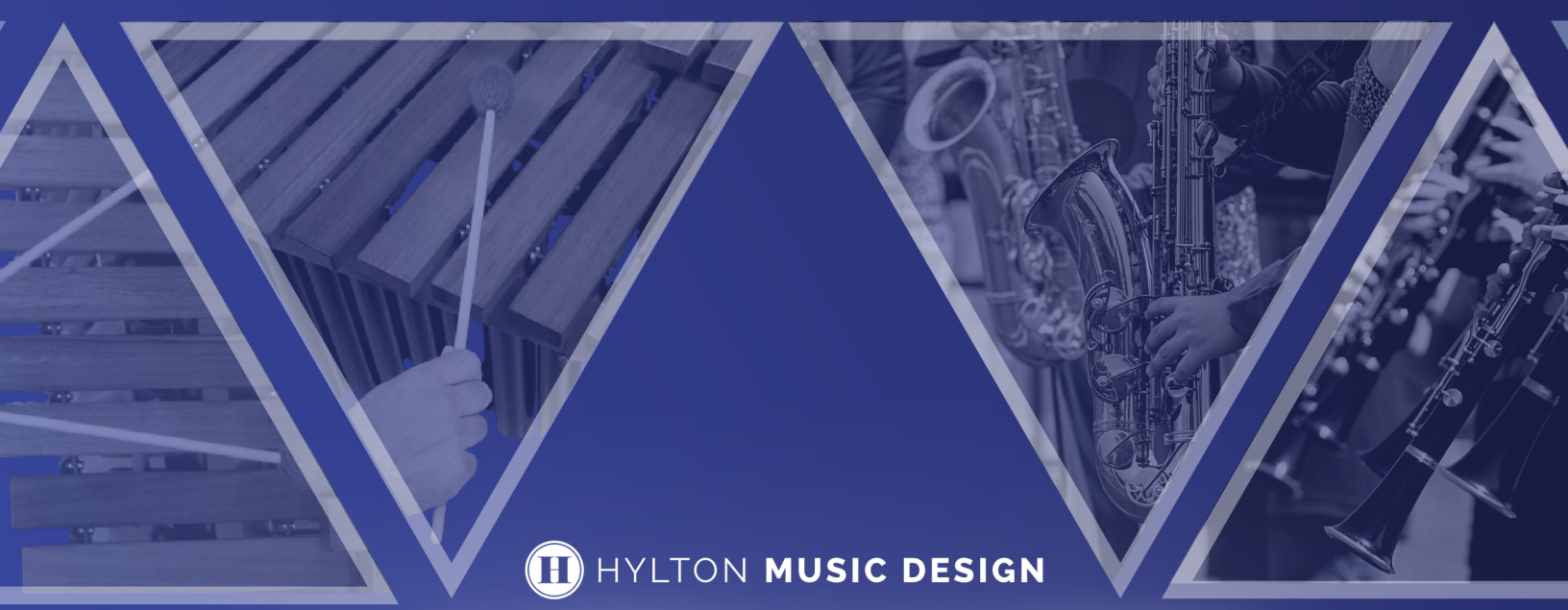

HYLTON MUSIC DESIGN

# NEXT LEVEL

PROGRESSIVE MUSICAL TRAINING
FOR YOUR
MARCHING ENSEMBLE

## 2 MALLET
## ALL

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# NEXT LEVEL Mission

**The goal is to develop the individual's full musicianship, thereby creating confident, fundamentally sound, well-rounded performers and ensembles.**

Each one of us must develop our own strengths before the entire ensemble becomes stronger. Individual practice and effort is crucial!

Develop the whole musical self, not just one aspect of playing - technique, music theory, harmony, ear training - always relate it back to performing on your instrument.

**Focus on creating sound at the highest level by listening to high quality performances and analyzing live music rather than over-analyzing the physical inner workings of playing.**

The only way to truly find out what a great tone is - Listen to it!

Constantly sample the best performers on your instrument and try to replicate that sound in your practice. Don't get caught up so much in what your lips and face do, just hear the sound and flow the air. Put yourself in their shoes, in the concert hall, in the stadium, just focus on the sound and you'll be surprised at the result.

**Through singing and audiation (the process of hearing music in your head) aim to create a higher level of musical nuance than can be properly addressed through speech.**

"Talking about music is like dancing about Architecture" - Martin Mull

Music doesn't happen in a book or on paper - it's in the air, it's in your head, it's all around you, and it exists only in the form of sound. Make it a point to live your life focused on the sounds all around you. Sing and audiate to constantly to absorb the music you hear.

**Practice with Energy, Focus, Positivity, Teamwork, and perform with Power, Sensitivity, Clarity, Nuance, and Emotion!**

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# How to use this curriculum

NEXT LEVEL is built so that you can use the materials in full or in part with your entire marching band, winds, indoor percussion, and even in sectional and solo practice over multiple seasons and years so that your students progress evenly through their development. This set of exercises is not meant to be played in its entirety, daily. Choose the exercises that will most help your students at their current ability level and slowly challenge them over the course of weeks/months to LEVEL UP!

We all know that our ensembles are only as good as our best and worst players; therefore, this program focuses on the individual's needs and how all students can progress at their own pace, thereby reducing bad habits and maximizing improvement within the ensemble setting.

Why Fundamentals?

- It can be difficult to get students to understand the true importance of fundamentals; they just wanna play the cool stuff without investing much time into their technique. Educators have to get students to understand that fundamentals are the very basis of everything they play and getting better on their instrument is directly related to how well they can perform. ***"The better you get, the more fun you'll have!"***

- Buzz Words:
  - ***"Wanna play cool/difficult music? then you've gotta have great fundamentals."***
  - ***"Great performers can do the easy/boring stuff really really well. That's what gives them the skill to do the really difficult things"***

- Don't worry about your number of players or fitting the instrumentation of the packet, just choose what part(s) will be the best fit for your individual students.
- Use exercises to diagnose and fix technique issues
  - Finding places in your repertoire that the students' can't handle? - fit an exercise to the repertoire skill: tonguing: articulation ex., scalar passages: flexibility or dexterity ex., etc.
  - Want to expand your brass players' range? - work on the flexibility exercises.
- Build your daily fundamentals routine
  - choose 1-2 exercises per category (breathing, long tones, flexibility, articulation/style, chorale).
- Use our exercises as jumping off points
  - once an exercise is learned, change it up or add other techniques to further challenge your students. For instance: change the tempo, add dynamics, change the articulation, try it in a different octave, try it in a different scale, key, or mode, etc.
- When learning new exercises
  - go slow! not just the tempo but also the pace of learning... (phrase by phrase).
  - Give students a minute on their own for each exercise (or even each phrase) before diving in.
  - Go phrase by phrase, paying attention to the more difficult key signatures/skills.
  - You might only do 1 phrase of each exercises that day but you can make better progress going slowly, it's about ***Quality not Quantity.***
- Adapt the material to be more specific to your goals.
  - Change the dynamics of exercises to match your repertoire goals for the day.
  - A specific rhythm
  - a specific scale/chord.

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The **Percussion** packet is designed with multiple uses and possibilities in mind. Each warm up can function as a stand alone “lot tune” or as a combined warm-up exercise for winds and percussion. You can also use battery and front ensemble warm-ups separately. With the wide range of techniques covered in the packet you can find the specific and essential skills that you are looking for to level up your percussion ensemble.

## Battery:

If performing with the winds or front ensemble, exercises with the same number of measures can be mixed and matched based on what your ensemble needs. You can also take short excerpts of each exercise to focus in on specifics techniques and isolate rhythms to enhance timing.

Level 1: All sections play snare part in unison for total understanding of exercises.
Level 2: Tenors/Bass Line play arounds and split parts to develop instrument specific skills.
Level 3: Incorporate various dynamics (i.e. soft playing, crescendo and decrescendo)

## Front Ensemble:

The front ensemble portion covers two and four mallet playing, auxiliary, timpani, drum set and electronics. There are several options depending on the skill level and size of your group.

### Two Mallets

It is important to note that the the levels are not ranking the instruments in order of difficulty but are based on the difficulty of the notes in the exercise. Vibraphone presents many new challenges to the students with the incorporation of the pedal. The exercises written for vibraphone are designed for enhancement that skill. However as your players are leveling up they can play the marimba exercises on vibraphone for more of a challenge.

Level 1: Glockenspiel (beginner level)
Level 2: Vibraphone (intermediate)
Level 3: Marimba (advanced)

### Four Mallets

The Marimba and Vibraphone parts for the exercises are intended to develop instrument specific skills. Progressing through the packet will cover all of the necessary building blocks for four mallet technique.

### Rack Players

While you can go through the progression of levels with your players, instrument selection should be taken into account for part selections. No need to bring out the entire percussion cabinet just for warm-ups. Feel free to use the instruments you have and play the rhythms written in the exercises.

Level 1 BD/Tamtam (novice)
Level 2 Rack 3 (beginner)
Level 3 Rack 2 (intermediate)
Level 4 Rack 1 (Advanced)

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### Drumset

The packet is set up to help establish better timing and coordination for your drum set player. Main focus is keeping a steady beat!

Level 1 (beginner) Keep the groove! Simplify them if needed.
Level 2 (intermediate) As written
Level 3 (Advanced) Embellish grooves and improvise fills.

## Electronics:

The fastest developing section in the modern front ensemble. These exercises are to serve as a way make the electronics an everyday addition to the ensemble.

### Synths

Level 1: Sampler (novice) Intended for players with minimal melodic note reading skills. Develops timing and feel for performing various samples they may encounter during a show. There are three types of samples Short-S Riser-R and Boom-B.

Level 2: Synth 1 (beginner) Focuses on bass clef and parts similar those supporting low end in performance. Can play single notes instead of octaves to start with.

Level 3: Synth 1 w/Samples (intermediate) Introduces multi-tasking, can begin by only playing risers and booms to simulate moments they may perform during the show.

Level 4 Synth 2 RH Only (intermediate/advanced) begins to develop basic piano skills that are similar to what they may perform during the show.

Level 5 Synth 2 Both Hands (advanced)

Level 6 Synth 2 RH Hand Marimba (super advanced) In case you have the synth player who also a skilled pianist that needs a little more challenge.

### Samples

We have included three sets of samples. Each sample set includes (4) Short (4) Risers and (4) Booms Feel free to mix and match the samples from each sound family. Allow the students to select the samples for each exercise. The main goal using samples as part of the warm-up is to make the performers more aware of their responsibilities during the show. It will also give a chance to work the gremlins out of the electronic setup prior to the performance!

### Best Practices:

- Don't just play through things and expect to automatically get better - actually work on a specific skill or detail and make a noticeable improvement each day/session.

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- Take time to hear individual sections or sub sections playing. There's a LOT going on in every exercise, hearing everything while everyone plays simultaneously is not easy.
- It's better to do small chunks or phrases than long exercises: ***Quality not Quantity***
- Have individuals play for the group! Celebrate your students achievement by having them perform for the class and receive praise for their progress.
    - This is a great way to develop confidence amongst all of your performers, no matter their level. Challenge them to play a short excerpt of something for the class, right there on the spot. "it doesn't have to be challenging - just choose something you can perform at a high level and execute!"
    - for less experienced players it might be a simple breathing exercise or single long tone phrase.
- once an exercise has been learned, create variety by adding dynamics, changing articulation patterns, etc. choose techniques that your students need to develop based on the challenges of your repertoire.
- Put exercises "on the move" with - marching in a block, circle drill, across the floors, easy choreography, etc.

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# Percussion Section Essentials

## Setup

Even before playing a single note set the foundation with a consistent warm up position. Students should take pride in looking a like a pro even before they strike the downbeat. Attention to these details prior to playing will in turn help the students pay more attention to the details of playing.

Typical Battery Setup (left to right) Tenors - Snares - Bass Drums
*Cymbals can either go next to tenors or behind the snares

Try to avoid having all three sections in one straight line. Tenors and Bass drums should be at an angle similar to a concert arc but with the sections in a straight line. Use similar spacing between each player, this will help replicate the spacing they will use while marching. - *Think stick and a fist between each player.*

It is important to keep the focus toward the center of the warm up set. Imagine either an instructor or a conductor being in middle and eye should be directed towards that position. This will help the battery with watching the drum major on the field or creating a better posture for performance during the show. Reminding them to keep heads up will also raise their awareness level for listening, matching player to player and assisting with visual demands on the field.

## Metronome

It is highly recommended that the battery works on the warm ups with a metronome. Many of the exercises are written to help strengthen rhythmic timing. The students ability to play rhythms with good timing will improve overall tempo control from the ensemble as well as help clean up any “dirty” moments they may have in the show music. The stronger the entire group is playing in time the more success you will have developing a consistent music ensemble.

For front ensemble I recommend keeping the metronome behind the group so they train their ears to listen back while on the field.

## Using the metronome creatively

Once the battery is solid playing with the regular quarter or big beat metronome play around with the subdivision the met. i.e. instead of quarters set it to half notes (or even whole notes!) to help the students achieve the next the level of rhythmic understanding. The alterations will keep the students from being completely reliant on the metronome to keep time for them.

If battery is struggling with certain rhythms in an exercise you can also put more subdivisions through the met (8ths, 16ths, triplets). I would also advise slowing the exercise down so the players can have a better understanding of how individual rhythms line up with the rhythmic subdivisions.

## Marking Time

Battery members should mark time while playing warm ups. This allows for deeper connection between feet and hands as they are working through the basics. Doing so should help with better foot timing while marching as well as better rhythmic timing overall.

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## Pre-Downbeat Routine

Be sure to establish this routine and make sure the students are consistent in performing this prior to striking the first note. They should be in a set position before the count-off starts. Doing so will help get mental focus started prior to the exercise. This should apply for both Battery and Front Ensemble.

## Battery

Basic count off would be 8 counts from met or 8 count tap-off from snare.

**Default Routine**

-First four counts performers focus and subdivide
-beat five start marking time
-beat seven sticks out or up
-beat eight prep stroke for down beat

## Front Ensemble

Basic count off would be 8 counts from met or 8 count tap off from single mallet player

**Default Routine**

-First four counts performers focus and subdivide
-beat five and six mallets come up
-beat seven mallets setup over first notes
-beat eight  preparation upstroke for downbeat

These can be altered to be more stylish but the main purpose should be to set the students up for solid attack on the exercise.

If playing exercise multiple times without break players can stay in set position after the last note and use eight counts from the met or tap off before restarting exercise. Be sure the players keep the prep stroke on count eight to solidify the attack.

## Timing/Listening

While working through the exercises be sure to establish a listening point for the performers. It normally would be center snare, center marimba or drum set. Given various ensemble setups and levels you can use what will work best for you group. Just be sure that the timing source is in the middle of the ensemble so everything is coming from a central location.

**Listening "Games" or Variations**

- make metronome only audible to listening point
- having listening point push and pull tempo to force other players to adjust
- have listening point vary dynamics to train awareness beyond tempo

## Further considerations and uses of percussion exercises

**Battery**

The full battery portion should give you a wide variety of exercise to be used over the course of several seasons. Depending on your groups ability you can start simple with a few and then add on as they progress. You can find the technique or skill set that they improvement on and focus on that specific

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exercise. The snare drum part throughout the packet could be given to all members of the percussion section to work on improving basic drumming and rhythmic skills which translates to all the various instruments of the section.

**Front Ensemble**

All the exercises can work as stand along ensemble pieces. The individual parts from each can also be used solo etudes or exercises for improvement any instrument throughout the concert percussion family. The auxiliary parts could be used to work on accessories during concert band for solos/duos and trios. The chorales work will for concert percussion playing as well. They help focus on playing musically as a percussion ensemble.

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# How to Practice

It's not WHAT you do as much as HOW you do it. Don't just choose to practice the most difficult exercises, practice the easy ones and make them amazing. Be mindful about how you sound, take time to stop and think both before and after you play a phrase.

Reinforcing great quality and making solid progress on things is much more important than long hours of unfocused practice. Practicing should not be a grueling thing that you hate doing and it should not be a 'once in a while' occurrence. Find a way to love it and incorporate it into your daily routine. Try not to practice for more than 45mins-1hr at a time so that your mind and chops stay "fresh." You can accomplish something in as little as 5 minutes if you are focused and specific.

**Practice the SKILLS you need!** The exercises are just a means to get there. Don't just practice the exercises because you need to learn them. Focus on the skills they serve, Tone, Flexibility, Style, Range, Articulation, etc. Develop your skills through experimentation.

Have a goal for your practice session. Be focused and specific with what you do and how you do it. For instance:

> ***"I have 10 mins to practice and i've already warmed up. I'll do a 5 minute rewarm (hit the 5 step warmup process) and then I'll spend about 5 minutes working on the "flex 2" exercise to get the accents to pop out easier."***

Get in a good warmup everyday! 5-30 mins of fundamentals before you practice repertoire - this can even happen at the beginning of class before rehearsal begins. Technique maintenance (exercises) and repertoire (show music) should be covered and improved upon every day, even if it's only 5-10 mins.

### Ways to practice:

- Don't just Play it - Sing it, put it on a pad, rhythm only, pitches only, etc.
- Loop it:
    1. pick a small chunk (as few as 2 notes, as many as 2 measures).
    2. start a met or steady tempo.
    3. play the passage with a few beats of rest in between (I.e play 4 beats, rest 4 beats).
    4. repeat again and again (5 to 50 times) focusing on fine tuning your playing.
- The Practice Cycle
    - identify the problem/goal.
        - Example: "I keep missing the Bb on beat 3 in measure 37."
    - Isolate and solve the issue at a manageable tempo.
        - Pick the smallest chunk of material that you need to fix the issue (could be as little as 1 or 2 notes, as much as a few measures).
        - Example: "I'll play just measure 37 at a much slower tempo, making sure I'll do it correctly each time OR go even slower"
        - for more in depth issues you may need to experiment with different techniques.
            - for example, "I can't get to the high note" isolate just that note, work your way up to it, make it feel comfortable, etc.
    - Once the problem is solved, repeat it several times at least 5 or 10 or 1,000,000 times...

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- If you do this repetition work without first fixing the issue, you're simply practicing the wrong way and that will start to solidify the problem.
- Put the segment back into context
    - Example: "I'm going to play the whole phrase now and make sure I still get the Bb in measure 37"

## Suggested Practice Materials

- Binder with sheet protectors.
    - NEXT LEVEL sheet music
    - Show Repertoire
    - Mechanical Pencils
- Tonal Energy App for iOS or Android (http://tonalenergy.com/ $3.99)
    - Includes metronome.
    - Used for practicing with drones.
    - Used to work on tuning and intonation in the practice room.
    - For examining **just** vs. **equal** temperament.
- Phone/tablet/laptop to record audio/video of yourself.

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# Practice Cycle

1. **Find the problem**
2. **Fix it**
3. **Rep it**
4. **put it back into context**

- Don't just play the same thing the same way and expect a difference. Make a specific change.
- Don't rep bad playing before you've fixed a problem - you'd just be reinforcing bad habits.
- When you're trying to fix a problem - Experiment with different ways of doing it.
- Don't be afraid to fail - that's how we learn!
- Practice singing, wind patterns (no instrument), air and valve, buzzing/leadpipe, etc. before you play it.
- Record yourself and listen back. You might hate it at first - like hearing your own voice over the phone but get to a level where you enjoy hearing yourself!

## Learning New Music/exercises

You'll be expected to learn new repertoire on you own to have it ready for camps and rehearsals. Learn new music with the best possible quality so that bad habits are minimized.

- Jumping right into a new exercise or piece of music that is above your level can spur bad habits to creep in (Tension, bad airflow, over articulation, etc). Simplify your learning process by reducing the difficulty:
    - Listen to it first.
    - Sing it.
    - Air and Valve it.
    - Play it like a Chorale - slowly, lyrically, and connected at a steady tempo.
    - Play it in a comfortable register (lead parts can be learned down an octave).
    - Start with the more lyrical or less demanding sections and work your way into the more technical ones.
- Memorization of exercises will truly help your students progress. Internalizing any type of material, from exercises to repertoire, allows the students to stop looking at the page and concentrate more on the sounds they are hearing and sensations the body is experiencing.
    - many exercises have the same sequence of going down a minor third and back up so once they learn/memorize the 1st half, they already know the 2nd half.

## Common Problems

- We tend to get more tense when we perceive a passage as 'difficult.' Notice yourself get tense and relieve the tension - go back to playing the difficult parts air and valve or slow tempo and keep the tension out, then patiently speed it back up or put it back into context.
    - Tension will manifest in the shoulders, hands, neck, etc. and also in the tongue, keep the tongue light and relaxed at ALL times!

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- Don't make the same mistake the same way over and over. Try something different. Don't assume that you aren't good enough to master everything or that it will take months for you to improve. The technique of playing a brass instrument is something anyone in good health can master. Approach it as if you've just gotta figure it out, not do the same thing for months on end... Figure out how to play with an amazing tone, Figure out how to slur easily, It's all just coordination, truly, ANYONE can do it with some experimentation! just **FIGURE IT OUT**!

- When you're having trouble with a technique in music (i.e. "the slur in measure 7 is not coming out clearly). Strip away the other things around it to simplify. Take away the style, play with a comfortable dynamic, go slower, etc. Simplify all else in order to just work on that one technique. Once you master the thing begin to add the other parts of the music back in, one by one.

## Best Practices (for practicing)

- Before and during your practice session, listen to recordings of great players in order to input their sound into your ears and then reproduce it.
- Before you do an exercise, practice the skill that it addresses. For instance, before doing your flexibility, practice your slurs out of time to get great quality, then put it in time on the exercise.
- Choose a good venue where you can properly hear yourself and perform all tasks (including visual) effectively.
- Hit the 5 fundamentals categories in every practice session - it can be done in as little as 5 mins.
- NEVER  let your breathing suffer. If you encounter a problem in a phrase the first thing to assess is if your posture and breathing is correct.
- Do wind pattern/air and valve reps often!
    - 1-3 air and valve reps before each time you play a phrase or lick.
- When trying to fix a problem, use experimentation, do it too loud, too soft, too much air, not enough air, lots of tongue arch, not enough arch, etc. This is how we can fine tune our playing and solve technical problems.
    - For instance: "*I'm having trouble slurring from e to g (concert d to f). It just won't come out without tonguing it.* - Well, we know that a higher note needs faster air and that the back of the tongue needs to arch to make the air go faster - so practice wind patterns on e to g arching the tongue too much, then play it... If that doesn't work try a large volume of air... etc. - **Experiment with too much, then not enough then, fine tune it...**
- When "repping" a lick or phrase try it in a "loop."
    - choose a steady tempo and repeat the phrase with 4 or more beats of rest in between.
    - This will help you really focus on fine tuning the phrase.
    - It's only to be done after a phrase has be "fixed." - don't rep bad playing.

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# Exercises

## Breathing

If you play a wind instrument... air is your fuel for sound. Tank up fully and often. If you play percussion, calm breathing is very important while playing.

**Prep for exercises** (choose 1-2 from each category)**:**

- Quick Stretch:
  - start with a 2-5 min stretch of the upper body, arms, neck, shoulders, etc.
- Relaxation:
  - “Tension release” - 3...2...1... Squeeze every muscle in your body from your toes to your eyelids while sucking in a tense breath (for approx 10 secs). Then relax every muscle in your body with a calm sigh. Mentally scan your body for any tension and let it go.
  - “big sigh” - just a simple big breath in and calming sigh out, arms up on the inhale, down on the exhale. This is great to check tension at anytime, especially after long exercises or in the middle of rehearsal.
- Expansion (exercises that help expand our usable lung capacity)
  - “Breathe/hold/stretch” - take a full breath in and hold it, keep taking tiny sips as you stretch your upper body for approx. 5-10 seconds. Then big sigh out.
  - “In sip sip, Out push push” - at a slower tempo (72-96bpm) in quarter notes: 1. Full inhale 2. sip 3. sip - 1. full exhale 2. push out 3. push out. Make sure then inhale/exhale is as full as possible then work hard on the sip and push for expansion.
- Flow - these 3 exercises help to visualize the flow of air and can also be used to teach articulation quality.
  - “paper airplane” - take a full breath then flow air slowly and smoothly like gliding a paper airplane. Not hard or the airplane will crash, smooth and steady exhale until you’re comfortably empty. Use the arm on the inhale and exhale just like you’re throwing the plane.
  - “dart” - take a full breath and flow one quick staccato note exhale. Quick like a dart, stay relaxed, let the abs work to motivate the air. Use the arm on the inhale and exhale just like you’re throwing the dart.
  - “bow and arrow” - for big dynamics... take a full breath then release the full amount of air quickly like the arrow. Use the arms on the inhale and exhale just like you’re drawing and releasing the bow.
- Other Ideas/Options
  - Show Segments - Choose a short (:10-30 sec) excerpt from your show (probably full ensemble moment) and use it on air/valve or wind pattern on hand.

**Breathing Rules for Always:**

- Air is always moving (never hold your breath) - no stagnation.
- Air uses momentum from in to out - there should be a quick turn around from in to out with no hesitation or delay.
- Use a full 1 or 2 count breath at all times - (faster tempi need 2 counts, slower tempi need 1 count). Sometimes this will be altered as needed in show repertoire.
- Even if you only have time for 3 good breaths at the beginning of your warmup/practice, DO IT!

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**Focus points:**

- Keep the entire body as relaxed as possible.
- Posture should be tall and open.
- Open oral shape, think AH or OH.
- Very little sound on inhale and exhale, not even a whispered “haaa.” just the sound of the air passing the lips.
- “Breathe to expand, don’t Expand to breathe” - Meaning, don’t move your shoulders or belly on purpose, just focus on the breath and the body will work properly.
- “Quick Turnaround of Air” - don’t slow or stop the air between inhale/exhale.
- “Breathe Low” - like a pitcher filling a glass - from the bottom to the top.

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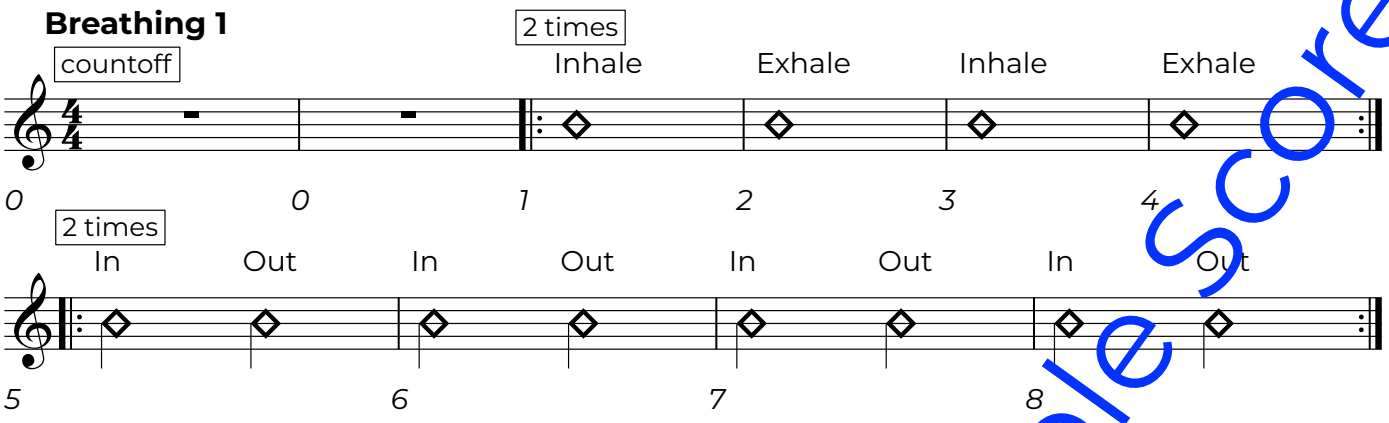
**Breathing 1**

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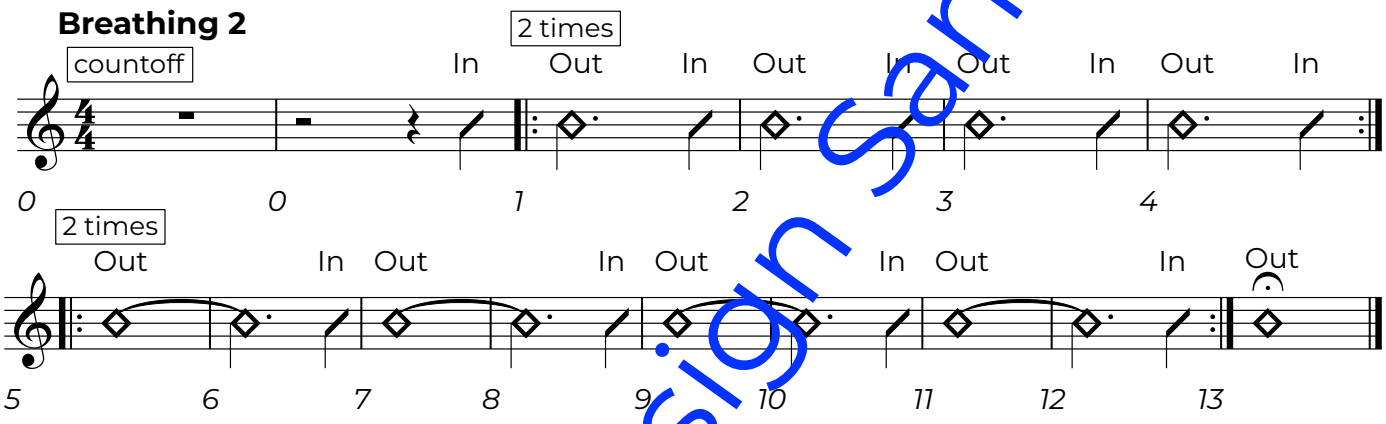


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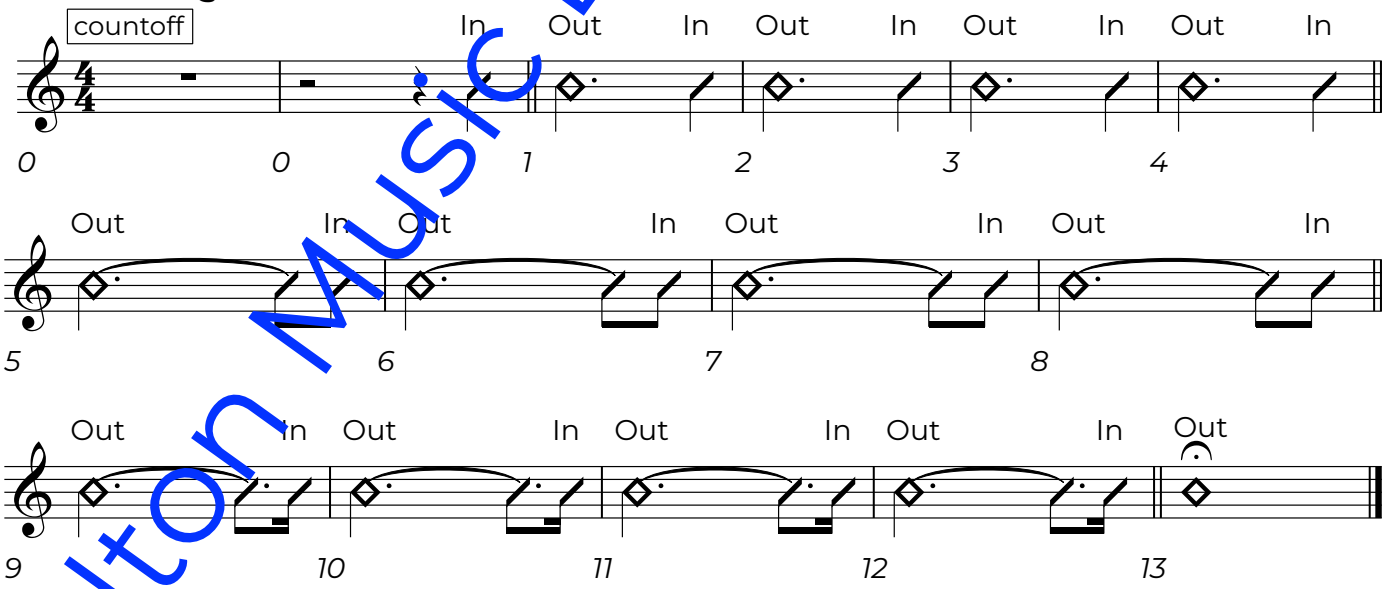


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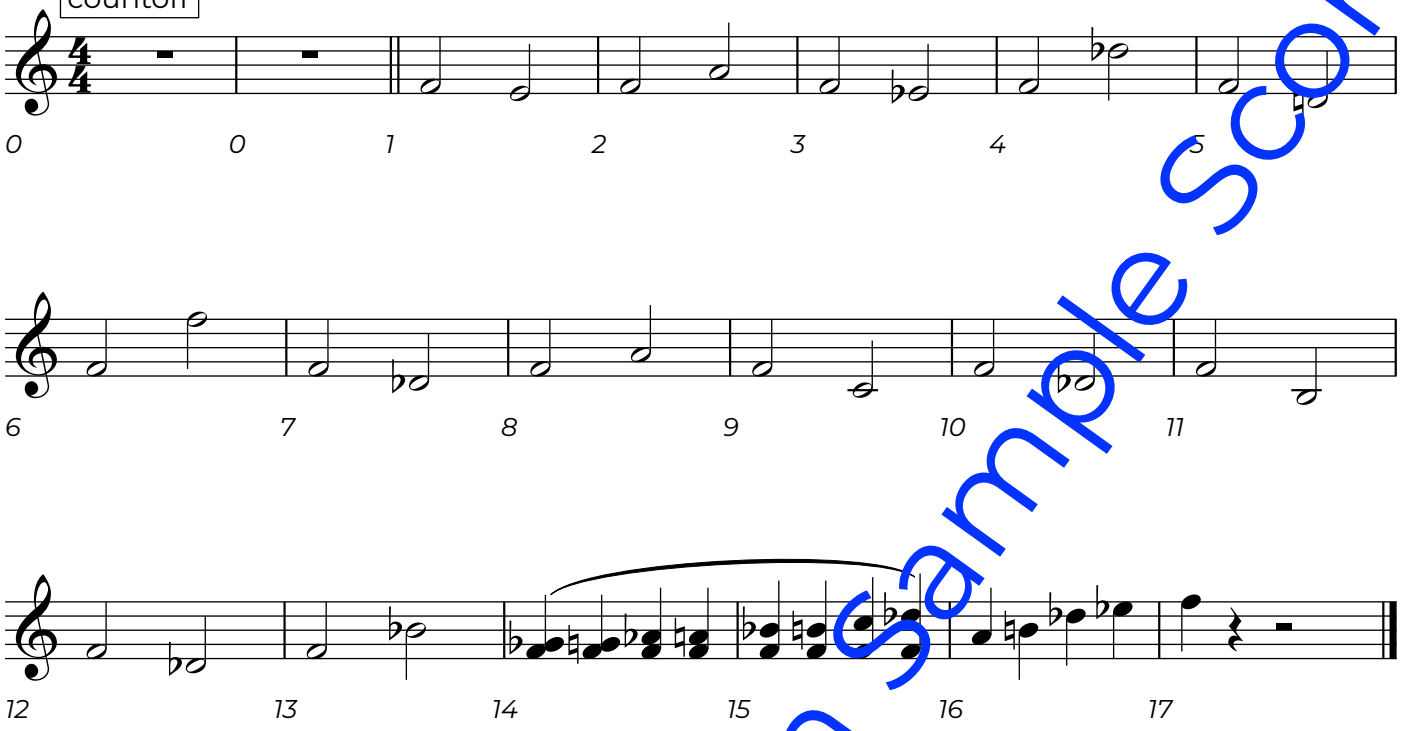
## Long Tones #1

countoff




## Long Tones #2

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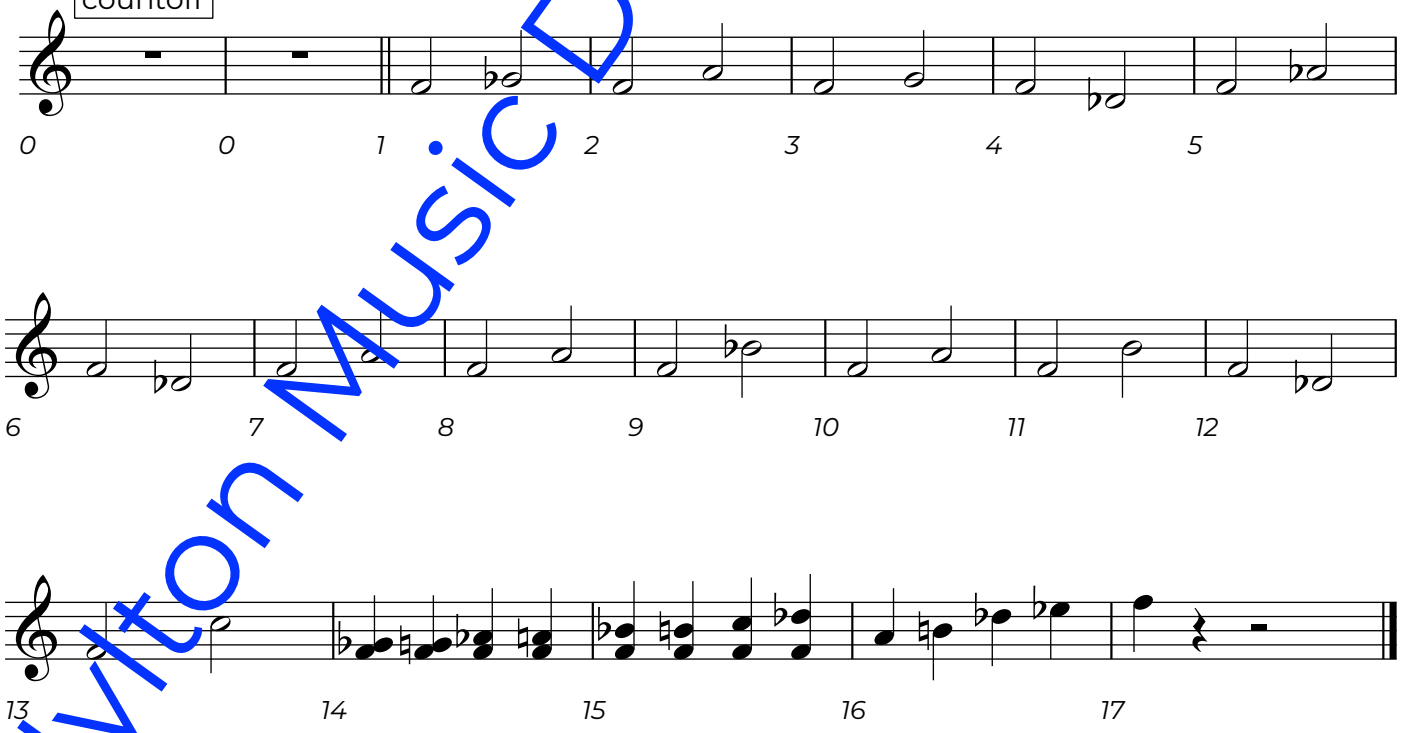


