Study Guide

for

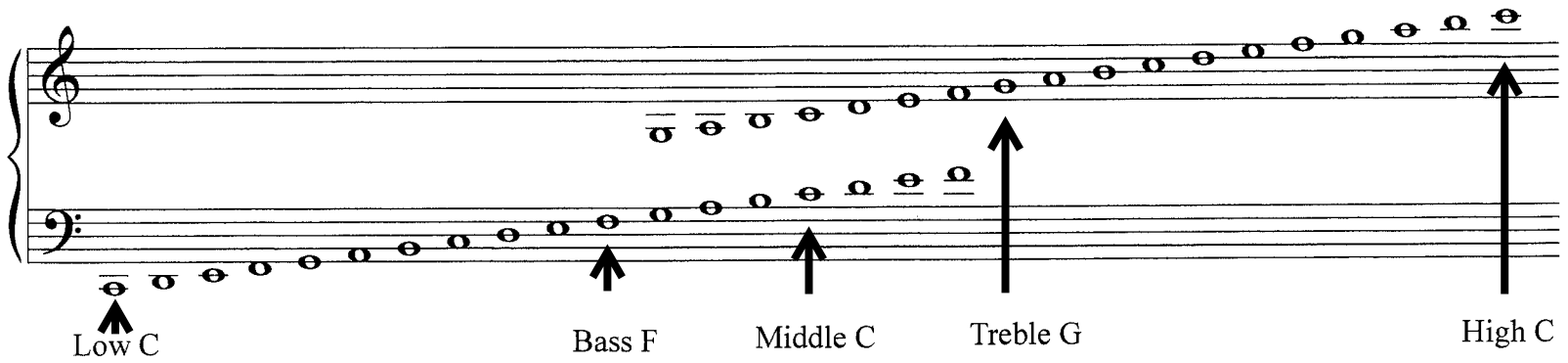
Piano 1

Cheryl Ziedrich, Instructor

©2012, 2017, 2020 Cheryl Ziedrich

Keyboard Chart

With Landmarks



The standard piano keyboard has 88 keys total, including naturals and sharps.
This chart shows a four-octave range of notes most commonly seen in piano music.
Memorize your Landmarks and you will be able to learn the rest of the notes quickly!

Sitting at the Piano

Sit on the piano bench at the middle of the keyboard. Pianists use the right foot on the right pedal, or damper pedal. With your right heel anchored on the floor, rest your toes lightly on the pedal. Adjust the bench so that your leg feels relaxed and comfortable.

Hands and Fingers

Leaning slightly forward, place your hands on your kneecaps. Notice the rounded shape your fingers take. Keep this rounded shape as you float your hands to the keyboard. Fingertips, and the side tips of the thumbs, will rest on the keys. Fingernails are kept short for good contact. You should see a fairly flat line from the knuckles of your hand, through the wrist, to the elbow.

In piano music the thumbs are always designated as Finger 1, index fingers as 2, and so on, to little fingers as 5. Right Hand and Left Hand are abbreviated as RH and LH.

Higher and Lower, Soft and Loud

Pitches on the piano sound higher as they move to the right, and lower as they move to the left.

The full name of the instrument we are studying is “Pianoforte”, Italian for “soft-loud.” The technology involved in a touch-sensitive keyboard was revolutionary in 1700 when it was invented by Bartolomeo Cristofori. Earlier keyboard instruments, such as the harpsichord and the pipe organ, relied on multiple keyboards and different tone qualities to produce contrasts in sound.

Practice making loud and soft sounds up and down the keyboard: for louder sounds, sink quickly into the keys; for softer sounds, sink slowly into the keys.

Playing Black Keys

Black keys on the piano are arranged in groups of two and three. Using RH 2 and 3, play the groups of two black keys moving upward, listening for the change in pitch. Now use LH 2 and 3 to play the groups of two black keys moving downward, listening for the change in pitch.

Use fingers 2,3 and 4 in the same way to play the groups of three black keys. Listen for the change in pitch.

The Music Alphabet

White keys on the keyboard are named with alphabet letters:

A B C D E F G

A standard piano keyboard begins at the low end with **A**, and the sequence of seven letters is repeated all the way up the keyboard.

