The United States Army Field Band

The Musical Ambassadors of the Army

Washington, DC

Tuba Clinic

by

Sergeant First Class Scott Cameron

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Playing the tuba should begin with good habits. Fundamentals must be practiced daily. In order to produce the best tone, large amounts of air must be inhaled to fuel the sound. Music is the ultimate goal, but the primary task is to master the basics of consistently producing a good sound. Therefore, the focus of this clinic is practicing and utilizing fundamentals to sound the best at all times.

WARM-UP

Although students do not always have a chance to warm up before band rehearsals, players should strive to go through a warm-up routine every day to practice fundamentals. No one has ever been born with a tuba in his or her hands—playing tuba is an art that must be practiced to be realized.

The warm-up will consist of long tones descending and ascending, flexibility exercises, tonguing exercises, scale studies, and etudes.

LONG TONES

Long tones are just what the name implies: tones performed for a long period of time to maximize sound output and breath control. This is the part of the warm-up routine which concentrates most on sound. These easy exercises allow the player to concentrate on the basics of tone production. Correct fundamentals include posture, embouchure, breathing, tongue position, and jaw placement. All of these have a direct impact on tone. Spending a short time every day on producing a great sound will have long-term benefits.

To practice long tones, start on a Bb in the staff *(see Long Tones on page 11–4)*. For four seconds, breathe in fully; without holding the breathe or tonguing, start the tone at a *mf* level. (If available, a metronome can be set to 60.) Play the note as evenly and smoothly as possible for eight to twelve seconds. If the note is not as smooth and even as desired, play it again. Repeat this for every pitch, descending chromatically to low F. Then move upward from low F two octaves to F in the staff. Do not go on until every note has the same sound or timbre. The first time this is done, it may take an hour to complete—that is OK. Producing a great sound in different ranges and perfecting fundamentals is a major accomplishment.

FLEXIBILITY EXERCISES

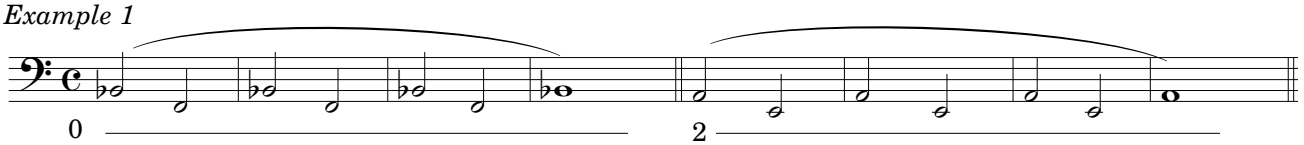
Often, tubists are not able to slur as evenly as they should. These flexibility exercises will concentrate on a the fundamentals of a good slur.

Start again on the Bb in the staff. Slur a Perfect 4th from the Bb in the staff to the F just below the staff *(see Example 1 below)*. Again set the metronome to 60. The slur should imitate the sound of the long tone. The air stream should not stop between notes. When slurring down, the jaw will drop slightly; it will return when ascending.

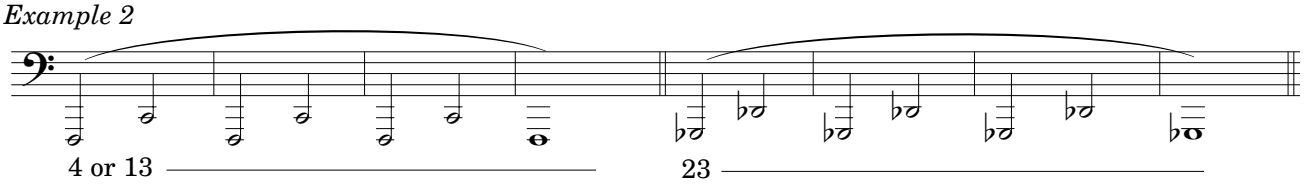
This exercise will descend chromatically. Use the same valve combination for each slur. If the best possible sound is not produced, repeat the exercise until satisfied, always using correct fundamentals.

Once F below the staff is reached, slur a Perfect 5th down to the Bb. Continue down to the low F, then ascend to the F in the staff, or higher if possible! *(See Example 2 below.)* It is important to rest frequently to avoid fatigue and carelessness, especially in the higher registers. If extensive warm-ups have never been done before, doing all of this done at once will quickly exhaust the player.

Example 1



Example 2



SCALES & TONGUING EXERCISES

Every audition consists of three elements: scales, a prepared piece, and sight reading. These elements should also be included in a practice routine. Playing scale patterns is also a great way to practice the fundamentals of tonguing.

To rearticulate a pitch, the tongue should be positioned just BEHIND the teeth, NOT BETWEEN them. This is to ensure that the tongue will not impede the air exiting the mouth.

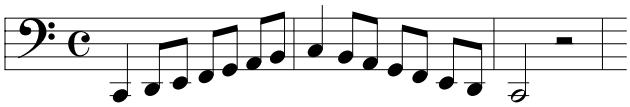
Start with a one octave C scale. Repeat the rhythmic pattern in *Example 3* on each note of the scale. Do not forget the previous exercises on long tones and flexibility. Strive to incorporate those fundamentals into this exercise. Again, do not continue until the best results are achieved. Once this exercise has been mastered using all scales *(see Scale Supplement)*, try the pattern in *Example 4*.

Example 3

MUSICAL STUDIES

Once the fundamentals of producing a good sound are understood and drilled, they can be applied to music. Before performing a piece, mark in the music where to breathe. Air is the fuel for the sound, so plan where to fill up to sustain a great tone.

Example 4



Also determine the character of the piece. Is it happy or sad? Does it have a certain style? Should it be smooth and sustained or detached? Does it tell a story or paint a picture? Almost all studies have a certain emphasis. They enable the student to concentrate on that one aspect of technique in a musical context. Always attempt to convince the listener that each aspect has been studied and practiced diligently.

There are many fine study books available to tubists today. A list of recommended books and solos can be found at the end of this section.

Always remember that perfect practice does make perfect. Players must want to sound great every time they play—that takes consistent, steady practice. It is not about how many minutes or hours are spent practicing, but how often one practices and performs with an excellent sound, good fundamentals, and proper technique. All the natural ability in the world would be lost without the desire to strive for the very best every day! Good luck!

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Freshman Studies

The Arban-Prescott First and Second Year ..... Arban/Prescott (Carl Fischer, Inc.)
Beginning studies from the famous Arban method. Emphasis on fundamental aspects of beginning brass performance. Designed to be used in class with other brass instruments.

