Zerweck System of Violin Playing

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Learn to Play the Violin with Over 30 Popular and Familiar Songs

by Matthew Zerweck

Matthew Zerweck, Violinist

Matthew began his music studies at age 5, after watching Itzhak Perlman perform on the children's television show, "Sesame Street." After studying with several esteemed artist teachers, he entered the Eastman School of Music, where he frequently led the Eastman Orchestras as Concertmaster. He earned degrees from the Eastman School of Music (BM, MM), where he served as teaching assistant to the world renowned violinist and teacher, Charles Castleman.

Matthew is the lead violinist in Camerata San Antonio (**www.cameratasa.com**), a latin grammy-nominated chamber music group in San Antonio, founded by Ken and Emily Freudigman, leading players in the San Antonio Symphony. With Camerata, Matthew performs 4-5 contrasting chamber music programs every year, including concerts in San Antonio's new Tobin Center. Formerly the Asst. Concertmaster of the San Antonio Symphony (2008-2012), Matthew teaches violin full time in San Antonio. His private students have performed as concerto soloists with the San Antonio Symphony, gained entrance into the TMEA All-State Orchestra, and pursue music degrees at competitive colleges and conservatories.

Matthew is director of the Cadenza Academy of San Antonio. Recognizing the importance of building a strong community of string playing and teaching, he hopes to bring the most dedicated and talented teachers and students together for music classes, lessons, and group playing. As part of this project, Matthew has developed a new violin method for students in private and group lessons, “The Zerweck System.” In San Antonio, Matthew has been active in a wide variety of projects. He premiered Arthur Williford's contemporary Violin Sonata in San Antonio. He's performed major concertos with the UIW Orchestra and Youth Orchestras of San Antonio. In 2015, he recorded the lead violin parts for “Upon the Awful Tree,” an independent film with an original score by Matt Dunne.

In his free time, Matthew enjoys spending time with his wife, Nancy, and two cats, Spartacus and Sub-Zero. He enjoys cooking, reading, and gardening.

"This beginning Violin Method exists to demonstrate that the vast majority of fundamental violinistic tasks can be taught well, simply and efficiently, using very brief, popular songs. Students may already recognize these songs by ear. Most of the songs have lyrics and can be easily sung. Much older violin methods are often too dry, or push young students into an inappropriate, even harmful level of precocity, with a very low level of self-awareness. After decades of domination by one single beginning violin method in the U.S., I believe we should collectively ask: Why are students studying 7 Gavottes and 5 Minuets, when they are unable to play simple, familiar folk songs and lullabies, historically important songs or even patriotic tunes? In my system, songs or pieces can be added or removed by a teacher at will, as the organization is entirely transparent. I would love to see a generation of violinists grow, who love playing music, who play pieces of music they want to play, in the way they want to play them."

-Matthew Zerweck

Personal Site: **matthewzerweck.com**
Teaching and Blog Site: **zerweckviolin.com**

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Zerweck System – 1st Position Hand Shapes and Fundamental Bowing Technique

An Overview

At its core, the Zerweck System is a *structure for organizing fundamental violinistic problems.*

The system is **flexible**, and can easily accommodate young beginners (with no musical training), remedial students, students taking the violin as a second instrument, adult students, and Internet-based self-learners of all kinds. This book can be used alone, as beginning lesson material, or as a companion to other material.

More **advanced students** can benefit from this system by treating the repertoire as a bowing study, and also review the organization and movement of the left hand.
Many of the pieces are also suitable for sight reading, posture work, memory work, position work (in at least positions 1-4), and transposition work.

The system is **serious *and* fun.** All students crave a sense of systematic mastery.
No student loves the sensation of starting a new piece and feeling like they are starting from square one each time. The repertoire selections are popular pieces and extremely economical. The pieces are selected from a wide variety of sources. In learning the 6 hand shapes, corresponding pieces and scales, meeting additional piece-specific goals, students will be significantly prepared to begin tackling the great problems of violin playing.

The system is **transparent.** There's no guesswork. Students don't simply glide from piece to piece, hoping that they magically improve. Students gain a sense that violin practicing is a non-linear activity, not a straight line to longer and more difficult pieces.
The skill sets are clear, fundamental, and quite comprehensive. They can serve as a launching point into a study of all 7 positions, vibrato, advanced bow technique, and the traditional etude studies for the instrument.

There are **VideoTutorials** for all of the selections in this book.
See **www.zerweckviolin.com** for an index of the videos.

The basic structure of the system is this:

There are 6 Fundamental Hand Shapes in left hand technique (Tetrachord Patterns)

The repertoire is organized around those hand shapes.

After a pattern is mastered, a new shape is introduced, and then mixed with previously mastered shapes.

Along the way, little by little, Fundamental Scales (12 major and minor), Listening Techniques, Reading Techniques, Bowing Techniques, Practice Techniques, are slowly worked into the framework.

Inspirations for the Zerweck System?

This packet is the result of an intense and comprehensive study of all of the major schools of violin playing, past and present, including, but not limited to: The Auer Method, the French and Franco-Belgian Schools of Violin Playing, the methods of DeBeriot, Baillot, Leonard, and modern texts by Galamian, Flesch, Sevcik, Dounis, Barmas, and Schradieck.

I've taken into account my experiences as a violin student, a professional violinist, a private teacher, as well as research on educational theory and cognitive psychology related to study habits and practicing.

Why did I create this?

In my own lessons with beginning students, I had grown tired of hearing the same beginning graded pieces, over and over again. I knew that psychologically, I wouldn't be able to tolerate hearing those pieces again and again for the next 40 years. I wanted more flexibility in music selections, and in dealing with students of varying ages.

I had grown tired of seeing the same problems materialize in students. Many of those problems are needlessly created by poorly constructed beginning repertoires. I had tried, again and again to patch the popular repertoire sets with extra scales, studies, and supplementary material. But it's frustrating and inefficient to teach that way.

What many teachers fail to realize, is that the repertoire in beginning violin study *is extremely important. After all, it's what students will see, every day, on their music stand.* More than anything else, the repertoire we select for students, the challenges that they work on from day-to-day, is what influences their knowledge sets. As teachers, we should work towards a long-term outcome: Helping students build a *framework* that will be strong enough to withstand a *lifetime* in violin playing. Though listening to a recording 1000 times may *appear* to be helpful, in no way does that activity help build such a framework.
It's an approach that encourages mindless repetition.

As a private violin teacher, many of my new, incoming students tend to have many *significant* skill gaps, all of which should be *inexcusable in any method of teaching*:

***No* systematic understanding of the fingerboard**
Inability to read music, including note names and rhythms
Familiarity only with the Keys of A, D, G, and no experience playing on the G-String
No knowledge of principles of tone production
Students stuck in the upper half of the bow
Fundamental misunderstandings regarding the bow hold and bow movement
Severe problems of excess tension and pressure
Lack of *any* useful practice habits, beyond repetition
Inability to play all of the Major and Minor Scales in 1st position
Lack of any significant Left Hand organization
Lack of any problem solving skills
Lack of self-testing rhythm and intonation
Inability to learn a piece without hearing a recording
Inability to start anywhere except the beginning of a piece
Lack of self-initiation
Lack of confidence and ownership

Though the average young student has studied countless Gavottes, Minuets, and possibly much more advanced works, they've likely missed out on playing **simple pieces with simple phrasing structures**. Many of today's popular violin methods suffer from a precocity which places inappropriately complex music in front of developing students.

If an “intermediate” or “advanced” student is unable to perform the Zerweck System repertoire beautifully, what business do they have playing Concertos, Sonatas, Baroque Dances, and Character Pieces? If an “intermediate” or “advanced” student has several of the gaps listed above, can we be content as teachers, continuing to push graded repertoire with constantly increasing difficulty?

That serves no purpose. The ***spectacle of playing fast and loud*** pieces is meaningless, even harmful, when a student cannot do fundamental tasks well. Isn't it better to focus on *learning goals*, rather than *performance goals?*

The great violin players: Perlman, Hahn, Heifetz, Chang, Stern, Meyers, etc...
Yes, they've accomplished spectacular, acrobatic feats on the instrument.
More importantly, these violinists have performed the fundamental tasks much better than average violinists:

- Playing with a beautiful tone (phrasing well, communicating well)
- Playing in tune
- Playing with a great awareness and control of rhythm
- Listening well

Graduation Goals in the Zerweck System

Always play expressively, in tune, with good rhythm, good sound.

Play with great posture, and an awareness of your body.

Hand Shape Exercises:
Playable with four notes per bow at 60=Quarter note, and other bowing patterns.
Students should be able to demonstrate both “blocked” action, as well as rolling, independent finger action.

Major and Minor Scales, w/arpeggios:
All, memorized, playable with four notes per bow at 60=Quarter note

Chromatic Scales in 1st position, using several different finger patterns:
Students should be able to speak and play using sharp and flat naming schemes

Have at least one challenging piece from each unit memorized and performance ready

Be able to perform transposed versions of at least one piece:
If “Joy to the World” is not a favorite, download some other options from ZerweckViolin.com.

Be a competent note reader:
If students have practiced speaking and playing the hand shape exercises, note reading should not be a problem.

Be aware that bow strokes have names:
Detache, Accented Detache, Detache Porte, Detache Lance, Martele, Staccato, Spiccato, Portato, Legato, Slurs, Retakes, etc.

After a careful study of this system, you should be very prepared to begin work on the following:

More complex, larger scale pieces in the 1st Position
See ZerweckViolin.com for a listing of appropriate pieces.

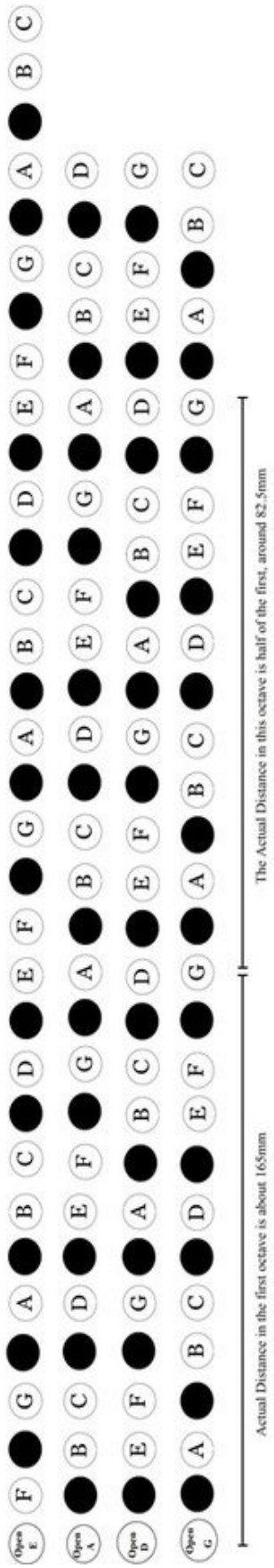
Shifting (Changing through the Positions)

Position work in each of the 7 positions

Double stopping

Vibrato (when familiar with the 3rd and 4th positions)

Thank you for choosing to incorporate the Zerweck System into your violin study!
If you happen to find any typos or mistakes of any kind, please contact me via my website at ***ZerweckViolin.com***



What's so difficult about left hand technique?

Violin playing can be quite complex for the left hand. The violin has approximately 112 locations across 4 strings, playable by any of the 4 fingers through 7 unique positions, not including “expressive intonation.” There are countless varying patterns, both on one string, and across multiple strings. Yet, we have no frets, and must find these locations easily by touch and by ear. If you think the diagram to the left looks complicated, remember also that on a real violin, the distances are of a logarithmic nature, not evenly spaced like a piano.

Avoid finger tapes, when possible!

Many beginning students use irksome finger tape arrays, which offer *zero* benefit to the student. Tapes focus a student's concentration on single finger tips, and give the impression that something important happens at a finger tip level of organization. Not so. The action of the fingers originates from the knuckles, the basal joints. Intonation is organized by changing the entire shape of the hand. If you must use finger tapes, try to limit their use to one tape for first finger, first position, and perhaps 4th finger, 1st position. That can help build a useful frame.

The most common language of teaching finger placement is the language of "High 2, Low 2, Low 1, High 3, etc."
Rather than teach individual fingers with language that implies no relationship from one finger to the hand as a whole, we can reduce the complicated action of the left hand to 6 unique hand shapes, only the first 4 of which are used for the vast majority of violinistic tasks. These hand shapes are so simple and intuitive, that it's possible to approach advanced organization and position playing in all positions very early on in a student's development.

Fox, Teacup, Rabbit, Claw, Crab, Closed Claw.

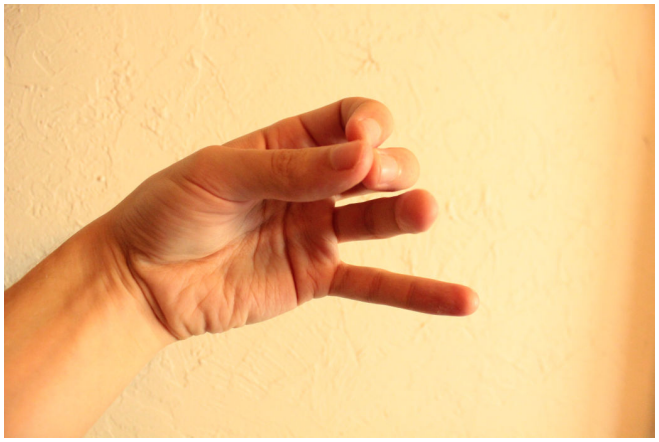
We can use these hand shapes to start building a foundation for systematic fingerboard knowledge.

Of course, there will be a point in every student's development, where constantly naming shapes will not be extremely useful. At that point, students will be fluent in all Major and Minor scales and arpeggios, chromatic scales, and have significantly strong note-reading skills.

Students will also eventually transition from blocking hand shapes in large groups, to finding more loose, independent, rolling, flexible, left hand action.

6 Hand Shapes

Fox: 2+3 Close Together



Tea: 1+2 Close Together

Rabbit: 3+4 Close Together

Claw: All Fingers Separate

Crab: 1+2 close, 3+4 close

Closed Claw (rare): All fingers close together

Easily Adapt Other Pieces to This System

The Zerweck System is extremely compatible with currently existing Violin Methods. At its core, the Zerweck System is a structure for organizing violinistic problems in the beginning stages. I consider this system to be ideal for “Artist Teaching.” *Artist Teaching*, in its simplest form, is teaching that is informed by the work you do as a practicing artist, a performing musician. *Teaching* and Perfroming are *not separate activities.*

Considering a particular student's needs or a teacher's preferences, pieces can be added or removed from the system at will. This selection process should occur frequently. It's creative, organic, and students will appreciate that their private teacher has included his or her favorite pedagogical works, folk pieces, and classical arrangements.

There's *nothing magical* about the selection of pieces in the Zerweck System, other than the fact that they fit several criteria:

1) Hand Shapes are a primary organizational feature.

2) Some particular skill is introduced or strengthened. No system can do *everything*, so it's a matter of judgment. What skills are important for your students?

3) Often, duet parts are available to aid in listening skills, ensemble skills, and the adjustment of intonation. Sometimes those duet parts also introduce a new technical skill or practice routine.

4) The repertoire selections and pedagogical moments are interesting and varied. The selections are usually *very* economical in length. Selections favor *pedagogical* use over “Urtext” presentations.

The structure of the Zerweck System is straightforward:

Students learn a Hand Shape, and then play pieces using that Hand Shape.
Fox, Tea, Rabbit, Claw, Crab, Closed Claw. When possible, hand positions are learned in isolation, *and only then* should those hand positions should be mixed in repertoire selections.

It's not extremely difficult to take a body of repertoire, such as the Suzuki Method, and

categorize its pieces according to the Hand Shapes it uses. The following pages will be helpful in analyzing Suzuki Books 1-3 for usage with the Zerweck System.

Hand Shape Analysis of Suzuki Books 1-3

F=Fox, T=Tea, R=Rabbit, Claw, Crab, CC=Closed Claw

Book 1, Suzuki

Piece Name	Hand Shapes (Tetrachords)	# of Strings	Length	Key	Other Pedagogical Notes
1 Twinkle	F	2	12m.	AM	1st finger usage on the E string occurs without the support of other fingers.
2 Lightly Row	F	2	16m.	AM	#2-11 are healthy additions to the "Fox" repertoire, if those pieces are appealing to you and your student.
3 Song of the Wind	F	2	14m.	AM	
4 Go Tell Aunt Rhody	F	2	12m.	AM	
5 O Come...	F	2	16m.	AM	
6 May Song	F	2	12m.	AM	
7 Long Long Ago	F	2	16m.	AM	
8 Allegro	F	2	16m.	AM	
9 Perpetual Motion	F	2	16m.	AM	
10 Allegretto	F	2	16m.	DM	
11 Andantino	F	2	16m.	DM	
12 Etude	F+T	4	14m.	GM	The first mixture of Tea and Fox patterns.
13 Minuet 1	F+T	3	24m.	GM	
14 Minuet 2	F+T+R	3	40m.	GM	
15 Minuet 3	F+T	3	32m.	GM	
16 Happy Farmer	F+T	3	20m.	GM	
17 Gavotte	F+T+R	4*	32m.	GM	

Book 2, Suzuki

1 Chorus	F+T+R	3	24m.	GM	
2 Musette	F+T	3	16m.	DM	
3 Hunter's Chorus	F+T	2	34m.	GM	
4 Long Long Ago + Variation	Almost all T, some F	3	33m.	GM	
5 Waltz	F+T	3	23m.	GM	Great selection for blocking of hand across double stops.
6 Bourree	F+T+R	3	24m.	GM	
7 Two Grenadiers	F+T+Claw	3	40m.	dm/DM	
8 Theme from Witches' Dance	F+T+R+Crab+Claw	3	41m.	DM	Surprisingly a lot of hand patterns.
9 Gavotte from Mignon	F+T+R	3	70m.	GM	
10 Gavotte by Lully	F+T+R	3	55m.	am	
11 Minuet in G	F+T+R	3	32m.	GM	Contains chromatic and Dim 5th movement across strings
12 Boccherini's Minuet	F+T+R	4	44m.	AM	Significant syncopation rhythms

Book 3, Suzuki

1 Gavotte, Martini	F+T+R	3	88m.	GM	Low 1st finger occurs in isolation.
2 Minuet (II), Bach	F+R+Claw	3	32m.	gm	
3 Gavotte in G Minor	F+R	3	40m.	gm	
4 Humoresque	F+T	4	56m.	DM/ dm	1st finger on E string occurs in isolation.
5 Gavotte, Becker	F+T+R	3	50m.	gm/ GM	
6 Gavotte in D major	F+T+R	3	58m.	DM	
7 Bourree, Bach	F+T+R	3*	52m.	GM/ Gm	

Analysis of Hand Shapes in the Zerweck System (Book 1):

Zerweck System Repertoire

Piece Name	Hand Shapes (Tetrachords)	# of Strings	Length	Key
FOX Unit	Fox Patterns and Fox Scales.	4	NA	**Scale Practice includes: GM, DM, eventually DbM**
Boil dem...	F	1 (any)	4m.	GM, DM, **AM,** EM
Hickory Dickory	4th finger pizzicato	2	1m. vamp	GM
Mary had a little lamb	F	1(any)	8m.	GM, DM, **AM**, EM
Dies Irae	F	1 (any)	7m	Written in "bm"
Jingle Bells	F	1 (any)	14m.	**AM**
Oh when the Saints	F	1	16m.	**AM**
Daisy Bell	F	2	16m.	**GM**
Amazing Grace	F	2	16m.	**GM**
Dreidel Song				**GM**
Joy to the World	F	2	21m.	**DM**
Riffs	F	2	variable	variable
Taps	F	2		GM
Good Morning to All	F, one instance of T.	2	9m.	**GM**
Frere Jacques	F	2	8m.	**DM**
Row Your Boat	F	2	16m.	**DM**
Three Blind Mice	F	2	56m. (variations)	**DM**
TEA Unit	Tea patterns and Tea scales.		NA	**Scale Practice includes: CM**
Snake Charmer	T	1	16m.	**dm**
Hot Cross Buns	T	2	8m.	**GM**
Mo Li Hua	T	2	14m	CM (pentatonic)
Pop Goes the Weasel	T	2	8m.	**GM**
Scarborough Fair	T	2	18m.	**dm**
Sakura Sakura	F+T	2	14m.	am

Turkey in the Straw	F+T	4	18m.	GM
My Country Tis of Thee	F+T	2	14m.	GM
America the Beautiful	F+T	2	17m.	GM
Hail to the Chief	F+T	3	32m.	CM
La Cucaracha	F+T	2	27m.	GM
La Cucaracha, 5-Legged version	F+T	2	15m.	GM
Yankee Doodle	F+T	2	16m.	GM
RABBIT Unit	Rabbit Patterns and Rabbit scales.		NA	**Scale Practice includes: AM, EM, AbM, EbM**
Cielito Lindo	R	2	32m.	EM
Korobeiniki	R	2	8m.	gm
Star-Spangled Banner	R+T	3	33m.	BbM
CLAW Unit	Claw Patterns and Claw Scales.		NA	**Scale Practice includes: FM, BbM, F#M, BM**
Georgie Porgie	Claw+ (R)	2	16m.	BbM, BM
Greensleeves	F+T+Claw	3	17m.	em
CRAB Unit	Crab Patterns and Crab Scales.		NA	**Scale Practice includes: All HMinor Scales**
Hava Nagila	Crab	1	9m.	For convenience, “a harmonic minor”
Misirlou	Crab	2	20m.	e, a harmonic minor
Jarabe Tapatio	T+Crab+Claw	3	16m.	G Major
Take Me Out to the Ball Game	T+F+Crab	3	32m.	C Major
Closed Claw Unit	Closed Claw pattern and scales, Chromatic and Melodic Minor			**Scale Practice: Melodic minor, Chromatic Scales in # and *b*.**
Burglar Music	Various, extensions	4	16	Gm

Advice for Parents and Spouses with an Emerging Violinist:

The most helpful supporters give honest, positive encouragement, but infrequently, not every day:

Good encouragement:	Bad encouragement:
“Sounds like you're working hard.” **“I'm so proud of you for practicing on your own.”** -encourages individual effort, not results **“I'm impressed you can do all of that *on your own!*”** -young students have ownership over VERY few activities.	**“Are you sure it's supposed to sound like that?”** - discourages making mistakes, takes away ownership, and encourages useless performance practicing **“Don't you have to clean your room or do some other menial, quieter activity?”** -passive aggressive way of discouraging practicing

Set up a healthy environment for practicing:

-The best environment for practicing is usually a quiet, closed room, without distractions.
-This room has a mirror, and hopefully some sunlight! It shouldn't feel like a prison cell.
-Students who practice in open family rooms tend to do very useless performance/practicing.
-Students who practice in echoing bathrooms tend to misjudge their sound production.
-Students who are encouraged to play with practice mutes or electric instruments have no sense of appropriate sound production, and intonation also suffers.

Schedule time:

Young children especially, have very little control over their lives, and this is especially true in regards to time management. Most children and most teenagers are terrible at keeping schedules. That's not completely their fault. Many schedule items are unknown and out of their control. If meals, errands, and other activities take place at unpredictable times, there's little chance that any child will practice regularly. If violin practice is scheduled at a regular, predictable time, the student is well-rested, and the student is not over-scheduled, **regular practice is not difficult to achieve**.

I just don't think my child or spouse is practicing well:

You're right, they probably aren't! The best we can do as parents, spouses, and teachers is model appropriate behavior and continually test in a low-stakes setting, such as private violin lessons. Allow children to make many mistakes in a safe environment. With time, habits will change. Dominating a student's practice sessions on a day to day basis helps no one.

Some Hints for Great Practicing:

Mindless Repetition and The Illusion of Mastery

Studies have proven that **"massed" practicing**, the act of repeating, or re-reading something over and over again, is the *least useful method of practicing*.

Most students have studied for a test at some point using only massed practicing.
Intuitively, most students feel that repetition and re-reading is *useful.*
Students may do well on a single test, and then the next day, forget nearly everything studied.
That's the problem with massed practicing: Massed practicing *feels good, it's easy, it's intuitive,* but it only gives a student the *illusion of mastery.*

The resulting gains are very small. Careless, massed practicing is the primary reason teachers hear these infamous words: **"It sounded better at home."**
Some repetition is necessary in violin playing. *After* solving a problem in violin playing, repeating a passage several times can be useful as a test, and to solidify a newly learned skill in one's mind.

Most Great Practicing is non-intuitive, and feels more challenging than *mere repetition.*

Great Practicing is Mindful and Creative

A basic structure for all great practicing looks like this:

1) **Think carefully about an appropriate, achievable goal.** Start simple, like one note, or one measure of a piece.

2) **See if you can achieve that goal.** (Self-testing)

3) **Evaluate the results.** If things don't go well, consider, specifically, what didn't go well, and why it didn't go well. Perhaps a smaller, simpler routine can be created, or perhaps we just need to practice more slowly.

4) **Rinse and Repeat.** Back to step one.

10 Suggestions for Great Violin Practicing:

1) **The most successful students are *self-initiated.*** They seek out knowledge, have many questions, and perform higher than base-line expectations.

2) Putting forth a great effort, by nature, results in setbacks and moments of failure. ***Many failures will be necessary to achieve mastery. Errorless learning is a myth.***

3) ***Successful students practice in a safe place, where they can be comfortable making mistakes.***

4) **Successful students self-test frequently.** Self-testing is extremely useful when be aided by a metronome or drone pitch.

5) ***Focusing on learning goals is healthy.*** "I want to learn how to make a beautiful sound." ***Focusing on performance goals is often very negative and anxiety-producing.*** Performance goals are: "I want to play better than Zoe and sit as Concertmaster." Achievement is not necessarily a measure of ability.

6) ***Cramming for 7 hours is much less useful than practicing for one hour per day, 7 days per week.*** Our brains continue to work on problems while we sleep and while we take breaks.

7) ***Attempting to solve problems before being given an answer is far more useful than knowing the answer ahead of time.*** Most violinistic problems can be solved through simplification, and the creation of simple, thoughtful routines. Practice slowly at first, and in small chunks.

8) It's human nature to equate "trying hard" with using a lot of physical effort, including unnecessary tension and gripping. ***Most violin playing requires very little physical effort.***

9) ***Reflection on difficult problems is more useful than constant playing.***

10) ***Technique is Conception.***
Technique (Practical Knowledge) and Musicality (Creativity) are not terms in opposition. They are two sides of the same coin. One cannot exist without the other.

Create Your Own List

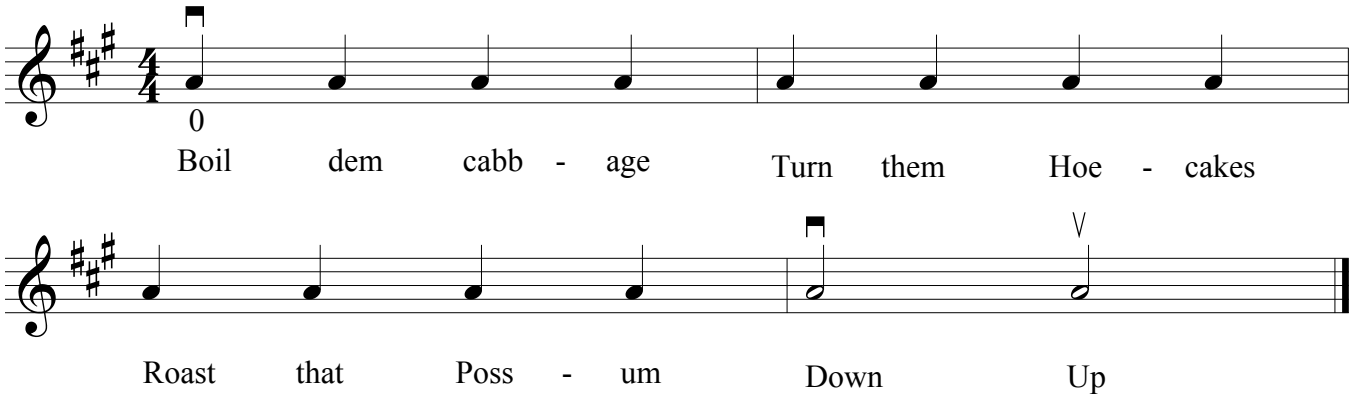
After some experience playing the violin, maybe student and teacher can work together to develop their own 10 suggestions for great violin playing. It's a great exercise to keep track of what works best for an individual student.

Unit 1 – Fox Hand

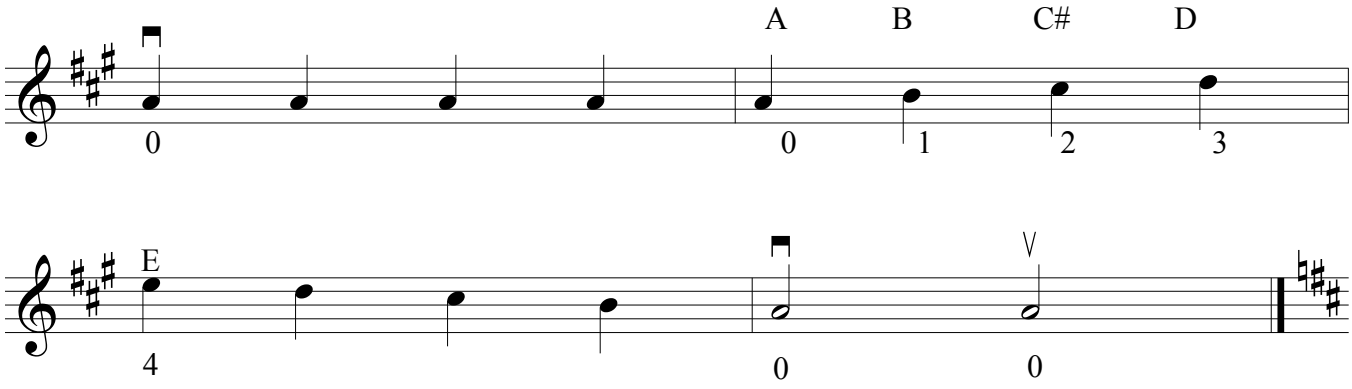
Boil dem Cabbage,
Turn them Hoecakes,
Roast that Possum down, up.

inspired by "Boil them Cabbage Down"

Preparation on the **A String:**



Song, only on the **A String:**

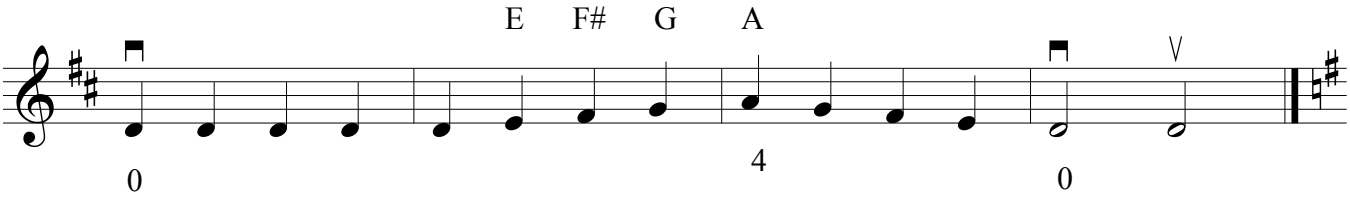


For a neophyte violin scholar, both the "prep" and the "song" can be played with **pizzicato** first.

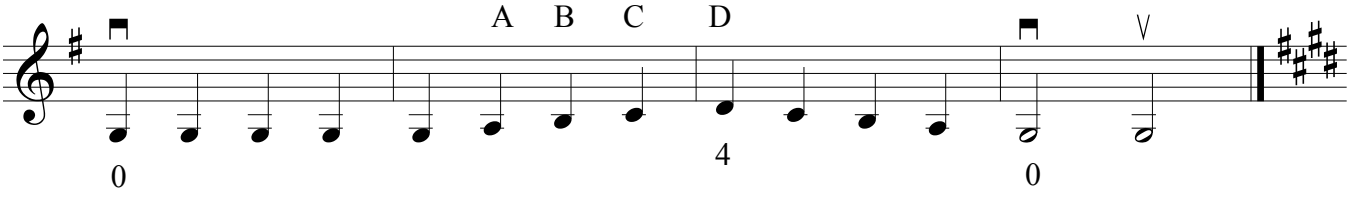
When confidence is high, think about adding **arco**, bowed playing.

Both the prep and the Song can be played **Forte** and **Piano**.

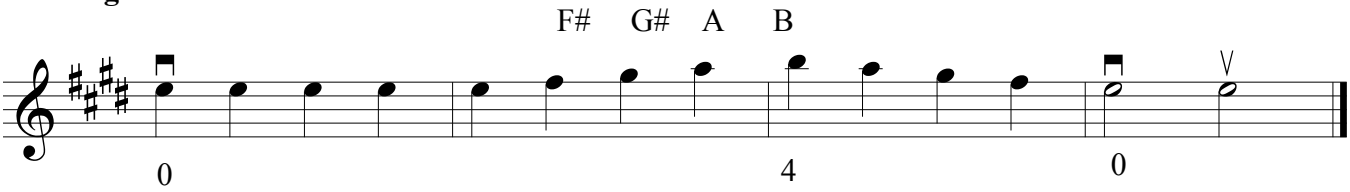
D String



G String



E String



[Zerweck 2014]

Practice Breathing and Cueing

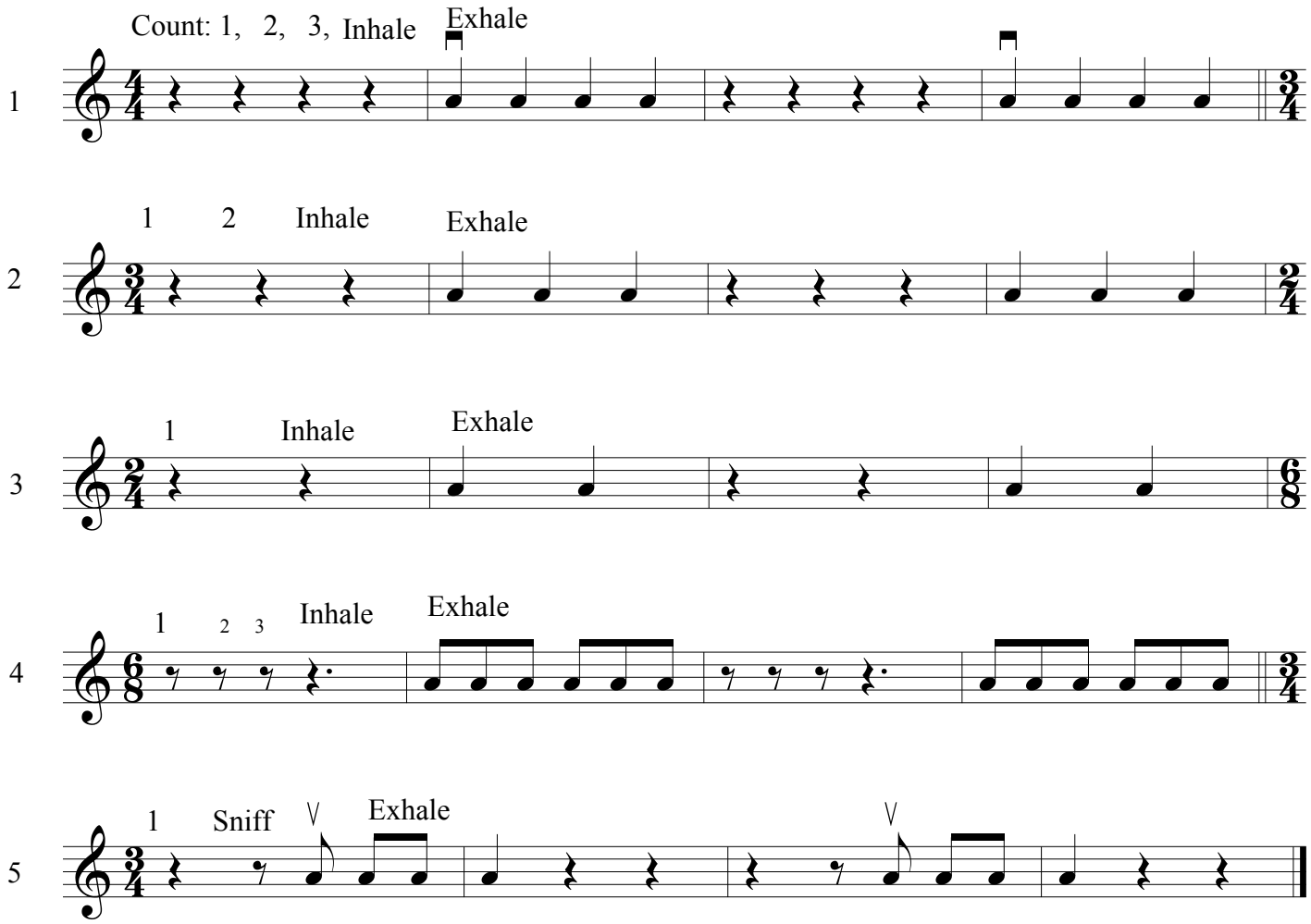
First, away from the violin, why don't we practice breathing and cueing some words.

Let's speak together: "Paganini!"

The speed and the intensity of my preparation breath will influence the tempo and the intensity that we speak "Paganini." If we prepare well with a breath, playing together will be easy.
It's good to get into the habit of preparing all of your playing with a breath, as if you're preparing to sing.

Below are several examples to use for practicing preparation through breathing and cueing.
No need to master them all at once!

Also, try various tempi on the metronome. 60, 80, 100, 120.

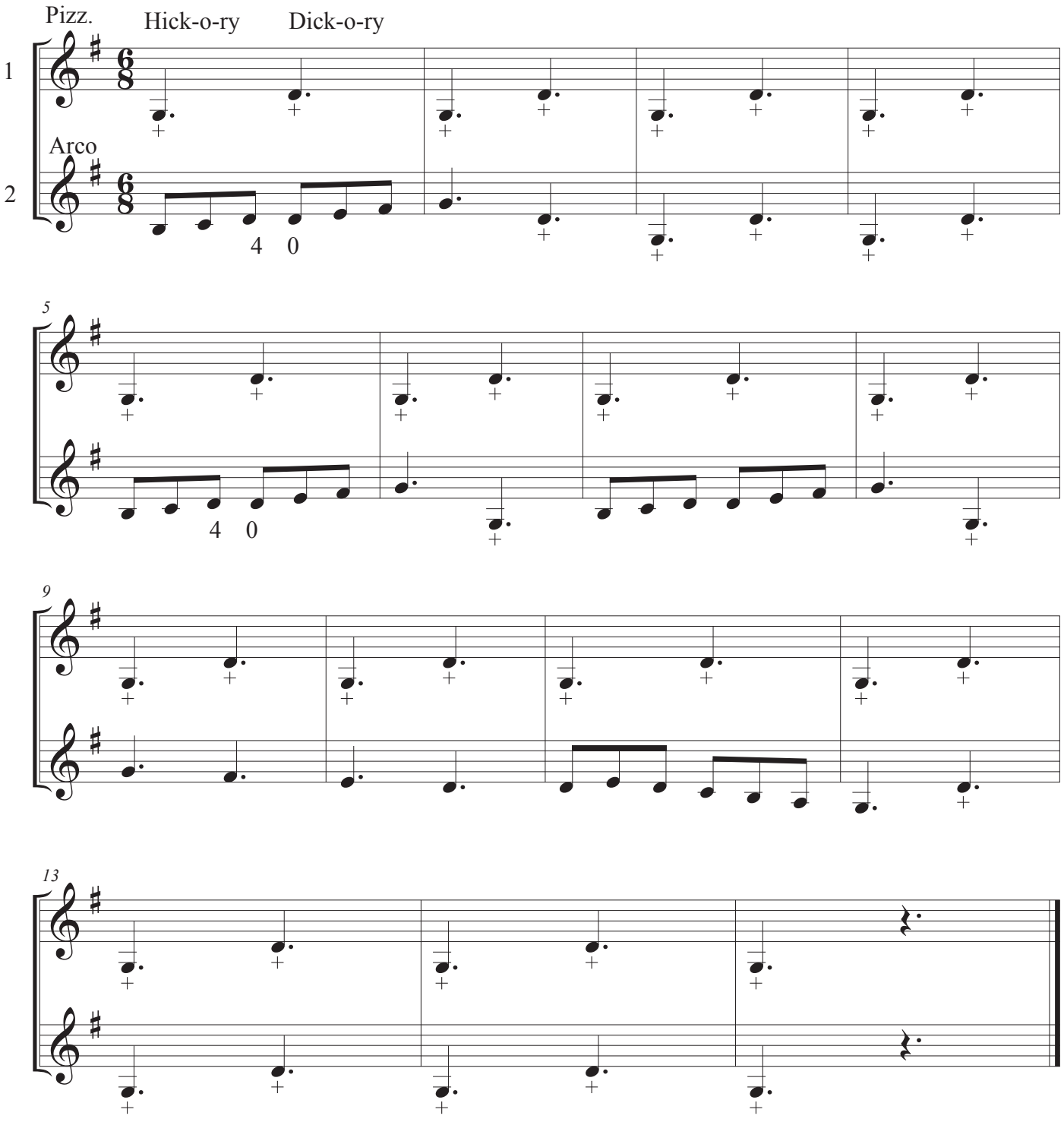


Beethoven's 5th Symphony has a rhythm that is similar to this one.

Hickory, Dickory, Dock

English Nursery Rhyme

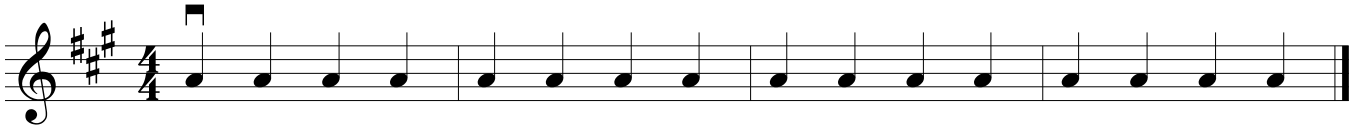
Left hand Pizzicato indicated by: +



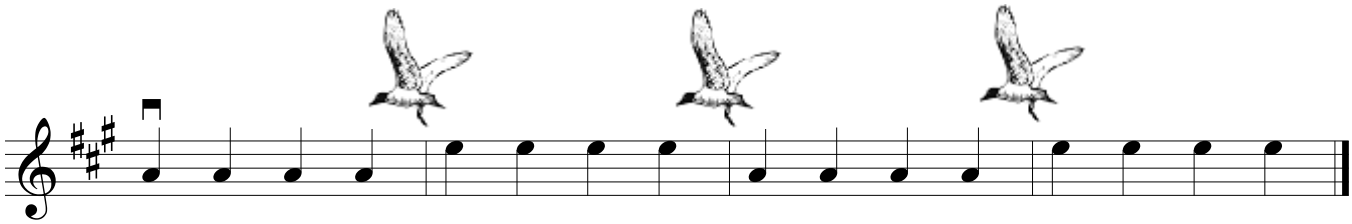
Bowing practice for "Mary Had a Little Lamb"

Expectation vs. Reality: Using the bow effectively is often the most difficult part of violin playing! The following exercises will simplify the complicated bowing and rhythm problems in "Mary." In our first string crossings, we'll use a "bird flap"motion.

1

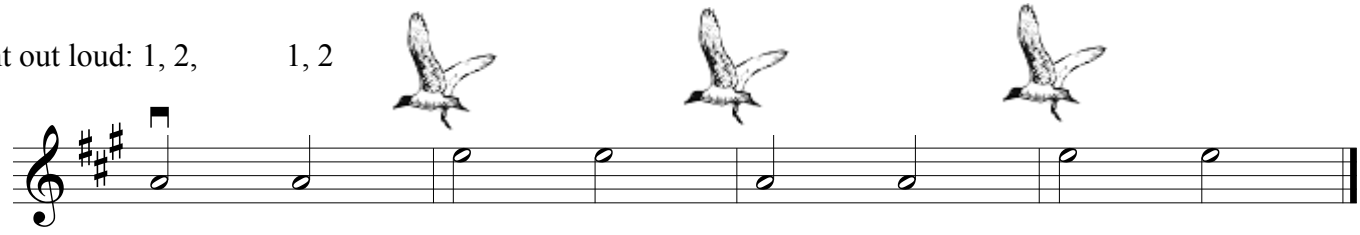


2



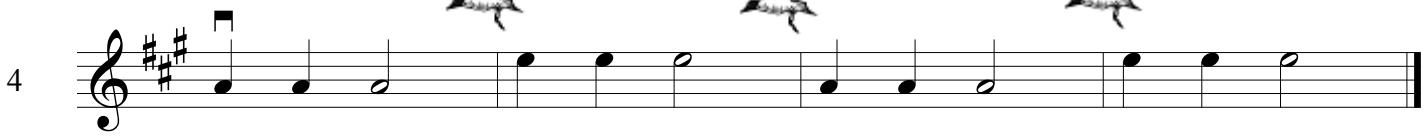
Count out loud: 1, 2, 1, 2

3



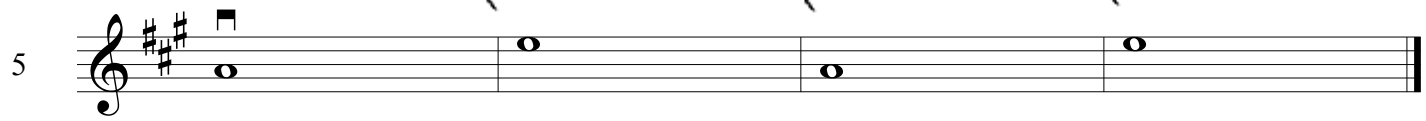
Count out loud: 1, 1, 1, 2

4



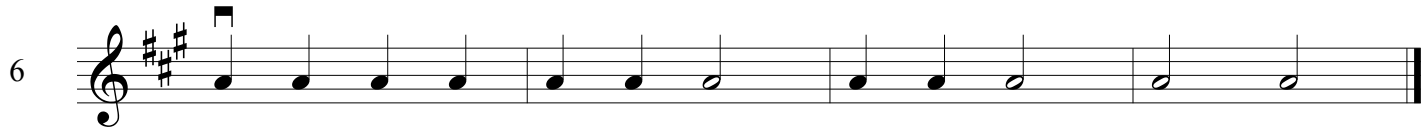
Count out loud:1, 2, 3, 4

5



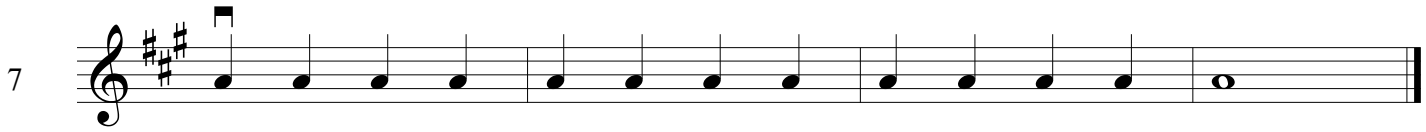
Ambitious students should try the following exercises with a metronome.
Suggested tempi: 60, 80, 100, 120 = Quarter.