Using LH 2, play and say the music alphabet from the low end to the mid-range. Switch to RH 2, and continue to the highest **C**.

Now practice the alphabet backwards! Beginning with the highest white key, play and say, "C B A; G F E D C B A."

Finding White Keys

White keys can be located by their position in relation to black keys:
C is to the left of any group of two black keys. Find and play all the Cs.
F is to the left of any group of three black keys. Find and play all the Fs.
Beginning at the low end, play C F C F all the way up.

Play C D E all the way up the keyboard; play E D C all the way down.
Play F G A B all the way up; play B A G F all the way down.

Landmarks

Notice the manufacturer's name on the keyboard cover, or *fallboard.*
Directly below is a group of two black keys, and to the left of them is **Middle C**.

Place RH 1 on Middle C, and drop RH 2 3 4 5 onto D E F G. This G above Middle C is **Treble G**. Treble means *high.*

Now place LH 1 on Middle C, and drop LH 2 3 4 5 onto B A G F. This F below Middle C is **Bass F**. Bass means *low.*

Fingering Patterns

Play these patterns on any black keys you choose. Practice with RH and LH.

32323 23232 23432 43234

Play these patterns on any white keys you choose. Practice with LH and RH.

15151 51515 13531 53135

Half Steps, Sharps and Flats

Half steps are the smallest distances on the piano: a half step goes from one key to the very next key higher or lower. Half steps occur between white keys E and F, and B and C; all other half steps involve a white key and a black key.

♯ **Sharp** means: go up one half step. Find and play F♯ C♯ G♯ D♯ A♯ E♯ B♯

♭ **Flat** means: go down one half step. Find and play B♭ E♭ A♭ D♭ G♭ C♭ F♭

Whole Steps

A whole step is equal to two half steps. Play these whole steps upward:

C D F G C♯ D♯ G♭ A♭ E F♯ B♭ C

Play these whole steps downward:

E D A G A♯ G♯ E♭ D♭ F E♭ C♯ B

Intervals

Musicians measure the distance from one pitch to another by counting the alphabet names involved. To determine the interval from Middle C to Treble G, count C as the first note; the following D E F are the second, third and fourth, and G is the fifth. So the interval from Middle C to Treble G is a fifth.

Intervals of a second may be half steps (minor seconds) or whole steps (major seconds).

The interval from one pitch to the next higher or lower of the same letter name is an eighth or **octave**.

Playing Intervals

Try playing these patterns on any white keys you choose.
Practice with both LH and RH.

12131415 51413121 15253545 54535251

Rhythm

Rhythm refers to the duration of sound, that is, the long and short tones and the silences that occur in music. In most music, the rhythm is organized by a steady **beat** or pulse. The steady beat may be fast or slow; speed in music is called **tempo. Notes** indicate both pitch and duration. **Rests** are the signs for silence, and are counted just like notes.

Clap and say:

Are you sleeping, Are you sleeping

The rhythm of these syllables can be notated:

These are **quarter notes**. Each lasts one beat. Notice the filled-in note head.

Clap and say:

Brother John, Brother John

This rhythm is different because the syllable “John” sounds long:

The **half note** has an empty note head; it lasts two beats.

Clap and say:

Morning bells are ringing, morning bells are ringing

More syllables require more notes:

Eighth notes look like quarters except they are beamed together. Two eighth notes fill the time of one beat.

Notes and Rests

𝅝	Whole Note	𝄻	Whole Rest
𝅗𝅥.	Dotted Half Note		
𝅗𝅥	Half Note	𝄼	Half Rest
♩	Quarter Note	𝄽	Quarter Rest
♪	Eighth Note	𝄾	Eighth Rest

