ROLF PERSSON

R.P. TECHNICAL EXERCISES

PART 1

FOR TRUMPET, CORNET AND OTHER BRASS INSTRUMENTS

SYDDANSK
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Thank you

I would like to say a big thank you to my former teachers, former and current colleagues and not least all the students I have had over the years and who are the reason why I have developed all my exercises.

Thanks to Peter Hellesø for making recordings and QR-codes of the exercises for the readers/players, so they can see and hear my thoughts about how the exercises should be played.

A very big and special thanks to my former student, and now very good friend and not least sparring partner Christian Hauge Svendsen, for help and guidance in noting and editing all my material so that it now appears in this very professional way.

An educational development project from Syddansk Musikkonservatorium, 2024.

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Welcome to my world of trumpet playing, ideas and thoughts

My name is Rolf Persson, and I am currently Lector at the Royal Academy of Music of Southern Denmark in Odense, where I teach trumpet and ensemble. I have received my education from 1979 – 1984 at Malmö Musikhögskola with Associate Professor Leif Bengtsson and then later Christer Nilsson as trumpet teachers.

In addition, I have studied in Chicago with teachers such as Vincent Chicovitz, Adolph Herseth and Ross Beacroft, New York – Phil Smith, London - Christian Steele-Perkins, Michael Laird.

I have been privileged to be meet and also teach together with many of the "stars" including the world's best trumpet- and brass players, such as Håkan Hardenberger, Anthony Plog, Mathias Höffs, Alan Vizutti, Adam Rapa, Ole Edvard Antonsen, Timofej Dokchitzer, Christian Lindberg, Jens Bjørn Larsen, Rex Martin, and a lot of other fantastic musicians.

A large part of my inspiration also comes from the talented colleagues I have worked with daily in my life as a musician, trumpet player and teacher.

In the period 1985 – 2008 I was employed as an alternating solo trumpet player in Odense Symphony Orchestra, and since then I have devoted myself to work as a teacher and conductor.

Already very young, I have been interested in teaching and with that also to invent and try new and different methods to improve my own and my students' trumpet playing.

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Why write a new book of exercises?

As I remember Pierre Thibaud saying when he published a new book of exercises in his time – "There is nothing new to tell, but it is always exciting to see and hear other people's ideas and opinions on how to improve your own playing".

I always have been interested in new and sometimes slightly different ways to learn about myself and my trumpet playing, and of course not least if it can help me improve my own playing. Therefore, I am and have always been open to new, different, and different ways of thinking and practicing, which hopefully can make it easier for me and everyone else to play different things on our instruments.

It's no secret that we all want to become as good as possible playing our instrument, and not at least to make it as easy as possible when we play. Here we are not talking about playing with a special sound, fast and so on, but only playing the instrument as good as possible. There are, however, many ways to get there.

Therefore, I always have and will respect all trumpet players and teaching methods, regardless of what type of music is represented.

I will never ever say or claim that my way is the only way that will allow us to achieve our goals, but it is one of many ways to do it. However, I will always vouch for the way I play myself, and not at least the way I teach.

All my exercises, and the ways in which I think they should be played, have been developed when I by myself, or one of my students has had some special challenges and wishes around their trumpet playing.

I have called this book, which is my third "*Technical studies*", as it contains exercises that will help to improve our coordination, finger technique, articulations, and speed.

In this book I also have chosen to include some of my favorite exercises from Arban, Clarke and Chikovitz, to show and explain how I think we get the most out of these exercises.

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The way I think, and with which my exercises are built up, is that we constantly must focus and improve the coordination between breathing, air, the air pressure, the pressure/contact against the lips, the position of the tongue, our ears, and so on.

How I see it, it is very important that there always is an equilibrium between the air pressure and the contact/pressure against the lips. Especially when we get a little higher in the register, the muscles in our throat often will go in and shut off the air, if this equilibrium does not take place. If this happens, it becomes very hard and tiring to play, and that really will destroy our sound and strength.

In my playing, I also think a lot about using and creating upbeats in all music and exercises. This helps me more easily to maintain a natural flow in the air, and the momentum of the music.

Regardless of what and how we play, we must never forget to listen to what comes out of our instrument. Unfortunately, we often think and focus a little too much on how to produce the result in our body, with the air, the tongue, lips, etc., but forget the most important thing, which is basically the result that comes out of the instrument and out to the audience. Therefore, we must always try to play all our exercises as a piece of beautiful music, and not as "just an exercise". This way of thinking and playing our exercises, will help us insert them into the concert pieces or orchestral solos where they are to be used.

The exercises in this book have been developed and emerged, as I have experienced from my studies that many brass players – and especially trumpeters, have challenges with looping on their instrument. Not least making legato upwards on natural tones often causes problems.

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Explanation and exercises about the airstream we need to use

When we start all notes with a clear touch and spick them long – accent/line, they cause the feeling of playing all notes forward – that is, not just up and down, getting better and stronger. To make these distinct and elegant poses, we also need to activate the tongue. It is of the utmost importance that the tongue is constantly activated, as this must help regulate the pitch. This means that when we have to make the slurs afterwards, it is significantly easier to maintain the flow on the air and the slurs are therefore easier to perform.

I compare the long tones to turning on a faucet. When the water is turned on, there is a long and even jet of water that does not immediately change.

If we then run a finger through this water jet, we divide the jet without changing the pressure from the tap. If we make this movement slowly, the water will spray around over the place – if we make this movement quickly, we just quickly divide the water jet, and nearly nothing will happen with the water jet.

If we think about the movement of the tongue in the same way as the finger through the water jet, we can break our airflow very quickly, and in this way does not lose any of the flow/pressure on the air that we need to regulate the tones on the instrument.

When we play our long notes with clear movements and tonguing, it is also very important that we put the right notes – and with the right pressure on the air flow, in and through our mouthpiece/instrument, to get the optimal sound and quality of the notes that will leave the instrument.

By this I mean that in virtually all work/movement we do with our tongue, should take place as close to the lips as possible. This means that already when the air leaves our mouth, the air must "play" the right note, which is then amplified through the mouthpiece and out through our instrument. This feeling can be obtained by saying "zzziii".

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- Do the following exercise without mouthpiece or instrument.

Take a relaxed normal breath "all the way down into the stomach".

Maintain the mouth position/embouchure as we usually do when playing and start the air by saying "thyyyyyyy".

Focus on the air leaving the mouth in a small and even jet, directly into the hole in the mouthpiece (which is not there right now).

When doing this exercise, the whole body should be completely relaxed and without any tension. The air therefore passes through the lips without being pushed through. It is important that the air is very centered when it leaves the mouth and out through the lips.

Keep the same flow on the air and now go very slowly from "thyyyy" to "thiiiii" without changing the embouchure. We should not blow more or harder, but only focus on going from "thyyyy" to "thiiii". Hopefully we can feel that it can easily be done and that it is more or less only the tongue that does the work.

Now make the same attempt to start on "thyyyy", and slowly go to "thooo". Pay attention to thinking the air forward and not downward. The tone should now be lower, but the tip of the tongue should still be as far forward in the mouth as possible. This is so we do not get the feeling that the tongue "falls back" and that we thus lose the intensity of the air. Care must still be taken not to inflate more or less, but only to focus on inflating a steady air flow with intense air pressure, thus causing the tone to become higher or lower.

Now do the exercise several times with glissando both up and down. However, be constantly aware to keep the embouchure in the same position - the same flow of

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air that comes from below (with the feeling that it comes all the way down from the stomach) and that it is the tongue that regulates the pitch of the air when it leaves the lips.

The intensity and sound of air leaving the mouth and out through our lips, is of the utmost importance to optimize our sound and flexibility.

Long tones and clear tonguing

In the way I prefer to practice, I always play with long notes and clear tonguing. This means that we have to keep a smooth "flow" with the air, and the synchronization between the embouchure, air, fingers, tongue and not least the brain have to be optimized in this way.

If we start practicing most exercises with long notes and clear tonguing, we will then be able to also play everything with short notes without any problems.

However, remember when we are playing with short notes, we should still feel a smooth "flow" with the air (as if you were still playing long notes) so that we do not close off the air with our tongue.

We must always remember that the function of the tongue is not to start the tone, but to let the air come out at a certain time so that the lips can vibrate and, in this way, start a nice tone.

Also, thoughts about the function of the tongue lead me to think of water...

If we imagine a faucet in a kitchen and turn on the water, we have an even and natural "flow" on the water.

This jet of water can then be broken through by quickly opening and closing the tap. We can also choose to break this water jet by passing a finger through, and in this way keep the smooth "flow". If we do this slowly, the water splashes throughout the kitchen, but if we do it quickly, we hardly not break the water jet and the "flow".

This is how I think the air and tongue should work.

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If we constantly ensure a neat and even airflow that must be projected through the instrument, the function of the tongue becomes to divide this airflow, which therefore provides some nice and clear approaches.

This also means that the tension in the tongue can be minimized, which then allows us to get a very fast tongue.

About taking a breath

"Always remember to take a big breath before playing"!!!

This statement is now as such not wrong, but the question is more about how to take this breath.

My experience has shown me that when somebody say, "take a big breath", most people take a huge breath so that they almost lift completely off the floor and therefore also being really tense more or less throughout the whole body.

This means that the air cannot leave the body in a natural way, and therefore risks getting more and more tension in the body. These tensions can ultimately have major consequences for the body's well-being.

A good exercise is to just take an extremely large breath and fill yourself so much with air that it is downright uncomfortable - stand and hold on to the air for a few seconds - and then "let the air comes out" (which only takes a split second). Then let the body relax completely. When we stand there and let the body relax, it is a good idea to shake the whole body a little and feel that every part of our body is totally relaxed.

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Then how to do?

It has been shown to be very effective to focus more on letting the air come out - instead of blowing it out, and then relax the whole body - "grounding" before taking a big (though not violent) and comfortable breath.

This way will helps us to make it more natural and easier to breathe "all the way down into the stomach", and thus avoid straining the rest of the body more than necessary.

I put a lot of emphasis on just letting the air come out, instead of blowing it out. If we just let the air out, we will be emptied of air in a split second - compared to if we breathe out slowly or thus hold back a little for the air to come out.

When we let the air out and being emptied of air, we can relax our whole body and thus "grounding", which provides the perfect starting position to breathe again in a nice, relaxed way.

A great help to be able to breathe in a comfortable and effective way is to always breathe in relation to the tempo at which we are going to play – but always in a relaxed and calm way. It is also a great advantage to subdivide the tempo both when breathing and when playing, as this leads to better propulsion.

Basically, I always try to breathe in the same way, with a relatively large and very relaxed breathing with a feeling that the air comes all the way “down into the stomach”.

However, breathing should not be too large, because there must be room for the air “to turn around" before it is ready to be used for playing on our instrument.

This means that it is only the moment I start playing that there is a difference in the speed of the air. The way I breathe has therefore no bearing on whether I should play weakly, vigorously, high, low, fast, or slow.

When we start playing, it is important to "present" the first note like a singer always do, with the feeling that we are giving it on to the room/audience.

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To do this, it requires that the body is not tensed up and that the air is not squeezed in any way before it has to pass the lips and throughout the instrument. This also requires that the feeling of intensity and centering of the air, is as close to the instrument as possible. If you do not get this feeling, you risk that the air "beats back" and causes tension in the body and that the throat closes off.

Another good way of thinking to get the feel as close to the instrument as possible is a little unconventional, but nevertheless right and very effective.

It is my good friend Adam Rapa who made this statement:

“Don´t be a shitter - be a pisser”

Although to some it sounds a little provocative, it actually says it all.

So, remember to never struggle and strain to get the air pressed into the instrument, but make sure to intensify it easily and elegantly progresses through the instrument and thus helps us to get a nice and relaxed sound.

How to think and play short notes?

During my studies, I was fortunate enough to attend a masterclass with Dennis Wick, who at the time was solo trombonist in the London Symphony Orchestra - and yes, he's the one with mutes and mouthpieces.

There he said a phrase that I have never forgotten – "A short note is just a long note that just gets shortened".

This phrase, and not least this way of thinking, has meant a lot to me and my playing.

When we have to play a short note and think that it should be long, we have to aim much more precisely for the note we want to play. Through thinking and playing in this way, we will always be able to play the tone long if necessary.

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Play at ”the end of the breath”

Playing a single short note has many challenges.

Once again, I would like to draw attention to the statement of Dennis Wick: 'A short note is a long note that just ends a little earlier'

Especially when playing trumpet in a symphony orchestra, we are often exposed to having to play just a few short notes all over the register. Therefore, it makes sense to also practice this "discipline".

My experience is that we as trumpet players often take a to big breath and hold on to the air before we must play this one short note.

If, on the other hand, we take a breath, breathe out the air and play this one short note on the last air we have left without ever stopping the "flow" of the air, we have a very high probability of hitting this specific note. Of course, this requires that we "aim" very precisely for the note we want to play/hear, and again think that it is a long note we must play.

When we learn to master this "discipline" every time we play a short note, an elegant tone with good sound and a perfect intonation will appear.

Garden hose

The way I believe we can regulate the speed of the air with the tongue as a valve, can also be compared to a garden hose.

If you take a garden hose without any kind of nozzle/valve at the end and open the water – there will be a certain pressure on the water coming out of it.

To change this pressure of the water leaving the garden hose, we can squeeze the exit of the garden hose, and thus make the water jet/pressure leave the garden hose faster. Note that the pressure of the water from the tap and out into the garden hose is still the same as before, and that we can regulate this by pressing together or loose the end of the hose.

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If we do the same exercise, but instead of squeezing together the end of the garden hose - squeeze it together about 10 cm back from the end. What will then happend? Well, then we can't regulate the pressure on the water coming out of the tube at all, but it just causes less water to come out of the garden hose....

Therefore, it is very important that we have our valve in the mouth – the tongue, as close to the exit as possible – the lips, in order to regulate the speed of the air leaving our mouth.

What often happens if we don't have the "valve" in our mouth – the tongue – not activated, the "valve" is then moved back to the throat, which means that less air comes out from the mouth and the pressure that has to come out through the lips is virtually unregulated.

In order to always get the optimal sound and to make it as easy as possible for us to play, it is very important that there always is a balance between the pressure that leaves the lips and into the mouthpiece, and the contact (pressure) we need to have with the mouthpiece against the lips. If these two factors do not "play" together, and one or the other gets the upper hand, here too we risk losing the tongue's function as a valve, and the valve goes back into the throat so that only the amount of air – and not the pressure on the air – can be regulated.

Trampoline

I think we've all have had some experienced challenges when we should make legatoslures upwards. This happens because we do not have enough speed of the air and that our feeling is not far enough advanced in our mouth.

As higher the tones are – as higher the speed of the air leaving through our lips must be.

Since the embouchure is not of great importance - if it works ok, it is very important that our tongue's regulation of the air takes place as far forward in the mouth and as close to the instrument/mouthpiece as possible.

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Think that we are standing on a seesaw in the swimming pool or on a trampoline in the garden and from stagnant trying to jump upwards, this is almost impossible.

If we then use the trampoline to first jump down and then afterwards up, we easily and naturally get upwards as we then get a greater speed of our movement.

We can directly transfer this approach to our instrument.

If we with a good speed of air grip the deep note and carry it on all the way to the next/higher note we want to play, we can just "pluck the high note down".

Through playing/thinking this way, we can continue to play all notes forward instead of up or down. This means that we pull the register together so that we can focus and concentrate on playing forward. However, it is very important to constantly aim directly for the specific notes we want to play and hear, so that we constantly try to hit the "Bullseye" on every single note.

Think ahead – not up or down

Those of us who grew up with Stamp's exercises have become accustomed to thinking up when we play down in the register and thinking down when we have to play upwards.

Now, this is not wrong, but I prefer to think only that all the notes should be played forward and not least far away.

Often when I practice, I stand and look out a window, and to get a good flow, I think that my sound should go all the way to a tree/building or similar. In the same way as our sound should go to the last seats in a concert hall.

When we think all notes ahead, we naturally pull the entire register together and thus minimize the limitations in relation to playing low or high notes.

However, it requires us always to constantly aim and "shoot" for the notes we want to play and hear - control, and always through the instrument and not just into it.

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So, how are we going to get this control in our playing?

Unfortunately, there is no shortcut to success, but hard work in many hours of effective practice every single day, helps most of us along the way. How far we get depends on many parameters.

Personally, I think the ability to concentrate is one of the greatest importance in relation to how far we get with our instrument. Without a doubt, it is also crucial to spend many hours with our instrument every single day to achieve our goal.

Talent and flair for the instrument we have chosen are of course not without significance, but I do not think that is the most important thing.

Example: If we take two people with the same instrument and talent. Let them for a period practice the same hours a day and on the same exercises.

One will almost always be better than the other. The reason for this difference, I believe, is the ability to concentrate, which is the determining factor.

Upbeats

In all the music I have to play, I love to think/emphasize and play with upbeats in order for the music to become more alive. In many exercises and pieces of music, there are often accents on the one-beat and none on the upbeats. To get a better flow in the music and make it easier to play, it is therefore often an advantage to mark the upbeats as much as on the first beat (and sometimes almost more).

To try this out, it can be very fun and rewarding to occasionally move the bar line a single beat or just an eighth. This gives a completely different emphasis and momentum in the piece of music/exercise.

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Bending

Why use "bending"?

I use bending to improve the control of my embouchure and to make my lips vibrate more than when playing a regular note on our instrument.

Bendings are also really good to do as warm down. When we get our lips to vibrate as much as possible, the blood circulation will speed up, and then help to make the lips optimal again.

When we should "bend" a tone downwards, it is important to maintain the speed of the air. The biggest mistake is that we usually blow less and that the tone therefore "falls" down to the next natural tone.

I imagine an alpine skier going down a hill at full speed. If this skier bends forward and downwards, he will fall forward and thus fall and lose speed. If, on the other hand, he lowers his body with his legs, he maintains speed but descends without falling, and then also easily gets back up.

It could also be a water skier... If this skier at full speed across the water accidentally turns his skis downwards, he will fall forward and lose speed. If, instead, he bends his legs and thus lowers his body, he retains speed above the water and can easily get back up without having lost speed above the water.

In the same way, it applies to maintaining the speed of the air when we "bend" a note downwards. While concentrating on playing with a smooth and intensive airflow through (and not just into) the instrument, we must make sure to shape the tone and "force"/think/play it down half a note (or more) before we again make sure that it comes back up to "its right level". Here too, it is important to listen for what comes out of from the bell of the instrument, and by that, I mean to constantly try to play with a big and nice sound, and that the intonation is always in order.

The higher up we go, the more important it becomes to control the speed and intensity of the air. The strength of the embouchure also becomes more and more important as we move up the register. If the embouchure is not strong enough, we will not be able to keep our tone without descending to the next natural tone.

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One really good exercise for the airflow

Sometimes when I feel my playing not really work, I do this exercise to optimize the blowing of the air:

- Take the mouthpiece in your right hand
- Open the spit valve
- Take a really big breath
- Put your lips around the lead pipe
- Blow the air through the whole instrument – blow, blow, blow and really try to empty the body for all air

Repeat these two or three times.

Take care because we very easy can feel/be dizzy when doing this exercise!!!

After making this exercise, play the same melody or phrase that you have played before, and listen to the big difference this crazy exercise has made for the sound.

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“Just an exercise” …

"These exercises I only play to improve my height"!

"I just play these exercises to get faster finger technique"!

In my world, every note written on a piece of paper is music. Therefore, every note must always be played with the best sound, start and intonation that I am able to produce.

This means that the note I am just playing, I try to play with the greatest empathy and musicality I am capable of. The next note I'm getting ready to play must be at least as good as the one I'm currently playing and preferably even better, and so on...

Never play a single note on your instrument without trying to play it with the best and most beautiful quality of sound and phrasing you ever have played.

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R.P. Technical studies

APPLICABLE TO ALL EXERCISES

ALL NOTES MARKED WITH A TENUTOLINE AND AN ACCENT, MUST BE PLAYED EXTREMELY LONG AND IN ITS TOTAL FULL LENGTH AND WITH A VERY CLEAR TONGUING.

PLEASE NOTE THAT WE SHOULD NOT PLAY WITH DIRECT ACCENTS, JUST VERY CLEAR TONGUING.

ALL NOTES SHOULD BE PLAYED THROUGH THE INSTRUMENT - NOT JUST INTO IT, SO THE TONE THAT COMES OUT OF THE INSTRUMENT ALLWAYS IS OPTIMAL.

ALL NOTES WE PLAY, ARE PLAYED FORWARD AND STRAIGHT AHEAD, SO WE DON'T FOCUS TOO MUCH ON WHETHER IT'S HIGH OR LOW NOTES.

ALWAYS LISTEN TO WHAT COMES OUT OF THE INSTRUMENT – even though many times we focus mostly on what and how we put into it.

WE SHOULD ALWAYS PLAY WITH THE BEST IMAGINABLE QUALITY.

THE TONE OR PHRASE WE ARE PLAYING MUST ALWAYS BE PLAYED AS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WE HAVE EVER PLAYED, AND WITH THE BEST IMAGINABLE SOUND. THIS NOTE OR PHRASE IS THEN PLAYED TO THE NEXT NOTE/PHRASE, WHICH IS THEN PLAYED EVEN MORE BEAUTIFULLY AND WITH EVEN BETTER SOUND AND QUALITY, AND SO ON…

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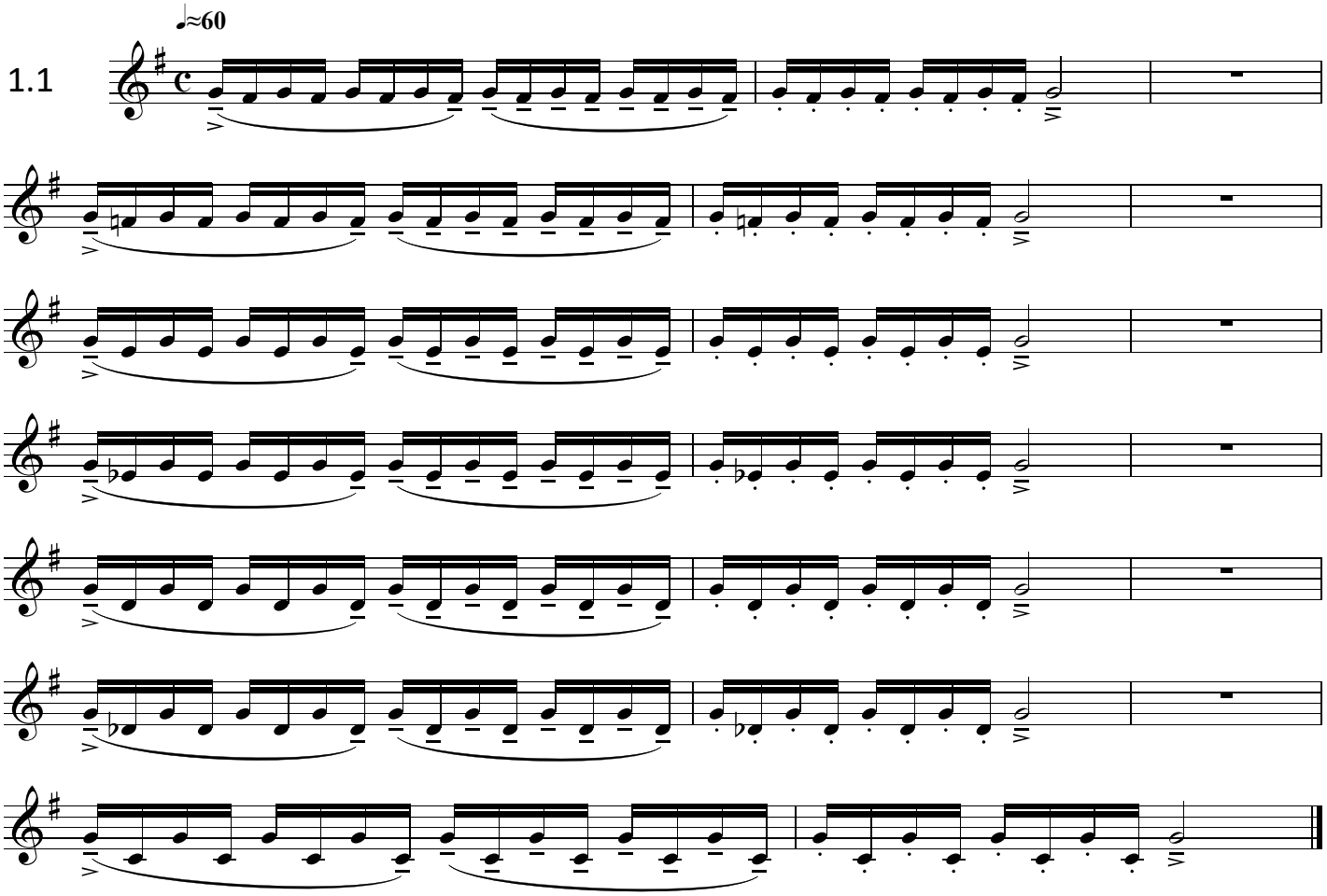
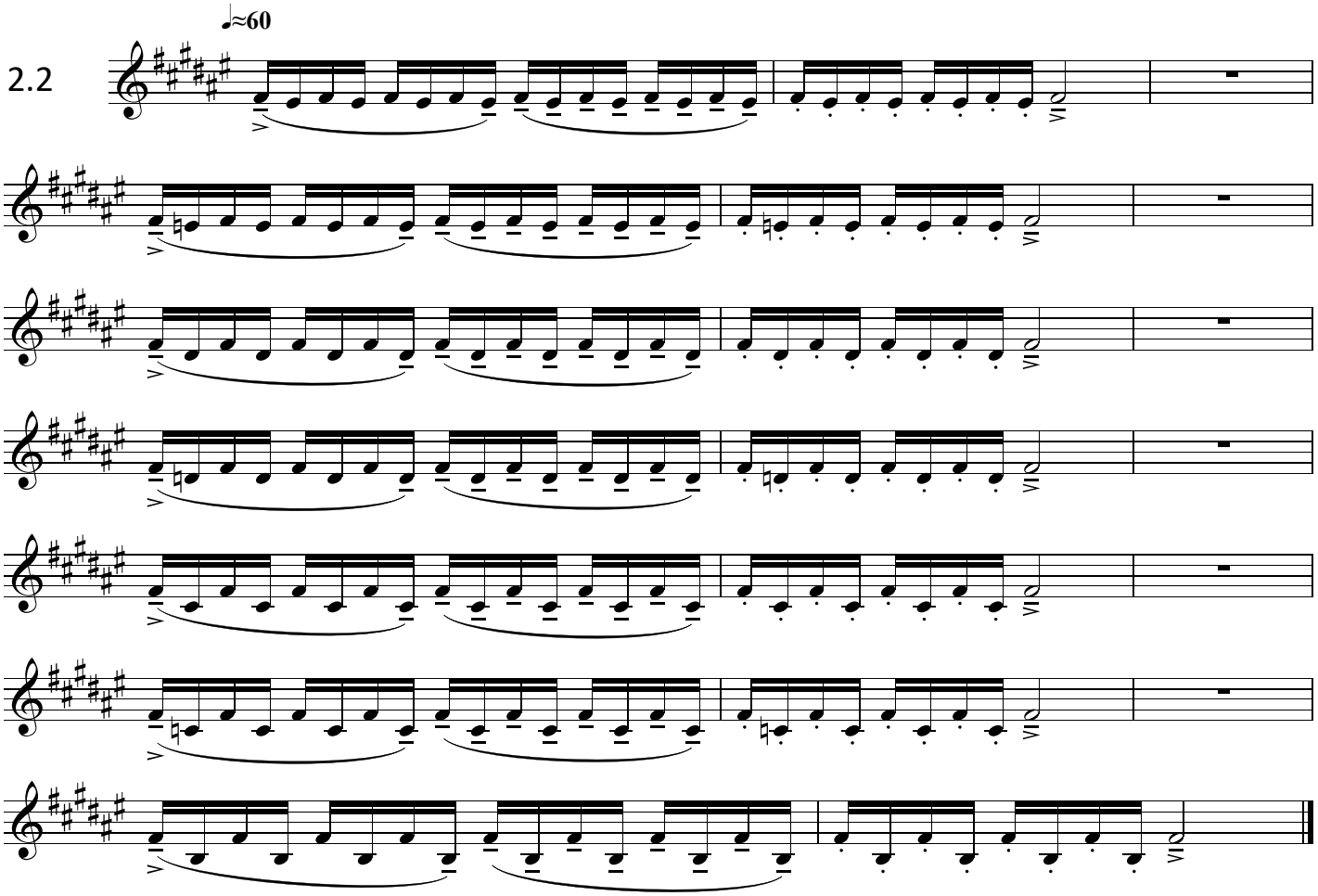
1 - Air- / Flow Studies 1

Should be played as one long tone with very clear articulation





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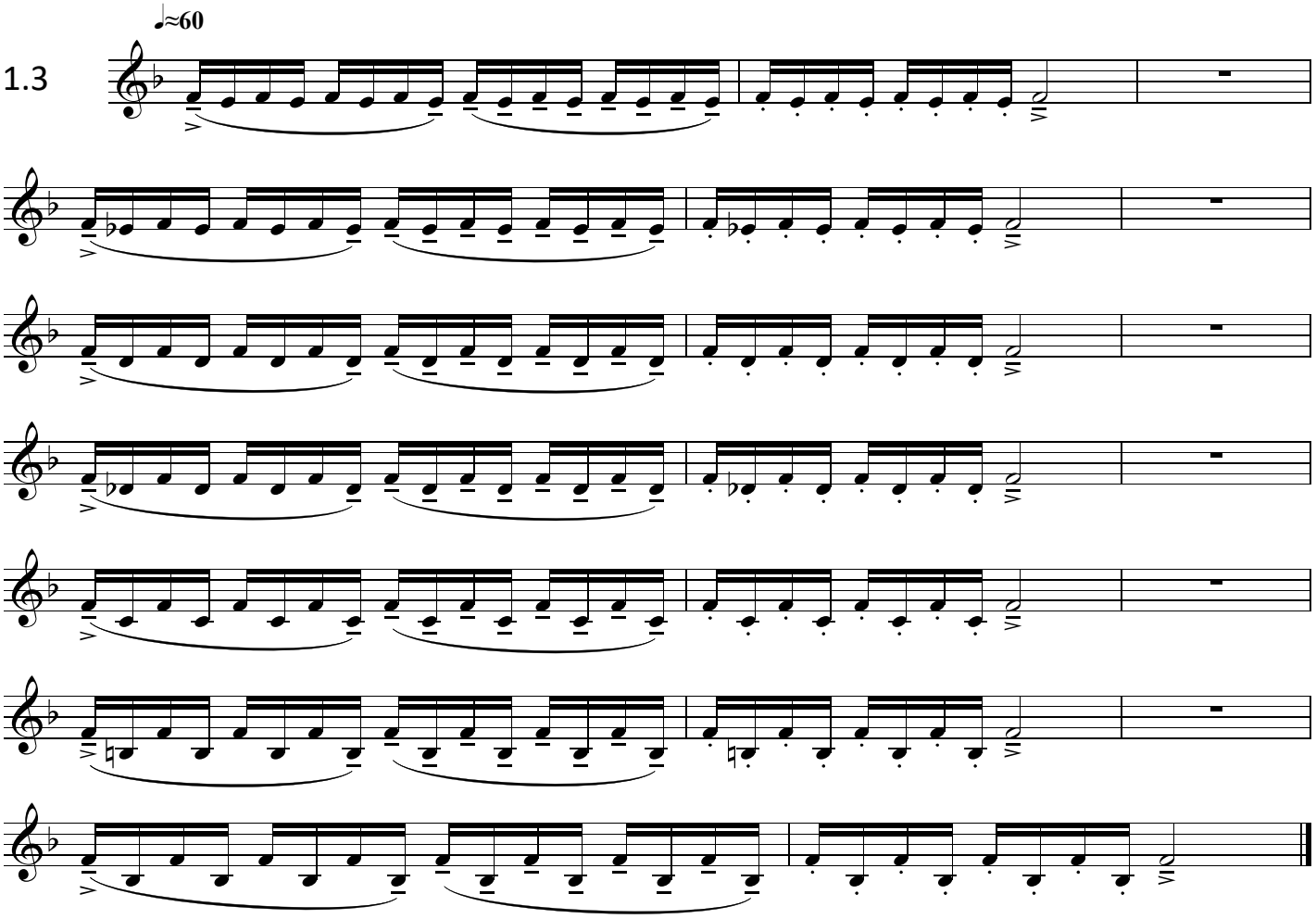

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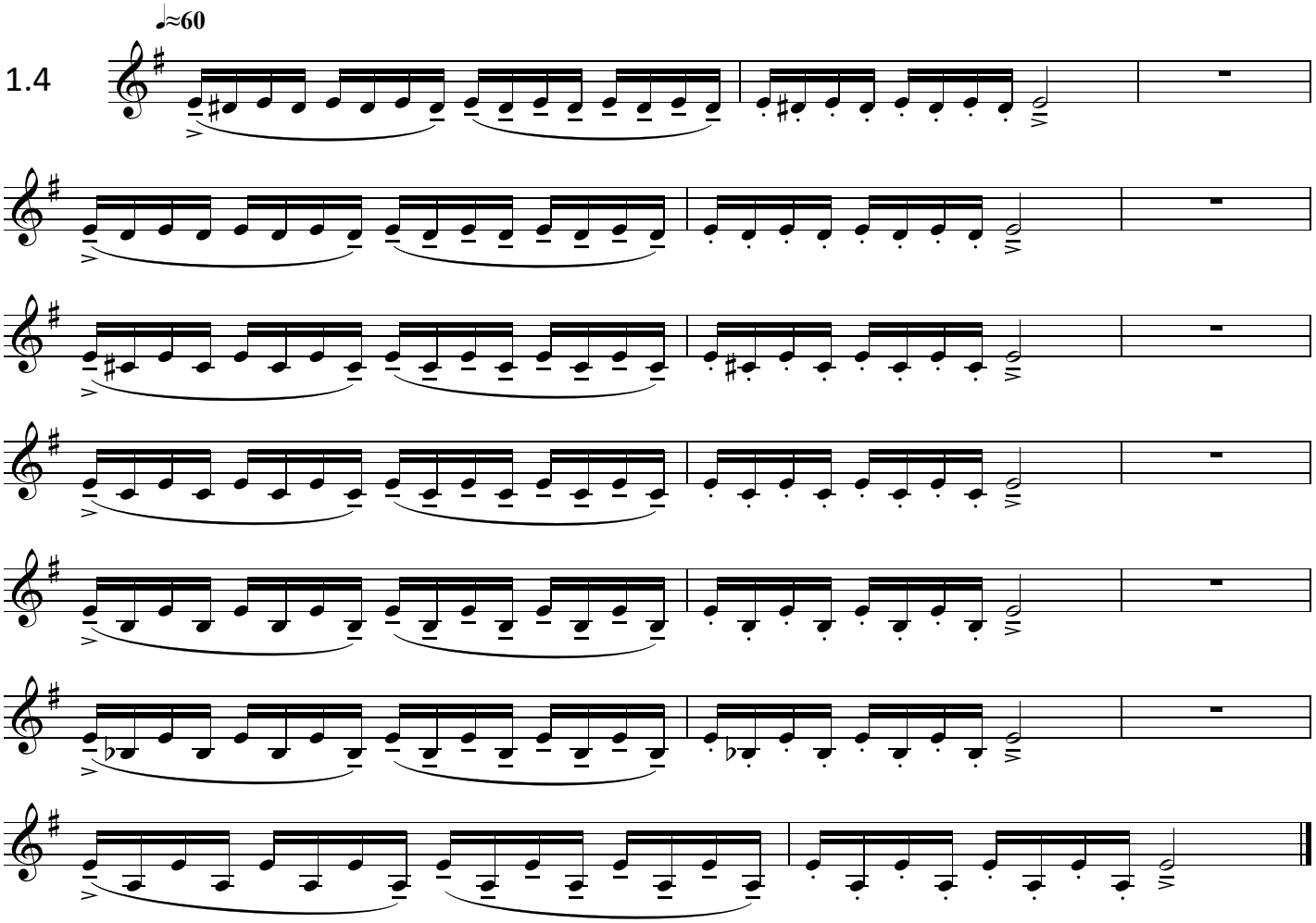

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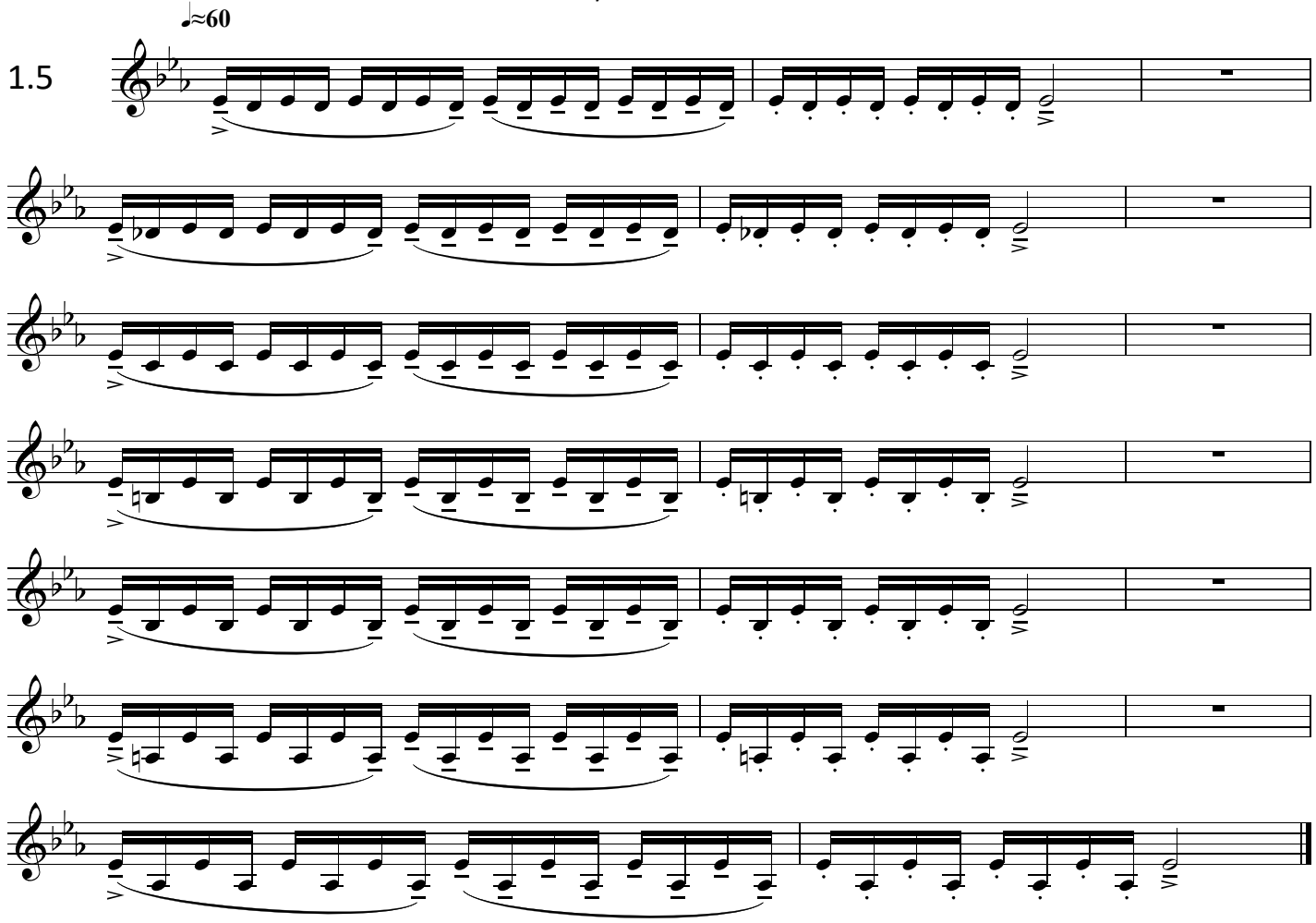

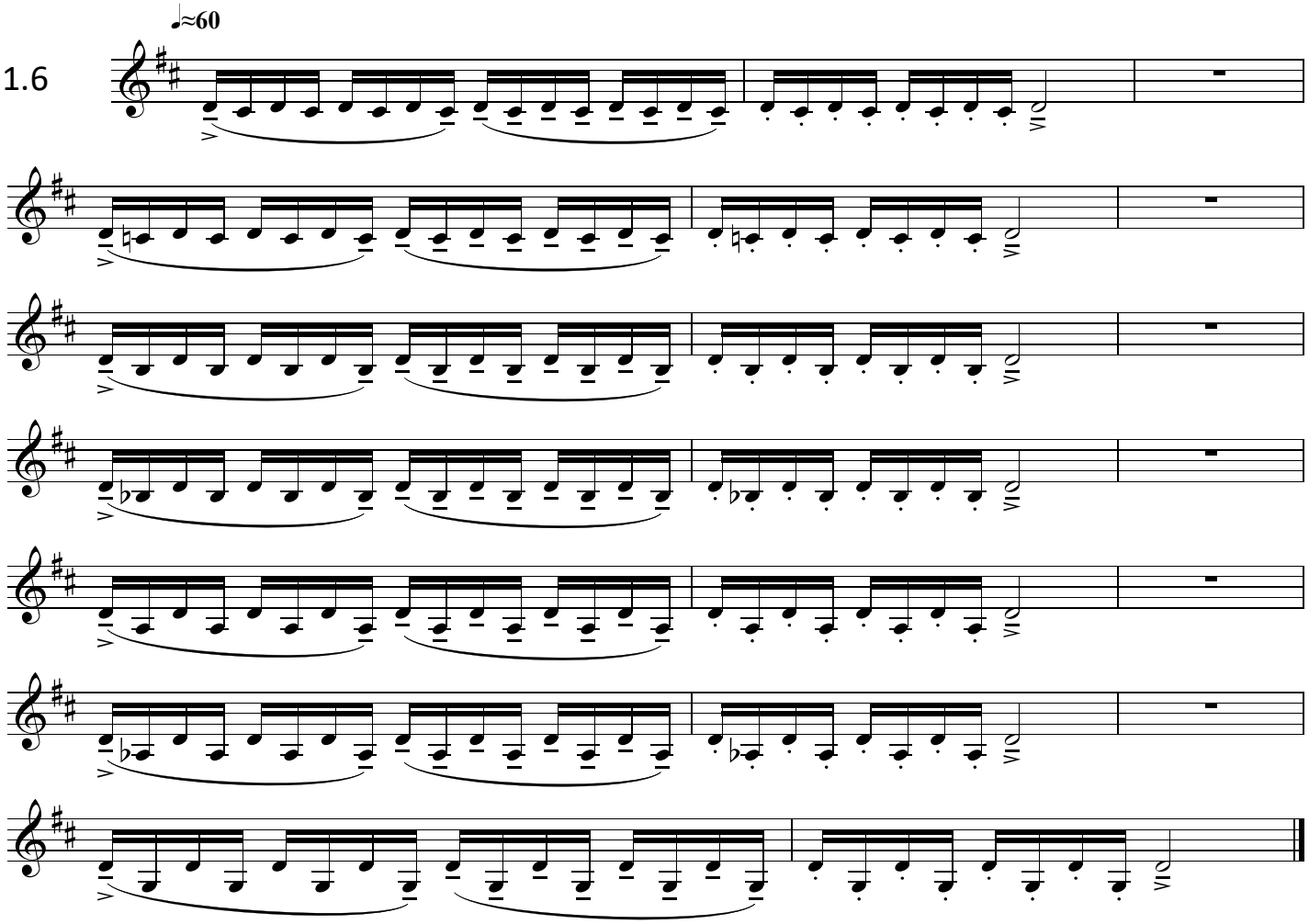

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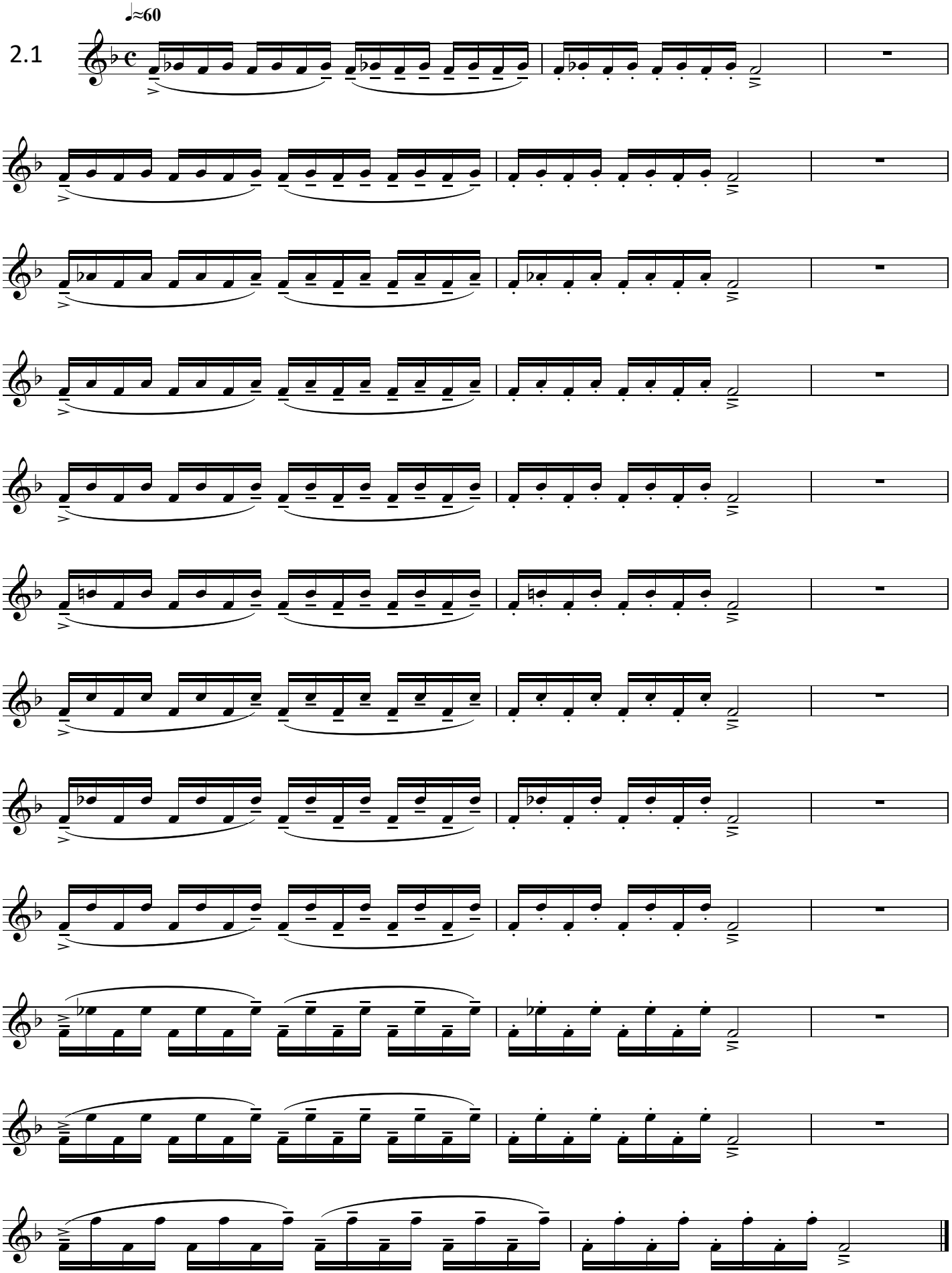
2 - Air- / Flow Studies 2

Should be played as one long tone with very clear articulation

2.1



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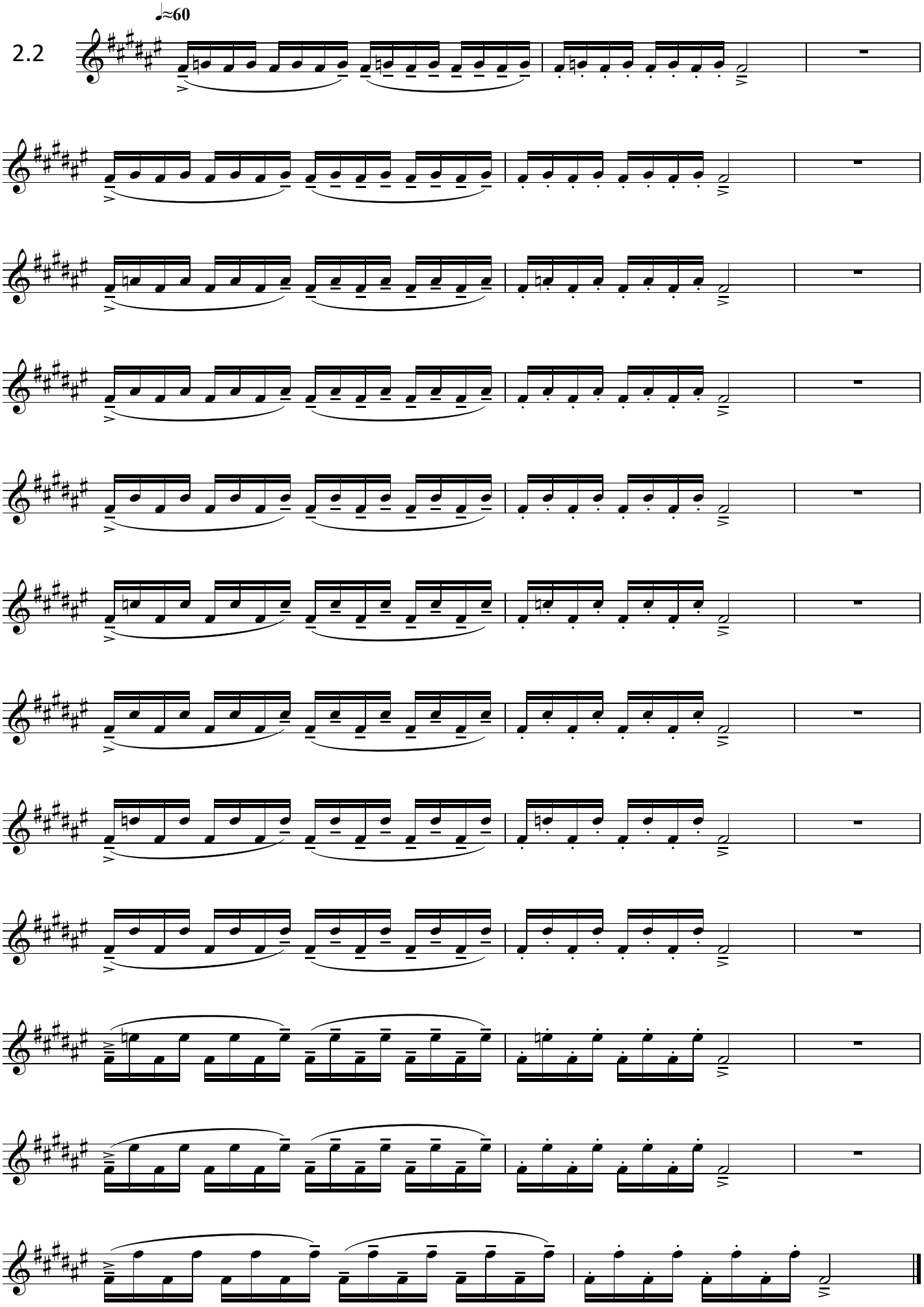

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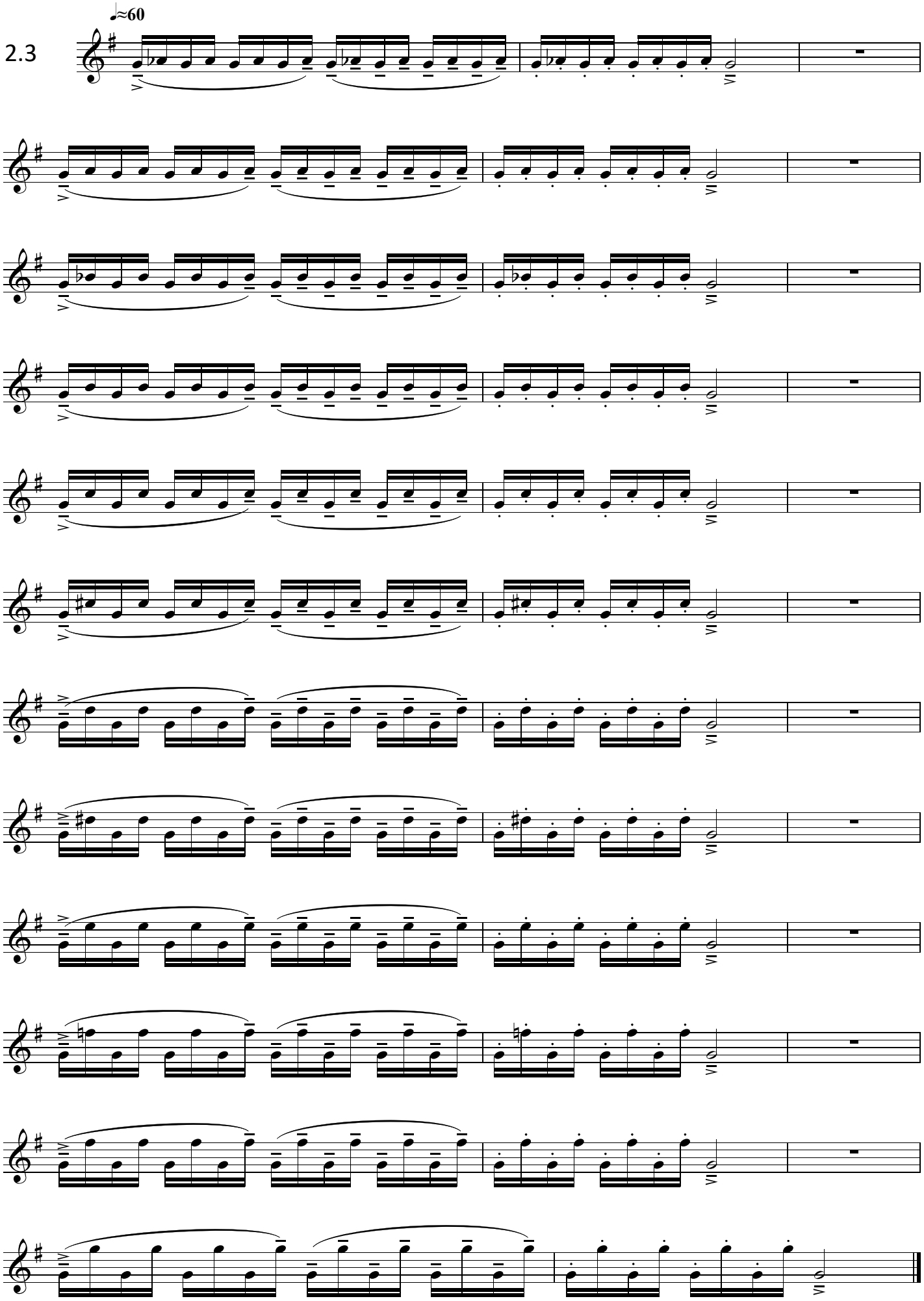

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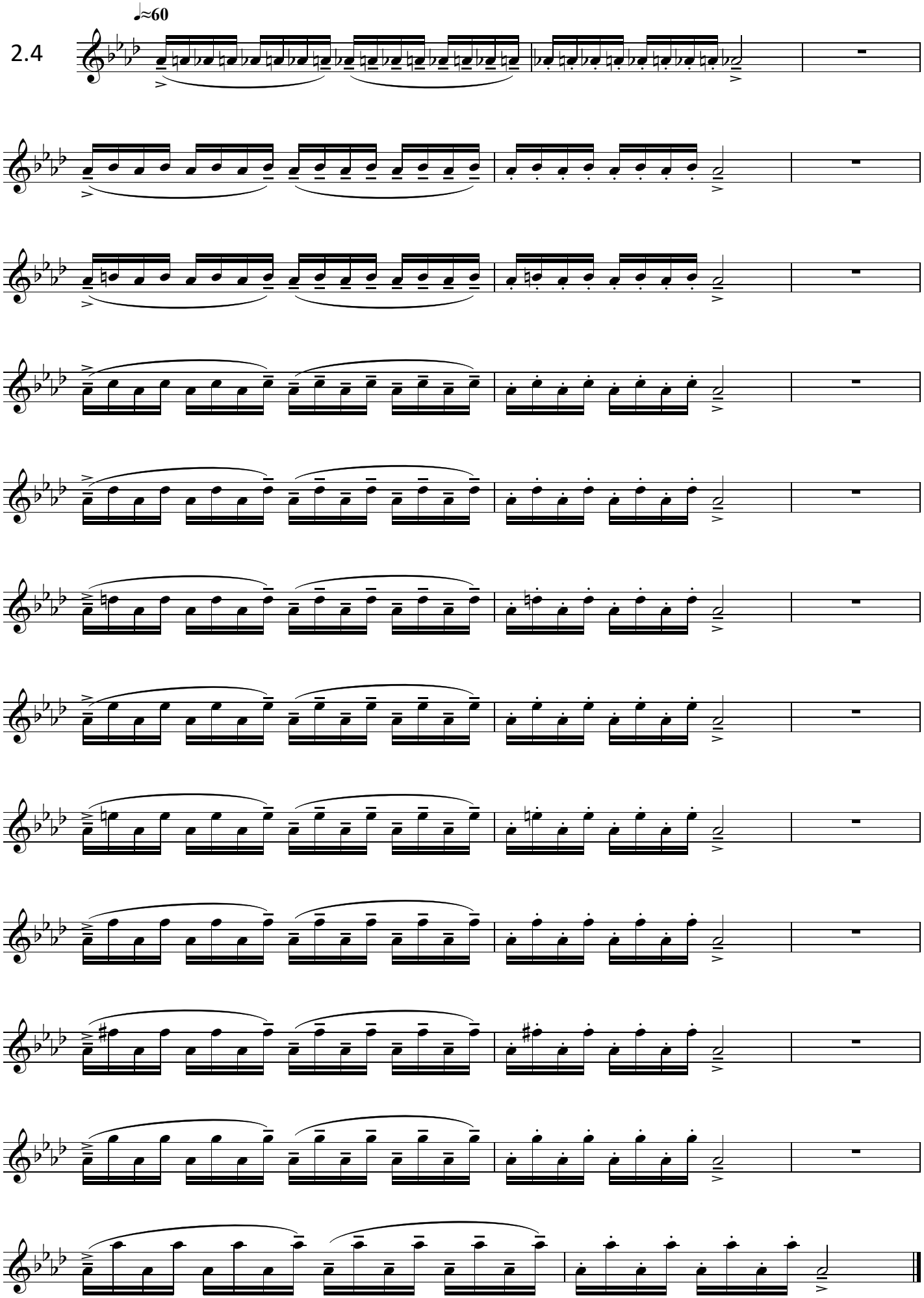

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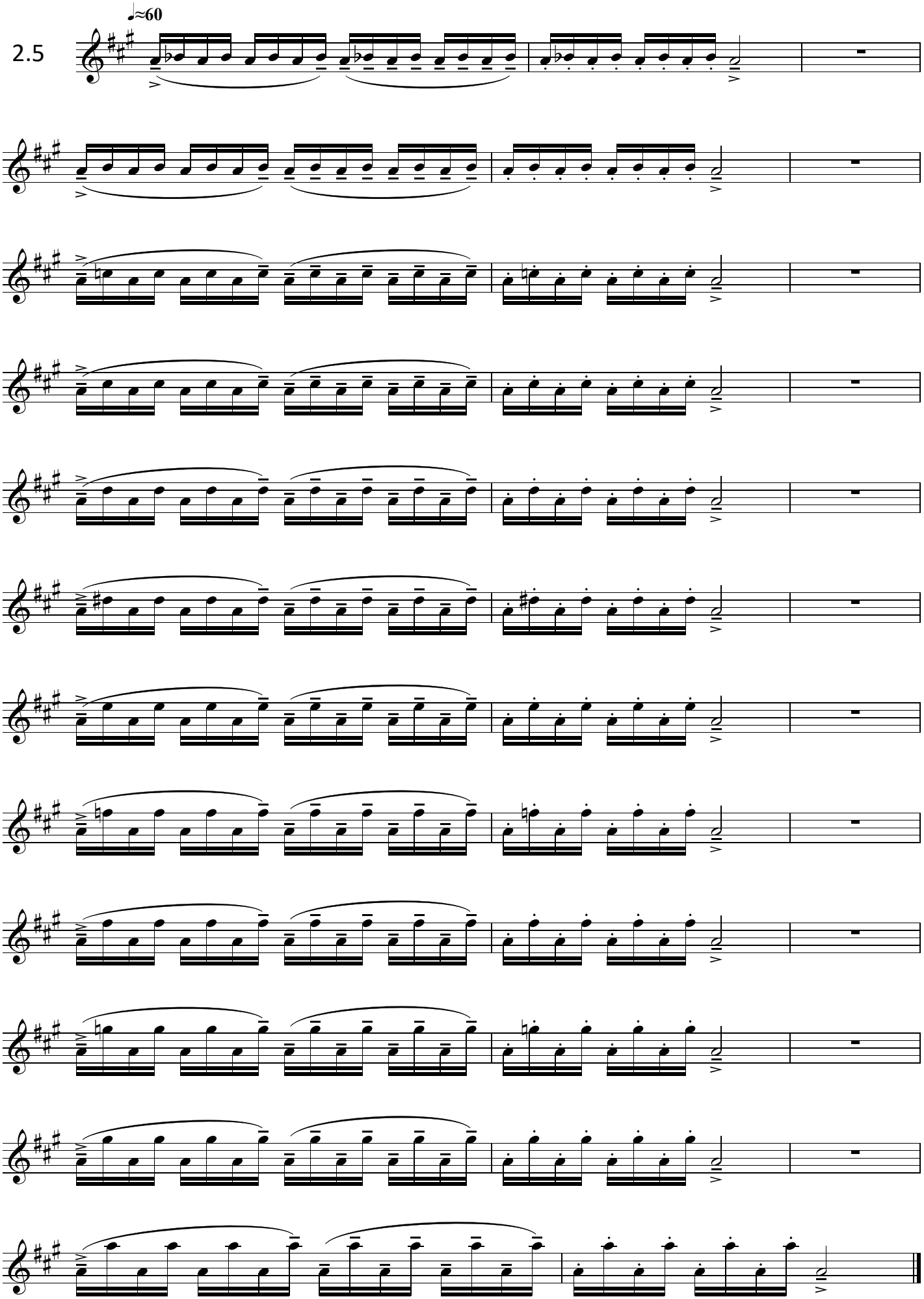

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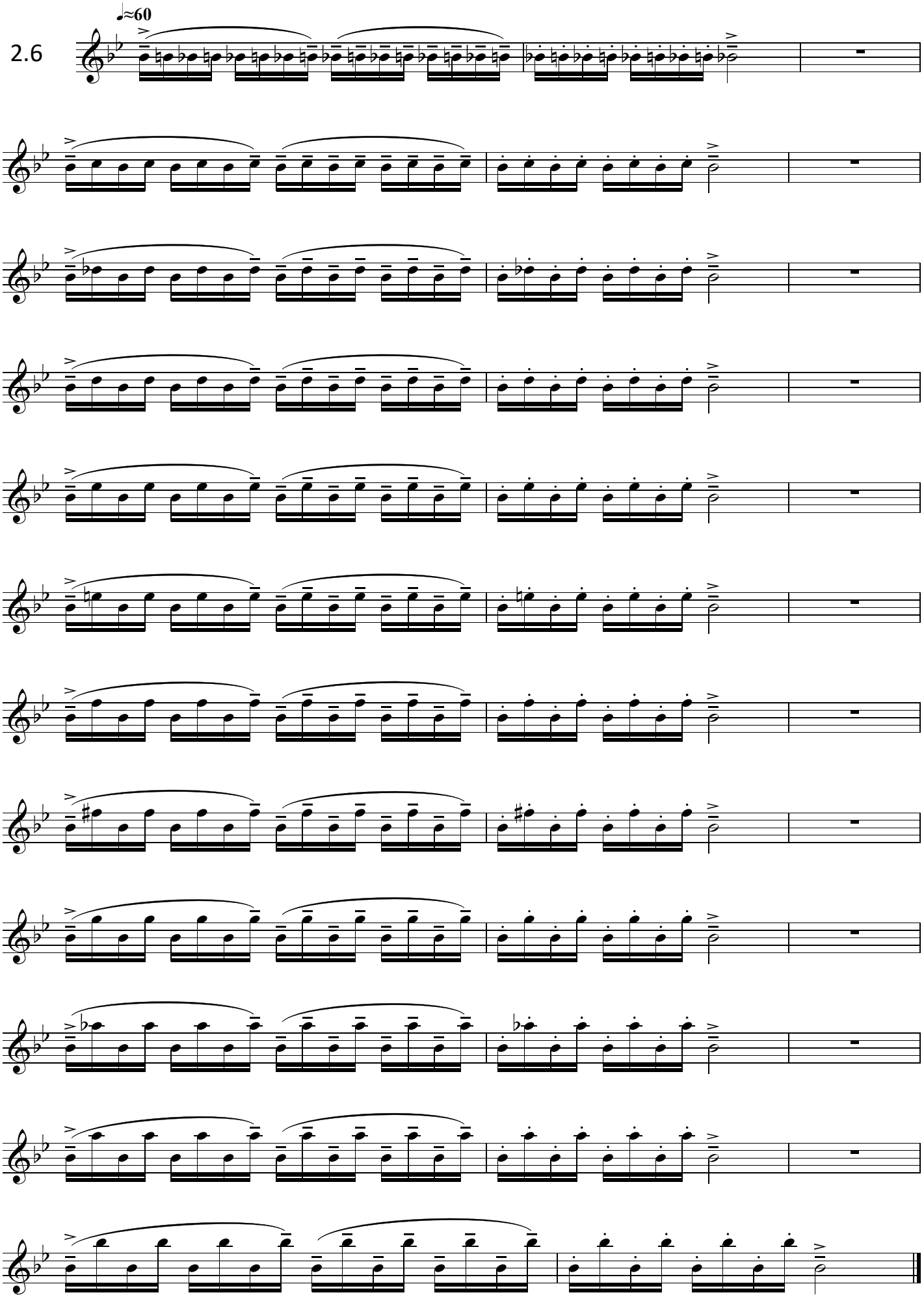

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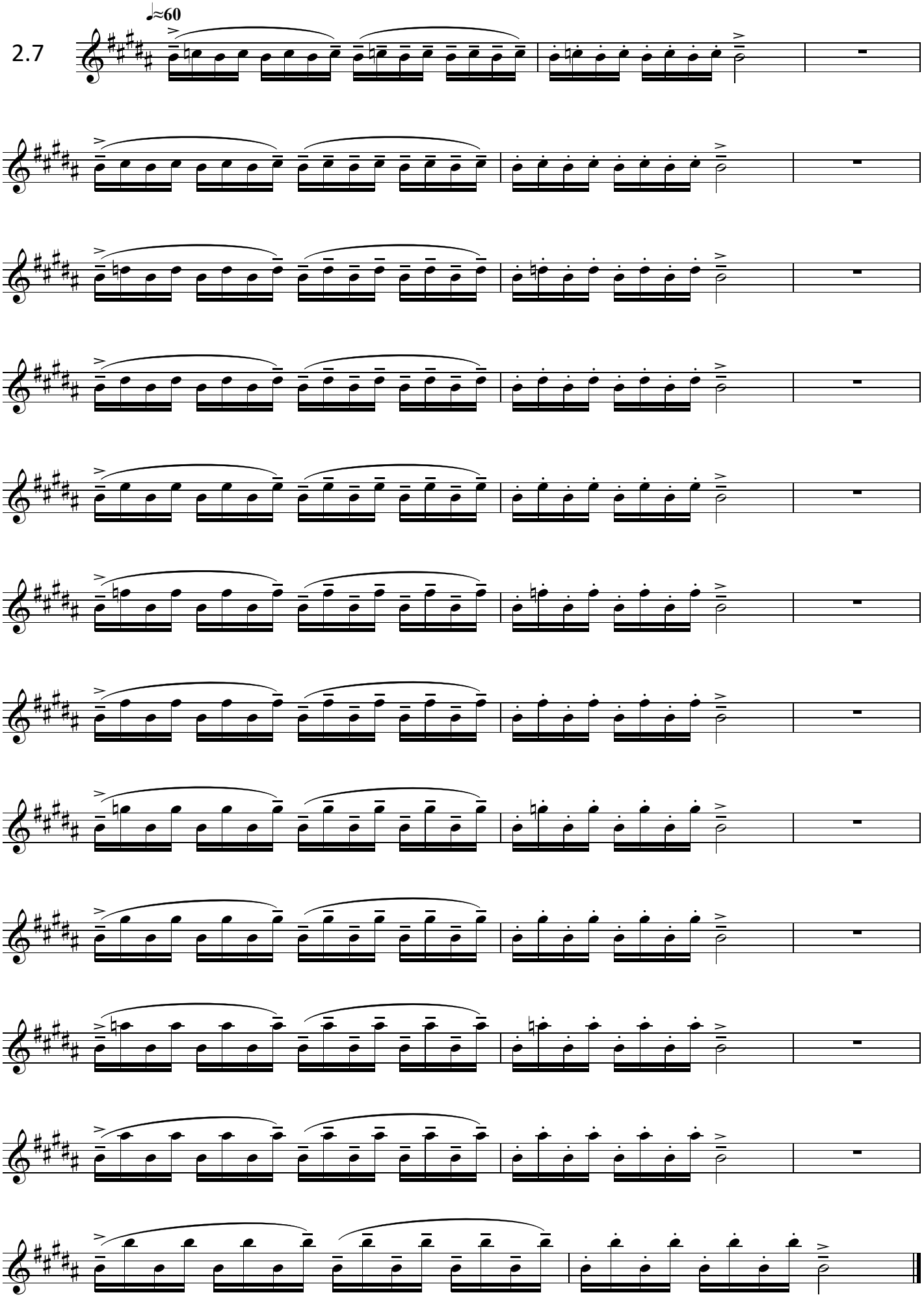

