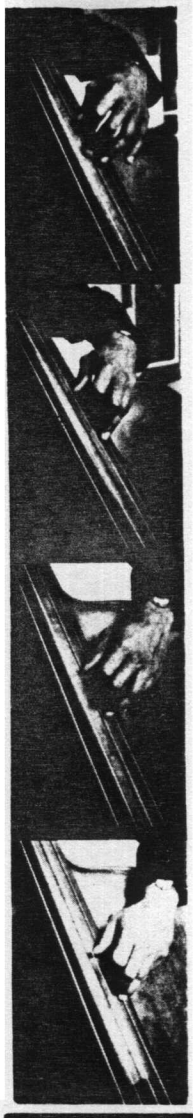
ray brown's

# BASS METHOD

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 1

Since 1953, Ray Brown has dominated the jazz bass field. No other musician has won as many awards in the annual polls conducted by influential publications such as Down Beat, Playboy, Esquire, the old Metronome and, in England, the Melody Maker. Similar recognition has also been accorded him in France, Czechoslovakia, Australia and Japan. He is regarded not only as the listeners musician but the "musicians' musician." An integral part of the Oscar Peterson Trio for several years, Brown's early experience included periods with Dizzy Gillespie's big band and with his own trio, featuring Hank Jones on piano and Charlie Smith on drums. He also has taught music at the School of Jazz in Lennox, Mass., and currently is on the faculty of the Advanced School of Contemporary Music in Toronto, Canada. And so the best of both worlds—playing and teaching—is embodied in Ray Brown's book, Bass Method, designed for expert and beginner alike.



# FOREWORD:

The modern music student to-day is a privileged person. He has at his fingertips the experience, advice and empirical guidance of men who are his personal idols, who in their own developmental years had no such help to rely on. Typical is the case of the young bassist, who to-day has the unique advantage of being able to study with Ray Brown—either in person, at the Advanced School of Contemporary Music in Toronto, or through this book.

In the early 1940's, when Ray was studying bass at high school in Pittsburgh, most tuition was based on formal conservative concepts that had no direct bearing on the special requirements of the jazz musician. But Ray expanded his knowledge by going out on the road with a band soon after his graduation in 1944.

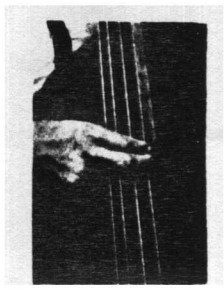
It was only a year later that I met him in New York, just after he had joined Dizzy Gillespie. It has been a continuous joy to follow his progress through the years, to hear the great music which he has always been associated, and to observe his evolution as both performer and teacher. Before the Advanced School of Contemporary Music was founded, he was a faculty member at the School of Jazz in Lennox, Massachusetts, from 1957.

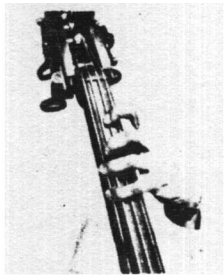
Gene Lees once noted, in Down Beat, Ray's "passion for understanding everything he does, right down to the marrow . . . manifest to-day in the gorgeous lines he plays behind everything Oscar Peterson does . . . Whatever he's doing, it will bear an uncanny relationship to what his colleagues are doing."

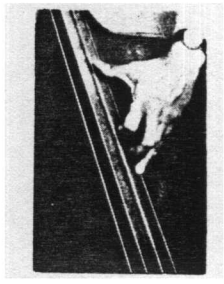
This is the kind of sensitivity the young bassist may develop from a study of Ray's advice. "The book should provide a foundation," he says, "not to make people play like me or copy me, but to enable them to use my experience as a basis for developing along their own lines."

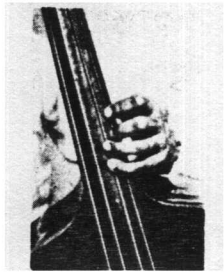
The perfectionist in Ray has made his didactic development a logical stage in his career. The expert bassist, expert cook, expert golfer, expert composer has become an expert teacher.

*LEONARD FEATHER*









**INTRO:** This book has been written so that every bass player can avail himself of the valuable knowledge and experience I have had the pleasure of accumulating through many years in the music business.

I have included most of the basic ingredients which I believe will make you a better bass player. Regardless of which bass player you admire or want to emulate you must still have a good foundation on the instrument. I have tried to give it to you in this book and I hope you will use it as a stepping stone in becoming the musician you want to be.

Also, you will notice that I give fingerings on some exercises and not on others. The reason for this is to force you to think and to practise.

And this last point, I want to emphasize . . .

NEVER STOP PRACTISING!

*RAY BROWN*

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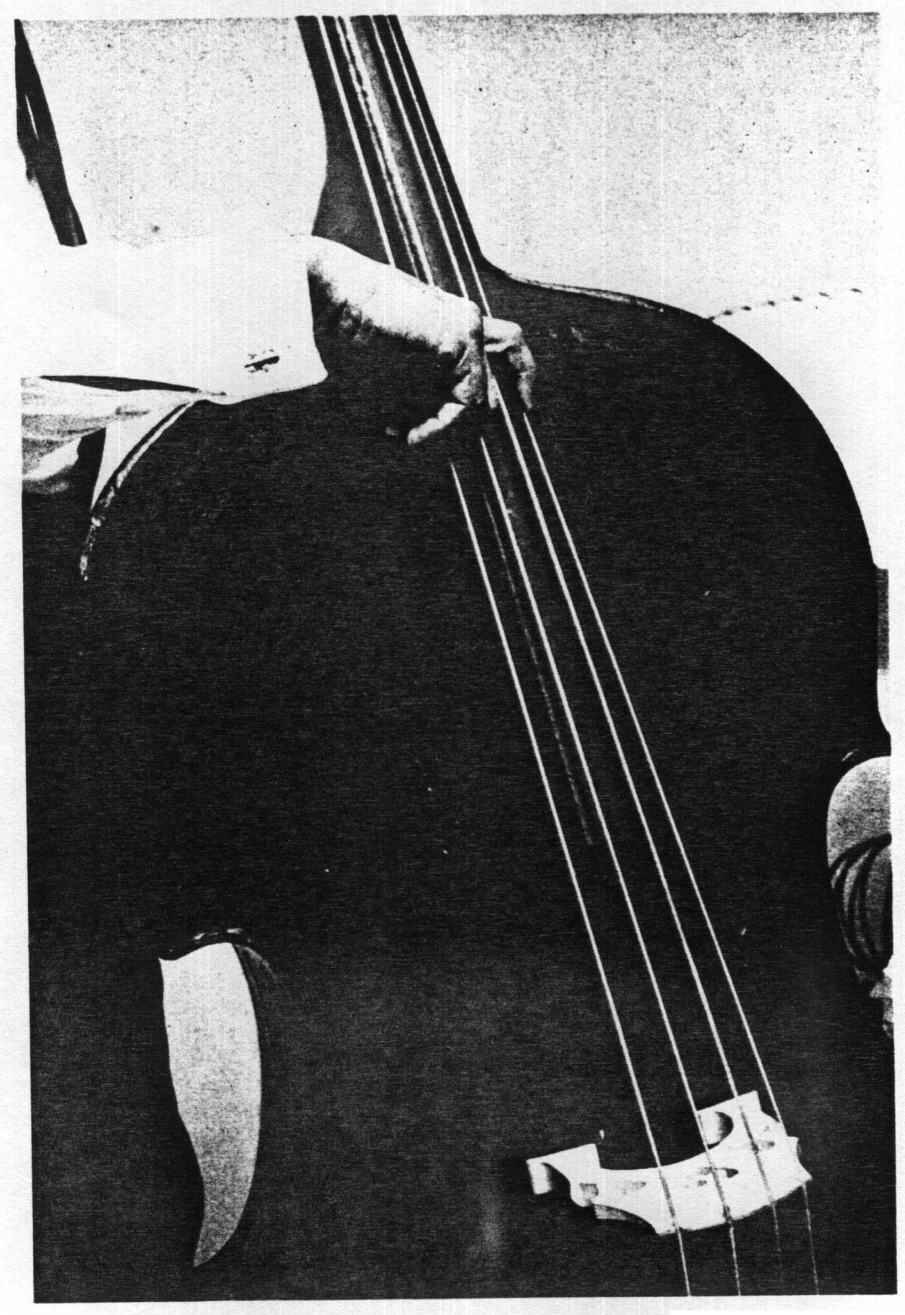
# CHAPTER I

## SCALES, TRIADS, THIRDS, FOURTHS, FIFTHS, SIXTHS, SEVENTHS & OCTAVES

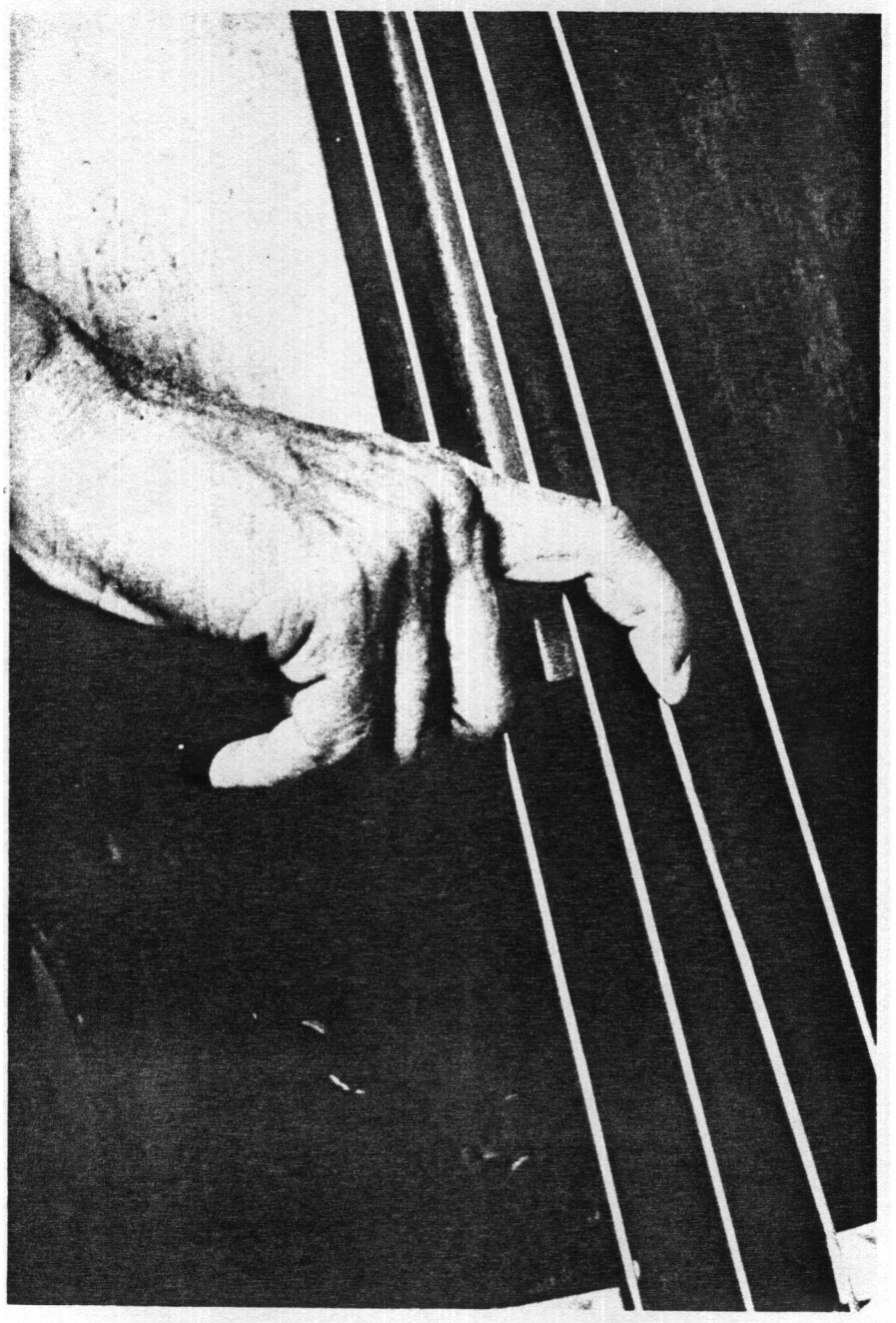
On the following pages you will find all of the scales played on the lower half of the bass, plus thirds, fourths, fifths, sixths, sevenths and octaves. These should be studied and practised until you know and can play them at any given time.

Included is an exercise for two-fingered practice and slur practice, enabling you to articulate much better on fast passages for parts and solos.

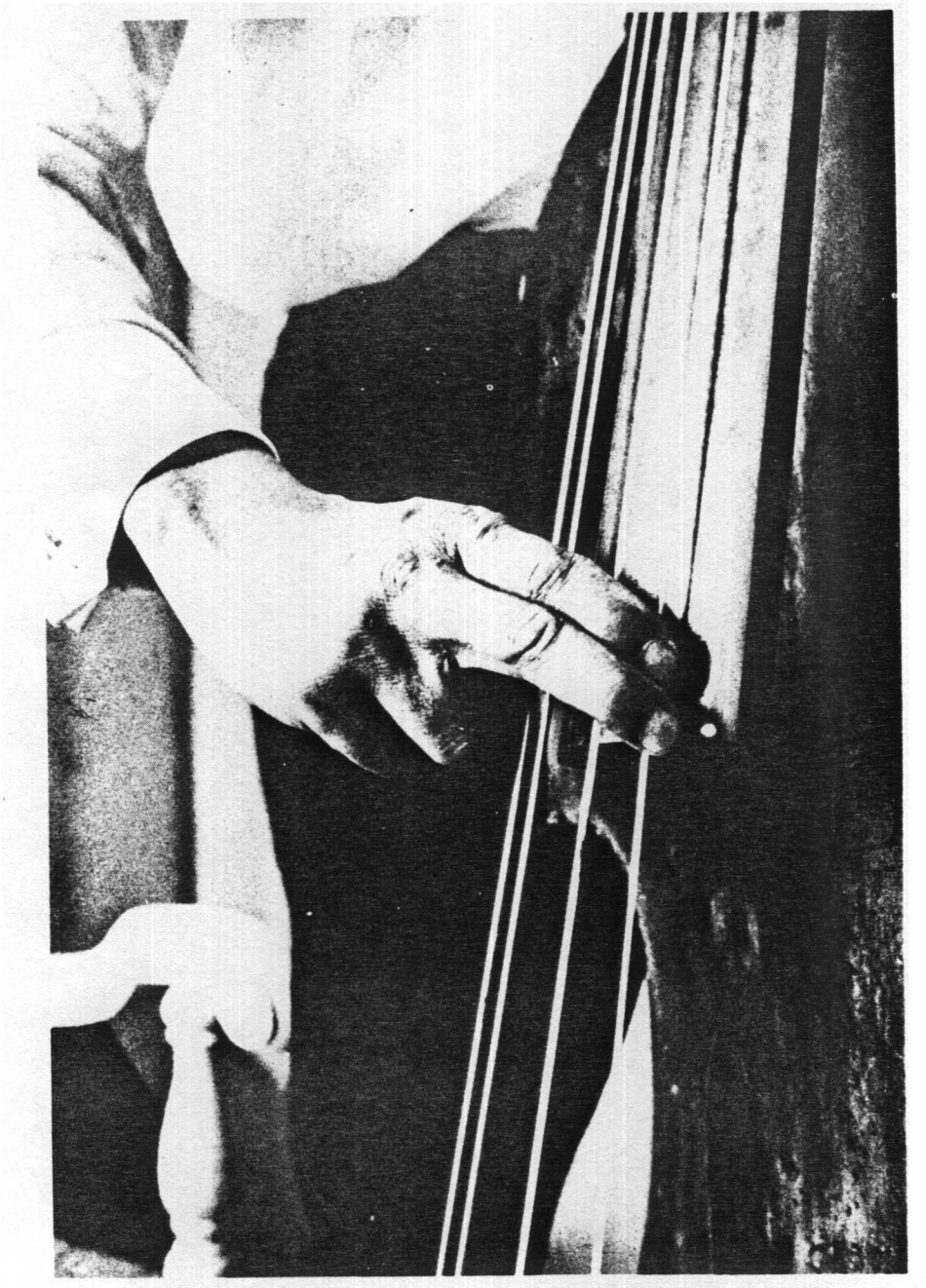
Make sure you have a thorough knowledge of the foregoing before you proceed to Chapter II.



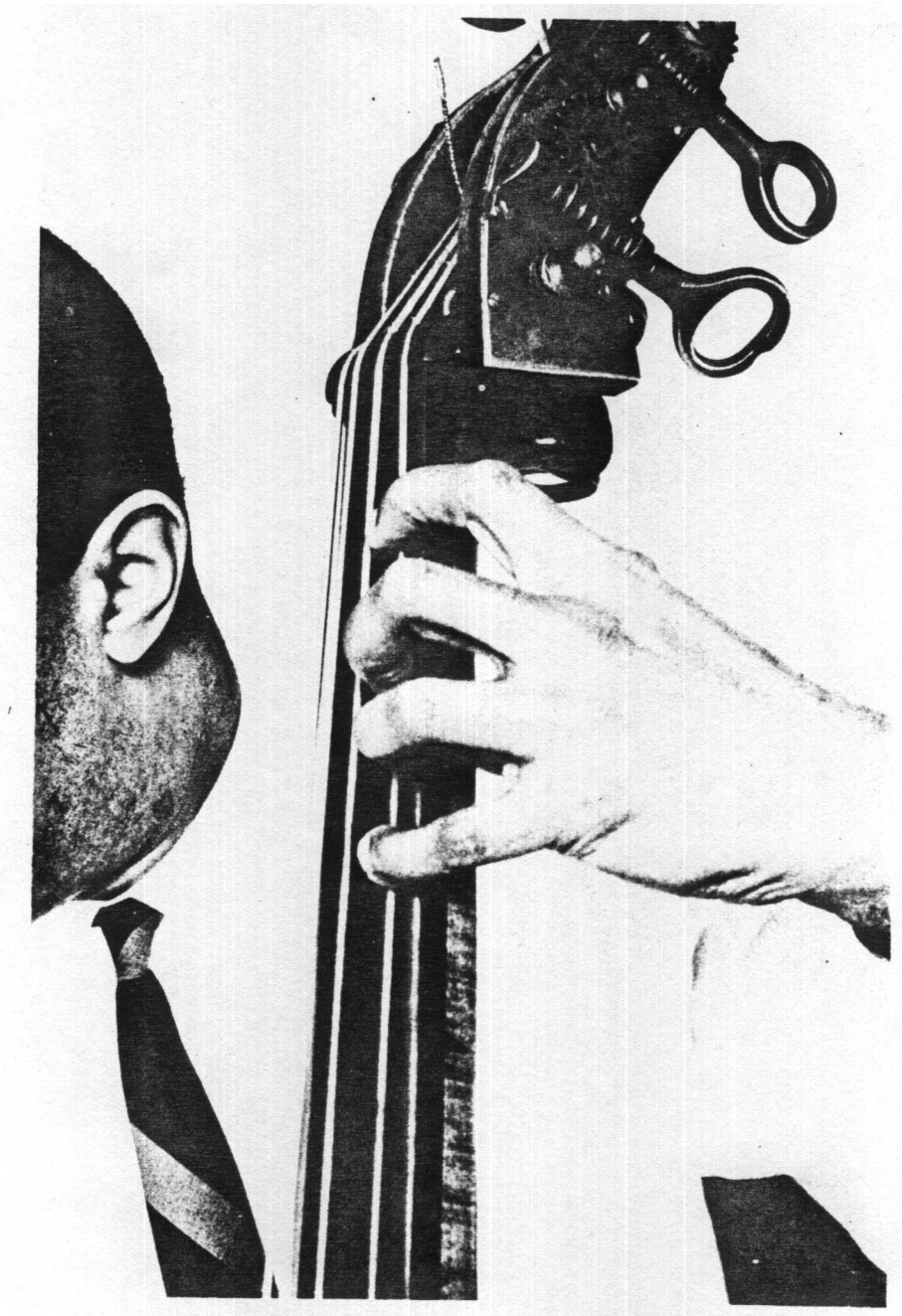
*Right hand position for soft pizzicato playing, or ballad playing.*



*Right hand position for good jazz sound (thumb against the fingerboard).*



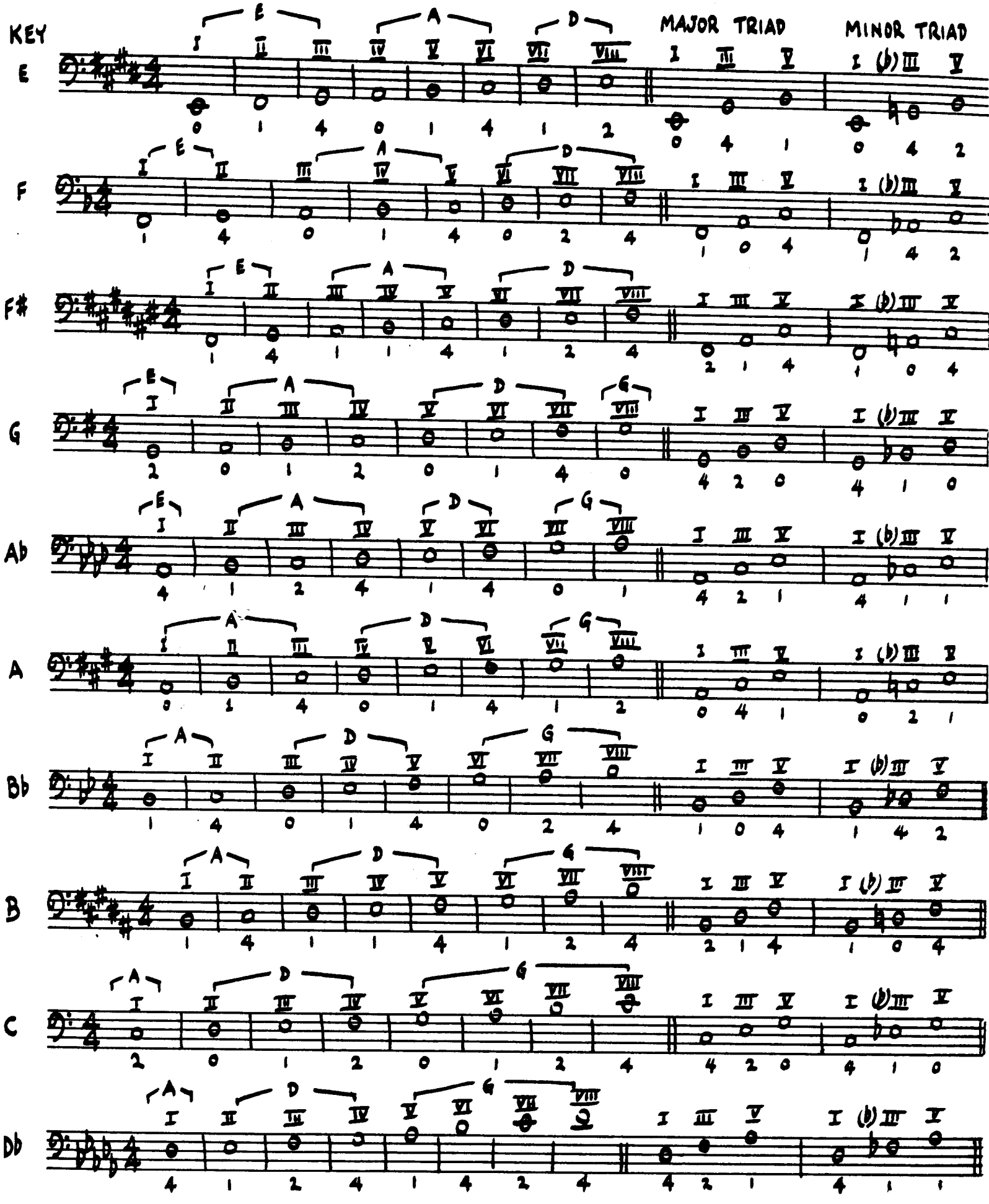
*Right hand position for heavy jazz playing (thumb against the fingerboard).*



*Left hand position. Tips of fingers are used to create best possible sound.*

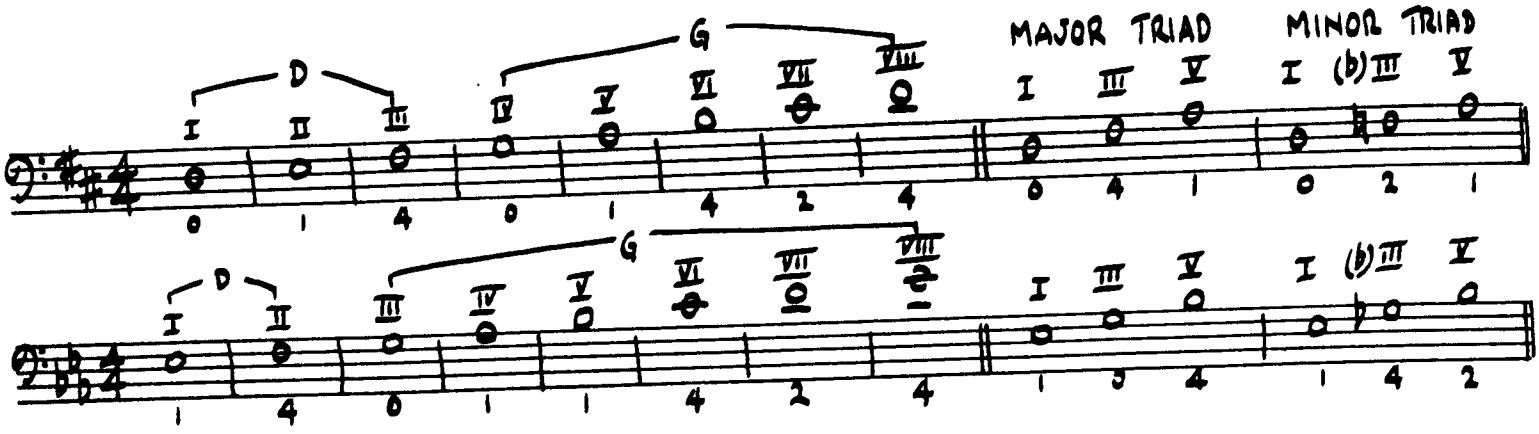
*Position of hands and body in higher thumb positions.*

# SCALES

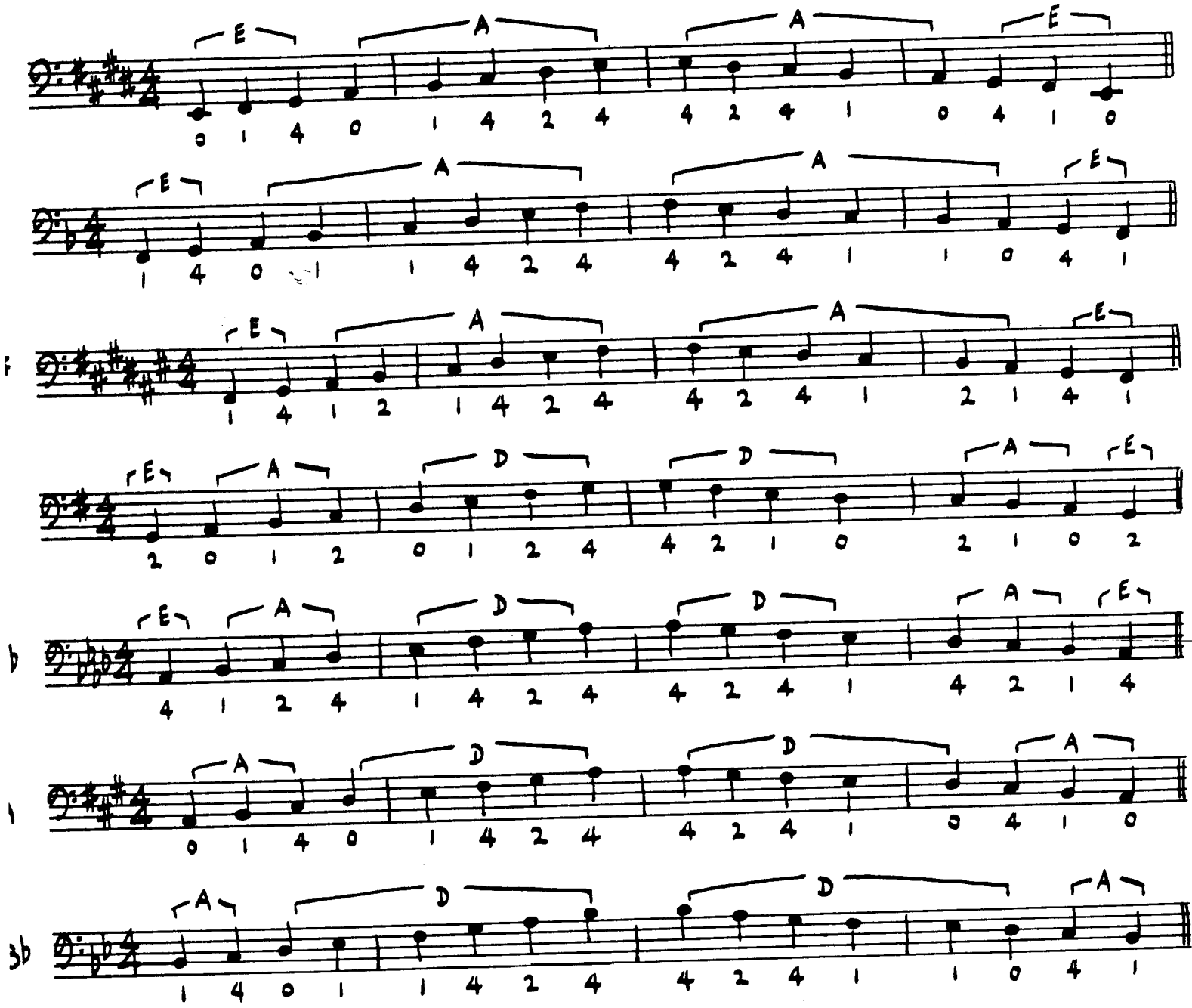



* PRACTISE UNTIL YOU MEMORIZE EVERYTHING

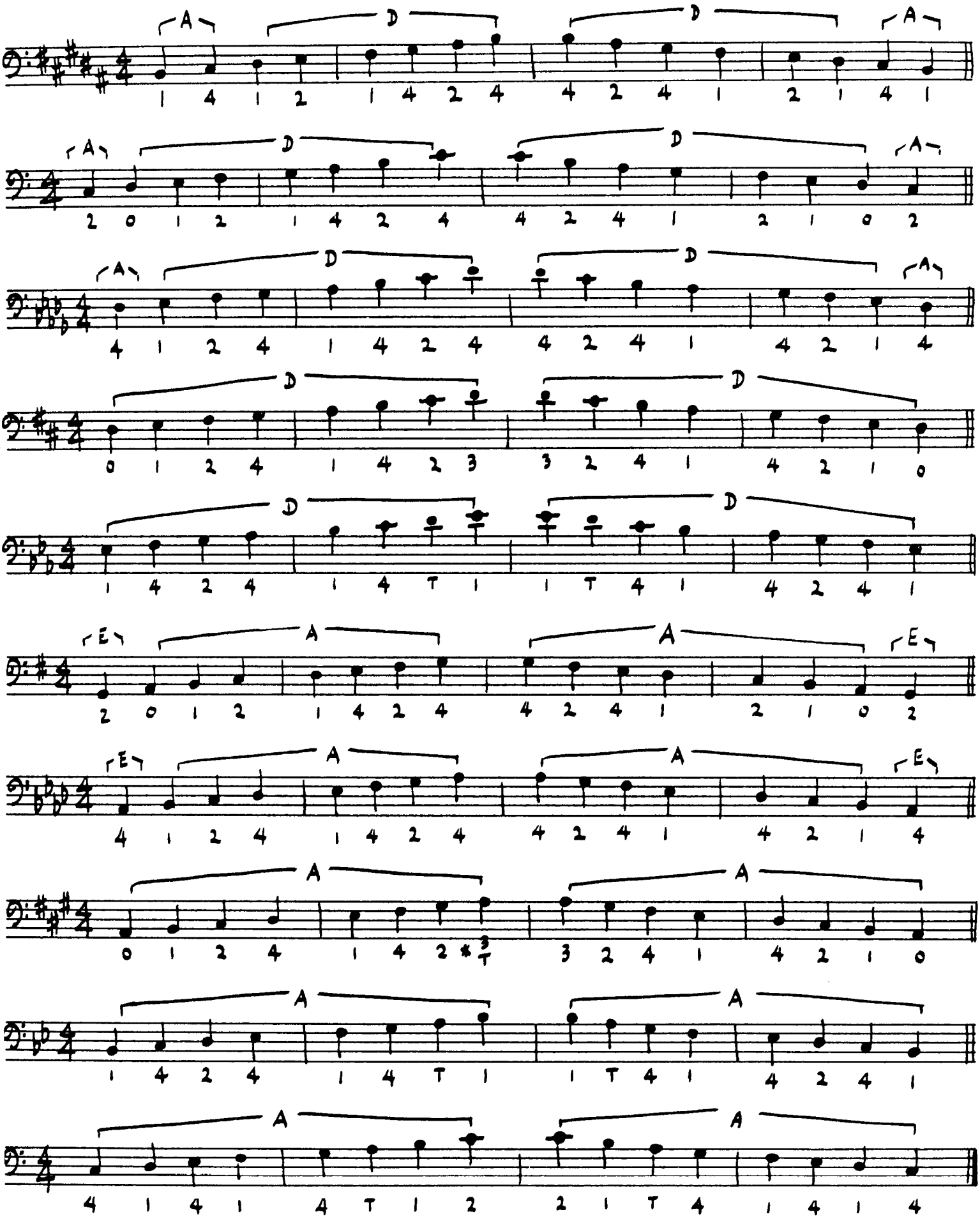
# SCALES



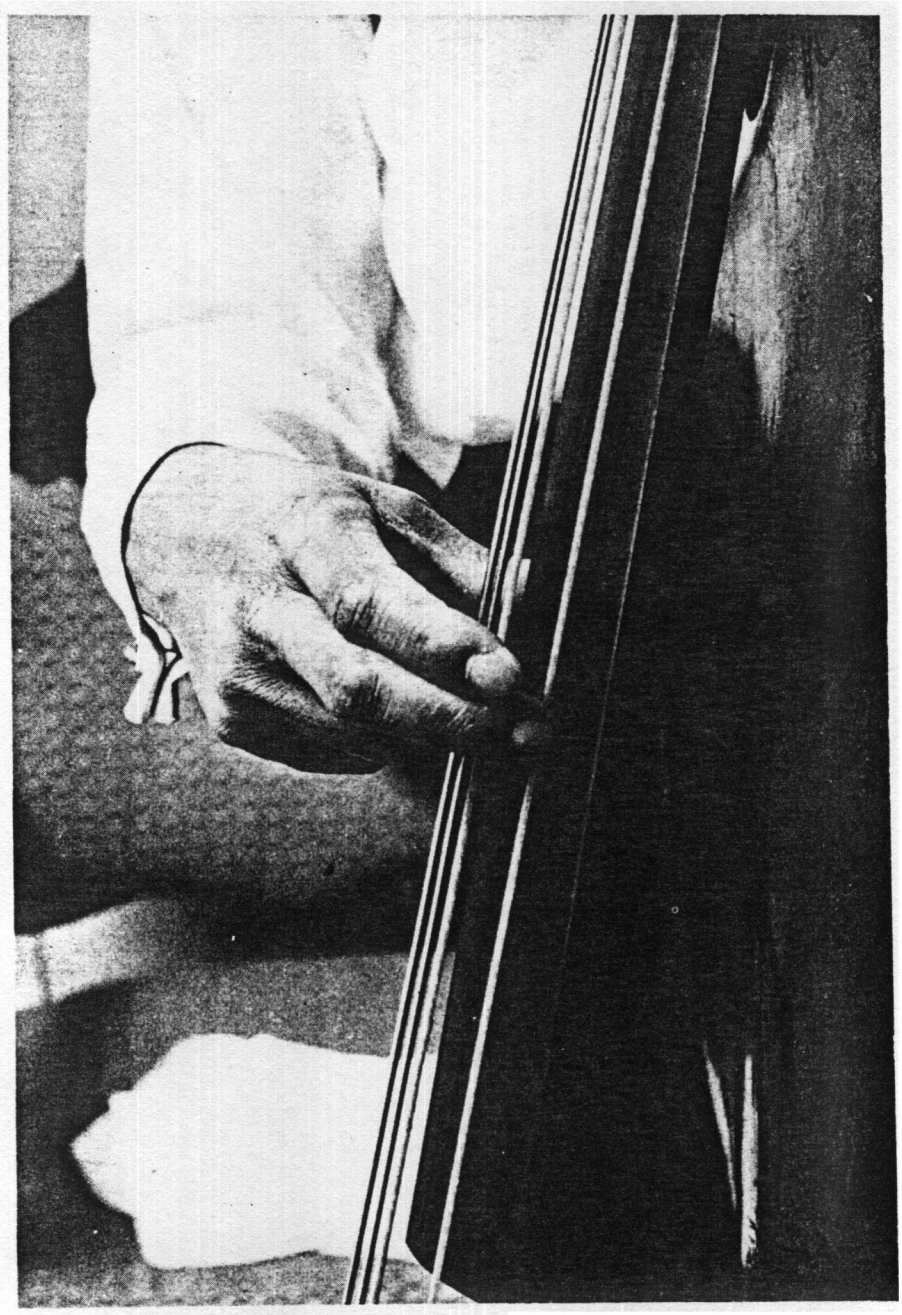

# SCALES ON OTHER STRINGS



# SCALES

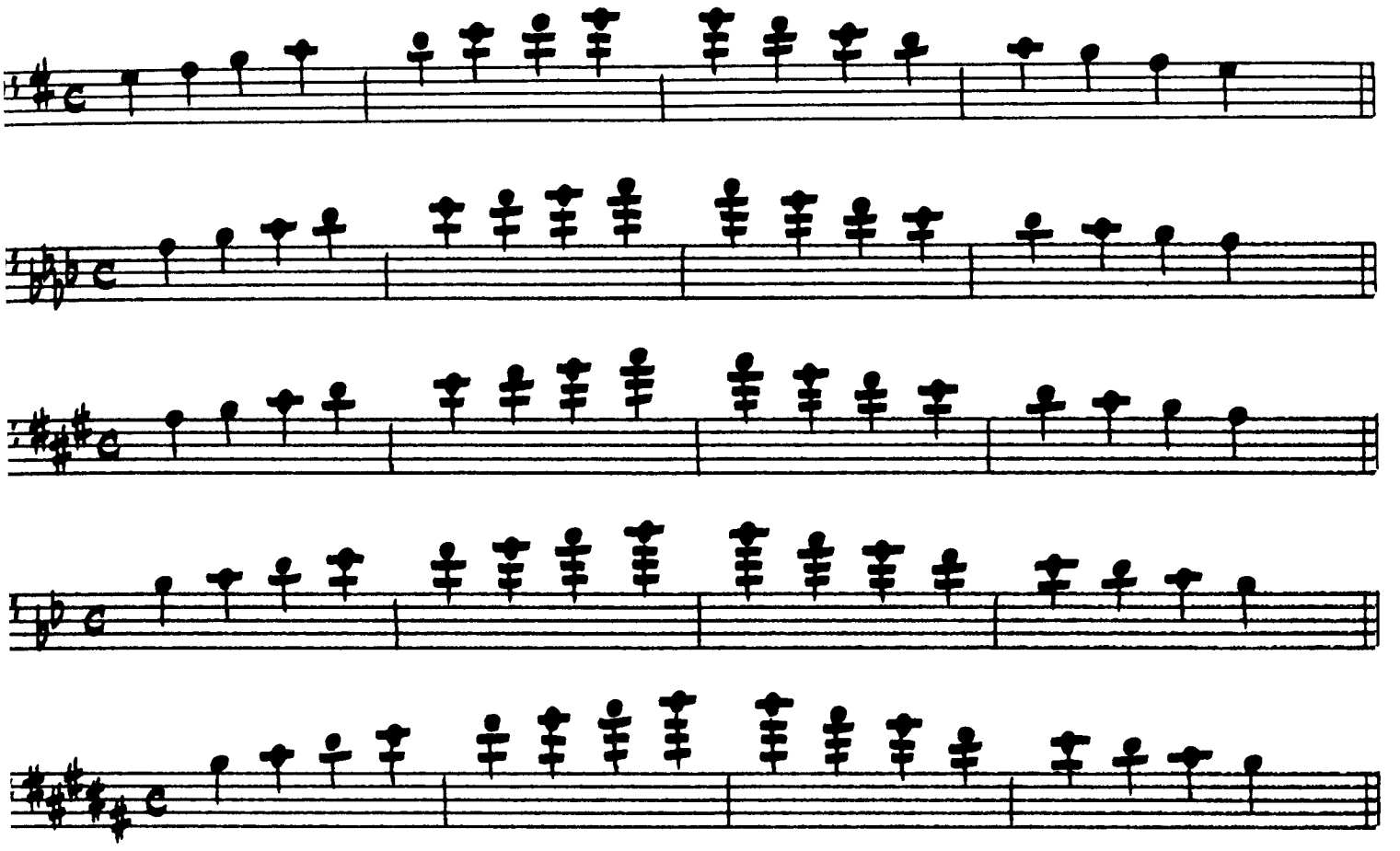


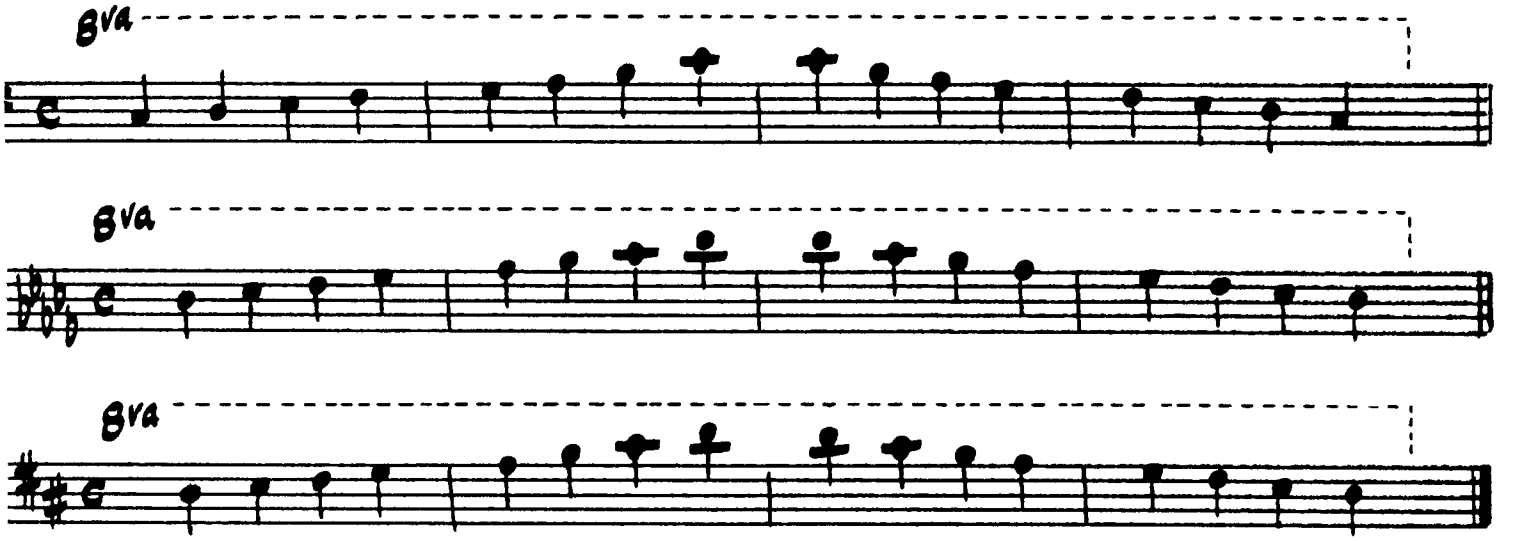

* USE 3rd FINGER IF YOU ARE COMING BACK DOWN AND THUMB IF YOU ARE GOING UP.



*Right hand position for two-finger style pizzicato.*

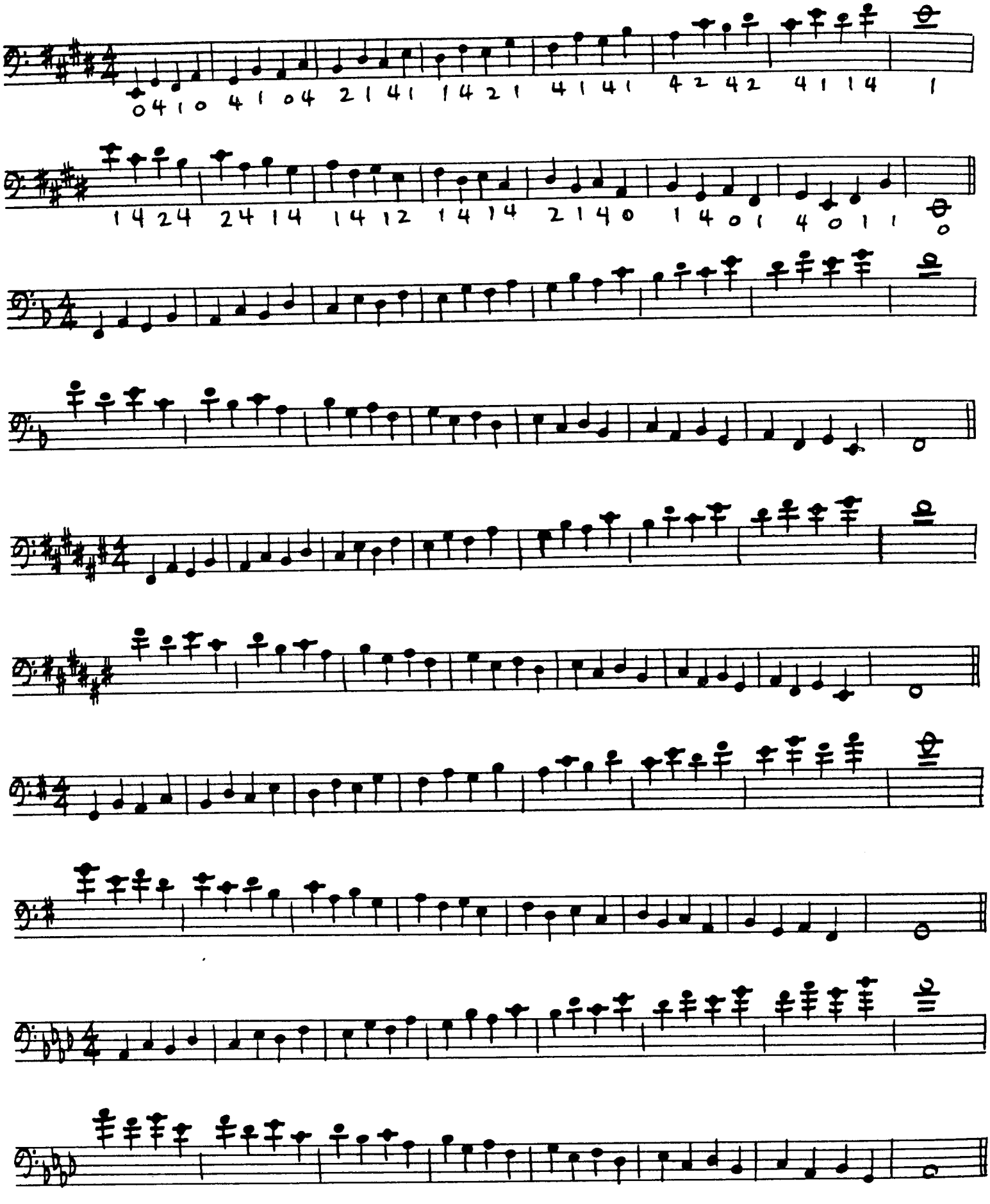
# SCALES



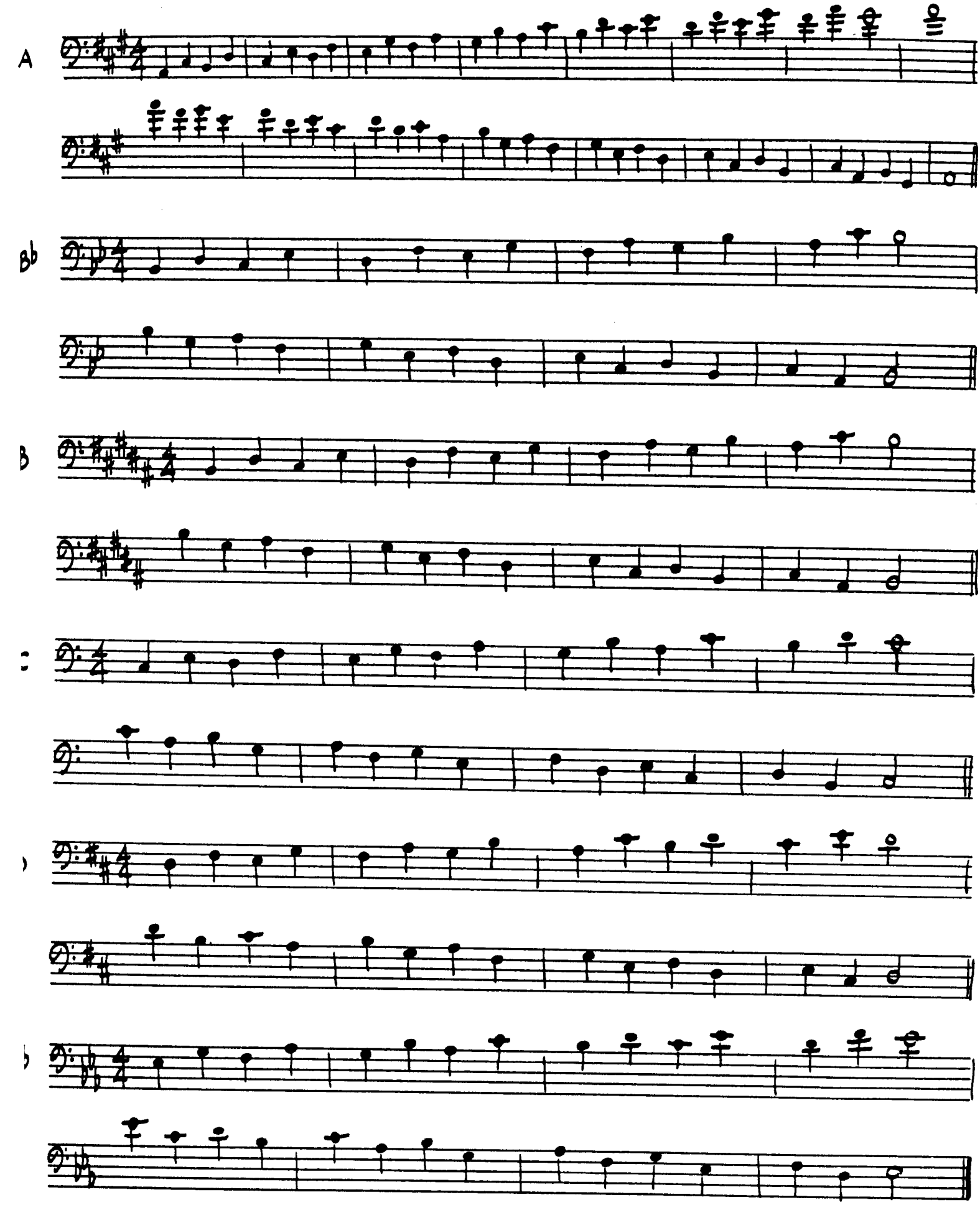


OTE: AFTER YOU CAN PLAY THESE THOROUGHLY, PLAY PICKING EVERY OTHER NOTE. SLOW AT FIRST AND THEN FASTER. EXCELLENT FOR 2 FINGER PRACTICE ALSO.