Practical Studies, Book II ..... Robert W. Getchell (Belwin-Mills)
Beginning studies with particular emphasis on rhythm. Most selections are short and interesting, but a few are longer and more complex.

Freshman Solos

Honor and Arms ..... George F. Handel/William J. Bell, 1:56
(CPP/Belwin, Inc.) Grade II–III.

Entr'acte from "Rosamunde" ..... Franz Schubert/George Masso, 4:10
(Kendor Music, Inc.) Grade II.

Sarabanda and Gavotta ..... Arcangelo Corelli/Himie Voxman, 3:00
(Rubank, Inc.) Grade II–III.

Upperclass Studies

Studies in Legato
for Bass Trombone and Tuba ..... Reginald H. Fink (Carl Fischer, Inc.)
Musical studies emphasizing smooth, sustained playing. Many studies are prefaced with instructions.

Progressive Techniques for Tuba ..... Donald Knaub (Hal Leonard)
Intermediate method begins with a warm-up/practice routine complete with instructions; also includes *70 Studies by Blazevich*.

Upperclass Solos

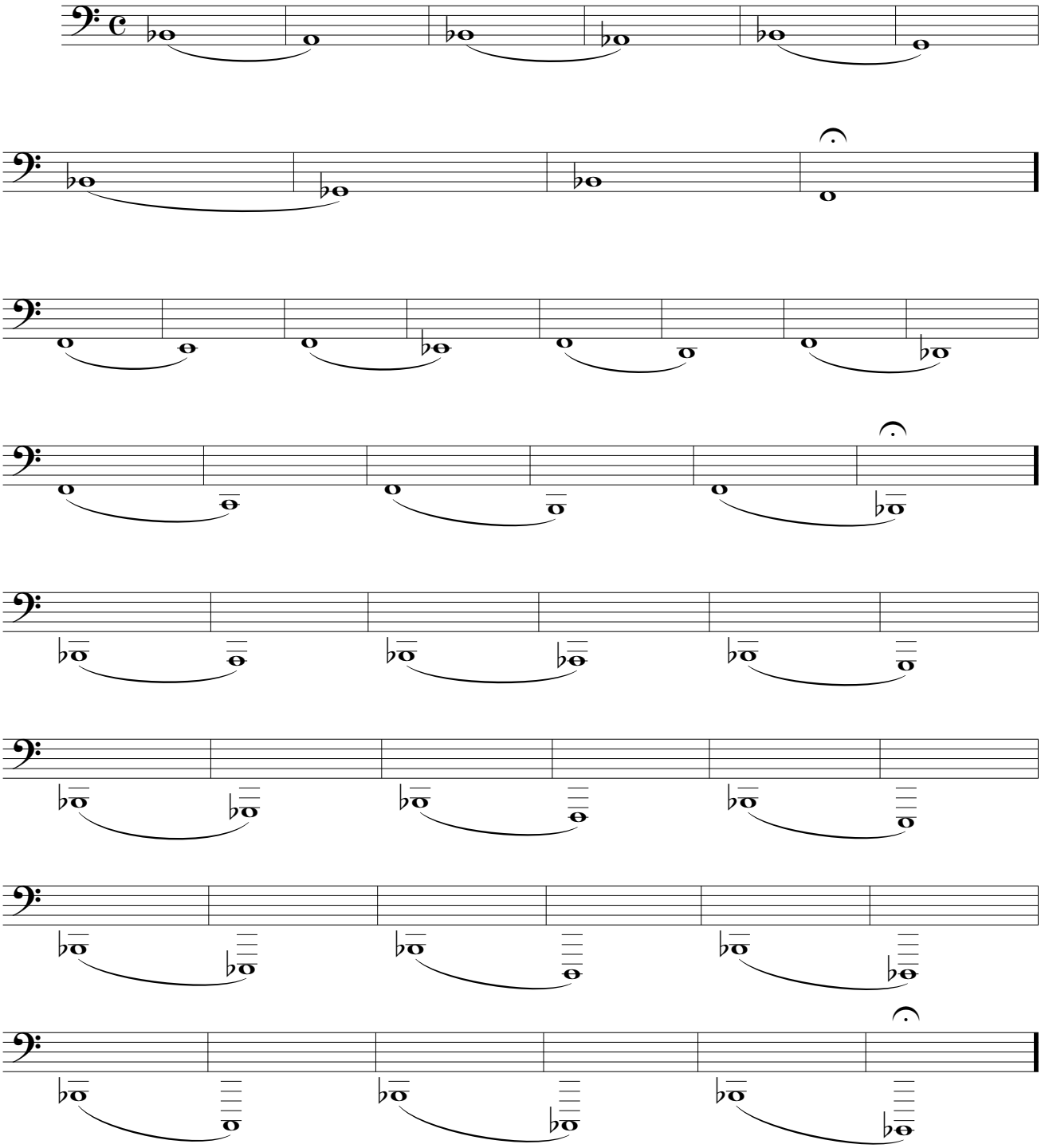
Air and Bouree ..... Johann S. Bach/William J. Bell, 3:25
(Carl Fischer, Inc.) Grade III–IV.

Variations on a Theme of Judas Maccabeus .... Beethoven/Handel/Bell, 4:45
(Carl Fischer, Inc.) Grade III–IV.