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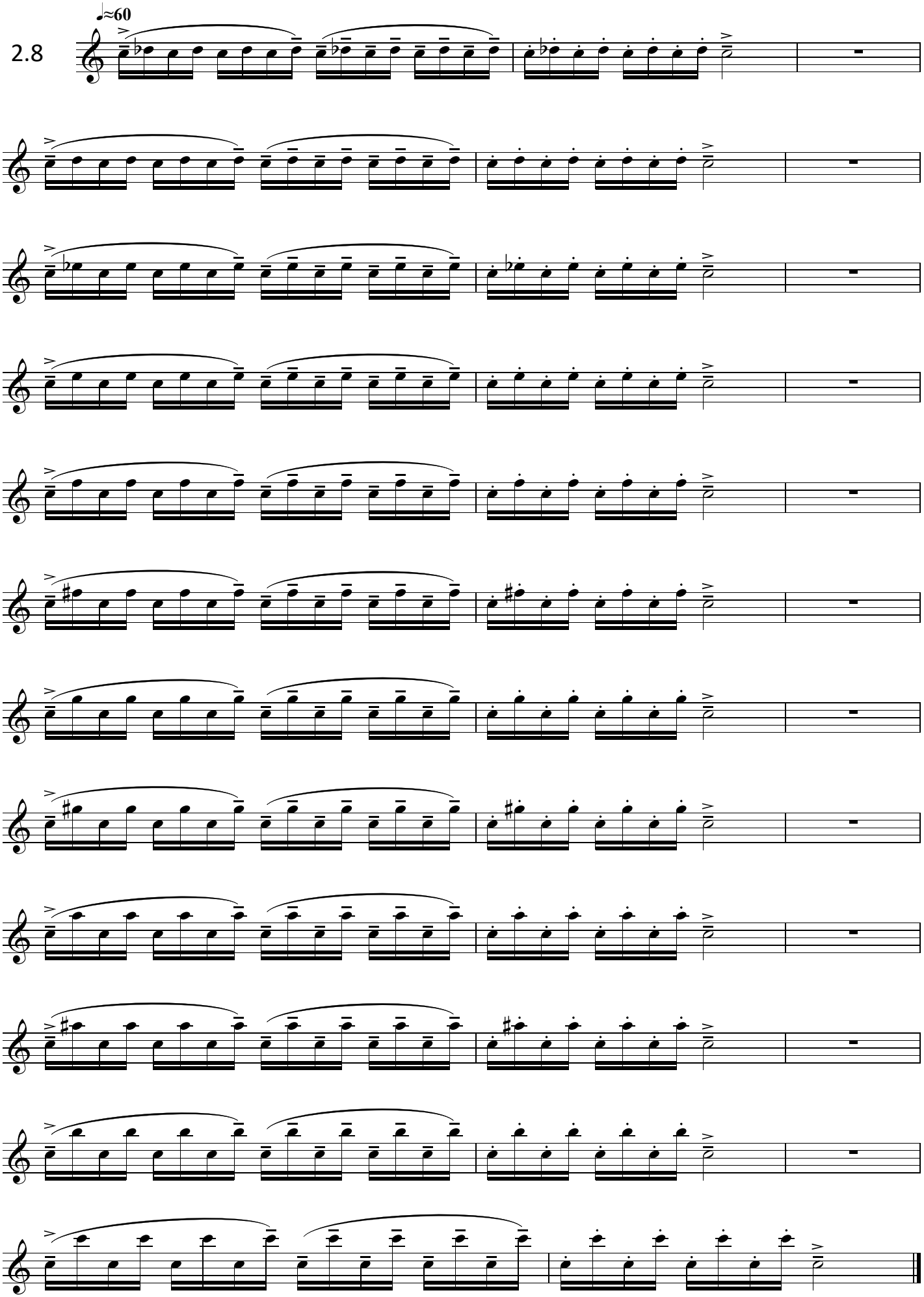

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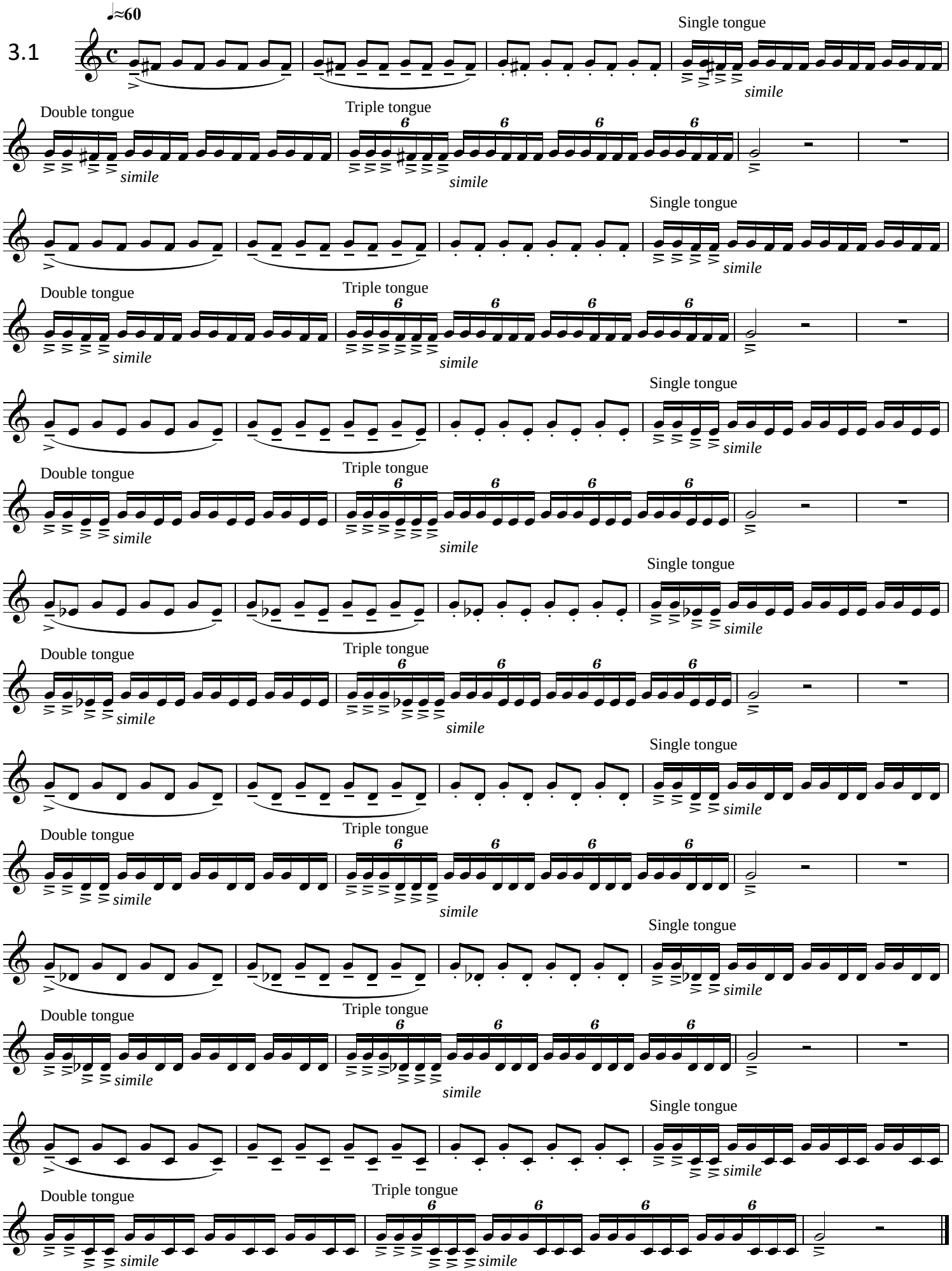
3 - Air- / Flow Studies 3

Should be played as one long tone with very clear articulation



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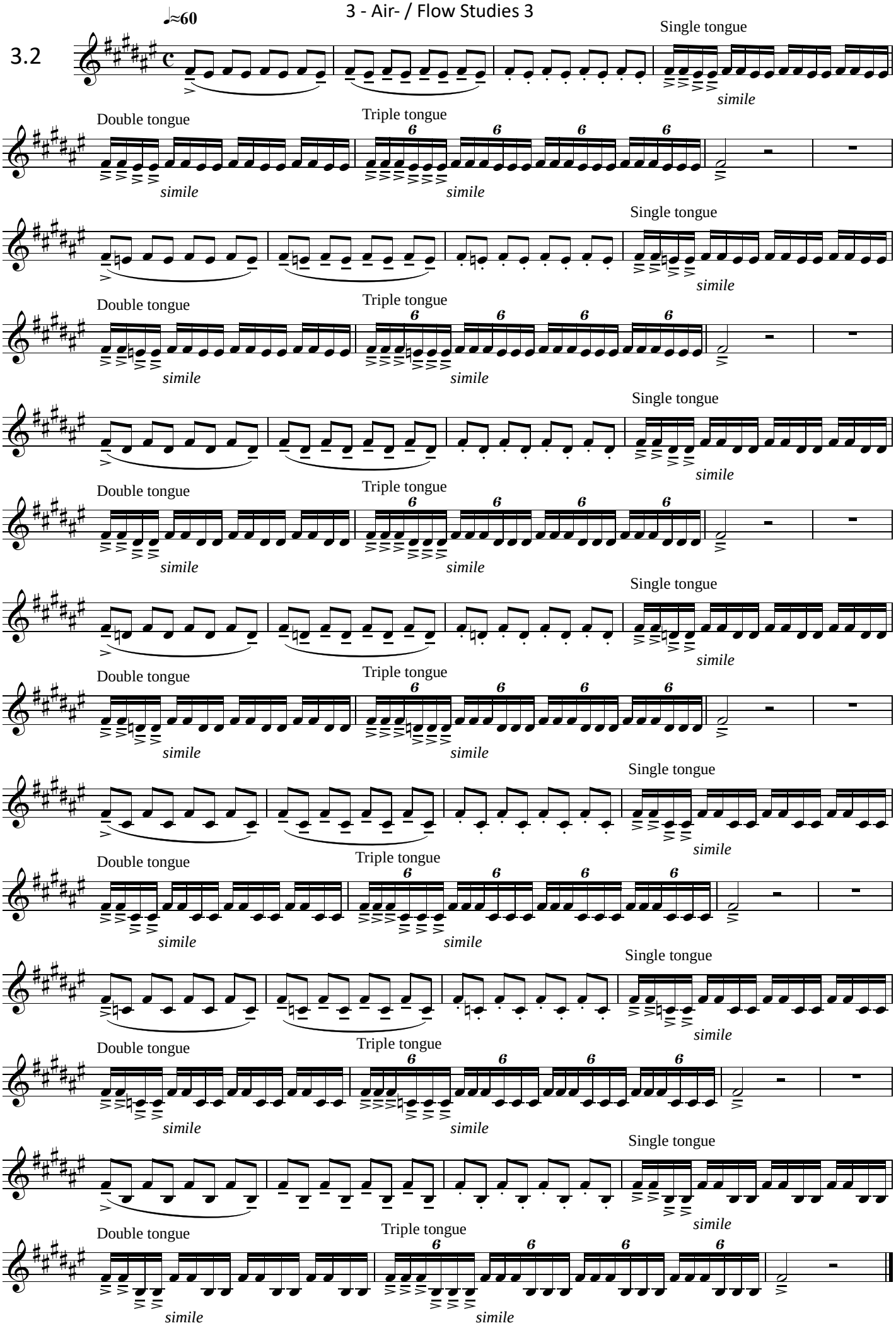

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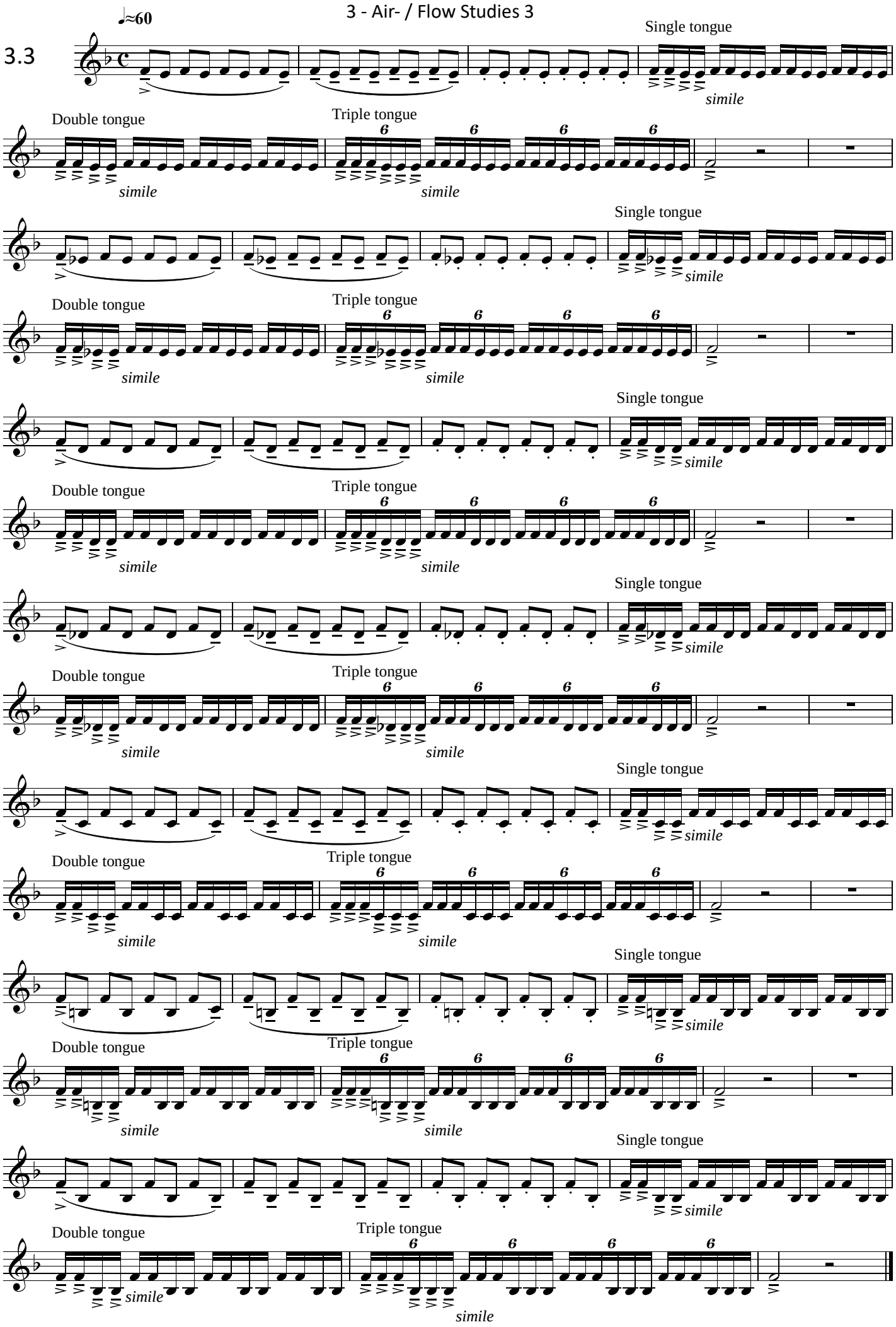

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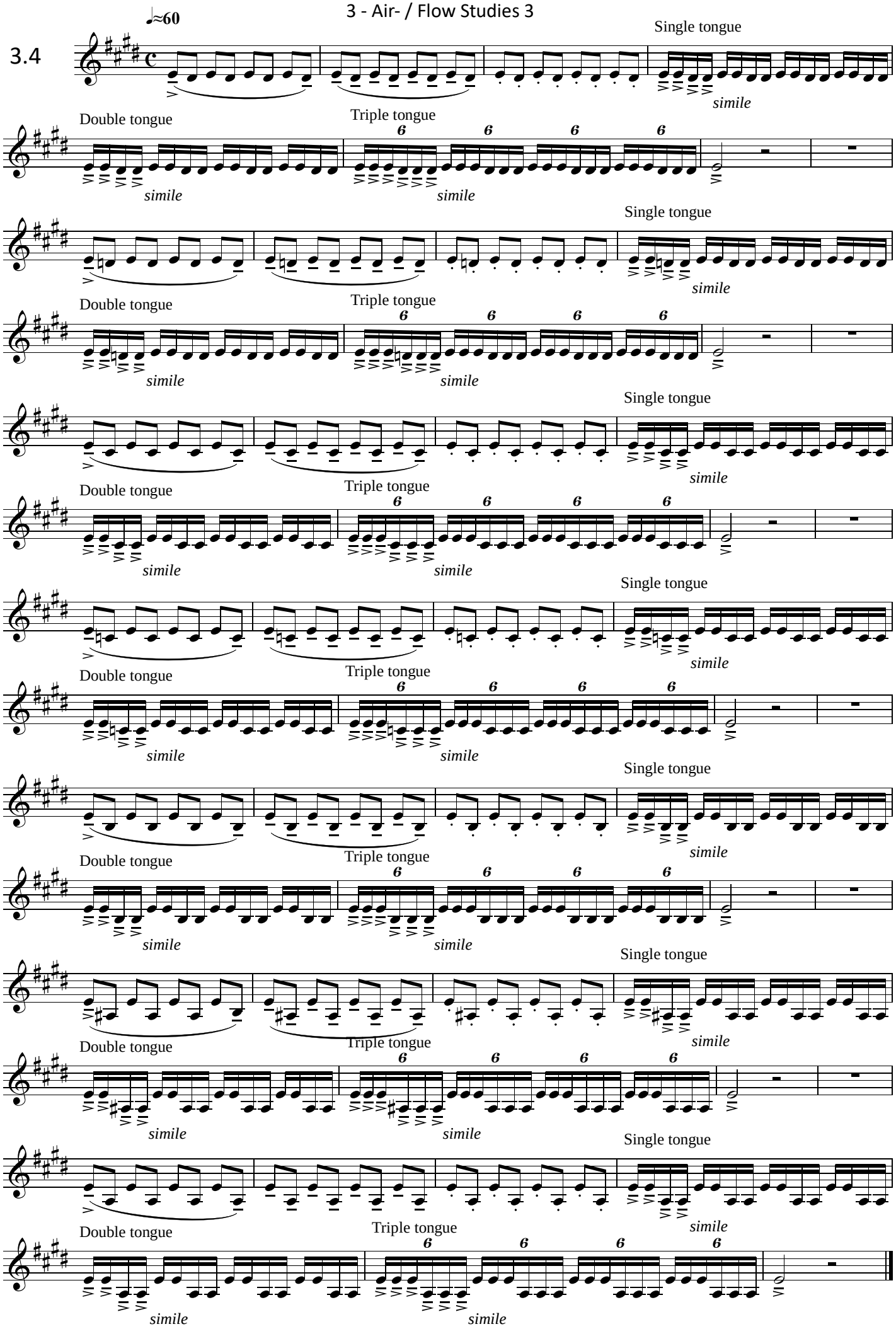

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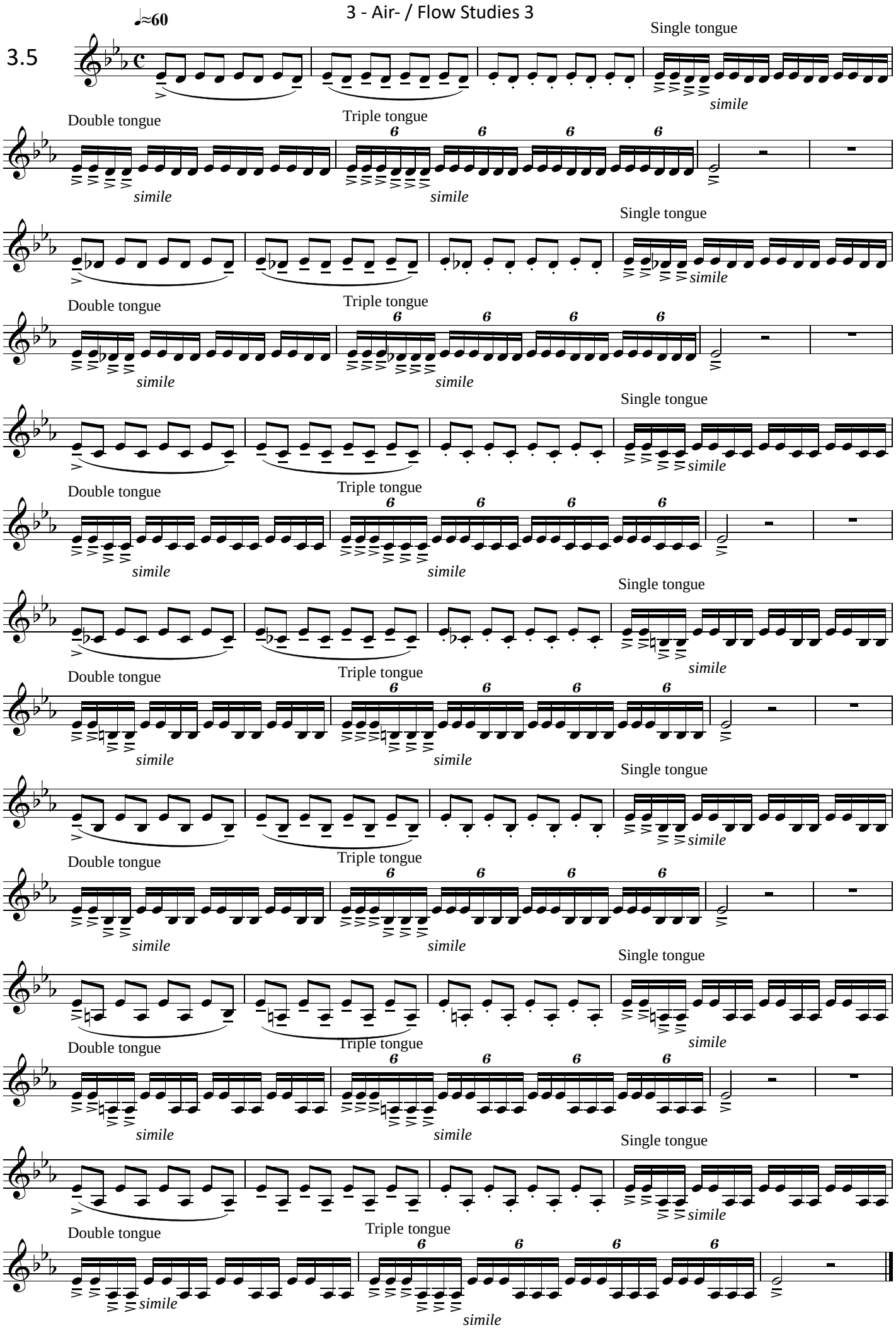

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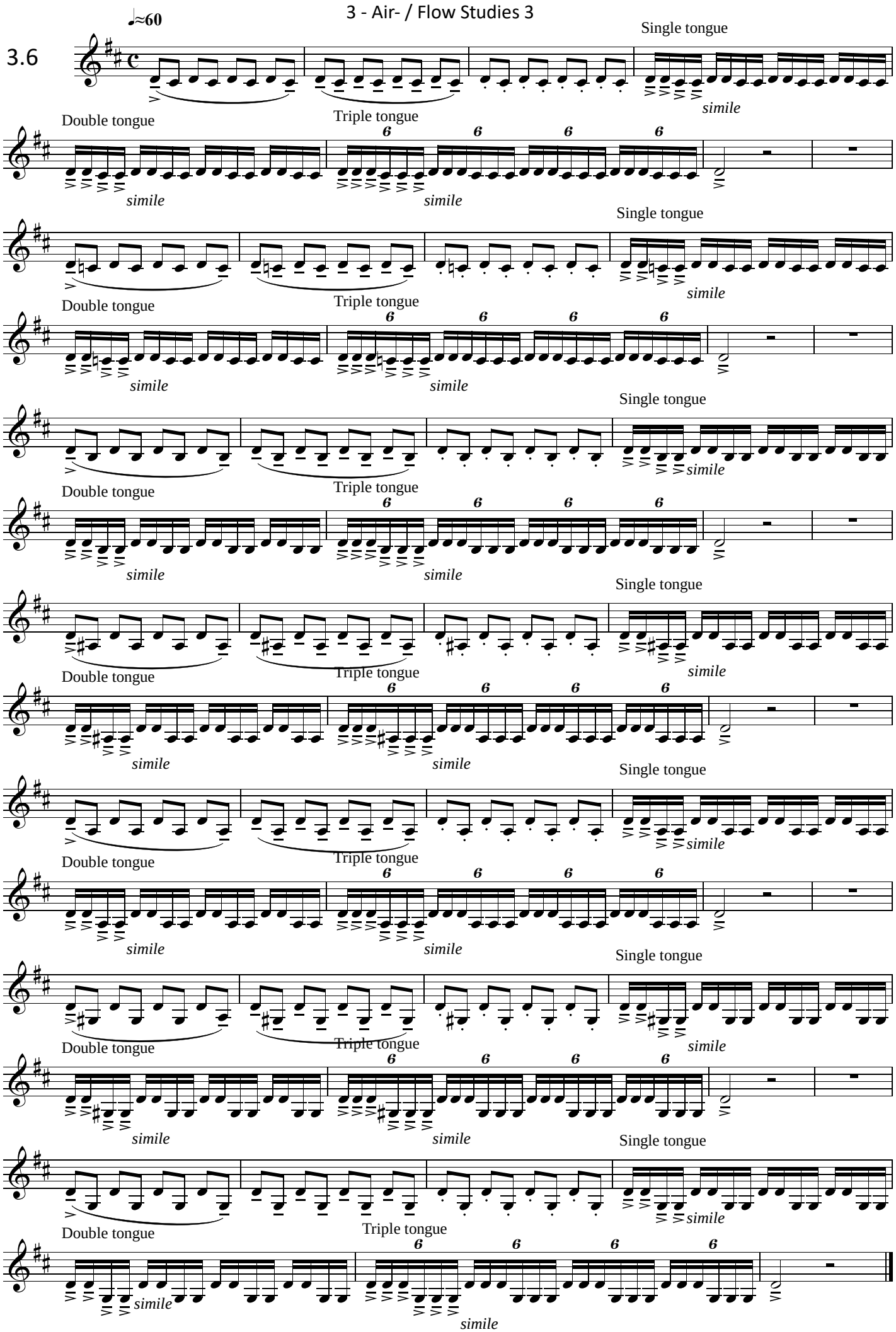

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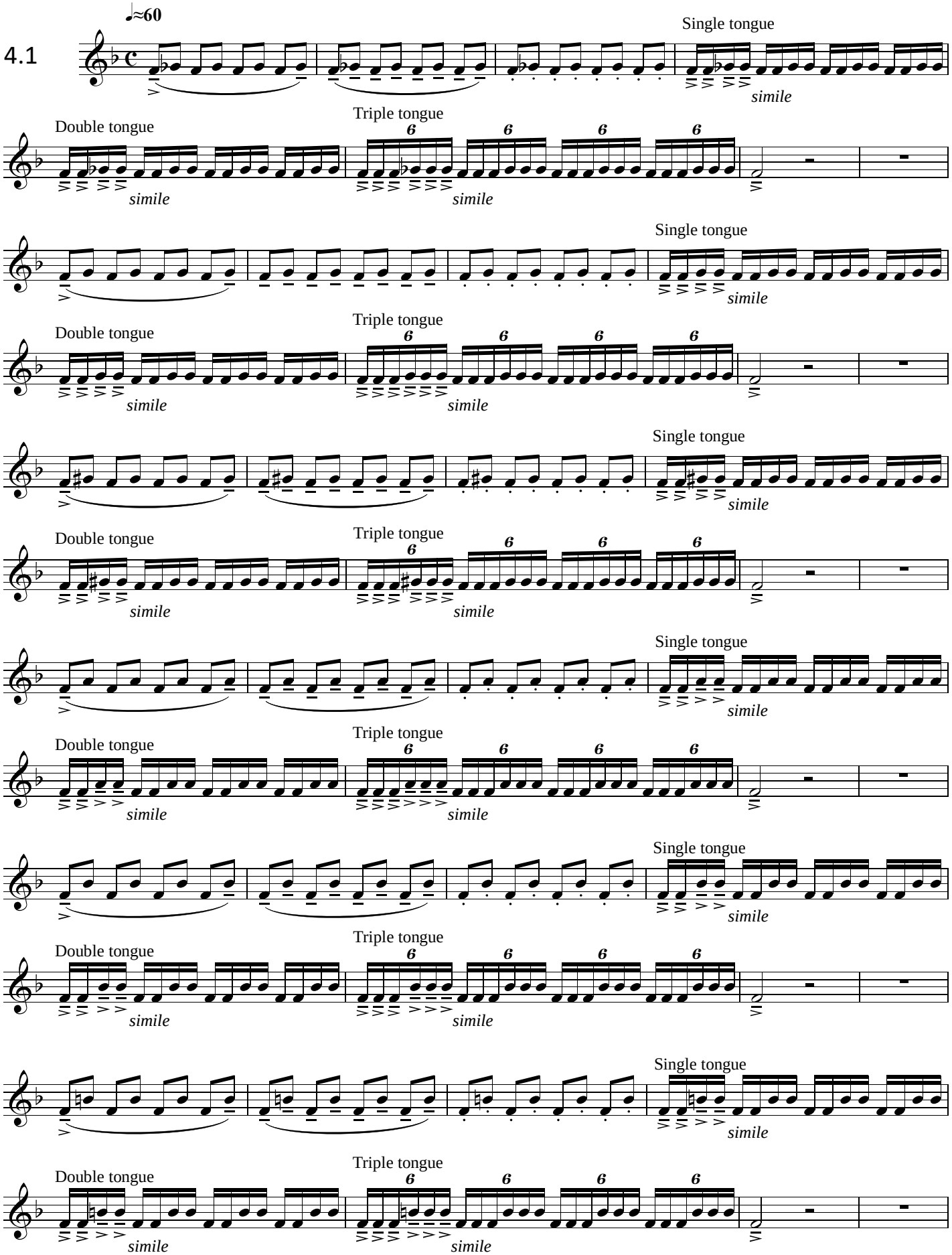
4 - Air- / Flow Studies 4

Should be played as one long tone with very clear articulation



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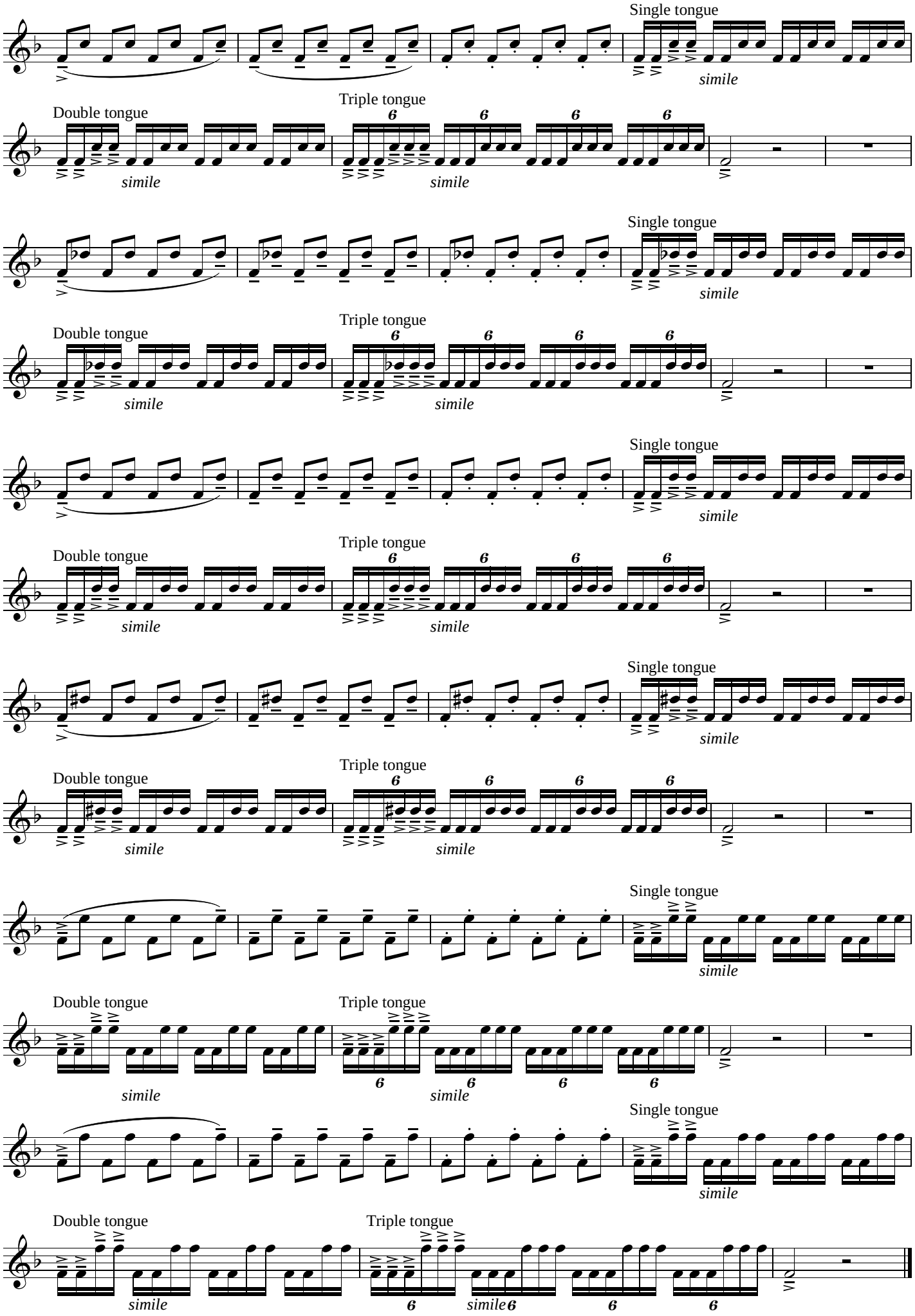
4 - Air- / Flow Studies 4



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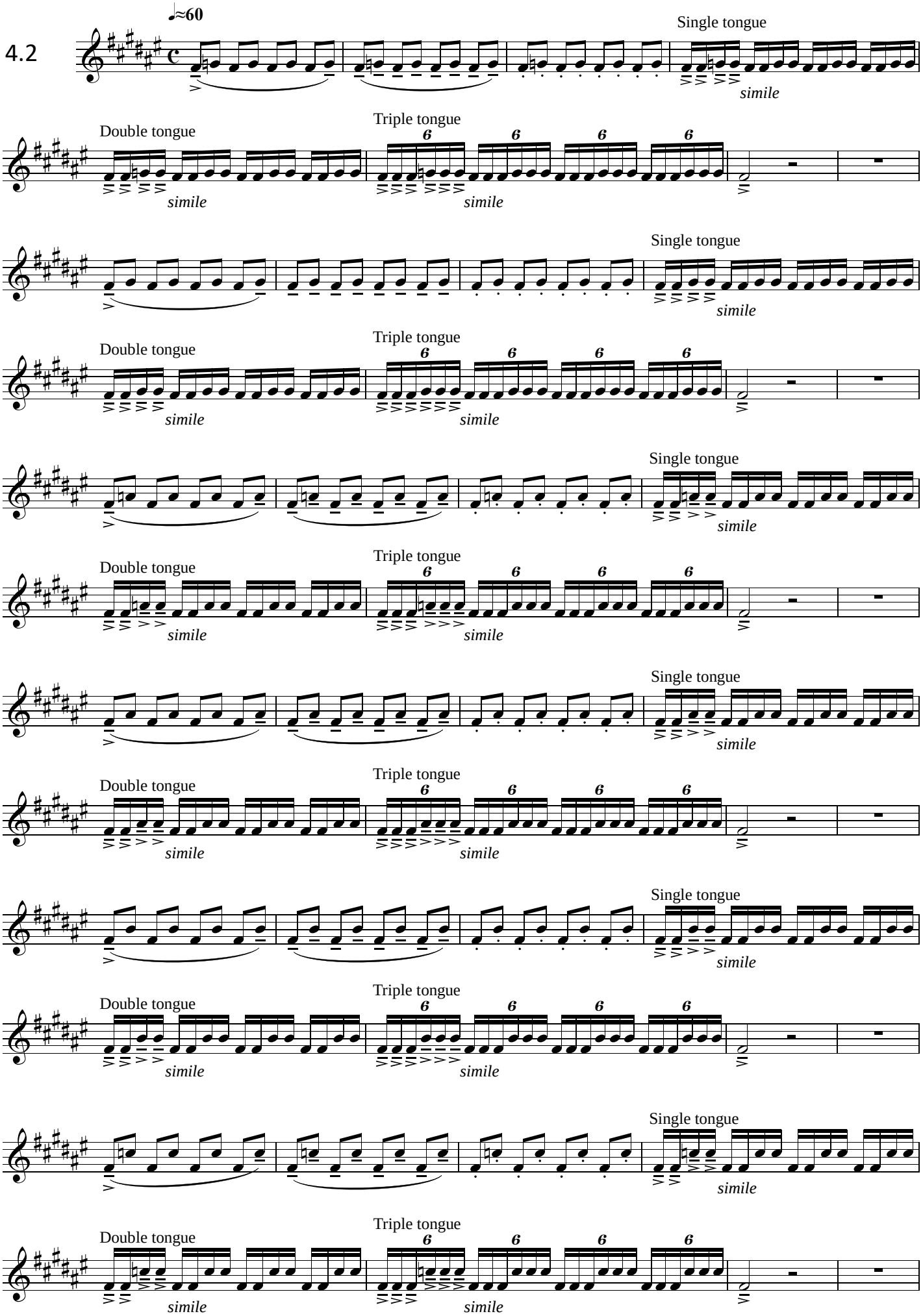

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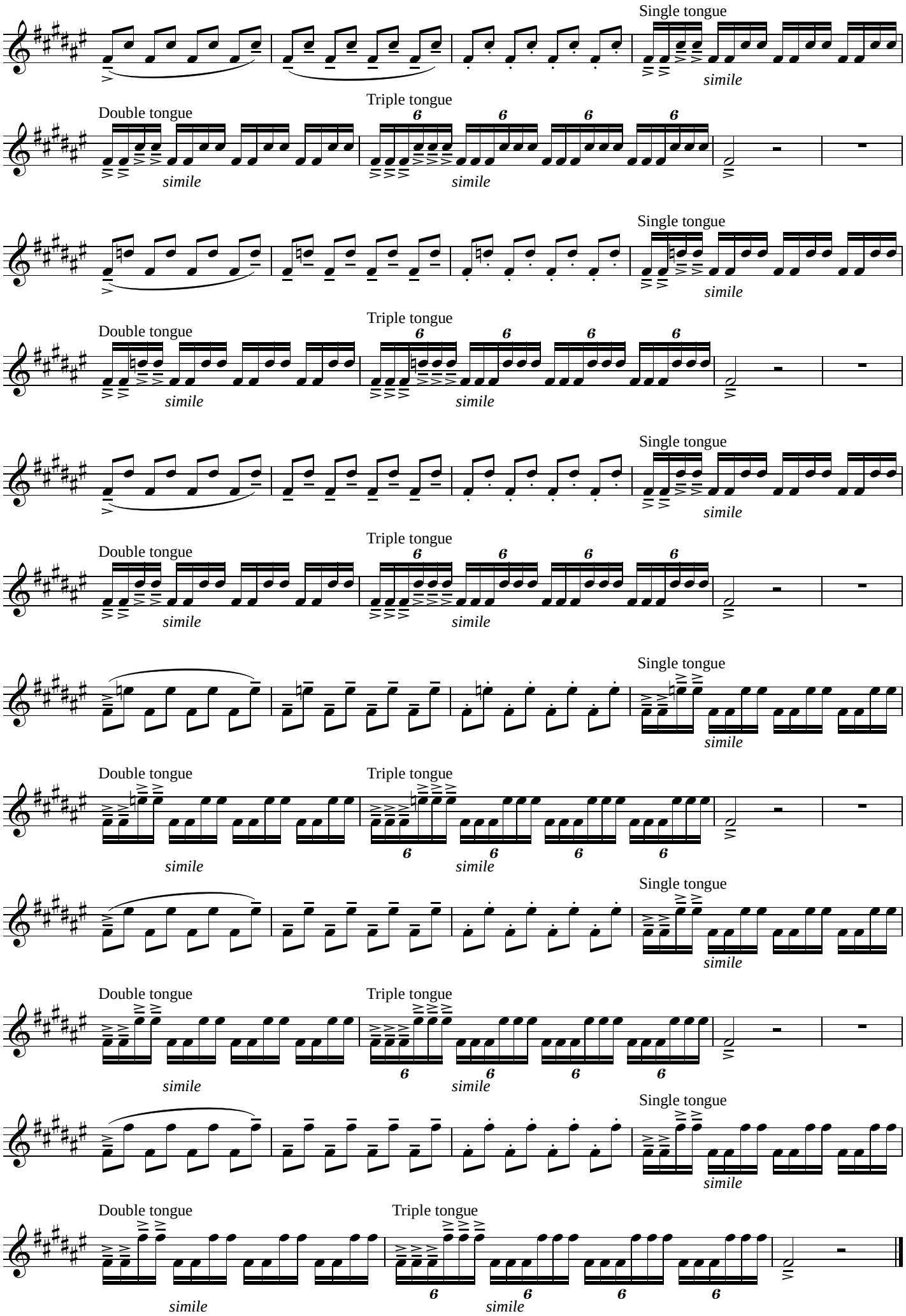
4 - Air- / Flow Studies 4



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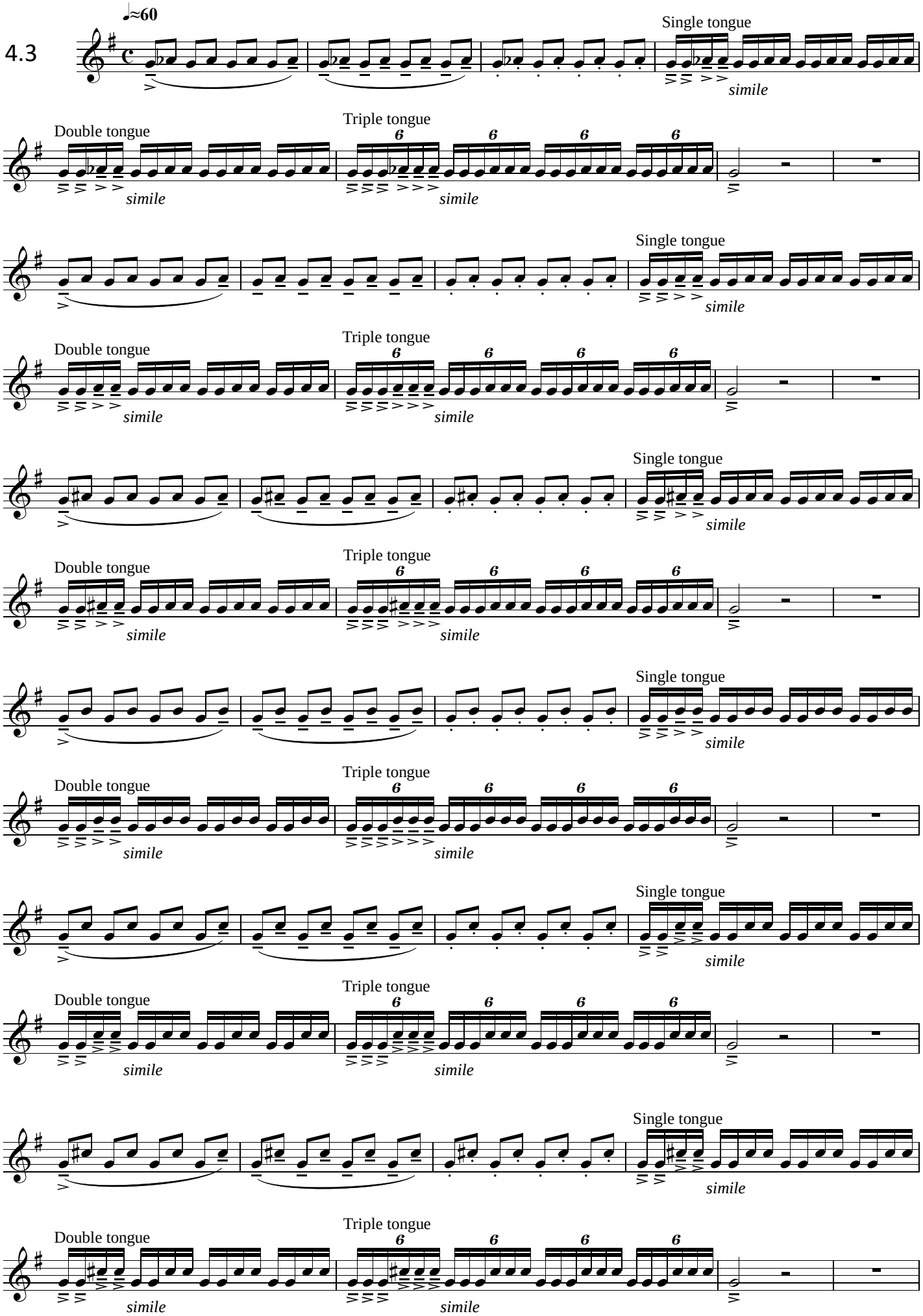

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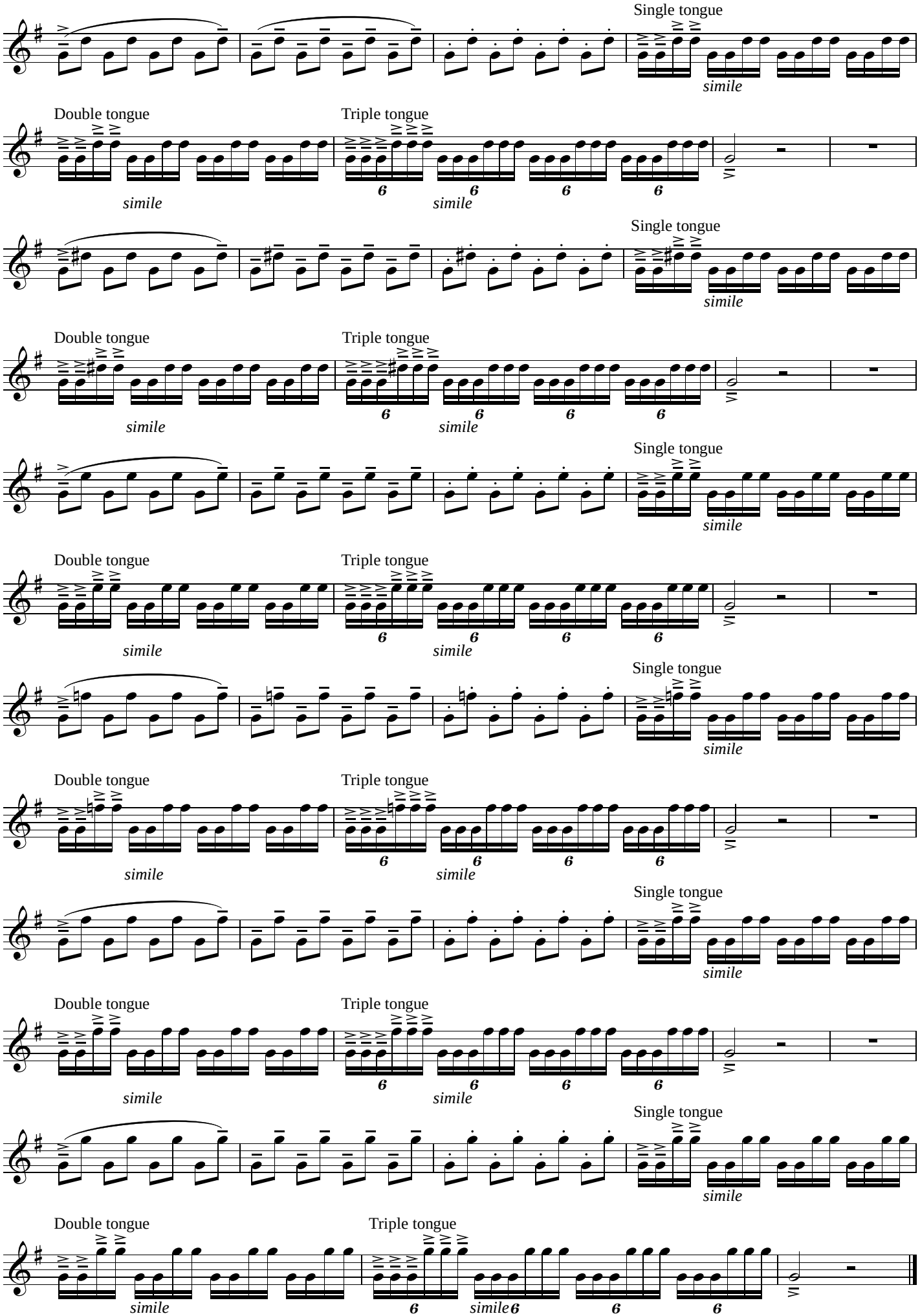
4 - Air- / Flow Studies 4



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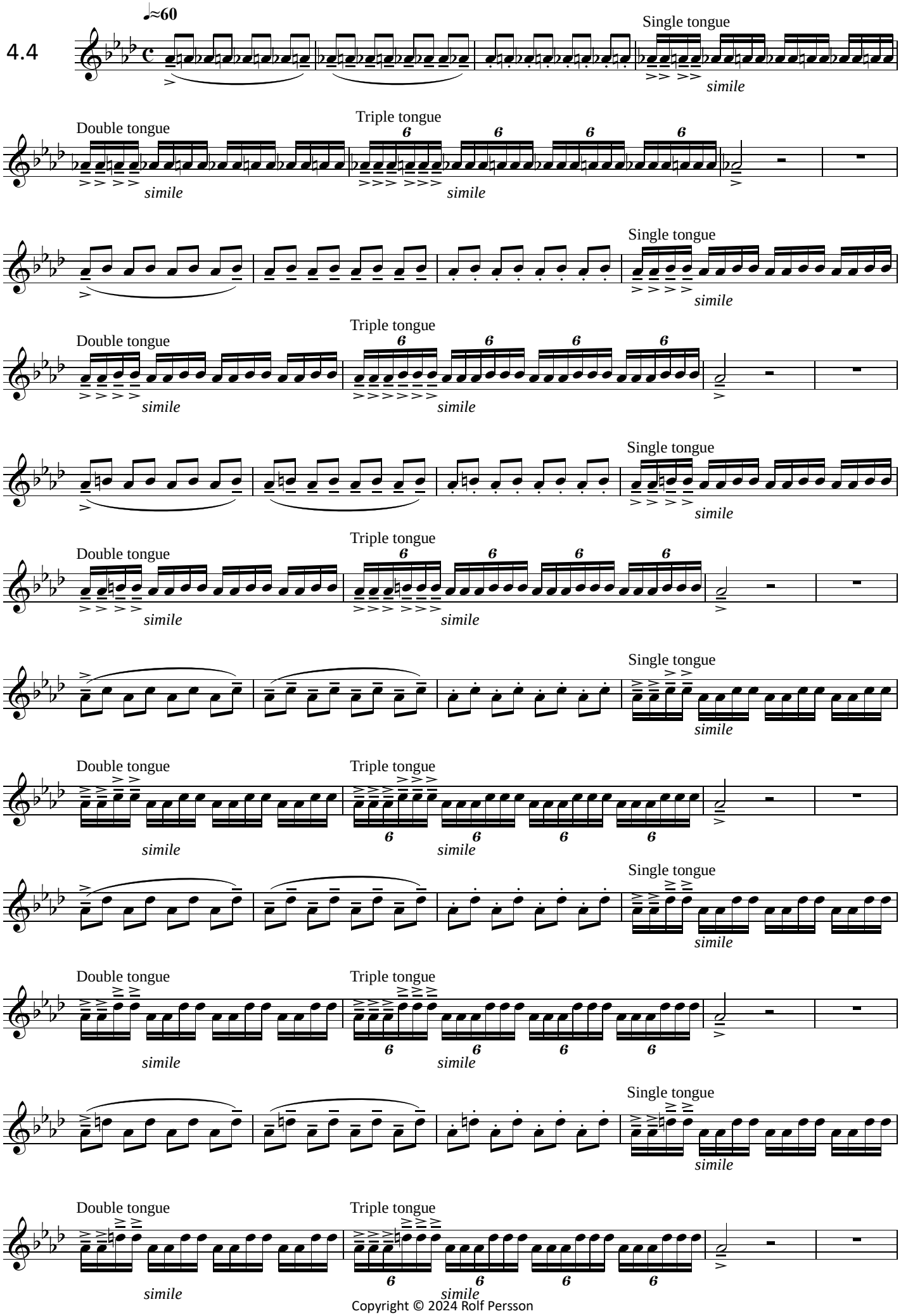

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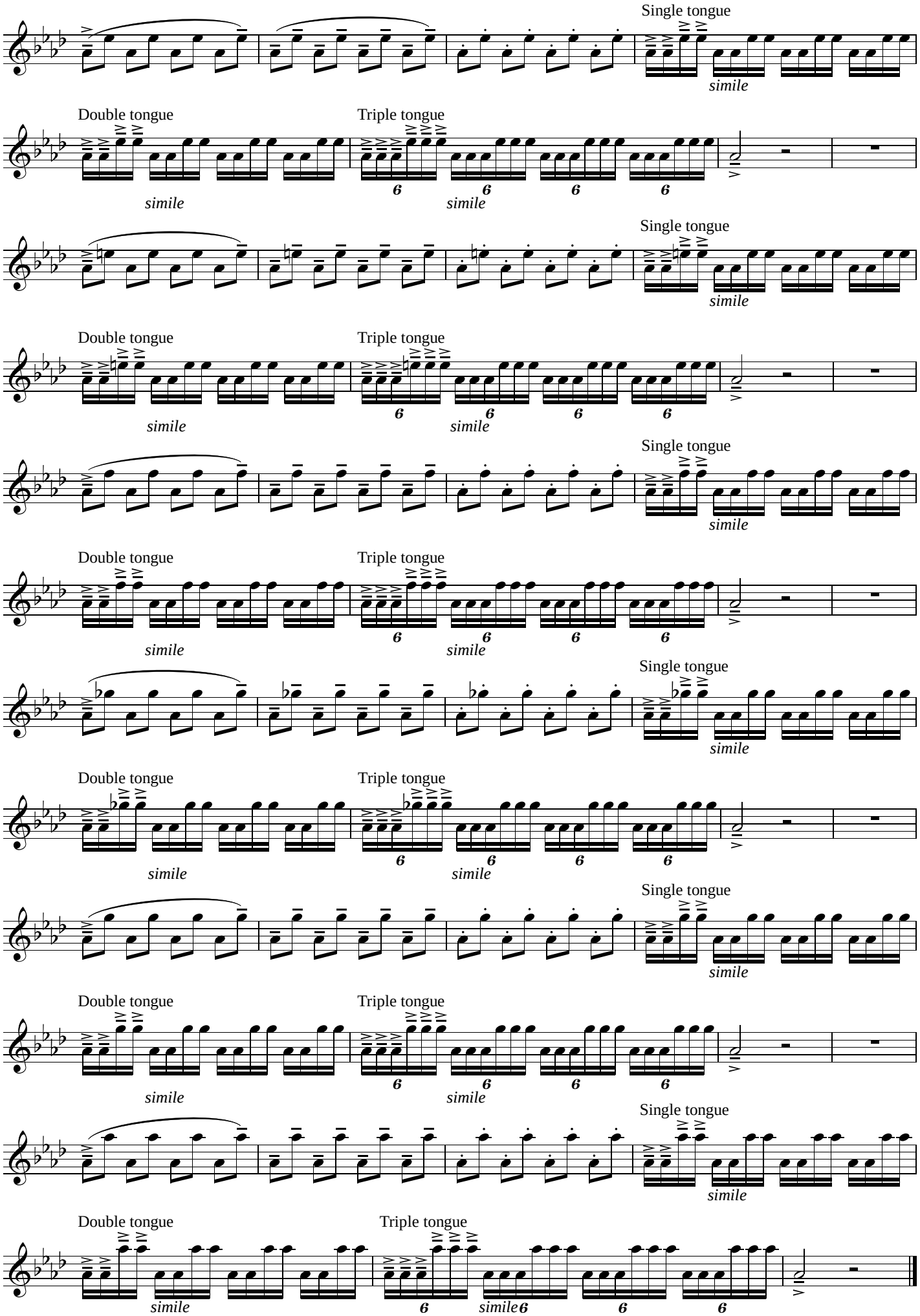

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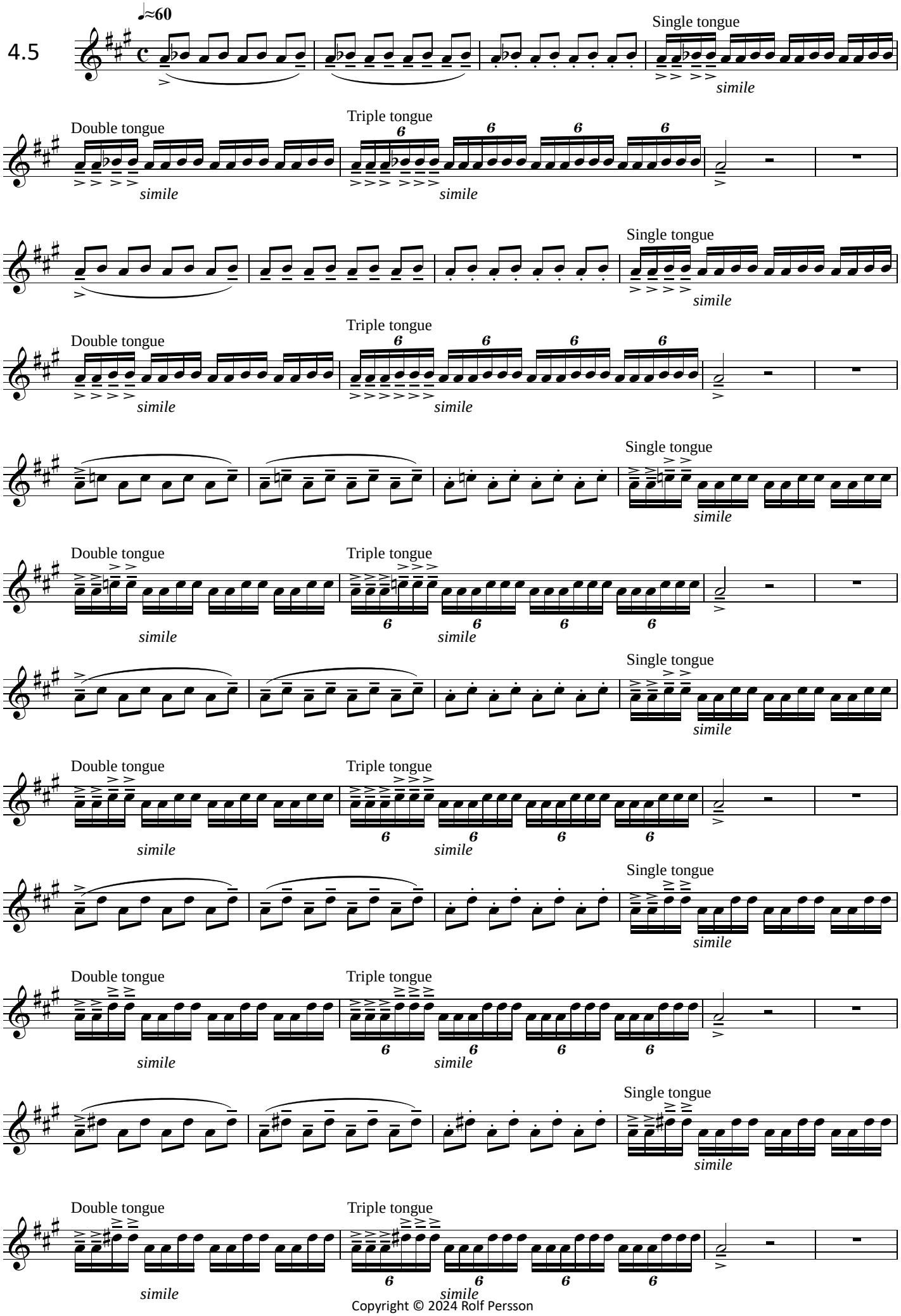

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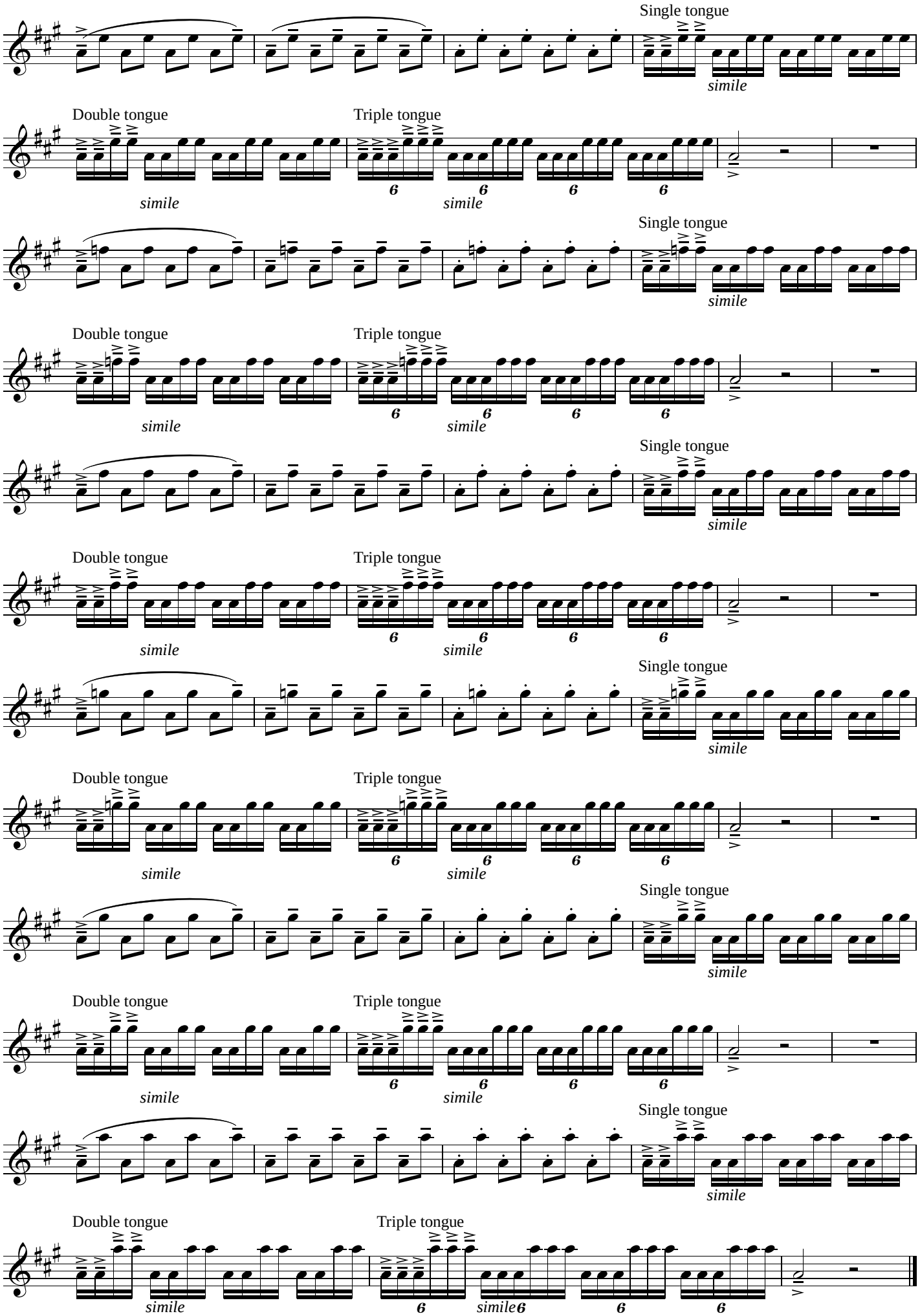

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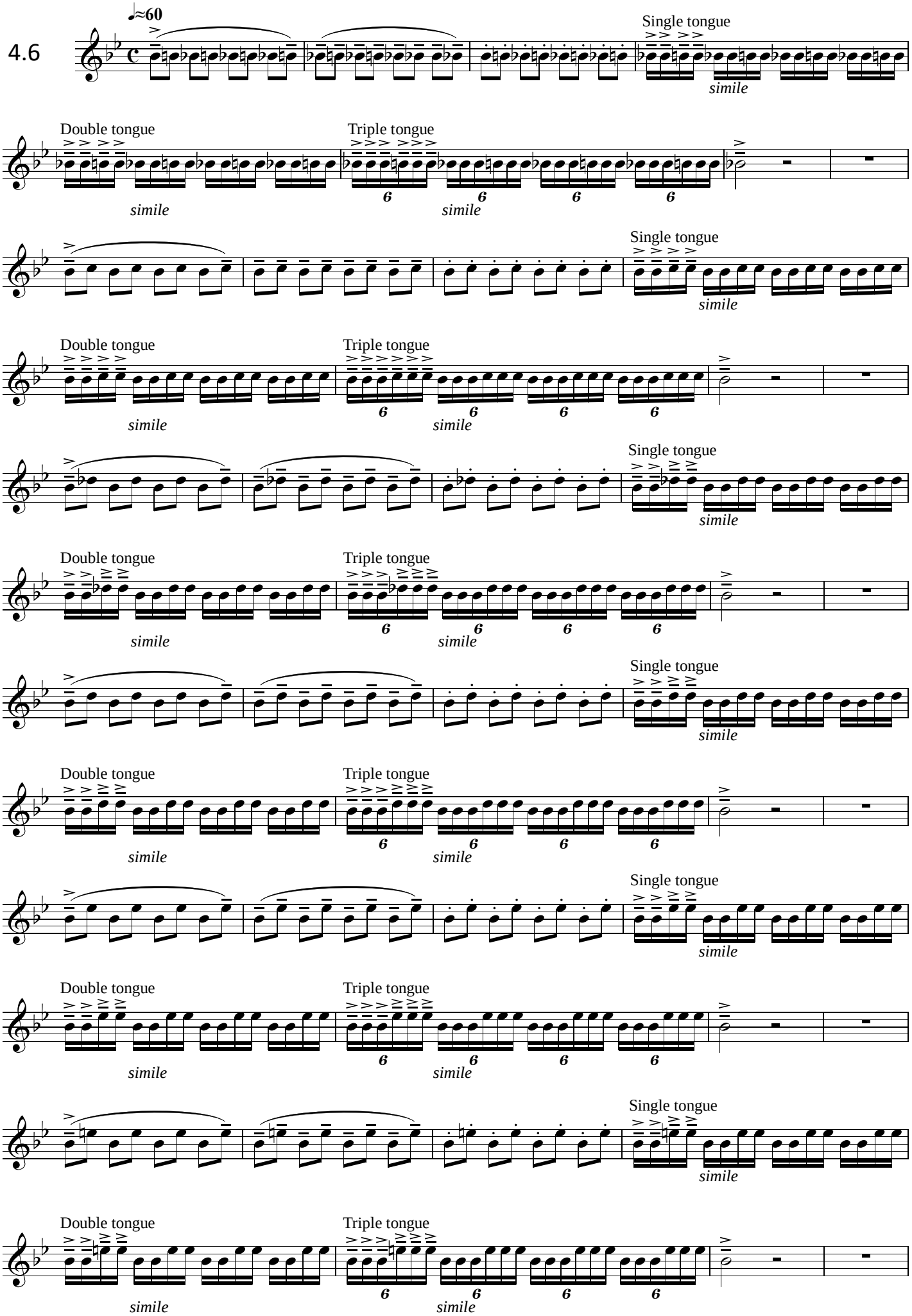

