DEMETRIUS CONSTANTINE DOUNIS

THE STACCATO

Studies on a Scientific Basis for the Highest Development in Staccato-Playing, Op. 21

CARL FISCHER®
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FOREWORD

To possess a good staccato has always been one of the most cherished ambitions of every violinist. Its mechanism has been discussed at length ; questions were raised as to whether it was a divine gift or the result of some occult power. These contentions were further enhanced by the fact that many a distinguished violin player did not possess a good staccato—however developed their bow technique in other respects might have been—while there were mediocre violinists who prided themselves in being able to execute it brilliantly.*

Scientific investigation, along psycho-physiological lines, proves that the mechanism of staccato is based primarily upon the *rational* and *thorough development* of *accentuation in* EVERY *part* of the *bow*. Fortunately enough, staccato has no parentage with divinity or affinity with any occult power.—Complete mastery of its technique is within the reach of all players who shall have the determination and will power to patiently, insistently and thoroughly develop the accentuation in EVERY part of the bow. I expressly emphasize : " in EVERY part of the bow," because therein lies the secret of staccato playing.

To be more explicit : The method generally recommended as preparatory to staccato is to practise *martelé*, mainly at the point of bow, less frequently at the nut and very seldom in the middle. After these preparatory martelé exercises the study of staccato proper is taken up, and here it is that bitter disappointments await the violinist. Those parts of the bow which were employed for the practice of the preparatory martelé exercises will respond to the player's efforts in staccato, by producing one or two, even three, at most, four martele notes with the same bow and in a SLOW TEMPO ; while, all other parts of the bow will persistently refuse to produce anything but *scratchy* tones without the faintest effect of martelé or staccato. Any attempt to increase the rate of speed will prove, in both cases, fatal ; in the first

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* The explanation to this is to be found in the fact that every individual is endowed with a natural, innate aptitude—a "knack"—for doing something, and as regards mediocre violinists with a brilliant staccato, it so happens, that this "aptitude" expresses itself in the form of a special facility in correctly producing and developing the accentuation, the basis of staccato. In this particular case, however, this "knack" can be acquired and much more developed by every one, through a rational and scientific study.

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case—because of the non-adequate consideration of rhythm in the preparatory exercises—the result will consist in "*blurring*" the notes; in the other case any such attempt will have as effect non-controllable jerks or springing movements of the bow producing anything but staccato or martelé.

The above clearly shows that in those parts of the bow where the accentuation was studied through the martelé exercises, though imperfectly, elementary staccato notes could be produced; whereas, in all other parts, where the accentuation was not practised, not only elementary staccato could not be executed, but even martelé was impossible. As it may be seen, therefore, a thorough study of accentuation must form the basis of all preparatory staccato exercises. To be effective and bring the desired results the accentuation must be practised in every part of the bow, and not only in the form of martelé, at the point, the nut or the middle of bow. The most important parts of the bow to develop for staccato playing are the parts between point and middle, and nut and middle, as in these parts occur the staccato notes where, all efforts of the player to produce them, fail. The cause of failure is that the accentuation was not developed nor practised at all in these parts, and the bow is either too weak to accent or, on the contrary, exaggerated, non-balanced pressure is used for accentuation.

As I have already said, the development of the accentuation in every part of the bow must form the basis of all preparatory staccato studies. For a thorough development of staccato, however, this is not sufficent. To be able to execute it at all times, in every part of the bow and at any rate of speed, i.e. to acquire complete, I would say absolute, mastery of staccato technique, the following seven points have to be considered and developed :—

I. THE ACCENT (ATTACK).

II. CONTROL OF THE BOW BEFORE AND AFTER EACH STROKE.

III. THE ACCENT DURING THE DRAWING OR PUSHING OF BOW (simultaneous movement).

IV. RAPIDITY.

V. SWIFT DRAWING OR PUSHING OF BOW AND QUICK TRANSFER OF IT FROM ONE PART TO ANOTHER.

VI. RHYTHM.

VII. CONTROL OF RHYTHM.

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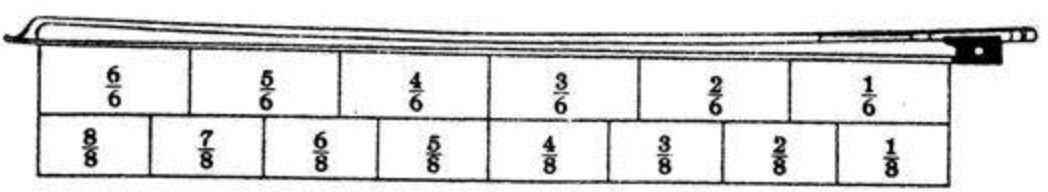
The exercises presented in this book are specifically intended to develop in the highest possible degree all the above points of staccato, thus solving the so much discussed staccato problem. It is earnestly recommended to devote daily ten to fifteen minutes to staccato practice. In spite of contrary assertions, staccato practice, if rightly done, will influence most favourably the whole technique of the bow.

THE AUTHOR.

EXPLANATION OF THE SIGNS

⊓ — down bow.
V — up bow.

F. — frog (nut) of bow
M. — middle of bow.
P. — point of bow.



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DIRECTIONS FOR PRACTISING

CHAPTER I.

PRERARATORY STUDIES.

[A] THE ATTACK AND THE ACCENT.

These exercises are specially designed for the development of the attack and the accent. They should be studied carefully and the greatest attention should be given to every detail; *i.e.*, the setting of the bow on the string; the attack and the accent; the swift lifting of the bow from the string and the quick transfer of it from one part to another. These exercises are not addressed to beginners in accentuation, they are intended to develop the accentuation as thoroughly as possible, and with a view to adequately preparing the violinist for the execution of staccato proper.* After each note, the bow should be lifted from the string and pass over to the new part in the air—about half an inch above the strings—and as quickly as possible. This will not only accustom the right arm to a rapid change of position,**but will also strengthen, in a remarkable degree, the grip of the fingers on the bow. Also, lifting the bow from the string, after each stroke, will give additional control to the hand over the bow.

[B] THE ACCENTED LEGATO.

These exercises introduce the simultaneous movement of accentuating each note DURING the drawing or the pushing of the bow. Violinists give different names to this kind of bow-stroke: *ondule, portato, parlando,* etc. I would suggest as the most appropriate name for it: THE ACCENTED LEGATO. The main characteristic of this bowing is that: "*the bow should not be stopped or interrupted in its course* BEFORE, DURING, *or* AFTER *the accentuation.*" The accented legato is unequalled for testing and controlling the resistance of the strings and the flexibility of the bow-stick, thus providing a most excellent means for the correct adjustment of the pressure in every part of the bow. In addition, this kind of bowing presents the most rational method for initiating the violin player in the simultaneous movement of accentuation while drawing or pushing the bow, a compound movement of primordial importance to the staccato. All these exercises should be studied, at first, with whole bow, then half (lower, middle and upper half), and finally with quarter bow ($\frac{1}{4}$ $\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$).

[C] THE ACCENTED STACCATO.

This is the slow form of staccato; it is called, also, heavy staccato. It is a succession of martelé notes in one bow, either down or up. To the player who has mastered the exercises contained in [A] THE ATTACK AND THE ACCENT, and [B] THE ACCENTED LEGATO, this form of bowing presents no difficulties at all; the only new difficulty being that of stopping the bow suddenly after each note. This sudden stopping

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* The preparatory and elementary degrees of accentuation are treated in my book: "THE MARTELÉ AND THE SPICCATO, STUDIES IN ACCENTUATION," where the mechanism of accentuation is explained in detail.

** Not infrequently, the inability to execute correctly a rapid staccato is caused by the "laziness" of the right arm to co-ordinate its up and down movement with the "tremulant" movement of the hand and fingers of the right hand. The result is that instead of helping, the right arm, on the contrary, acts as a brake, thus hindering the very movement of staccato.

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of the bow presents many difficulties only to violinists with an inadequate preparation for staccato playing. The chief reason is that they are not able to control the bow after each accentuation. The exercises of Ⓐ THE ATTACK AND THE ACCENT—where the bow is lifted from the string after each accented note—are admirably suited to impart to the right arm and hand the necessary strength and flexibility to effectively control the bow after each stroke. These exercises—THE ACCENTED STACCATO—should be practised, too, with whole bow, half bow (lower, middle and upper half) and quarter bow.

CHAPTER II.

DEVELOPMENT OF RAPIDITY.

The specific object of these exercises is the development of rapidity. They are specially designed to cultivate and develop that " tremulant " movement of the hand, indispensable for an effective execution of rapid staccato. Exercises ① a) and b), ② a) and b), ③ a) and b), ④ a) and b), ⑤ a) and b), and ⑥ a) and b) should be practised first with quarter bow, and then with eighth bow, and . The other exercises are to be practised as indicated. The bow should always be lifted from the string, after each group of notes.

CHAPTER III.

DEVELOPMENT OF RHYTHM

These exercises are the natural outcome of the preceding ones. They are to be practised in true staccato manner, i.e., with whole bow. They serve excellently for the purpose of equalizing and synchronizing the movement of the entire right arm with that of the right hand and fingers, in different rhythmical variations.

CHAPTER IV

DEVELOPMENT OF CONTROL IN RHYTHM.

We now come to the most important point of the higher development of staccato-technique: that of controlling the staccato in tempo. The exercises offered, present different rhythmical variations in the same bow-stroke. They are such as to develop in the highest degree rhythmic precision, stability and sensitiveness of the bow in staccato playing. To illustrate the exercises the first part of the ascending G major scale is used. All exercises should be practised with whole bow. *NOTE.*—To illustrate the exercises of Chapters I, II and III, the 2nd, 8th and 34th Etudes of Kreutzer are used. This not only on account of their adaptability but mainly because every violinist is familiar with them. It is needless to say that all exercises contained in this book should, and must, be practised (after they are practised on the Kreutzer Etudes) on any other etude, passage, scale, arpeggio, etc., which contain notes of equal value. The "Moto Perpetuo," by Paganini, the one by Ries and also by Novacek, as well as different movements from the Bach solo-sonatas form a most excellent basis (theme) for the practice of these exercises.

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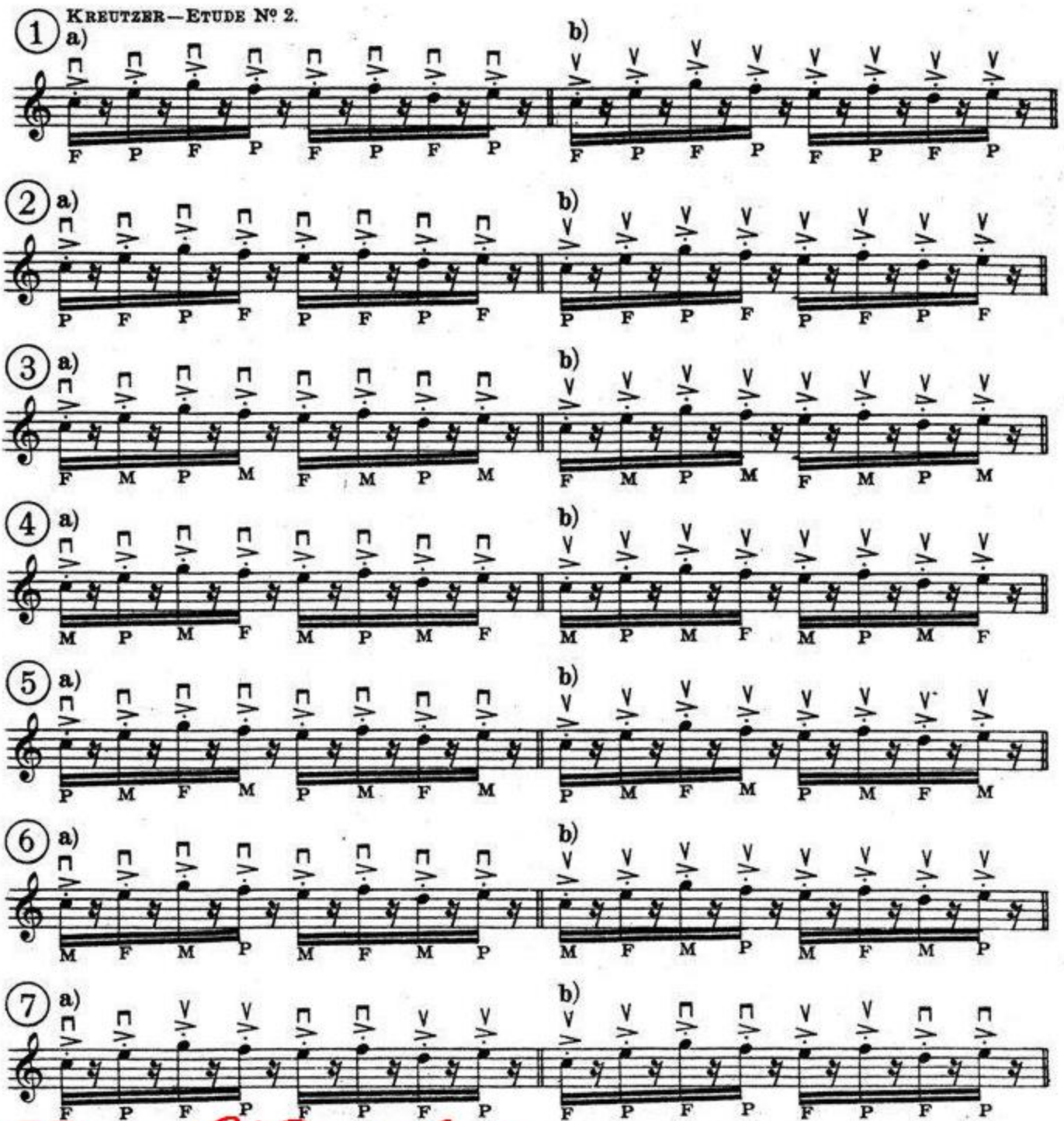
THE STACCATO

Studies on a Scientific Basis for the Highest Development
in Staccato-Playing, Op. 21

DEMETRIUS CONSTANTINE DOUNIS
(1886–1954)

