MADAME

SAINTON-DOLBY'S TUTOR

FOR

ENGLISH SINGERS.

(LADIES' VOICES.)

PART I.

The Formation, Production, & Cultivation of the Voice,

WITH NUMEROUS

SCALES AND EXERCISES.

LONDON: BOOSEY AND CO., HOLLES STREET.

BRITISH MUSEUM

INTRODUCTION.

ENGLAND possesses, like all other great nations, her own speciality with regard to Art. In Music as well as in Painting she has a style of her own, and, as far as execution is concerned, Oratorio and, in another school, Ballad music are her own creation. Handel wrote the greater part of his works for England, and, later, Spohr, Mendelssohn, and Costa have written Oratorios for the great choral gatherings to be found nowhere but in England—Oratorios which even in their smallest details are now known to every amateur as well as to every musician in this country. Ballad music, though far removed from the grandeur of that of the Oratorio, is also an essential part of English art, and possesses an equal attraction for the music loving public. Among the works of Arne, Shield, Dibdin—and, later, Bishop, Wallace, Balfe, Smart, Macfarren, Hatton—who cannot recall sweet melodies which have acquired world-wide popularity? A ballad simply sung without exaggeration, and with purely natural feeling—that is to say, sung so that each word has its appropriate expression, each phrase its own significance—goes directly to the heart, and awakens memories of home and childhood wherever it is heard.

Though the following exercises are intended for the training of vocalists in all branches, it is my purpose in this work to deal chiefly with those most in vogue among English artists, who seem to lack a book of reference and authority. English by birth, English by education, English at heart, I have long desired to offer to young pupils wishing to devote themselves principally to the study of the foregoing branches of the vocal art the fruits of my long experience in a career to which I owe my happiest remembrances. In trying to smooth the difficulties in the path of such students, I only pay a debt of gratitude to my compatriots who encouraged my first steps and applauded my subsequent efforts, and to whom I owe the success of which I am and ever shall feel proud.

ON THE VOICE.

Of all the gifts of Nature the voice is the most precious, and the manner of using it, as, also, of preserving such a treasure, ought to be the great object of those who study the Art of Singing. A good professor will begin by giving his pupil exercises for acquiring equality in sustaining sounds, and lightness and flexibility in rapid passages, without passing beyond the natural limits of the voice. It is only on this condition that the organ can preserve its freshness, which in the case of so many singers prematurely leaves it, in consequence of efforts to gain effects only flattering to their *amour propre*. They form the sound to give that vicious trembling, fashionable, it is true, in the present day, but destructive of that purity of intonation without which no music is possible. It is the work of a professor to ascertain the natural extent of the pupil's voice, and never allow it to be passed. To neglect this rule is to destroy the most precious, the most noble, the most magical instrument God has given to man, and to place an auditory in a state of uncertainty as to whether singers were made for their pleasure or their martyrdom.

It will be seen by the foregoing remarks that this work pretends to treat only of the school of singing most in vogue among English artists in this country, namely, that of the Oratorio and Concert-room. Having been engaged throughout my long career exclusively in these branches of the Art, I leave to others the task of preparation for the stage. While both

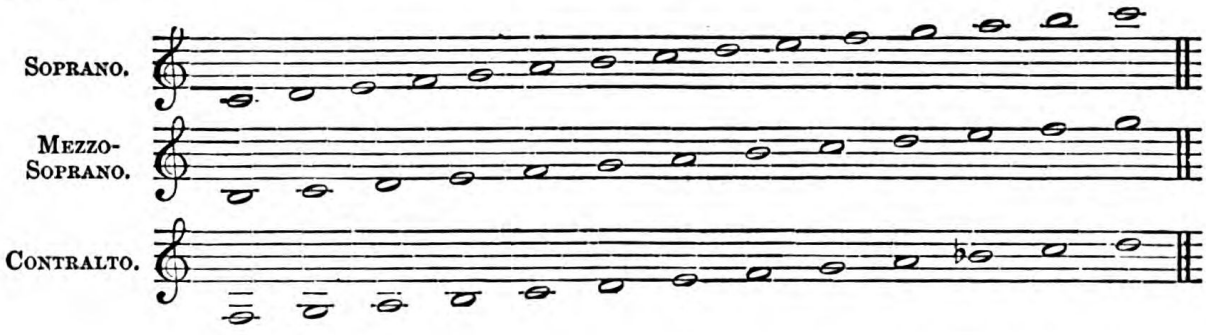
schools exact an equal amount of dramatic power, the difficulty of the Oratorio singer is far the greater, inasmuch as the same effect must be produced without the aid of stage accessories; indeed, the expression in Oratorio *must* not in any way partake of a stagey character. Great Operatic singers have rarely been successful in Oratorio in our time, the exceptions being Madame Goldschmidt (Jenny Lind), Mademoiselle Titiens, and Miss Louisa Pyne; but all these began their musical education with the study of Oratorio, the only school, in my opinion, upon which great singers are formed, whatever may be their future career. What perfect control must a singer have of her powers who can interpret with all their varied expression such songs as, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," "Come unto Him," "Rejoice greatly," and "He was despised," from the *Messiah;* "Hear ye, Israel," the recitatives of the Queen and "O rest in the Lord" from *Elijah;* and "Scenes of horror" from *Jephtha;* yet each must receive its proper expression by means of the voice alone. A singer trained for the stage will almost invariably overstep the line where religious feeling ends and theatrical expression begins.

ON THE FORMATION OF THE VOICE.

No one has arrived yet at an accepted theory on the formation of the voice; the subject is still one of conjecture alone. I have found the following explanation easy to be understood, and attended with good results. The sounds are produced by the restriction or expansion of the glottis, the deep sounds being formed at the base of the vocal organs, the high tones above them; the former vibrations being called chest notes, the latter head notes; but the most important study of all, especially for beginners, is that of the medium or mixed voice, and for this the experience of a professor is the only safe guide. The right or wrong use of these notes may perfect or ruin a young voice at the beginning, and I recommend a short lesson every day from an experienced master as the best and quickest method of conquering this difficulty, which, I must here remark, is usually greater for the contralto than for the soprano voice. Unless a pupil be closely watched there is danger of subsiding into a throaty or a nasal production of these tones, either habit being most difficult to correct when once formed. Later I shall give examples for guidance in this important study. I shall only add here that the greatest care must be taken not to force these notes, and urge the pupil not to lose patience if the difficulty be not quickly overcome. It is, however, a great encouragement to know that when once this study is perfected it facilitates all the others in a marvellous way, especially the practice of the scales and exercises throughout the whole compass of the voice.

ON THE CLASSIFICATION OF VOICES.

Women have three kinds of voices—Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, and Contralto. Each of these may have such a compass, that the difficulty of classifying it may be great to an inexperienced ear; but in listening well to the low notes and the medium notes a good professor will not make a mistake. It is not the compass which decides the character of a voice; and in our time we have many examples of this in such voices as those of Malibran, her sister, Madame Viardot, and Madame Alboni, who, though all possessing contralto voices, were able to sing certain soprano parts, owing to the facility with which they could use the notes of the highest register; but these voices are exceptional, and must not be taken as a standard by which to judge others. The following illustration will show the usual compass of each voice :—



ON RESPIRATION.

The most important aid to the art of singing lies in the management of the breath, excellence in which is indispensable. The inspiration must not be sudden, like a gasp, but like a prolonged inward sigh, while the expiration must be as slow as possible to allow the singer to sustain the note or passage she desires to sing during the required time. Any effort in taking the breath, any grimace while holding a note, any unsteadiness in singing a passage or hurrying to get to the end of it, shows that the manner of taking the breath, as well as the use of it, is defective. The most favourable position for a singer is that of standing, and the mouth must be open naturally without the slightest contraction of the muscles of the face, while the tongue should fall naturally in the mouth, *almost*, but not quite, touching the teeth. By close attention to these rules bad habits difficult to correct are avoided at the beginning. To sustain a note equally and with a pure sound is the gift of very few singers. It is much easier to swell and diminish a sound than to hold it without wavering. When a note can be held equally from twelve to fifteen seconds, then will be the time to begin the study of the "Messa di voce," or swelling and diminishing the sounds.

OF INTONATION.

Everybody can be taught to sing more or less; voices can be improved in quality and extended in compass; voices can even be *made* by a careful attention to the rules for the Art of Singing, but upon only one condition, which is, the possession of what is called "a good ear for music." If this be wanting, all the teaching in the world will not avail to make a singer, and the student not endowed by nature with a delicate and fastidious ear for intonation is wiser in abandoning all idea of becoming one. But very often a defective method will cause imperfect intonation without the ear being at fault, and I have known singers corrected of singing certain notes out of tune by adopting the true method of using them. To obtain good intonation the pupil must determine in which register of her voice each note ought to be taken. She must then practise holding the notes *piano* very steadily and very firmly, using the middle of the voice. Such practice at either end of the voice would be injurious.

ON THE MANNER OF TAKING THE NOTES.

This is called the "attack" of the notes, and can be done *piano* or *forte* according to the character of the phrase to be commeneed. The object is to prevent the sound from beginning above or below the note to be sung. Many inexperienced singers take their notes with a sort of slide, which is very disagreeable.

ON VOCALISATION.

The art of vocalisation consists in singing a series of notes on one vowel sound, in uttering each note distinctly without running into the next, while the pure sound of the vowel is never lost for an instant. There must not be the least contraction of the features or movement of the face or tongue during this exercise, and the vowel *a* pronounced as in "father" is the most convenient sound to adopt. To vocalise well should be the ambition of every singer, and should not be evaded even if the pupil possess an obdurate voice. By the exercise of vocalisation alone can *legato* music be sung with the necessary light and shade.

ADVICE TO SINGERS.

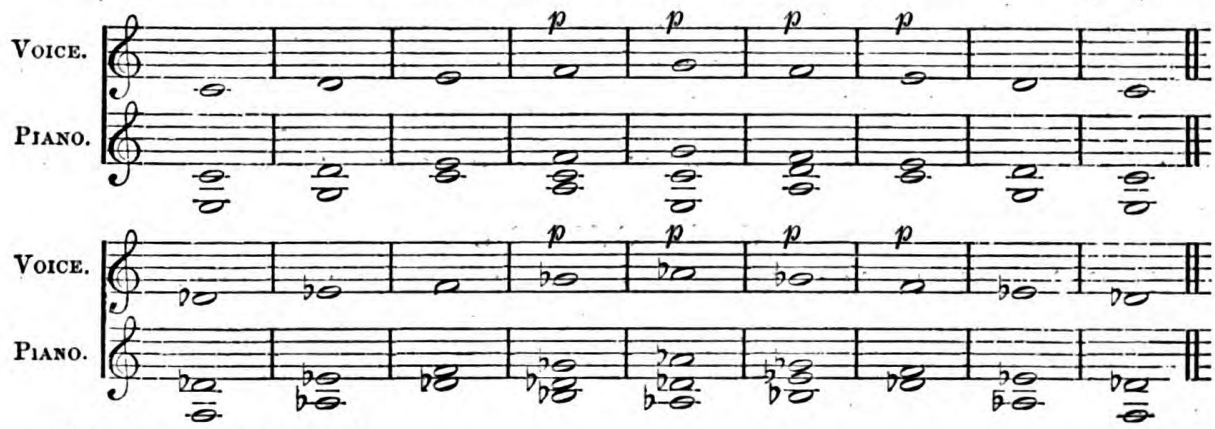
Simple diet, moderate exercise, and regularity of practice cannot be too much insisted on. The last is most important for those who wish to excel in the art, and it should be commenced in the morning by singing the equal notes up and down the scale, followed by exercises in vocalisation. The time of practice should be determined by the strength of the singer alone, for while one individual can sing half-an-hour without fatigue, another may not be able to support more than ten or fifteen minutes. The best guide, then, is the strength of the pupil, who will abstain from singing as soon as the least symptom of fatigue is felt, whether from a slight aching of the throat, or hoarseness. Then will be the time for some rest, and the practice may in this way be renewed three or four times a day without danger.

ON UNITING THE REGISTERS.

Soprano and Mezzo-Soprano.

If the pupil possess natural chest notes it is a very great advantage, but not having them the effort to create them must be made, and this exacts the utmost caution. If, after a short time, there seems no hope of obtaining them, the study had better be relinquished, for though they are necessary for a great dramatic singer, it is possible to be a good singer without them. Having obtained the chest notes the pupil will commence practising the following exercises, being very careful not to force the high notes of the chest register.

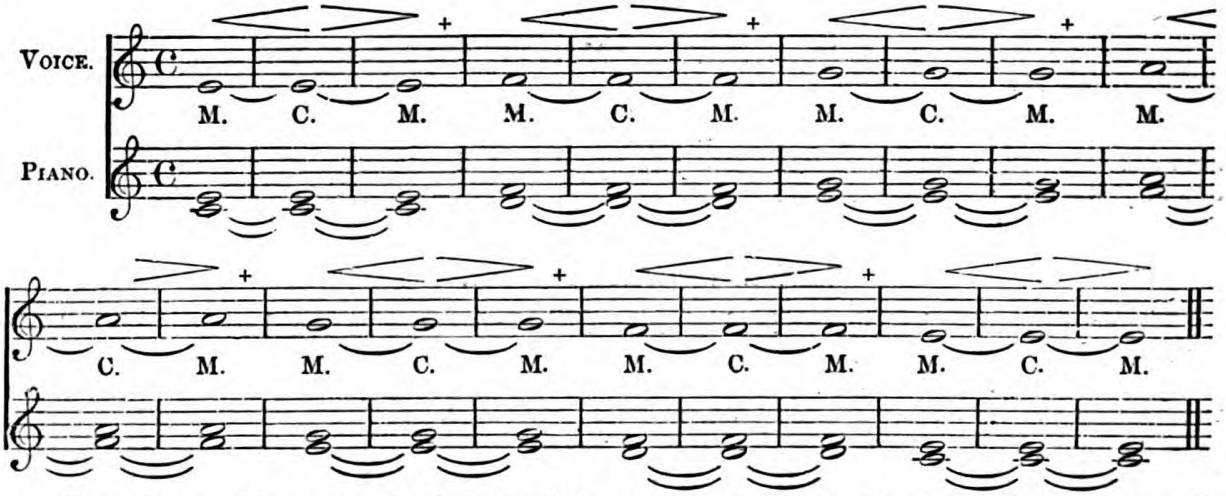
Sustain these notes first with an equal sound, afterwards swelling and diminishing :



The same in D♯ and E♭.

When the pupil can recognise the chest from the medium register she must study the following exercises on passing from one register to the other while holding the same note. To sustain a sound without wavering is one of the most difficult studies in the Art of Singing.

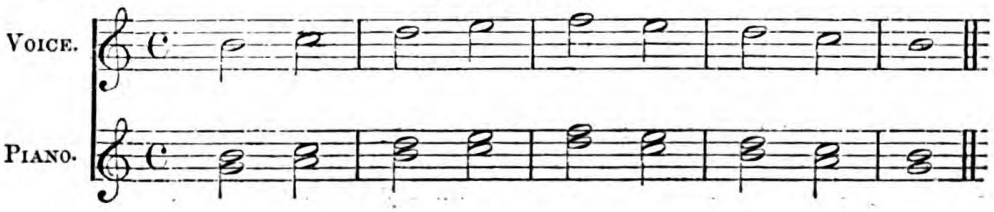
Example.

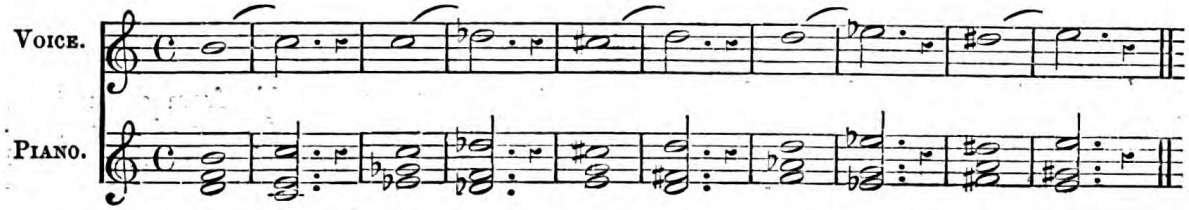


Sing this exercise again, beginning with the chest voice, passing into the medium and ending with the chest. To sustain the sounds equally in changing the register is very difficult, and the student must not lose patience if the progress in this study be not rapid.

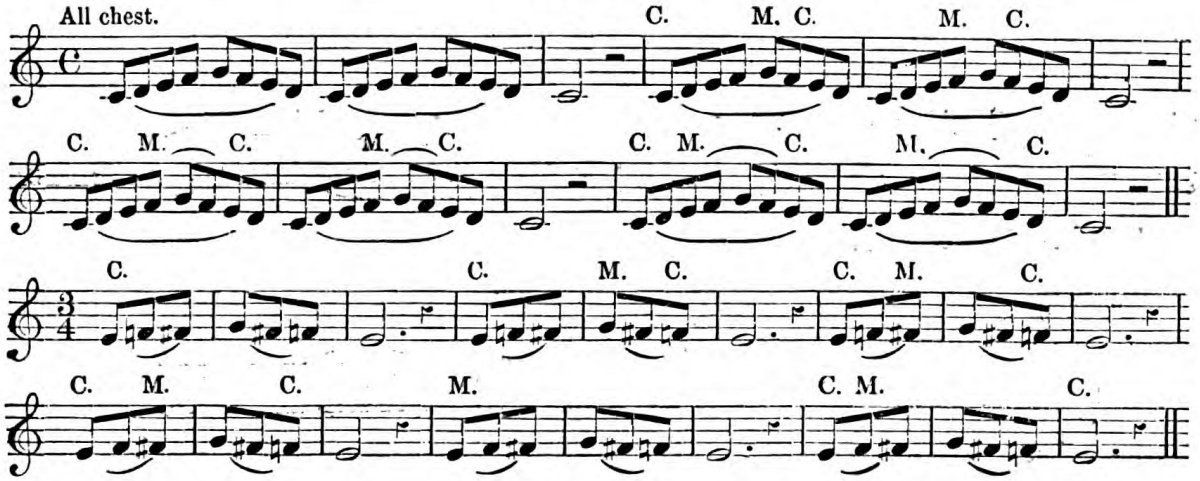
The following examples are for the passage from the medium to the head voice :—

Examples.



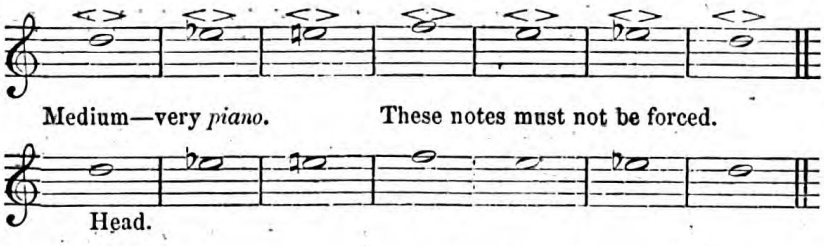


EXERCISES FOR PASSING RAPIDLY FROM ONE REGISTER TO ANOTHER.



The following exercise is to join the medium and head voice :—

FOR SOPRANO AND MEZZO-SOPRANO.

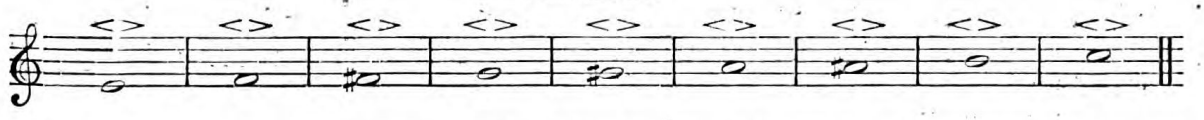


The art of uniting the different registers of the voice is the greatest triumph of a singer, for it enables her to cover all its inequalities, and to use every note throughout its compass with facility and effect.

OF THE CONTRALTO.

I have already said that the study of the union of the registers is much more difficult for the contralto than for the soprano; it must also be undertaken with the greatest care, for with young voices this study is dangerous. The attempt should be made to *coax* the chest notes up to B♭ and C by very slow degrees, practising always *piano*, never in the least forcing the voice or singing below A or higher than C

EXAMPLE.



The above exercise must be practised in the manner indicated for the soprano and mezzo-soprano.

ON PORTAMENTO.

Portamento is the word given by the Italians to the passing smoothly from one note to another. There are two kinds of *portamento*, one is in joining a group of notes of equal value with evenness, the other in binding two notes forming a distant interval with lightness and elegance, and the latter is the most common form. This ornament is very much abused by ignorant singers, who use it as a means of expression which very often borders on the ridiculous. I have heard it employed so frequently during the performance of a song that it has had the effect of a continued lamentation. The following is an example of the first manner :—

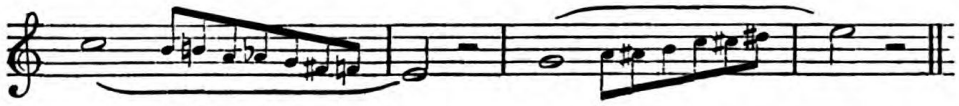
EXAMPLE OF FIRST MANNER.

And this of the second :

SECOND MANNER.

Sung thus :

The best manner of using the *portamento* is to slightly diminish the first note before passing to the second. Avoid the following effect :—



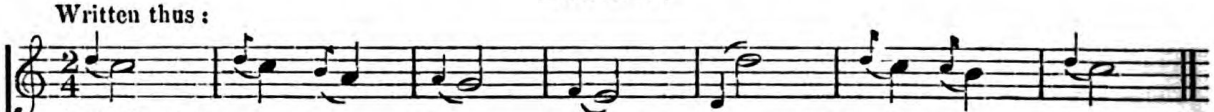
There are singers who pass from one note to another by touching all the intervals between, a kind of howl most disagreeable to hear. The study of the *portamento* is dangerous because of the temptation to exaggerate; but if watched by a good professor this error is not likely to occur.

ON THE APPOGIATURA.

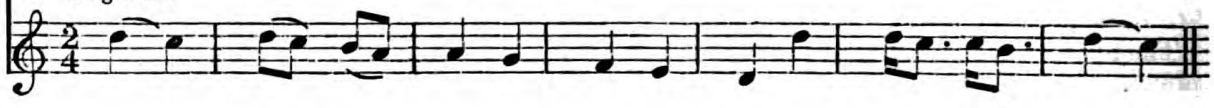
The appogiatura is the small note which precedes any note of greater value than itself, and must be *leant* upon, as its name indicates—viz., "appogiare," to *lean* upon. This ornament is so differently understood by executants that modern composers have nearly discontinued writing it. It is, however, to be found in all music up to a very recent date; singers must therefore understand how to use it correctly.

EXAMPLE.

Written thus :

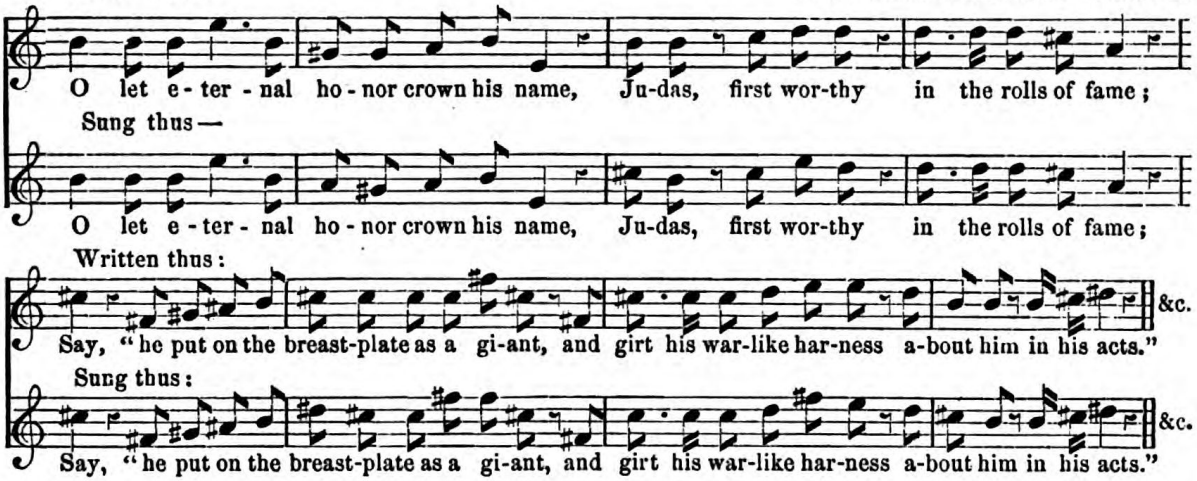


Sung thus :



When the small note is less than half the value of the following note it must be sung short, as in the last bar but one of the above example. In recitative the appogiatura is rarely written. It is used in the following manner :—

Written thus: From *Judas Maccabæus.*—HANDEL.

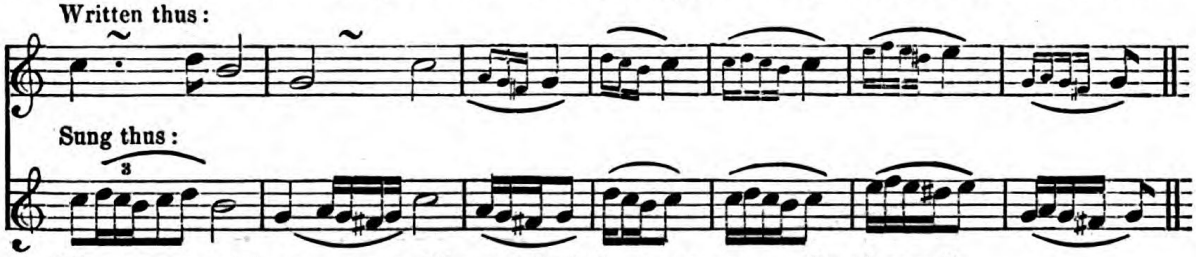


In the following exercises many examples will be found by which the student will learn the various methods of using this ornament.

OF THE TURN

This is one of the most effective ornaments, and when neatly performed gives great lightness and interest to the music, but it must be sparingly and well, or it is in very bad taste.

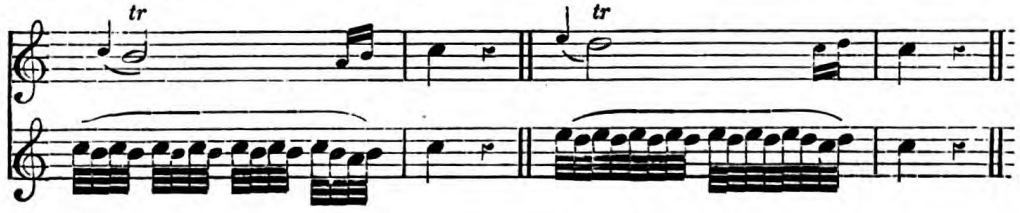
Written thus:



The turn must be sung smoothly, not *jerked* out, as one so often hears it.

OF THE SHAKE.

This is one of the most beautiful and effective ornaments in the art of singing; indeed no light soprano can be considered perfect who does not possess it. It is very difficult to acquire; but for the consolation of those who do not possess it, I may add that the acquired is usually more perfect than the natural shake. The study of the shake is treated of largely in the following pages, and must be commenced only when the student has gained a certain proficiency in vocalisation.



ON LIGHT AND SHADE.

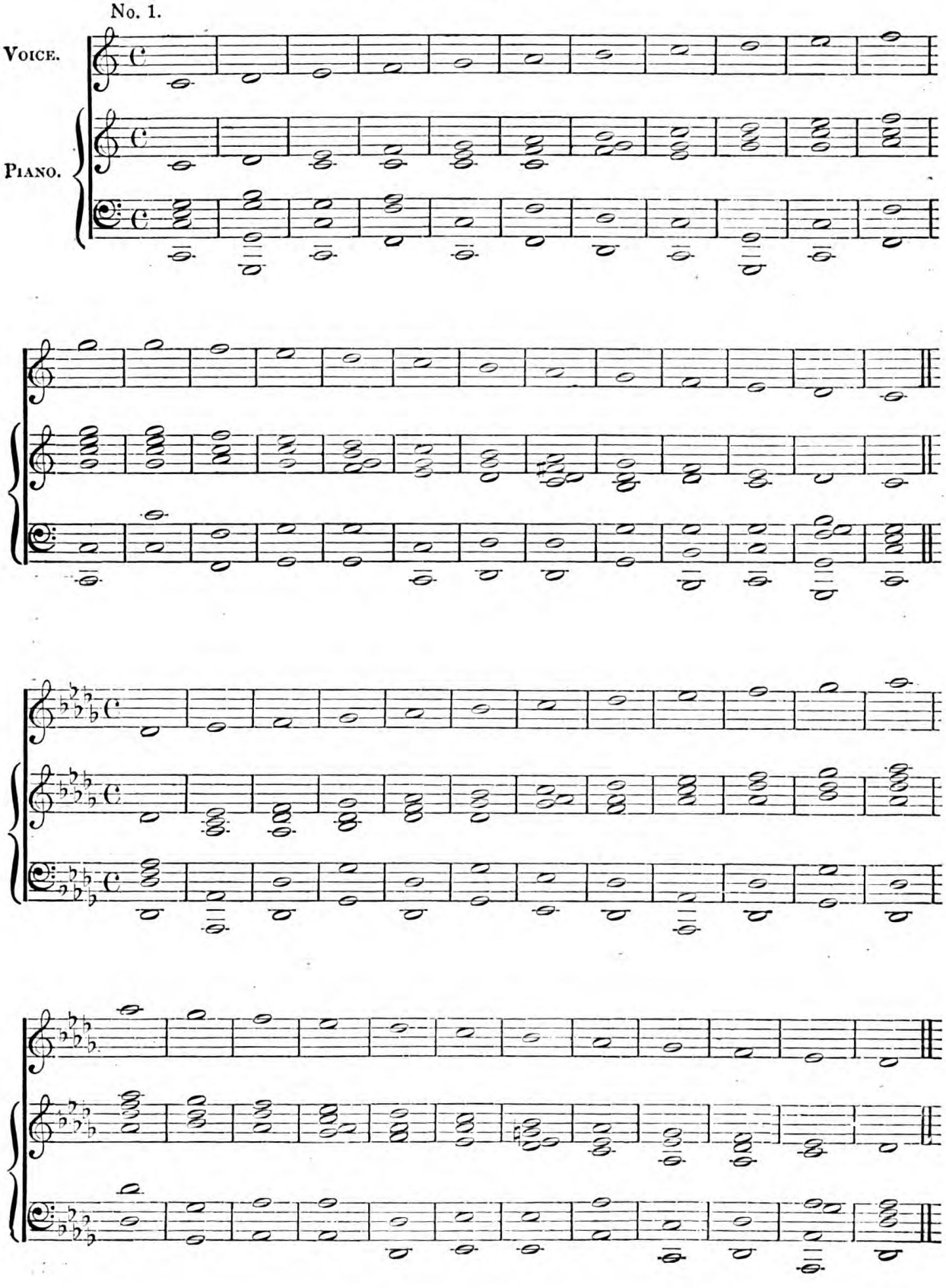
The expressions used for light and shade are the following :—

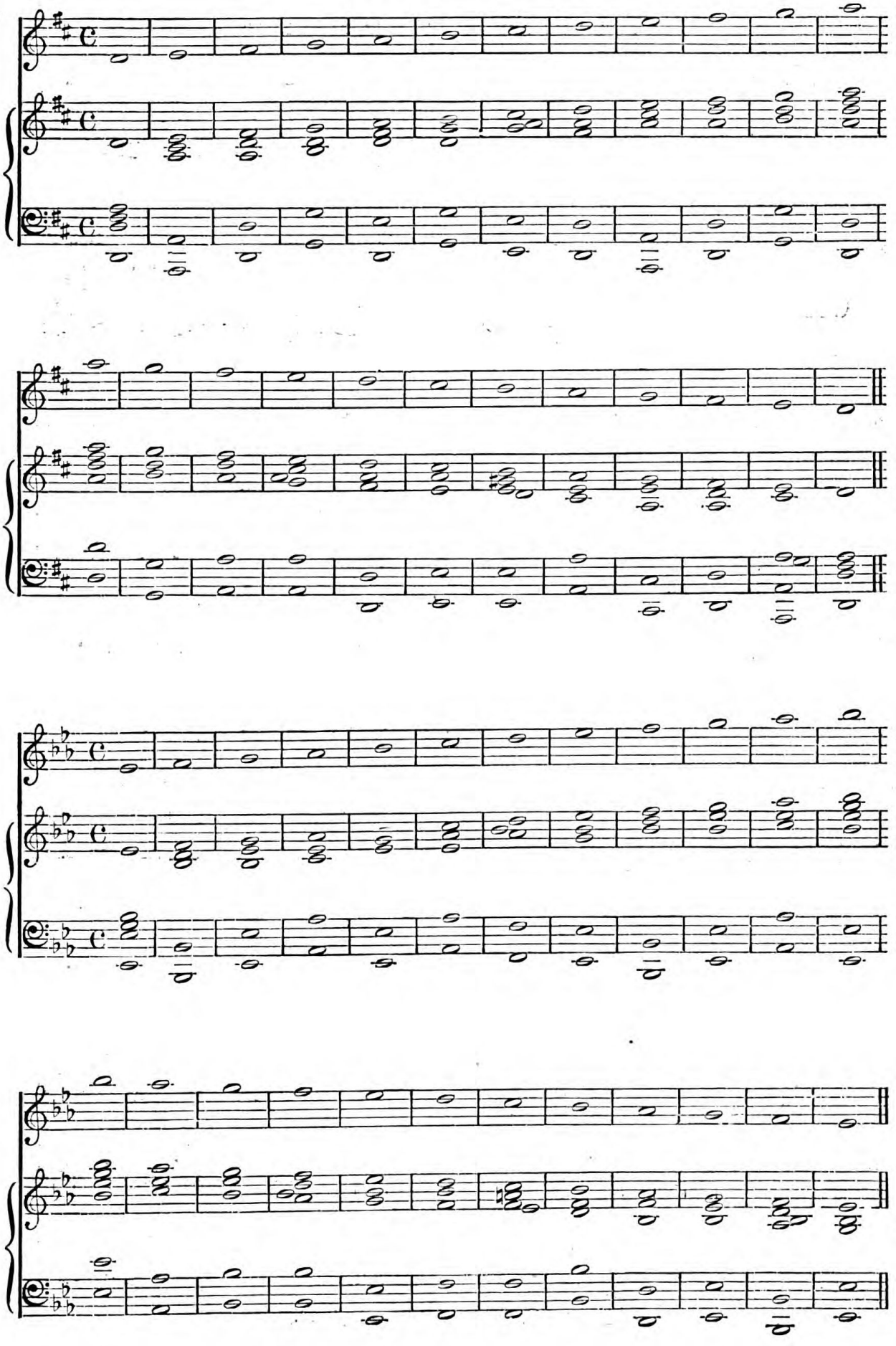
Piano—Soft.
Forte—Loud.
Crescendo—Increasing the sound.
Diminuendo—Diminishing the sound.
Decrescendo—Ditto.
Rallentando—Slower.
Accelerando—Faster.
Ritenuto—Little slower.
To swell a sound this mark is used
To diminish it, this
To swell and diminish one sound or a whole passage, this

Most of the following scales and exercises are selected from Panseron's valuable *Methode de Vocalisation*, a book I have been in the habit of giving to my pupils for many years :—

SCALE TO BE SUNG IN EQUAL TONES.

No. 1.

