The Techniques of Bowing. Op.50

A. Casorti

INTRODUCTION

The Six Fundamental Bowings

THERE are six fundamental bowings; all others are variously combined from these. I cannot too urgently advise young violinists to study these six bowings diligently, they being the foundation of and key to all the rest. They are classified thus:

1. The rapid detached stroke with whole bow (*grand détaché*).
2. The singing stroke.
3. The hammered stroke at the point (*martelé*).
4. The detached stroke with the forearm (*détaché*).
5. The springing bow.
6. The thrown stroke.

For the execution of these six bowings, see Nos. 5, 10, 4, 11, 15 and 17. For the development of the right arm, see Études 2, 3 and 4.

Rules for Bowing

1. To get a fine tone the bow must be drawn, up or down, at a right angle to the strings; and on no account should it be allowed to slide from the bridge towards the fingerboard, or *vice versa*.

2. The bow should be kept between fingerboard and bridge, somewhat nearer to the latter.

3. The hair must lie flat upon the string, and the stick should be tilted a trifle toward the fingerboard.

4. In order to produce an elastic and sympathetic tone, do not draw the hair too taut with the screw.

5. Never hold the bow too tight; for the wrist and the various joints of the hand and fingers must always be kept perfectly flexible. The thumb, by aid of which the bow is balanced, should be kept slightly bent.

6. Always hold the elbow lower than the stick, so that the arm may not weigh upon the strings and impair the quality of the tone.

7. In *down-bow* the forefinger should press lightly on the stick to keep it steady; in *up-bow* the little finger presses, with the elbow drawn inward and the wrist gradually lifted so as to resume its correct position over the bridge.

8. All movements of the bow must be directed solely by the wrist and forearm, never by the upper arm or the shoulder.

9. By maintaining the string in steady and equable vibration, a tone can be developed which will "carry" to a great distance,— but not by exerting an exaggerated pressure of the hair on the string

10. All accents must be produced with the wrist by a slight pressure of the hair on the string and of the stick between the fingers.

11. The hair should never leave the strings; and great care must be taken to avoid interrupting the tone on changing from down-bow to up-bow, or the reverse.

How to Hold the Left Hand

In stopping tones, the fingers must press firmly on the strings; they must also be raised high enough to produce, in falling, the effect of little hammer-strokes. Hold the left elbow in front of the chest, to give the fingers their proper position over the fingerboard; by this means you will avoid drawing the strings out of line, which would lessen the sonority of the tone.

Signs

⊓ = Down-bow.

∨ = Up-bow.

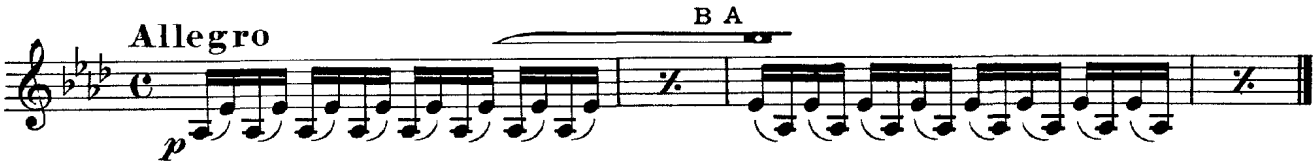
⟵ signifies that a whole bow is to be taken for one note (or two slurred notes).

A–B shows which portion of the bow is to be employed.

§1. Legato Stroke Near the Nut

Performed entirely by the wrist, with a short bow, and holding the stick lightly between the fingers.

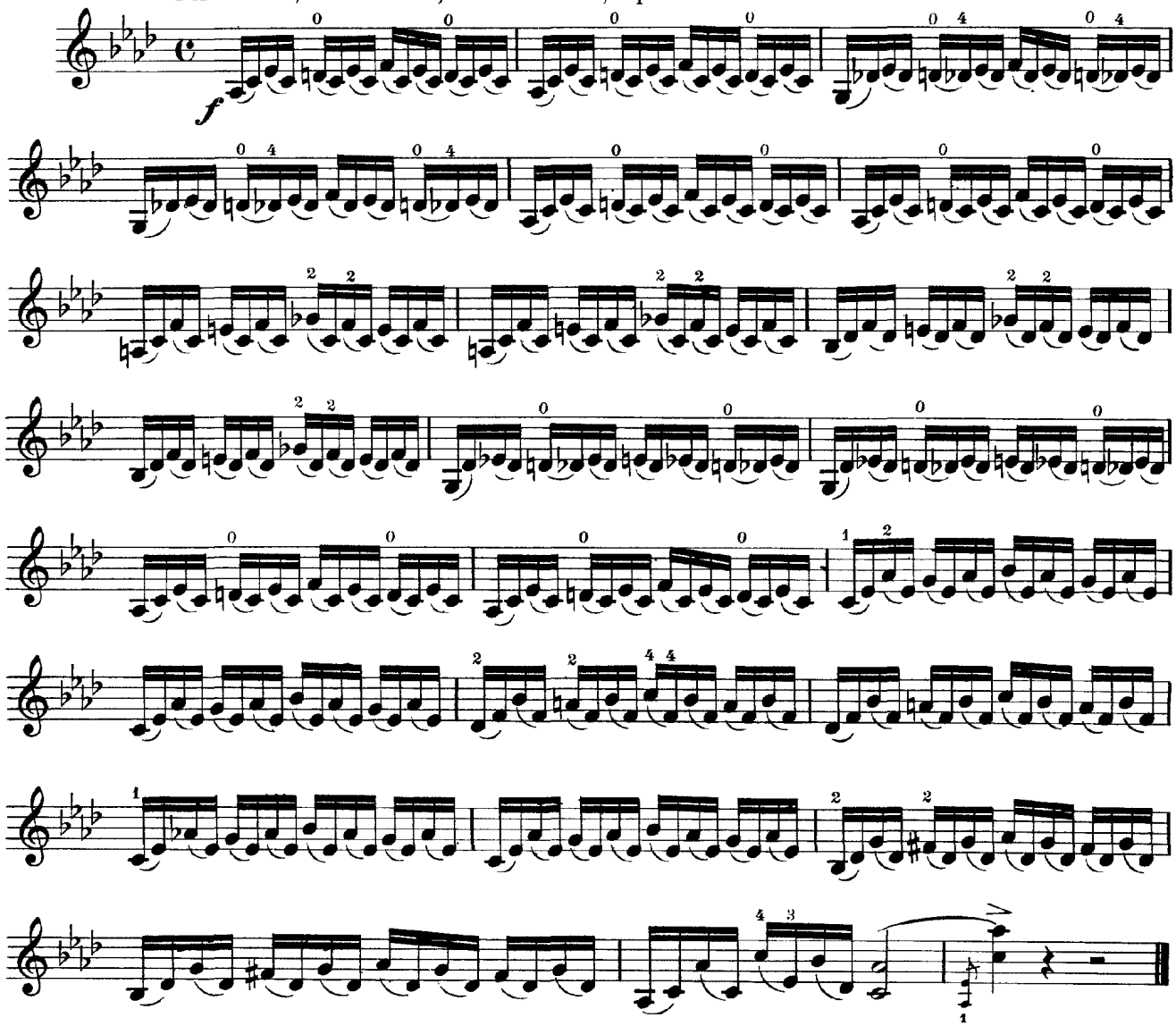
Play the notes in a smooth legato, the wrist held above the bridge without letting the arm weigh upon the strings.



ÉTUDE I

Allegro

First time, down-bow; second time, up-bow



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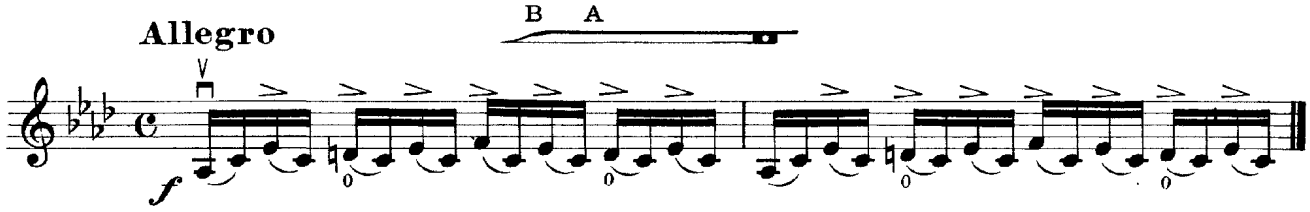
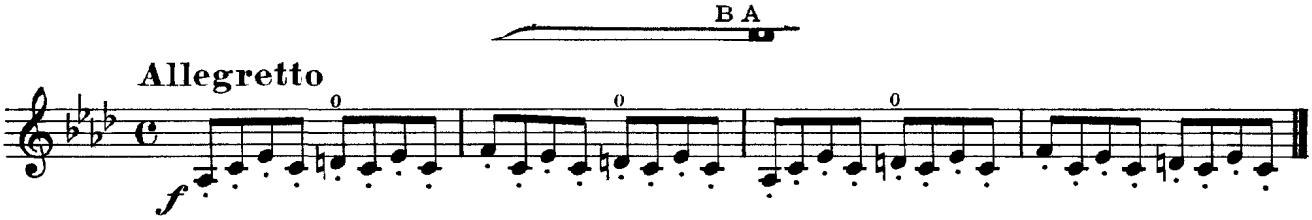
§ 2. Legato Stroke Near the Point

To be executed entirely by the wrist, bearing slightly with the forefinger upon the stick to keep the hair evenly down on the strings. It should also be practised at the middle of the bow, as this requires still greater independence of the wrist.



§ 3. Hammered Stroke Near the Nut

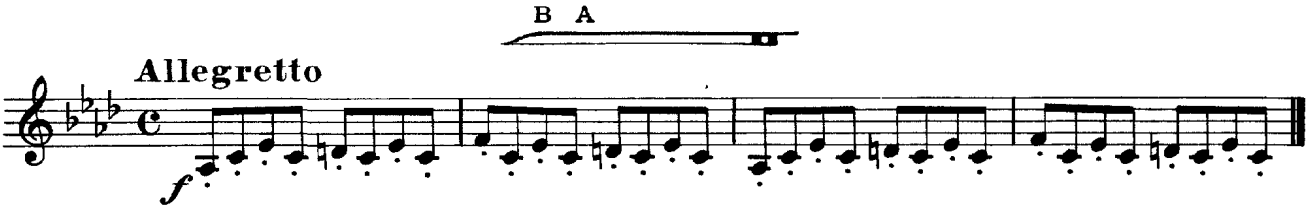
Each note must be accented, but not roughly, by pinching the stick lightly between the fingers without any stiffening of the wrist. Execute with short bow, and let the string vibrate.



Third Fundamental Bowing

§ 4. Hammered Stroke Near the Point. (Martelé)

To be executed with the wrist, aided by the forearm. All the notes should be uniformly articulated and accented by pinching the stick slightly between the fingers. Employ the same length of bow for each note.