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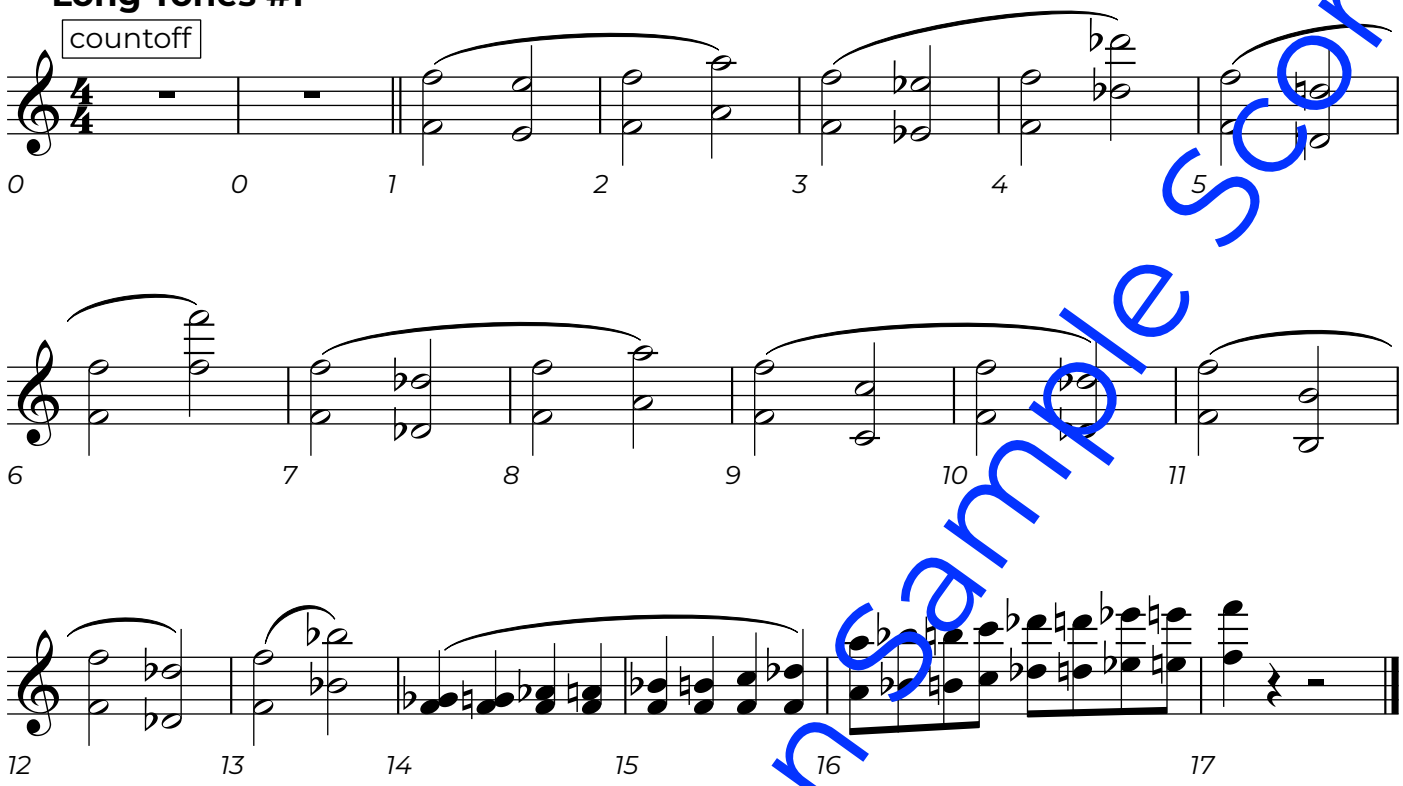
## Long Tones #1

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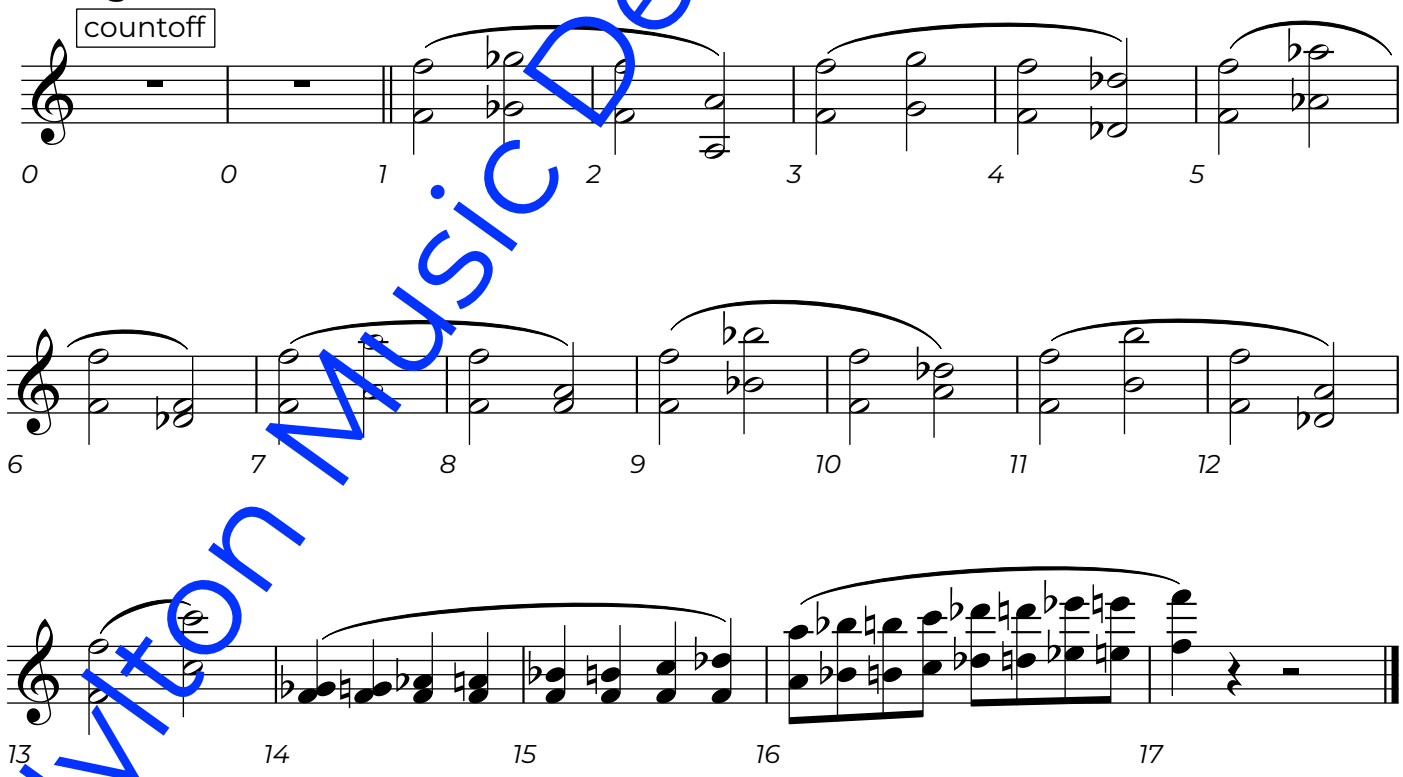


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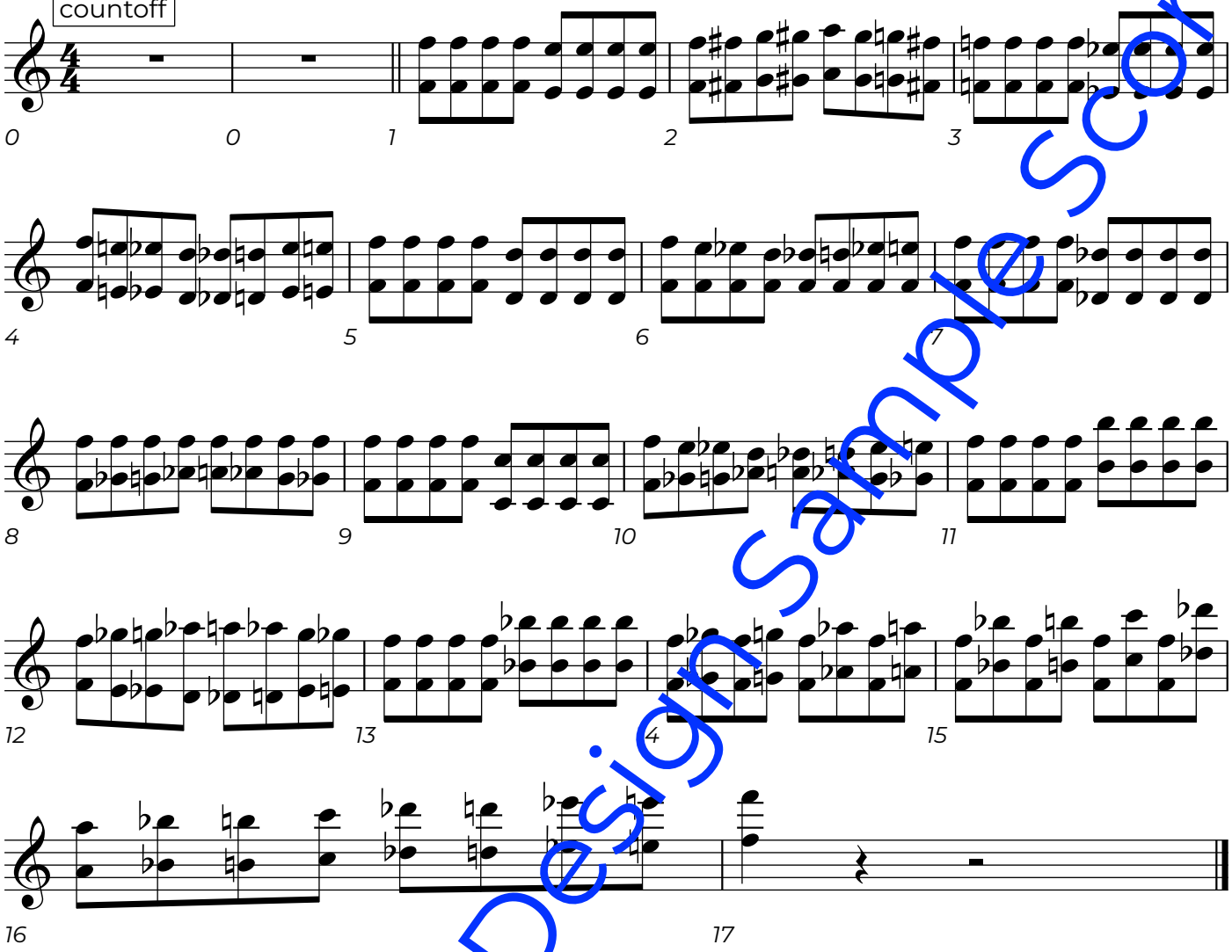
## Long Tones #1

countoff

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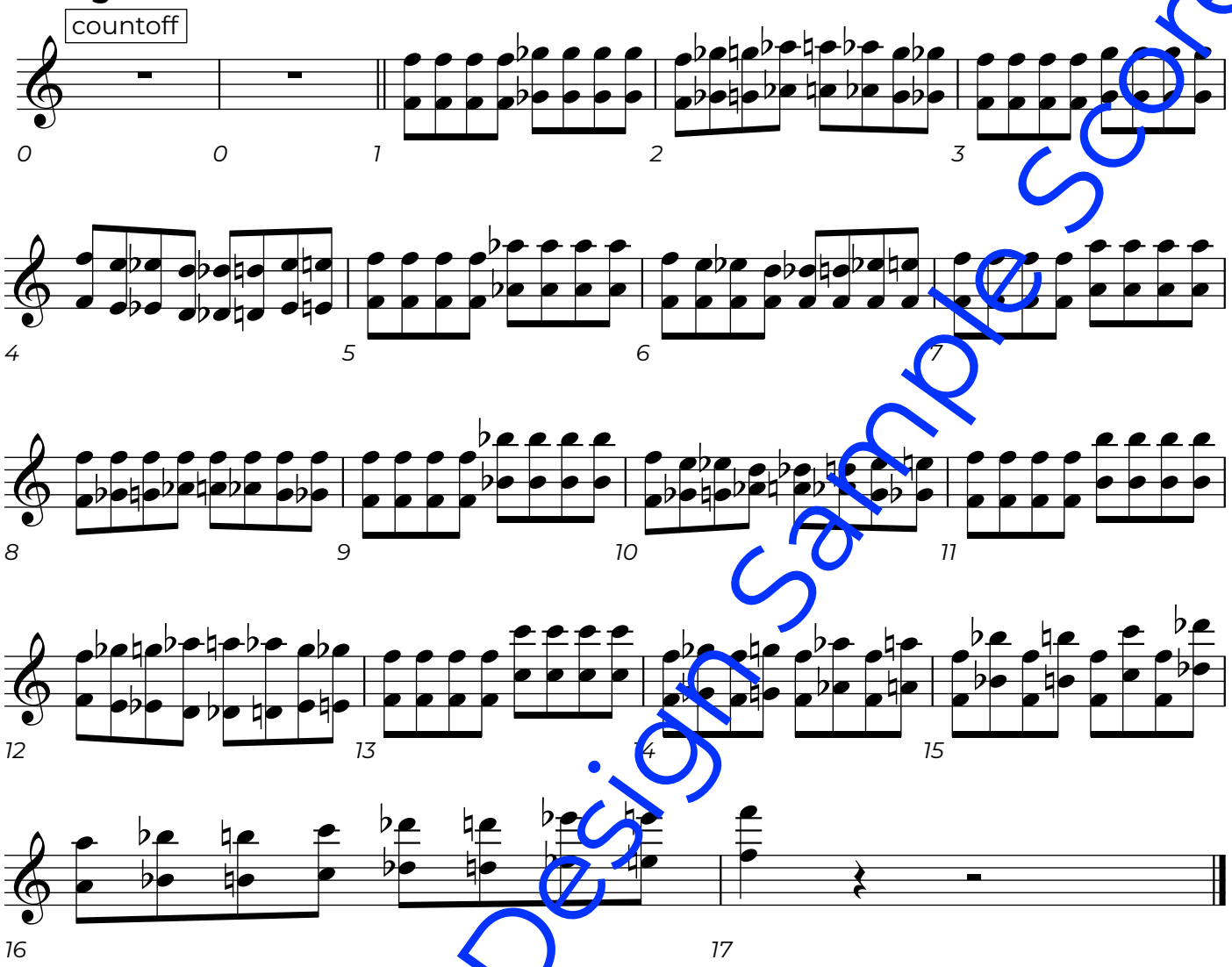
## Long Tones #2

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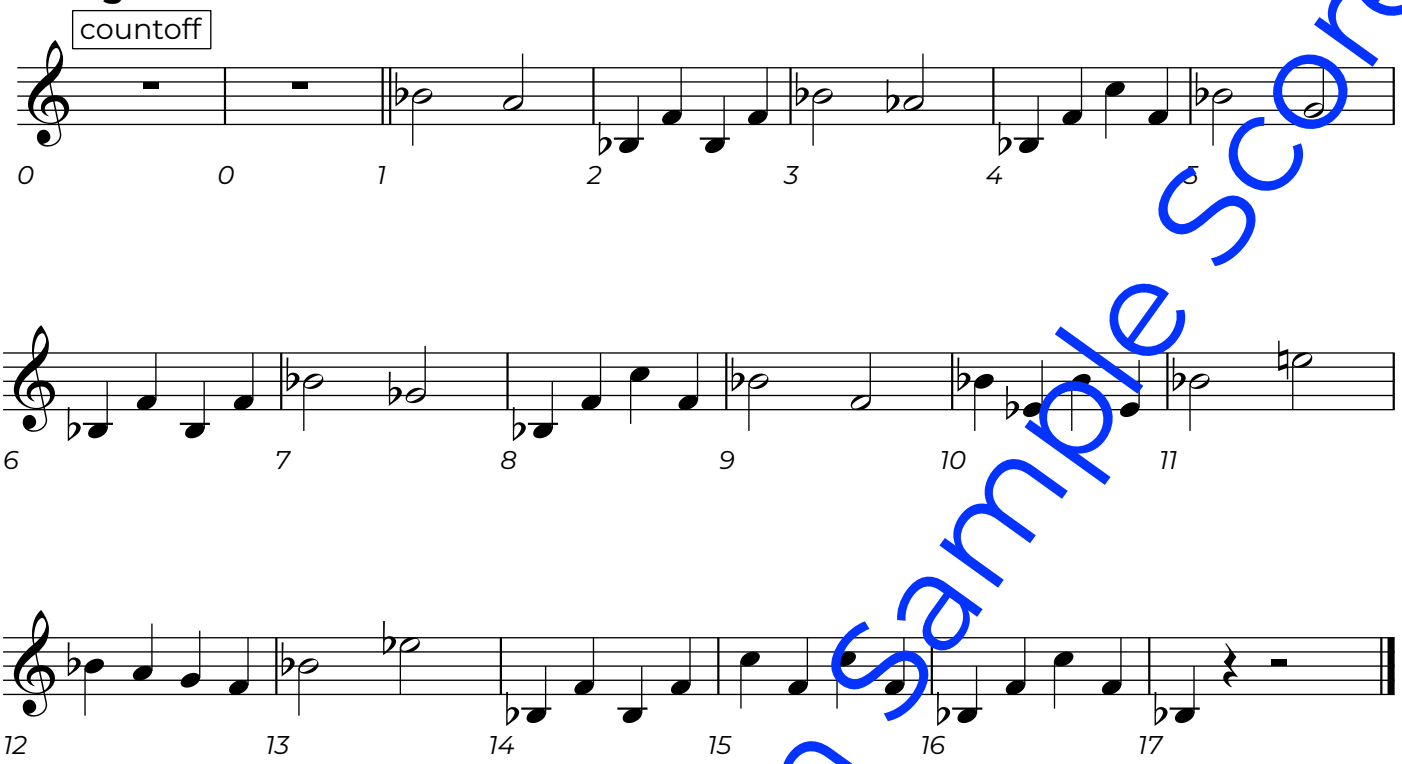


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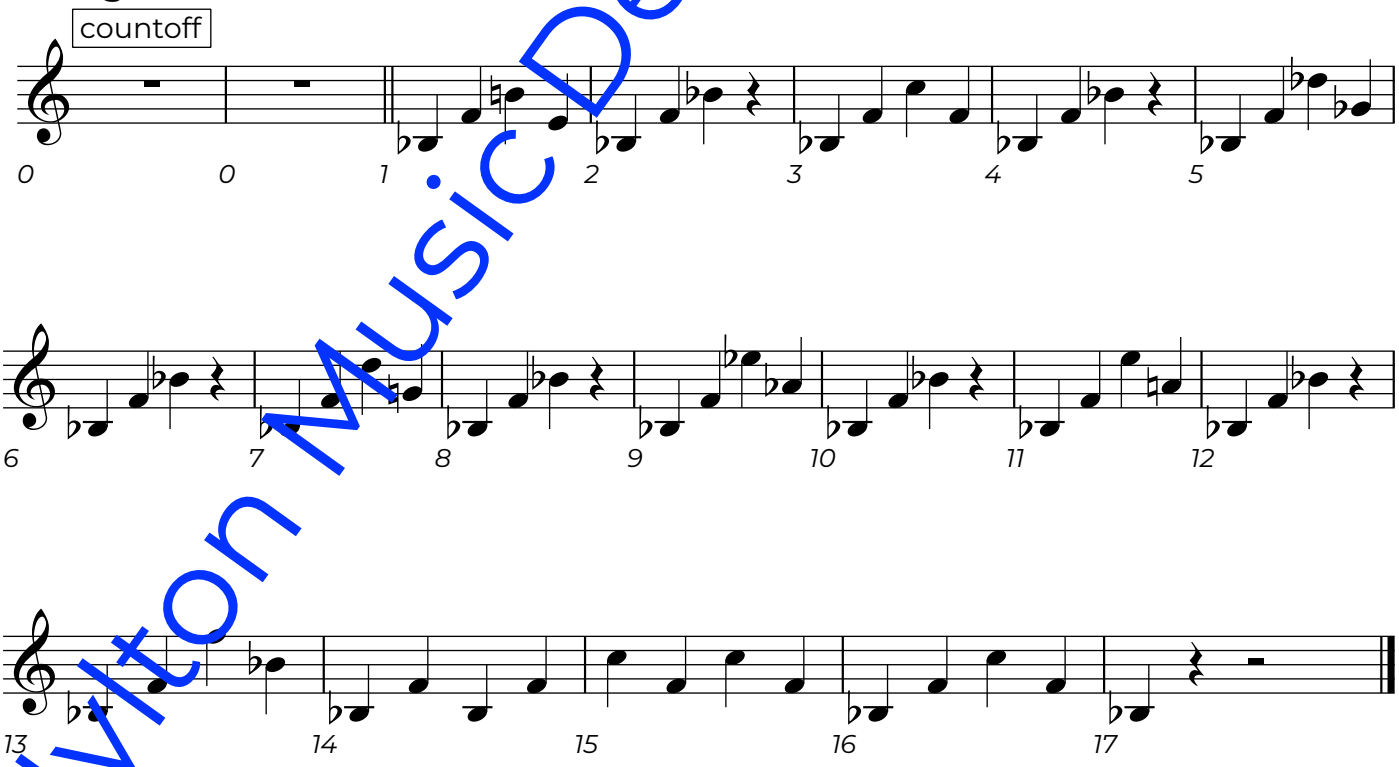


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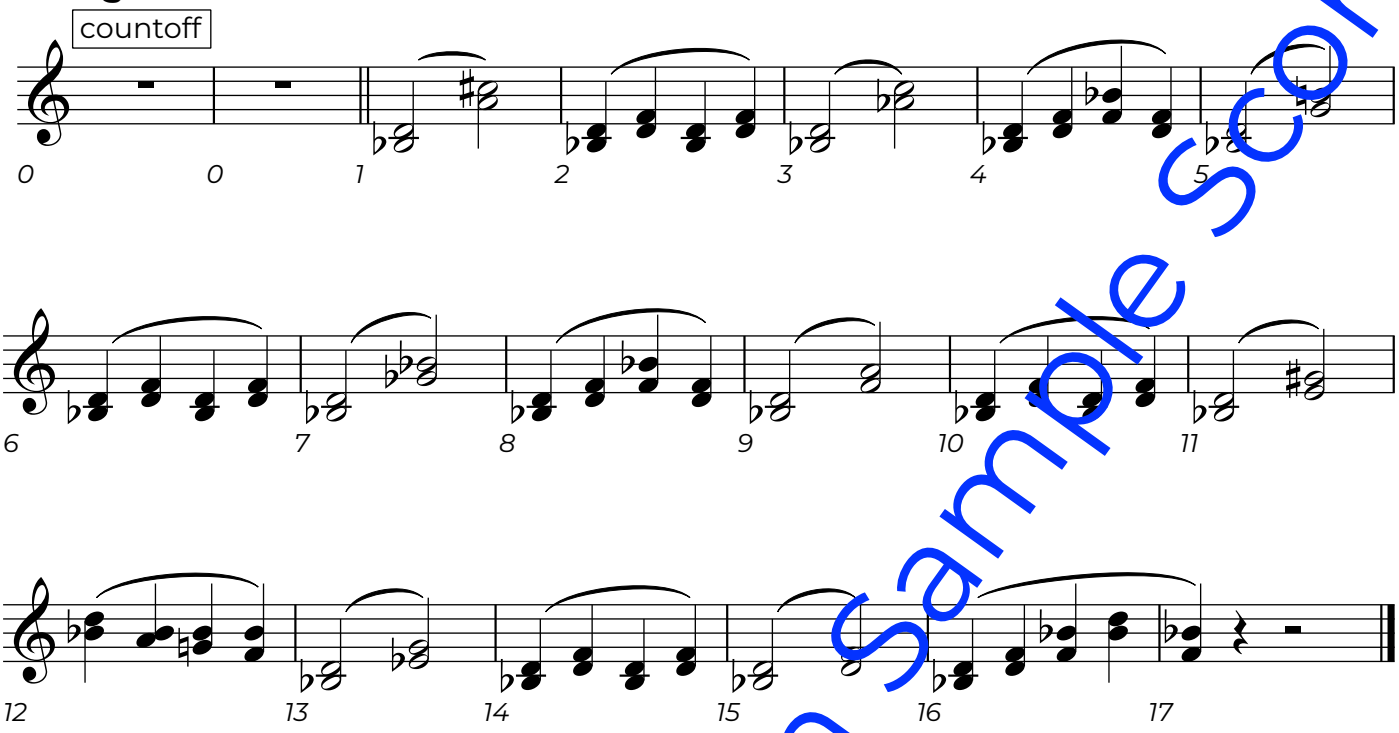
## Long Tones #3

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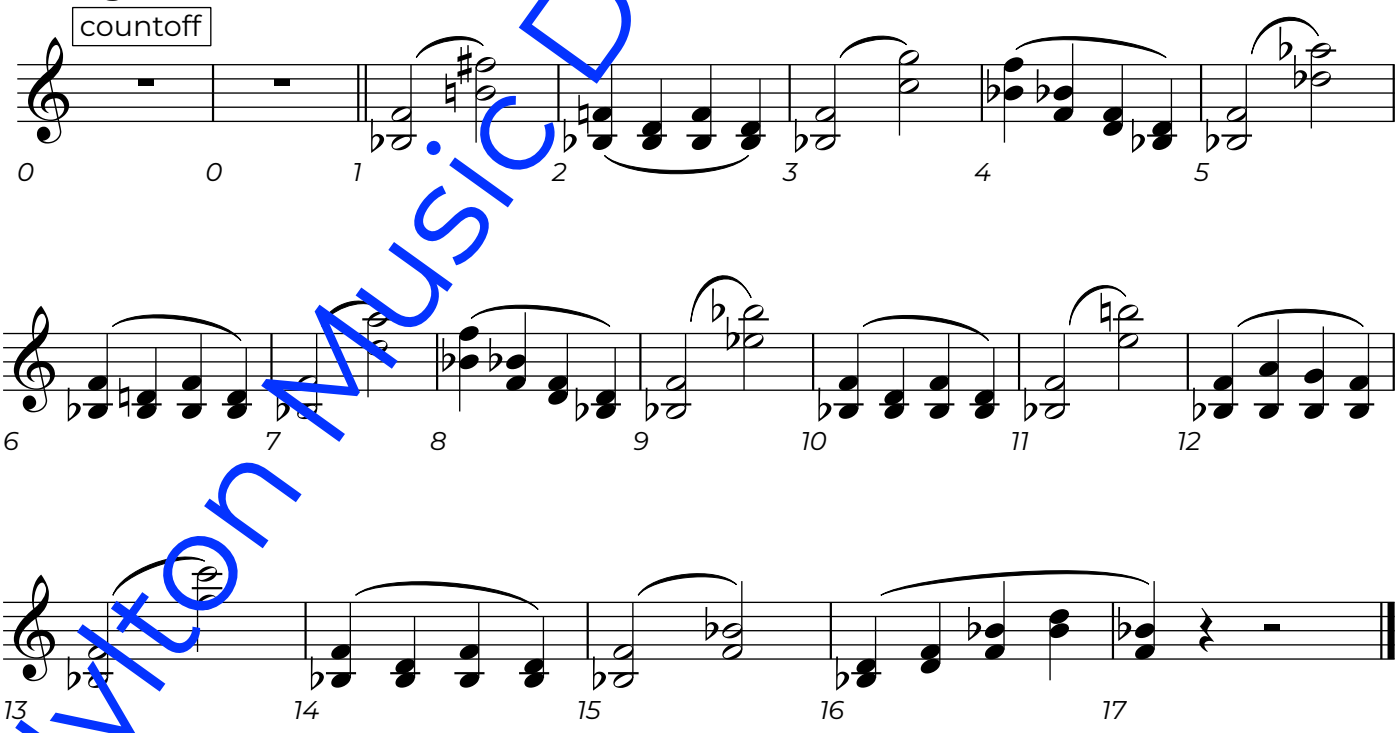


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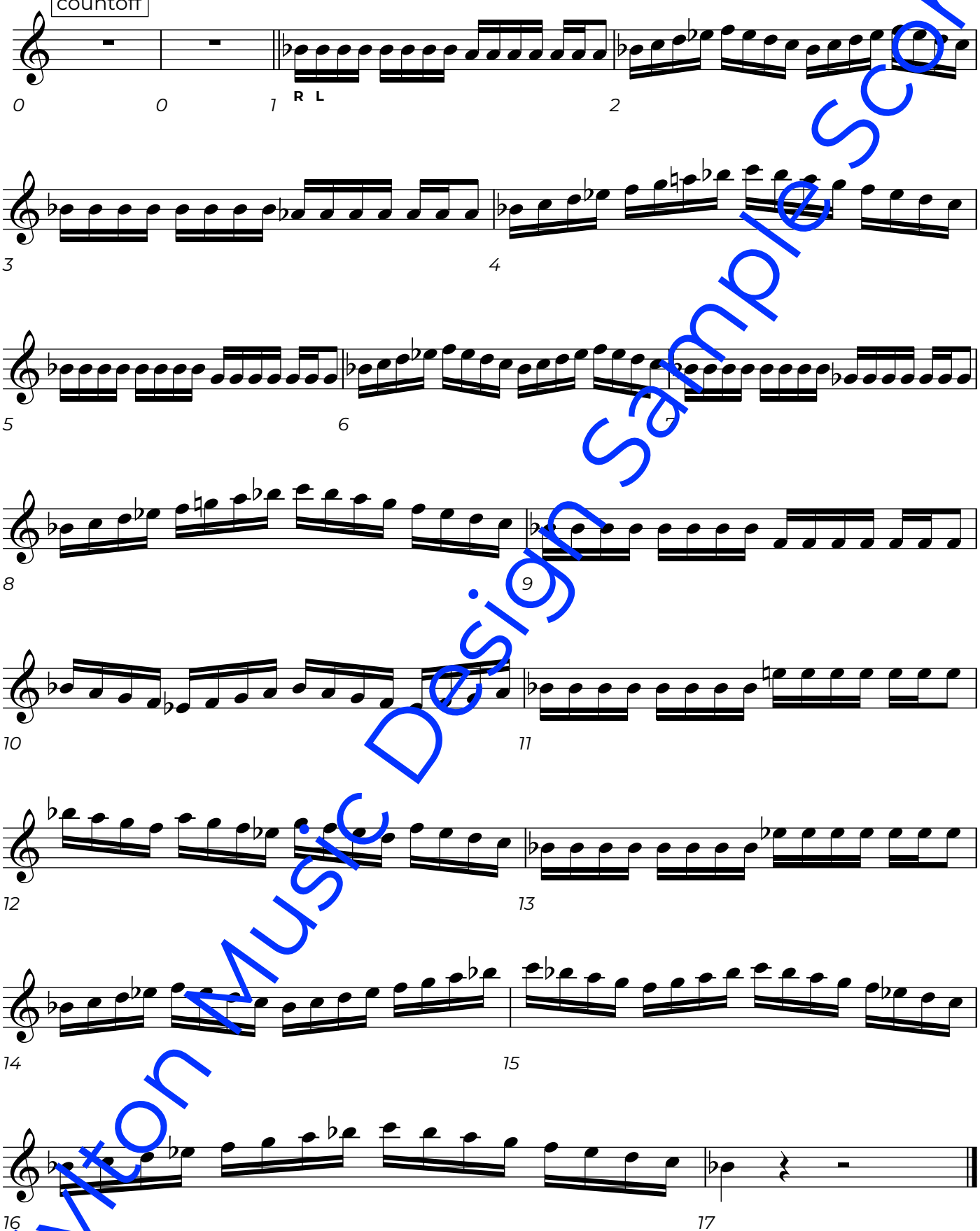
## Long Tones #3

countoff

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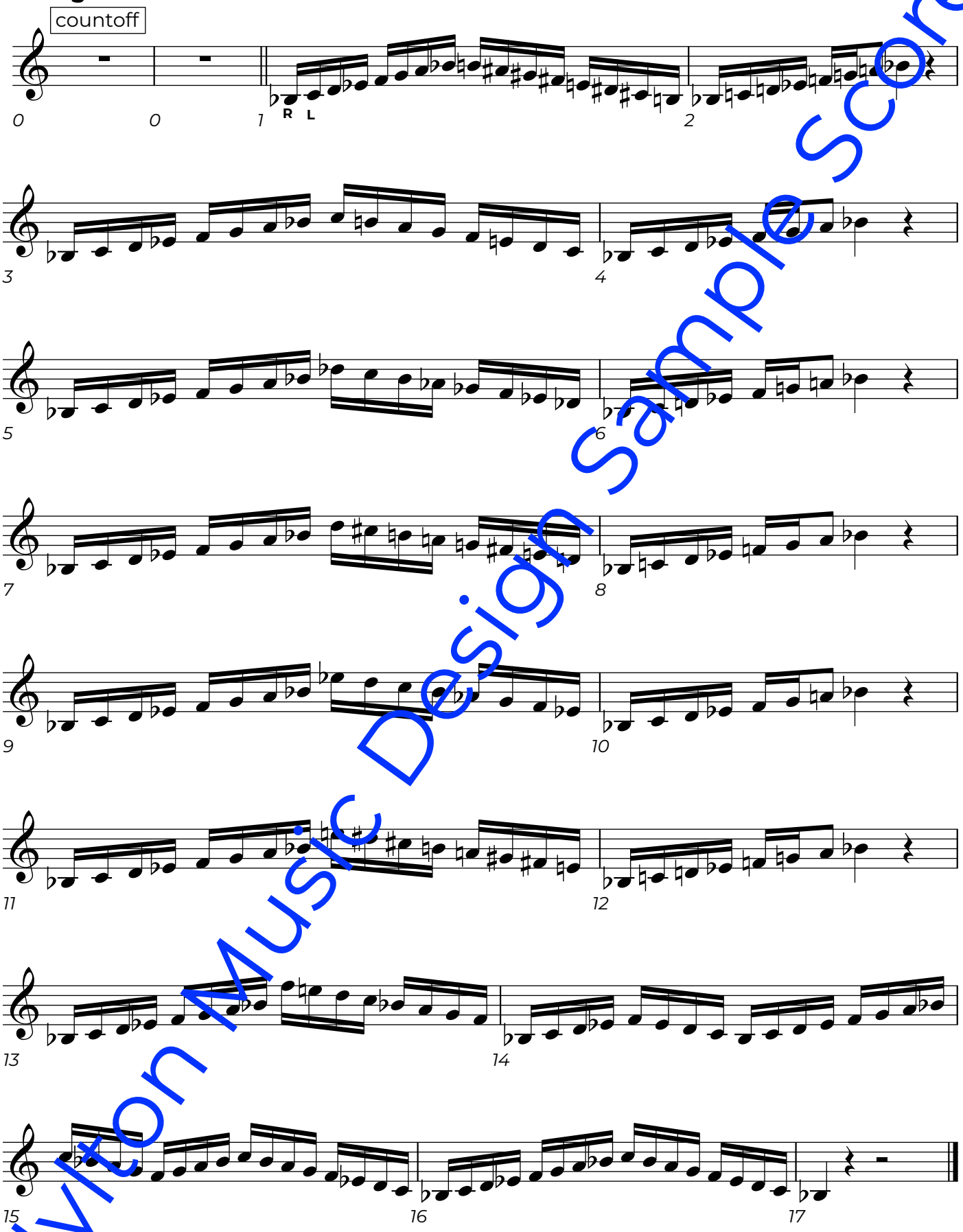


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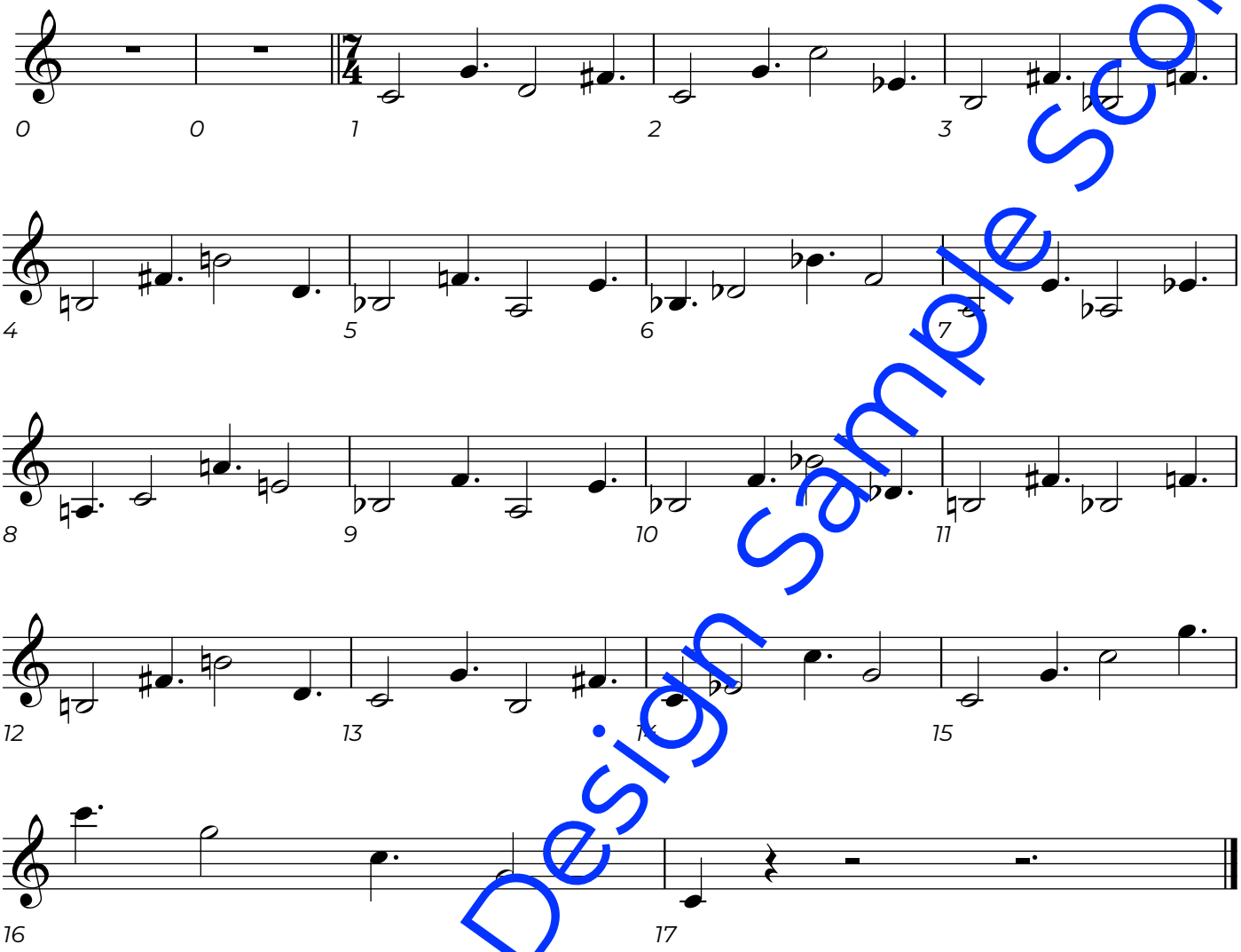
## 7/8 Long Tones

