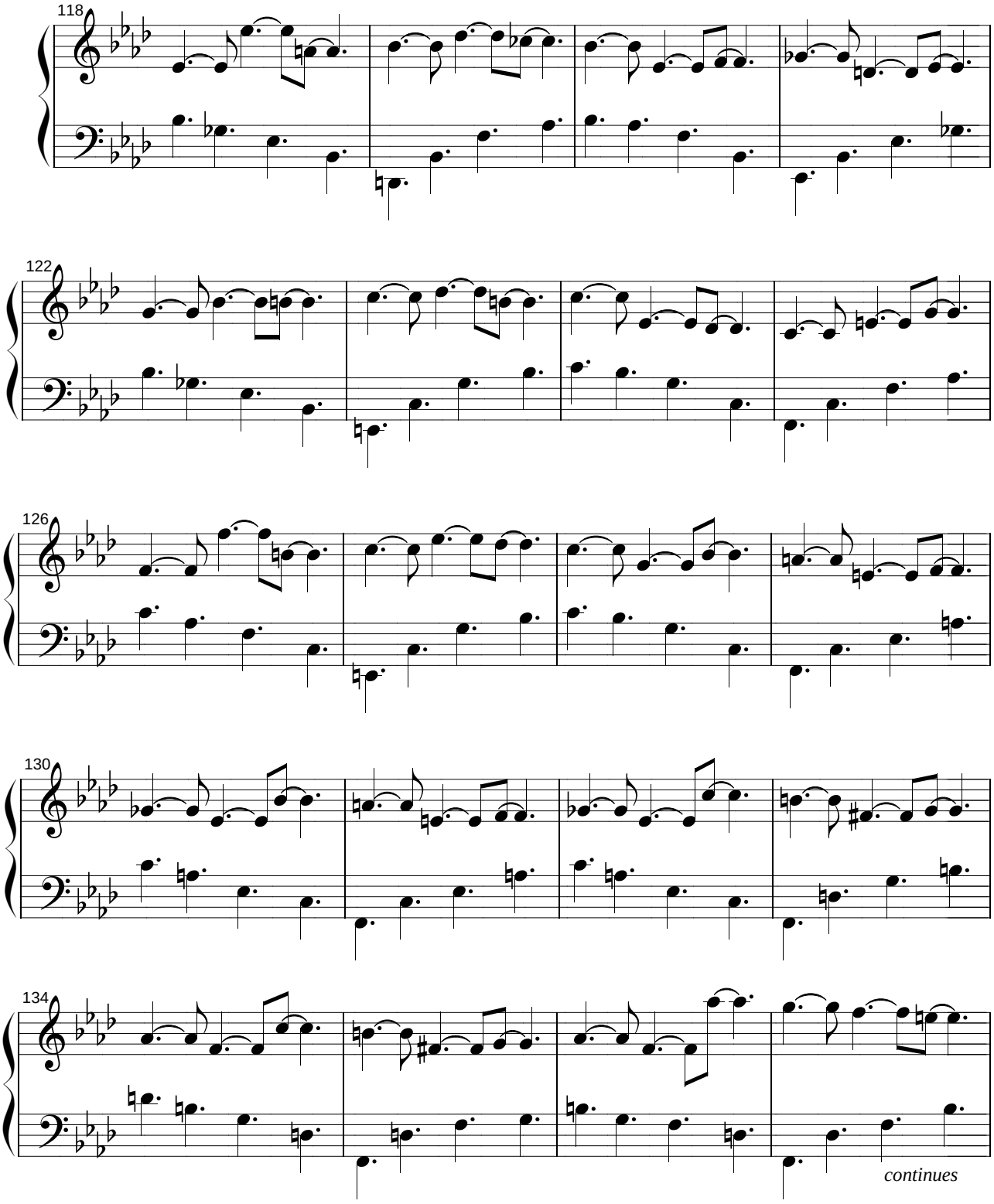
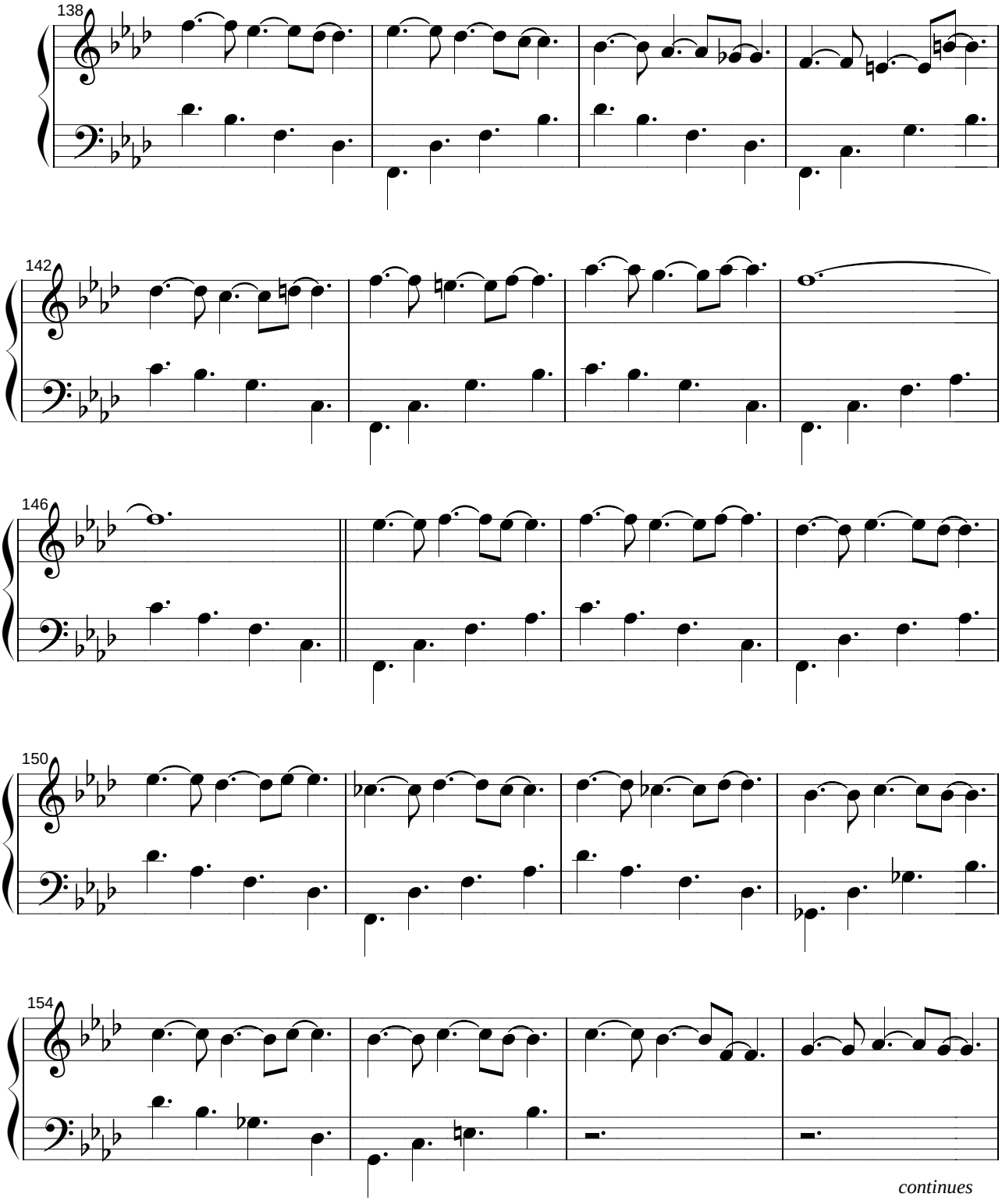

78
82
86
90
94
continues


98
102
106
110
114
continues


118
122
126
130
134
continues



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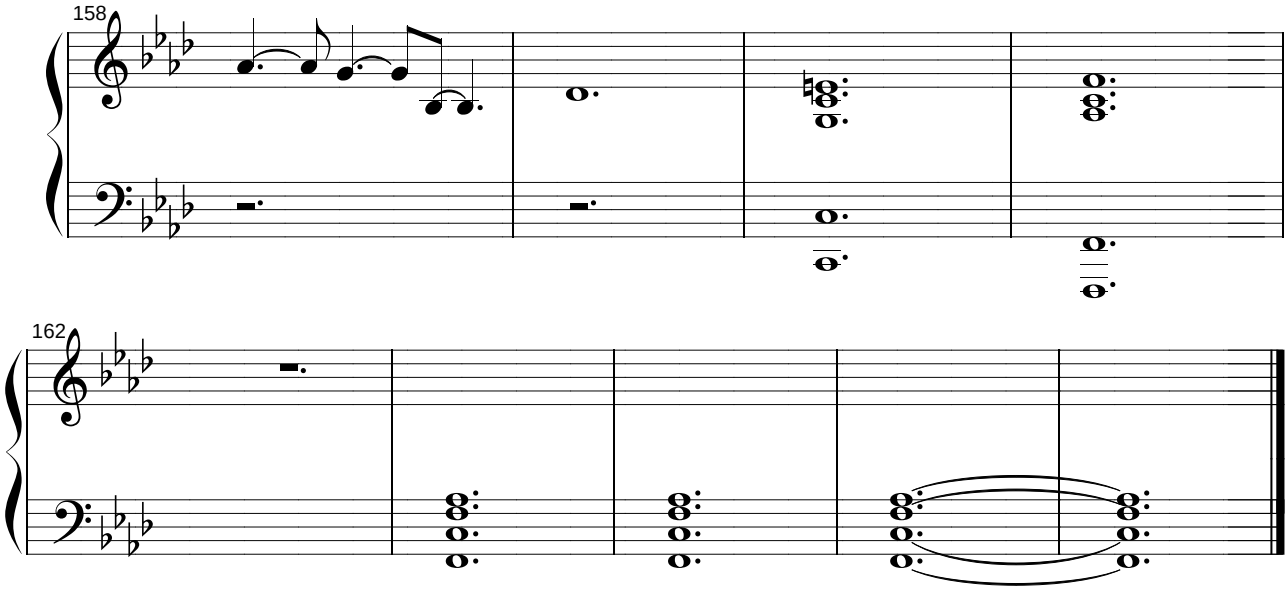
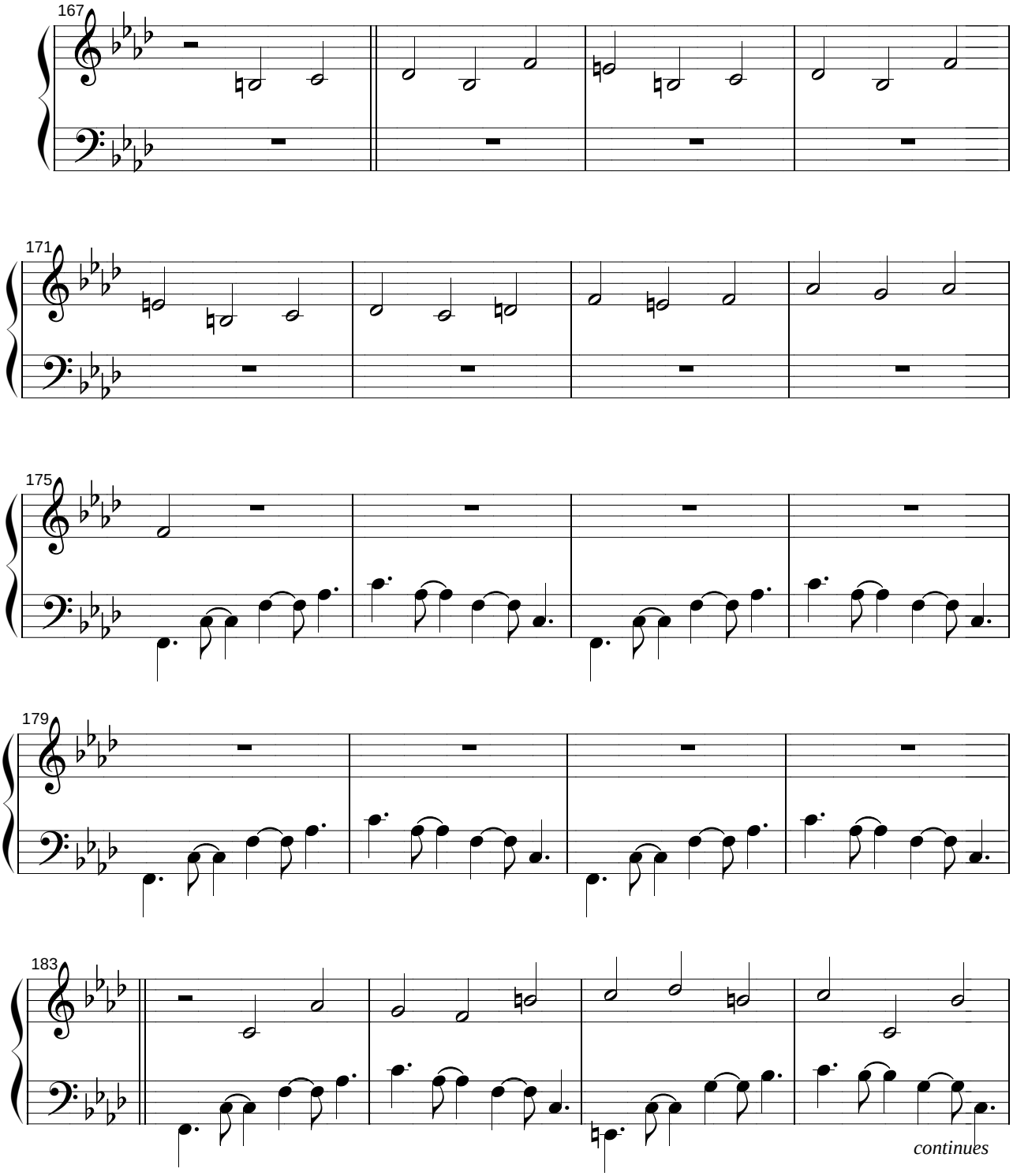
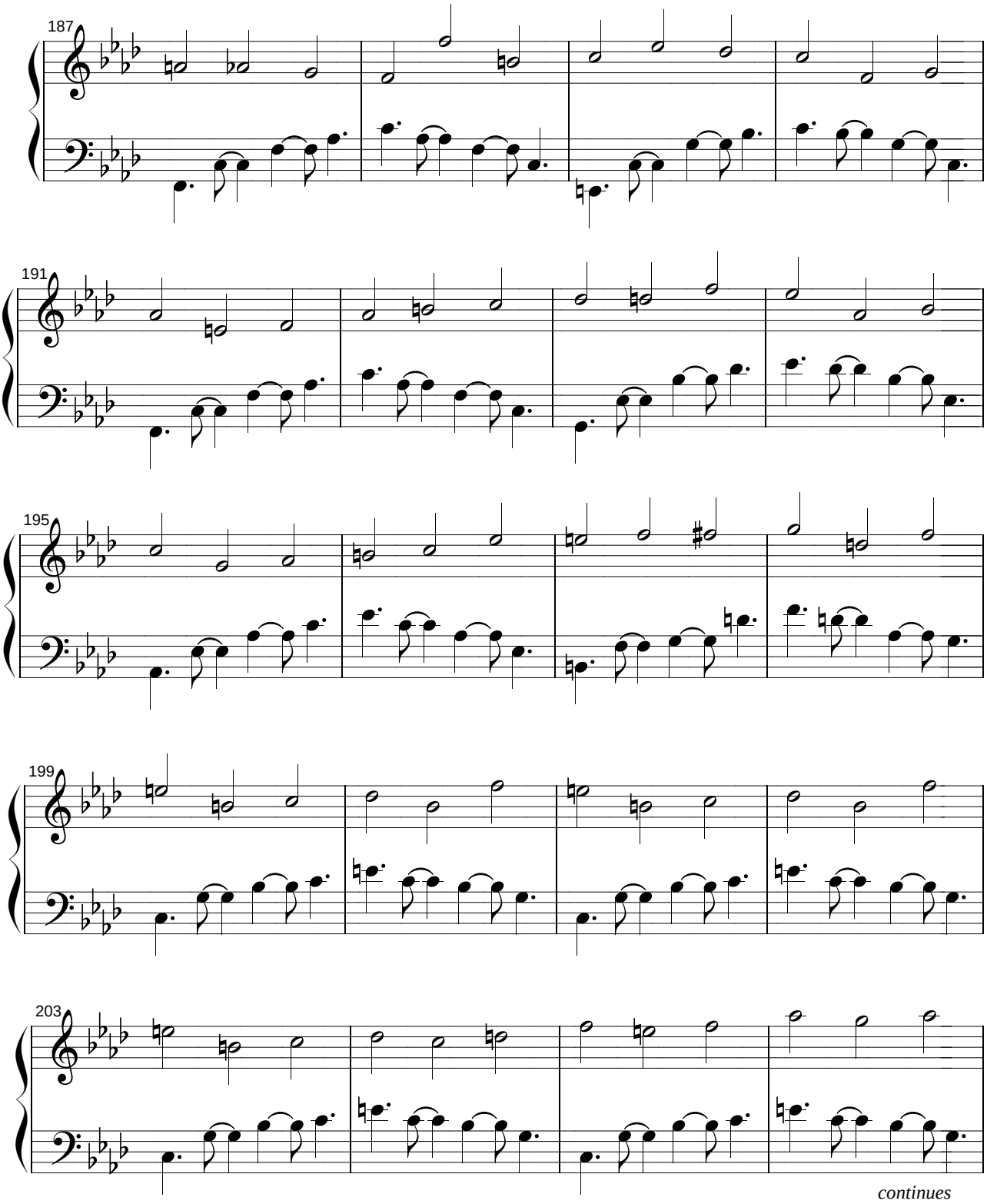

158
162

F. Chopin Etude opus posthumus no. 2

in 12/8 Latin feeling





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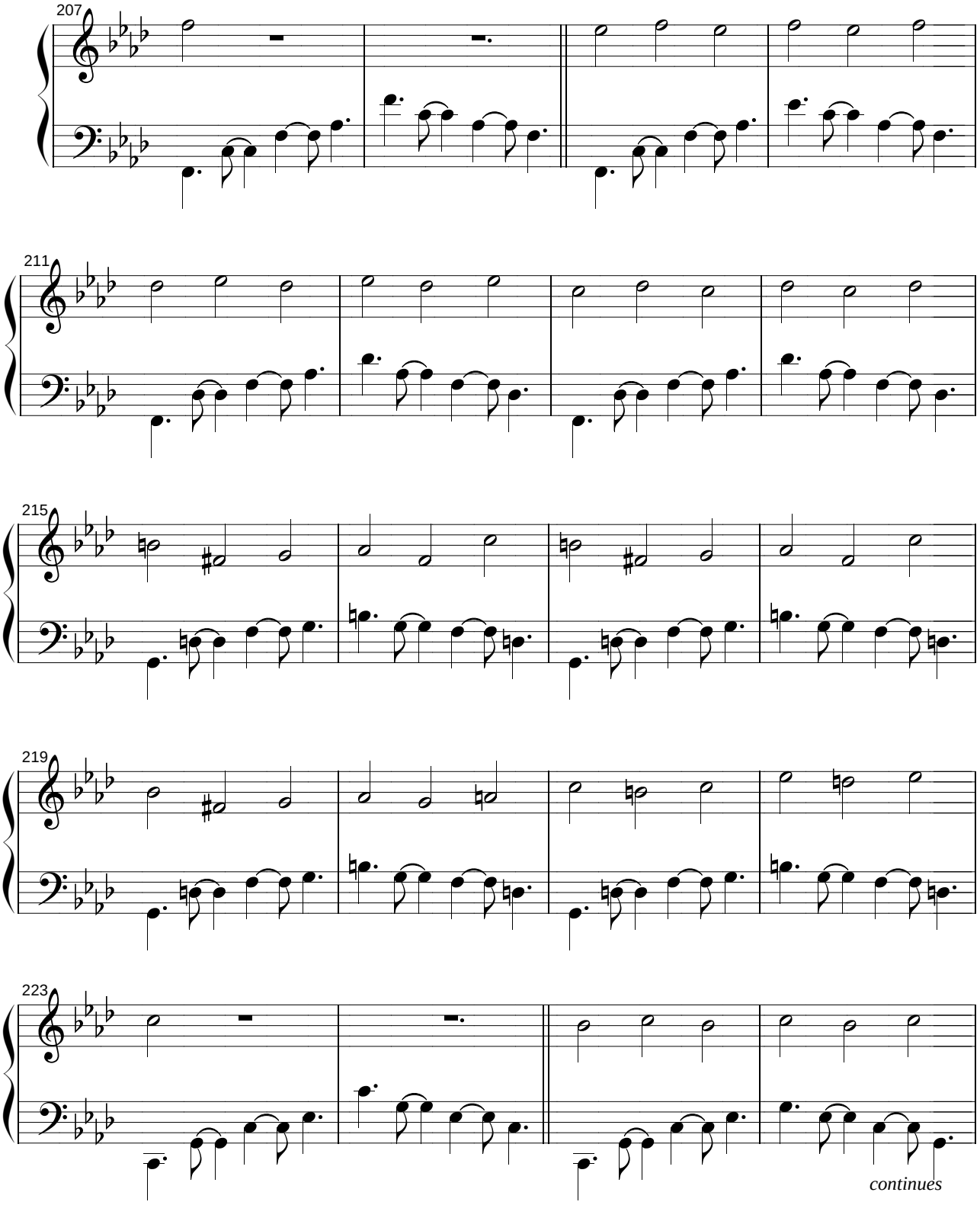

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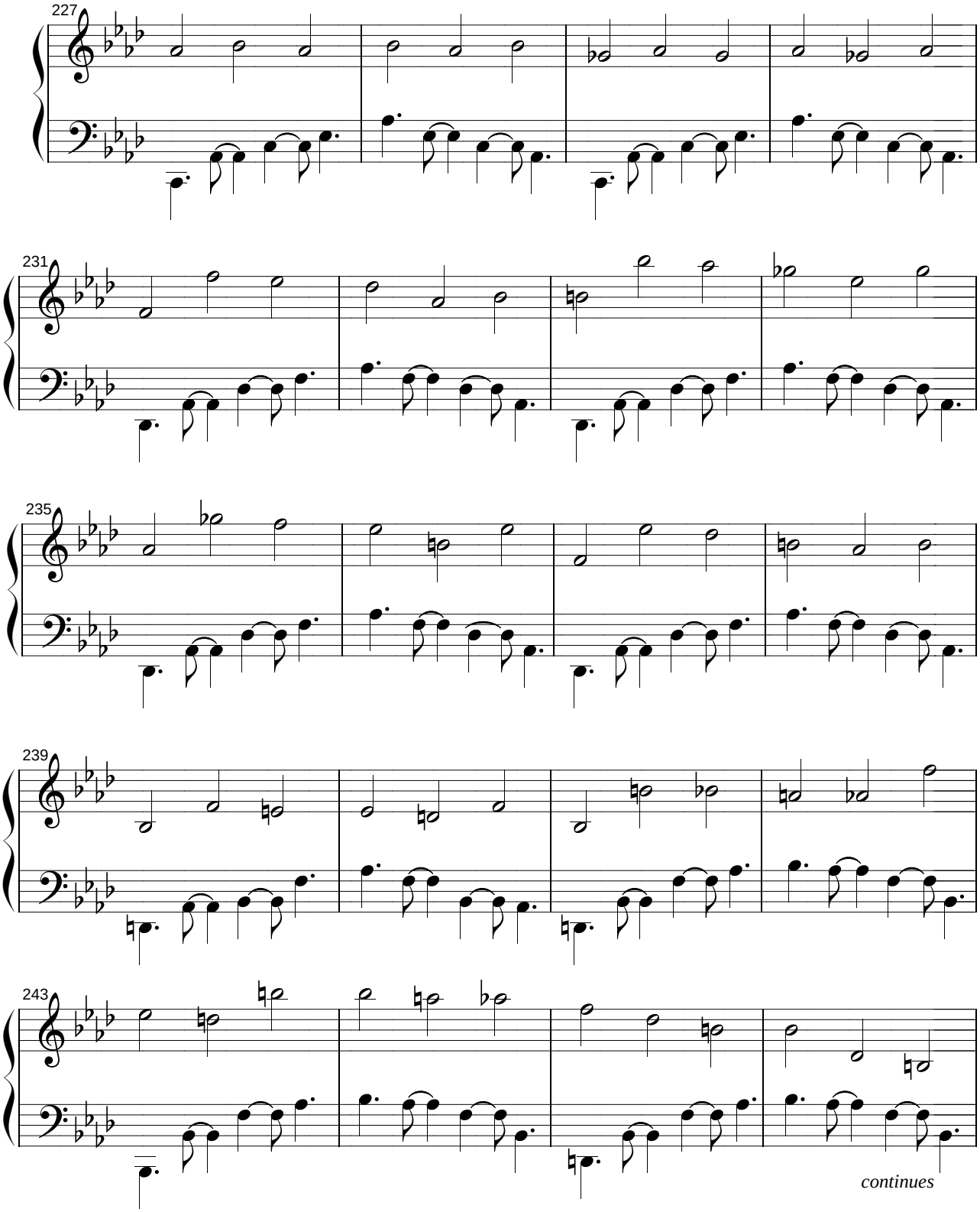

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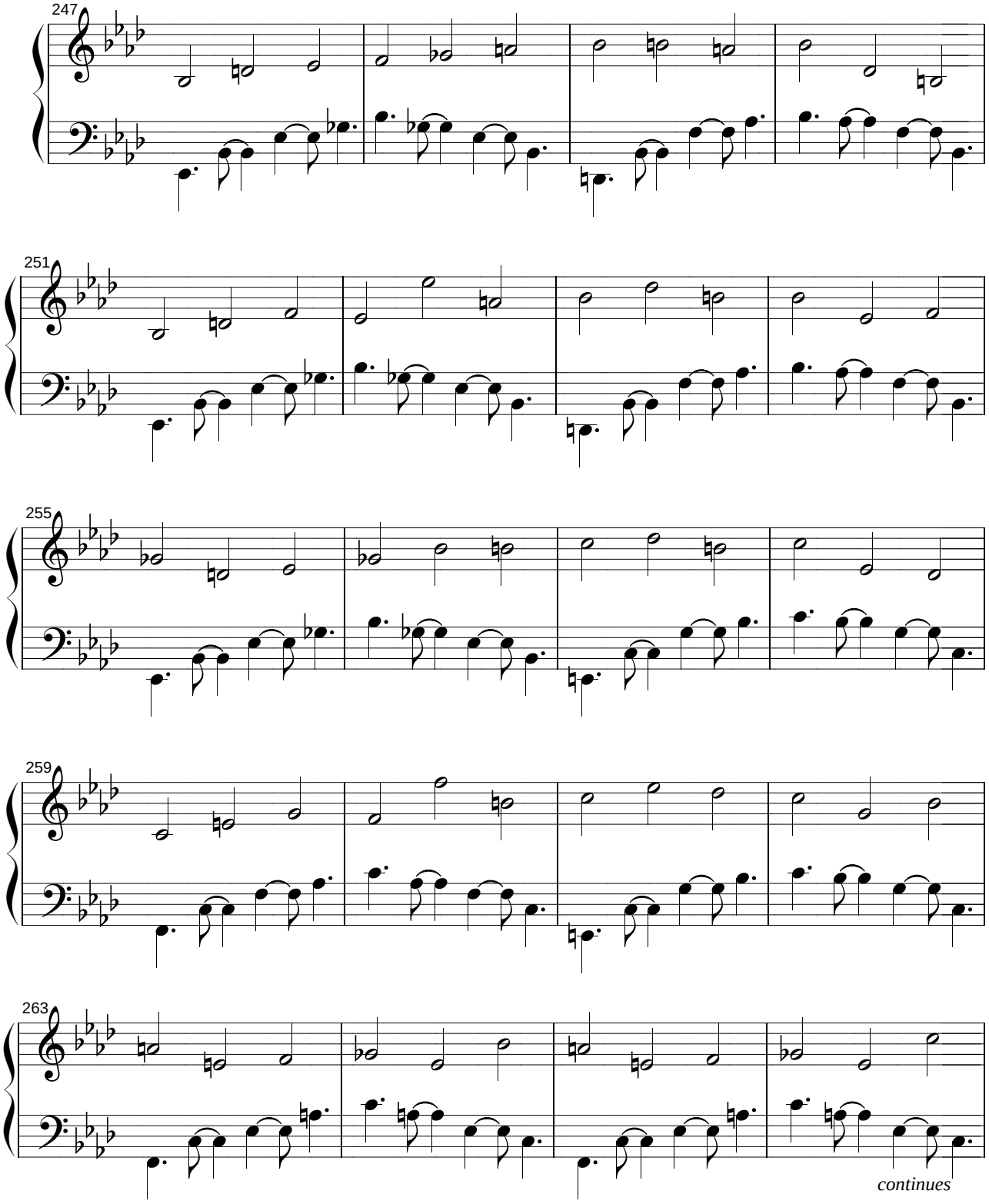

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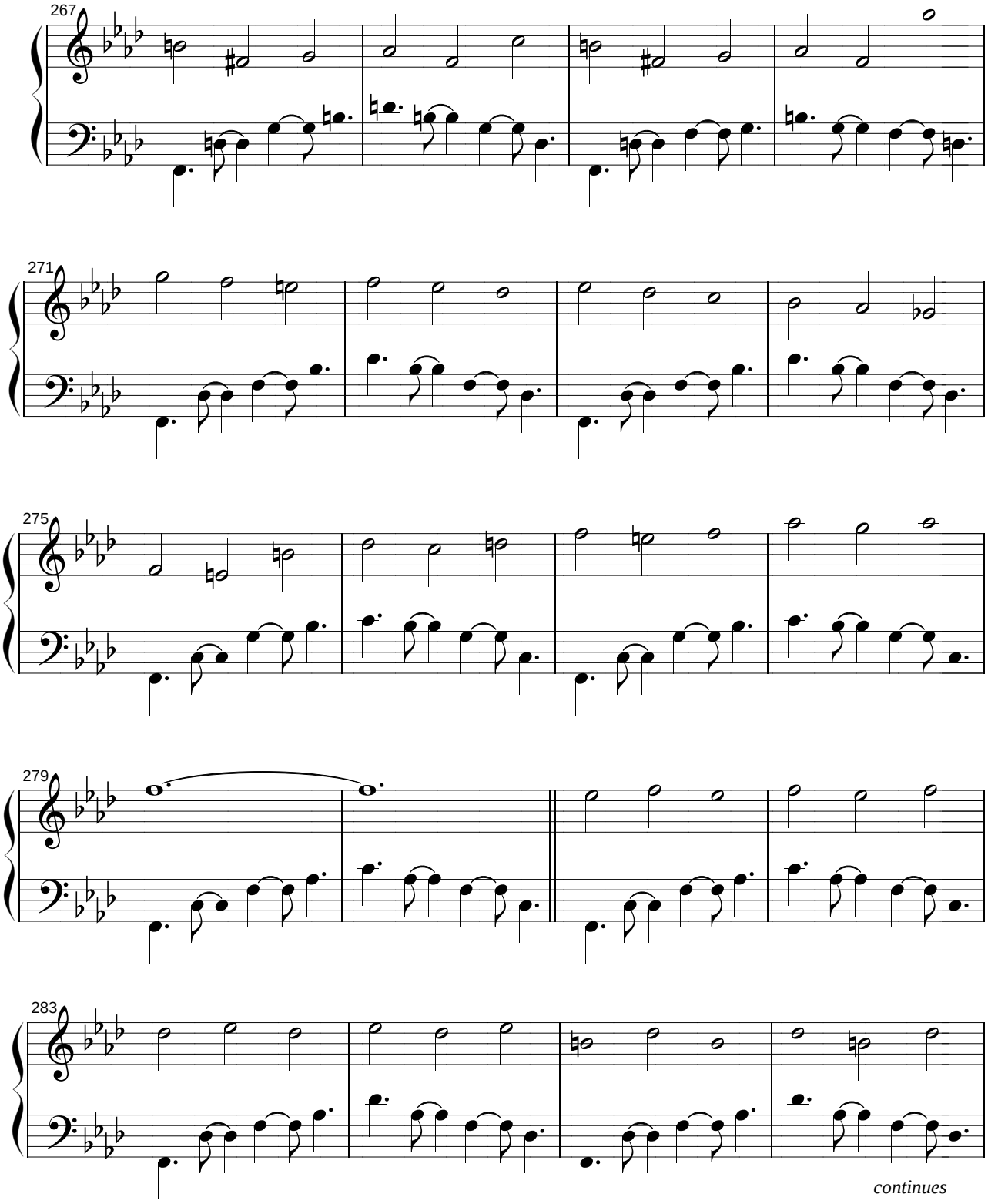

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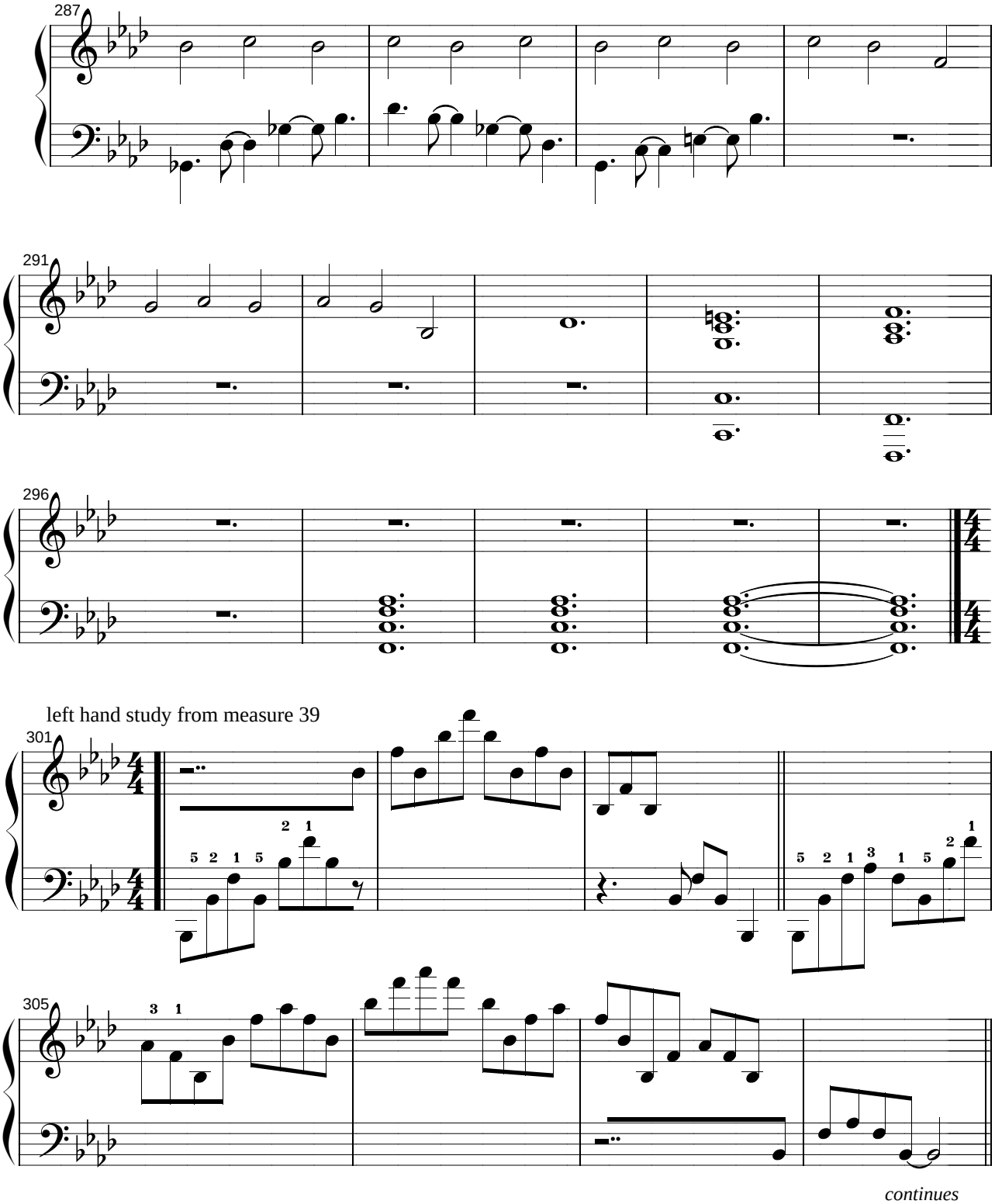

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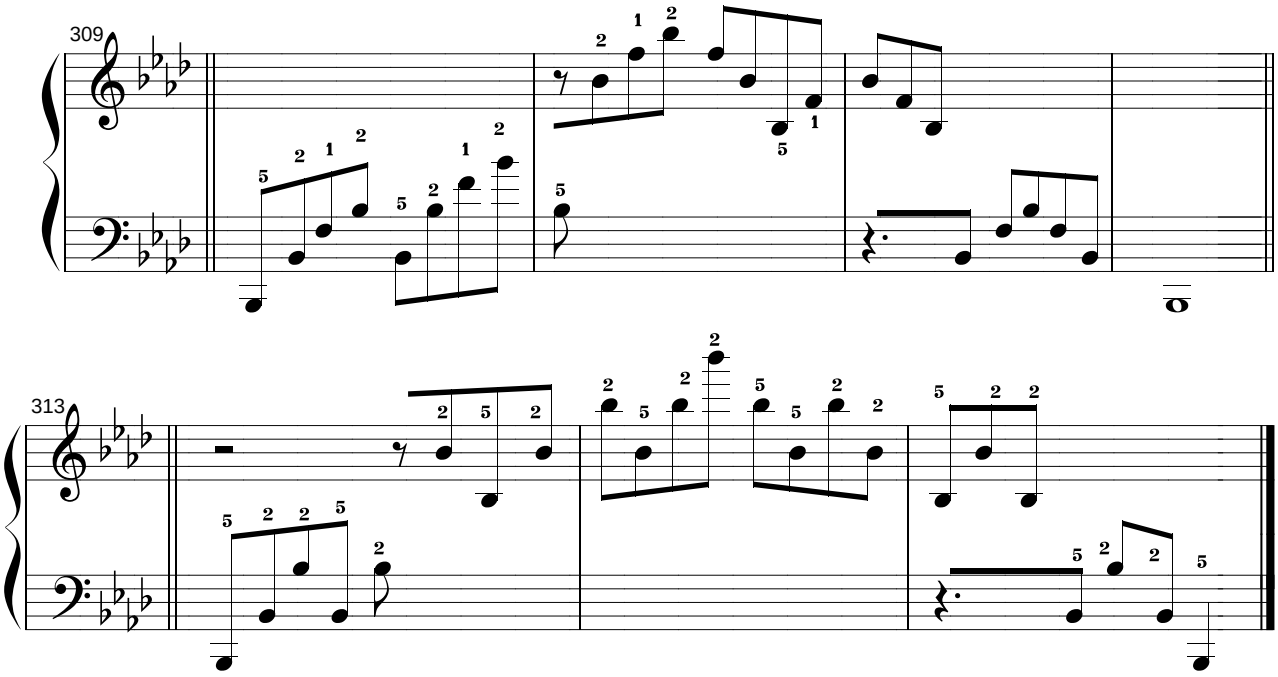
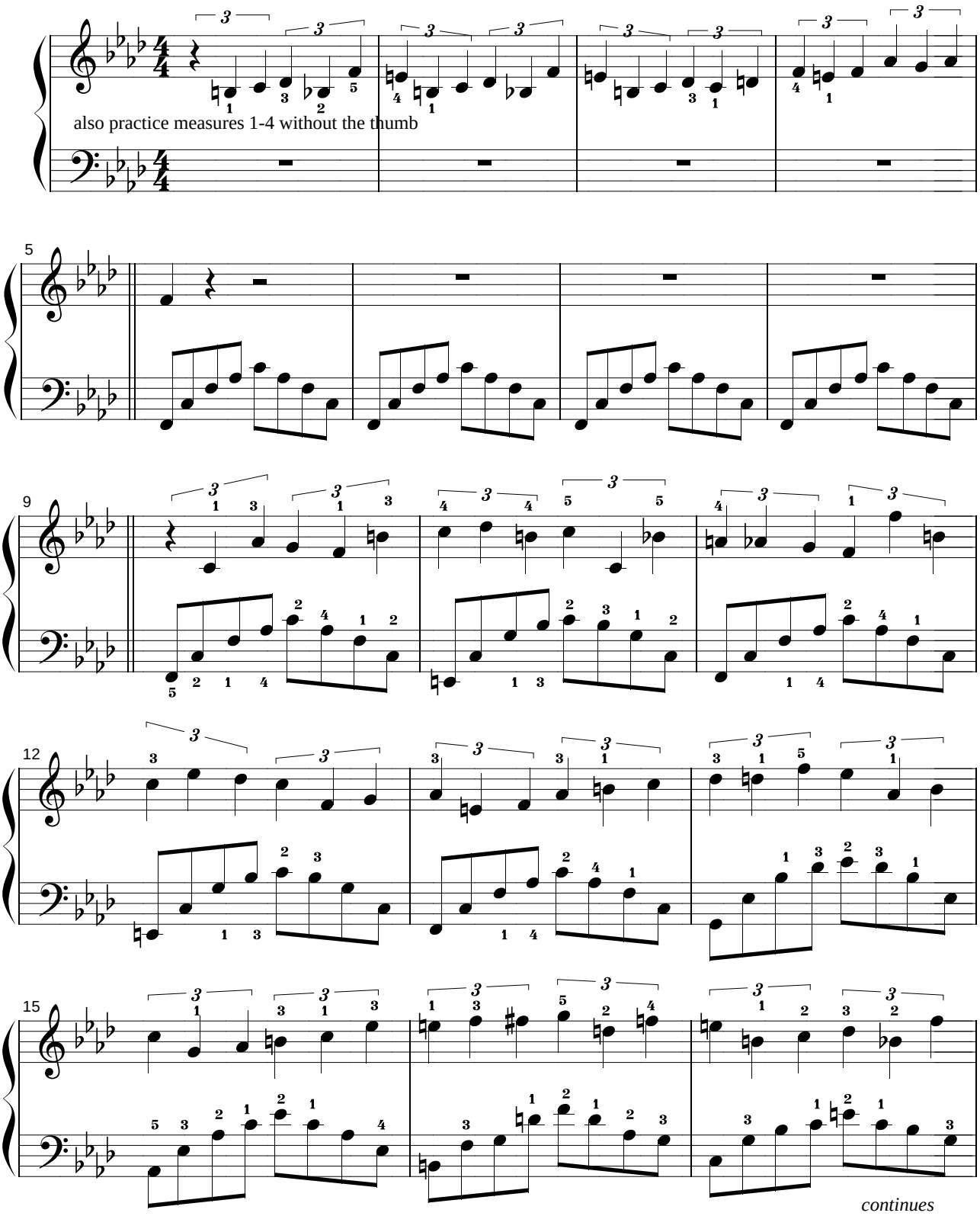

309

313

F. Chopin Etude op. posthumous no. 2

F. Chopin

fingering is only suggested; write fingering that is comfortable for your hand



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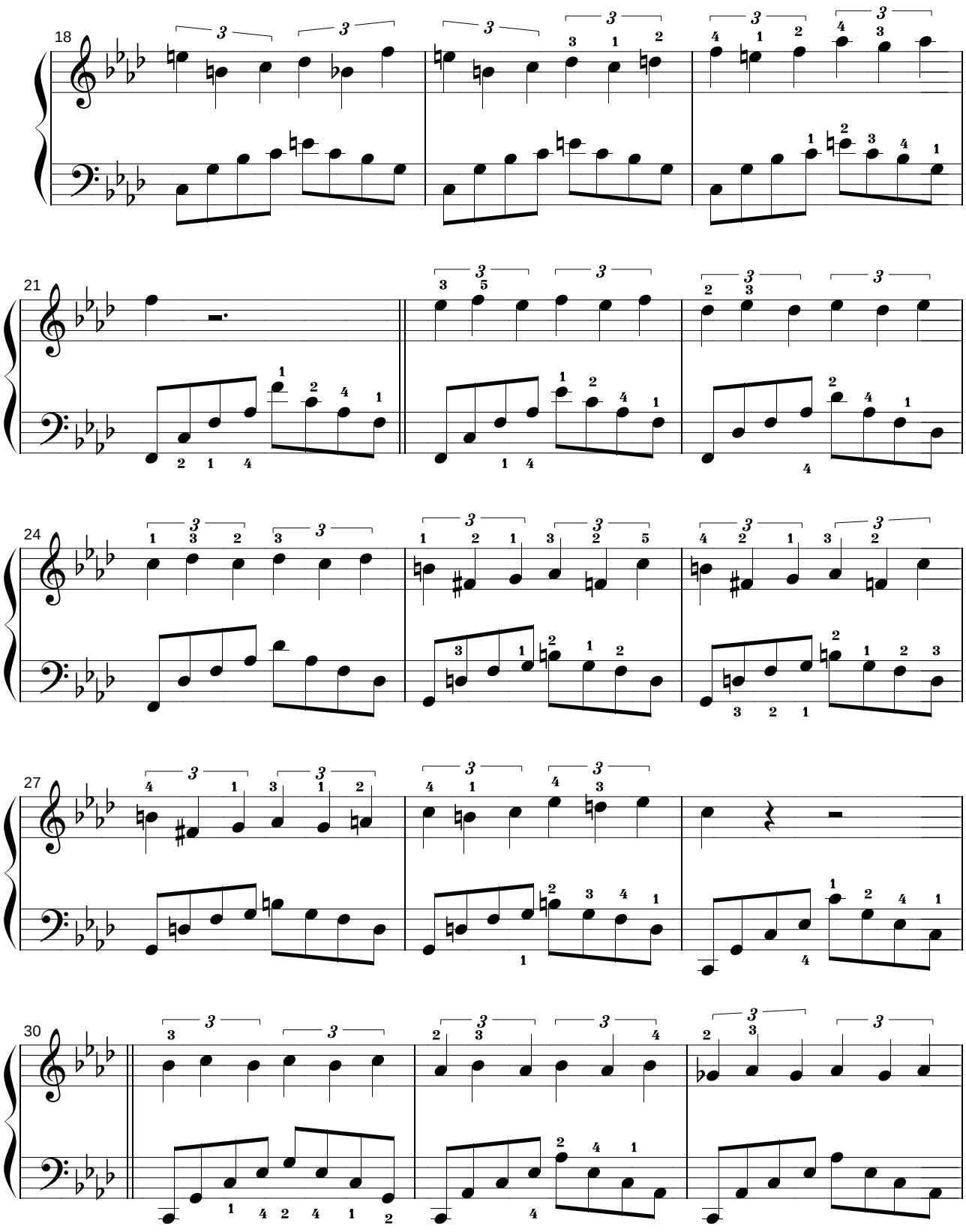

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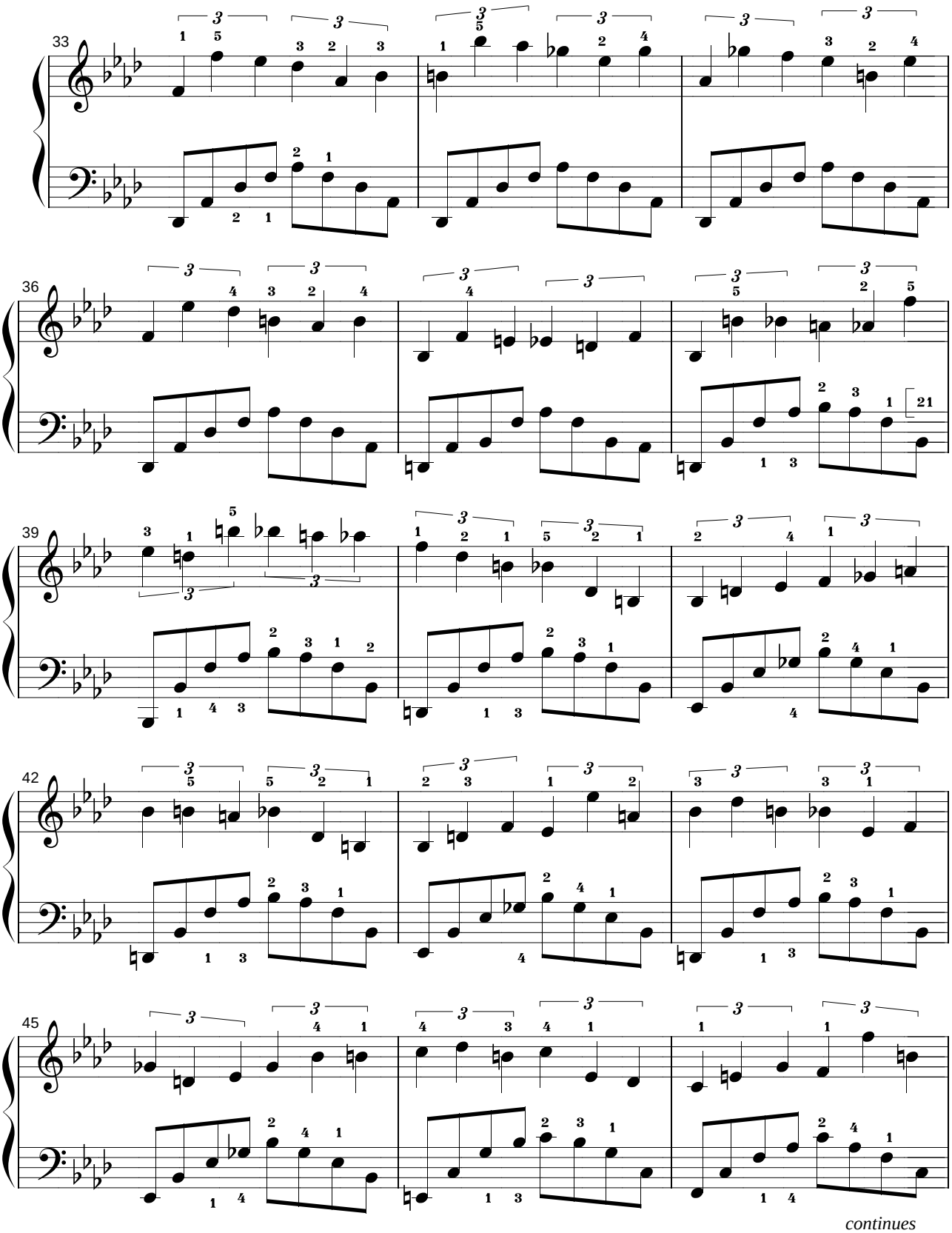

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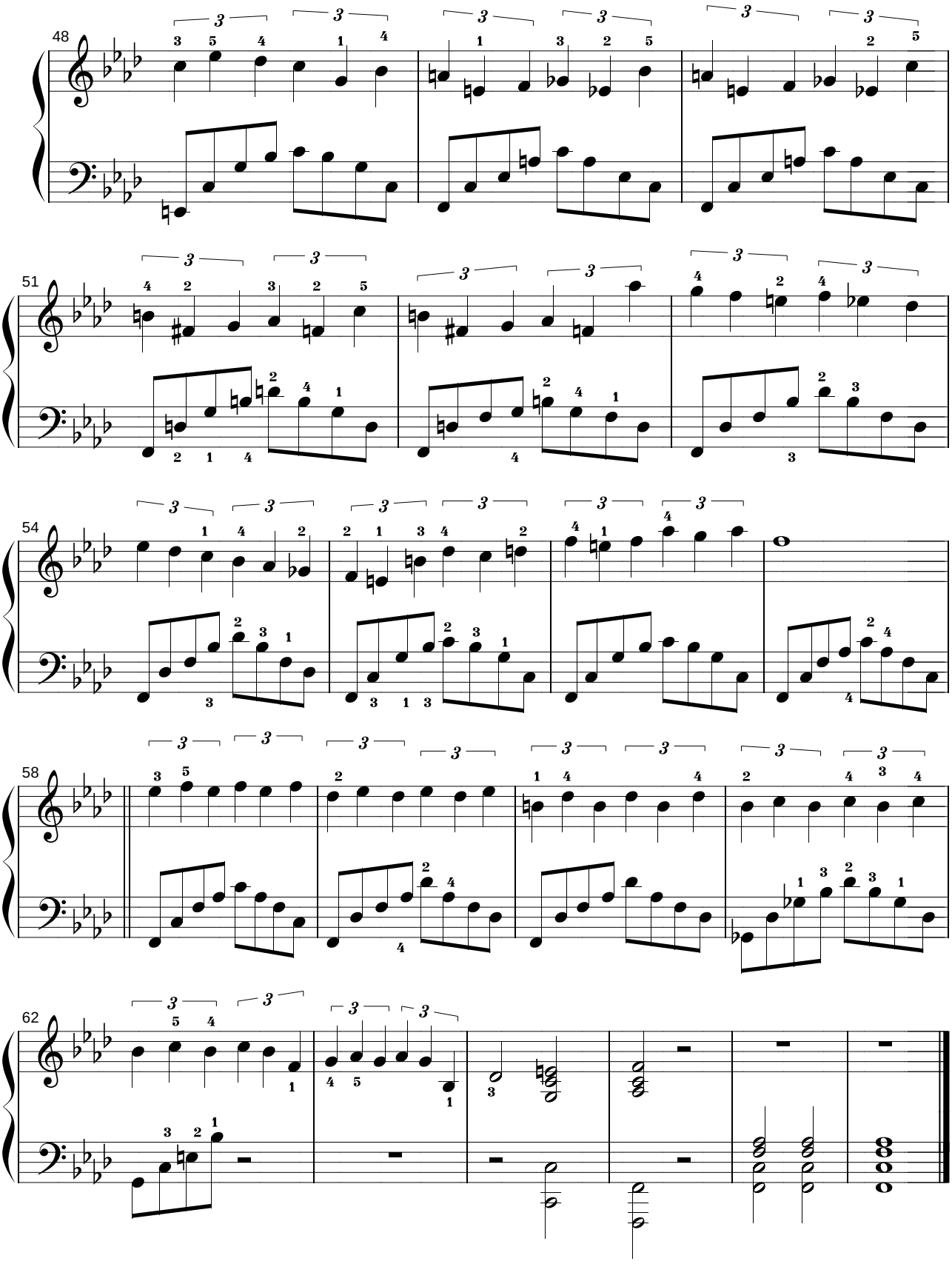
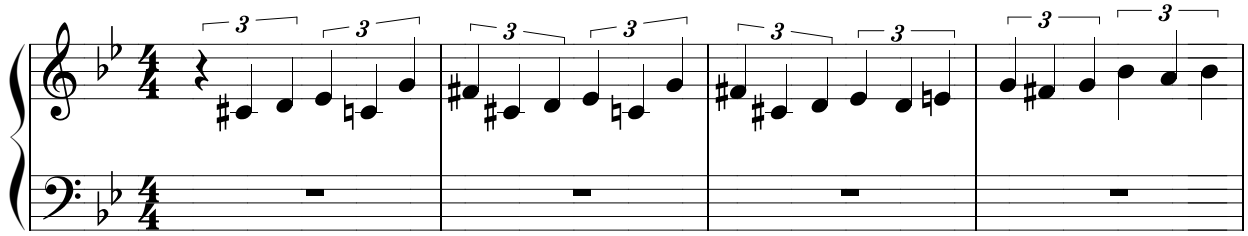
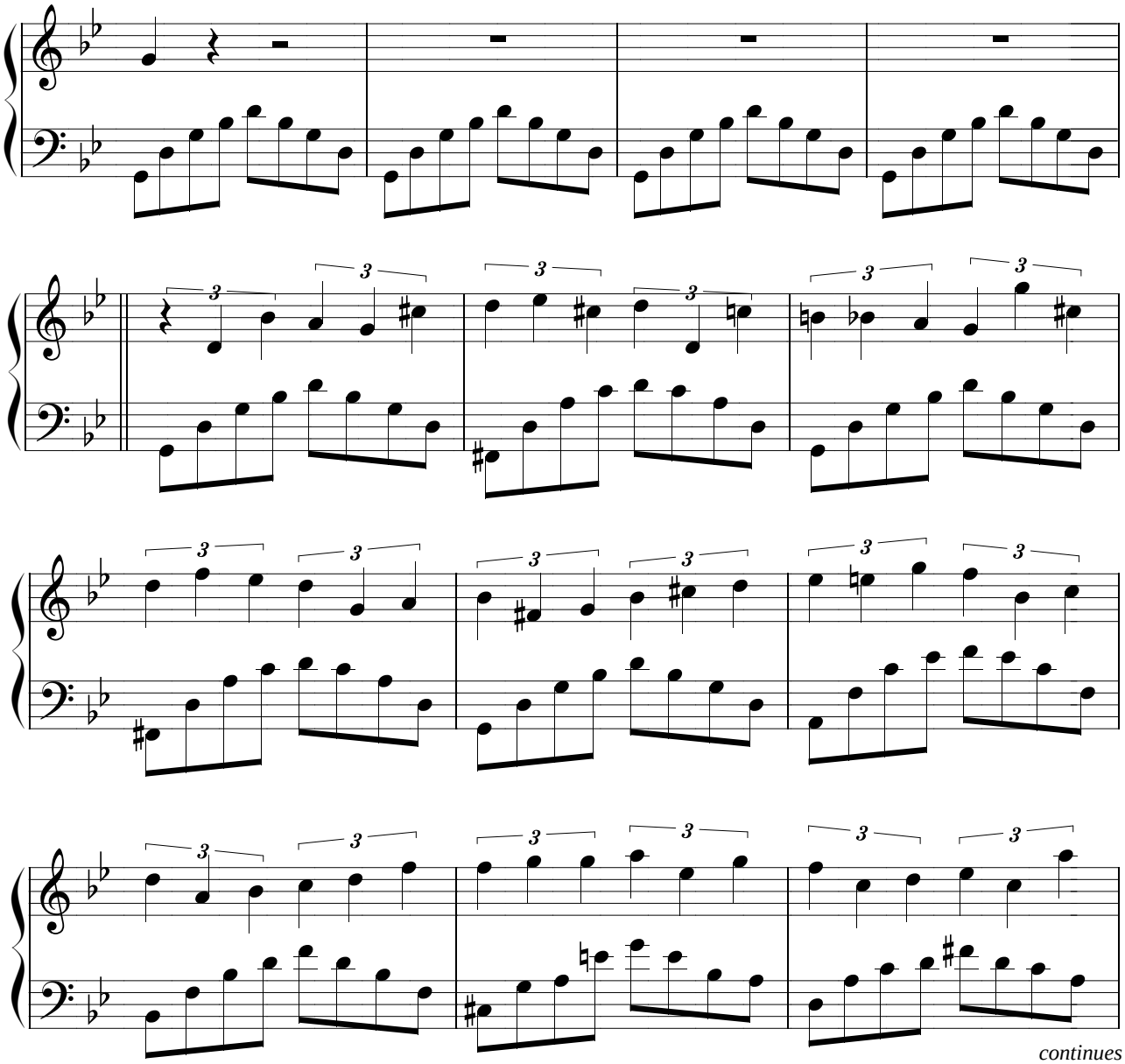

48
51
54
58
62

F. Chopin Etude op. posthumous no. 2

transposition



use original fingering written for Ab; change fingering again for this Bb transposition after weeks of practicing



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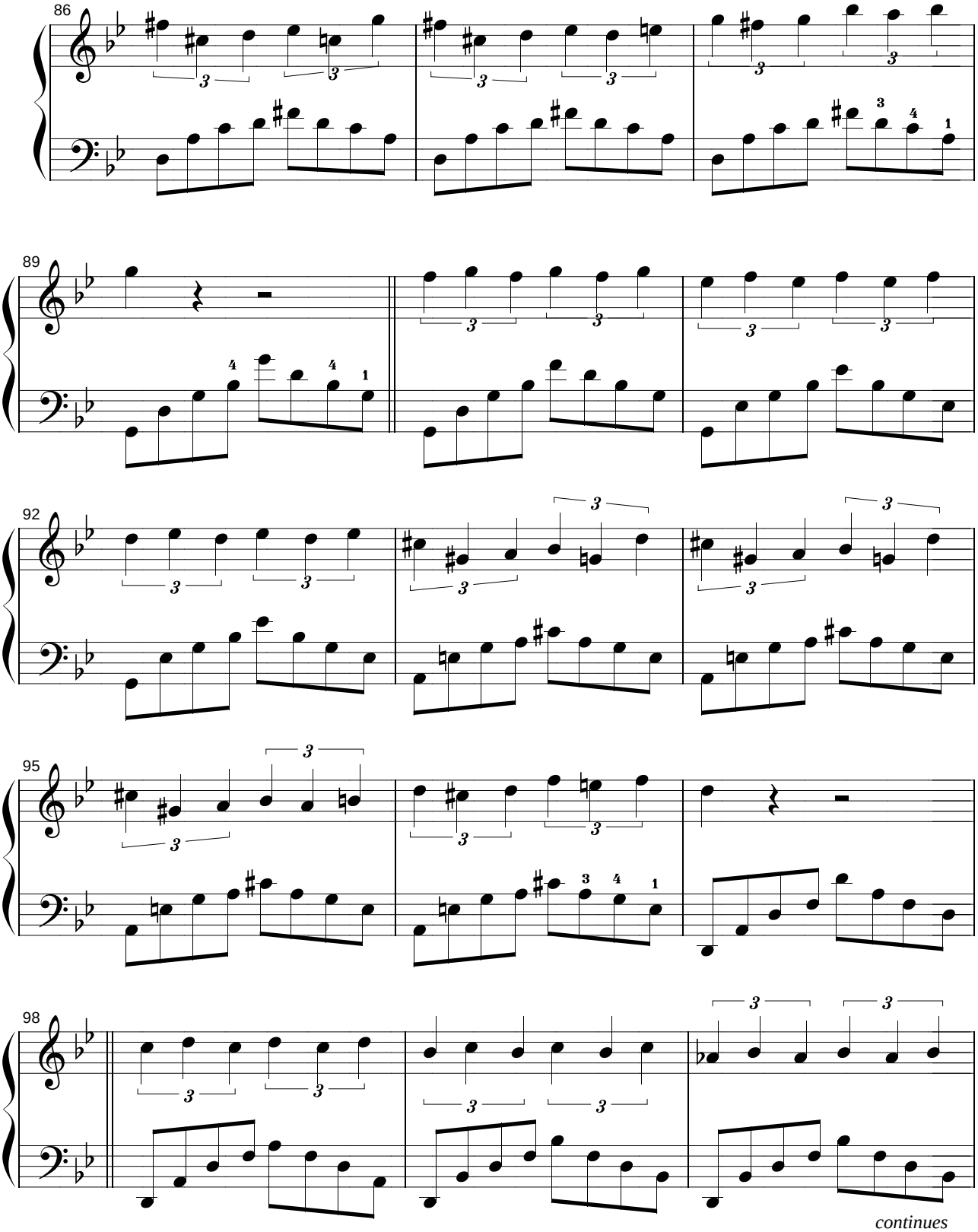

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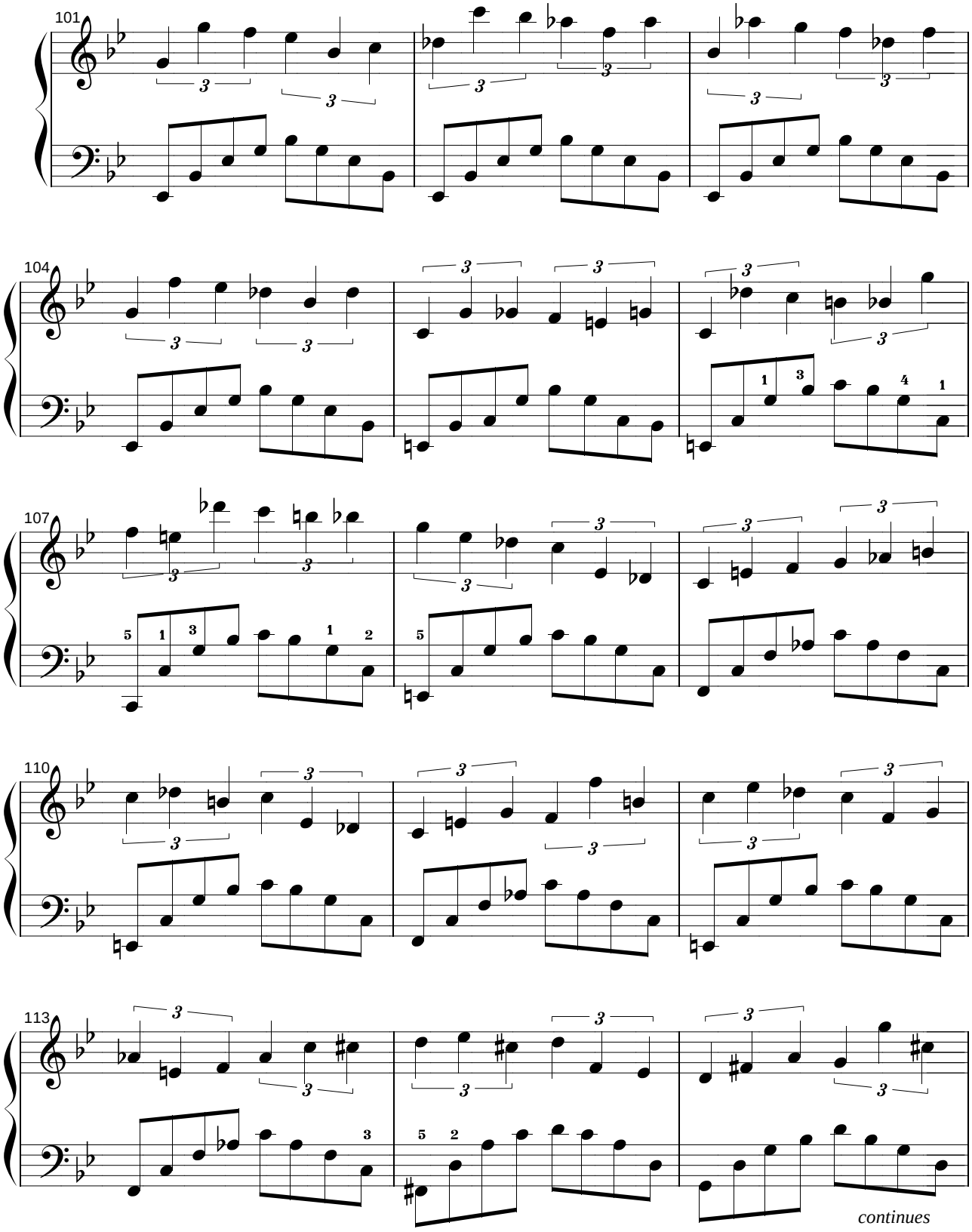

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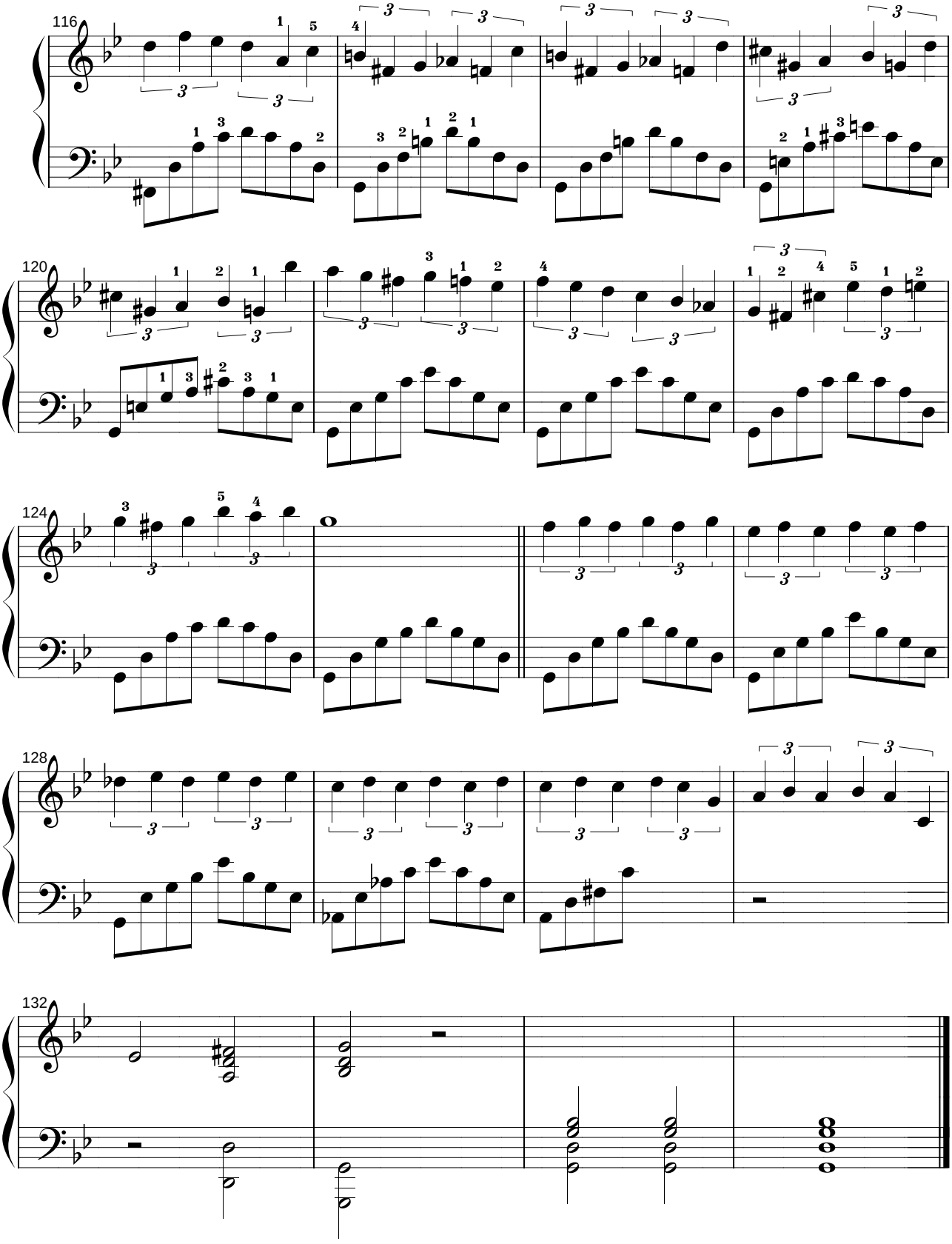
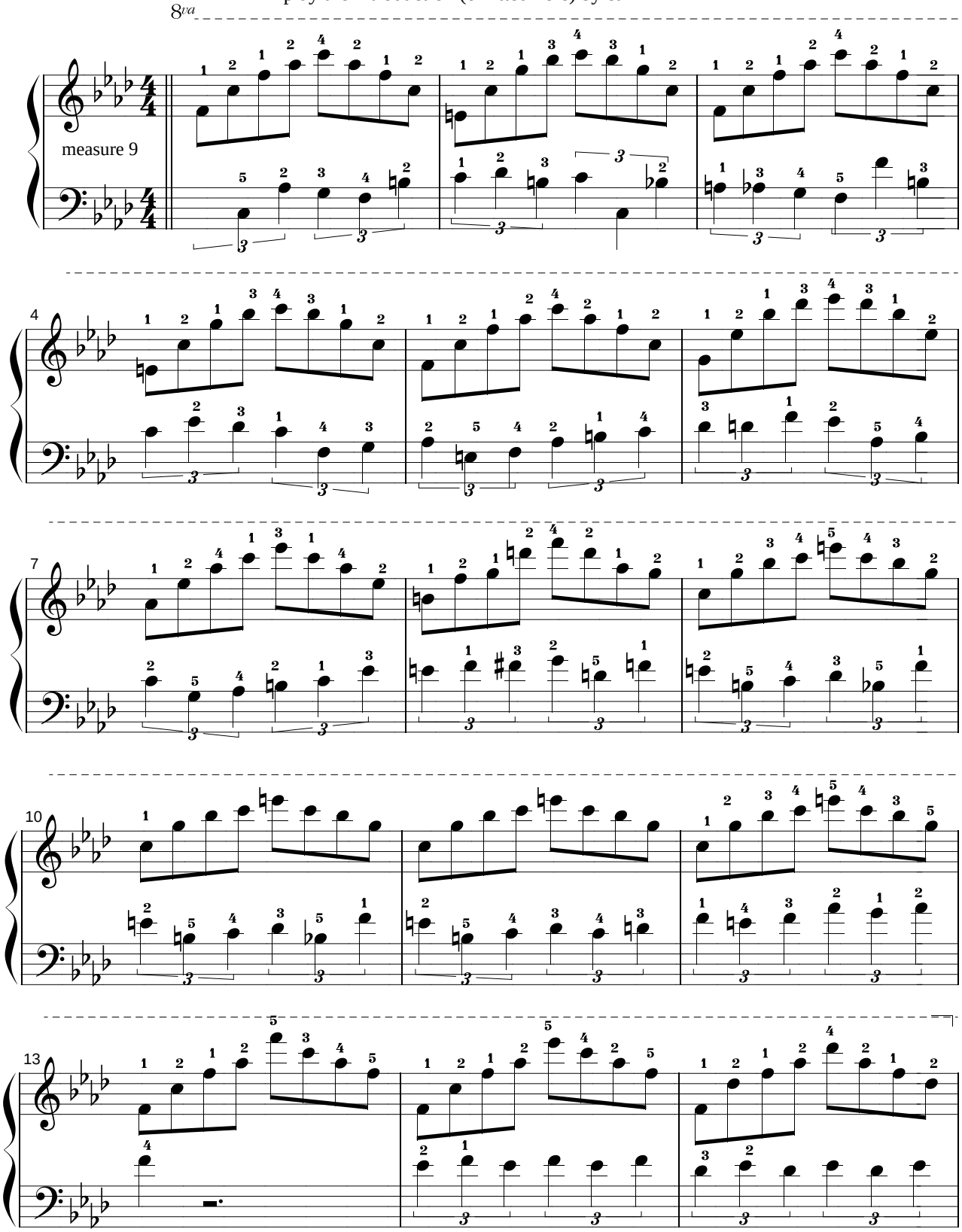

116
120
124
128
132

F. Chopin Etude op. posthumous no. 2

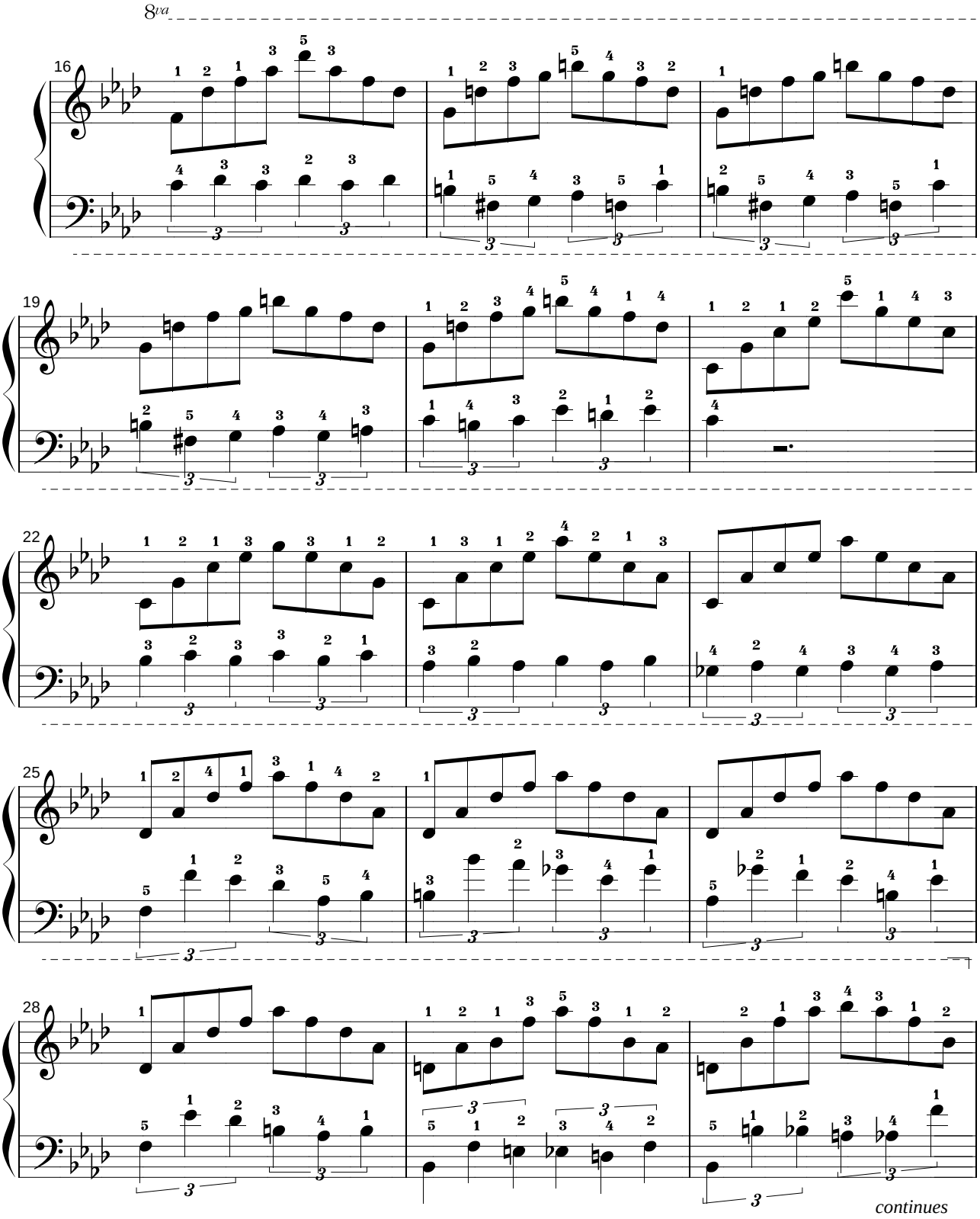
clefs inverted

play the introduction (omitted here) by ear



continues

Information played with the left hand is transfered and registered in the reflex system of the right hand; consequently, the right hand understands what is played by the left hand more thoroughly.



