ROLF PERSSON

R.P. SPECIAL TECHNIQUES

FLEXIBILITY WITH TONGUING AND SLURS

FOR TRUMPET, CORNET AND OTHER BRASS INSTRUMENTS

SYDDANSK
MUSIKKONSERVATORIUM
DANISH NATIONAL
ACADEMY OF MUSIC

Thank you

I would like to say a big thank to my former teachers, former and current colleagues and not least all the students I have had over the years and who are the reason why I have developed all my exercises.

Thanks to Peter Hellesø for making recordings and QR-codes of the exercises for the readers/players, so they can see and hear my thoughts about how the exercises should be played.

A very big and special thanks to my former student, and now very good friend and not least sparring partner Christian Hauge Svendsen, for help and guidance in noting and editing all my material so that it now appears in this very professional way.

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Welcome to my world of trumpet playing, ideas and thoughts

My name is Rolf Persson, and I am currently Lector at the Royal Academy of Music of Southern Denmark in Odense, where I teach in trumpet and ensemble. I have received my education from 1979 – 1984 at Malmö Musikhögskola with Associate Professor Leif Bengtsson and then later Christer Nilsson as trumpet teachers.

In addition to this education, I have studied in Chicago with teachers such as Vincent Chicovitz, Adolph Herseth and Ross Beacroft, New York – Phil Smith, London – Christian Steele-Perkins, Michael Laird.

I have also been privileged to be together and also teach together with many of the "stars" including the world's best trumpet- and brassplayers, such as Håkan Hardenberger, Anthony Plog, Mathias Höffs, Alan Vizutti, Adam Rapa, Ole Edvard Antonsen, Timofej Dokchitzer, Christian Lindberg, Jens Bjørn Larsen, Rex Martin, and a lot of many other fantastic musicians.

A large part of my inspiration also comes from the talented colleagues I have worked with daily in my life as a musician, trumpetplayer and teacher.

In the period 1985 – 2008 I was employed as an alternating solo trumpet player in Odense Symphony Orchestra, and since then I have devoted myself to work as a teacher and conductor.

From my very young days, I have been interested in teaching and with it also to invent and try new and different methods to improve different moments in my own and my students' trumpet playing.

R.P. Special techniques – Flexibility with tonguing and slurs.

APPLICABLE TO ALL EXERCISES

ALL NOTES MARKED WITH TENUTOLINE AND ACCENT, MUST BE PLAYED EXTREMELY LONG AND IN ITS TOTAL FULL LENGTH AND WITH A VERY CLEAR TONGUING.

PLEASE NOTE THAT WE SHOULD NOT PLAY WITH DIRECT ACCENTS, JUST VERY CLEAR TONGUING.

FOCUS ON THAT ALL NOTES SHOULD BE PLAYED THROUGH THE INSTRUMENT - NOT JUST INTO IT, SO THE TONE THAT COMES OUT FROM THE INSTRUMENT ALLWAYS IS OPTIMAL.

THINK THAT ALL NOTES WE PLAY, ARE PLAYED FORWARD AND STRAIGHT AHEAD, SO WE DON'T FOCUS TOO MUCH ON WHETHER IT'S HIGH OR LOW NOTES.

ALWAYS LISTEN TO WHAT COMES OUT OF THE INSTRUMENT – even though many times we focus mostly on what and how we put into it.

WE SHOULD ALWAYS PLAY WITH THE BEST IMAGINABLE QUALITY.

THE TONE OR PHRASE WE ARE PLAYING MUST ALWAYS BE PLAYED AS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WE HAVE EVER PLAYED, AND WITH THE BEST IMAGINABLE SOUND. THIS NOTE OR PHRASE IS THEN PLAYED TO THE NEXT NOTE/PHRASE, WHICH IS THEN PLAYED EVEN MORE BEAUTIFULLY AND WITH EVEN BETTER SOUND AND QUALITY, AND SO ON….

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The exercises in this book have been developed and emerged, as I have experienced from my studies that many brass players – and especially trumpeters, have challenges with looping on their instrument. Not least making legato upwards on natural tones often causes problems.

When we start all notes with a clear touch and spick them long – accent/line, they cause feeling of playing all notes forward – that is, not just up and down, getting better and stronger. To make these distinct and elegant poses, we also need to activate the tongue. It is of the utmost importance that the tongue is constantly activated, as this must help regulate the pitch. This means that when we have to make the slurs afterwards, it is significantly easier to maintain the flow on the air and the slurs are therefore easier to perform.

I compare the long tones to turning on a faucet. When the water is turned on, there is a long and even jet of water that does not immediately change.

If we then run a finger through this water jet, we divide the jet without changing the pressure from the tap. If we make this movement slowly, the water will spray around over the place – if we make this movement quickly, we just quickly divide the water jet, and nearly nothing will happen with the water jet.

If we think about the movement of the tongue in the same way as the finger through the water jet, we can break our airflow very quickly, and in this way does not lose any of the flow/pressure on the air that we need to regulate the tones on the instrument.

When we play our long notes with clear movements and tonguing, it is also very important that we put the right notes – and with the right pressure on the air flow, in and through our mouthpiece/instrument, to get the optimal sound and quality of the notes that will leave the instrument.

By this I mean that in virtually all work/movement we do with our tongue, should take place as close to the lips as possible. This means that already when the air leaves our mouth, the air must "play" the right note, which is then amplified through the mouthpiece and out through our instrument. This feeling can be obtained by saying "zzziii".

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- Do the following exercise without mouthpiece or instrument.

Take a relaxed normal breath "all the way down into the stomach".

Maintain the mouth position/embouchure as we usually do when playing and start the air by saying "thyyyyyyy".

Focus on the air leaving the mouth in a small and even jet, directly into the hole in the mouthpiece (which is not there right now).

When doing this exercise, the whole body should be completely relaxed and without any tension. The air therefore passes through the lips without being pushed through. It is important that the air is very centered when it leaves the mouth and out through the lips.

Keep the same flow on the air and now go very slowly from "thyyyy" to "thiiiii" without changing the embouchure. We should not blow more or harder, but only focus on going from "thyyyy" to "thiiii". Hopefully we can feel that it can easily be done and that it is more or less only the tongue that does the work.

Now make the same attempt to start on "thyyyy", and slowly go to "thooo". Pay attention to thinking the air forward and not downward. The tone should now be lower, but the tip of the tongue should still be as far forward in the mouth as possible. This is so we do not get the feeling that the tongue "falls back" and that we thus lose the intensity of the air. Care must still be taken not to inflate more or less, but only to focus on inflating a steady air flow with intense air pressure, thus causing the tone to become higher or lower.

Now do the exercise several times with glissando both up and down. However, be constantly aware to keep the embouchure in the same position - the same flow of air that comes from below (with the feeling that it comes all the way down from the

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stomach) and that it is the tongue that regulates the pitch of the air when it leaves the lips.

The intensity and sound of air leaving the mouth and out through our lips, is of the utmost importance to optimize our sound and flexibility.

Garden hose

The way I believe we can regulate the speed of the air with the tongue as a valve, can also be compared to a garden hose.

If you take a garden hose without any kind of nozzle/valve at the end and open the water – there will be a certain pressure on the water coming out of it.

To change this pressure on the water leaving the garden hose, we can squeeze the exit of the garden hose, and thus make the water jet/pressure leave the garden hose faster. Note that the pressure of the water from the tap and out into the garden hose is still the same as before, and that we can regulate this by pressing together or loose the end of the hose.

If we do the same exercise, but instead of squeezing together the end of the garden hose - squeeze it together about 10 cm back from the end. What happens then? Well, then we can't regulate the pressure on the water coming out of the tube at all, but it just causes less water to come out of the garden hose....

Therefore, it is very important that we have our valve in the mouth – the tongue, as close to the exit as possible – the lips, to regulate the speed of the air leaving our mouth.

What often happens if you don't have the "valve" in our mouth – the tongue – not activated. The "valve" is then moved back to the throat, which means that less air comes out from the mouth and the pressure that must come out through the lips is virtually unregulated.

To always get the optimal sound and to make it as easy as possible for us to play, it is very important that there always is a balance between the pressure that leaves the lips and into the mouthpiece, and the contact (pressure) we need to have with the mouthpiece against the lips. If these two factors do not "play" together, and one or the other gets the upper hand, here too we risk losing the tongue's function as a

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valve, and the valve goes back into the throat so that only the amount of air – and not the pressure on the air – can be regulated.

Trampoline effect

In all these exercises, great emphasis must always be placed on the tone that stands alone. When we focus on those tones, we can use them as a "trampoline effect".

Example:

If we stand still on a trampoline and try to jump upwards – this is nearly impossible.

If we first put our weight downwards and then jump upwards, it helps a lot, and we get ourselves "shot" upwards.

We can use these “middle notes" with the same mindset - focus on the fact that they gain a lot of weight and are played extremely long. In this way, they will help us pass on all the notes to the next, without us having to exert ourselves more than necessary.

The exercises in 5 & 6 can with advantage be played the other way around, so we start with the lowest course in each exercise. This can often make us to cheat ourselves. By this I mean that many times when we see some high notes in the music, we immediately react by shutting off because we have the habit of finding it difficult. Therefore, if we start on the lower notes and play our way up, we do not always notice that it becomes a little harder to play the higher notes.

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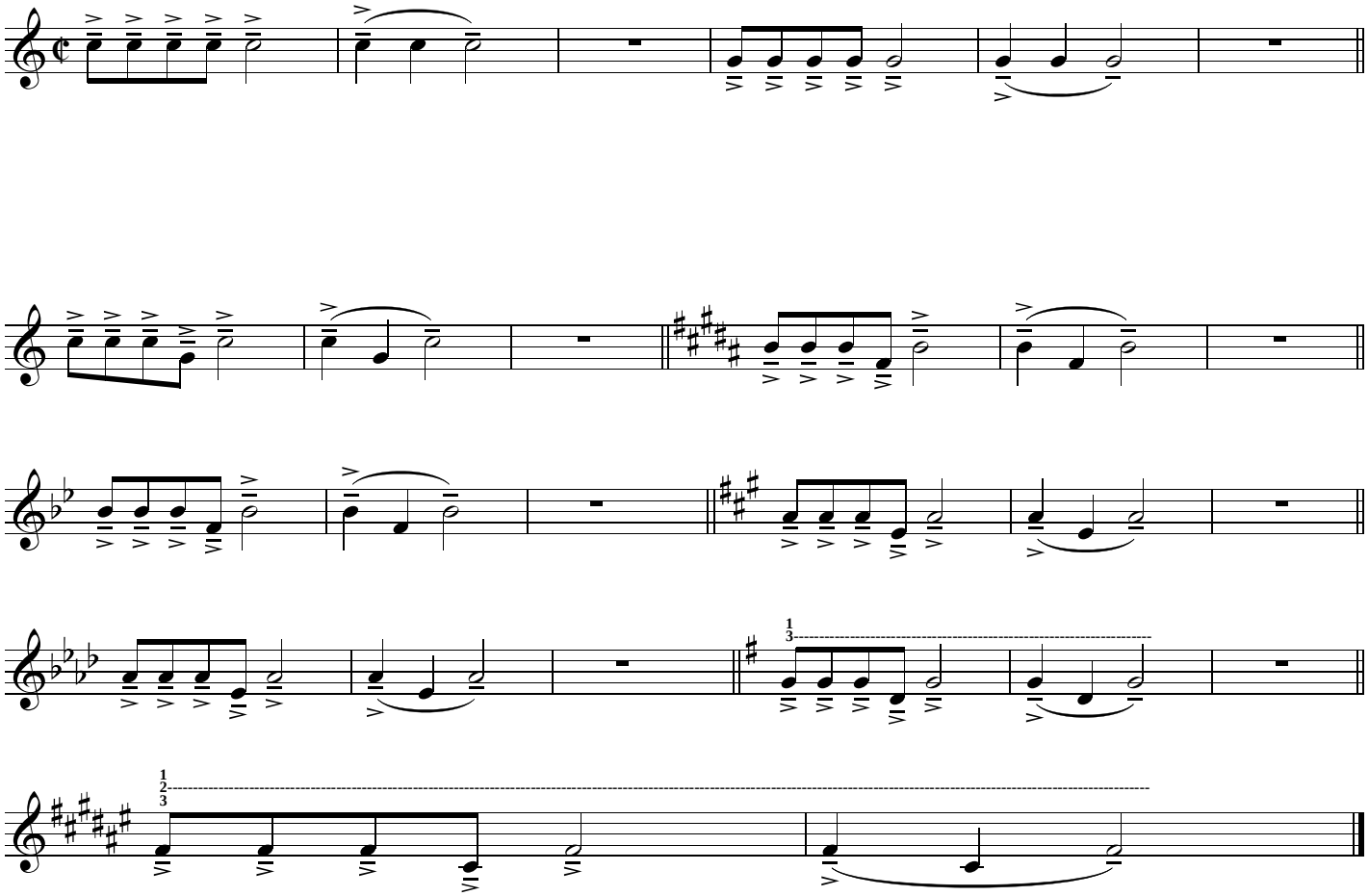

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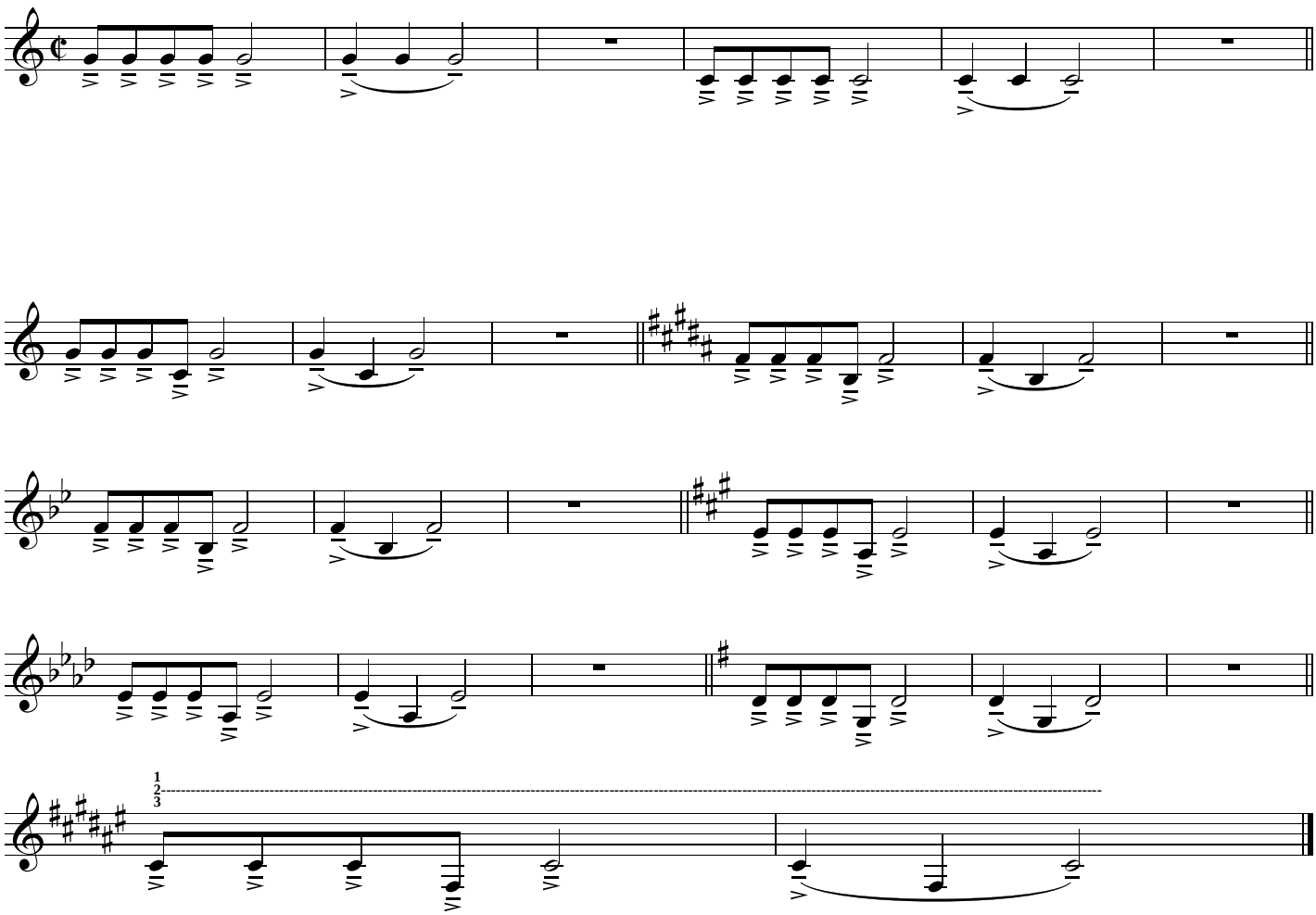

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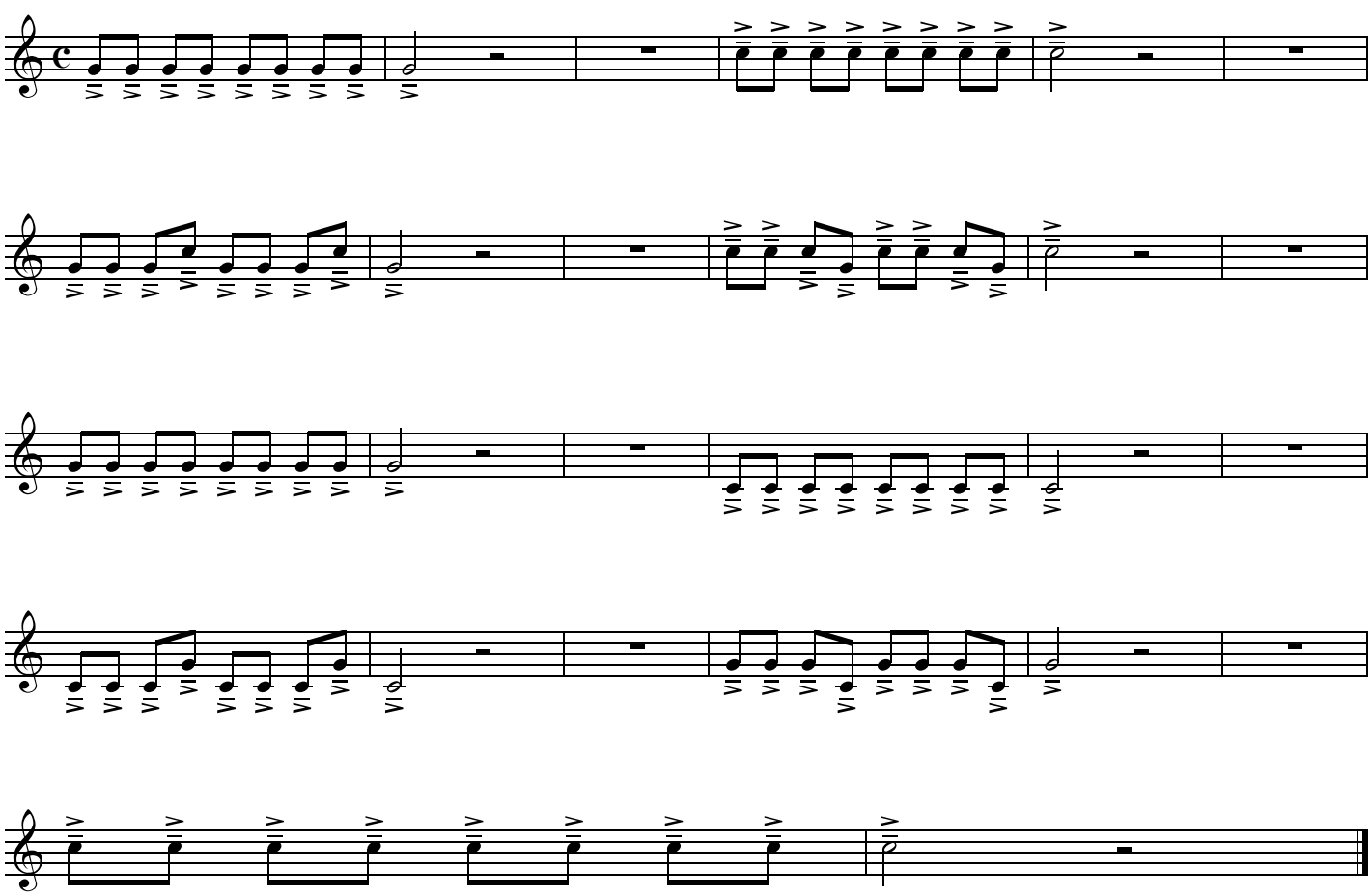

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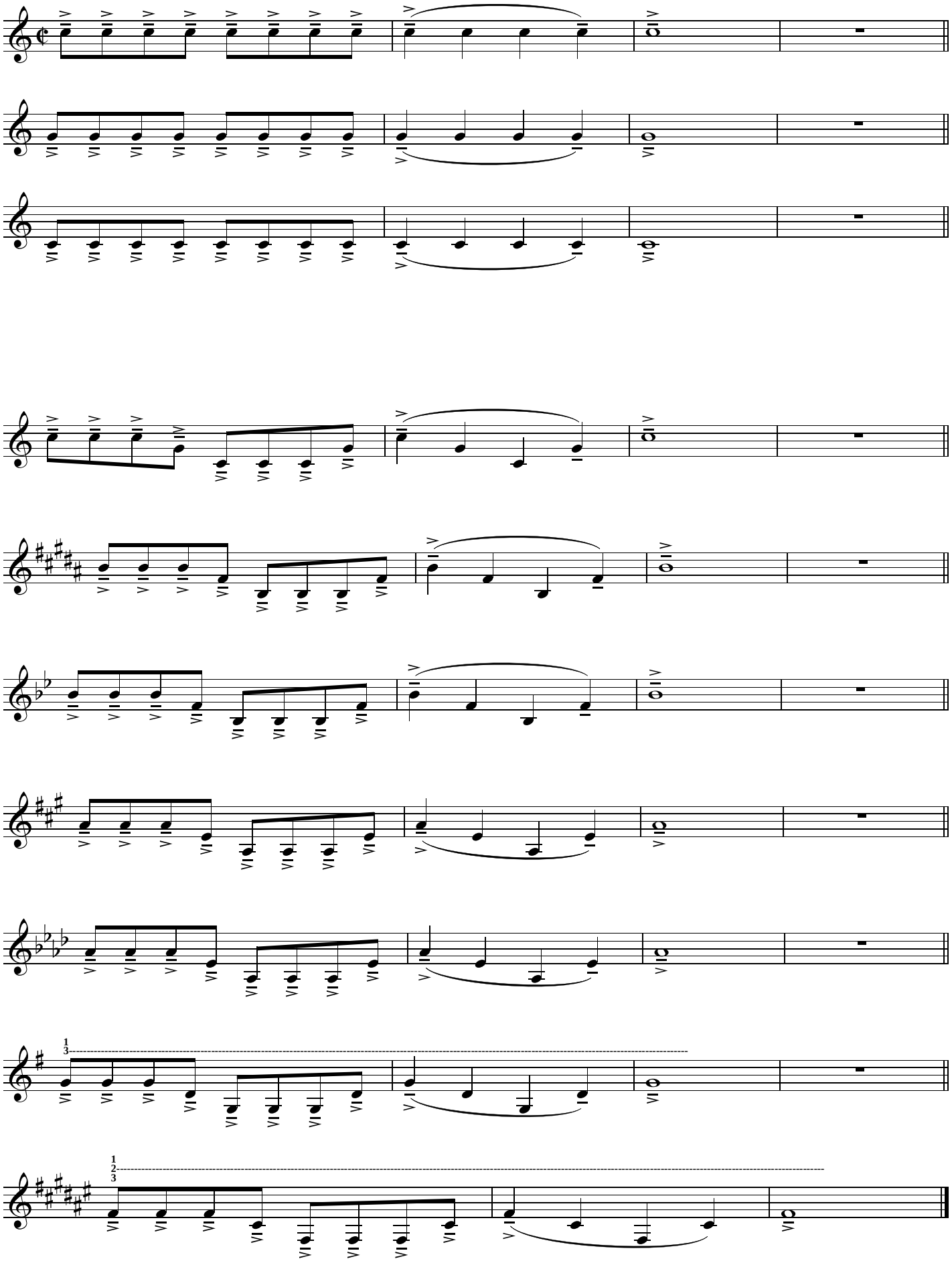

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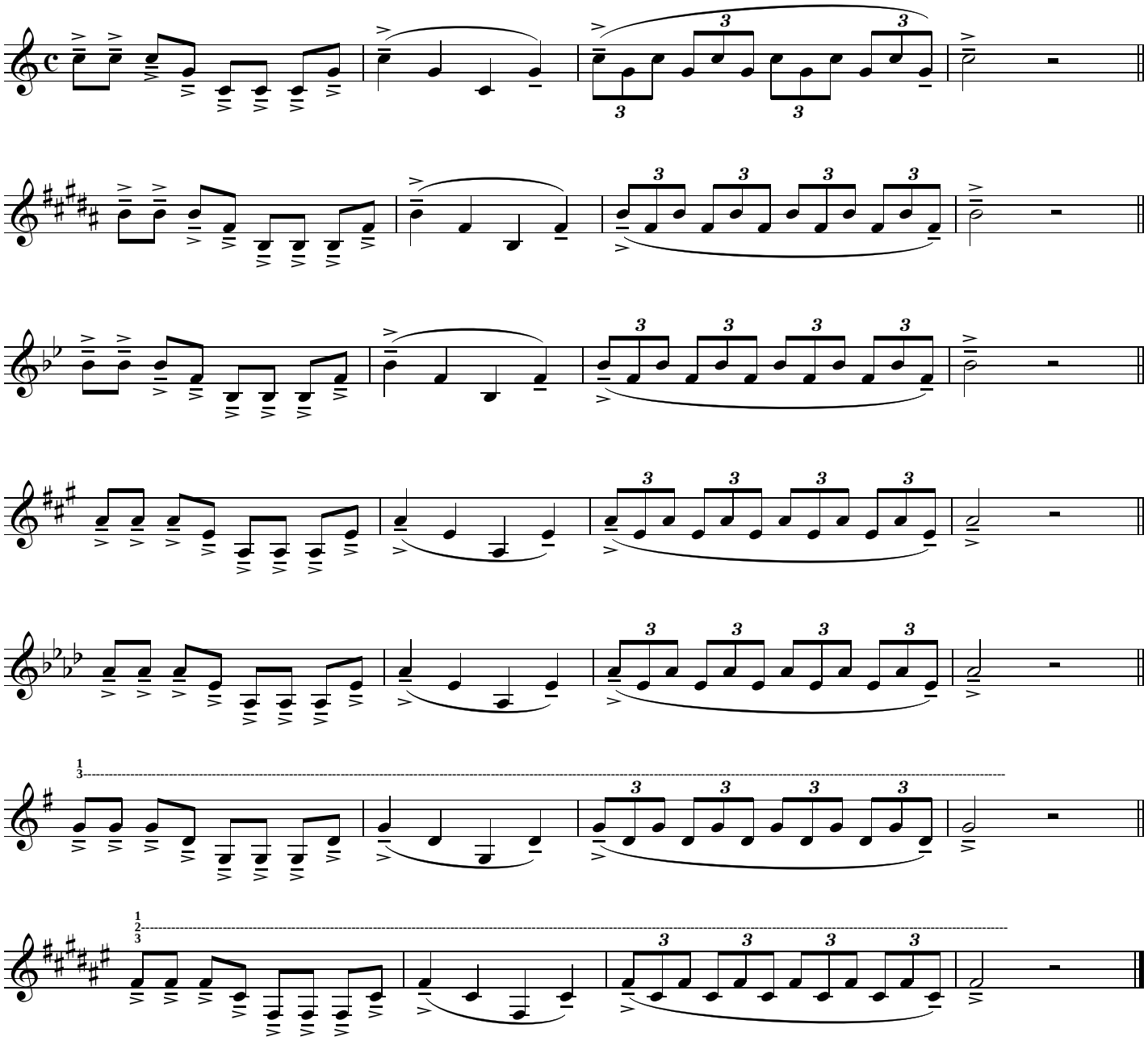