♩ = 120 - 180

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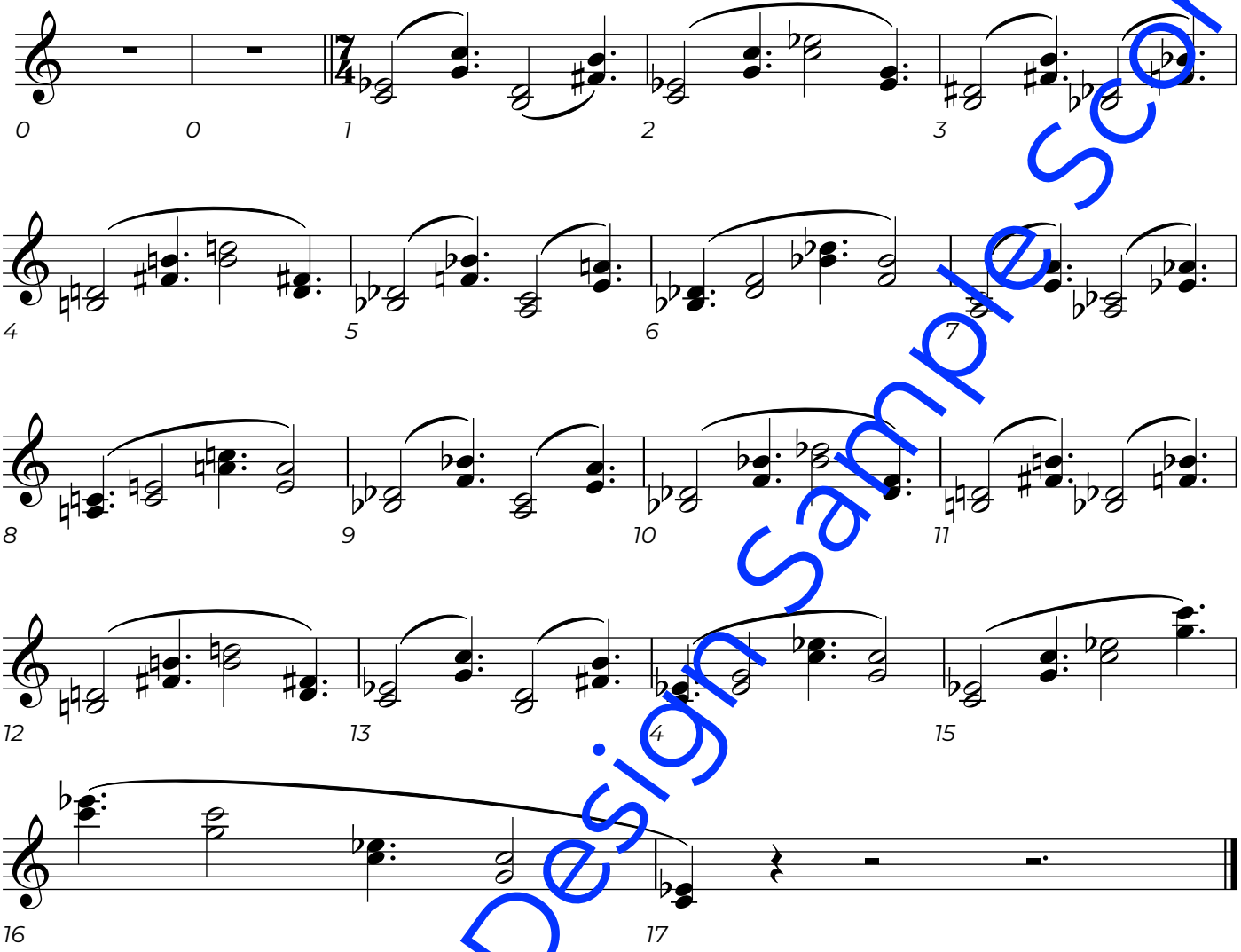
**7/8 Long Tones**

♩ = 120 - 180

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**7/8 Long Tones**

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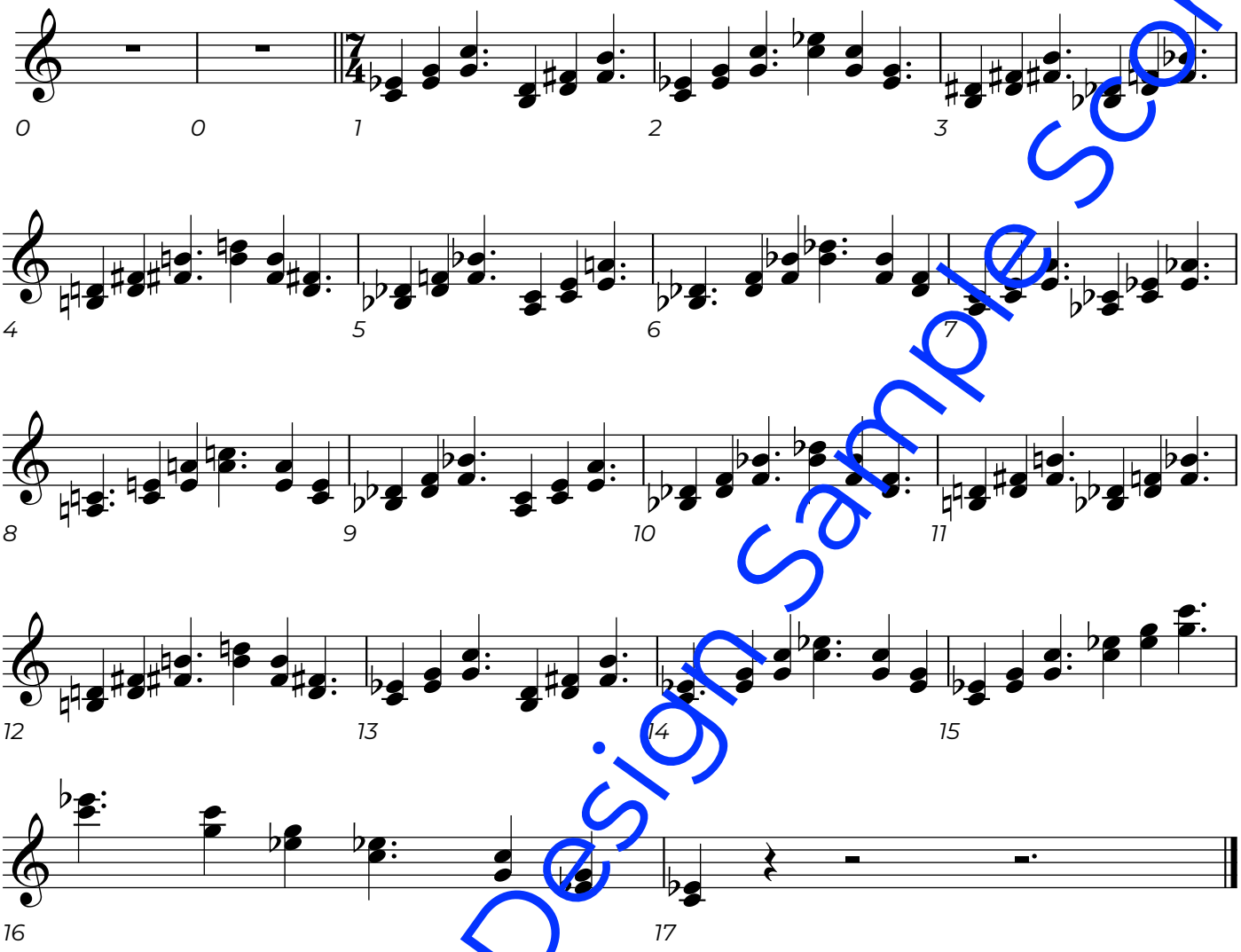


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**Flow Studies**
**♩ = 88-108**

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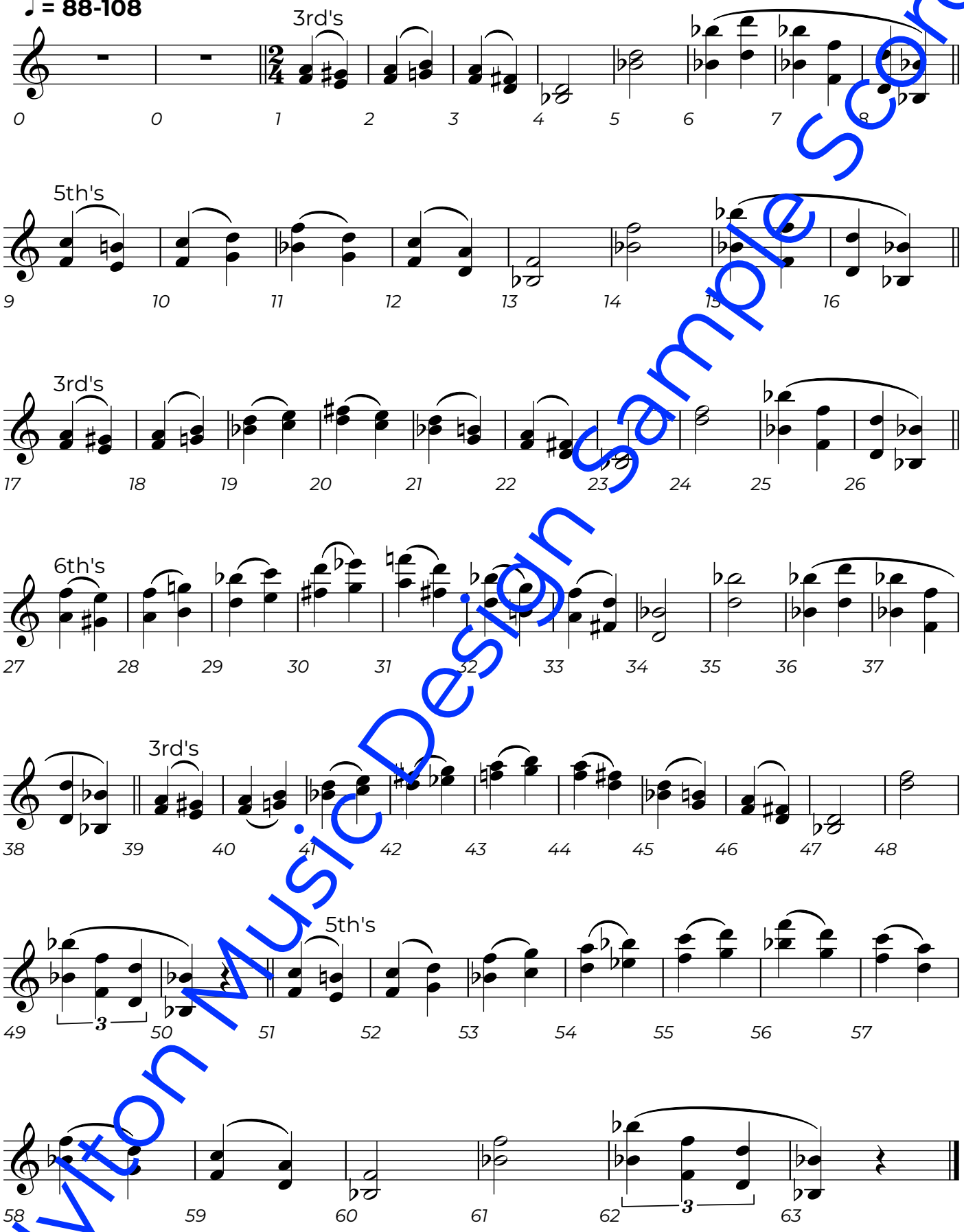
**Flow Studies**

♩ = 88-108

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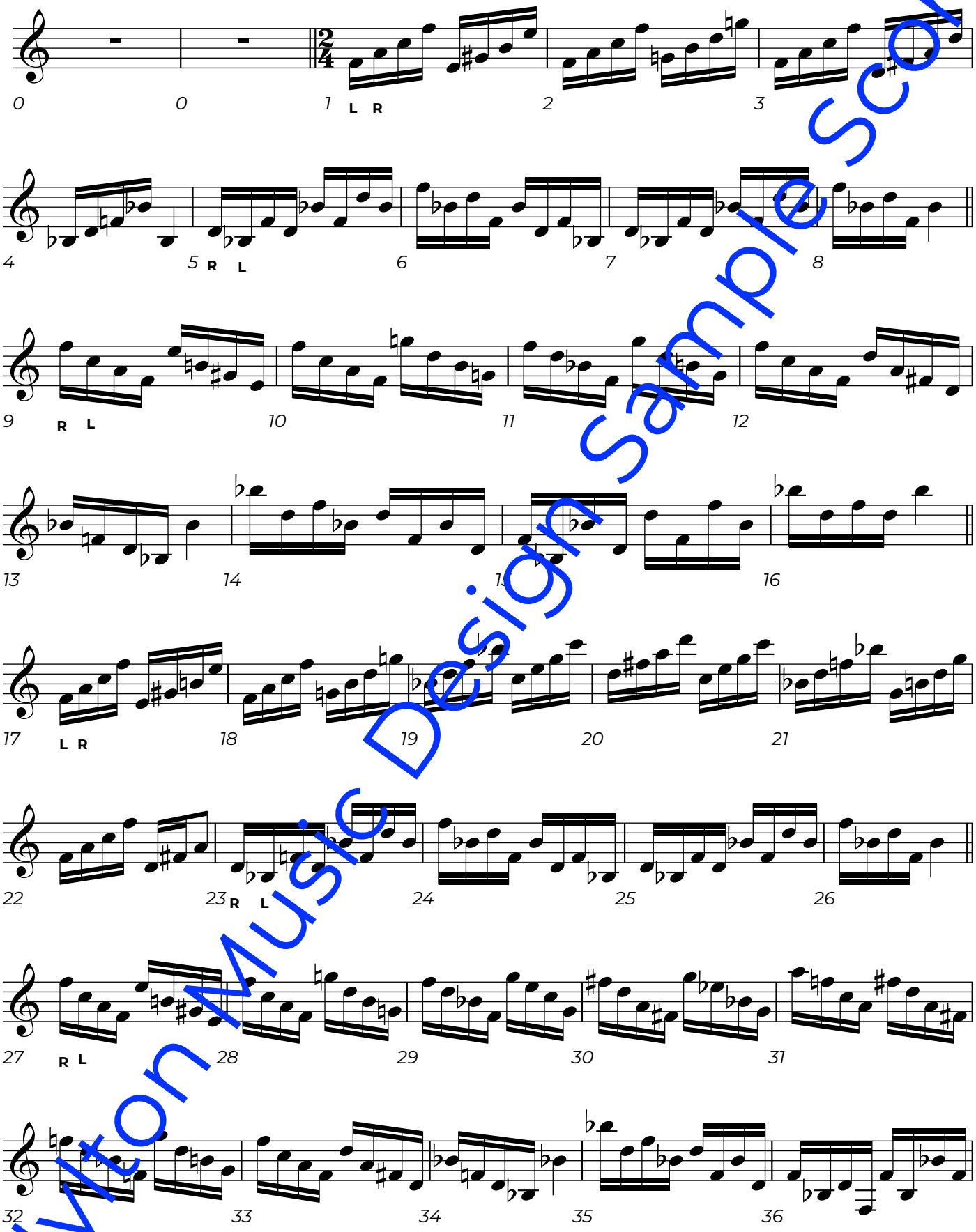
**Flow Studies**

♩ = 88-108

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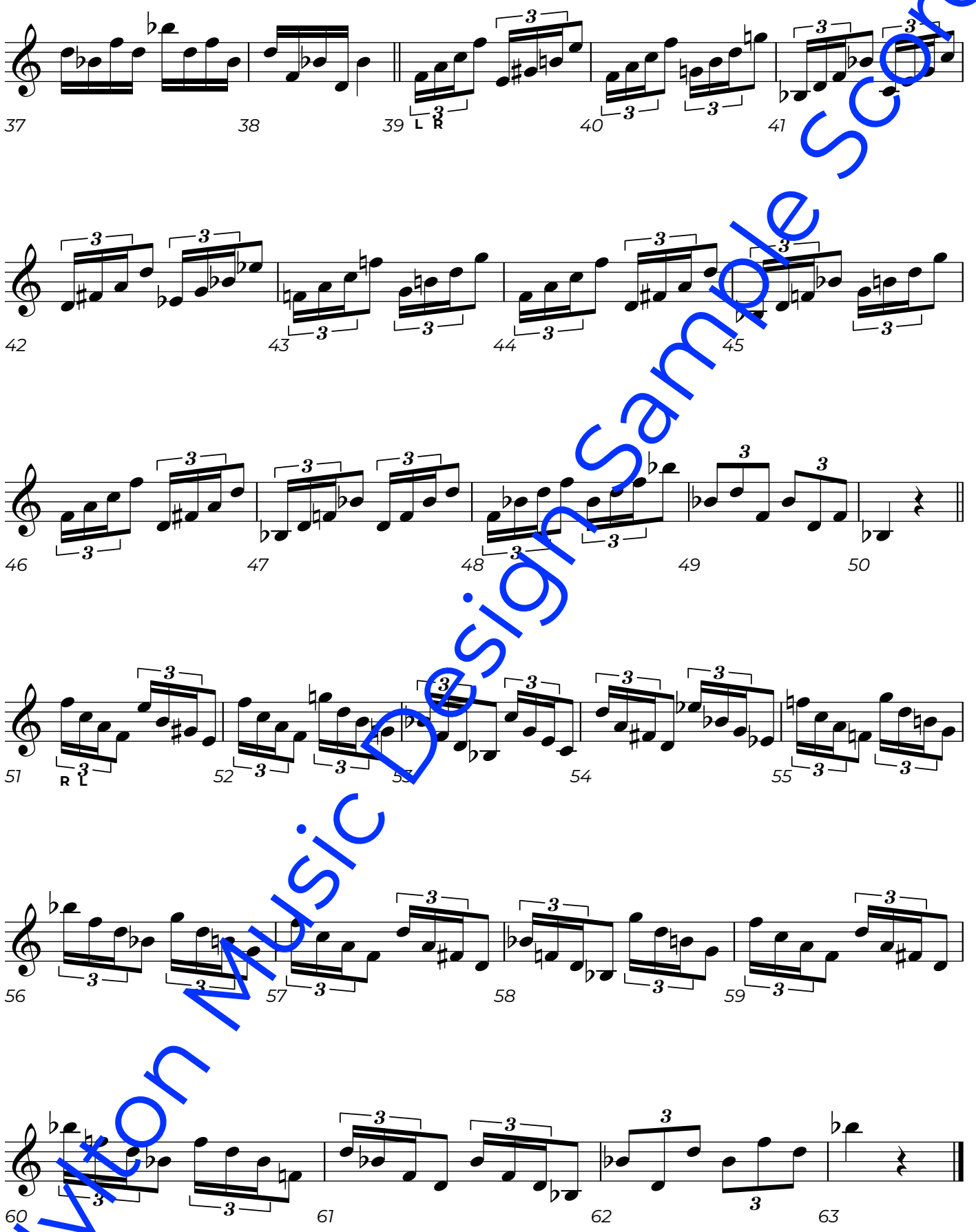


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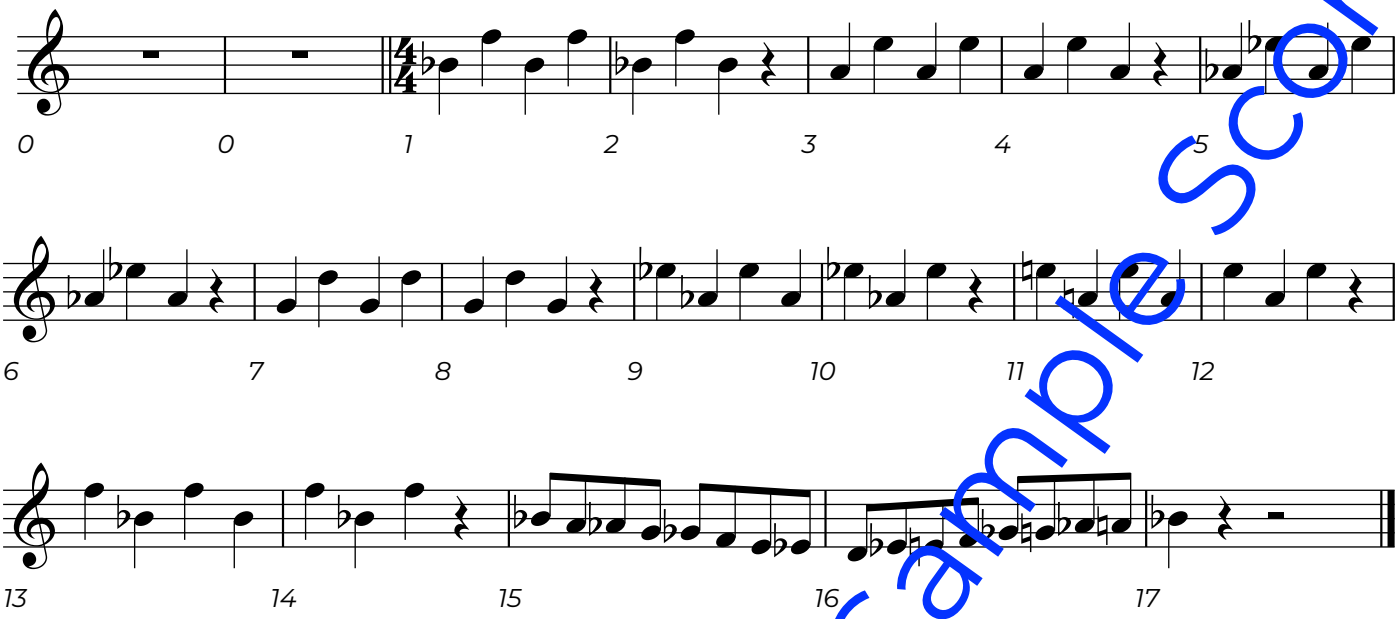
## Flexibility 1

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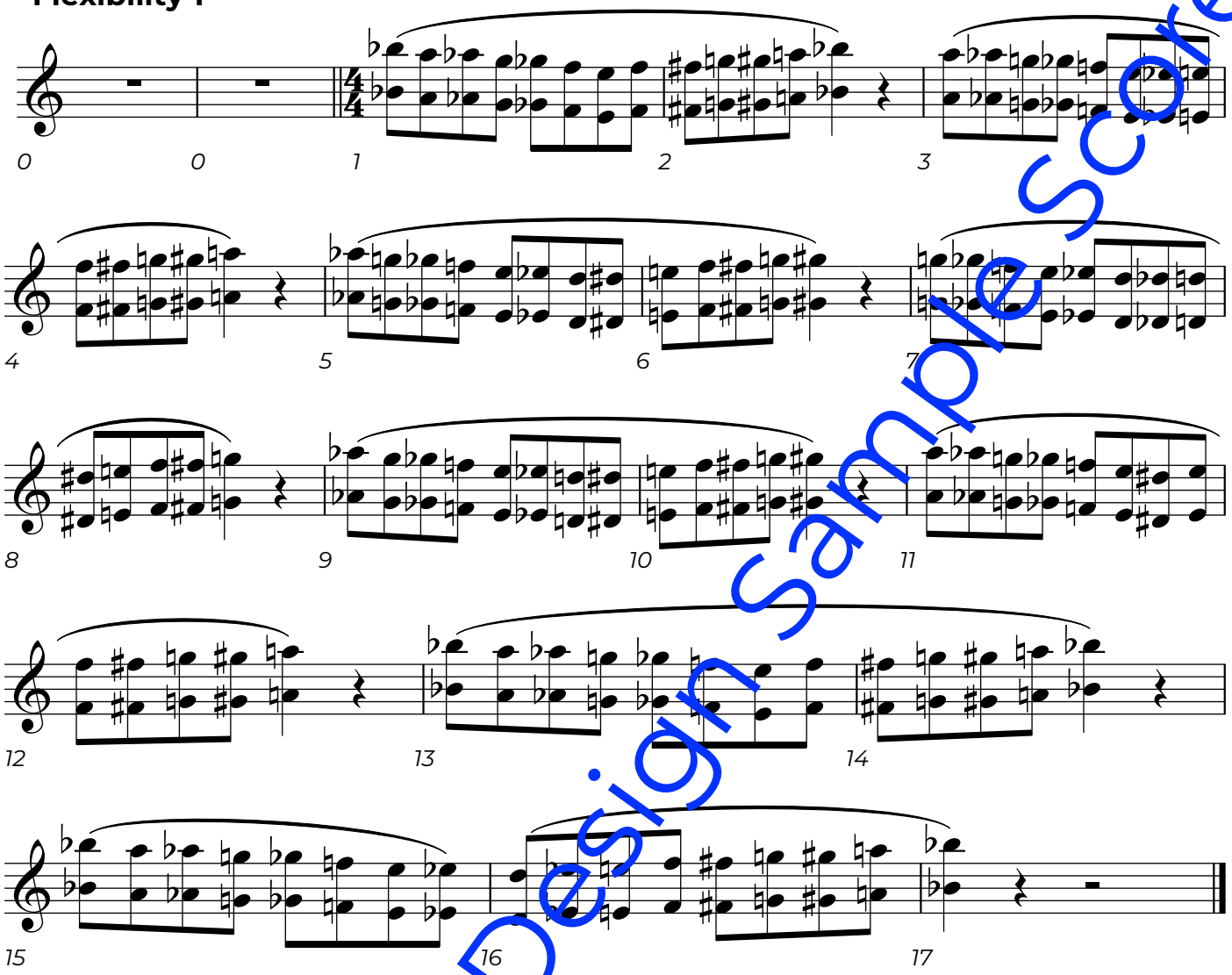
**Flexibility 1**

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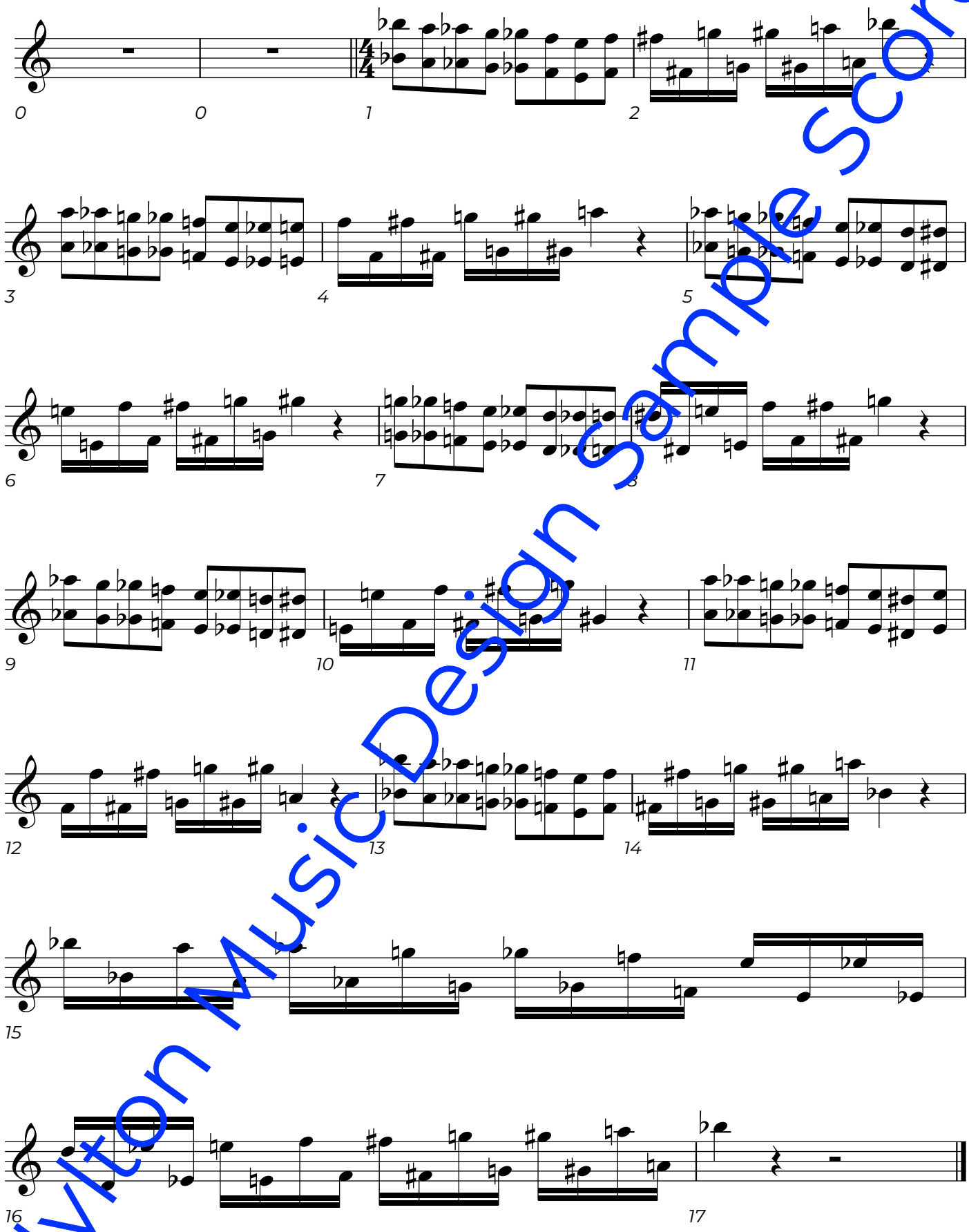
## Flexibility 1

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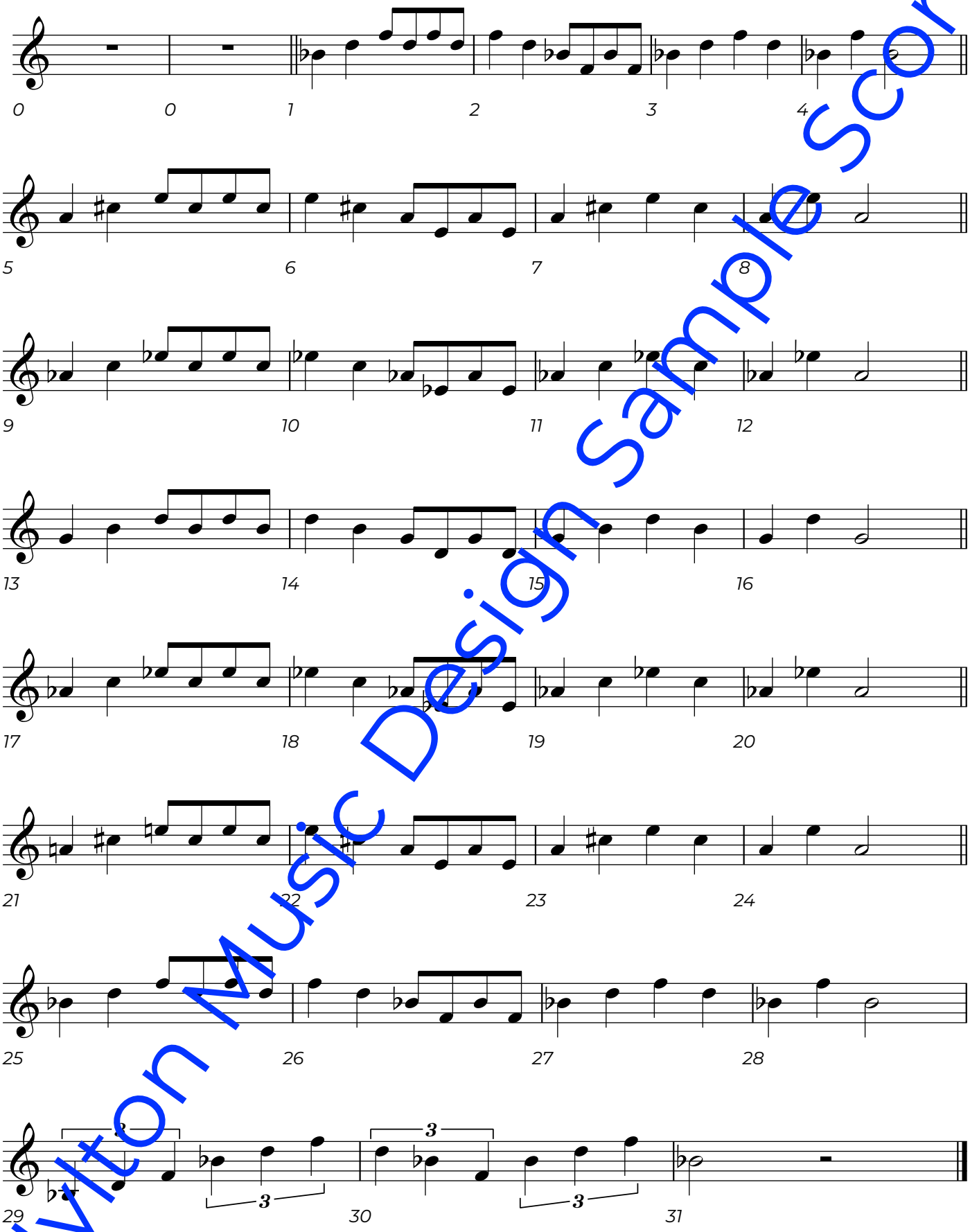
## Flexibility 2A Major

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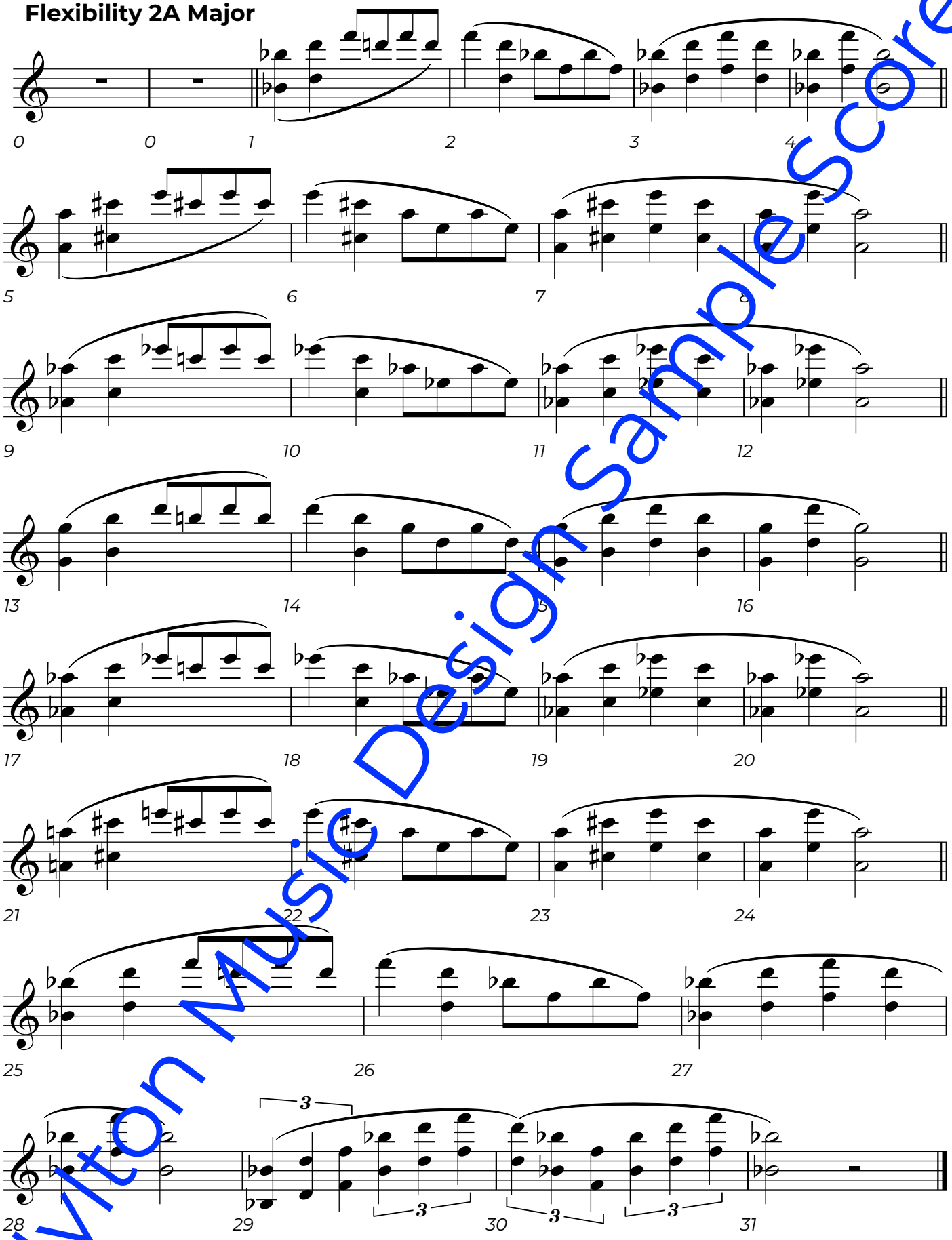
**Flexibility 2A Major**

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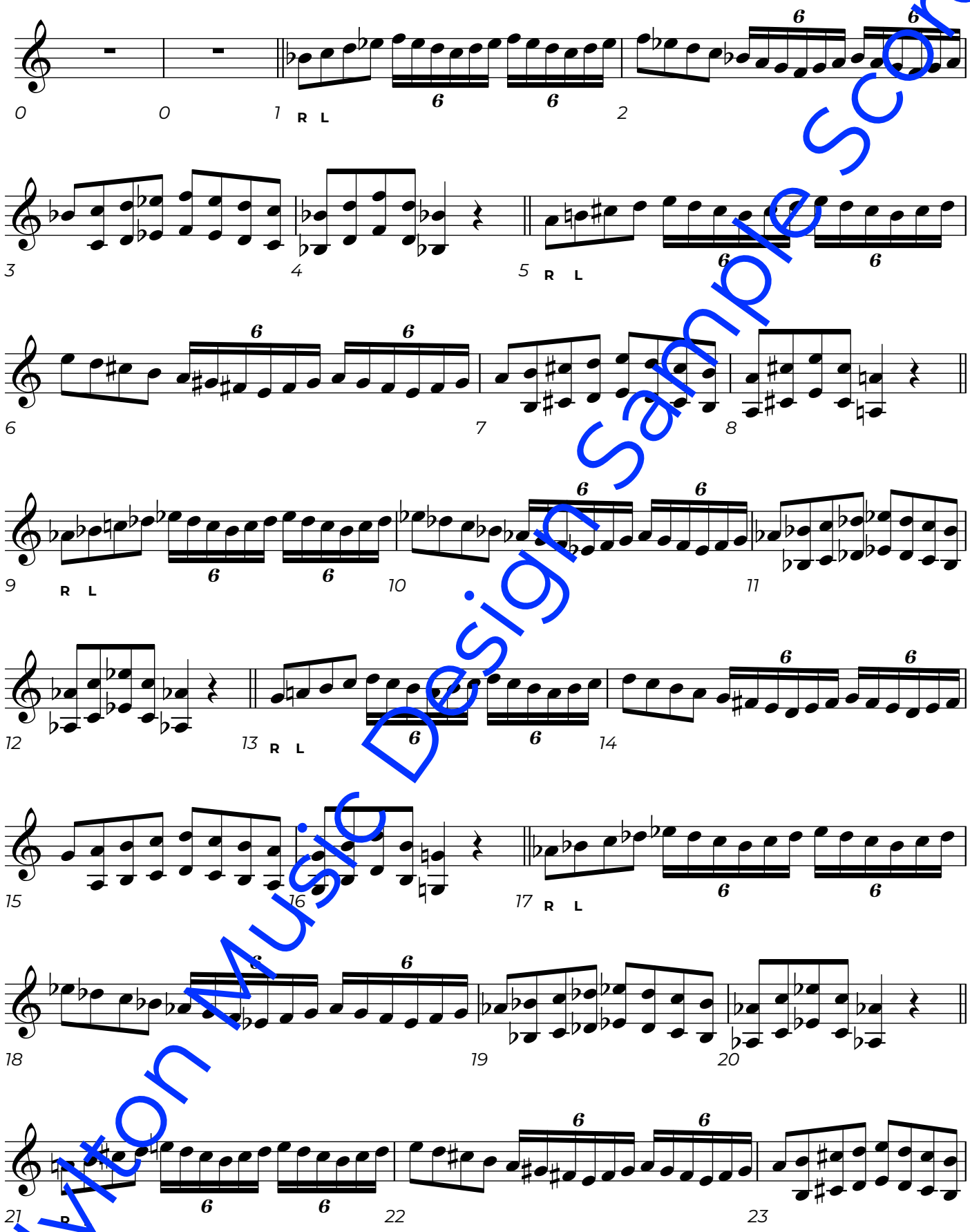
## Flexibility 2A Major




V.S.