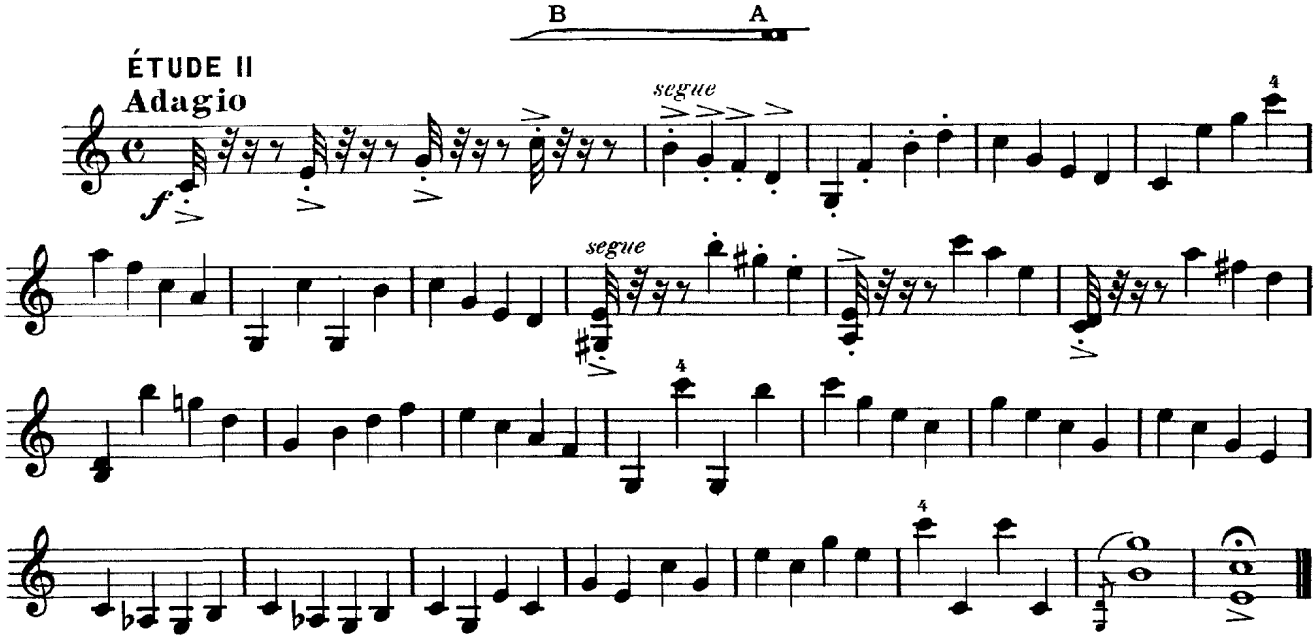
First Fundamental Bowing

§ 5. The Rapid Detached Stroke. (Grand Détaché)

It must be executed with the whole bow with the rapidity of a The difficulty to be o-

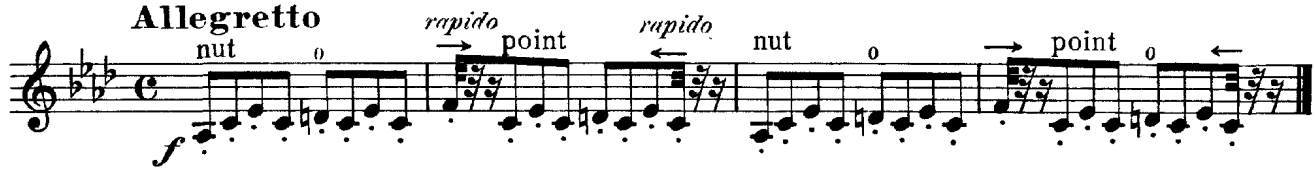
vercome is, to keep the bow at a right angle with the strings, both for down-bow and up-bow, without lifting before each note. When either point or nut is reached, the arm should come to a dead stop. Each note is to be strongly accented, but only by the wrist and without roughly scraping the strings. The stick should be held lightly between the fingers.

N.B. All strokes ought to be practised at first on the open strings, and then with the finger-exercises.



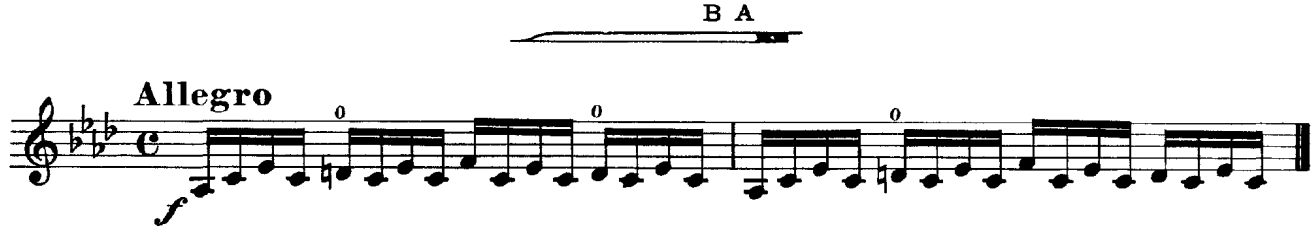
§6. Mixed Bowings

The first measure with the martelé - stroke at the nut of the bow, the first and last note of the second measure with the rapid detached stroke, followed by the martelé-stroke at point or nut, according to the position of the bow.



§7. Detached Stroke Near Nut

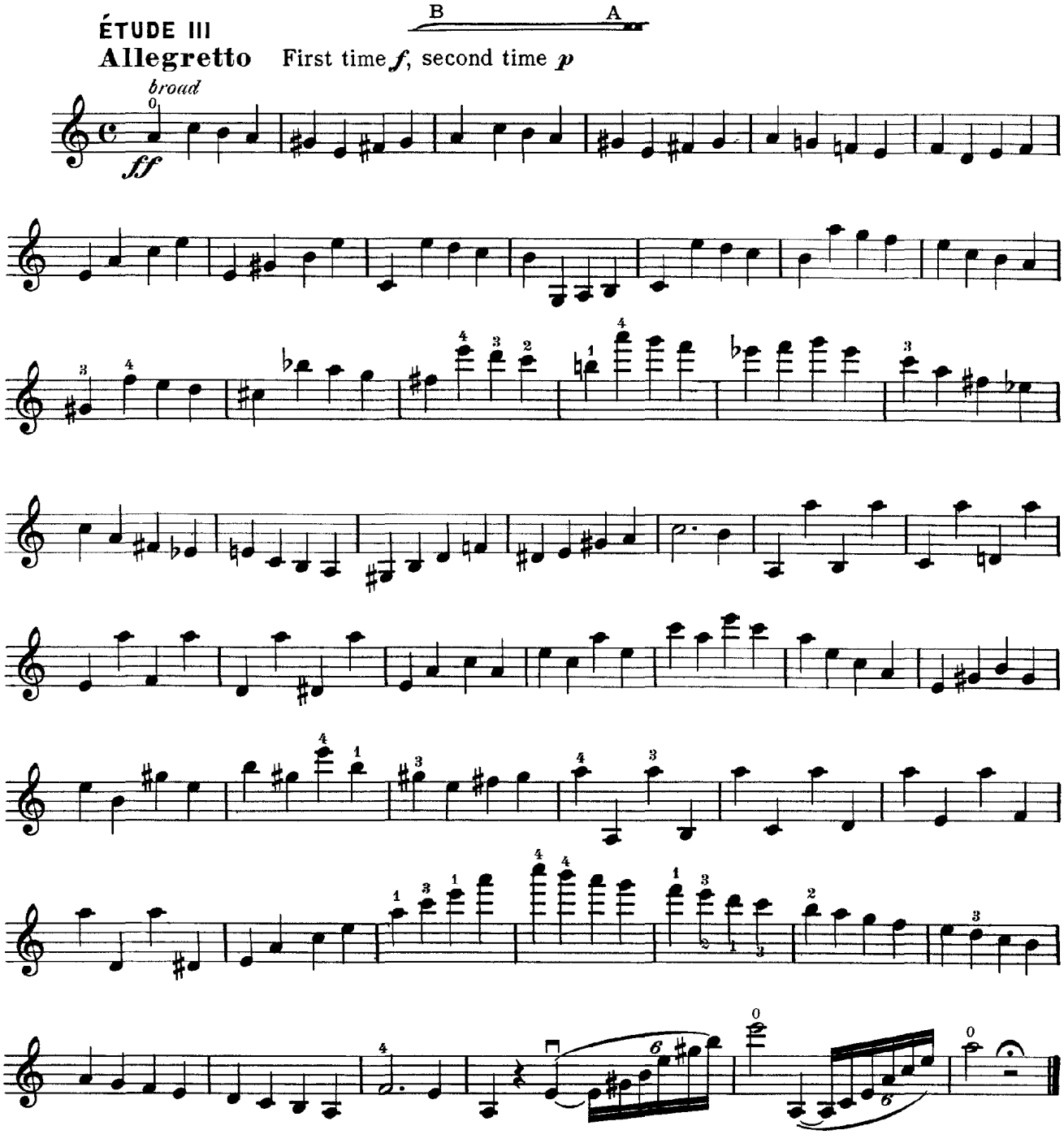
To be executed without accent, somewhat more bow being employed than for the hammered (martelé) stroke. The wrist must be kept very supple.



§ 8. Detached Stroke with Whole Bow without accent

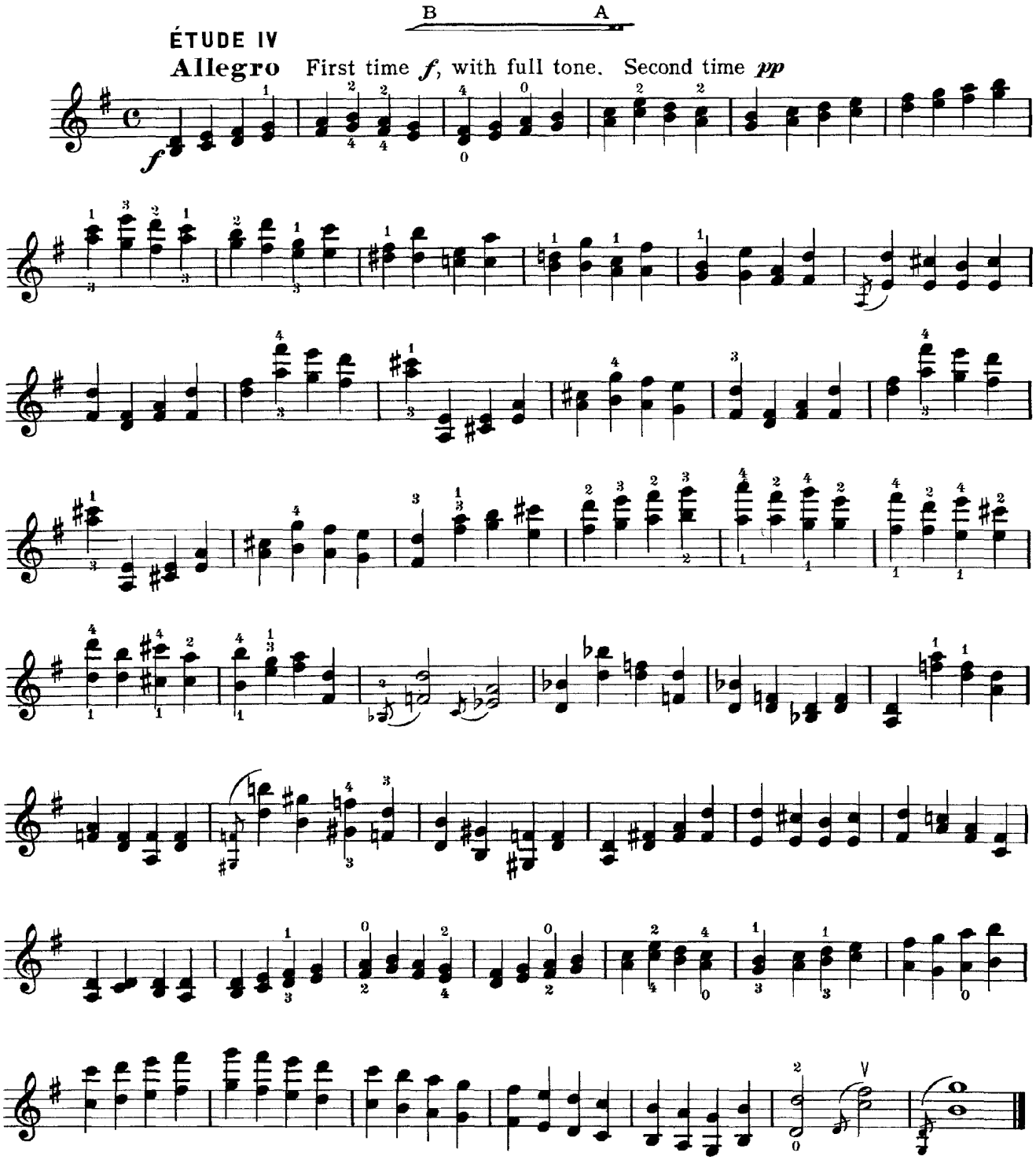
This bowing-exercise aims at entire independence of the forearm and its complete development, and likewise at acquiring a full volume of tone without bearing too heavily on the strings. For up-bow the wrist must be lightly raised, that it may not bear down on the strings; for down-bow the arm is to be extended to its full length, always holding it lower than the stick.