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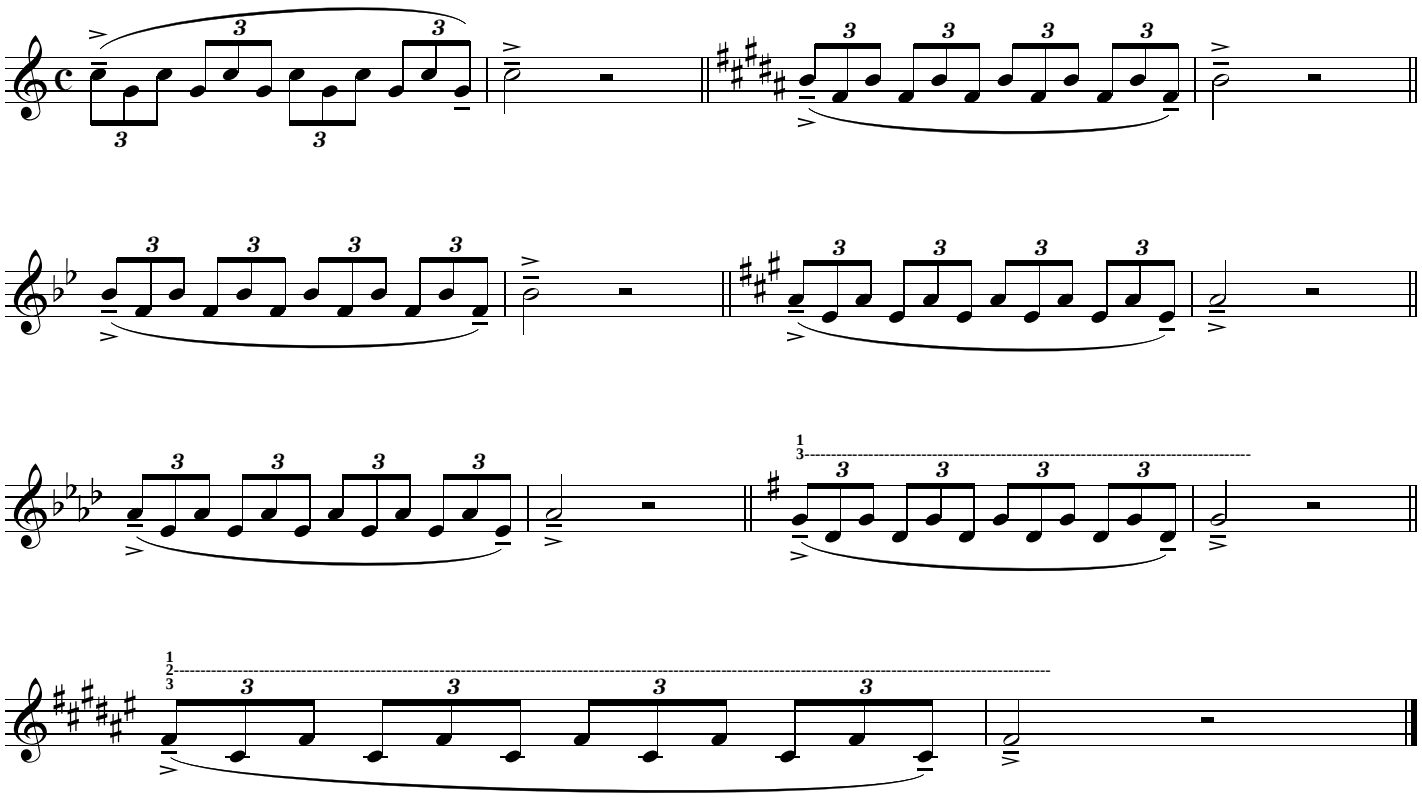

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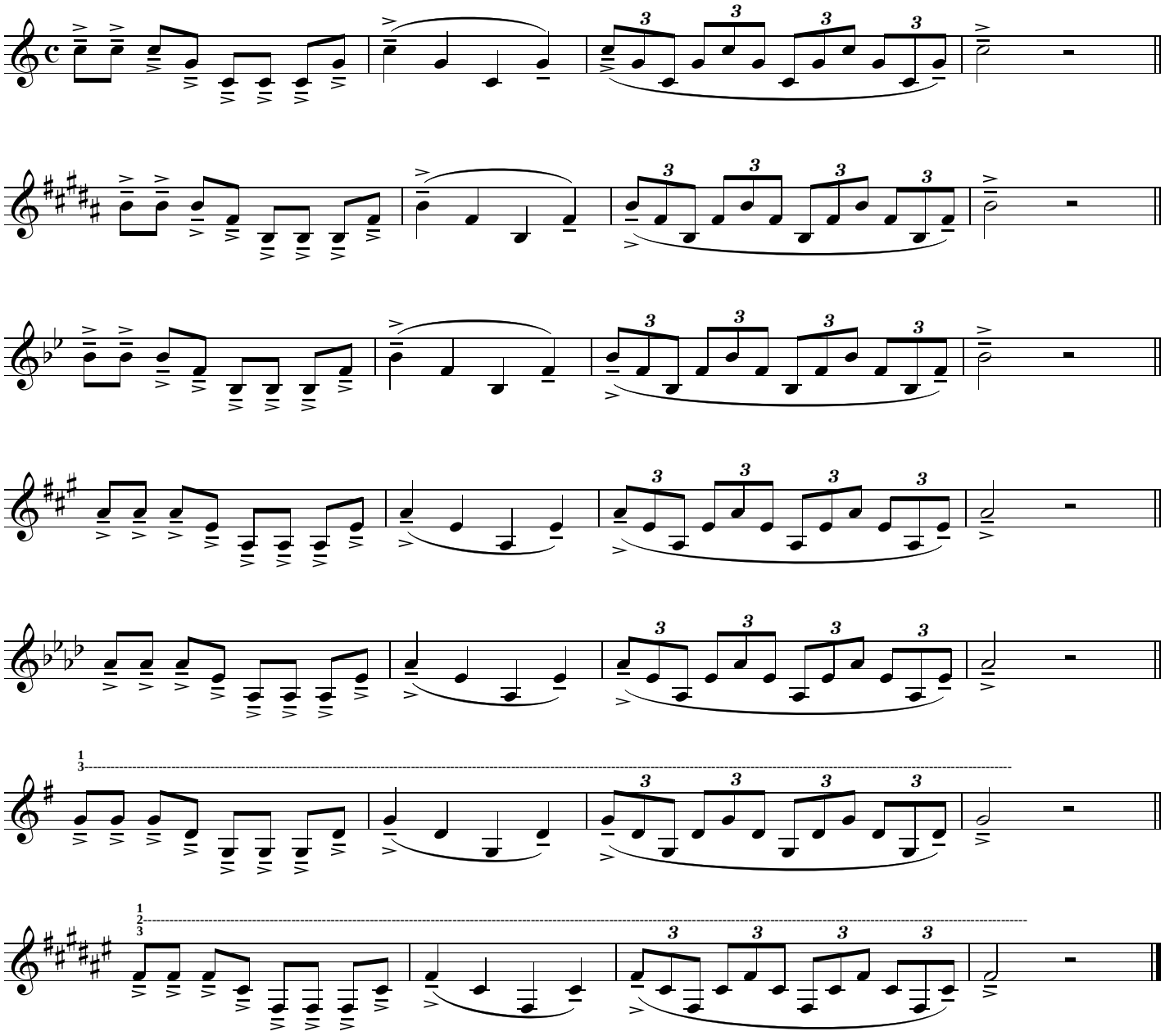

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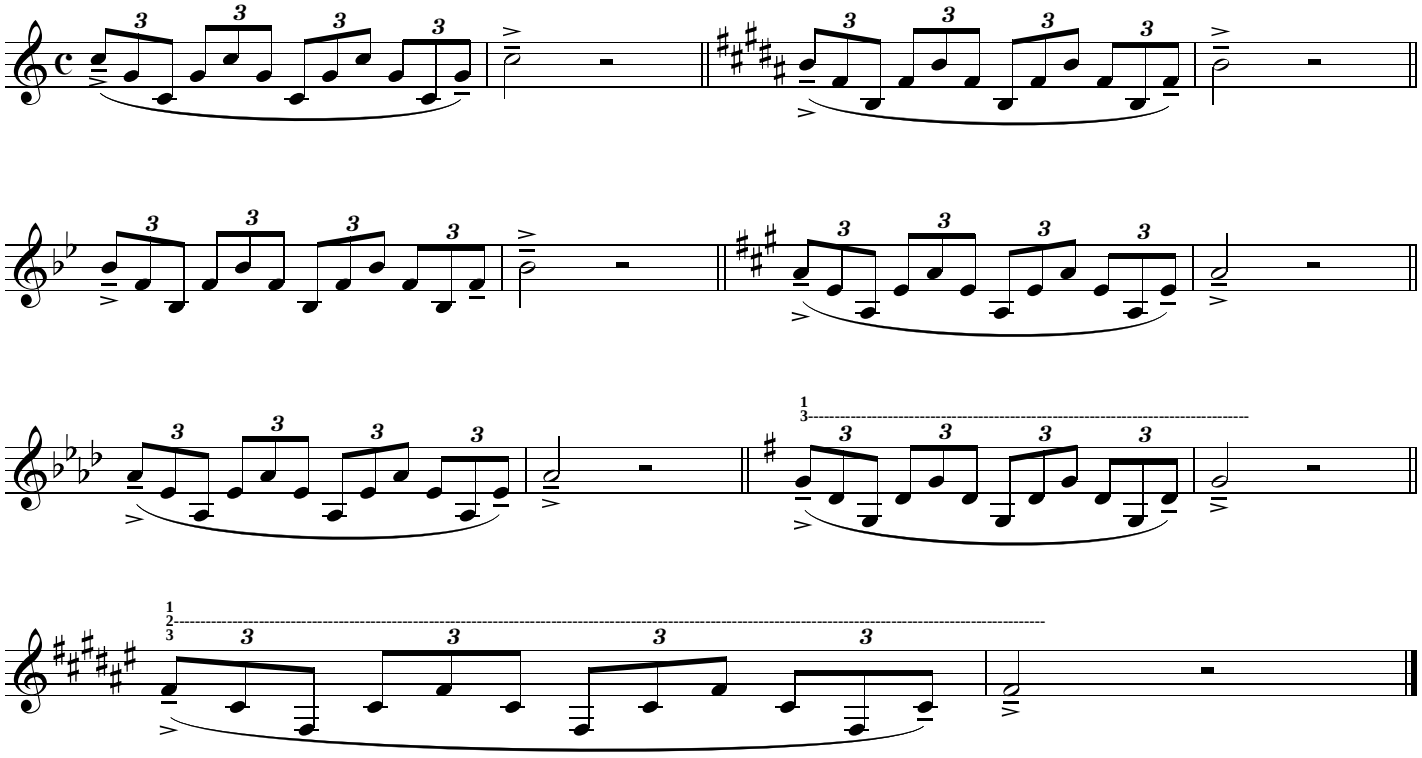

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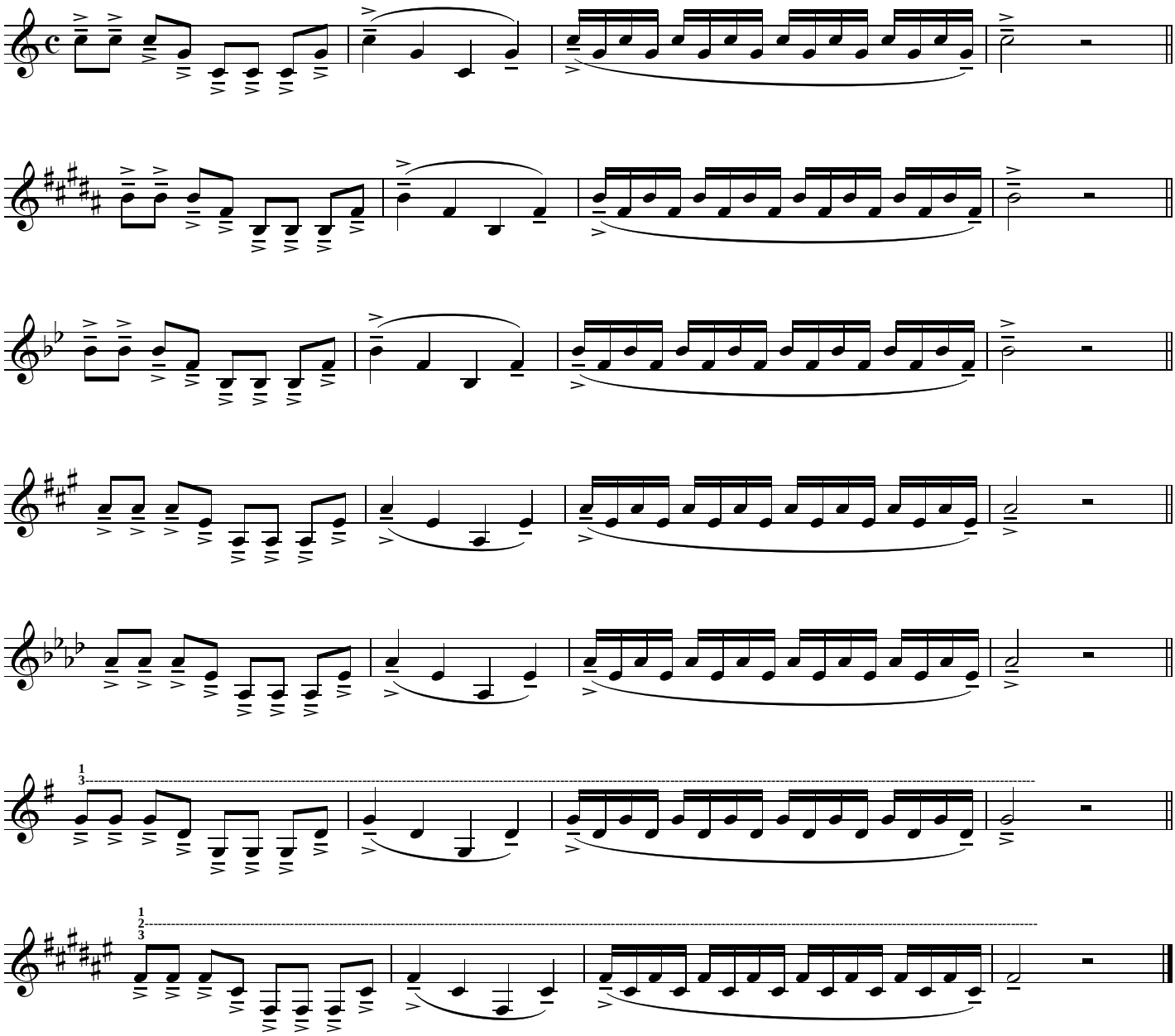

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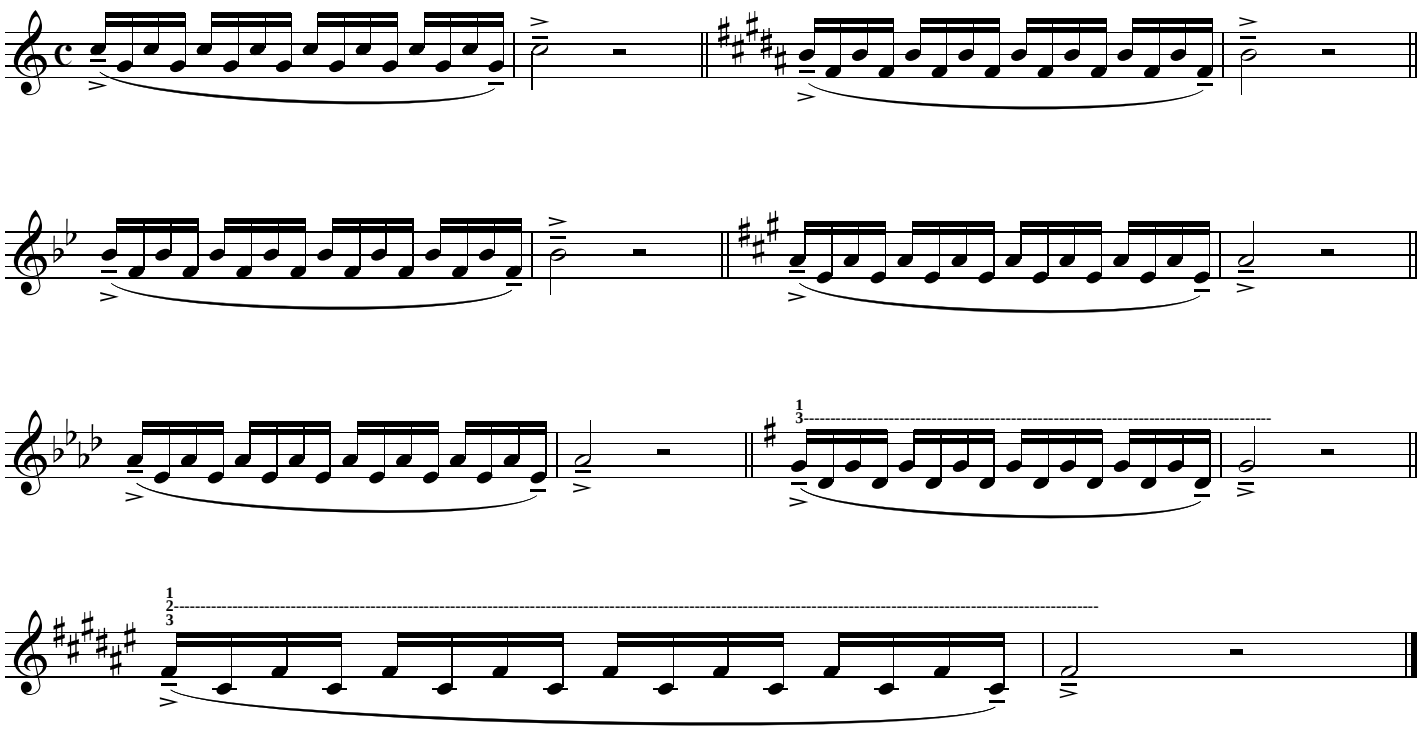

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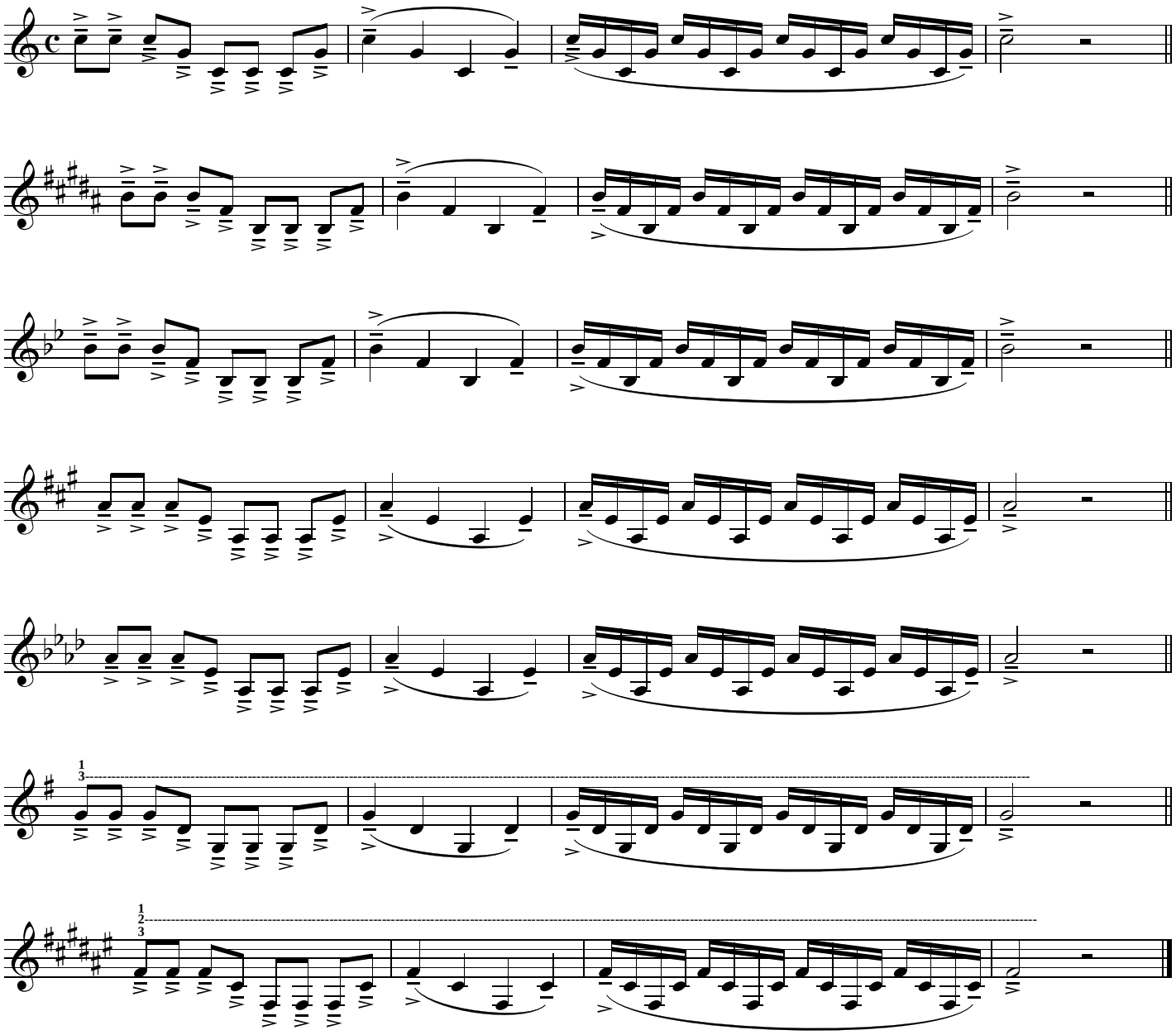

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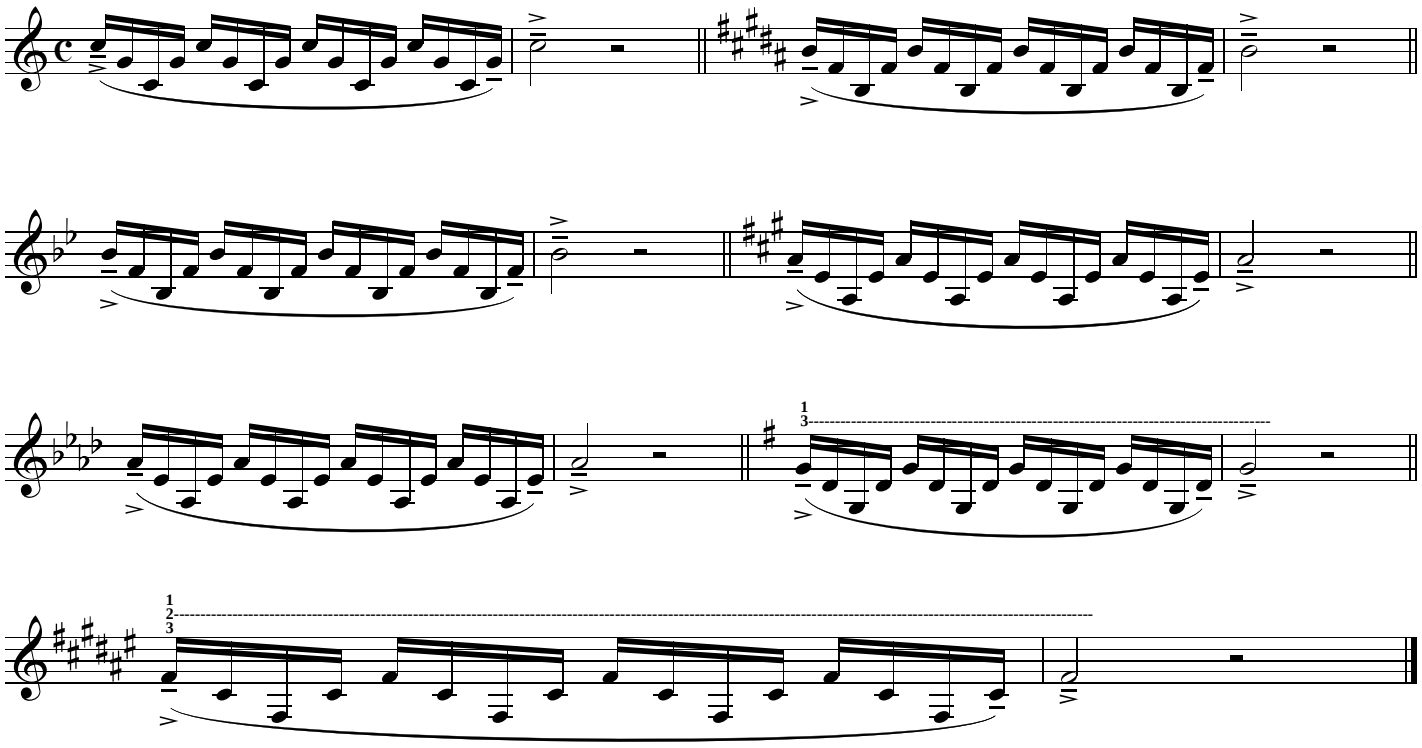