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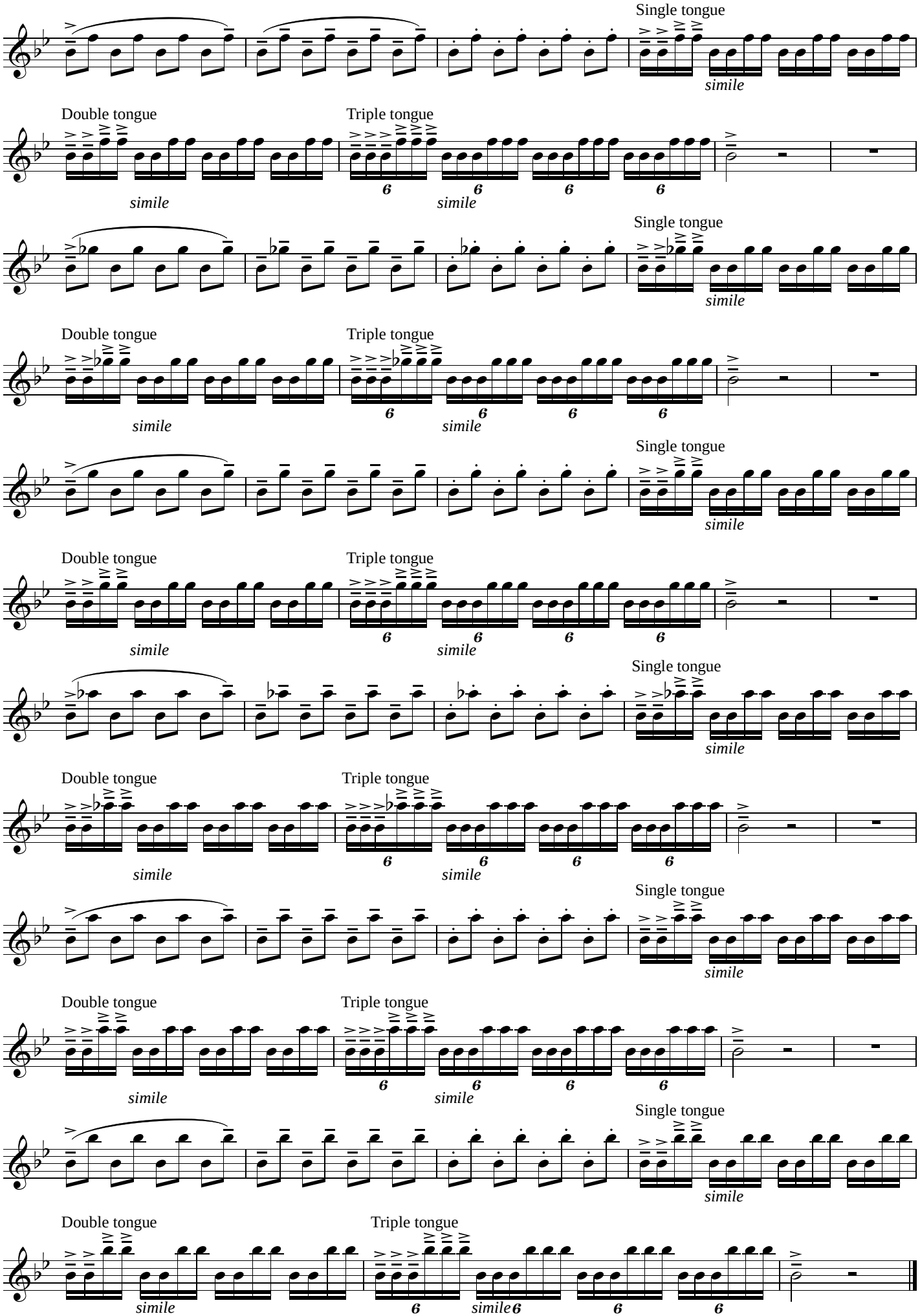

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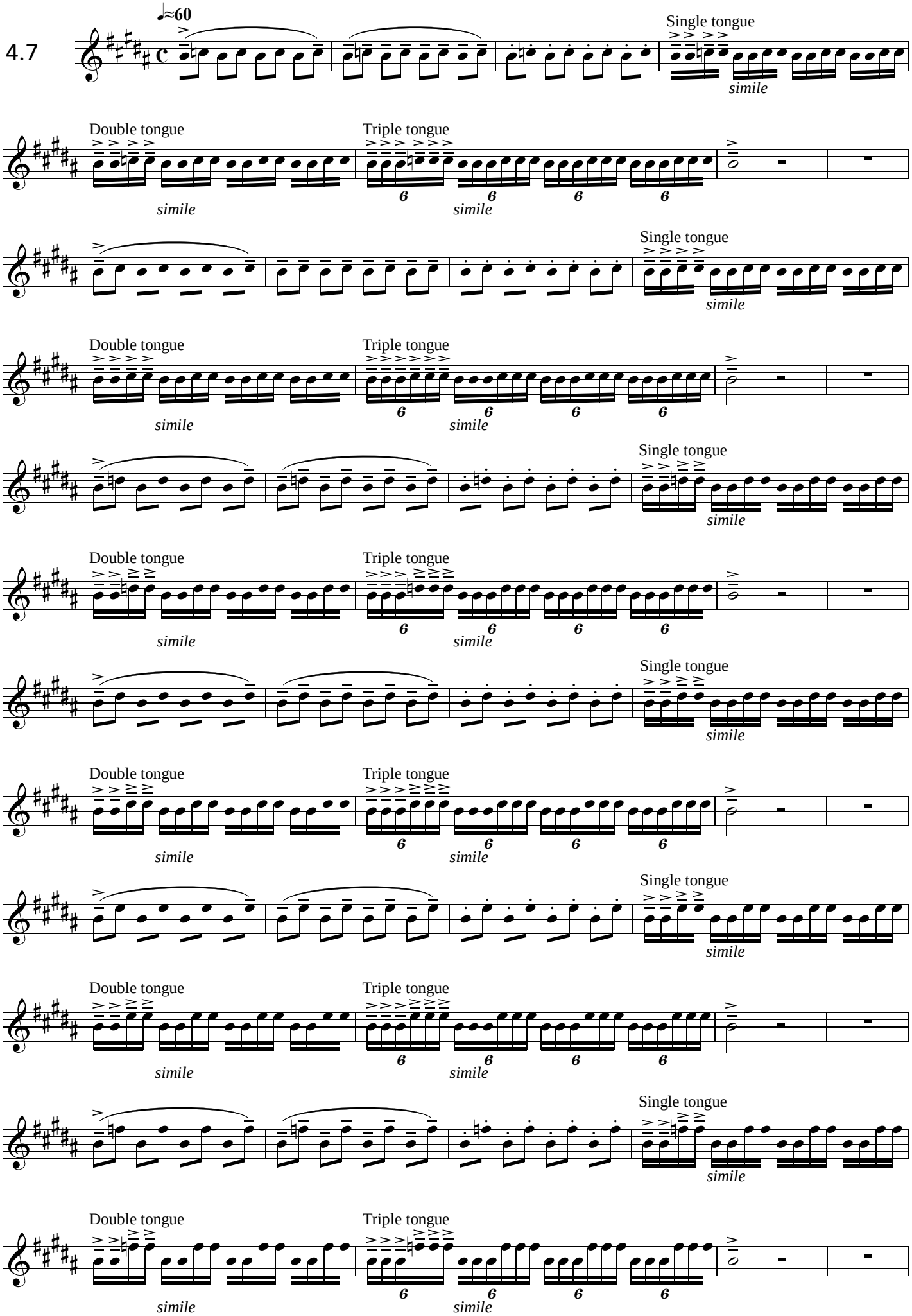

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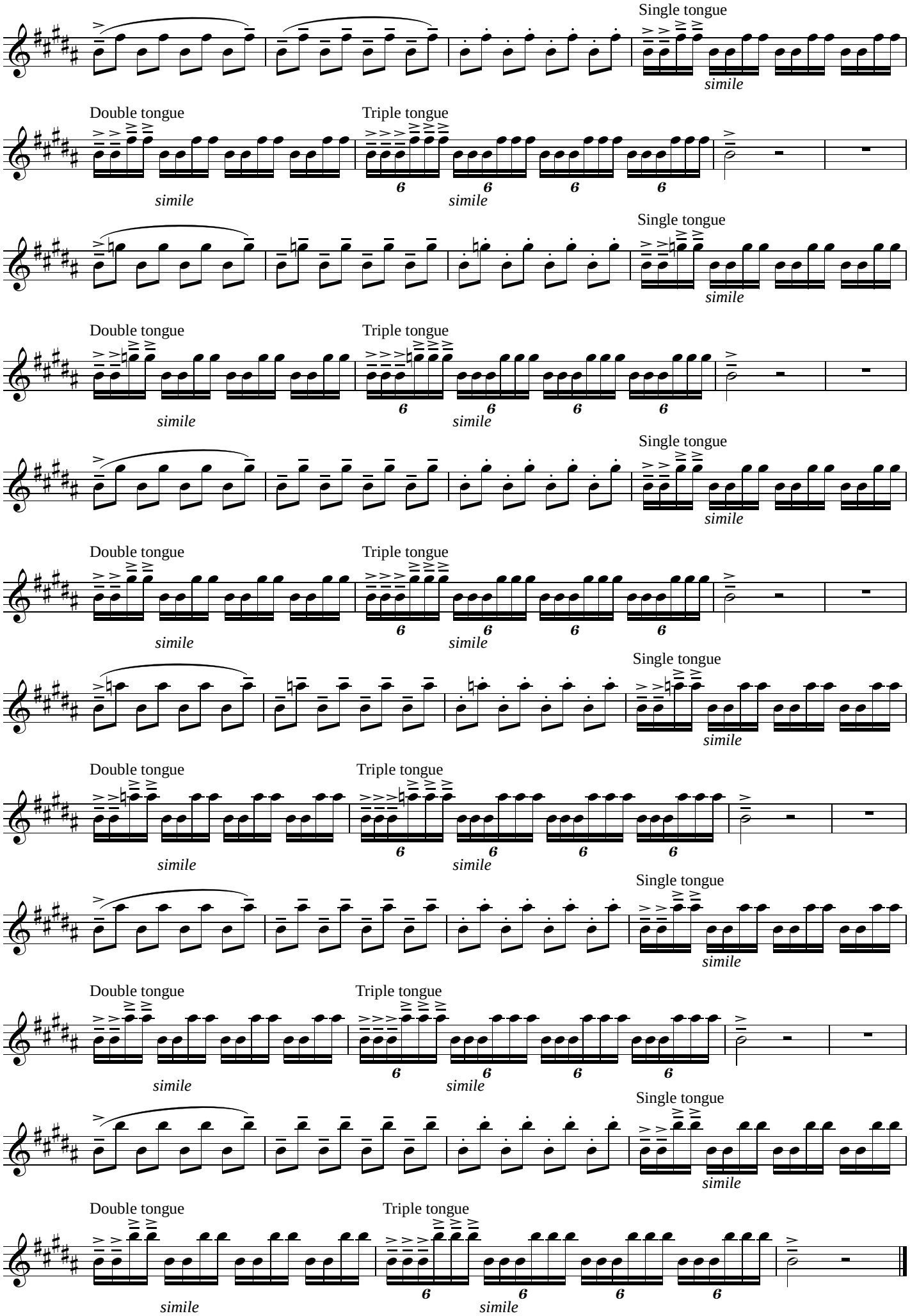

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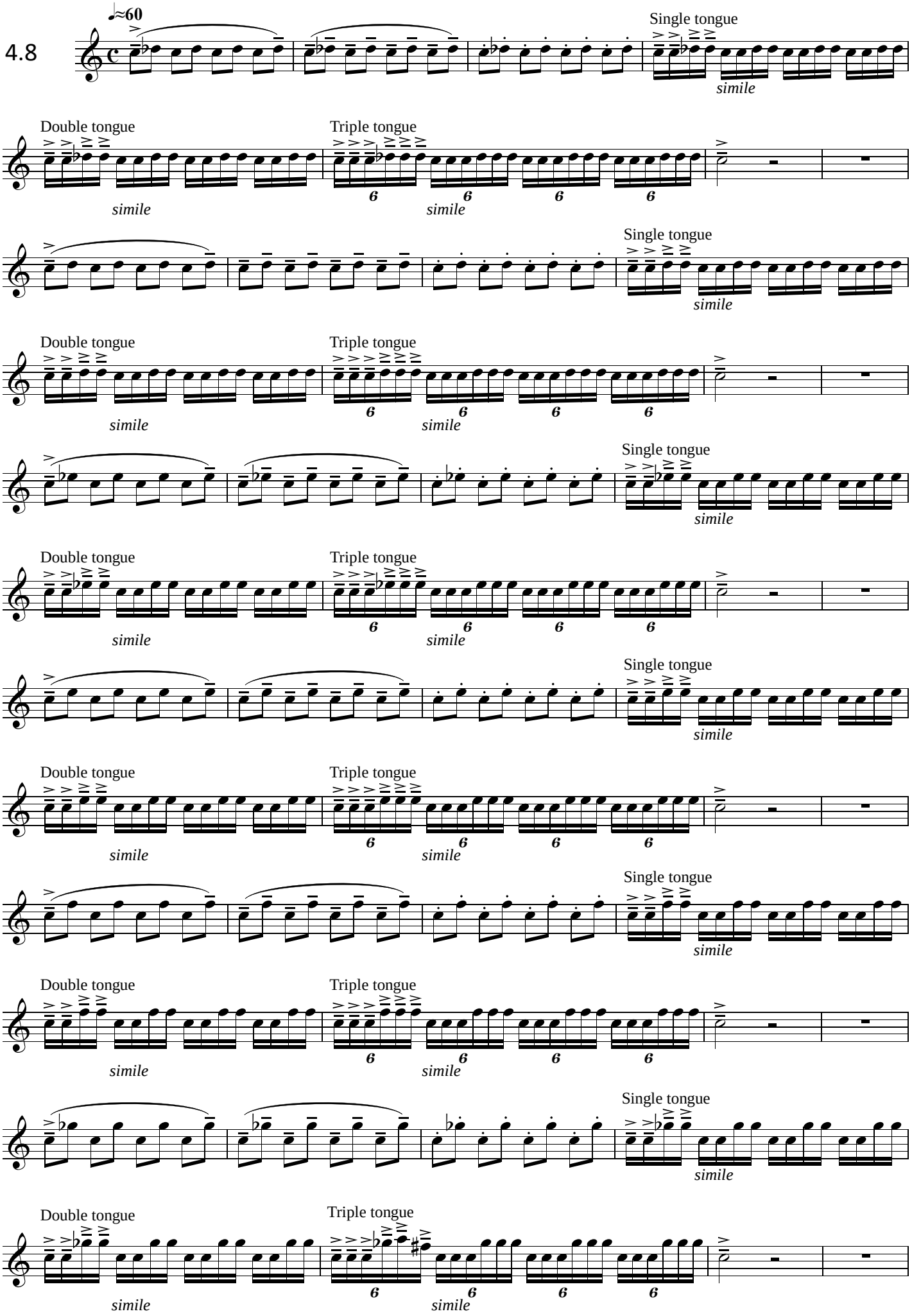

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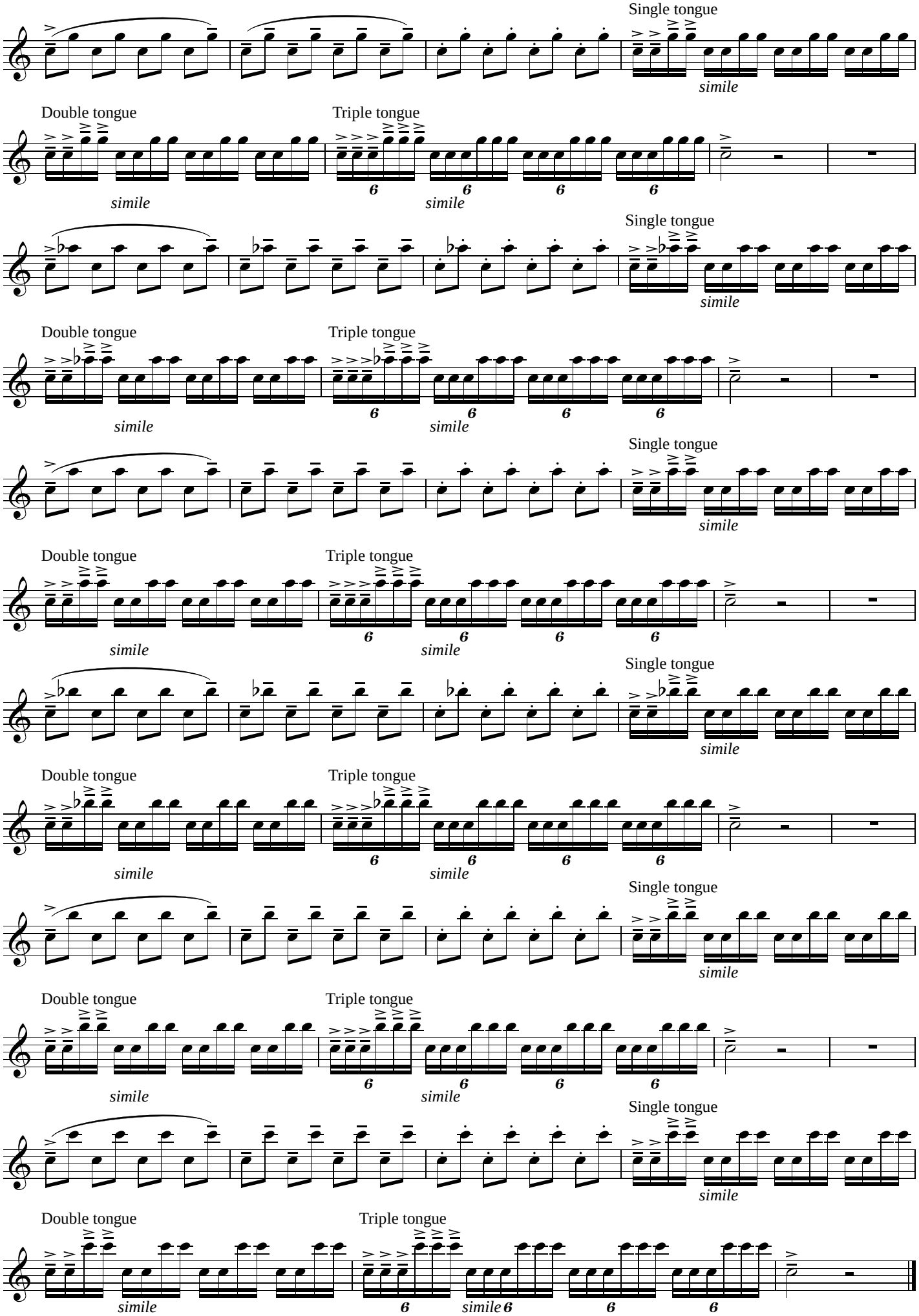

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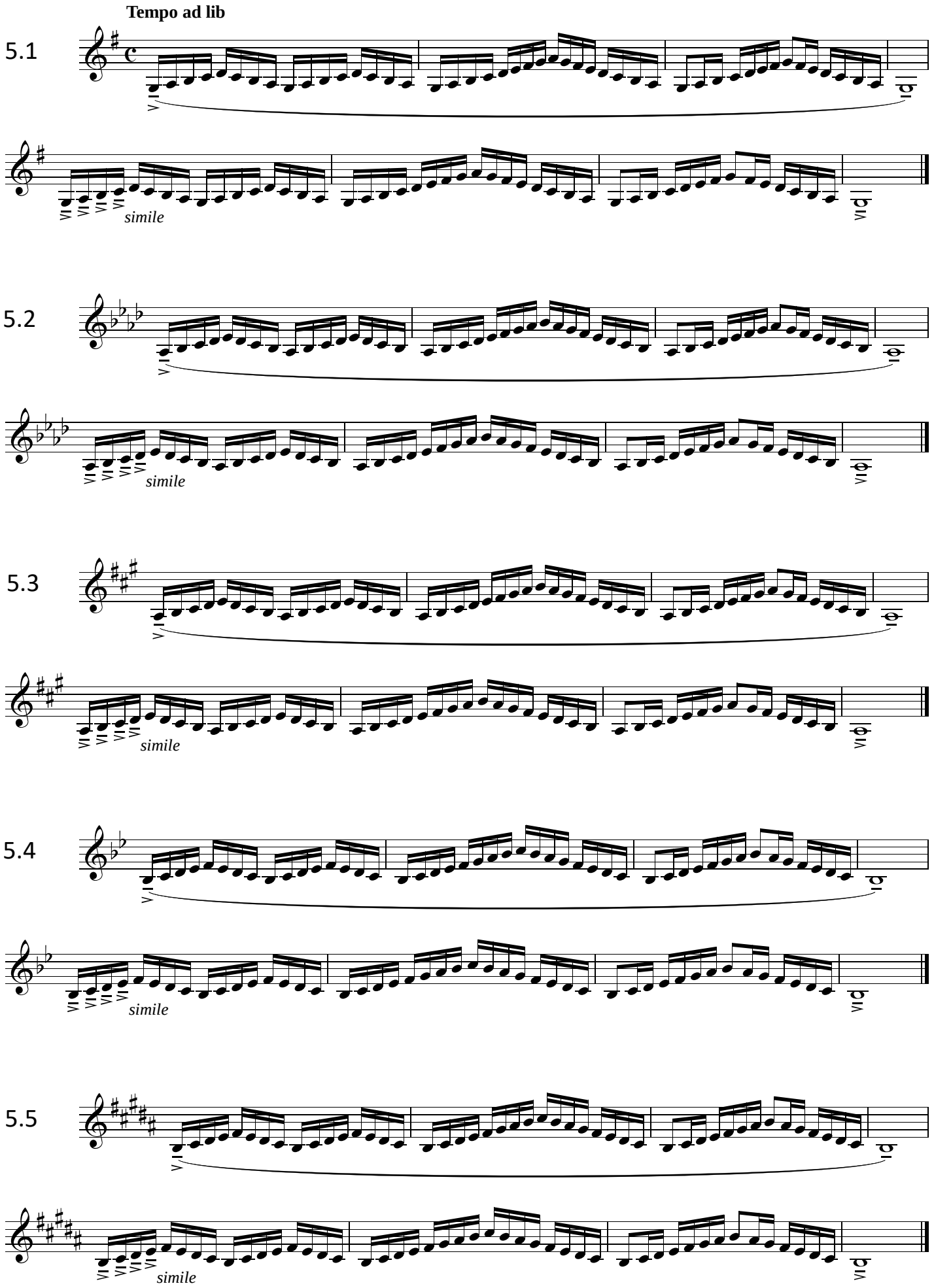
5 - Scales for speed – Major



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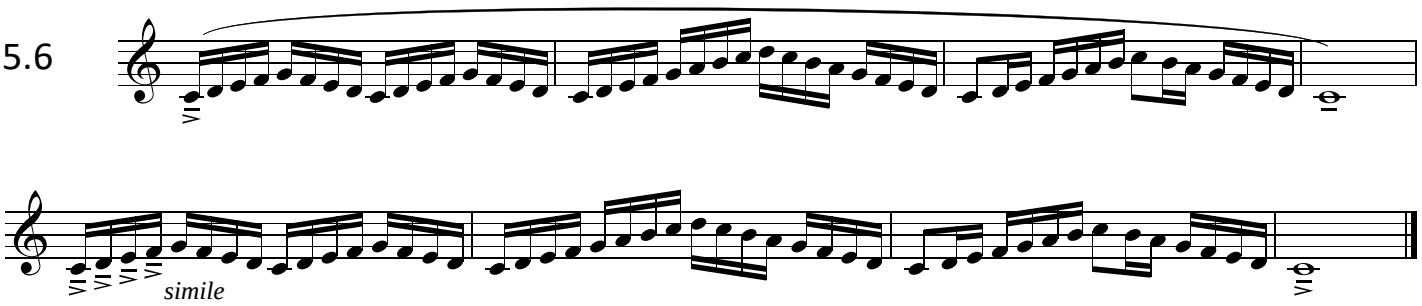

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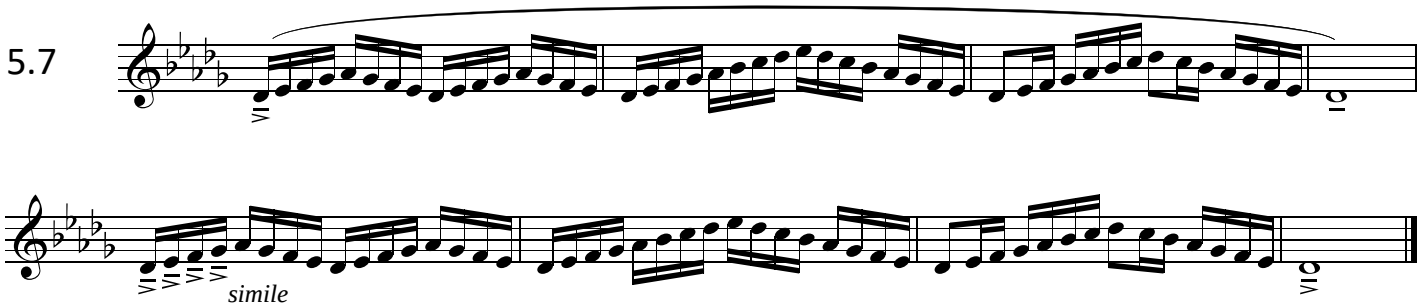

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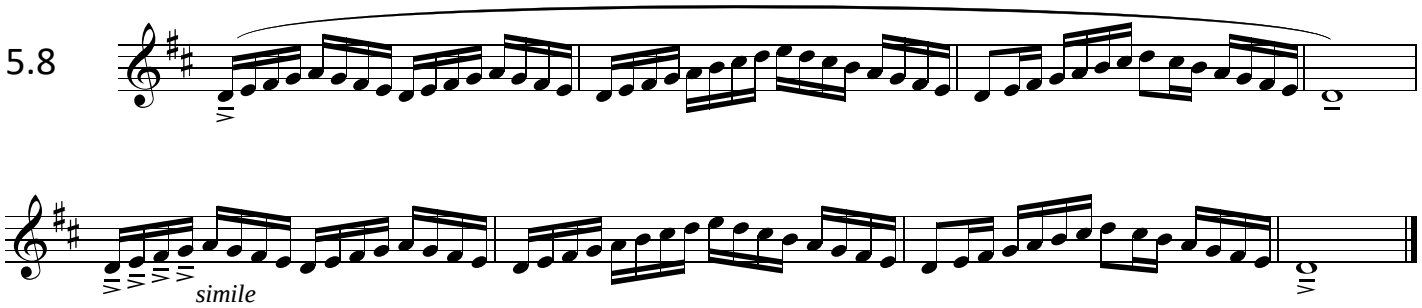

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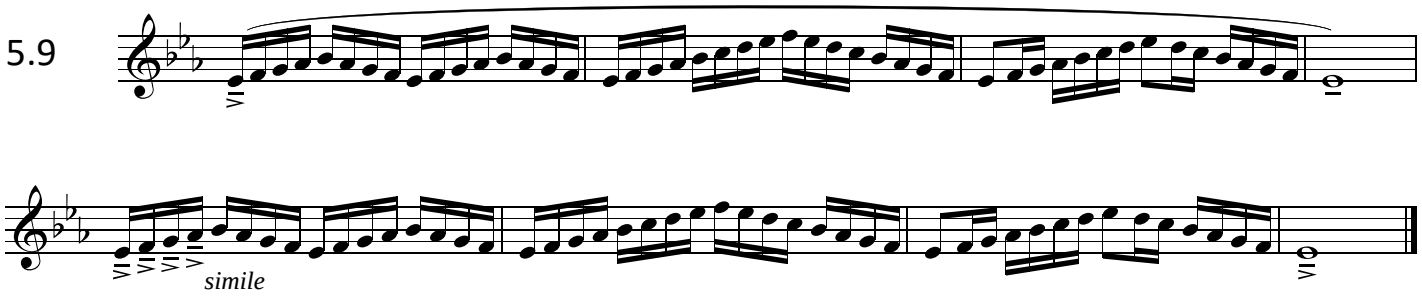

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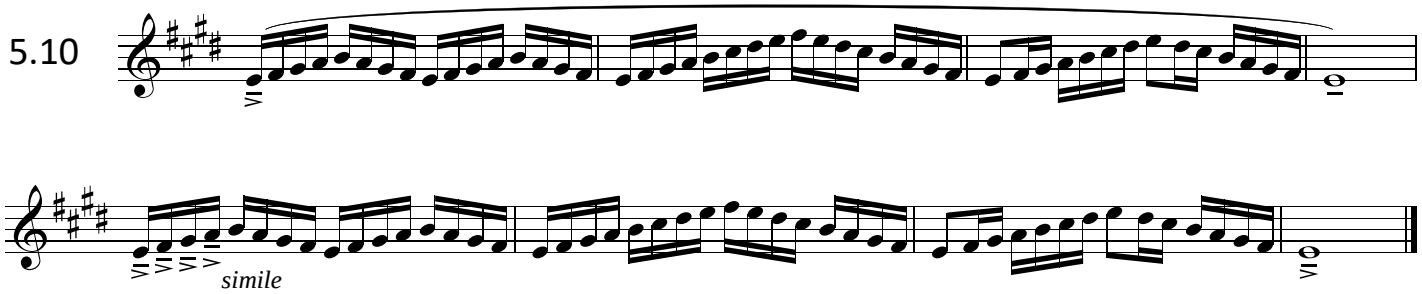

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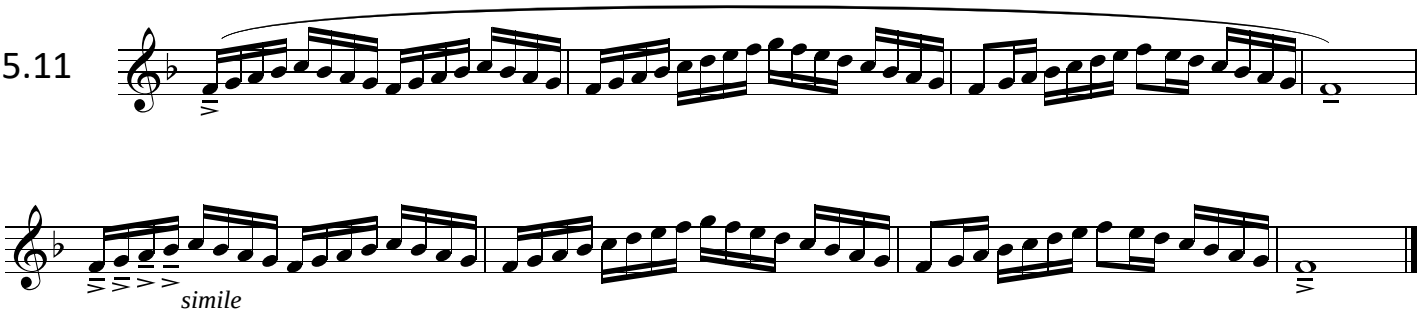

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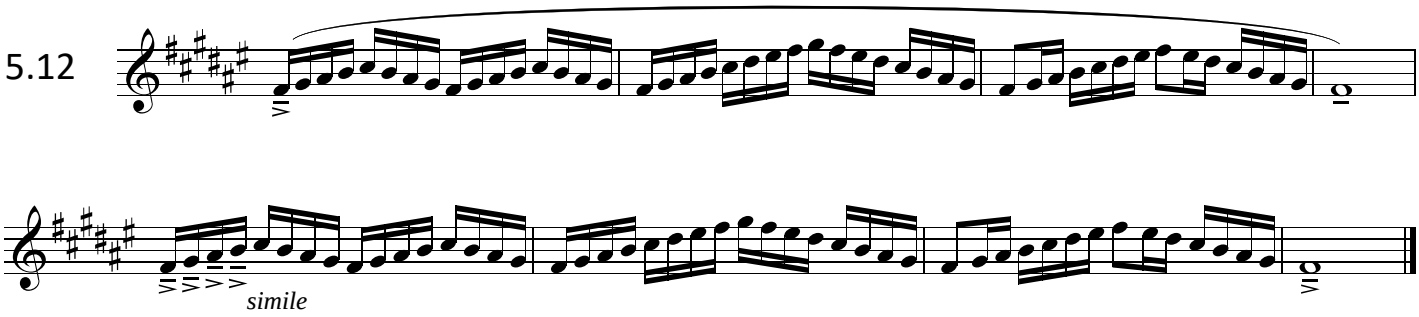

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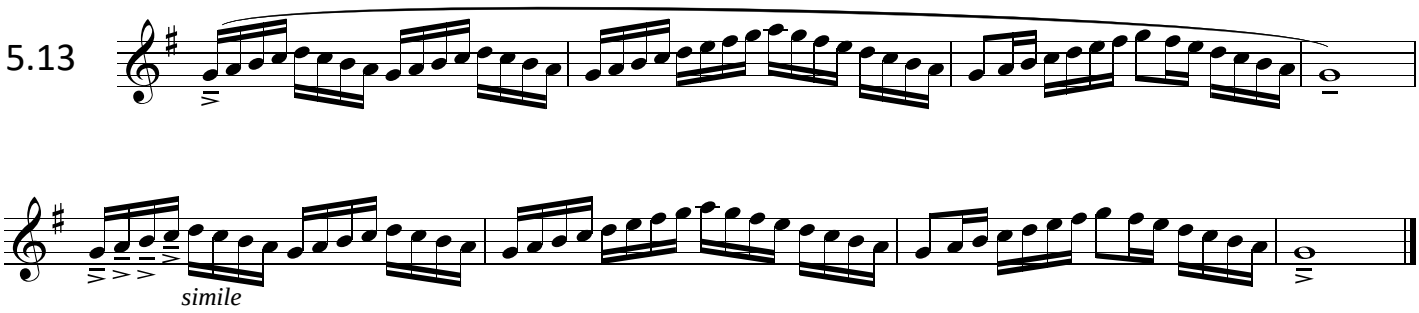

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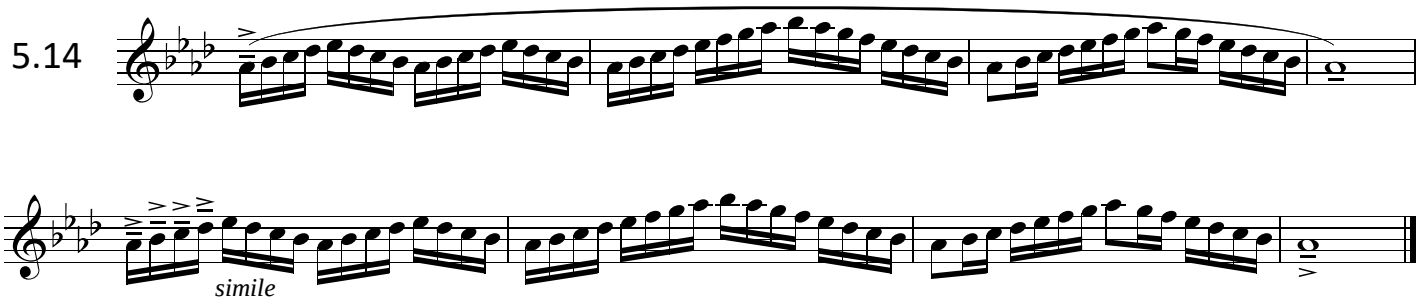

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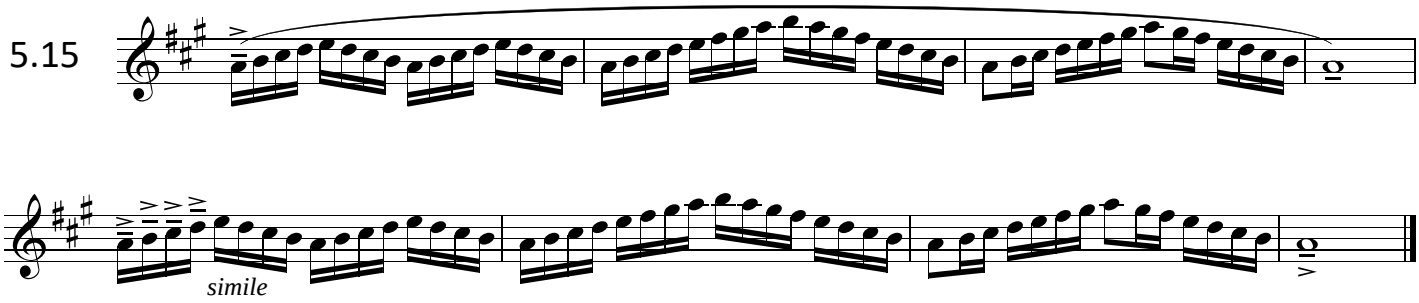

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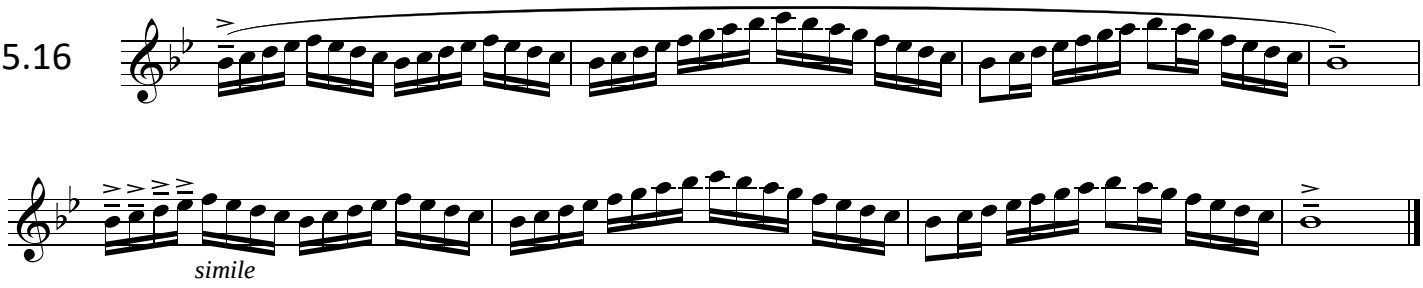

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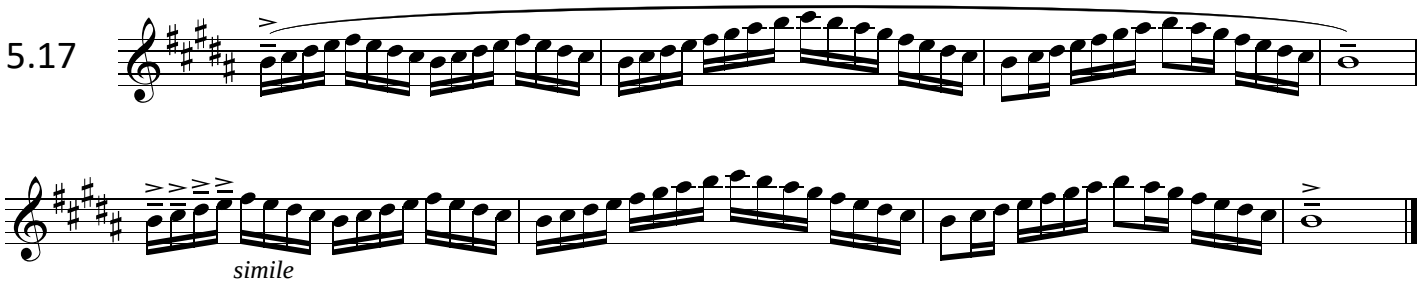

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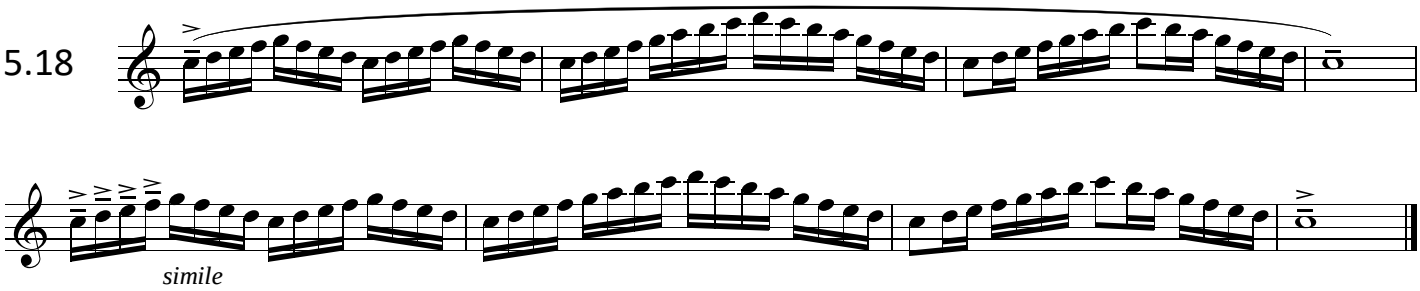

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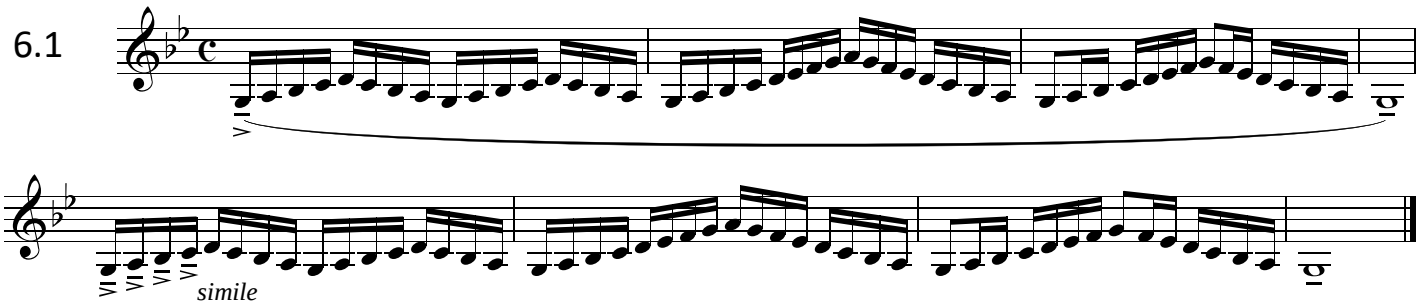
6 - Scales for Speed - Minor

Tempo ad lib

6.1



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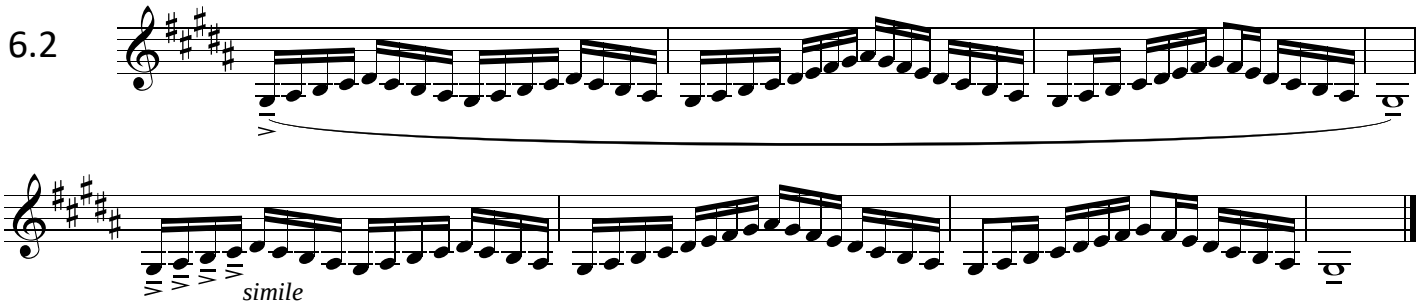

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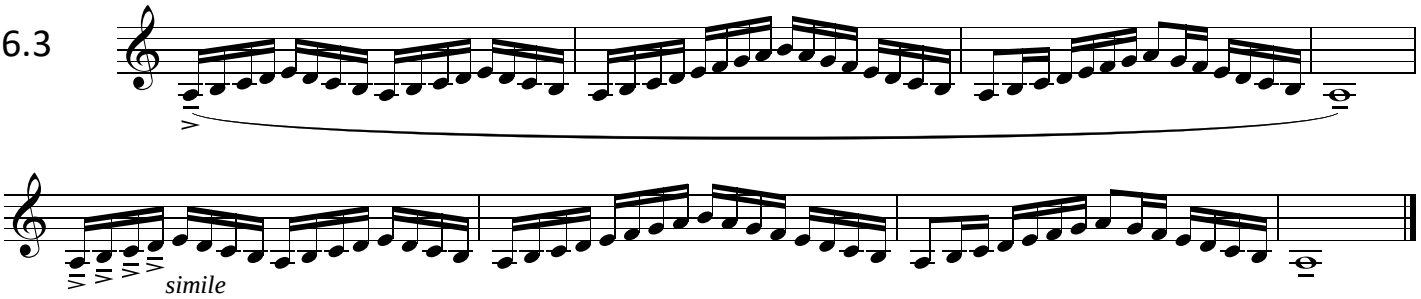

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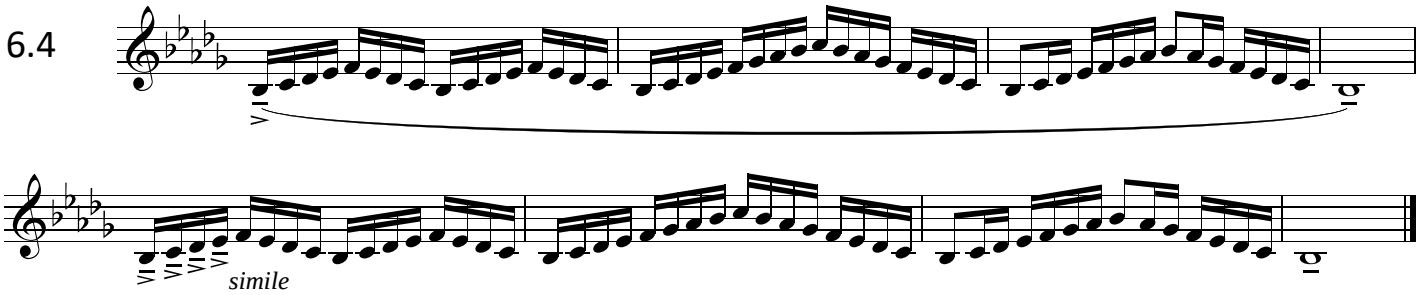

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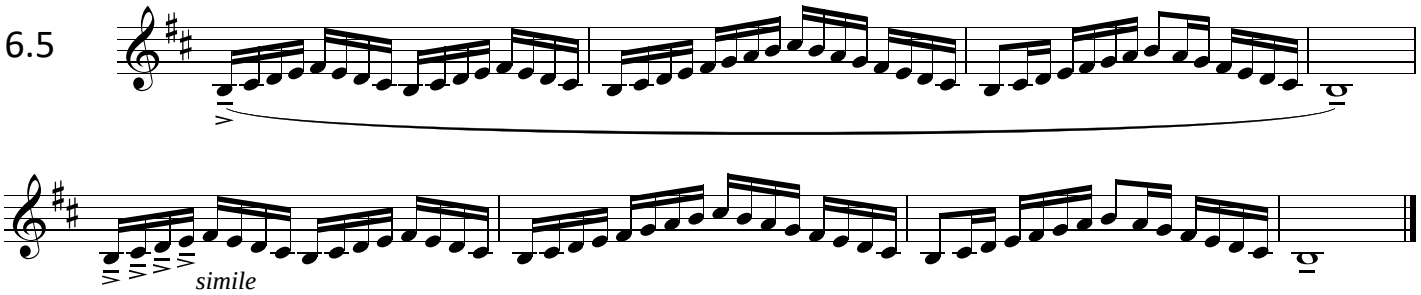

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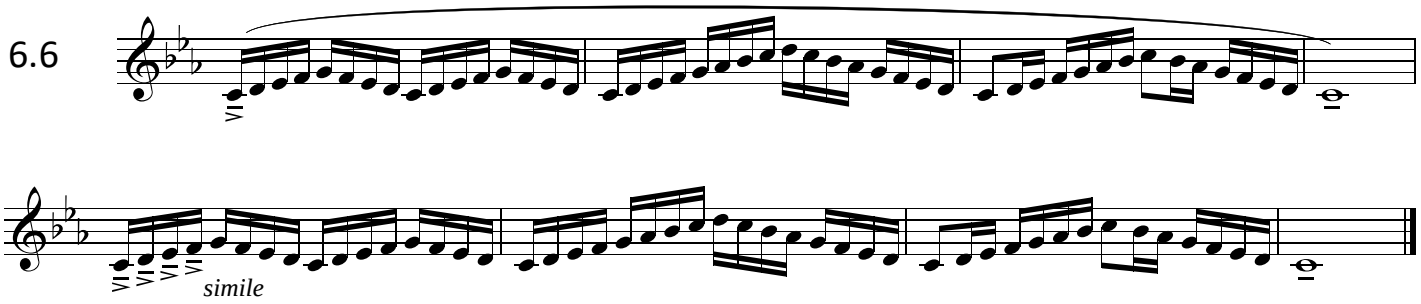

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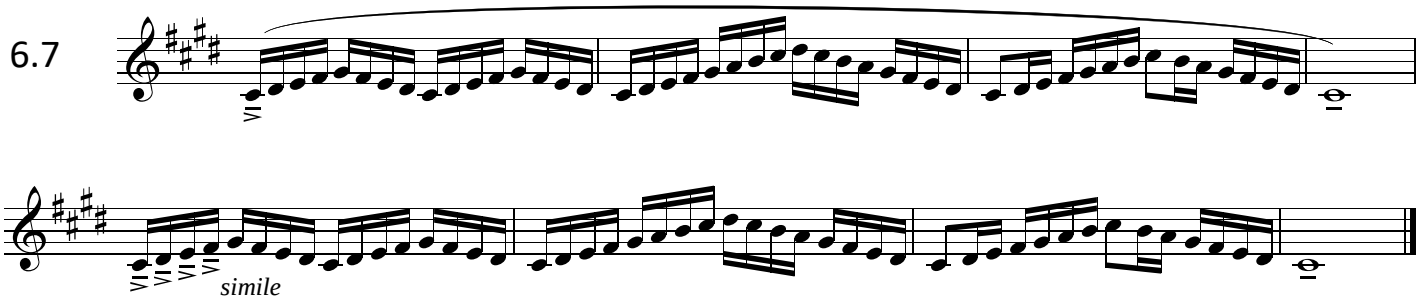

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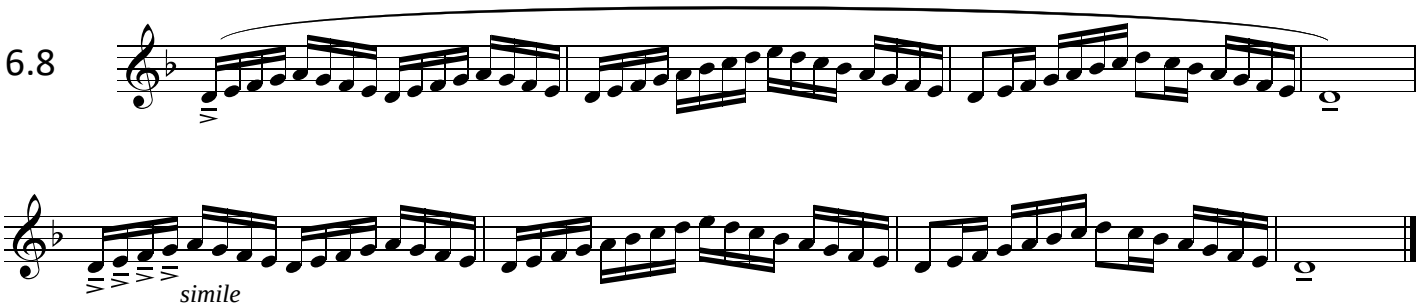

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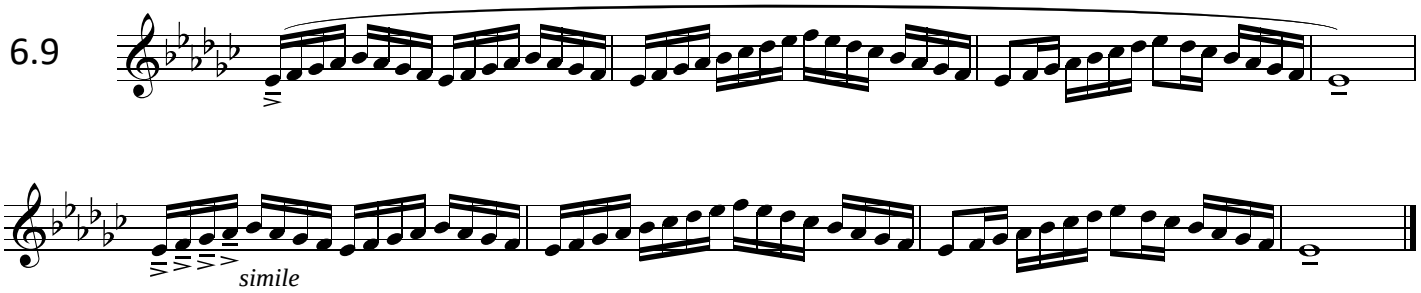

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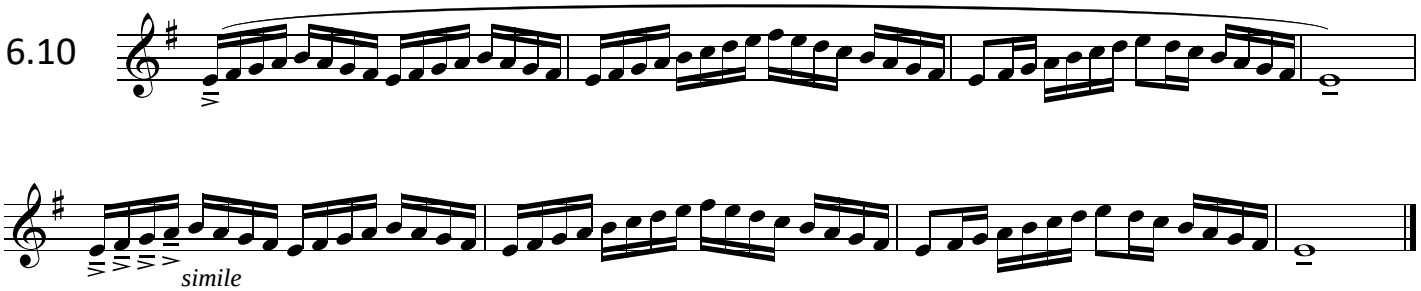

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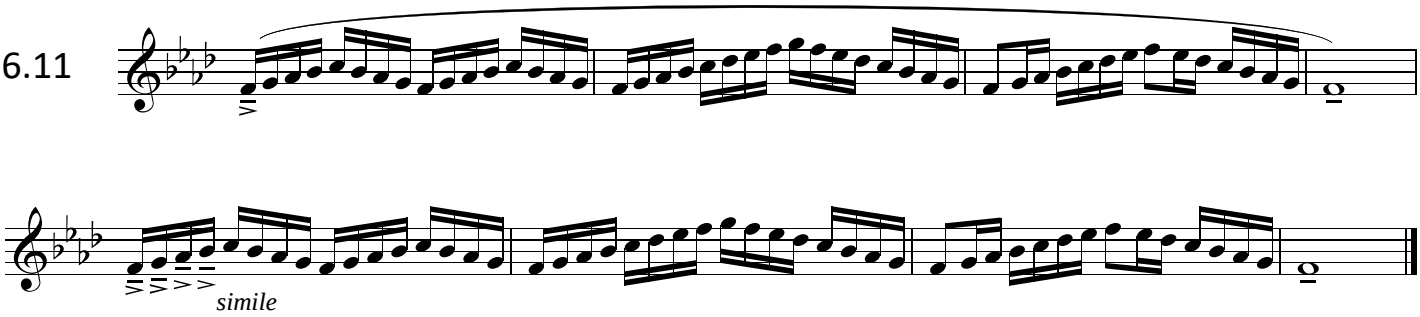

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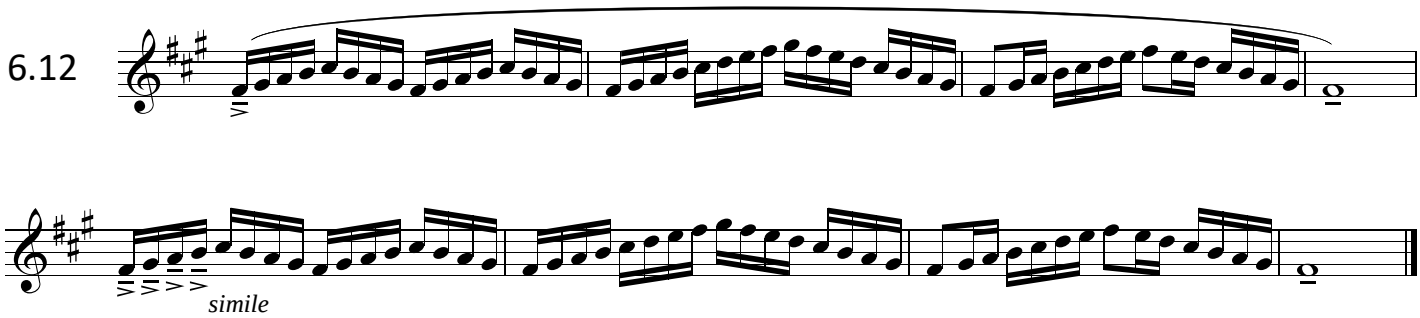

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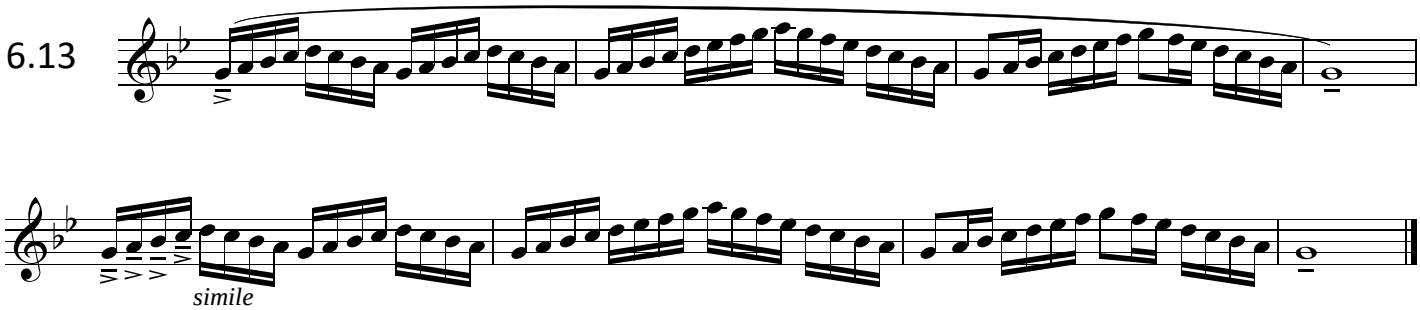

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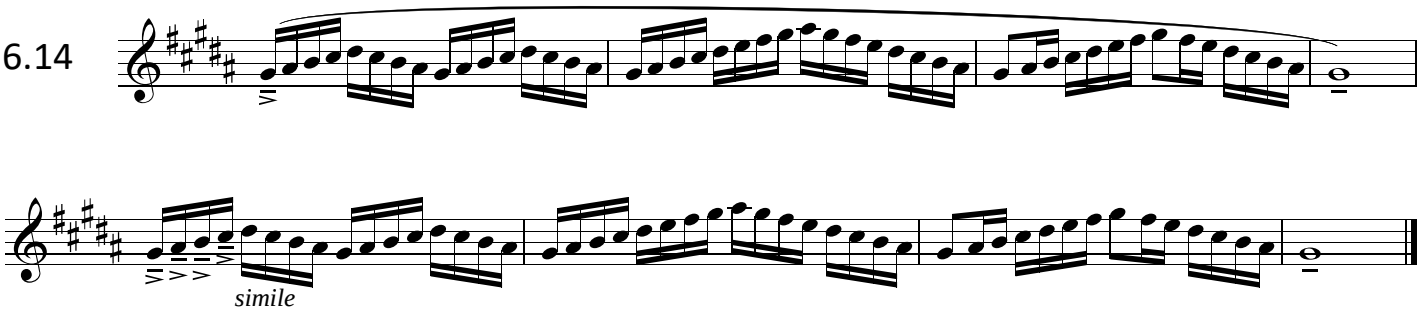

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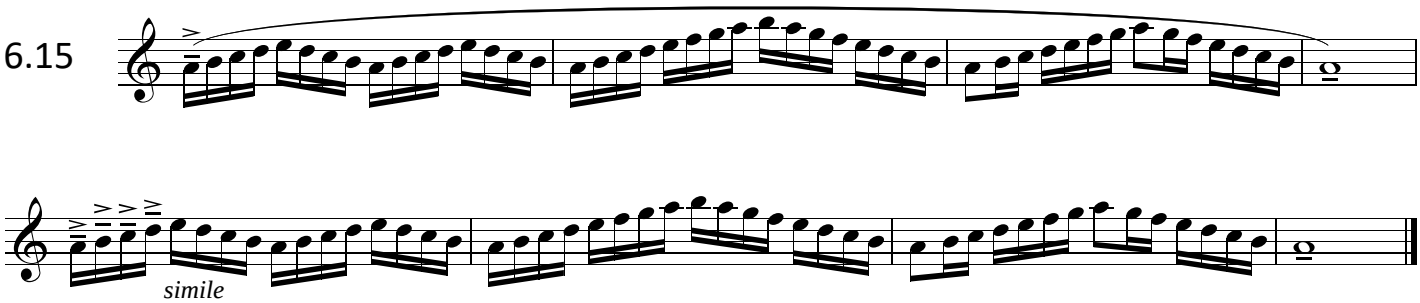

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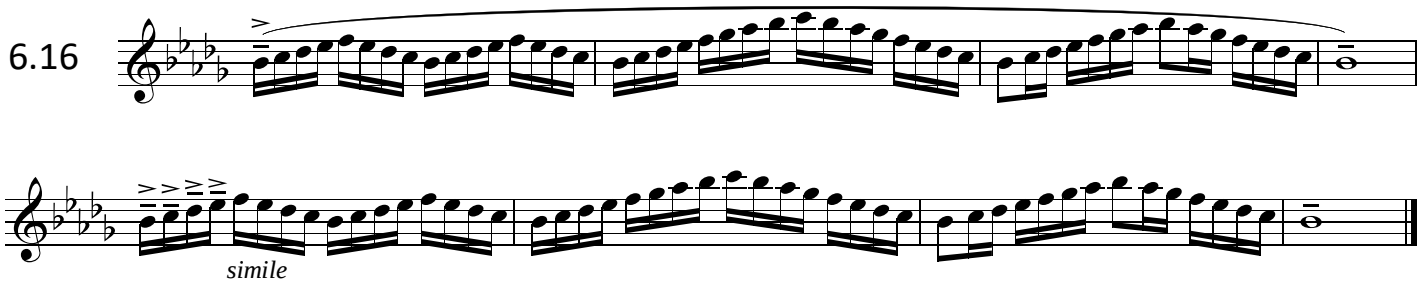

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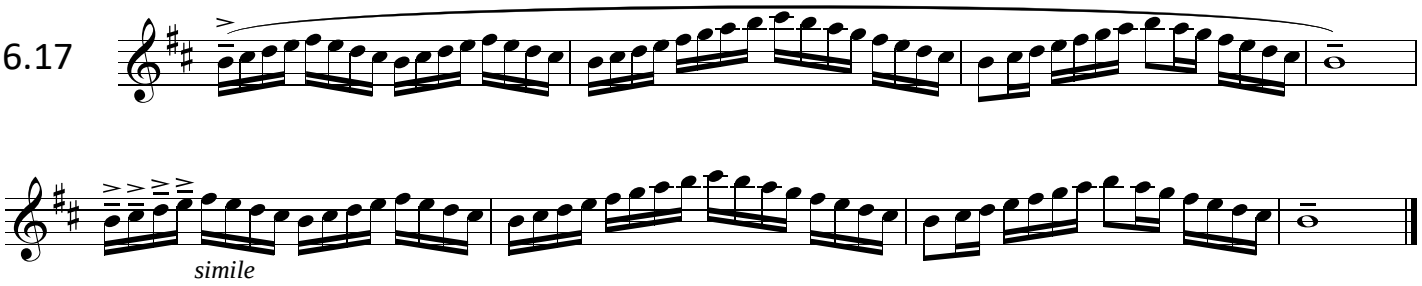

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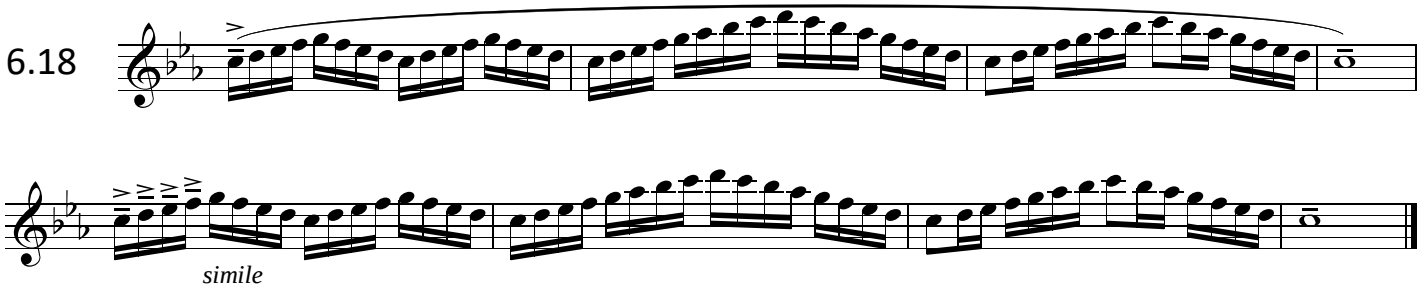

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7 - Technical Finger Studies – Major

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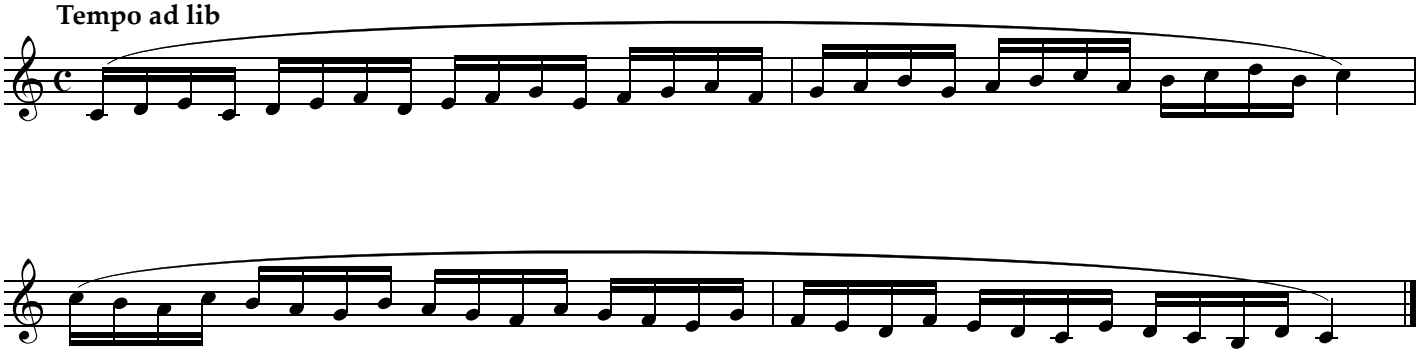