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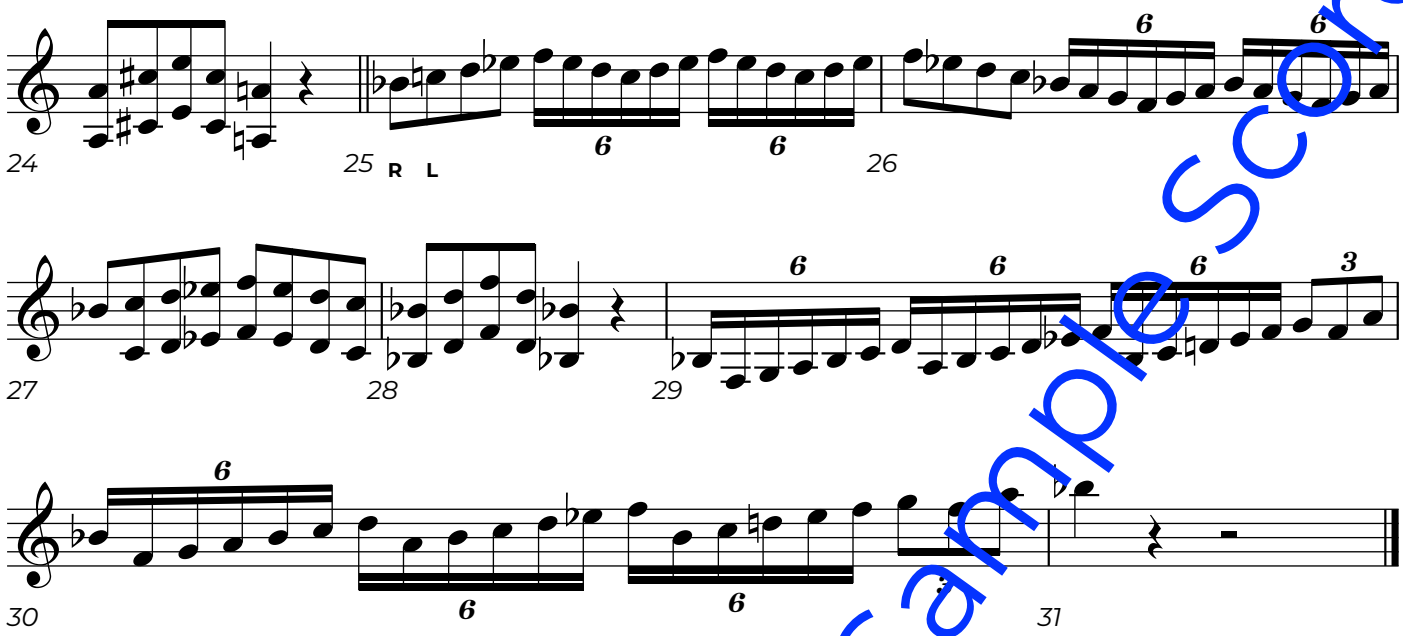


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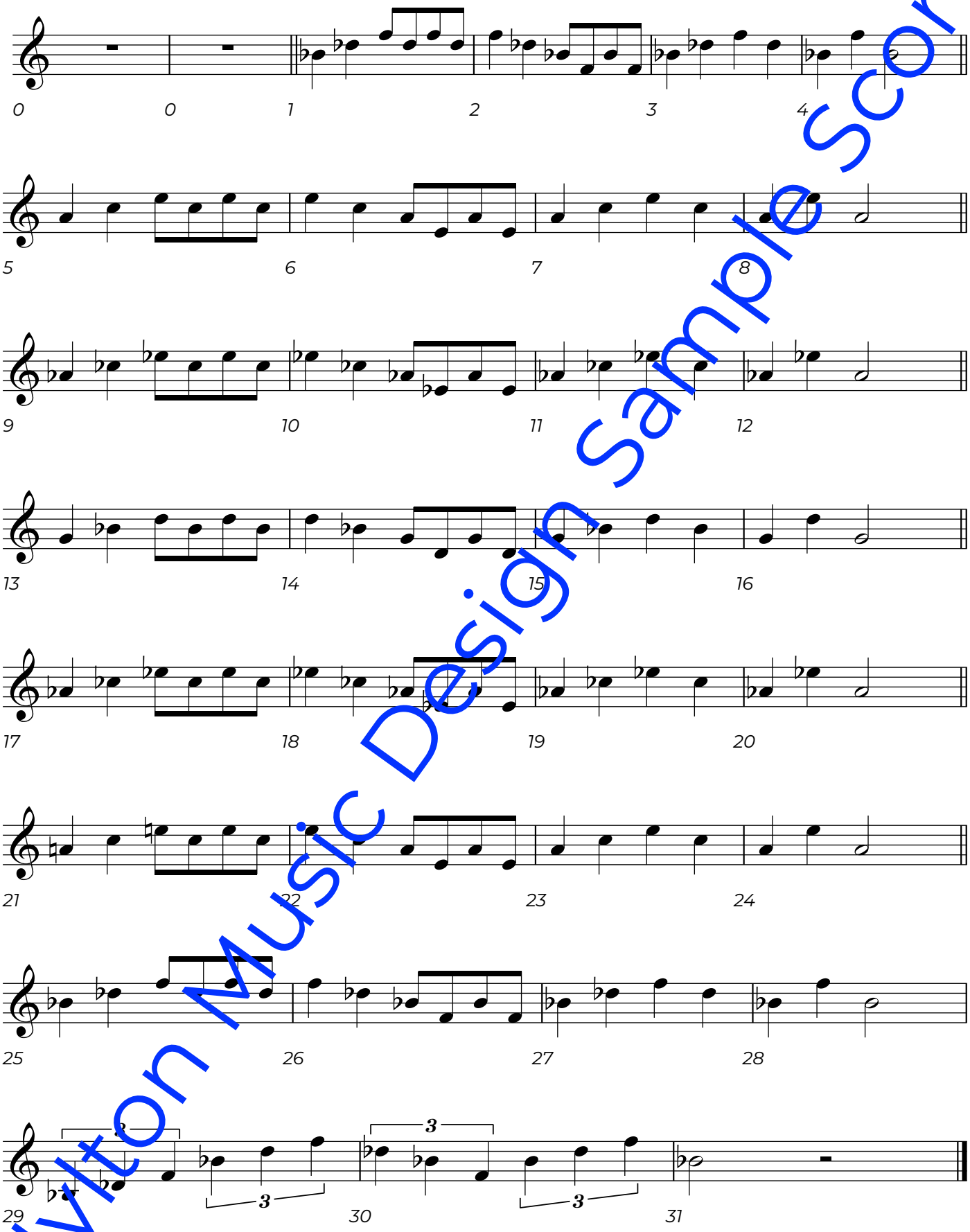
## Flexibility 2B Minor

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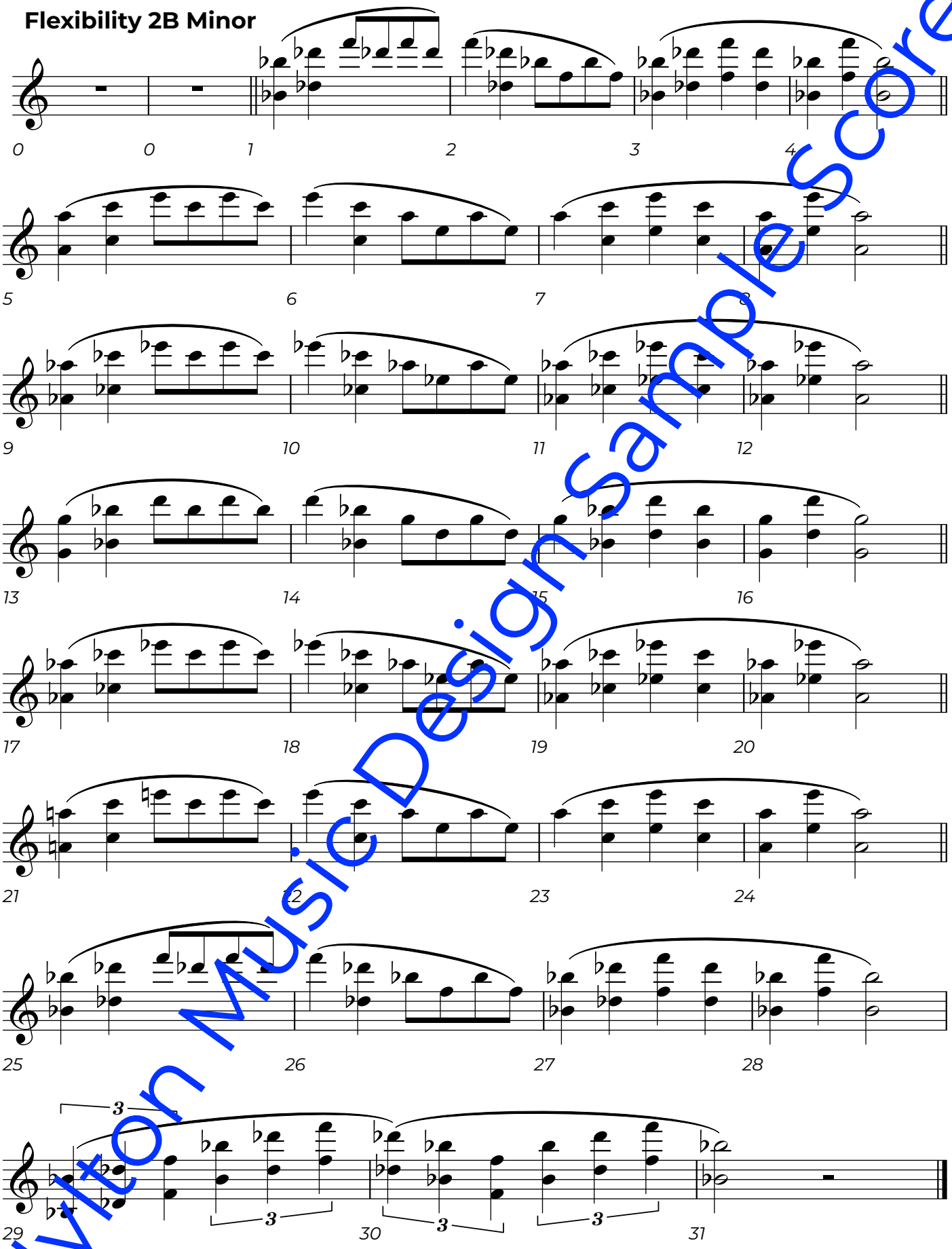
## Flexibility 2B Minor

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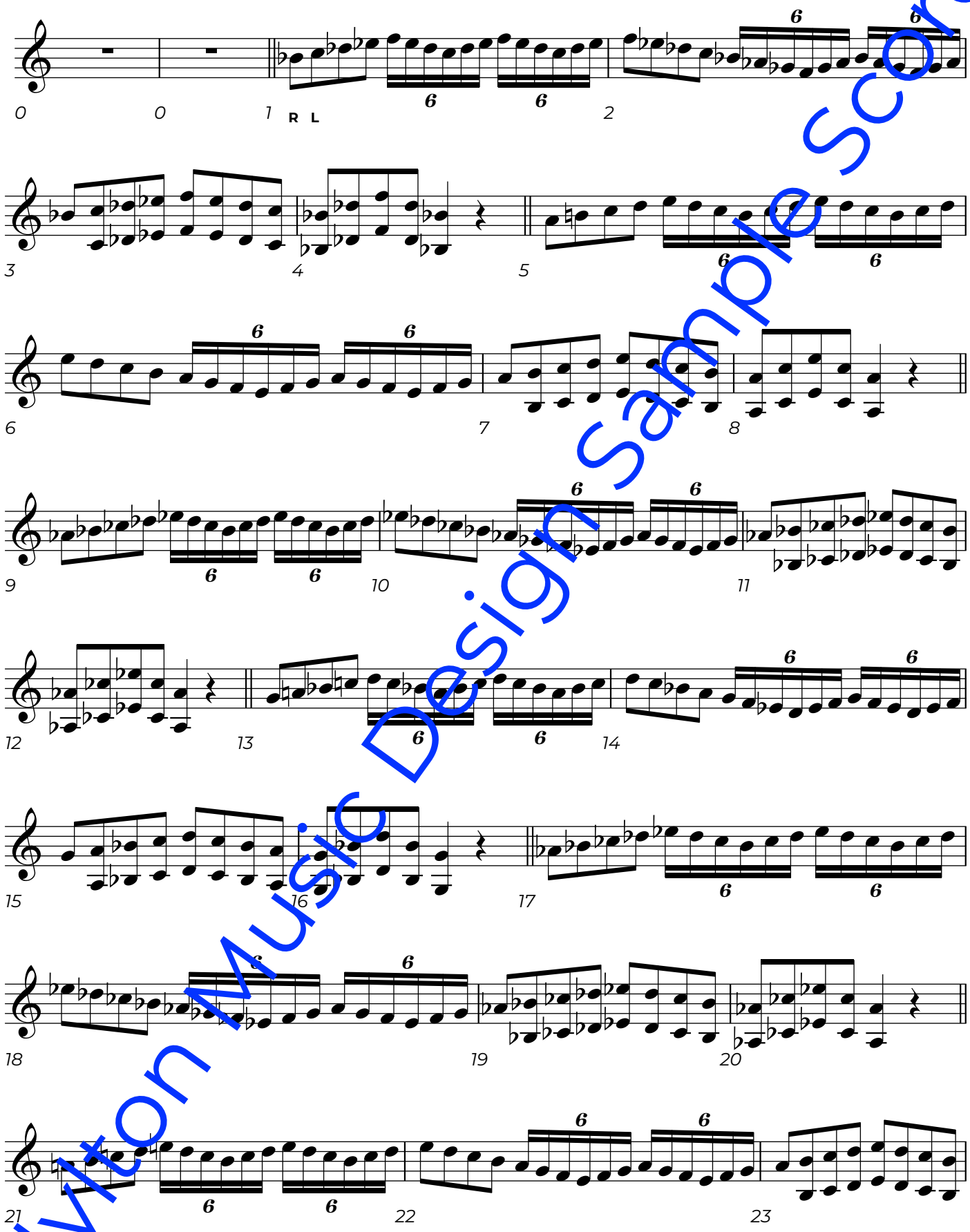
## Flexibility 2B Minor

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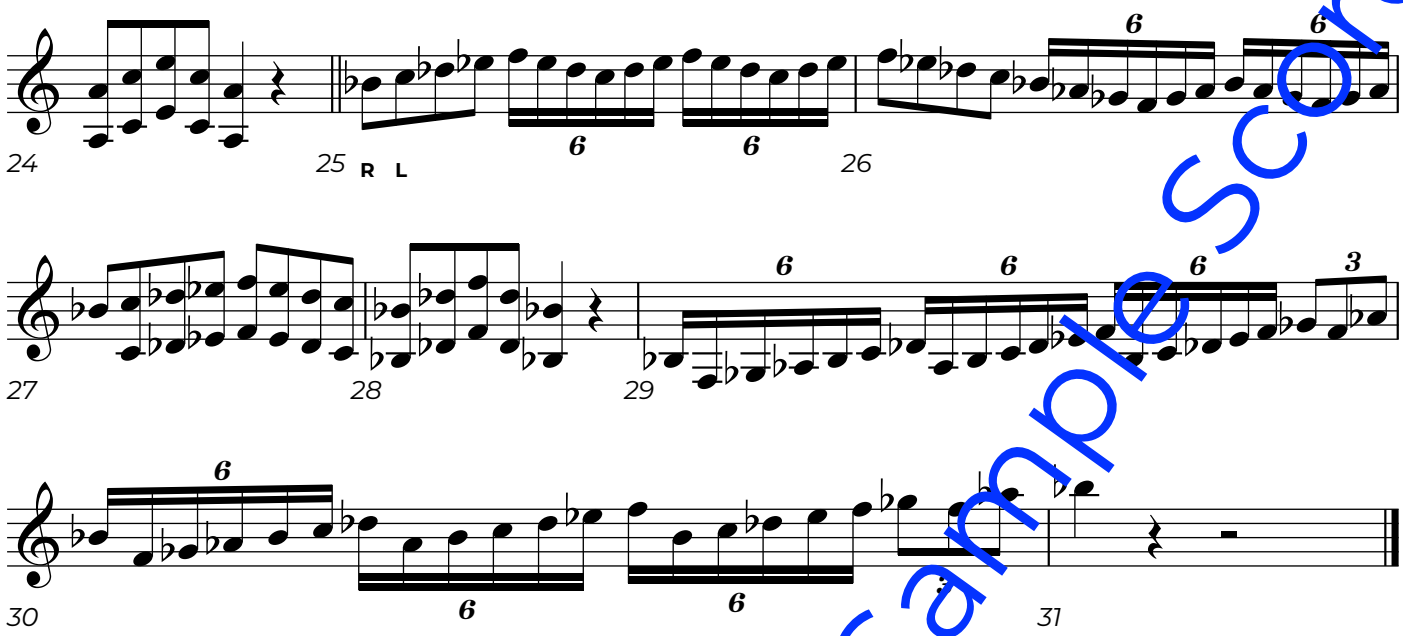


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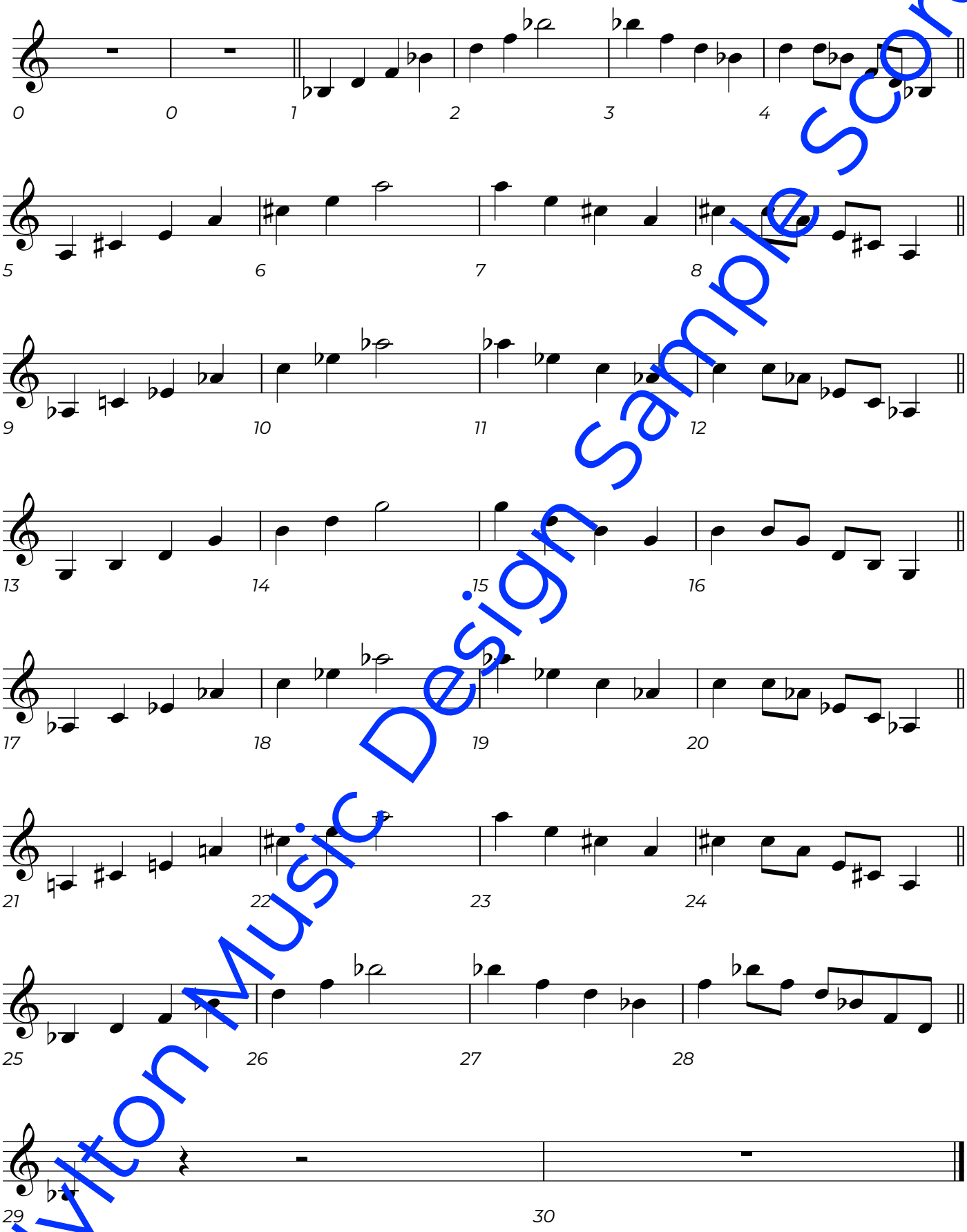
## Flexibility 3

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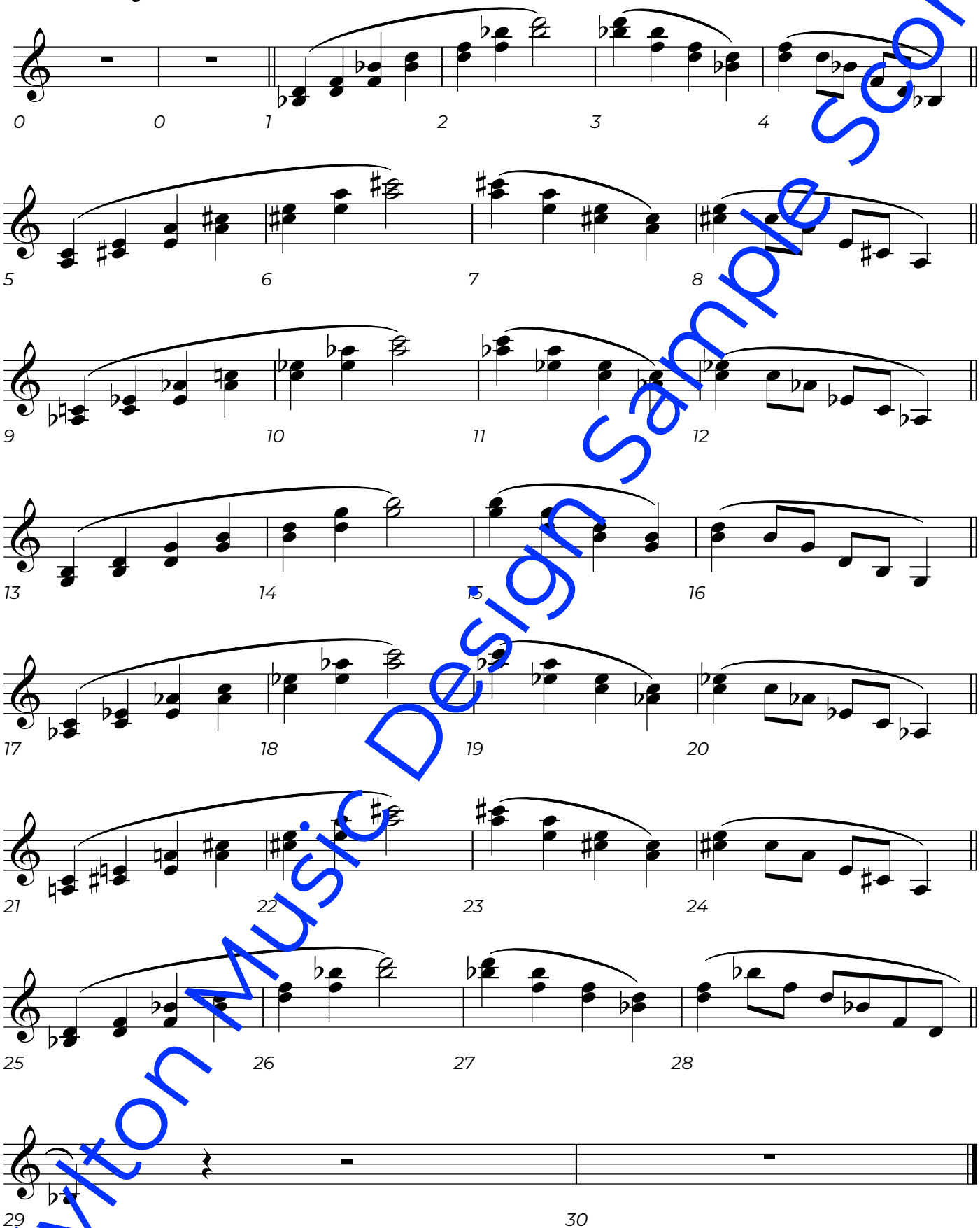
## Flexibility 3

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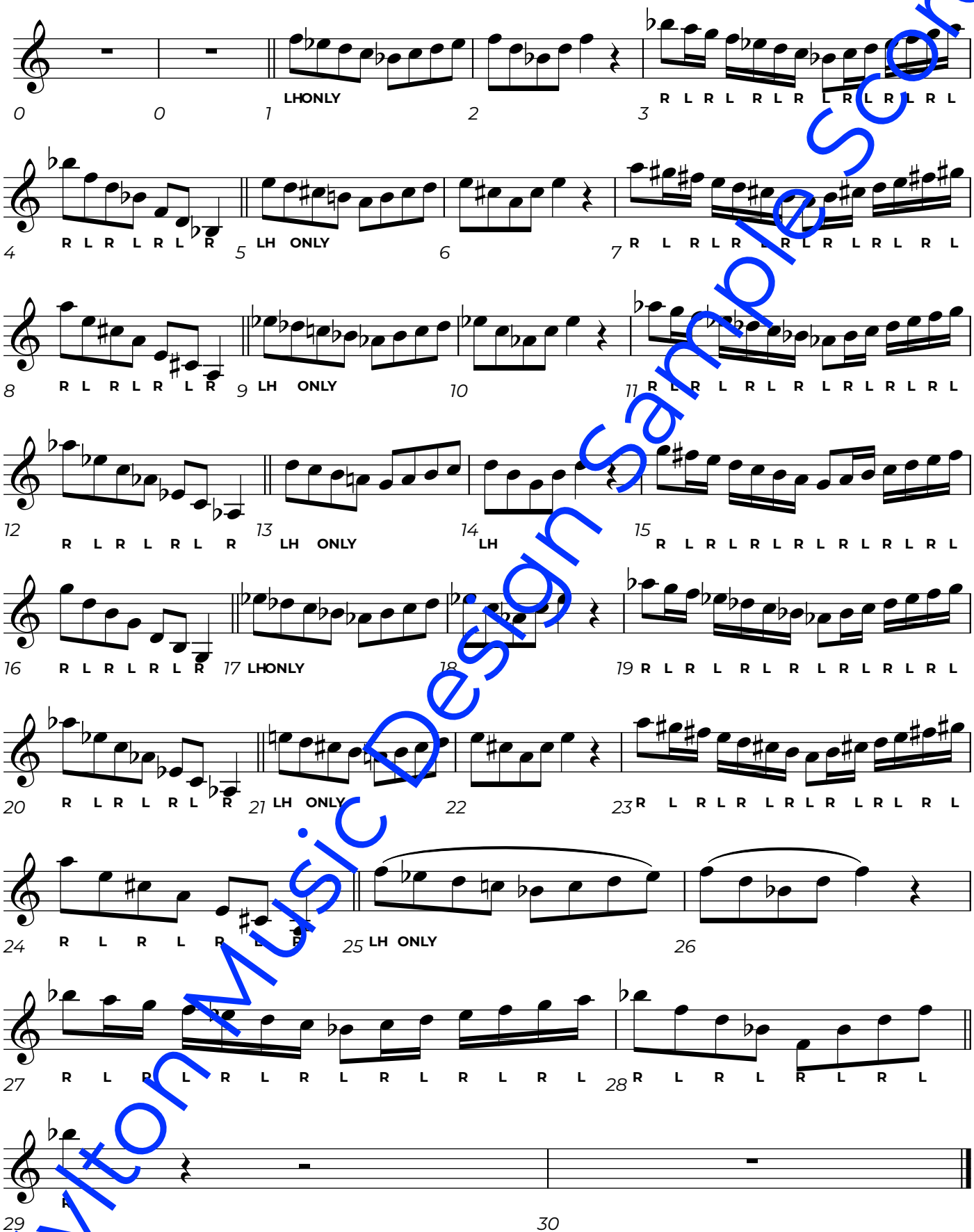
## Flexibility 3

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## Flexibility 4

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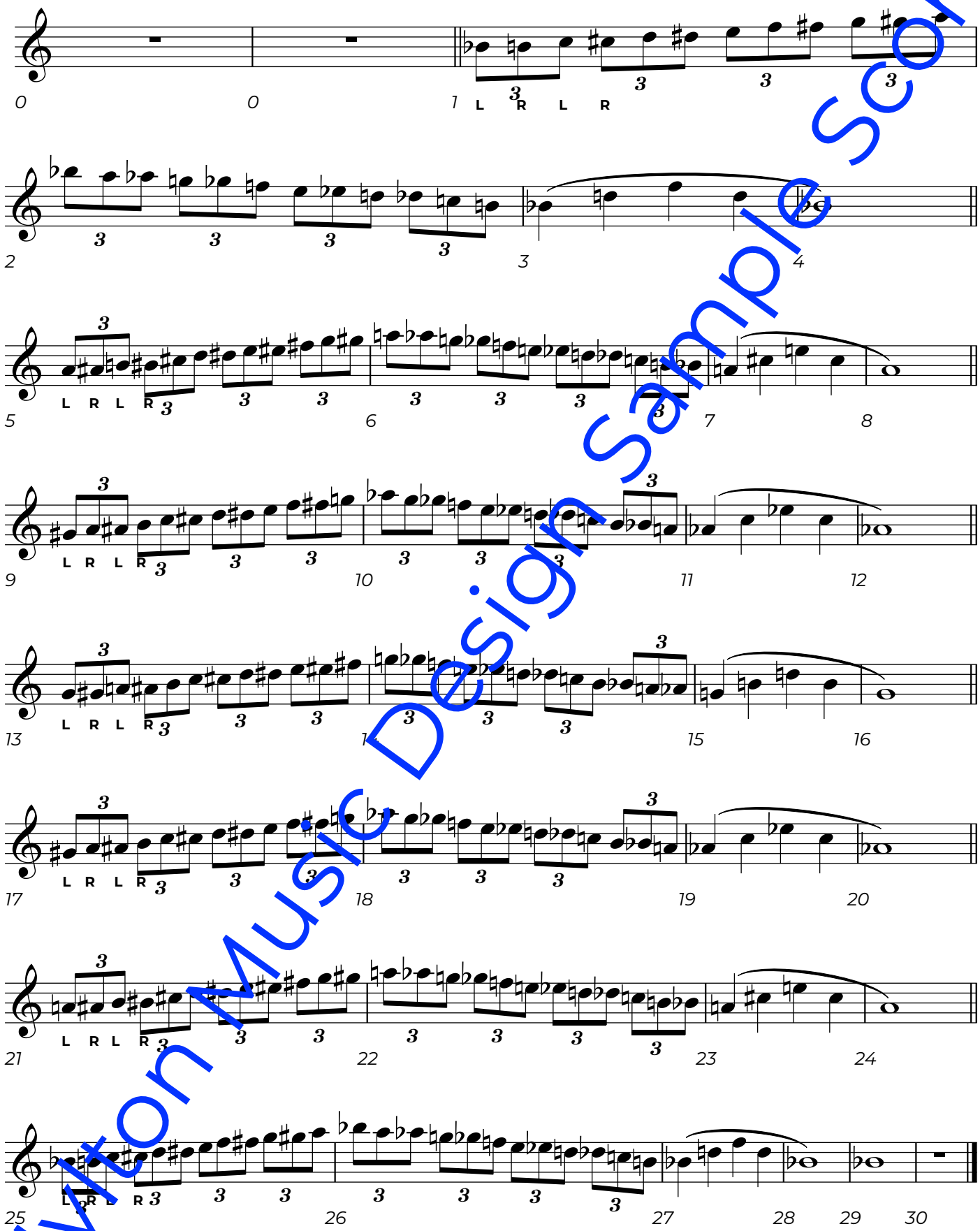
## Flexibility 4

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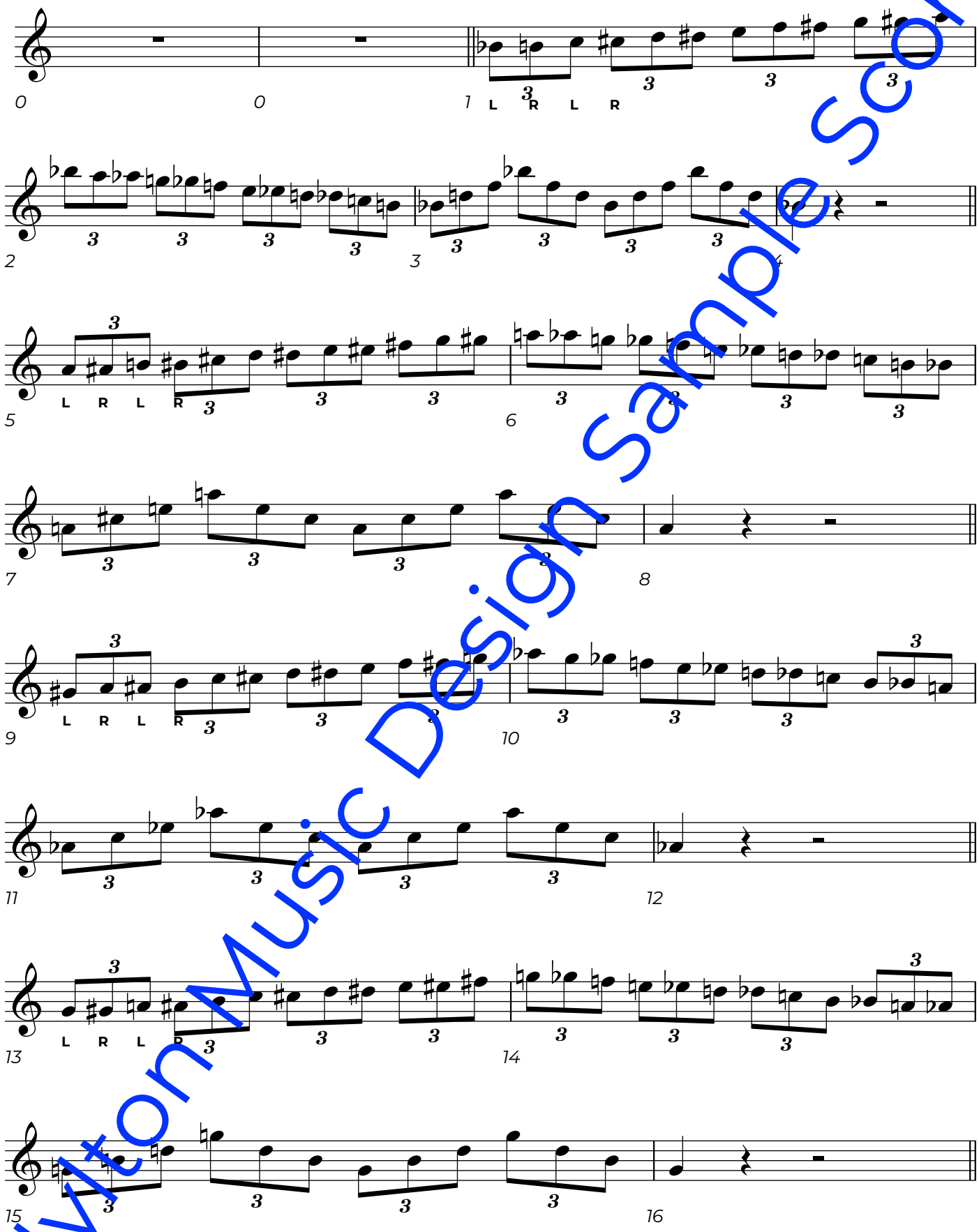
## Flexibility 4