A THE ATTACK AND THE ACCENT

FIRST DEGREE



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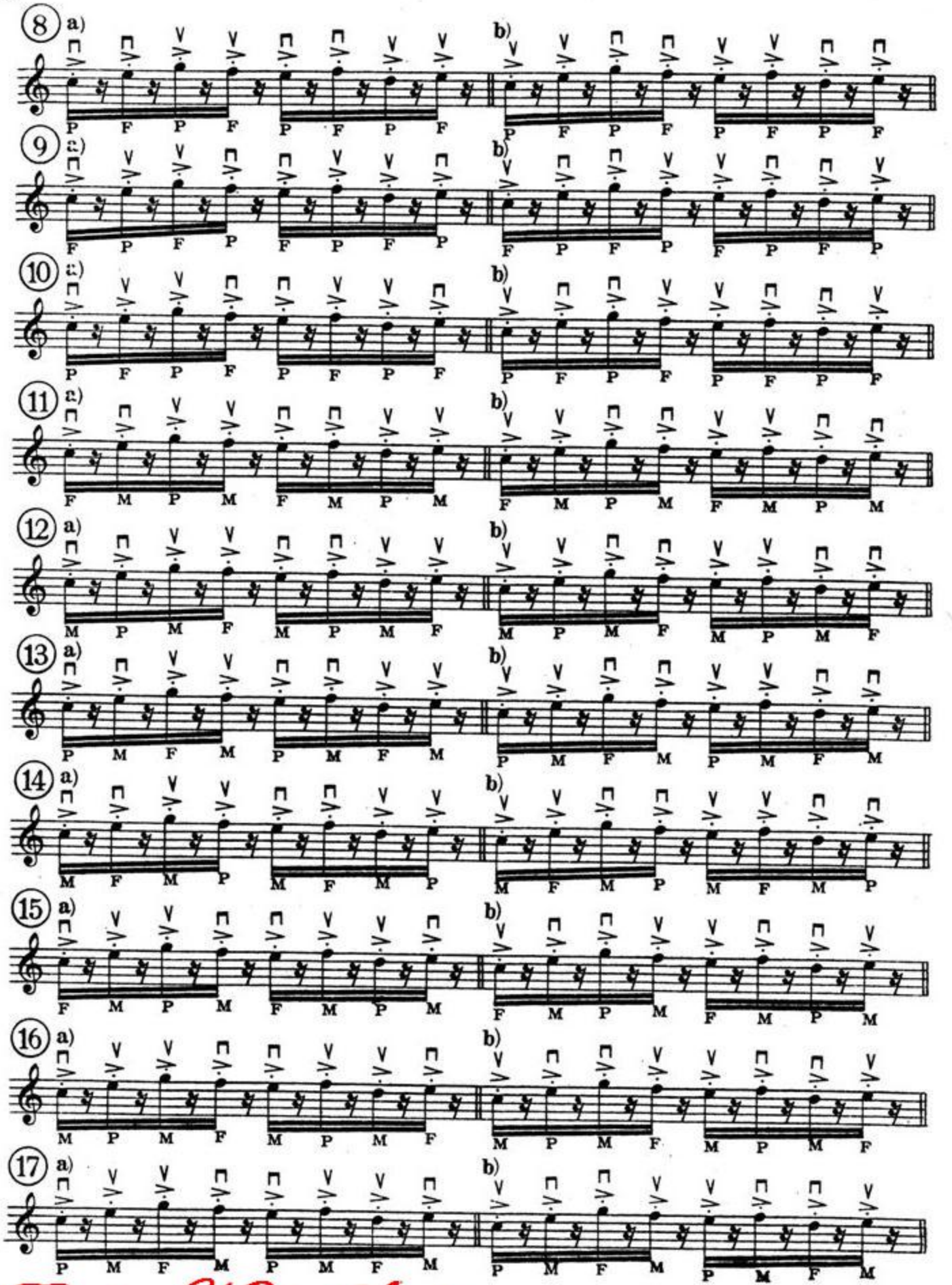

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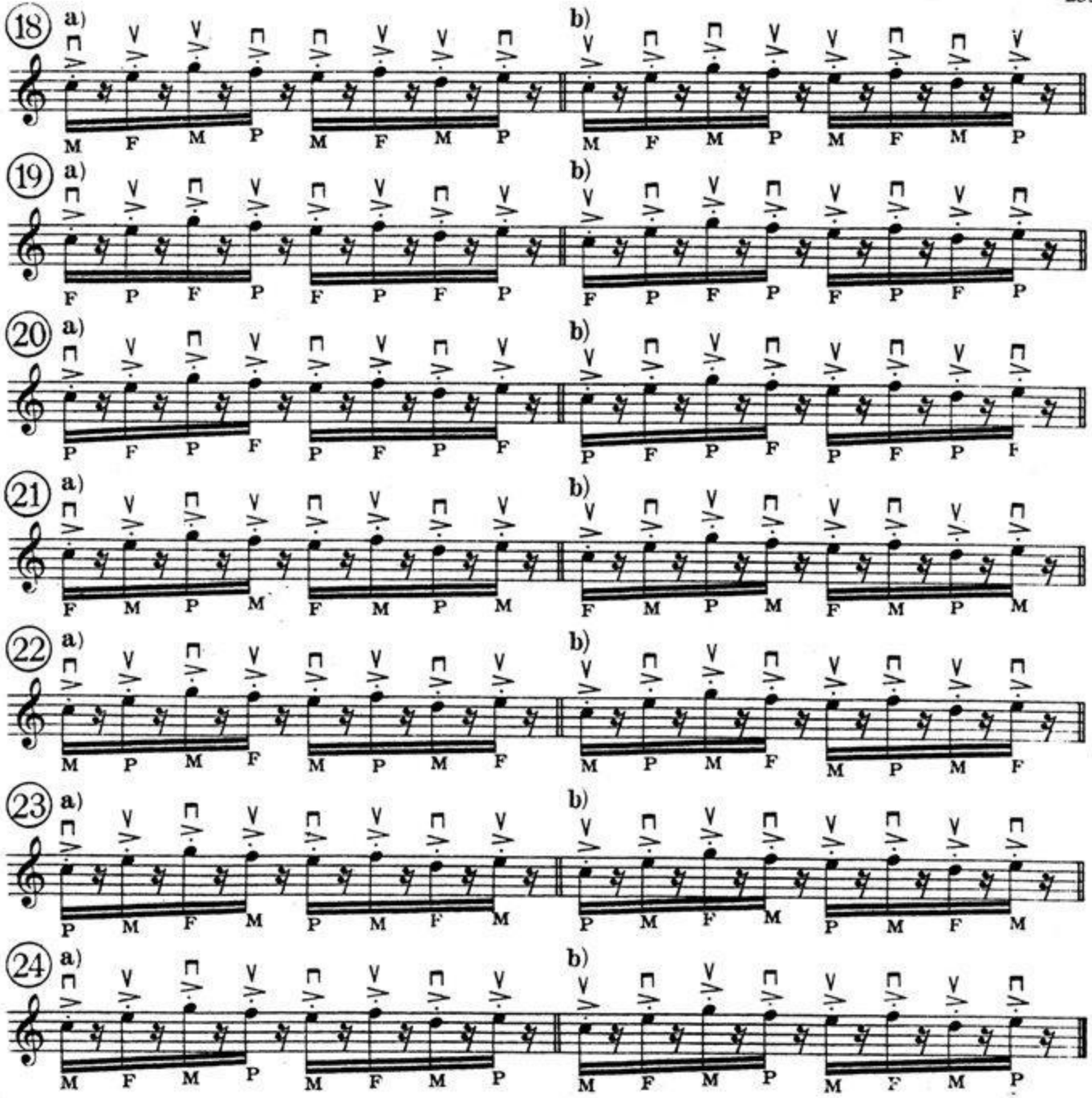

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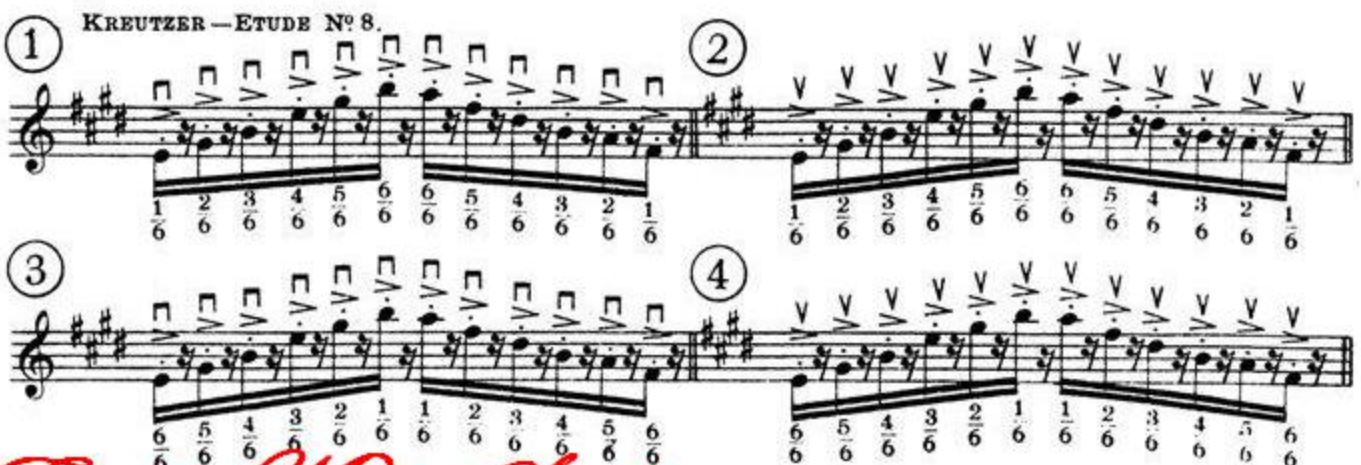

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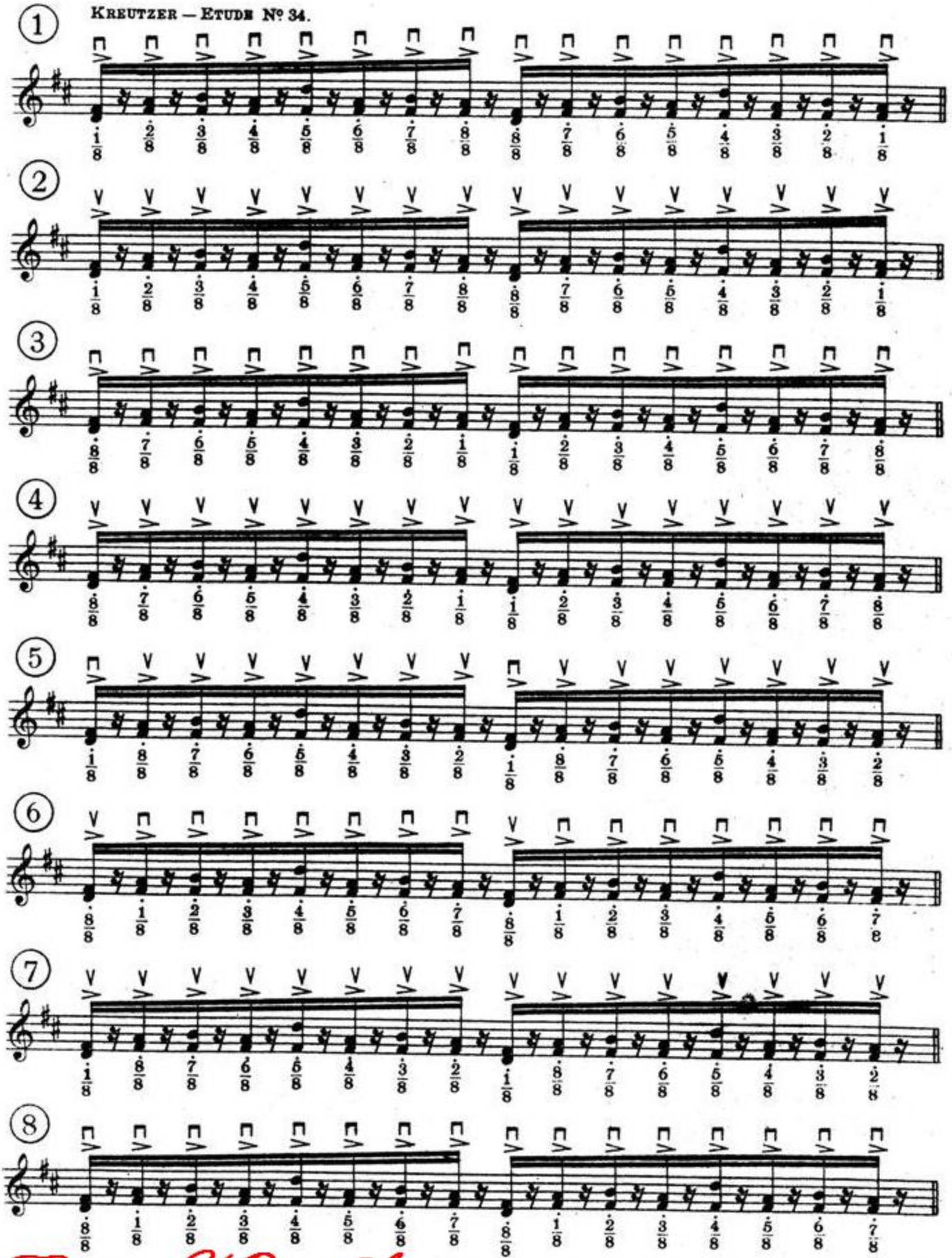
THIRD DEGREE



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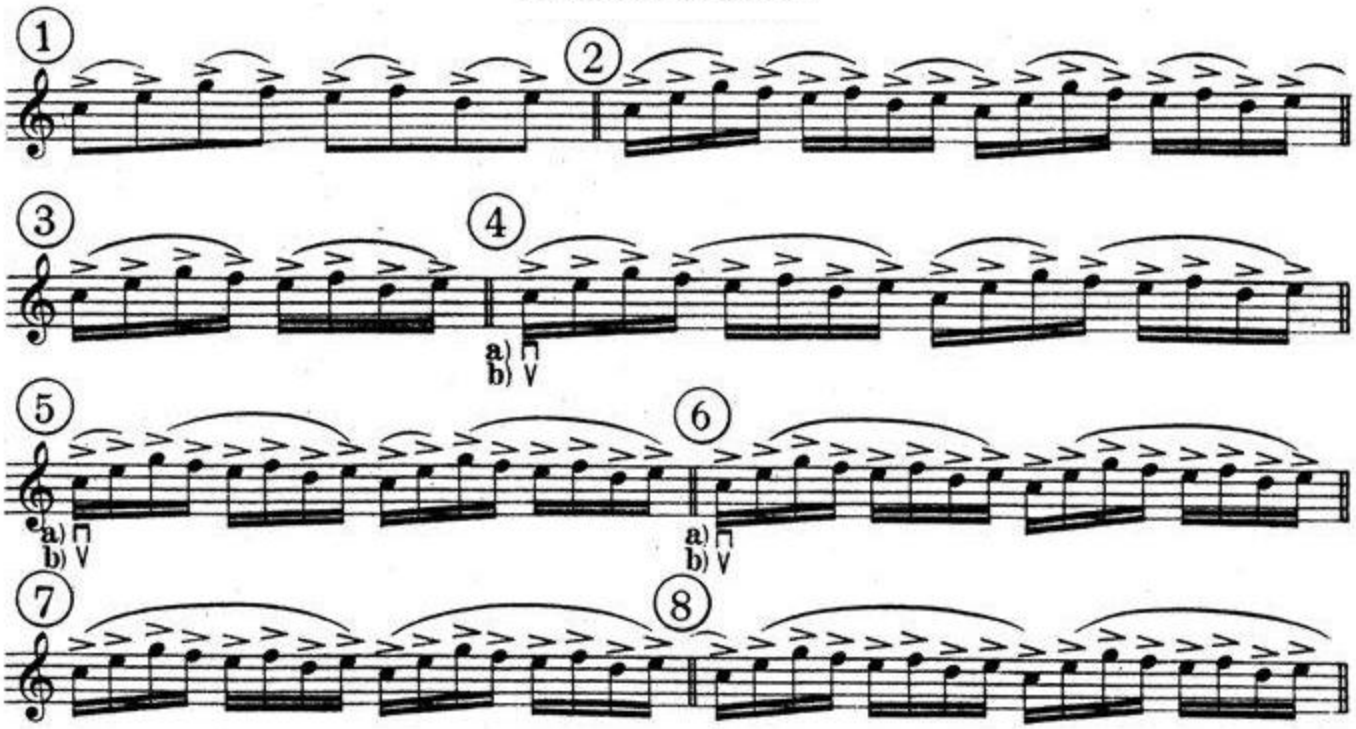