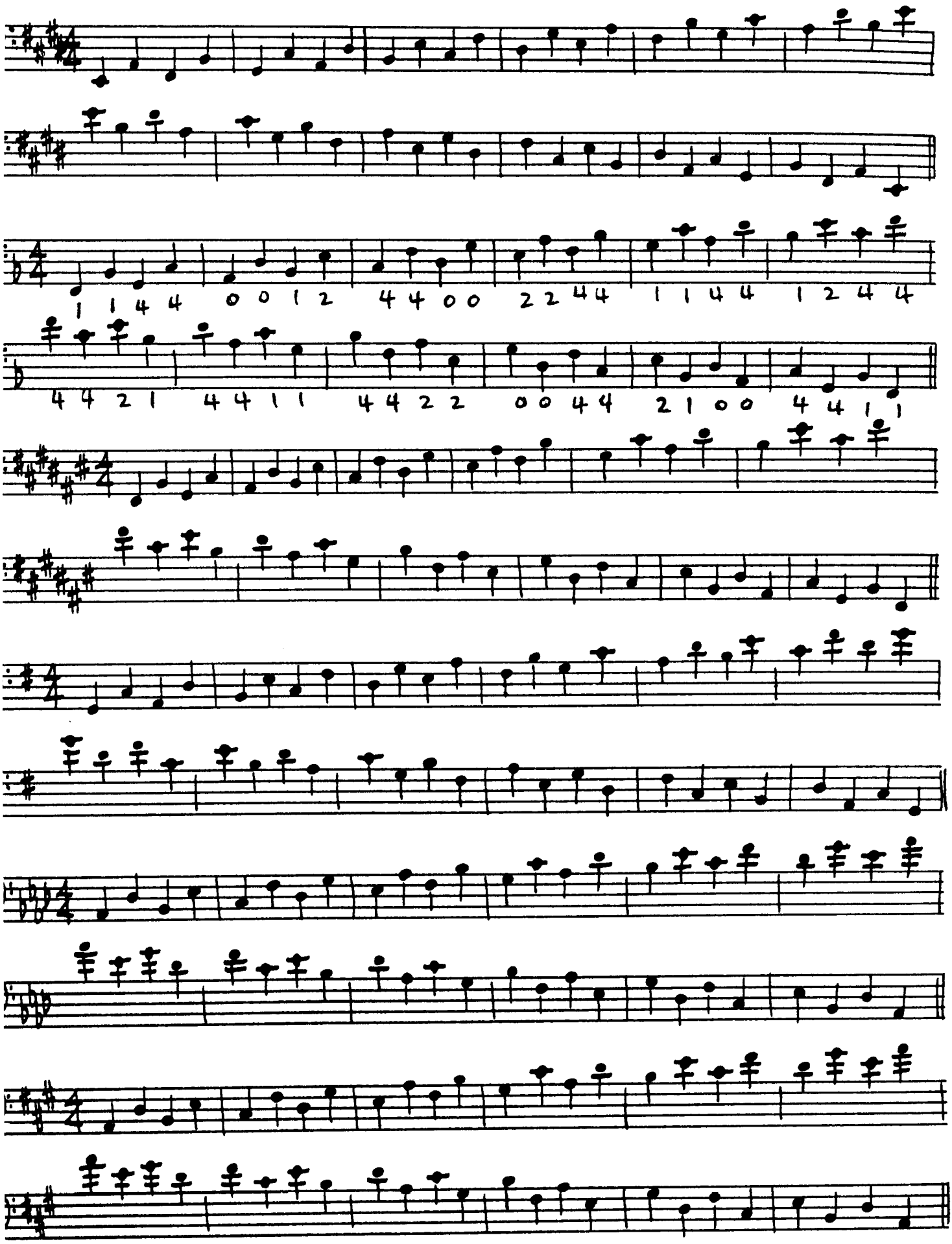
# THIRDS


0 4 1 0 4 1 0 4 2 1 4 1 1 4 2 1 4 1 4 1 4 2 4 2 4 1 1 4 1
1 4 2 4 2 4 1 4 1 4 1 2 1 4 1 4 2 1 4 0 1 4 0 1 4 0 1 1 0

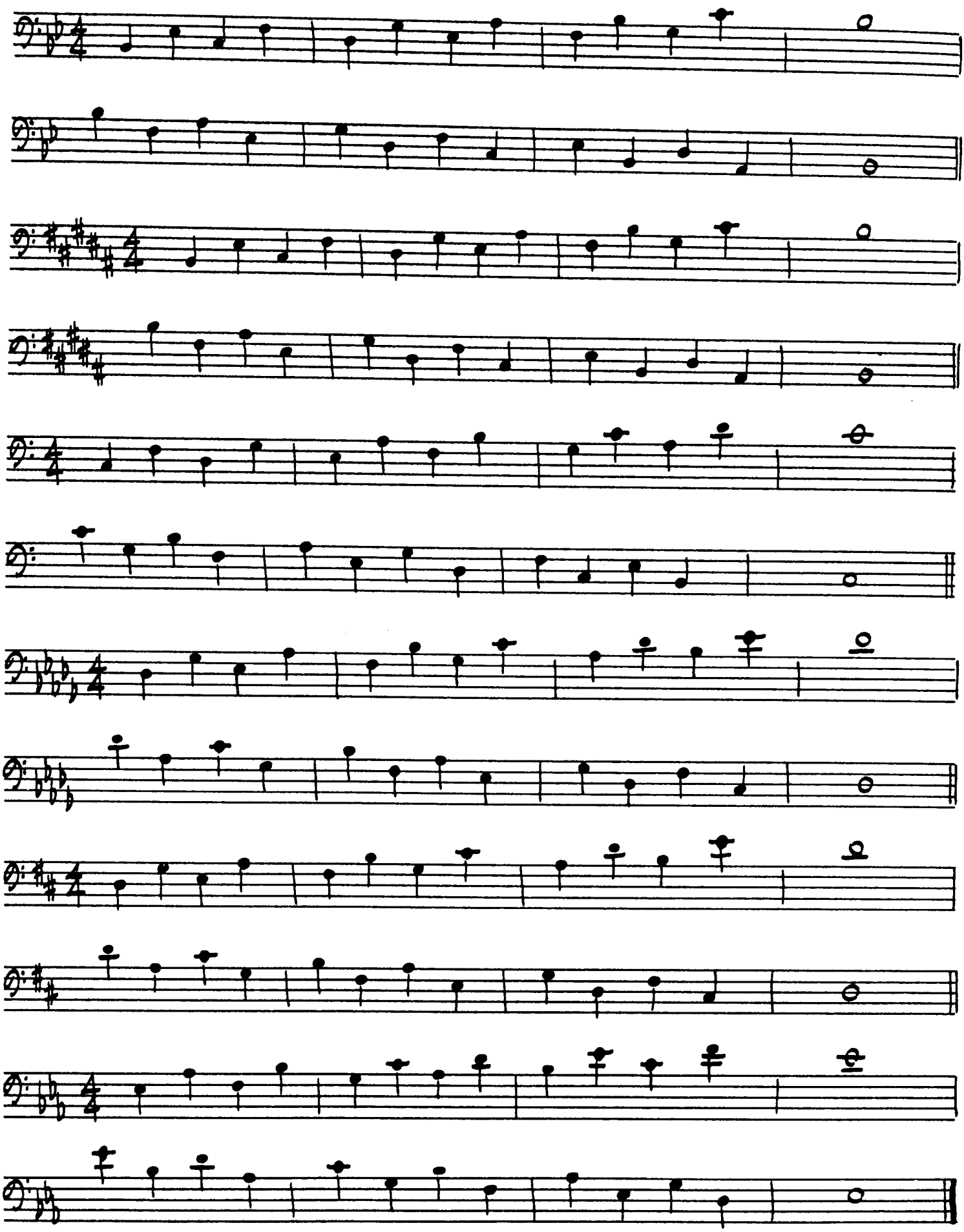
# THIRDS



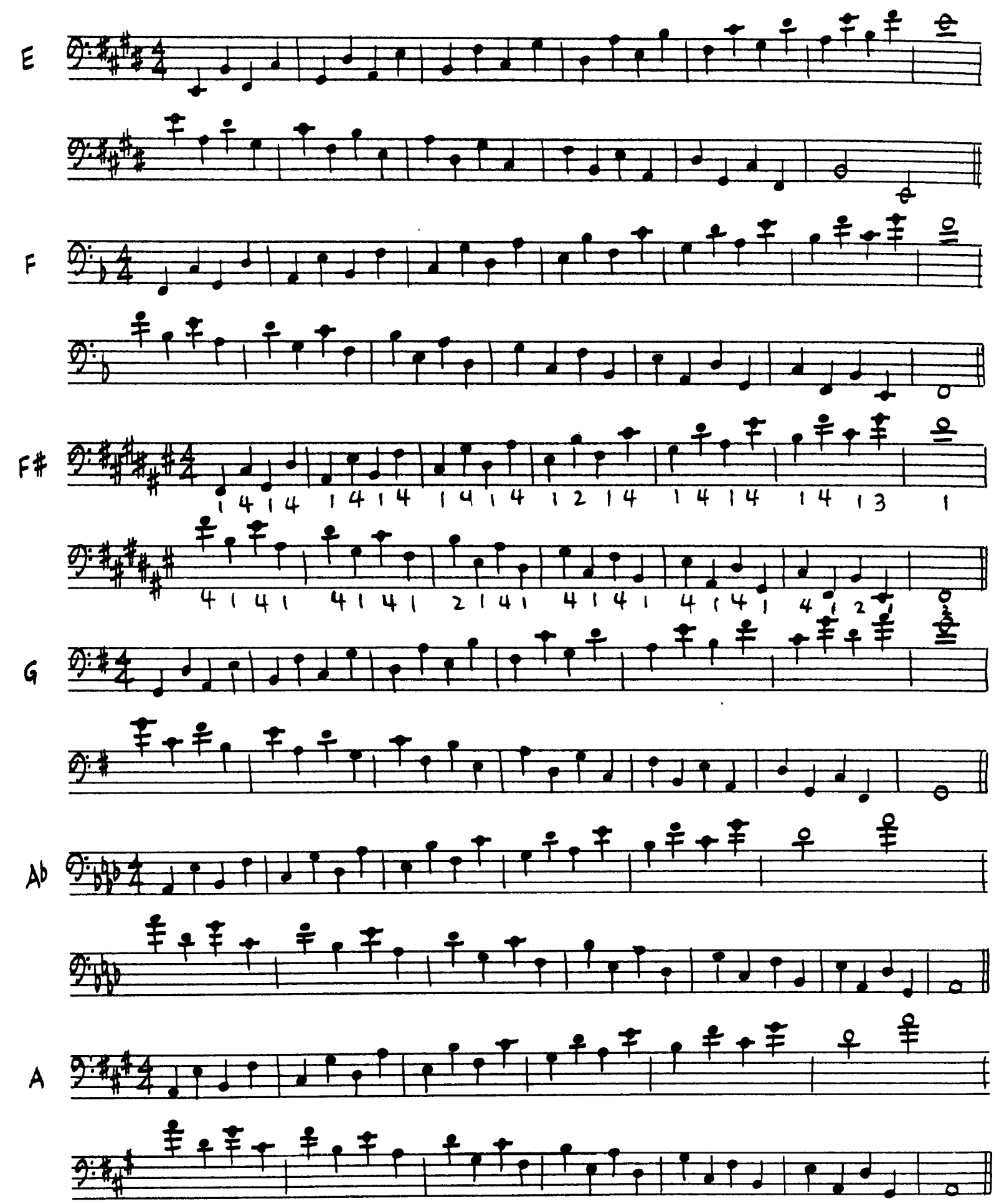
# FOURTHS



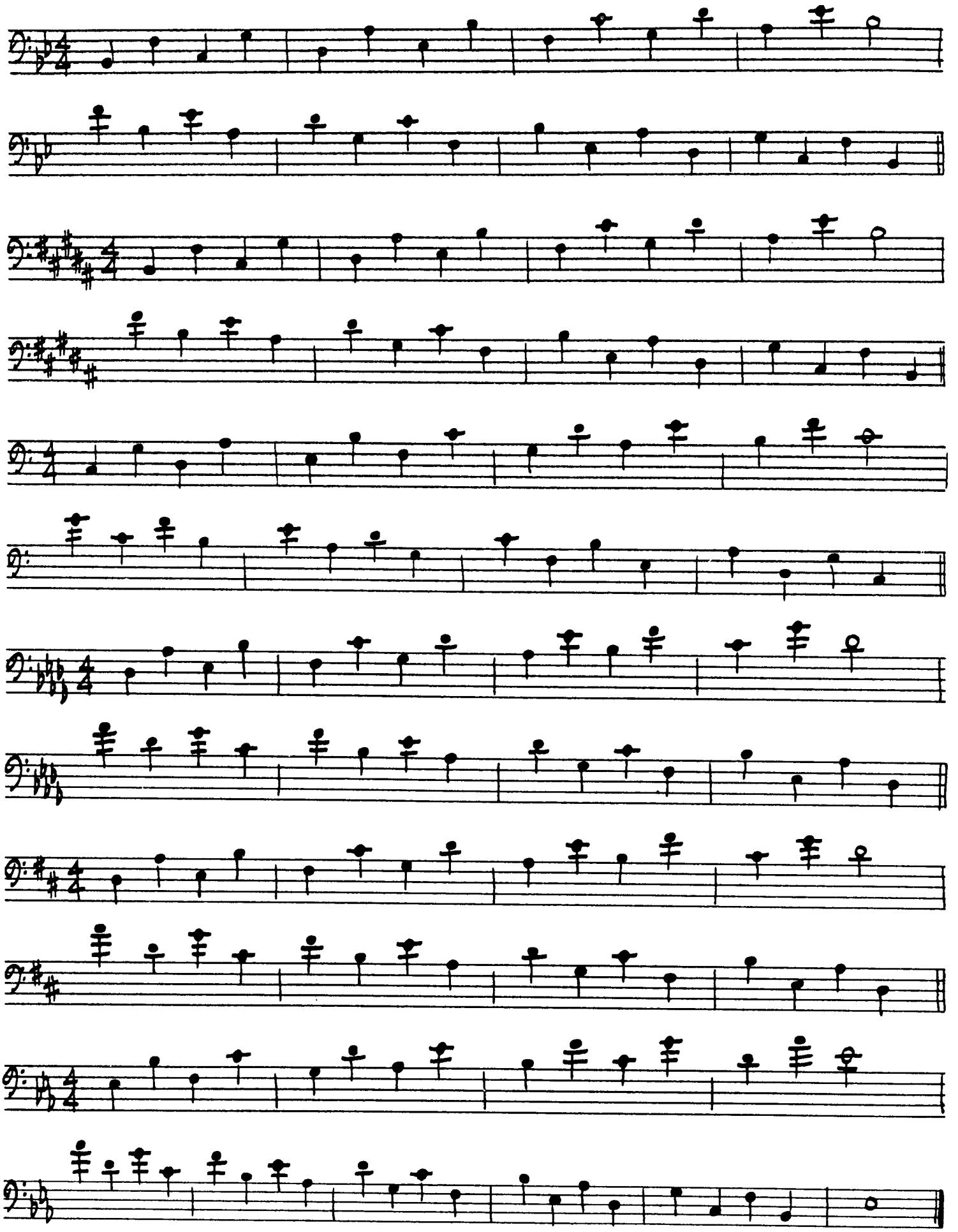
# FOURTHS



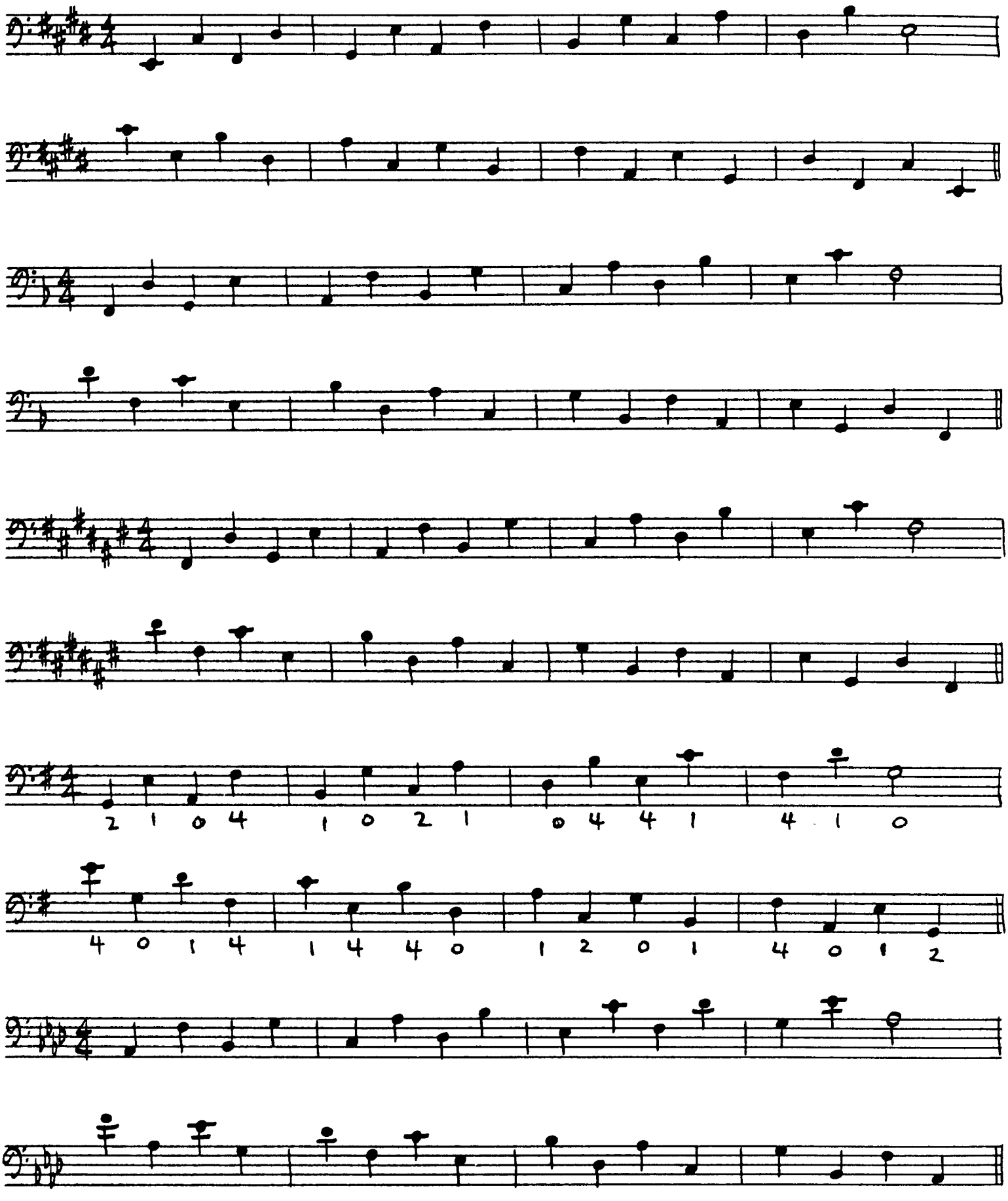
# FIFTHS


E
F
F#
1 4 1 4 1 4 1 4 1 4 1 4 1 2 1 4 1 4 1 4 1 4 1 3 1
4 1 4 1 4 1 4 1 2 1 4 1 4 1 4 1 4 1 4 1 2
G
Ab
A

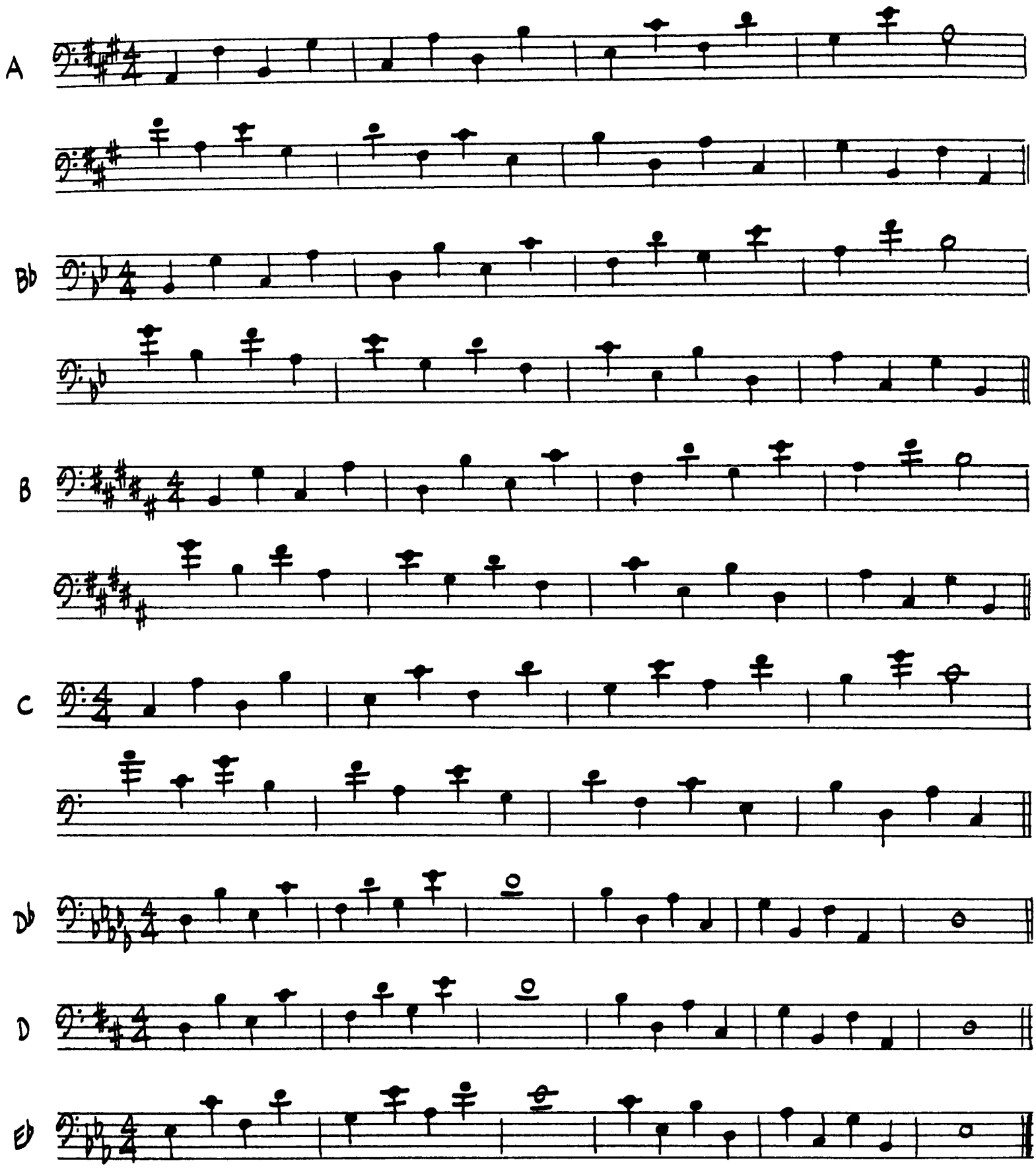
# FIFTHS



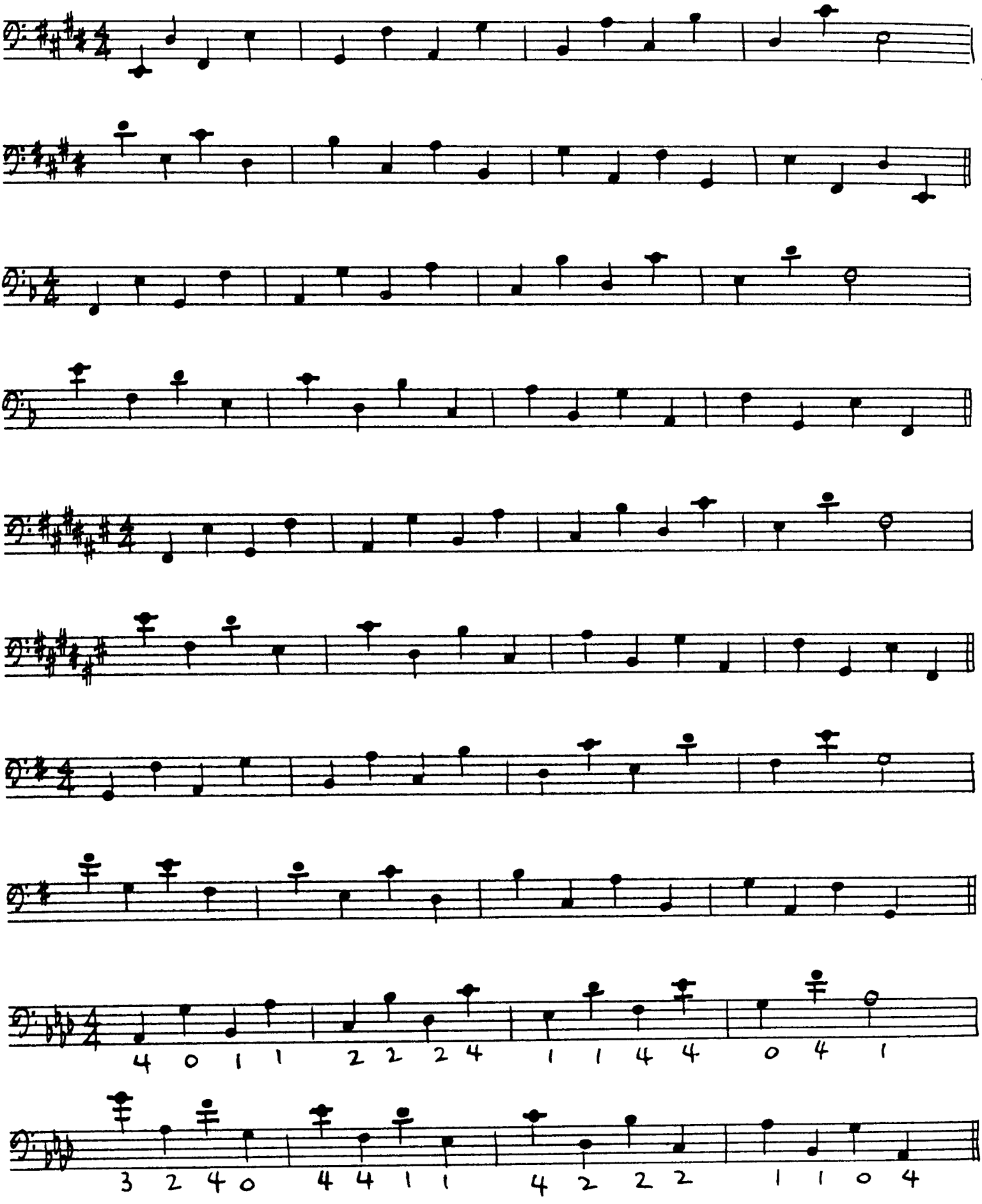
# SIXTHS



# SIXTHS

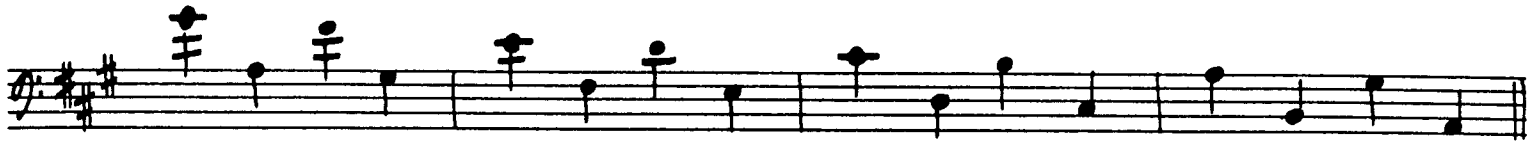


# SEVENTHS



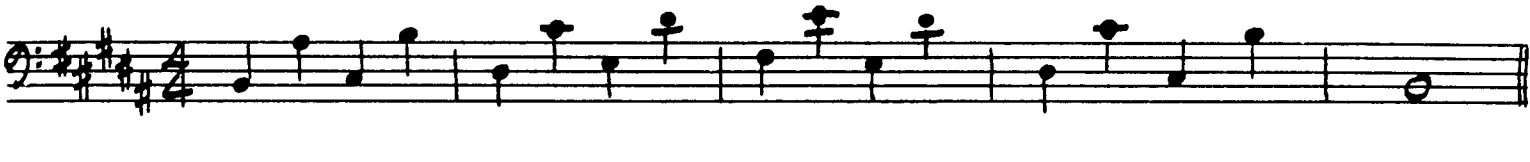
# SEVENTHS

A

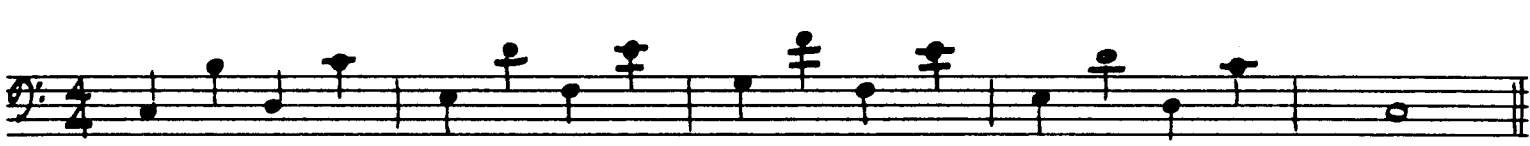


B♭

B

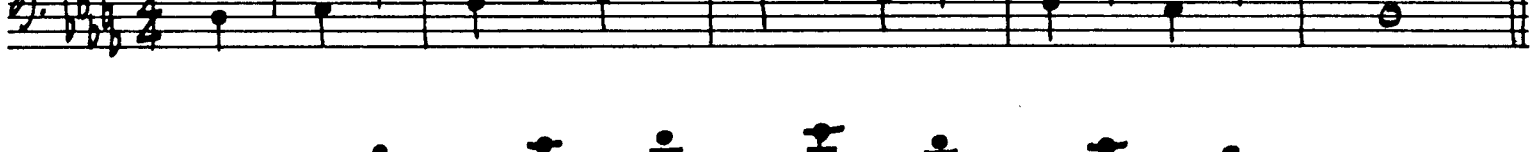


C

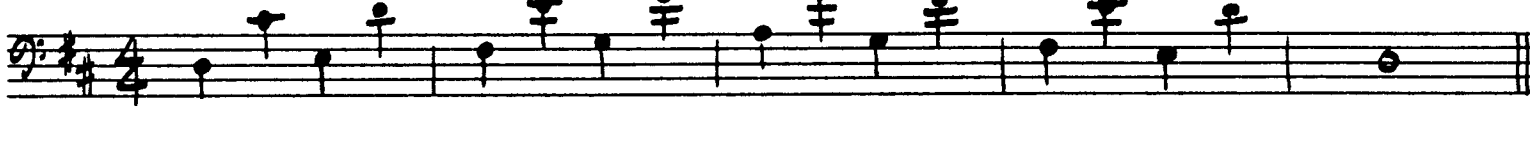


D♭

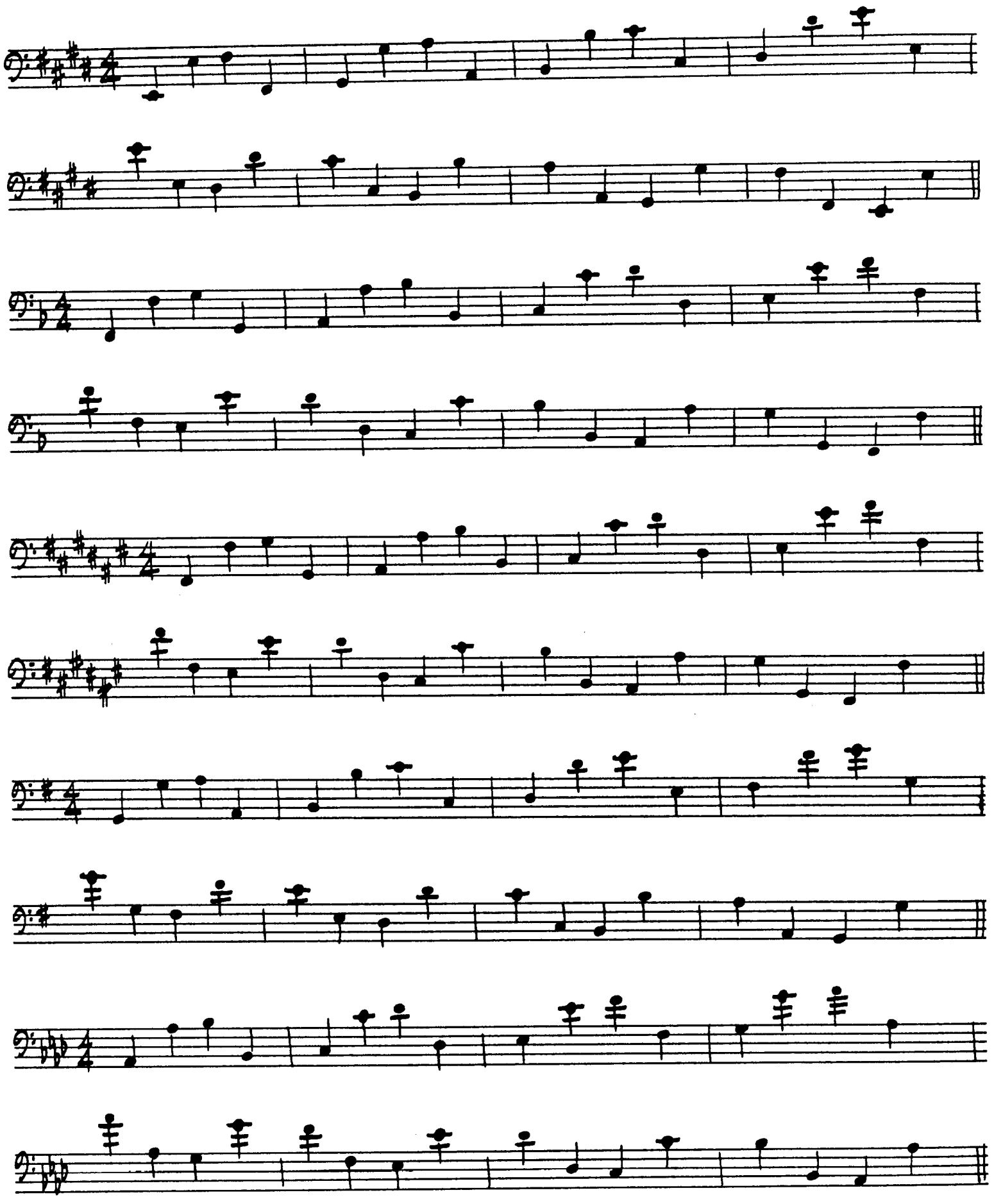
D



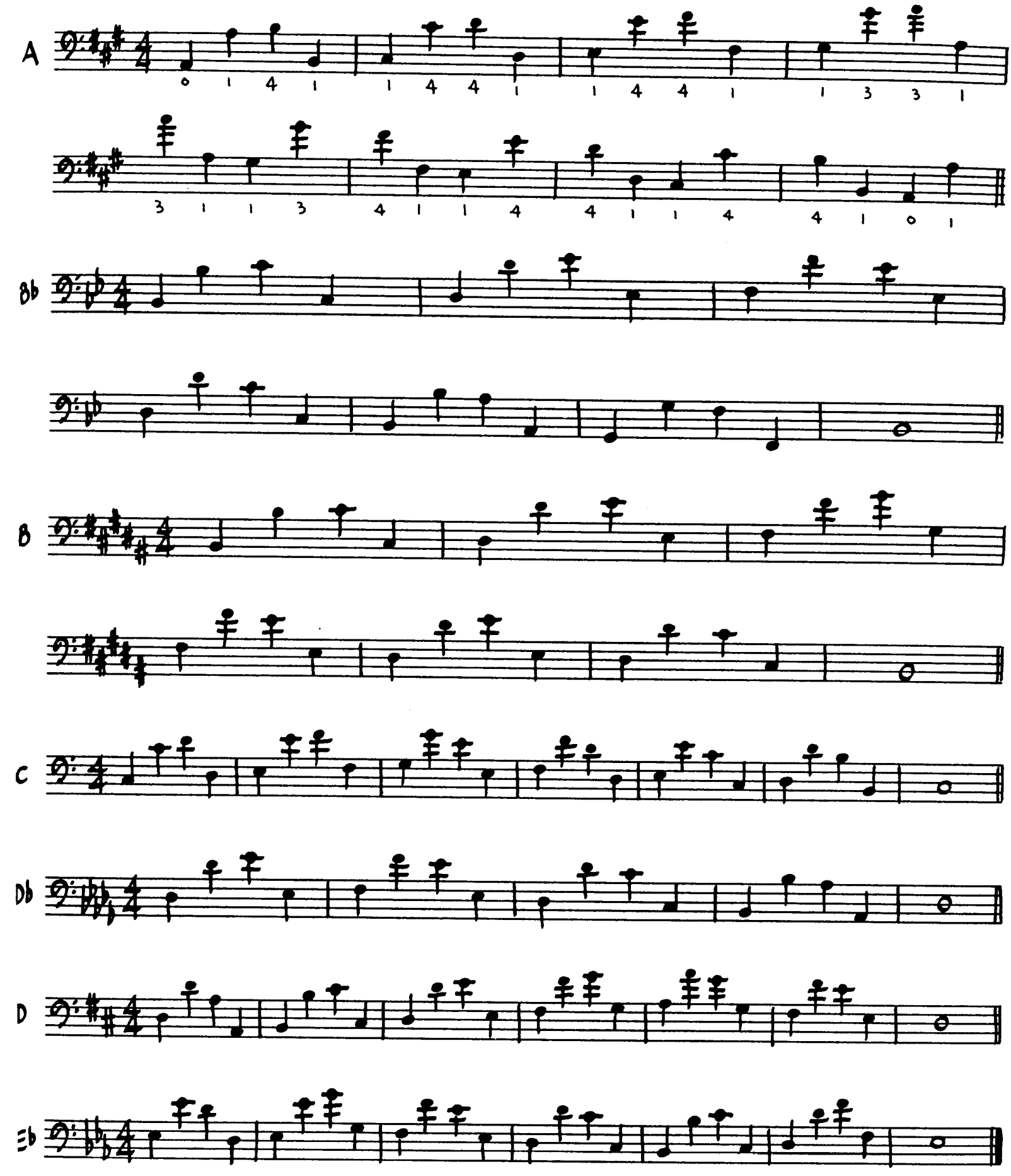
E♭



# OCTAVES



# OCTAVES



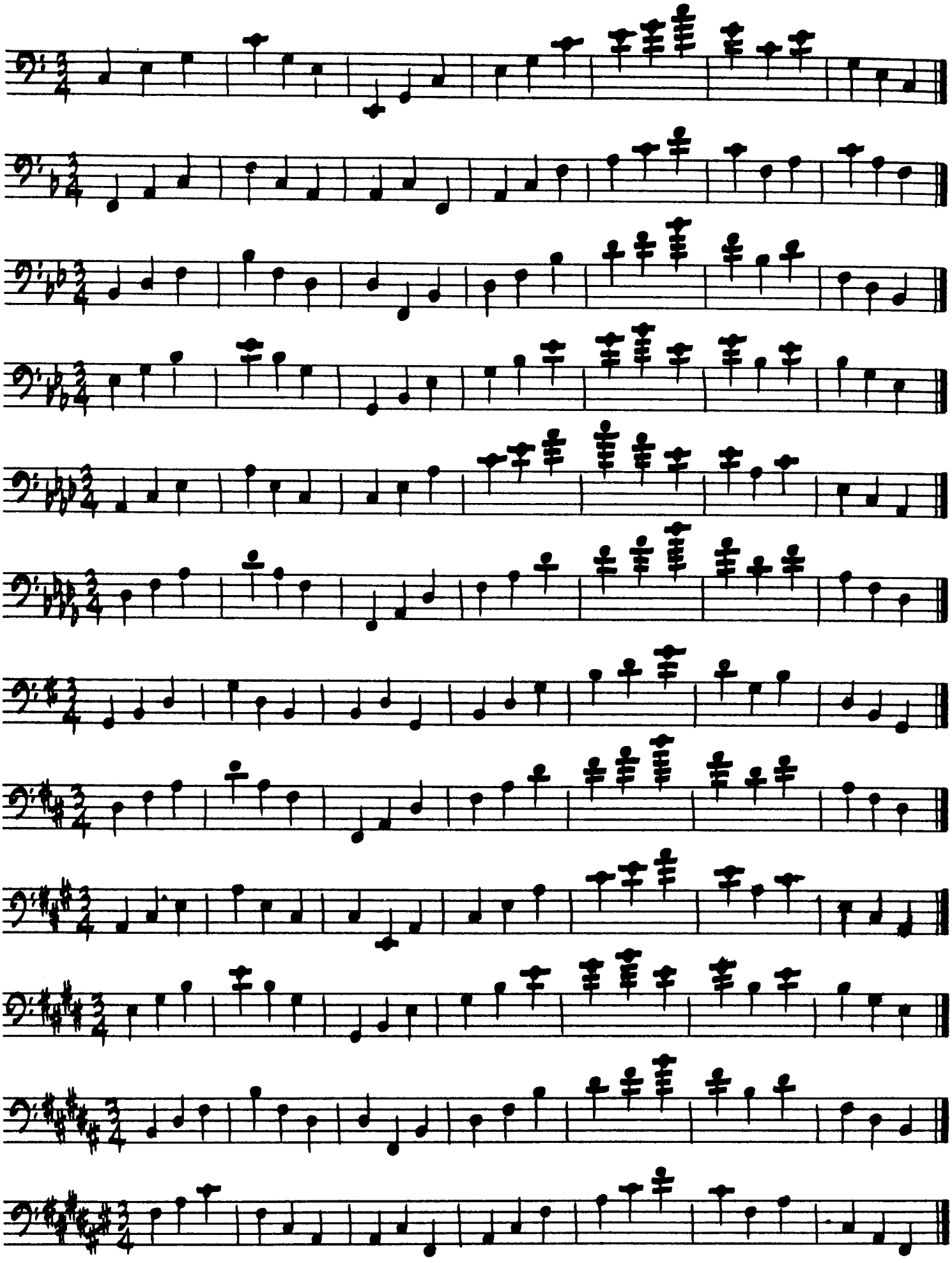
# CHAPTER II

## CHORDS

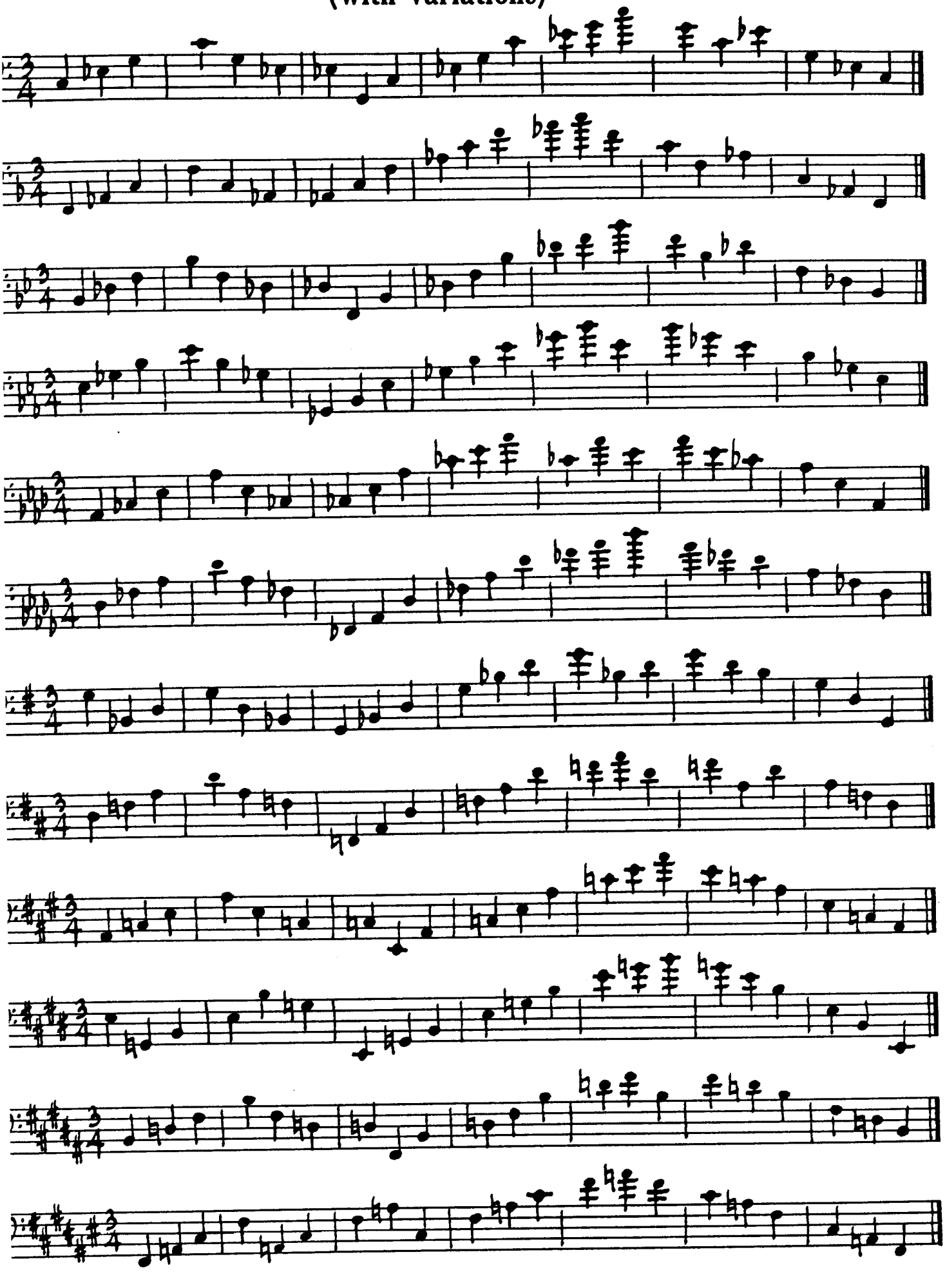
A good jazz musician should, as we say in the jazz venacular, know all of his changes. You should begin Chapter II by learning all of your triads—major and minor. After getting these under hand, you should add the 6ths, 7ths, etc.

A bass player who not only knows his chords but is able to call them out to some one else is a valuable asset to any musical organization.

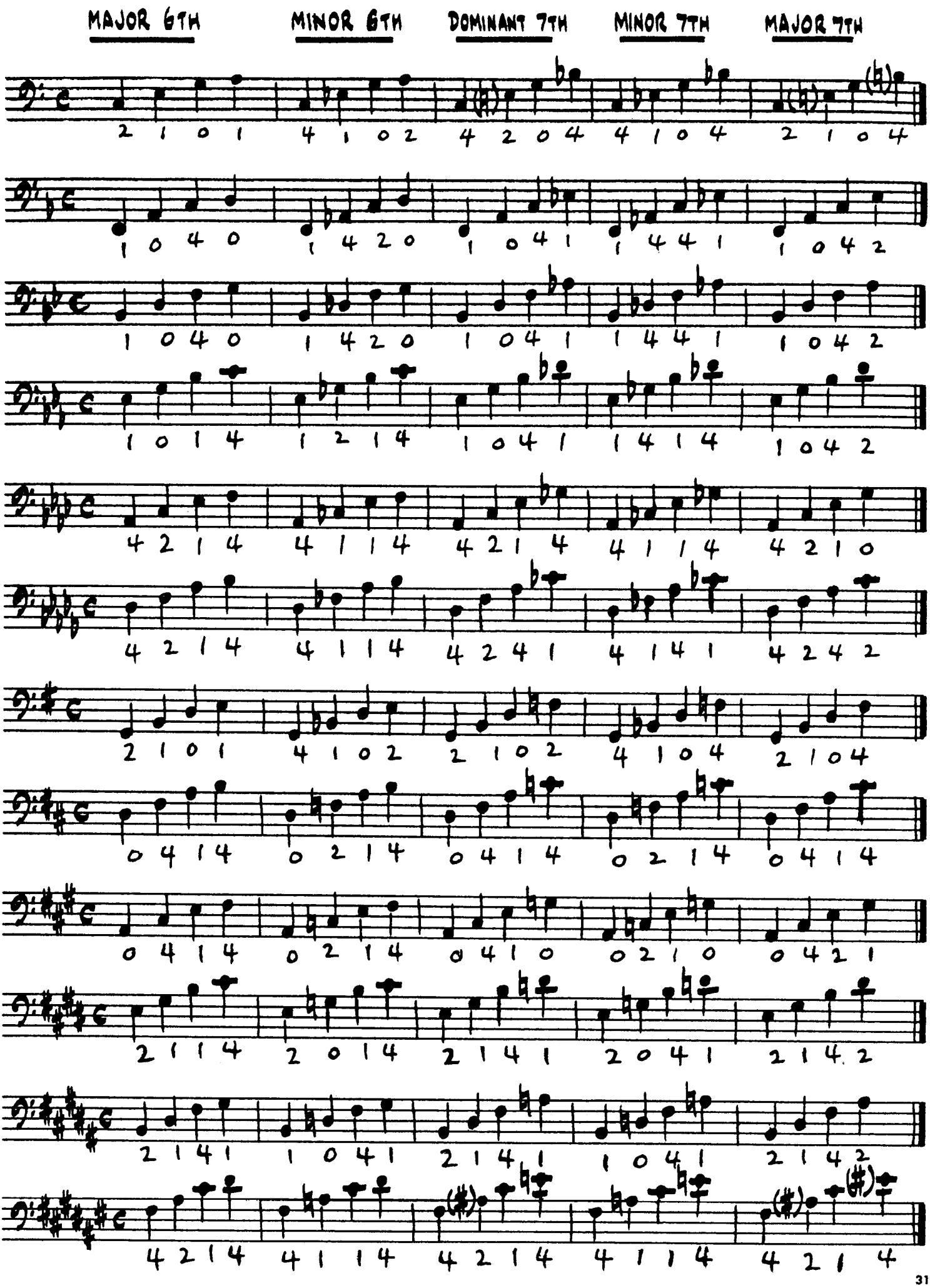
# MAJOR TRIADS
## (with variations)



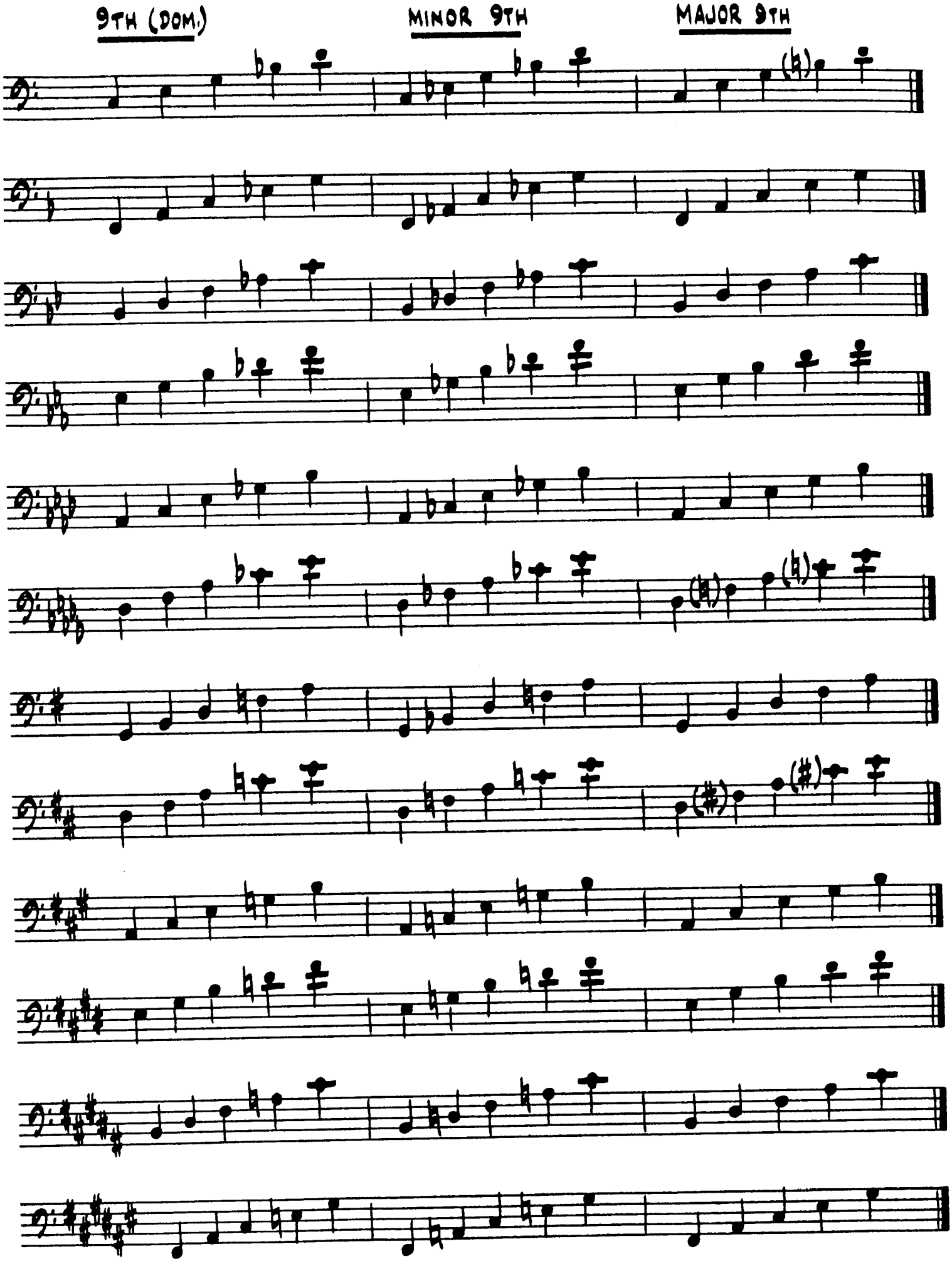
# MINOR TRIADS
## (with variations)



# CHORDS


MAJOR 6TH
MINOR 6TH
DOMINANT 7TH
MINOR 7TH
MAJOR 7TH
2 1 0 1 4 1 0 2 4 2 0 4 4 1 0 4 2 1 0 4
1 0 4 0 1 4 2 0 1 0 4 1 1 4 4 1 1 0 4 2
1 0 4 0 1 4 2 0 1 0 4 1 1 4 4 1 1 0 4 2
1 0 1 4 1 2 1 4 1 0 4 1 1 4 1 4 1 0 4 2
4 2 1 4 4 1 1 4 4 2 1 4 4 1 1 4 4 2 1 0
4 2 1 4 4 1 1 4 4 2 4 1 4 1 4 1 4 2 4 2
2 1 0 1 4 1 0 2 2 1 0 2 4 1 0 4 2 1 0 4
0 4 1 4 0 2 1 4 0 4 1 4 0 2 1 4 0 4 1 4
0 4 1 4 0 2 1 4 0 4 1 0 0 2 1 0 0 4 2 1
2 1 1 4 2 0 1 4 2 1 4 1 2 0 4 1 2 1 4 2
2 1 4 1 1 0 4 1 2 1 4 1 1 0 4 1 2 1 4 2
4 2 1 4 4 1 1 4 4 2 1 4 4 1 1 4 4 2 1 4

# CHORDS

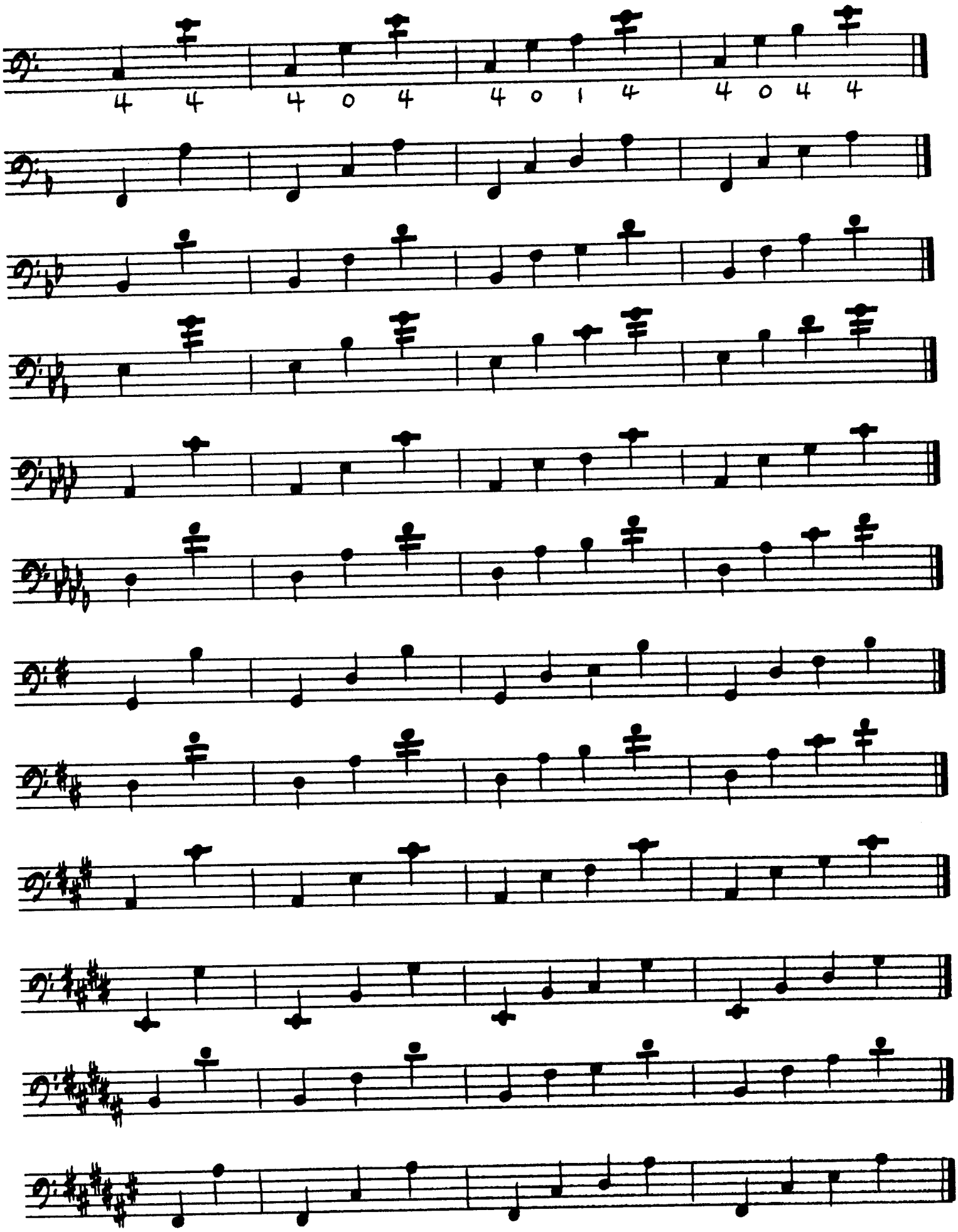


# CHAPTER III

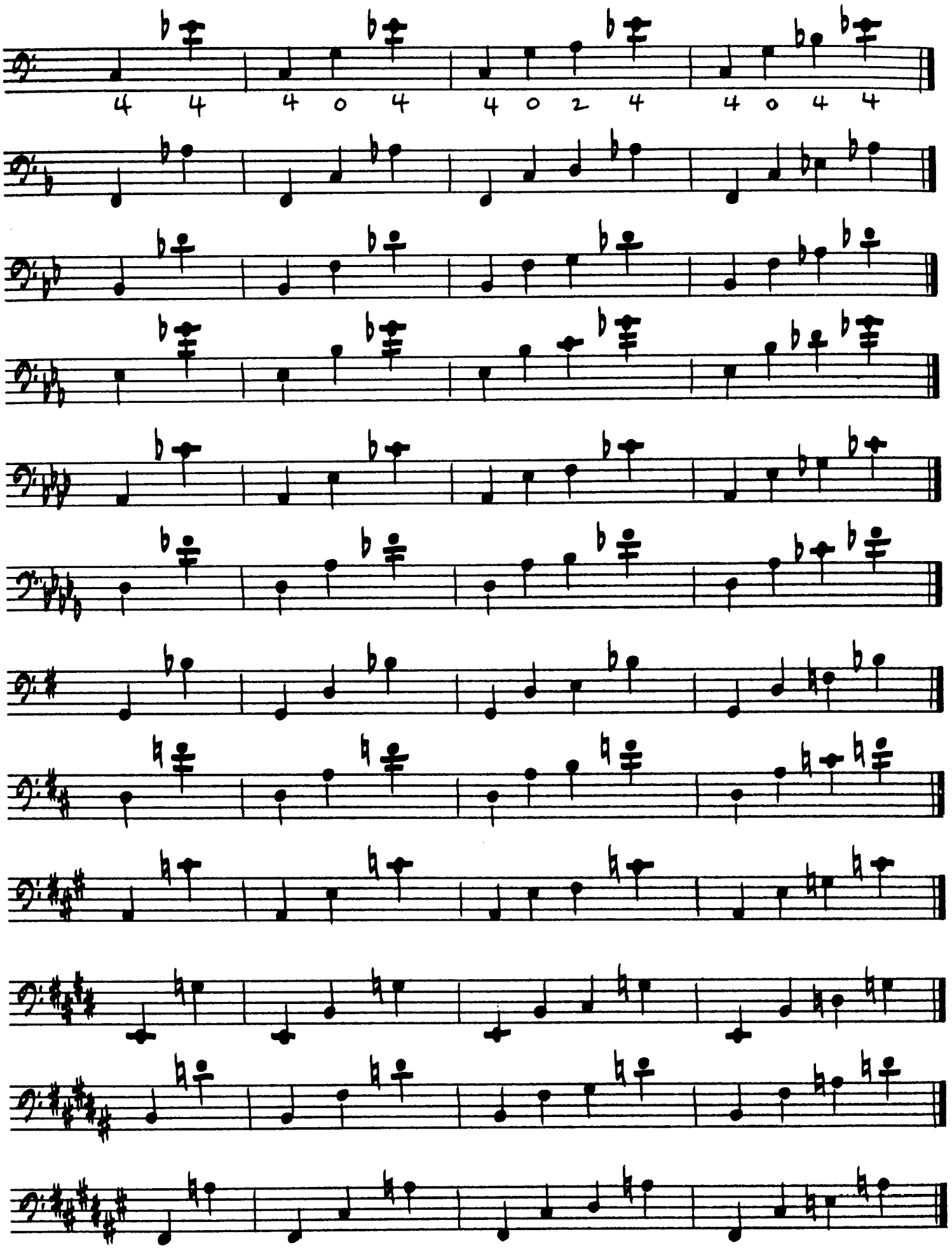
## EXERCISES IN TENTHS

One of the great thrills in playing bass is the utilization of what I like to refer to as color, a great deal of which can be achieved in the playing of 10ths. I do not think bass players of today or the older days have done enough experimenting in this direction. Remember that the main factor in the playing of 10ths is intonation. I recommend that you spend a great deal of time examining the material in Chapter III. You will find it very rewarding.

