Break-Crossing Exercises

A successful crossing of the register break is mostly based on a correct placement and movement of the left hand index finger. Too often this finger slides up onto the throat A key, making the transition back to the finger hole slow and cumbersome. Learn to play the throat A with the side of the first knuckle by turning the index finger onto the bottom 1/4 inch of the A key. For beginners, it is best that they learn to play A from a closed hand position E or F# rather than an open G--this should prevent the index finger from reaching too far up the A key. Other things to look out for in improving cross-break slurs:

1. Learn break-crossing slurs downwards first from a closed hand note such as B or C2 in the clarion register. A proper left hand thumb and index finger positions are most likely to occur quite naturally with this approach. "Use the downhill finger positions to teach the uphill."

2. The left hand thumb should not have different positions in the chalumeau and clarion registers. The register key is touched by the area under the left corner of the thumb nail, and the key is activated by bending at the thumb's first knuckle...not by turning the thumb, sliding the thumb, or raising the position of the thumb on the key.

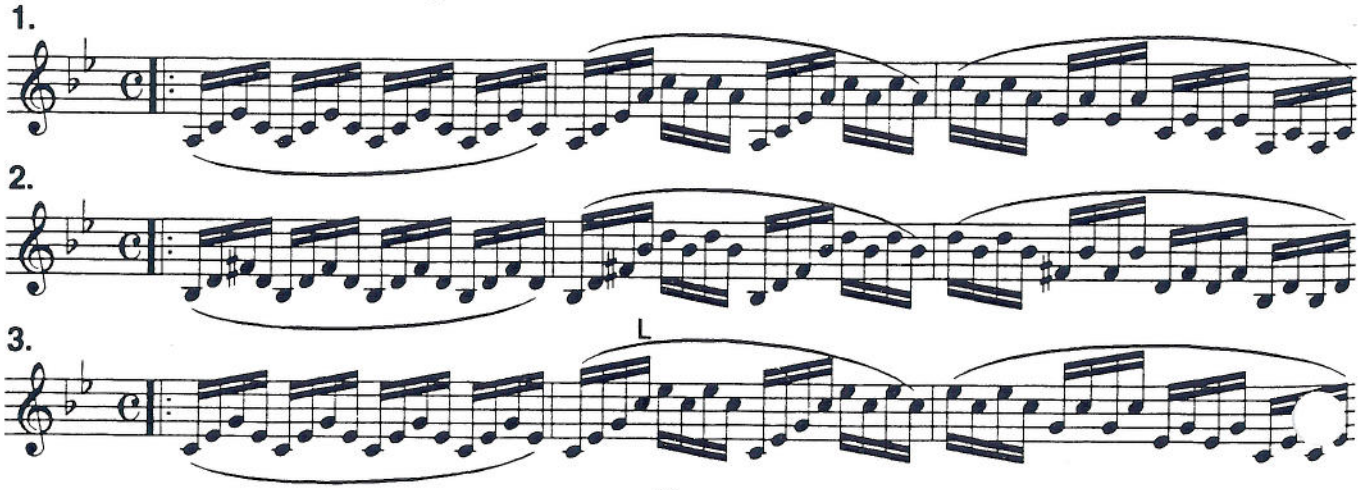
3. As an index finger reminder to not go high up the A key, put a piece of Scotch tape across the key surface 1/4 inch up the key from the tip near the F# hole. If the finger touches the bottom edge of this strip of tape, it serves as a tactile reminder that it has gone too high.