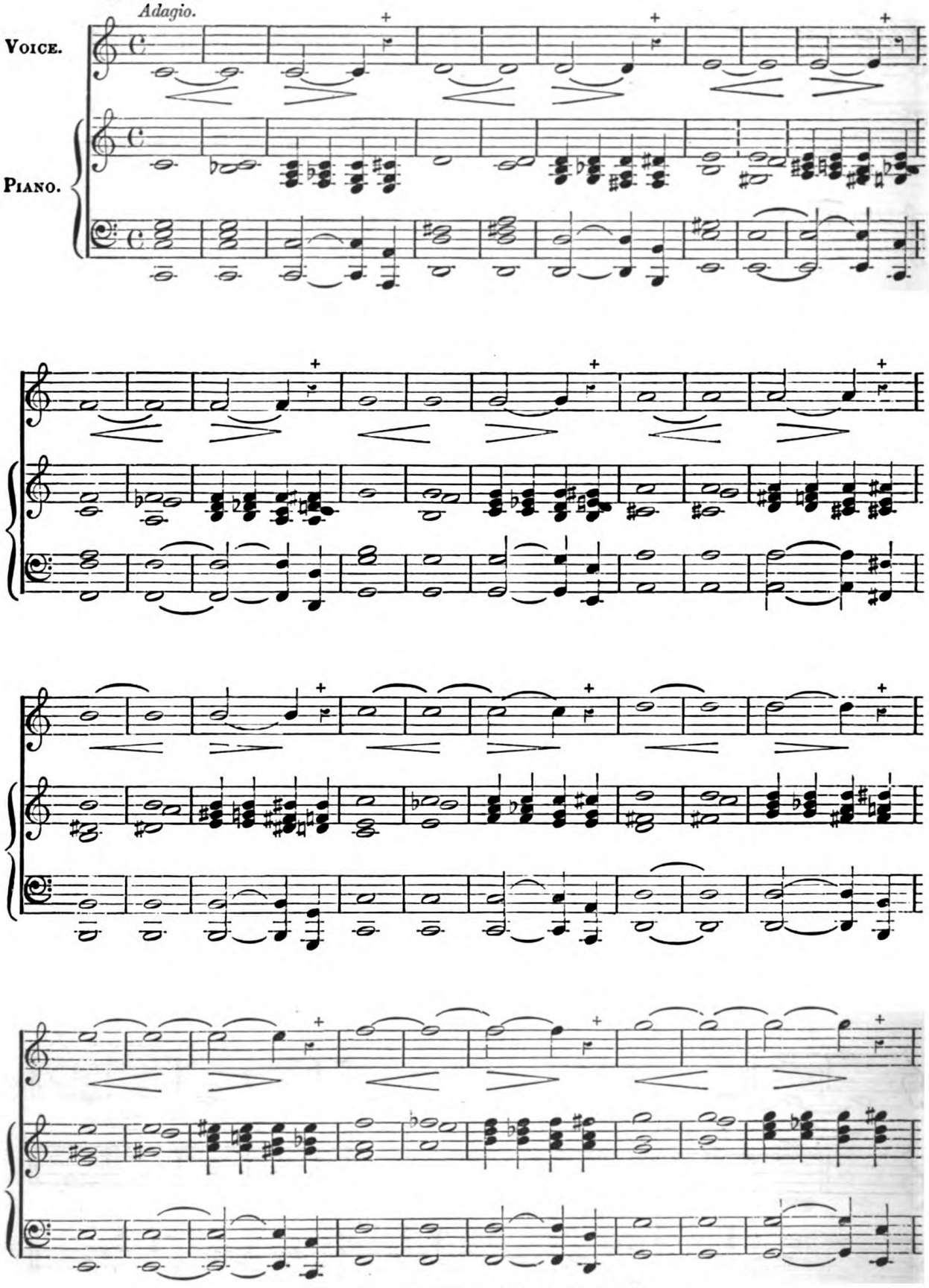




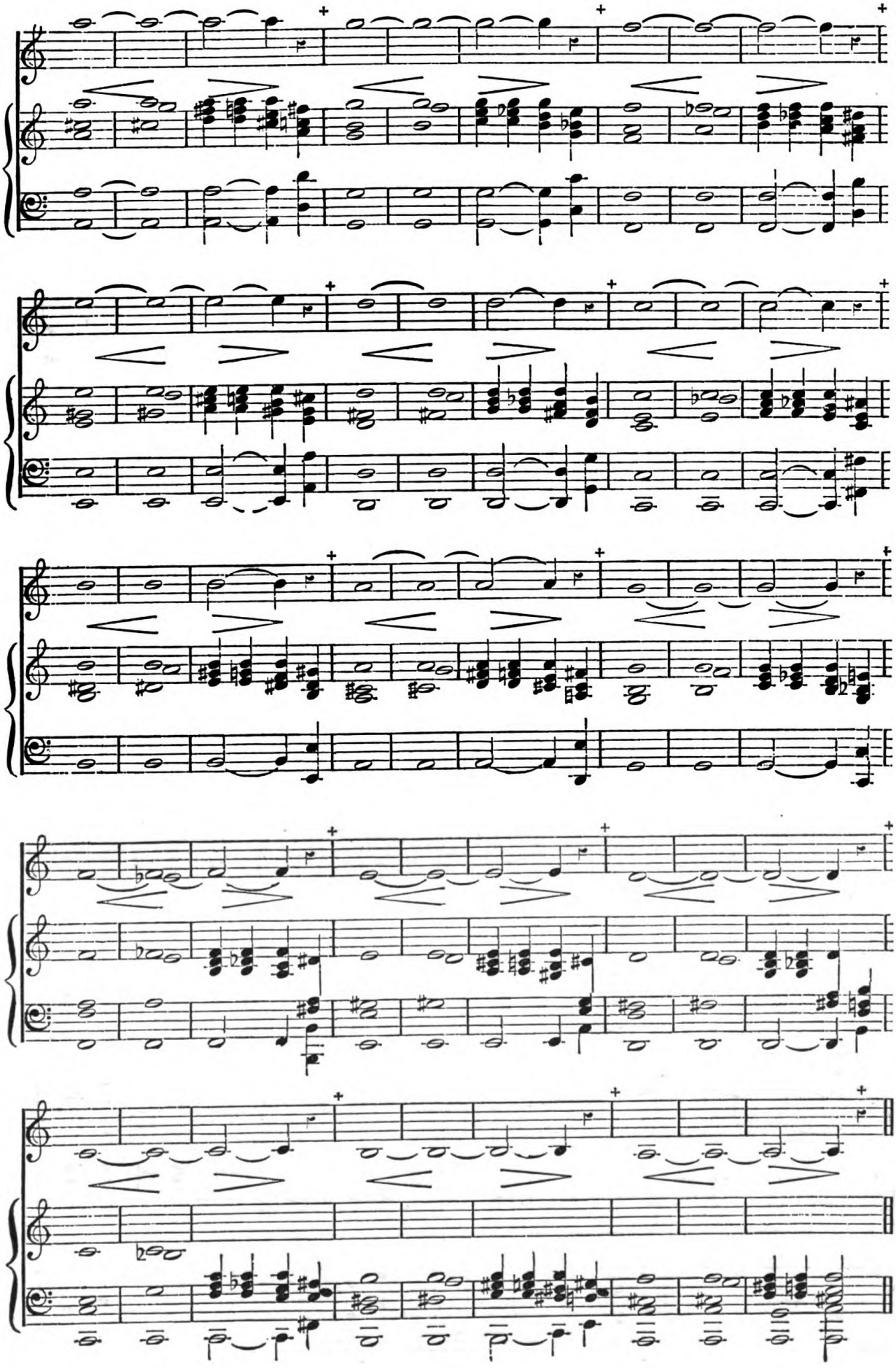
For swelling and diminishing each note.

No. 2.

Adagio.



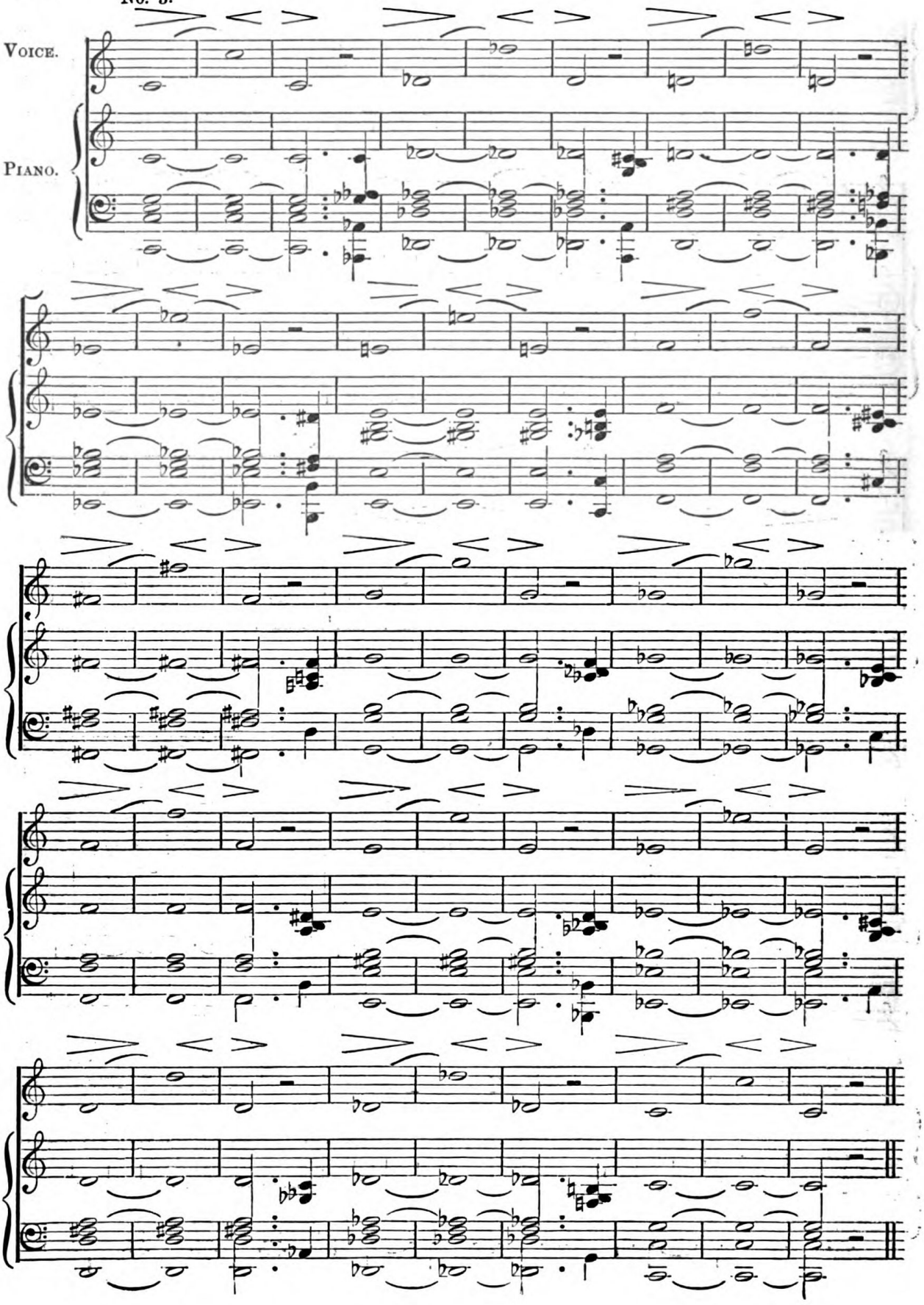
* Take breath where the sign (+) is placed.



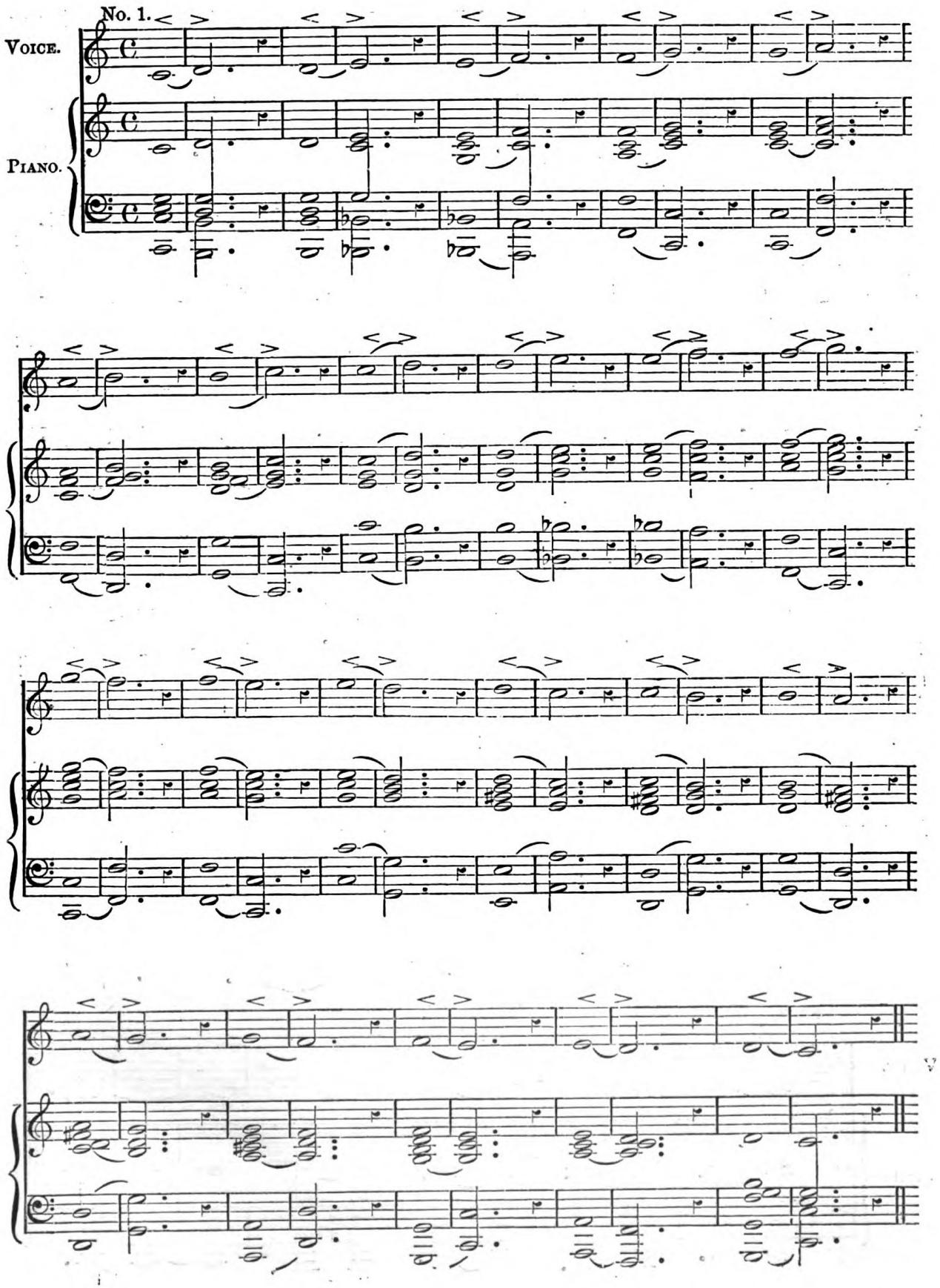
Exercise for extending the compass of the Voice.

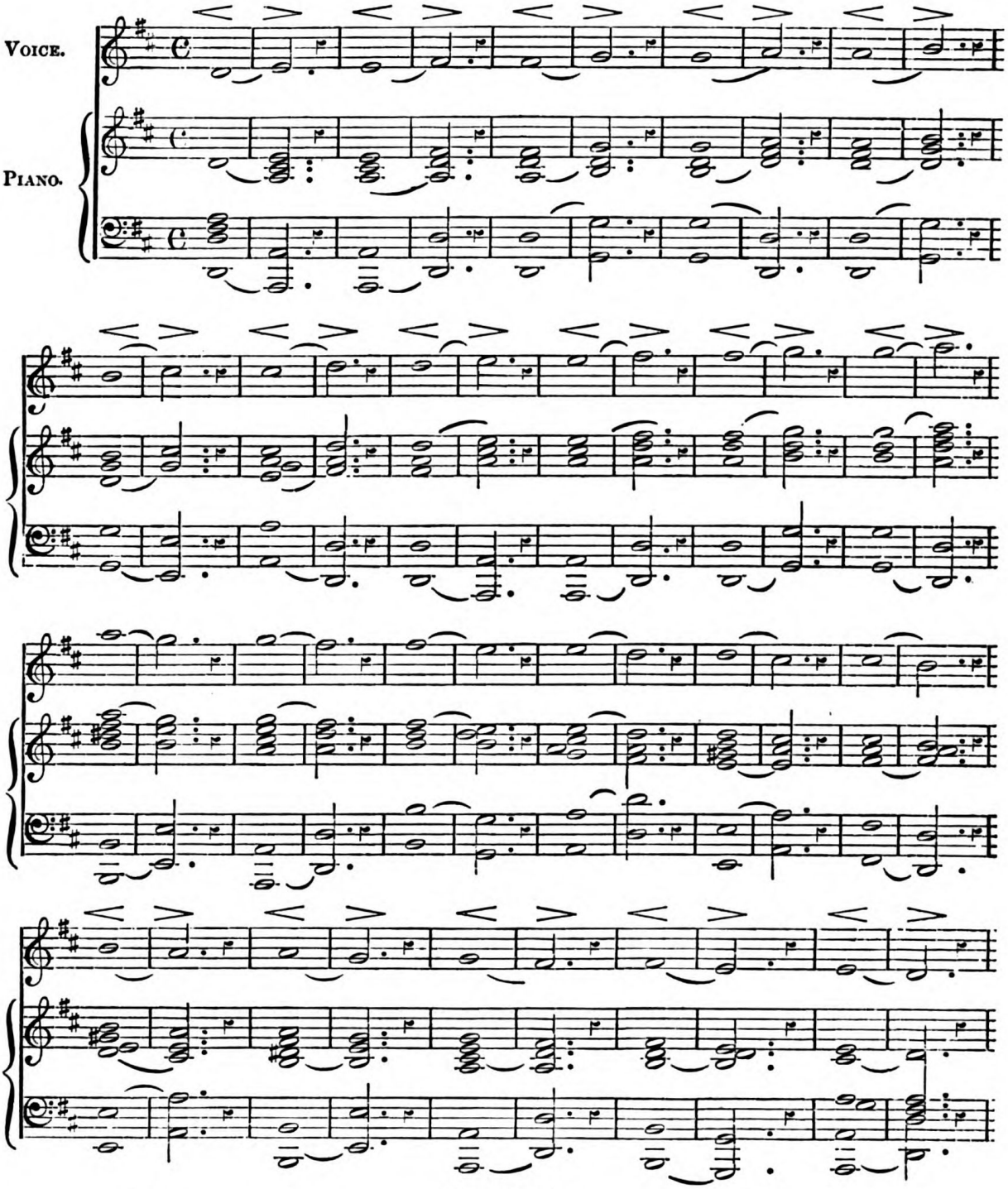
In practising this exercise the low note must be diminished, and thus the octave above will be quite easily gained. If the note is weak it must not be held, but as it becomes stronger it may be held and slightly swelled.

No. 3.

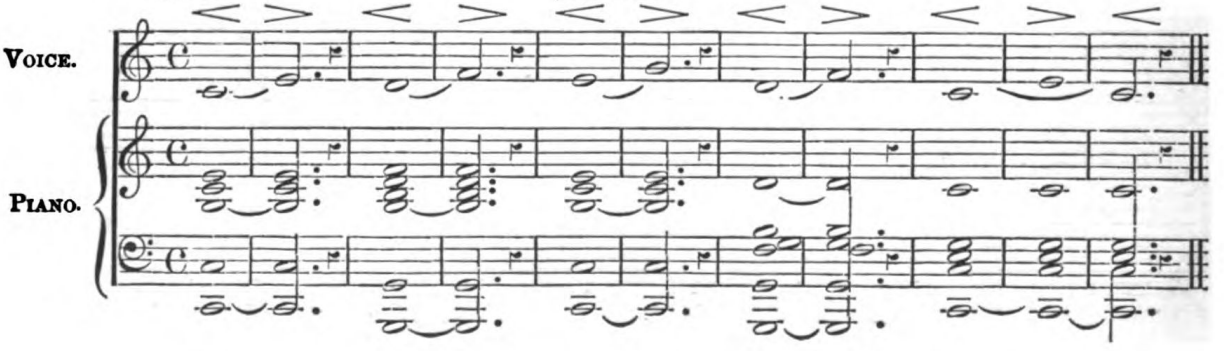


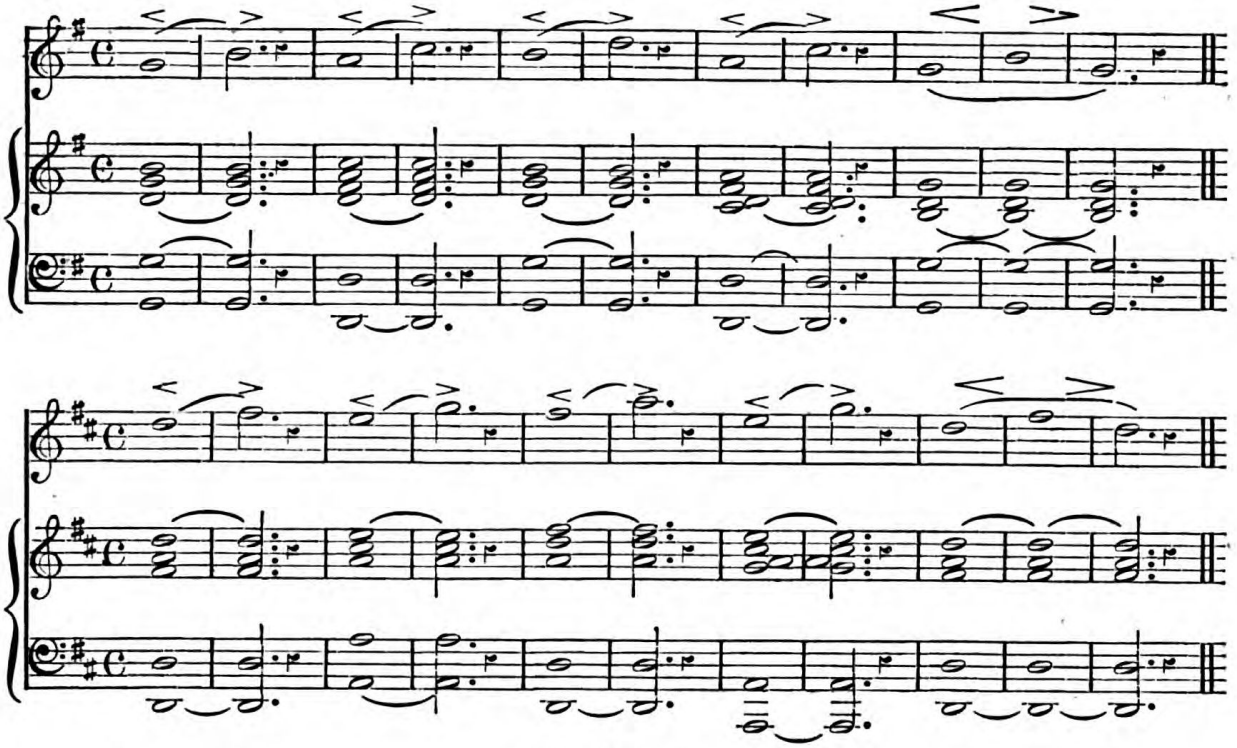
SECONDS.





No. 2. THIRDS.





FOURTHS.

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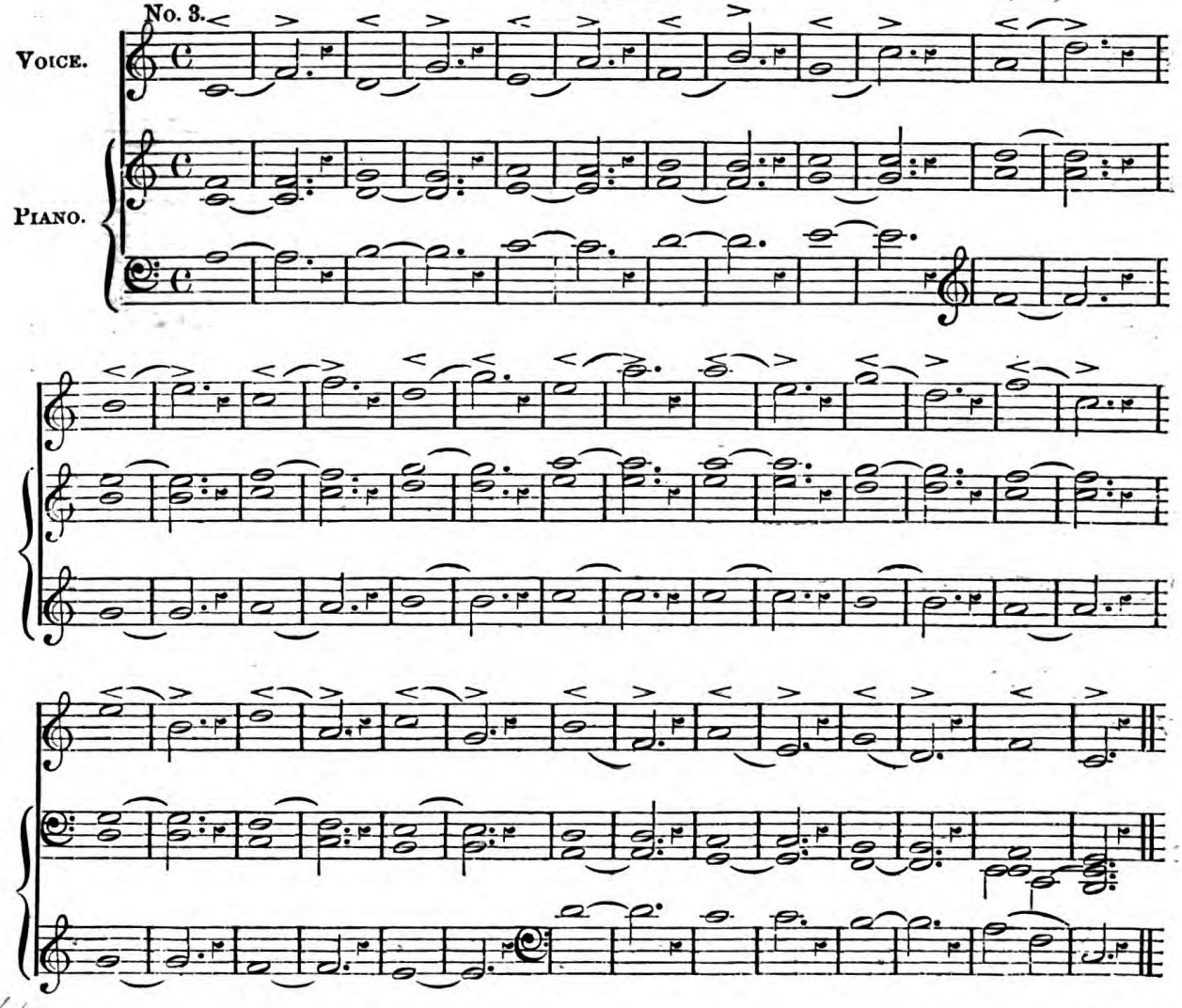
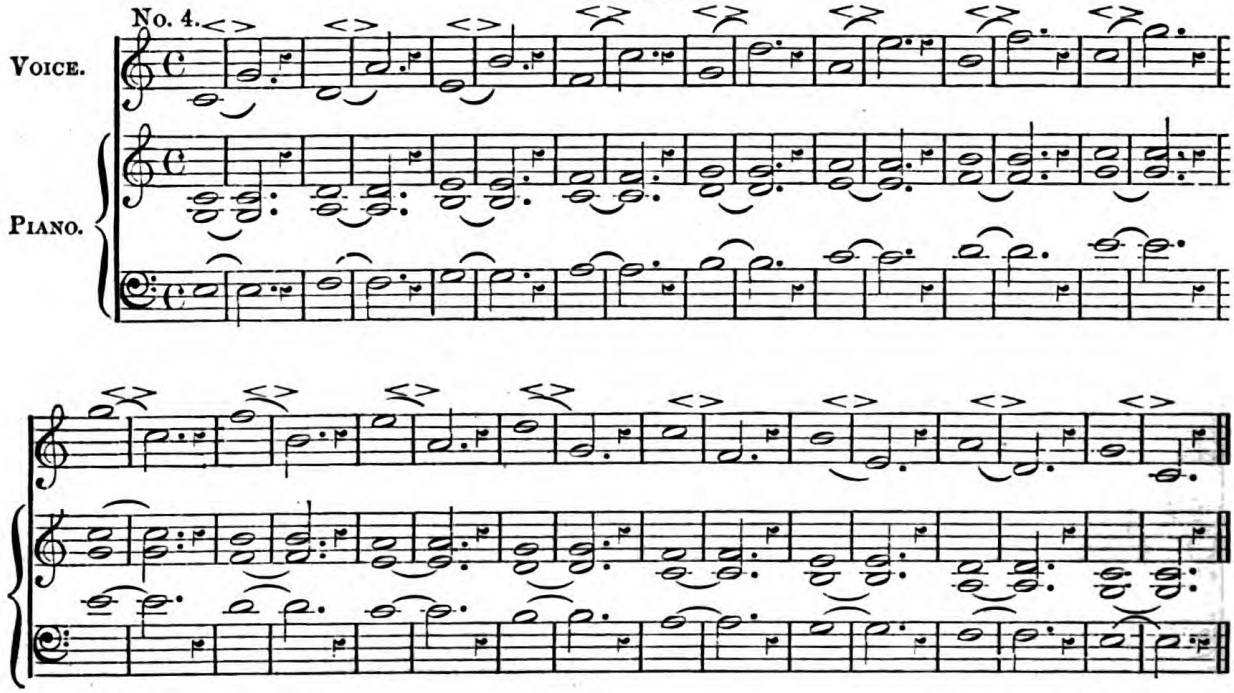


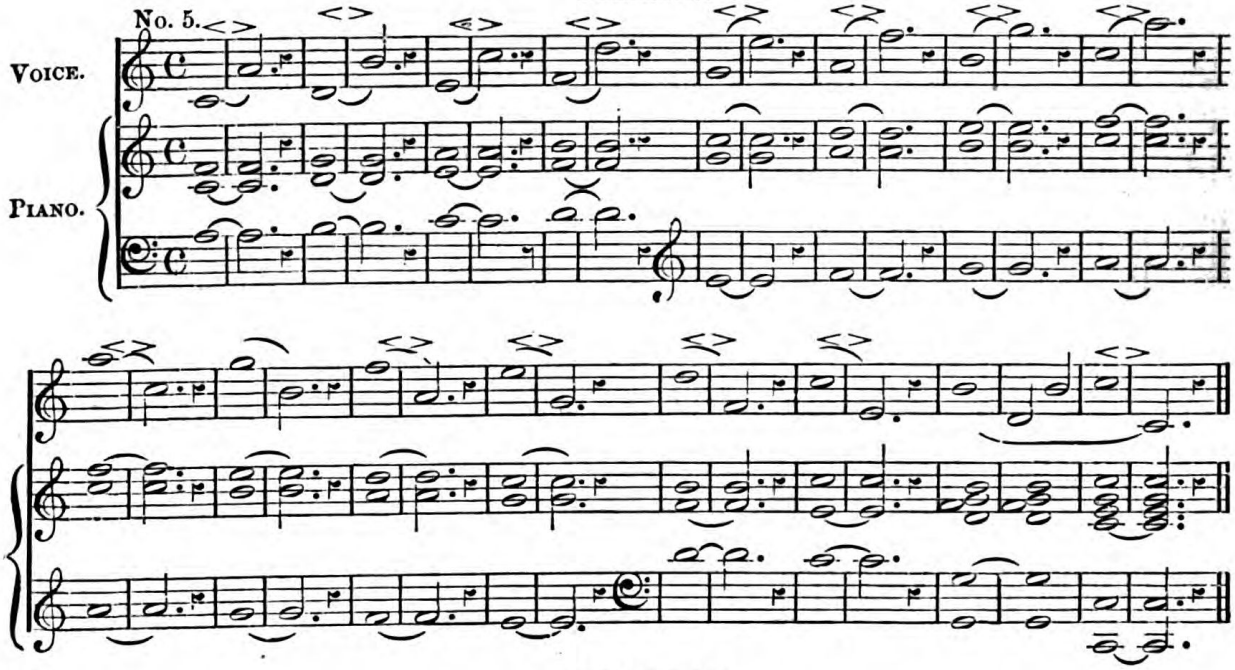
FIFTHS.

No. 4.



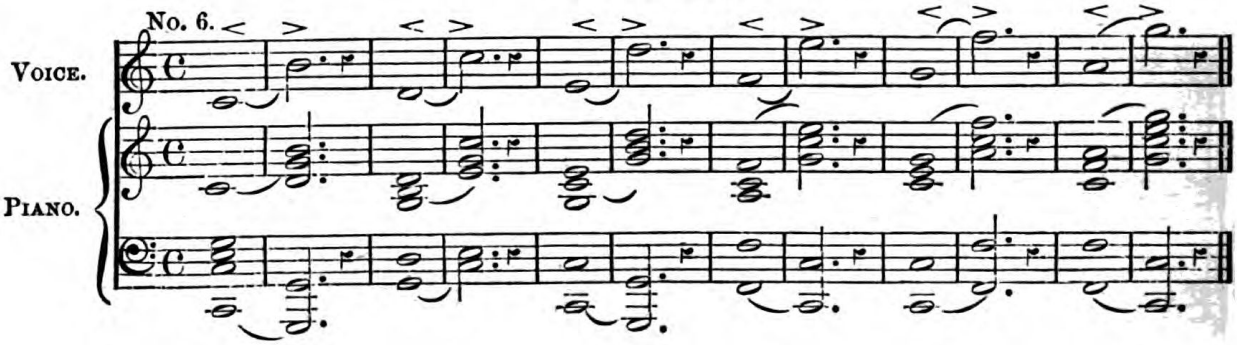
SIXTHS.

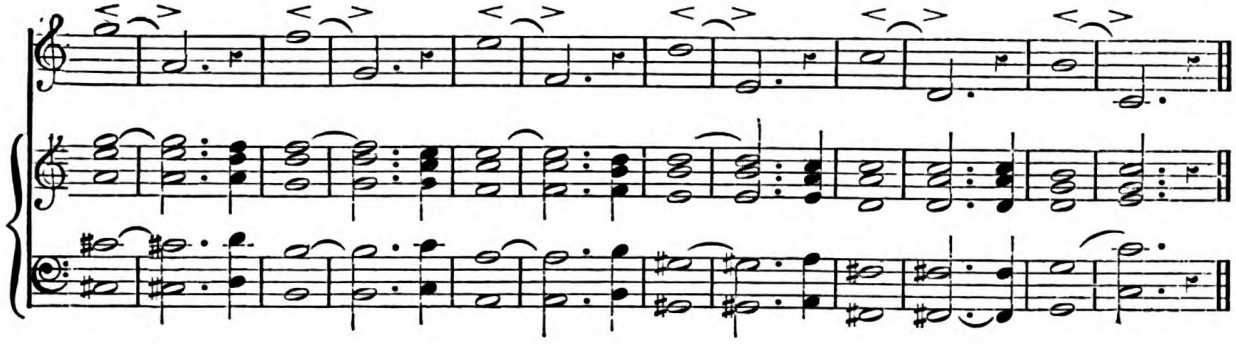
No. 5.



SEVENTHS.

No. 6.



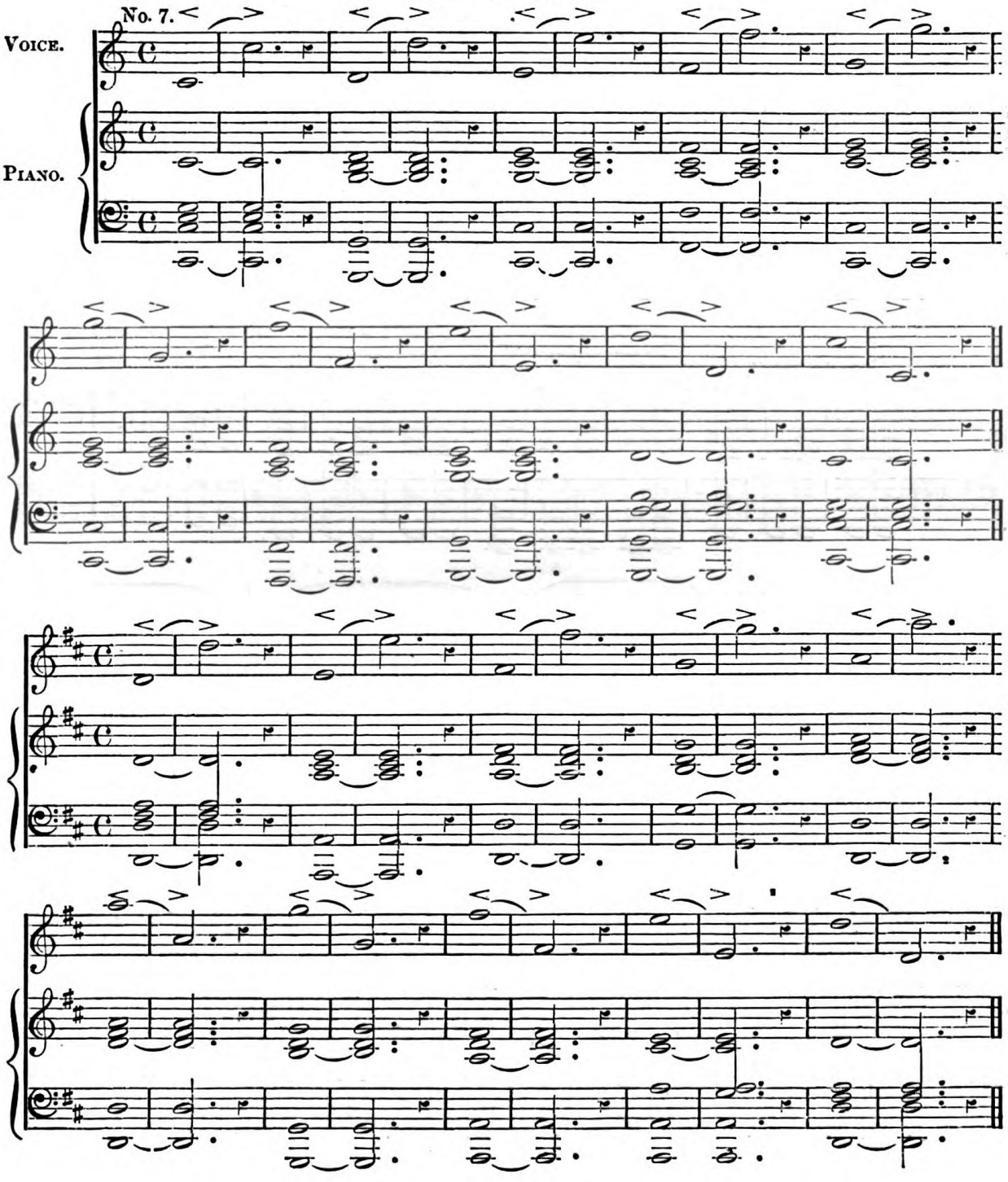


OCTAVES.

No. 7.

