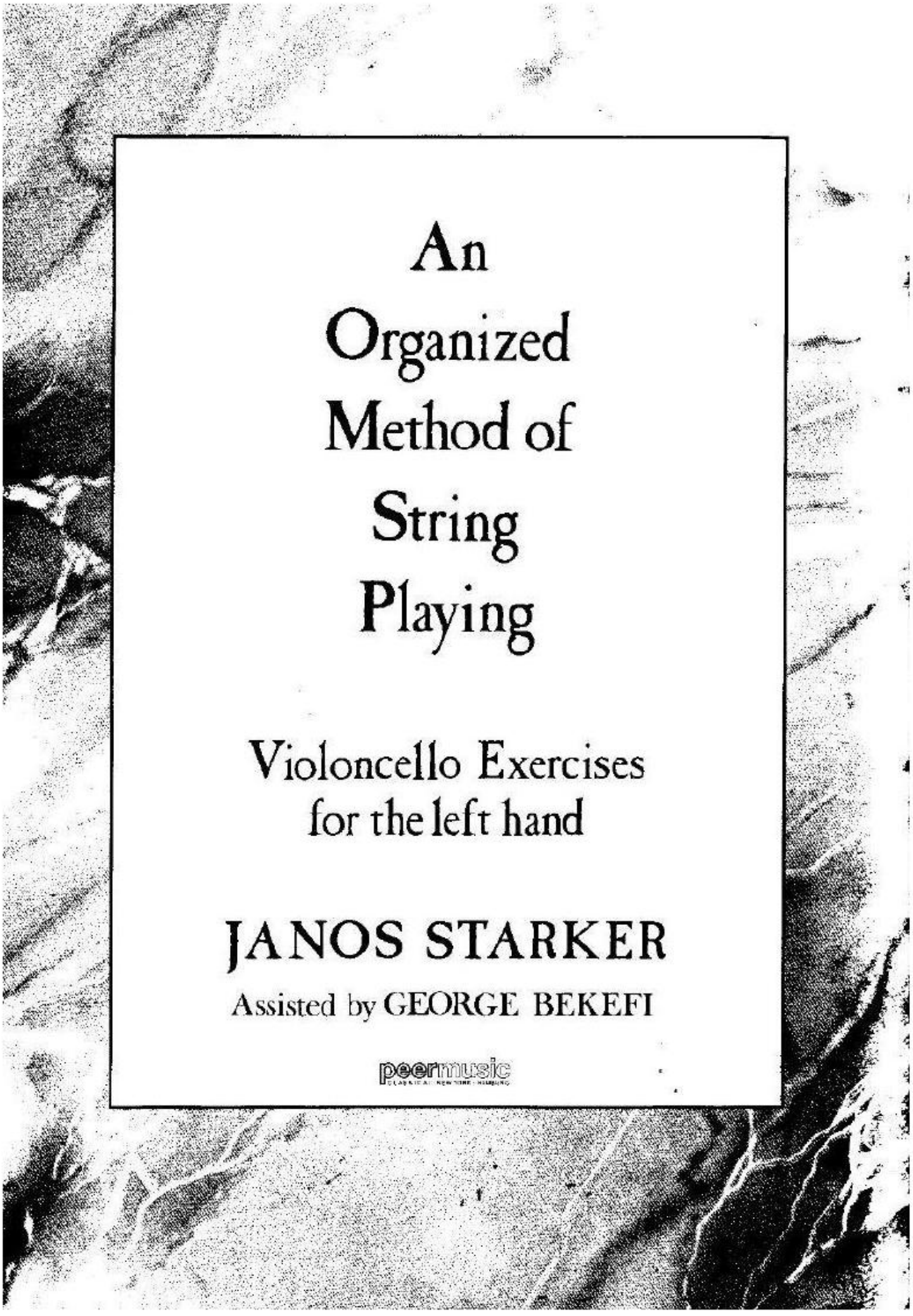


An Organized Method of String Playing

Violoncello Exercises for the left hand

JANOS STARKER

Assisted by GEORGE BEKEFI

peermusic

FOREWORD

Through the years many of my colleagues and students have used parts of this book by copying and passing it on to their friends and pupils. This process became cumbersome as the requests increased. Also, many times discussion of the fundamentals was half understood and the exercises became distorted and misused. Therefore, I have decided to publish this complete method. I hope it will help those who are somewhat familiar with its use, and induce those who see it for the first time to investigate its possibilities. The appareat resemblances to other exercises are due to the use of permutative variations. It is intended to show the mathematical possibilities on a four stringed instrument. In this instance the instrument is the violoncello.

The contention is that in order to produce music on an instrument one has to learn the available steps as one learns the alphabet; the combinations thereof will provide us with "syllables", then "words" (phrases), and eventually the ability to play a musical composition will come within reach. Too often gifted instrumentalists learn to jump and skip without the awareness of how to walk.

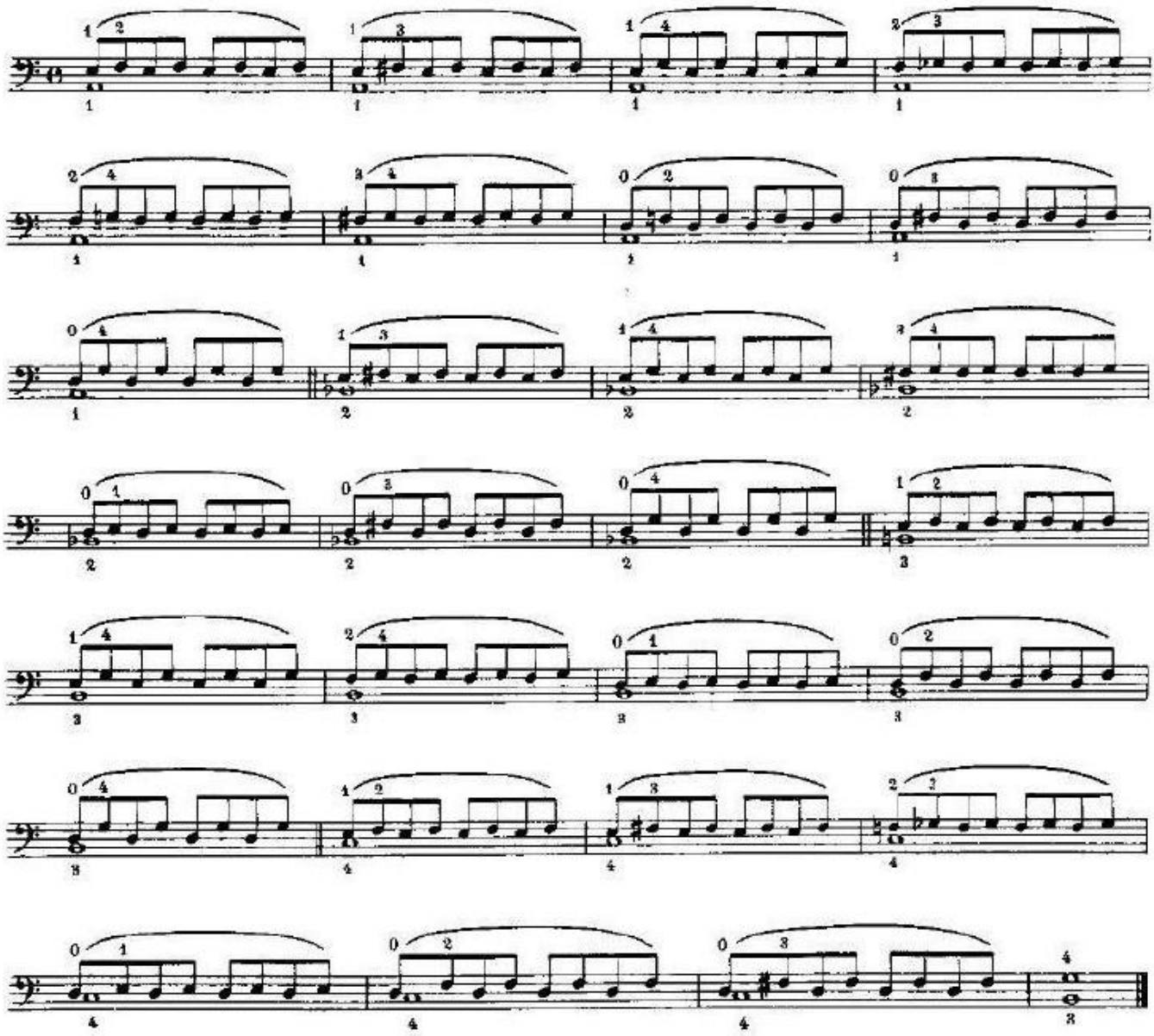
It is not my intention to suggest the neglect of other books, methods, and exercises. Their use is imperative in most instances. However, as I am using samples and patterns to show available combinations, the most important element should be the attempt to ignite the dormant imagination and to stop the time-wasting mechanical repetition of a written text. Each player has to evolve his own patterns and exercises (teachers must do the same for their pupils) to suit the individual needs according to the physical and musical characteristics and available time. I do hope this "method" will give as much satisfaction and results to its future users as it has given me through the years.

I would like to express my thanks to two of my dear friends and colleagues, Victor Aitay and George Bekefi, for their invaluable and devoted help in preparing this publication.

Janos Starker
Bloomington, Indiana, 1961

POSITION EXERCISES

Four Finger Position Exercises — Second Position A



One finger is resting on the string while the other fingers are playing all available combinations on the neighboring string.

The purpose is to strengthen fingers, to establish intonation within the given position to develop the "tendency" intonation.

The constantly changing double stops are parts of different harmonies, and so they require adjustments accordingly.

The four finger positions intend to establish between the first and fourth fingers, when placed on neighboring strings, the interval of seventh, or third, when reversed. The same is valid for the three finger positions between the first and third fingers. The positions are numbered according to the chromatic instead of the traditional diatonic scale. A denotes the repeated figures, when on the higher string, and B the same on the lower string.

To develop speed, trill, use the rhythmic patterns given on the following page.

All the exercises in this book should be practised in all available positions and on all strings.

The aspect of visualization of the instrument should be evident.

For beginners one should omit double stops until the fingers have obtained some strength.

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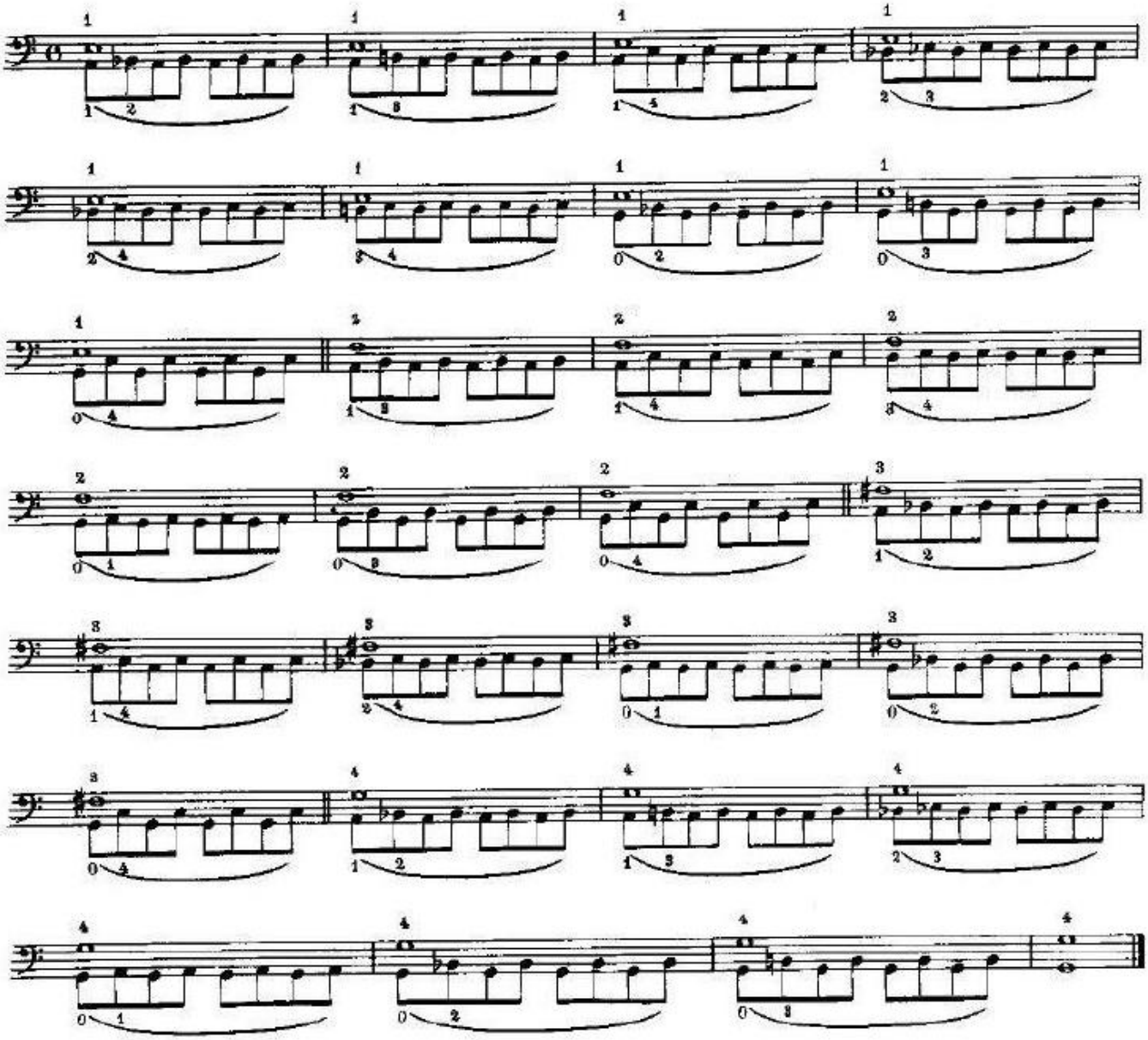
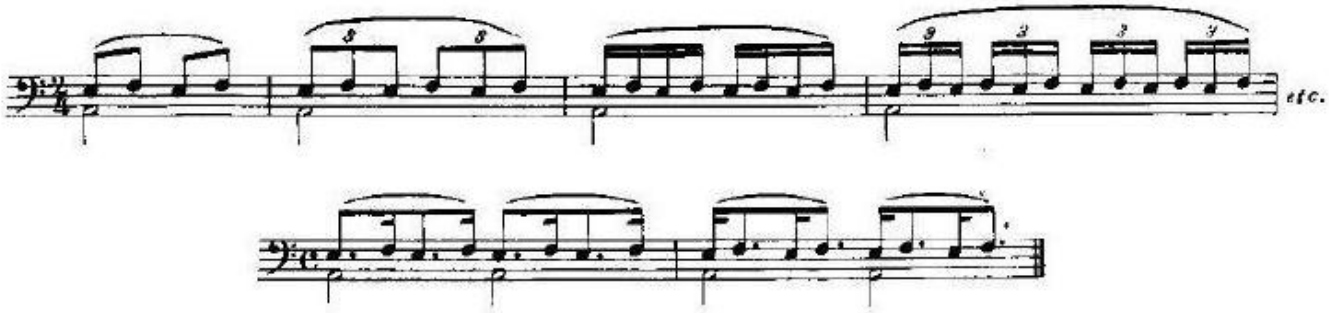
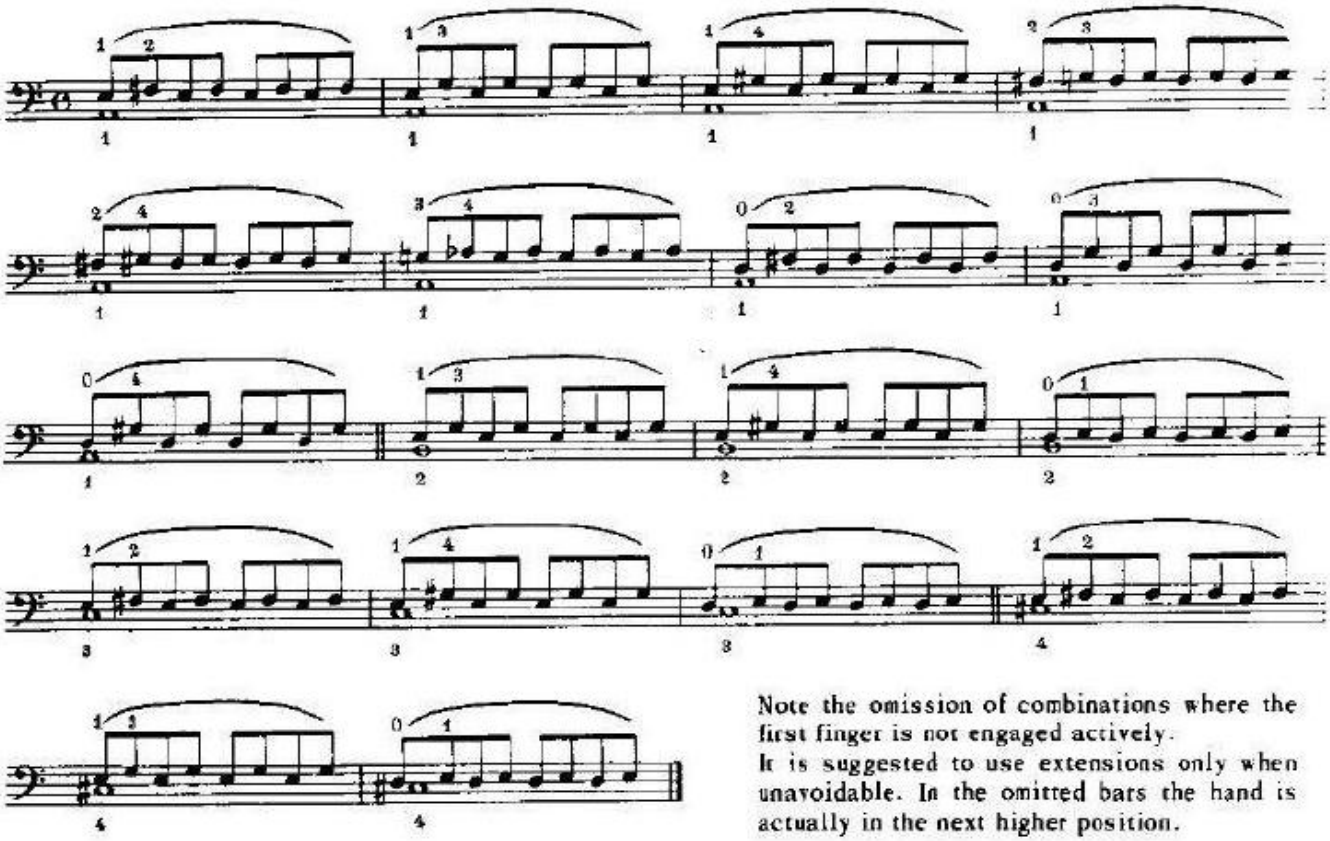
Second Position B