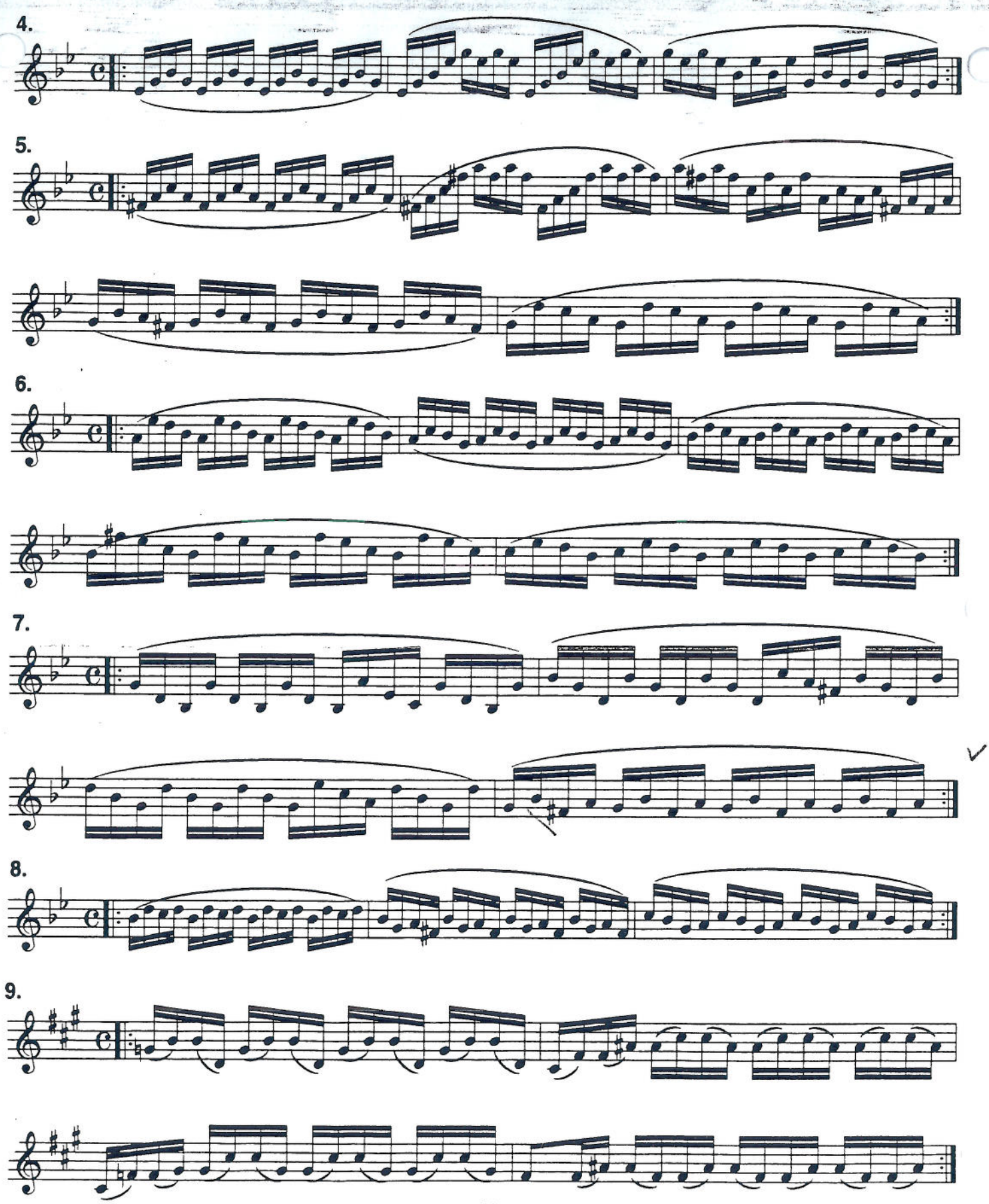
4. Try to activate the A key with the side of the index finger's first knuckle while the tip of that finger is still touching the F# ring key. This is an optimum position from which one can make very facile slurs across the break.

5. When opening the A and Bb keys try to leave the L3 and L4 fingers over the finger holes. Taking them up the tube and away from their "home positions" will only make the cross-break slurs more difficult.

6. Young players often tongue the top note of an upwards, cross-break slur, since this provides a small slice of silence in which the fingers have time to move to the next position.

7. Beware the "5 fingered A" in beginners...four fingers stacked up on top of the A key and the thumb placed on the wood under the thumb hole.