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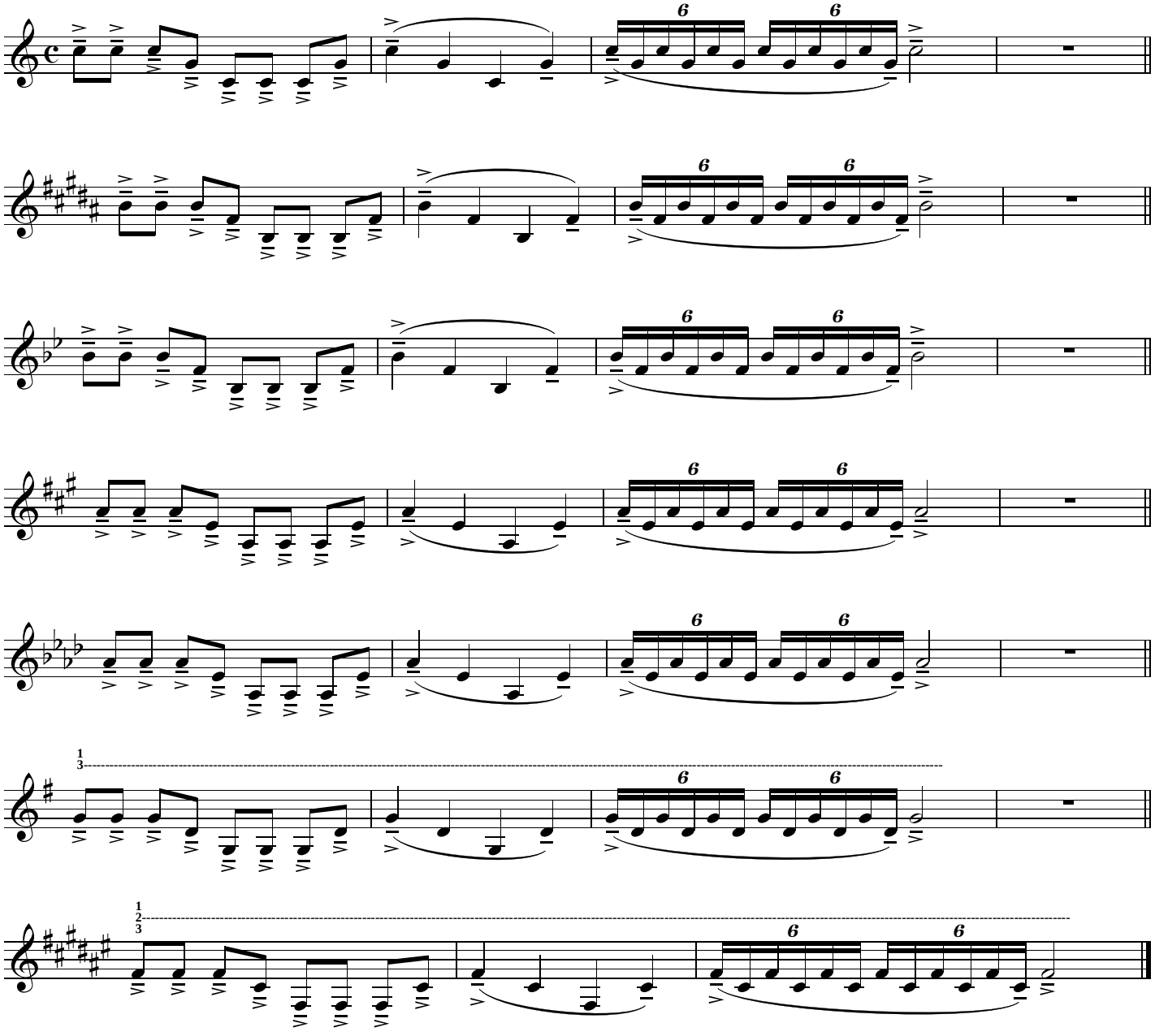

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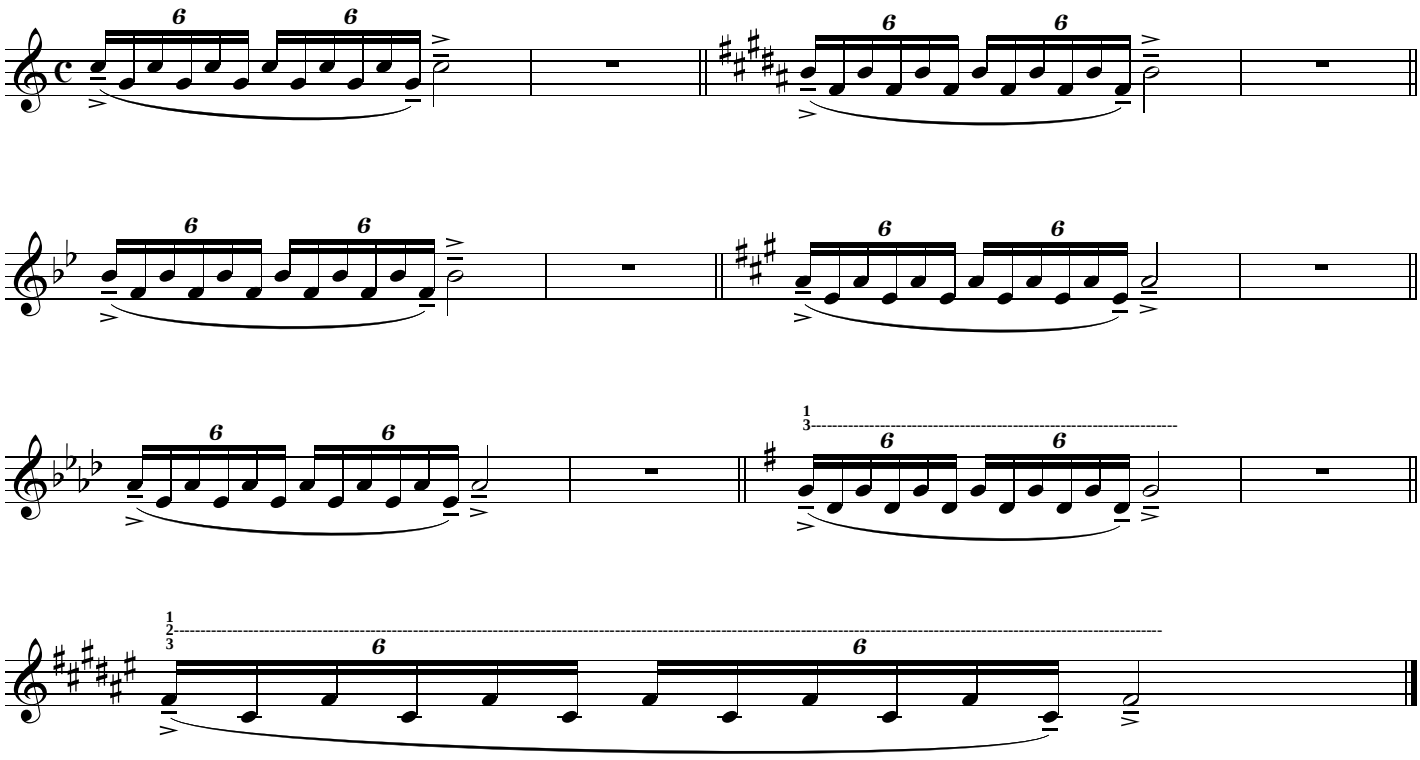

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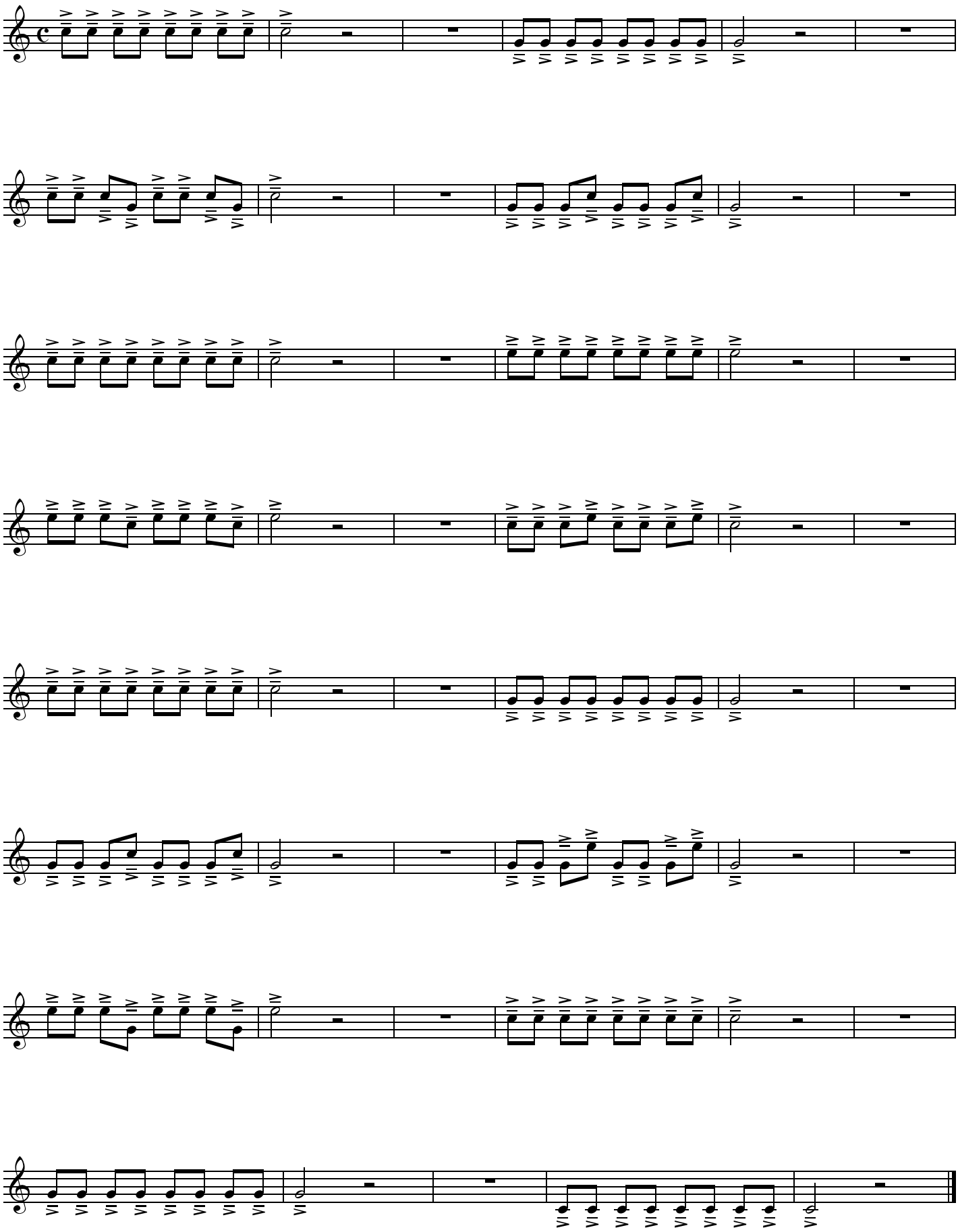

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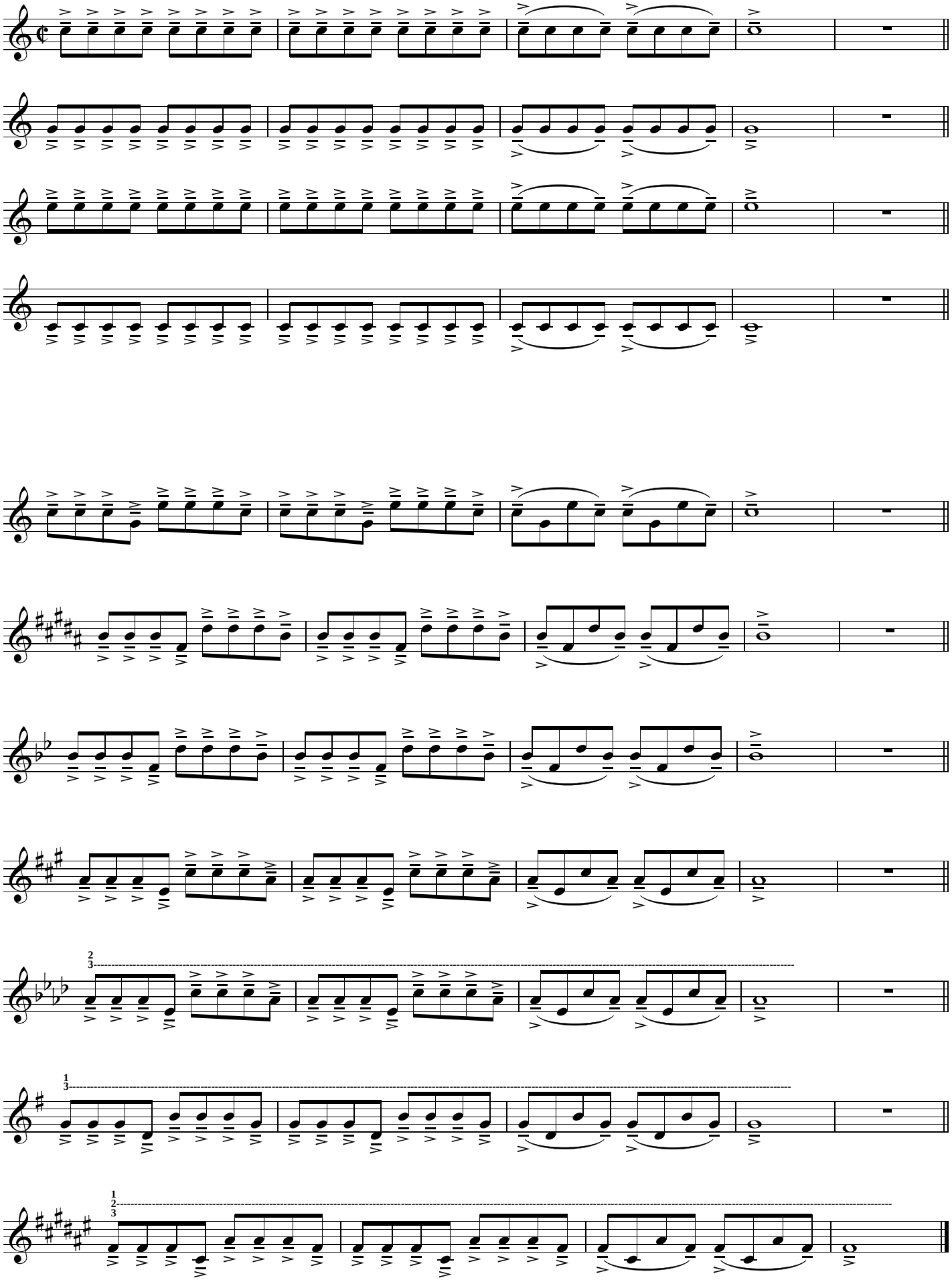

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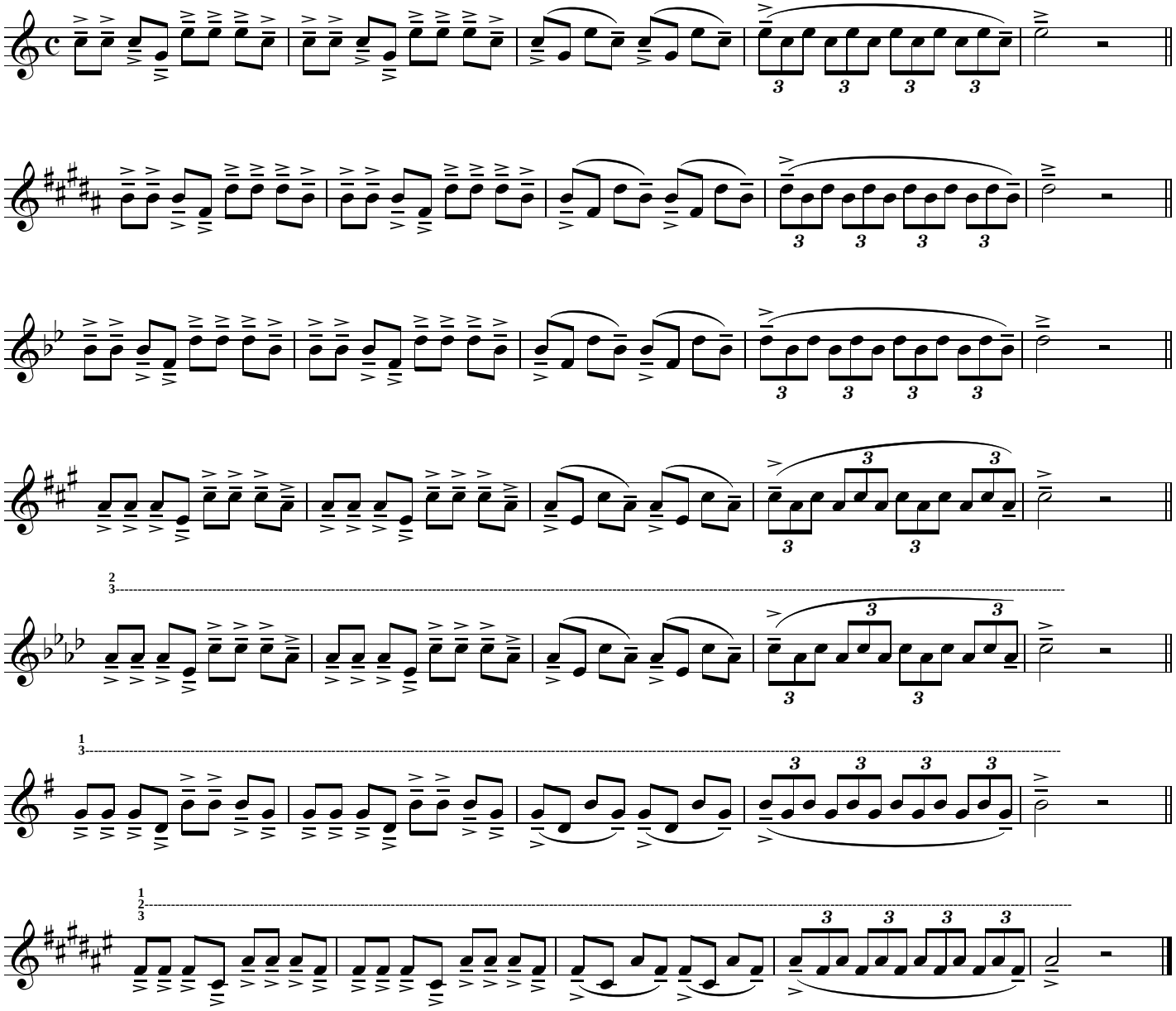

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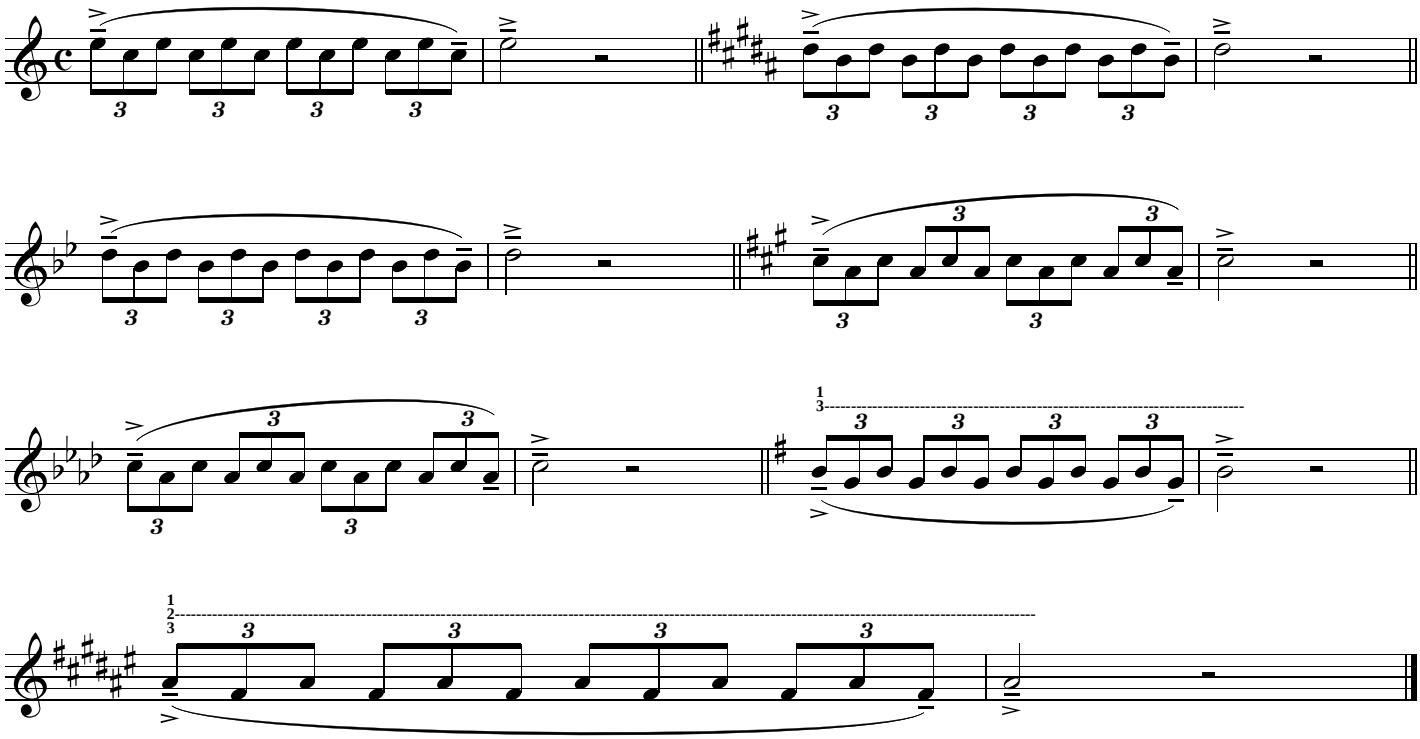

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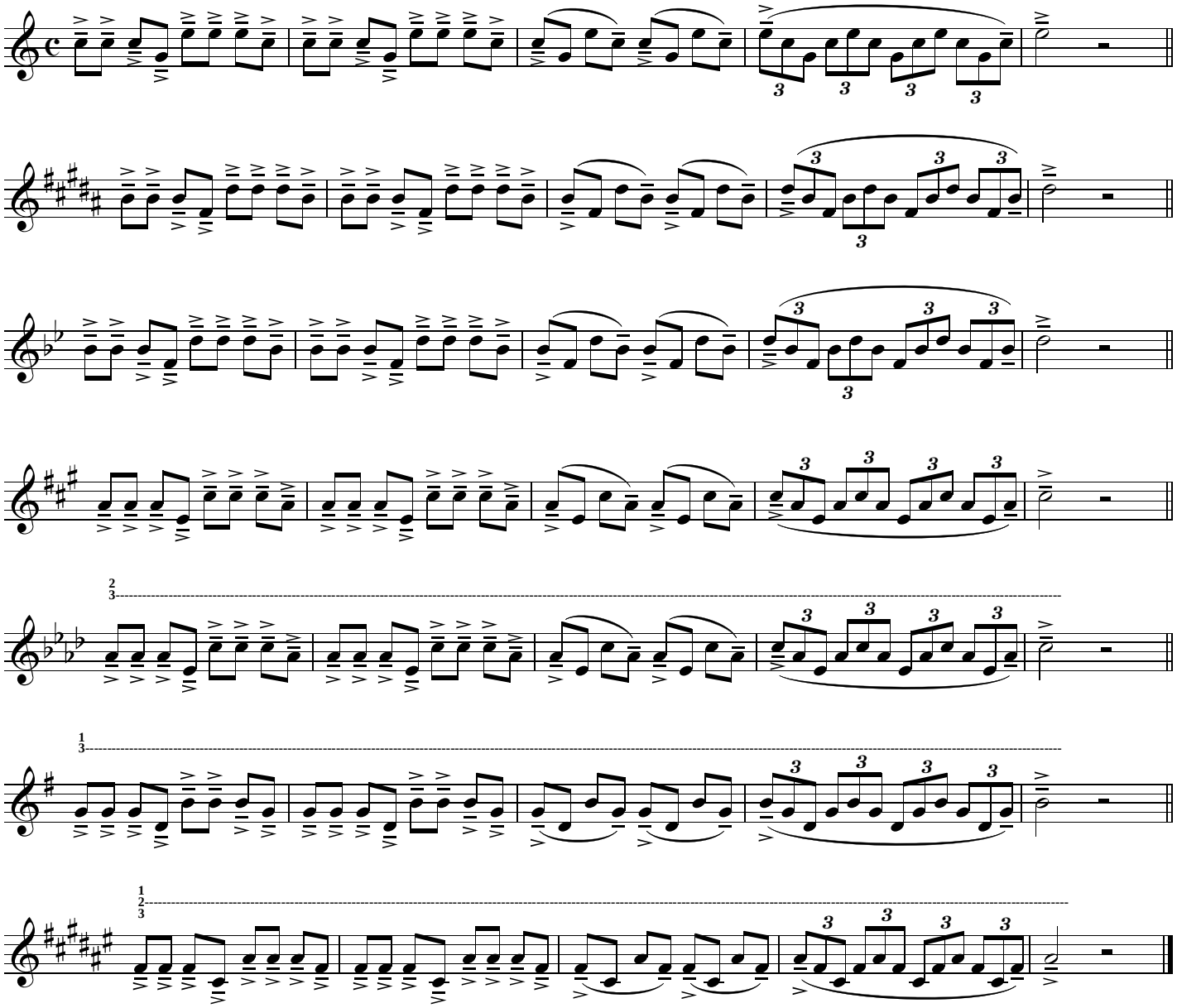