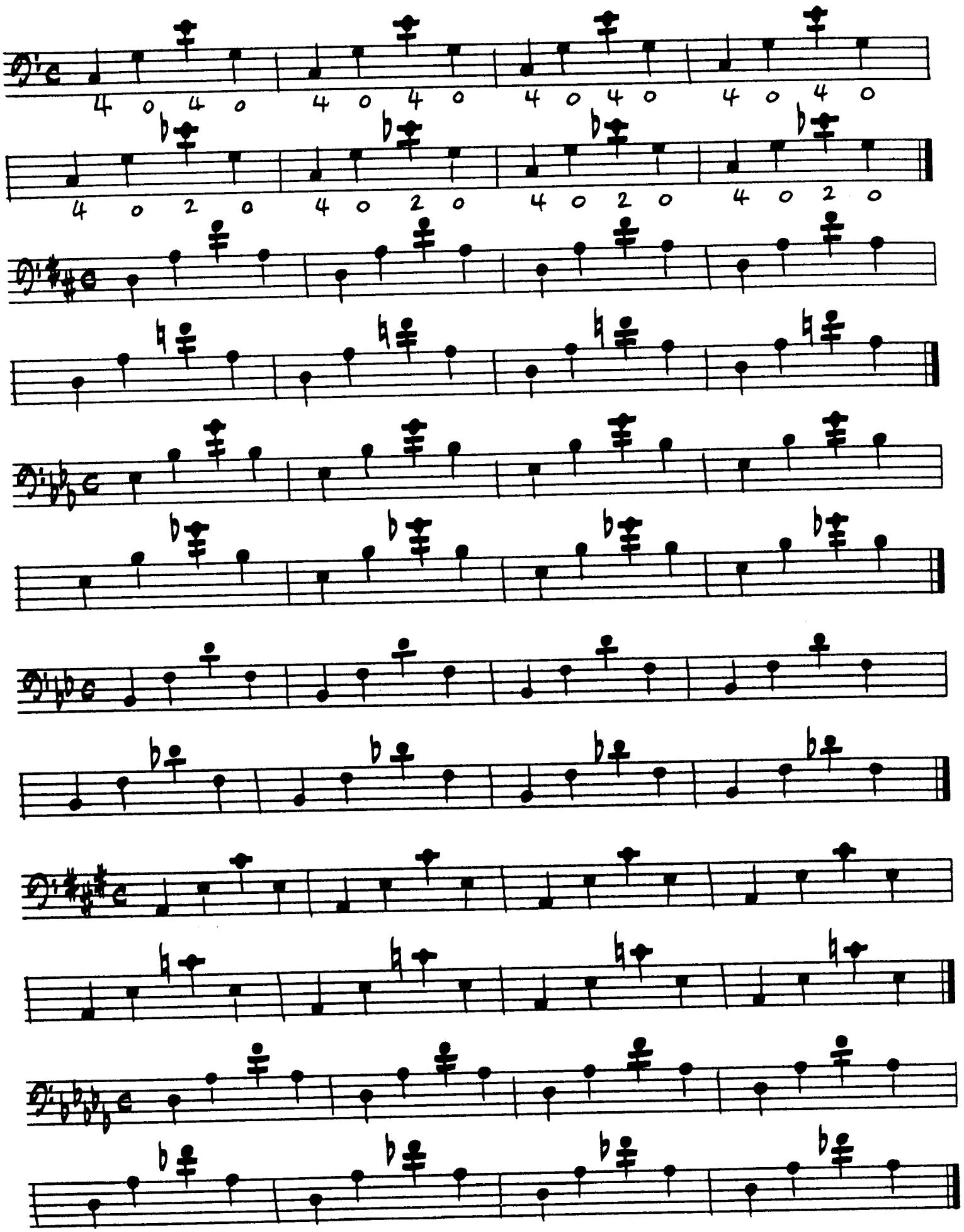
# EXERCISE IN TENTHS



# EXERCISE IN TENTHS

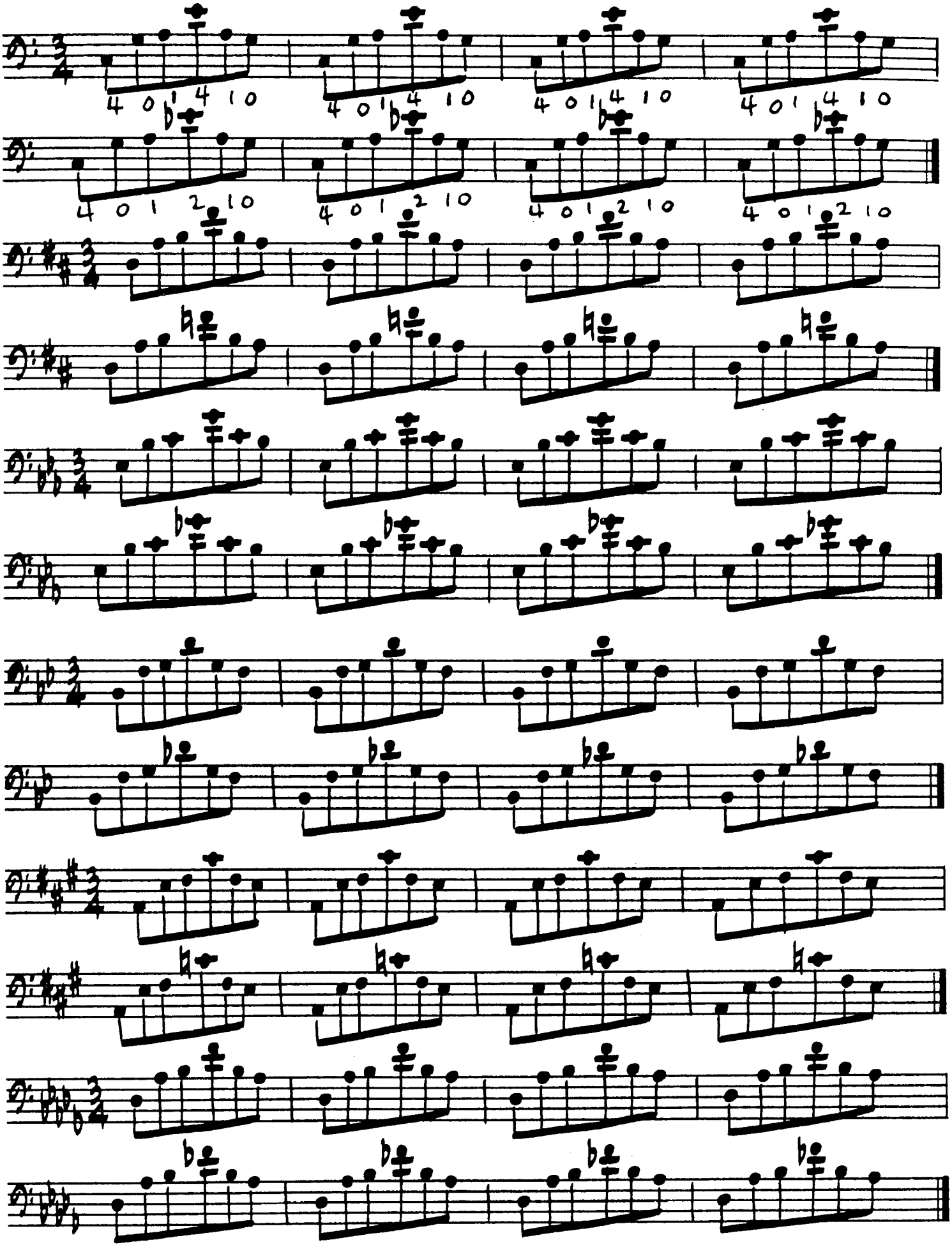


# EXERCISE IN TENTHS

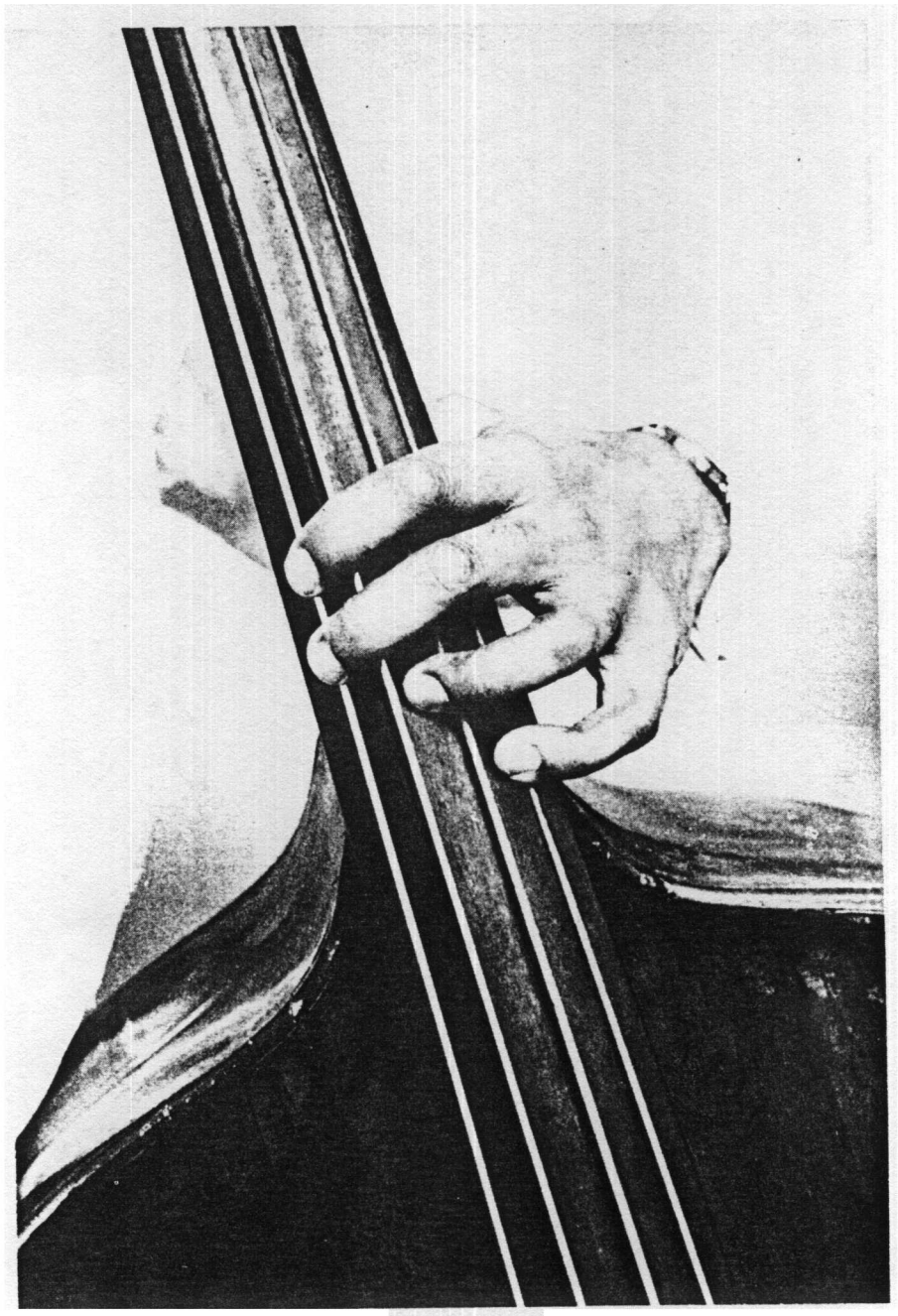



NOTE: PRACTISE THESE UNTIL THEY CAN BE PLAYED FAST AND SMOOTH.

# EXERCISE IN TENTHS

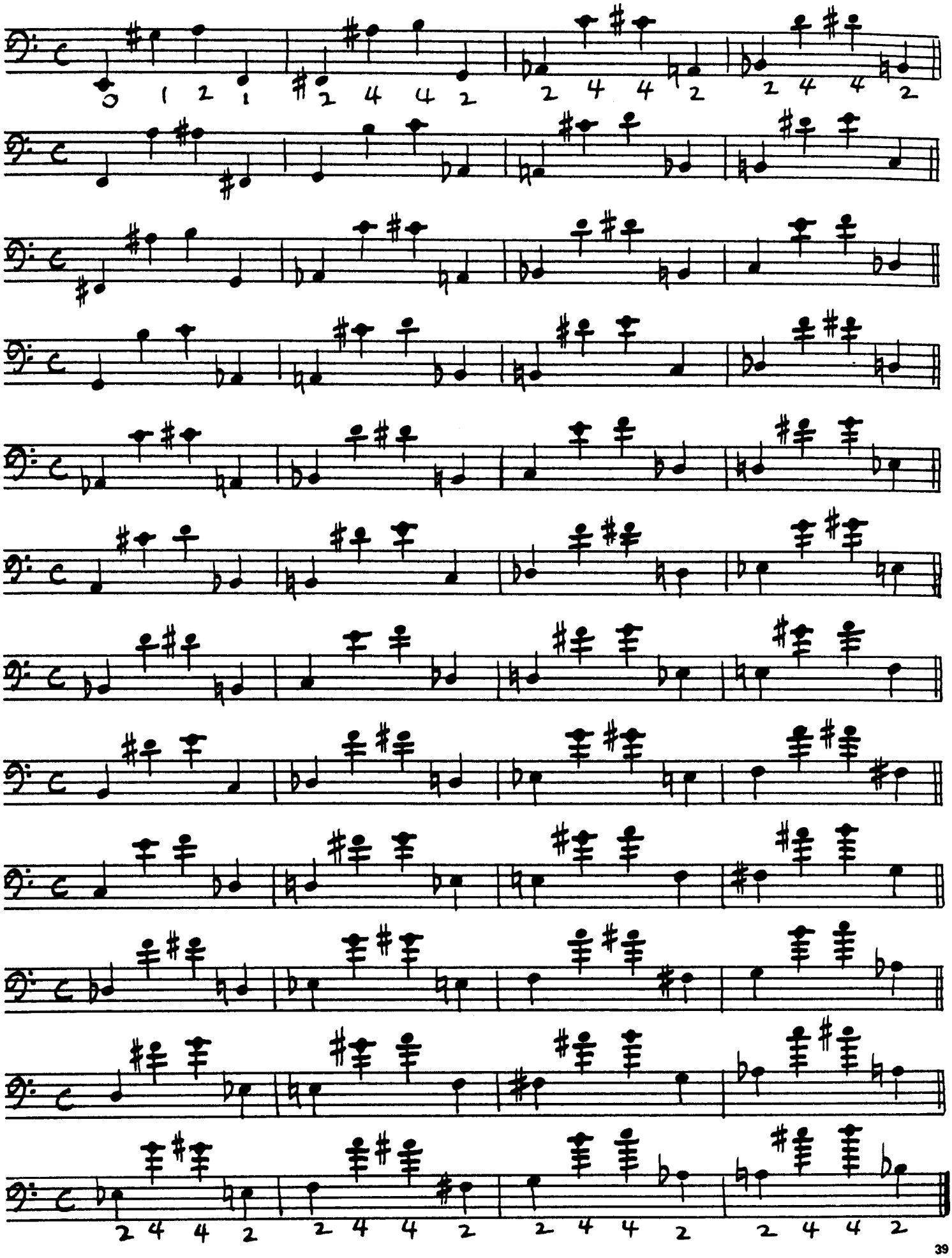



NOTE: PRACTISE THESE UNTIL THEY CAN BE PLAYED FAST AND SMOOTH.

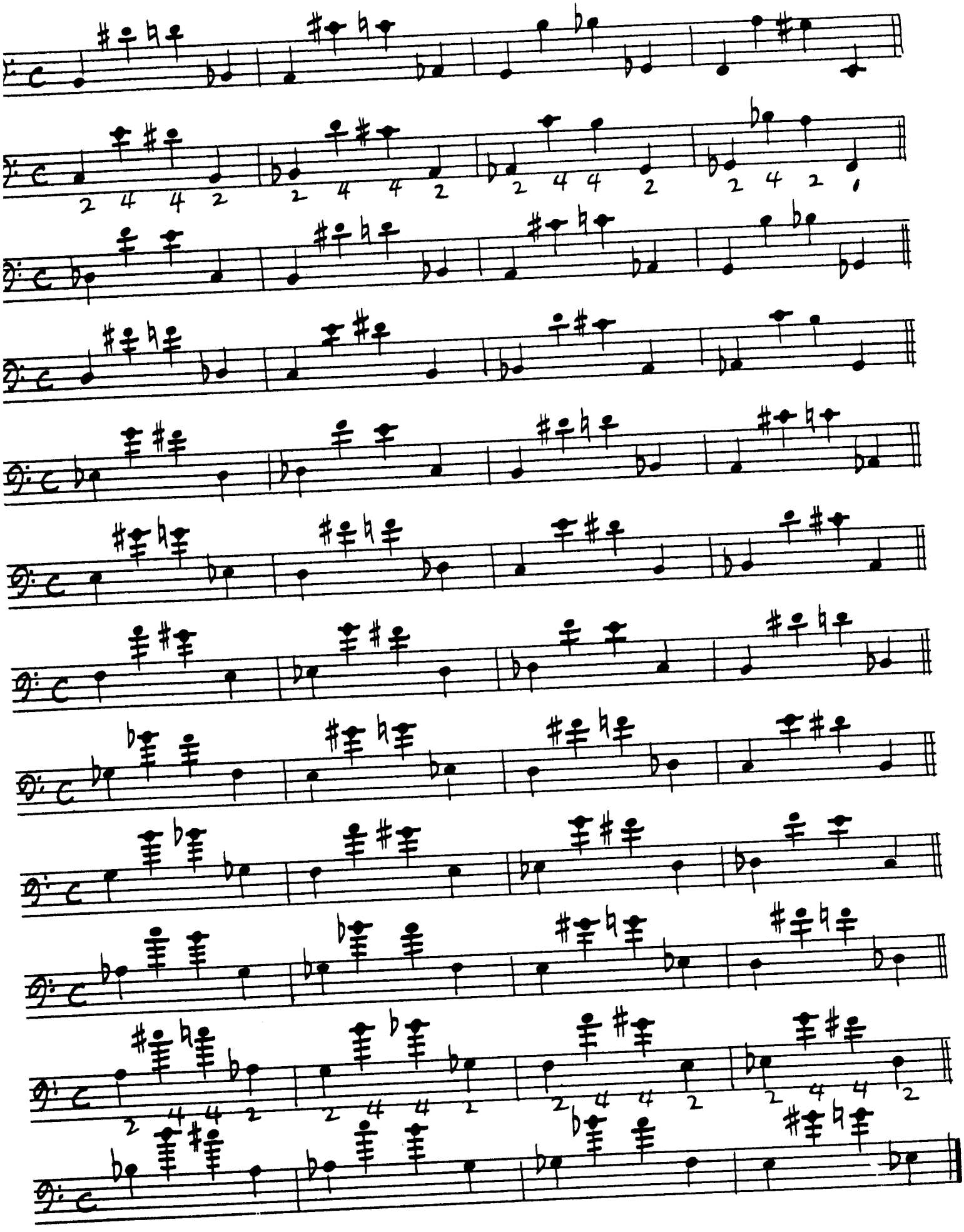


*Major tenth.*

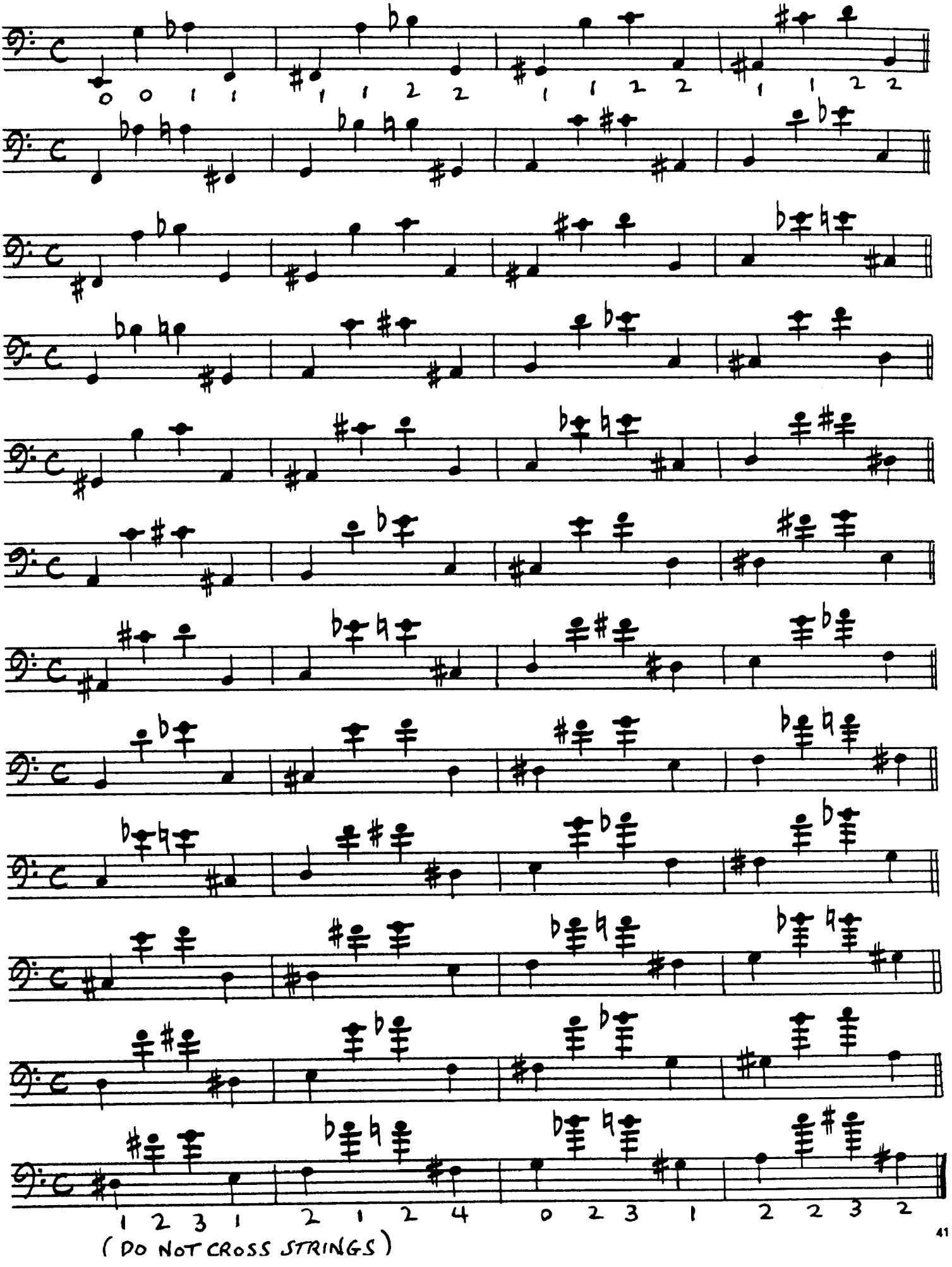
# CHROMATIC EXERCISES IN TENTHS (Major)



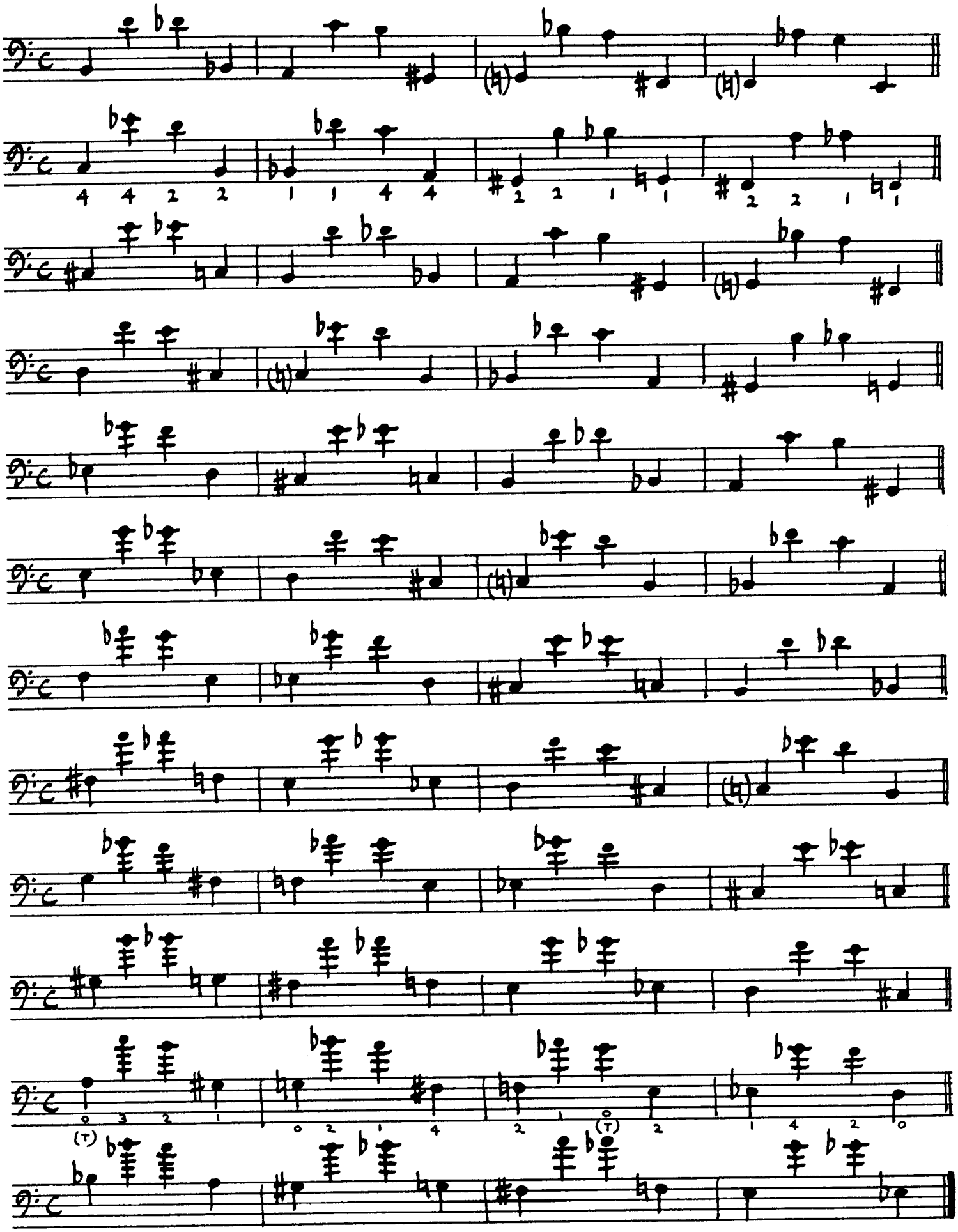
# CHROMATIC EXERCISES IN TENTHS (Major)

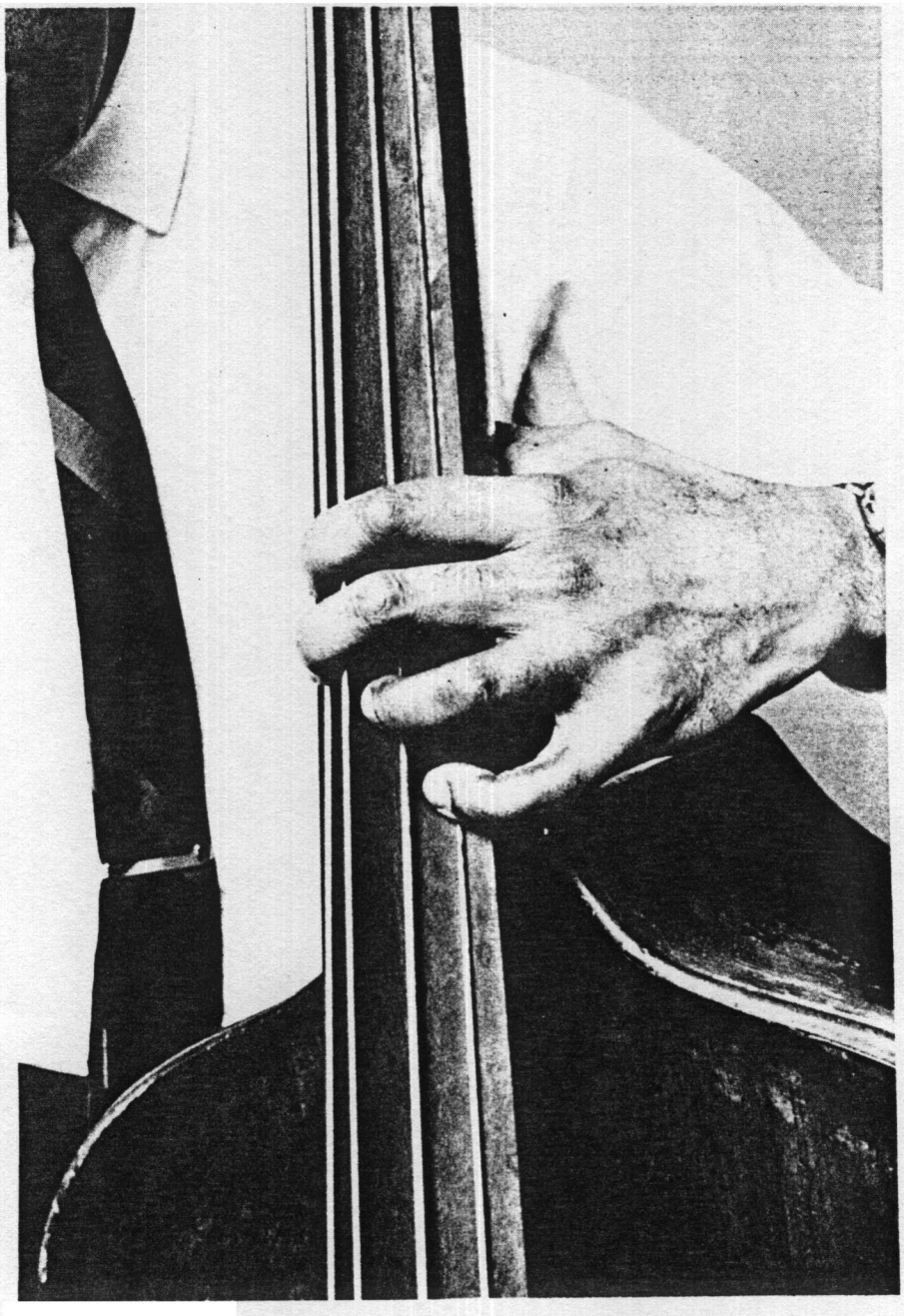


# CHROMATIC EXERCISES IN TENTHS (Minor)



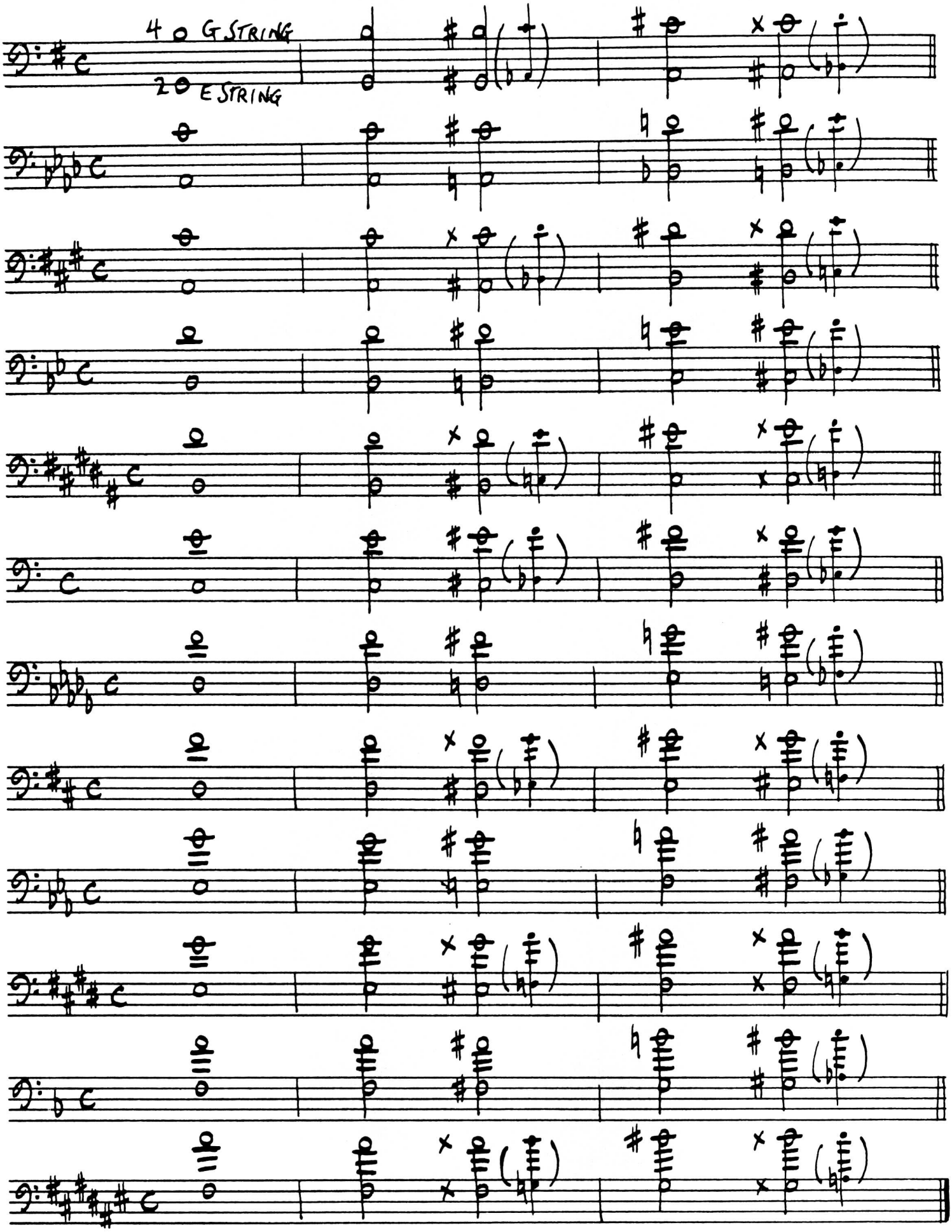
# CHROMATIC EXERCISES IN TENTHS (Minor)



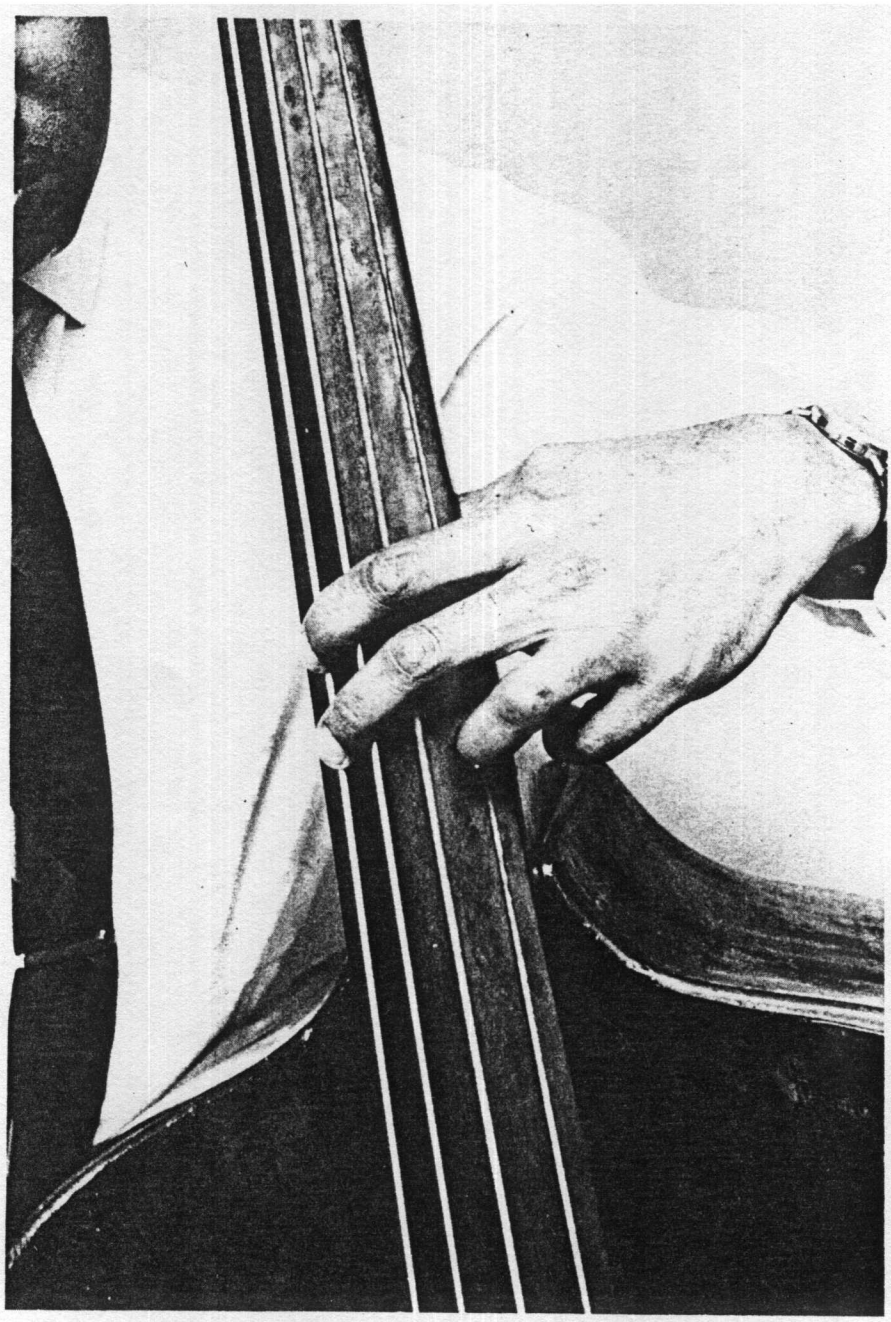


*Position of the left hand for playing tenths as double-stops (major).*

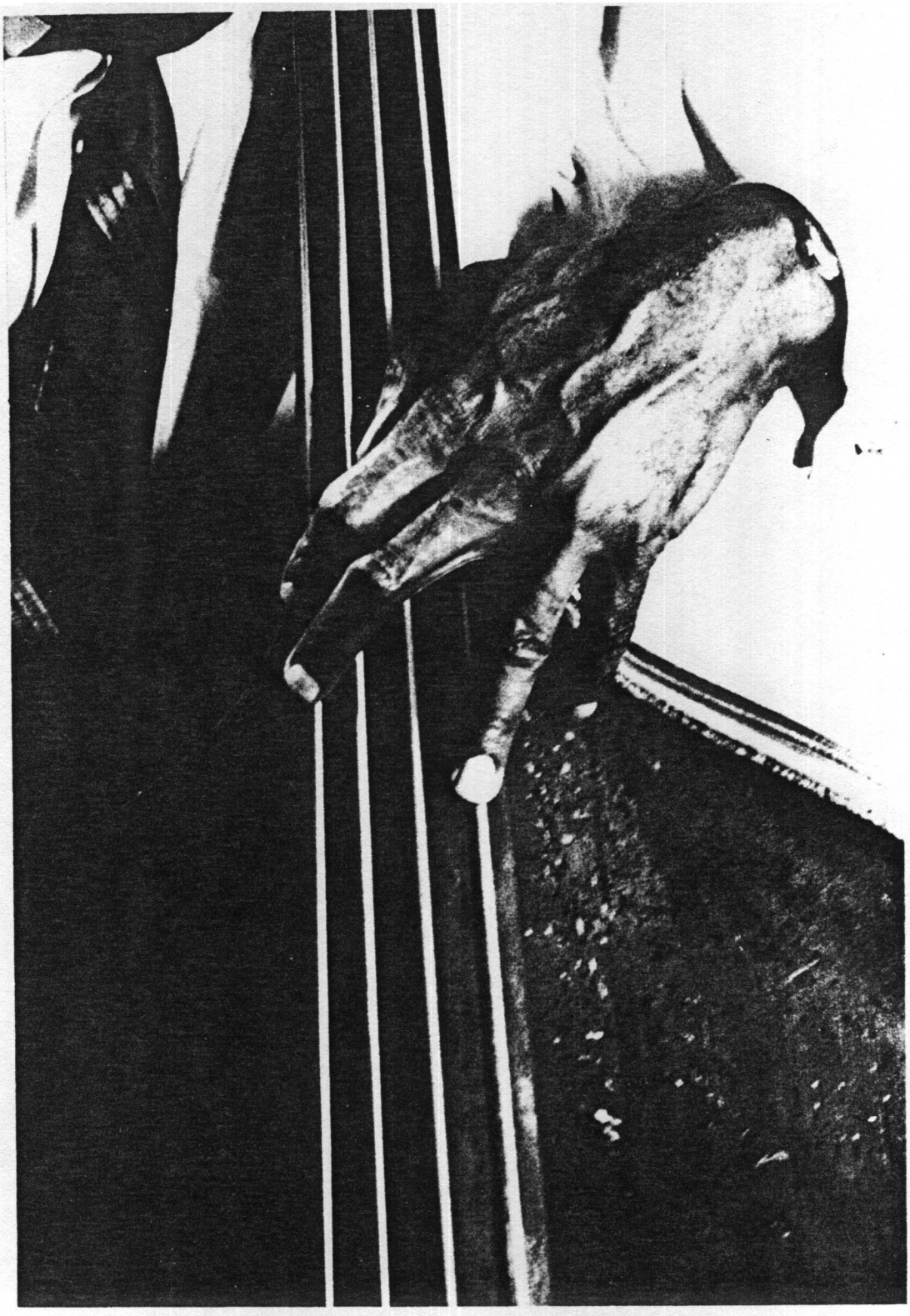
# MAJOR TENTHS AS DOUBLE STOPS




*ALL MAJOR 10ths
SAME FINGERING (MAJOR TENTHS IN BRACKETS ARE ENHARMONIC)

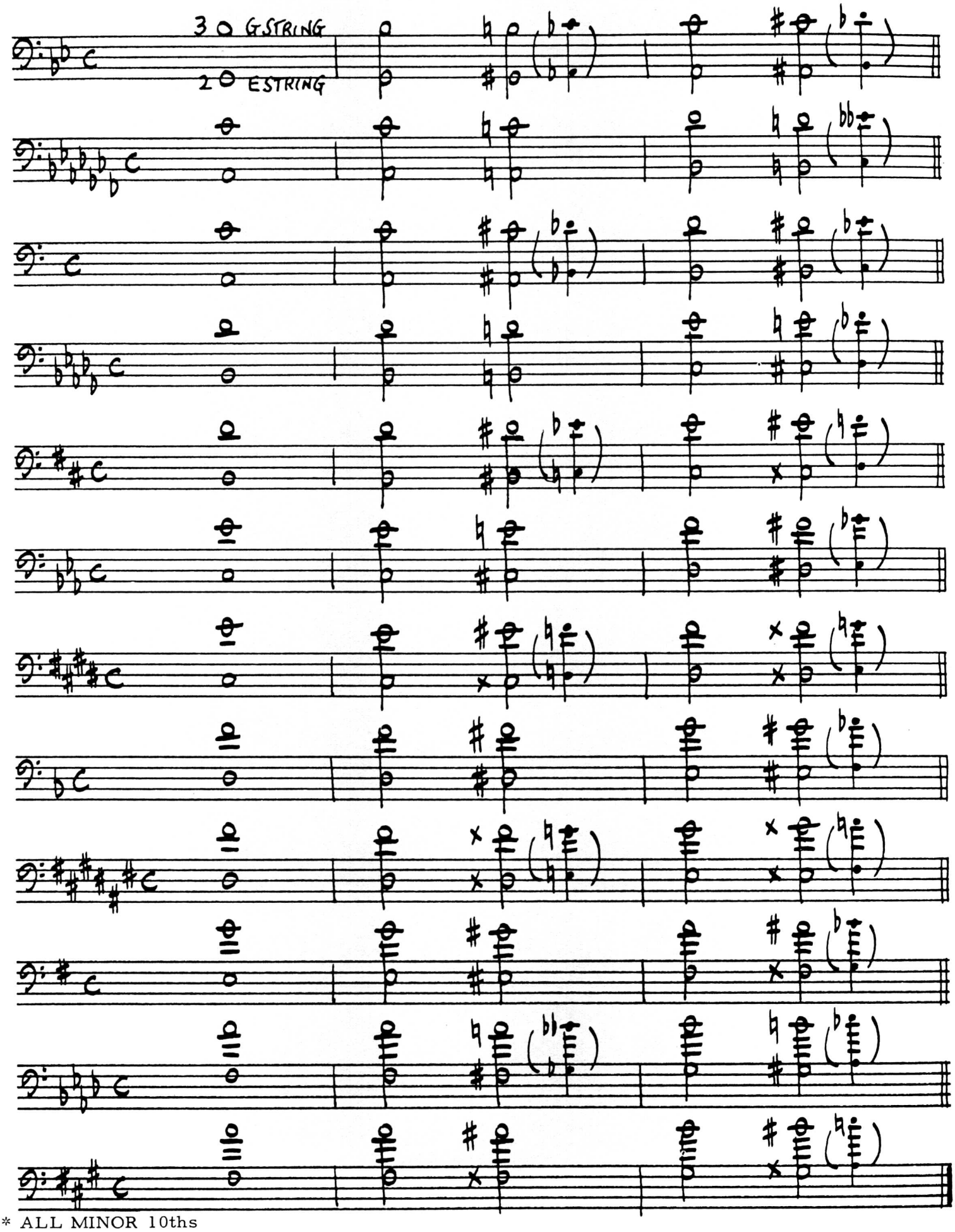


*Position of the left hand for playing tenths (minor) in the lower positions.*

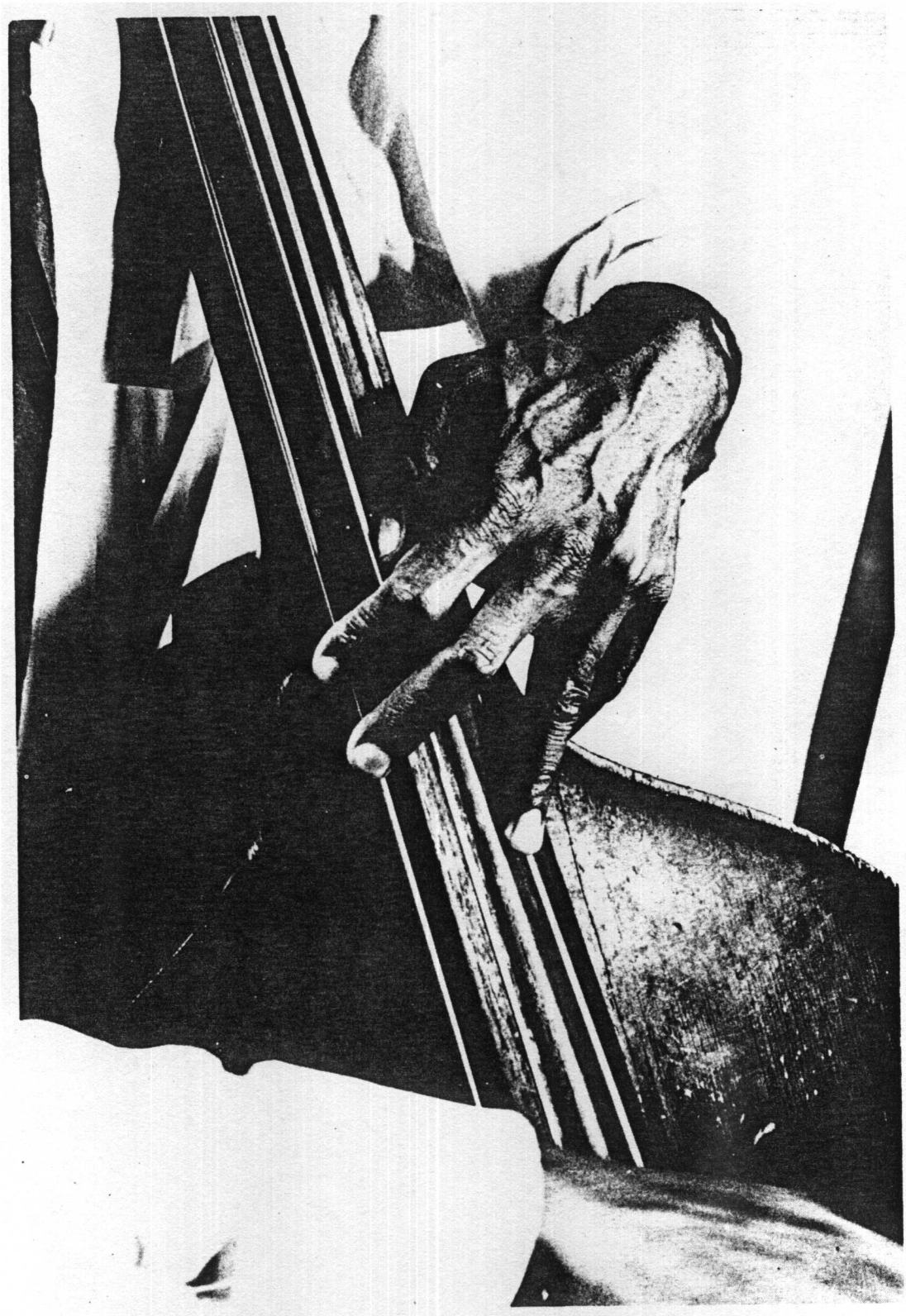


*Position of the left hand for playing minor tenths in the upper positions.*

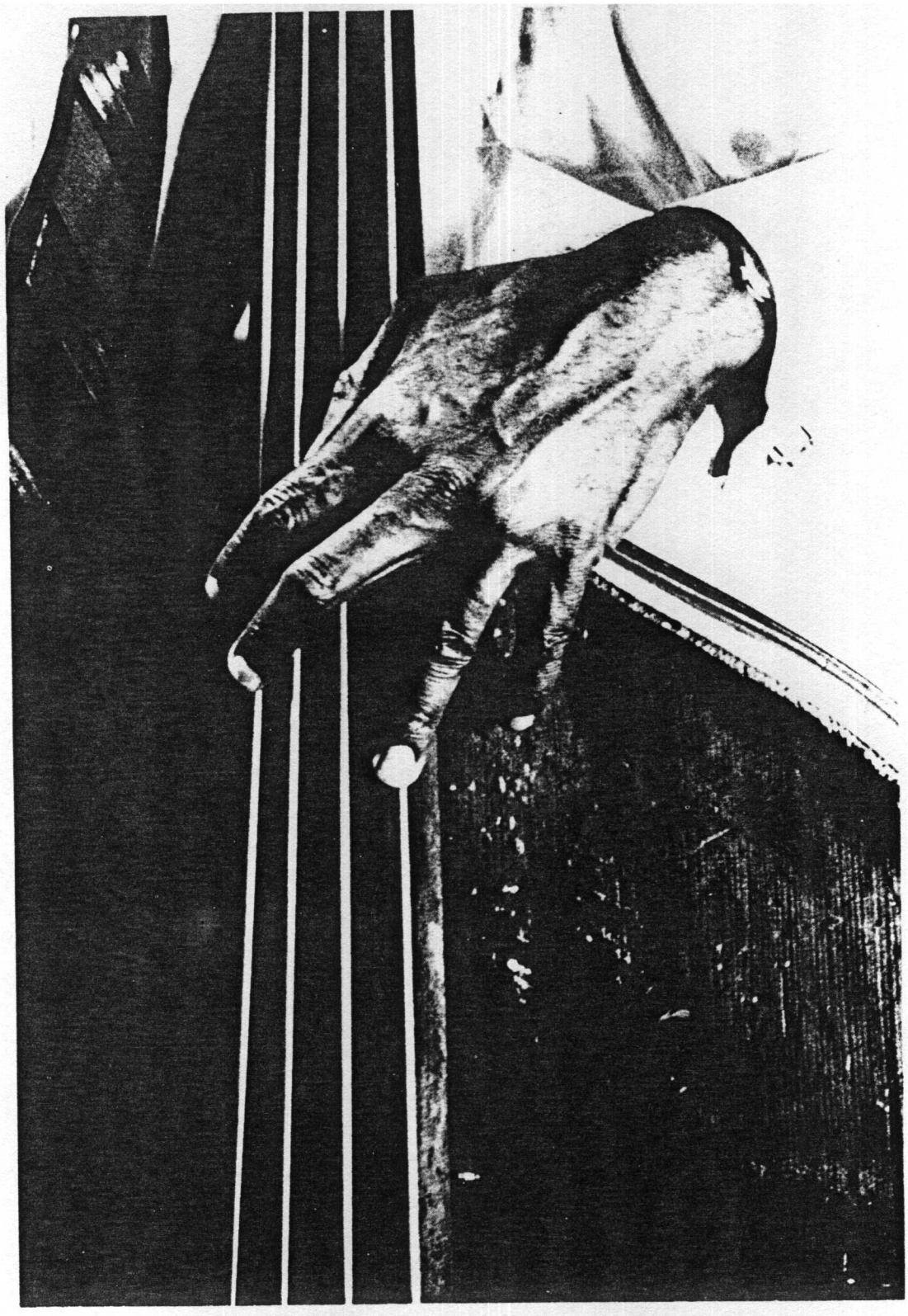
# MINOR TENTHS AS DOUBLE STOPS




* ALL MINOR 10ths
SAME FINGERING (MINOR TENTHS IN BRACKETS ARE ENHARMONIC)

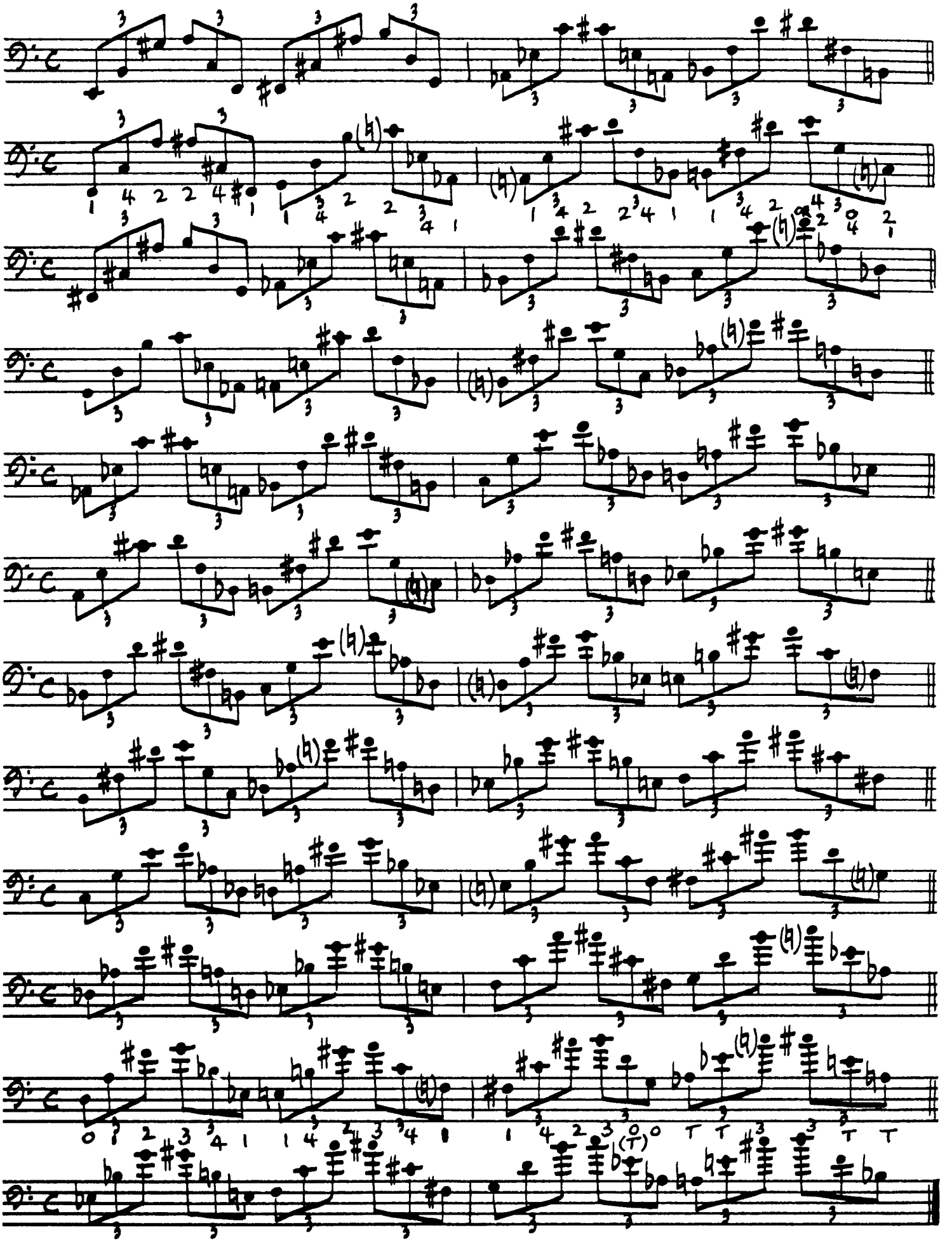


*Alternate position for major and minor tenths—fifth added (ed's note: this fingering is not covered in the book but should be attempted).*