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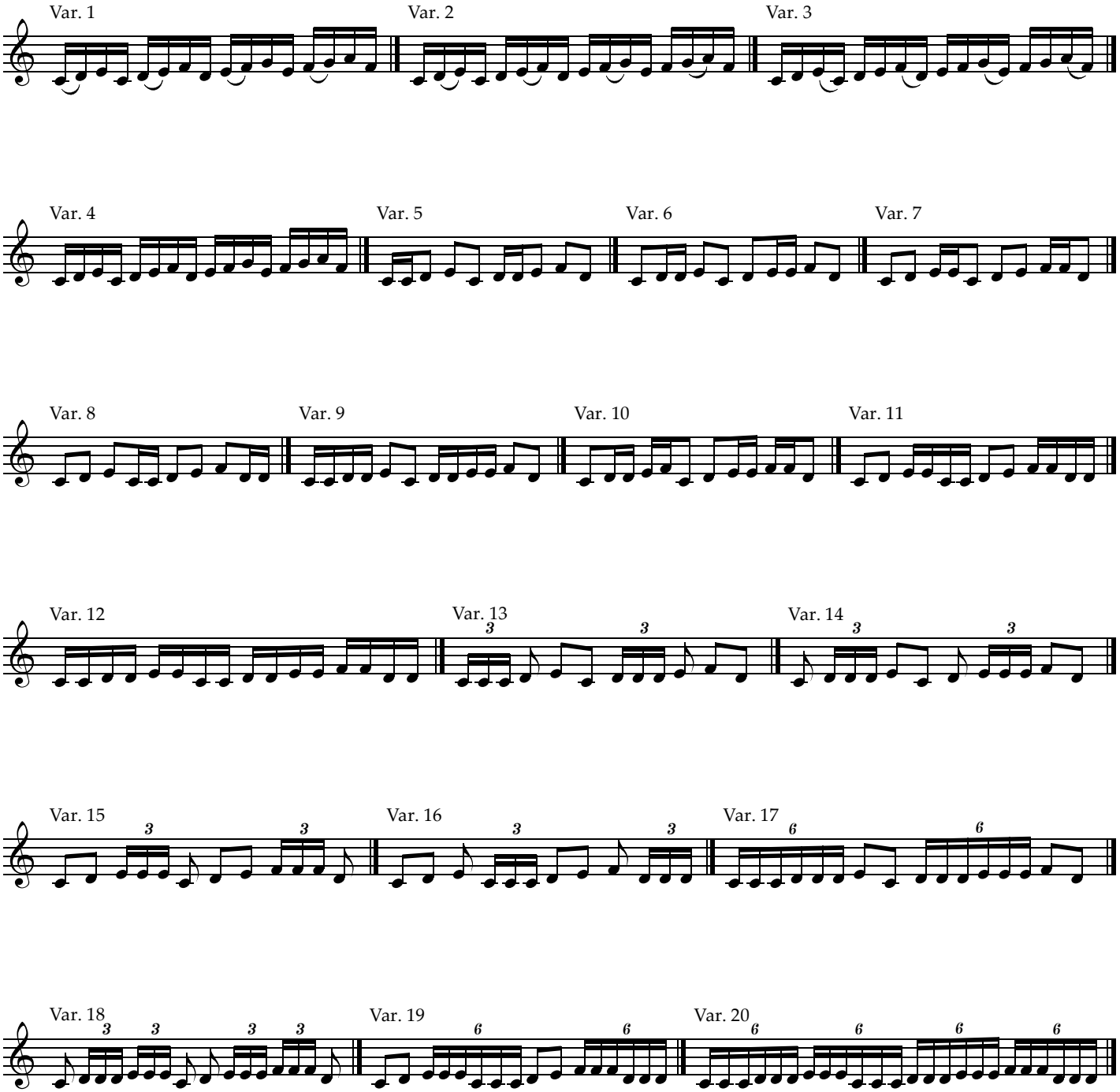

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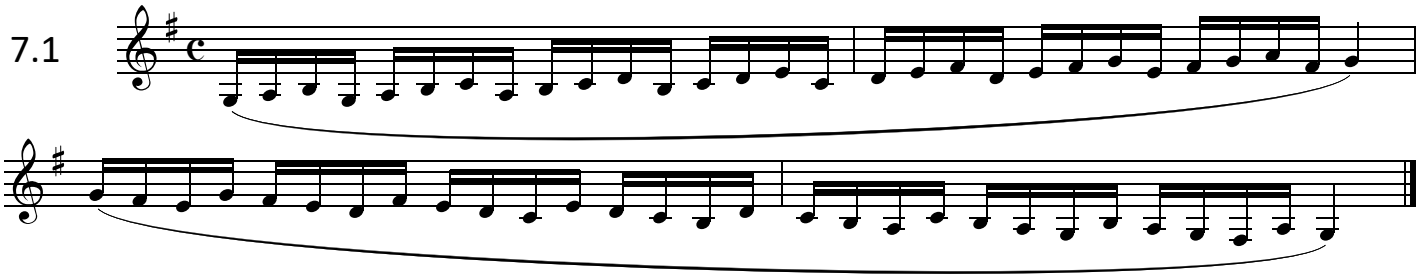

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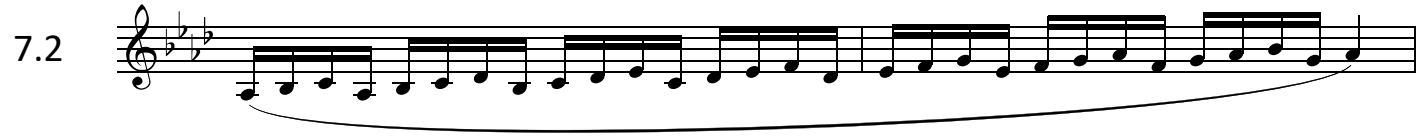

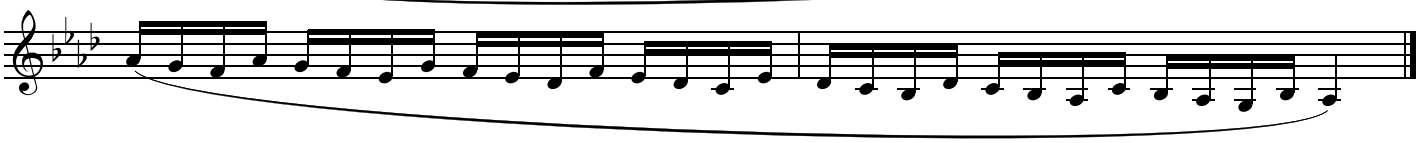

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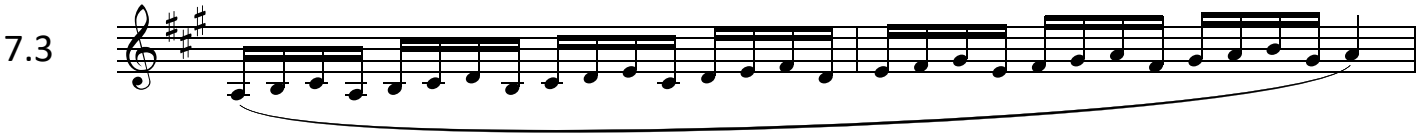

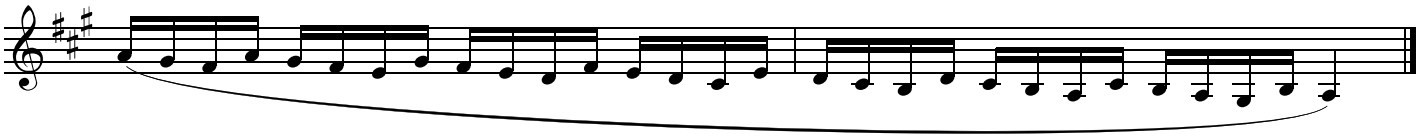

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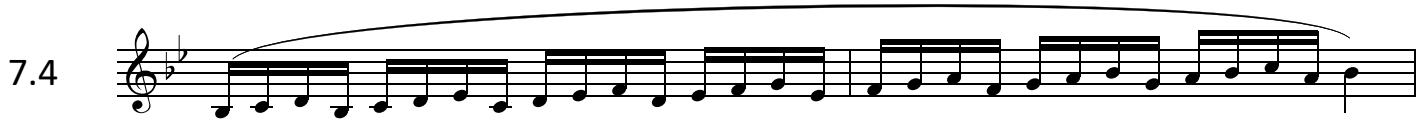

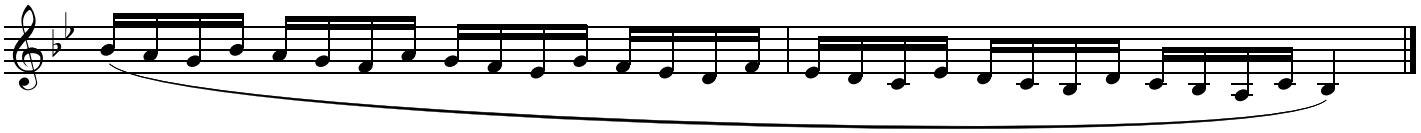

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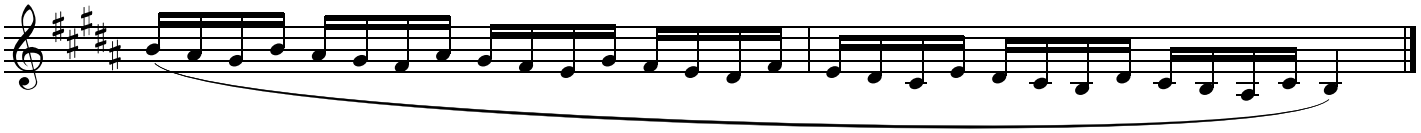

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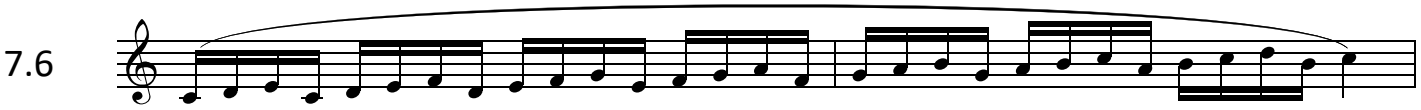

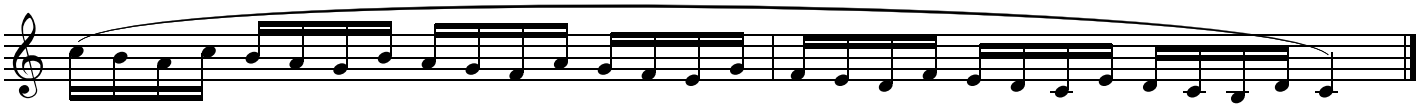

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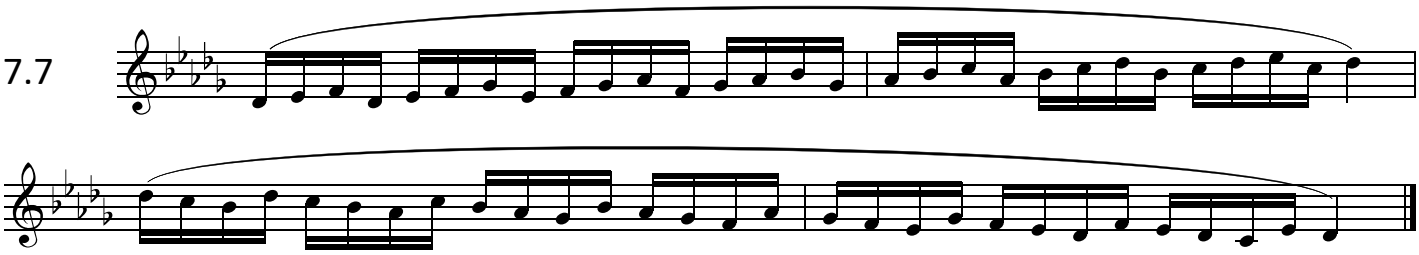

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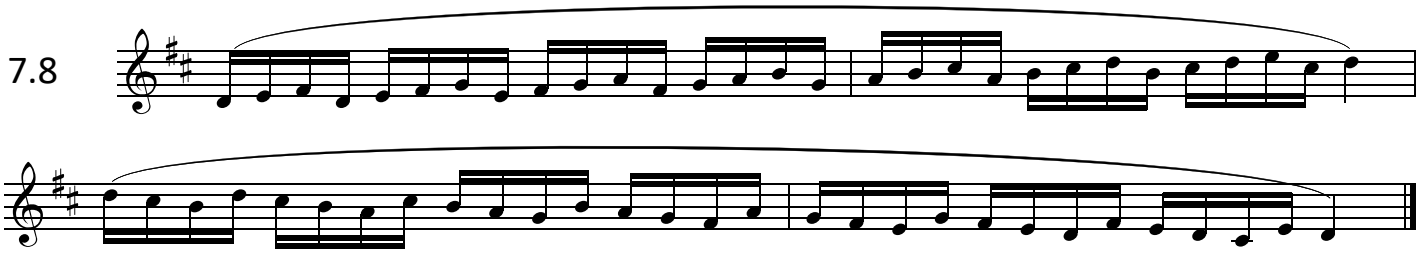

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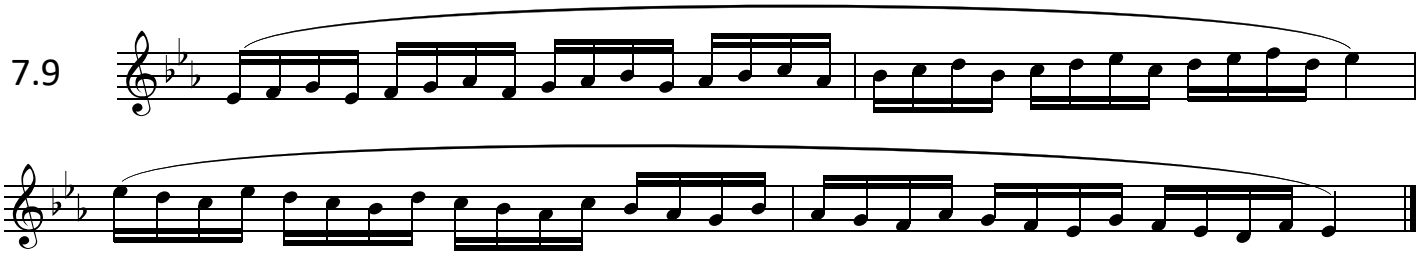

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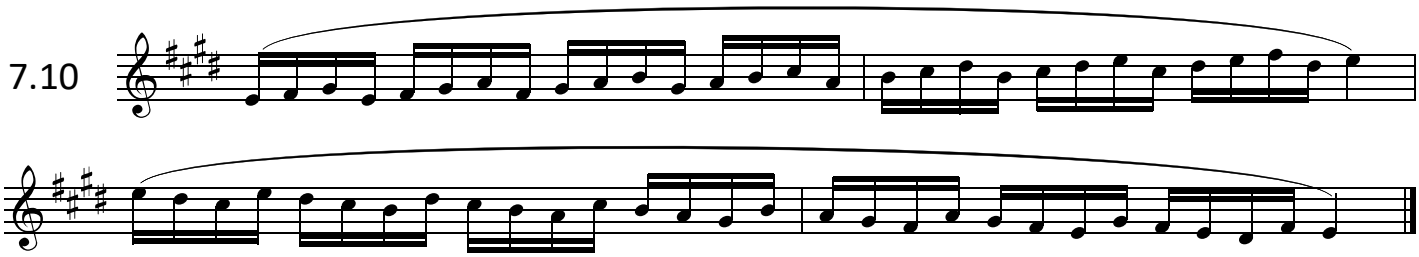

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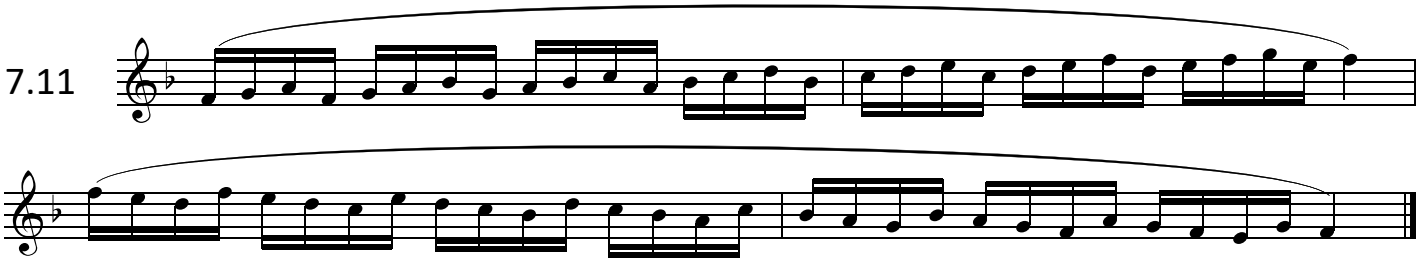

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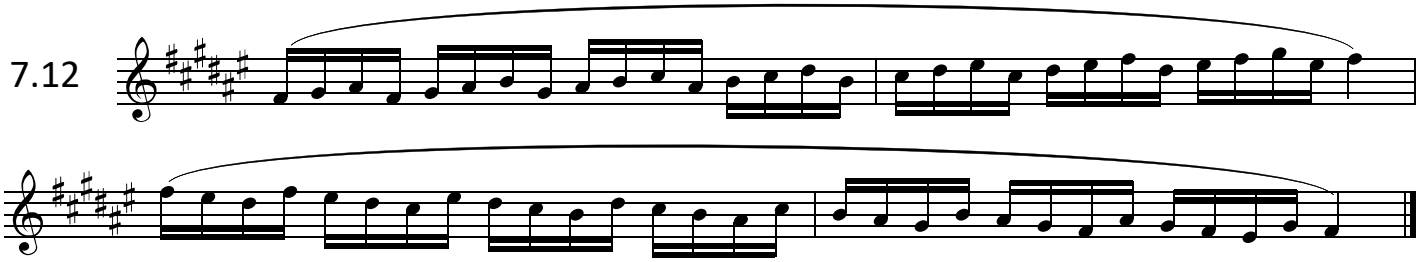

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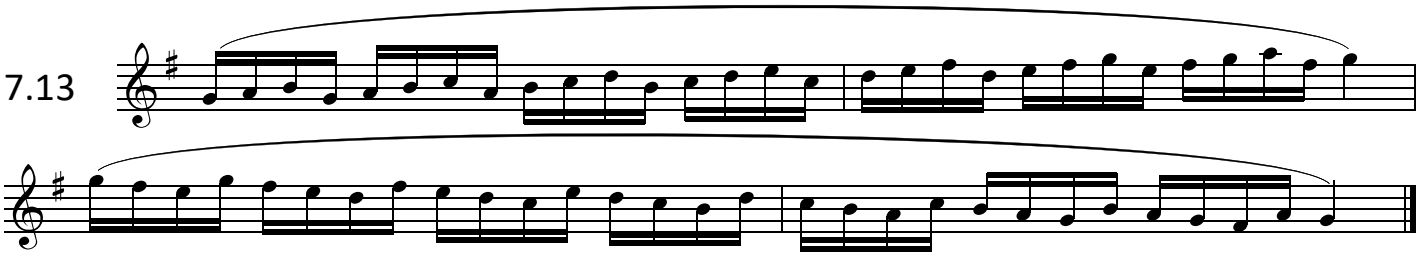

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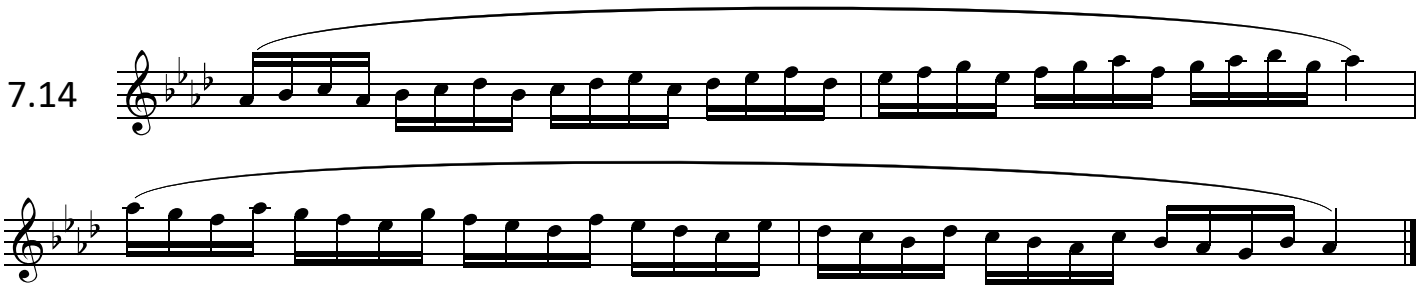

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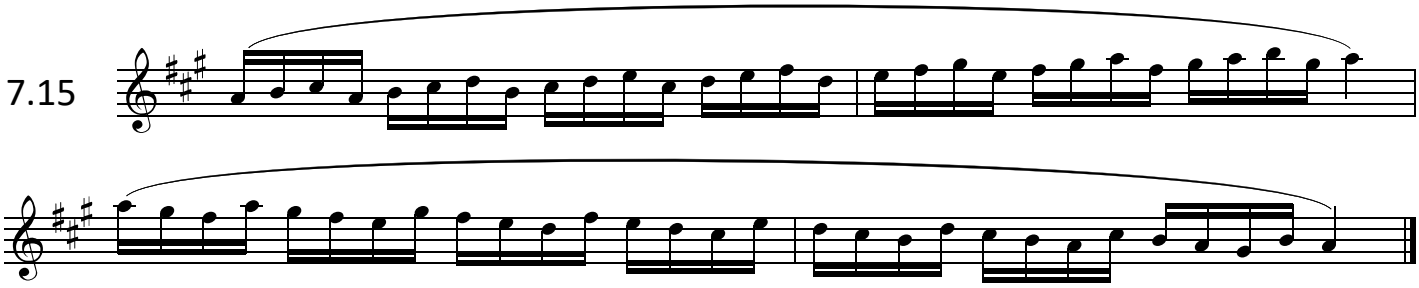

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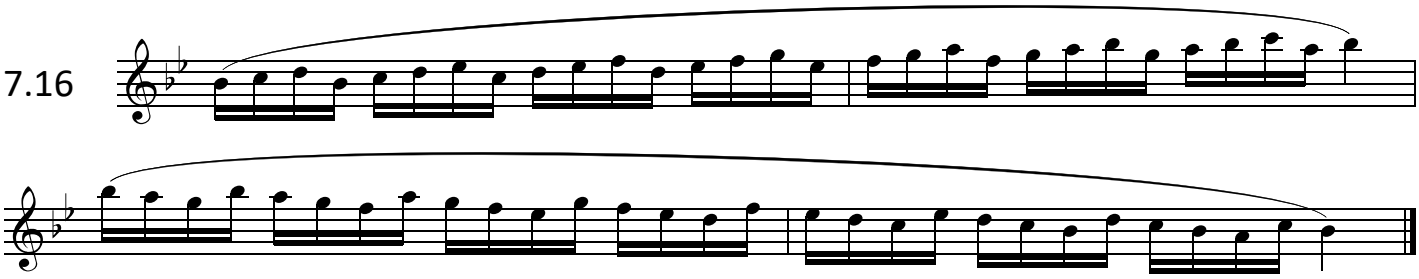

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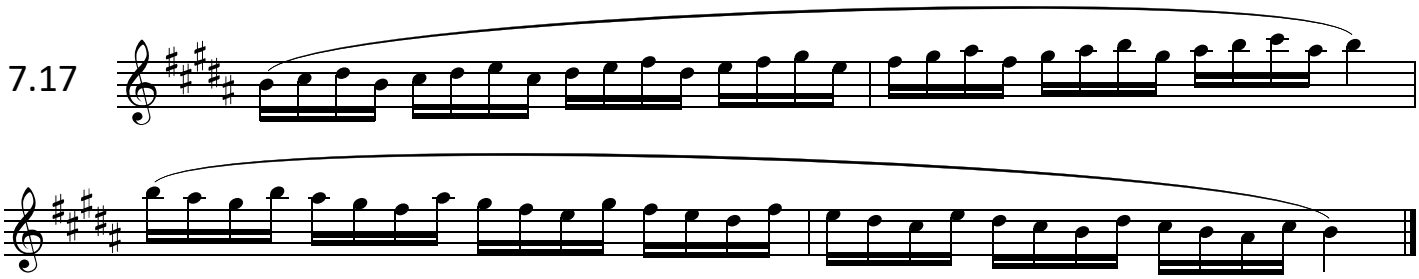

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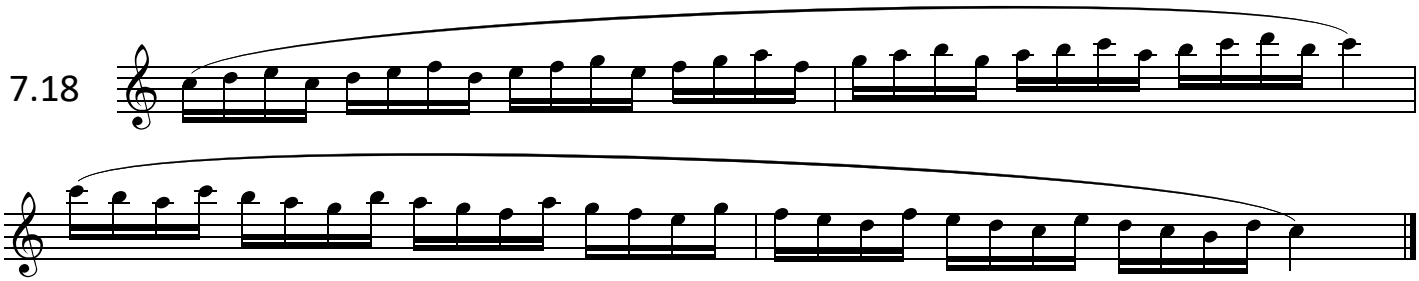

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8 - Technical Finger Studies – Minor

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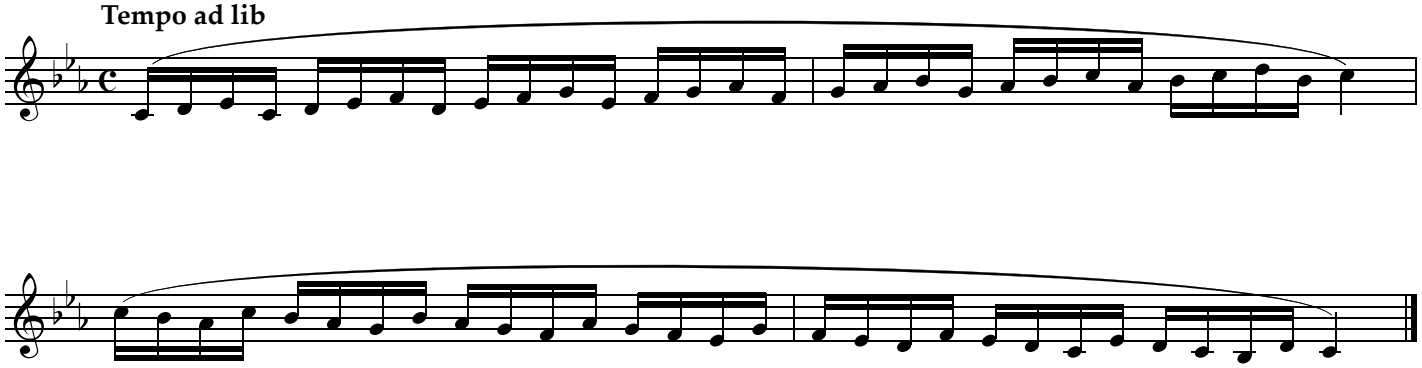
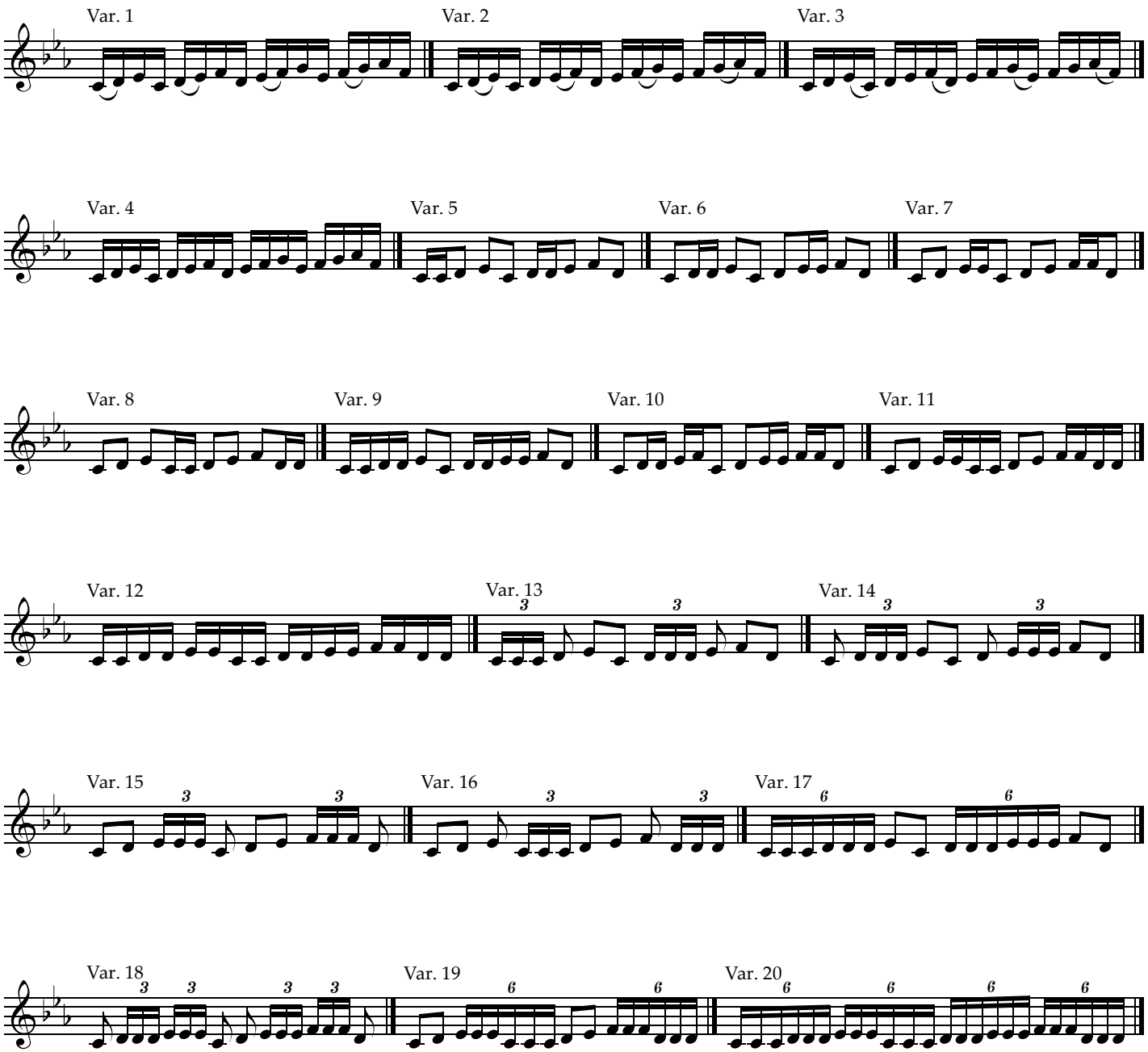


Variations



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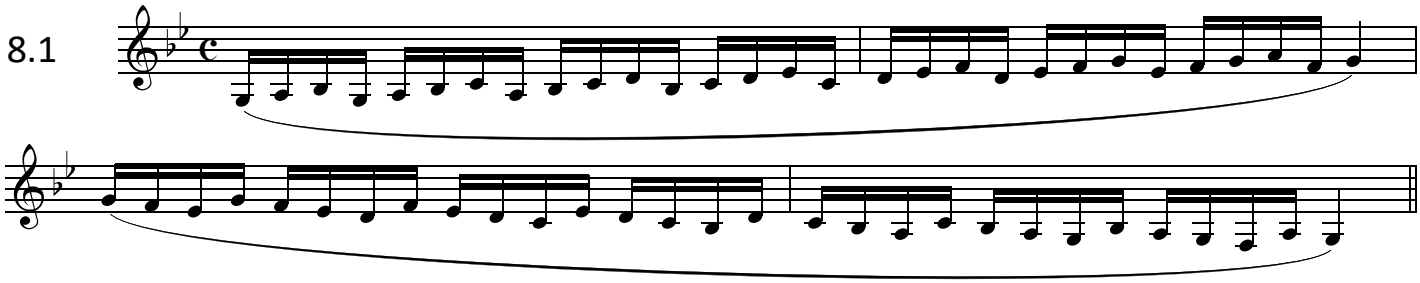

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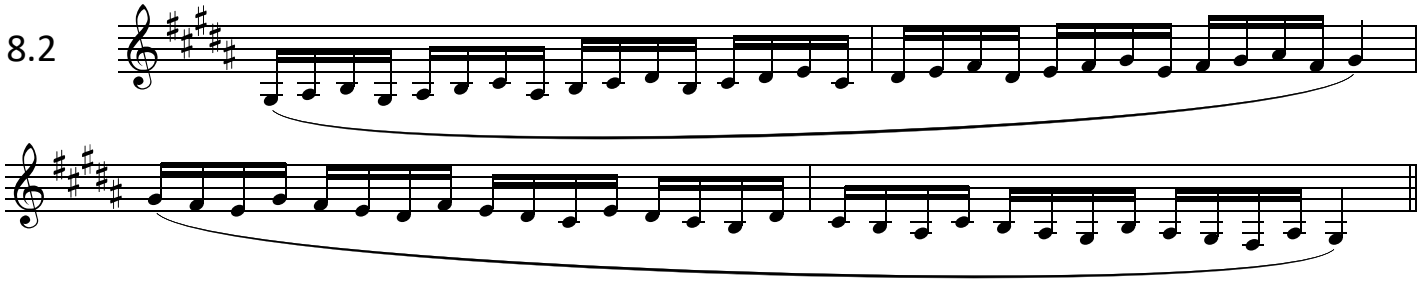

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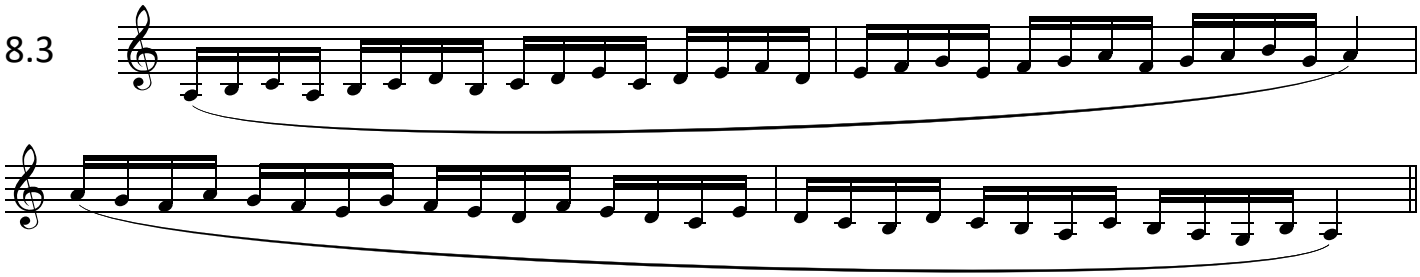

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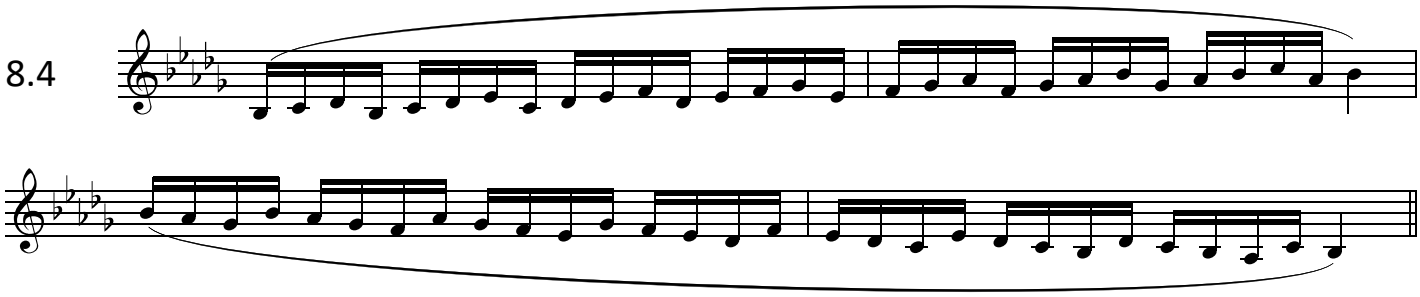

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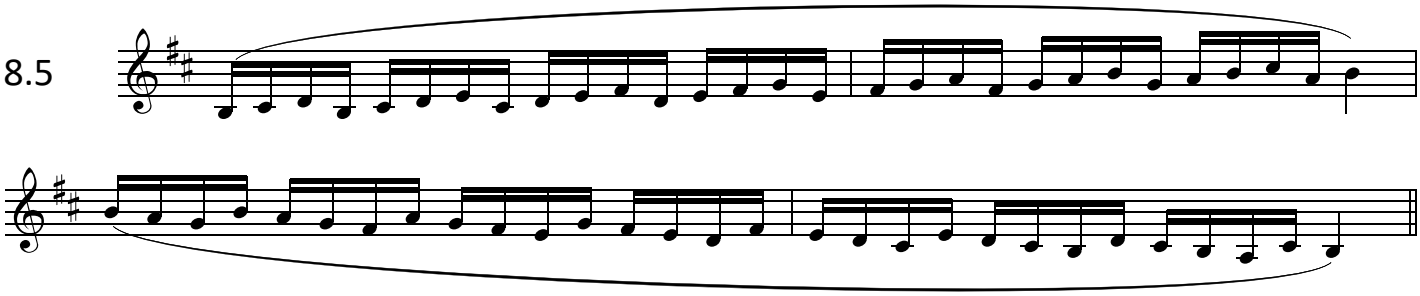

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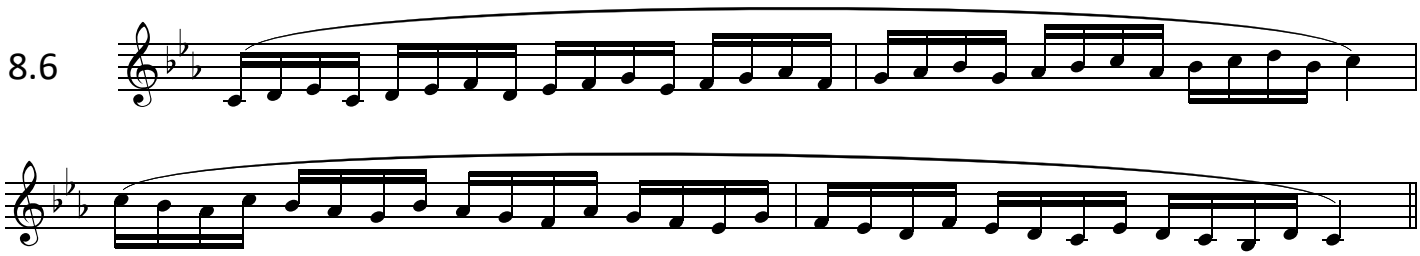

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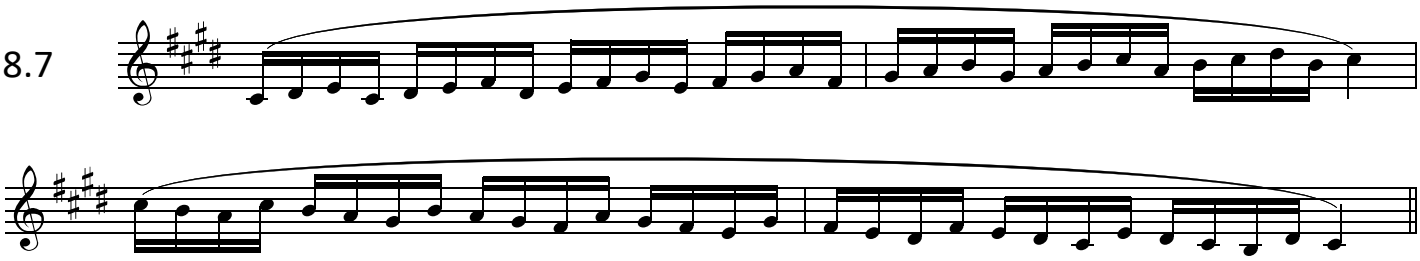

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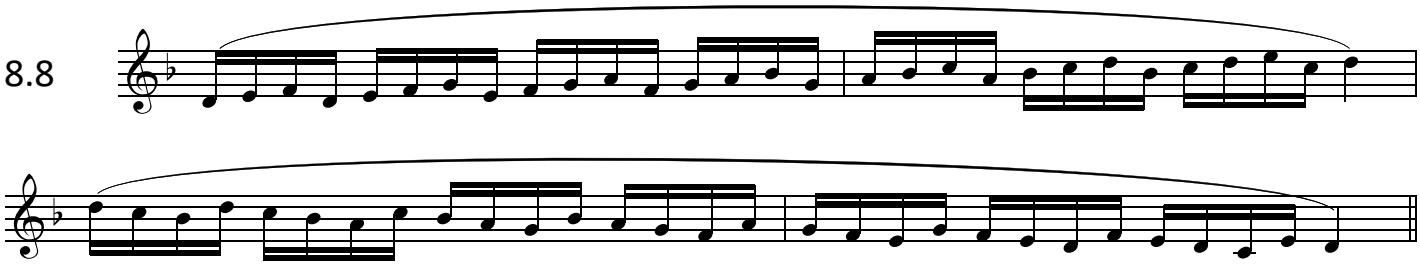

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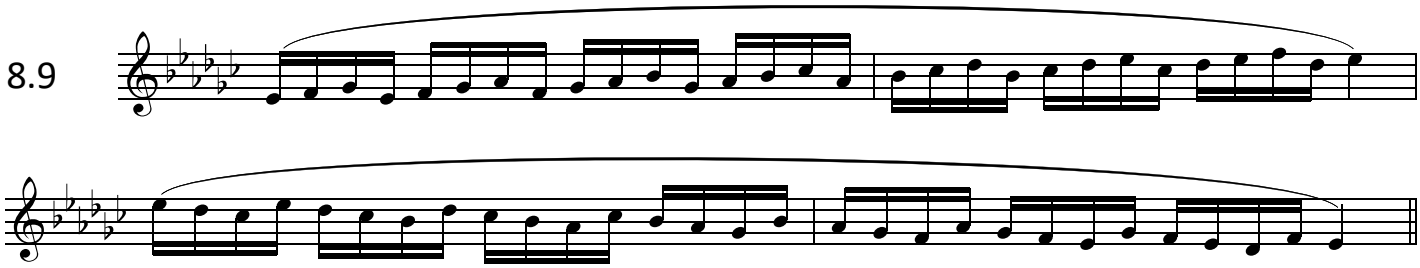

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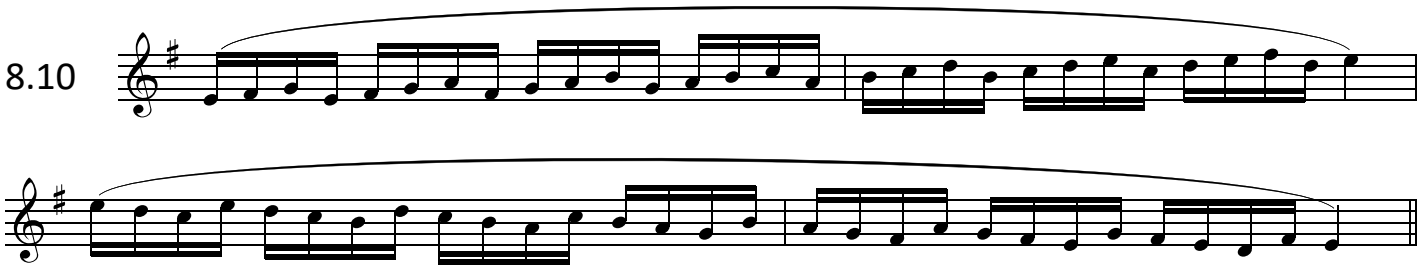

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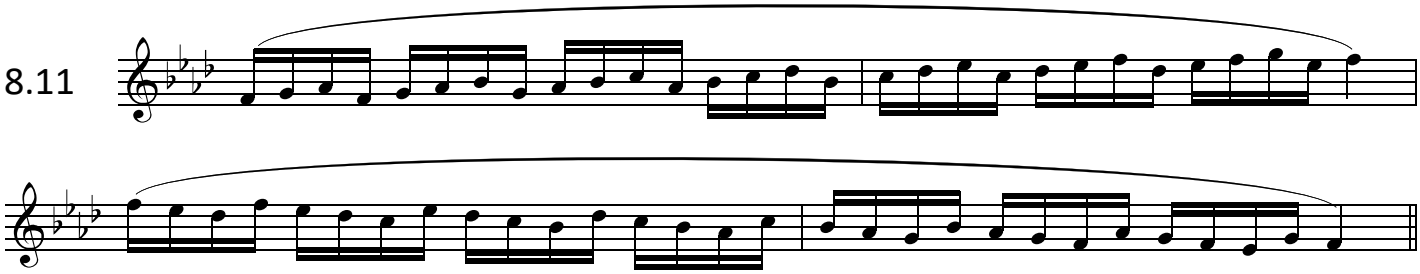

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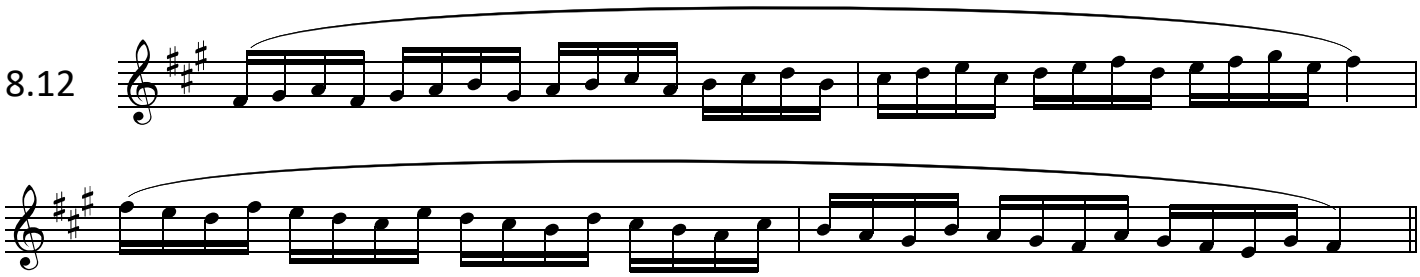

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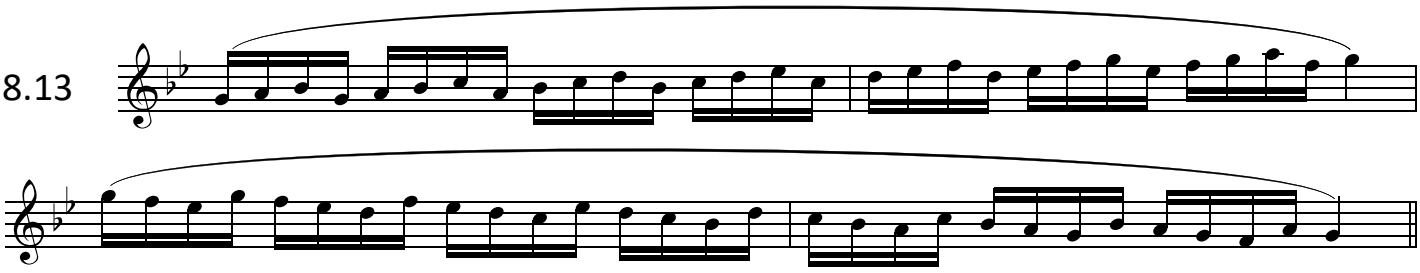

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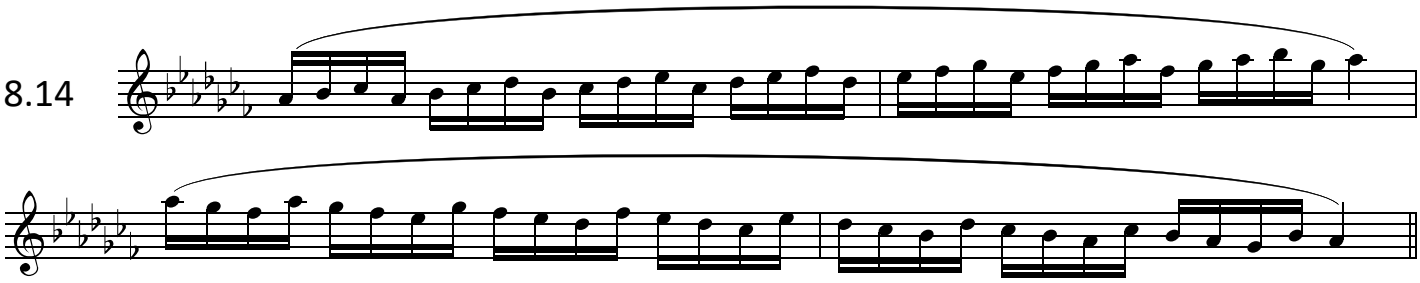

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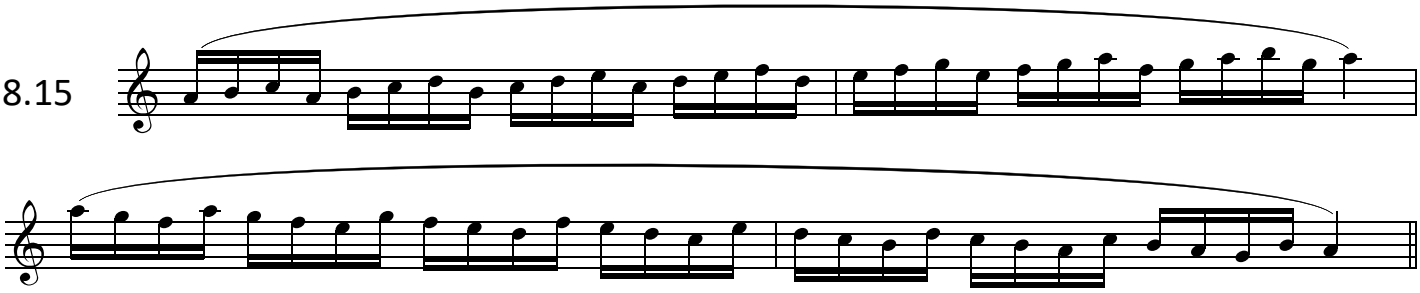

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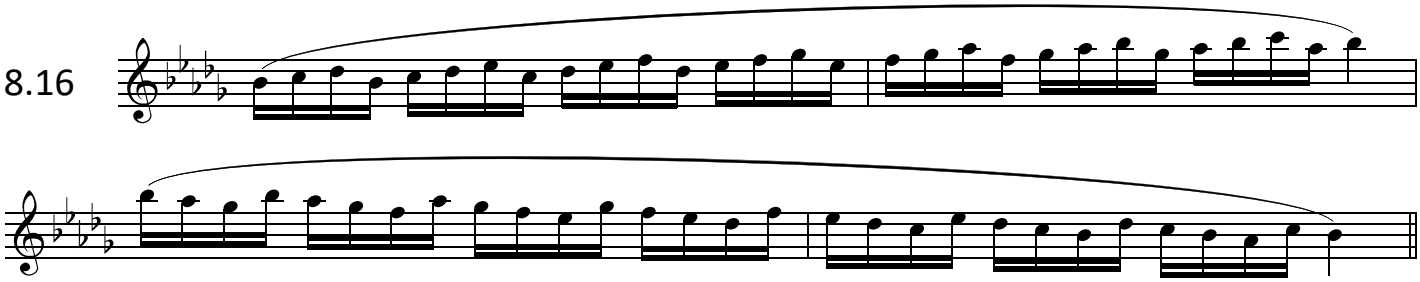

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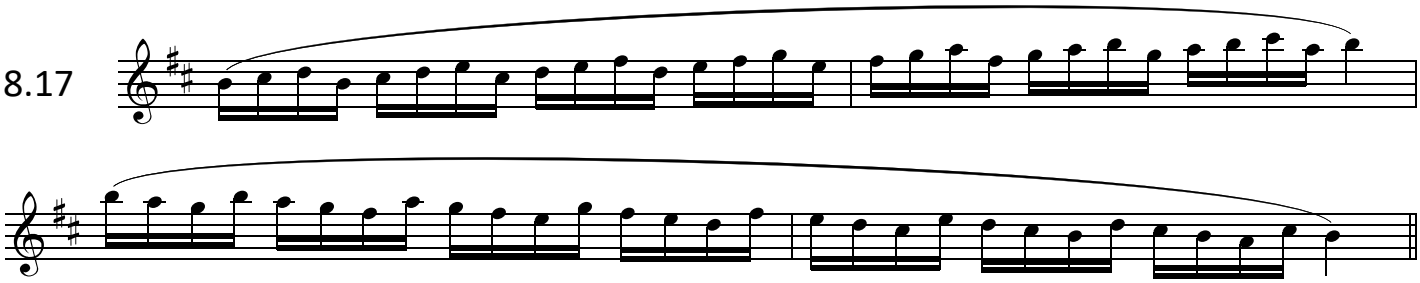

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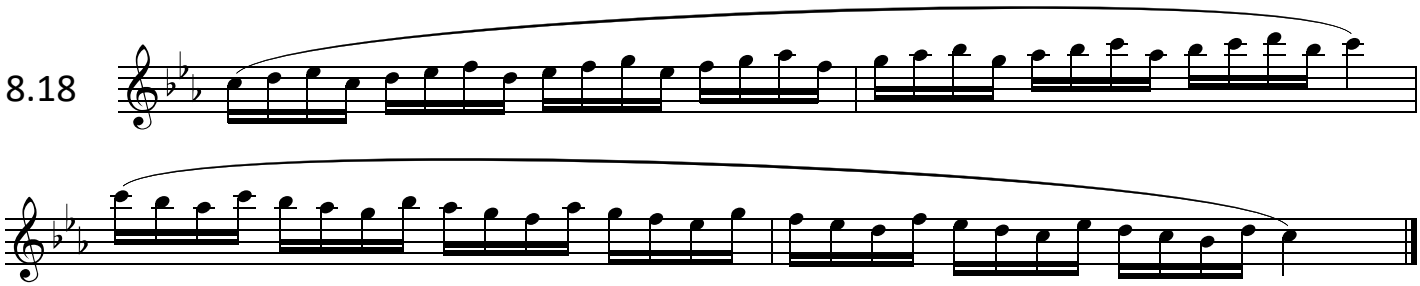

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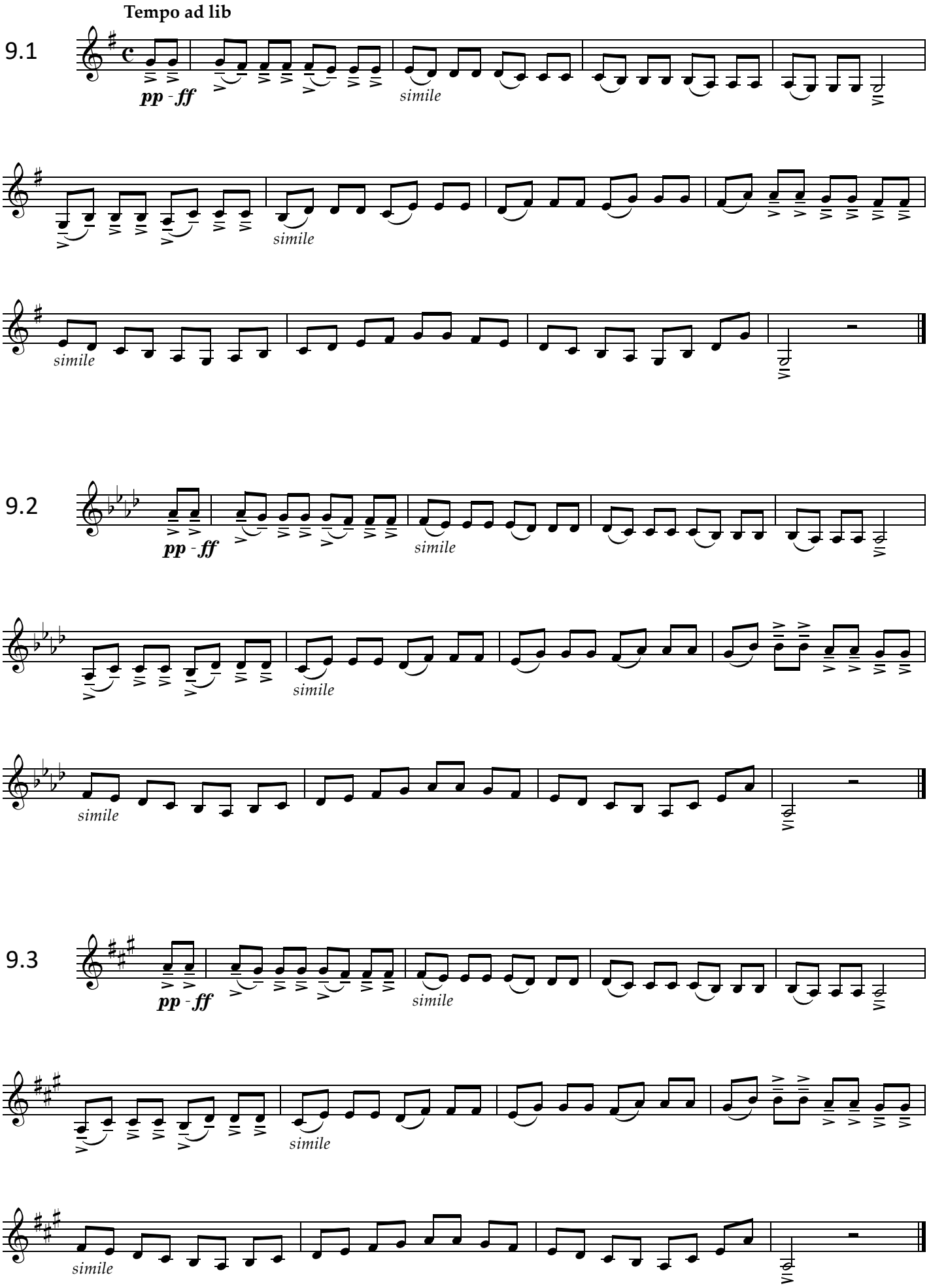
9 - Slurs & tongue 1 - Major



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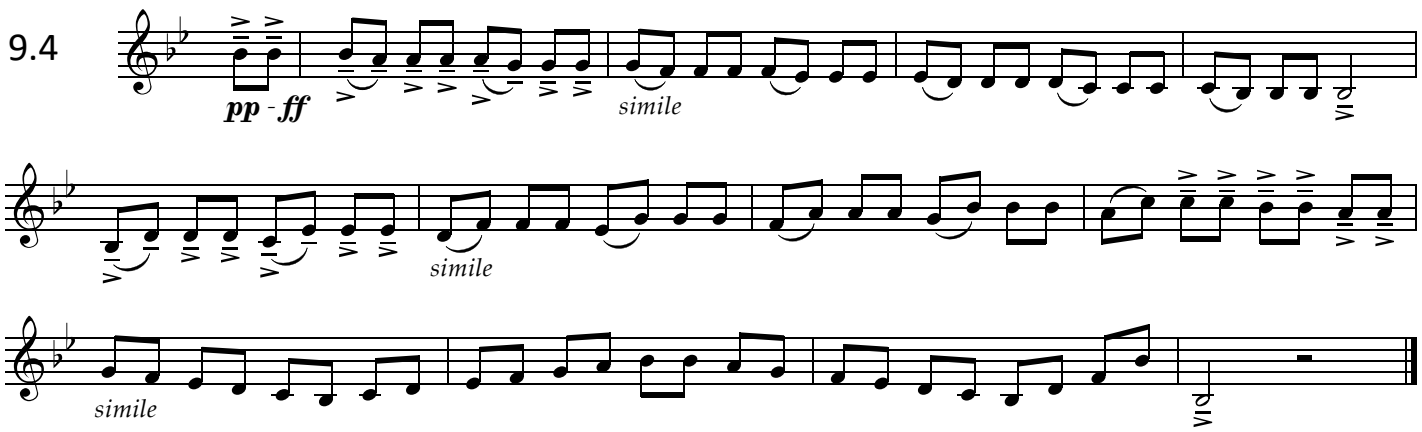

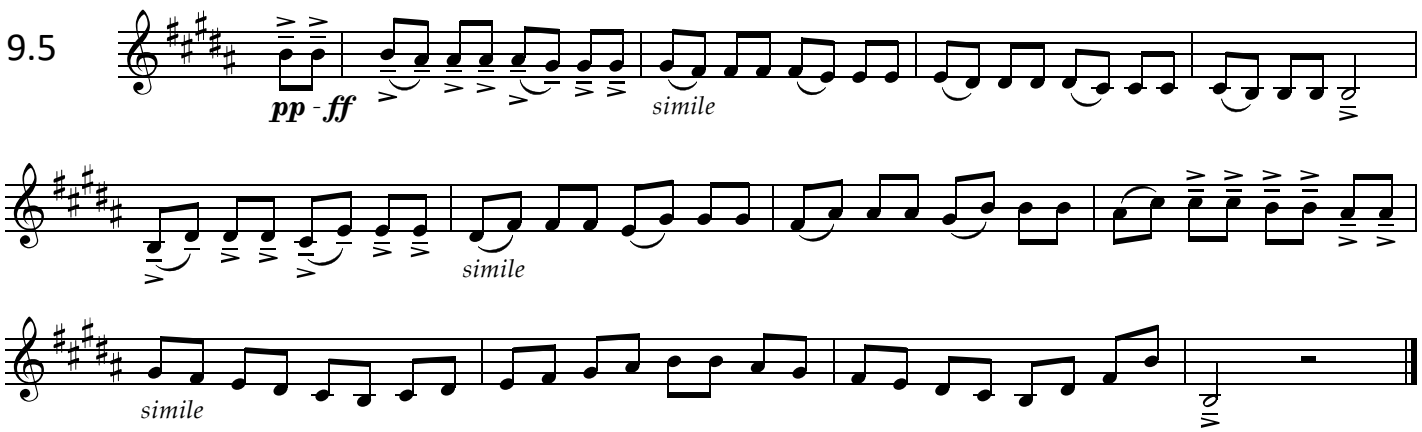

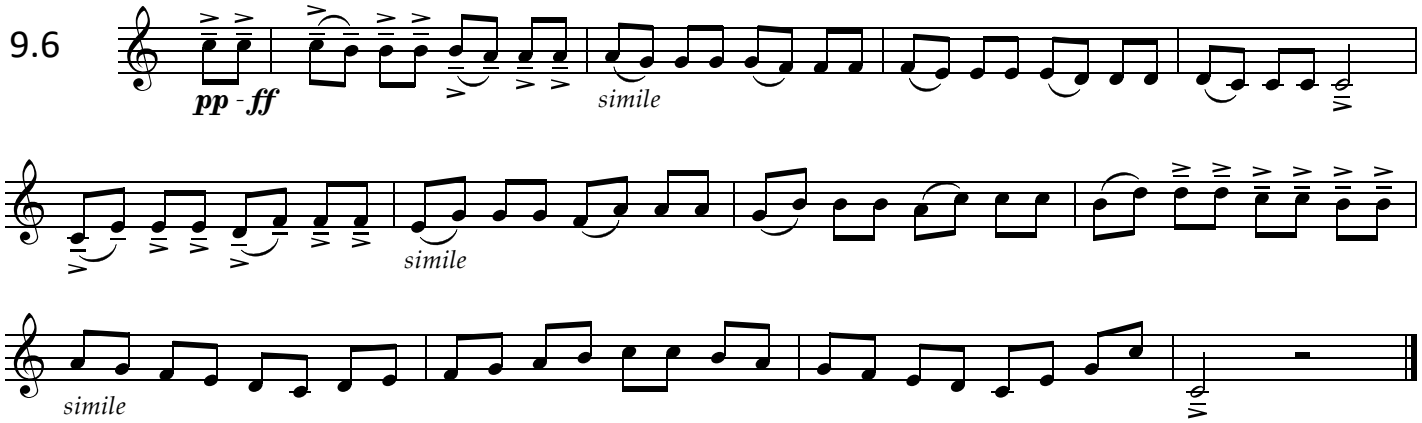

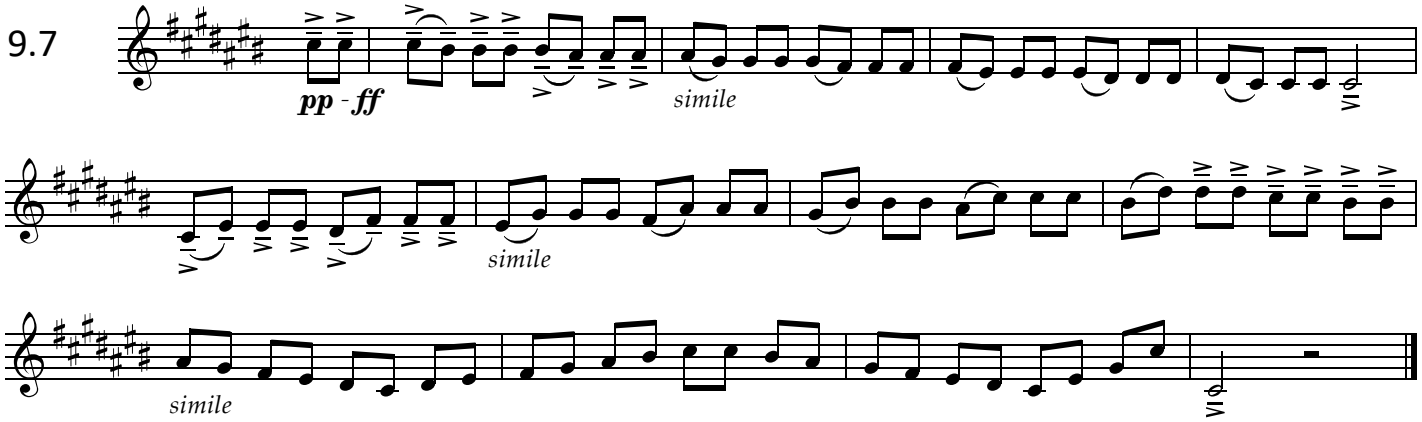

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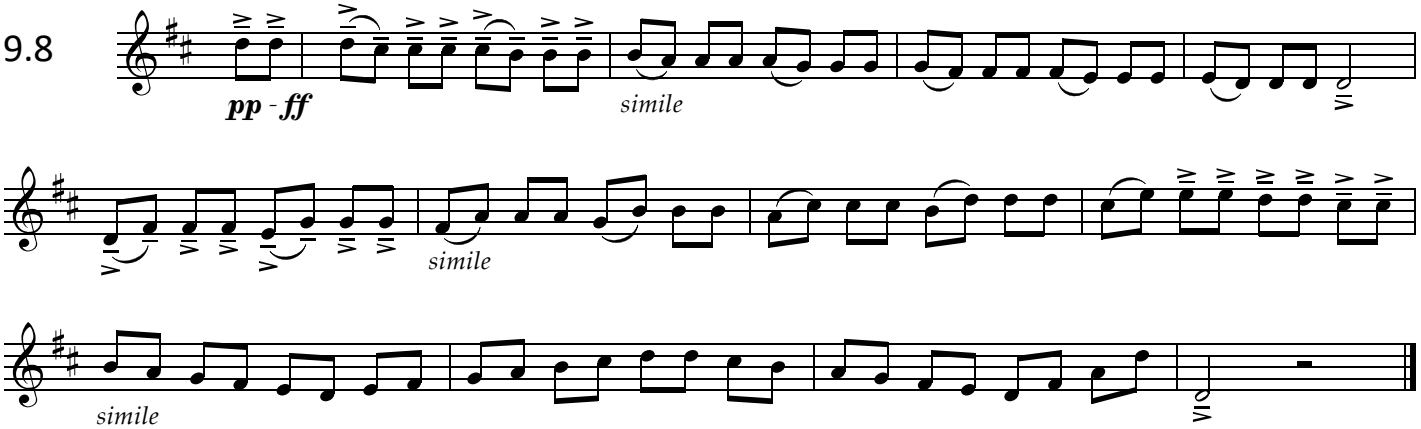