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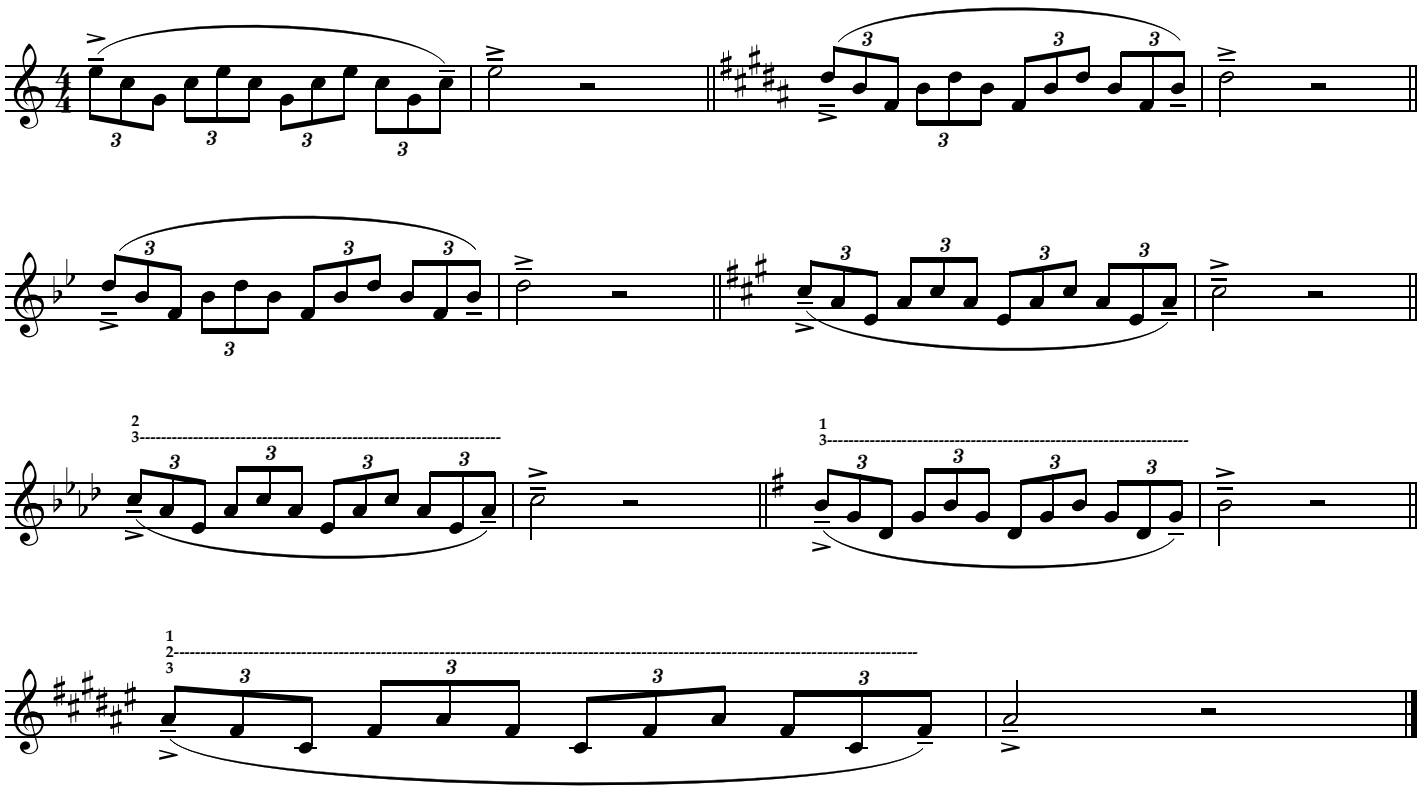

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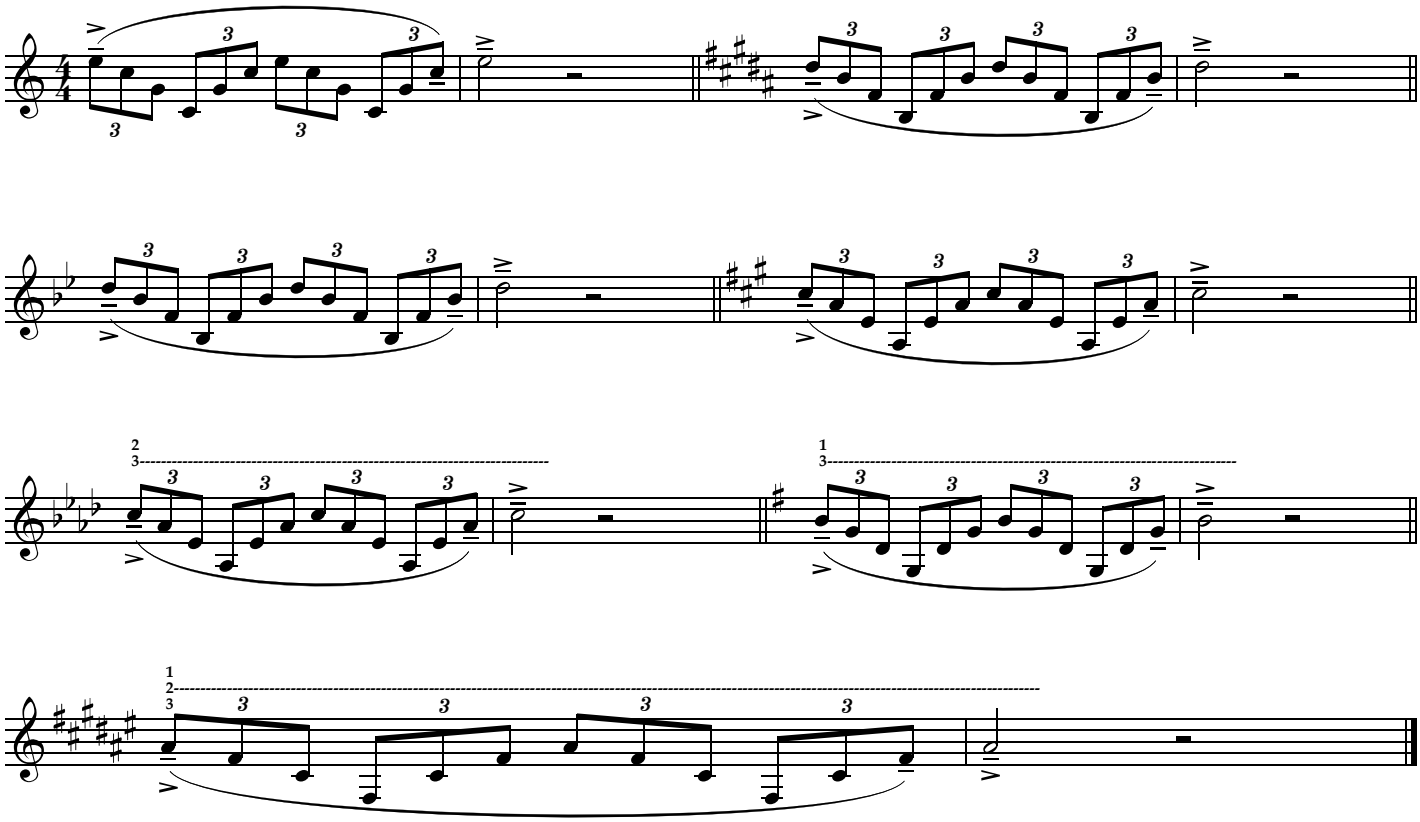

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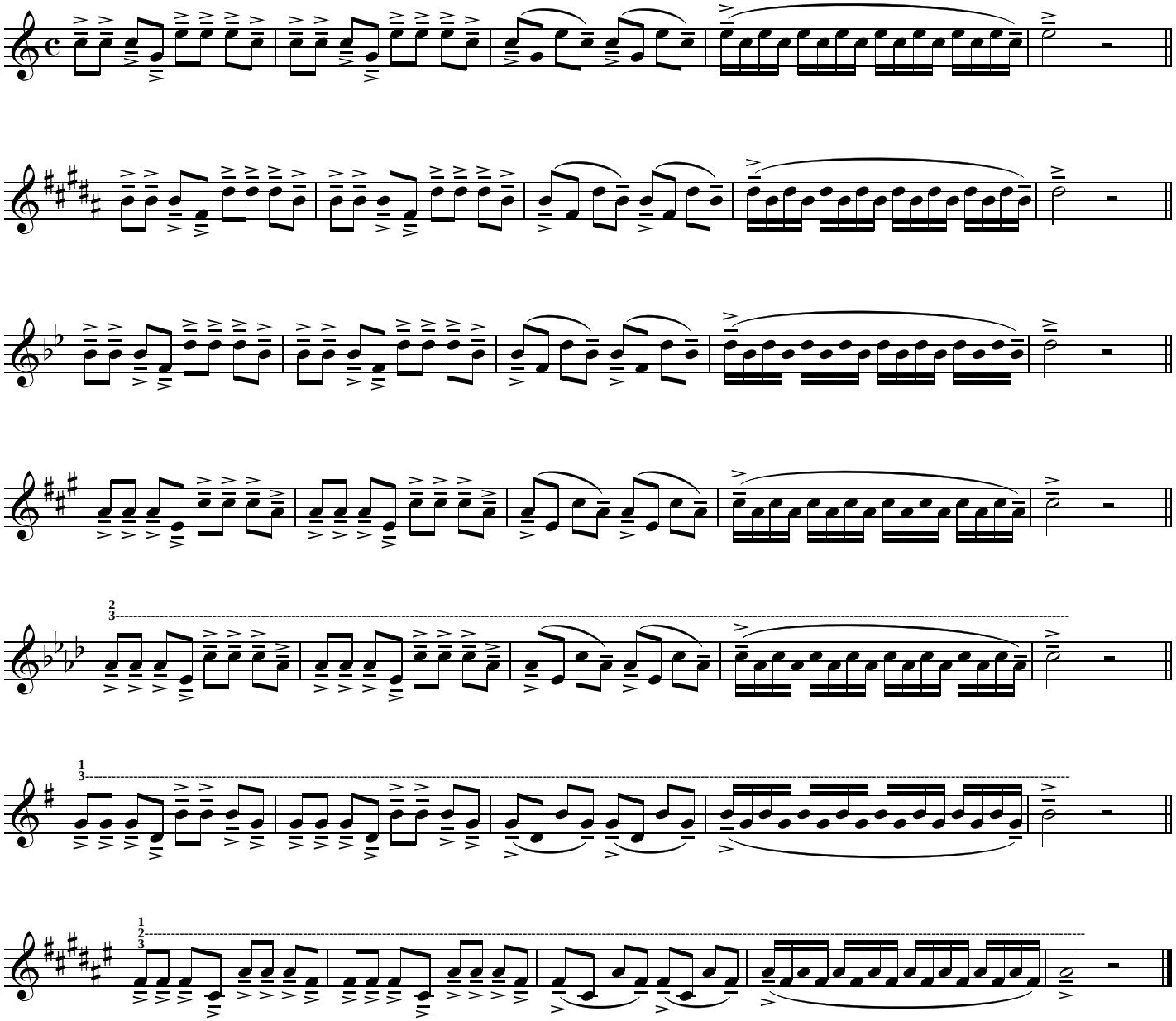

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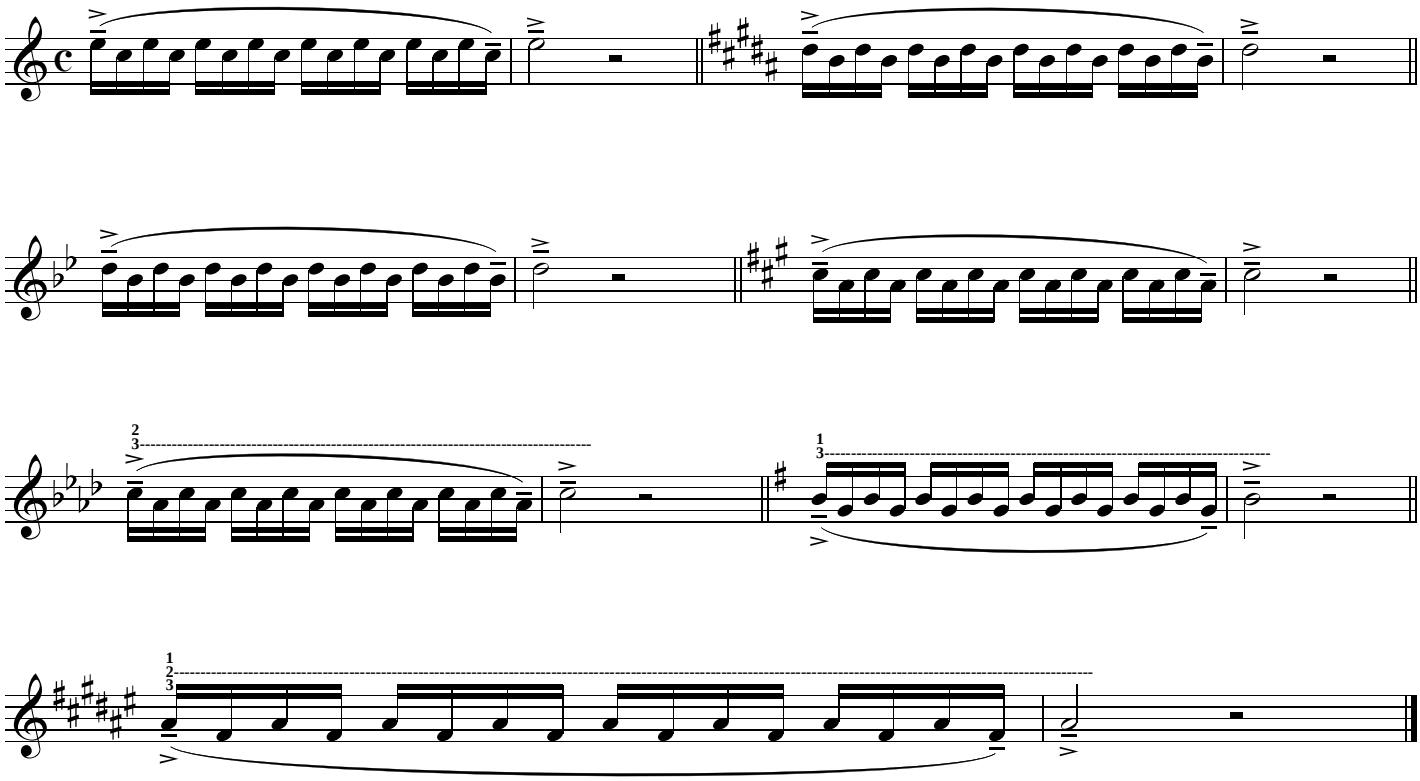

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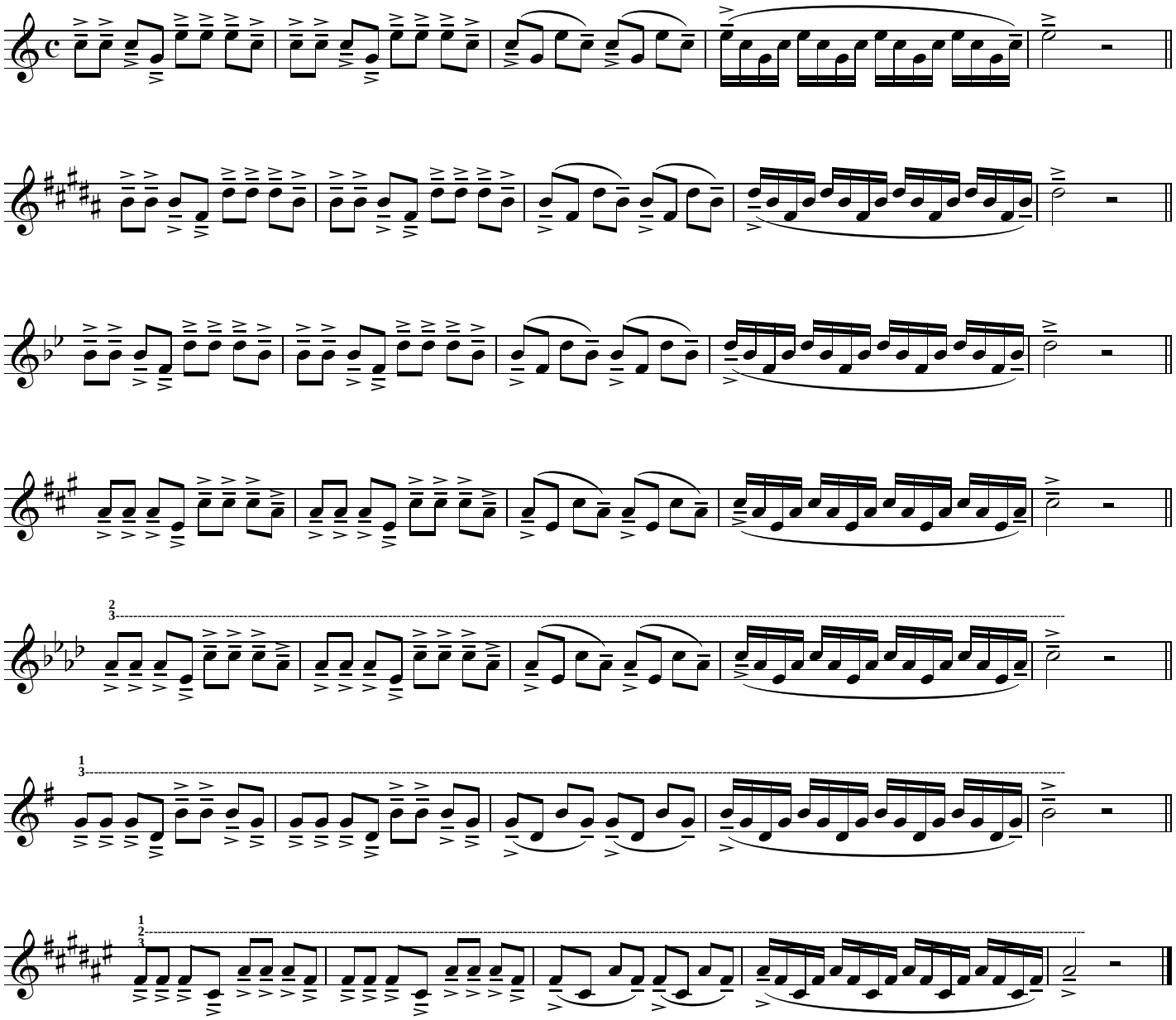

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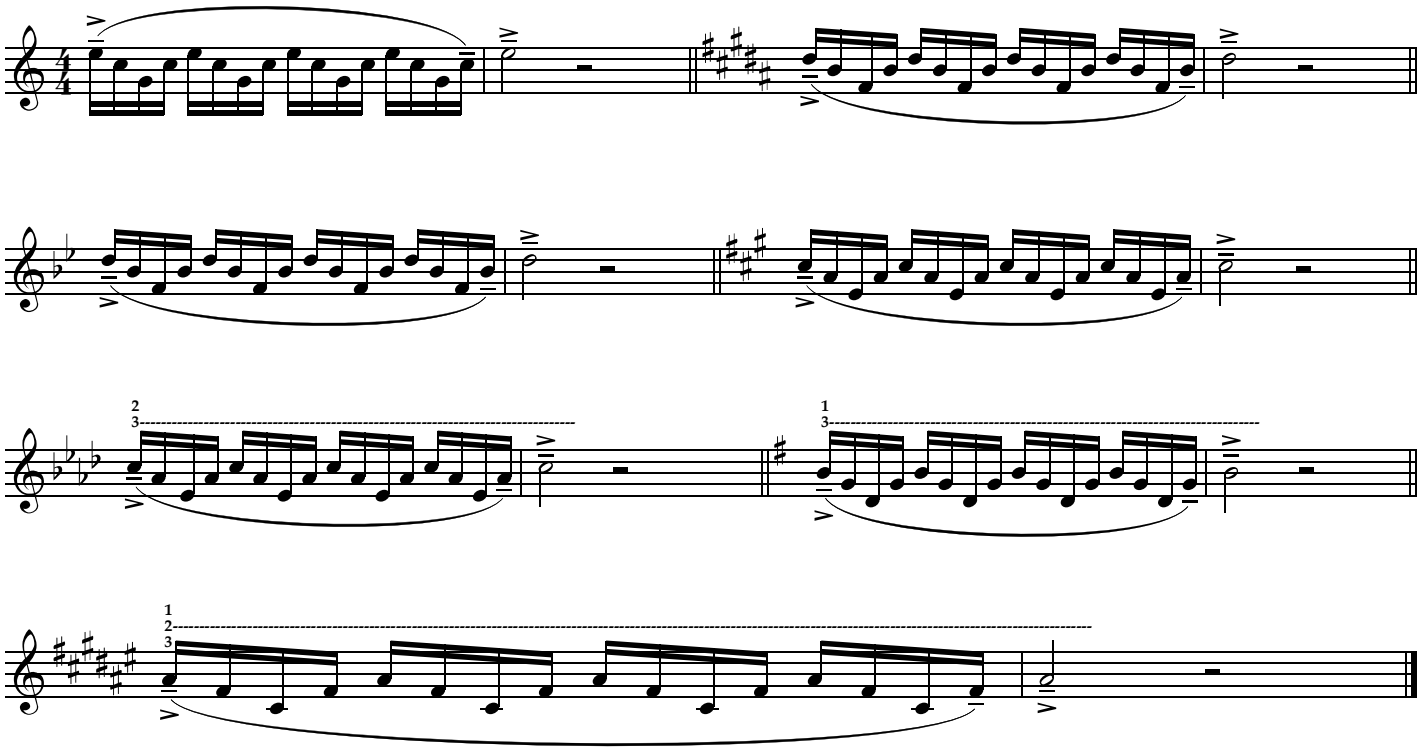

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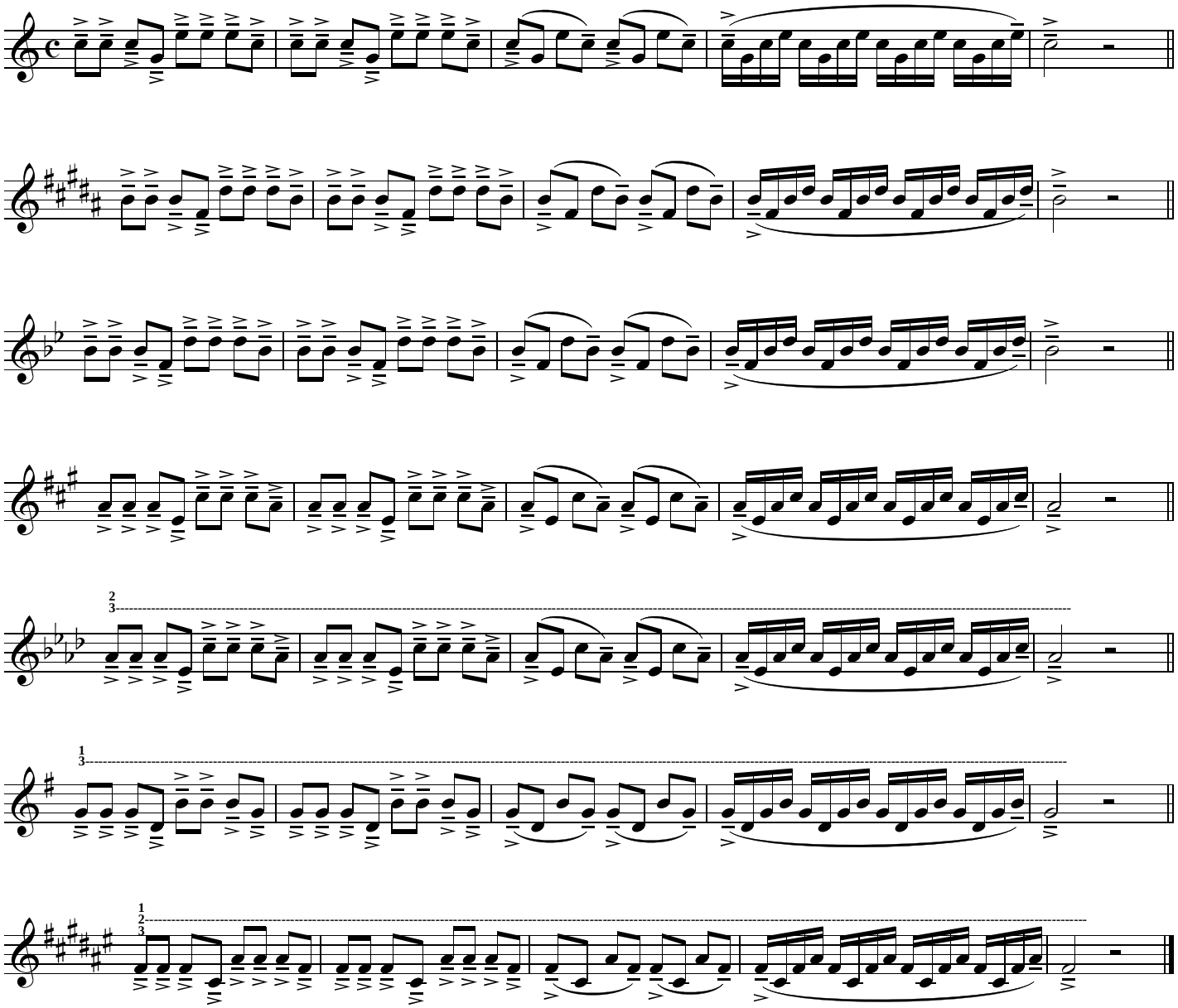

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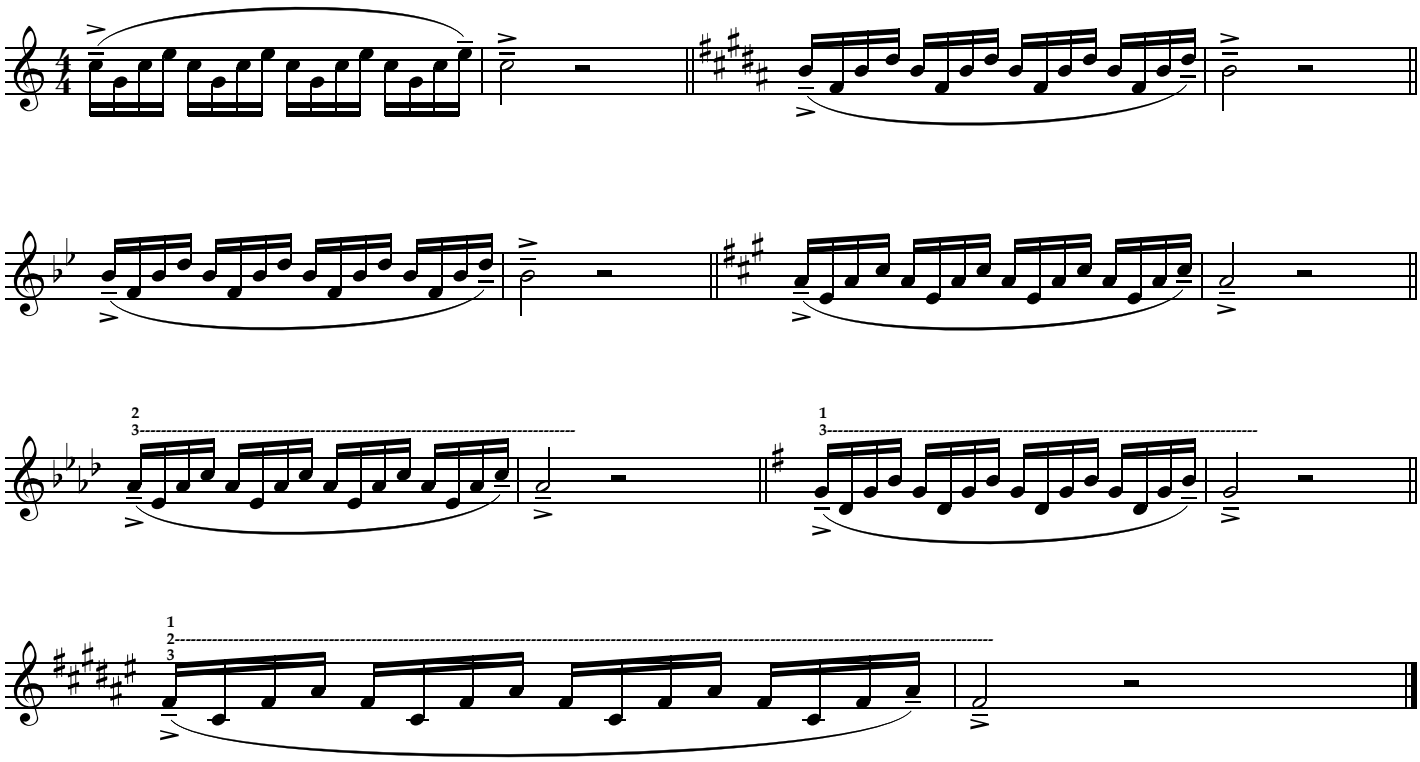

