BREATH CONTROL
Range and Endurance
Developed Through Chromatic Technique

from the

Charles Colin Complete Modern Method for Trumpet or Cornet

CHARLES COLIN — 315 West 53rd St., New York, N. Y. 10019

BREATH CONTROL

You Are the Instrument

By Dr. CHARLES COLIN

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You Are the Instrument

Have we really taken the time to analyze the important role our breathing plays in constantly rebuilding and molding our bodies for the purpose of blowing into a brass instrument?

Ever since the beginning of time, deep-rooted cultures from far-off lands (such as India) have penetrated deeply into an advance discipline of breathing. This has been brought down through the ages; the study of it has developed a phenomenon in gaining mastery and control of one's entire physical structure.

Our muscular development, reflexes, coordination and control are influenced by our breathing patterns. Our facial and body muscles are influenced and must be nourished by this energizing necessity.

Instinctive awareness of pitch sensibility is influenced by our breath manipulation. Our breathing apparatus is the main circuit for muscular coordination. Since blowing into a brass instrument is such an unnatural physical feat, it is the aggressive, abnormal push on the breath that actually stimulates and activates our reflexes.

Laws of Nature establish and govern our entire motorized physical muscular reflexes, and it is through constant training and discipline in exercising that we gradually draw on all our necessary operative muscles. This is the basis for drawing our reflexes into focus, thereby locking in our effort into a more productive muscular performance.

Our sensory-muscular awareness hinges on both our "Breath Intake and Output." The "Intake" should be effortless, because it is one of Nature's uninhibited phenomena. "Breath Output" for a brass instrument is not quite as natural. Breath Intake should never be noticeable as it is quite unprofessional to draw attention to an obvious Breath Intake. Regardless of whether we are conscious of it or not, we should reverse our course and shift gears for an all-out "Breath Output." Overemphasizing Breath Intake tends to slow up our muscular conditioned reflexes. Relaxed, slow Breath Input has an apathetic tendency of unconsciously retarding the forward impact needed to keep our Breath Output aggressive. Spasmodic "stop and go" or "on and off" action decreases breath efficiency and devitalizes our lip vibrations. Breath Output generates vitality and must perform like an uninterrupted, turned-on faucet.

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A preconception of sound, together with a good foundation in breath articulation is an essential factor in order to gain control, and make possible the unlimited facets of one's individual creativeness. This understanding is valuable in order to create varying combinations of colors in sounds.

There is no diamond-studded, magic wand built into any brass instrument which will transform any of us overnight into super artists. There are no short cuts, nor any hidden secrets. Neither is there any secret formula to blowing into a brass instrument, because it is the physical body that is actually the instrument.

It is because our mechanical equipment remains constant that we are able to make certain changes within our own muscular structure. The body, through application, gradually and finally adjusts to every peculiarity of every newly acquired mouthpiece or instrument. Since there are no two instruments ever built identically, the same applies to mouthpieces. Artistically contrived instruments within their individualistic characteristics are highly sensitive. Once built, an instrument never changes; therefore, the change must be within ourselves. A brass instrument does not make us play. We are the total instrument; we create the human need. Our breath, generated by body energy, blowing through the instrument makes the instrument play.

When we form the fleshy part of our lips to create a human reed, it is the breath supported by our body muscles that actually is the basis of brass instrument playing. The reed is one of the first important resistances set up to receive the violence of our articulation.

Some may be under the illusion that they can depend upon the amplifier (the brass instrument), but the instrument is solely dependent upon us. First and foremost, our body then becomes the flexible instrument that molds and adjusts itself in order to feed into the amplifier (mouthpiece and horn).

Whenever we decide to change our equipment, we must be prepared to make whatever necessary mental and physical adjustments, especially after our conditioned muscular motorized reflexes are already established and deep rooted.

The development of the vital muscles located in the corners of the mouth solidifies, strengthens and *supports our lip setting for our mouthpiece placement. The constant training* of Breath Output draws on our facial muscular structure. By Nature, each of us is endowed with different teeth formation, size of tongue, oral cavity, etc. This differs the same as fingerprints. Nevertheless, the way in which we train and utilize our breath through our God-given physical endowments has a direct bearing in controlling all of these essential areas.

Our tongue muscles are one of the vital supports for our breath output. They direct, control and guide the velocity of our breath for slurring, flexibility and legato playing. The tongue adjusts the air column, similar to the adjustable nozzle of a garden hose.

Breath accenting and breath pulsations are synonymous. Over-emphasizing and over-exaggerating during early basic breath calisthenics should be encouraged, but only for the purpose of clinical practice. As the momentum of tempo gradually increases, our physical structure will adjust itself. The basic practice of a slowing-down process by initial over-exaggeration, unmusical forced breath pulsation, should be used only as a jumping-off point to launch our proper motor mechanized reflexes. This early painstaking training is for the purpose of "Getting It All Together," and requires infinite time, patience and understanding to nurture this technique.

Once this training becomes firmly entrenched, the basic exaggeration will gradually reduce itself to a very bare minimum. This filtering-out process then becomes a conditioned reflex and a very integral part of our stabilized muscular activity.

WARM UP IS A MISNOMER

The phraseology "Warm Up" is a misnomer. Phraseologies such as Tonguing, Lip Slurring, "Breathing from the Diaphragm," are also gross misnomers. In the purest sense of these phraseologies, we neither tongue, lip slur, or breathe from the diaphragm. Neither do we "Warm Up" or "Warm Down." The function of the supposed "Warm Up" is to activate and stimulate our physical muscle structure. This is essential for readying a human reed to receive a brass mouthpiece.

All laws of logic and Nature are ruptured when, through ignorance, one persists in brutally misusing and beating one's facial muscles to a pulp, in order to pound them into shape. Brute force throws delicate, sensitive facial muscles into a state of shock, which is the result of uncontrolled frustration and panic. Even though Nature is kind and understanding and long suffering, it does not make it right that Nature should take so inhumane punishment and then be expected to reverse the physical damage instantly. It may accept such punishment for a limited amount of time but in due time it catches up and finally takes its toll.

"Warming Up" should stimulate the necessary facial and body muscles. These delicate muscles must be nurtured gently and patiently, step by step, devoid of any forcefulness, because the eye-ear-cheek-chin muscles all contribute strength and endurance.

Riding on our air column is synonymous to riding on interchanging breath syllables. This technique is supported by tangible buoyancy on our diaphragm muscles, and put into motion, this establishes a steady flow of supported breath.

Although hammer-like fingering is essential, it is important that the major emphasis should be the air column, allowing our finger reflexes to be carried along as we ride on the air column. It is essential to establish an understanding or concept of the finest quality tone we can conceive, and use this as a mental image for sound projection.

In order to play a wind instrument, normal breathing must be trained to take on a bigger work load. This doesn't just happen by itself. Therefore, it is necessary to be in constant training just prior to actual performance. We all should physically condition ourselves for preparatory muscular coordination.

Be aware of the many combined functional muscles which contribute and support the necessary framework for the buoyant support of the breath. Any one set of muscles should not be given preference because this will lead to muscular imbalance.

For positive, confident lip vibrations, everything must be geared to breath articulation. Muscular coordination may be illustrated by the following example. Imagine that we switch the speed of a movie projector to extreme slow motion. This type of practice naturally slows down our reflexes. It gives us a keener sensitivity to the coordination of many of our physical entities, i.e., ear, eye, breath, etc. We must not take our developed conditioned reflexes for granted because gradual deterioration could sneak in from a hit-and-miss, non-disciplined approach to warming up.

During practice sessions, we must continually be on the alert, we must protect ourselves from any apathetic, subconscious "day dreaming." This can very easily rob us of our powers of concentration so vital as to become the master of the actual instrument—the body.

Nature has its own unique way of warning and rebelling against our invasion into its selfish, stubborn territory. Nature fights against any man-made philosophies or self-willed adjustments. It is in constant turmoil, attempting to prevent us from disturbing or shifting our natural reflexes to our whims. A wild horse puts up a ferocious fight before being dominated. A fish fights to the end, before becoming subdued. Therefore, laws of Nature constantly warn us that if we are not dedicated and do not train our muscular structure constantly,

consistently, persistently and radically, Nature's muscles (that were never created to adjust to a piece of brass) will rebel and will take over; then all our labors will have been in vain. Nature's resources will automatically shift right back to original positions to where and how originally created.

Overanxiousness and impatience easily make us overlook, and prevent us from thinking through, many important preliminaries. Mental adjustment should be carefully pondered just prior to playing the horn. No one has ever been free from occasional depressing moments of apathy and discouragement. Naturally we are going upstream and actually fighting against and trying to dominate Nature. Who hasn't experienced "I just don't know what's wrong with me; I just can't get started. Every time I start to blow, nothing seems to happen."? Actually, self-examination is often needed for us to return to the basic fundamentals, especially the "Know How" of how to approach our dilemmas from an intelligent and positive point of view.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. *How do we go about developing a centered sound and a positive sense of pitch?*

A. This is done through various approaches. One, in particular, is to train ourselves to articulate without any hesitation or pre-testing whatsoever. We must set our breath in conformity with our developed sense of pitch in both the mind and sensitory ear. This can be attained through the various means of humming, whistling, singing or breath hissing the pitch, rather than pre-testing or insecure, instinctive guess work. Let's train ourselves to establish the sense of riding on the buoyancy of our diaphragm muscle support in conjunction with our rear tongue muscles. Whatever physical adjustment, either of the foregoing will establish a basis for synchronizing both the mental and the physical, in order to activate this combined force.

Q. *How do we go about developing a formula for developing pitch?*

A. Pitch serves as both a guiding influence and barometer for our entire physical, breath and mental takeover. We must keep reshaping our level of pitch through constant mental practice according to the images of pitch desired. "Practice away from the Horn" helps combat unnecessary tenseness or nervousness. Uptightness can only result in frustration. In order to protect ourselves against such roadblocks, we should play it safe, and revert back to the simple basics in preliminary exercises. Articulation or breath release should be supported by comfortable, buoyant body support. Unnecessary body tension is absolutely taboo.

COORDINATION OF BREATH PULSATION AND FINGER TECHNIQUE:

1) Firm and decisive fingering.

2) Metronomic level should begin as slowly as possible, with a slight gradual increase in speed.

3) Emphasis should be on accented breath pulsation, especially whenever accents are indicated or a natural accent is felt.

4) Whenever a breath-training exercise appears, keep the beat constant and steady. By training one's breath pulsation, this will act as the rhythmic beat.

5) With varied time signatures, when we are confronted with a series of meter changes, use the breath pulsation to keep the quarter note constant.

6) Never overexaggerate breath pulsation.

7) Maintain a steady, smooth, even flow of breath, diaphragmatically supported.

8) Controlled, well-trained, hammer-like fingering will pre-establish the framework for future, unlabored, automatic muscular motor reflexes.

Apply a slow, patient, painstaking approach at the very beginning of each practice session. This establishes authoritative confidence and draws into focus all the following necessary contributing muscles: fingers, wrist, arm and shoulder. In conjunction with these, we even have back-up power from our diaphragm muscles supporting our breath as it spreads the diaphragm muscles out against the rib cage, and, riding comfortably on our body buoyancy, gives us added confidence and total breath support.

The synchronization of only one set of muscles is only a partial contribution to the over-all system of our combined muscles. It is the entire spectrum of our muscular structure that represents the combined training of finger, breath and diaphragm support. When completely synchronized, all our muscular training is set into motion and then contributes all the necessary support from all our combined active physical muscles.

The sensation of riding on the breath is the "Actual Take Over." This sensation must be the aggressor, and the firm, hard, regimented fingering technique merely rides along with it.

Forceful regimenting of fingers still falls under the famous words of wisdom—"A drop of medicine will cure, whereas a teaspoon will kill" is the philosophy. It is well to regiment our finger muscles and put certain demands upon them, but once this is accomplished, relax this rigid discipline and let Nature and the subconscious take over; allow this technique to flow along confidently with a lot of ego as we ride the air column through the horn. You've experienced that good feeling—"If you've got it, flaunt it." (Ego.) Firm, hard, pressing down of our valves has its place nevertheless; it still must be subjected to and only must be carried along as we ride the air column. "It is the Breath that Carries the Fingering," not the fingering that carries the breath.

When we finally find that comfortable groove of riding on the breath, this technique will shift our synchronization into another gear. This now gives us the freedom to call upon, stimulate and motivate all the necessary muscular coordination from muscles in the arm, shoulder, and various contributory muscles.

Our over-all physical anatomy must be kept in a relaxed condition at all times. Yet the counterpart to this is to keep a constant vigilance over the demands for discipline in body support. It takes years to establish a comfortable sense of buoyance within the entire diaphragmatic muscles. Our first step is to never allow ourselves to be subjected to any degree of tenseness whatsoever.

For example, after completing a rather lengthy, exhausting, long-winded passage, this is the crucial time that we must discipline ourselves with the following techniques. Other than the diaphragm muscles encased within the lower rib cage, and surrounding our lower lungs, we should completely relax all other muscles in our body. Approximately a ten-second rest between exercises should be taken. This does not necessarily mean that the built-up buoyancy that we have so comfortably set up has to be dispensed with. Even though our entire body can be put into a relaxed mood, our diaphragm support can still be comfortably expanded, and remain in this fixed position indefinitely. The reason is that we do not have to reset this built-up body support for the next passage. If we do drop this buoyancy and support, we will over-react and over-tax our diaphragm muscles. This can cause panic time when we are searching for that instantaneous right body feel and natural adjustment so naturally built up; and, not having the understanding of these reflexes, we may inadvertently (not realizing its vital importance) discard this support completely. Unthinkingly and without realizing it, we just discard these vital built-up energies.

BREATH CONTROL
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The intent of these exercises were prepared specifically as a discipline for coordinated Rhythmic Accented Breath Pulsation. It is recommended that the preliminary exercises be practiced slowly.

Accelerated speed should be gradually increased when synchornization feels comfortable and secure. Speed increased prematurely could quite often unbalance coordination of Rhythm Breath Pulsation and Finger Synchronization.

During preliminary slow practice discipline in firmness of pressing down of the valves stabilizes muscular development.

Emphasis on dynamic accented "Rhythmic Breath Pulsation" motivates and molds the fluidity of unlabored finger dexterity.

Concentration on rhythmic accented breath pulsation synchronized with rhythmic accented finger firmness is an added dimension, study, and discipline for growth in stabilizing coordination.

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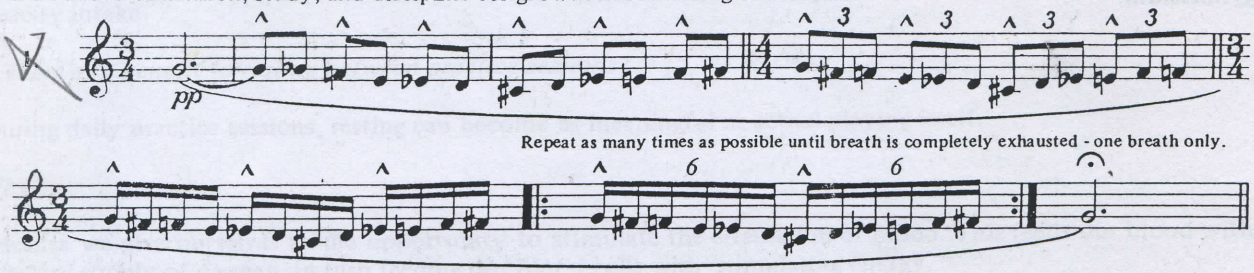

Emphasize rhythmic breath pulsation.

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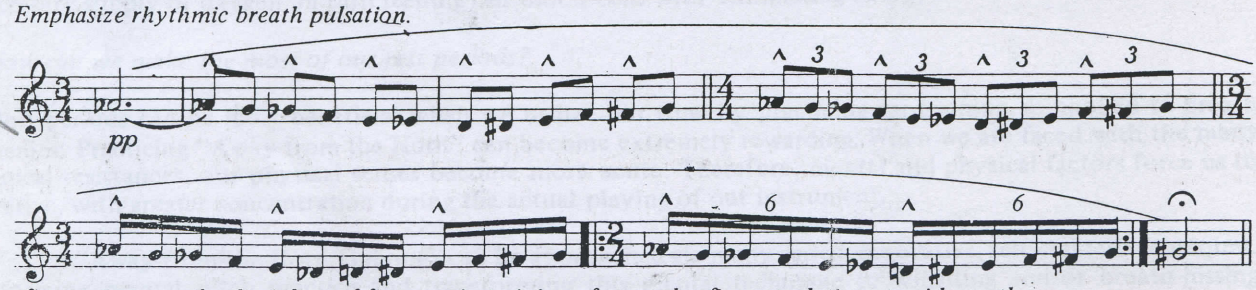

Concentrate on the discipline of firmness in training of muscular finger technique to ride on the rhythmic breath pulsation.