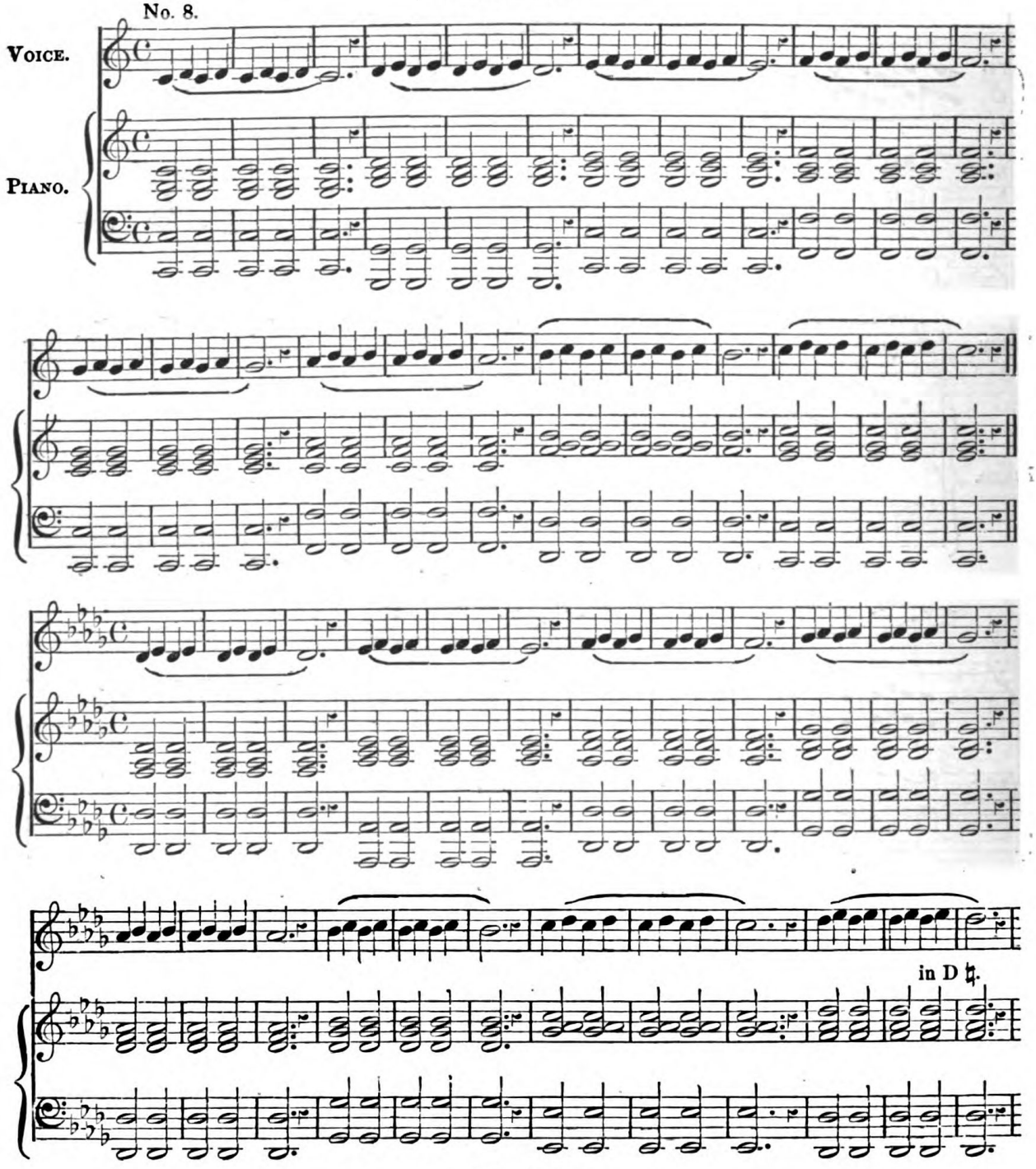
Voice.

Piano.



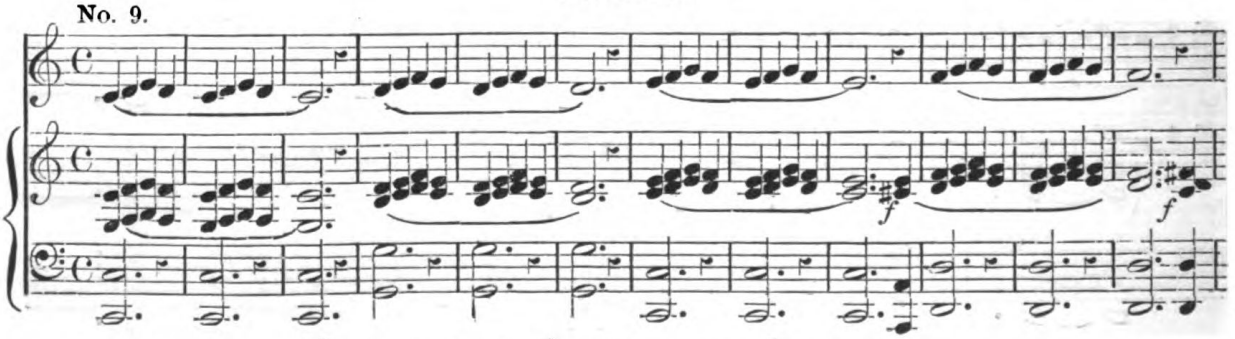
SECONDS.*

No. 8.

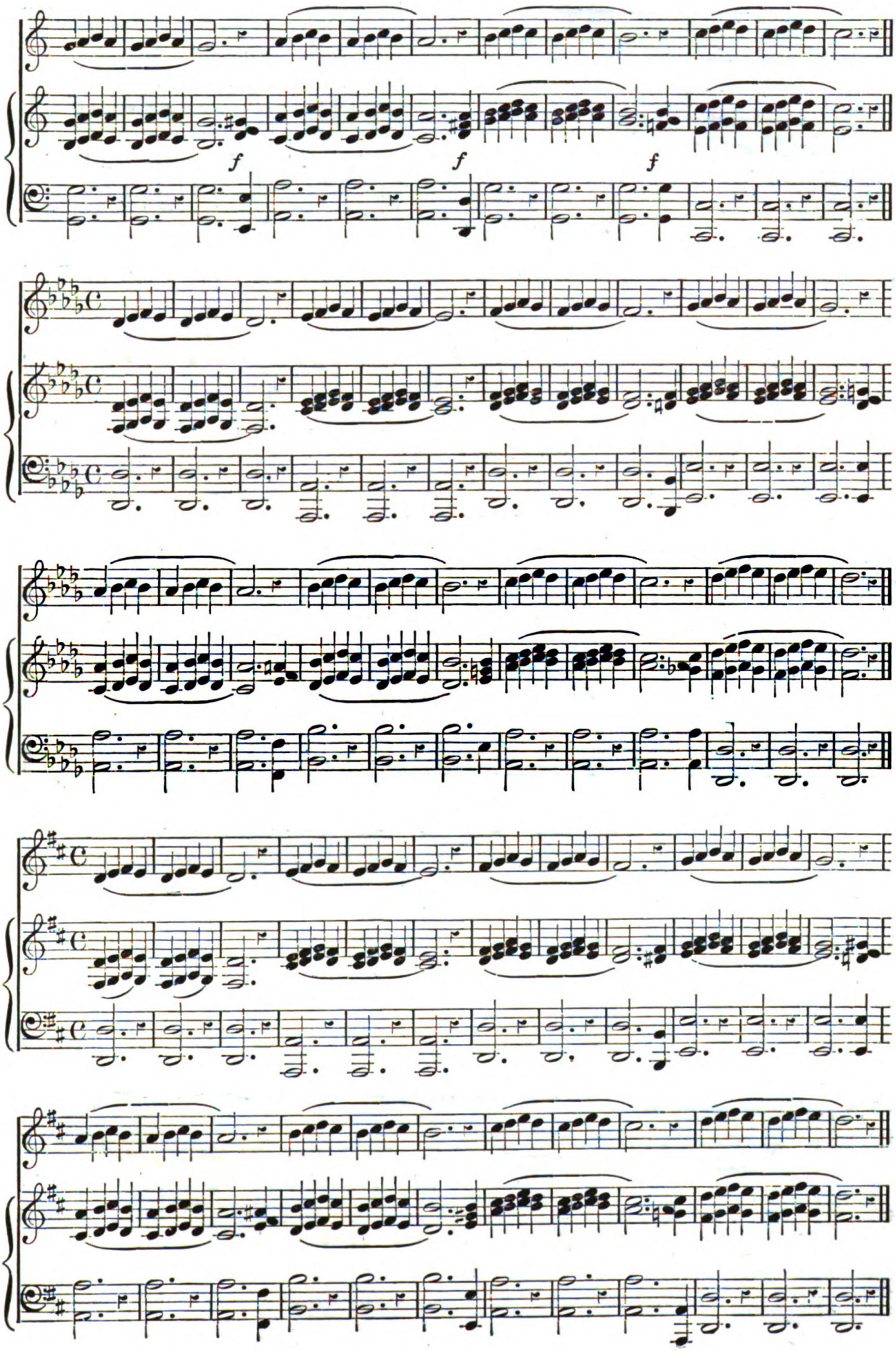


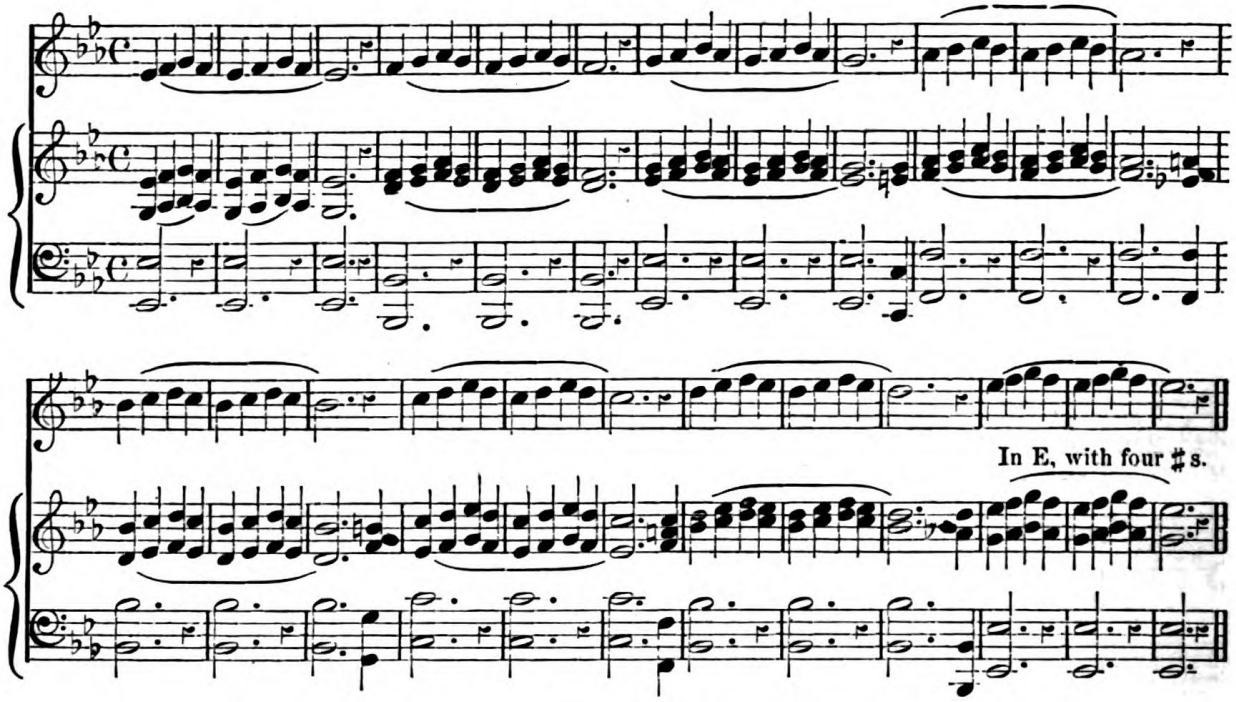
THIRDS.

No. 9.

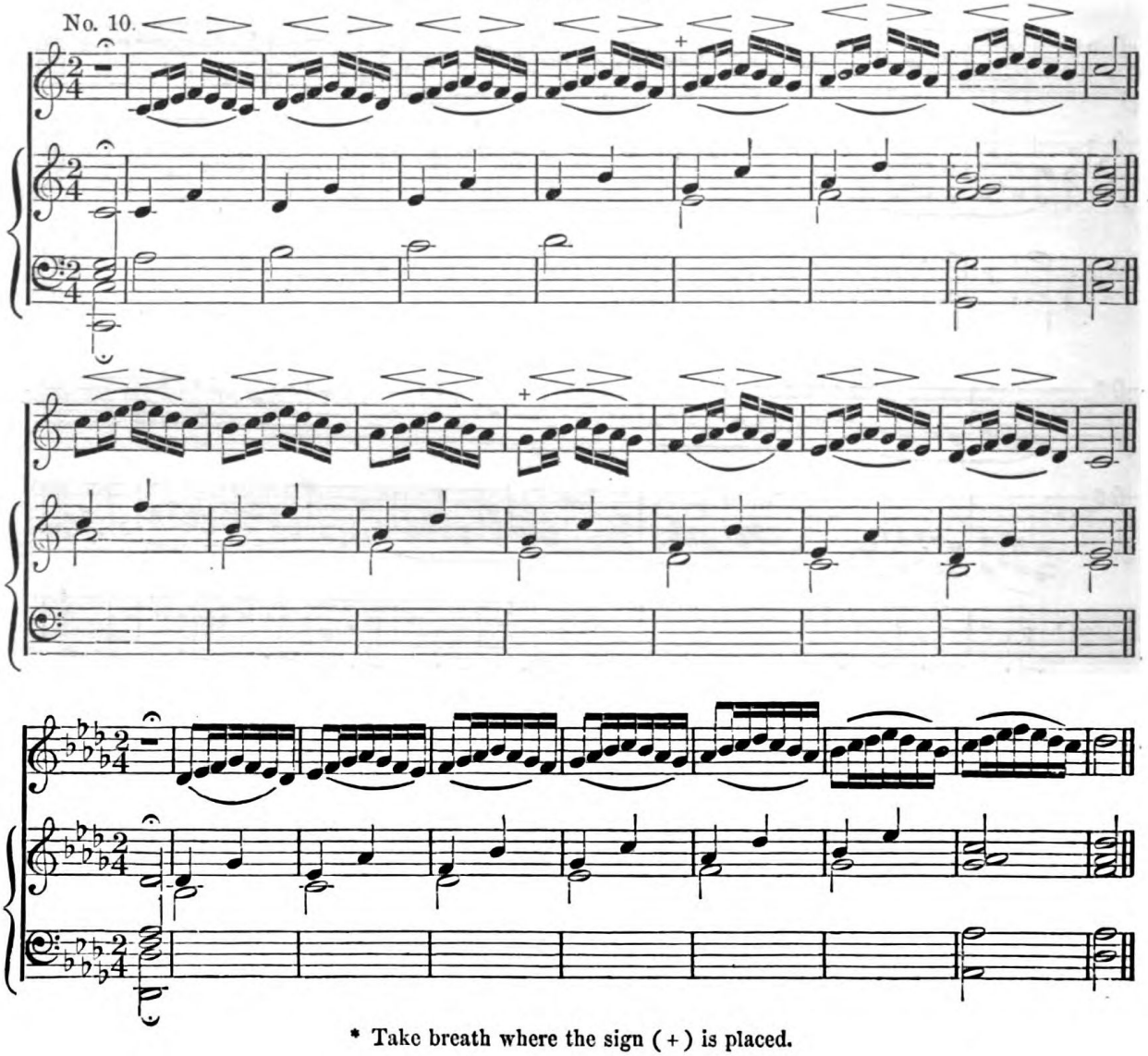


* This exercise will serve as a preparation for the shake.

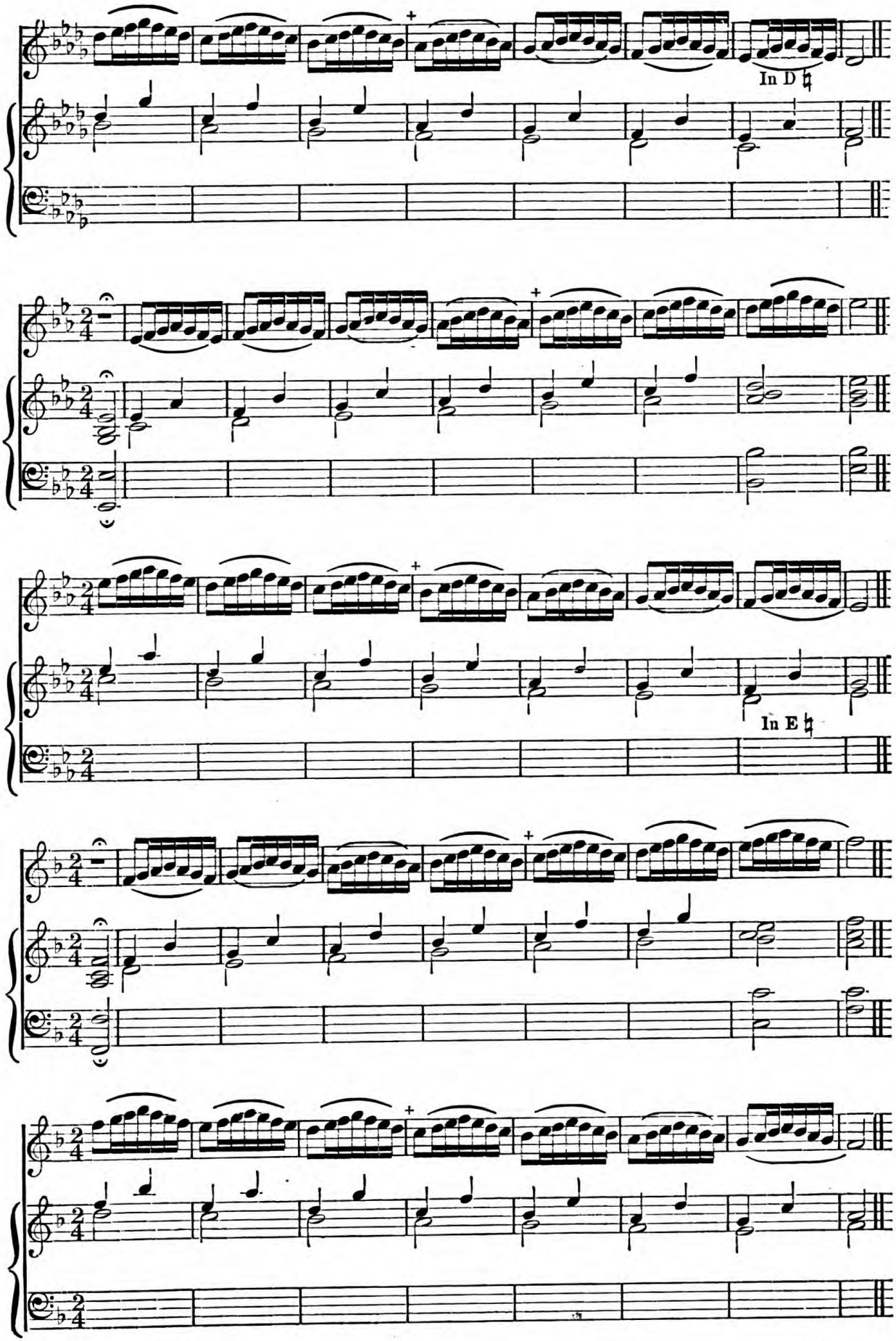

f
f
f



FOURTHS.

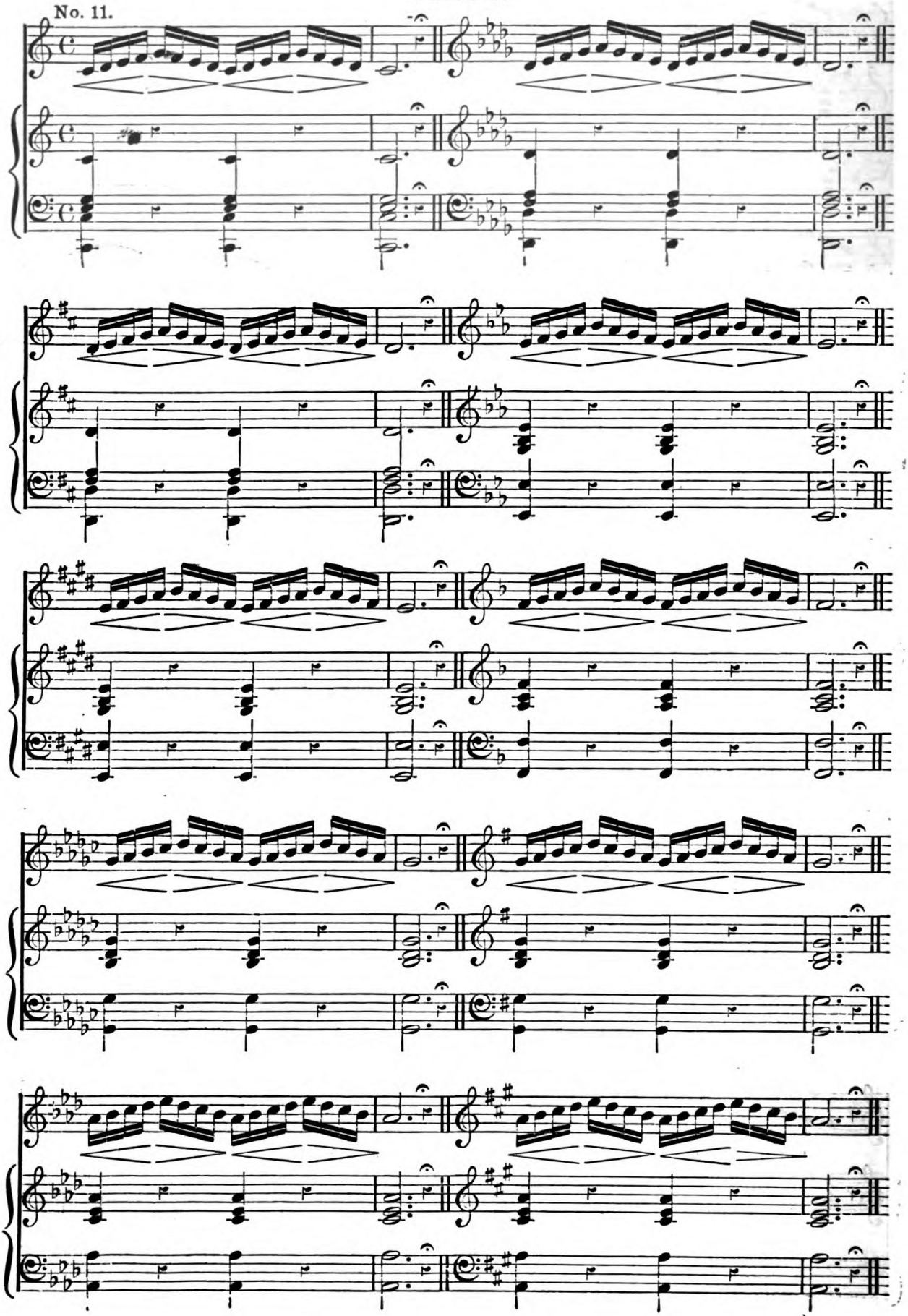


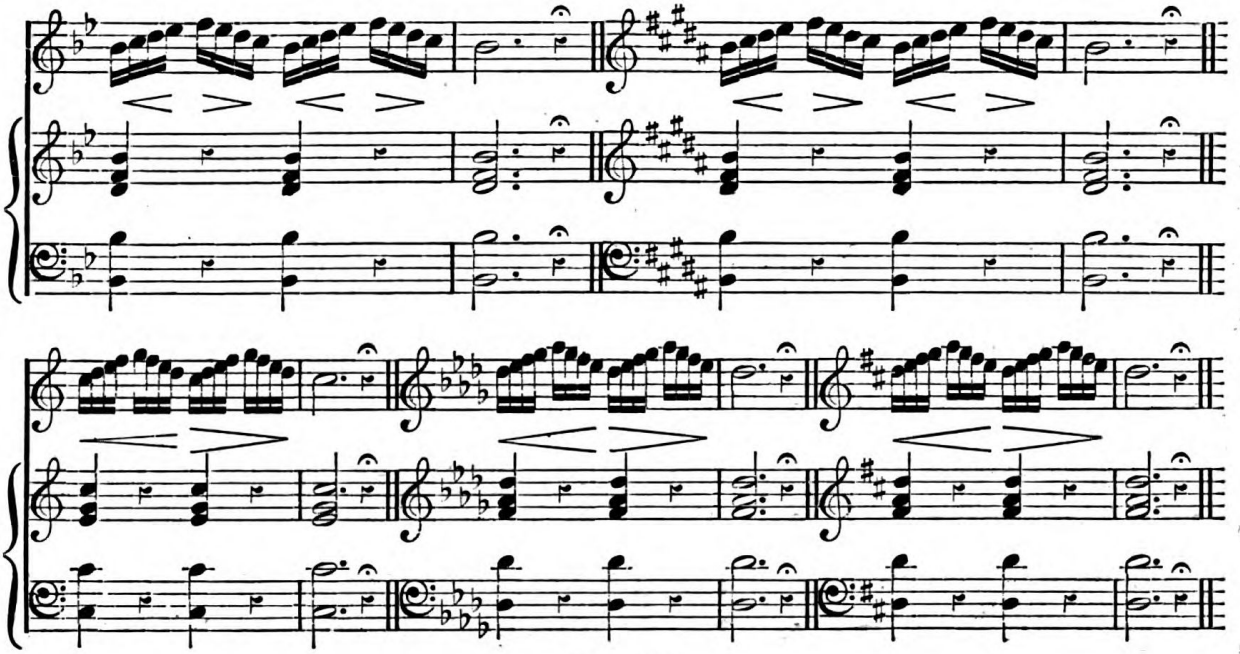
* Take breath where the sign (+) is placed.


In D ♮
In E ♮

FIFTHS.

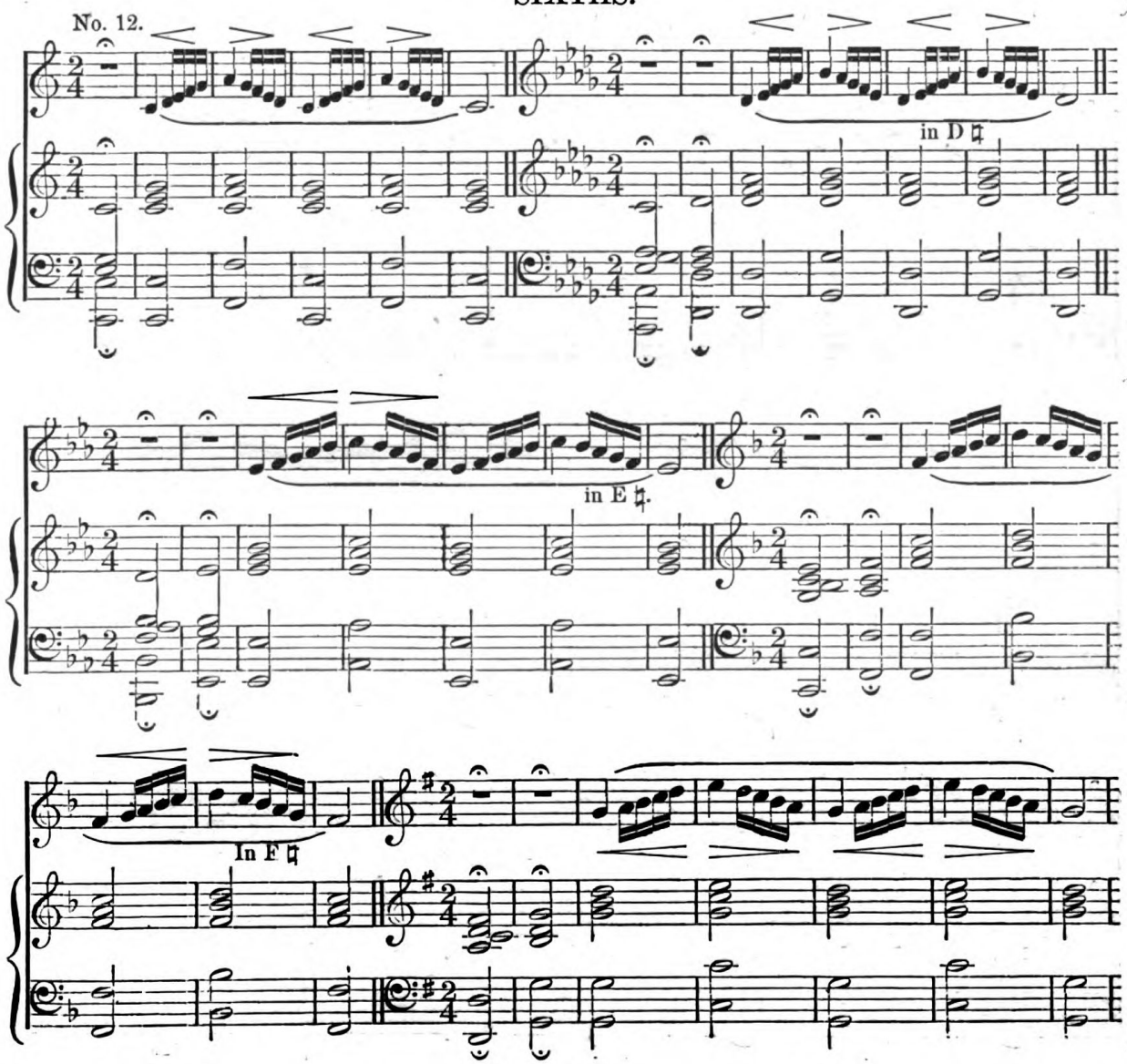
No. 11.

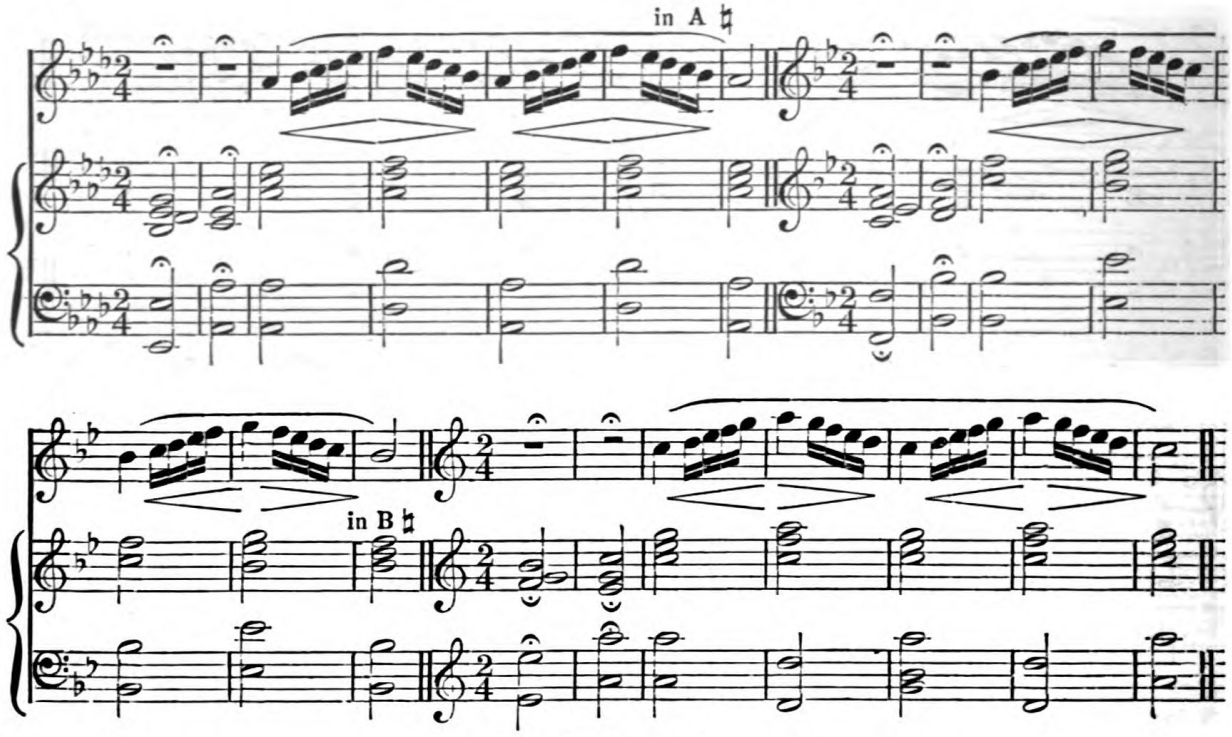




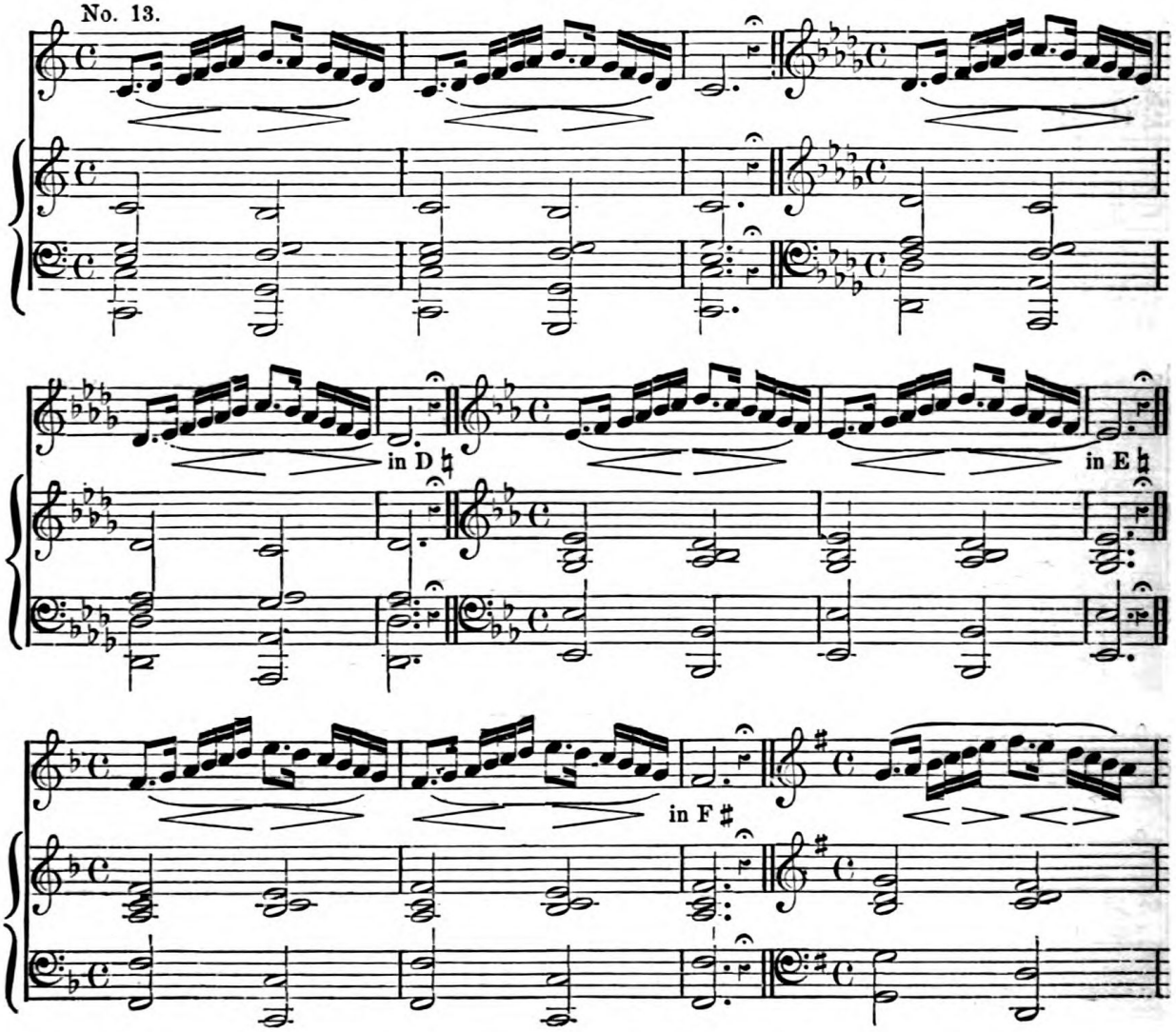
SIXTHS.