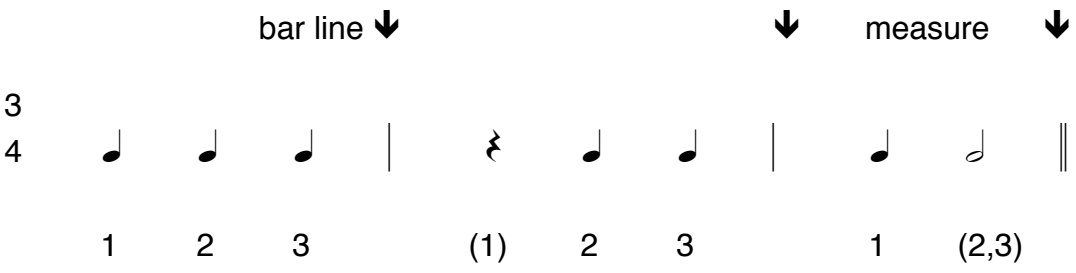
Meter and Time Signatures

Regular patterns of accented beats create **meter**. Beats may be in groups of two (duple meter), three (triple meter), or four (quadruple meter). This is the way in which a waltz, for instance, feels different than a march. **Time signatures** indicate the meter, **bar lines** organize the rhythm into measures, and a double bar indicates the end.

2 Two beats per measure
4 The quarter note gets one beat

3 Three beats per measure
4 The quarter note gets one beat

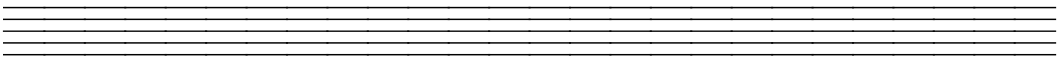
4 Four beats per measure
4 The quarter note gets one beat



The Staff and Clef Signs

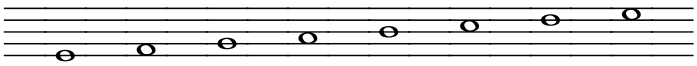
The **notation** of music initially developed to help singers remember chants they had already learned. In the ninth century, European church musicians drew signs higher or lower on the page above the words sung, showing the contour of a melody.

An Italian monk, Guido of Arezzo (c. 1030) recommended that horizontal lines be used.



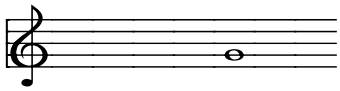
Staff

The tones of the scale could be shown by a line passing through a note, followed by a note above in the space between lines, stepping upward to another line note and space note, and so on to the top of the scale.

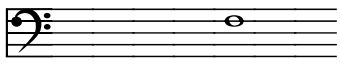


Line and Space Notes

Guido further recommended a letter be used at the start of one of the lines to designate its pitch name. His principles of notation were adopted throughout Europe by the twelfth century, and are now used worldwide.



G Clef Treble G



F Clef Bass F

Dynamics

The **intensity** of musical sound is called **dynamics**. Markings commonly used include these:

pp	*p*	*mp*	*mf*	*f*	*ff*
pianissimo	*piano*	*mezzo piano*	*mezzo forte*	*forte*	*fortissimo*
very soft	soft	medium soft	medium loud	loud	very loud

< *crescendo* gradually louder

> *diminuendo* gradually softer

Fingering Hints

Adjacent keys are generally played by adjacent fingers.
If a letter is skipped, a key is skipped, and a finger is usually skipped.
Scan the phrase to find the highest pitch and the lowest pitch to determine the best placement of the fingers.
Intervals of a fifth and octaves are comfortably played with fingers 1 and 5.
Triads are comfortably played by fingers 1 3 5.
Keep a pencil handy to mark fingering as necessary.

Good Habits

Sit in the center of the keyboard and keep eyes focused on the page.
Practice the rhythm first.
Study the pitches and intervals to determine a logical fingering.
Set a tempo before you play, slow enough for good accuracy.
Keep going.
When you finish, determine what needs more work.
Increase the tempo gradually to capture the character of the piece.
Learn to see groups of notes, not just one at a time.