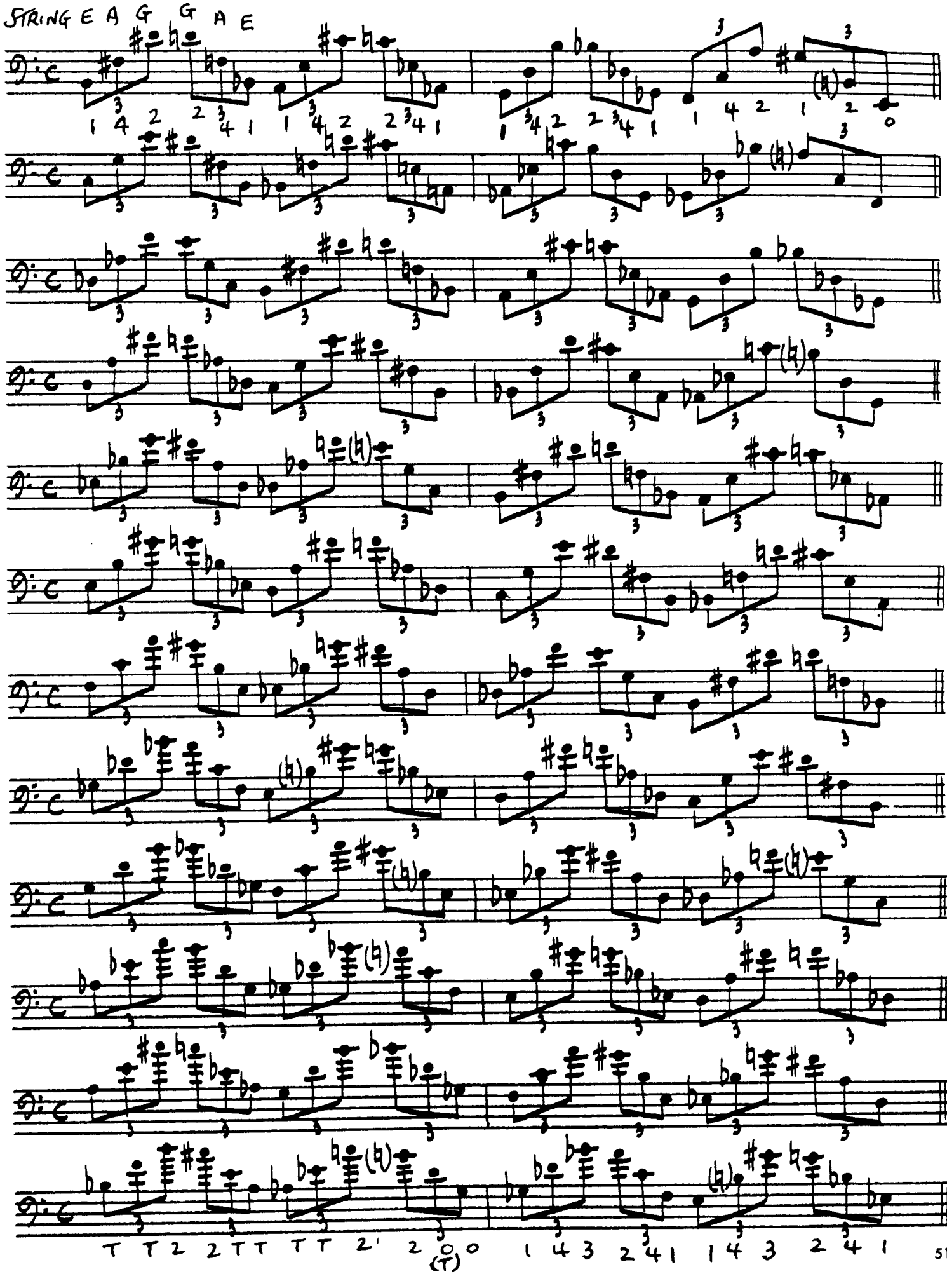


*Alternate position for major and minor tenths—sixth added (ed's note: this fingering is not covered in the book but should be attempted).*

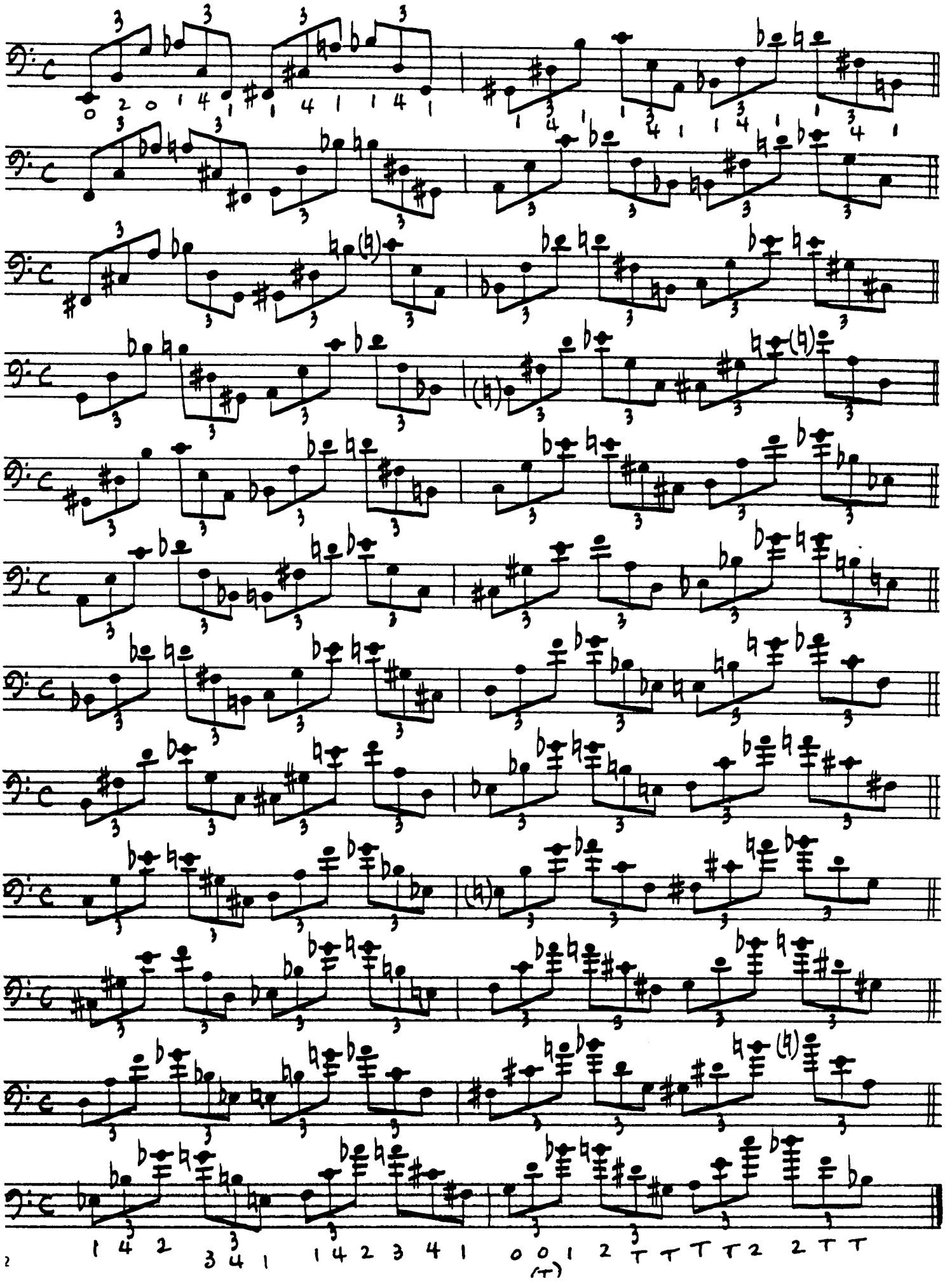
# EXERCISE IN MAJOR TENTHS (Fifth added)



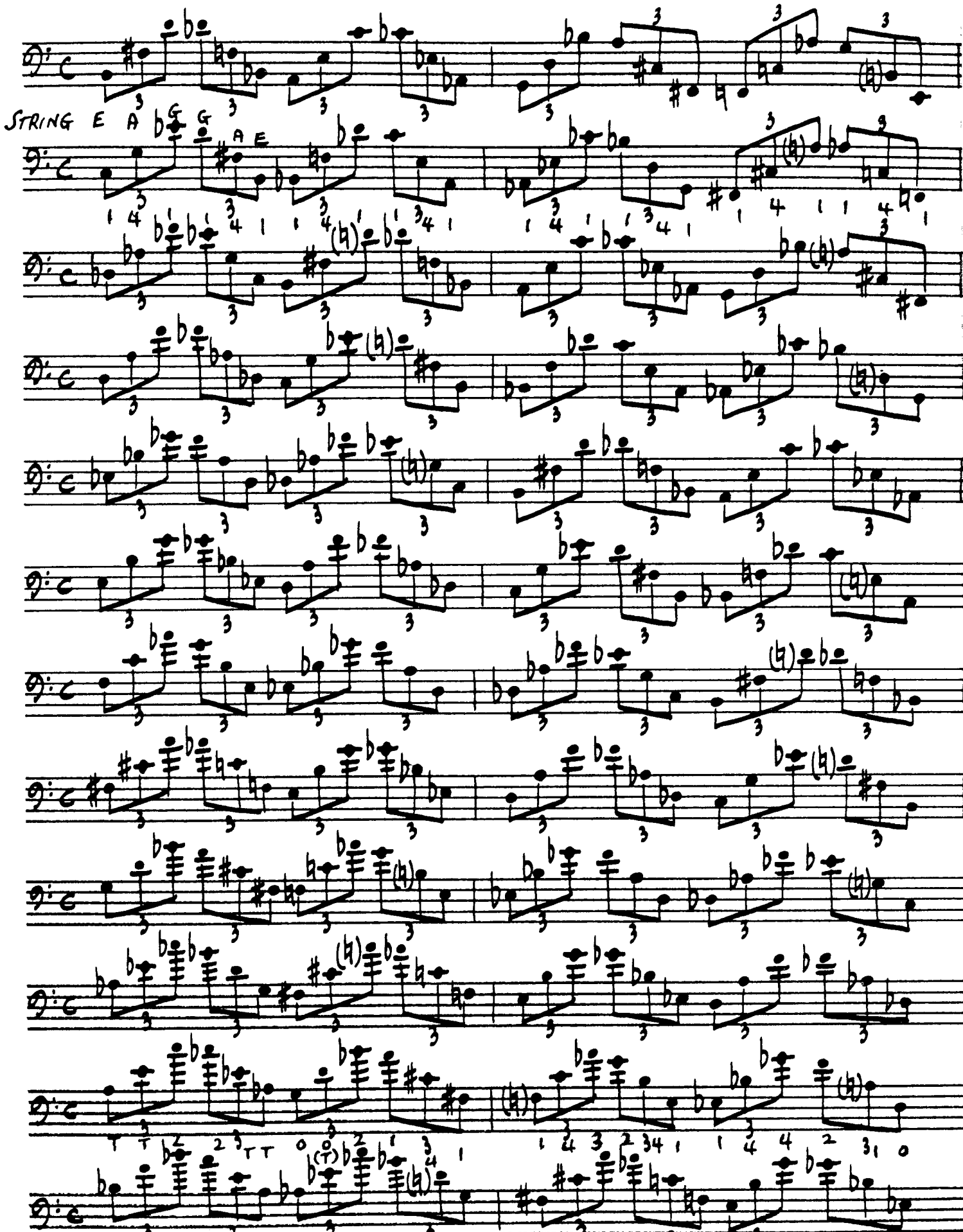
# EXERCISE IN MAJOR TENTHS (Fifth added)



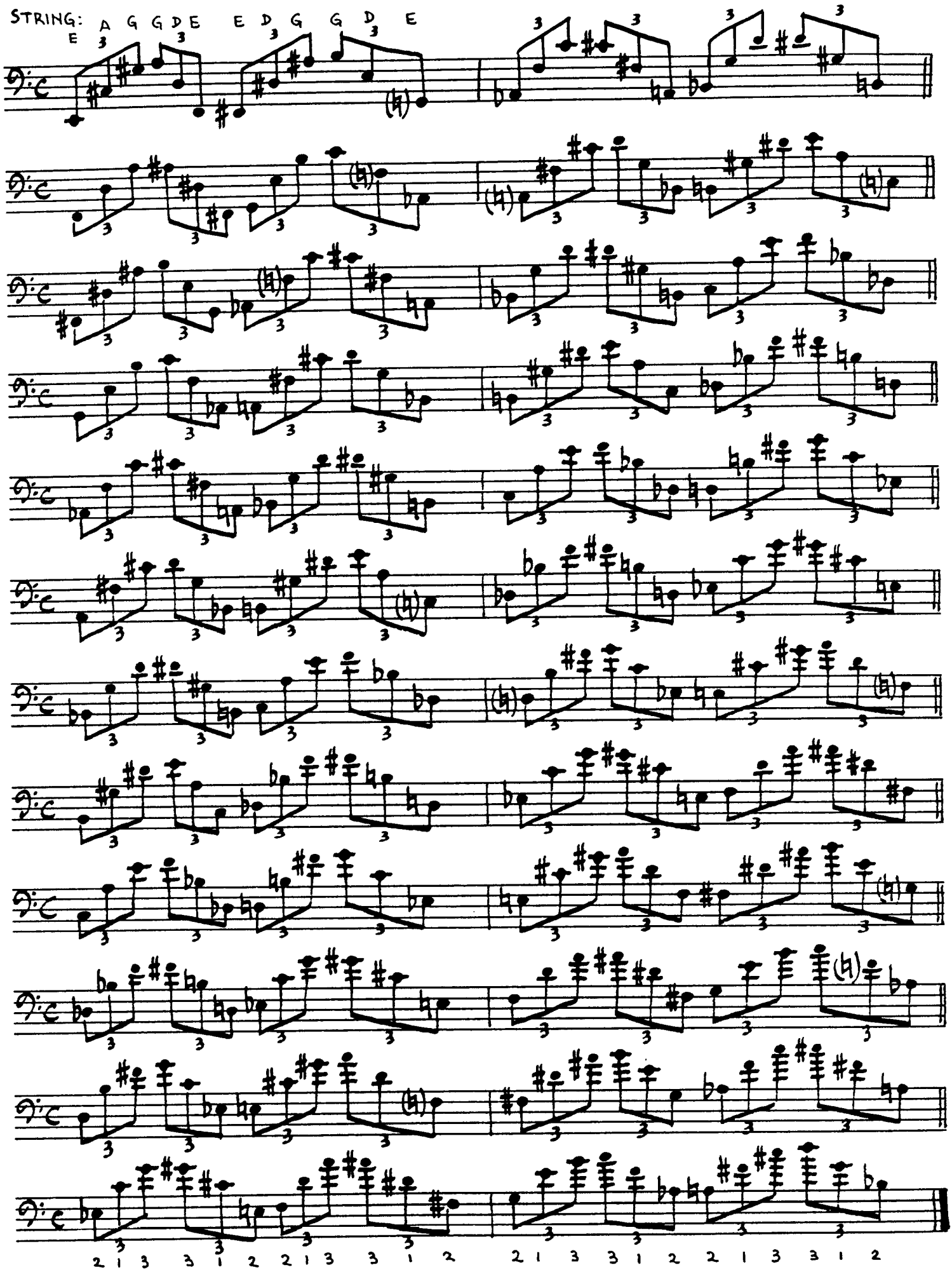
# EXERCISE IN MINOR TENTHS (Fifth added)



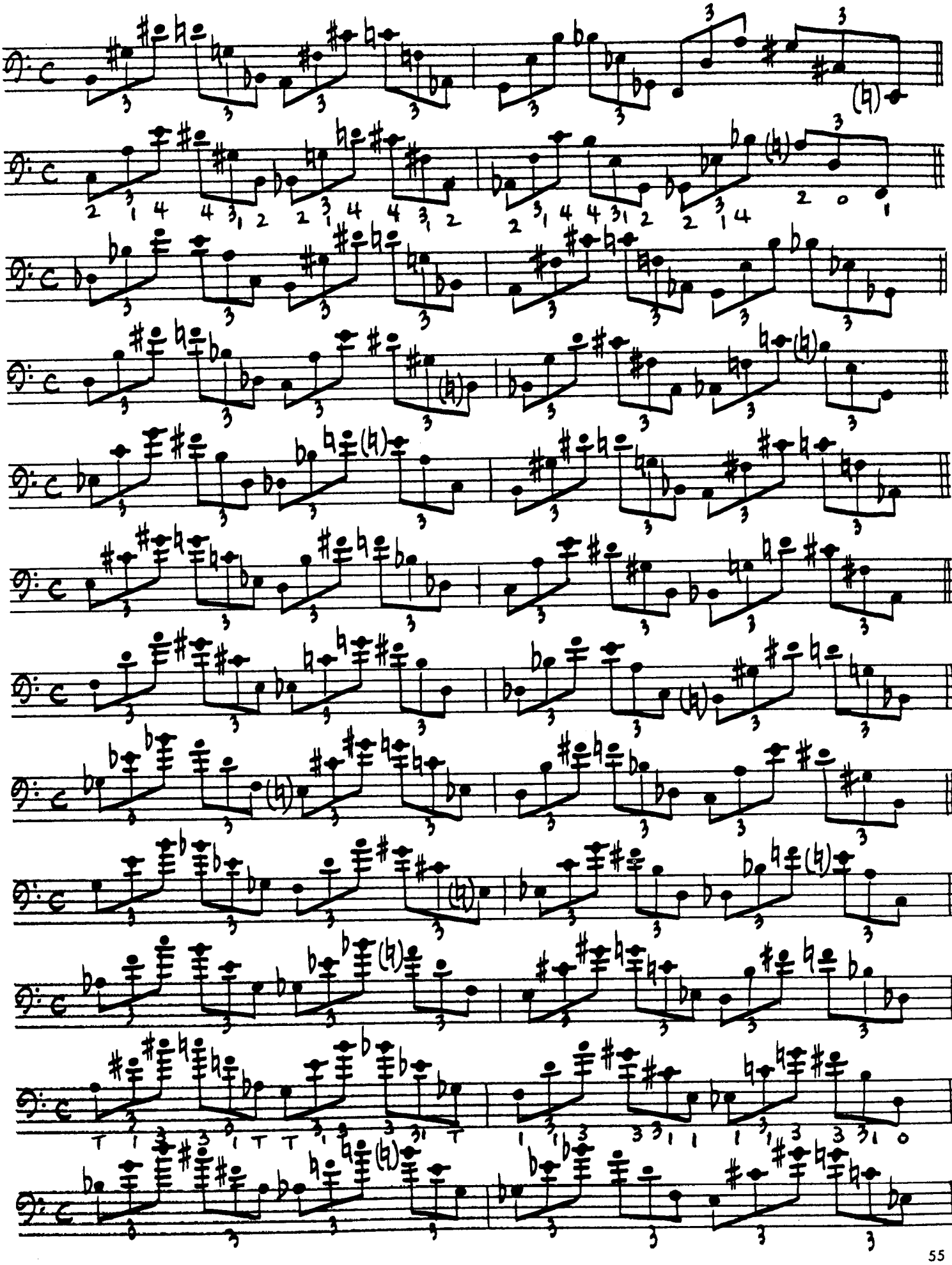
# EXERCISE IN MINOR TENTHS (Fifth added)



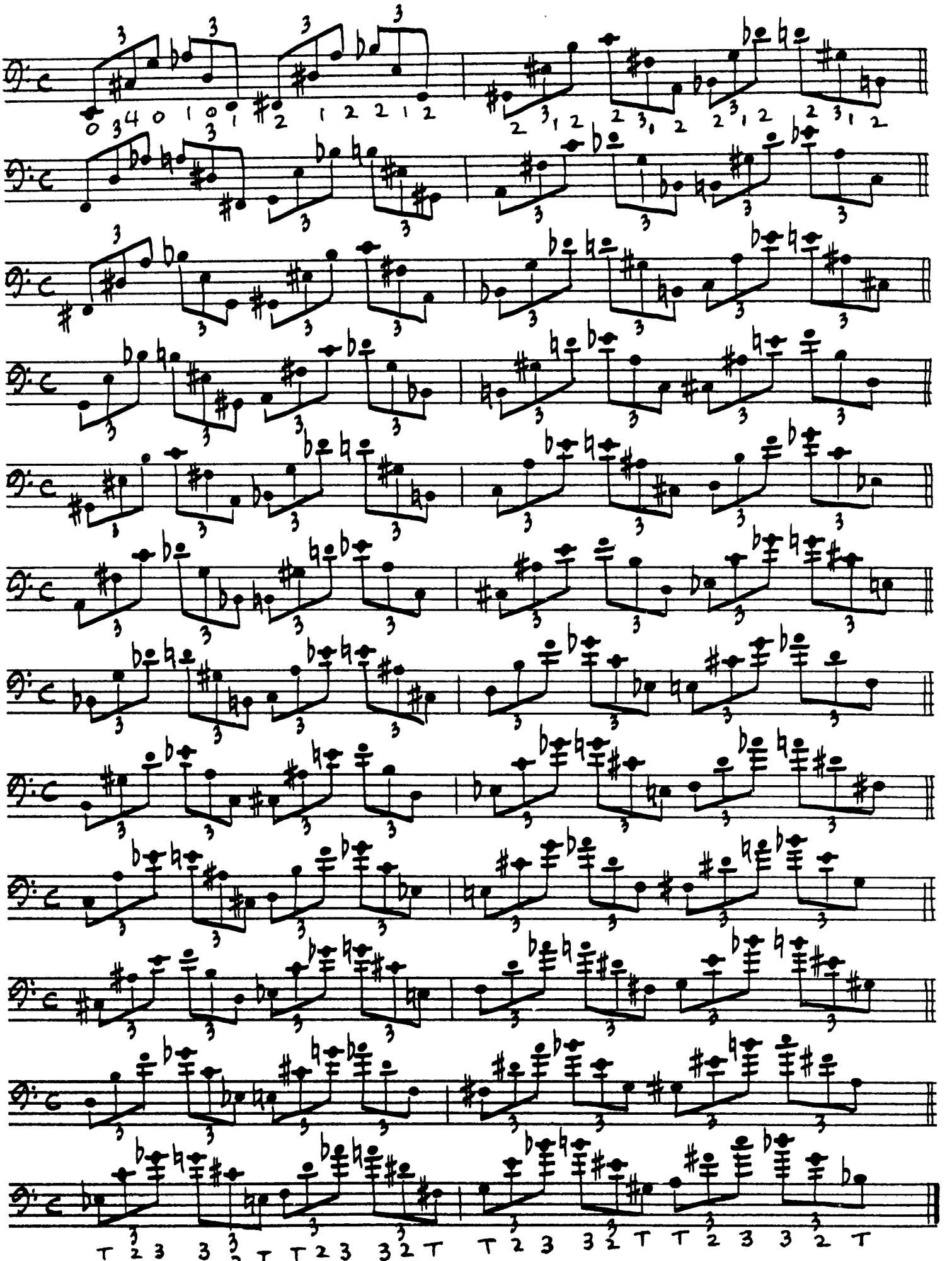
# EXERCISE IN MAJOR TENTHS (Sixth added)



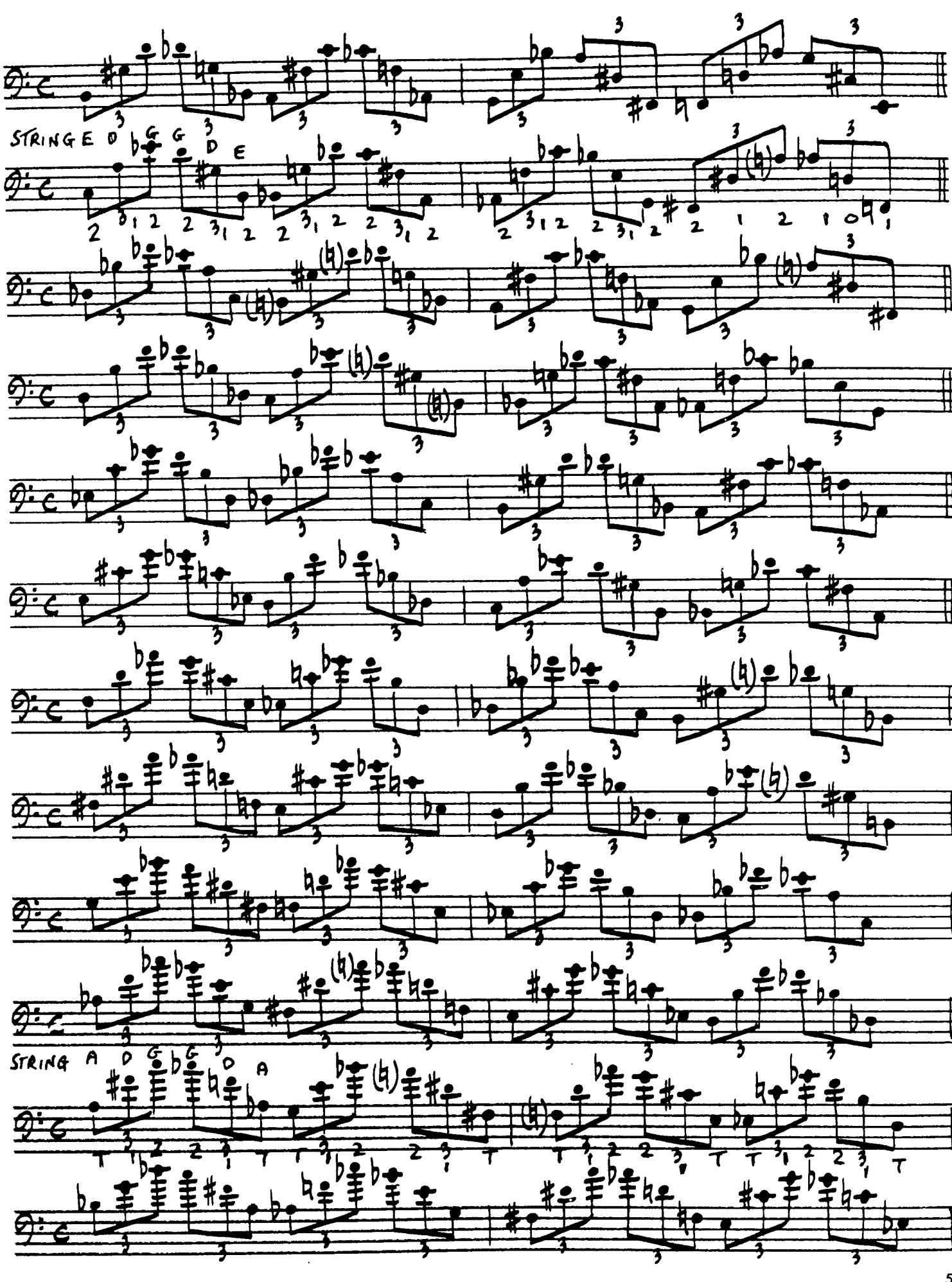
# EXERCISE IN MAJOR TENTHS (Sixth added)

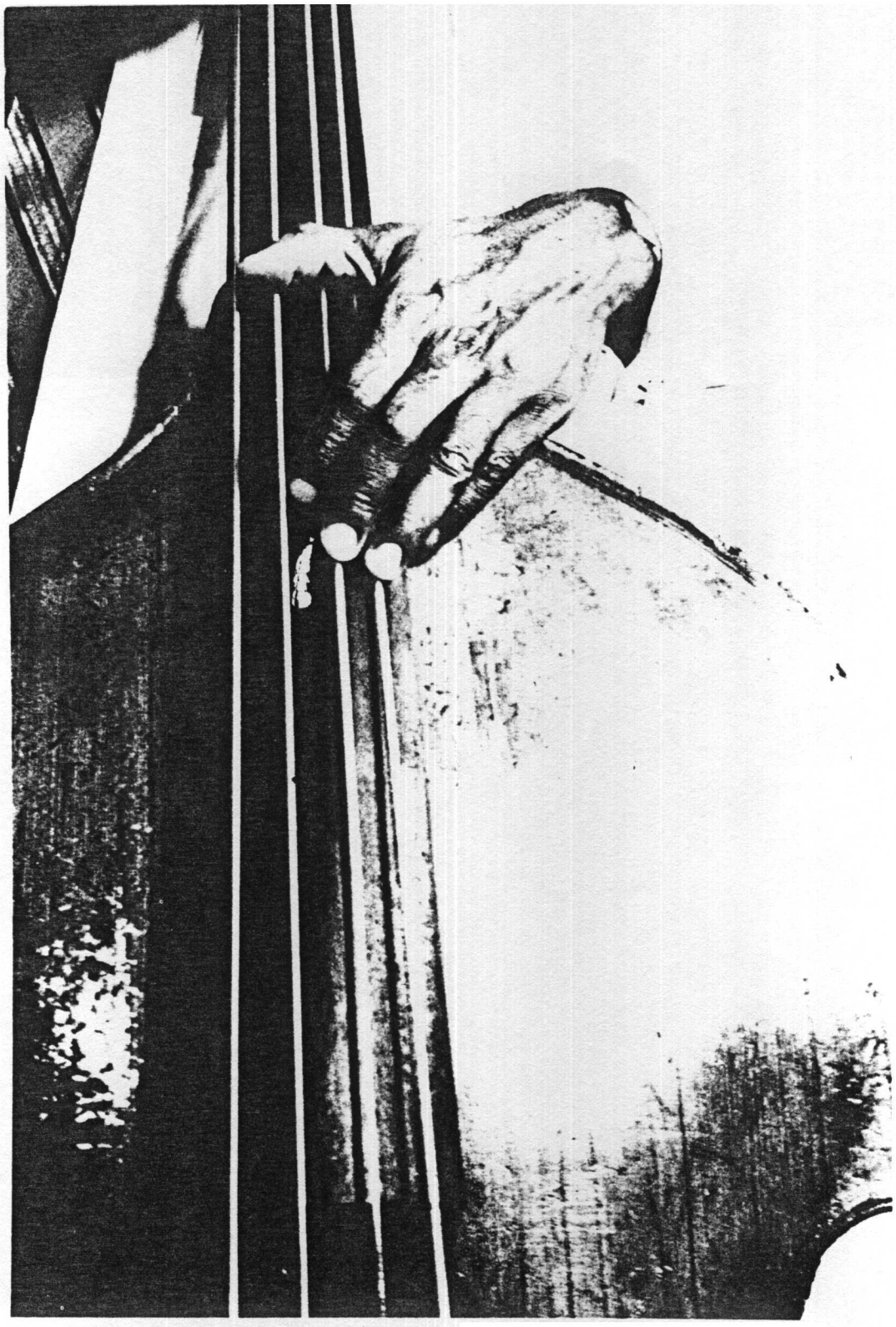


# EXERCISE IN MINOR TENTHS (Sixth added)



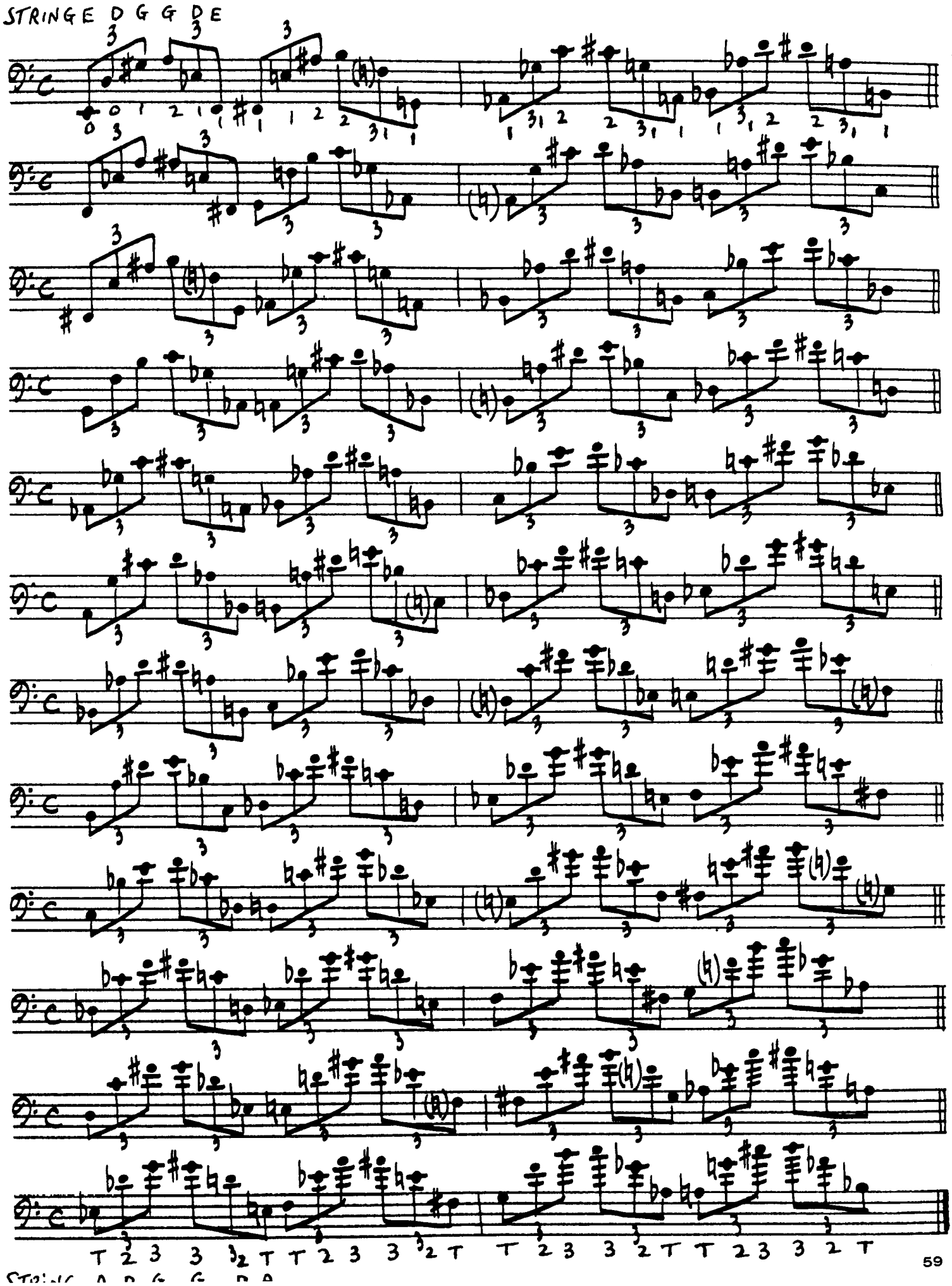
# EXERCISE IN MINOR TENTHS (Sixth added)



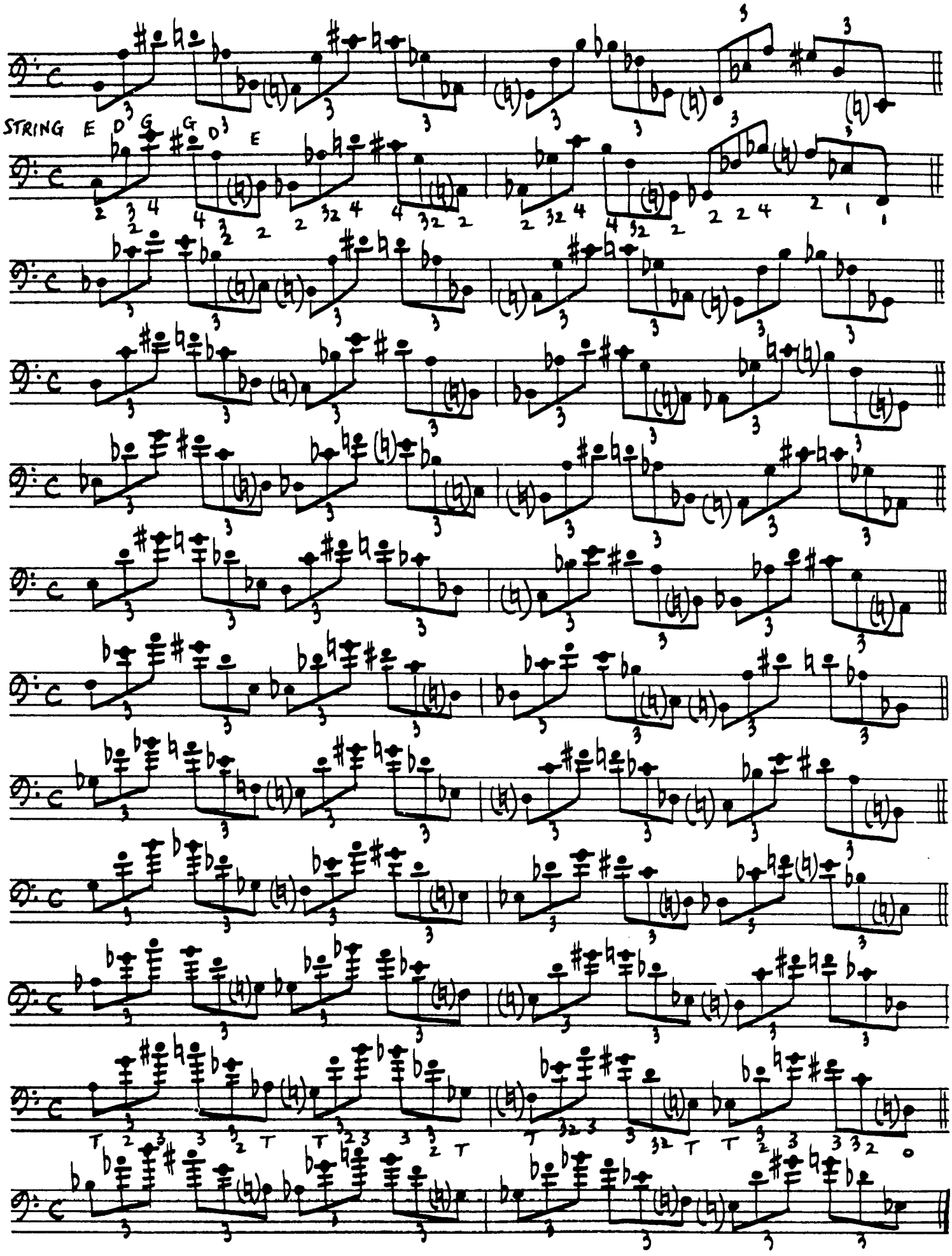


*Position of left hand for major tenths (seventh added).*

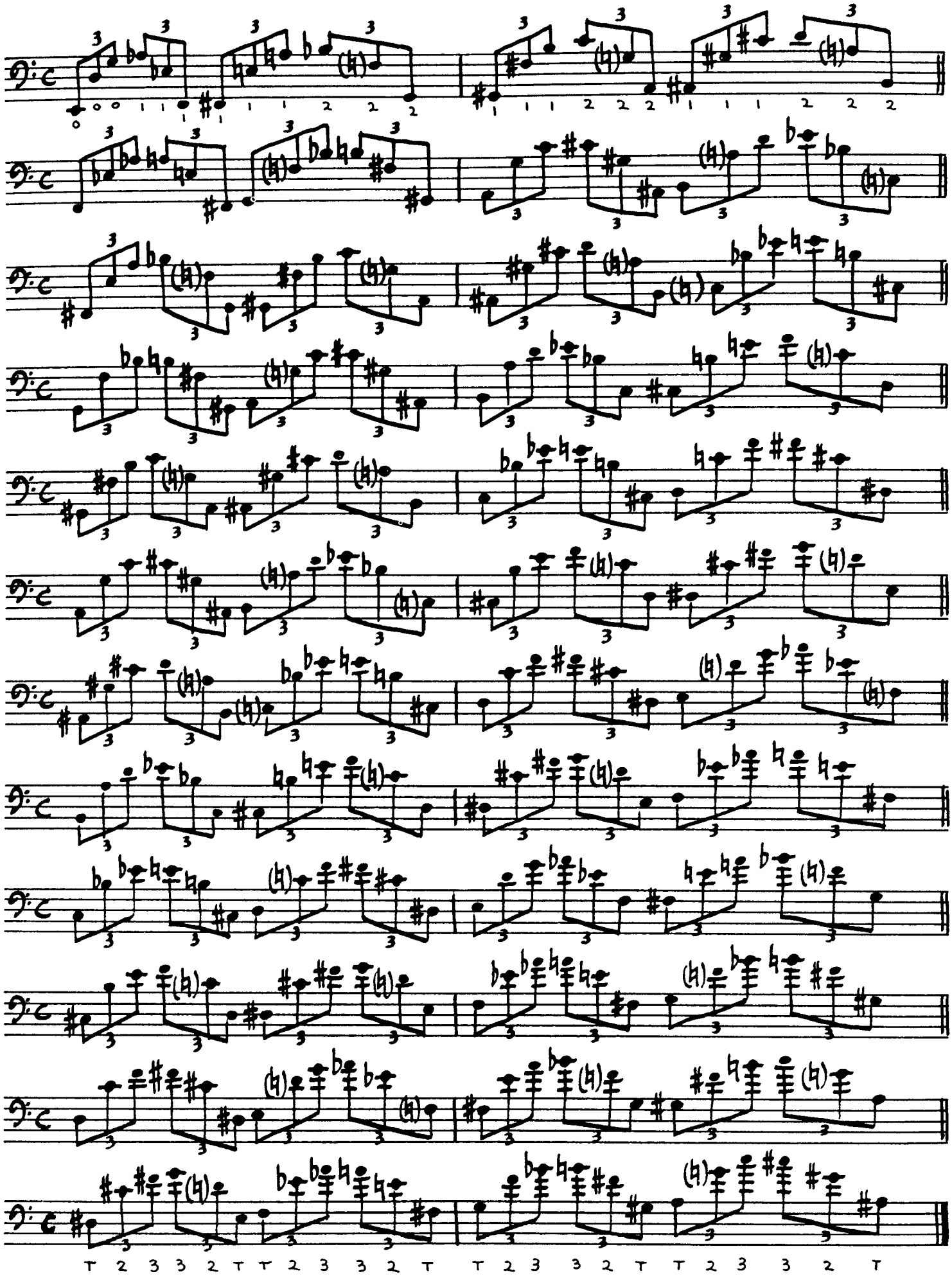
# EXERCISE IN MAJOR TENTHS (Seventh added)



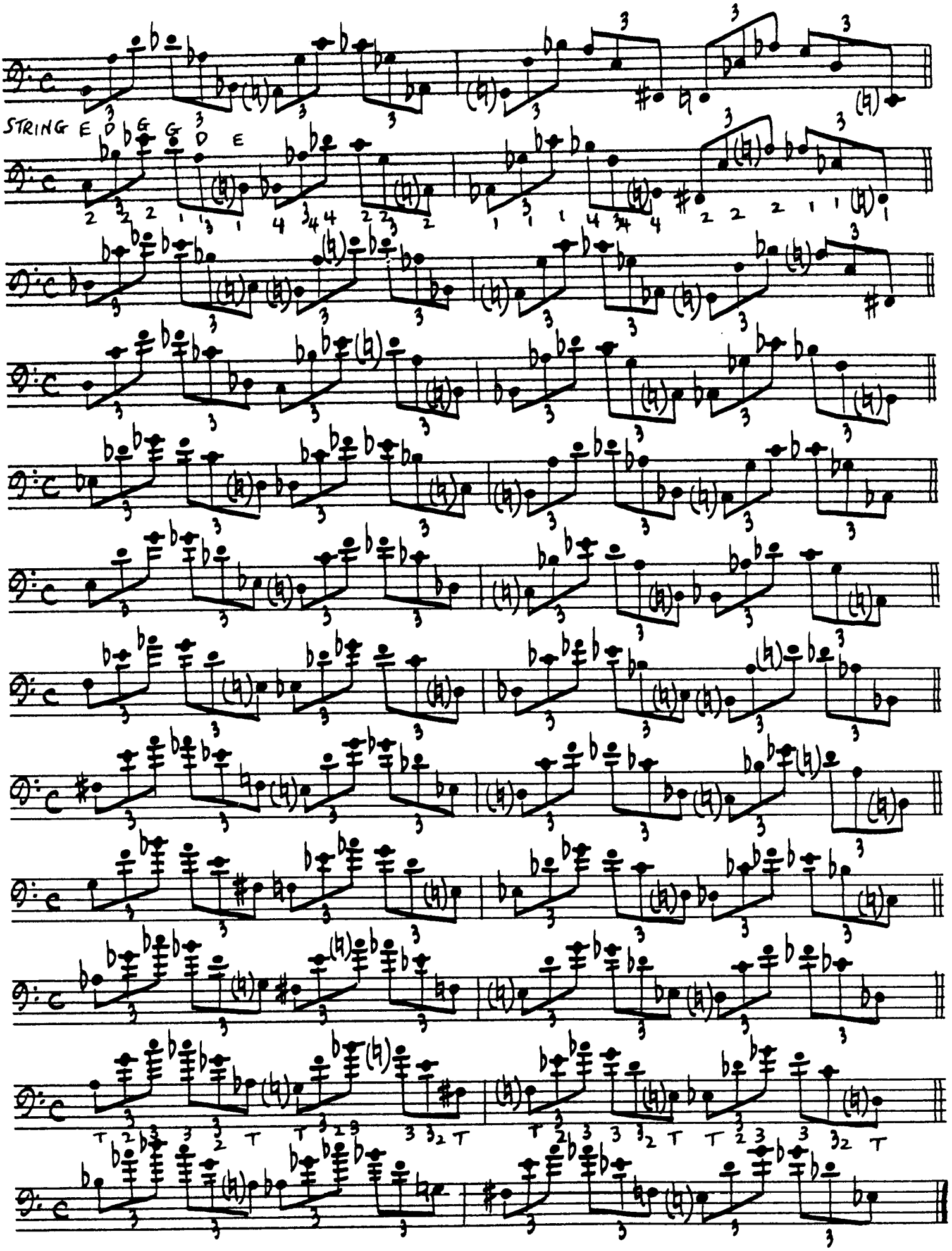
# EXERCISE IN MAJOR TENTHS (Seventh added)



# EXERCISE IN MINOR TENTHS (Seventh added)



# EXERCISE IN MINOR TENTHS (Seventh added)



# CHAPTER IV

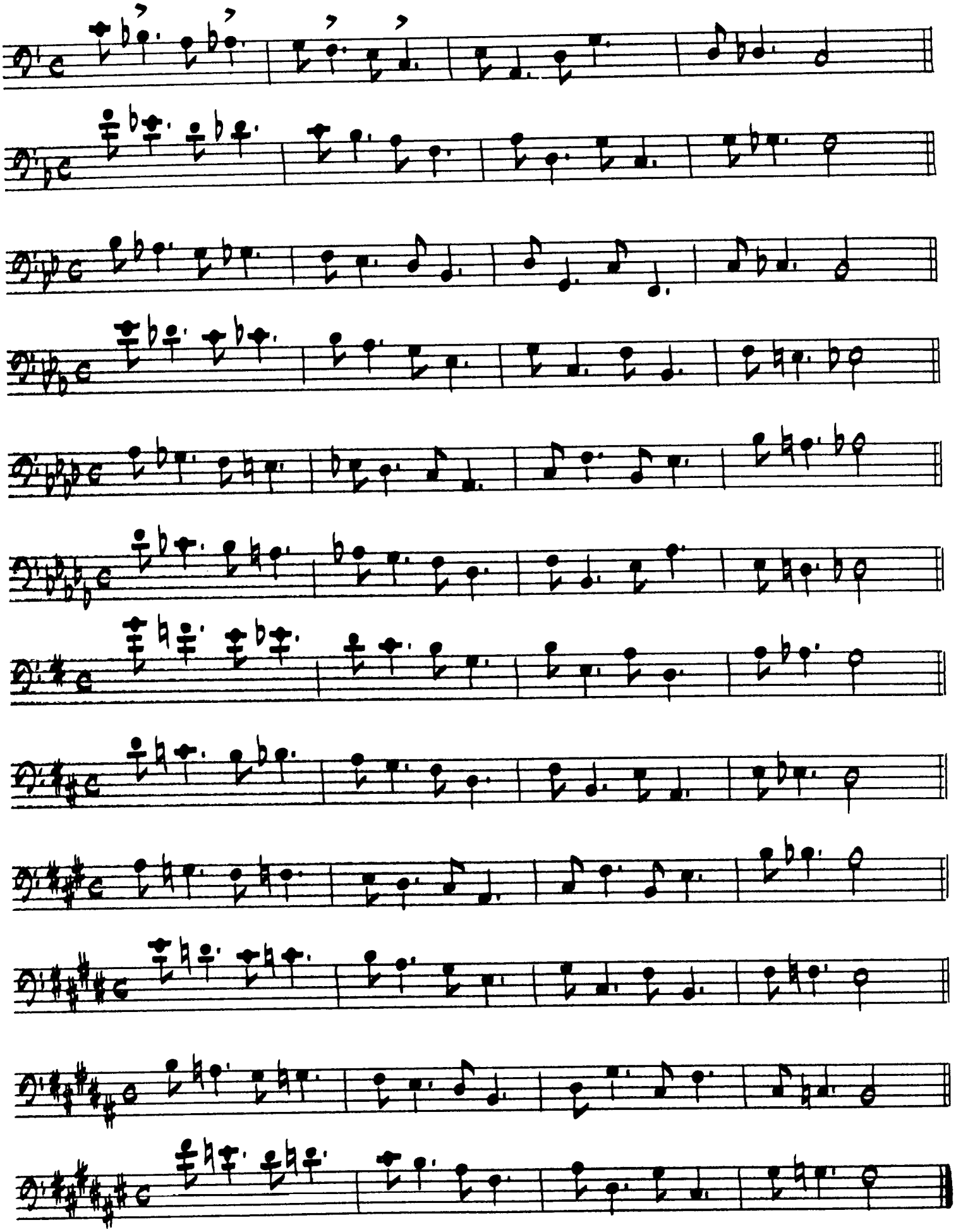
## RHYTHM PATTERNS WITH DROPS

My view is that "drops" should be played in *holes, or used to give the rhythm section a boost and the reason I have not written too many of them into this chapter is that I feel that they are personal and should come from within one's self. The main point to remember is that "drops" should be played so smoothly there should be no feeling of loss of time or any feeling of unbalance. Do not strain to play this type of figure as it will show in your playing. Above all, don't play "drops" just anywhere.

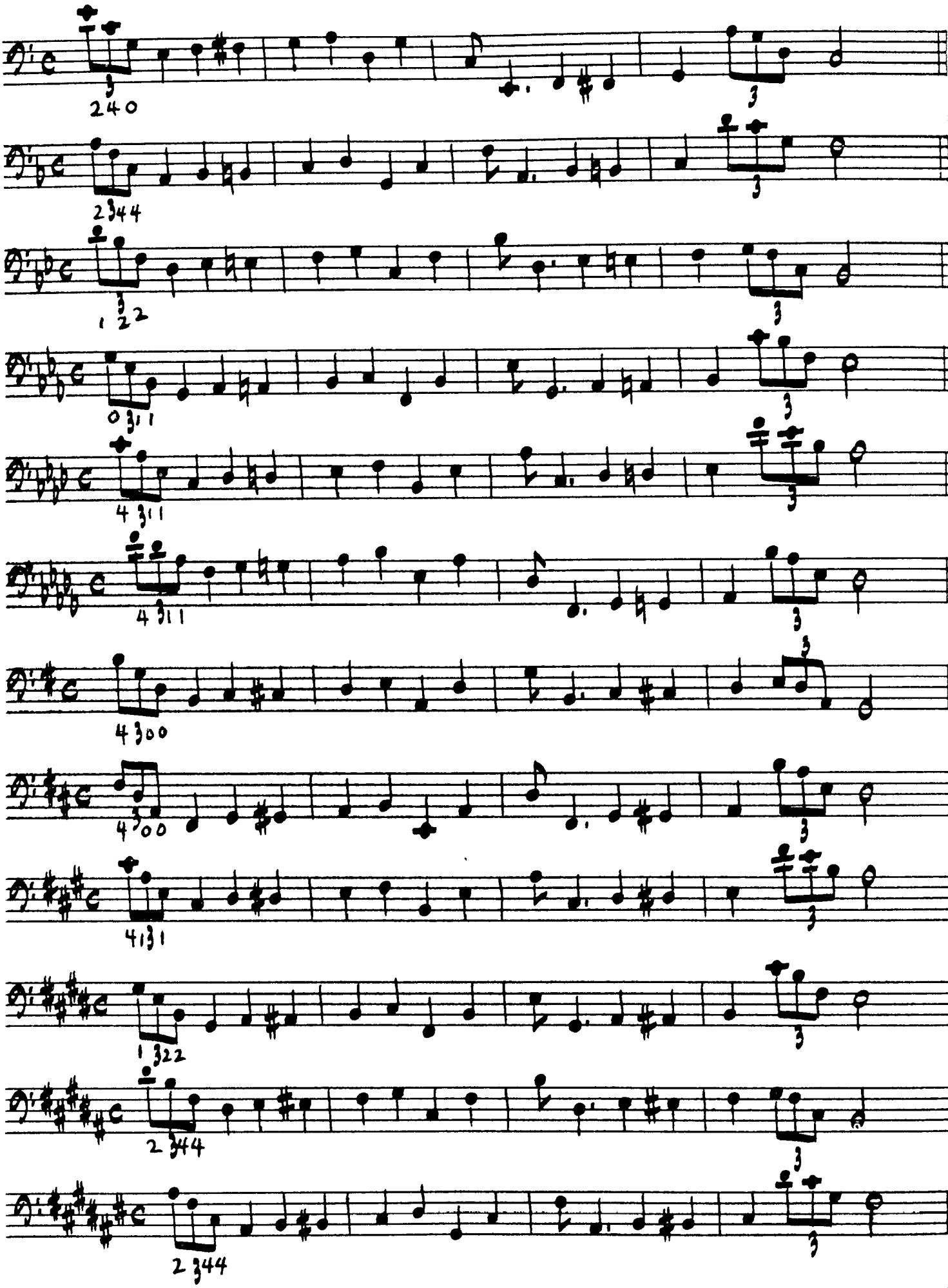
Listen to some of my records. I think they will give you some idea of where and how "drops" can be used and you can carry on from there.

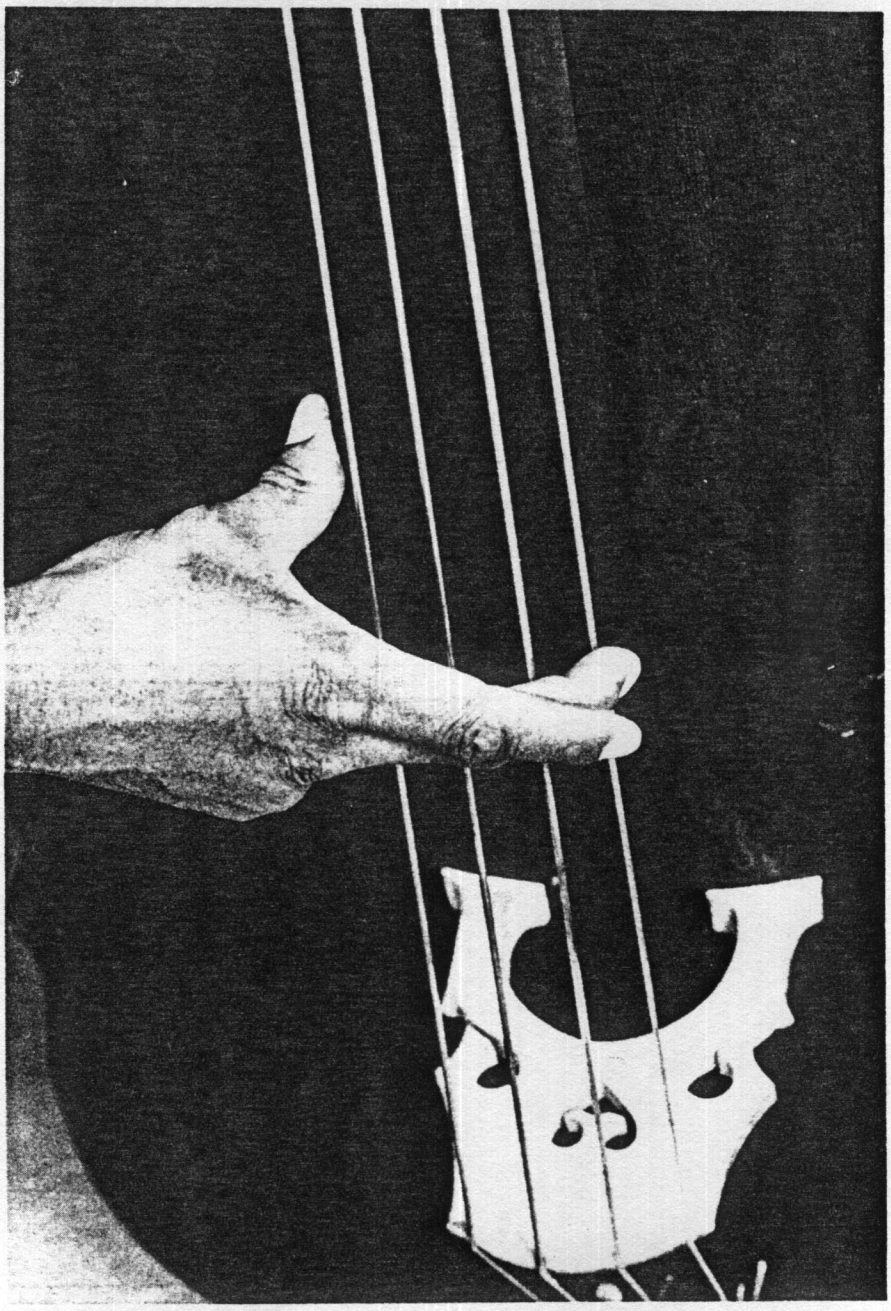
*Holes are spots where the soloist lays out (breathes) or where the ensemble isn't playing at the moment.