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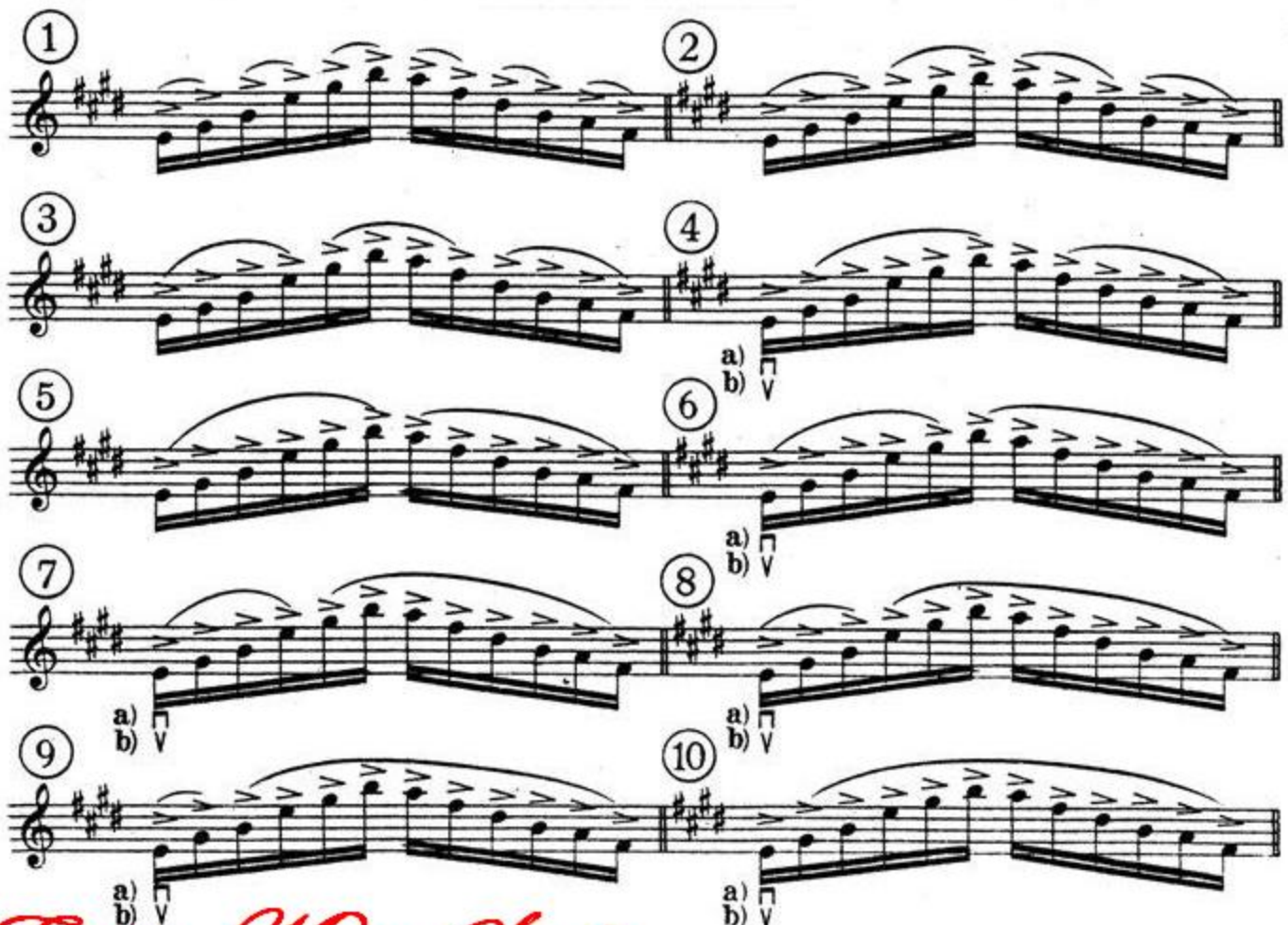

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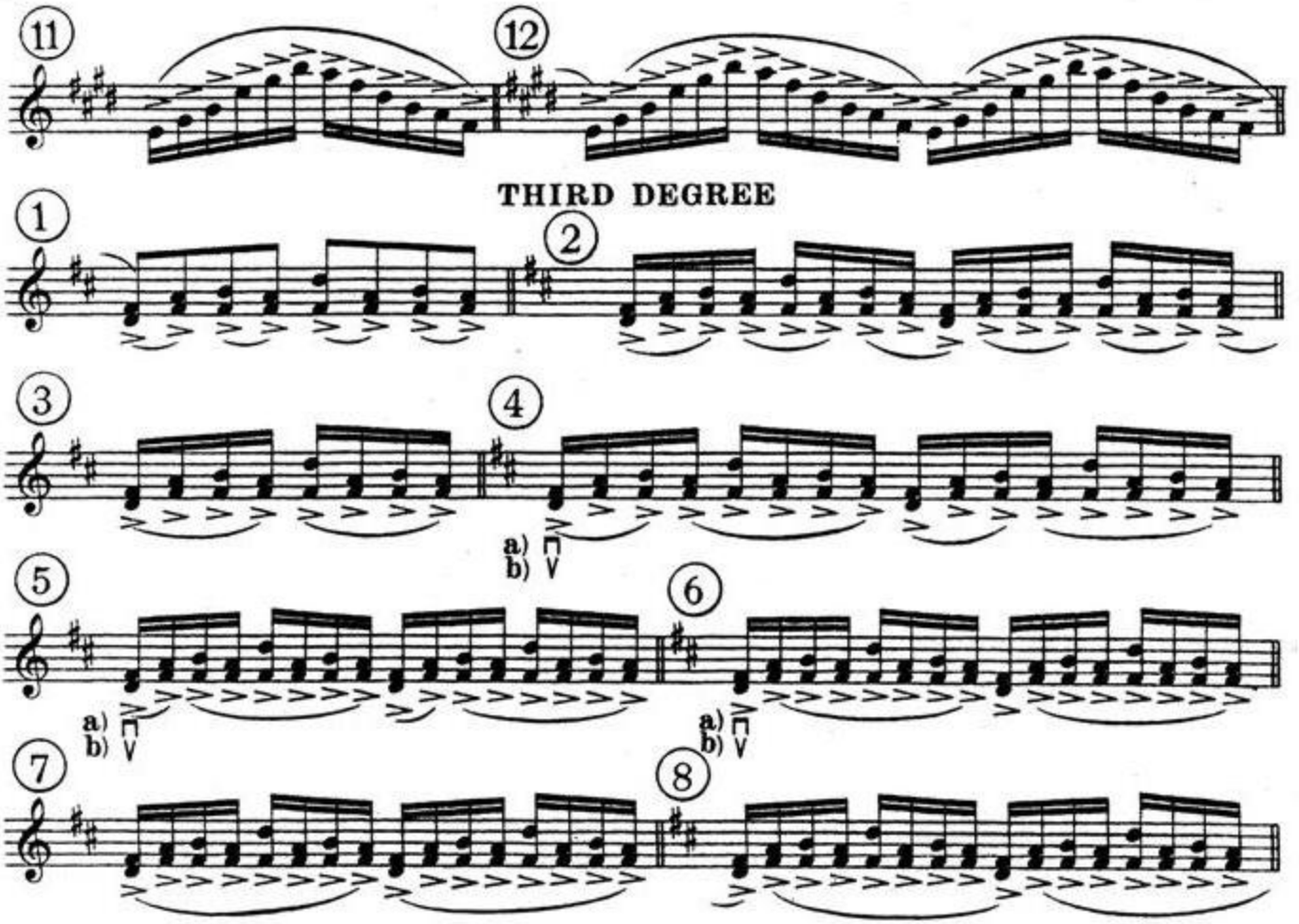
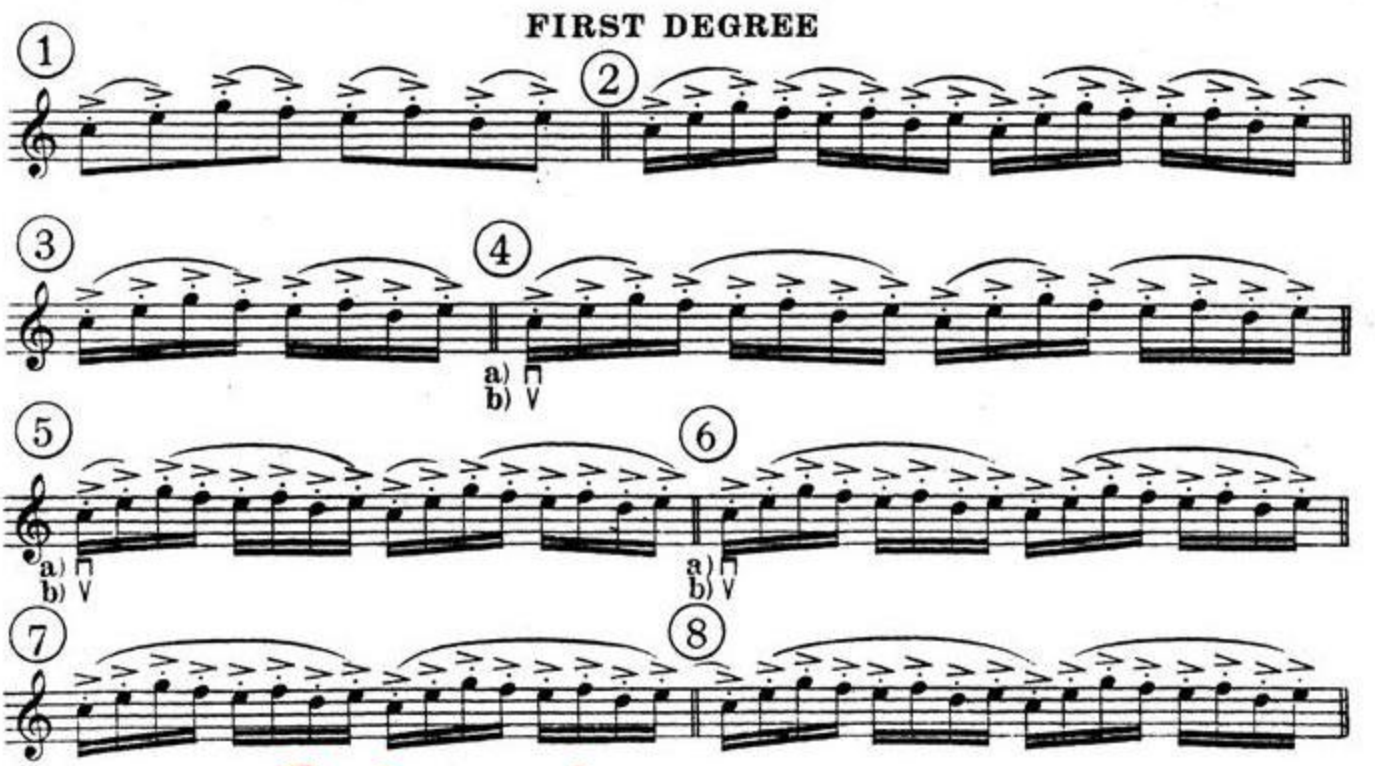


C THE ACCENTED STACCATO



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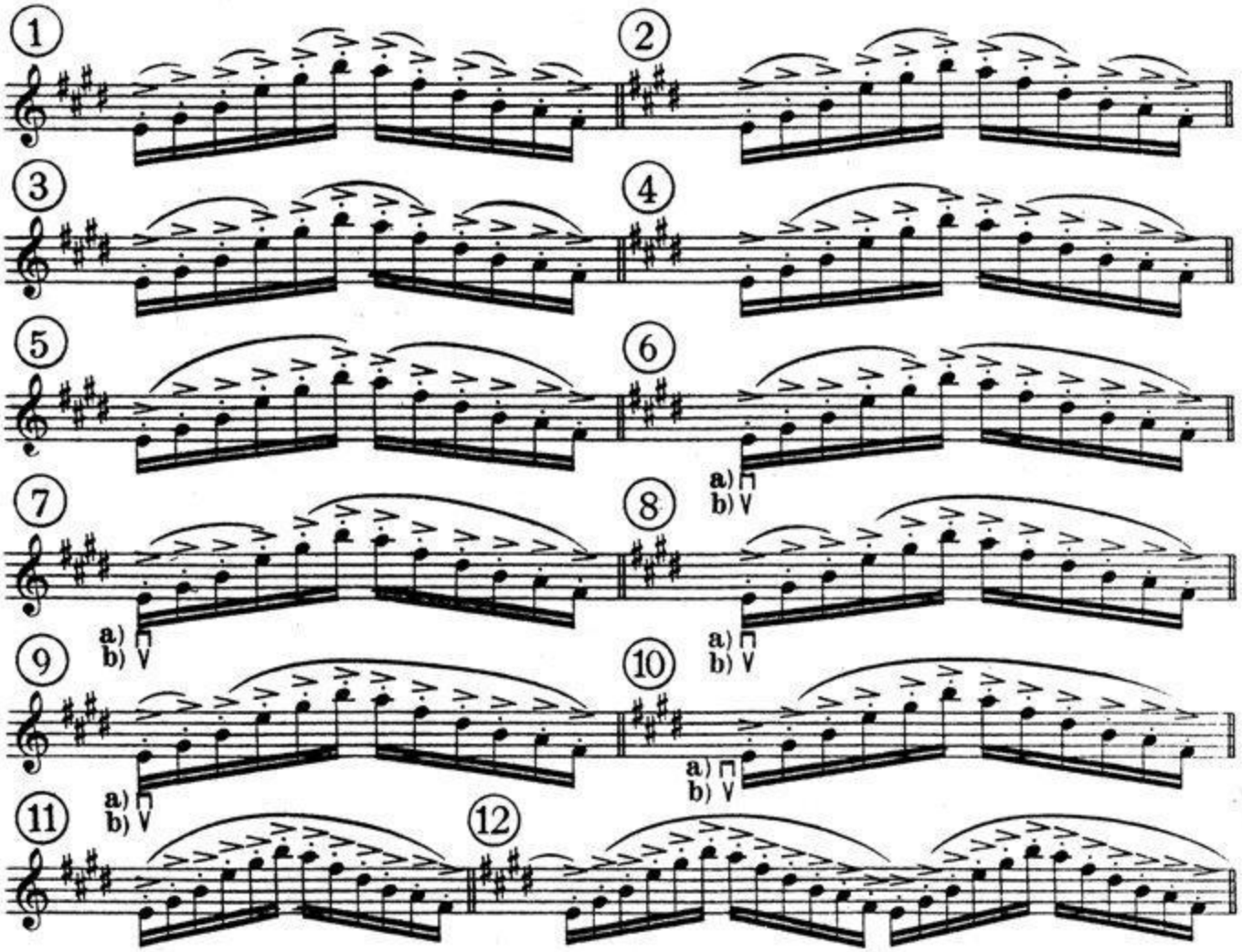