Rhythmic Patterns

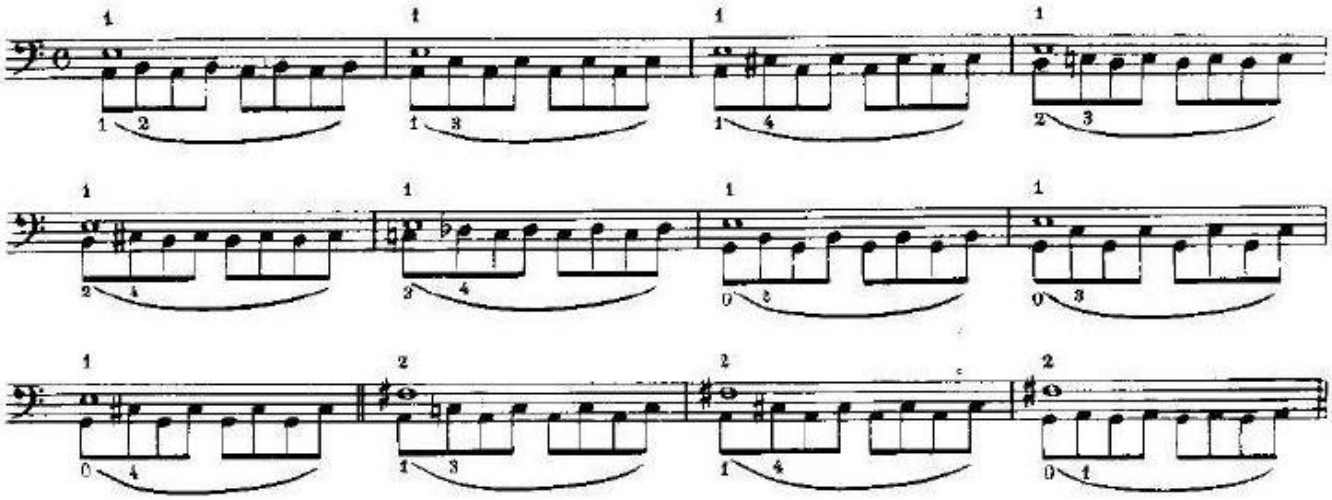


Second Position A with extensions

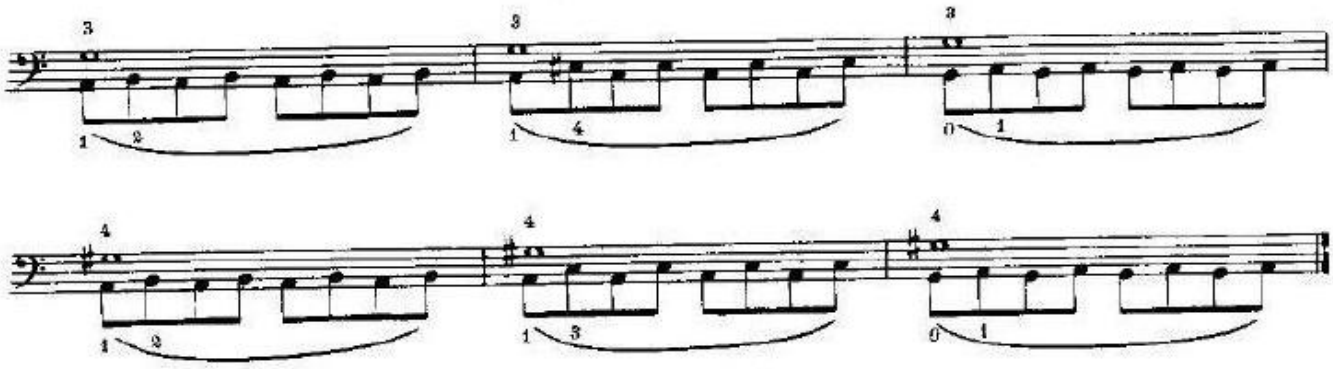


Note the omission of combinations where the first finger is not engaged actively.
It is suggested to use extensions only when unavoidable. In the omitted bars the hand is actually in the next higher position.

Second Position B with extensions



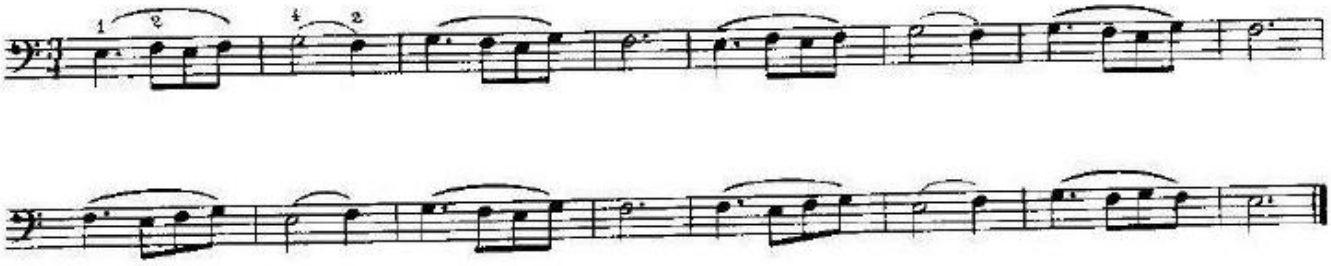
Second Position B *(Continued)*



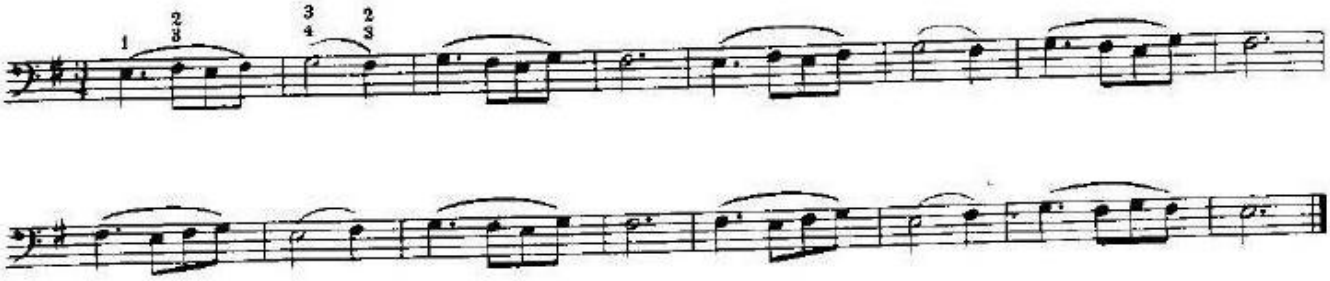
Foremost consideration should be given to keep the left hand in an identical position in relation to the strings, throughout the entire length of string. Therefore double fifths are omitted. However, the frequent use of double fifths with the first finger justifies its application. It is suggested to delay the practising of double fifths even with the first finger.

CONTROL EXERCISES

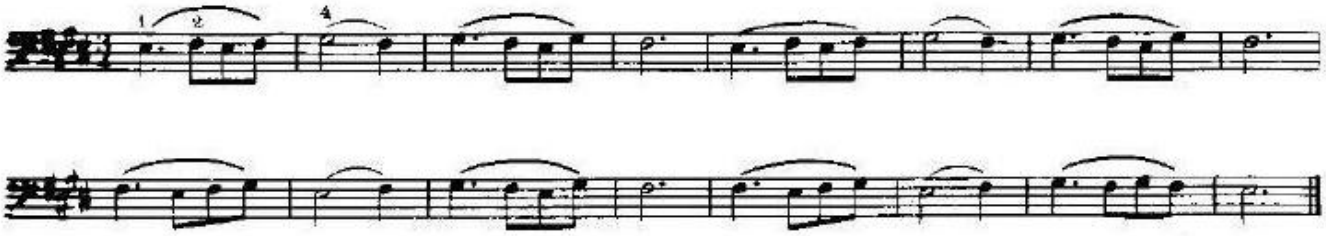
Second Position I



Second Position II and III



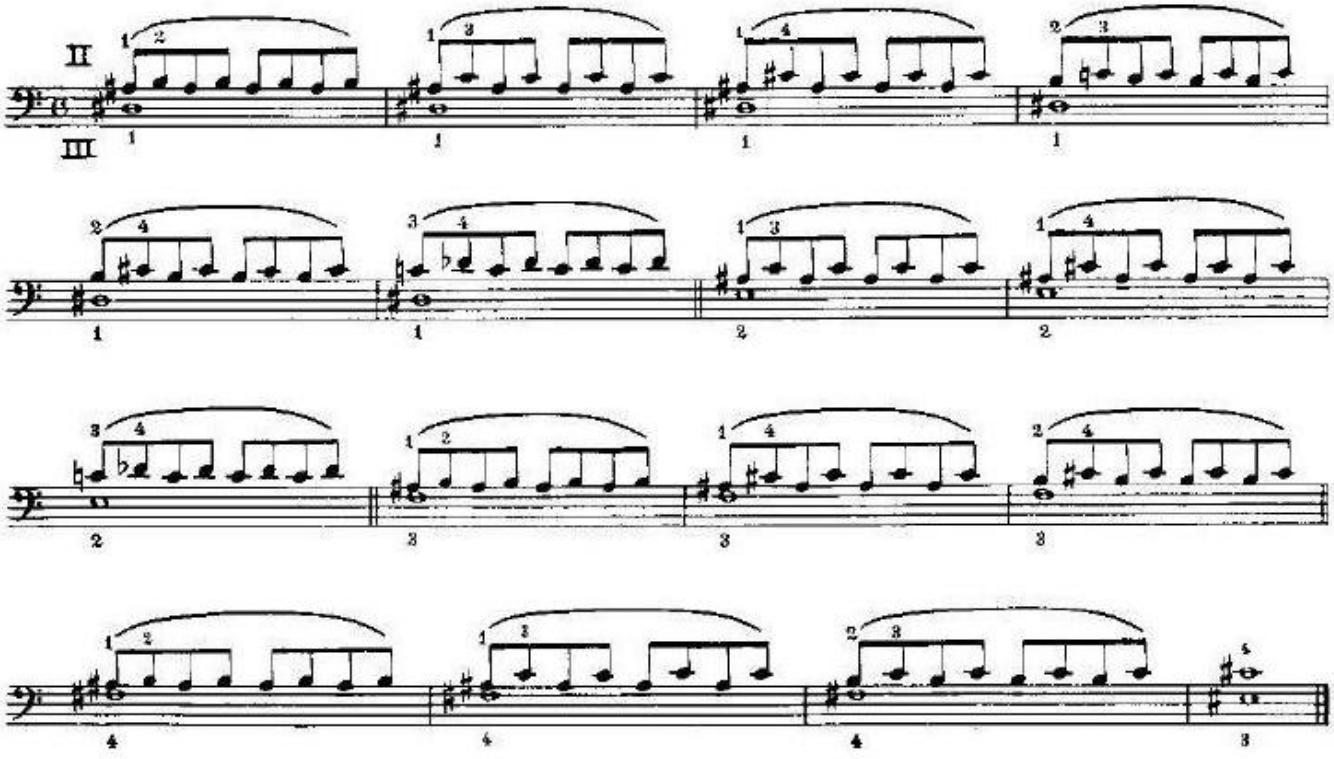
Second Position IV *(Extension)*



The purpose of the control exercise is to verify the results obtained by the position exercises and to release the excessive pressure applied while playing double stops.... Exercise III refers to the given alternate fingering (extension).

Four Finger Position Exercises

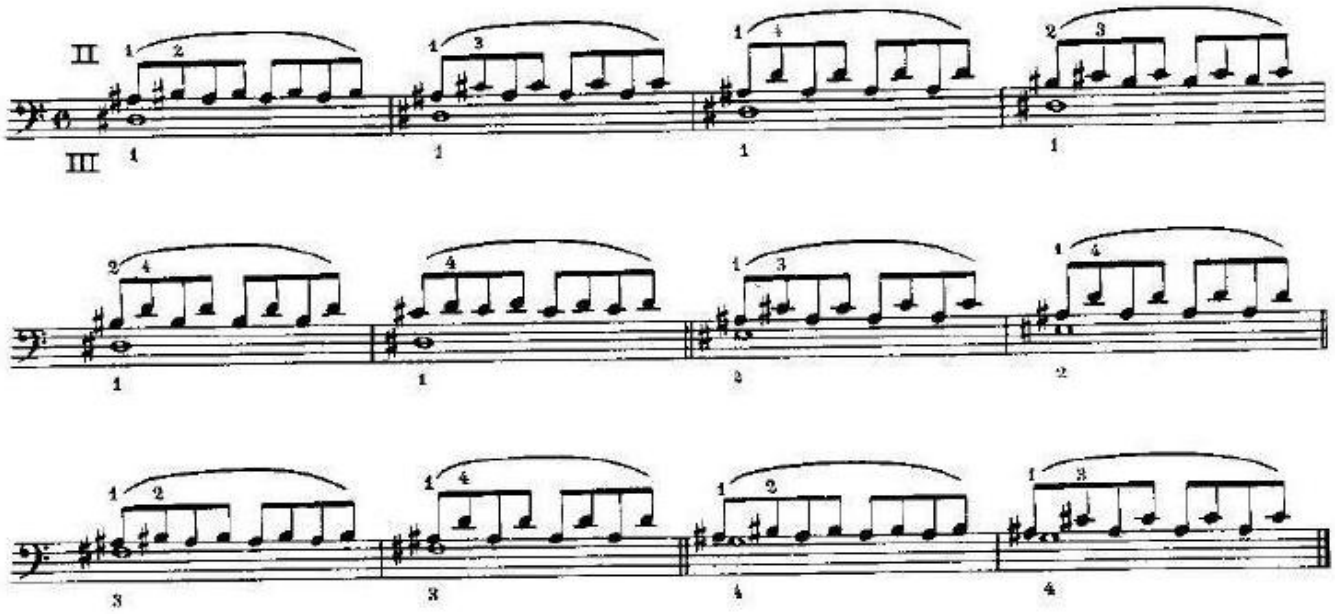
Eighth Position A



The combinations with open strings are omitted from here on. Their use is left to the player's discretion.

Eighth Position B: follow those in Second Position B, page 8.

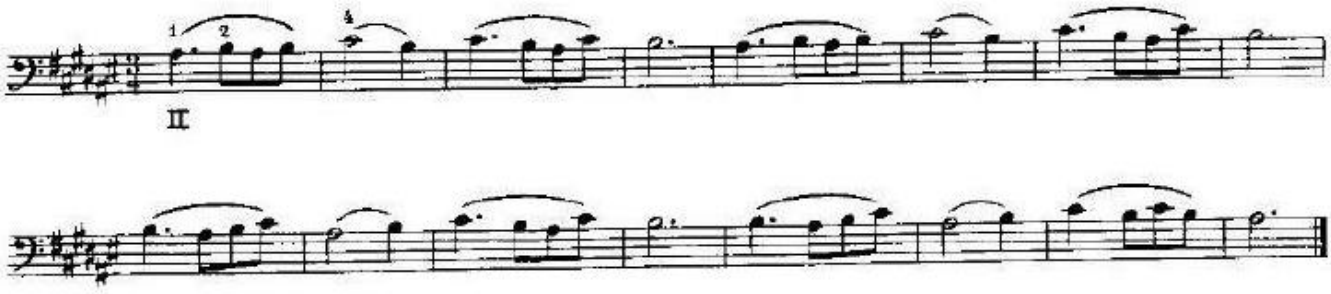
Eighth Position A with extensions



Eighth Position B with extensions: follow those in Second Position B, page 9.

CONTROL EXERCISES

Eighth Position I

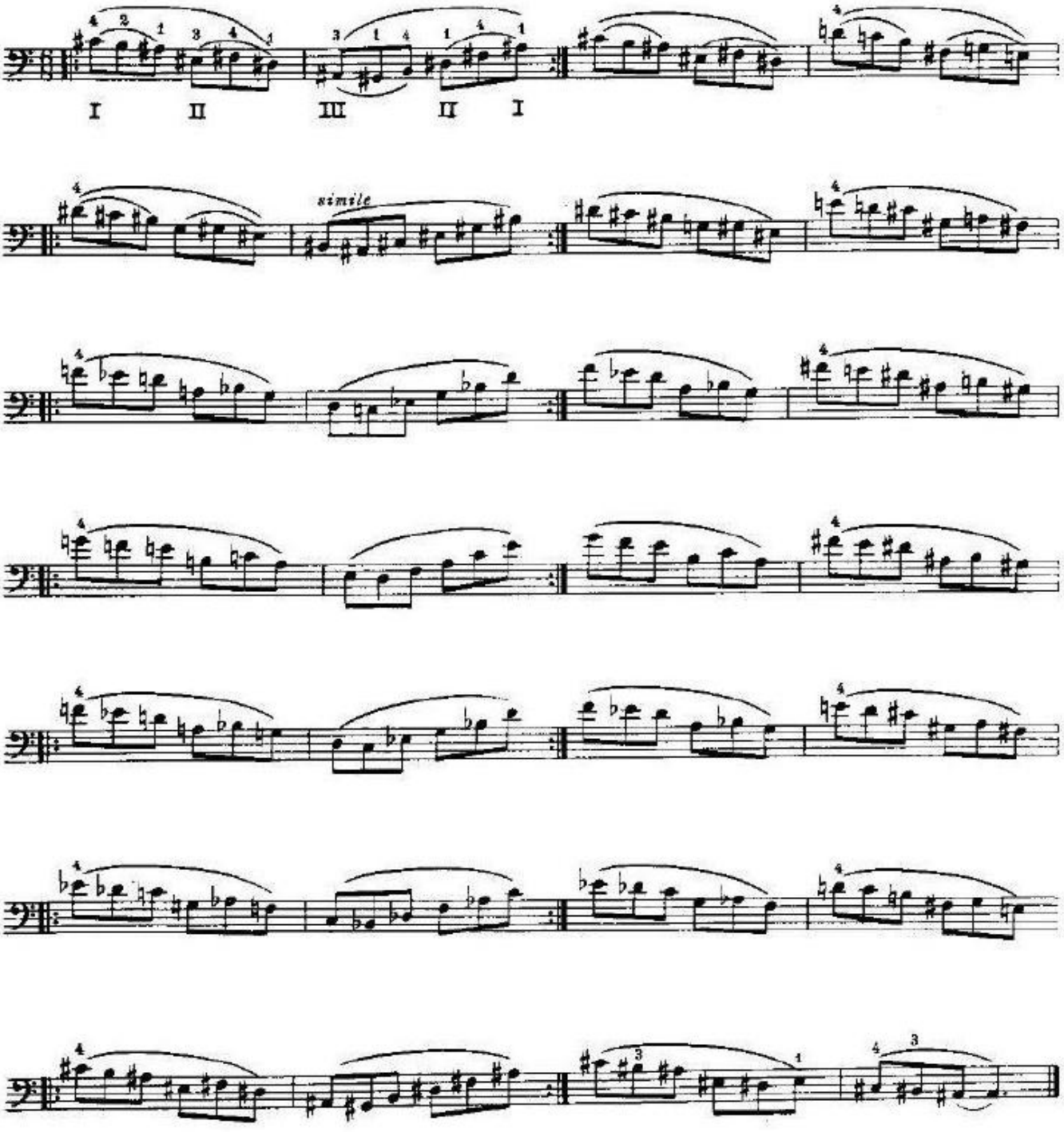


Eighth Position II - III - IV: follow those in second position, pages 10-11.

It is understood that all control exercises have to be practised in all positions and on all four strings, parallel with the progress in the basic position patterns.