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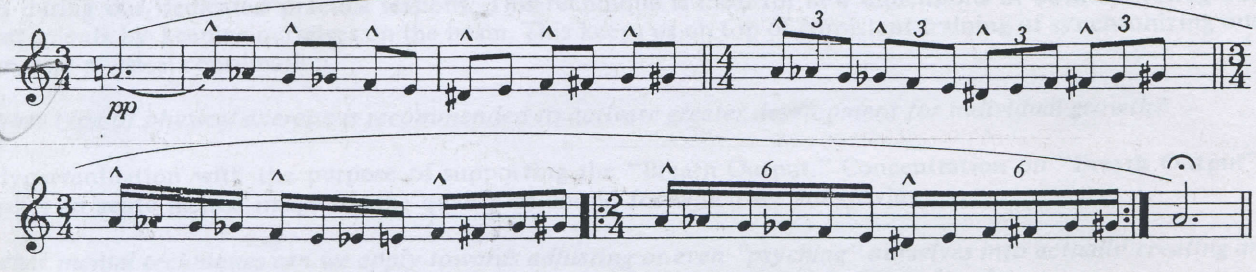

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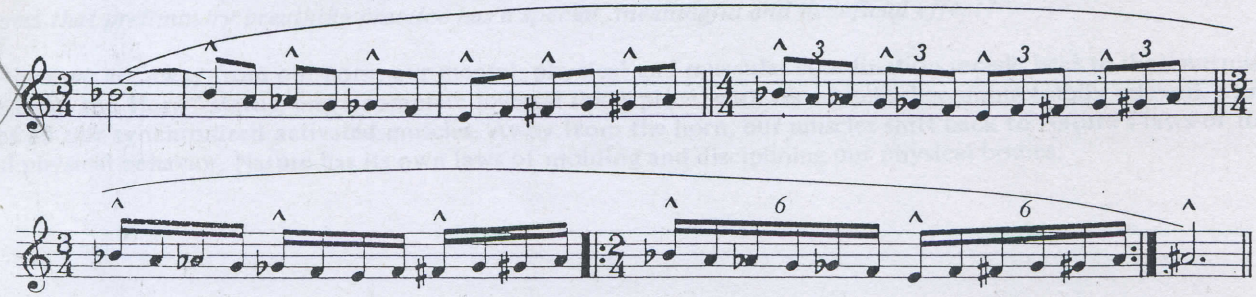

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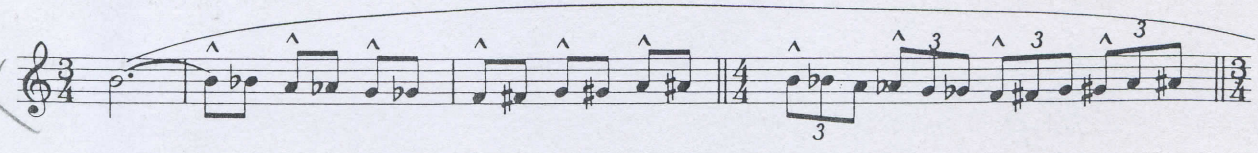

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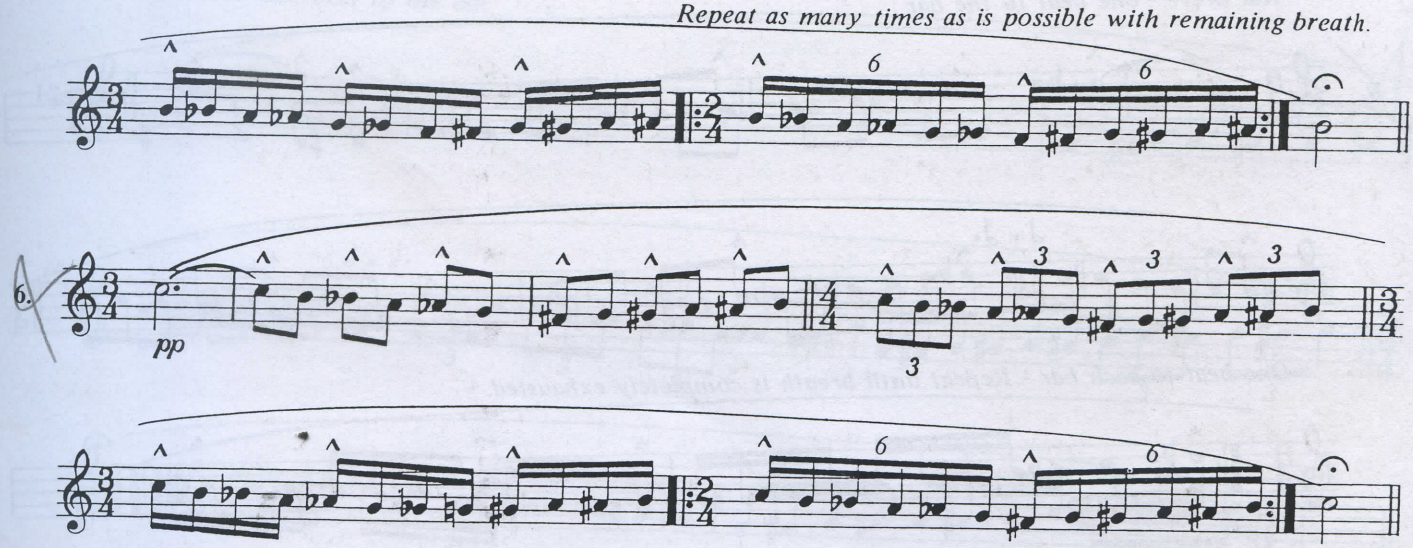
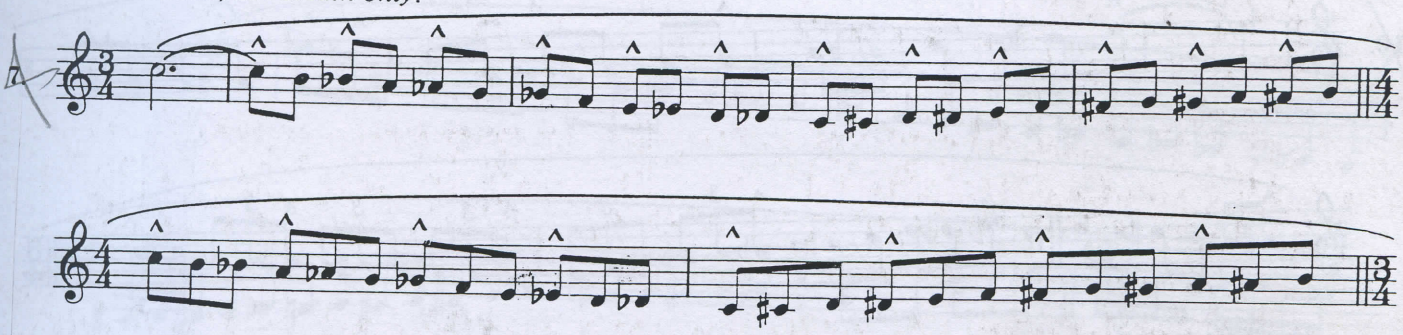
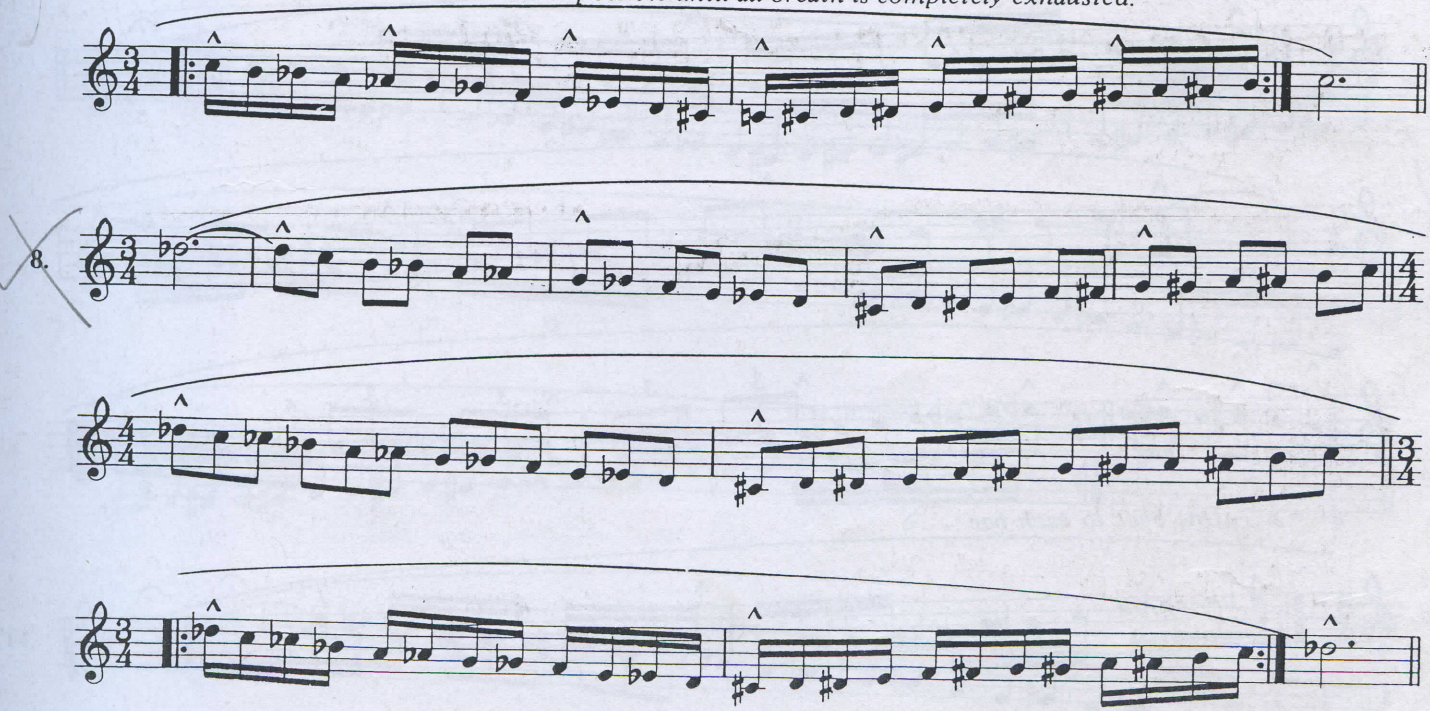
Repeat as many times as is possible with remaining breath.



Entire exercise, one breath only.



Repeat as many in one breath as is possible until all breath is completely exhausted.



Ala Breve - one beat to the bar

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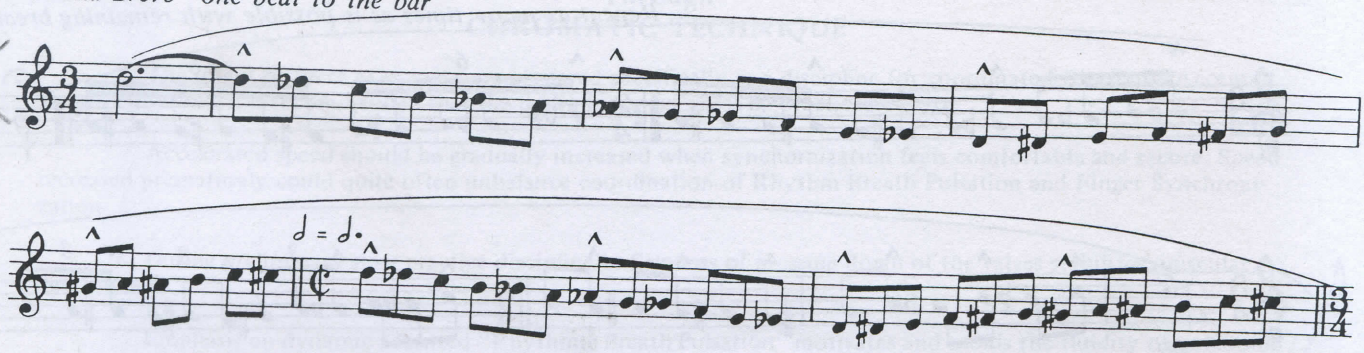
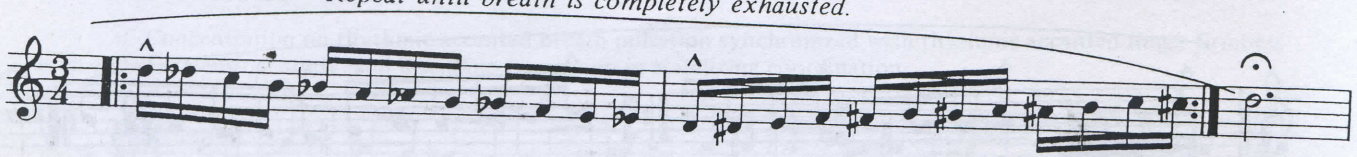


One beat to each bar - Repeat until breath is completely exhausted.



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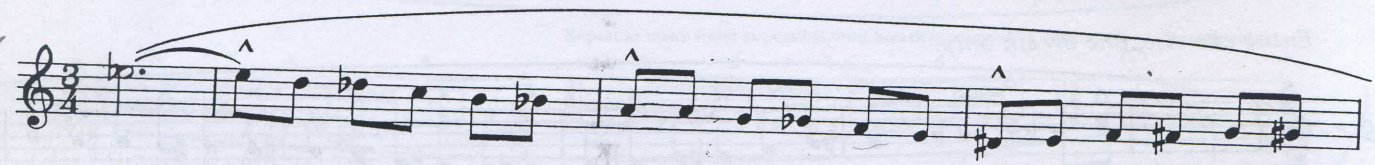
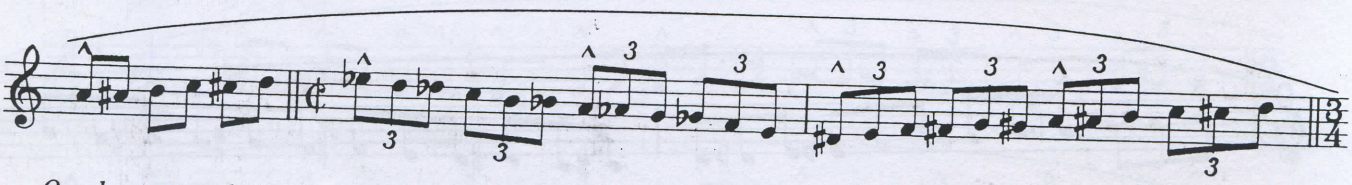
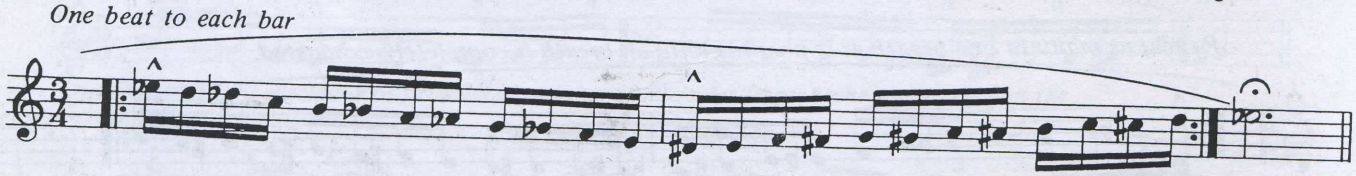




One beat to each bar



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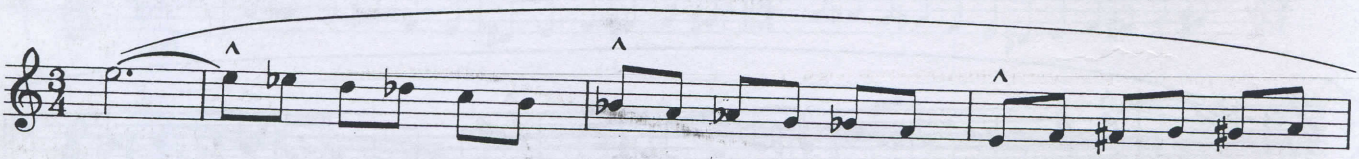
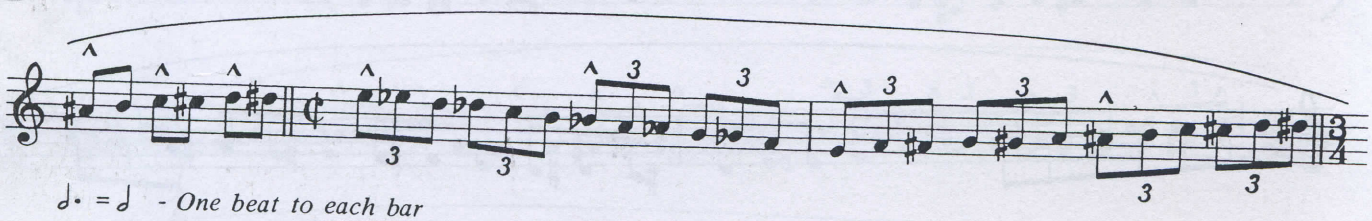
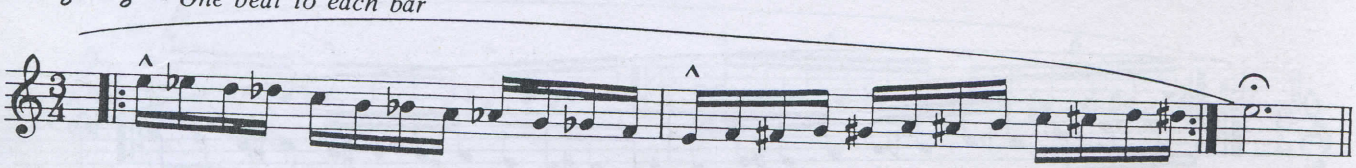