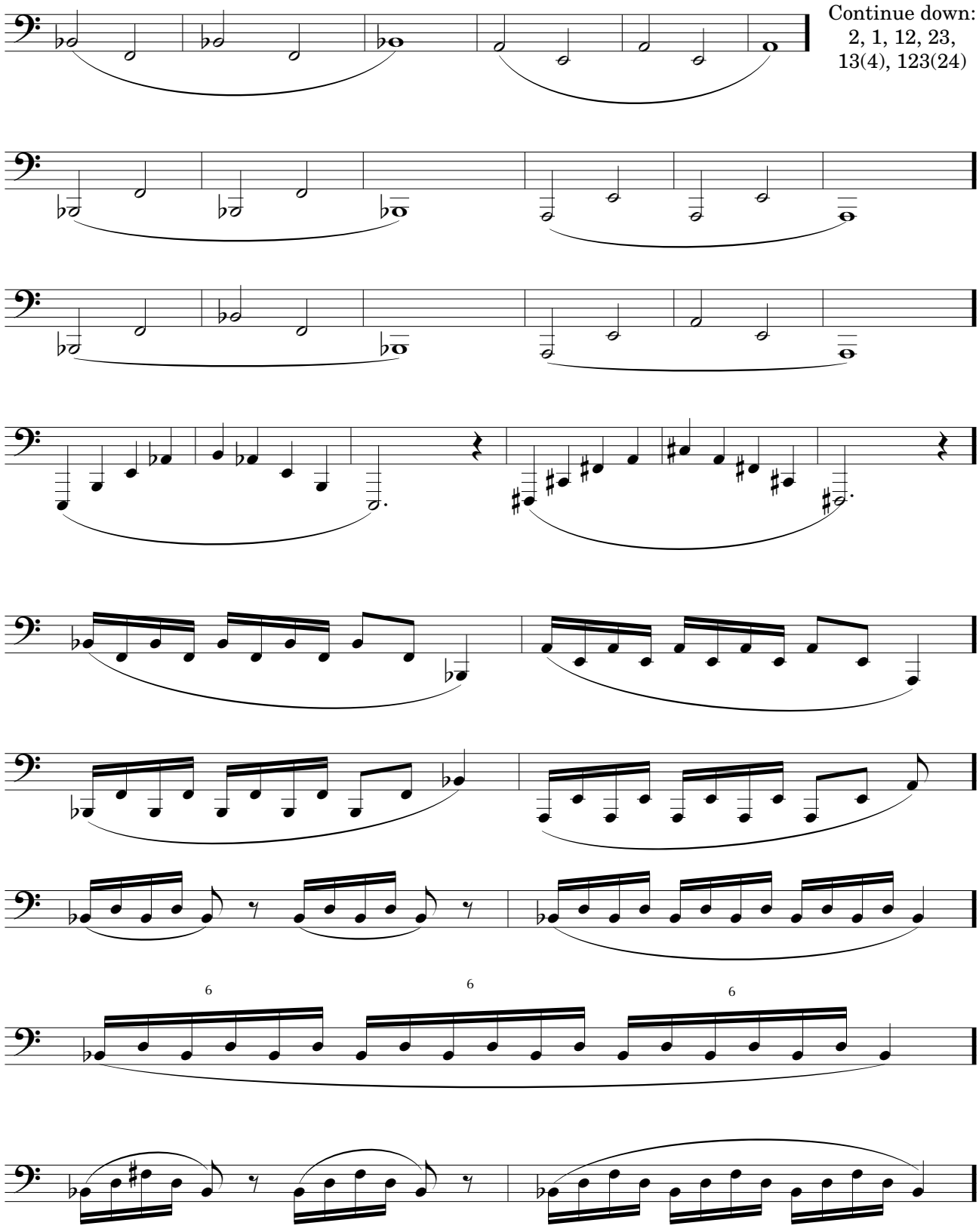
Suite for Tuba ..... Don Hada, 9:00
(Shawnee Press, Inc.)

Suite for Unaccompanied Tuba ..... Walter S. Hartley , 5:00
(Elkan-Vogel) Grade IV.