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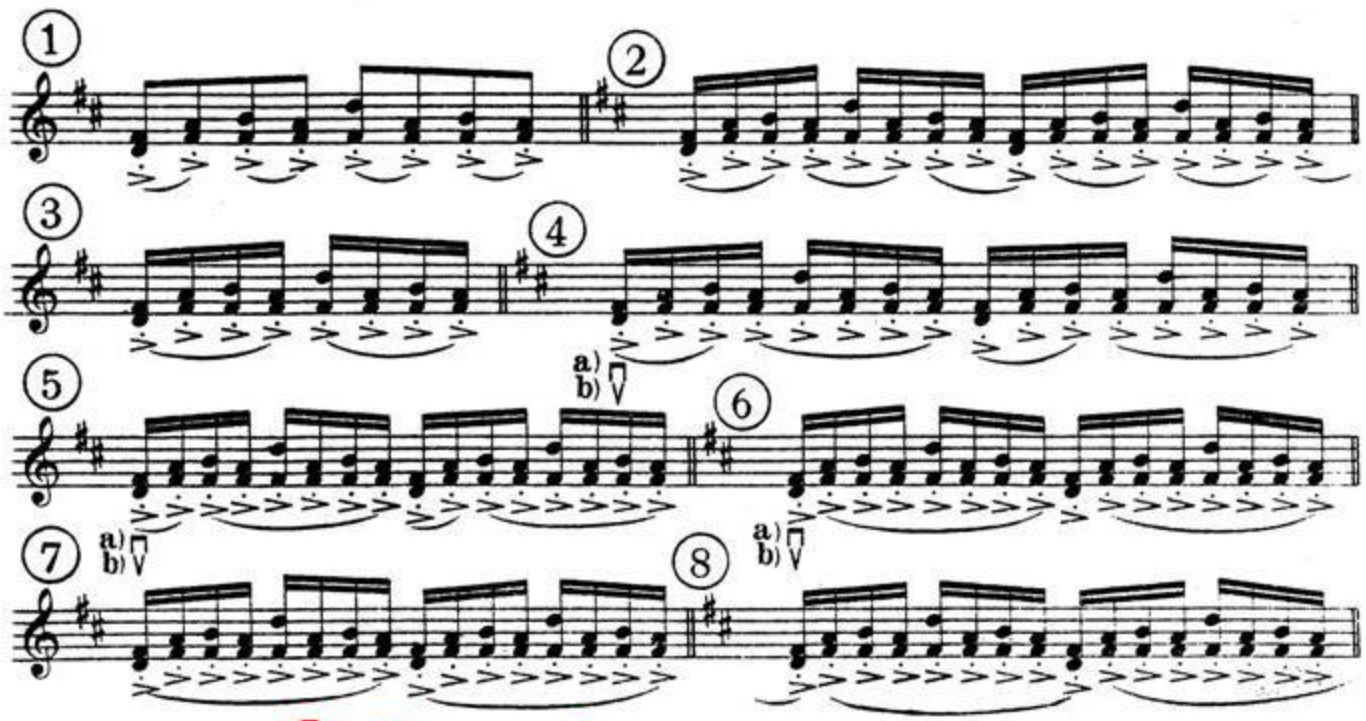

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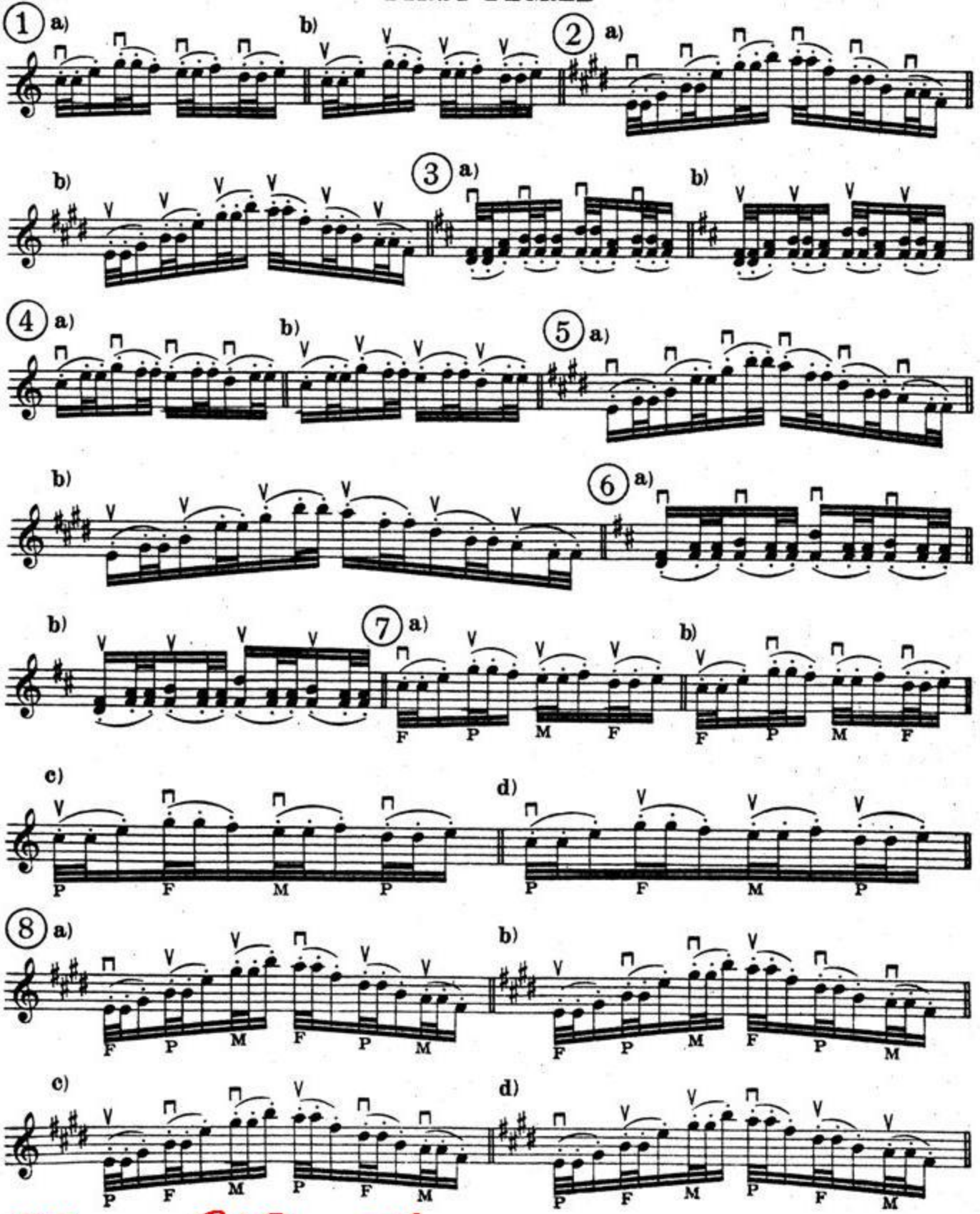
Chapter II.

DEVELOPMENT OF RAPIDITY

FIRST DEGREE



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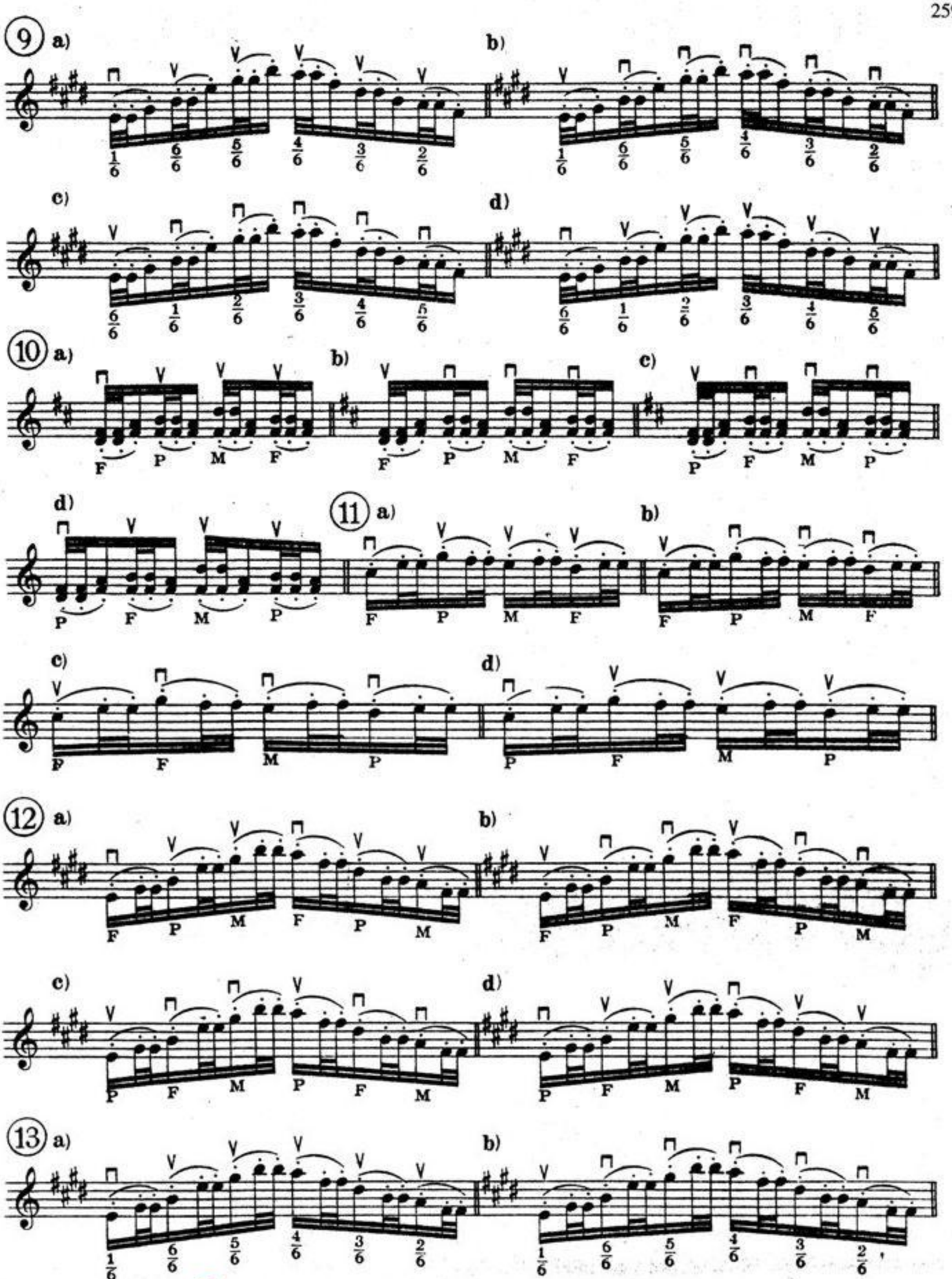

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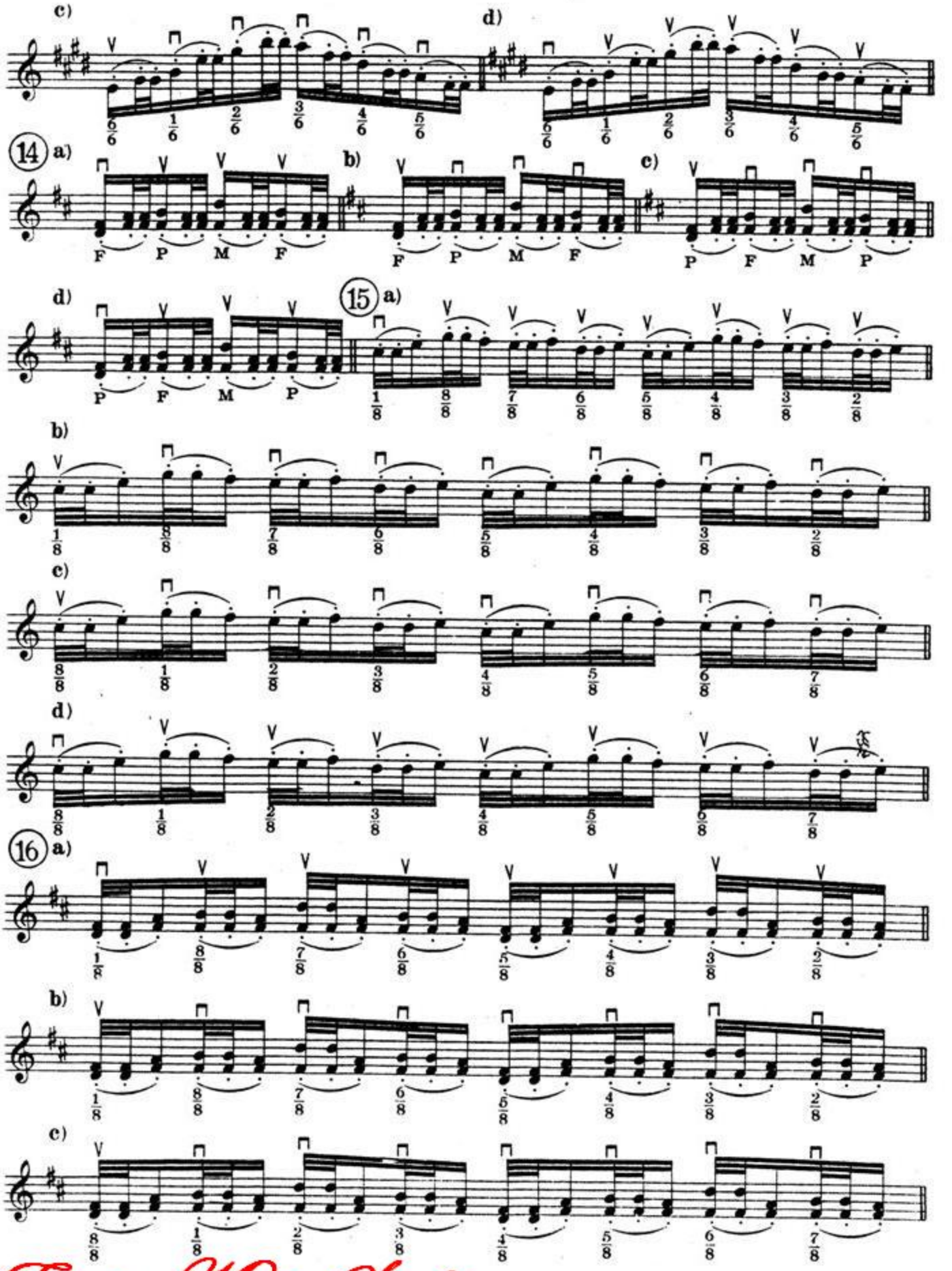