SERIAL CONTROL EXERCISES

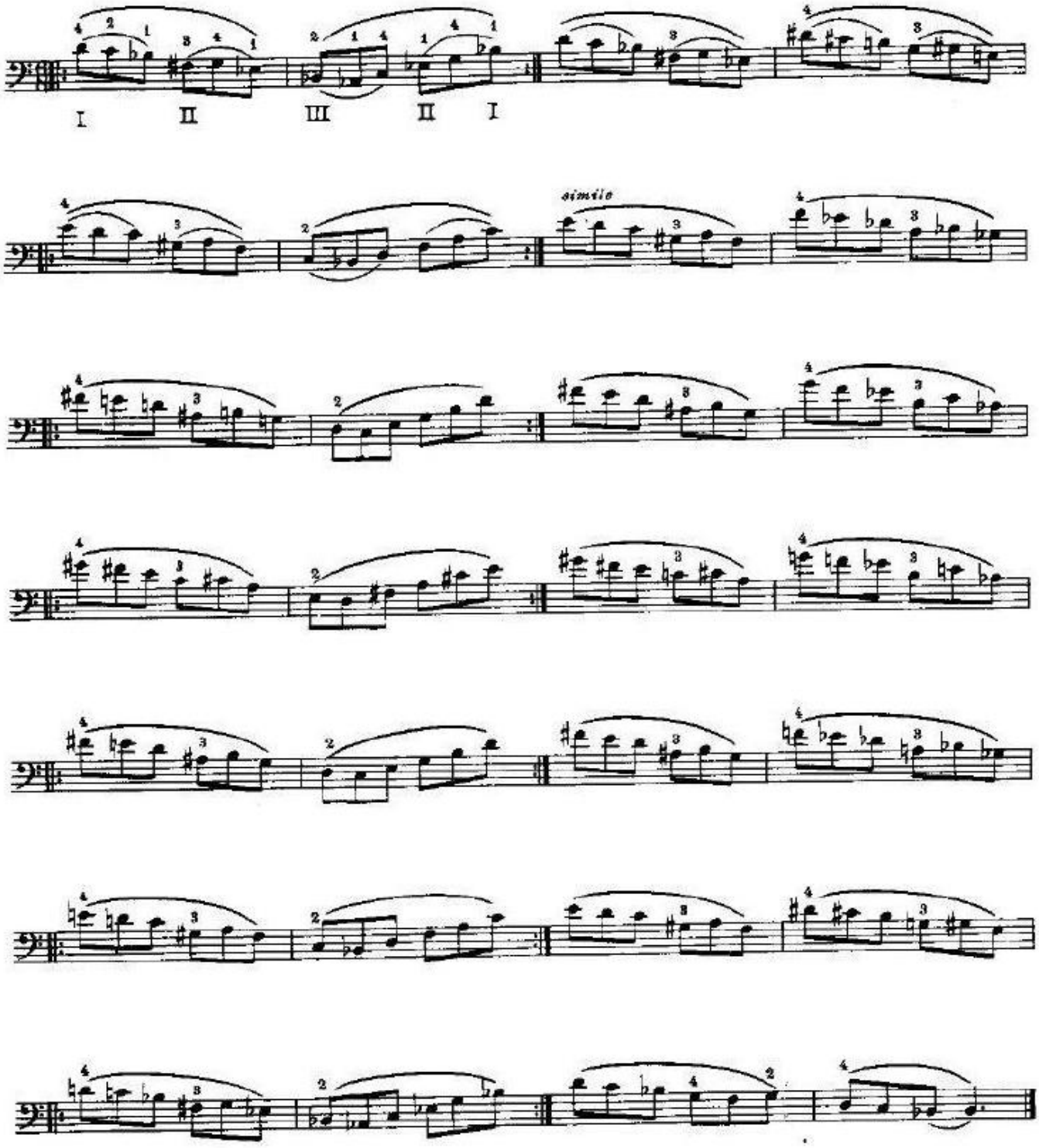
Four Finger Positions



In order to cover all of the four finger positions, start the same exercise also one half step higher.

SERIAL CONTROL EXERCISES

Four Finger Position Exercises with extensions



Follow instructions on the previous page.

Rhythm Samples

For Practising the Serial Control Exercises

Example 1

Ex. 2

Ex. 3

Ex. 4

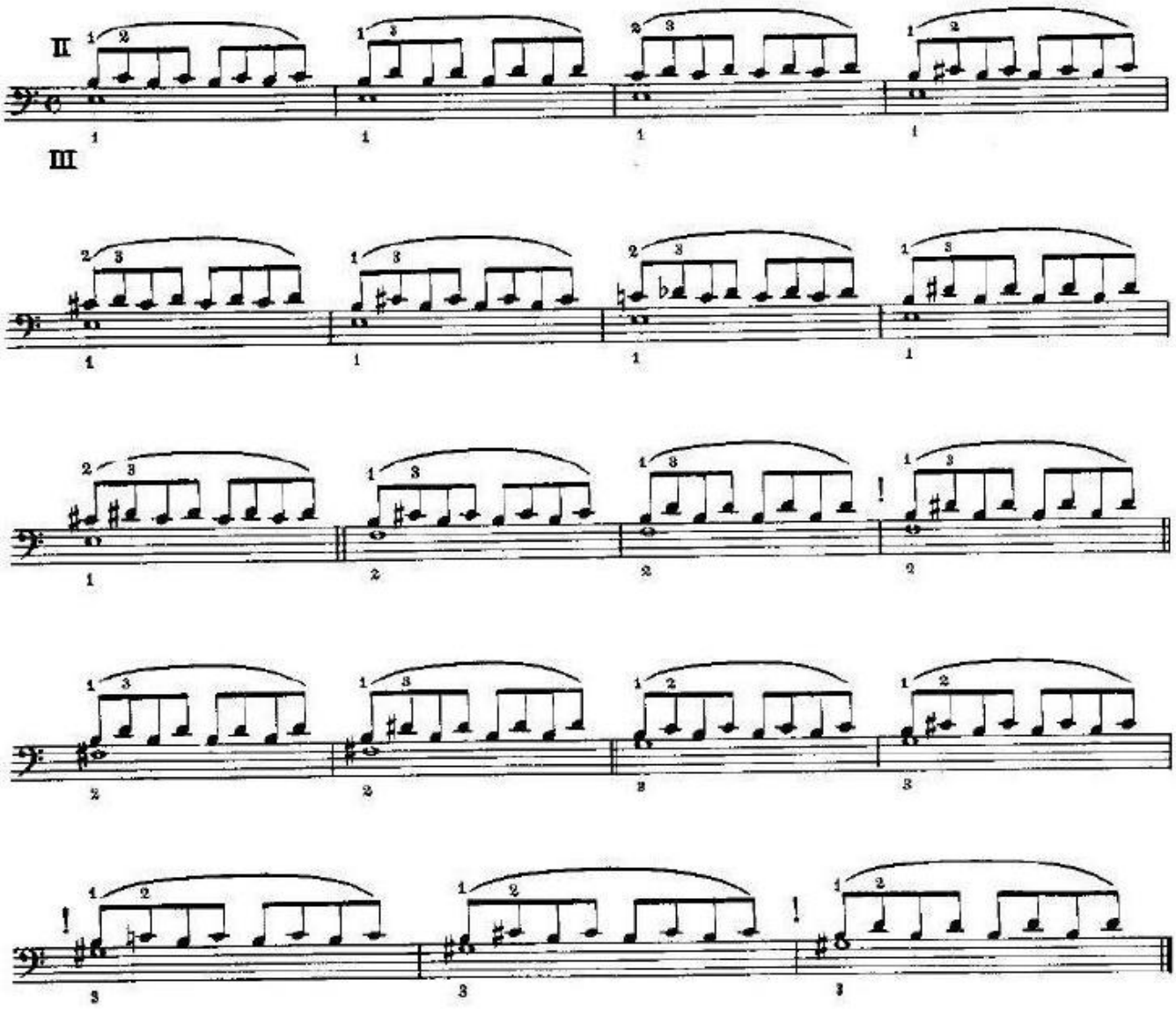
Ex. 5

Ex. 6

Ex. 7

Ex. 8

Three Finger Position Exercises — First Position A

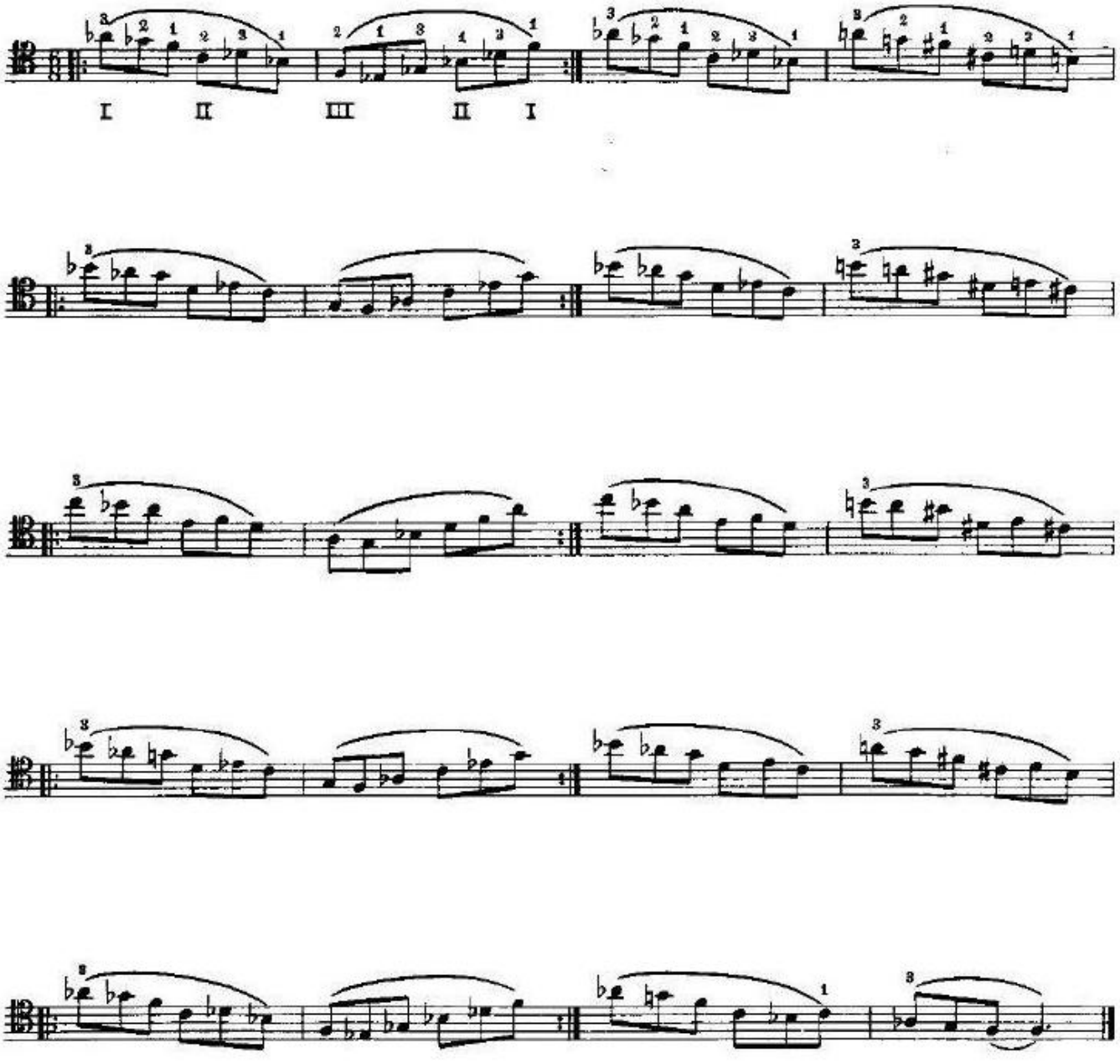


The three finger position exercises include all available combinations, with extensions. Note the combinations where the use of the half step results in an incomplete position. The interval between the first and third finger will be a sixth or diminished seventh reversed a fourth or an extended third.

First Position B: reverse the above exercise as in Second Position B of four finger exercises on page 8.

SERIAL CONTROL EXERCISES

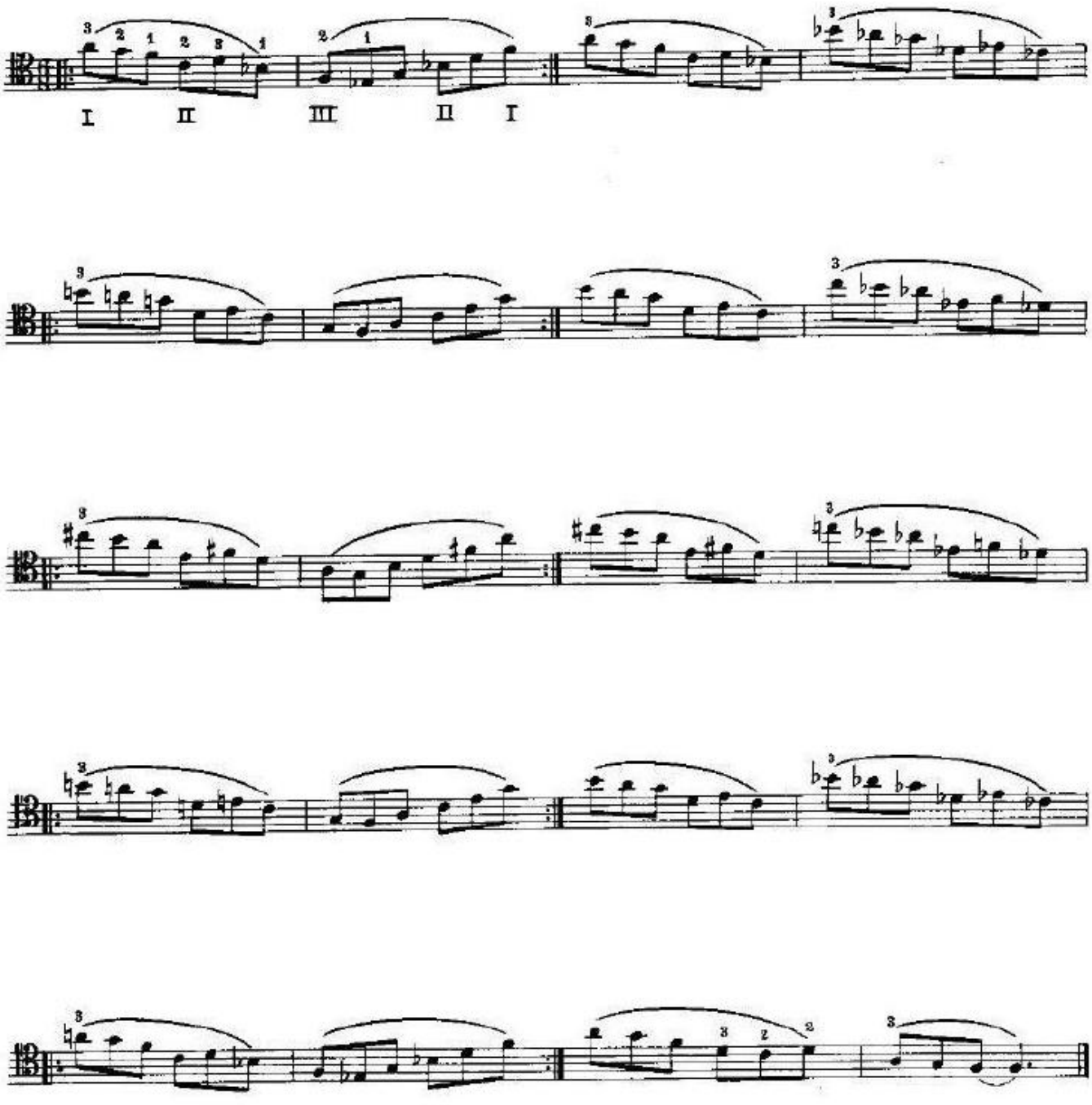
Three Finger Positions



Note that the three finger serial exercise starts in the position which is considered the last four finger position. The reason is to complete the exercise pattern.

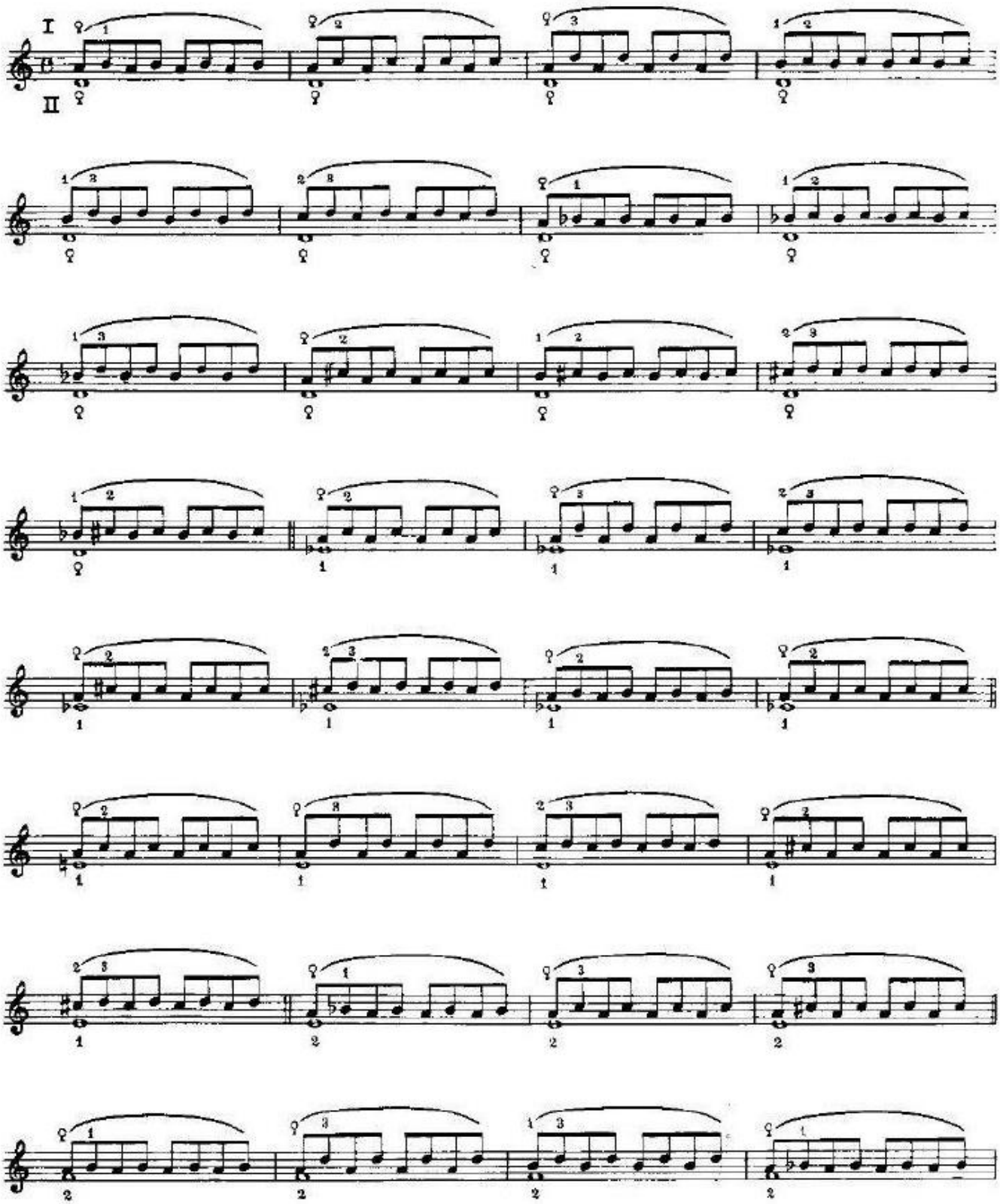
SERIAL CONTROL EXERCISES

Three Finger Positions with extensions

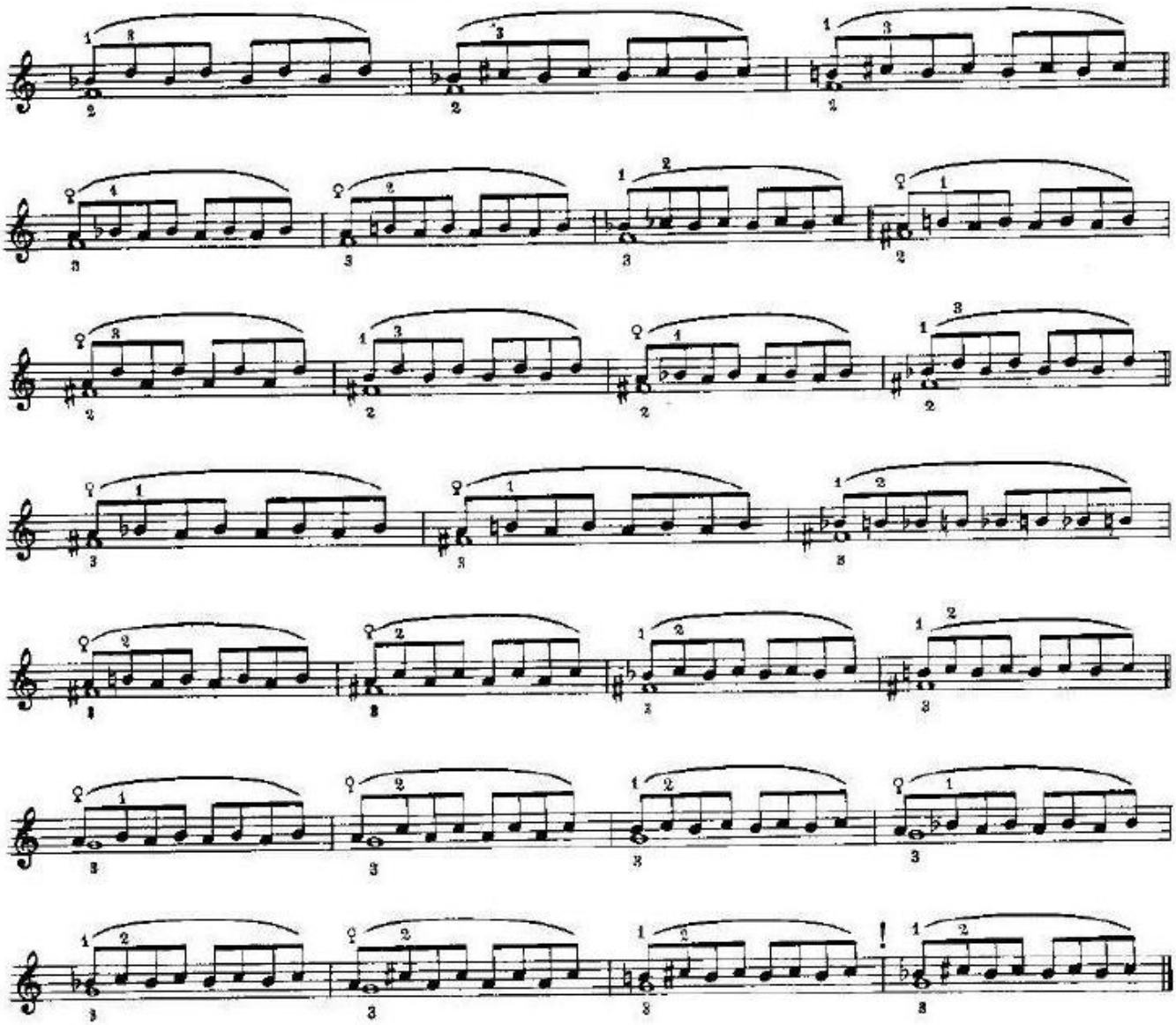


Observe the same as on previous page.
For all serial exercises use rhythm samples from page 15.