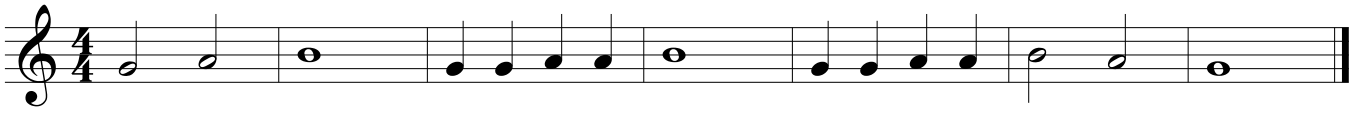
Glossary

Bass clef	𝄢 Symbol indicating Bass F is on the fourth line of the Staff
Bass F	The F a fifth below Middle C
Beat	Steady pulse by which note durations are measured
Common Time	Symbol C used as a time signature; same as 4/4 time
Eighth notes	♫ Two eighth notes fill the time of one beat
Finger Numbers	Pianists call the thumb of each hand Finger 1, proceeding outward to little finger as Finger 5
Flat	Go a half step lower
Half note	𝅗𝅥 Counted as two beats
Half Step	On the keyboard, from one key to the next closest, not skipping
Interval	The distance from one pitch to another
Key signature	Sharps or flats appearing on the staff to indicate the Tonic key
Measure	The notational space between bar lines
Middle C	The C nearest the center of the keyboard
Pianoforte	The full name of the keyboard instrument, literally “soft-loud”
Pitch	The highness or lowness of sound, or frequency of vibration
Quarter note	♩ Counted as one beat
Rests	Signs for silence, counted like notes
Rhythm	Duration, or the long and short sounds and silences of music
Sharp	Go a half step higher
Tempo	Speed
Time signature	Numbers appearing on the staff to indicate meter
Tonic	The key note, or first tone of the scale
Treble clef	𝄞 Symbol indicating Treble G is on the second line of the staff
Treble G	The G a fifth above Middle C
Whole note	𝅝 Counted as four beats
Whole Step	Two half steps

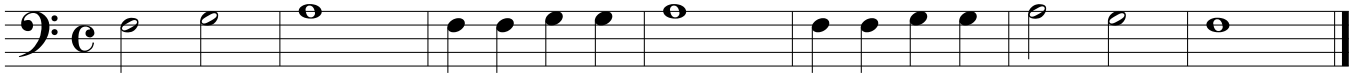
Do Re Mi

Find the highest pitch and the lowest pitch of the melody.
What is a reasonable fingering?
Mark the **first note only** with your fingering choice.

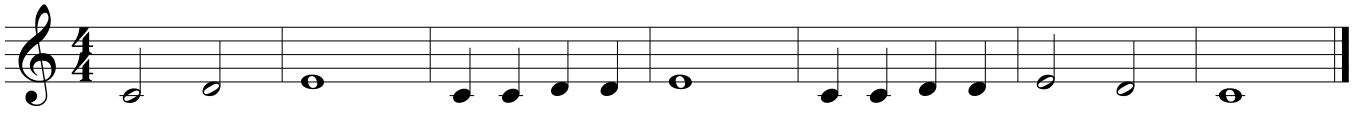
RH beginning on Treble G



LH beginning on Bass F



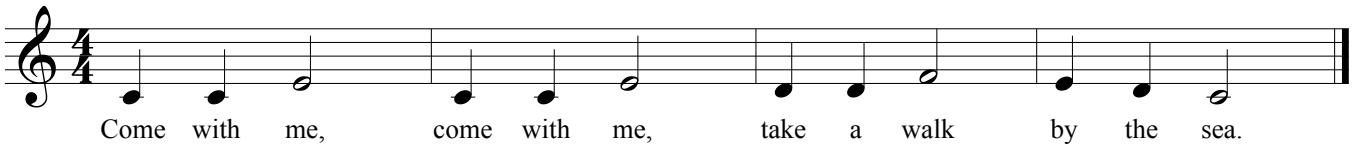
RH beginning on Middle C



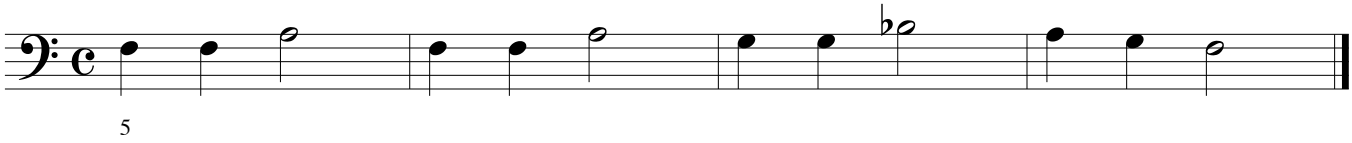
Come With Me

Find the highest pitch and the lowest pitch of the melody.
Mark the **first note only** with your fingering choice.