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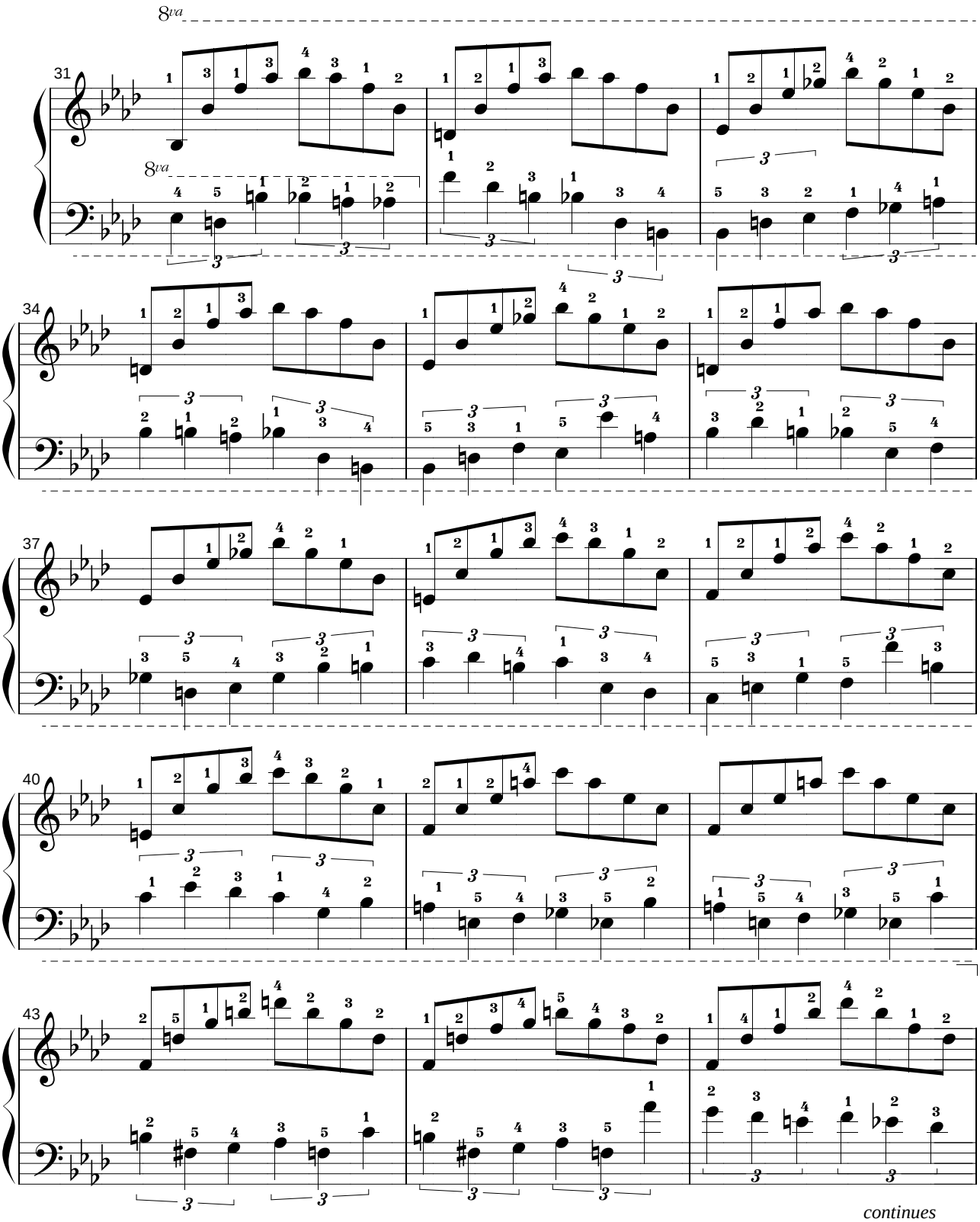

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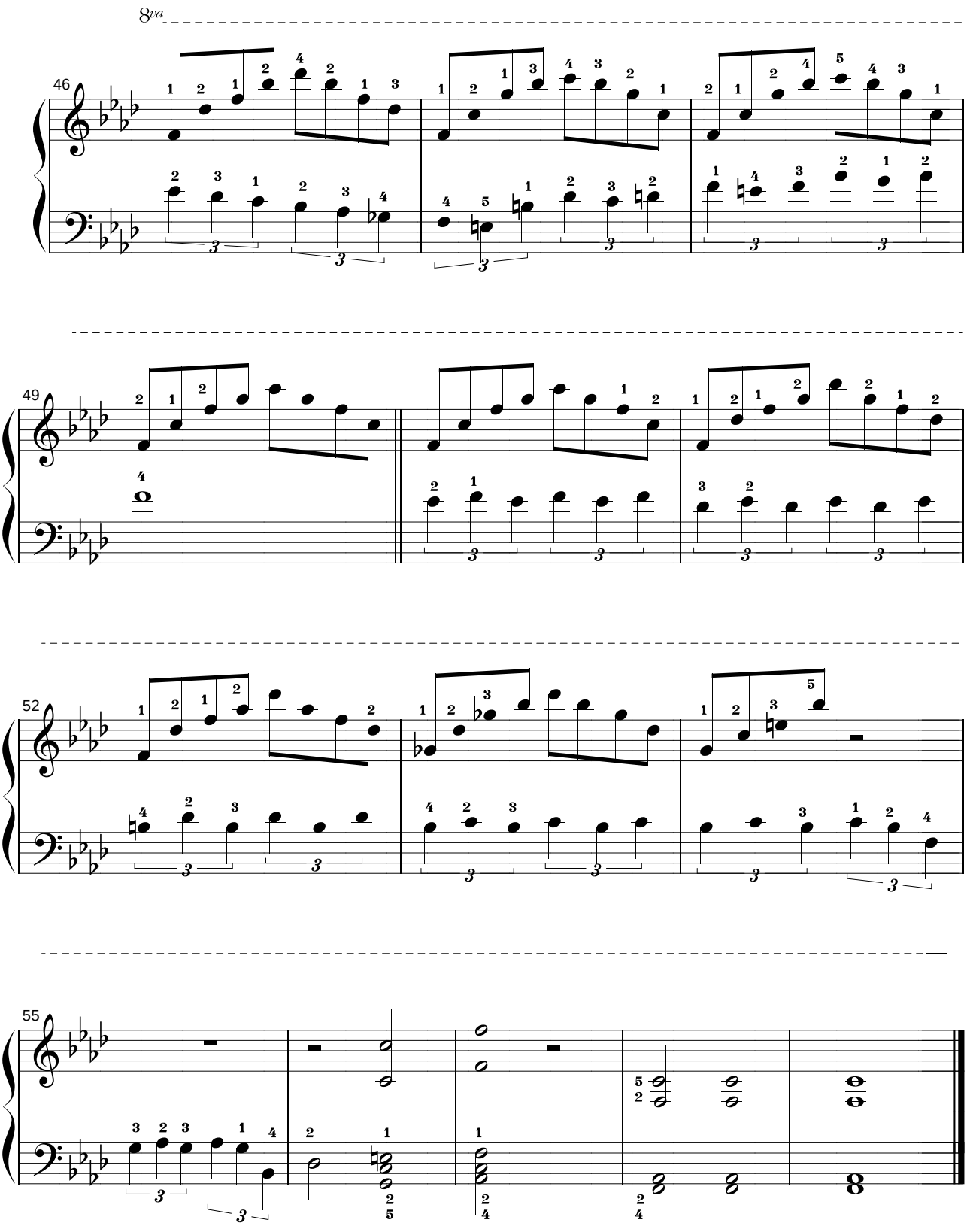
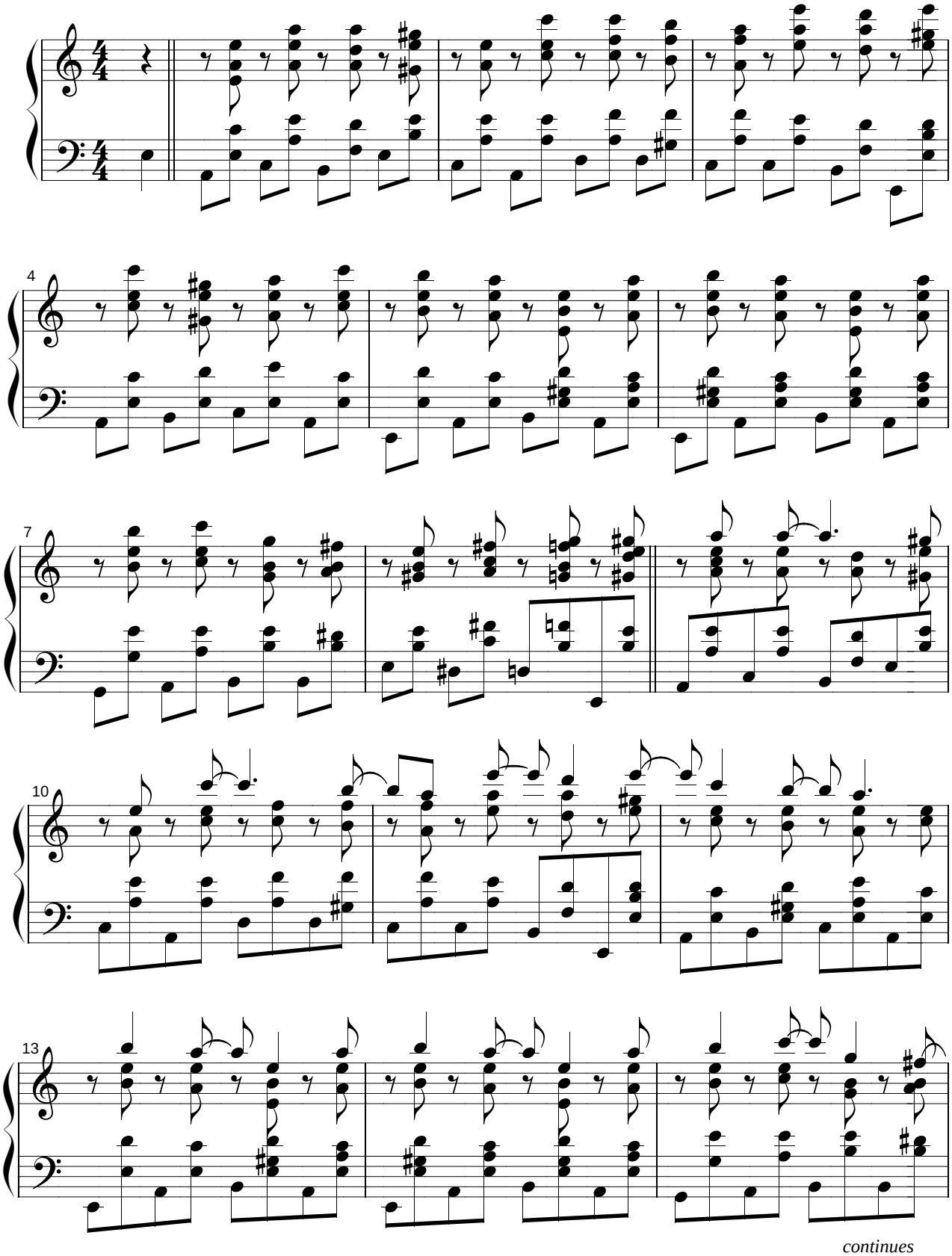

8va
46
49
52
55

F. Chopin Etude op. 25 no. 4

this etude is perhaps the first notated stride-style of playing

measures 1 - 18

F. Chopin



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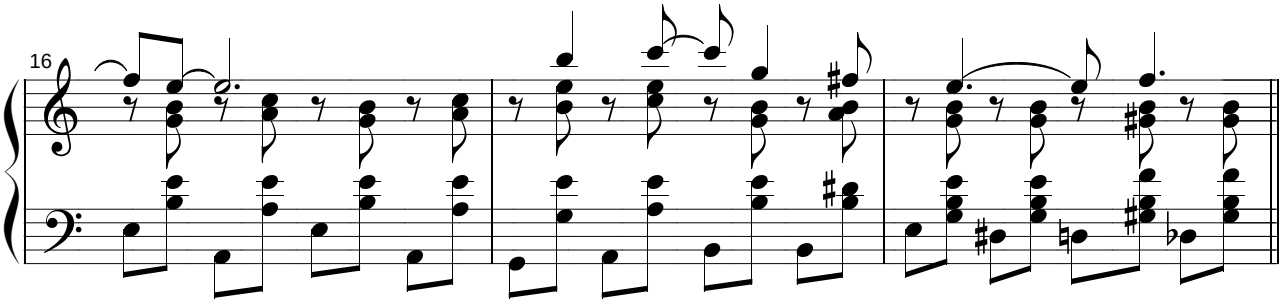
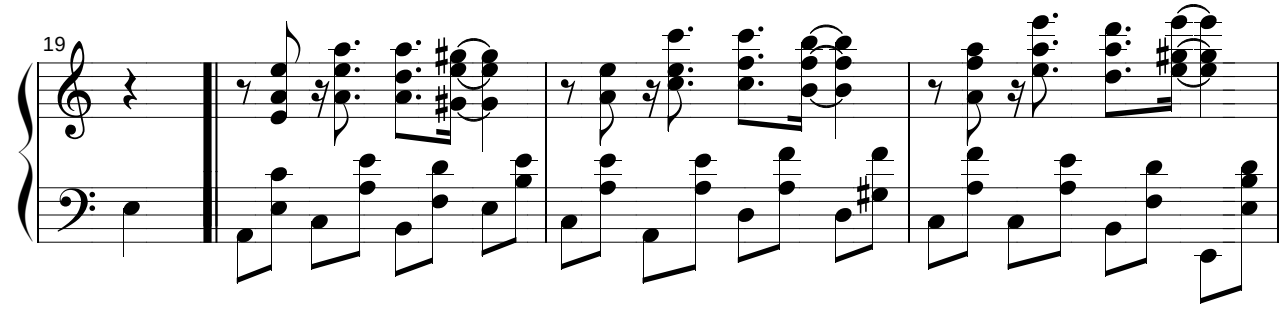
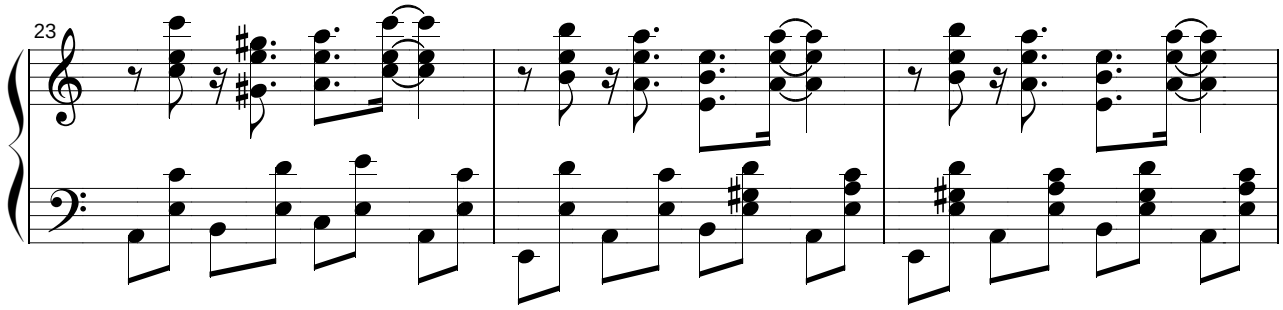
these examples appeared in Stuart Isacoff's 'Piano Today'
Fall issue 2000

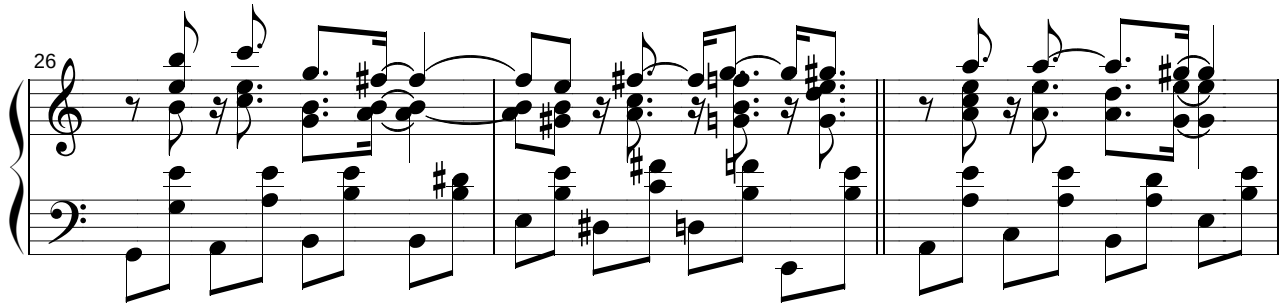
only the first eighteen (18) measures of this etude are notated because my purpose is to illustrate the similarity of it with the style of stride-piano

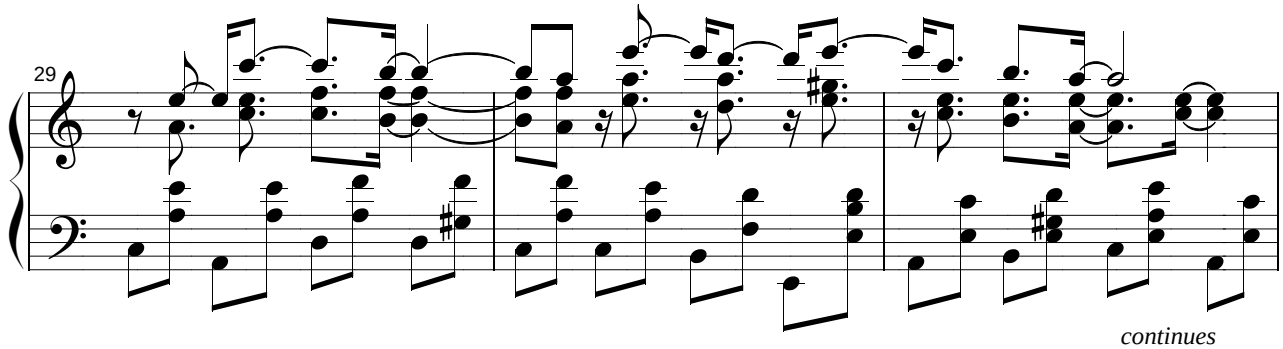


when played in syncopation, the etude sounds like Ragtime; however, this example is absolutely **not** intended as a method for preparing this piece for classical interpretation

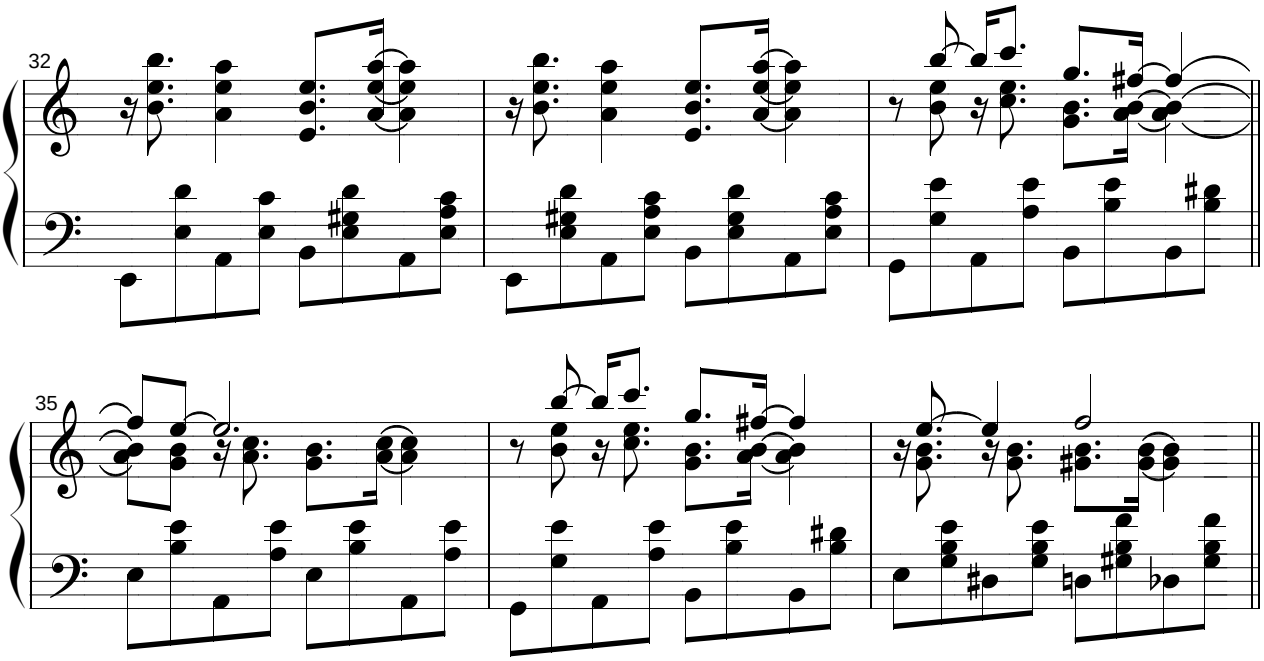




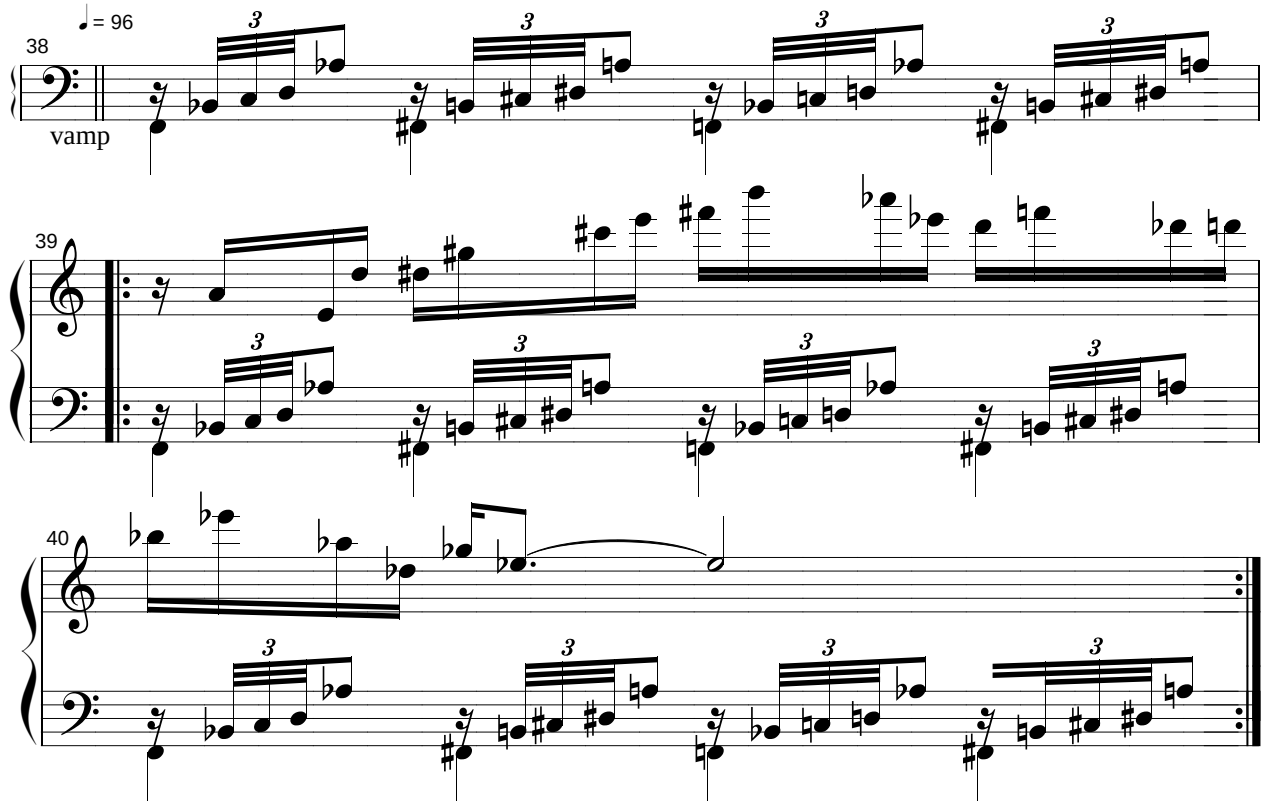




continues

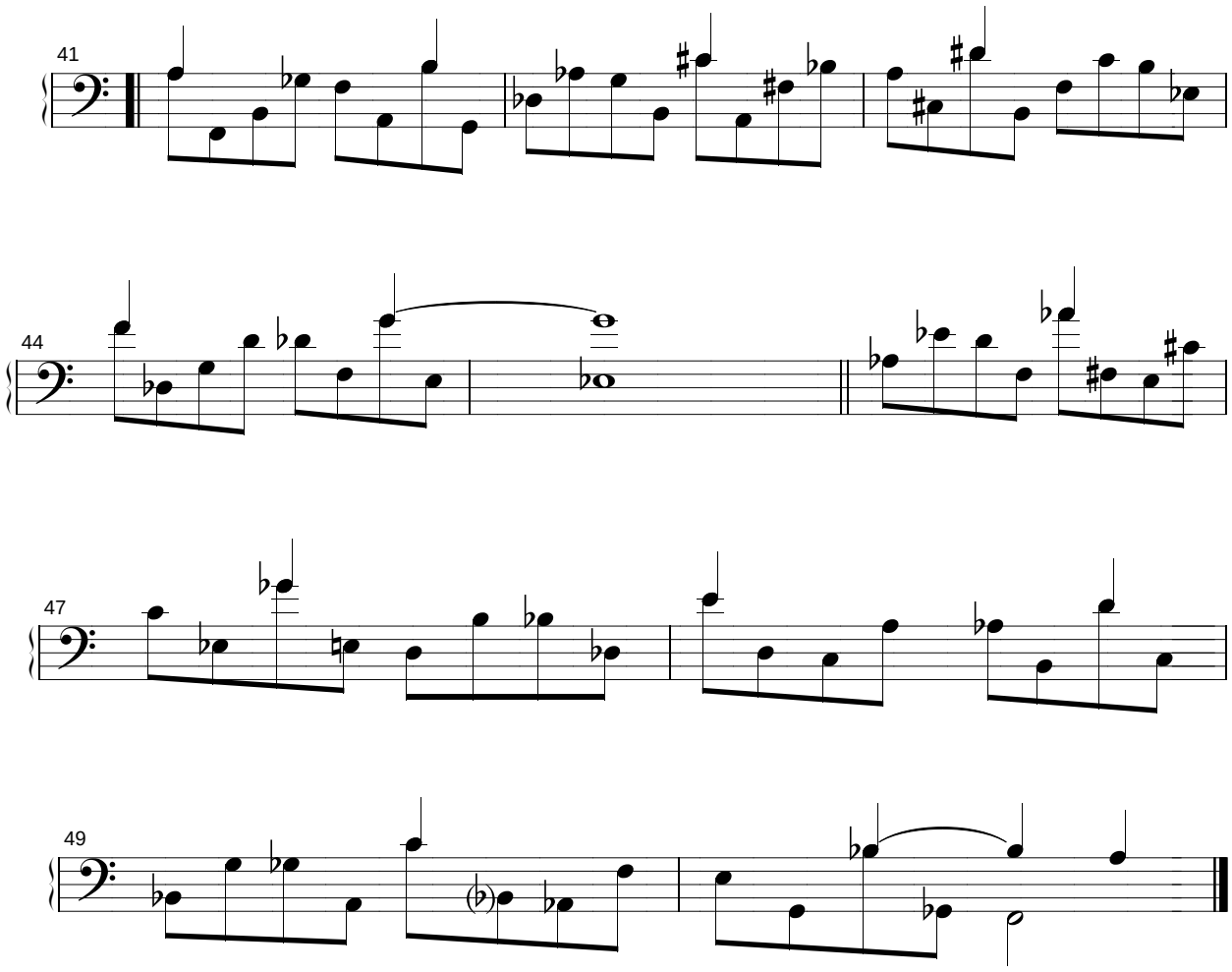


With this style of stride, an improvised solo in the right hand is much less restricted. Try it with 'Blues' or the melodic-fragment of 'From Another Star' (below) notated on page 157.



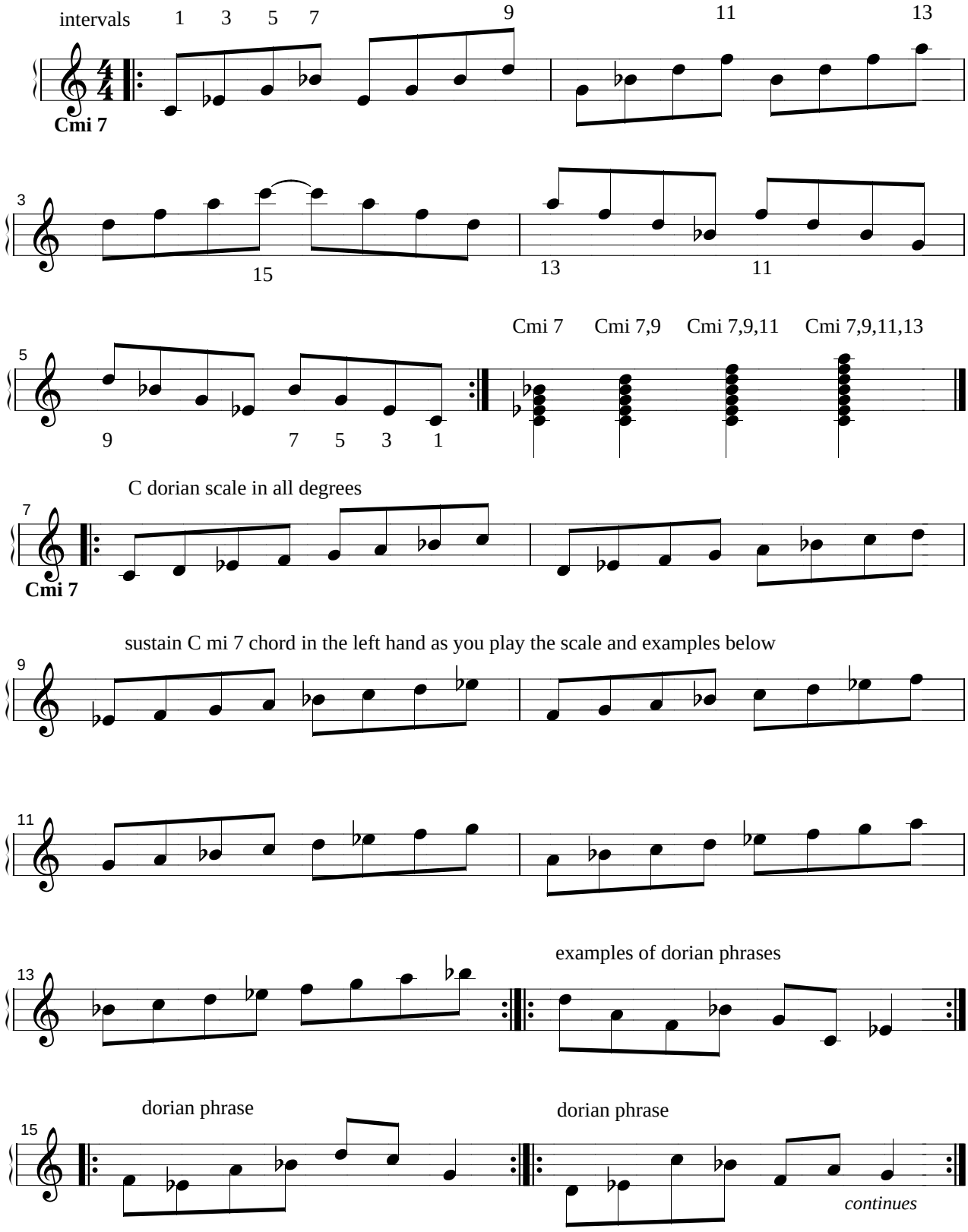
It will sound more flexible than it looks if you fit (practice) the left hand, quarter and eighth-notes, (triplets omitted) with the even sixteenth-notes in the right hand.

Exercise for the Left Hand

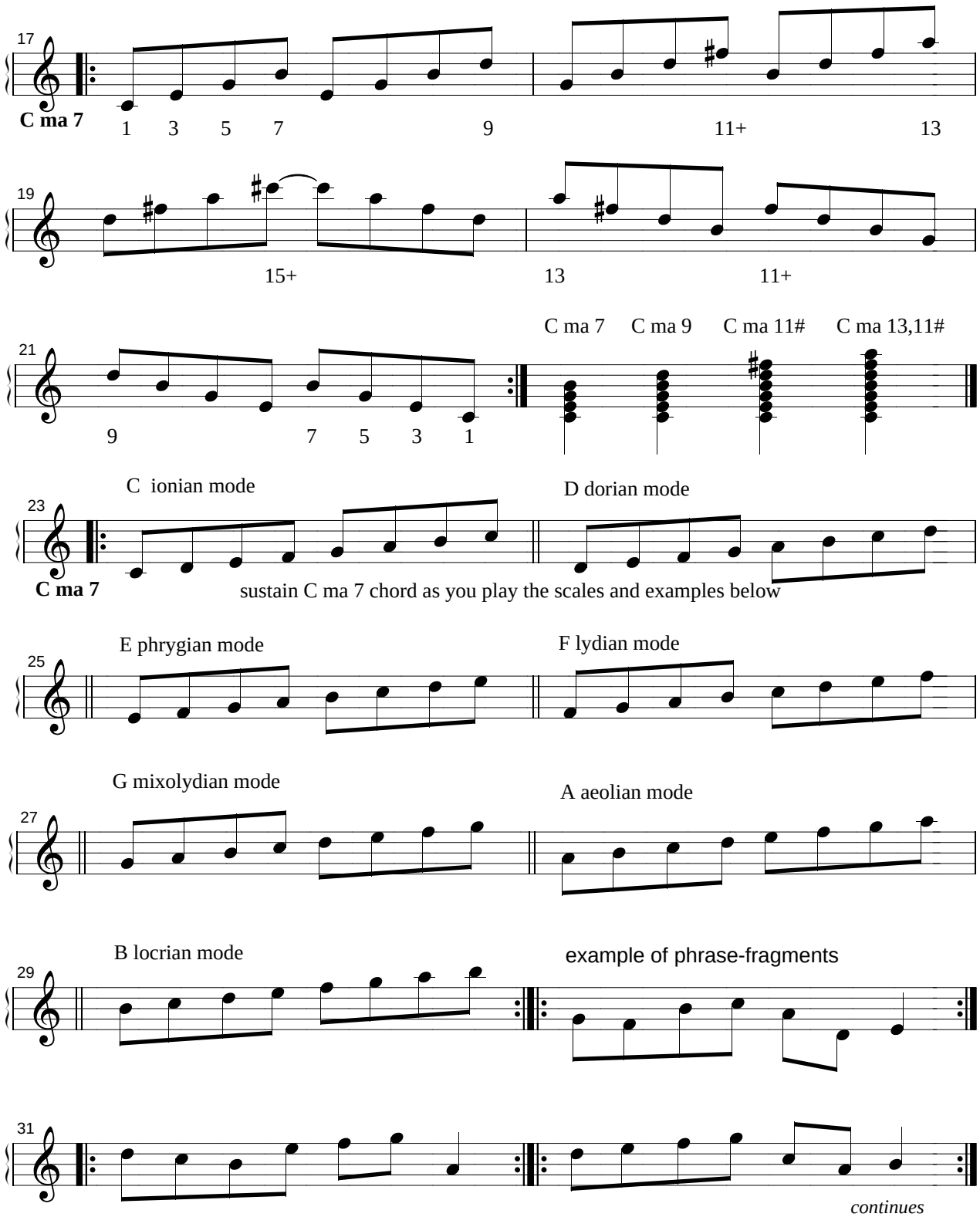


write similar examples

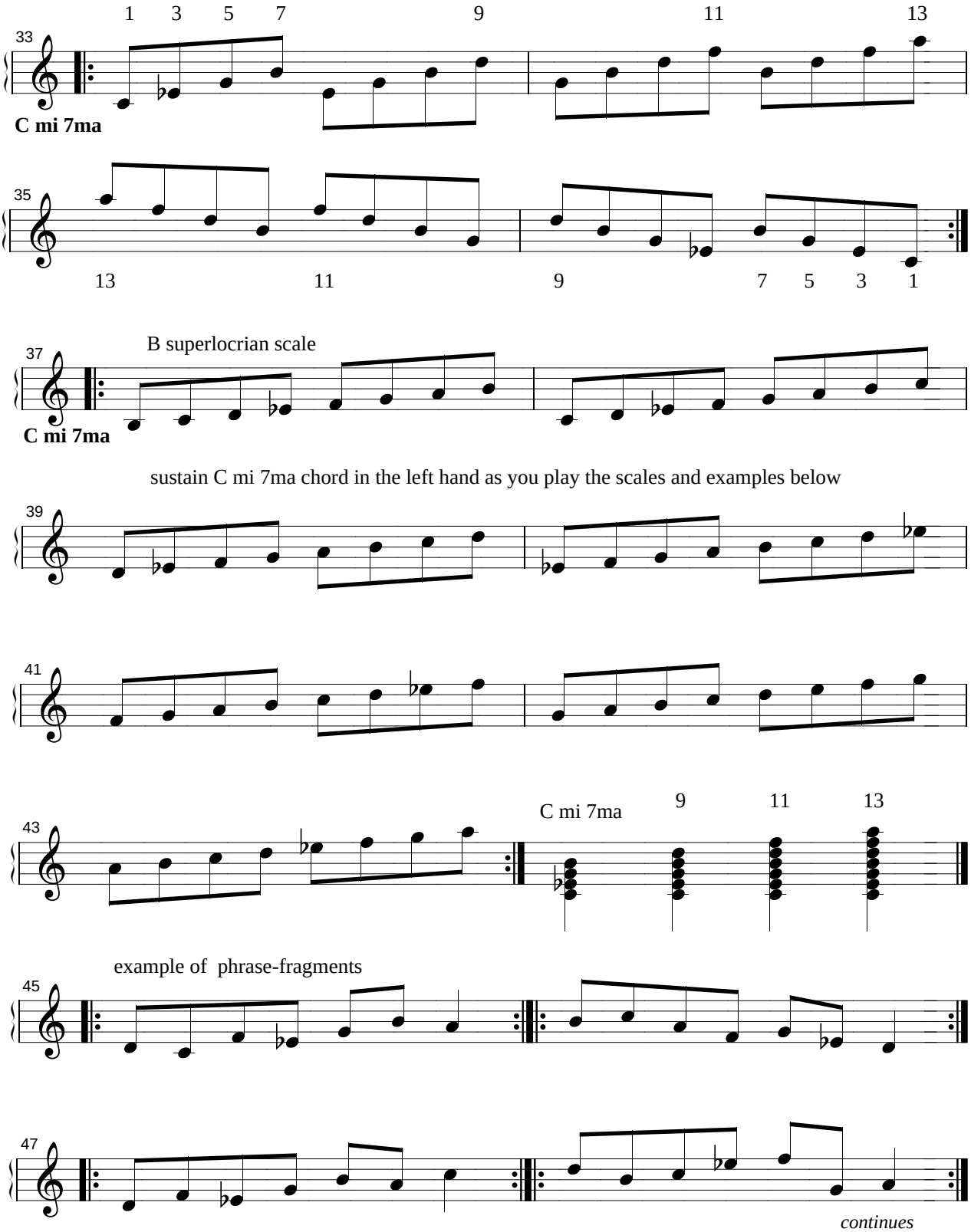
Scales and Arpeggios for Chords



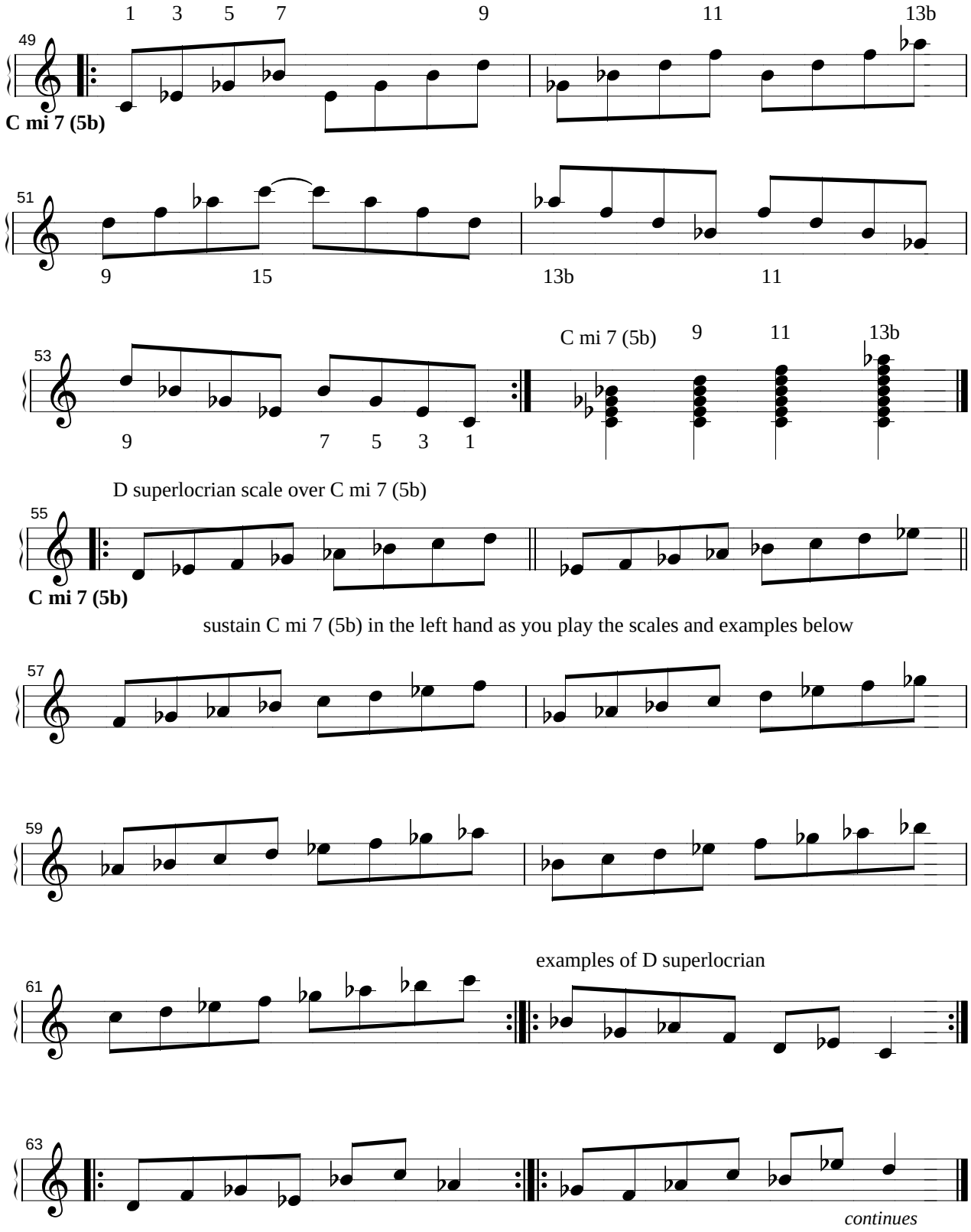
practice all scales and arpeggios in retrograde


17
C ma 7
1 3 5 7 9 11+ 13
19
15+ 13 11+
21
C ma 7 C ma 9 C ma 11# C ma 13,11#
9 7 5 3 1
23
C ionian mode
D dorian mode
C ma 7
sustain C ma 7 chord as you play the scales and examples below
25
E phrygian mode
F lydian mode
27
G mixolydian mode
A aeolian mode
29
B locrian mode
example of phrase-fragments
31

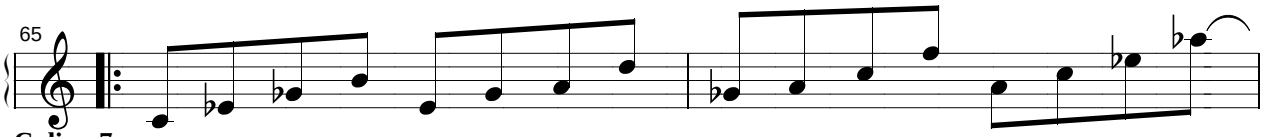
continues


1 3 5 7 9 11 13
33
C mi 7ma
35
13 11 9 7 5 3 1
B superlocrian scale
37
C mi 7ma
sustain C mi 7ma chord in the left hand as you play the scales and examples below
39
41
C mi 7ma
9 11 13
43
example of phrase-fragments
45
47

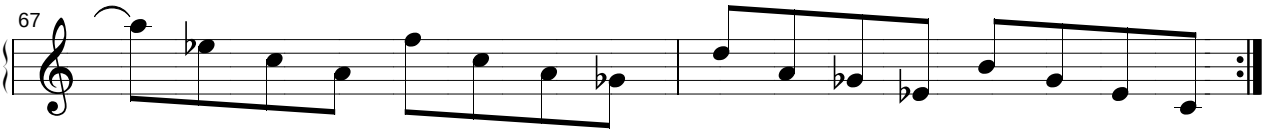
continues


1 3 5 7 9 11 13b
49
C mi 7 (5b)
51
9 15 13b 11
53
9 7 5 3 1
C mi 7 (5b) 9 11 13b
D superlocrian scale over C mi 7 (5b)
55
C mi 7 (5b)
sustain C mi 7 (5b) in the left hand as you play the scales and examples below
57
59
examples of D superlocrian
61
63

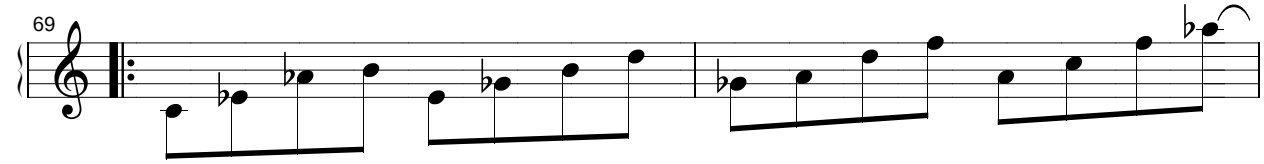
continues



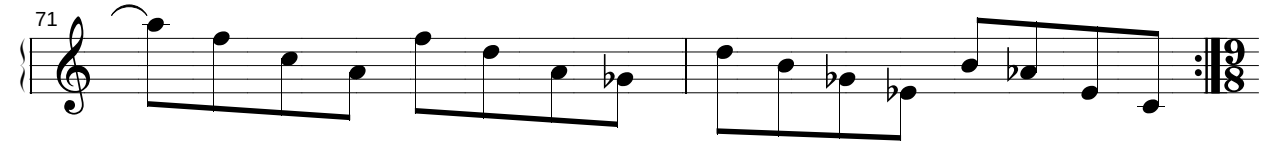
sustain C dim 7ma chord as you arpeggiate



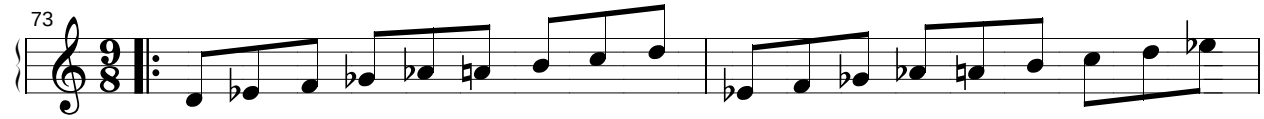
the 3rd eight-note of each group (above) may be included in the following exercise to form five-note patterns; same intervalic structure as measures 91-94 in the following page



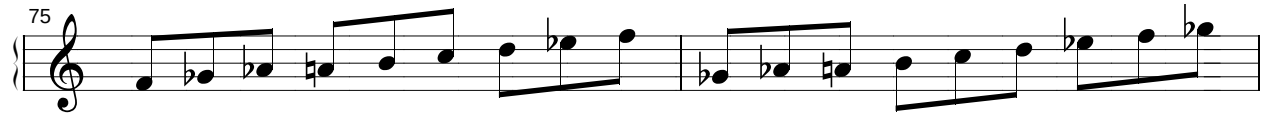
search every possible combination to practice; and remember the old adage, *don't seek and you will never find*

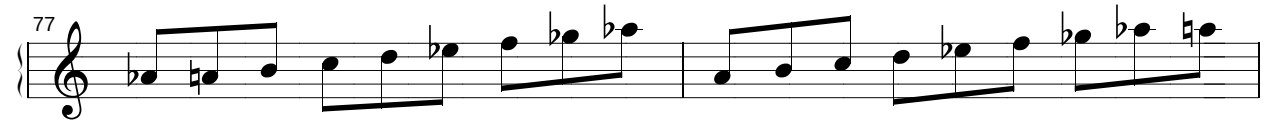


D diminished scale (also refered to as a dominant-diminished or an octatonic scale)

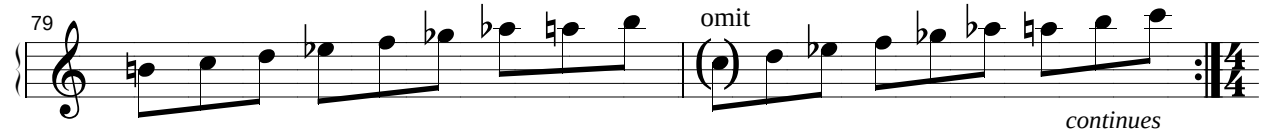


sustain C dim. 7ma chord as you play the scales



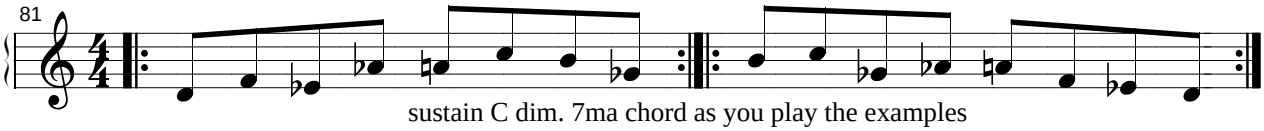


play retrograde but omit the 1st note in each measure

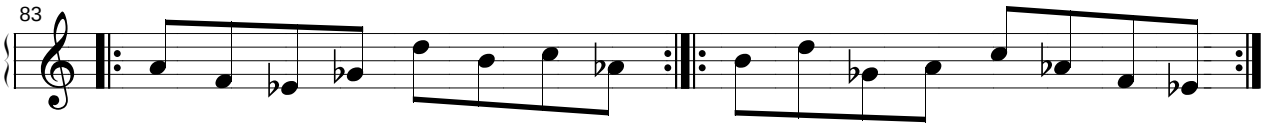


continues

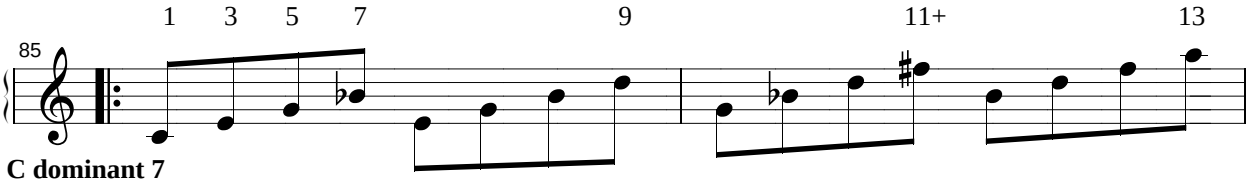
examples of D diminished scale



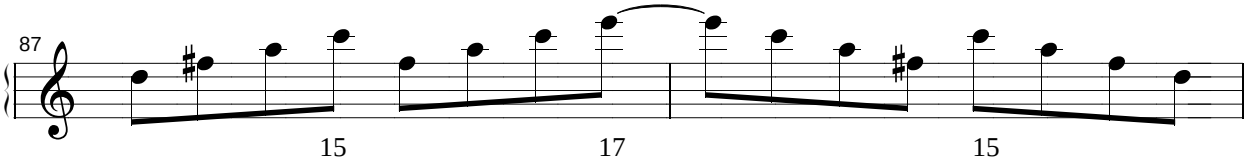
sustain C dim. 7ma chord as you play the examples

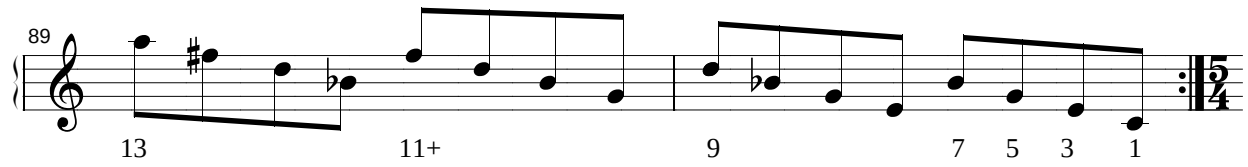


sustain C dominant 7 as you arpeggiate

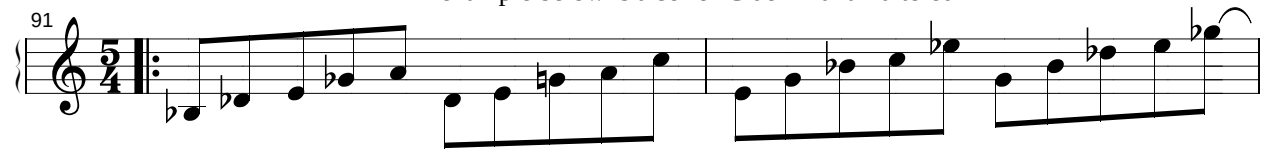


C dominant 7

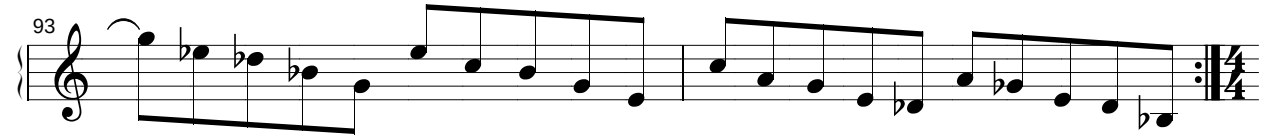




example below is also for C dominant 7 altered

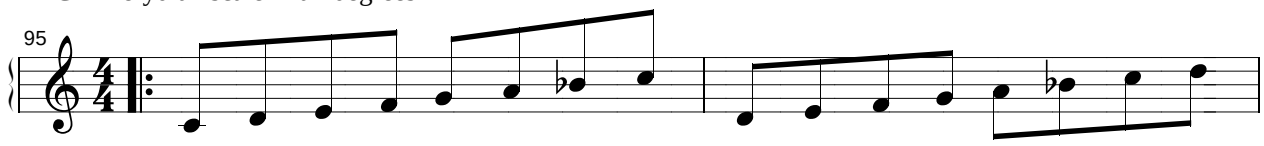


sustain C dominant 7 as you play this scale

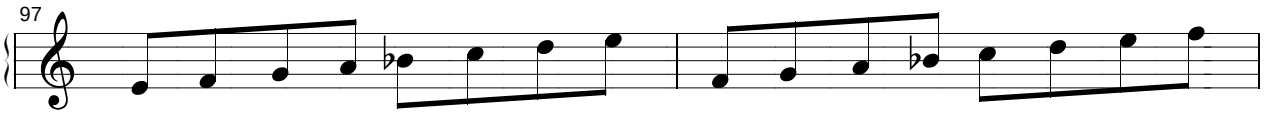


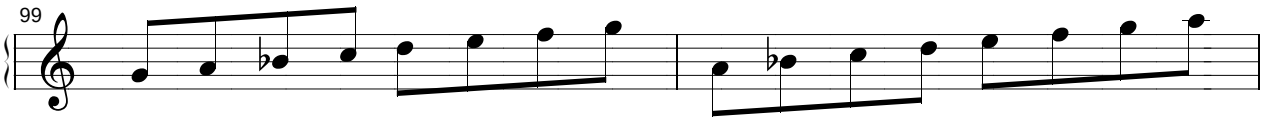
continues

C mixolydian scale in all degrees

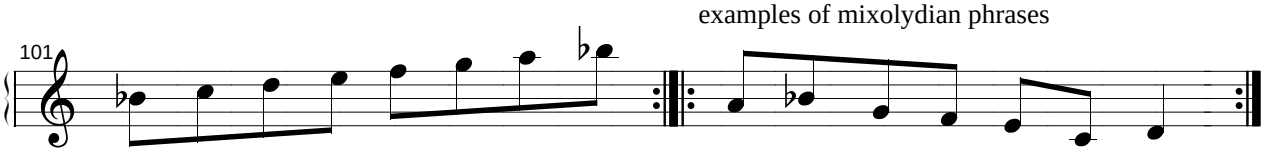


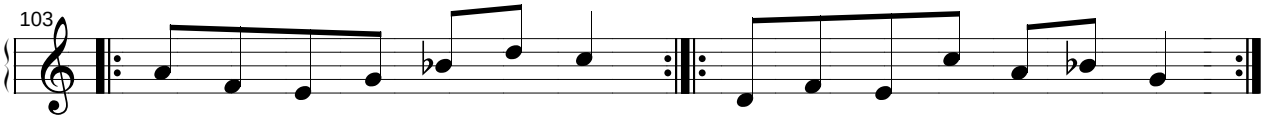
sustain C dominant 7 (**C sus 4** sounds better) in the left hand as you play these examples



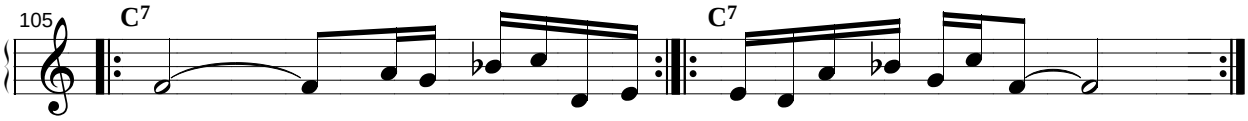


examples of mixolydian phrases

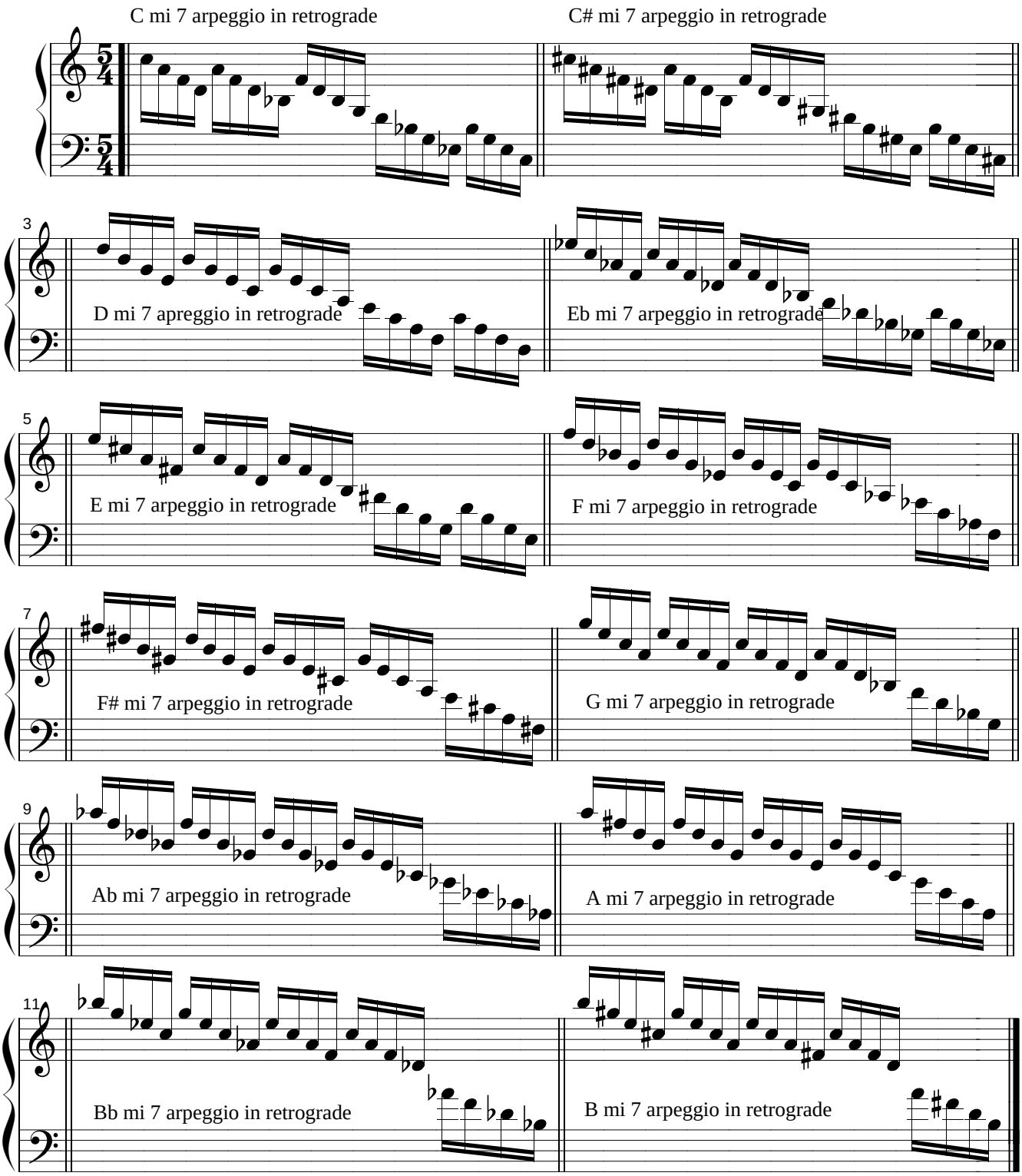




The notation below sounds INCORRECT. Never begin or end a C dominant 7 phrase with the 4th interval of the scale because it clashes with the major 3rd of the chord. Of course, whatever sounds wrong can be made (molded) to sound correct, but only by a few; a highly developed skill is necessary for that accomplishment.



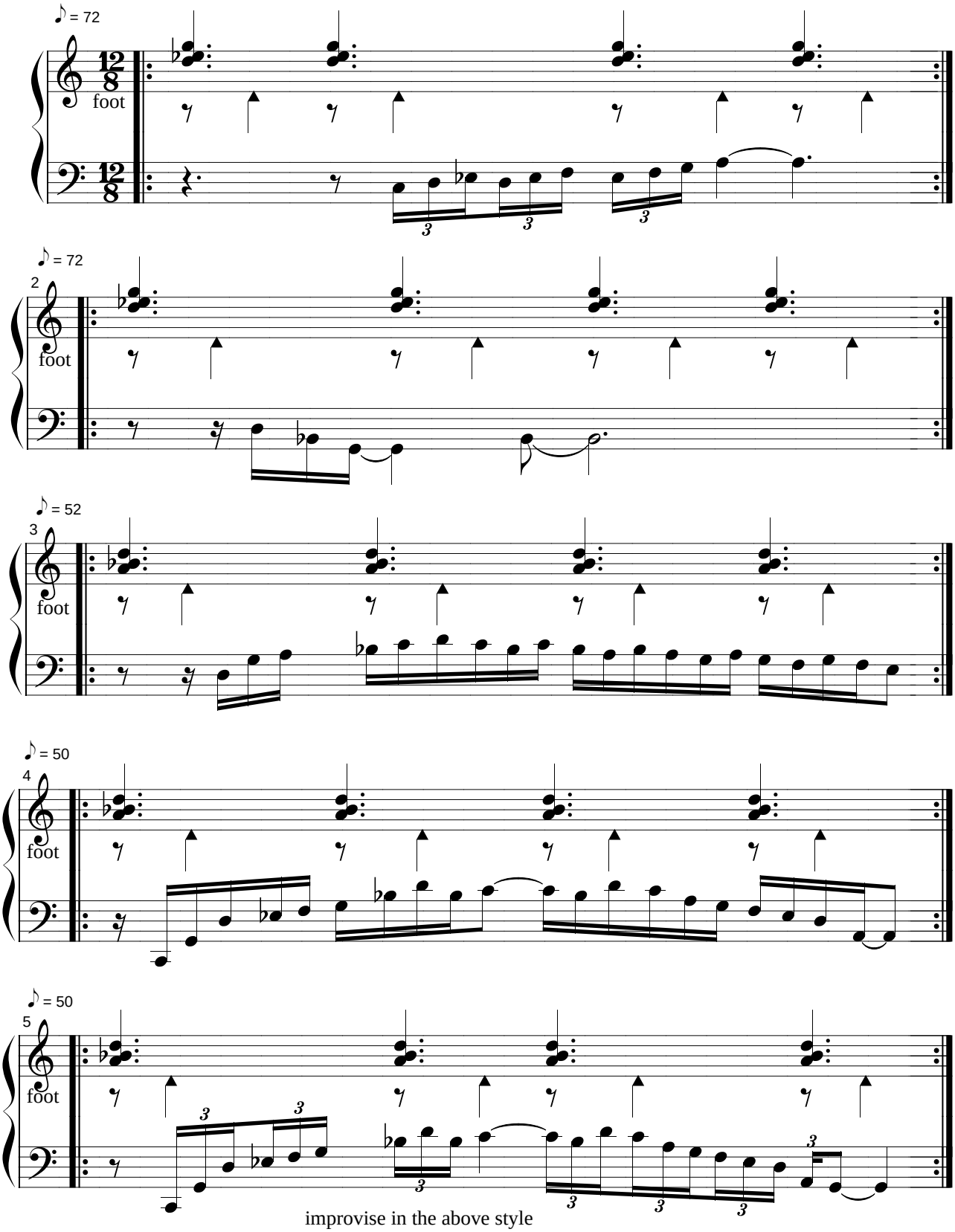
Arpeggios for Left Hand



within measure one: Dmi7 - Bbma7 - Gmi7 - Ebma7 - Cmi7 ::: 1st tone of each group = Bb ma9
2nd tone of each group = Gmi9 ::: 3rd tone of each group = Eb ma9 :::4th tone of each group = Cmi9

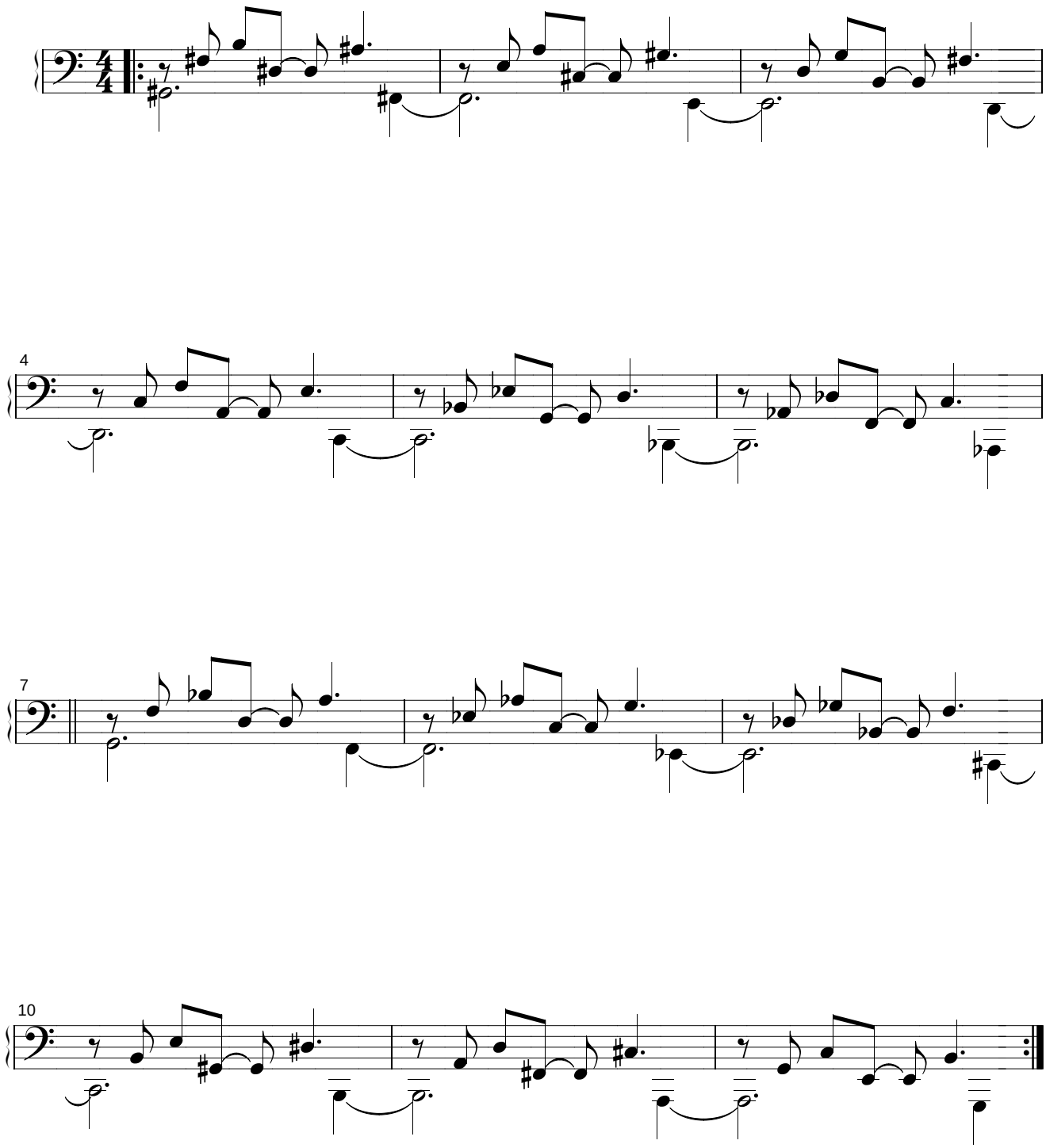
Solo in Left Hand - Chords with Right

reversing the coordination of left and right hands



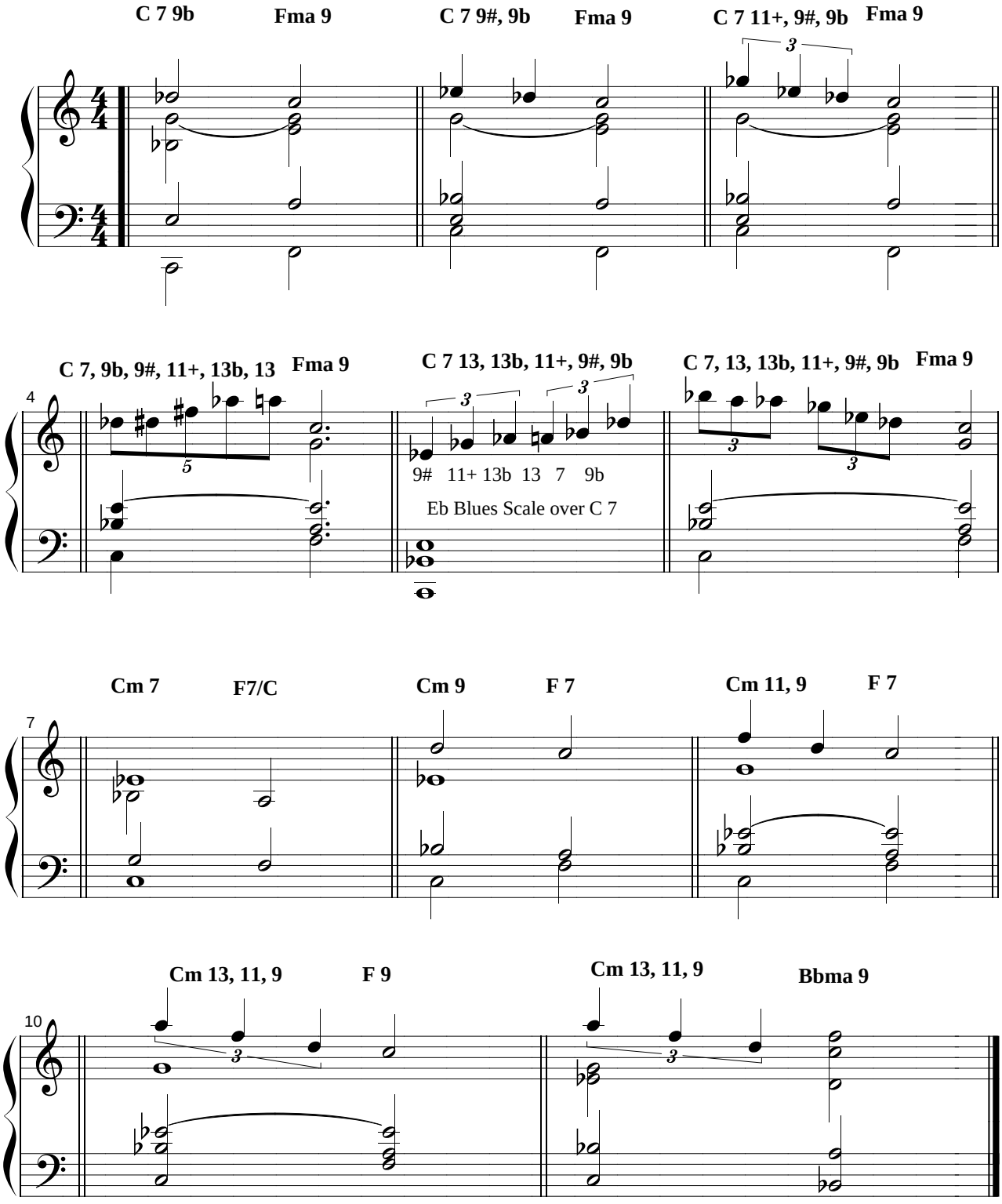
improvise in the above style

Left Hand F# mi 7 to E maj Progression



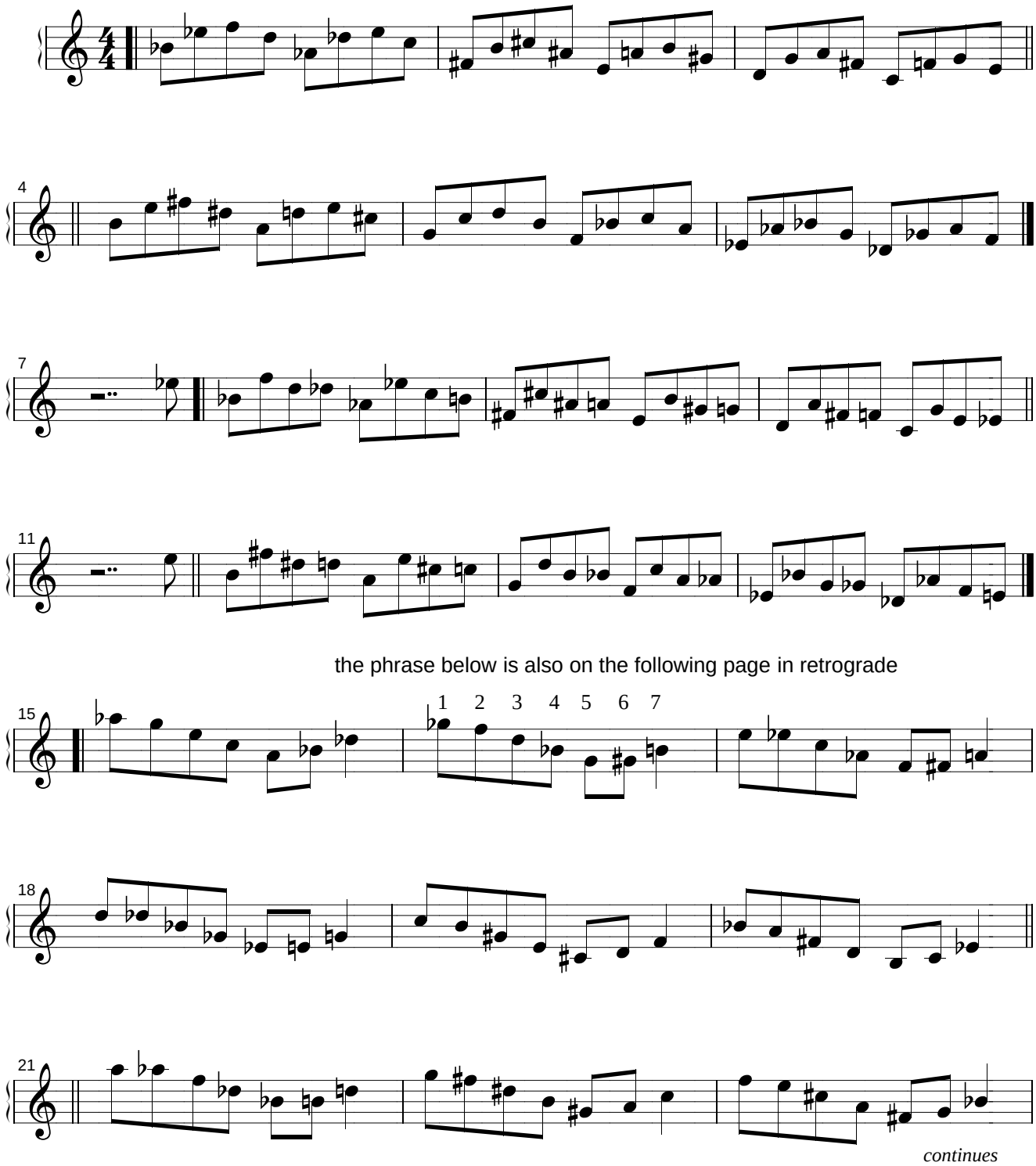
ALTERED INTERVALS

above the 5th of a chord

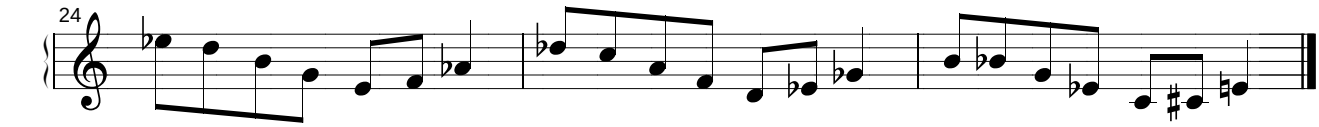


The sound-quality of each altered-chord must be stored deeply in the subconscious before recognition of each is achieved. Also, I have written this example to demonstrate that the Eb Blues Scale, in measure 5, is comprised of all altered tones belonging to C dominant 7. The Blues Scale is authentically justified by the overtone system.

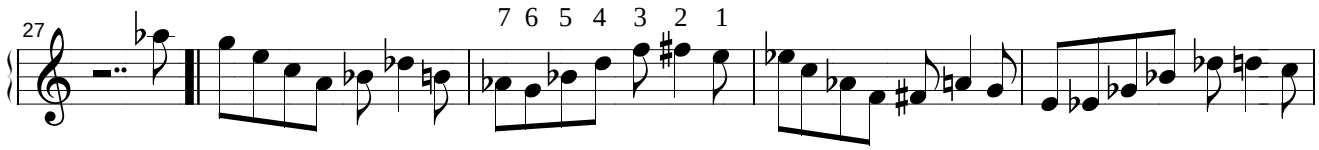
Pattern Phrases

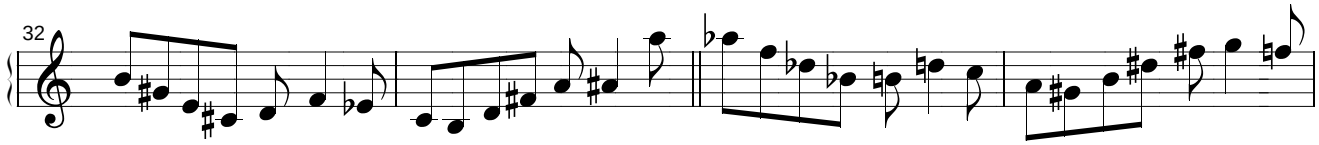


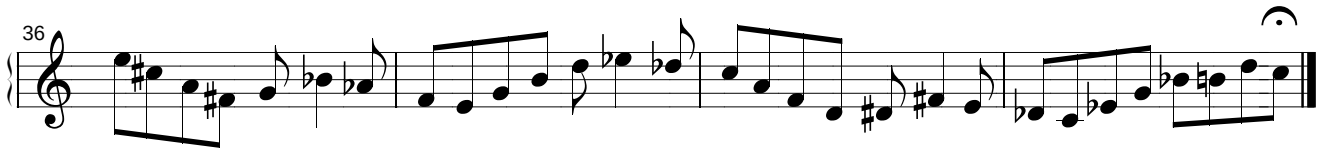
continues

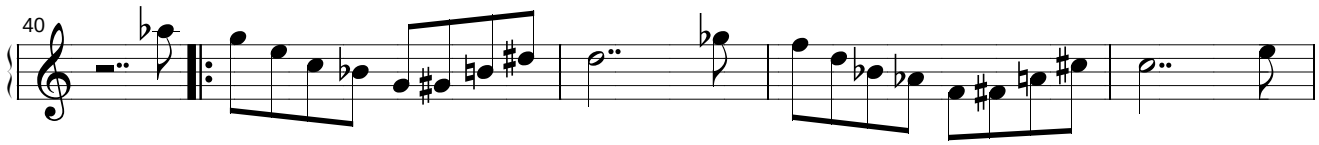


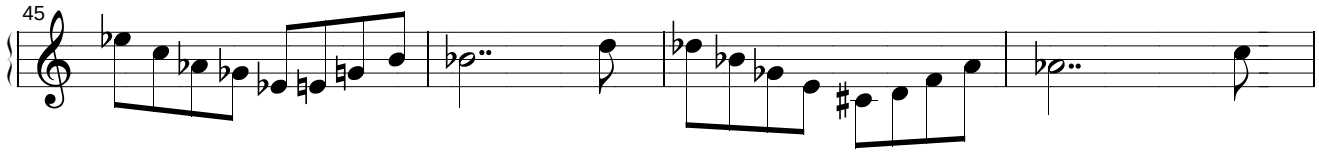
phrase on page 83 in retrograde

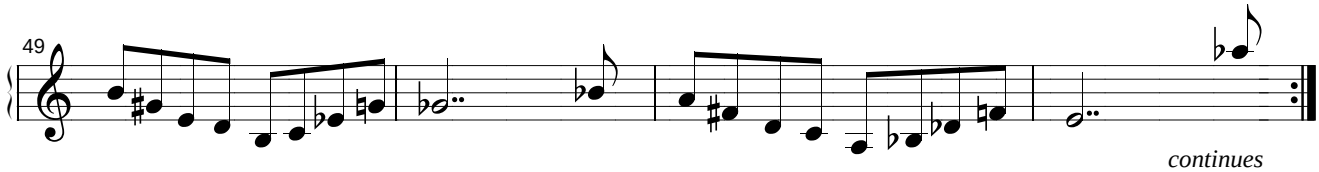




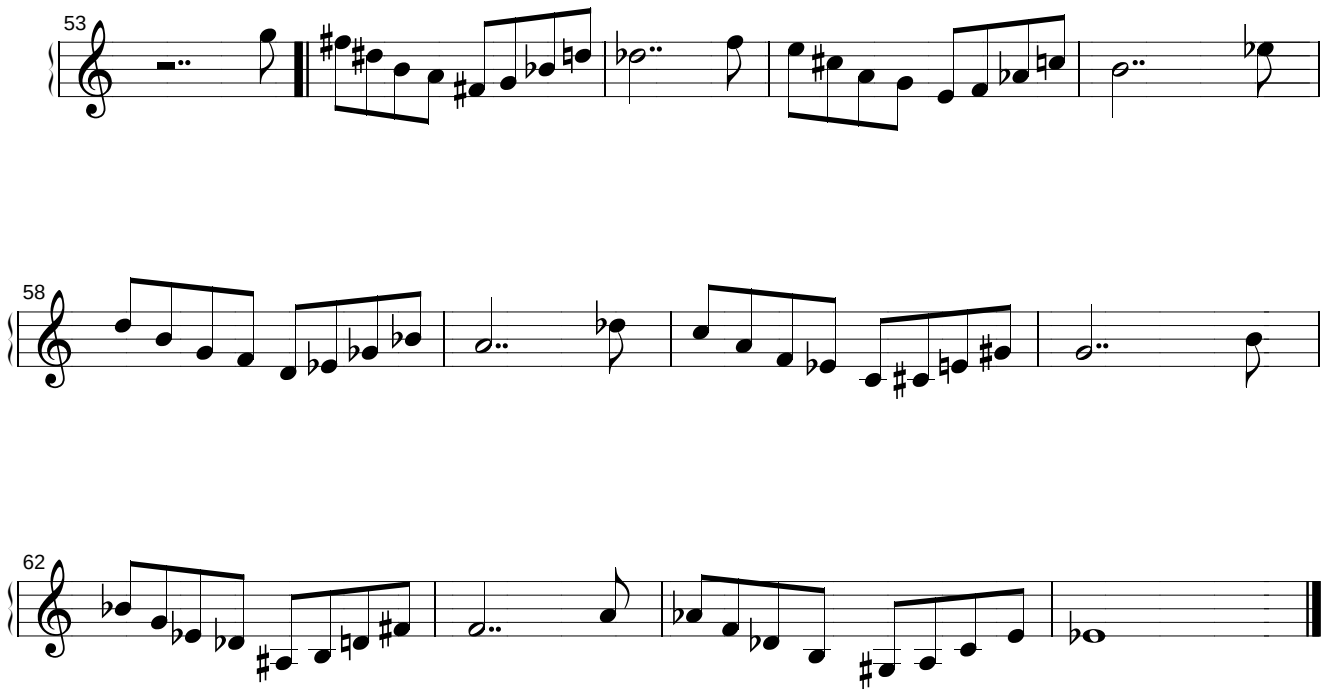




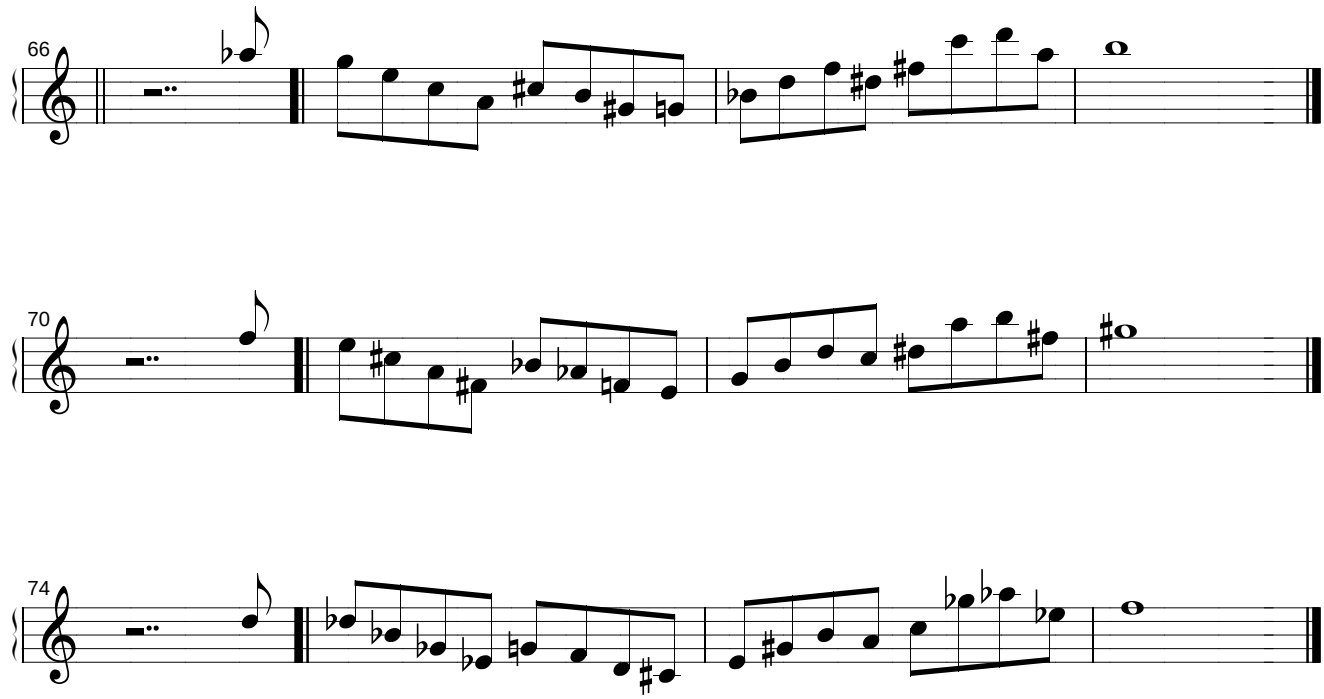




continues

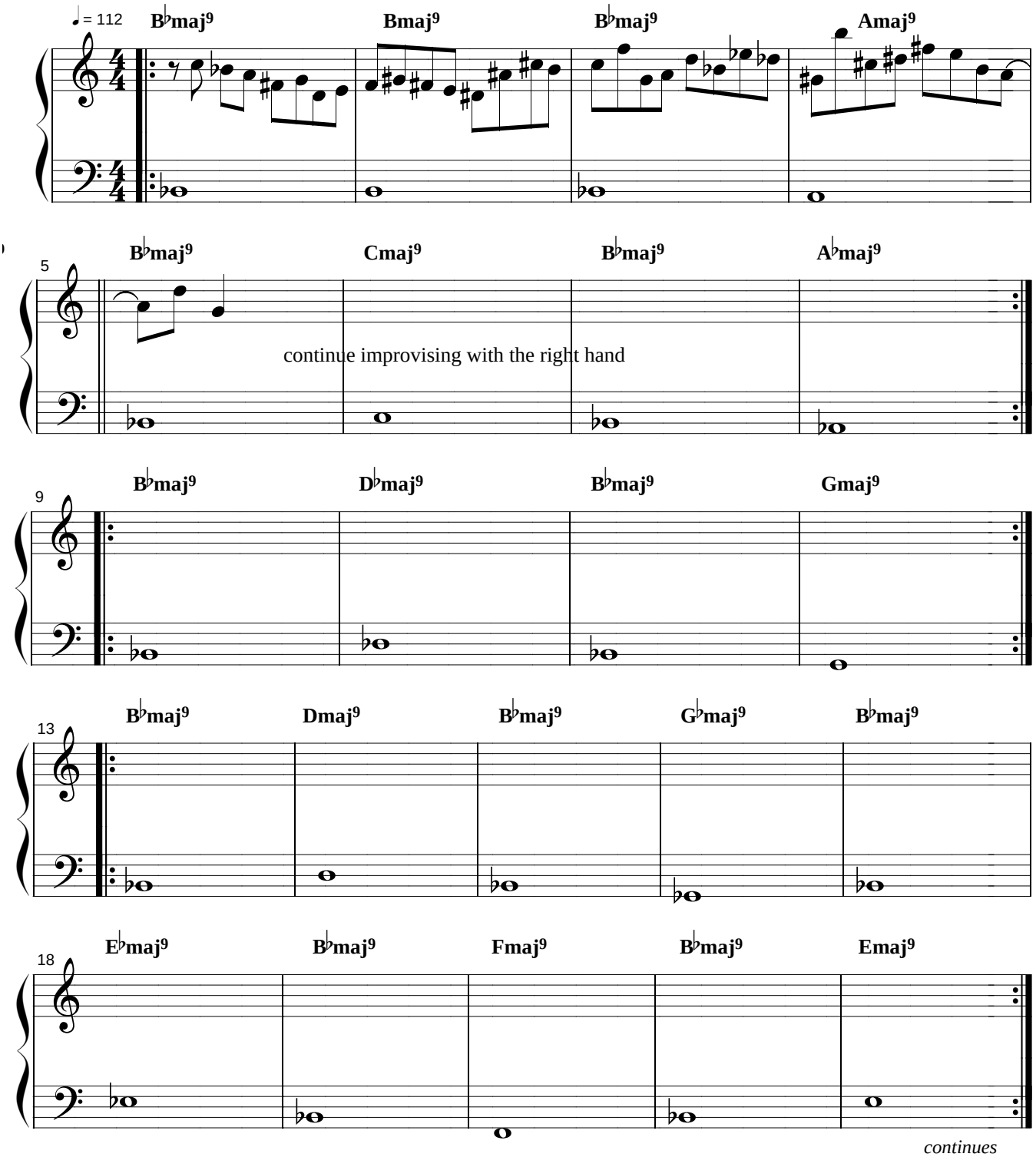


this phrase materialized, surfaced, after working on measures 27, 28 and 29



Shifting Tonalities

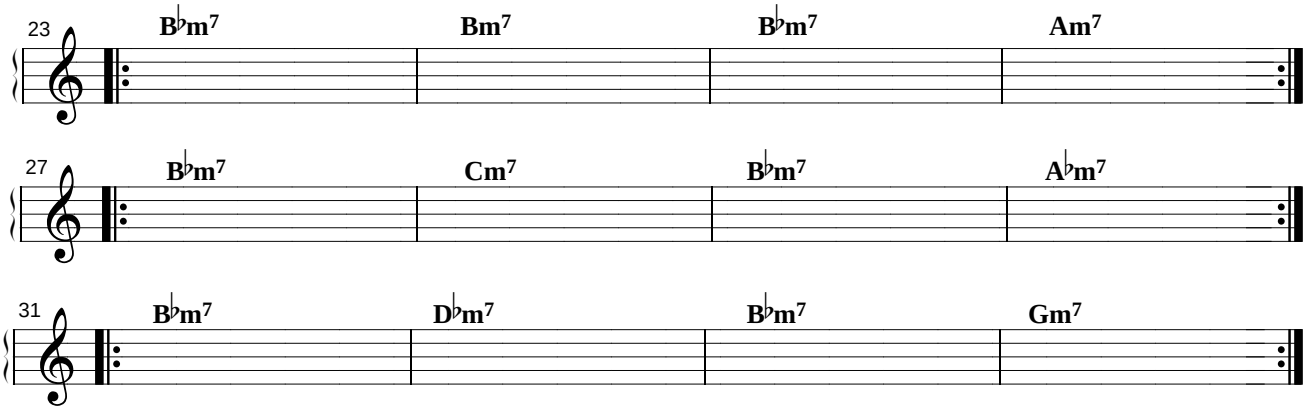
measures 1-5 are a suggested improvised line; continue improvising
and remember to repeat each of the following four-measure phrases



continues

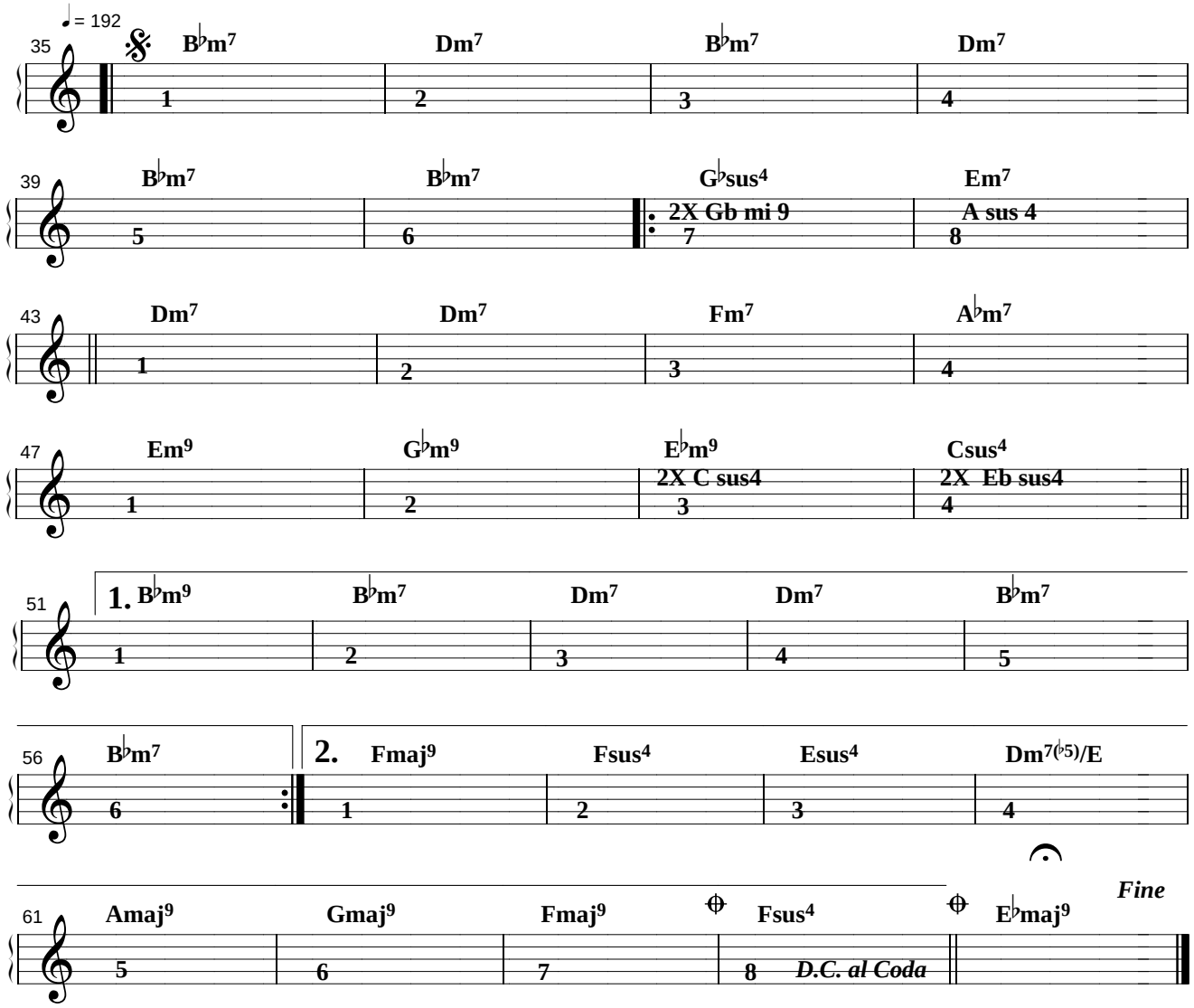
continue with all possible chord-combinations