♩. = ♩ - *One beat to each bar*



Ala Breve - one beat to the bar

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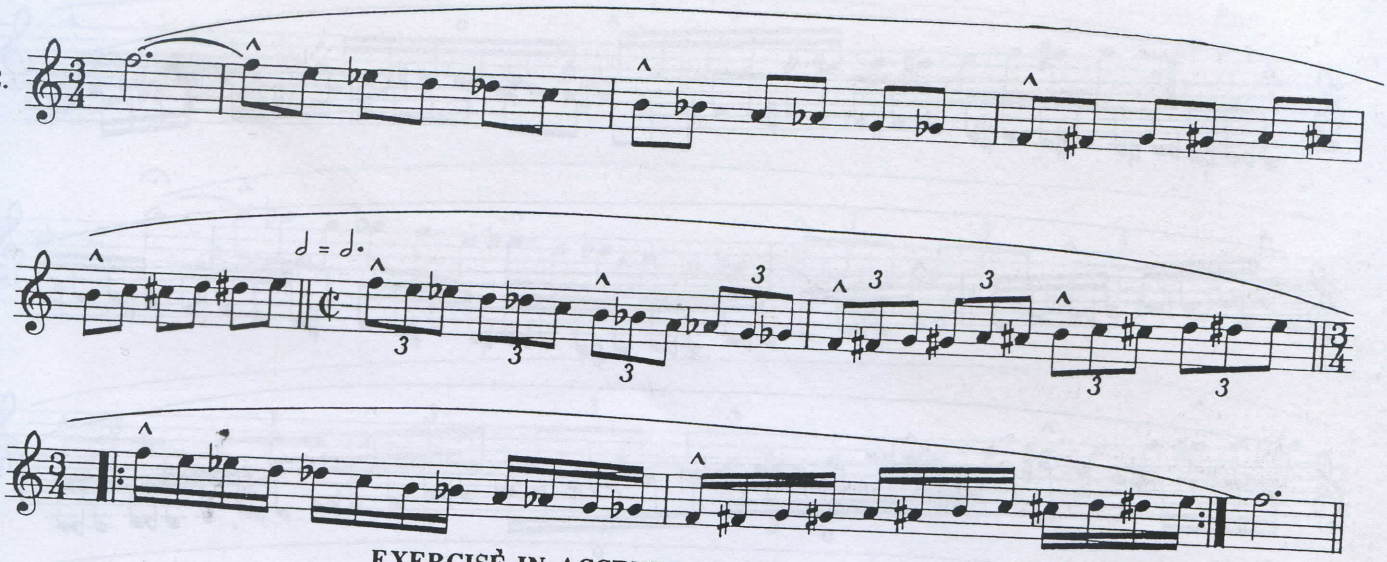
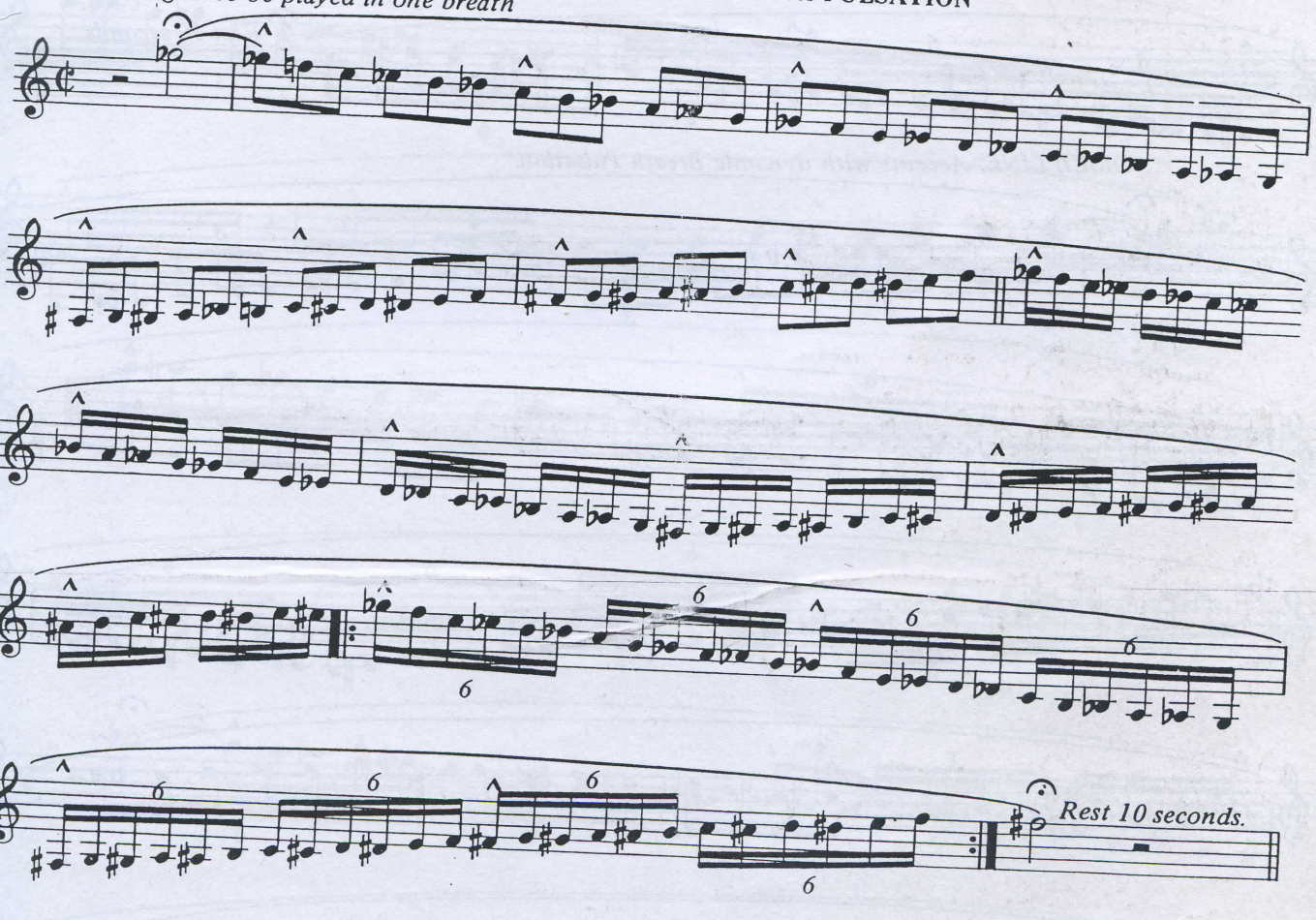


EXERCISE IN ACCENTED BREATH PULSATION

Ultimate goal to be played in one breath

13.



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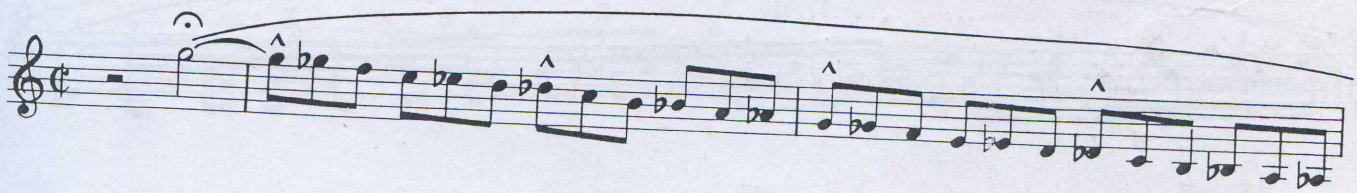

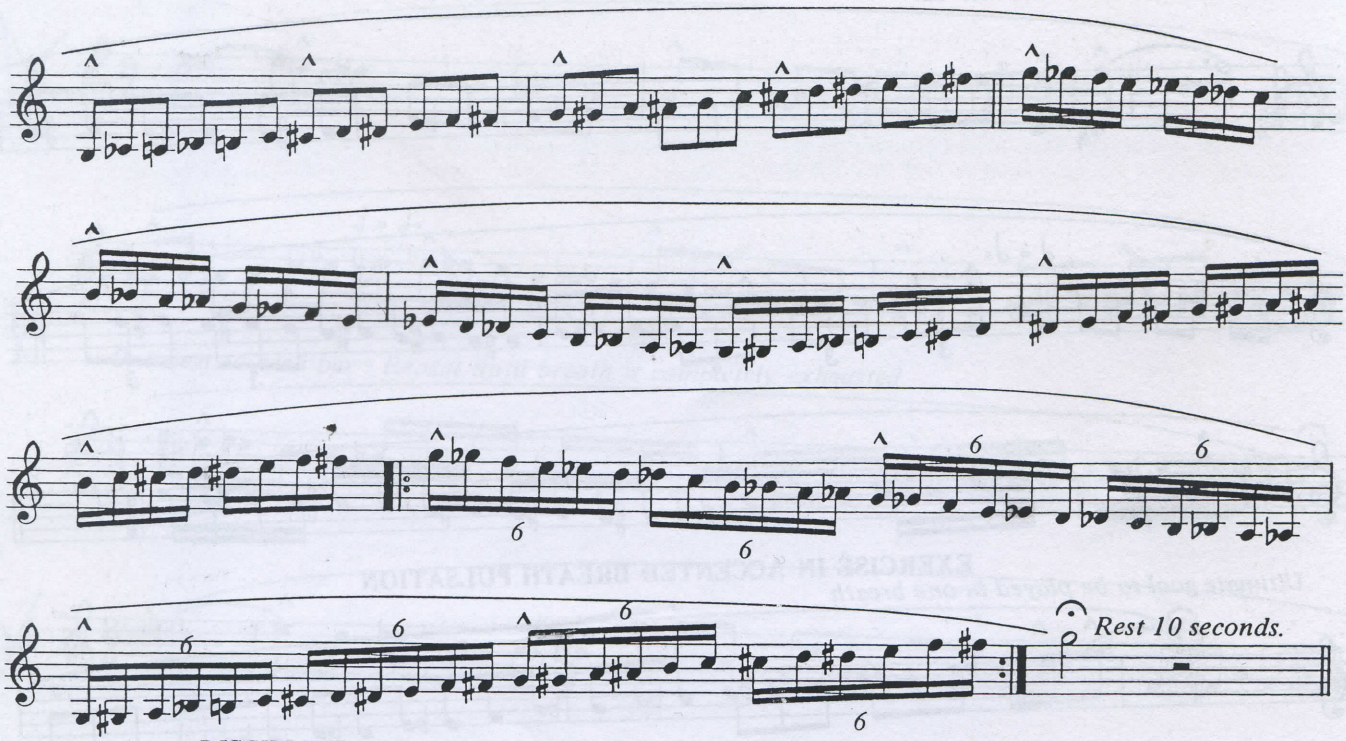

DISCIPLINE. Accents with dynamic Breath Pulsation.

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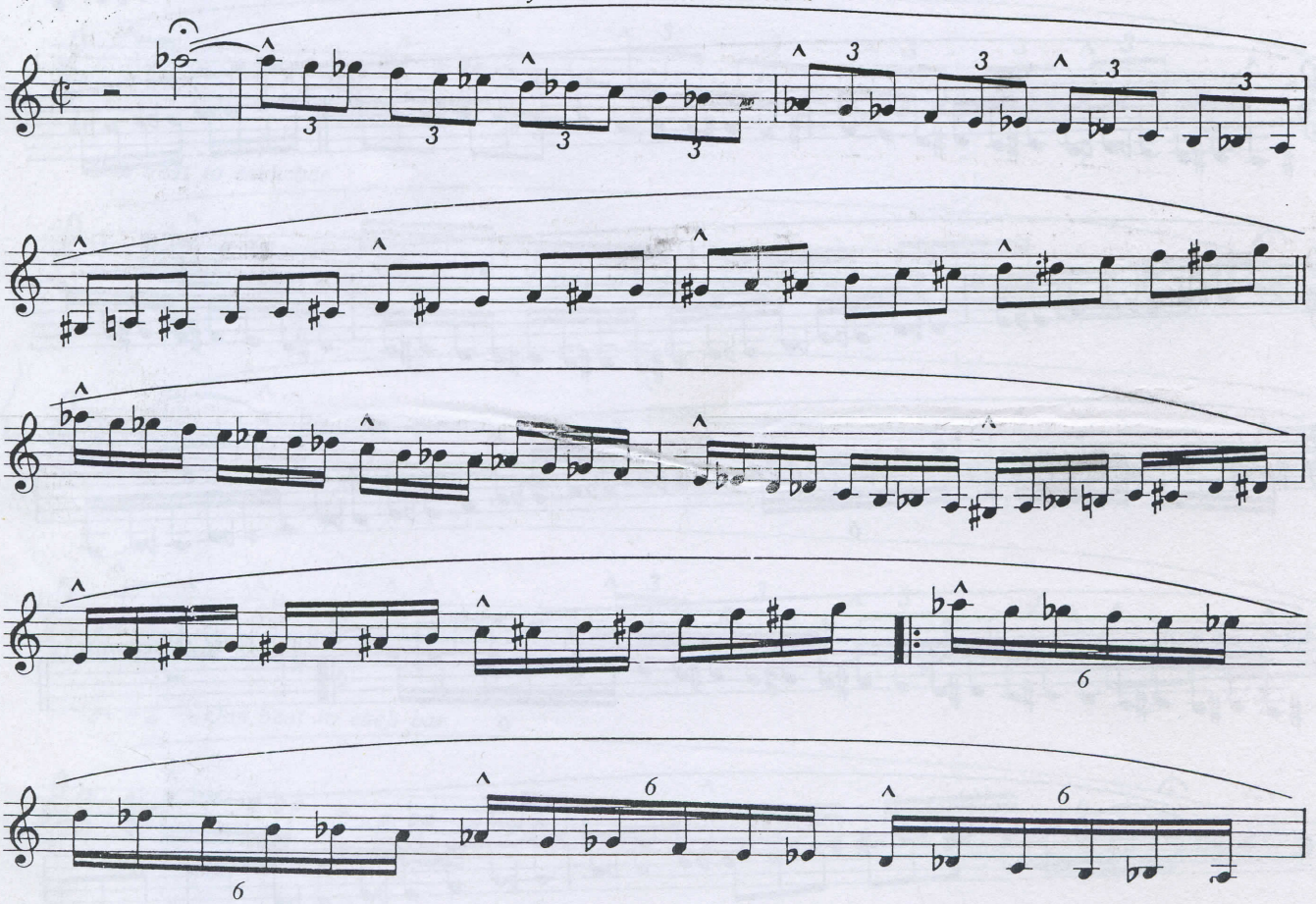

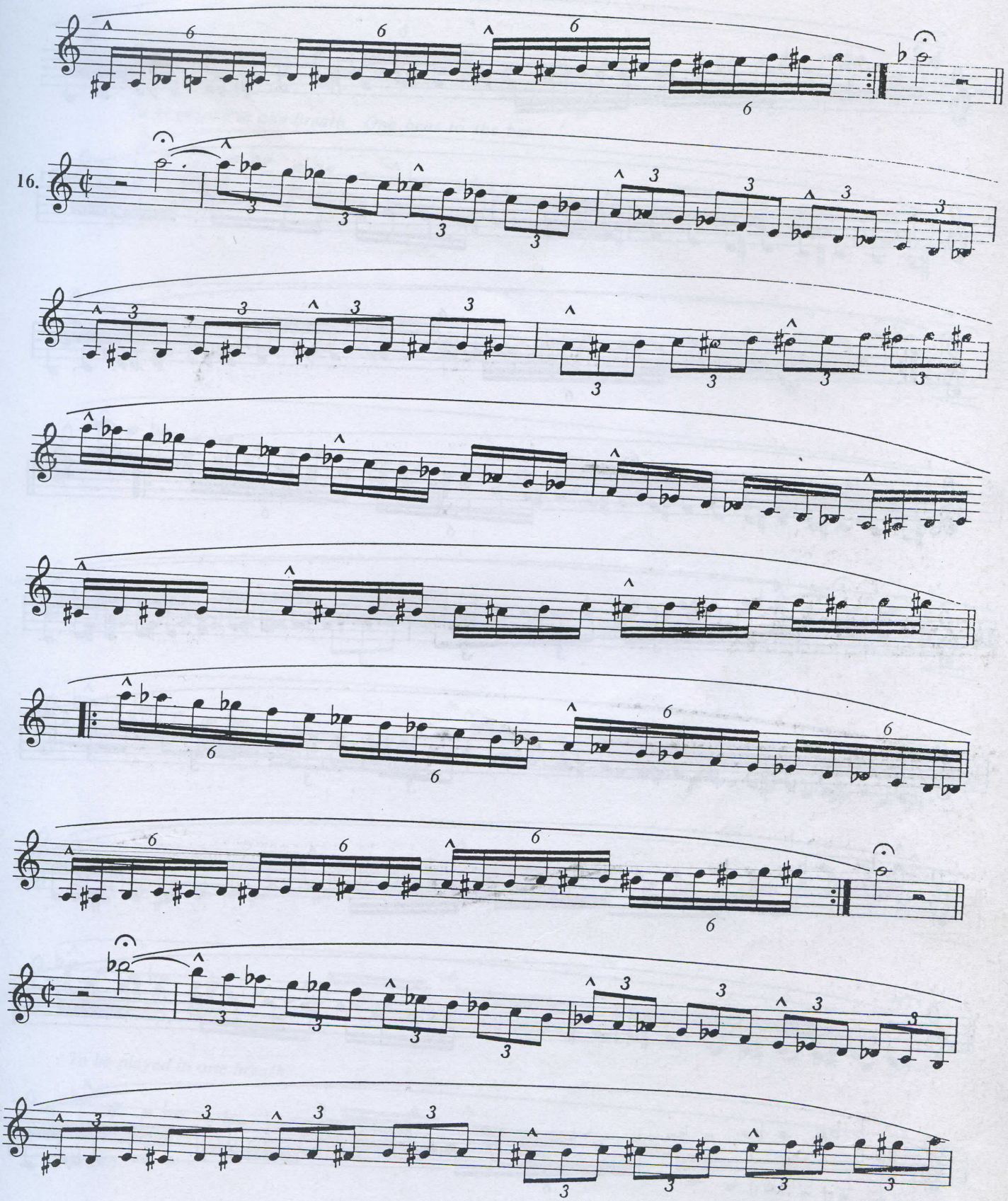
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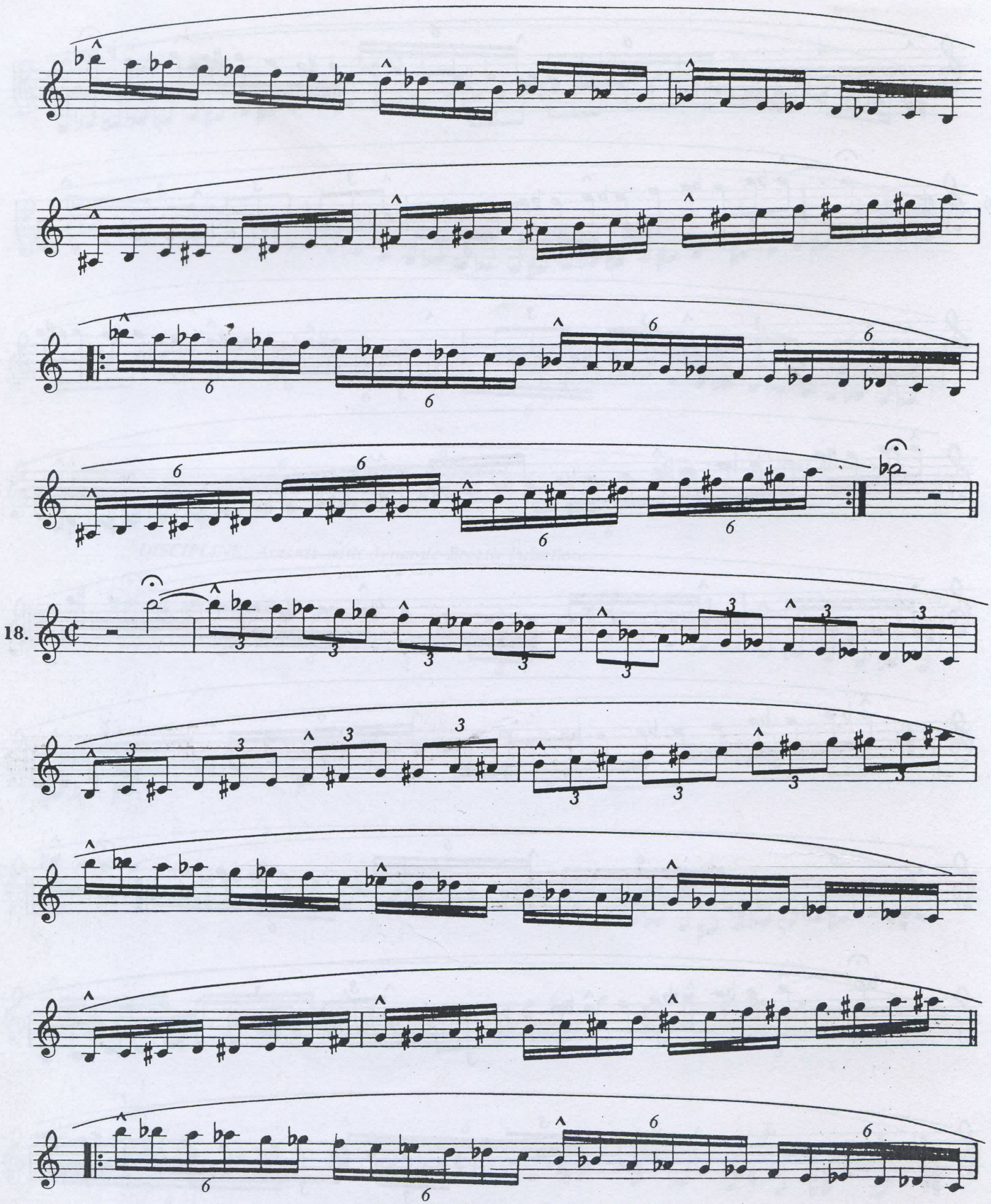
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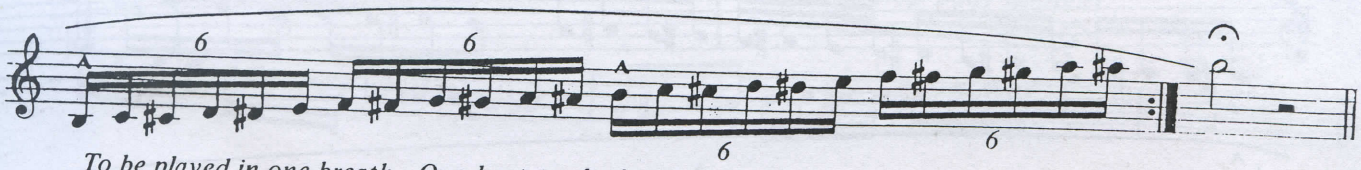
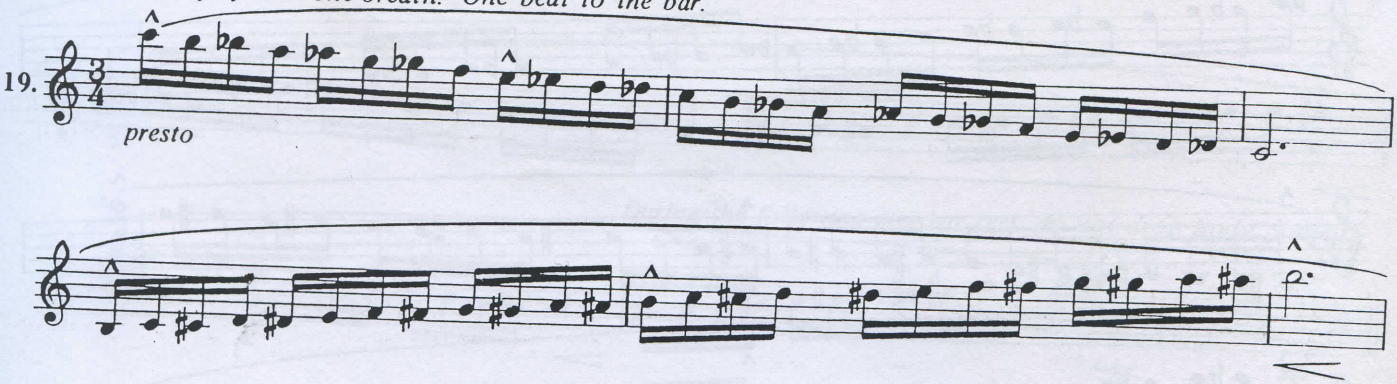
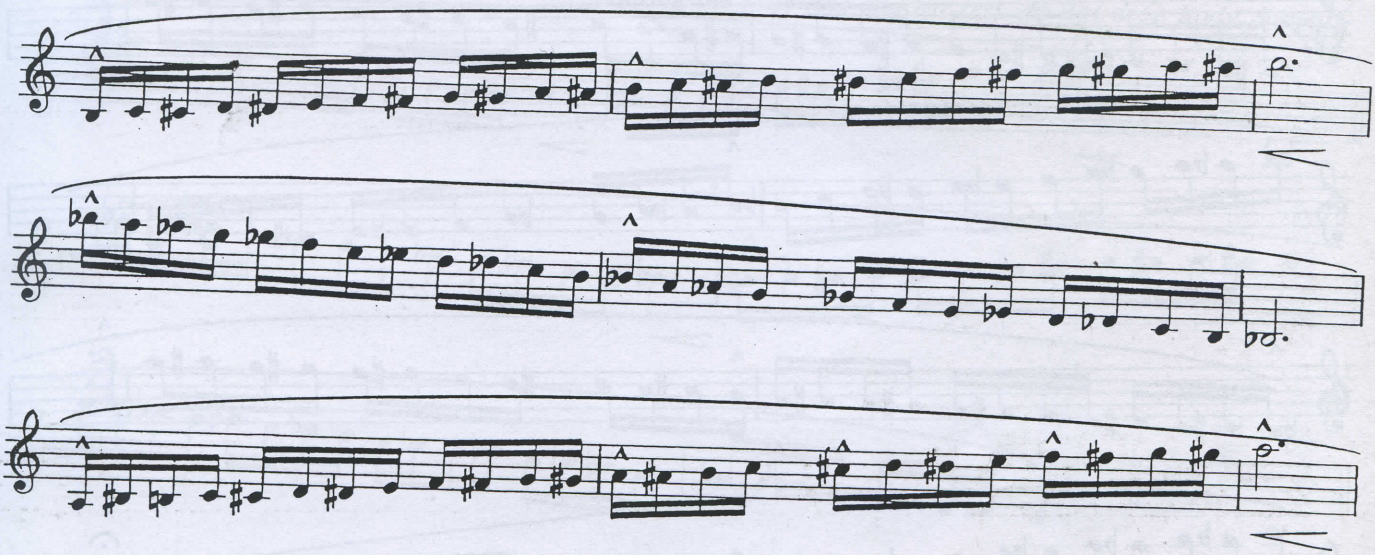