6



Ma- ry had a litt- le lamb, litt- le lamb, **(Half notes!)**

7

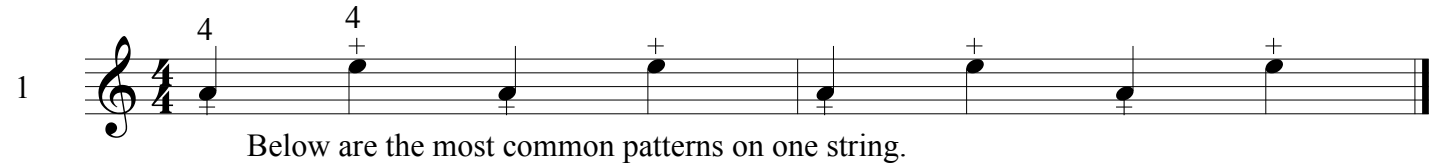


Ma - ry had a litt - le lamb its fleece was white as snow.

Fox Hand

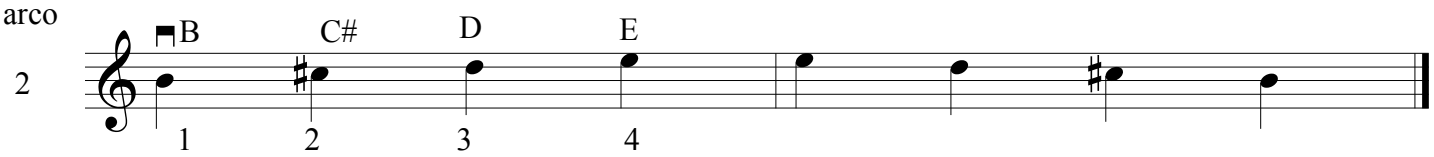
Beginning students should practice these exercises "detache" before adding the slurs.

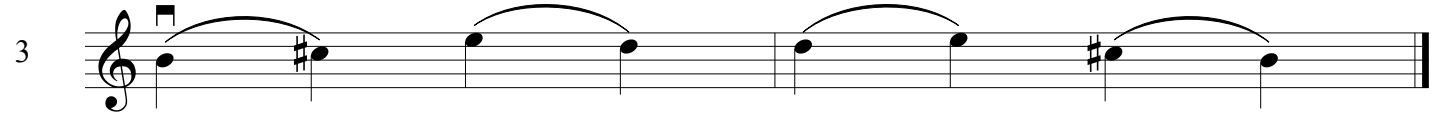
Prep:

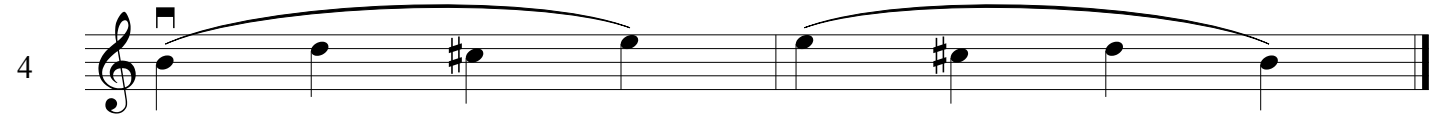


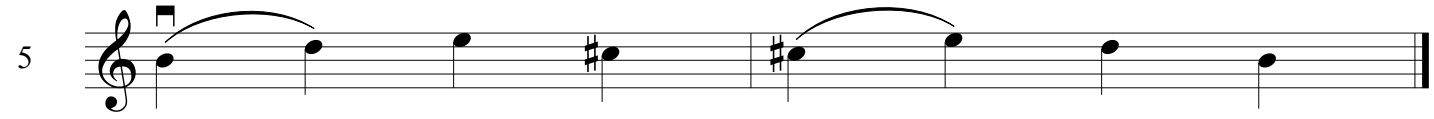
Below are the most common patterns on one string.
Gain even more coordination by playing with a metronome and using bowing patterns.

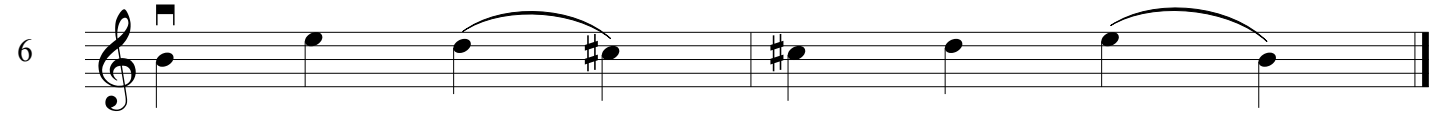
arco

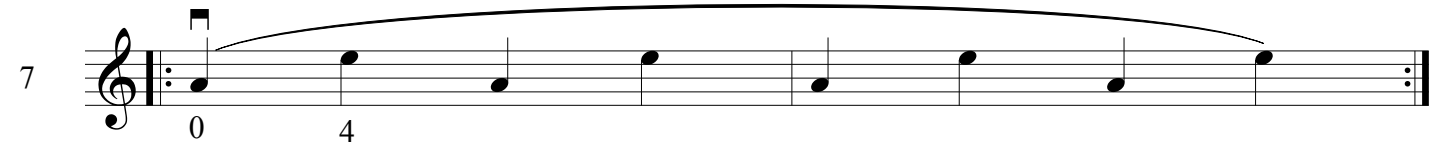












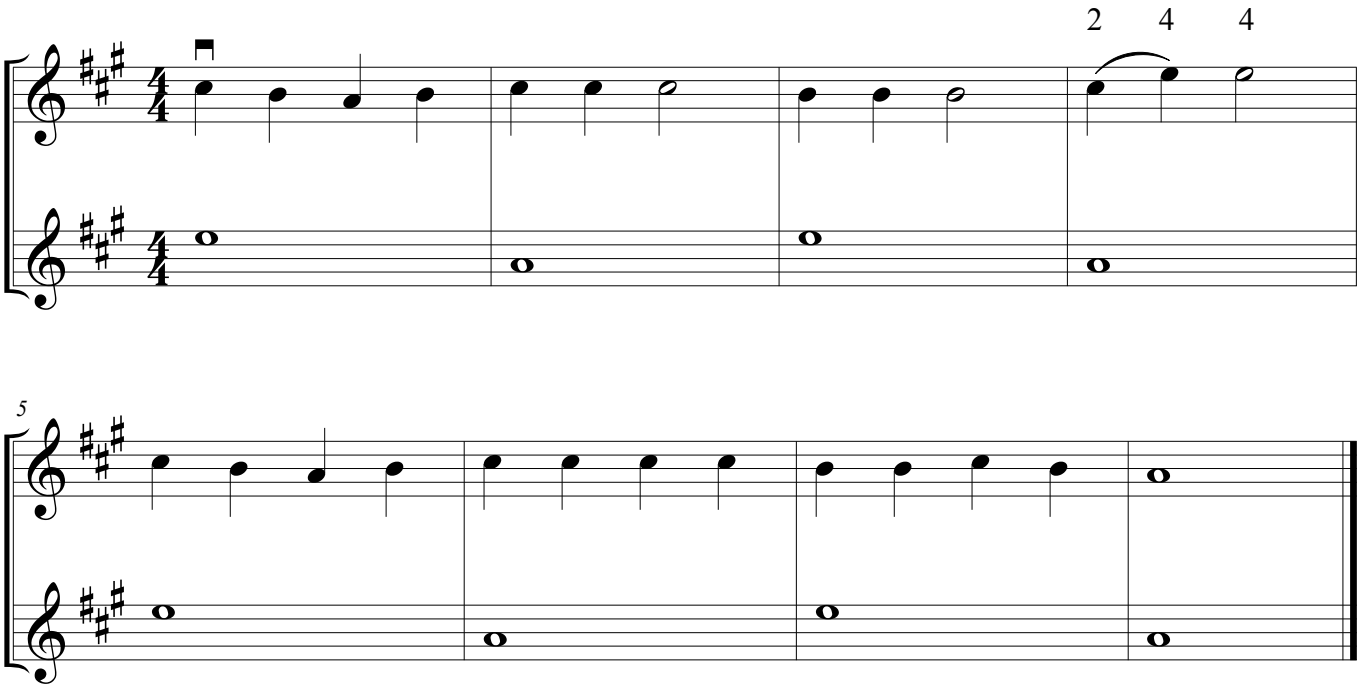
For reading comprehension, speak the note names and play these exercises.

Mary Had a Little Lamb

English Nursery Rhyme, Poem by Sarah Josepha Hale

1) Be sure to prepare your hand for Starting notes.

There's no need to pulsate the left hand on repeated notes.



Mary had a little lamb,
His fleece was white as snow,
And everywhere that Mary went,
The lamb was sure to go.

He followed her to school one day,
Which was against the rule,
It made the children laugh and play
To see a lamb at school.

And so the teacher turned it out,
But still it lingered near,
And waited patiently about,
Till Mary did appear.

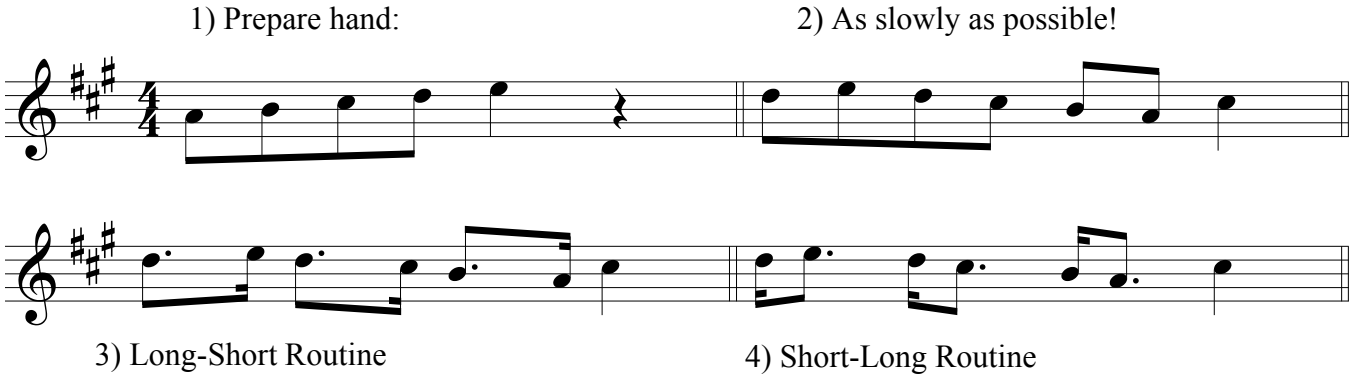
"Why does the lamb love Mary so?"
The eager children cry.
"Why, Mary loves the lamb, you know."
The teacher did reply.

The Redstone School, now in Sudbury, Massachusetts, is believed to be the schoolhouse mentioned in the nursery rhyme.

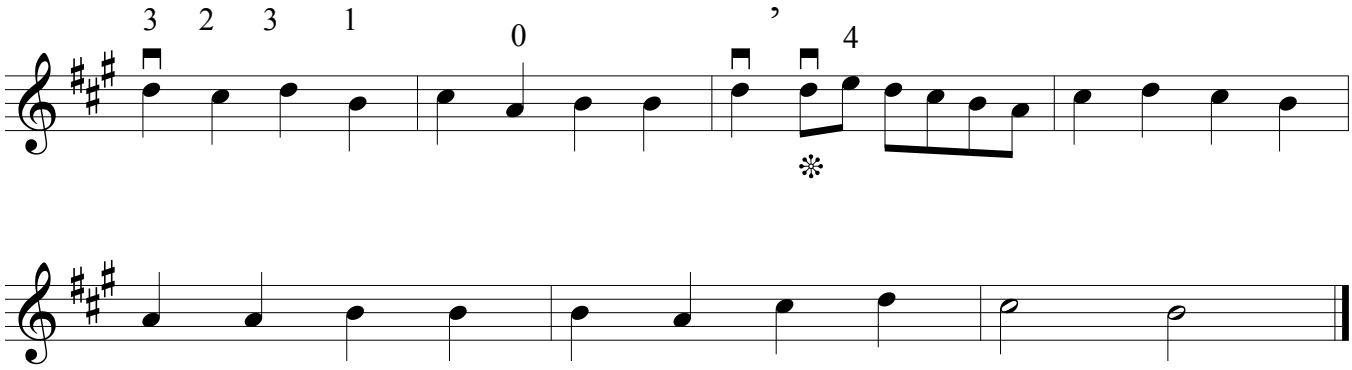
[Zerweck 2014]

Dies Irae

❊ **Preparation**: Dies Irae has a somewhat quick run of 8th notes.
This passage may require some extra preparation for a quick execution.
Lifting the bow before this passage may also require some preparation.



Dies Irae melody:



, indicates a bow retake (circular bow lift)

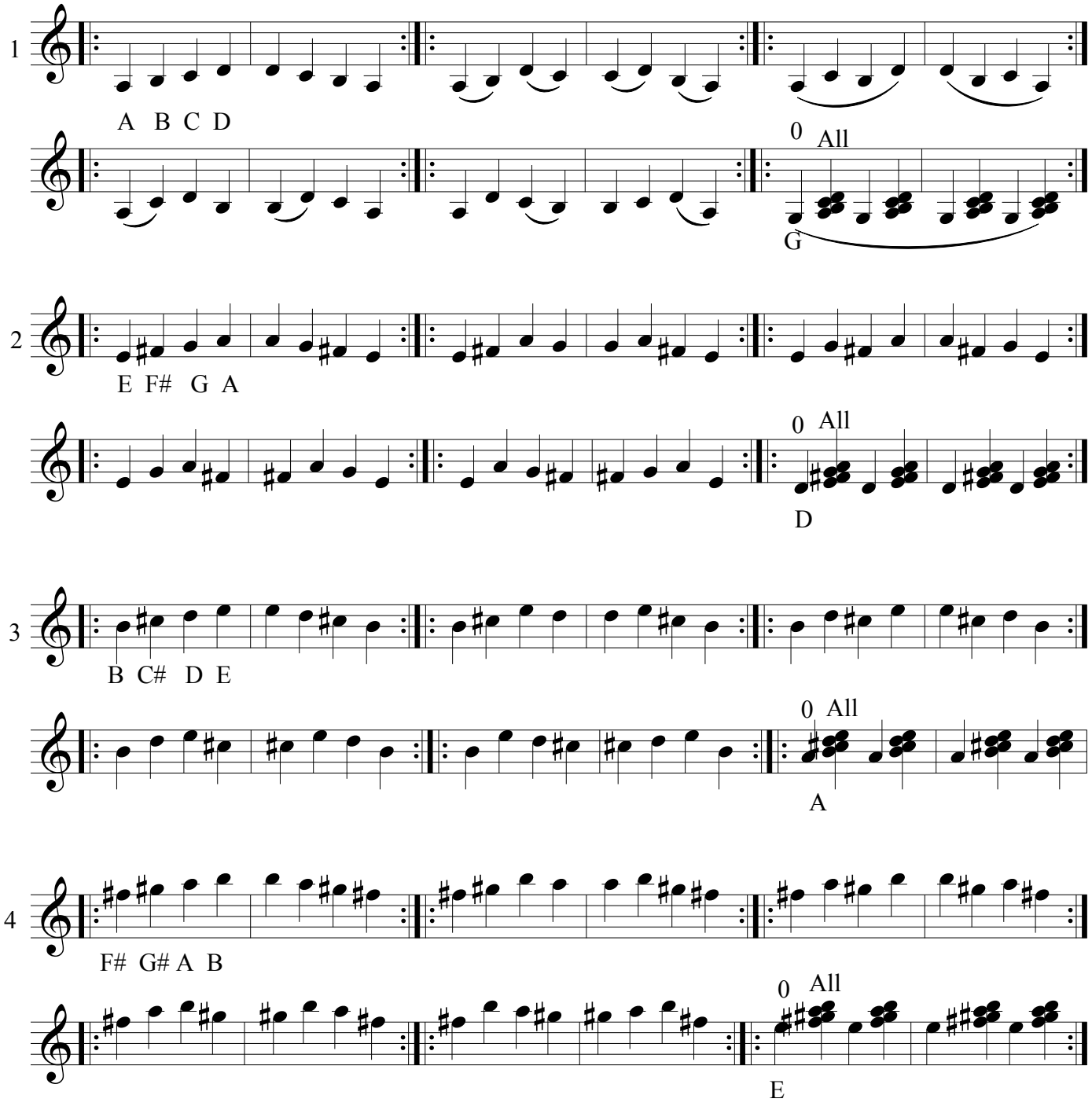
Common patterns in Fox Hand

With 2nd and 3rd fingers close together, you have a Fox Hand.

Otakar Ševcík (1852 – 1934), influential Czech violinist, is well known for his detailed analytical studies of major violin concertos, as well as his etude books for the left hand.
In the spirit of Sevcik's studies, below are some of the basic patterns in **Fox Hand** position.

If students have trouble naming the letter names of the notes, they should speak the note names and play the notes slowly at the same time to gain awareness.

"All" means all fingers down.

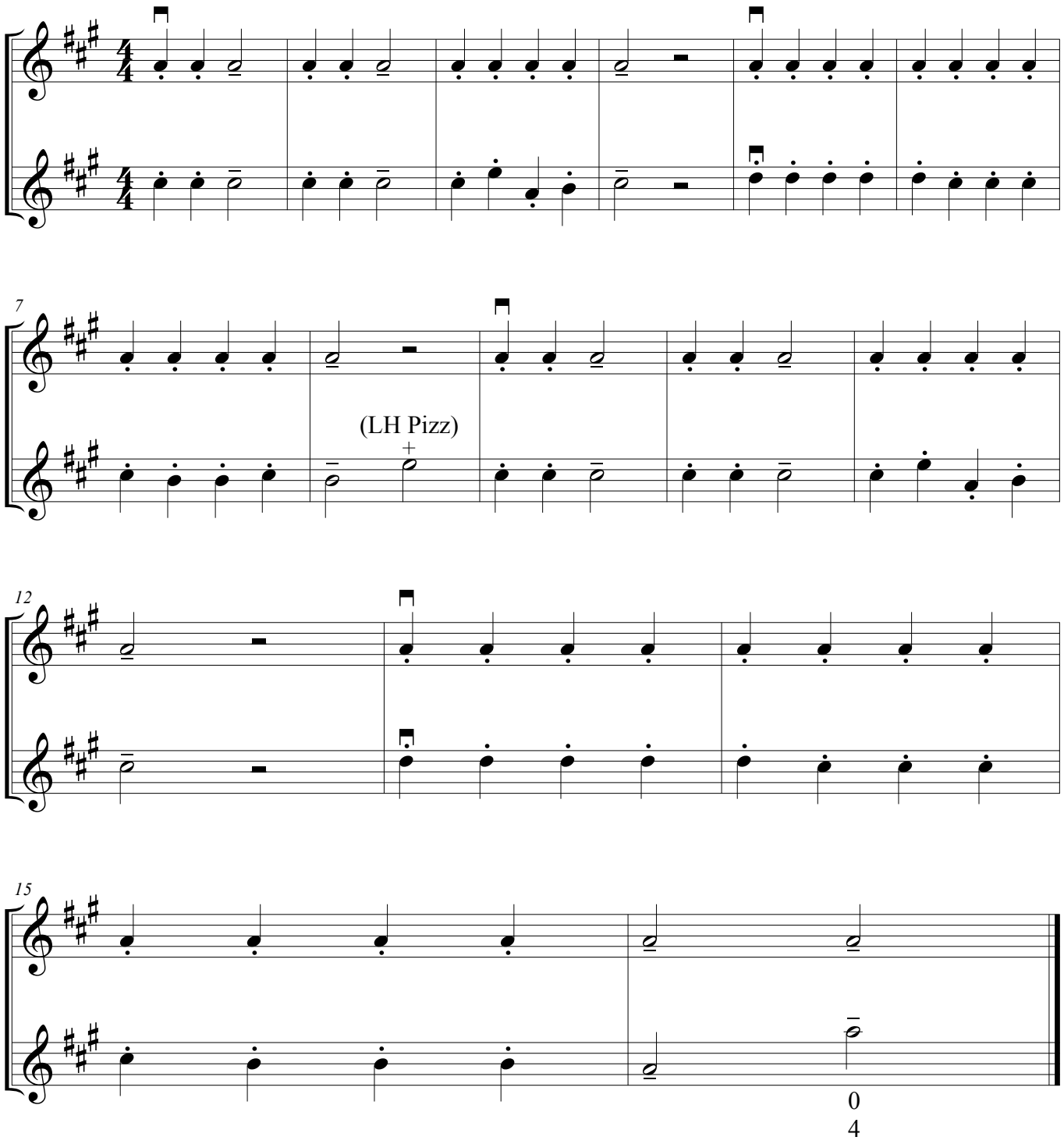


Jingle Bells

James Lord Pierpont, 1857

Preparation on Open A.

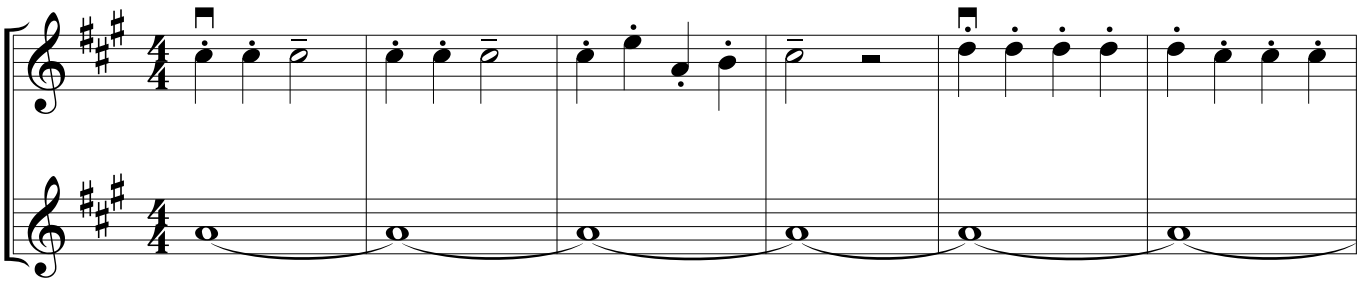
Teacher plays bottom part.



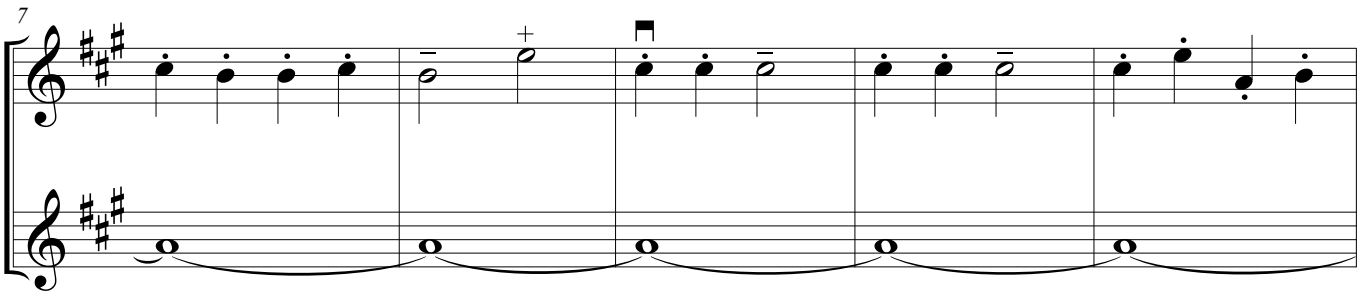
Jingle Bells

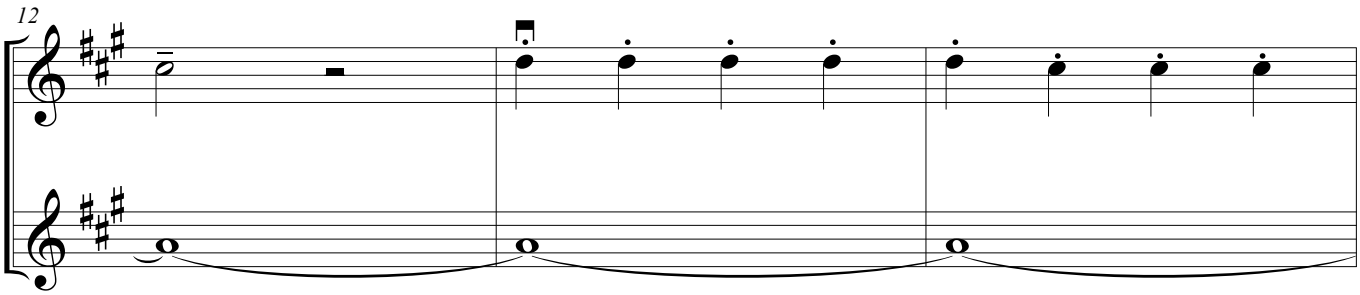
James Lord Pierpont, 1857

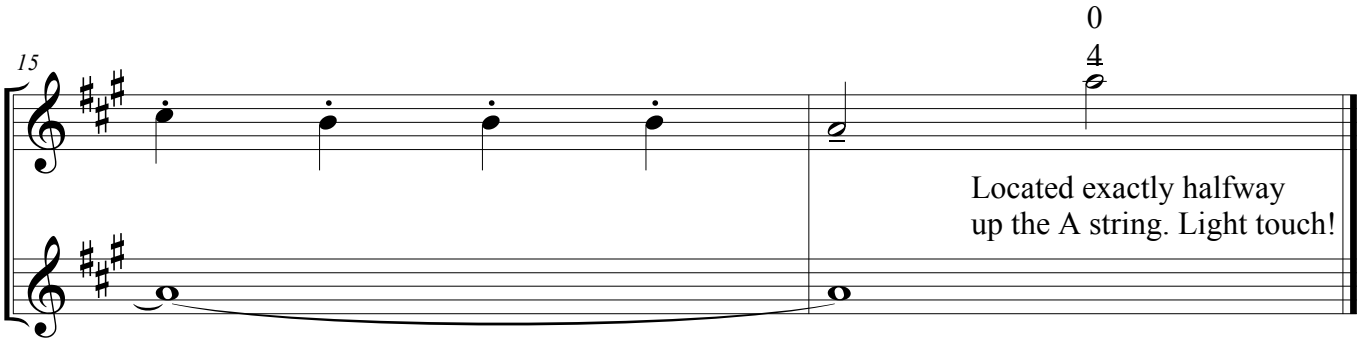
1) Solo violin plays with "Staccato" or Martele" bow strokes.
A dot (.) usually indicates some sort of articulation, whereas a (-) usually indicates "tenuto," literally translated as "To Hold." All musical markings are contextual.



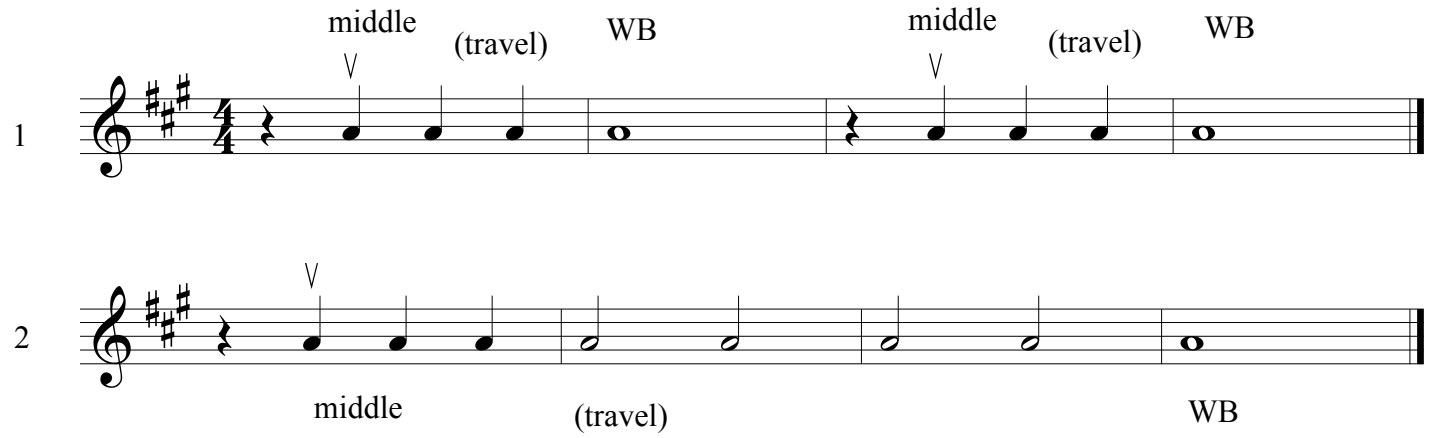
Accompaniment plays long "Son Filé"in one bow



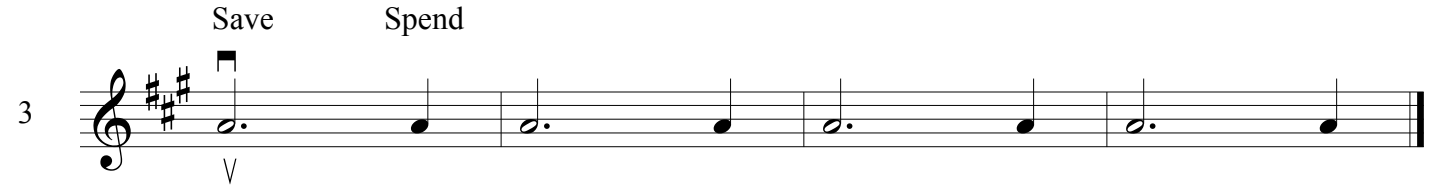


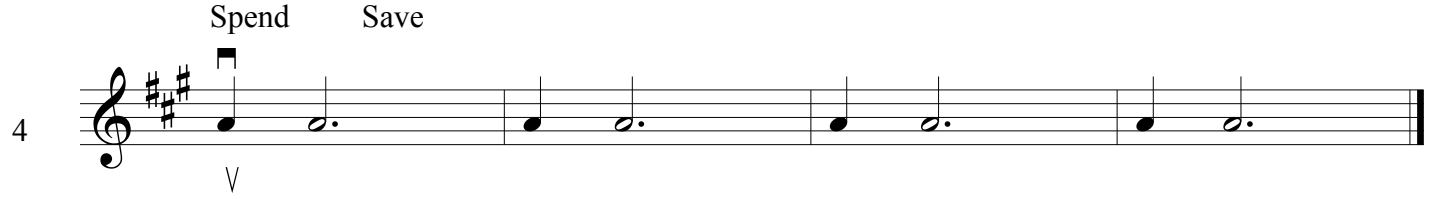


Bowing Preparation for "Oh When the Saints Go Marching In"



Uneven bow Distribution:



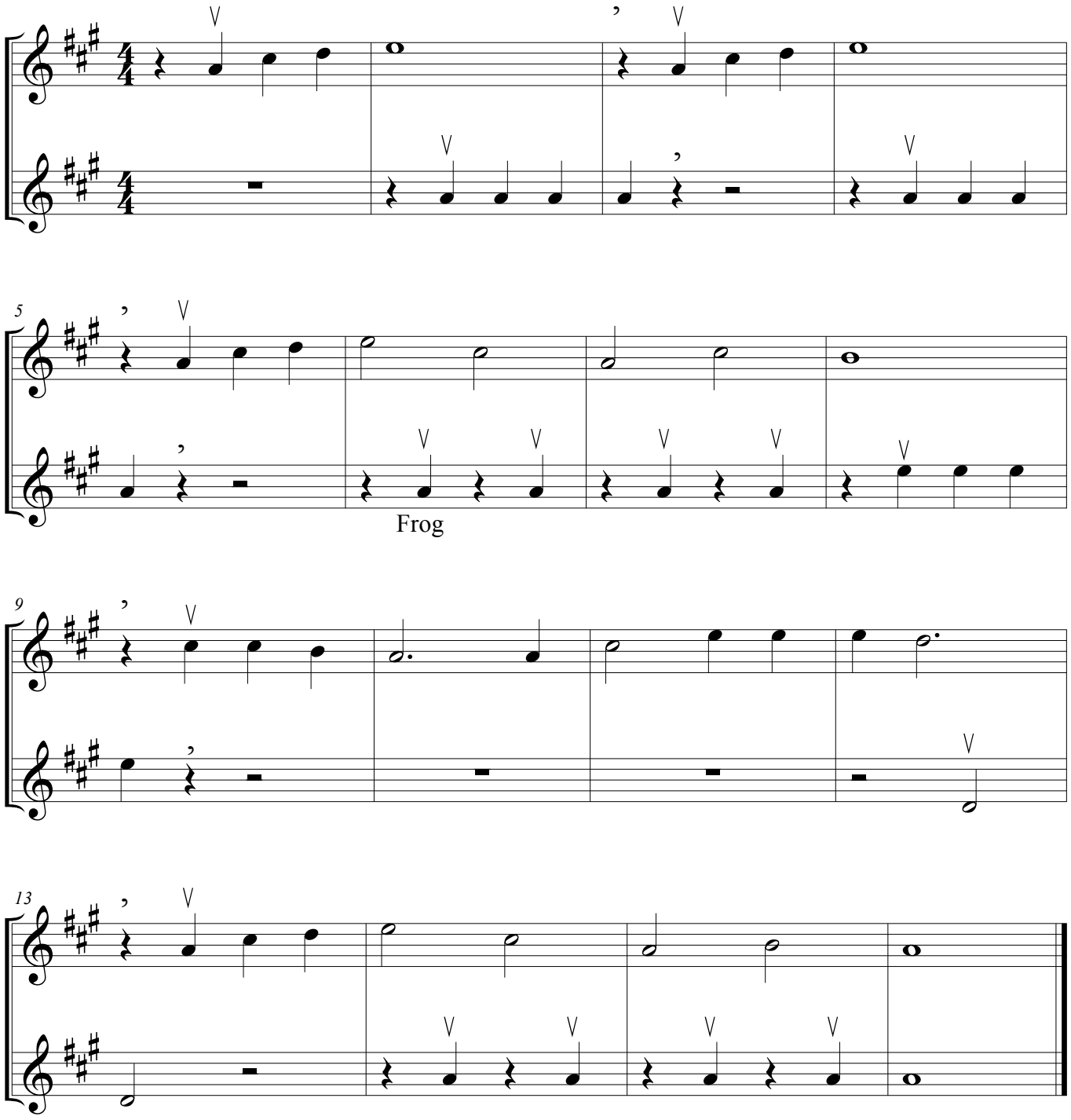


Oh When the Saints Come Marching In

American Gospel Hymn

This song was first recorded on May 13, 1938 by Louis Armstrong and his Orchestra.

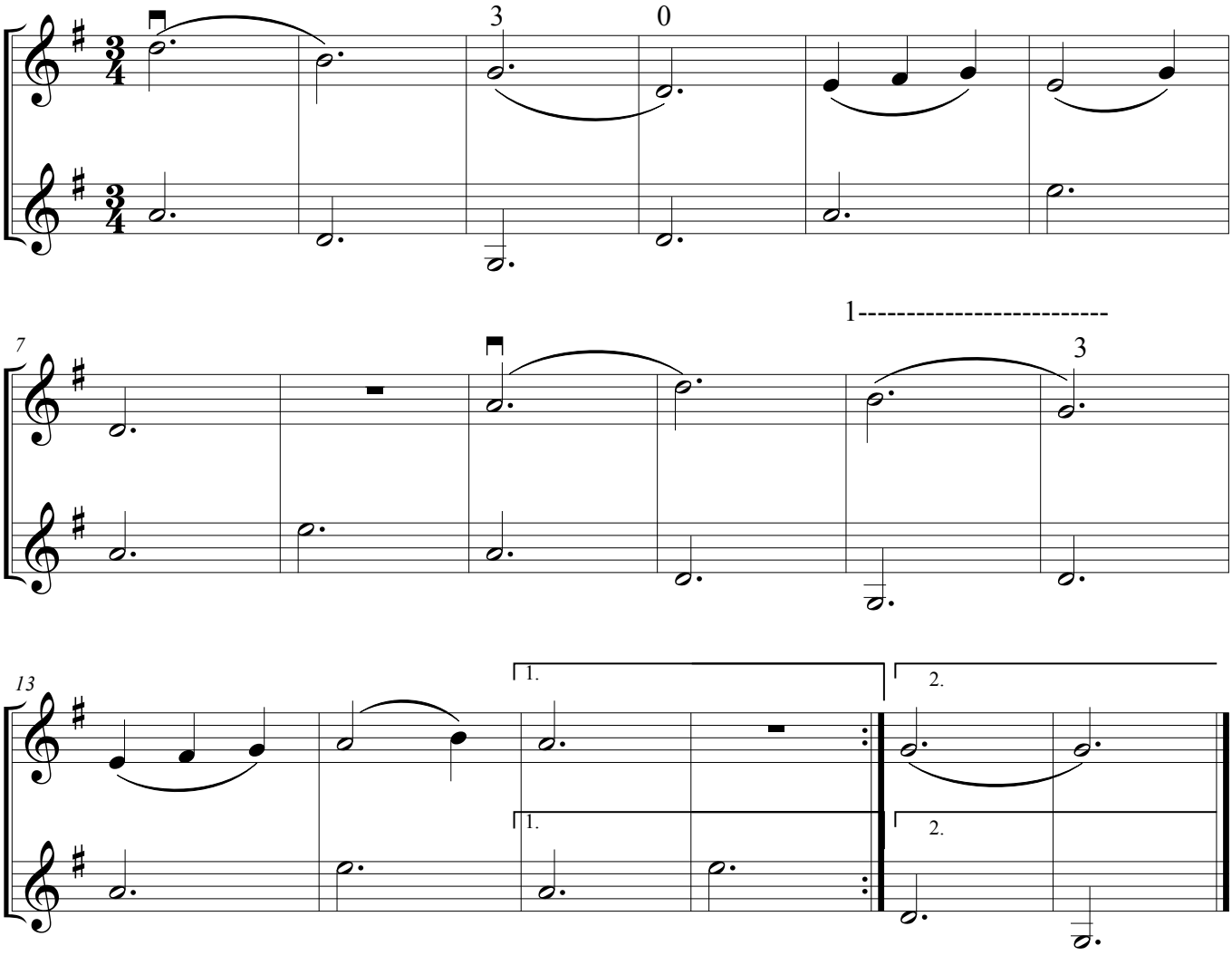
1) A great exercise for introducing bow distribution, lower half playing, more circular lifts.



Daisy Bell, A Bicycle Built for Two

Harry Dacre, 1892

Daisy, Daisy,
Give me your answer do!
I'm half crazy,
All for the love of you!
It won't be a stylish marriage,
I can't afford a carriage
But you'll look sweet upon the seat
Of a bicycle made for two.



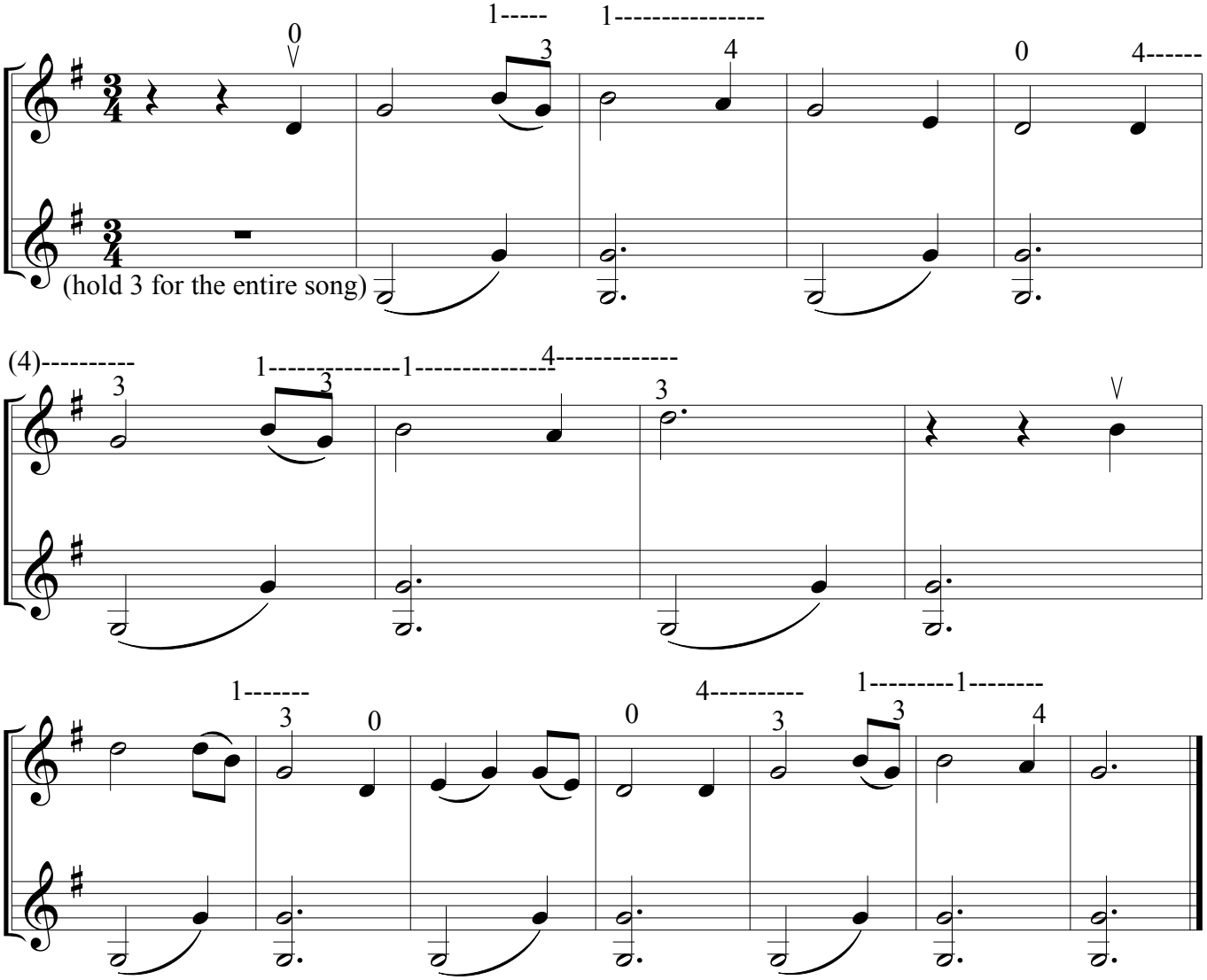
1) The Solo part is an opportunity to develop more skill in **legato**, connected playing.

2) The Duet part is an opportunity to work on string crossings.

Amazing Grace

Christian Hymn

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind but now I see.



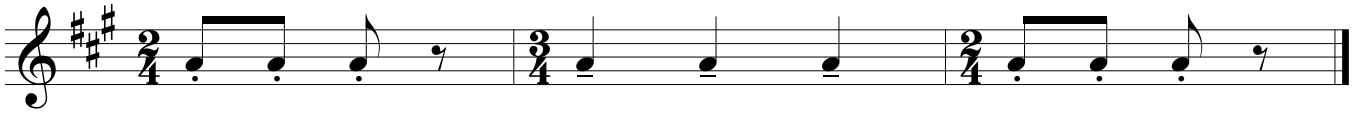
1) This work is a great opportunity to improve a student's hand shape through "blocking," the act of leaving fingers on the string for the sake of efficiency, and uninterrupted connections between notes.

2) The Duet part is an opportunity to check intonation and introduce the act of playing double stops.

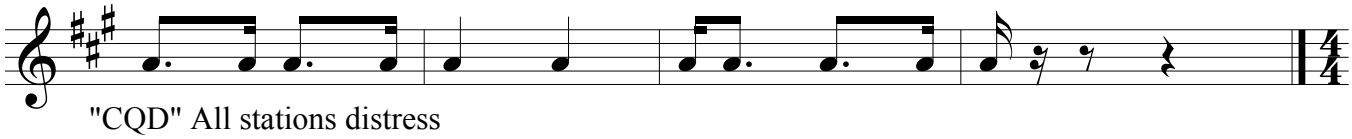
Tapping in Morse Code

Morse code is a a communication method that can use tones, lights, or clicks. These audio cues can be directly understood by a listener without special equipment.

For emergency signals, Morse code is one of the simplest and most versatile methods of telecommunication. The most common distress signal is SOS or three dots, three dashes and three dots. It is internationally recognized.



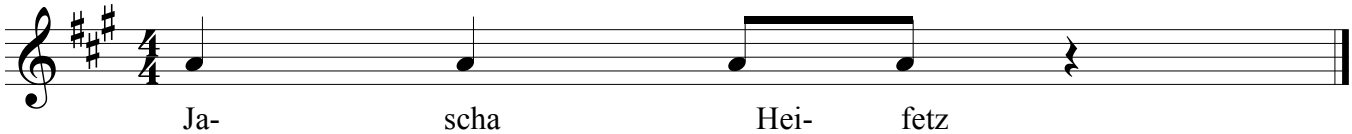
"SOS," Distress Signal

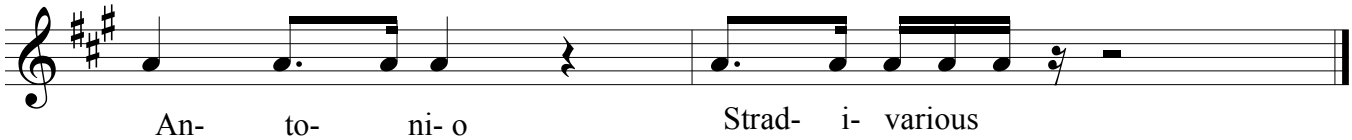


"CQD" All stations distress

Tapping exercises can be a useful way of relaxing the left hand and preparing young students for a vibrato motion. The wrist touches upper bout of the violin. Fingers tap the spruce top. A true vibrato will be developed later on, after some security in 1st through 4th positions has been established.

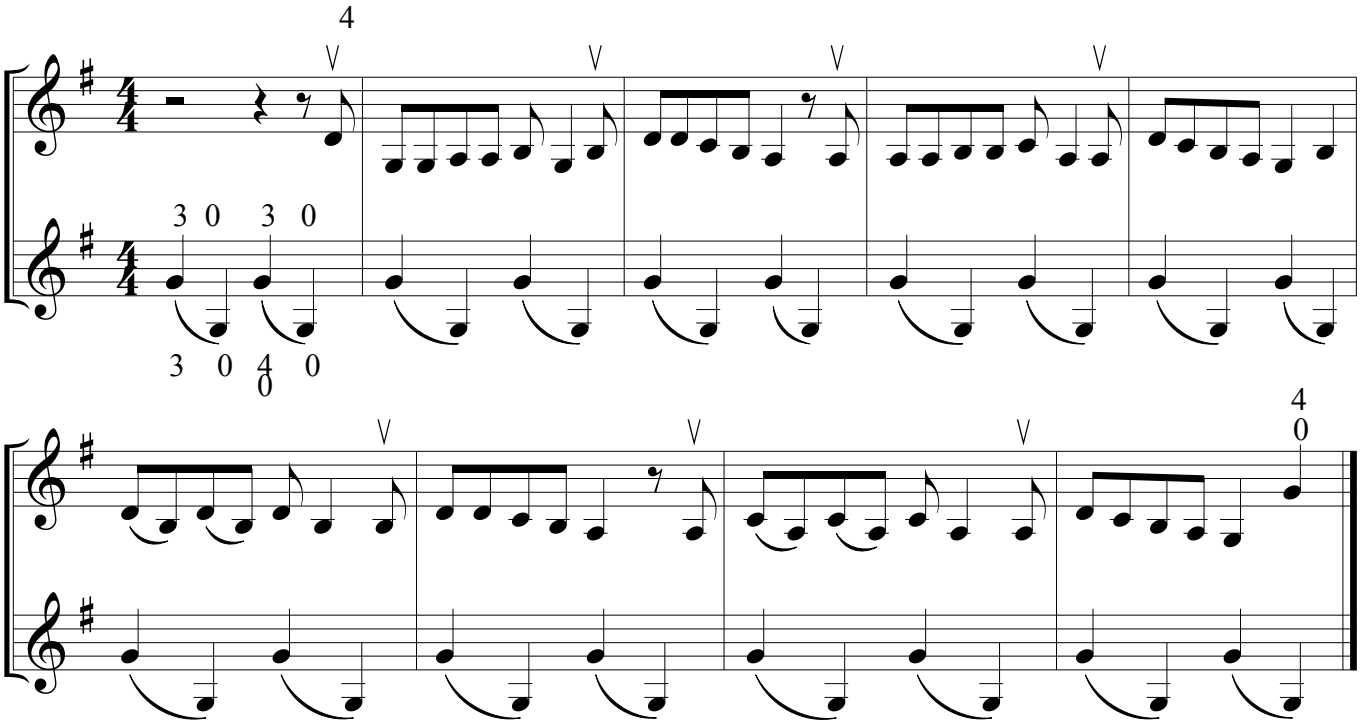
Try tapping your "name" Rhythm and writing it out on staff paper, like so:





Dreidel Song

Hebrew Folk Melody



1) Solo part: Syncopated rhythms and up-bow pickups.