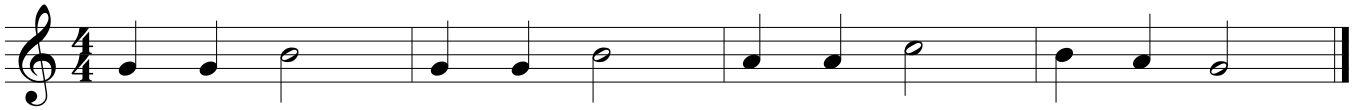
RH beginning on Middle C



LH beginning on Bass F
Using LH5 on Bass F will put LH2 comfortably on the B flat.



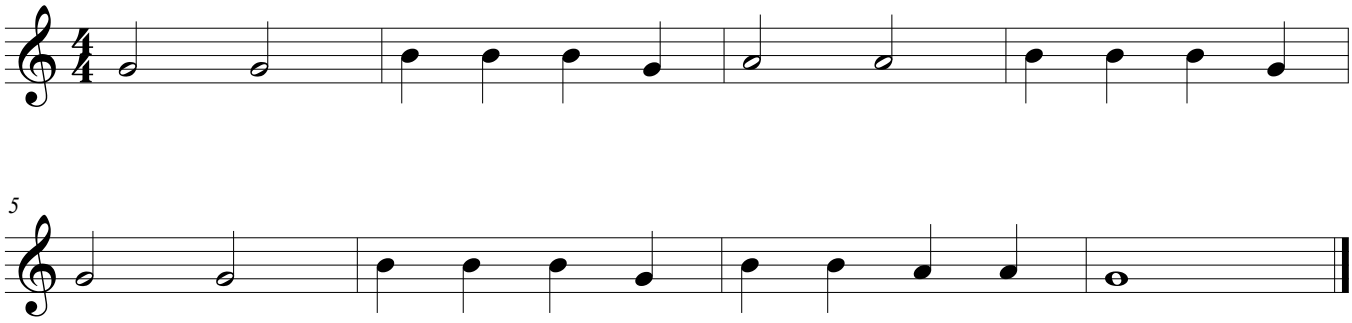
Beginning on Treble G



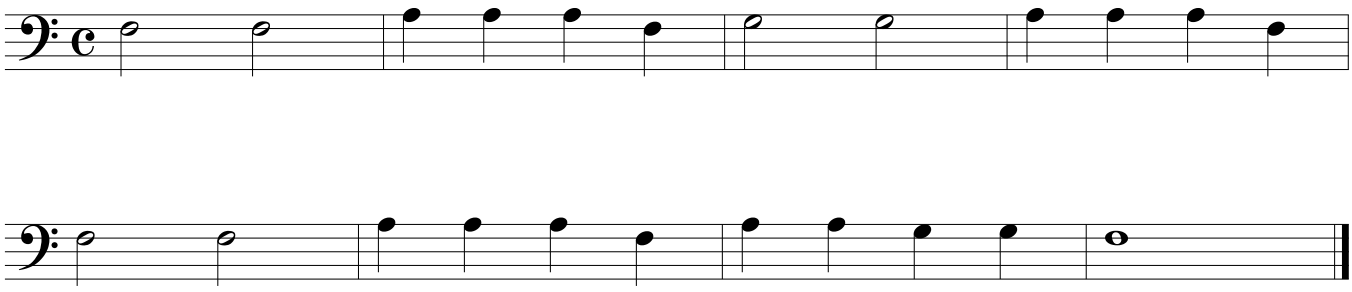
First Spiritual

Walk You In The Light

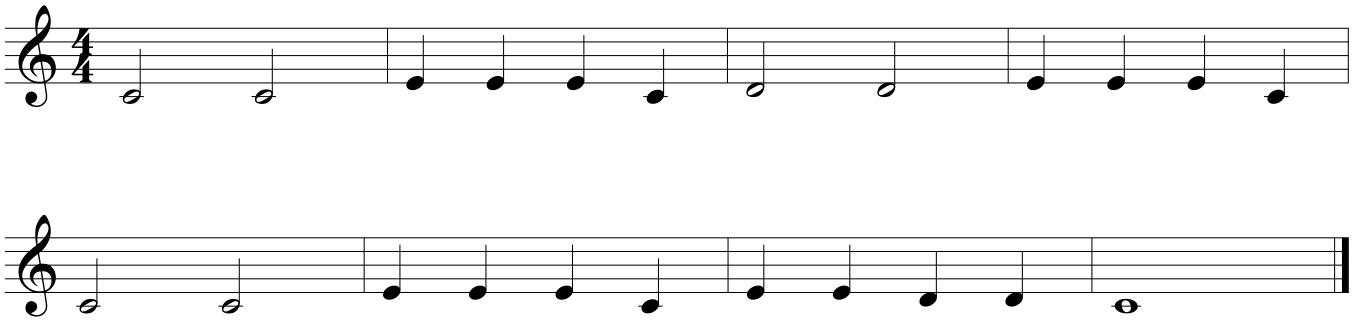
RH beginning on Treble G



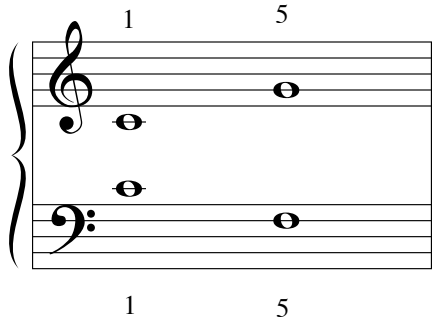