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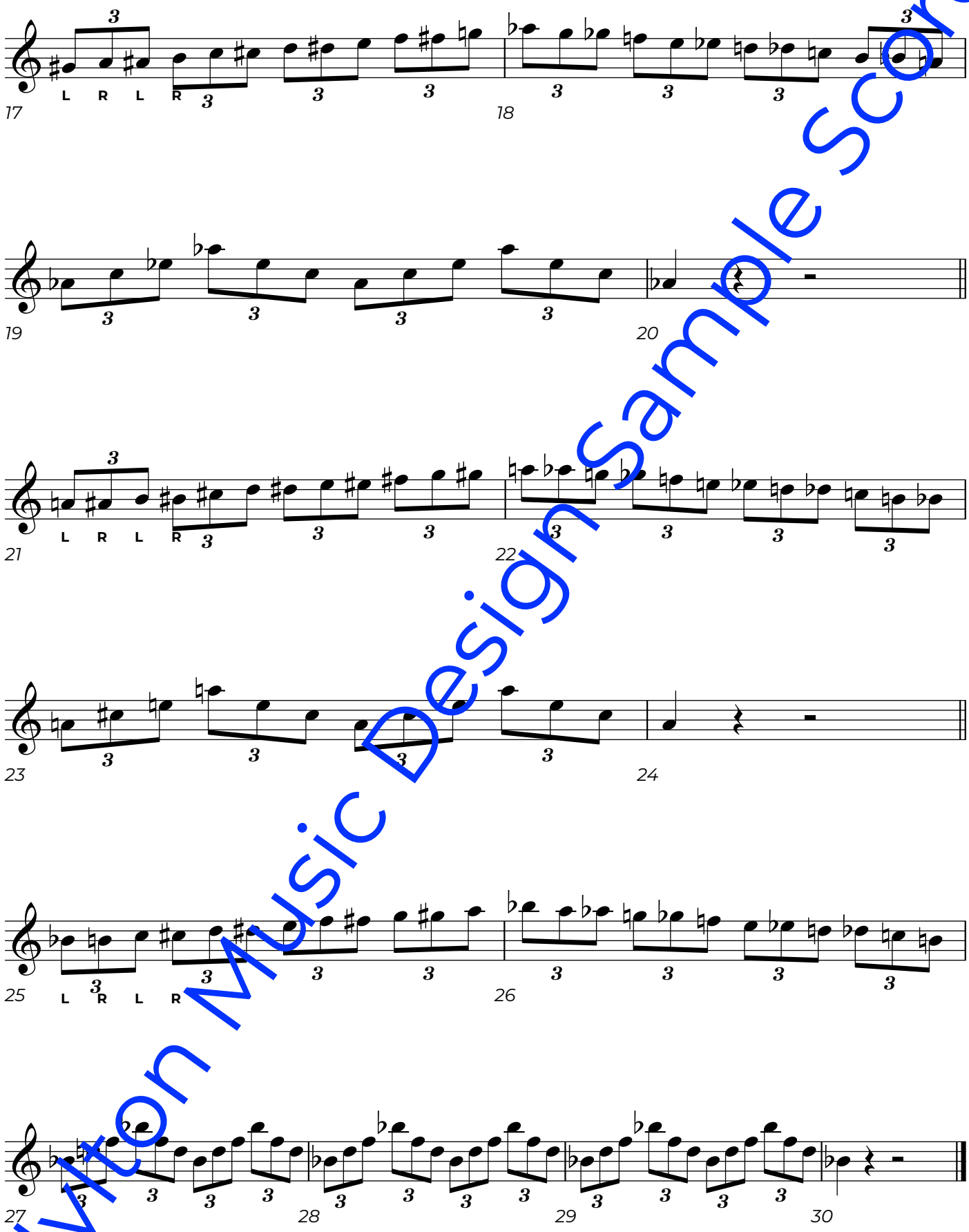


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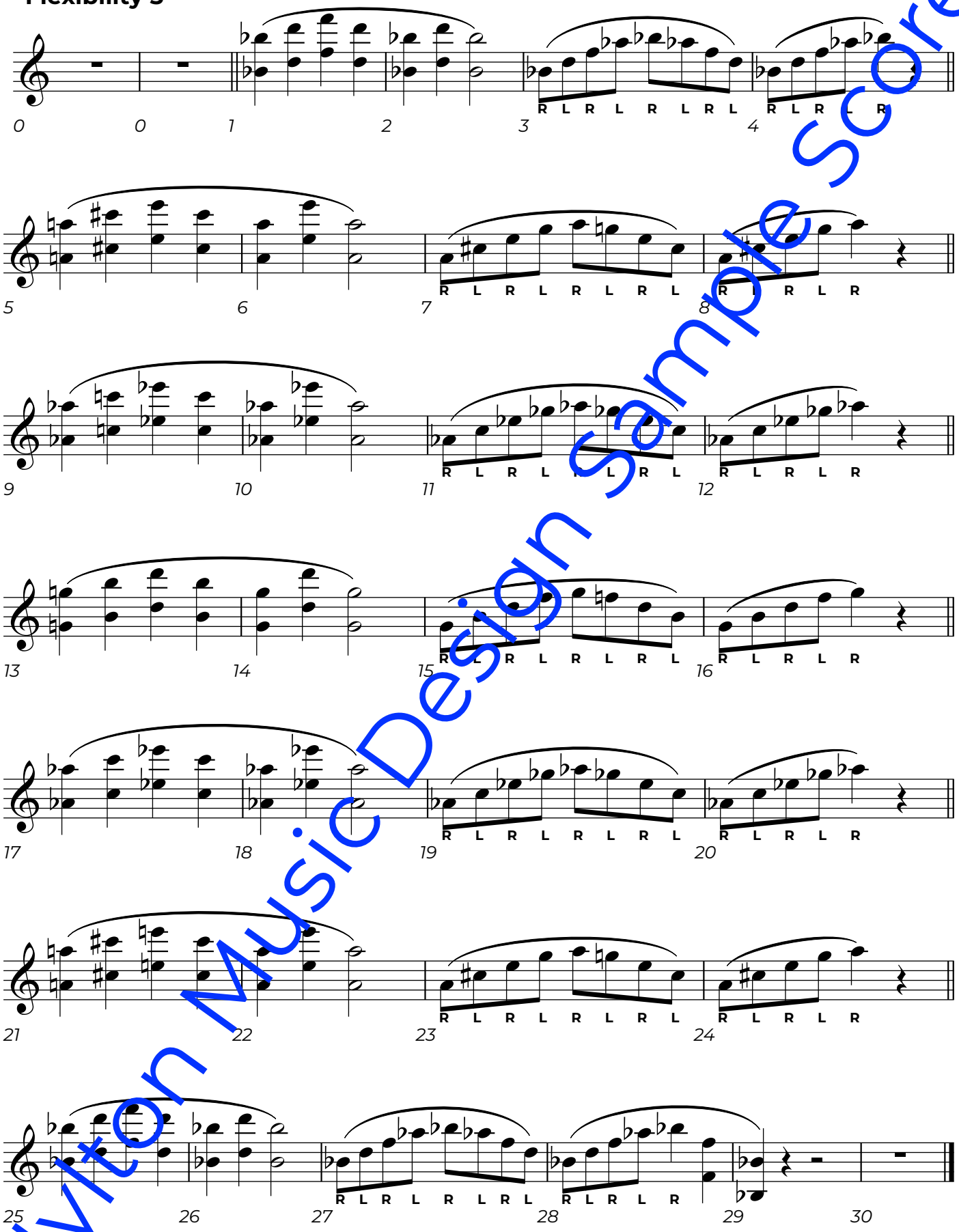
**Flexibility 5**

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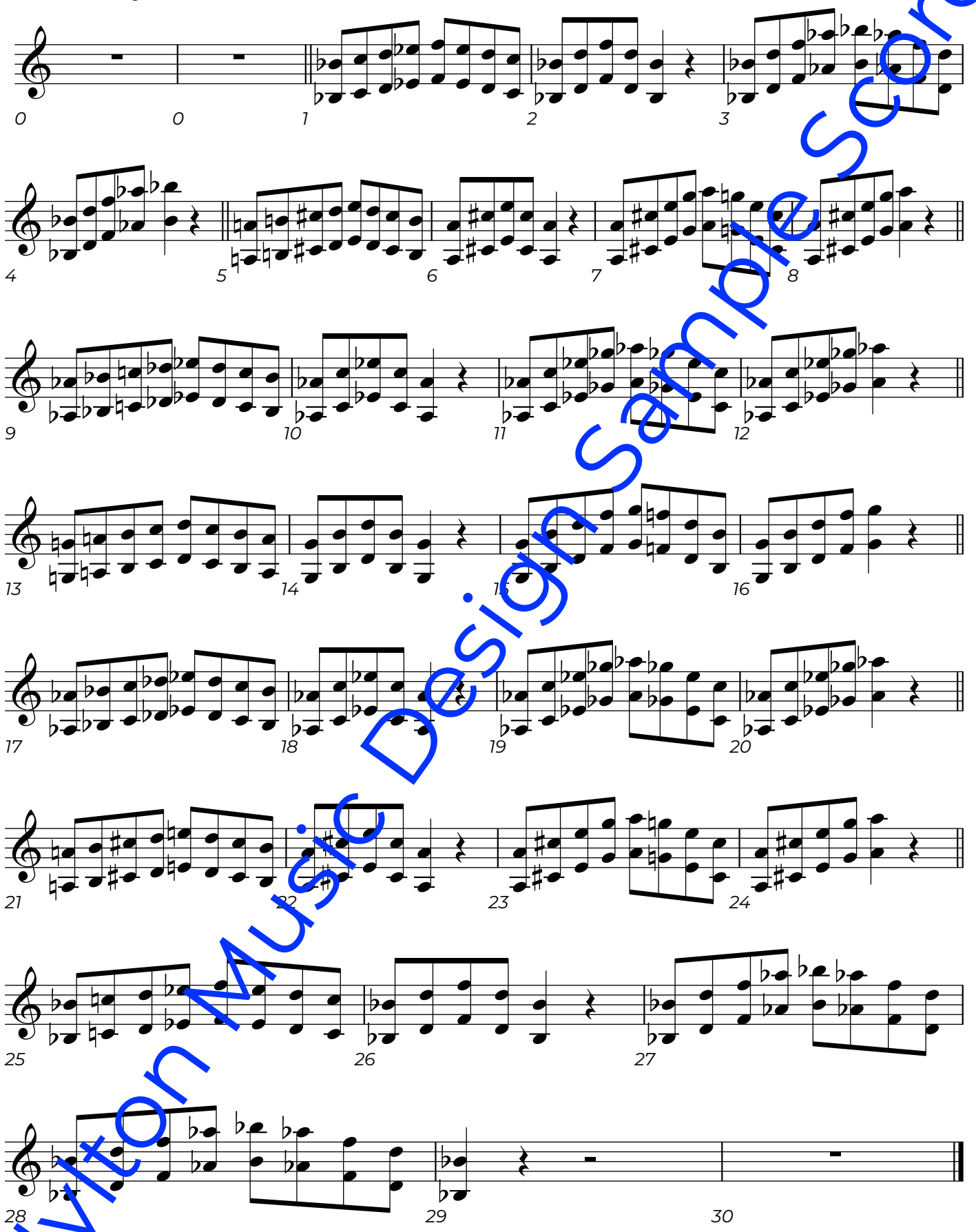
## Flexibility 5



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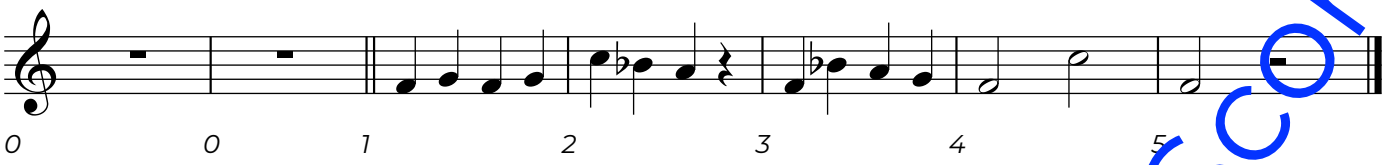
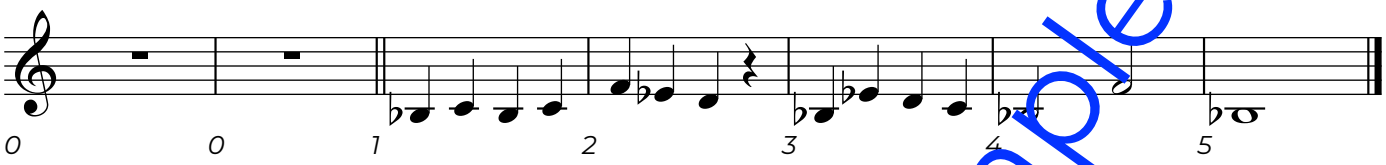
**Dexterity: F Major**




**Dexterity: Bb Major**

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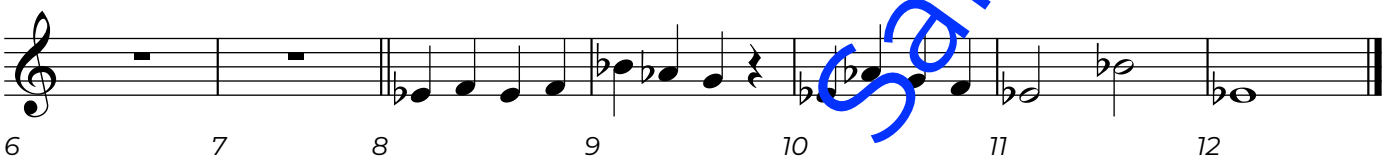


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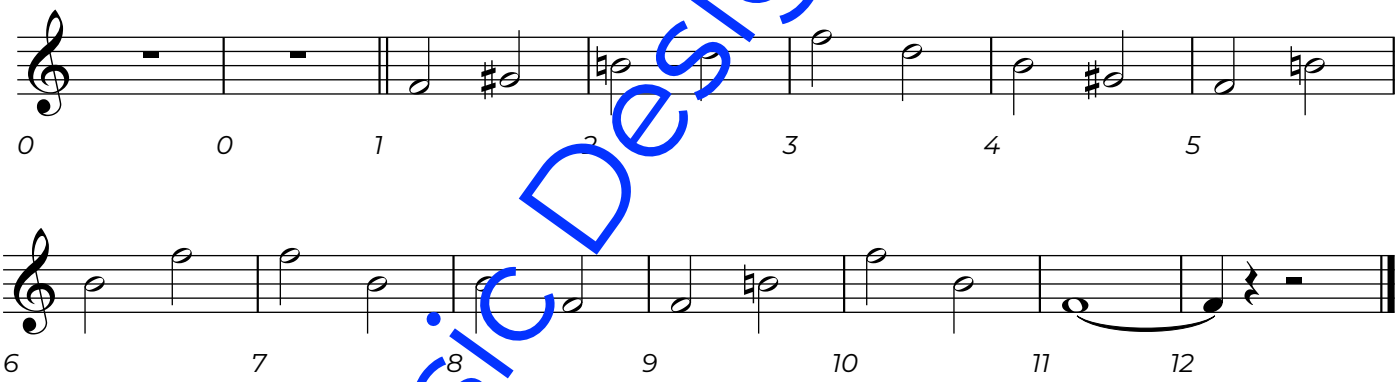


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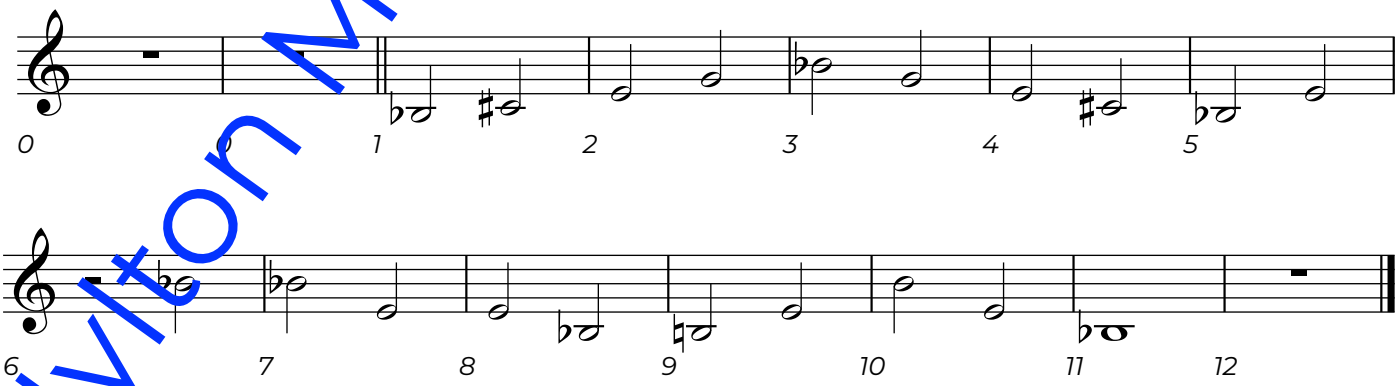


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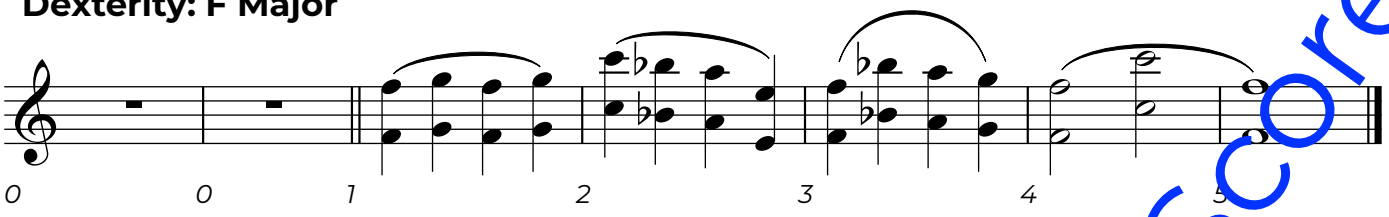
**Dexterity: F Major**



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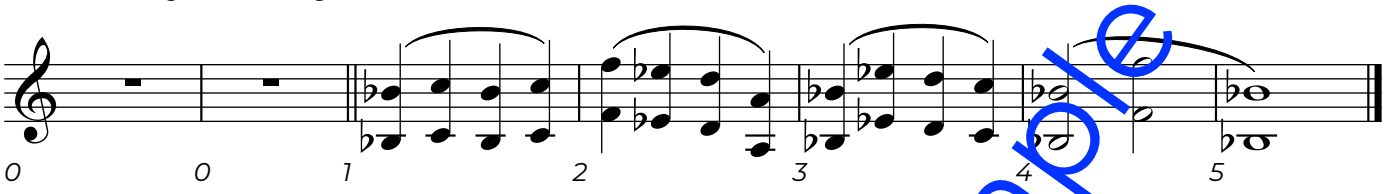

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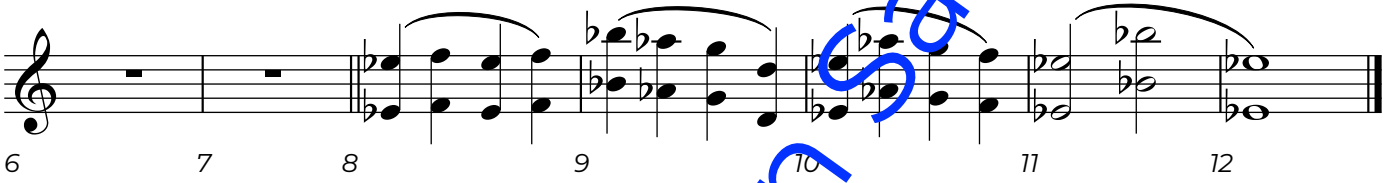

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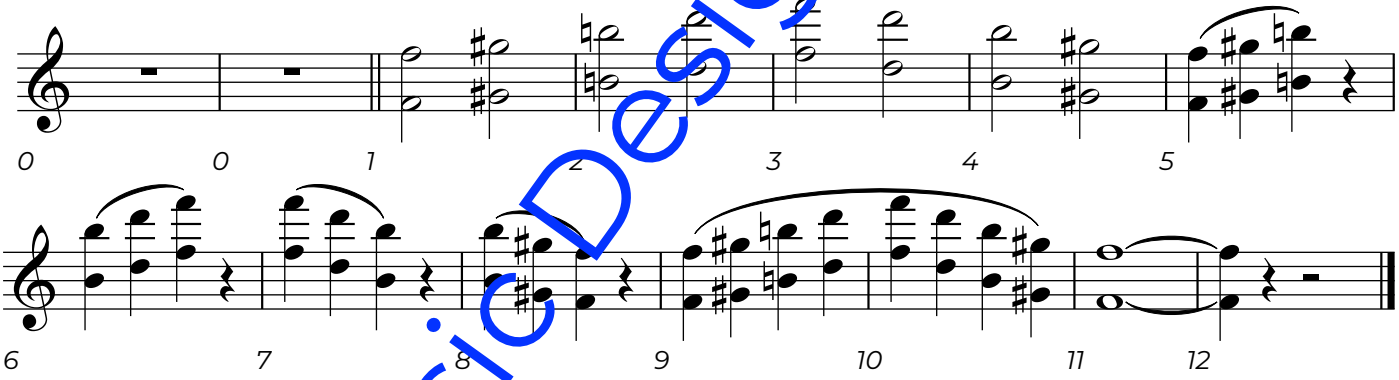

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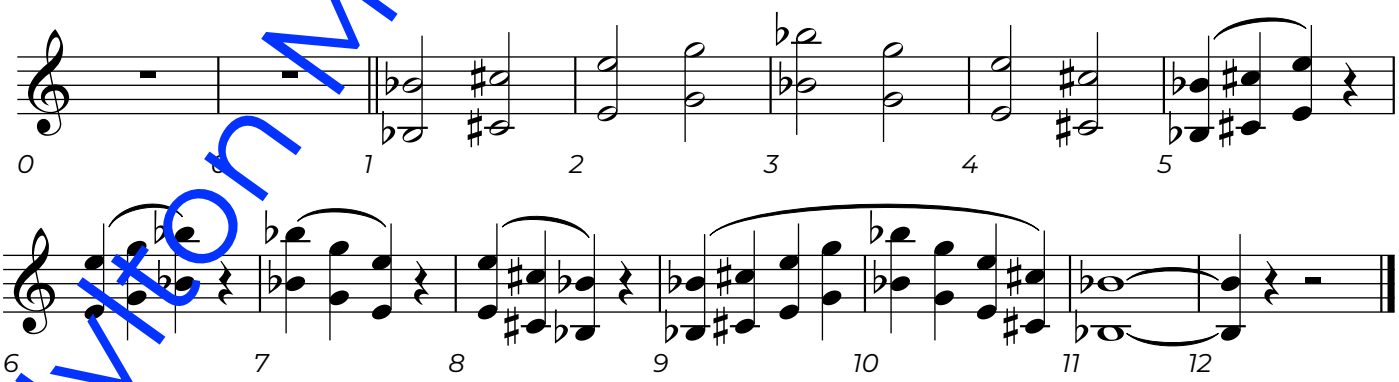

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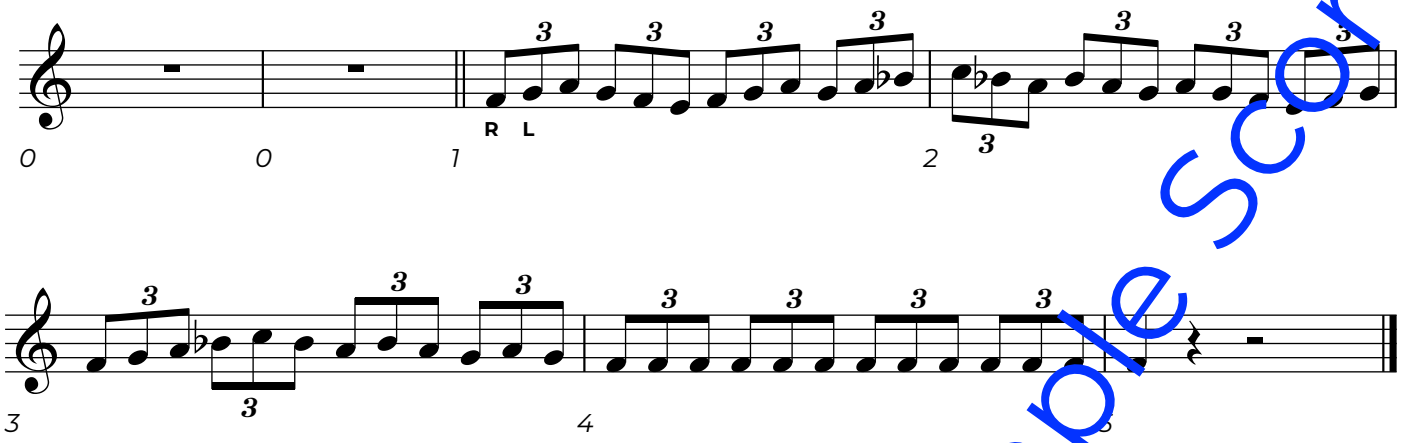
## Dexterity: F Major

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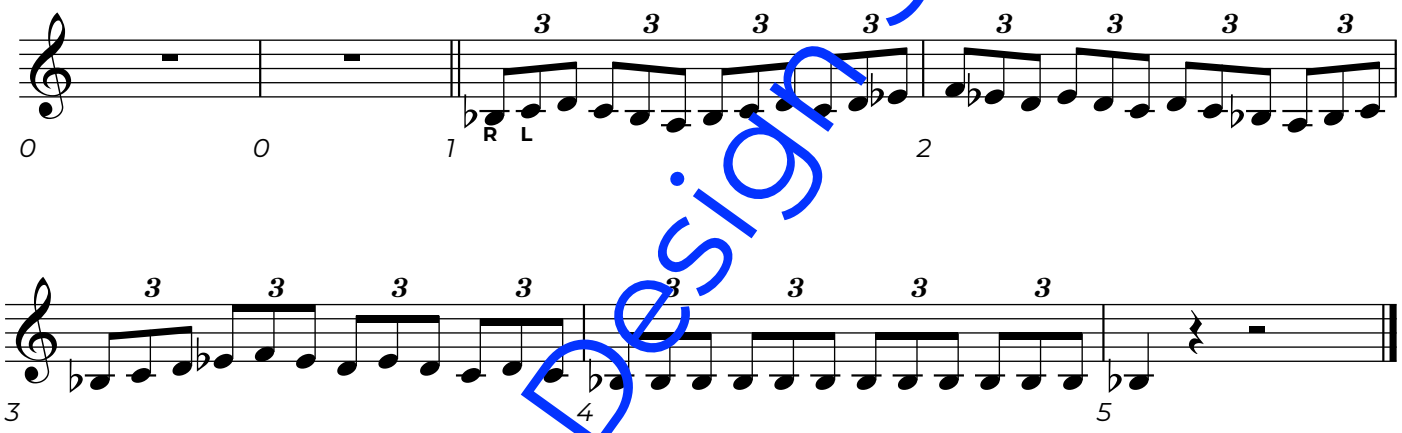


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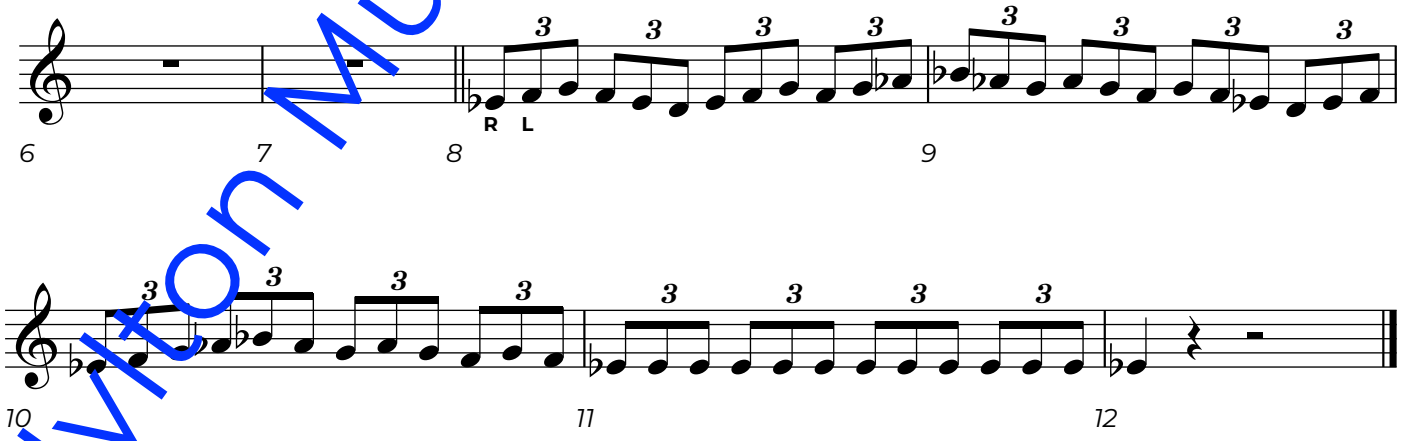


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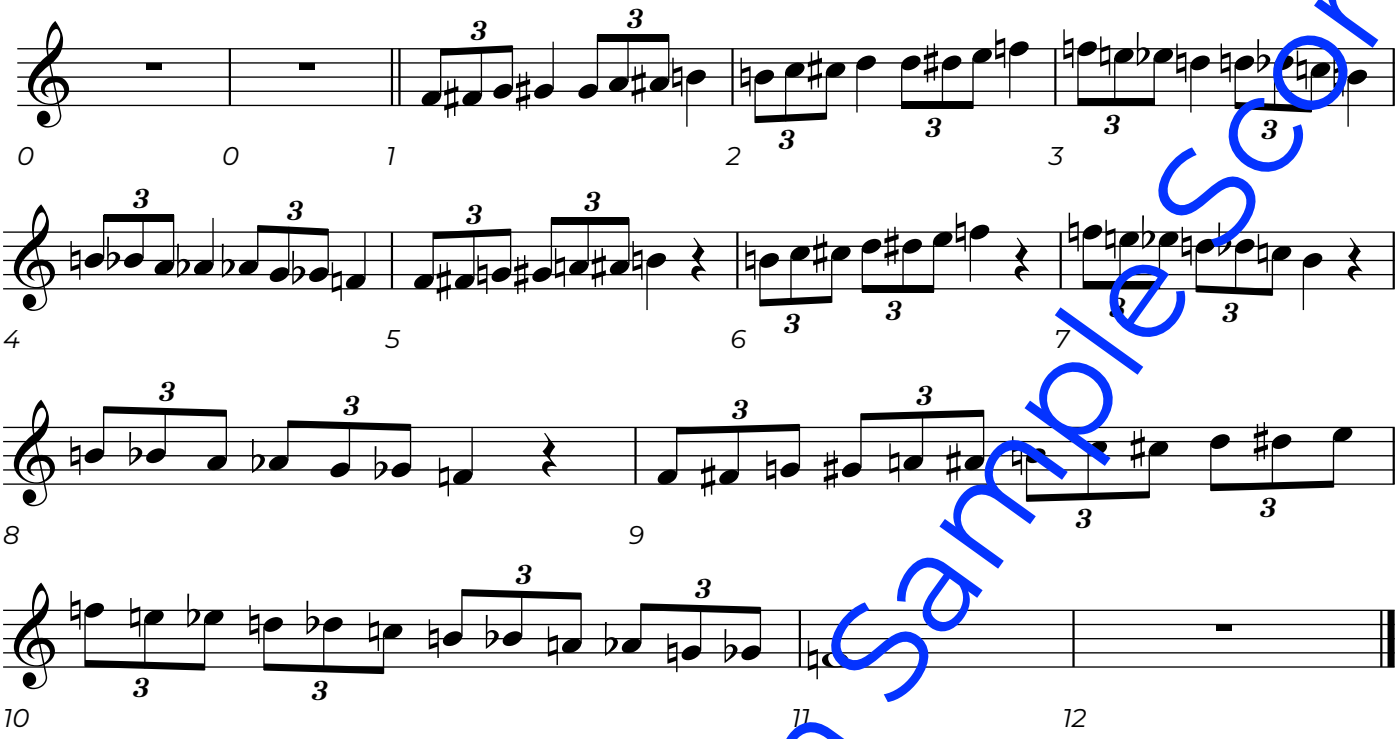
## Dexterity: F Chromatic



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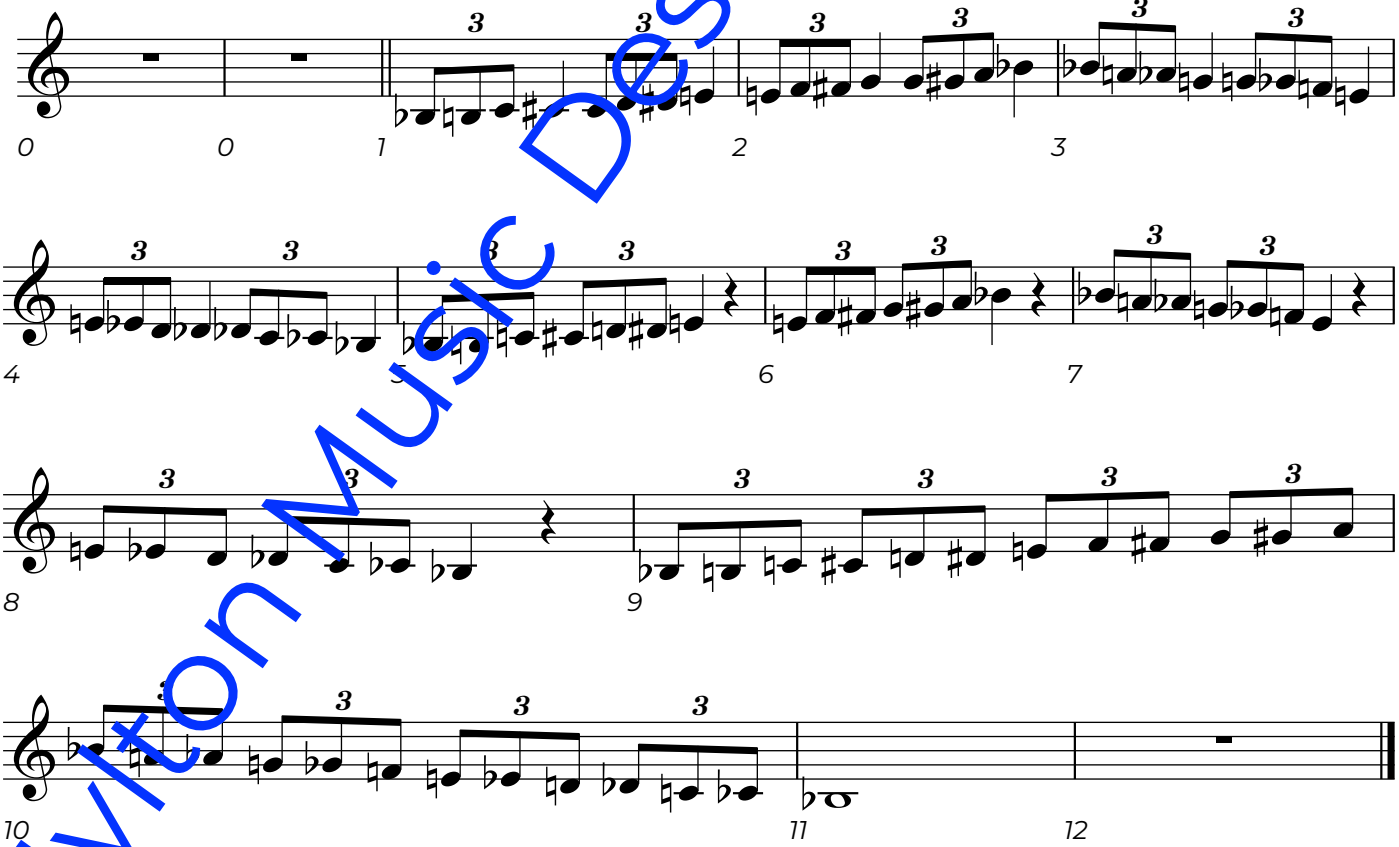

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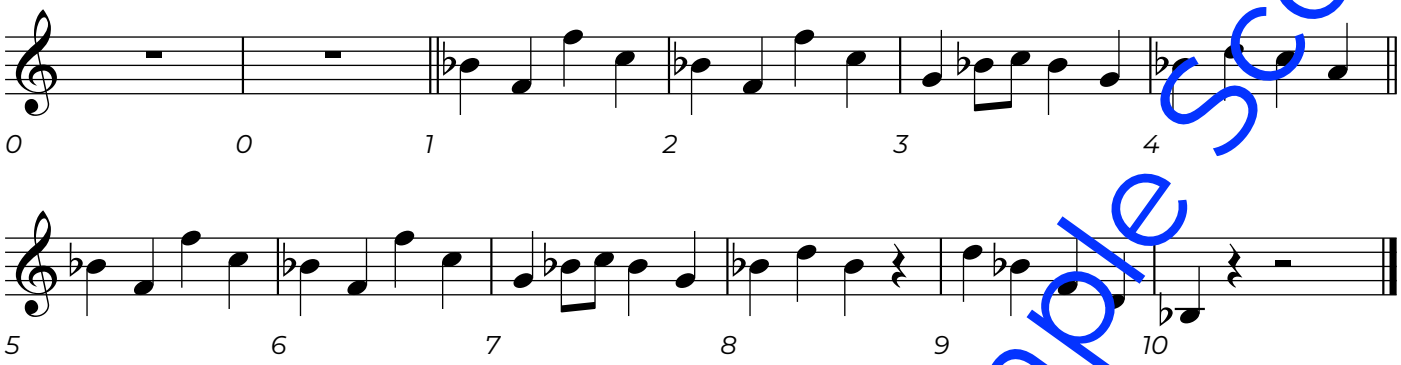


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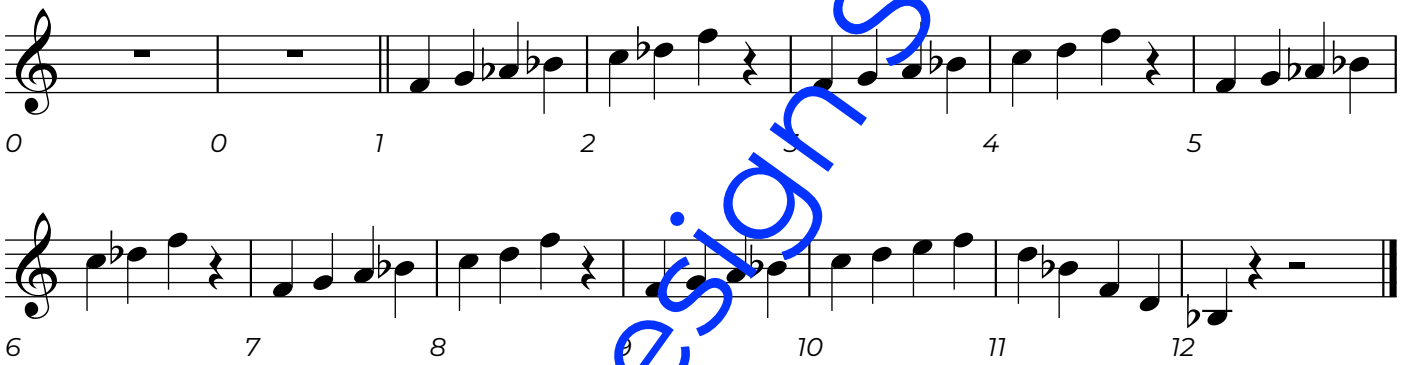