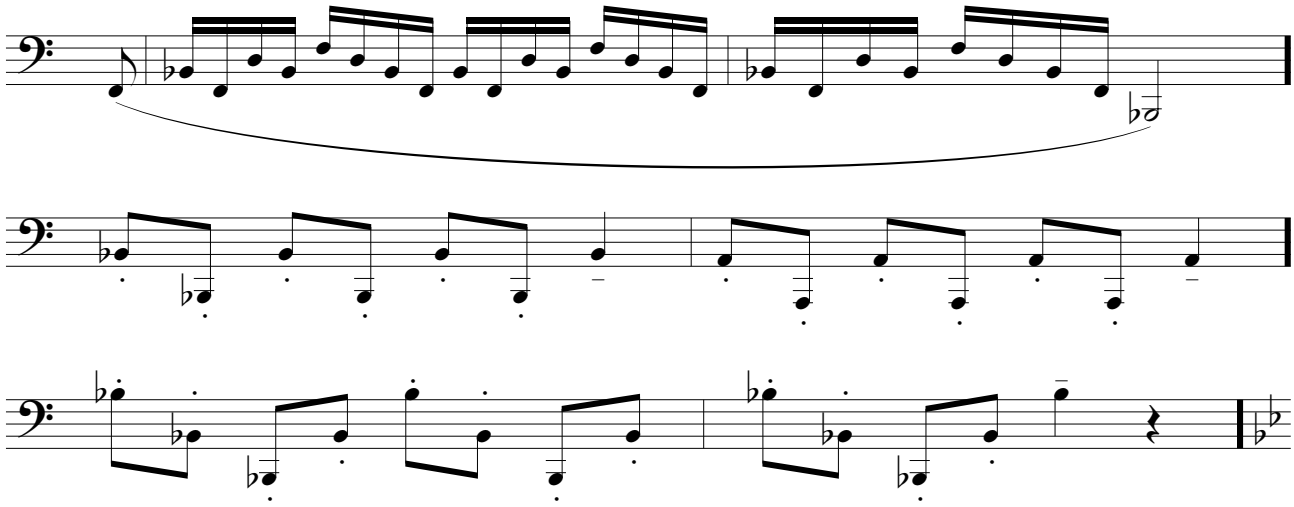
Long Tones



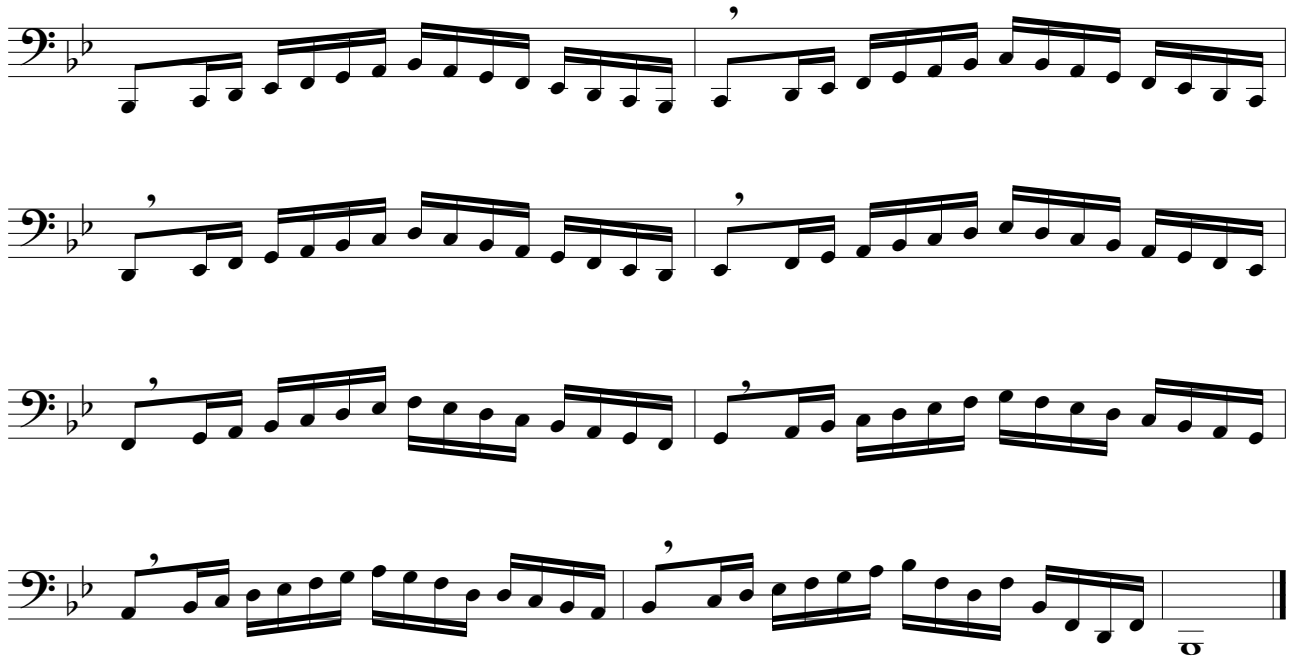
Flexibility



Flexibility, cont.



Scale Patterns

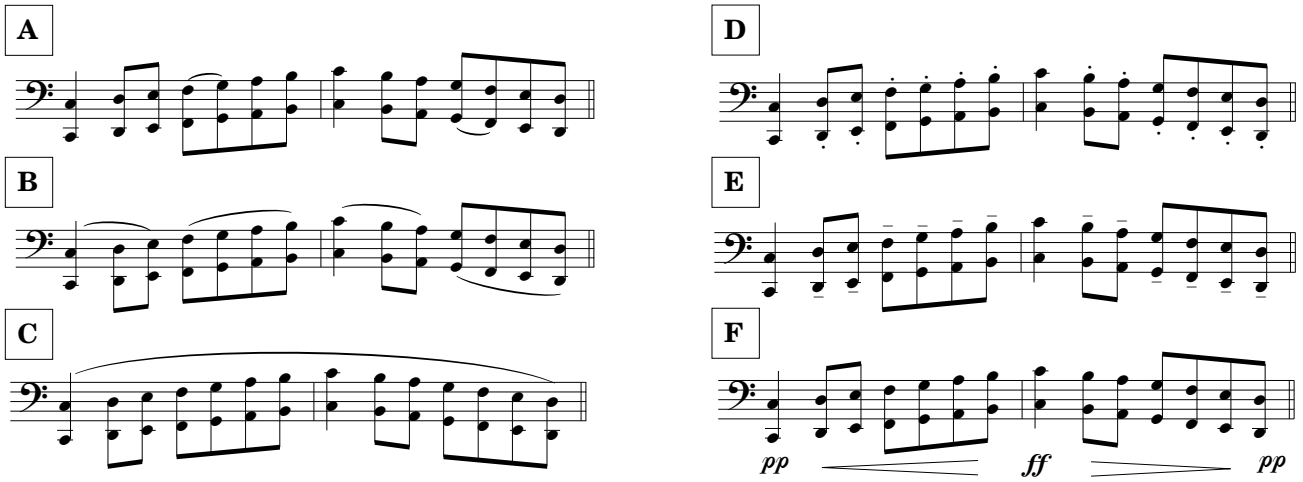


Scale Supplement

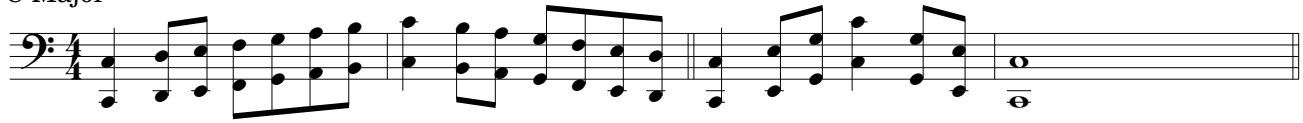
The fifteen major and minor scales make up our musical "ABCs." Just as a person wishing to read learns the alphabet first, a musician cannot expect to master an instrument without first learning the basic set of scales. By diligently practicing the major scales and all three forms of the minor scales, they will become automatic, just like reading the alphabet. This will make playing, especially sight reading, much easier so that the musician can concentrate towards the ultimate goal—making music!

Each scale below should be played slowly at first, ensuring that each note is played correctly. Gradually work for speed, but do not rush. Use a metronome whenever possible to guarantee evenness and a steady tempo. The player should practice difficult scales twice as often as easy ones to develop competence in all keys. As skills increase, change rhythmic patterns and increase tempos. Advanced players can still use scales to work on intonation, technique, range, and dynamics.

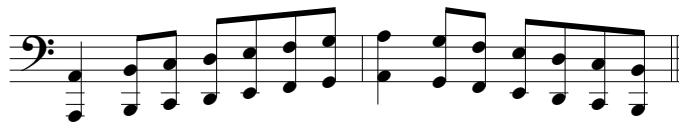
Use the following patterns one at a time or in combination to get even more benefit from scale practice:



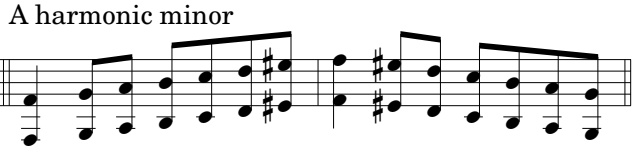
C Major



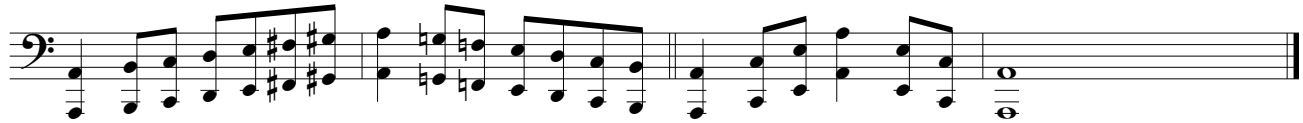
A natural minor



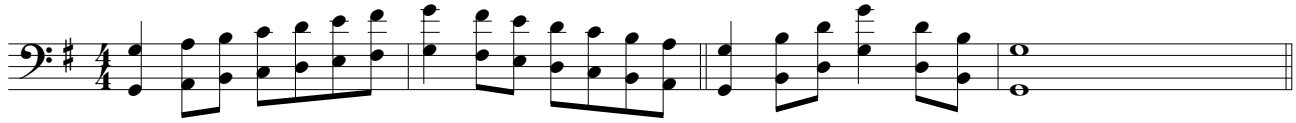
A harmonic minor



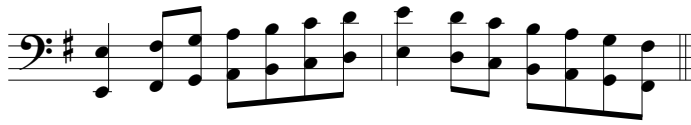
A melodic minor



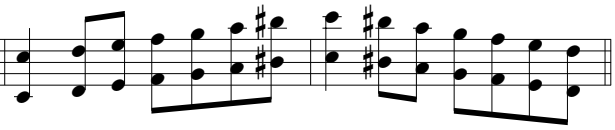
G Major



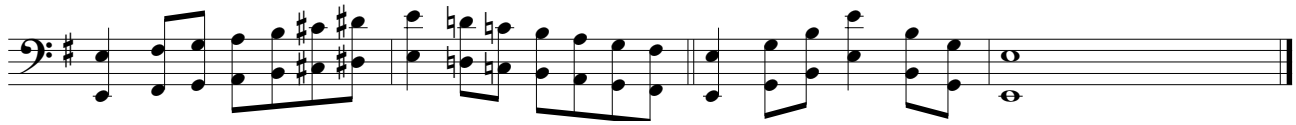
E natural minor



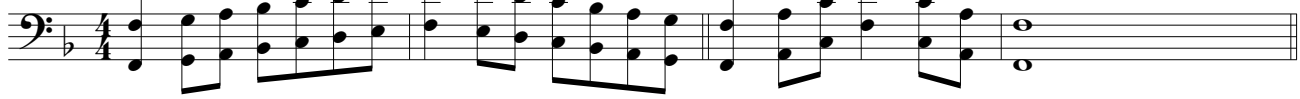
E harmonic minor



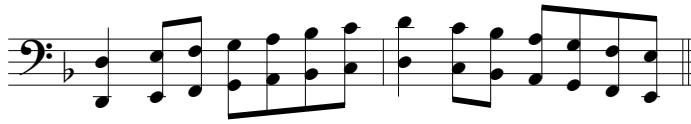
E melodic minor



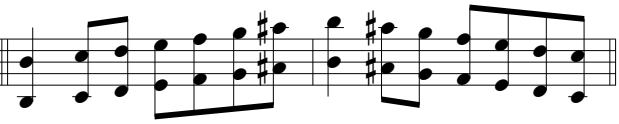
F Major



D natural minor



D harmonic minor



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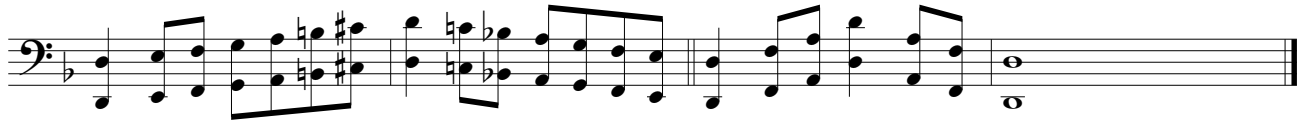
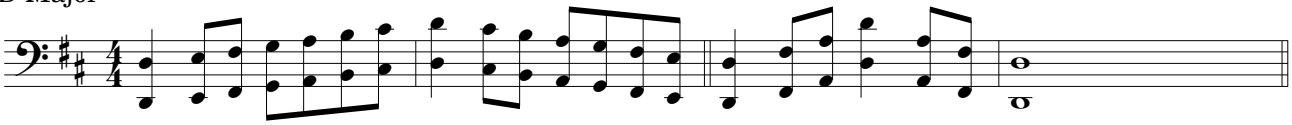


D Major



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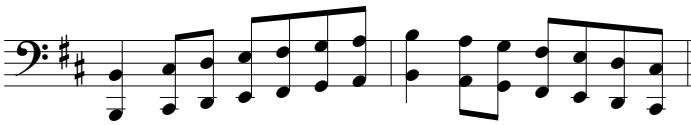

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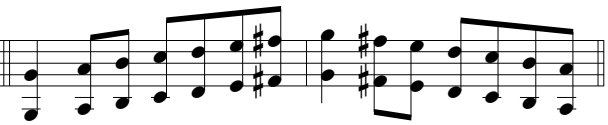

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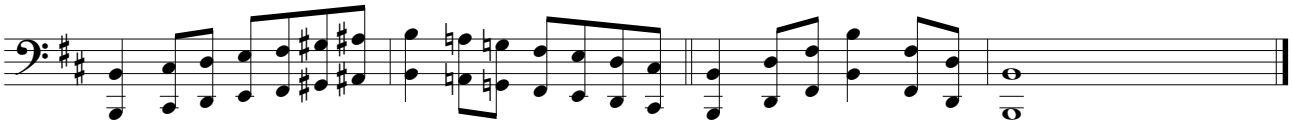
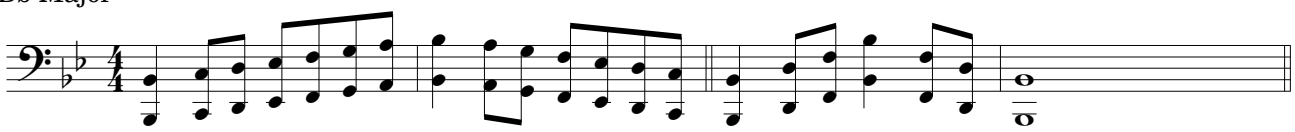


Bb Major



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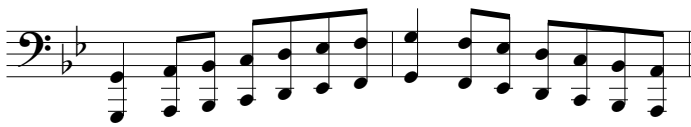