Thumb Position Exercises A



Thumb Position Exercises *(Continued)*



The use of the fourth finger can be added according to the player's desire and ability.

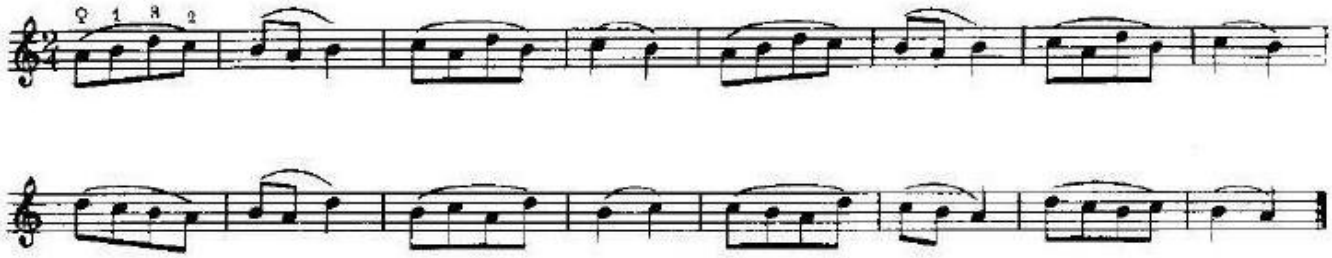
The thumb position exercises intend to establish the constant interval of an octave between the thumb and the third finger, respectively on the lower and higher strings, or the interval of a second when reversed. Only some of the extended or narrow positions /line 5, bars 3-4/ demand that the hand leaves the octave interval. This interval of an octave is identical with a fourth on one string. Therefore not only the facility of playing octaves develops, but simultaneously the hand is set for playing artificial harmonics.

Thumb Position B

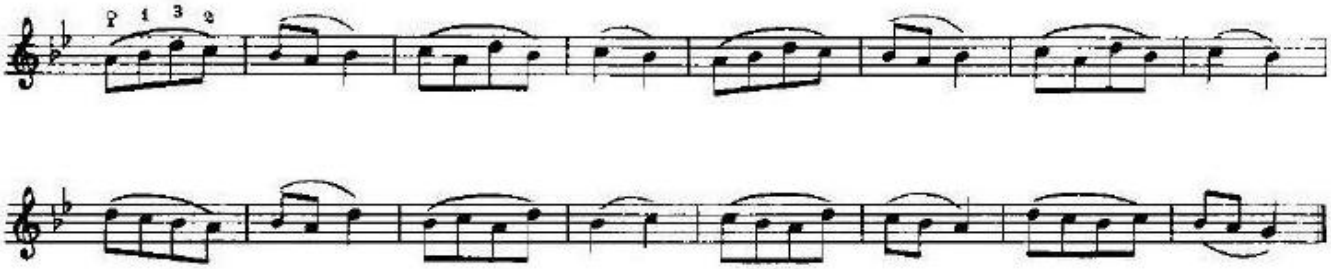
As in four finger position exercises, move fingers on D string.

CONTROL EXERCISES

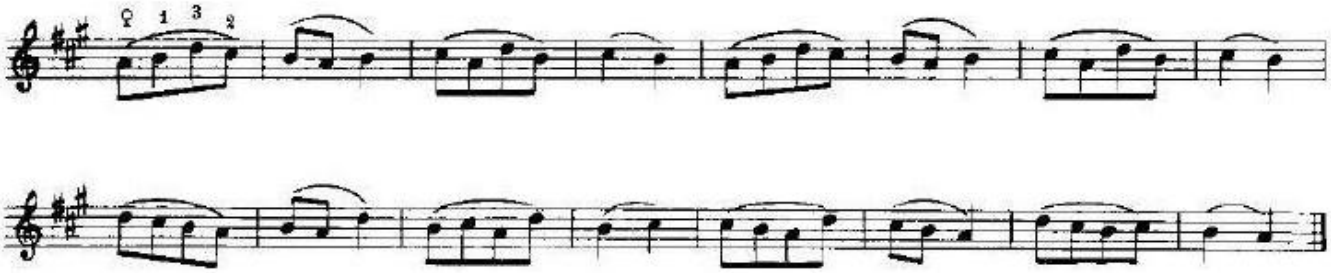
Thumb Position I



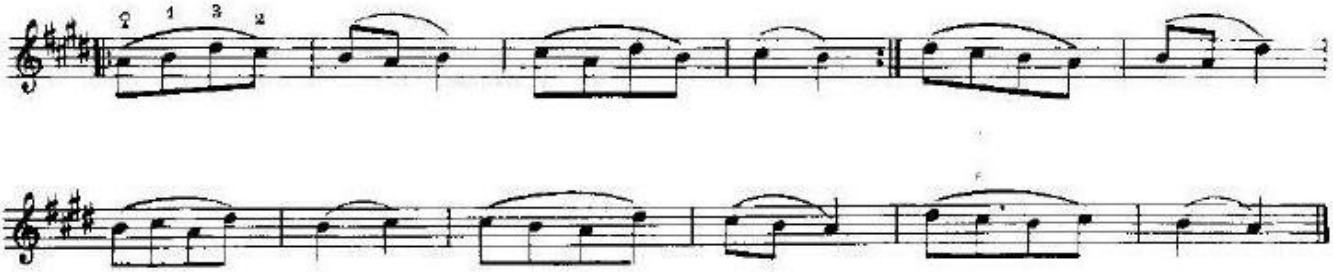
Thumb Position II



Thumb Position III



Thumb Position IV



Sample exercises in thumb position for the use of the fourth finger

I

II

III

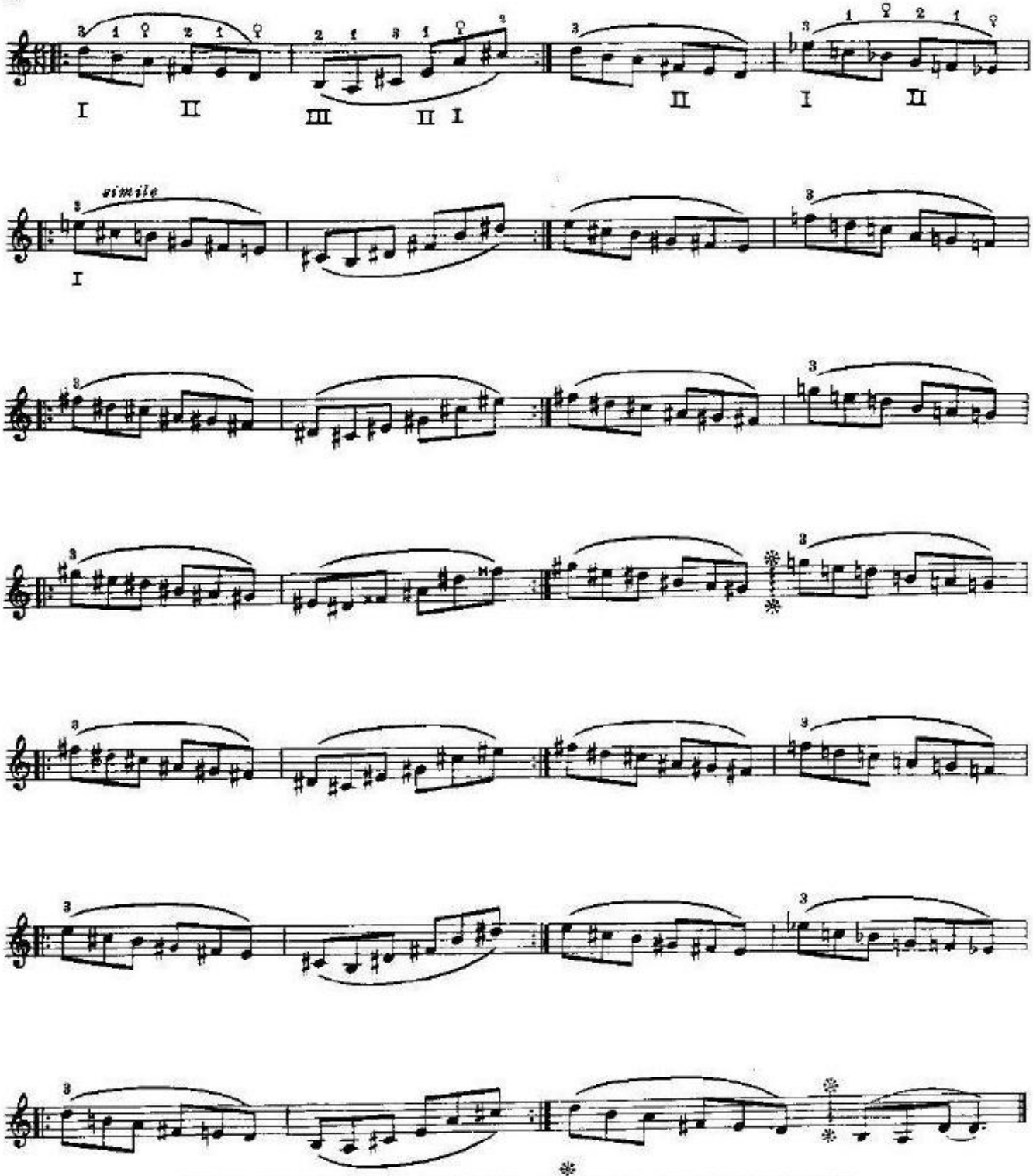
IV

The above exercises should be practised in all thumb positions, even if the high positions look impossible at first. The thumb can and should be used anywhere on the strings, but always establish the /octave/ position with the third finger.

SERIAL CONTROL EXERCISES

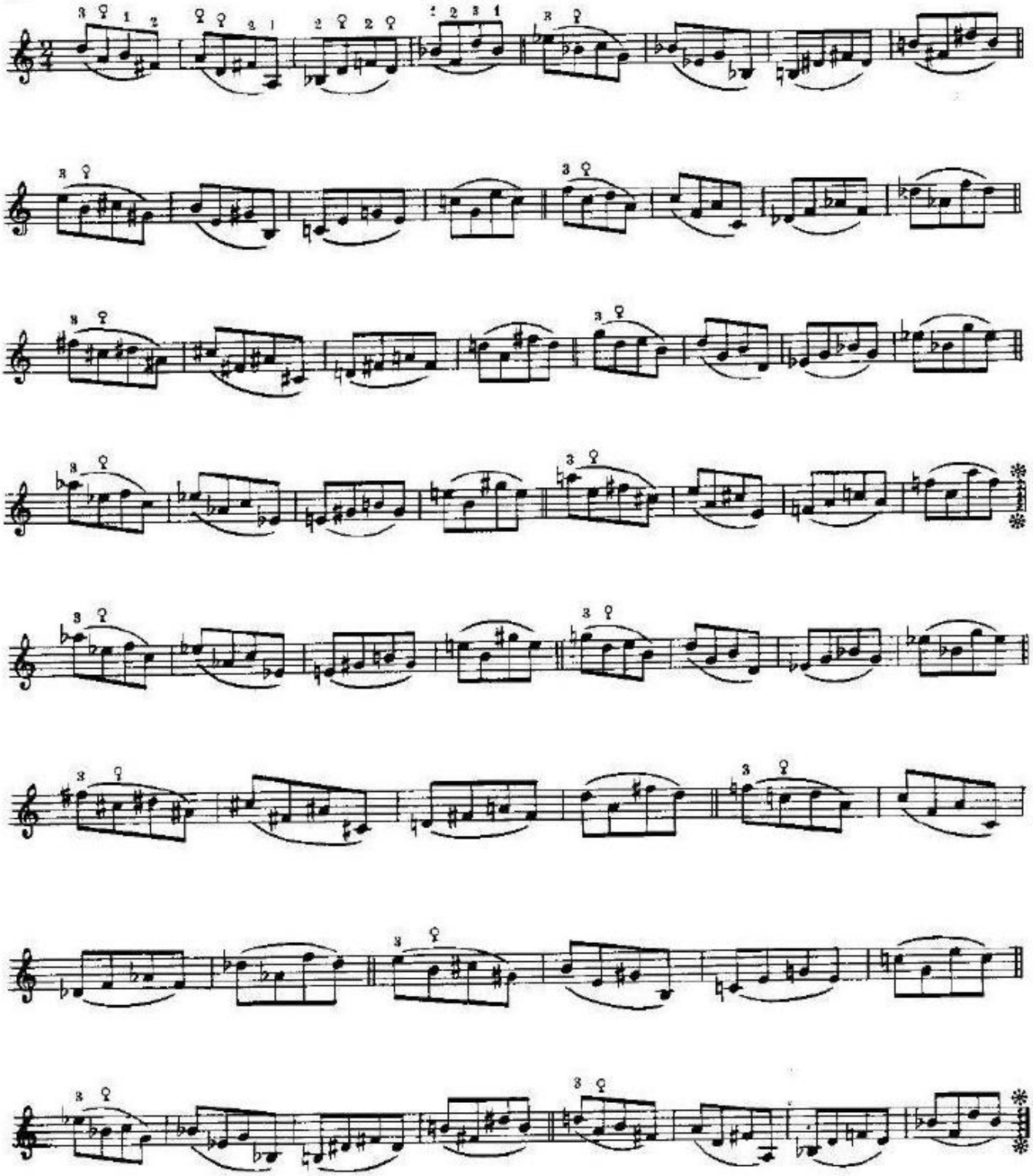
Thumb Position

I



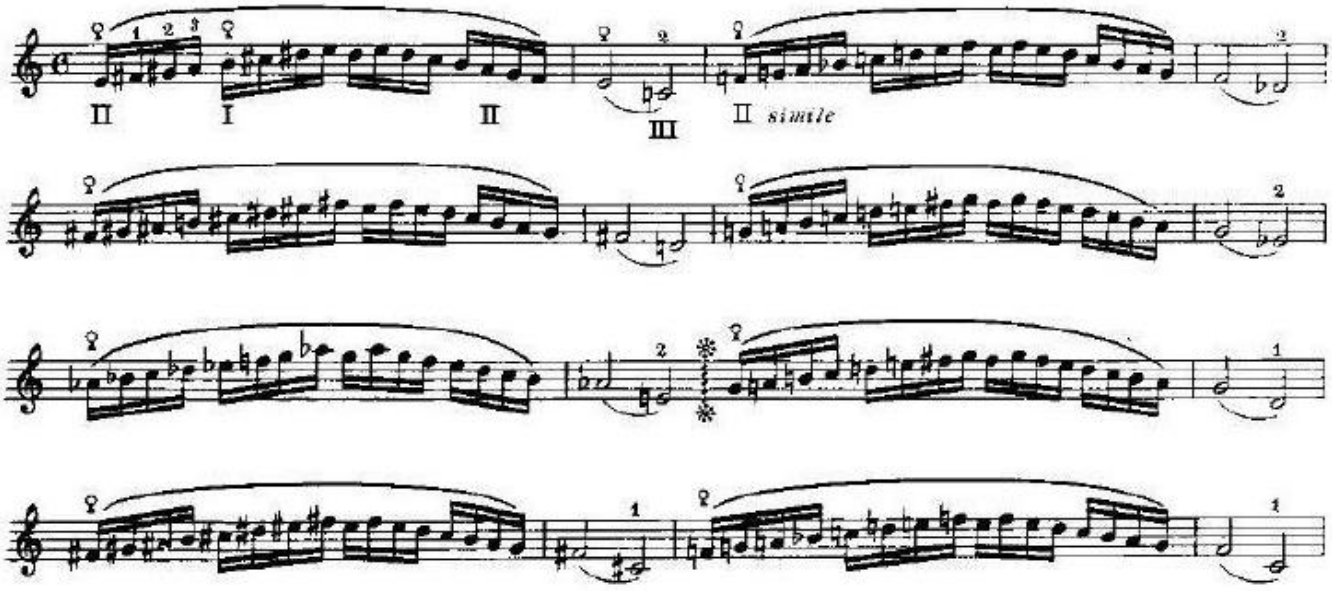
In these two exercises at the first sign: ⁂ the player should continue as high as the positions, already exercised, will permit. At the second sign: ⁂ the same applies in the opposite direction.