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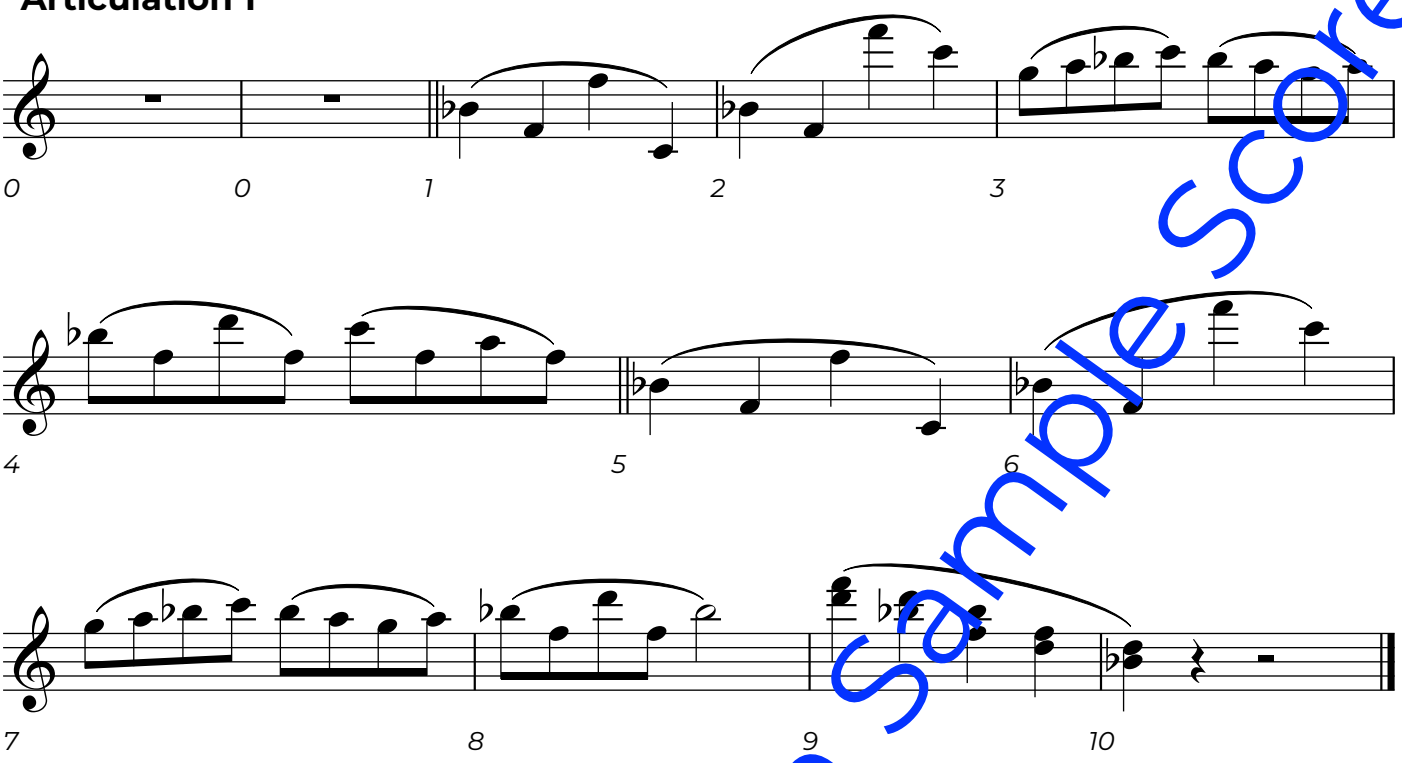


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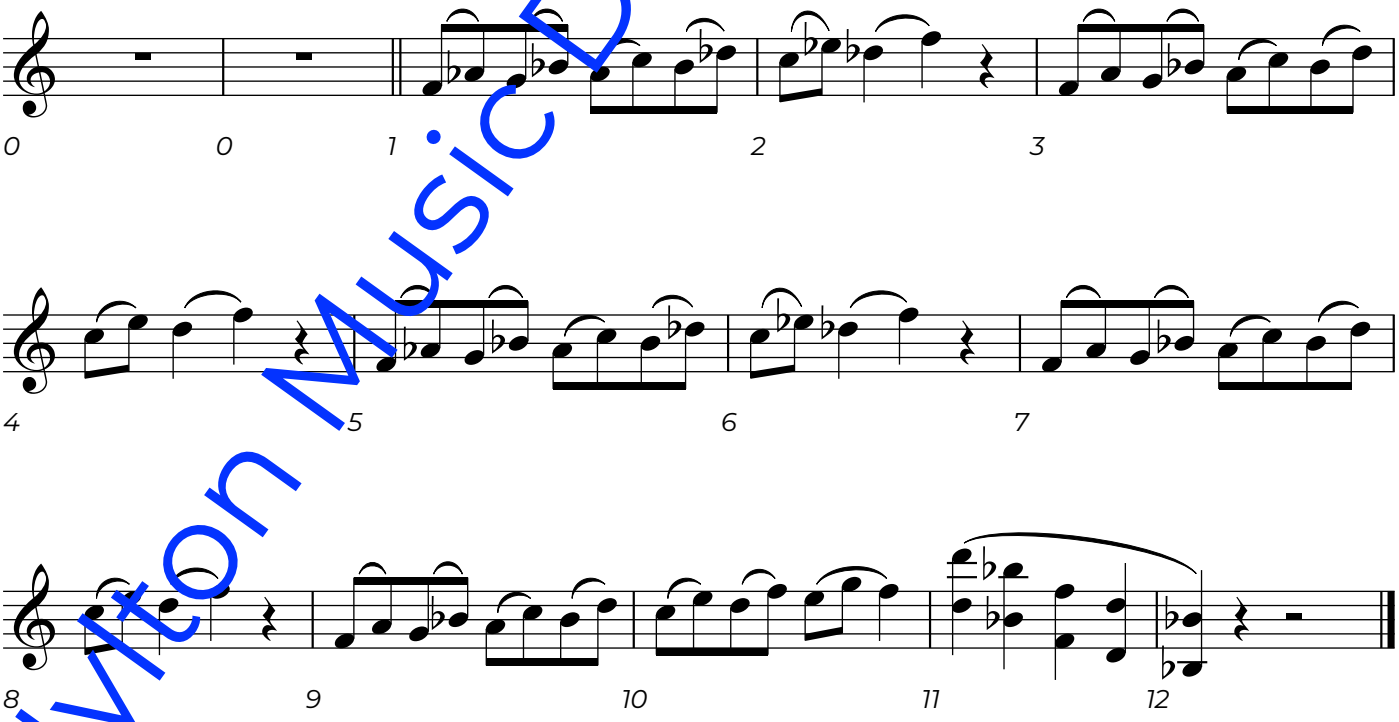


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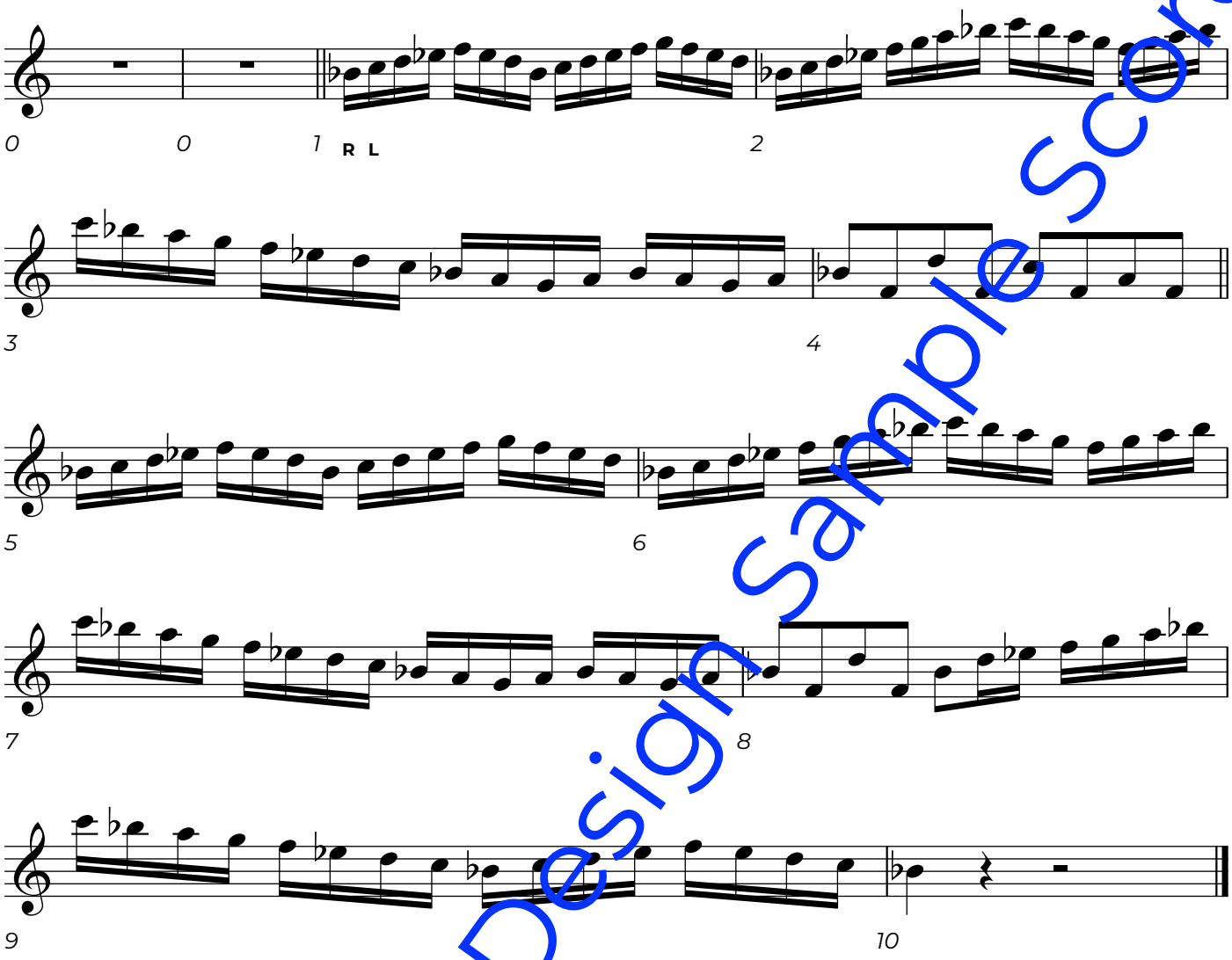


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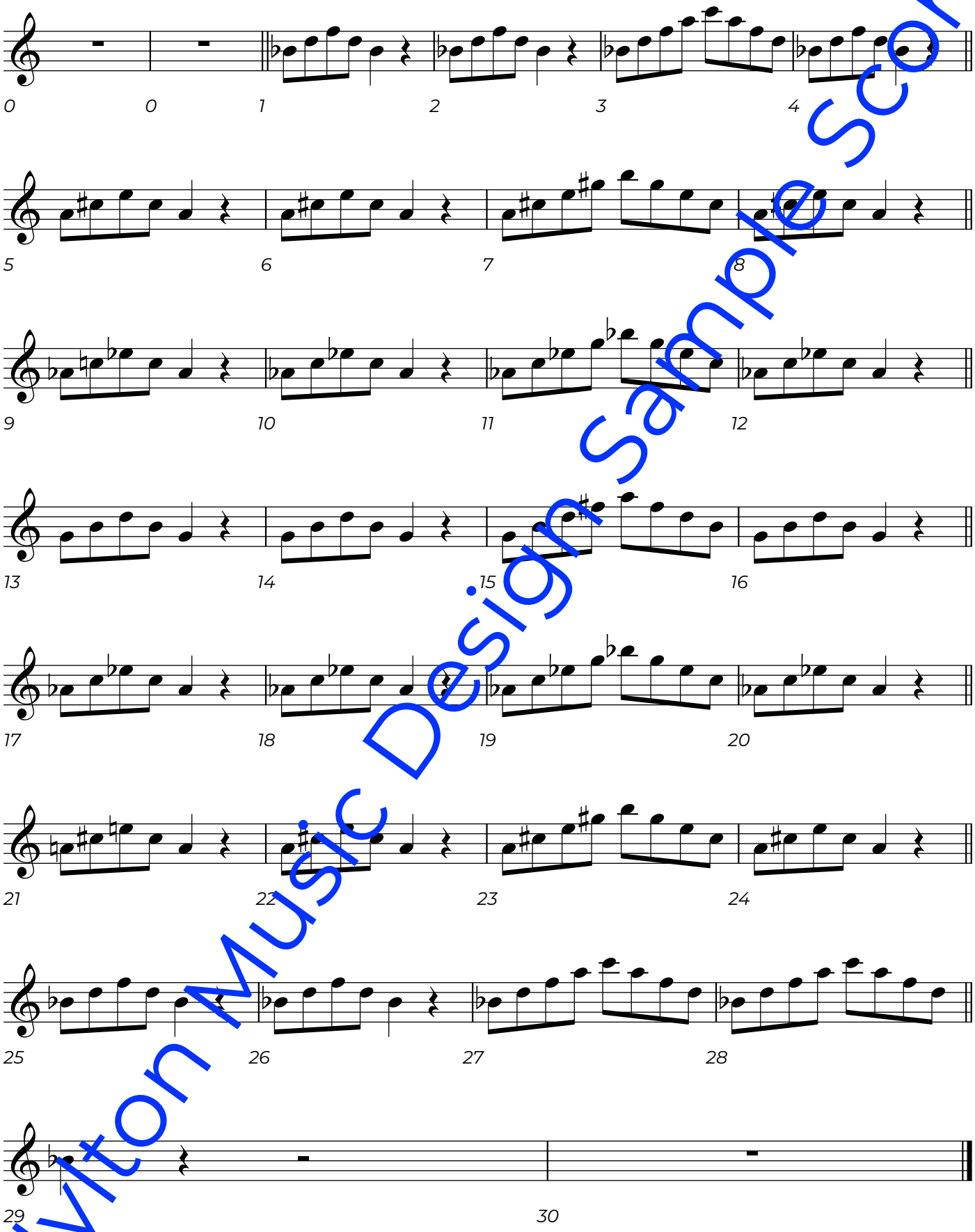


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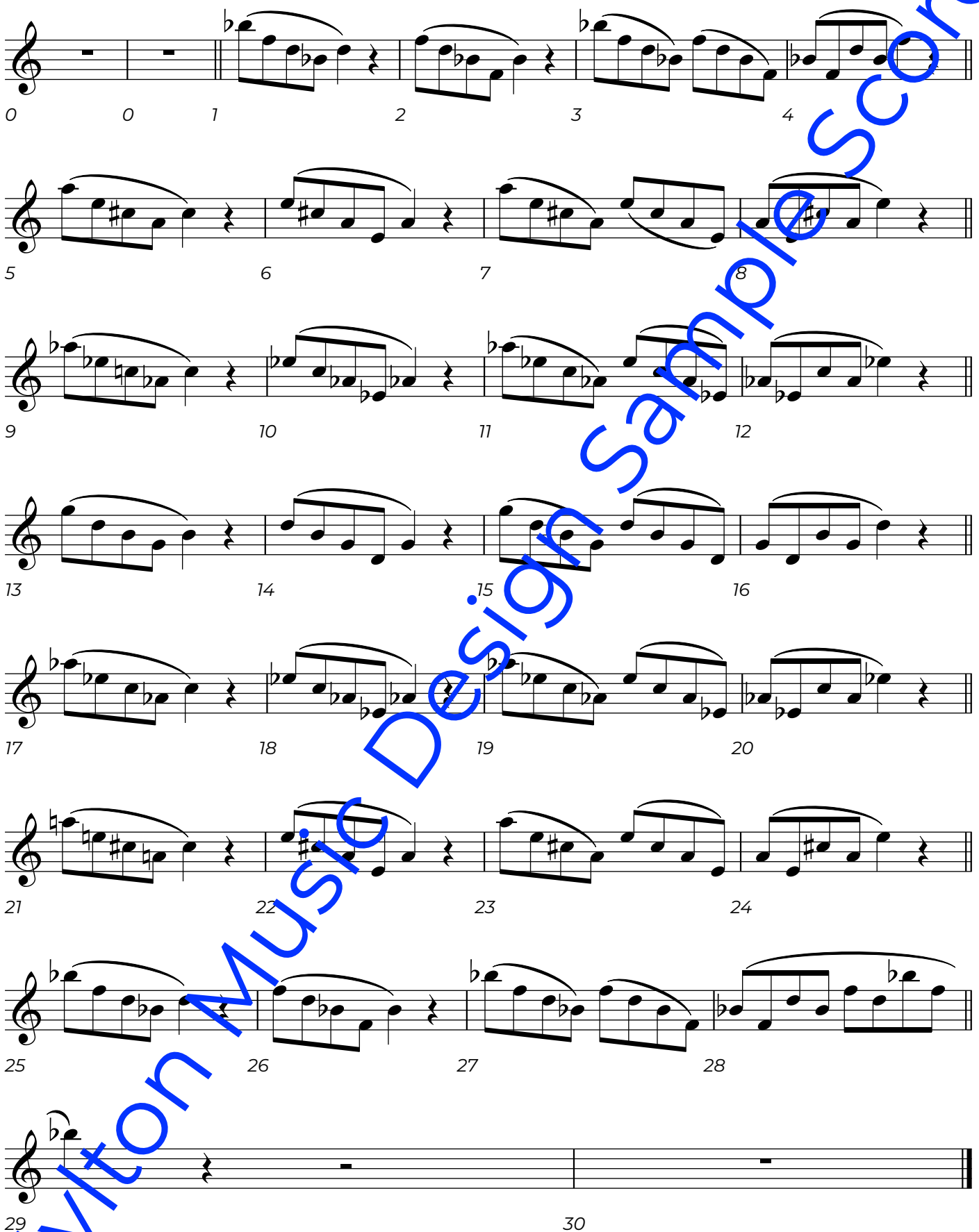


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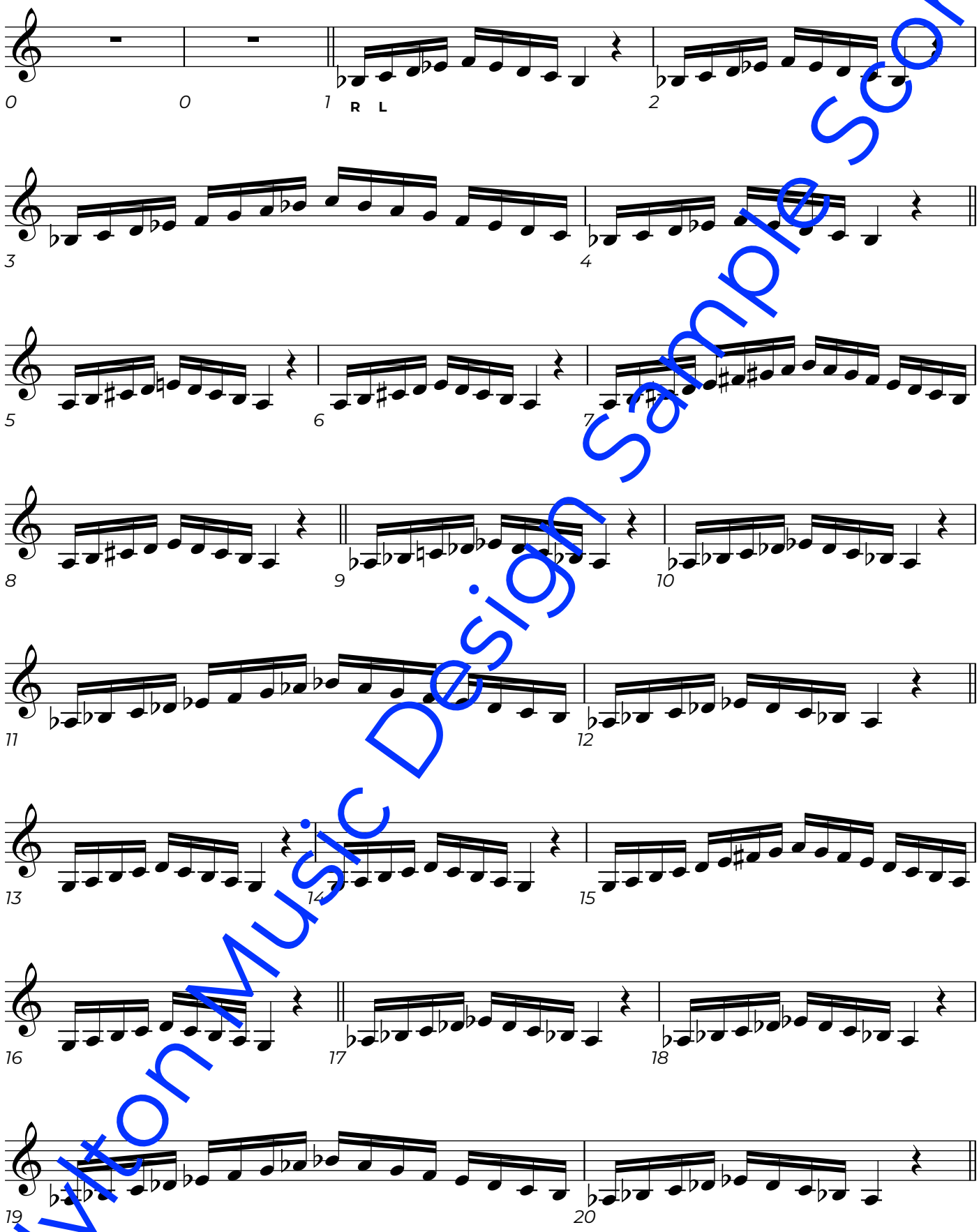


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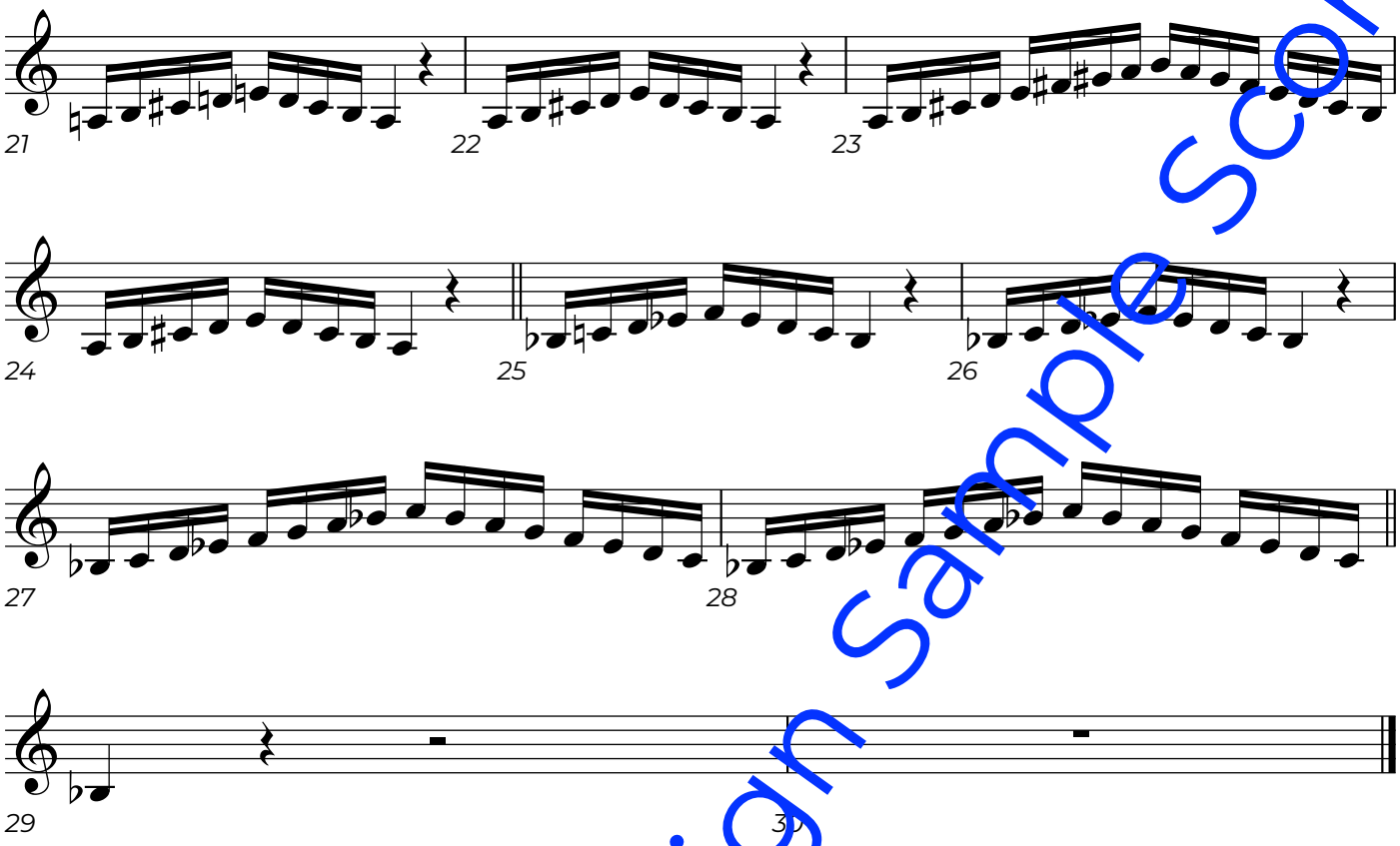


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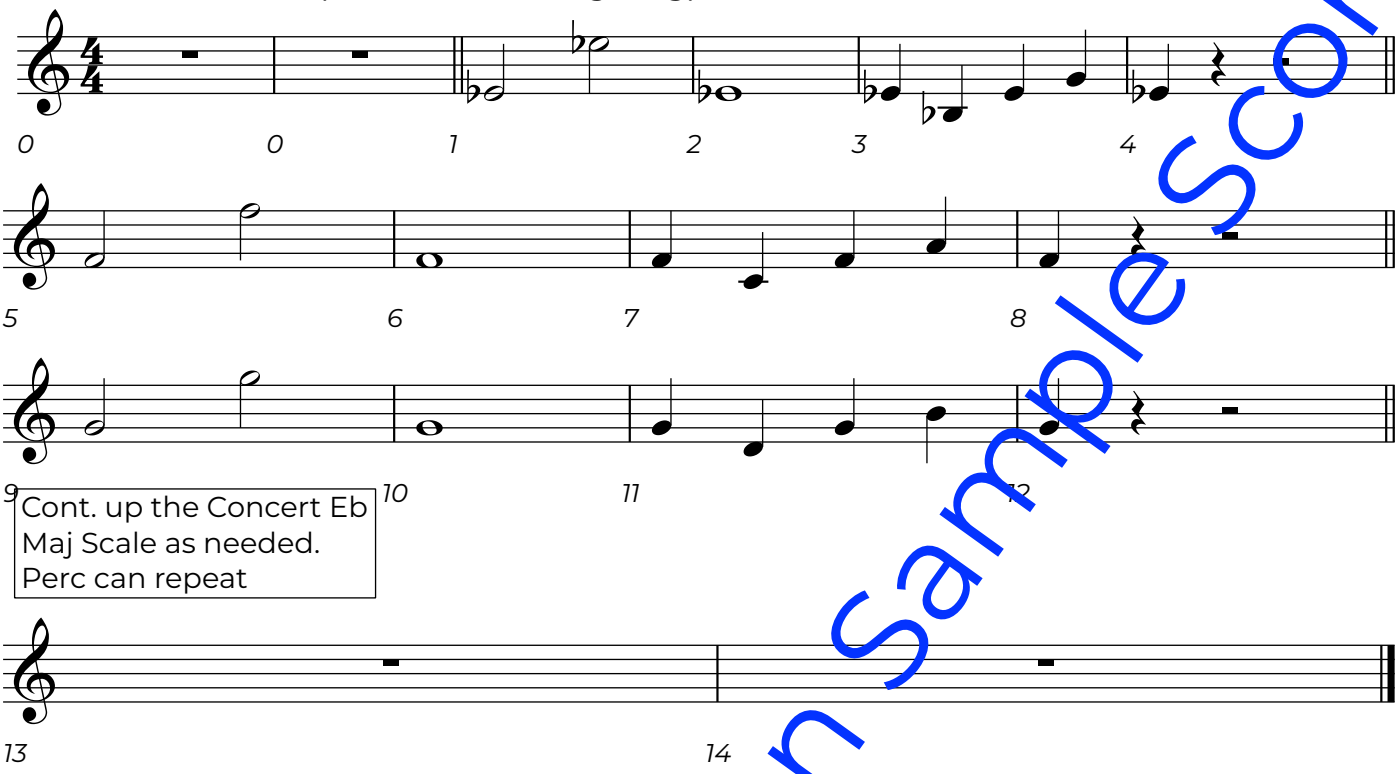
**Articulation 4** (fast/double tonguing)

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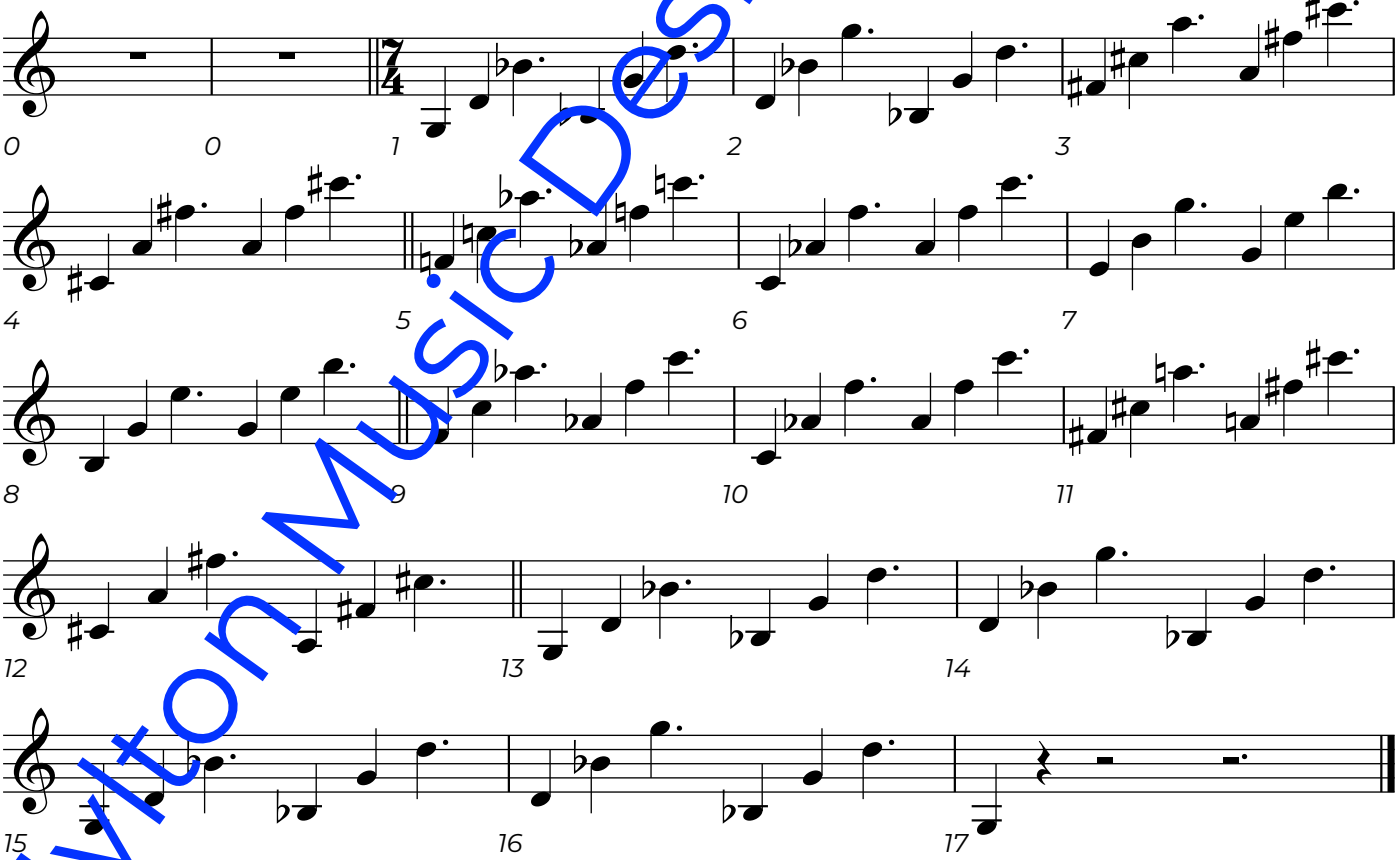


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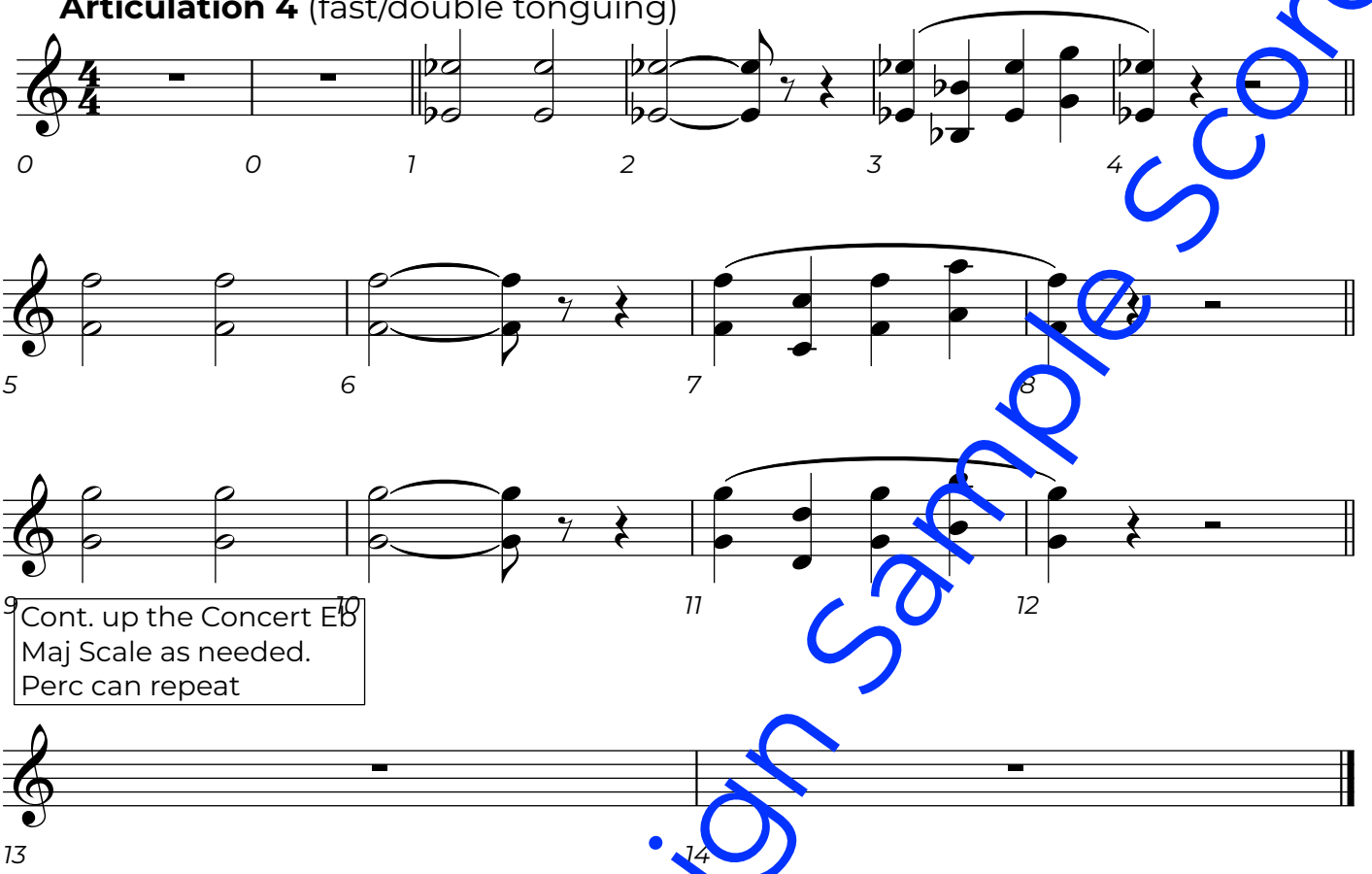
**Articulation 4** (fast/double tonguing)