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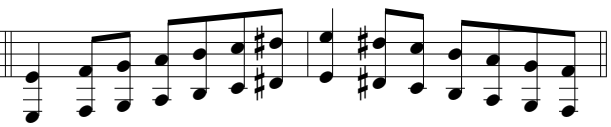

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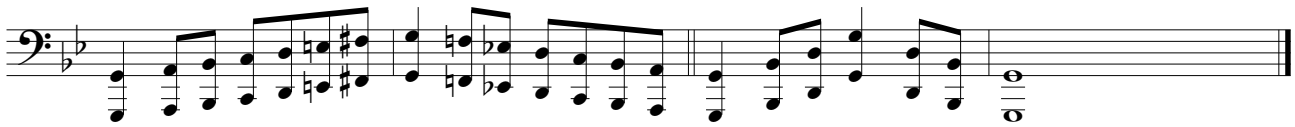

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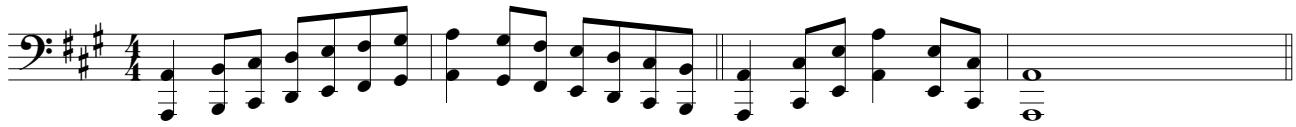

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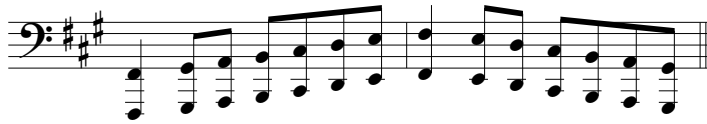

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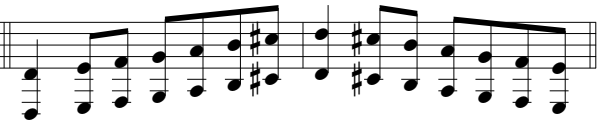

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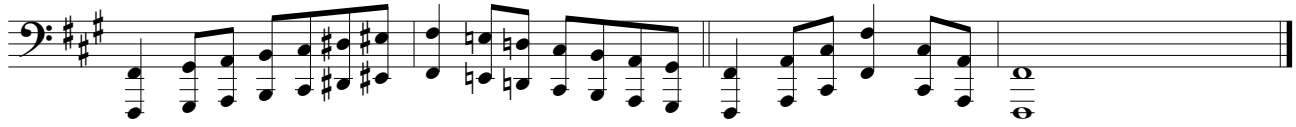
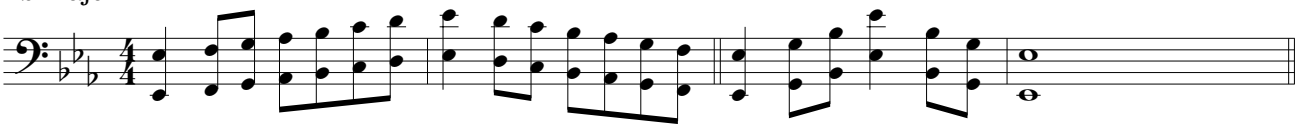
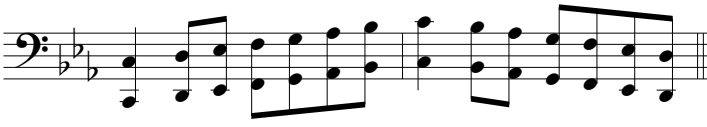


Eb Major



C natural minor



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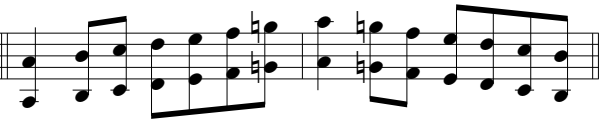

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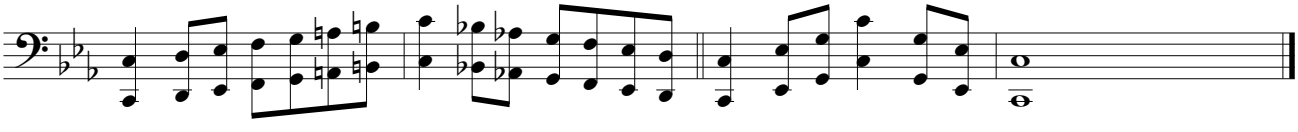
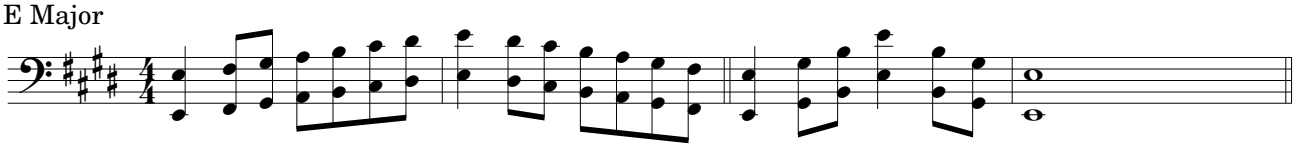


E Major



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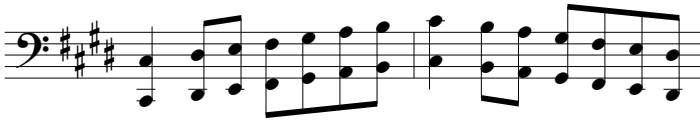

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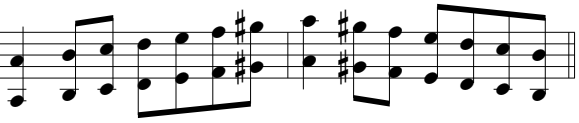