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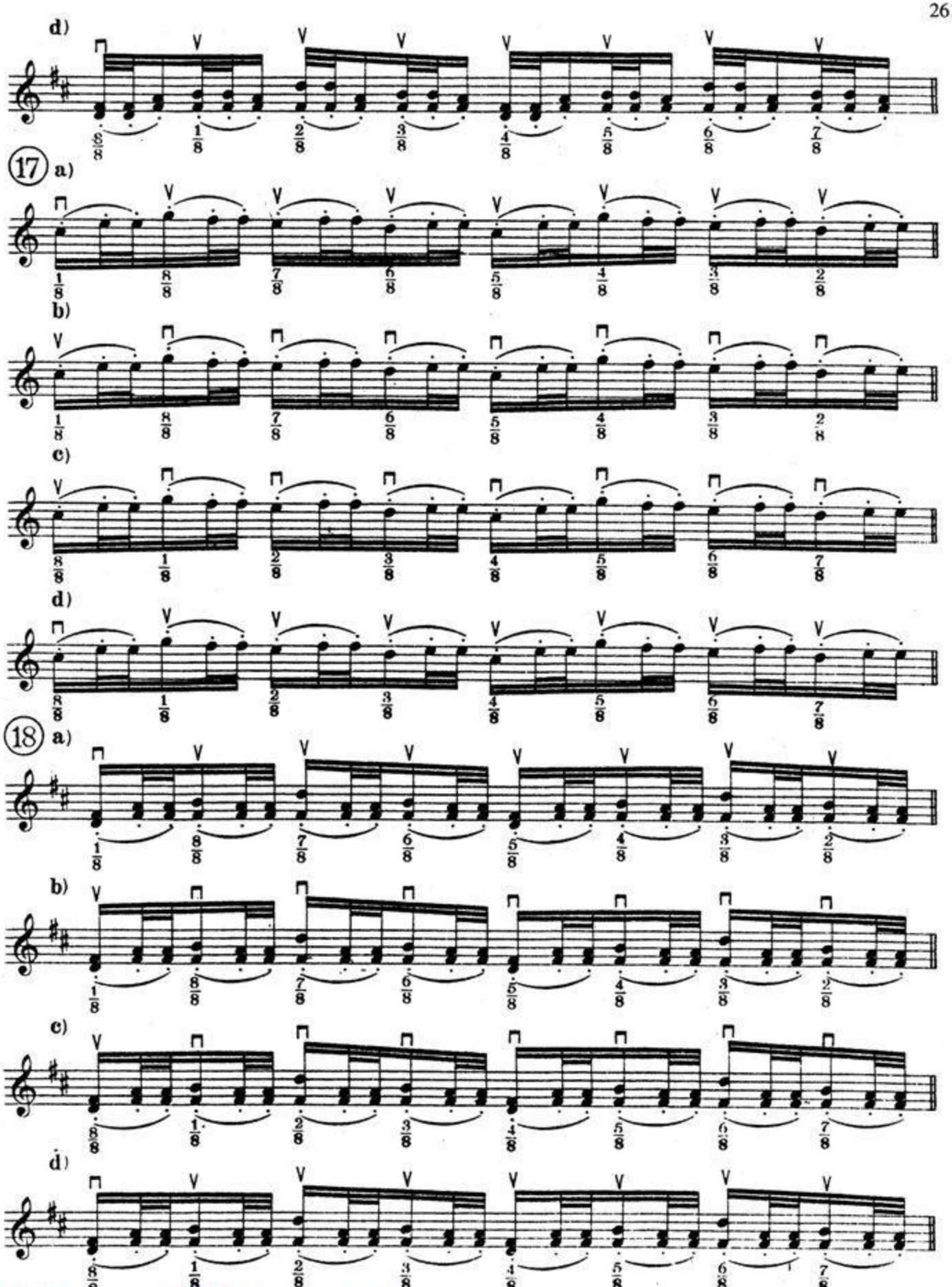

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SECOND DEGREE

All exercises of the FIRST DEGREE should be practised in the manner as indicated below for exercise ① a), i.e. by adding one more note to the group of the two rapid notes.

Ex. ① a)

THIRD DEGREE

All exercises of the FIRST DEGREE should be practised acoording to the following illustration, i.e. by adding two more notes to the group of the two rapid notes. Exercise ① a) is used as illustration.

Ex. ① a)

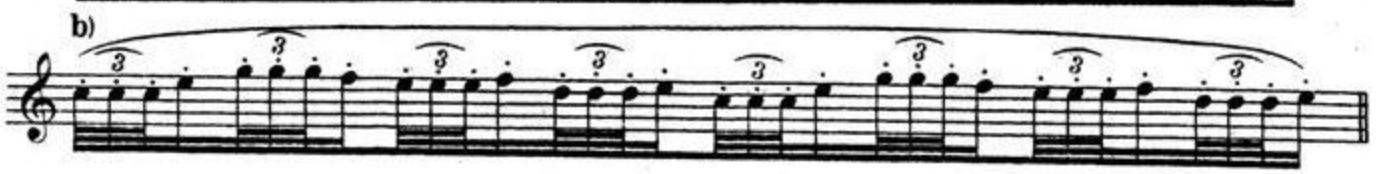
Chapter III.

DEVELOPMENT OF RHYTHM

FIRST DEGREE

① a)

b)



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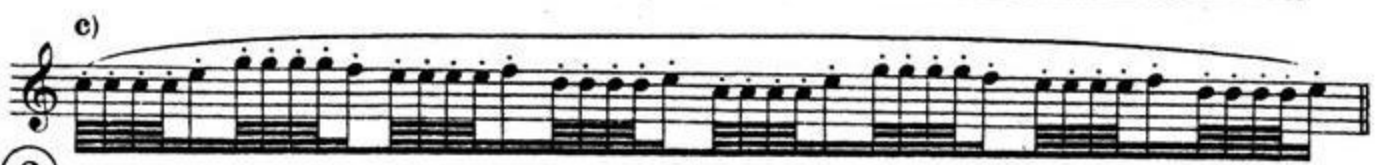

② a)

b)

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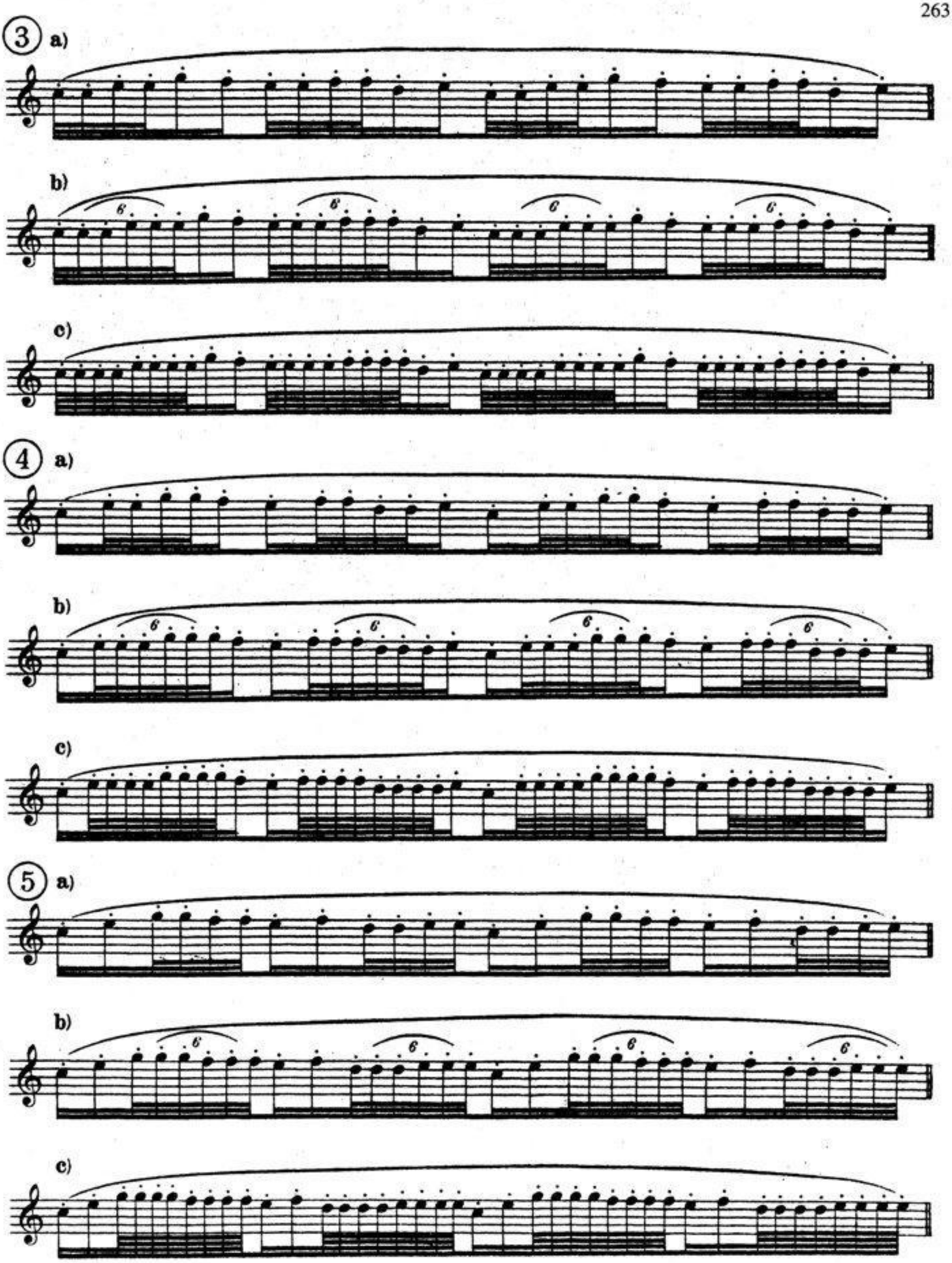

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6 a)

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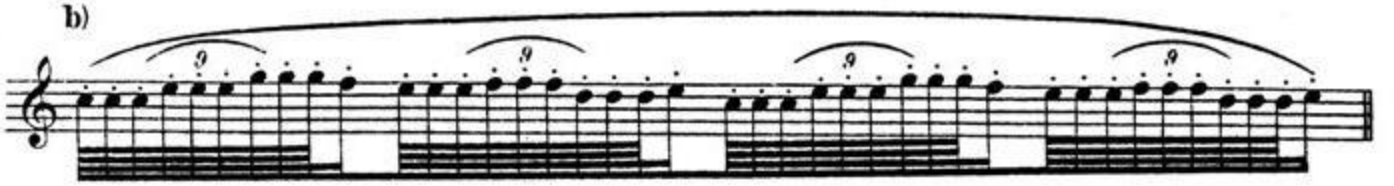

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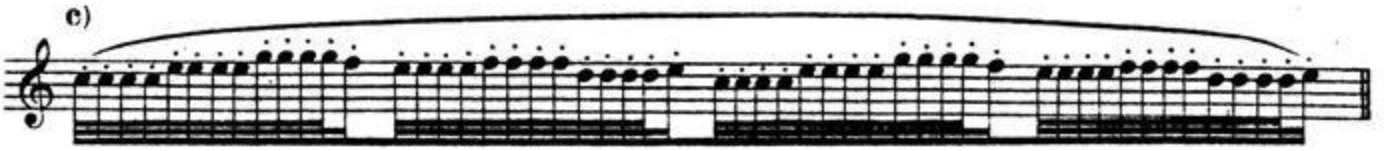

7 a)

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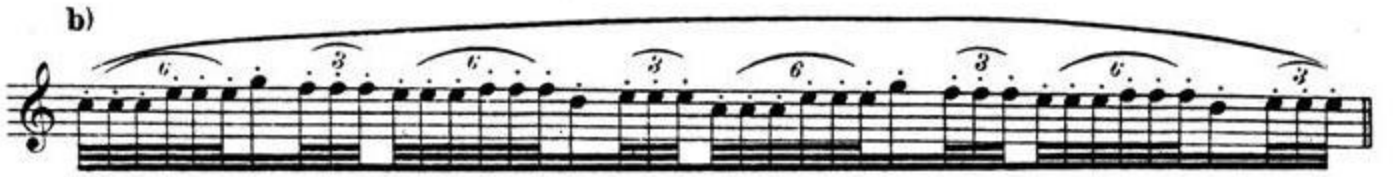

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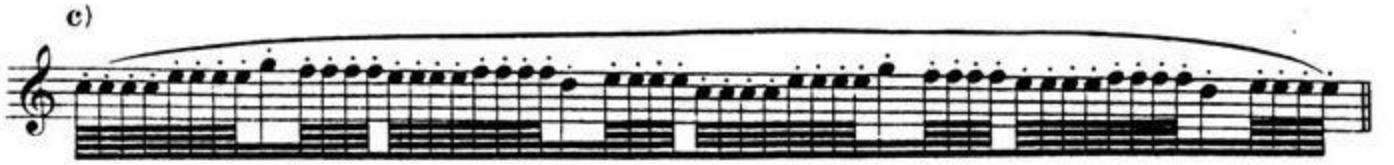

8 a)

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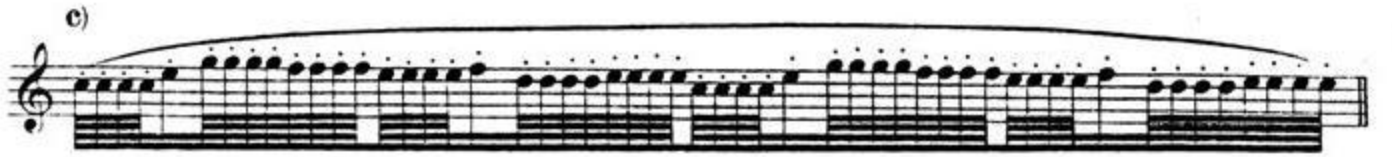

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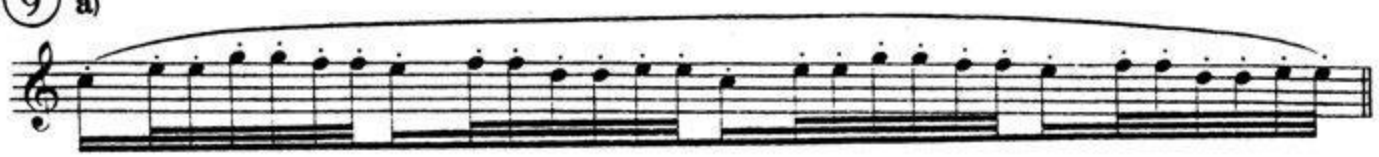
9 a)