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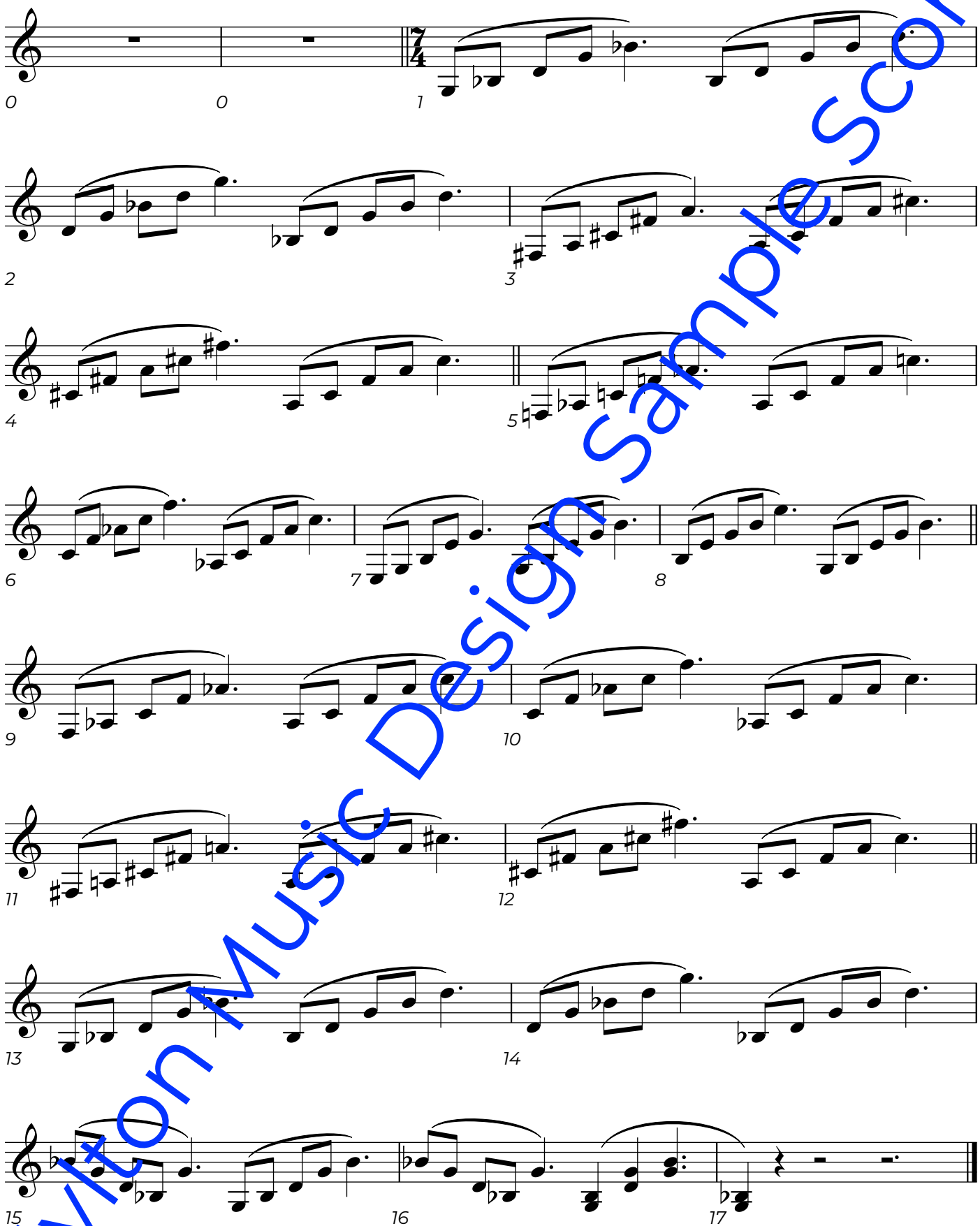


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**Articulation 4** (fast/double tonguing)

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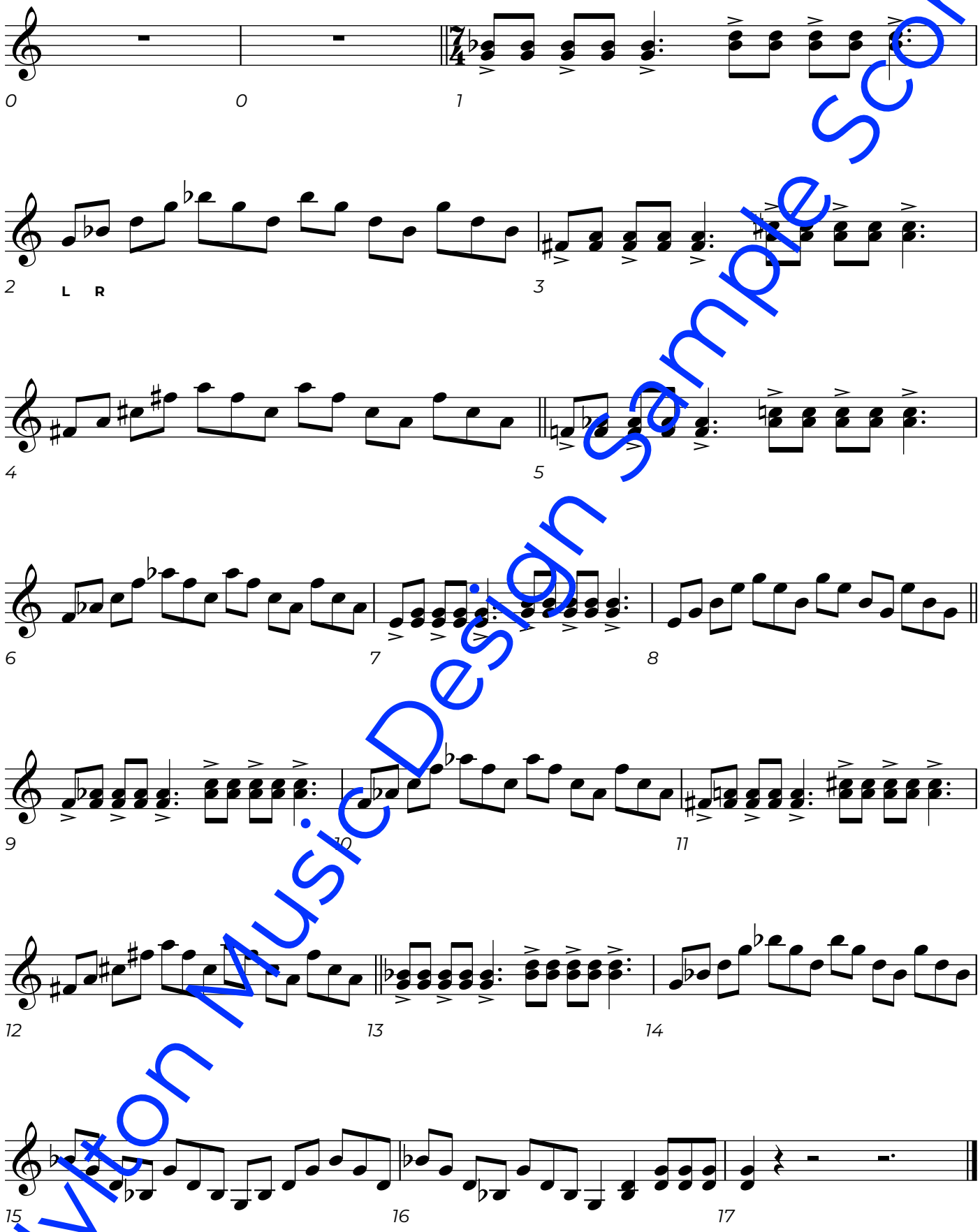


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**7/8 Articulation 2**

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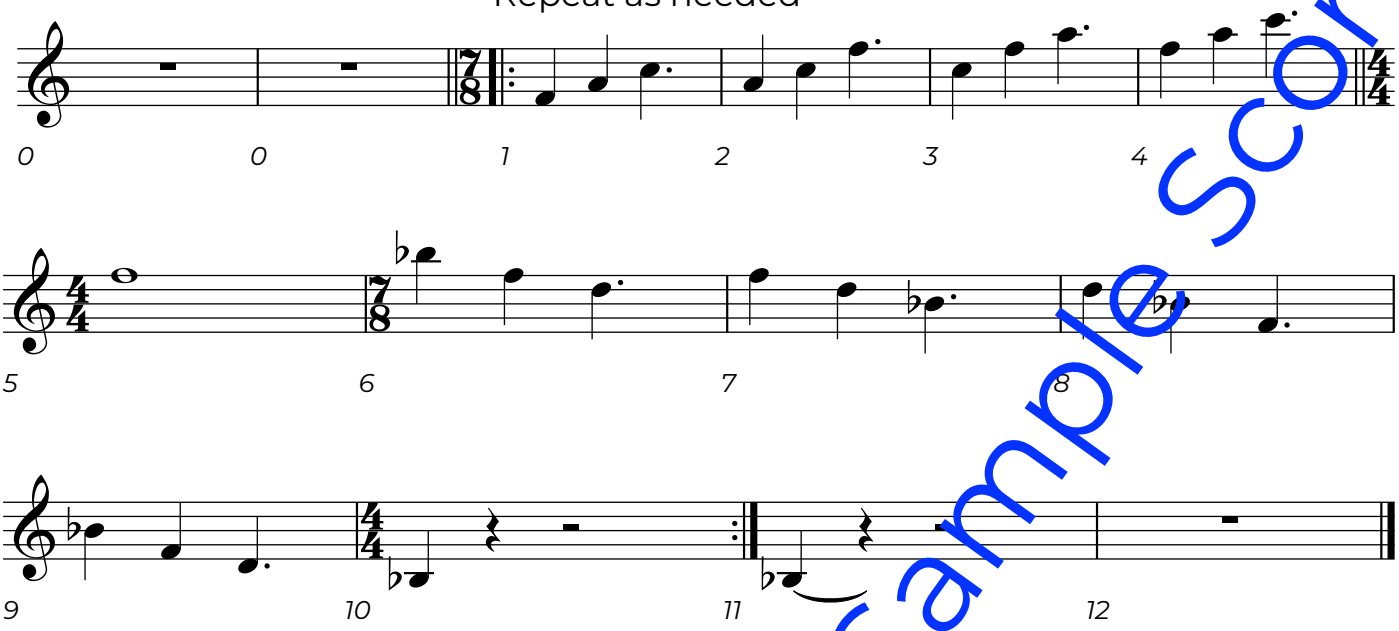


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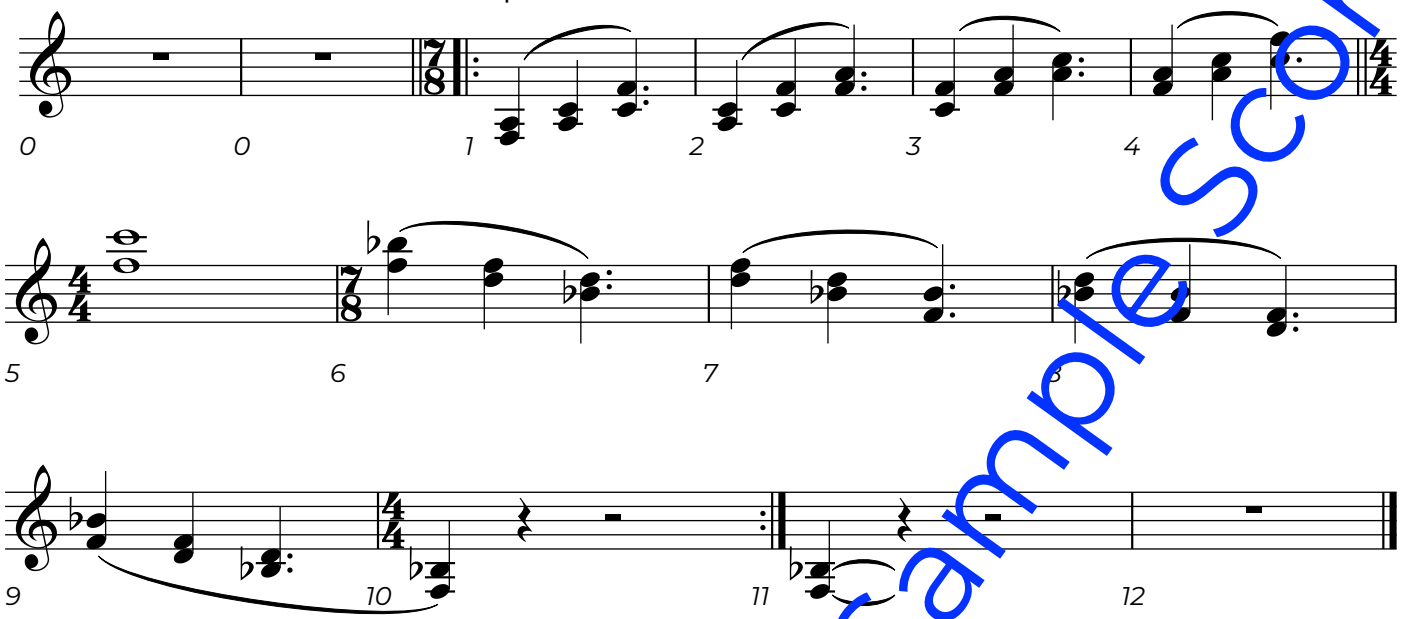


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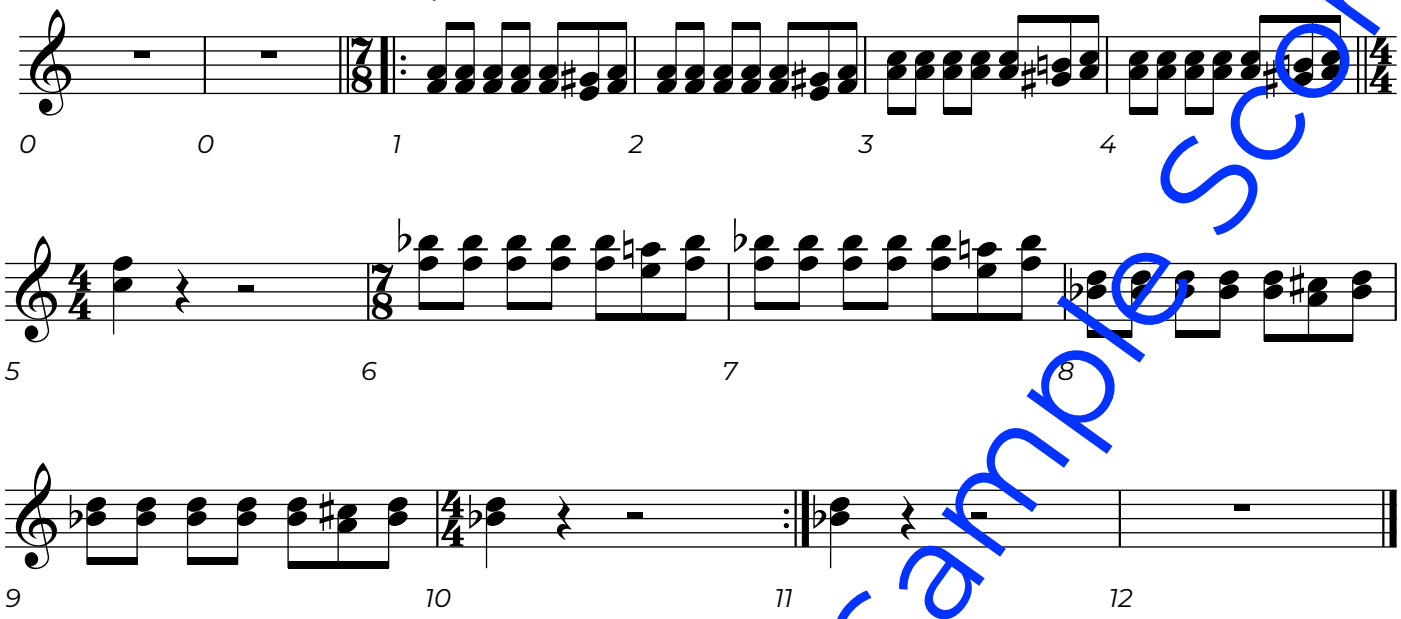


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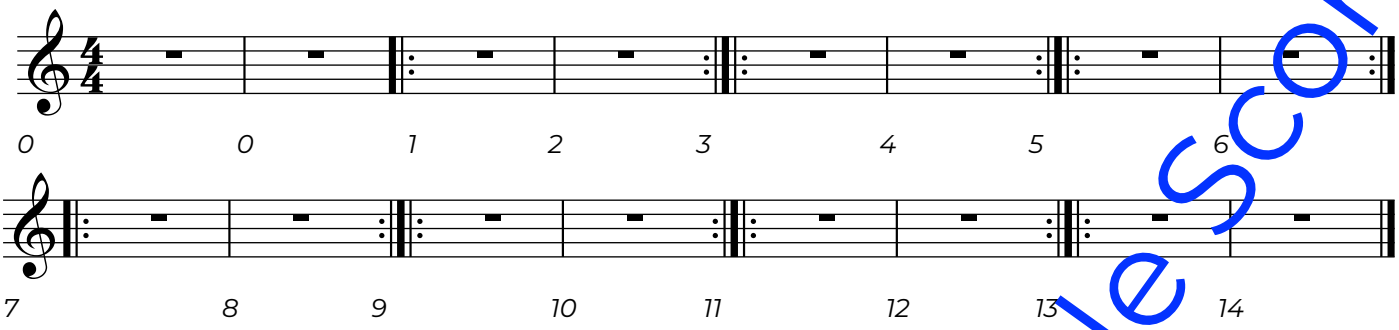


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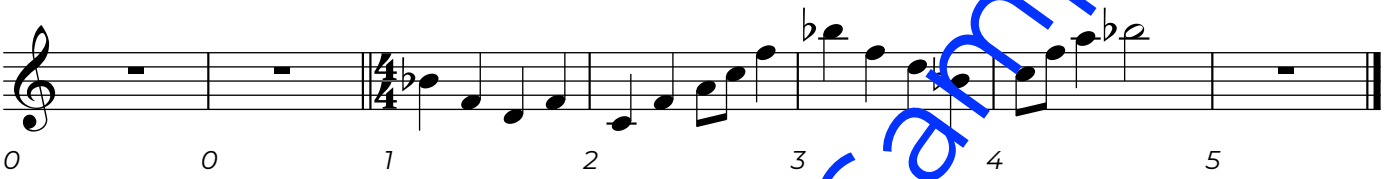


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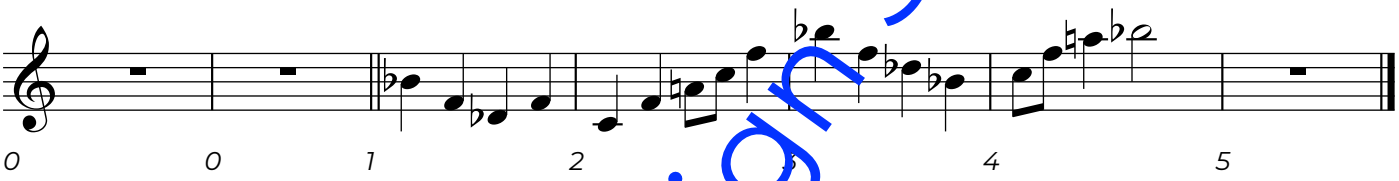


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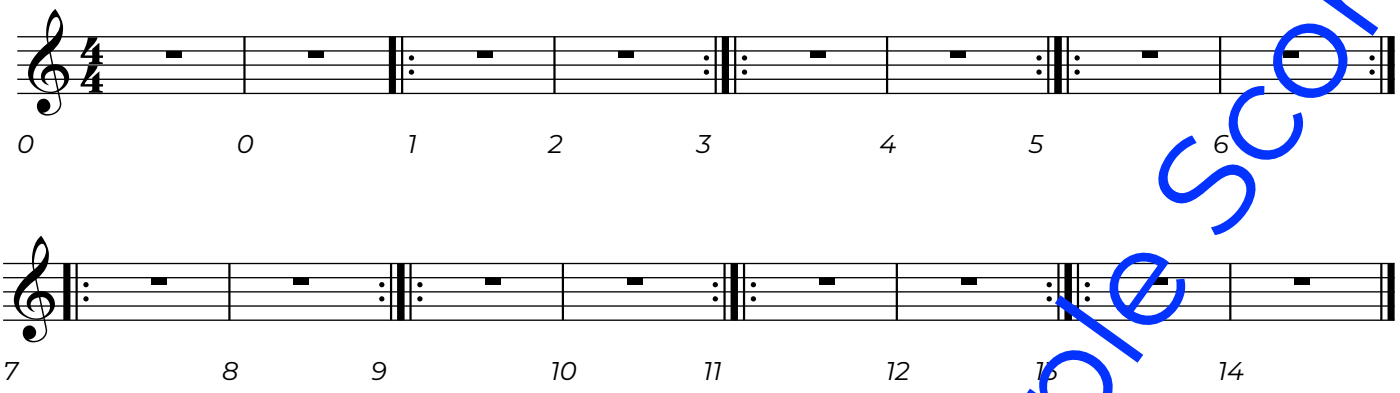


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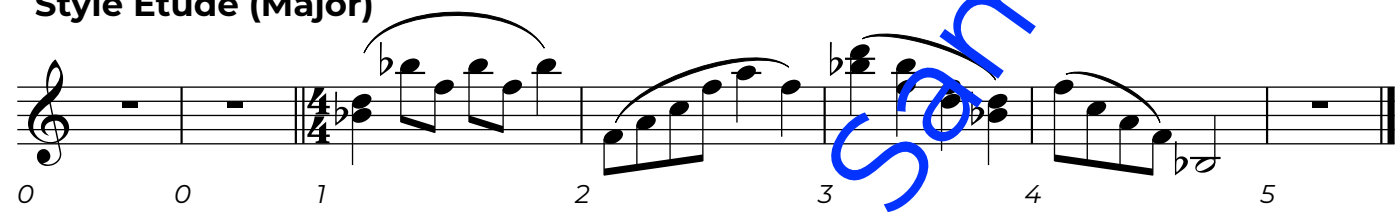


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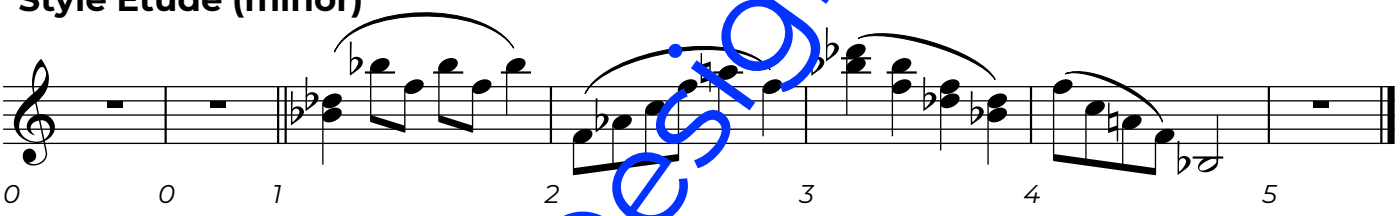


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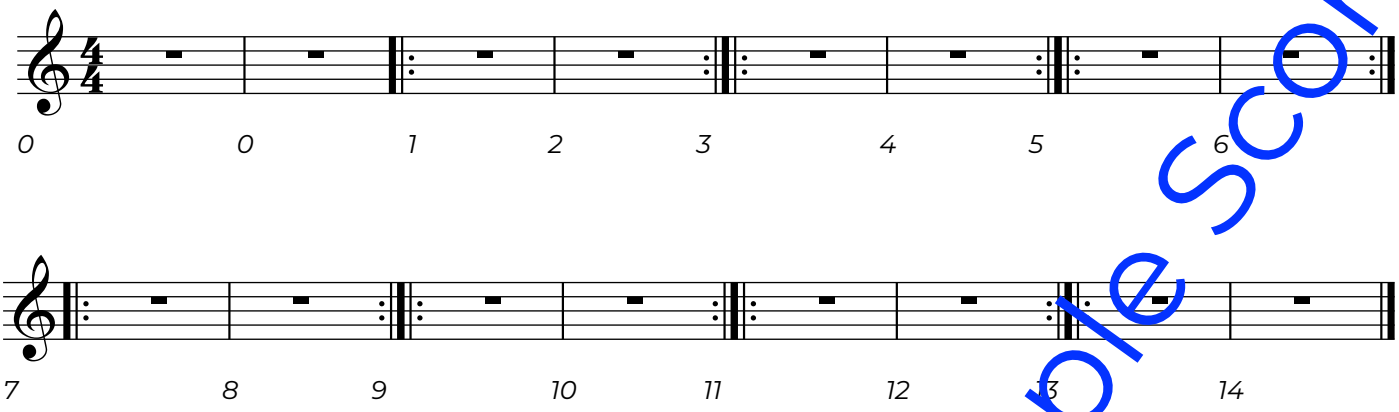


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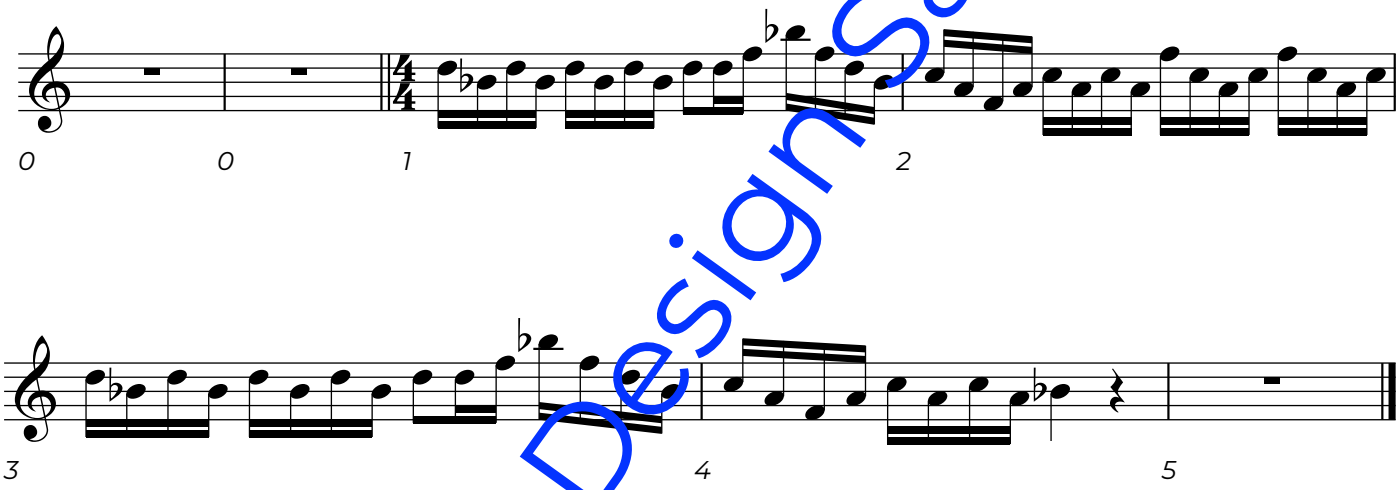


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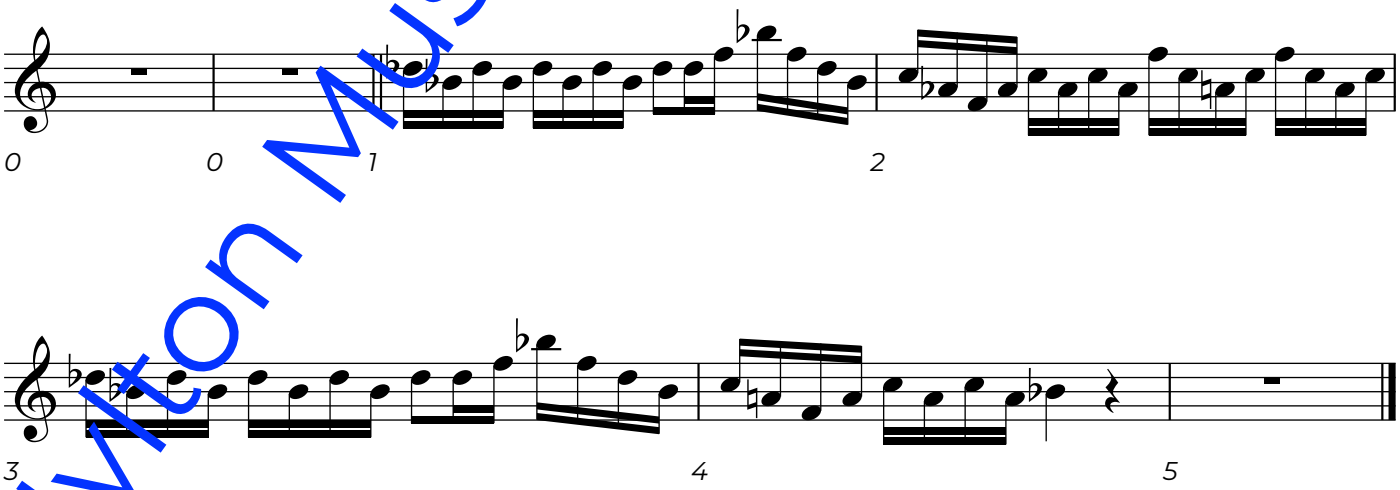


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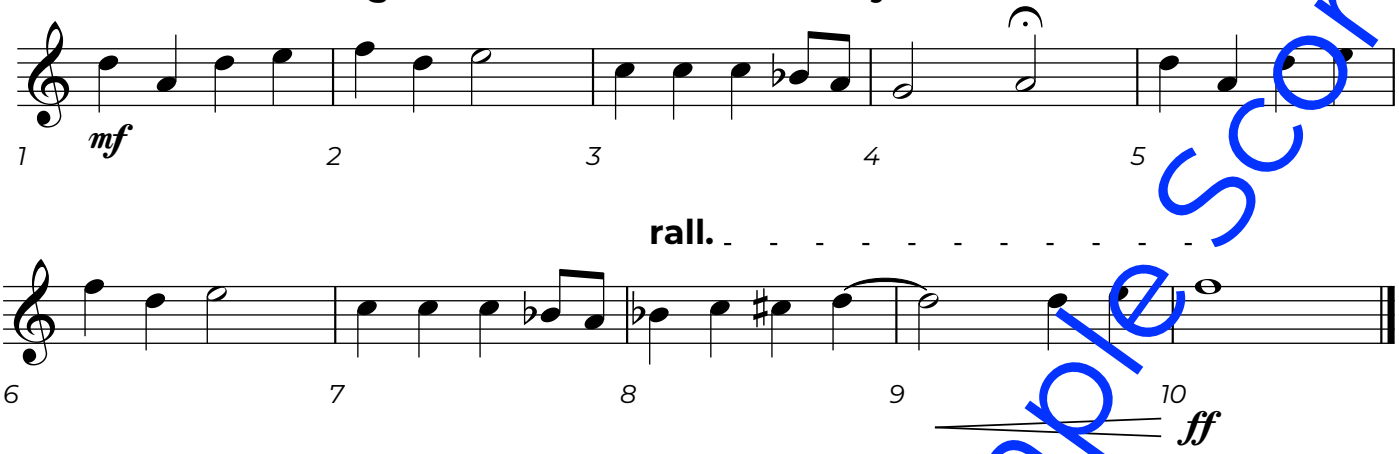
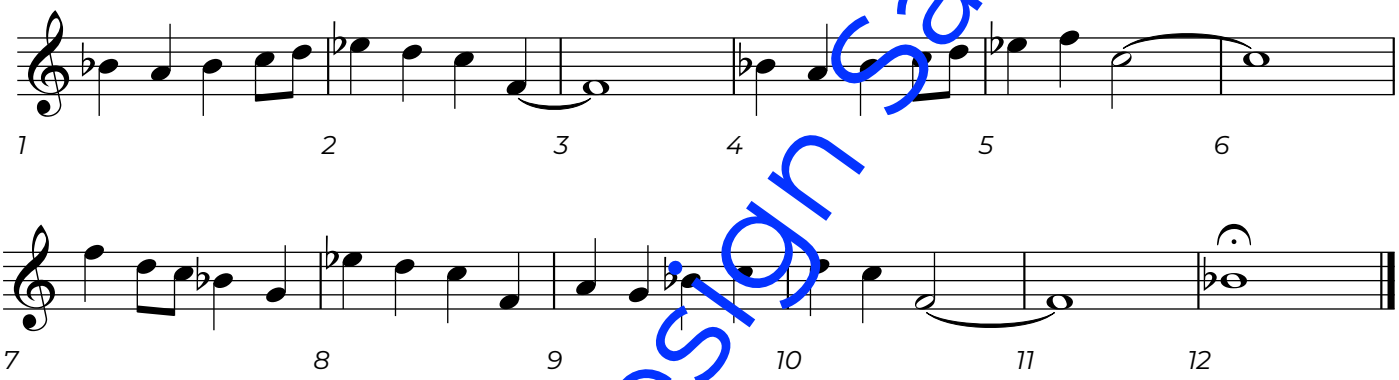
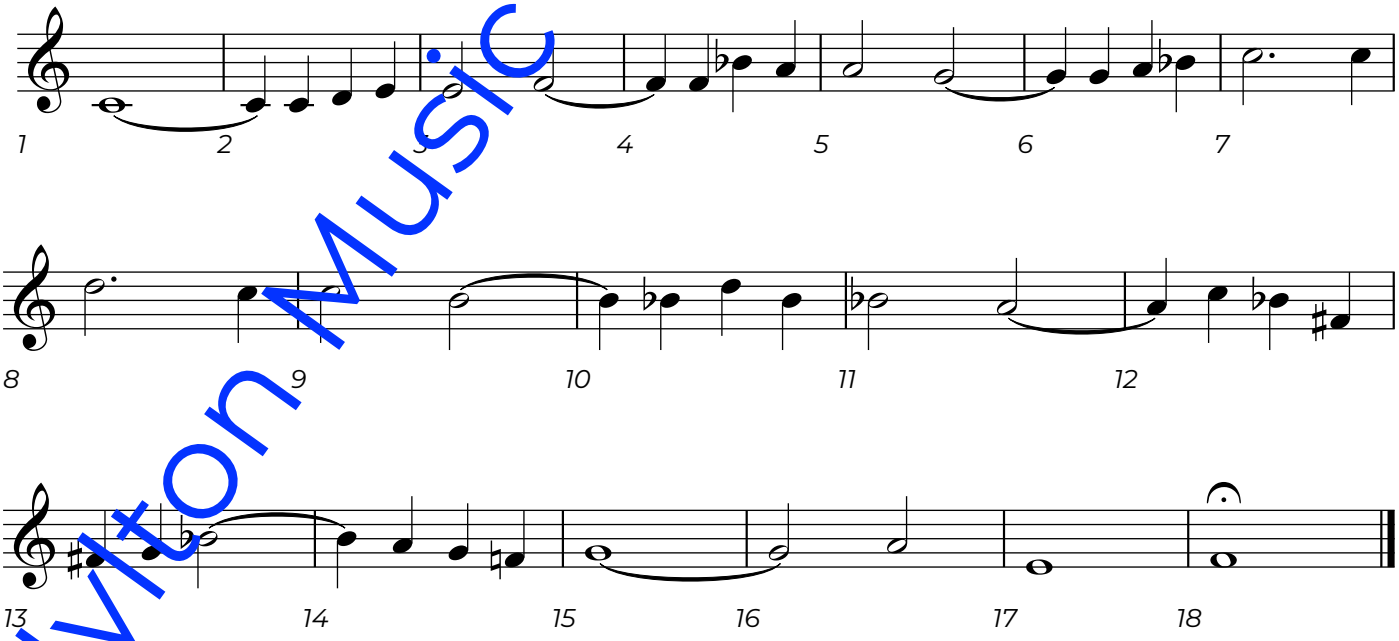
## Chorale 1: Schwing' dich auf zu deinem Gott by J.S. Bach




## Chorale 2: Horkstow Grange by Grainger



## Chorale 3: Adagietto from Mahler's 5th Symphony



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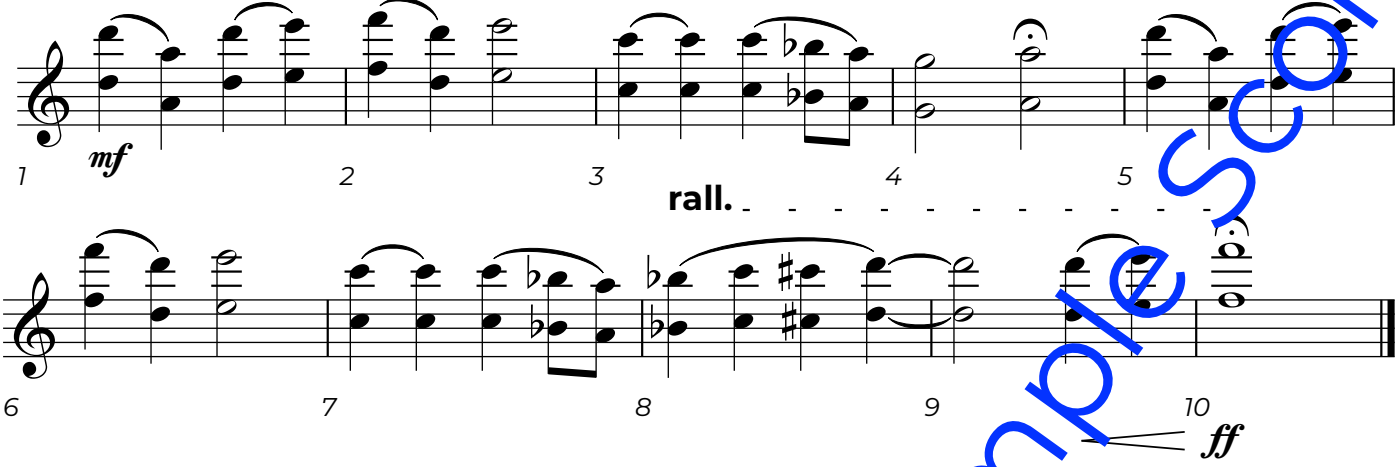
## Chorale 1: Schwing' dich auf zu deinem Gott by J.S. Bach

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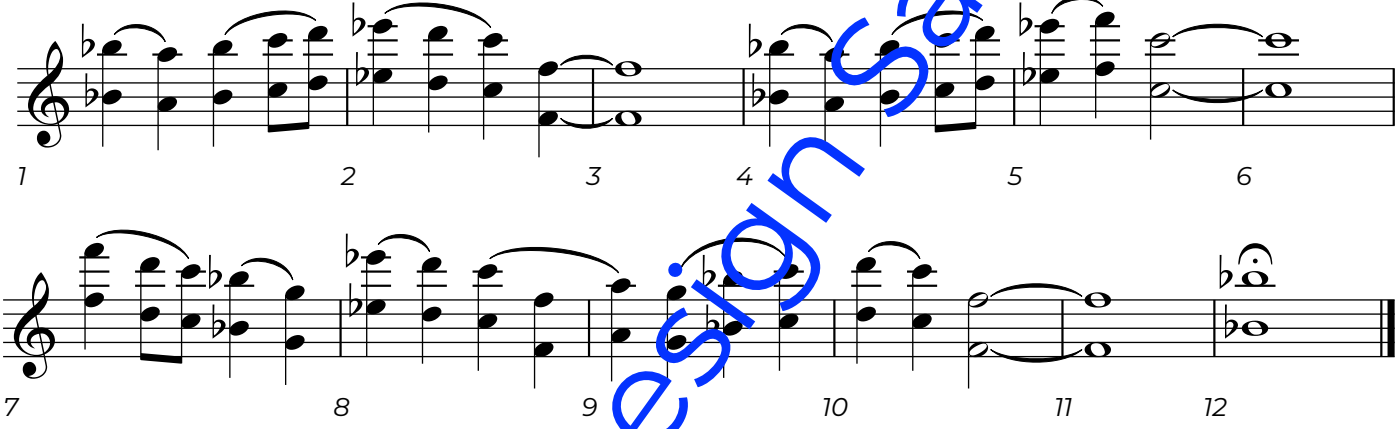