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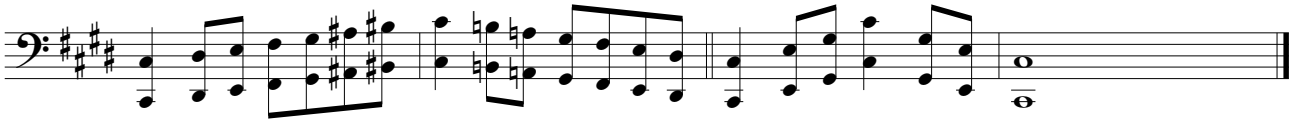
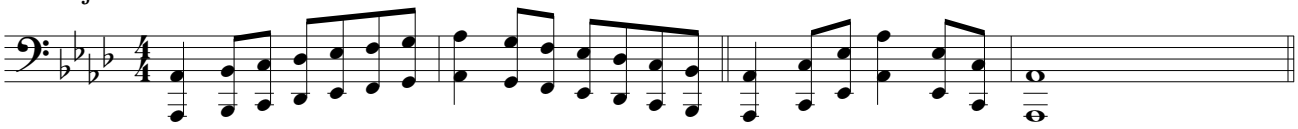


Ab Major



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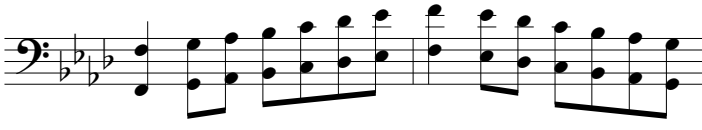
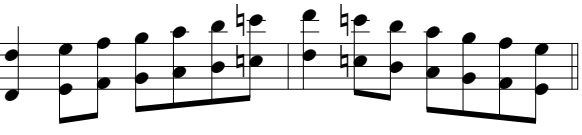
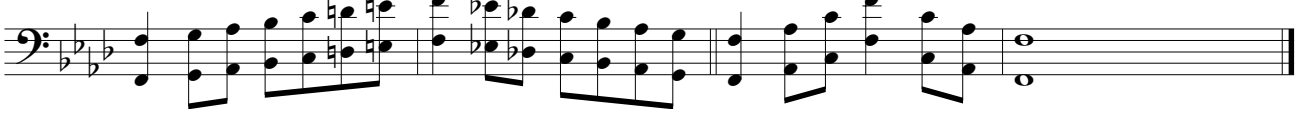


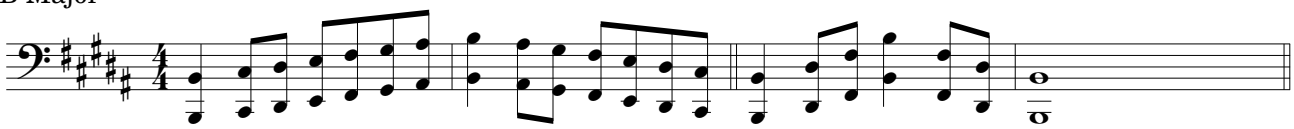
F harmonic minor



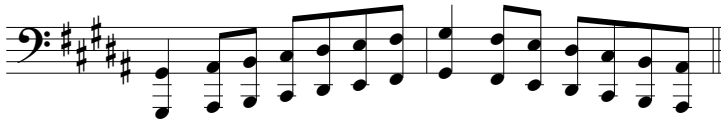
F melodic minor



B Major



G# natural minor



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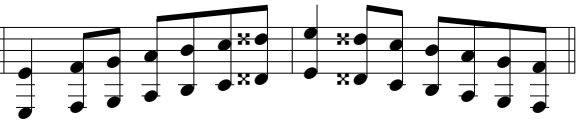

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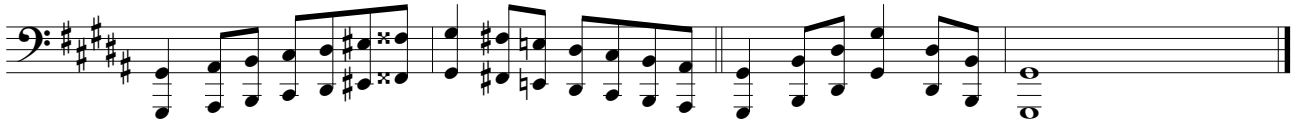
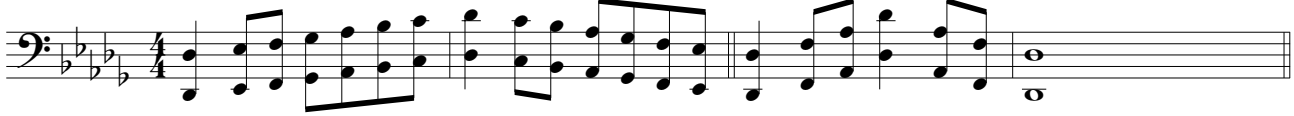
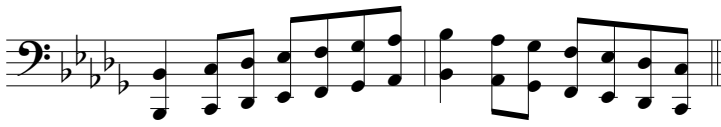


Db Major



Bb natural minor



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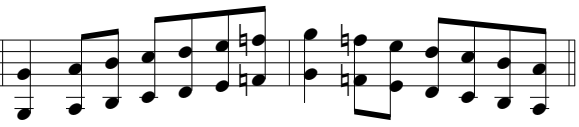

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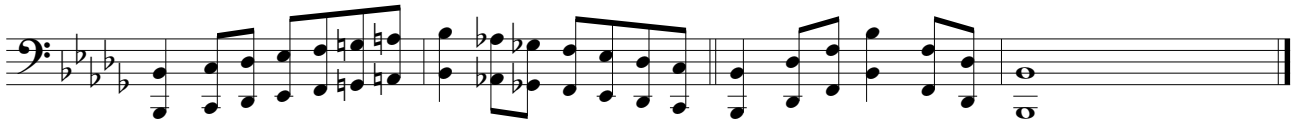
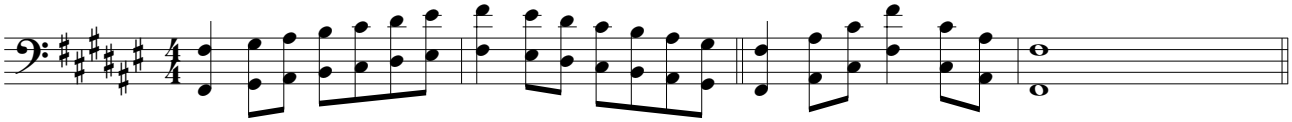
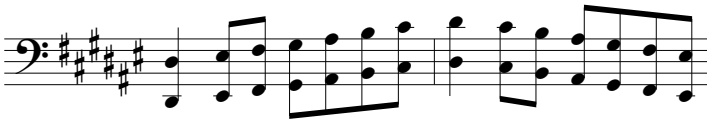