# RHYTHM PATTERNS WITH DROPS (Phase I)

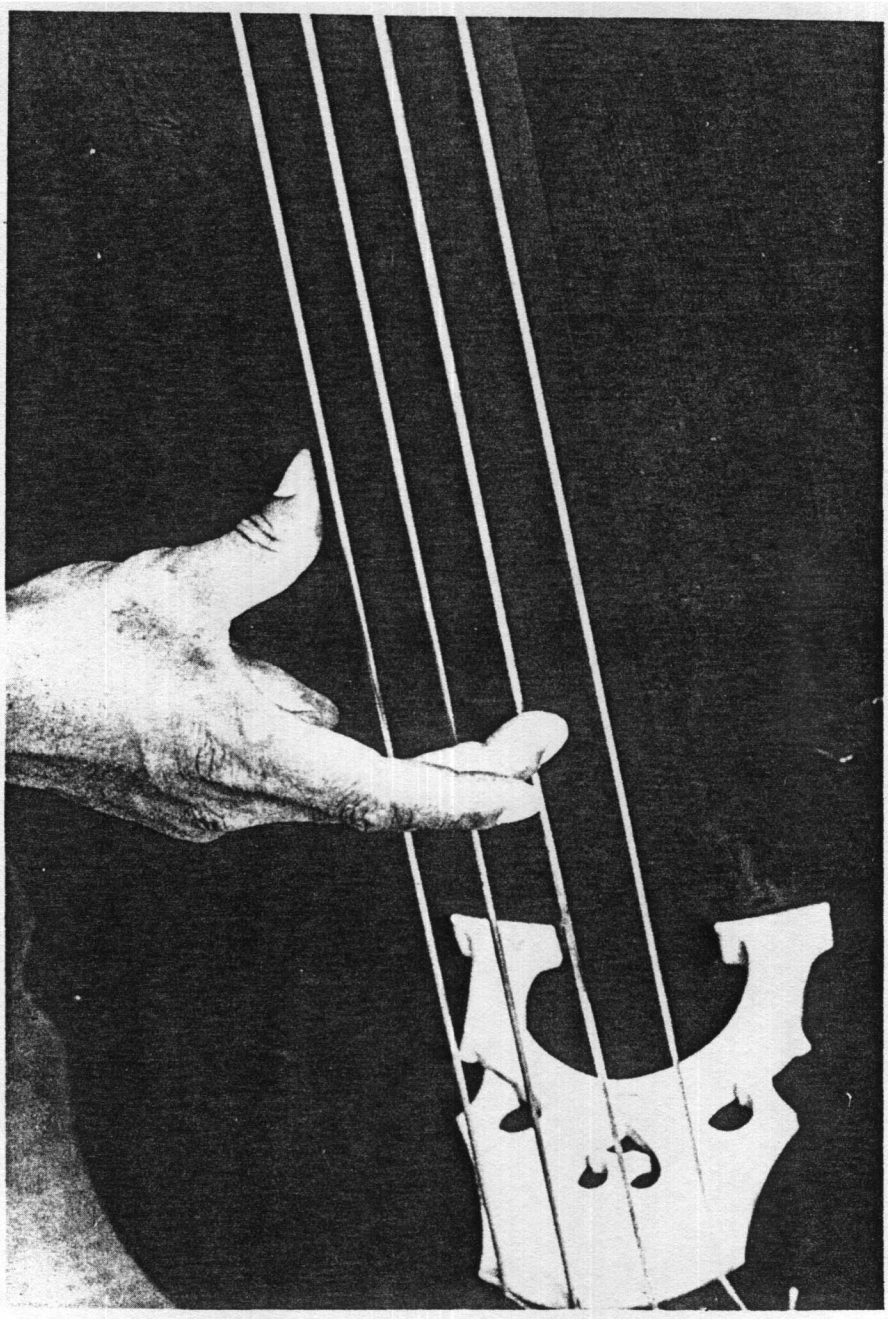


# RHYTHM PATTERNS WITH DROPS (Phase II)

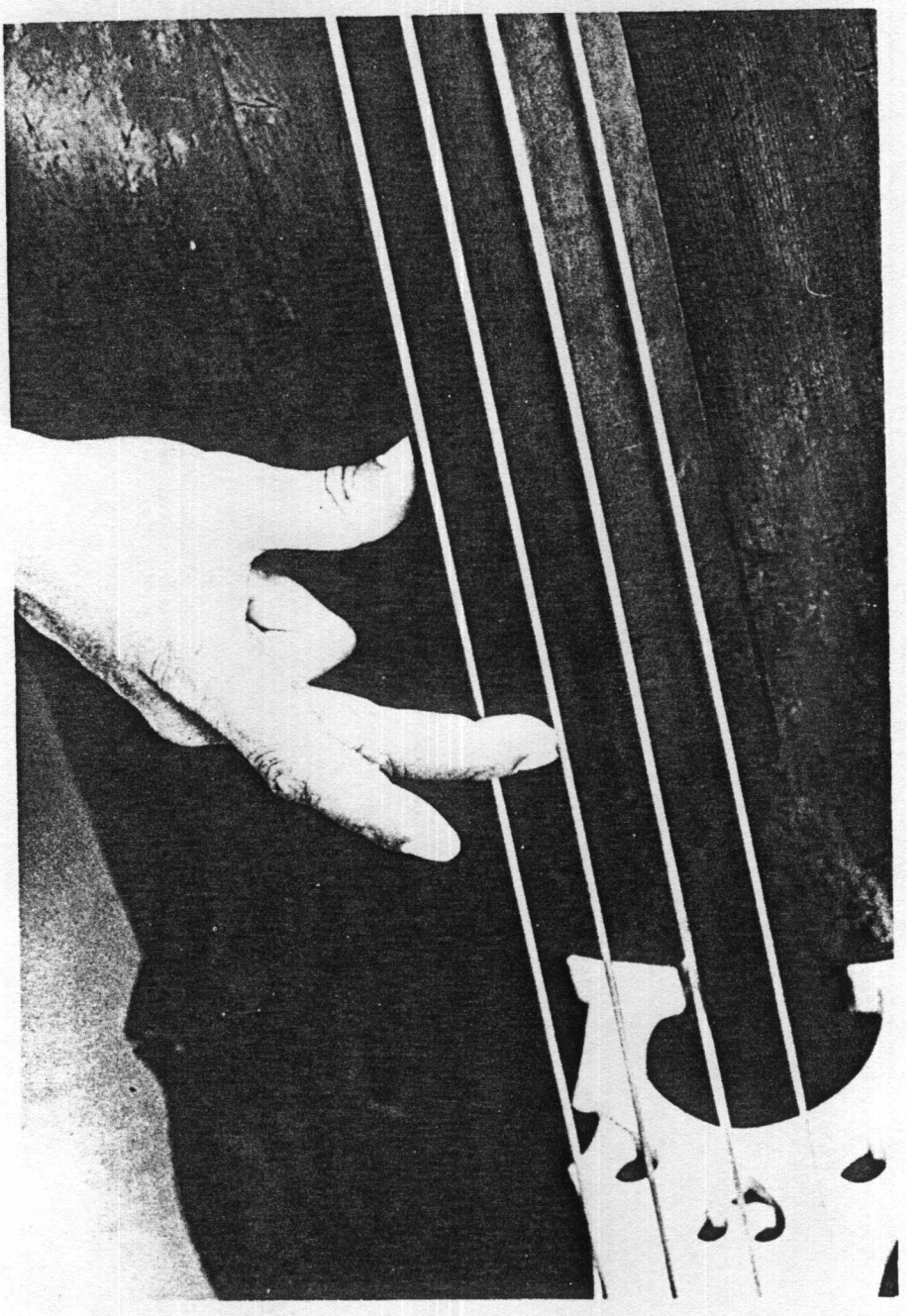




*How to "rake" strings. The motion shown in the above and next two photos should be executed on the "and" of 1 (third bar, page 69).* *Part I*

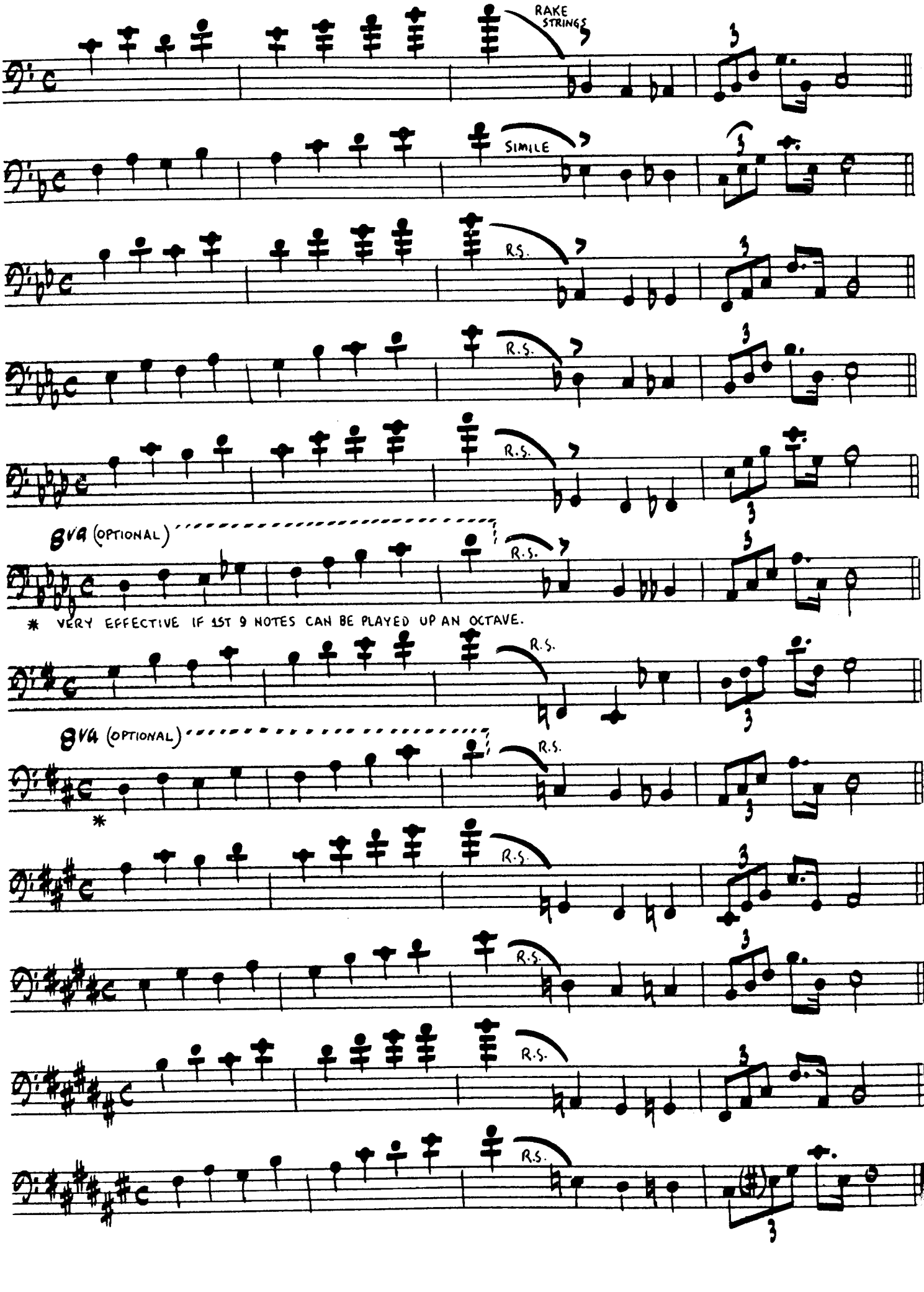


*Part II*

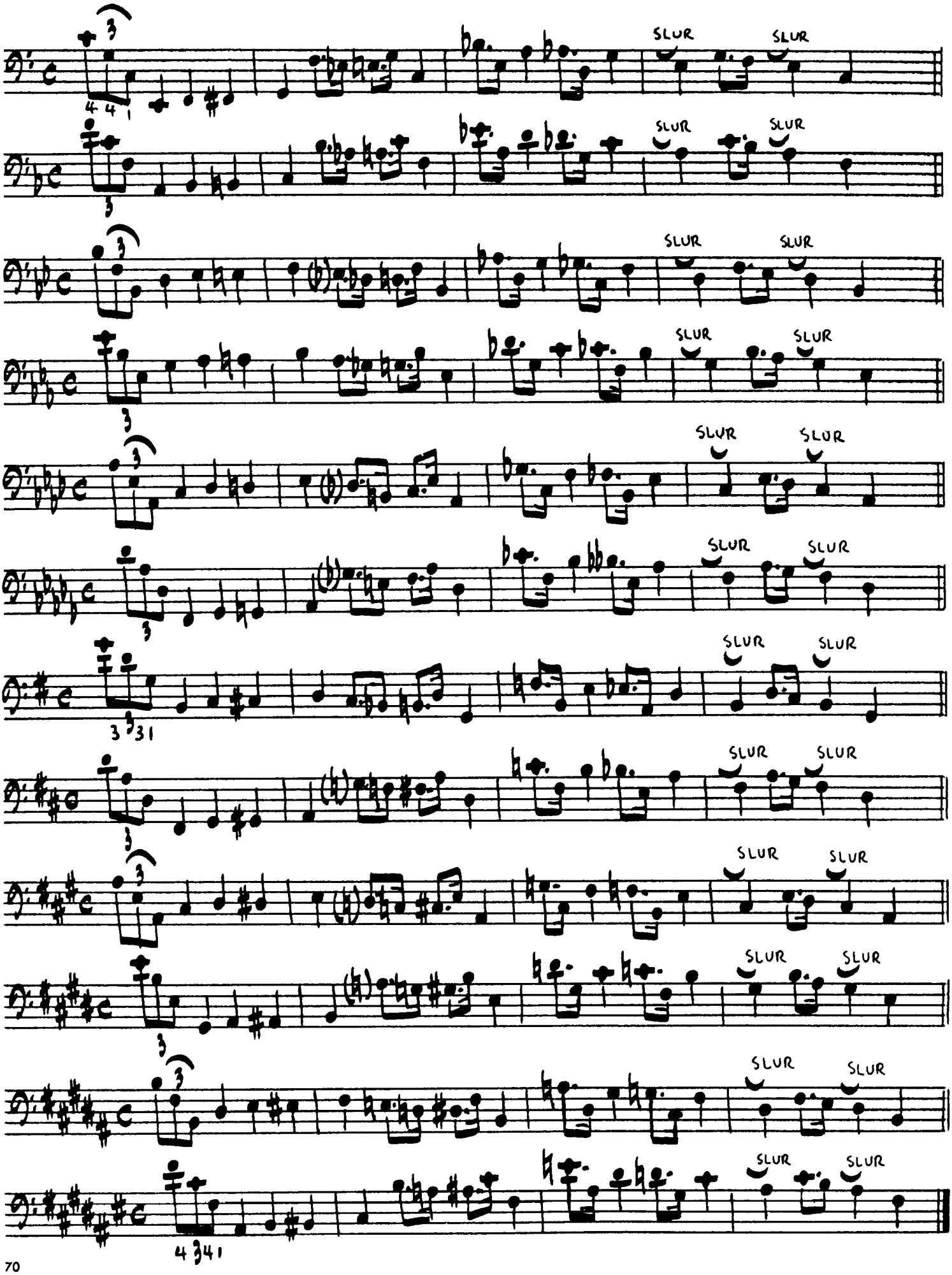


*Part III*

# RHYTHM PATTERNS WITH DROPS (Phase III)



# RHYTHM PATTERNS WITH DROPS (Phase IV)

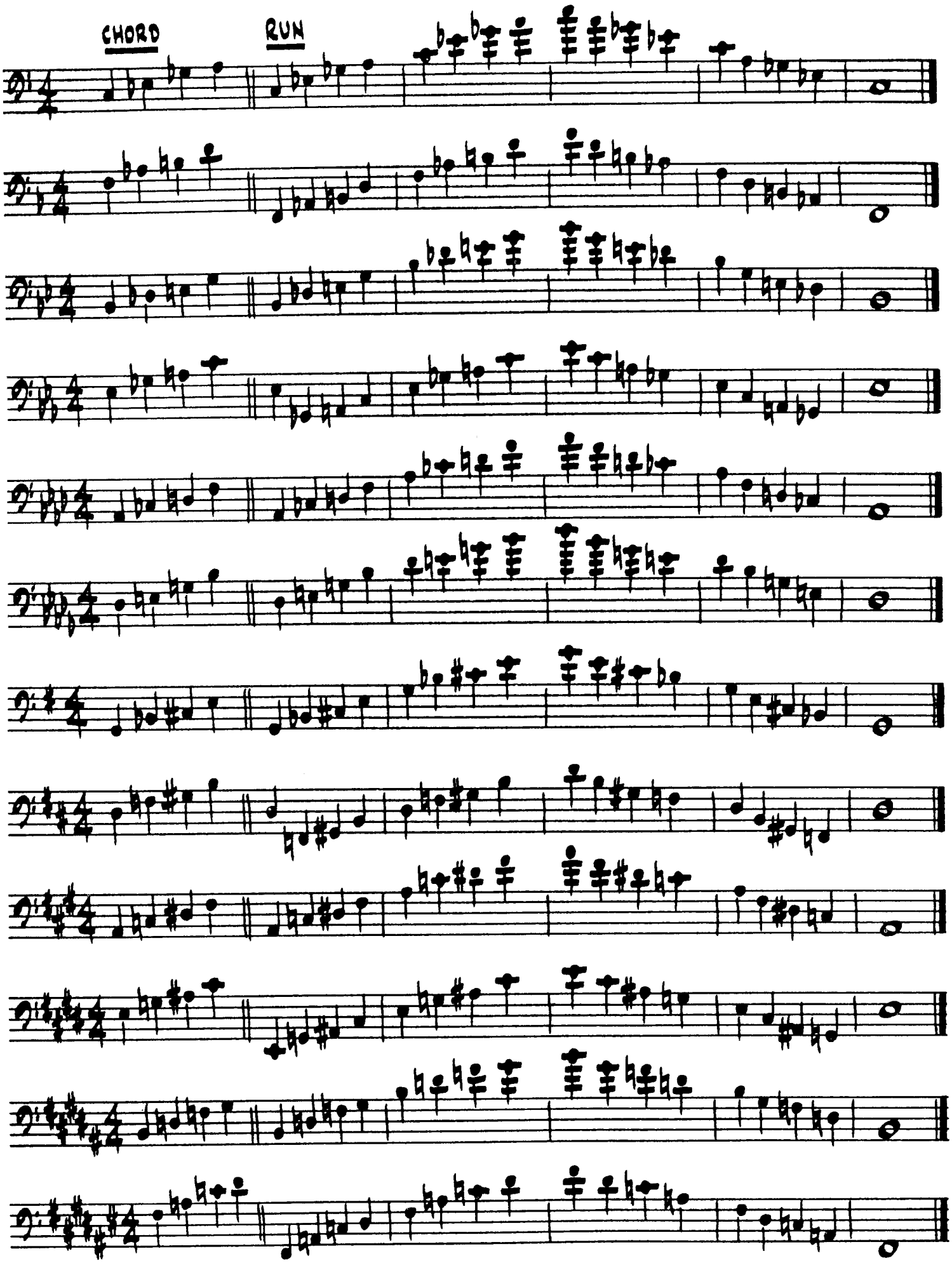


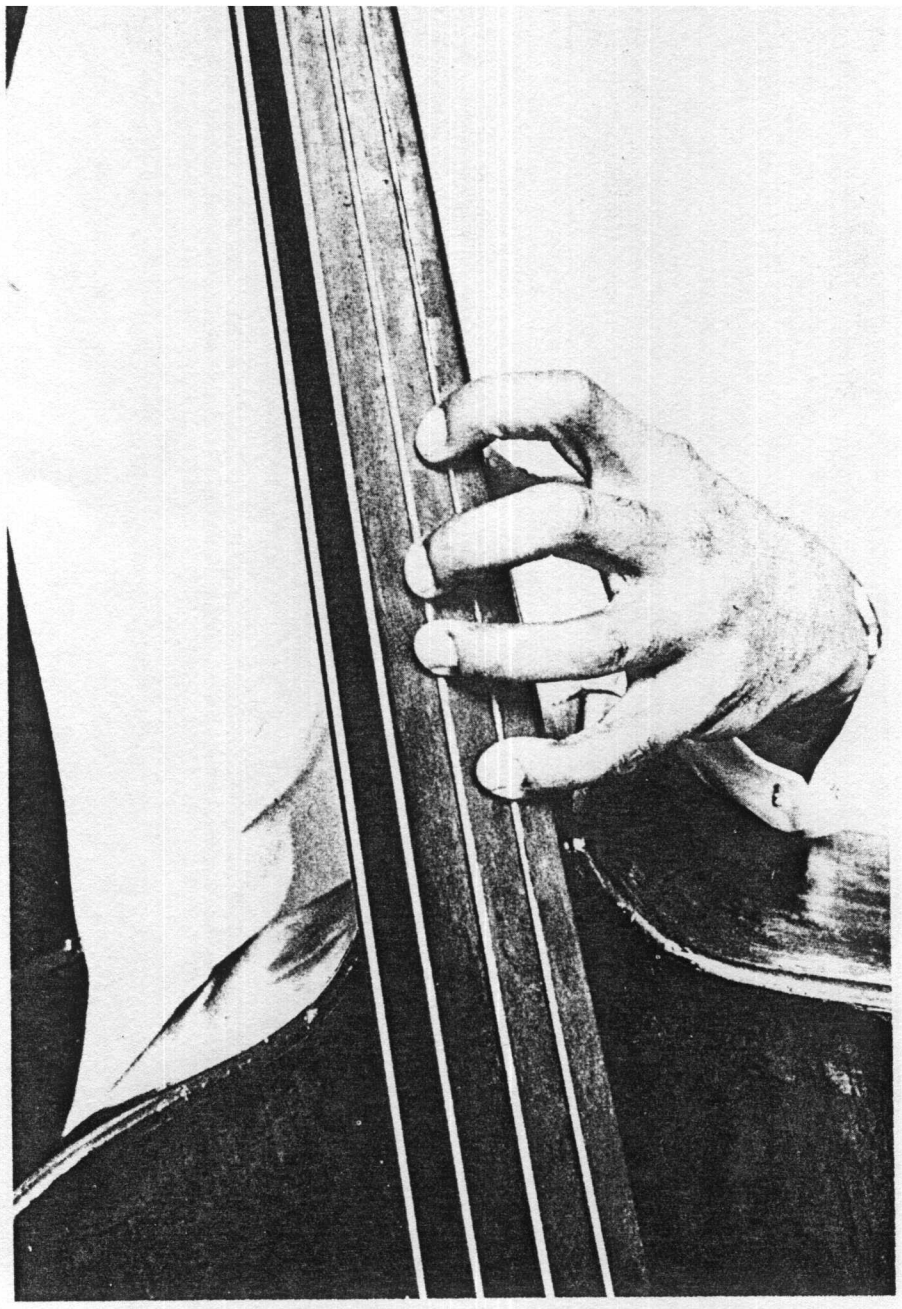
# CHAPTER V

## DIMINISHED CHORDS, RUNS & VARIATIONS

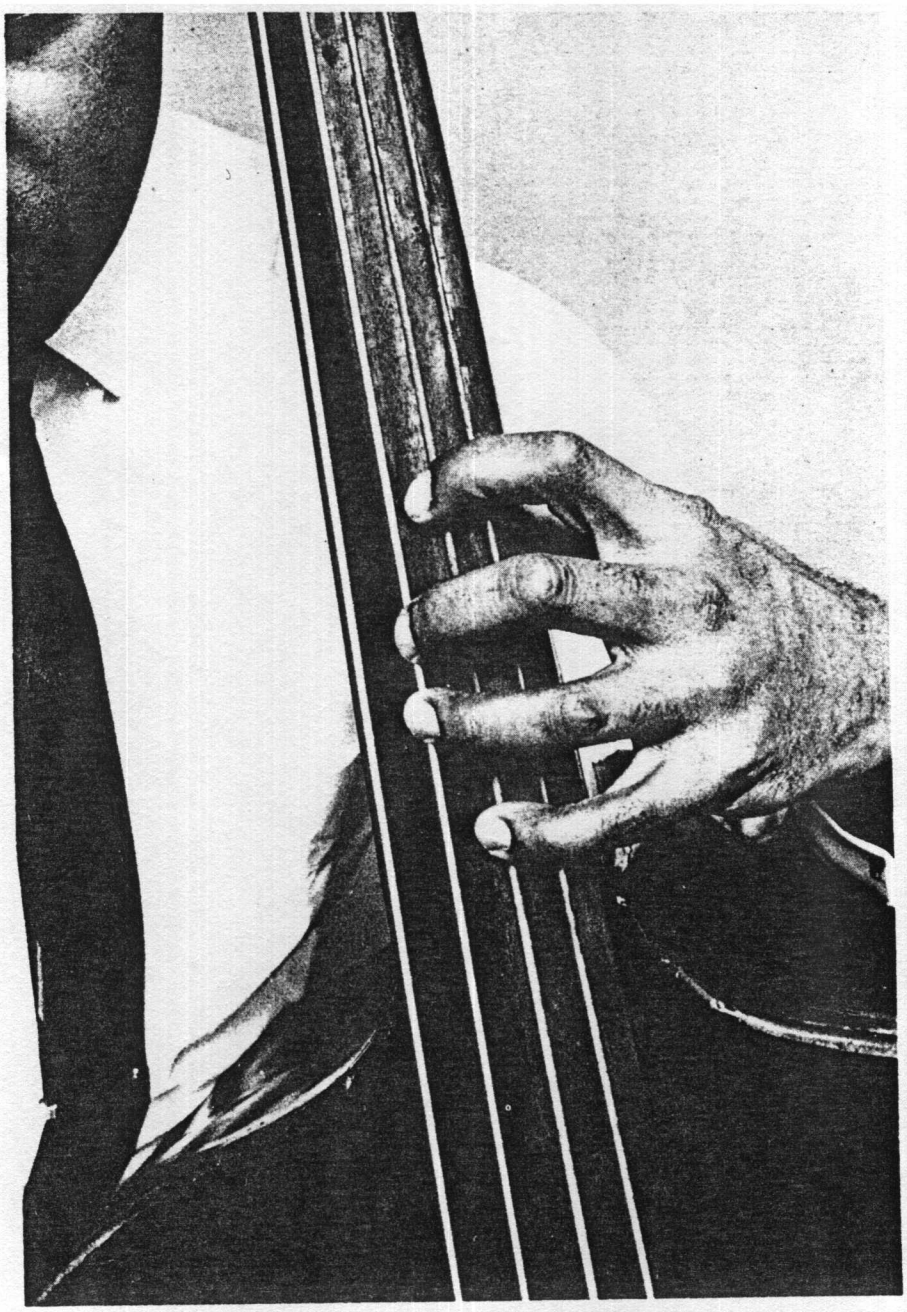
Diminished chords, runs, etc., are another part of the basic equipment all bass players should have. I have presented the diminished chords in various ways which you should learn. Then start to work out variations of your own. Intonation is very important here also. Pay strict attention to the fingering.

# DIMINISHED SEVENTH

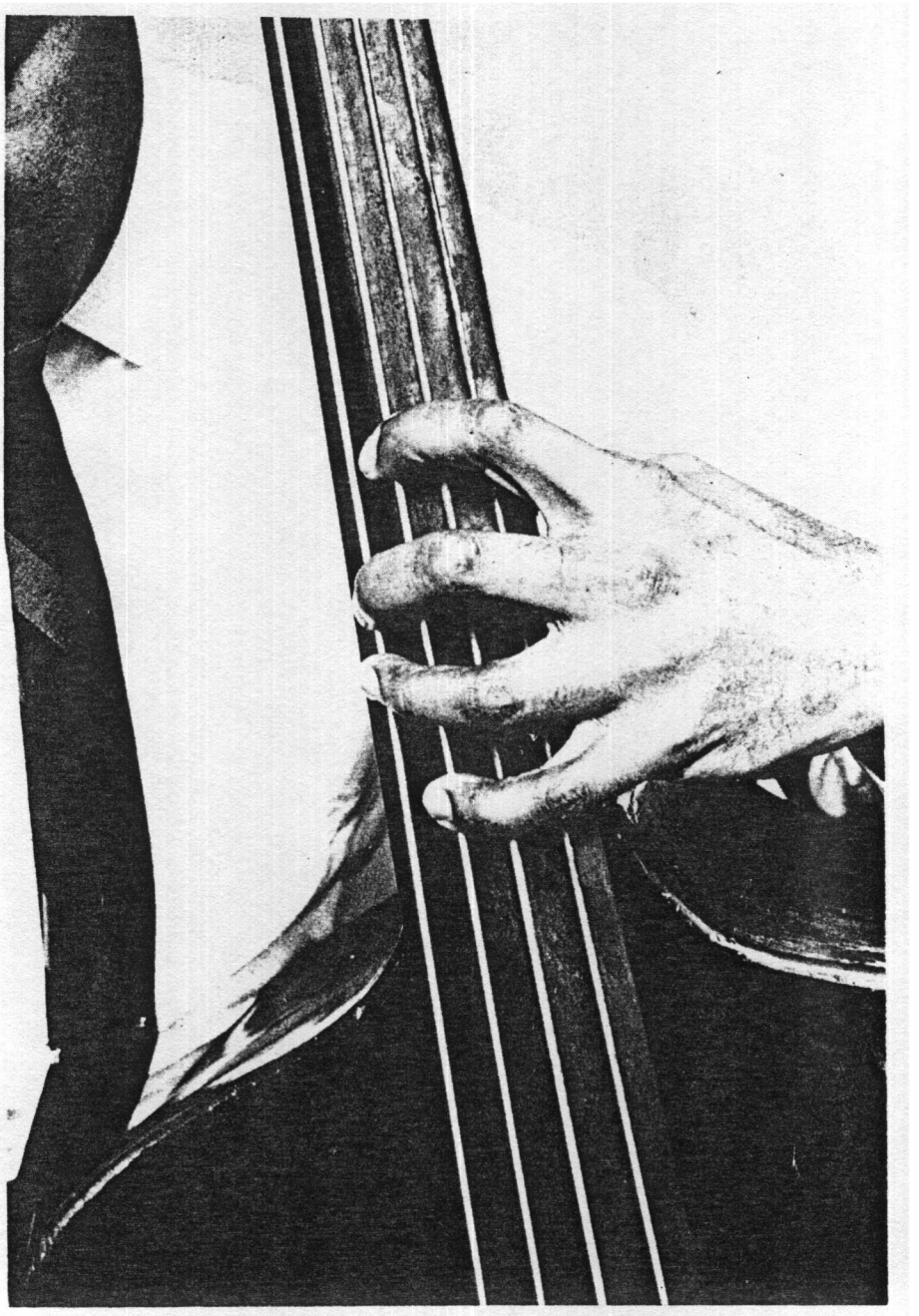




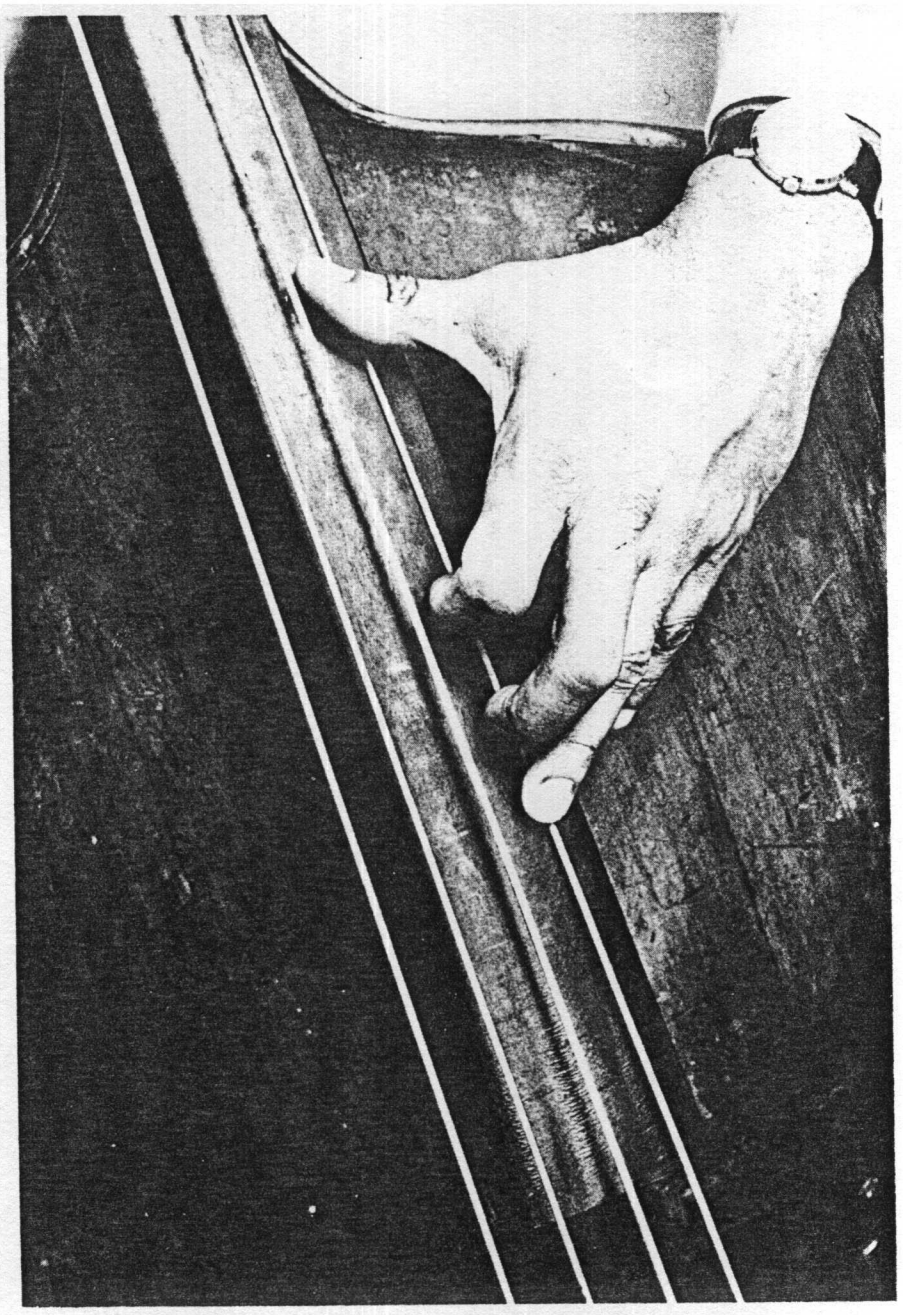
*Left hand position for the extension phase of the E diminished run (B-flat; D-flat; E).*



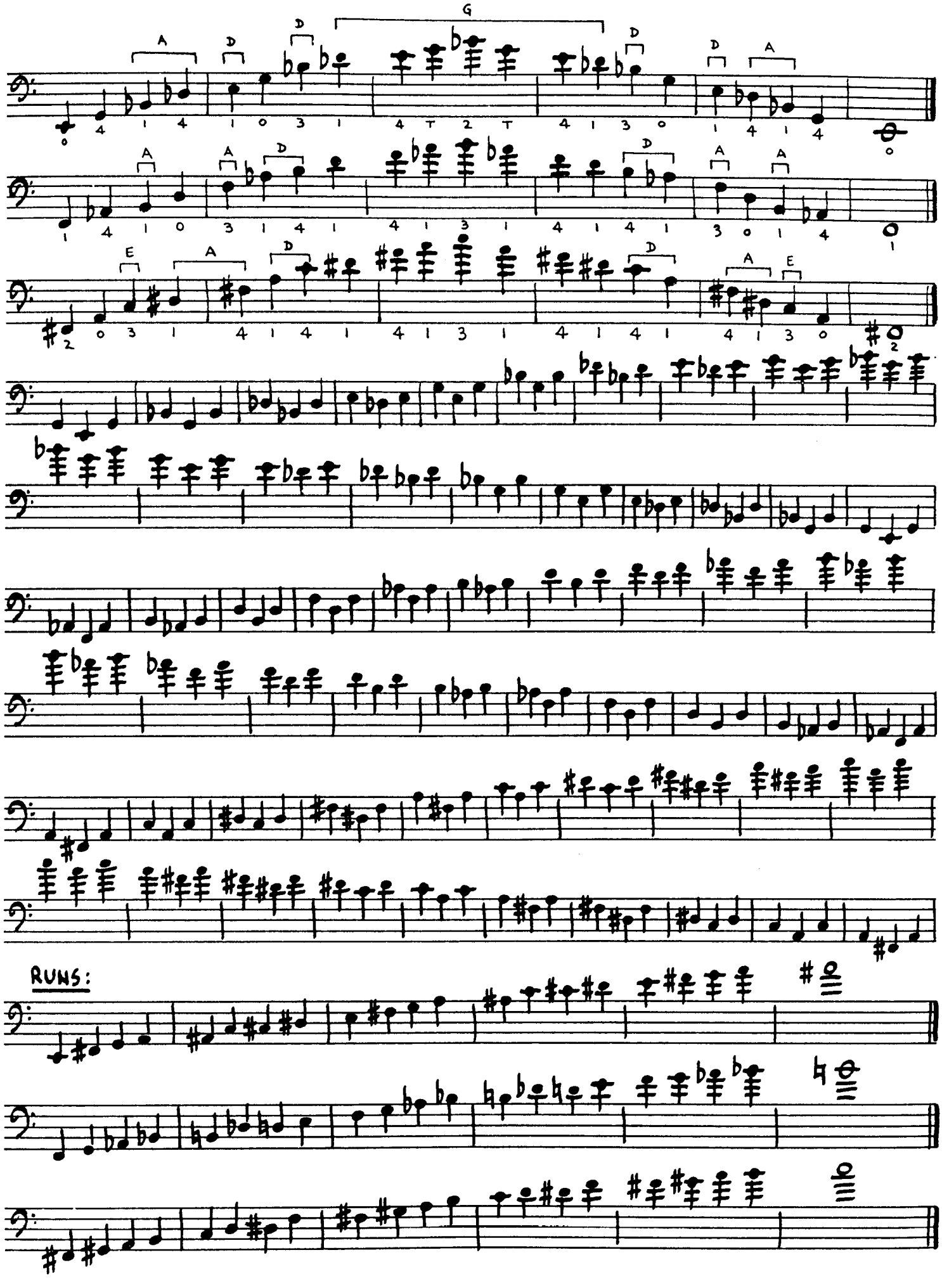
*Left hand position for the extension phase of the F diminished run (F; A-flat; B-natural)*



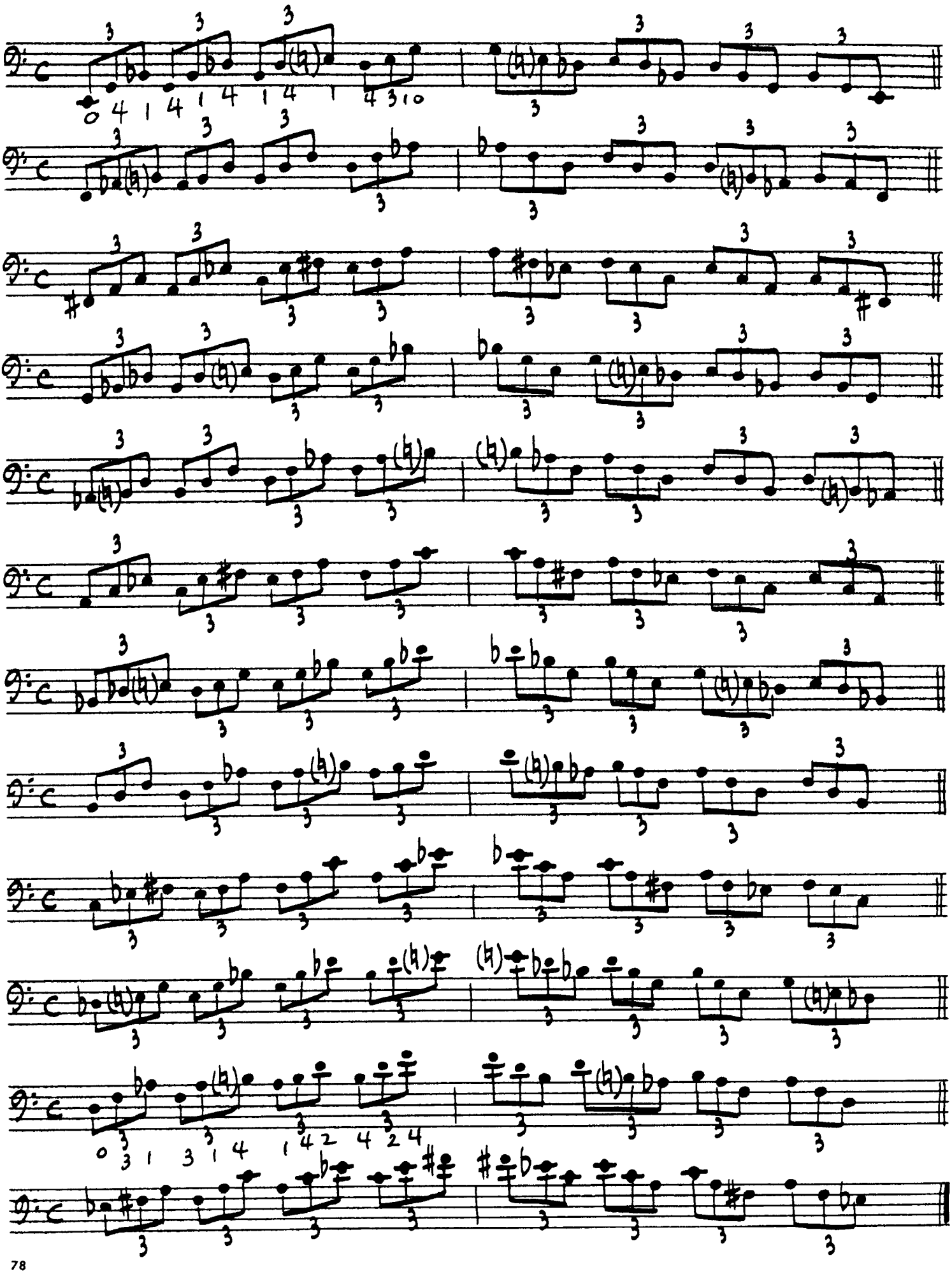
*Left hand position for extension phase of F-sharp diminished run (C-D-sharp; F sharp).*

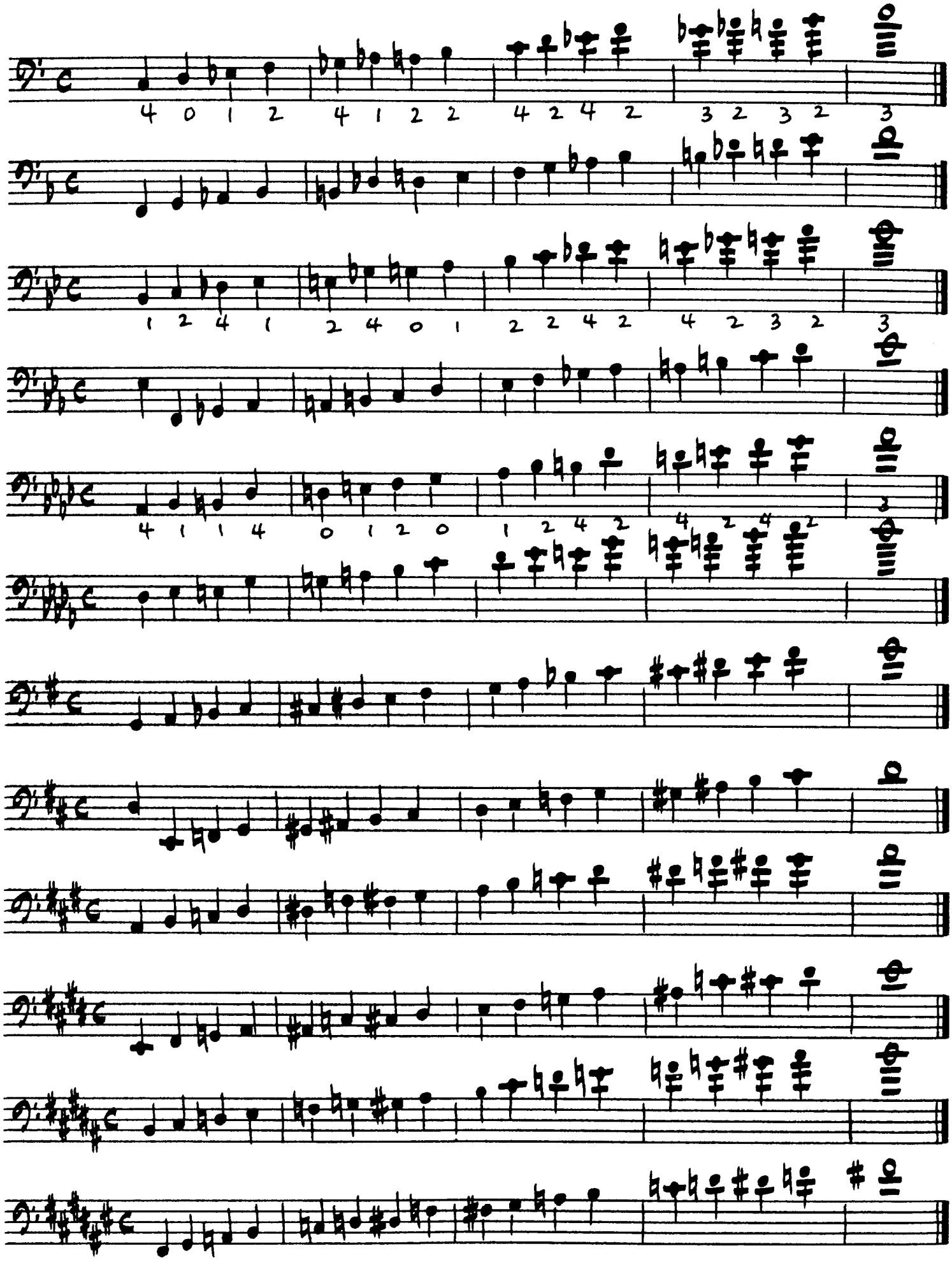


*Position of the left hand for extended diminished runs in the upper positions.*

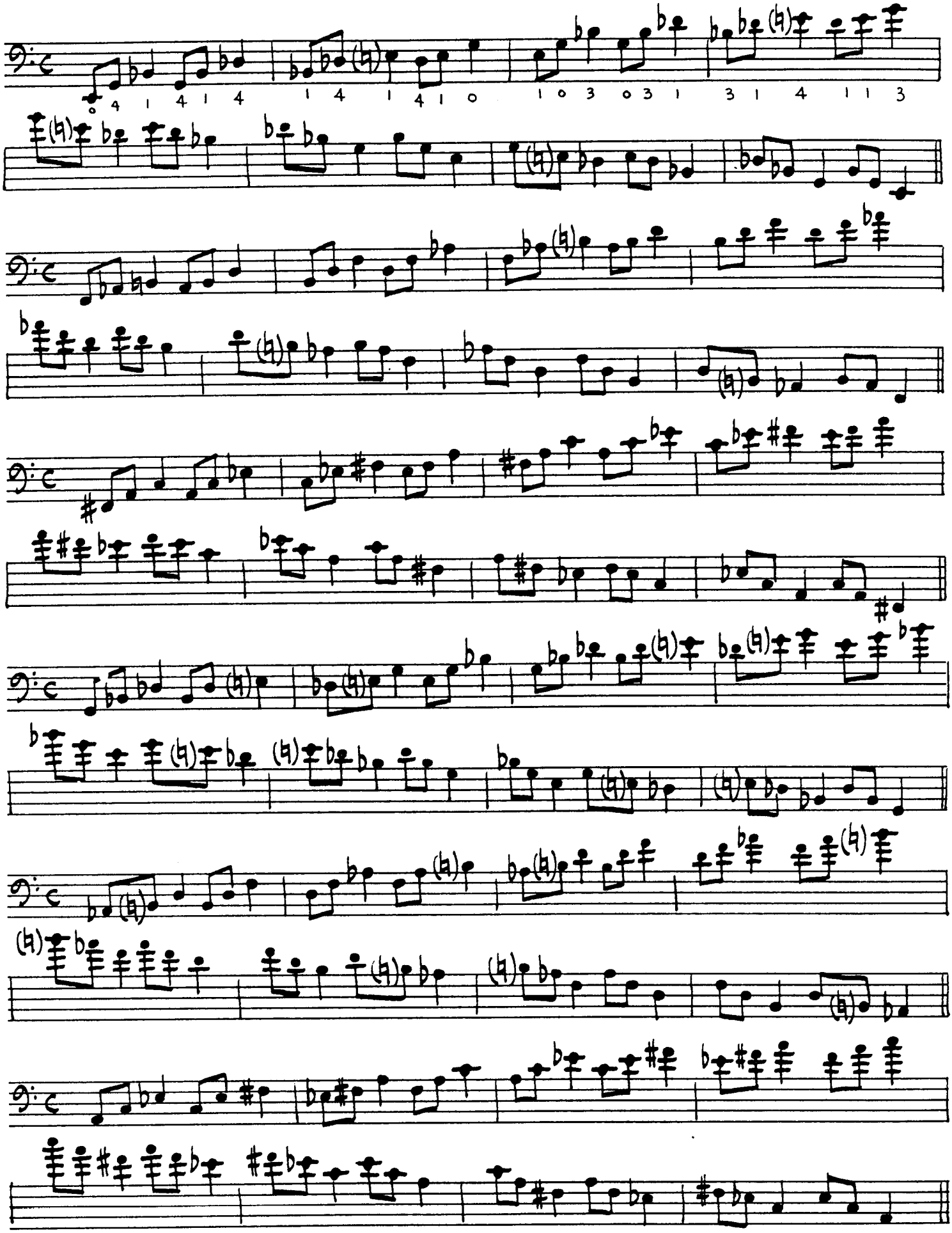

RUNS:

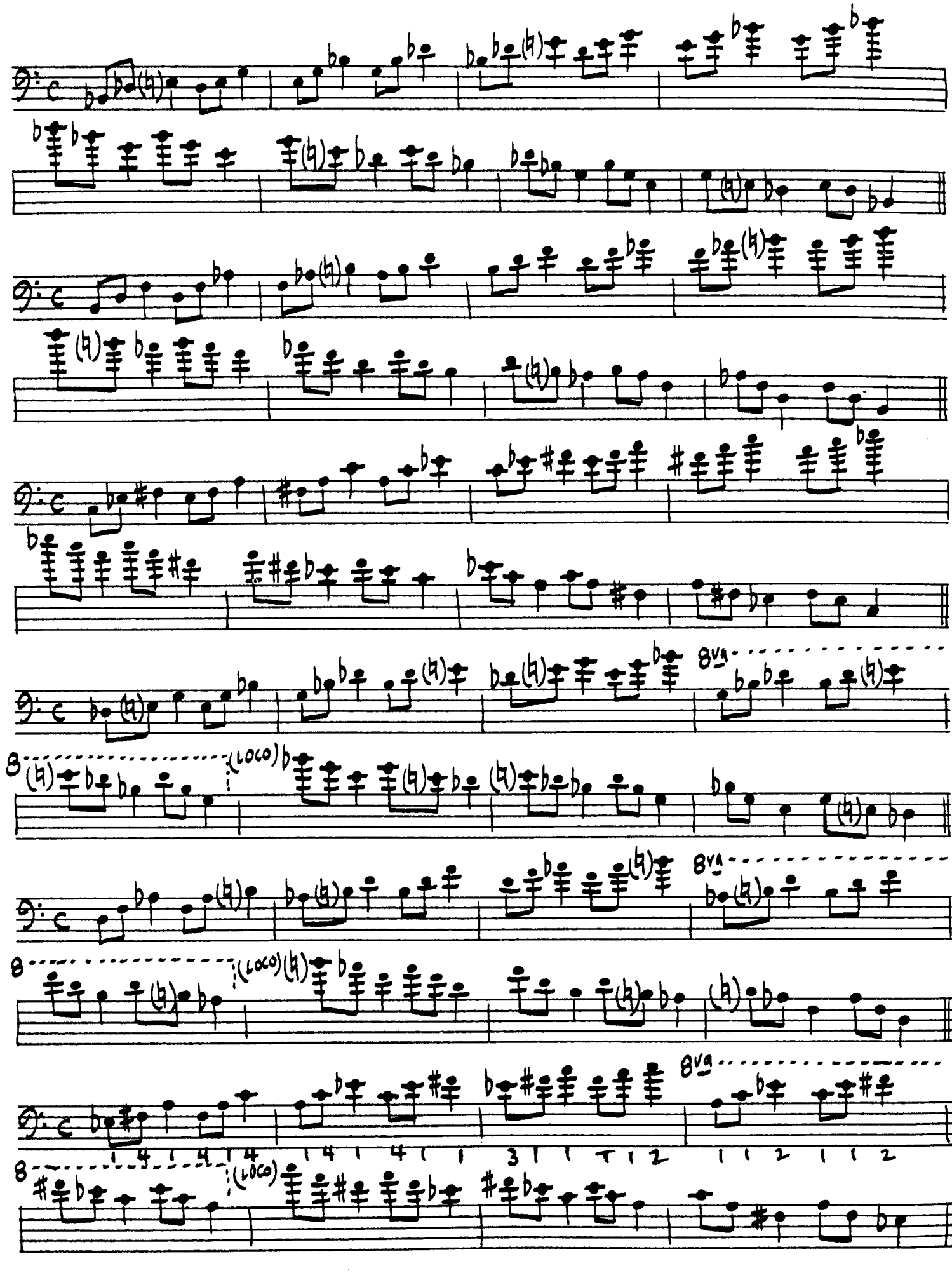
# DIMINISHED EXERCISE (Beginners)

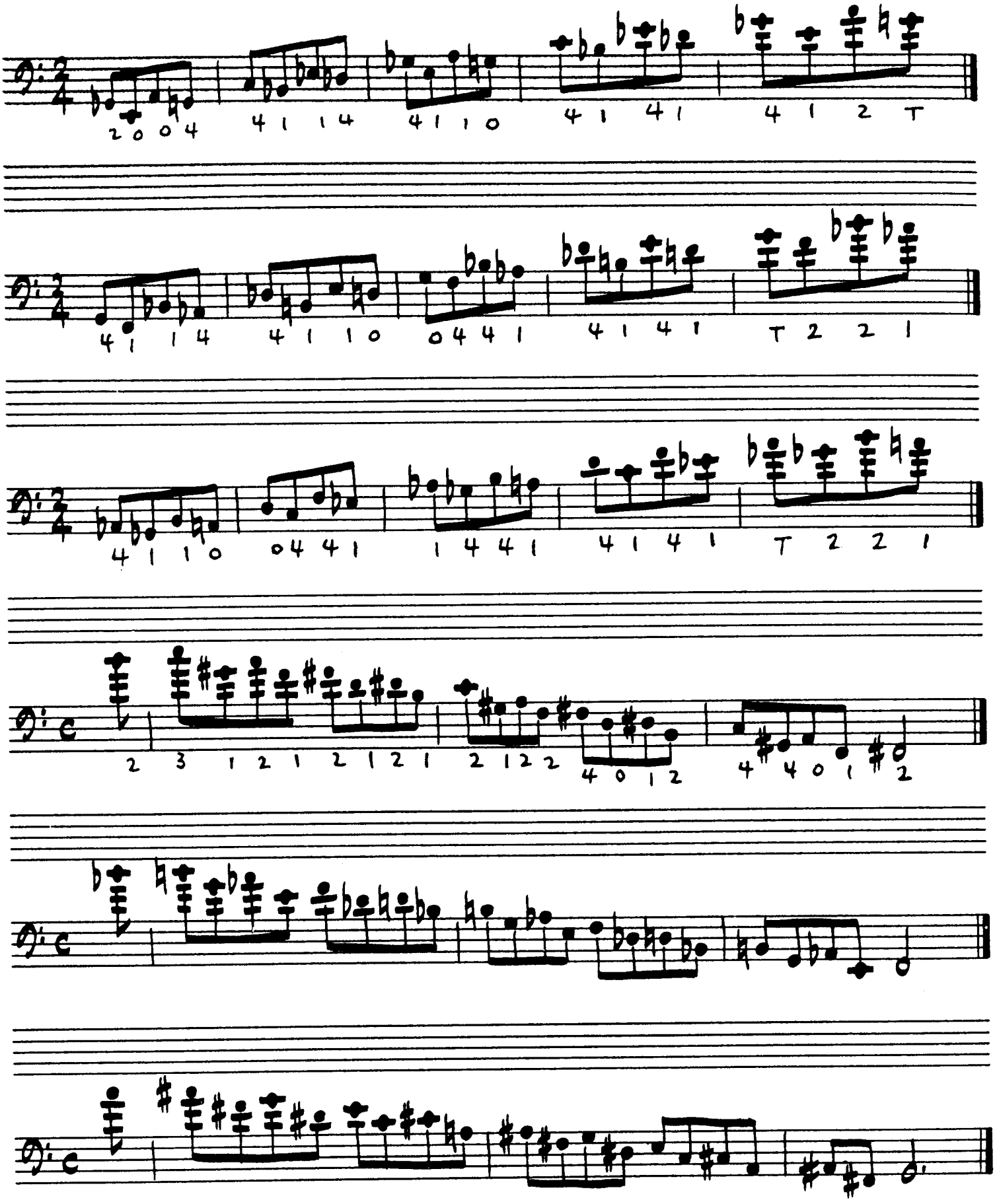


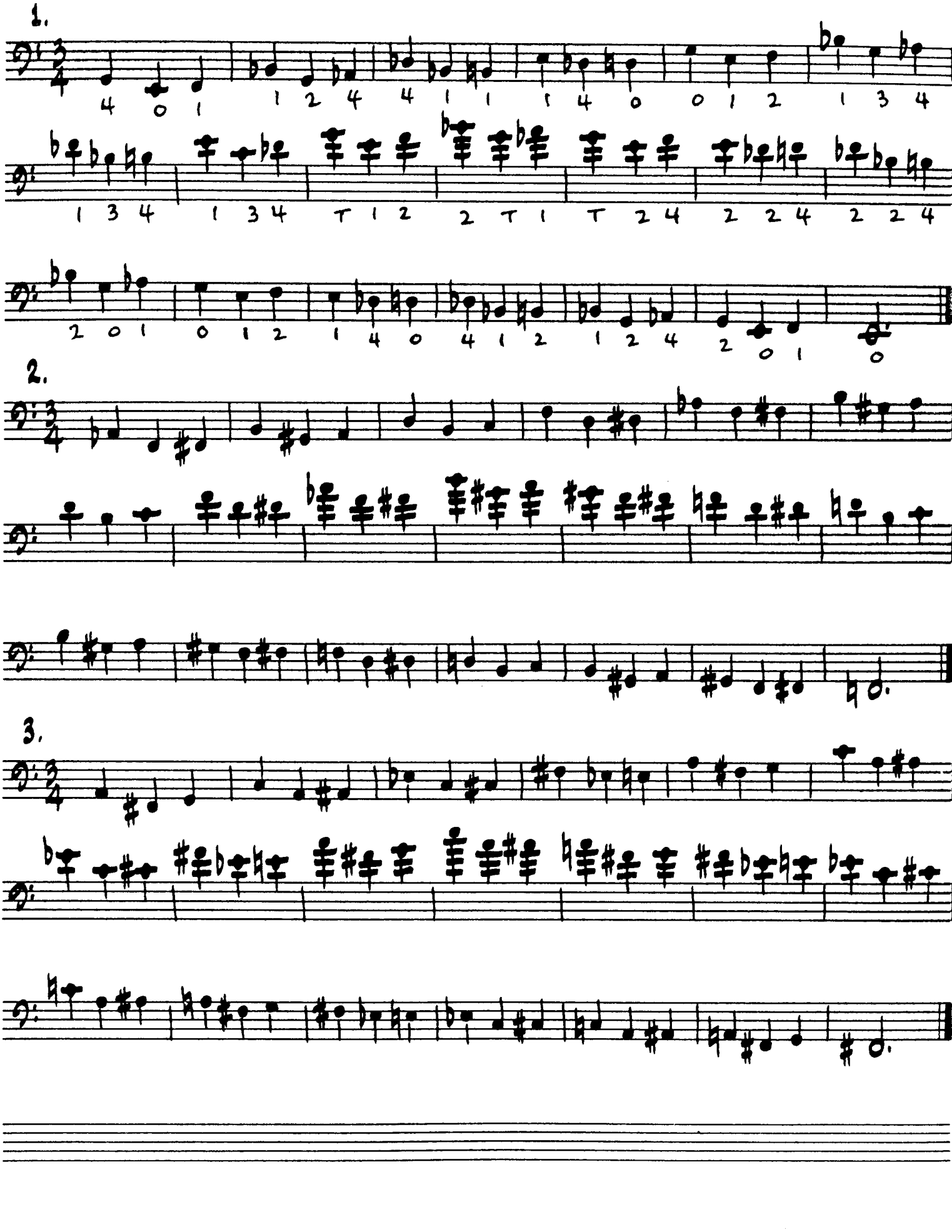

4 0 1 2 4 1 2 2 4 2 4 2 3 2 3 2 3
1 2 4 1 2 4 0 1 2 2 4 2 4 2 3 2 3
4 1 1 4 0 1 2 0 1 2 4 2 4 2 4 2