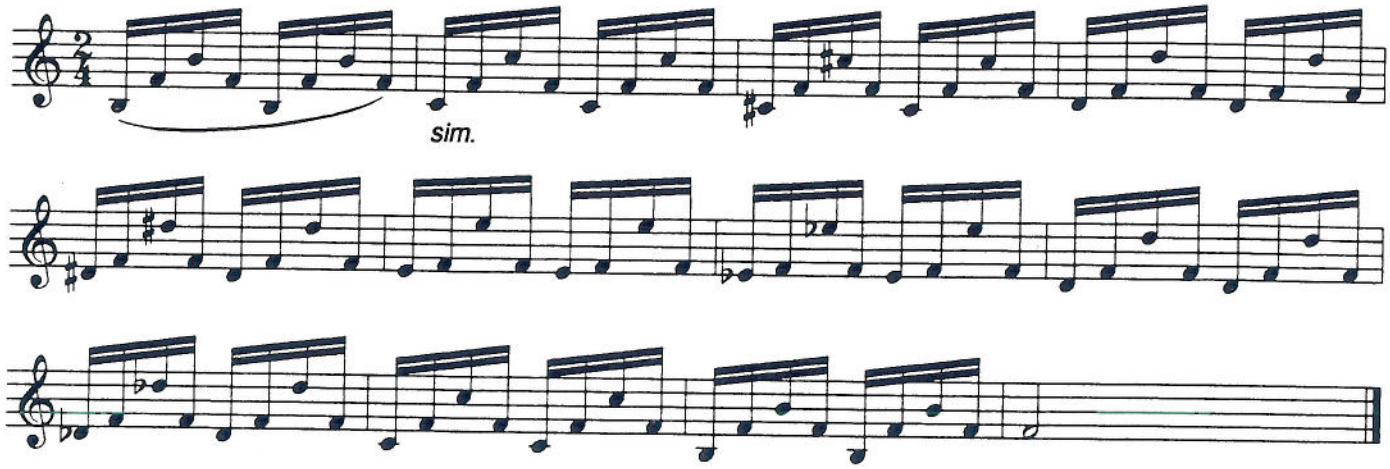



4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.

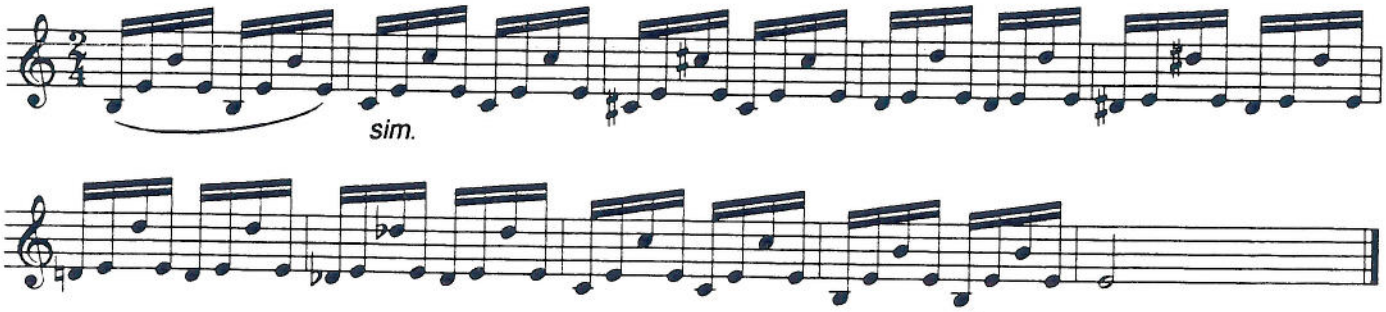
Break-Crossing/Thumb Exercises

The following exercises are devoted to working on the coordination of the left hand thumb on the register key with the other fingers of both hands in upward slurs into the second register. If the thumb is slightly late (the usual problem), there will be an audible "thunk" as the instrument makes a brief attempt to play a low chalumeau register note. Have the thumb move slightly ahead of the other fingers, anticipating where it needs to go. If it is too early, however, the slur will have a slight break of silence. Work to stay between these two extremes.