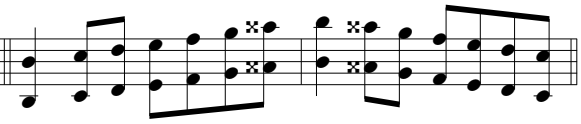
F# Major



D# natural minor



D# harmonic minor



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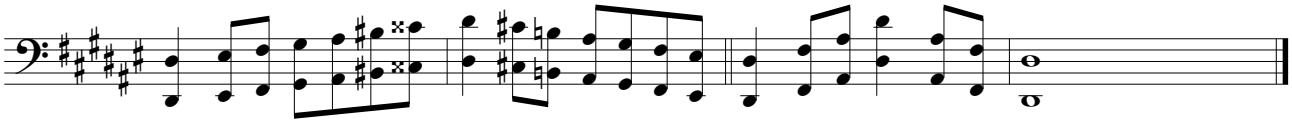
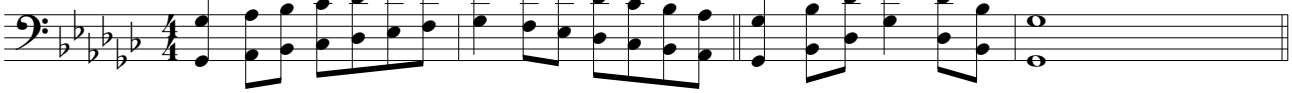
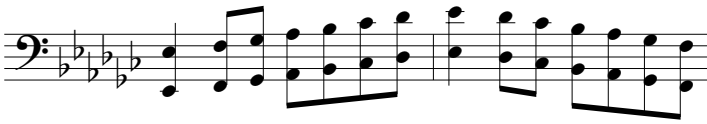


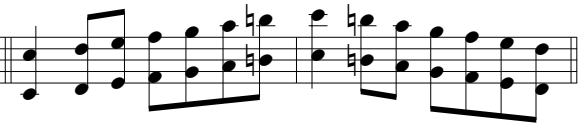
Gb Major



Eb natural minor



Eb harmonic minor



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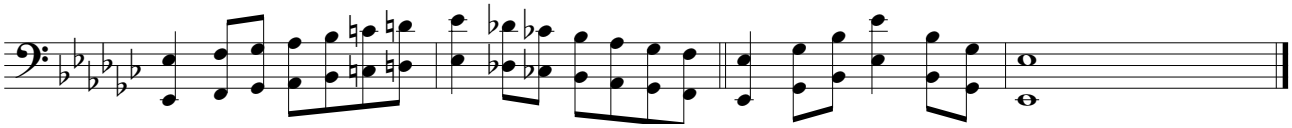
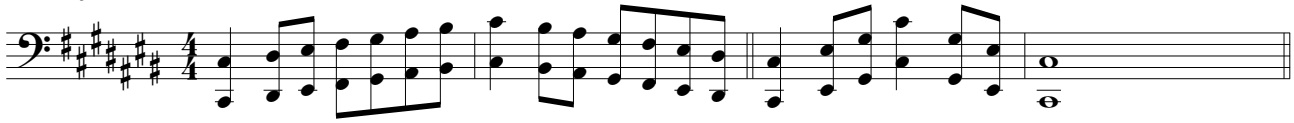
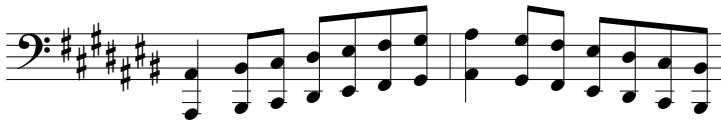


C# Major



A# natural minor



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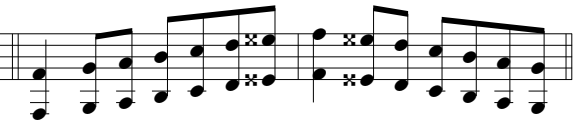

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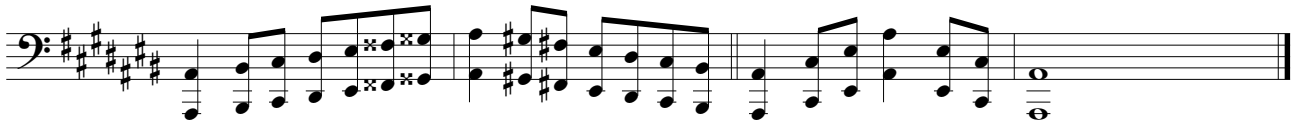

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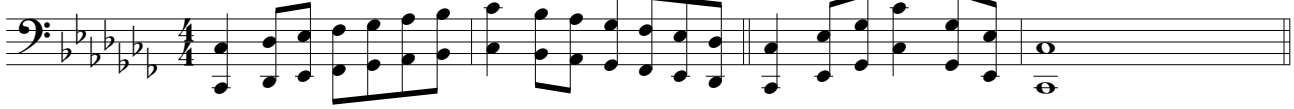
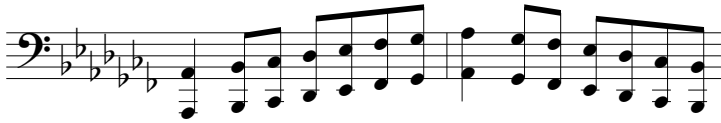
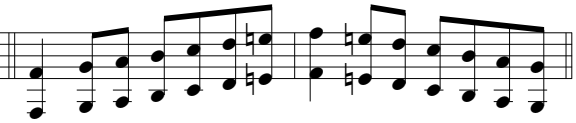
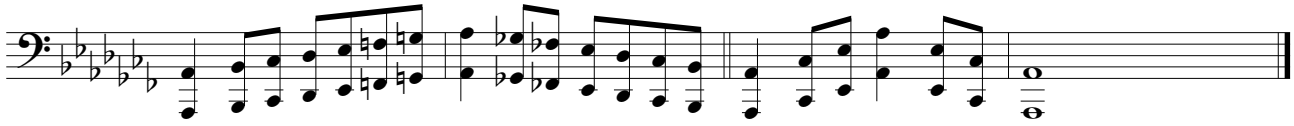


Ab natural minor



Ab harmonic minor



Ab melodic minor