# DIMINISHED EXERCISE (Advanced)

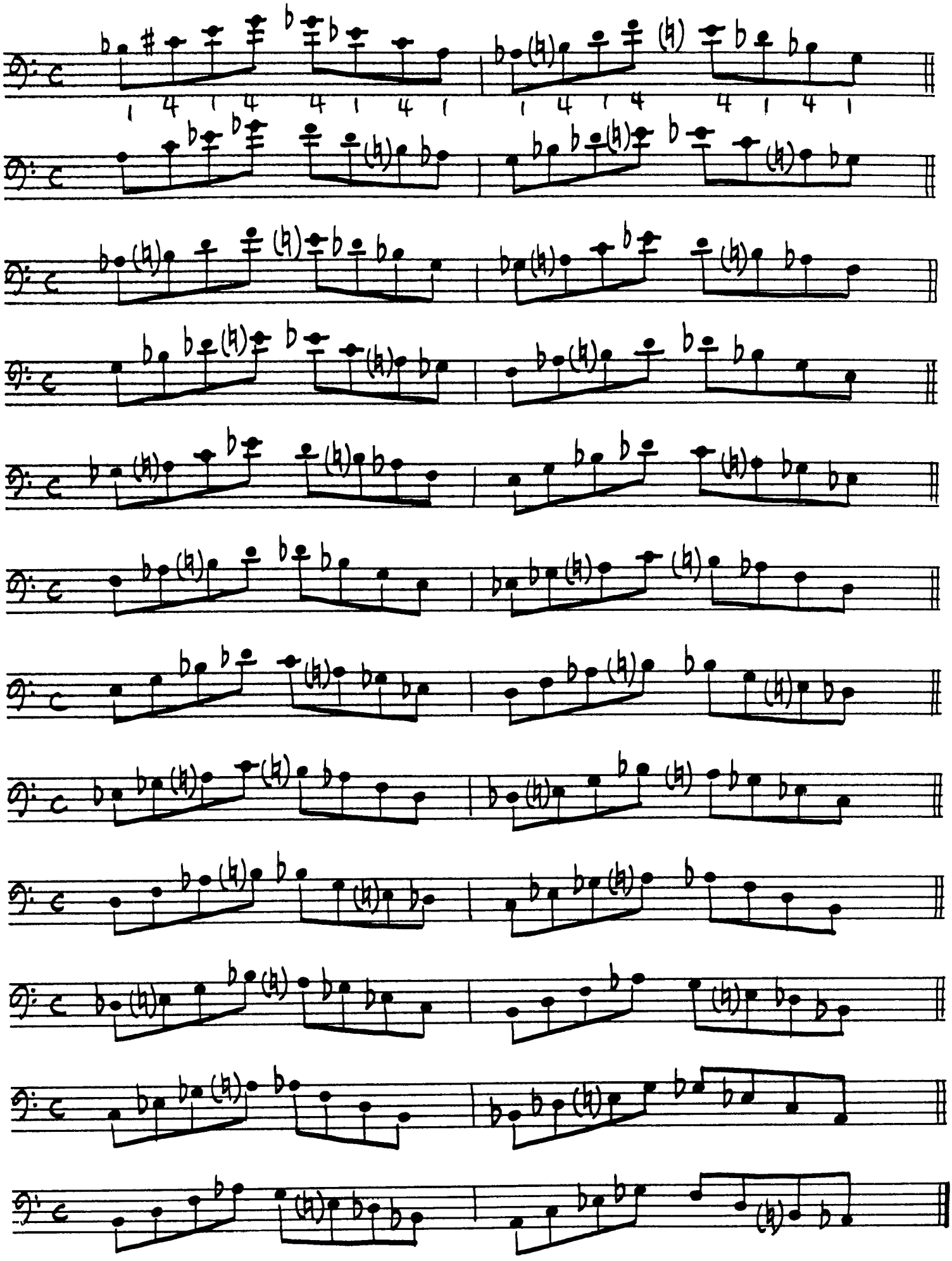


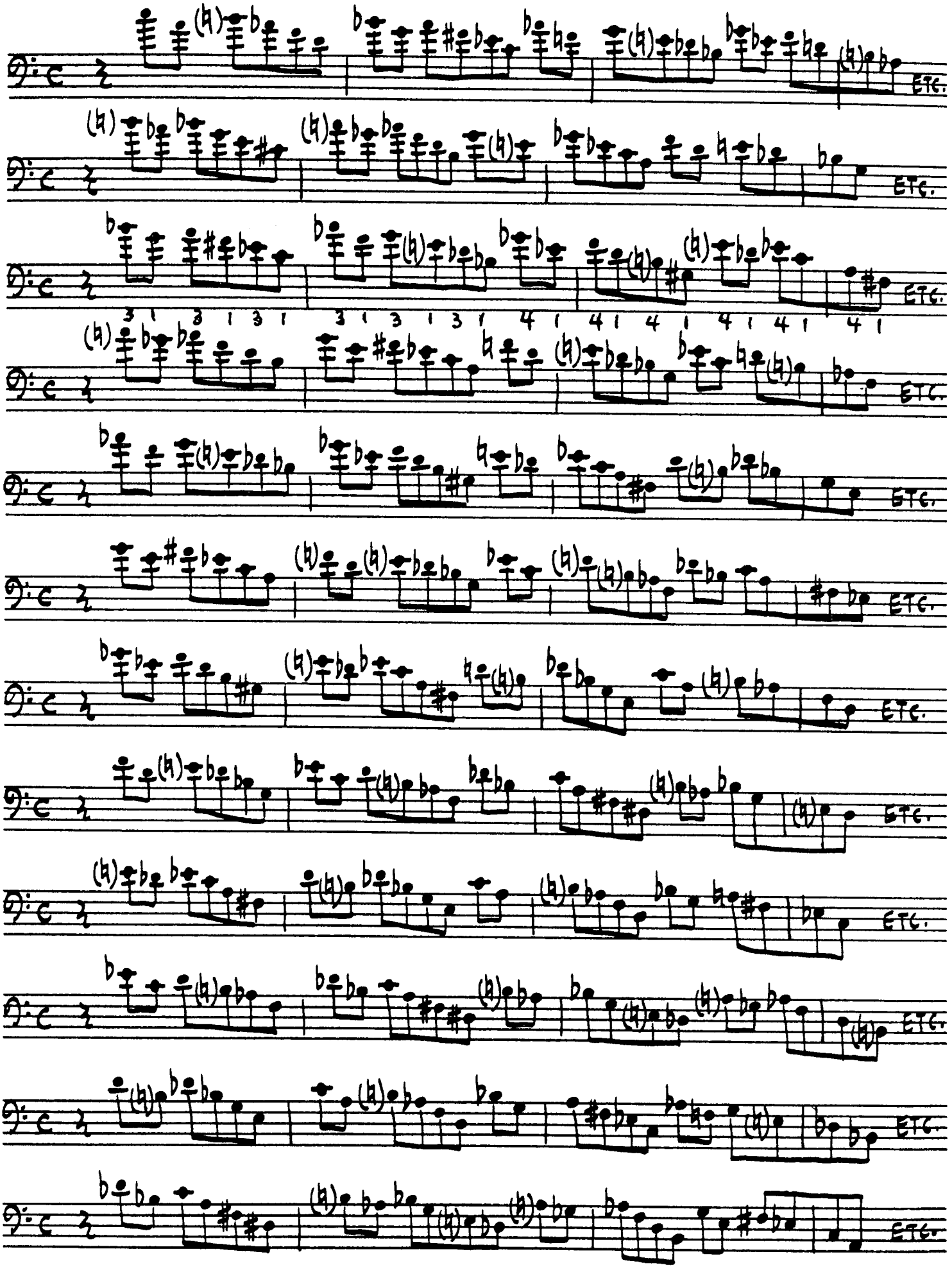

8va
(loco)
8va
(loco)
8va
(loco)




1.
2.
3.

# DIMINISHED EXERCISE (Solo)



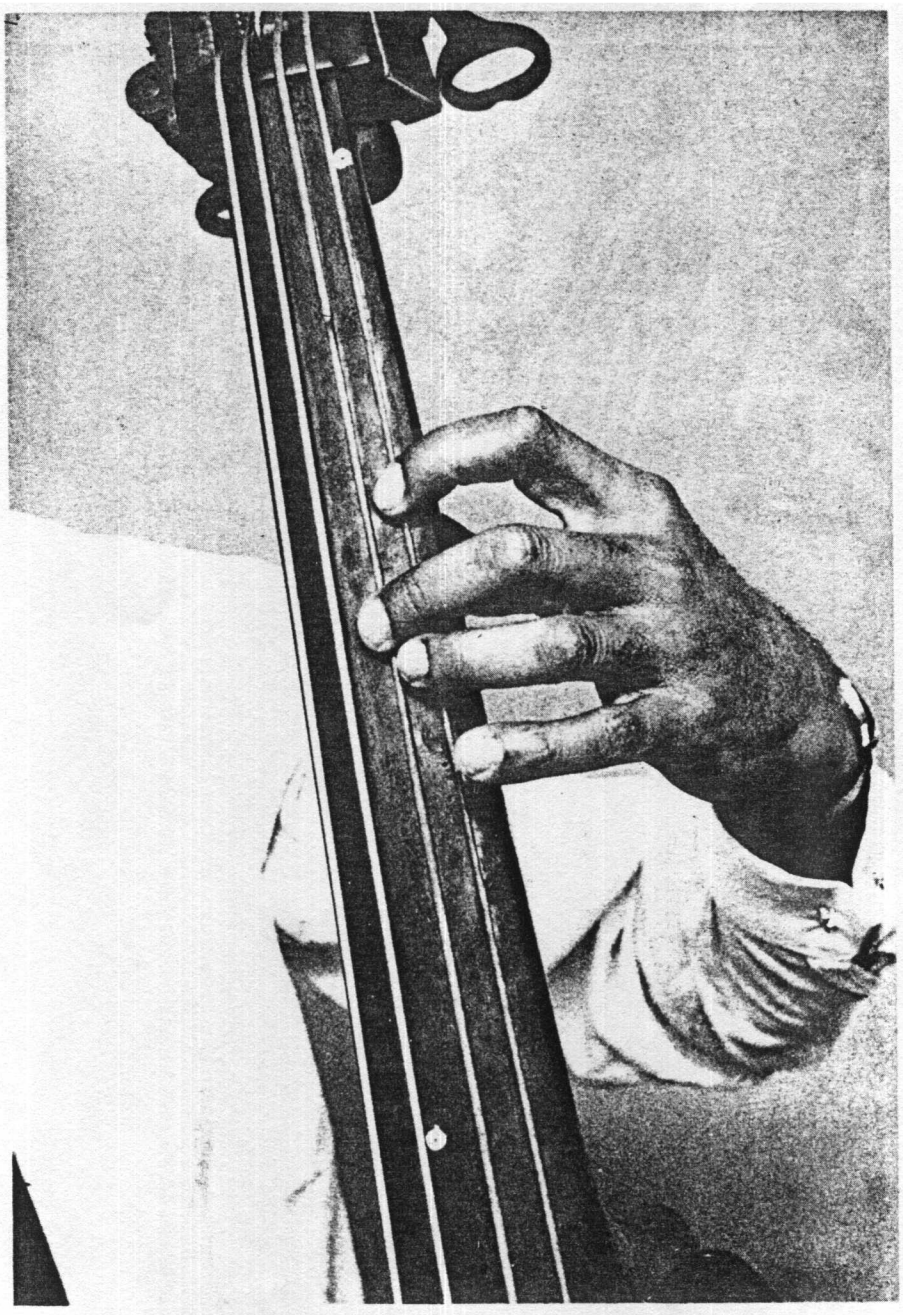

ETC.
ETC.
ETC.
ETC.
ETC.
ETC.
ETC.
ETC.
ETC.
ETC.
ETC.

# CHAPTER VI

## AUGMENTED CHORDS, RUNS, VARIATIONS AND WHOLE TONE SCALES

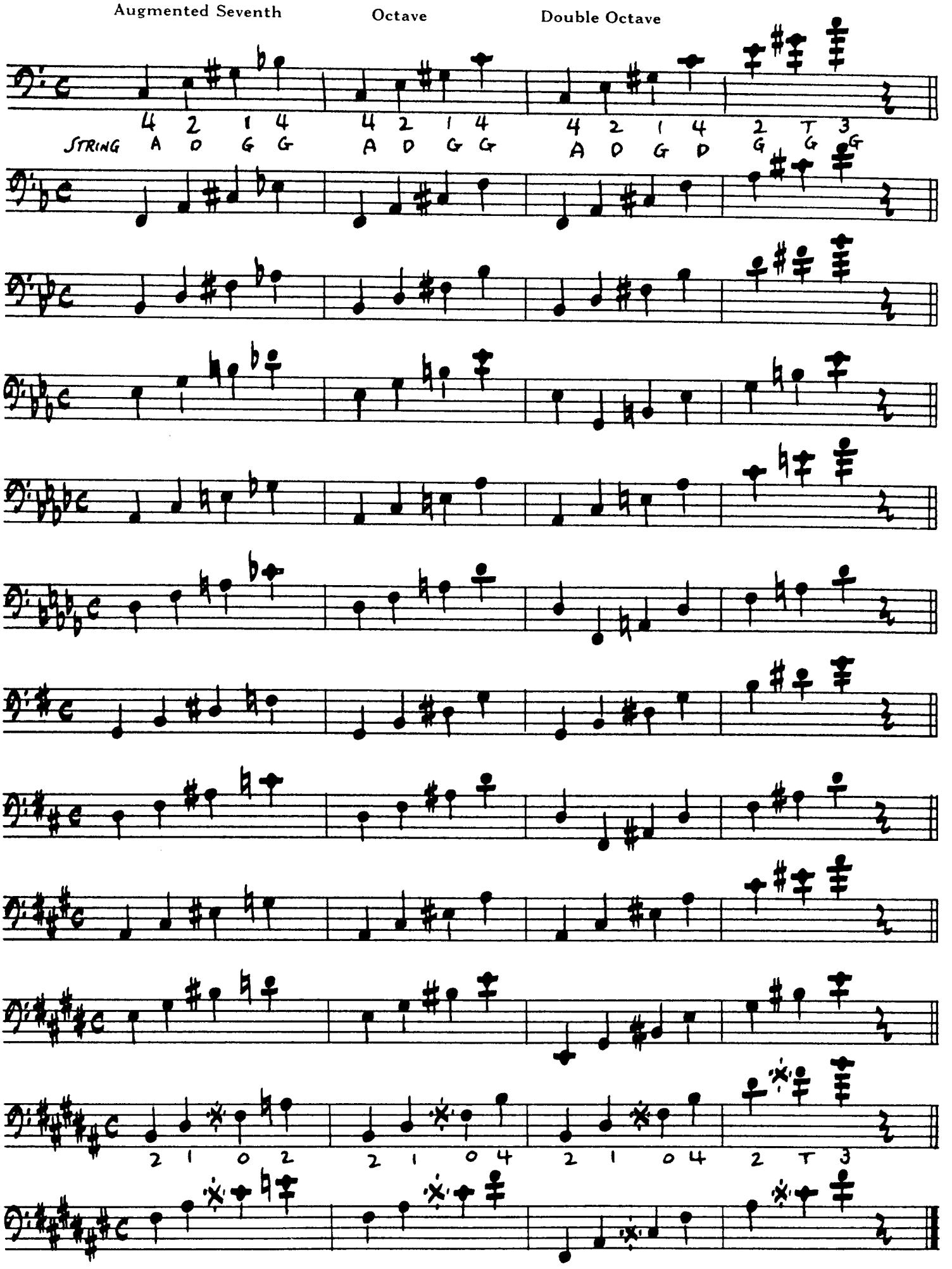
Augmented chords, runs, etc., like diminished chords, are very valuable in the playing of jazz. All of the variations presented here should be learned as thoroughly as your scales. Once, again, pay strict attention to the fingering.

*Position of the left hand for playing augmented exercises in the lower positions.*

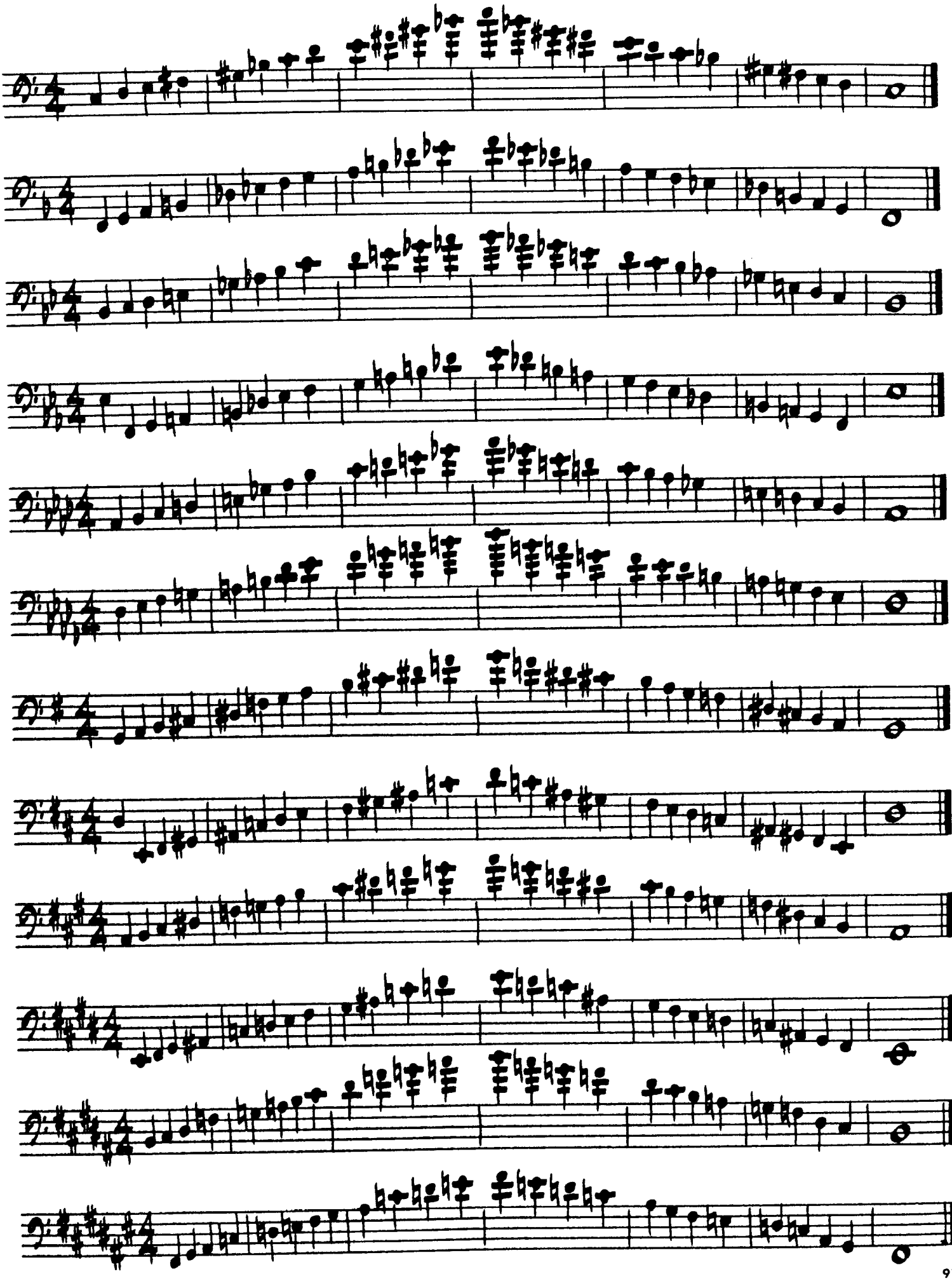


*Position of the left hand for playing augmented exercises (*fingering 2-1-4).*
**This fingering is not in one position.*

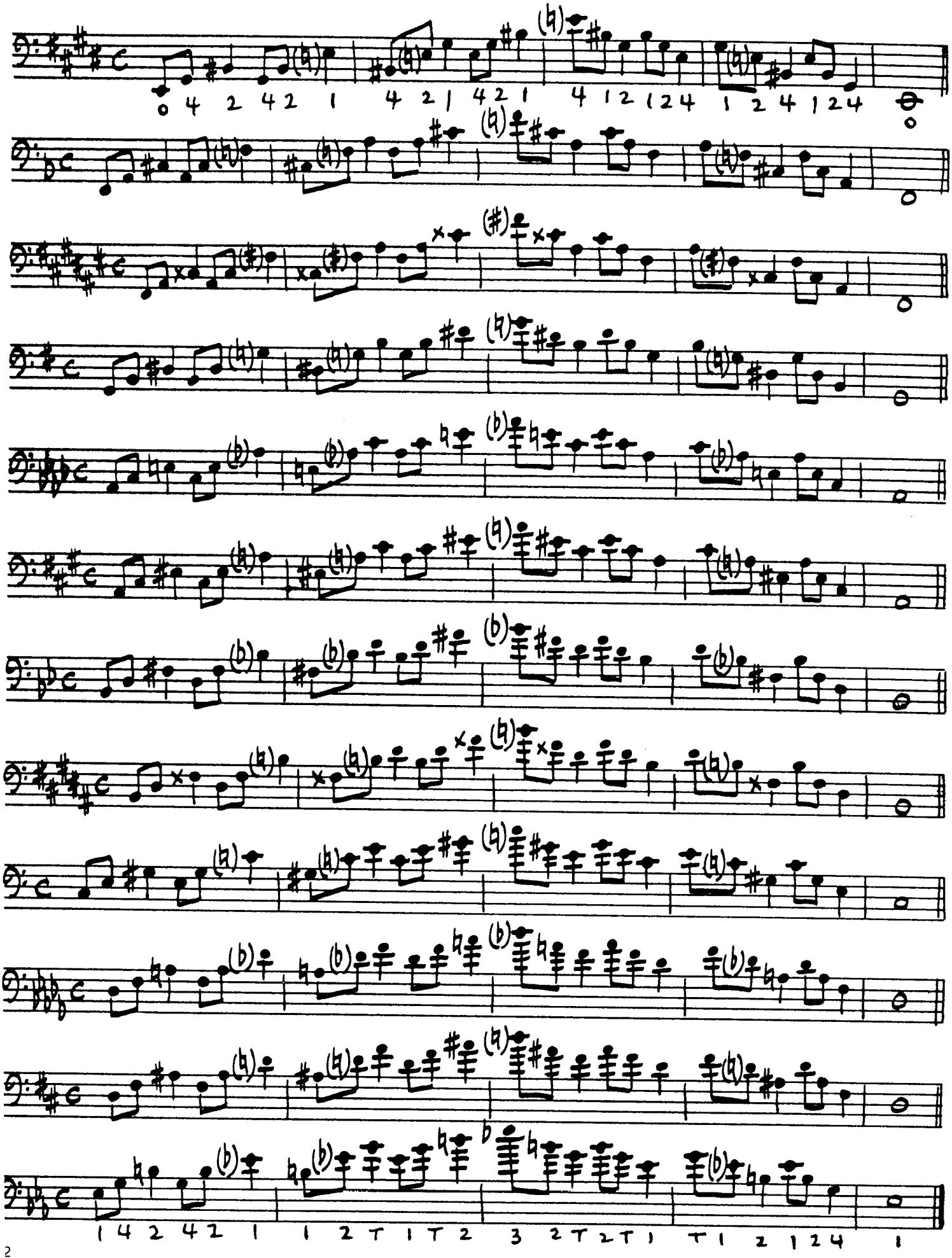
*Left hand position for playing augmented exercises in the upper positions (fingering 2-1-3).*

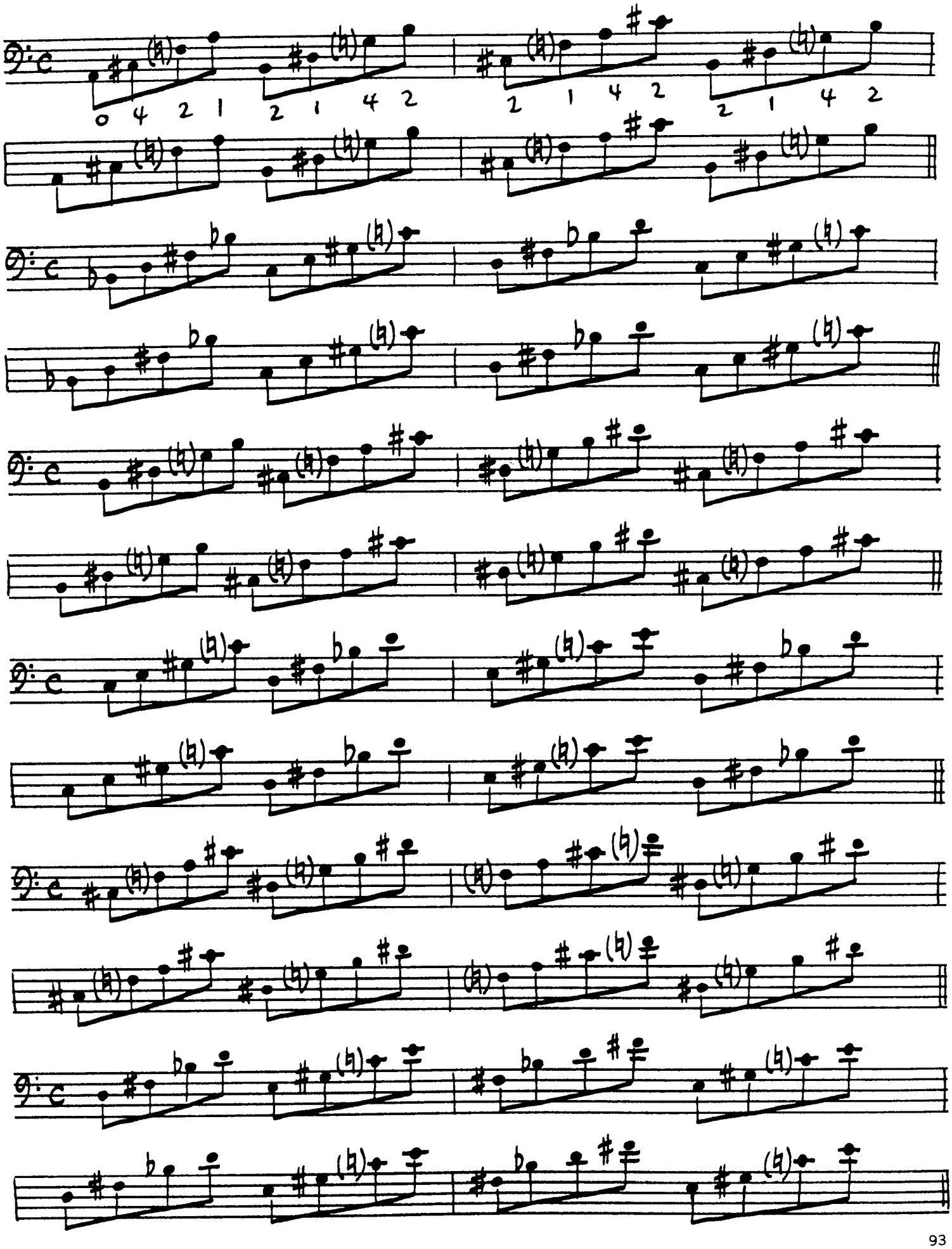

Augmented Seventh
Octave
Double Octave
4 2 1 4
STRING A D G G
4 2 1 4
A D G G
4 2 1 4 2 T 3
A D G D G G G
2 1 0 2
2 1 0 4
2 1 0 4 2 T 3

# WHOLE TONE SCALES

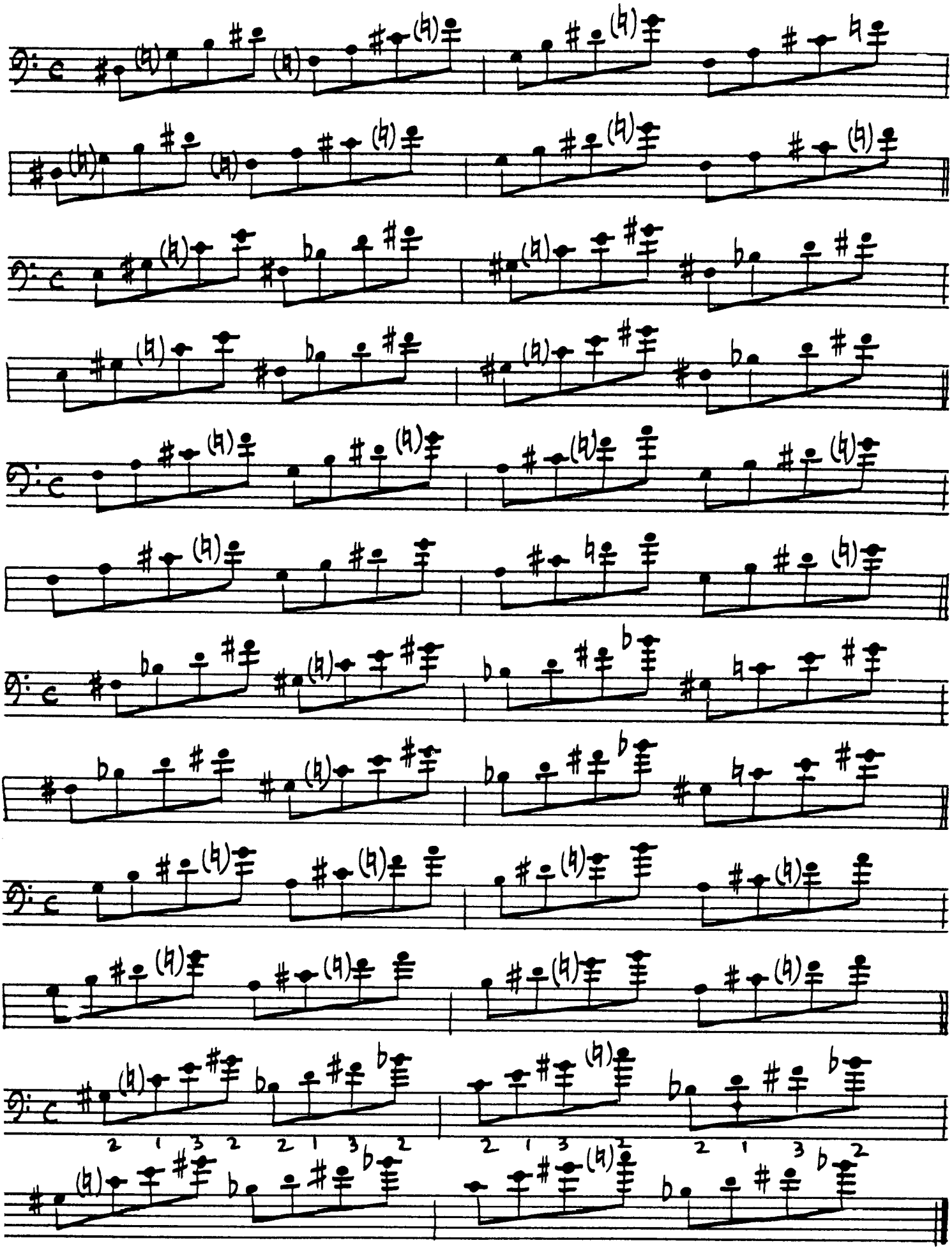


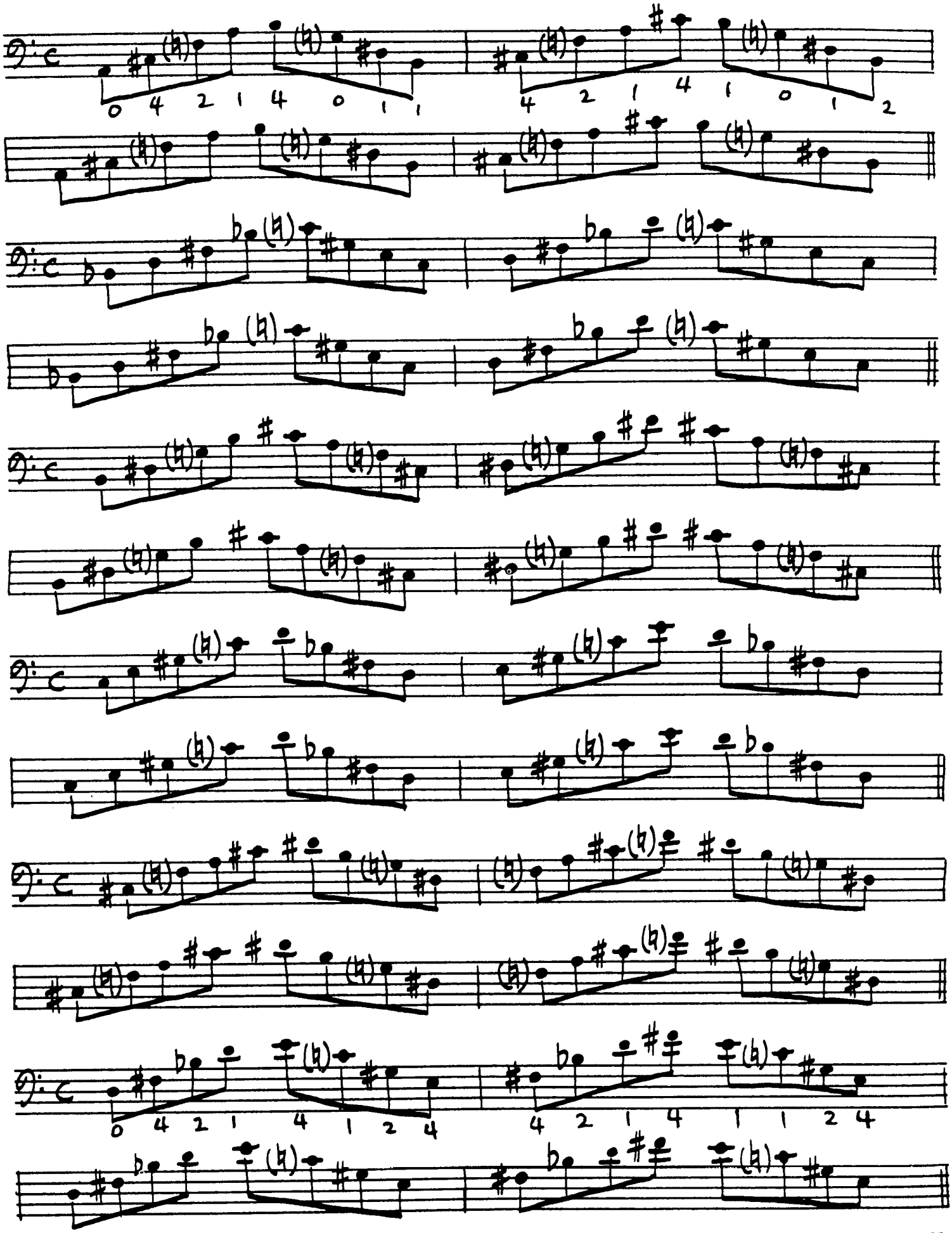
# AUGMENTED EXERCISES



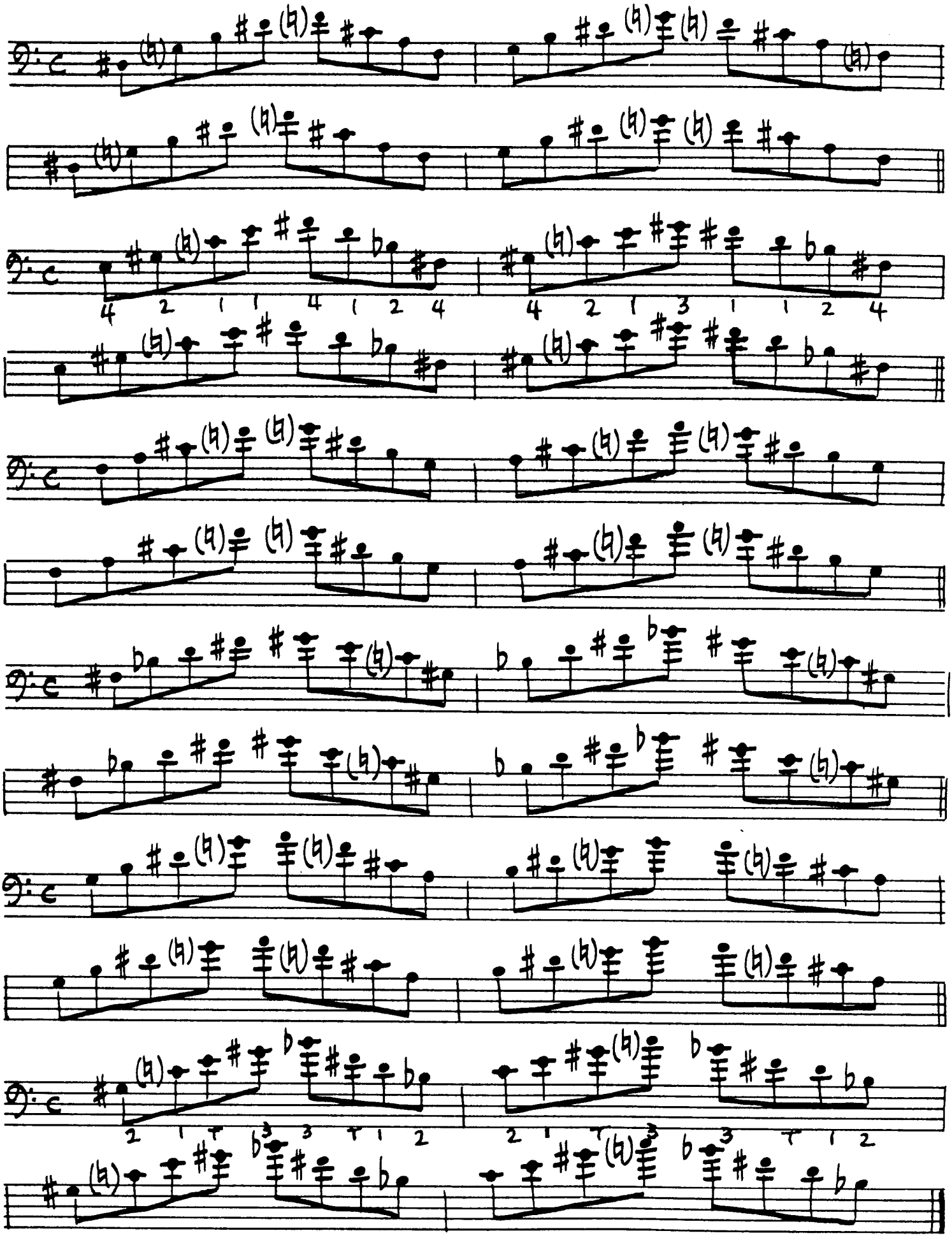

0 4 2 1 2 1 4 2
2 1 4 2
2 1 4 2

# AUGMENTED EXERCISES



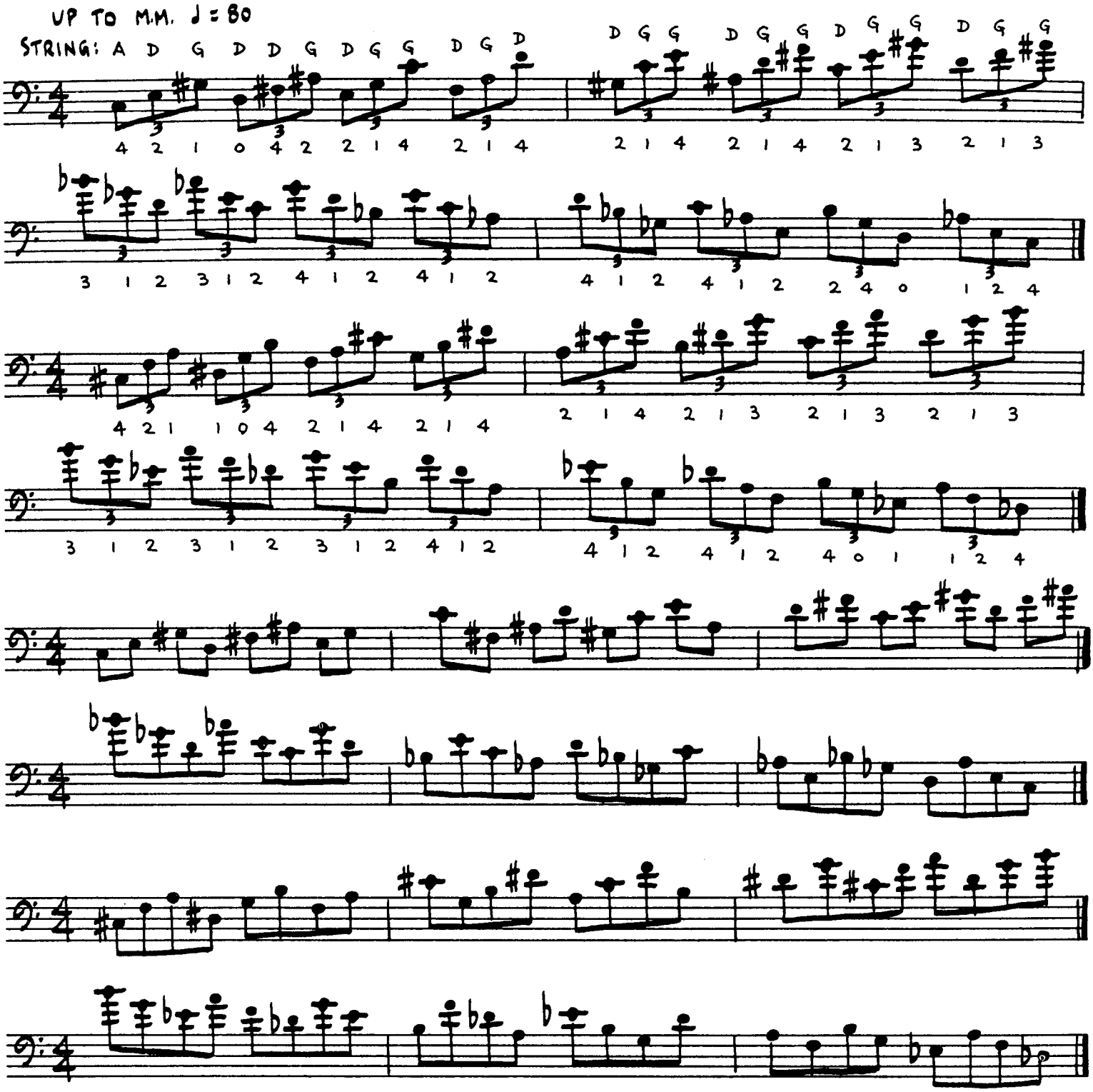

0 4 2 1 4 0 1 1
4 2 1 4 1 0 1 2
0 4 2 1 4 1 2 4
4 2 1 4 1 1 2 4

(CONT.)

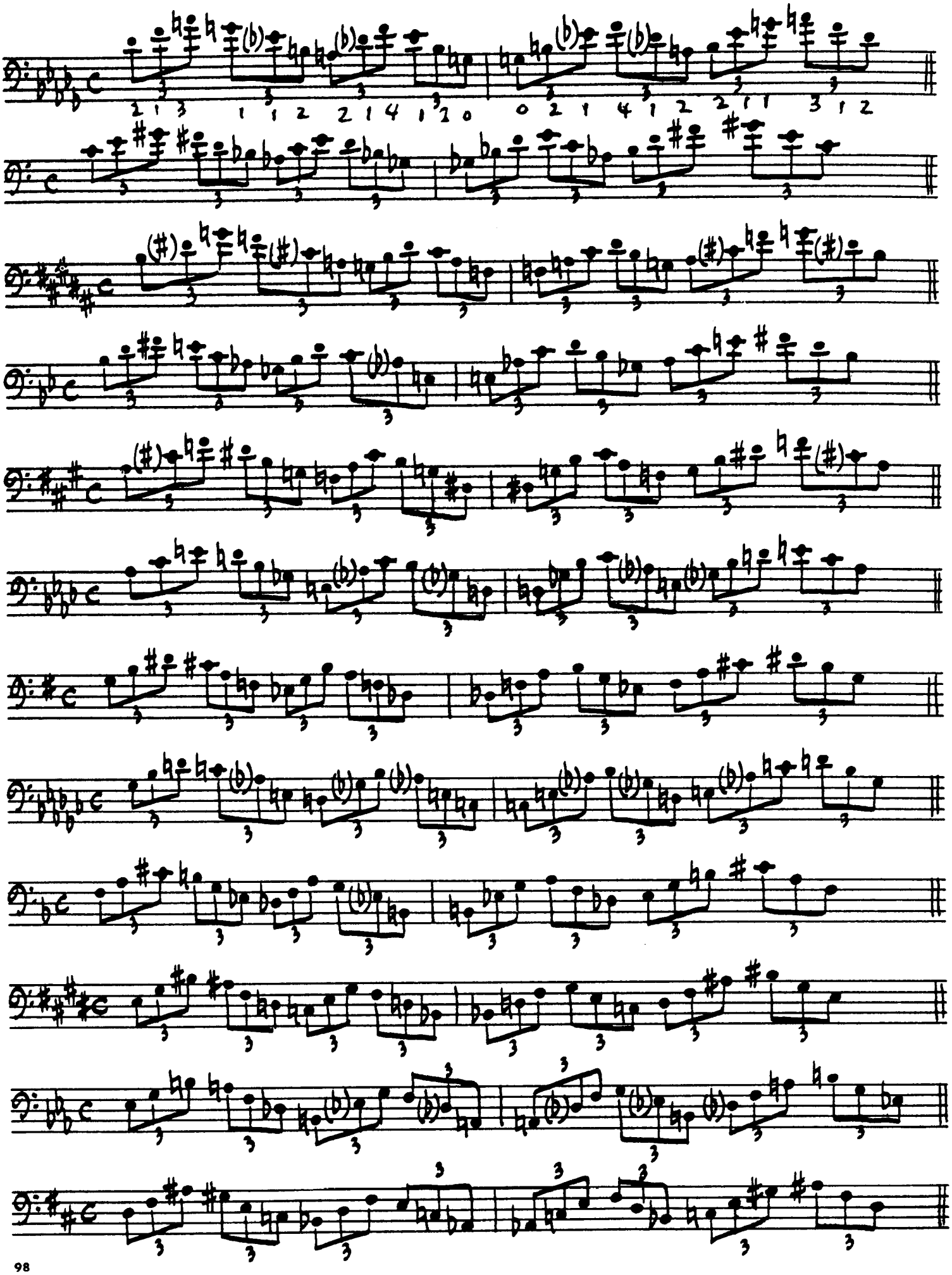


PRACTISE SLOW AT FIRST
UP TO M.M. ♩ = 80

STRING: A D G D D G D G G D G D



# AUGMENTED EXERCISE



# CHAPTER VII

## BLUES PATTERNS

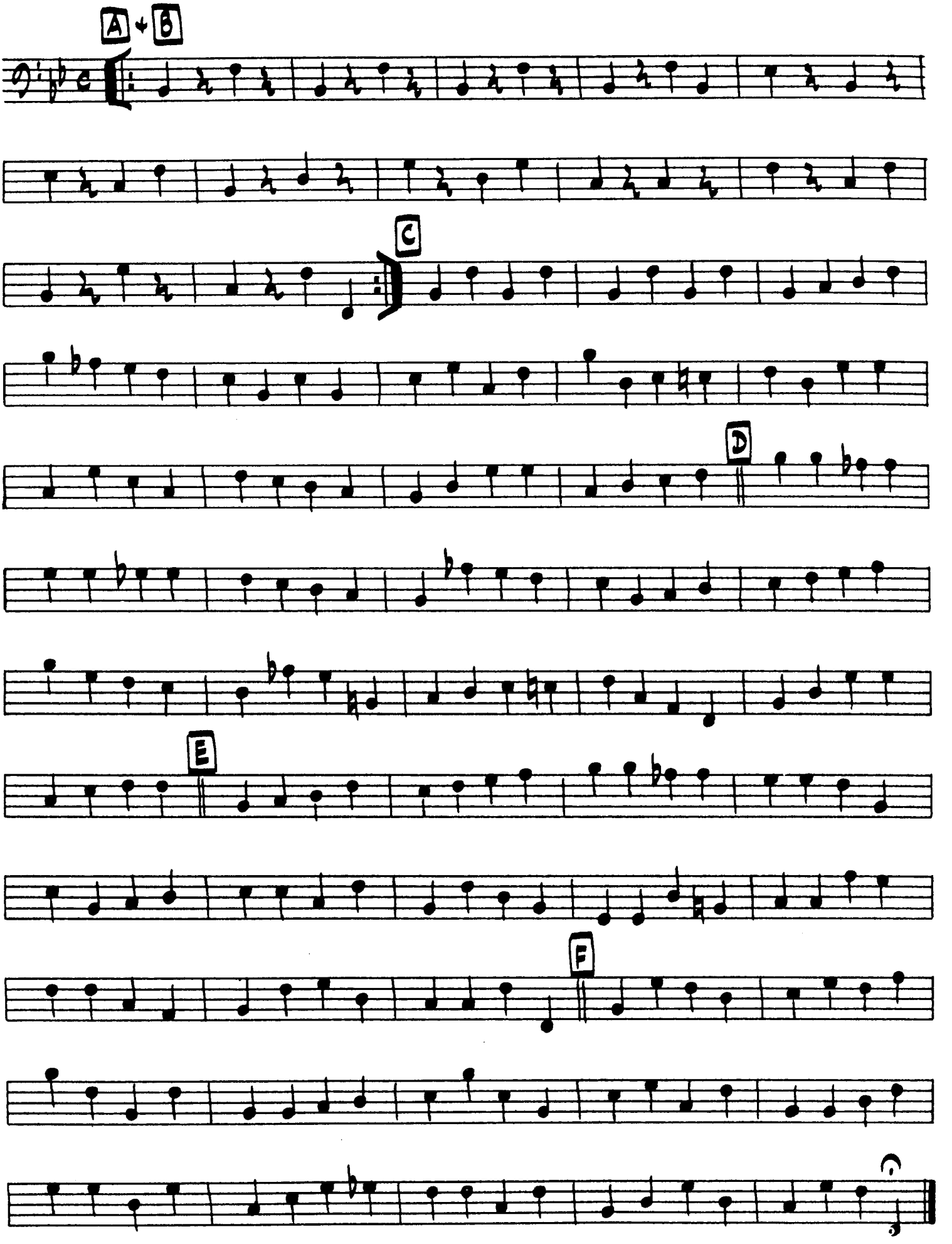
On the next four pages are a series of blues lines which you should play over many times.

The first page contains notes which are very basic but very necessary and excellent on an opening chorus.

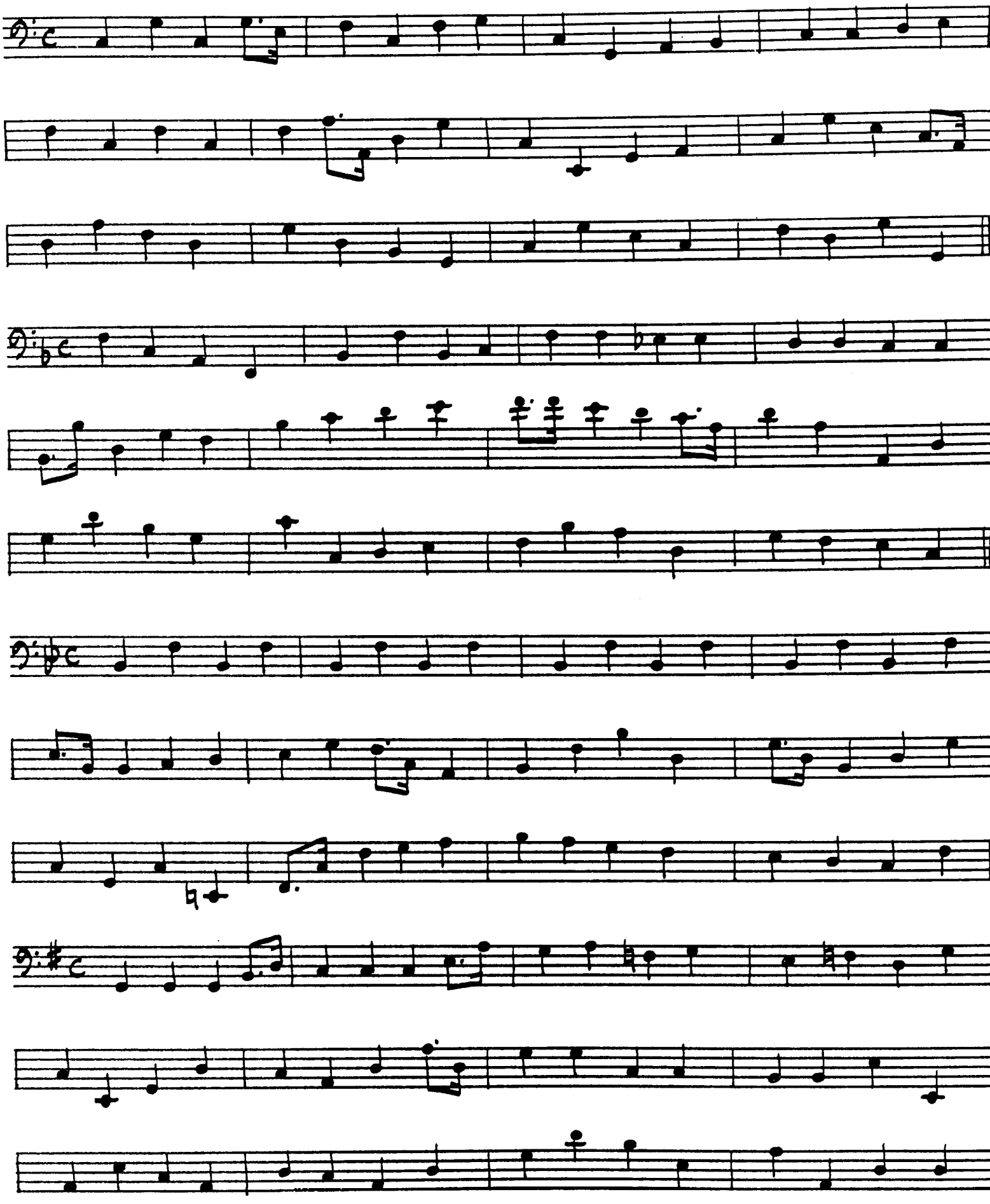
As we progress into blues 1, 2 and 3, you will notice they get more and more complicated but, in key spots, never fail to revert to the basic formula. After studying these, you should have an idea of how to play lines which will be complementary to any soloist.

The good bass player always picks his spots in which to play the various lines and should always listen to the soloist, trying to use notes which primarily let the soloist know where he is at all times. Blues lines such as those in Blues 2 and 3 should be used with discretion because the true function of the instrument should never be forgotten.