LH beginning on Bass F



RH beginning on Middle C

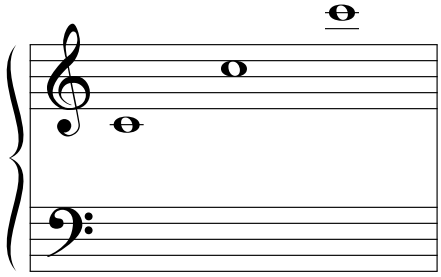


Landmarks on the Grand Staff

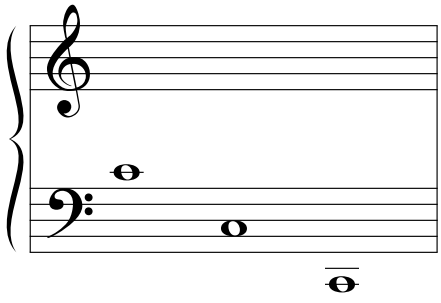


With RH 1 play Middle C, then Treble G a fifth above.

With LH 1 play Middle C, then Bass F a fifth below.

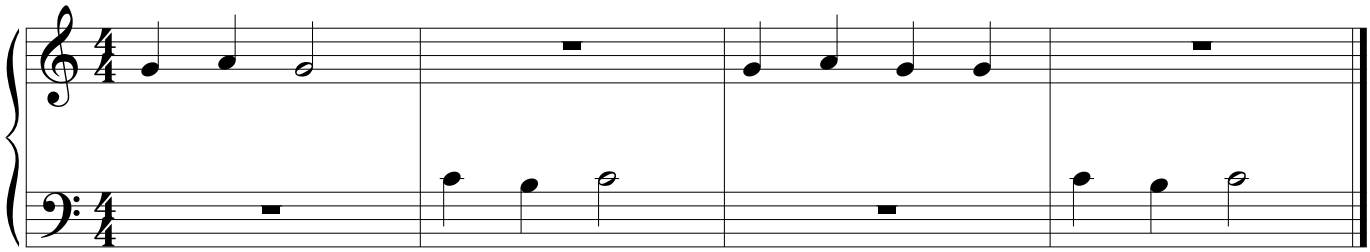


With your RH play Middle C,
then the C one octave higher,
and the C two octaves higher.
This is High C.