This stroke should be executed with full energy, and with scrupulous avoidance of interruption between the separate notes.



§ 9. Detached Stroke with Double-Stops

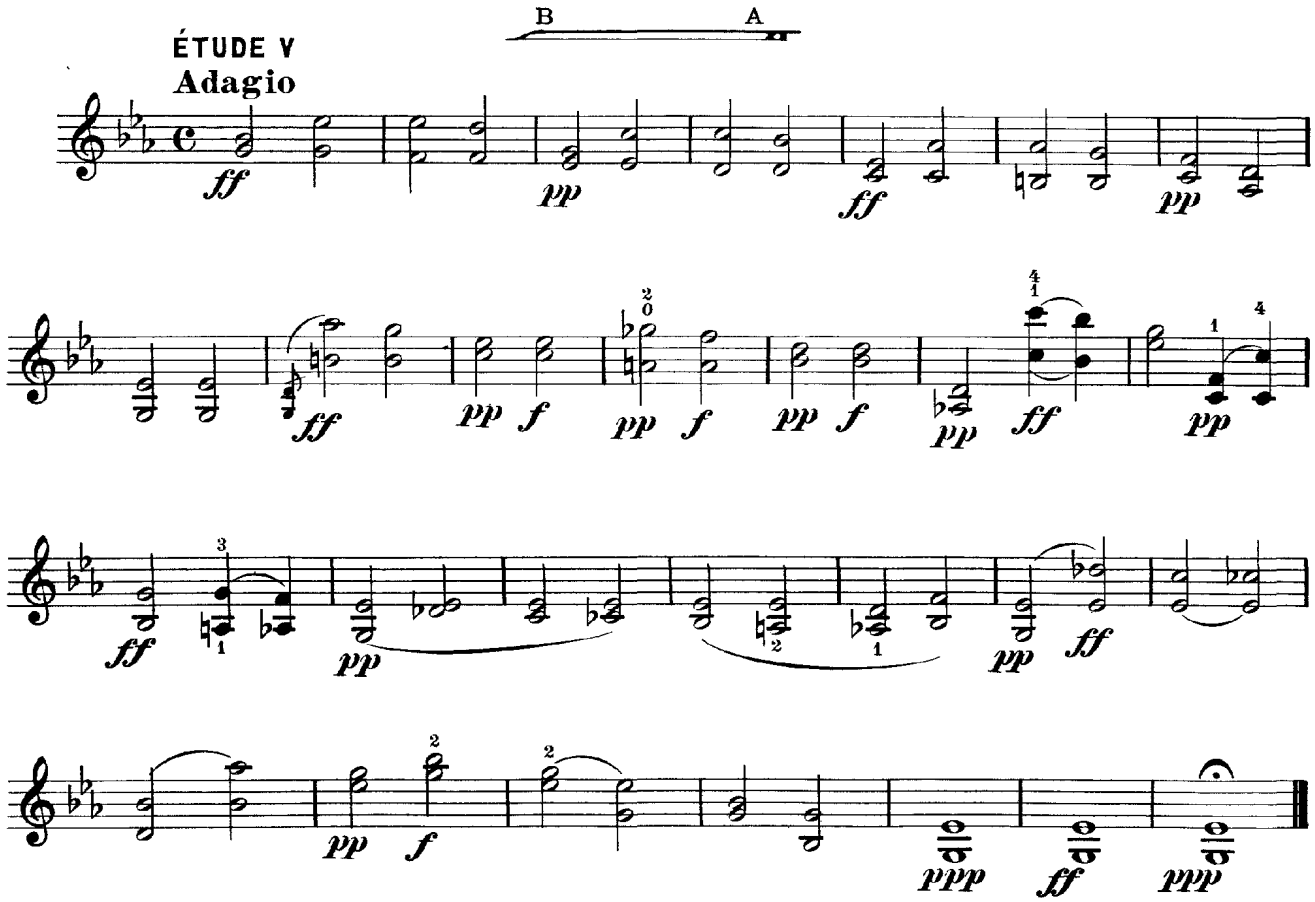
To be executed in the same manner as the preceding Étude. The hair must press firmly on both strings; and do not neglect to tilt the stick a trifle toward the fingerboard, so that the vibration of the strings may not be interfered with by the trembling of the stick.



Second Fundamental Bowing

§ 10. The Singing Stroke

To be executed without the least break in the notes between up-bow and down bow, the hair lying flat on the strings. The tone should be powerful, and the change from up-to down-bow should be imperceptible. At *f* the tone must not lose in fullness when about to pass to *p*, neither must it increase at *p* when about to pass to *ff*. In *f* the stick should be pressed slightly between thumb and forefinger, and should move freely in the fingers at *pp*.

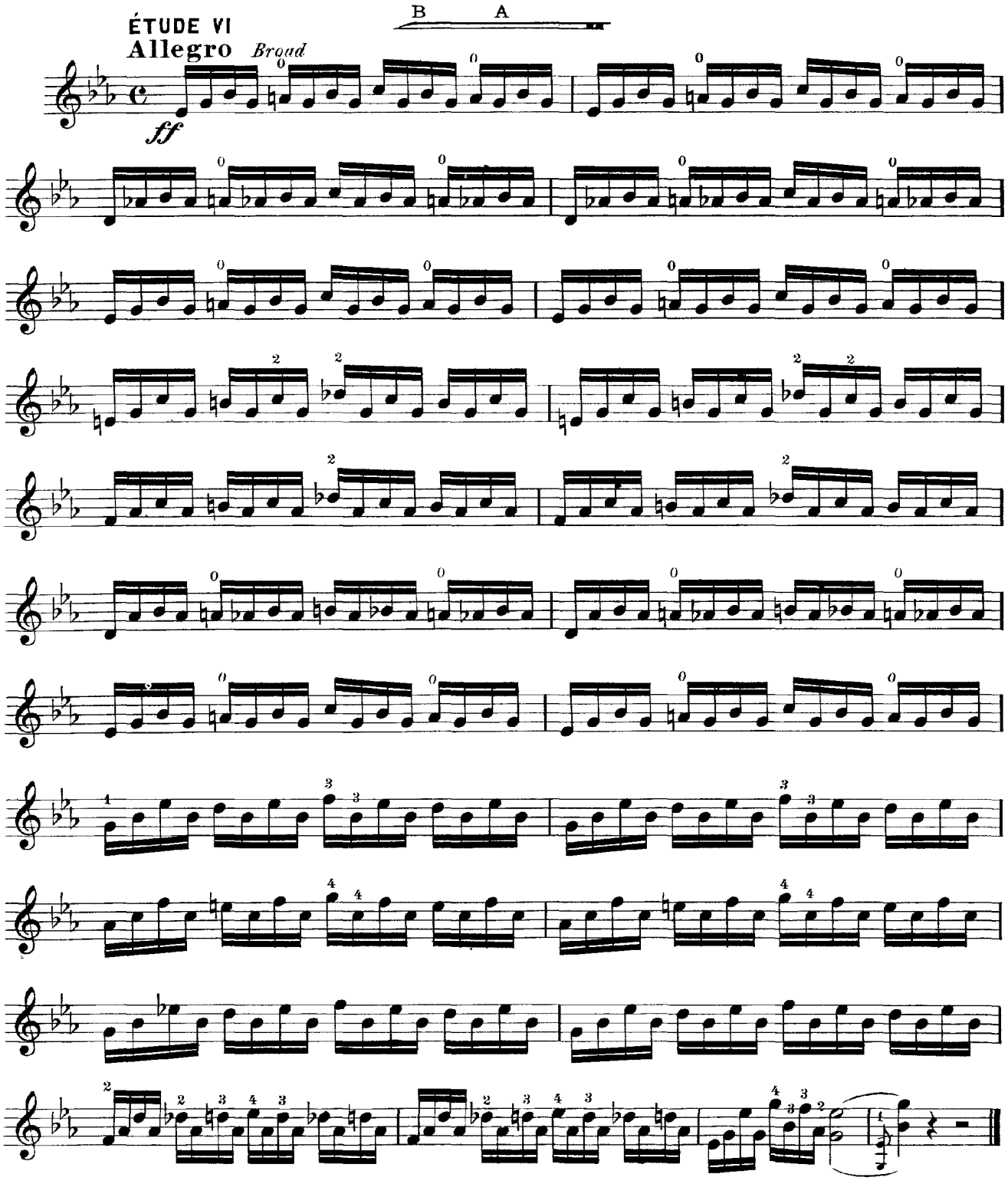


Fourth Fundamental Bowing

§ 11. Detached Stroke of the Forearm

The strings must be touched energetically, but not roughly. Executed by a half-bow across the strings, which must be kept in equable vibration to develop a full tone.

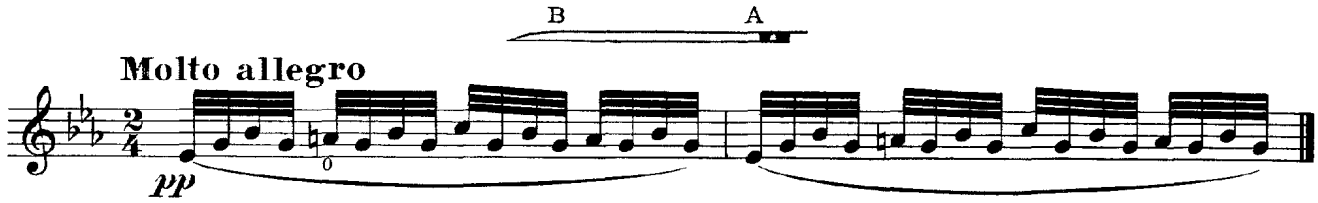
Wrist and finger-joints must be flexible, and the stick held lightly between the fingers. This bowing must be executed with breadth and energy.



This bowing must also be practised with the finger-exercise for springing bow, page **11**.

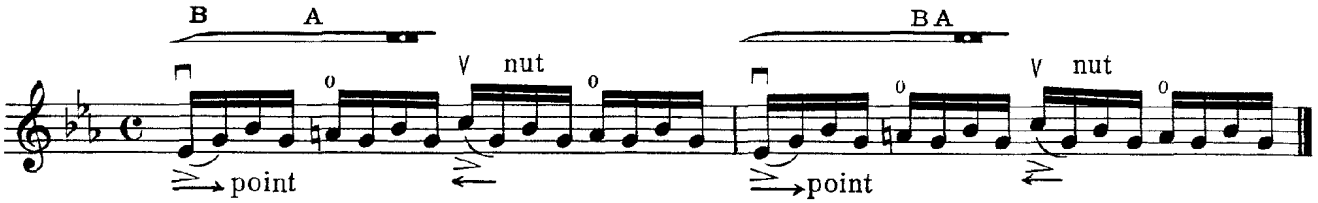
§ 12. Undulating Stroke

Execute with whole bow and from the wrist, the bow gliding gently over the strings. The undulatory movement must be kept up from nut to point throughout the down-bow, and likewise throughout the up-bow. The movement of the bow in passing from one string to another must be imperceptible, and the hair must nearly rest on both strings at once, to avoid executing the undulating movement by the arm. The movement should be very rapid, and the execution spirited.