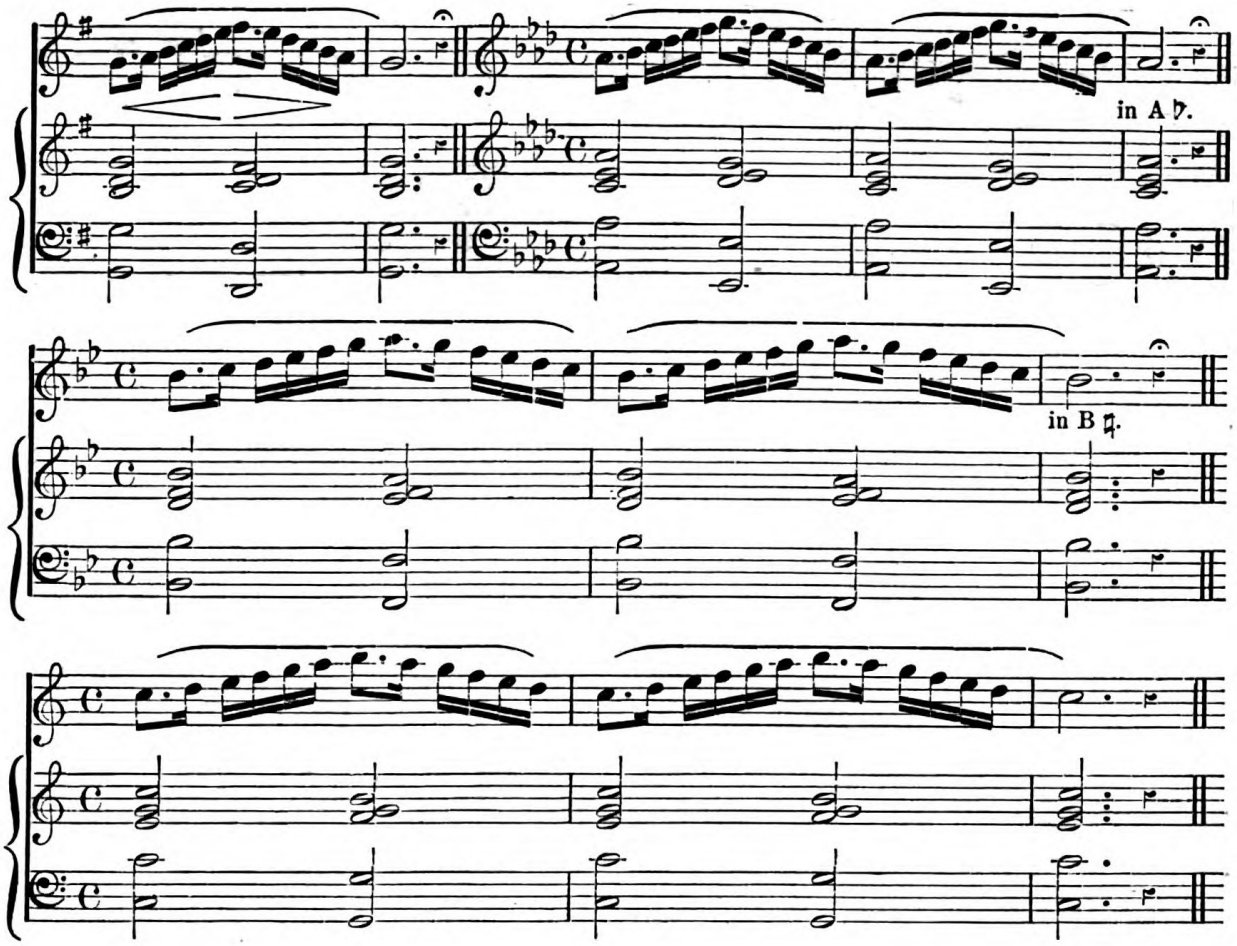
No. 12.





SEVENTHS.

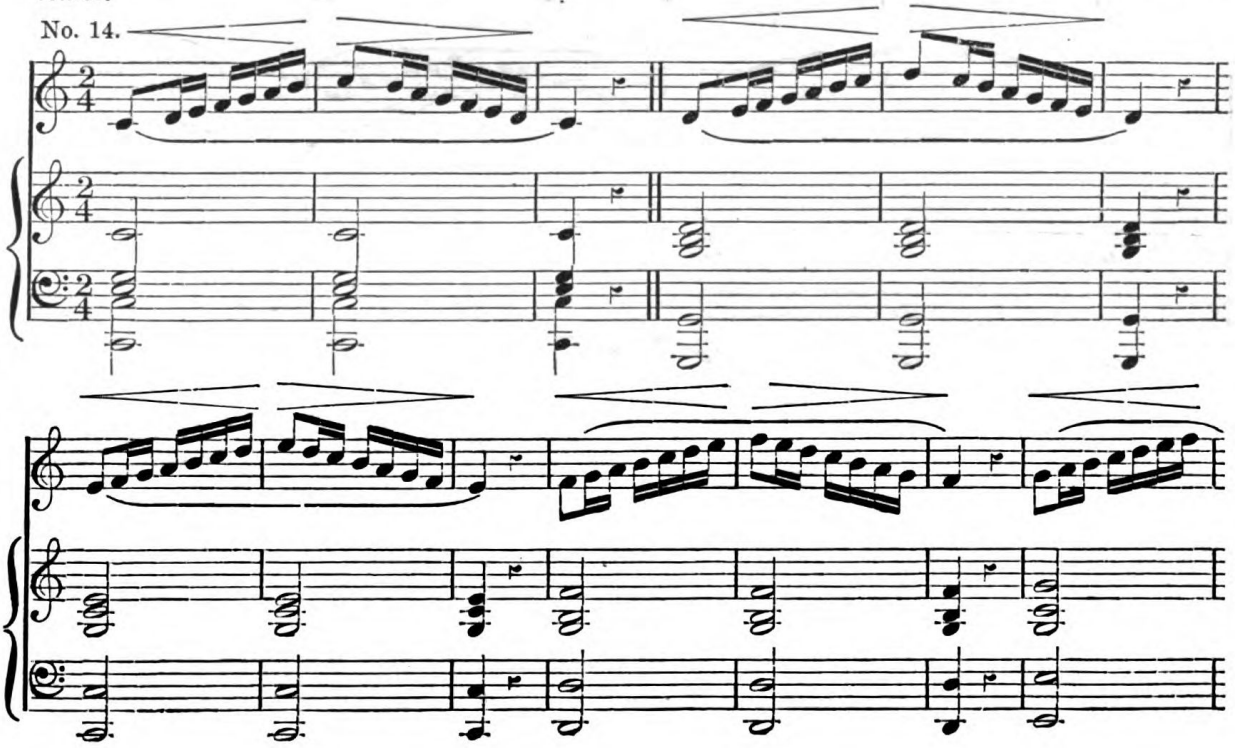


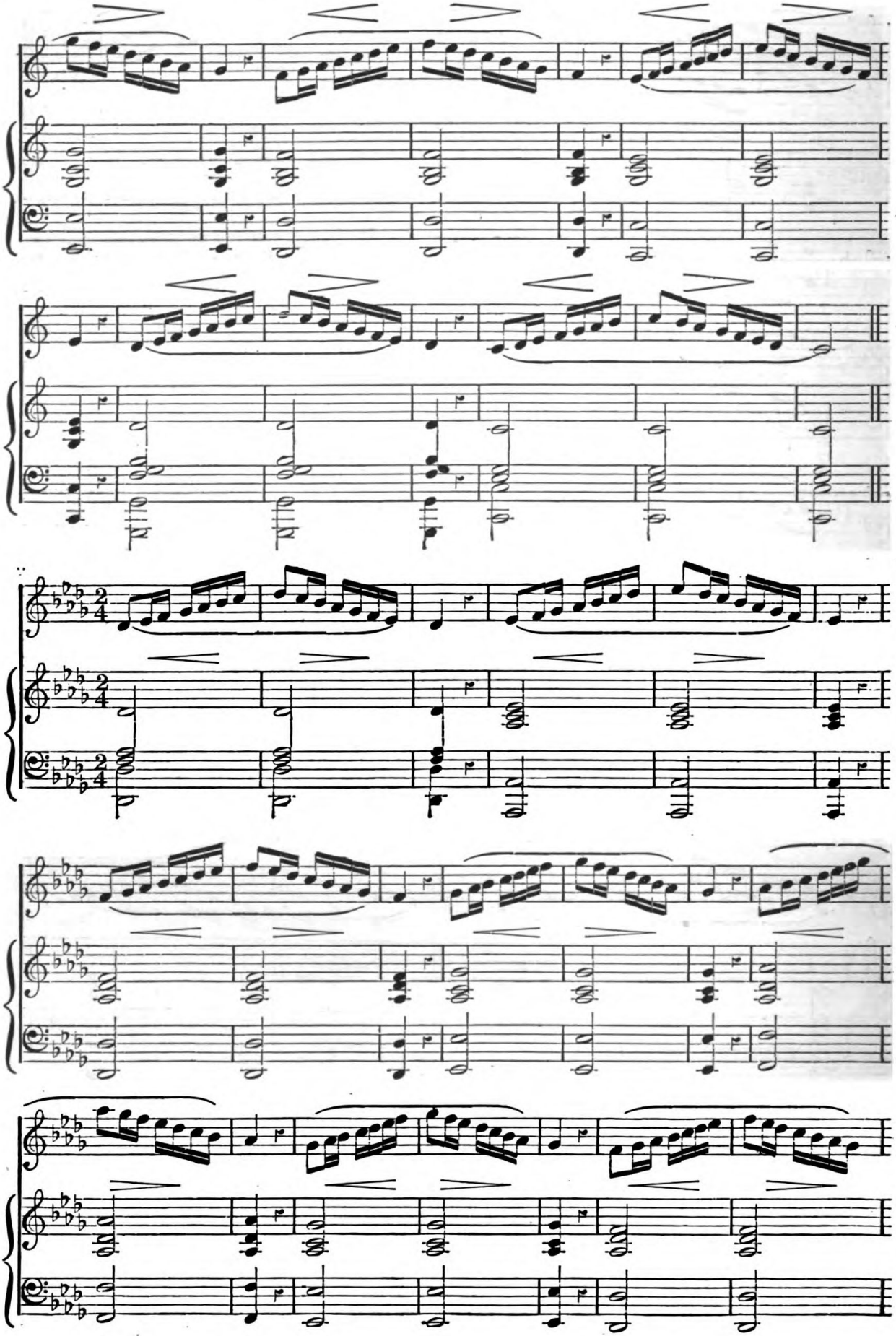


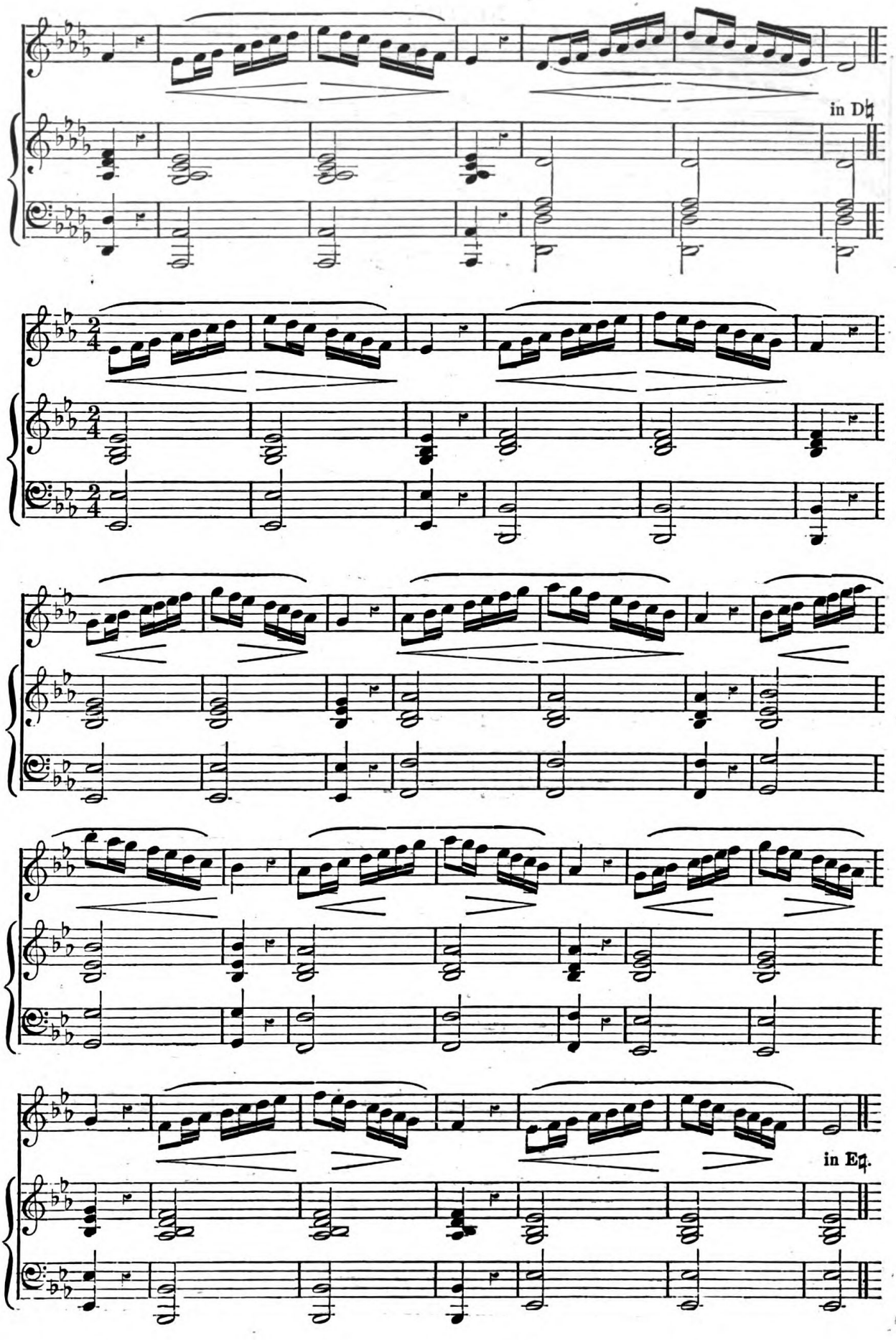
OCTAVES.

As a general rule, increase the sound in the ascending, and diminish it in the descending scales.

No. 14.

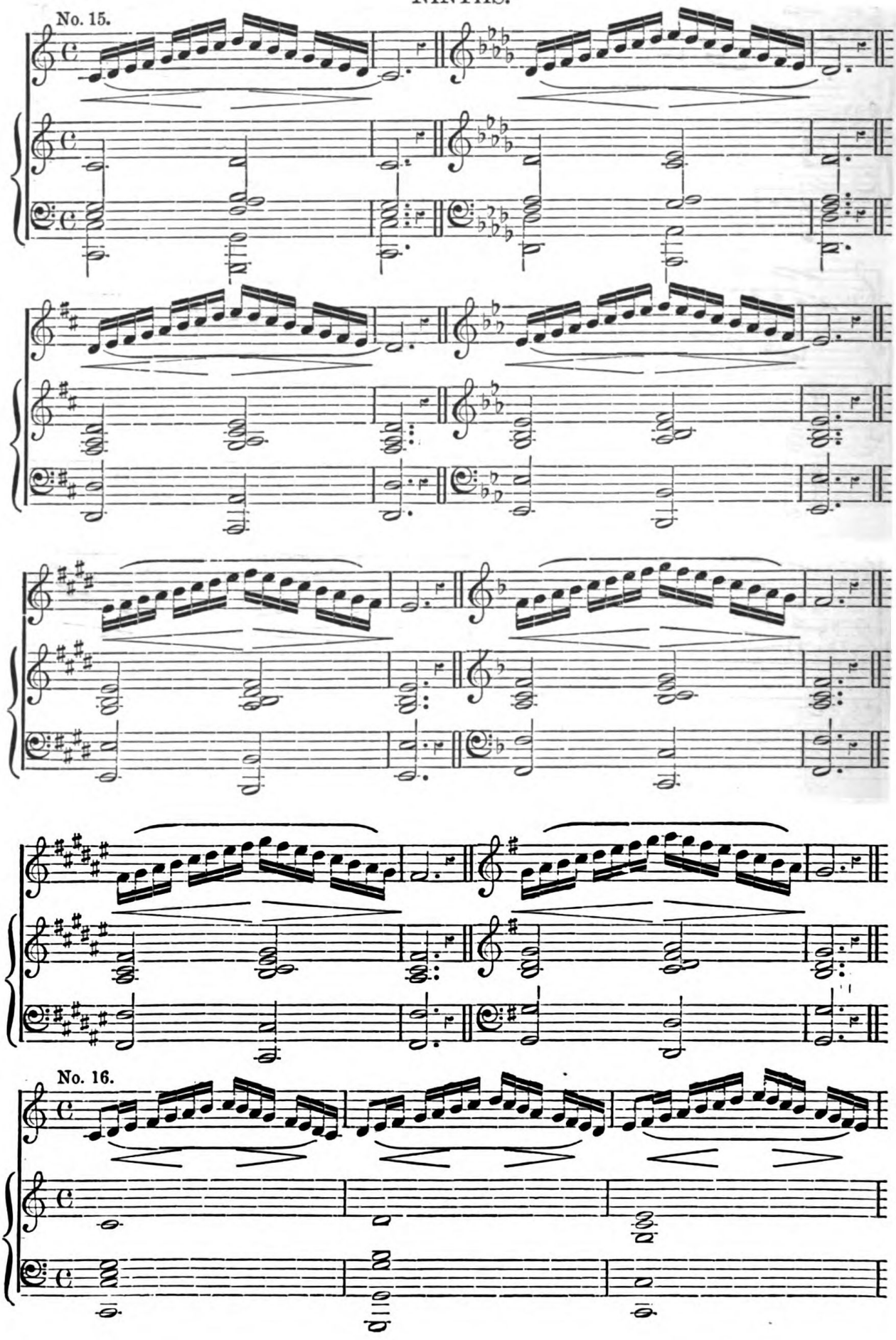




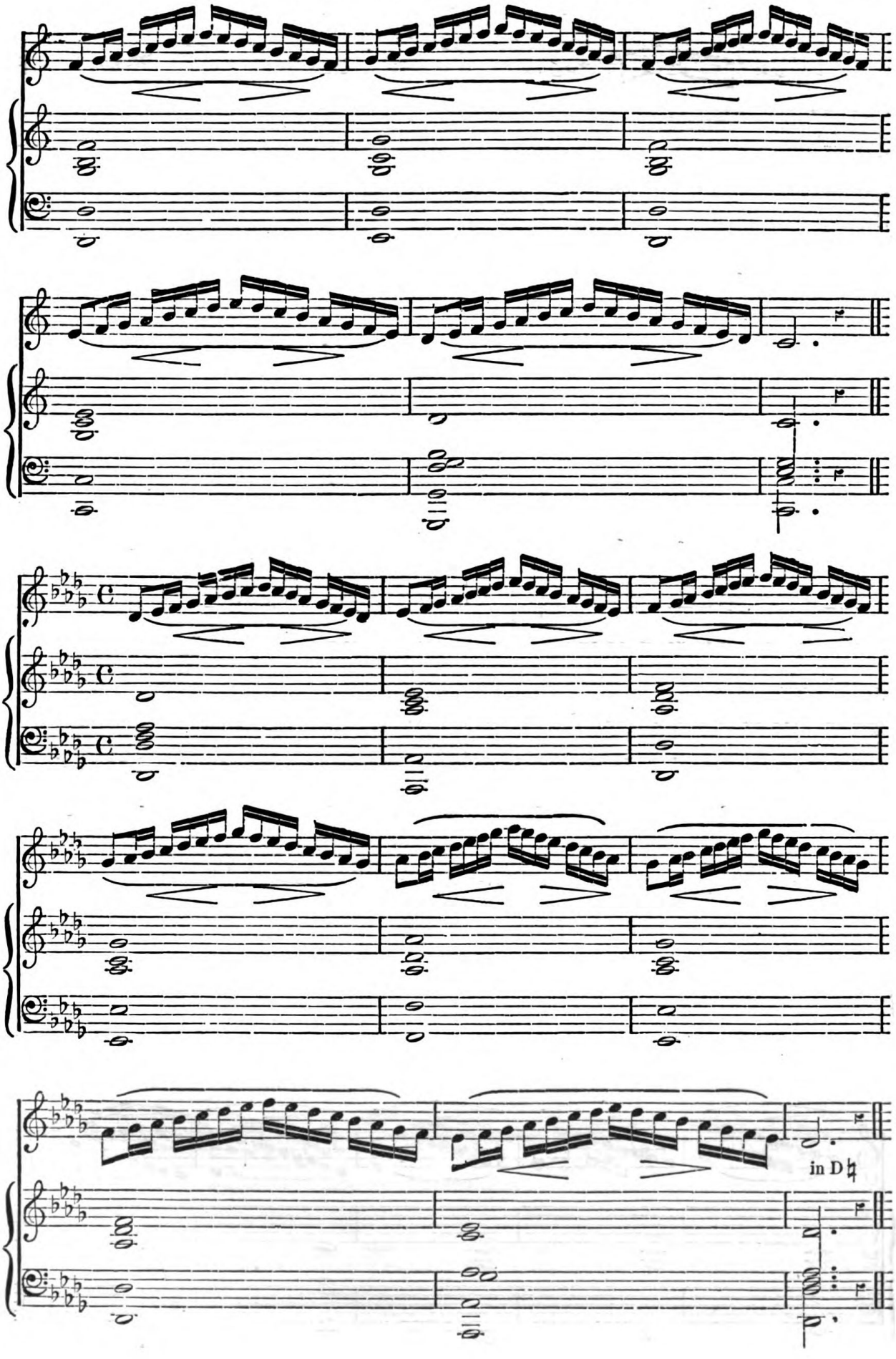

in D♮
in E♭.

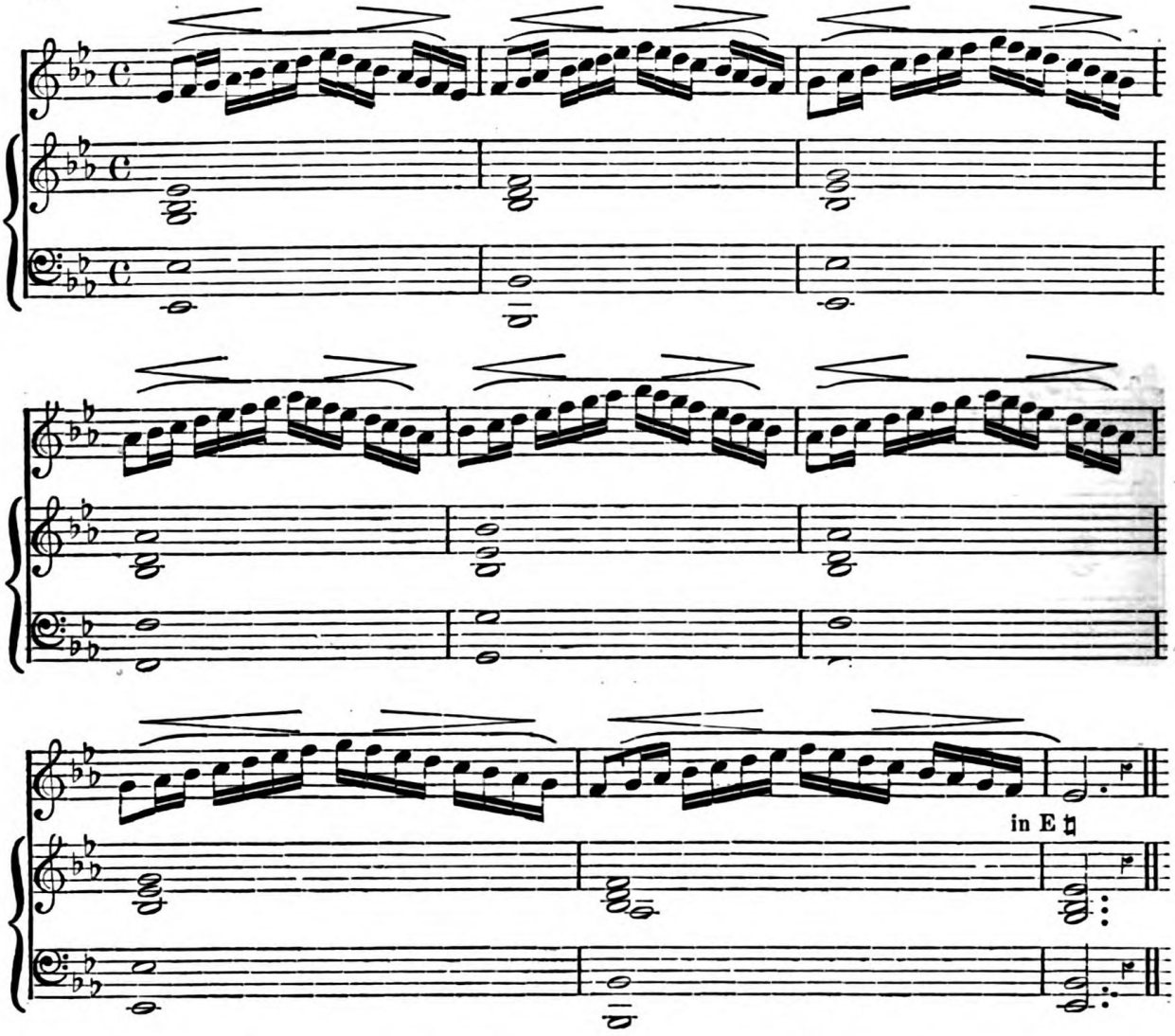
NINTHS.

No. 15.



No. 16.


in D♮



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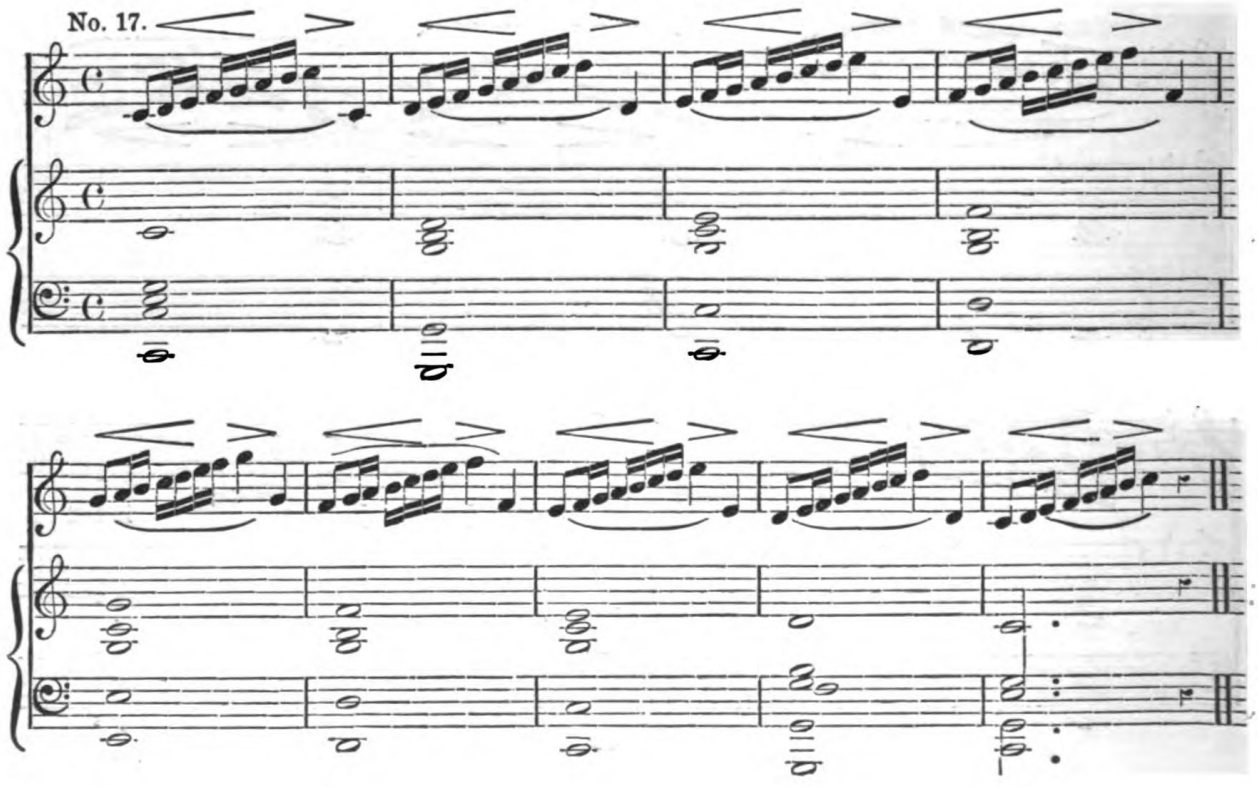

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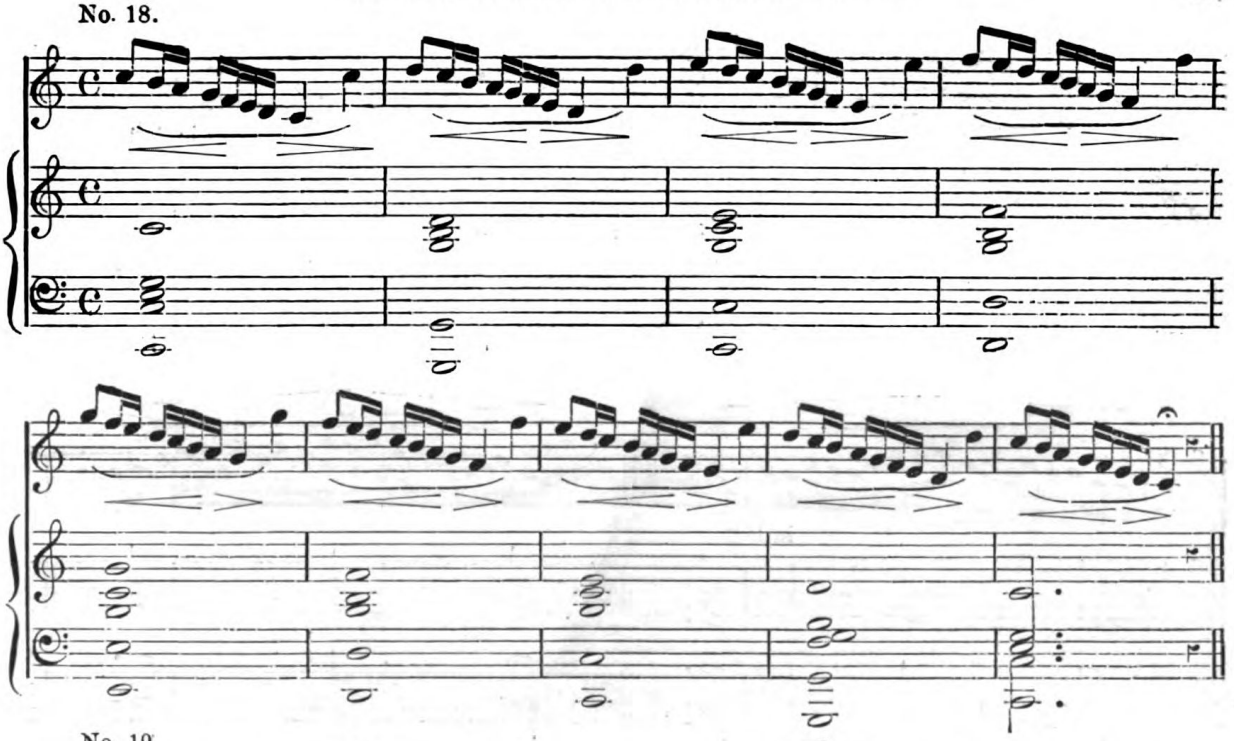
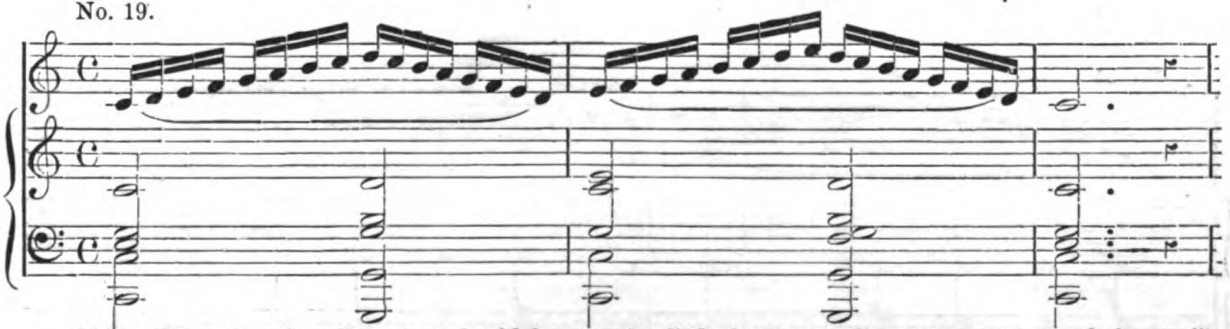
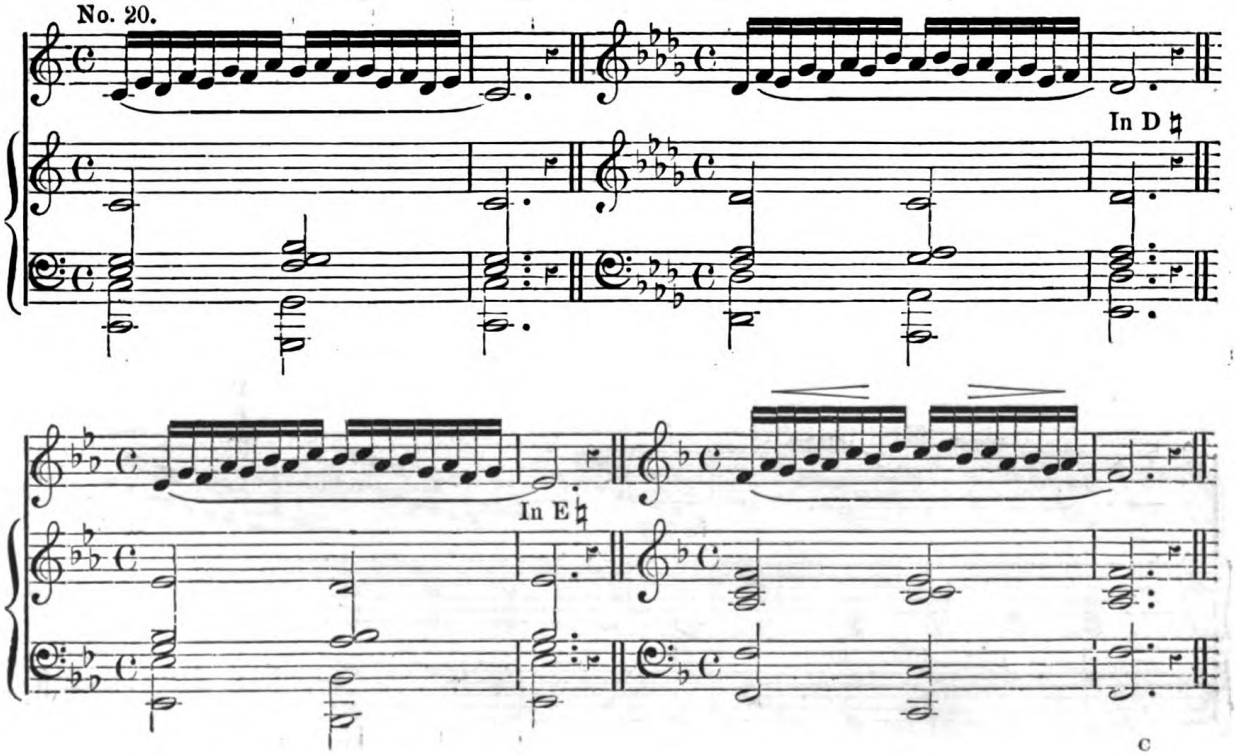


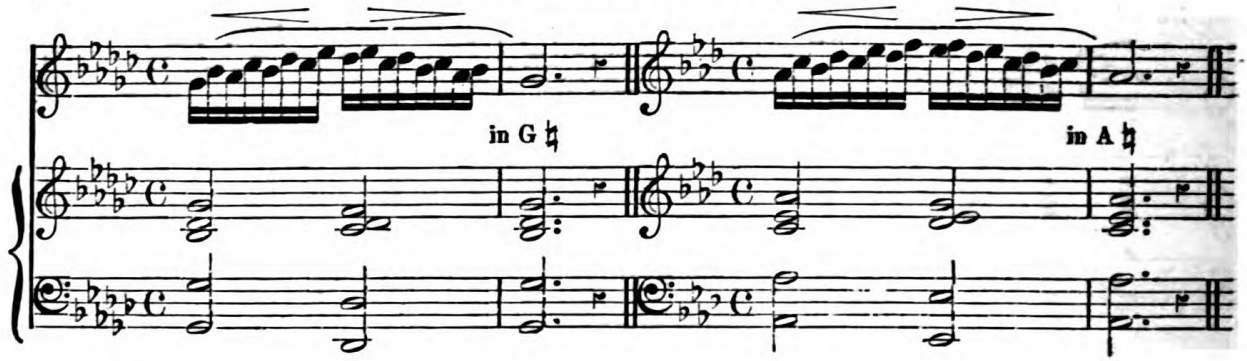
No. 19.