To be played in one breath. One beat to the bar.

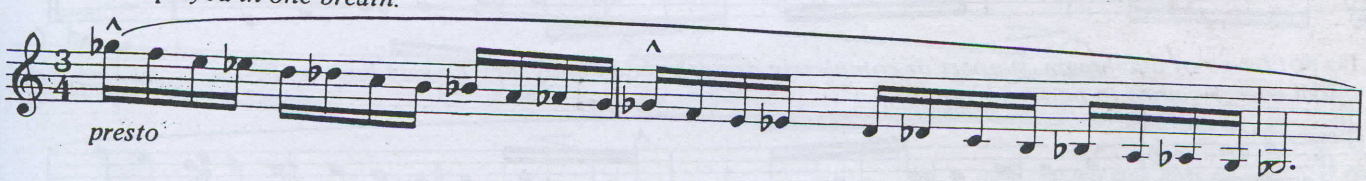
19.

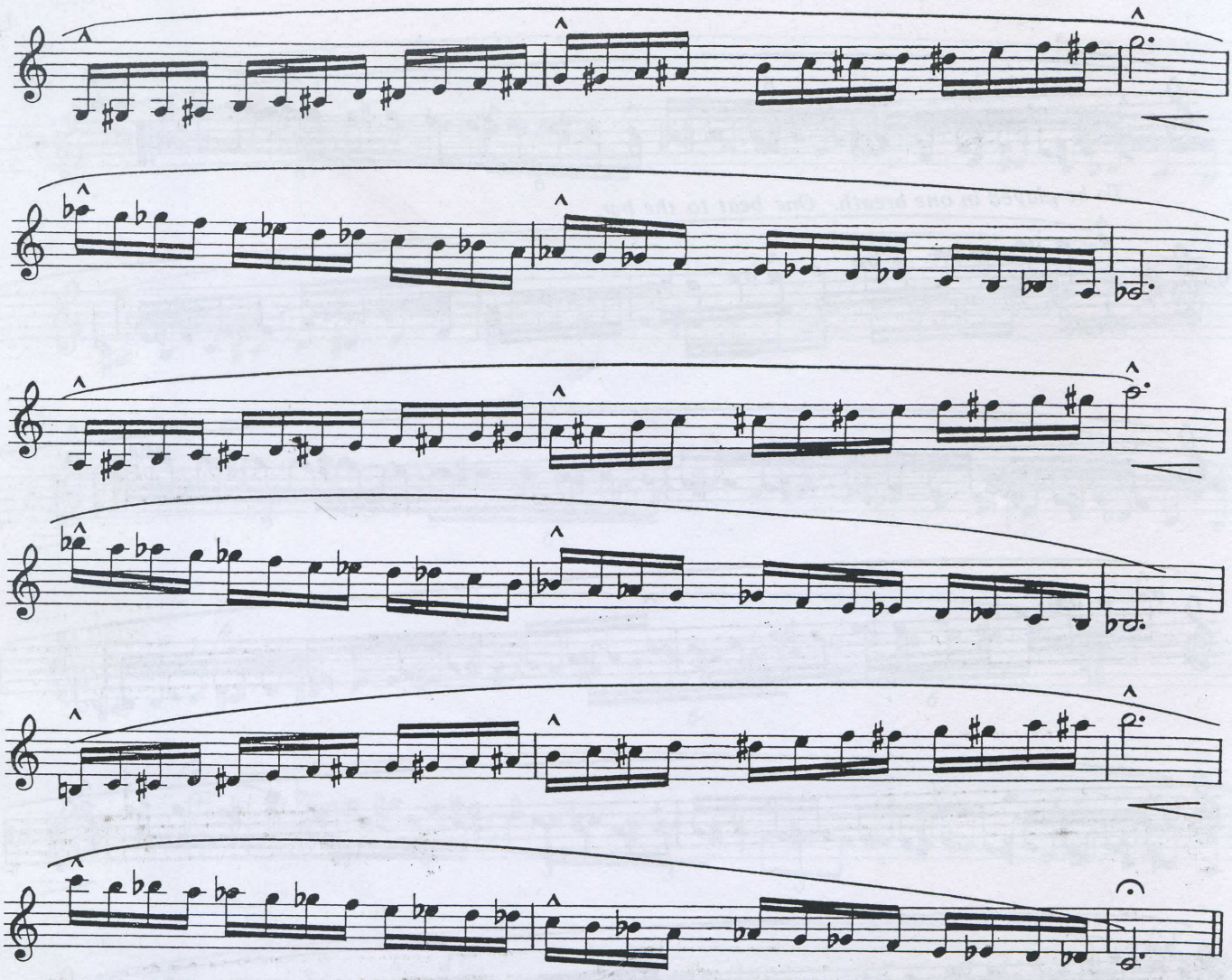




To be played in one breath.

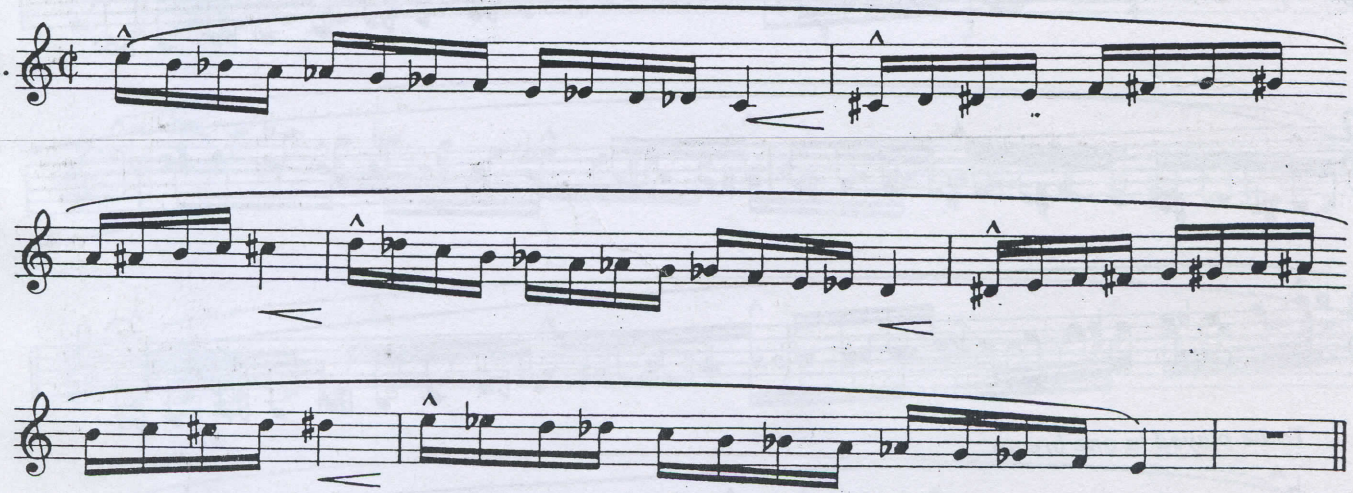
20.



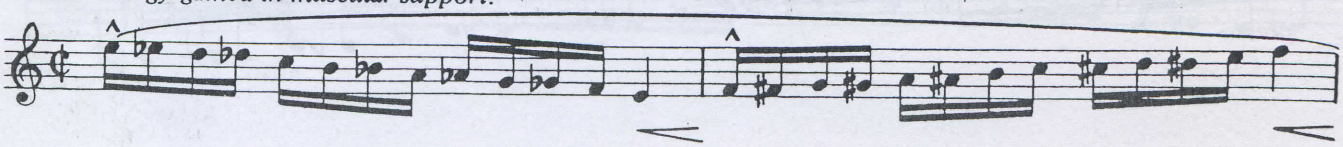


To be played in one breath.

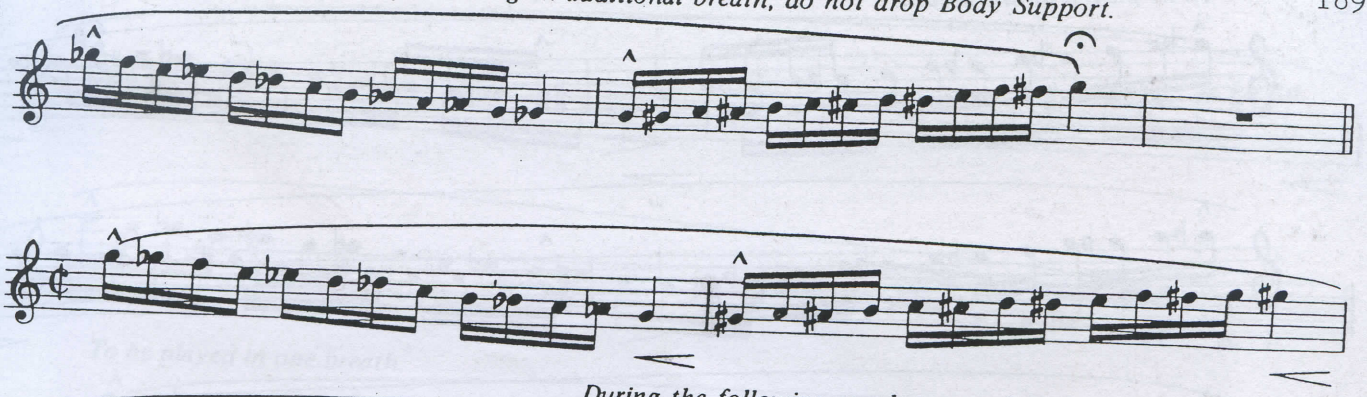
21.



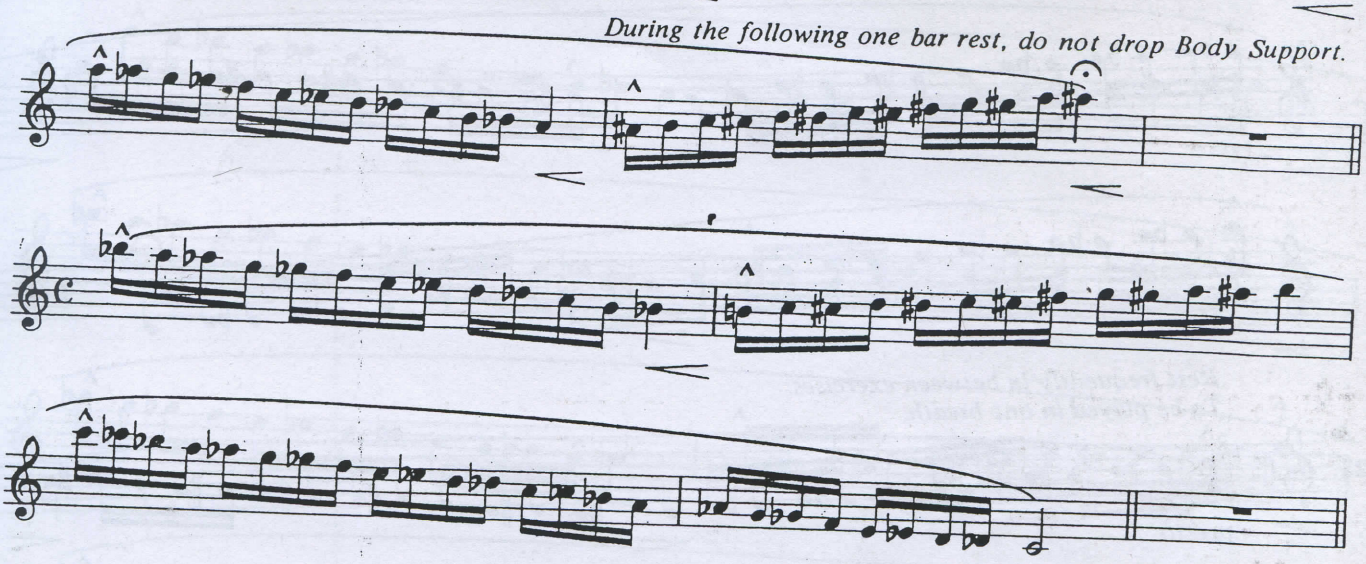
Do not let go of diaphragm support or completely drop the body buoyancy already built up by the initial energy gained in muscular support.



During the one bar rest. Upon taking an additional breath, do not drop Body Support.