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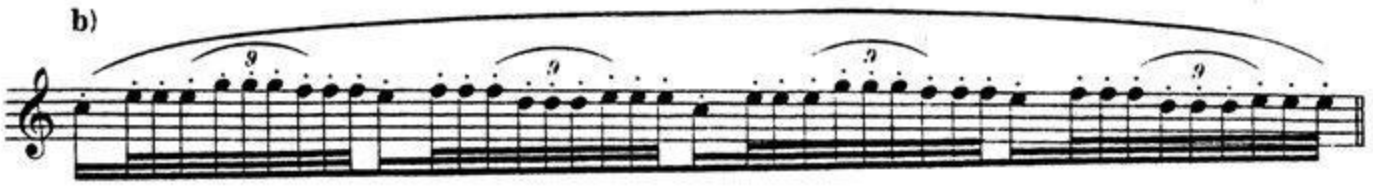

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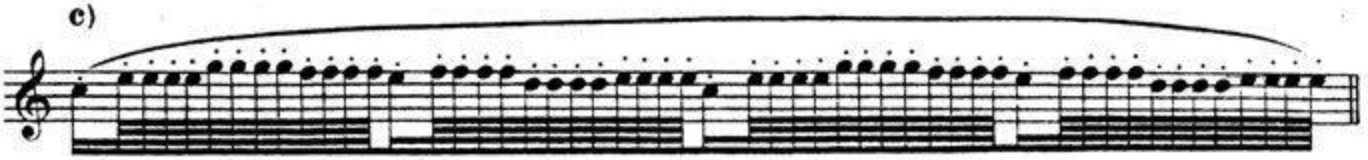

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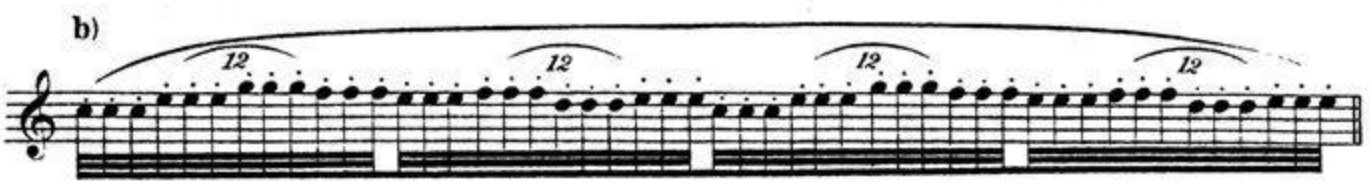

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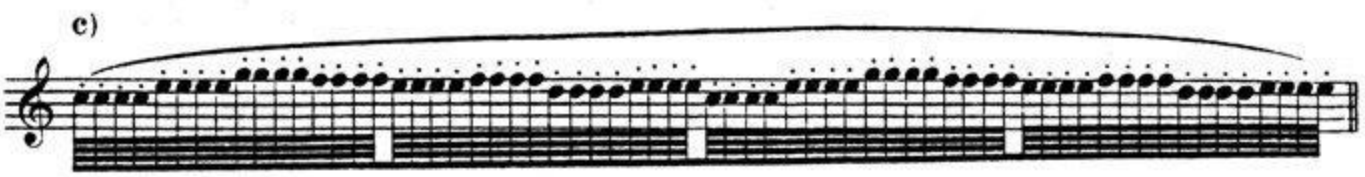

SECOND DEGREE

1 a)

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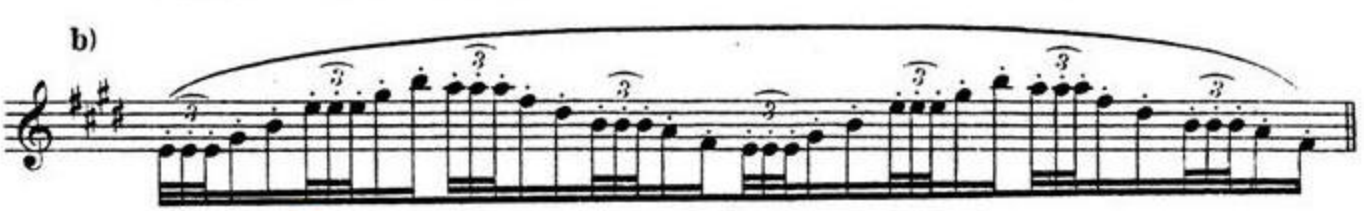

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c)

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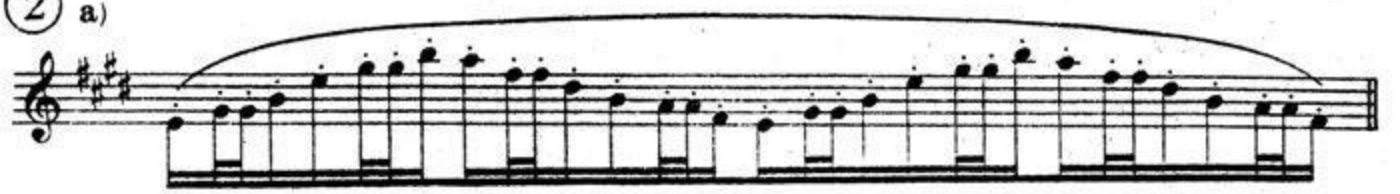

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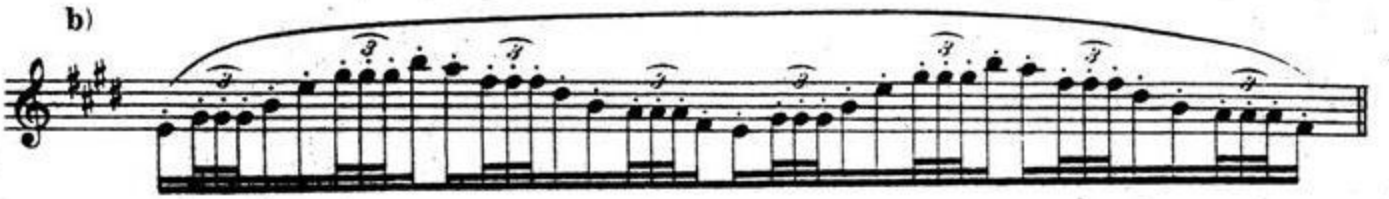

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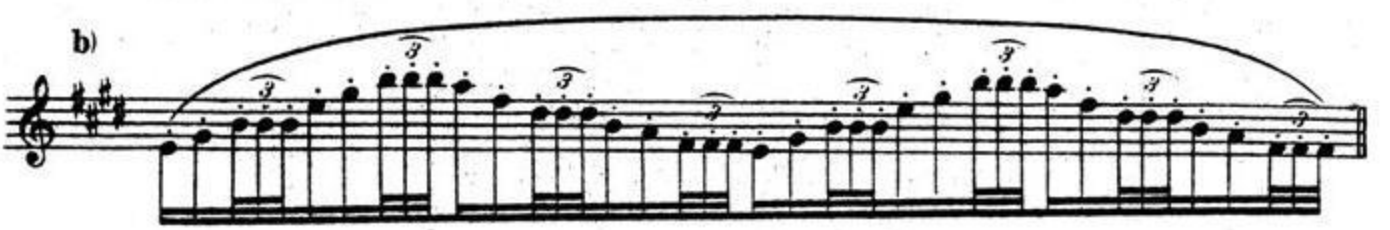

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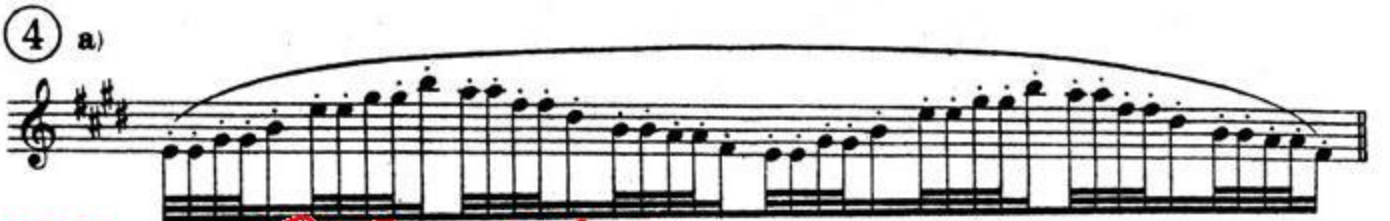
④ a)



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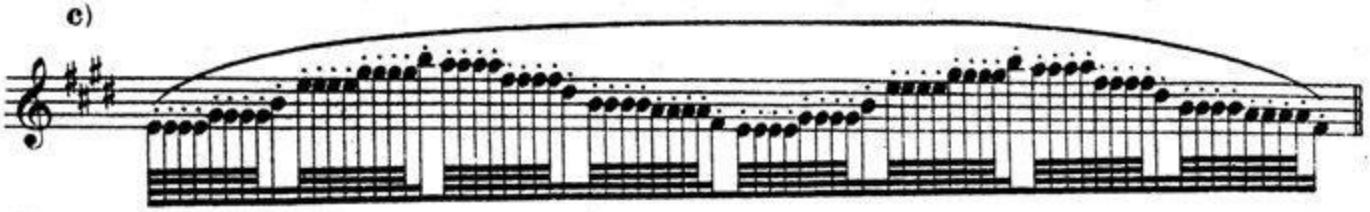
b)

c)



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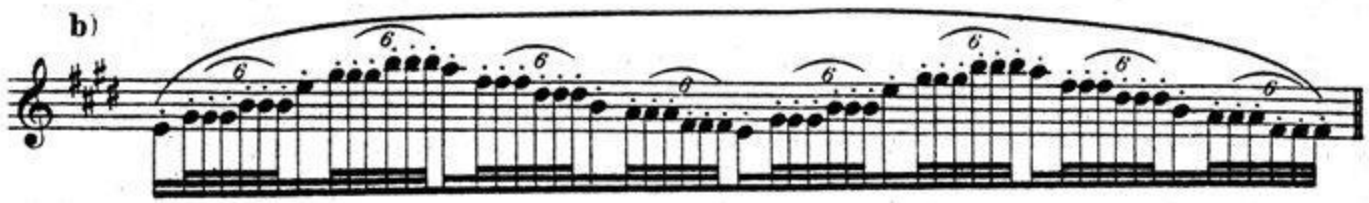

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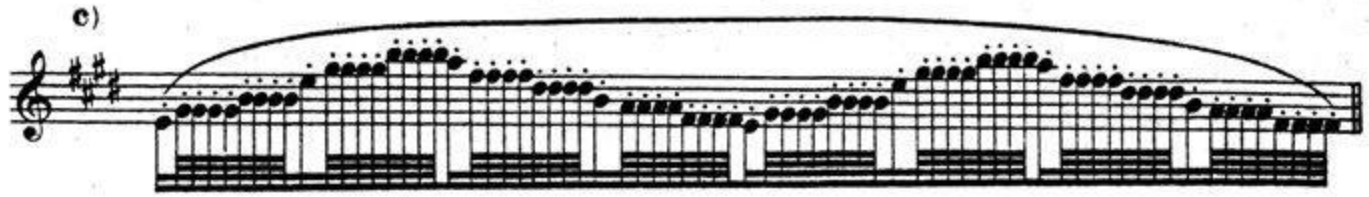

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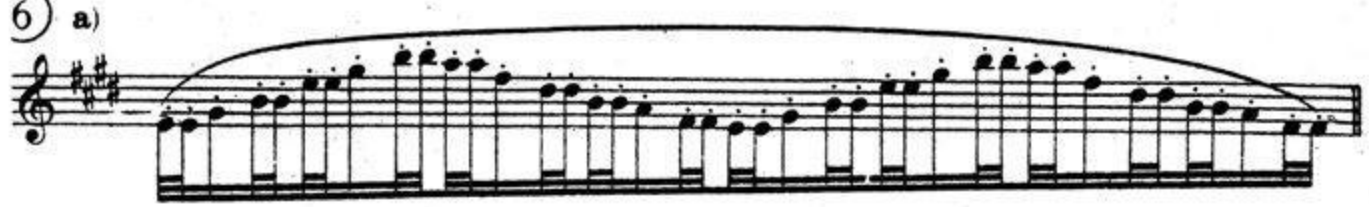

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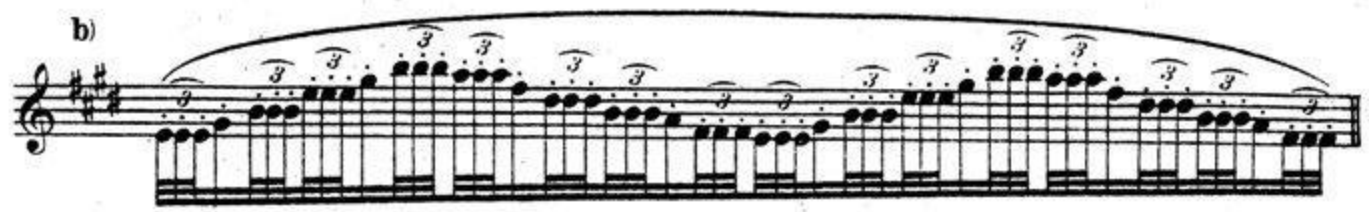

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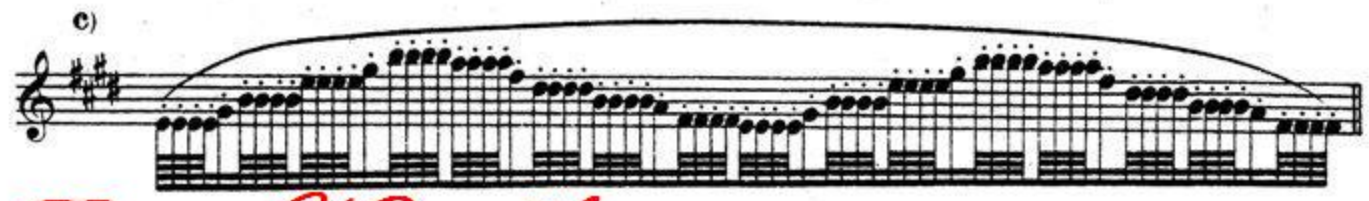