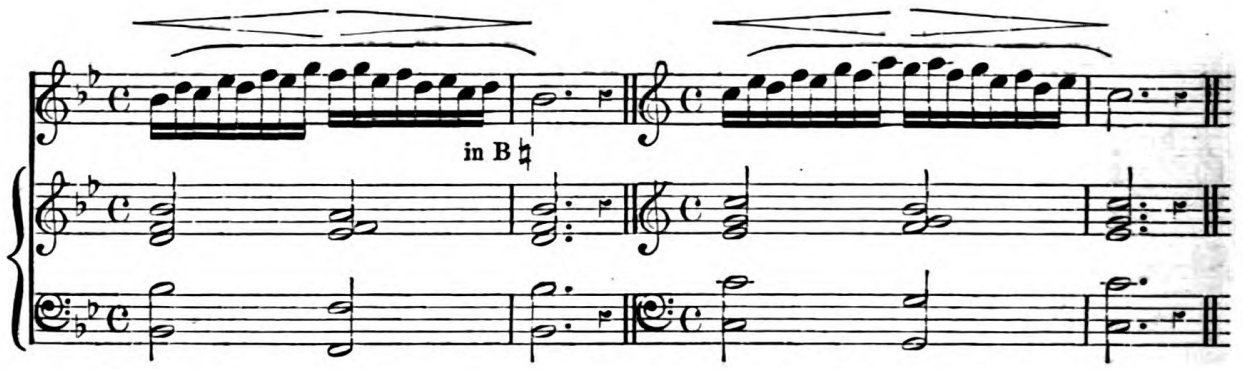


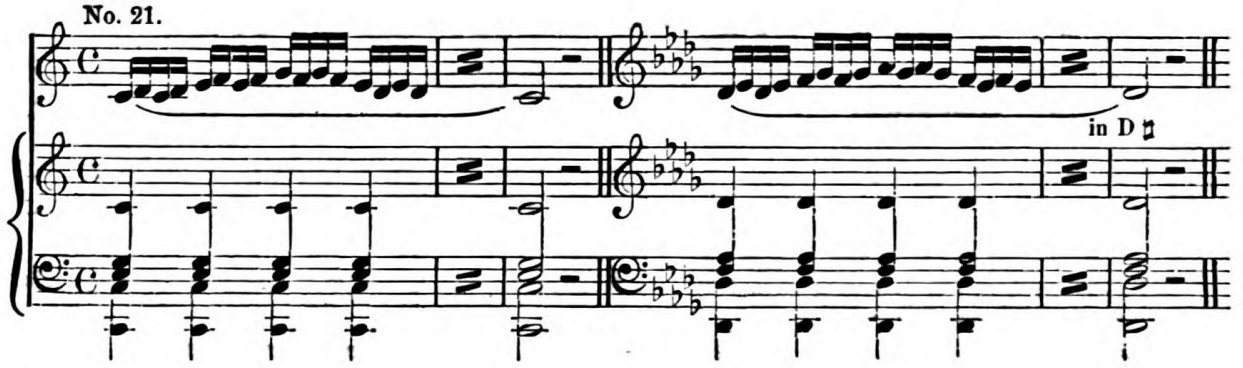
N.B.—These three last Exercises should be sung in all the keys, according to the compass of the pupil's voice, first *forte* and then *piano*.

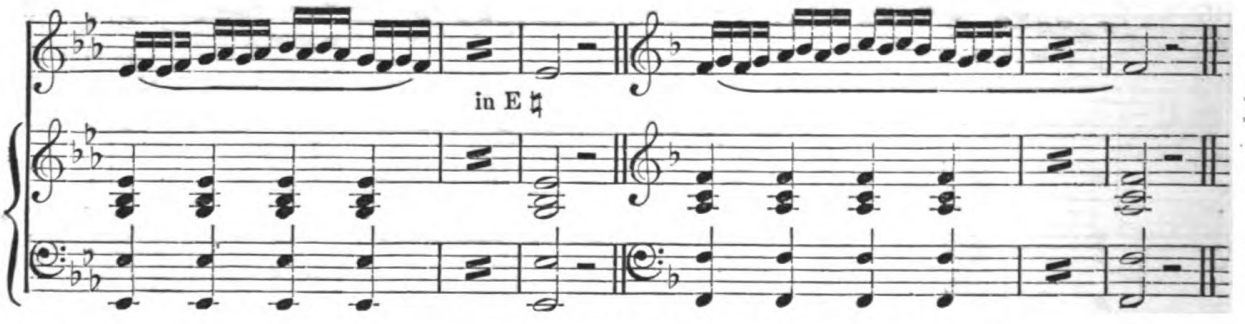
No. 20.

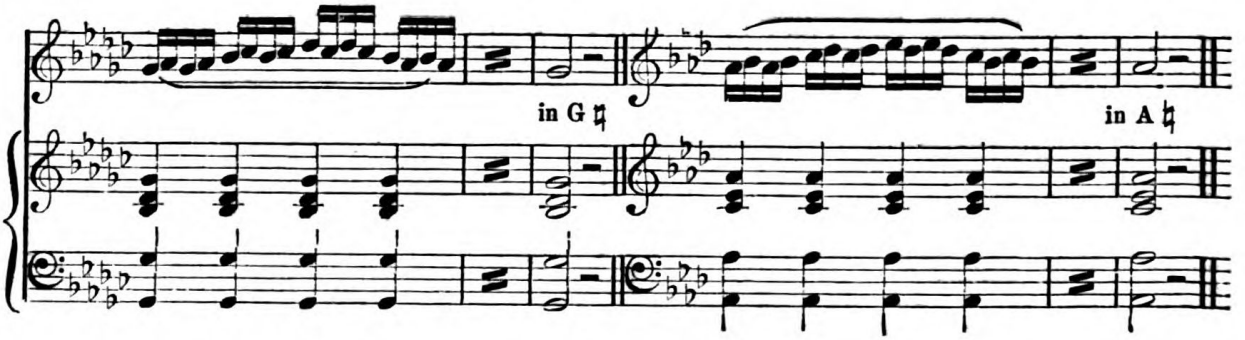


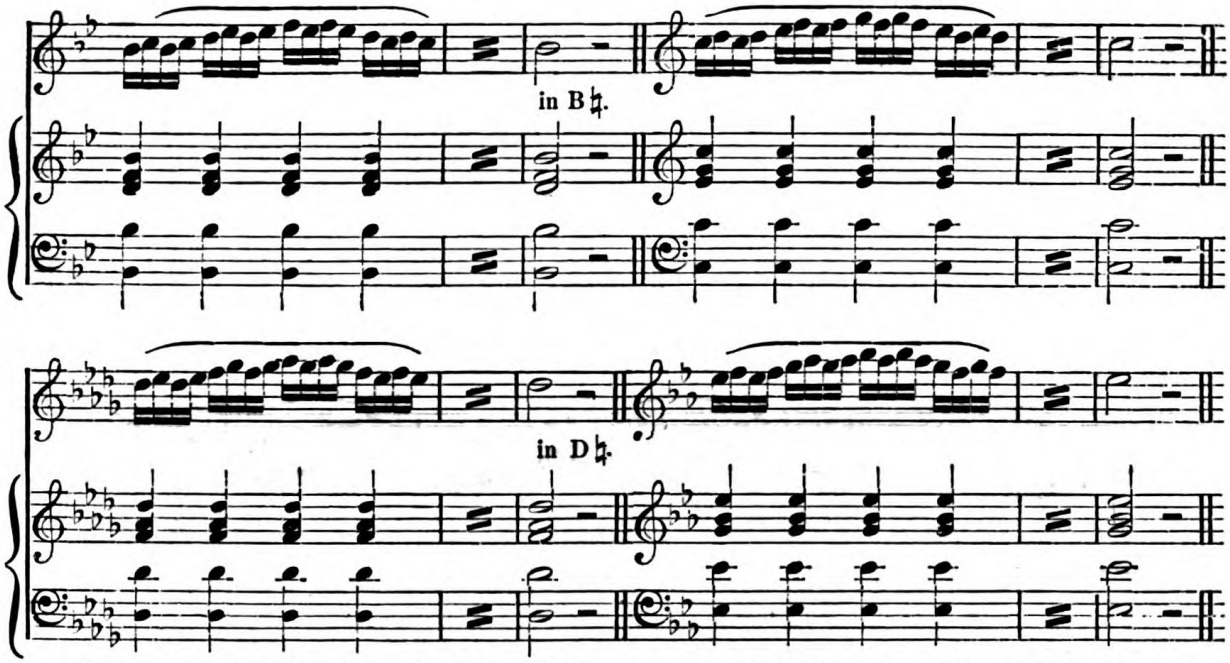

in G ♮
in A ♮


in B ♮


No. 21.
in D ♮

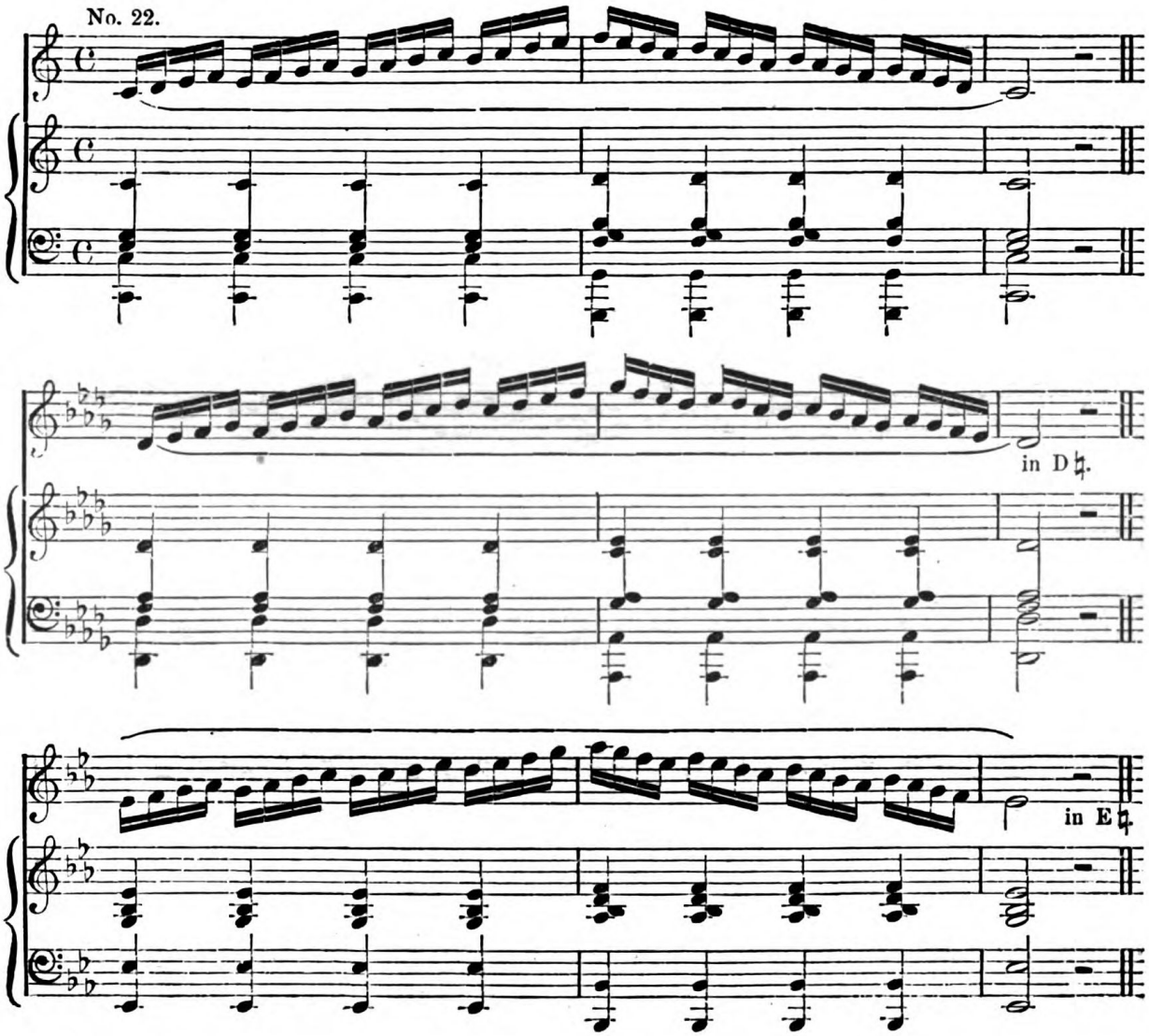

in E ♮

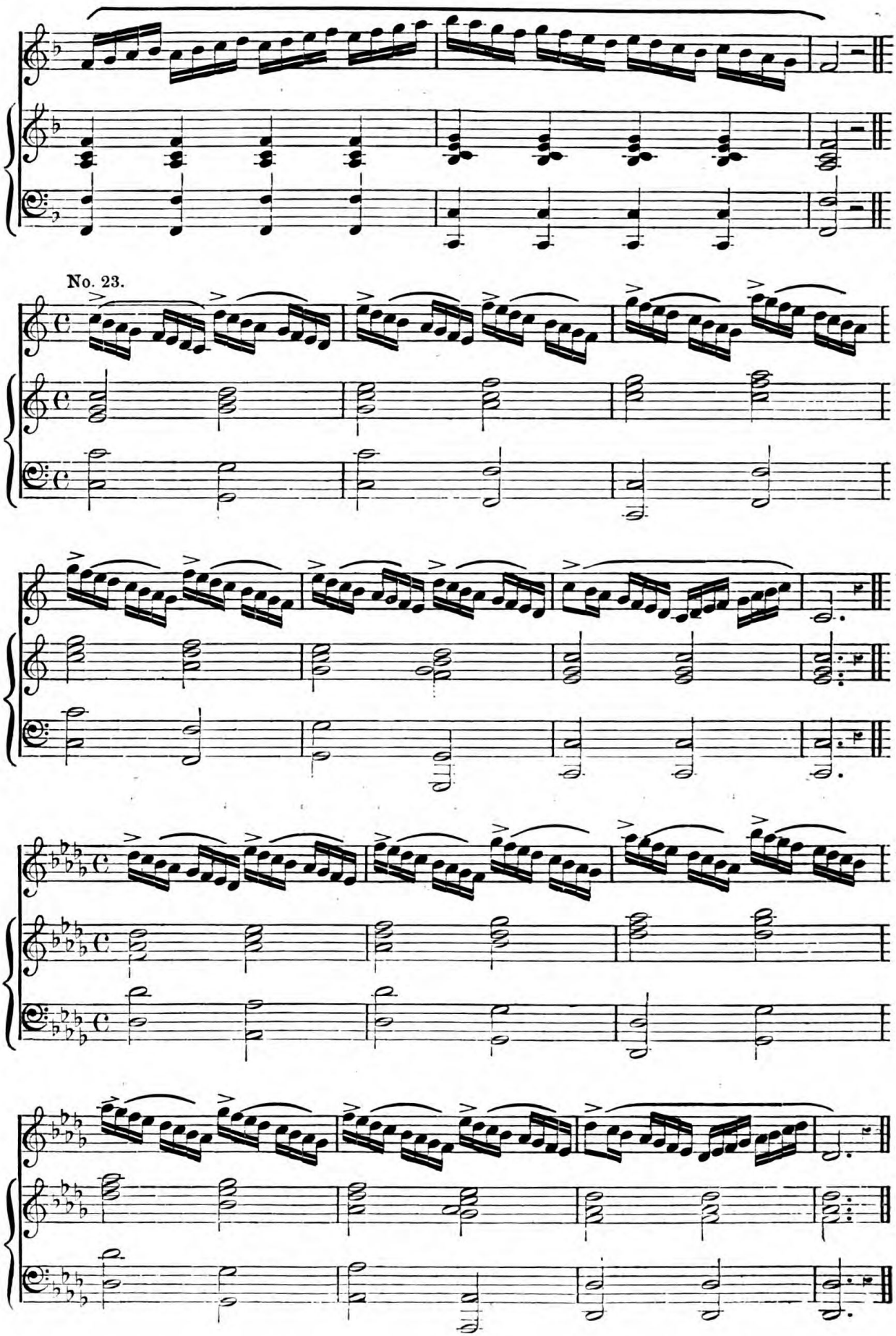

in G ♮
in A ♮

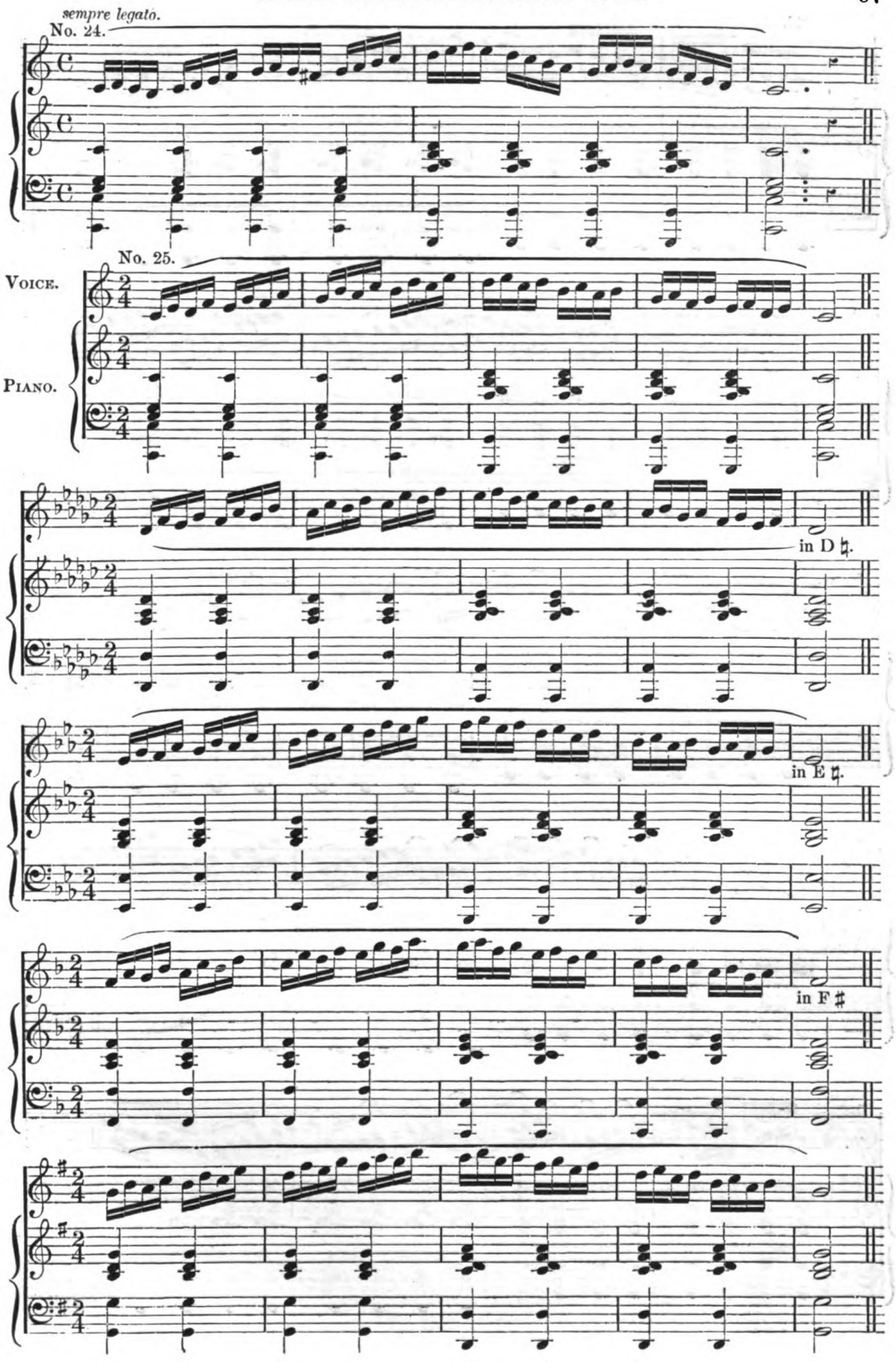


These and all other Exercises should be sung in all the keys, according to the character and compass of the pupil's voice.

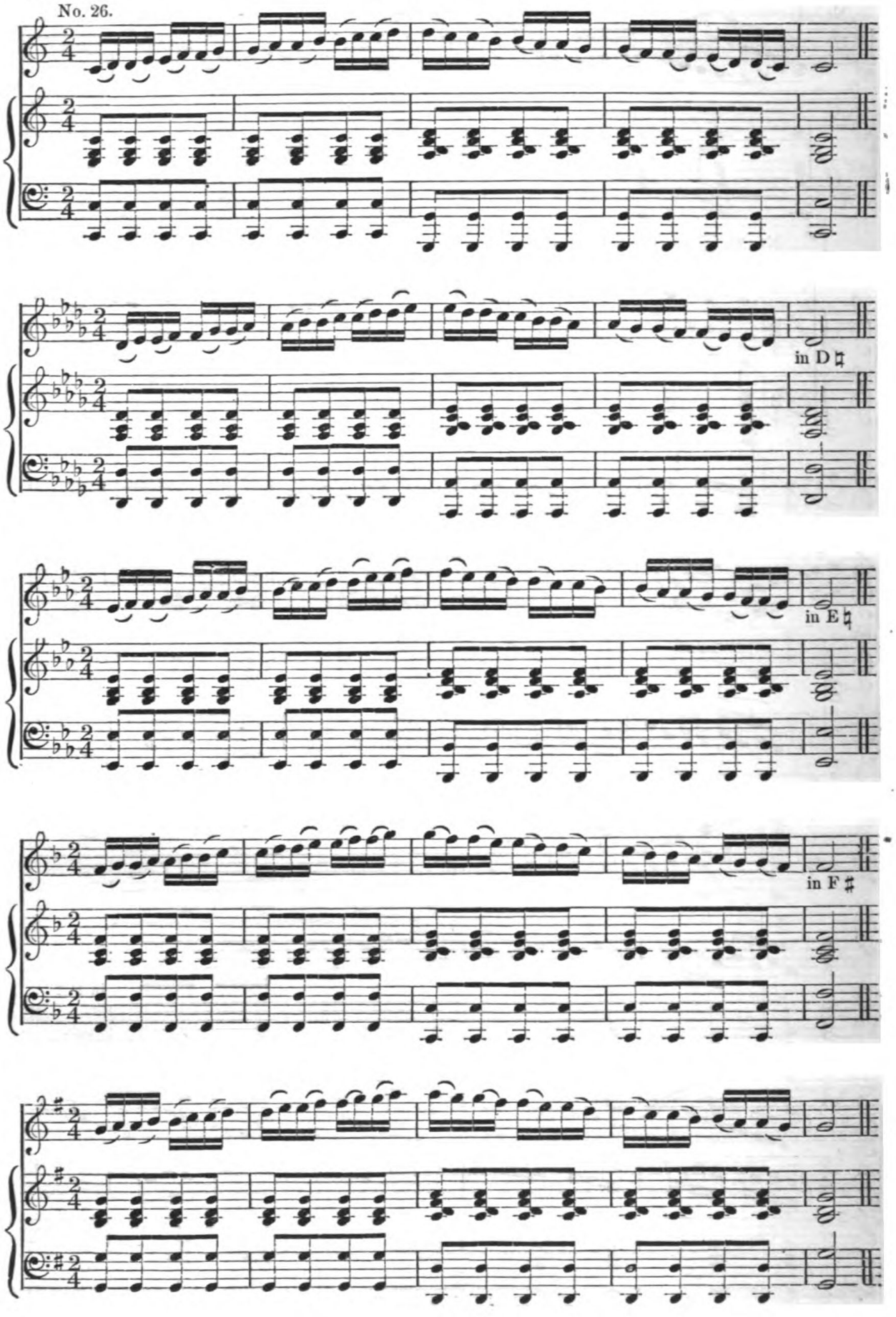
No. 22.



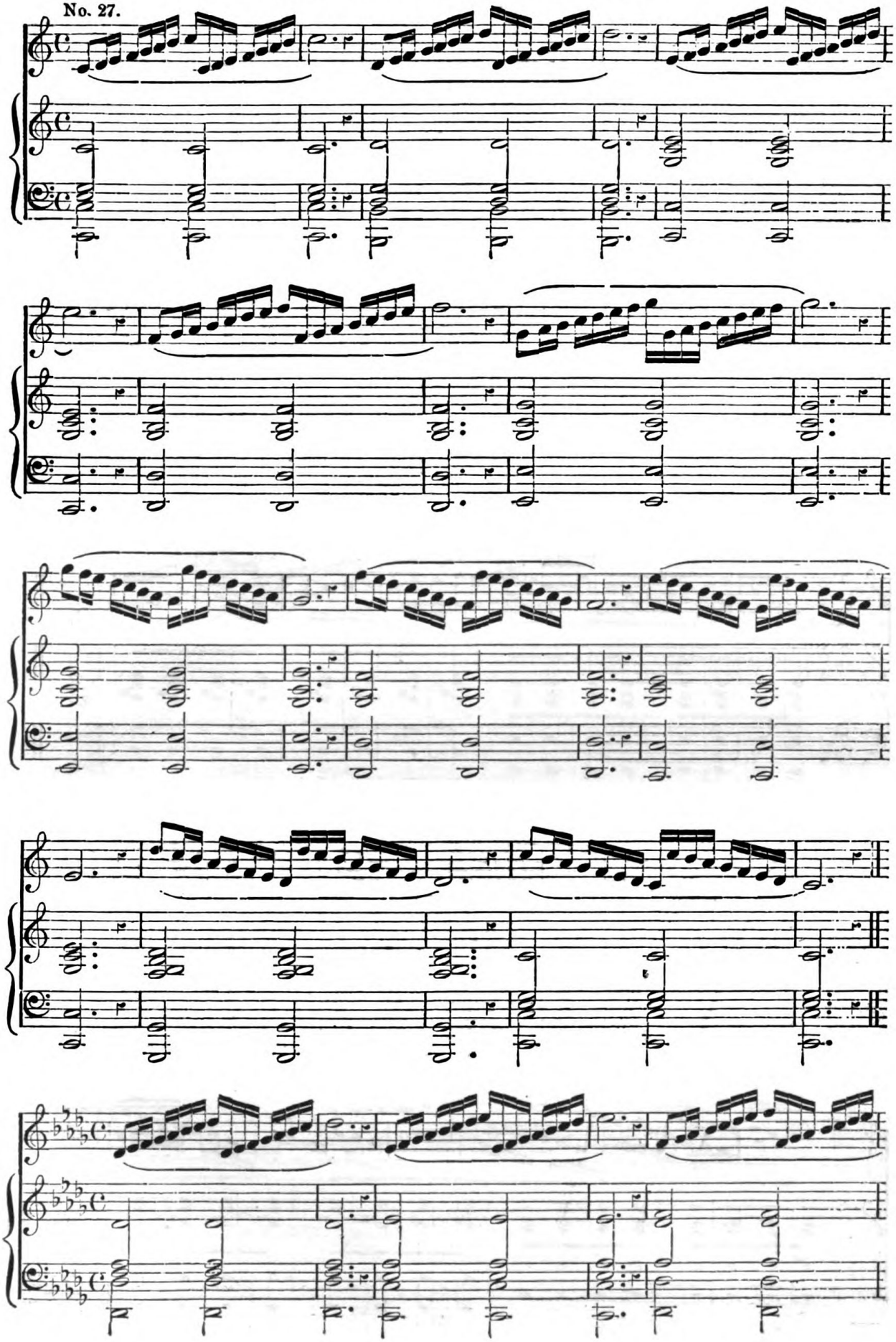

No. 23.

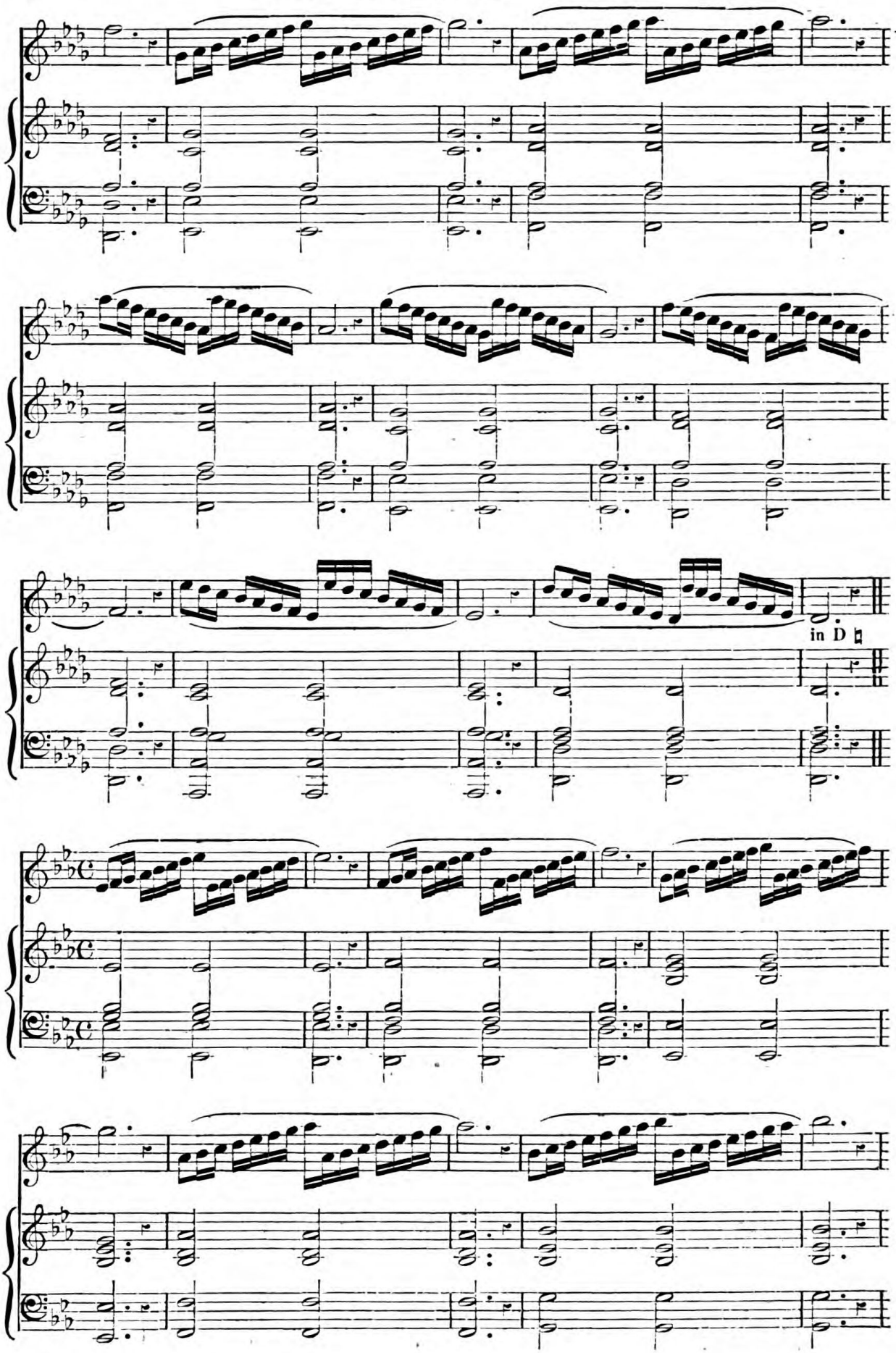

sempre legato.
No. 24.
No. 25.
Voice.
Piano.
in D ♮.
in E ♮.
in F ♯

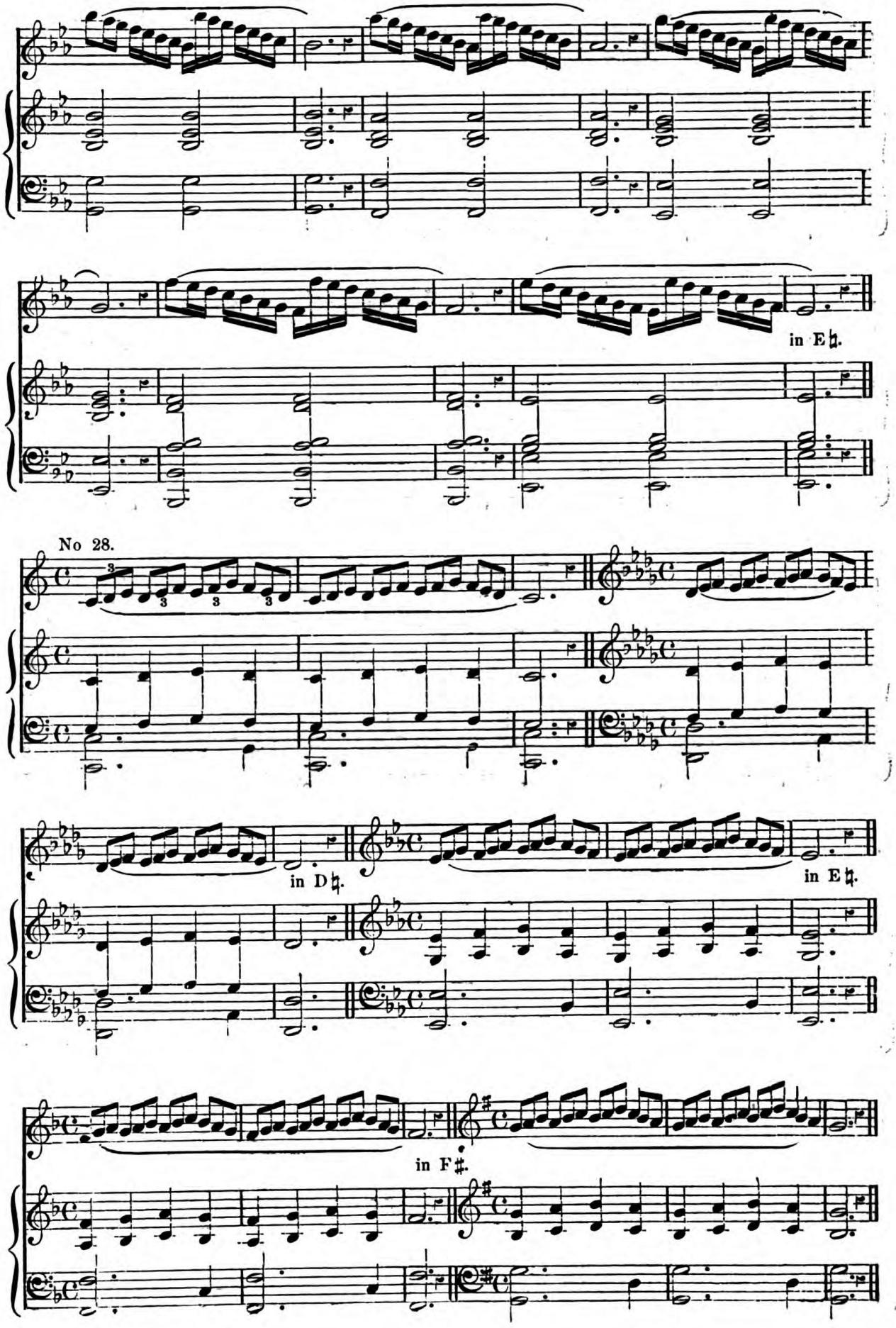
No. 26.



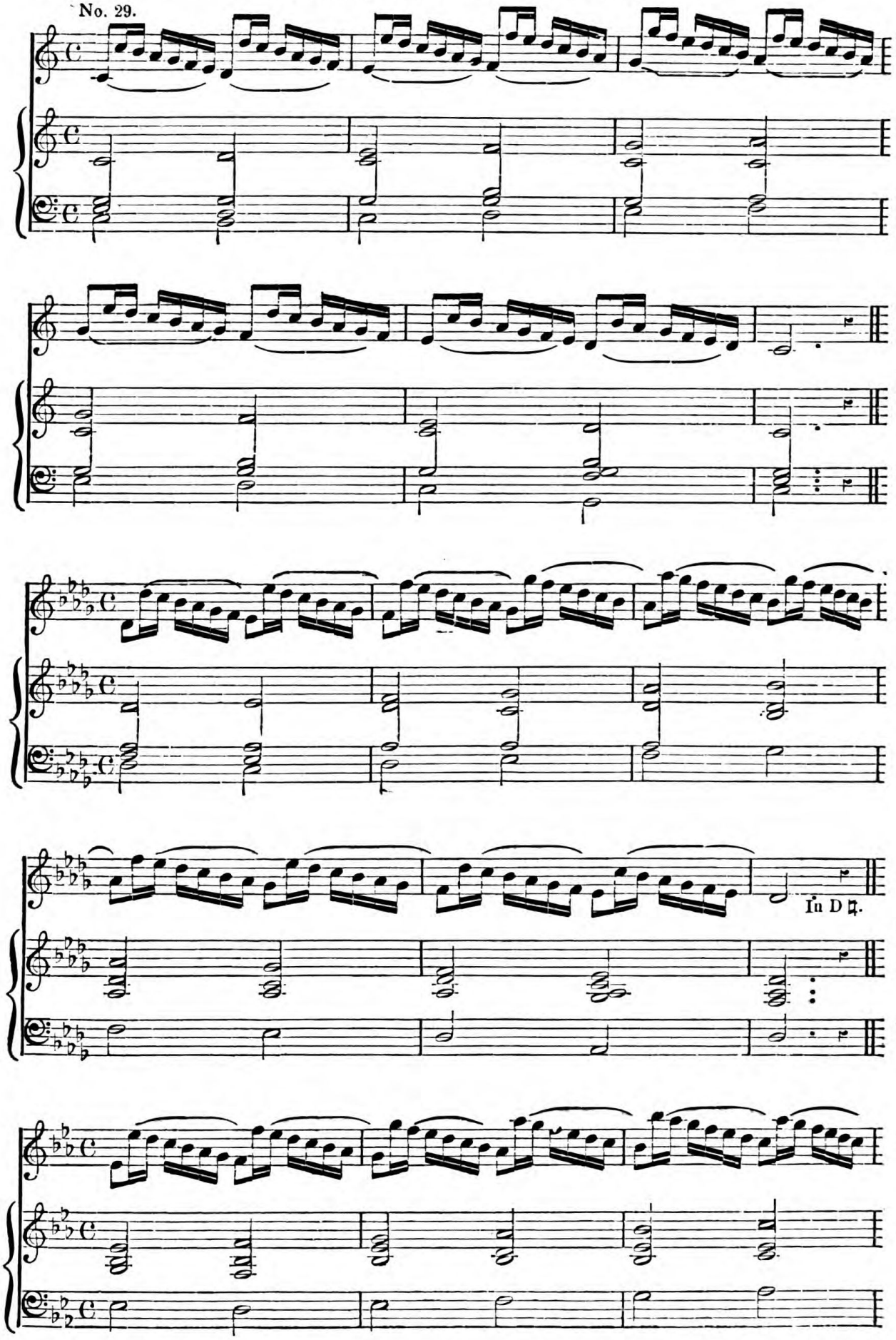
No. 27.