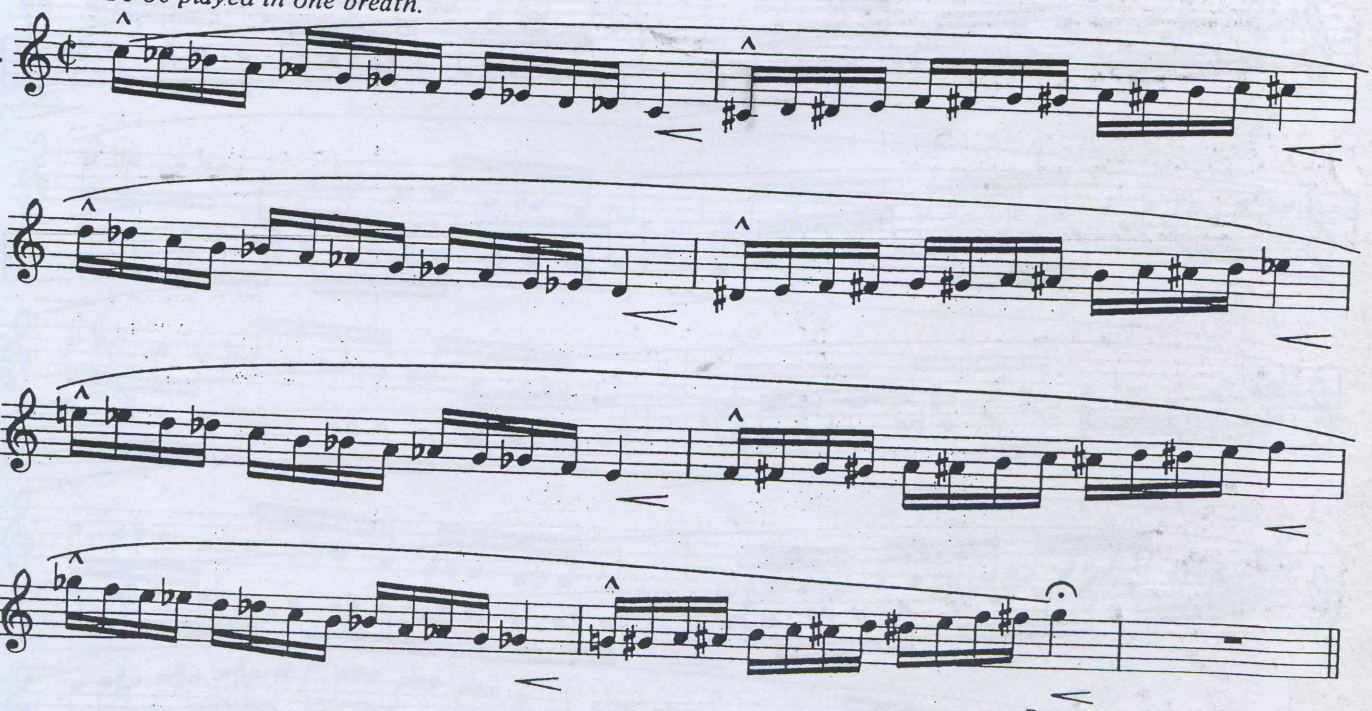


During the following one bar rest, do not drop Body Support.



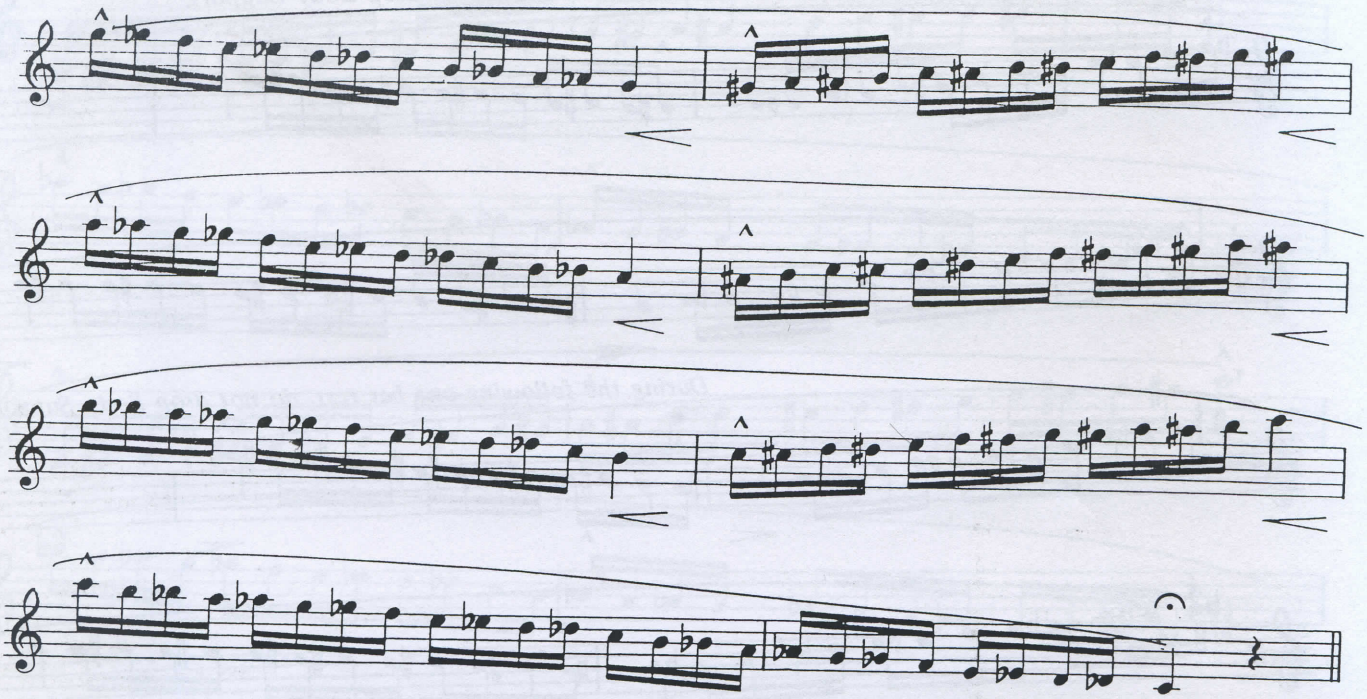
To be played in one breath.

22.



Do not drop Body Support.
Do not strain - strive for comfortable diaphramatic buoyancy - The key; well supported comfortable Body Support without any strain whatsoever - Eliminate any indication of force.

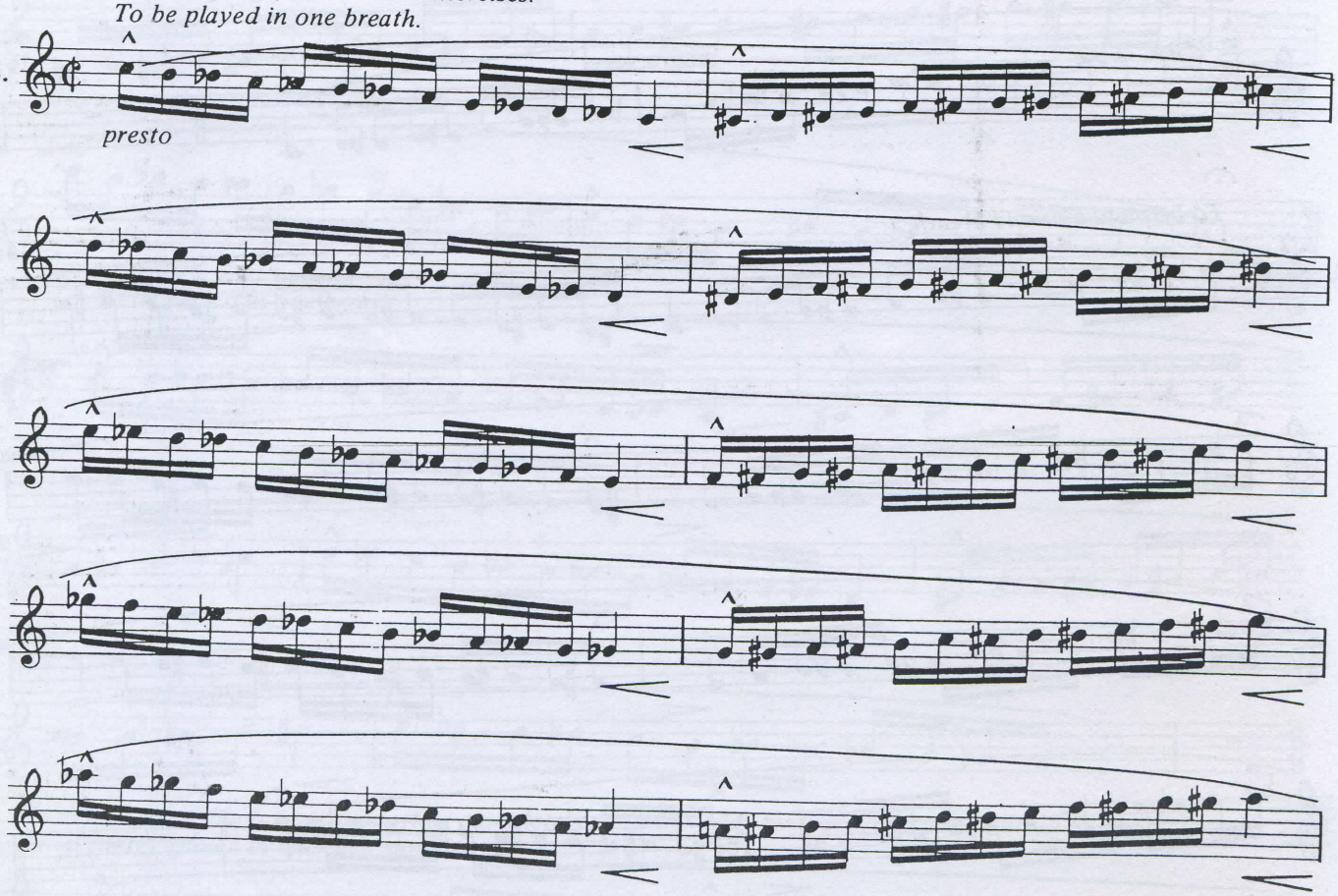
To be played in one breath.

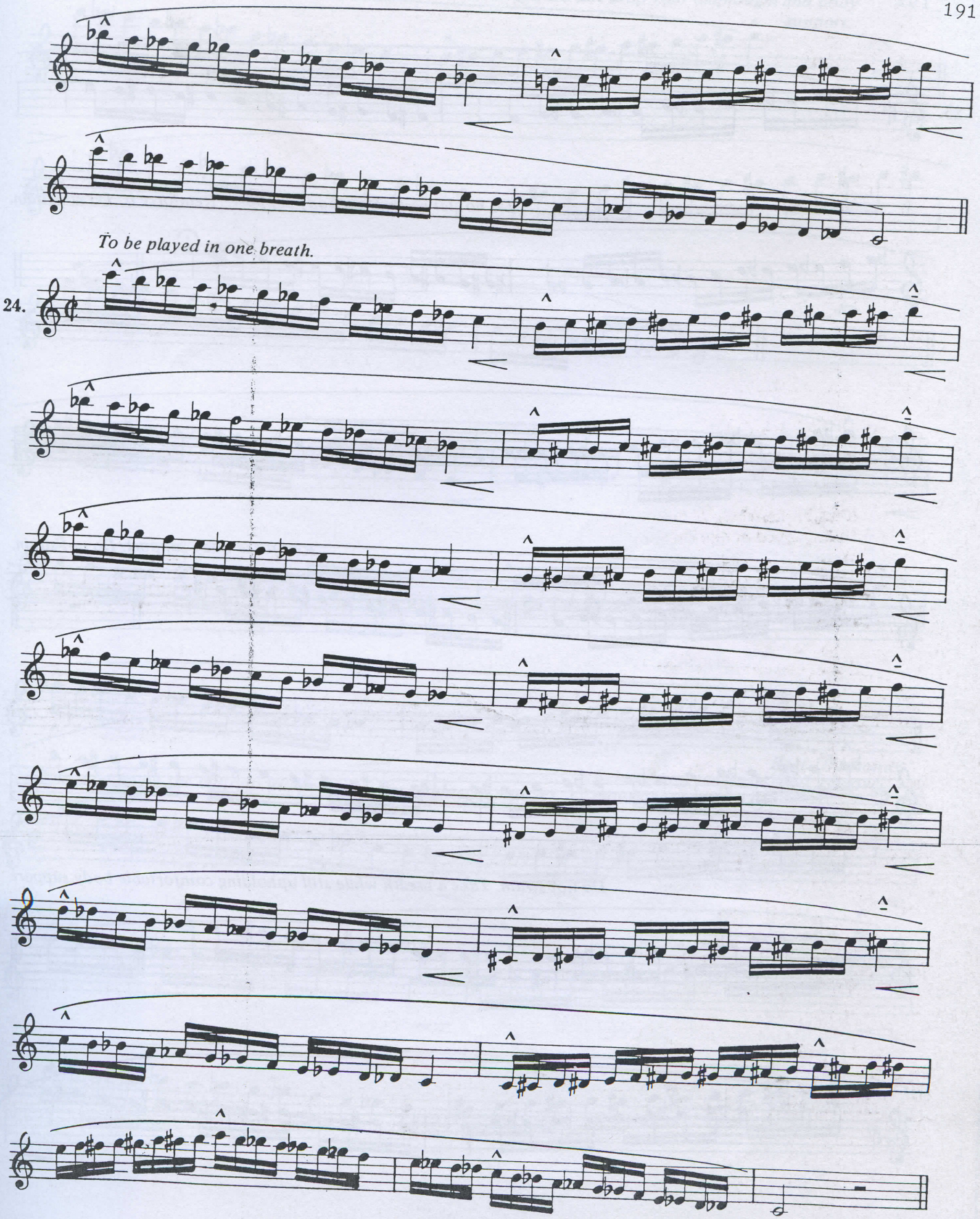


Rest frequently in between exercises.
To be played in one breath.

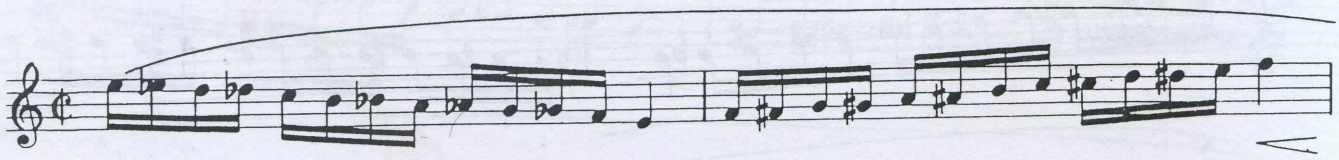
23.

presto

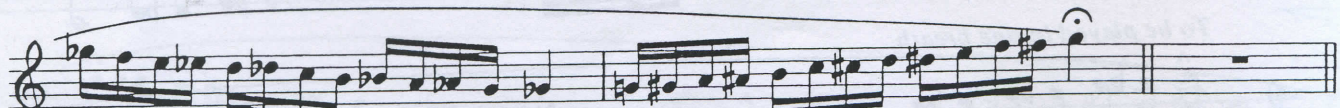


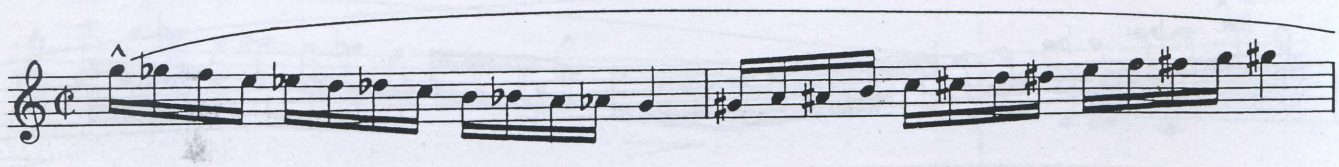

To be played in one breath.
24.

25.

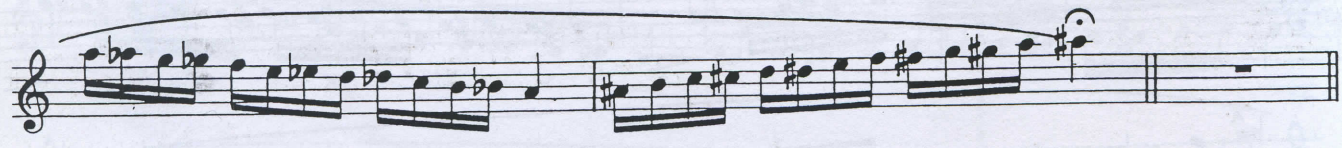


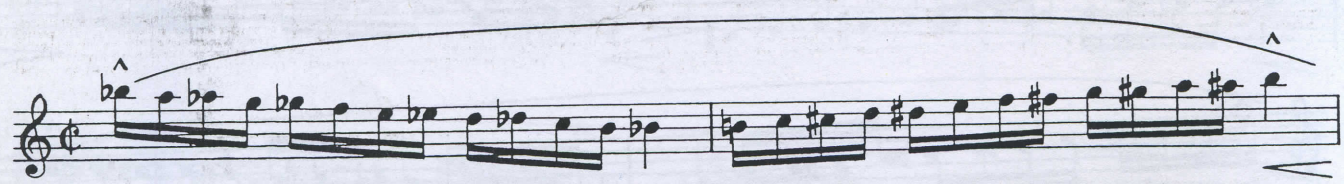
Do not let go built up body support. Reinforce it. Do not strain.



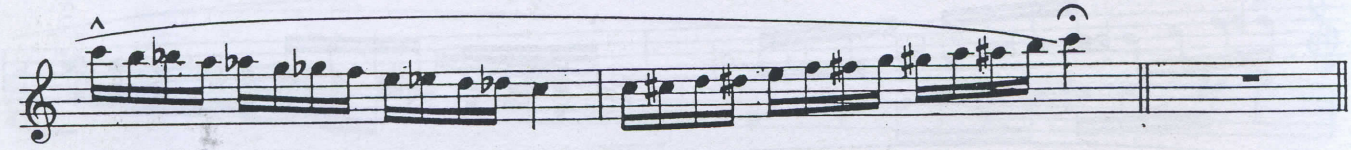


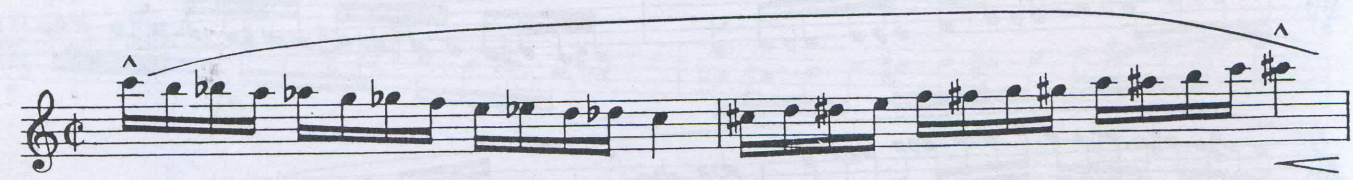
Reinforce body support. Do not strain.



