Carmine Caruso

musical calisthenics for brass

Carmine Caruso Techniques
Master Class
at
The ITG Carmine Caruso
International Jazz Trumpet
Competition

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Interval Studies

from Carmine Caruso
musical calisthenics for Brass

The Four Rules

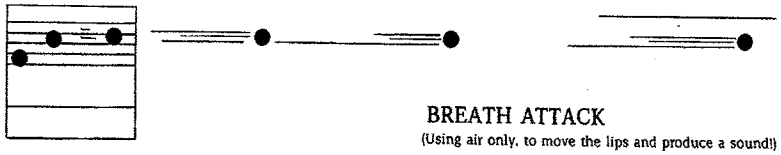
1. TAP YOUR FOOT. This is to establish the timing to which the muscles must move, so that they respond to the specific rhythm you make. (The tapping of the foot is the metronome for the muscular activity of the body.) For the beginning student who doesn't have a feel for meter, a metronome is suggested, with the speed set at ♩ = 60. Note: although the following exercises are comprised of whole notes and half notes, you may wish to change the count to fit your particular needs. Also, according to need, you may wish to tongue the first note and use a breath attack on the third note.

2. KEEP THE MOUTHPIECE IN CONTACT WITH THE LIPS THROUGHOUT EACH STUDY. The mouthpiece must be in contact with the lips throughout the playing of each exercise until no notes are sounding and regardless of pressure or feel. The reason for this is simple: If you take the mouthpiece away from your lips, you'll have to regain contact and this will require two movements-one on and one off. Then every time you move the mouthpiece away, you have to reset the whole embouchure. The "whole" embouchure consists of five definite movements: 1) Putting the mouthpiece in contact with the lips. 2) Putting tension on the lips for the note to be played. 3) Positioning the jaw properly. 4) Angling the instrument properly. 5) The blow. If you leave the mouthpiece in place, you reduce the five movements to three, and if you leave the lip in tension you'll only have one movement—the blow. While breathing, maintain the same mouthpiece pressure and tension used for the previous notes. Do not be concerned with sound or pitch.

3. KEEP THE BLOW STEADY. The blow is both a muscular and physical function. You are blowing air through the lips and the steadier the blow, the more compact the motion of the air. The more compact it is, the easier it is for the lips to ride that airstream. As the airstream ride improves, the music will improve. For an analogy, think of the lips as skis on the water. As long as the boat is going, the skis stay on the water. When the boat slows down, the skis dig in. When the boat stops, you fall off. This is what happens with the lips when the air is not being pushed steadily through them. The activity of a constant stream of air "feeding" the lips will develop a better balance of the muscles.

4. BREATHE ONLY THROUGH THE NOSE. Breathing through the nose is done for the same reason as Rule No. 2: to reduce the amount of muscular activity it takes to produce a note. It's common for players to breathe as if they are sniffing, which will put air into the sinuses instead of the lungs. Breathing normally through the nose requires fewer muscles (fewer moving parts) than changing the muscular position of your lips in order to breathe through your mouth. This is a quicker way to develop an embouchure, because there are fewer variables to control, making it easier for the embouchure to find its place.

EXERCISE 1:

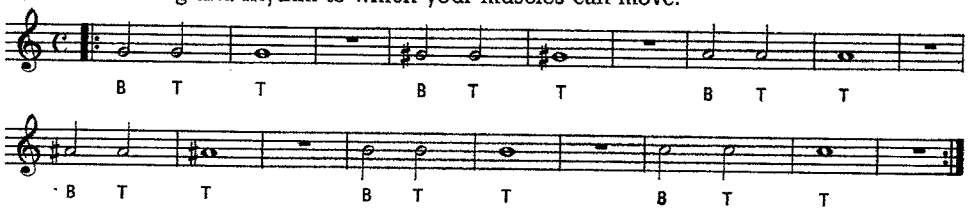


BREATH ATTACK
(Using air only, to move the lips and produce a sound!)

The Breath Attack is used in this initial exercise because it is the quickest way to get the lips in focus, to get them touching. Repetition of the Breath Attack eventually brings the lips into the best position. I call this balance; others may call it embouchure.