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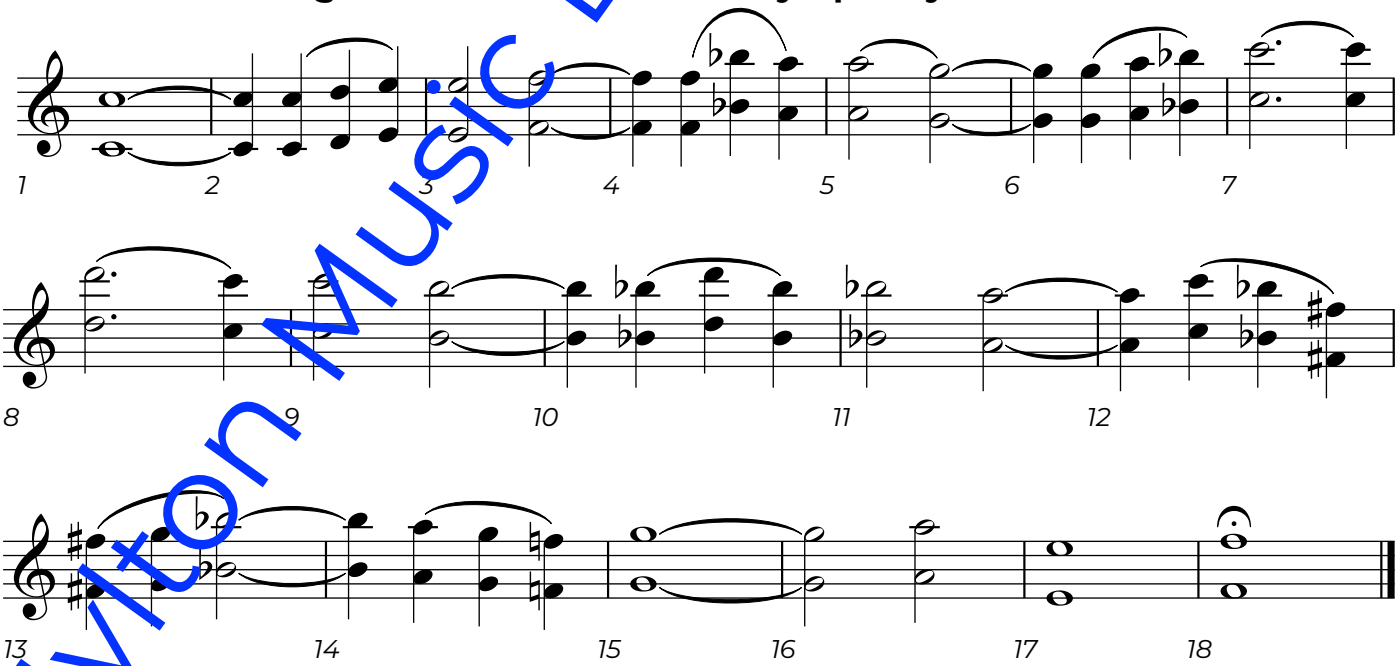

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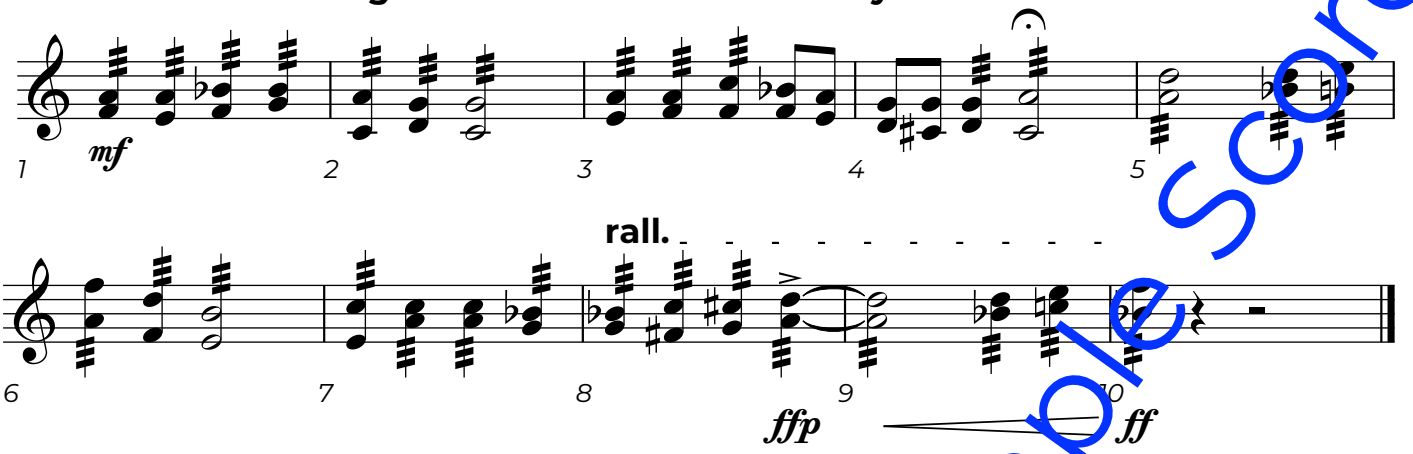


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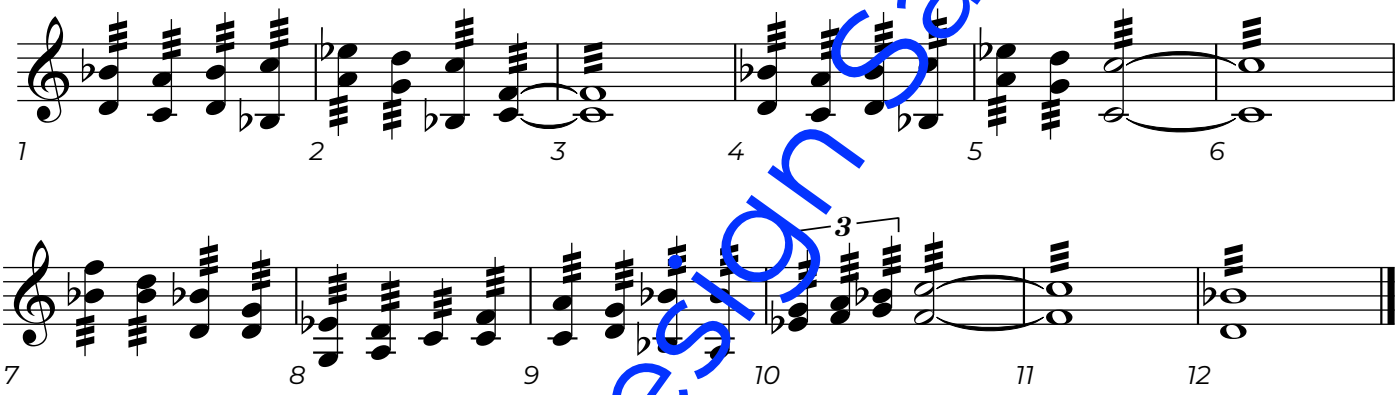


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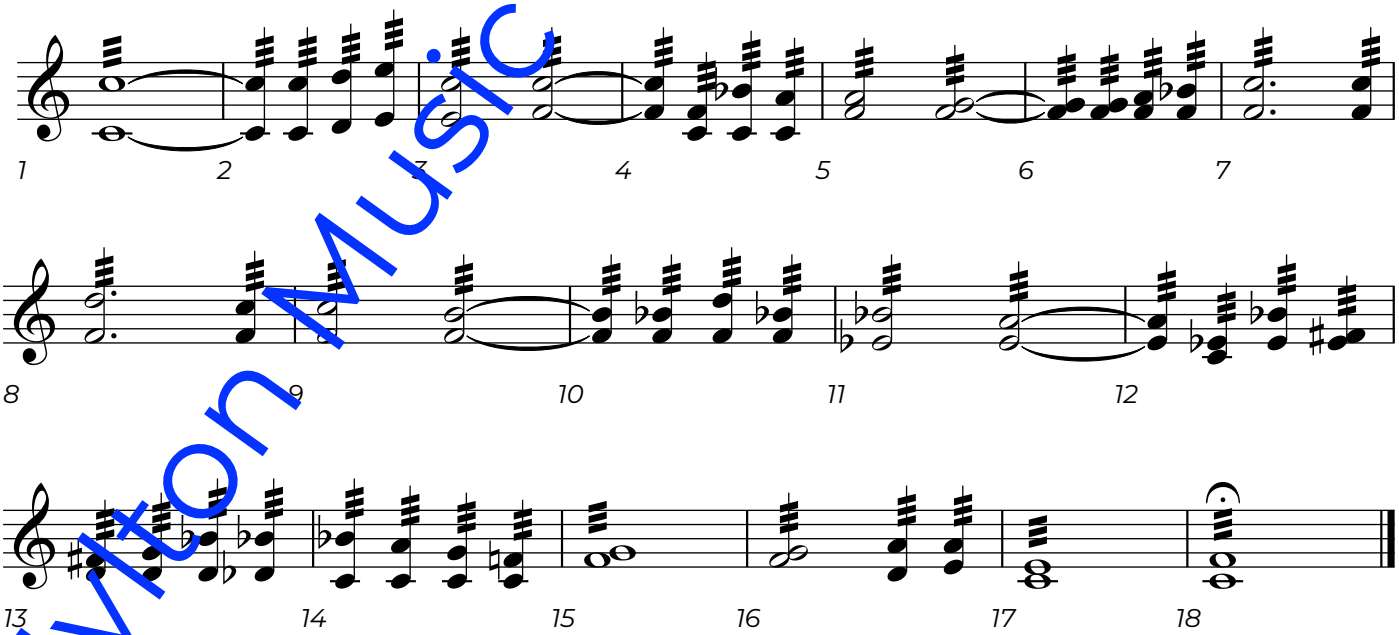

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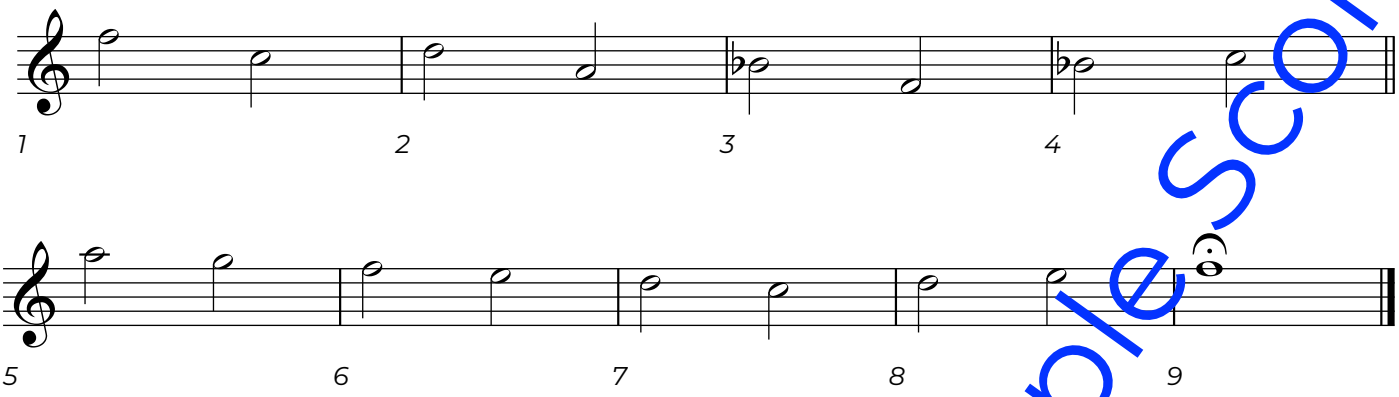
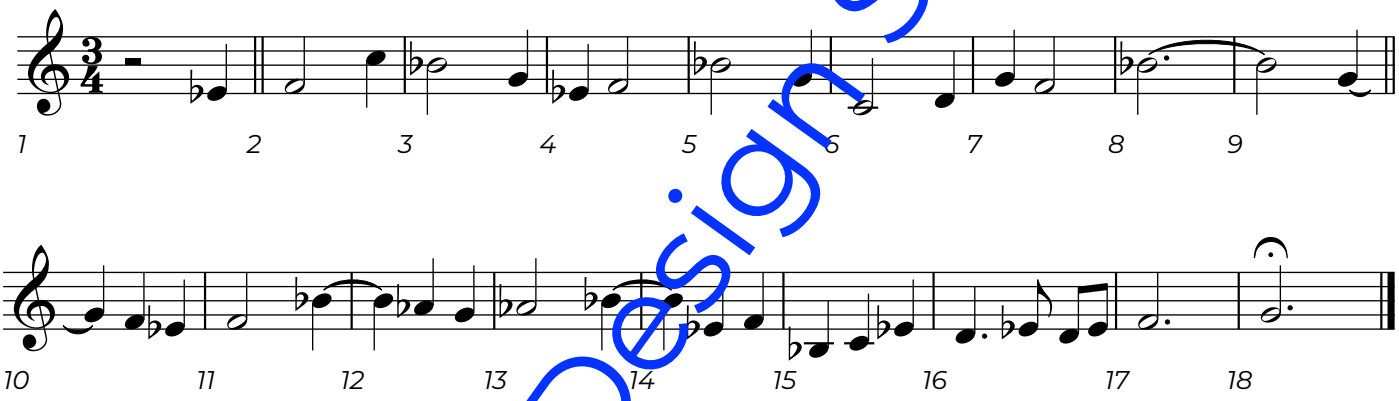
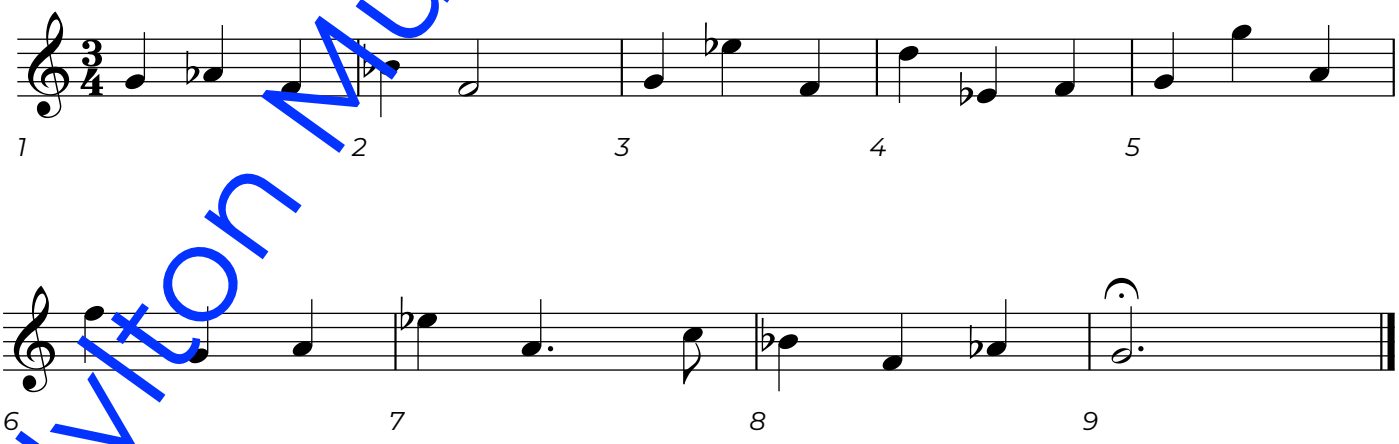
## Chorale 4: Canon by Pachelbel




## Chorale 5: Chaconne from 1st Suite by Holst




## Chorale 6: Nimrod from Enigma Variations by Elgar

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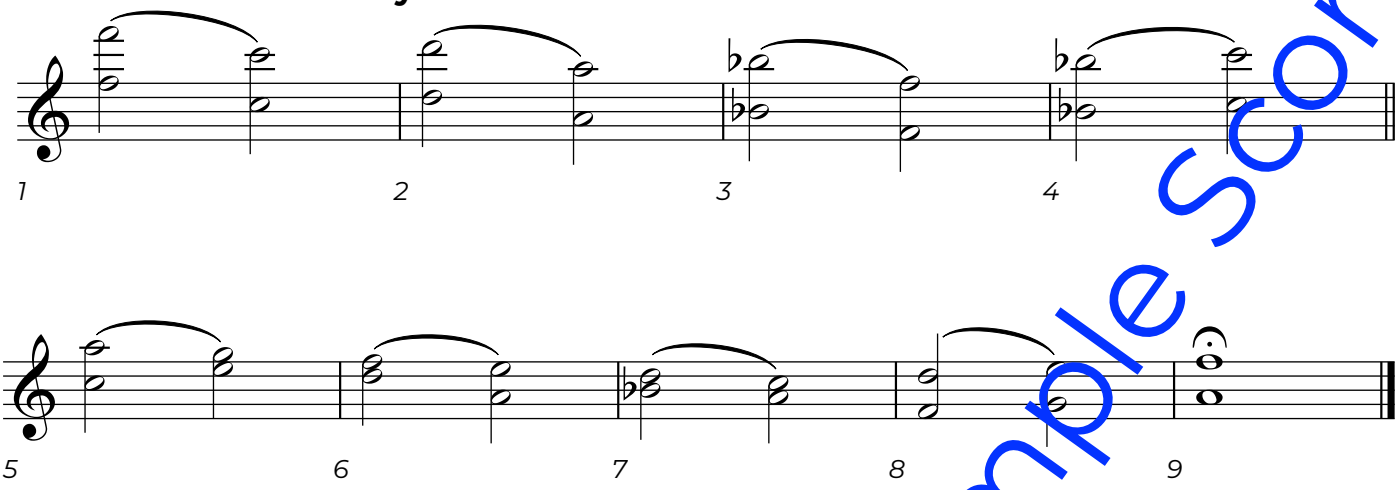


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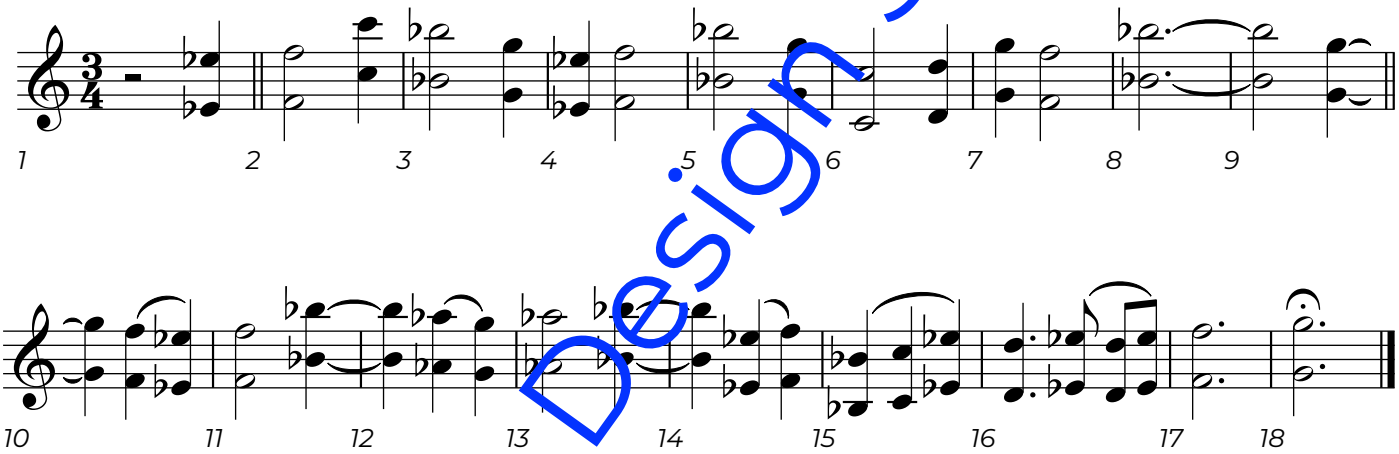


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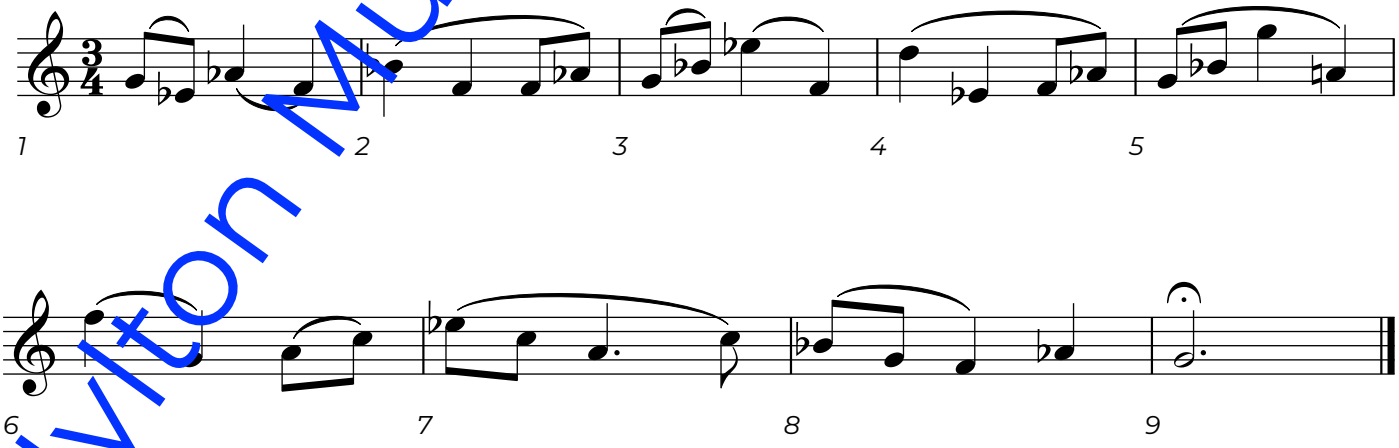


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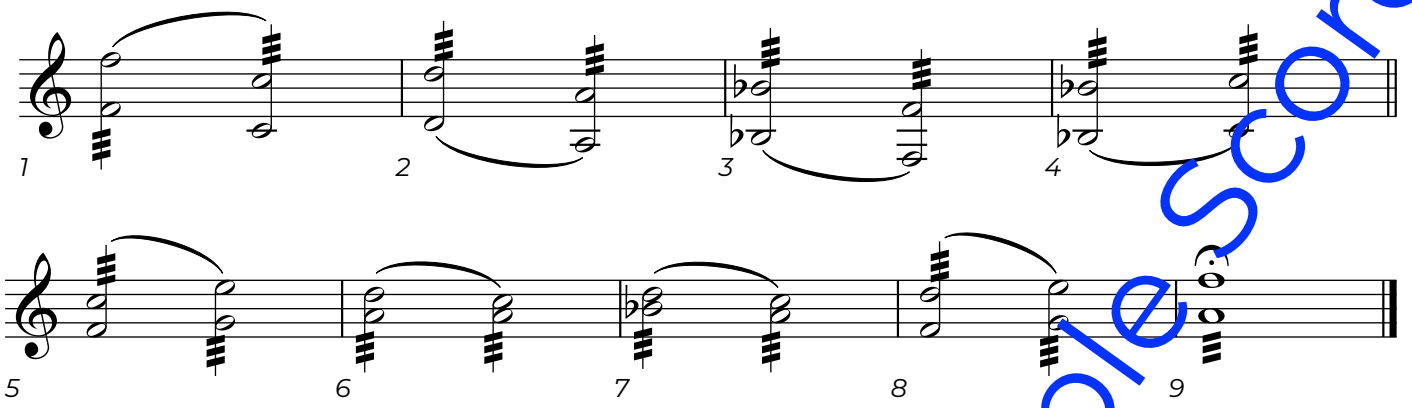

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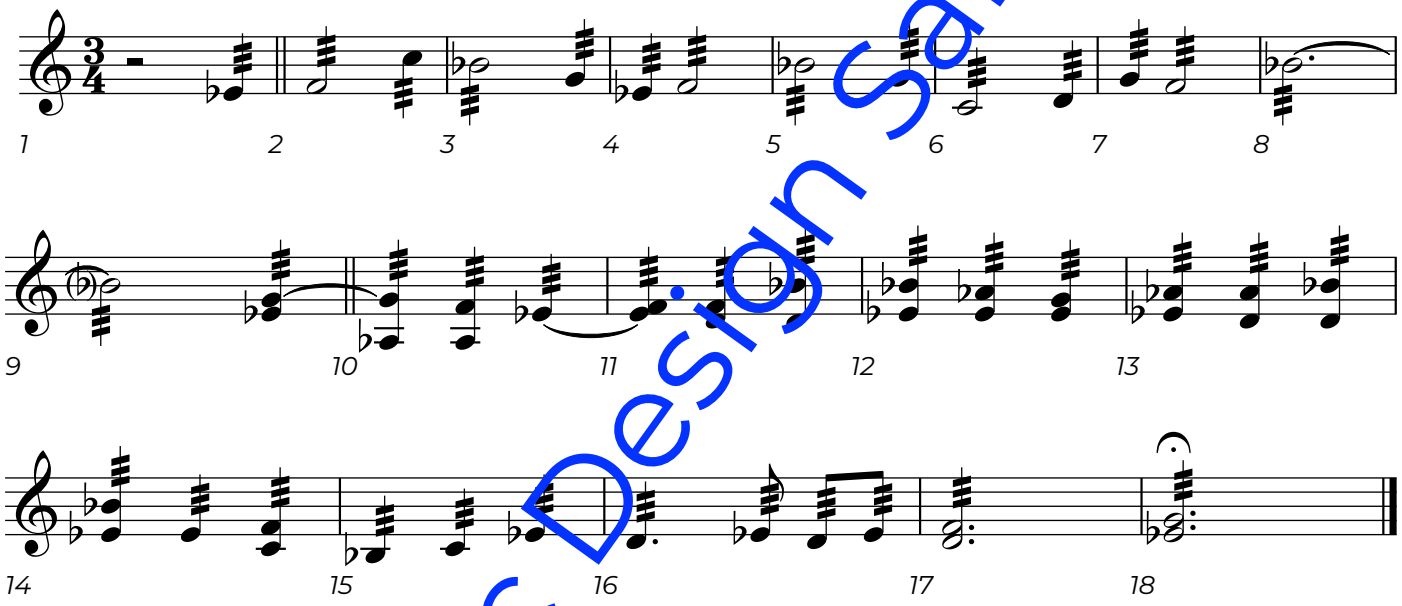

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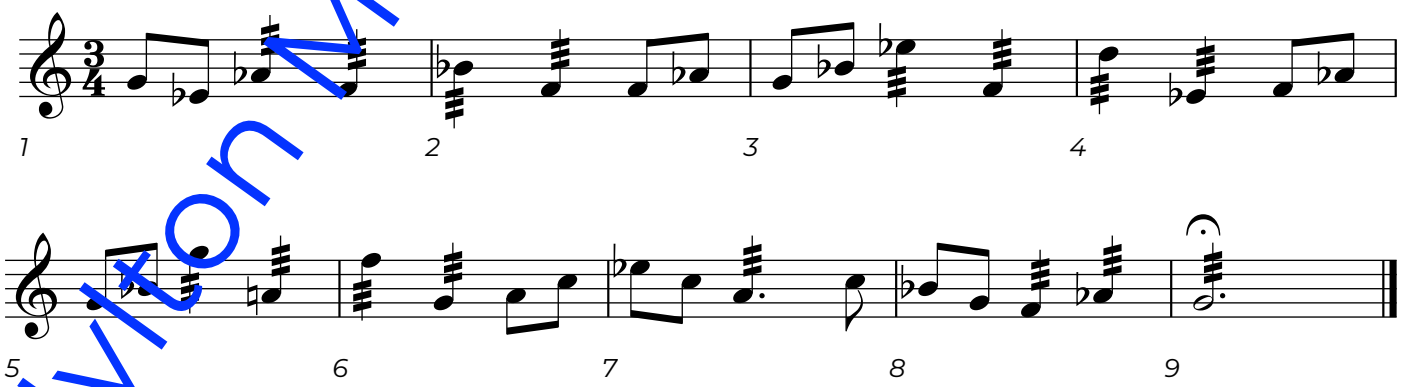

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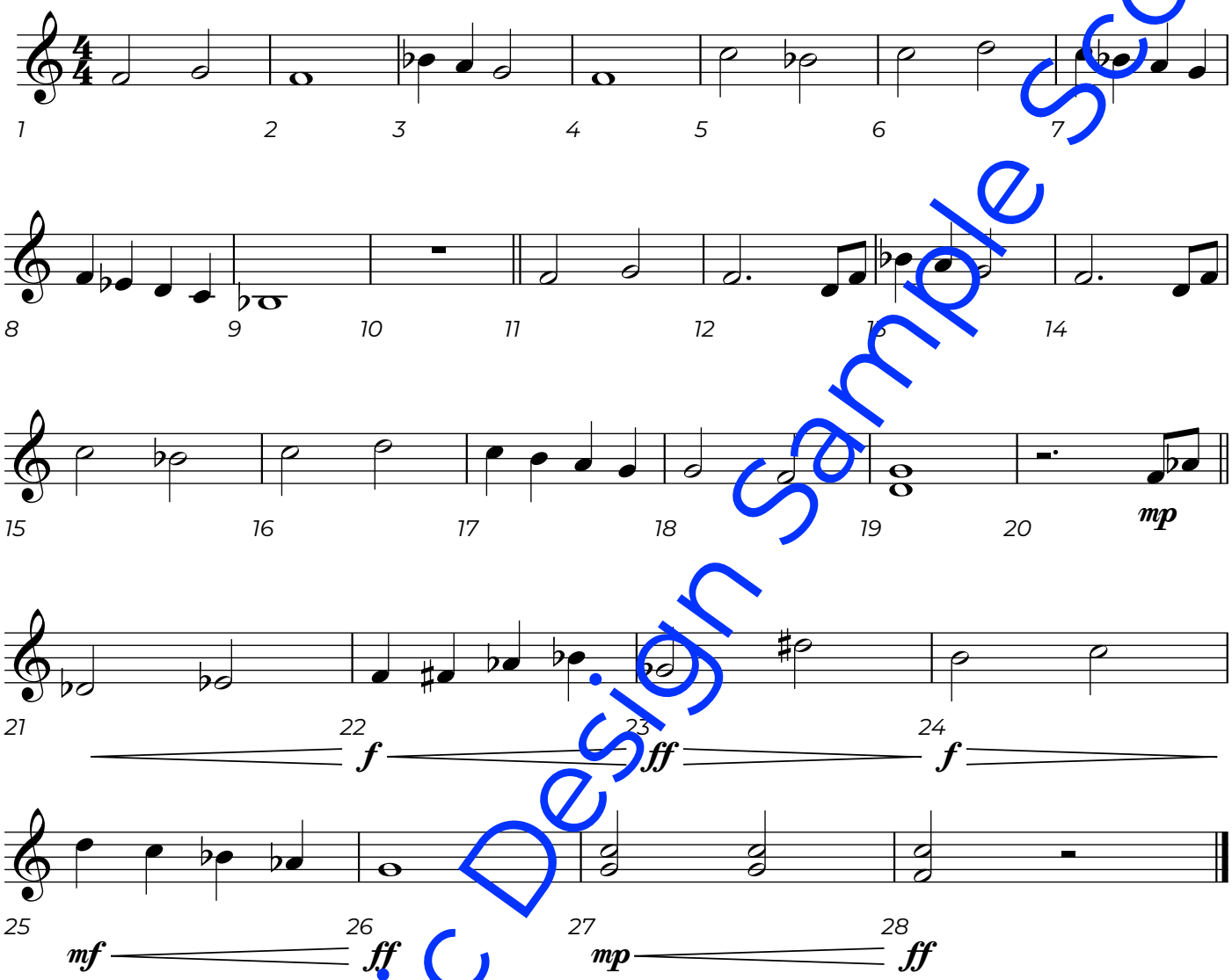
## Chorale 7: from Mahler's 2nd Symphony

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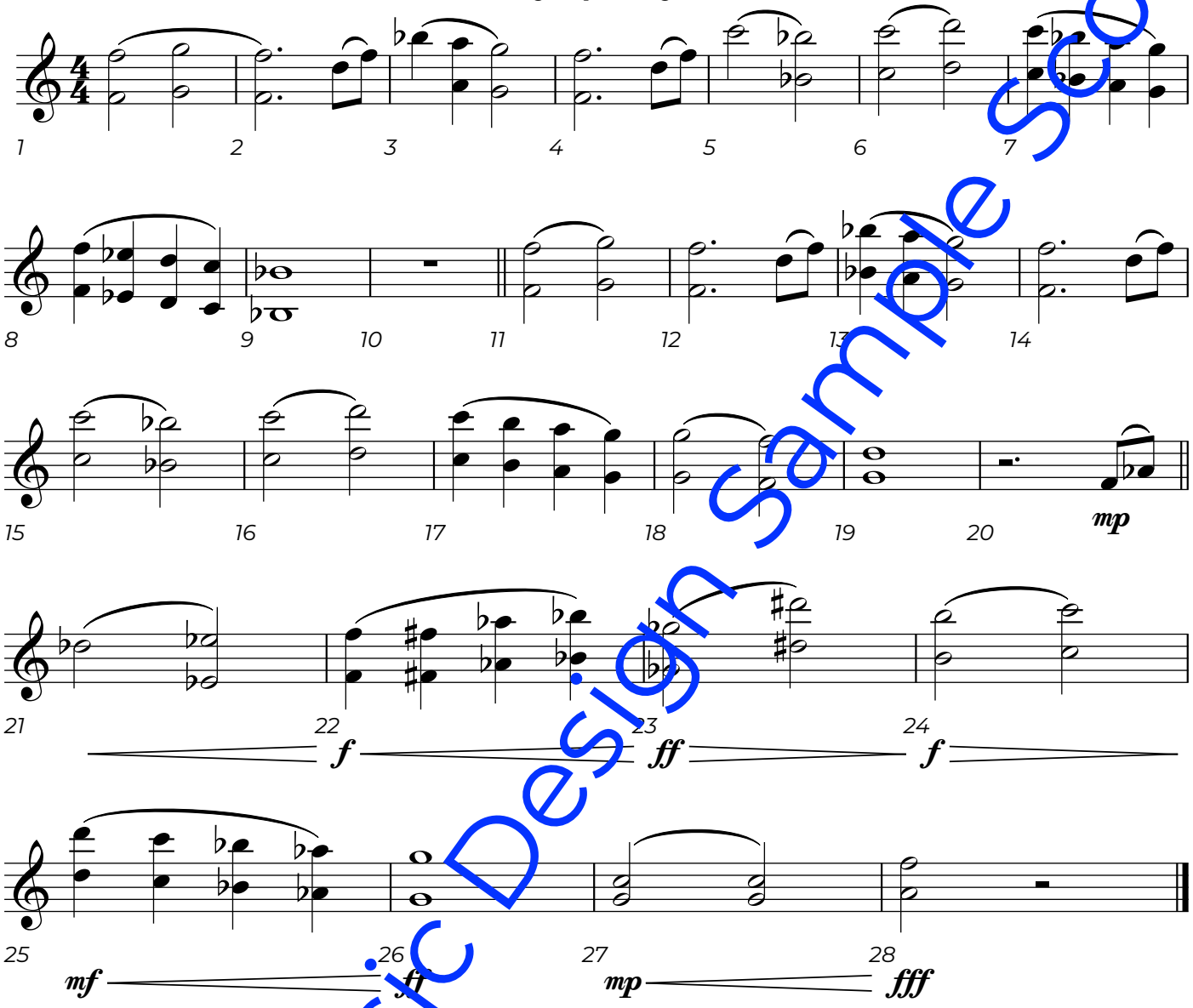


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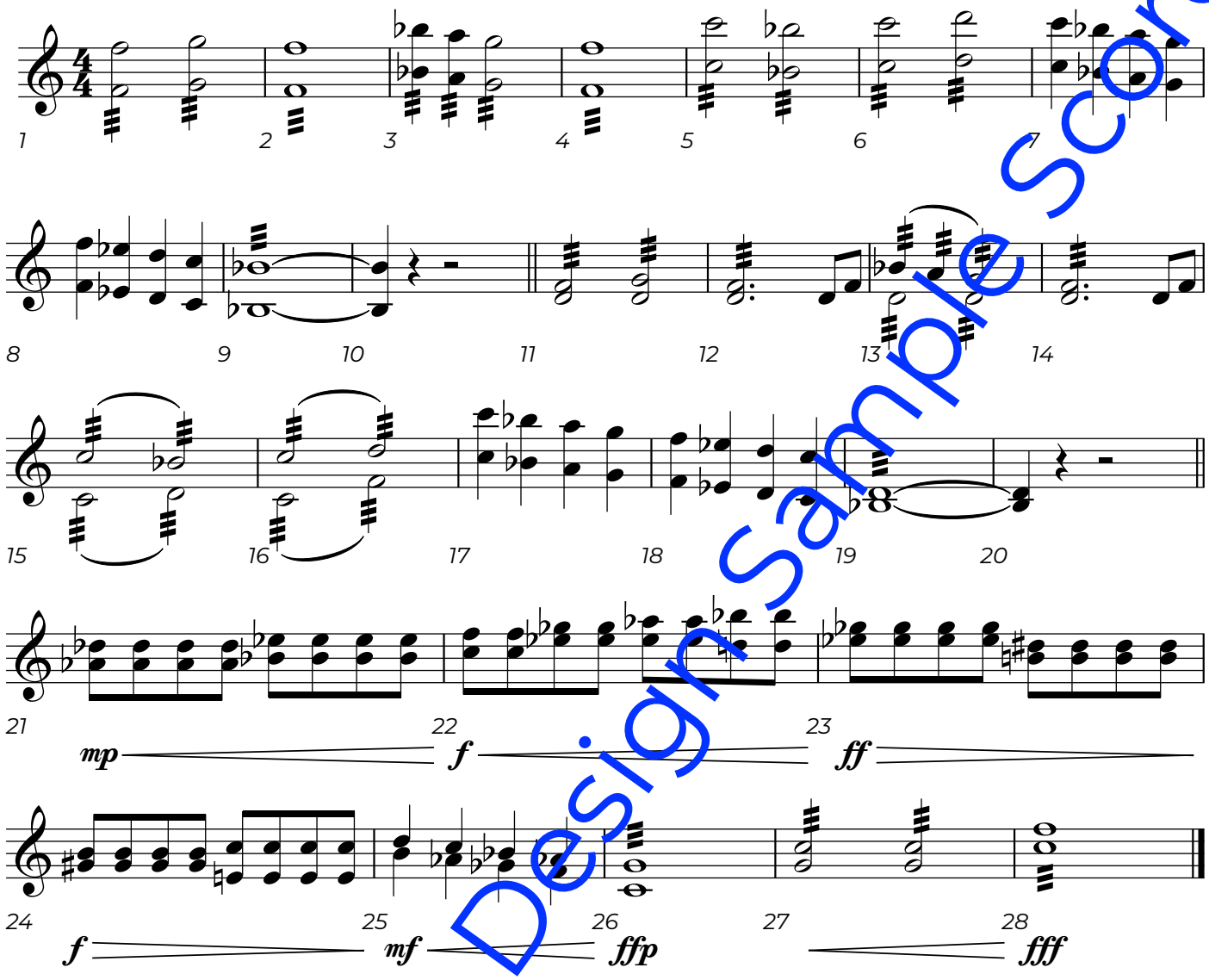


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