'Surfing Modal Patterns' resulted from editing pages 86 through 89

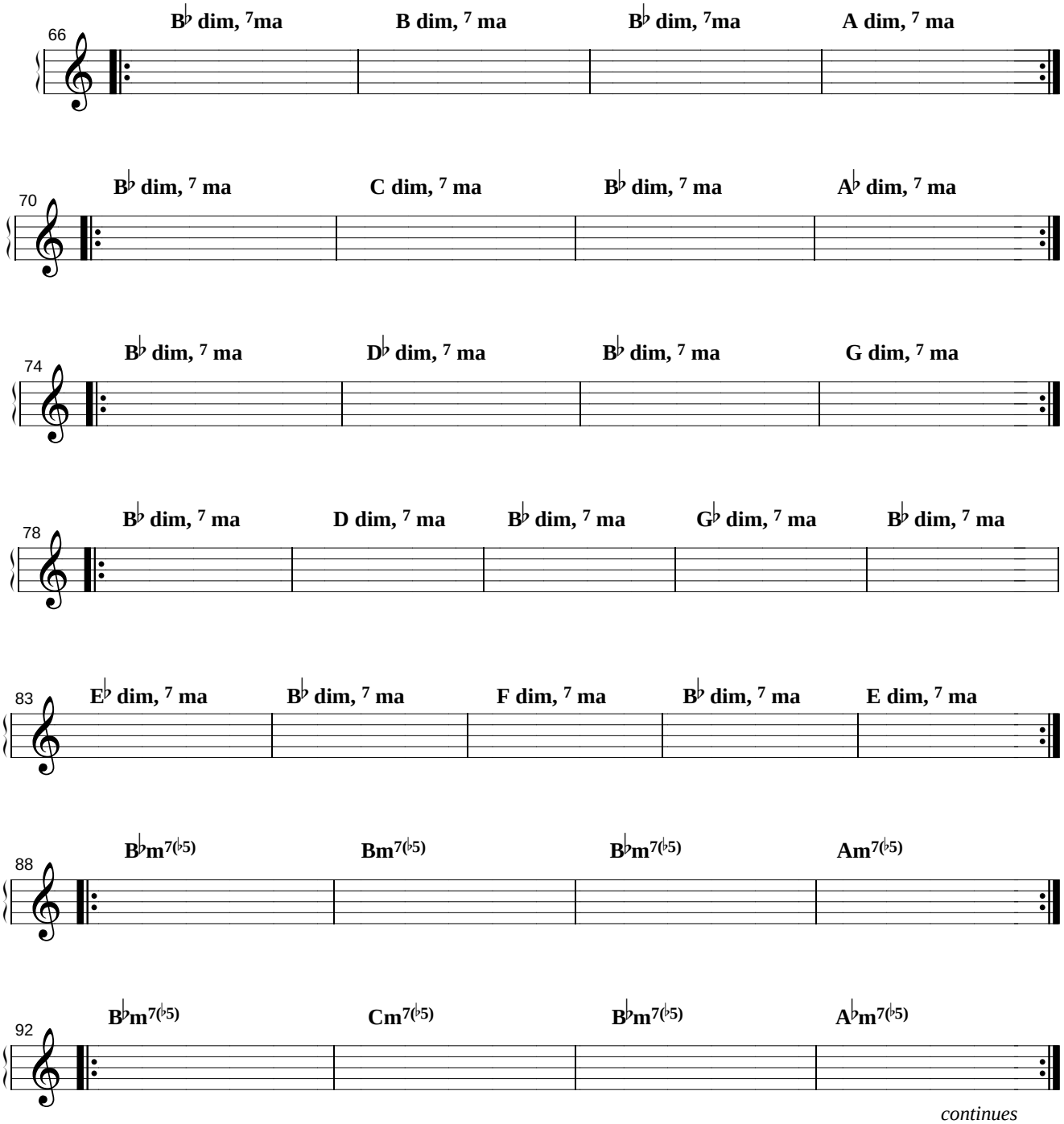


Surfing Modal Patterns

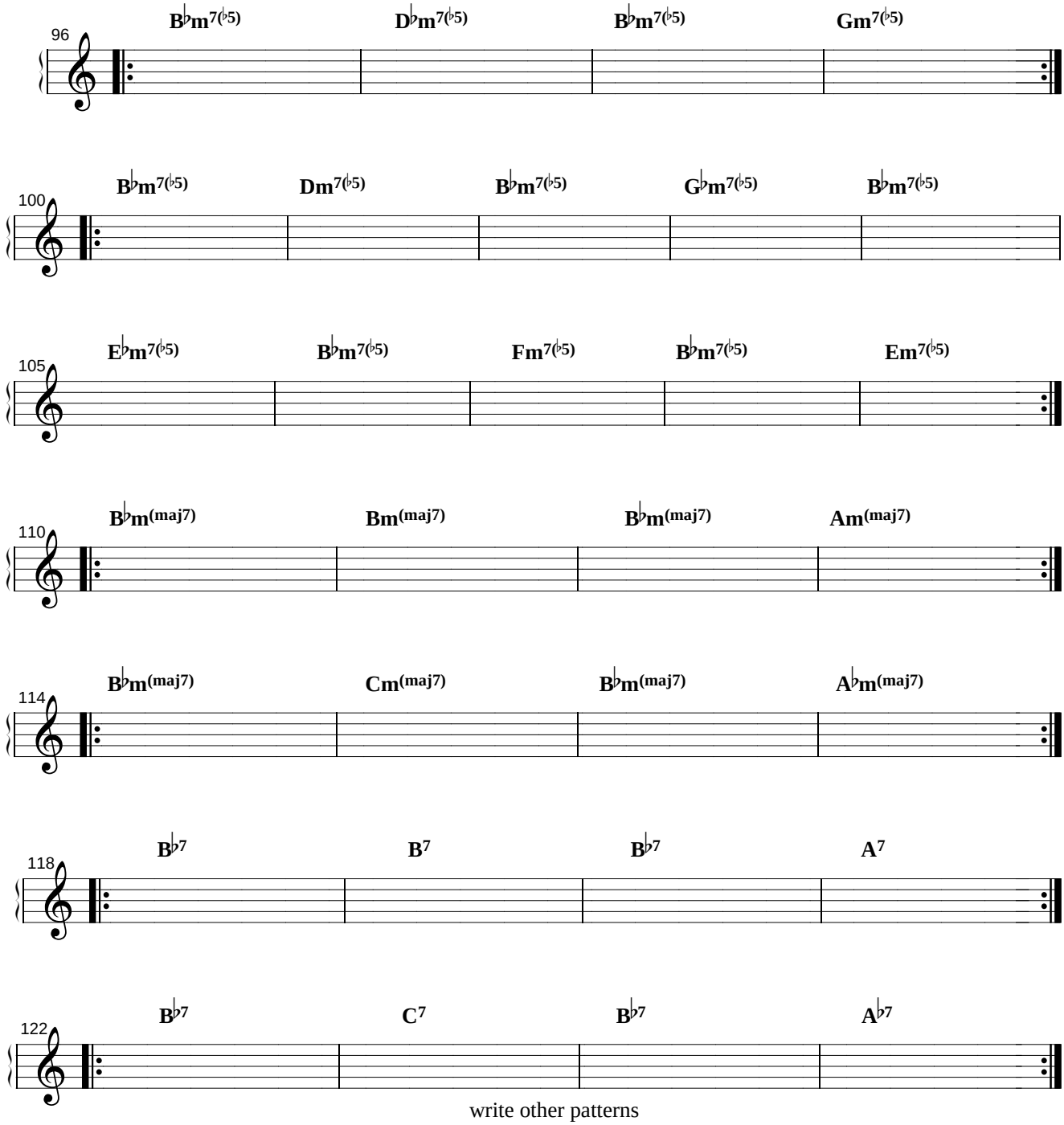
choose a common tone within the chords while singing and counting the measures as you improvise



fingers will perform automatically as you improvise while counting the measures; notice when you count 1, 2, 3, 4 (on 3rd and 4th staves) that your phrasing changes slightly


66
B♭ dim, 7ma
B dim, 7 ma
B♭ dim, 7ma
A dim, 7 ma
70
B♭ dim, 7 ma
C dim, 7 ma
B♭ dim, 7 ma
A♭ dim, 7 ma
74
B♭ dim, 7 ma
D♭ dim, 7 ma
B♭ dim, 7 ma
G dim, 7 ma
78
B♭ dim, 7 ma
D dim, 7 ma
B♭ dim, 7 ma
G♭ dim, 7 ma
B♭ dim, 7 ma
83
E♭ dim, 7 ma
B♭ dim, 7 ma
F dim, 7 ma
B♭ dim, 7 ma
E dim, 7 ma
88
B♭m7(♭5)
Bm7(♭5)
B♭m7(♭5)
Am7(♭5)
92
B♭m7(♭5)
Cm7(♭5)
B♭m7(♭5)
A♭m7(♭5)

continues



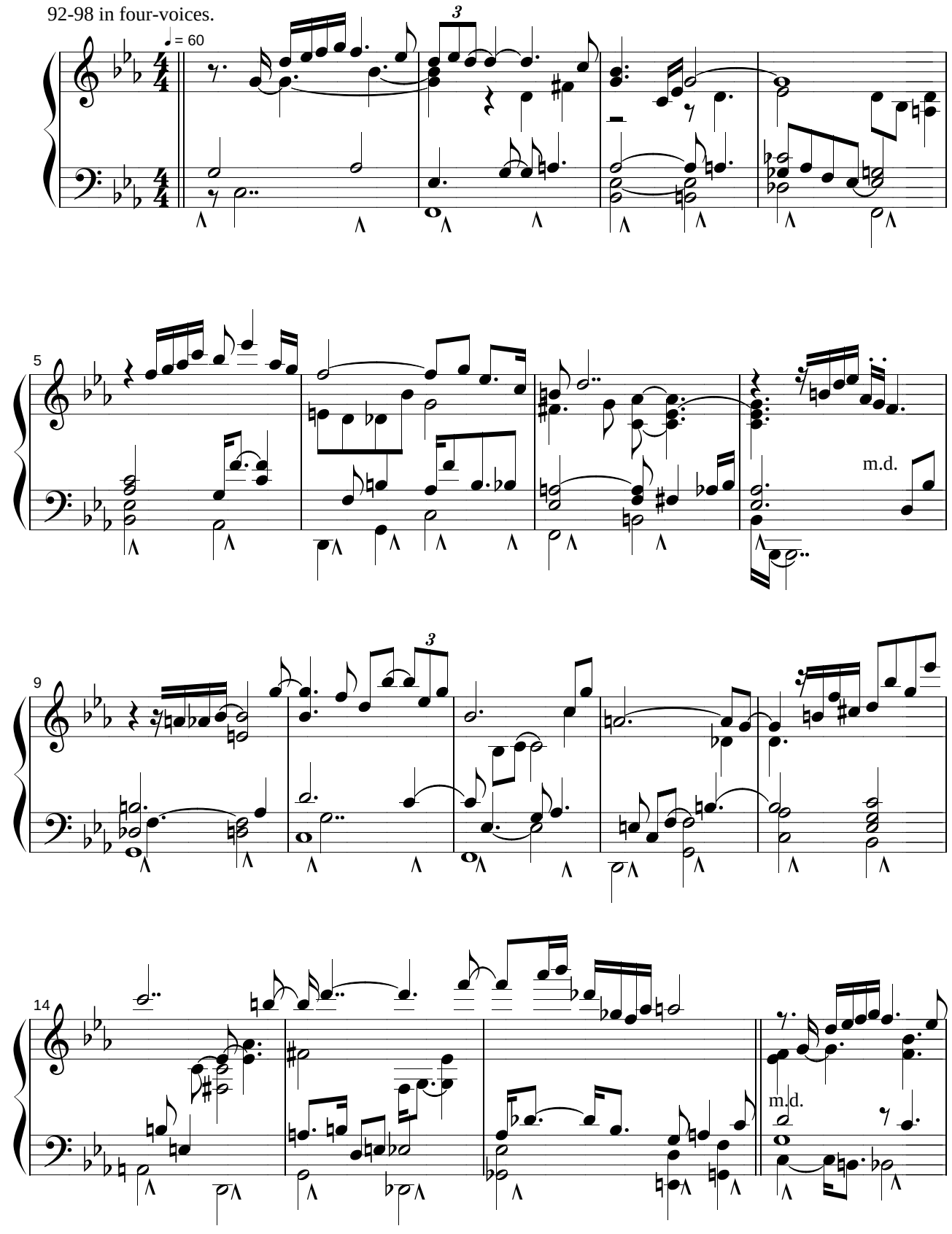
write other patterns

A Crest of Amber

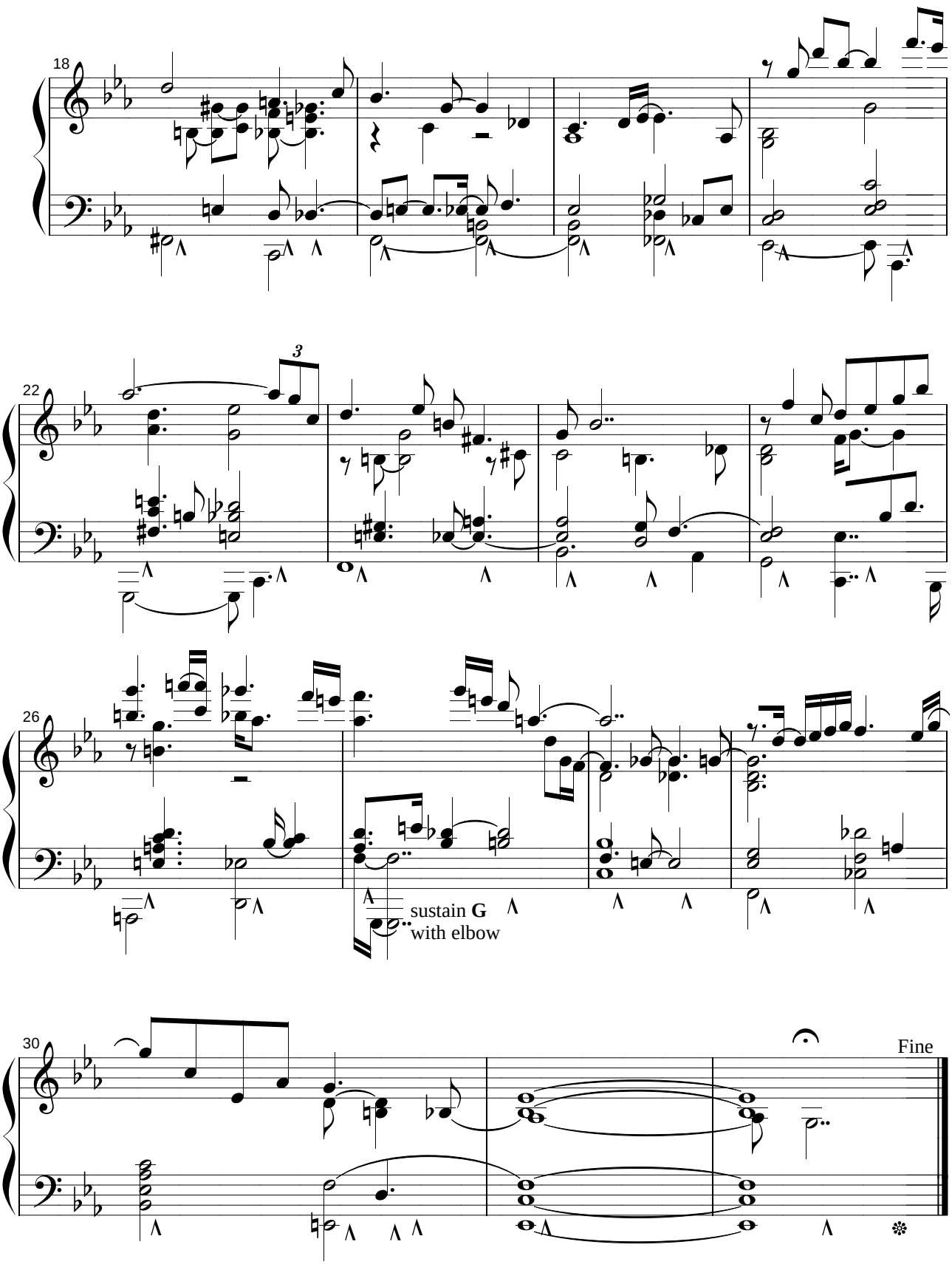
pedal symbols: down = ^ up = ❁

W. Norris

Skeletal-harmonisation for pages 92-98 in four-voices.



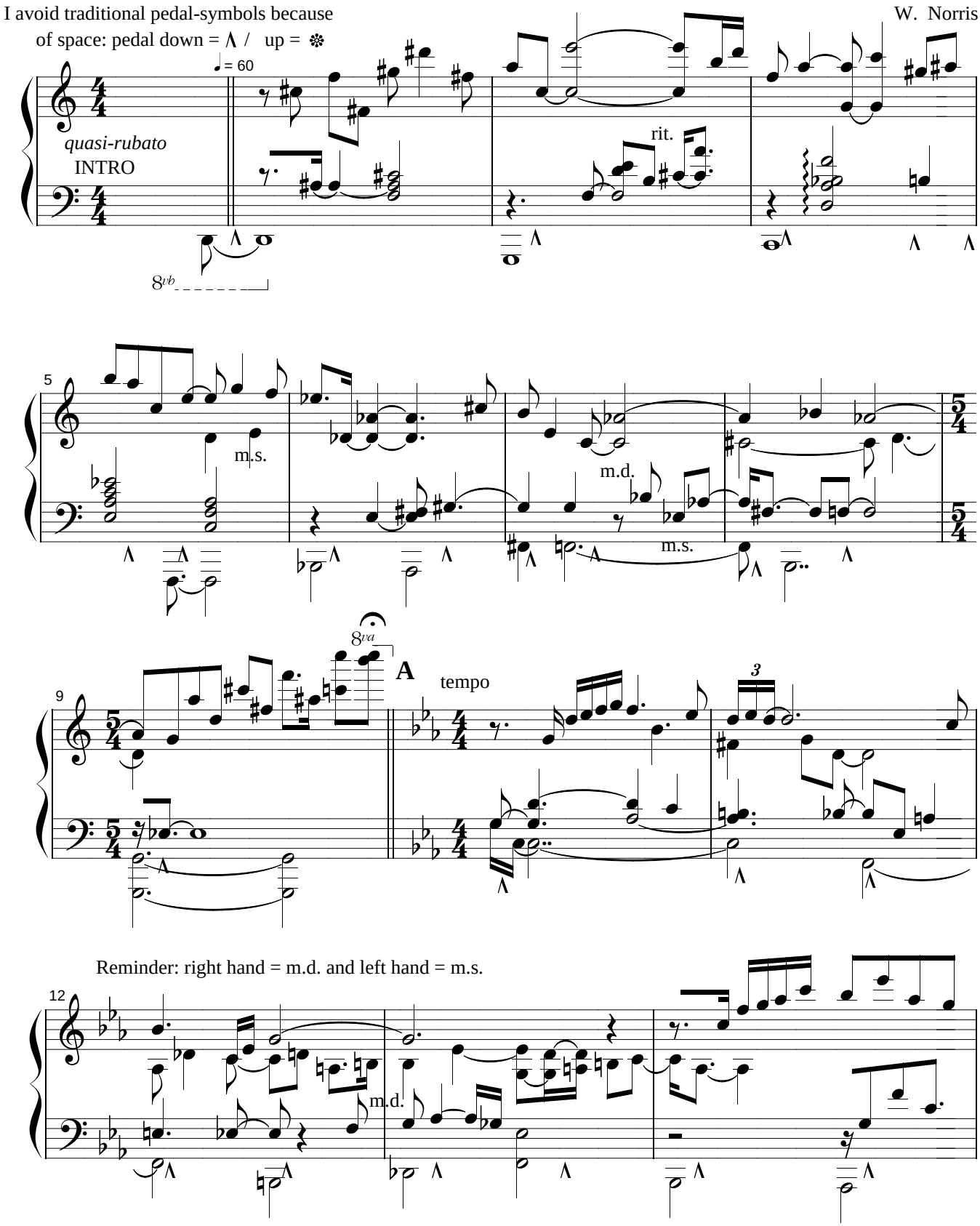
I intended to write in 3-voices but the melody, harmonically, required more elaboration.


18
22
3
26
sustain **G**
with elbow
30
Fine

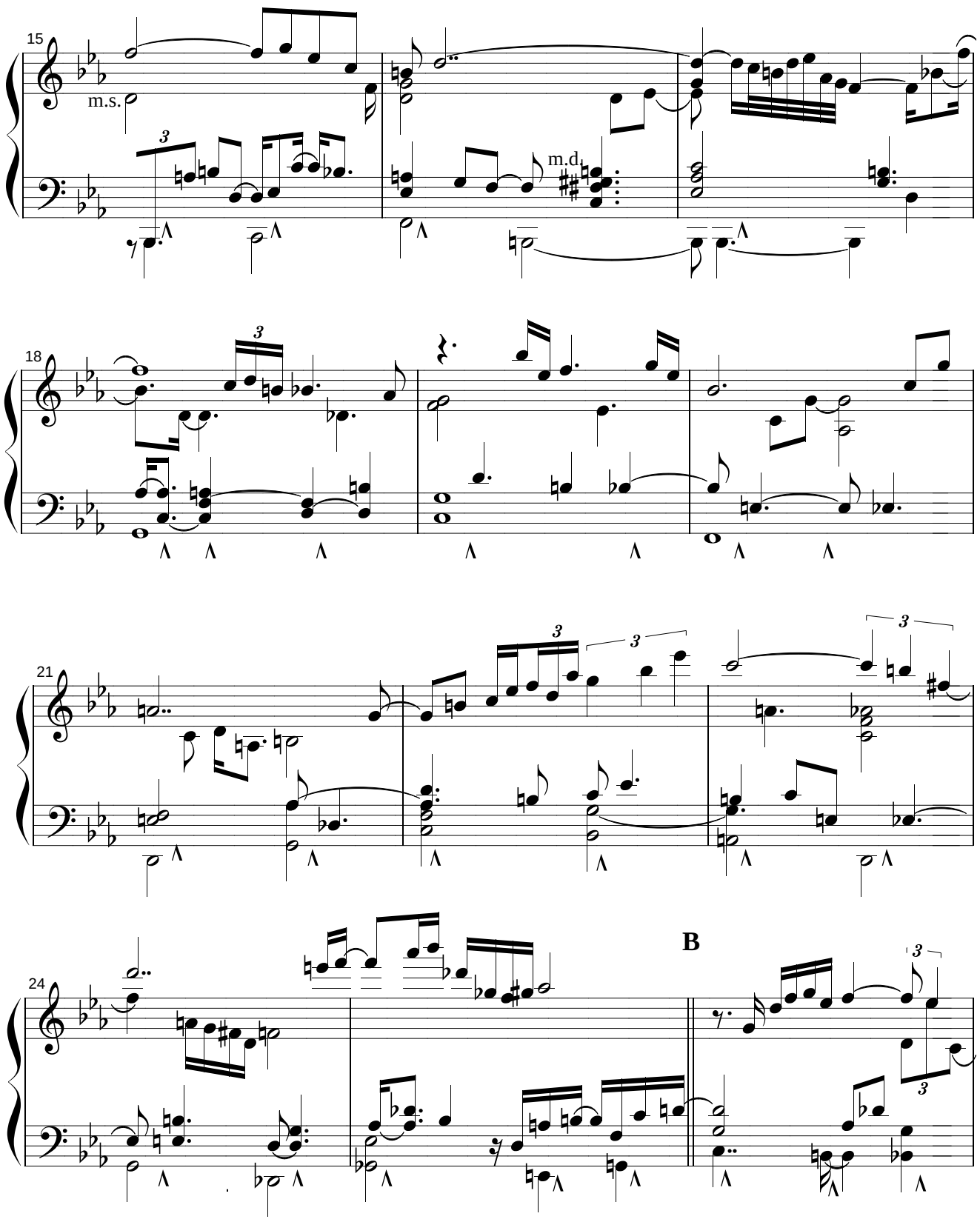
A CREST OF AMBER

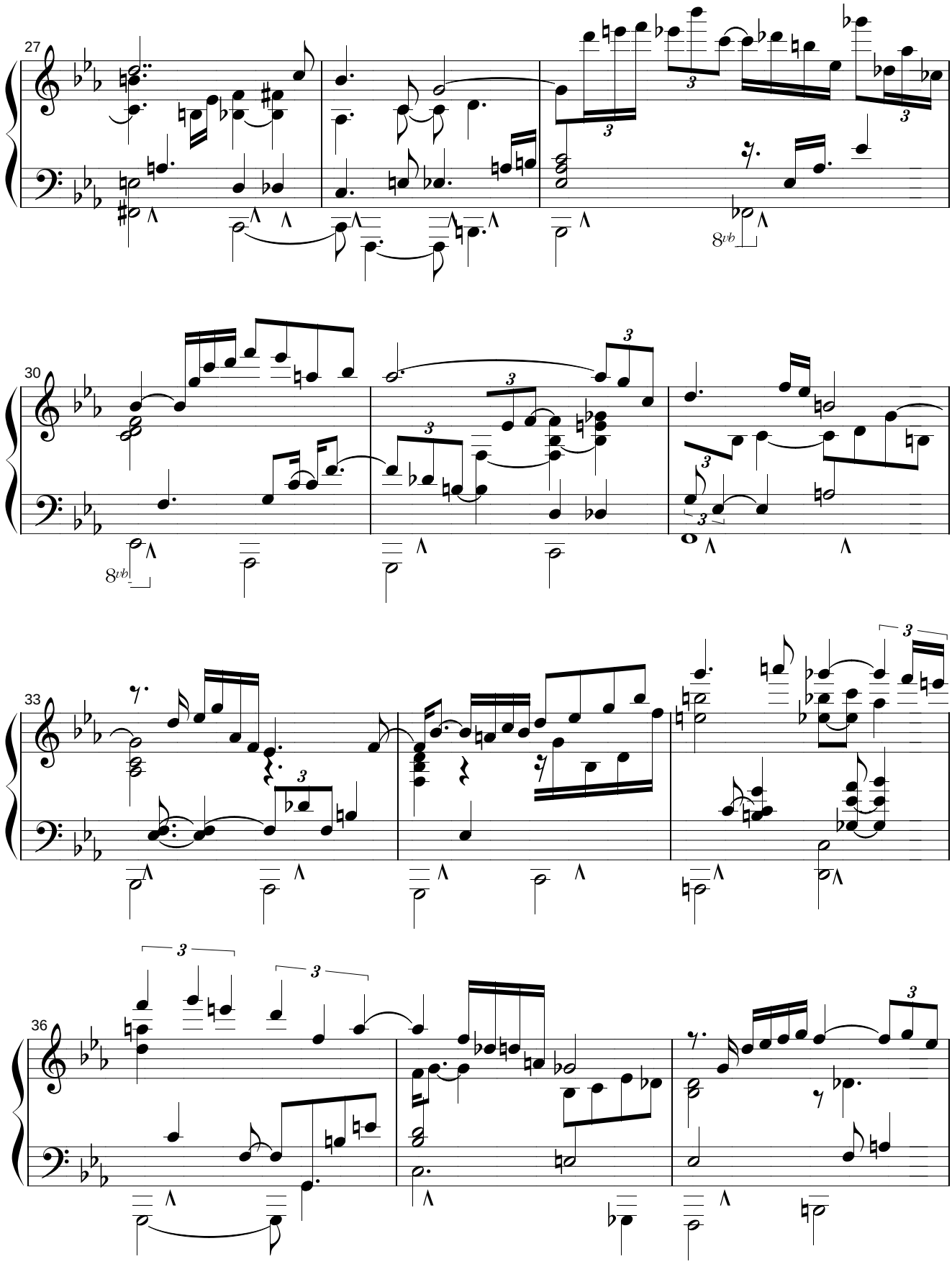
I avoid traditional pedal-symbols because of space: pedal down = Λ / up = ❁

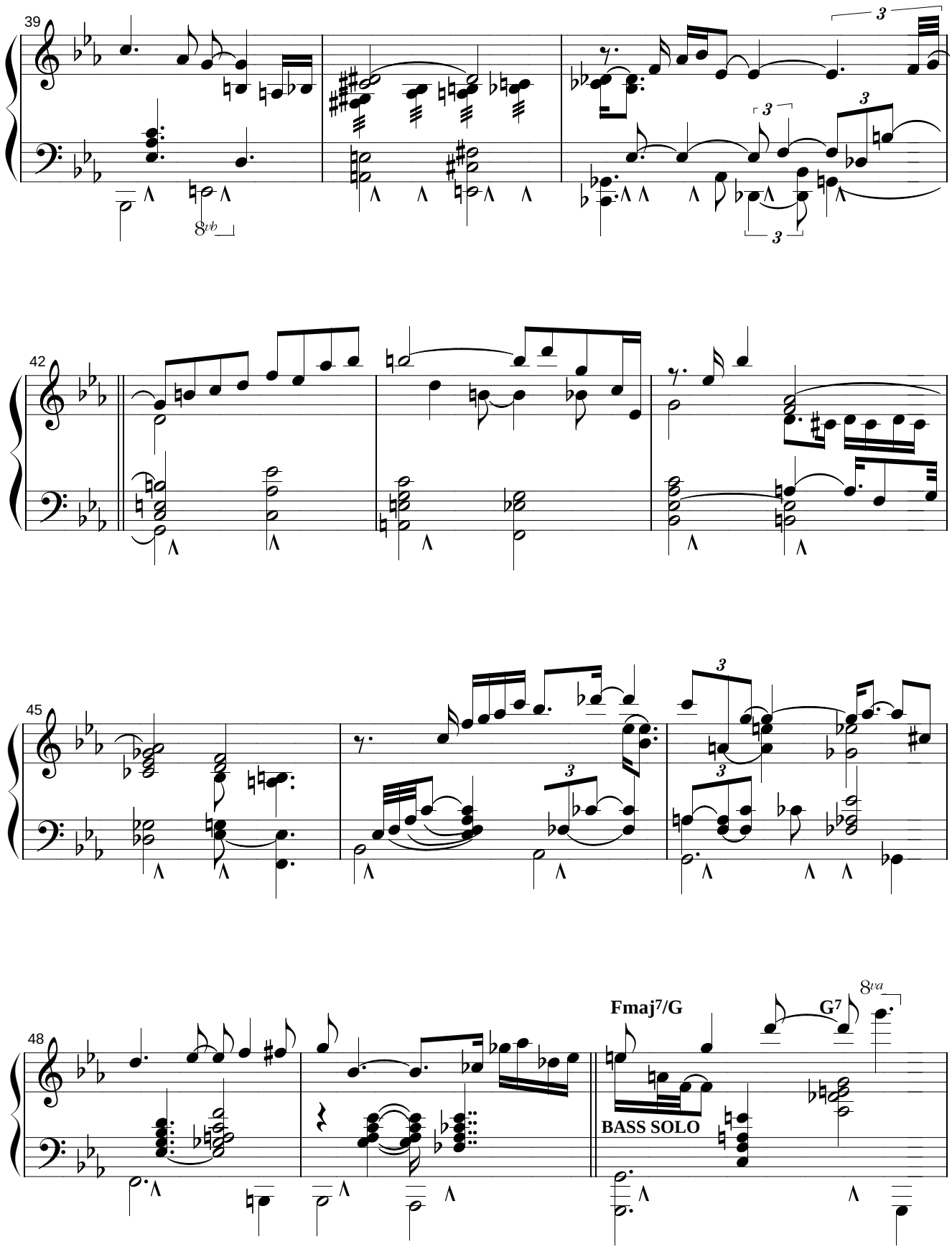
W. Norris

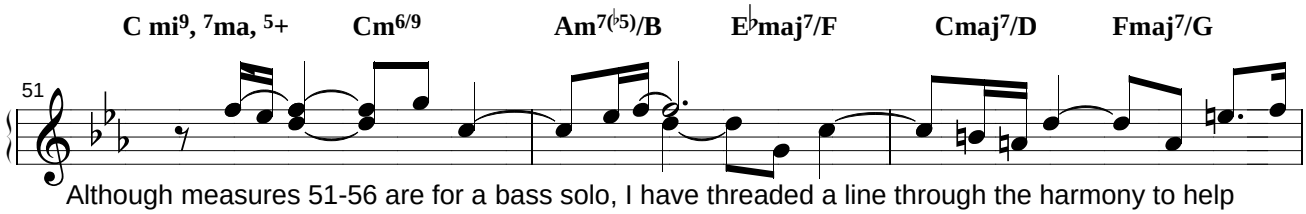


Sunburst Recordings, Inc. (SRCD 2001-2) 'From Another Star' with bassist, Mike Richmond

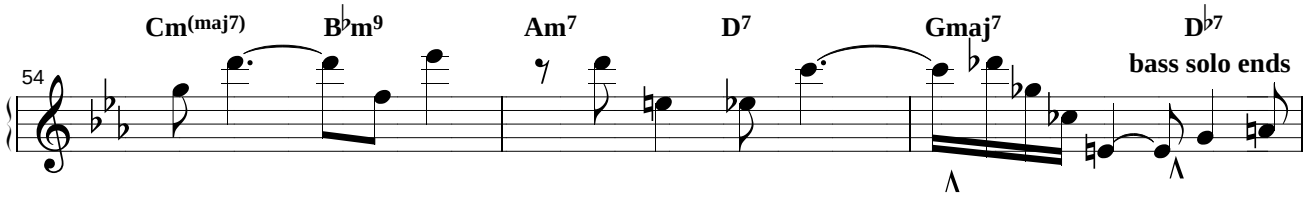

15
m.s.
m.d
18
21
24
B

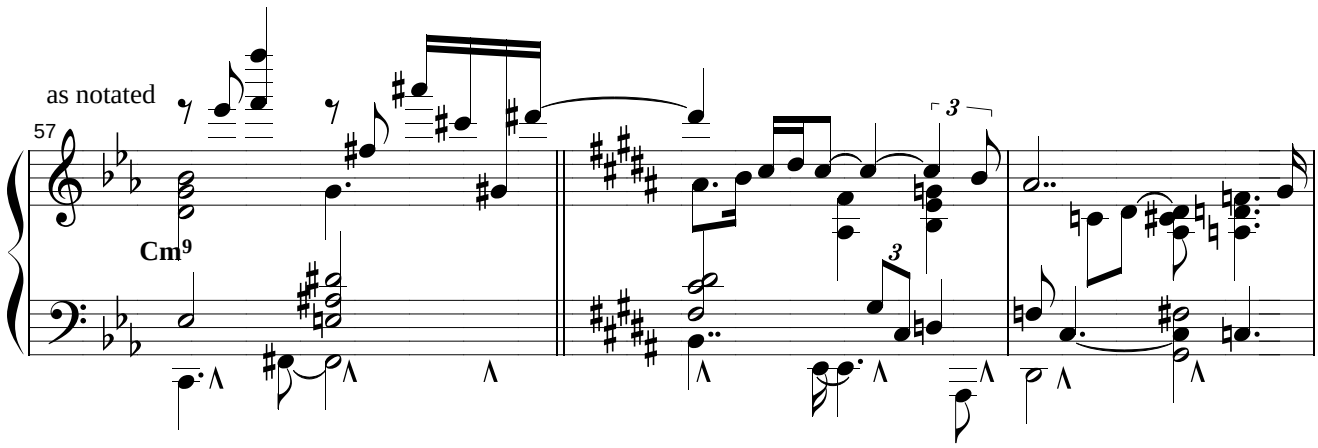

27
8vb
30
8vb
33
36

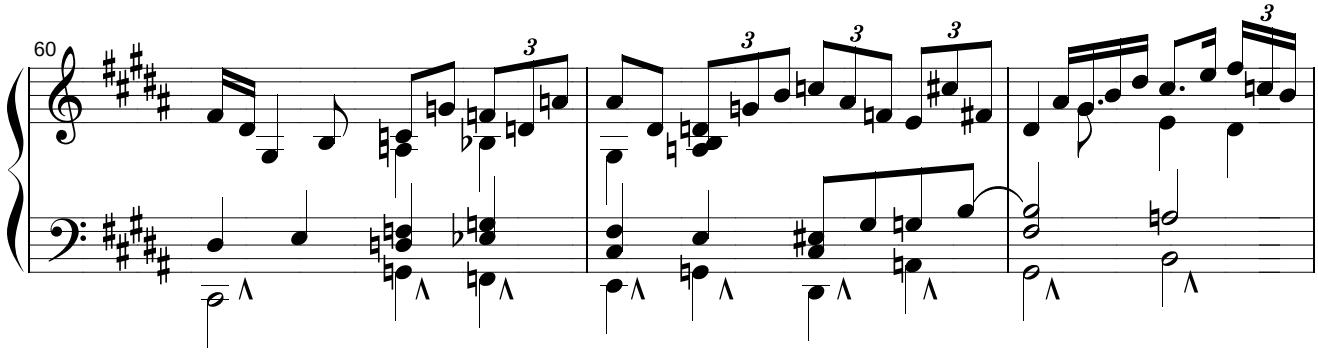

39
8vb
42
45
48
Fmaj7/G
G7
8va
BASS SOLO

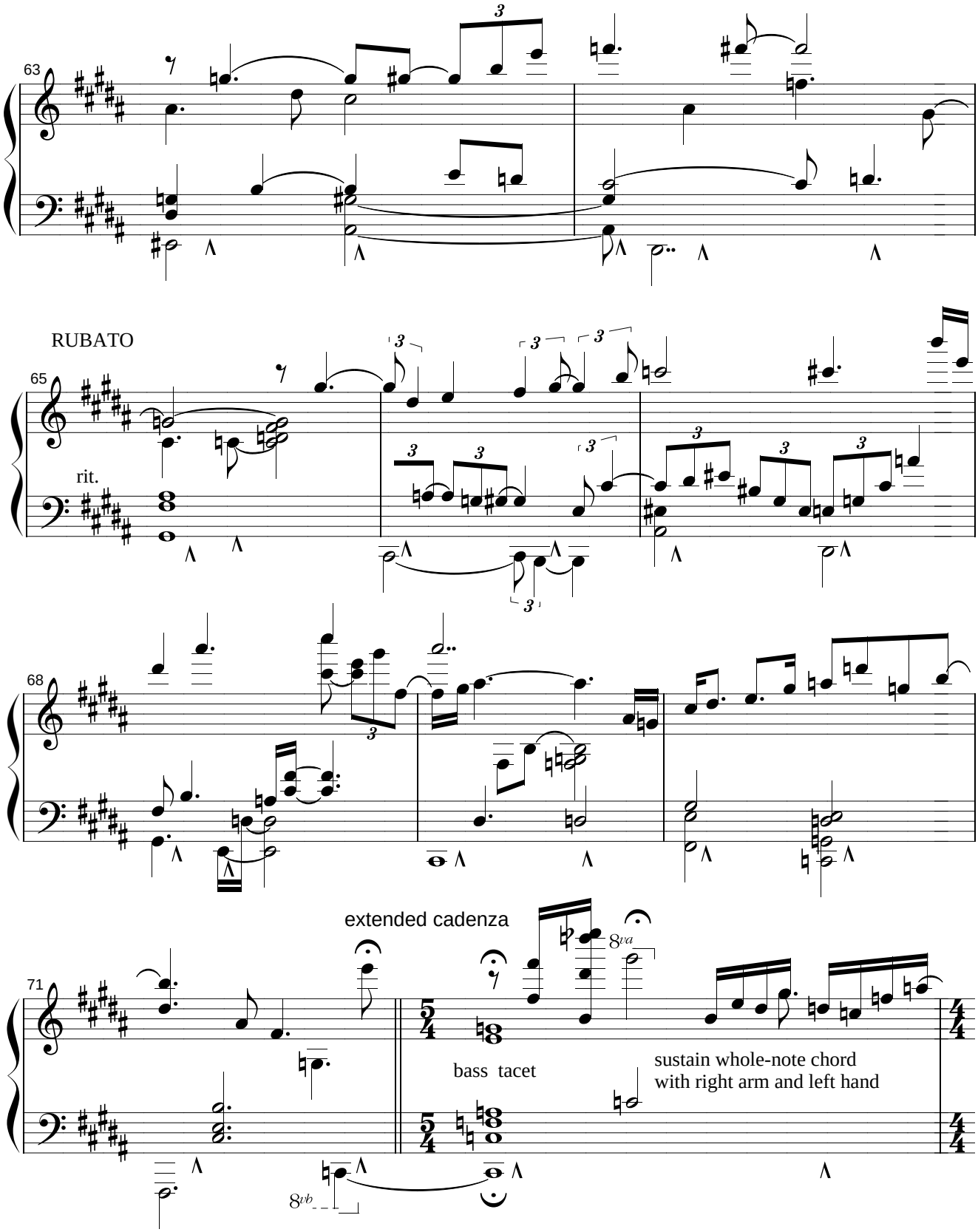


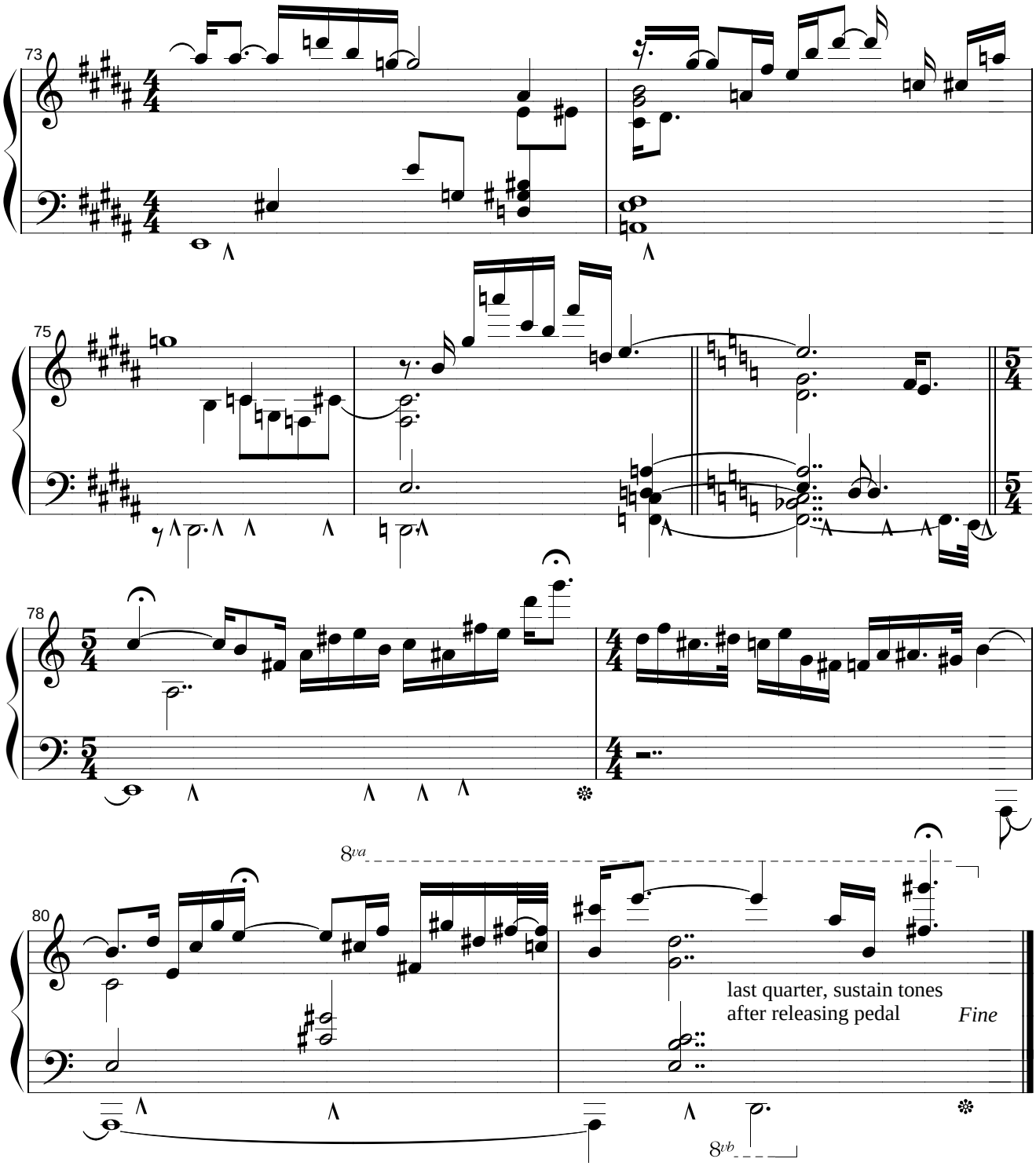
Although measures 51-56 are for a bass solo, I have threaded a line through the harmony to help with the memorization of chords; this procedure is applicable for all difficult progressions.







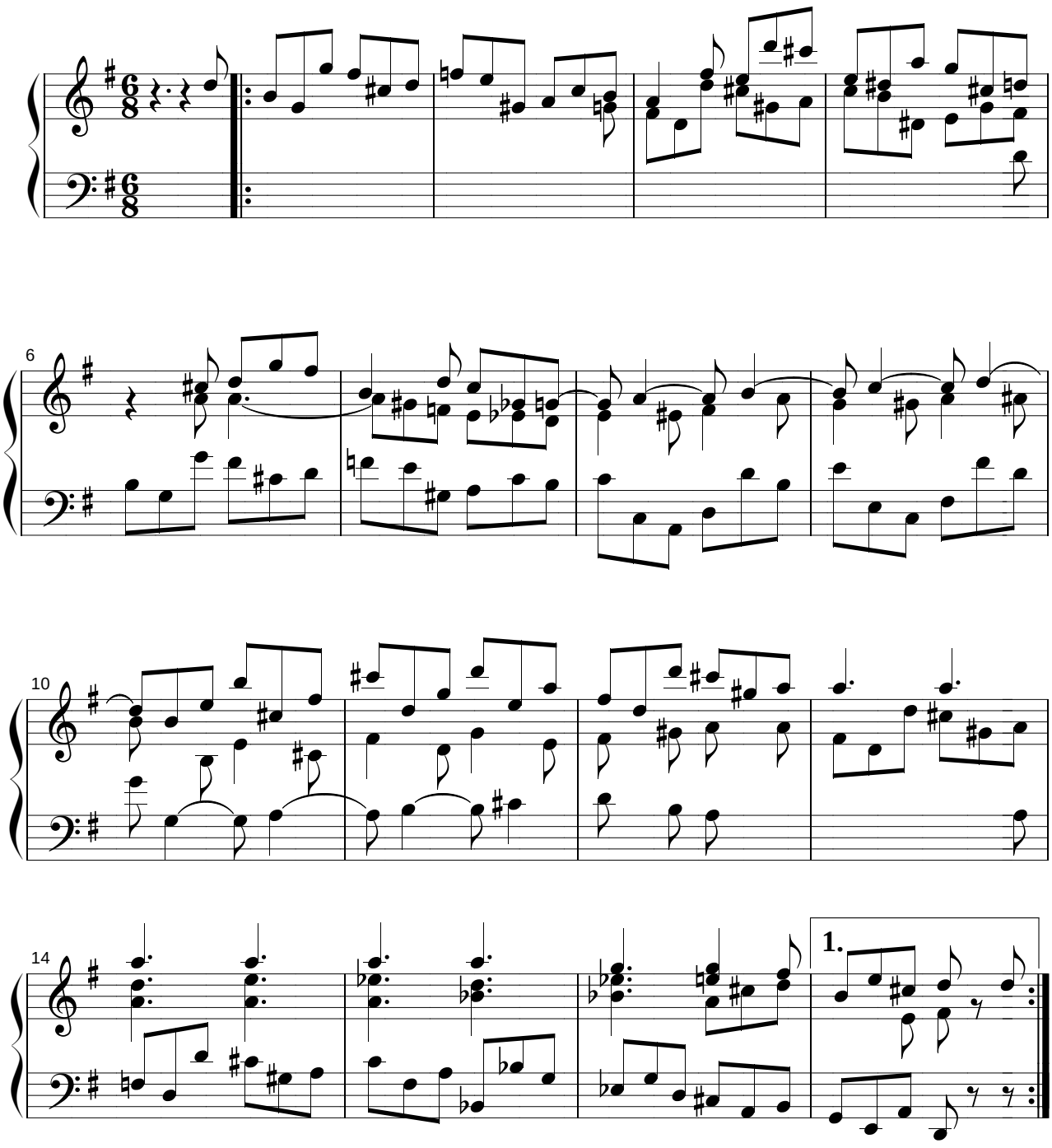

63
RUBATO
65
rit.
68
extended cadenza
71
8va
bass tacet
sustain whole-note chord
with right arm and left hand
8vb


73
75
78
80
8va
last quarter, sustain tones
after releasing pedal
Fine
8vb

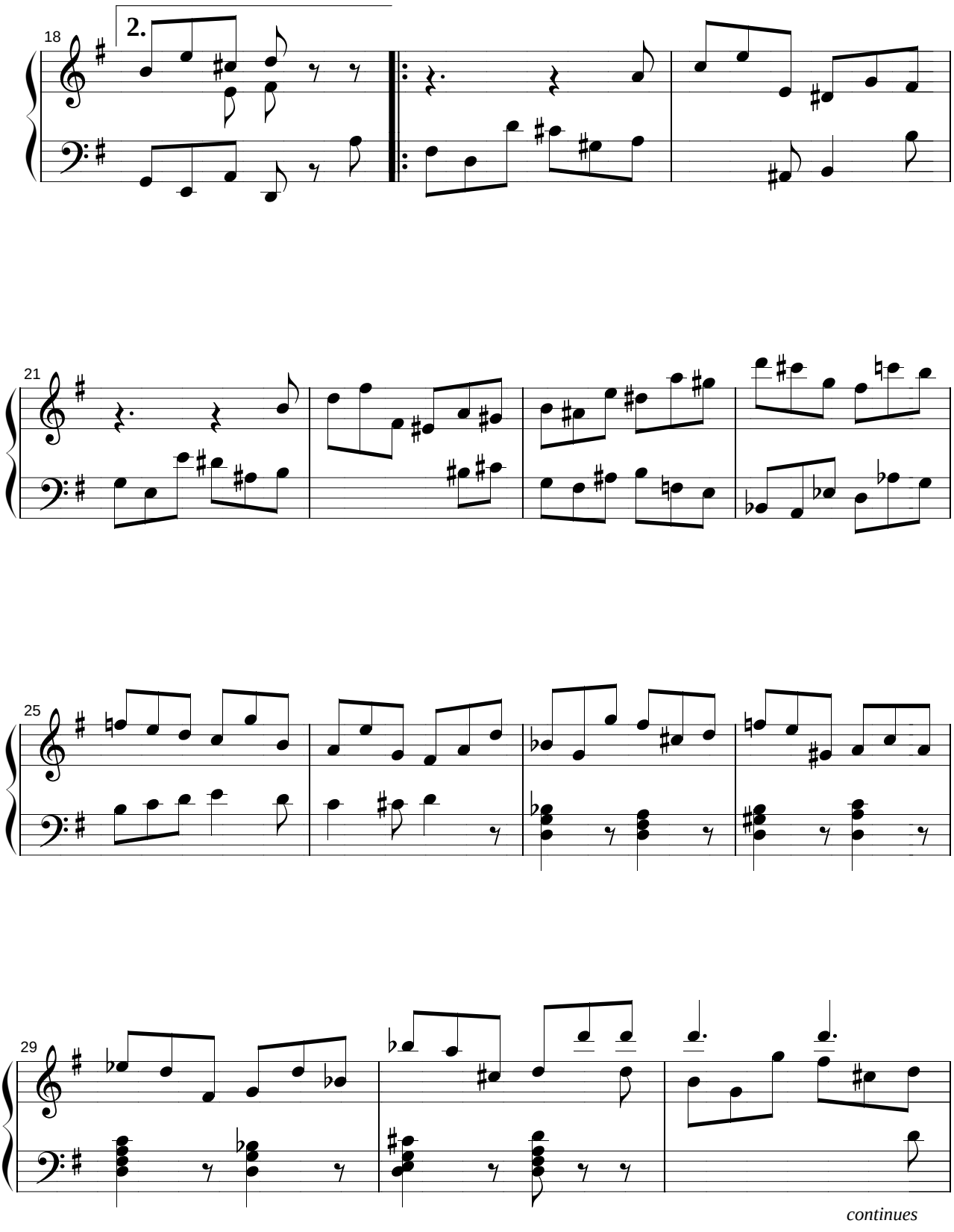
Gigue in G major

K.574

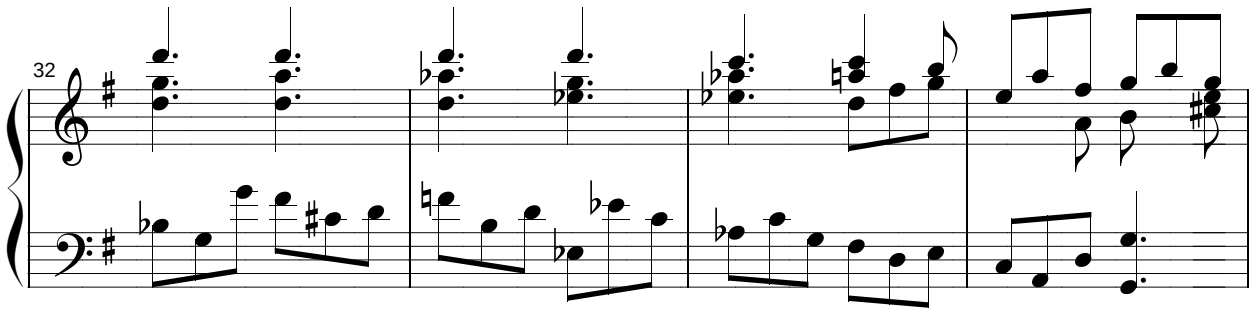
W. A. Mozart

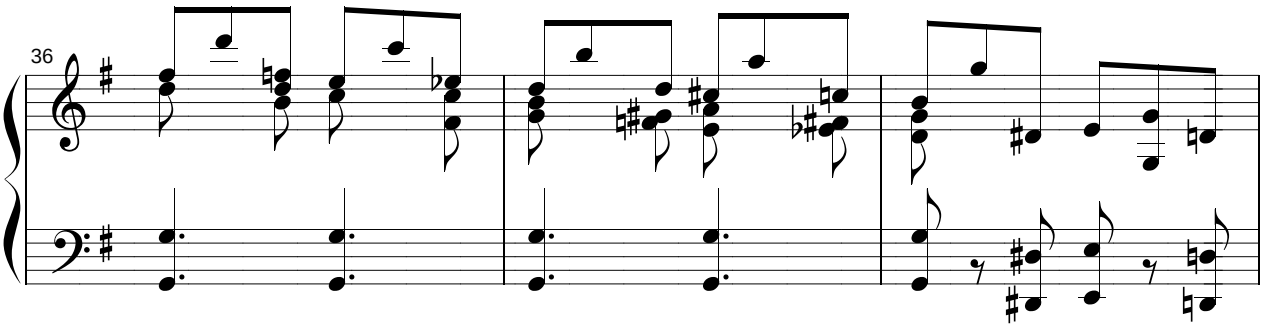


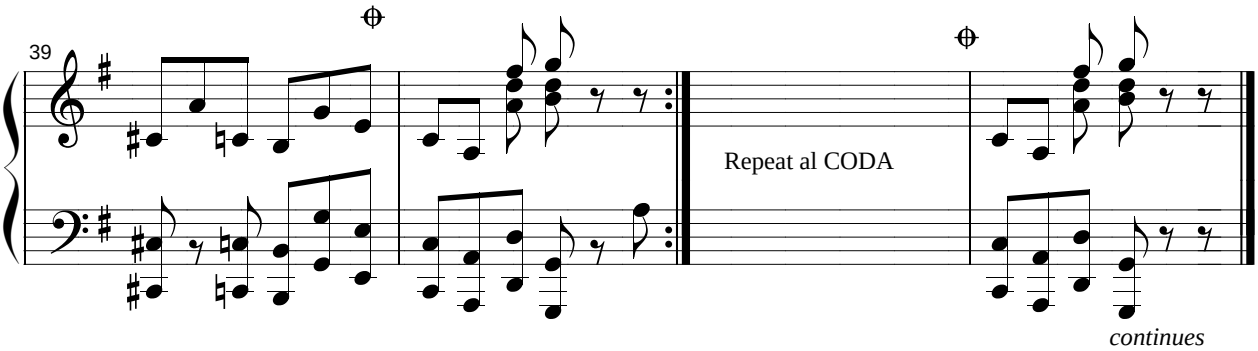
Incidentally, this composition was written in Leipzig on the 16th of May 1789 and it has three versions with intervals slightly altered in measure six. In the B section, on the following page, you will find that measures 22-24 contain a harmonic-sequence found in jazz; and if the bass-clef is played alone it sounds exactly like a walking bass-line by Ray Brown. When I brought this to his attention he was astonished. It's truly mathematical phenomena that this same sequence occured approximately 160 years later in jazz.



continues



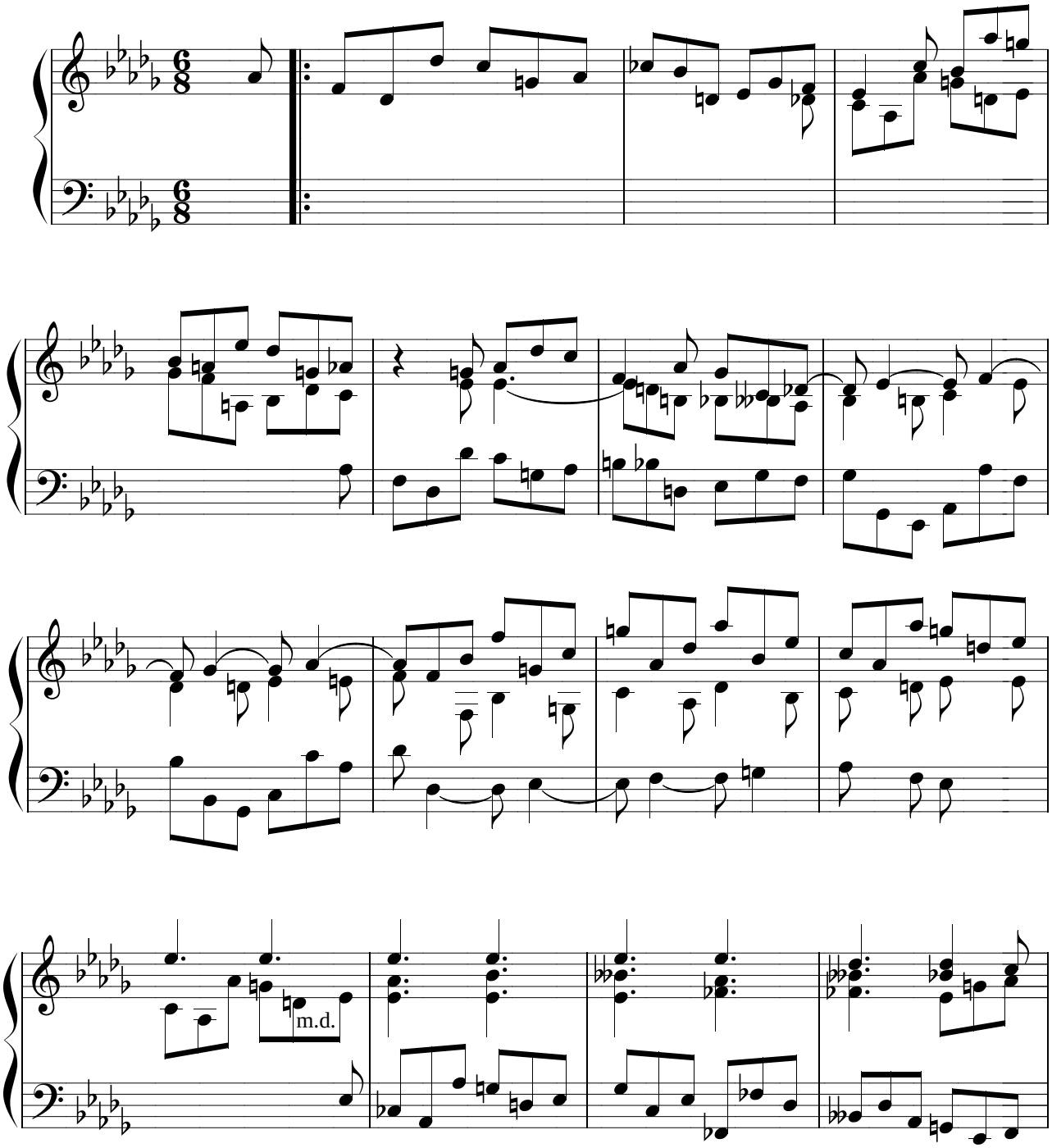




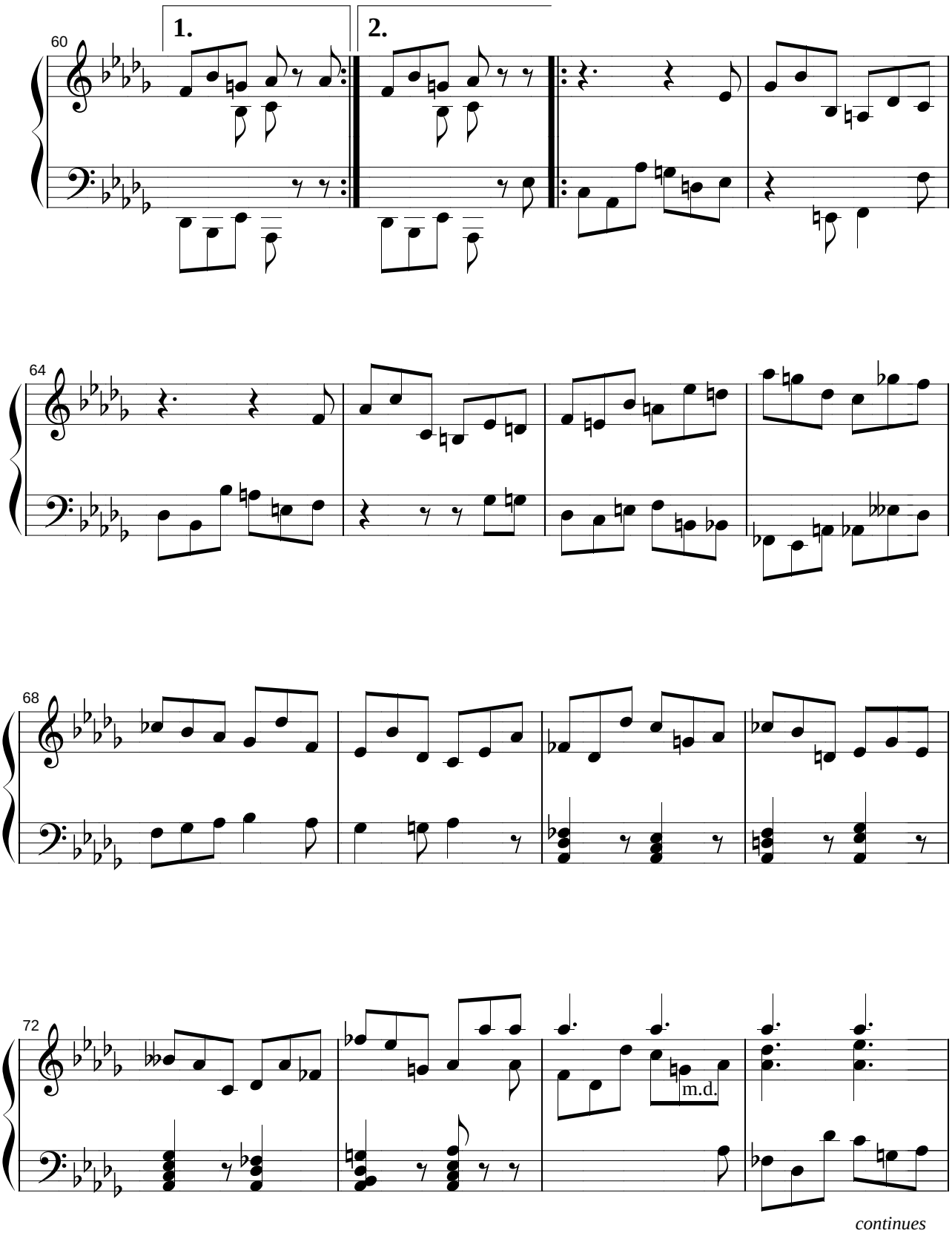
continues

Gigue in G Major

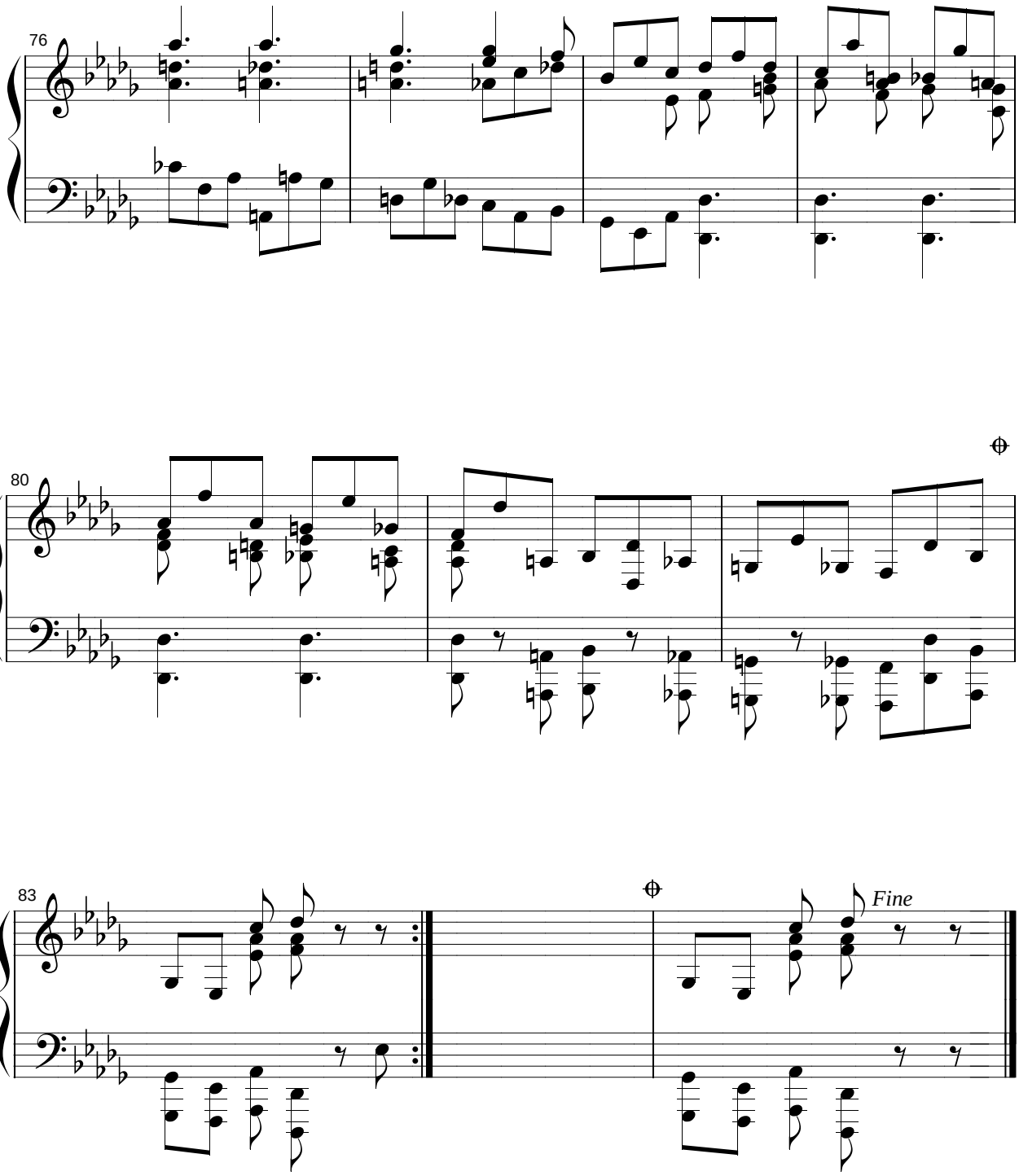
tri-tone transposition



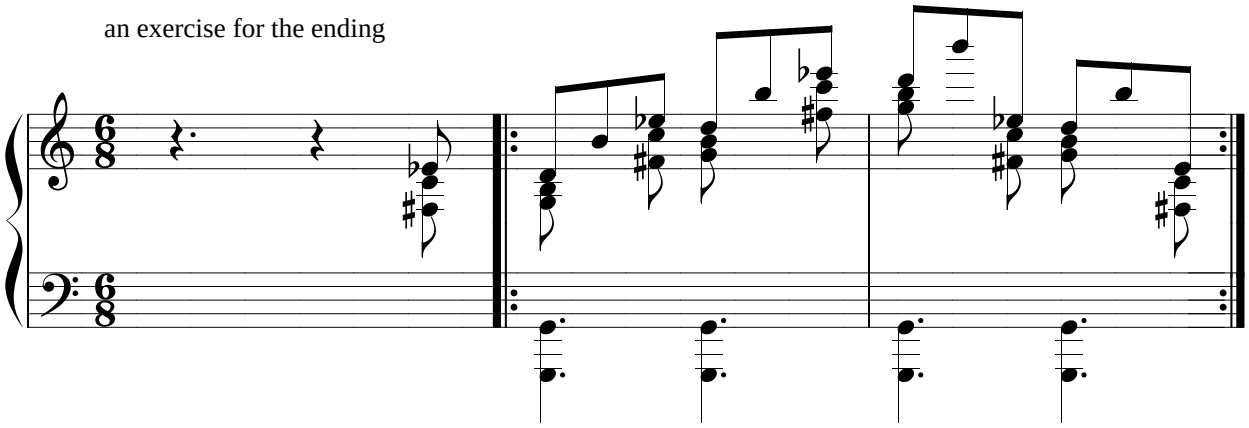
Tri-tone transposition is beneficial because all white-keys played in the original tonality become black-keys when transposed, the reverse is true for black, with the exception of F and B natural which are white keys.



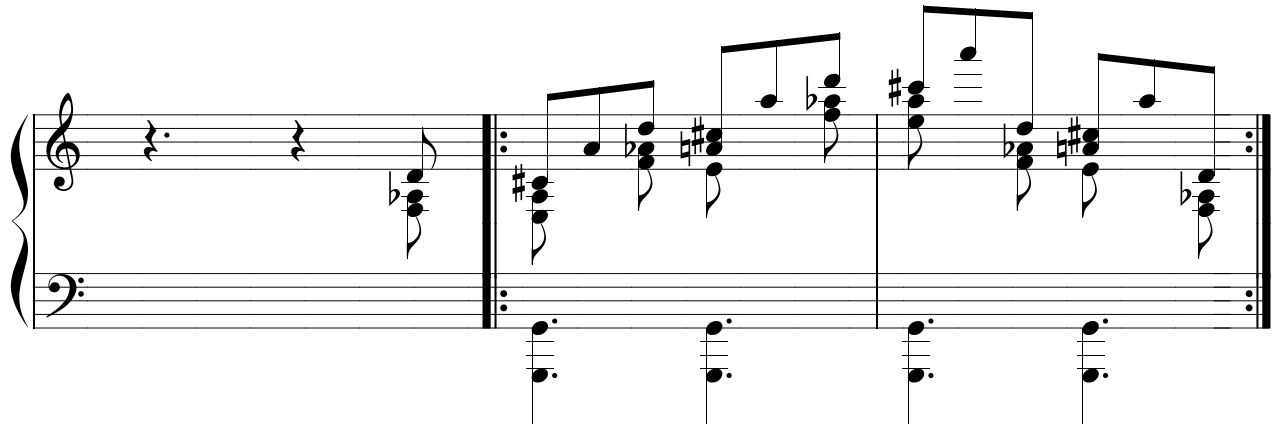
continues

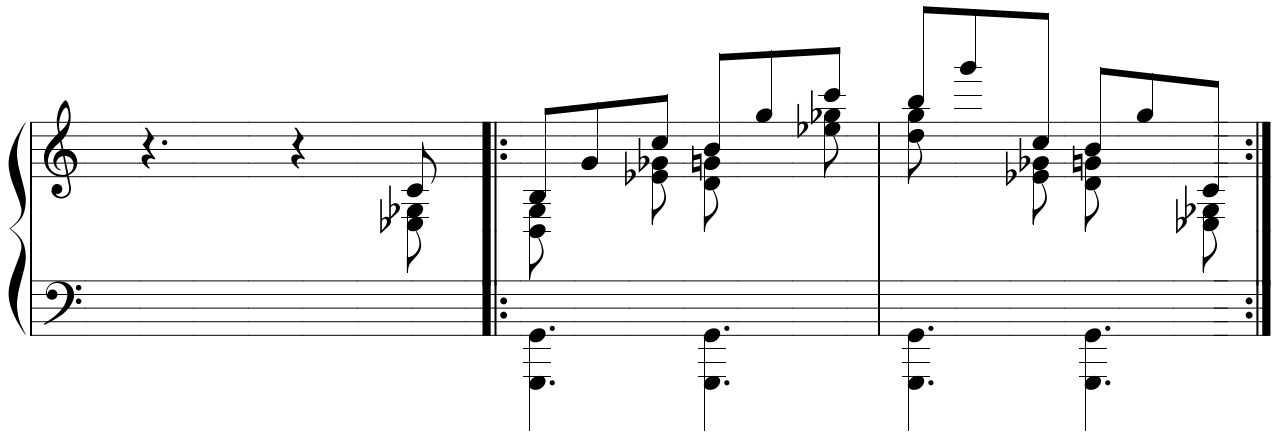

76
80
83
Fine

an exercise for the ending



these examples should encourage you to write your own technical exercises

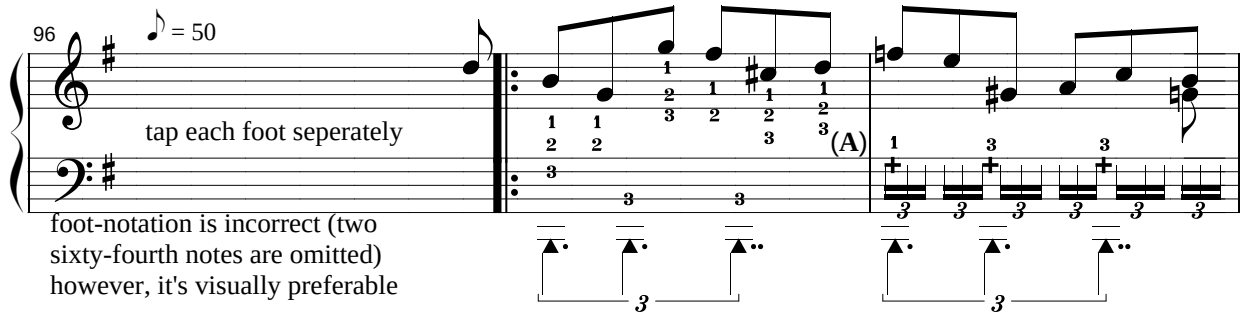




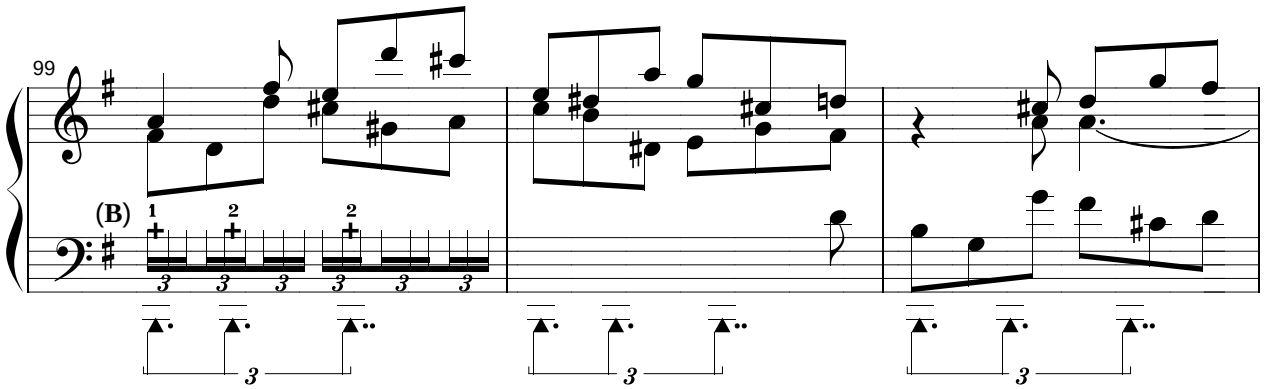
Gigue in G major

coordination exercise

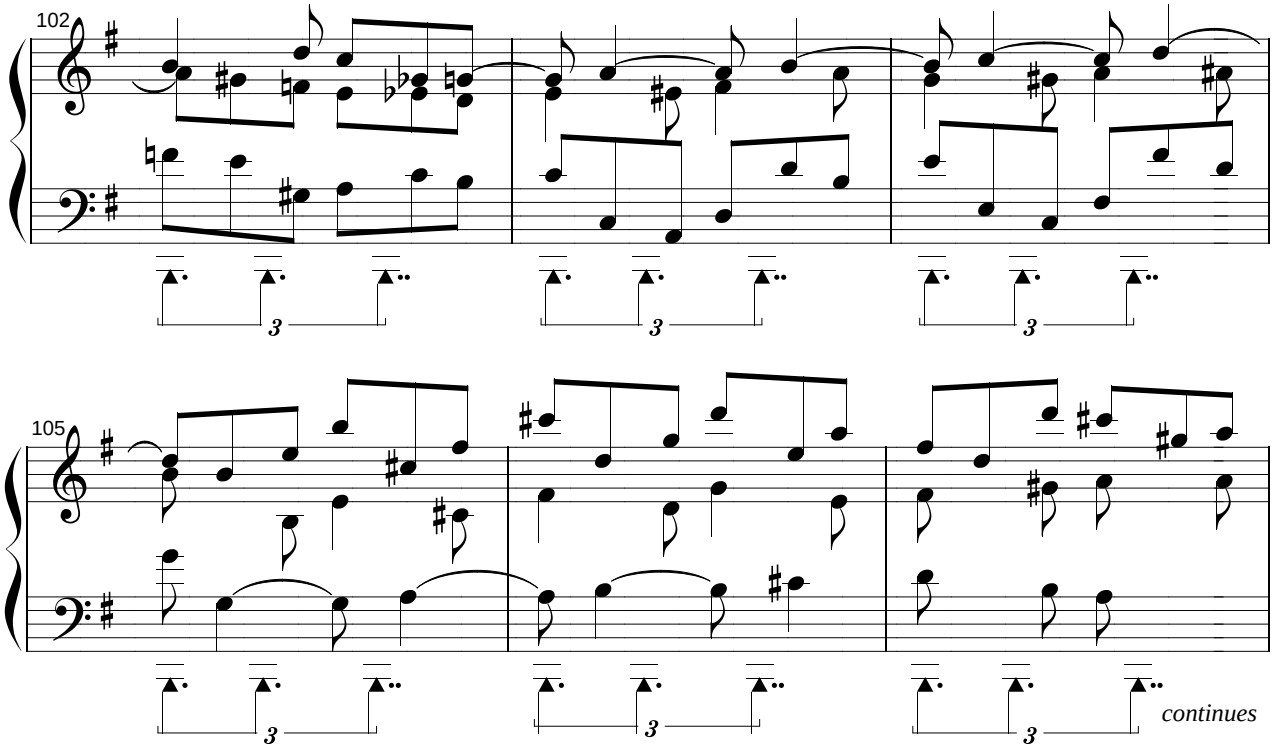
count: sixteenth-note triplets: **A** (notated in measure 98) and **B** (notated in measure 99)
tap foot: (**A**) tap **one** on the 1st triplet and also on **three** of the 2nd and 4th triplets;
(**B**) tap **one** on the 1st triplet and also on **two** of the 2nd and 4th triplets; next, but not notated, **one** on the 1st triplet and also on **two** of the 2nd triplet and **three** of the 4th triplet



foot-notation is incorrect (two sixty-fourth notes are omitted) however, it's visually preferable

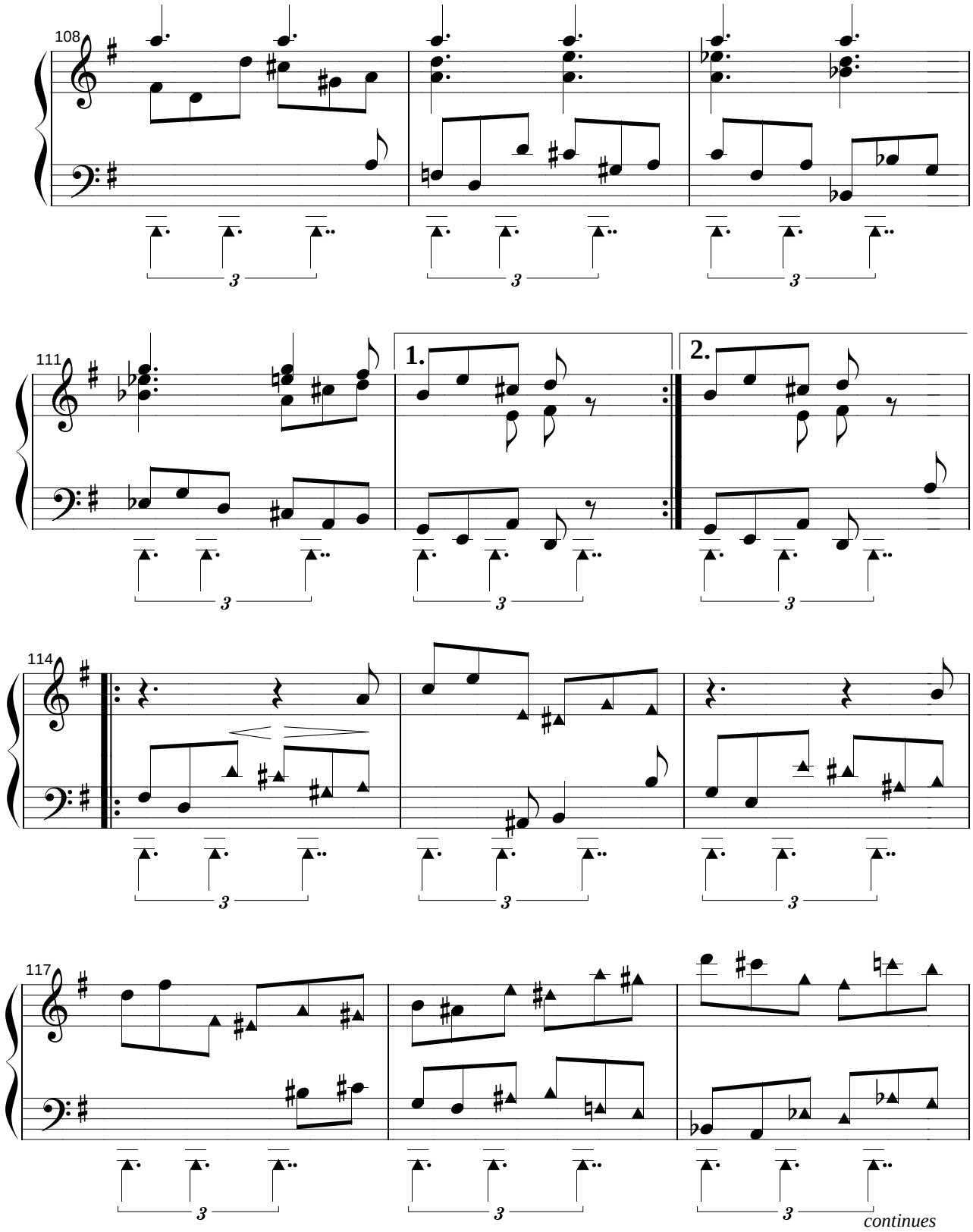


Play the soprano G~A~B~C~D (measures 103-104) and also the tenor-counterpoint in measures 105-106; the C# in measure 106 is the leading tone of the following D and gives a finality to the previously stated soprano phrase; also emphasize the tenor line because it answers the soprano.

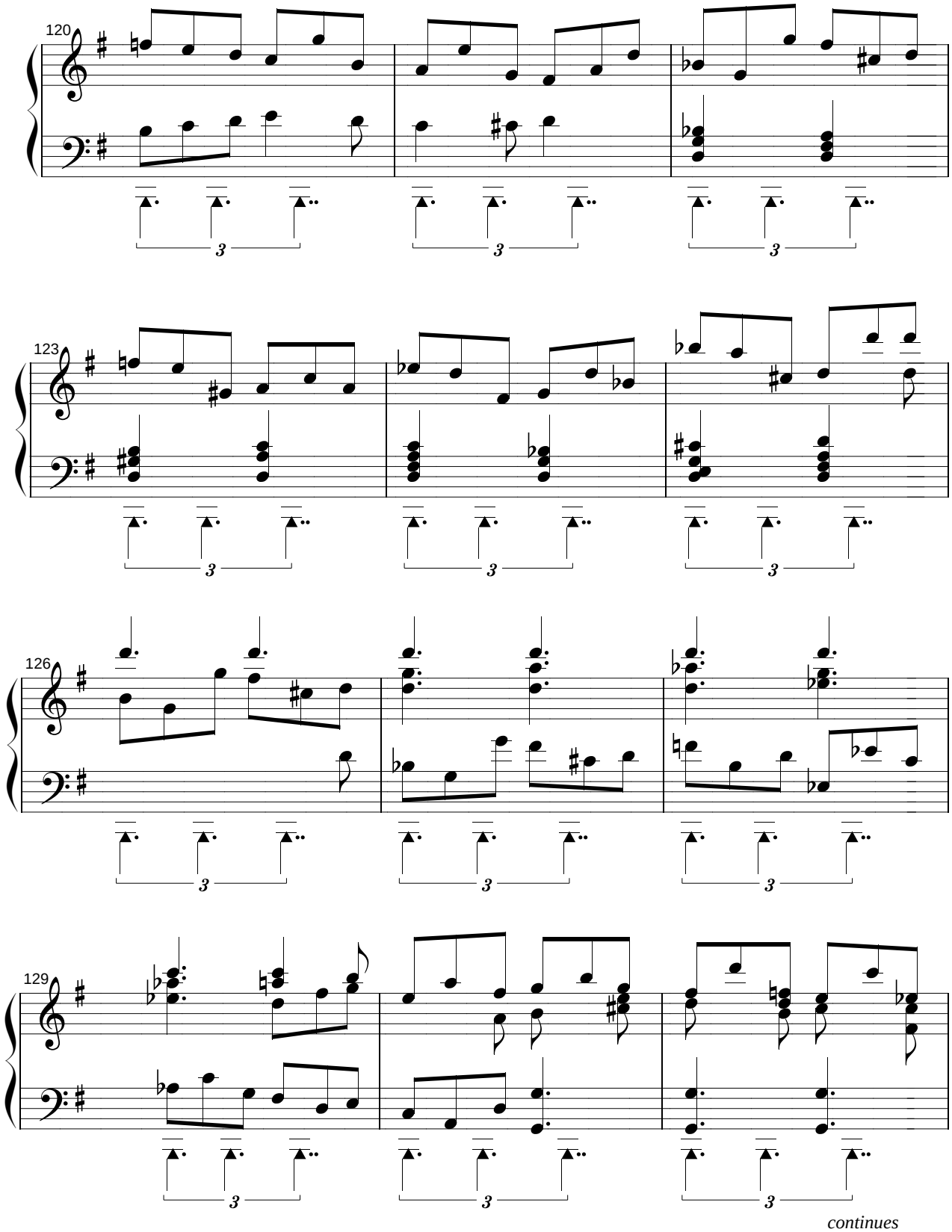


although notation for the foot is uneven, be sure to play hand notation exactly in time; also, examples (**A**) and (**B**) can be **displaced** by moving the pattern so that the downbeat is played on the second group of sixteenth-triplets

measure 114: in tempo, play 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th tones of the tenor;
measure 115: in tempo, play 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th tones of the soprano;
measure 116: in tempo, play 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th tones of the tenor;
measure 117: in tempo, play 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th tones of the soprano;
next, repeat the above, but in **measure 117**, play 3rd and 4th of the soprano and 5th and 6th of the tenor; now, **measures 118-121** represent two birds in flight and **measures 114-117** was a preparation for take-off; emphasize and mould the *triangular-shaped* notation; always search for *melodic elements*.

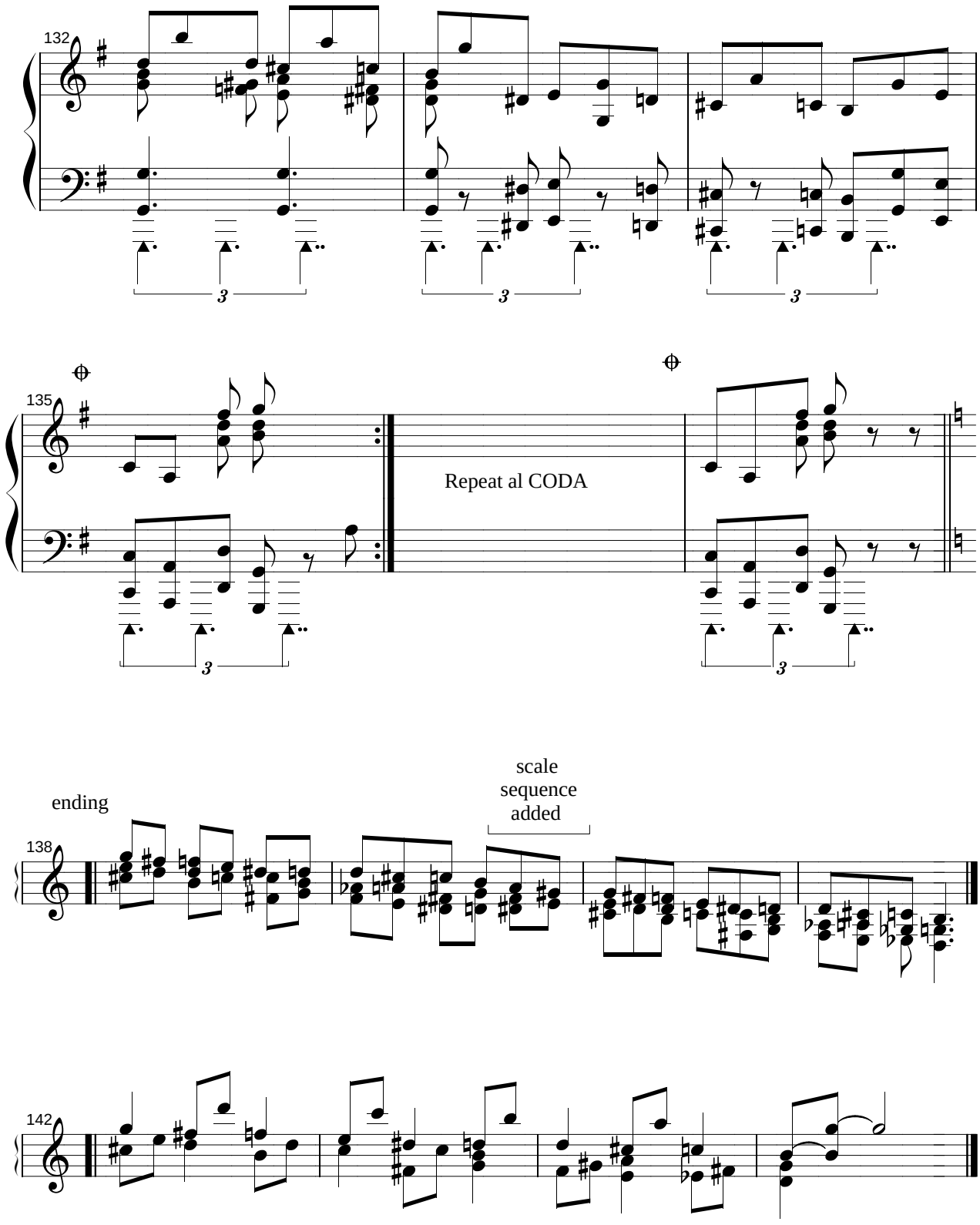


Interpretation: the melocic-tones of this piece force me to move the bar-line three eighth-notes to the right. I count aloud the opening phrase of measure 97 as 3, **4**, 5, 6, **1**, 2, 3 (instead of 6, **1**, 2, 3, **4**, 5, 6) and continue this bar-line displacement, as a discipline, throughout the entire piece; however, all tones should flow in the performance.