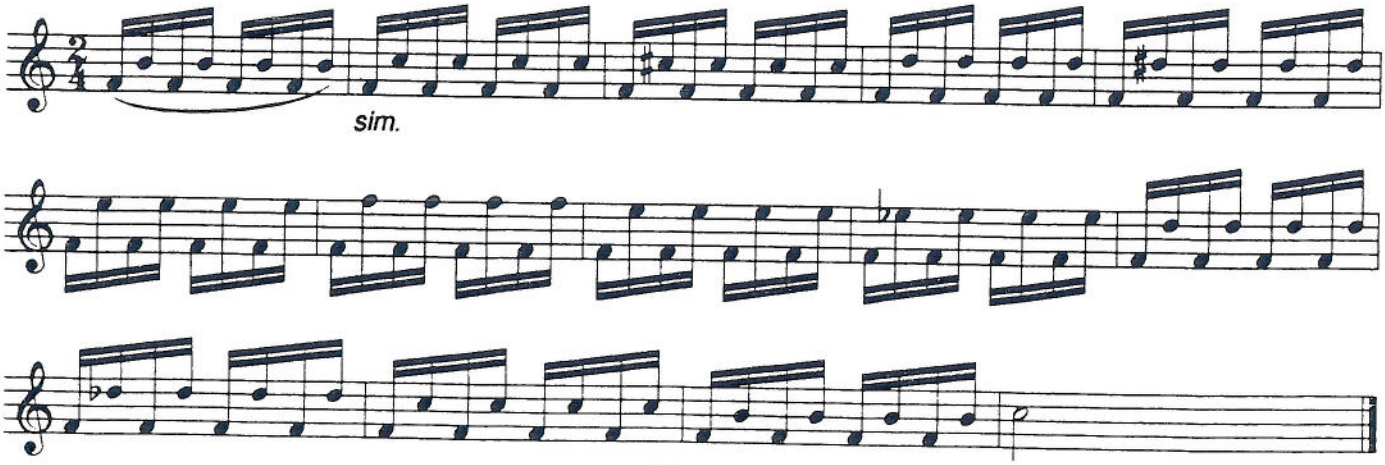
1.