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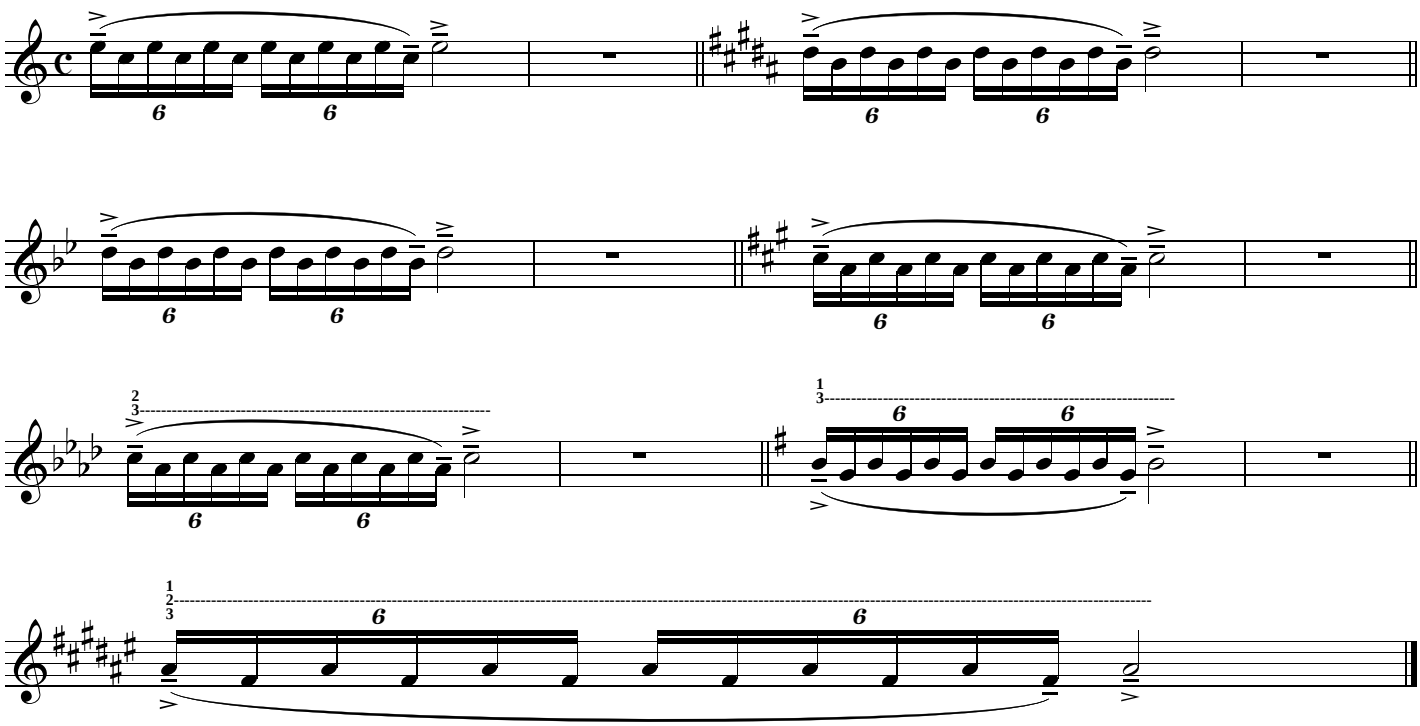

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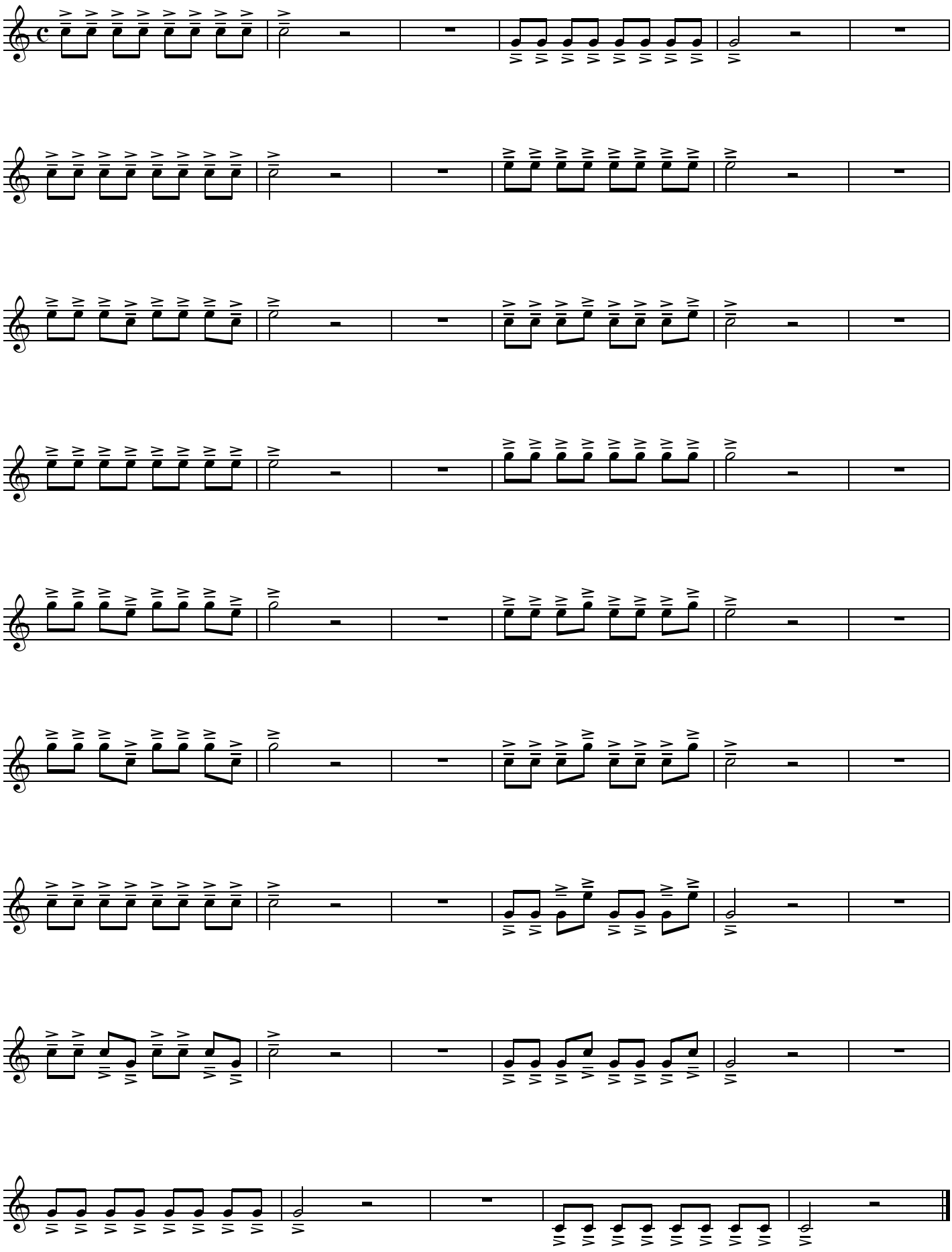
Exercise 5



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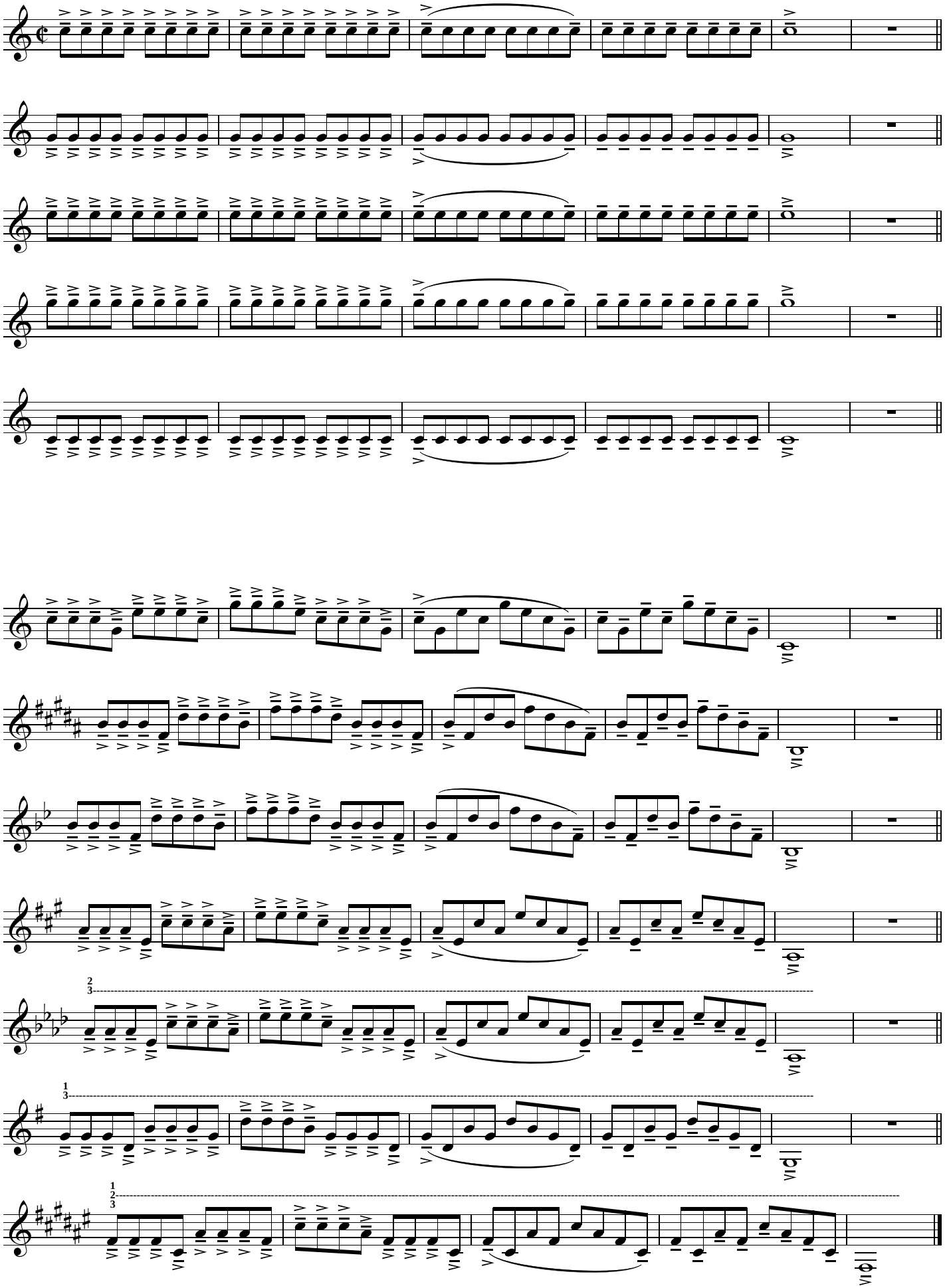

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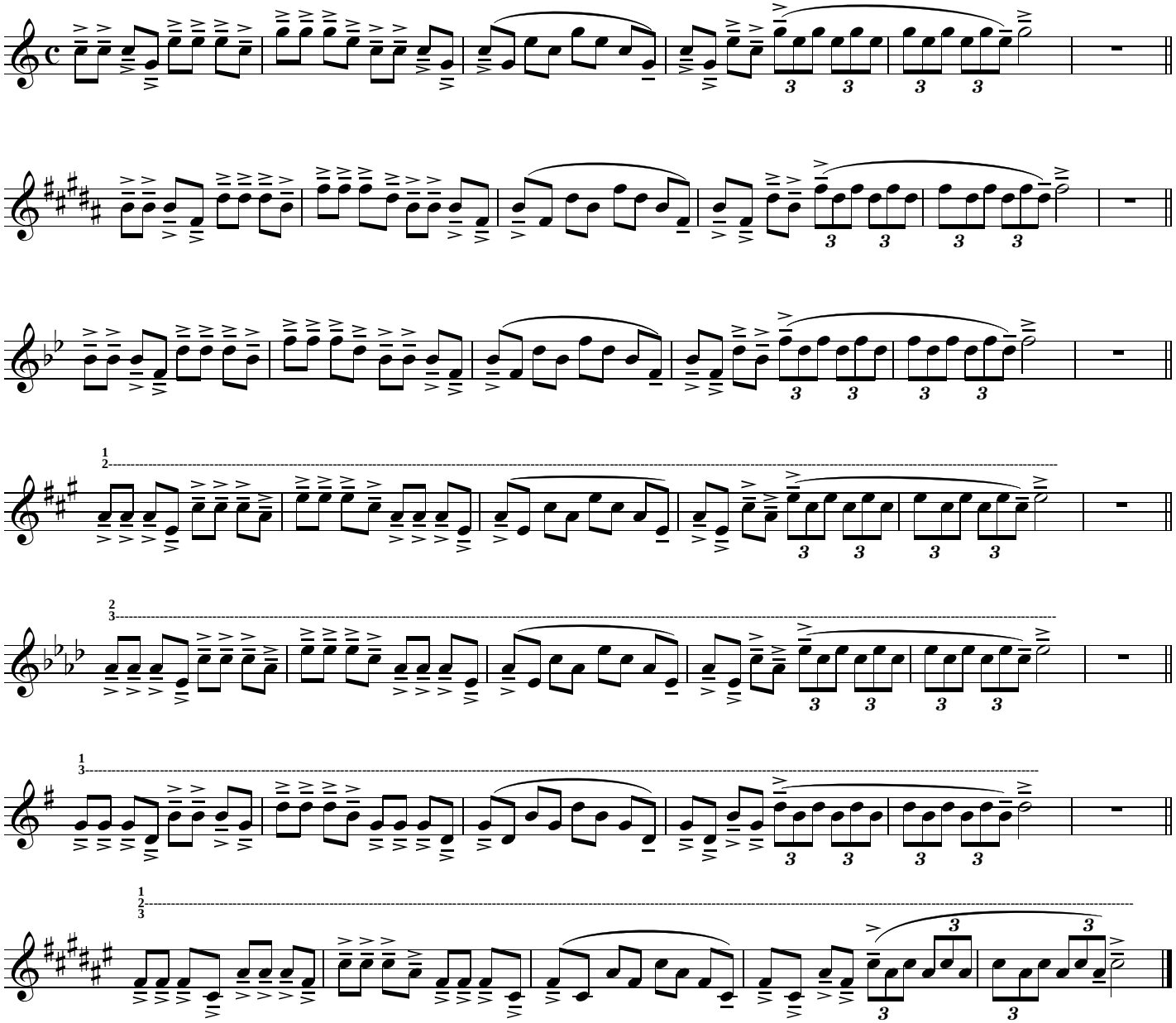

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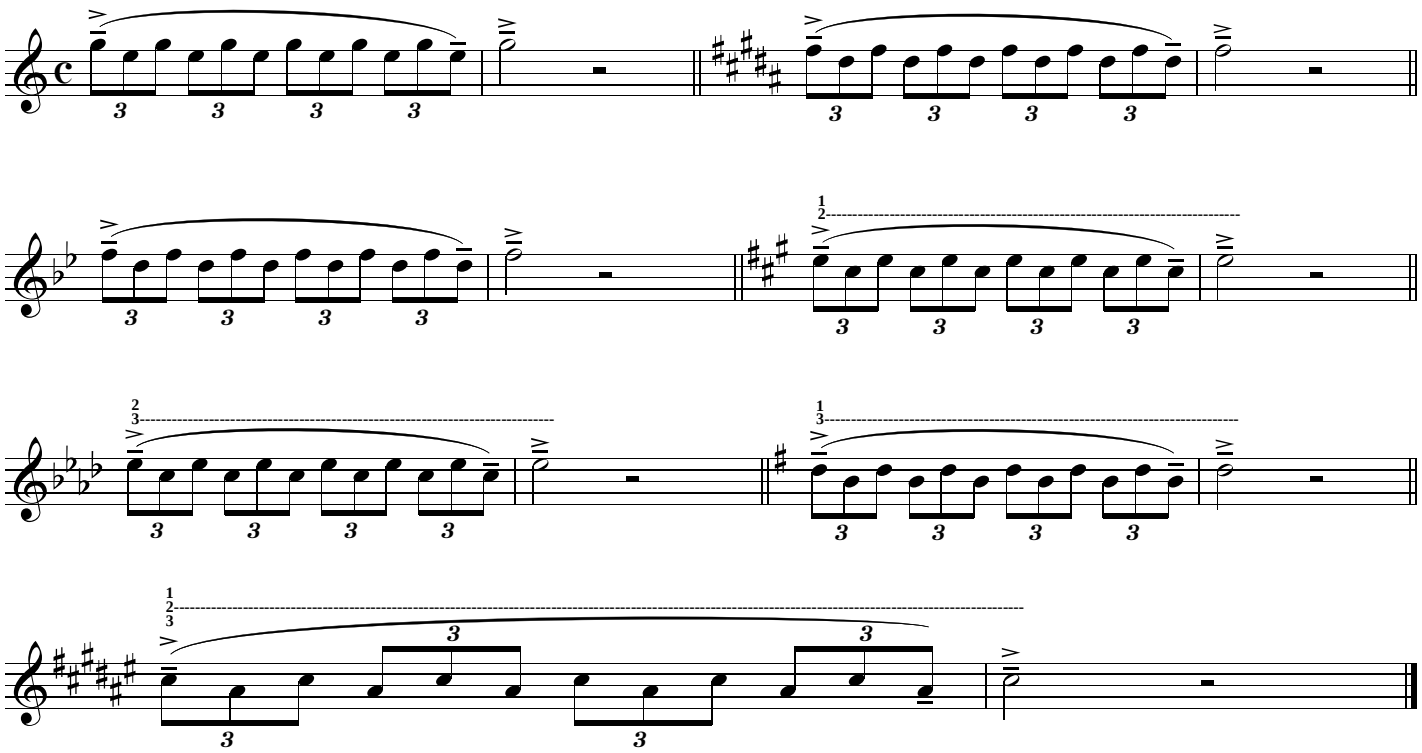

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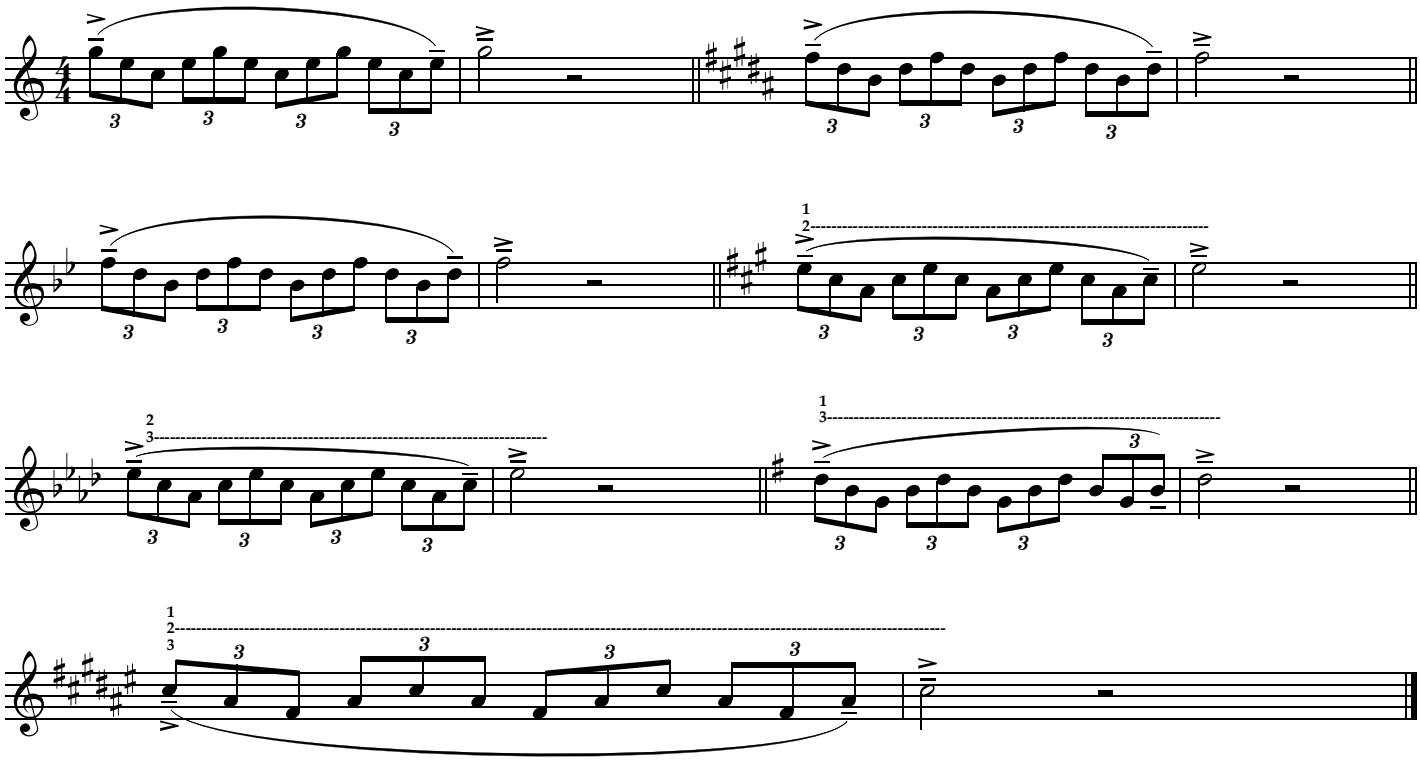

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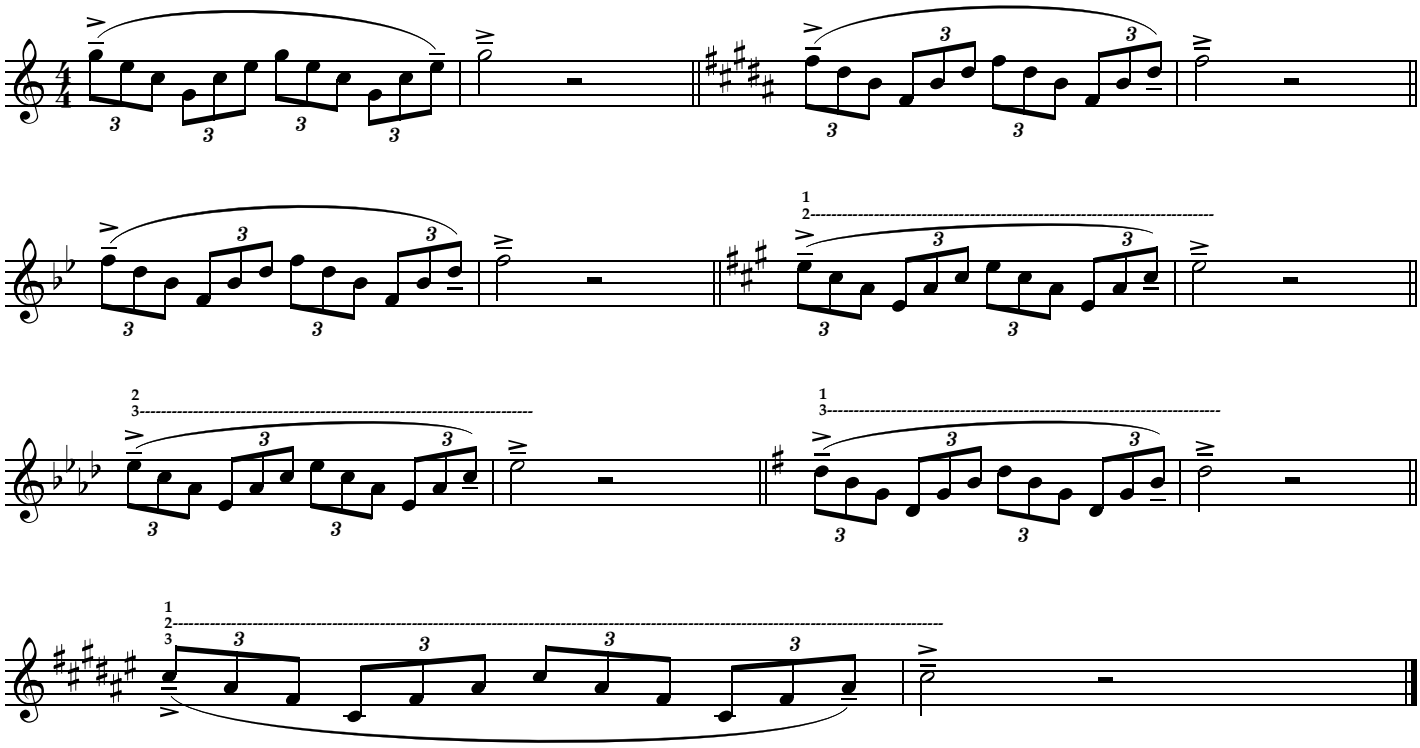