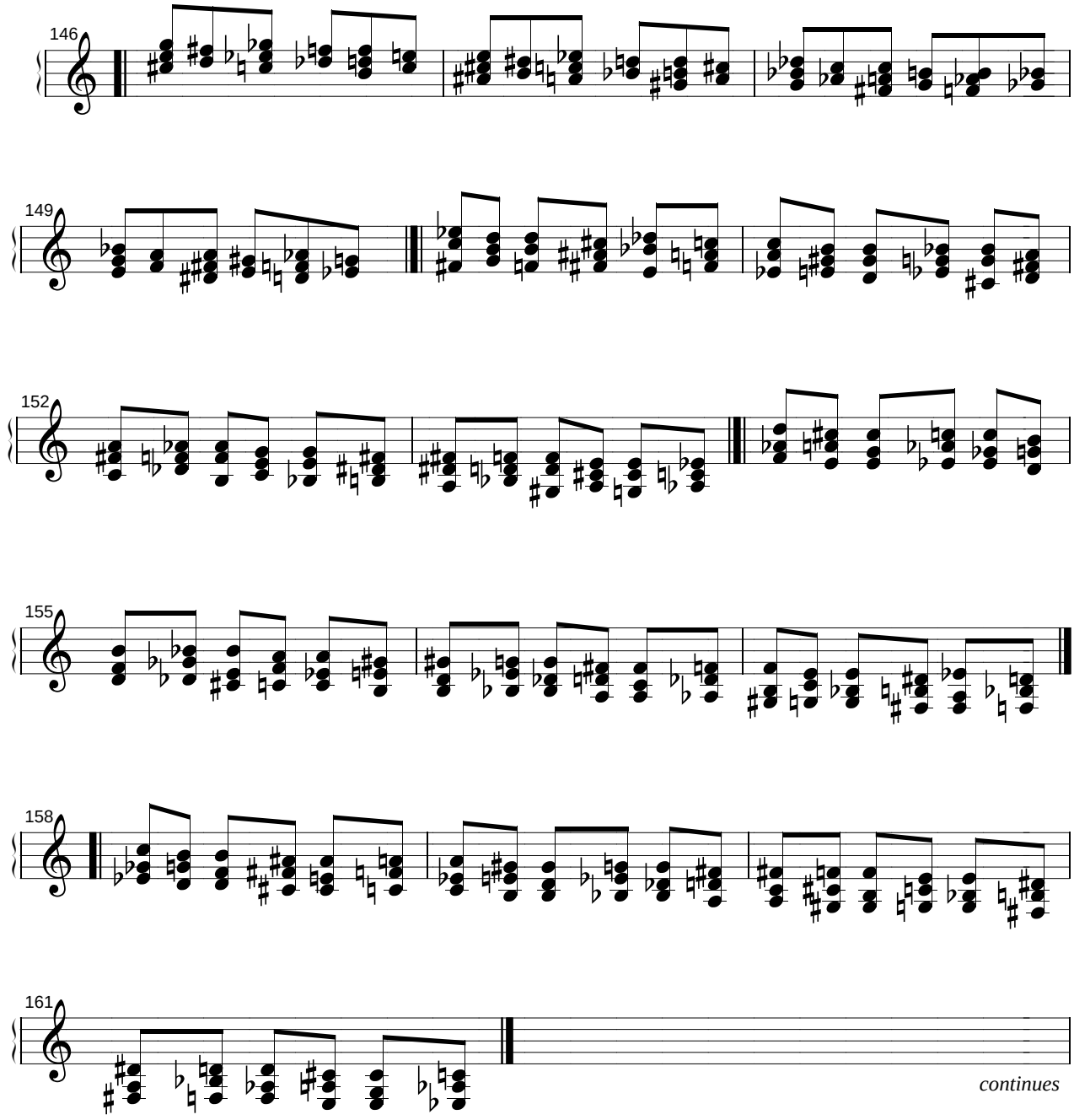


continues

After practicing this handicap, always play the entire piece again as if in performance; scan your body while playing; you should notice a slight change of energy. With interpretation, I think of this piece as a conversation between two voices in flight.



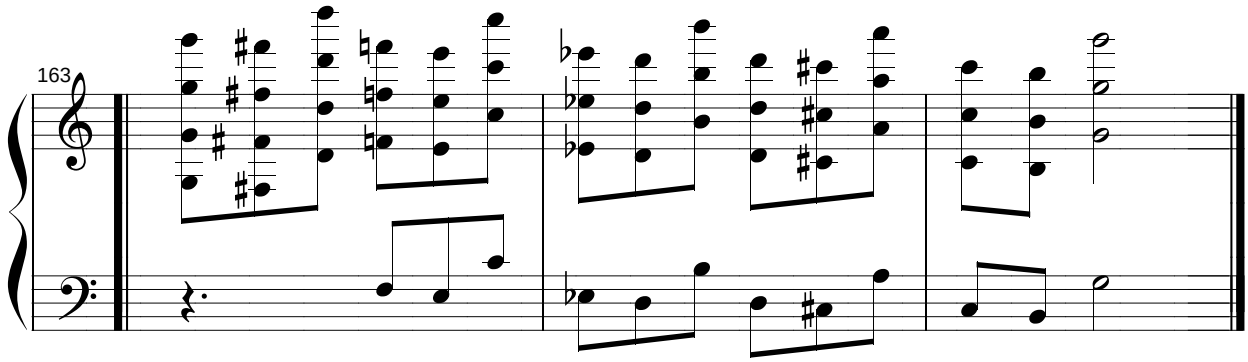
Sequences for the Ending



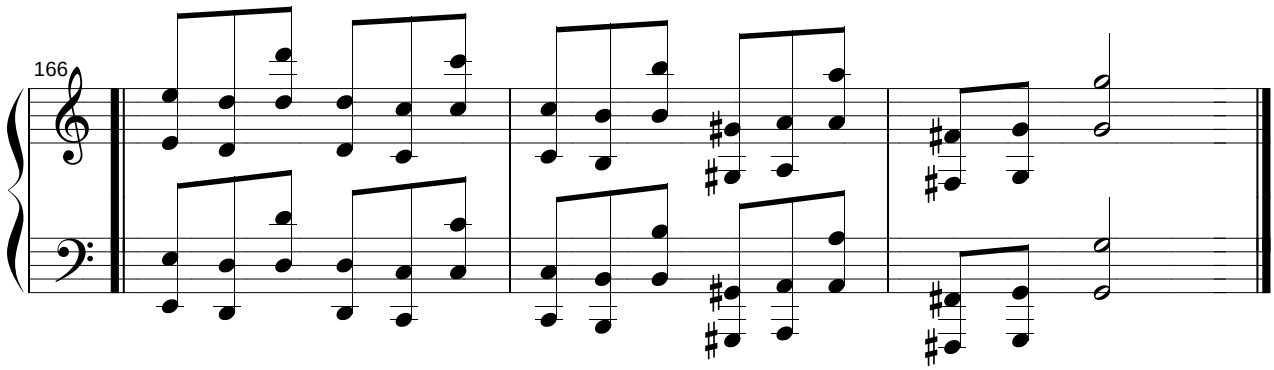
continues

I urge you to practice double-octaves as a technical challenge; here, I have written each single voice-line in double-octaves; you will hear these lines more thoroughly while performing.

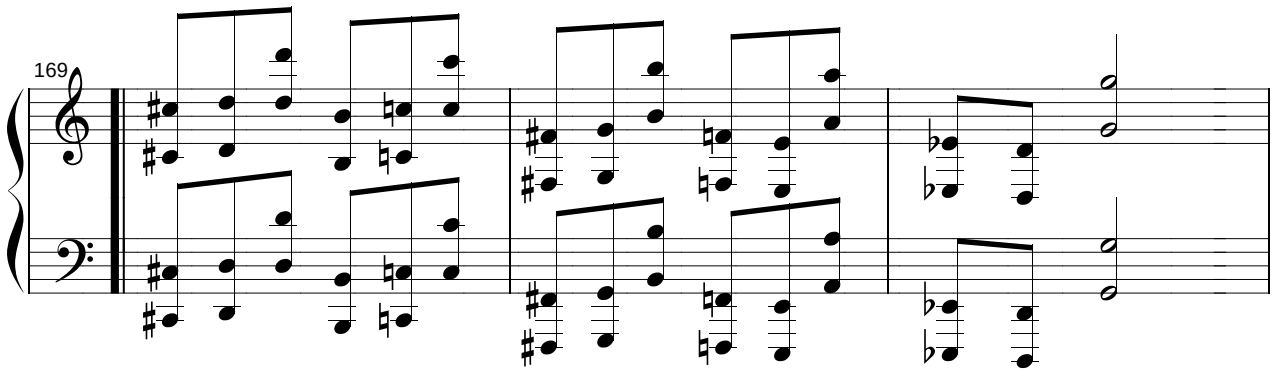
soprano-line for ending sequence; begin with the last eighth-note of measure 35; continue into 38



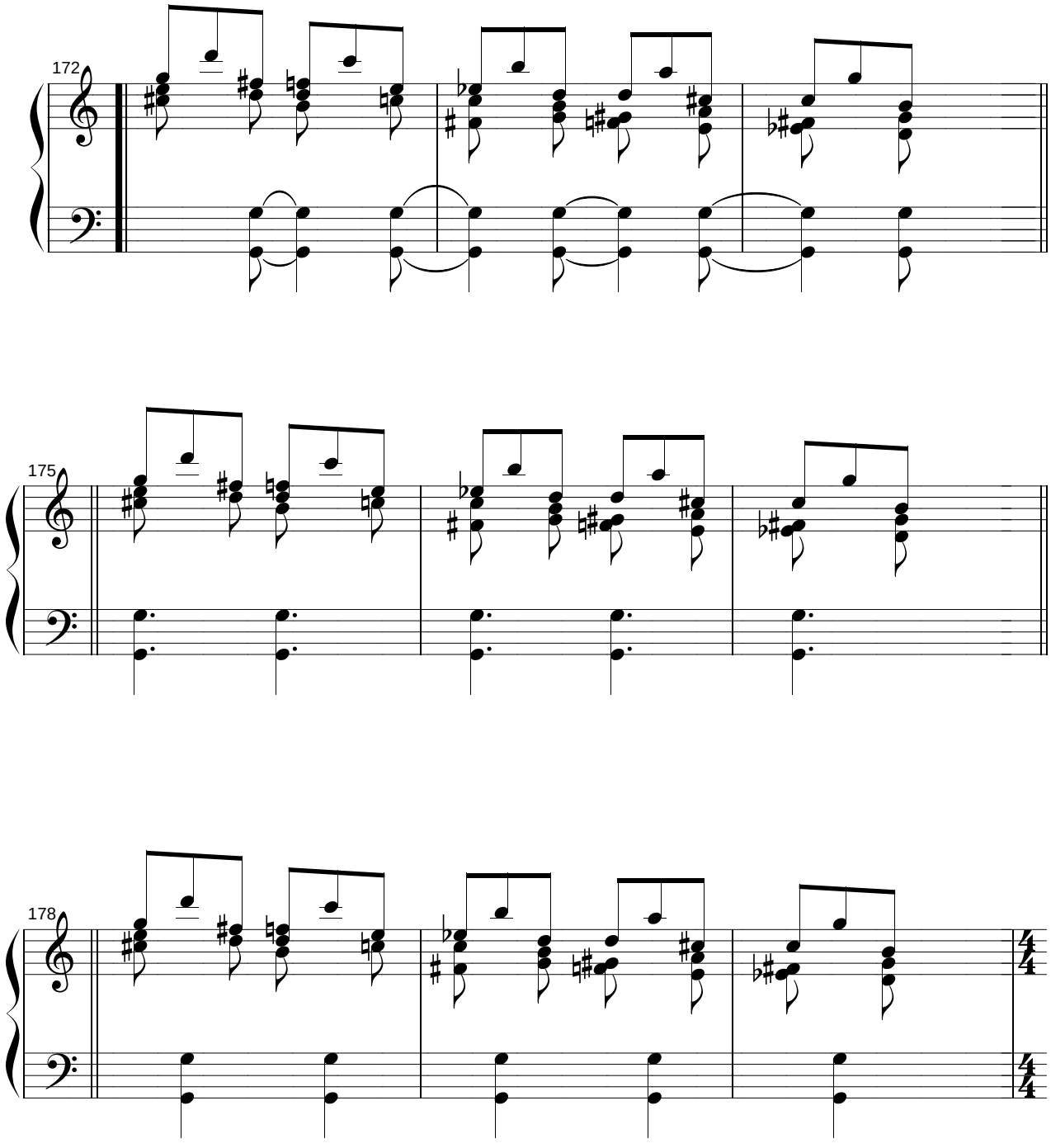
alto-line for ending sequence



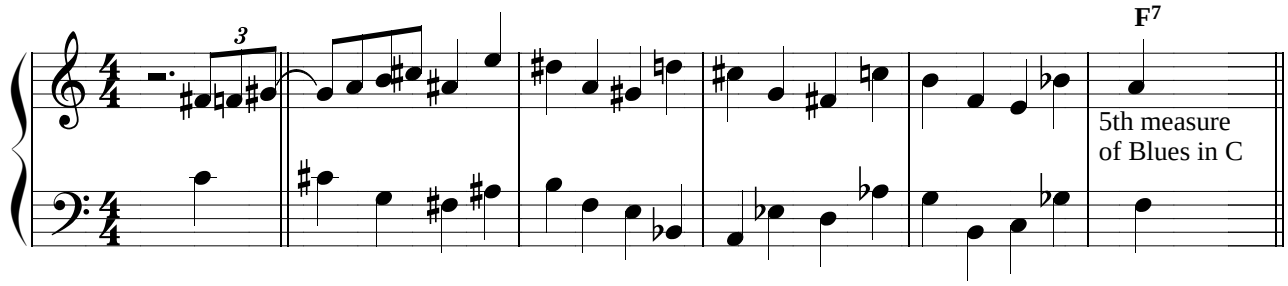
tenor-line for ending sequence



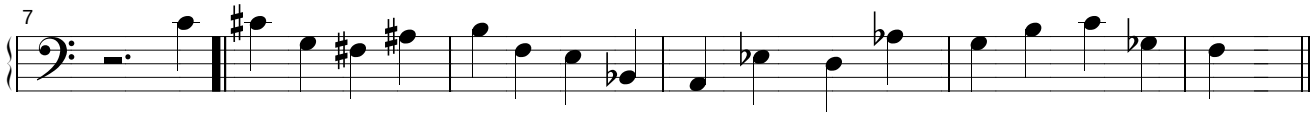
for the ending



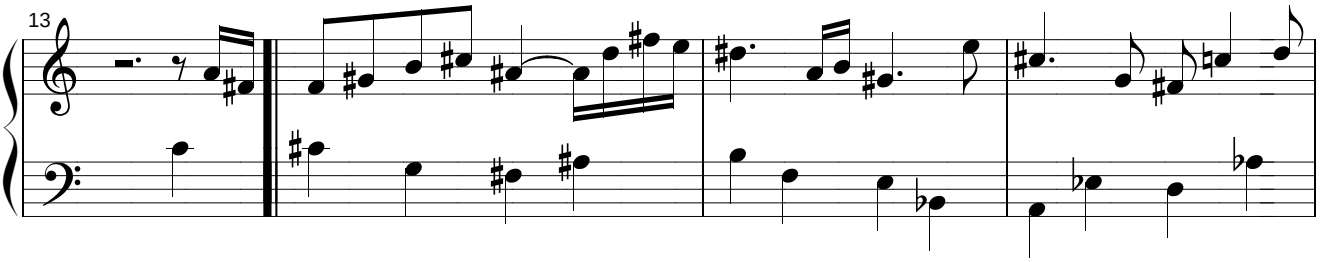
Jazz Sequence from Gigue in G major

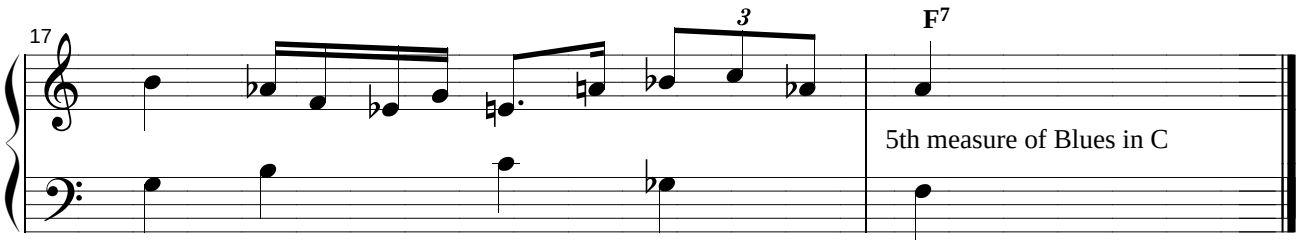


As mentioned on page 99, the counterpoint of this sequence was a bass-line frequently played by bassist, Ray Brown; but he had never heard *Gigue in G Major* until '94. Ray Brown was blessed with an extraordinary musical talent.



an improvised line over this sequence

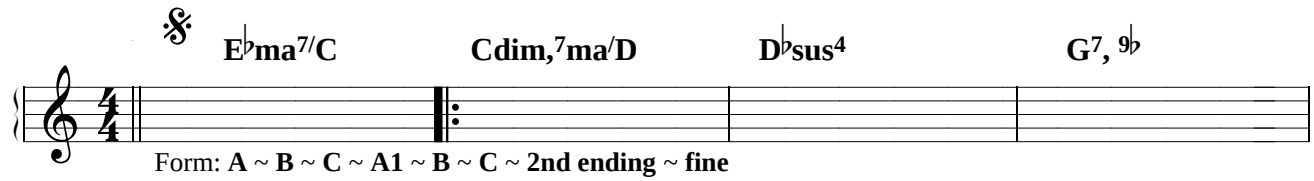




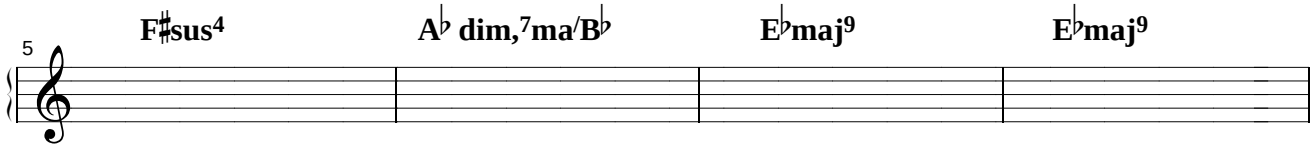
Gigue in G major

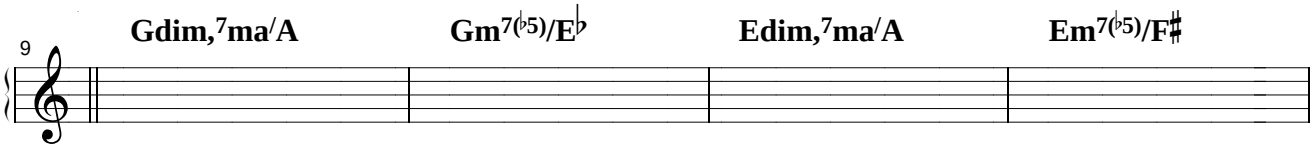
suspended 4th harmonic-sequence

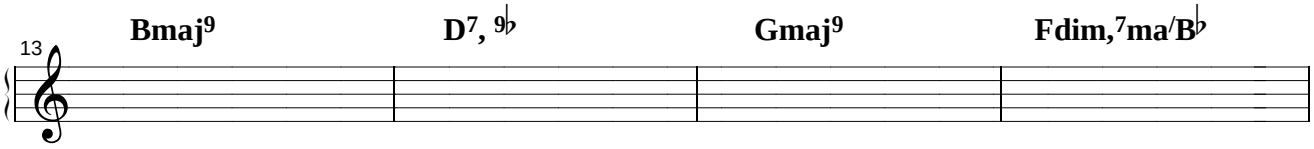
I wrote the following 24 measure interlude after practicing the preceding pages; the chords below have little if any resemblance with *Gigue in G major* yet, this harmonic sequence resulted from that work.

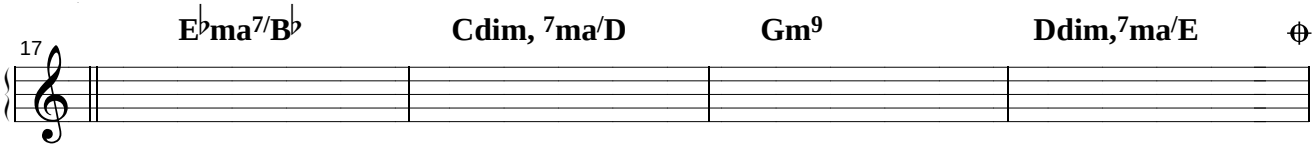


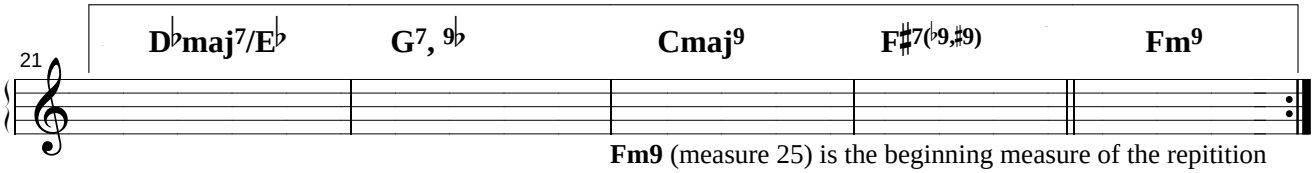
Form: **A ~ B ~ C ~ A1 ~ B ~ C ~ 2nd ending ~ fine**



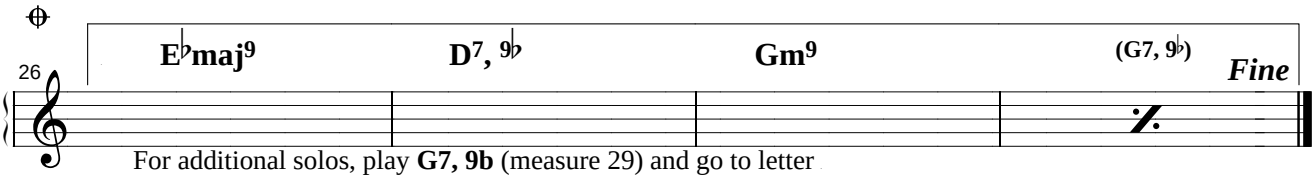








Fm9 (measure 25) is the beginning measure of the repitition



For additional solos, play **G7, 9b** (measure 29) and go to letter

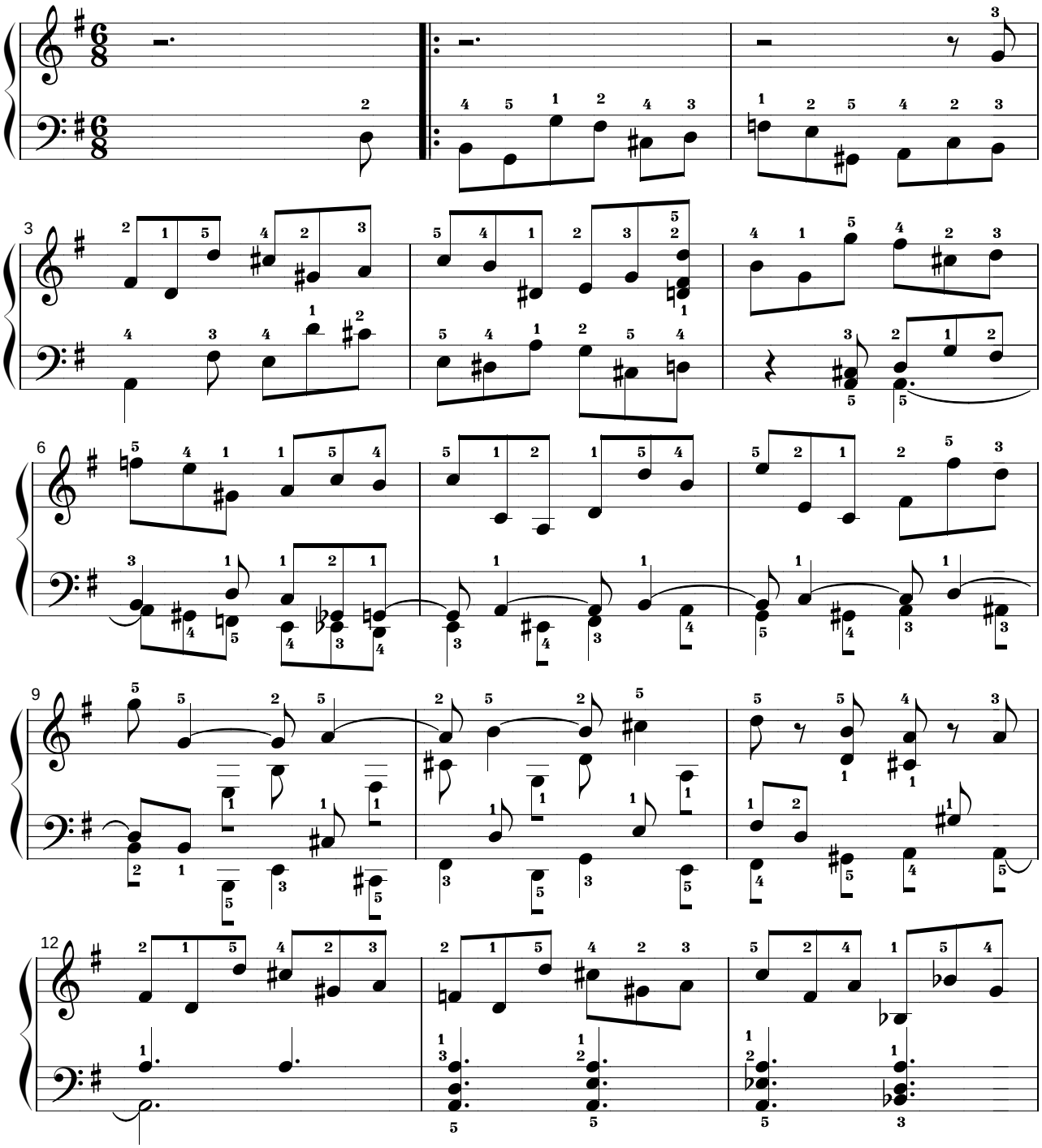
To close, ***D.S.*** (at **Coda** take **2nd ending**) ***al Fine***; play **Gm 9** for the closing chord.

Gigue in G major

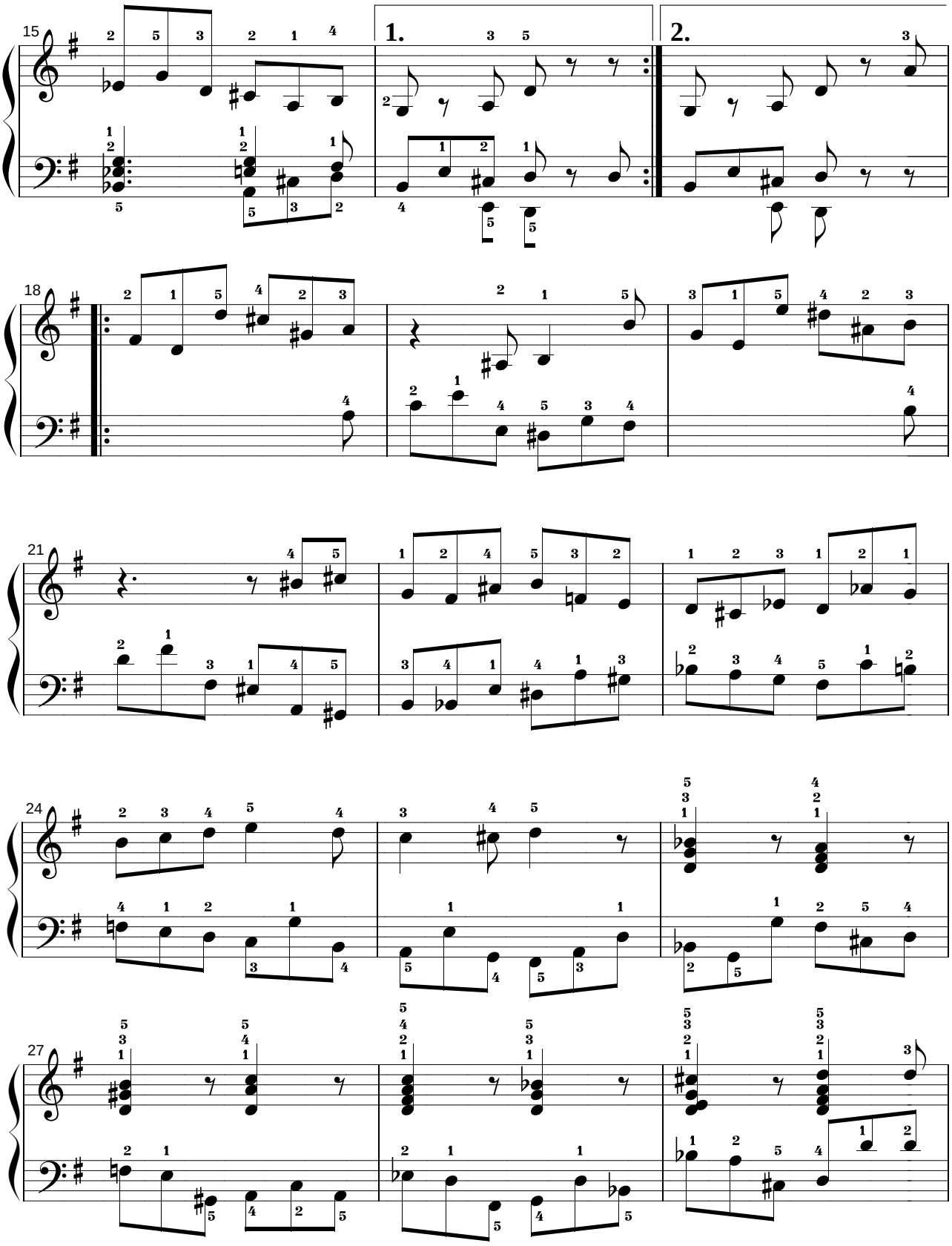
clefs inverted

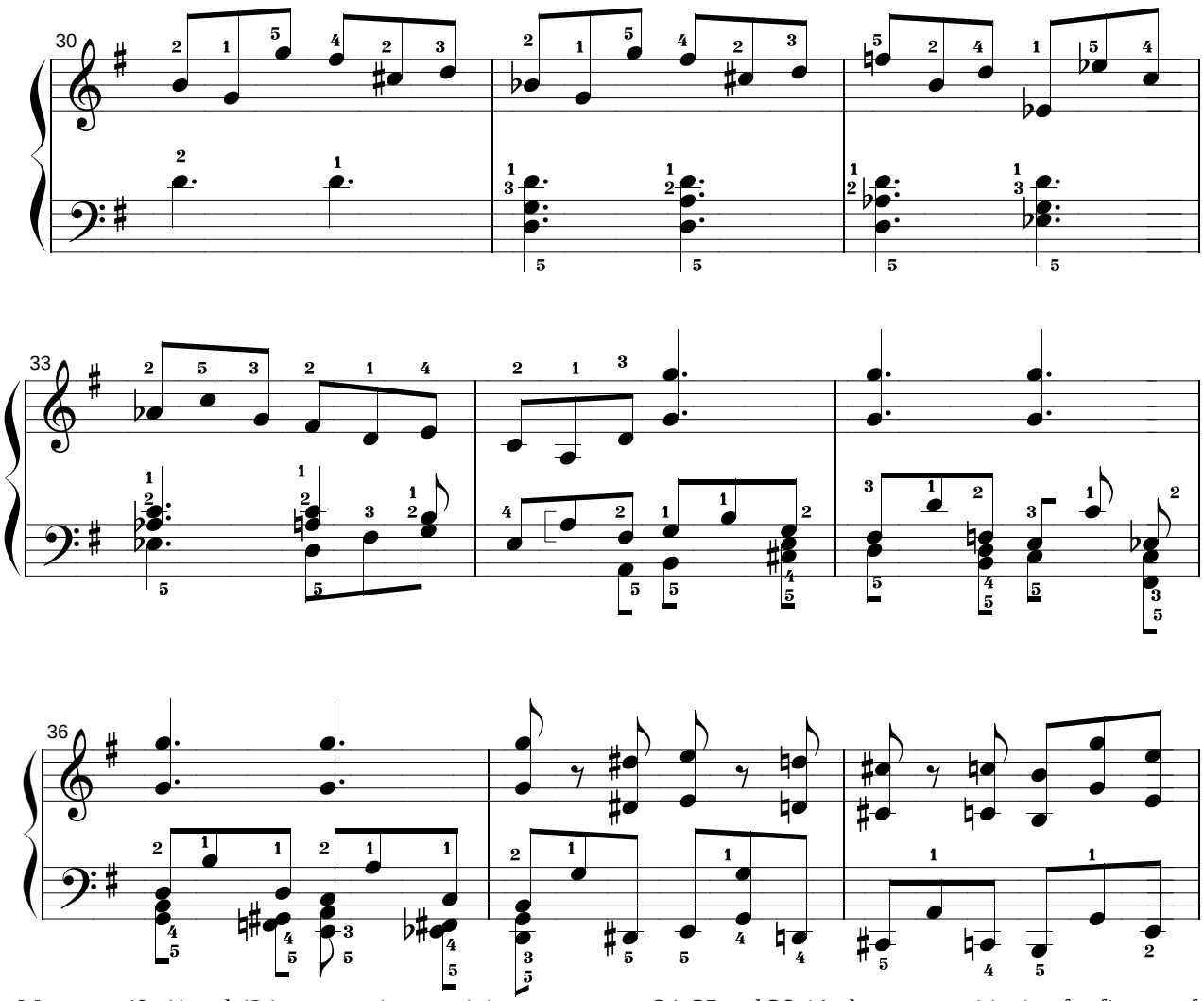
❁ After practicing clefs inverted, the nerves in your left hand will understand more thoroughly the notation your right hand plays; and of course, the reverse is true.

W. A. Mozart

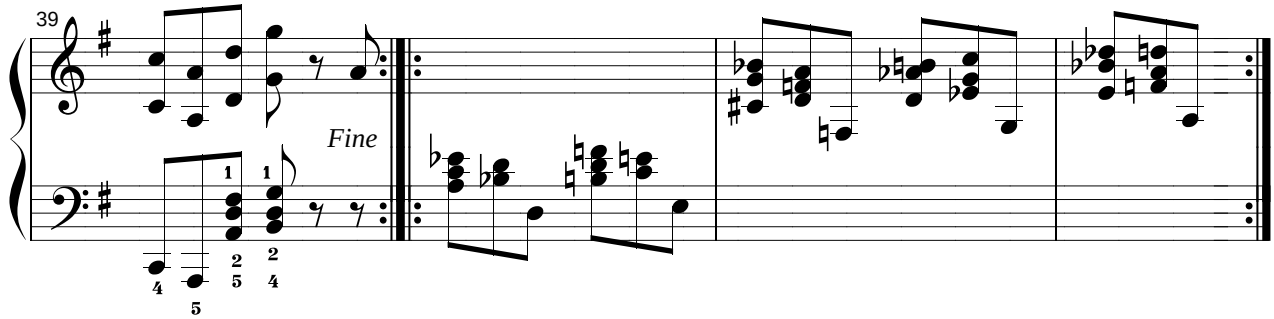


❁ ❁ This crossover exercise strengthens coordination; left hand = m.s. and right hand = m.d. Dr. med. Gerhard Klawunde, physiotherapist in Berlin, remarked during an examination that I should continue treatments with my therapists (Frauke Gutberlet and Klaus Konig) but only on the left arm; my right hand was bandaged following a finger operation. He explained that nerve and muscular information from treatment on the left arm would automatically be registered in the right arm. Clefs inverted resulted from our discussion.


15
1.
2.
18
21
24
27



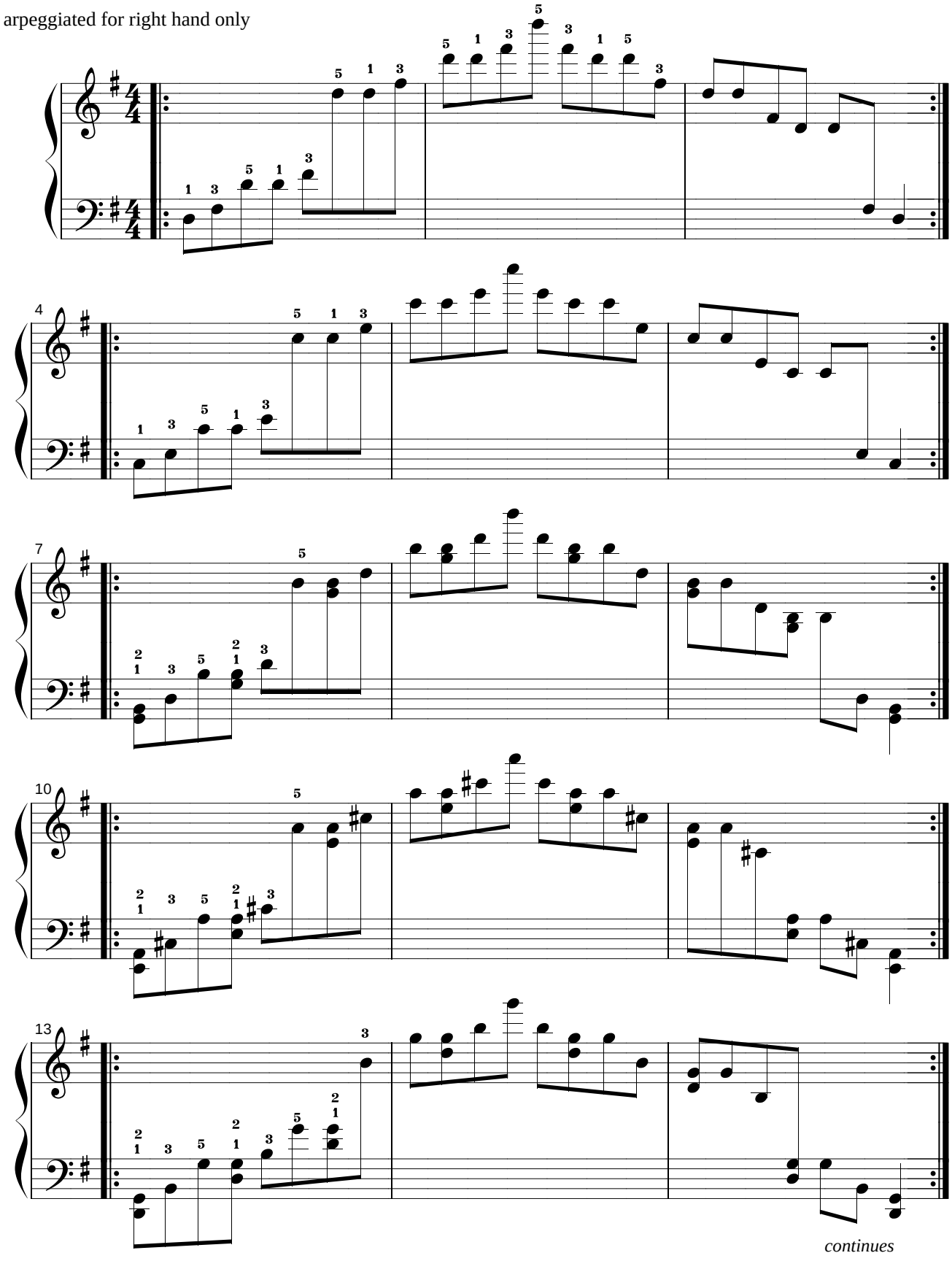
Measures 40, 41 and 42 is an exercise pertaining to measures 34, 35 and 36; it's the same positioning for fingers of the left-hand (on black and white keys) as the relationship experienced in the right hand with these intervalic-skips. I use this method often because it develops and shapes the left-hand; also, I find this example interesting for the ear.



This example of Mozart's Gigue in G major (with clefs inverted) appears as an essay, 'Strategies for Pianist Improvisers' by Walter Norris in 'Art in Motion' ISBN 978-3-631-58272-5 (edited by Adina Mornel) 2009 Peter Lang, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften Frankfurt am Main, Germany.
This publication is also listed in the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek Leipzig, Germany.

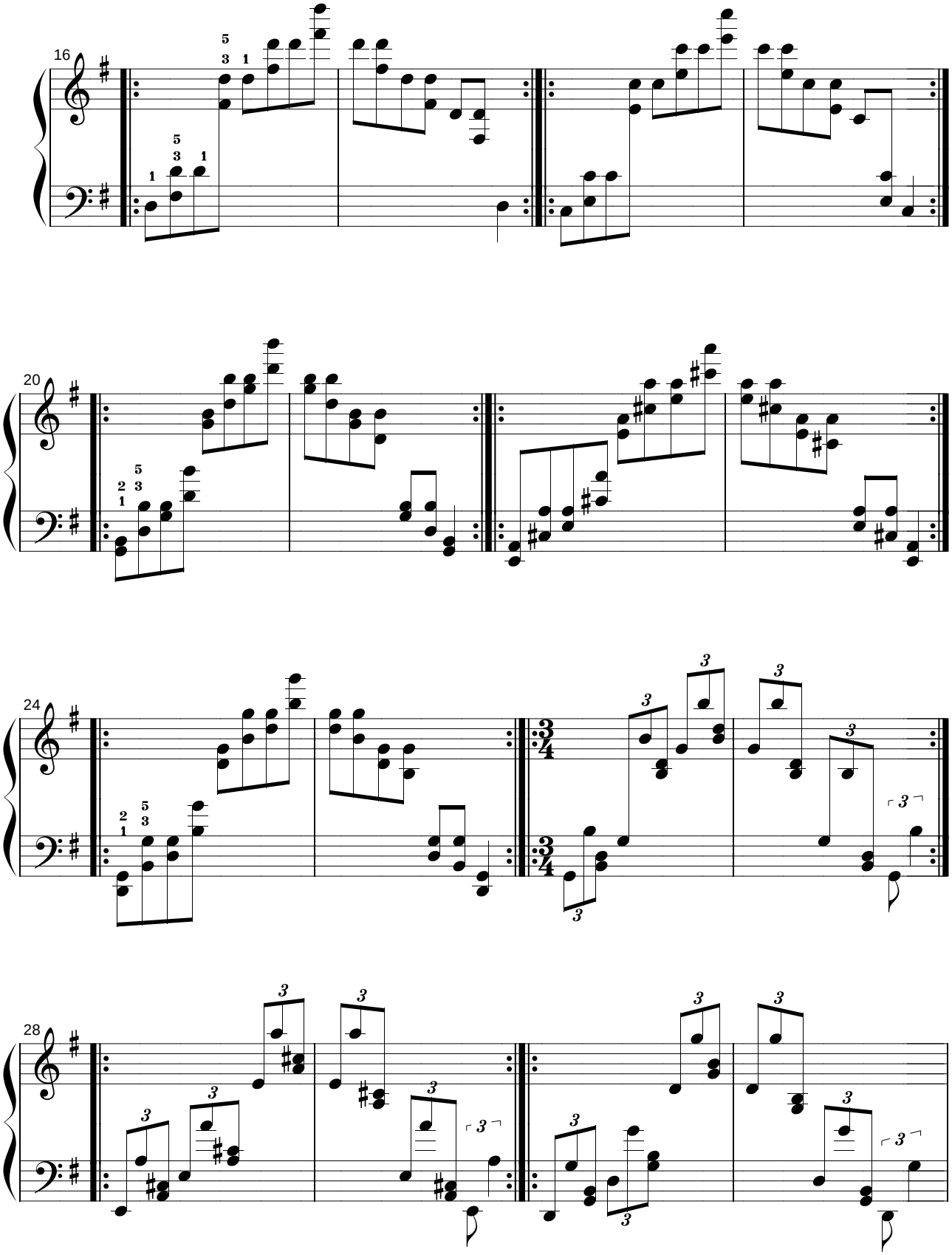
Gigue in G major

exercises for measures 35-40
arpeggiated for right hand only

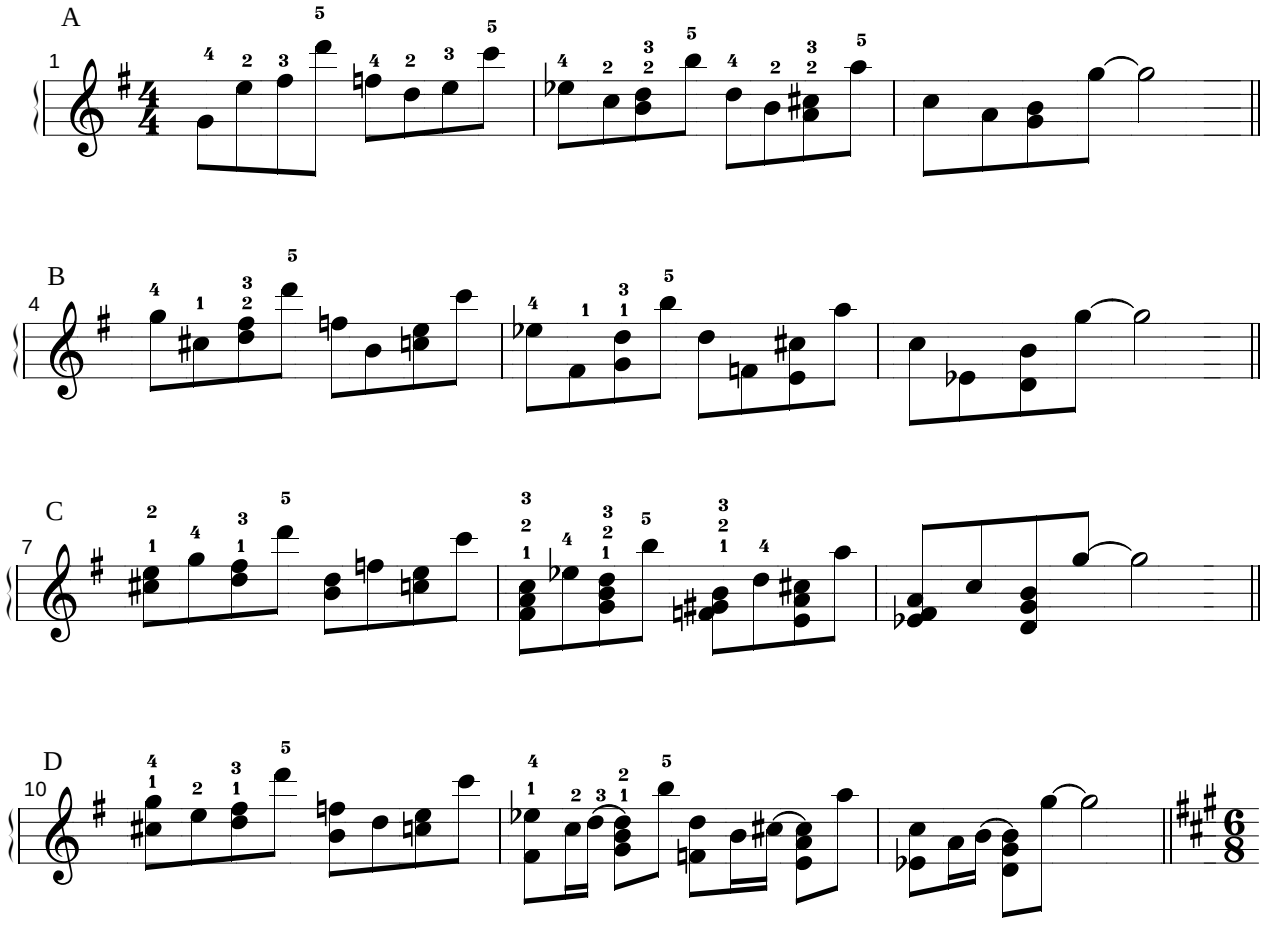


continues

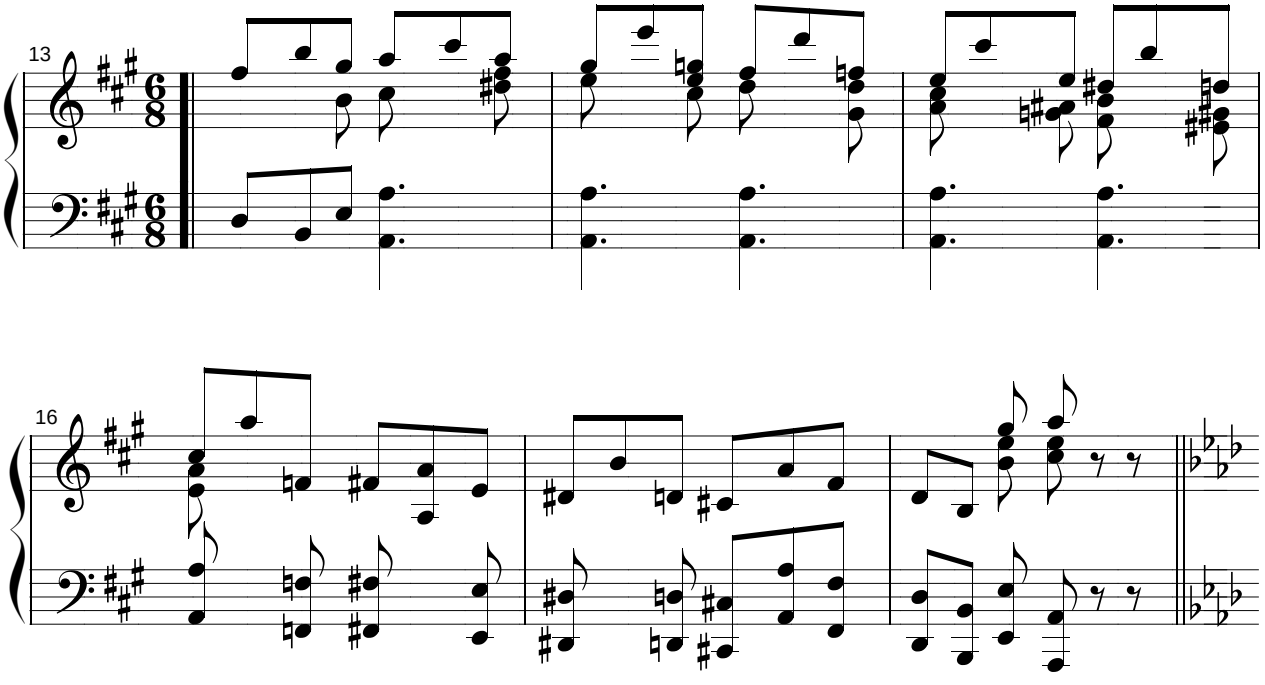
measures 35-40 for right hand only



Exercises for measures 35 - 40



two transpositions of the ending on page 71



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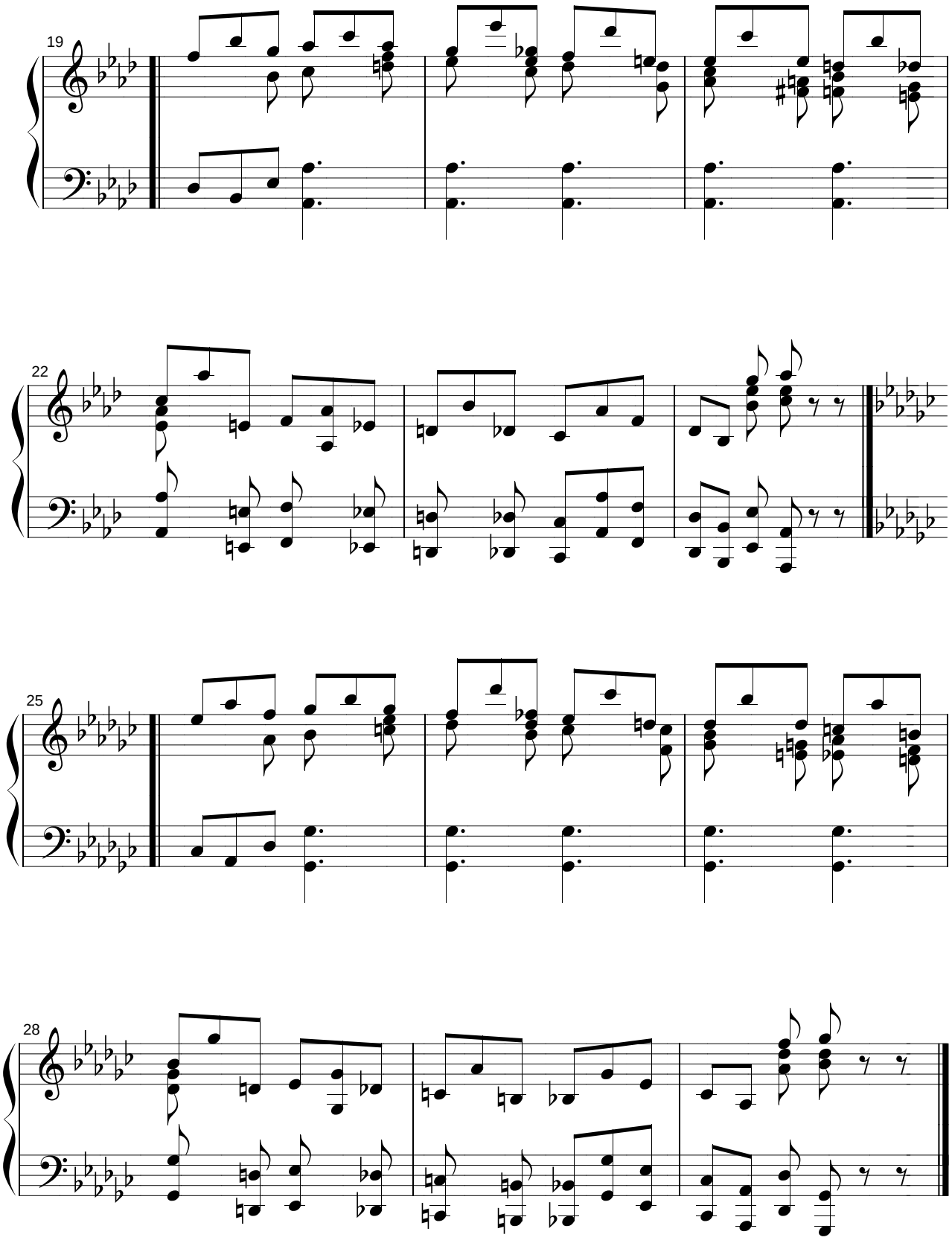
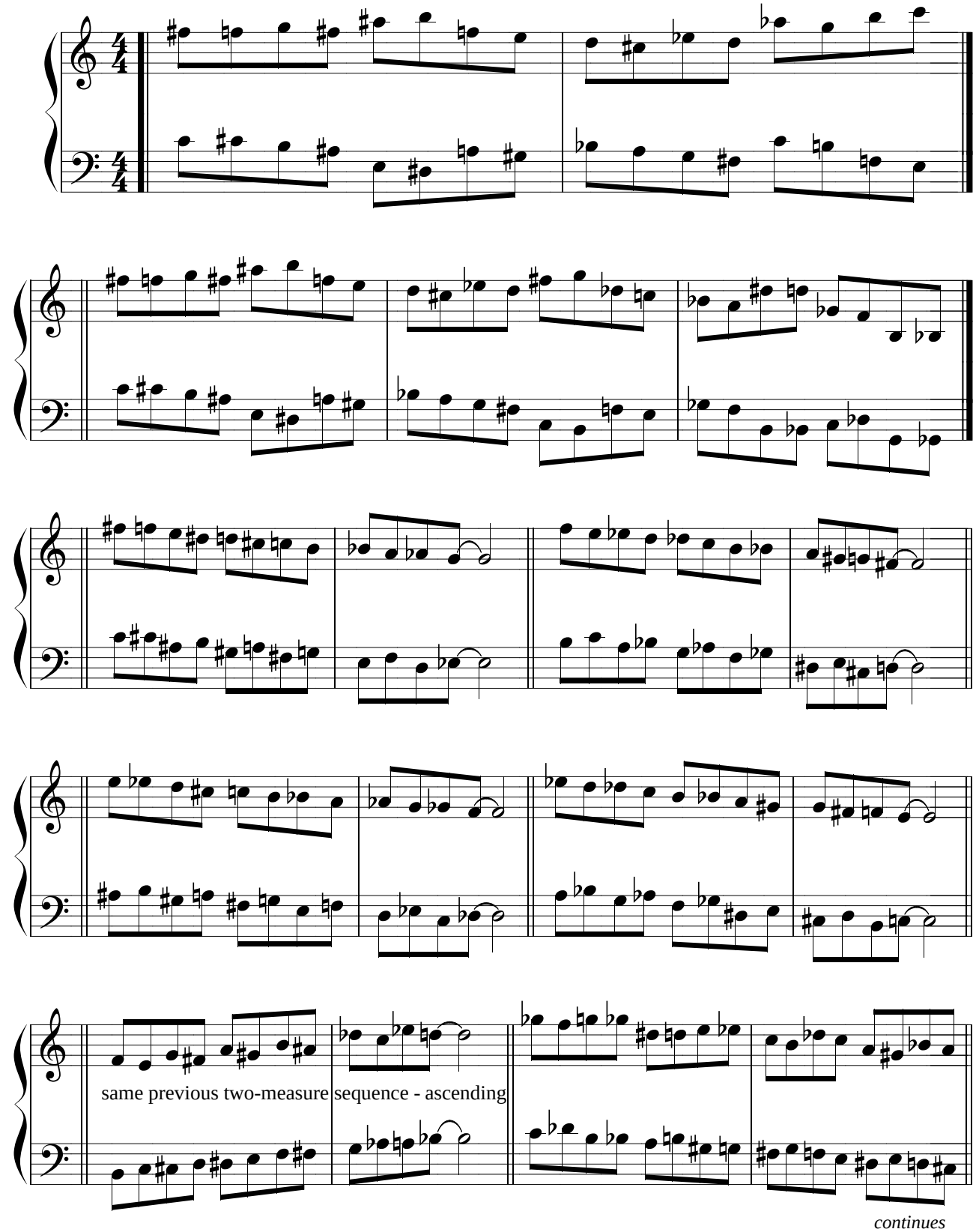

19
22
25
28

Variations of counterpoint

sequences for
measures 22 - 24



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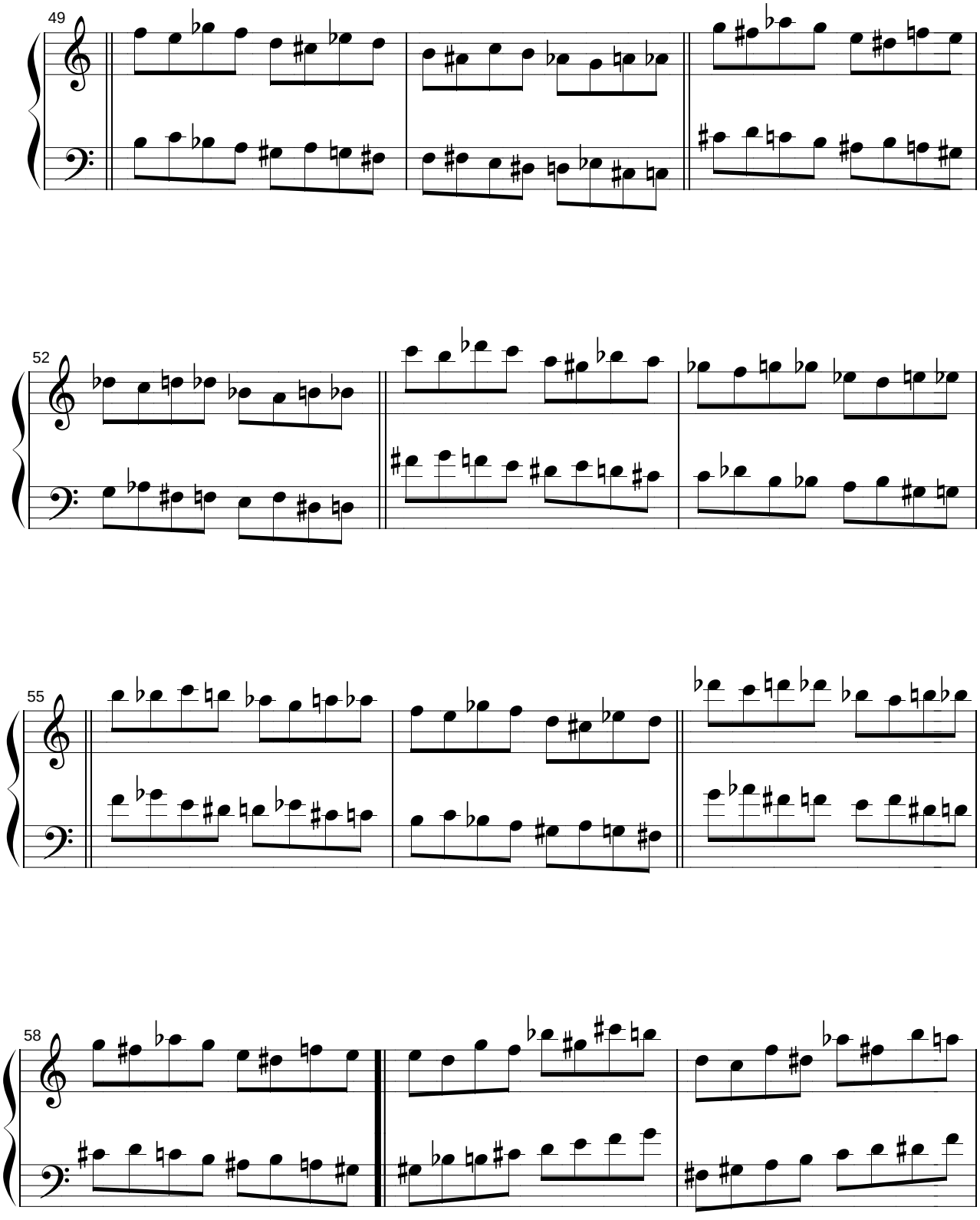

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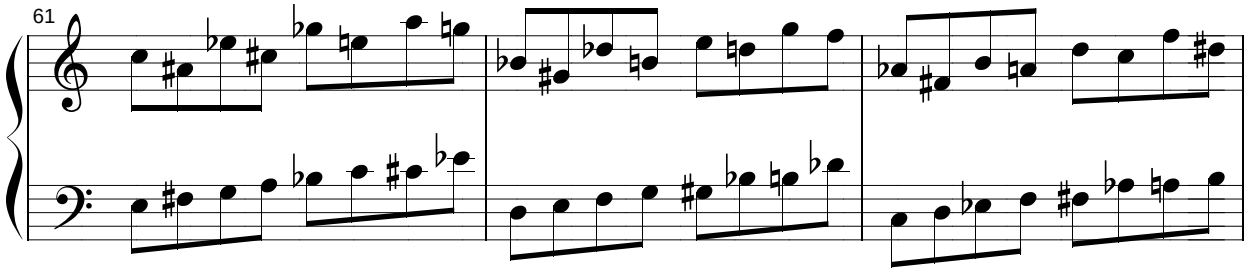
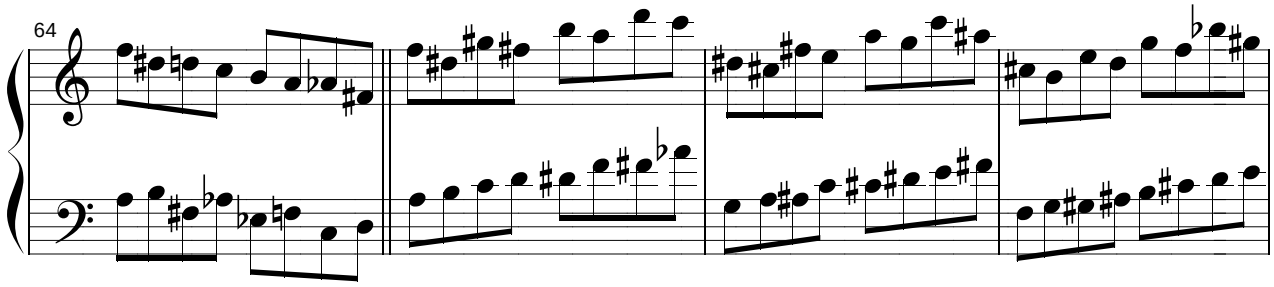
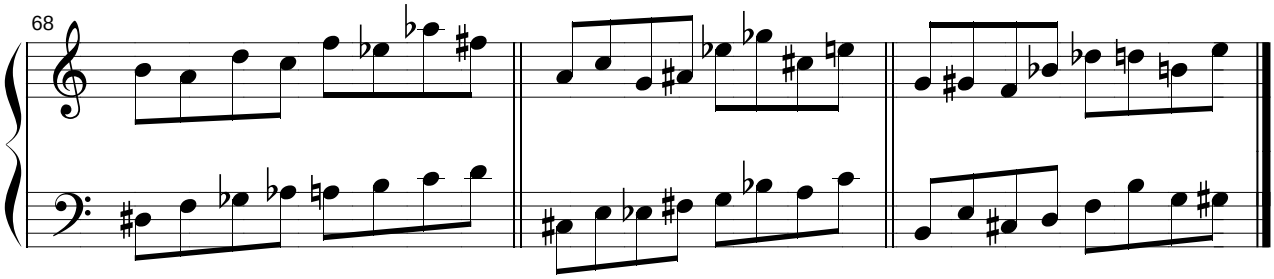
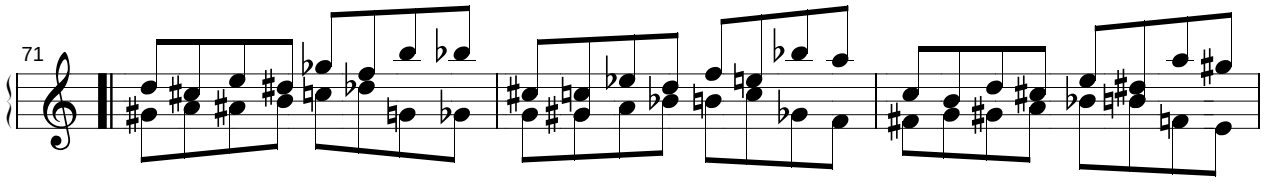


previous measure - descending

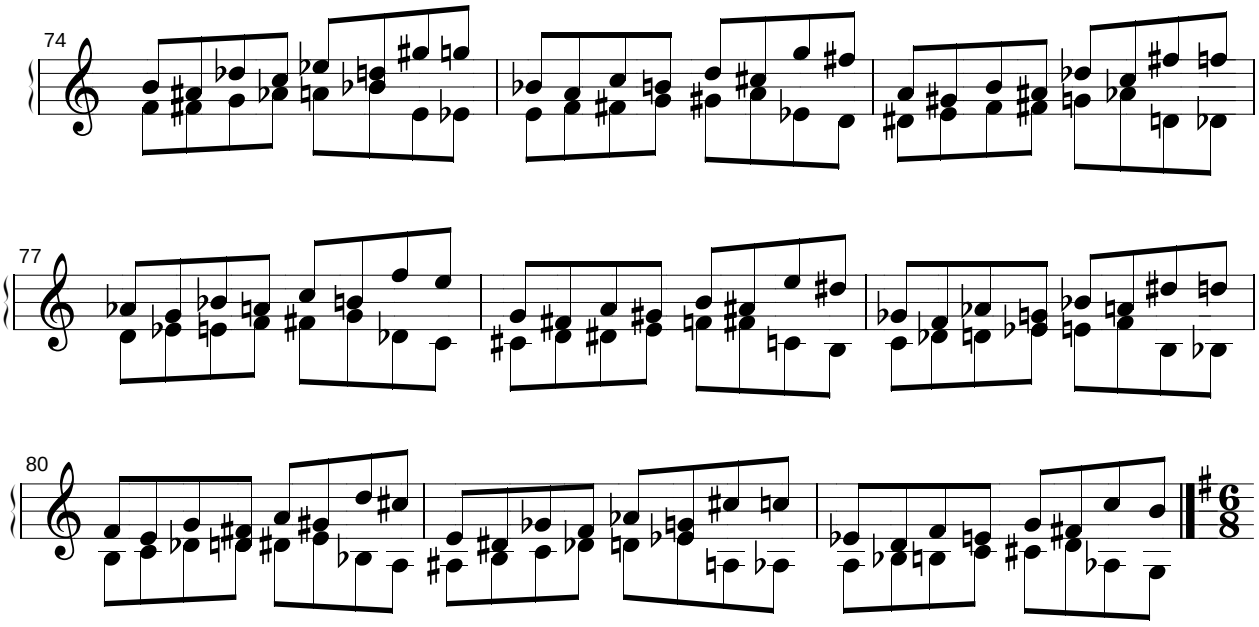


intervals rearranged variation





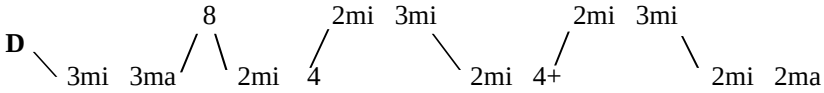
continues



the more different ways you can play one thing, the better you will play that particular thing whether it be a title, phrase, chord or harmonic progression

MATHEMATICAL DEVICE FOR TRANSPOSITION

VOICE-LINES, CHORDS OR CHORD-SYMBOLS

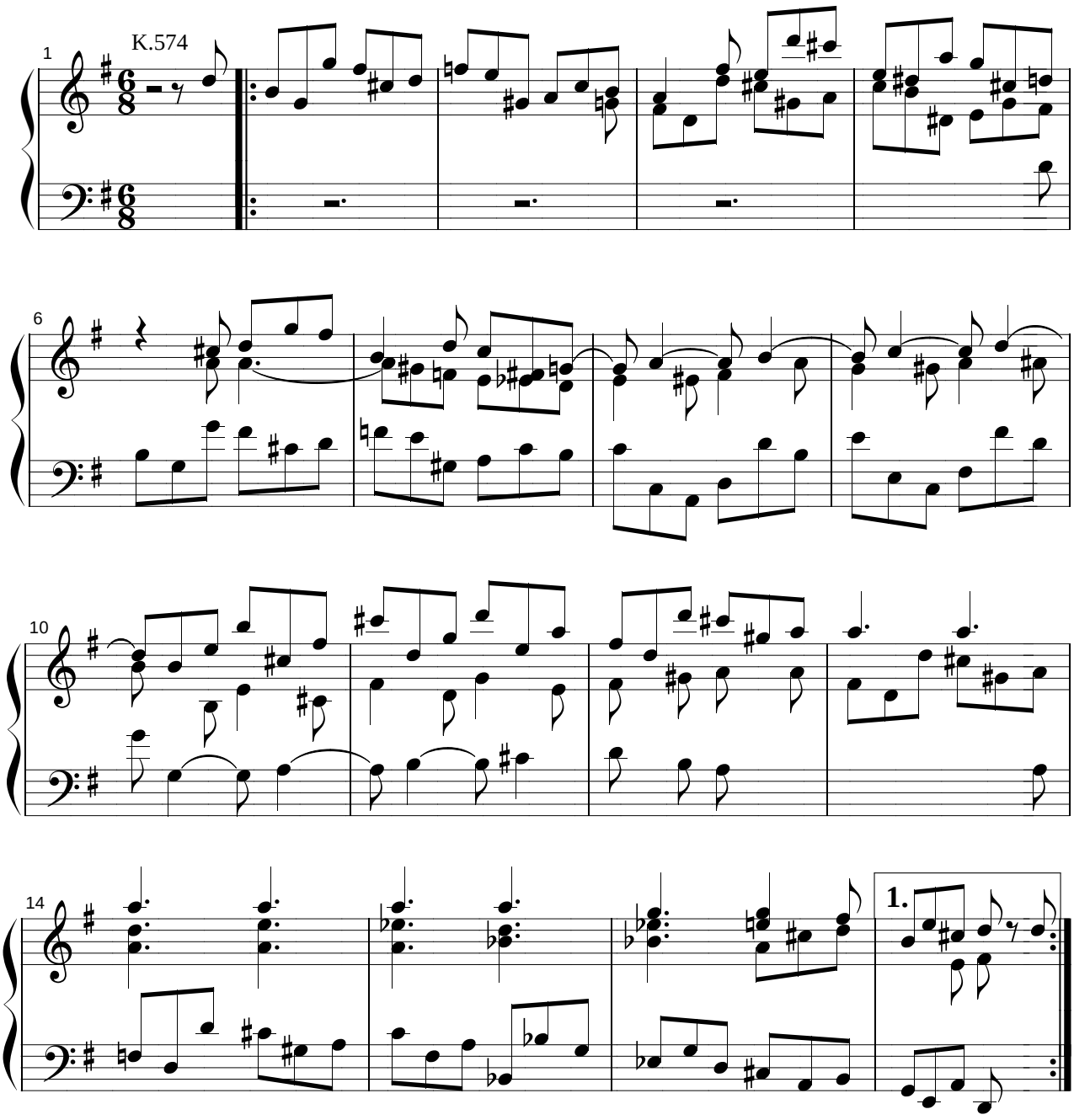


Play **D** and *descend* a mi 3rd plus a ma 3rd; *ascend* an octave; *descend* a mi 2nd plus a 4th; *ascend* a mi 2nd plus a mi 3rd; *descend* a mi 2nd plus an augmented 4th; *ascend* a mi 2nd plus a mi 3rd; *descend* a mi 2nd plus a ma 2nd. You have played the pick-up, first two measures and first quarter-note in the third measure of 'Gigue in G' on the following page. Now, if you begin on any other tone and follow the mathematical intervalic skips you will have this same phrase transposed.

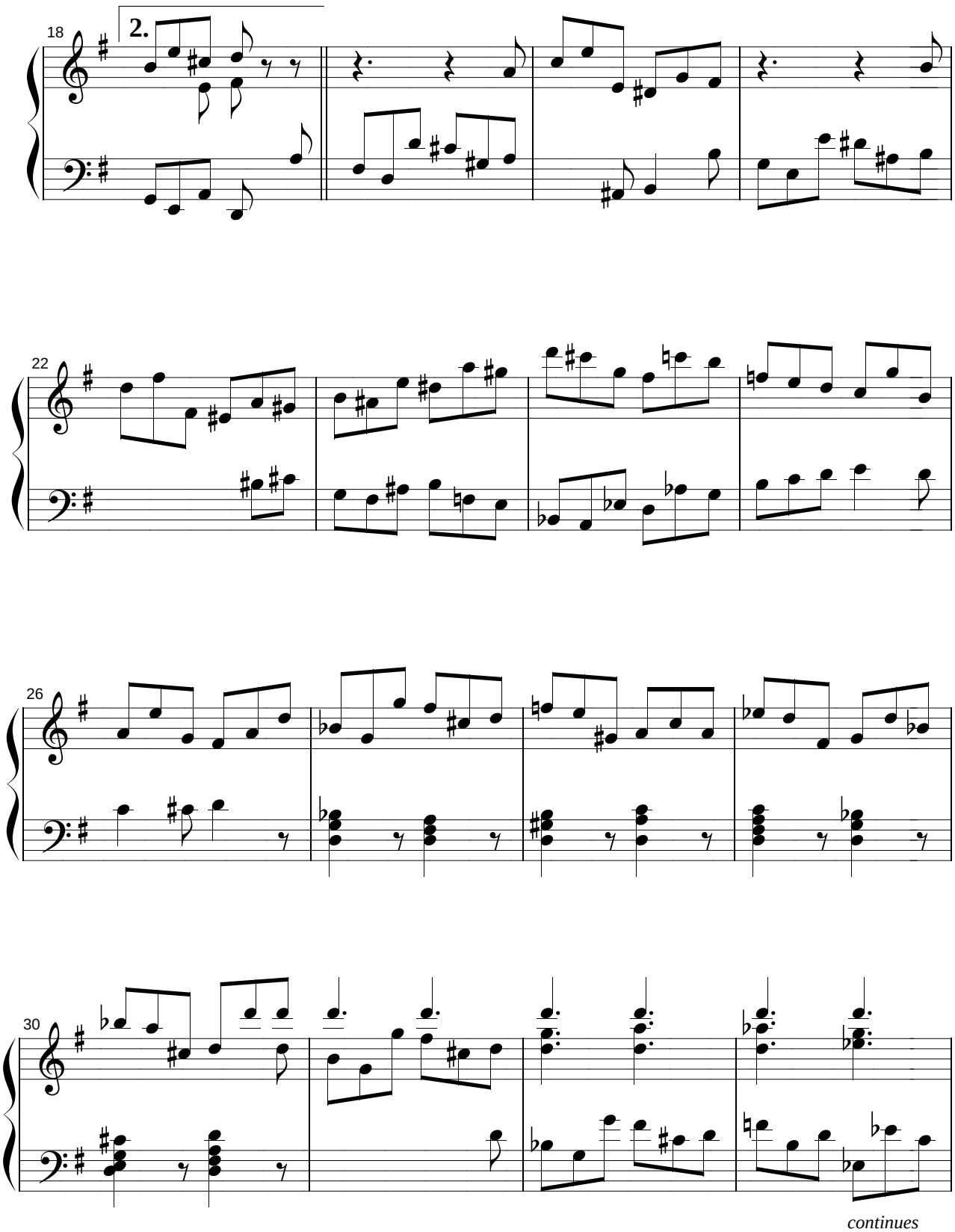
Gigue in G major

The improvised section, over a variation of Mozart's counterpart, (measures 43-48) resulted from exercises practiced on the previous pages. Also, on page 130 there is a variation of his ending.

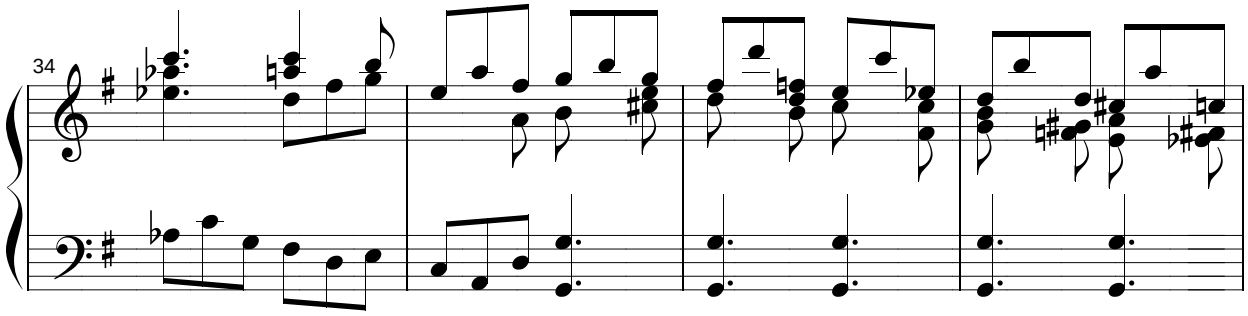
W. A. Mozart

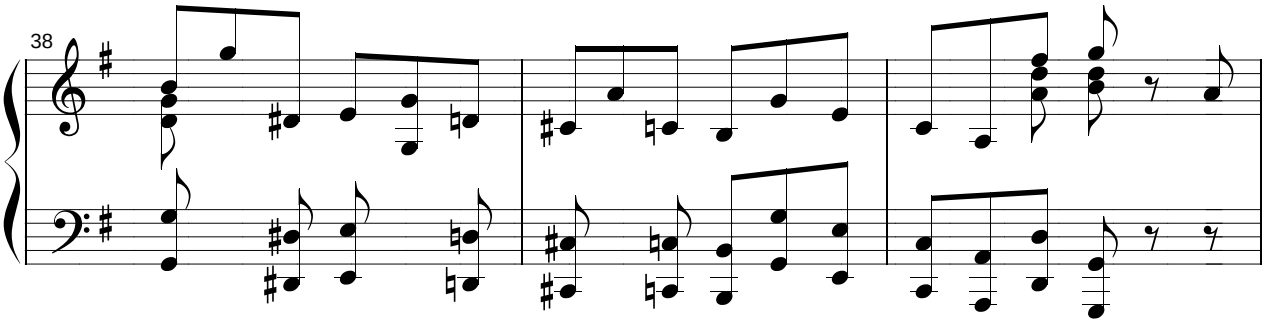


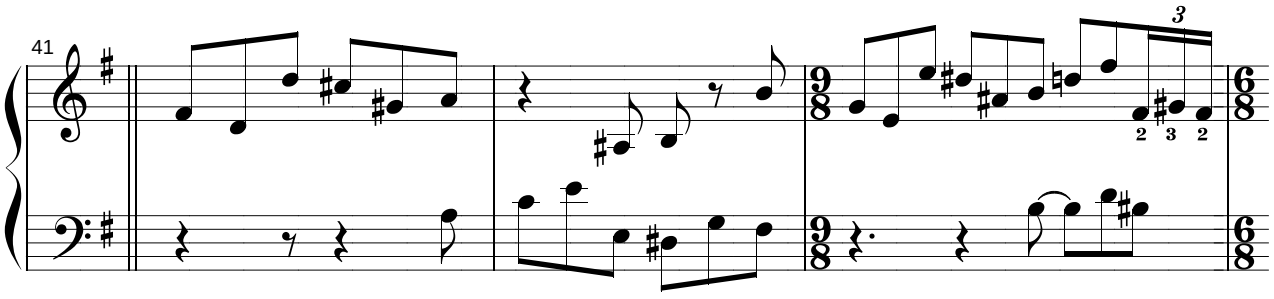
continues



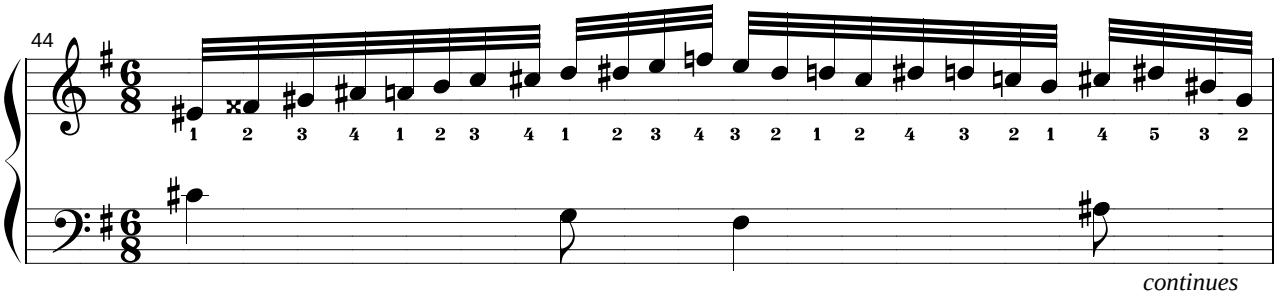
continues







Treble clef notation in the following 4 measures may be approximated in performance but it is to be practiced as notated; you'll perhaps question, in slow tempo, a few of the intervals matching the counterpoint (due to delayed resolutions) but when played at a faster tempo the treble-line sounds more interesting.



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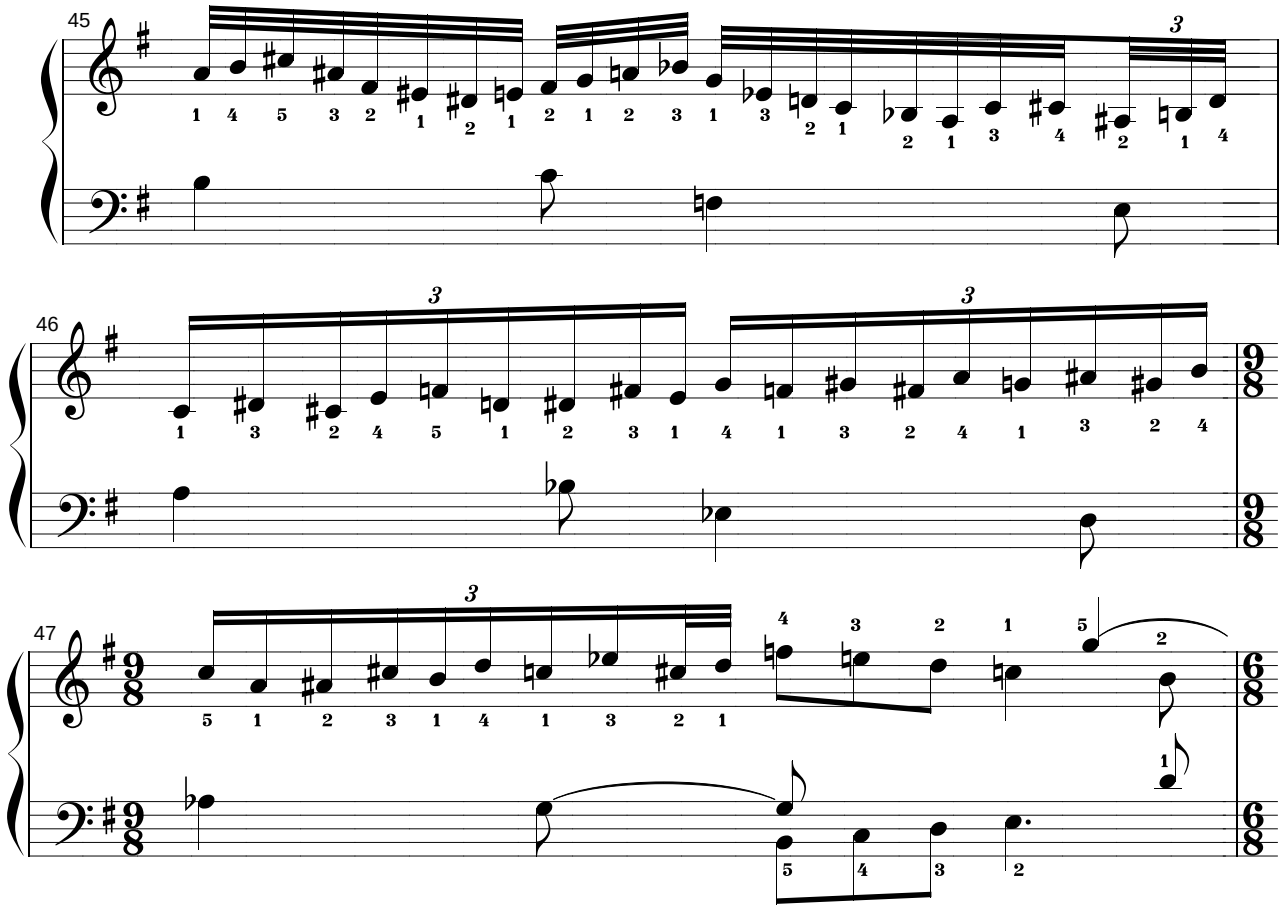
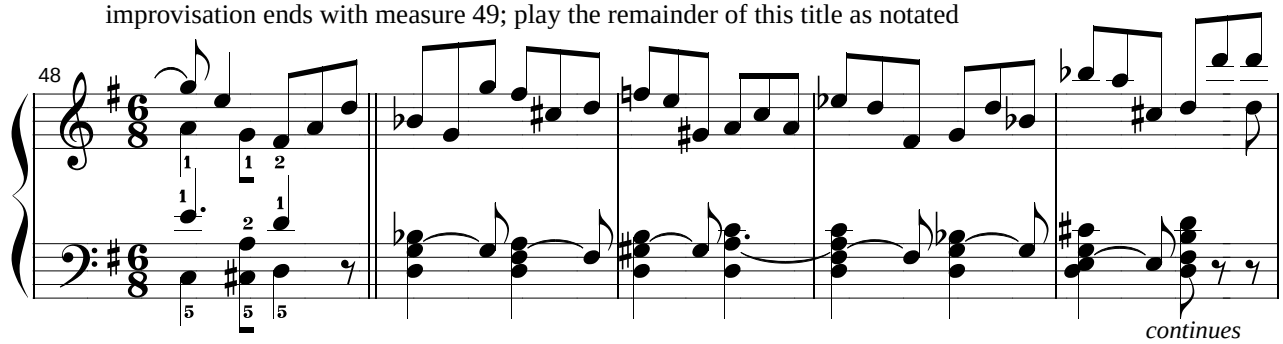
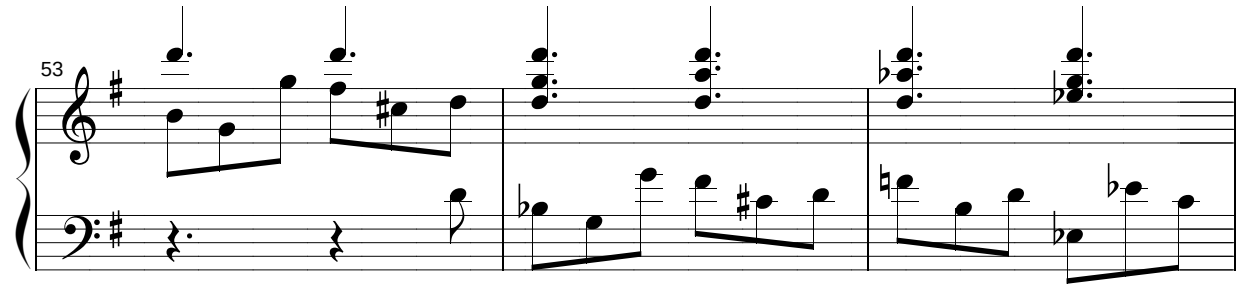


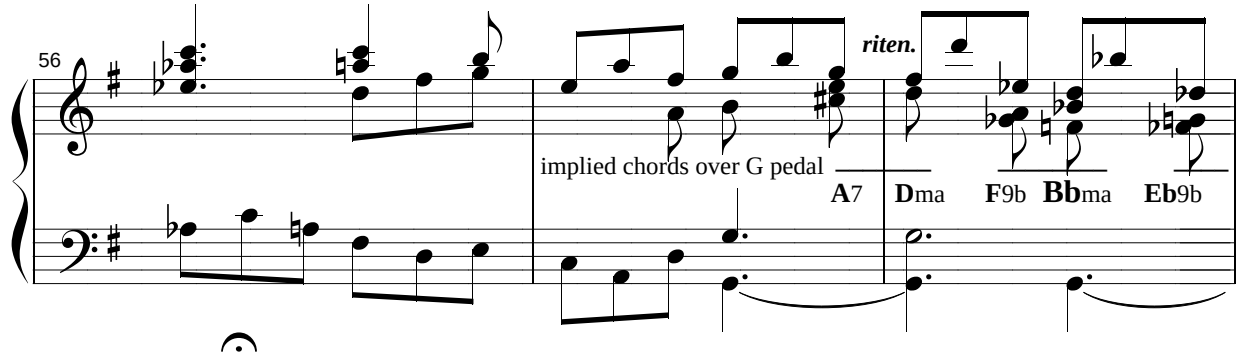
improvisation ends with measure 49; play the remainder of this title as notated



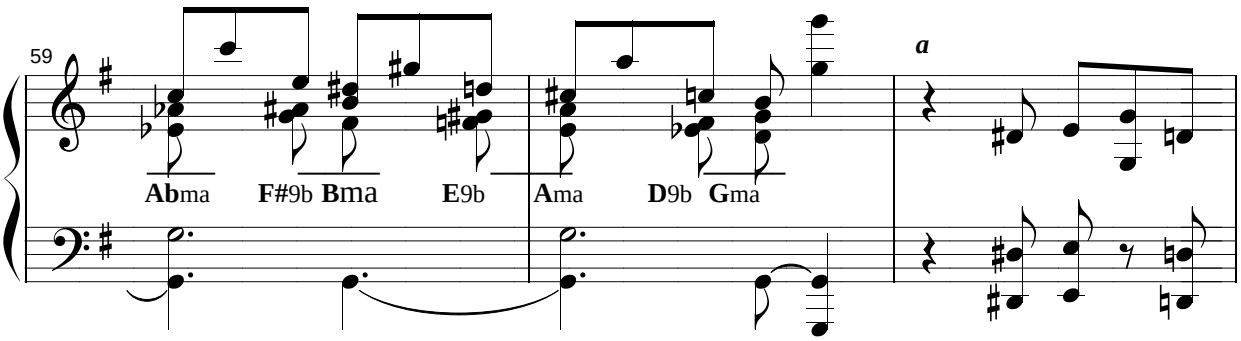
Notice in measures 49-52 that a voice-line in each chord of the bass clef is extended for an eighth-note value. This materialized after singing each tone horizontally plus interchanging them from one voice-line to another; suddenly, I realized the hidden melodic counterpoint. I'll admit that I've created cardinal sin however, Ferruccio Busconi wrote an elaborate transcription of this piece that was recorded by the pianist, Egon Pretri (CDAPR 7027 vol. 3) on Appian Recordings. So, I have changed notation to connect late baroque with twentieth century jazz.