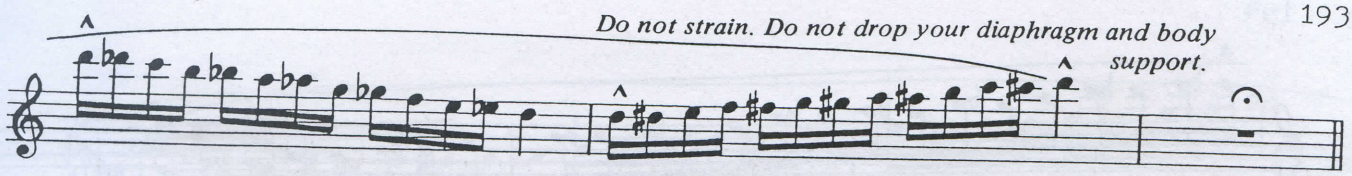


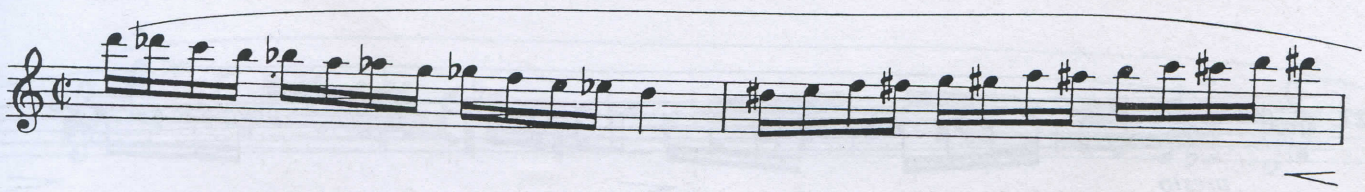
Do not strain. Take a breath while still upholding comfortable body support.

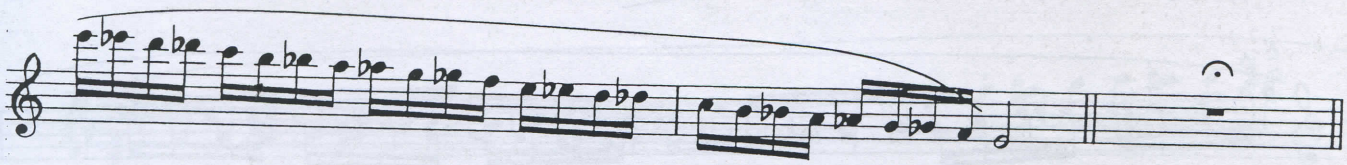




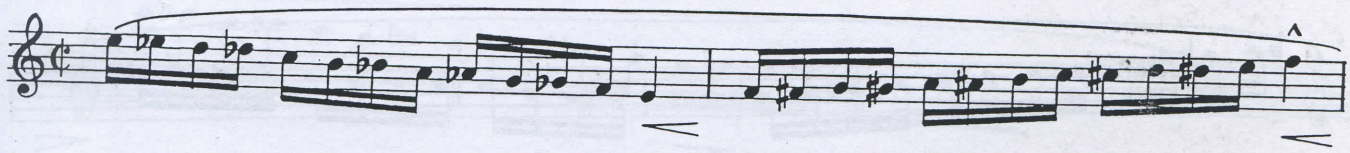
Do not strain. Do not drop your diaphragm and body support.

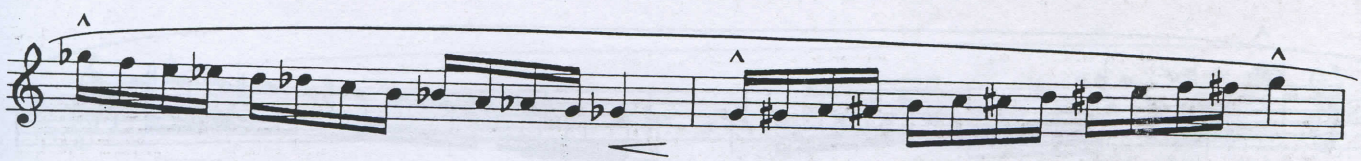


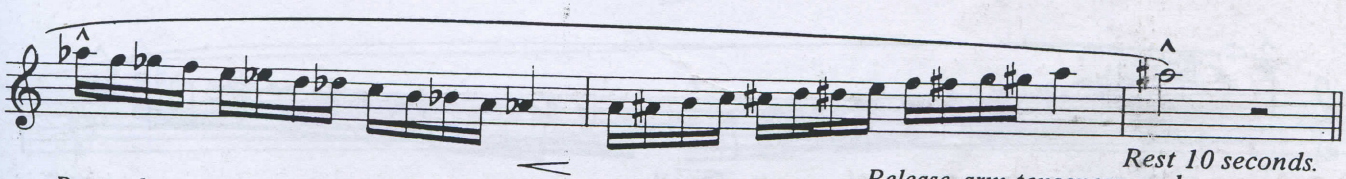




26.



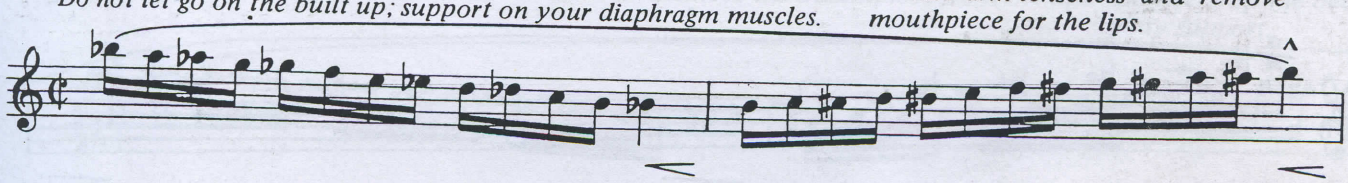


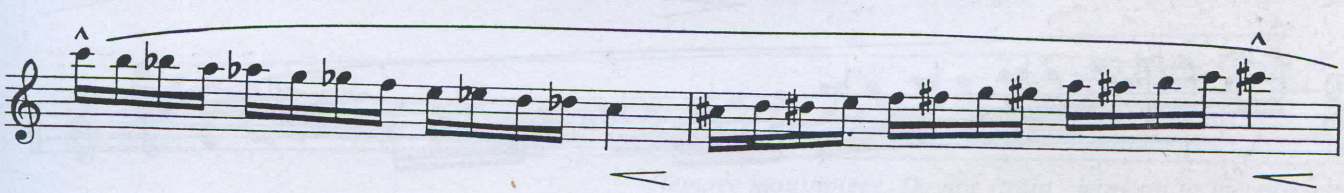


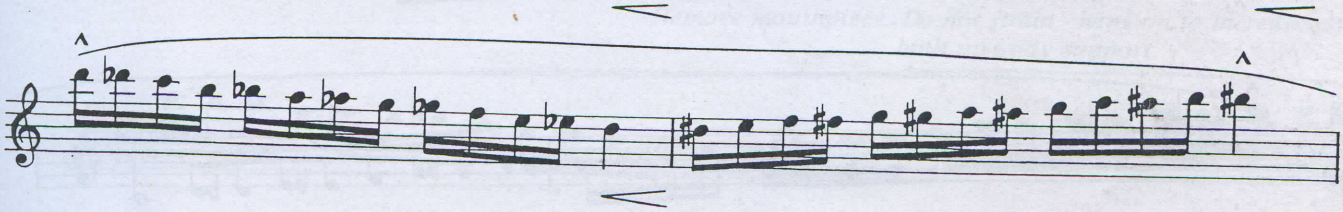
Rest 10 seconds.

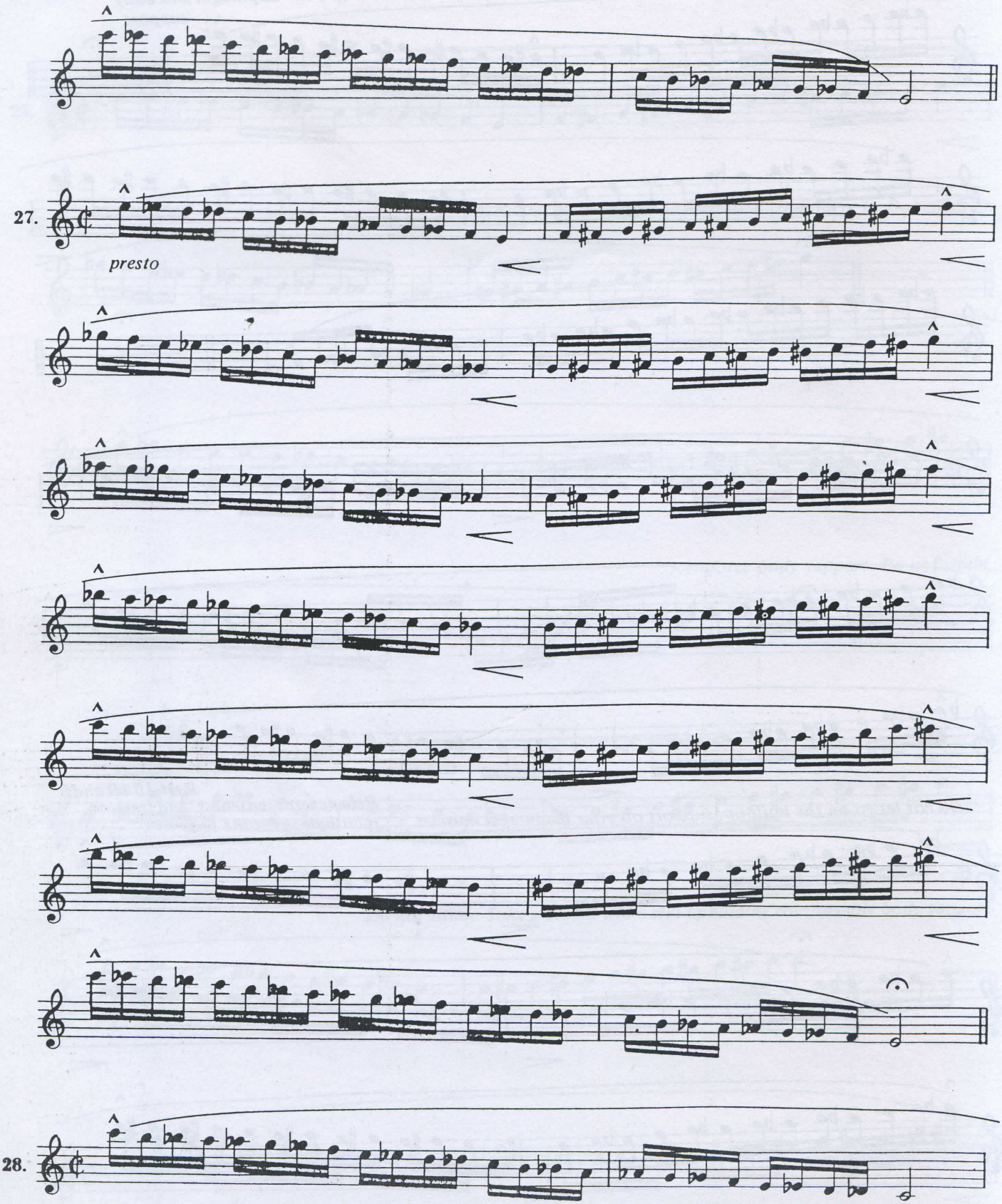
Release arm tenseness and remove mouthpiece for the lips.

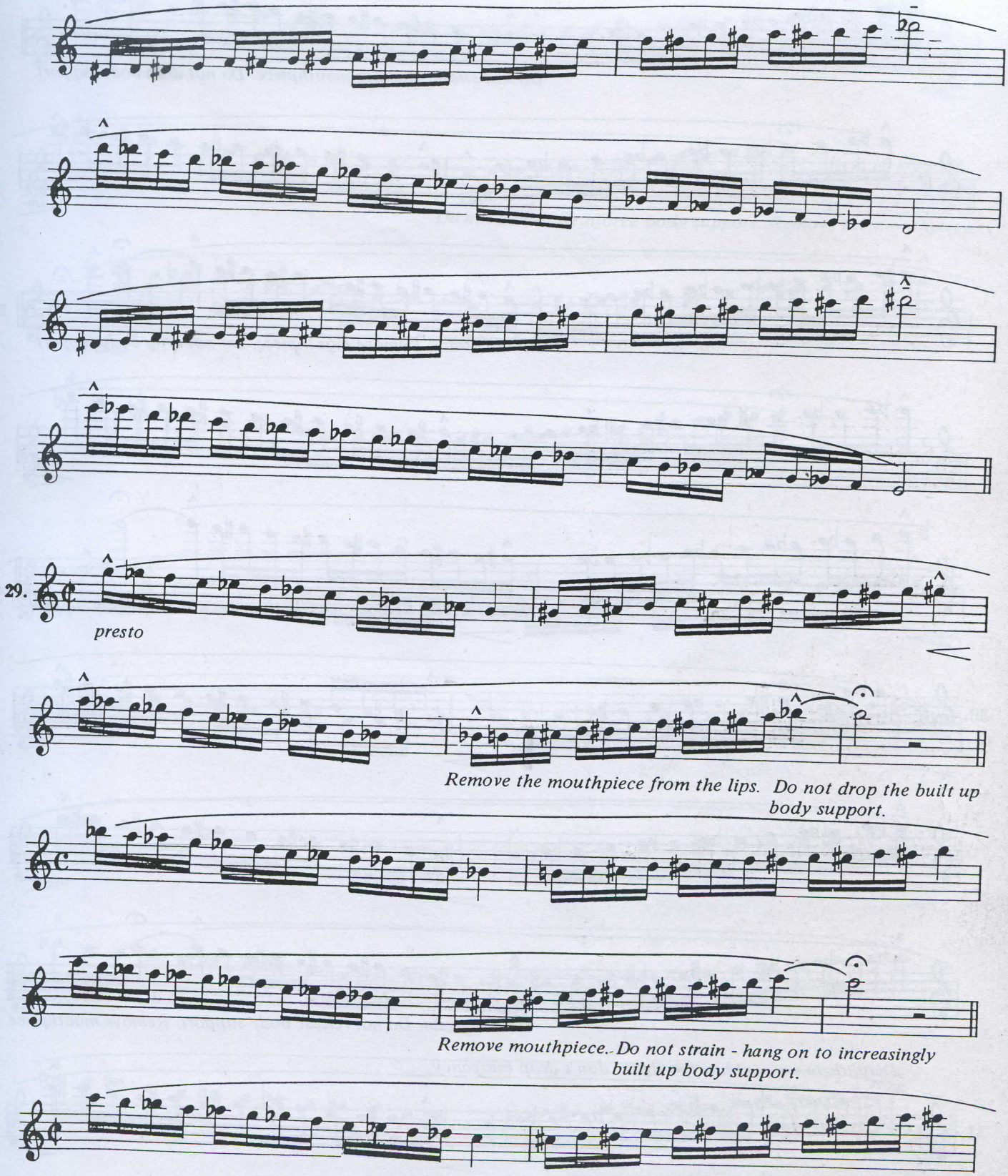
Do not let go on the built up; support on your diaphragm muscles.

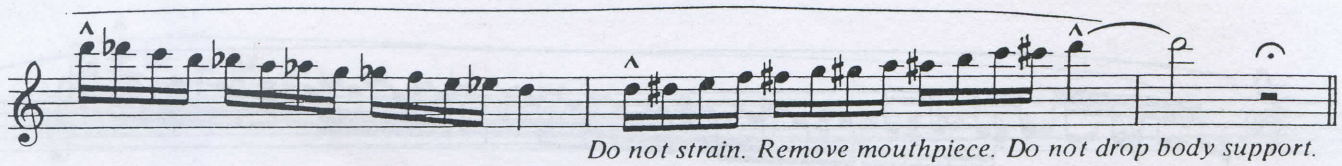




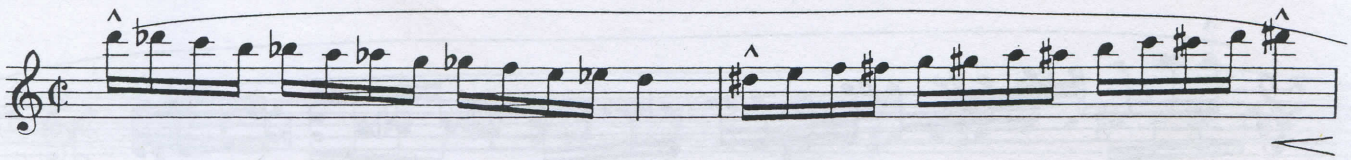


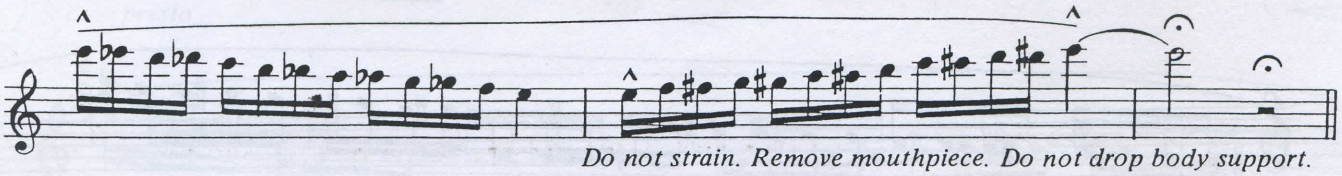

27.
presto
28.


29.
presto
Remove the mouthpiece from the lips. Do not drop the built up body support.
Remove mouthpiece. Do not strain - hang on to increasingly built up body support.