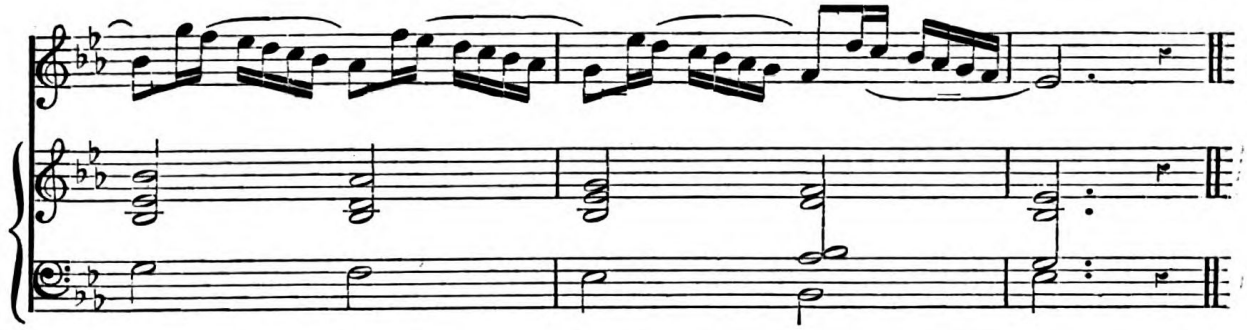



in D

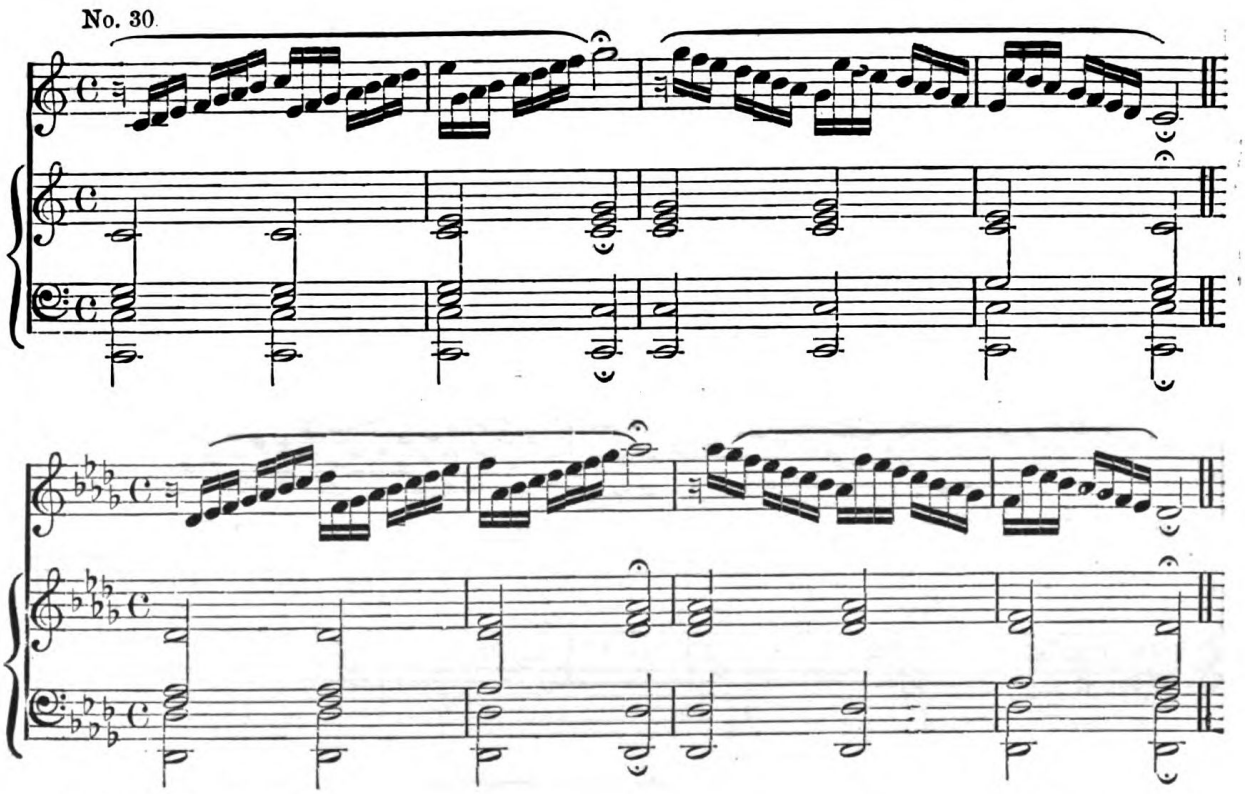

in E♮.
No 28.
in D♮.
in E♮.
in F♯.

No. 29.

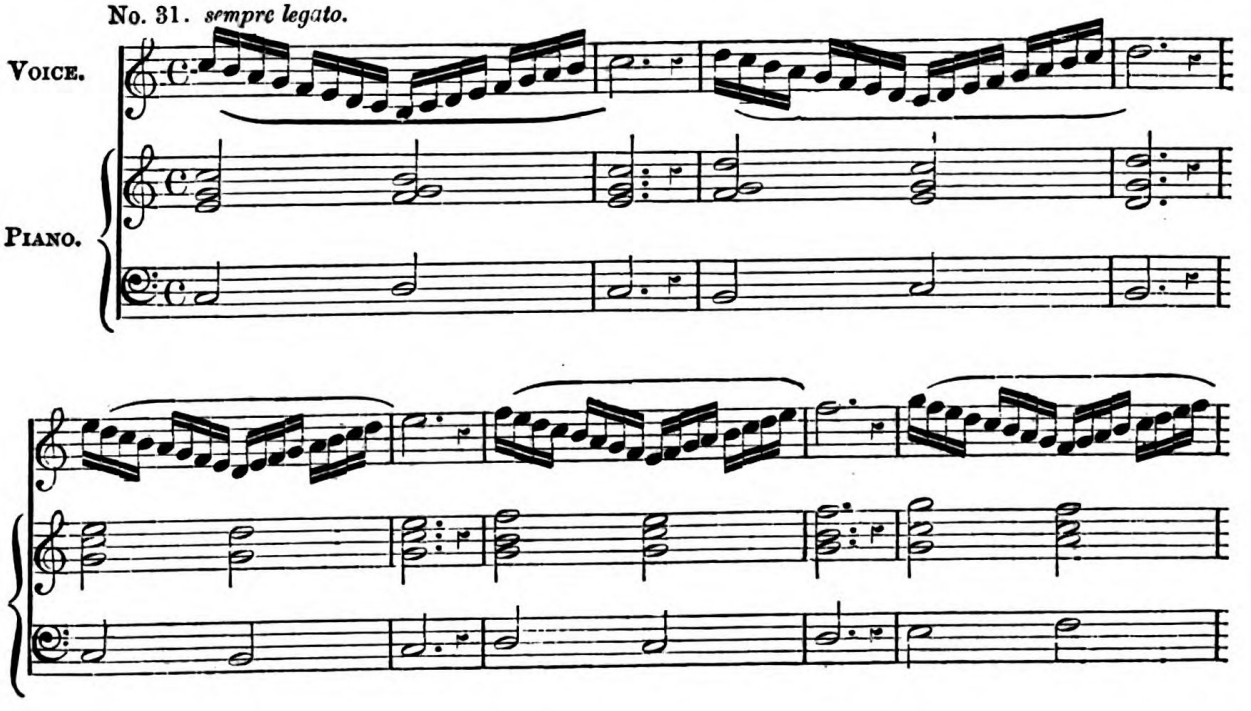


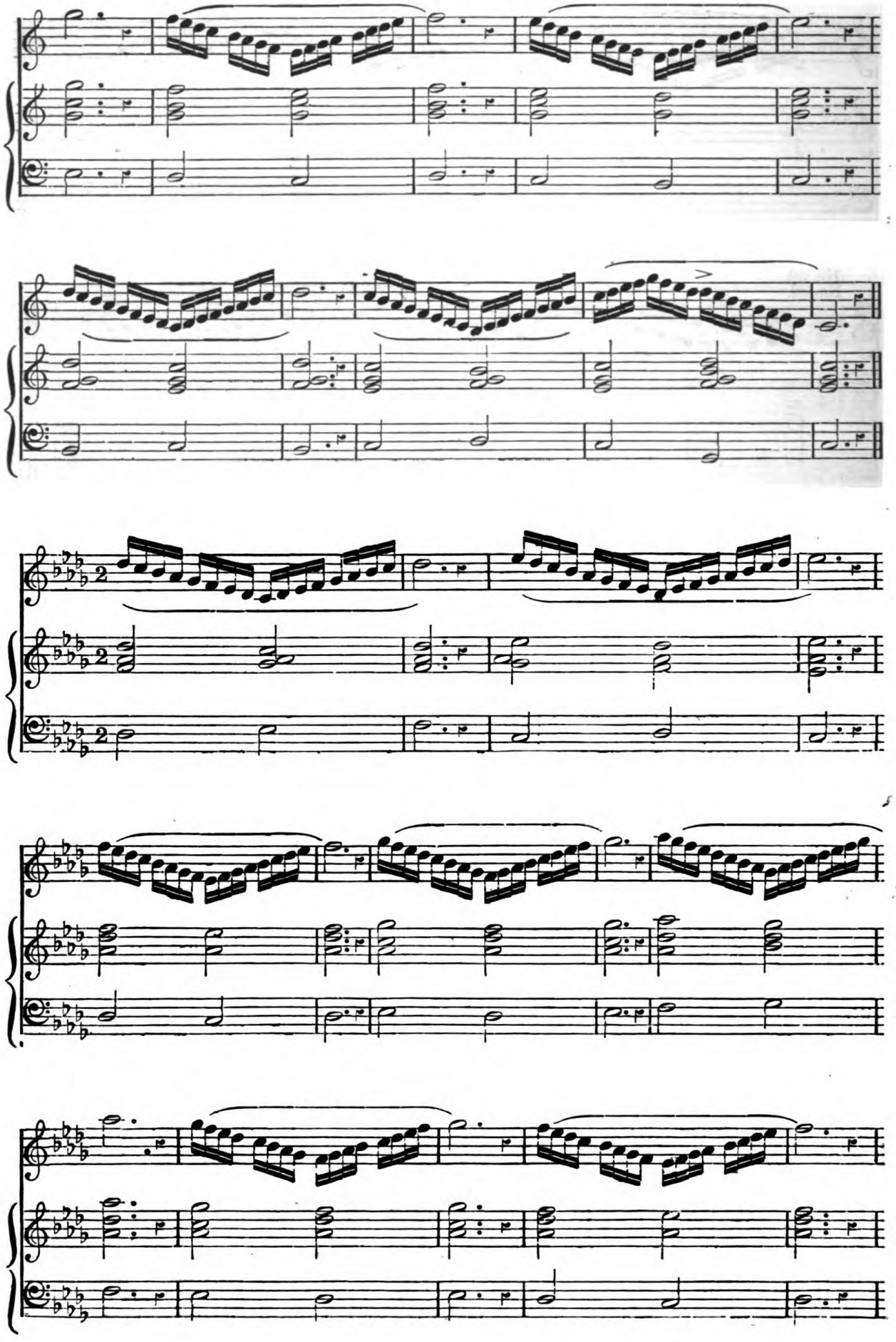


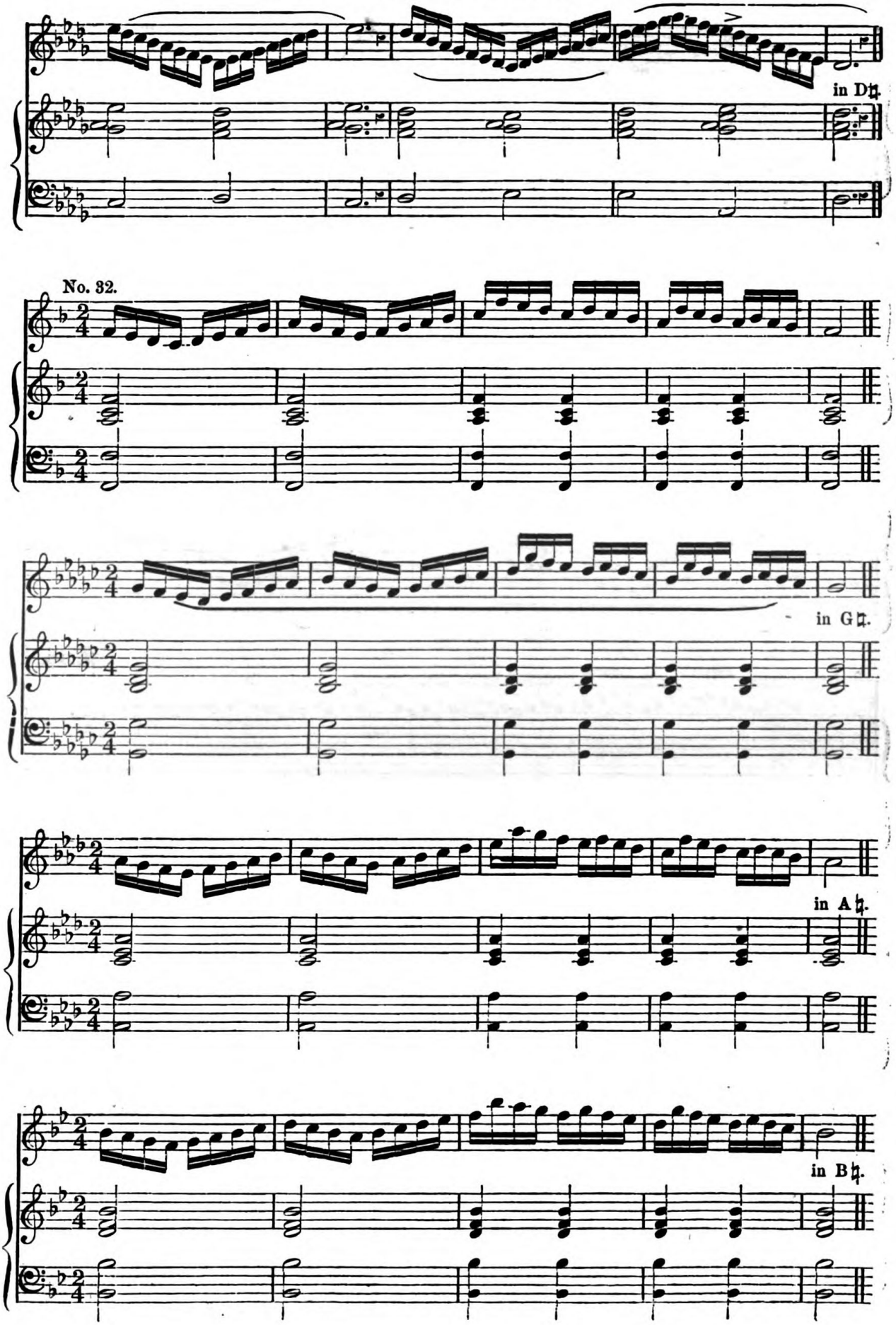
No. 30



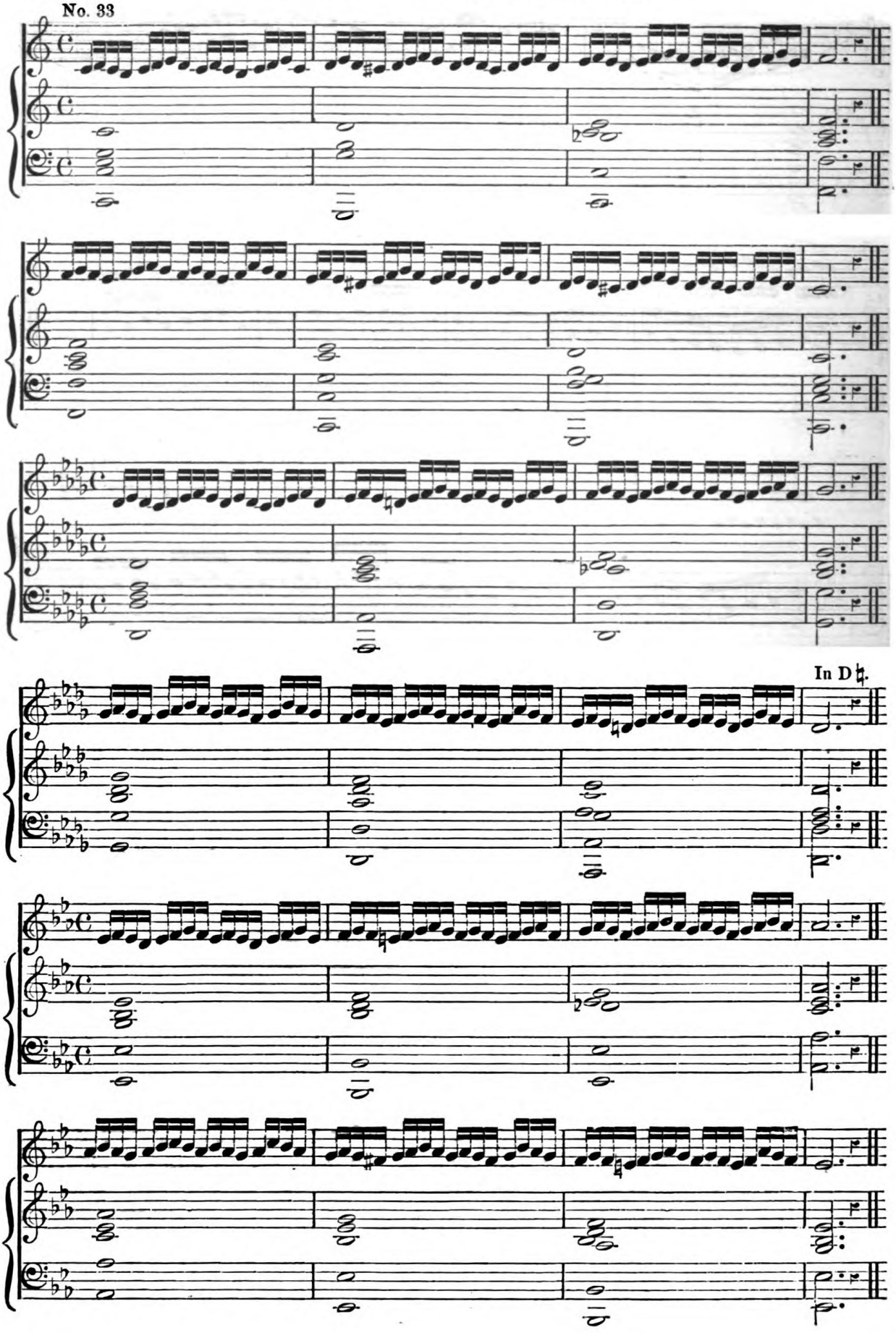
No. 31. *sempre legato.*

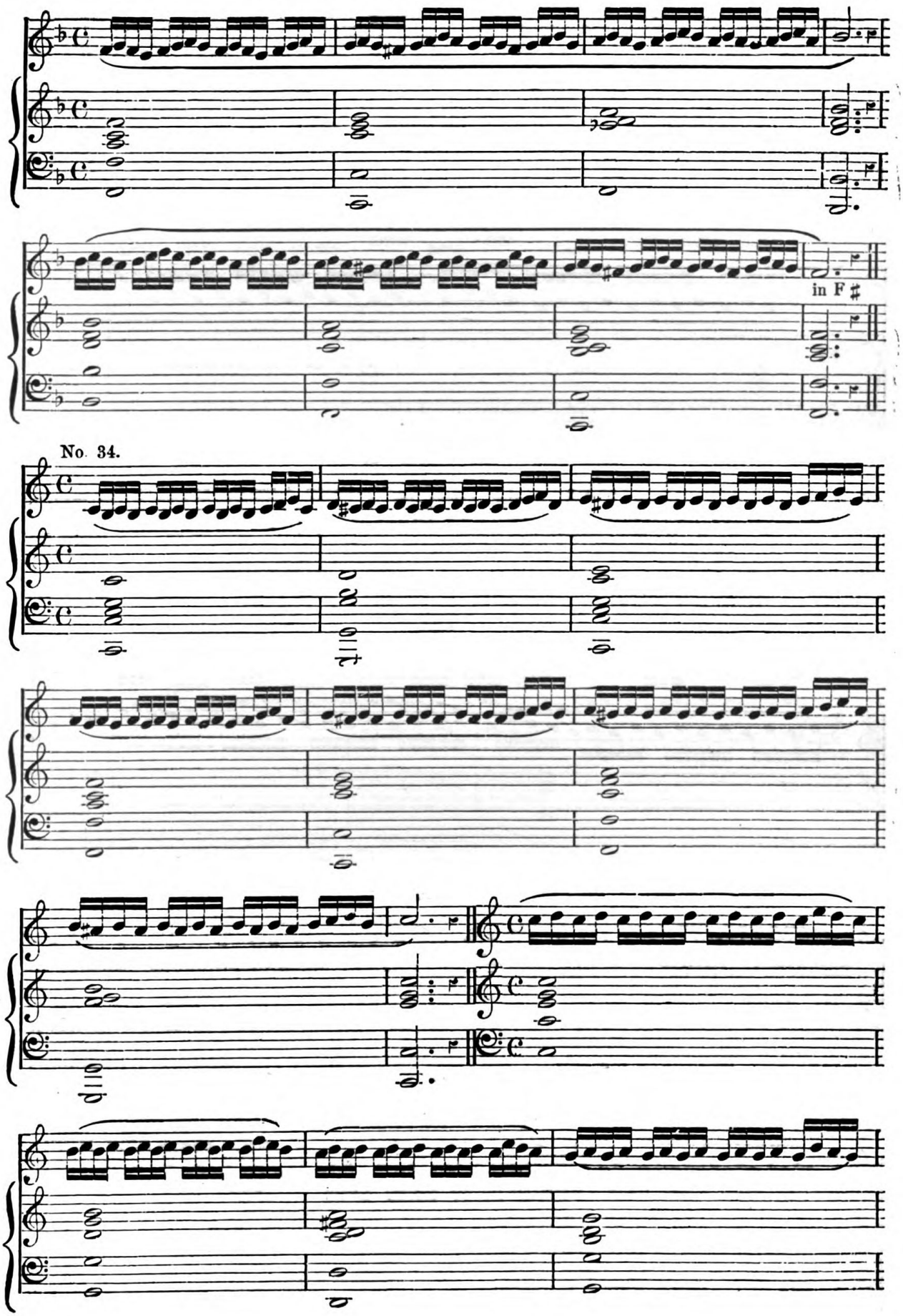


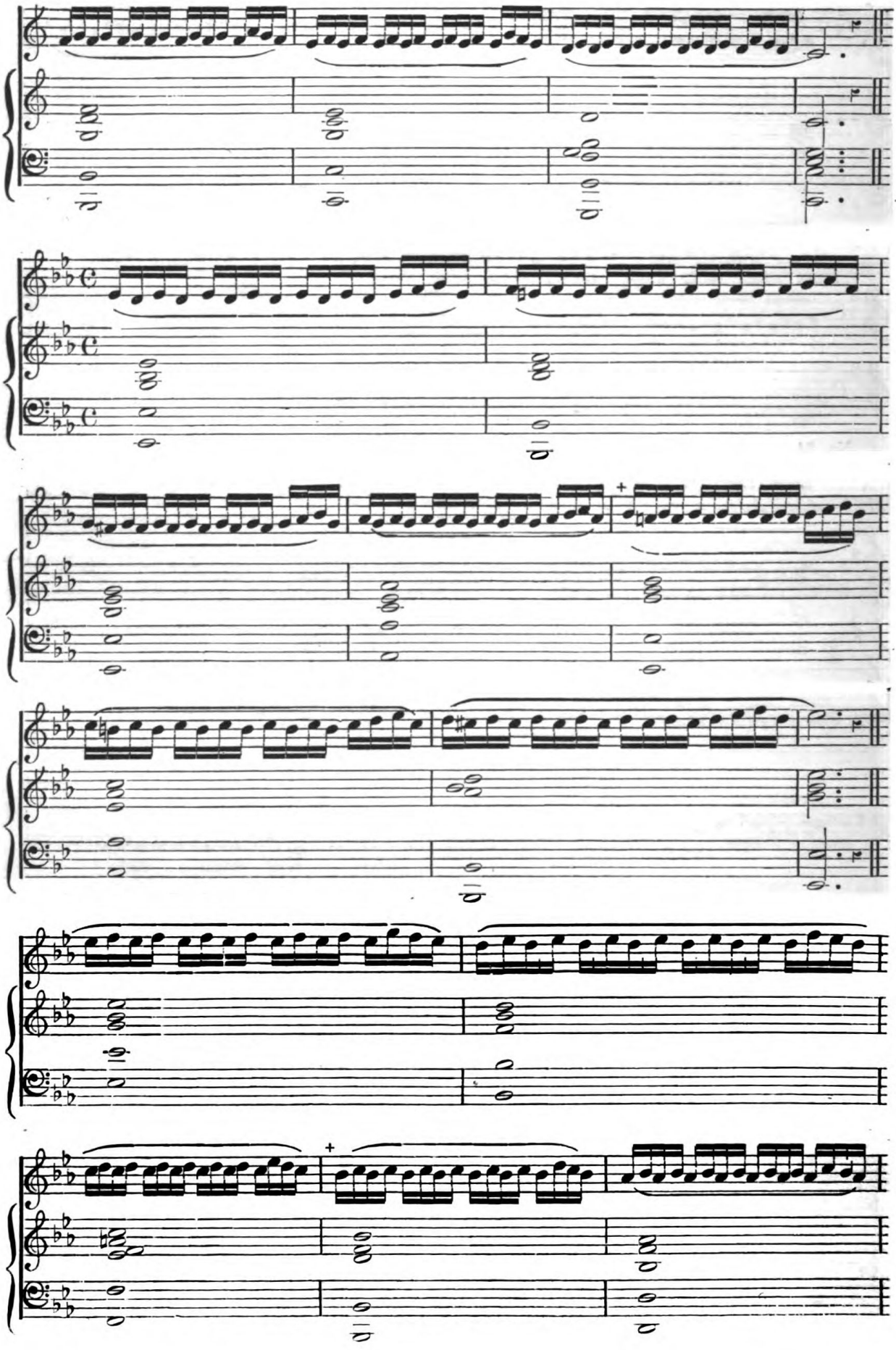


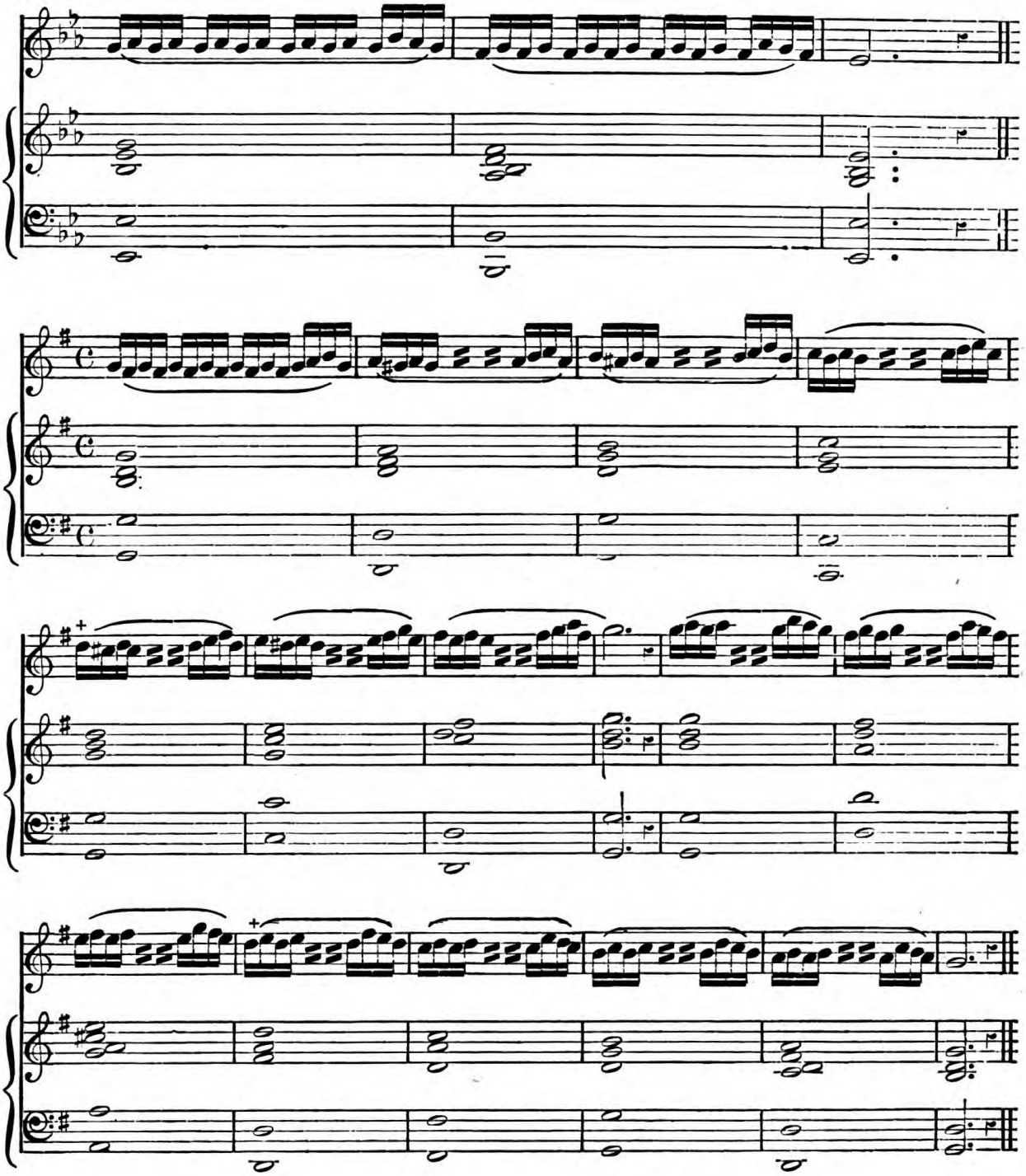

in D♮.
No. 32.
in G♮.
in A♮.
in B♮.

No. 33

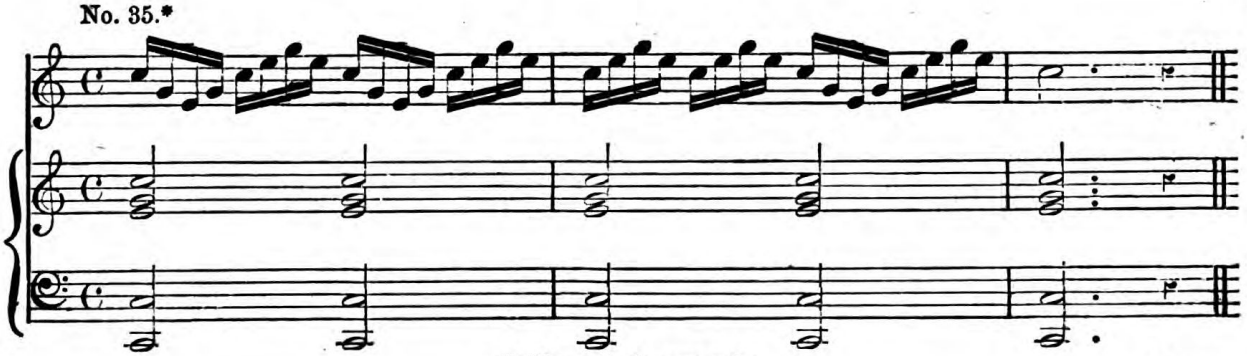



in F ♯
No. 34.



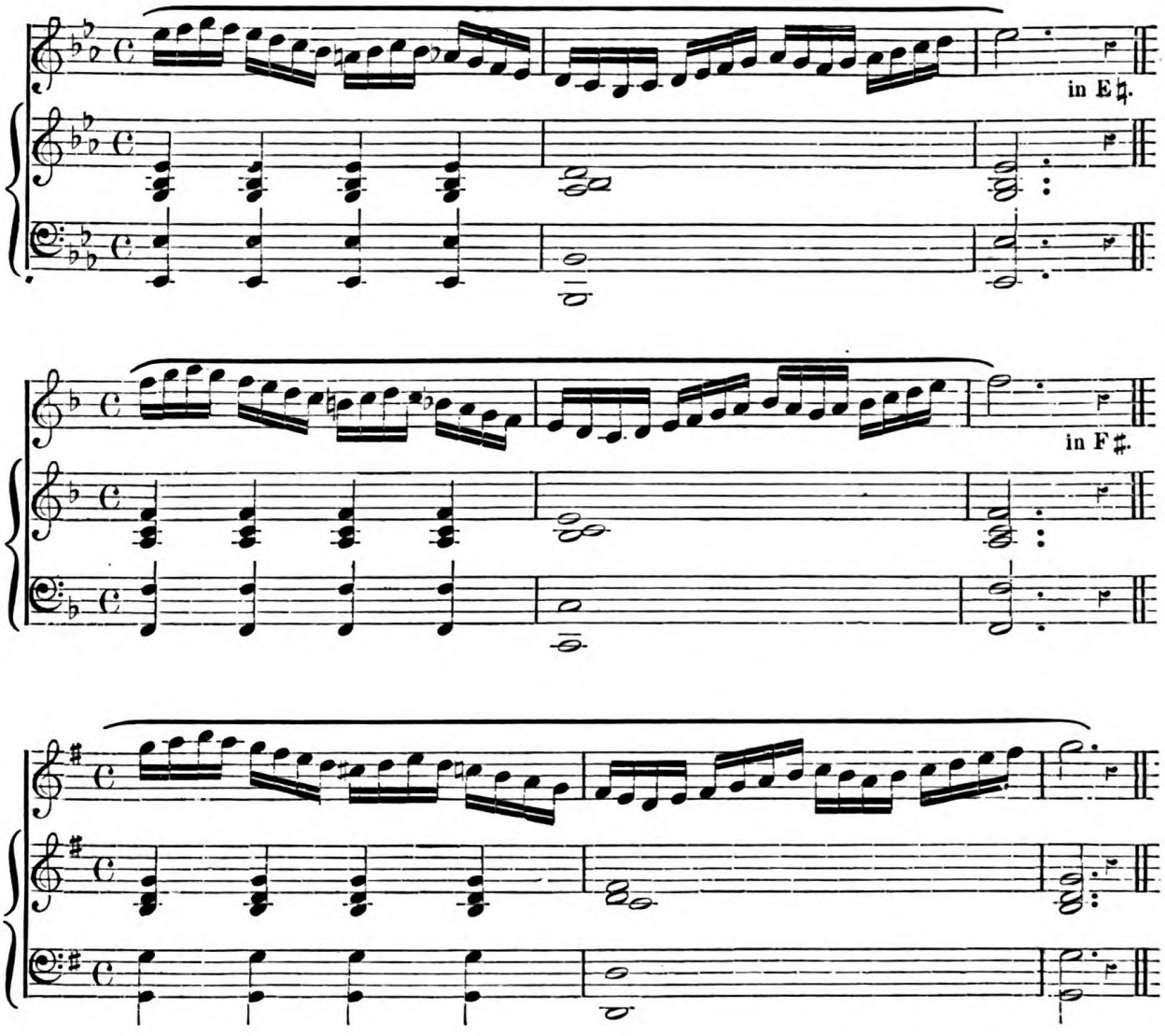


No. 35.*

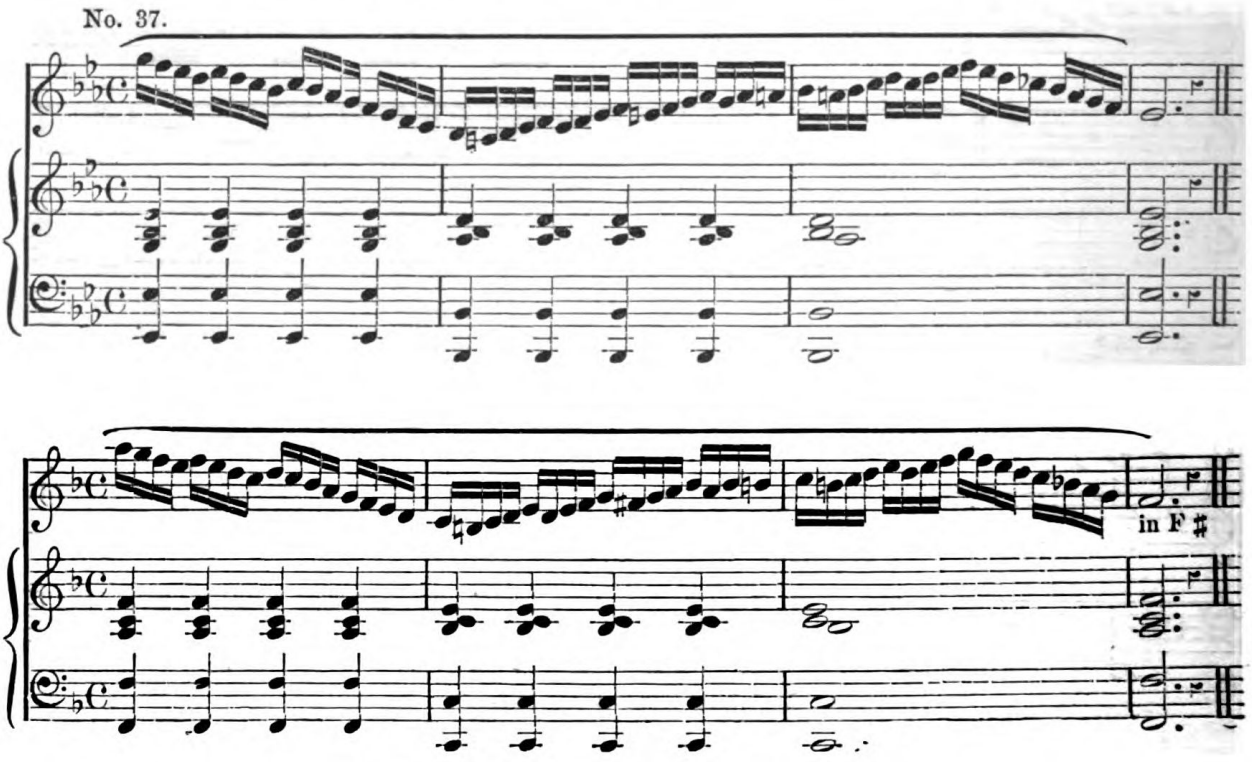


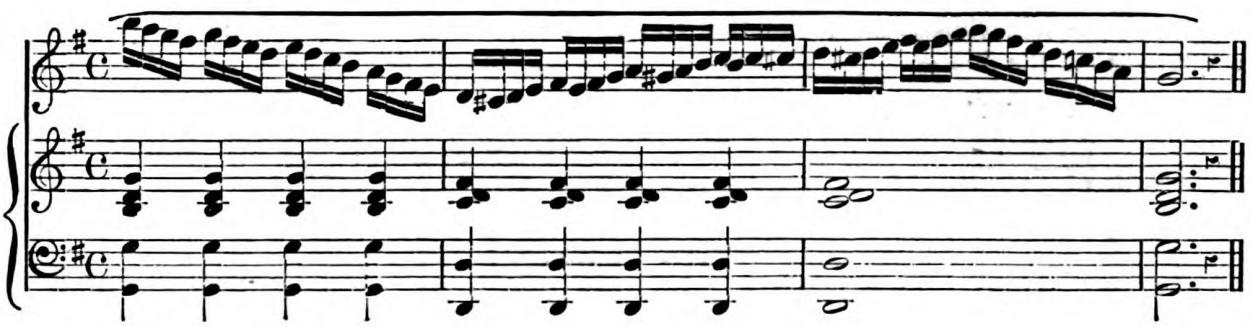
* Sing this in every key.