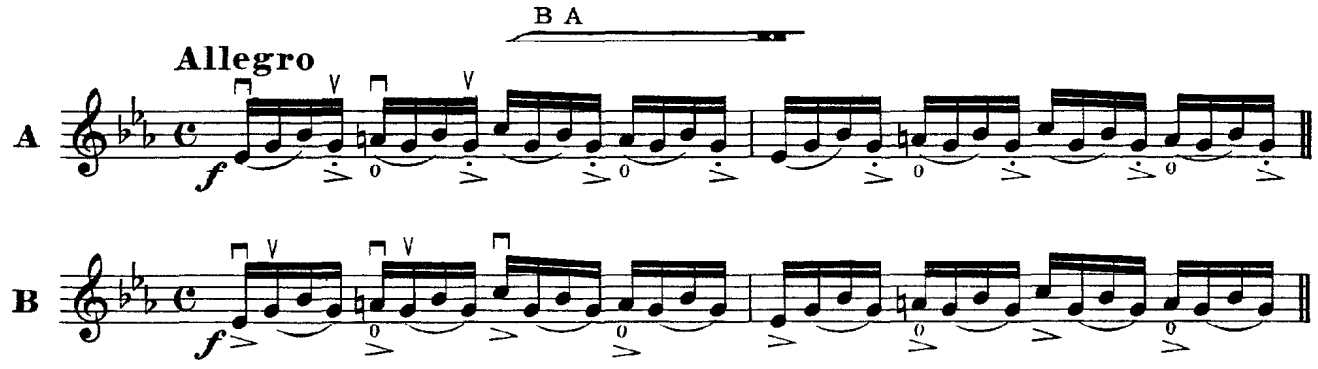
§ 13. Combined Bowings

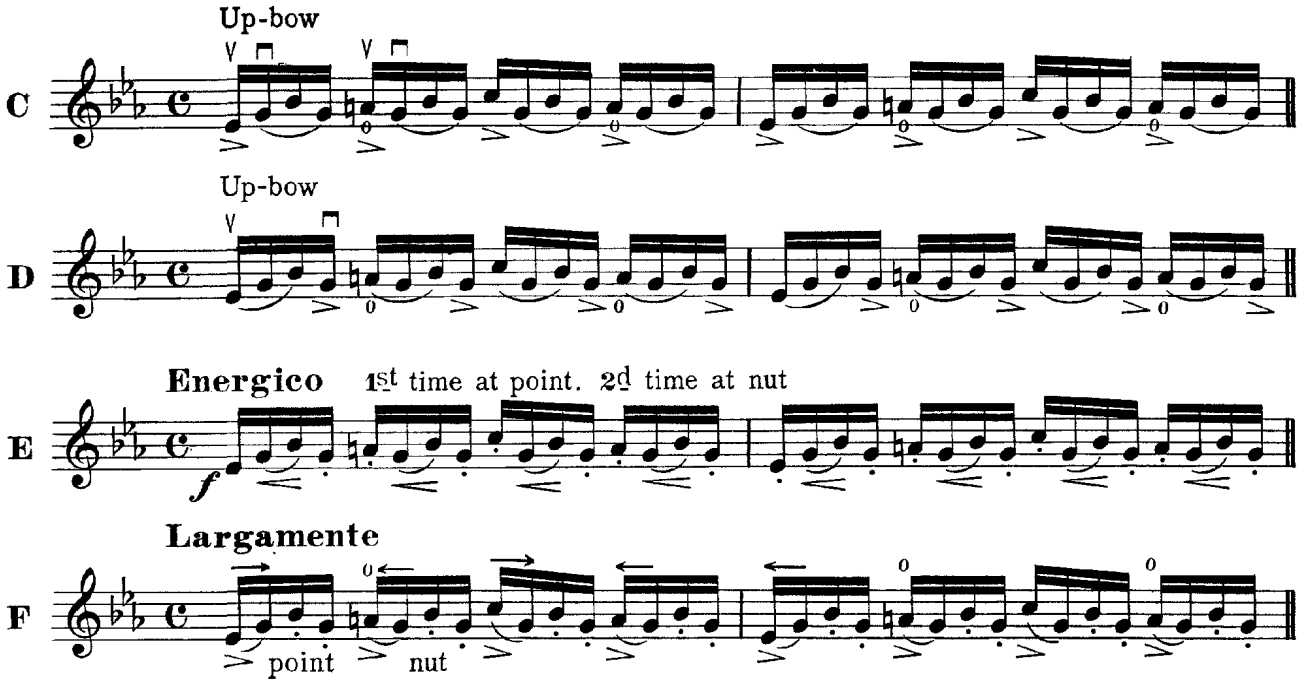
For the legato notes the whole bow is taken. The staccato notes are executed alternately with the forearm and nut. This bowing requires an extremely supple wrist.



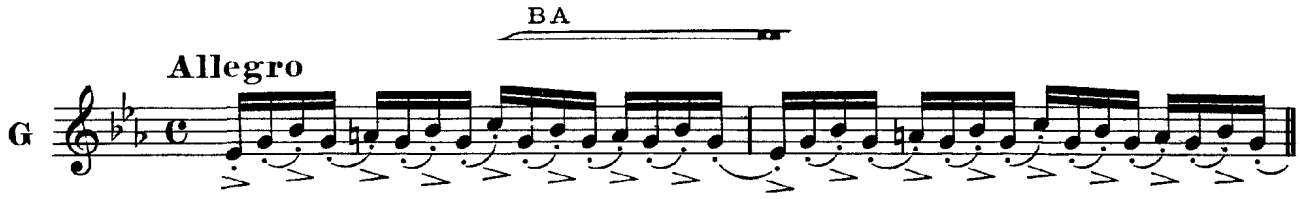
§ 14. Sparing the Bow

Not more bow should be employed for the three legato notes than for the one staccato note; above all, there must not be the slightest break between them. The strongly detached note must be executed by the wrist alone.





Short bows, the > strongly accented.

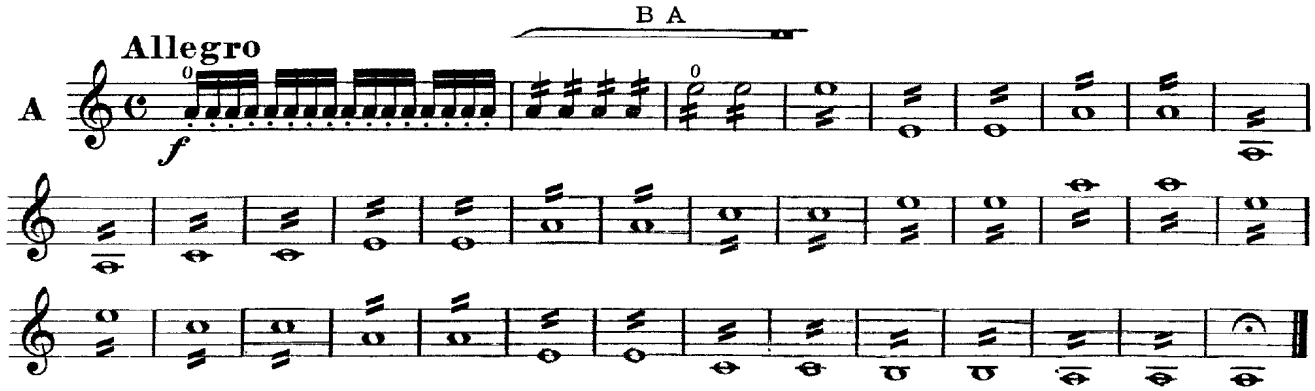


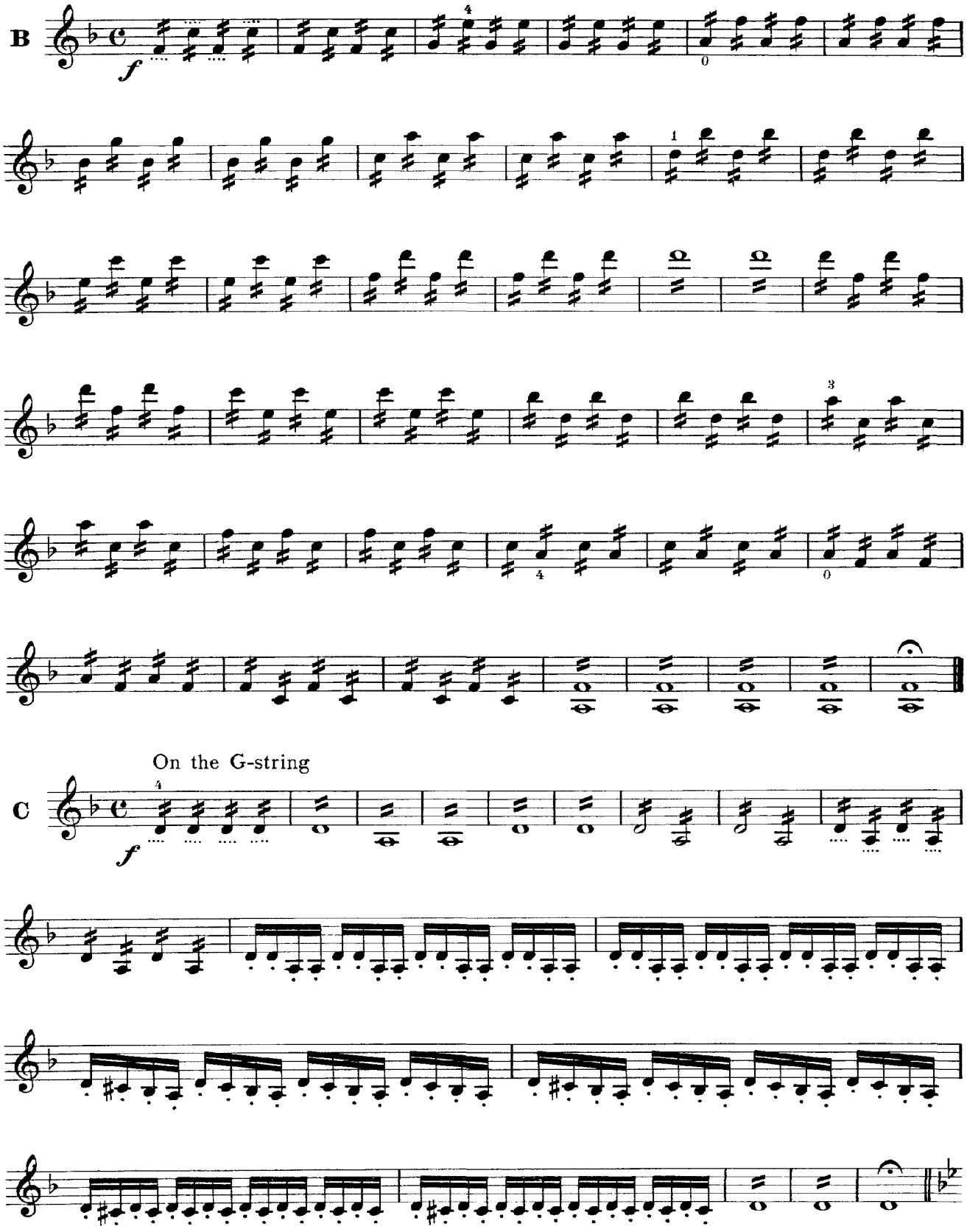
Fifth Fundamental Bowing

§ 15. Springing Stroke

Executed by the wrist, at the middle of the bow. The stick must play freely between the fingers, so that it can rebound on the strings. The bow is to be kept nearer the bridge, the elbow drawn inward. The notes should be very distinctly detached, employing short bows.