2) The bottom finger pattern for the duet part allows students to become accustomed to a relaxed shifting motion.

The are many great examples of great Jewish music and music inspired by Jewish folk melodies. **Itzahk Perlman's** recording of the Theme to Schindler's List (**John Williams**) is a great example.

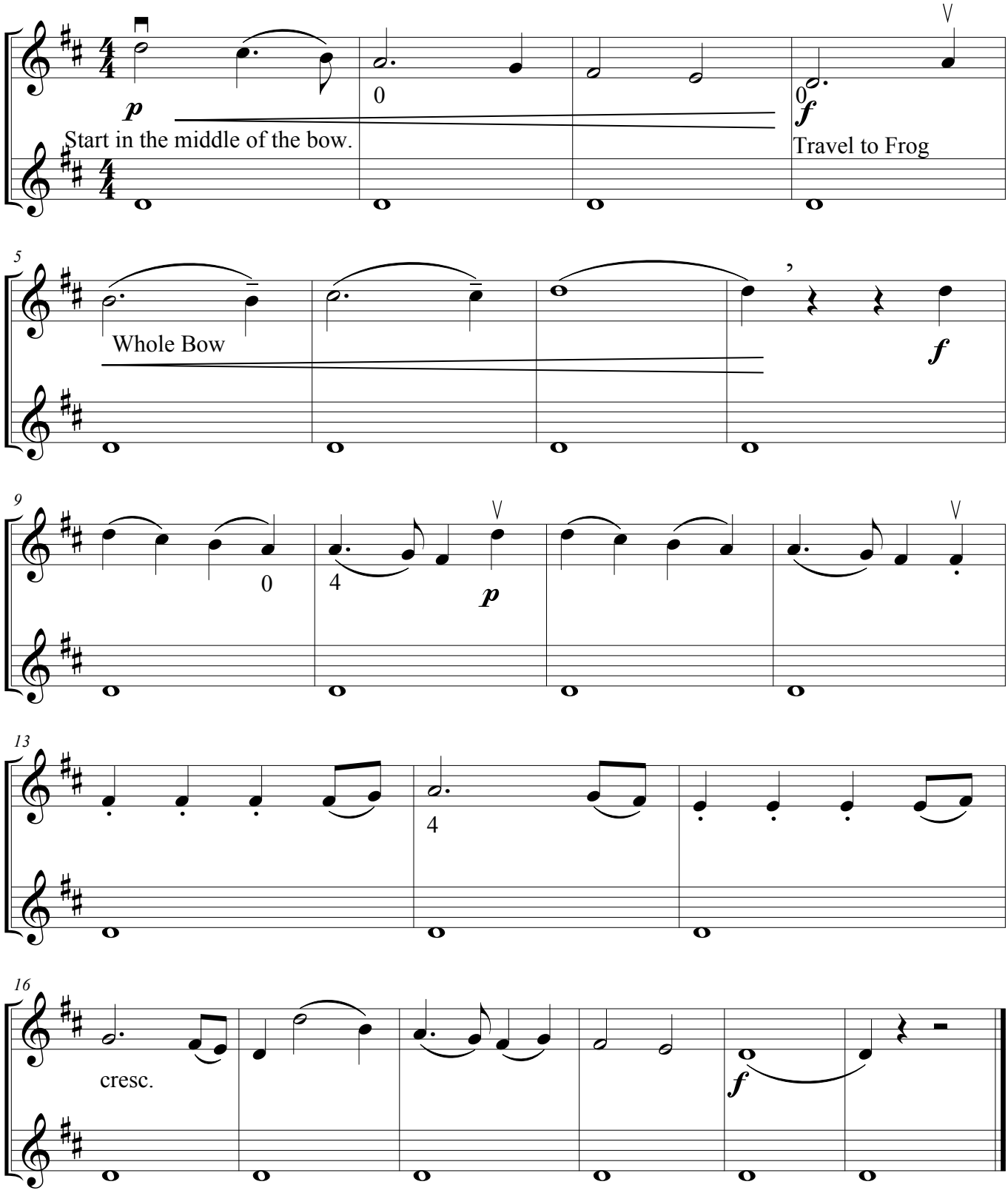
Josef Achron (1986-1943) wrote many works inspired by Jewish themes, his "Hebrew Melody" being the most famous. Violinist, Michael Ludwig, has recorded a CD featuring Achron's violin works.

Though composer **Max Bruch** was a protestant, one of his best known works is "Kol Nidrei," based on a Hebrew prayer.

Joy to the World

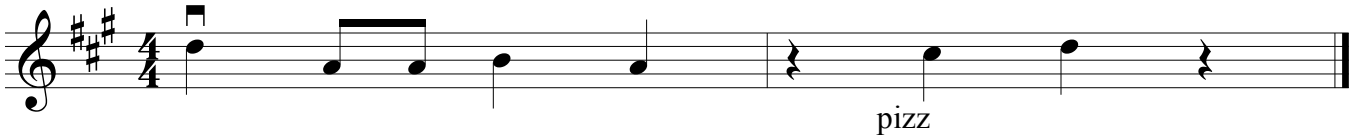
Popular Christmmas Hymn, inspired by Handel's "Messiah"

1) Introduce dynamic markings in both parts.
2) 1st part requires bow distribution and 2nd part can encourage use of a whole bow.



Easy Riffs

Shave and a Haircut, Two Bits.



Two Bits is the price of a shave and a haircut, exactly 25 cents! This riff has has been recontextualized to mean *many* things, some very offensive.

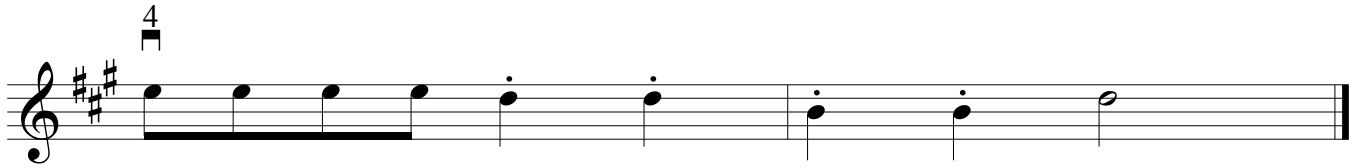
The italian version is "Ammazza la vecchia... col flit." "Kill the fly with DDT insecticide."

This riff plays a major role in the 1988 film Roger Rabbit in a call and response gag.

One way that American captives in the Vietnam war would verify a new prisoner's identity was by tapping the first notes of "Shave and a Haircut" against a wall, waiting for the appropriate response: (Two bits!). American prisoners were then able to communicate with one another via the quadratic alphabet code, similar to Morse Code, but simpler.

At the time of writing (Dec 2014), I had several students knock on the door to my studio with the "Shave and a Haircut" riff. They heard it in the Disney movie, "Frozen."

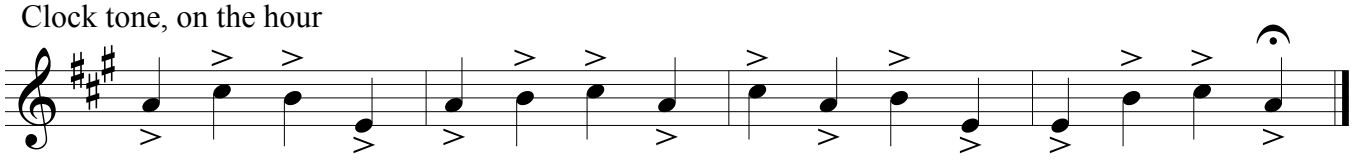
Stereotyped "Asian" riff



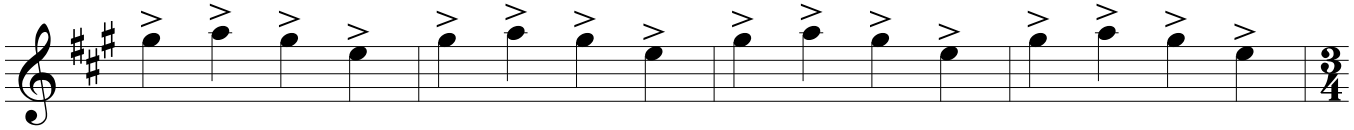
This tune is a western invention. It's been adapted for songs like Carl Douglas' "Kung Fu Fighting," and the theme of the original "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turles" animation. We'll get a chance soon to play some authentic Japanese folk tunes!

Introduce accents:

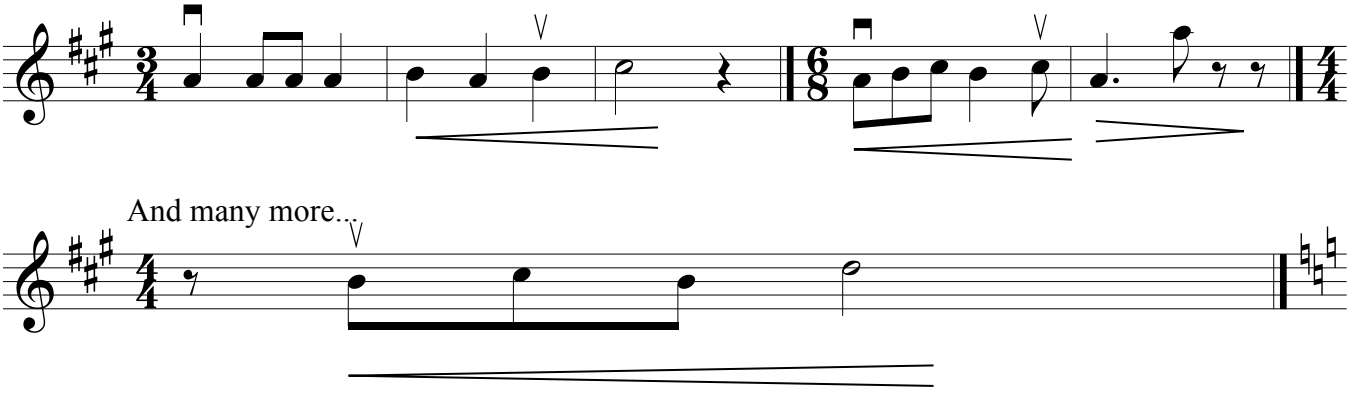
Clock tone, on the hour



Spooky riff (accompany with Bb)

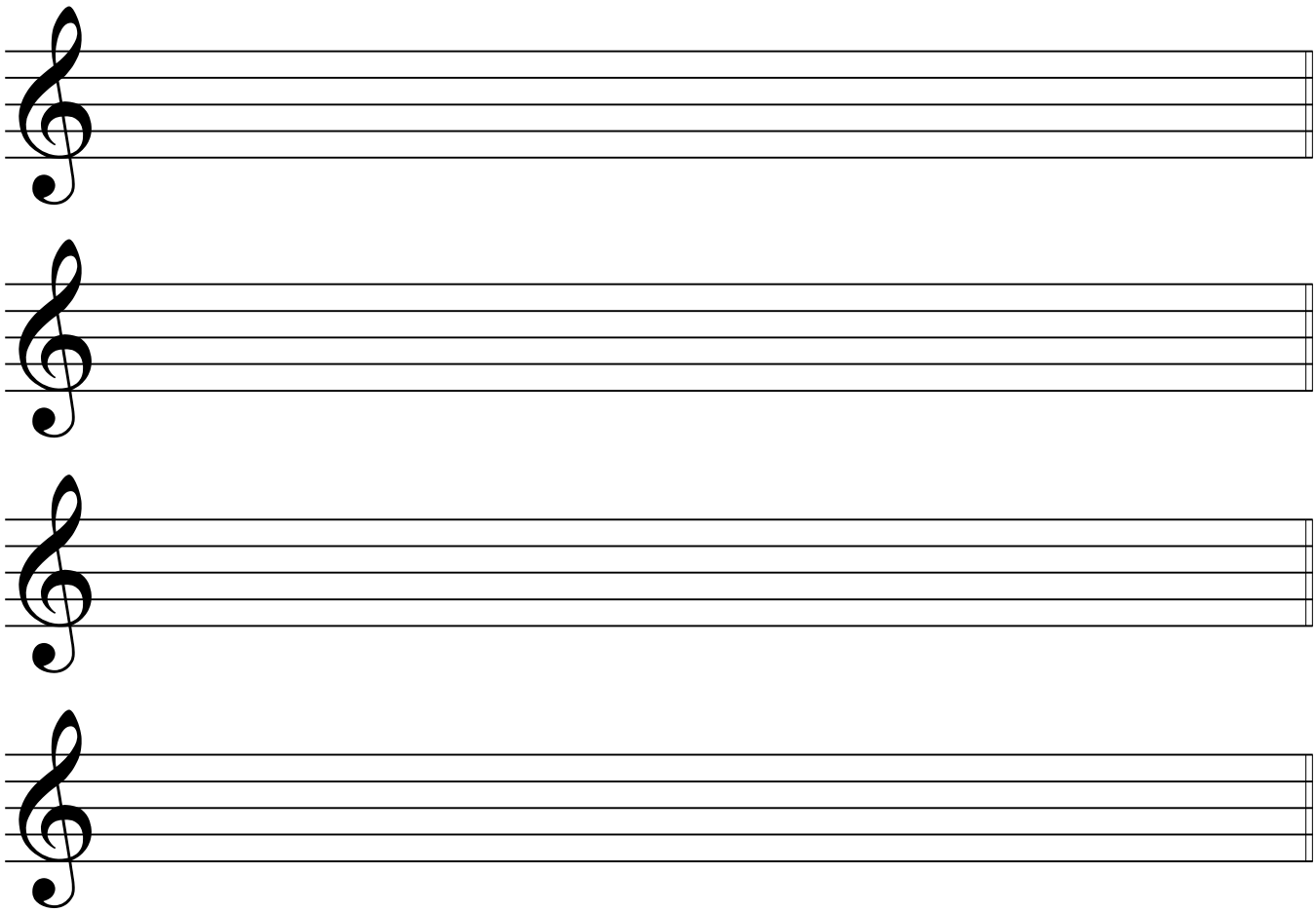


Vaudville Flourishes



And many more...

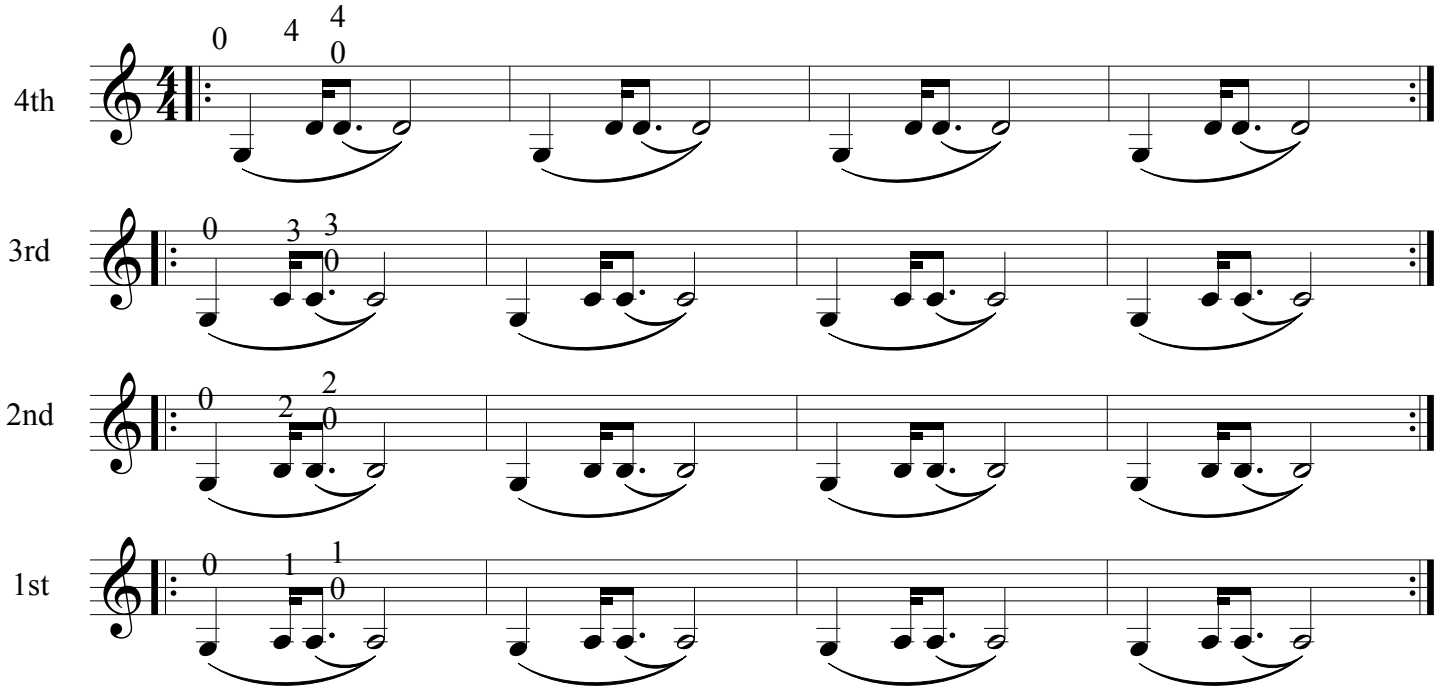
If you and your teacher decide to add more riffs (or compose your own!), write them out here:



Finger "Pressure" exercises.

The word "Pressure," is almost always a bad word when it comes to the violin.
Try to avoid its use whenever possible. Violin great, Yehudi Menuhin, went so far as to call the falling action of the left hand a "strengthening of the arches."

Most beginning players use far too much unnecessary pressure on the fingerboard.
The are some exercises on the next few pages that will help us discover an appropriate sense of touch. This page can be part of a quick, daily warm-up.



Instructions:

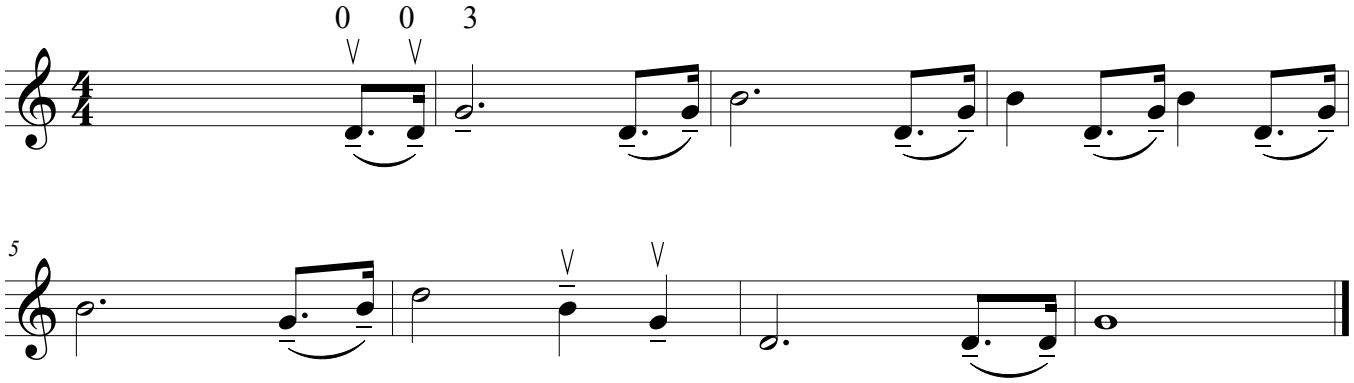
We'll practice this exercise two ways.

1) Allow your finger to fall to the string in a hammer-like fashion.
Hints:
The motion is initiated from the basal joint of your hand (knuckle).
The shape of the finger will be round, arched.
The finger will fall just slightly left of center on the violin string.
After landing, the finger will rebound, spring-like, to a natural harmonic.
There is a harmonic under first finger (speaks 3-octaves above G), however, it's extremely temperamental.
Be content with a squeak from that finger.

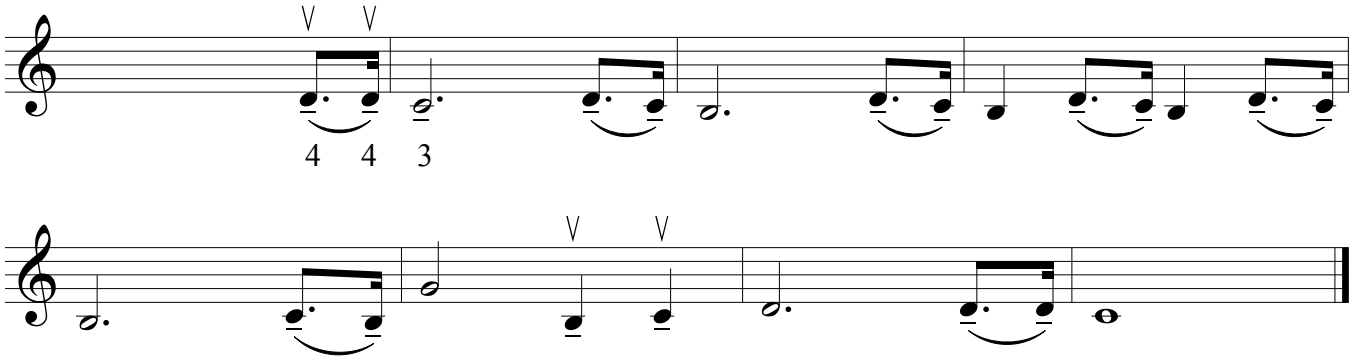
2) Instead of rebounding to a harmonic, rebound to a less-than-heavy feeling in the fingertip.
We only need enough weight to stop the string and make a beautiful, focused sound.

Taps

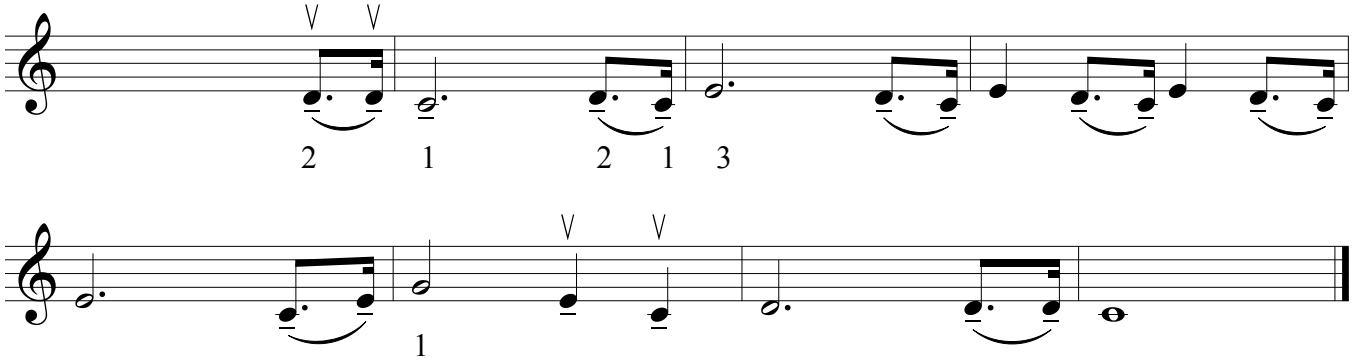
A military call sounded at dusk, at funerals, and flag ceremonies.



As preparation for natural harmoncs, play first as Stopped pitches.
Then, practice as natural harmonics. Left hand fingers use as little pressure as possible, a delicate touch.



Students with experience in 3rd position can try this version.



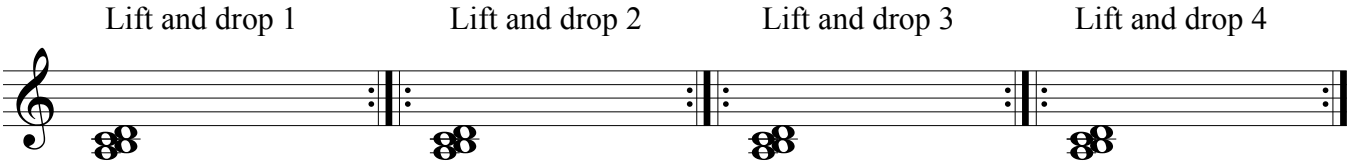
Finger Independence Exercises, or finger Dependence Exercises?

Demetrius Constantine Dounis (c. 1886-1954) was a tremendous proponent of "Finger Independence" exercises. His violin exercises push the capabilities of the left hand far beyond the requirements of the violin repertoire. Sometimes, his exercises involve actions from all four fingers: one finger held in place, pizzicato with one finger (left to right), lifting with another, and pushing forward and back ward with the last.

However, "Finger Independence" is a misnomer. Really, we can only achieve the *illusion* of finger independence through a balancing and coordinating of motions in the entire hand.

Finger Dependence Exercise with Fox Hand:

1) With violin only (no bow):
Position your Fox Hand carefully on the G string. With all of the fingers stopping the string, we'll practice lifting and dropping each finger, many times, from the 1st major knuckle joint.



2) Besides simply lifting individual fingers, we can also alternate between 2 opposing fingers, 3 fingers vs 1, or add and remove the entire Fox Hand.

Alternate Opposing Single fingers:

1 and 4, 1 and 3, 1 and 2, 2 and 4, 2 and 3, 3 and 4,

Alternate Opposing Doubles:

1+2 and 3+4, 1+3 and 2+4

Three Against One:

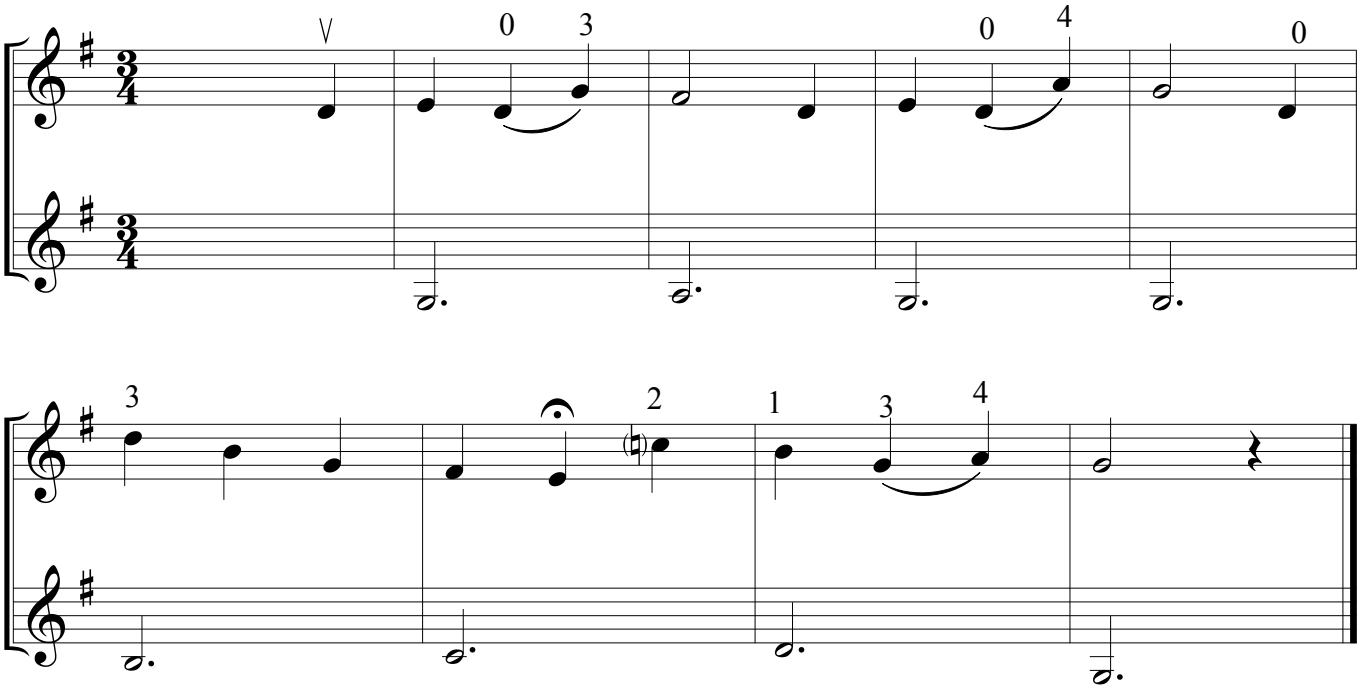
1 and 2+3+4, 2 and 1+2+4, 3 and 1+2+4, 4 and 1+2+3

Raise and Lower Entire Fox Hand: 1+2+3+4

Good Morning to All

Good morning to you
Good morning to you,
Good morning, dear children.
Good morning to all

Patty and Mildred Hill, 1893



1) Practice bowings with slurs.

2) What's a Fermata? How long should we hold it?

3) By touch, we can easily find the C Natural, close to 1st fingers E and B.
This is not Fox Hand (It's "Tea"), but we'll make an exception!

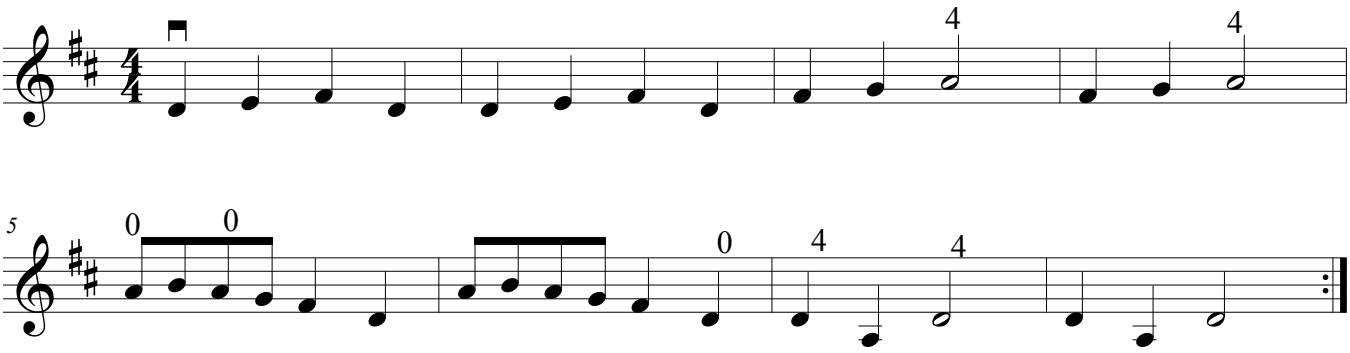
** How can we change this piece to make it sound more "Happy?"
What would that Rhythm look like?

Fun Fact:
While "Good Morning to All" is in the Public Domain, "Happy Birthday"is a hotly disputed, copyrighted work, and still the subject of court battles.

Canon: Frere Jacques

French nursery rhyme

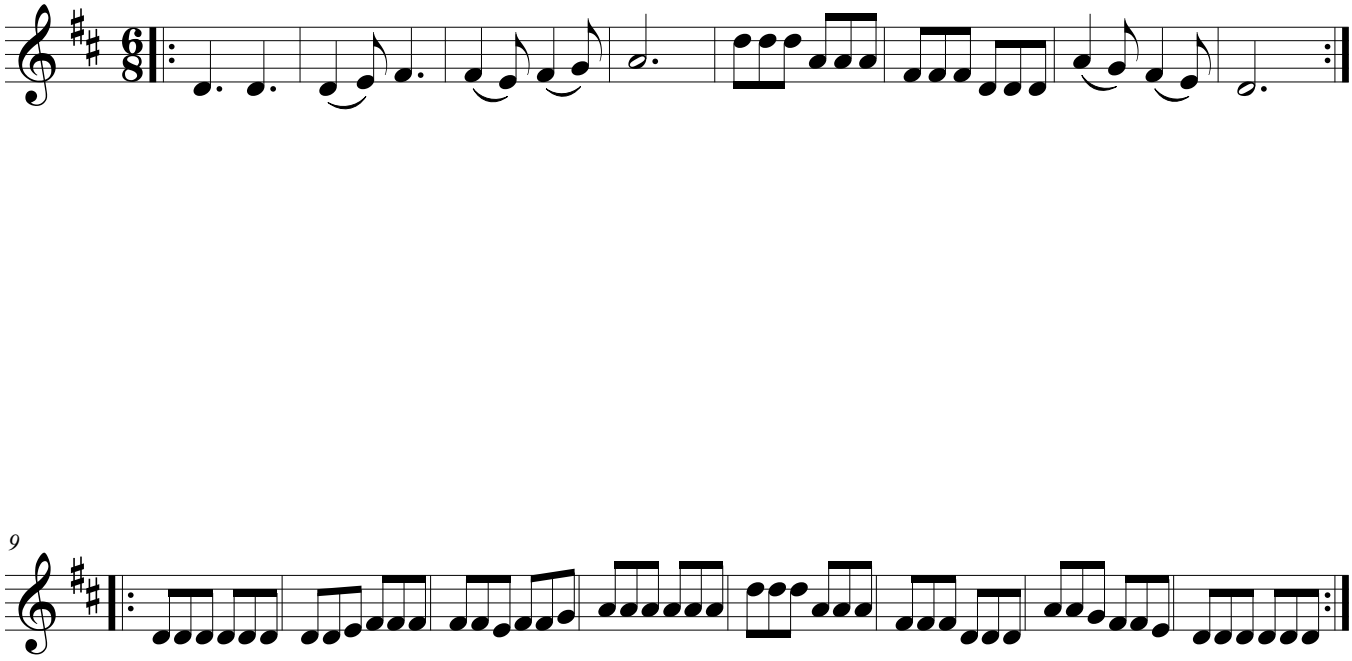
Player 2 starts after two measures have been played.



Canon: Row, Row, Row Your Boat

English Folk Song

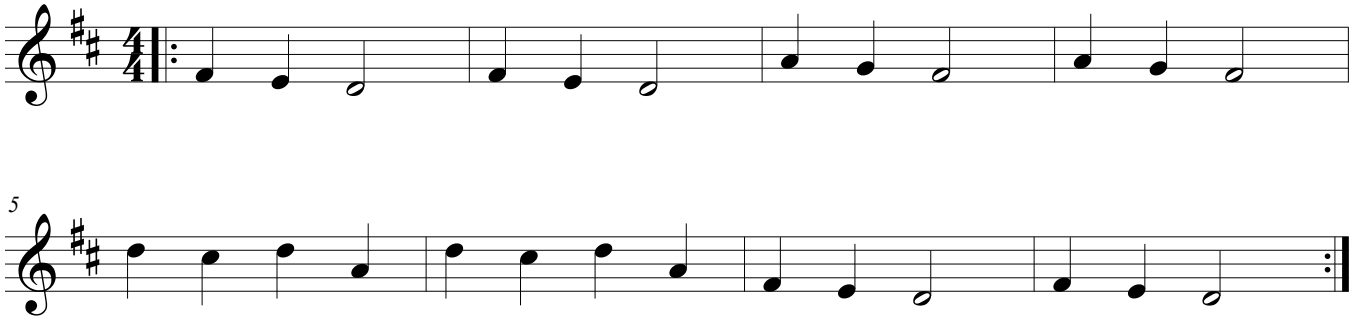
Player 2 starts after two measures have been played.



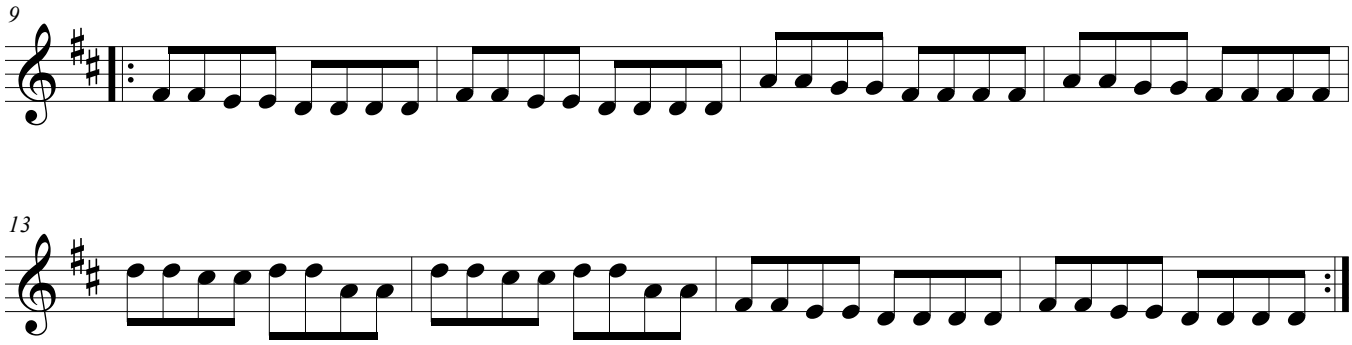
Canon: Three Blind Mice

English Folk Song

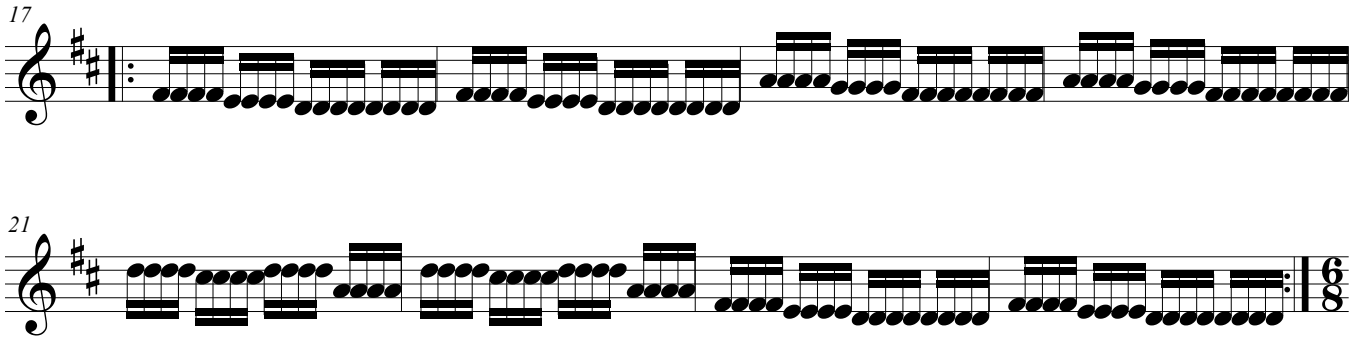
Player 2 starts after two measures have been played.



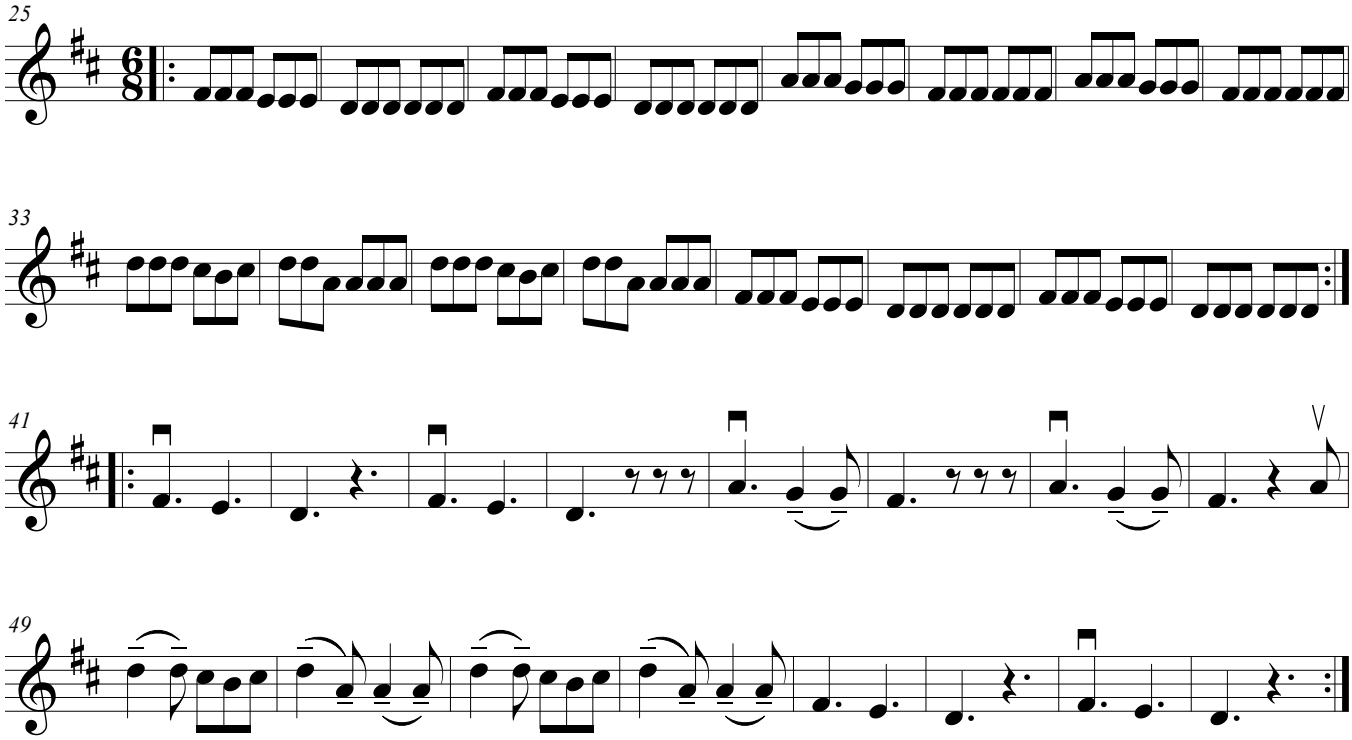
Variation in 8th Notes



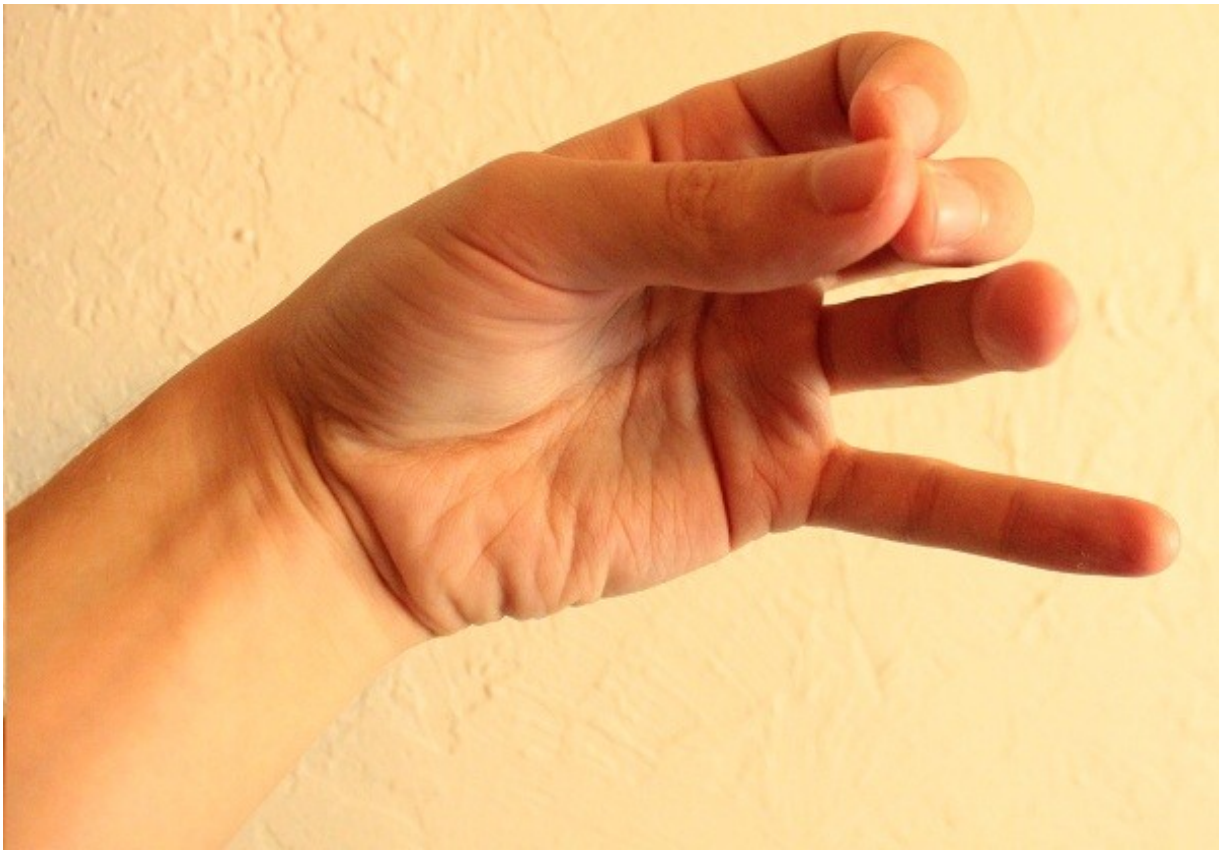
Variation in 16th Notes



Variaions in 6/8

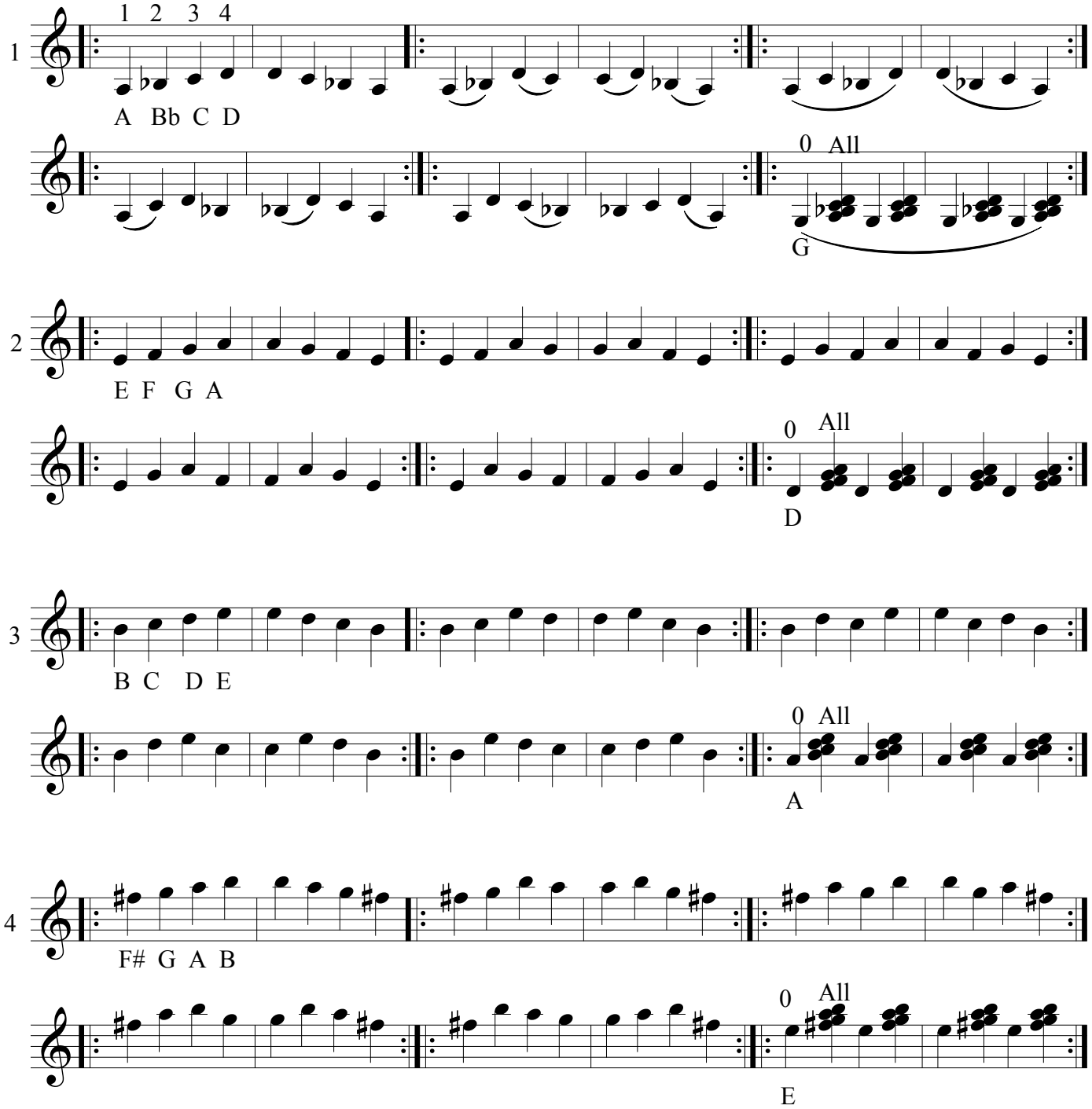


Unit 2 – Tea Hand



Common patterns in Tea Hand

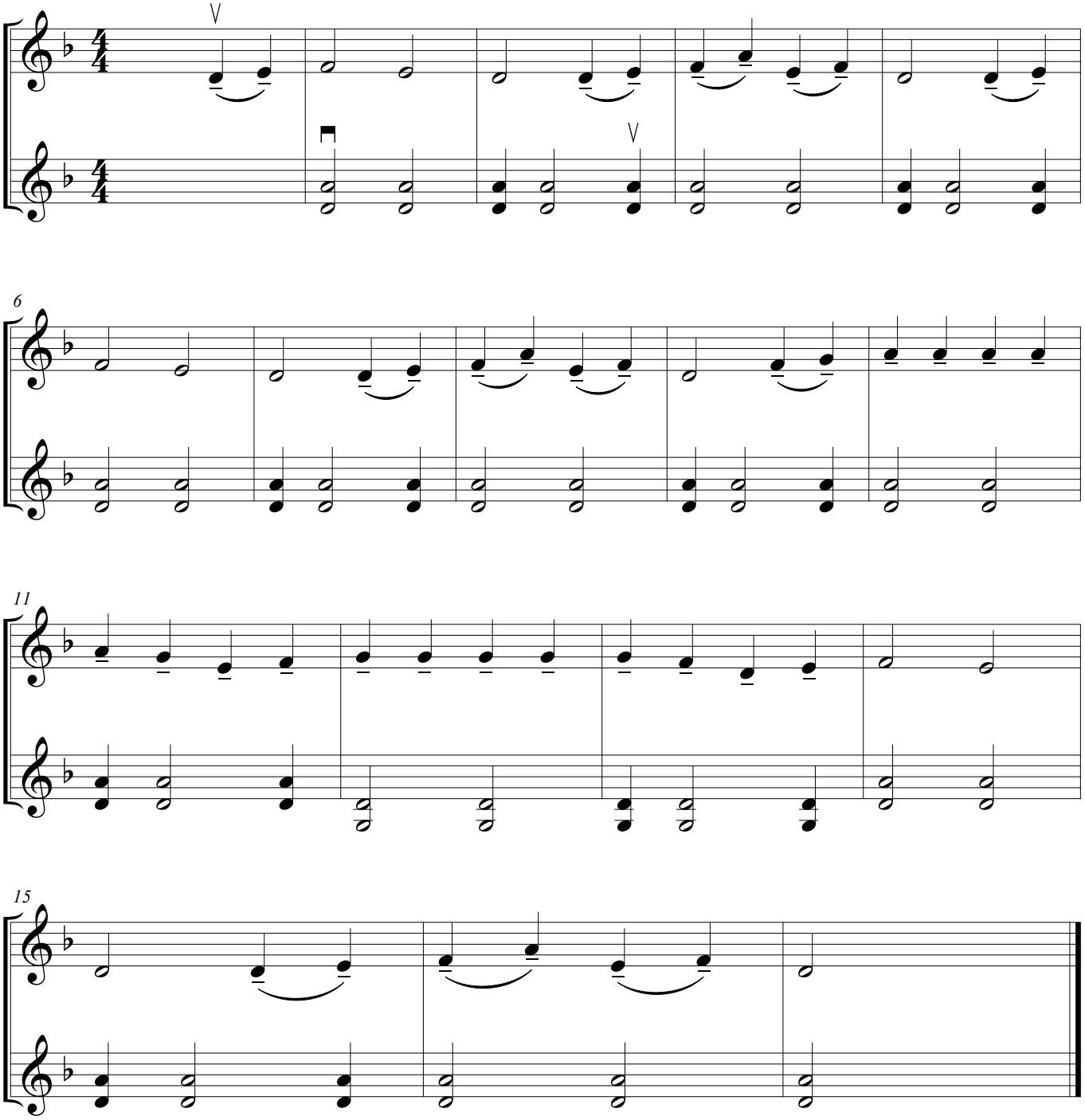
1st and 2nd fingers are close together.
Pretend you're holding a small espresso cup or teacup.