No. 36.



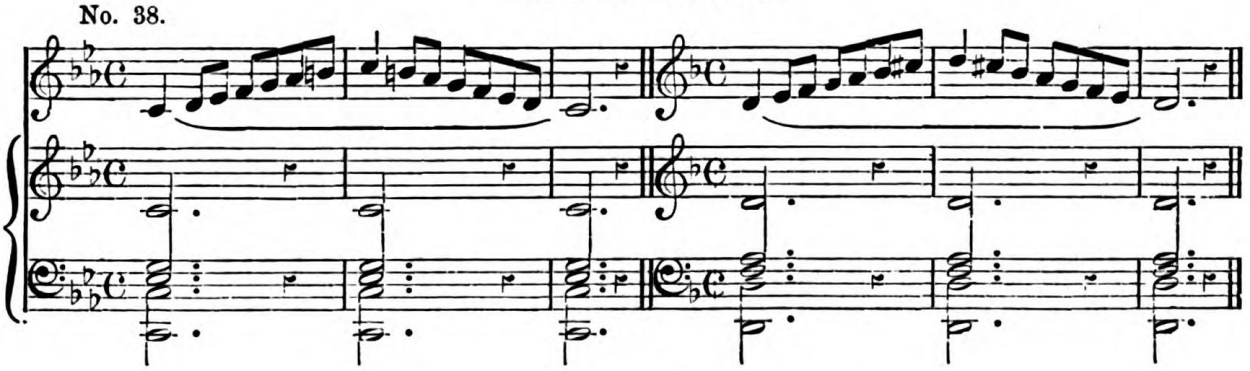
No. 37.

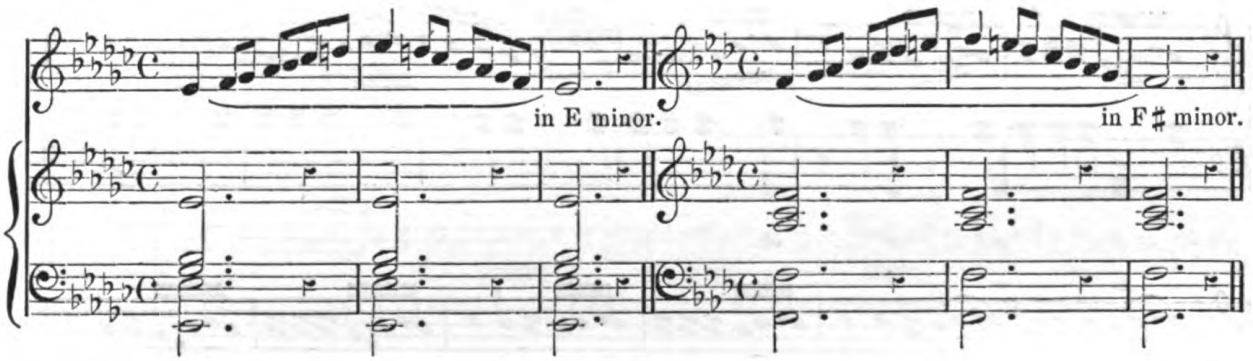


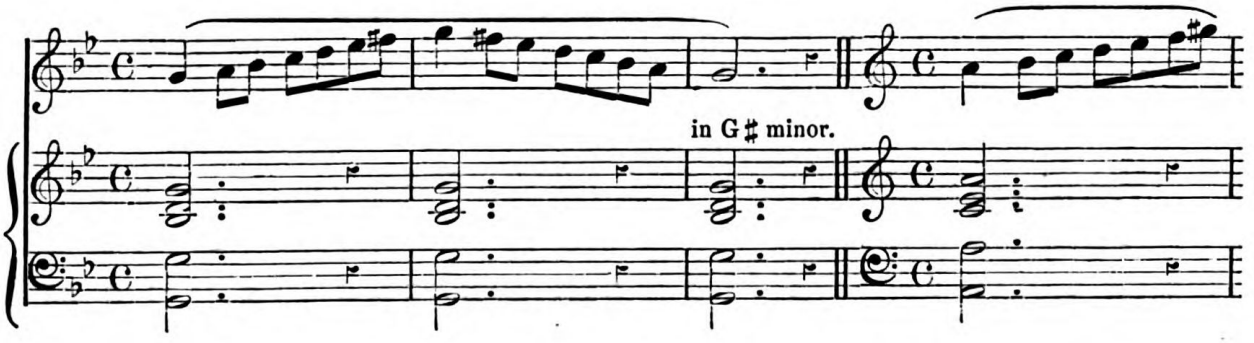


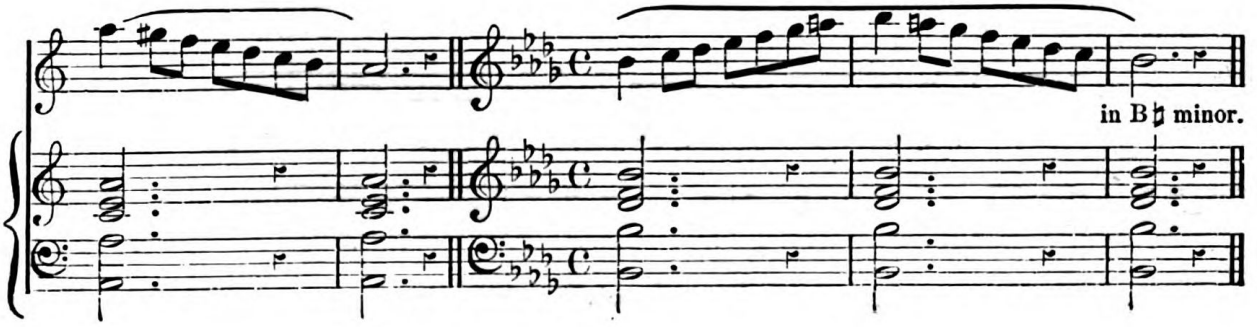
MINOR SCALES.

No. 38.



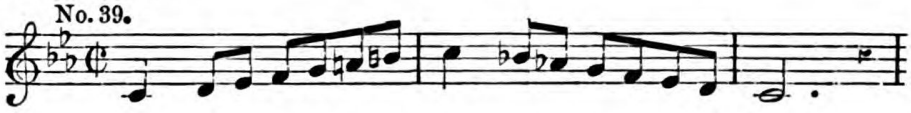






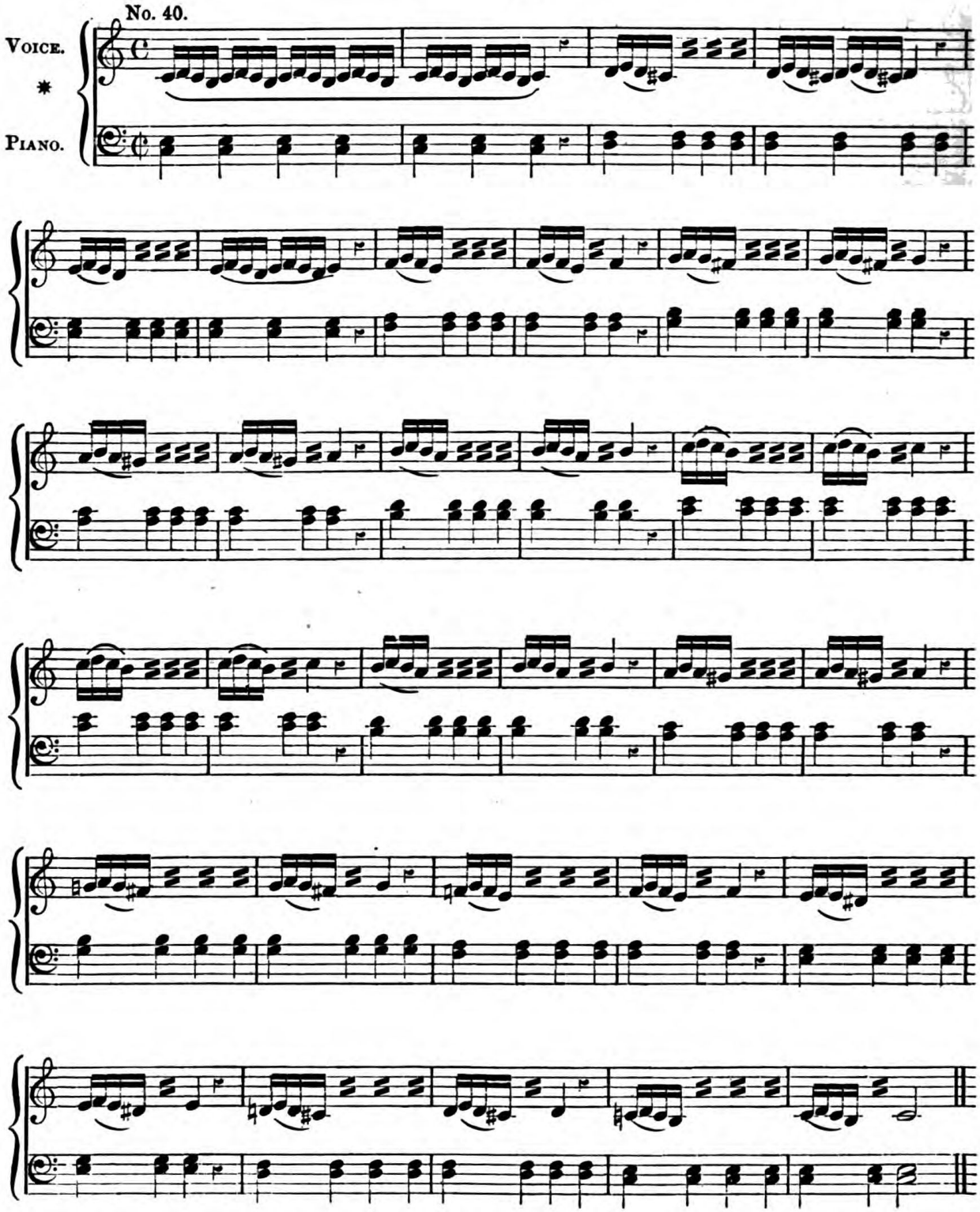
Study the following Scale in all the Keys. This last Minor Scale is more generally employed than the first.

No. 39.



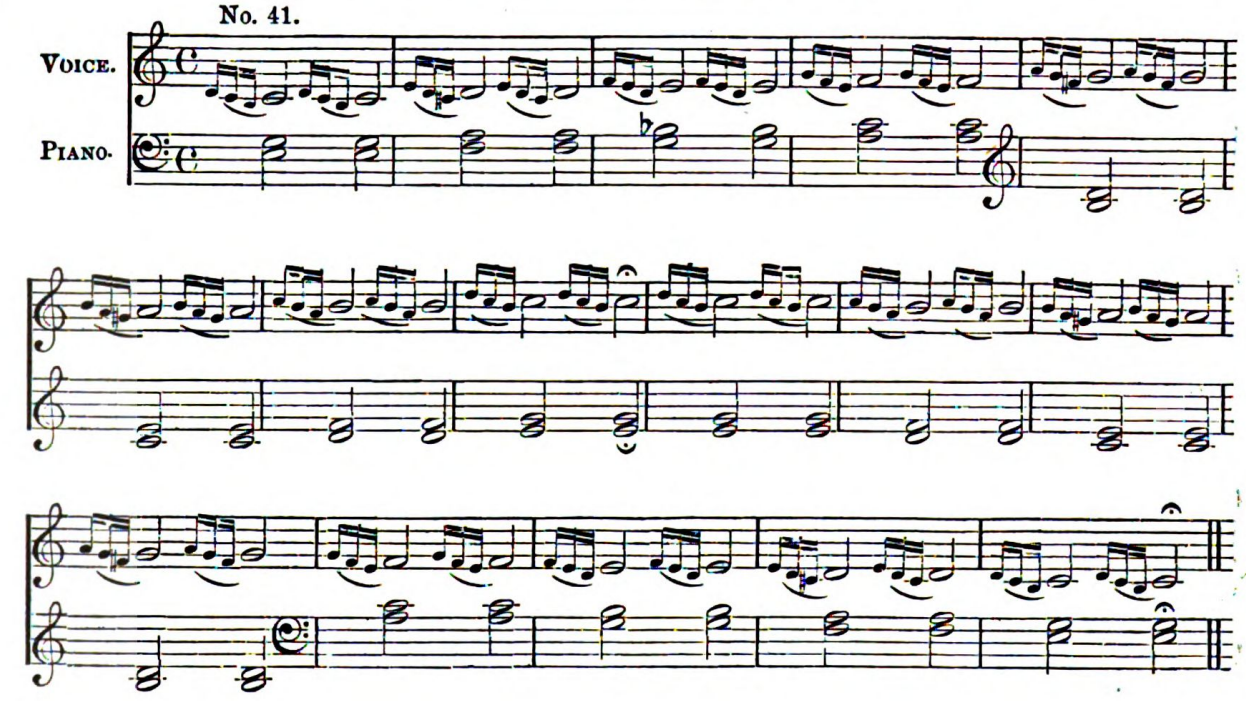
THE TURN.

No. 40.

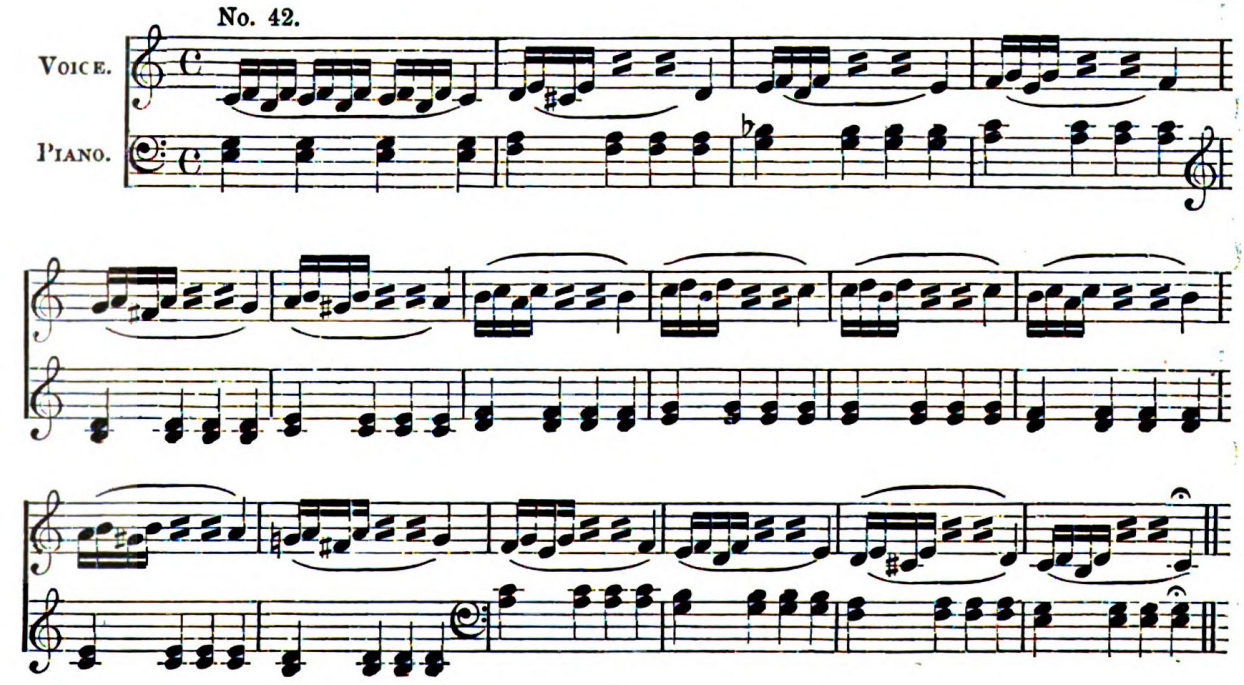


* This Exercise must be studied in all the Keys.

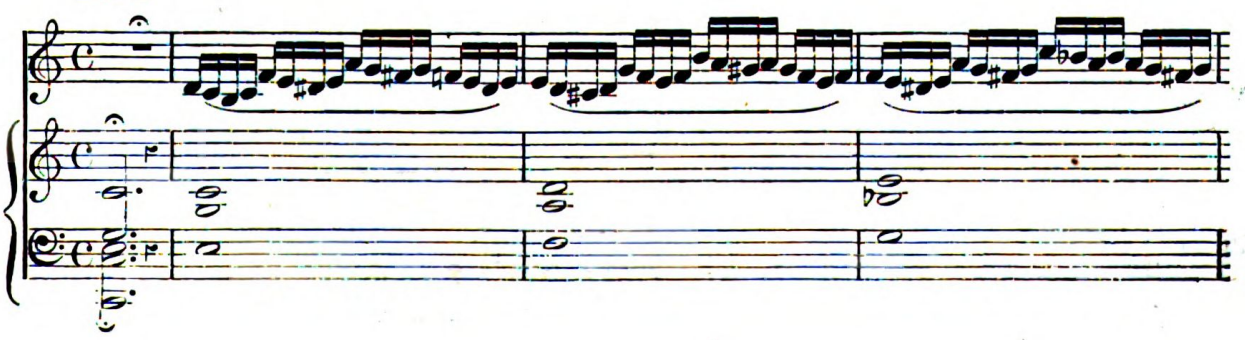
No. 41.

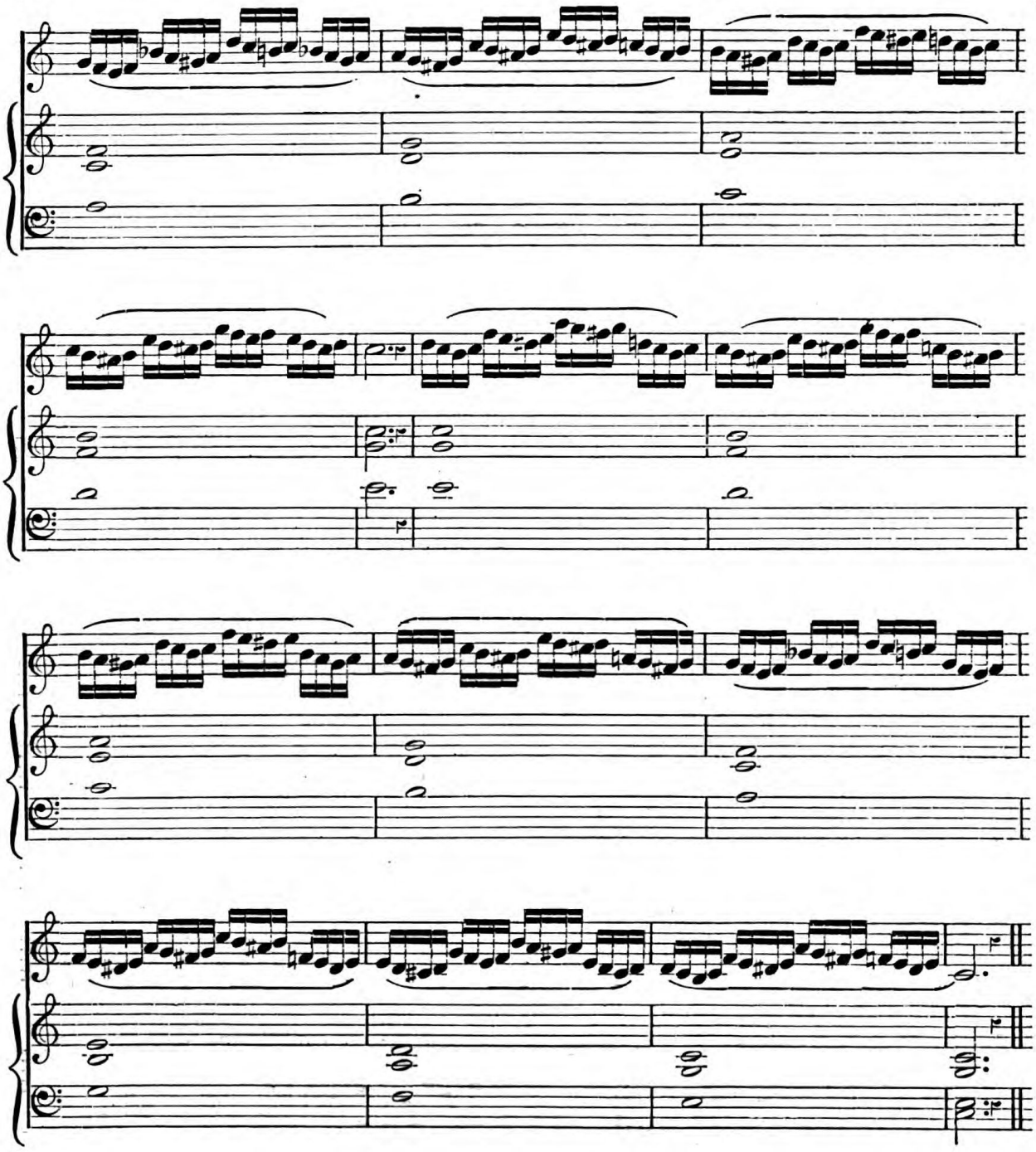


No. 42.



No. 43.

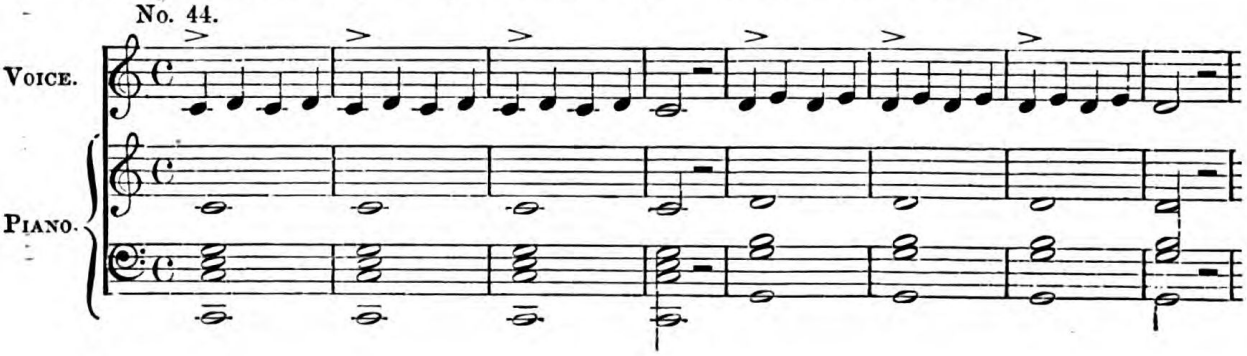


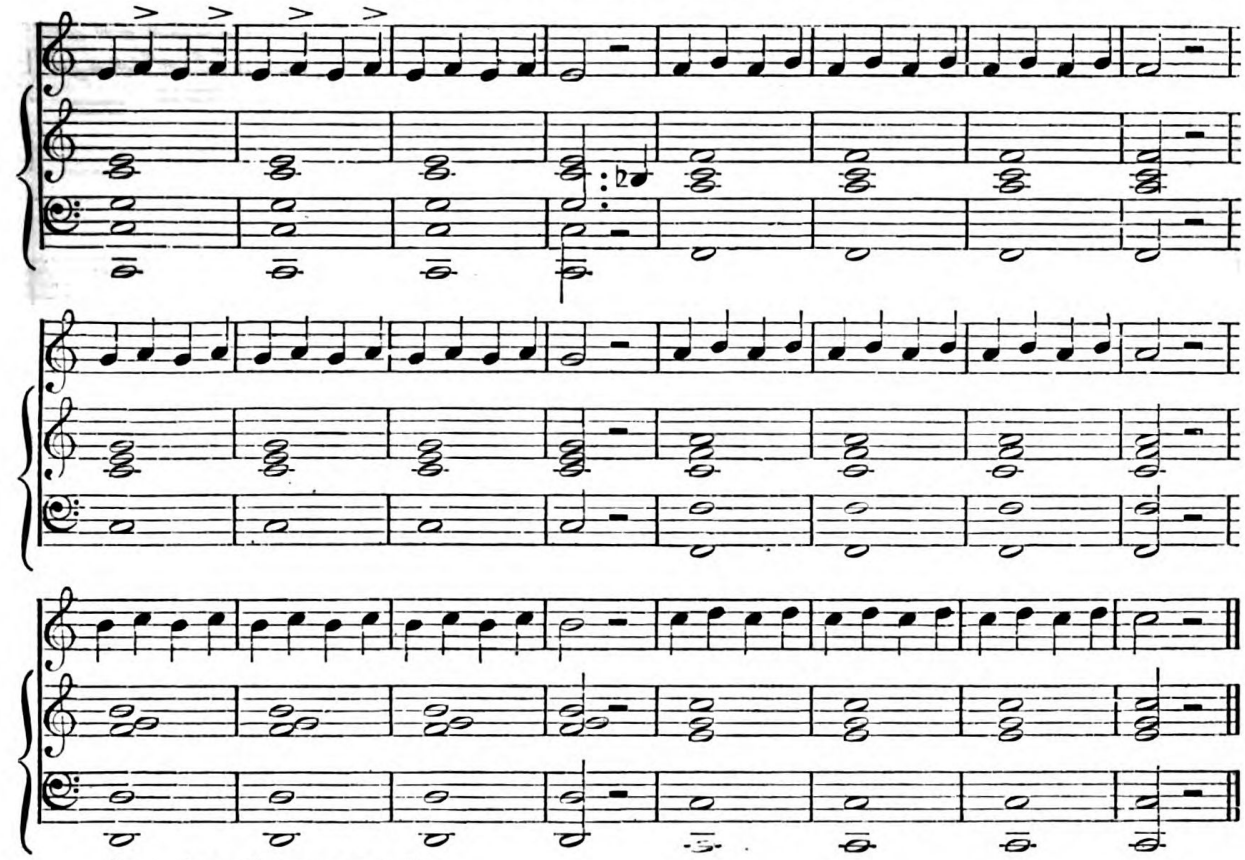


EXERCISE FOR THE SHAKE.

Study this Exercise very slowly in all the Keys. Accent on the lower note.

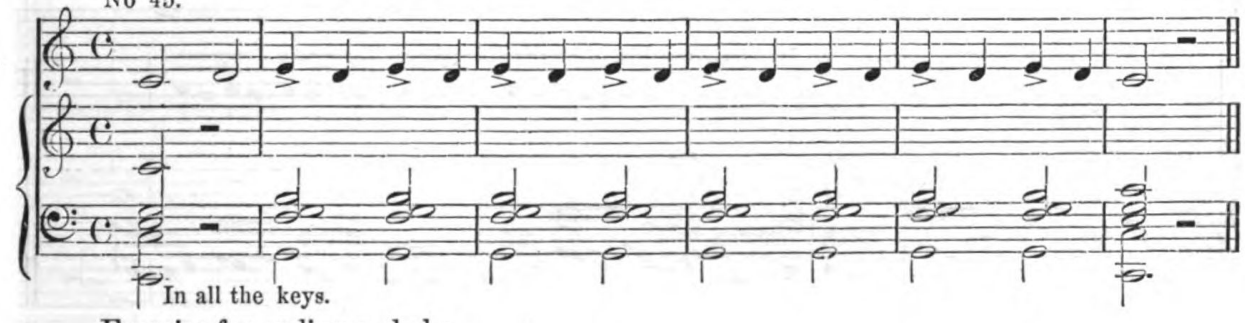
No. 44.





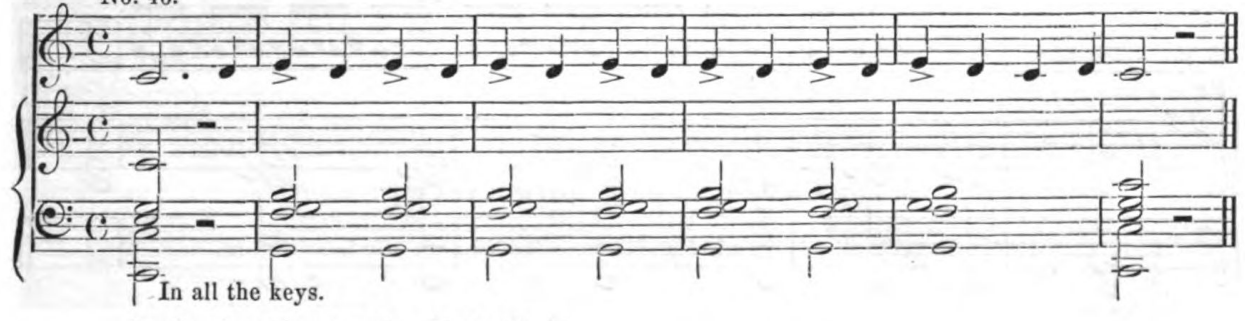
Accent on the upper note.

No 45.



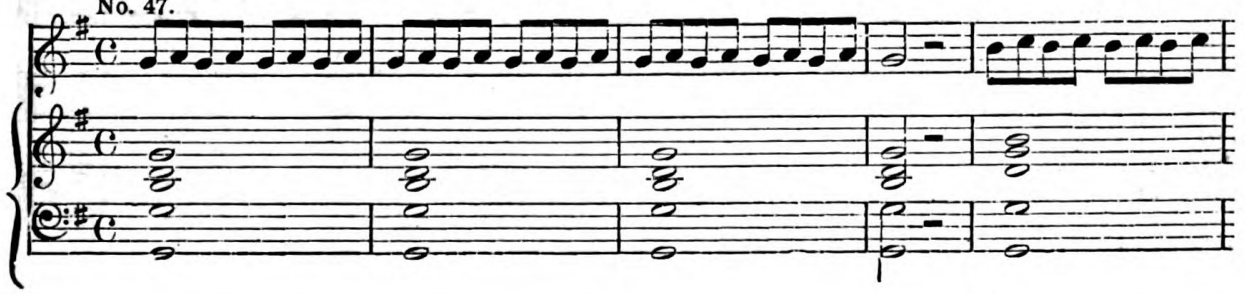
Exercise for ending a shake.

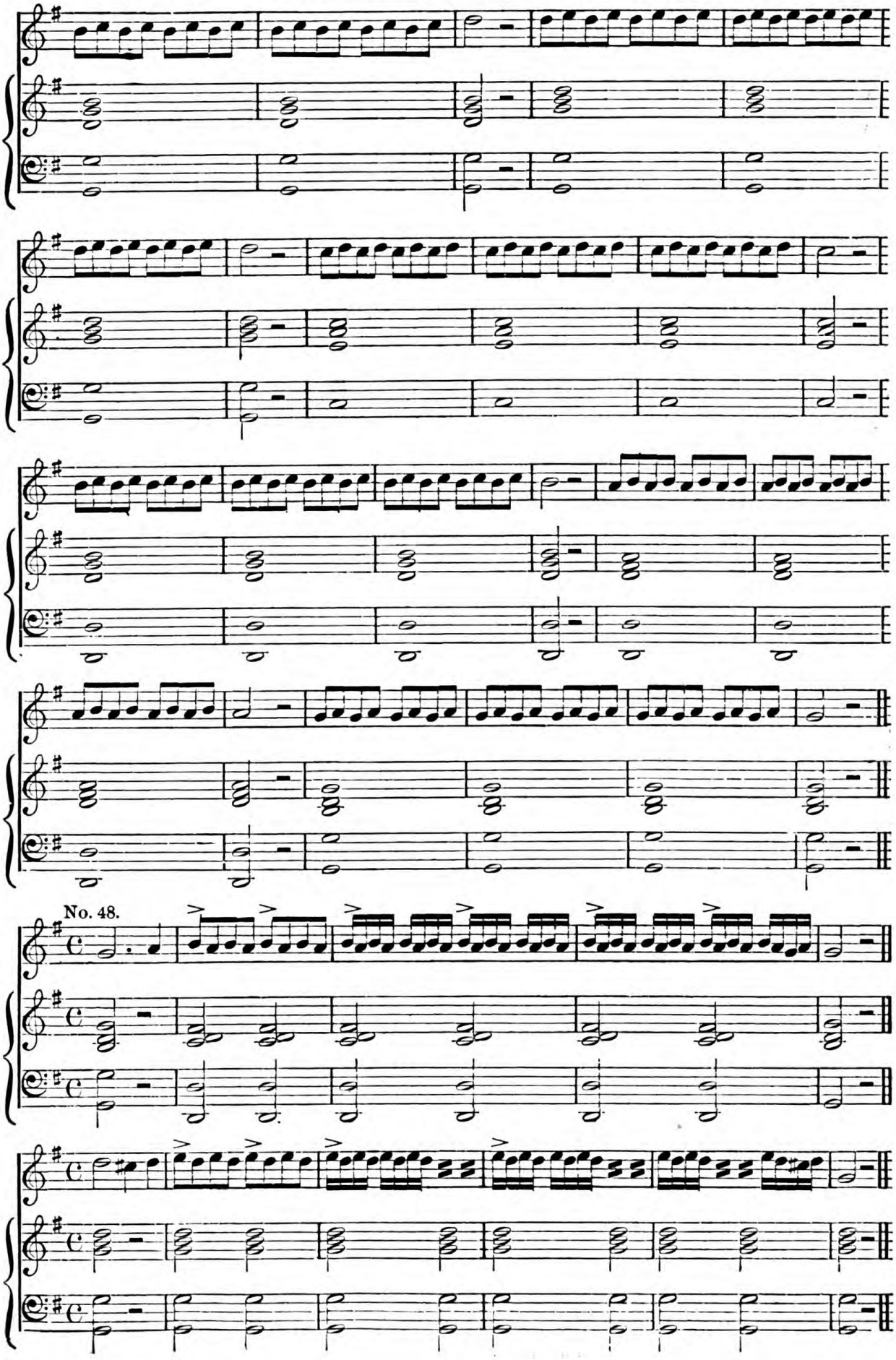
No. 46.

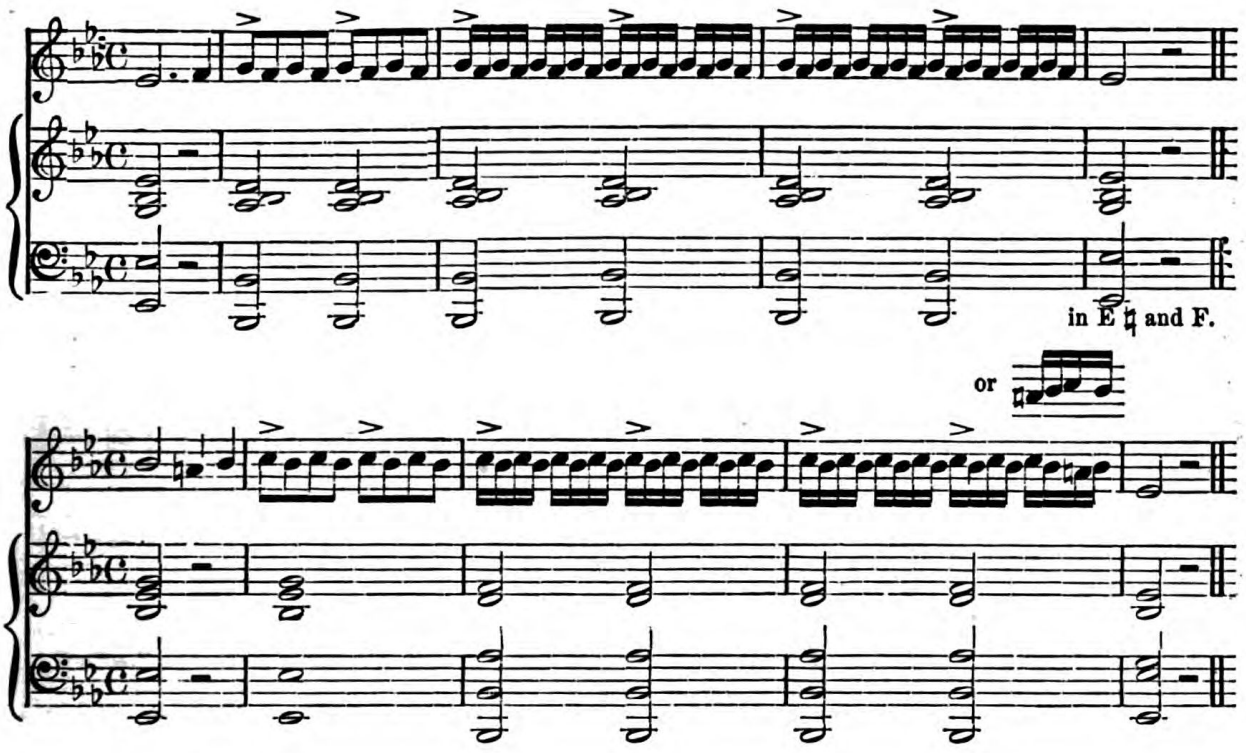


Study this Exercise in all the keys.