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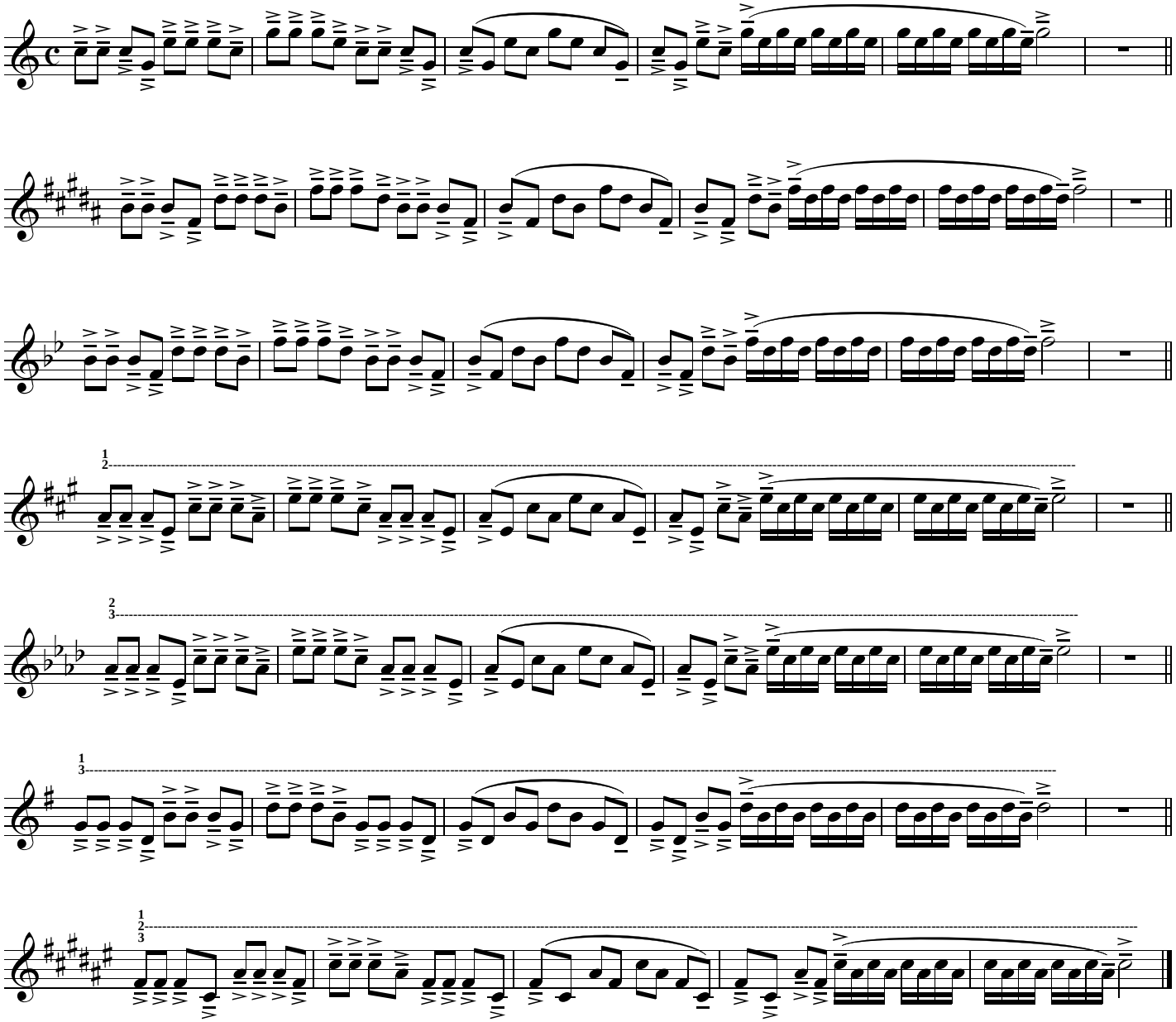
Exercise 5.8



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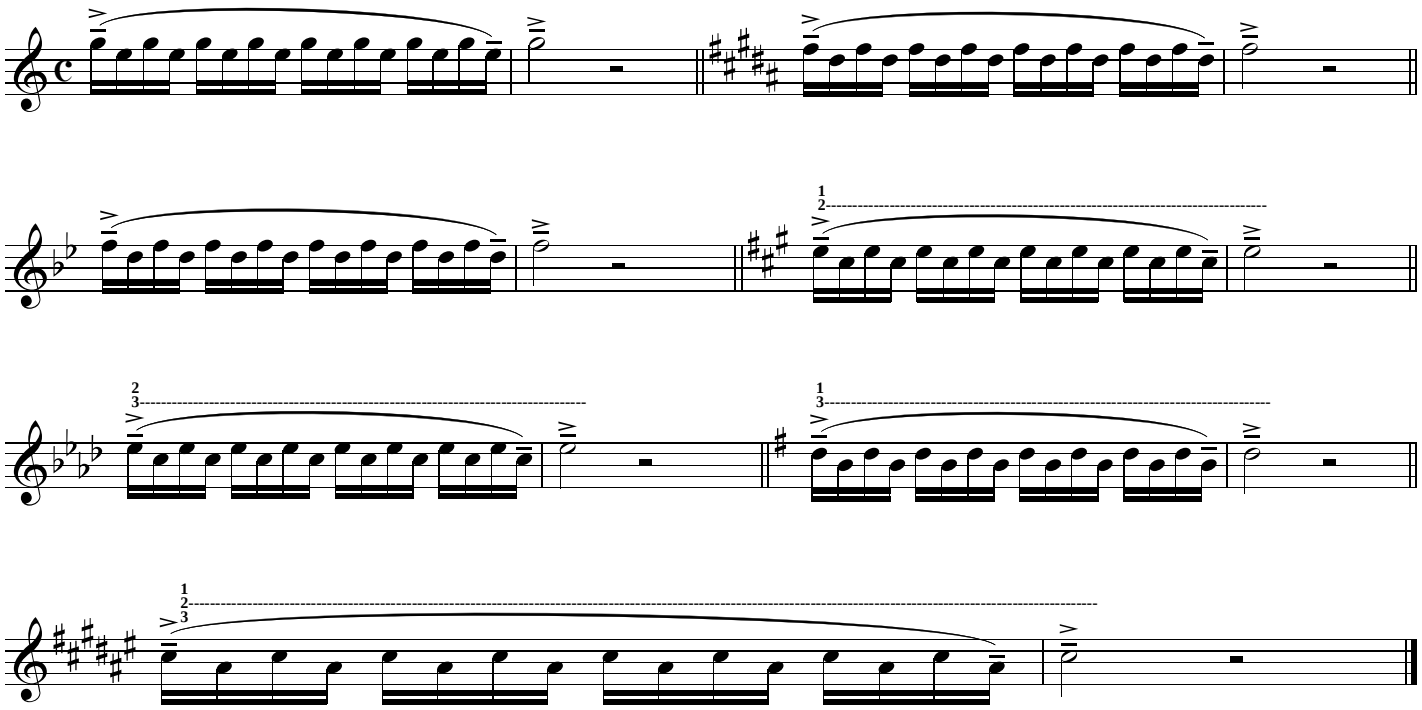

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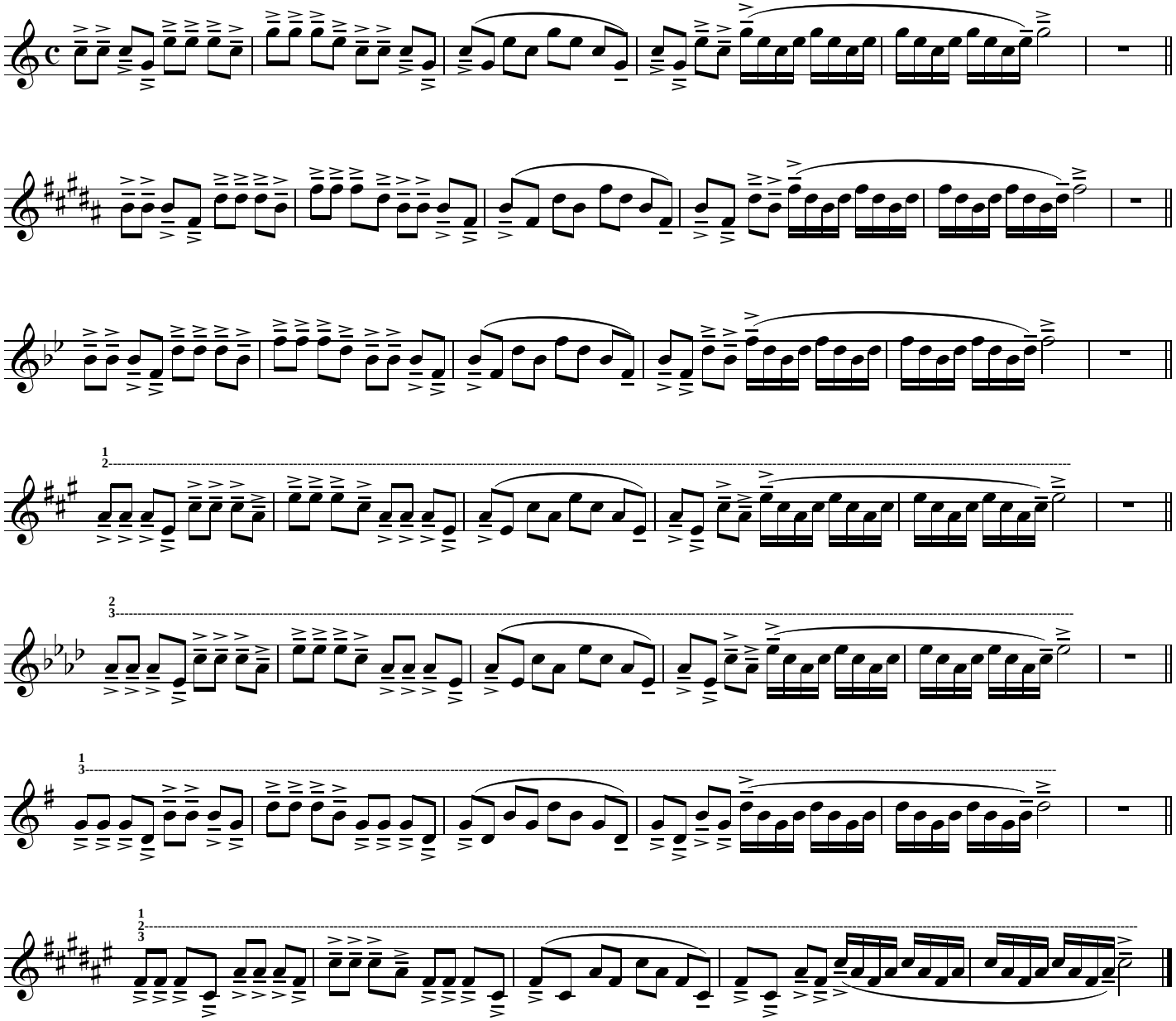

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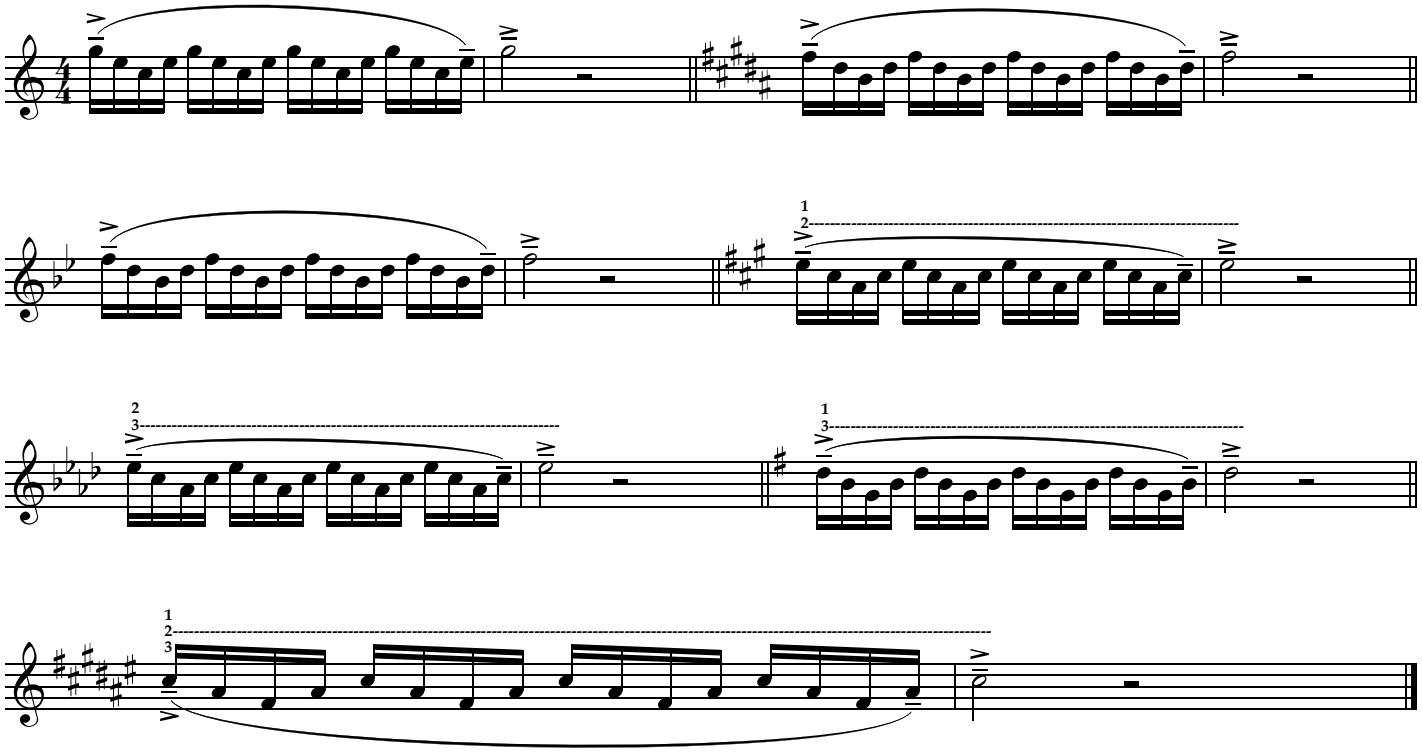

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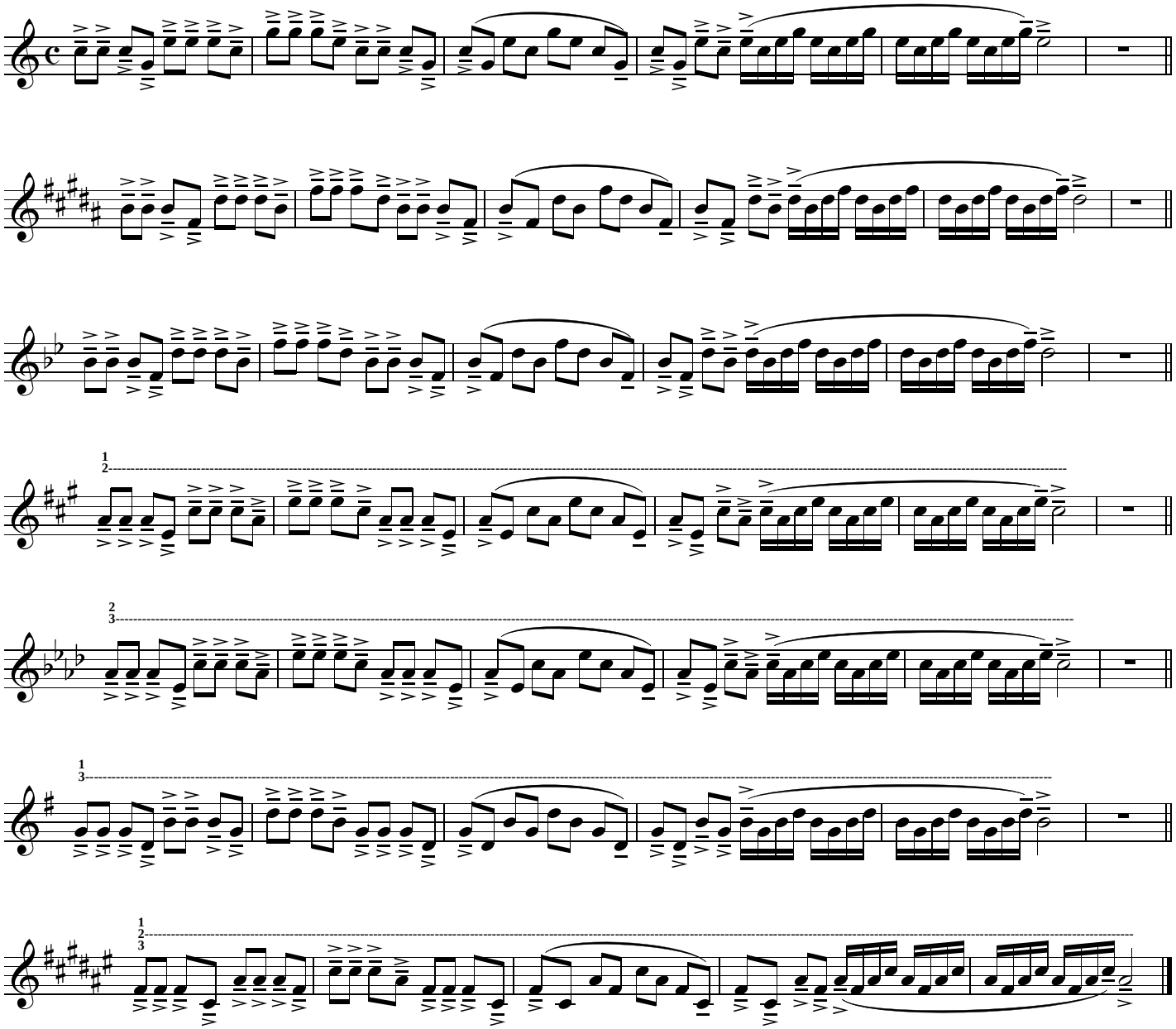

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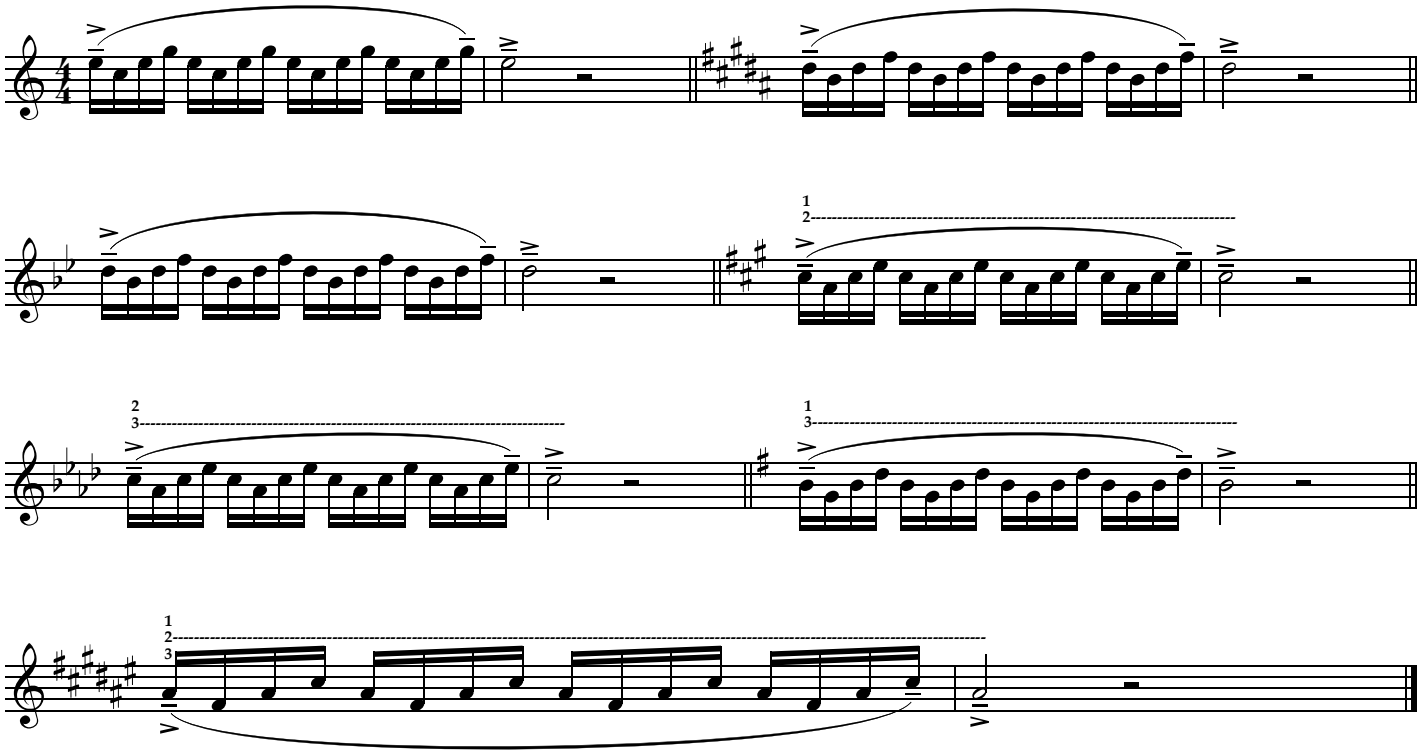

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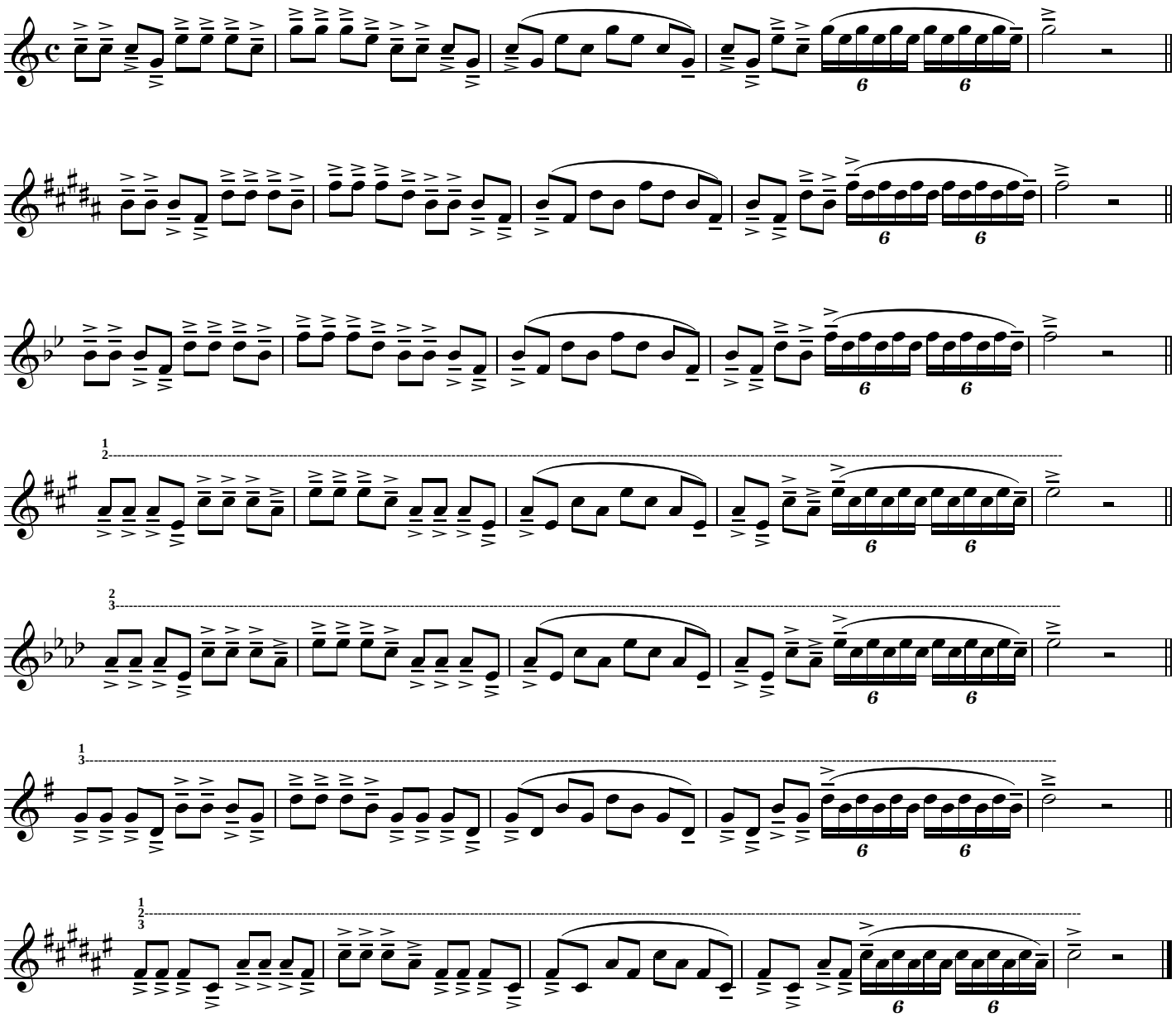

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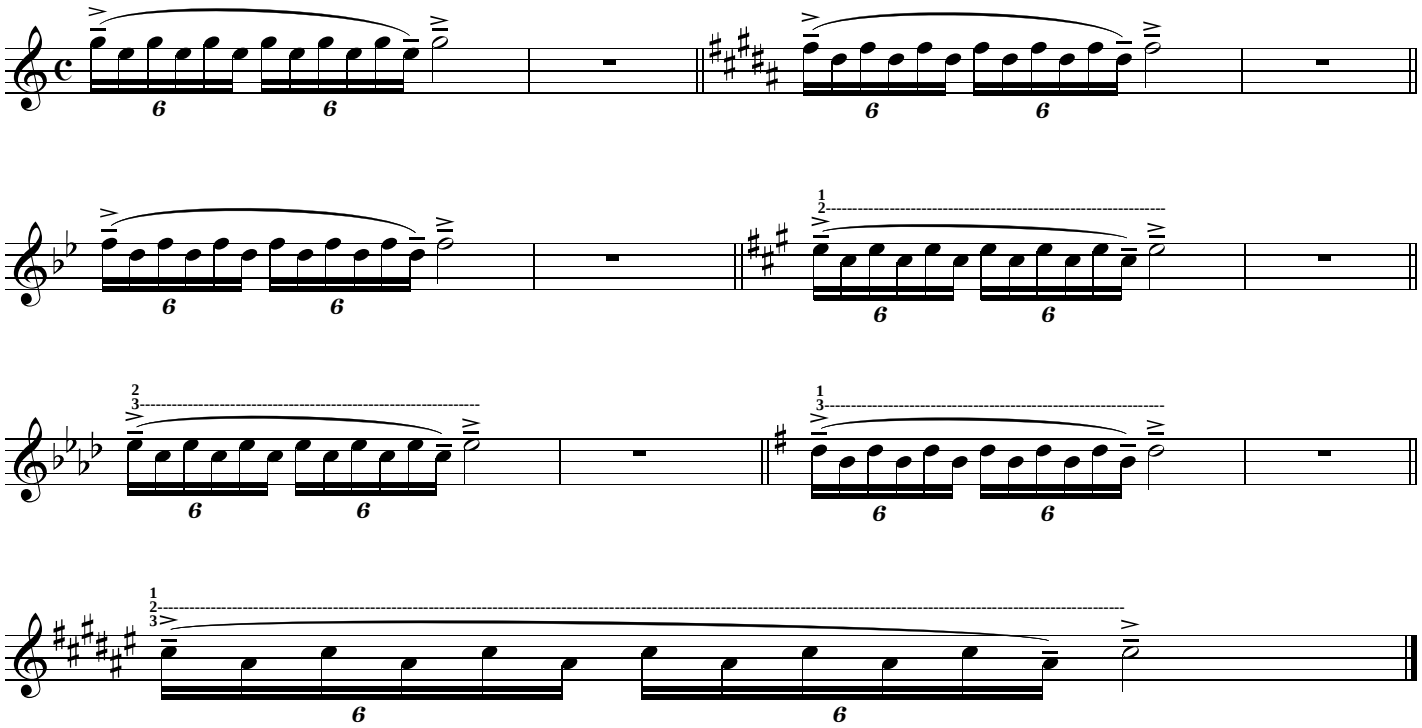