B = Breath Attack T = Tongue

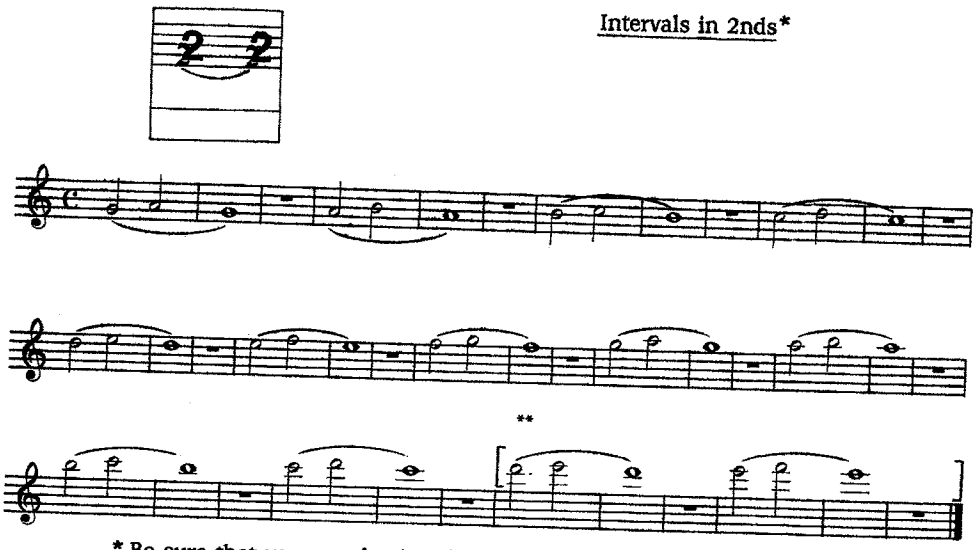
● REMEMBER: Start tapping your foot before you start playing to establish the timing and rhythm to which your muscles can move.



When you play these studies, treat them like calisthenics. Don't be concerned with how they sound and feel at this point, and don't worry about pitch or missed notes. The discipline to feel is physical, not musical.

EXERCISE 2:

Intervals in 2nds*



* Be sure that you are slurring these intervals and not tonguing them.

** Play these notes only if you're able, don't force.

Again, when you are playing these exercises, don't be concerned with the sound, pitch or feel. Play with abandon!

Play as high as you can go until no sound comes out of the horn, but make sure that you complete the effort to play the particular interval. Take the horn away from your lips and rest ten or fifteen seconds. Then pick up where you left off and go higher, again until no sound comes out of the instrument. That is the end of this study. Stop for fifteen minutes or more and then repeat the study. PRACTICING IN THIS MANNER WILL INCREASE YOUR HIGH REGISTER.

During the rest period, if you wish to practice other exercises or music, feel free to do so. But do not use these physical techniques with other types of music.

If your lips become swollen, tired or stiff, wait longer before resuming the exercises. If they continue this way, then don't touch them until it is comfortable. Any discomfort will increase the chance of manipulating to reach a note and cause extraneous motion.

Chromatic Bending Exercise

There have been many exercises involving lip bending that have become our favorites. This exercise is meant to enhance that concept.

Each line of this exercise is to be played in one breath slurring the whole line. As you progress though the activity, you might want to start adding the tongue to the first note in bar 2 and the second in bar 3. This will help find the center of each note and develop a more accurate pitch and resonant tone after the attack.

An important part of this is to maintain the corners THROUGHOUT each page. I do not take the mouthpiece off between lines. I also keep the vibrating surface inside the mouthpiece in place, reinforcing a response factor that you can trust. Please do not confuse this with the term tension! We are trying to define a "reed strength" that listeners hear as ease of production.

After each line, keep the mouthpiece in place as mentioned. Breathe SLOWLY AND DEEPLY through the nose and go on when you have a full and relaxed breath.

The net effect of this activity is to stabilize the embouchure activity. It also requires a muscular involvement that helps avoid the lack of muscle tone throughout each breath that can result in aggressive changes in air and lip tension. Also, one can develop a muscle tone that aids in producing a consistent tone.

The net effect is that we develop a lip tension that is more compatible with a deep resonant tone and resembles a consistent "reed" like a clarinet. It helps to balance out the recipe of lips, air and tongue position so we have the best balance for success.

As a "senior" practice person I have noticed a marked decline in natural muscle tone. This is normal! However, a more "youthful" muscle tone is needed. This exercise helps me find and maintain a better balance than nature allows for!