No. 47.

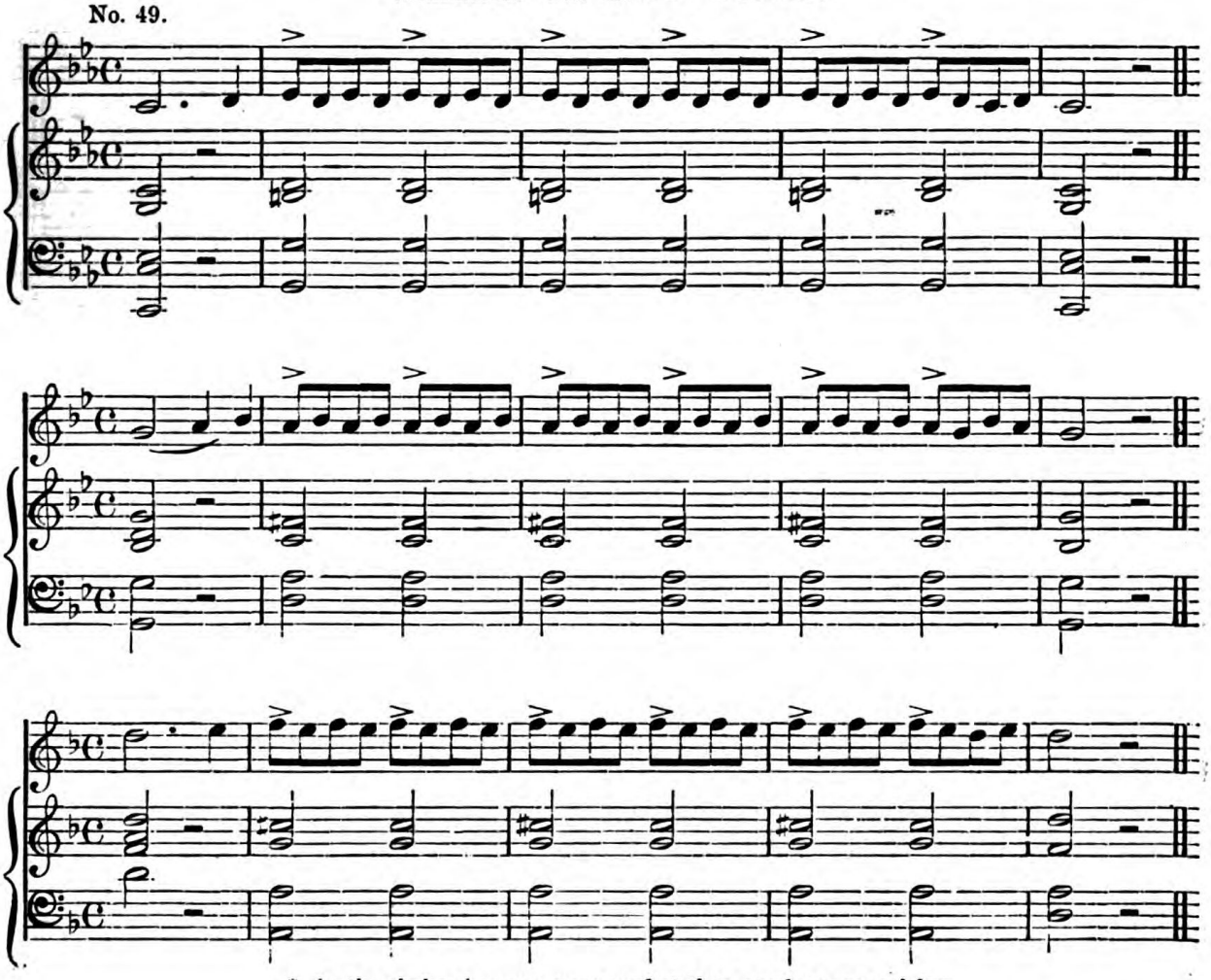



No. 48.

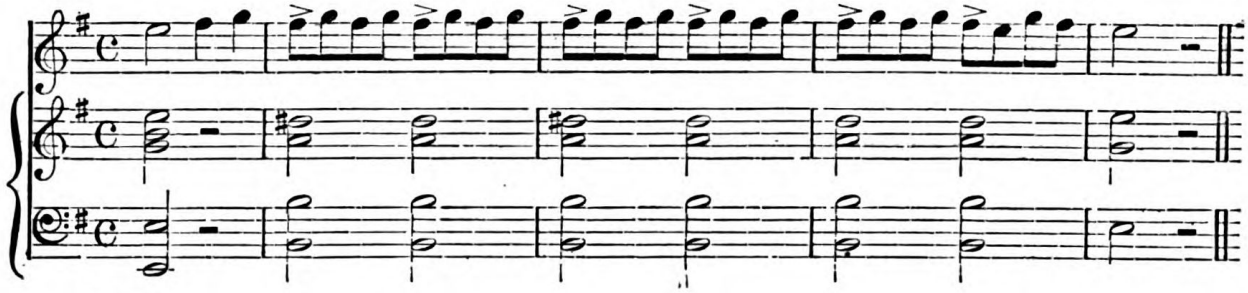


SHAKES ON HALF TONES.*

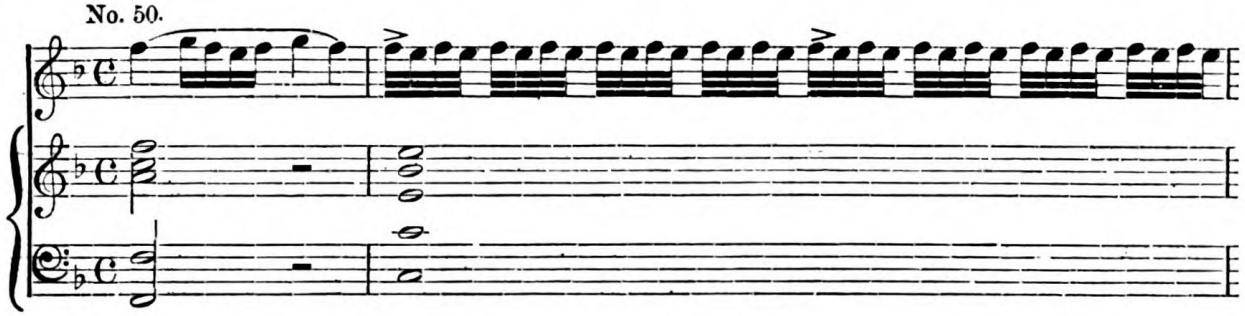
No. 49.

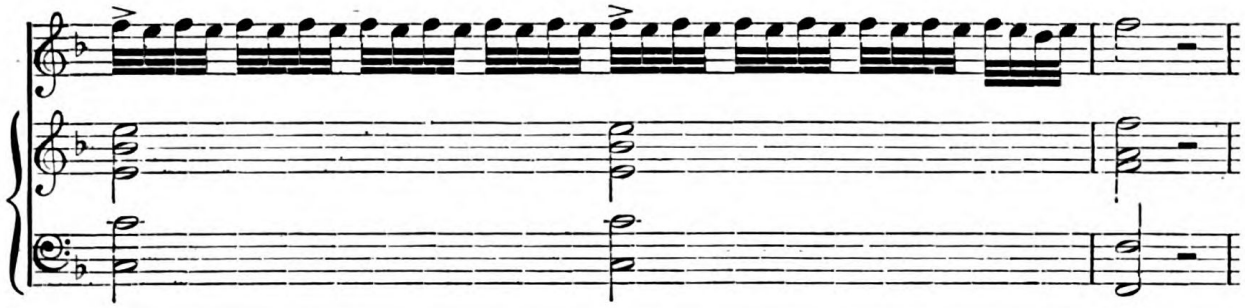


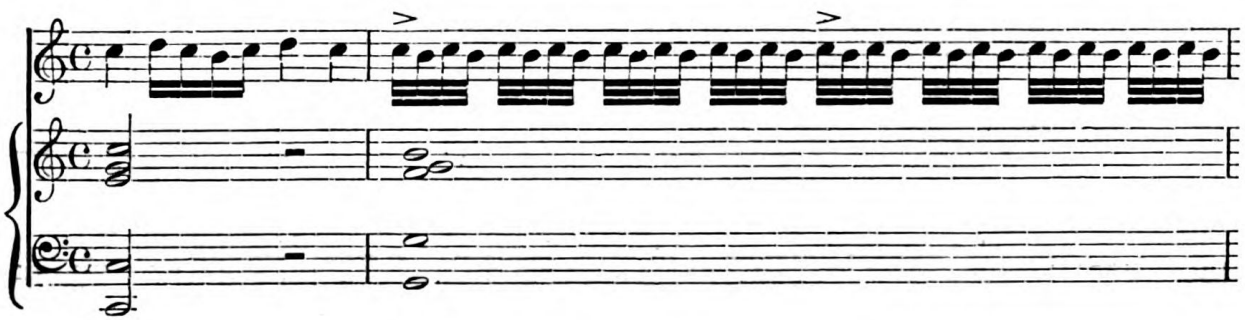
* As the shakes become more perfect they can be sung quicker.

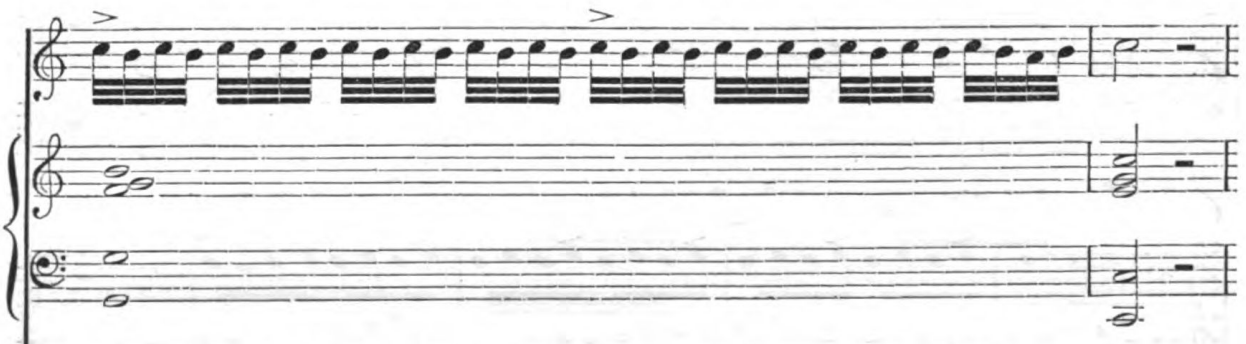


No. 50.









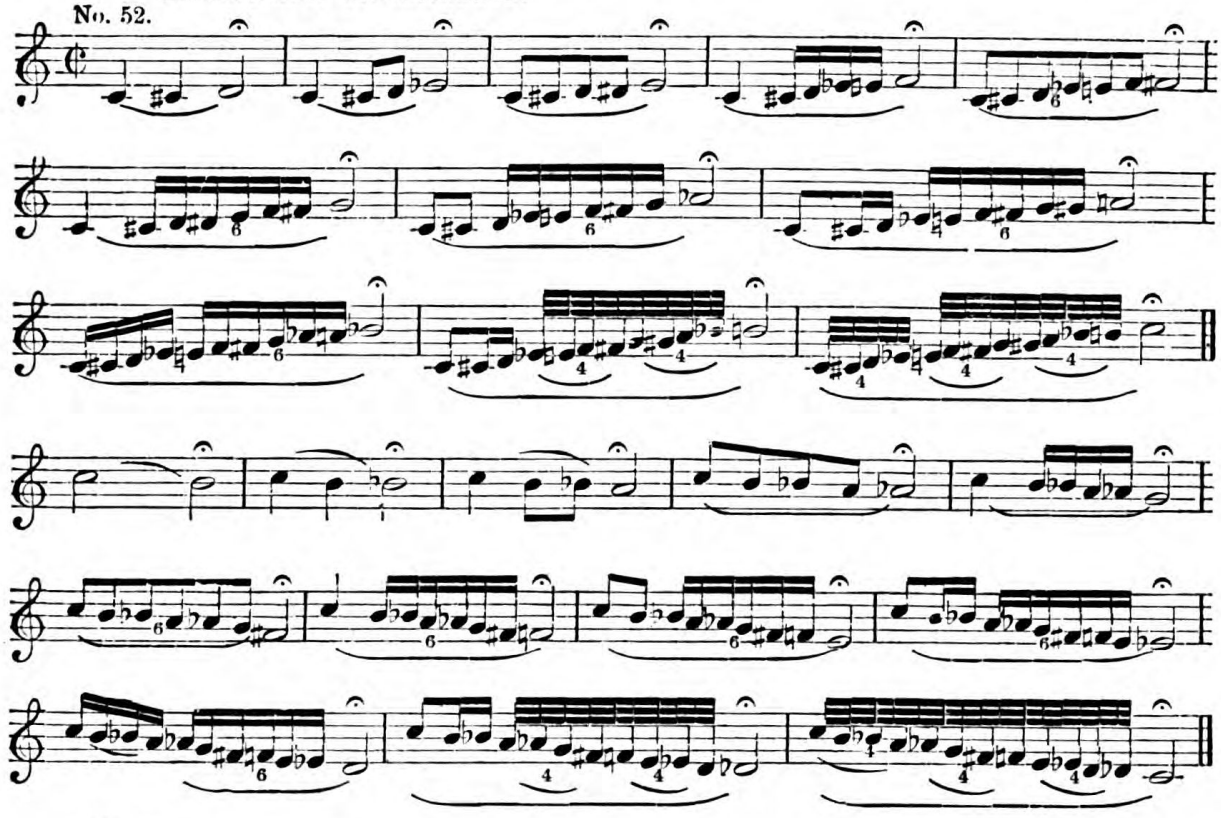
Practice shakes on the following notes, and observe the terminations.

No. 51.

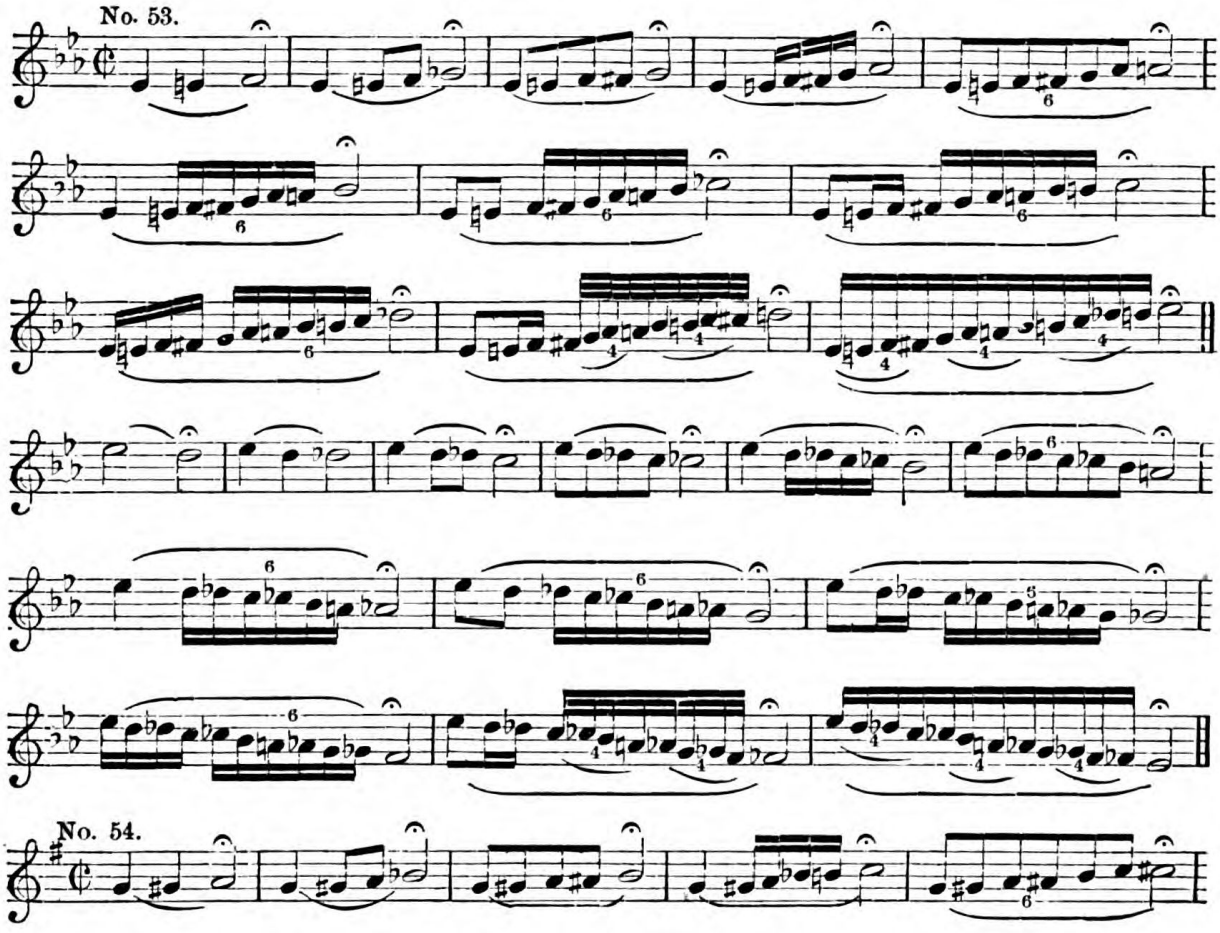
Study of the Chromatic Scale.

Be careful of the intonation.

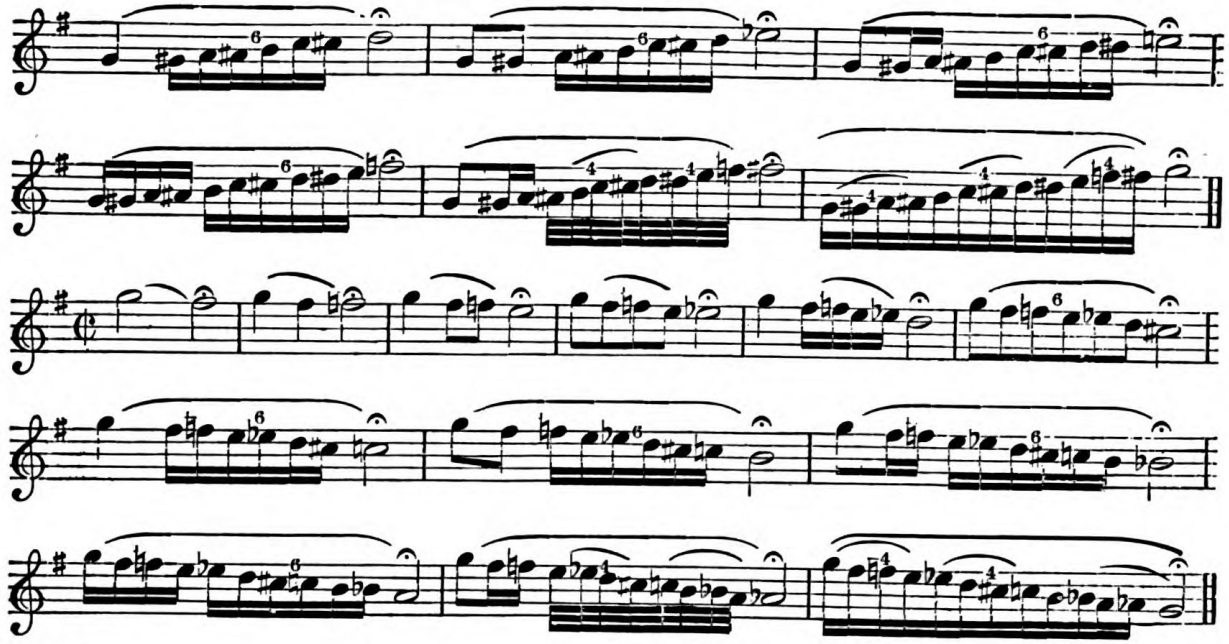
No. 52.



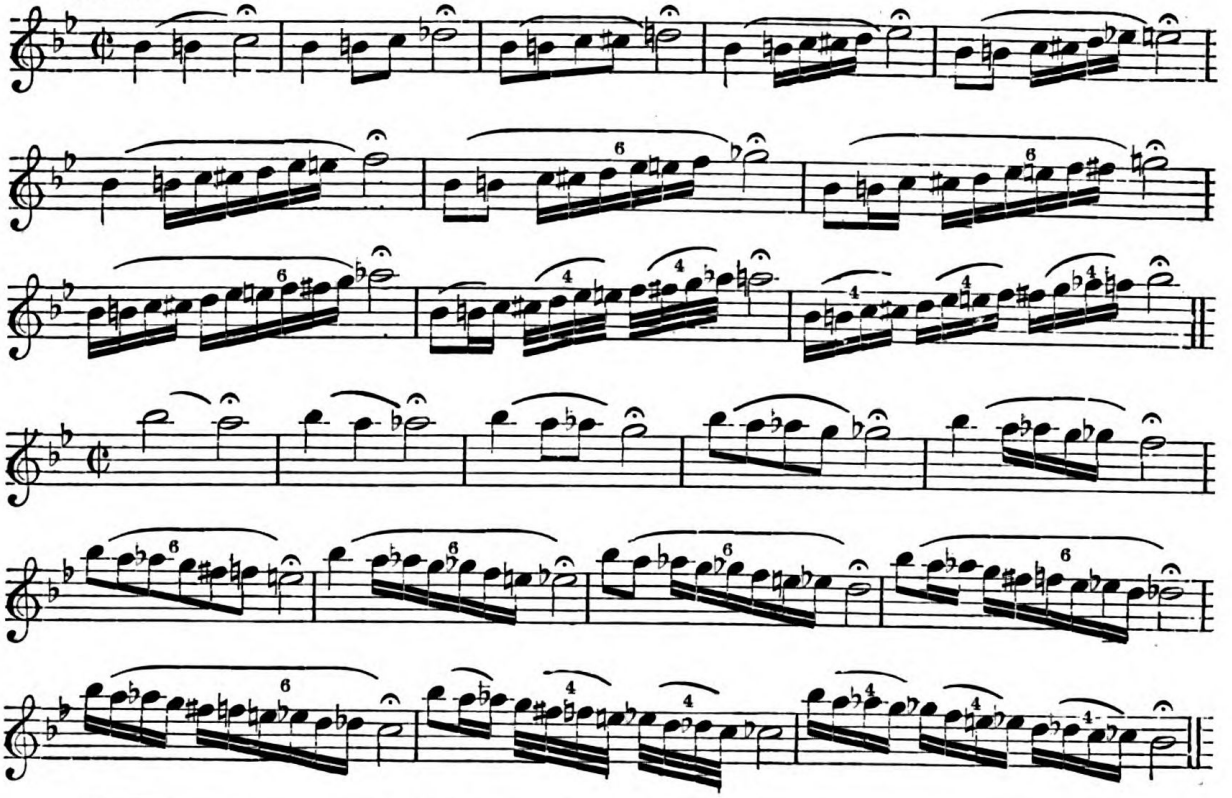
No. 53.



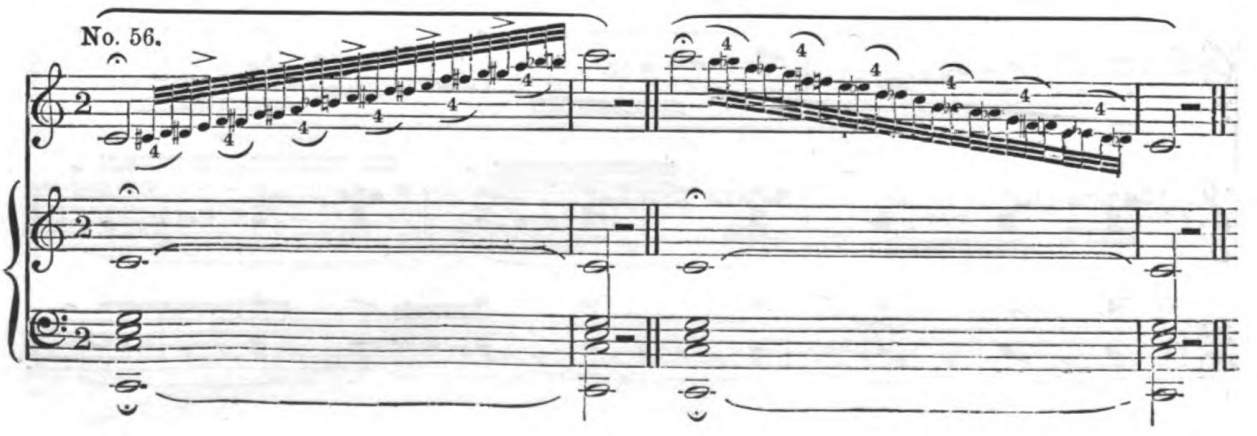
No. 54.



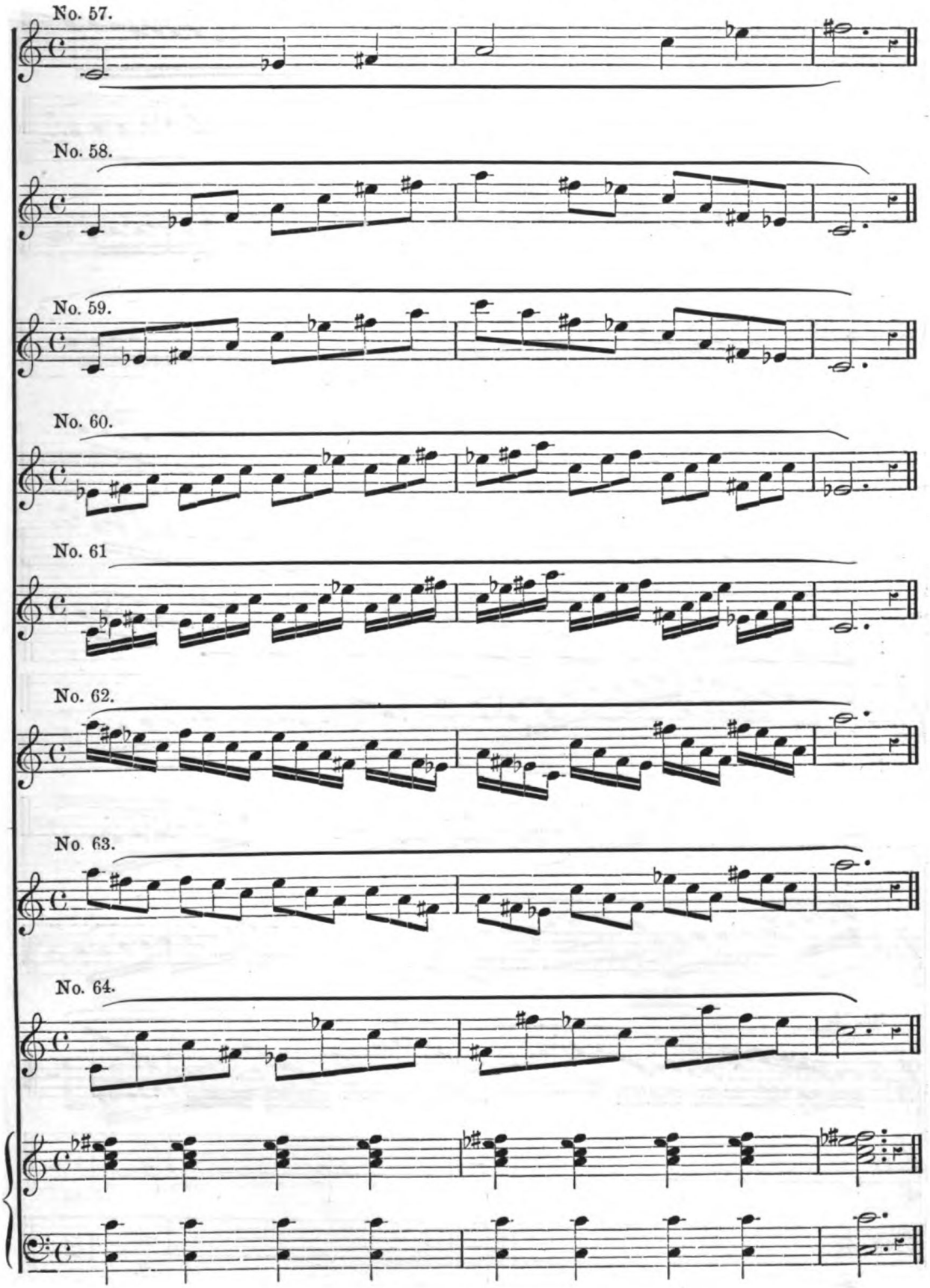
No. 55.



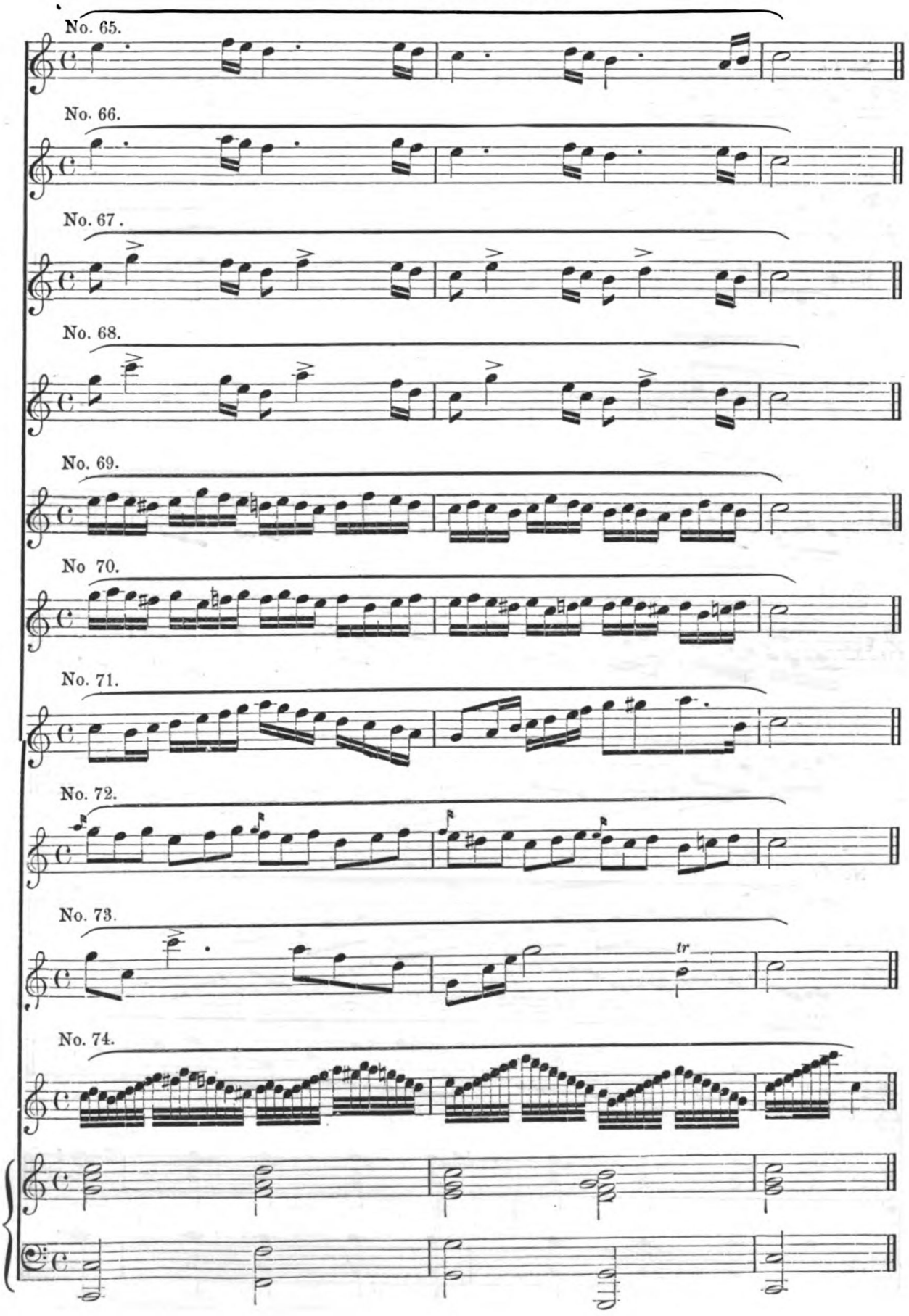
No. 56.

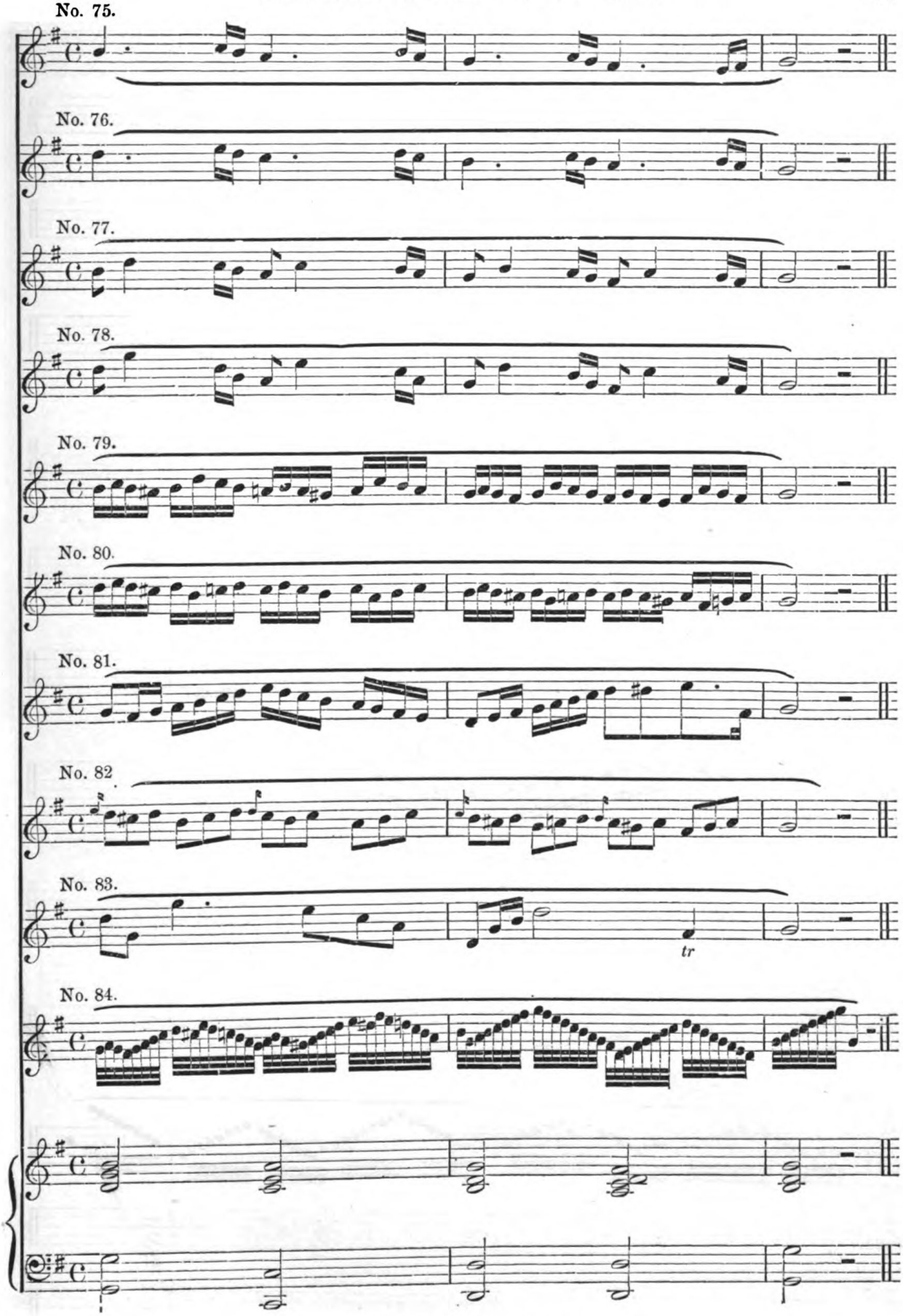


On the Chord of the diminished Seventh.



Perfect Cadences.





END OF FIRST PART.