Snake Charmer

Various origins, likely inspired by "Kradoutja."

- Indicates a Portato or "wa wa" bowstroke on a slur.
On detache bowings, the bowstroke is called "detache porte."

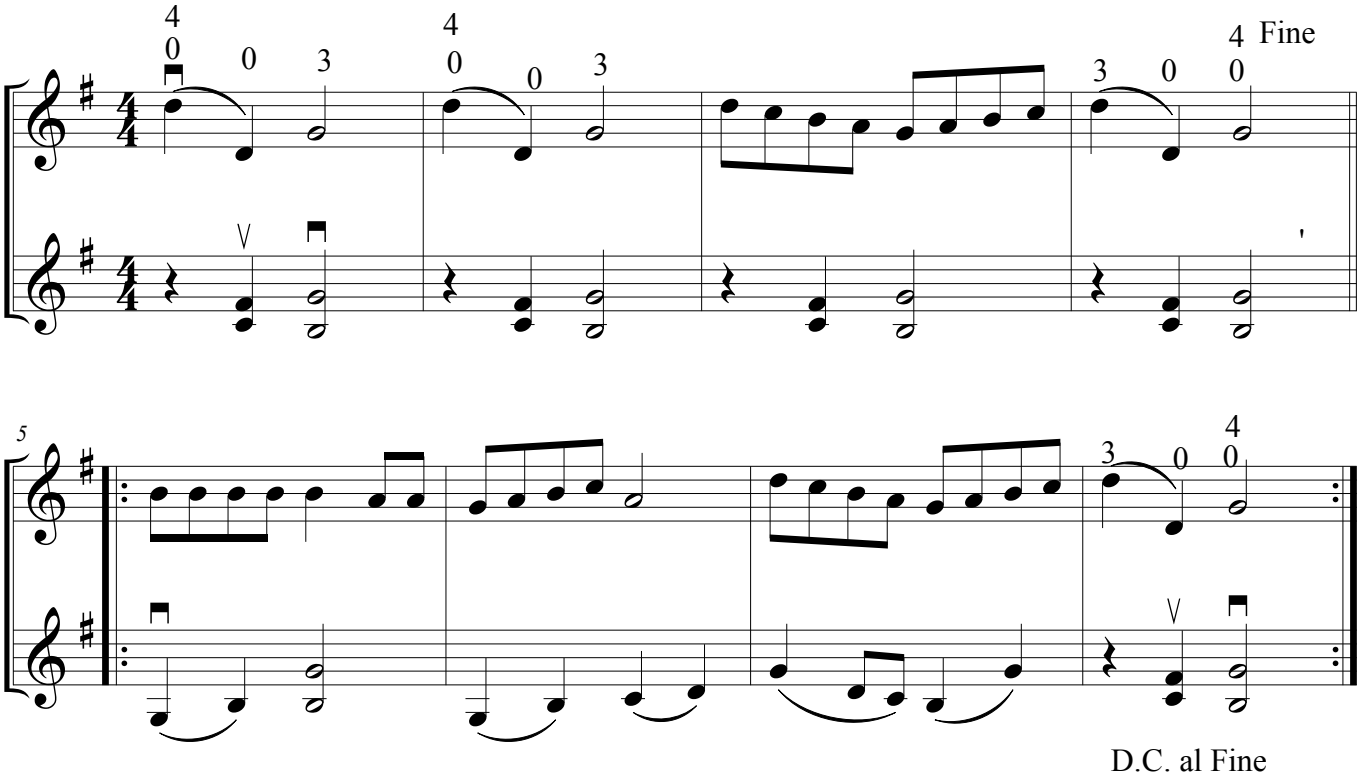


[Zerweck 2014]

Hot cross buns!
Hot cross buns!
Zero a penny, one a penny,
Hot cross buns!
If you have no daughters,
Give them to your sons
Zero a penny,
One a penny,
Hot Cross Buns!

Hot Cross Buns

English Nursery Rhyme



1) Solo part is an opportunity to relax the hand in a preliminary shifting exercise, and get acquainted with Tea Hand position.

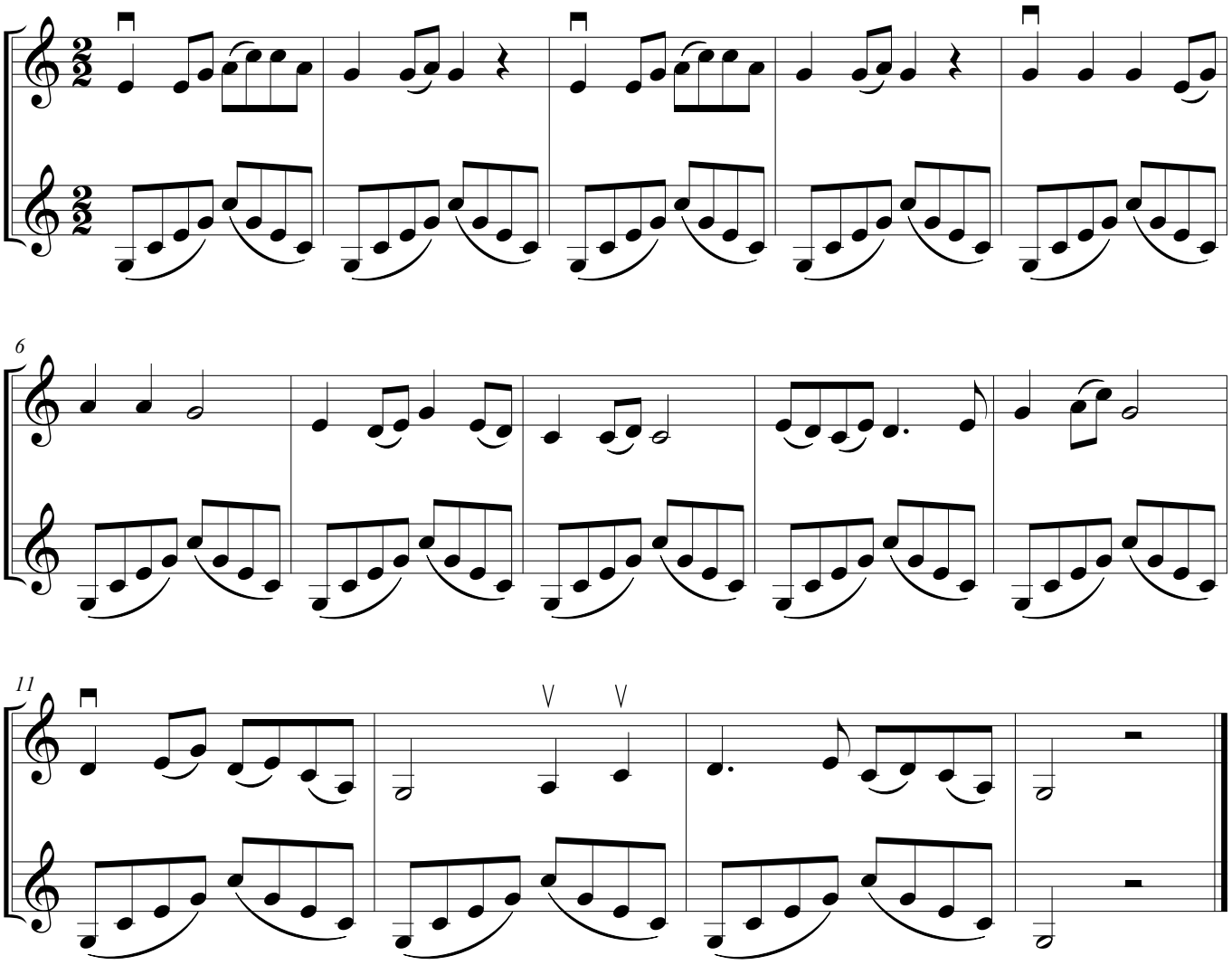
2) The duet part may be too challenging for some students, however, all of the double stops fall into Fox Hand position. Hint: Start with m. 5 first.
Practice all double stops in a similar manner, finding the bottom note first, and then the top note.

[Zerweck 2014]

Flower of jasmine, so fair!
Flower of jasmine, so fair!
Budding and blooming here and there,
Pure and fragrant all do declare.
Let me pick you with tender care,
Sweetness for all to share.
Jasmine fair, oh Jasmine fair

Mo Li Hua

Chinese Folk Song "Jasmine Flower"



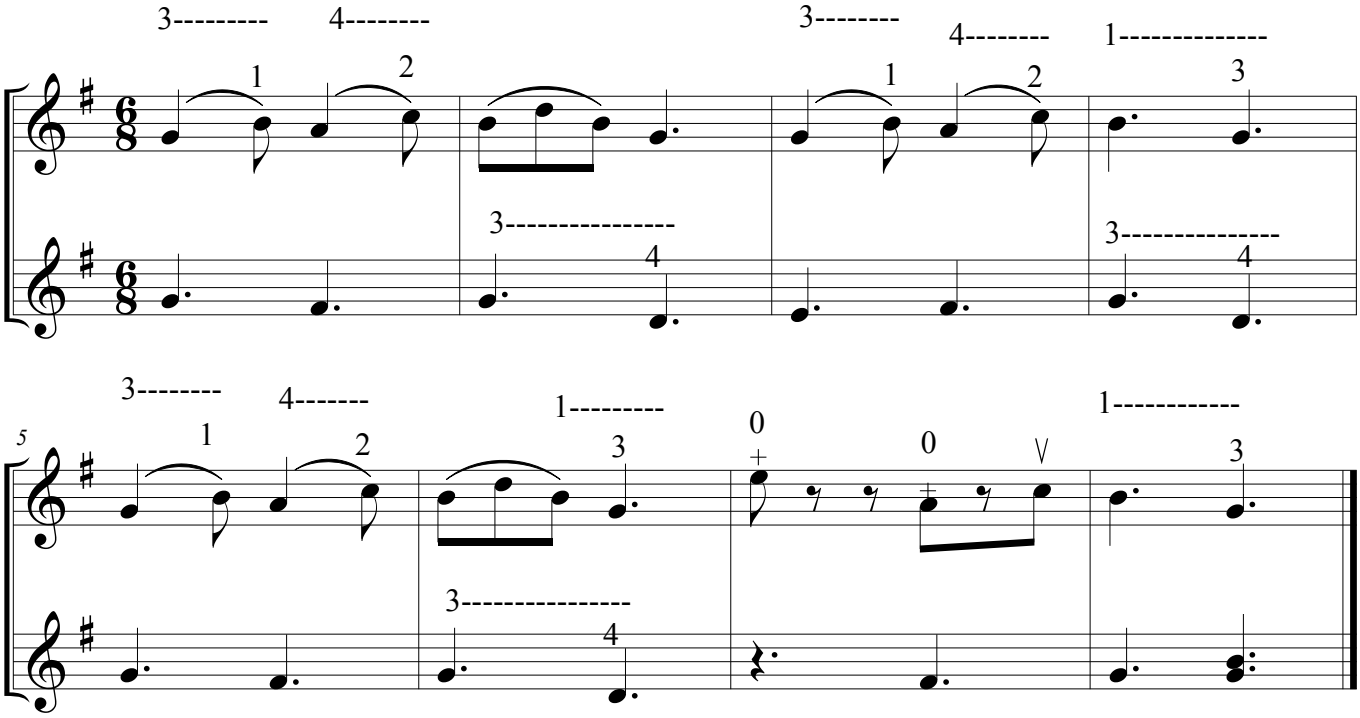
A simple, beautiful melody, the song became associated with the Jasmine Revolution in 2011. Organisers instructed protesters to play Mo Li Hua on their cell phones as an antigovernment protest.

The Duet part is an opportunity to master a C major arpeggio with four notes per bow.

Pop Goes the Weasel

Half a pound of two-penny rice,
Half a pound of treacle.
That's the way the money goes,
Pop! goes the weasel.

English Nursery Rhyme



1) The Solo part provides an opportunity to block the left hand, especially challenging with the Tea Hand position. To meet this challenge, Many students will have to bring the left wrist inward towards the violin, as well as swing the left elbow in front of their bodies.

2) The duet part should also offer a blocking challenge. It's not a matter of stretching, but instead finding a relaxed, easy posture that allows the blocking to occur.

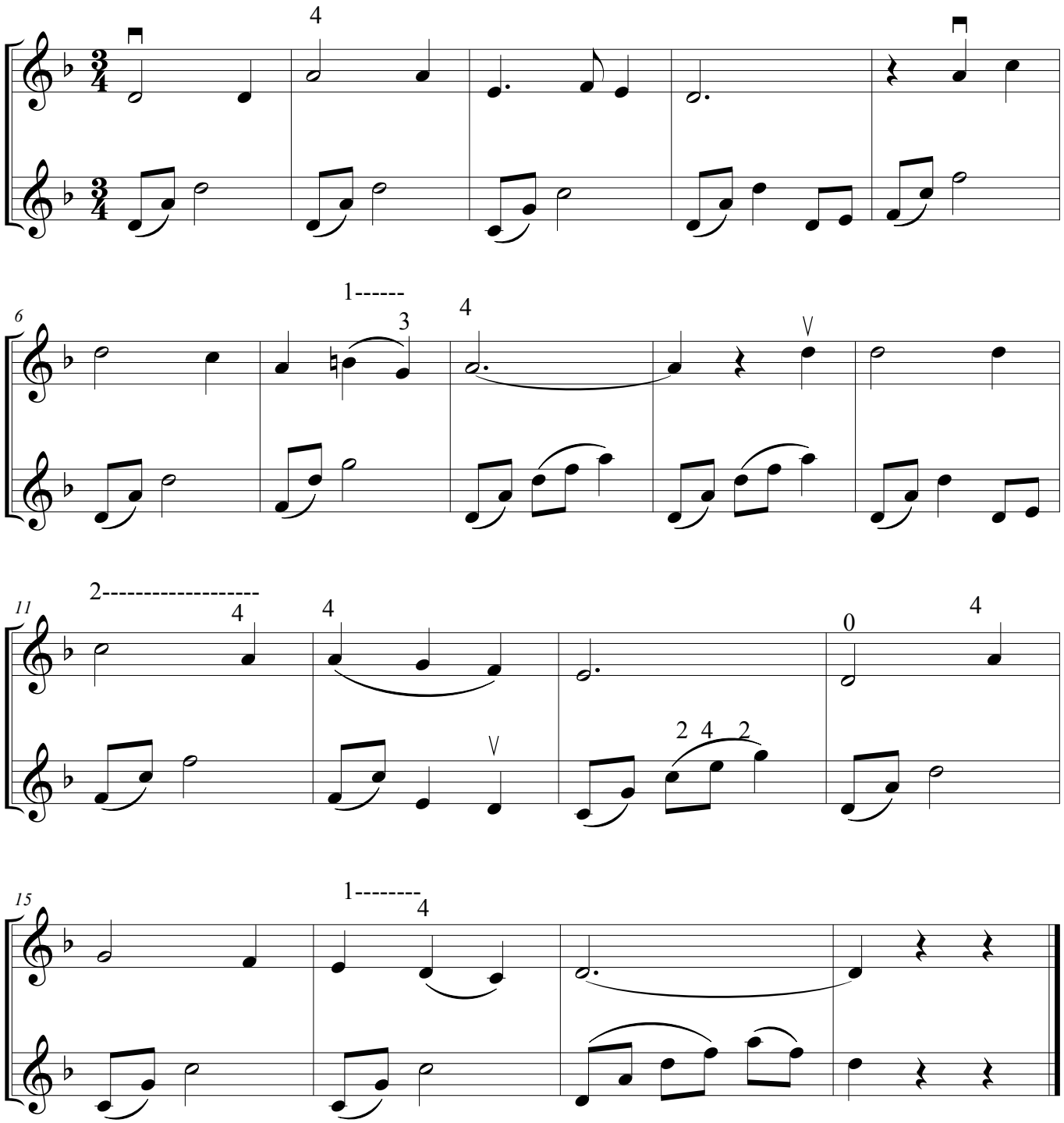
Alternatively, the duet part can be used as a shifting exercise, shifting to 3rd position for the Gs in measures 2, 4, and 6.

Scarborough Fair

English Ballad

The film, "The Graduate," uses this song
in its soundtrack, performed by Simon and Garfunkel.

1) The Solo part offers some bow distribution challenges and opportunities for blocking.
2) the Duet Part offers a chance to work on Perfect 5ths over string crossings.



A Haiku, by Basho:

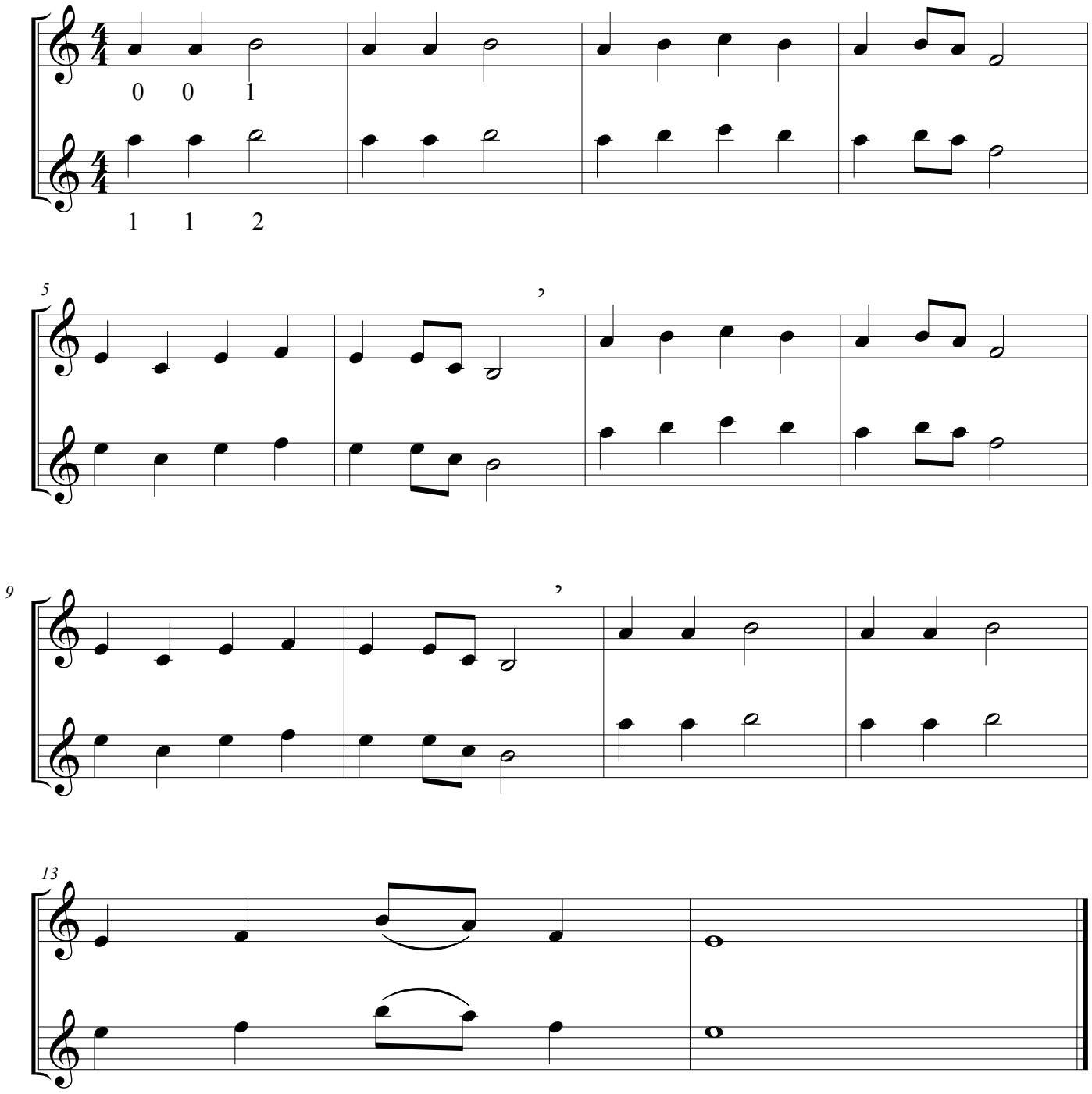
From all directions
Winds bring petals of cherry
Into the grebe lake.

Sakura Sakura

"Cherry Blossoms" Japanese traditional song

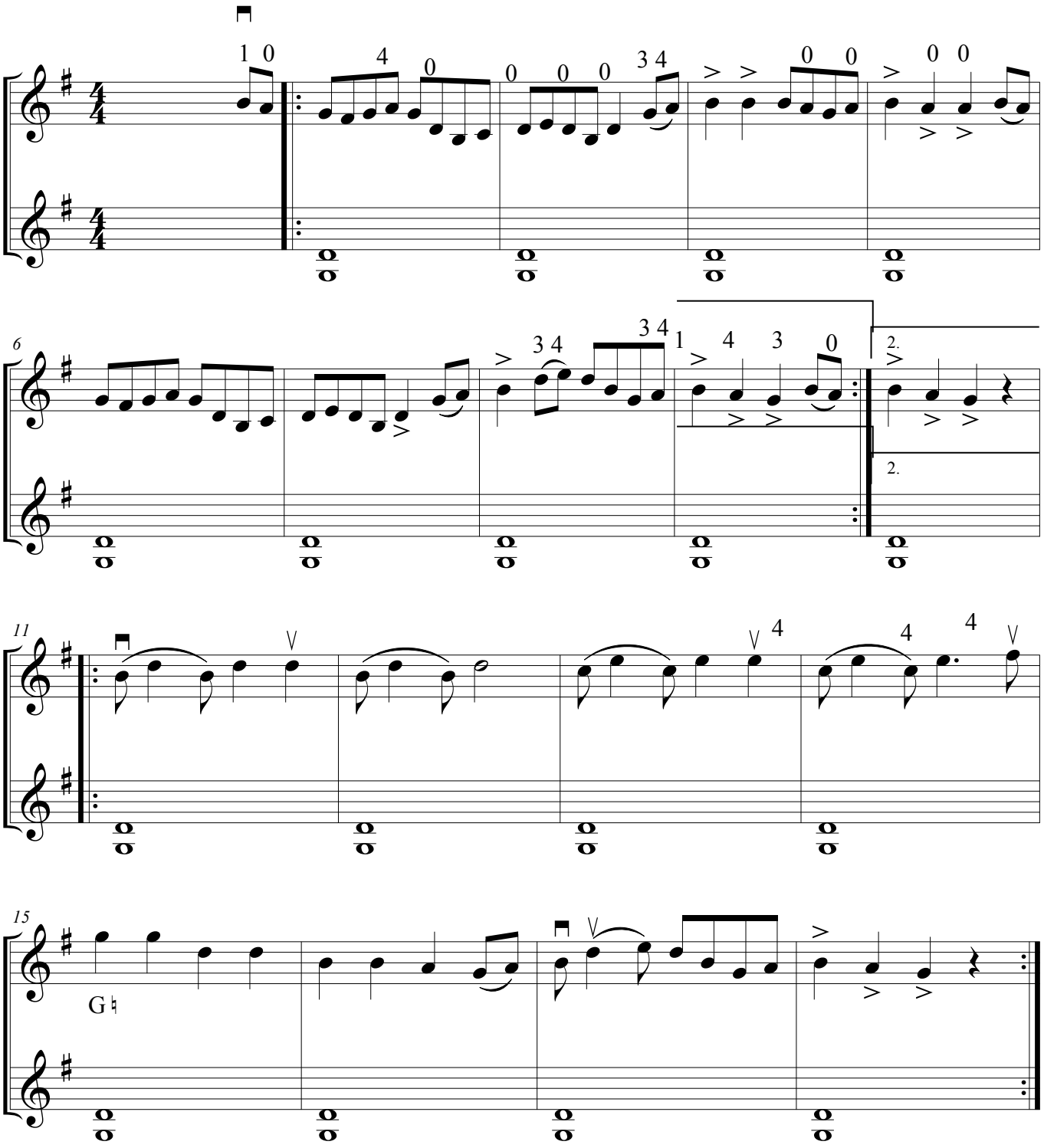
1) Solo part: intonation and clean string crossings.
2) Duet part: 3rd position playing.

In octaves:



Turkey in the Straw

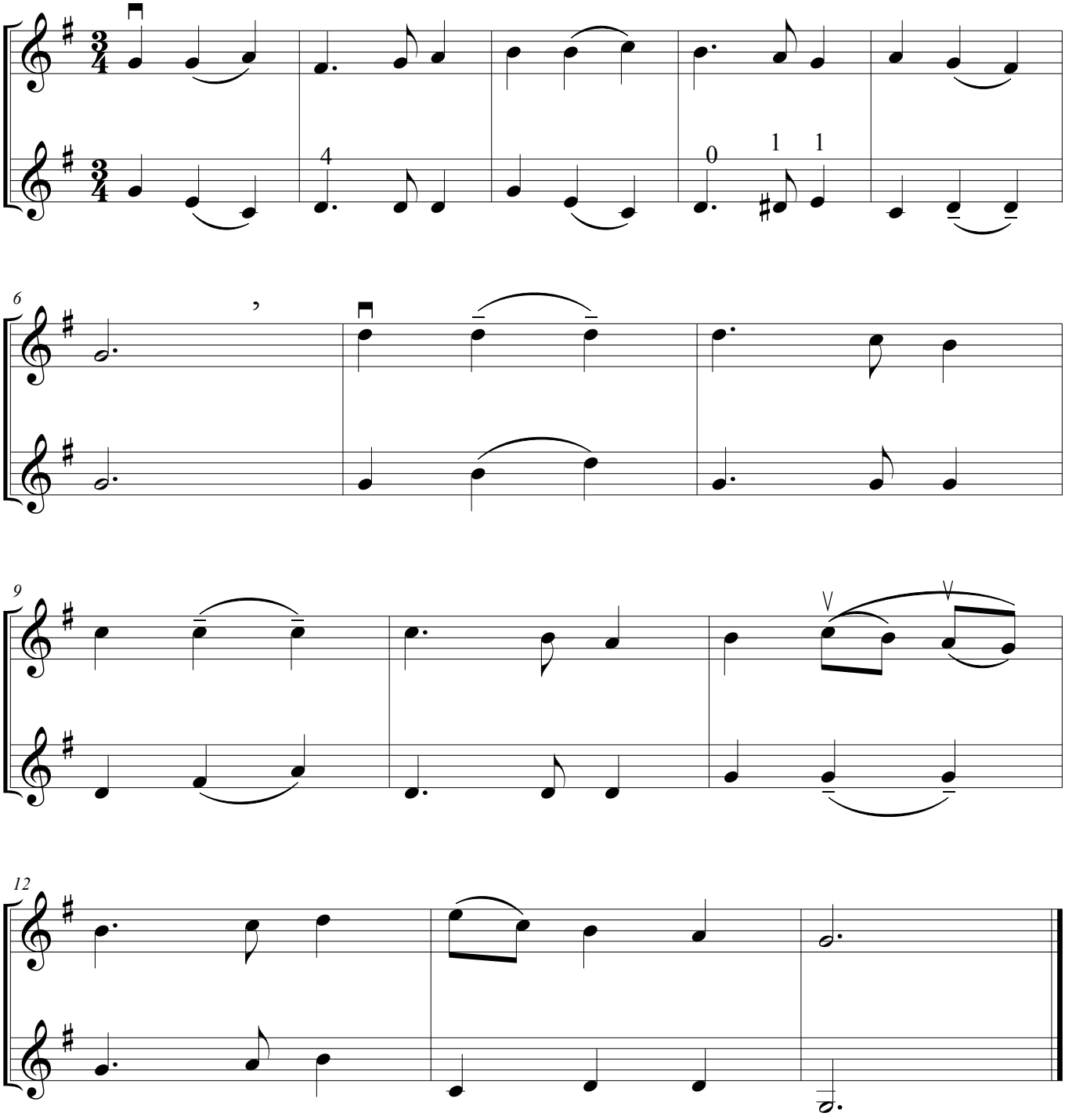
American Folk Song



My Country, 'Tis of Thee ("America")

Also known as "God Save the Queen."

Both parts offer some opportunities for bowing distribution and R.H. coordination.

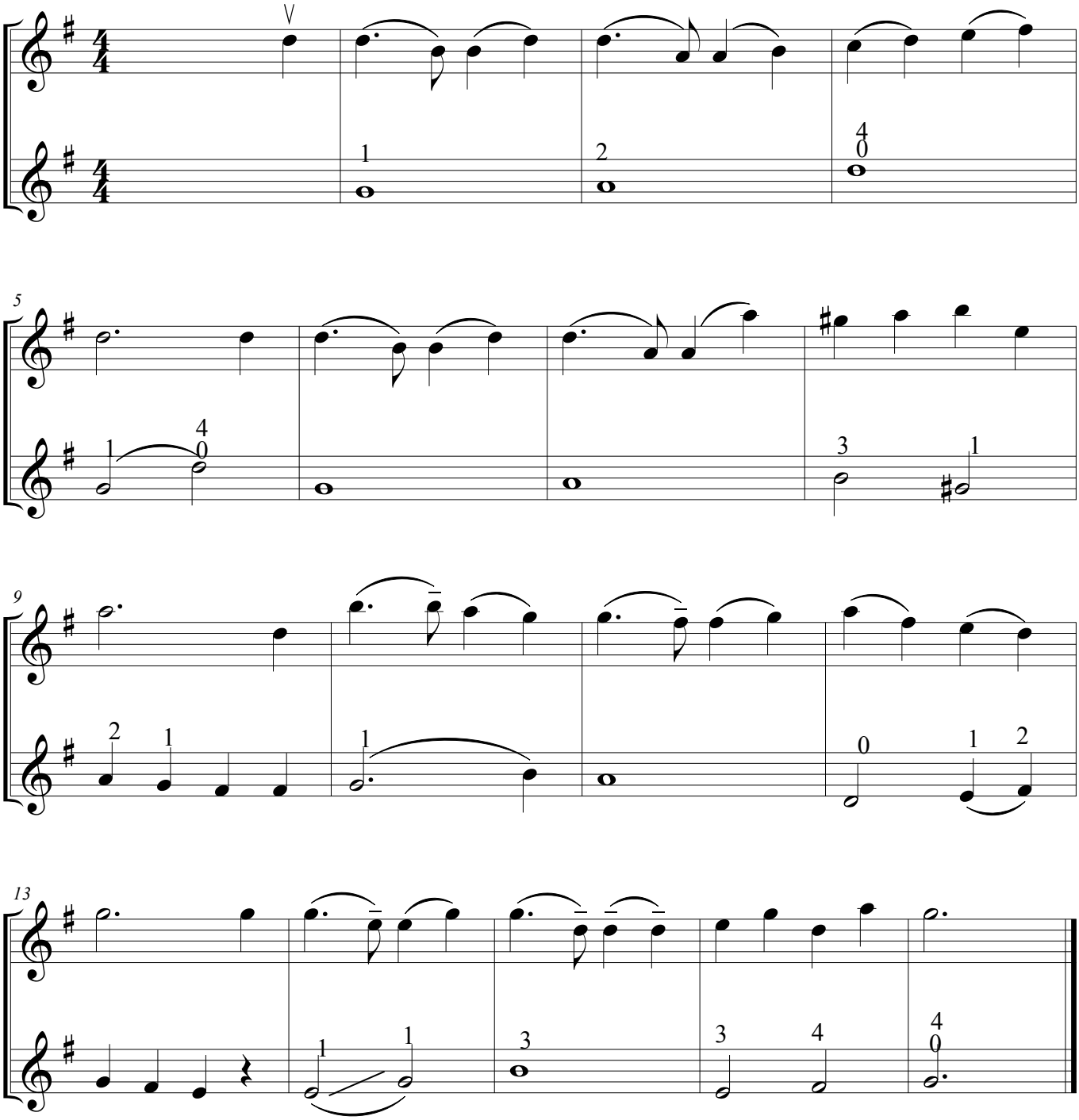


[Zerweck 2014]

America the Beautiful

Samuel A. Ward

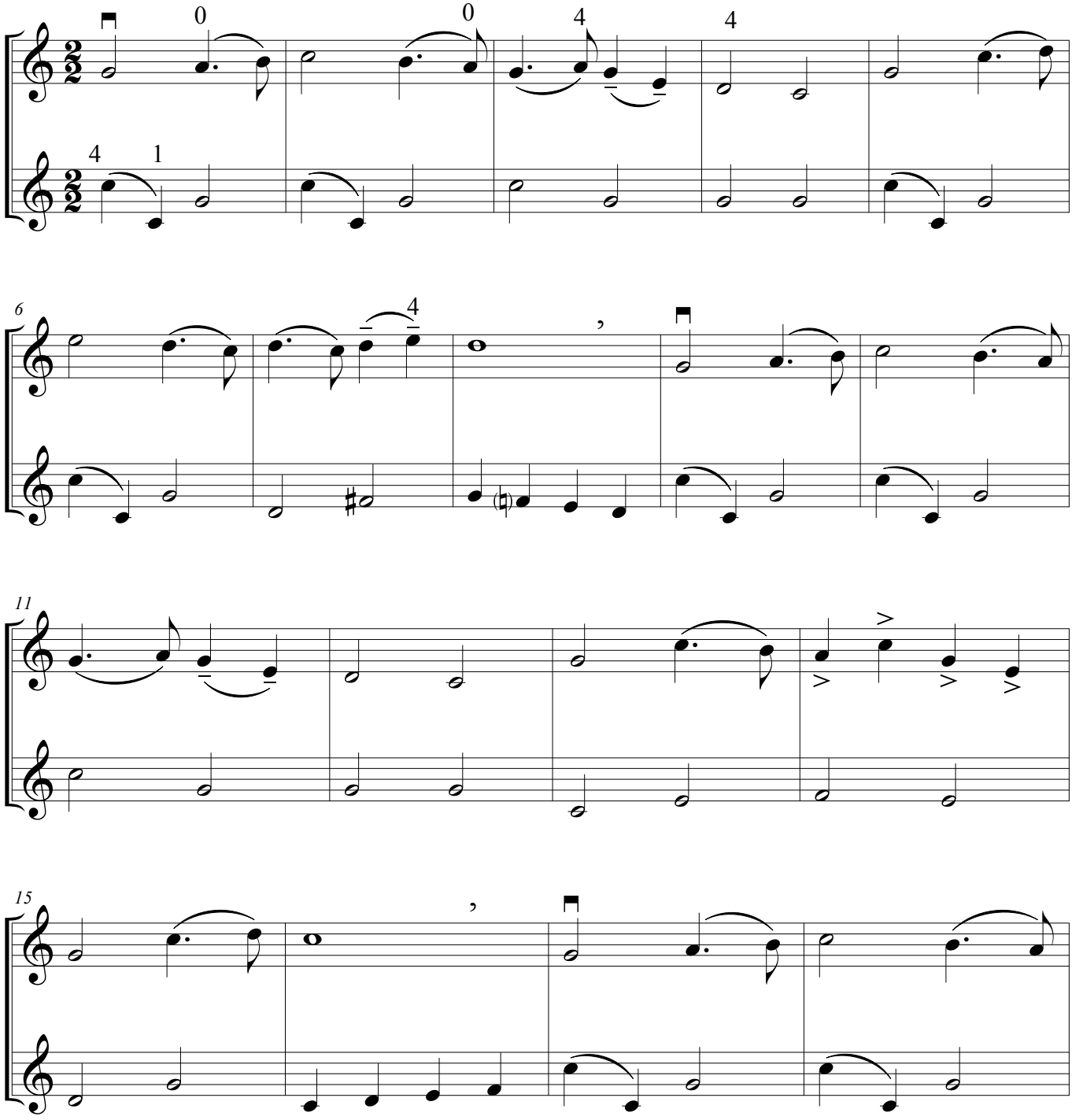
1) Solo part offers legato and string crossing opportunities.
2) Duet part offers more 3rd position playing and a "guide finger"shift.

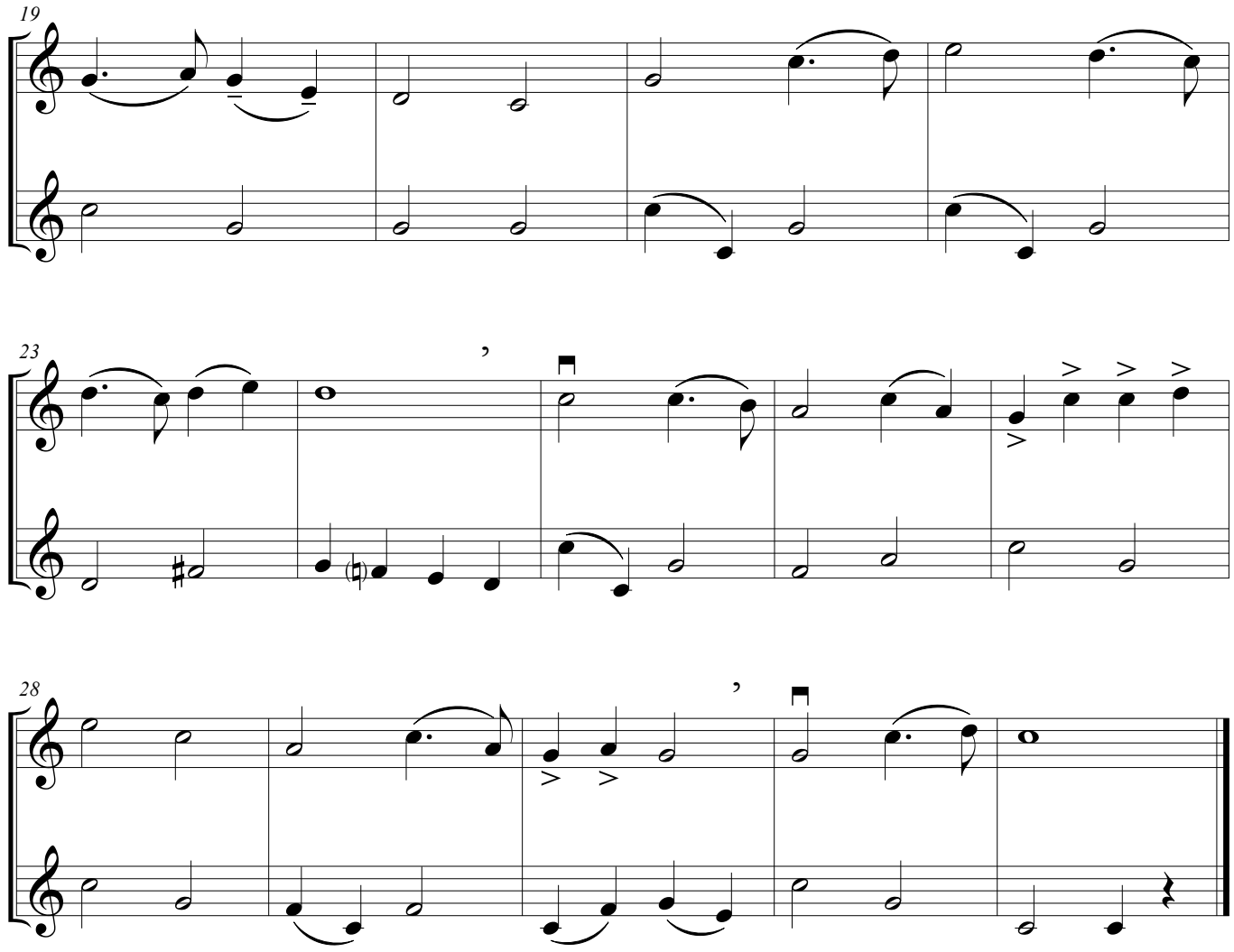


Hail to the Chief

James Sanderson, 1812

1) Solo part: dotted rhythms, portato, accents, lifts.
2) Duet part: opportunity for 3rd position playing.