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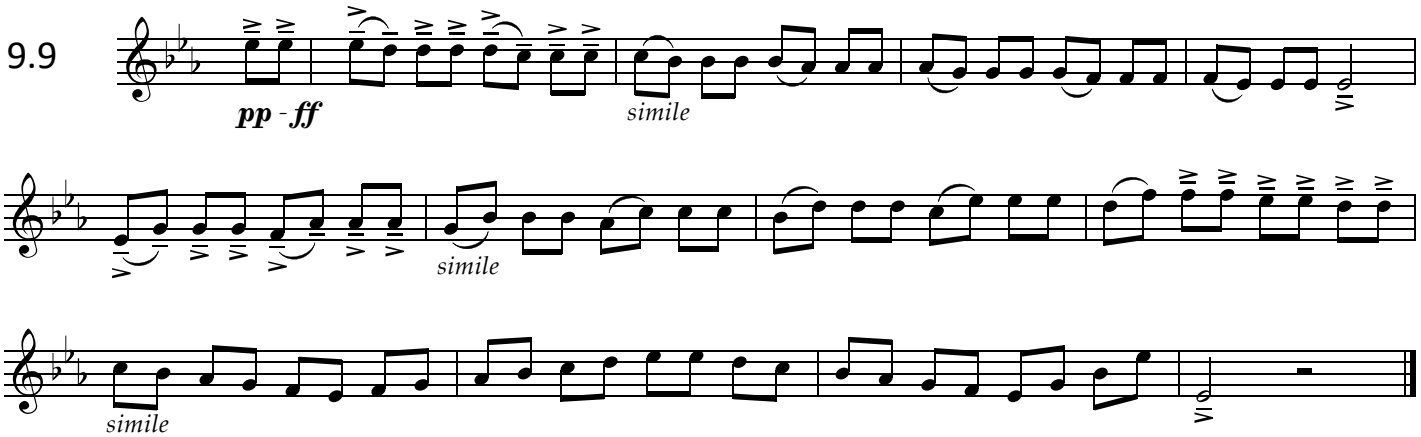

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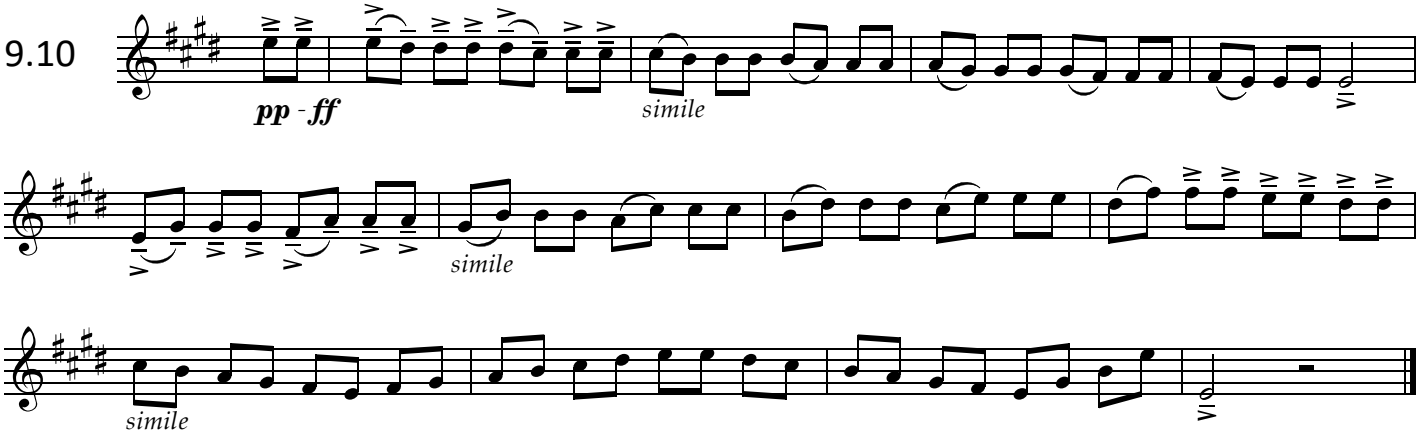

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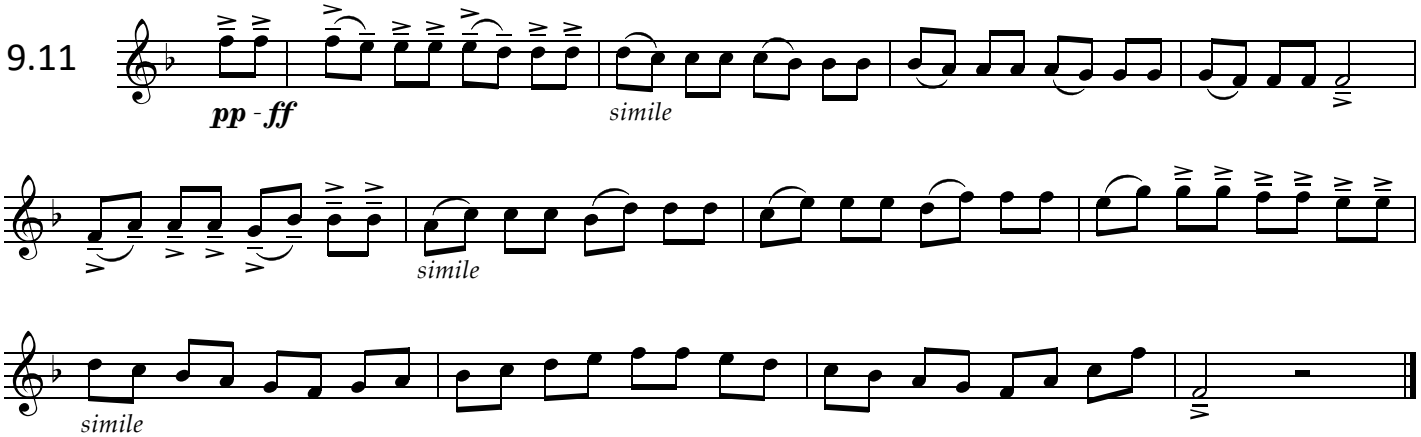

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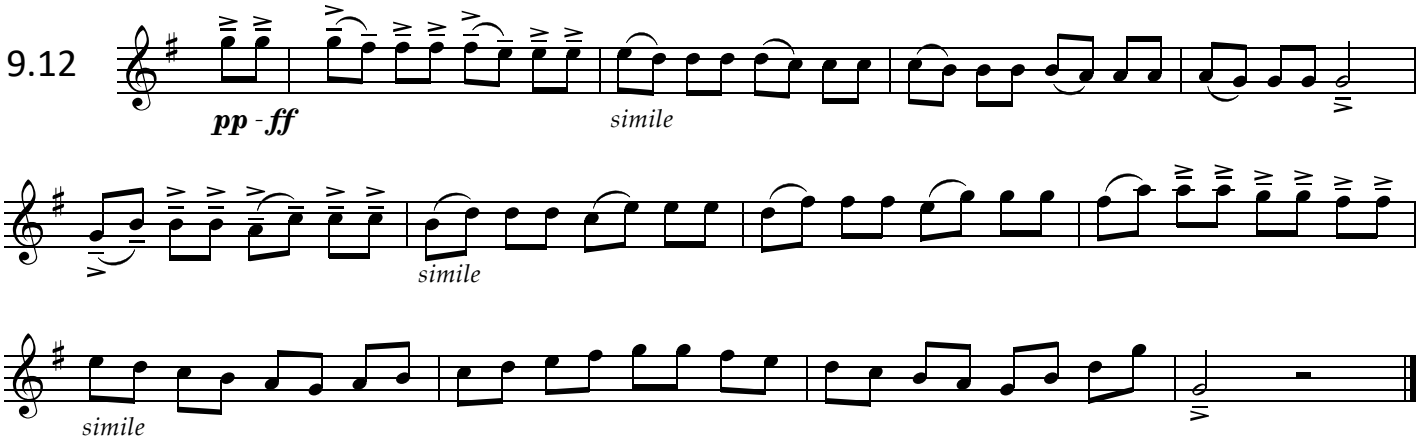

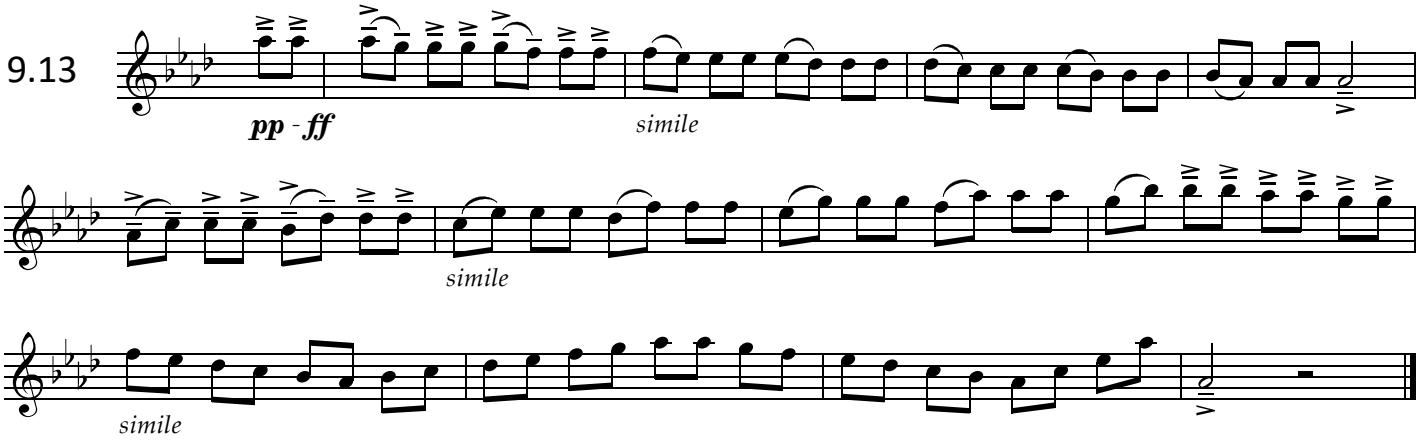

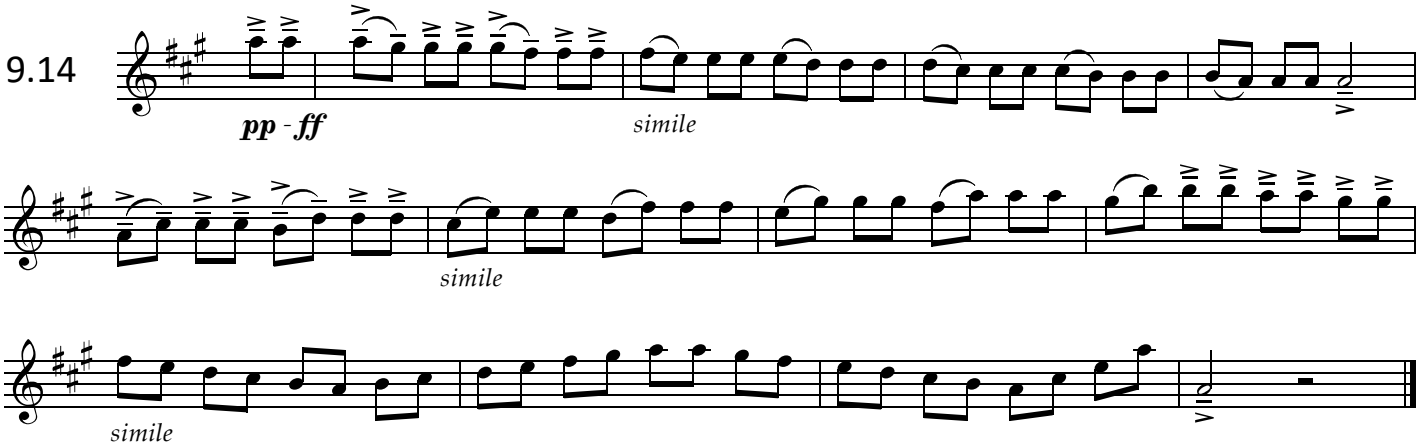

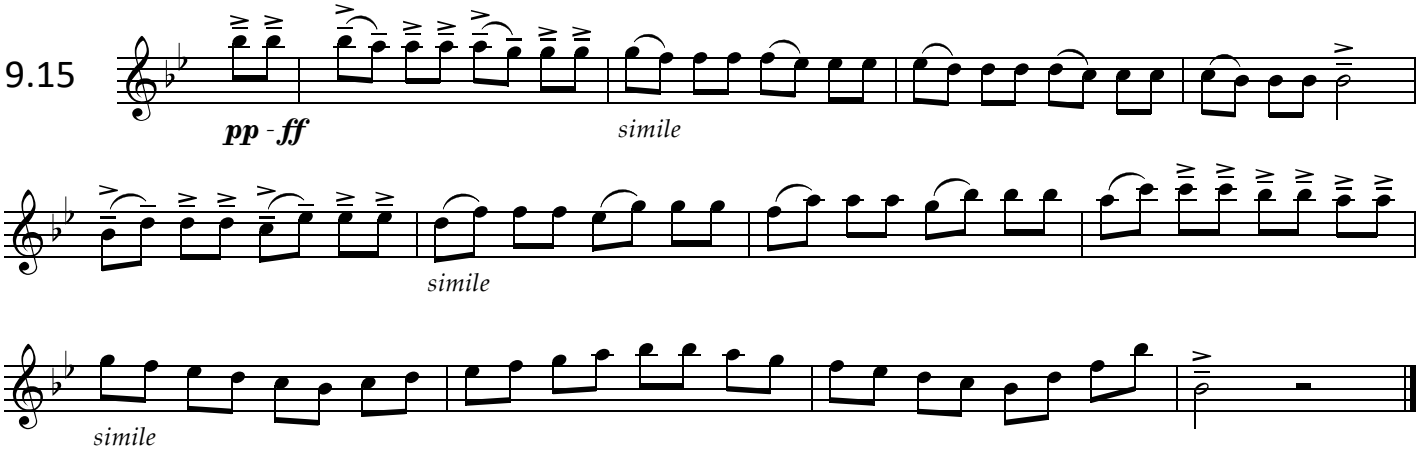

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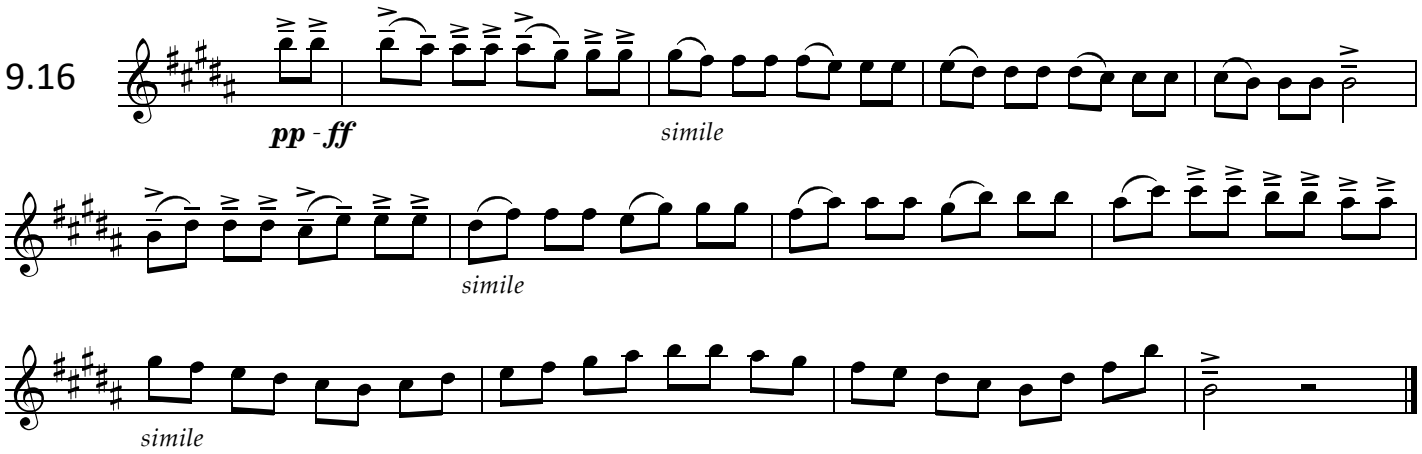

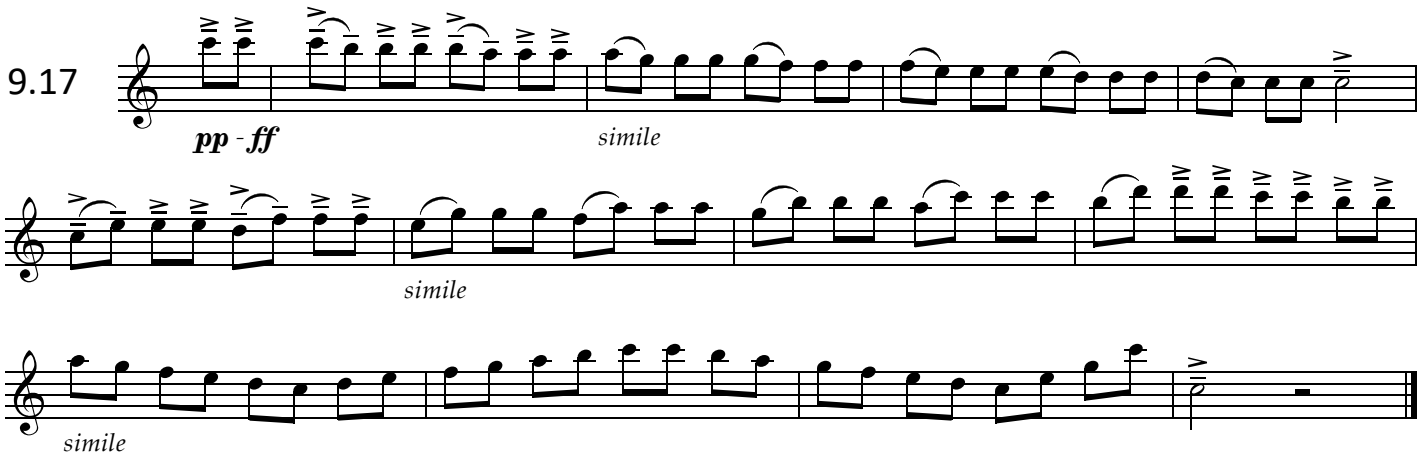

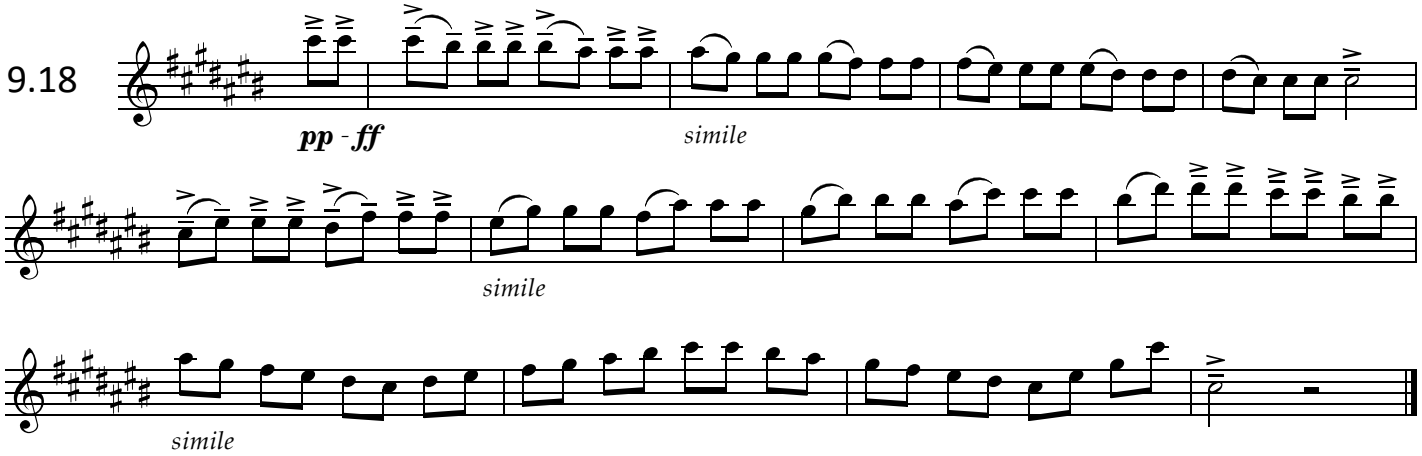

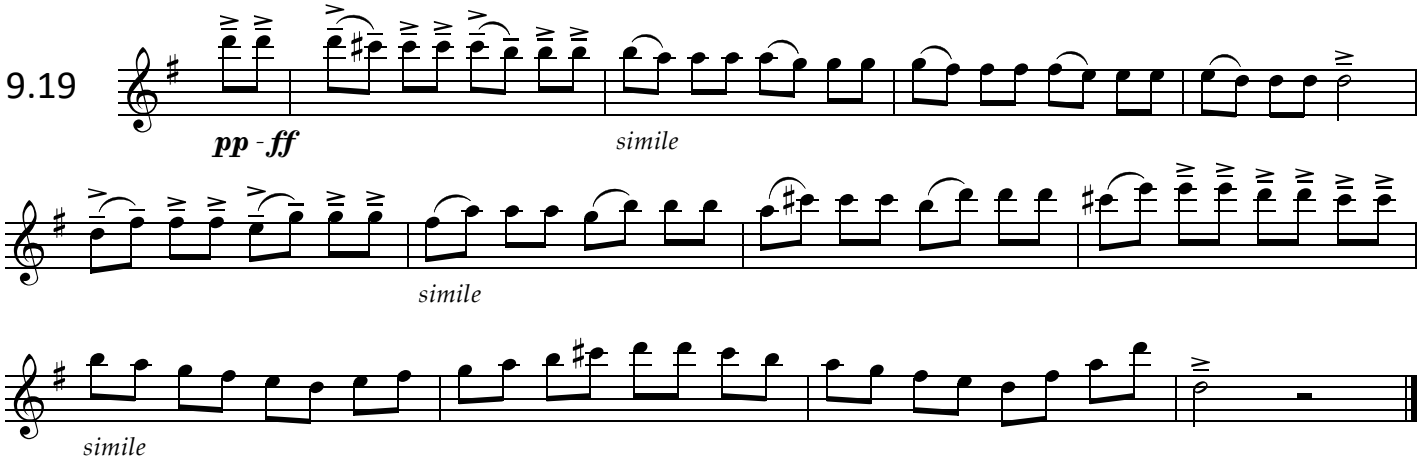

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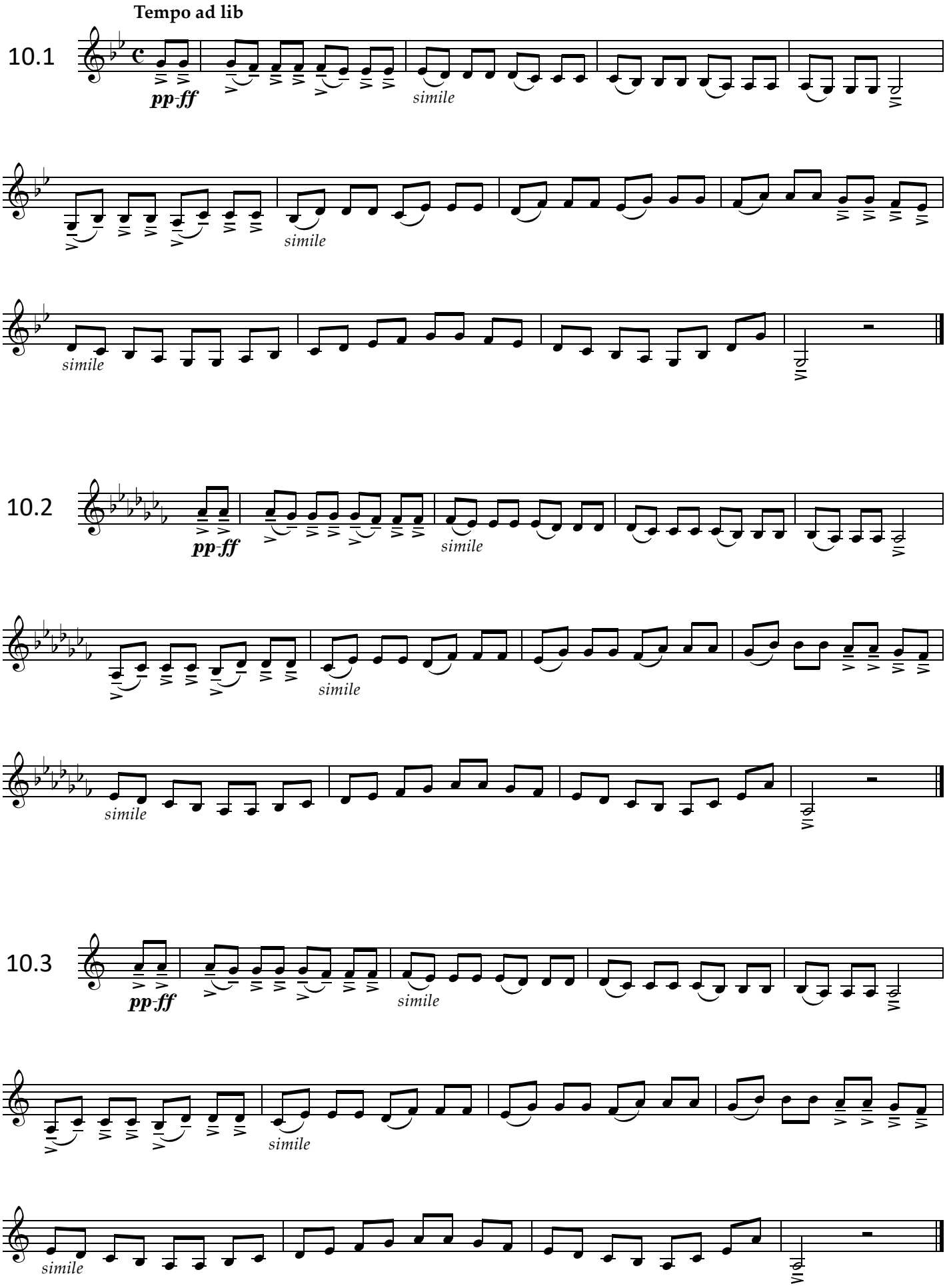
10 - Slurs & tongue 1 - Minor



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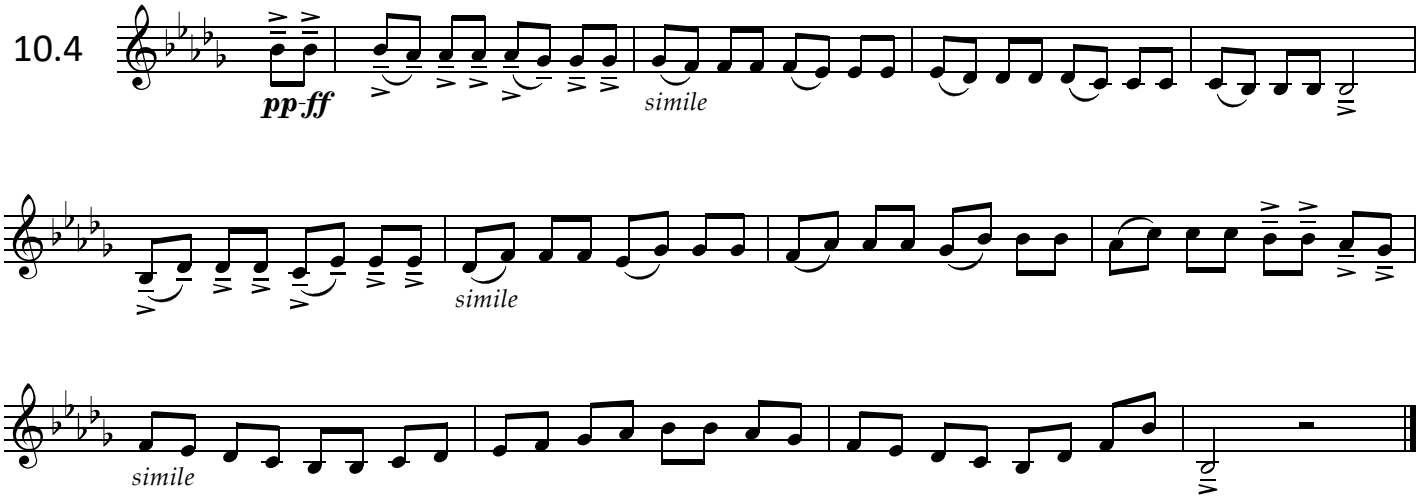

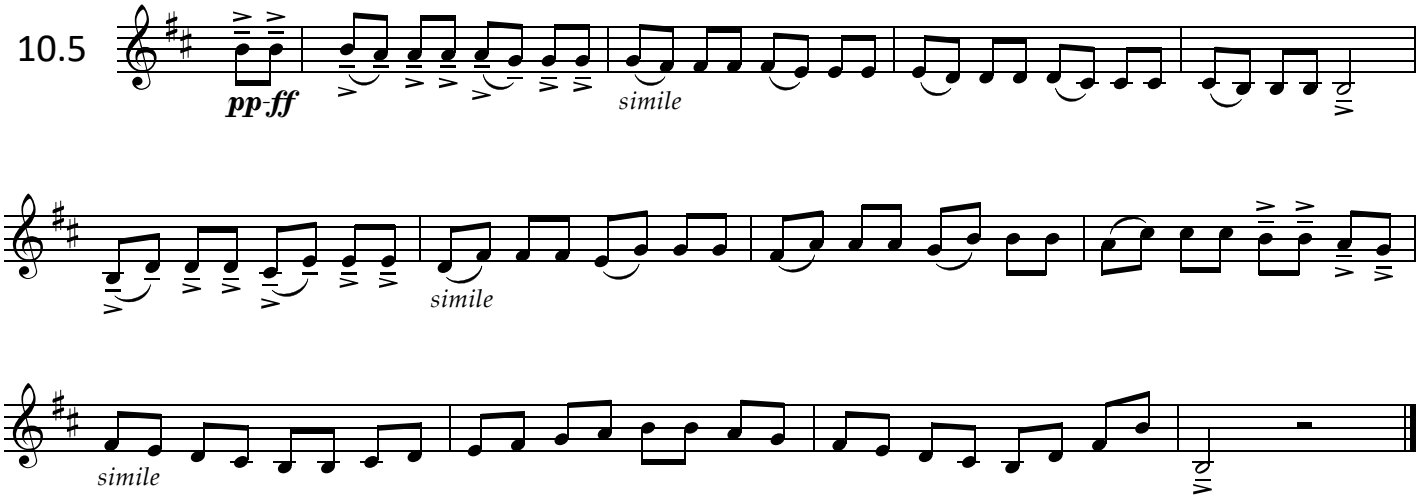

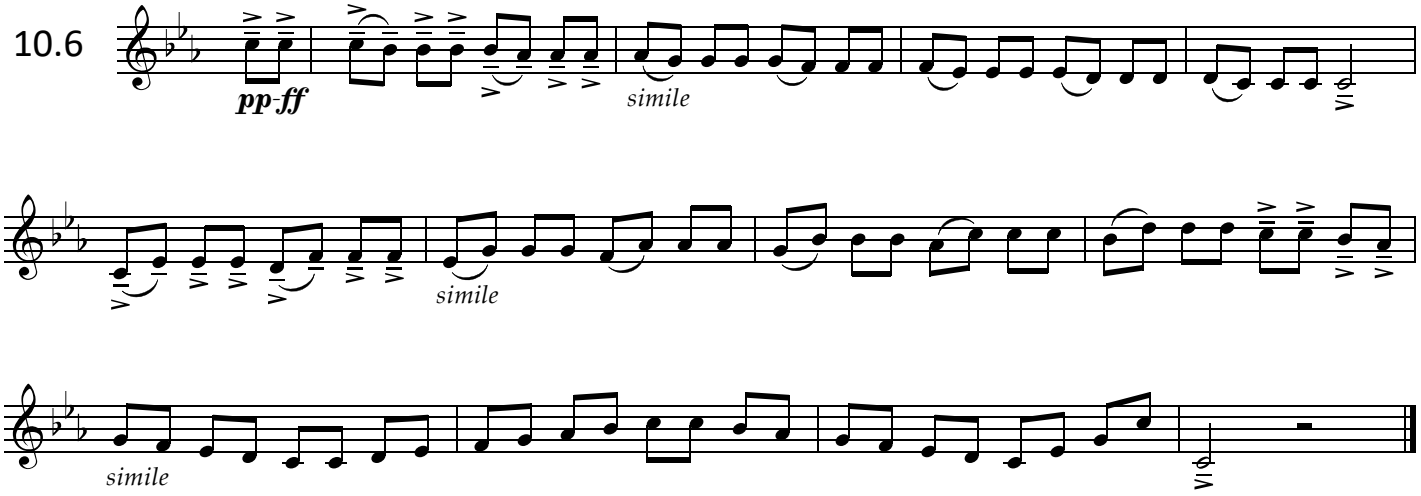

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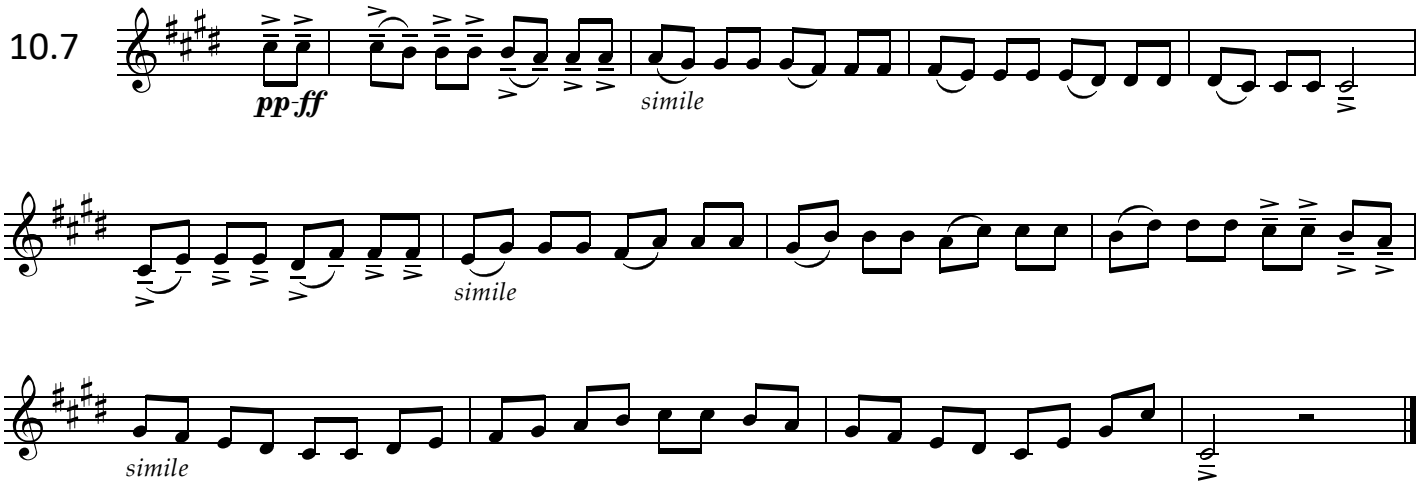

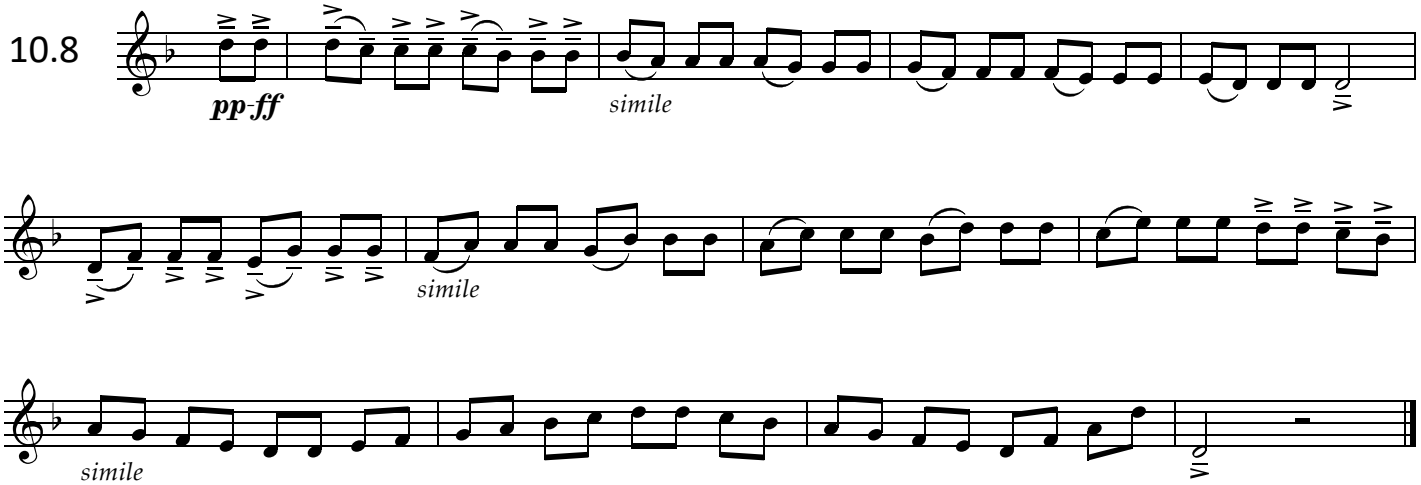

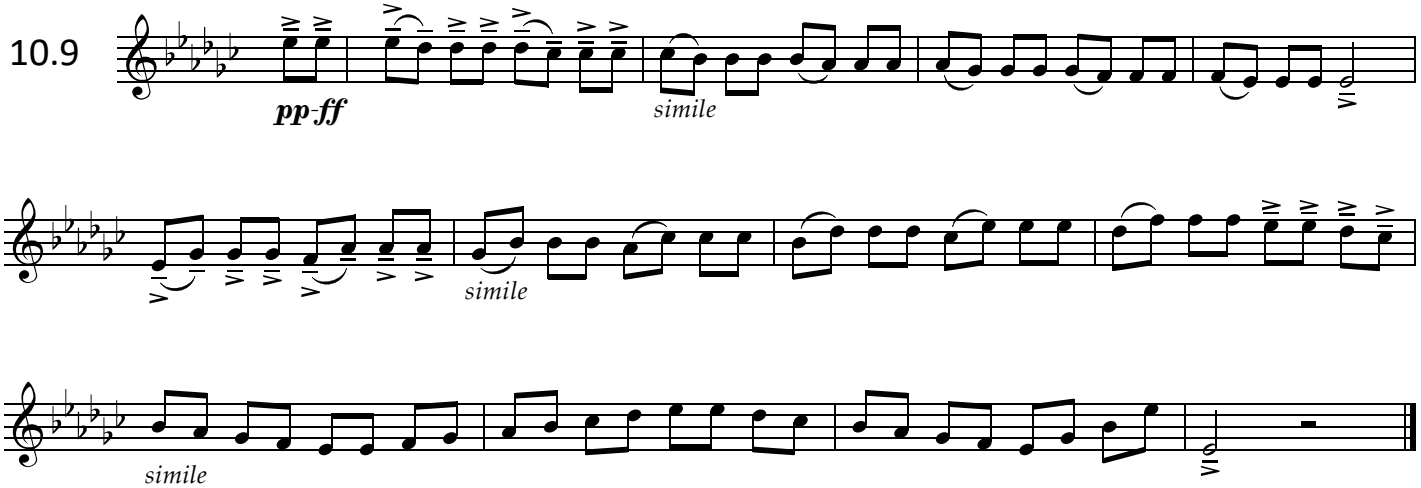

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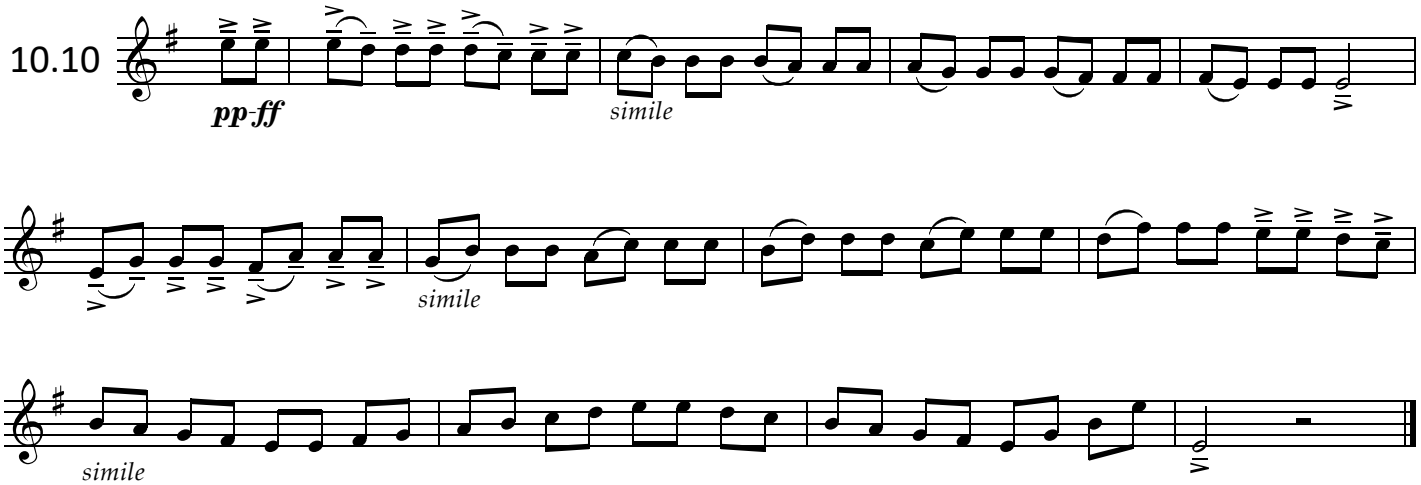
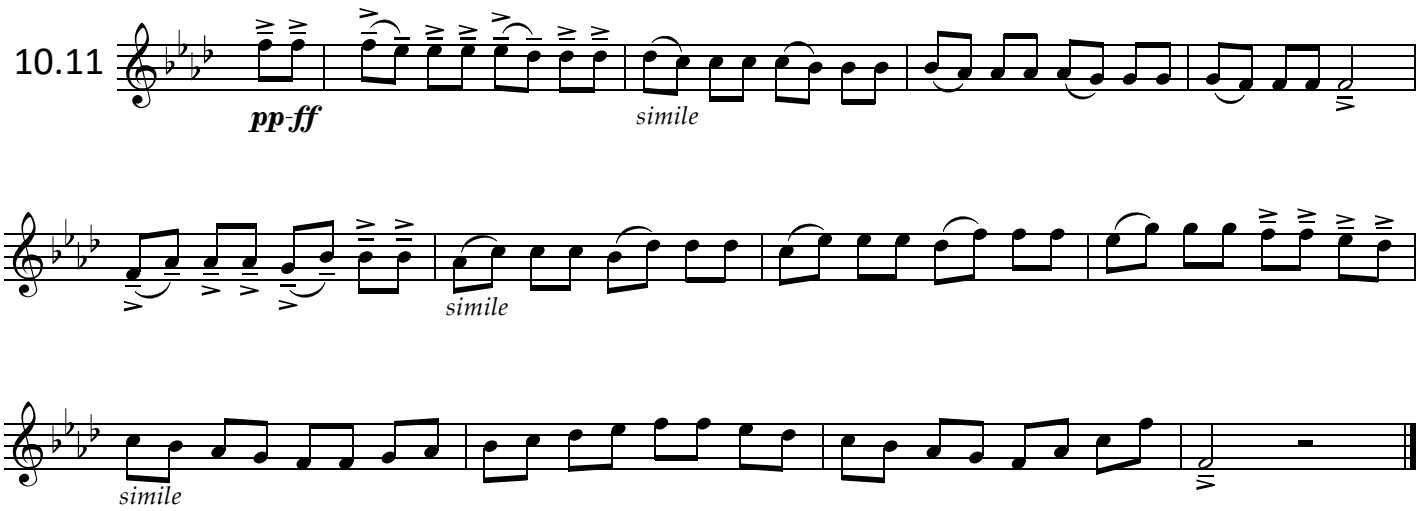
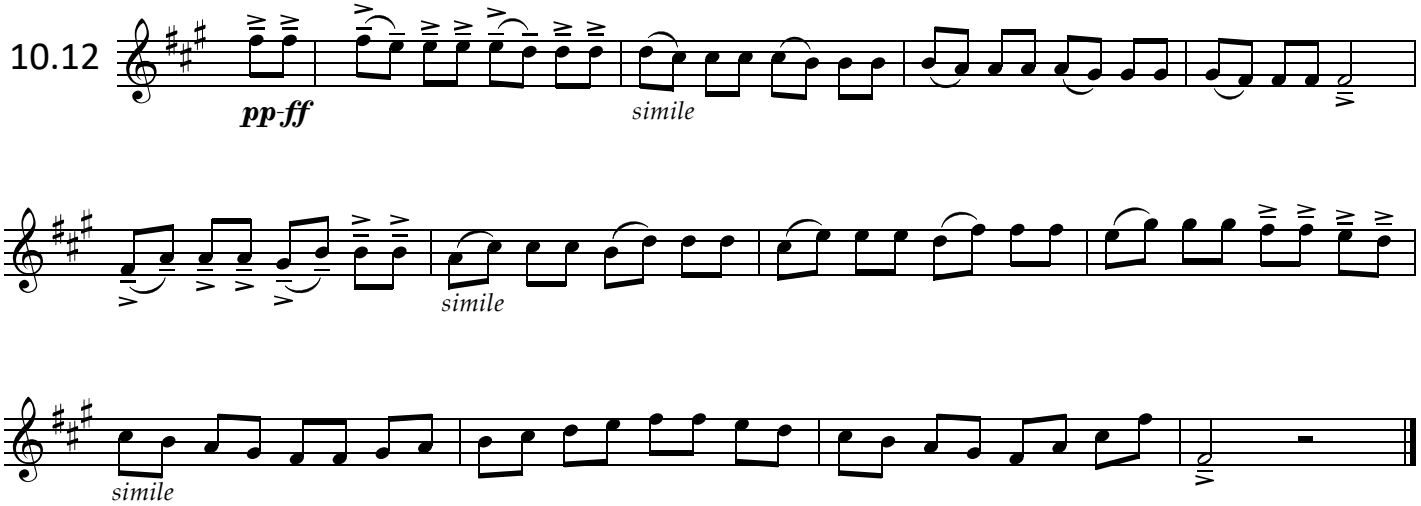
10 - Slurs & tongue 1 - Minor







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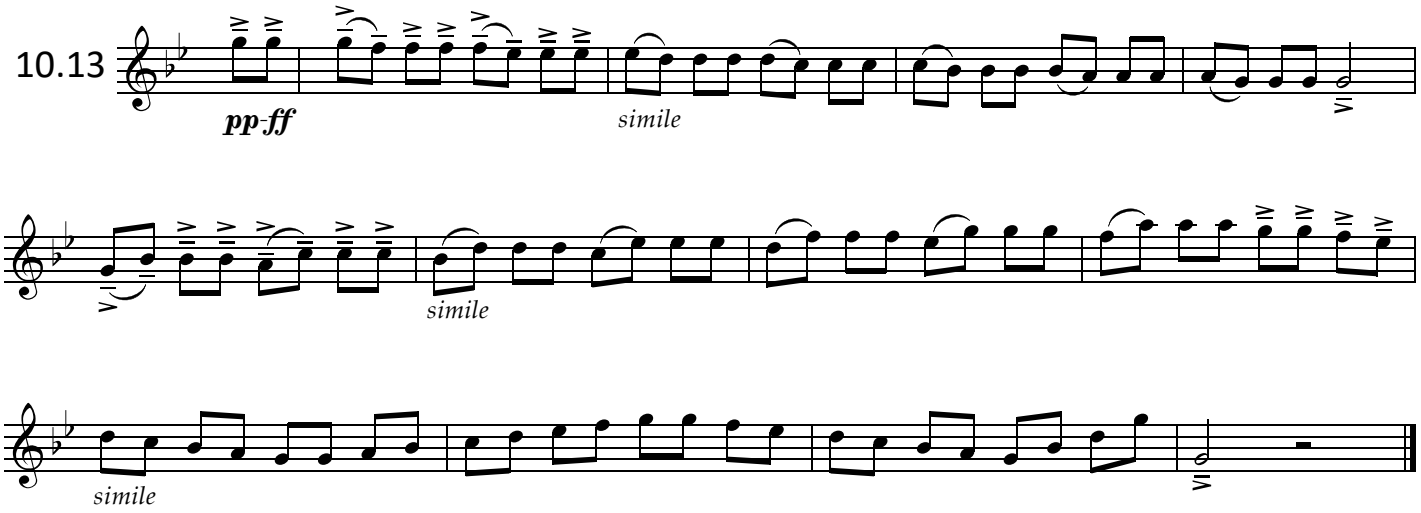

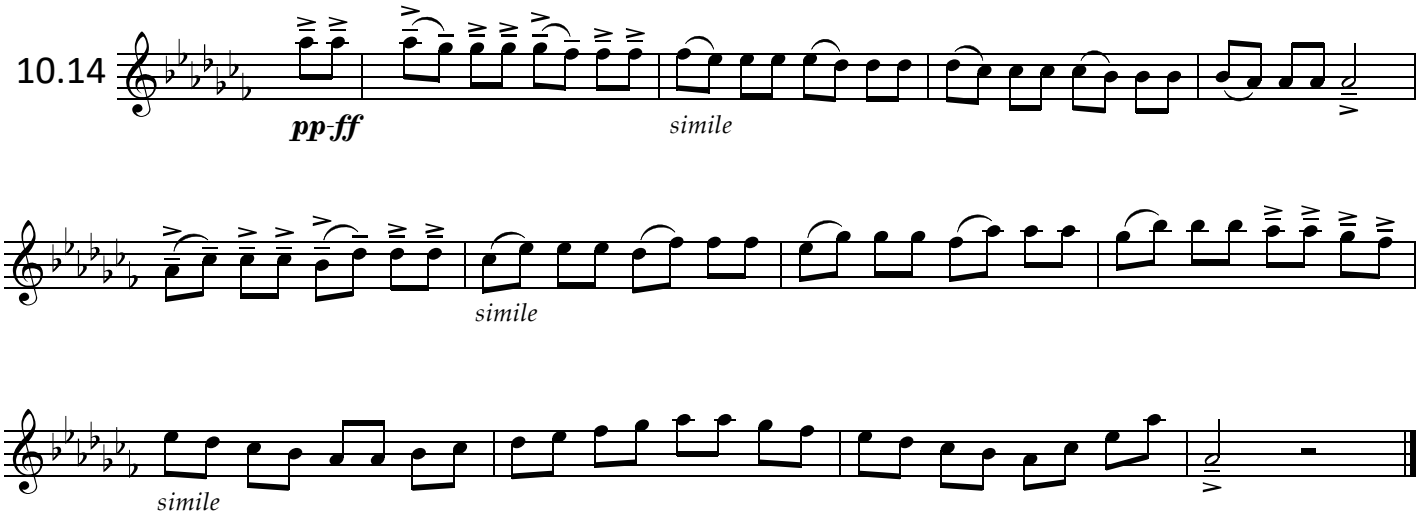

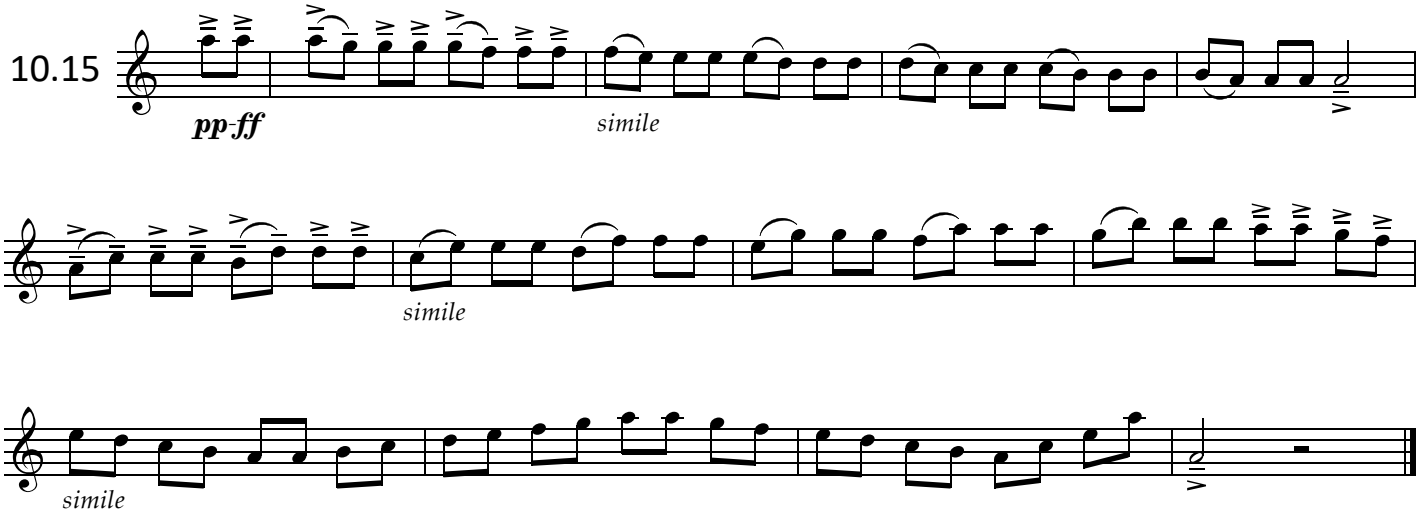

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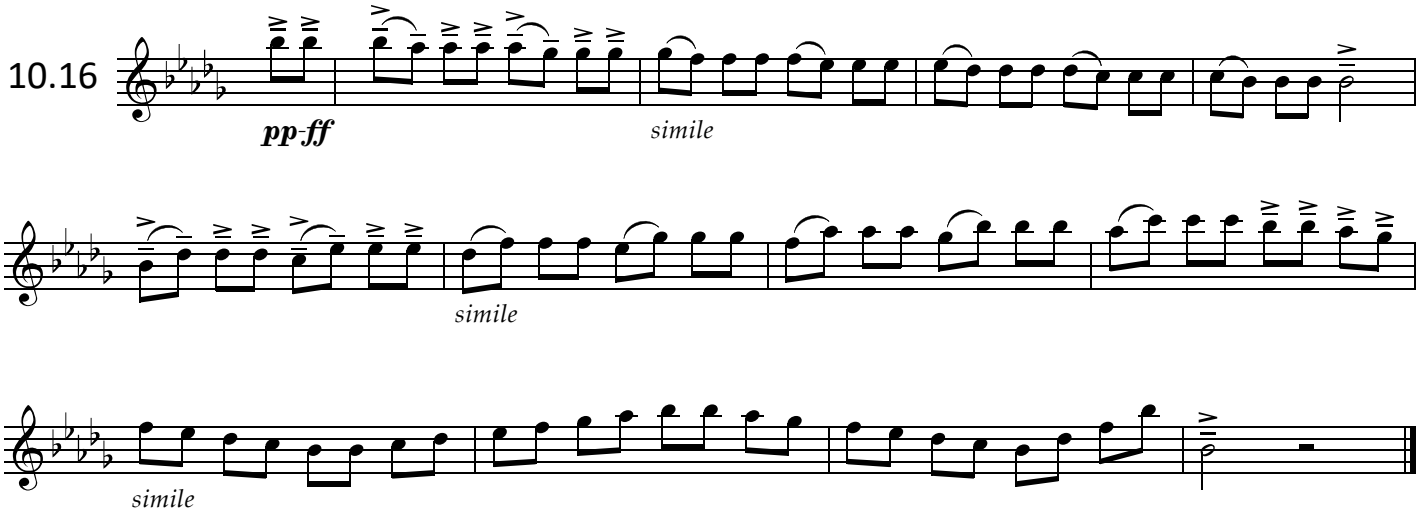

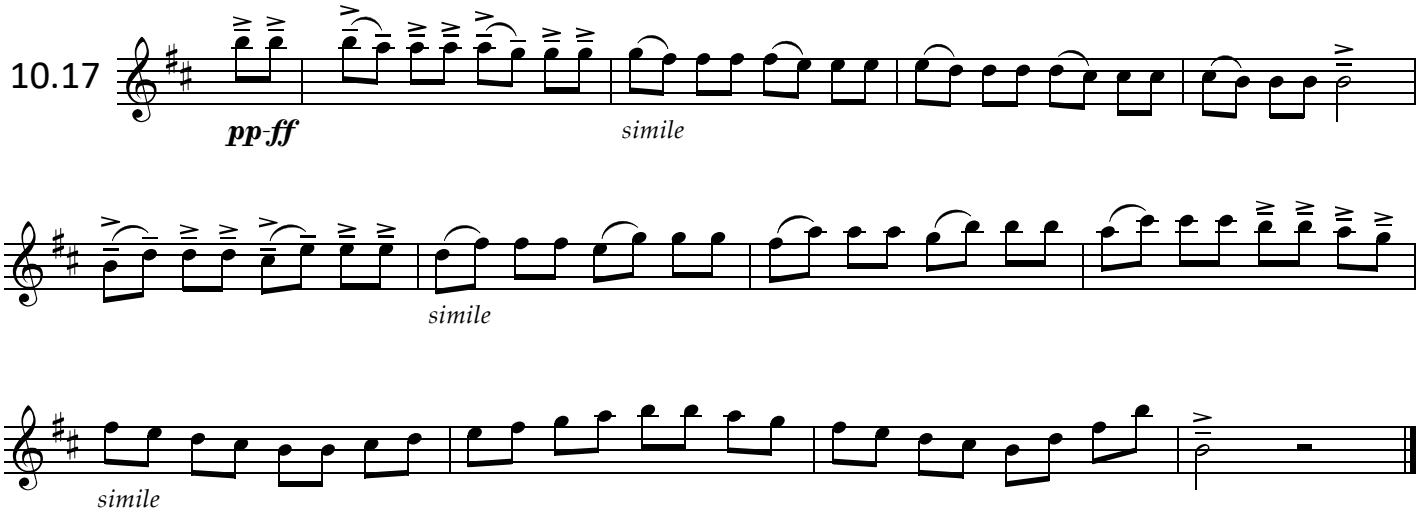

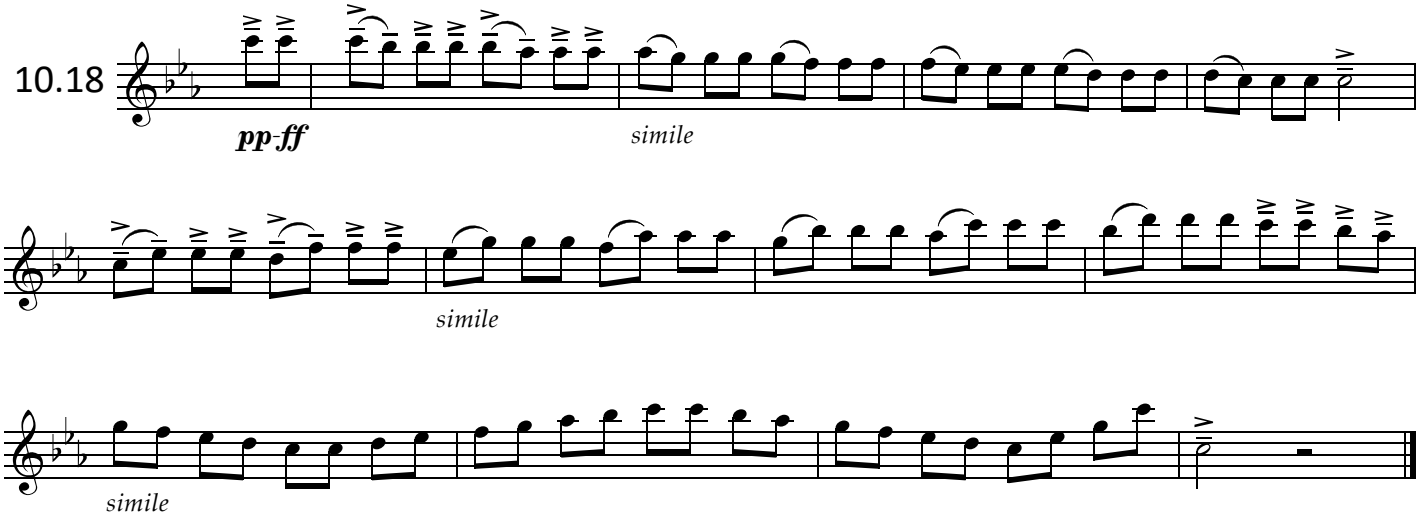

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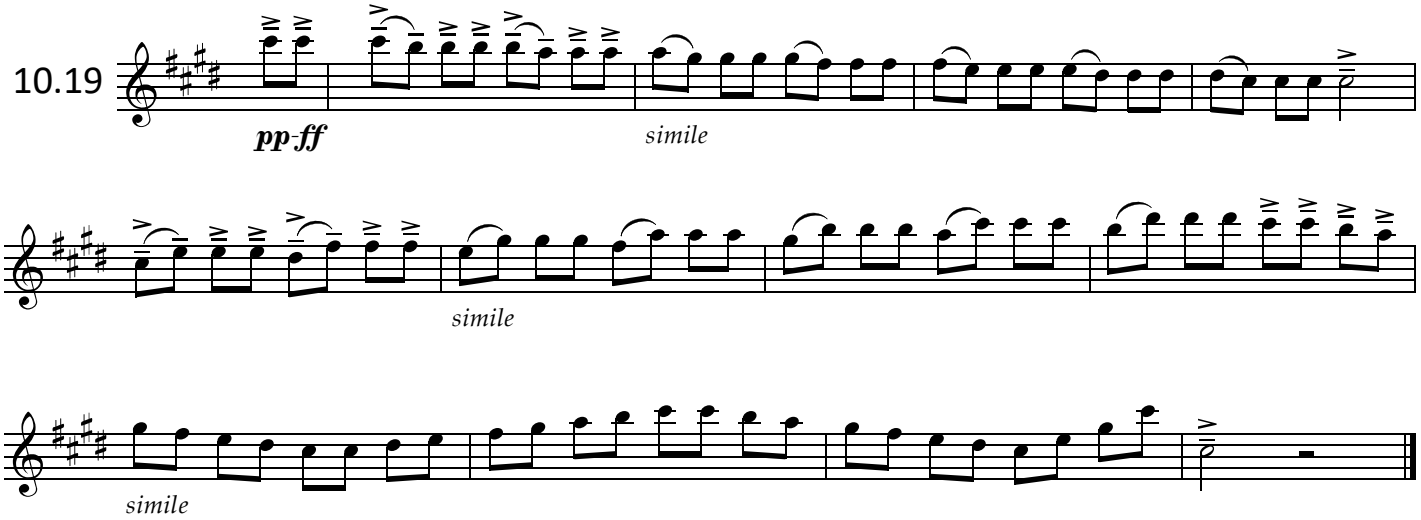
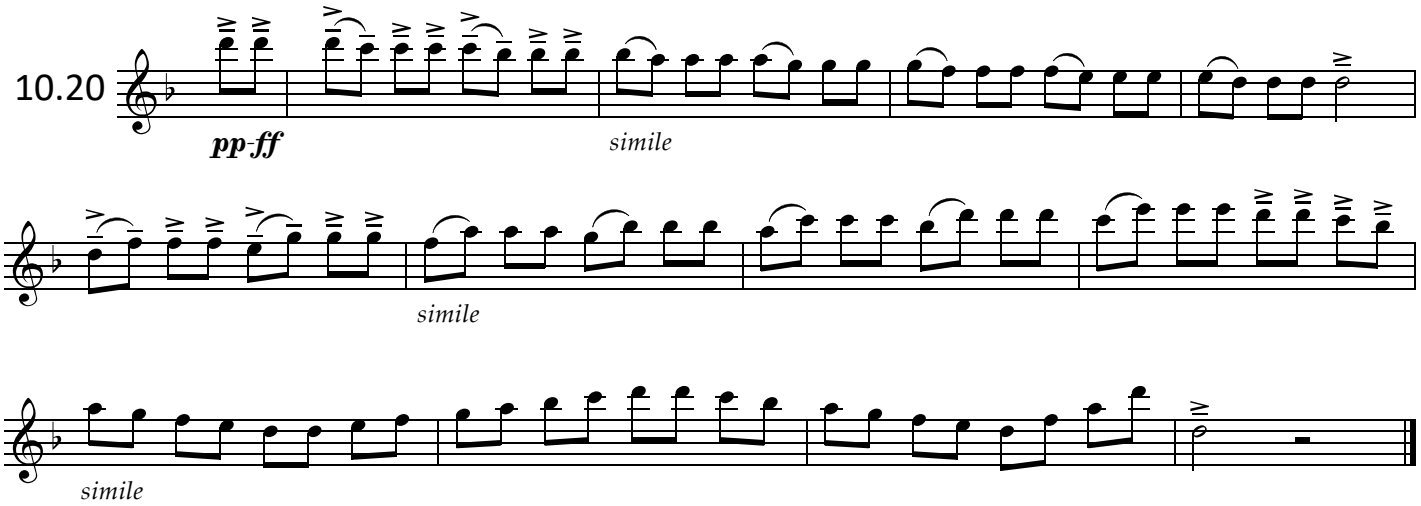
10 - Slurs & tongue 1 - Minor