Exercises for the springing bow, and the detached stroke with the forearm. (It. *Spiccato.*)

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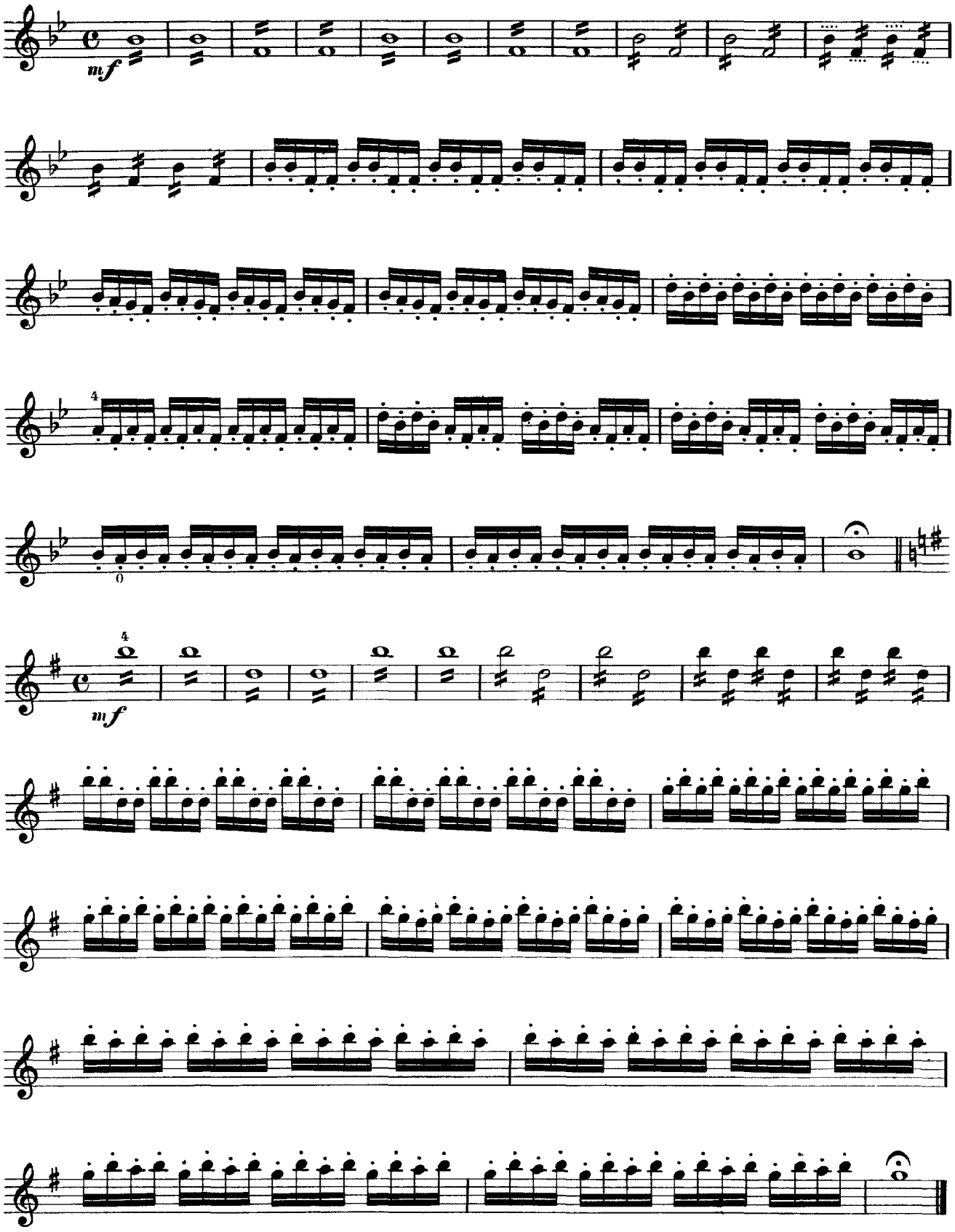
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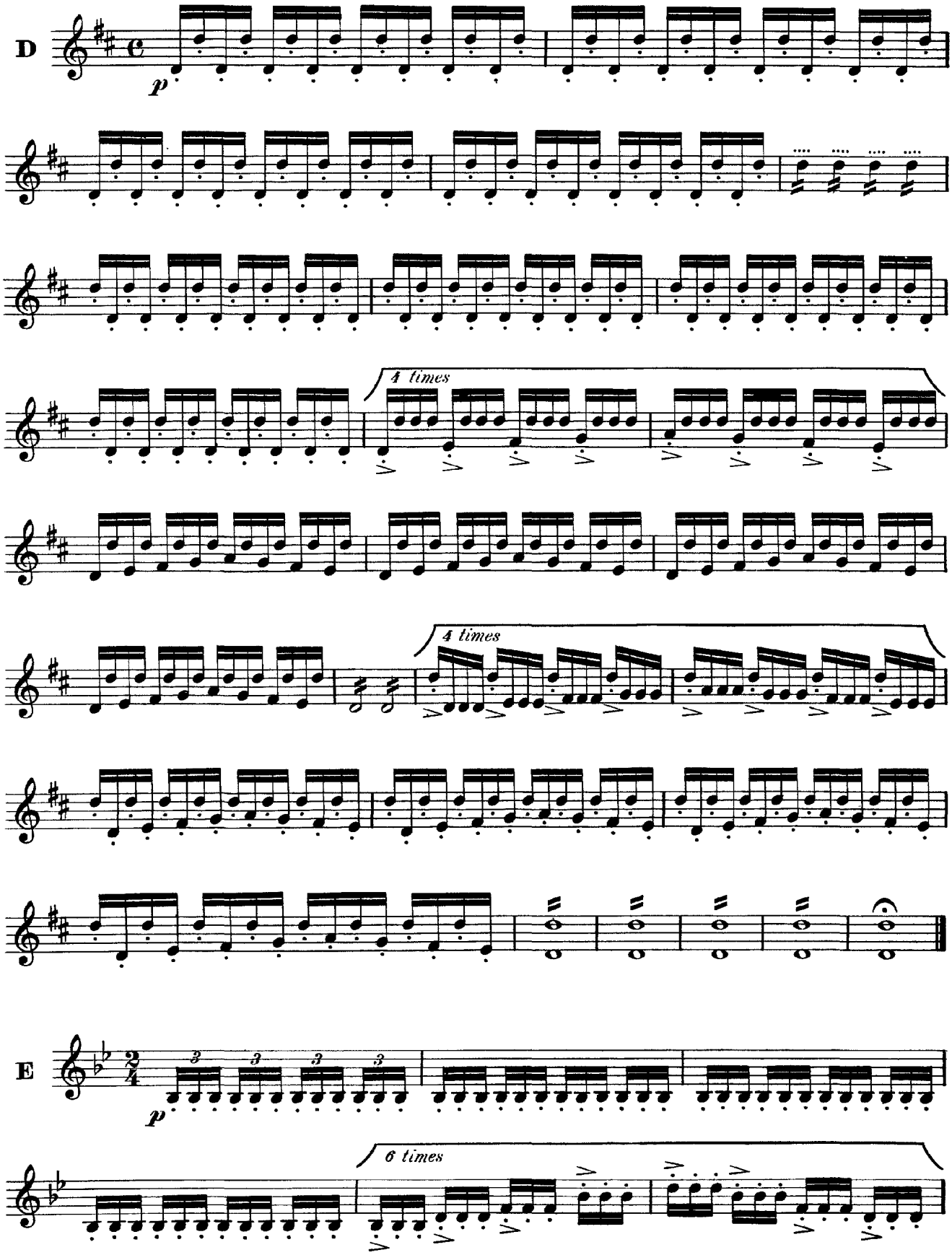
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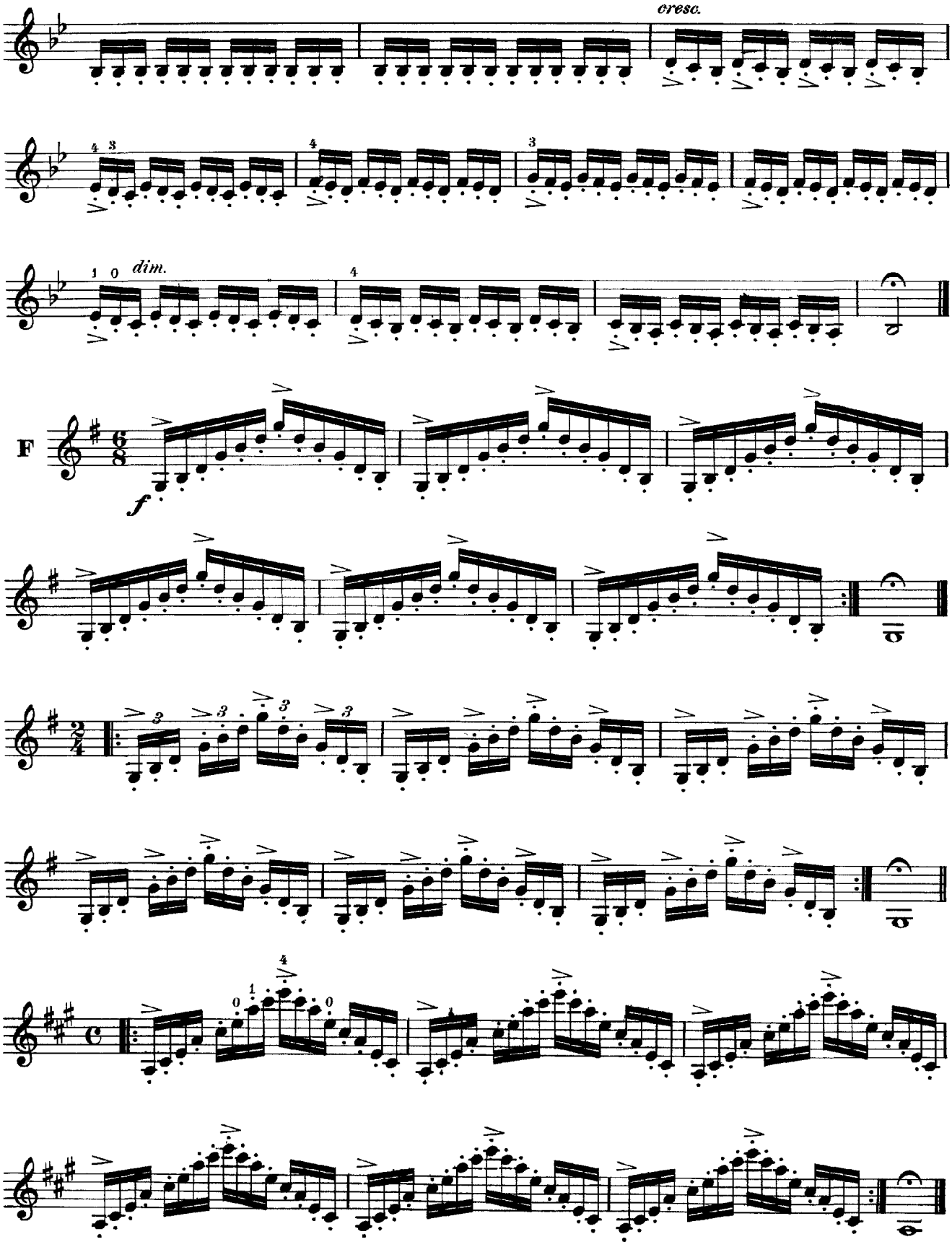
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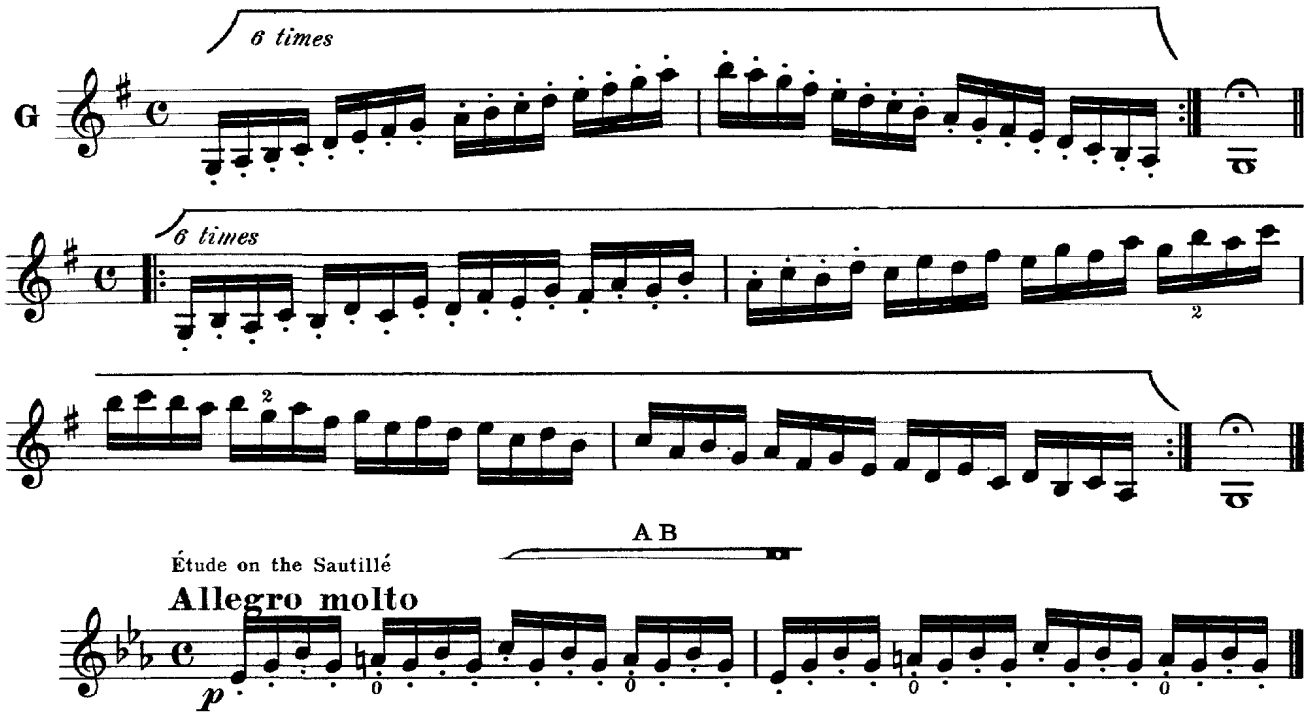
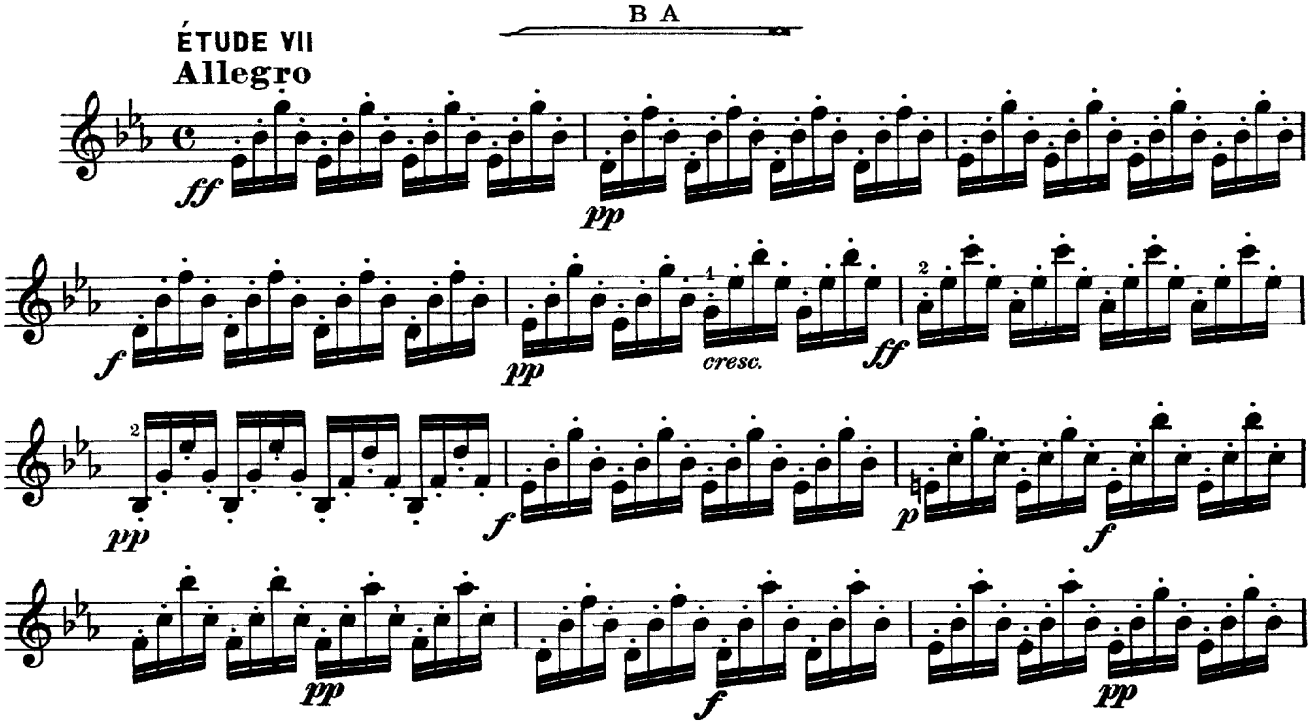