Lyrics written by Albert Gamse:

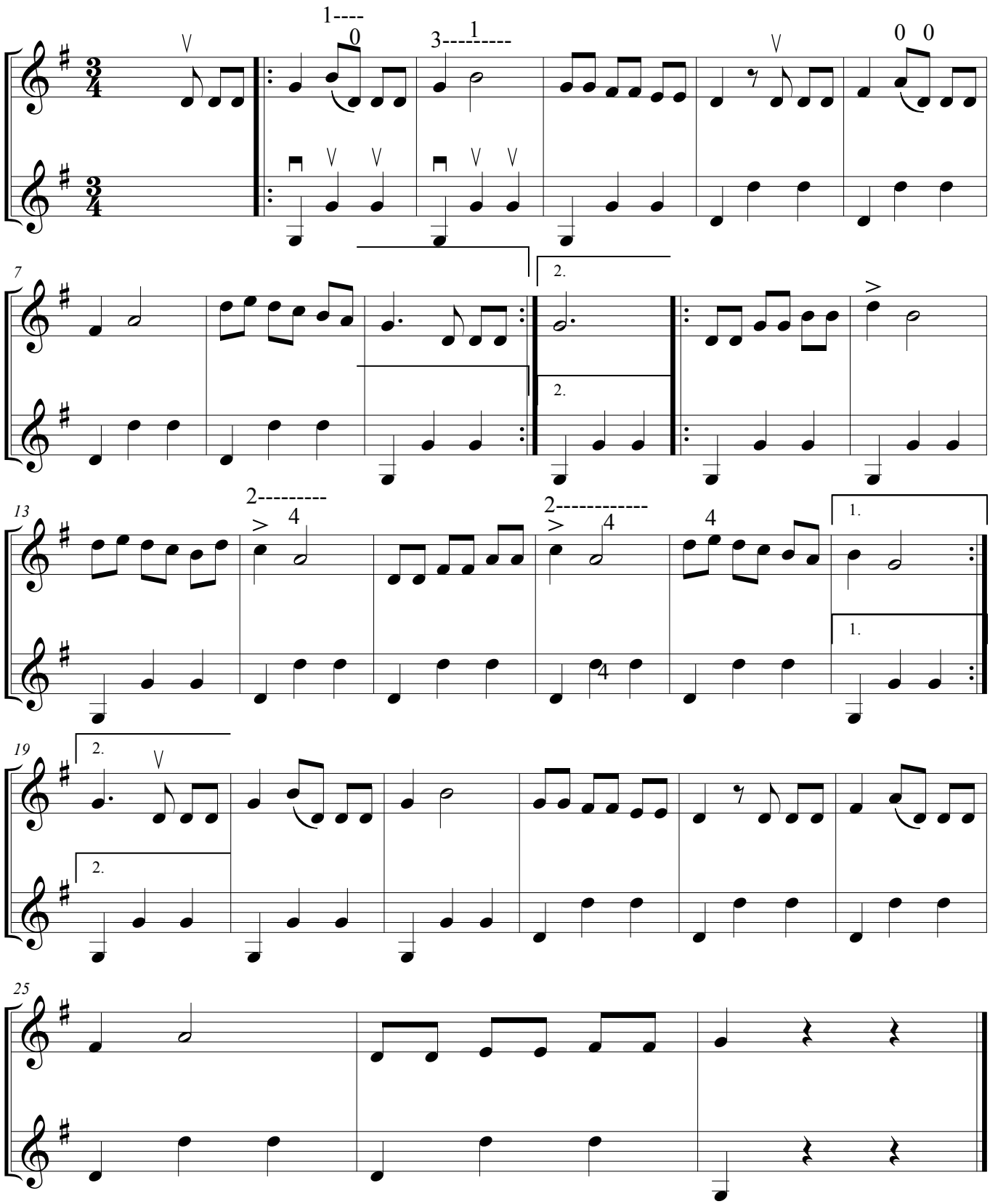
Hail to the Chief we have chosen for the nation,
Hail to the Chief! We salute him, one and all.
Hail to the Chief, as we pledge cooperation
In proud fulfillment of a great, noble call.
Yours is the aim to make this grand country grander,
This you will do, that's our strong, firm belief.
Hail to the one we selected as commander,
Hail to the President! Hail to the Chief!

Though "Hail to the Chief" is the official presidential anthem of the U.S., perhaps there are occasions for playing this tune in ordinary life:

The entrance of an important visitor, friend, or loved one, may offer a humorous opportunity to perform this work.

La Cucaracha

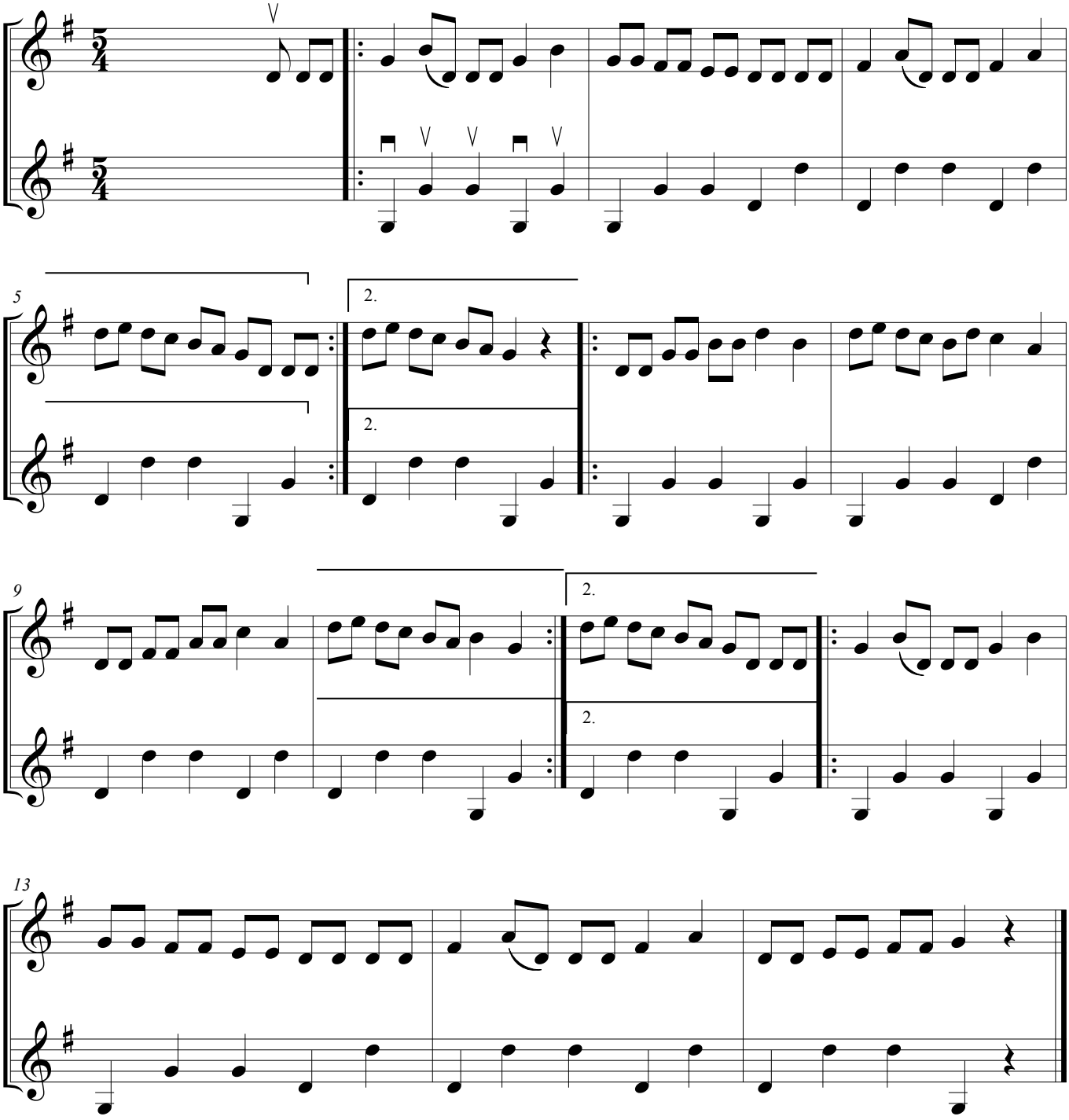
"The Cockroach," a traditional Corrido



La Cucaracha

"The Cockroach," a traditional Corrido

Five-legged arrangement



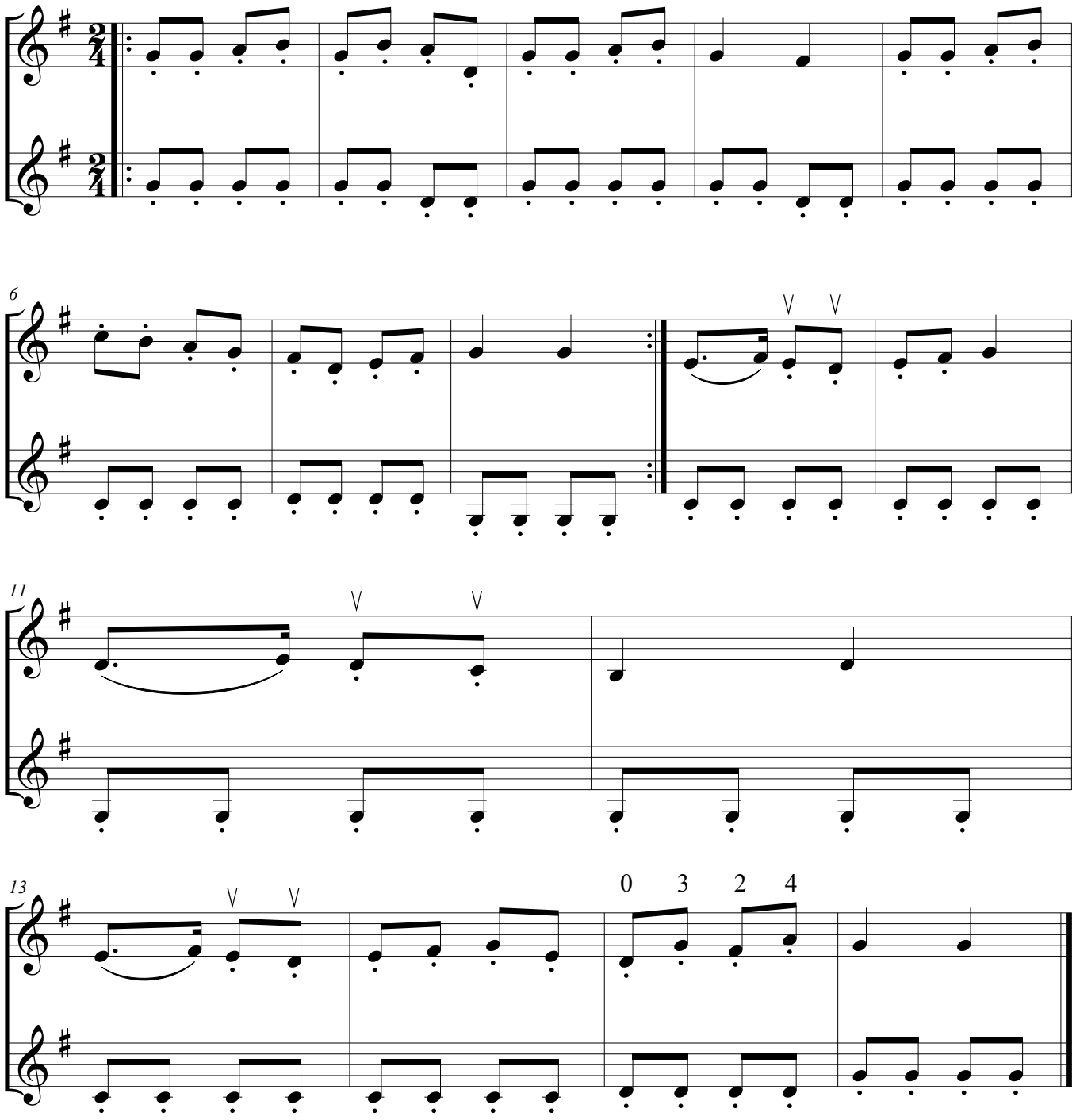
[Zerweck 2014]

Yankee Doodle

American Song, Connecticut State Anthem

Yankee Doodle went to town
Riding on a pony;
He stuck a feather in his hat,
And called it macaroni.

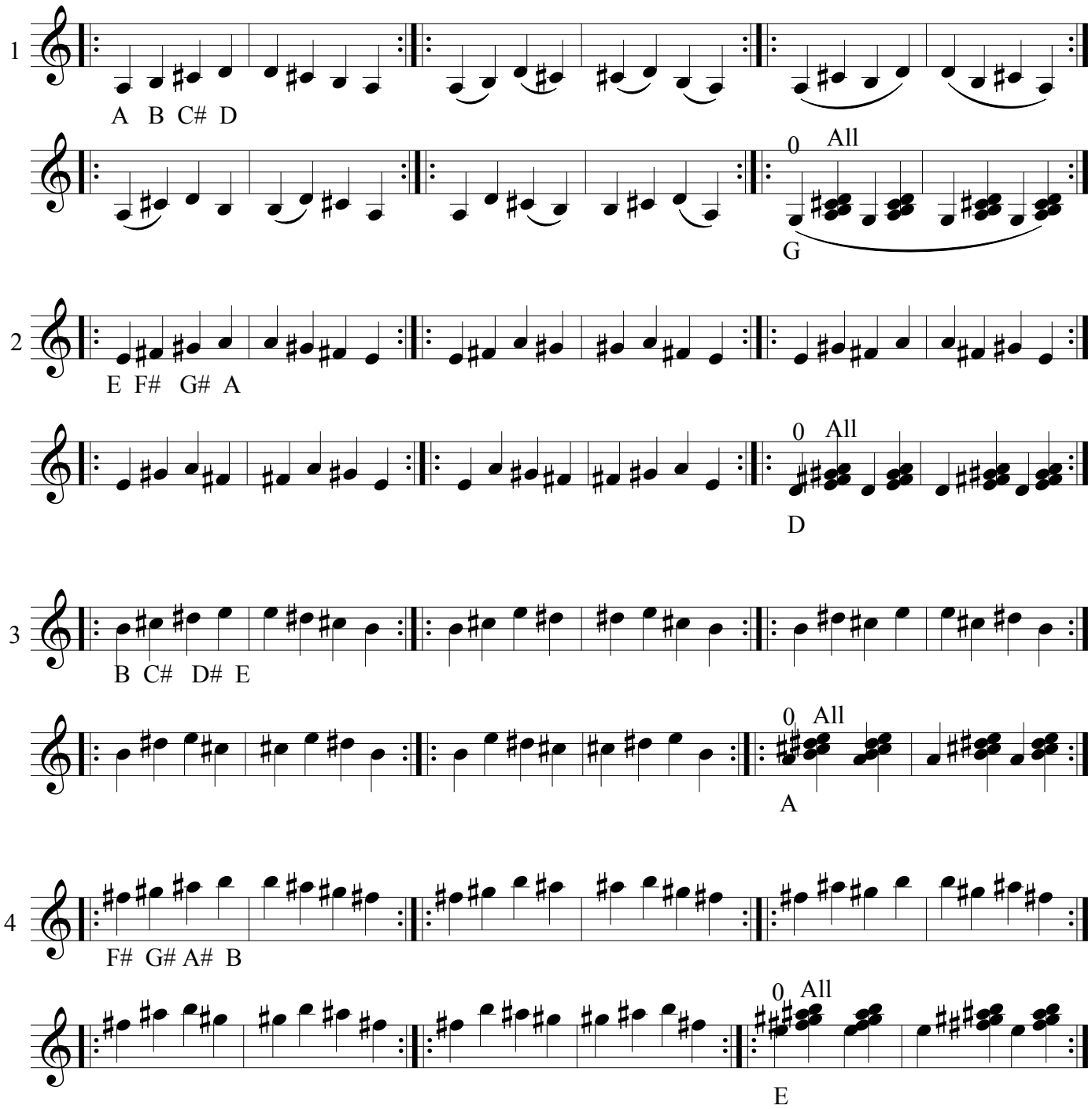
Staccato, and later, when ready, Spiccato, both parts.
Be sure to listen to: Souvenirs d'Amérique, Op.17, by Henri Vieutemps



Unit 3 – Rabbit Hand

Common patterns in Rabbit Hand

With 3rd and 4th fingers close together, you have Rabbit Hand,
or "bunny ears."

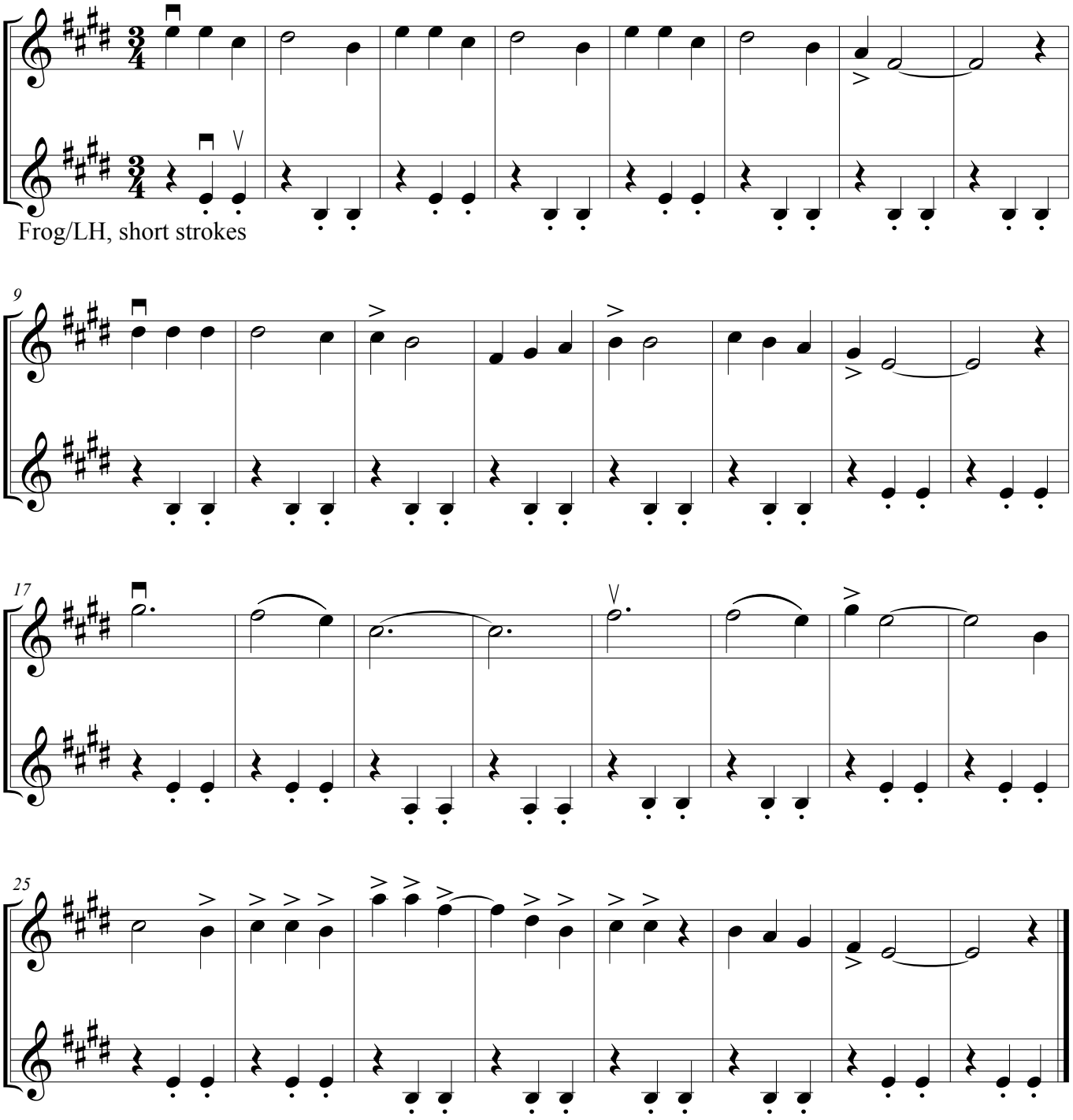


Cielito Lindo

Popular Mariachi song

Solo part: Detache Lance and Accented detache
Accompaniment: Frog control

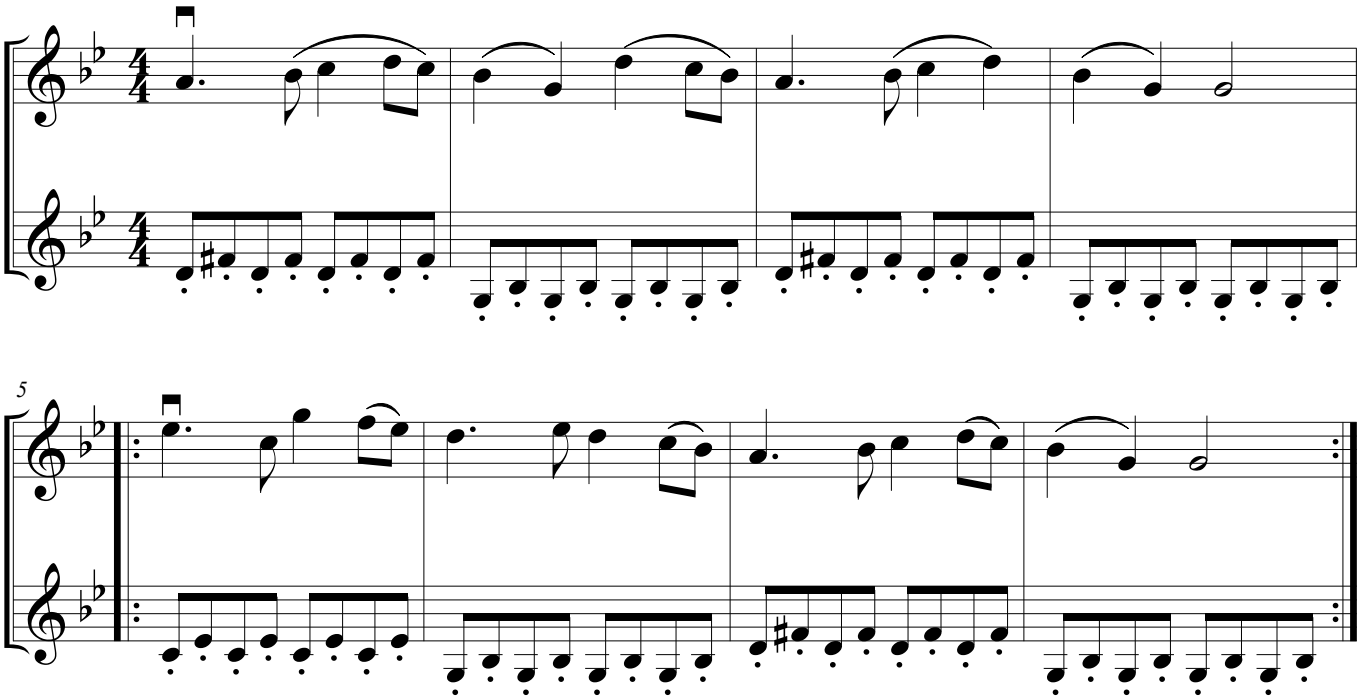
All Quarter notes use at least 1/2 bow.



Korobeiniki

Russian Folk Song, famous for use in "Tetris."

1) Solo part has mixed slur patterns.
2) Duet part useful for developing spiccato and LH finger action.



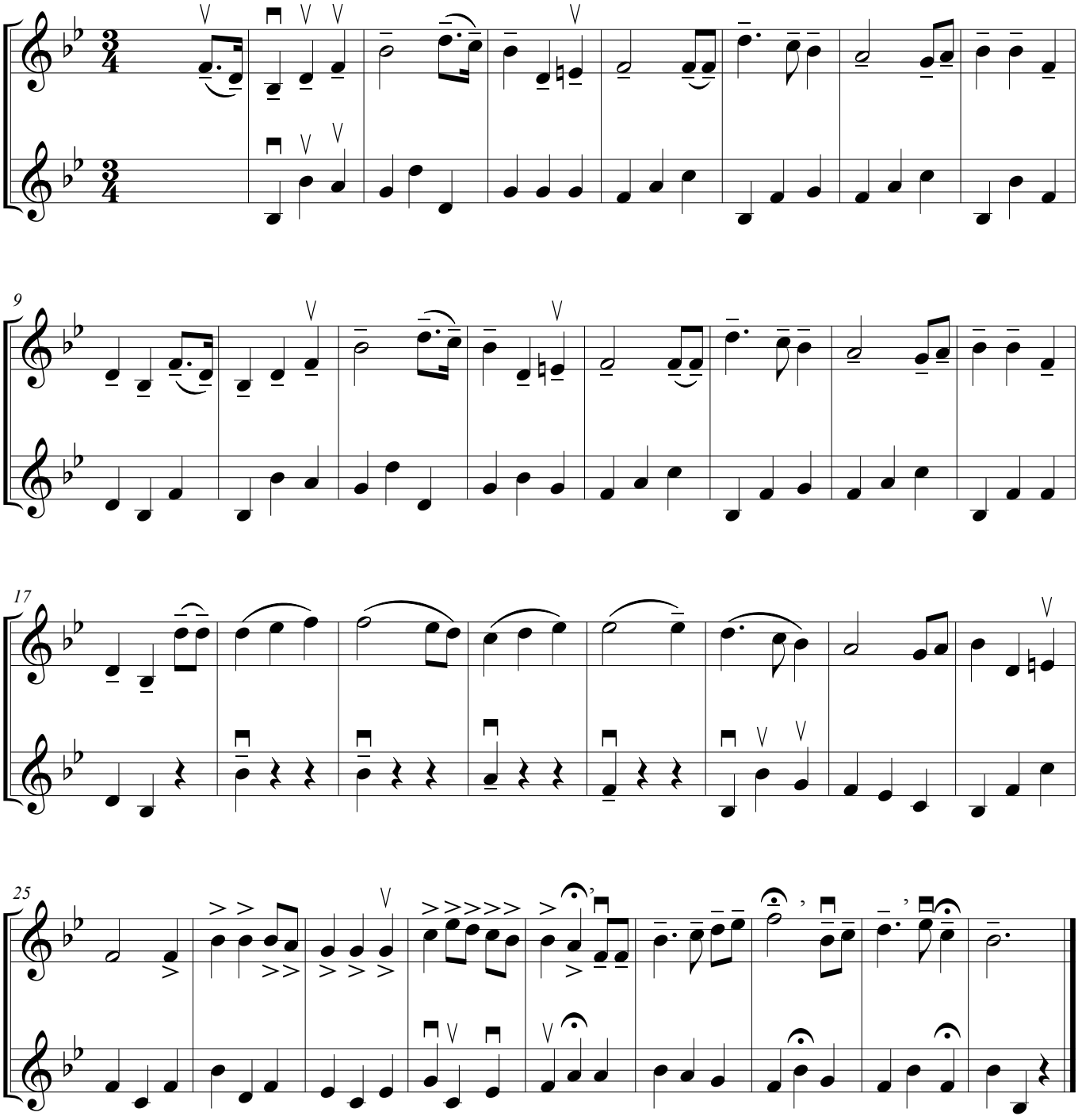
Oh, my crate is so full,
I've got chintz and brocade.
Take pity, oh sweety,
Of this lad's shoulder...

Korobeiniki were peddlers with trays, selling knicknacks and supplies in pre-revolutionary Russia. Nekrasov's poem is a sad story about the love between a peasant girl, Katya, and a young peddler.

Star Spangled Banner

National Anthem, U.S.A.

Portato, Porte, Legato, Accented Detache

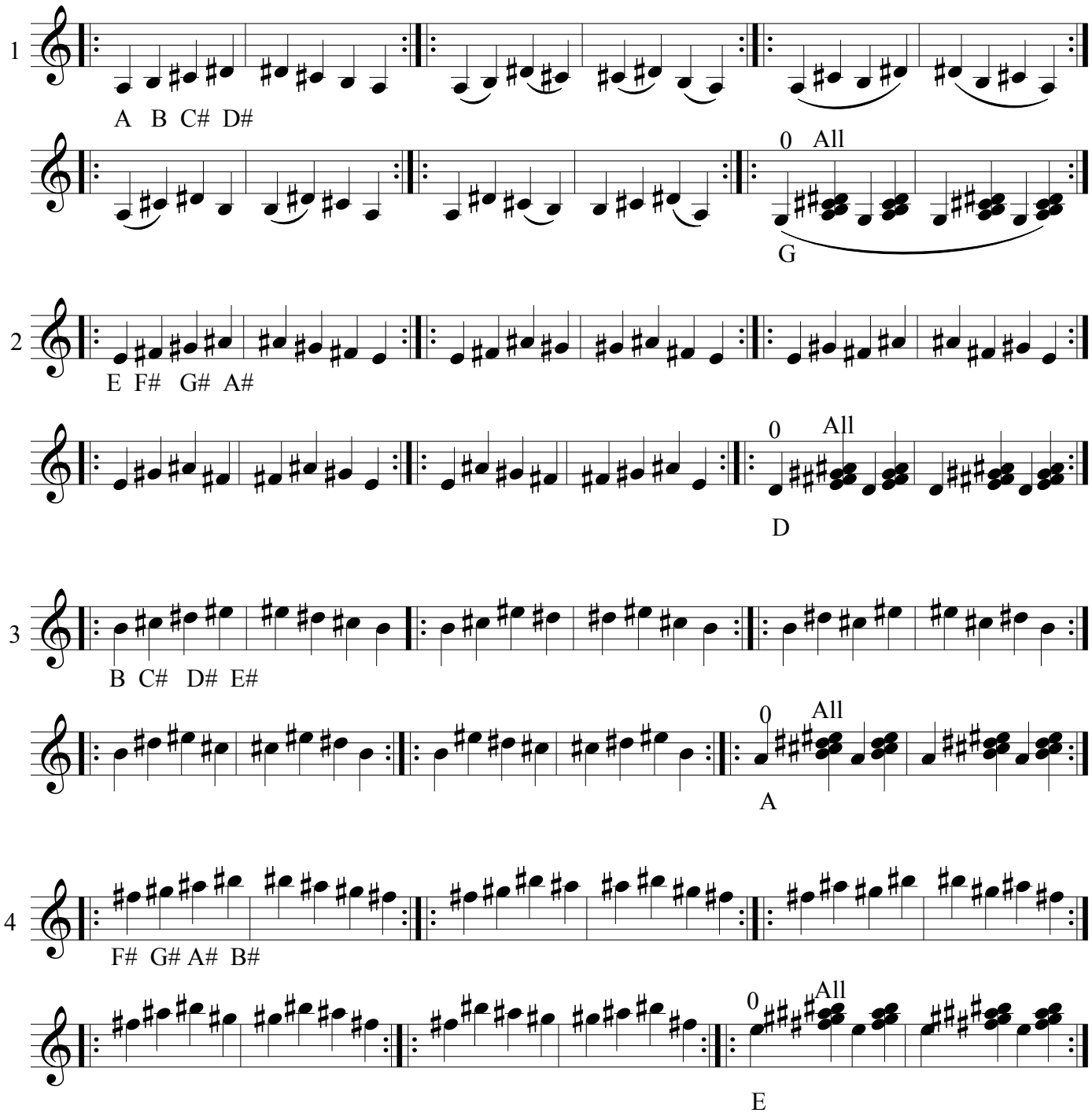


Unit 4 – Claw Hand

Common patterns in Claw Hand

None of the fingers are touching. The Claw Hand, though the fingers are spread, can still be a relaxed and comfortable hand position.

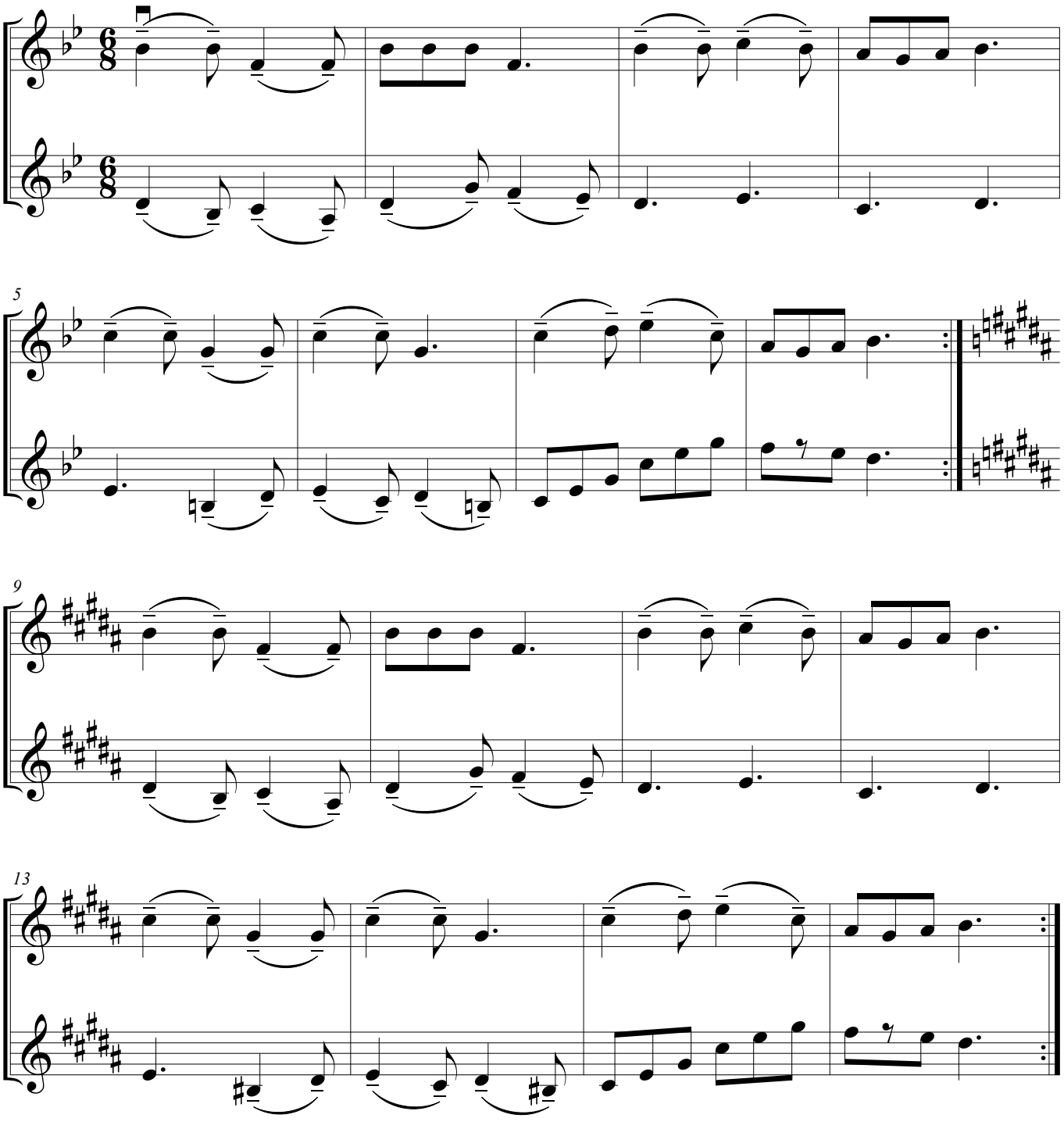
It may be beneficial to roll/seesaw the hand, instead of keeping all fingers down on the string.



Georgie Porgie, Puddin' and Pie,
Kissed the girls and made them cry,
When the boys came out to play
Georgie Porgie ran away

Georgie, Porgie

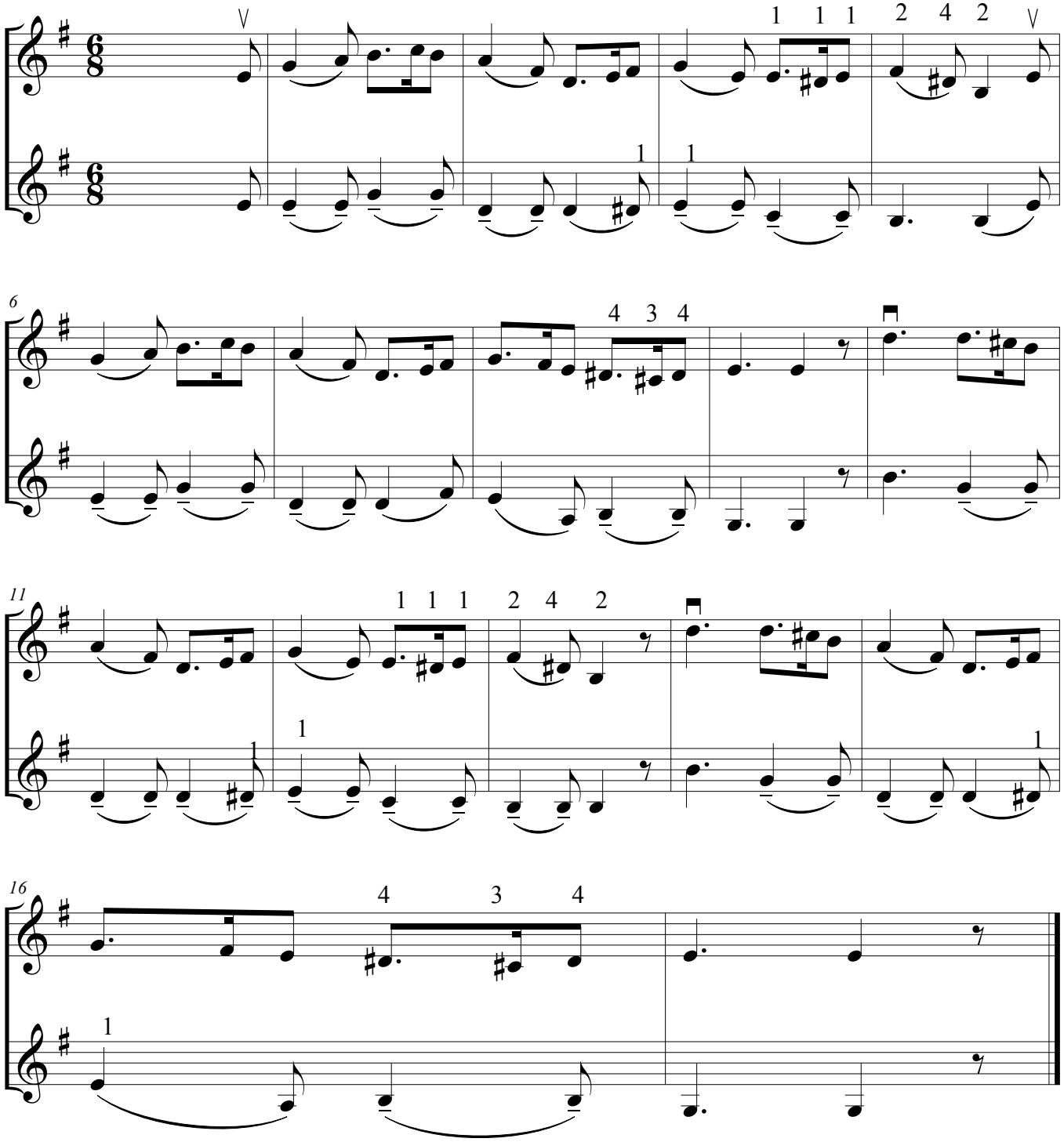
1) Solo part offers perfect 4th relationships, transposition.
2) Accompaniment offers transposition, fast arpeggio.



Greensleeves

English Folk Song

Both parts offer chromatic motion with 1st finger, in addition to the "Claw" hand position.

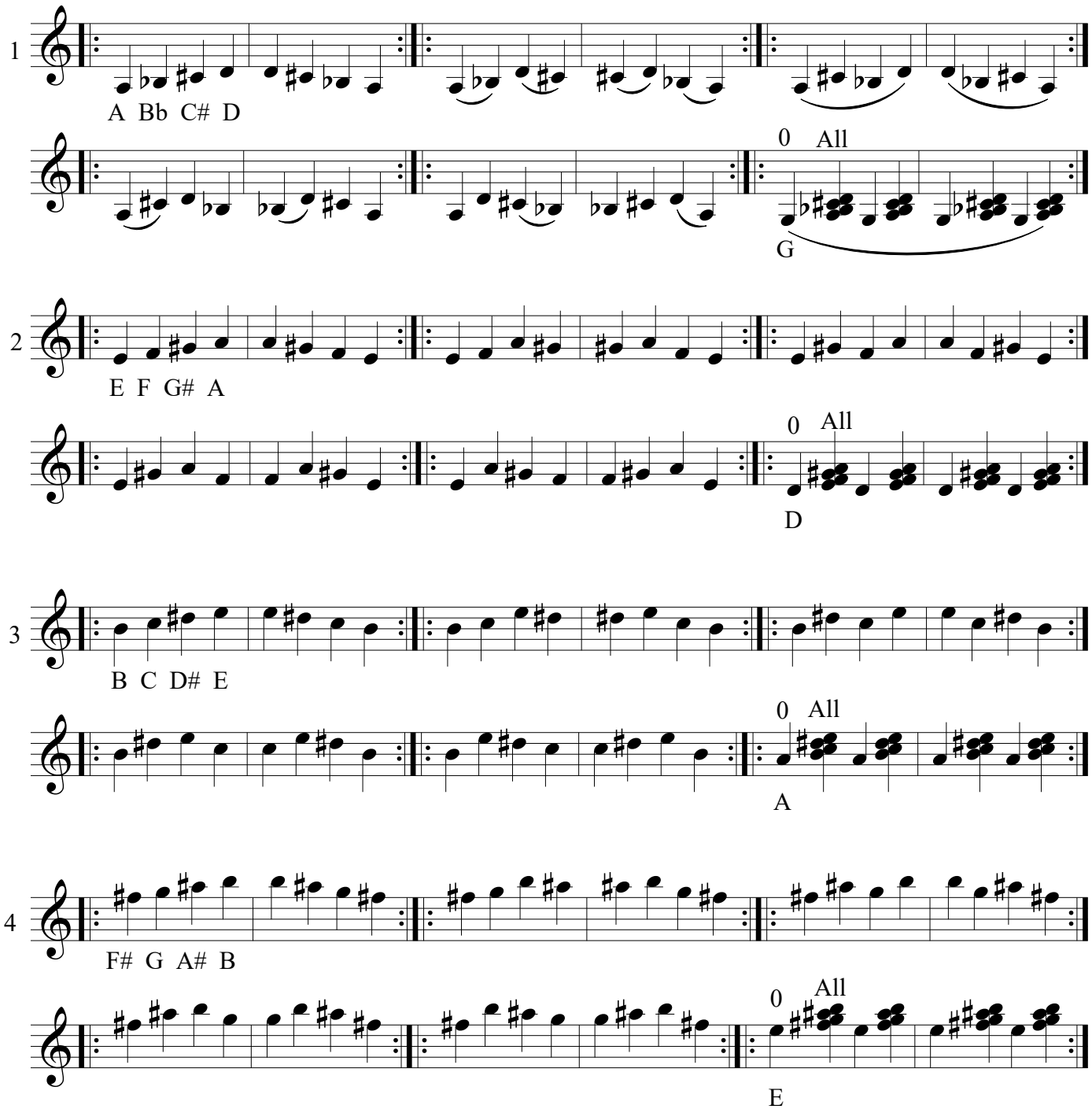


Unit 5 – Crab Hand

Common patterns in Crab Hand

With 1+2 AND 3+4 close together, we have a "Crab Hand."
Science Fiction fans, maybe there are other names we could call this hand signal.

Most student hands will not be capable of leaving all 4 fingers down on the string.
The finger action may have to look much more like rolling or seeesawing.

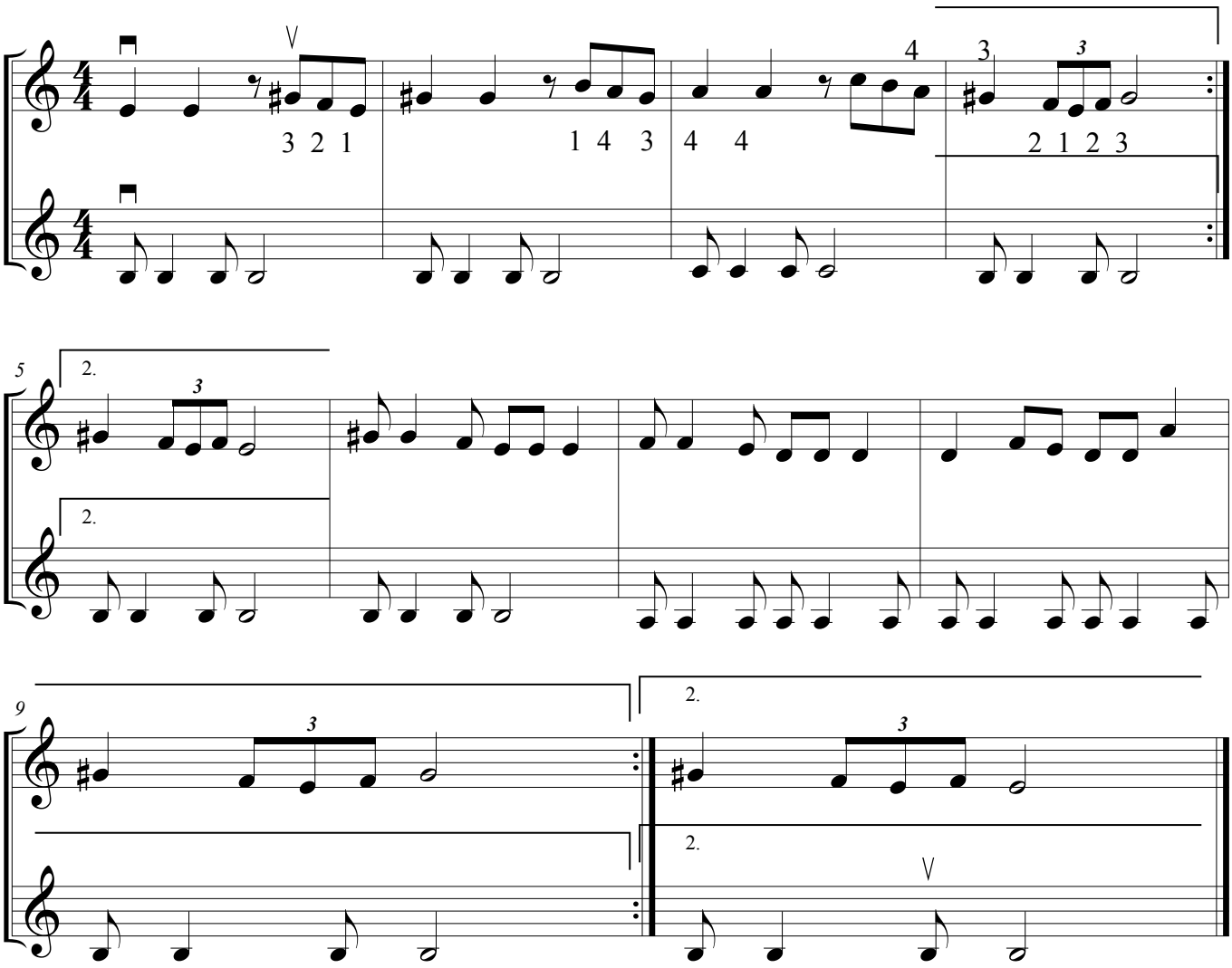


Let's rejoice
Let's rejoice
Let's rejoice and be happy

Hava Nagila

Modern Israeli Folk Song

1) Solo Part:Triplets.
2) Accompaniment: Syncopation

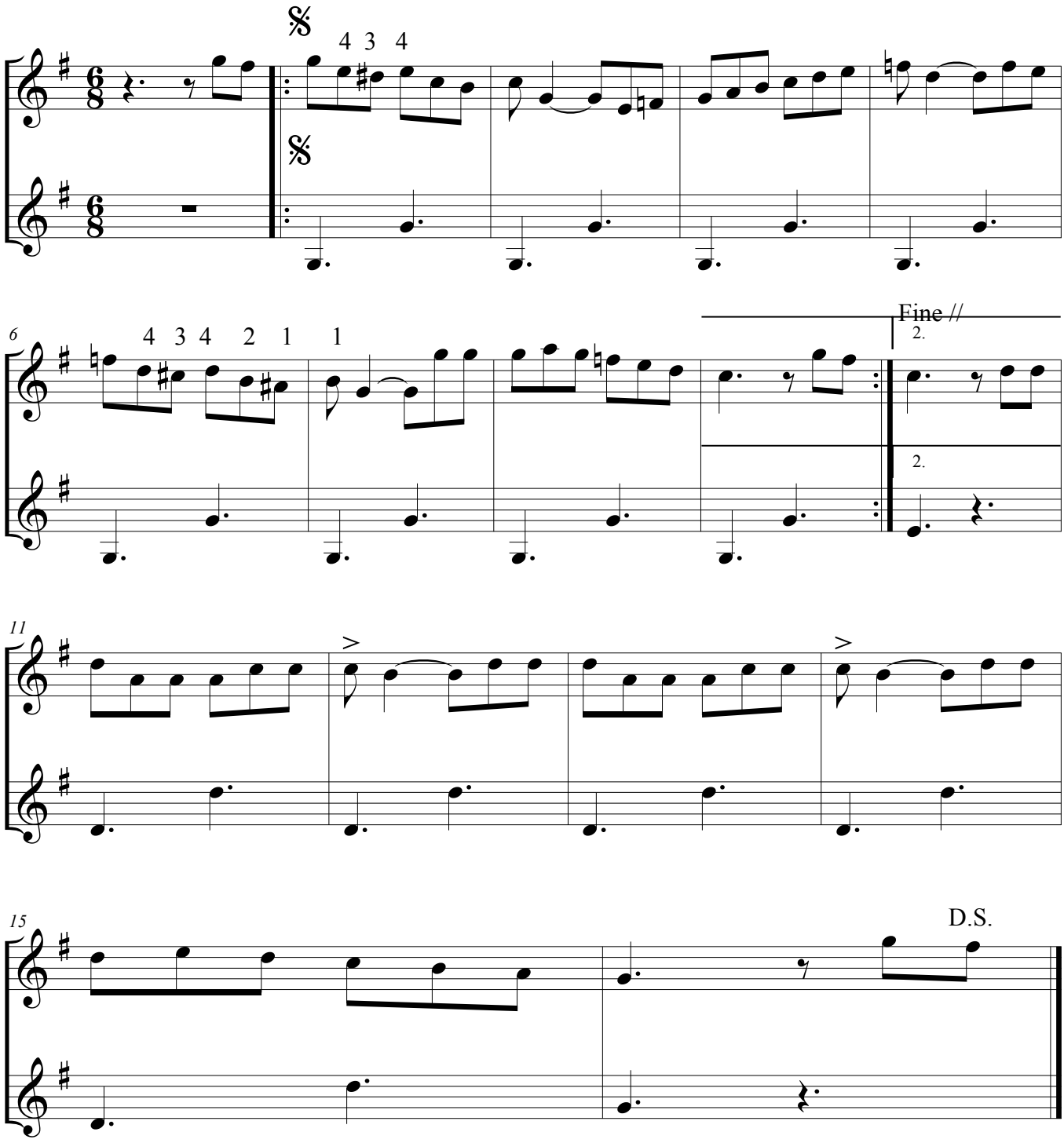


"Hava Nagila" ("Let us rejoice") was composed in 1920's, at a time when Hebrew was being revived as a spoken language.