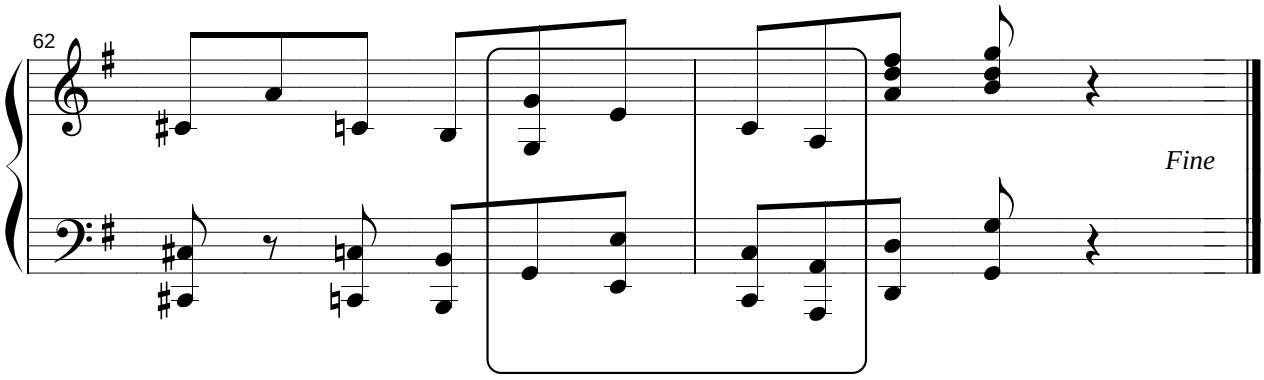
for a ritenuto effect, sing text with the melody: 'And now...we.. must.. hold-back and slow to..... a



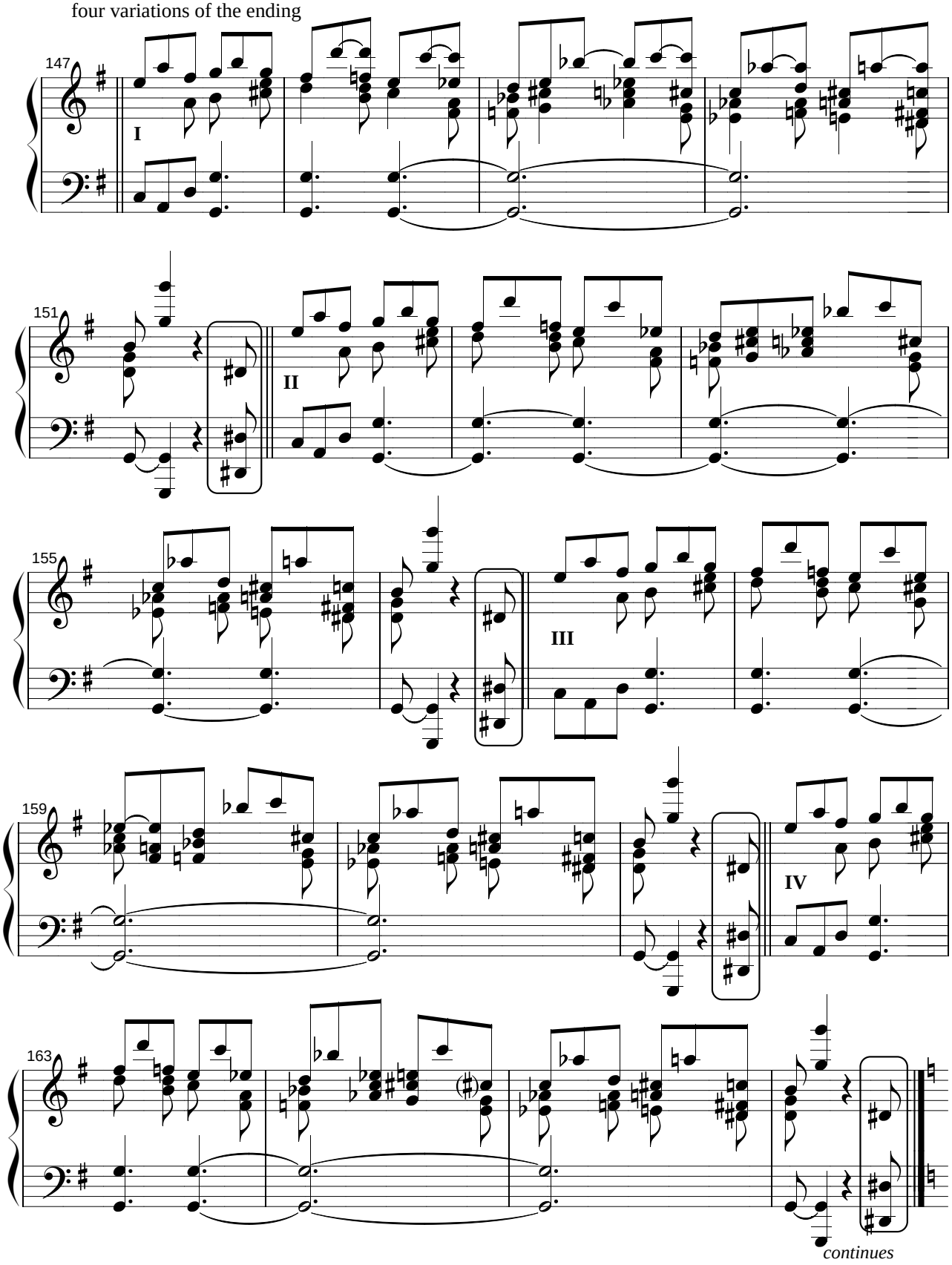
stand-still....and grad....ual.....ly. ..... in- crease.....our...tem...po'



Leading-tone diminished chords precede all primary-beats in measures 58-61; this major-triad progression, over G pedal, of implied modulations (all within the tonality) are: D, Bb, Ab, B and A. However, the Ab (2nd inv.) is connected modally, Ab with G phrygian and the A is from G lydian, but Bb (2nd inv.) sounds more like Gmi7; the Bb 2nd inv. (Gmi7 sound), Ab and A are interchanging modal chords; of course, G triad is not a modulation since G is the tonic. a*nalyzes by Alvaro Is-Rojas; author of "Treatise on Modern Harmony" (including jazz); work still in progress.*

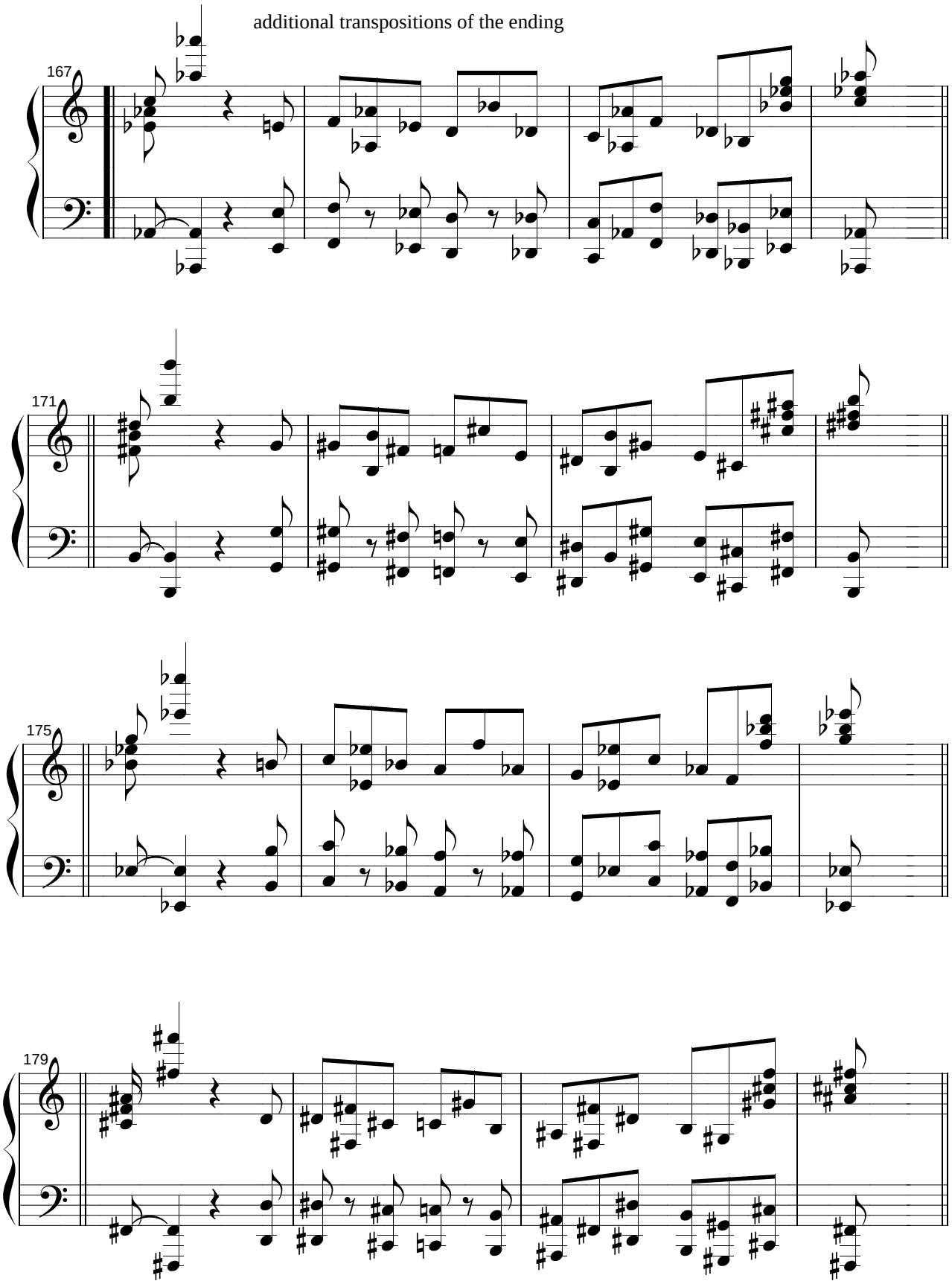


four variations of the ending



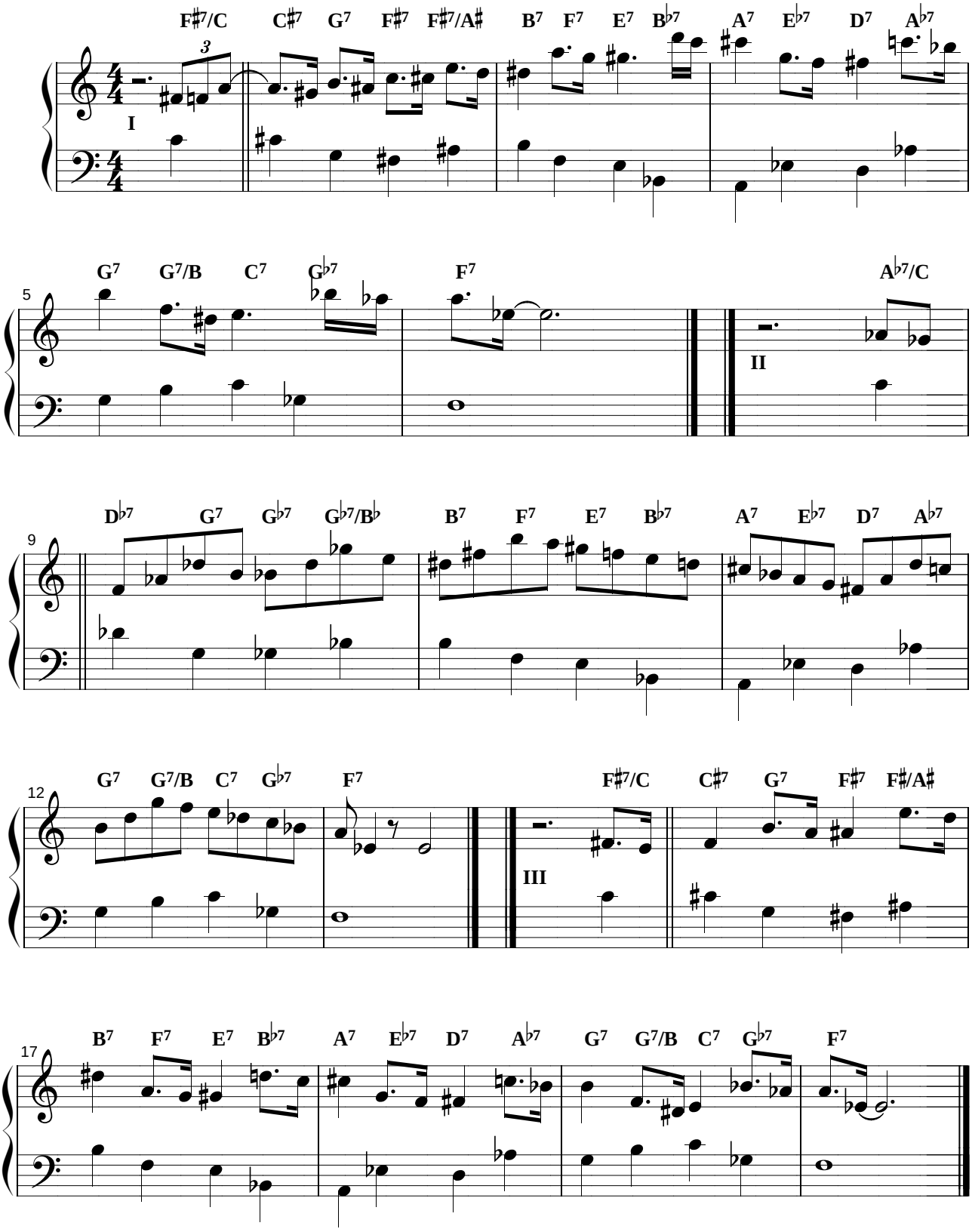
continues

additional transpositions of the ending



Gigue in G major

3 Variations of a Jazz Sequence

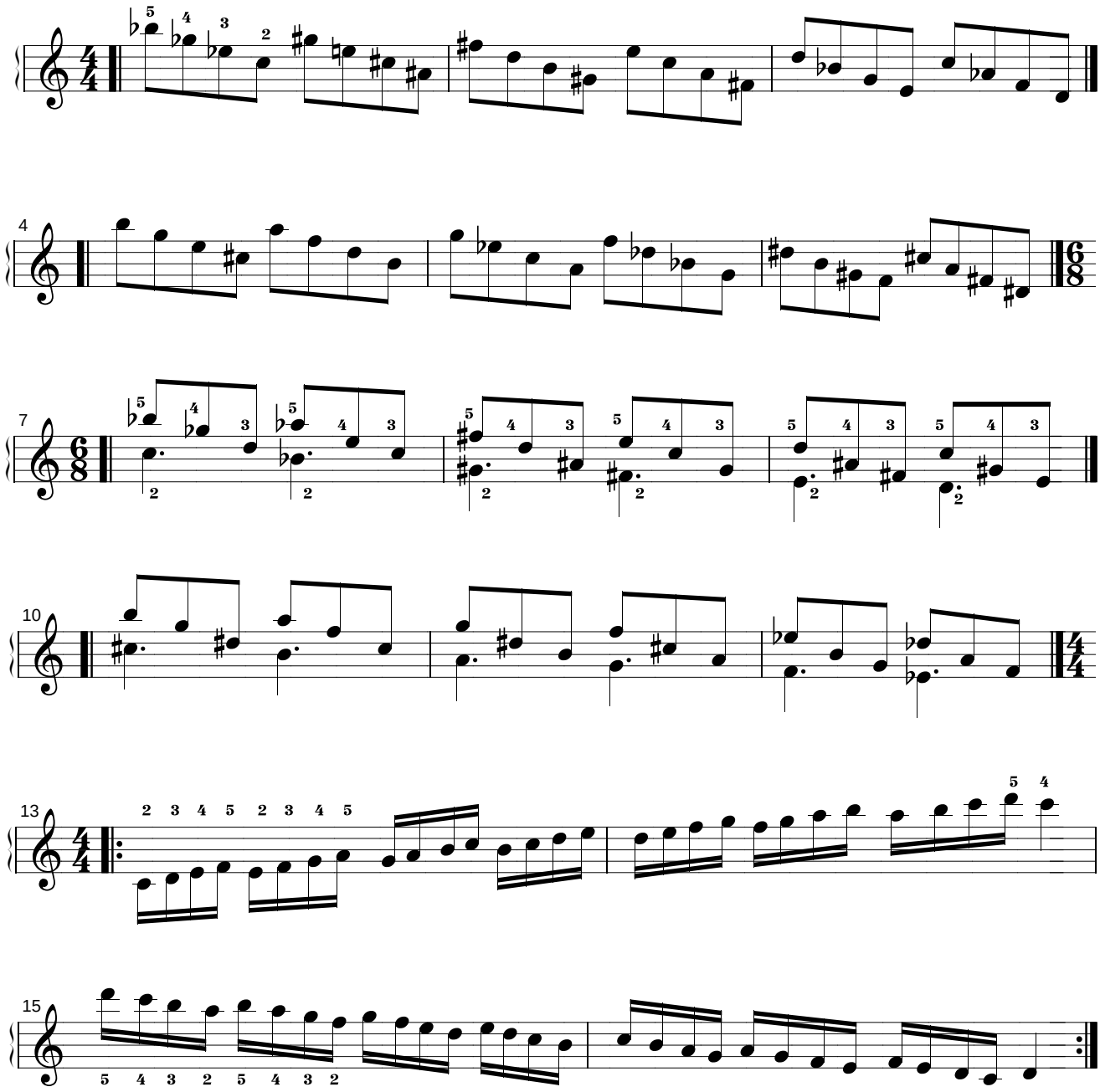


these examples appeared in Stuart Isacoff's 'Piano Today'
Fall issue 1996

Half-Diminished Sevenths

Without Thumbs

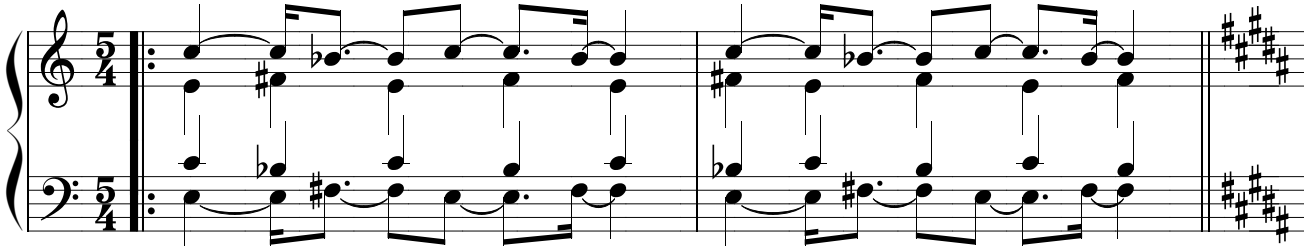
Practicing without thumbs bears fruit immediately. I learned this exercise from pianist/pianomaker, Rudi Steindl, chief technician for Steinway & Sons in Florida. This example, written as half-diminished sevenths, is for smaller hands but Rudi played it in dominant sevenths. WARNING: excessive stretching is dangerous for the knuckles.



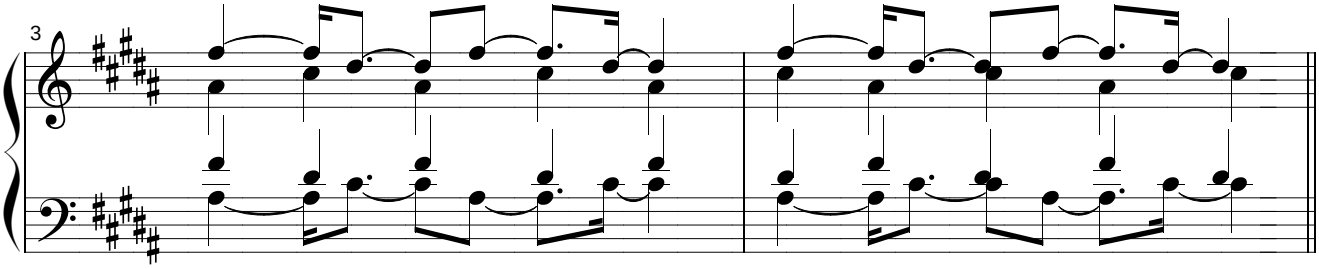
For Fingers Only

Without Thumbs

Practice hands seperately and count aloud (1, 2, 3, 4) in each measure of the soprano or bass-line. Next, count aloud (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) in each measure of the alto or tenor-line. Never practice this page for over forty (40) seconds.



be aware that your finger tips are centered on the black keys



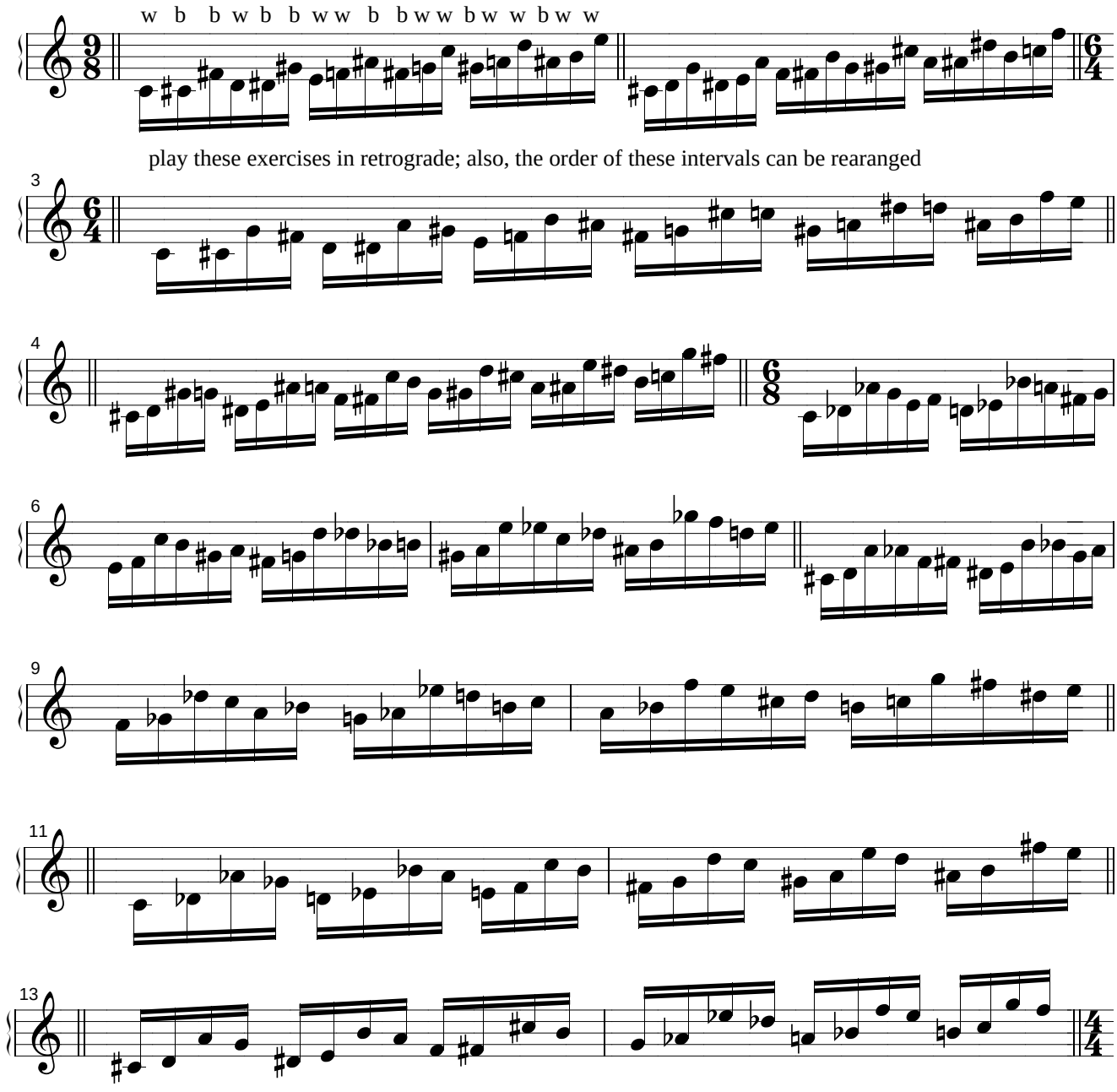
WARNING: The above exercises can cause inflamation of the tendons especially in the lower arms. There is always the risk of developing tendonitis when forcing muscles to execute technical difficulties beyond ones physical capacity. Tendonitis gives no warning and is noticed the moment *after* you are unable to produce a volume above double pianissmo. If you should ever experience tendonitis, stop all activity with the hands, see your doctor immediately and stay away from the piano until you are advised differently.

THERE IS A DIFFERENCE, physically and mentally, between improvisers and classical pianists. In the classical world one trains to perform as relaxed, physically and mentally, as possible. Improvisers physically and mentally force the body to perform unprepared music often and to the very limit of their capabilities; this reinforces tension in the circuitry of the brain as well as in all muscles and tendons. I have visited doctors and physical therapists regularly for the past thirty-eight years. Once you have experienced a muscle-spasm or an inflamed-tendon, the problem always returns if you over-practice because this experienced circuitry in your brain has been established; it will never forget to strike again. Serious pianists should have physical therapy on a regular basis; also, their level of performance will improve.

Black & White Key-Relationship

Play and sing (aloud) the pitch of each tone; then, repeat the same notes and sing aloud while naming the *black and white* keys. As for transposition, I want to emphasize the importance of practicing in all tonalities; it should begin in the first year of piano lessons and preferrably before age seven, when the development of a child's brain enters its next stage. My reason for stressing this point is that bandoneon players must begin before their fourth birthday due to the illogical order in the placement of left hand stud-buttons used for chords; if beginning after age five, greater difficulties are experienced, for many years, in mastering this most demanding instrument.

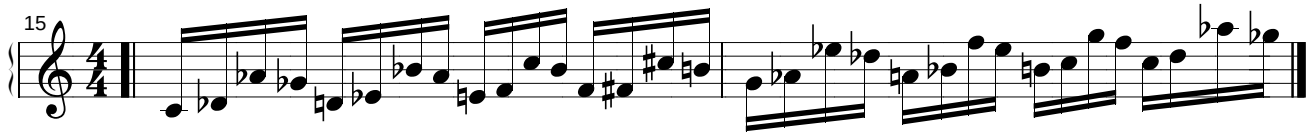
w = white
b = black



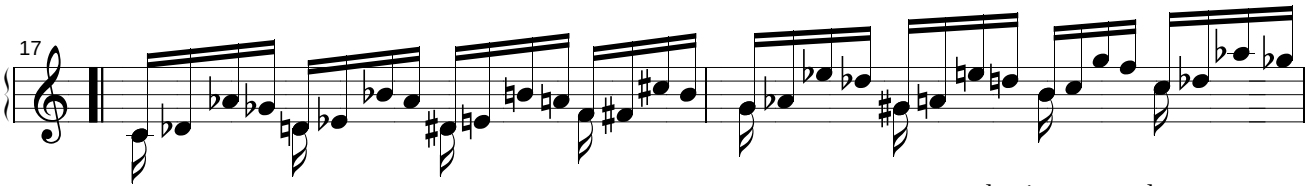
continues

measures 15 and 16 are written in the mode of C major

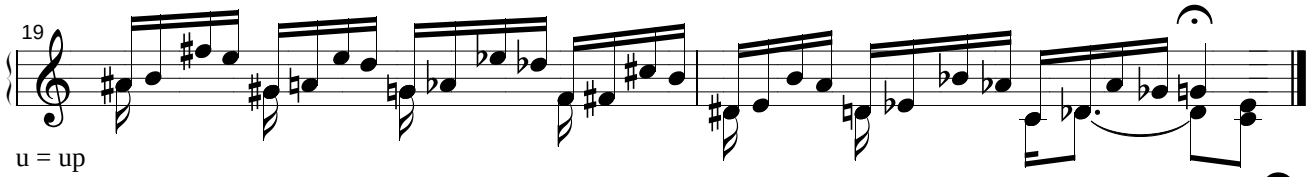
play in retrograde



measures 17 through 20 are written in the mode of C harmonic-minor

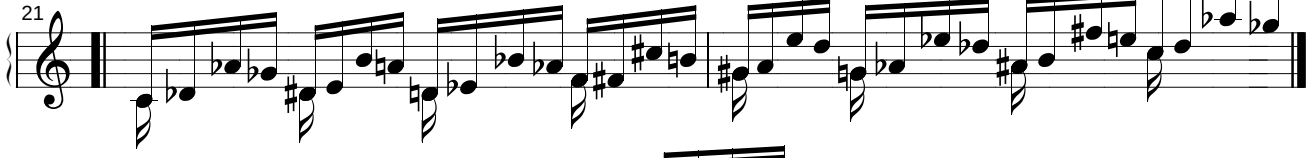


play in retrograde

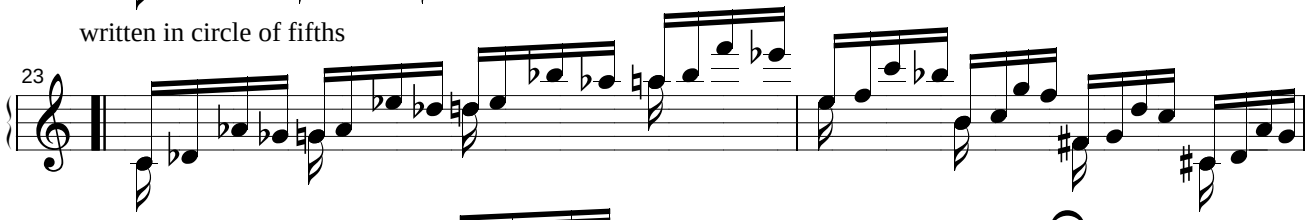


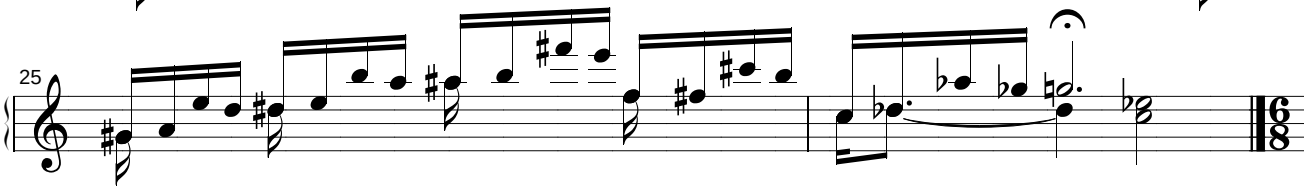
u = up
d = down

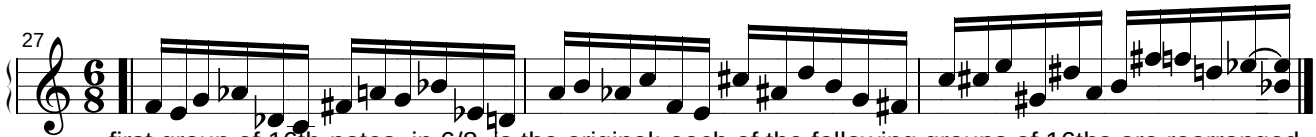
(u) 3- (d) 2- (u) 3- (u) 3- d) 2- (u) 3- (u) 2



written in circle of fifths



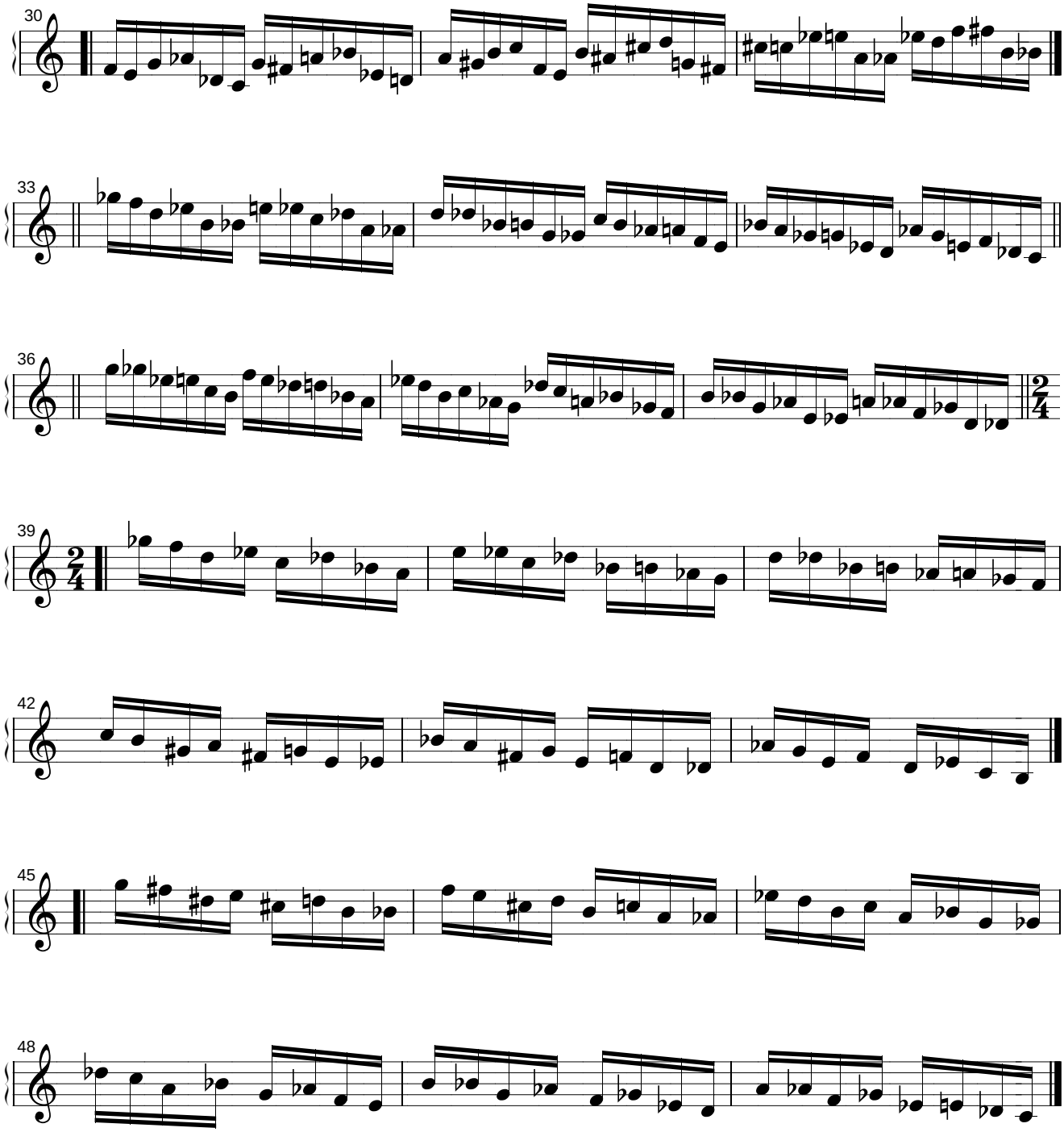


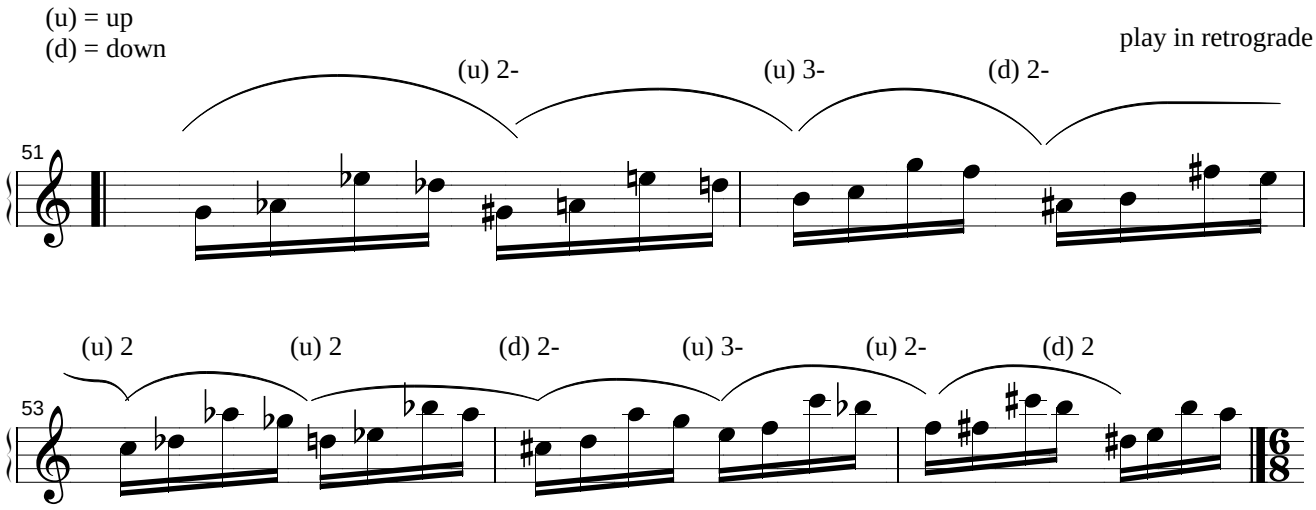


first group of 16th-notes, in 6/8, is the original; each of the following groups of 16ths are rearranged

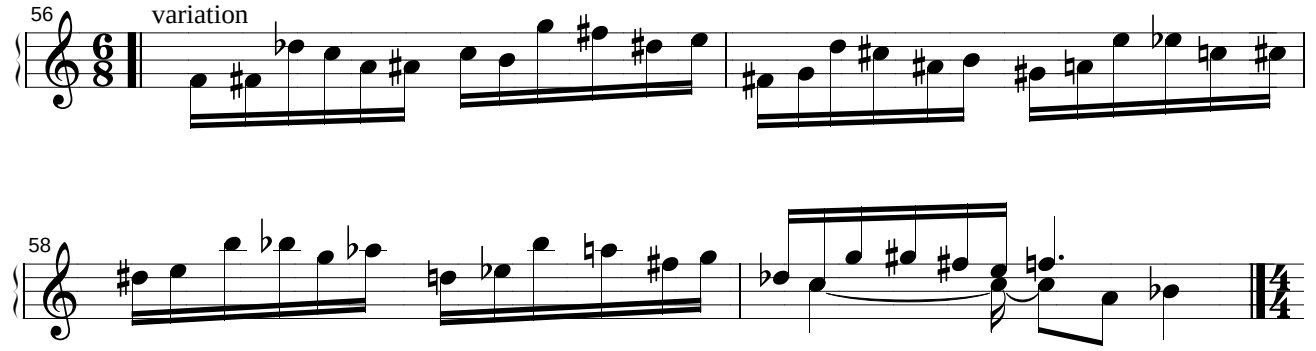
continues

these groups of sixteenth notes remained in sequence



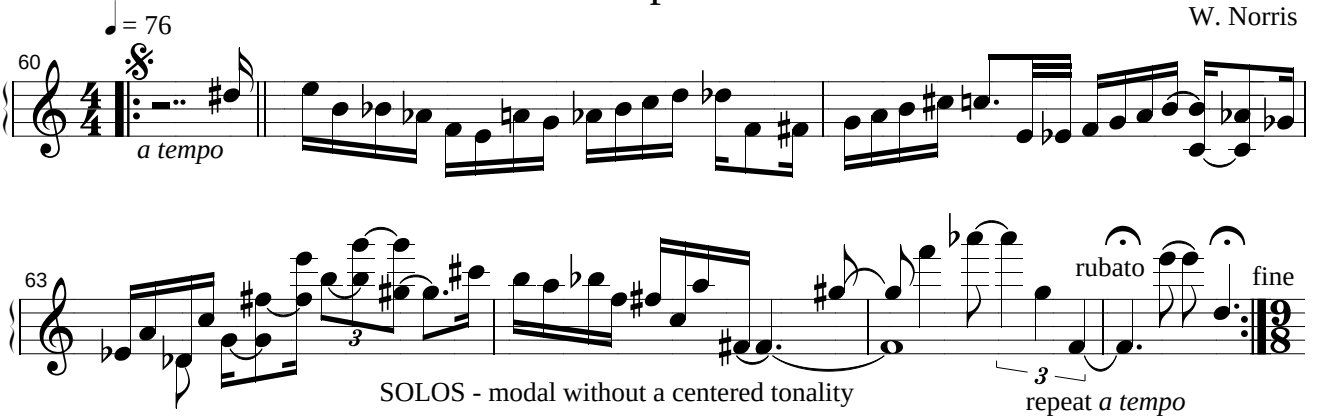


transposition, of the above phrase-pattern, is as follows: up a minor 2nd, up a minor 3rd, down a minor 2nd, up a major 2nd, up a major 2nd, down a minor 2nd, up a minor 3rd, up a minor 2nd, down a major 2nd; melodically, this and also in retrograde sounds more interesting



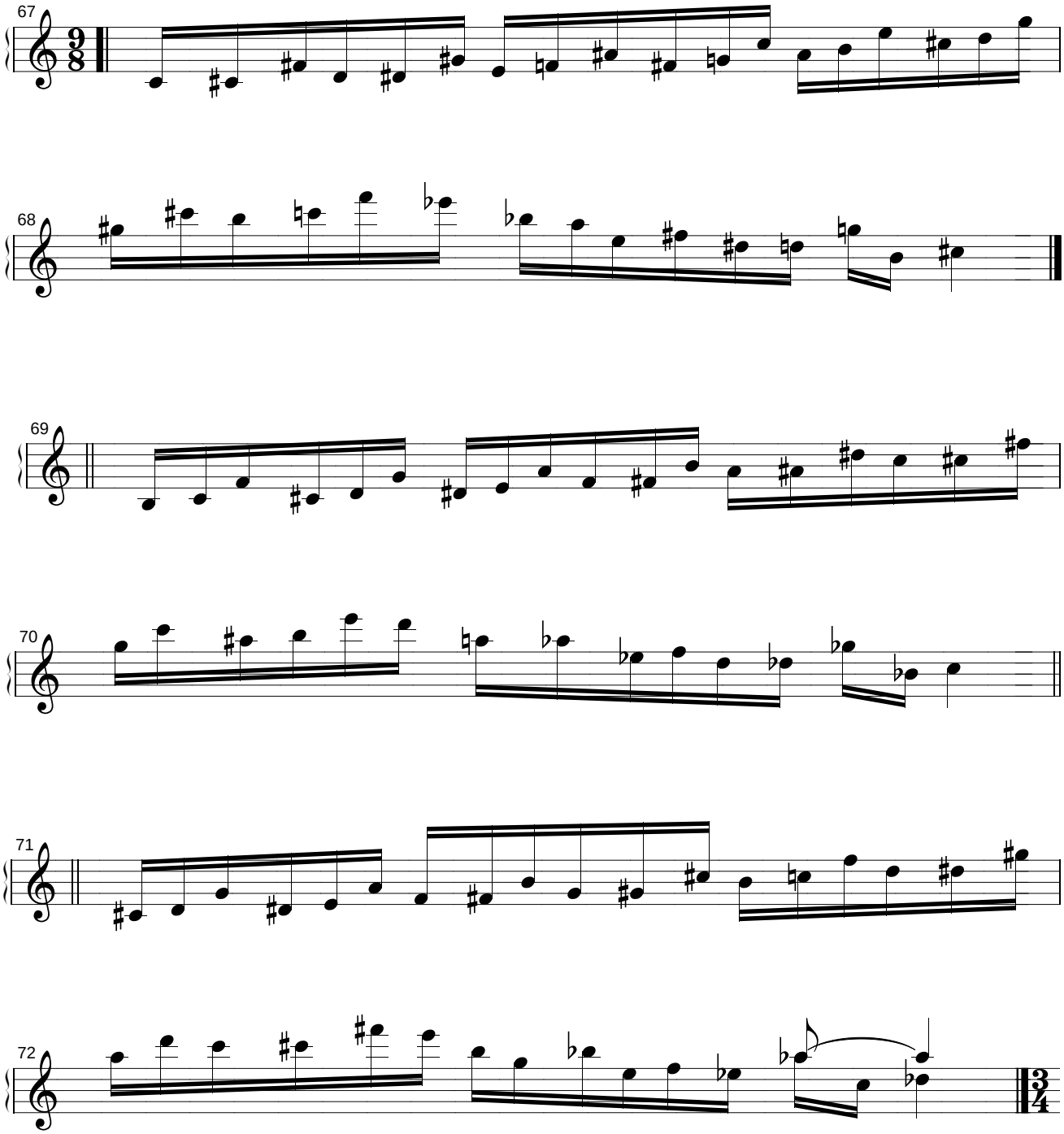
below is the result of practicing measures 5-10 (in 6/8 meter) on page 136; however, there is hardly any resemblance to be found

Impetus



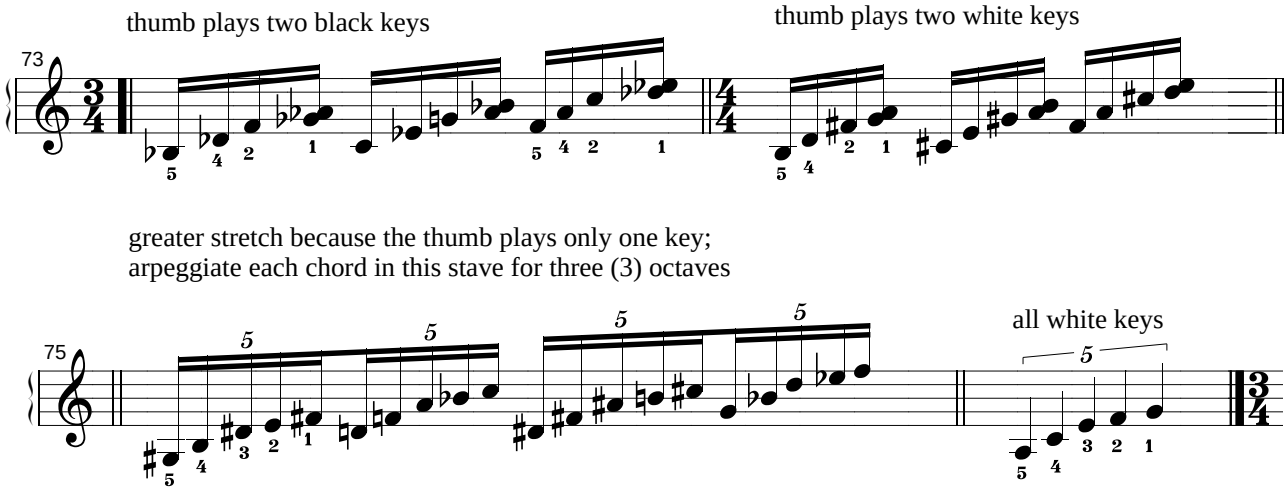
after improvising, play (*rubato) t*he last five-tones in retrograde; then play (*rubato)* the last five-tones as notated; D.S. *al fine*

variation of measures 1 and 2 on page 136 in three tonalities



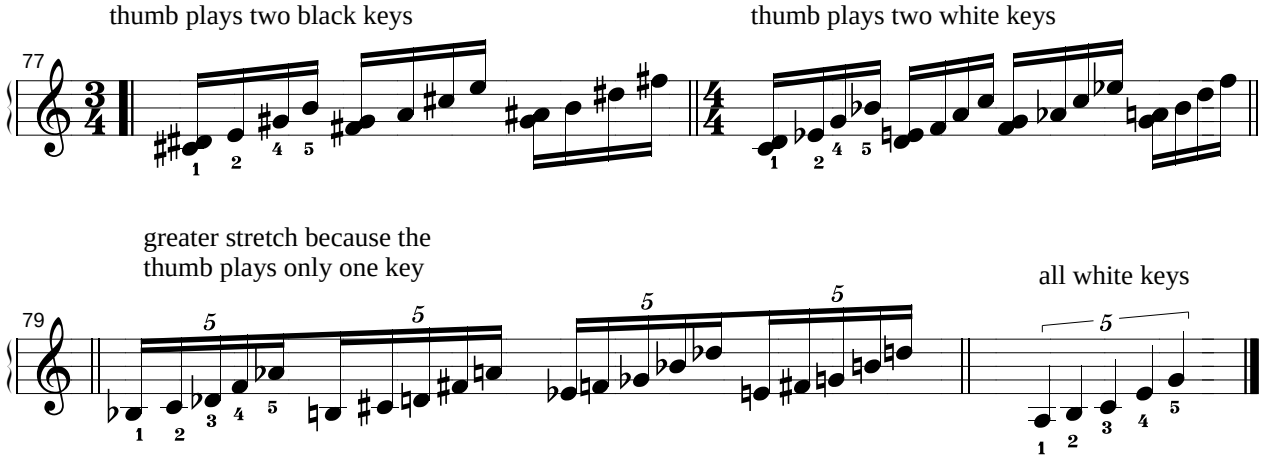
the examples (above) were written after editing the previous four pages

PERTAINING TO THE LEFT HAND



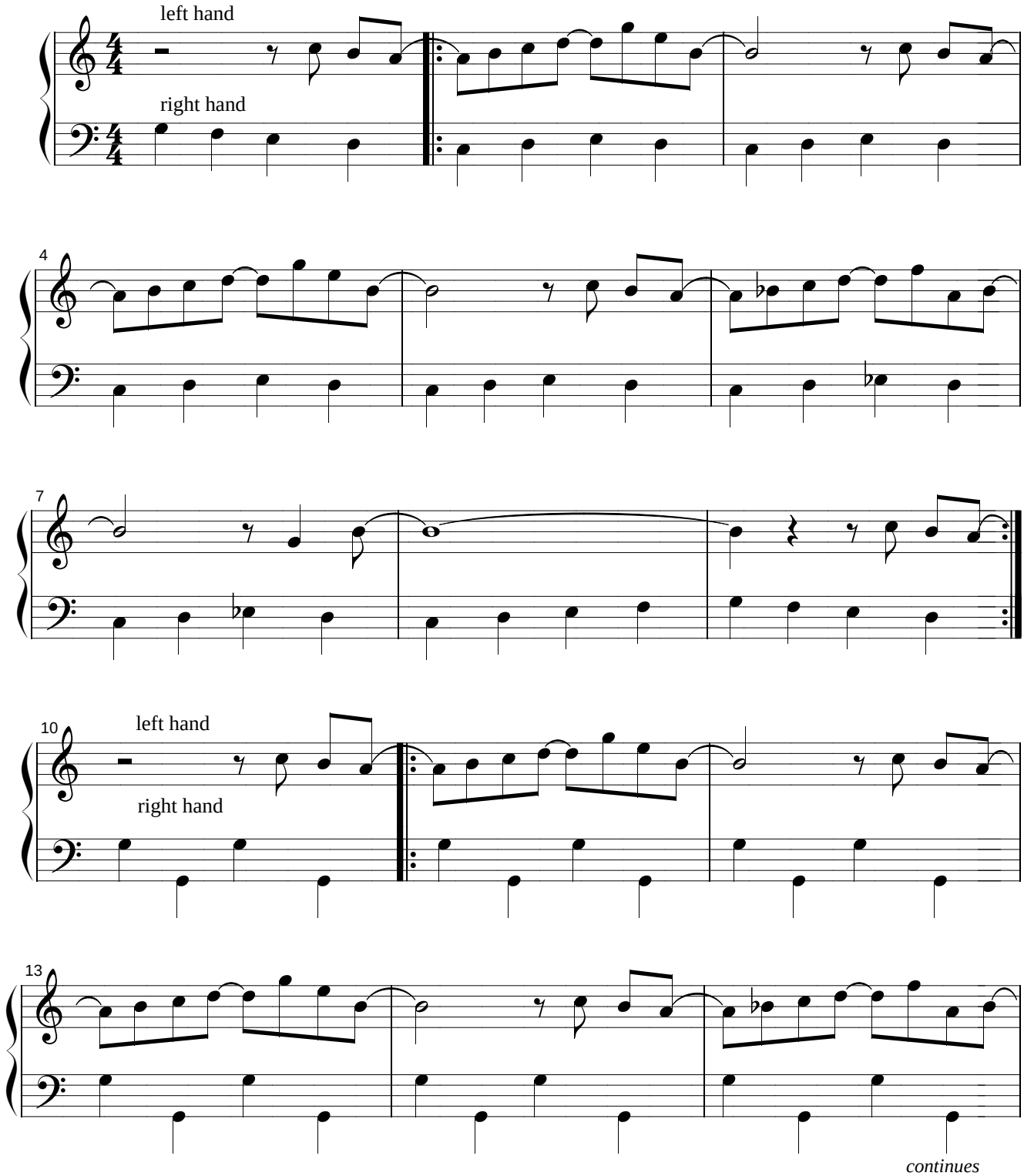
There is greater difficulty in reaching these same intervals in other tonalities because of different combinations of black (thin) and white (wide) keys; also, within a row of key-shanks (in piano actions) the measurements are not exact (a fraction off) in octaves which is unavoidable when constructing piano-actions because of the angle of strings being struck by hammers; a simular point, more easily noticed, is that distance of reach for the tri-tone between F *ascending* to B is less than F *descending* to B. These are physical reasons why every pianist MUST practice in all tonalities or remain forever at the mercy of the keyboard; another point, there's a slightly different sound-quality for each tonality as well as a difference of sound in each octave.

PERTAINING TO THE RIGHT HAND

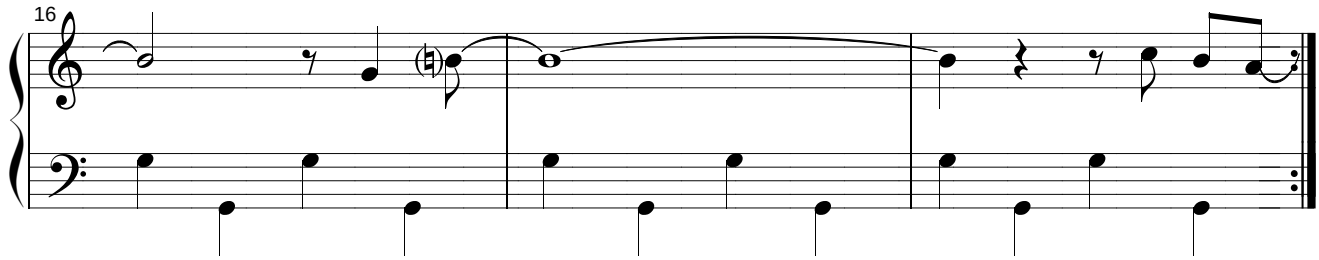


Hands Crossed

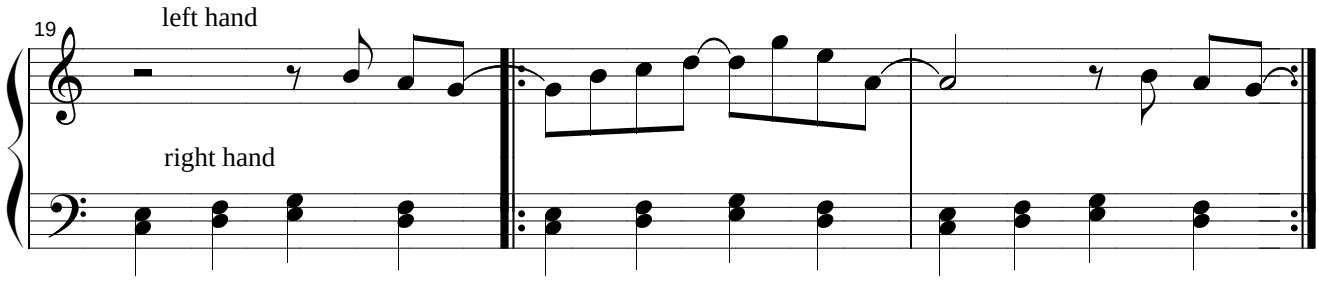
♩ = 112

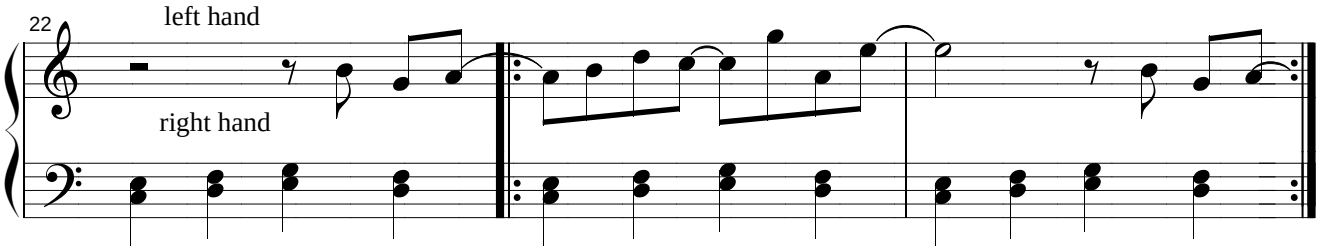


continues



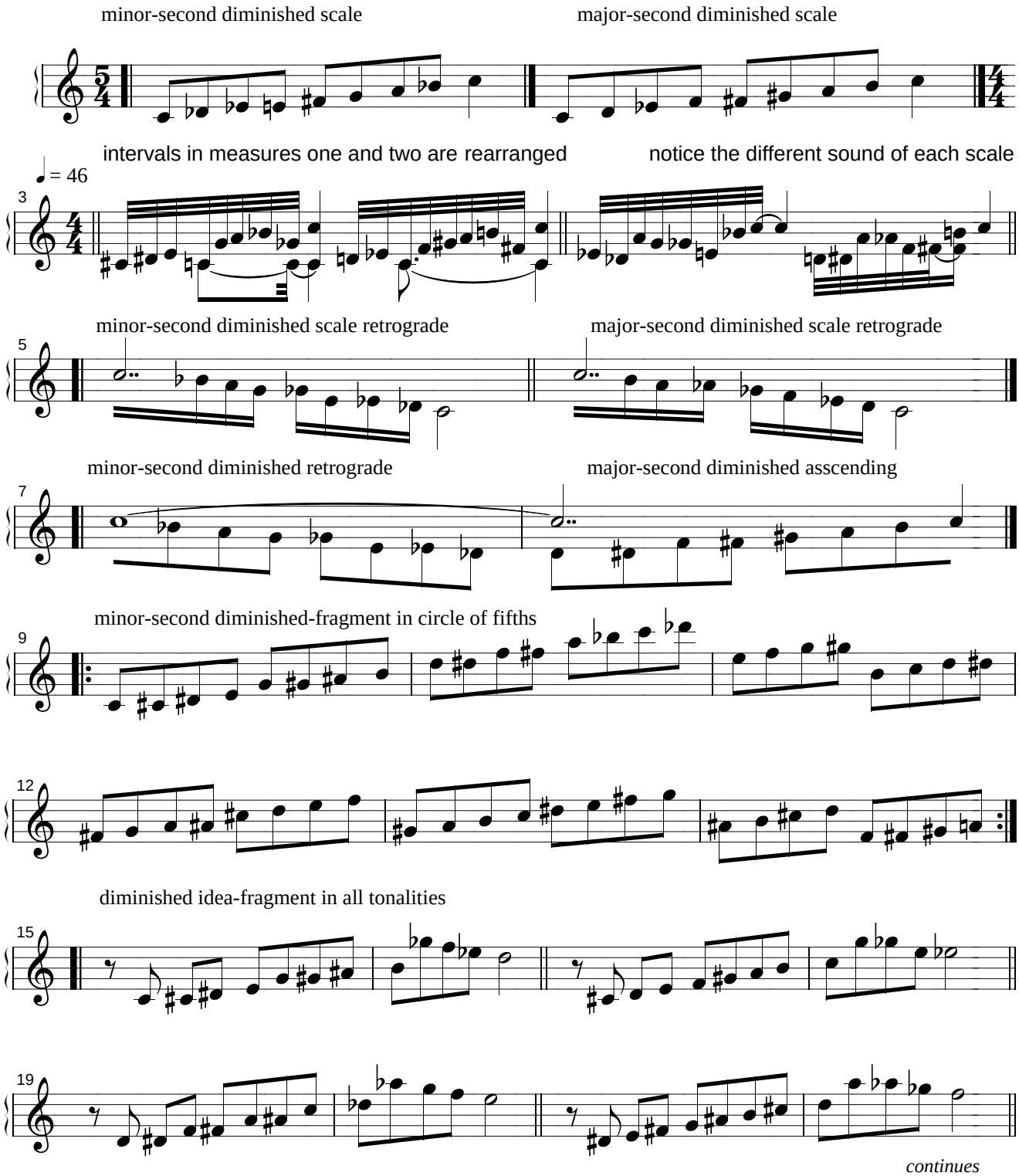
after practicing these exercises you will improvise with less inhibition but of course, in your own style



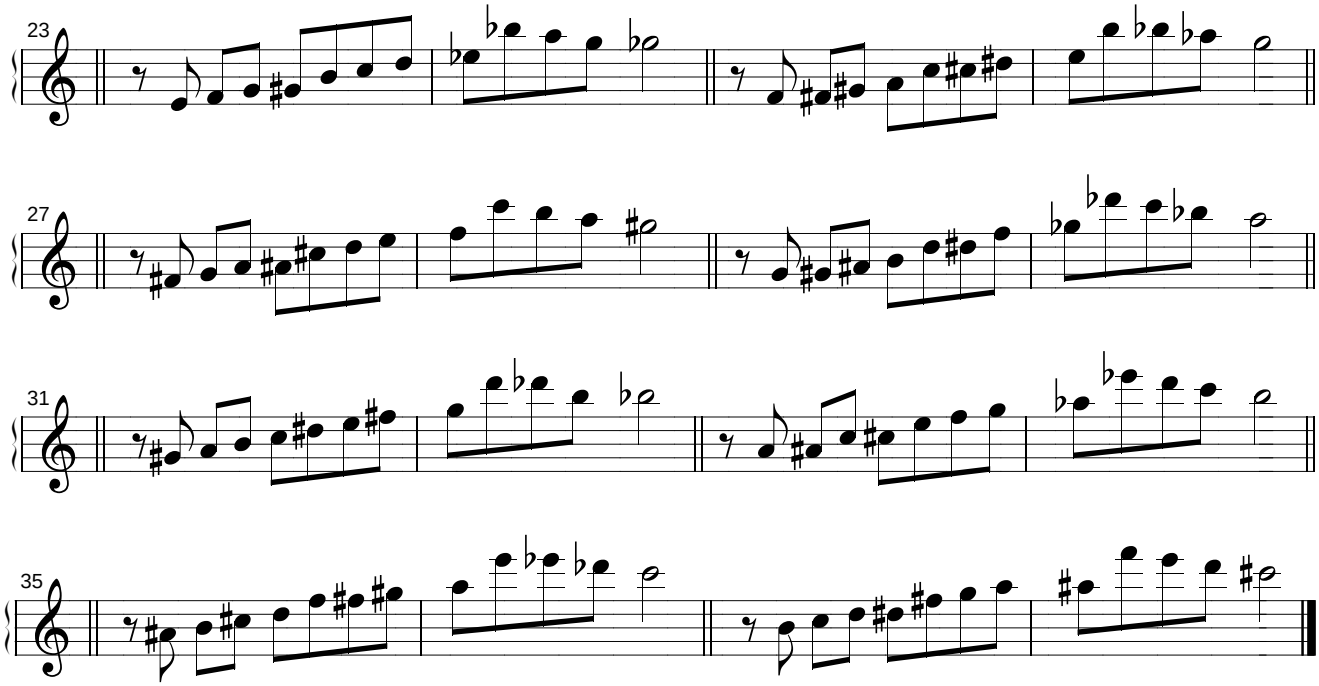


for a handicap, try playing the melody of FOUR with your left-hand while executing quarter-note chords in the right-hand

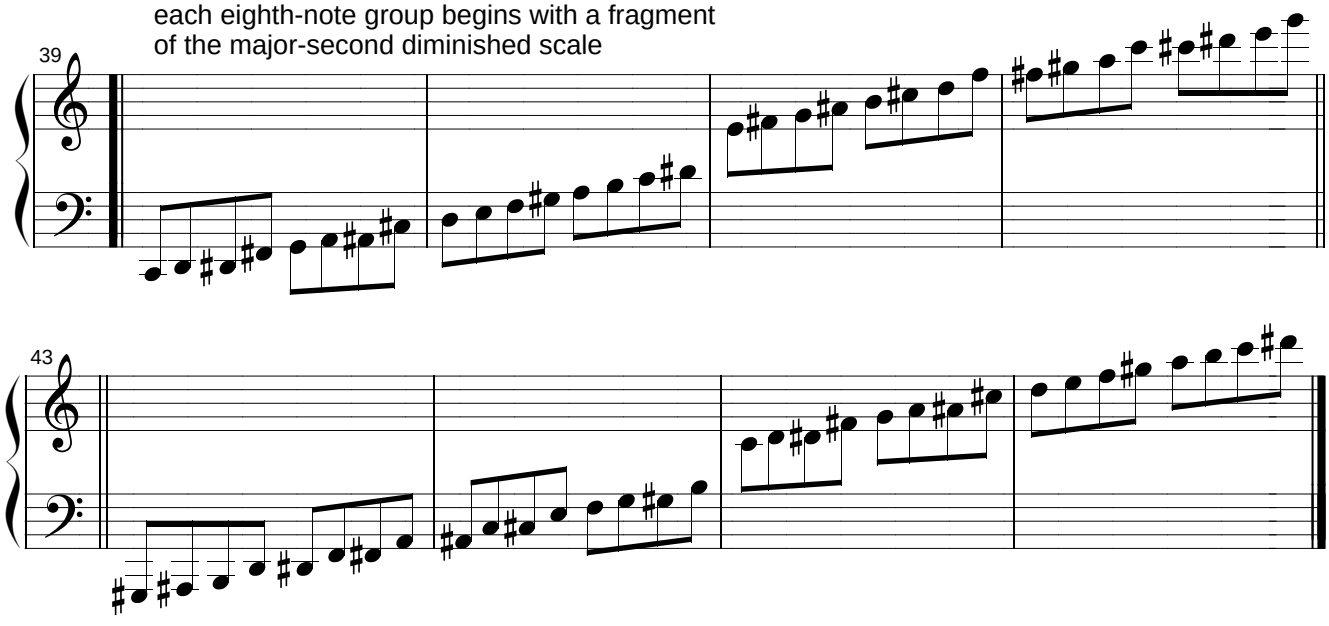
Diminished Fragments



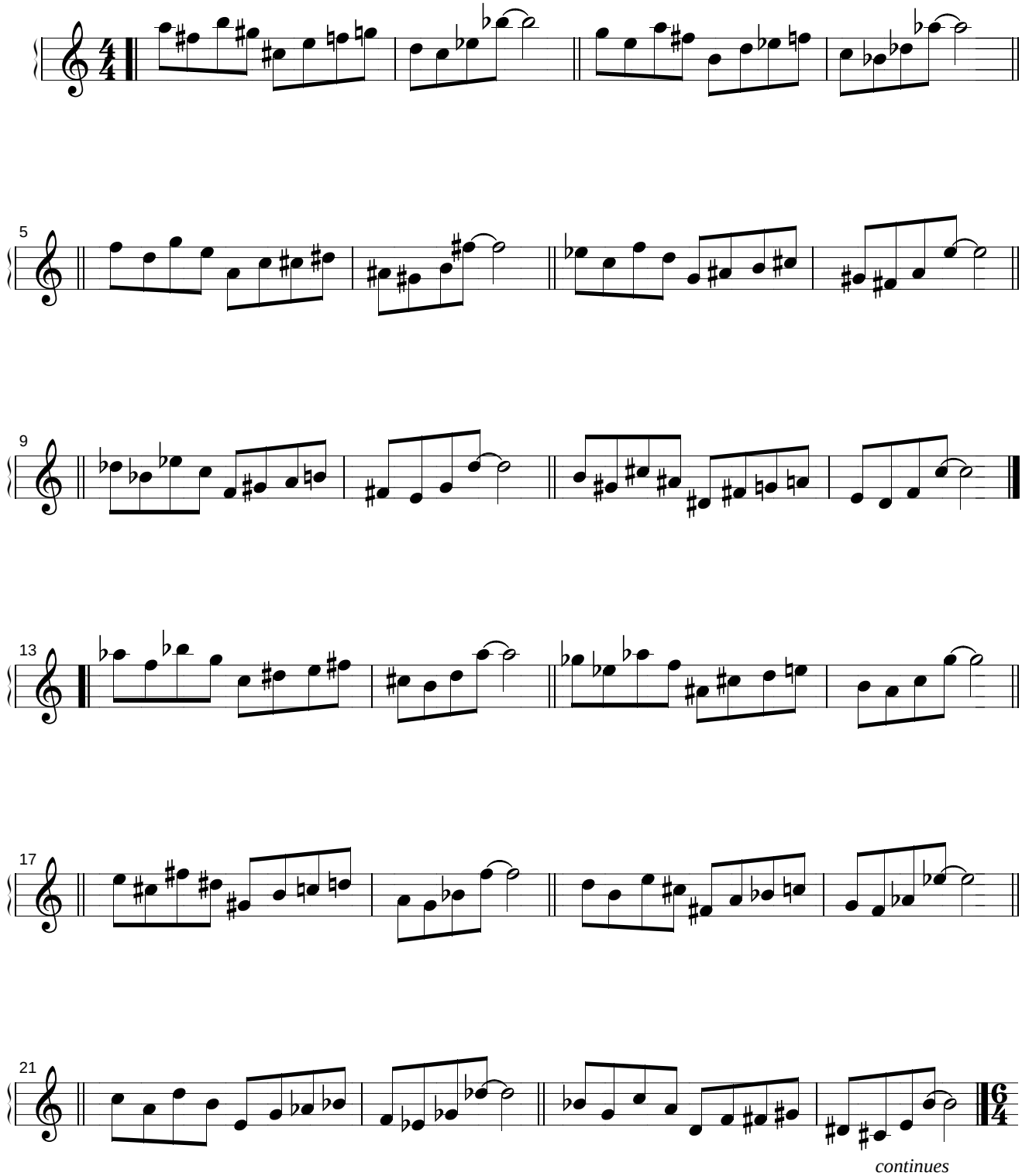
continues



each eighth-note group begins with a fragment
of the major-second diminished scale

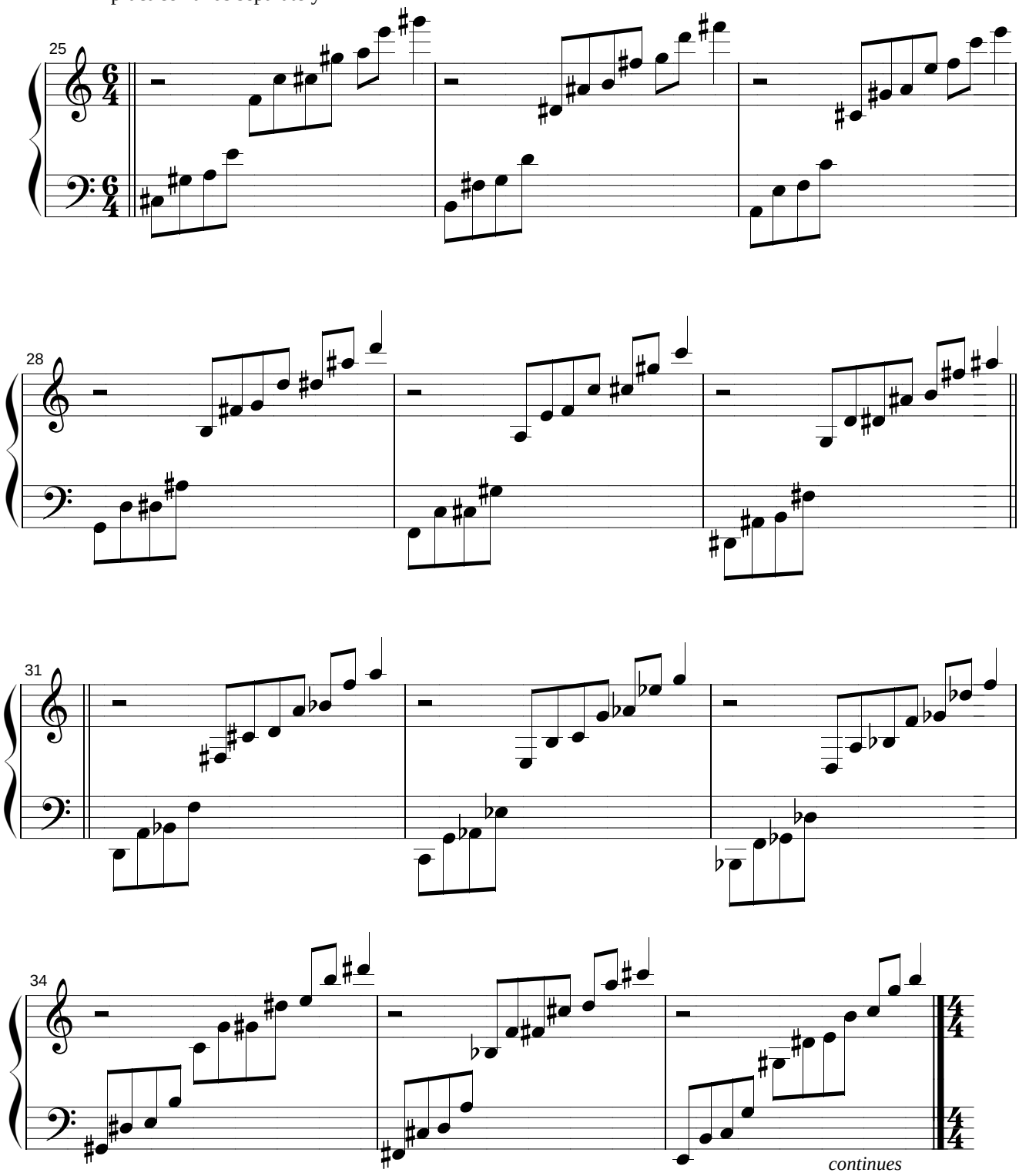


Single Lines



continues

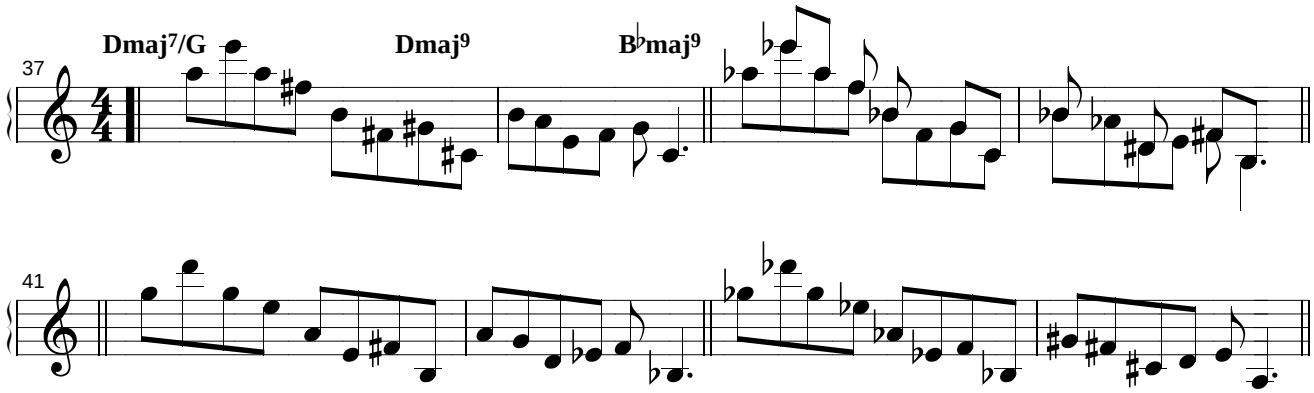
practice hands separately



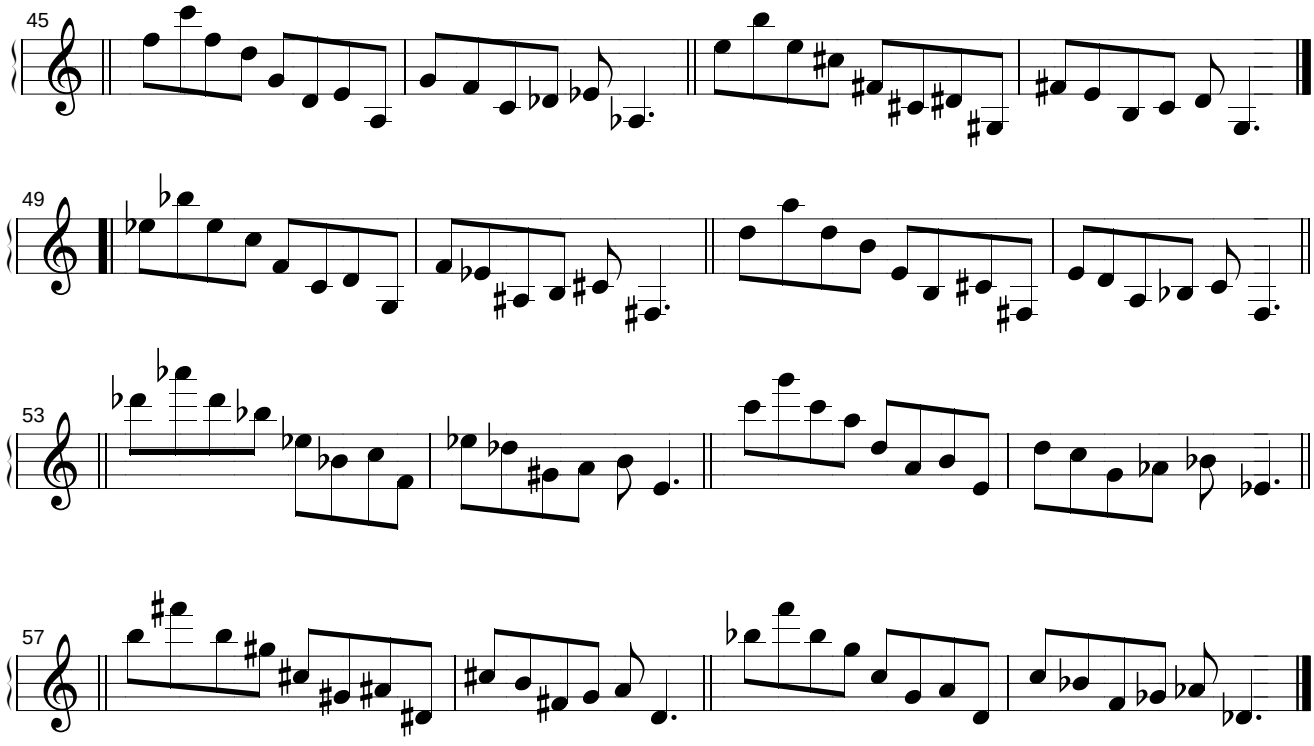
combine different measures

try contrary motion

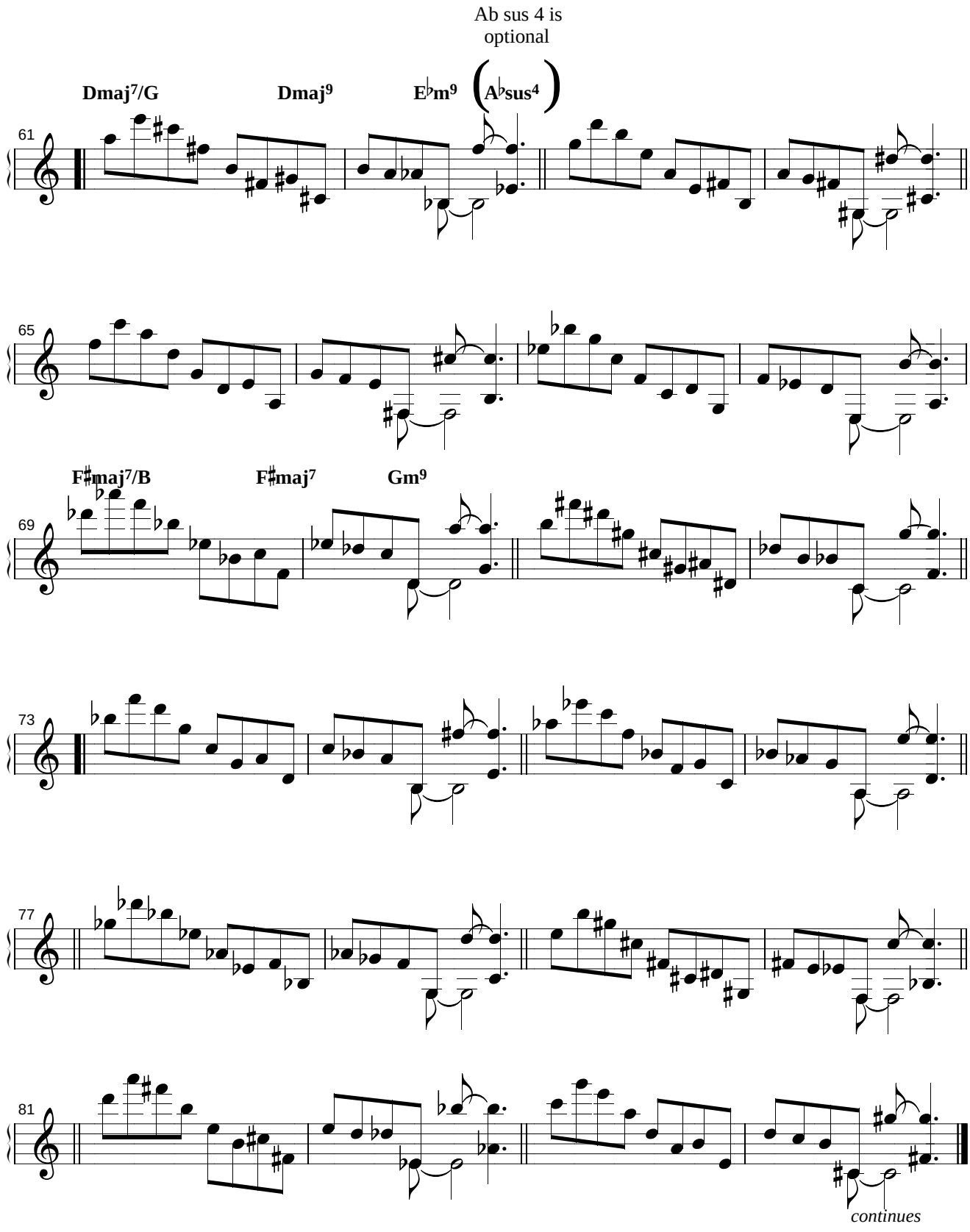
Up-turned stems in measures 39-40 represent five intervalic-fifths; Eb~Ab, F~Bb, G~C, Bb~D# and F#~B. Although the notation is descending, play the first three-fifths ascending, descend the next fifth and ascend the last; repeat and listen. Notice the connection of intervalic-thirds; Ab~F, Bb~G, D#~B = two minor 3rds and one major 3rd; play these 3rds ascending, then descending; repeat and listen. By playing every intervalic possibility, your mind will discover a new aspect of the music-notation; then your brain feels stimulated and refreshed.