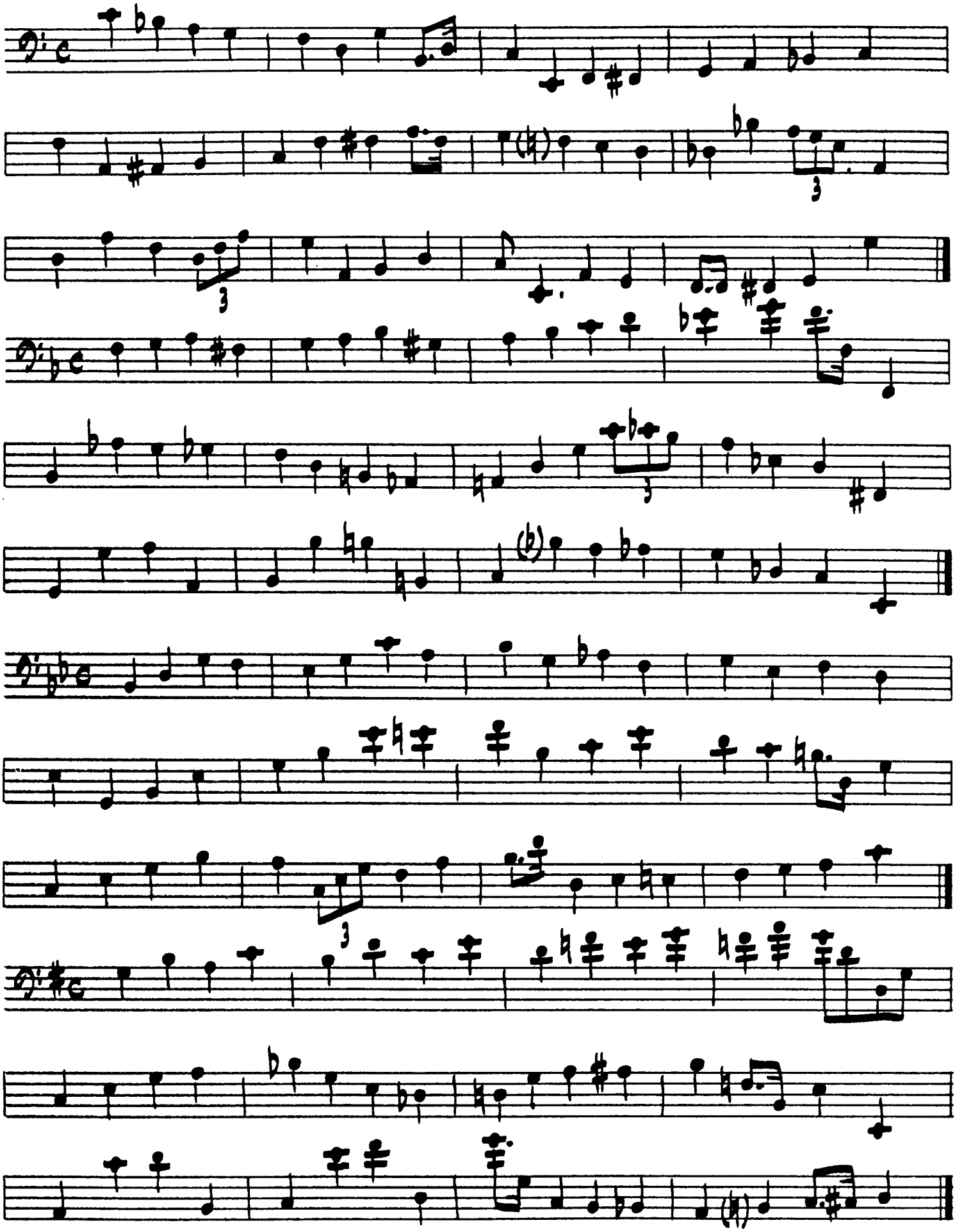
# BLUES



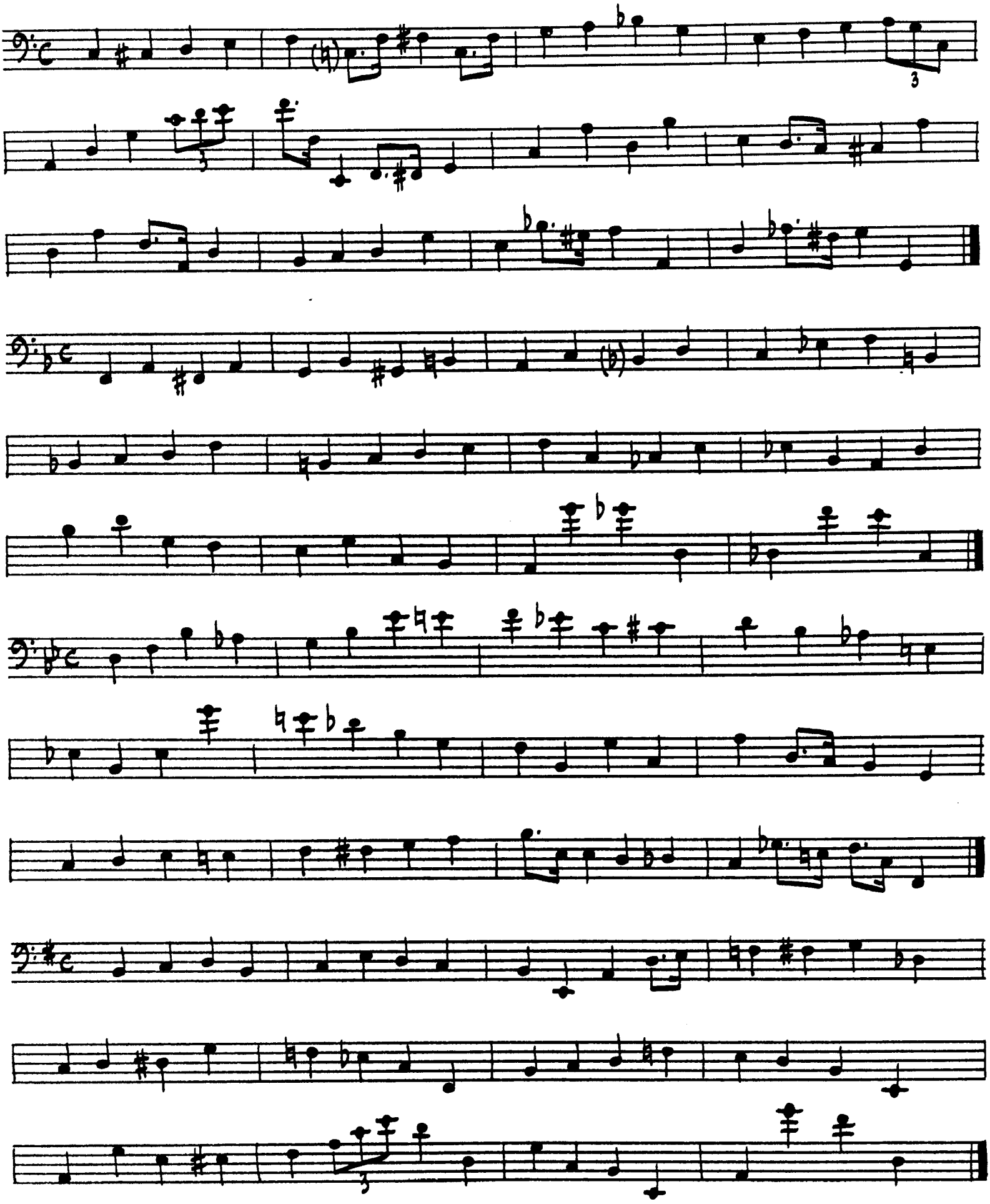
# BLUES (I)



# BLUES (II)



# BLUES (III)



# CHAPTER VIII

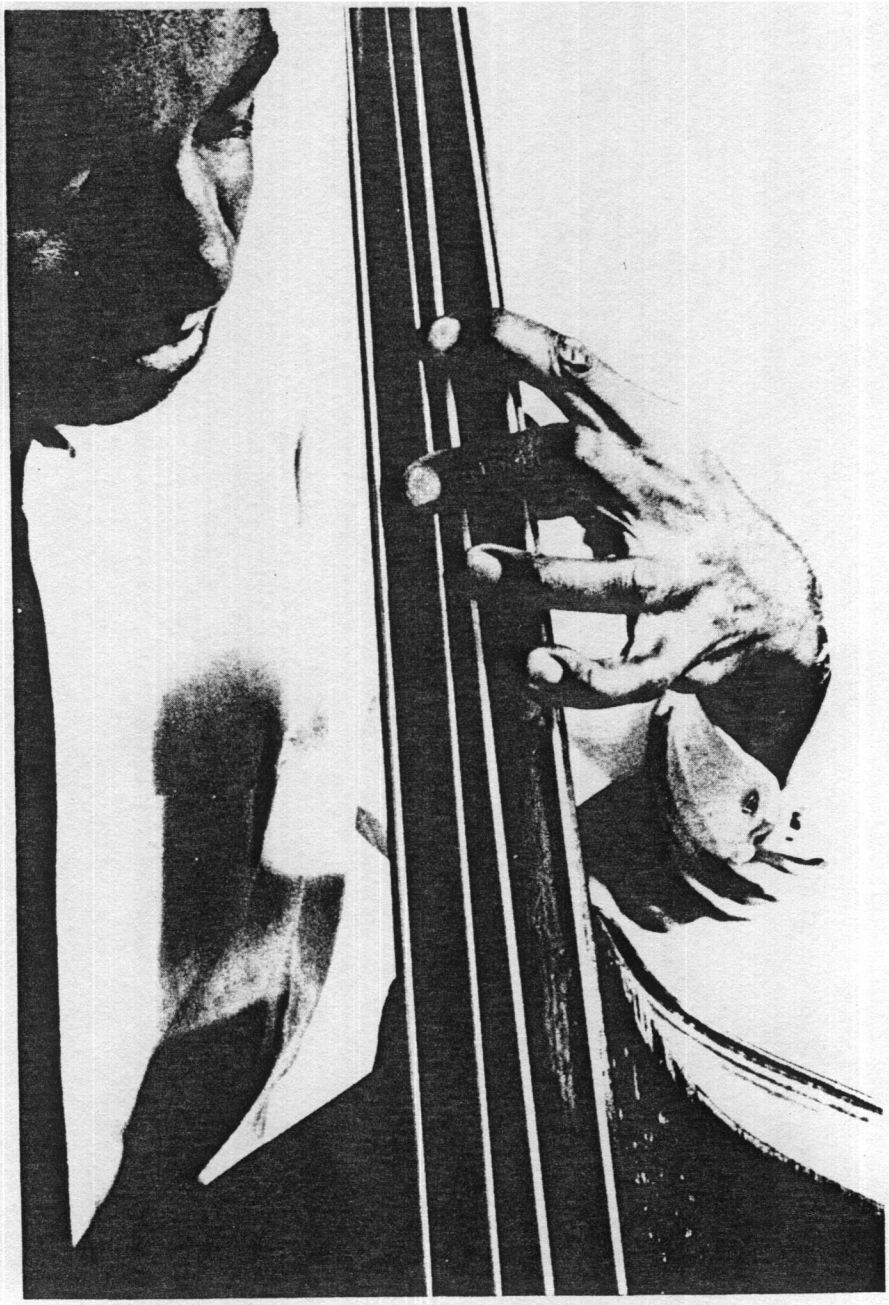
## EXTENSION SCALES & EXERCISES

After reviewing many of the parts I have had to play in the last ten years it's obvious that extensions on certain parts of the bass can be used to a great advantage.

I have included scales between Db and F# because I think this is the most practical place to play extensions. Also, with enough practice, you can play with good intonation and speed.

The use of extension scales requires a slight stretching of the hand but with a little practice you will find you can play scales without moving the hand. This may then be injected into things you have to play.

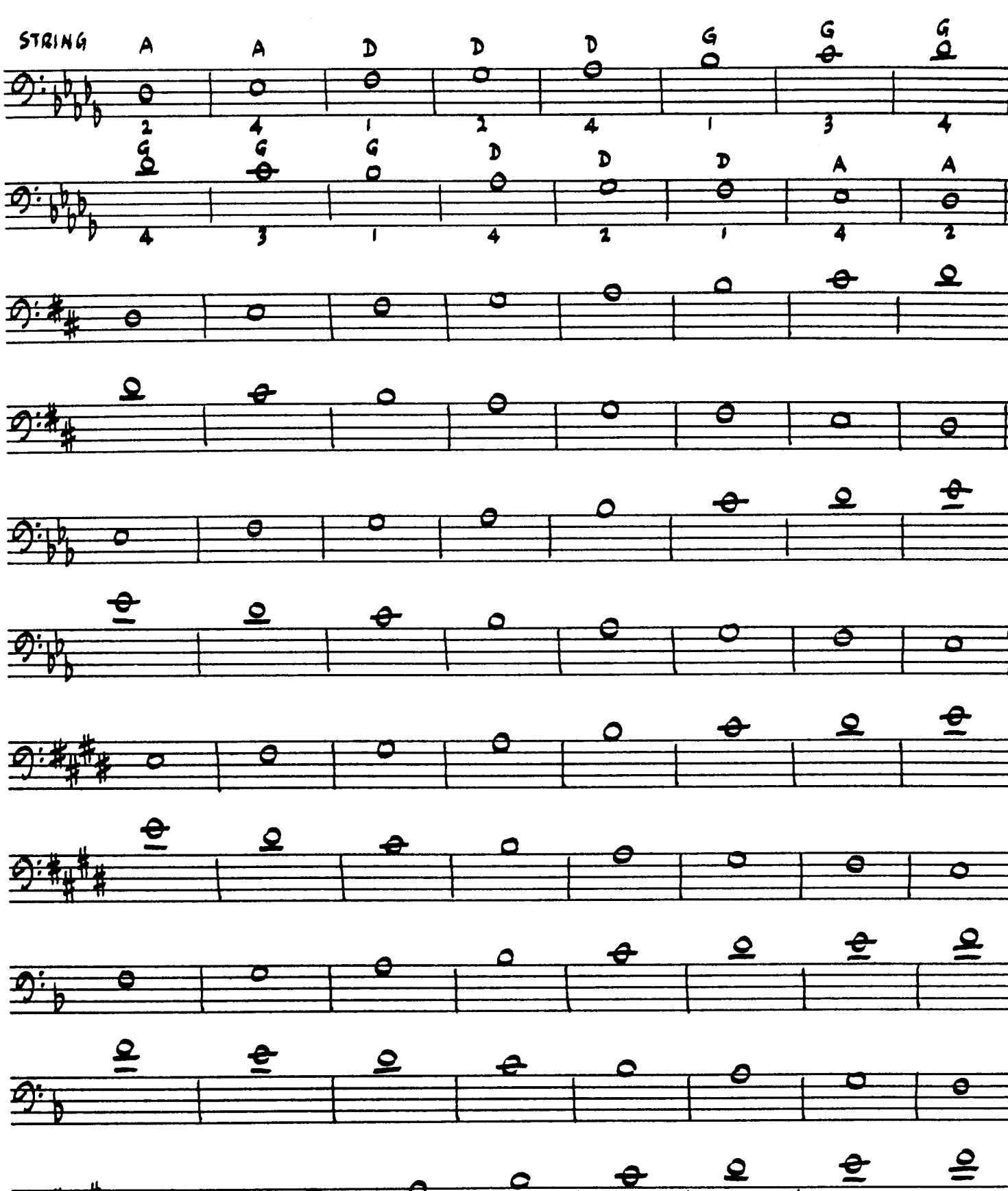
If you check back to Chapter V, you will see that I use this across the strings in the diminished runs. Intonation is the big factor here.

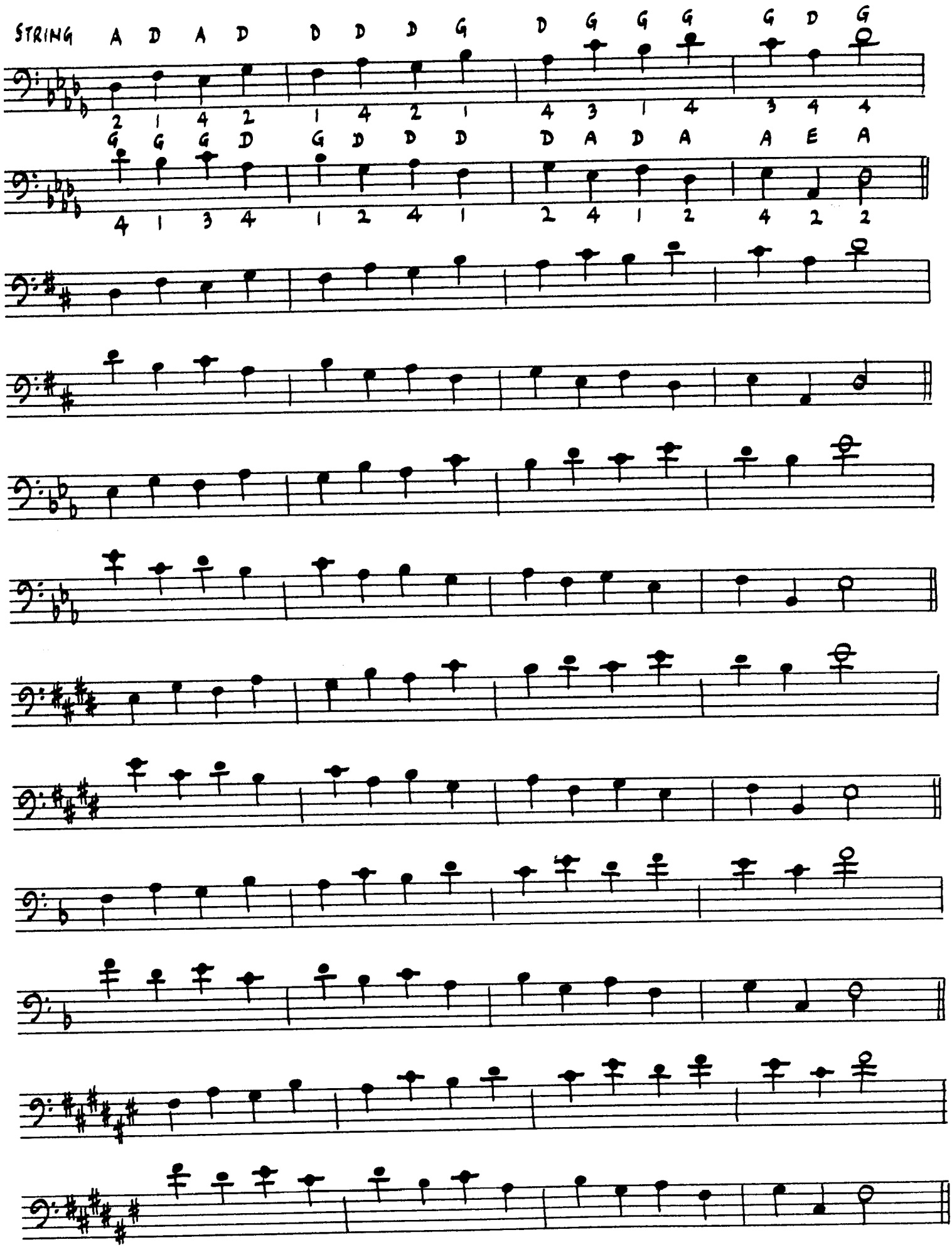


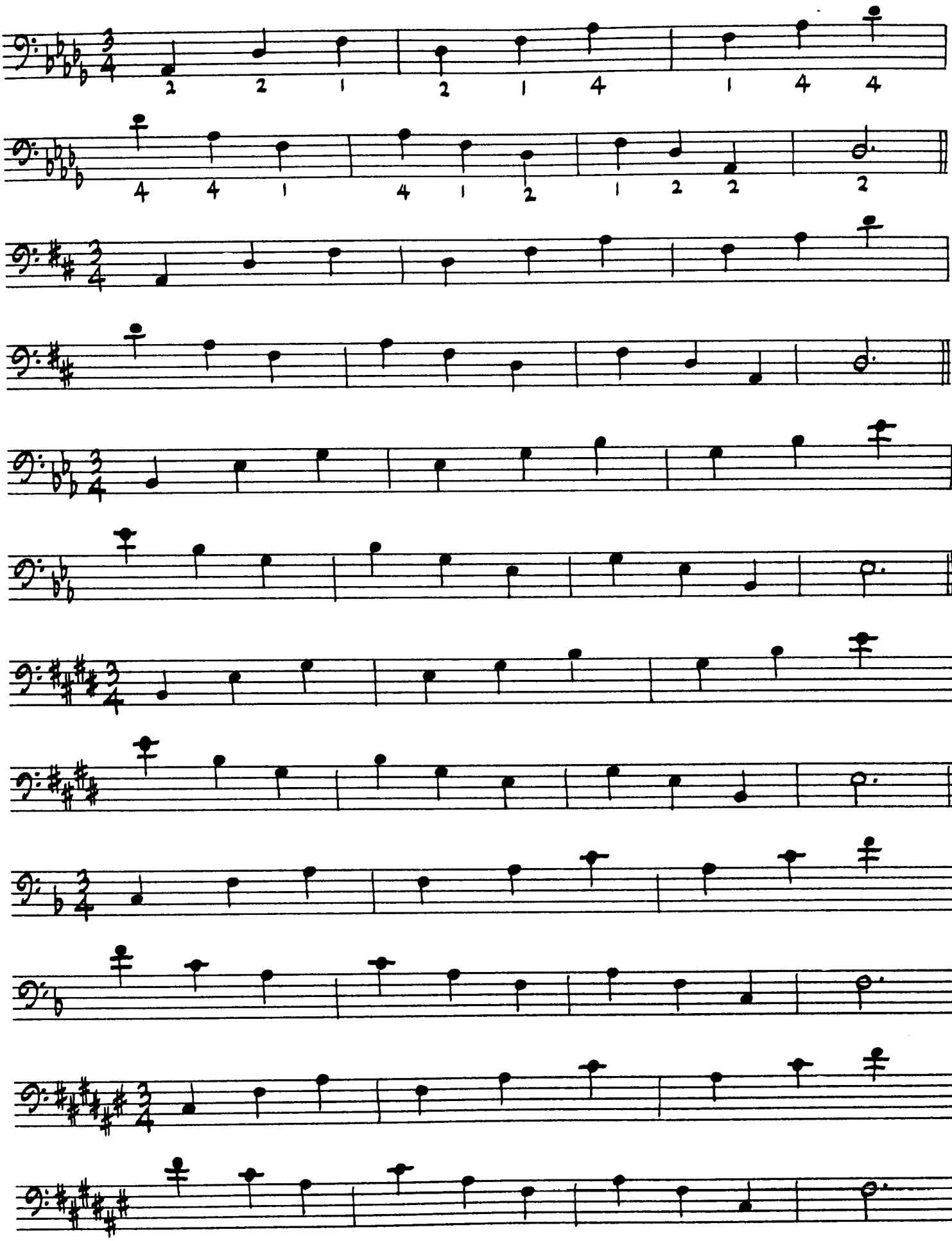
*Position of the left hand for extension scales and exercises.*

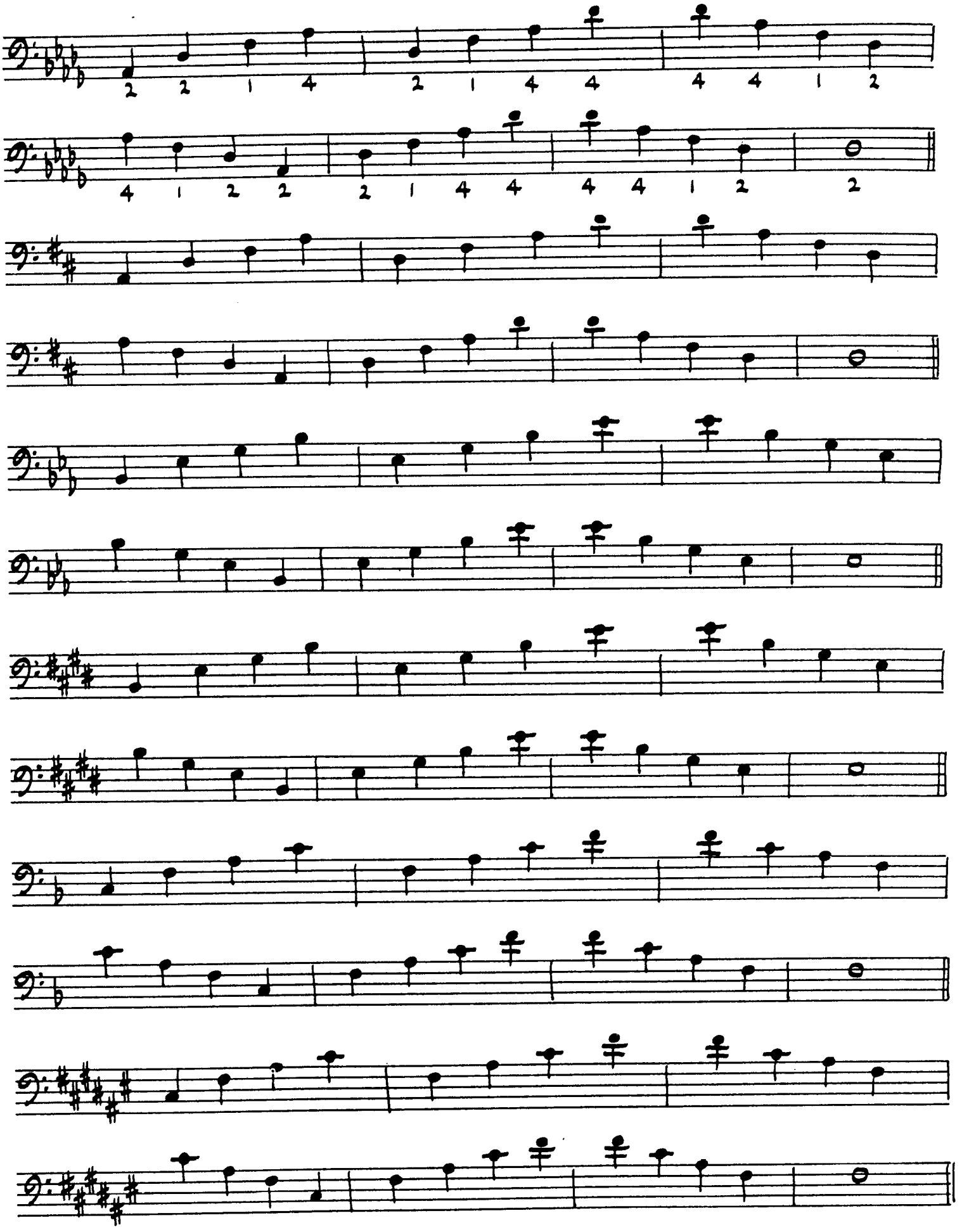
*Position of the left hand for extension scales and exercises (side view).*

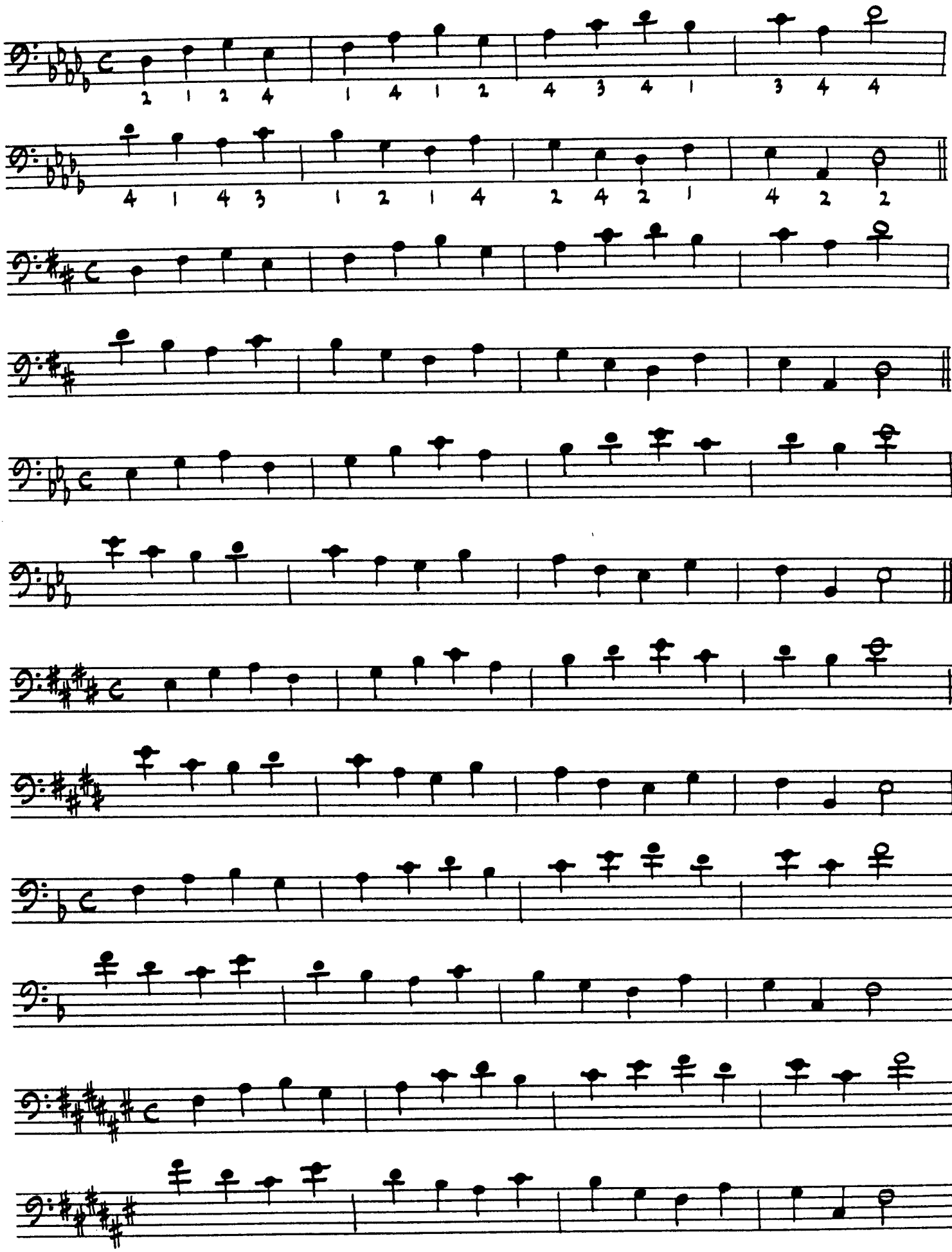
# EXTENSION EXERCISES

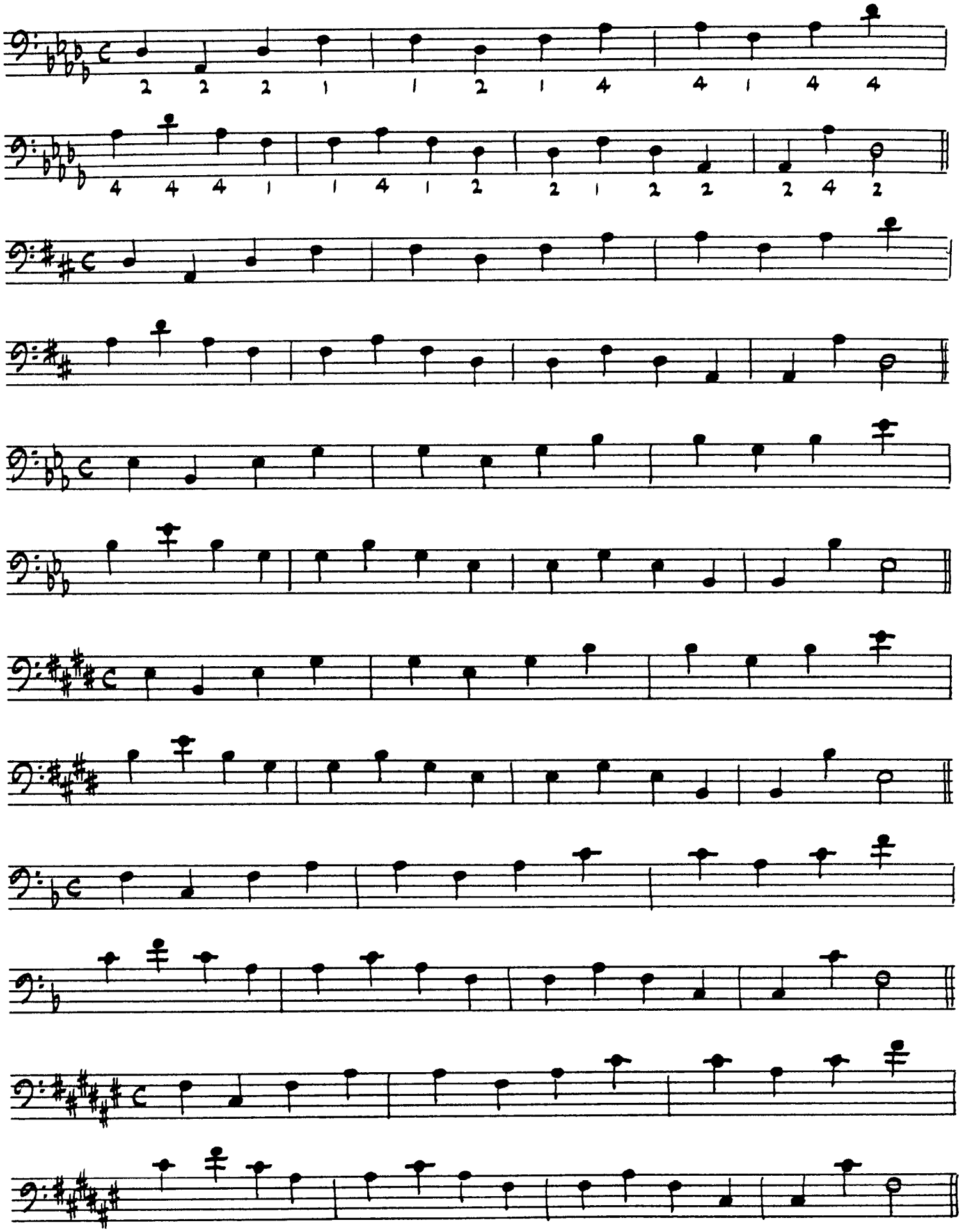


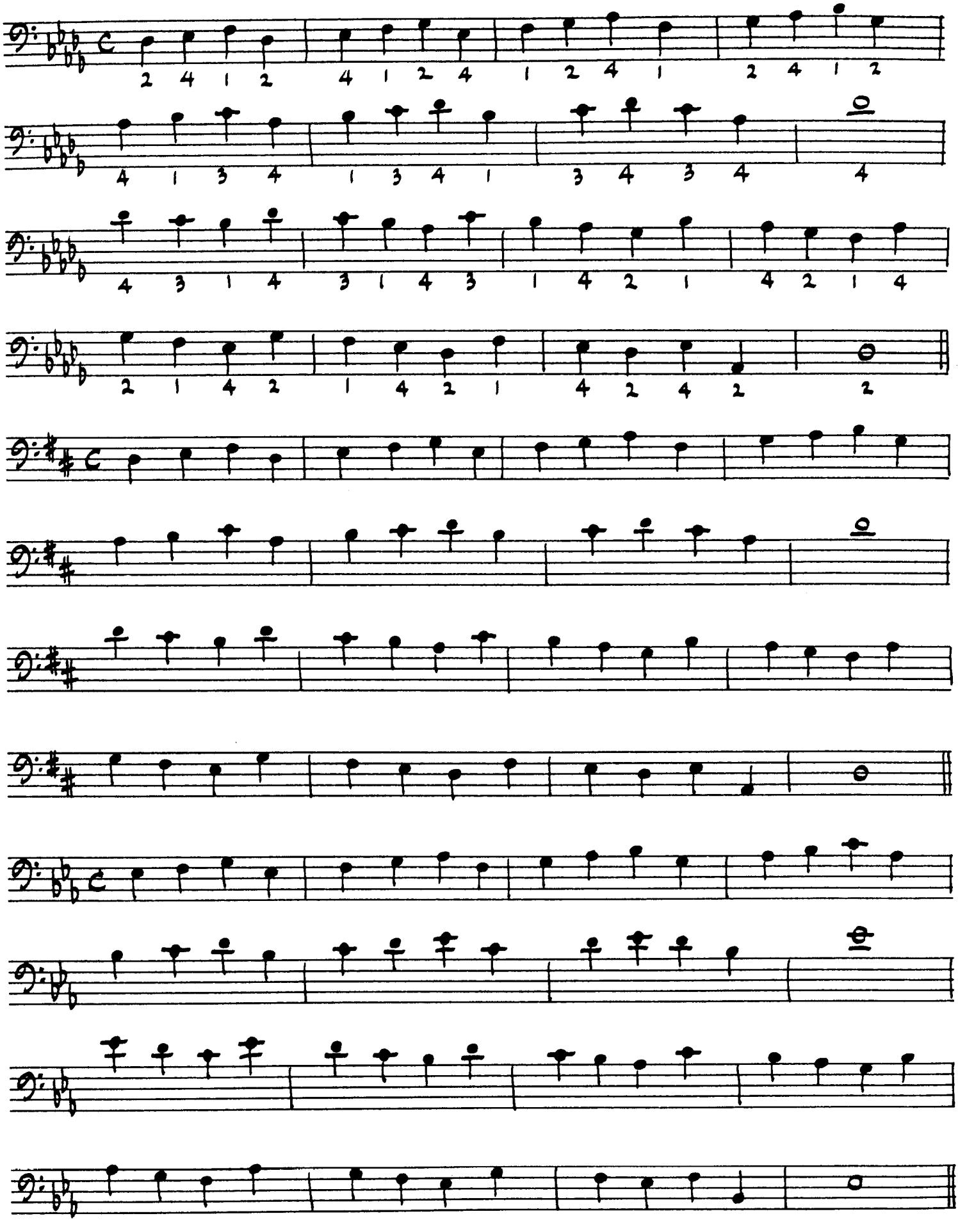

STRING A D A D D D D G D G G G G D G
2 1 4 2 1 4 2 1 4 3 1 4 3 4 4
G G G D G D D D D A D A A E A
4 1 3 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 2 2

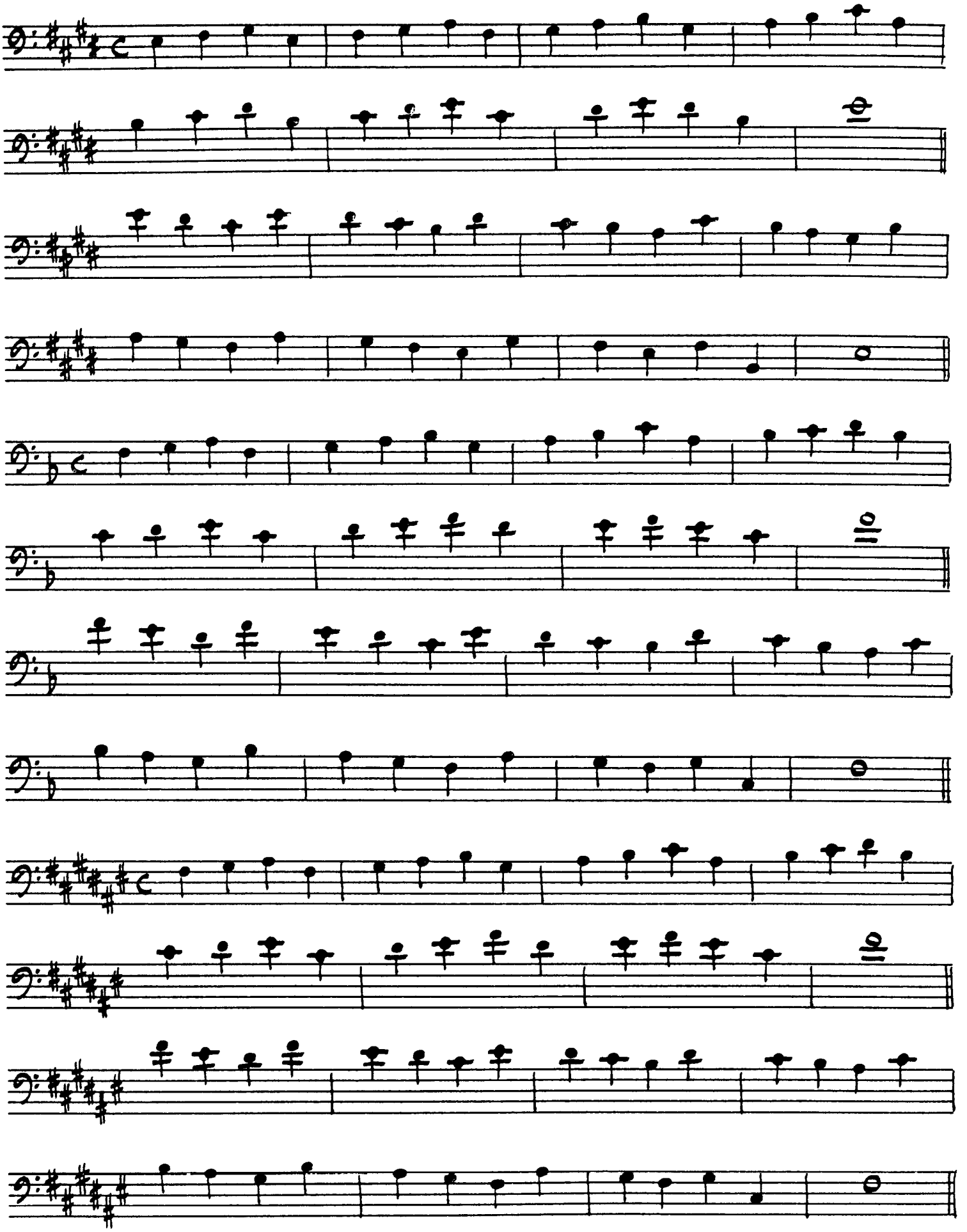

2 2 1 2 1 4 1 4 4
4 4 1 4 1 2 1 2 2 2

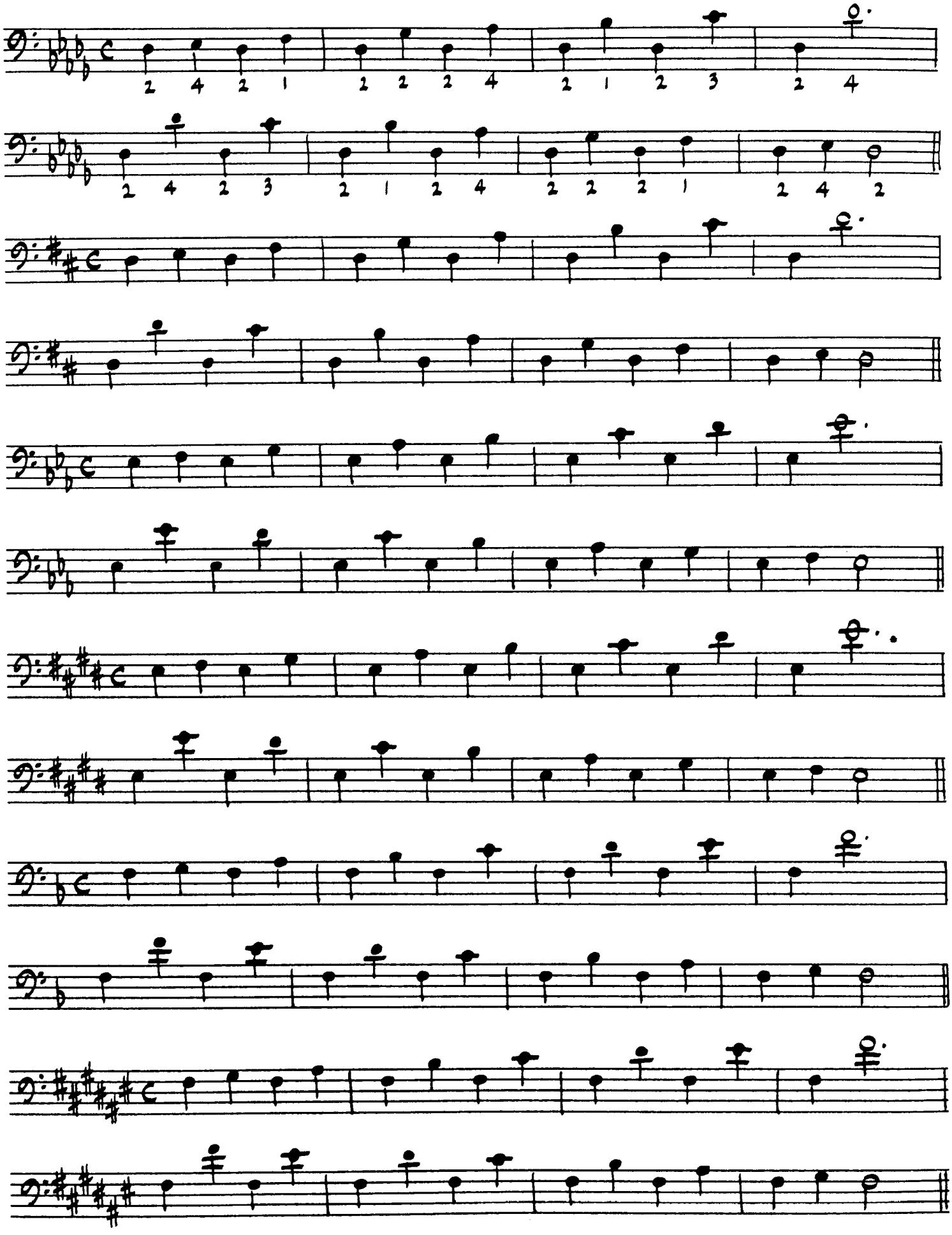

2 2 1 4 2 1 4 4 4 4 1 2
4 1 2 2 2 1 4 4 4 4 1 2 2

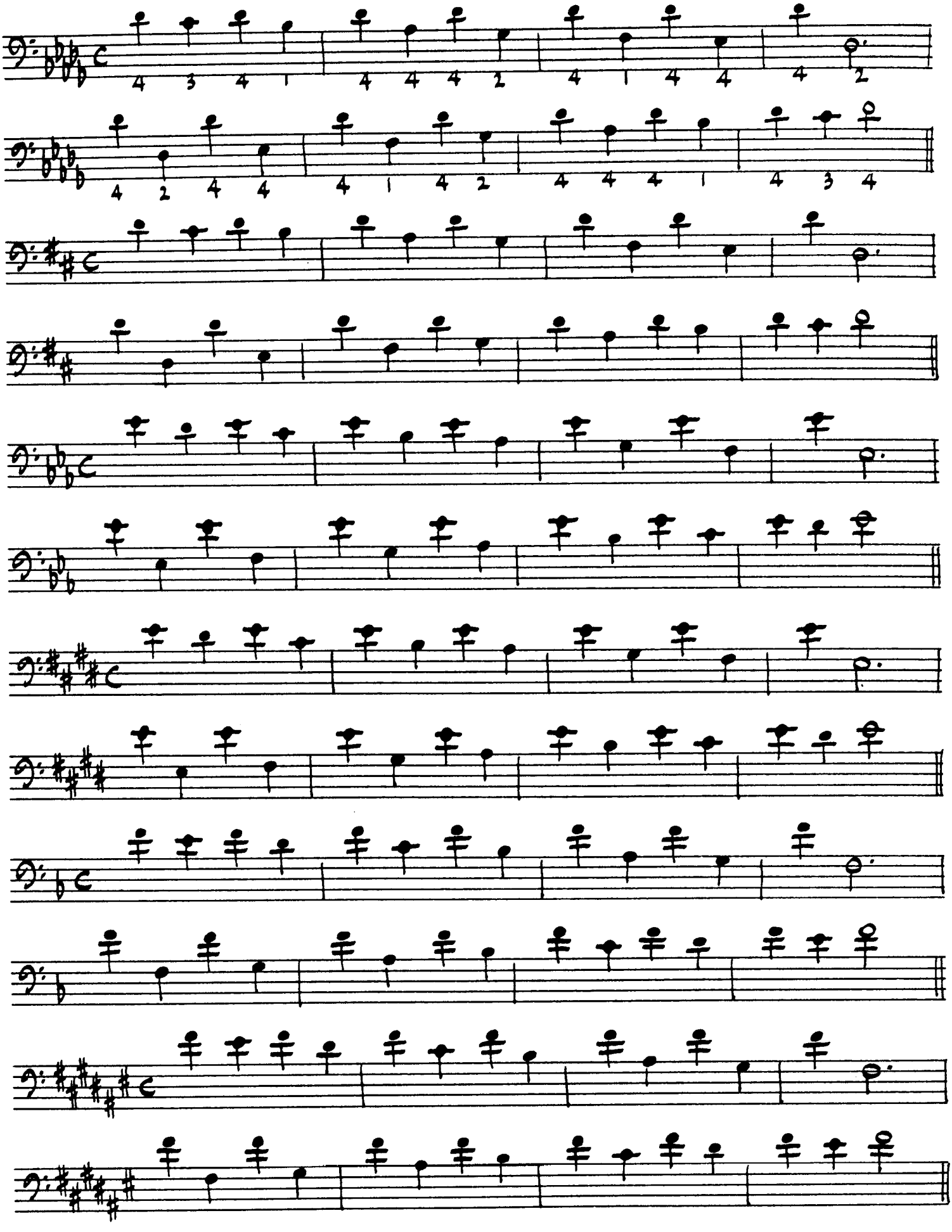

2 1 2 4 1 4 1 2 4 3 4 1 3 4 4
4 1 4 3 1 2 1 4 2 4 2 1 4 2 2


2 2 2 1 1 2 1 4 4 1 4 4
4 4 4 1 1 4 1 2 2 1 2 2 2 4 2


2 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 2
4 1 3 4 1 3 4 1 3 4 3 4 4
4 3 1 4 3 1 4 3 1 4 2 1 4 2 1 4
2 1 4 2 1 4 2 1 4 2 4 2 2




2 4 2 1
2 2 2 4
2 1 2 3
2 4
2 4 2 3
2 1 2 4
2 2 2 1
2 4 2



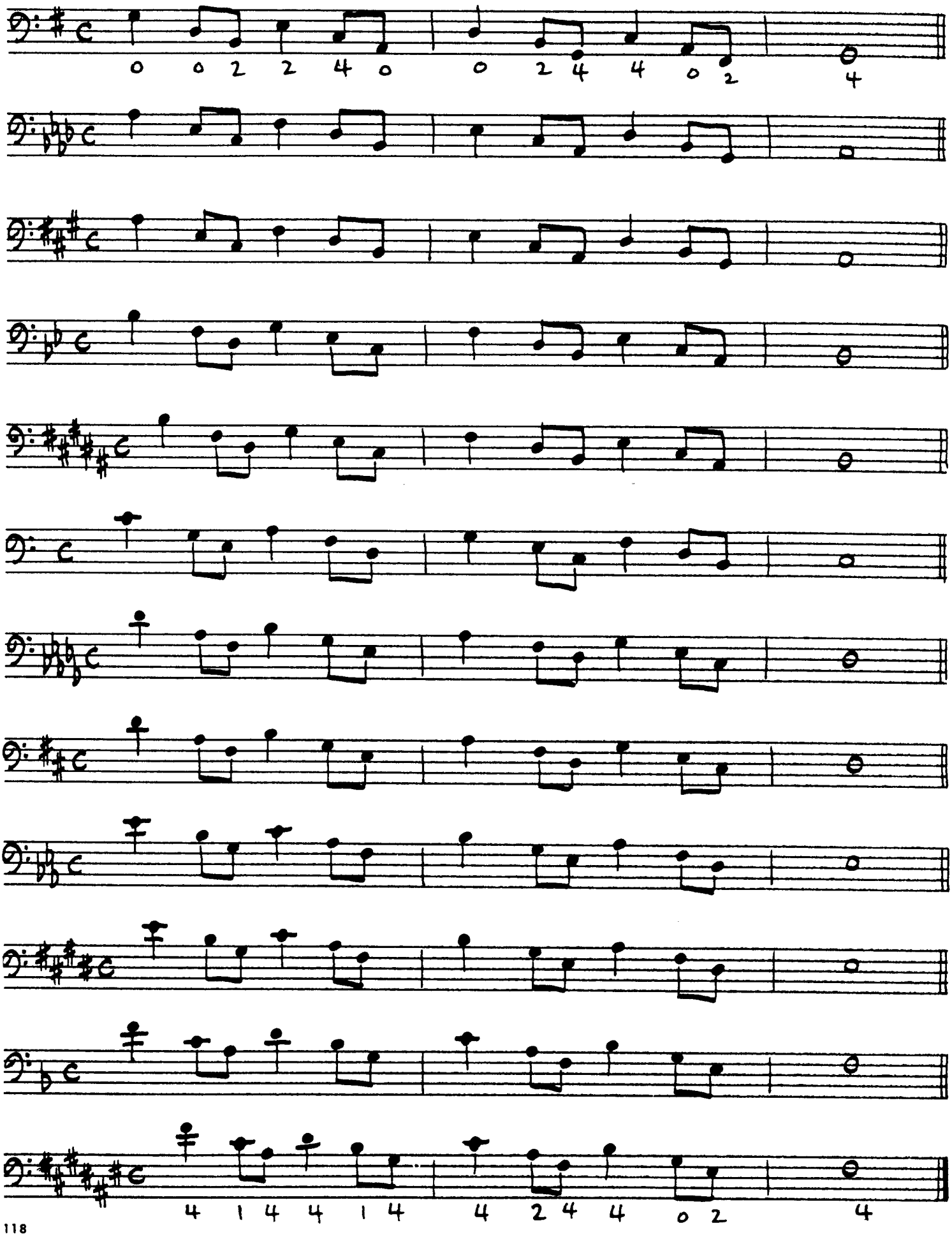
# CHAPTER IX

## SOLO EXERCISES & ARPEGGIOS

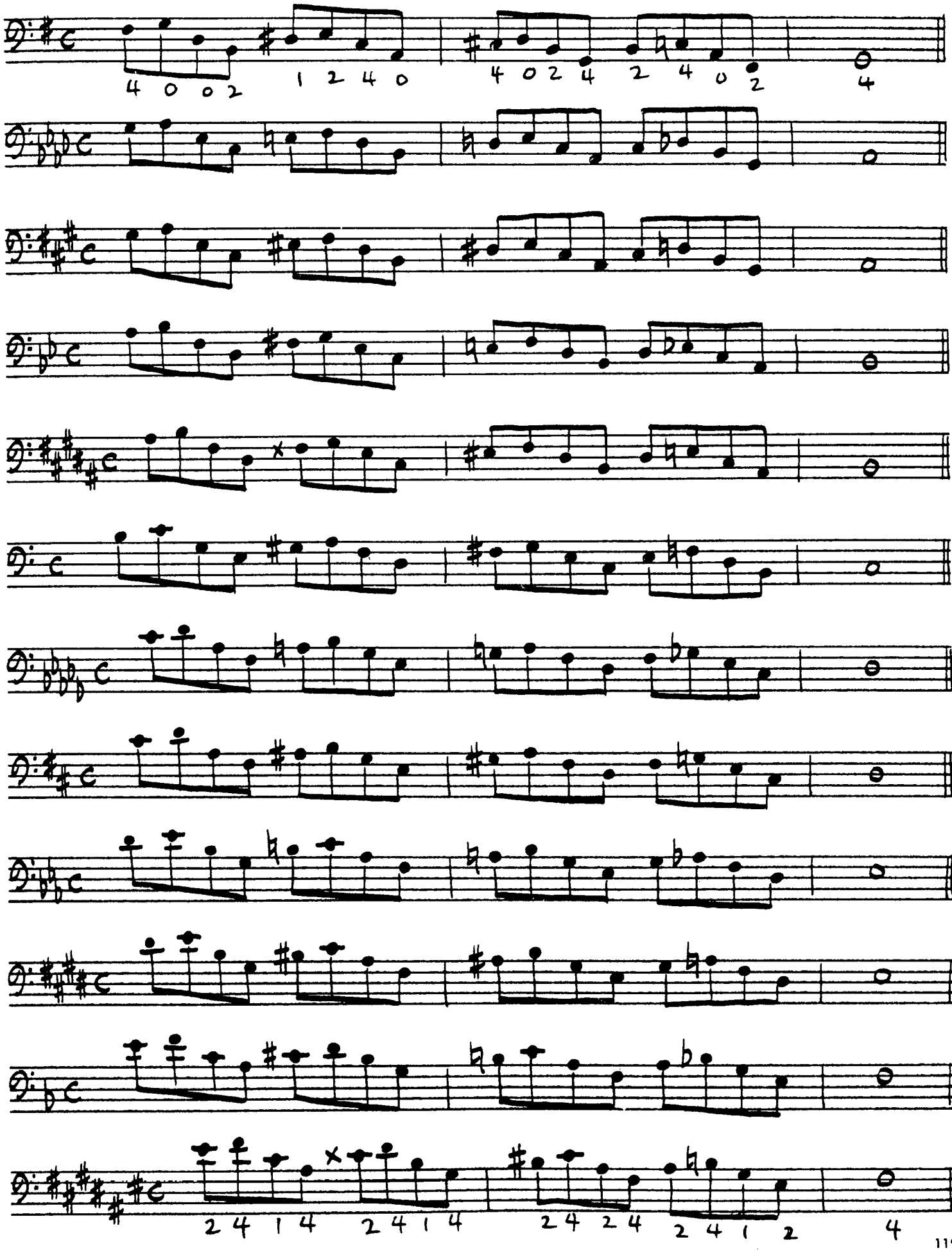
On succeeding pages are a series of what I call brief musical excerpts.

Some you will be familiar with but the reason I am including them is that most of us can only play certain things in certain keys. This should inspire you to learn how to play your own things in all of the keys.