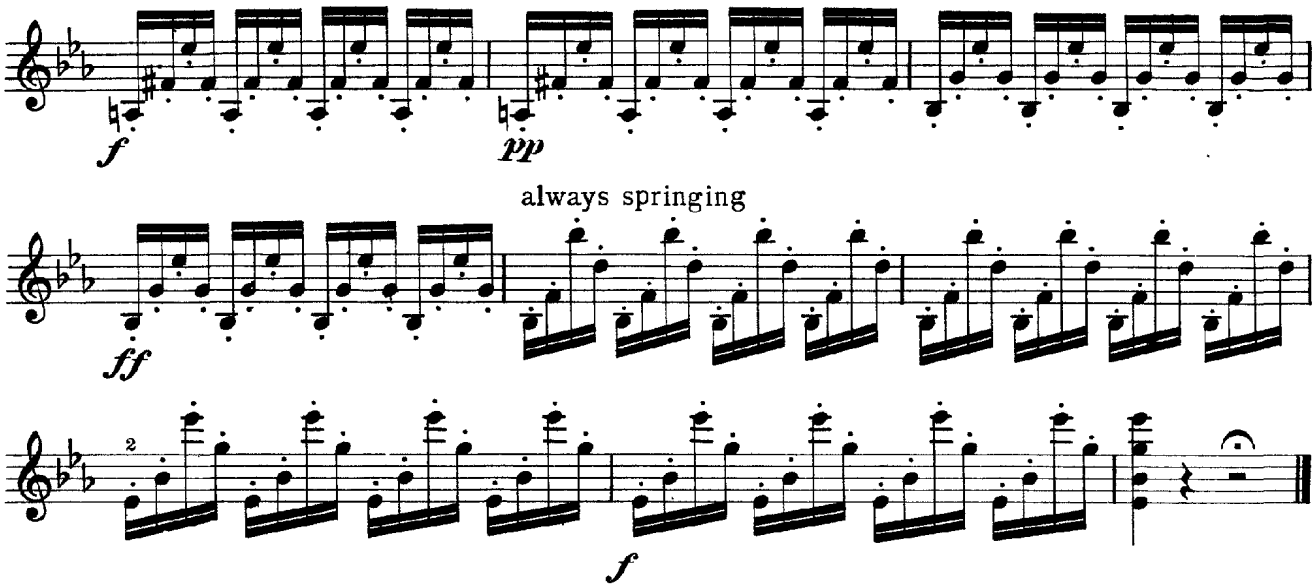
§ 16. Springing Stroke (Sautillé) across Three Strings

(It. *Saltato.*)

The difficulty of this exercise consists in passing over from one string to another with very light bow. The first time, this stroke should be executed without expression, the second time observing the marks of expression.

Forte passages to be played with detached stroke with forearm; *piano*, with springing bow.

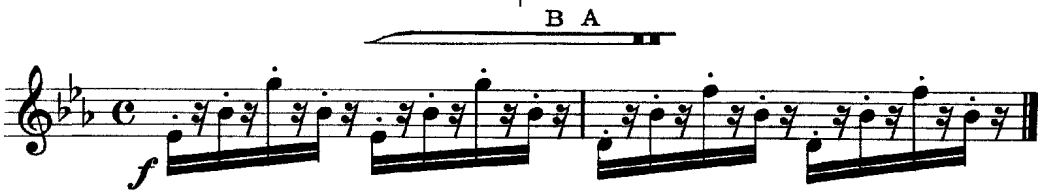




Sixth Fundamental Bowing

§ 17. The Thrown Stroke

It is distinguished from the others in being executed entirely by the arm; the bow is lifted between each two notes, then being allowed to fall again in the same place. The notes must be distinctly articulated, the stick pressed somewhat between the fingers.



§ 18. Staccato

The first note must be accented by suddenly holding back the bow. The main point is, to keep exact time with short bows in an allegro movement. One need not take it too much to heart if in the beginning the notes are not equally accented, for this imperfection will disappear after a time. After the accent on the first note the stick must be held lightly between the fingers, and the wrist kept perfectly supple.

The staccato should never be executed either by the upper arm or by the shoulder.