Jarabe Tapatio

Mexican Hat Dance

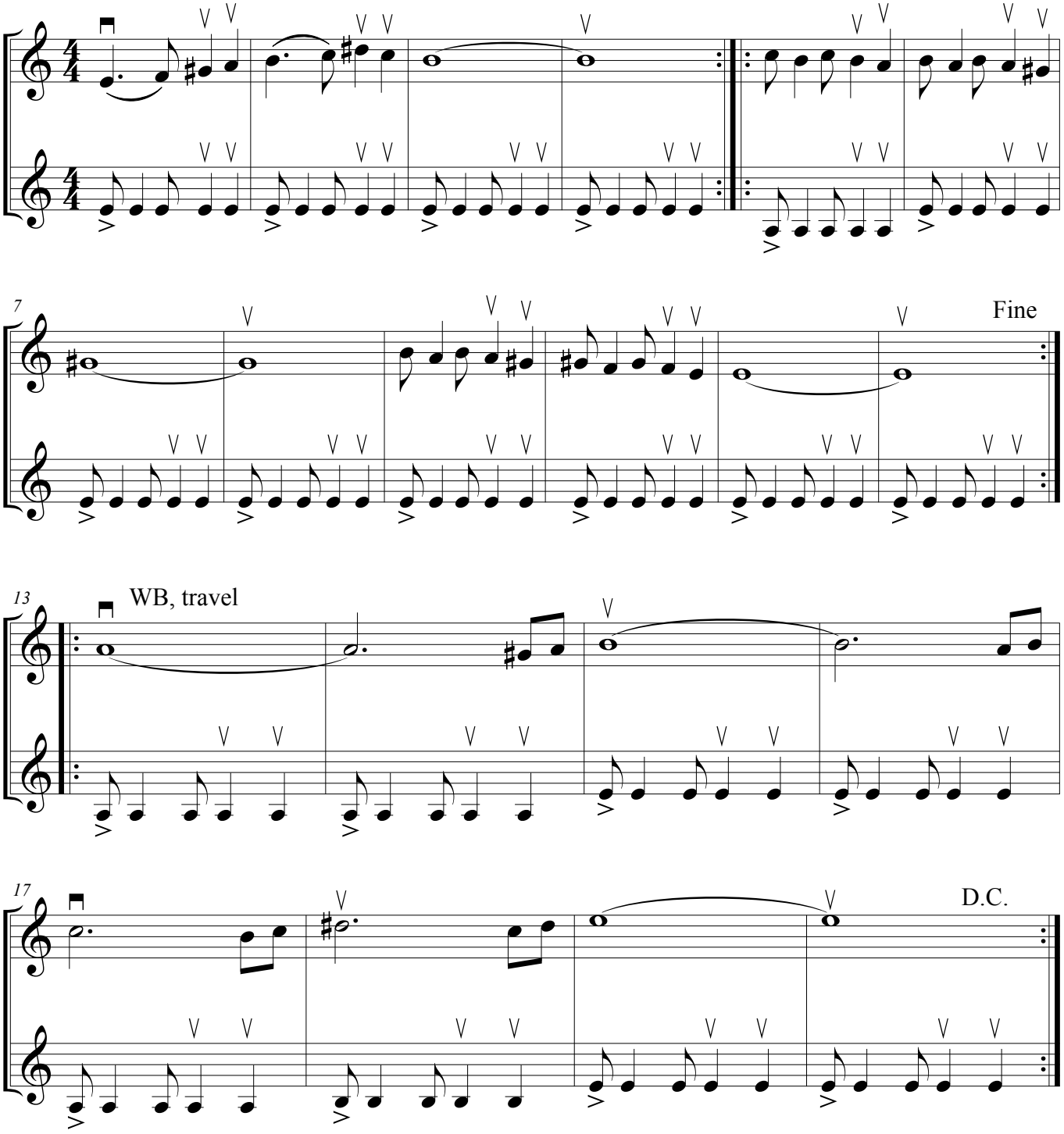
1) Crab Hand in transposition.
2) Perfect 5ths, 4ths, M3.



Misirlou

Greek Folk music
Popularized in "Pulp Fiction," with Dick Dale's Surfer Rock arrangement.

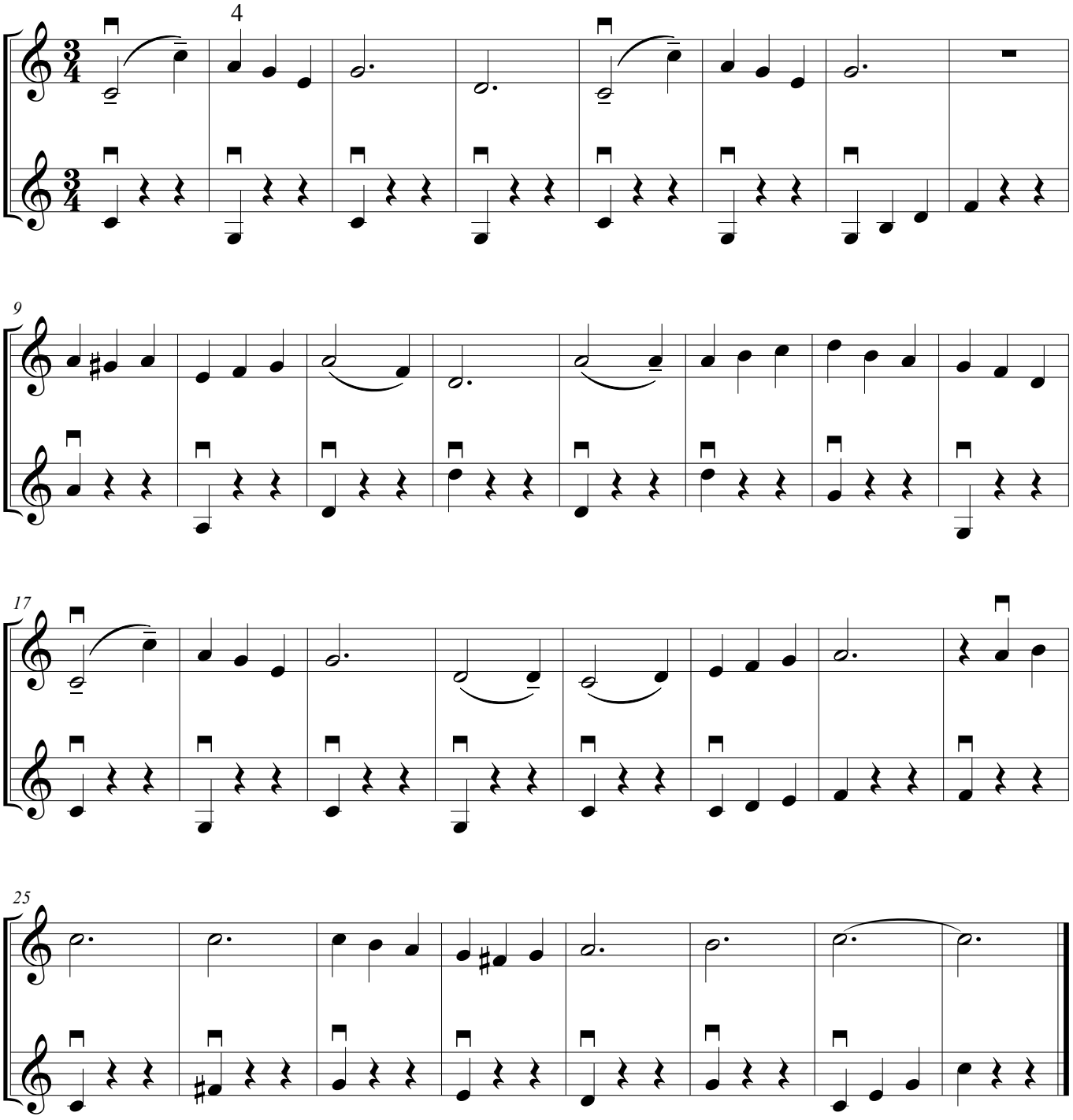
Syncopated Rhythms and Bowing coordination. Solo can be played Tremolo.



Take Me Out to the Ball Game

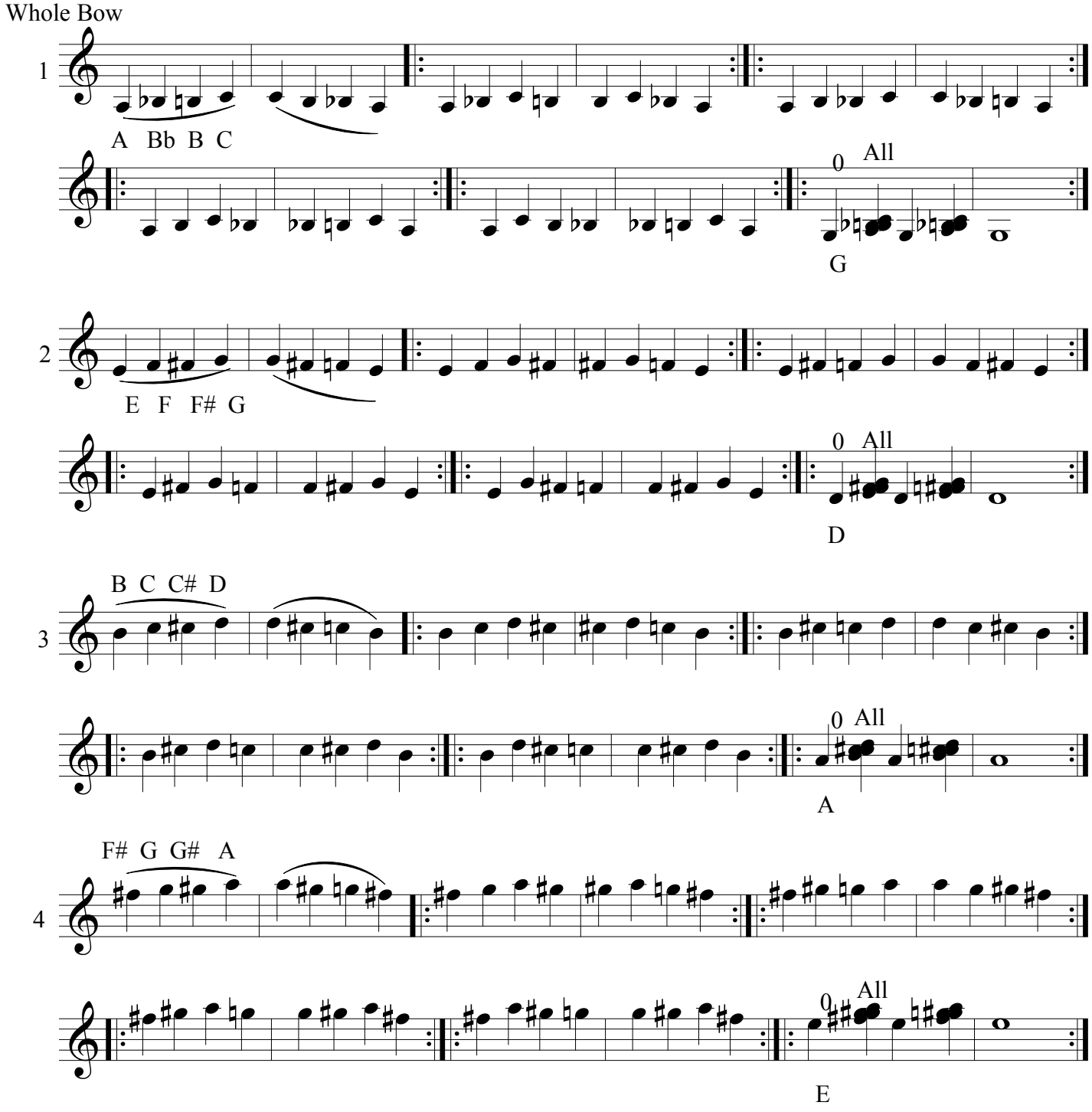
Albert von Tilzer, 1908 Tin Pan Alley song

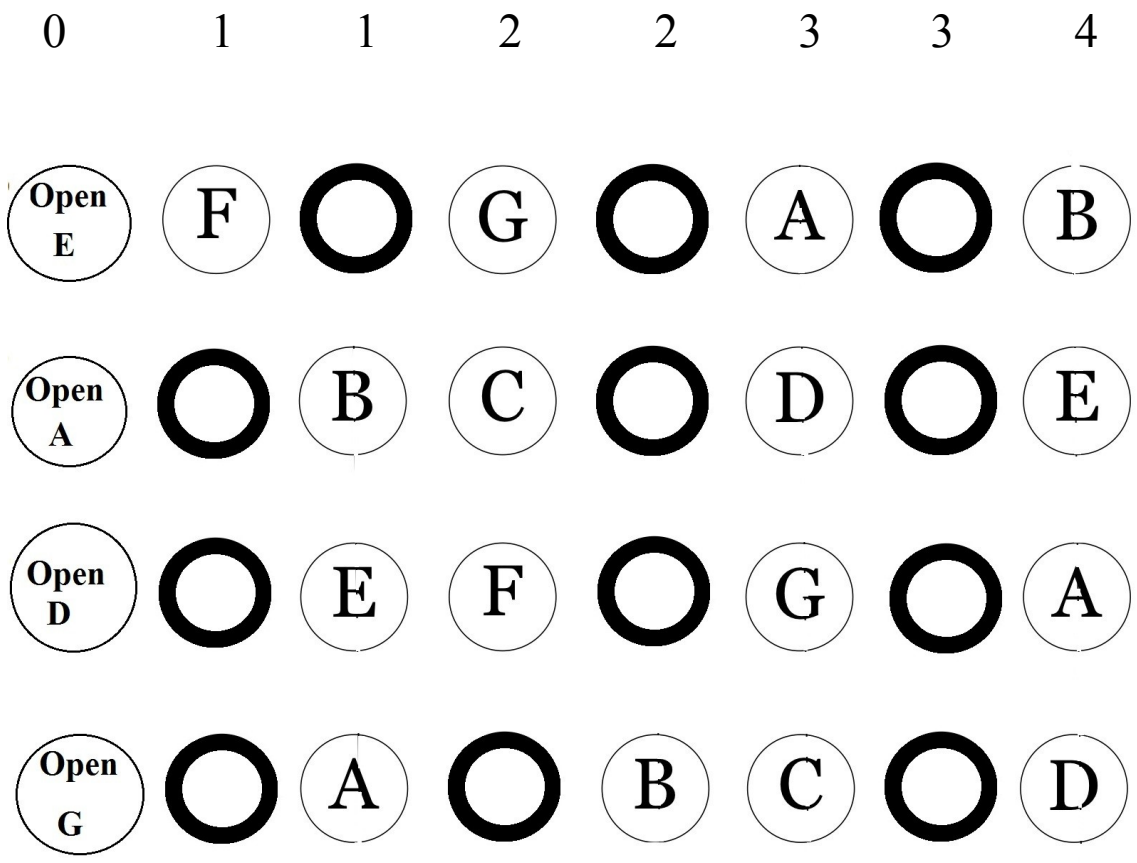
1) String changes, skipping over a string.
2) Large circular retakes.



Unit 6 – Closed Claw, Chromatic Scales, Review

Common patterns in Closed Claw Hand





Chromatic Discovery

Teachers should have a conversation with their student about naming the notes in the 1st position. This finger board diagram can be an opportunity to discuss the naming of notes visually.

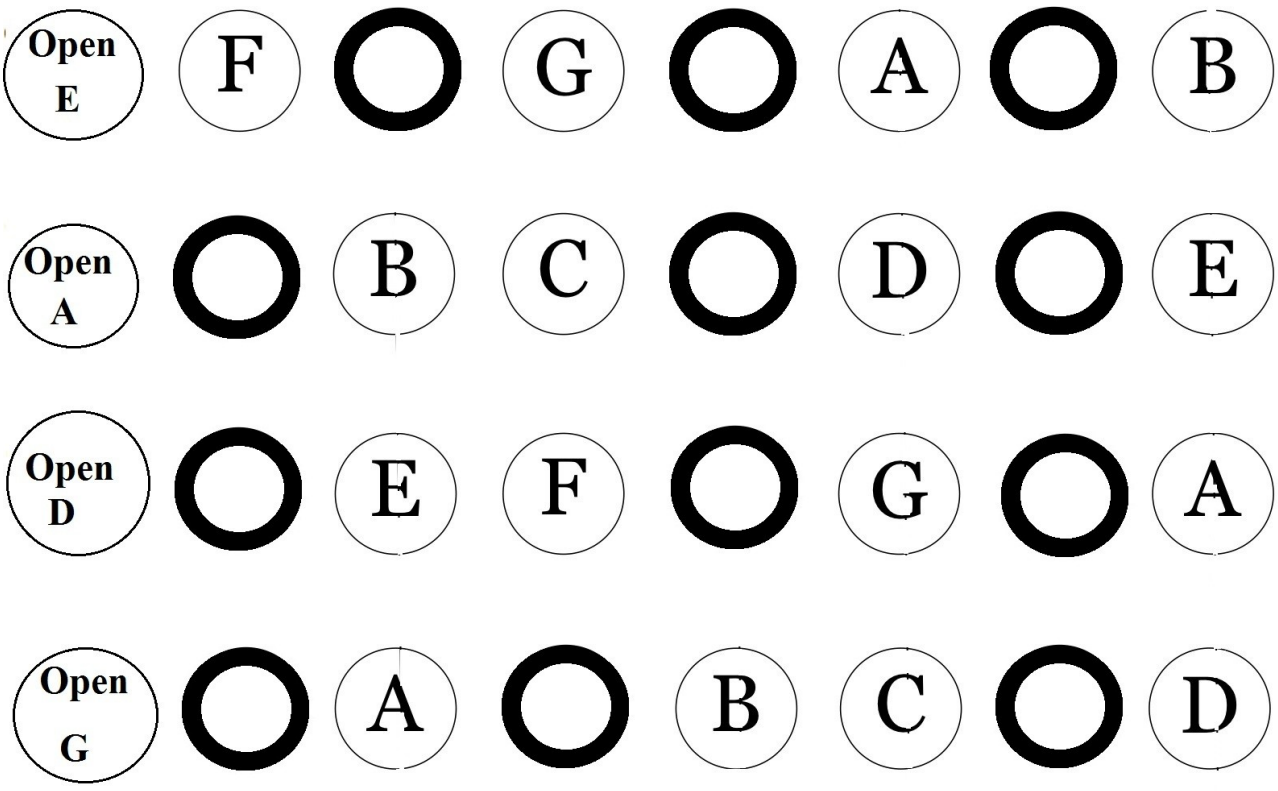
1) On this page fill in the empty black circles with SHARP note names.

Have the student perform a chromatic scale using all of the notes.
Have the student Speak the note names while playing the scale.

2) On the next page, the student can fill out the blank circles with FLAT note names.

***Discuss: "Enharmonic Equivalence."

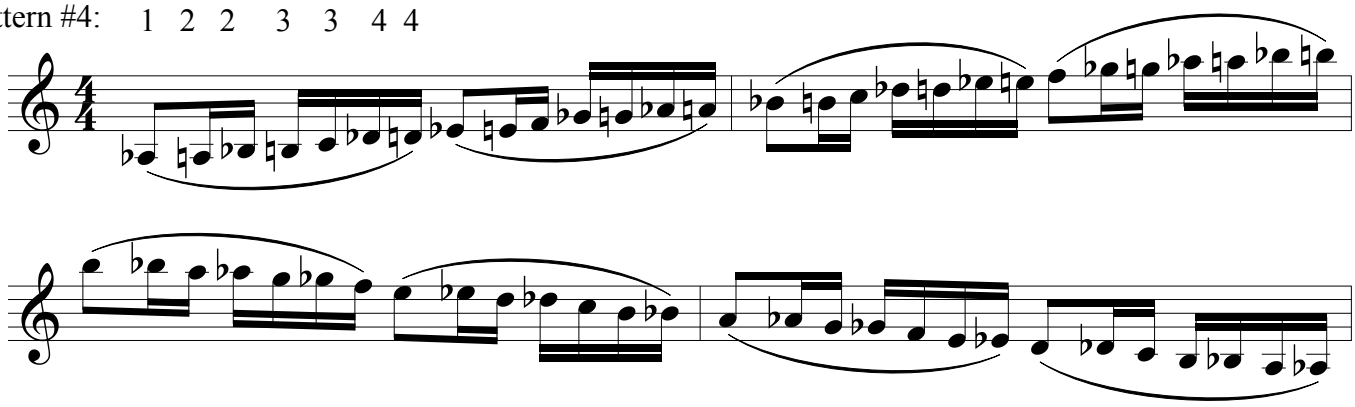
***Also, how are notes E and F, B and C different from the other notes?


Open E
F
G
A
B
Open A
B
C
D
E
Open D
E
F
G
A
Open G
A
B
C
D

Chromatic Scales in One Position

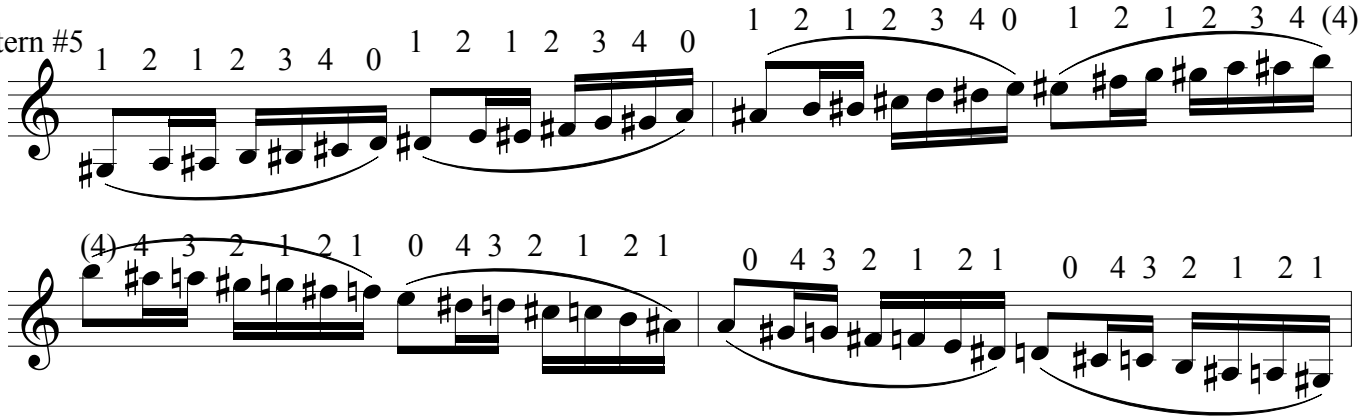
Pattern #1: 1 1 2 2 3 3 4
Pattern #2: 1 1 2 2 3 4 4
Pattern #3: 1 1 2 3 3 4 4
Pattern #4: 1 2 2 3 3 4 4

Pattern #1 is the most common chromatic solution. Pattern #5 stays in 1st position, and is common in extremely fast chromatic passages.



Students should first practice naming the notes with flat key names and then sharp key names. This is a great opportunity to practice Enharmonic Equivalents, in addition to becoming comfortable with the motion of the fingers moving towards and away from the bridge.

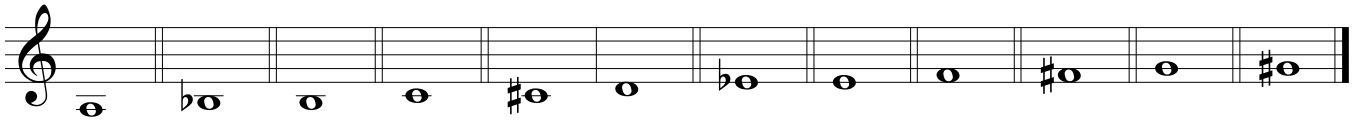
Pattern #5



Once students are able to associate note names (Flats and Sharps) on all four finger patterns, ambitious students should learn to transpose this chromatic scale by starting on the following starting positions on the G String.

When naming is no longer a difficulty, tempo and bowing goals should be set by the Teacher.

Starting positions, 1st Finger on G string

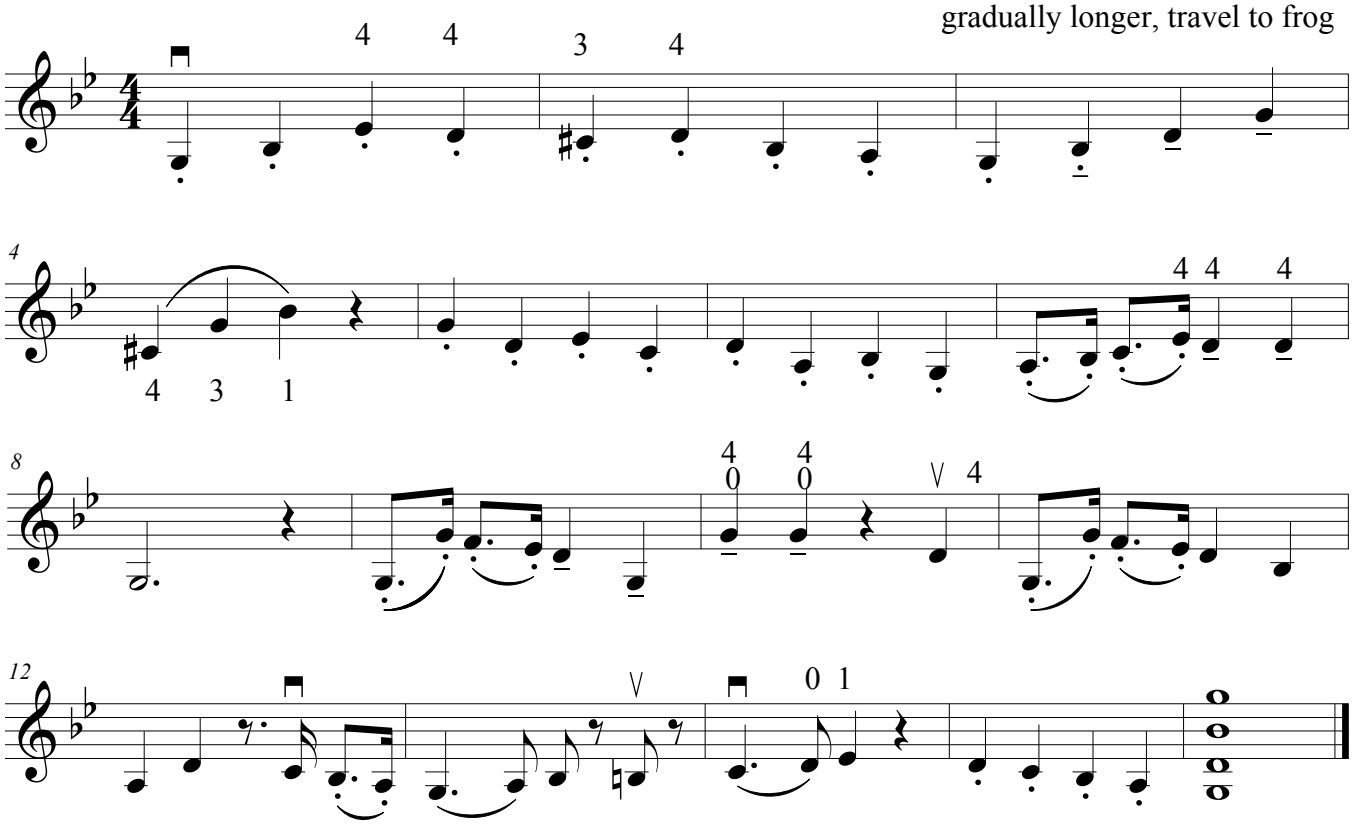


Burglar Music

J. S. Zamecnik

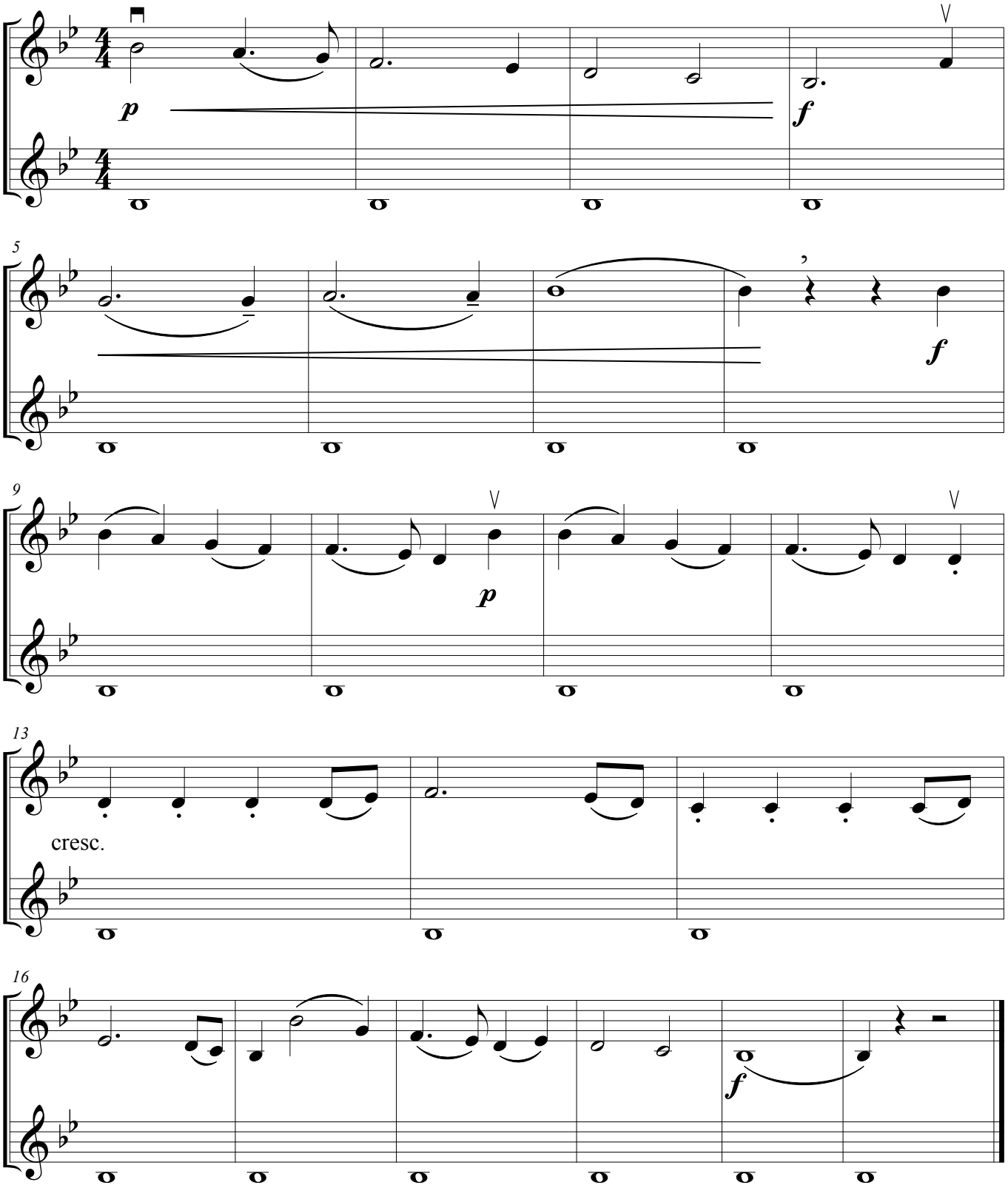
Extensions, introductory multiple stops.

gradually longer, travel to frog



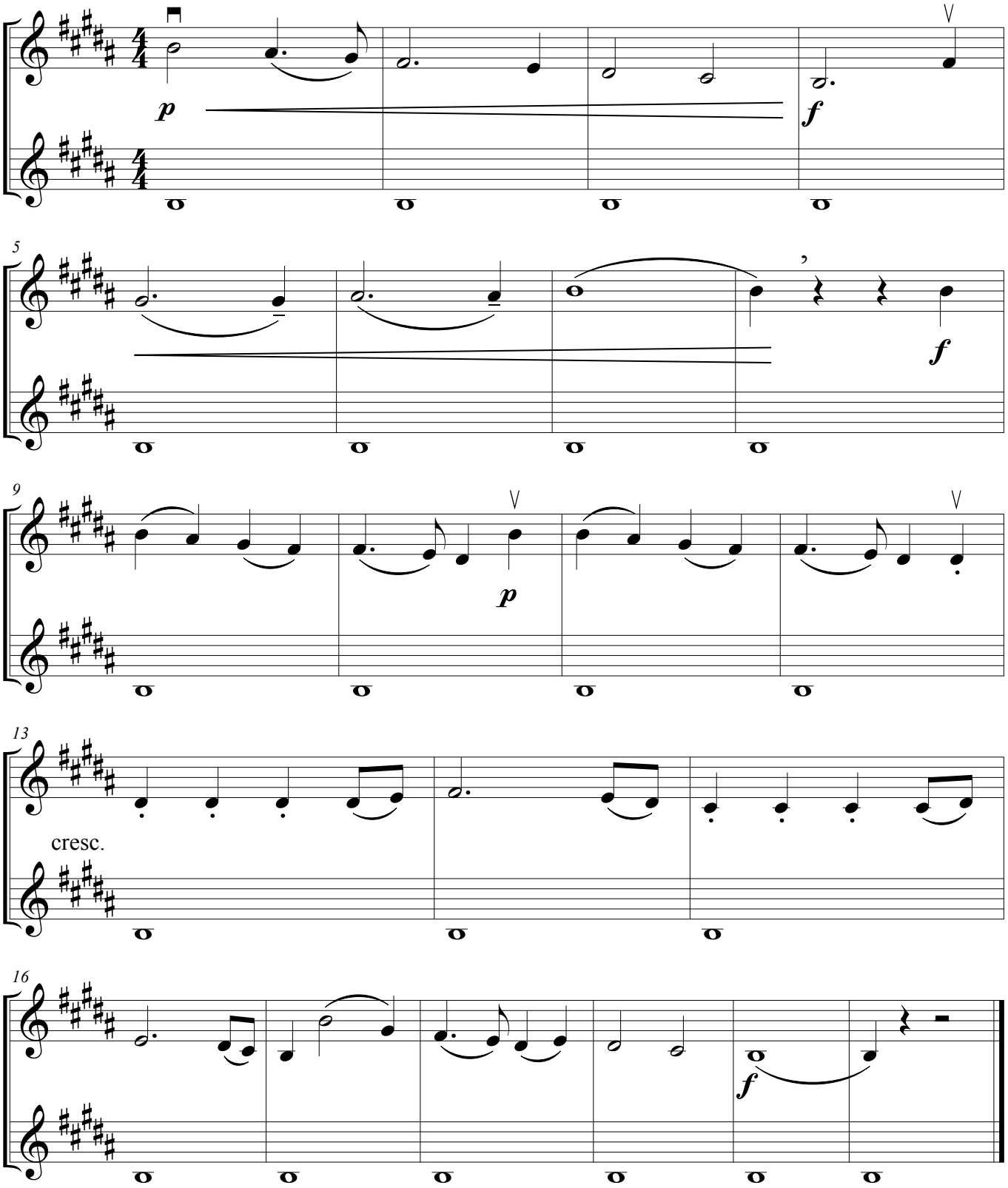
Joy to the World (Claw)

Popular Christmmas Hymn, inspired by Handel's "Messiah"



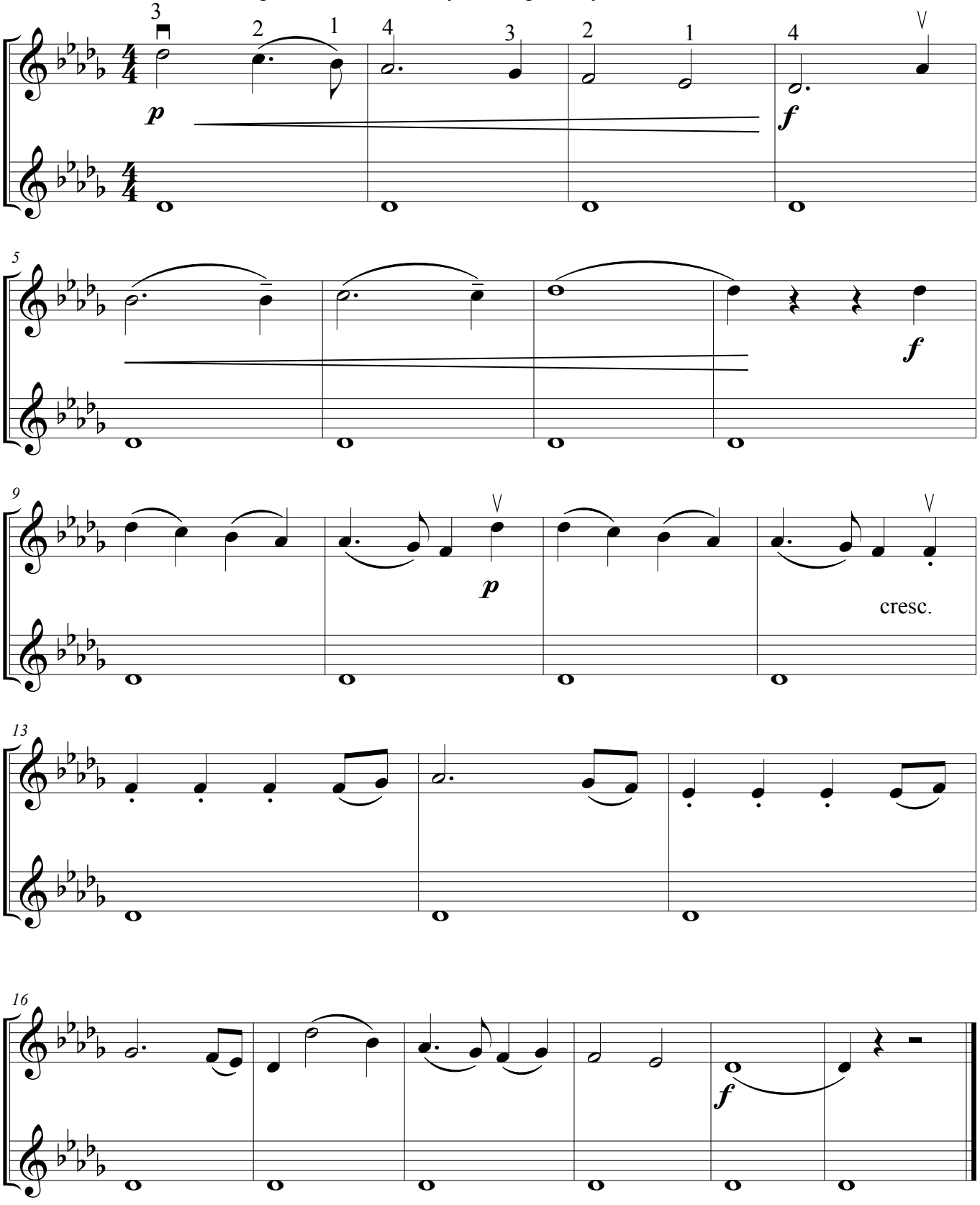
Joy to the World (Claw)

Popular Christmmas Hymn, inspired by Handel's "Messiah"



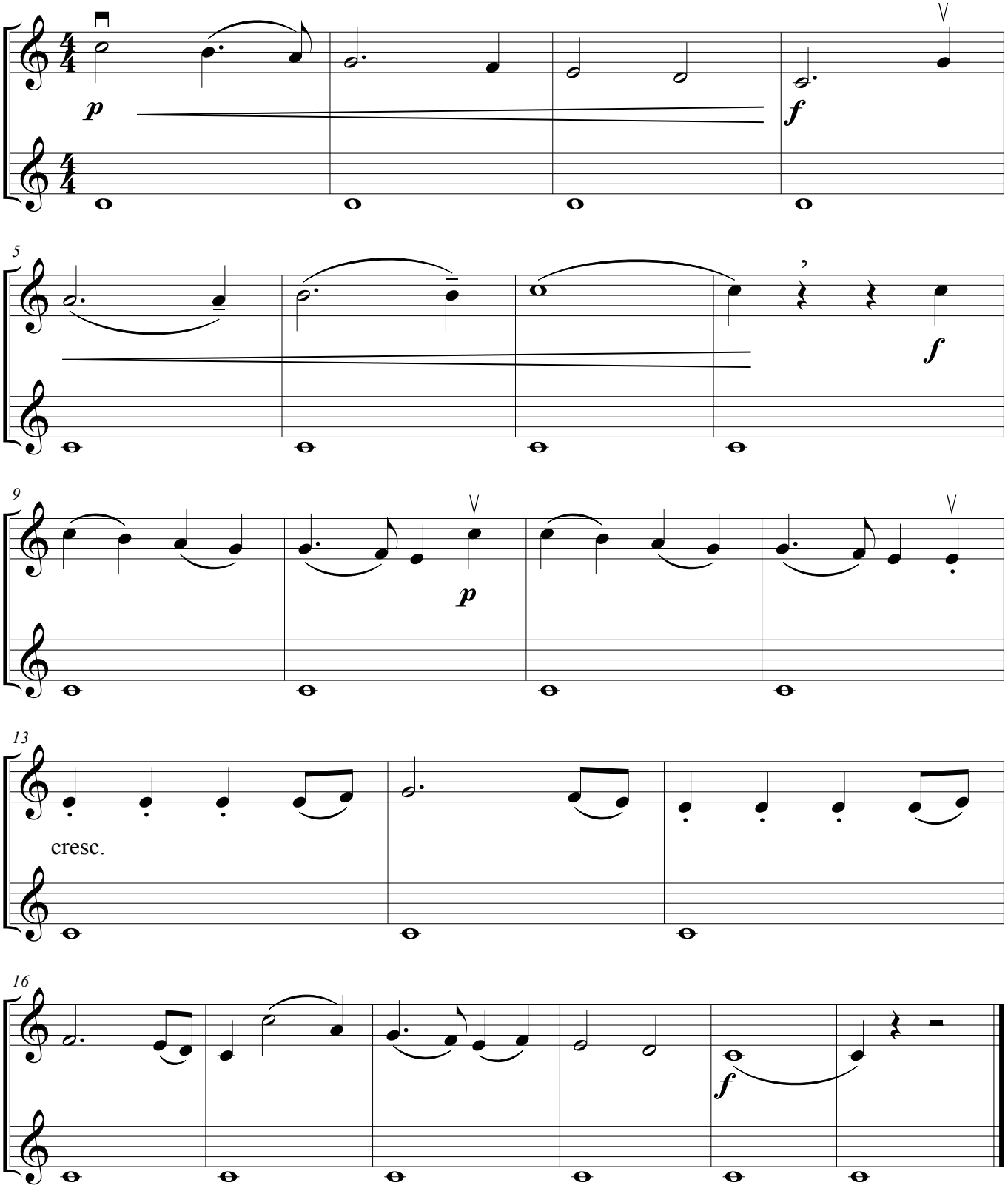
Joy to the World (Fox)

Popular Christmmas Hymn, inspired by Handel's "Messiah"