You may find fingerings that come out easier for the upper notes than the ones I have found but they must be one half step alternate fingerings for the note written or the strengthening effect will not work as well.

Also, rest more frequently on the last series (page 4). I usually do two at a time, resting equal amounts before the next set of two. You may choose to do page two this way as well while building a relaxed but engaged feel. NONE of the exercises should be tense, squeezed, pressured, etc. They are to develop similar muscle "tone".

I have also included a version in an expanding interval model. Play a page-rest as long-play a page-etc.

Bending-Flexibility Combination Exercise

Although I have included separate exercises in the book for each of these techniques, I believe combining the two is catalytic.

Many times, we upset the needed balance and stability that affords us the "effortless" tone production. That elusive aural sensation is usually accompanied by minimal change in our lip tension BETWEEN notes!

That said, then why does every book profess to tighten you lips when you ascend and loosen your lips when you descend? I always was puzzled by this. Although there is a partial truth to this, most of us do not have a great deal of success with this seemly simple concept.

Even as we play a long tone on one pitch, our support increases inversely based on how much air we have left in our body. I believe it is essential to keep the air energy or density (pick your term) consistent as moves toward the oral cavity. At that point, our jaw and tongue position react to that norm and we can, with the proper repetition, get a repetitive result. In other words, our lips and tongue position need to get the same entry air information to use our much practice ear-trained mechanical answer to get the same pitch.

If the air insistence is changing in tandem with range, we lose all sense of what to do next-in other words we guess! Our ear is telling us one thing and our mechanical self comes up with a "guess". That never made me feel good!

These hybrid exercises insist that you continue to support more throughout each continuing breath. Once again quoting Al Vizzutti:

"Everything you do is one complete blow of the trumpet".

To that I add:

"with support being inversely proportional to the volume of air left to maintain that air energy".

SO, the combined statement I profess is:

Al "Everything you do is one complete blow of the trumpet" Vince "with support being inversely proportional to the volume of air left to maintain that air energy".

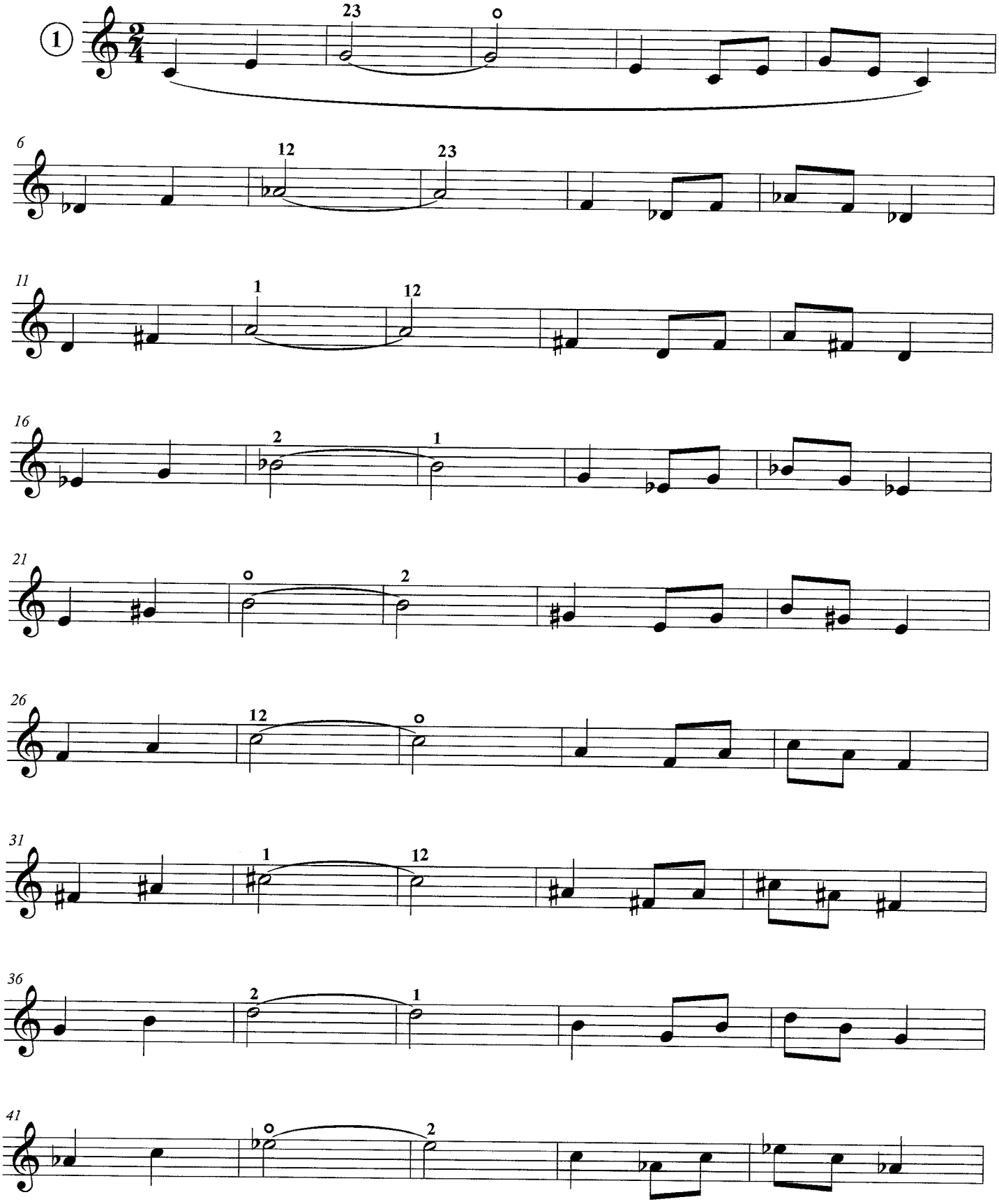
In applying bends at a variety of locations, if that is not happening, you cannot hold the notes by just lowering the jaw as you will lose the not. Only continuing the inverse proportion will allow you to make the proper decision consistently and get the effortless practiced result.