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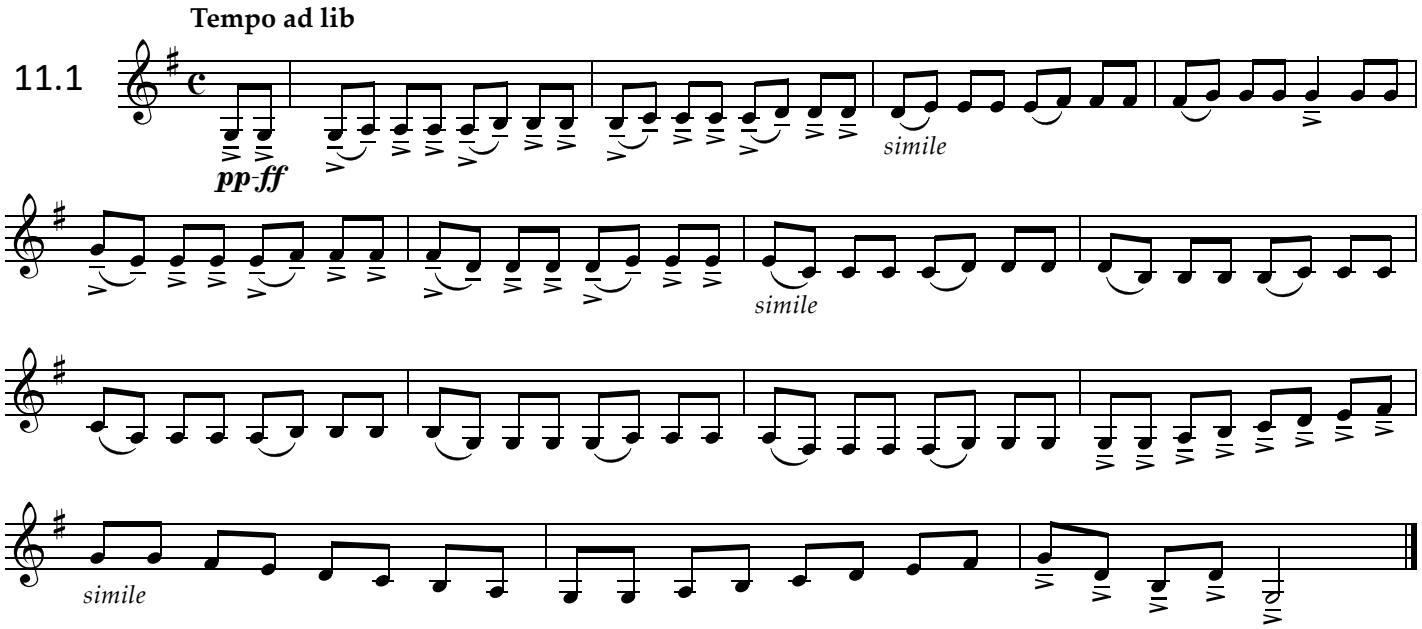
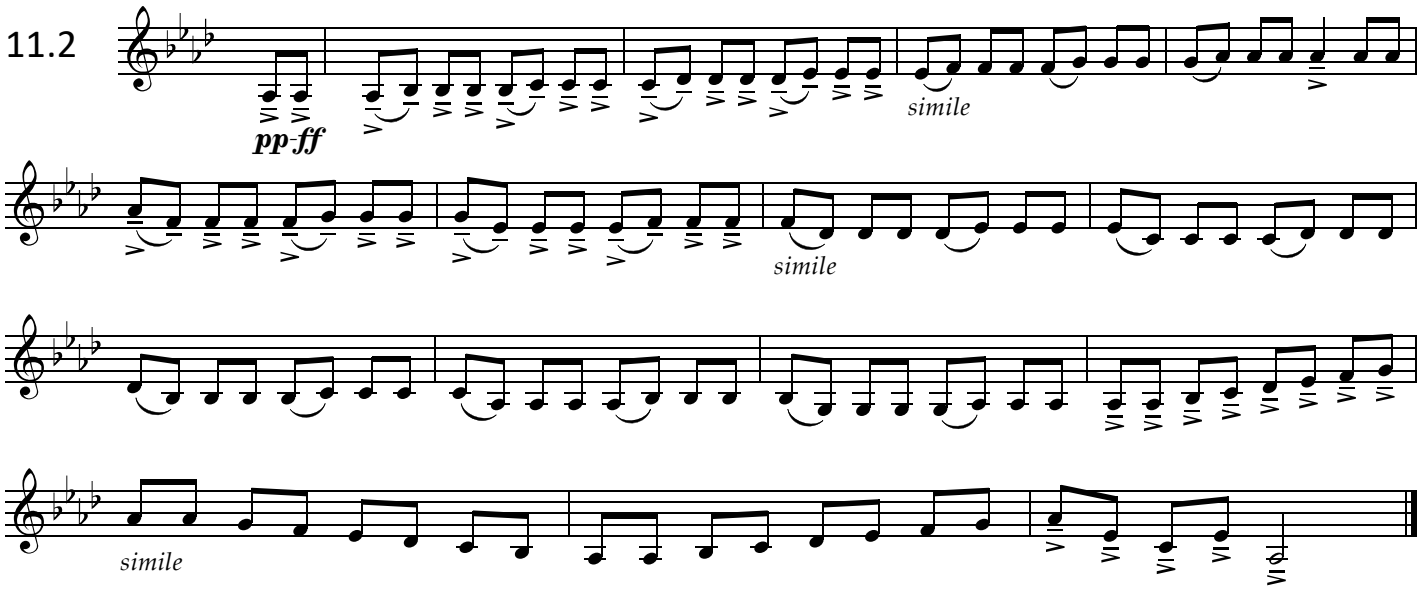
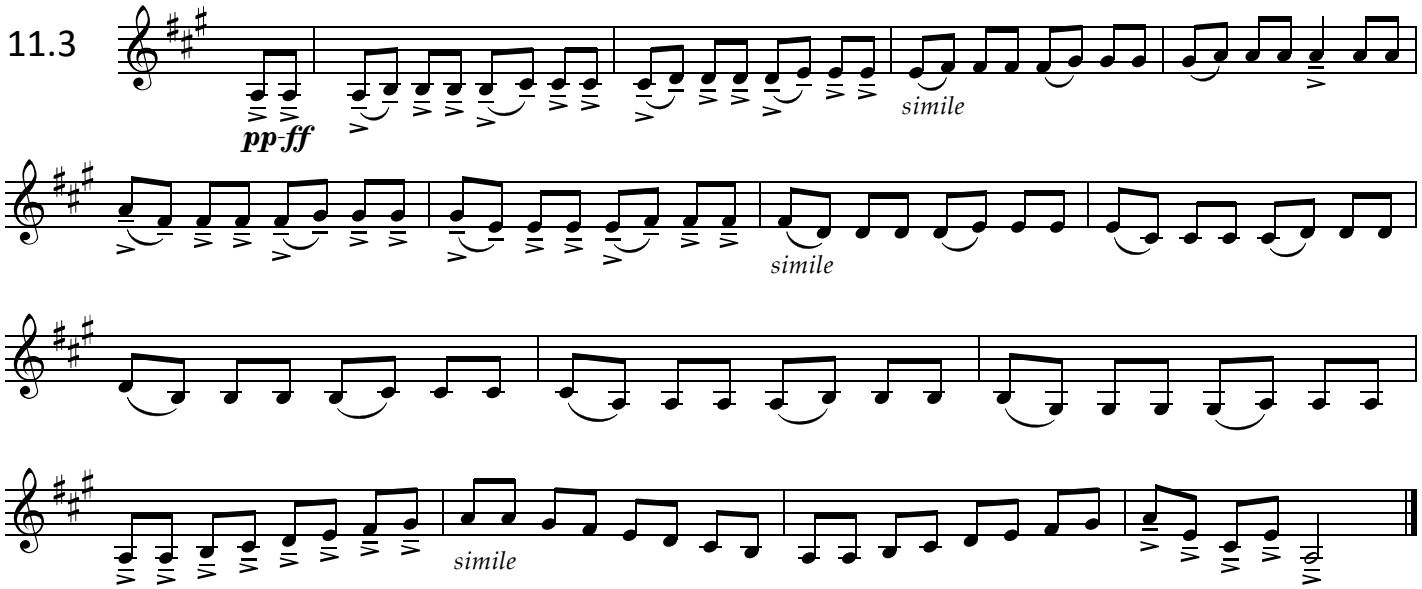
11 - Slurs & tongue 2 – Major







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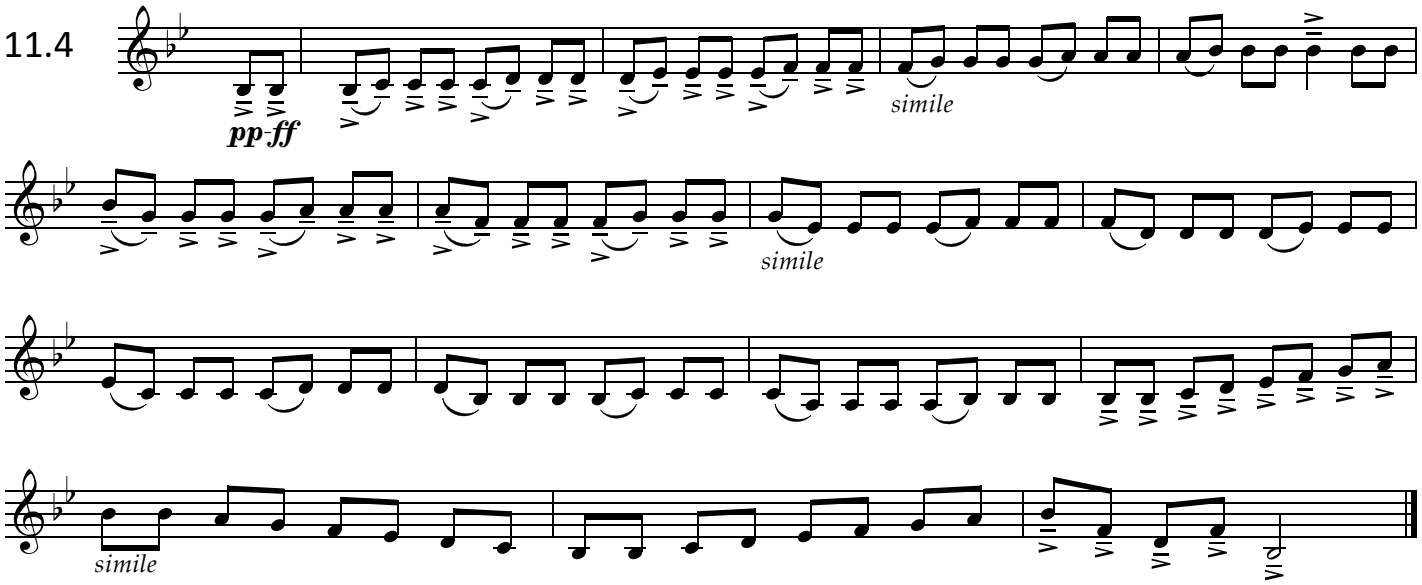

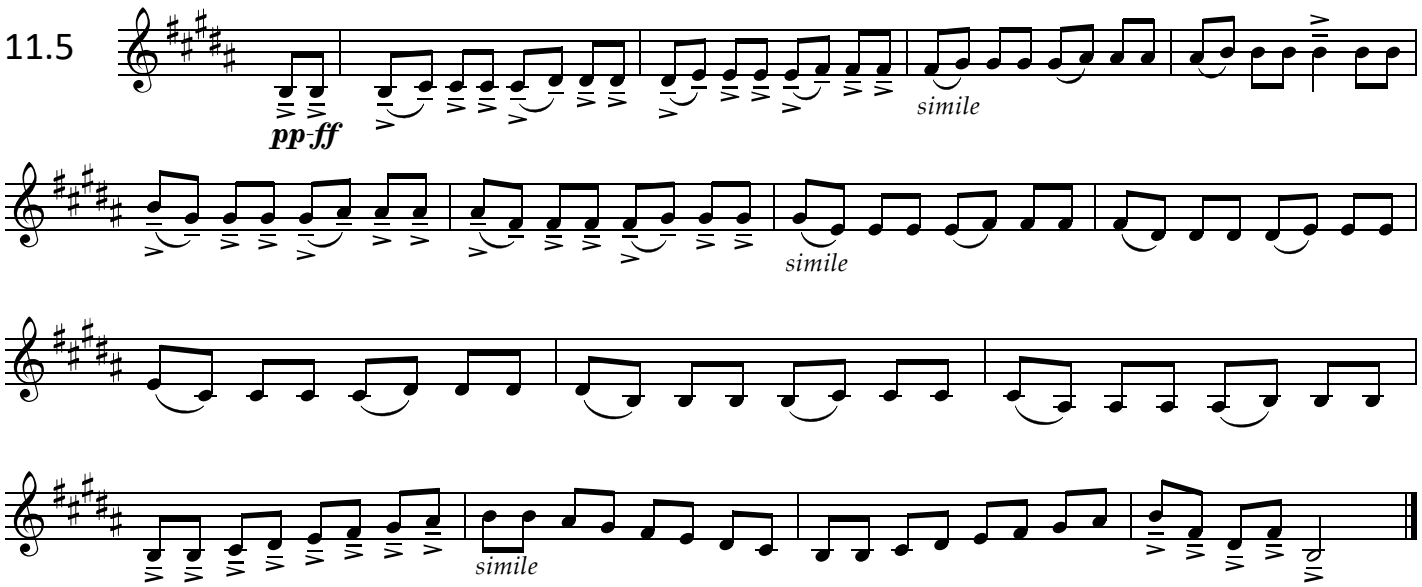

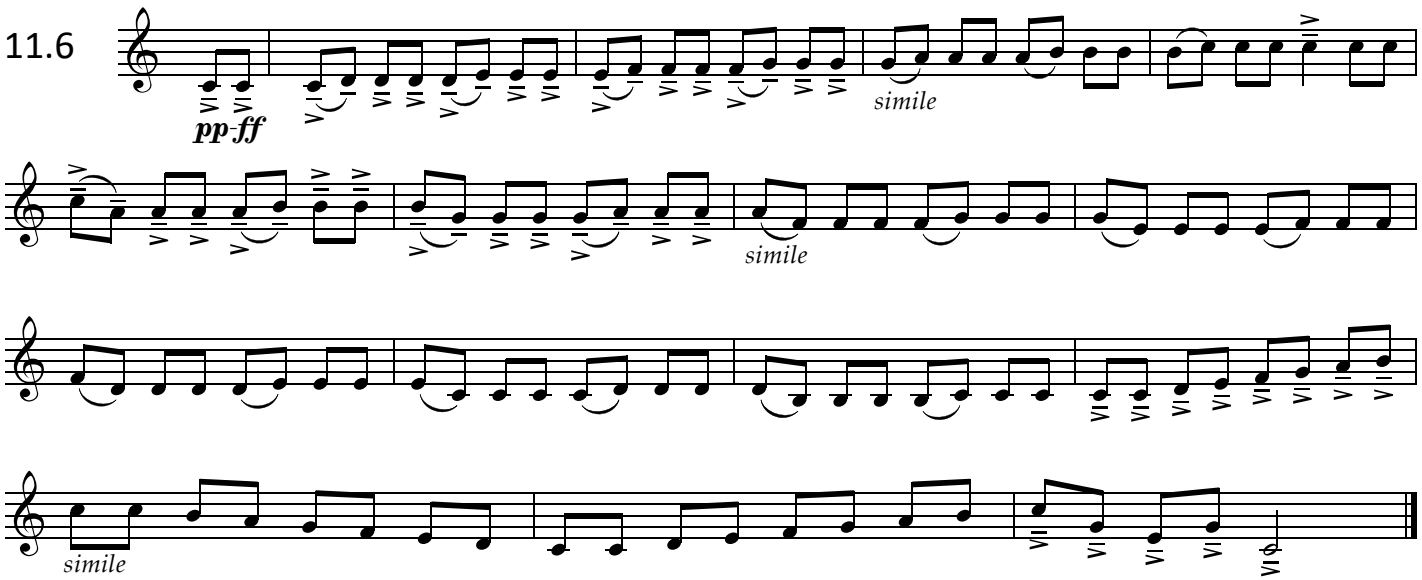

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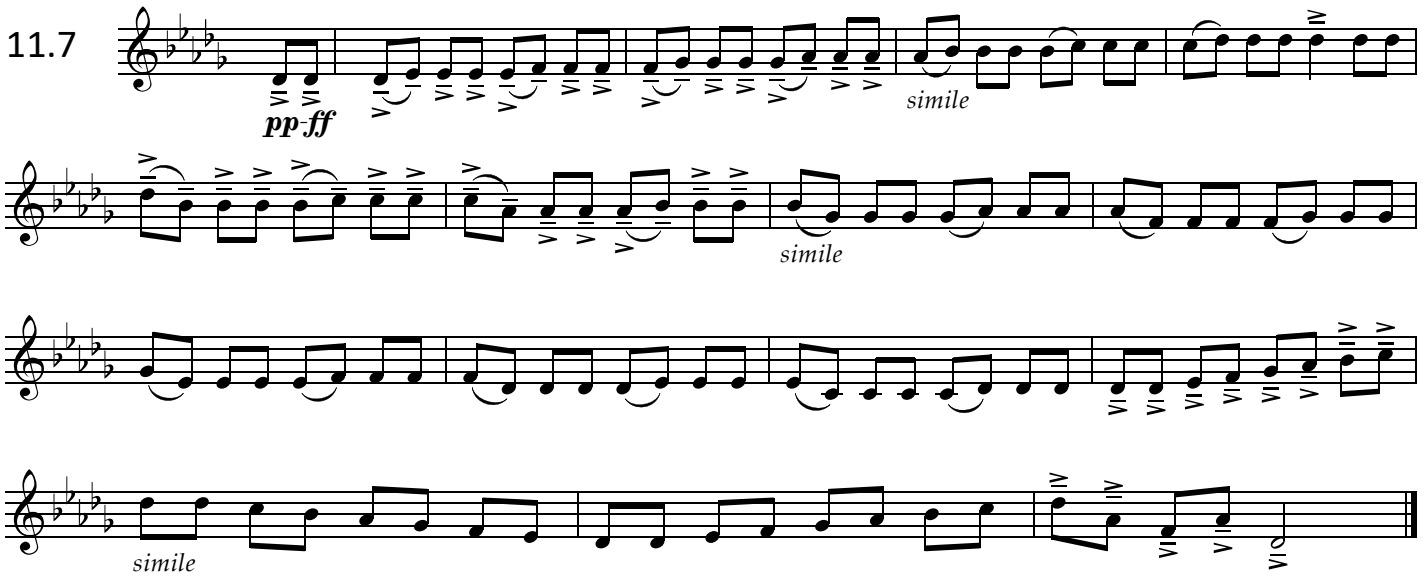

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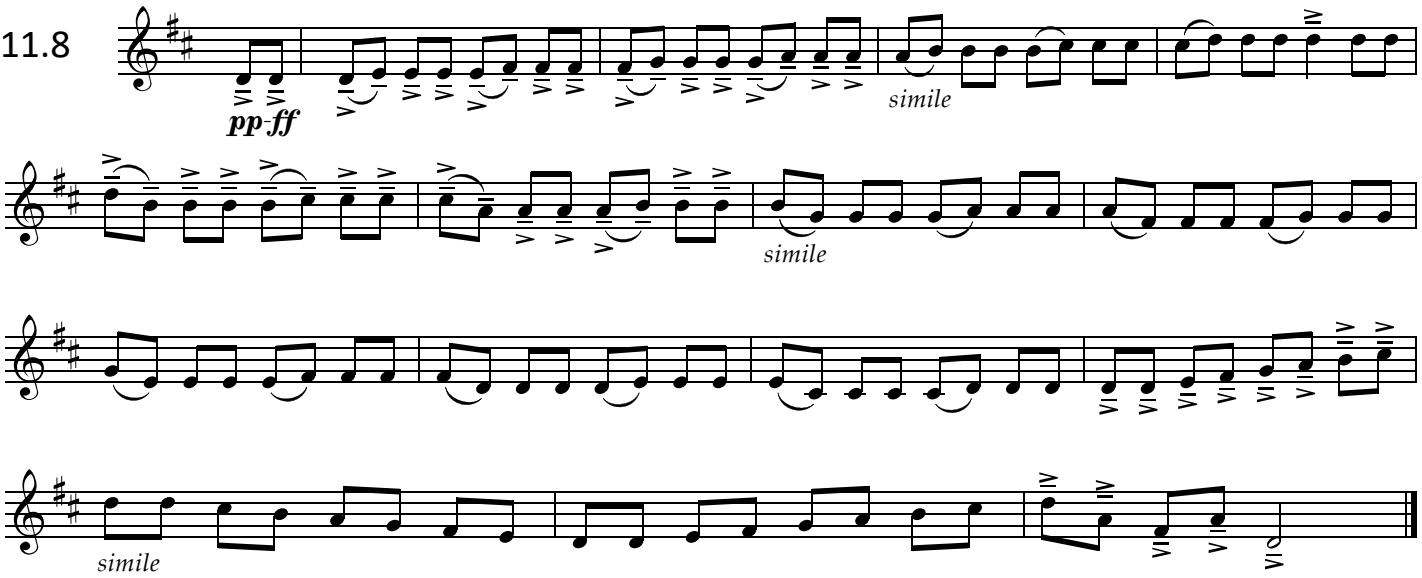

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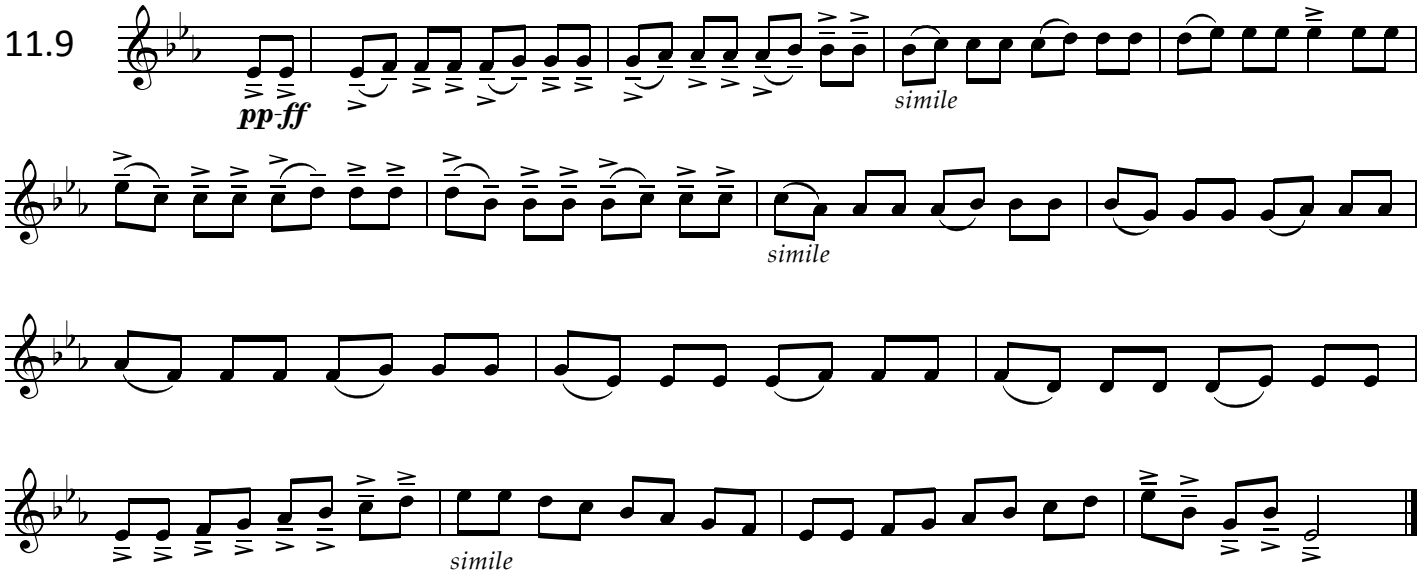

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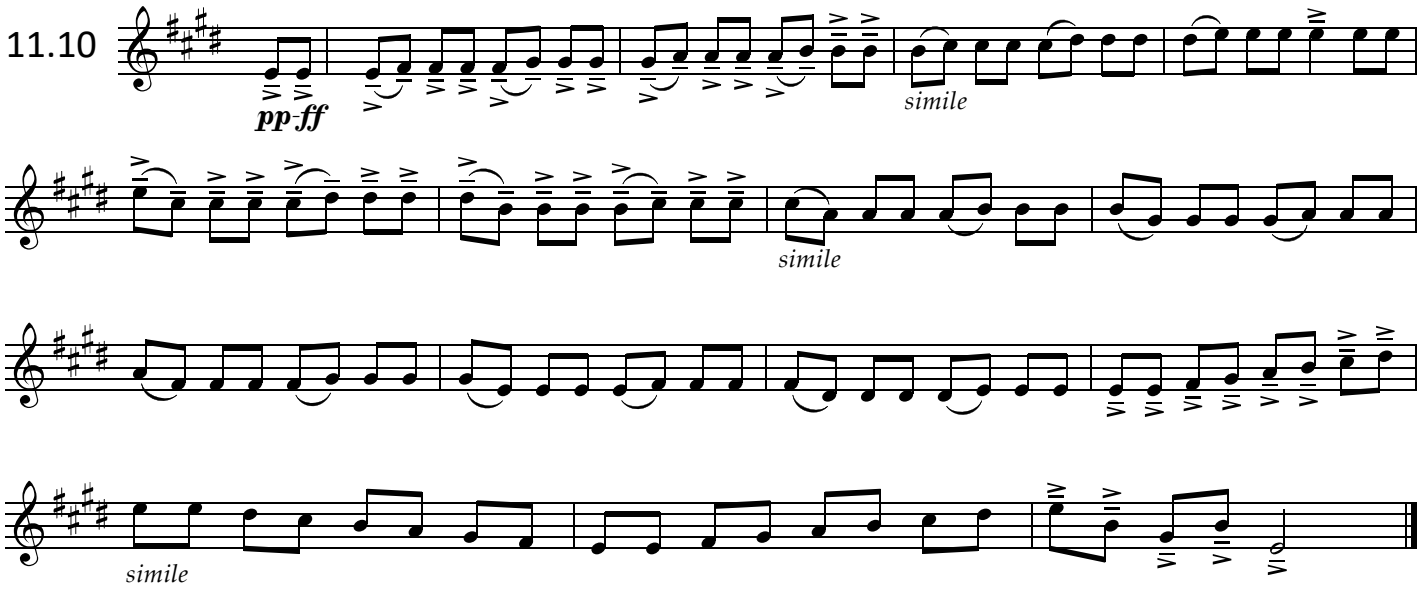

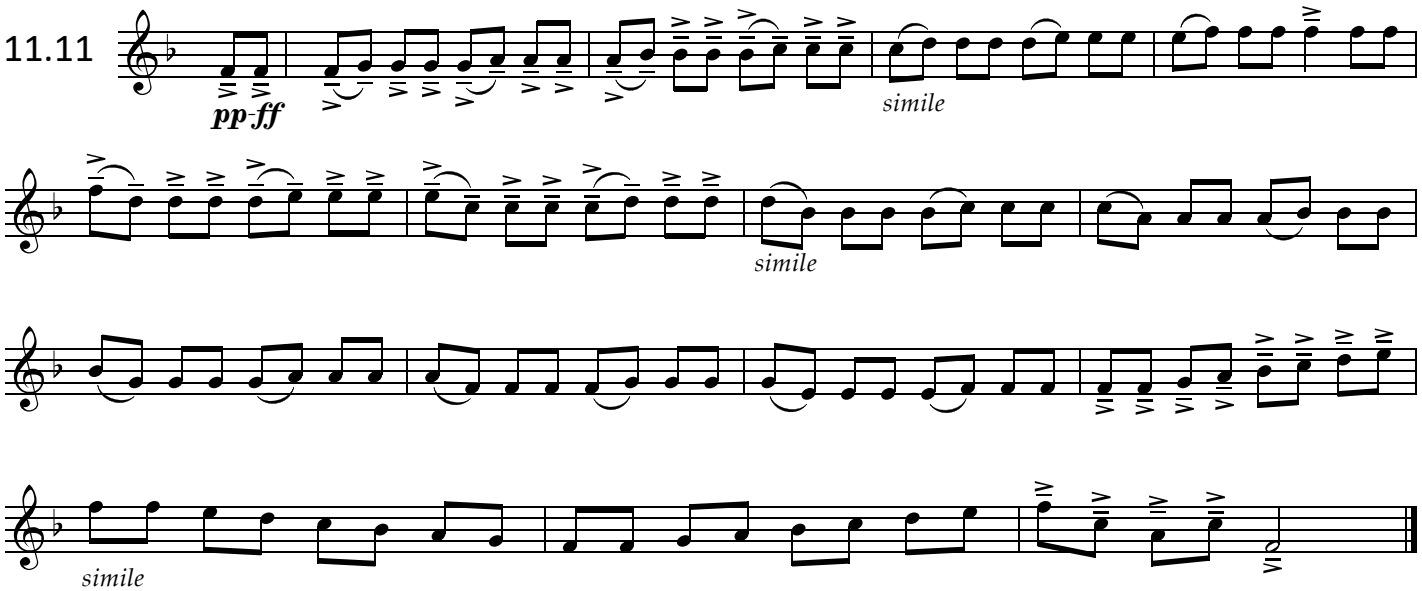

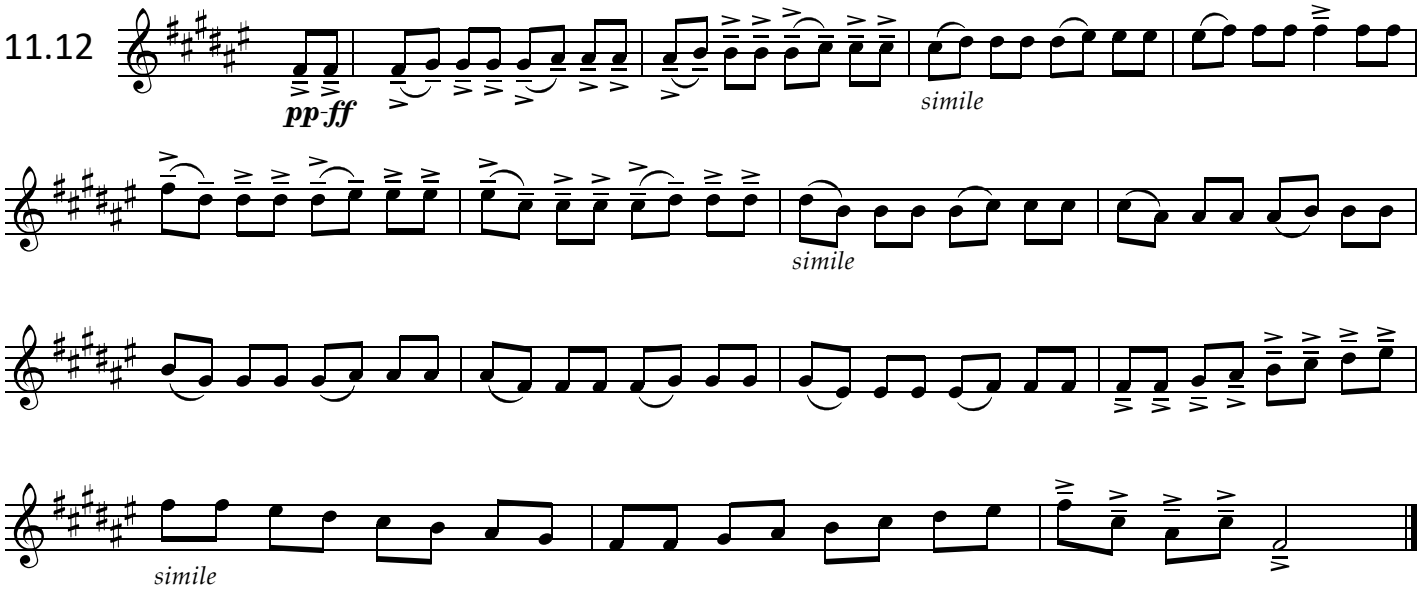

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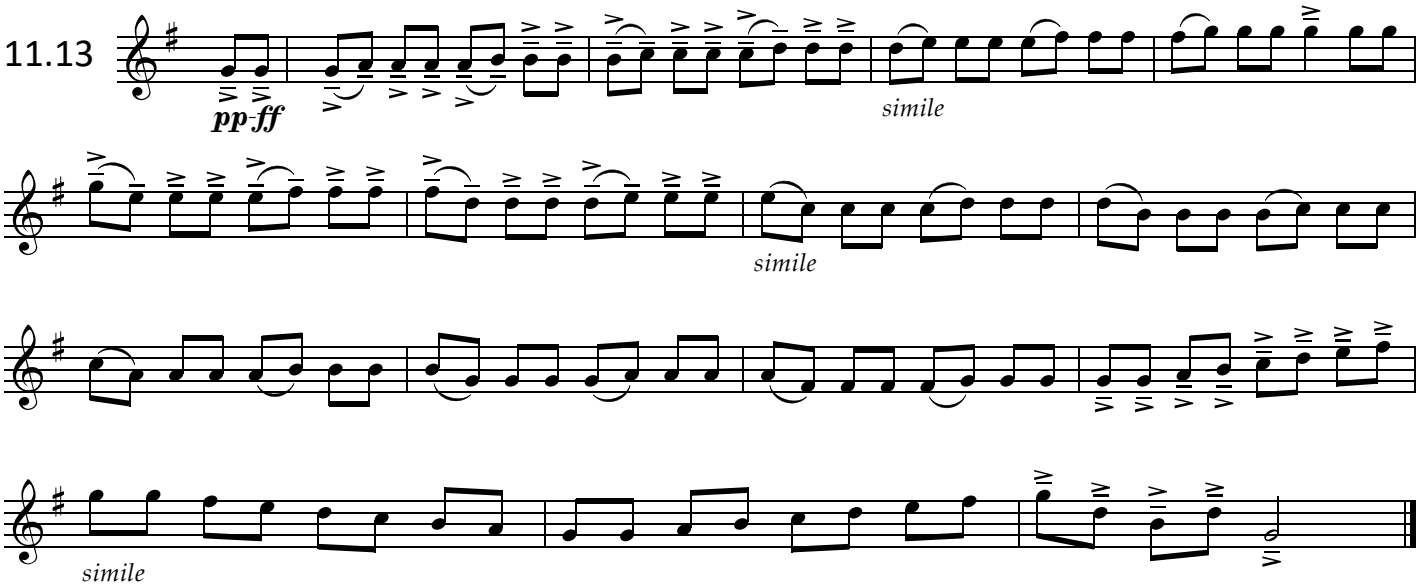

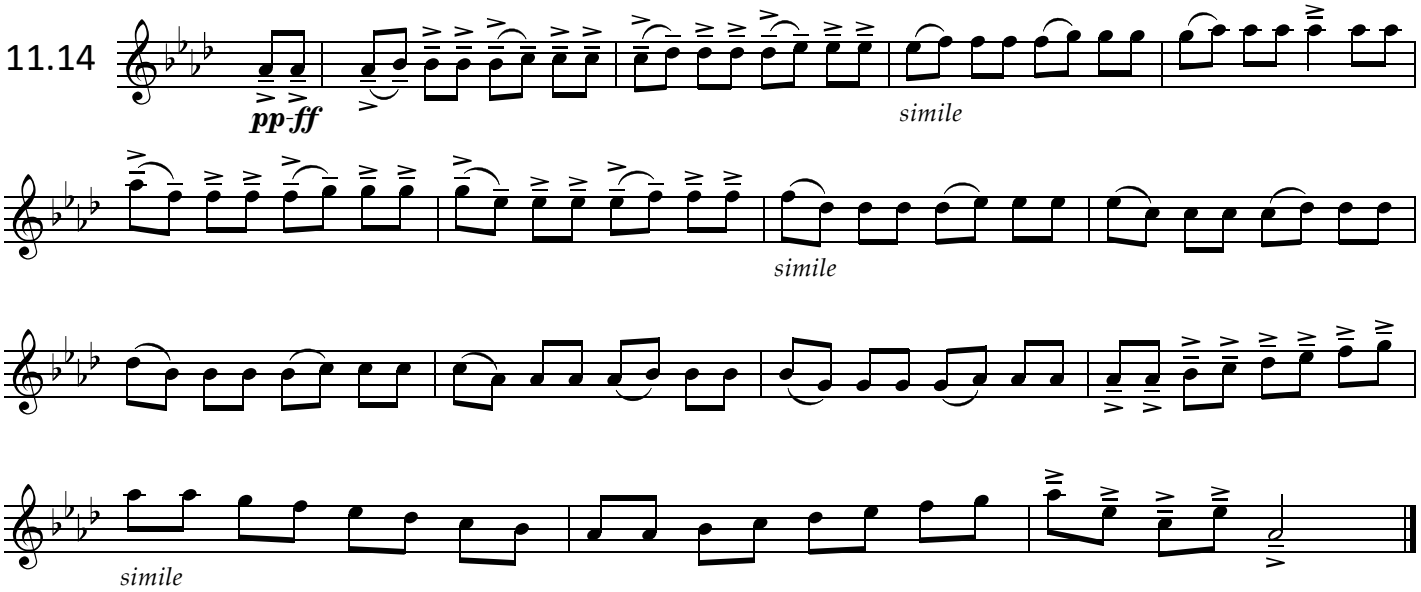

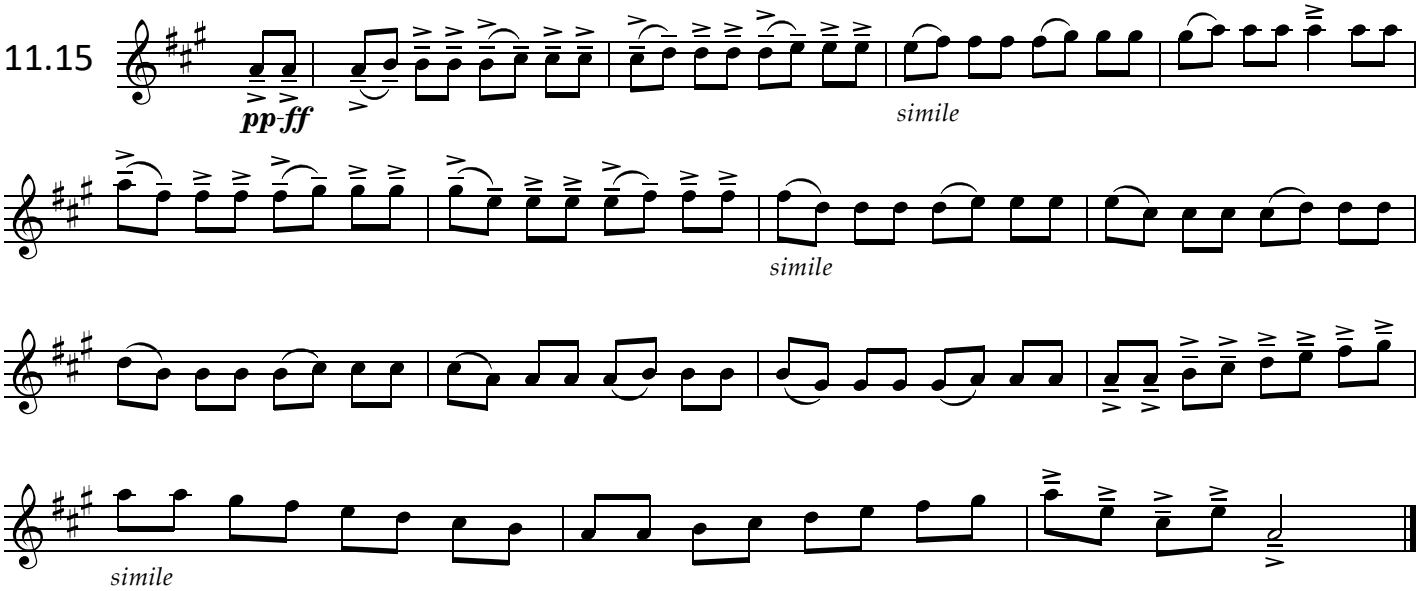

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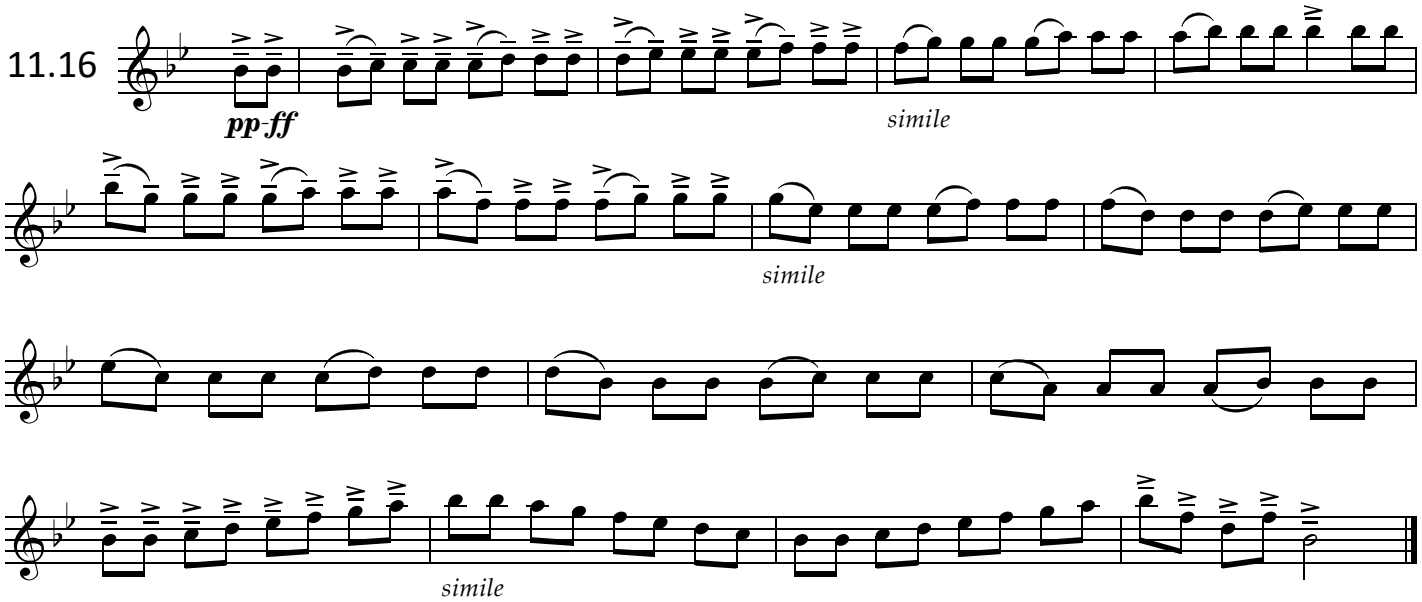

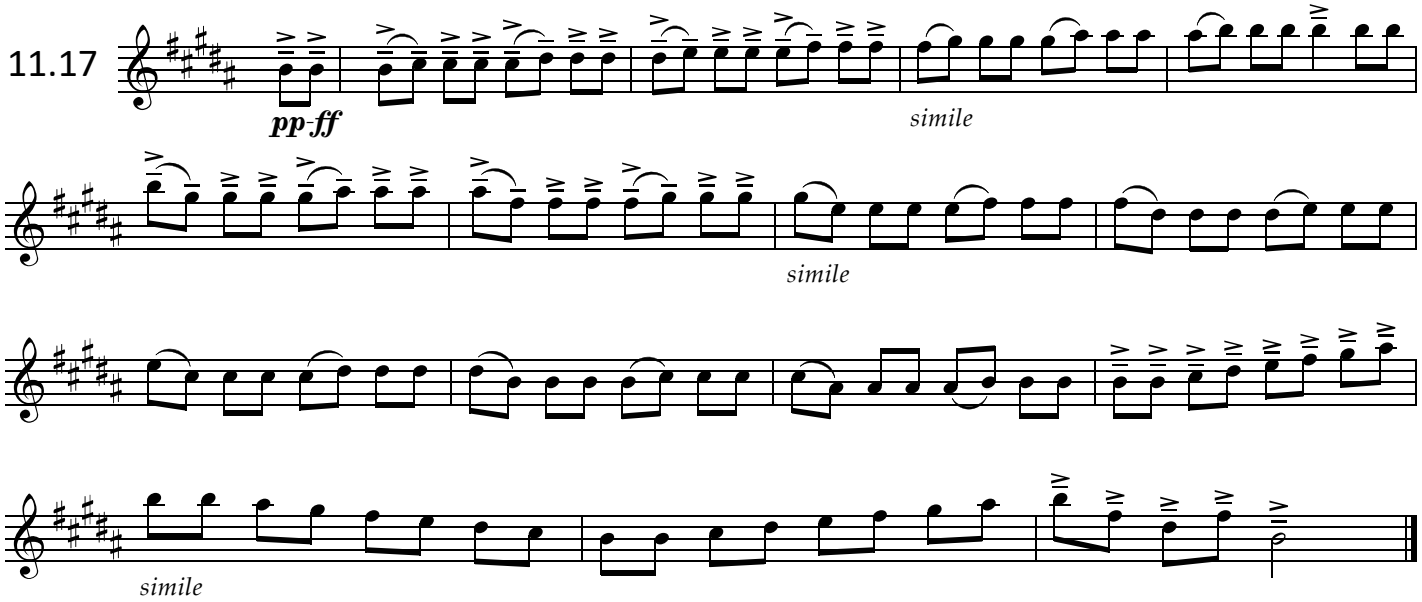

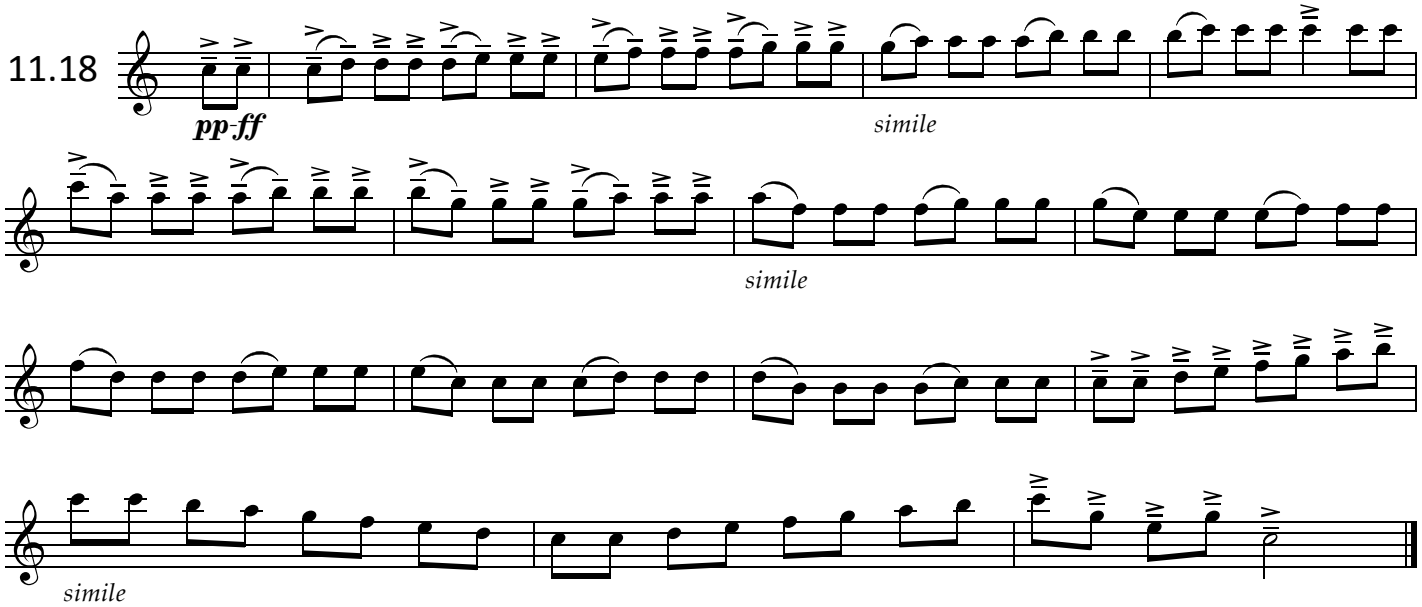

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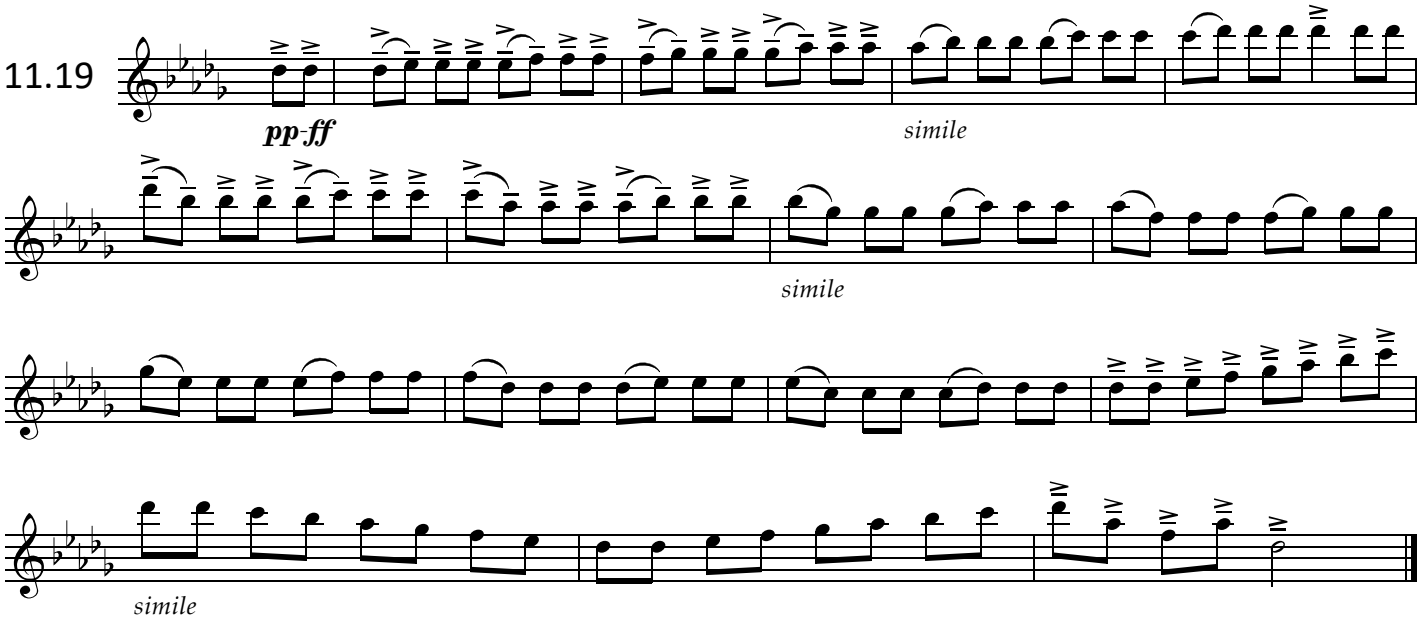

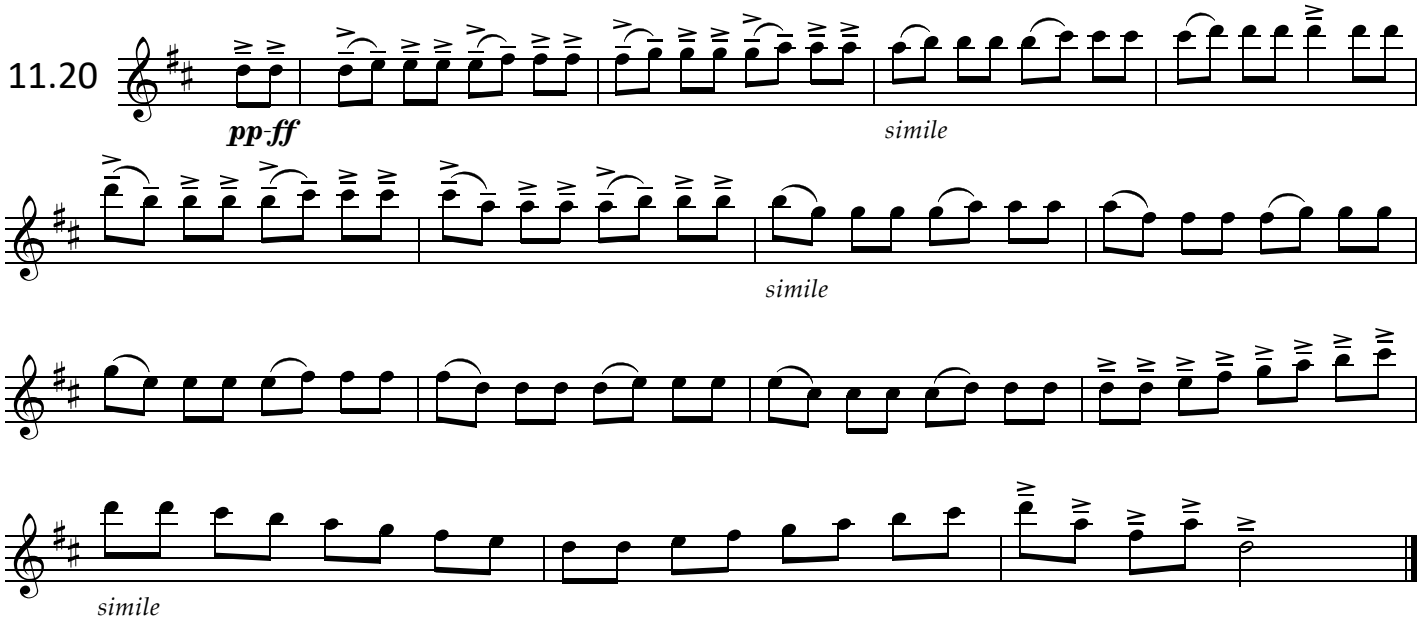

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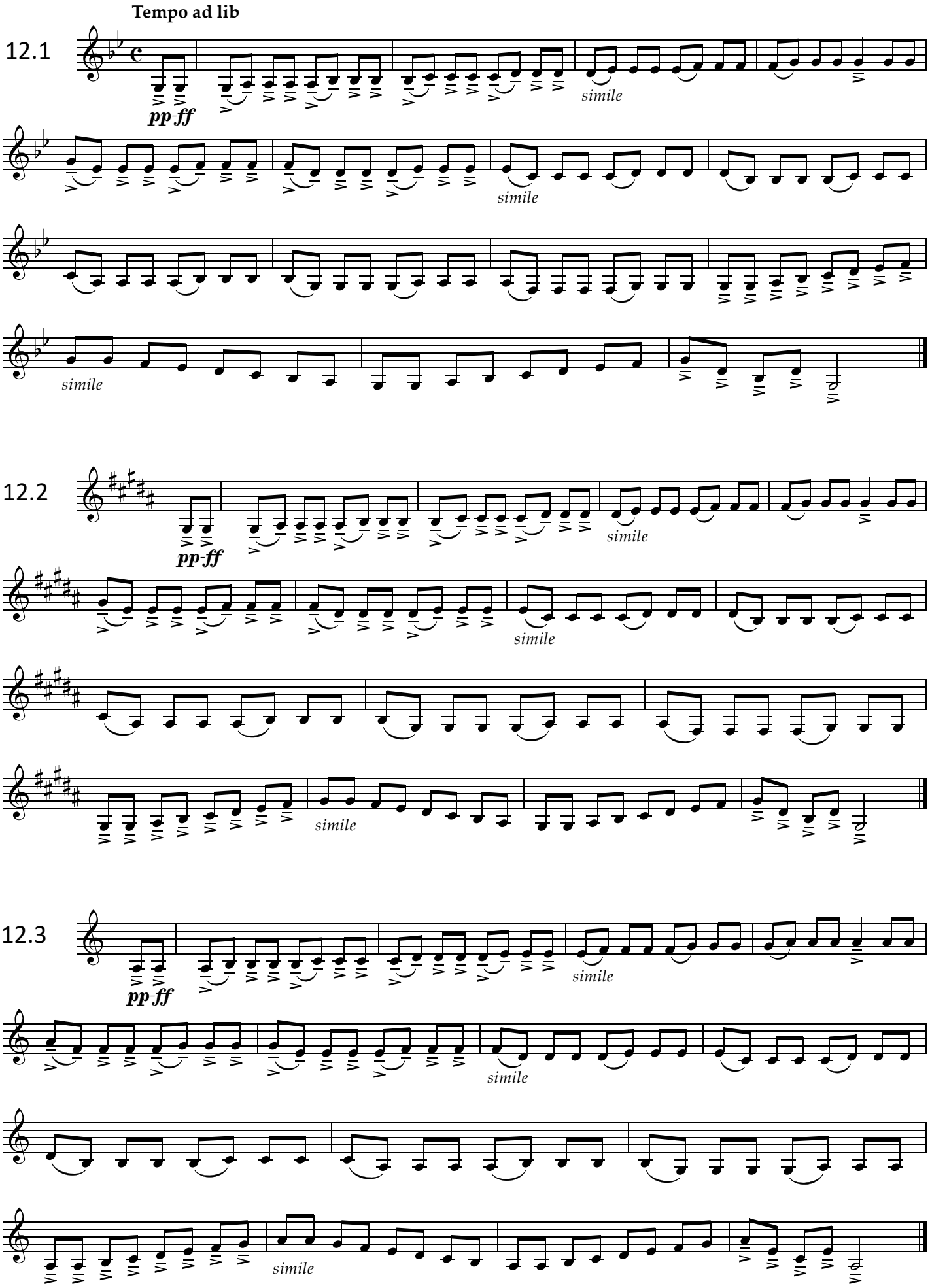
12 - Slurs & tongue 2 – Minor



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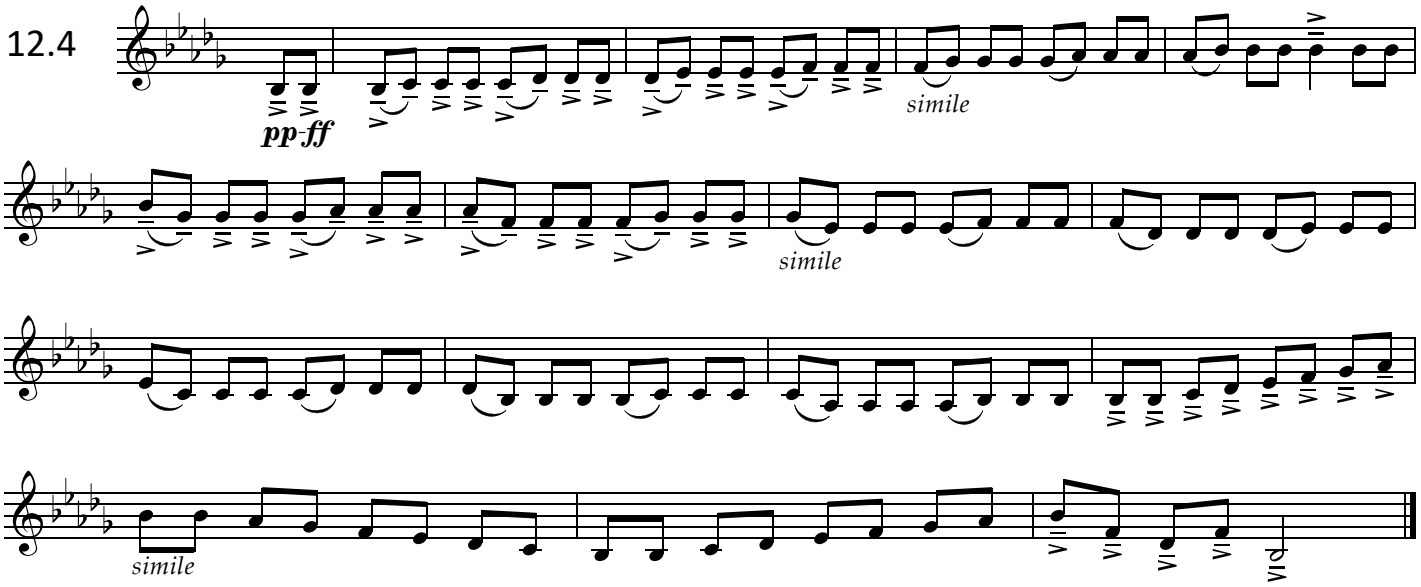

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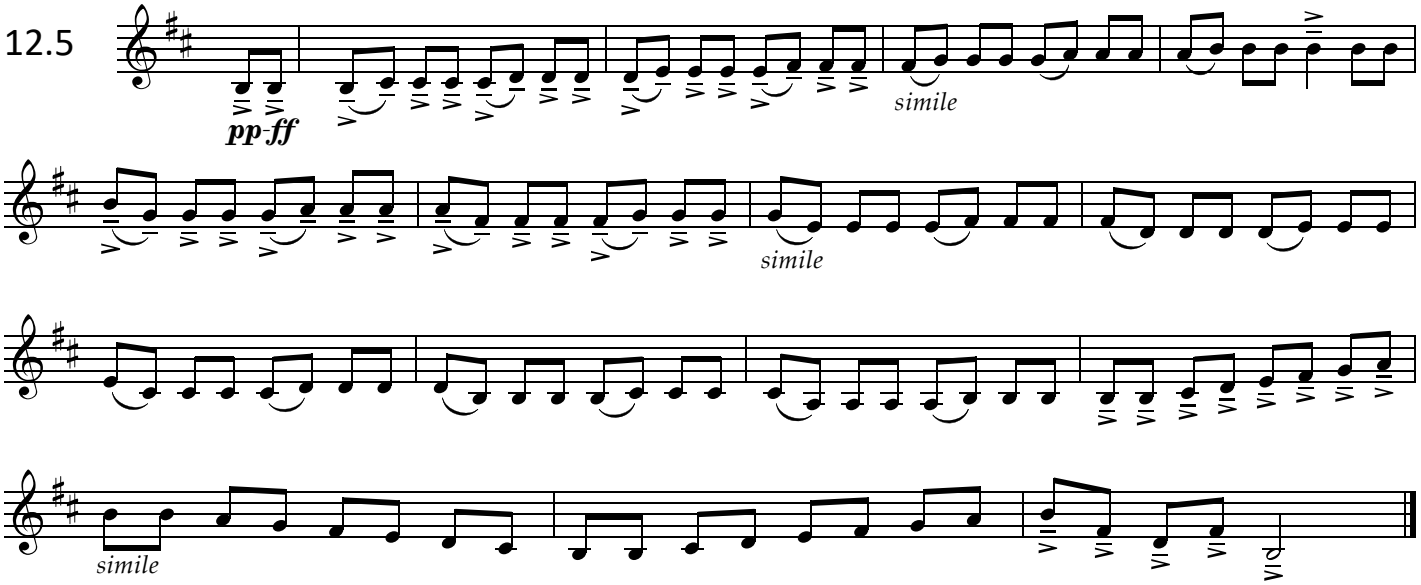

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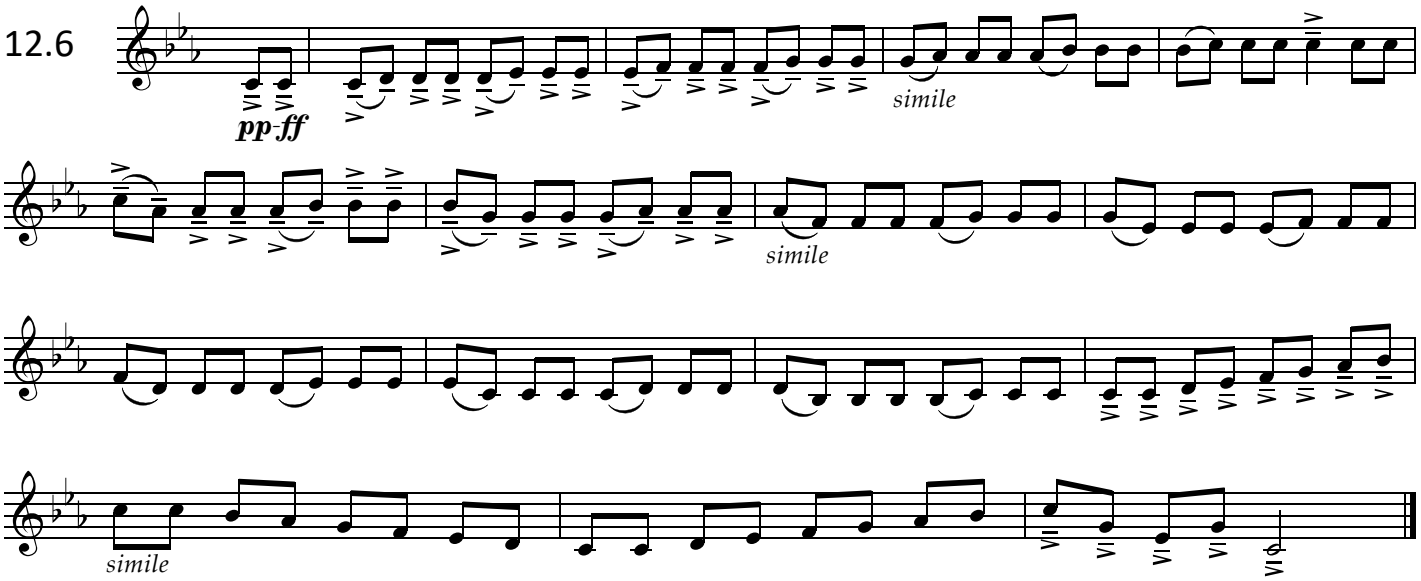

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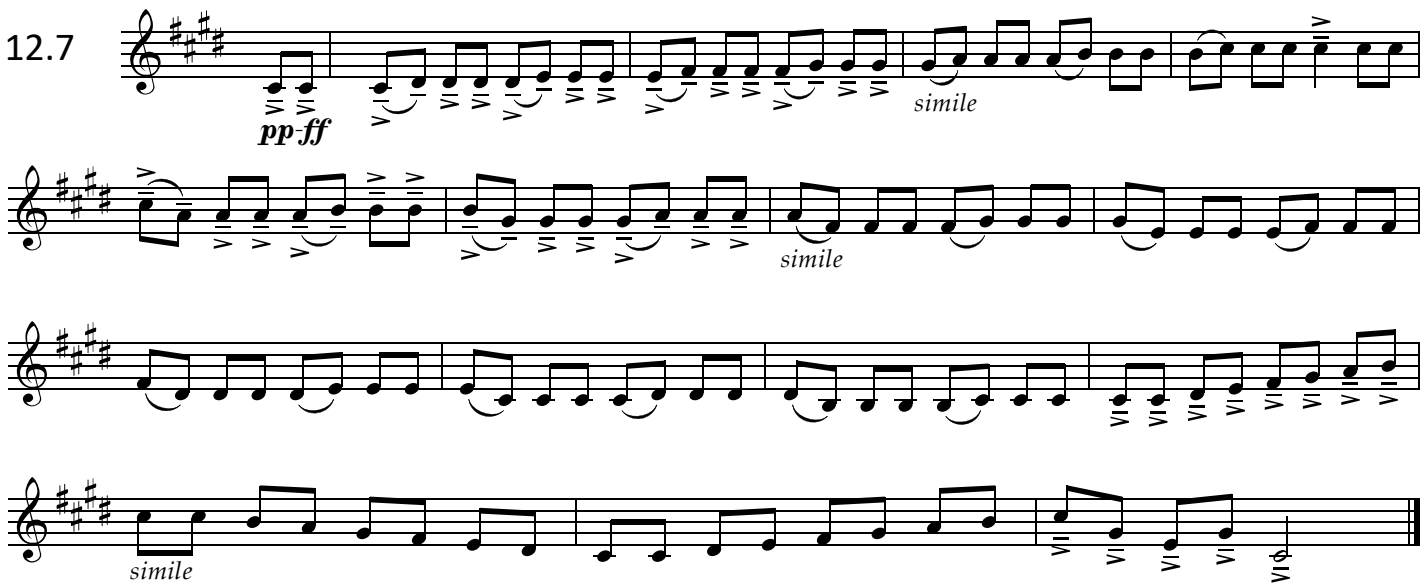