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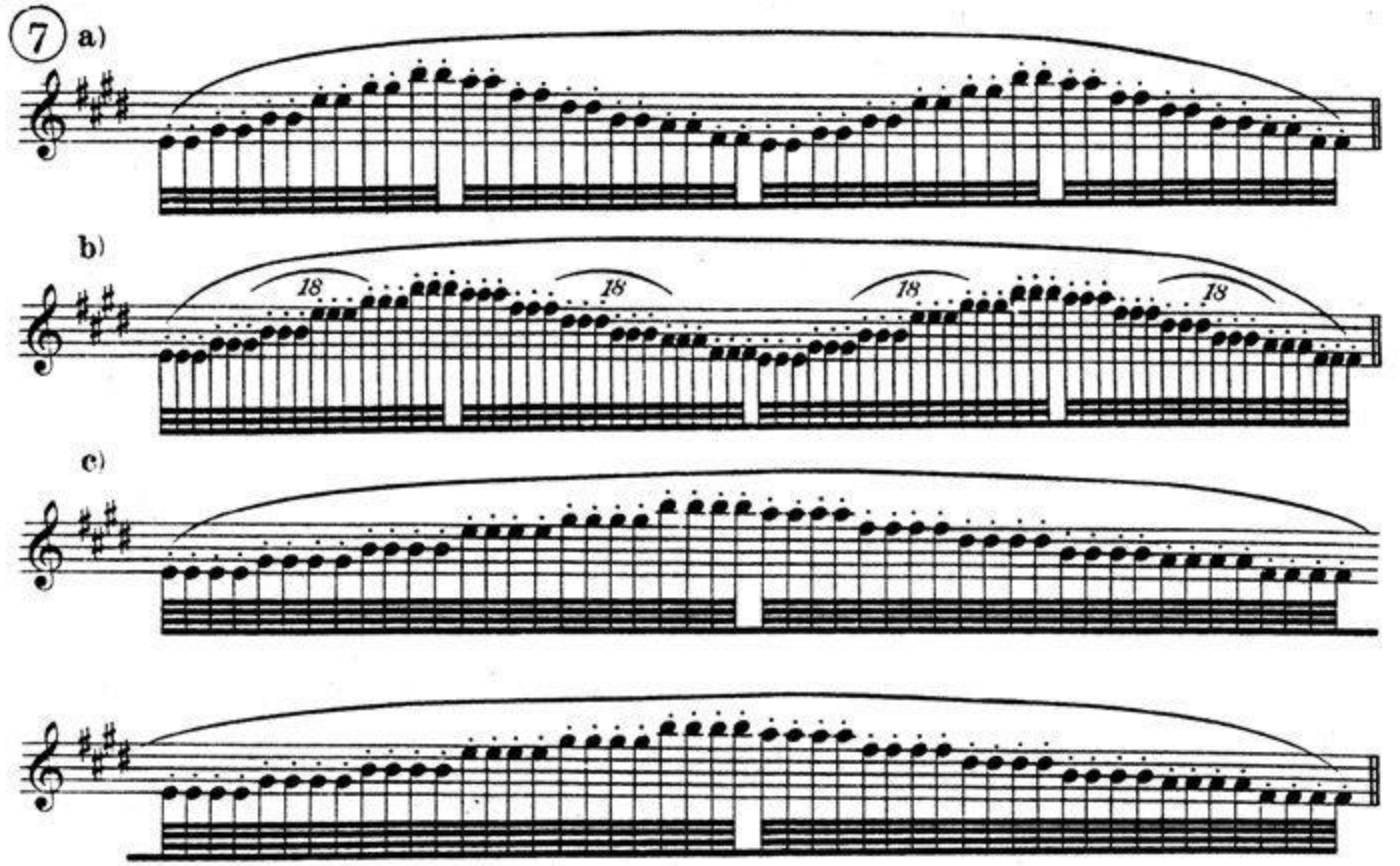
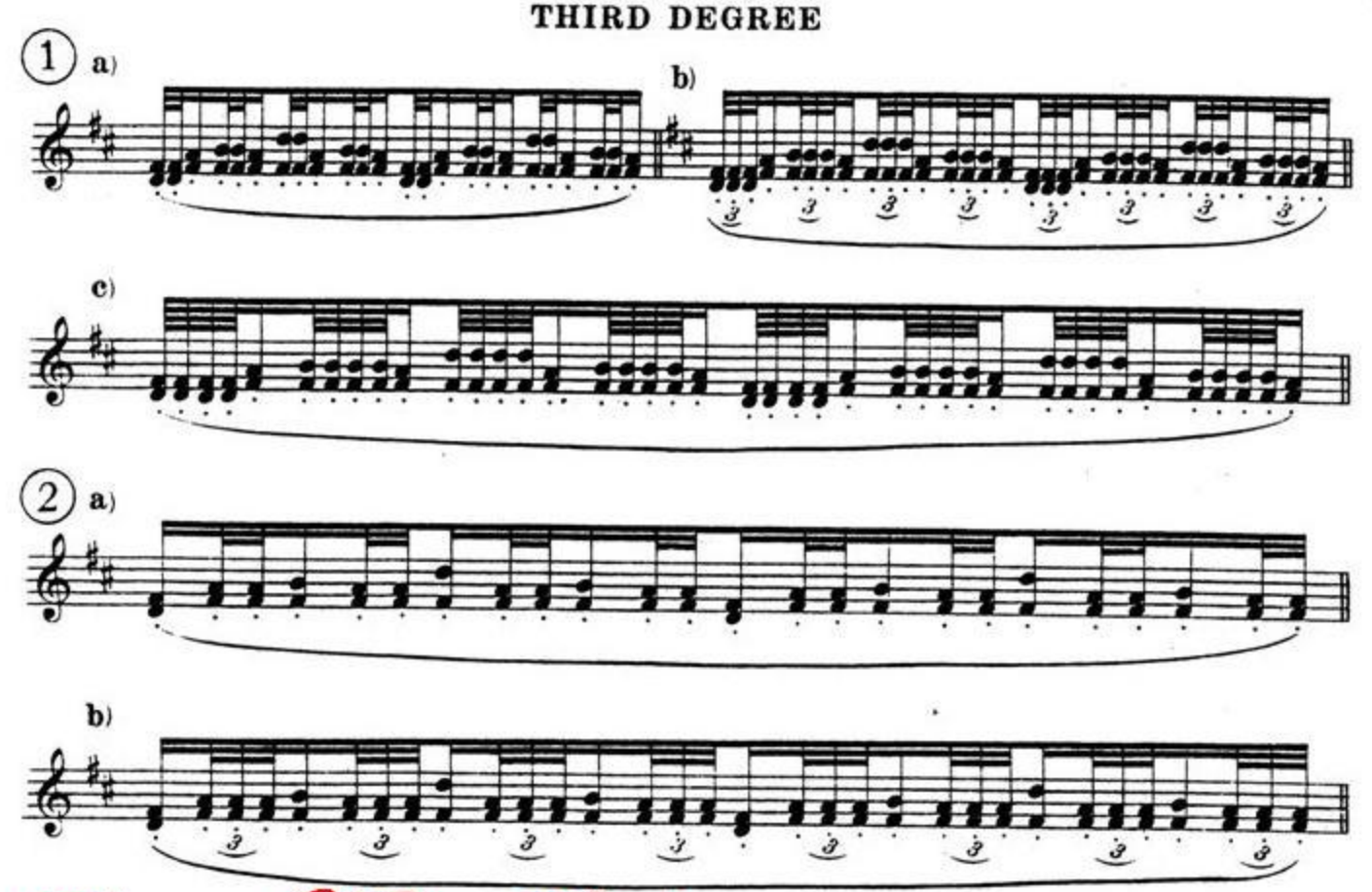


THIRD DEGREE



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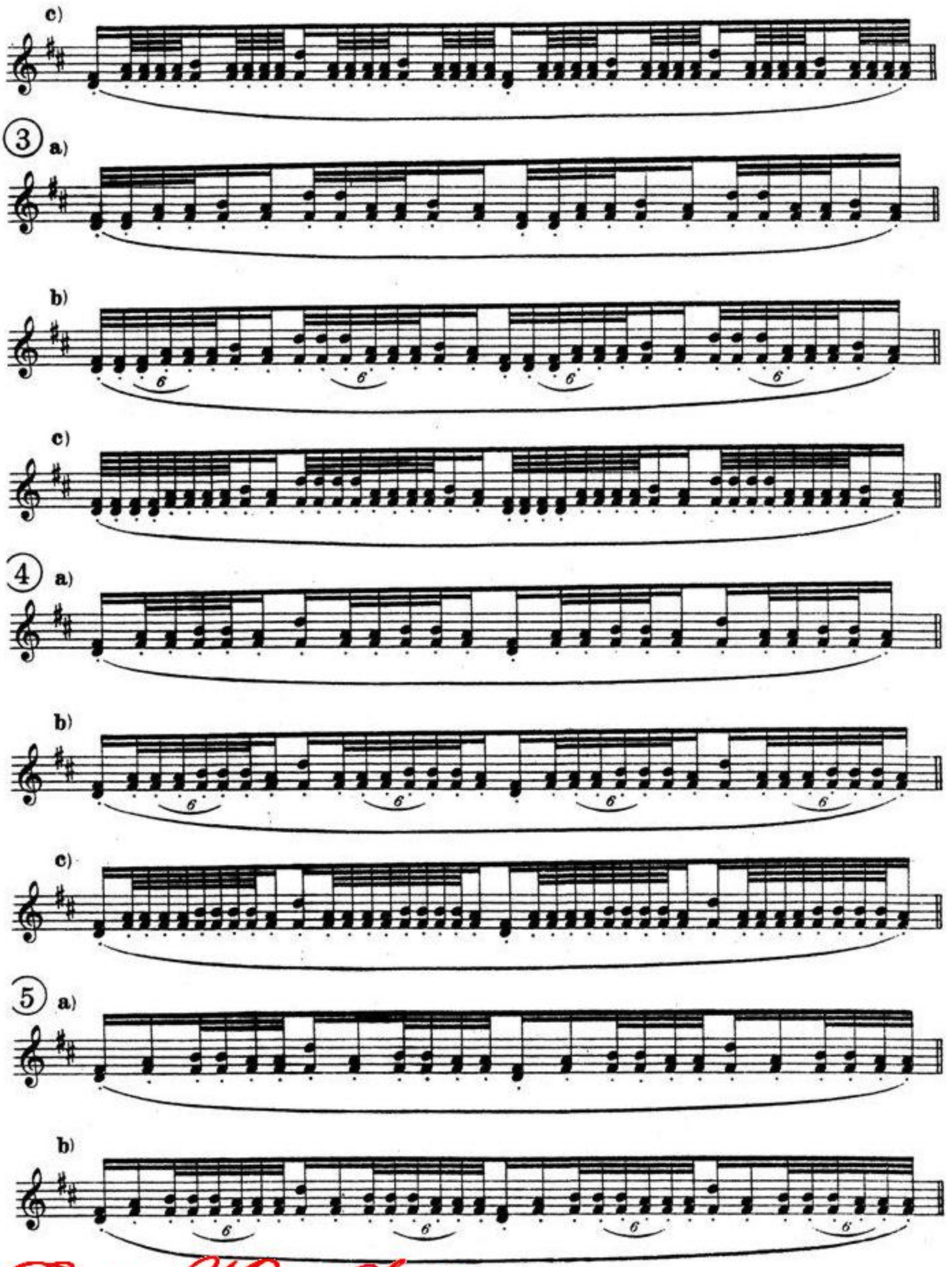

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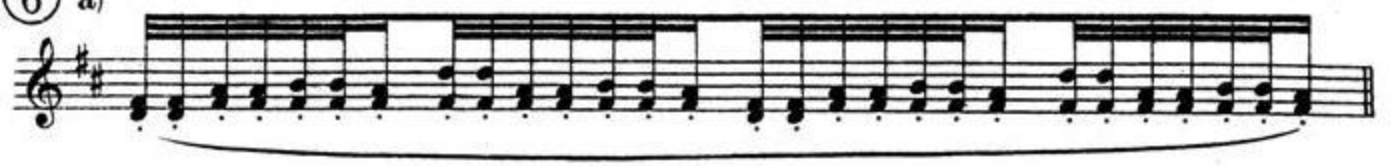

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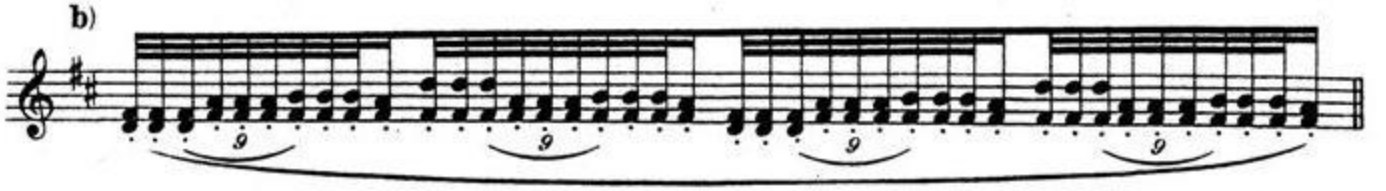

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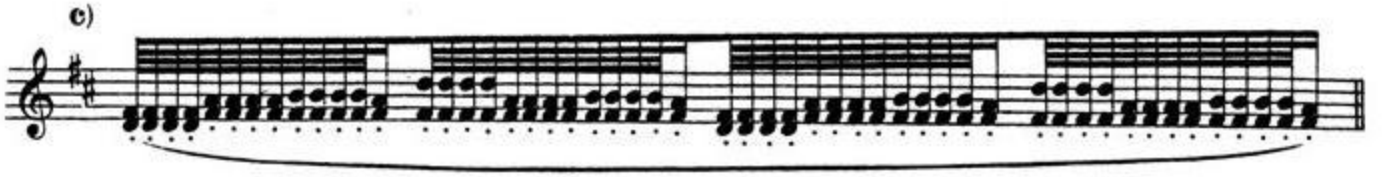

7 a)

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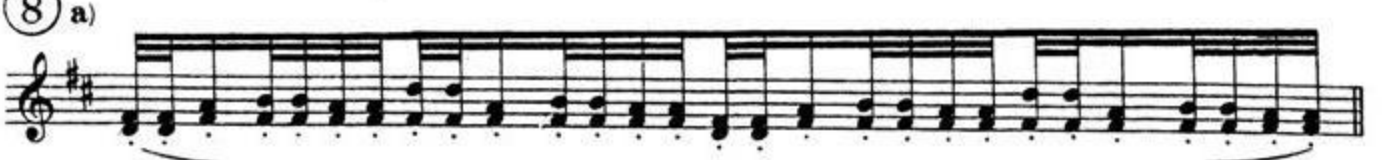
8 a)