Finally, the art of inhale and exhale is regulating our pre-trumpet success. These exercises should help understand and execute this. In doing so, our confidence will be much greater.

Bb Trumpet

New Bend Exercises

Vince DiMartino



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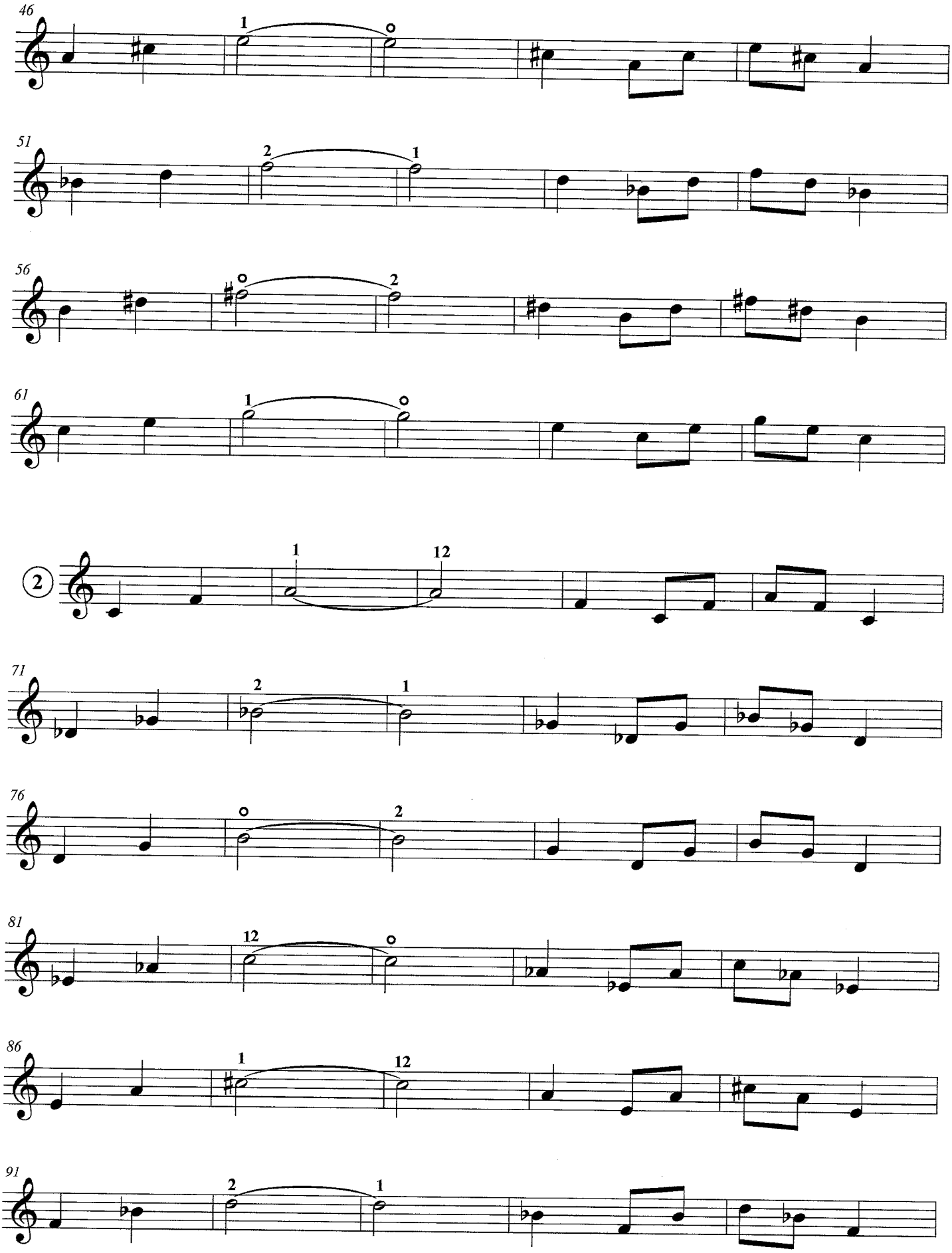
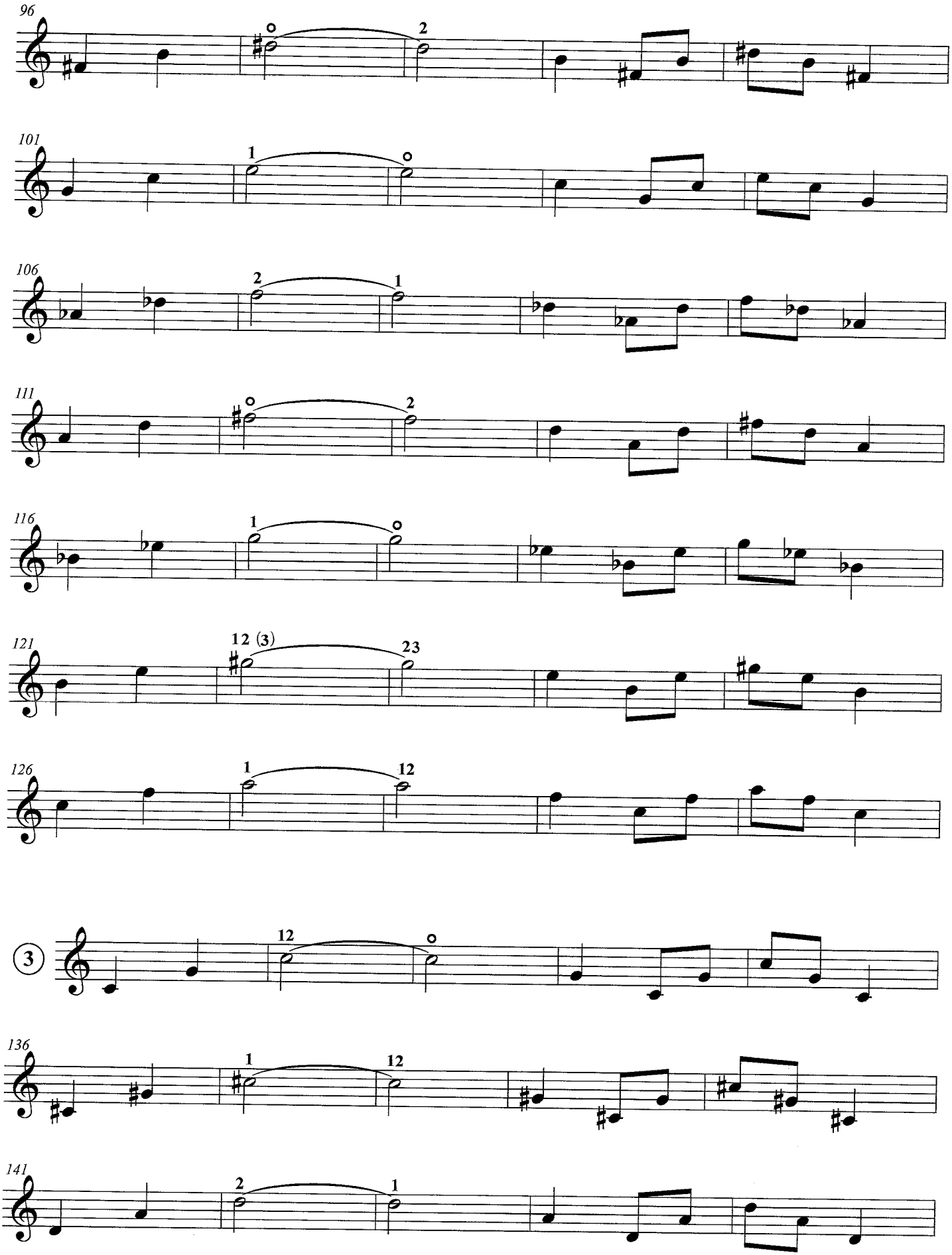
New Bend Exercises