II

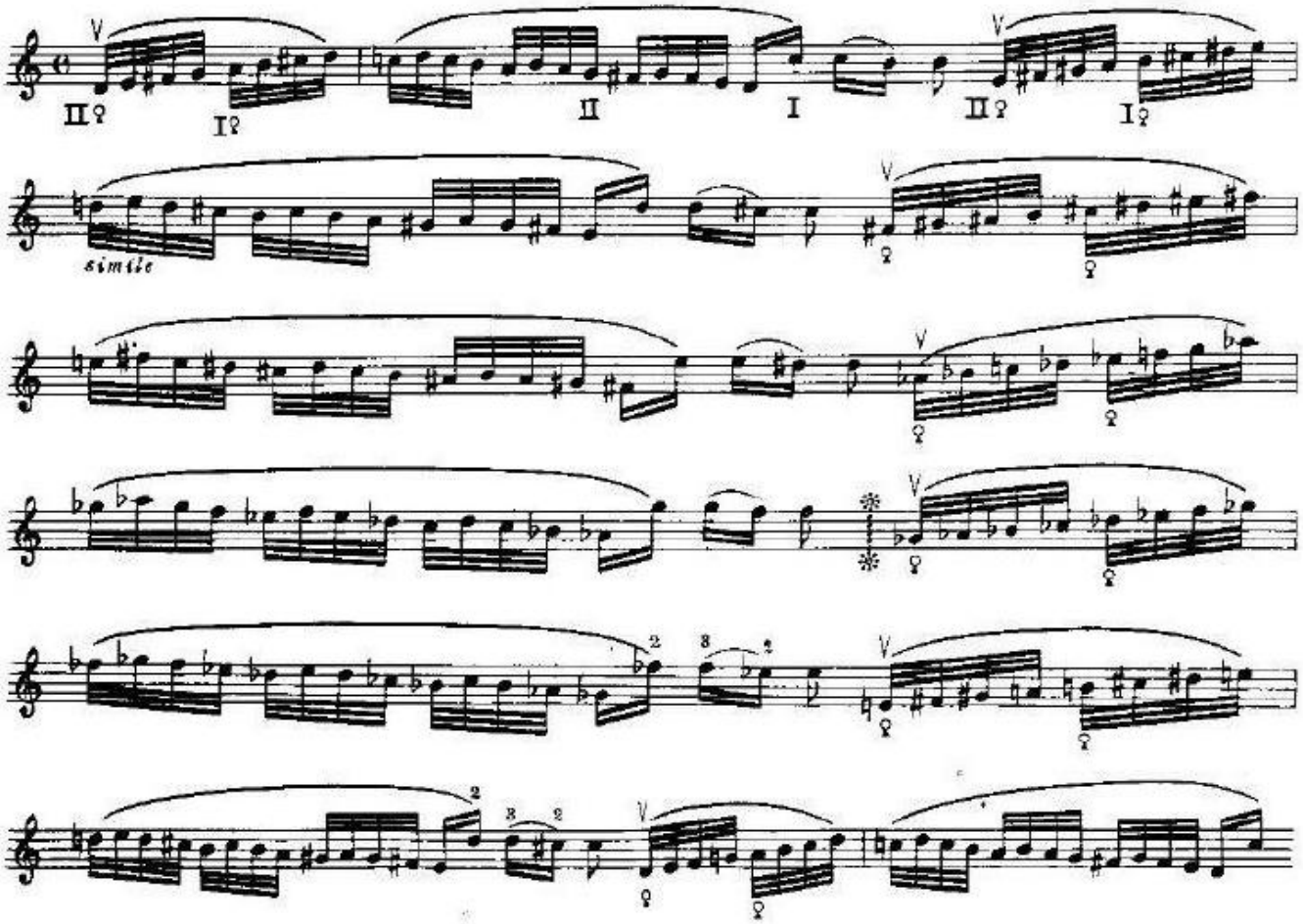


Serial Exercise Examples from the Repertory

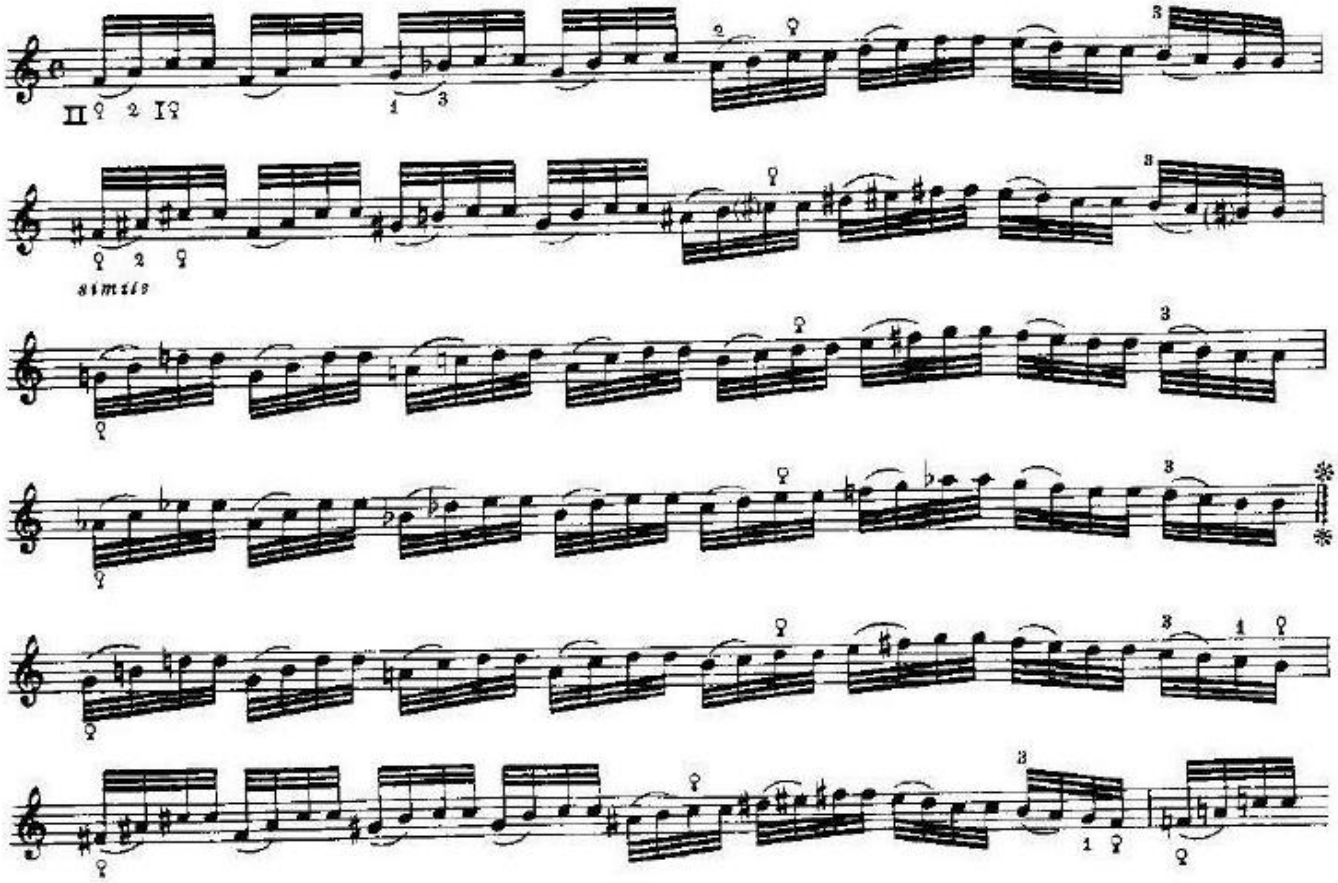
Beethoven: A Major Sonata, 3rd Movement



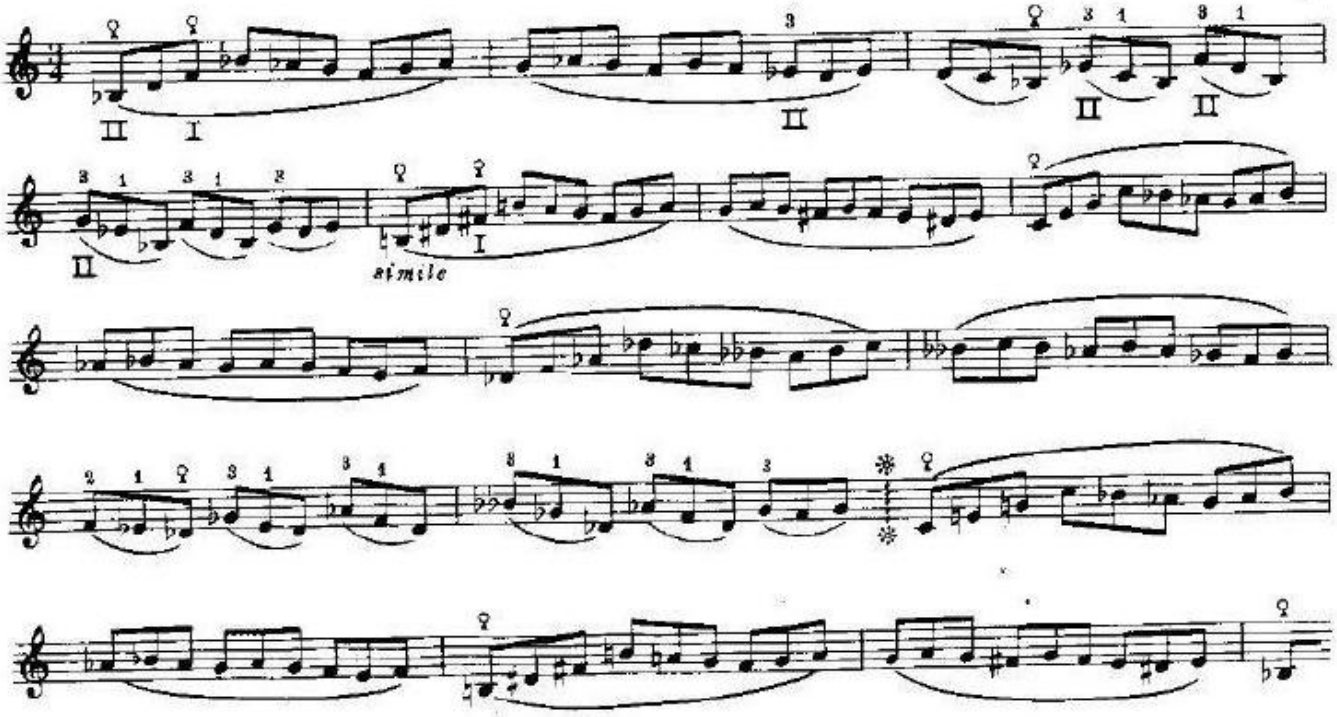
Haydn: D Major Concerto, 1st Movement



Boccherini: B flat Major Concerto, 1st Movement



Boccherini: B flat Major Concerto, 3rd Movement



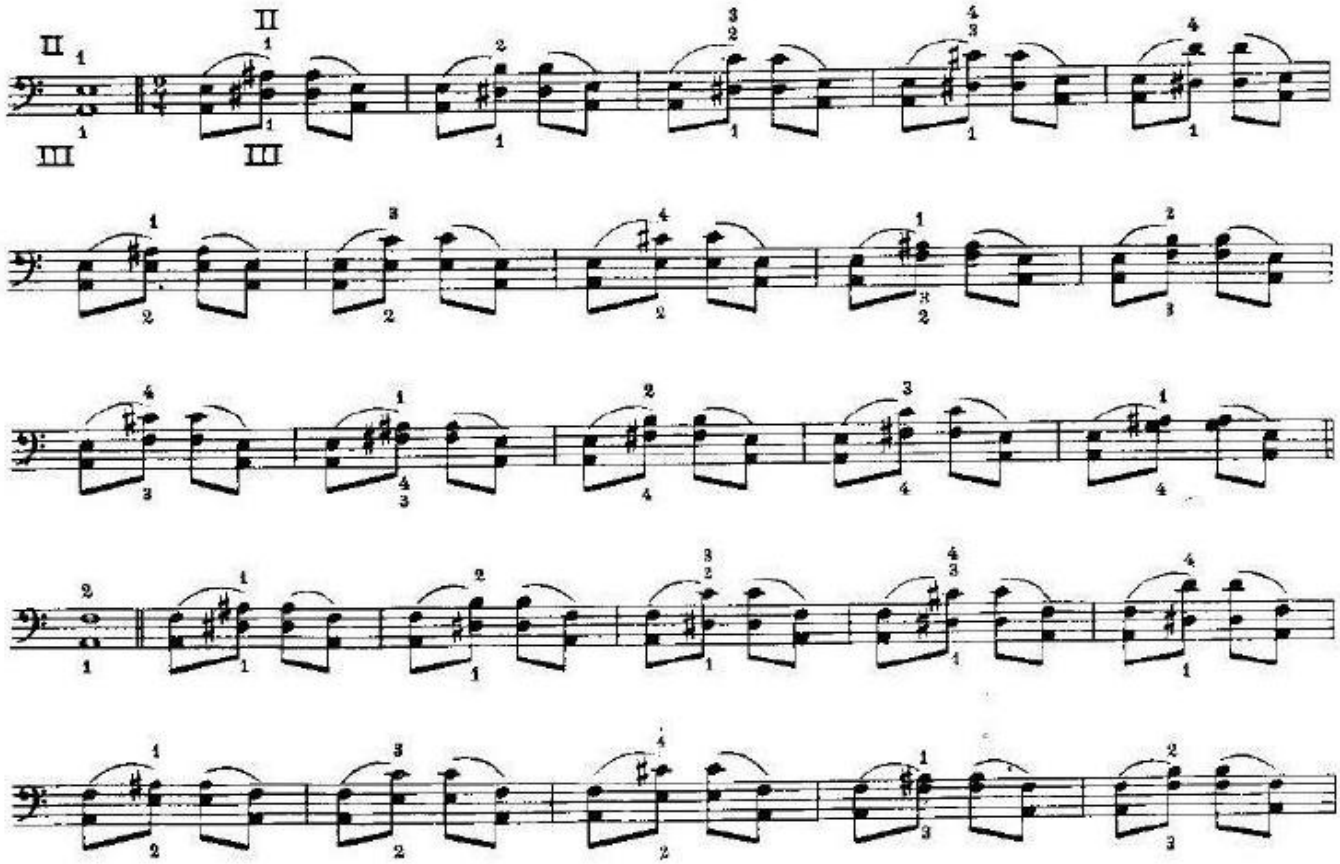
CONNECTION OF POSITIONS

The Intervals in the Second Position

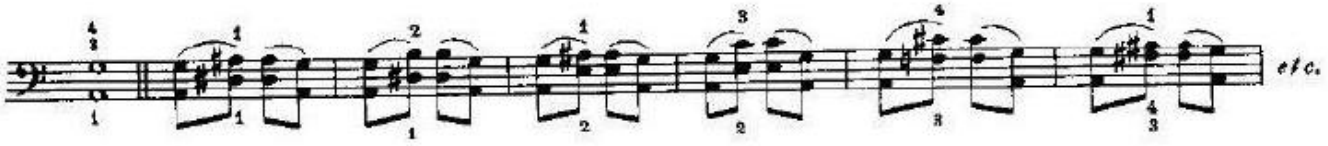
The Intervals in the Eighth Position

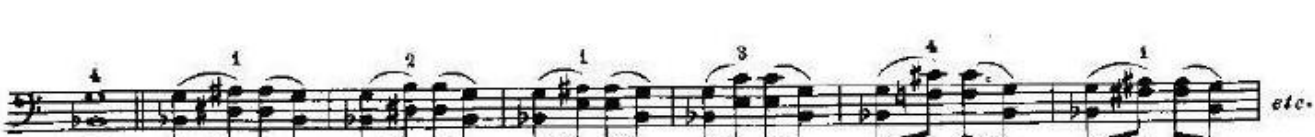
These are all the double stops occurring within the given positions. As explained on page 10, fifths with the second, third and fourth finger are omitted. Some extensions are indicated by alternate fingerings.

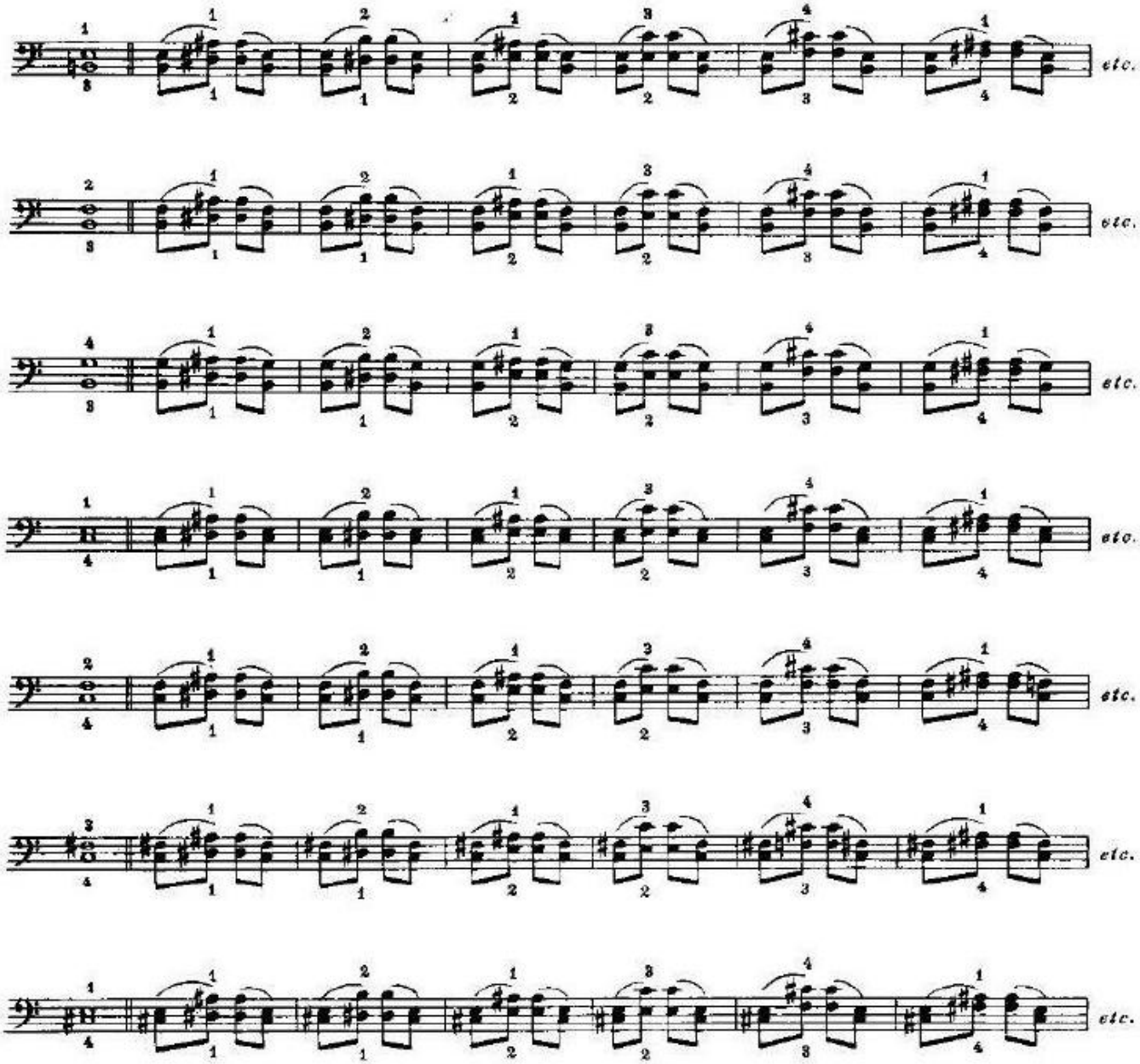
Connections between Second and Eighth Position



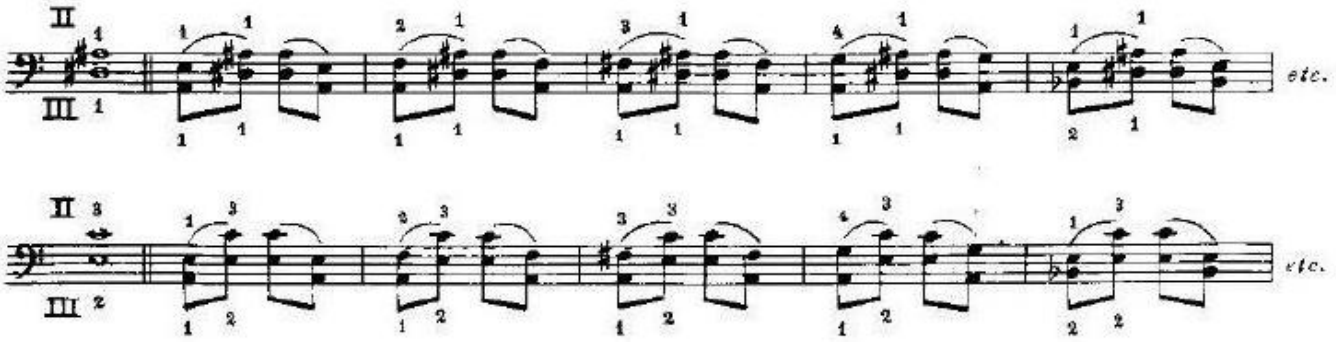
Choose a double stop in the lower position first and connect it to all the double stops in the selected higher position. The number of position connections within two positions is so high that from here on only samples will be given. The player should evolve a personal pattern and use about 20-25 combinations.
Some combinations with extensions are omitted seemingly. However, when the first finger is not used, the position can be considered the next regular one.