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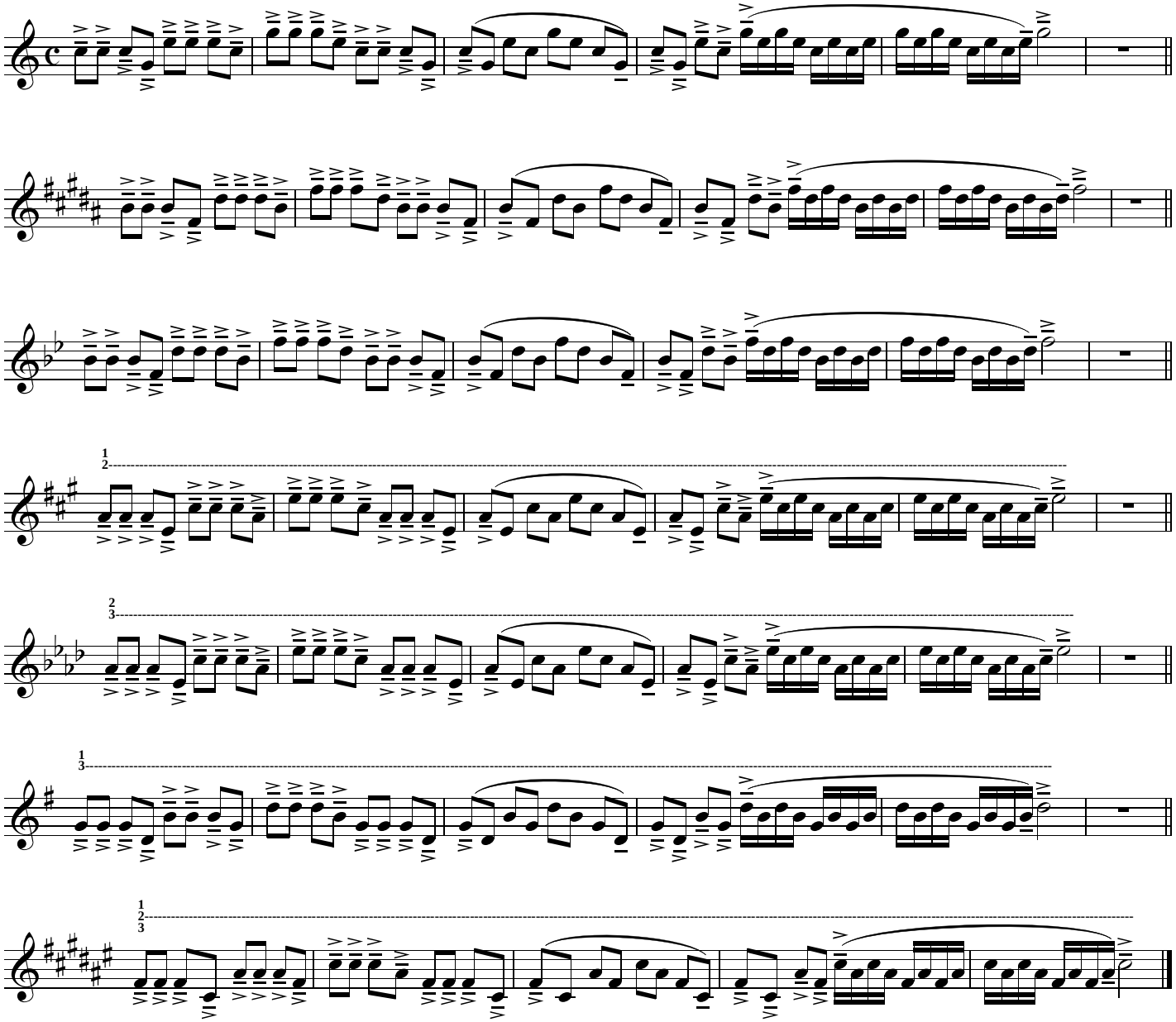

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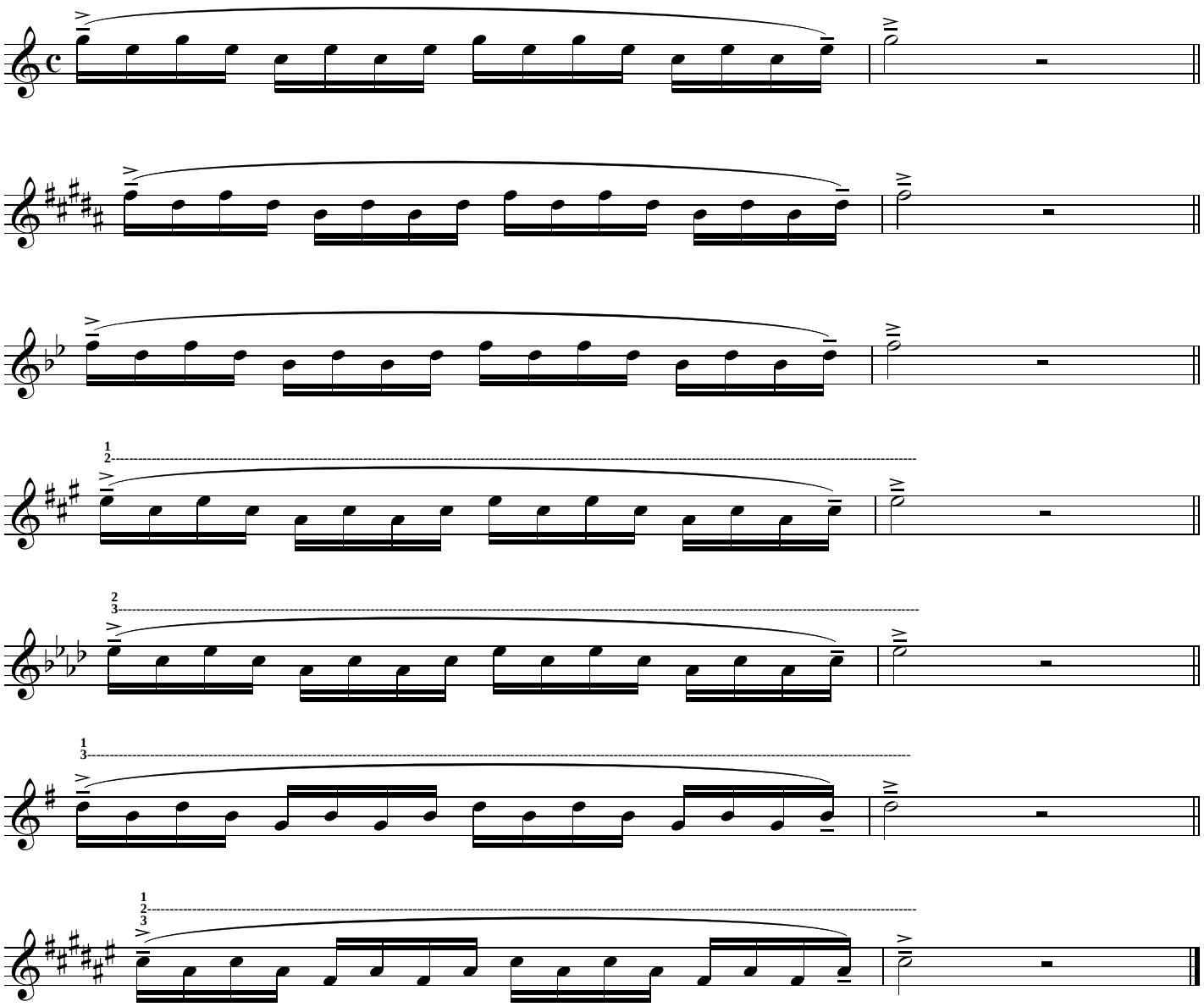

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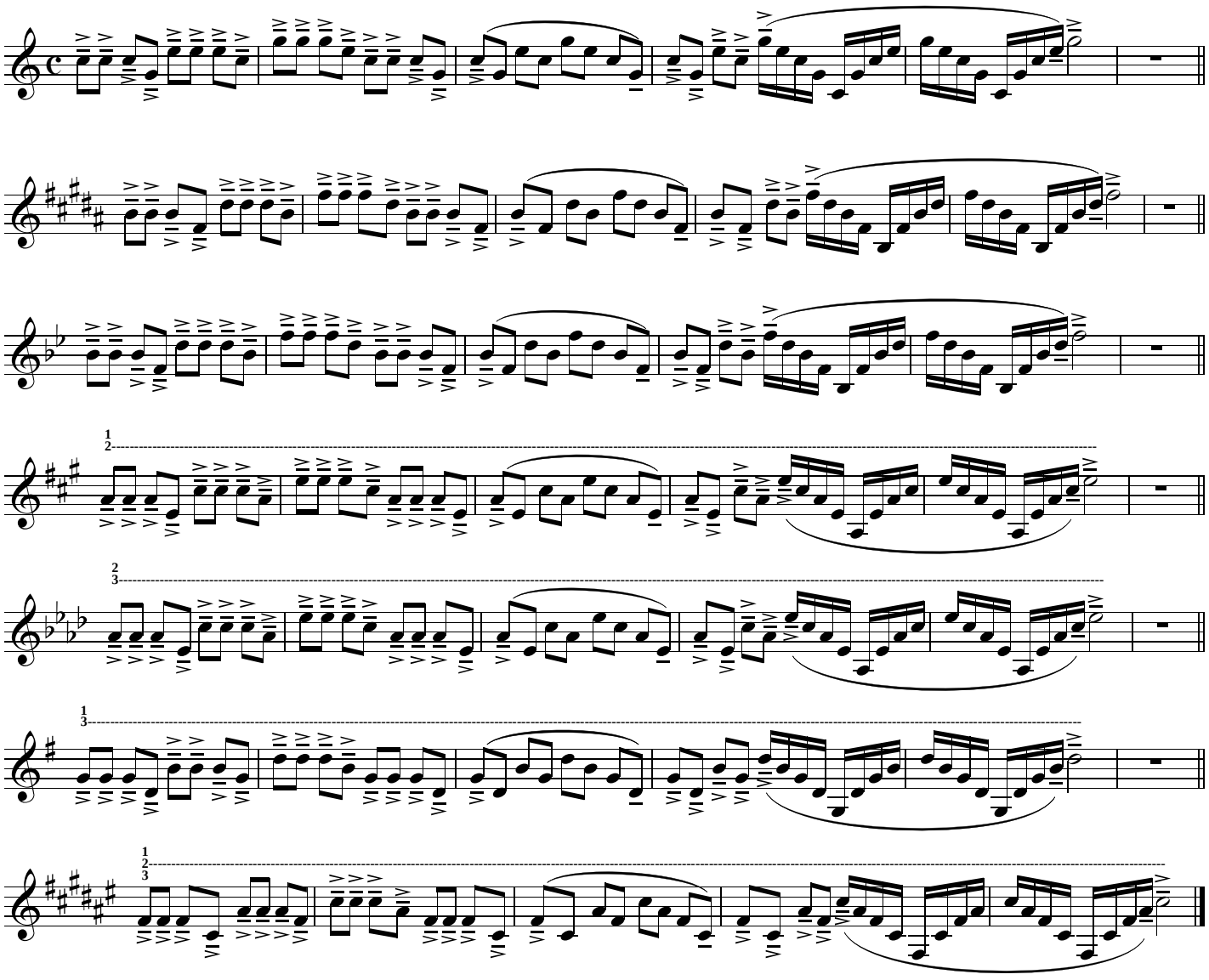

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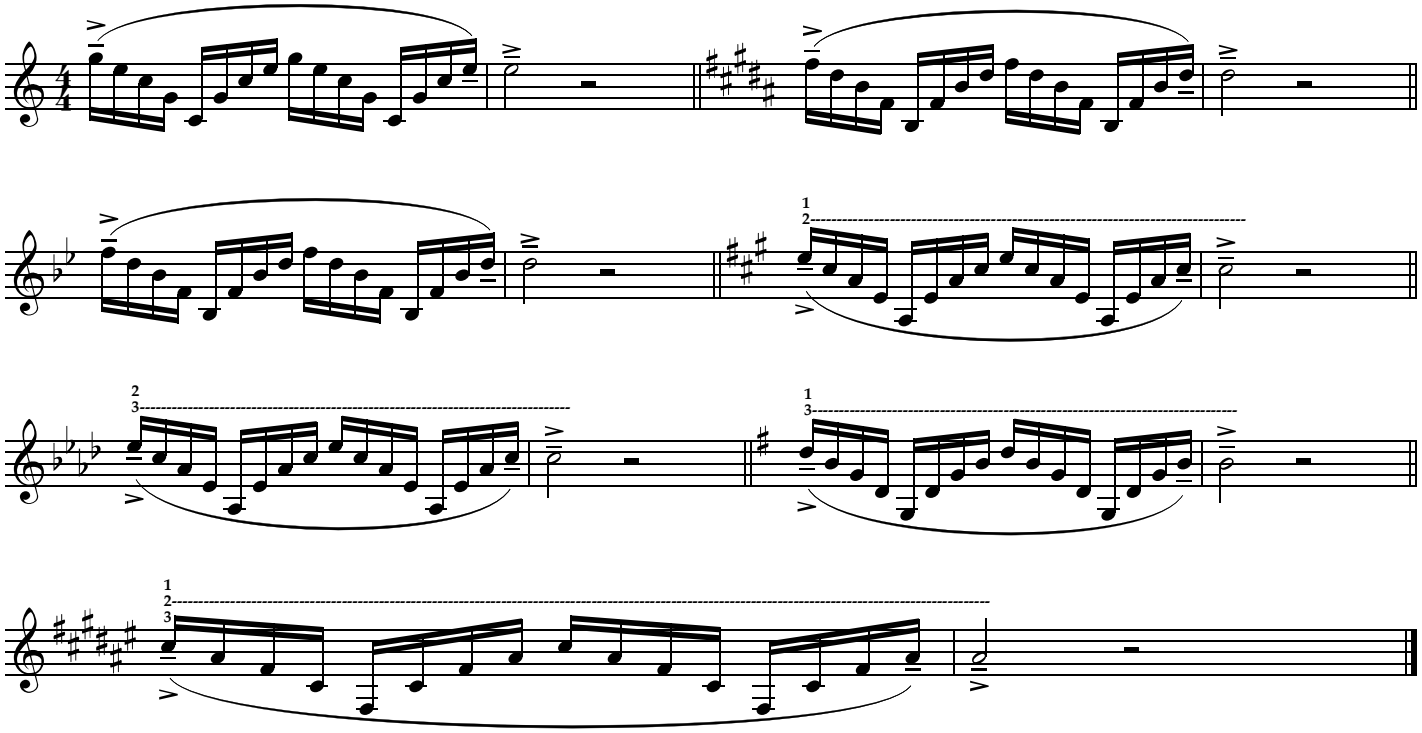

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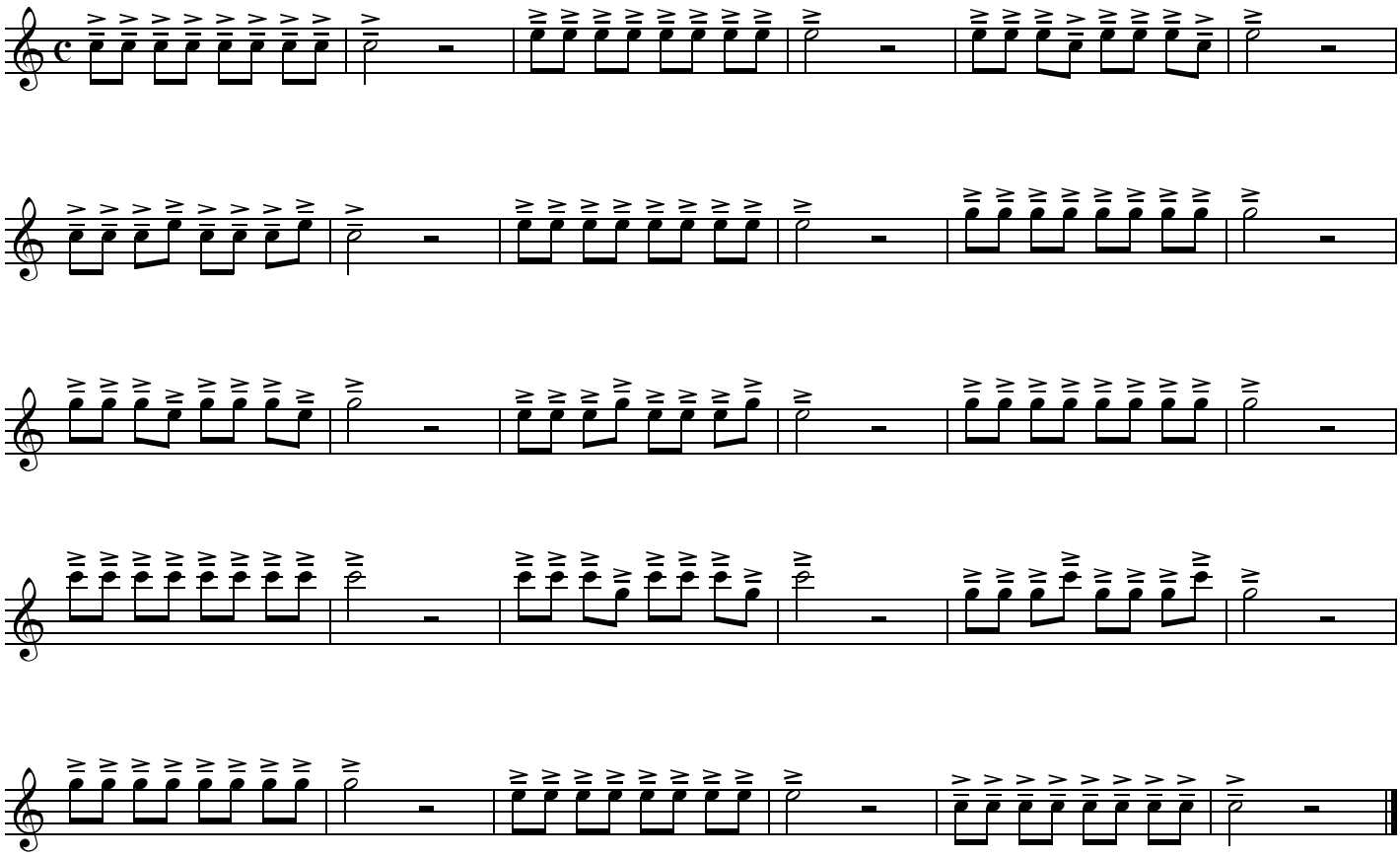
Exercise 6



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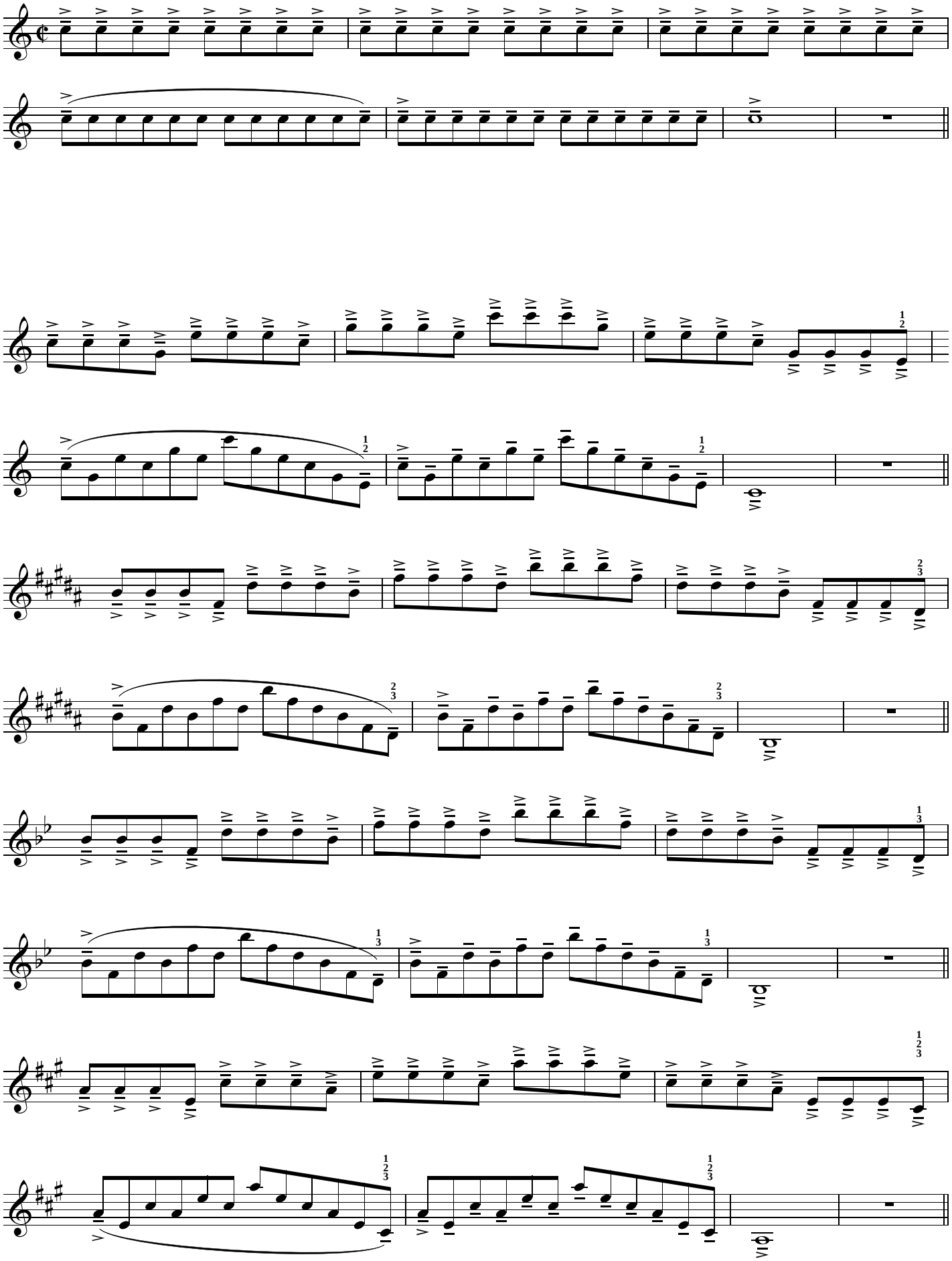
Exercise 6.1



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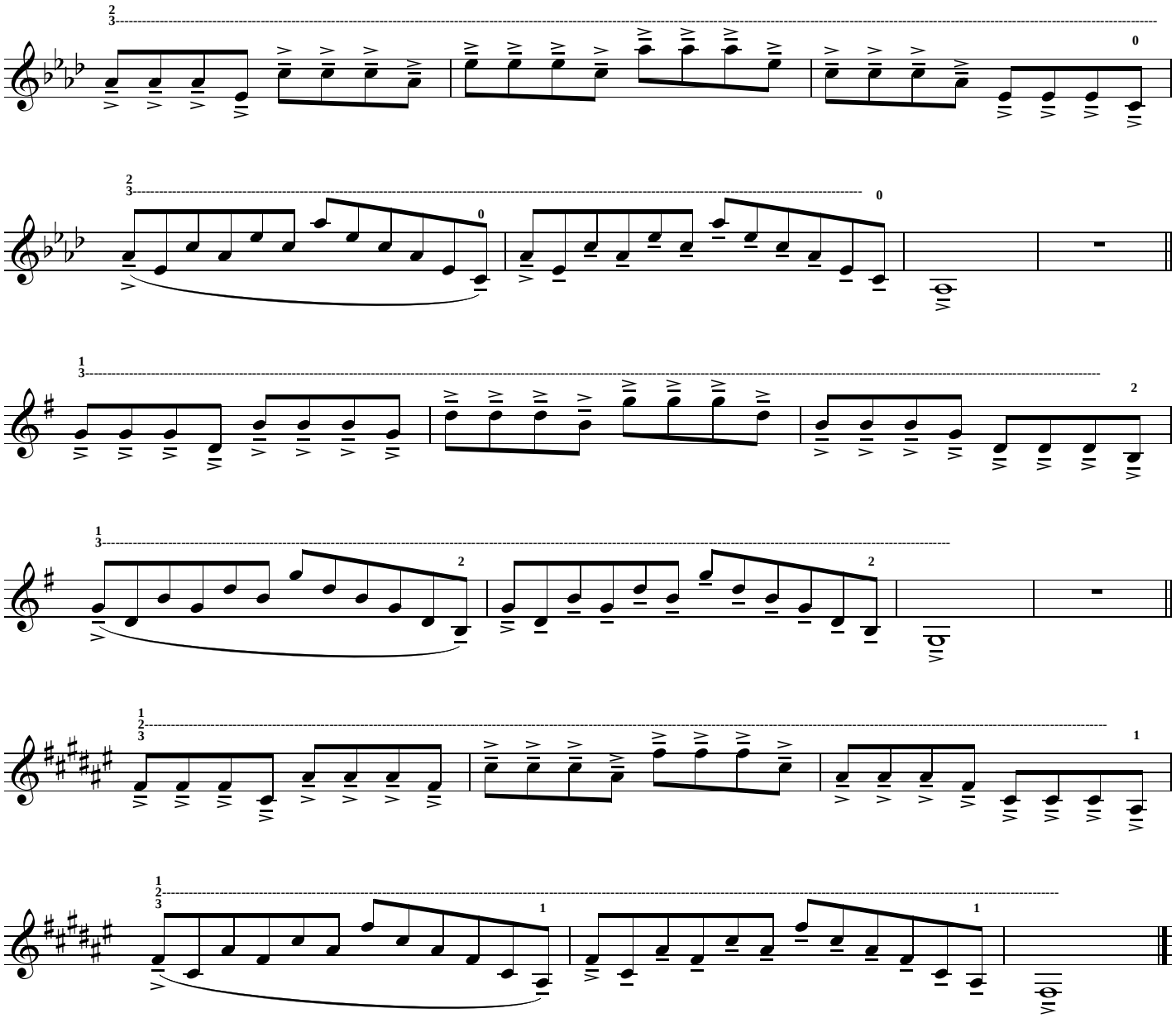