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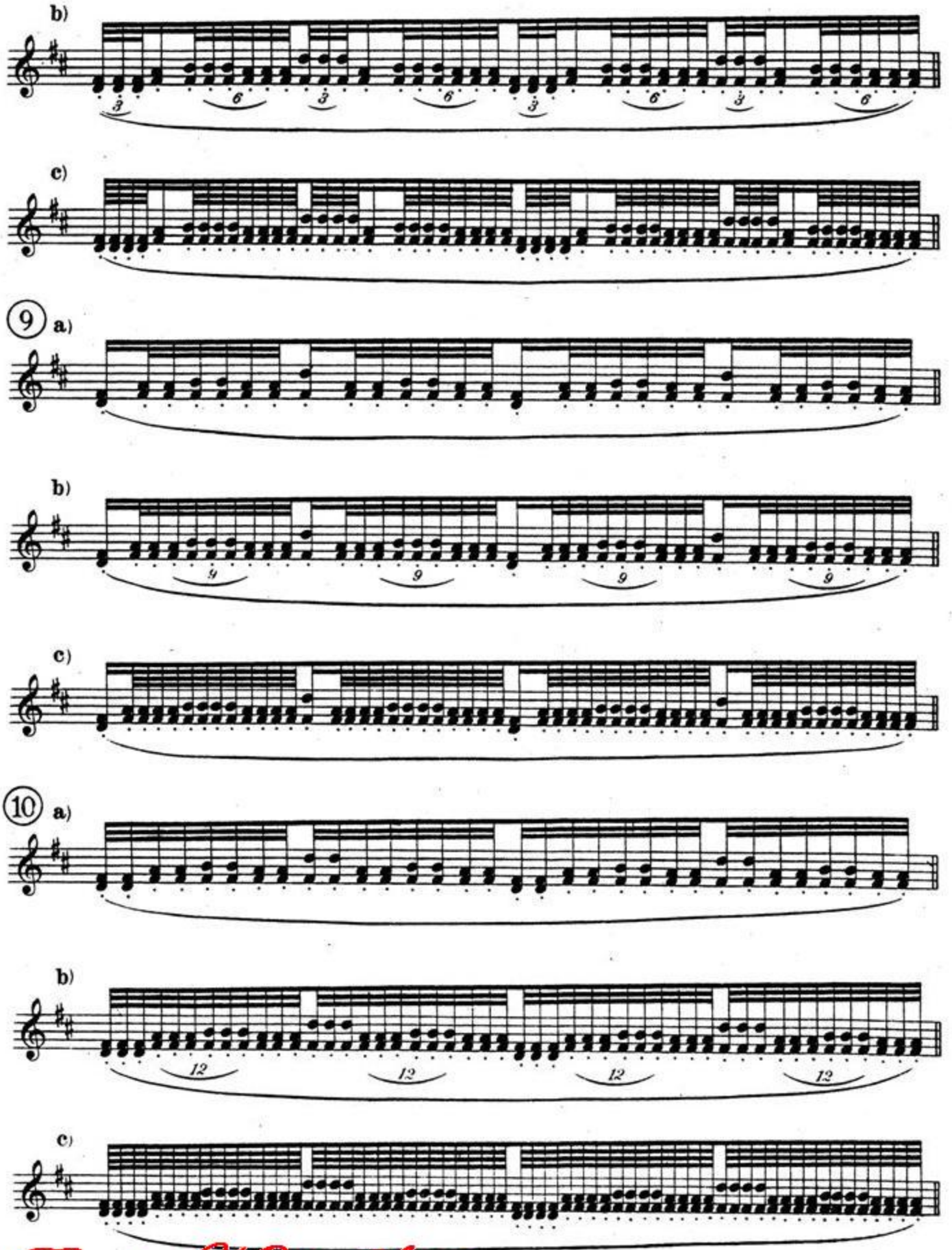

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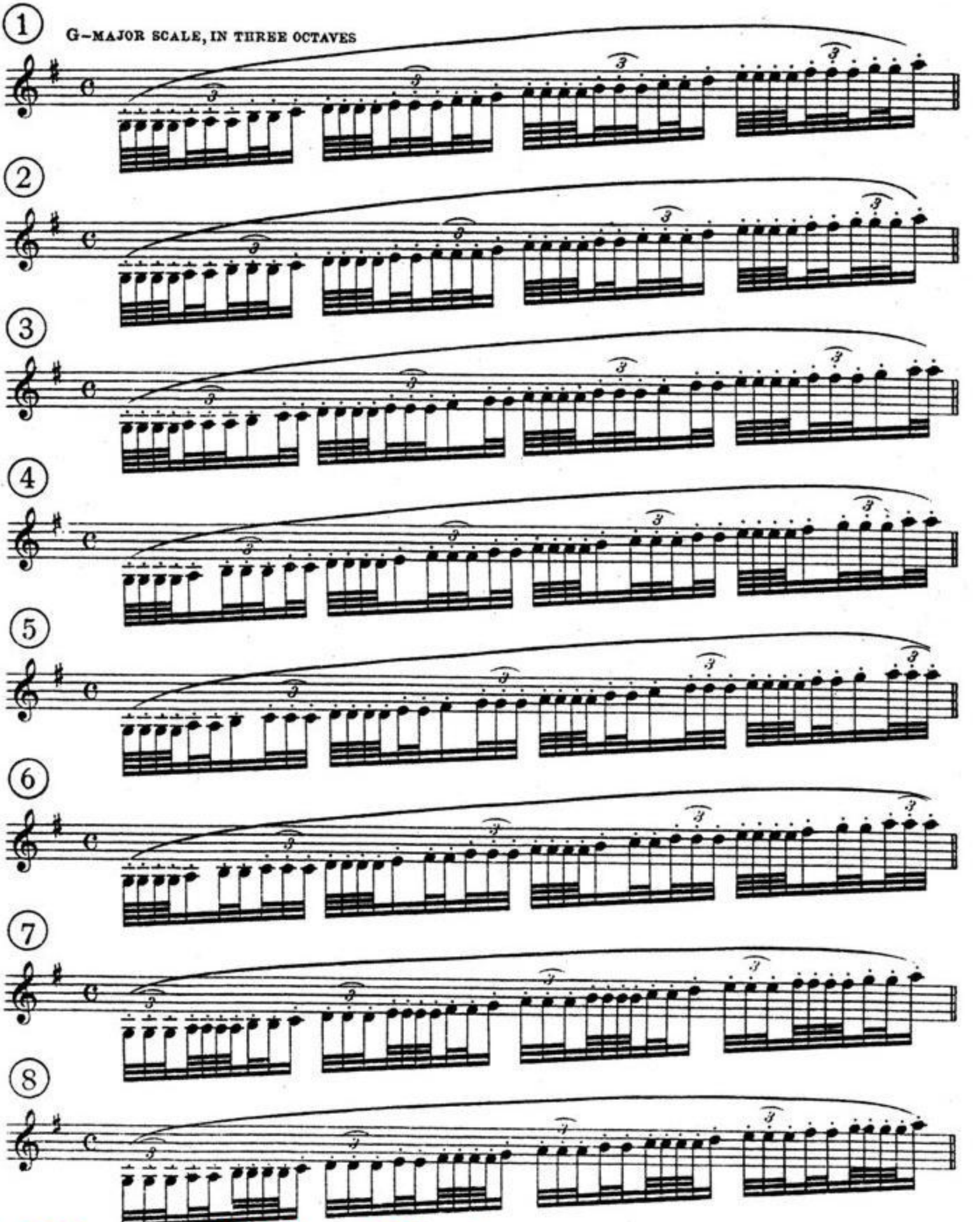
Chapter IV.

DEVELOPMENT OF CONTROL IN RHYTHM



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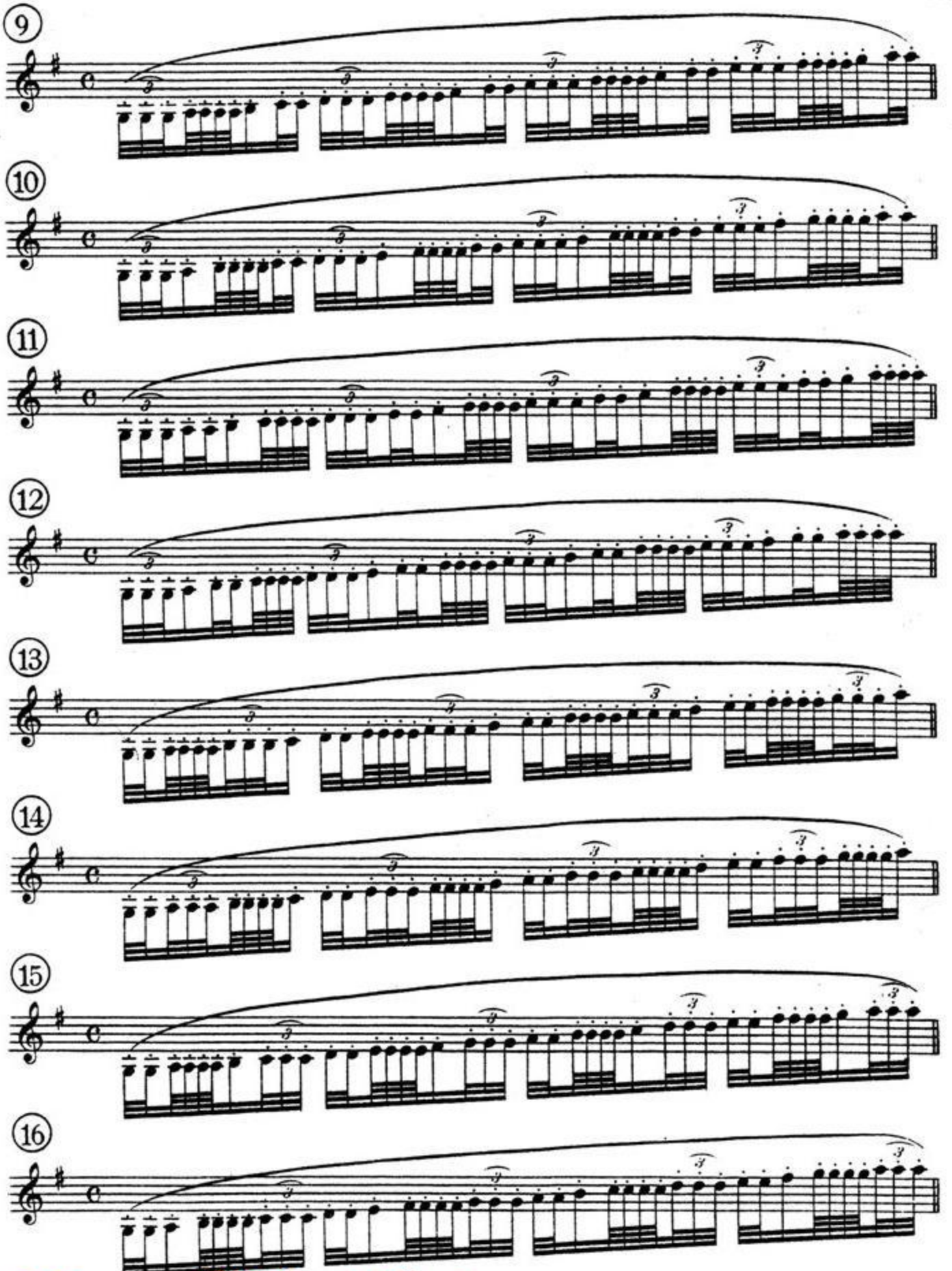

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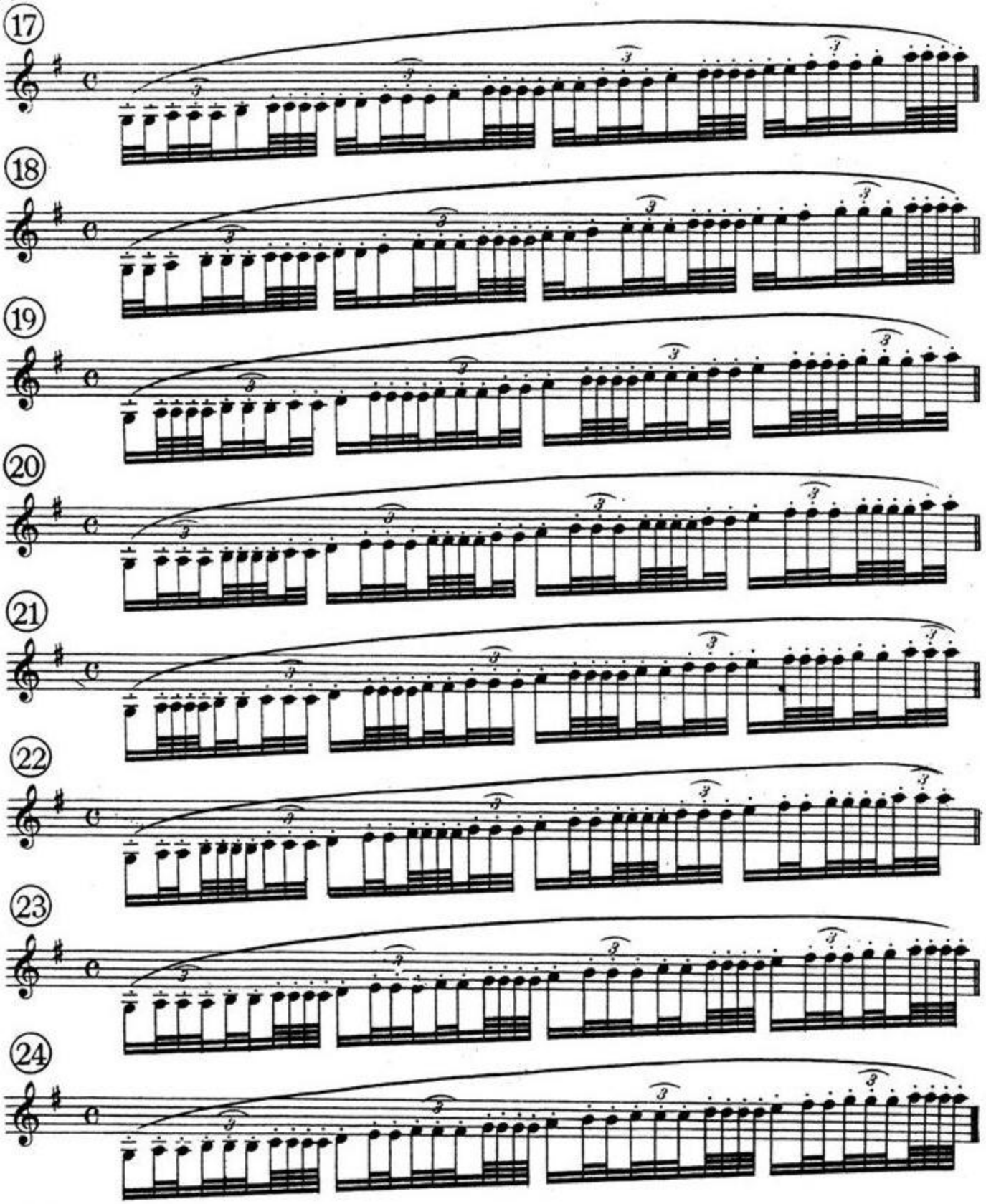

Each one of the above 24 Exercises should be practised on the three-octave G major scale. It is advisable to practise, in the same way, in all other keys, both major and minor, as well as on scales in double stops (thirds, octaves, sixths).

In a separate book: "STUDIES IN RHYTHM-CONTROL", combinations of different rhythmical variations, are to be found, for the practice of the different bowings.

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