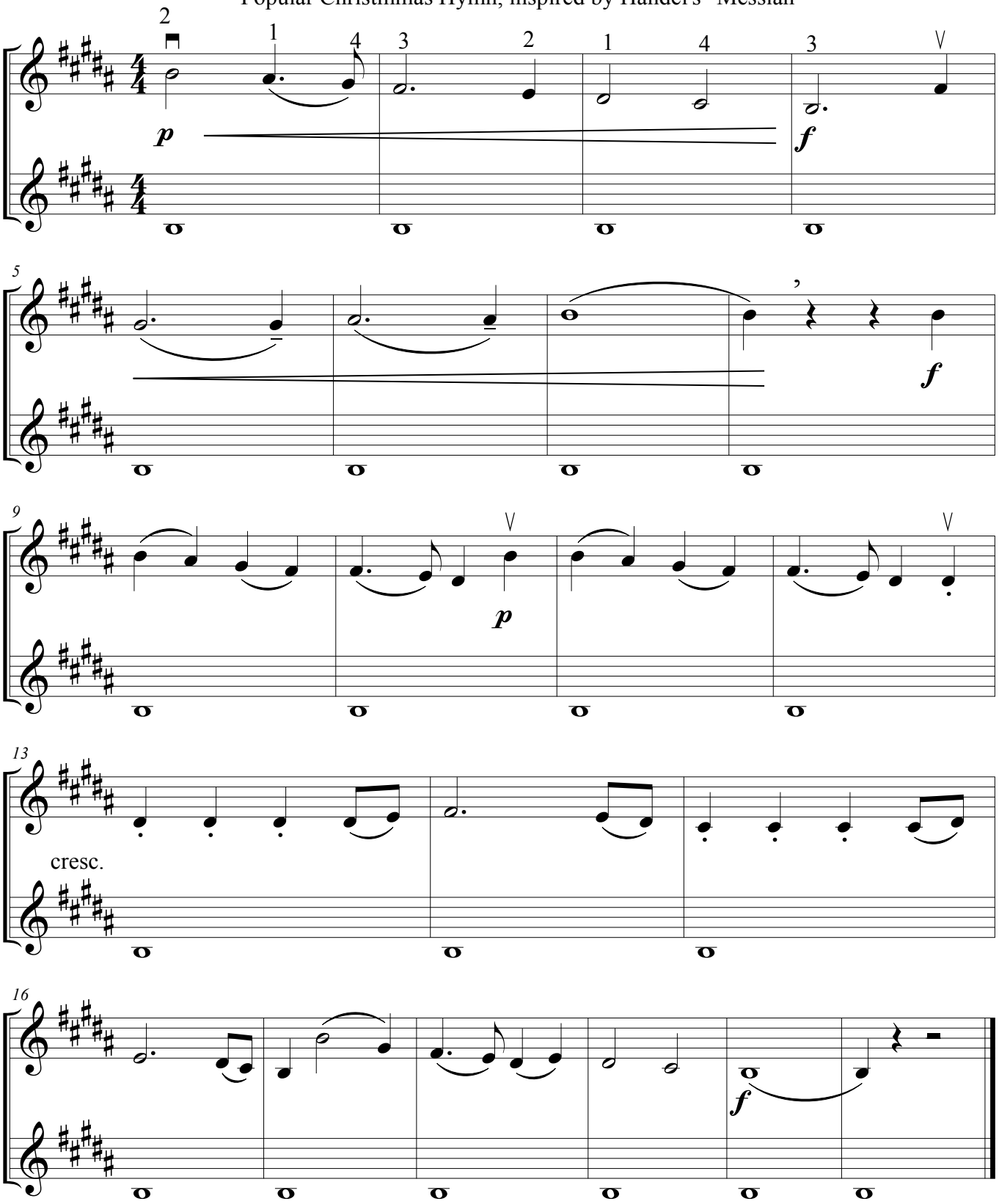
Joy to the World (Tea)

Popular Christmmas Hymn, inspired by Handel's "Messiah"



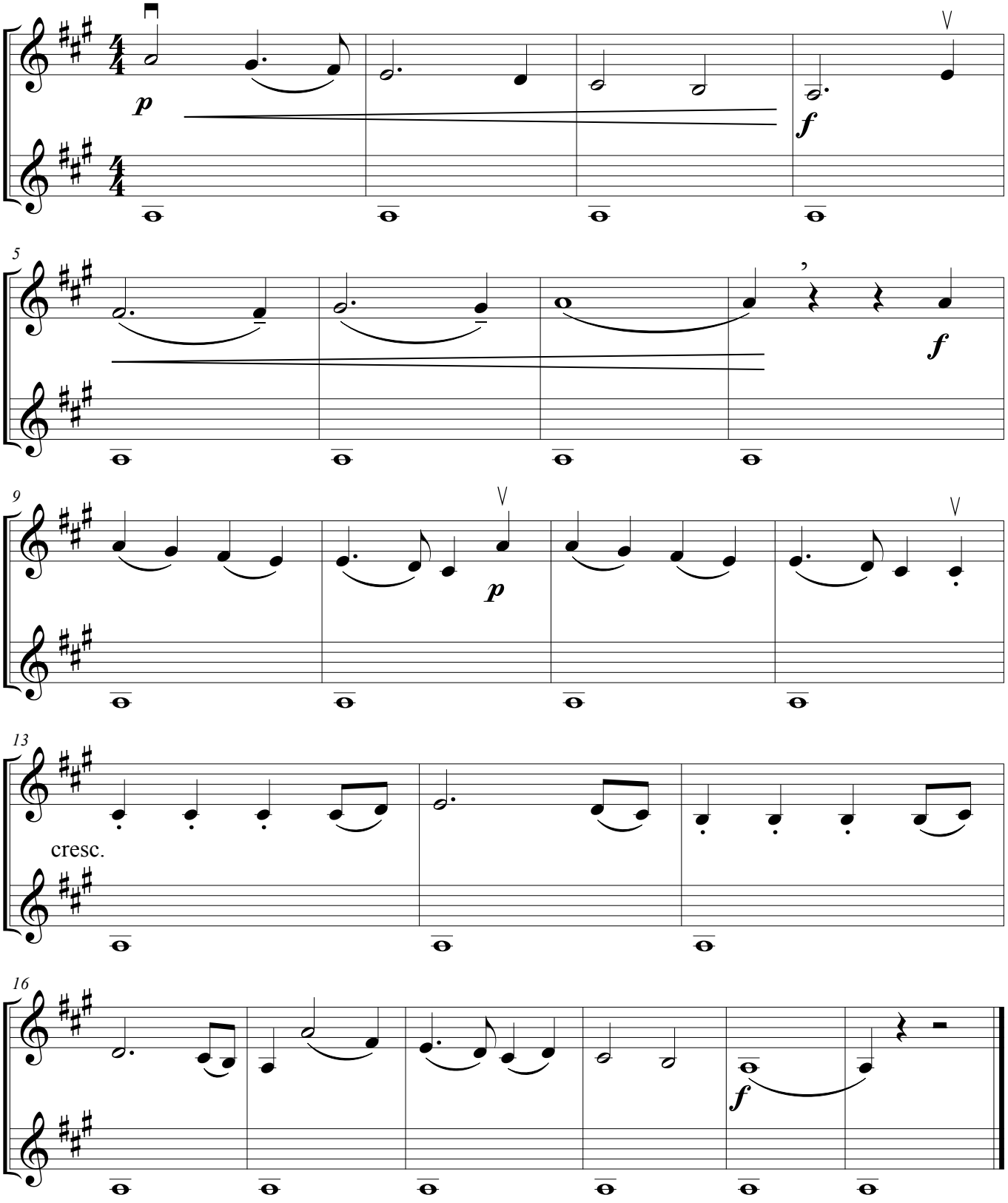
Joy to the World (Tea)

Popular Christmmas Hymn, inspired by Handel's "Messiah"



Joy to the World (Rabbit)

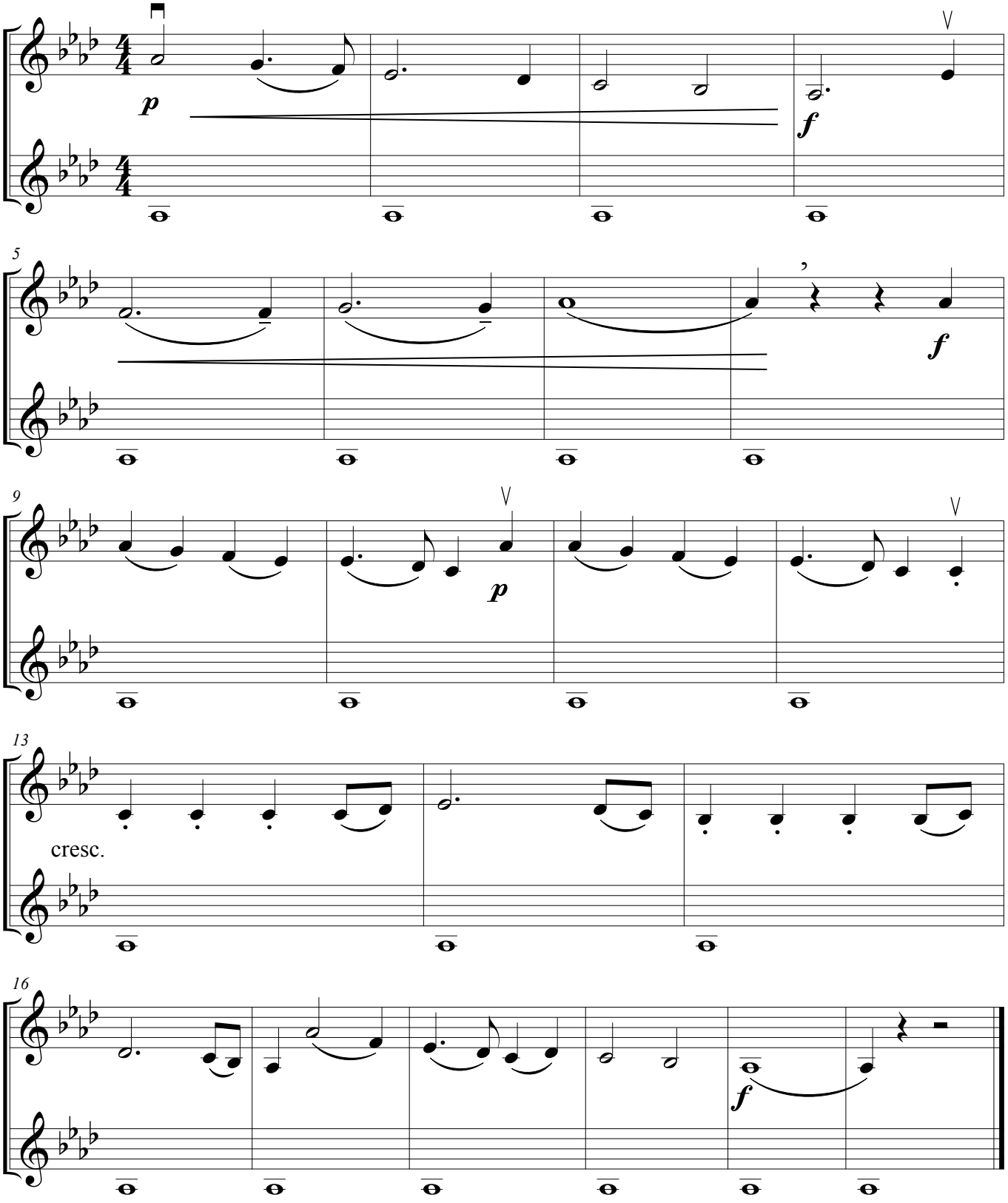
Popular Christmmas Hymn, inspired by Handel's "Messiah"



[Zerweck 2014]

Joy to the World (Rabbit)

Popular Christmmas Hymn, inspired by Handel's "Messiah"

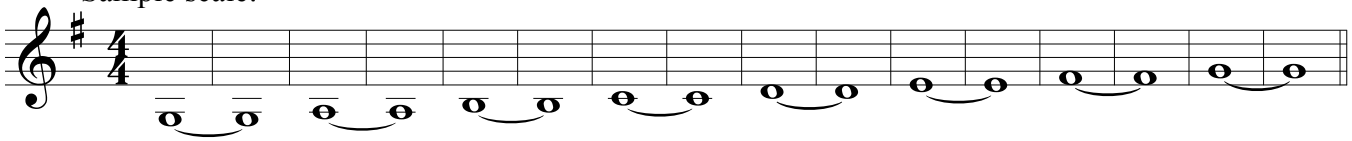


Fundamental Scale Technique Work

Tone Building: Son Filé, the "Spun Sound"

Based On Carl Flesch's "Problems of Tone Production"

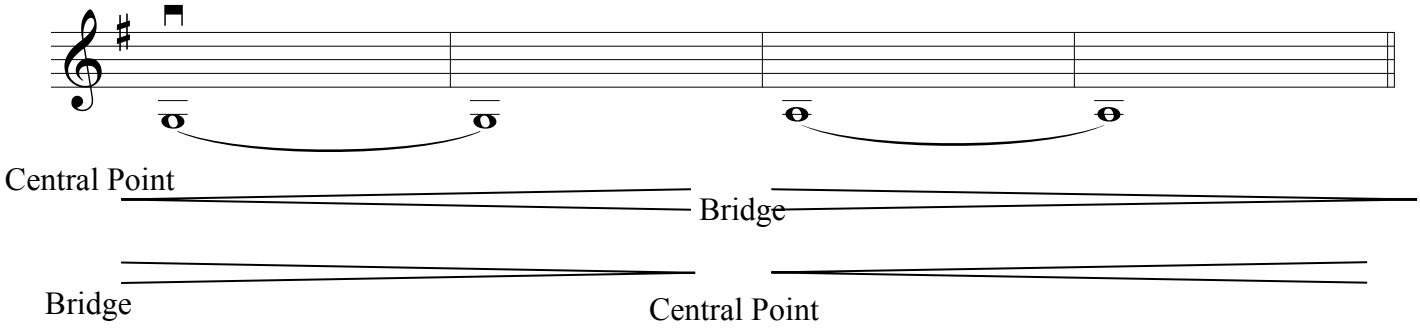
Sample scale: etc.



There are 4 Fundamental ways to practice Son File:

f at Bridge

p Neighborhood of Bridge

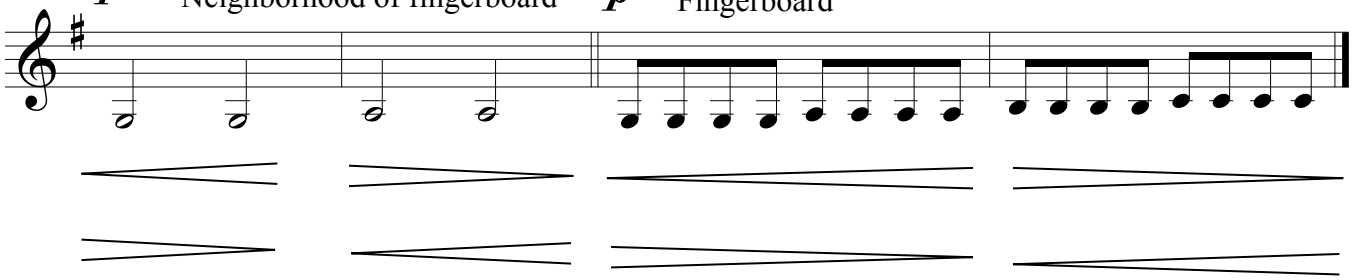


1) Forte at the Bridge.
2) Piano in the Neighborhood of the Bridge
3) Piano (central point) crescendo to Forte (Bridge), then Forte travelling back to Piano
4) Forte (Bridge) decrescendo to Piano (Central point), then Piano cresc to Forte

We can also practice in Grand Detache Variations

f Neighborhood of Bridge *f* Central Point

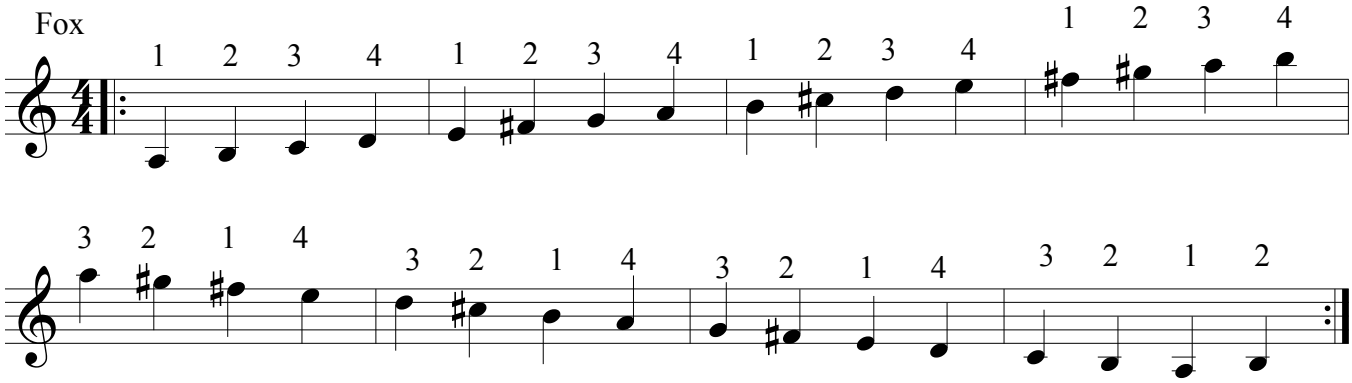
p Neighborhood of fingerboard *p* Fingerboard



Hand Shape Scales Across 4 strings

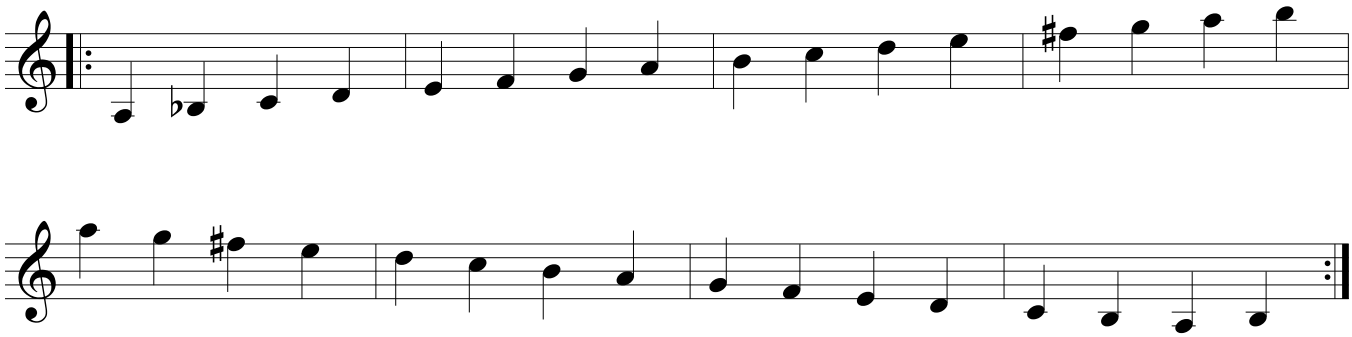
Be able to speak note names and play.

Fox

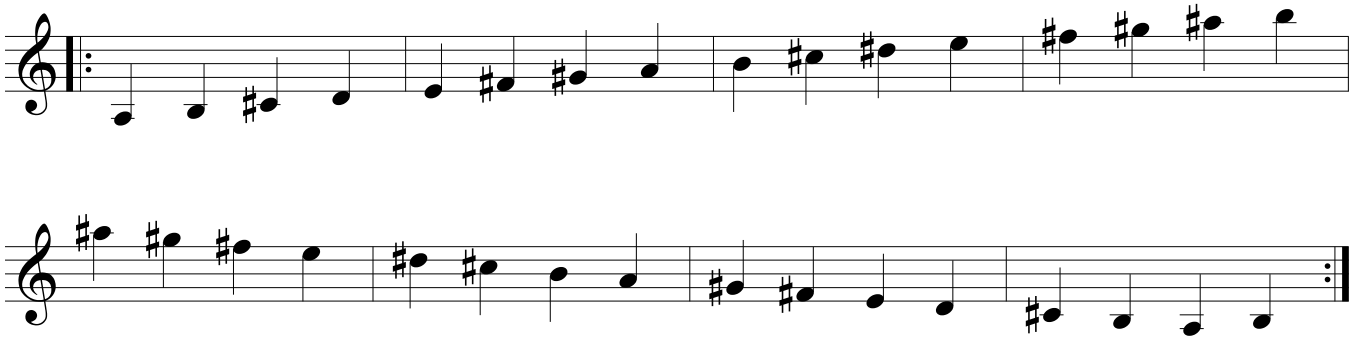


Same finger numbers, different Hand Position.

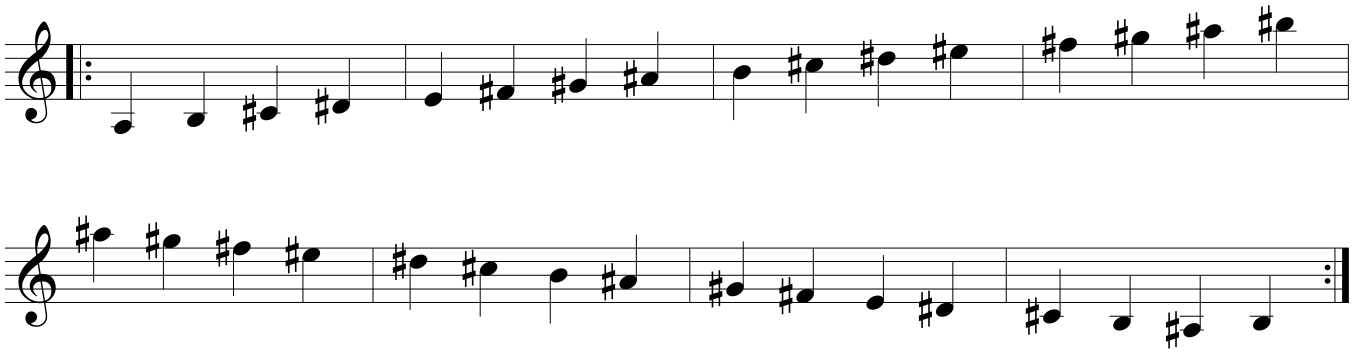
Tea



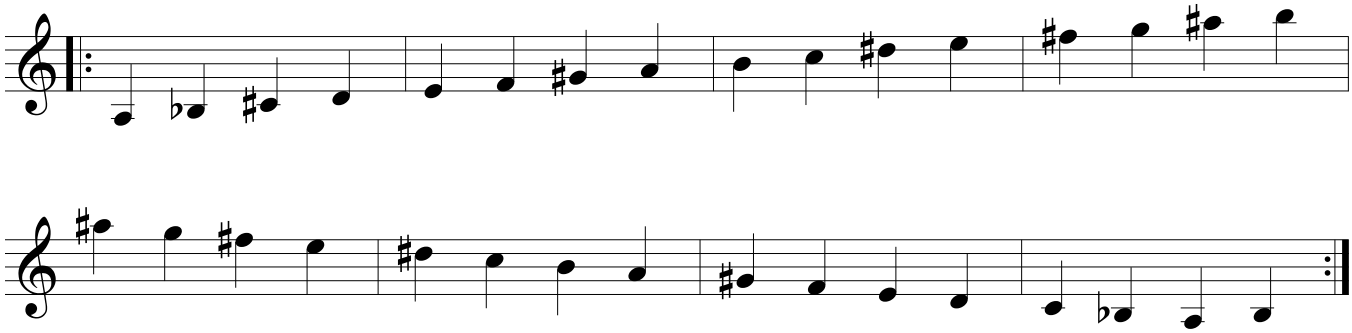
Rabbit



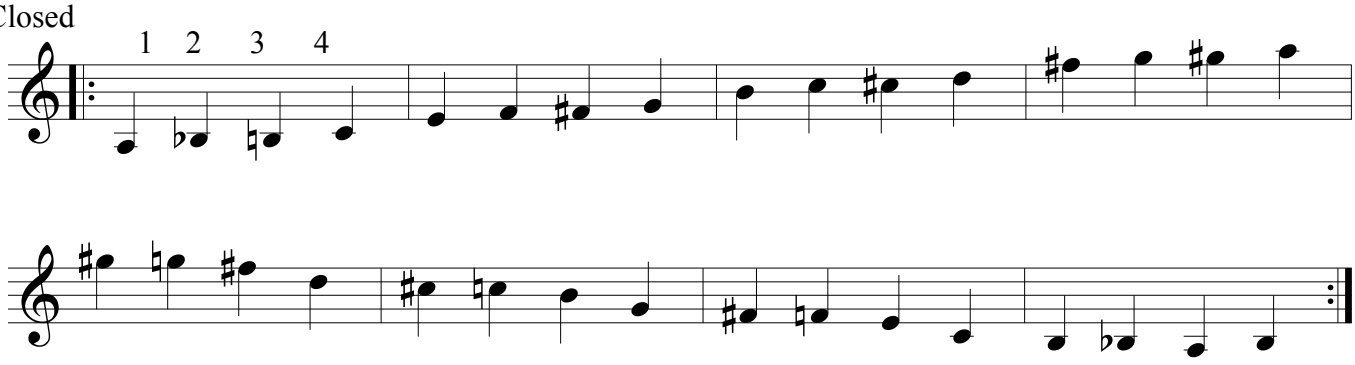
Claw



Crab



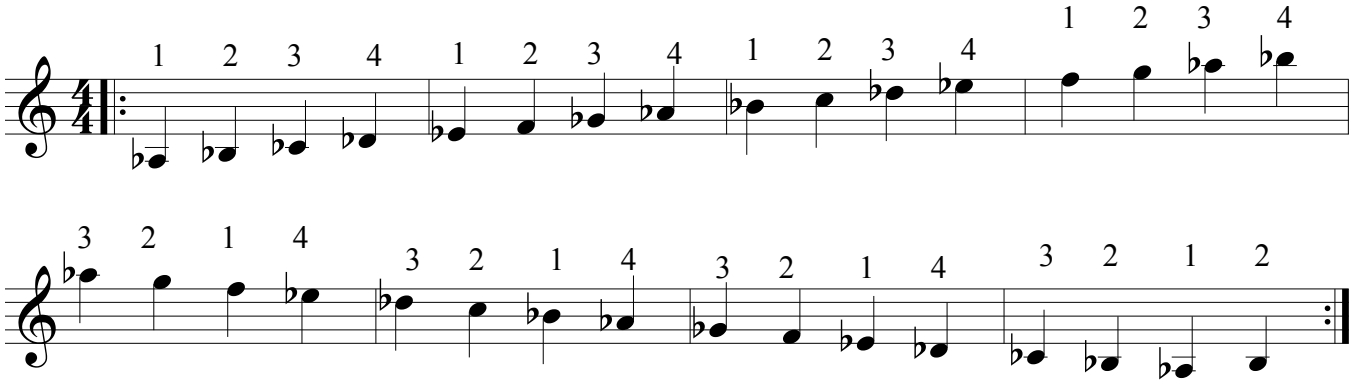
Closed



[Zerweck 2014]

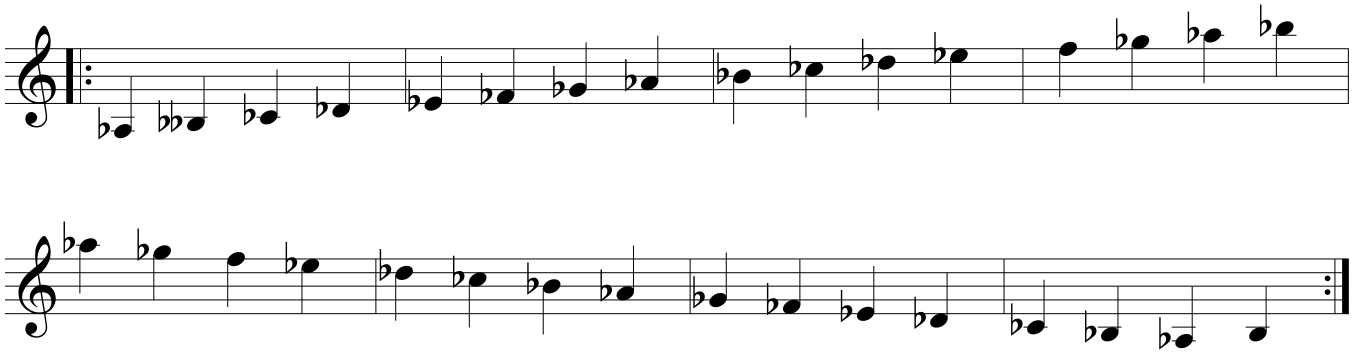
Hand Shape Scales Across 4 strings, now starting on Ab

Fox

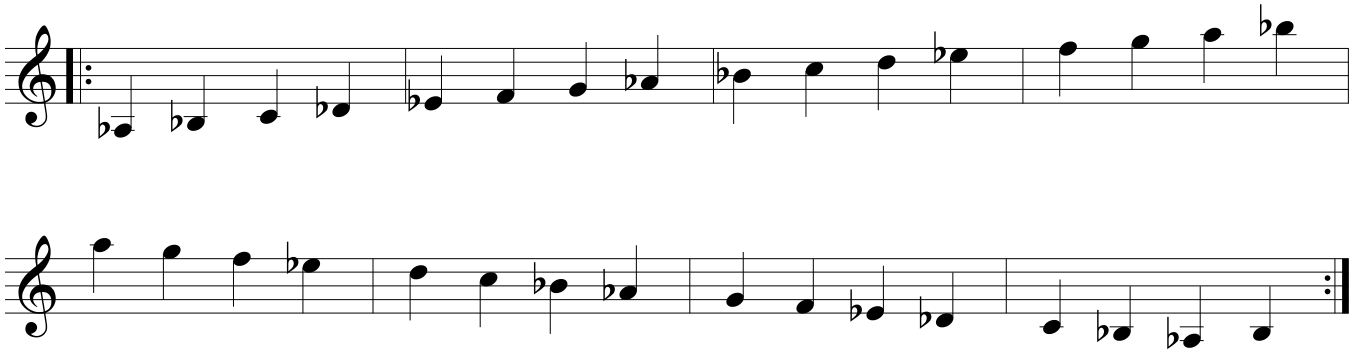


Same finger numbers, different Hand Position.

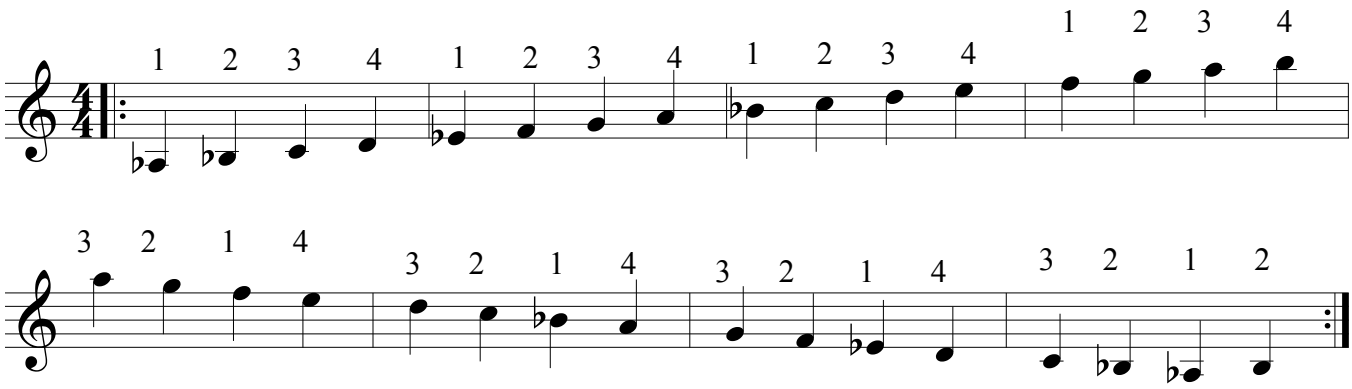
Tea



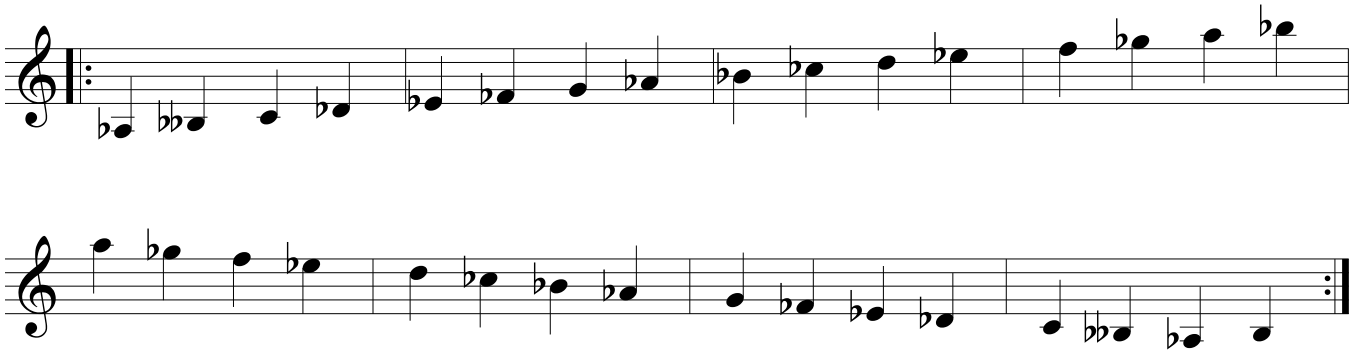
Rabbit



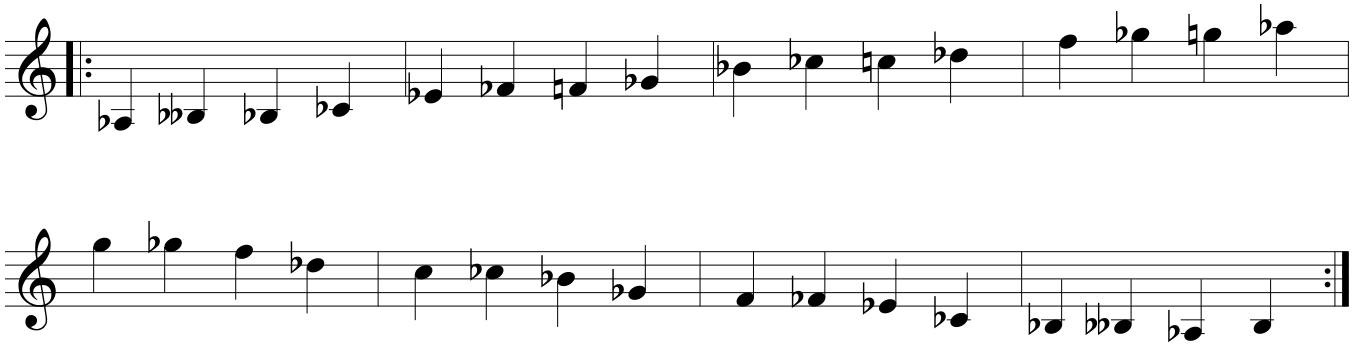
Claw



Crab



Closed

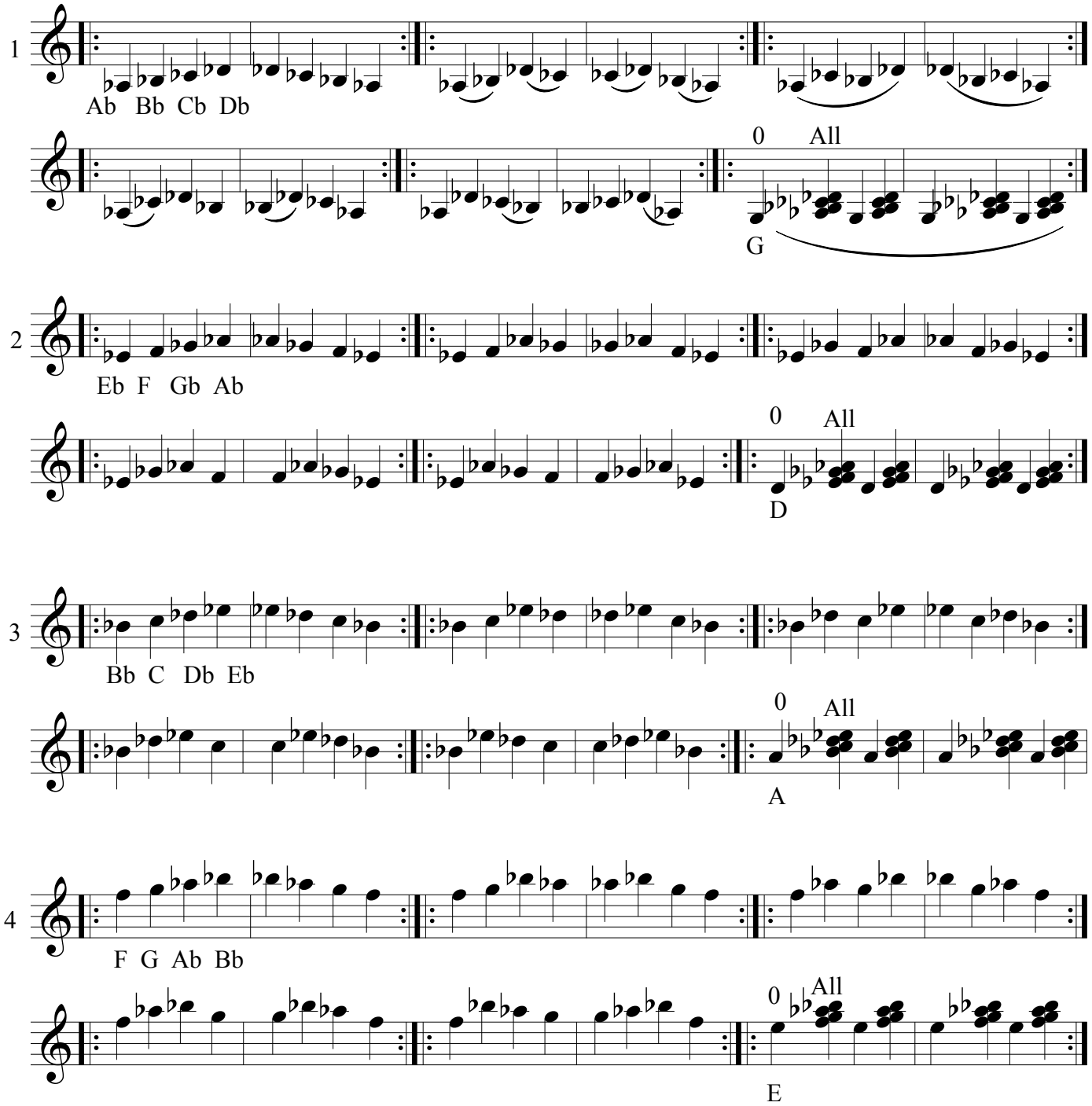


Common patterns in Fox Hand

With 2nd and 3rd fingers close together, you have a Fox Hand.

This is a lower setting of Fox Hand. It may be more difficult to hear, as fewer of the pitches will resonante with open strings.

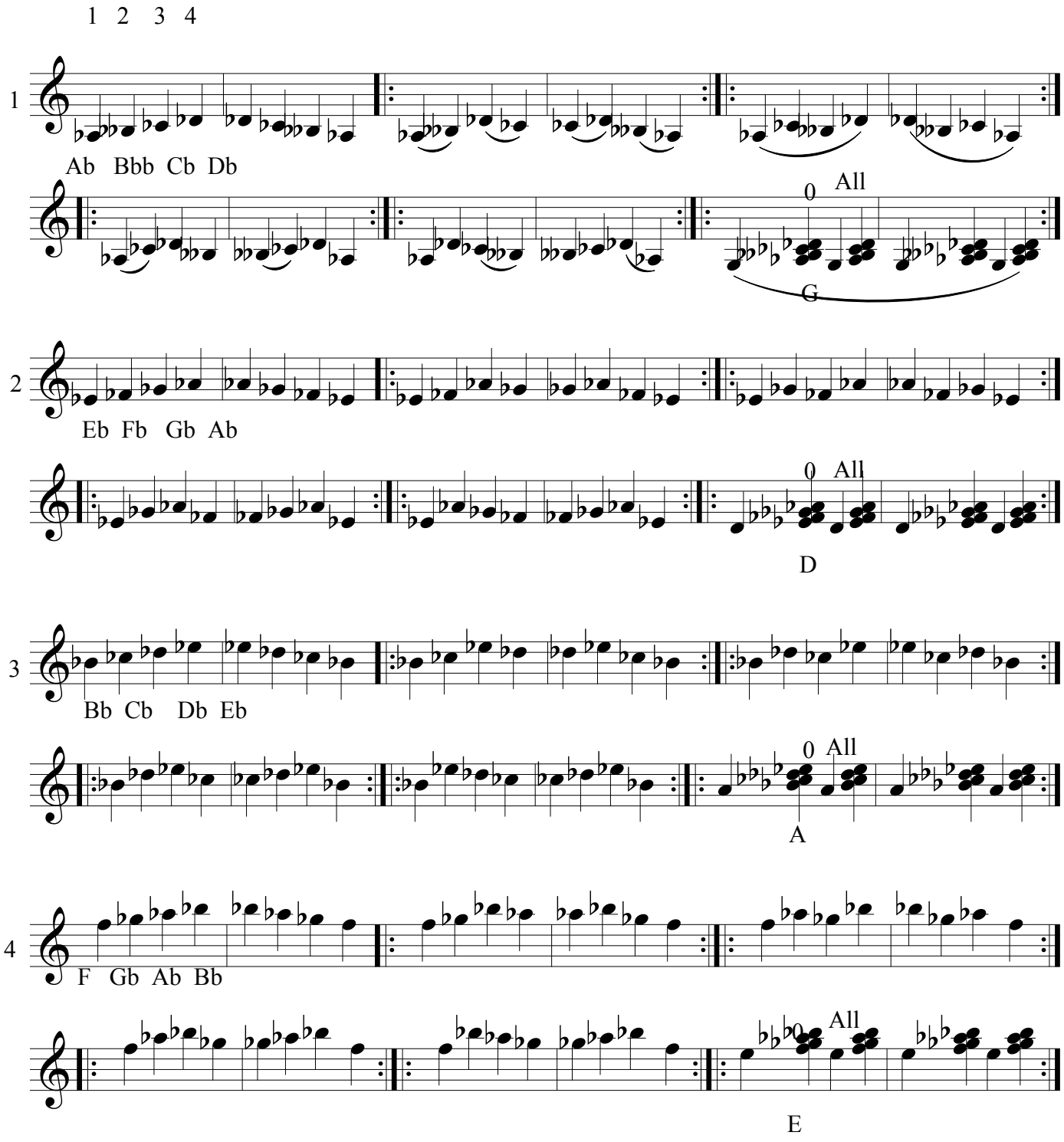
"All" means all fingers down.



Common patterns in Tea Hand

1st and 2nd fingers are close together.
Pretend you're holding a small espresso cup or teacup.

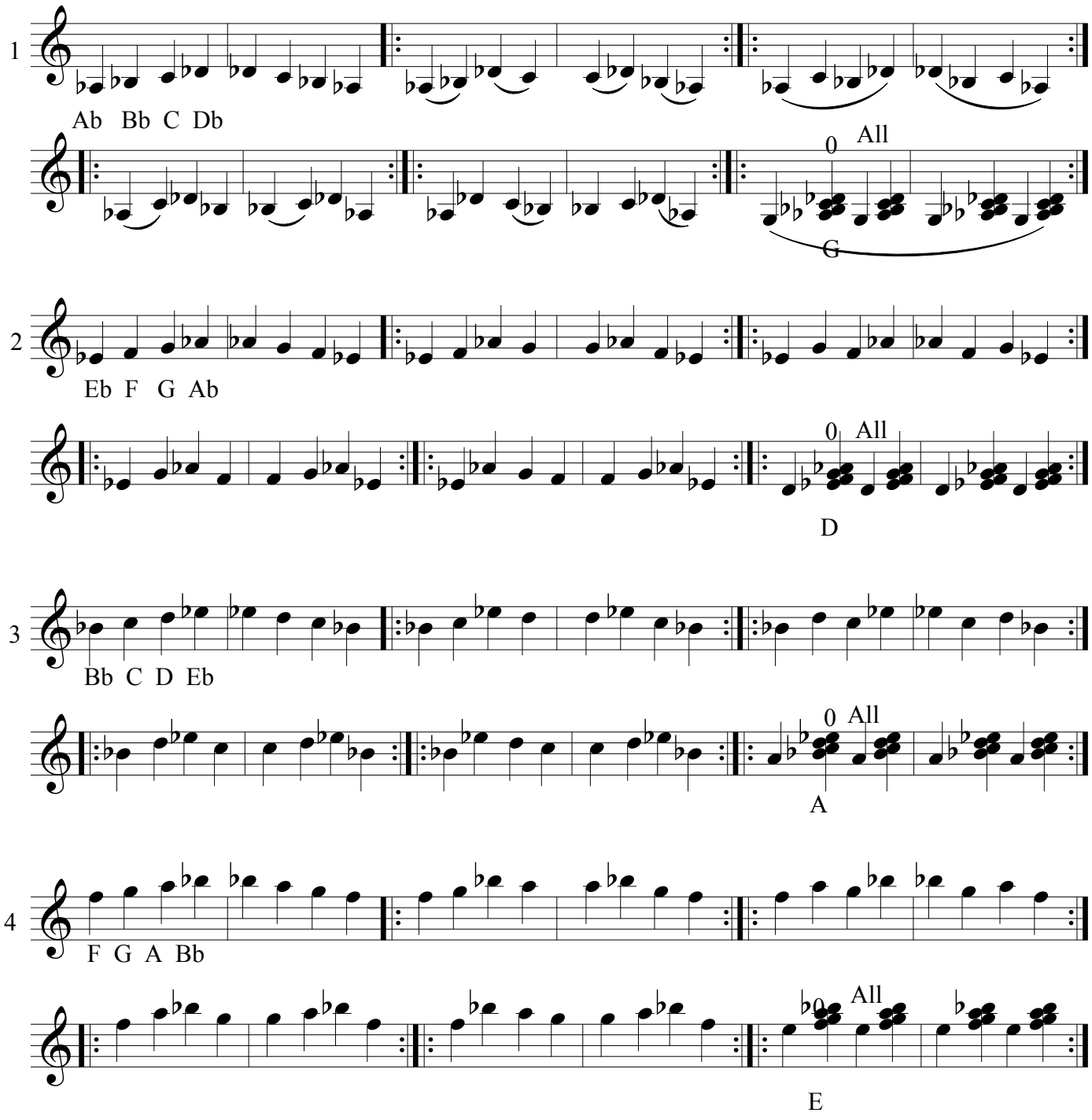
This is a low setting of Tea Hand.



Common patterns in Rabbit Hand

With 3rd and 4th fingers close together, you have Rabbit Hand,
or "bunny ears."

This is a low setting of Rabbit Hand.