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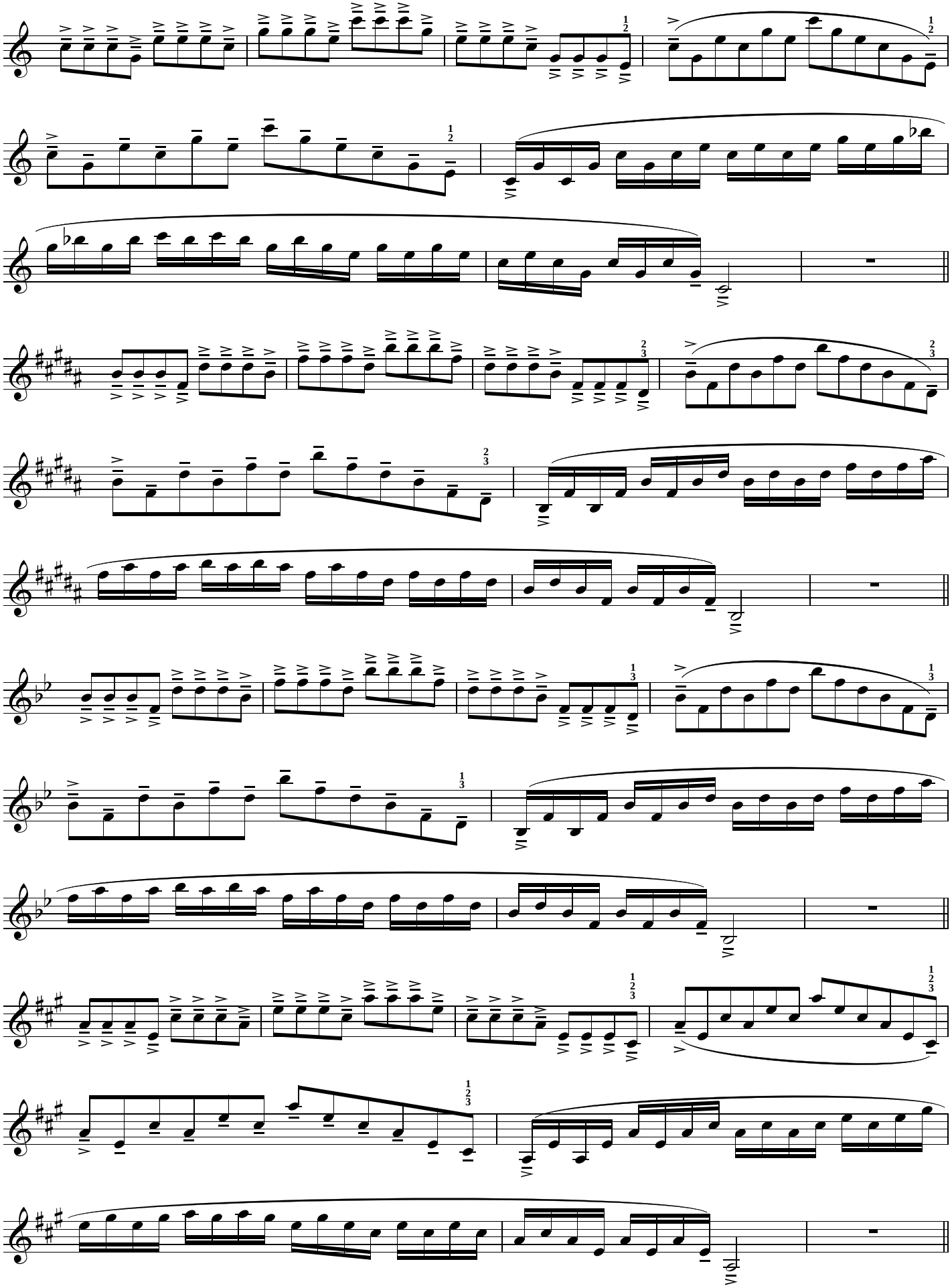

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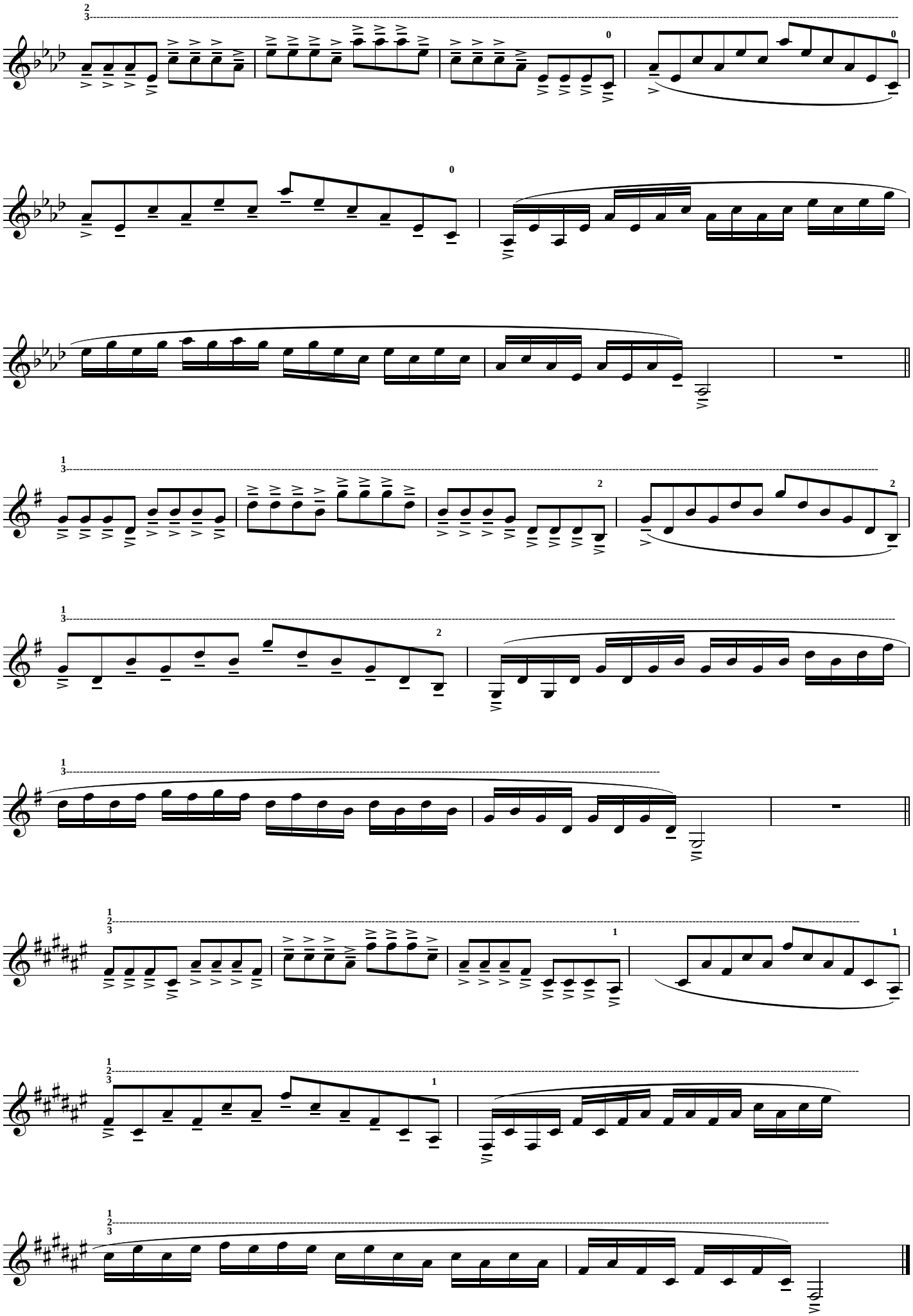

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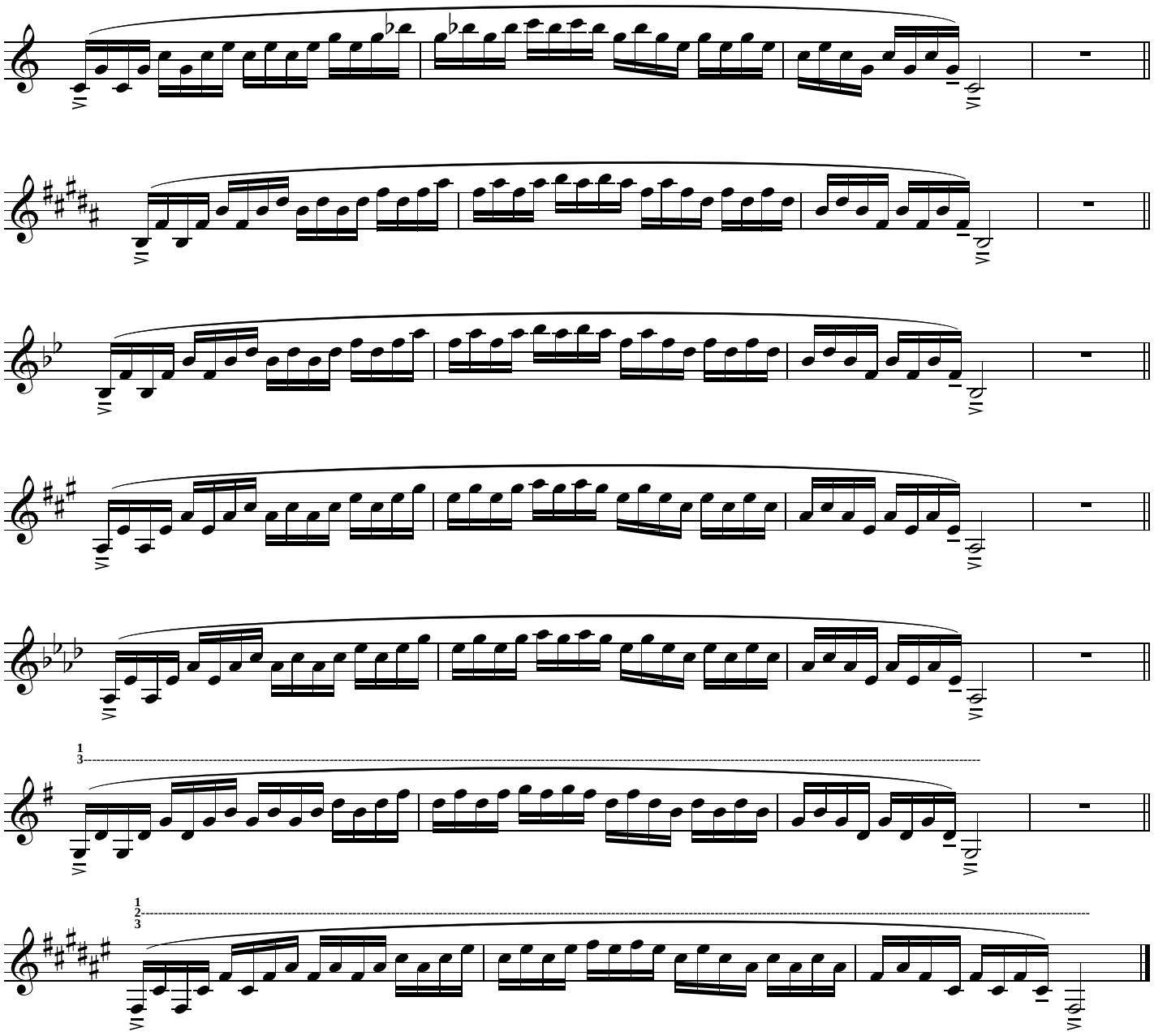

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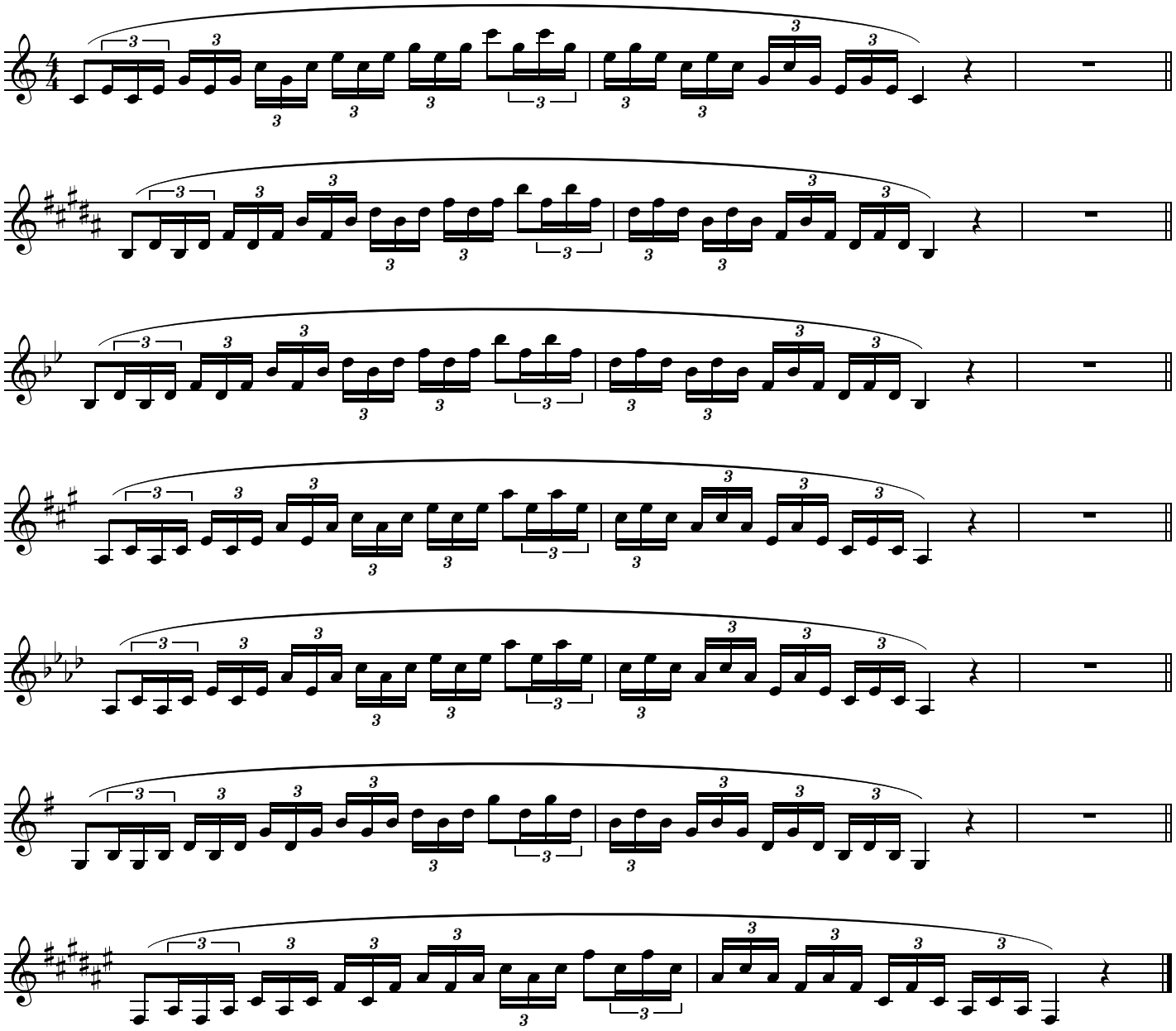
Exercise 6.4



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Outroduction to all R.P. exercises

I will here try to explain my thoughts behind all these exercises and explain to the best of my ability how they should be performed.

Why write new exercises when there is so much excellent material?

In the over 40 years that I have been teaching, I have constantly come up with new exercises, in addition to all the excellent material that already exists for the students who have had one or another problem or challenge in their playing.

Over the years, I have also participated in many masterclasses with talented and interesting musicians (not only trumpet players) and these musicians have given me a lot of inspiration. In this way, I have developed my own way of thinking in relation to improving the way of playing on our instrument, which here is especially intended for trumpet/cornet, but can also be used on many other wind instruments.

It is very important for me to point out that these are my ideas, which I have found out work great for me and my students I have taught over the years – and which I of course use in my teaching, but that is not to say that my way is the only approach to achieving the goal.

What is the basic principle of these exercises?

The basic principle of all my exercises is to strive for being as relaxed as possible when we play on our instrument, so that we do not use more force and energy than necessary.

Developing and improving this way of playing, requires great mental control, which then affects our breathing, which in turn affects the way we use the air when we play.

The preparation and breathing, can in many ways be compared to meditation and yoga, as many of the exercises must take place with metronome and with the same cycle for long periods of time. In this way, it becomes a daily routine how to use these methods - to relax and breathe in a natural way when playing on our instrument.

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This way of practicing should lead to being able to comfortably present the first note of the music we are about to play - and then play on, without spending more effort than is absolutely necessary.

"Always remember to take a big breath before playing"!!!

This statement is now as such not wrong, but the question is more about how to take this breath.

My experience has shown me that when somebody say, "take a big breath", most people take a huge breath so that they almost lift completely off the floor and therefore also being really tense more or less throughout the whole body.

This means that the air cannot leave the body in a natural way, and therefore risks getting more and more tension in the body. These tensions can ultimately have major consequences for the body's well-being.

A good exercise is to just take an extremely large breath and fill yourself so much with air that it is downright uncomfortable - stand and hold on to the air for a few seconds - and then "let the air comes out" (which only takes a split second). Then let the body relax completely. When we stand there and let the body relax, it is a good idea to shake the whole body a little and feel that every part of our body is totally relaxed.

Then how to do?

It has been shown to be very effective to focus more on letting the air comes out - instead of blowing it out, and then relax the whole body - "grounding" before taking a big (though not violent) and comfortable breath.

This way helps us to make it more natural and easier to breathe "all the way down into the stomach", and thus avoid straining the rest of the body more than necessary.

I put a lot of emphasis on just letting the air comes out, instead of blowing it out. If we just let the air out, we will be emptied of air in a split second - compared to if we breathe out slowly or thus hold back a little for the air to come out.

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When we let the air out and being emptied of air, we can relax our whole body and thus "grounding", which provides the perfect starting position to breathe again in a nice, relaxed way.

A great help to be able to breathe in a comfortable and effective way is to always breathe in relation to the tempo at which we are going to play – but always in a relaxed and calm way. It is also a great advantage to subdivide the tempo both when breathing and when playing, as this leads to better propulsion, and give us calmer in the feeling of the tempo.

Basically, I always try to breathe in the same way, with a relatively large and very relaxed breathing with a feeling that the air comes all the way “down into the stomach”.

However, breathing should not be too large, because there must be room for the air “to turn around" before it is ready to be used for playing on our instrument.

This means that it is only the moment I start playing that there is a difference in the speed of the air. The way I breathe has therefore no bearing on whether I should play weakly, vigorously, high, low, fast, or slow.

When we start playing, it is important to "present" the first note like a singer always do, with the feeling that we are giving it on to the room/audience.

To do this, it requires that the body is not tensed up and that the air is not squeezed in any way before it has to pass the lips and throughout the instrument. This also requires that the feeling of intensity and centering of the air, is as close to the instrument as possible. If you do not get this feeling, you risk that the air "beats back" and causes tension in the body and that the throat closes off.

Another good way of thinking to get the feel as close to the instrument as possible is a little unconventional, but nevertheless right and very effective.

It is my good friend Adam Rapa who made this statement:

”Don´t be a shitter - be a pisser”.

Although to some it sounds a little provocative, it actually says it all.

So, remember to never struggle and strain to get the air pressed into the instrument, but make sure to intensify it easily and elegantly progresses through the instrument and thus helps us to get a nice and relaxed sound.

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Garden hose

We can also imagine how the water comes out from a long garden hose.

When we turn on the water, a steady stream of water comes out at the end of the hose. If we then squeeze the opening of the garden hose, we can regulate the speed of the water, even if the water pressure and the amount of water from the tap are the same.

This can be compared to how we regulate the speed and intensity of the air with the front part of the tongue, and thus also the pitch, before we let the air out through the lips and through the instrument.

If, on the other hand, we squeeze the garden hose about 10 cm from the opening, we cannot regulate the speed of the jet of water coming out of the hose, but this only causes less water to come out of the hose.

This can be compared to the fact that if we do not have the right feeling of regulate the air with the front part of the tongue before it enters the instrument, we run the risk that the air cannot escape through the lips and thus backfire.

By counteract, I mean that the throat risks closing off and the amount of air therefore becomes smaller, which therefore means that we cannot regulate the speed of the small amount of air that then reaches the instrument.

How to play short notes?

During my studies, I was fortunate enough to attend a masterclass with Dennis Wick, who at the time was solo trombonist in the London Symphony Orchestra - and yes, he's the one with mutes and mouthpieces 😊.

There he said a phrase that I have never forgotten – "A short note is just a long note that just gets shortened".

This phrase, and not least this way of thinking, has meant a lot to me and my playing.

When we have to play a short note and think that it should be long, we have to aim much more precisely for the note we want to play. Through thinking and playing in this way, we will always be able to play the tone long if necessary.

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Long tones and clear tonguing.

In the way I prefer to practice, I always play with long notes and clear tonguing. This means that we have to keep a smooth "flow" with the air, and the synchronization between the embouchure, air, fingers, tongue and not least the brain have to be optimized in this way.

If we start practicing most exercises with long notes and clear tonguing, we will then be able to also play everything with short notes without any problems.

However, remember when we are playing with short notes, we should still feel a smooth "flow" with the air (as if you were still playing long notes) so that we do not close off the air with our tongue.

We must always remember that the function of the tongue is not to start the tone, but to let the air comes out at a certain time so that the lips can vibrate and, in this way, start a nice tone.

Also, thoughts about the function of the tongue lead me to think of water...

If we imagine a faucet in a kitchen and turn on the water, we have an even and natural "flow" on the water.

This jet of water can then be broken through by quickly opening and closing the tap. We can also choose to break this water jet by passing a finger through, and in this way keep the smooth "flow". If we do this slowly, the water splashes throughout the kitchen, but if we do it quickly, we hardly not break the water jet and the "flow".

This is how I think the air and tongue should work.

If we constantly ensure a neat and even airflow that must be projected through the instrument, the function of the tongue becomes to divide this airflow, which therefore provides some nice and clear approaches.

This also means that the tension in the tongue can be minimized, which then allows us to get a very fast tongue.

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Think ahead – not up or down

Those of us who grew up with Stamp's exercises have become accustomed to thinking up when we play down in the register and thinking down when we have to play upwards.

Now, this is not wrong, but I prefer to think only that all the notes should be played forward and not least far away.

Often when I practice, I stand and look out a window, and to get a good flow, I think that my sound should go all the way to a tree/building or similar. In the same way as our sound should go to the last seats in a concert hall.

When we think all notes ahead, we naturally pull the entire register together and thus minimize the limitations in relation to playing low or high notes.

However, it requires us always to constantly aim and "shoot" for the notes we want to play and hear - control, and always through the instrument and not just into it.

So, how are we going to get this control in our playing?

Unfortunately, there is no shortcut to success, but hard work in many hours of effective practice every single day, helps most of us along the way.

How far we get depends on many parameters.

Personally, I think the ability to concentrate is one of the greatest importance in relation to how far we get with our instrument.

Without a doubt, it is also crucial to spend many hours with our instrument every single day to achieve our goal.

Talent and flair for the instrument we have chosen are of course not without significance, but I do not think that is the most important thing.

Example: If we take two people with the same instrument and talent. Let them for a period practice the same hours a day and on the same exercises.

One will almost always be better than the other.

The reason for this difference, I believe, is the ability to concentrate, which is the determining factor.

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Trampoline - Tuuyyyyii!

I think we've all have had some experienced challenges when we should make legatoslures upwards. This happens because we do not have enough speed of the air and that our feeling is not far enough advanced in our mouth.

As higher the tones are – as higher the speed of the air leaving through our lips must be.

Since the embouchure is not of great importance - if it works ok, it is very important that our tongue's regulation of the air takes place as far forward in the mouth and as close to the instrument/mouthpiece as possible.

Think that we are standing on a seesaw in the swimming pool or on a trampoline in the garden and from stagnant trying to jump upwards, this is almost impossible.

If we then use the trampoline to first jump down and then afterwards up, we easily and naturally get upwards as we then get a greater speed of our movement.

We can directly transfer this approach to our instrument.

If we with a good speed of air grip the deep note and carry it on all the way to the next/higher note we want to play, we can just "pluck the high note down".

Through playing/thinking this way, we can continue to play all notes forward instead of up or down. This means that we pull the register together so that we can focus and concentrate on playing forward. However, it is very important to constantly aim directly for the specific notes we want to play and hear, so that we constantly try to hit the "Bullseye" on every single note.

Play at" The end of the breath"

Playing a single short note has many challenges.

Once again, I would like to draw attention to the statement of Dennis Wick: 'A short note is a long note that just ends a little earlier'

Especially when playing trumpet in a symphony orchestra, we are often exposed to having to play just a few short notes all over the register. Therefore, it makes sense to also practice this "discipline".

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My experience is that we as trumpet players often take a to big breath and hold on to the air before we must play this one short note.

If, on the other hand, we take a breath, breathe out the air and play this one short note on the last air we have left without ever stopping the "flow" of the air, we have a very high probability of hitting this specific note. Of course, this requires that we "aim" very precisely for the note we want to play/hear, and again think that it is a long note we must play.

When we learn to master this "discipline" every time we play a short note, an elegant tone with good sound and a perfect intonation will appear.

” Upbeats”

In all the music I have to play, I love to think/emphasize and play with “upbeats” in order for the music to become more alive. In many exercises and pieces of music, there are often accents on the one-beat and none on the upbeats. To get a better "flow" in the music and make it easier to play, it is therefore often an advantage to mark the upbeats as much as on the first beat (and sometimes almost more).

To try this out, it can be very fun and rewarding to occasionally move the bar line a single beat or just an eighth. This gives a completely different emphasis and momentum in the piece of music/exercise.

”Bending”

Why use "bending"?

I use "bending" to improve the control of my embouchure and to make my lips vibrate more than when playing a regular note on our instrument.

When "bending" a tone downwards, it is important to maintain the speed of the air. The biggest mistake is that we usually blow less and that the tone therefore "falls" down to the next natural tone.

I imagine an alpine skier going down a hill at full speed. If this skier bends forward and downwards, he will fall forward and thus fall and lose speed. If, on the other

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hand, he lowers his body with his legs, he maintains speed but descends without falling, and then also easily gets back up.

It could also be a water skier... If this skier at full speed across the water accidentally turns his skis downwards, he will fall forward and lose speed. If, instead, he bends his legs and thus lowers his body, he retains speed above the water and can easily get back up without having lost speed above the water.

In the same way, it applies to maintaining the speed of the air when we "bend" a note downwards. While concentrating on playing with a smooth and intensive airflow through (and not just into) the instrument, we must make sure to shape the tone and "force"/think/play it down half a note (or more) before we again make sure that it comes back up to "its right level". Here too, it is important to listen for what comes out of from the bell of the instrument, and by that, I mean to constantly try to play with a big and nice sound, and that the intonation is always in order.

The higher up we go, the more important it becomes to control the speed and intensity of the air. The strength of the embouchure also becomes more and more important as we move up the register. If the embouchure is not strong enough, we will not be able to keep our tone without descending to the next natural tone.

One really good exercise for the airflow.

Sometimes when I feel my playing not really work out, I do this exercise to optimize the blowing of the air.

- Take the mouthpiece in your right hand
- Open the spit valve.
- Take a really big breath.
- Put your lips around the leadpipe.
- Blow the air through the whole instrument – blow, blow blow and really try to empty the body for all air.

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Repeat these two or three times.

Take care because we very easy can feel/be dizzy when doing this exercise!!!

After making this exercise, play the same melody or phrase that you have played before and listen to the big difference this crazy exercise has made for the sound.

Exercises!!!

"These exercises I only play to improve my height"!

"I just play these exercises to get faster finger technique"

In my world, every note written on a piece of paper is music. Therefore, every note must always be played with the best sound, start and intonation that I am able to produce.

This means that the note I am just playing, I try to play with the greatest empathy and musicality I am capable of. The next note I'm getting ready to play must be at least as good as the one I'm currently playing and preferably even better, and so on....

Never play a single note on your instrument without trying to play it with the best and most beautiful sound and phrasing you ever have played.

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