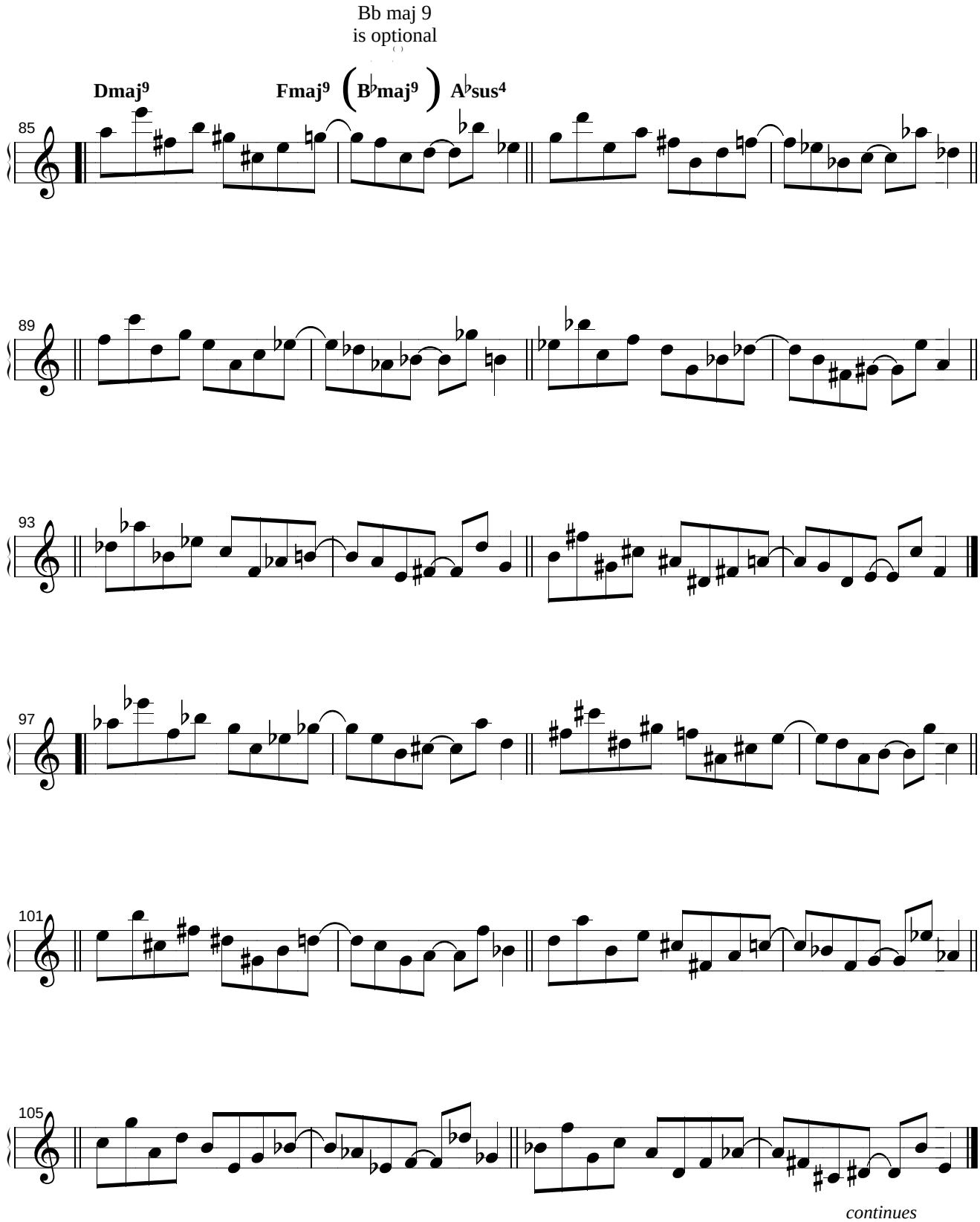


you'll notice a similarity with these intervals but the following pages shows their development; it's the way I work

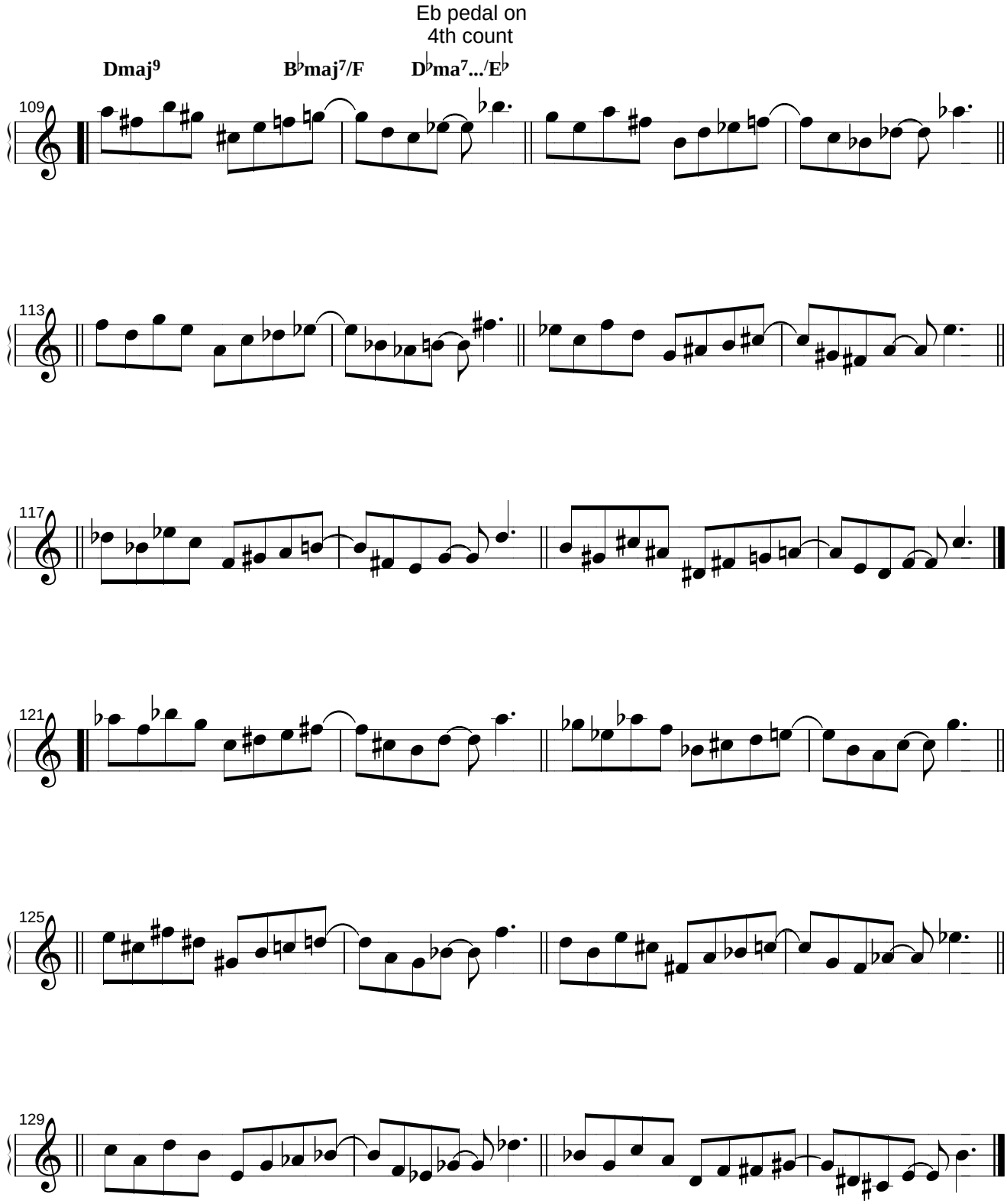


continues


Ab sus 4 is optional
Dmaj7/G
Dmaj9
E♭m9
(A♭sus4)
61
65
F♯maj7/B
F♯maj7
Gm9
69
73
77
81
continues

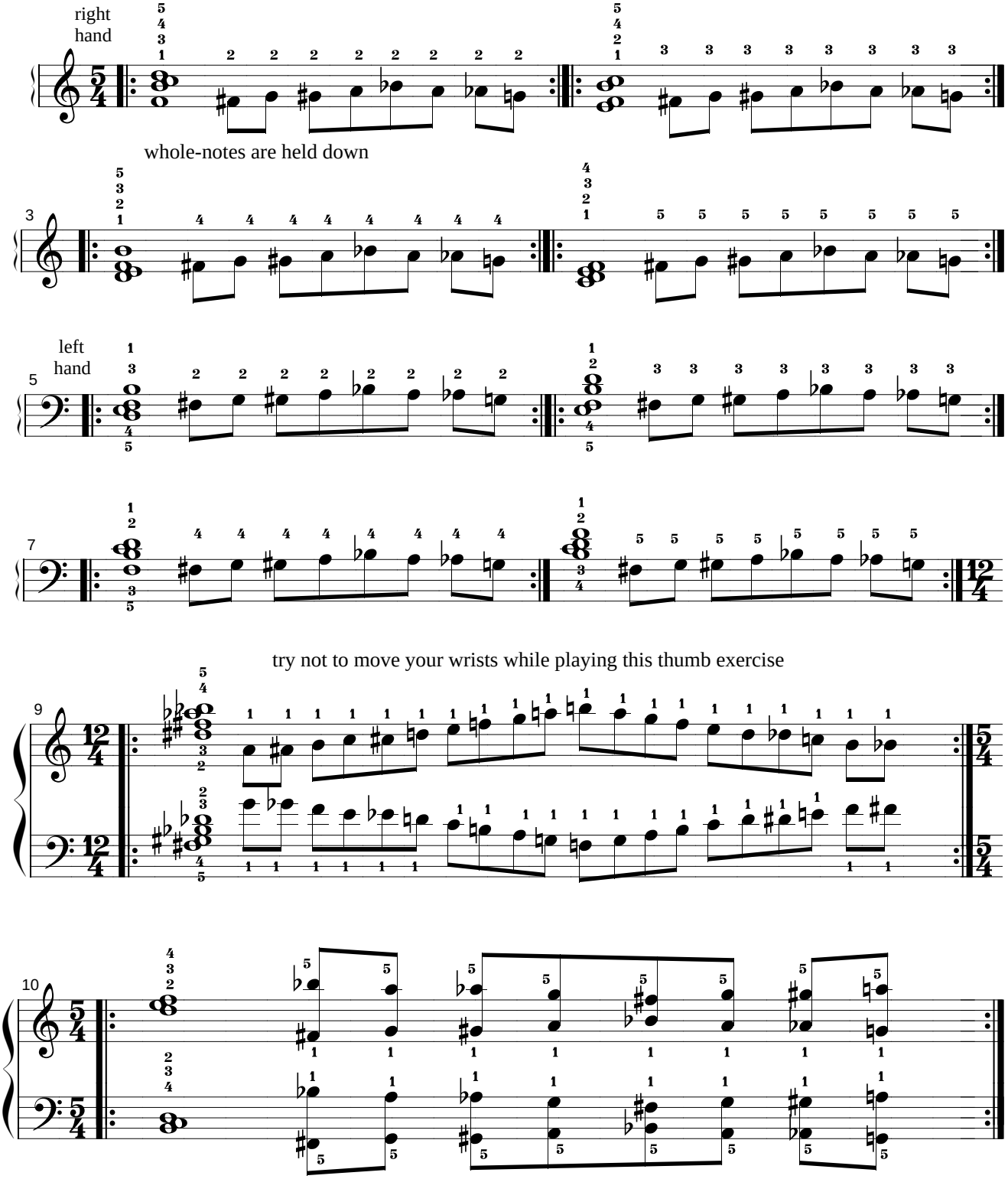

Bb maj 9
is optional
Dmaj9
Fmaj9
B♭maj9
A♭sus4
85
89
93
97
101
105

continues


Eb pedal on
4th count
Dmaj9
B♭maj7/F
D♭ma7.../E♭
109
113
117
121
125
129

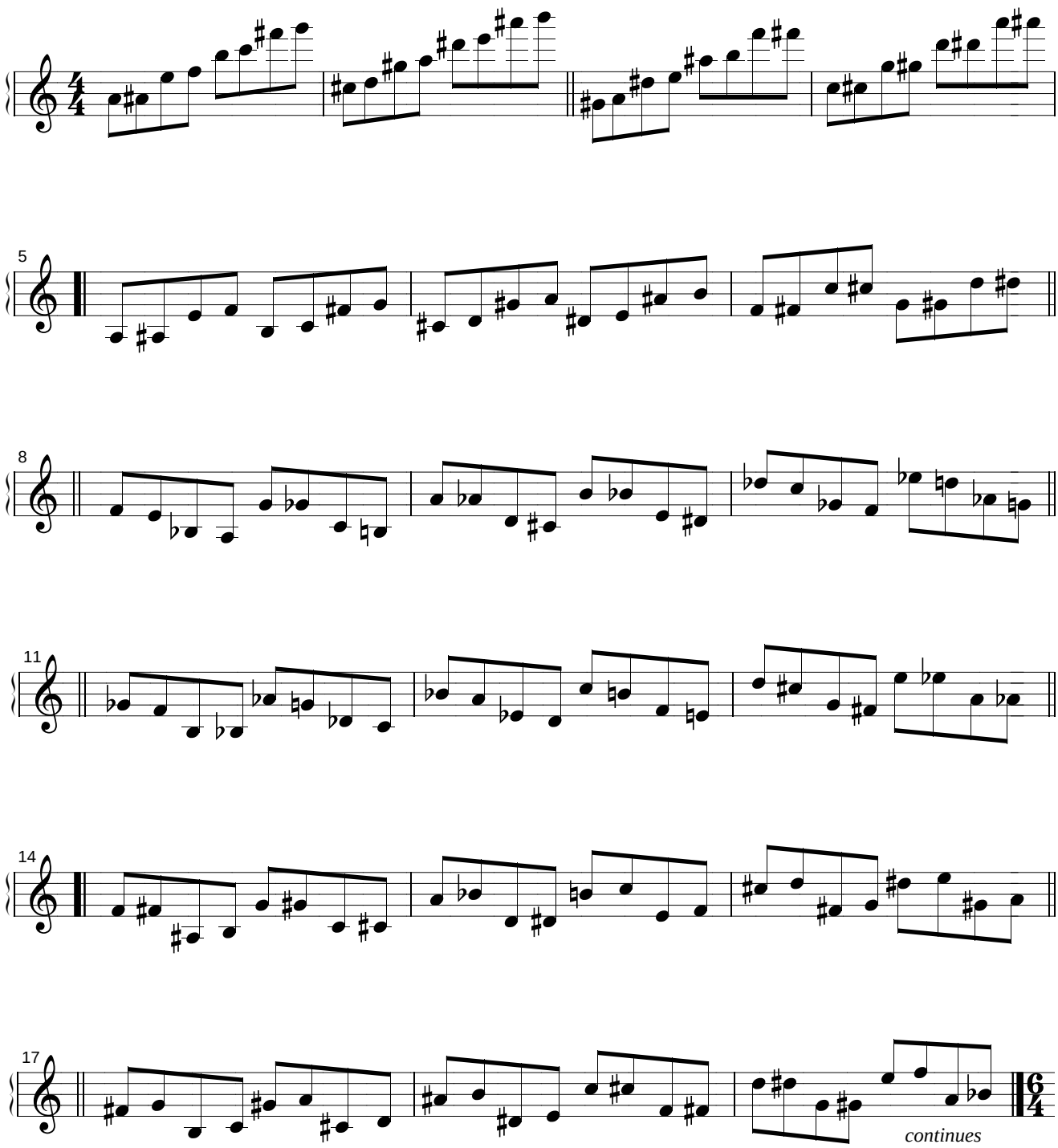
Repetition for One Finger

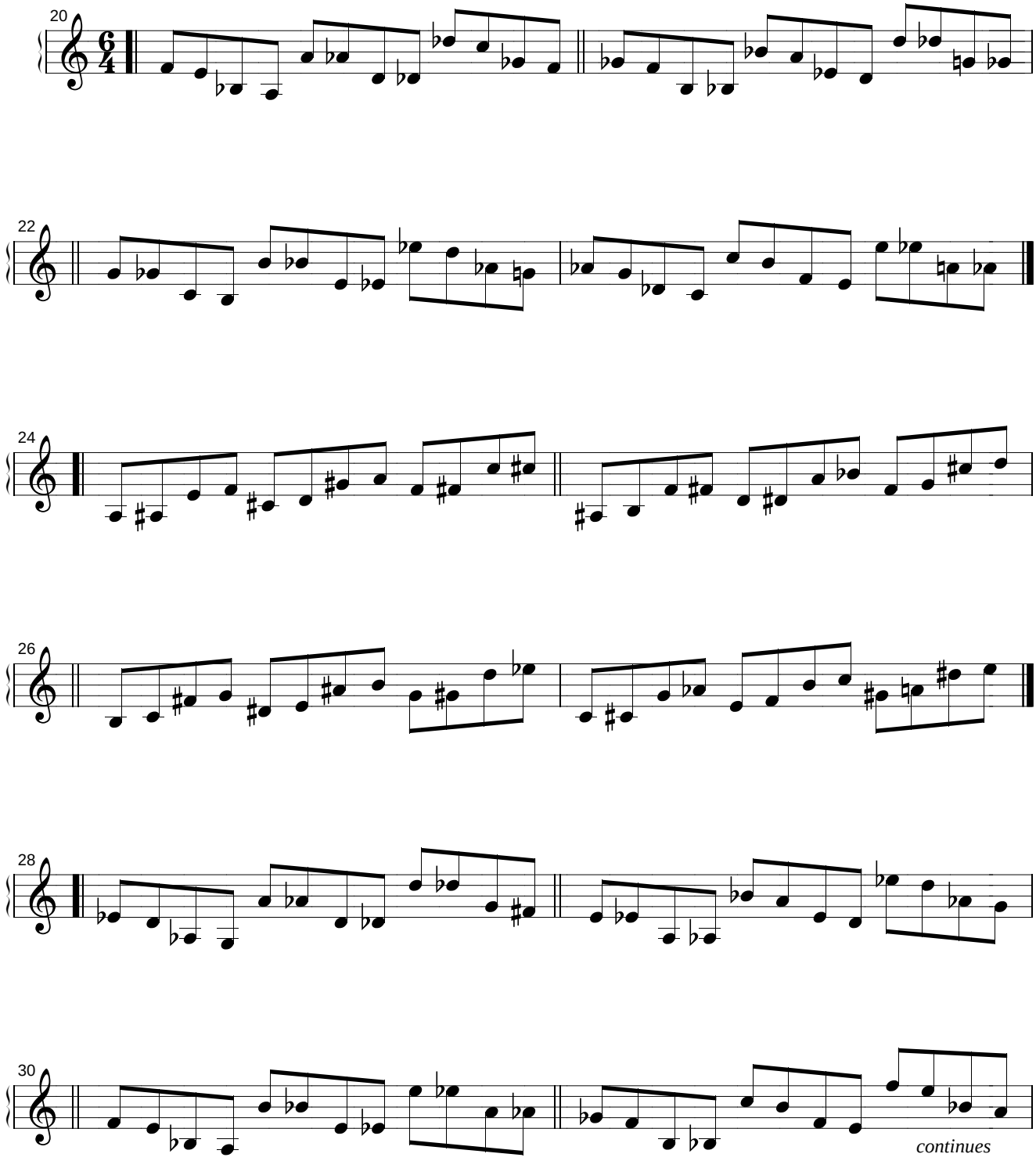
WARNING: practice slowly and softly; this exercise strains the knuckel joints



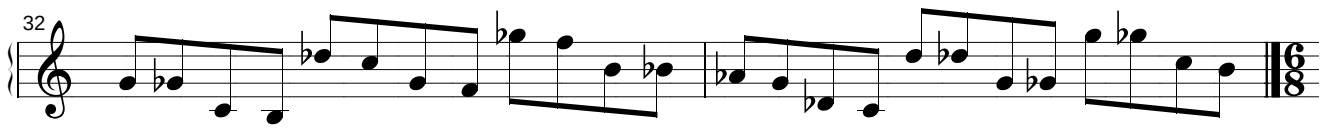
Leading Tones

minor second skips

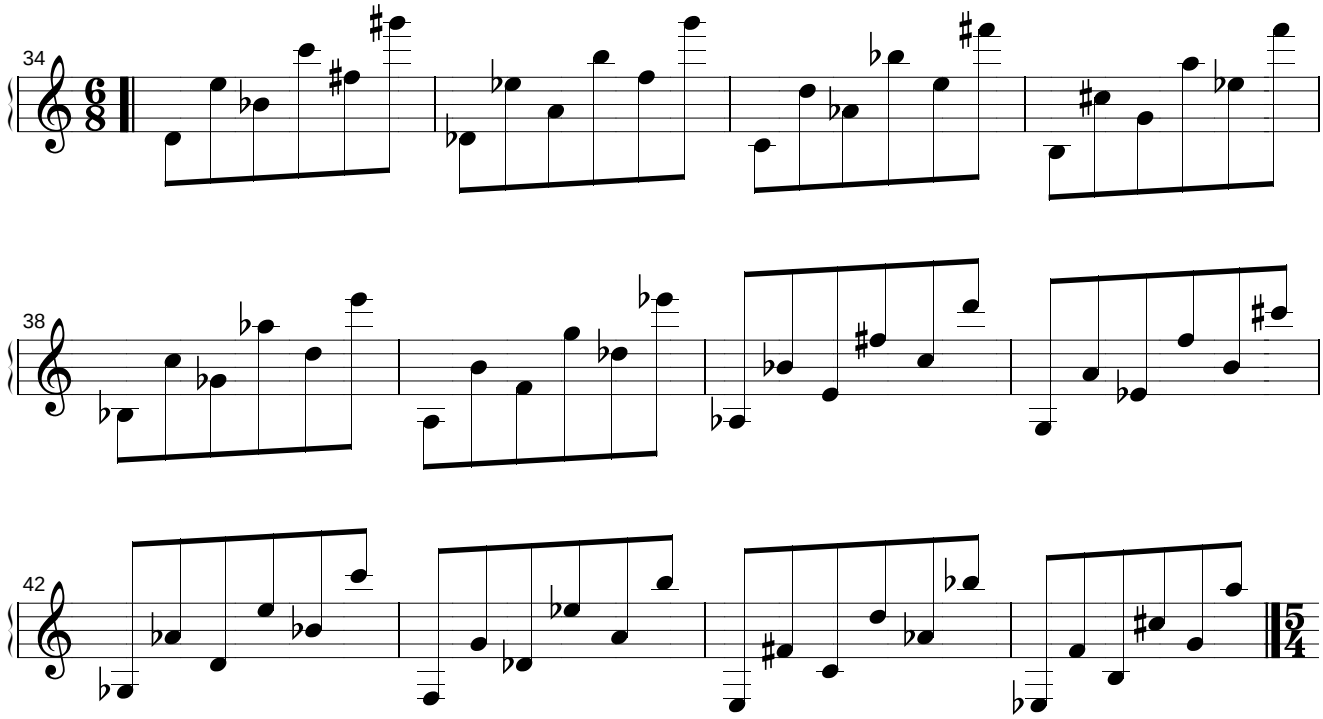




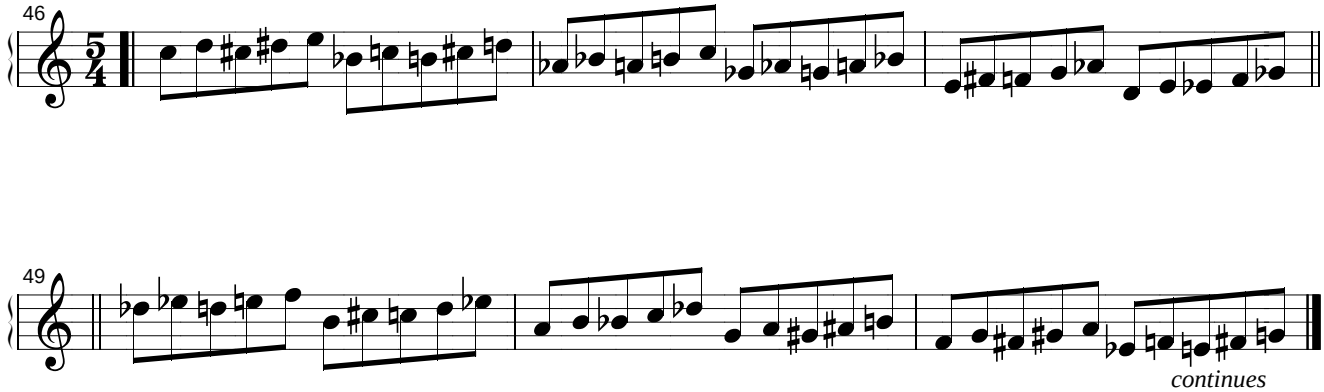
continues



major nineths with skips in tri-tones



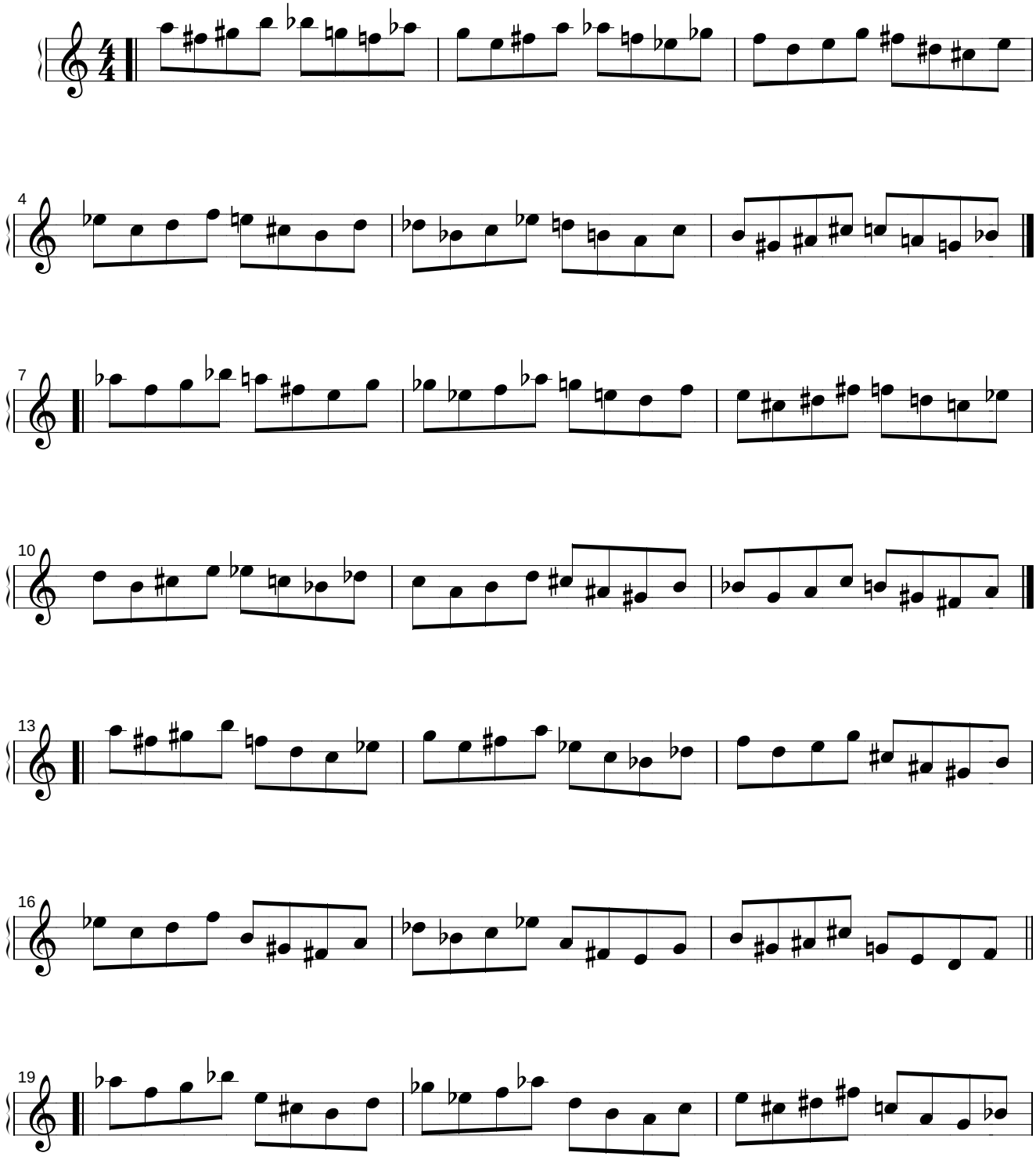
major and minor seconds with skips in tri-tones



continues

Combinations of Minor

Seconds and Thirds



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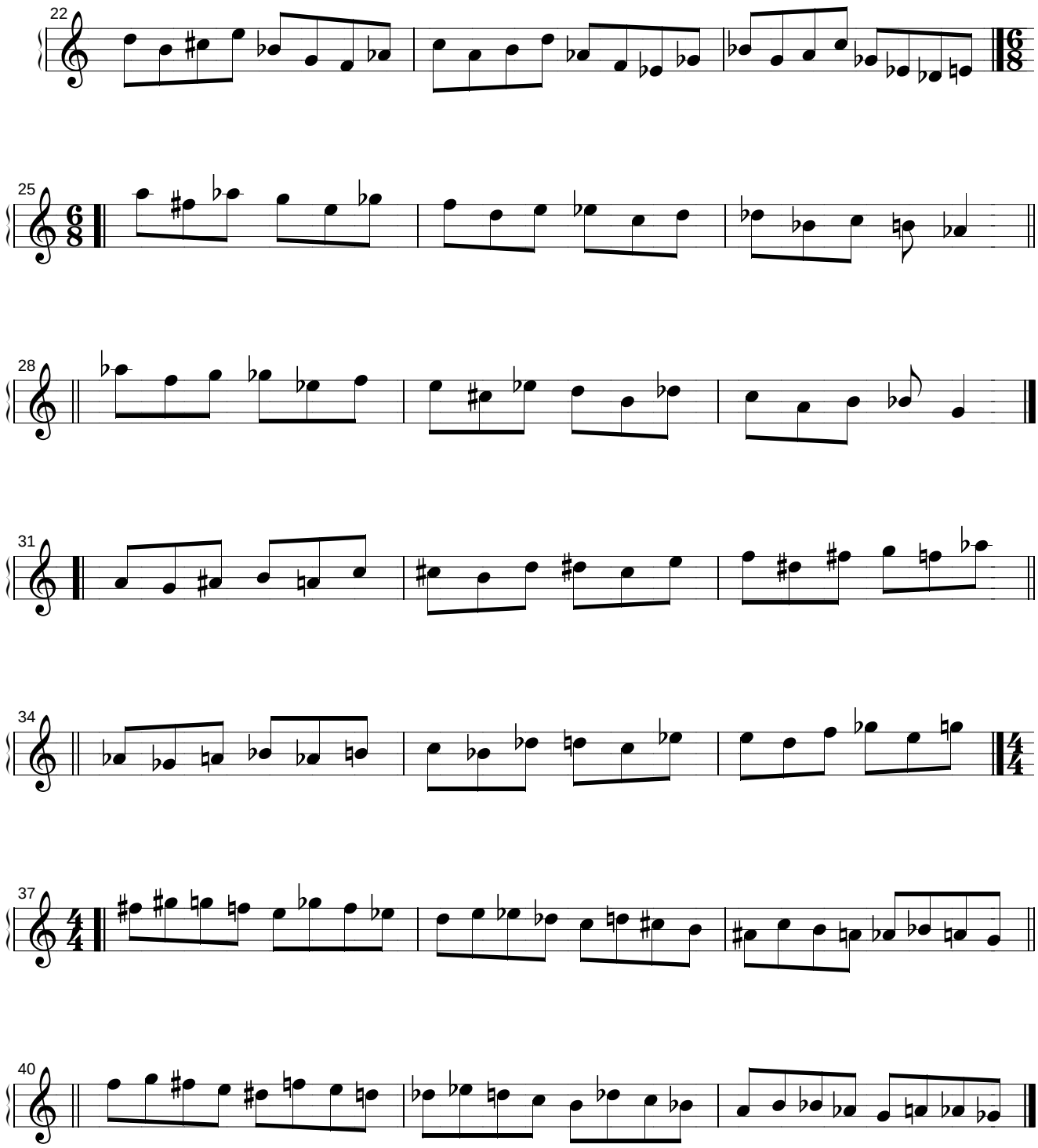
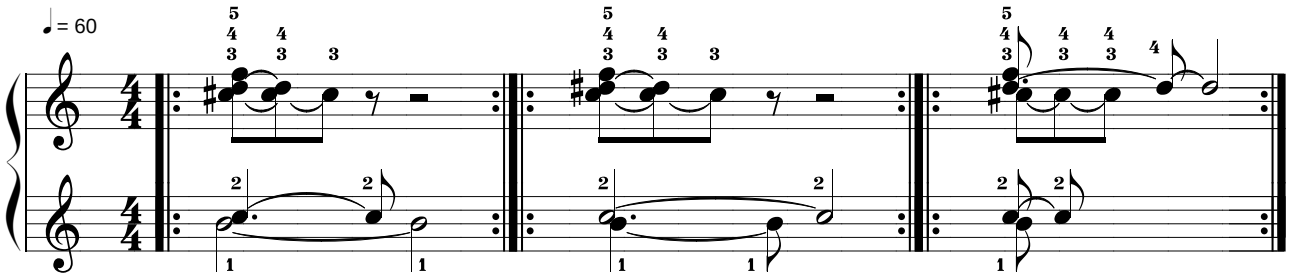
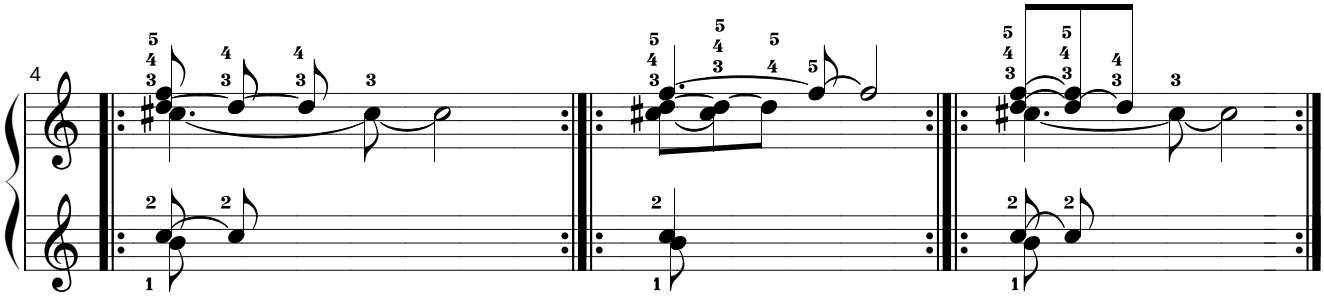

22
25
28
31
34
37
40

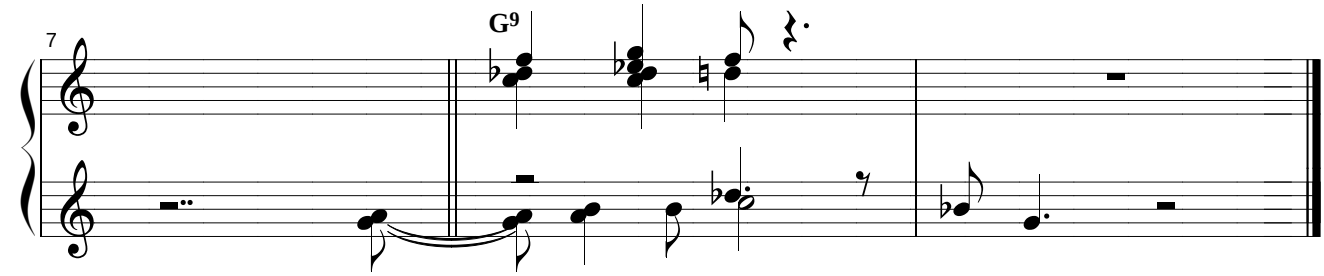
Bending Tones 'n Blue

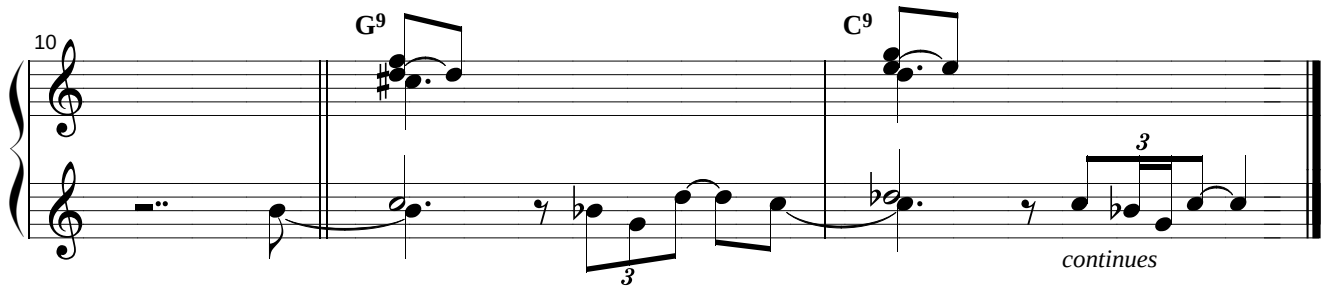
play both treble-staves with your right-hand and release soprano on the 2nd count,
alto on the 3rd, tenor on the 4th and baritone on the 1st count of the next measure

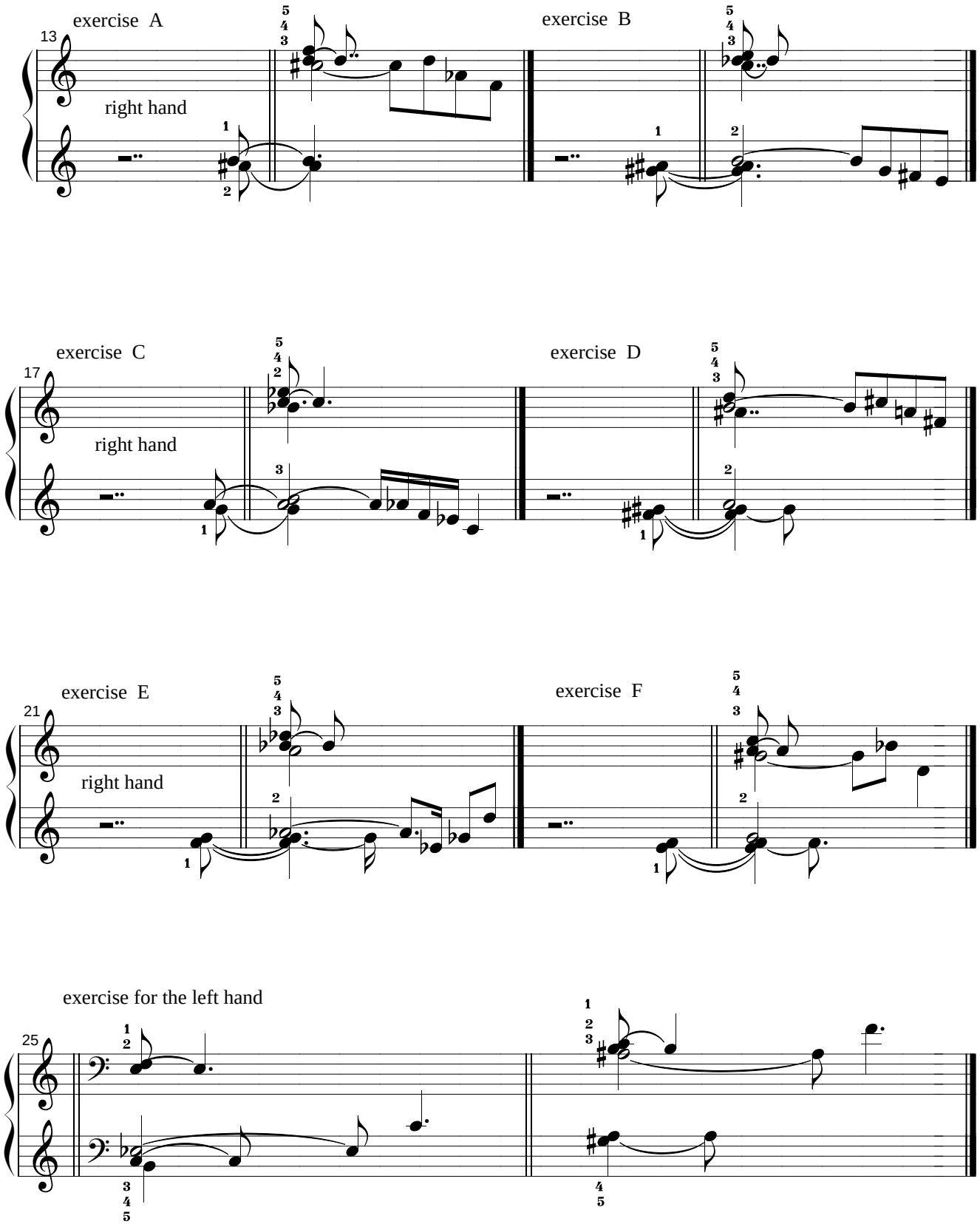


WARNING: this page and the following page can inflame tendons in the lower arm



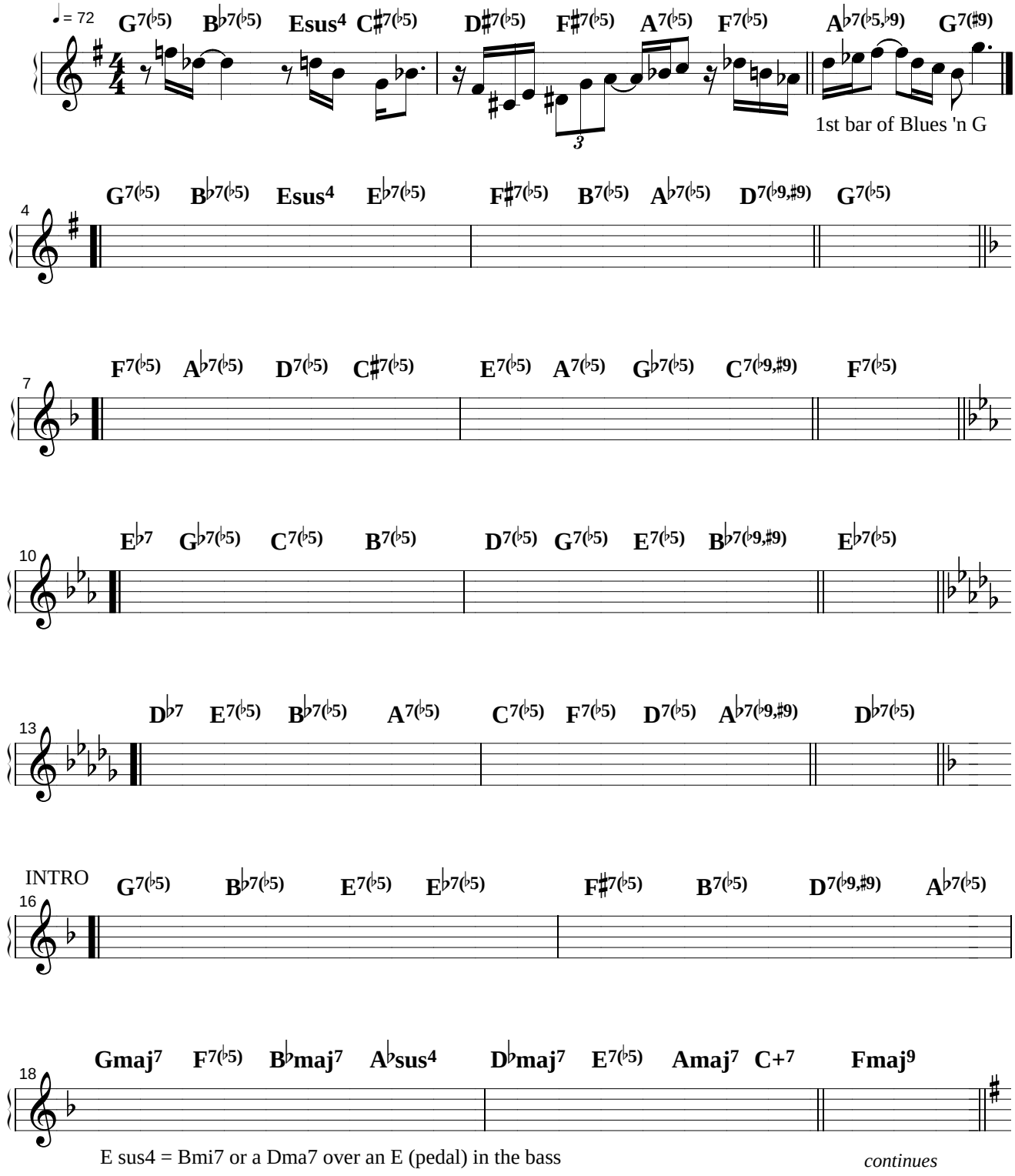





exercise A
13
right hand
exercise B
exercise C
17
right hand
exercise D
exercise E
21
right hand
exercise F
exercise for the left hand
25

Blues Turnaround

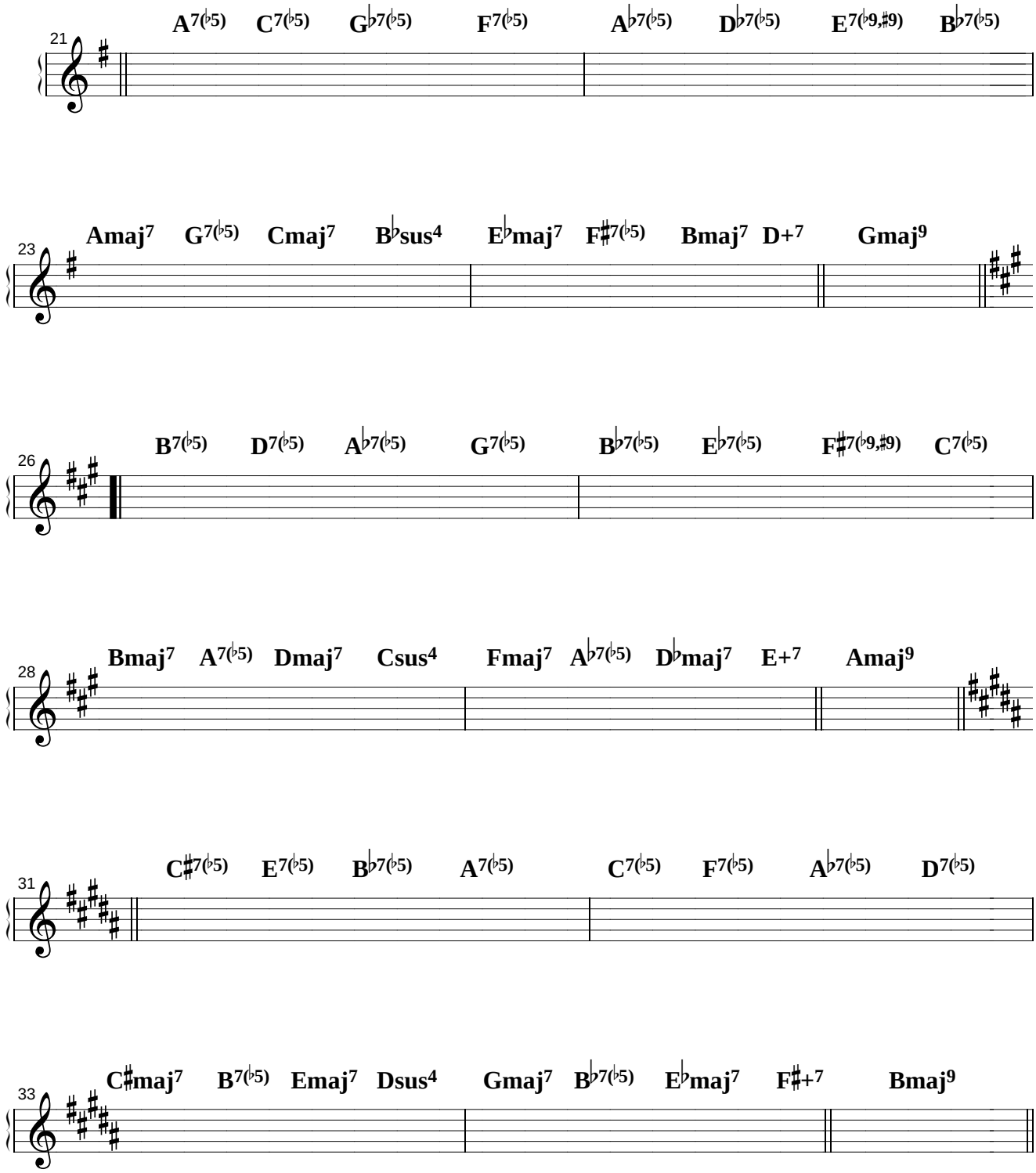
11th and 12th measures of the blues



E sus4 = Bmi7 or a Dma7 over an E (pedal) in the bass

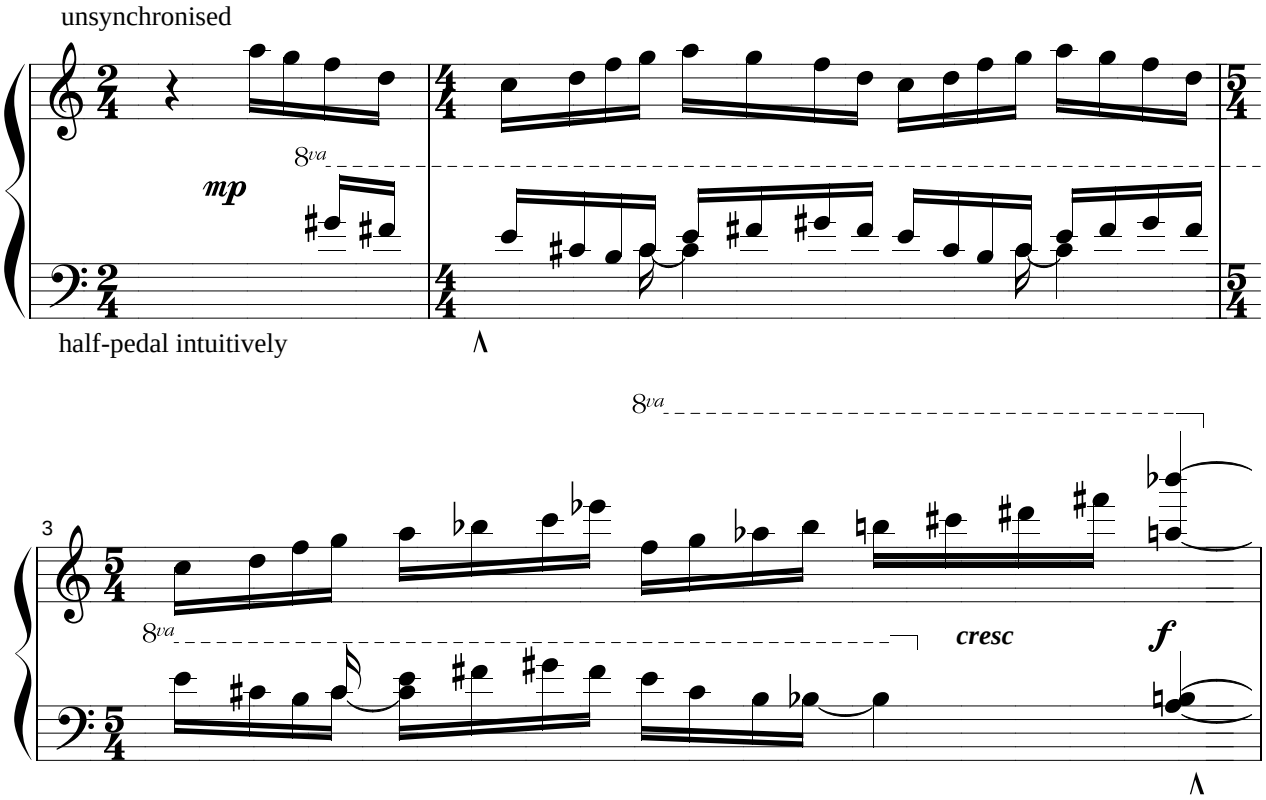
continues

examples transposed

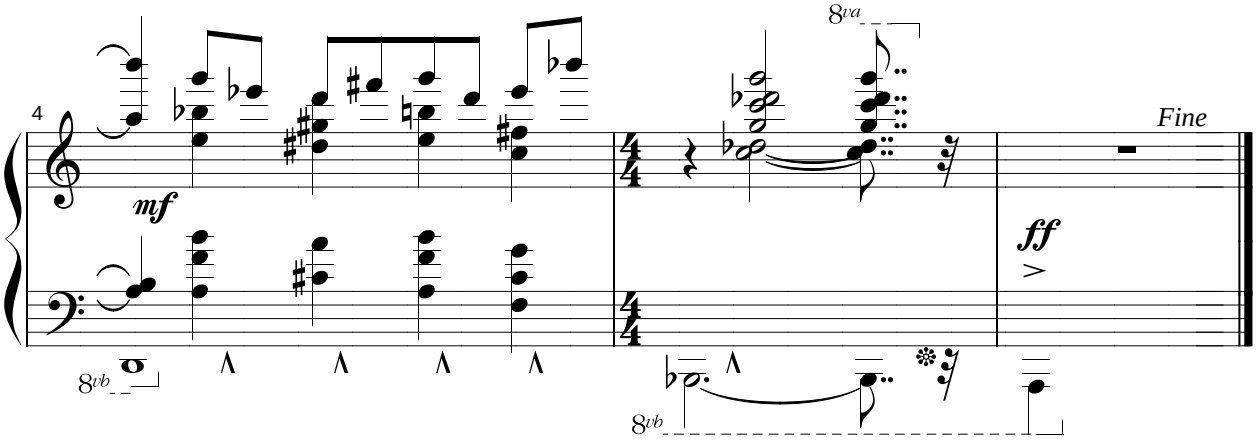


Ending for Touch of Jade

W. Norris



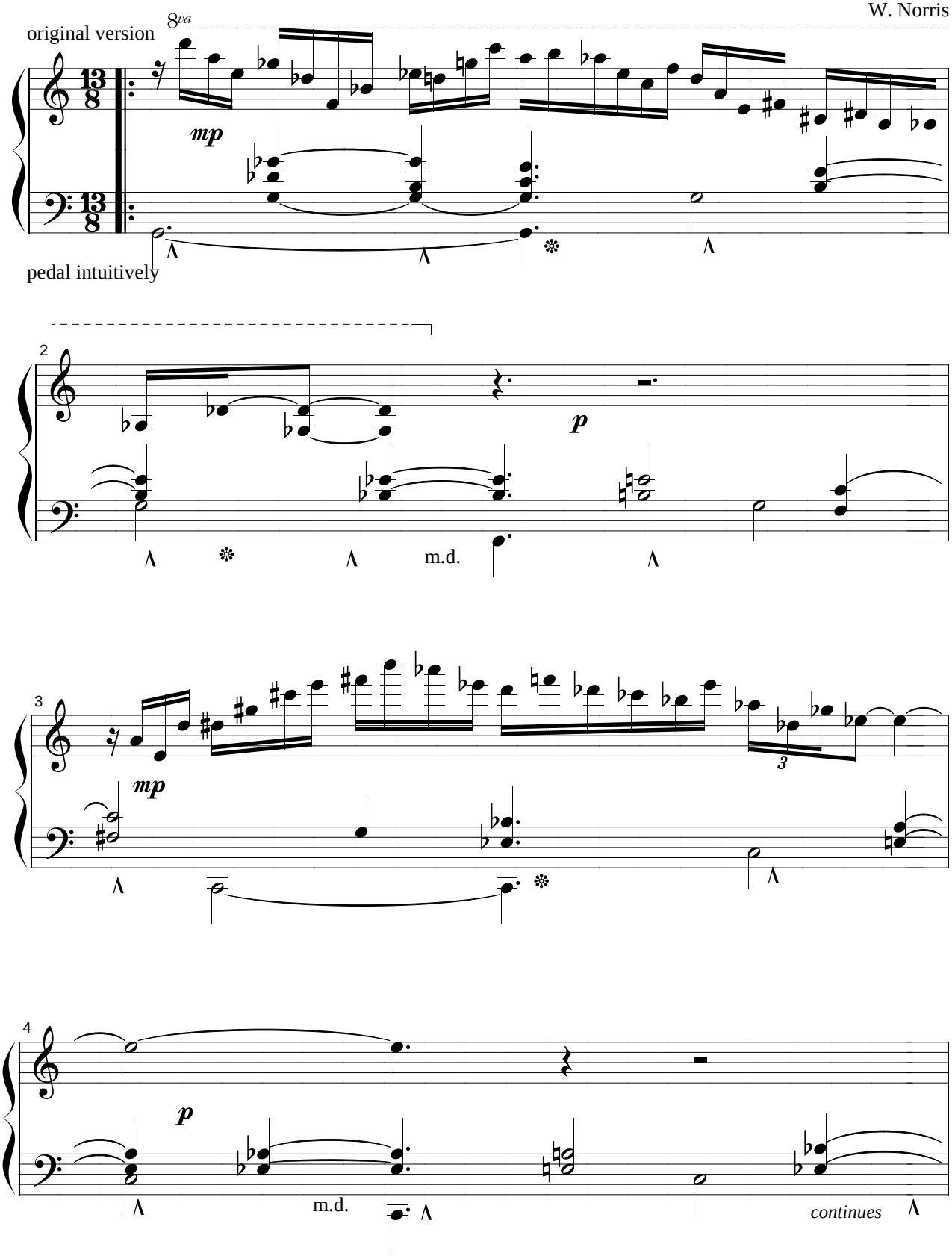
Notation is correct on the 5th quarter-note of measure 3; if played in lower registers it sounds wrong but in the highest octave, especially the last four tones of a piano, the tension is greater because there are no strings above. I often use dissonant-intervals at this frequency for endings.



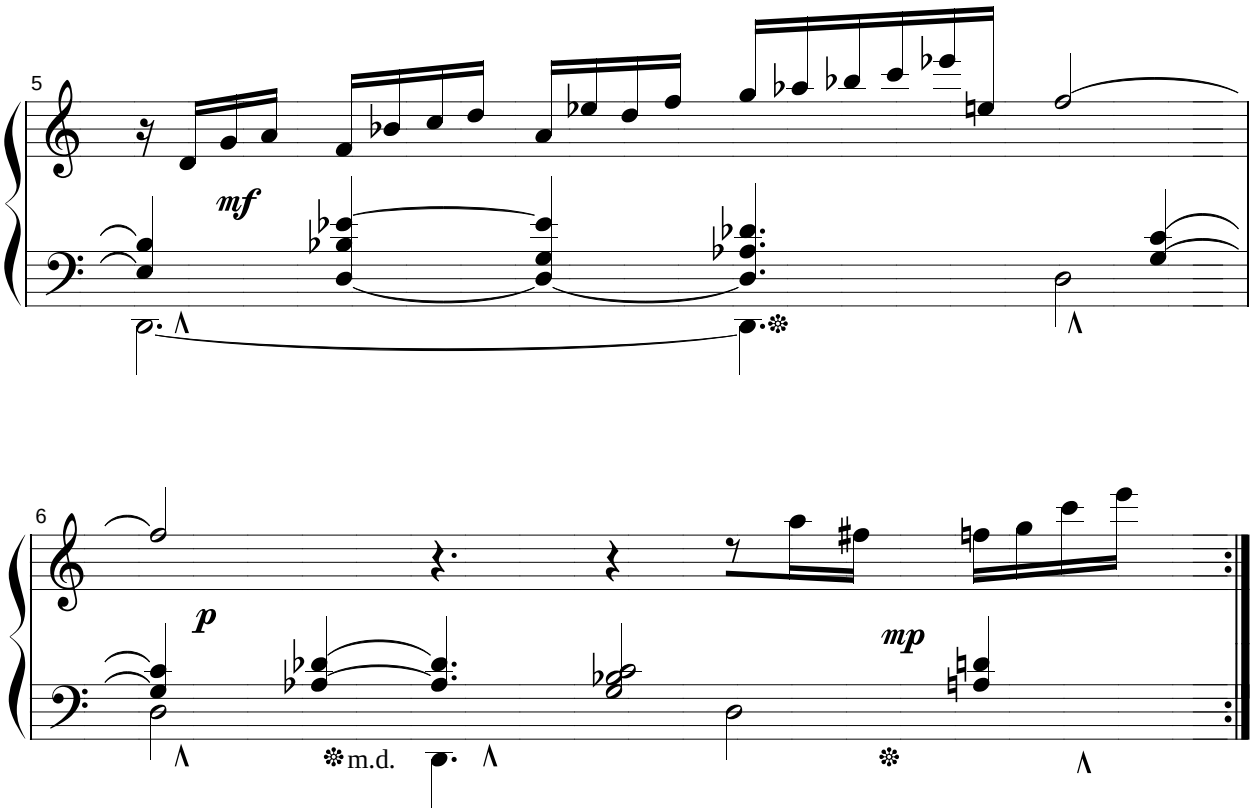
I have included this ending for the purpose of having you experiment with as many different dynamics and emotions as possible; after each endeavour, listen silently (with your imagination) to all of the tones you have just played; then follow this same procedure and play repeatedly. Remember to put joy into your practice or it will remain dormant during performances.

From Another Star

W. Norris



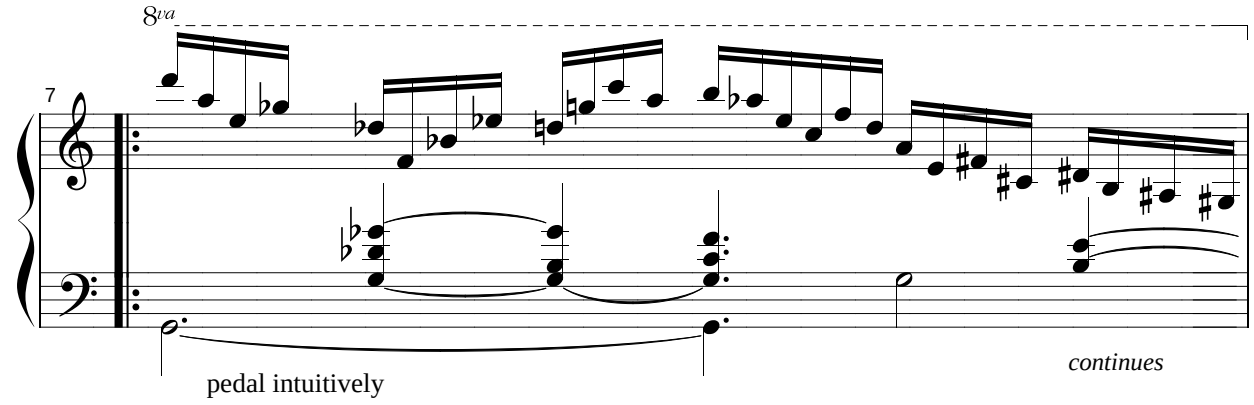
Sunburst Recordings, Inc. (SRCS 2001-2) 'From Another Star' with bassist, Mike Richmond

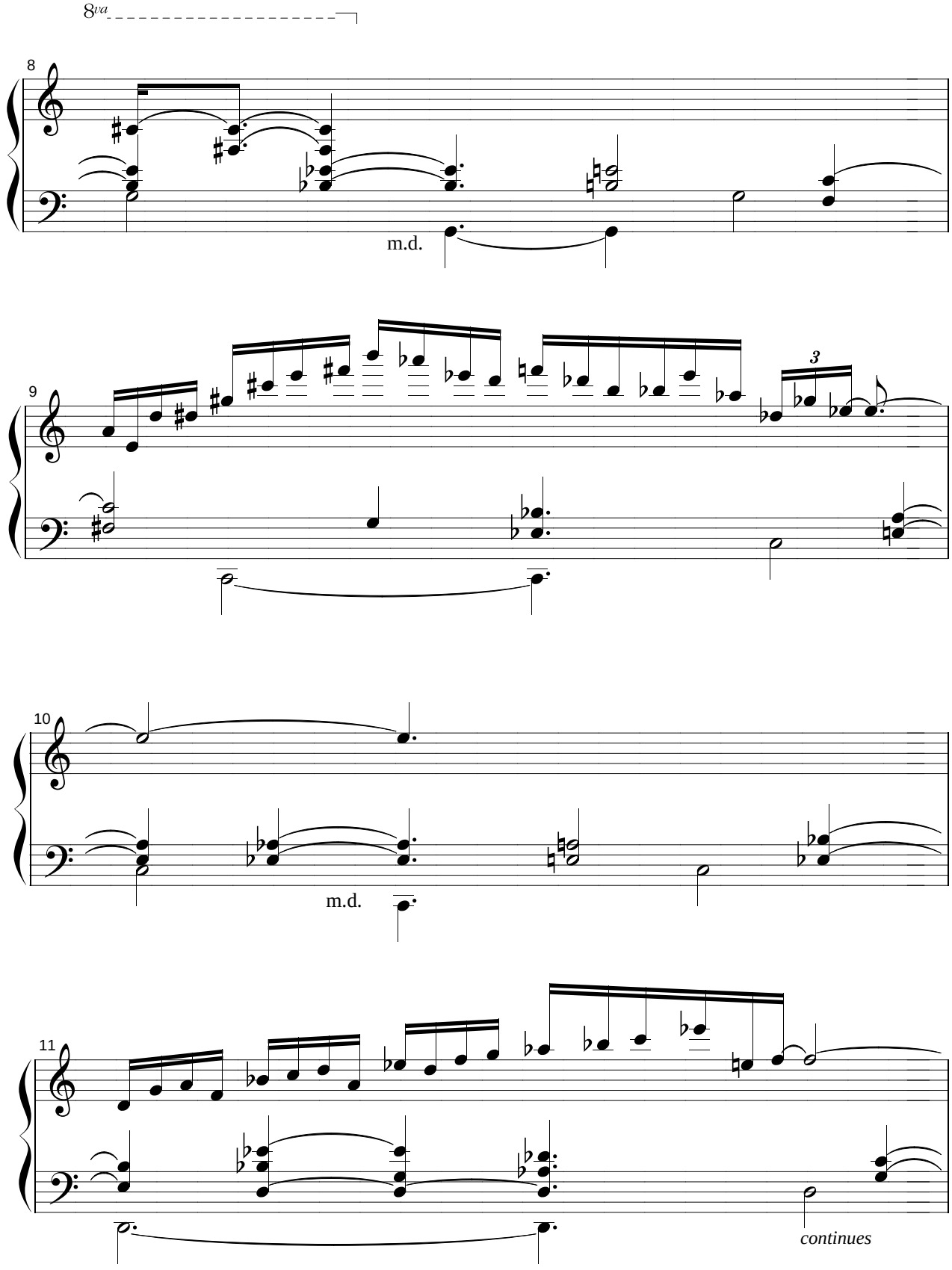


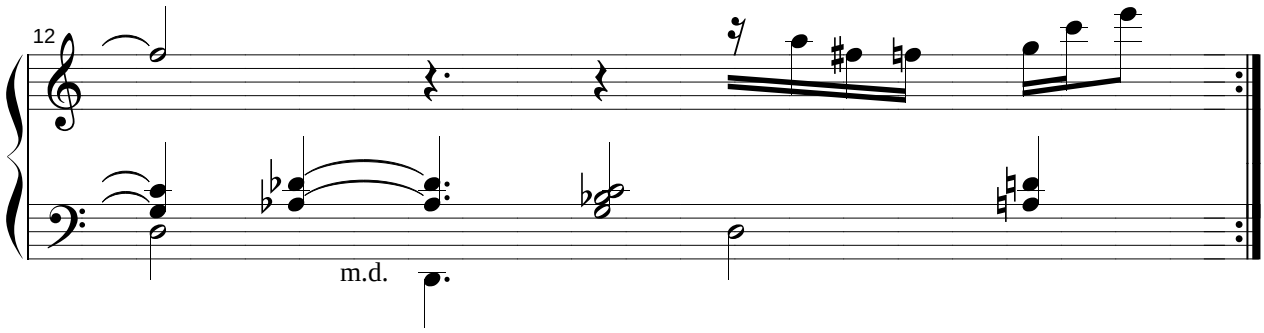
Measures 1-6 must be practiced a few months (in order to prepare a firm foundation) before measures 7-19 will bare fruit. You will sense (feel) a difference of dissonance when playing, hands together, melody and bass-clef displacement. However, working on measures 7-19 will help you acquire a better understanding of this composition; when returning to the original version your hearing will have benefited as well from this discipline.

melody and bass clef displacement

From Another Star



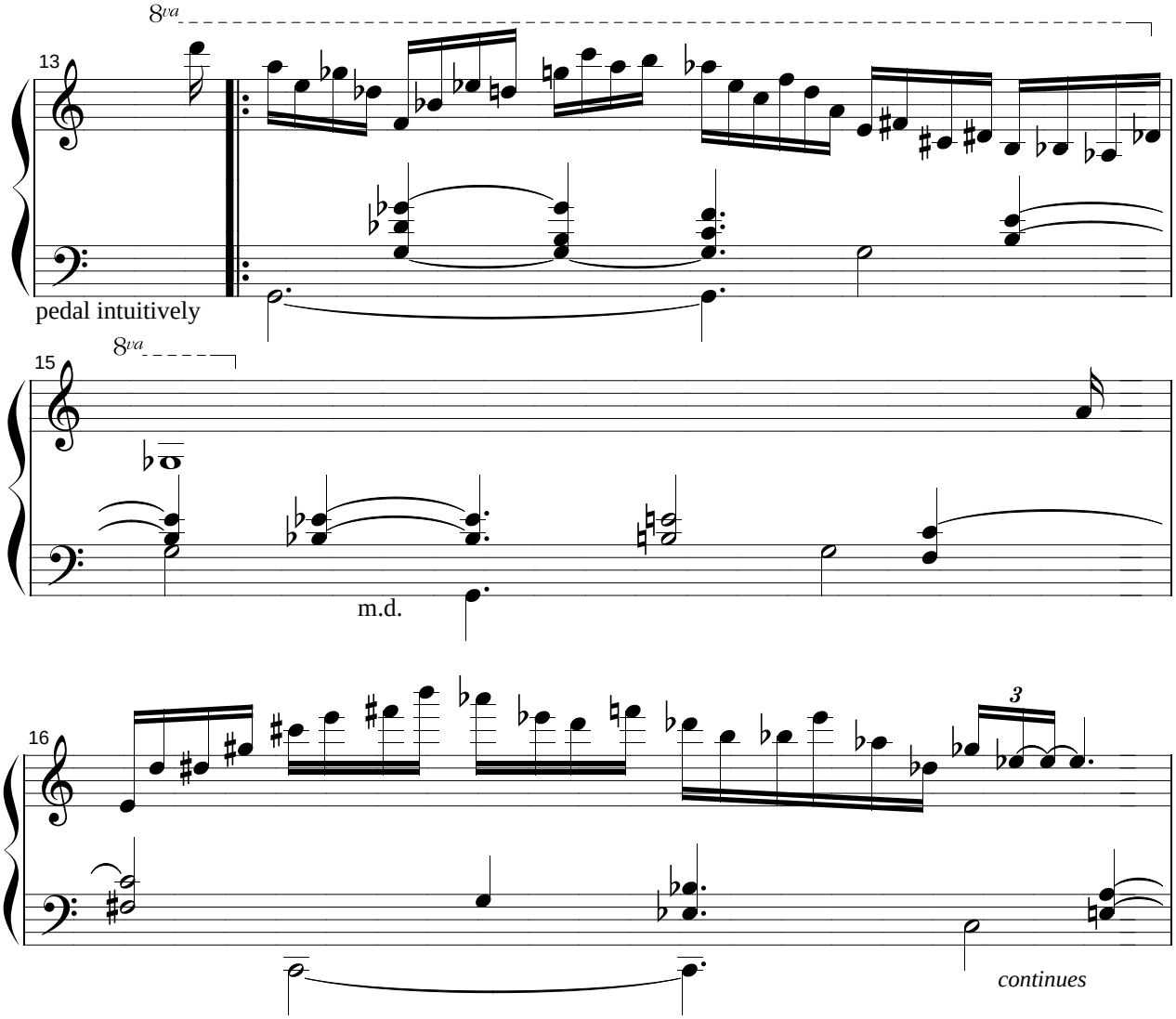

8va
8
m.d.
9
3
10
m.d.
11
continues

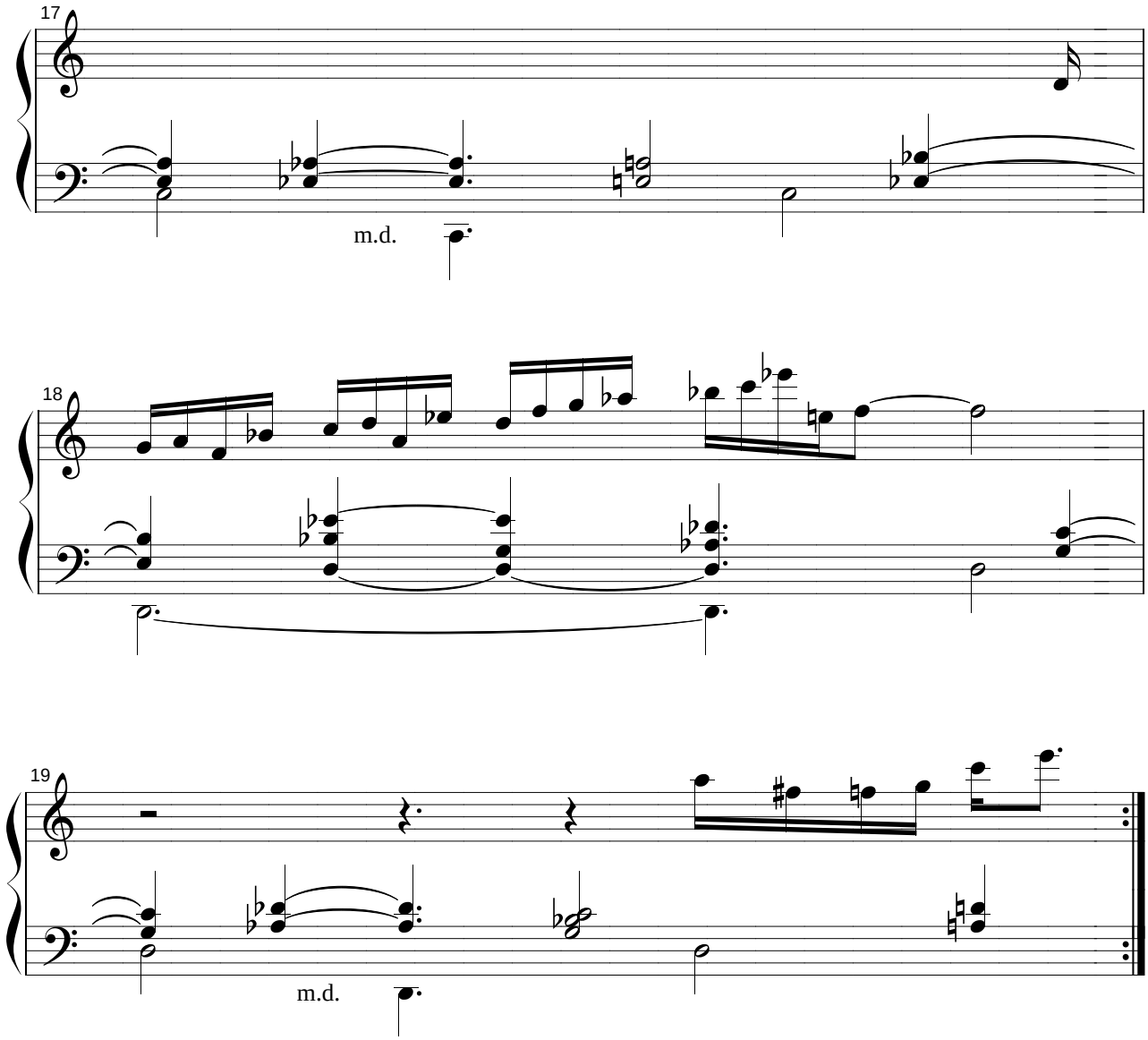


treble clef notation has been moved another sixteenth-note to the left in the example below

melody and bass clef displacement

From Another Star

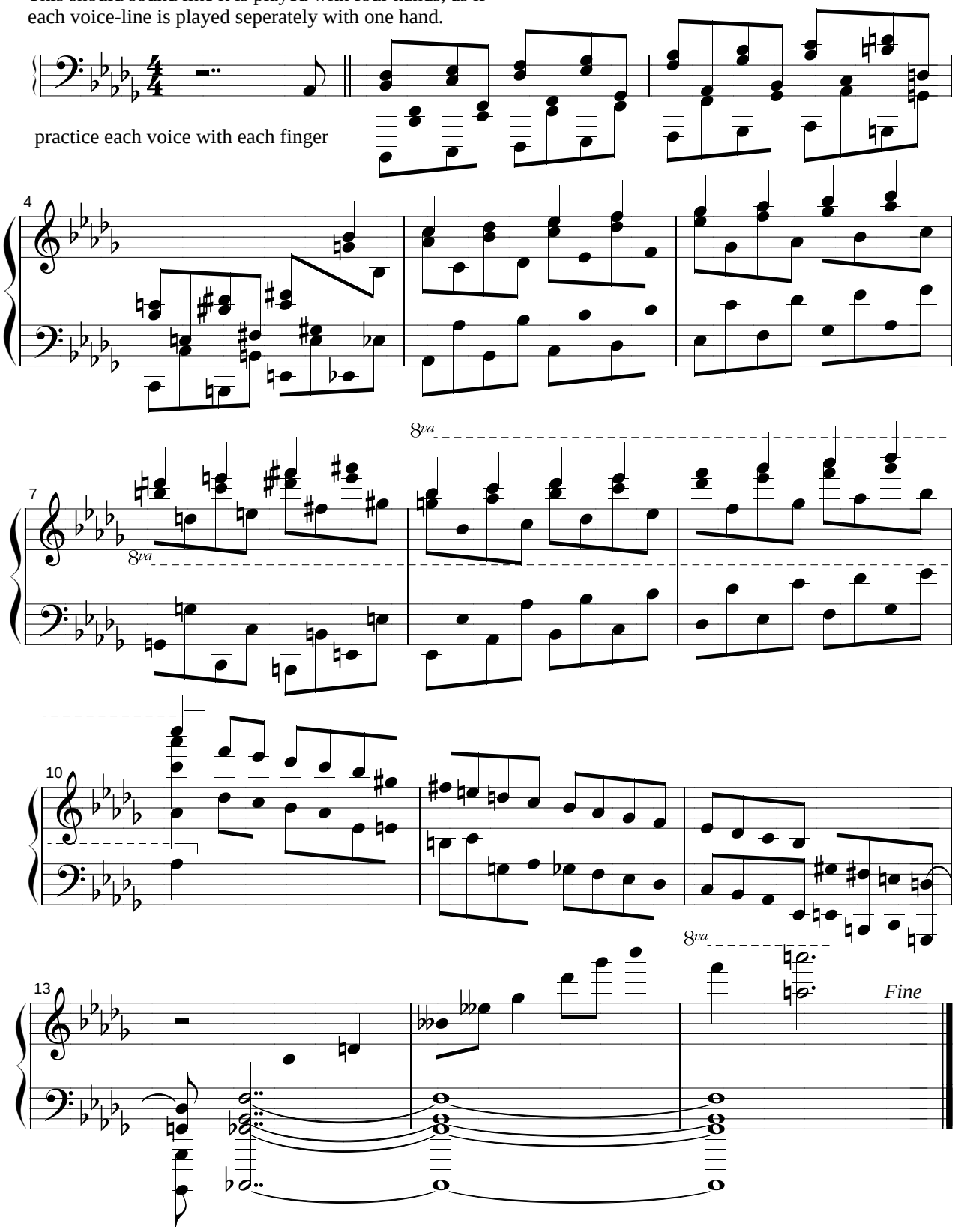



17
m.d.
18
19
m.d.

Ending for Body and Soul

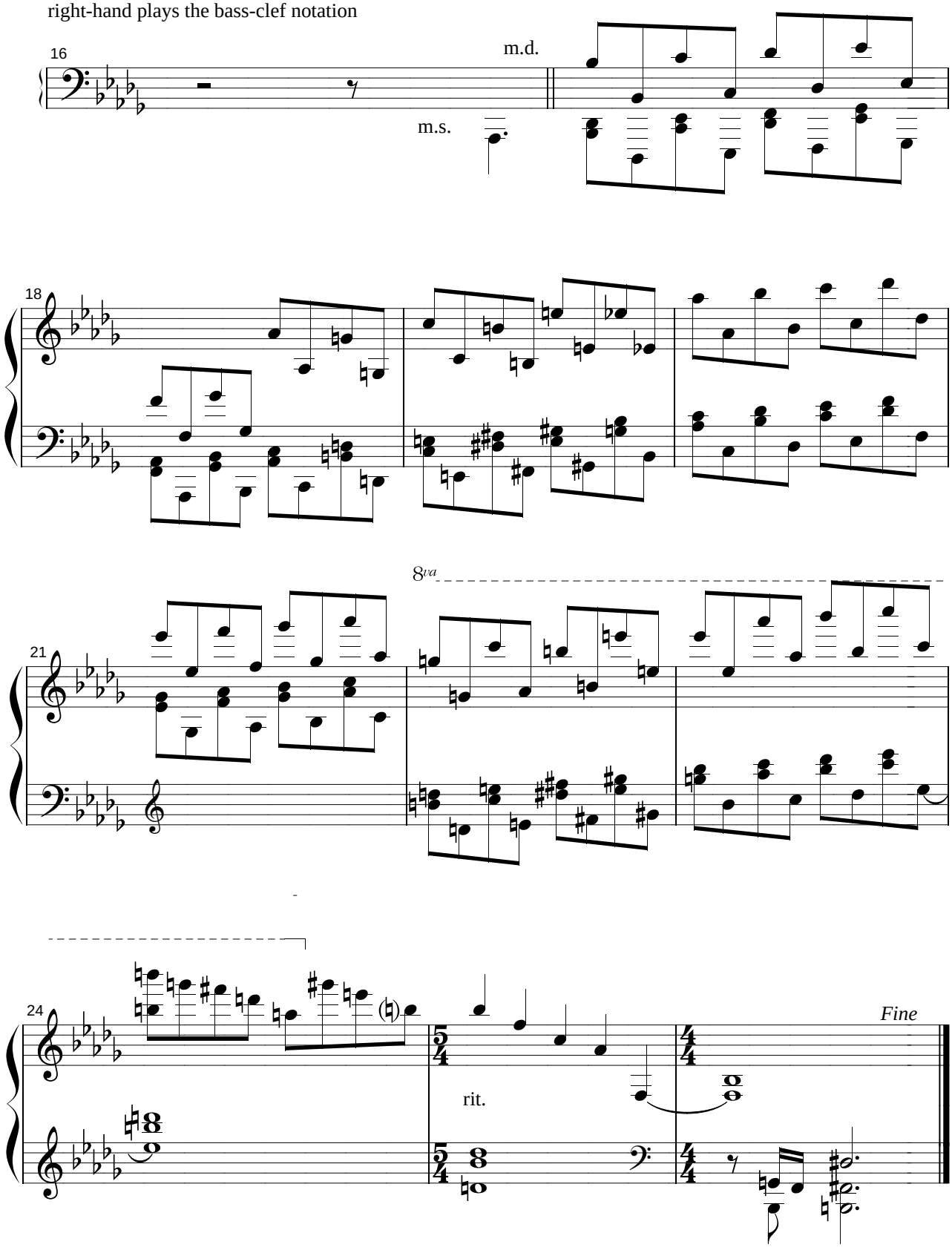
broken octaves with 3rds

m.d. Practice alto and tenor lines throughly.
This should sound like it is played with four hands, as if
each voice-line is played seperately with one hand.



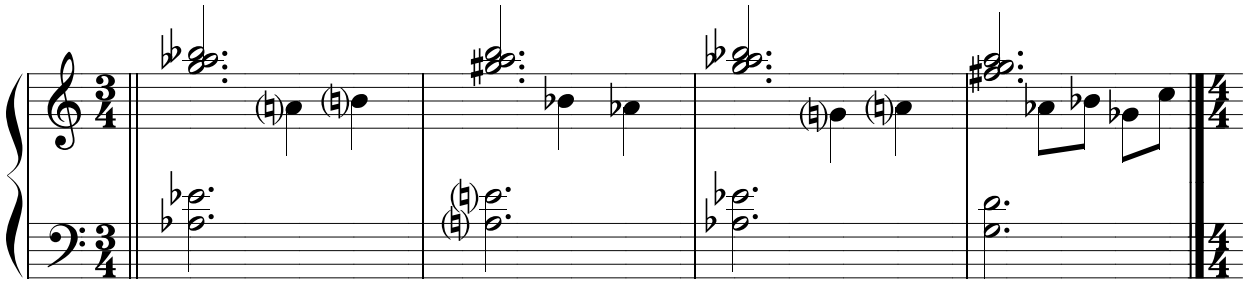
Clefs Inverted

treble-clef notation from the preceding page (written below) is played with your left-hand while your right-hand plays the bass-clef notation



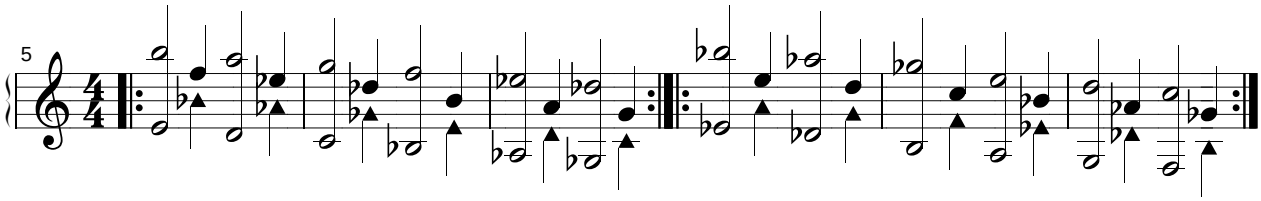
Exercise for Pitch

sing only the quarter and eighth notes while playing dotted-half note chords simultaneously

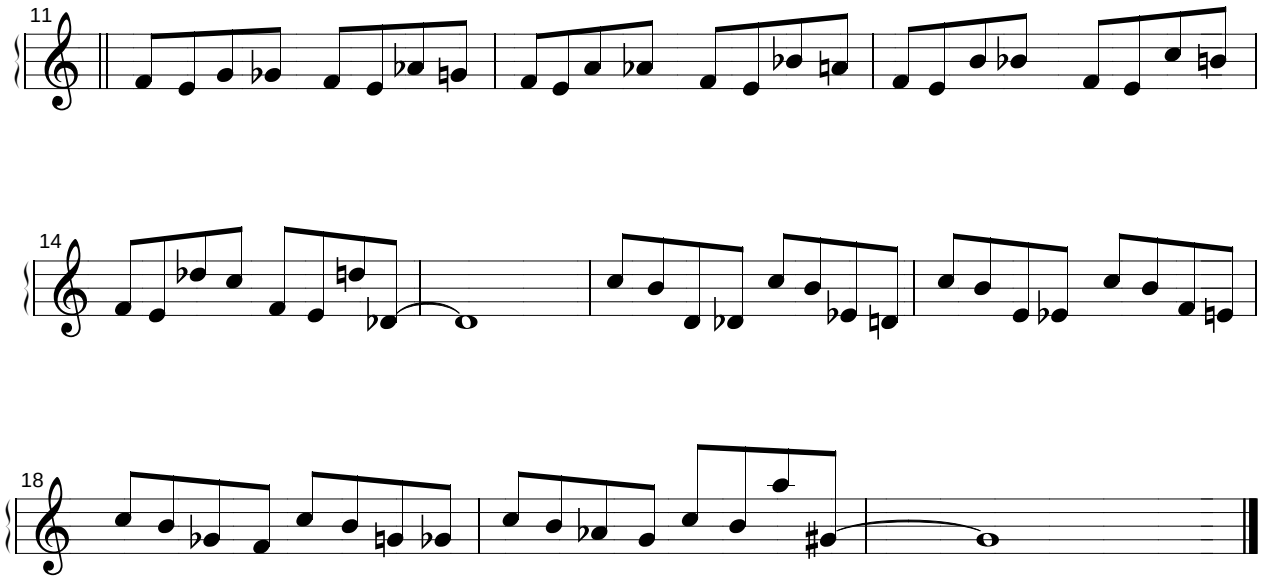


sing each voice-line and play the remaining two voices simultaneously

play half-notes and sing the top quarter-notes; repeat and sing only the triangular quarter-notes



sing but don't play this exercise and check your pitch with the piano, in measure 20, on the final G#

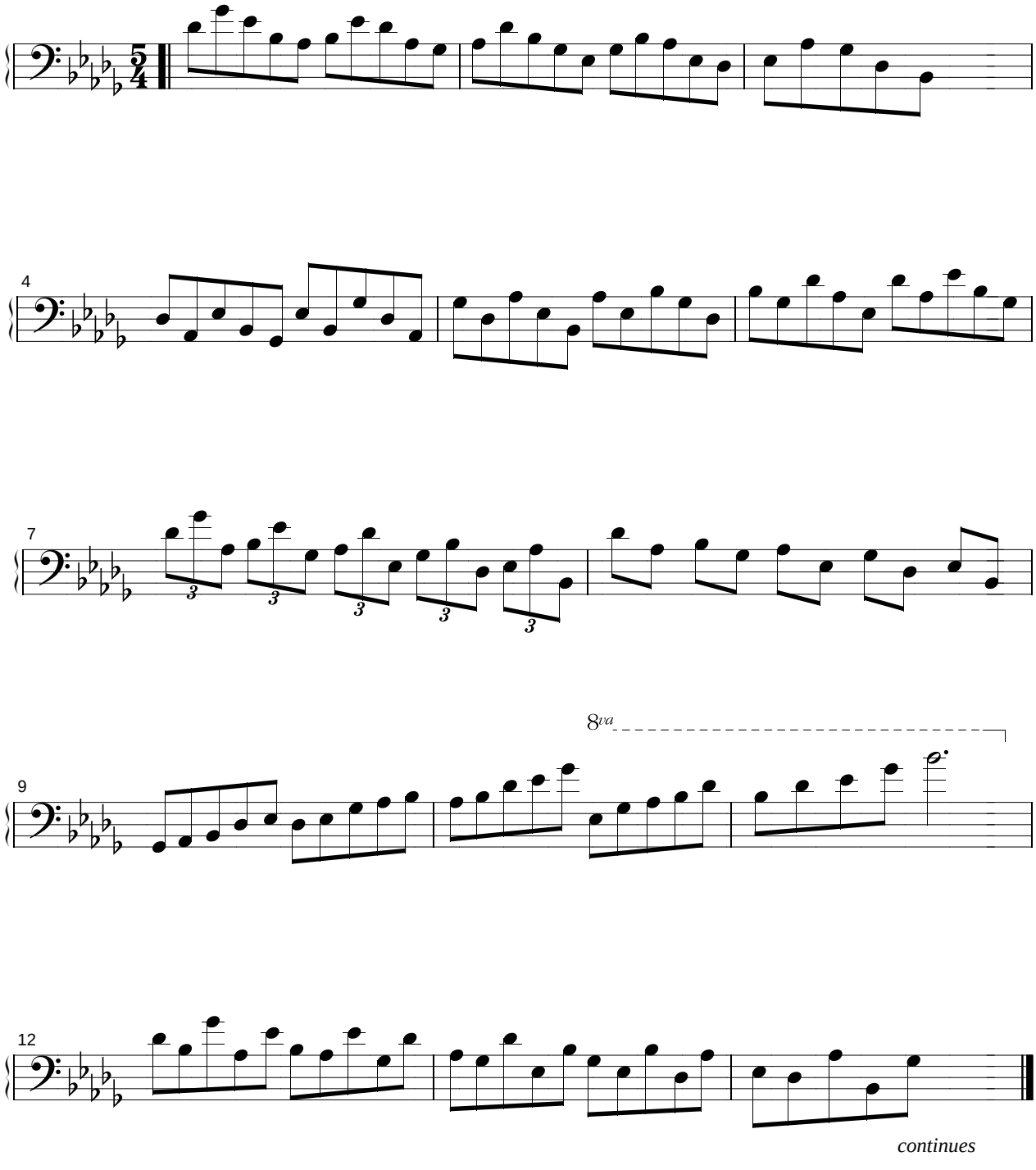


You must sing intervals daily to maintain your sence of perfect or absolute pitch, especially in your later years. When you sing, think the letter-name of the pitch and listen to the quality of its frequency; memorize the sound.