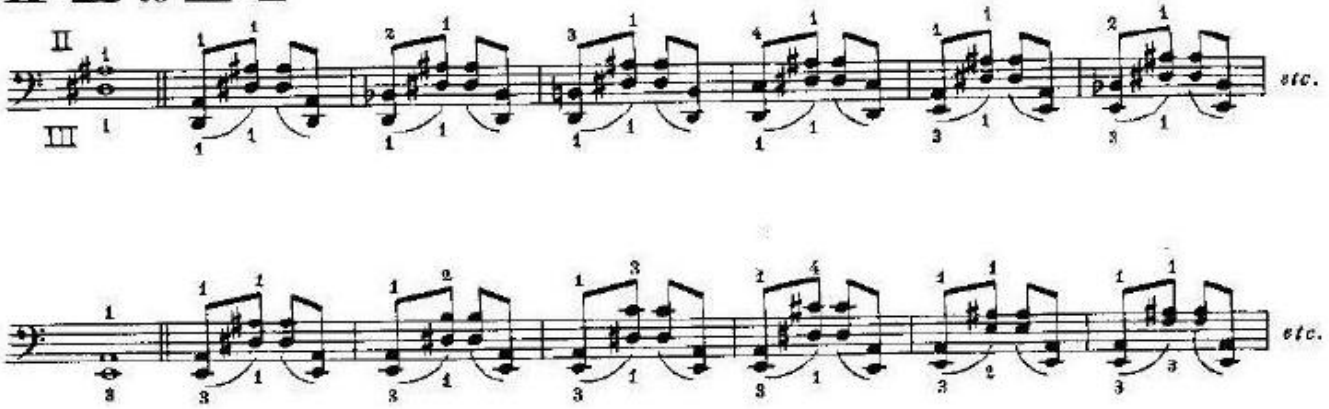


The next two samples show the reversed version of the position connections. The changes occur in the lower of the two positions.

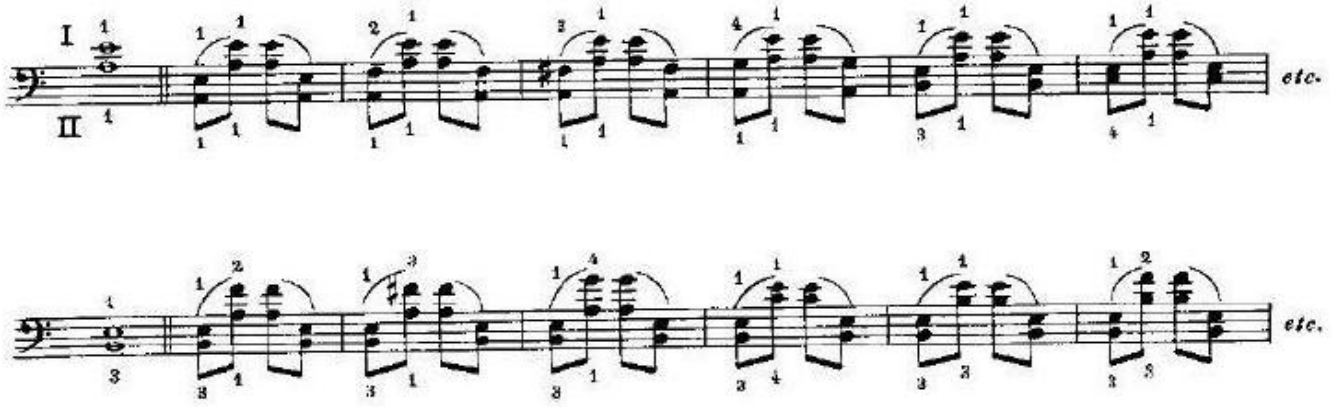


Connections of Positions Across Strings

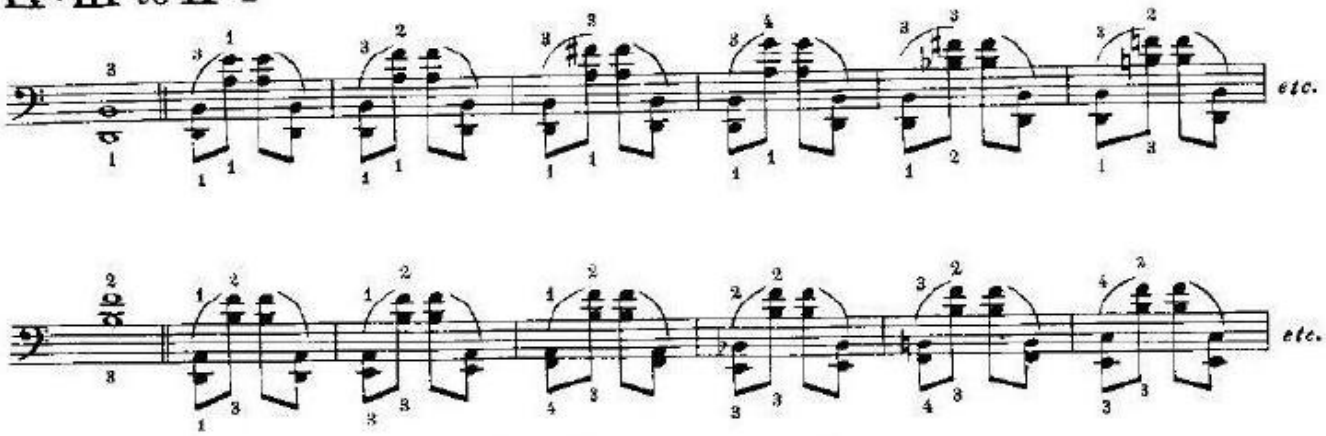
IV-III to III-II



III-II to II-I



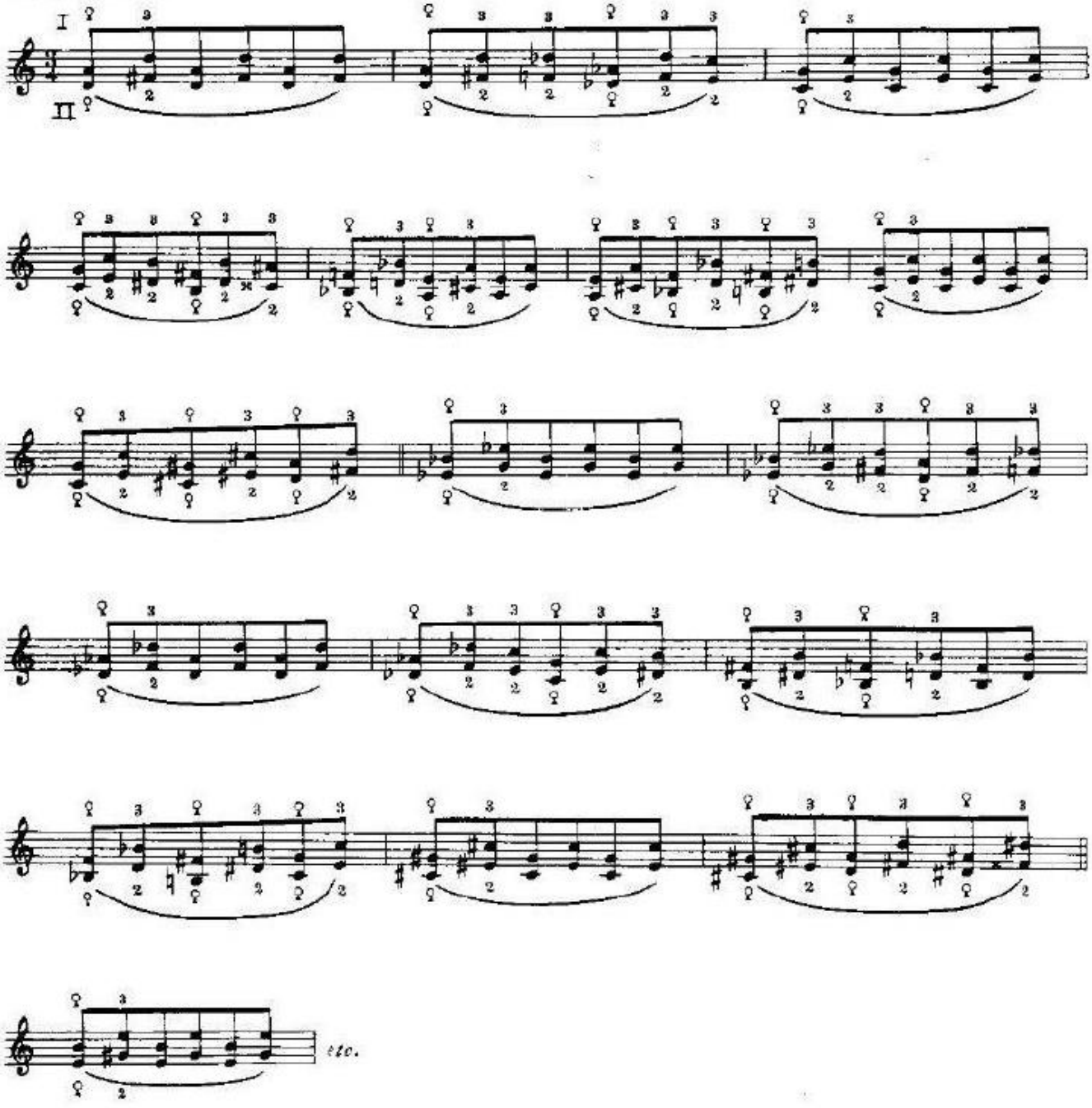
IV-III to II-I



For all position connections use insert.

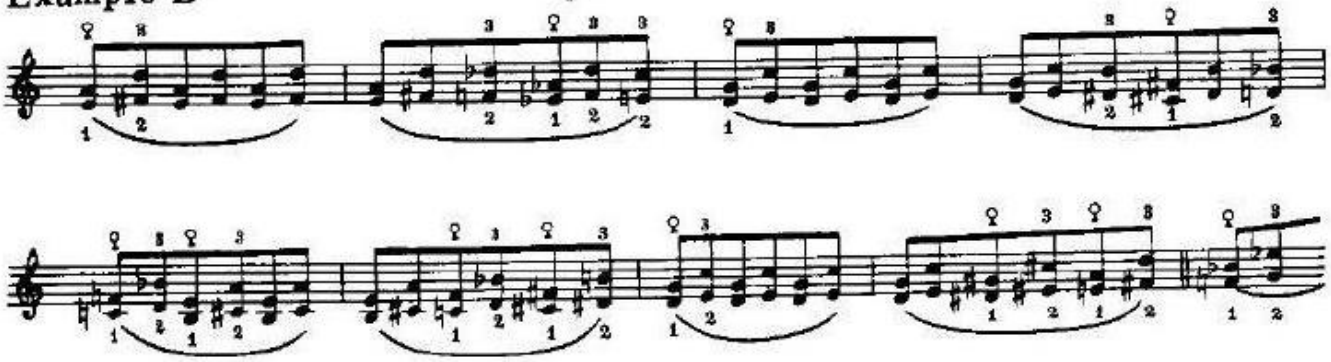
Serial control exercises with double stops in thumb positions

Example A

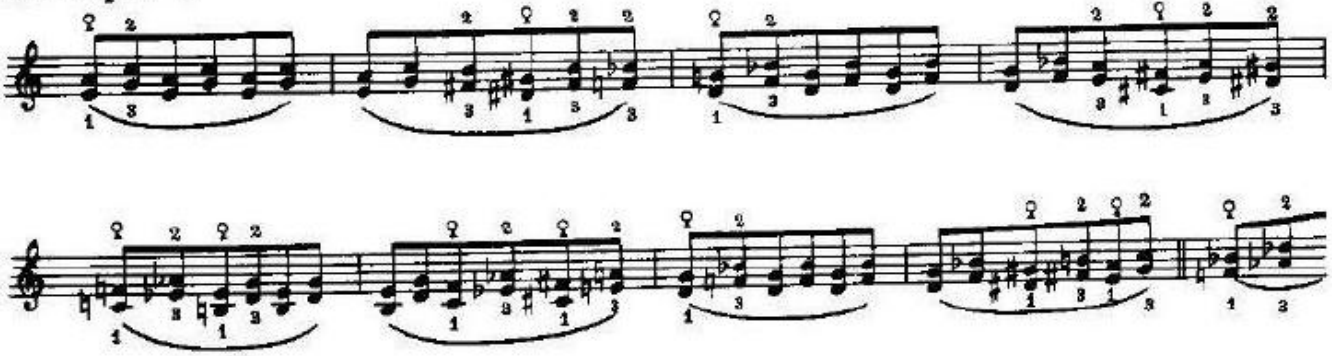


The pattern consists of eight bars. Continue it as high as the previous position exercises permit it, and come back to the lowest position as well. The following examples should be used for further combinations.