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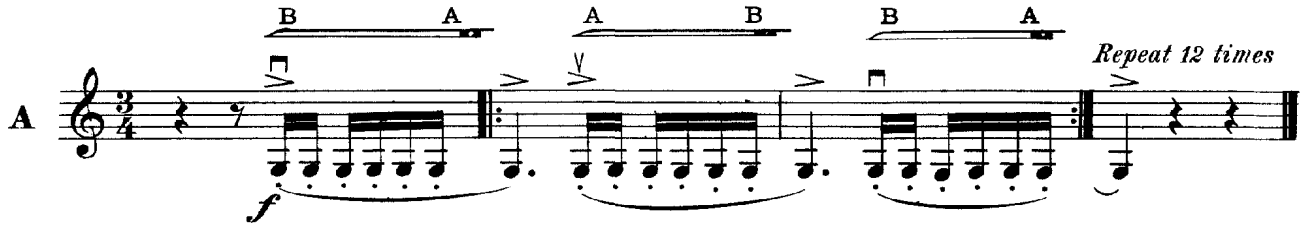
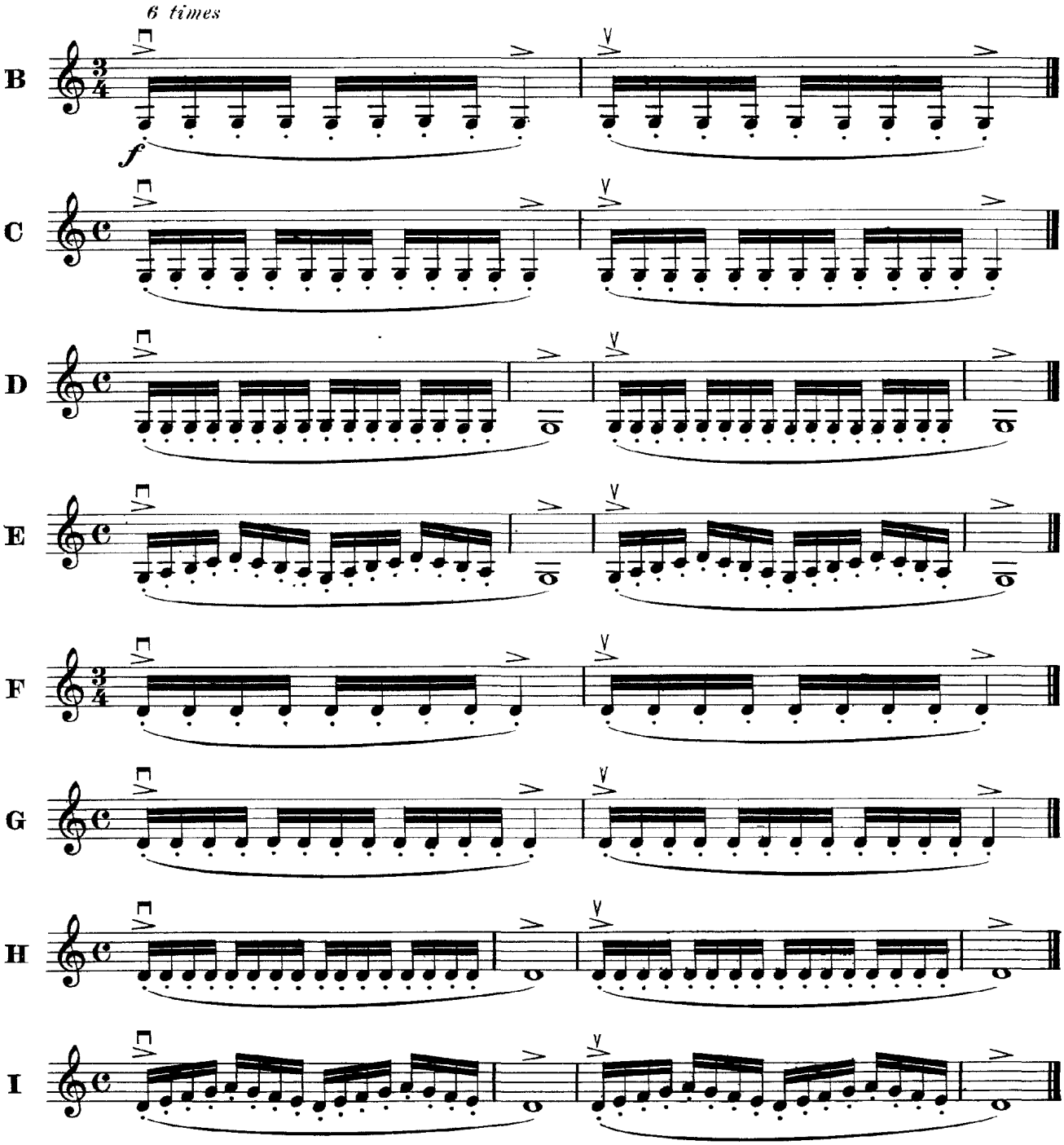
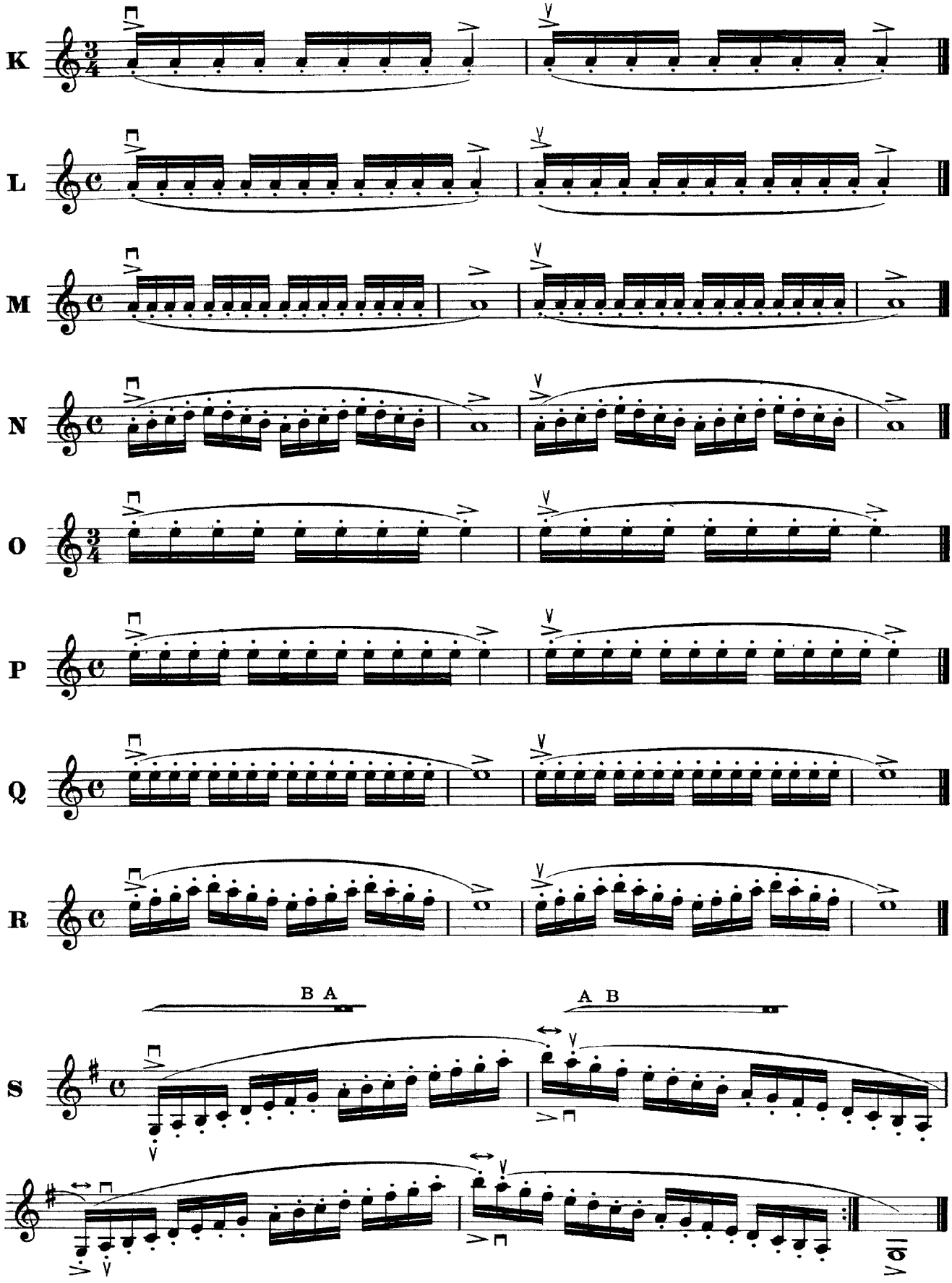


This exercise is to be continued on all the open strings.

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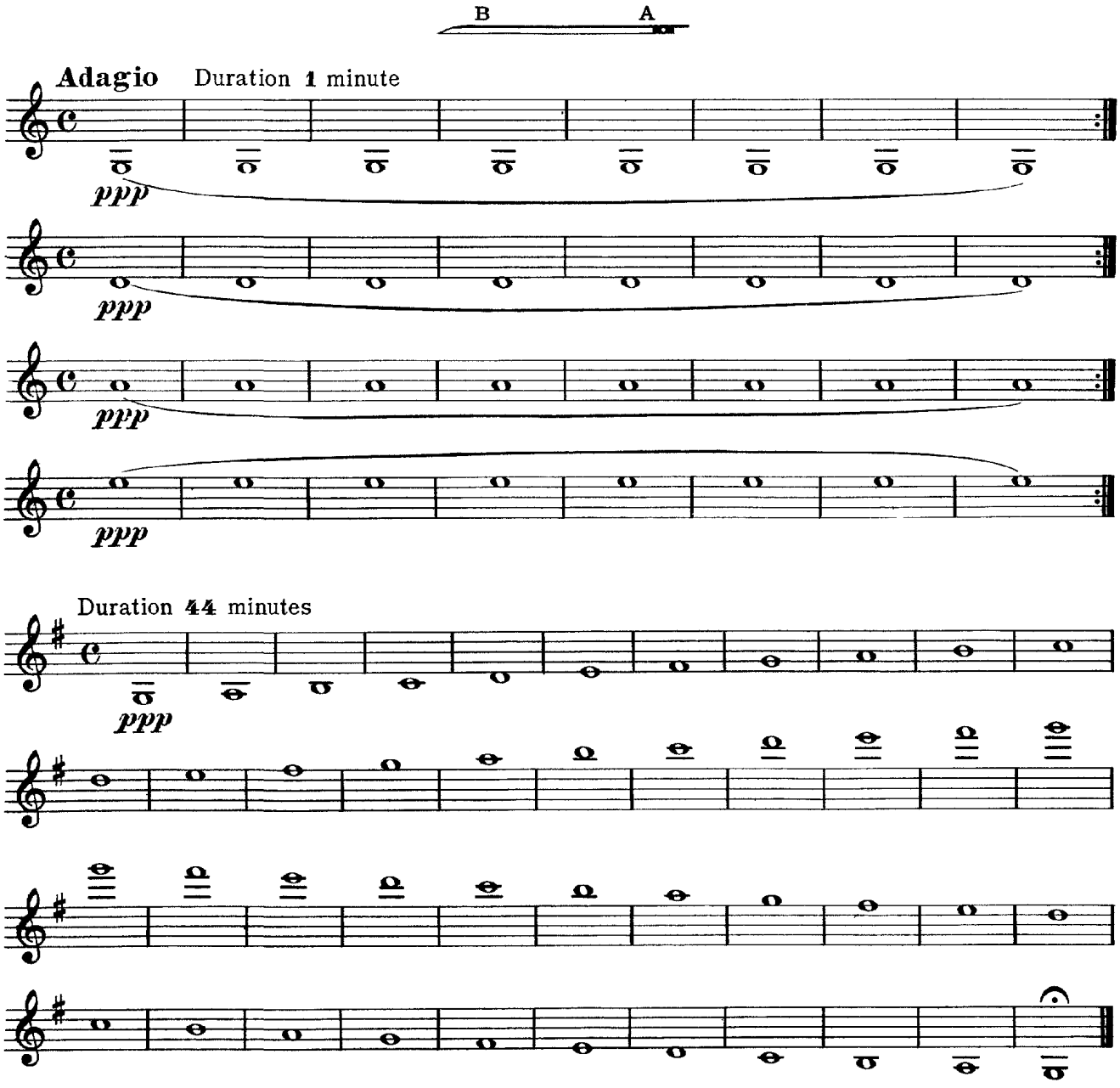
§ 19. The Sustained Tone

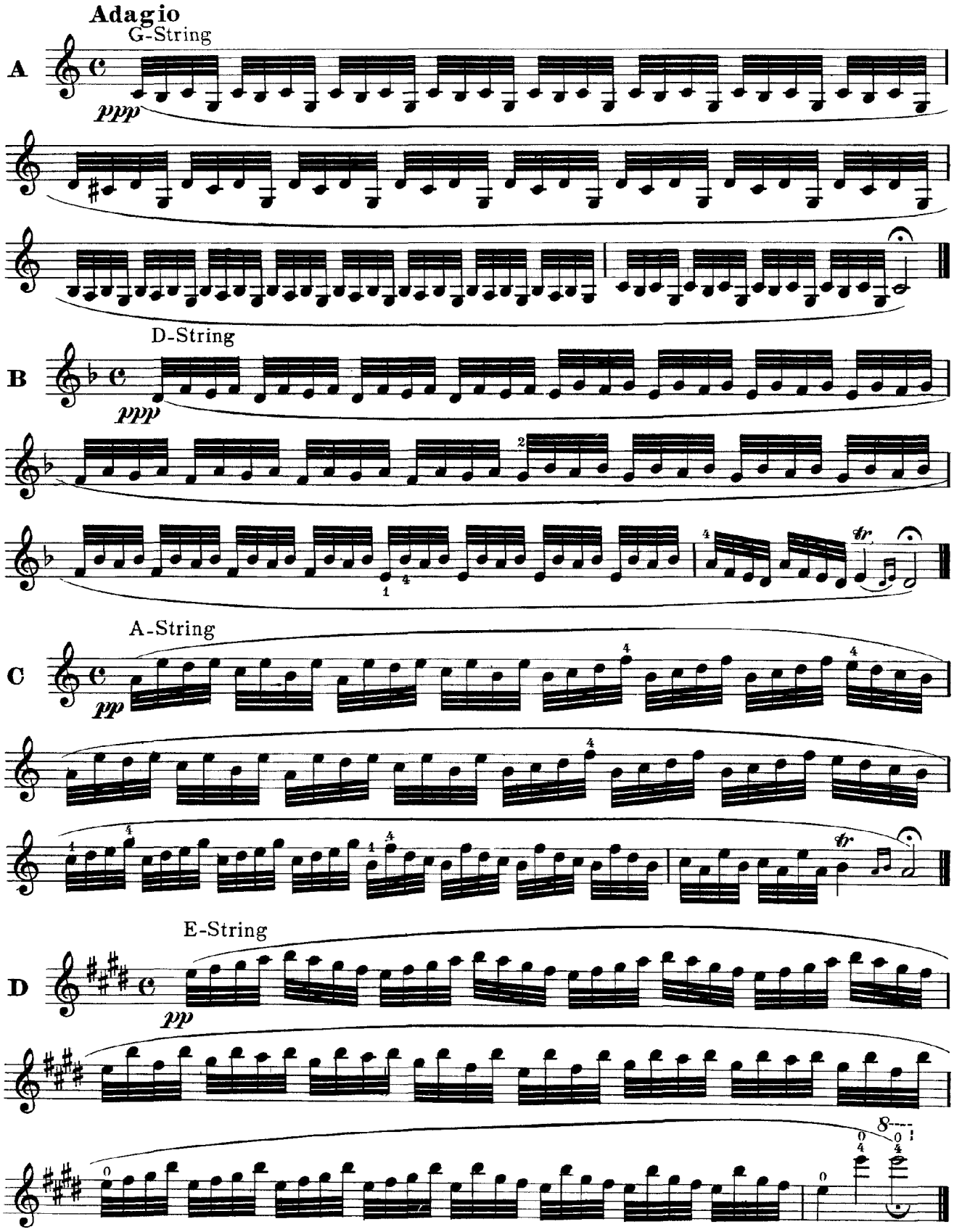
The sustained tone is at once the most difficult and the most important of all strokes. It is executed with whole bow, without expression and with a mere breath of tone, letting the bow move smoothly and imperceptibly. The duration of each bow should be one minute.