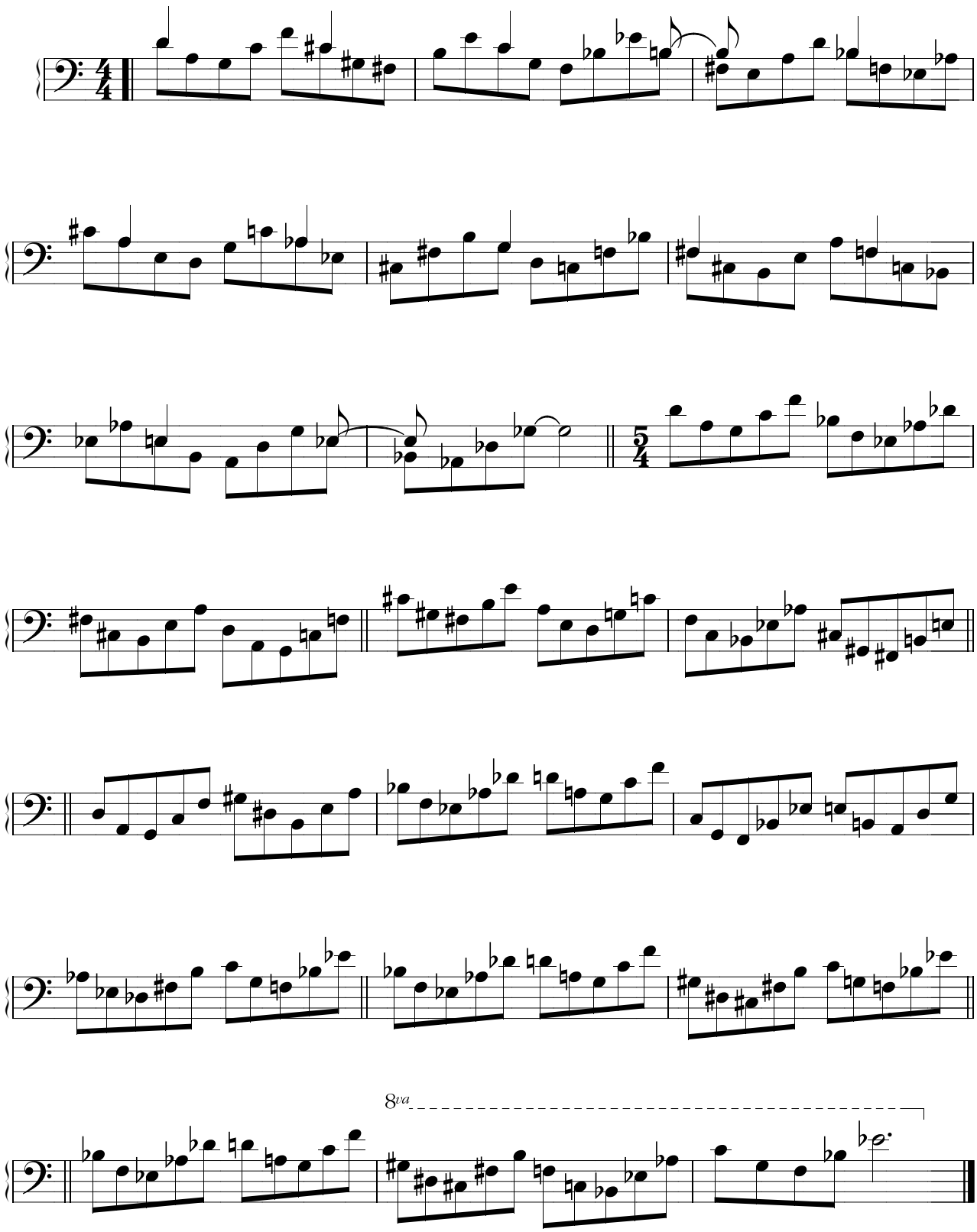
Pentatonic Patterns

for the left hand

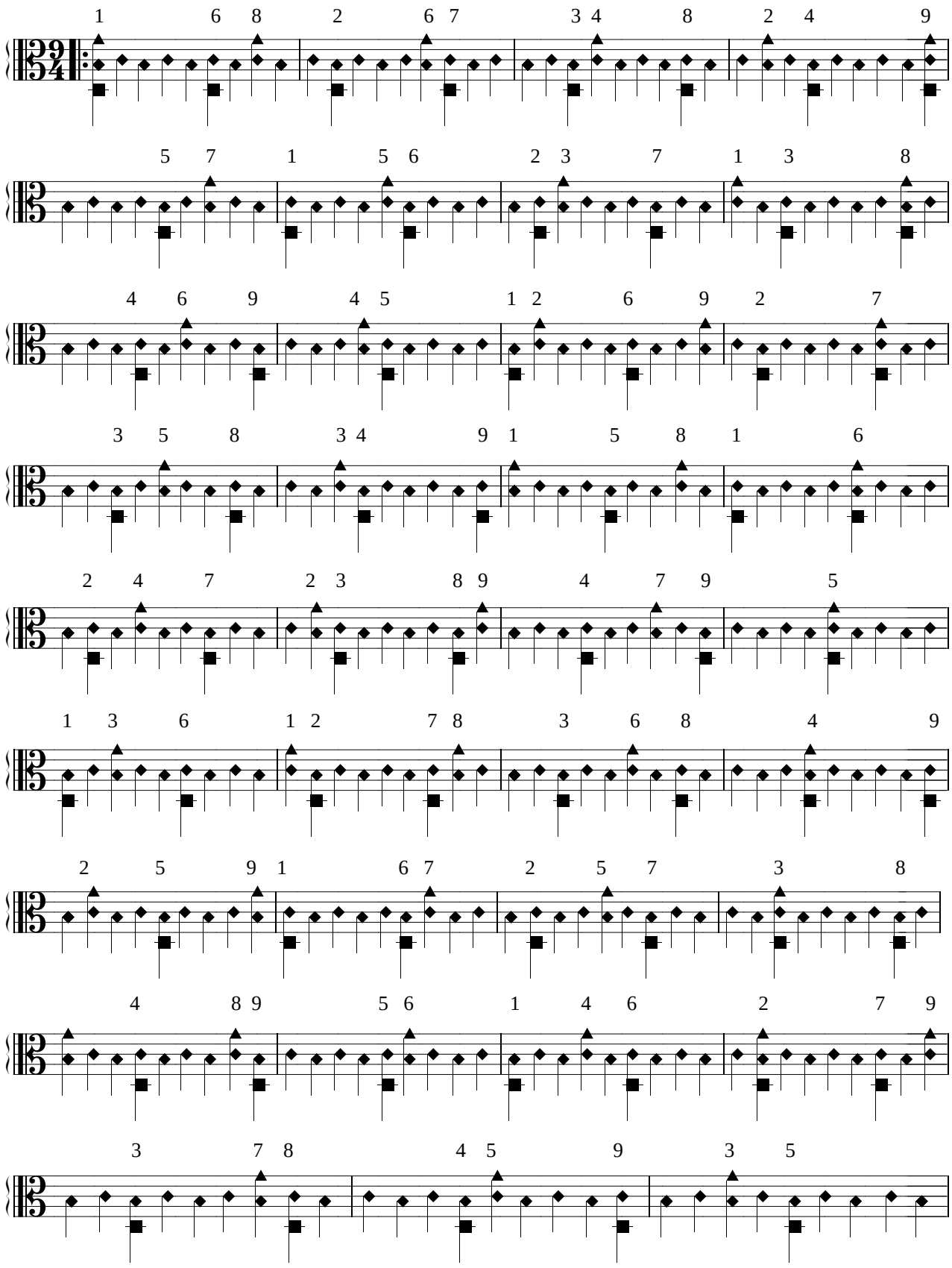
I was shocked by the Cuban classical virtuoso pianist, Frank Fernandez as he improvised only on black keys with his left hand while I accompanied in the bass register; his velocity immediately reminded me of John Coltrane; never have black keys been so utterly devoured by any pianist. Below are a few pentatonic-examples for Black Keys.



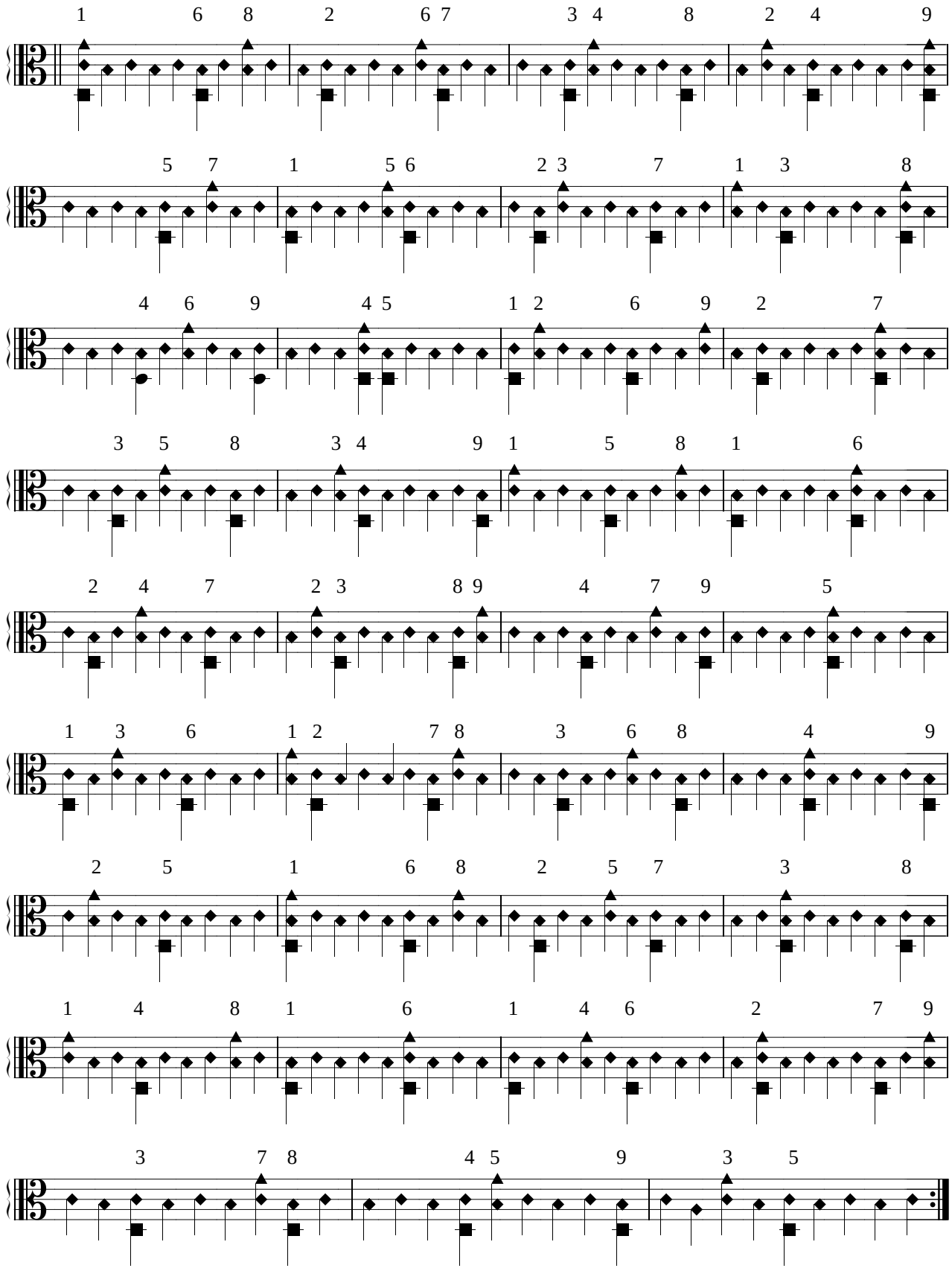
continues


8va

Fives and Sevens within 9/4 meter



the above notation is to be played only on a felt-covered table
m.d. 5th finger on top-line - 2nd and 3rd on middle-line - thumb on bottom-line - invert for m.s.


1 6 8 2 6 7 3 4 8 2 4 9
5 7 1 5 6 2 3 7 1 3 8
4 6 9 4 5 1 2 6 9 2 7
3 5 8 3 4 9 1 5 8 1 6
2 4 7 2 3 8 9 4 7 9 5
1 3 6 1 2 7 8 3 6 8 4 9
2 5 1 6 8 2 5 7 3 8
1 4 8 1 6 1 4 6 2 7 9
3 7 8 4 5 9 3 5

The Major and Chromatic Scale

Created by the Overtones of a Single Tone

While reading 'Style and Idea' by Arnold Schoenberg, I immediately realized that his rational analysis applied not only to why it is difficult for the masses to appreciate contemporary music, but it's how non-schooled musicians improvise intuitively. His example on pages 177-180 is notated in all tonalities.

Truly a question to ponder! How is it possible for musicians, who never bothered to learn music notation or chord symbols, manage to improvise? I believe the answer is in Schoenberg's hypothesis of why any two tones relate to one another.

Any single tone, when activated, produces 13 overtones of which a few relate to some of the overtones found within any other tone. In other words, the vibrating overtones from one tone connect with those overtone-vibrations belonging in all tones. Lower overtones, first through the sixth, are more easily felt and heard than higher overtones of the seventh through the thirteenth. Within the first six overtones, the 1st is repeated three times and the 5th twice; this in itself produces thick, warmer vibrations. The higher overtones that are not duplicated are thin vibrations and faintly heard; only the 8^{th} and 12^{th} overtones are repetitions of lower tonic-dominant pulsations. However, not all tones share the same measurable degree of compatibility.

You'll find the OVERTONES SERIES, concerning the tone of C, listed on the top stave of page 177. Notice that the 4^{th}, 5^{th} and 6^{th} overtones (C E G) produce a C major triad; the 7^{th}overtone is Bb; 8^{th} is C; 9^{th} is D; 10^{th} is E; 11^{th} is F#; 12^{th} is G and the 13^{th} is Ab. Do keep in mind that F, the fourth scale-degree of C, does not belong to the overtone series of C. The F major triad is from the overtones of G, the 7^{th} (F) and 9^{th} (A) plus (C). Our G major triad is from the 6^{th} and 9^{th} overtones of C and its major 3^{rd} (B) is found in the 5^{th} and 10^{th} overtones of G; it's also the 11^{th} of F. Incidentally, the 13^{th} interval in a C 13 chord is A natural; however, the 13^{th} overtone of C is A flat. All tones connect (some more than others) because of overtone vibrations.

The tones of our MAJOR SCALE are the combined tones of three primary (I IV V) triads; in the key of C, tonic I = C; subdominant IV = F and dominant V = G; example: C major triad, C E G; F major triad, F A C; G major triad, G B D. These three triads (I, IV, V) are also the principal ingredients of 12-bar Blues; four measures of I – two measures of IV – two measures of I – one measure of V – one measure of IV plus two measures of I, create the basic harmonization for all Blues progressions.

Our CHROMATIC SCALE, comprised of minor-second intervals, is found in the higher overtones (7 up to 13) of these prime tones within the triads of C, F and G. Example: Bb, the 7^{th}, F# the 11th and Ab the 13^{th} of C plus Eb, the 7^{th} and Db, the 13^{th} of F (all are black keys on the piano) and also notice that C#, the 11^{th} and Eb, the 13^{th} belong within the overtones of G.

Intuitively, improvisers play unfamiliar progressions quite aesthetically. Example: an untrained saxophonist can improvise over untried harmonic sequences without knowing which chord the accompanying pianist will play next. This type of improviser slides from one tone to the next by ear and instinct; it's the magnetic pull and attraction of overtones that enables them to literally swim with and rarely against the tide unless they have experienced improvising phrases in contemporary harmony from the second-half of our twentieth century; with, meaning intervals inside of the chord; against, meaning intervals outside of the chord.

When pianists, singers or instrumentalists lose their sense of pitch, they desperately search for the correct interval and are shocked when realizing just how far they are off key; usually it's the dominant, fourth below or fifth above, from their desired tone and naturally their effort is forced to a stand-still. I believe the vibration-pull of the dominant in the particular chord (3^{rd}, 6^{th} and 12^{th} overtones) pulls them away from the key-center; plus there are three additional vibrations of the dominant within that specific tonality, the 2^{nd}, 4^{th} and 8^{th} overtones.

Since all tones are related by overtones, we intuitively feel and to an extent hear, slightly, the lower vibrations; this is why those who only play by ear react to overtones passionately and of course, their solos can sound fantastic; a few names, Errol Garner, Chet Baker and Carl Perkins could not read music-notation or chord-symbols, nor did Stan Getz read chord-symbols, but all of them could improvise, even in live performance, on harmonic progressions of a new title in any tonality. Count Basie's innovating big-band of the mid-thirties had music-stands but no monetary resources for arrangements; they pretended to read but actually faked, quite skillfully, the harmony of the brass and reed section for four or five-hours of dance music; in those days they had less than ten notated charts in their repertoire. Biologically, the human being primarily feels (limbic system) and then thinks in the cerebral cortex. Players improvise more musically when they feel (non-criticizing right-hemisphere) and don't think with their left-hemispheric language center.

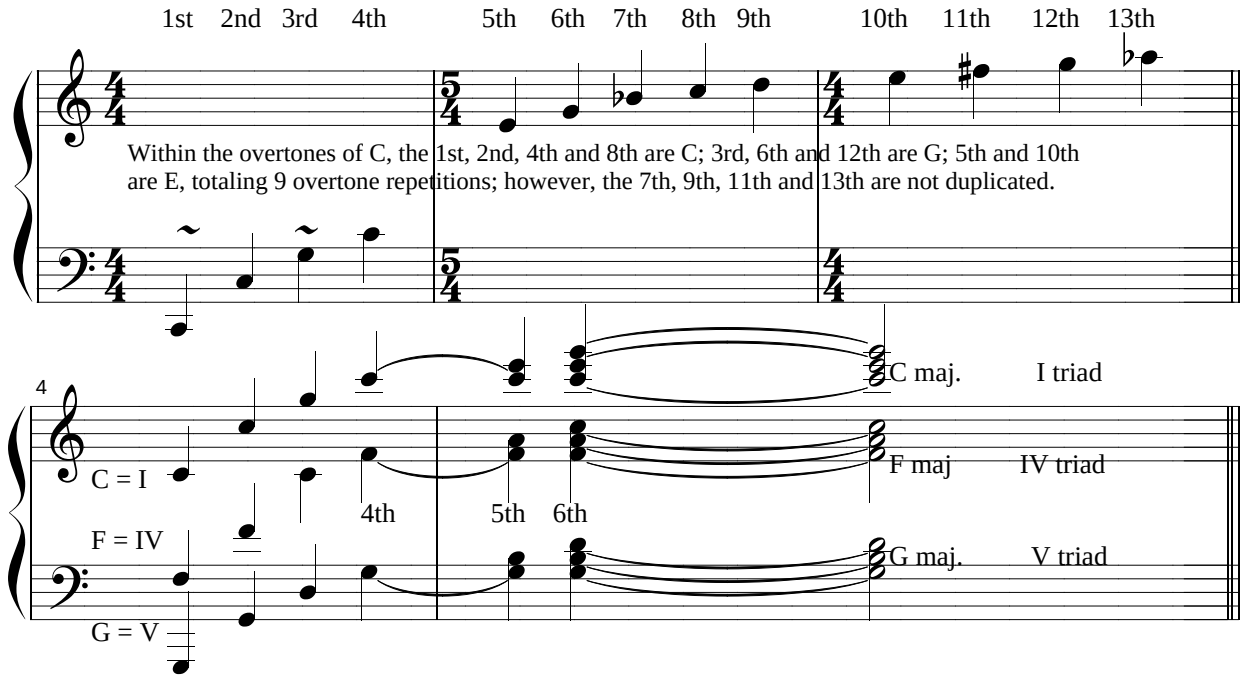
So, within the major and chromatic scales there exists a family of sympathetic overtone-vibrations; the lower overtones are more easily perceptible and sound more familiar to the ear than higher overtones; consequently, the higher overtones remain mystical and emotionally cooler. This is why uneducated listeners prefer traditional music and also, they experience difficulties understanding dissonant contemporary music. Let me repeat; Schoenberg's analogy is also, in my opinion, the reason why improvisers, who literally float in a sea of overtones, intuitively feel and choose intervals, aesthetically, within any accompanying harmonic progression. All musical phenomena can be referred directly to overtones.

In the evolutionary era of Parker and Gillespie, higher overtones, 7^{th} up to the 13^{th} (altered notes) were used within their improvisations and compositions; improvisation, by the mid-forties, had become more complicated than in the periods of Swing or Dixieland. Louis Armstrong usually began and ended all phrases on the tonic or fifth degree of a scale; he never used an interval above the dominant seventh; Parker and Gillespie were courageous, even revolutionary, in molding their solo-lines with altered tones.

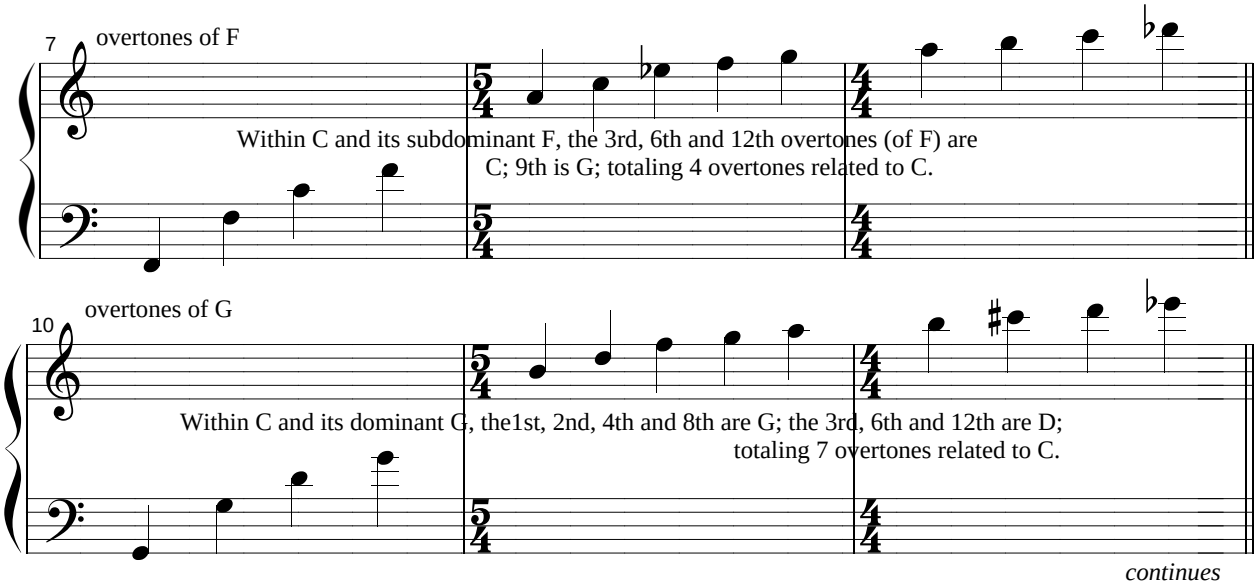
Some of my Berlin students who specialized in Free-Improvisation were unaffected by the magnetic pull of lower overtones, especially when I had them play a sequence of diatonic-chords; however, they consistently remained uninhibited while playing dissonant intervals. Quite the opposite is true with improvisers who are comfortable with lower overtones, yet when dealing with dissonant music they experience distraught nerves. Neurologically, today's improvisers have changed as a result of technology; and for sure, brain cell circuitry is wired differently nowadays than a century ago. It took so many years before my nerves adjusted to dissonance; of course, it was a matter of adaptation but I had to work. Nevertheless, life is more interesting when you intuitively force yourself to learn what you can't do.

Today's contemporary music, because of higher overtones, is incredibly challenging and one needs an enormous technique to master its many difficulties; even so, the information within pages 175-180 enhances your awareness of intervallic-relationship not only with single-line phrases but specifically when structuring voice-lines horizontally for chord-progressions.

How Overtones Influence Improvisers
Overtone Vibrations from a Single Tone



Above: within C and its dominant G, their 4th, 5th and 6th overtones produce C and G major triads; the 7th and 9th of G plus C create the F major triad and the combined tones of these 3 primary triads constitute the white keys of our C Major Scale; by including the higher overtones (black keys) of C, the (7th) Bb, (11th) F#, and (13th) Ab plus (7th) Eb, and (13th) Db of F, we have the Chromatic Scale.



continues

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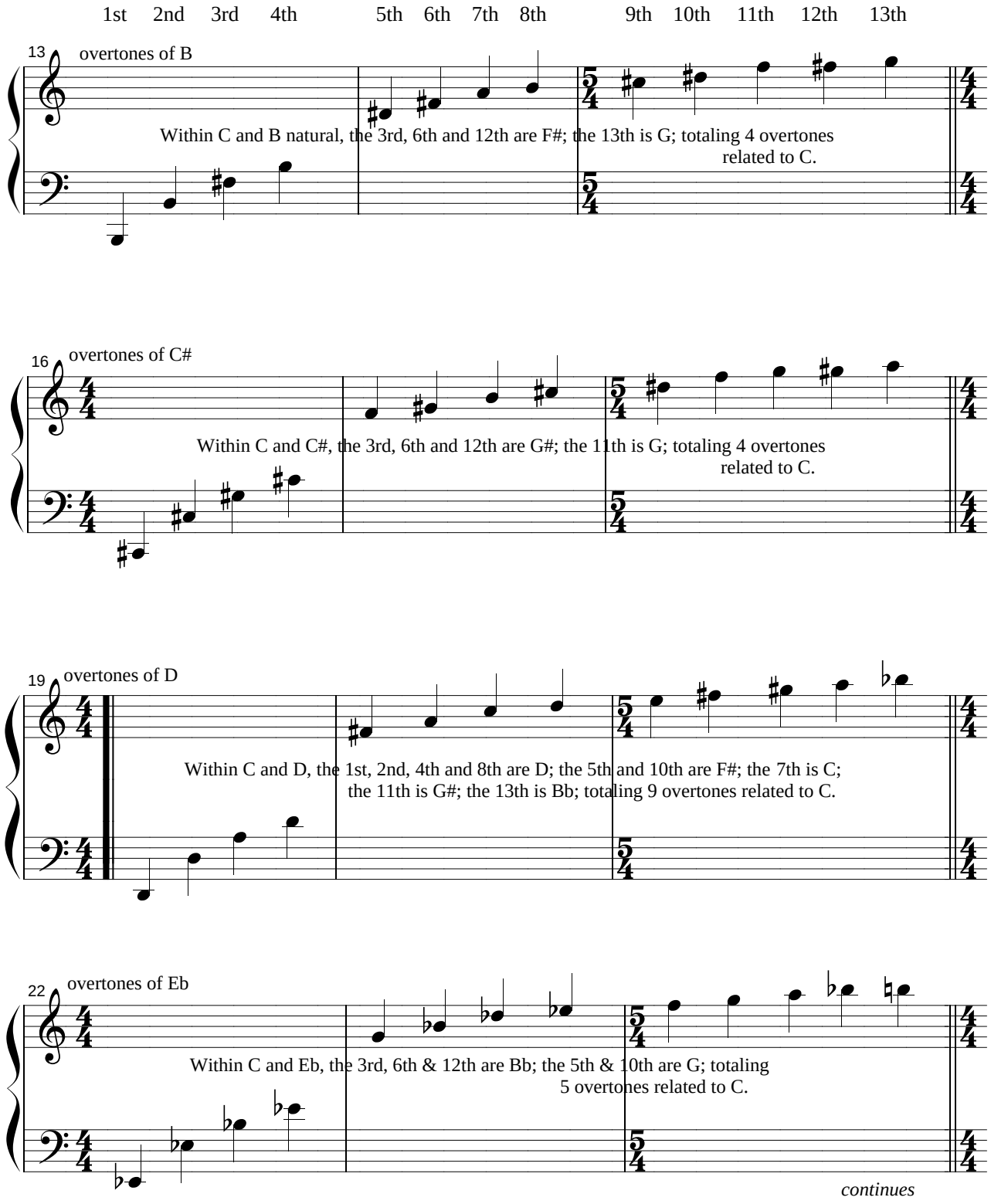
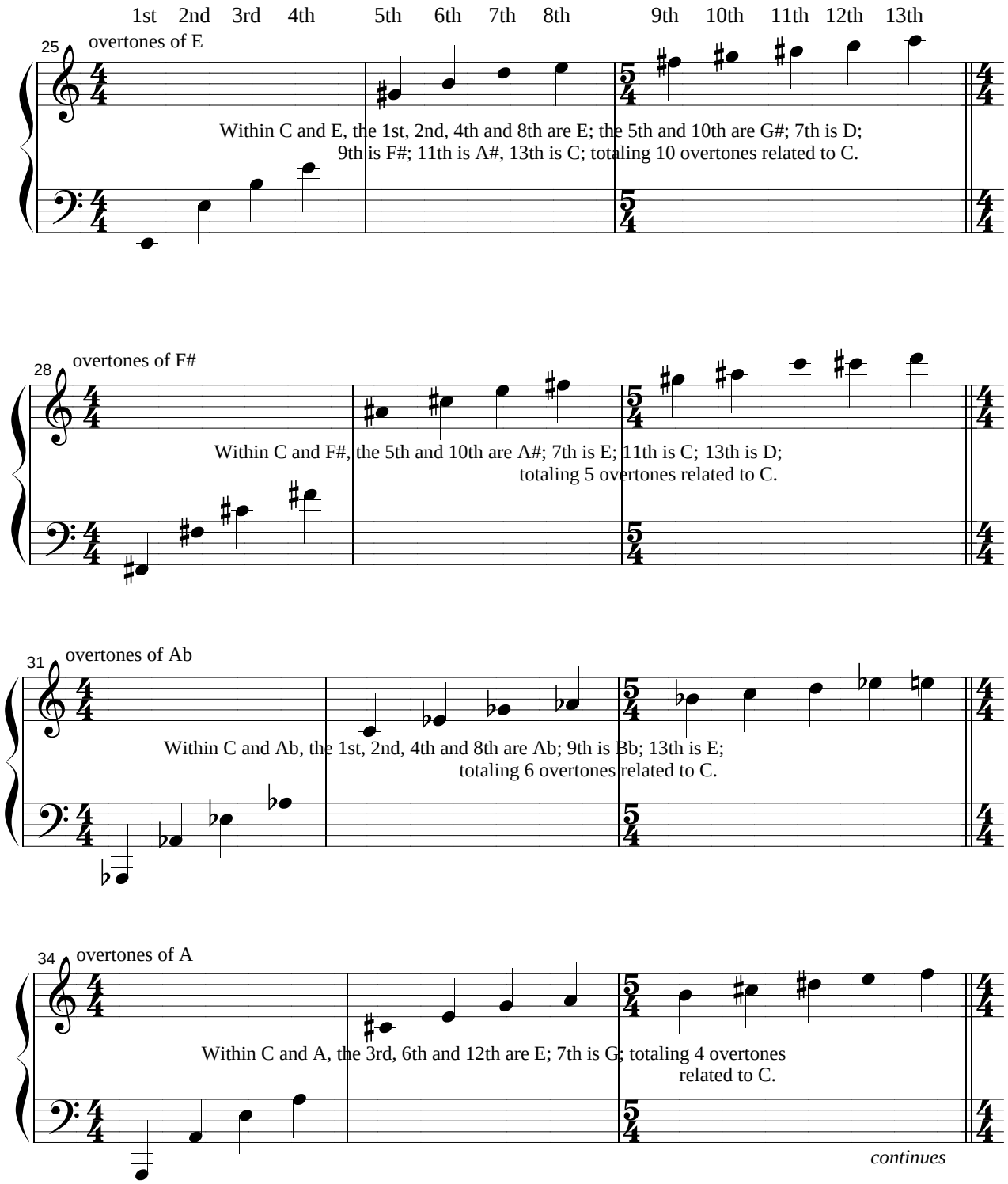
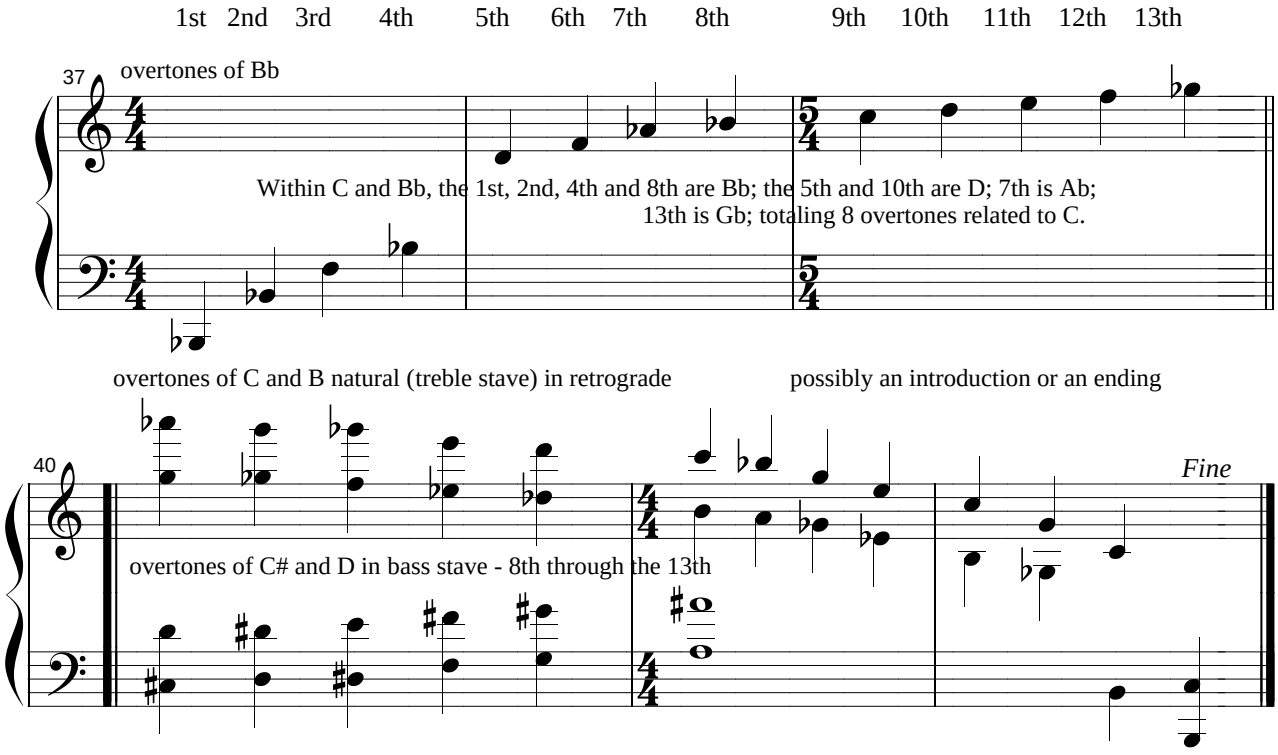
Treble clef: press G down and hold but don't play it; now play C in the bass and G, the 3rd overtone of C, will sound. If you try the same with F it will remain silent because it's not an overtone of C. Try other intervals; but remember that higher overtones are always soft and faint in comparison with lower overtones.


1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th 9th 10th 11th 12th 13th
13
overtones of B
Within C and B natural, the 3rd, 6th and 12th are F#; the 13th is G; totaling 4 overtones related to C.
16
overtones of C#
Within C and C#, the 3rd, 6th and 12th are G#; the 11th is G; totaling 4 overtones related to C.
19
overtones of D
Within C and D, the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 8th are D; the 5th and 10th are F#; the 7th is C; the 11th is G#; the 13th is Bb; totaling 9 overtones related to C.
22
overtones of Eb
Within C and Eb, the 3rd, 6th & 12th are Bb; the 5th & 10th are G; totaling 5 overtones related to C.

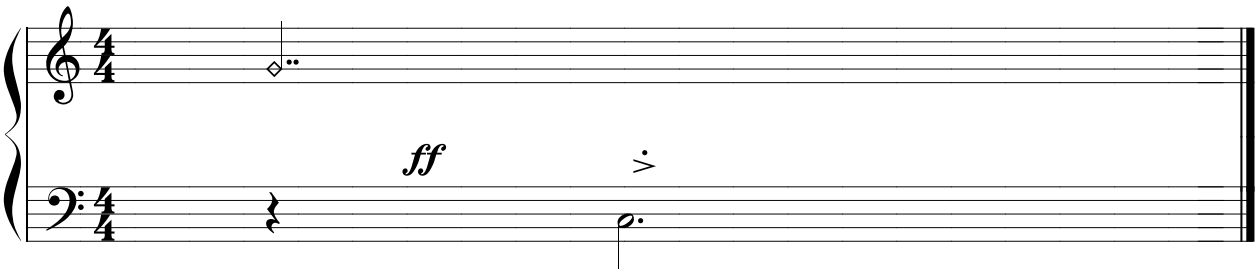
continues


1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th 9th 10th 11th 12th 13th
25
overtones of E
Within C and E, the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 8th are E; the 5th and 10th are G#; 7th is D;
9th is F#; 11th is A#, 13th is C; totaling 10 overtones related to C.
28
overtones of F#
Within C and F#, the 5th and 10th are A#; 7th is E; 11th is C; 13th is D;
totaling 5 overtones related to C.
31
overtones of Ab
Within C and Ab, the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 8th are Ab; 9th is Bb; 13th is E;
totaling 6 overtones related to C.
34
overtones of A
Within C and A, the 3rd, 6th and 12th are E; 7th is G; totaling 4 overtones
related to C.
continues


1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th 9th 10th 11th 12th 13th
37
overtones of Bb
Within C and Bb, the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 8th are Bb; the 5th and 10th are D; 7th is Ab;
13th is Gb; totaling 8 overtones related to C.
overtones of C and B natural (treble stave) in retrograde
possibly an introduction or an ending
40
Fine
overtones of C# and D in bass stave - 8th through the 13th

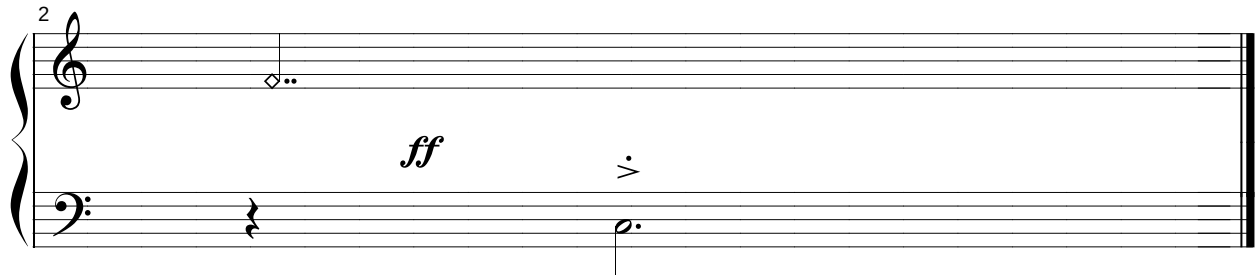
Gravitational Pull to the Root

Keep G, in the treble-clef depressed without sounding; now accent C, in the bass-clef and the depressed G will sound like a ghost-tone; it's because G, the 3rd overtone of C, is activated by the overtone-vibrations of C.

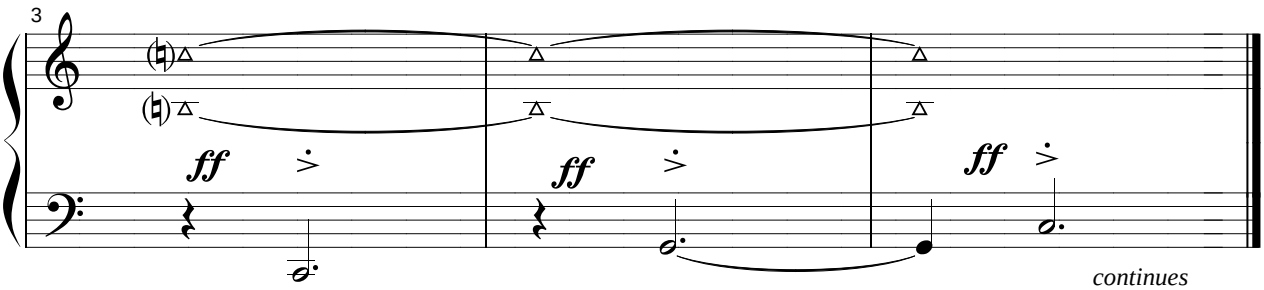


Keep F, in the treble-clef depressed without sounding; now accent C, in the bass- clef, and the depressed F should NOT sound because it does not belong to the overtones of C; there are exceptions, due to the design of some pianos, and those instruments may activate the F faintly.

F, being the suspended 4th of C, pulls a minor-2nd down to E (the major-3rd of C) for its resolution.

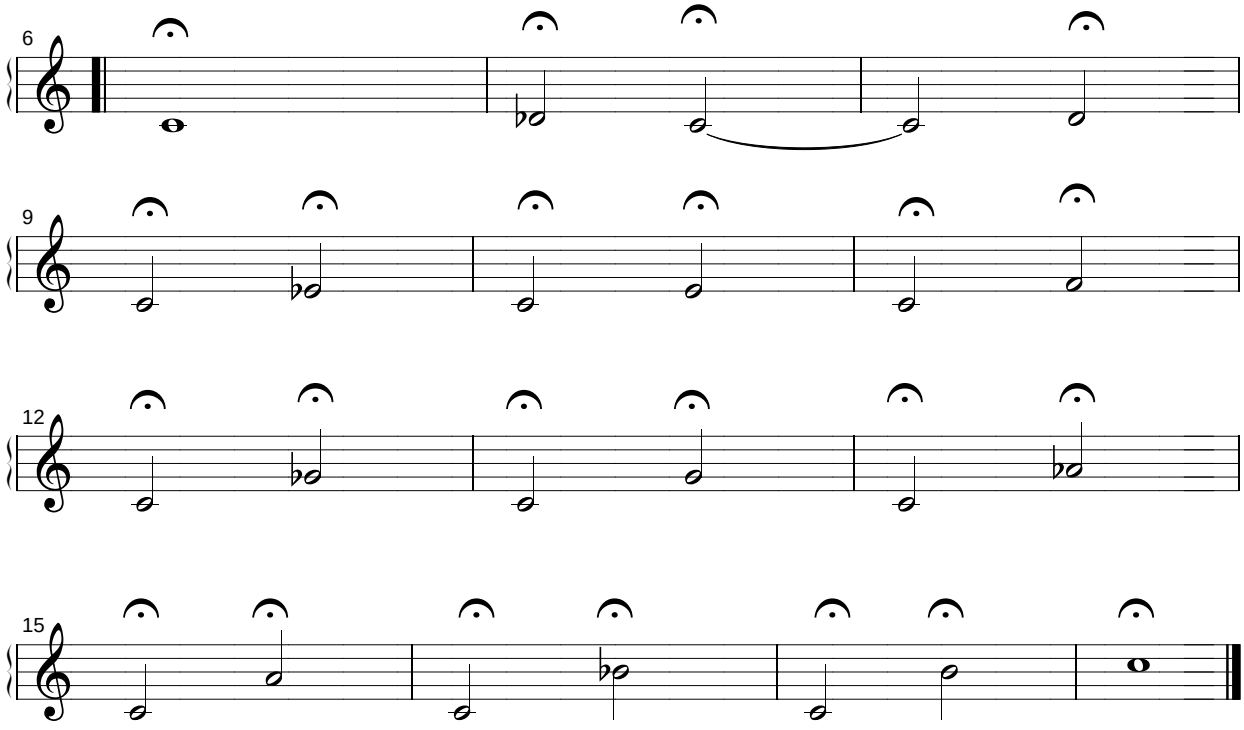


Keep both C and the leading tone B natural (treble clef) depressed; then accent C, in the bass clef, and C in the treble clef will be heard but not B natural because it does not belong to the overtone-vibrations of C; however, continue holding B natural and C down while accenting G, in the bass clef, and you will hear the ghost-tone B natural because it's the 5th overtone of G; but when accenting C, in the last measure, the leading tone B natural joins the ghost-tone C.



continues

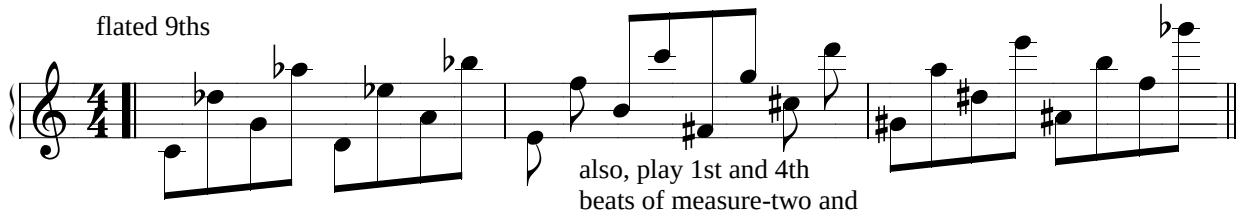
Play middle-C; keep eye-lids closed; then play Db, listen intuitively and observe the fermata before playing C's repetition in measure two. You should feel and think of middle-C as a landing-platform and it's gravitational power pulls Db back down to middle-C; next, play D and feel the pull back down to C. Continue with the following measures and there is always that pull back down to middle-C; but when reaching B natural, the leading-tone in measure 17, you feel that it pulls you up to C one-octave above middle-C. This example is comparable to a space rocket without enough fuel to escape magnetic earth and lands back on middle C, but when you reach the major 7th, the rocket is immediately affected by the gravitational pull of the moon, represented here as C one octave above middle C. The first tone establishes a gravitational root-foundation; this rule applies for all tonalities.



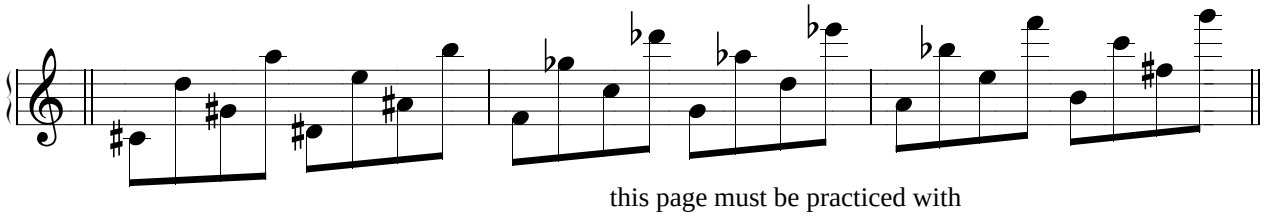
Dissonant Elements

play all examples
in retrograde

flated 9ths

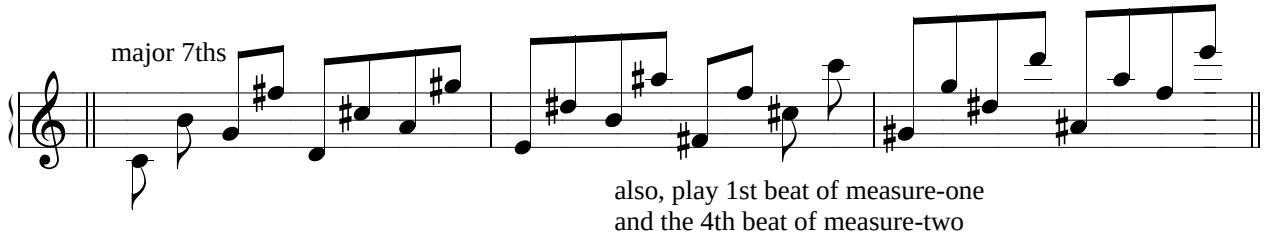


also, play 1st and 4th
beats of measure-two and
continue this sequence

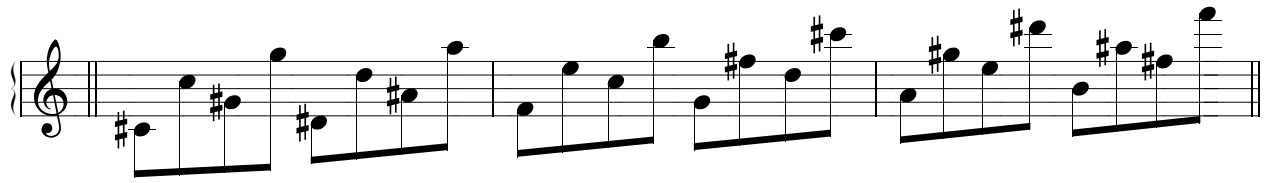


this page must be practiced with
the left hand; two-octaves lower

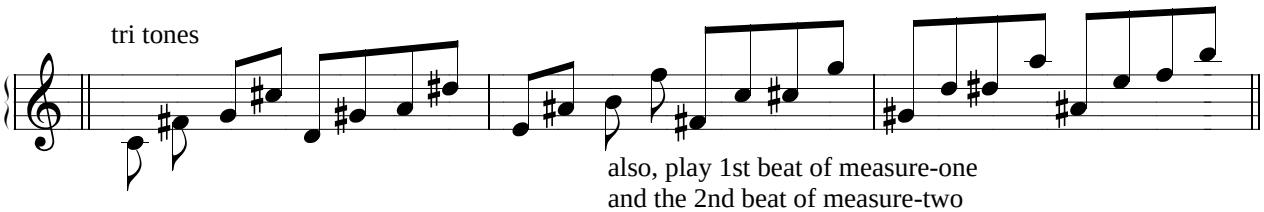
major 7ths



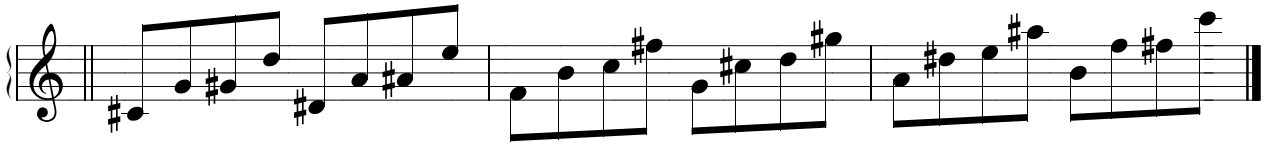
also, play 1st beat of measure-one
and the 4th beat of measure-two
and continue this sequence



tri tones



also, play 1st beat of measure-one
and the 2nd beat of measure-two
and continue this sequence.



experiment with different combinations of dissonant intervals

Four brief sections as a study to mix and balance dissonance. Notation for the highest octave sounds wrong in lower octaves with more overtones.

Elements 'n Dissonance

Homage to Noel Lee

W. Norris

leggiero

♩ = 80

8va

pedal markings: down = ^ up = ❁

mp *mf*

8vb

use sustaining pedal intuitively; connect tones; search for all possible melodic-fragments and shape them; mould the sound

7

f *mf* *f*

10

♪ = 96

p

3

13

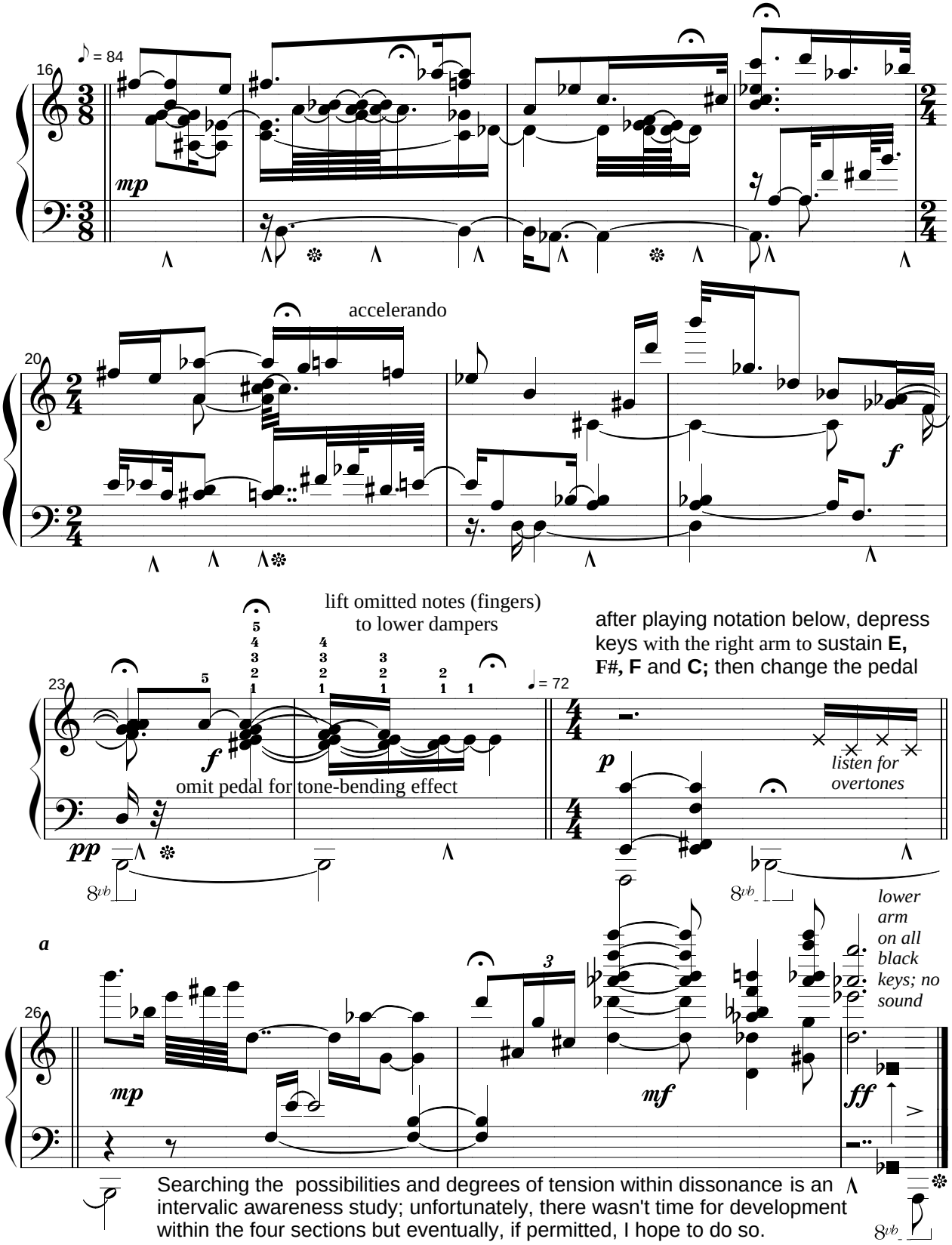
3 3

f

section for improvisation

This title was constructed with flatted 9ths, major 7ths and tri-tones; rhythmic-notation was changed until the quality of dissonance became more melodically balanced.

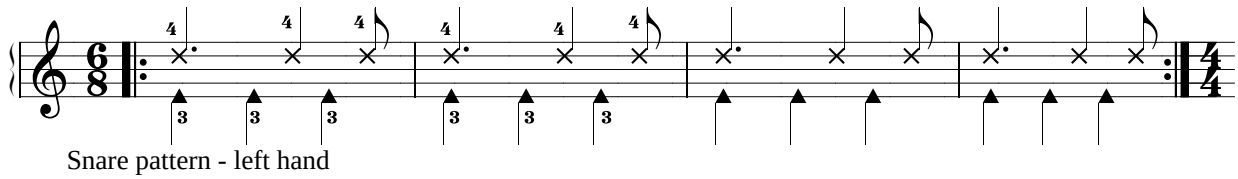
I urge you to listen to the compact disc 'Noel Lee Plays Noel Lee' Circe 87114LD. His compositions stand at the highest level of aesthetics. www.noel-lee.com



Quarter note triplet with Cymbal Pattern

Play exercises with each hand; inverted hand position and fingering for the left-hand

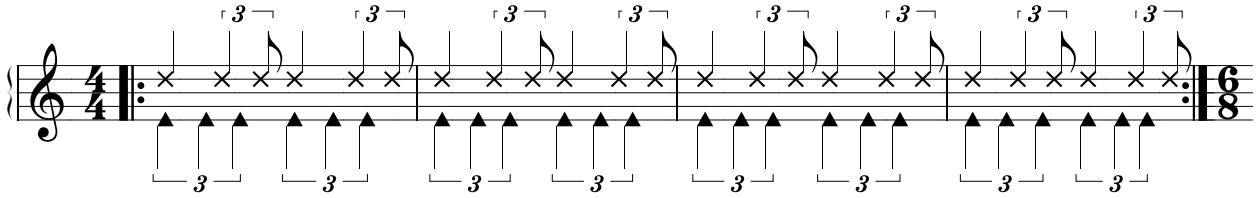
cymbal pattern - right hand also with all combinations of any two fingers

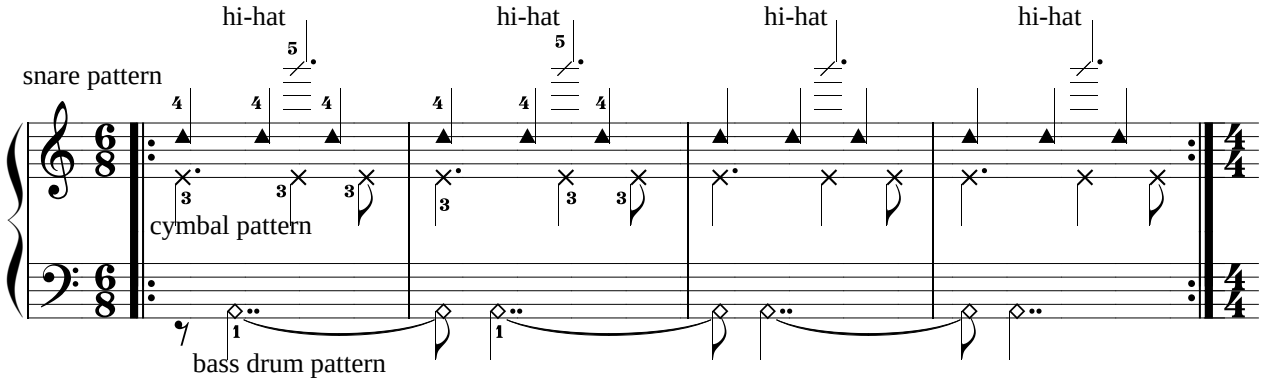


Snare pattern - left hand

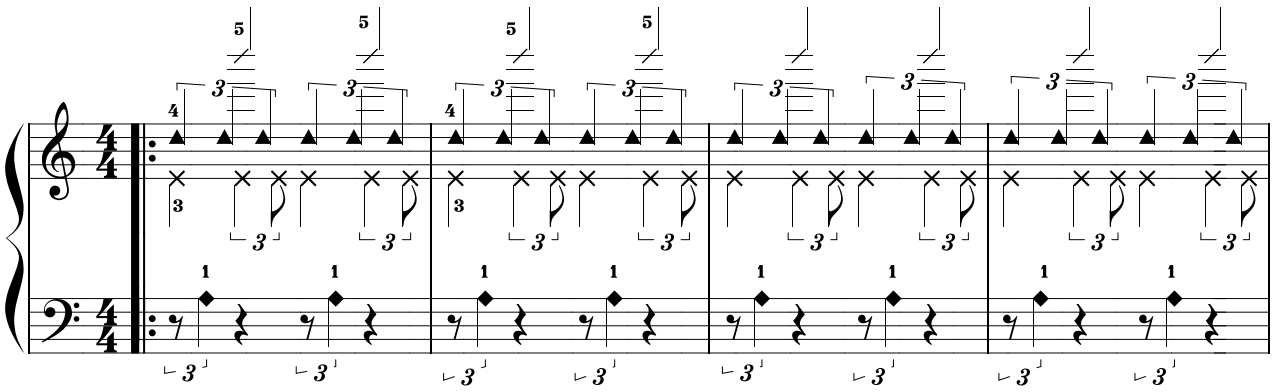
Warning: the exercises on this page can cause tendonits

Same as above in 4/4 - cymbal pattern - right hand



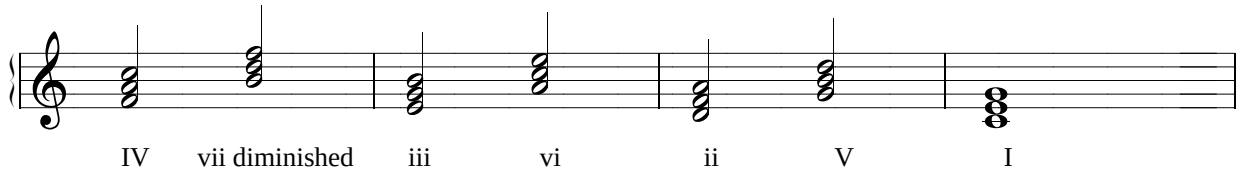


Execute this exercise with the right-hand while rotating your left-hand and left-foot in contrary motion.

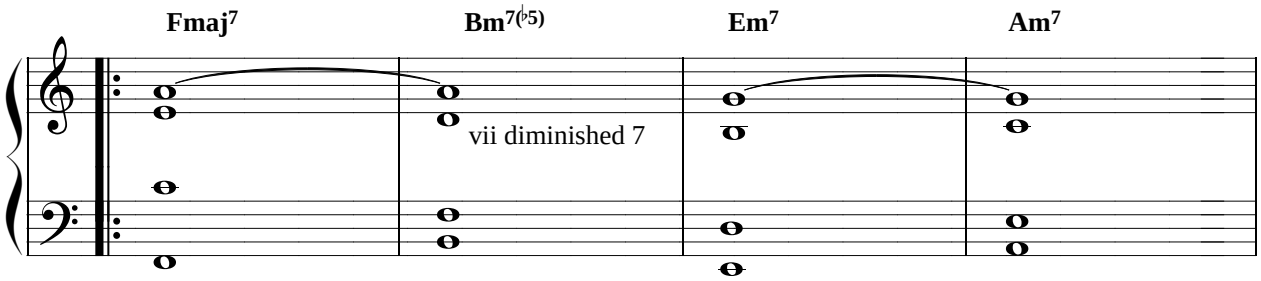


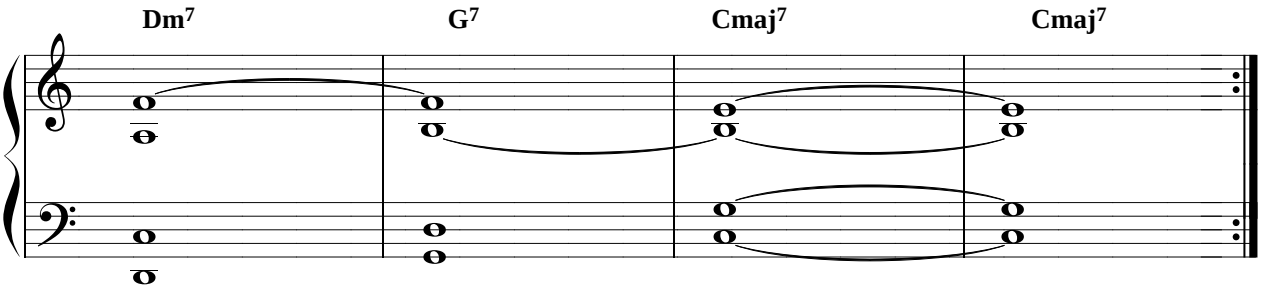
Tonal Circle of Fourths

IV, vii dim, iii, vi, ii, V, I



Although the above theoretical example from the eighteenth century is diatonic, this same progression is found in jazz improvisation of the nineteen thirties. The purpose of my writing this and the next page is to stimulate your curiousity about theory of the past; although nothing is new, what is played today was never imagined in the centuries before.



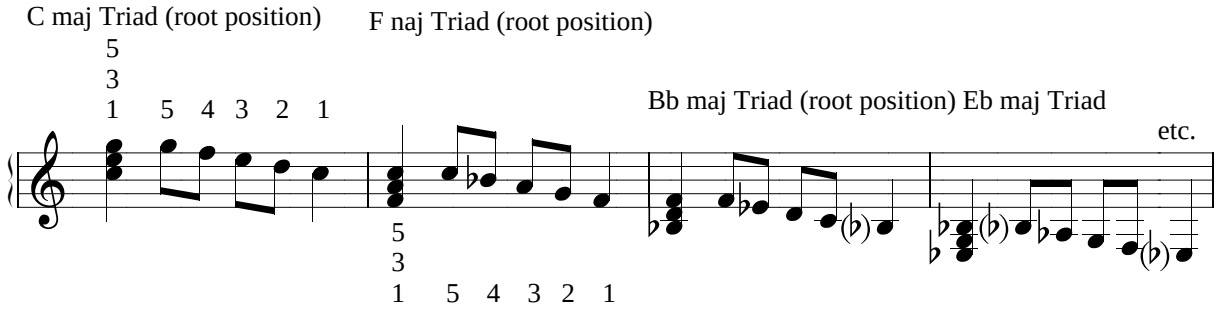


The chord progression, above, is basic for many standards including the popular title, 'All My Love'.

On the following page is an explanation of the circle of fifths and circle of fourths. In jazz, the term used is a circle of fourths; in classical, this term is refered to as a circle of fifths. Diatonically, the 4th scale degree **above** C is F; and the 5th scale degree **below** C is also F.

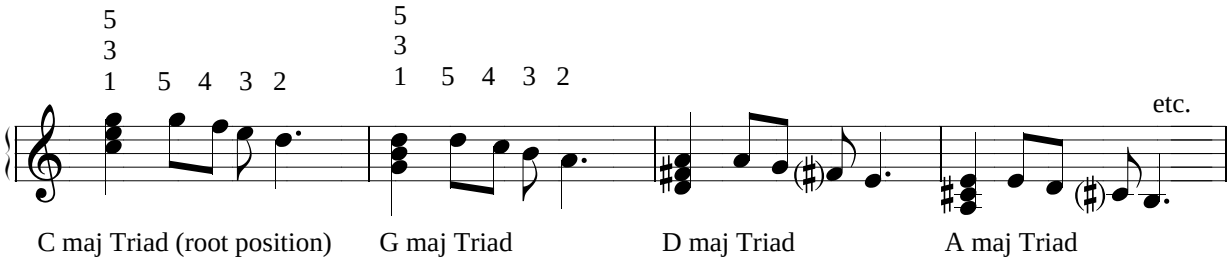
Circle of 4ths & 5ths

I remain grateful to Alvaro Is-Rojas
for this explanation of 4ths and 5ths



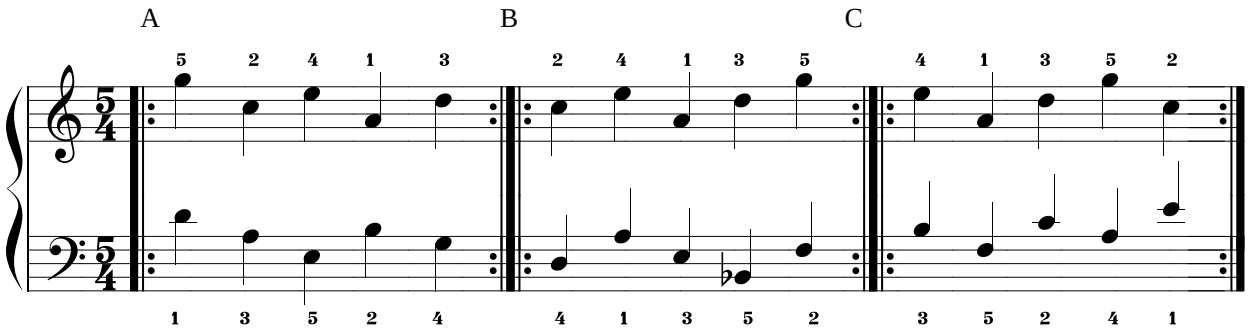
Today, the circle of 4ths are calculated melodically by counting the root and its ascending scale-step intervals, *C D E F = 1 2 3 4* the 4th becoming the root of F, which ascends as *F G A Bb = 1 2 3 4* which becomes the root of Bb. Example; C F Bb Eb Ab Db Gb
F# B E A D G C. These same tones in retrograde would result in a circle of 5ths; C G D A E B F#
Gb Db Ab Eb Bb F C.

In the early eighteenth century, the circle of 4ths were theoretically calculated by descending, melodically, from the 5th of C maj triad to its 2nd interval which then became the 5th of the G maj Triad. Although this information may seem trivial it does reveal the analytical thinking of musicians at that time in history.

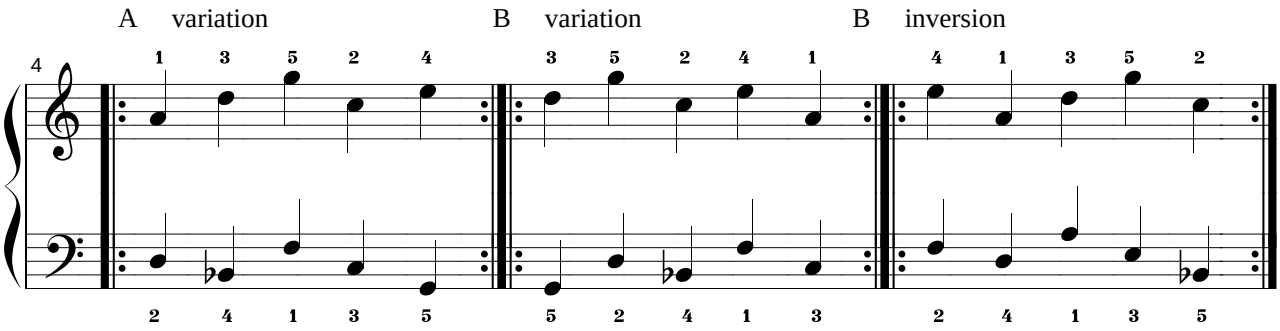


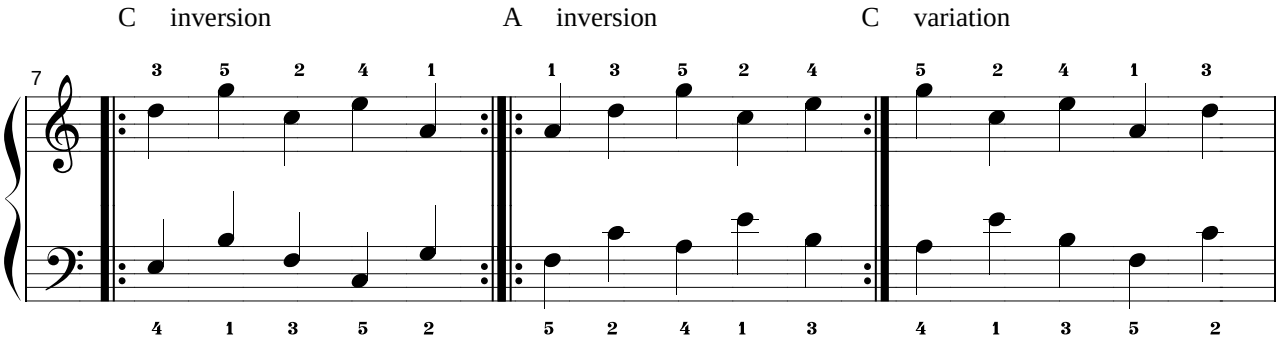
I was fortunate to have studied piano with the organist, John H. Summers, from September 1936 until June 1950. He and his wife, Evelyn, were dedicated musicians. Each August, John traveled by bus to New York City and studied at Columbia university while his substitute organist performed the church services in Little Rock. This was John's vacation, studying privately plus eight to ten hours of practice each day. Through the rest of the year, his daily work schedule was twelve to fifteen hours seven days per week; these hours consisted of teaching, practicing, preparing two church services each Sunday plus two choir rehearsals. John's life style influenced me and I have tried to follow his example of a working discipline to the best of my ability. I wrote the four co-ordination exercises on page 186 with John in mind. His unique co-ordination came from a life time of playing organ; he conducted with the left hand while his right played the keyboard manuals as both feet executed the pedal board (black keys with the toe of his shoe and white keys with the heel) all simultaneously; I sat next to him and turned the pages in disbelief. Consequently, his piano playing was effortless. To conclude, in the mid fities John travled to Lipzig, Germany to visit St. Thomas Church where J.S. Bach had been organist and teacher.

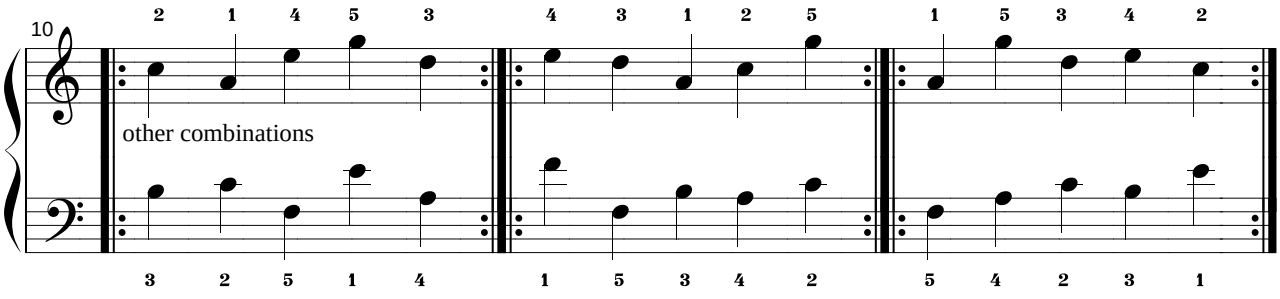
Finger Coordination



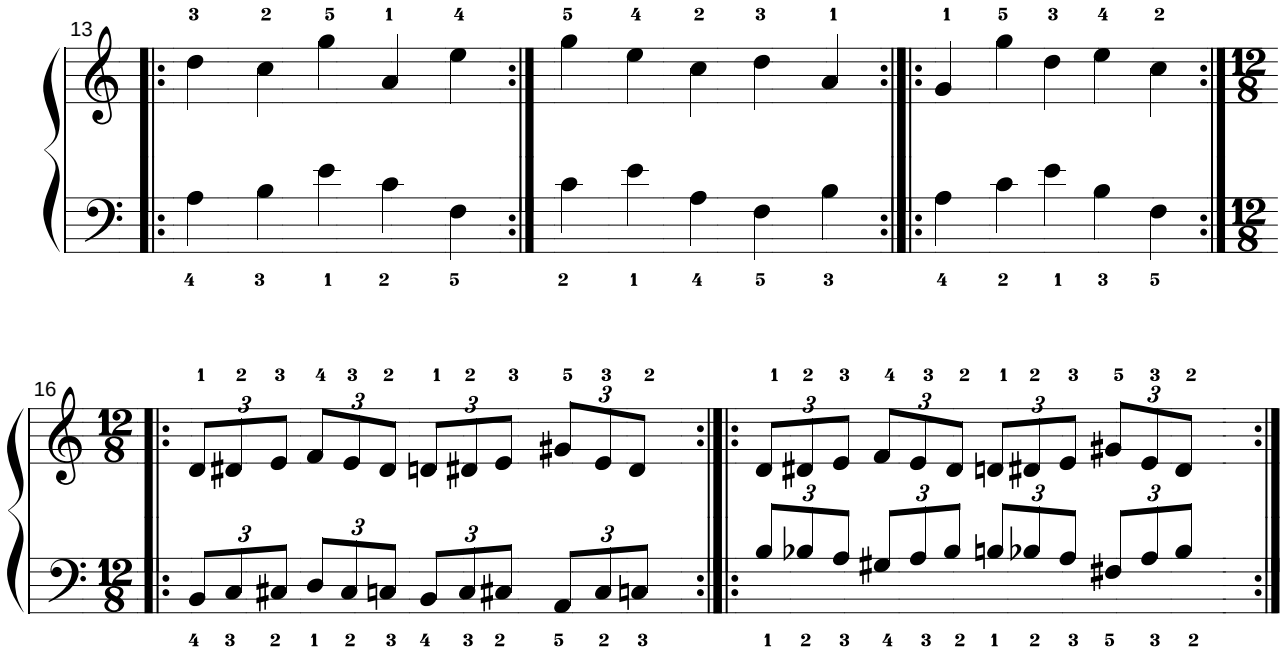
combine different numerical combinations and use other intervals if you wish







continues



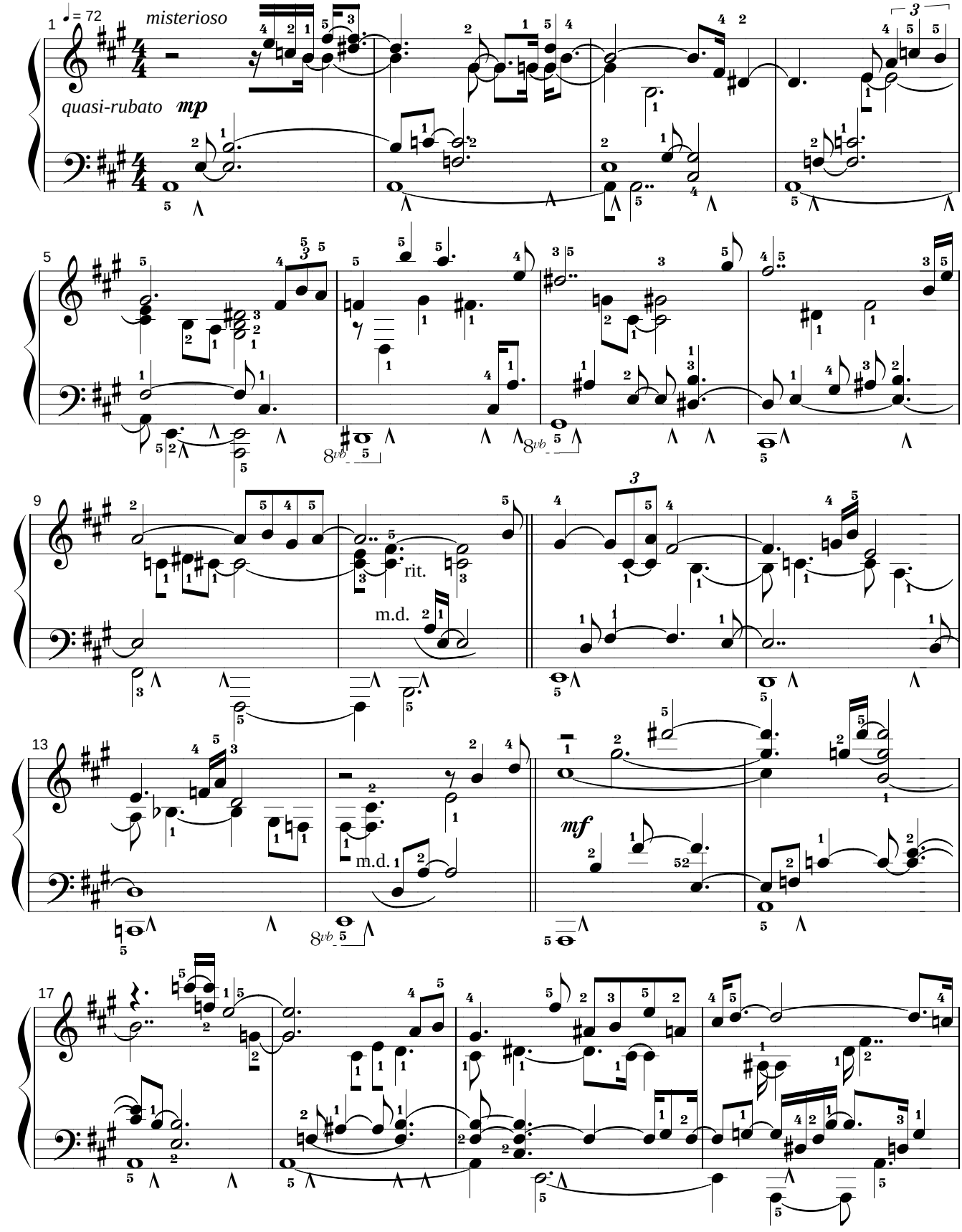
Hopefully, there are exercises within this book you can live with. Many of these examples are dangerous but if pianists are serious about developing a greater physical capacity at the keyboard, they must visit a physical therapist regularly so that muscles, tendons and nerves can be stretched because, after years of practice, your muscles become slightly shorter. You must learn to mentally scan inside your muscles and neutralize all tension. As a pianist/improviser, you should write your own book of methods so that you acquire an individul style, just as classical pianist/composers developed theirs by writing etudes. This book reveals the work-habits I use at the piano; however, organize your own work-plan and live within it; and I can assure you, a bed next to the instrument is most beneficial; if you are exhausted and can't sleep, just sit, stare at the keyboard and with imaginative ears listen to the instrument sing as your fingers playfully touch ivory, as if in a dream.

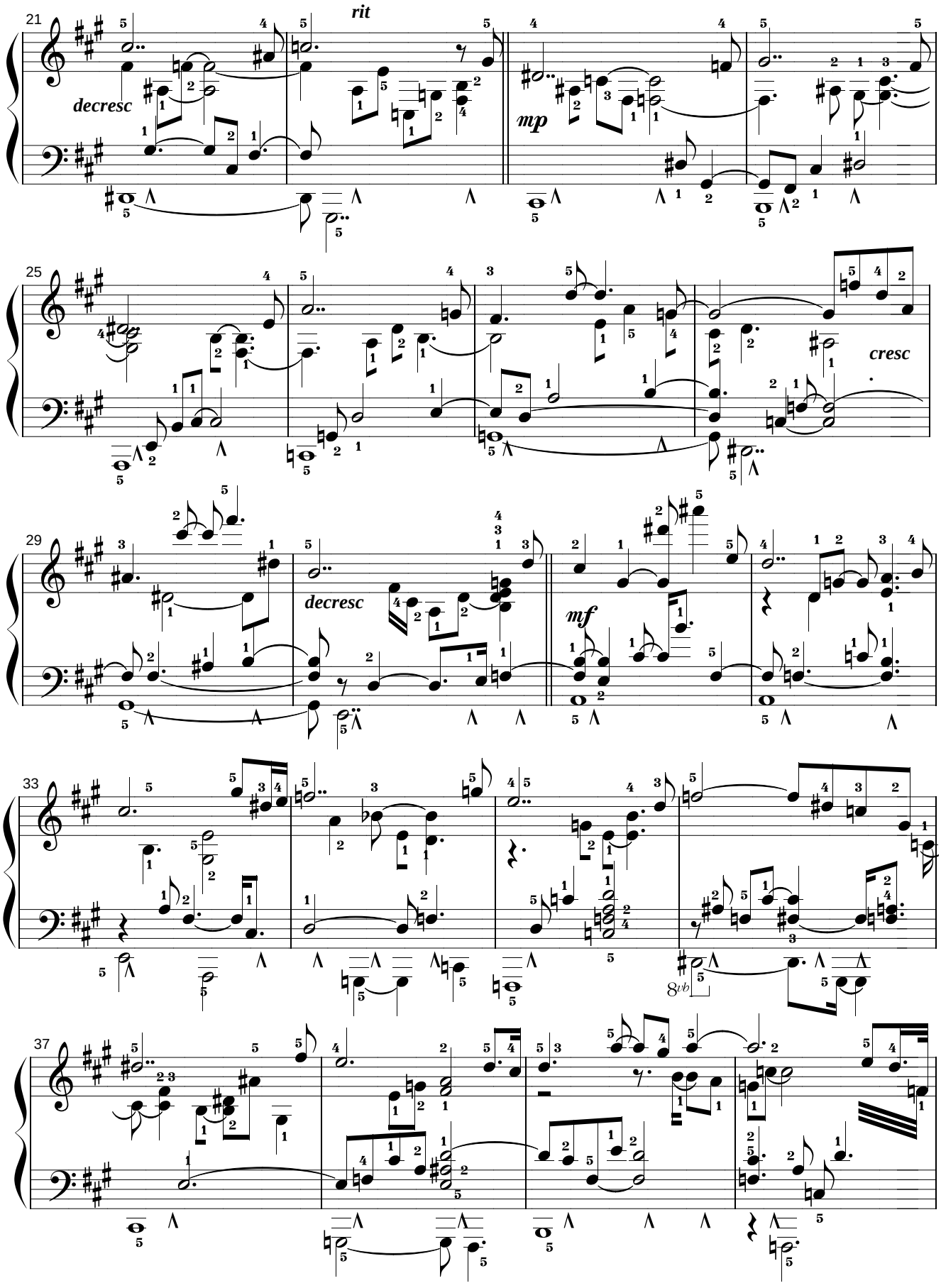
One last reminder, always sustain the thought that there's no rejuvenation of spirit quite like the compositional aspect of absolute music.