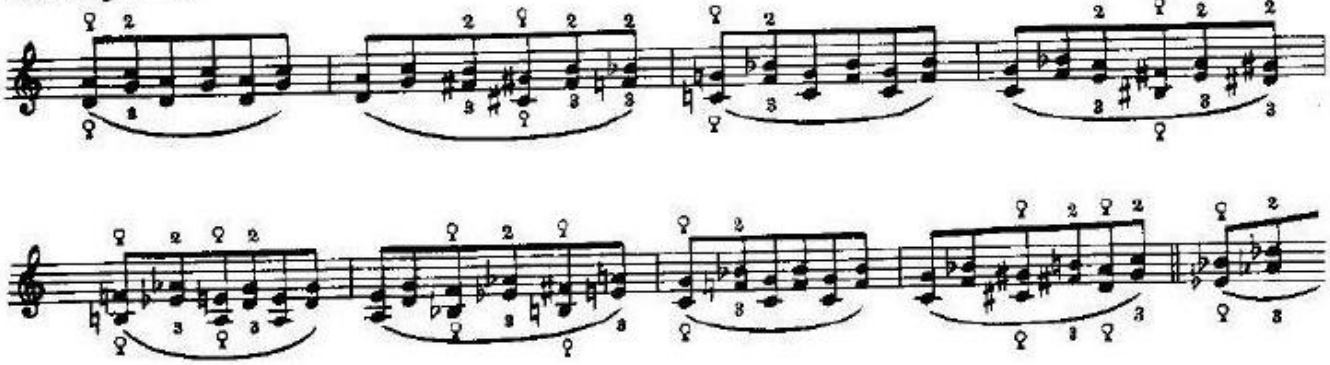
Example B



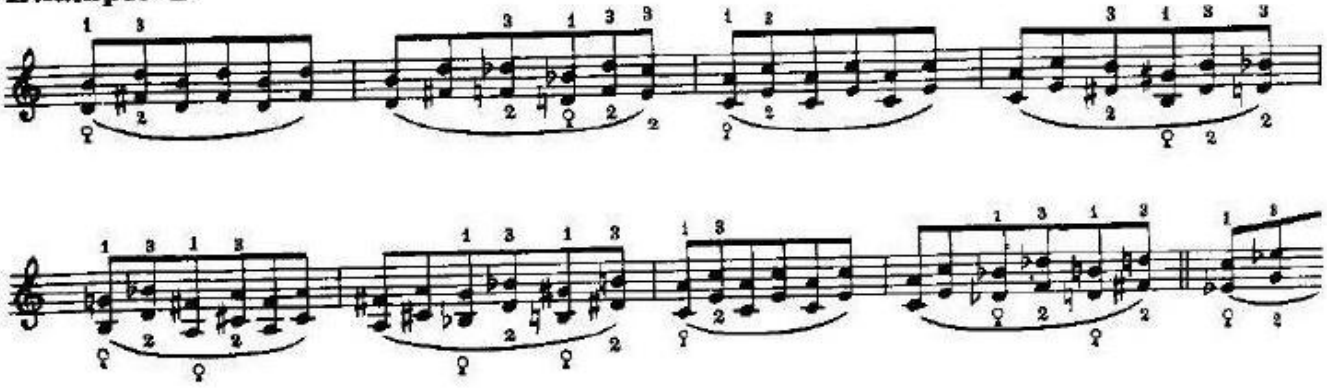
Example C



Example D



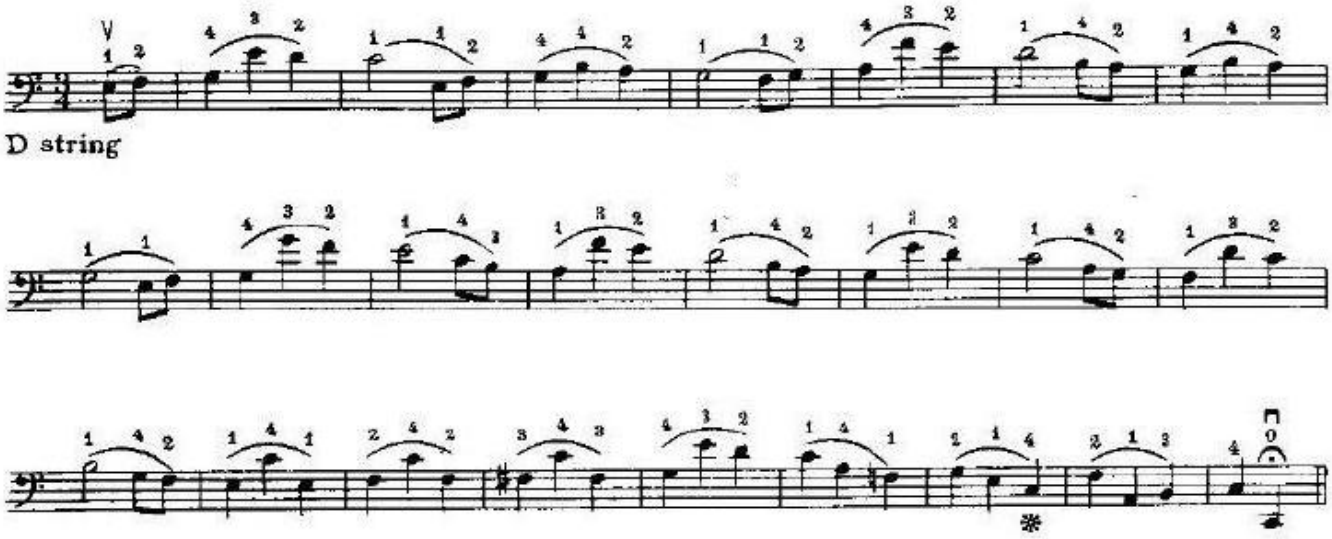
Example E



CONTROL EXERCISE

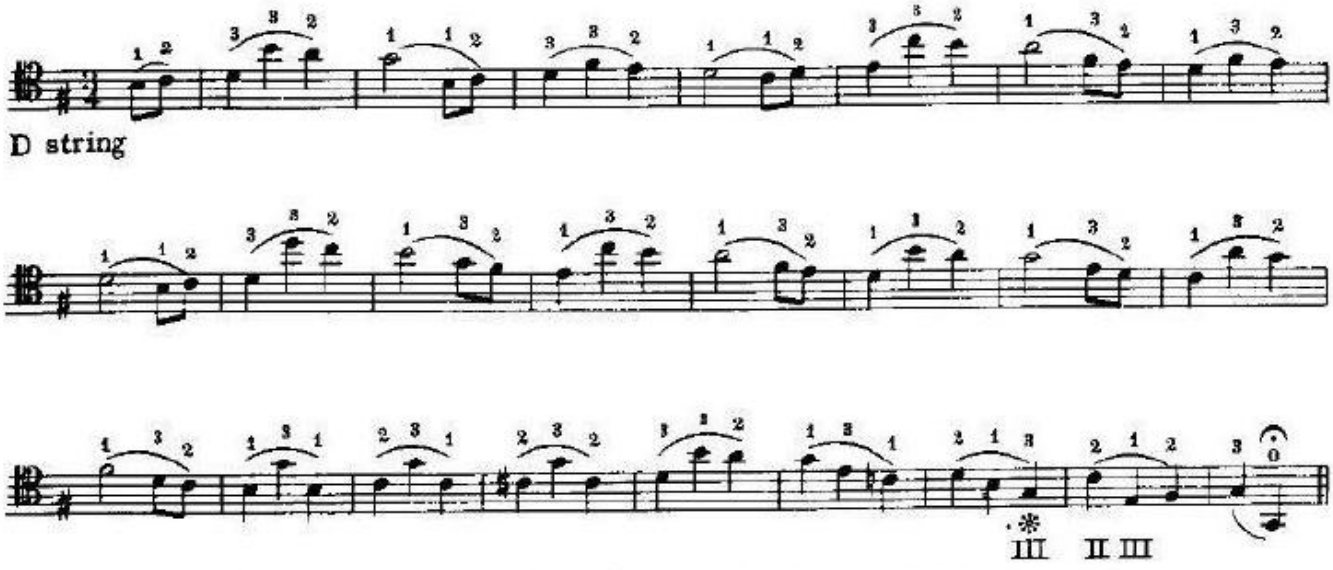
For Connections of Positions

From the Second Position



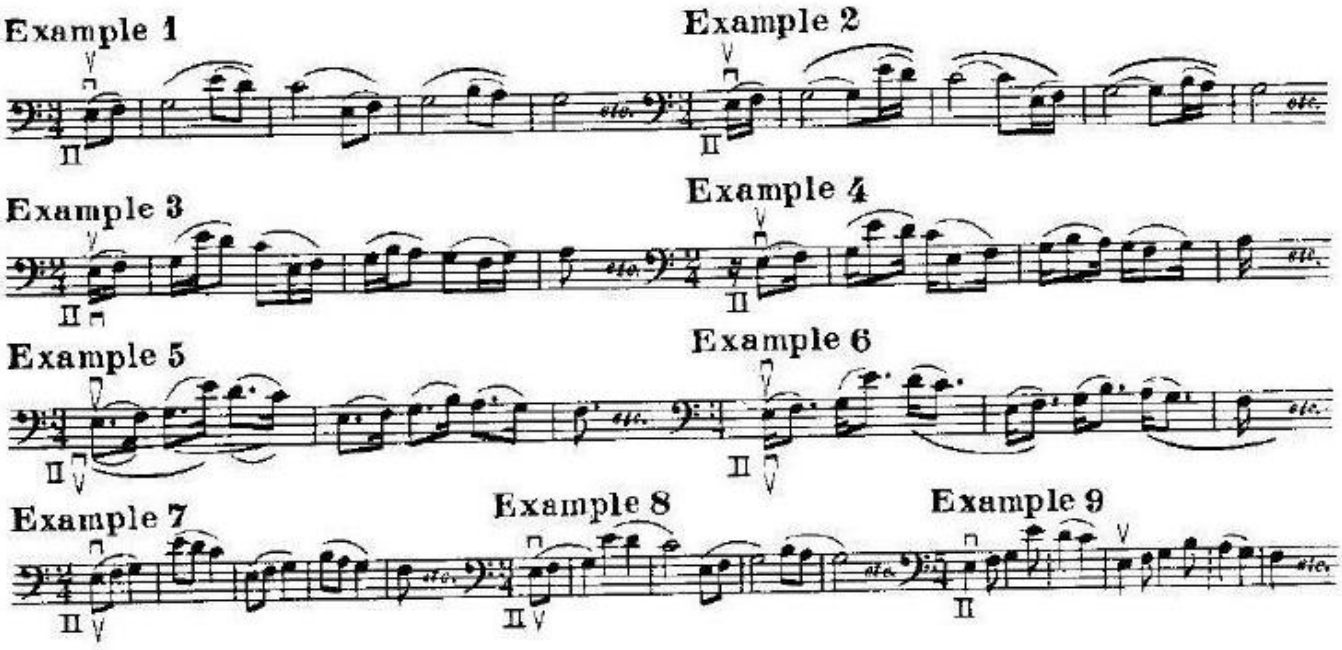
The exercise should be played on the D string up to the sign: ❋
The same exercise should be played in every position, and on all other strings. When the exercise starts on the G or C strings, the ending should go upward.

From the Ninth Position



Note that when the exercise reaches high positions, the third finger is used instead of the fourth.

Rhythm and bowing samples for practising the control exercise

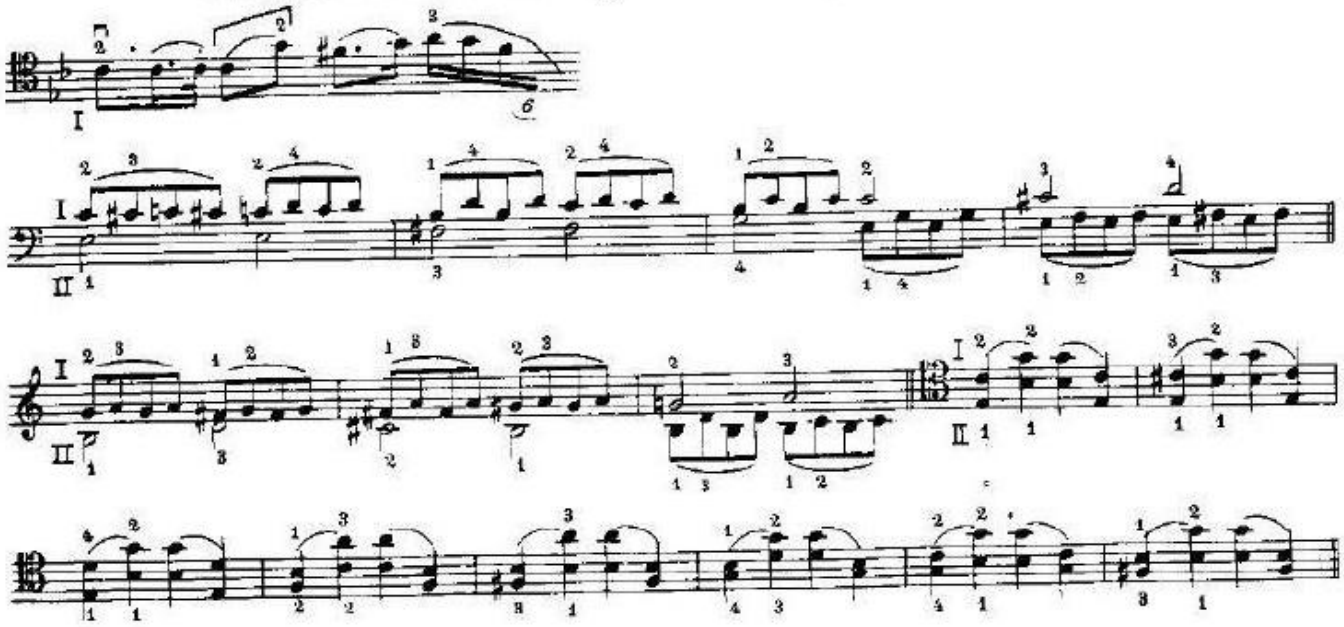


In the control exercises on the previous page the indicated fingerings and bowings intend to develop the so-called "anticipated" connections (shifts). The time for the shift is taken from the beat preceeding the shift. Also, the finger playing the previous note leads the shift.

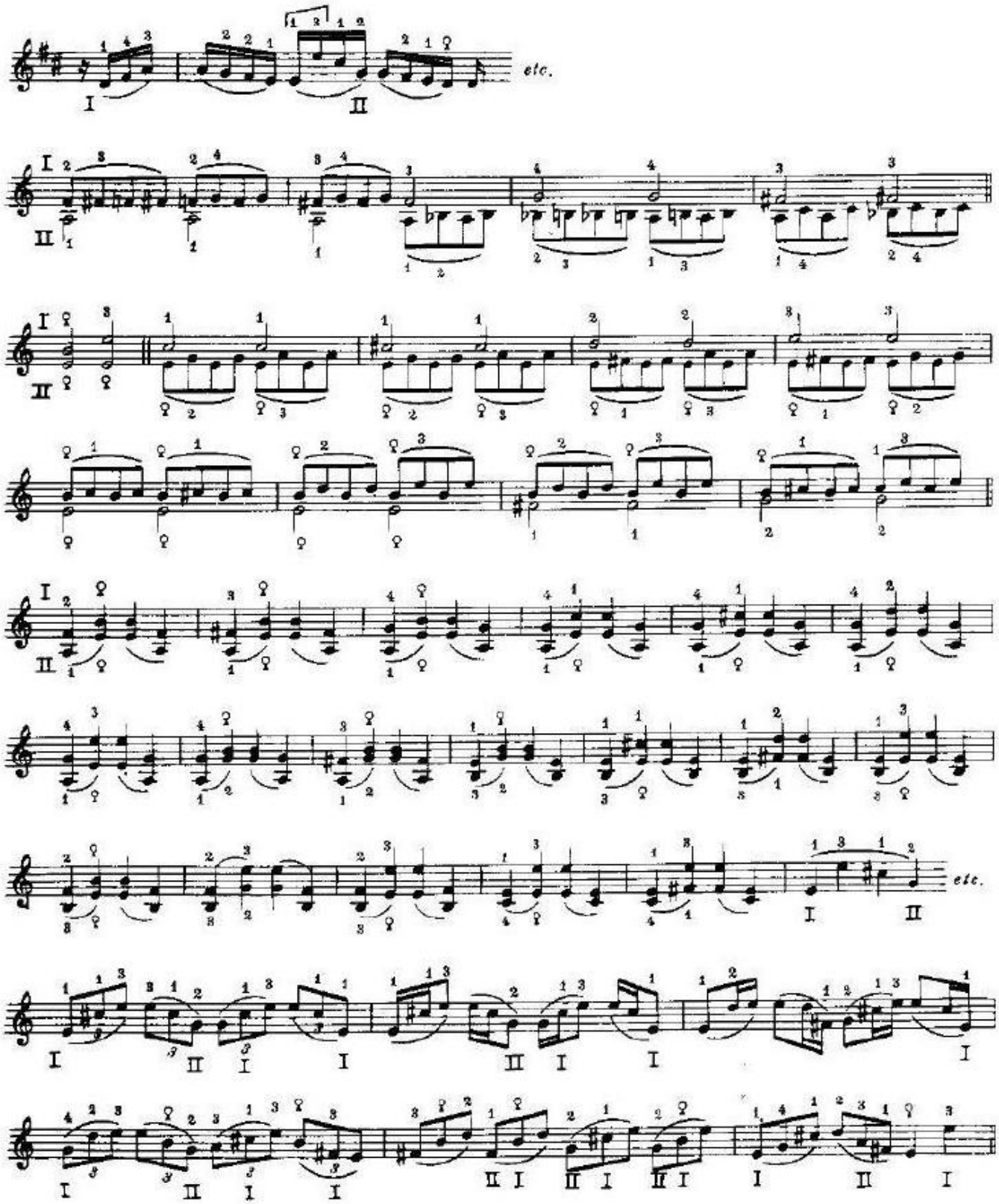
Examples 7-8-9, however, requite, with their bowing patterns, the use of the "delayed" shift. Here the finger playing the note to follow, leads the shift. The action itself is faster and starts on the next beat. Combinations of timing should be individually experimented.

Use of the Method for Practising the Literature

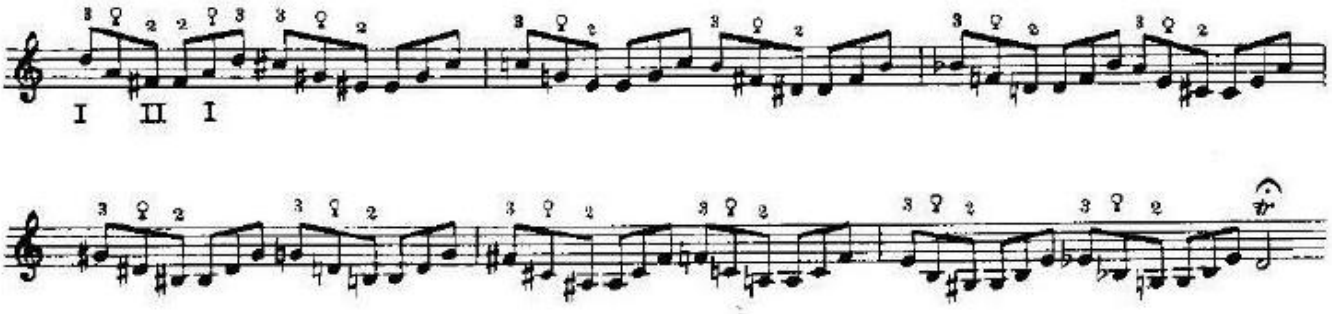
Boccherini: B flat Major Concerto, 2nd Movement



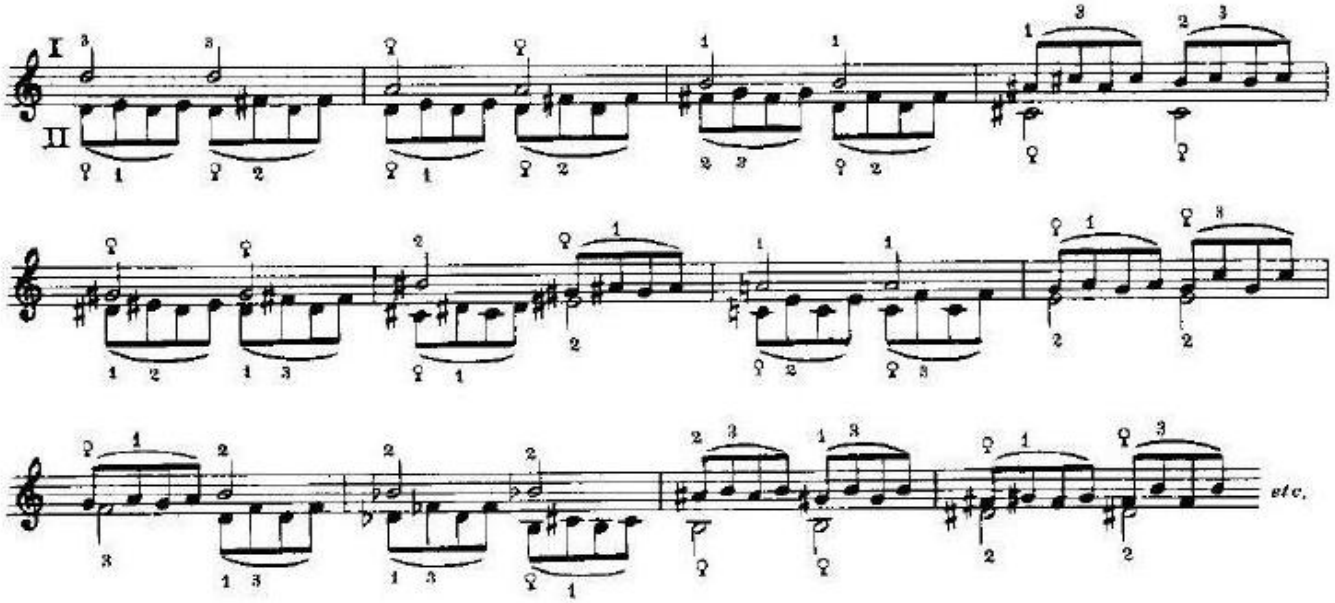
Haydn: Concerto in D Major, 1st Movement



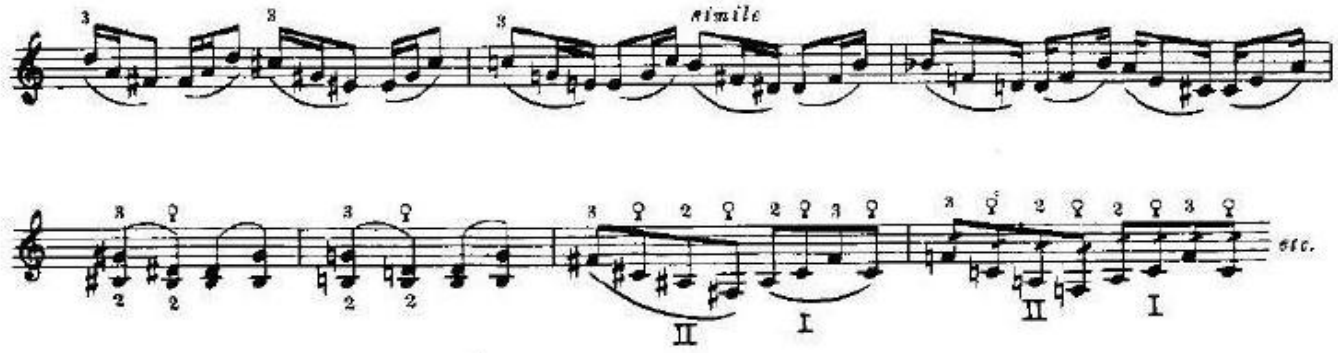
Saint-Saens: Concerto, 2nd Movement



This passage is a position exercise in itself. It should be practised on all strings and in all positions.