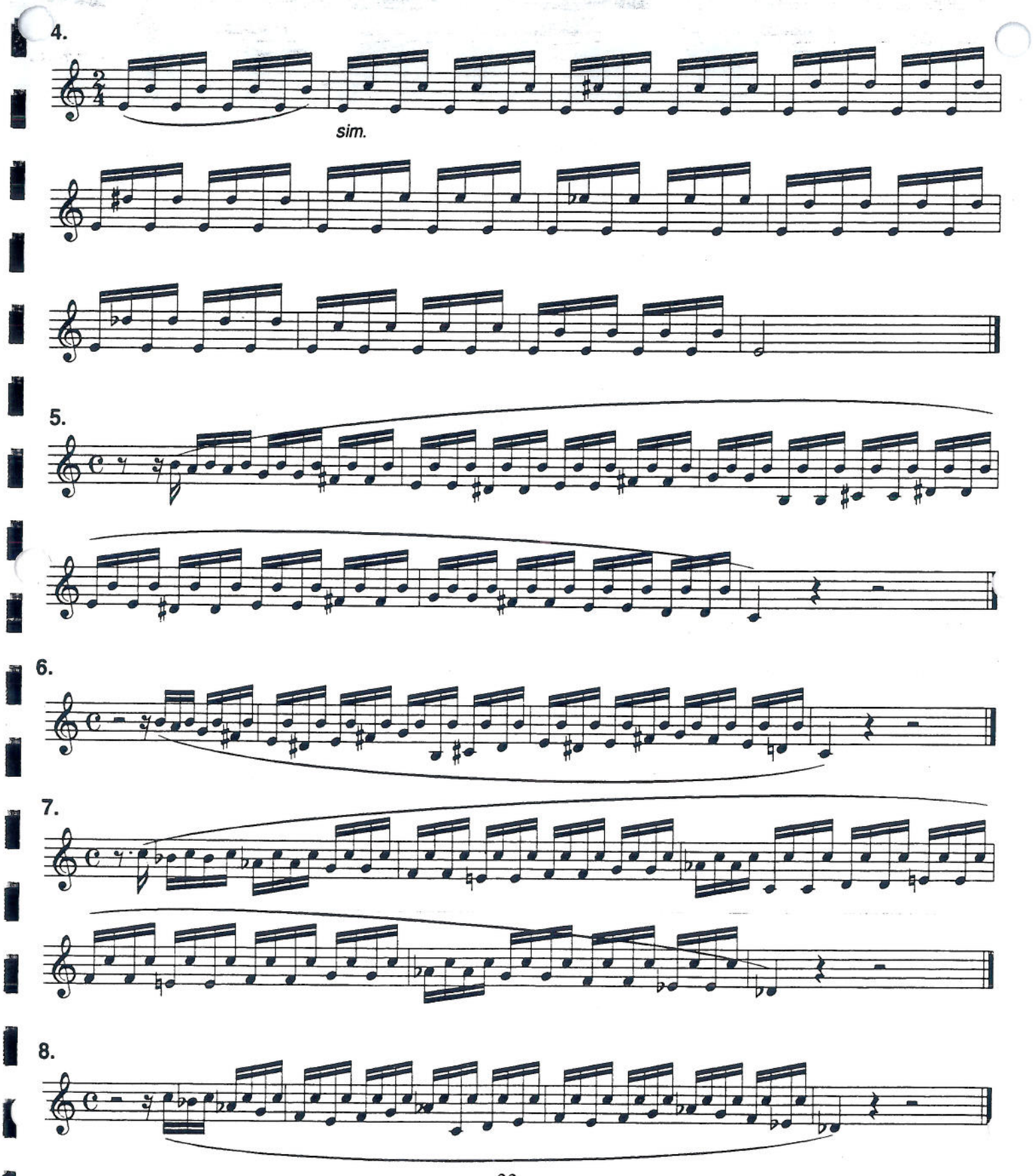


2.



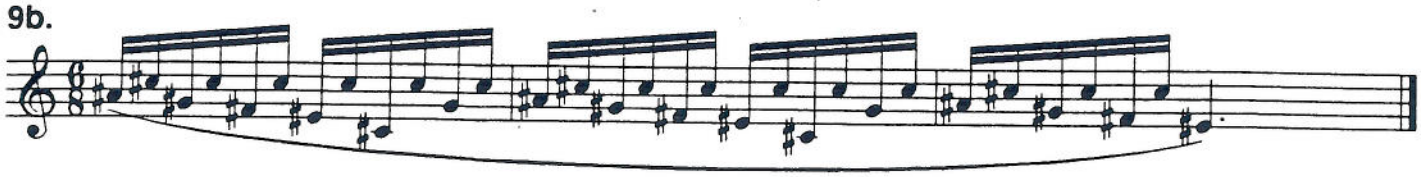
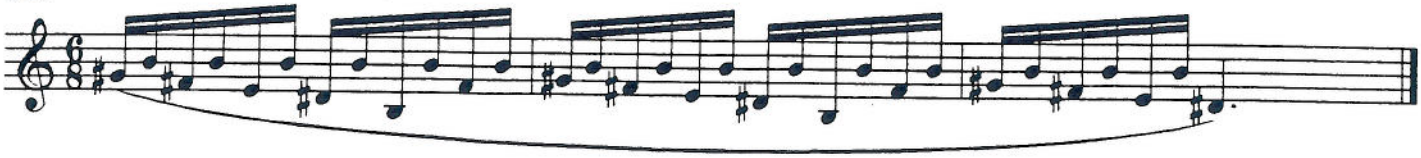
3.




4.
sim.
5.
6.
7.
8.

9a.

9b.



9c.