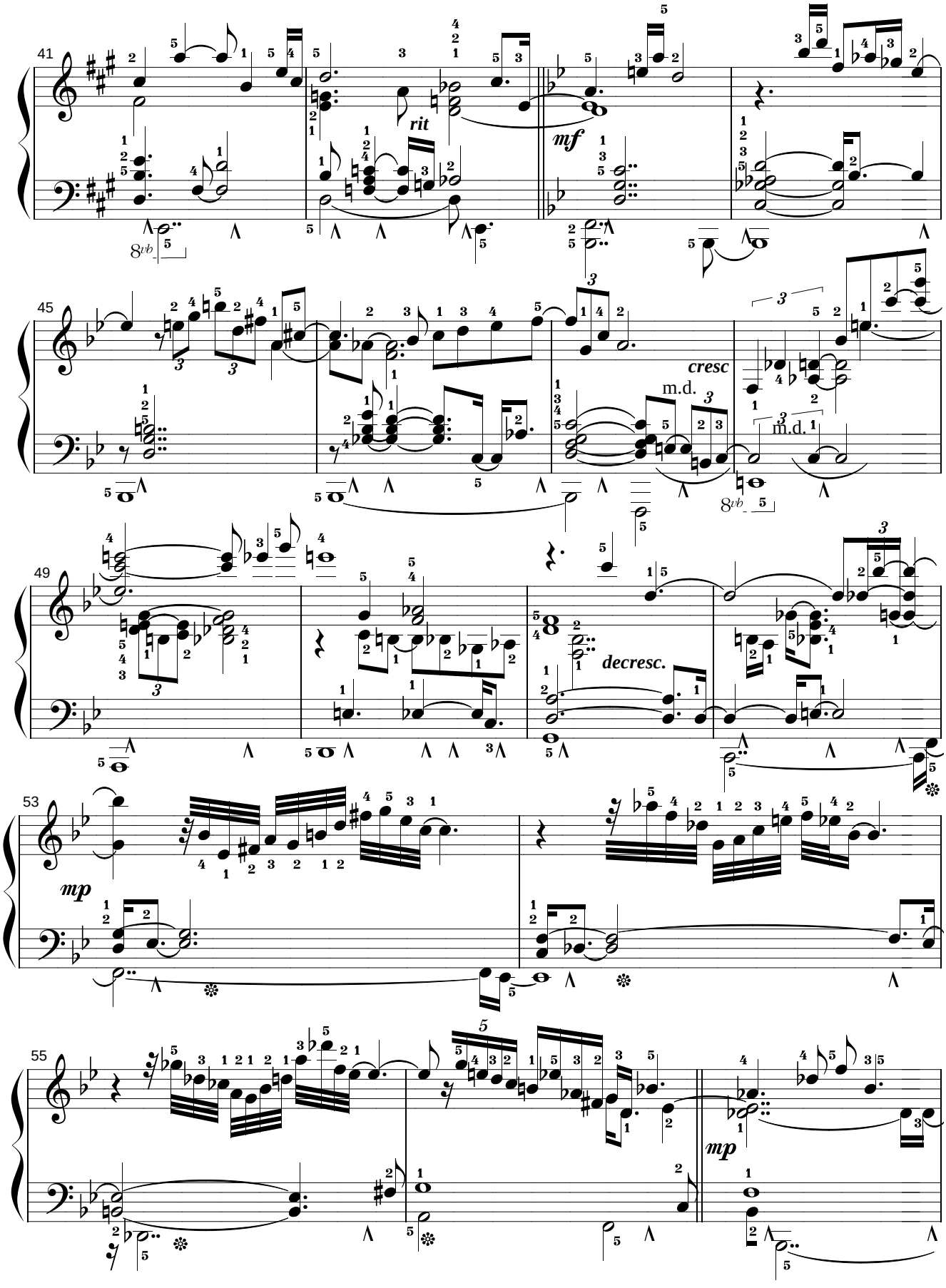
Reflective

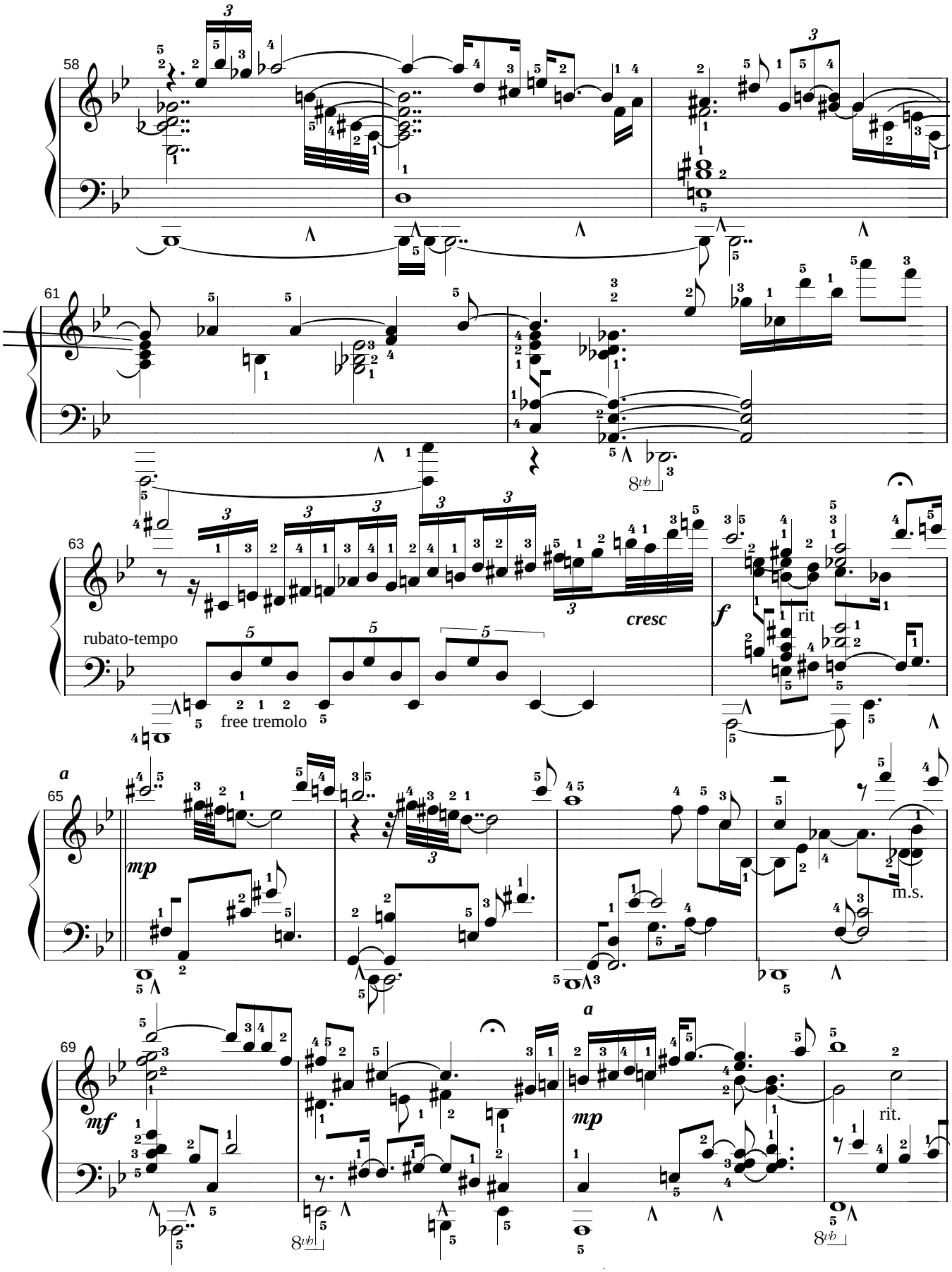
pedal symbols: down = Λ up = ❄

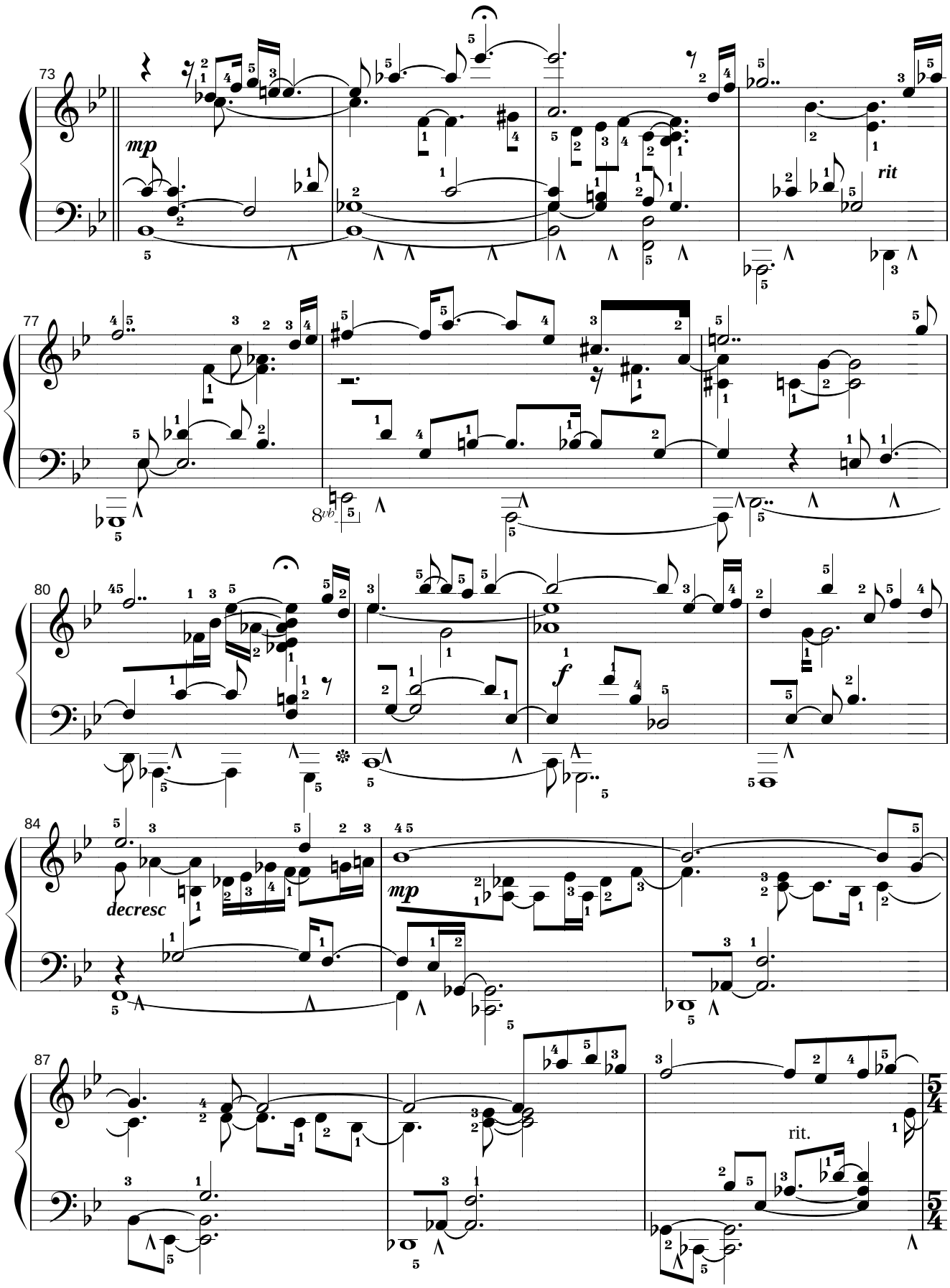
W. Norris

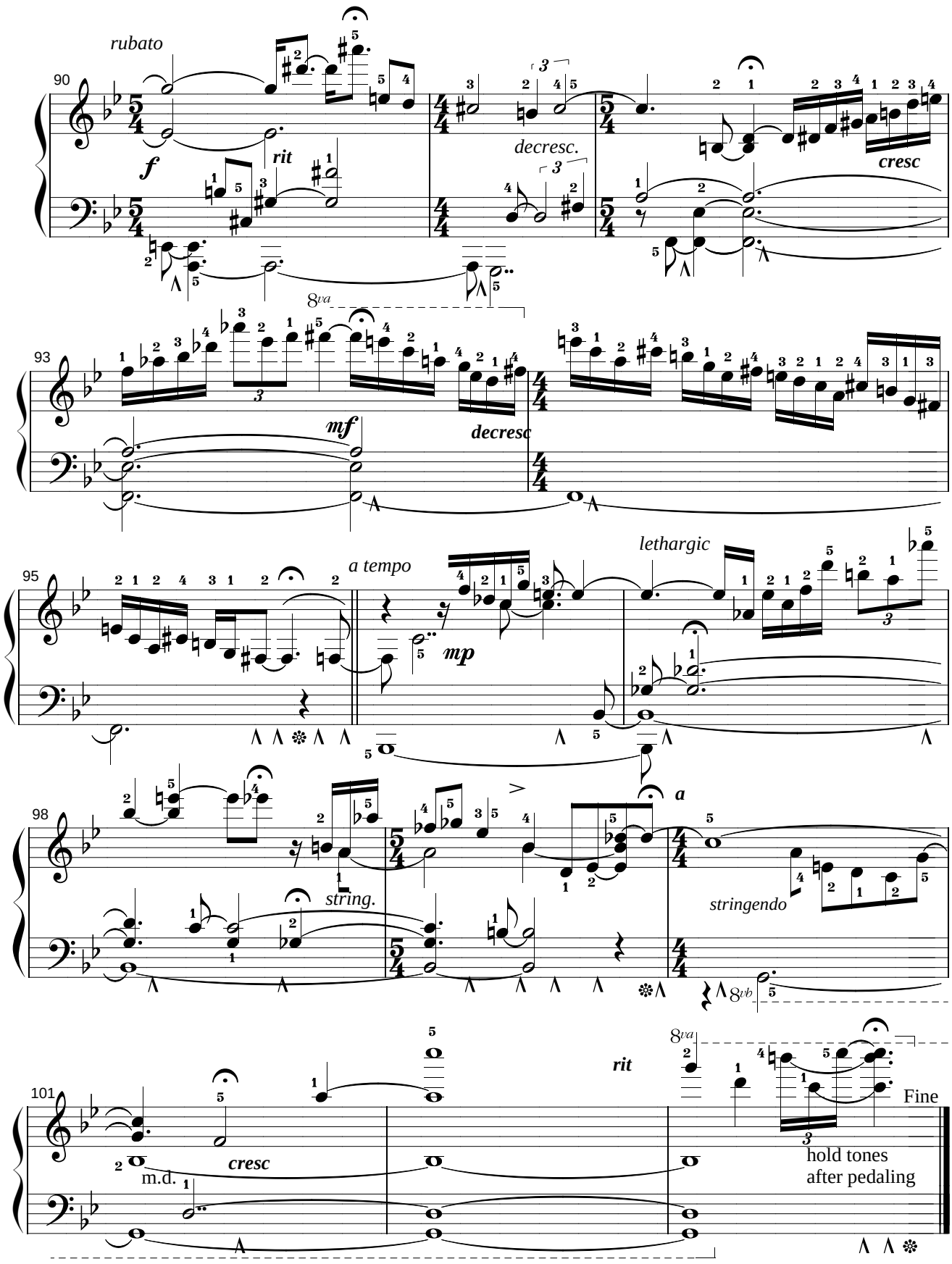



21
rit
decresc
mp
25
cresc
29
decresc
mf
33
8vb
37

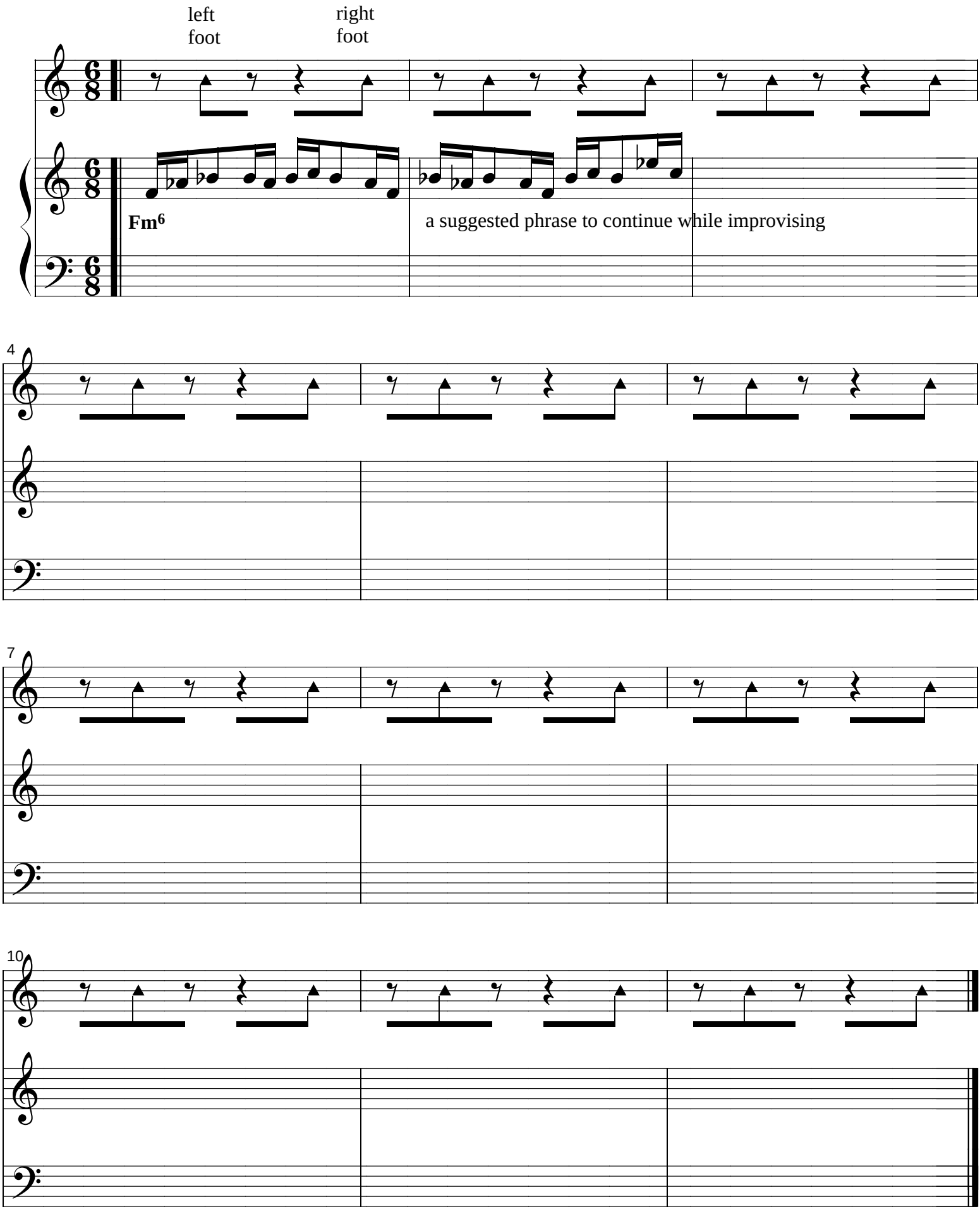

41
rit
mf
45
cresc
m.d.
m.d.
49
decresc.
53
mp
55
mp


58
61
8vb
63
rubato-tempo
free tremolo
cresc
f
rit
a
65
mp
m.s.
69
mf
a
mp
8vb
rit.
8vb


73
mp
rit
77
8vb
80
f
84
decresc
mp
87
rit.


rubato
90
f
rit
decresc.
cresc
8va
93
mf
decresc
lethargic
95
a tempo
mp
98
string.
a
stringendo
8vb
8va
101
rit
Fine
cresc
m.d.
hold tones
after pedaling

Tap on 2 and 6


left foot
right foot
Fm6
a suggested phrase to continue while improvising
4
7
10

SUPPLEMENTARY SECTION

The following studies are a direct result of my practicing exercises notated in the previous pages of this book. As mentioned earlier, you should choose a physical therapist, who understands the difficulties pianists are confronted with in acquiring advanced piano technique and visit them regularly. Practice all exercises softly and with as little effort as possible.

Although my concern within this book pertains to keyboard technique, my ultimate objective is that you become obsessed with re-arranging all of the possible intervals you have selected for your idea/phrases and to question which combinations of these tones make the particular idea/phrase sound aesthetically interesting to your ear. This process does not concern emotions; it is a searching type of work. Emotional and inspirational factors materialize the moment you combine an ideal intervallic-arrangement of the idea that gives your senses a feeling of euphoria; like a bright light inside the brain that is illuminated instantly. This means researching repeatedly until you are satisfied with your efforts; such artistic discovery is always a revelation.

Mastering musical difficulties is a matter of reinforcing, daily, the circuitry in your brain. Practice can be an experience of agony or pleasure; the choice is definitely yours and in my opinion it should not be a question of immediately conquering a difficulty. Instead, practicing on problems should be a joy regardless of the degree of complexity and eventually your playing will sound rewarding; after all, we can only accomplish to the best of our capabilities. Keep in mind, each pianist develops somewhat differently from the next because each ultimately develops diverse working habits; it's nature's rule and by acknowledging this as reality you will, in due course, become one with the instrument. Yet, to drill repeatedly and work perseveringly with innumerable methods in your arsenal will produce an endurable technique that is sustainable even if you are obliged to perform after being hospitalized for six months; this is indeed a long absence from the piano. Mental practice is necessary and fruitful but it never replaces the physical. Have your program prepared so that you can perform it daily for two weeks before a concert, all titles in tempo with improvised solos; this consists of reinforcing, if necessary, any phrase. You must know absolutely, and your subconscious must sense, that you are prepared to perform with conviction.

We live in an innovative period of neuroscience and its research reveals new concepts on how the mind processes information and expands brain-mapping; for a better understanding, I recommend 'The Brain that Changes Itself' by Norman Doidge. However, I find that a few of these new ideas and methods, proved from technological observation, often confirm older disciplines used by pianists in previous centuries. I hope neuroscientists will soon include studies on accomplished improvisers and classical pianists performing on acoustic instruments; the research, with students (or beginners) playing electronic keyboards is inadequate.

A reminder worth emphasizing; after waking from a long night's sleep or an afternoon's nap, go to the piano; sing the pitch of **A** during the month of January, **A#** in February and continue a minor-second sharper for each month of the year; remember to sing **A** again before ending your day's practice; feel the key (eyes closed) to check your pitch on the piano. This avoids careless thinking of intervallic-pitch when singing or silently improvising away from the instrument.

You must focus on getting out of bed with music flowing through your mind; all external interruptions should be avoided; work until you need sleep again; then, as you return to the piano immediately sing **A**. Answering the telephone or keeping appointments interrupts your musical momentum and although your mind continues improvising or thinking music, the quality of your attention-span is less. The best living environment, especially in the late years, would be a cottage, with a piano, located deep in the forest; no expense that protects your talent can be excessive.

Prepare breakfast alone; your mind, still fresh after a night's sleep, is imagining intervals or a particular passage of a composition. In this mental state there's a flexibility, noticeable, in all of your physical-movements; a flowing momentum uninterrupted but related to the tempo of your musical thought. This feeling should continue as you go from kitchen to the piano where, hopefully, your stored food-energy is released in a brief improvisation; then the day's work begins.

Within all pages of this book, my purpose is to conquer any and all obstacles that challenge pianist improvisers; in other words, to attain technique. However, the bona fide challenge is to search endlessly for qualities, in notated and recorded music, that improve our understanding of beauty more thoroughly; so that on each plateau of learning, our ability to evaluate the aesthetics in Art is elevated. It is necessary to attend and absorb as many musical performances and art exhibitions as possible; these experiences inspire and affect your playing much like the process in osmosis; but a teacher's guidance is absolutely necessary for developing your sense of taste. Nevertheless, aesthetic radiance rarely occurs in performances if technical skill and analyses of music is insufficiently prepared. Let me suggest that you locate the most difficult passages in each of Chopin's Etudes as well as complicated polyphonic measures in Bach's Well Tempered Clavier and practice these brief isolated sections; you will attain musicianship and technical knowledge; and if your schedule permits, tackle the entire piece. Naturally, this applies to all complex examples found in music literature but my point is that you gain immensely within the least amount of time; after all, your real objective is training to improvise at a higher level of soulful intellect.

I lacked discipline in my early years and practiced whatever entered the mind but since age ten, I have literally lived at the piano, probably as fate intended. Many pianists are of the opinion that four hours of disciplined practice is enough; their interpretations sound exquisite but instead, I aspired to achieve an animalistic quality in my playing and to develop my sense of aesthetics in music. I chose to practice every available hour, and did so, because I wanted each performance to reflect my individualistic (non-egotistical) character; to practice like an animal so I'll perform like a sophisticated beast.

Although I no longer play in public, because of a recent heart attack, I'll continue searching at the keyboard in order to change, by remapping the brain, my style of playing and yet, remain within the tradition of evolutionary music. My life has been beautifully orchestrated; and I have no regrets with the fact that I worked only to acquire pianistic skills that enabled me to pursue the art of improvisation. Although this allowed me to express my inner self emotionally, I do regret experiencing only a minute fraction of the vast classical repertoire. The swiftness of time made

my youth so transient; one lifetime isn't enough to scrutinize all in music.

I apologize for the abrasive tone in many of these paragraphs, but I am a lecturer by nature and feel compelled to stress the importance of conditioning skills that allow the senses to express our emotions at the piano; if performers don't put enough of their feelings into the music, how can listeners be expected to remain seated, or awake? Yet, my abrasiveness is possibly due to the policy, which I ferociously oppose, of many universities where students are educated to teach following generations of students to teach music; they may learn all there is to know about musical rules but few, if any of them, can play beautifully. Such a policy dulls the student's senses for musical taste and if they should ever perform, it will sound rather bureaucratic and rarely with artistic expression. I believe students must first learn to perform and afterwards continue their education to teach methods.

I'll continue expanding this book with emphases on musical aesthetics. I sincerely wish to maintain contact with owners of 'Essentials for Pianist Improvisers' so that they may receive all future up-dated versions and if necessary, have their questions answered.

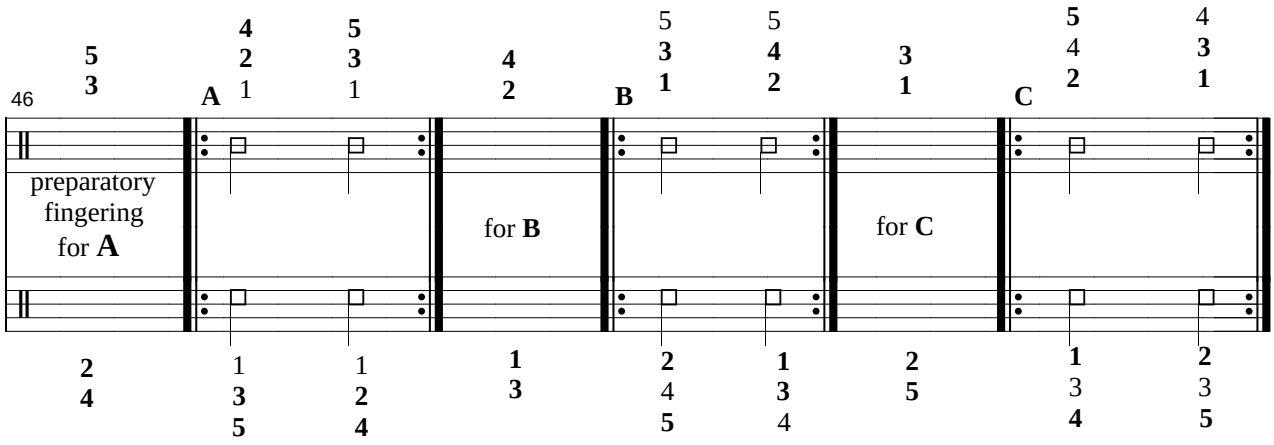
I'll close with two aspects worth remembering. You must be able to hear all intervals that your eyes scan; and with keeping both eyes closed, picture your fingers moving on an imaginary keyboard while visualizing, mentally, the musical sounds your ears perceive.

Postscript:

Practicing contemporary music improves your pedal-technique because of the degree of dissonance that must be dealt with. Also, execute the sustaining pedal with your left foot so that afterwards, your right foot comprehends (intuitively) the degree of dissonance involved; then later, you will pedal with greater sensitivity not only contemporary but all music from our historical past. Depending on the instrument, I use the sustaining pedal with fractions of full, half, quarter, eighth or sixteenth depressions and often while combined, simultaneously, with nearly as many degrees of depression on the *una corda* pedal. Although the pedals are the spirit of the piano, the secret of an individualistic/interpretive expression (while playing) lies within the pedal technique of the pianist.

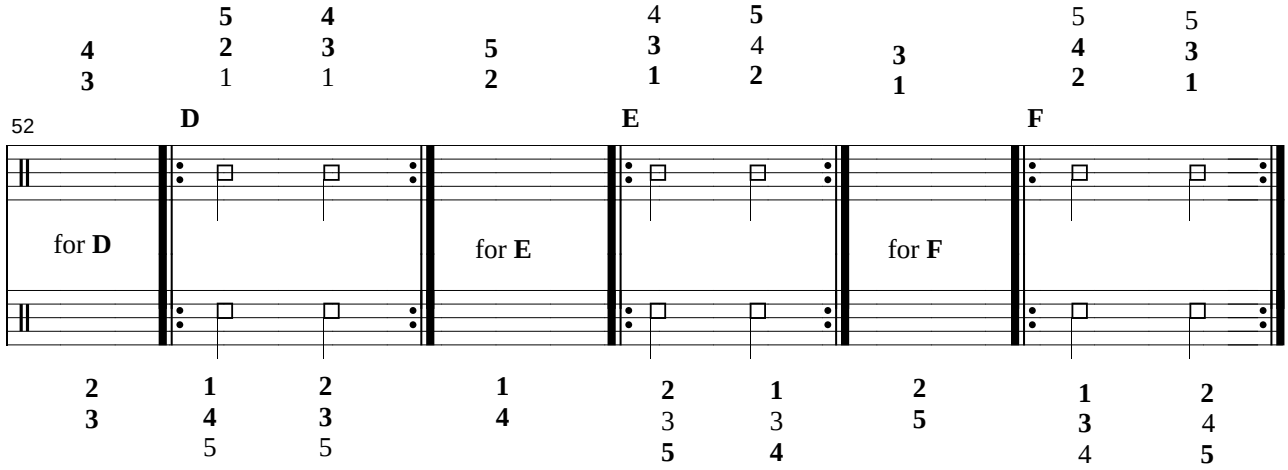
In today's world of neuroscience, the methods in this book can be termed as brain-mapping; a connecting, by the firing, of neurons in different areas of the brain. Practicing in as many different ways as possible constructs (creates) brain-maps that continually expand, or change, with daily practice.

press the two fingers, indicated in **bold font**, and raise the three remaining fingers; then lower the (3) raised fingers

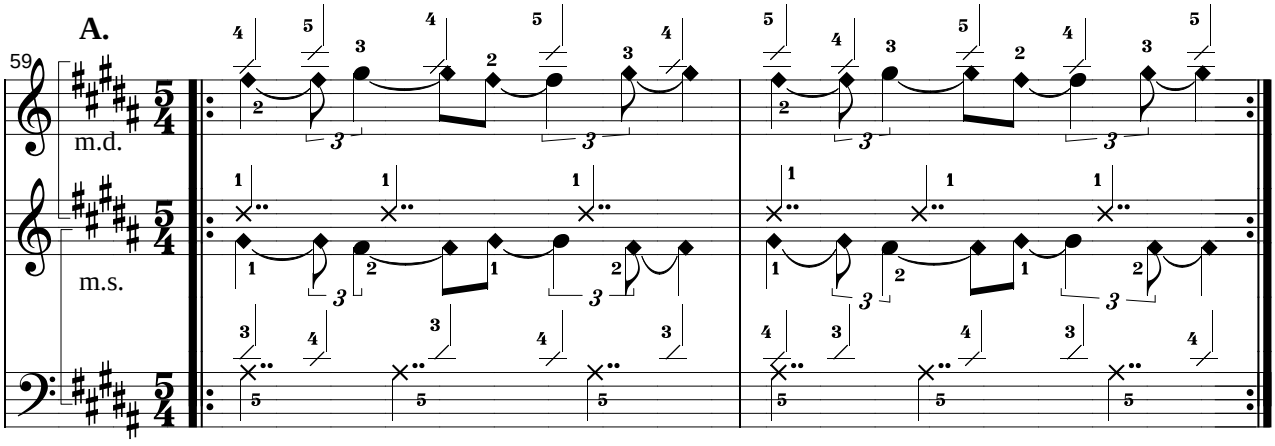


On a padded table surface, press the two (2) fingers that are numbered in **bold-font** while raising the remaining three (3) fingers; this automatically prepares the correct three (3) fingers for executing the next set of fingering. The coordination difficulty is to consciously raise the exact fingers and by pressing these **bold** numbers, it will help avoid raising the wrong fingers.

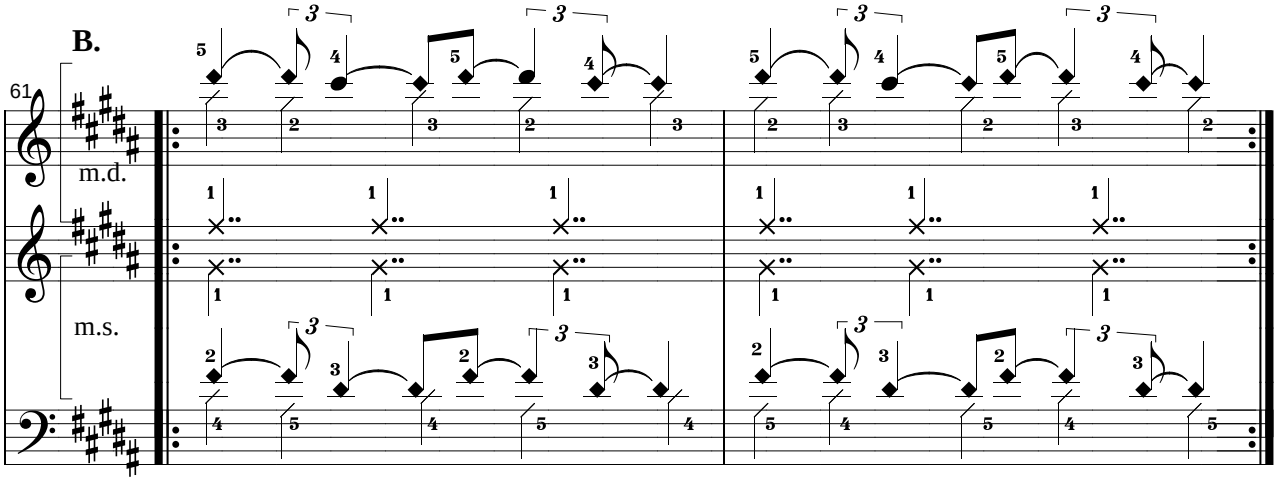
Do not repeat more than three (3) times for each exercise

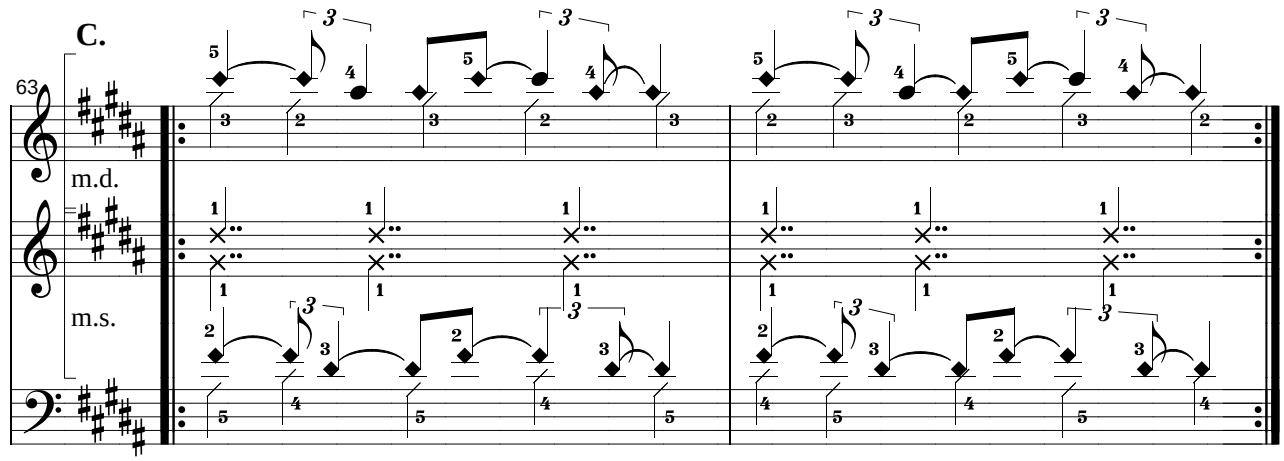


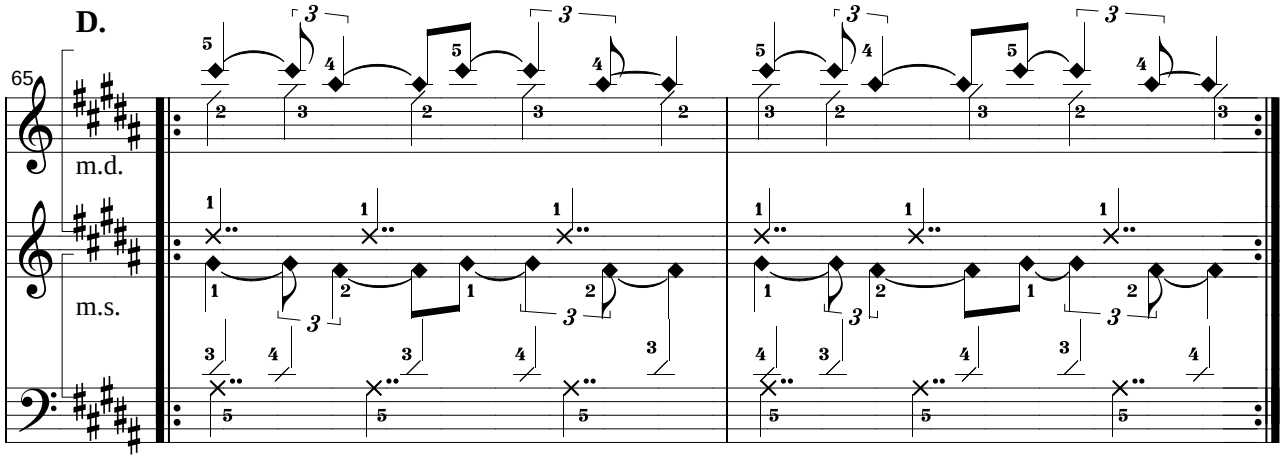
While practicing a variation of the Polyrhythmic exercise on page 37, I noticed that my conscious awarness of lifting the correct fingers was often inacurate, mentally and physically. I lifted fingers unintentially especially when fingering, in the left hand, differed from the right. These **mind over matter** exercises develop finger strength, coordination and at the same time, lubricate the mind because blood flow is increased.

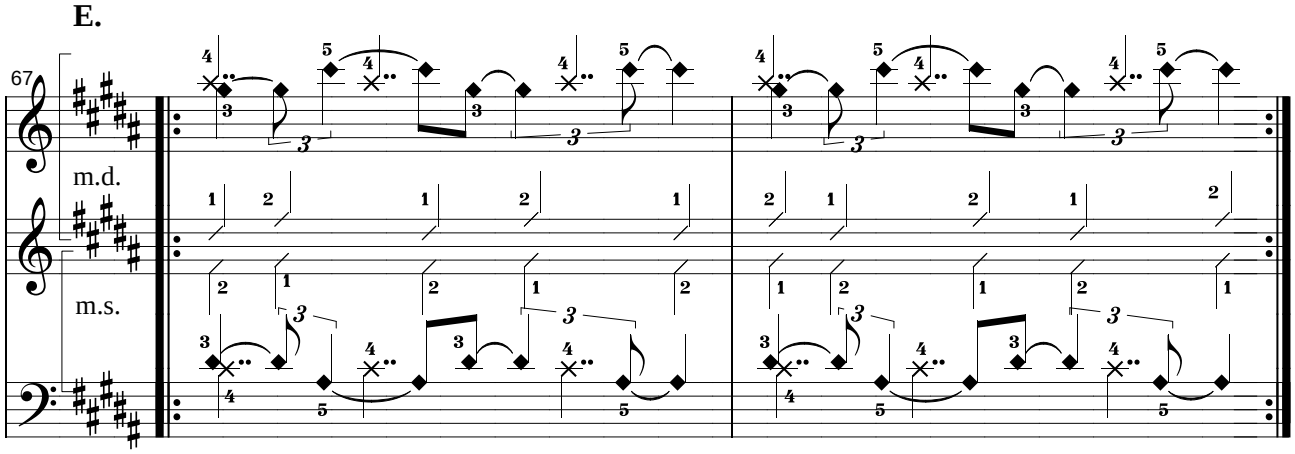


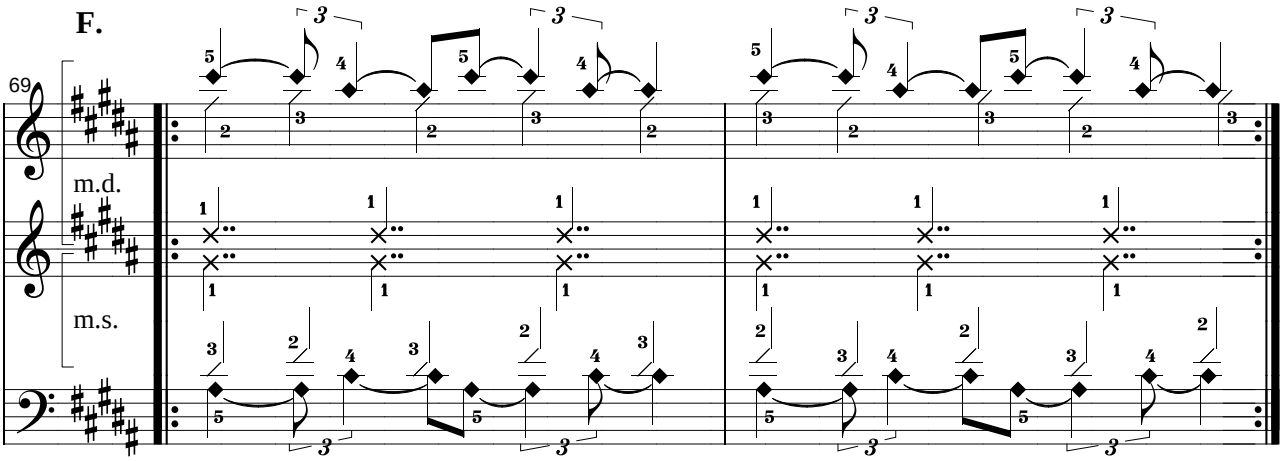
I have notated in the trebel clef, each of the first three voice-lines with different fonts to illustrate that the soprano-line is five quarters, the alto-line is the equlivant of four quarters and the contralto is the equlivant of three dotted-quarters; font duplication for bass clef is simular to the trebel.

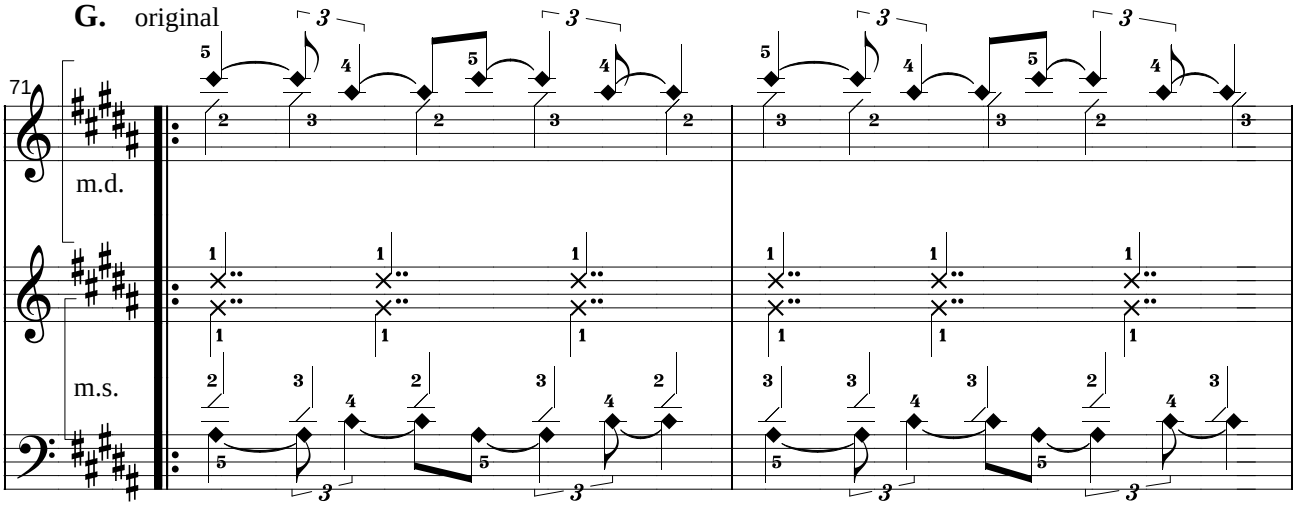



C.
63
m.d.
m.s.


D.
65
m.d.
m.s.


E.
67
m.d.
m.s.

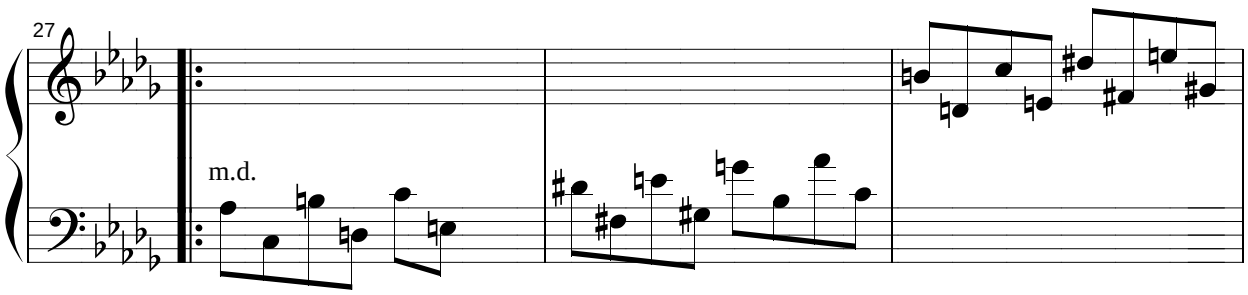




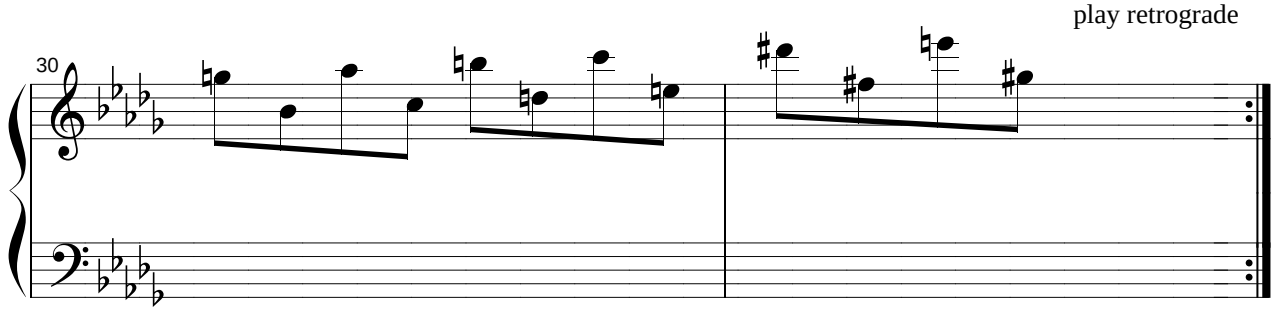
execute the numbers below in the same rhythmic notation as in the above example

	4		**5**		**4**		**5**		**4**		**5**		**4**		**5**		**4**		**5**
m.d.	**2**			**3**		**2**			**3**		**2**			**3**		**2**			**3**
	1				**1**			**1**			**1**				**1**			**1**	
	1		**2**		**1**		**2**		**1**		**2**		**1**		**2**		**1**		**2**
m.s.	**3**		**4**		**3**		**4**		**3**		**4**		**3**		**4**		**3**		**4**
	5			**5**			**5**			**5**				**5**				**5**	

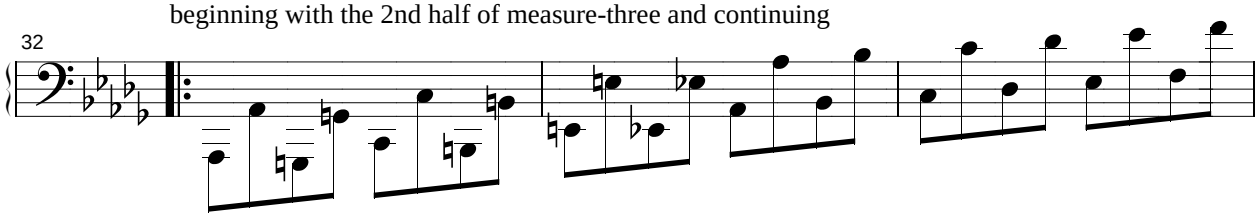
2nd half of measure-three plus the fourth measure

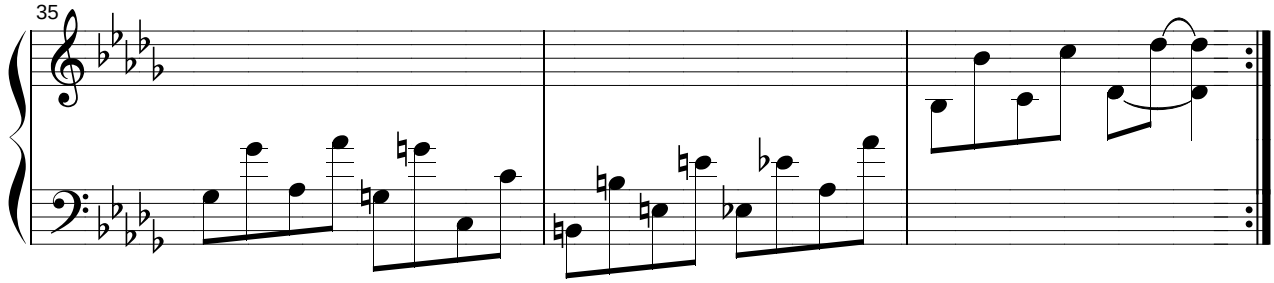


play retrograde

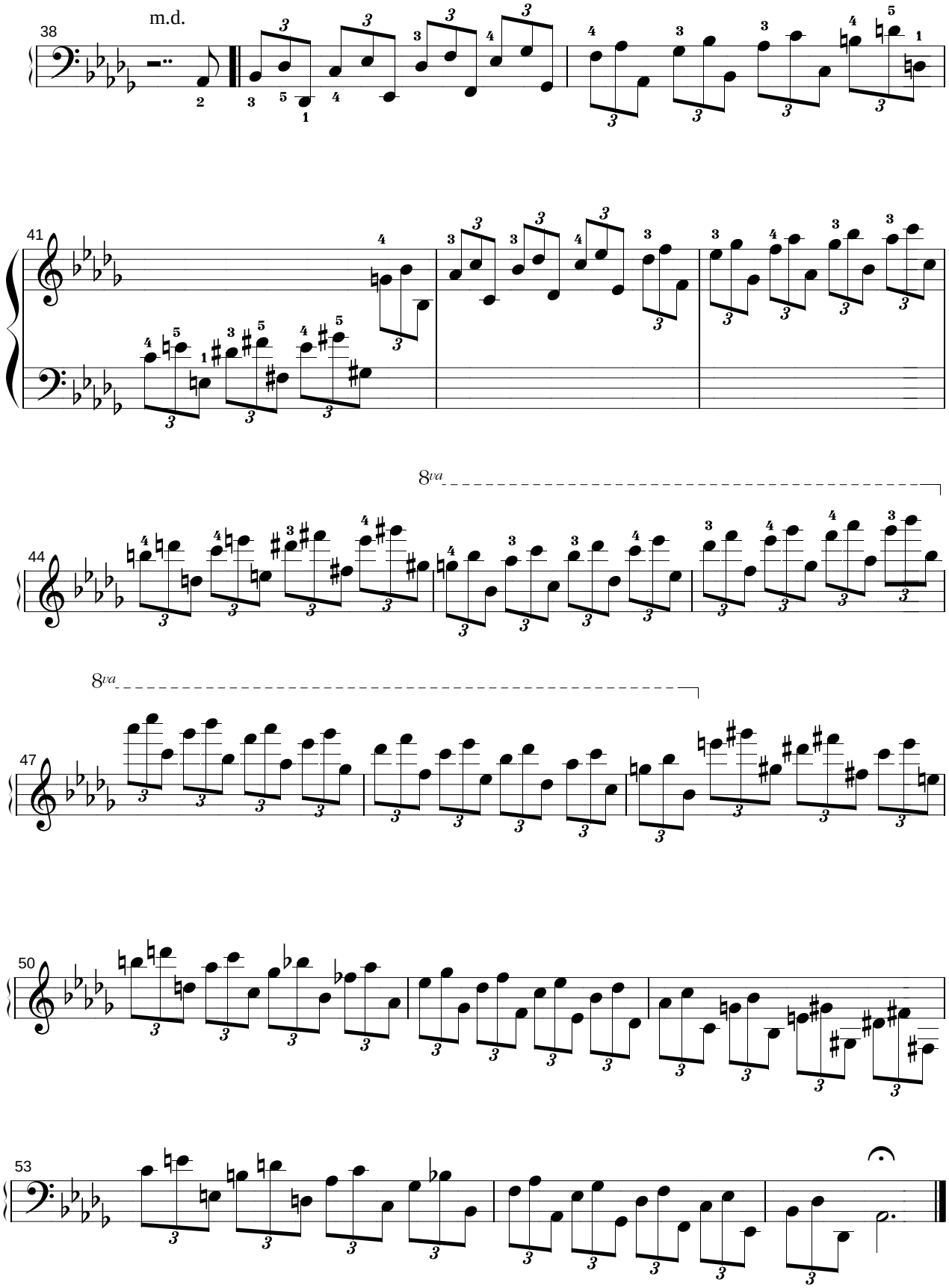


beginning with the 2nd half of measure-three and continuing

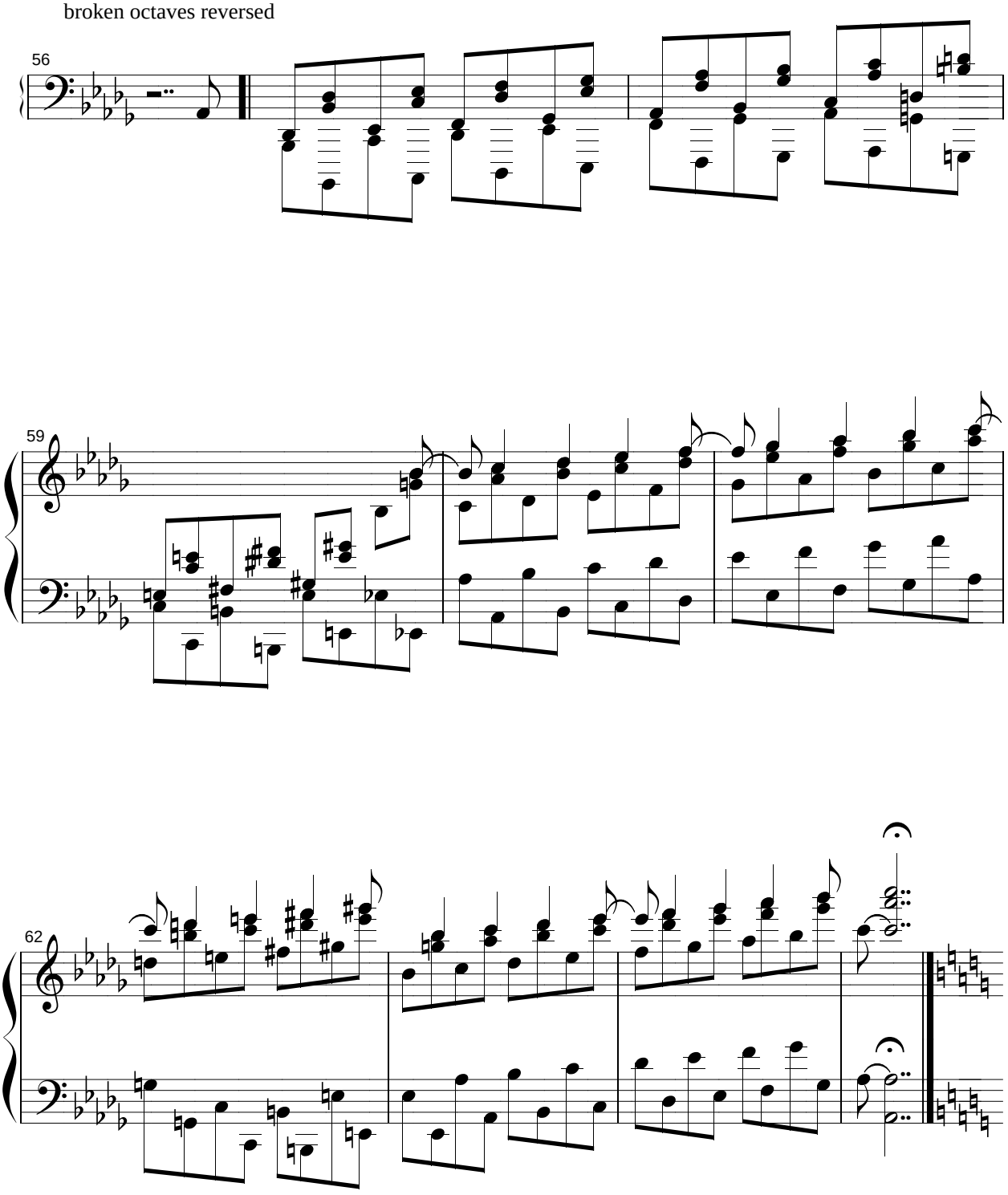




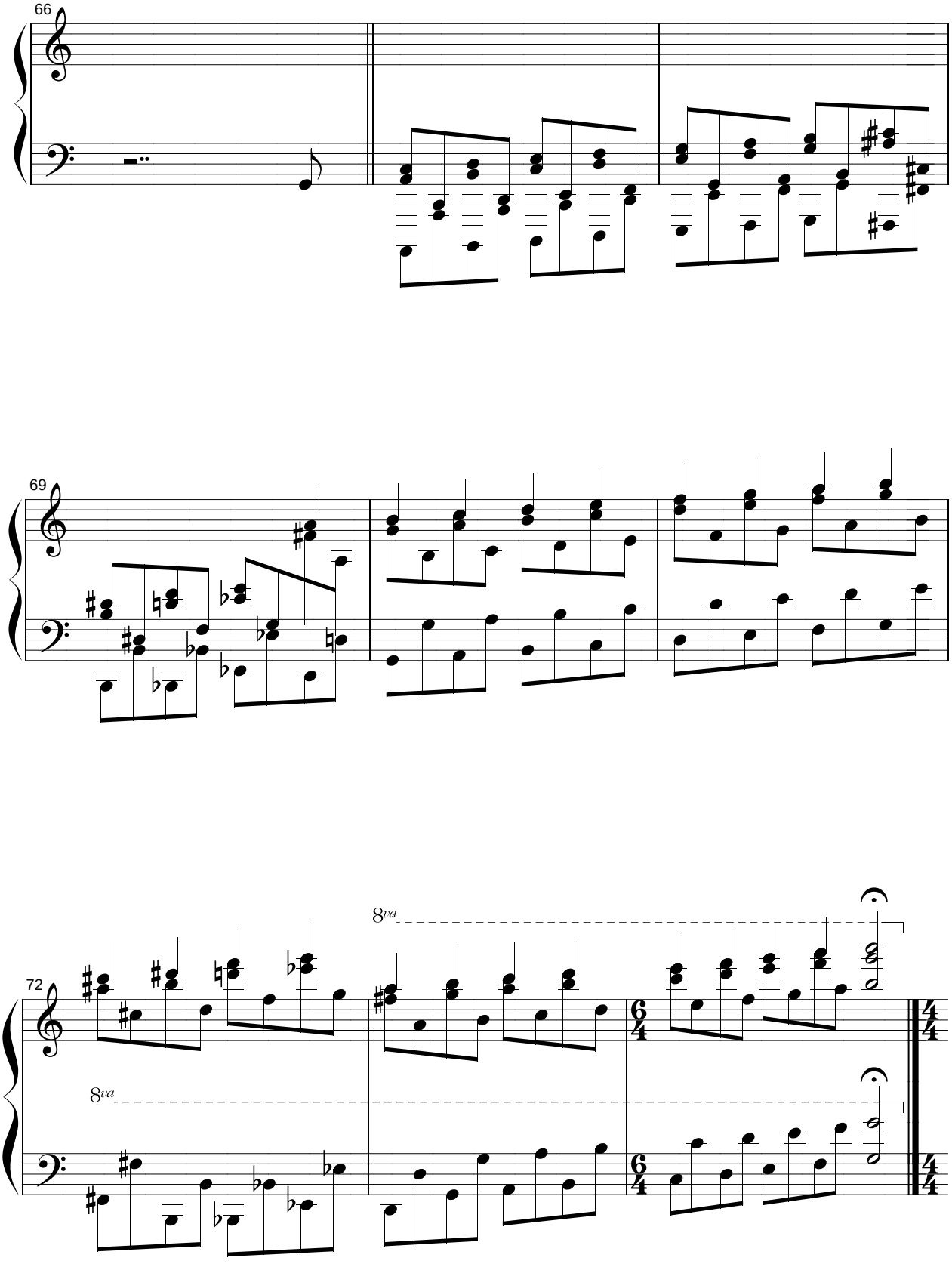
Suggested fingering; write yours as you wish.



broken octaves reversed

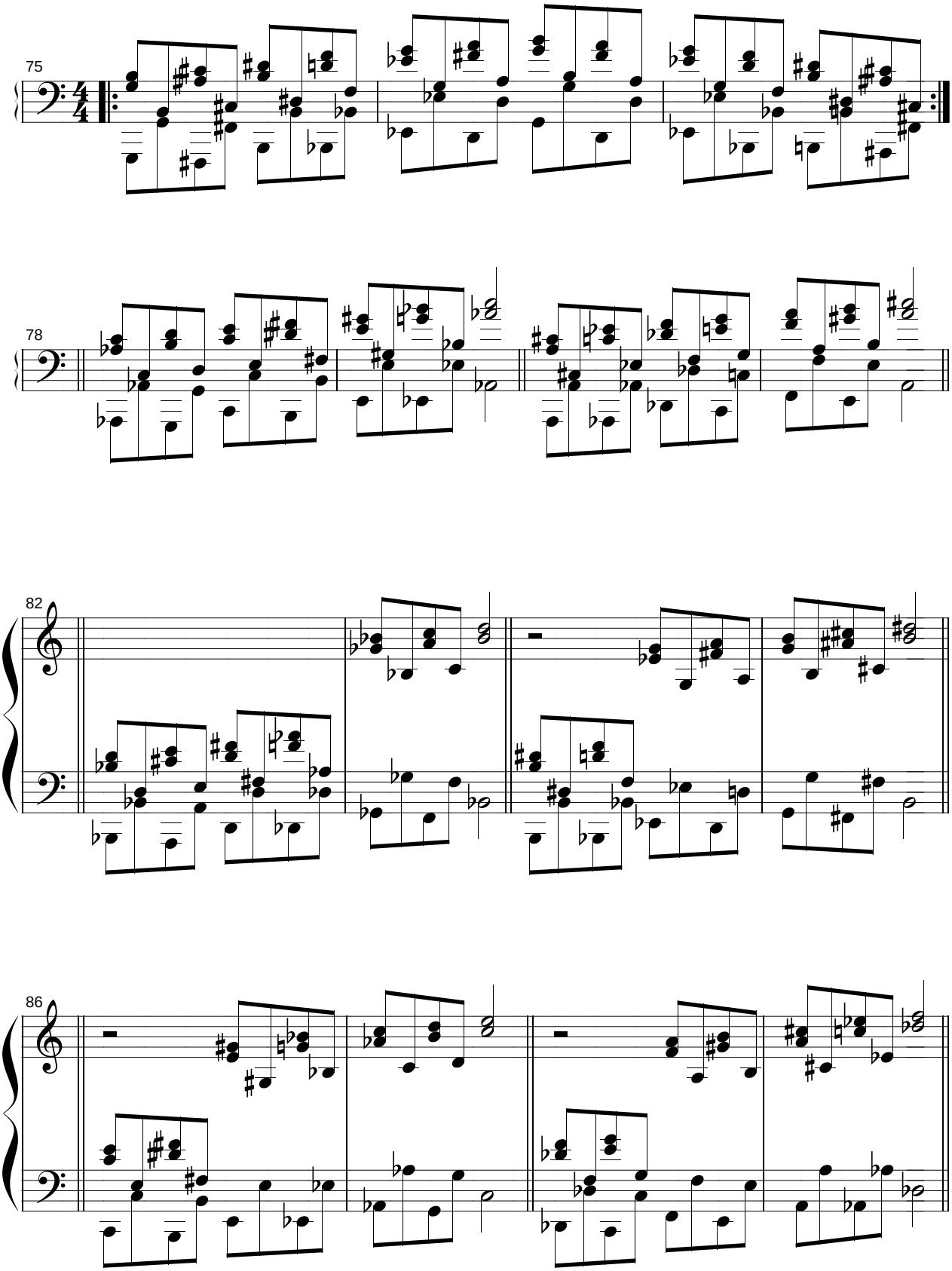


Transposition of 'broken octaves with 3rds' (page 168) into the key of
A minor because the hands must work more when playing on white keys.

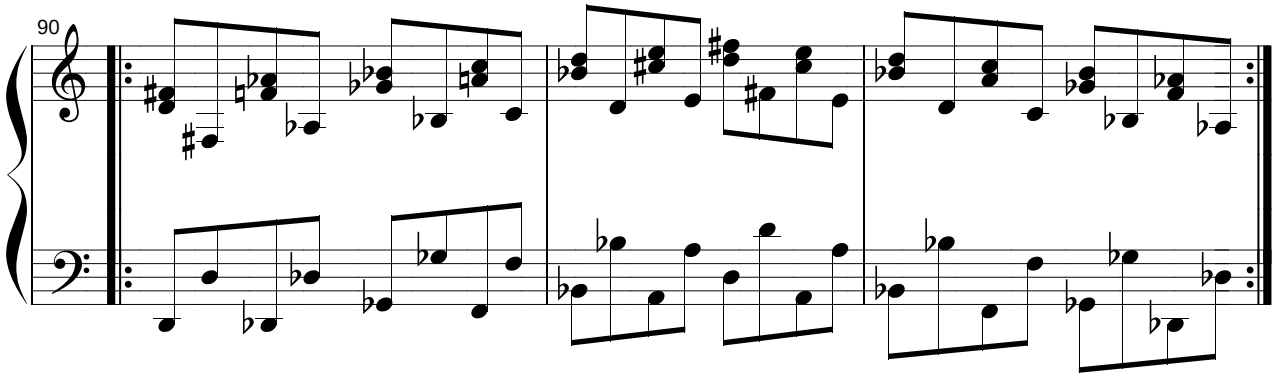


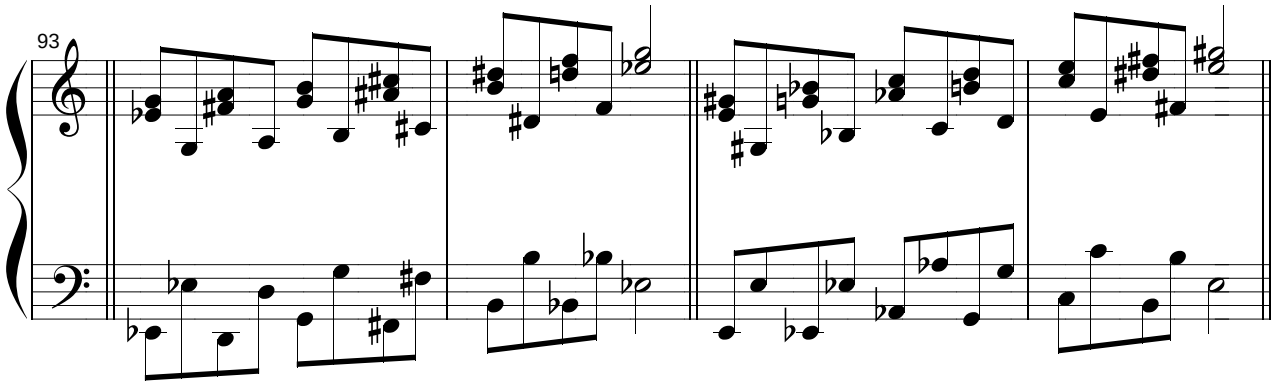
Second-half of measure two (page 168) plus the third measure
and first quarter of measure four; notated in all tonalities.

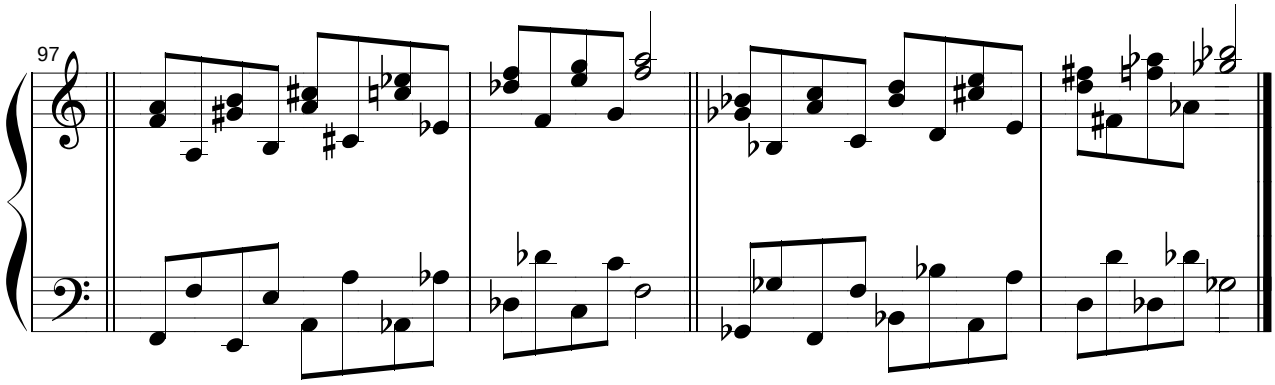
This examples, notated with retrograde, applies for the remaining phrases.



This example, notated with retrograde, applies for the remaining phrases.

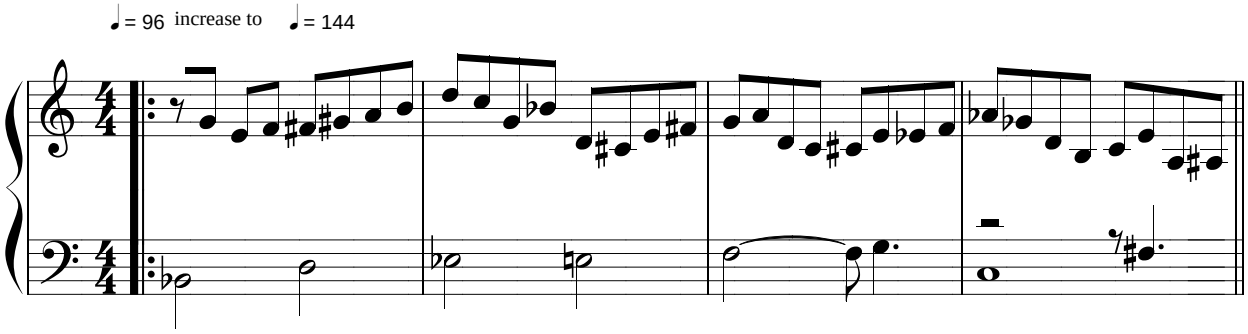




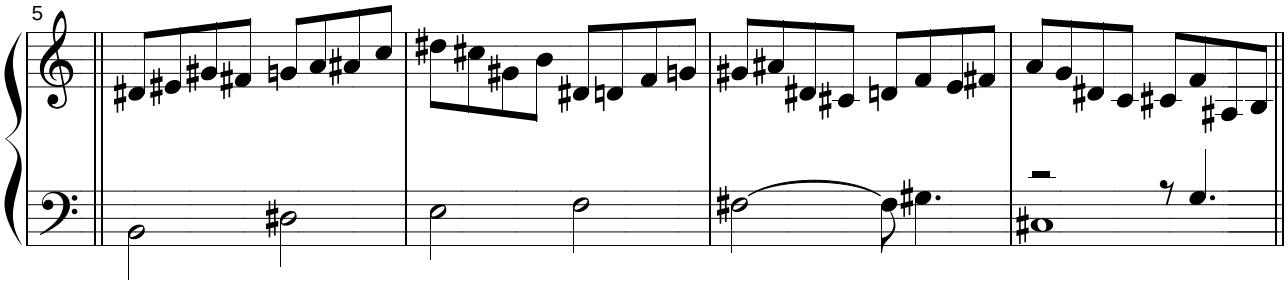


Turnaround for 'Rhythm Changes'

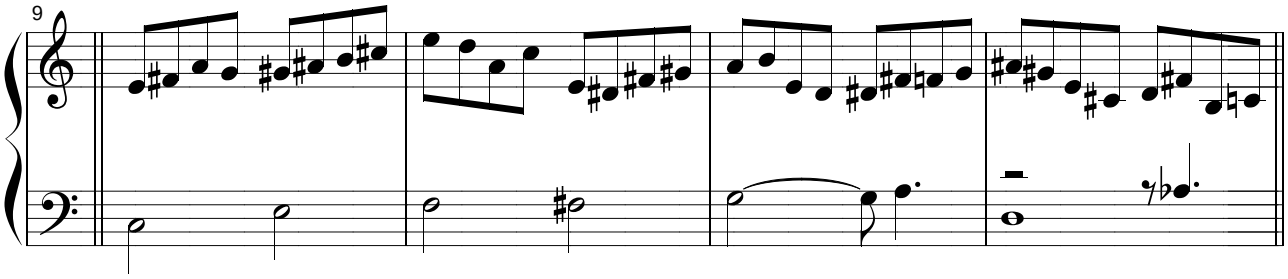
write your variations



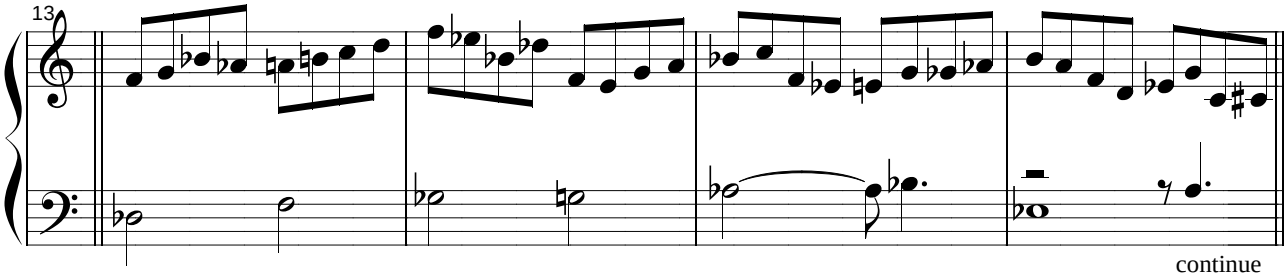
Check the notation in measures 17-20 on the following page.



Practice each line in retrograde and your fingers and brain will remember the notation more quickly.

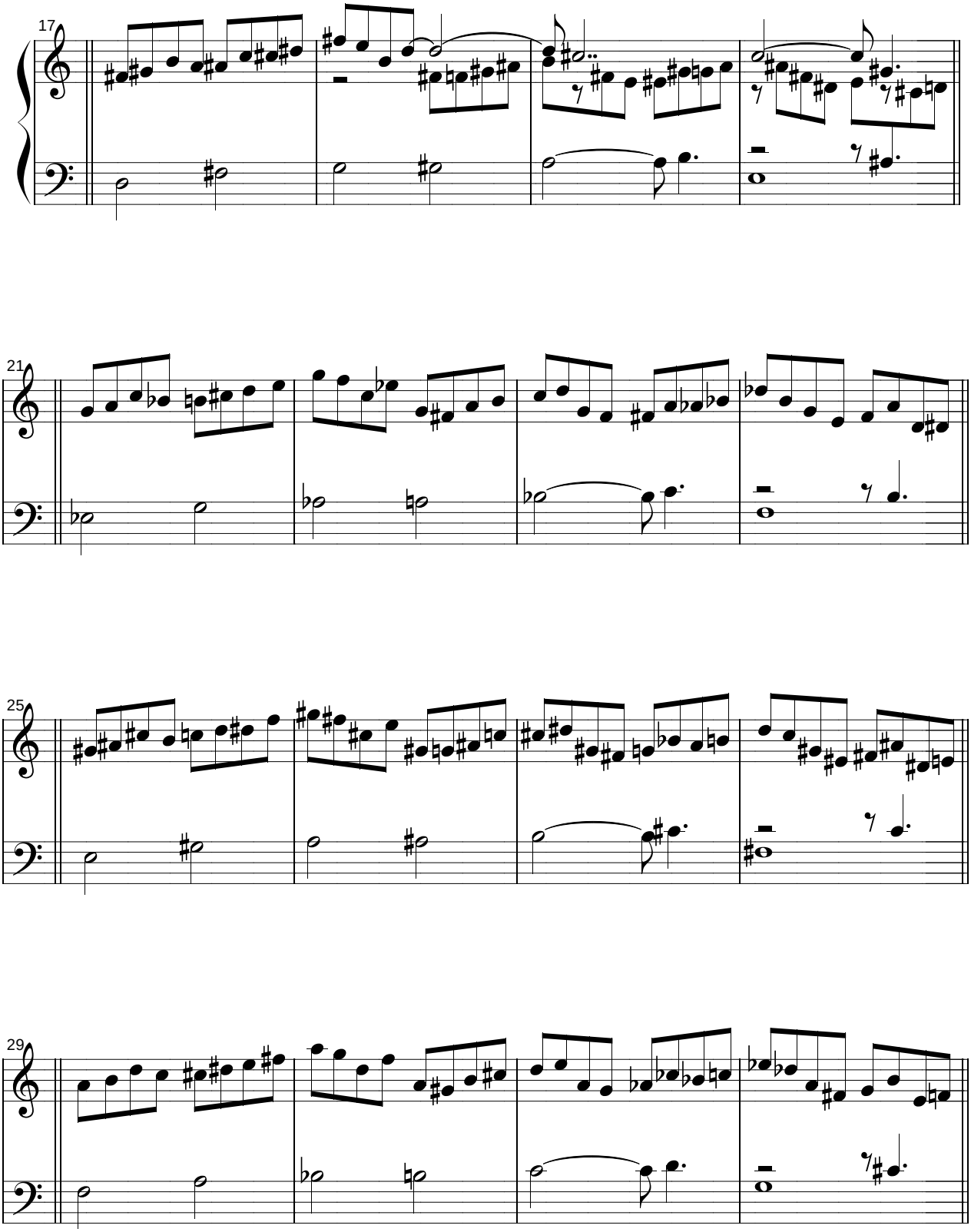


Write your fingering, which may differ in some examples.

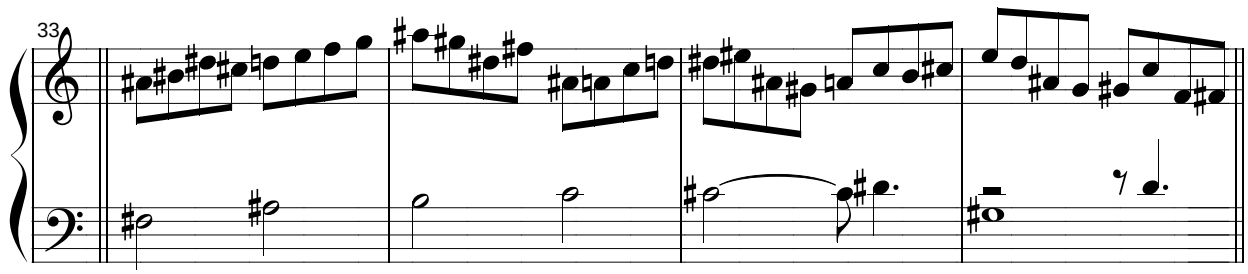


continue

In measures 18-20, the soprano (from **D natural to G#**) molds and connects the sound of this otherwise single voice-line; keep this in mind as you practice the remaining examples.



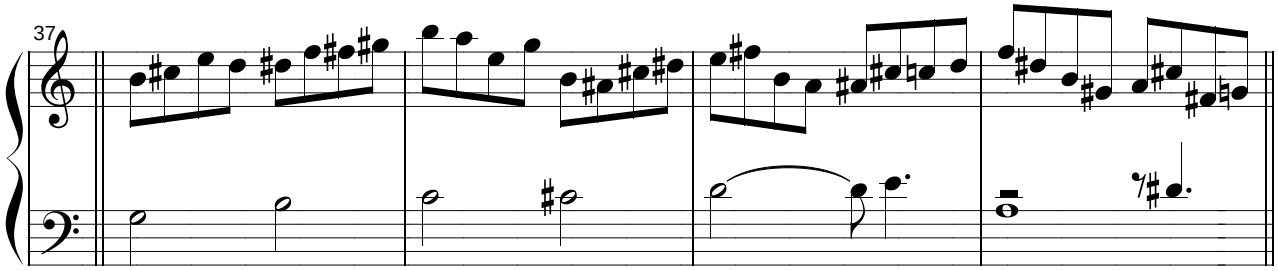
continue

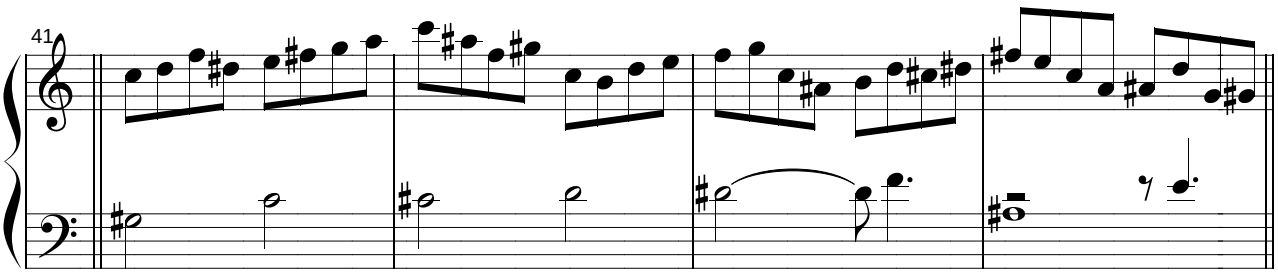


intervalic measurements: the first two intervals in measure 33 are represented by the beginning number 2.

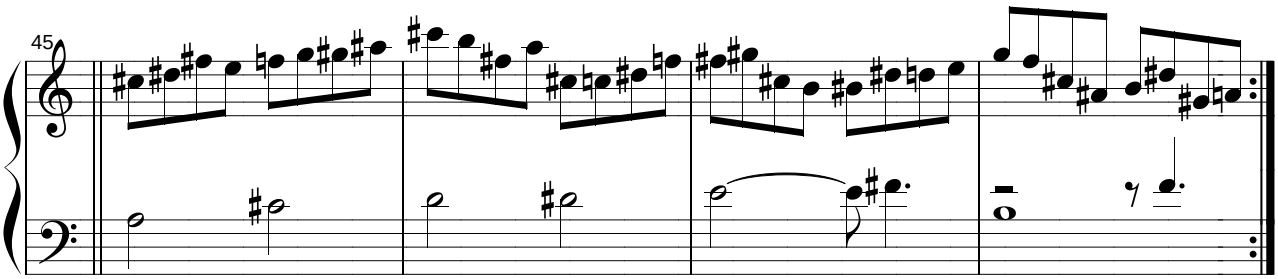
ascend 2 3- 2- 2 2- 2 3- 3- 3- 2 2- 2 2- 3- 2 3- 2- 3 2-

descend 2 2 4 5+ 2- 5 2 2- 2 3 3- 5



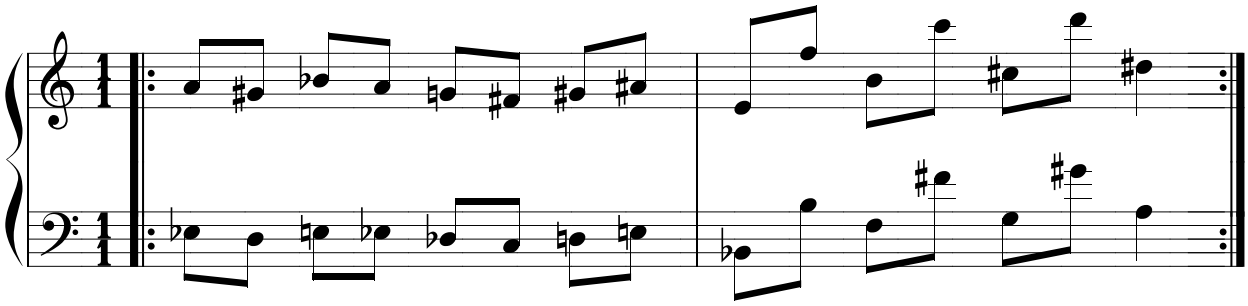


Equal-tempered tuning sounds slightly different in some tonalities; one reason is that each tonality has its own color-quality; but this is only heard and felt intuitively by a few musicians; but it can be a problem for improvisers with absolute perfect-pitch.

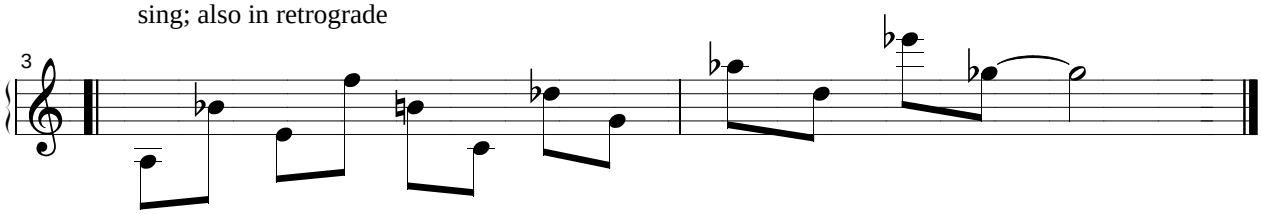


Melodic Difficulties

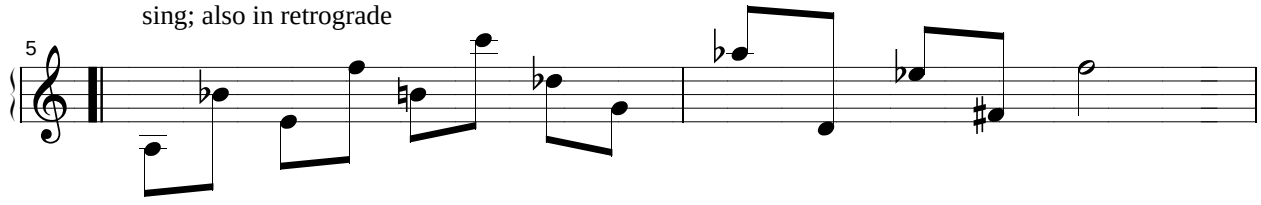
sing the treble clef while playing the bass clef; also invert; also in retrograde

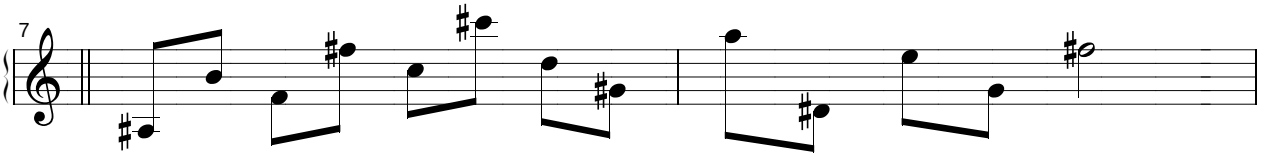


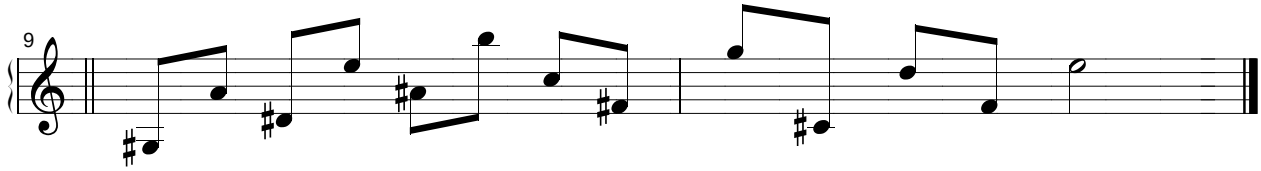
sing; also in retrograde



sing; also in retrograde







Recommended reading: 'The Brain that Changes Itself' by Norman Doidges

COMPOSITIONS

Streets of Madashi	West Coast Records	1954
Dozo	West Coast Records	1954
Jack Departs	West Coast Records	1954
Guatemala	West Coast Records	1954
Scrambled	Riverside Records	1961
D. & D.	Riverside Records	1961
Drifting	Enja Records	1974
Nota Cambiata	Enja Records	1974
Rose Waltz	Enja Records	1974
Thumbs Up	Enja Rcords	1974
Synchronicity	Enja Records	1978
Stepping On Cracks	Enja Records	1979
Winter Rose	Enja Records	1980
Enkephalins	Enja Records	1980
Modus Vivendi	Concord Records	1990
Vars	Concord Records	1991
C. J.'s Blues	Concord Records	1991
Thumbs Out	Concord Records	1991
Sunburst	Concord Records	1991
Never Should It Ever End	Concord Records	1991
Rose Petals	Concord Records	1991
Love Every Moment	Concord Records	1993
Moonglazed	Concord Records	1993
Hues of Blues	Concord Records	1995
Backbone Mode	Concord Records	1995
Orchids 'n Green	Concord Records	1995
Afterthoughts	Concord Records	1995
From Another Star	Sunburst Recordings, Inc.	1998
Images Enhanced	Sunburst Recordings, Inc.	1998
Elysium	Sunburst Recordings, Inc.	1998
Sunhazed	Sunburst Recordings, Inc	1998
A Crest of Amber	Sunburst Recordings, Inc.	1998
Dark Brows	Sunburst Recordings, Inc.	1998
Twilight 'til Dawn	Sunburst Recordings, Inc.	2000
A Touch of Jade	Sunburst Recordings, Inc.	2001
Percussive Fingers on Soundboard and Strings	Sunburst Recordings, Inc.	2006
Tango Mio	Sunburst Recordings, Inc.	2006
Reflective	Sunburst Recordings, Inc.	2006
Late Harvest	Sunburst Recordings, Inc.	2006
Hearts Without Malice	Sunburst Recordings, Inc.	2006
Elements 'n Motion	Sunburst Recordings, Inc.	2006

‘Essentials for Pianist Improvisers’ is extraordinary. All analyses are so complete, so intelligent, so practical.

Noél Lee, composer/pianist
Paris
1998 *Commandeur de l’Ordre des Arts et Lettres*
1999 *Grand Prix de la Musique*
2004 *la Grande Médaille*

The jazz improvisations by my teacher, Walter Norris, exist on the same horizon with the classical masters of piano. ‘Essentials for Pianist Improvisers’ is a classic not only for pianists but also for composers and theorists.

Minako Tokuyama, composer/pianist
Tokio
1992 Best composition award at the Fukui Harp Festival
1997 Winner of the Vienna International Composers Competition
2003-04 Judge of composition for the Japan Music Competition

I met Walter Norris some years ago in Berlin. By that time, I already knew what a great pianist and improviser he was. His integrity and full dedication to music puts him in a league where only few are chosen. His book/cd ‘Essentials for Pianist Improvisers’ contains a substantial amount of exercises and musical ideas, which are a product of his own daily practice, long life experience as an international performer, composer, teacher and recording artist. The book/cd embraces subjects like piano technique, ear training, timing, co-ordination of hands, improvisation based on the overtones series, theoretical approach to vertical structures, basic and advanced melodic ideas to develop skills and much more. I highly recommend this book to pianists who would be prepared to launch forth into a long term improvement project towards perfection.

Alvaro Is-Rojas, pianist/theoretician for music
Stockholm
Senior Lecturer
Royal College of Music (1988-2006)

BOOKS

(available from publishers)

‘Art in Motion’	Adina Mornell, editor	Peter Lang Verlag
‘The History of Jazz’	Ted Gioia	Oxford Univ. Press
‘Jazz Solo Piano’	Franz Krieger	Adeva Musik
‘Barney, Bradley and Max’	Whitney Balliett	Oxford Univ. Press
‘Encyclopedia of Jazz’	Leonard Feather	Oxford Univ. Press
‘The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz’	Barry Kernfeld, editor	Macmillan Press
‘New York Notes’	Whitney Balliett	Da Capo Press
‘Jazz Seen’	William Claxton	Taschen Verlag
‘Pianophoto’	Wolfgang Frankenstein	Konzert Verlag

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