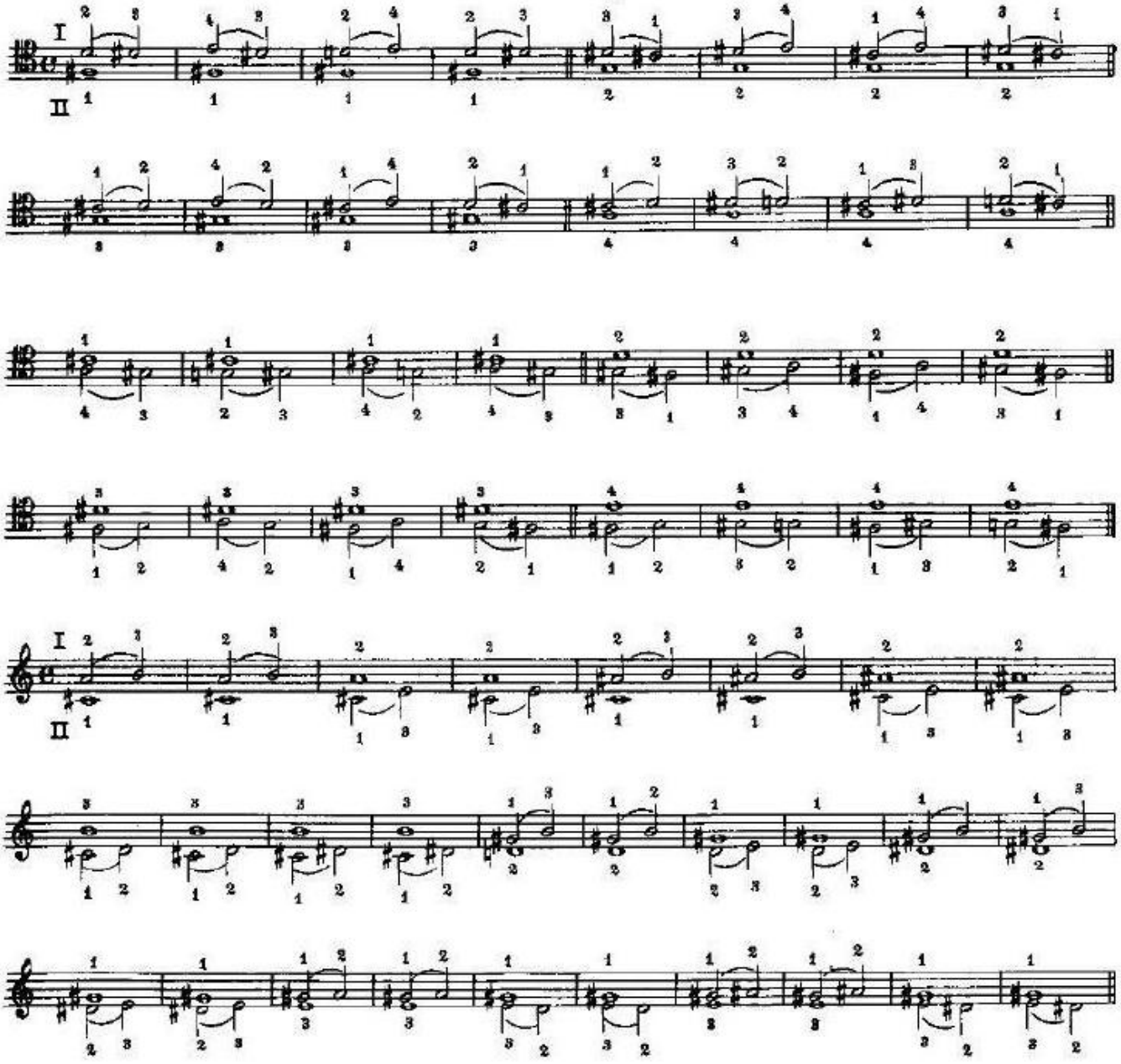


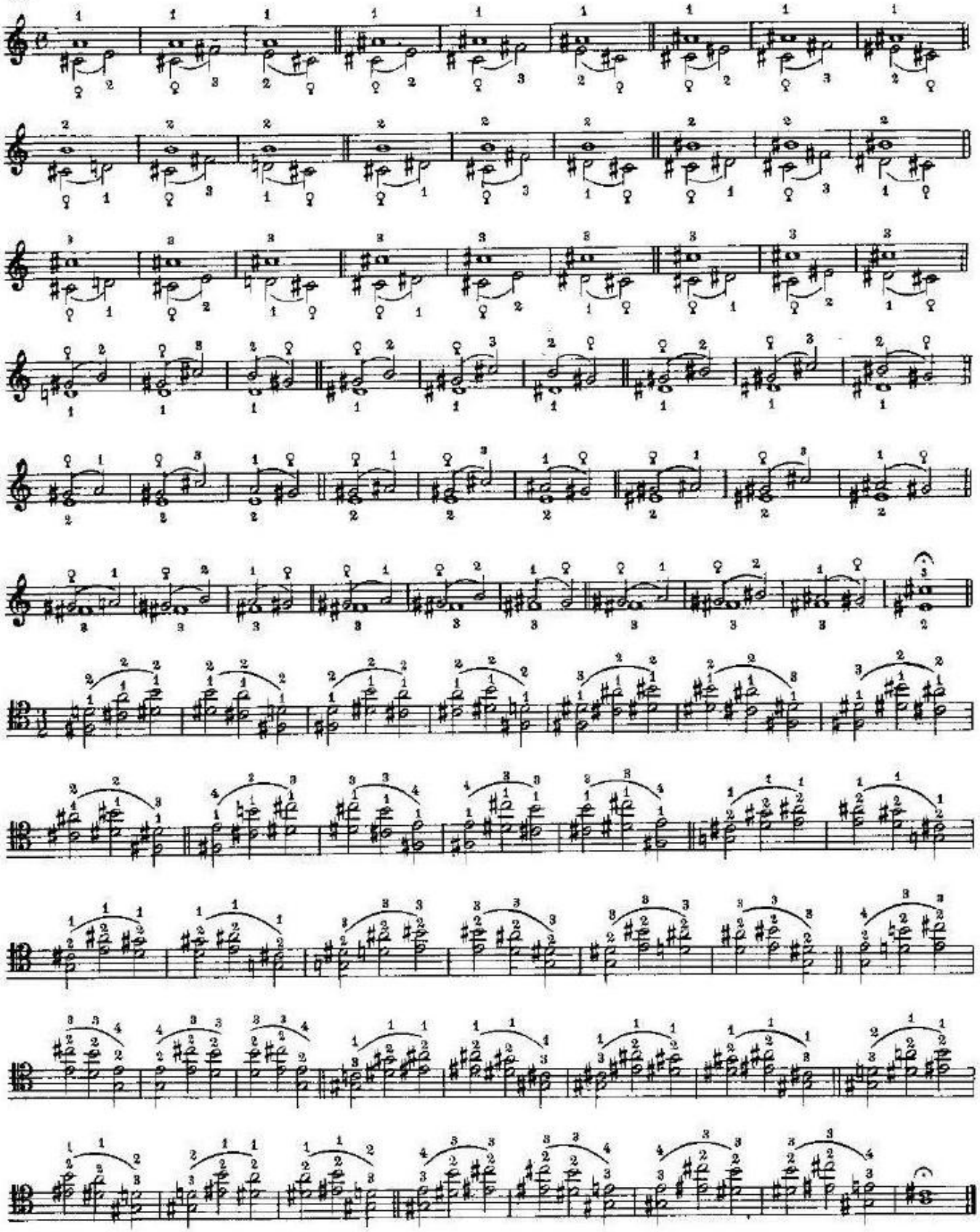
After separating the positions and working them independently, use some of the rhythmic patterns below.



Dvorak: Concerto, 1st Movement

The proposed fingering is one of many possibilities. Musically, however, this proved to be the most satisfactory.





The seemingly unnecessary combinations used in these sample exercises all occur in the respective positions. These will help the player to learn a "territory" on the cello instead of only the single passage at hand.

GUIDE FOR POSITION EXERCISES

This guide intends to help the actual application and development of all the available positions and the combinations thereof. We note eight four finger positions, four three finger positions, and one octave of the thumb positions. These thumb positions should be continued at will. The proposed practising process is the following:

Step 1. Select a position. Take two double stops. Repeat one after the other as on pages 7 and 8 of the method.

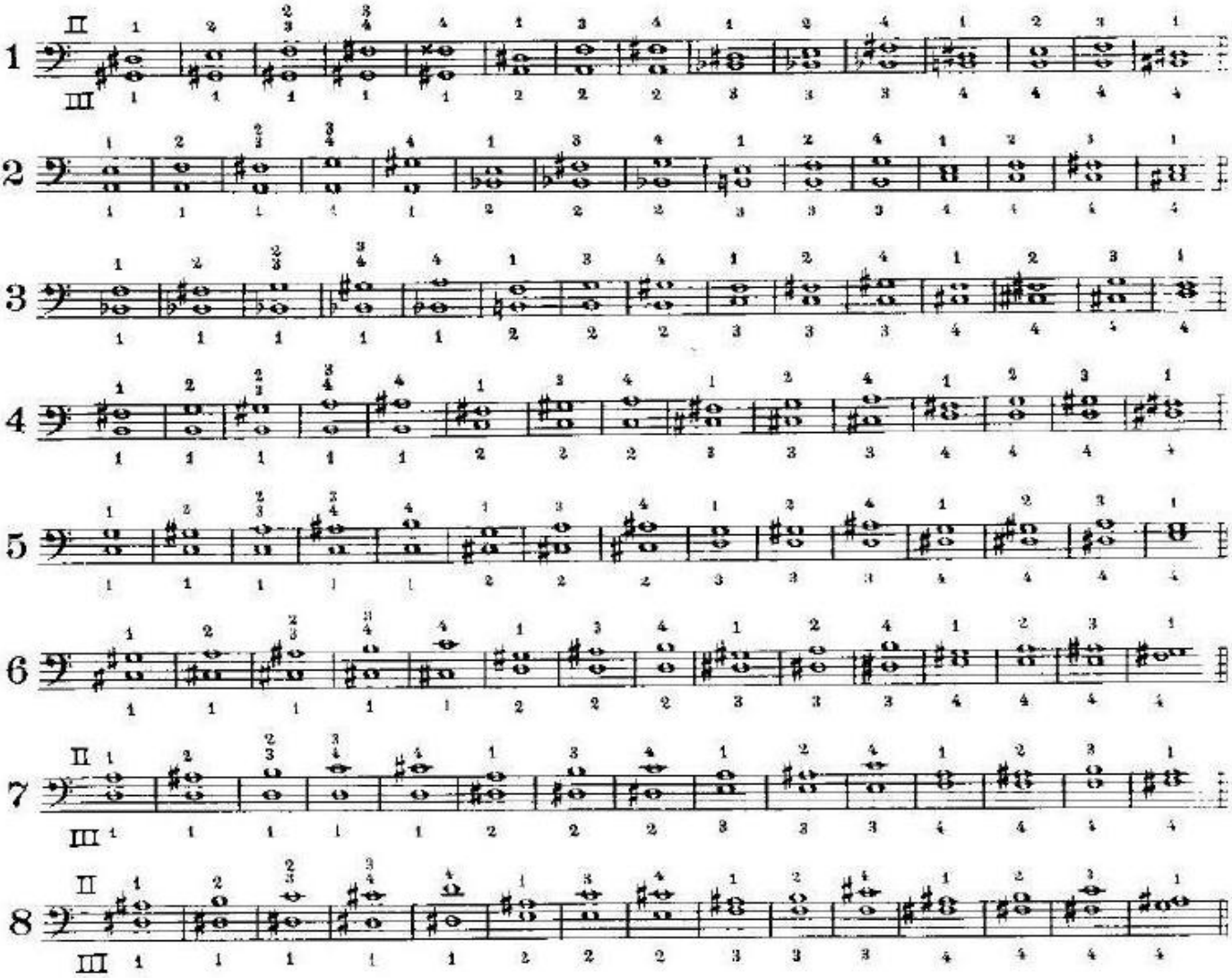
Step 2. Select any other position, preferably a distant one at the beginning, and proceed the same way.

Step 3. Take a double stop from Step 1 and connect to all double stops in Step 2 as seen in the connection of position exercises.

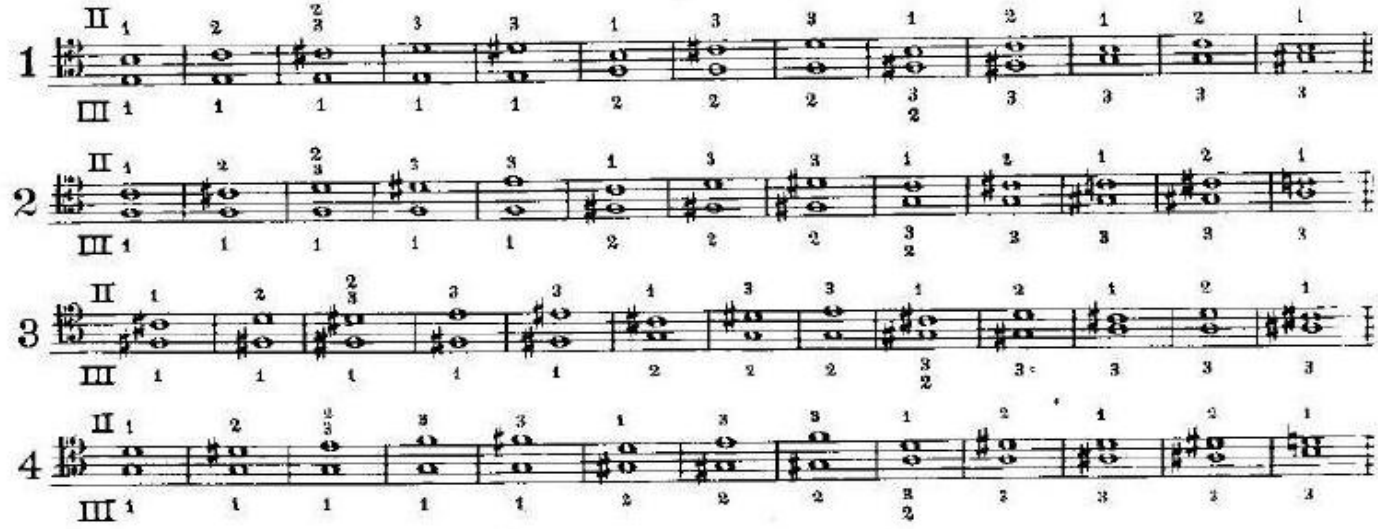
Step 4. Use the control exercises in both positions (Step 1 and Step 2) as on pages 10 and 11. Naturally the positions shown in the guide are applicable on the neighboring string combinations as well.

The teacher of beginners should write out short combination exercises for the student eliminating the double stops.

Four Finger Positions



Three Finger Positions



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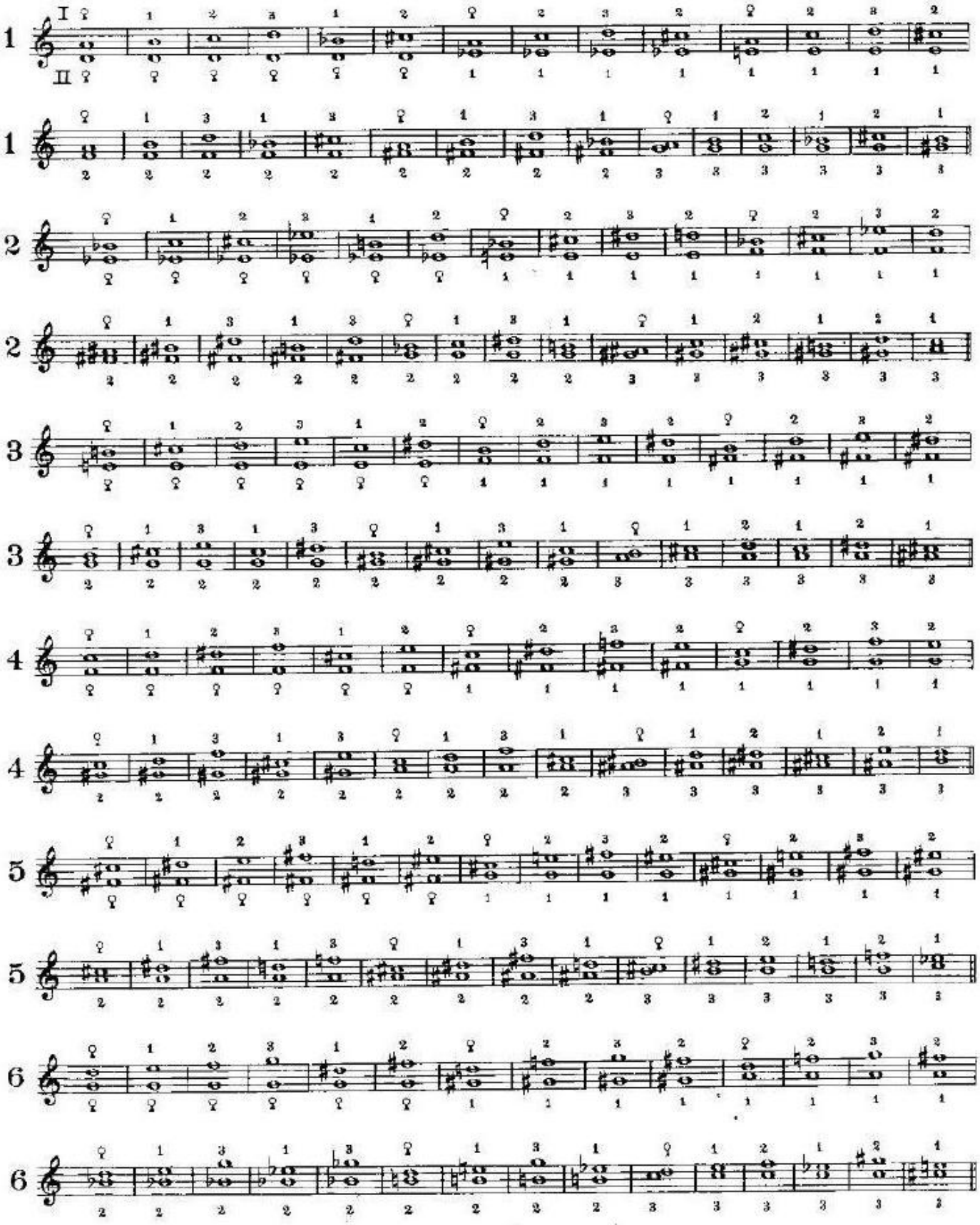
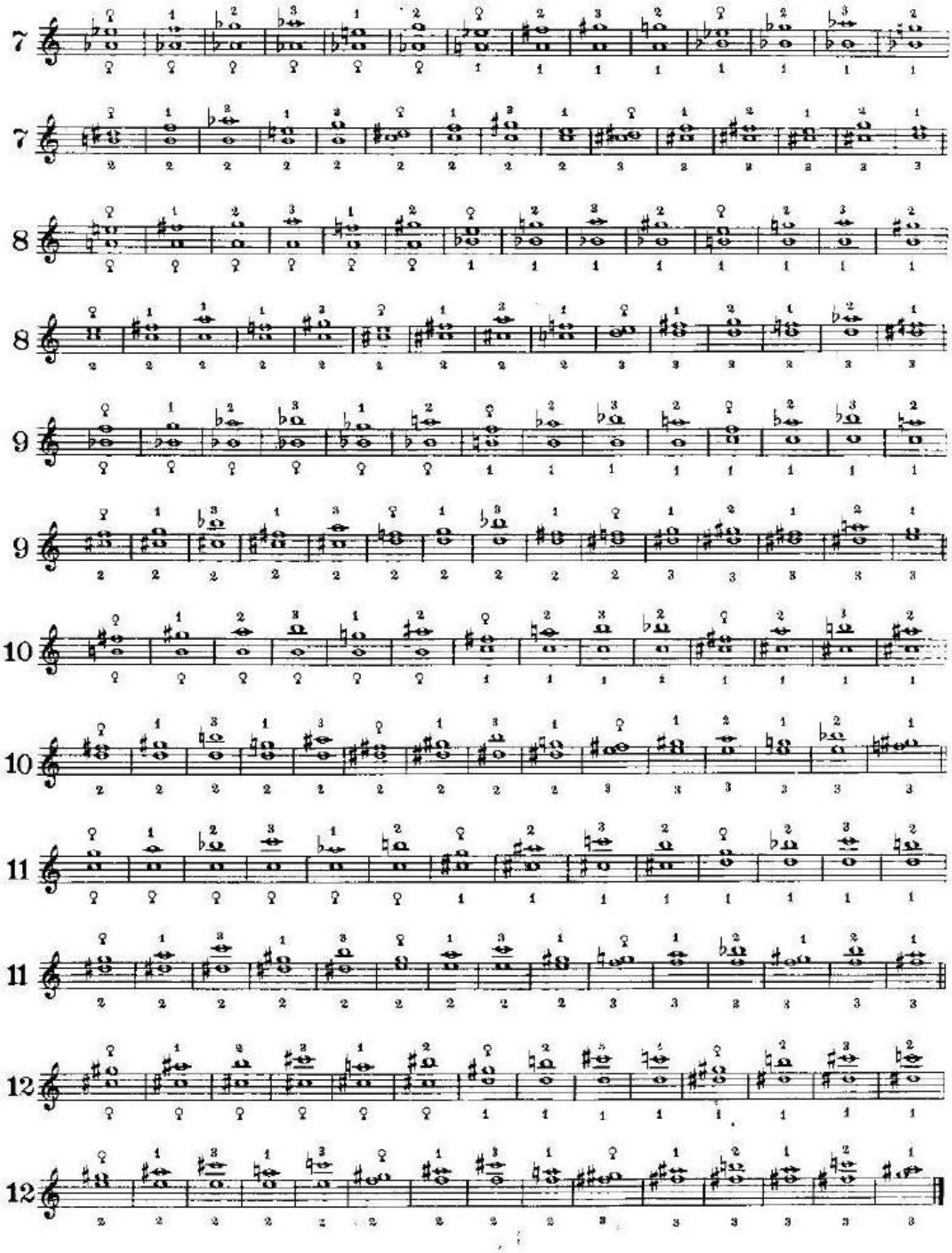
Thumb Positions

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