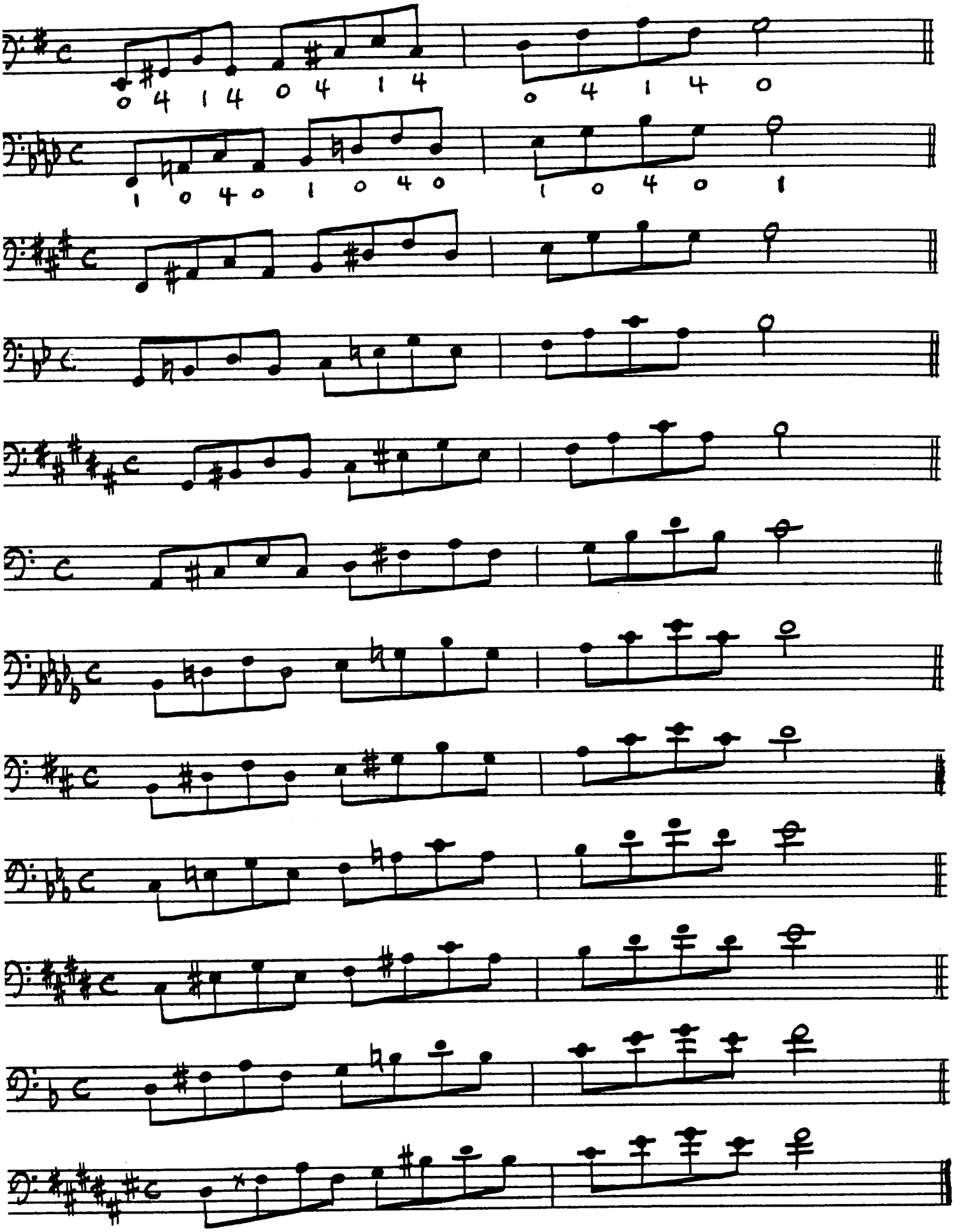
# EXERCISE (Solo)



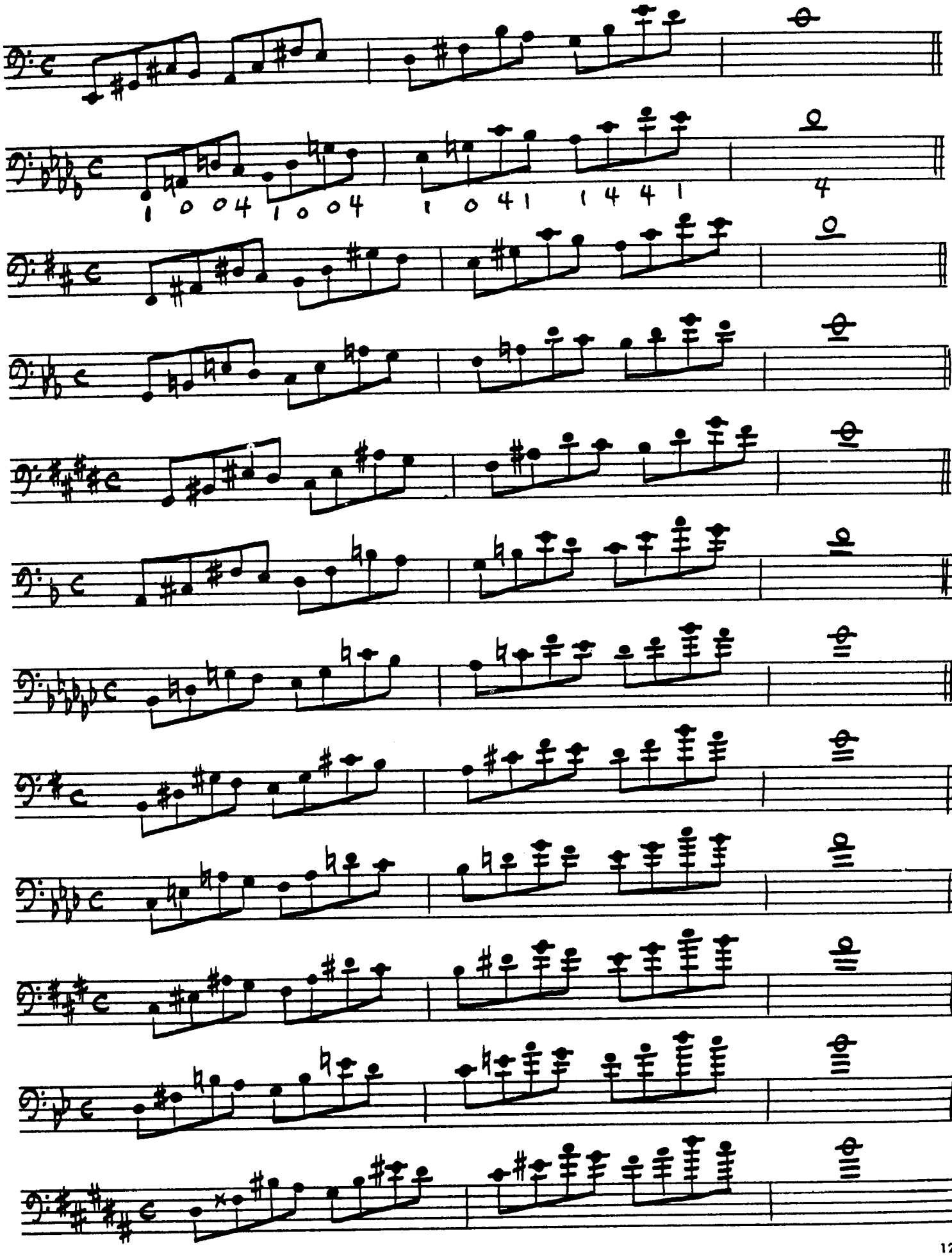
# EXERCISE (Solo)



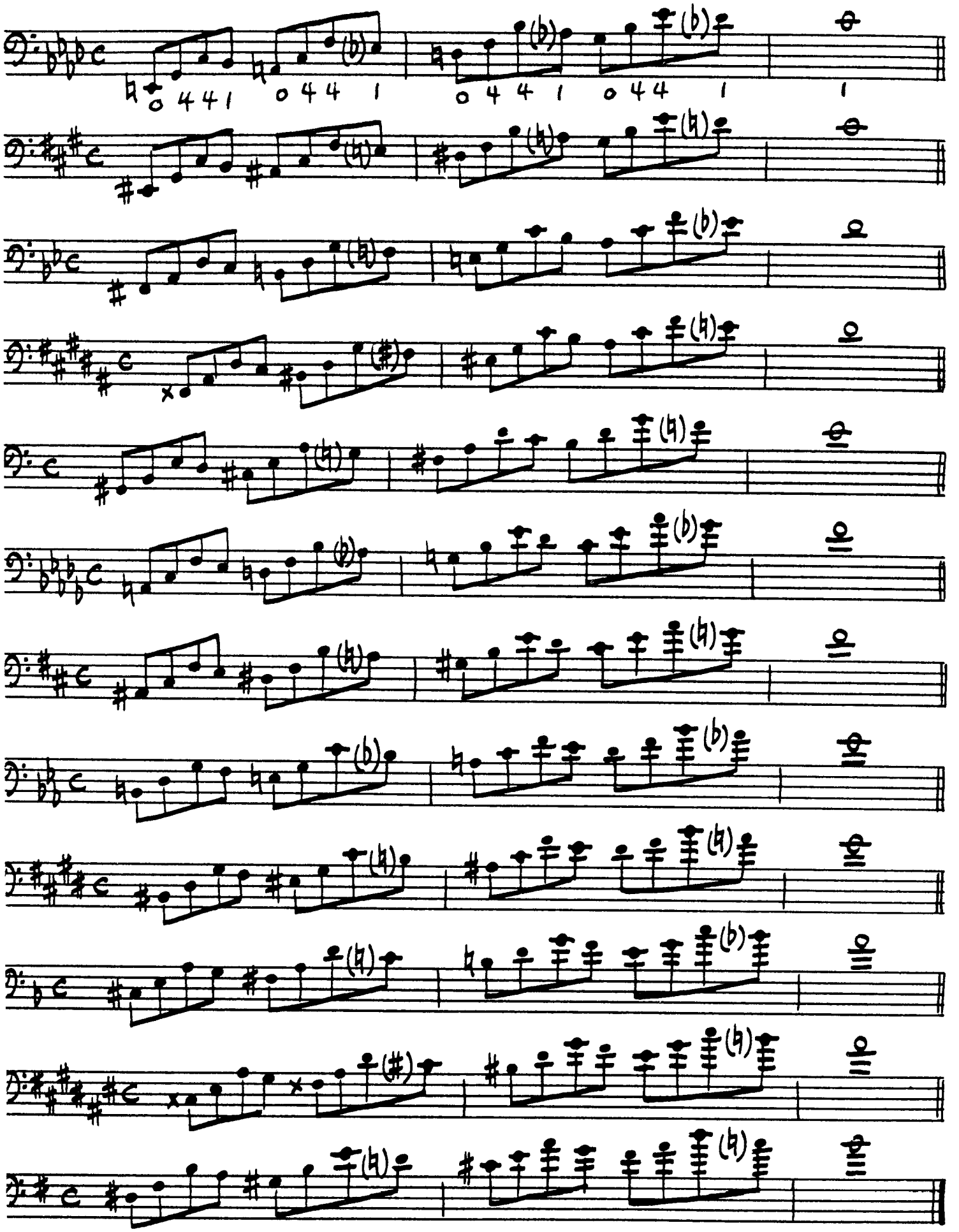
# EXERCISE IN FOURTHS



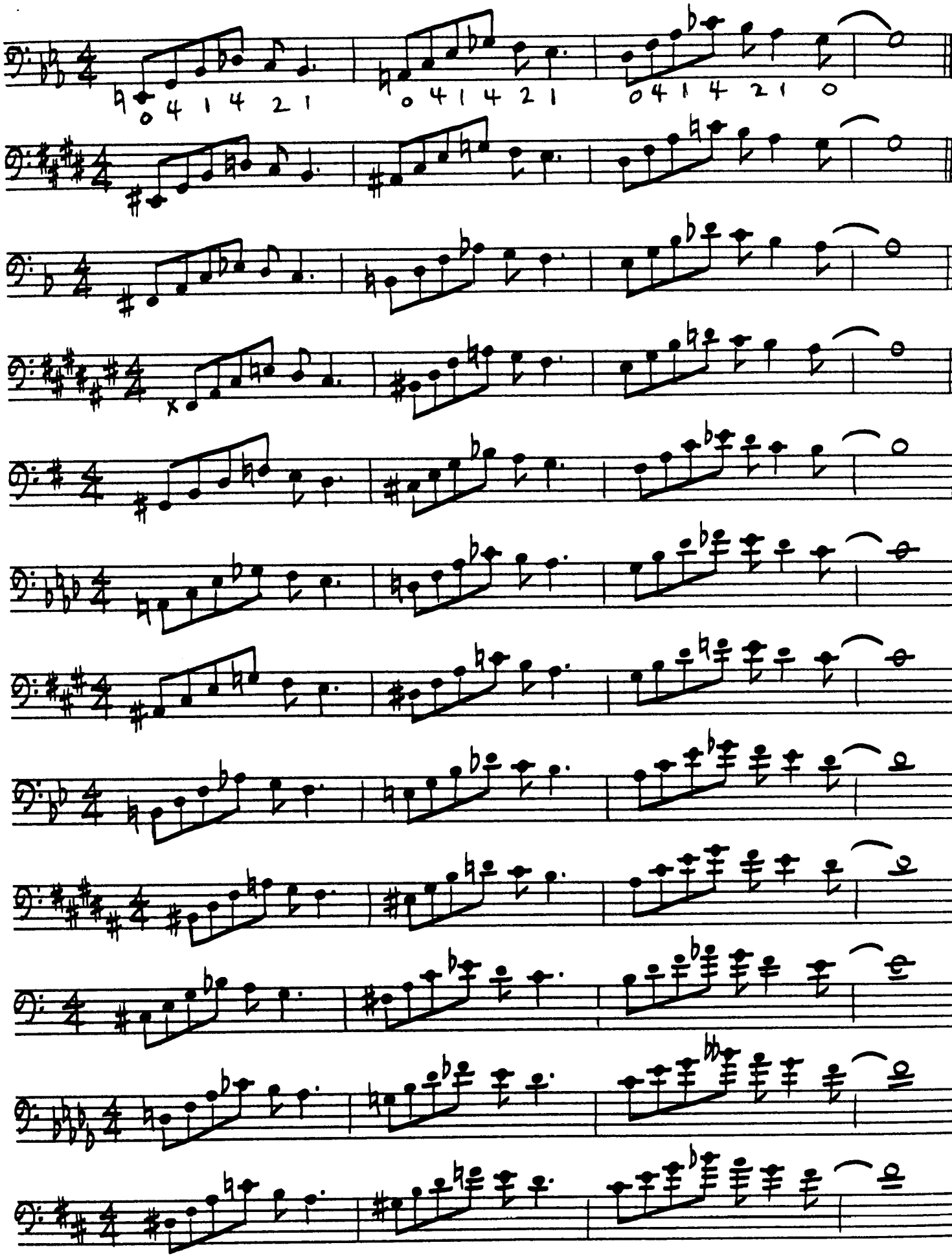
# EXERCISE IN FOURTHS



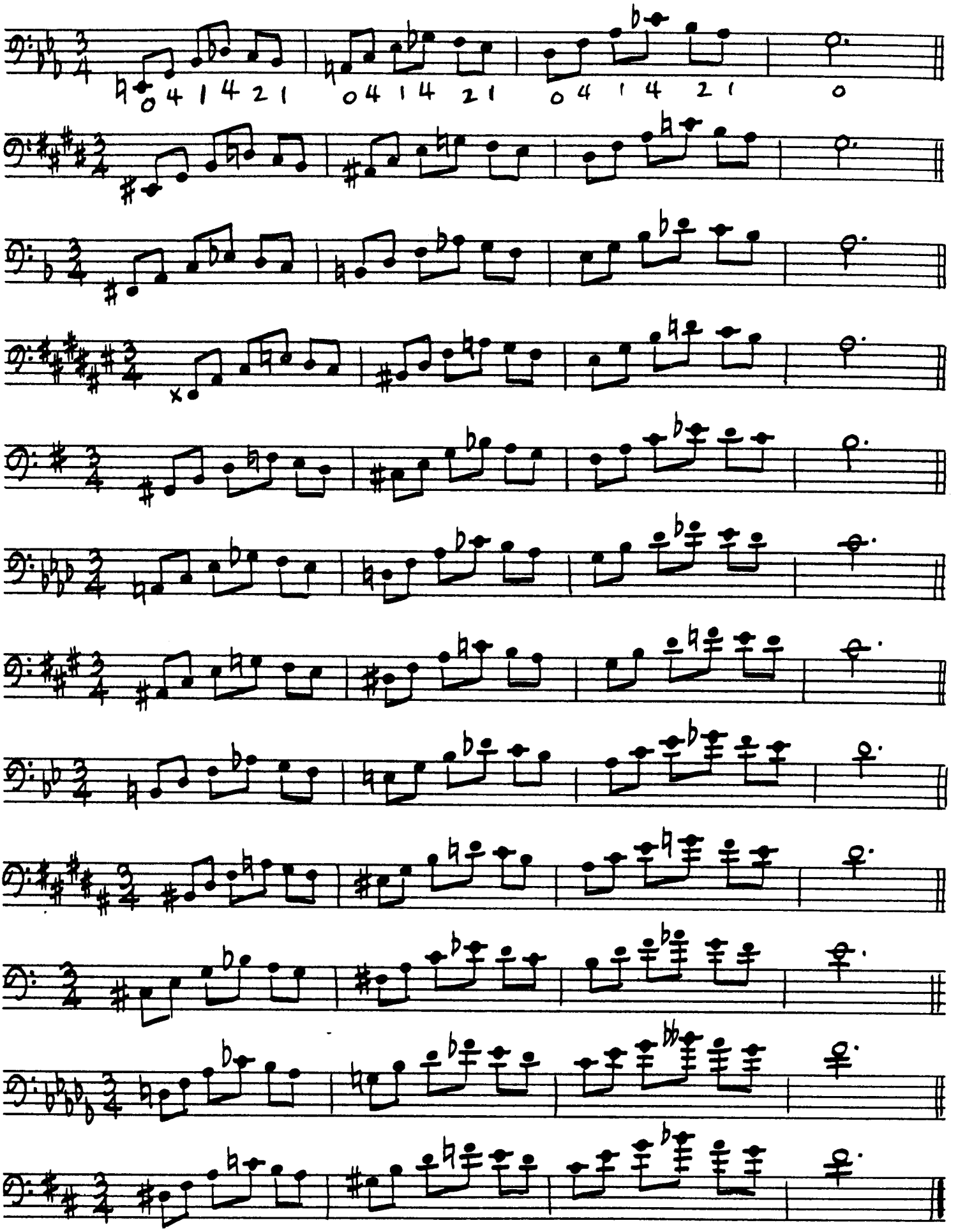
# EXERCISE IN FOURTHS



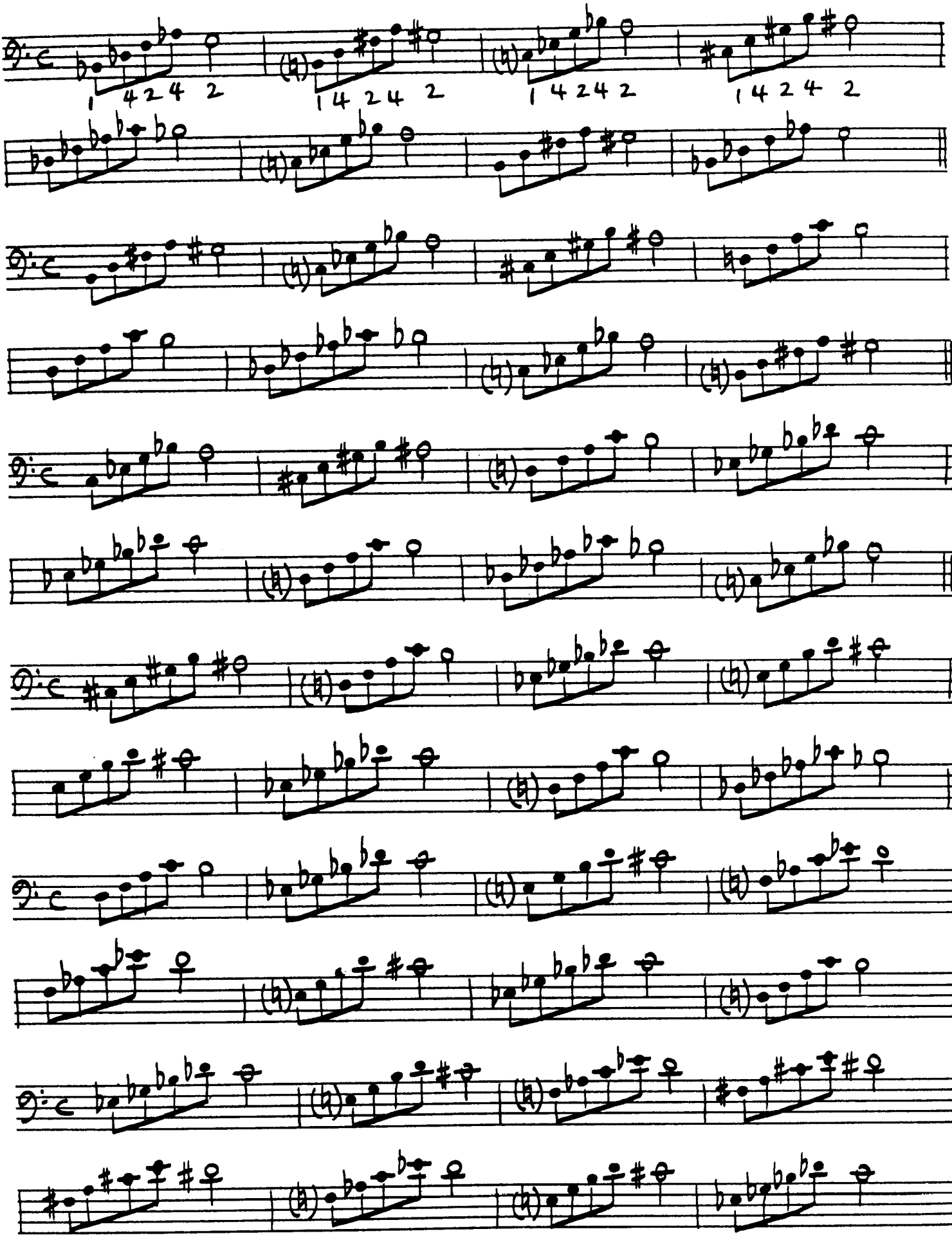
# EXERCISE IN FOURTHS (Solo)

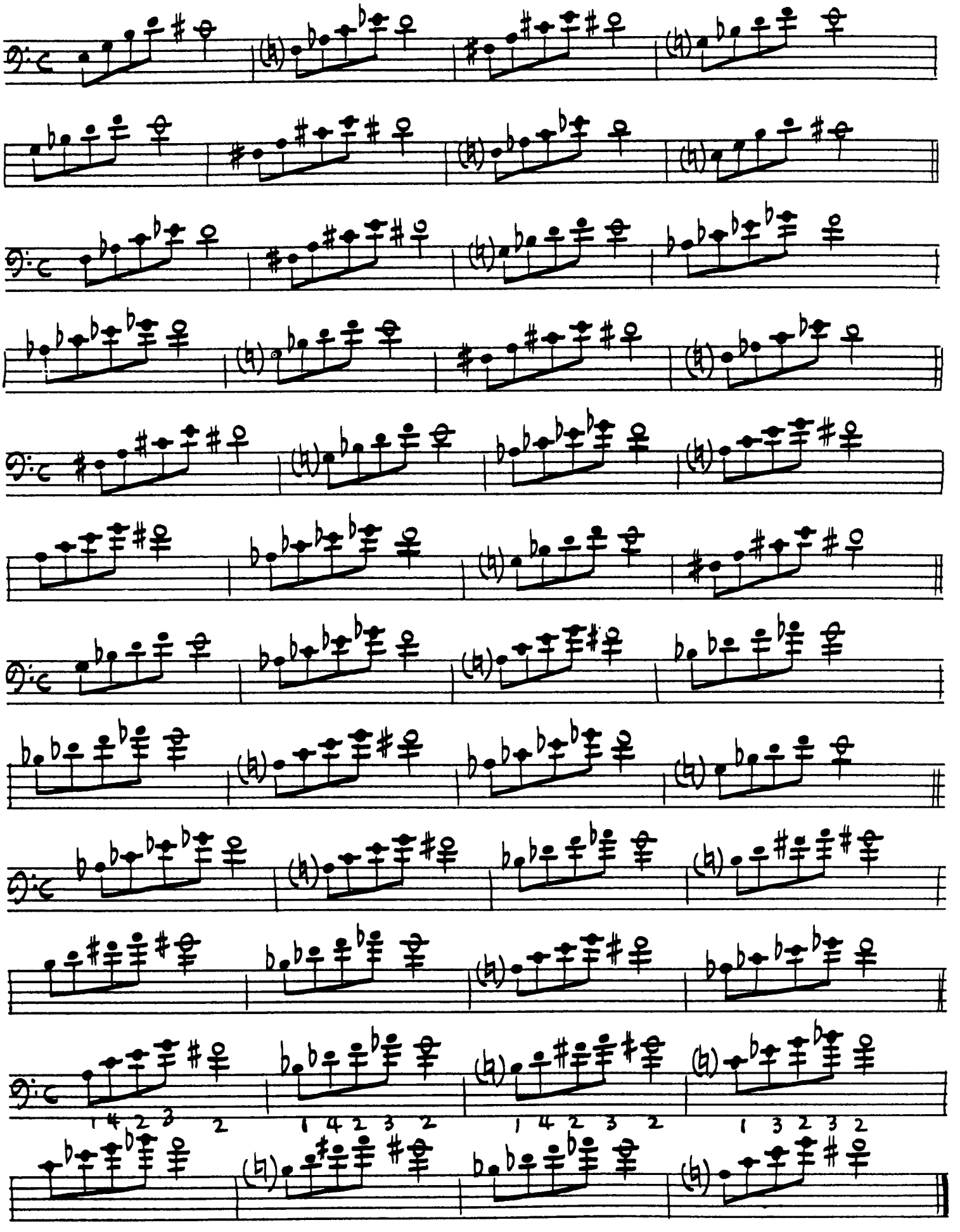


# EXERCISE IN FOURTHS (Solo)

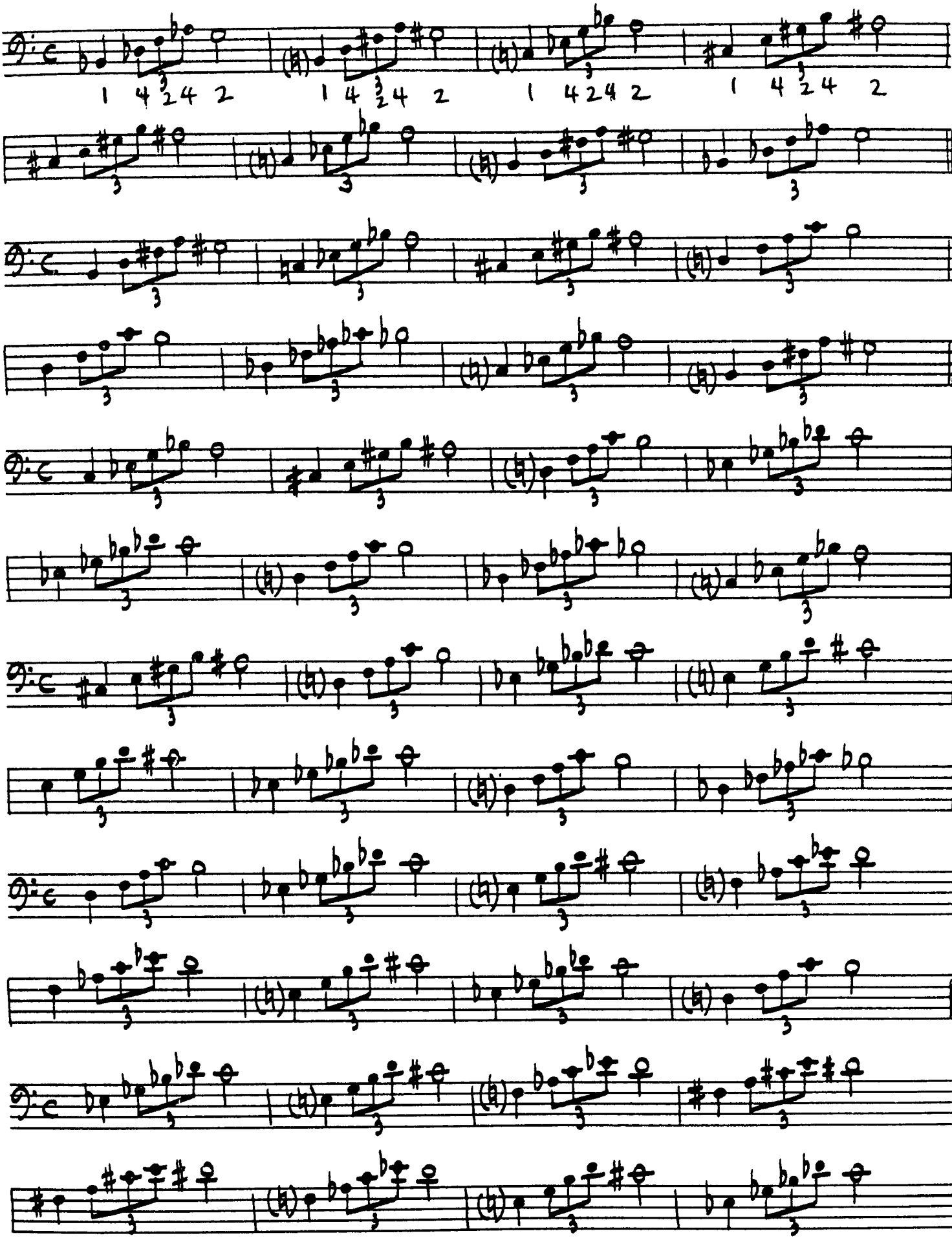


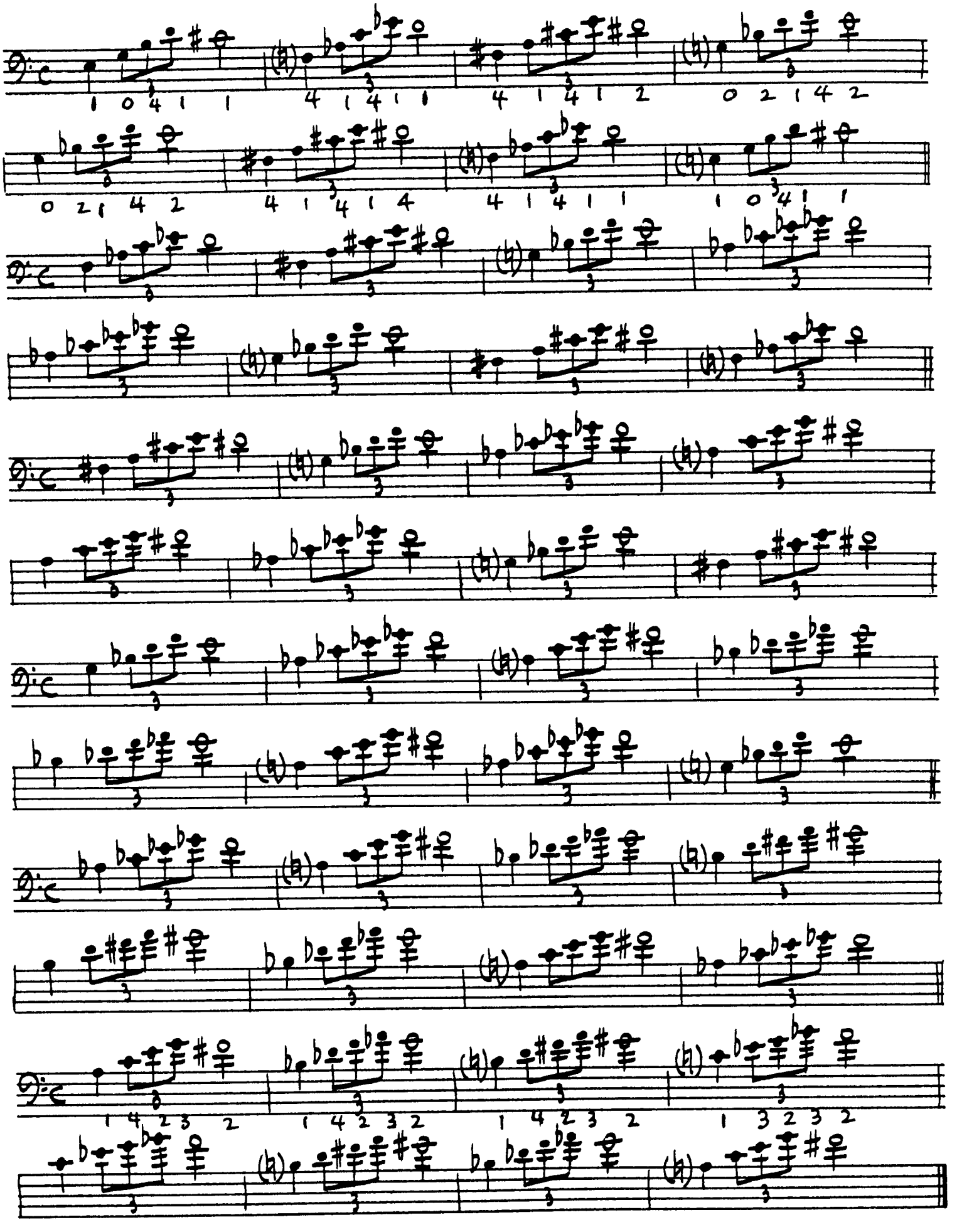
# EXERCISE (Solo)



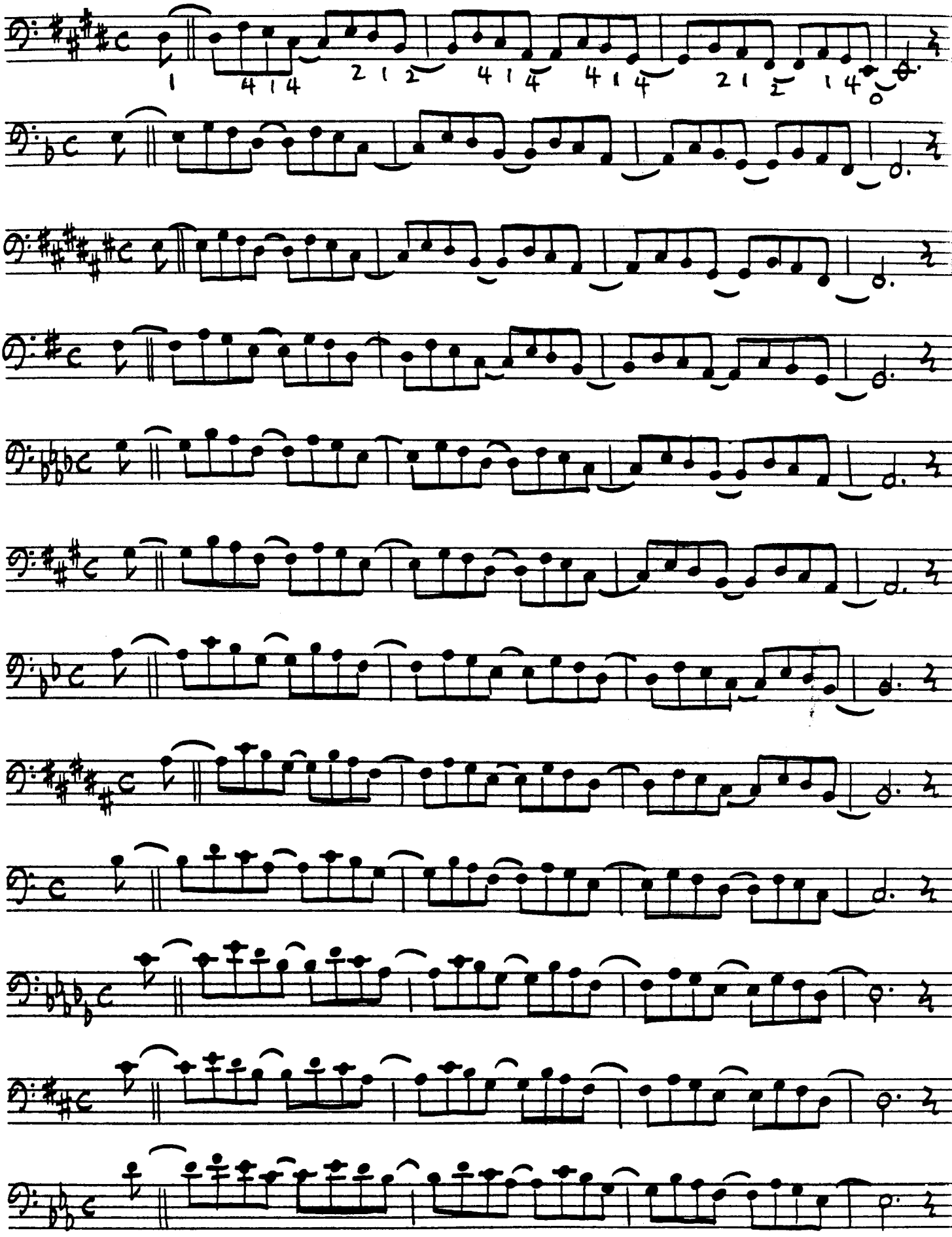

1 4 2 3 2
1 4 2 3 2
1 4 2 3 2
1 3 2 3 2

# EXERCISE (Solo)

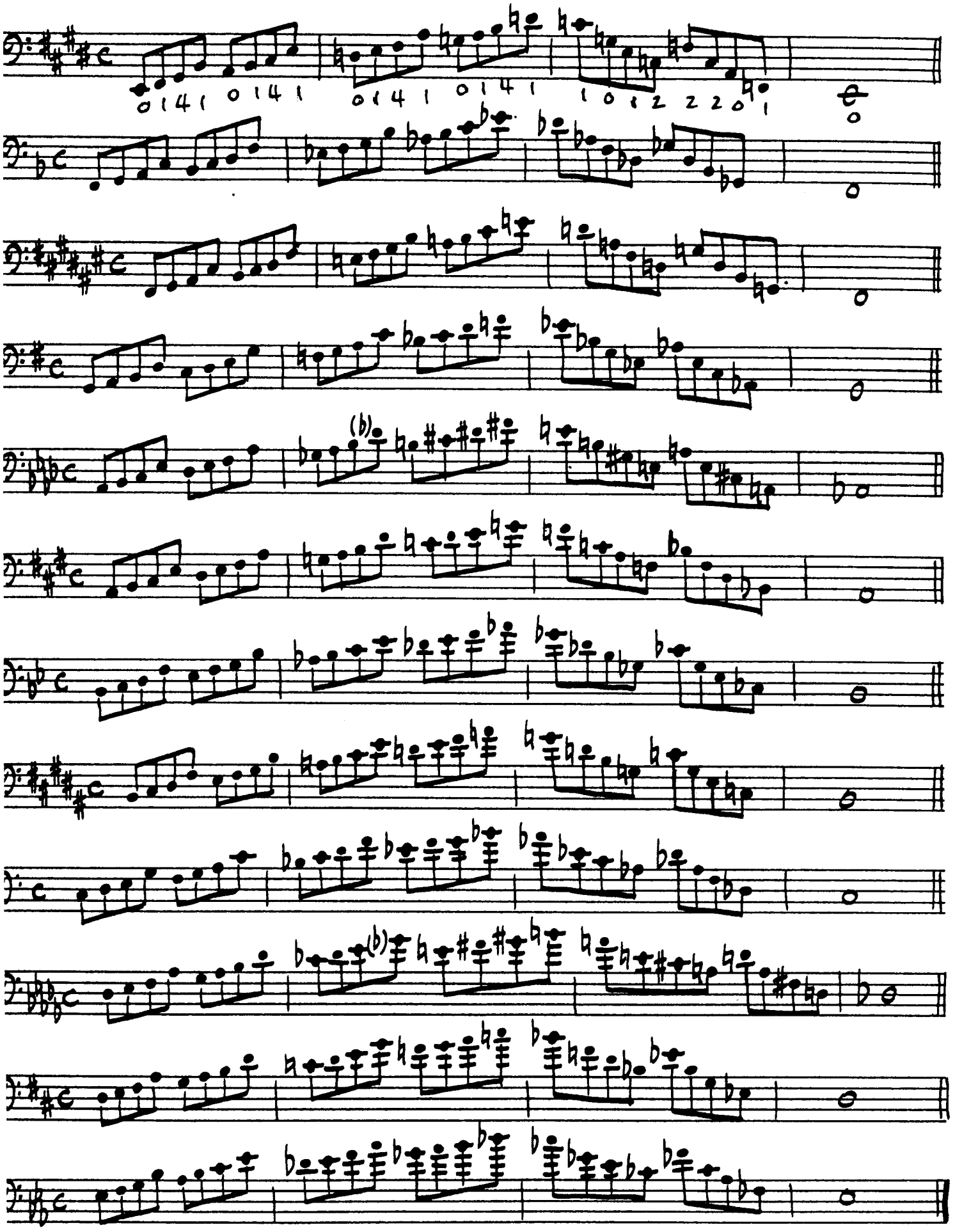




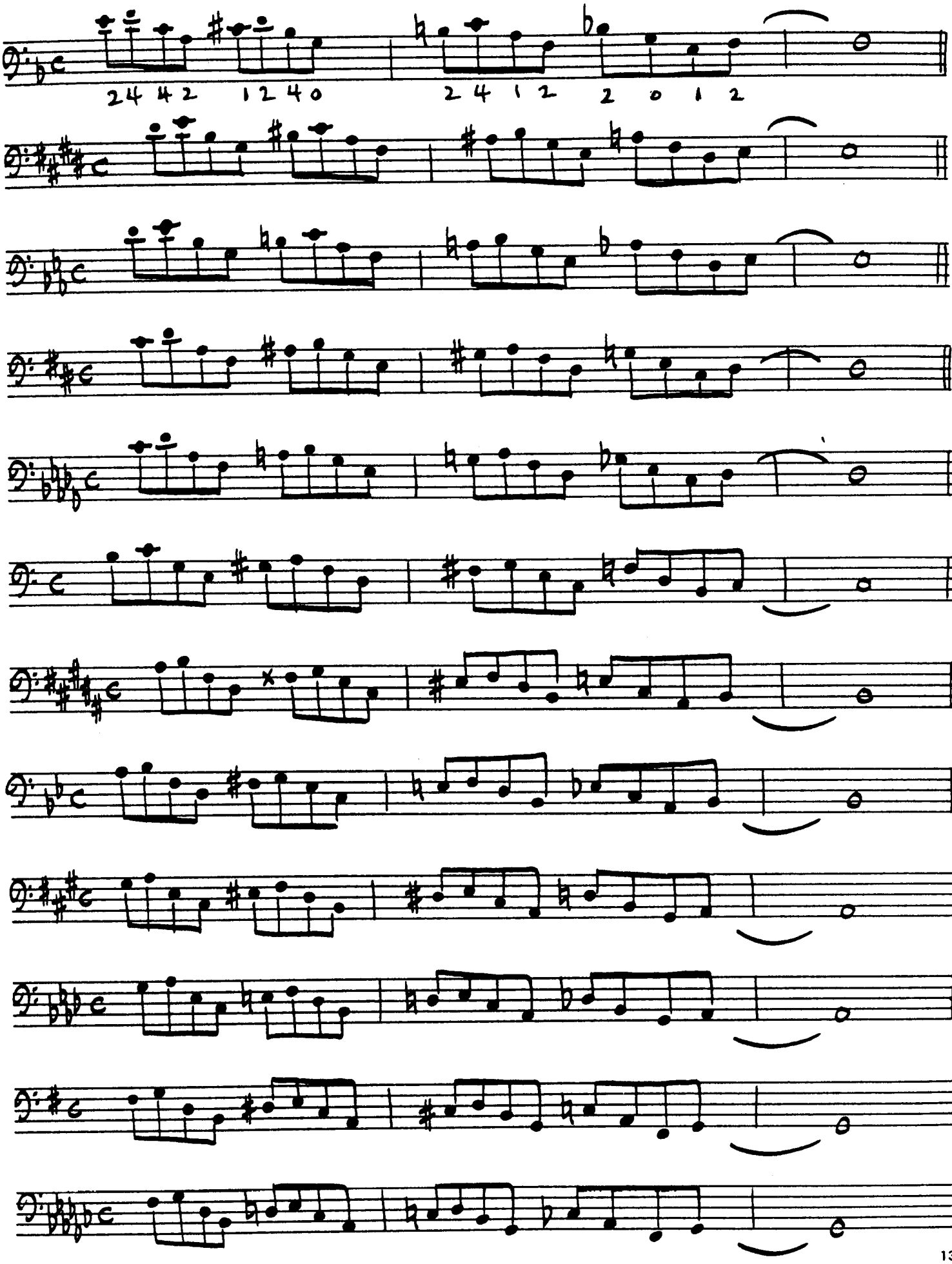
# EXERCISE (Solo)



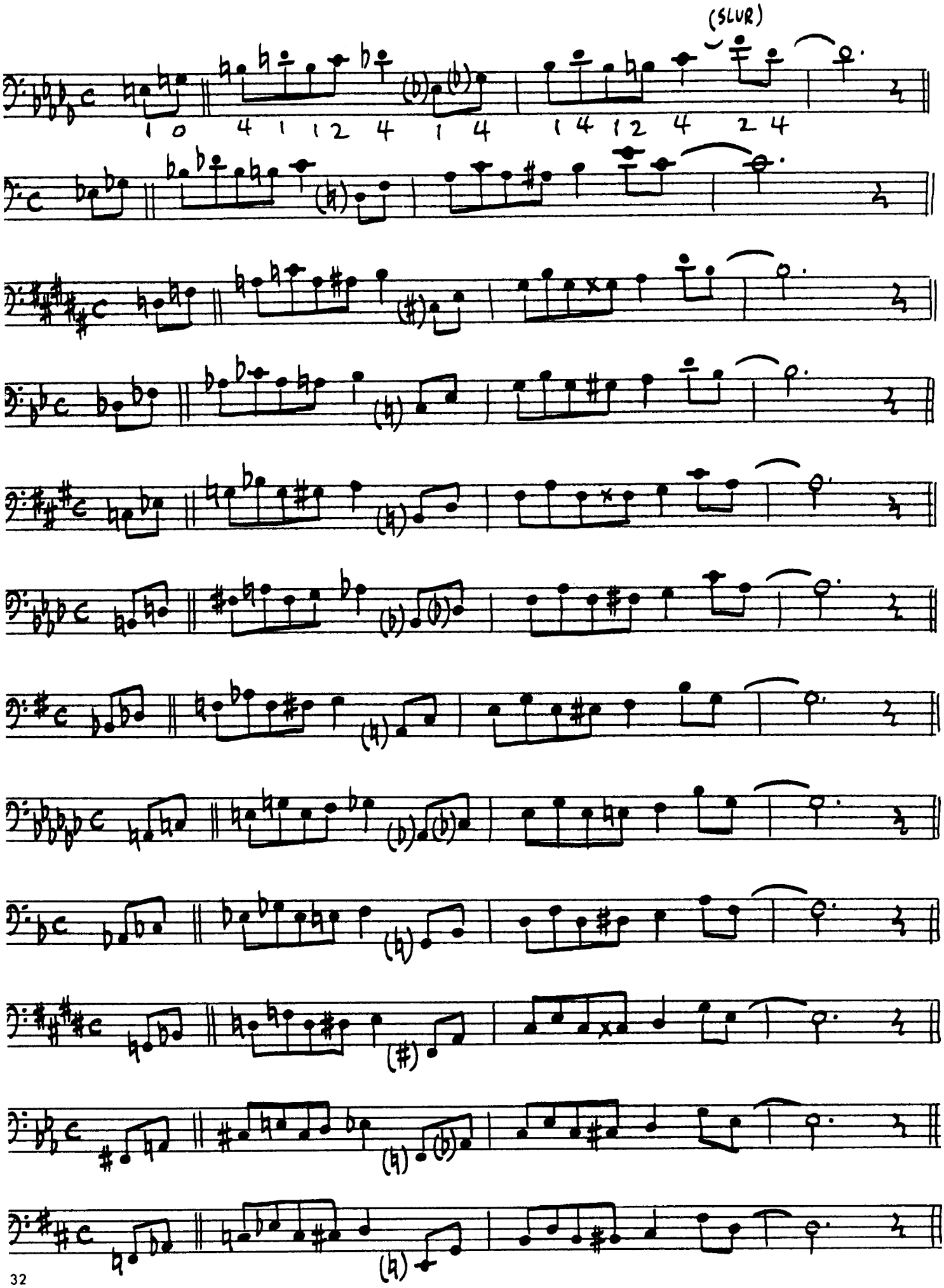
# EXERCISE IN FOURTHS (Solo)

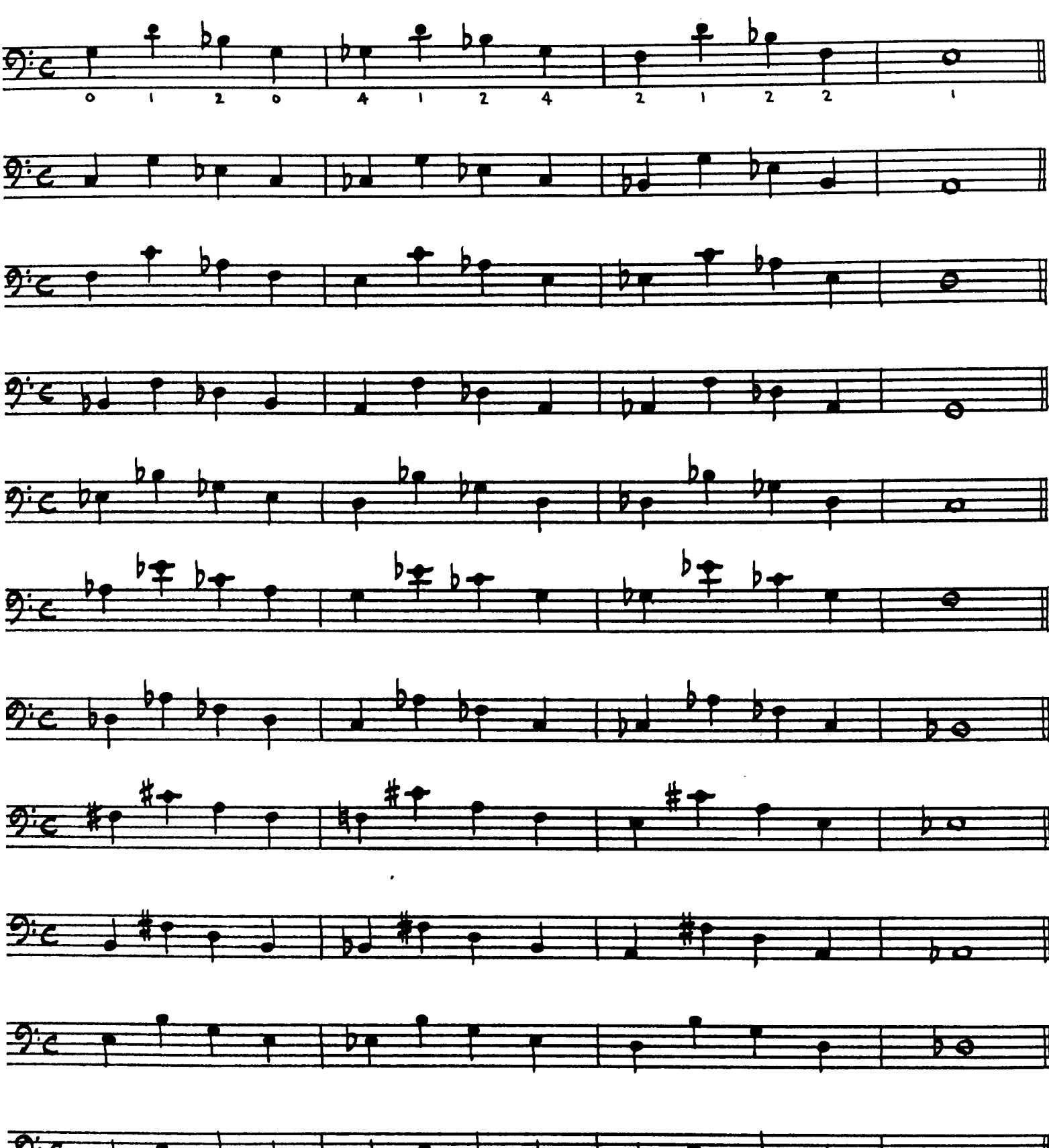


# EXERCISE (Solo)

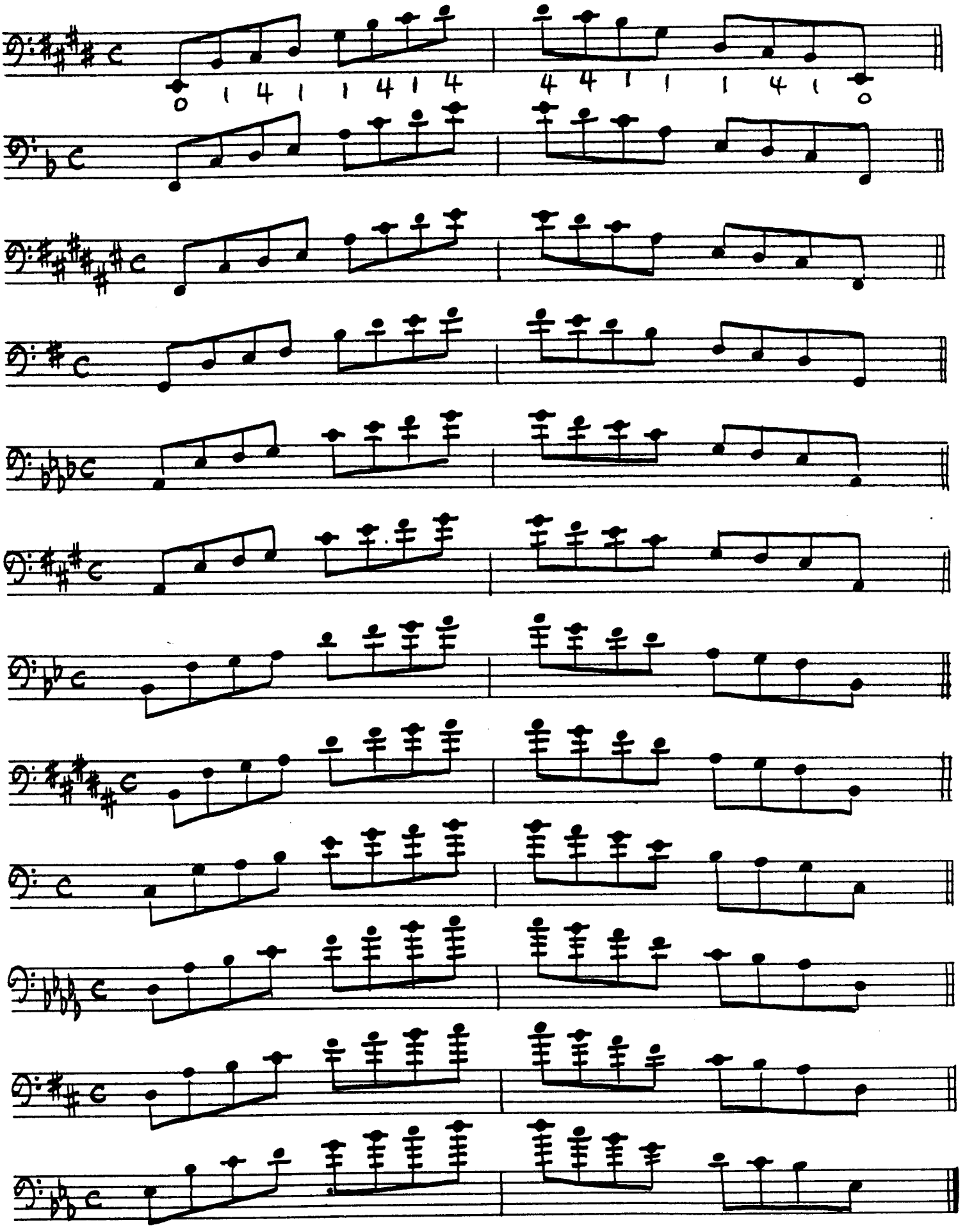


# EXERCISE

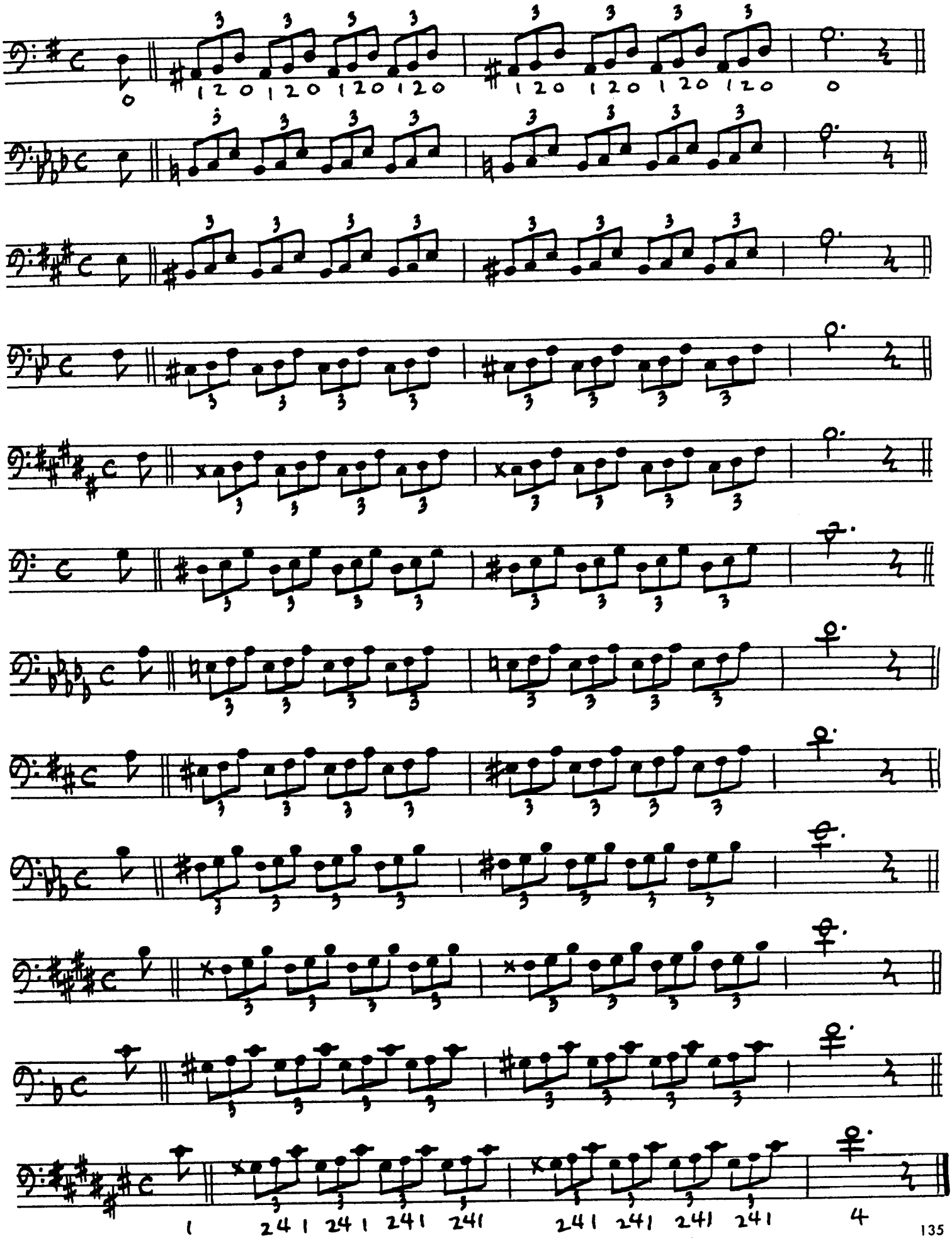



0 1 2 0 4 1 2 4 2 1 2 2 1
0 1 2 0 4 1 2 4 2 1 2 2 1

# ARPEGGIOS FOR ENDINGS



# TRIPLET EXERCISE FOR SOLOS



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