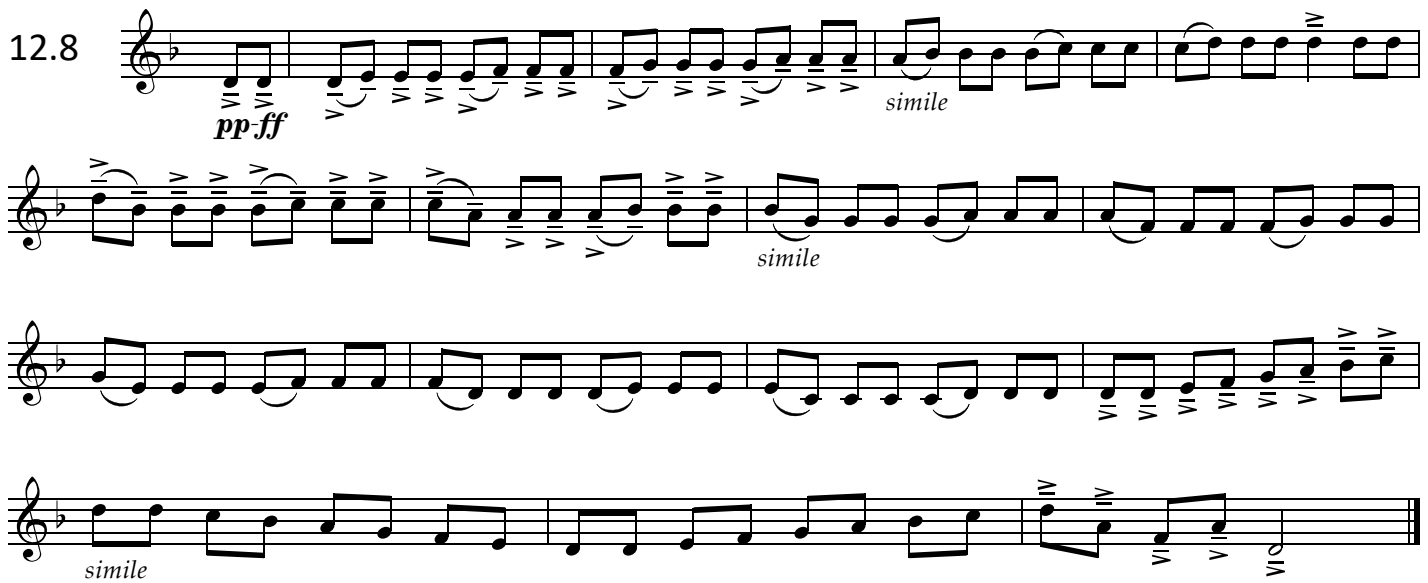

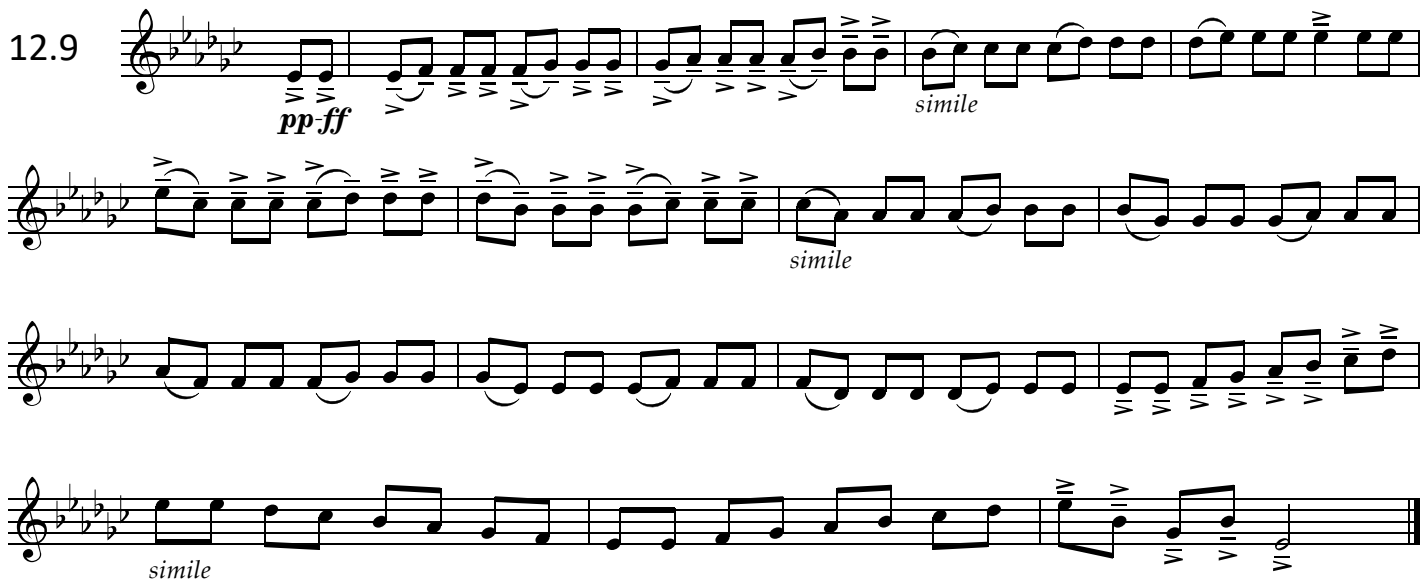

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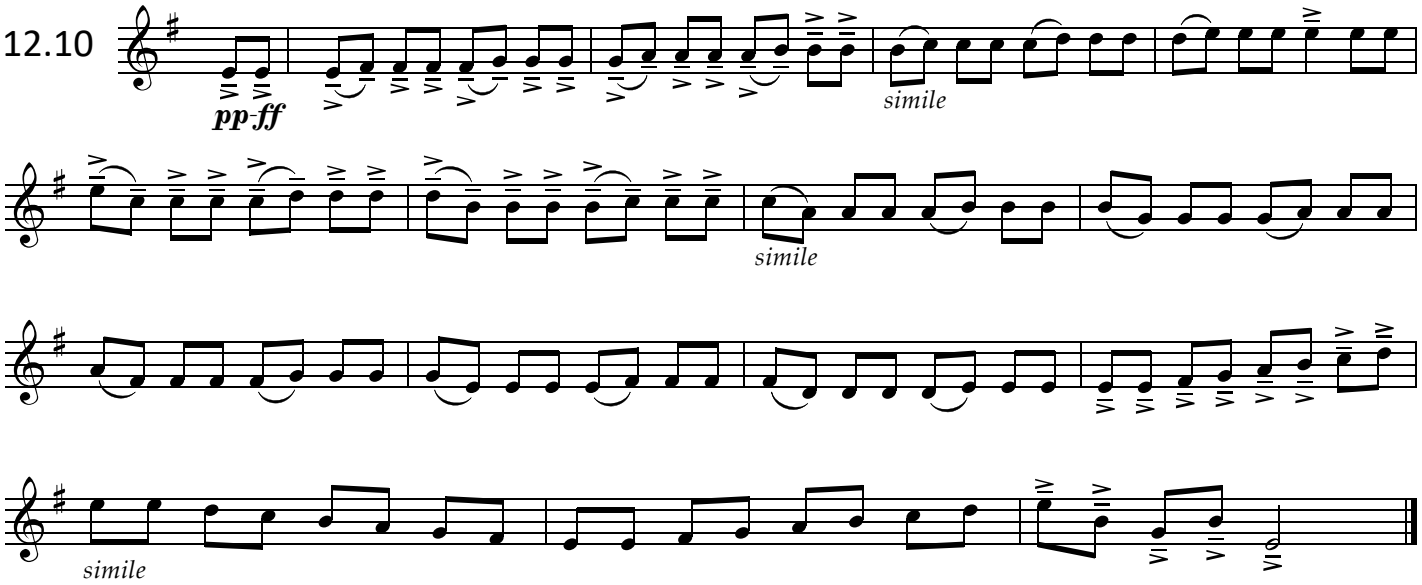

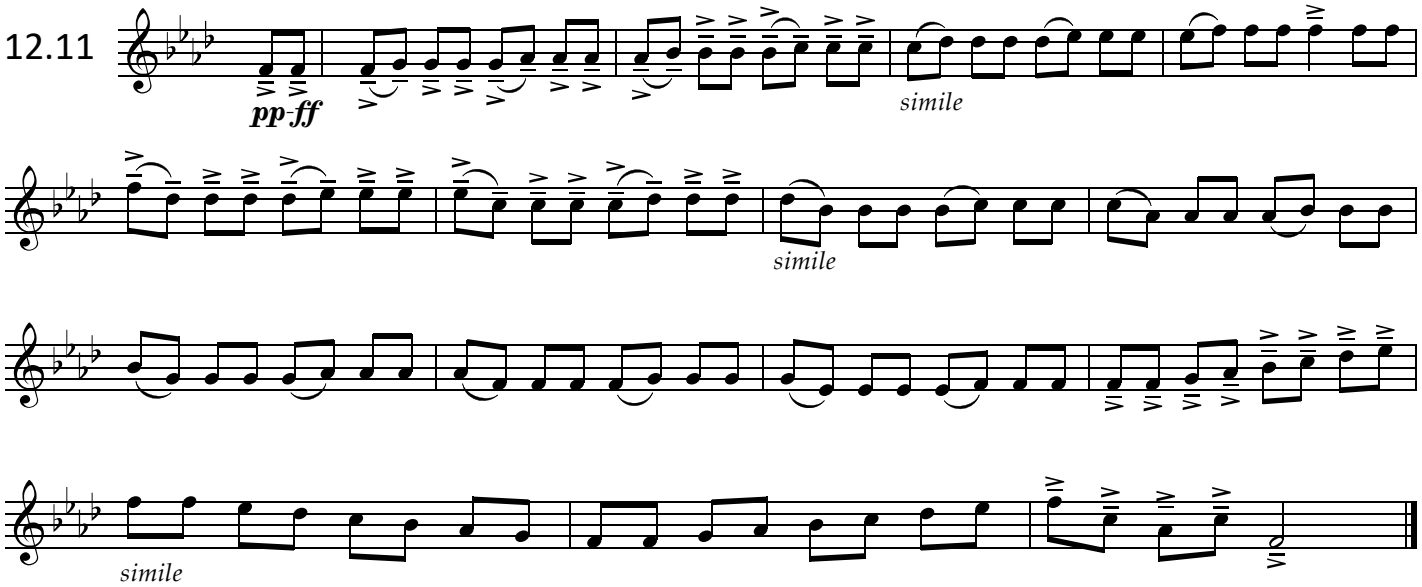

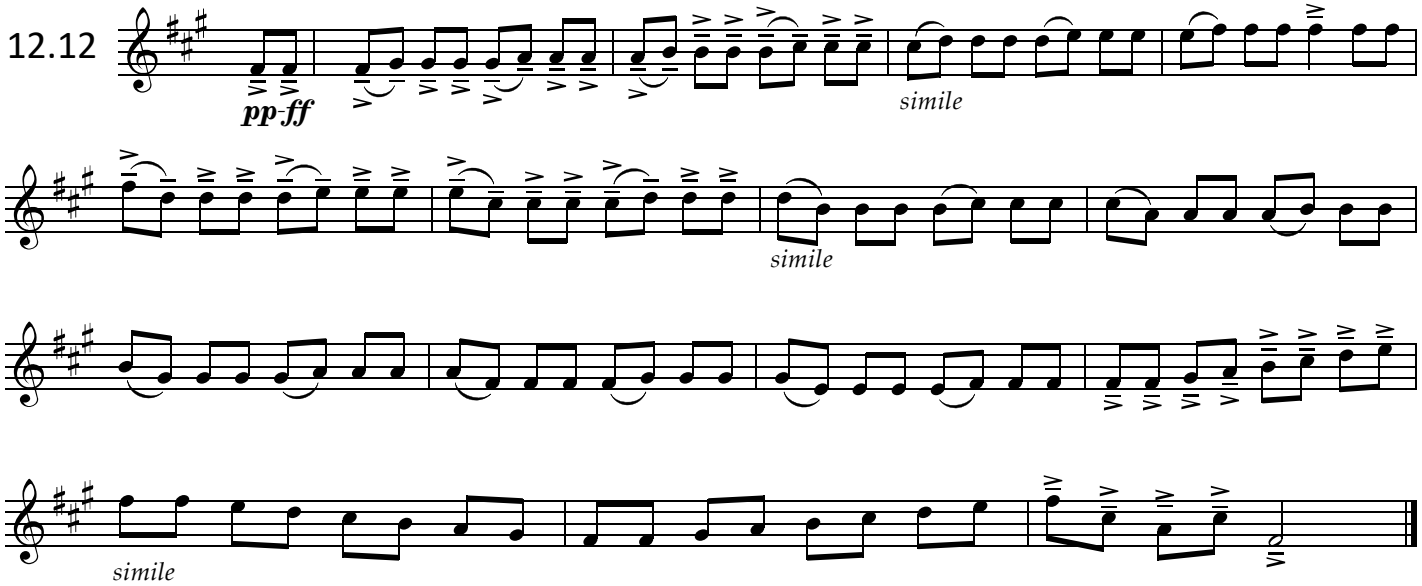

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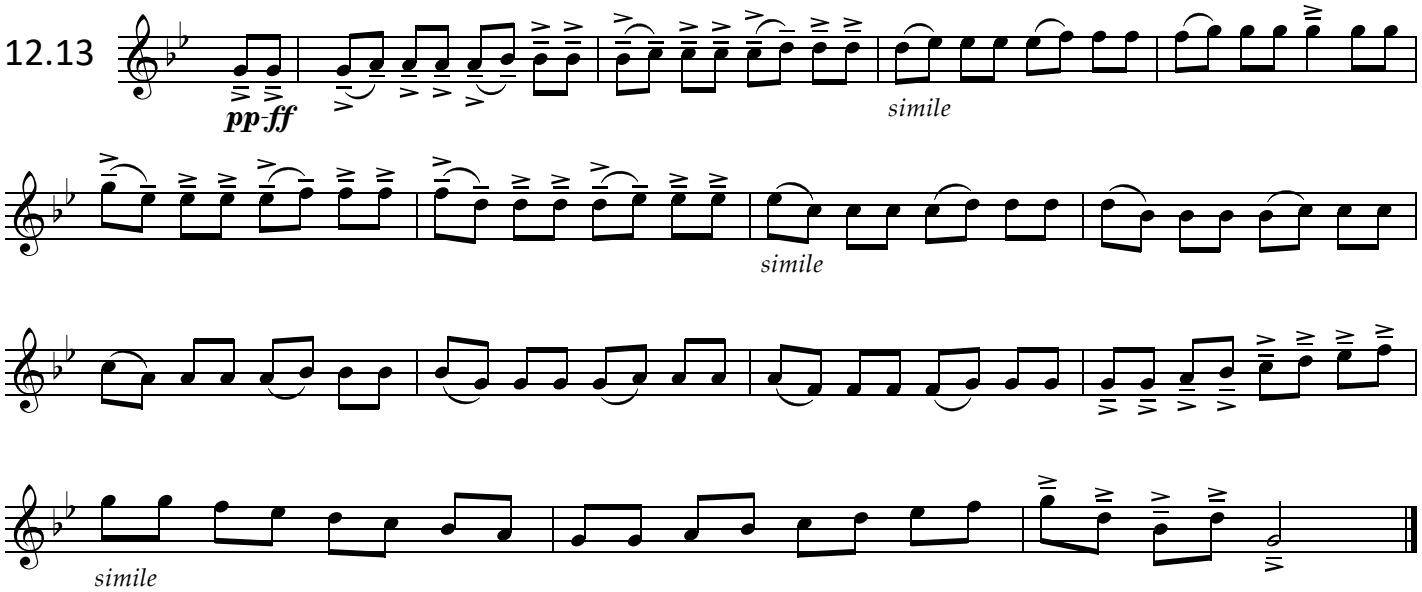

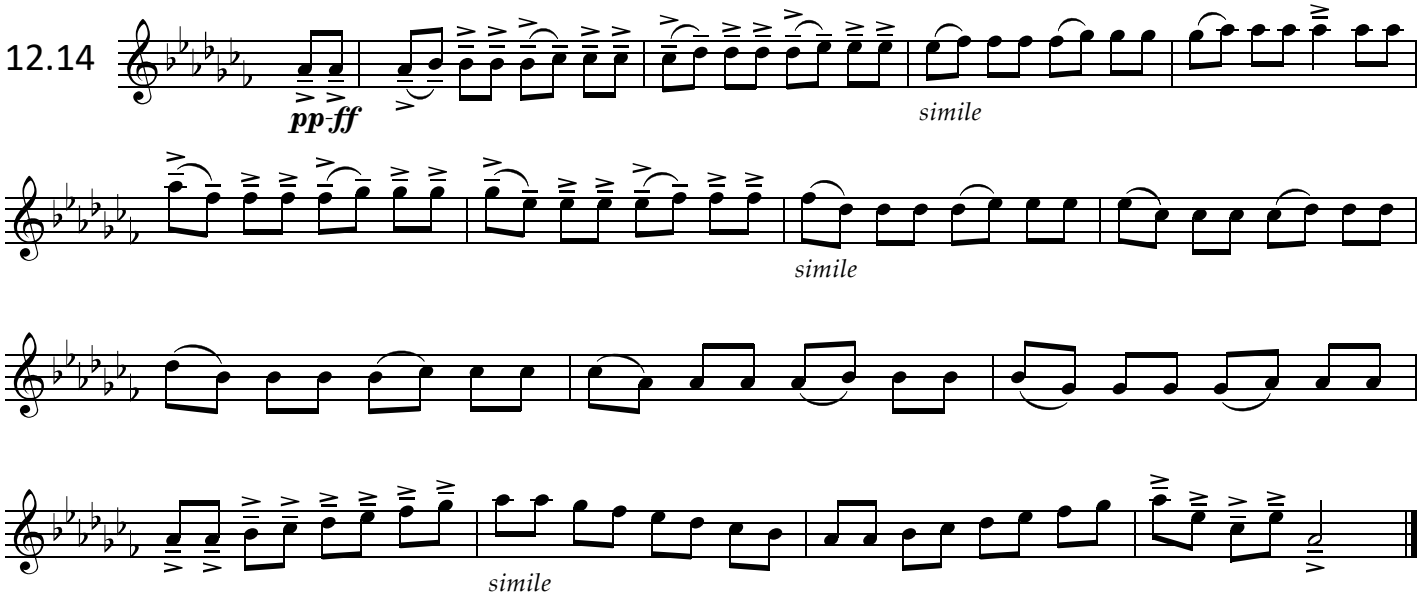

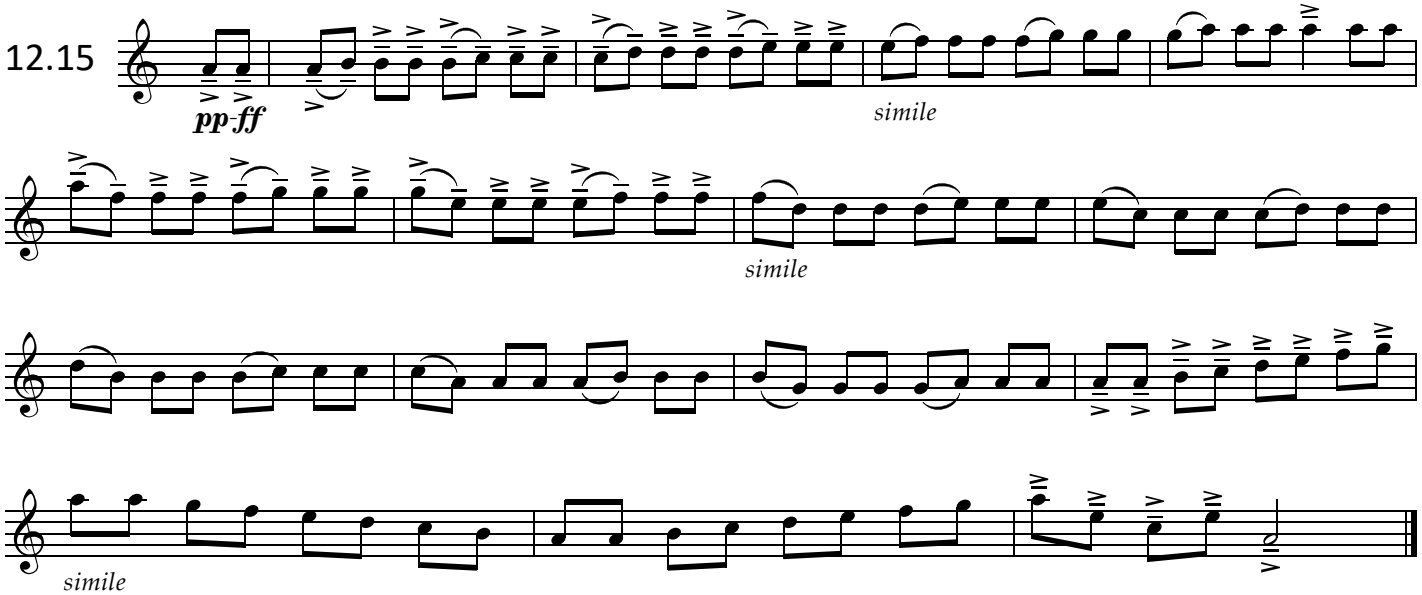

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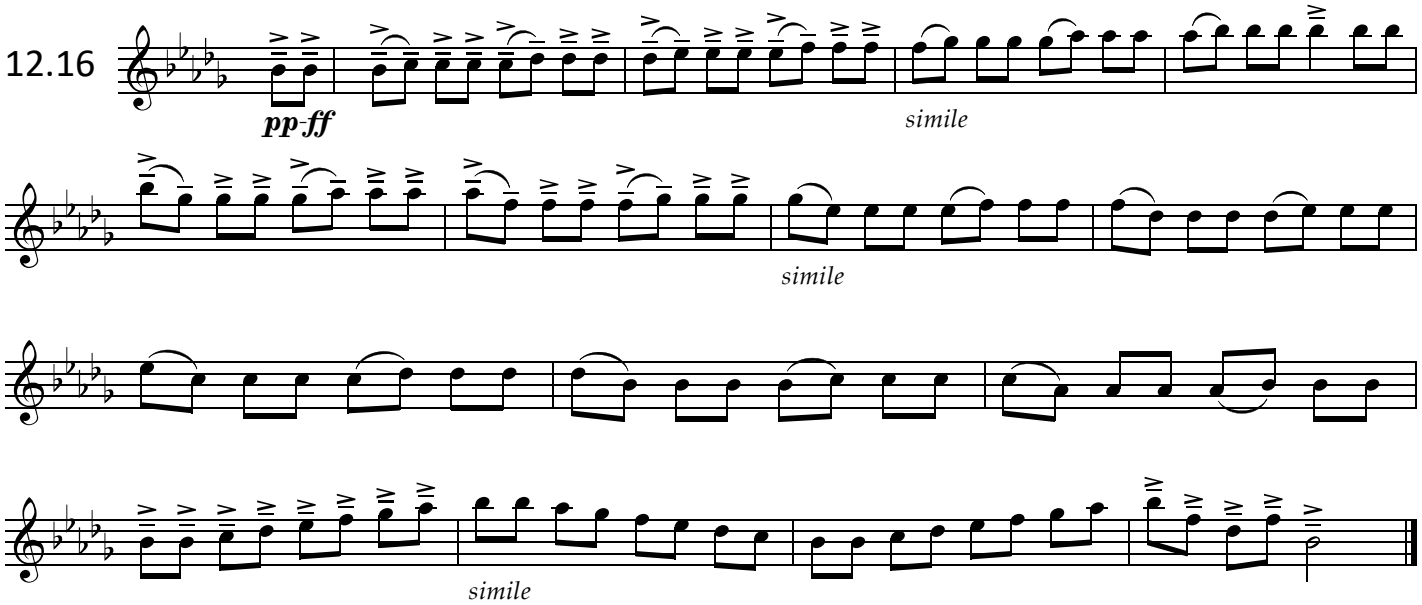

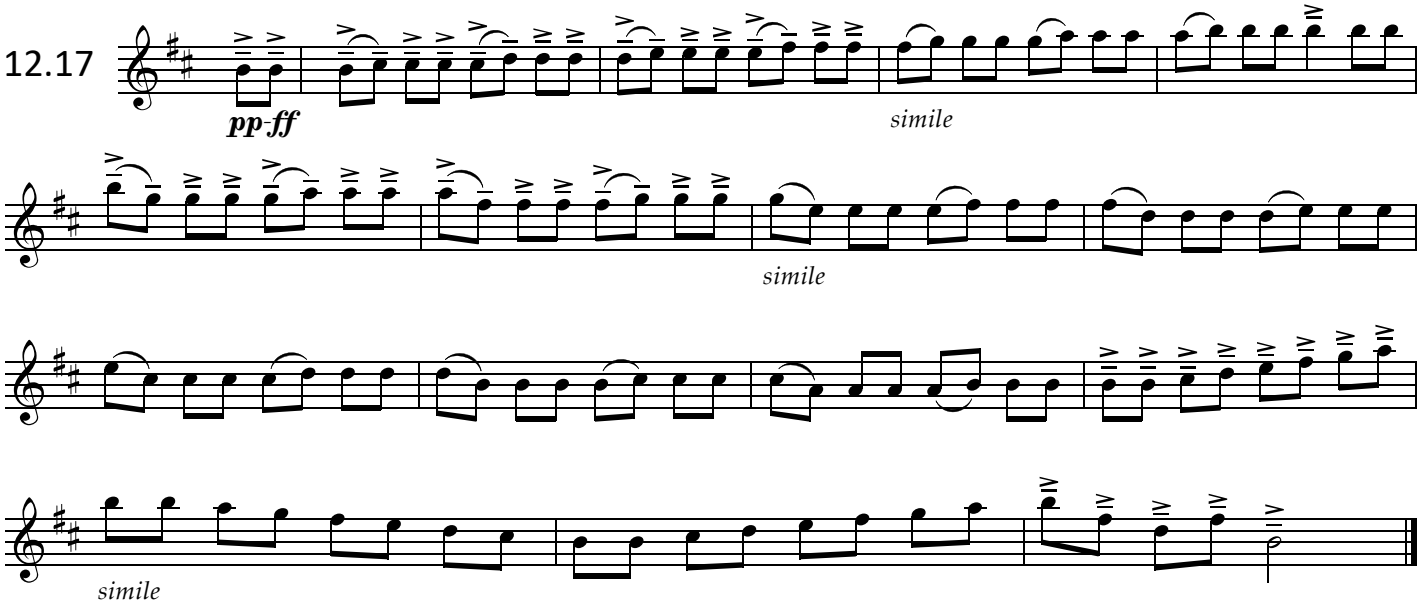

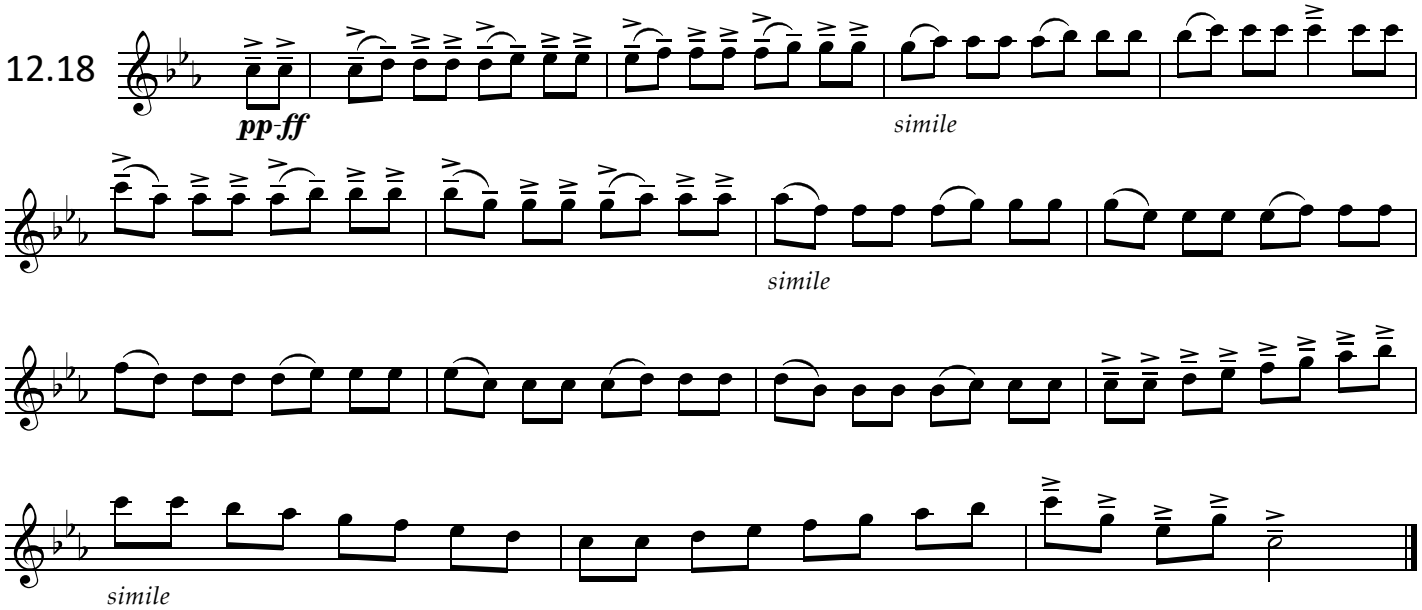

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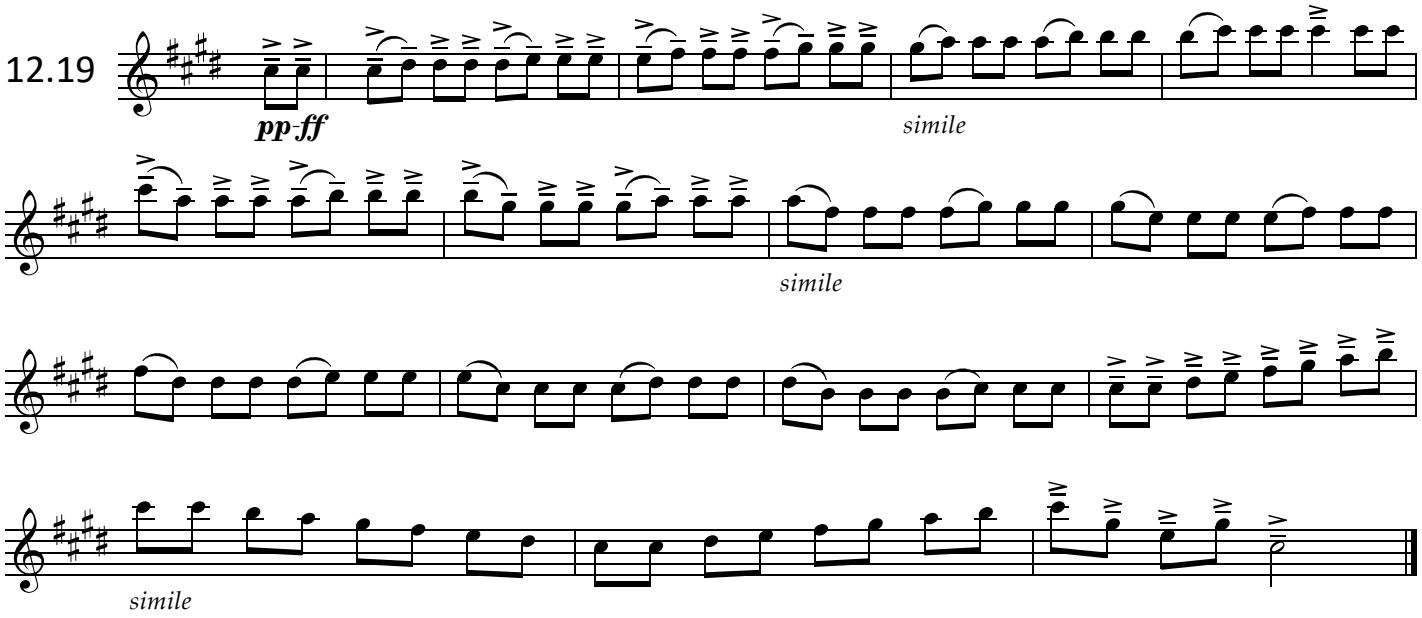

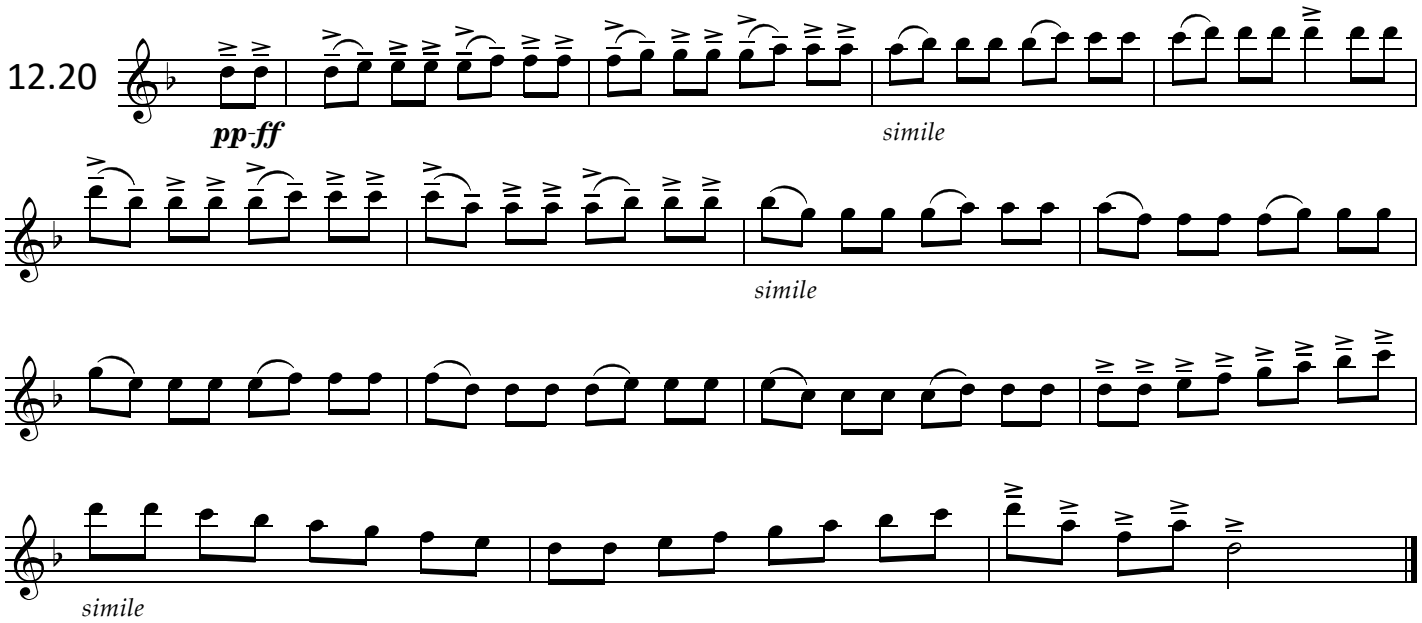

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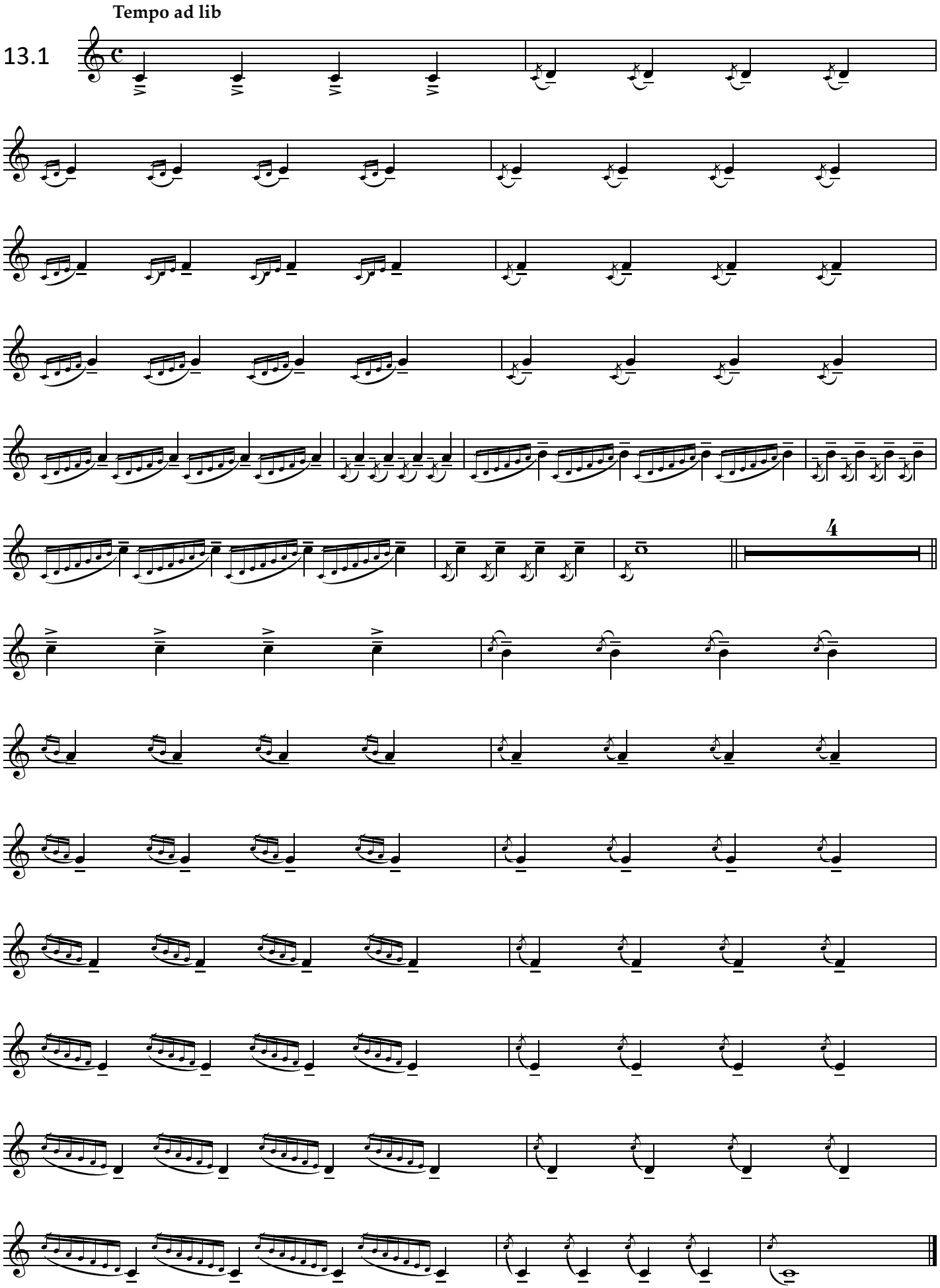
13 - Flexibility, flow and fingers

Improving the flexibility with help from grace notes



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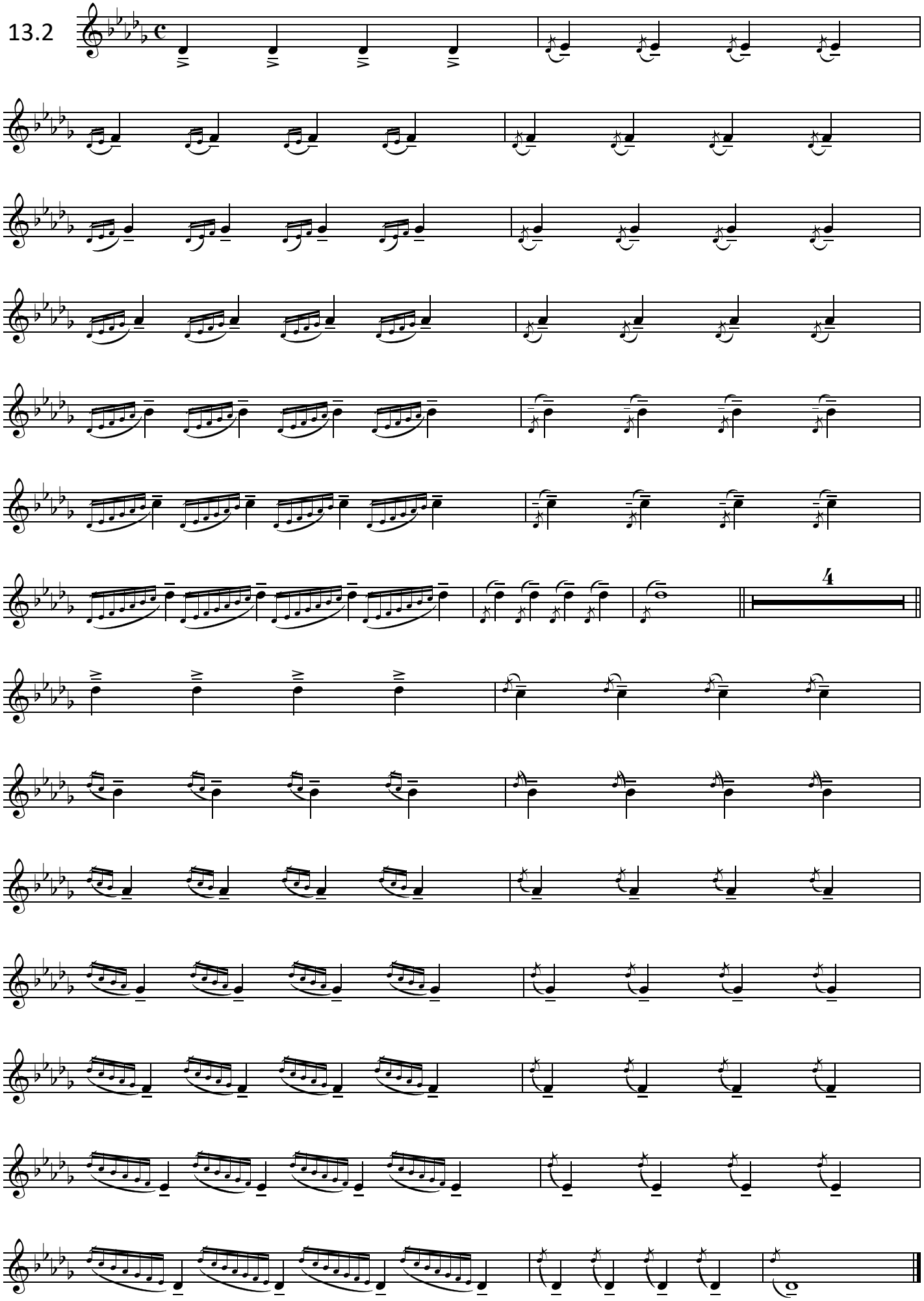

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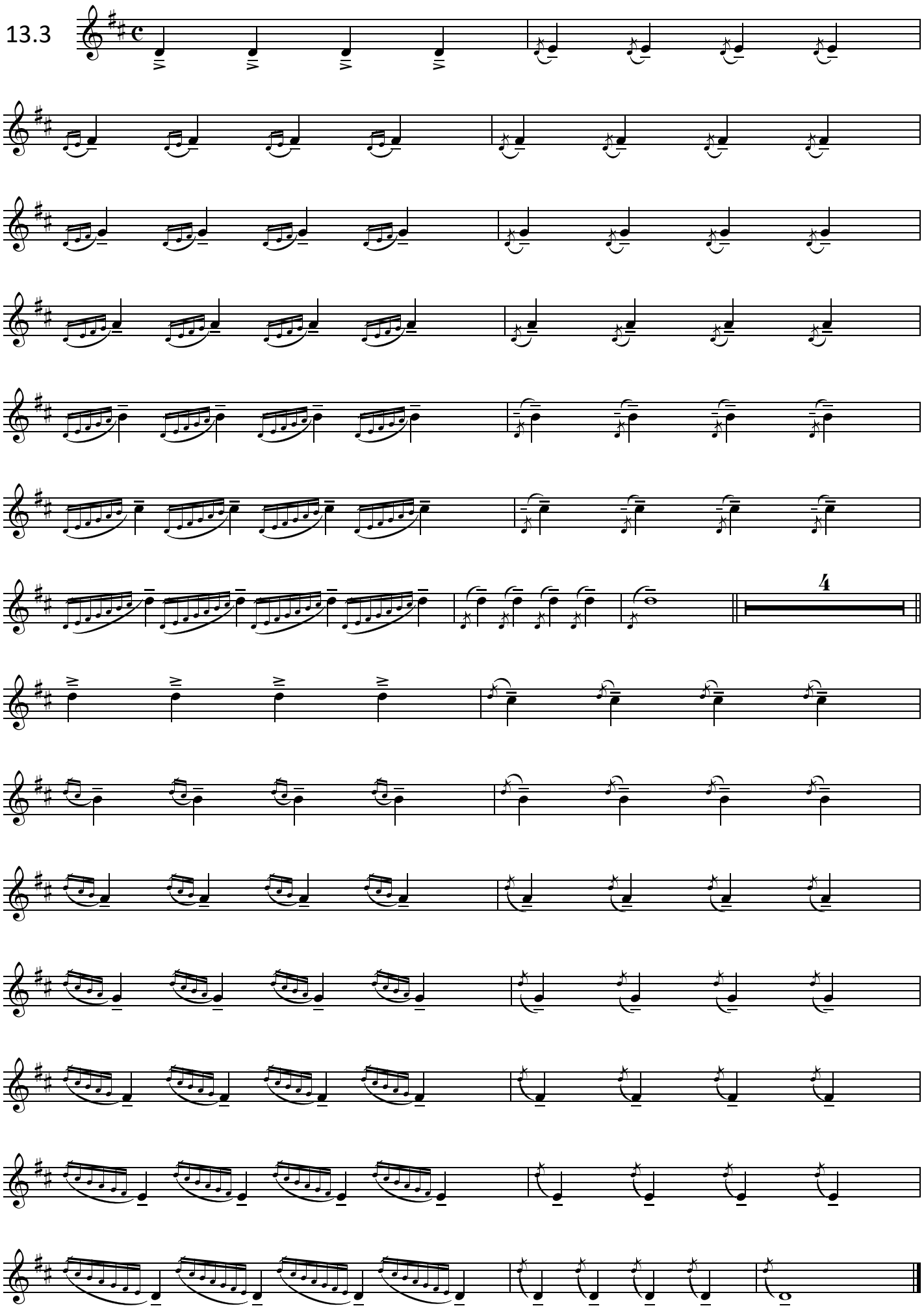

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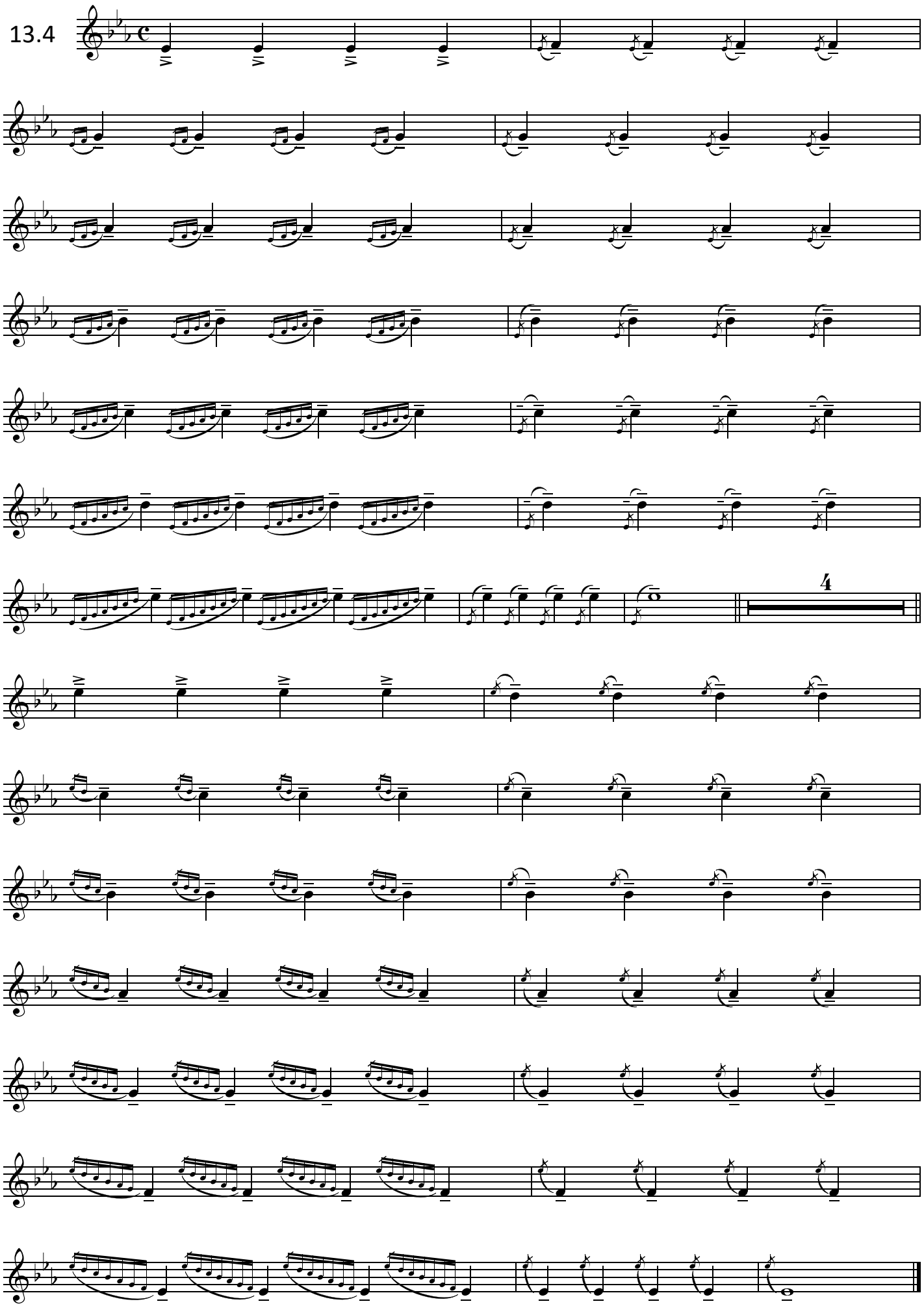

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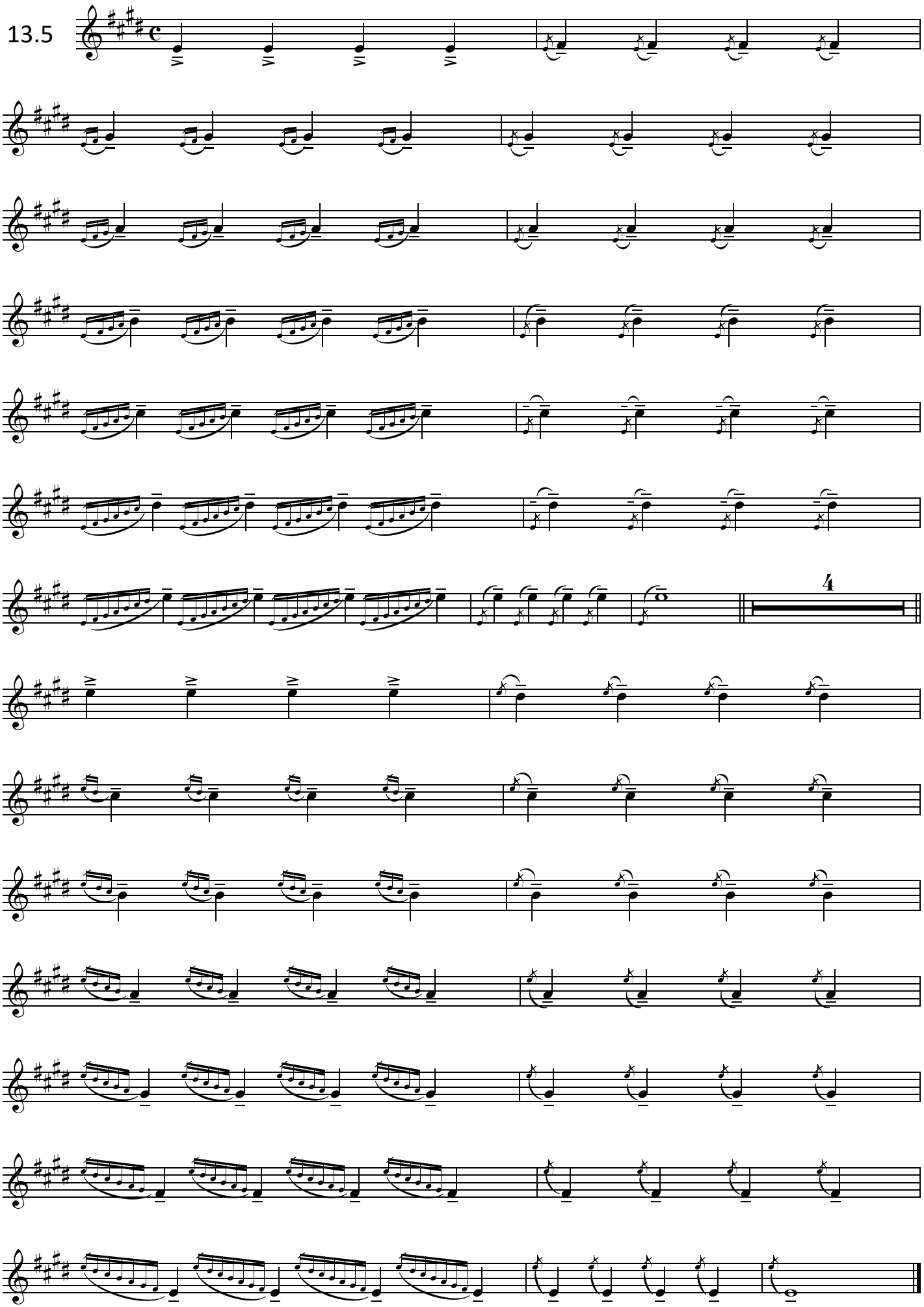

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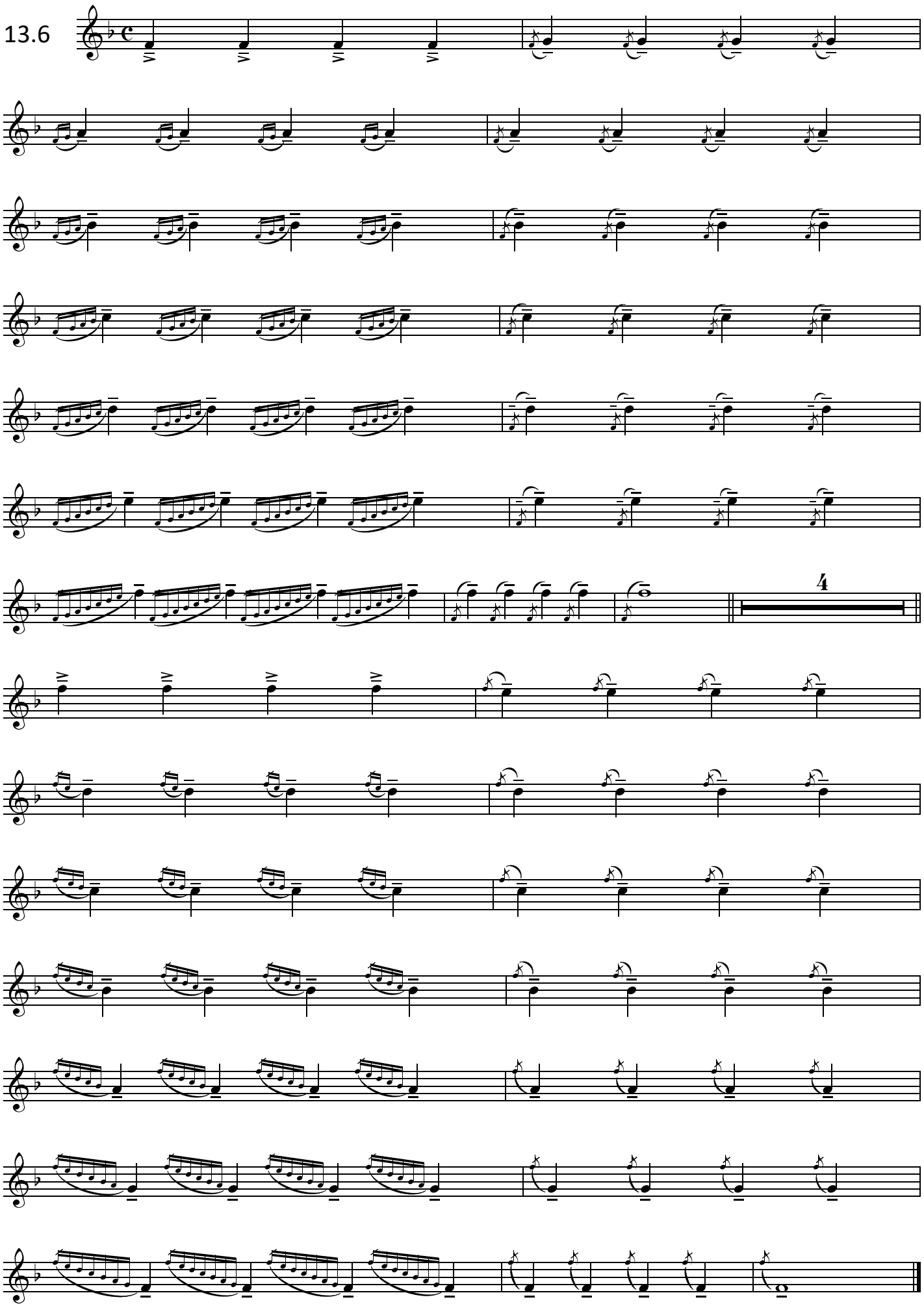

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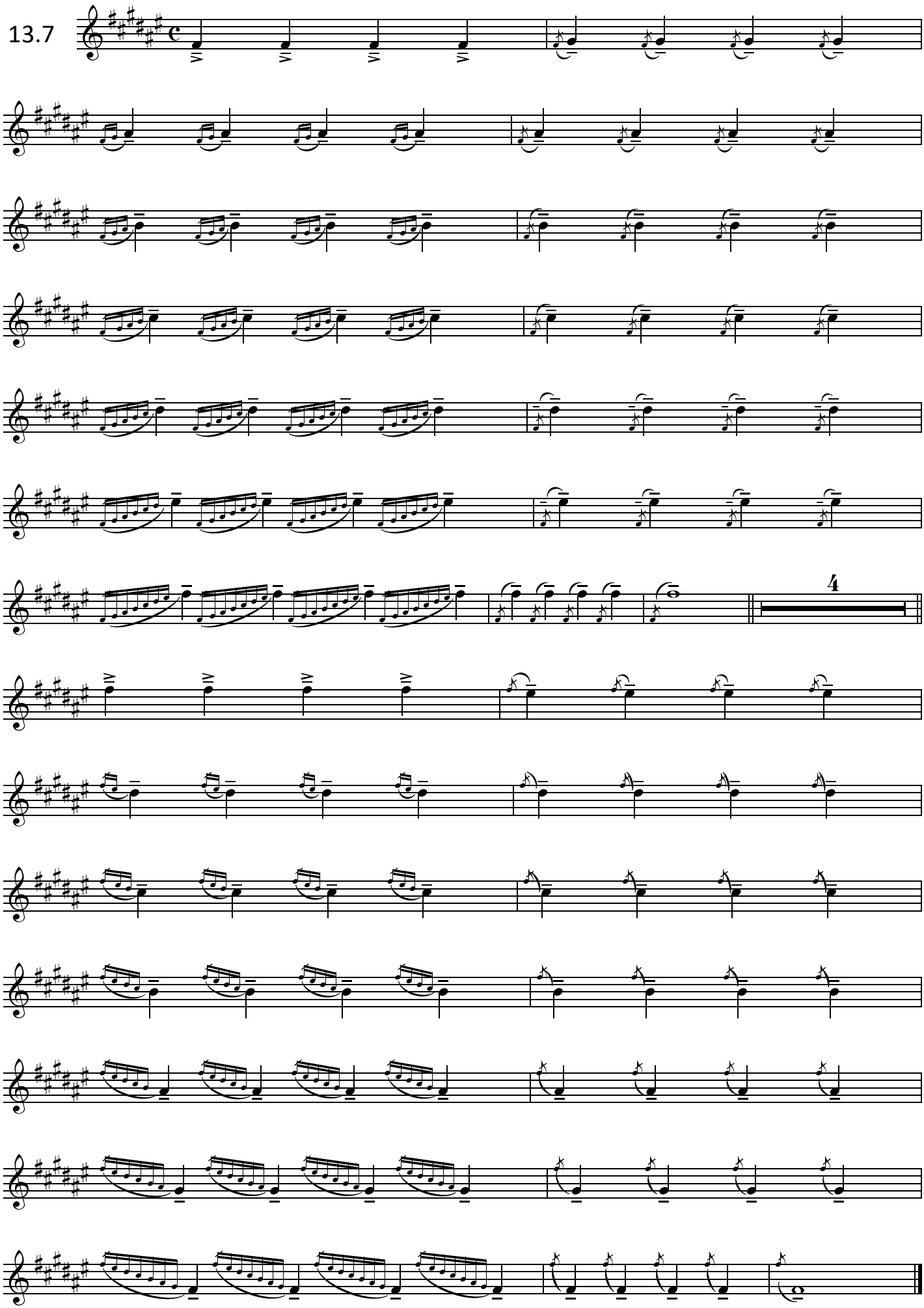

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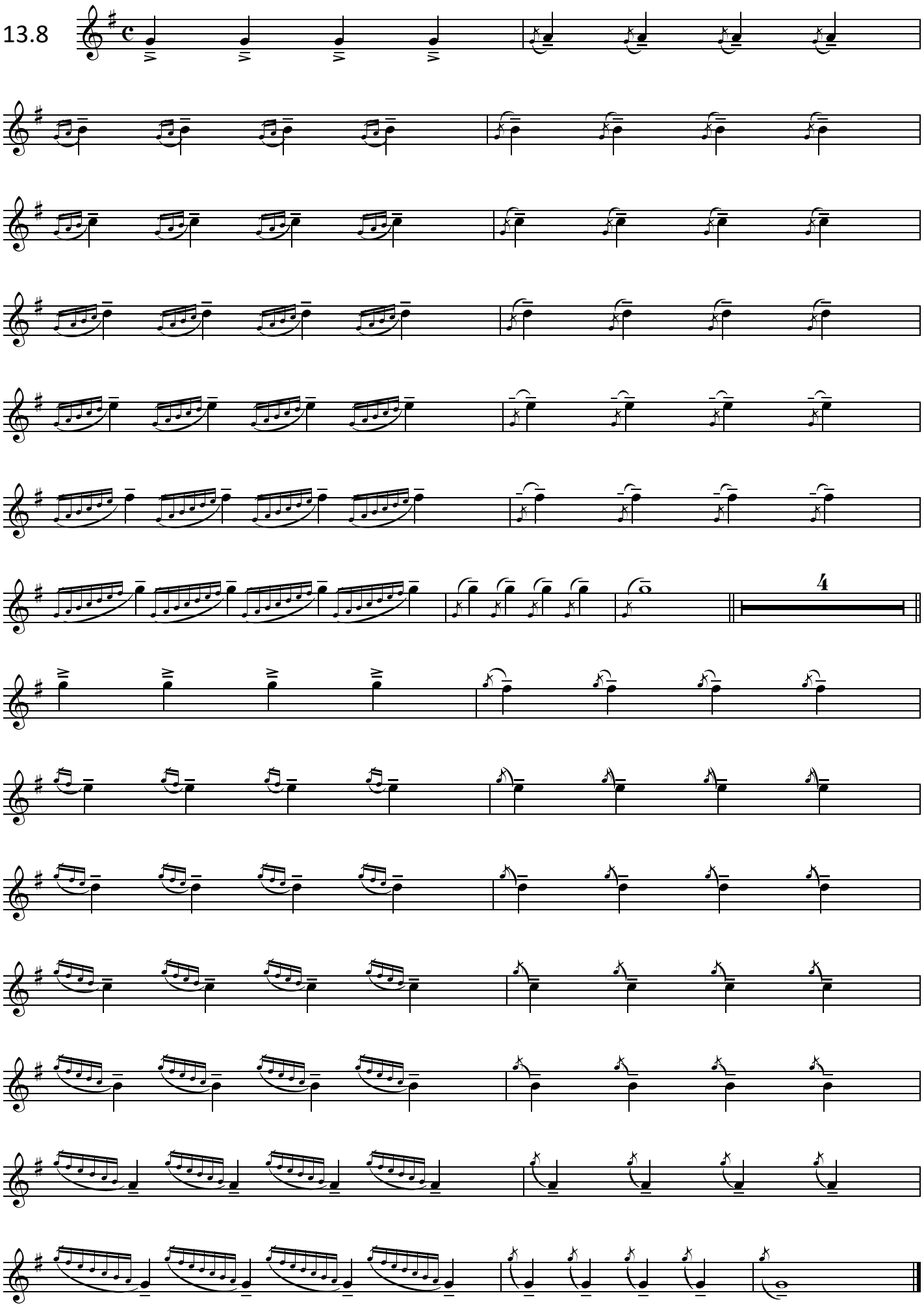

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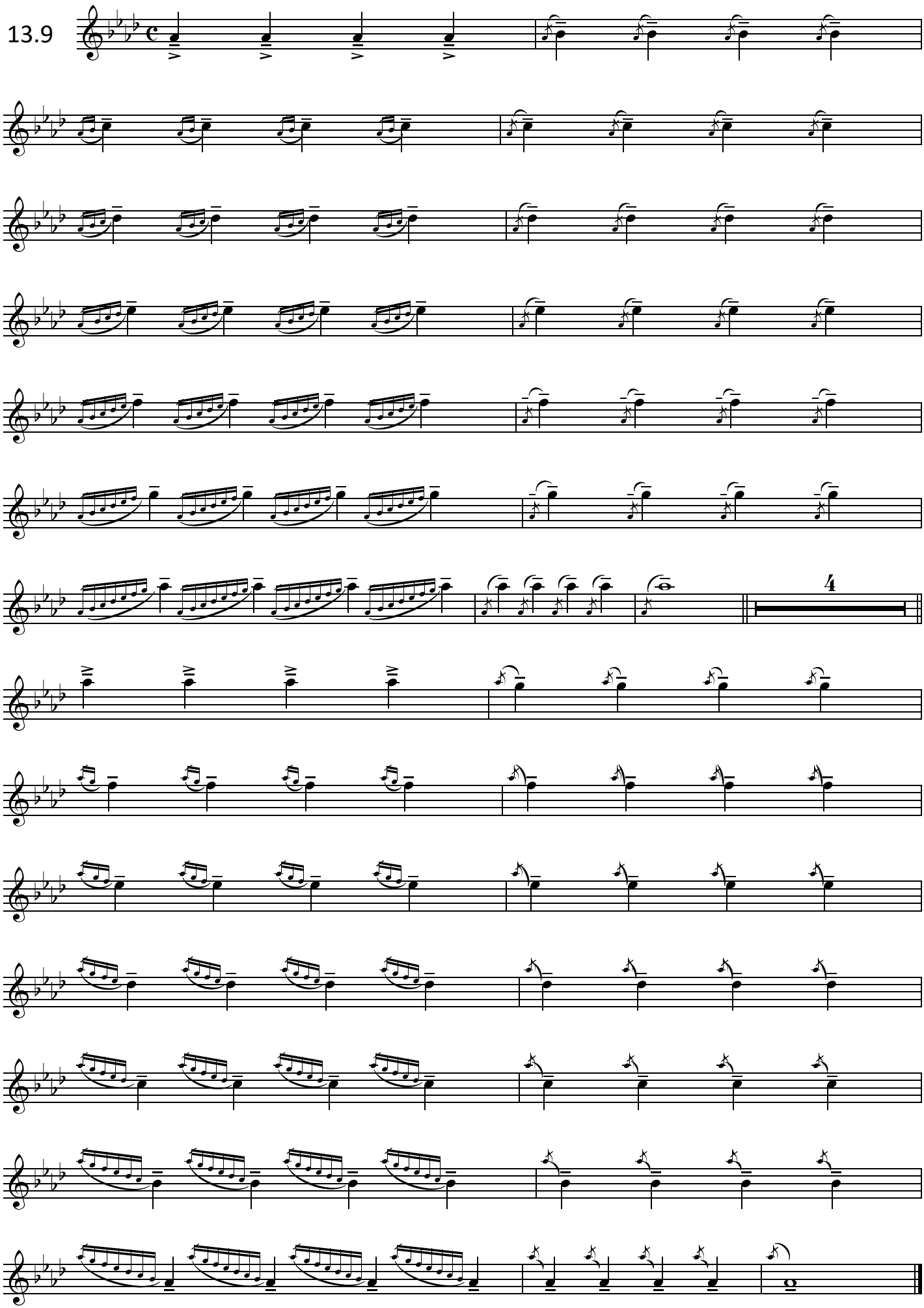

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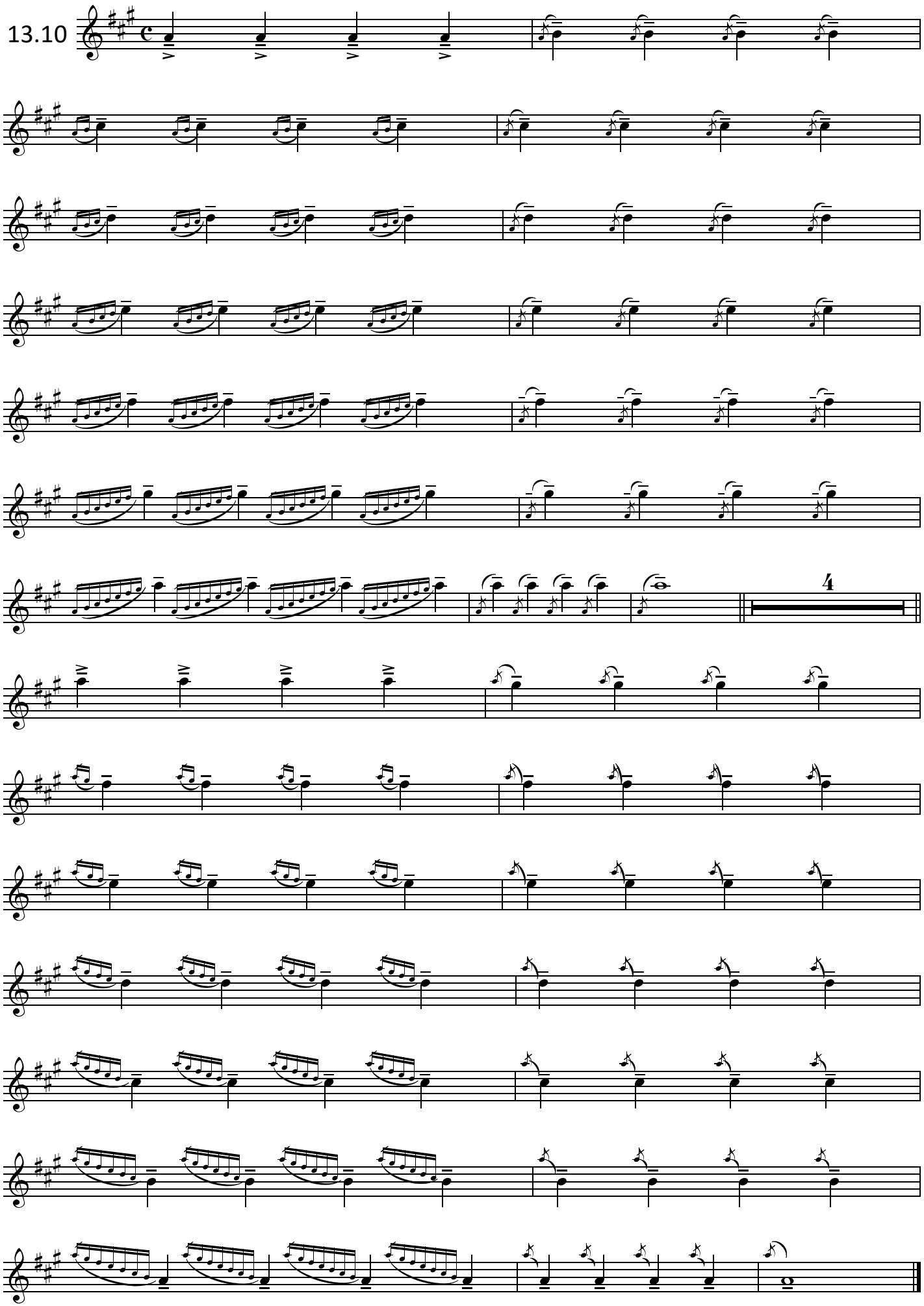