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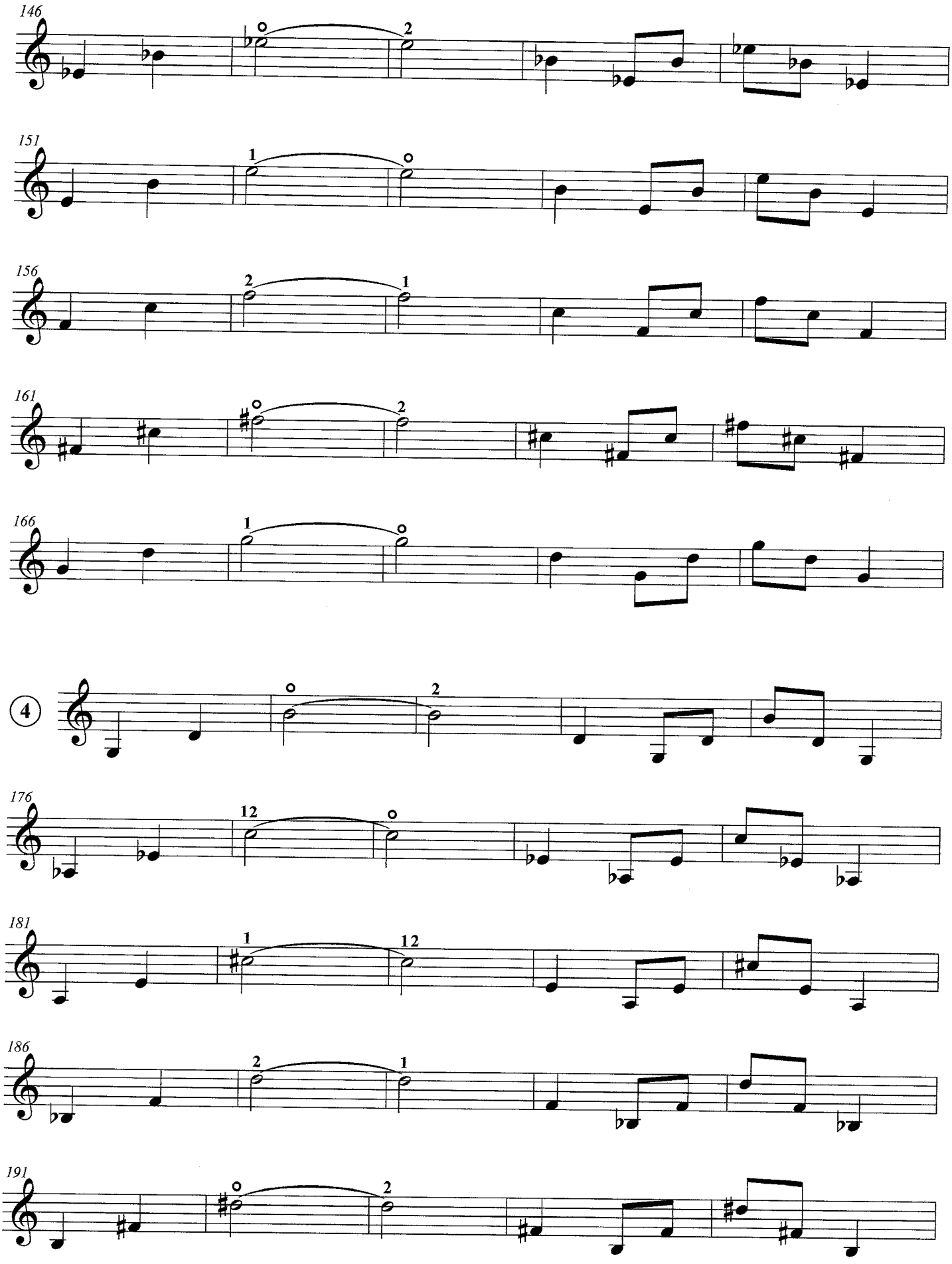