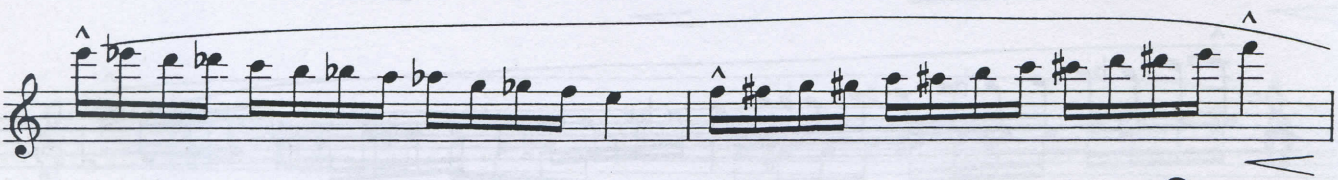


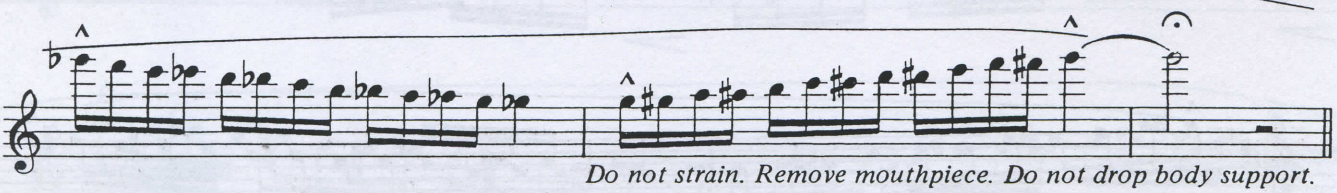
Do not strain. Remove mouthpiece. Do not drop body support.





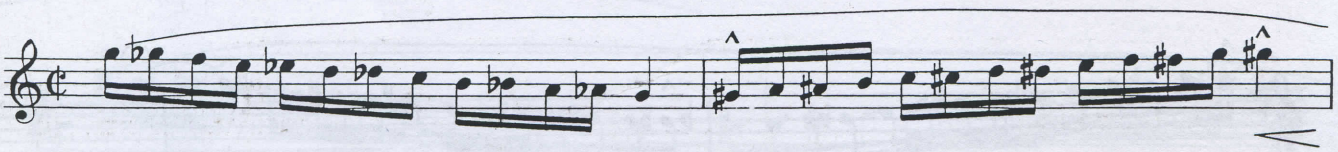
Do not strain. Remove mouthpiece. Do not drop body support.

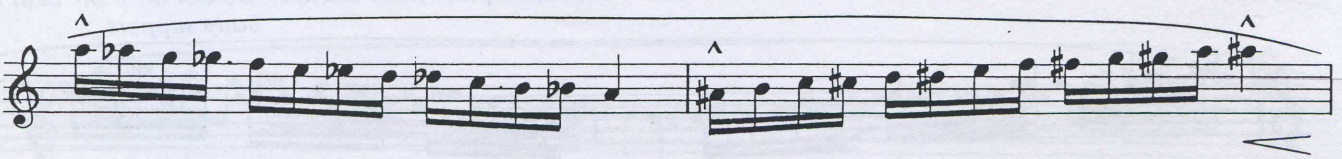


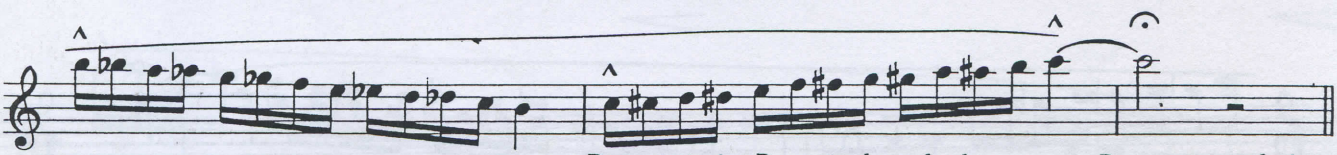


Do not strain. Remove mouthpiece. Do not drop body support.

30.



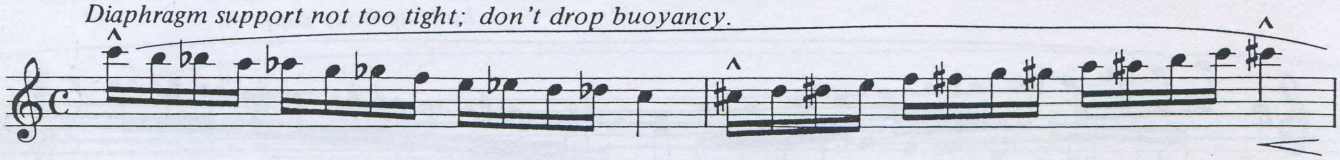


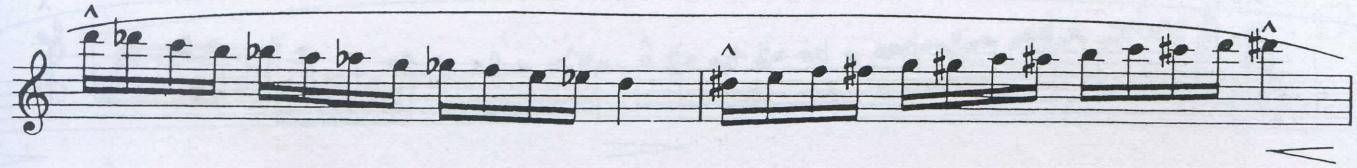


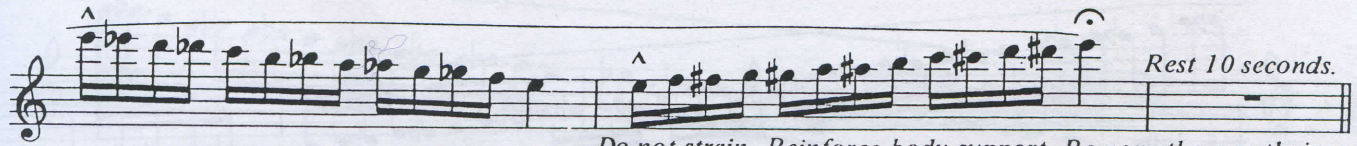
Do not strain. Do not release body support. Remove mouthpiece.

Diaphragm support not too tight; don't drop buoyancy.

31.

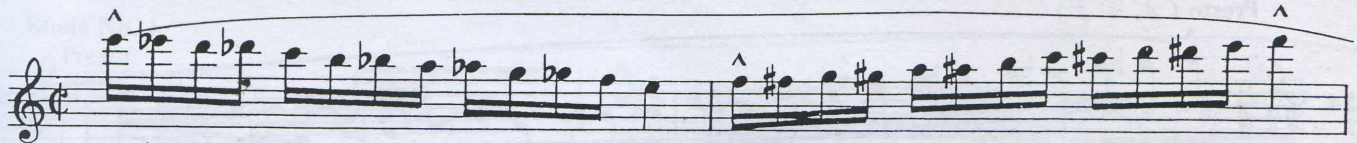




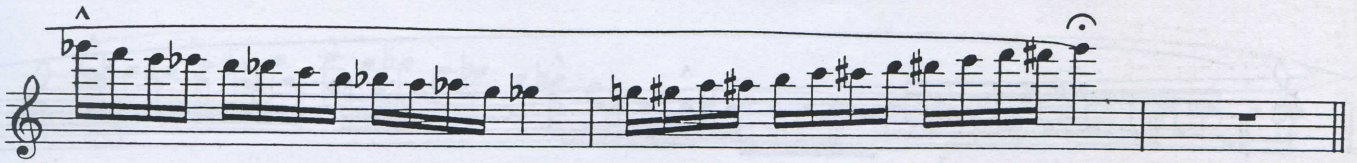


Do not strain. Reinforce body support. Remove the mouthpiece.

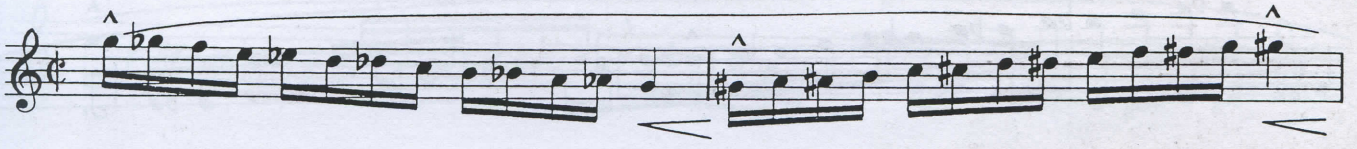
2.

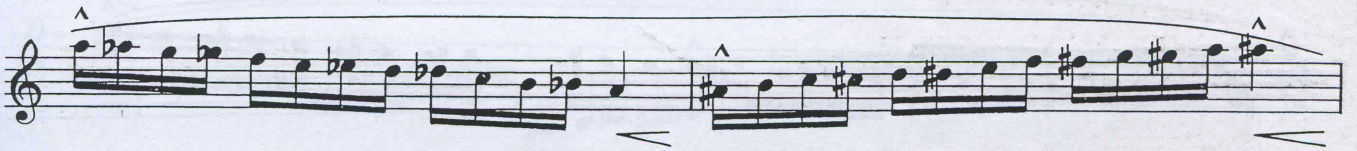


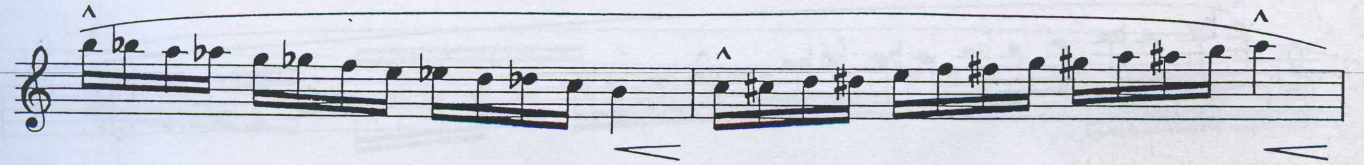
presto

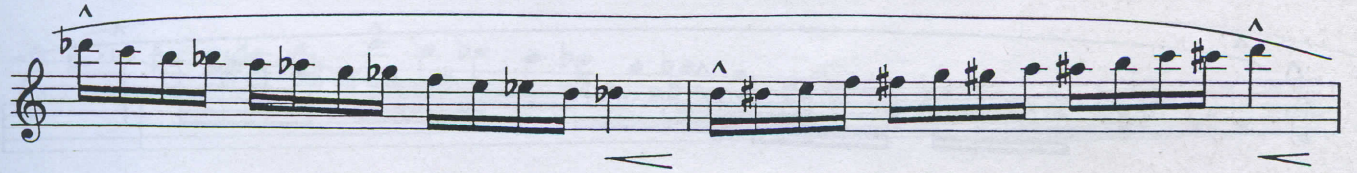


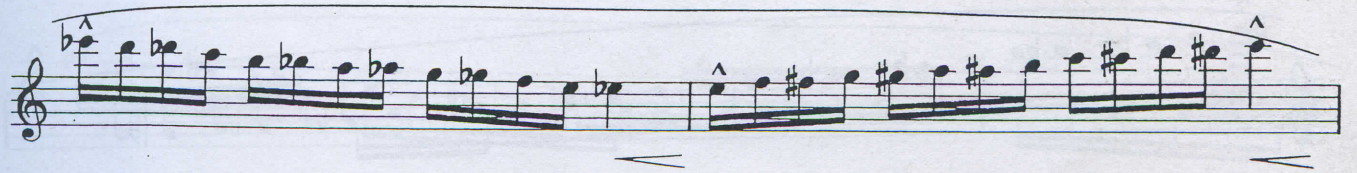
3.

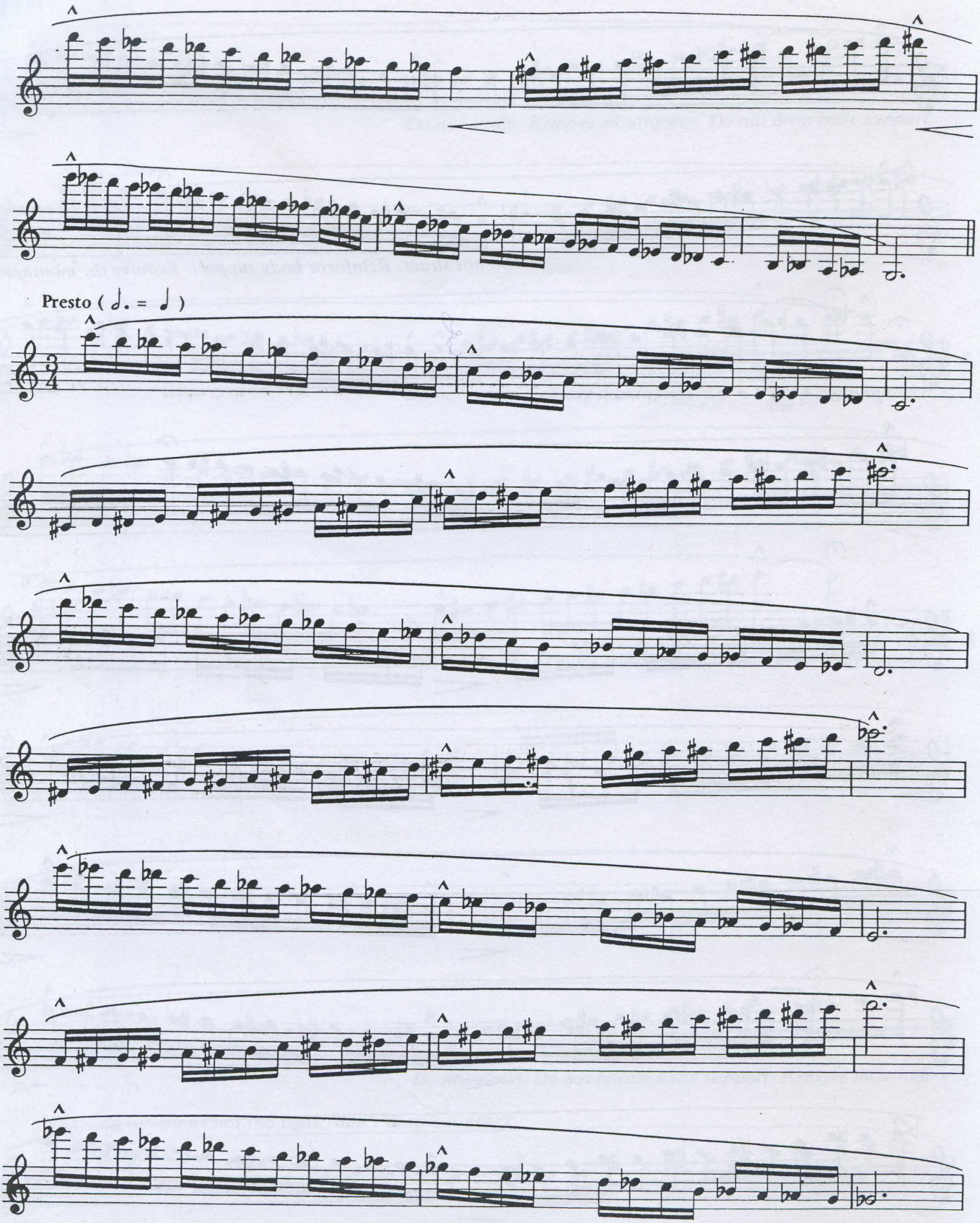


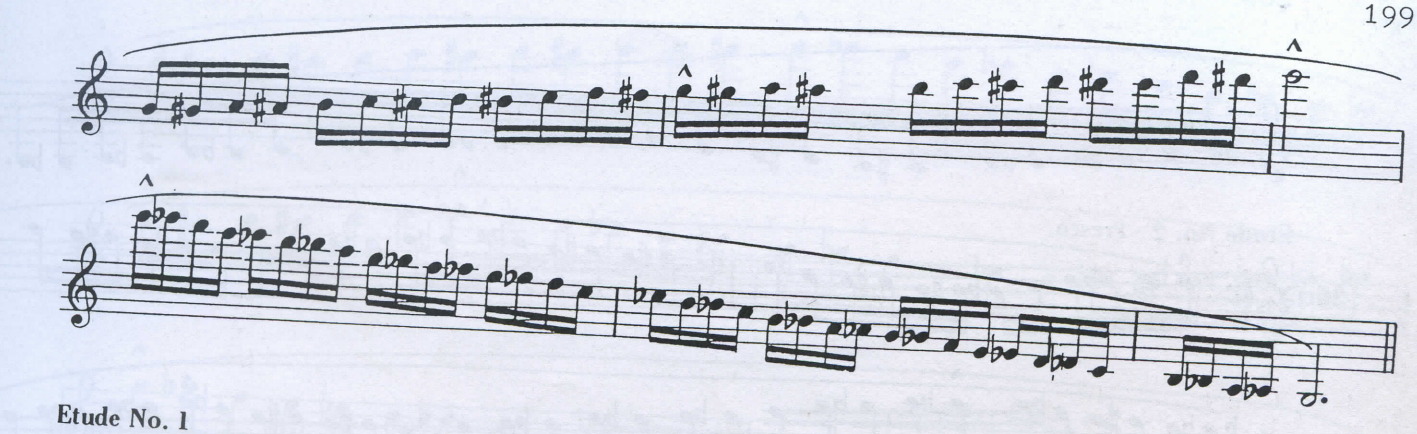








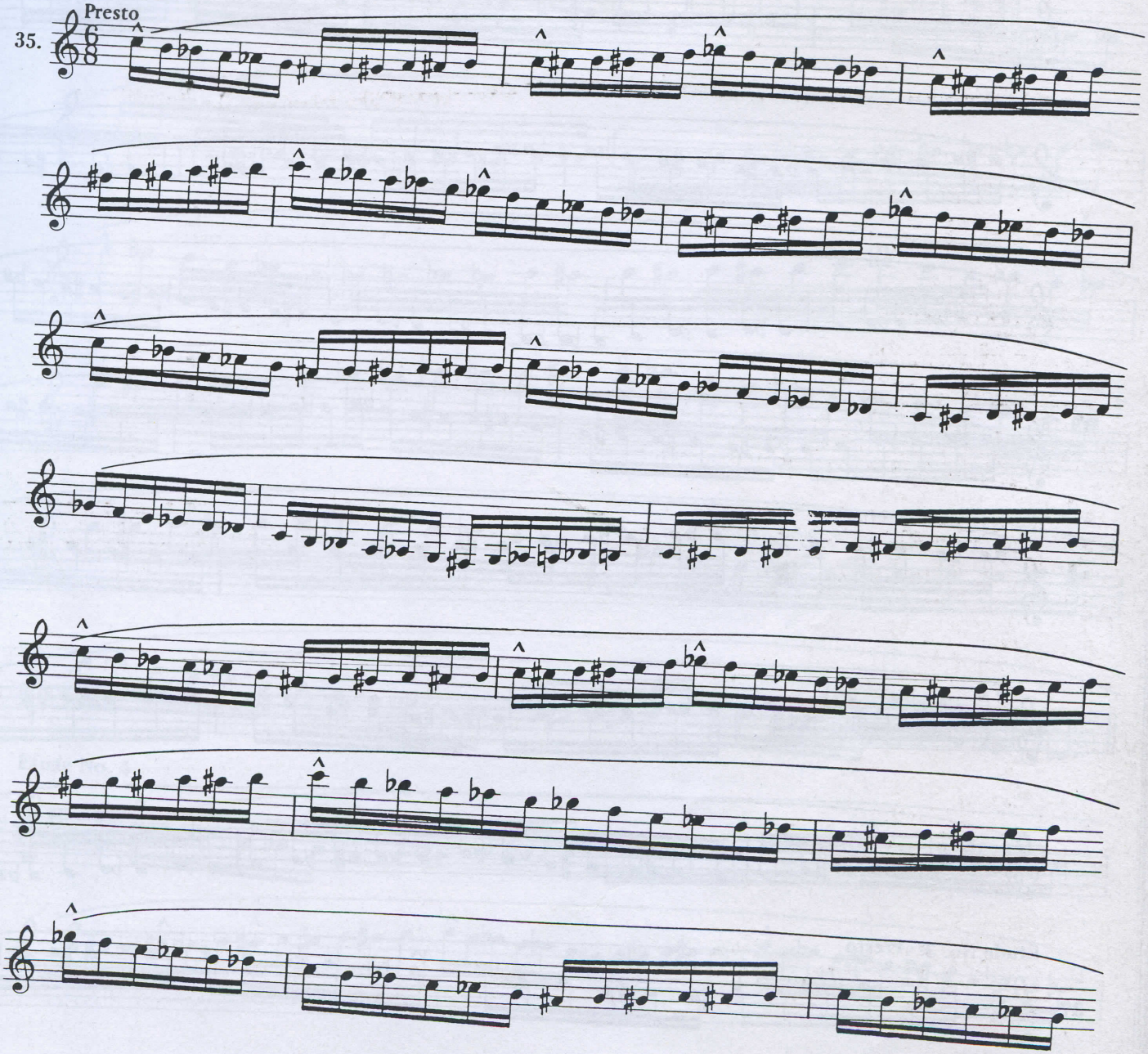

Presto (♩. = ♩)
34.