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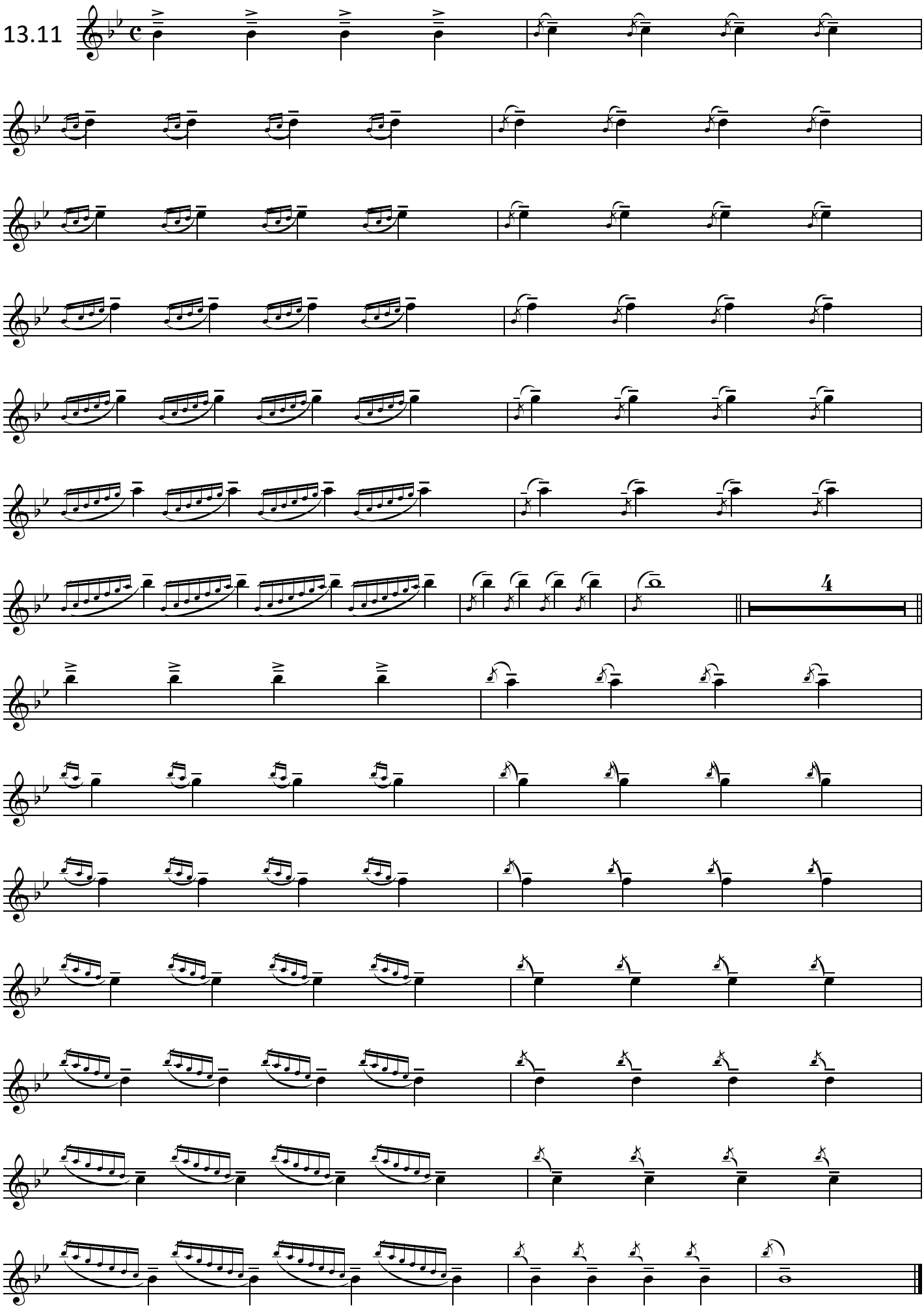

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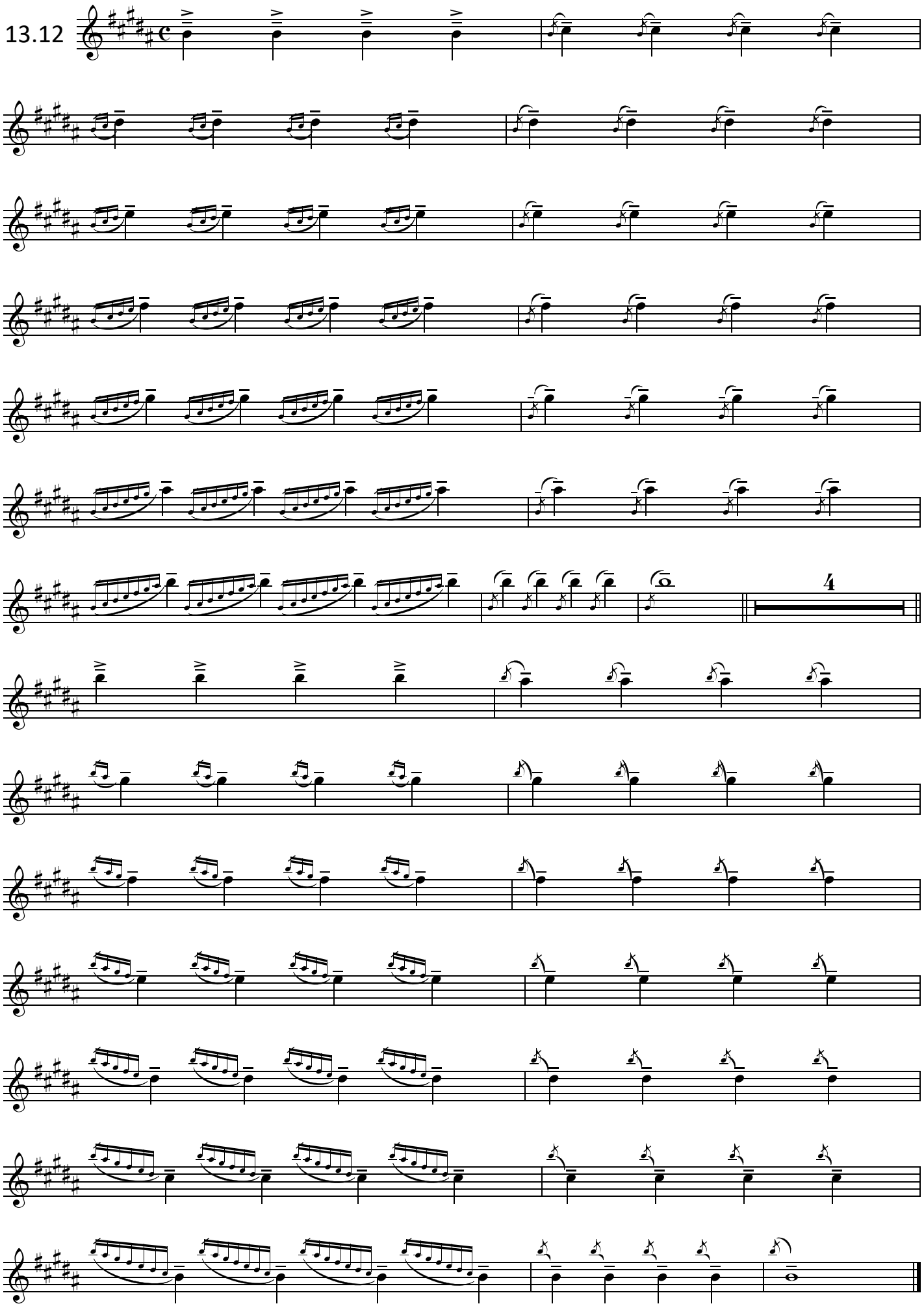

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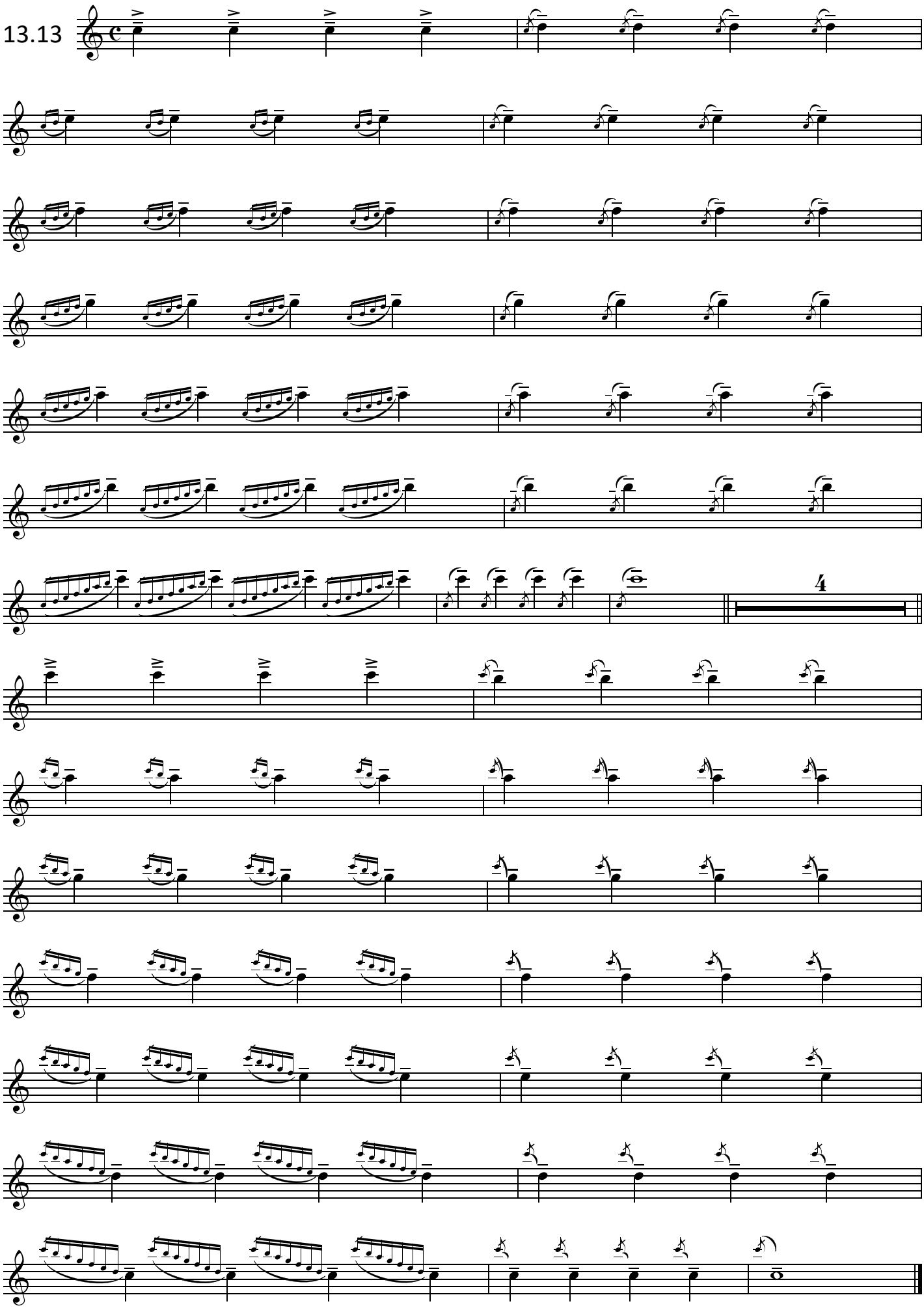

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Warmup scales

I have called this scale exercise Warmup scales, as I often have used it as a warm-up after a longer break in my practice.

What is important in this exercise is not to play too fast, so you can "feel" and “taste” every single note in the exercise. The last note before the quarter jump up to the octave must be extremely long, and we must have the feeling of really carrying this note on to the next one. In this way, we want to get the feeling that we "can bring the higher note down", instead of "going up and playing it".

Then when we get to the highest note, it's important to just keep on playing forward. Even if, especially in the high register, the notes do not come as we want, we must continue to play the exercise until the last note.

This means that if the notes stop to sound, just go on playing forwards, and when the notes start coming/sounding again, just continue and play on as if everything is fine and nothing have gone wrong.

Why? We would off course like to expand our register, and thus also our own belief that we can play the higher notes.

If we stop playing every time something goes wrong, we risk that our brain thinks it's okay to stop every time something goes wrong.

If, on the other hand, we continue to play even if some notes disappear, we get used to always playing on and thinking ahead, even if things sometimes go a little wrong.

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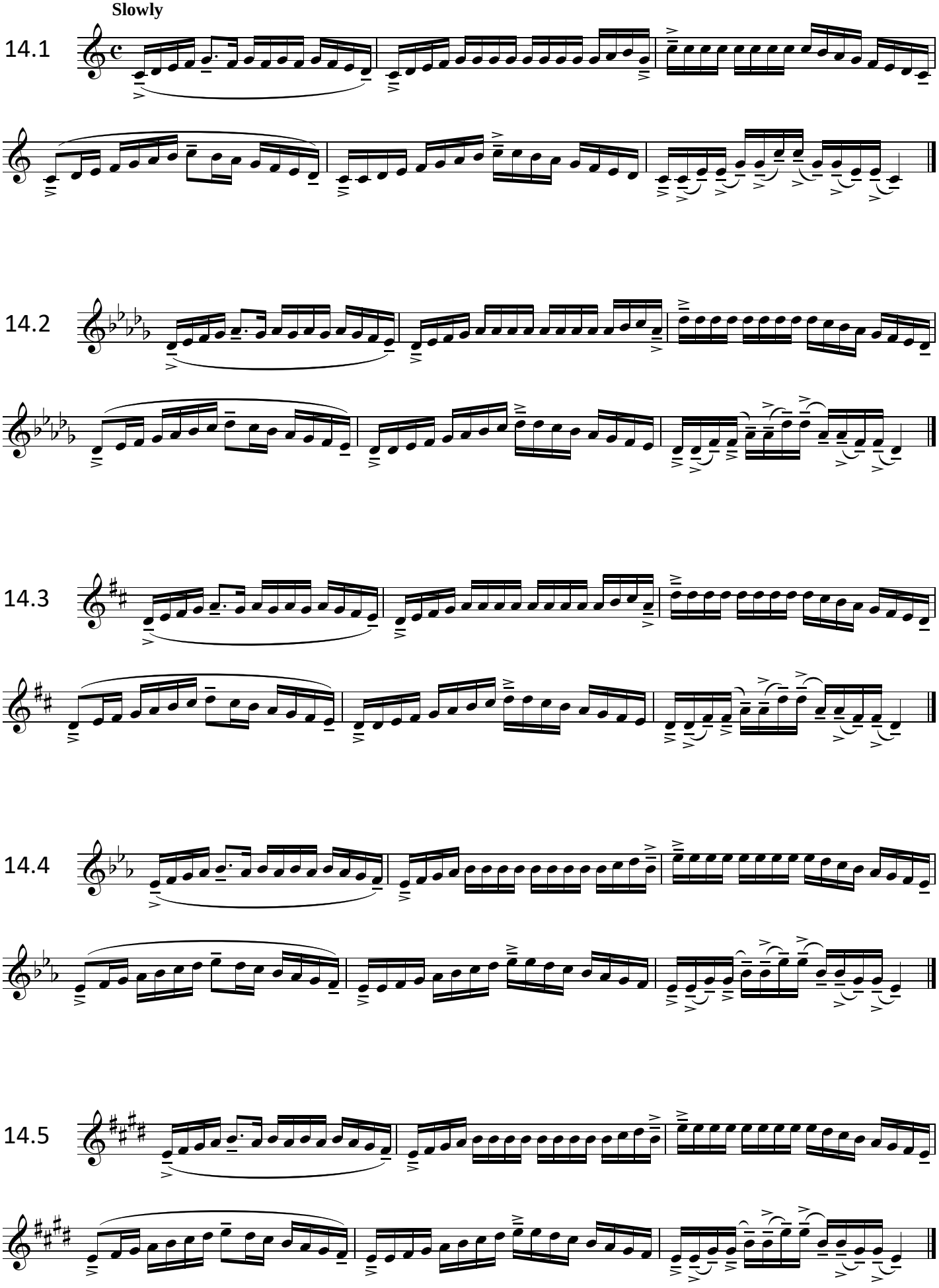
14 - “Warmup” scales



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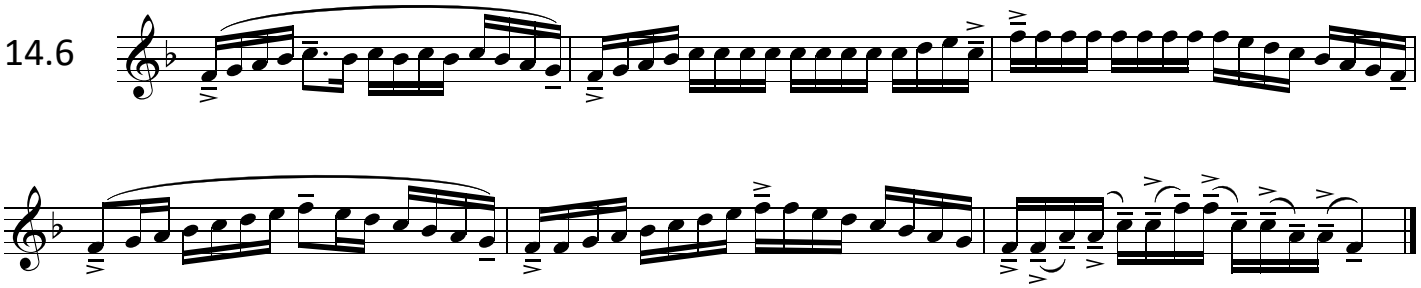

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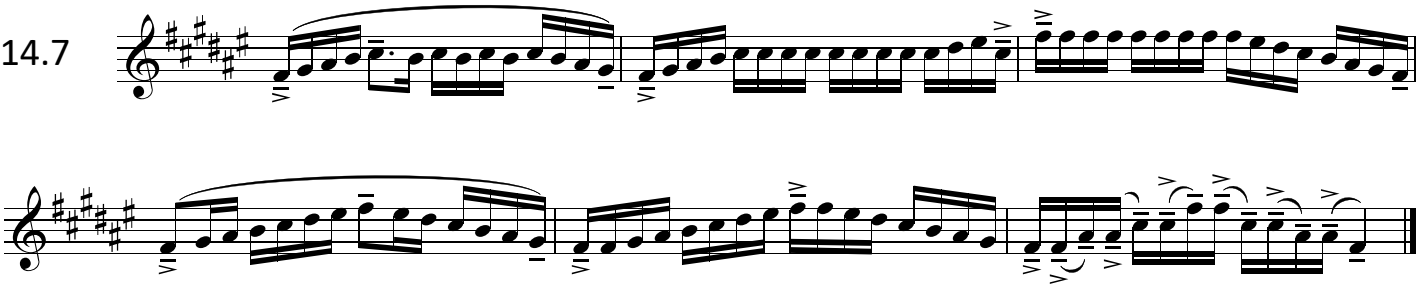

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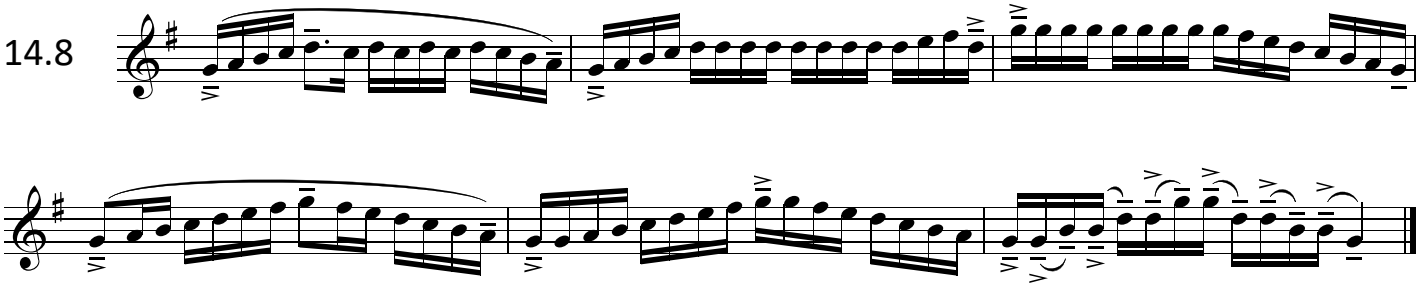

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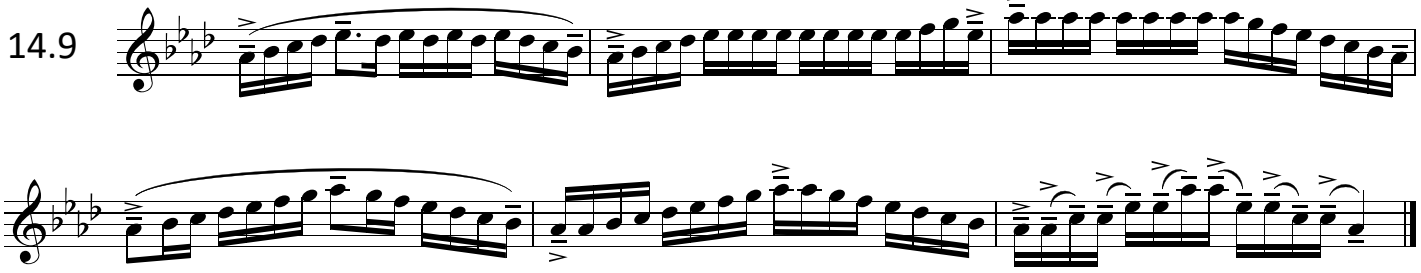

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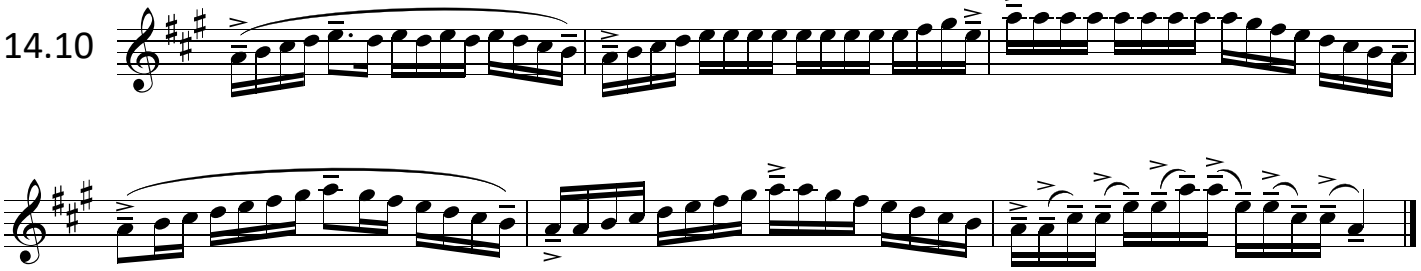

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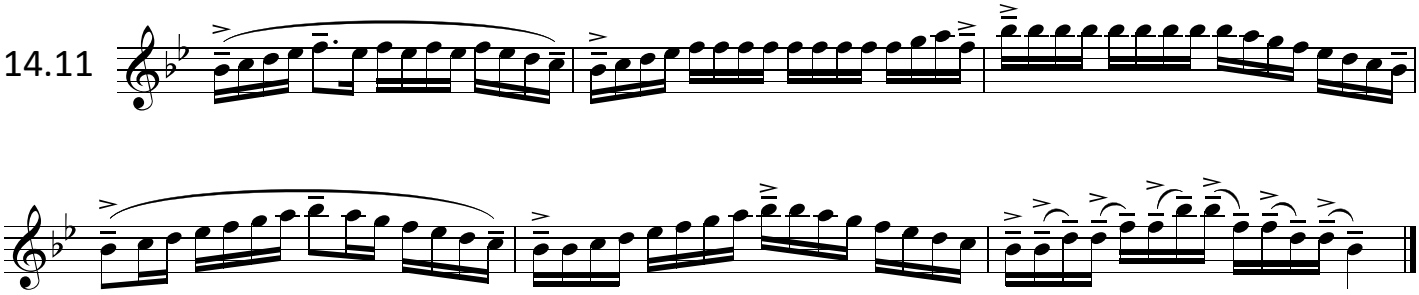

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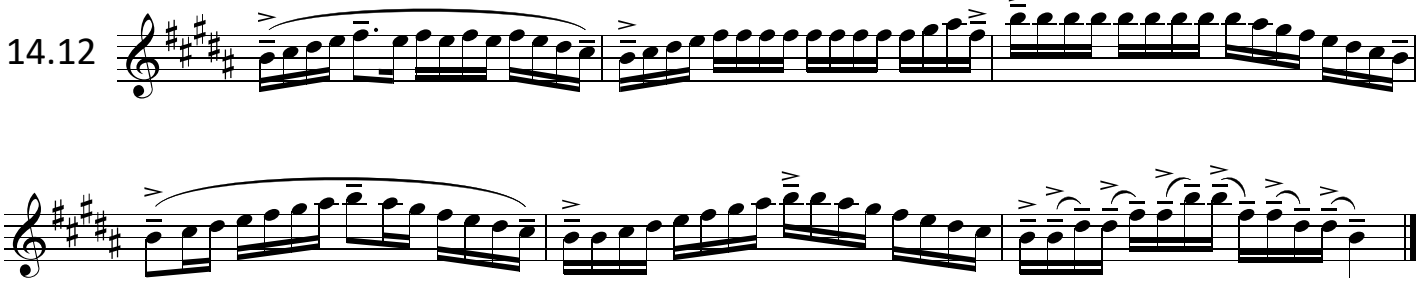

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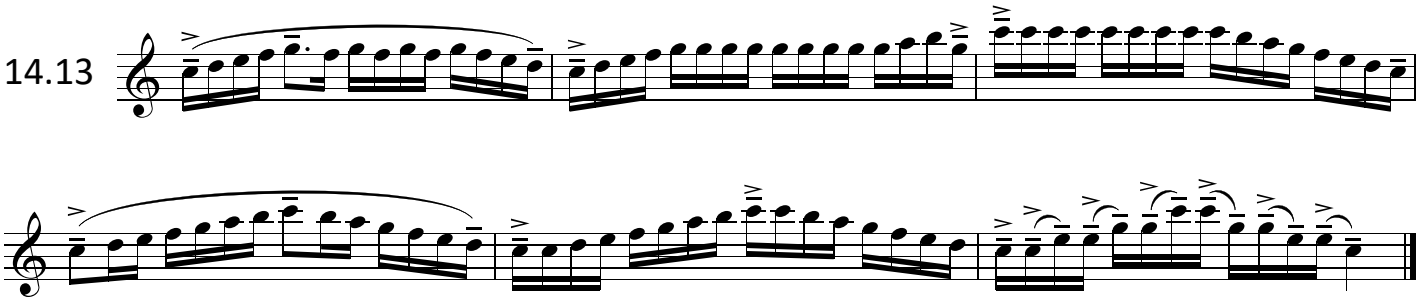

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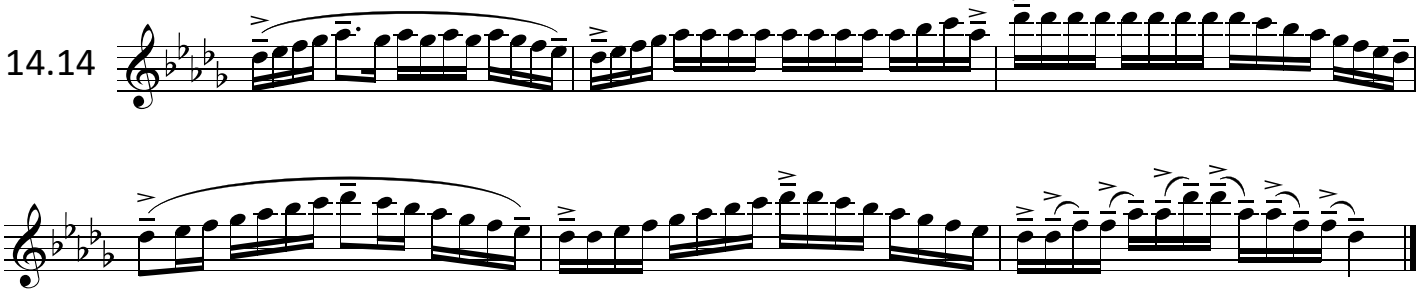

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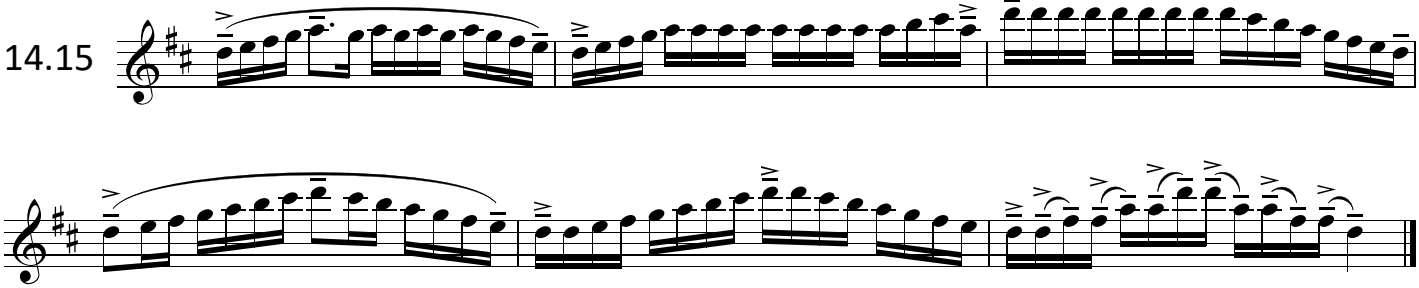

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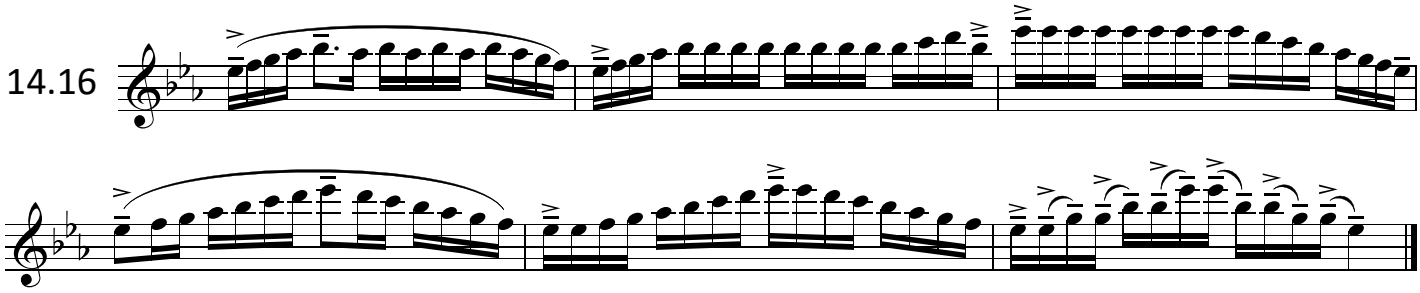

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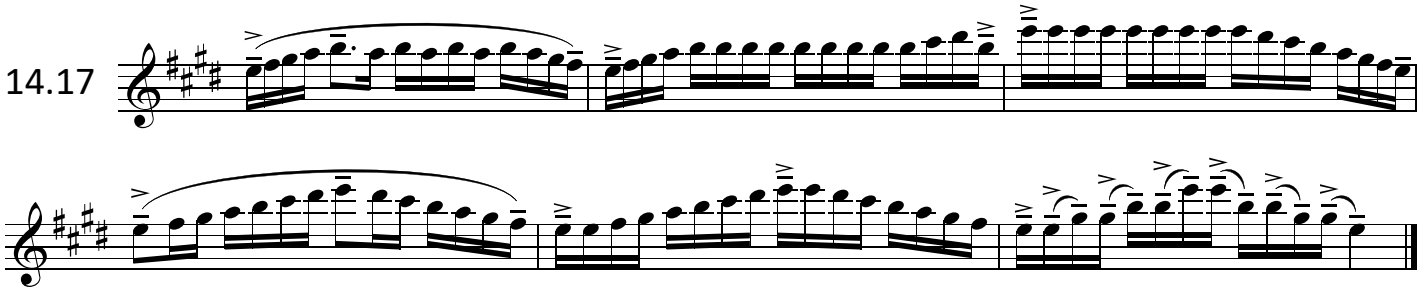

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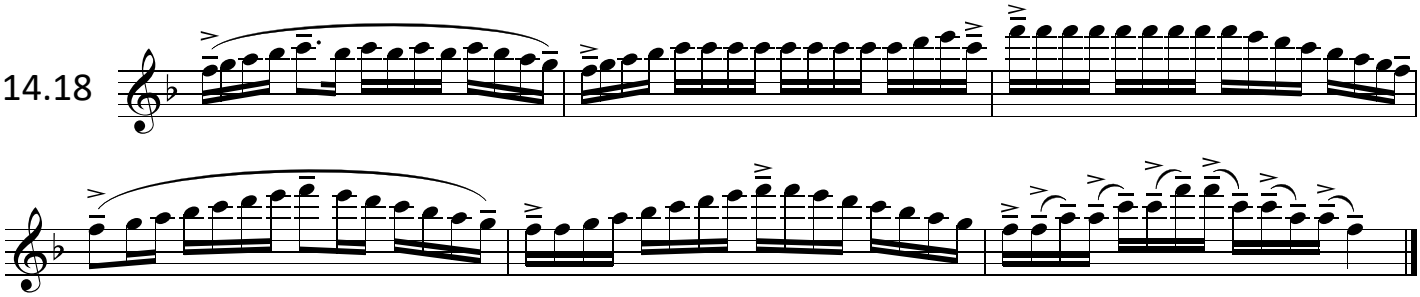

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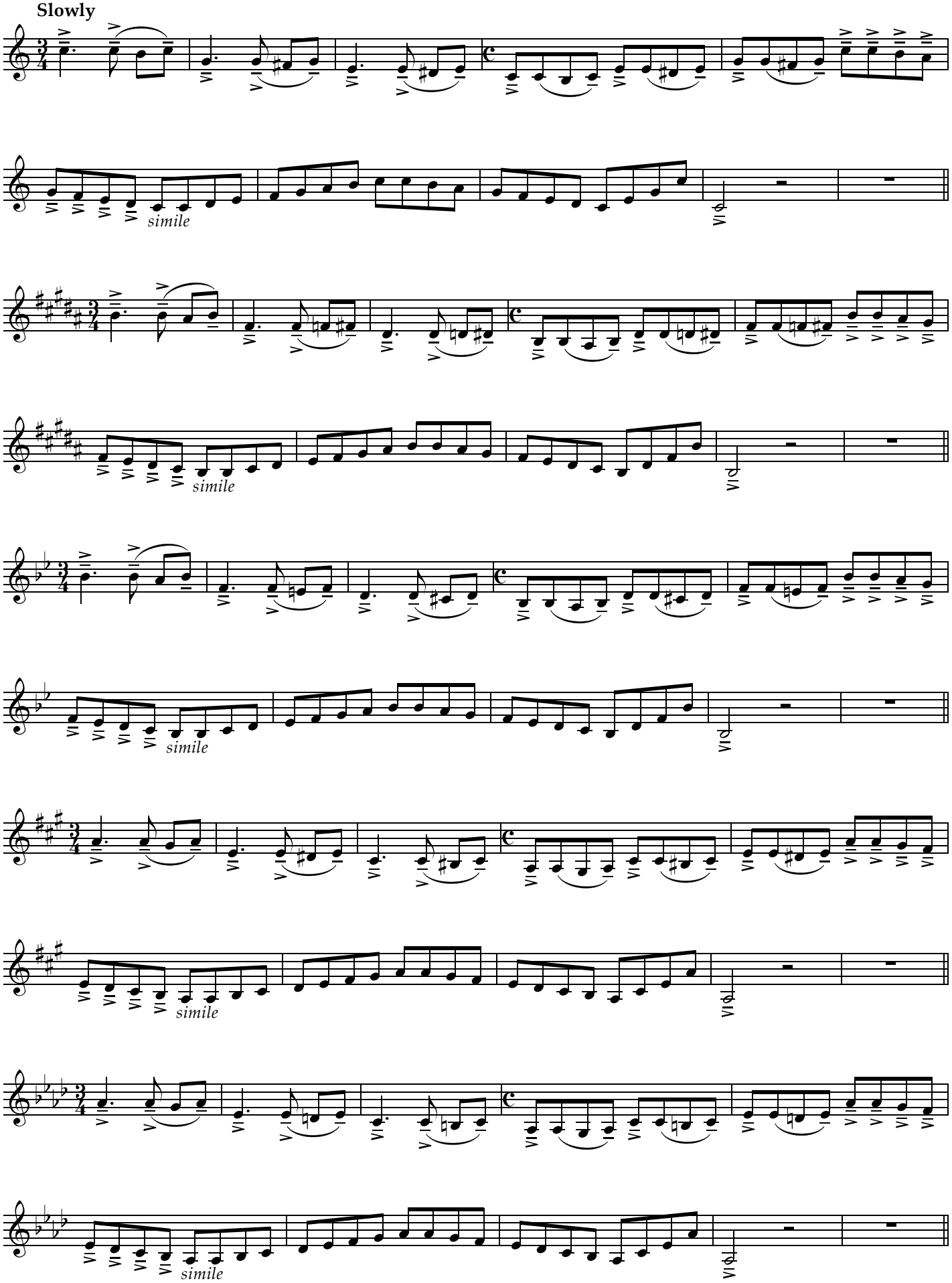
15 - Alternative warmup 1



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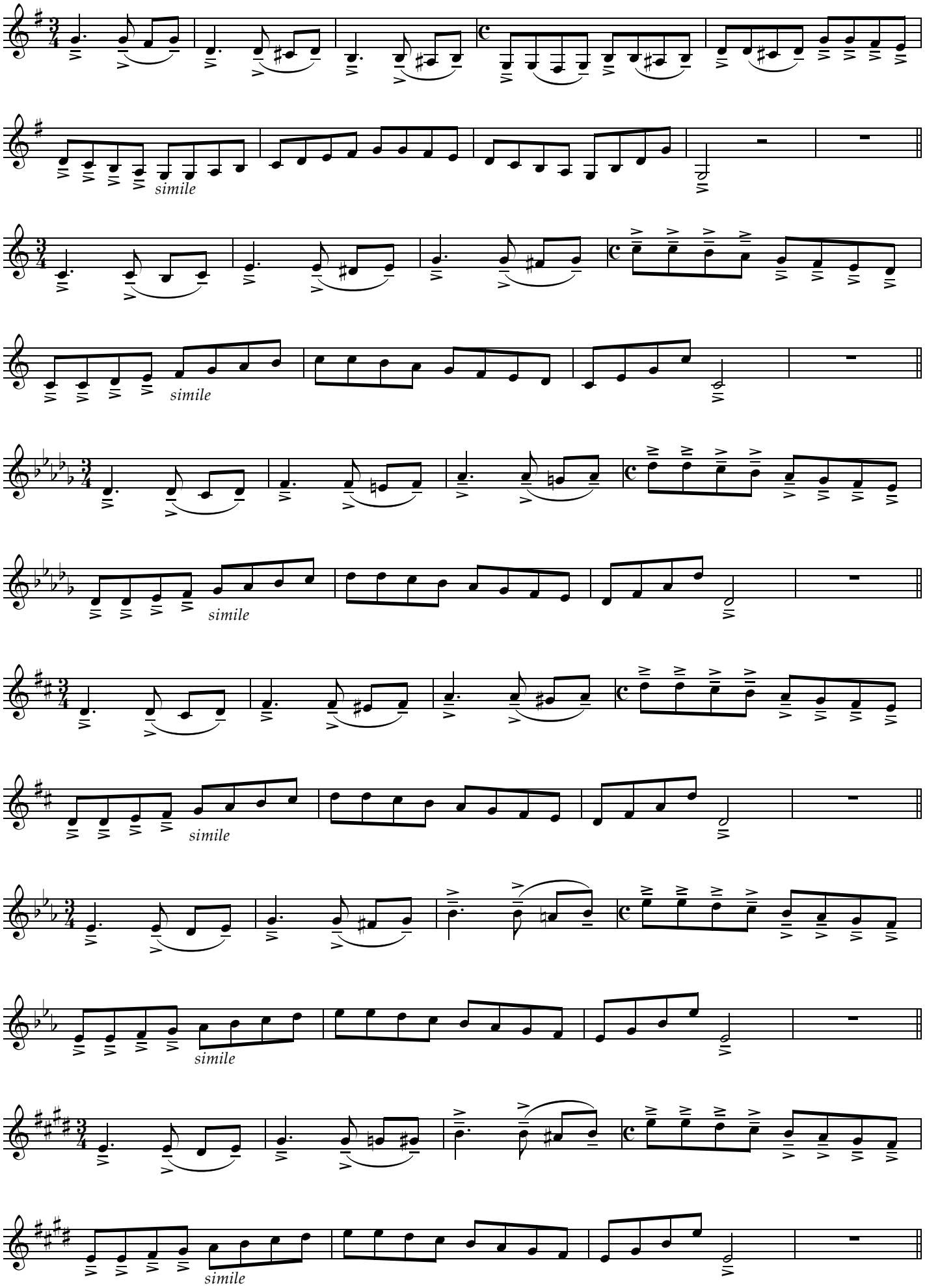

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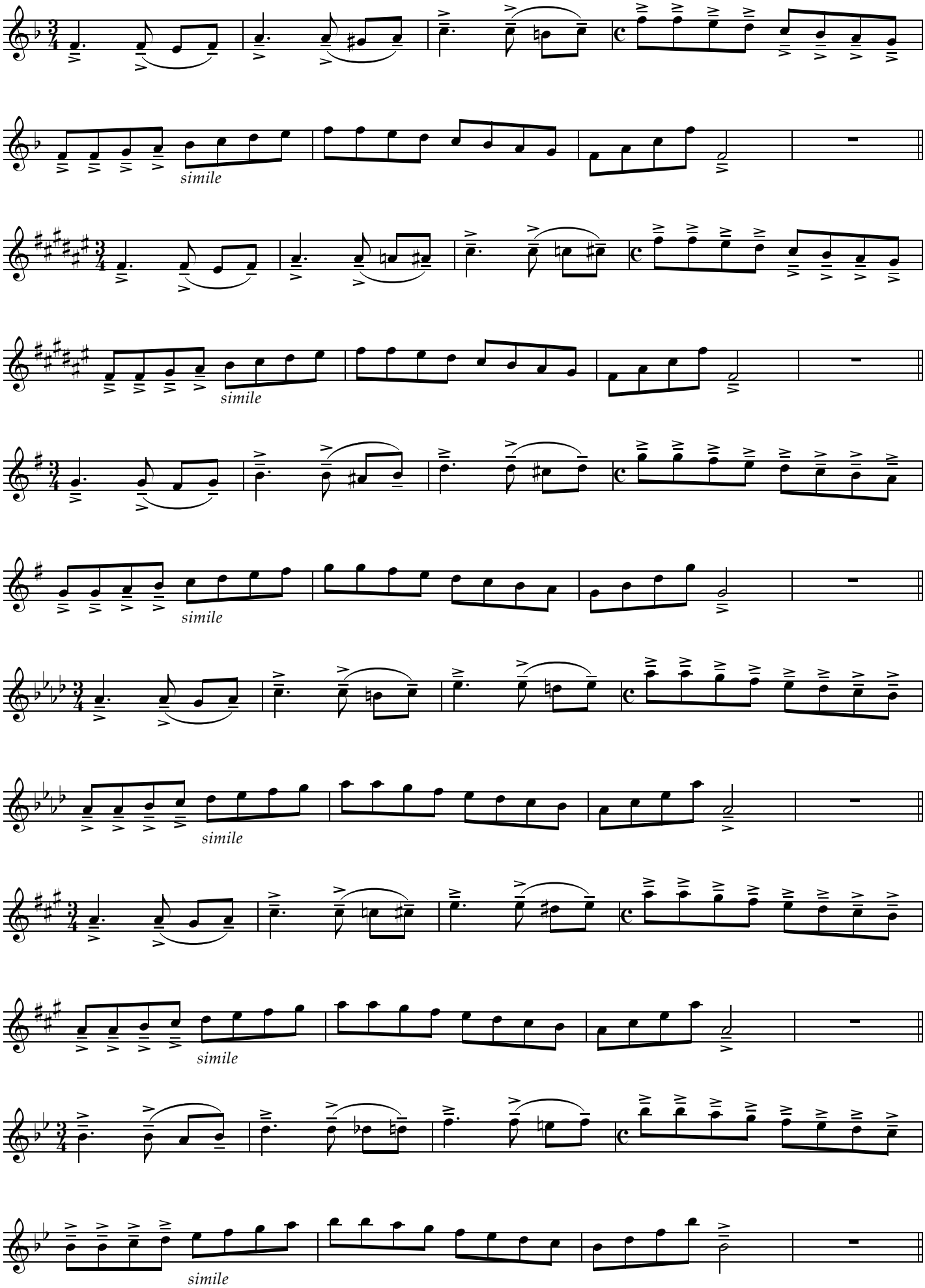

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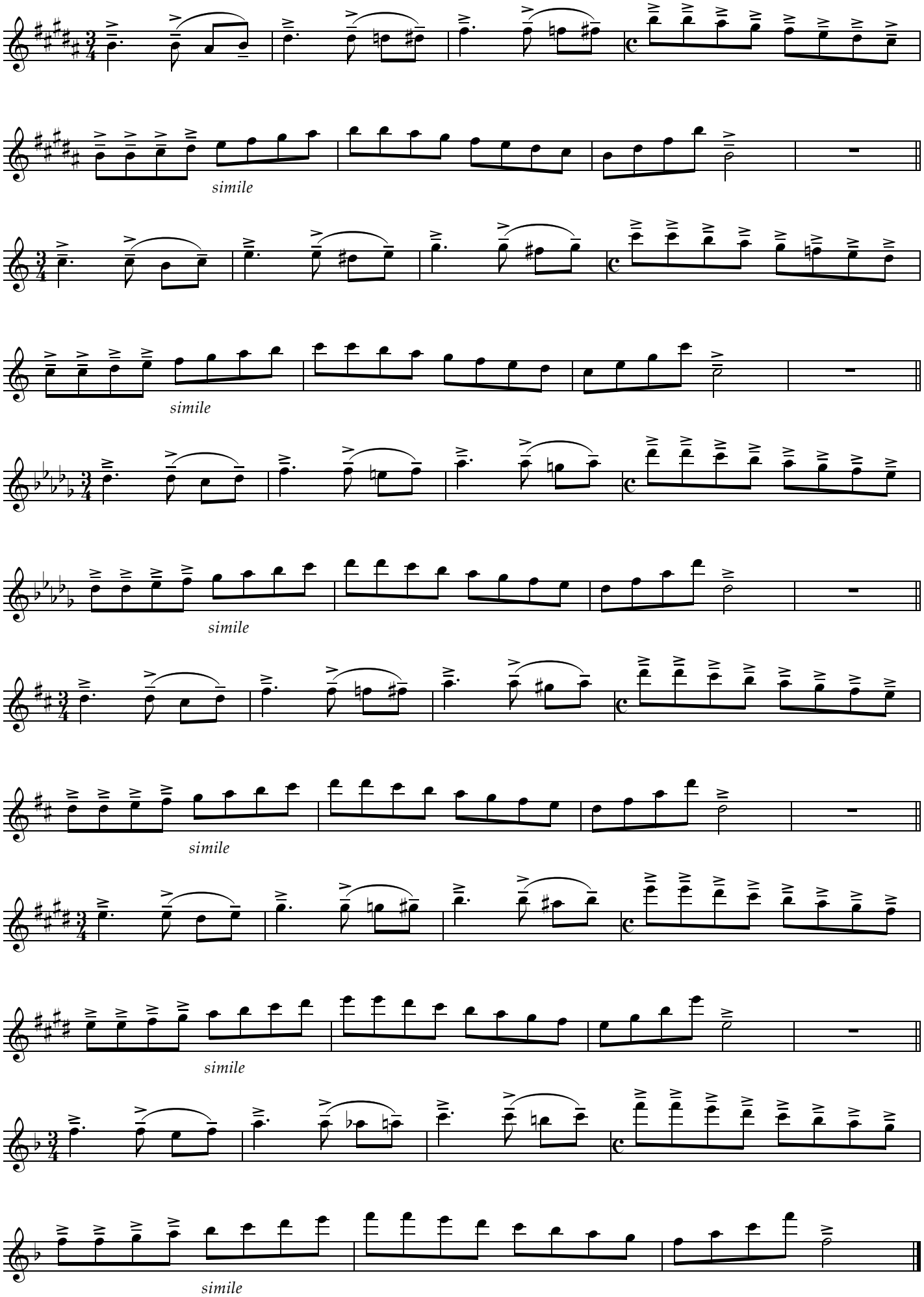
15 - Alternative warmup 1



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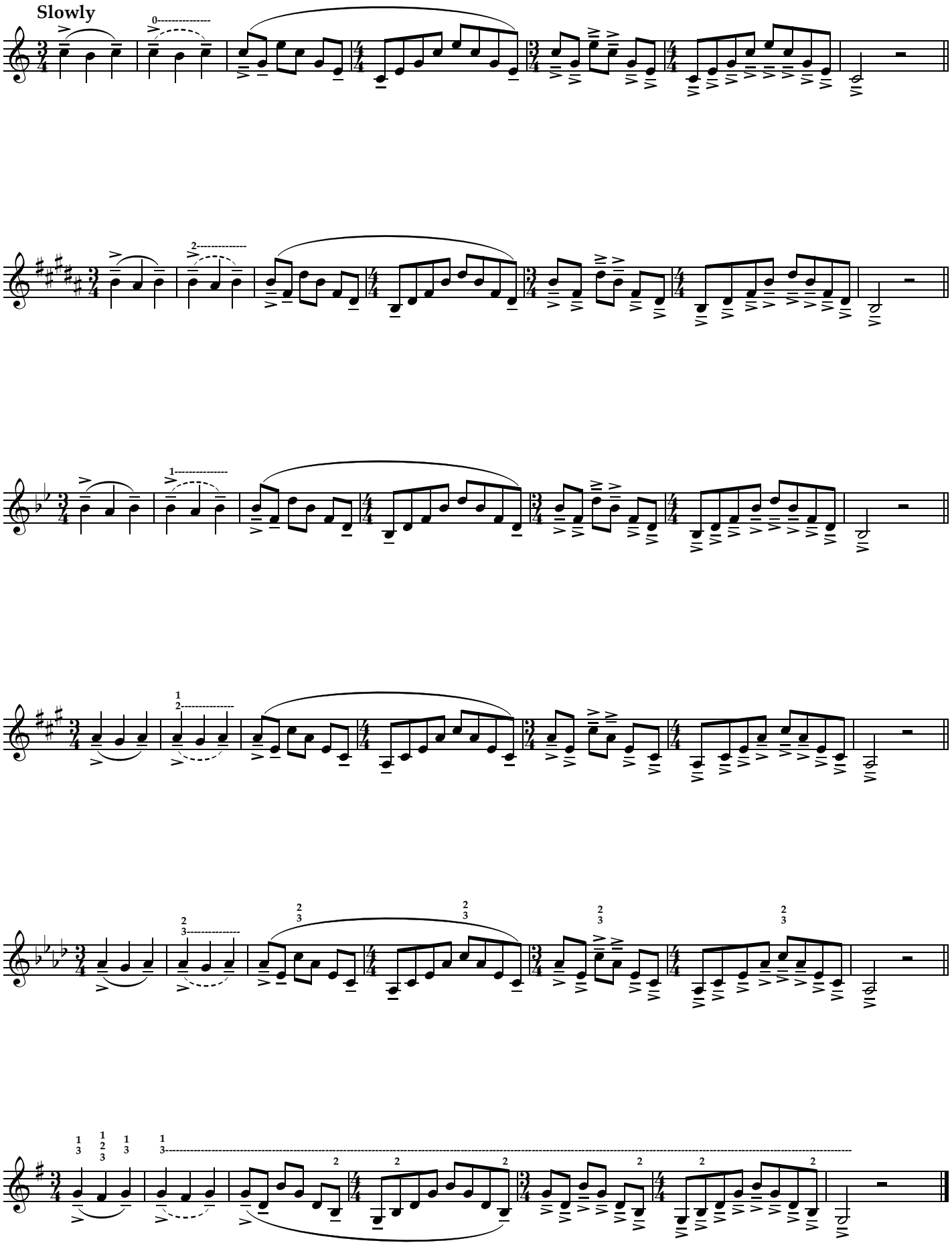
16 - Alternative warmup 2

with bending, slurs, and tongue



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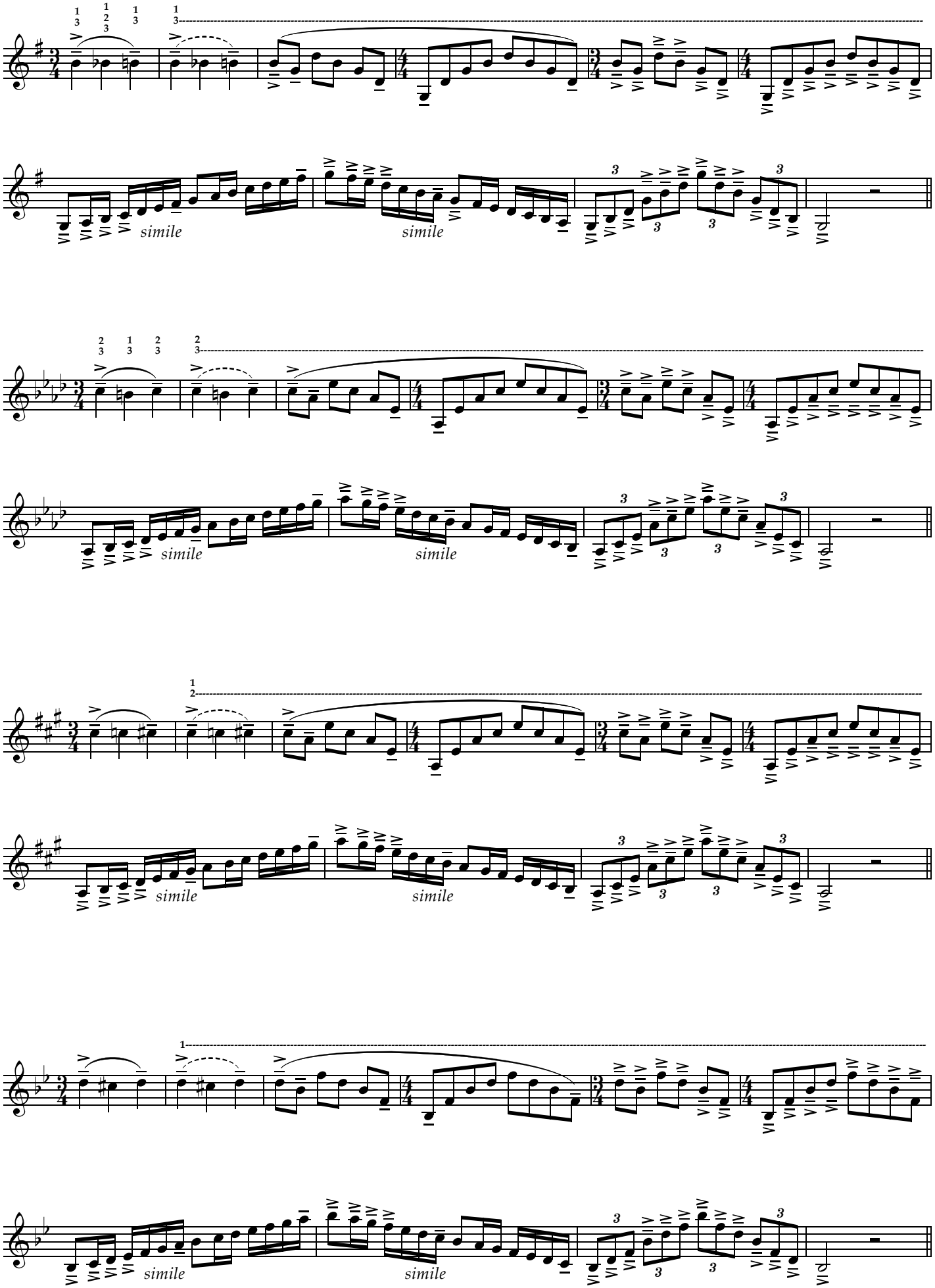
16 - Alternative warmeup 2

with bending, slurs, and tongue



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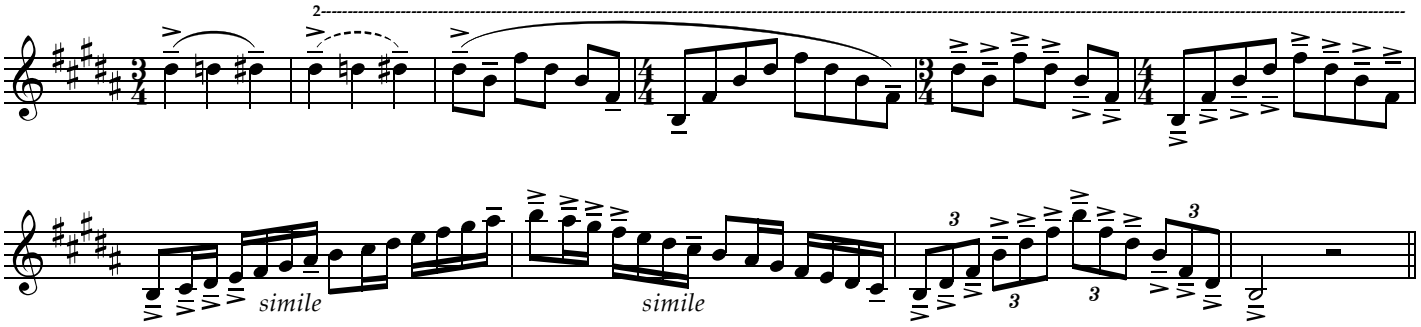
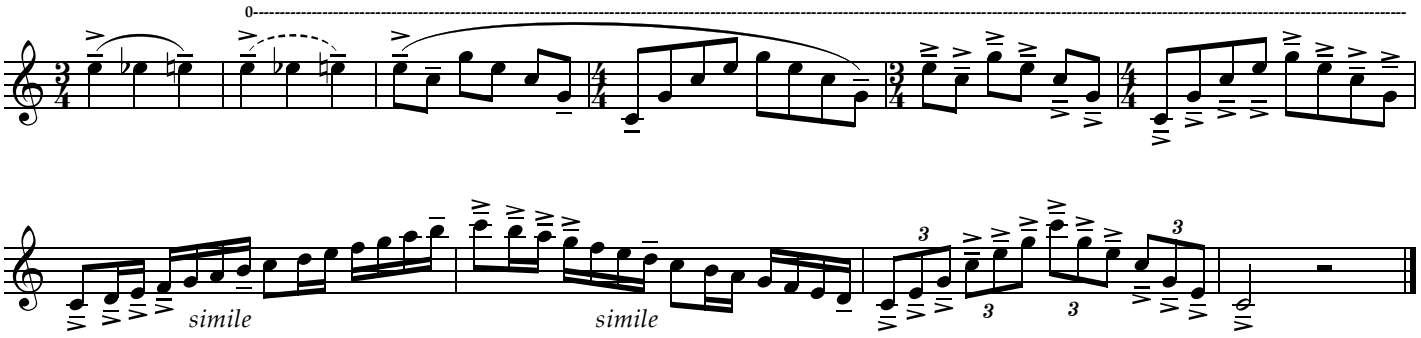
16 - Alternative warmeup 2

with bending, slurs, and tongue





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<u>Bending and ”Tuuyyyiiit”</u>

For Embouchure control

This exercise will help us to get a better control of our embouchure, in the way that we need good muscles in our lip corners to make bending in the higher register.

Also, in this exercise it is important that we start every new line with a very clear start/tonguing, and then play the next couple of notes very long and with a very clear tonguing.

In the fifth bar, try to use the feeling like an upbeat into the next tone, and then when the line is going up, still think about the upbeat feeling, but also use the “springboard effect”. We need to play the lowest note longer and with emphasis to catch the higher note “down”, instead of “going up” and trying to play it this way.

Play the exercise gently and do not force the air and sound. Try all the time to keep the airstream going through the instrument – and not just into it – for a good, big, and freely sound through the whole exercise.

It will also help us to play this exercise a little bit rubato. In this way we will have time to “feel and taste” every single note before we are going further on to the next. In this way, it will help us to keep the quality of every note through the whole exercise.

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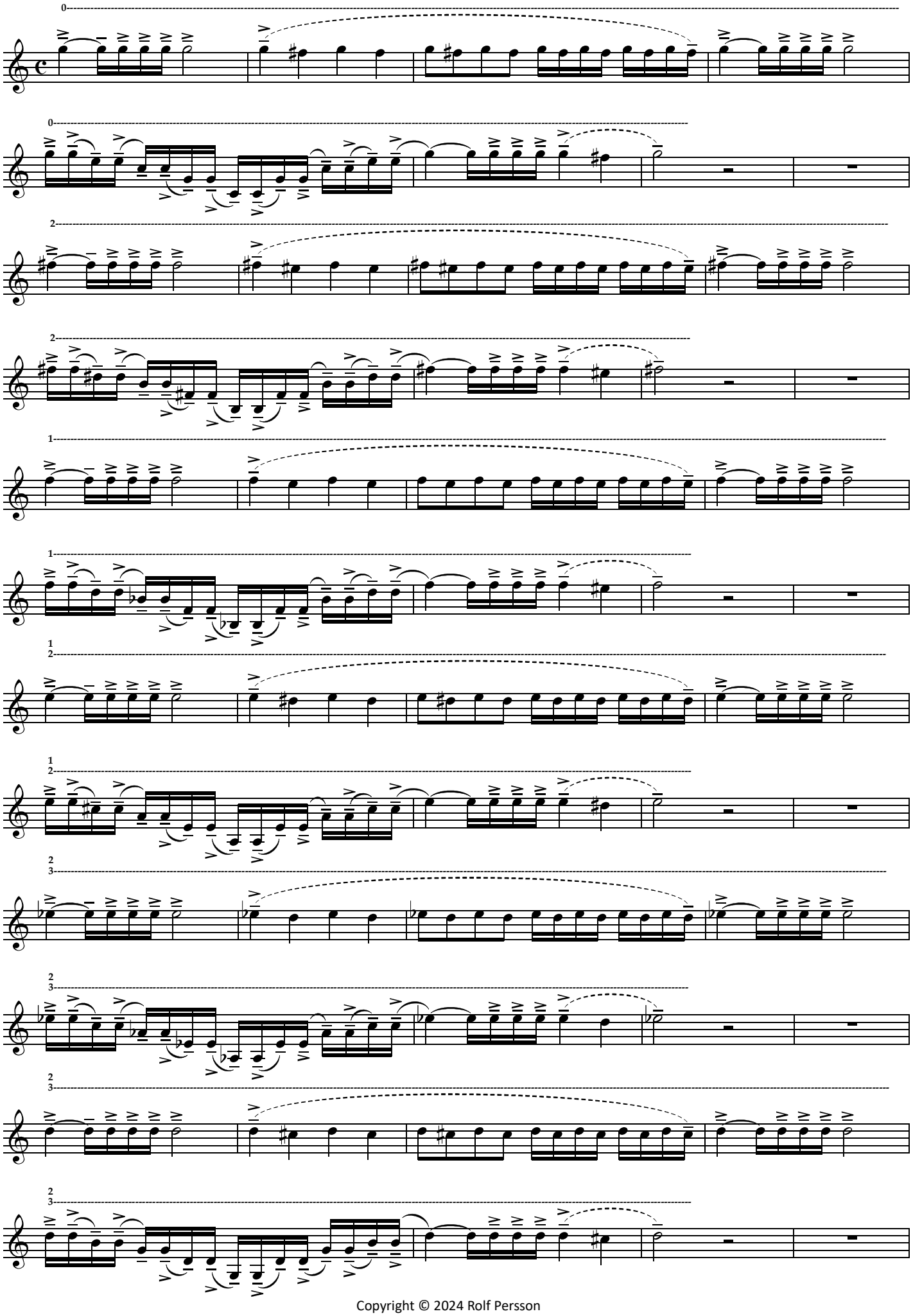
17 - Bending and “Tuuyyyiiit”

Tempo ad lib



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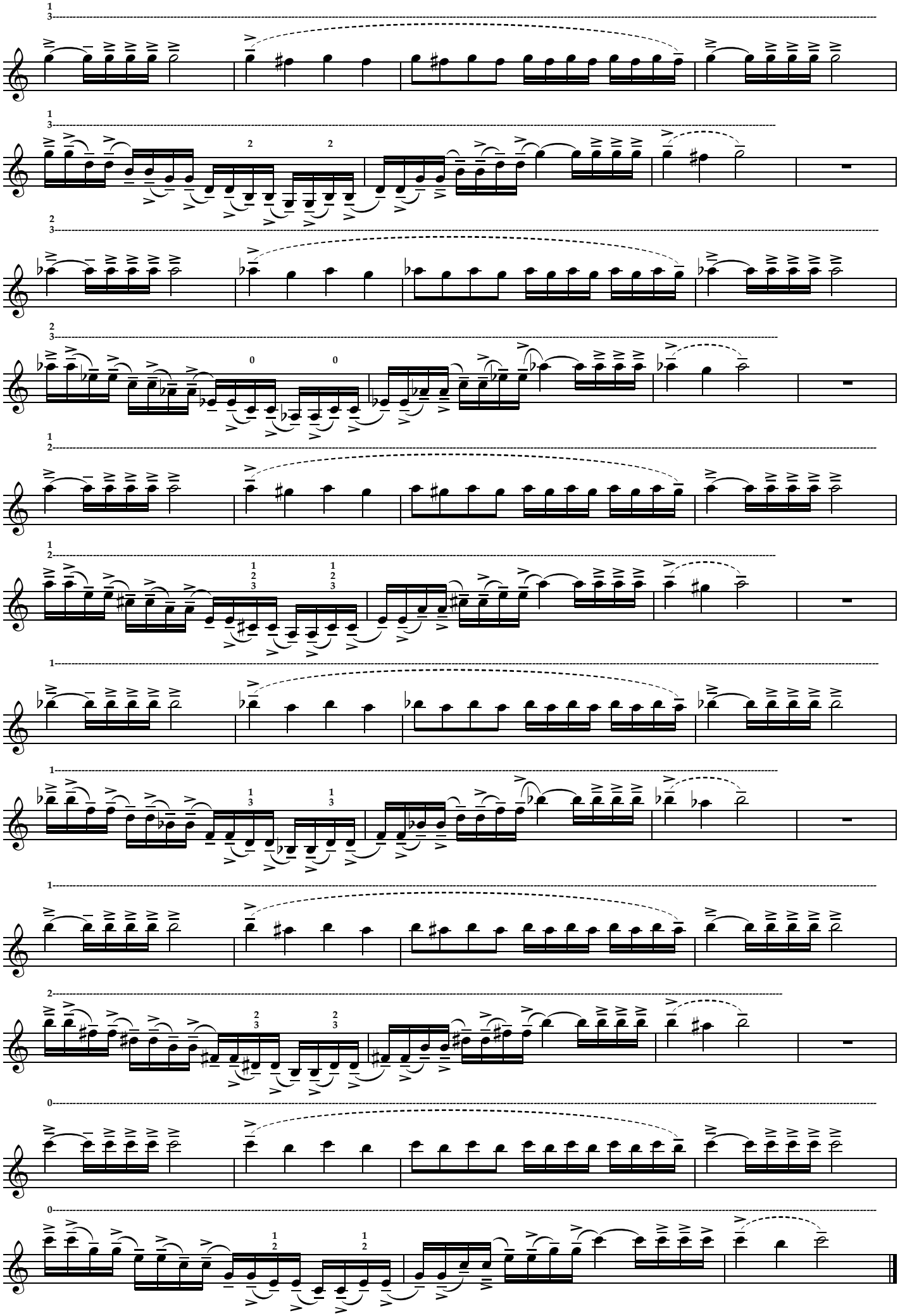
17 - Bending and “Tuuyyyiiit”



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