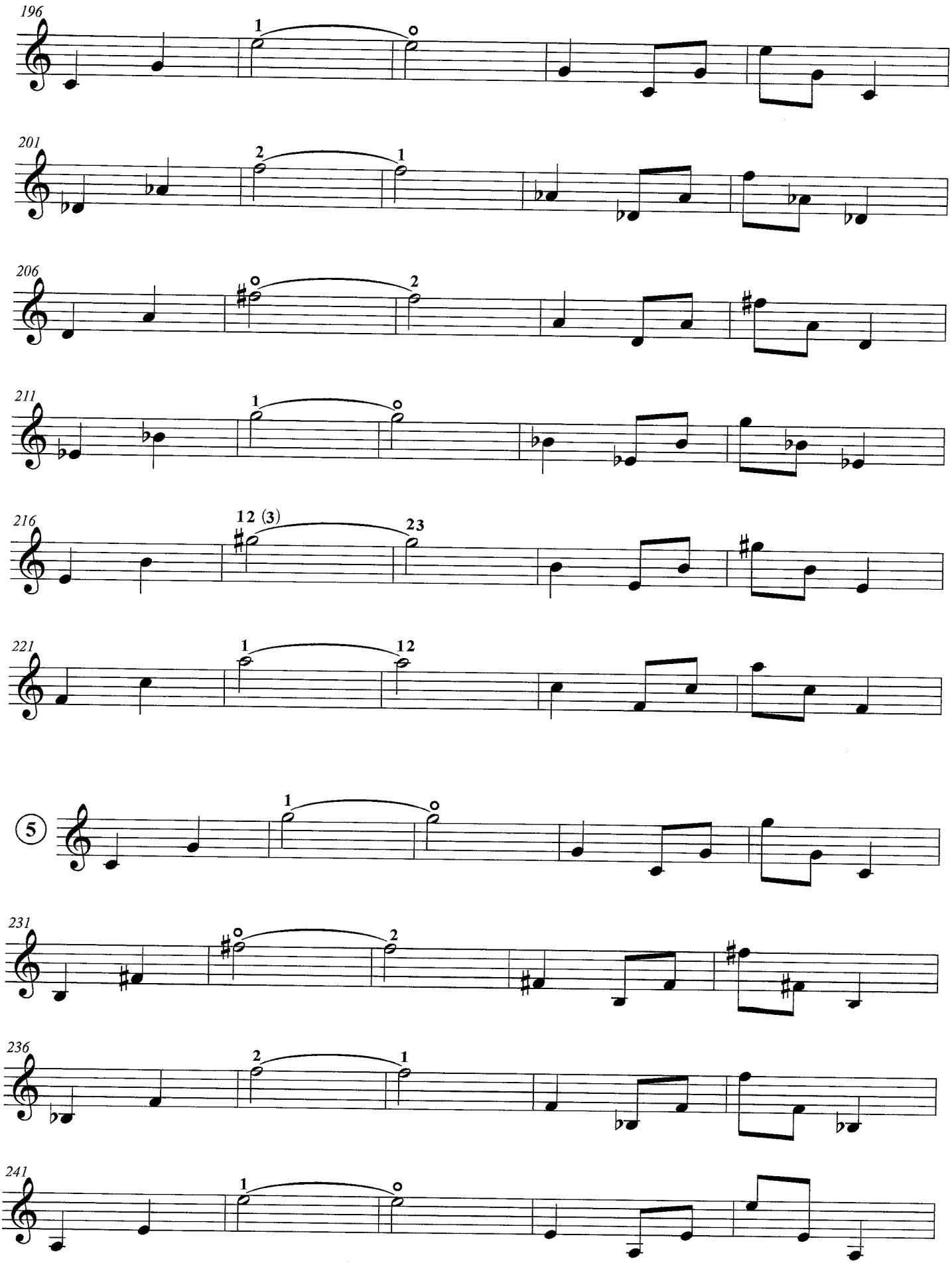
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