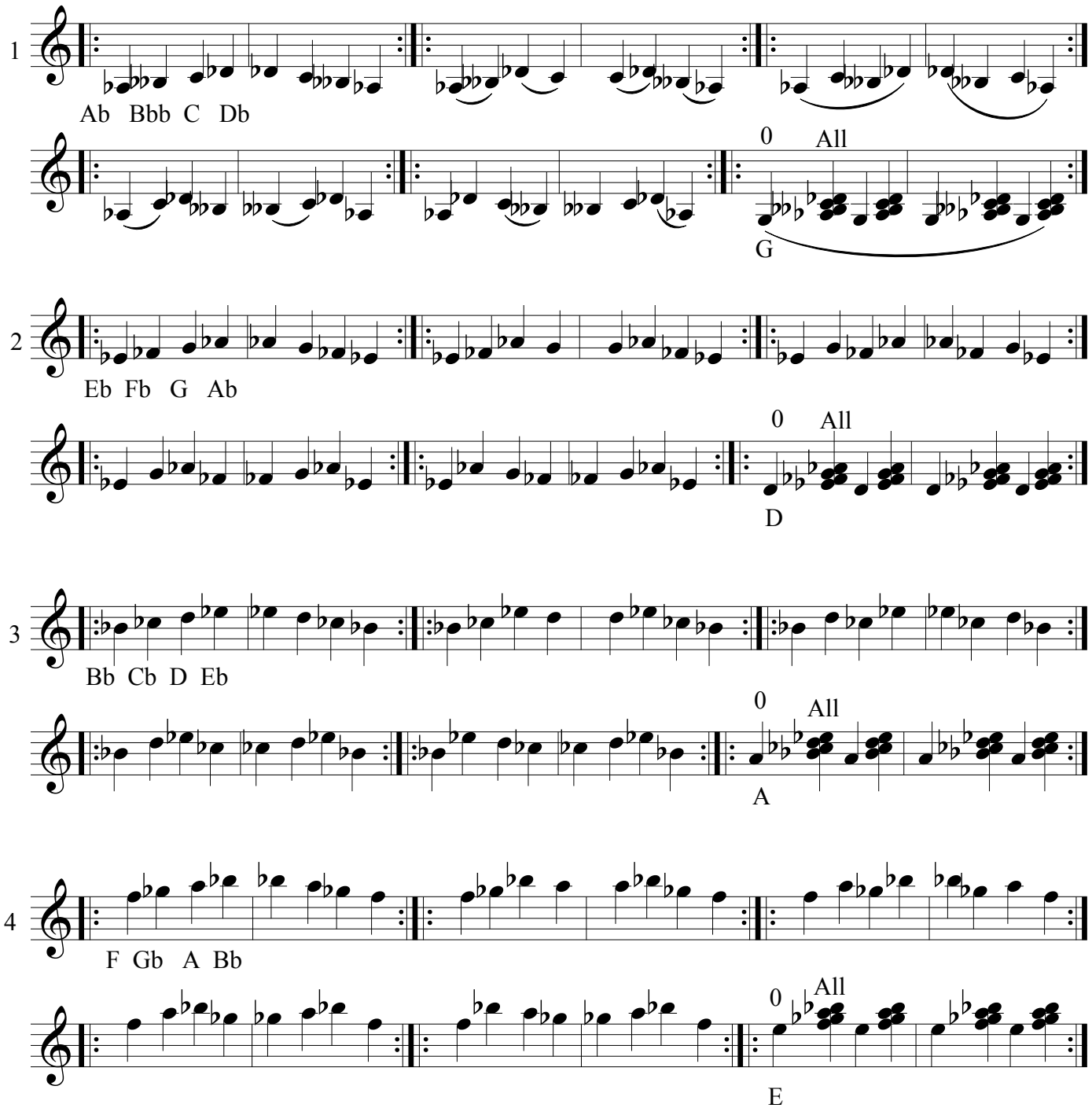


Common patterns in Crab Hand

With 1+2 AND 3+4 close together, we have a "Crab Hand."
Science Fiction fans, maybe there are other names we could call this hand signal.

Most student hands will not be capable of leaving all 4 fingers down on the string.
The finger action may have to look much more like rolling or seeesawing.

Low setting.

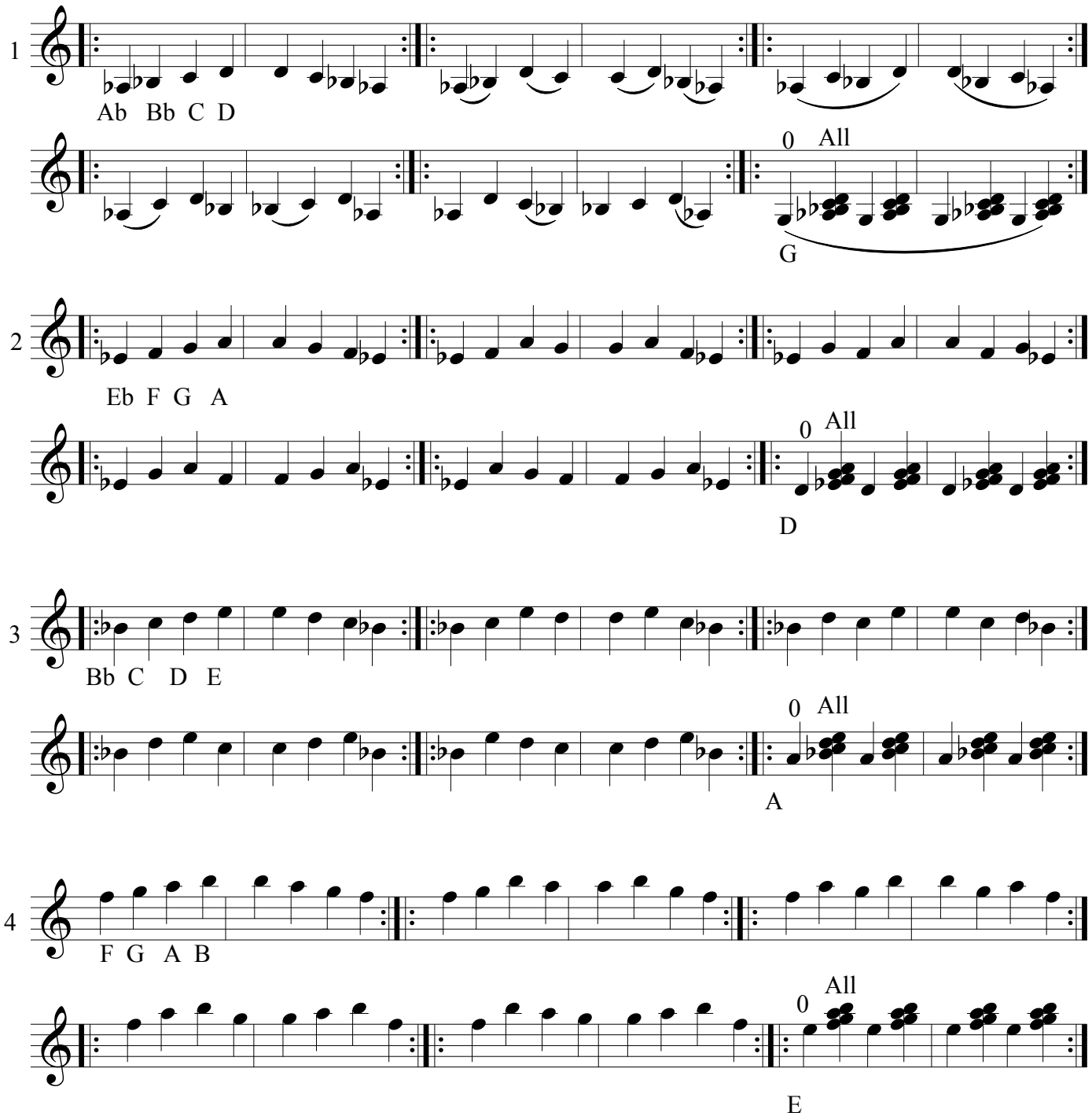


Common patterns in Claw Hand

None of the fingers are touching. The Claw Hand, though the fingers are spread, can still be a relaxed and comfortable hand position.

It may be beneficial to roll/seesaw the hand, instead of keeping all fingers down on the string.

This is a low setting.



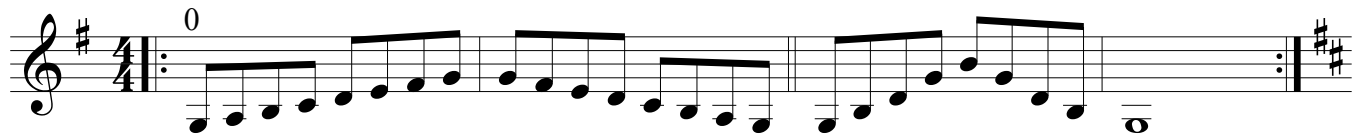
Major Scales and Arpeggios in One Octave

1st position only

Use 4th fingers instead of open, when possible.

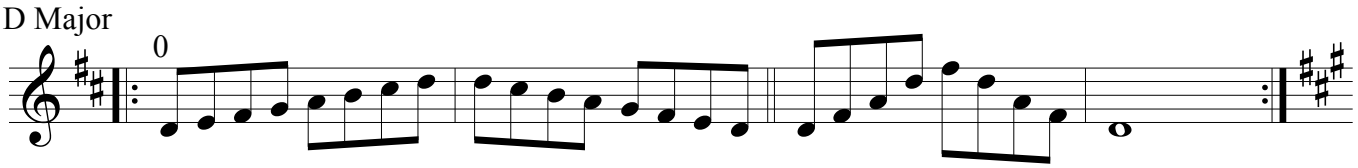
G Major

Fox



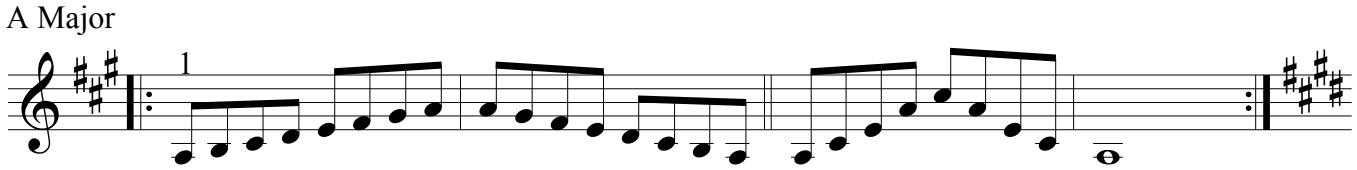
D Major

Fox



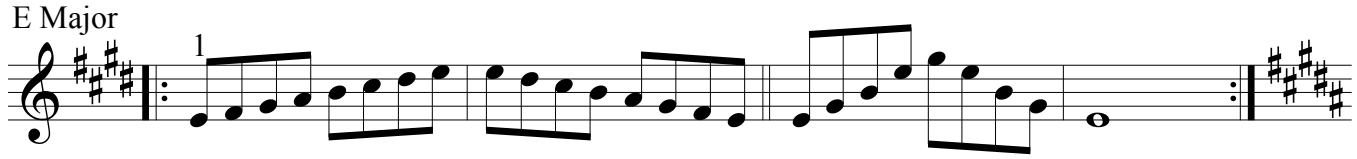
A Major

Rabbit



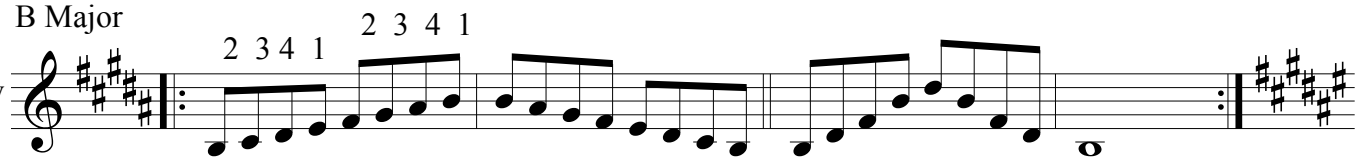
E Major

Rabbit



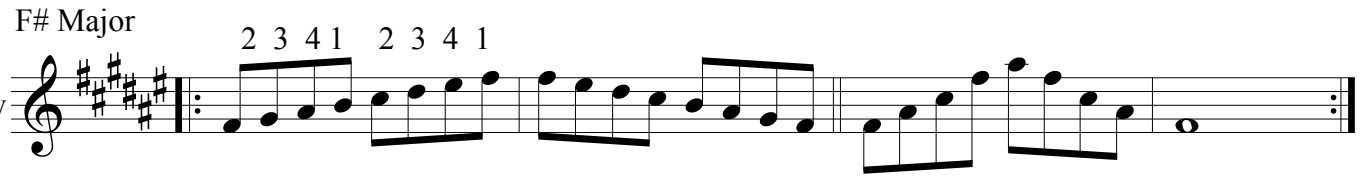
B Major

Claw



F# Major

Claw



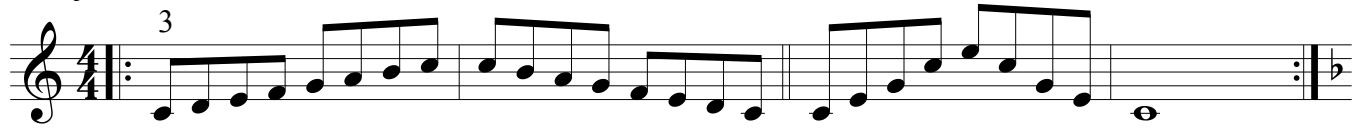
Major Scales and Arpeggios in One Octave

1st position only

Use 4th finger instead open strings, when possible.

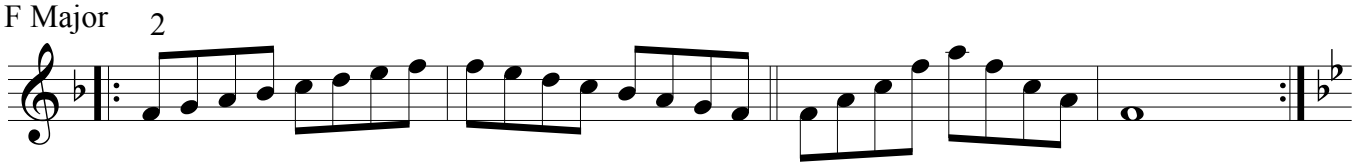
C Major

Tea



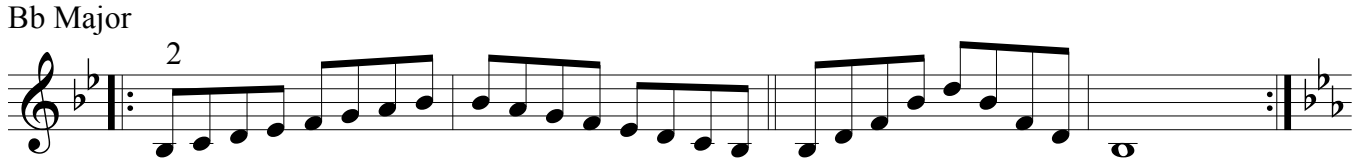
F Major

Claw



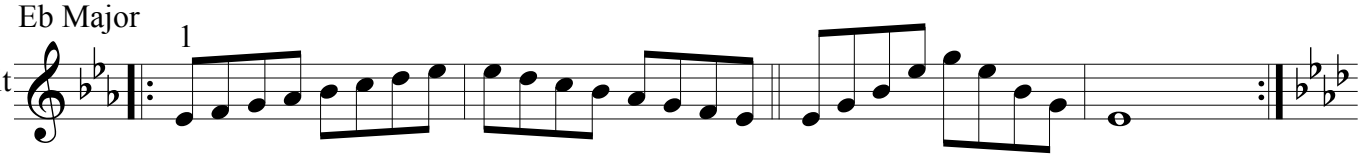
Bb Major

Claw



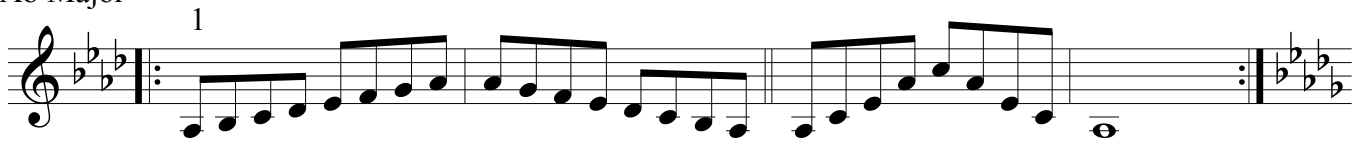
Eb Major

Rabbit



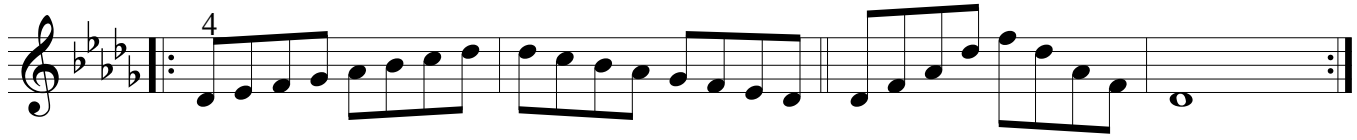
Ab Major

Rabbit



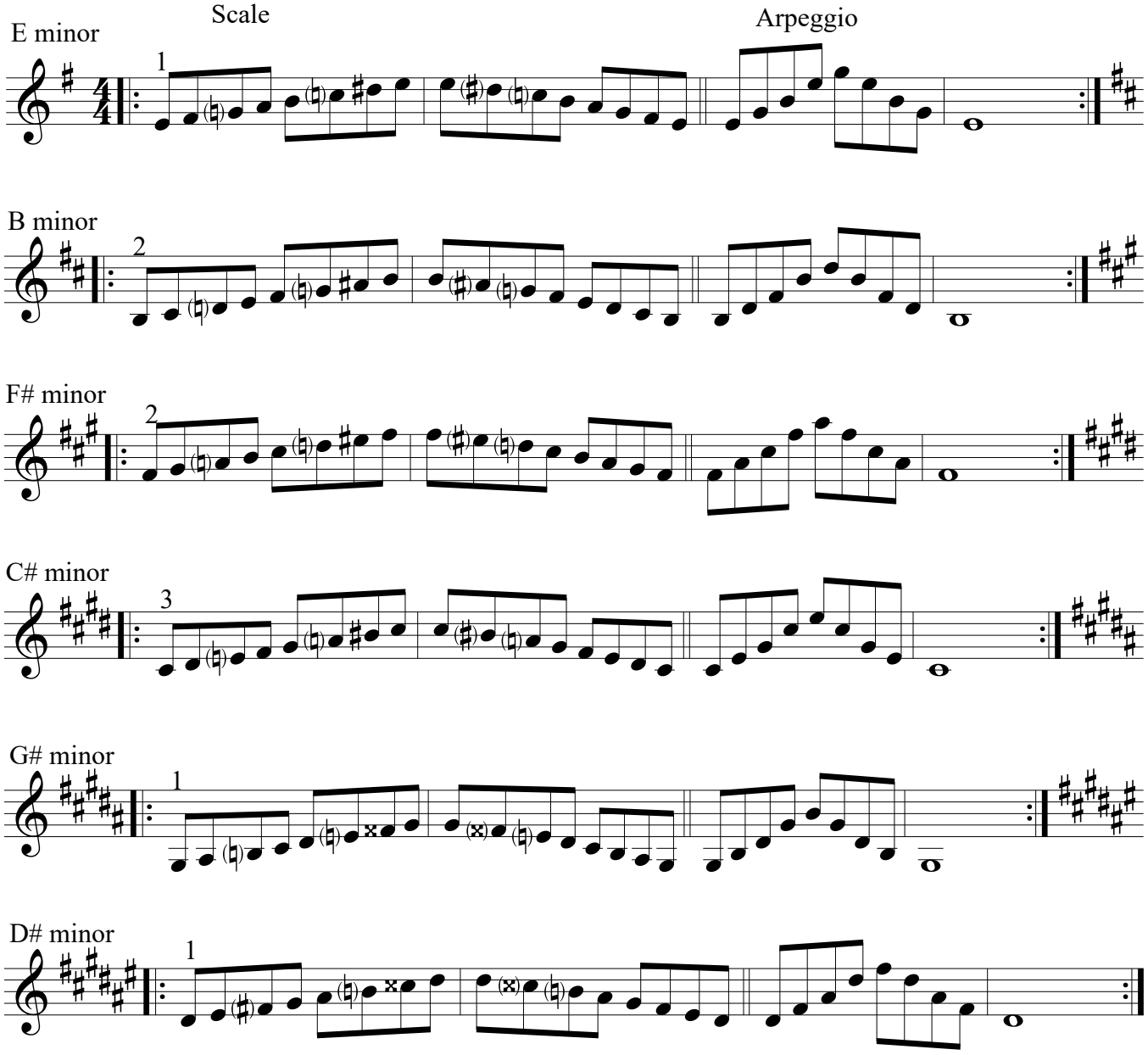
Db Major

Fox



Harmonic Minor Scales and Arpeggios in One Octave

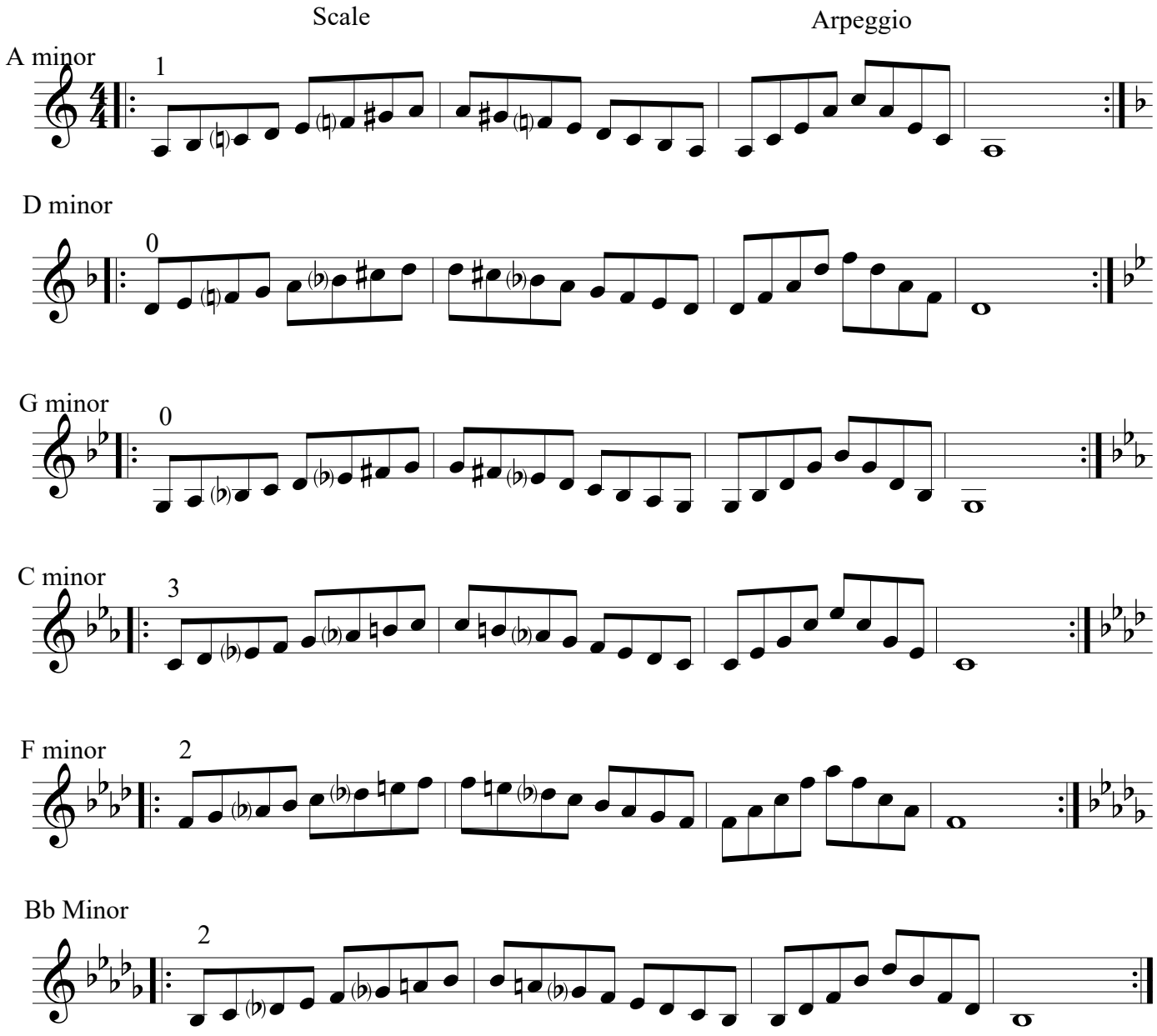
1st position only



[Zerweck 2014]

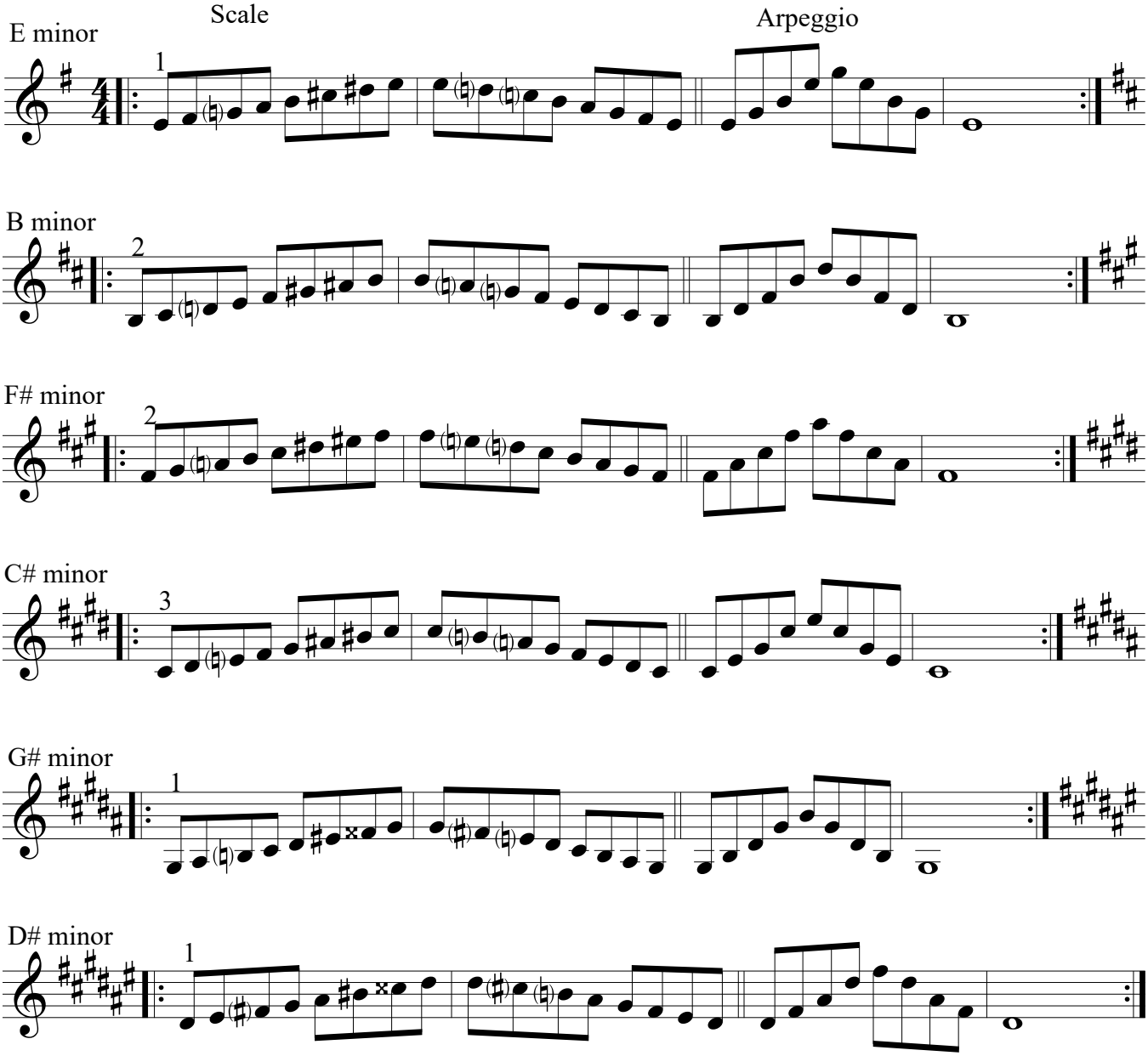
Harmonic Minor Scales and Arpeggios in One Octave

1st position only



Melodic Minor Scales and Arpeggios in One Octave

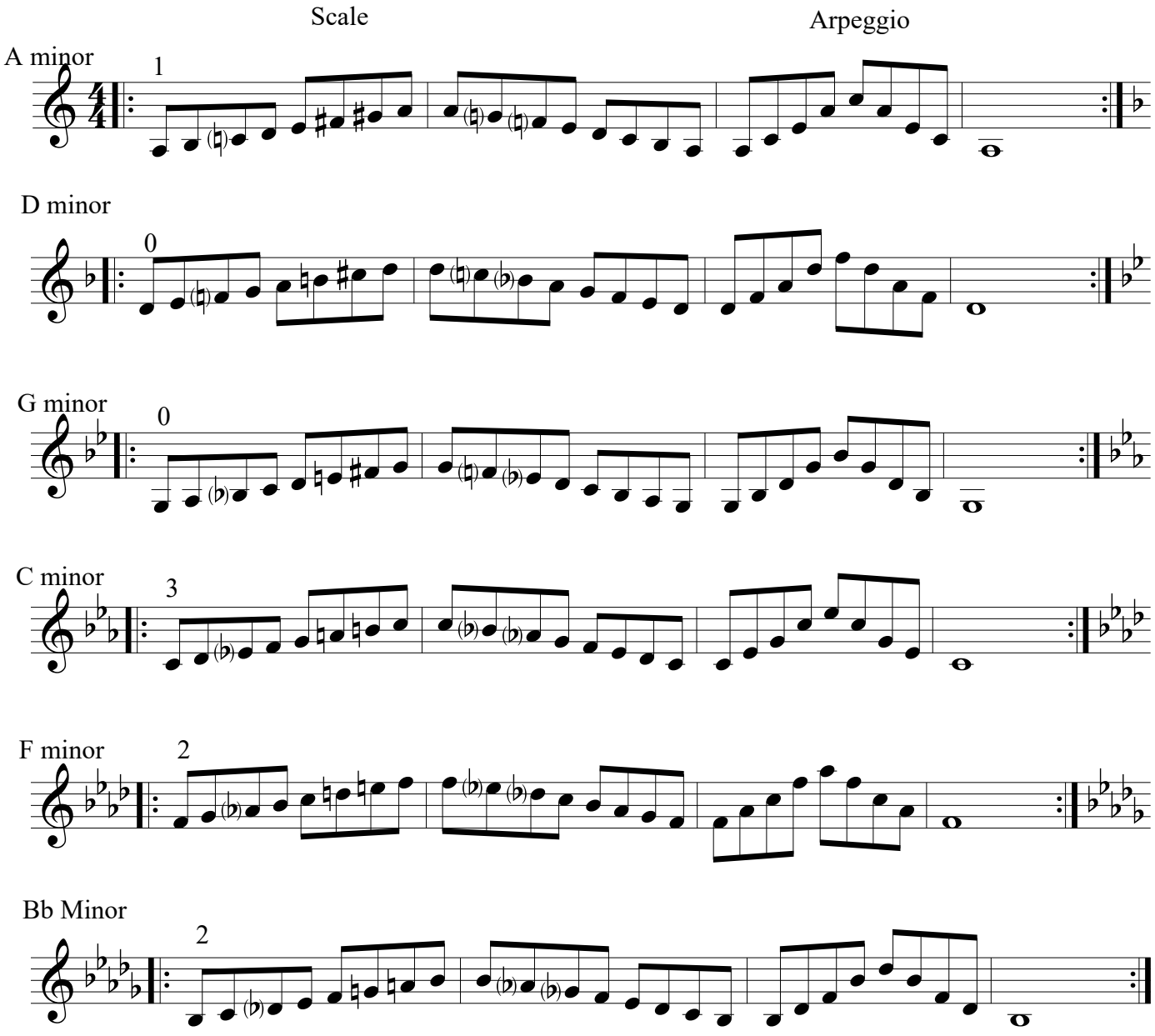
1st position only



[Zerweck 2014]

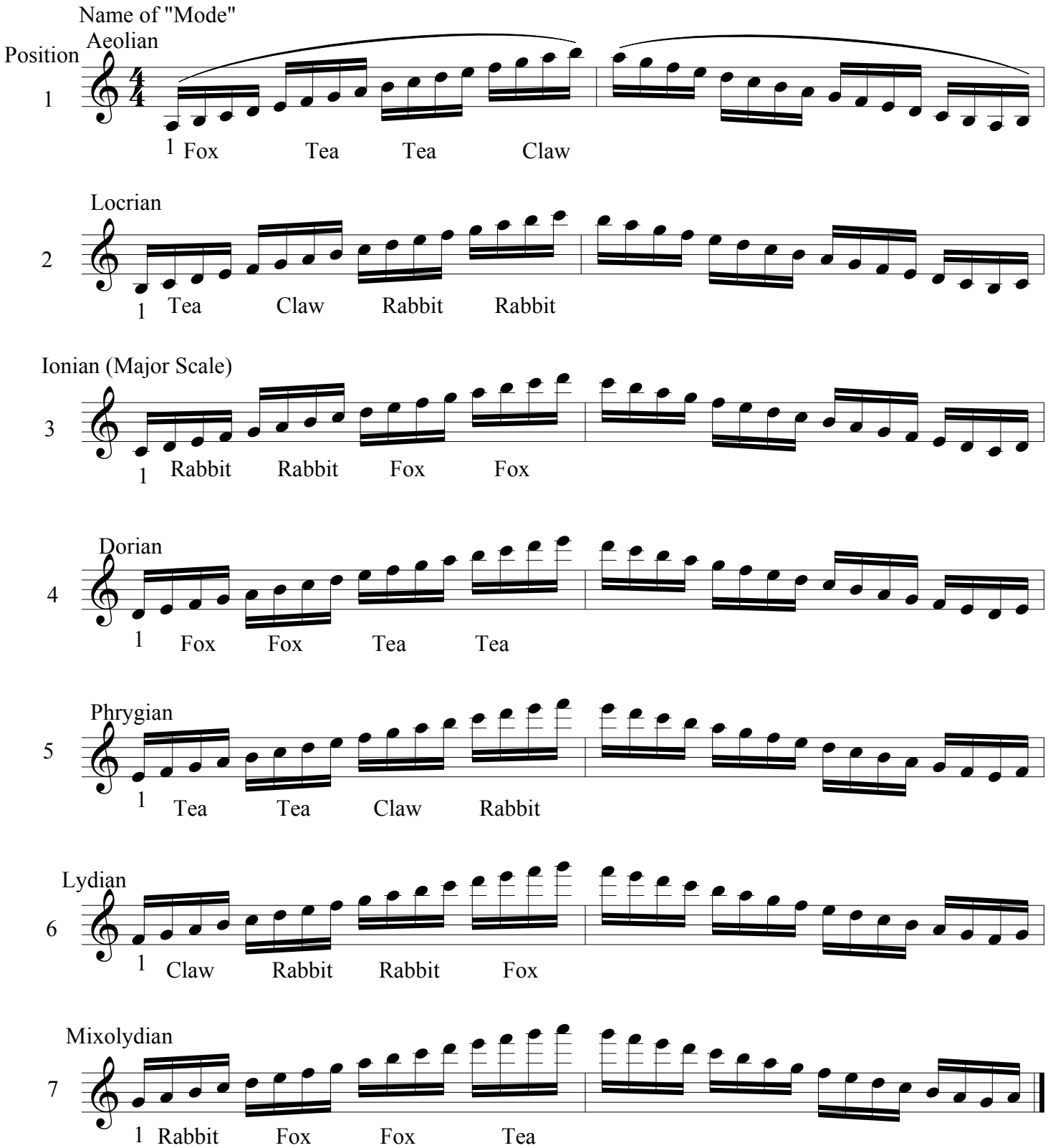
Melodic Minor Scales and Arpeggios in One Octave

1st position only



Diatonic Scales that remain (restez) in one position

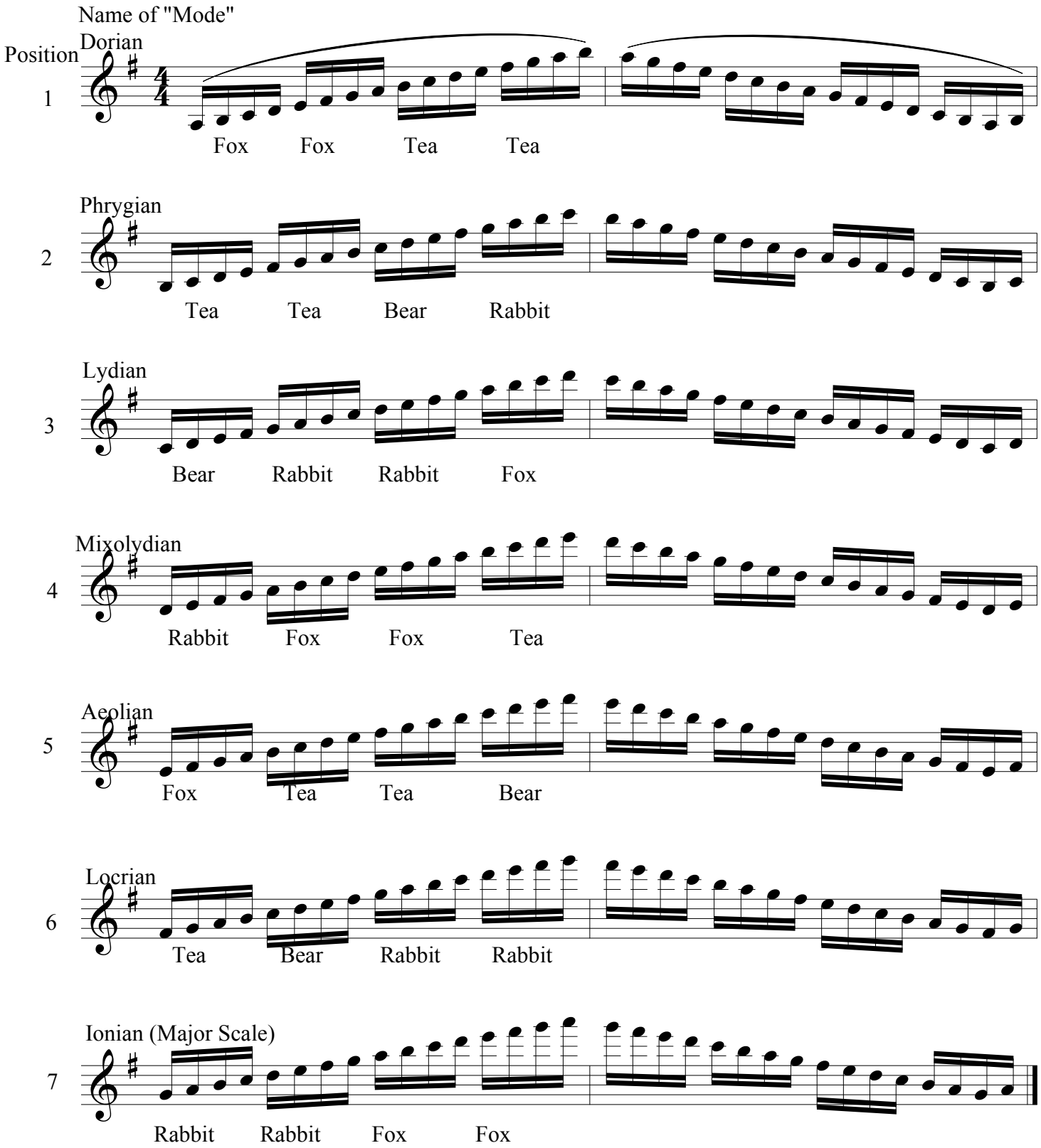
Key of C Major, or A natural minor



[Zerweck 2013]

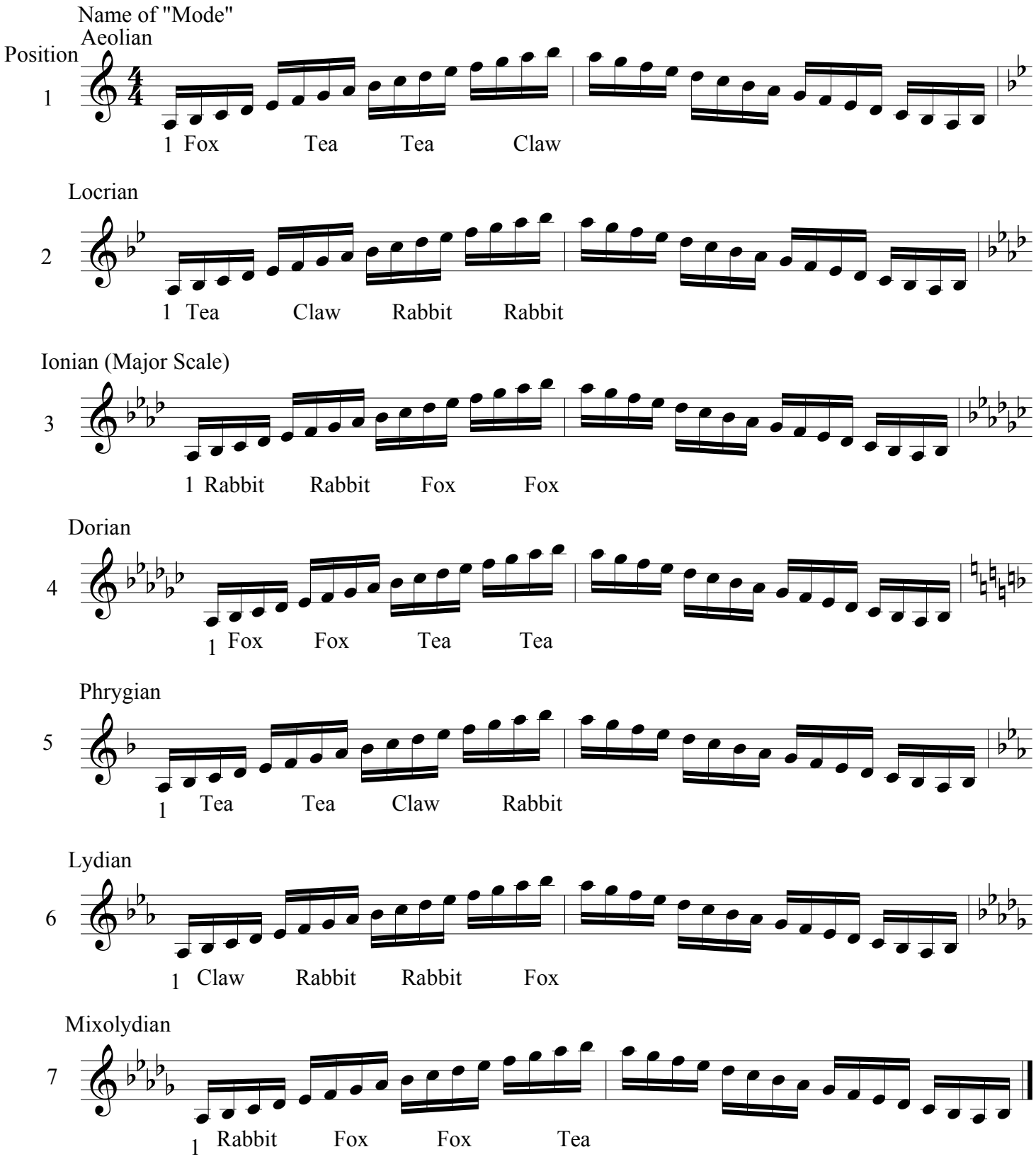
Diatonic Scales that remain (restez) in one position

Key of G Major, or E natural minor



Finding all modes in 1st position

All Flat Keys



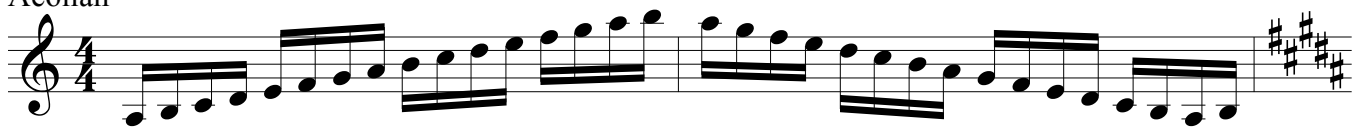
[Zerweck 2014]

All Sharp Keys

Name of "Mode"

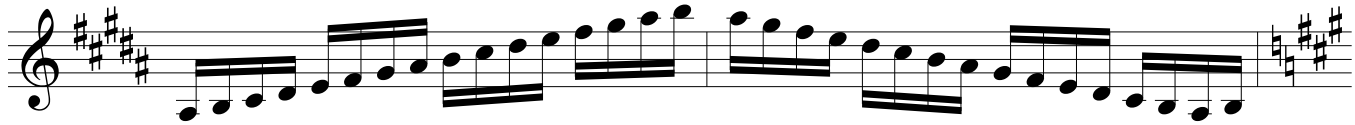
Aeolian

1



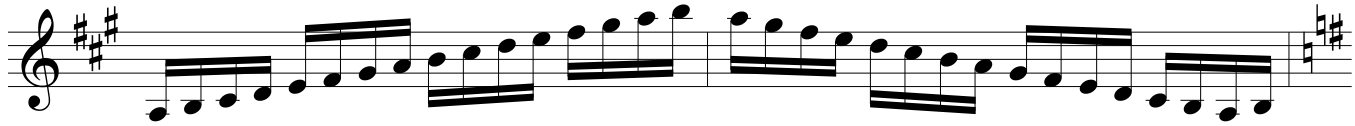
Locrian

2



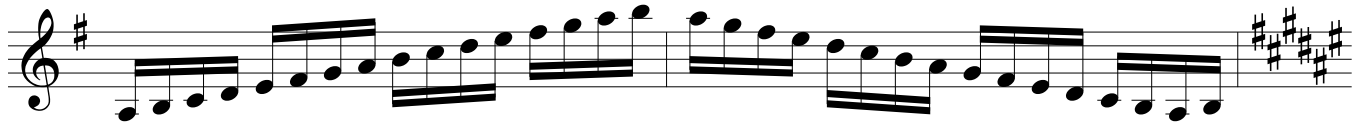
Ionian (Major Scale)

3



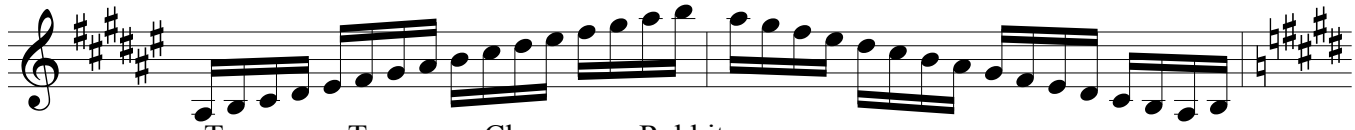
Dorian

4



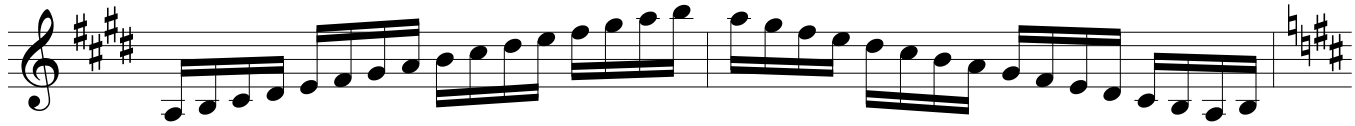
Phrygian

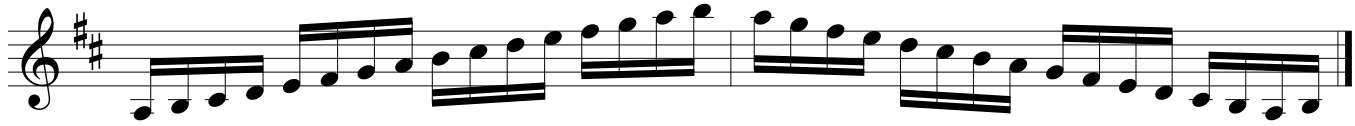
5



Lydian

6



Mixolydian

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