Viotti, having neglected playing for a time, practised the sustained tone for two hours with and without finger-exercises; and then remarked that his fingers felt as if he had never been out of practice.

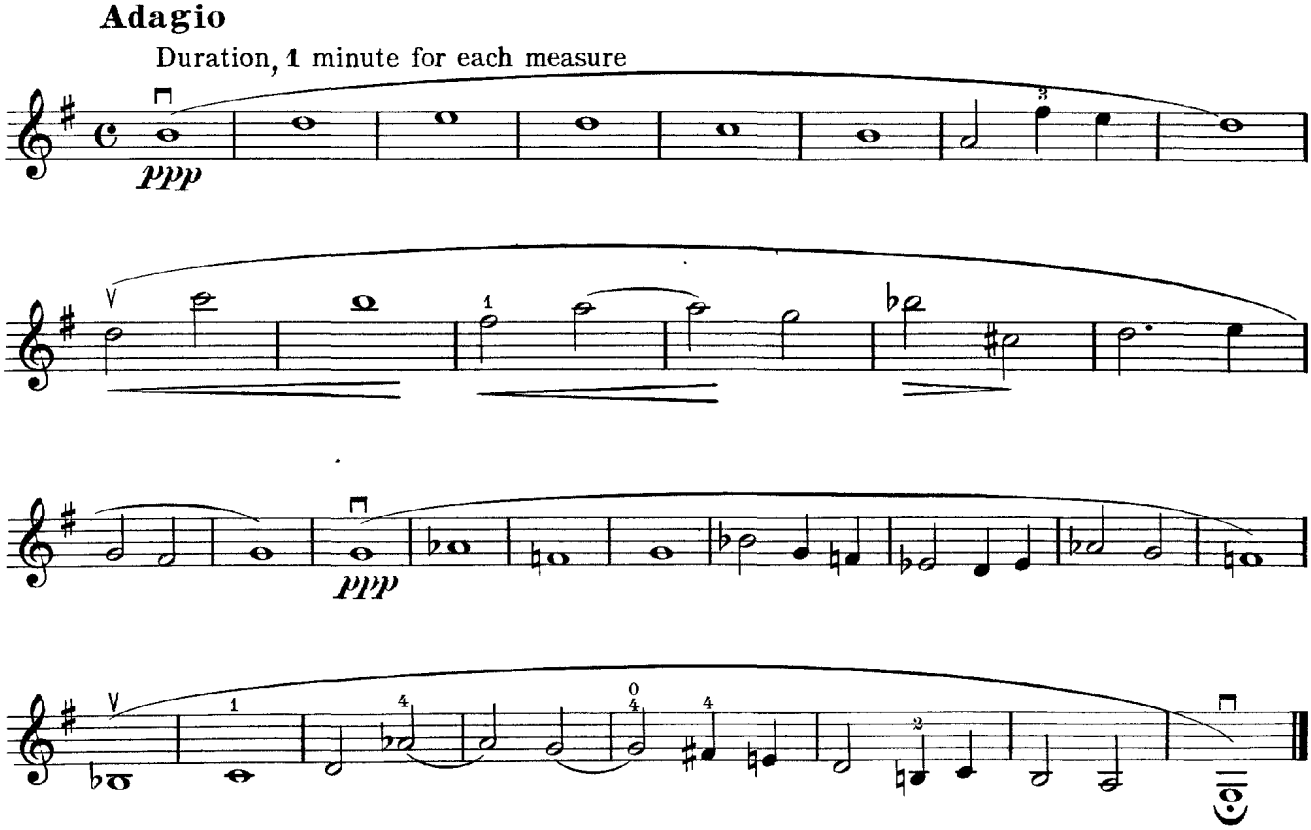
For those who feel timidity before an audience, the practice of the sustained tone is indispensable for steadying the nerves and giving precision of bowing. It is also well to execute this bowing with a full tone, in which case the duration of the sustained tone is **30** seconds.



§ 20. Sustained Tone with Finger-exercises



§ 21. Melody in Sustained Tones



§ 22. Sustained Tones in Double Notes and *ppp*

The difficulty is, to bring the two strings into vibration simultaneously, and to maintain this vibration evenly from the nut to the point.

The hair must first be set upon the strings; then sustain the tone without accent and without interrupting the tone between the notes. In the middle of the bow the forefinger must be pressed on the stick to keep it from trembling.

For the up-bow lift the wrist towards the middle of the bow, in order to sustain the tone to the nut. The duration of each bow is **30** seconds.

N.B. These exercises also have the particular advantage of steadying the bow on the strings; they contribute toward the elasticity of the tone by making it sympathetic.

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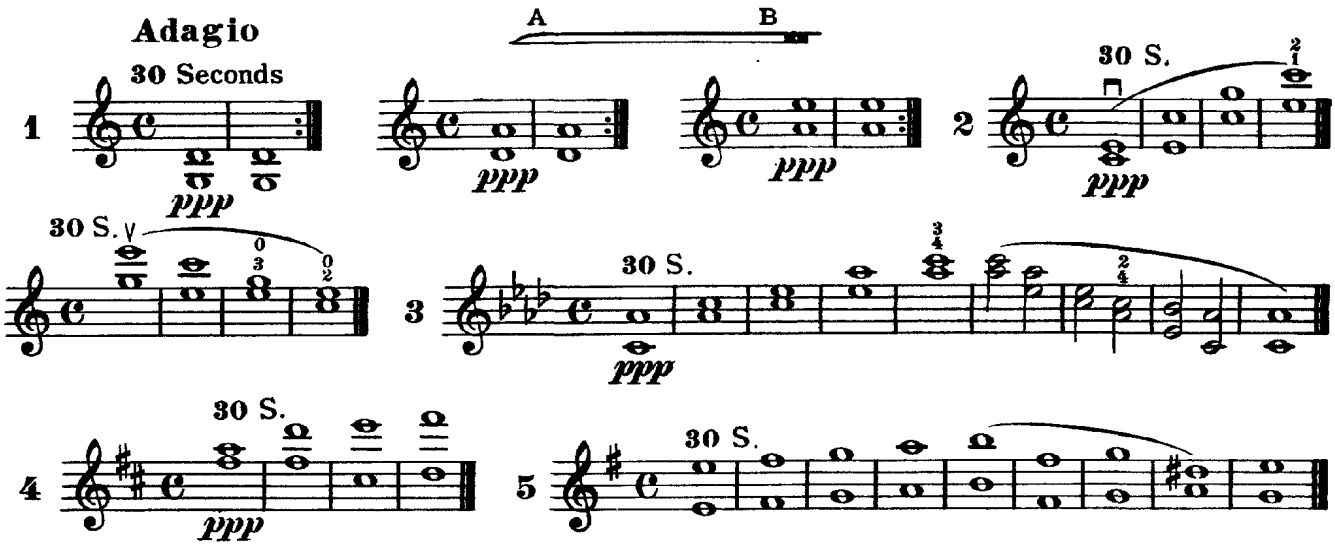
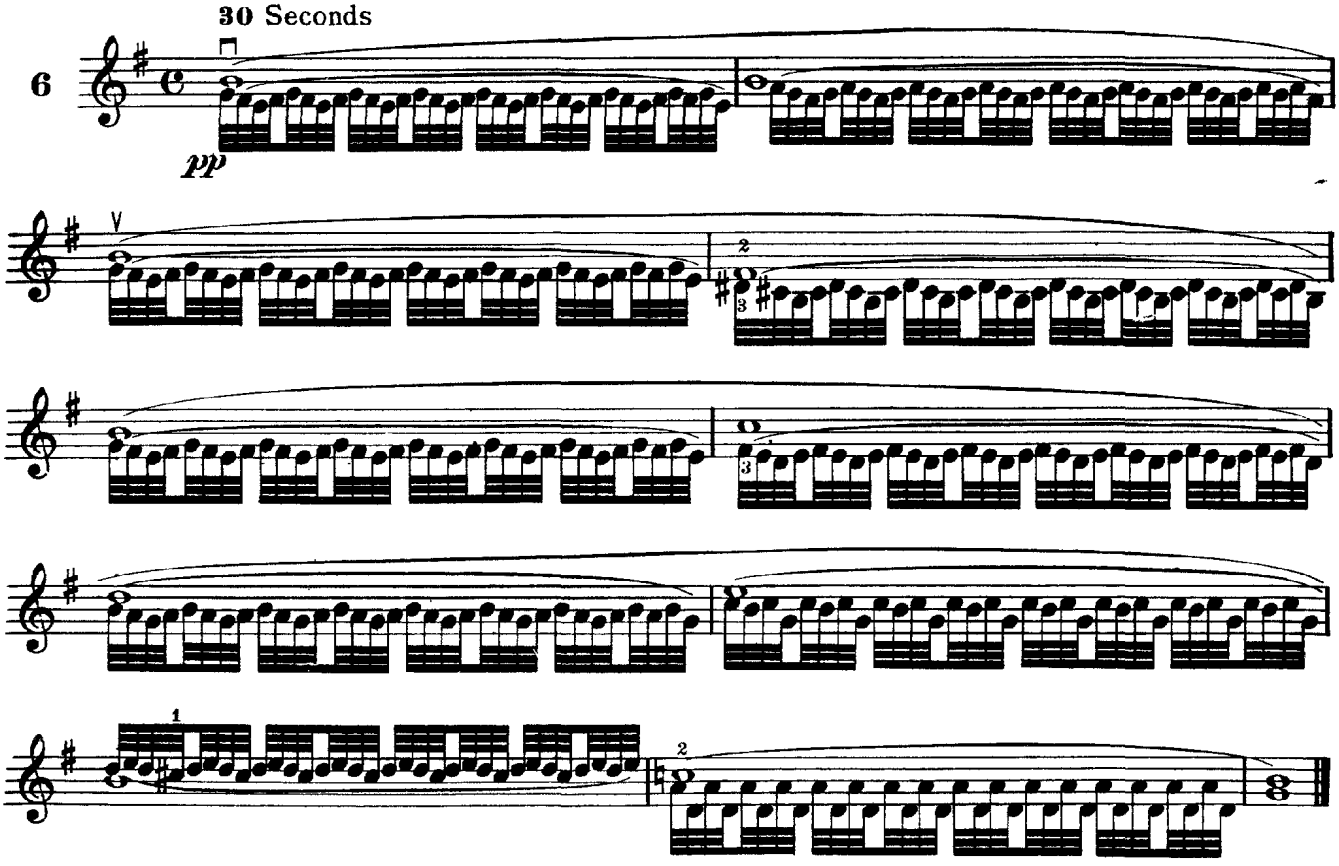
How to Sustain Double Notes with a faint, scarcely perceptible tone



Sustaining of Tone with Finger-exercises