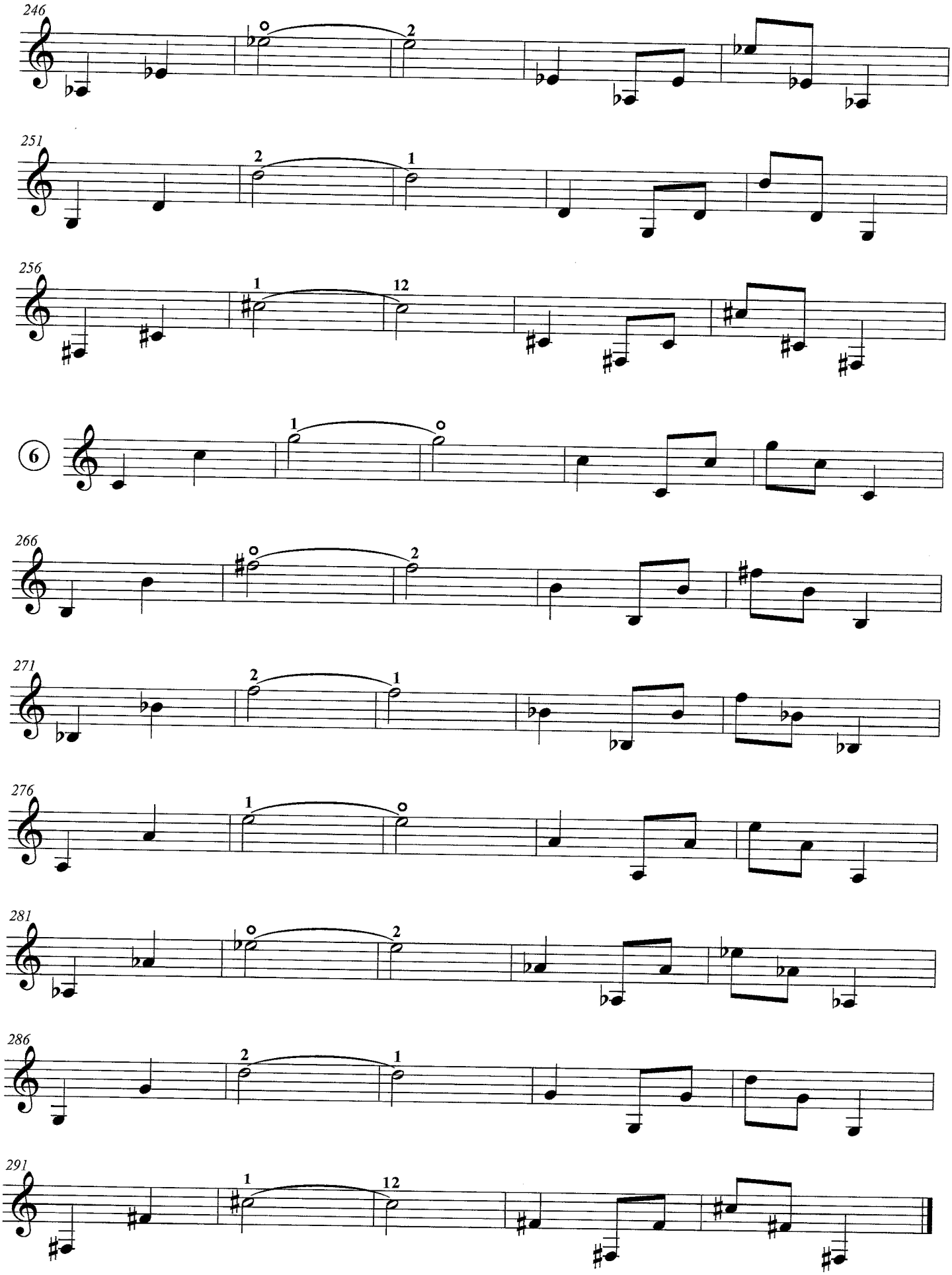
New Bend Exercises