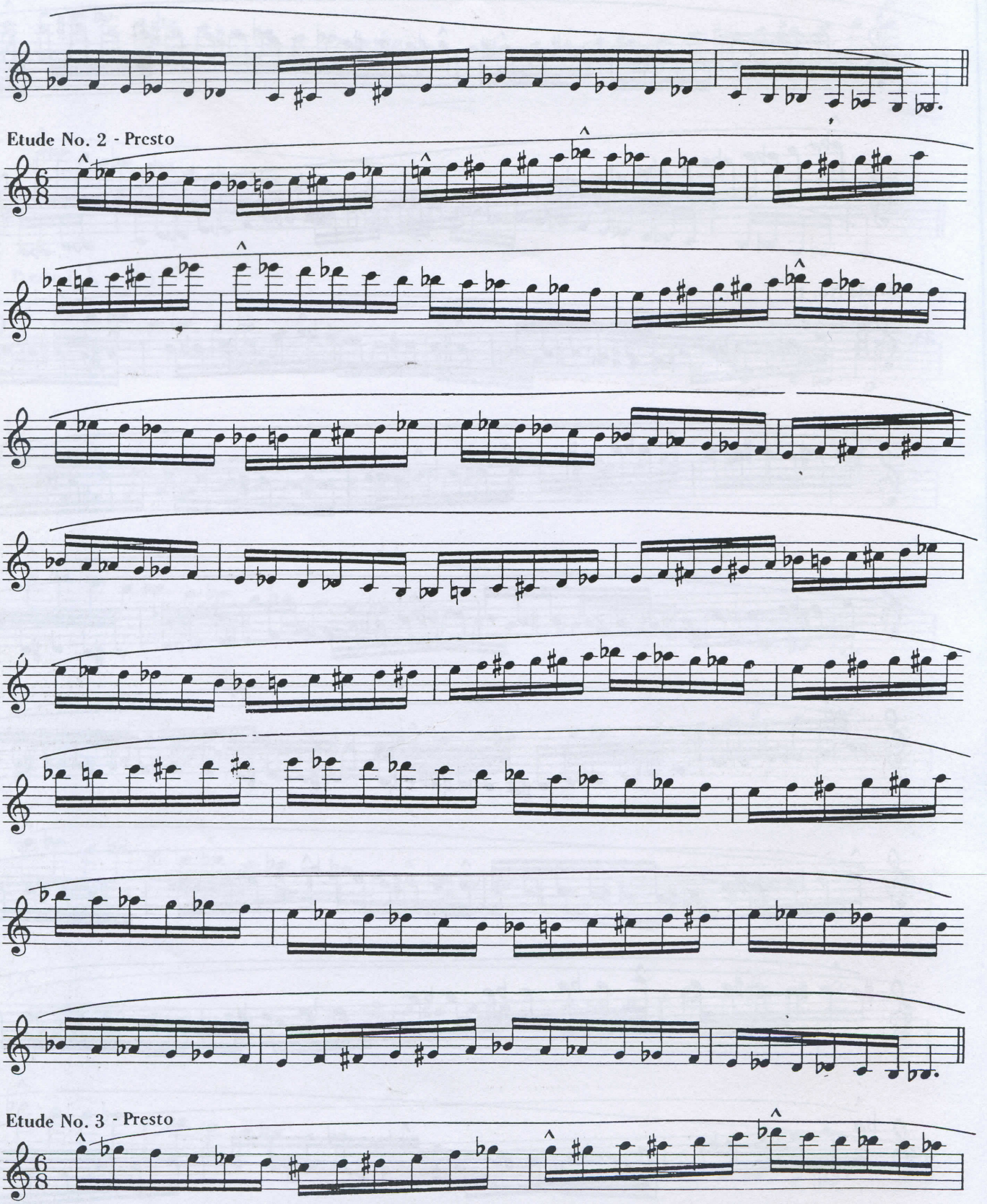


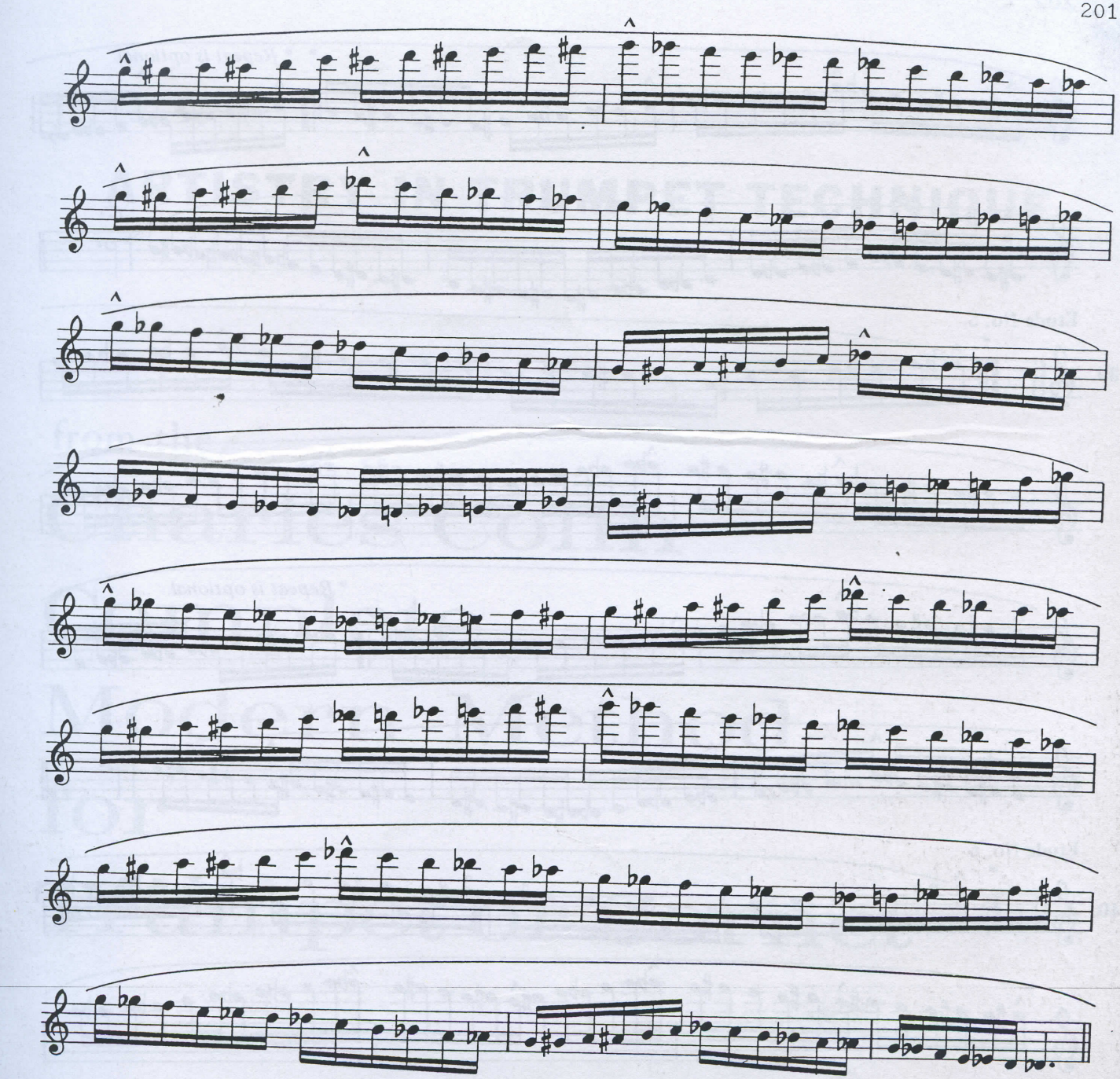
Etude No. 1

Presto

35.

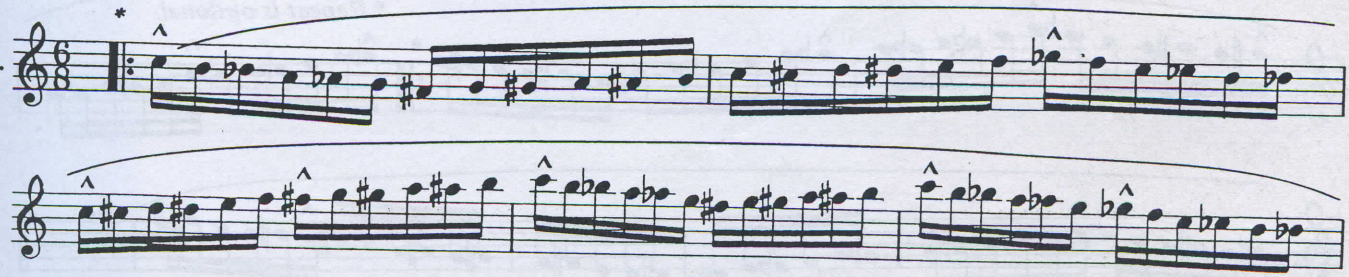


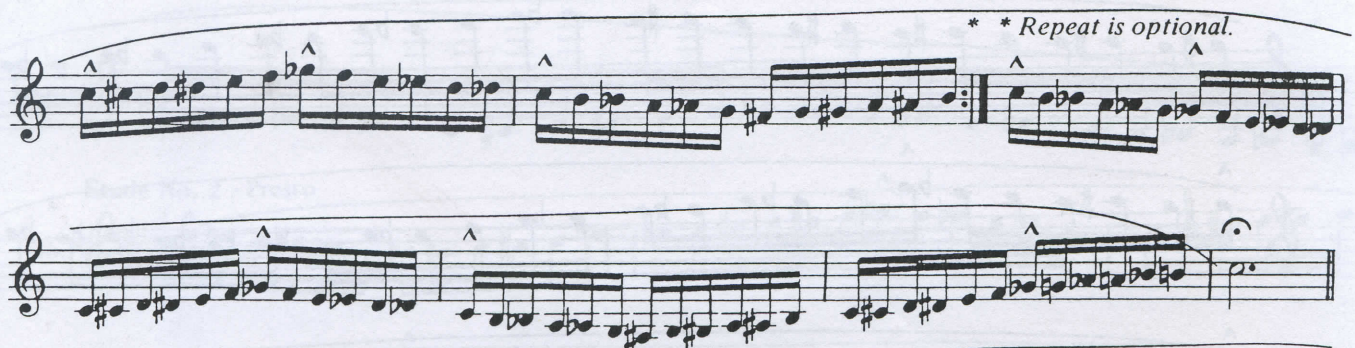

Etude No. 2 - Presto
36.
Etude No. 3 - Presto
37.



Etude No. 4

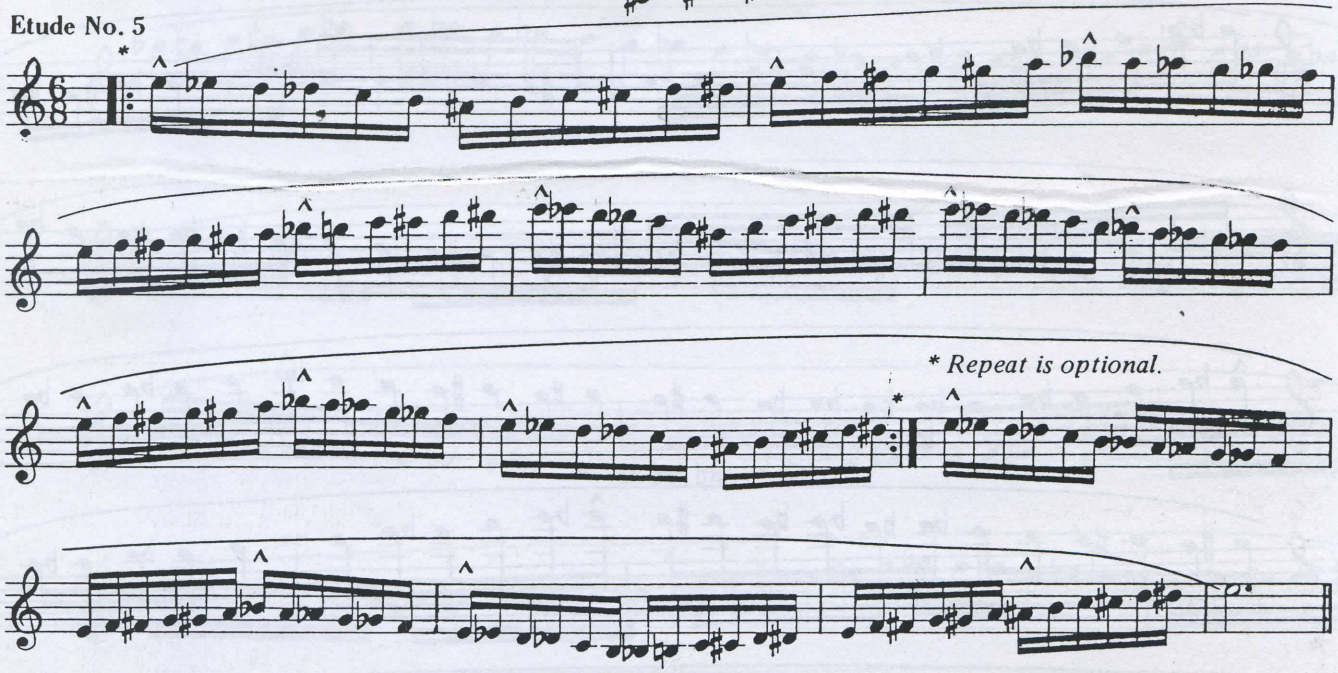
38.

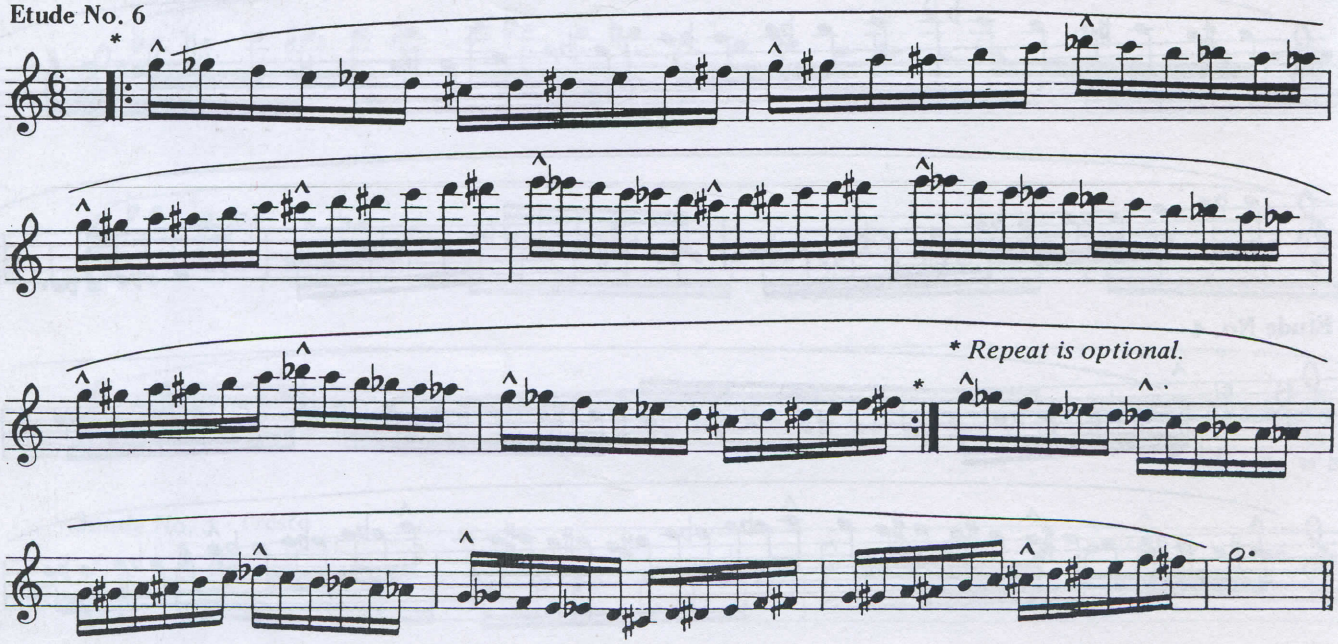




Etude No. 5

39.



Etude No. 6

40.