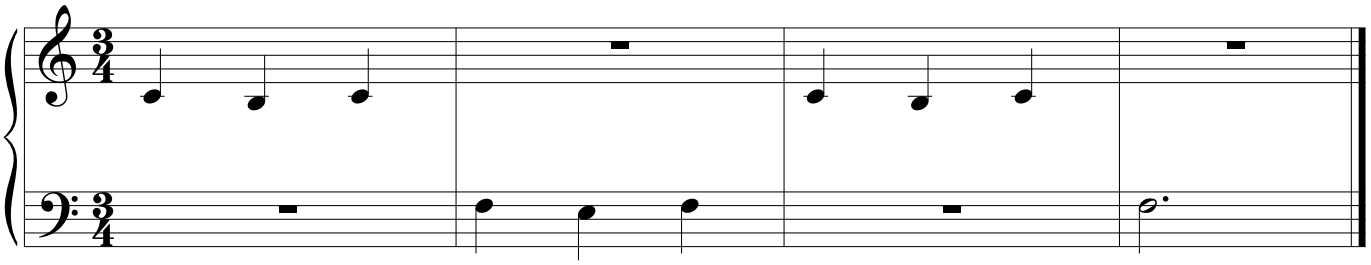


With your LH play Middle C,
then the C one octave lower,
and the C two octaves lower.
This is Low C.

Seconds



More, Please

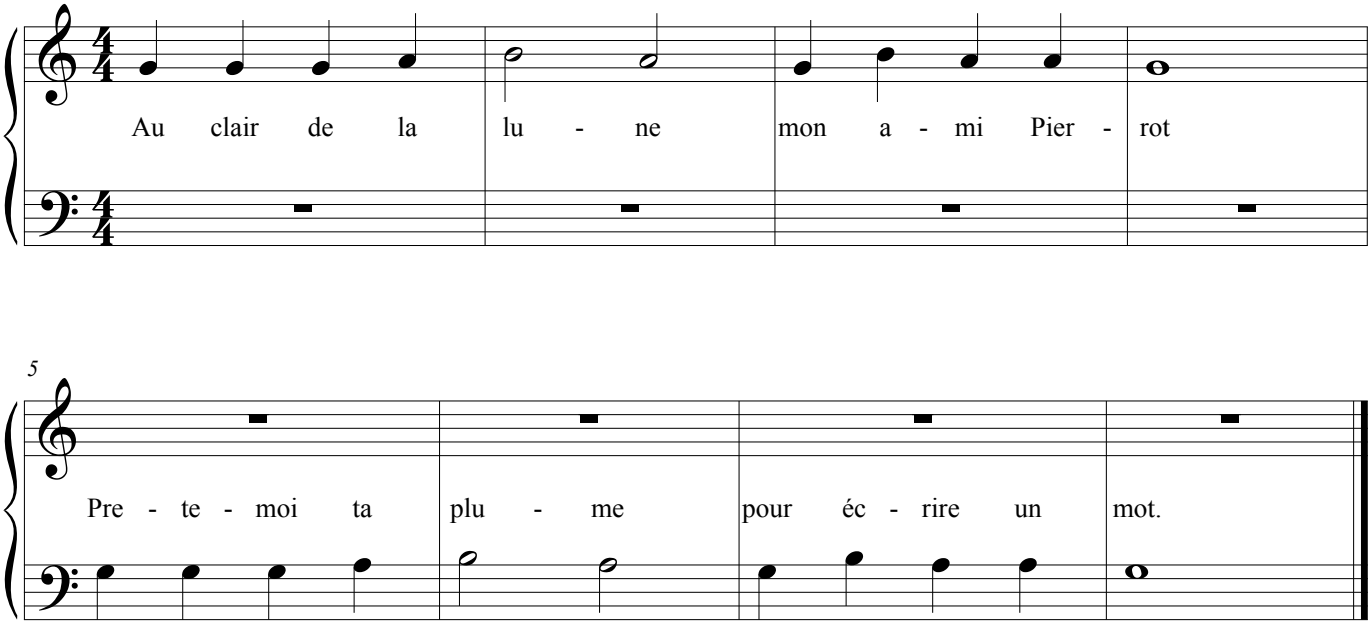


A Reminder

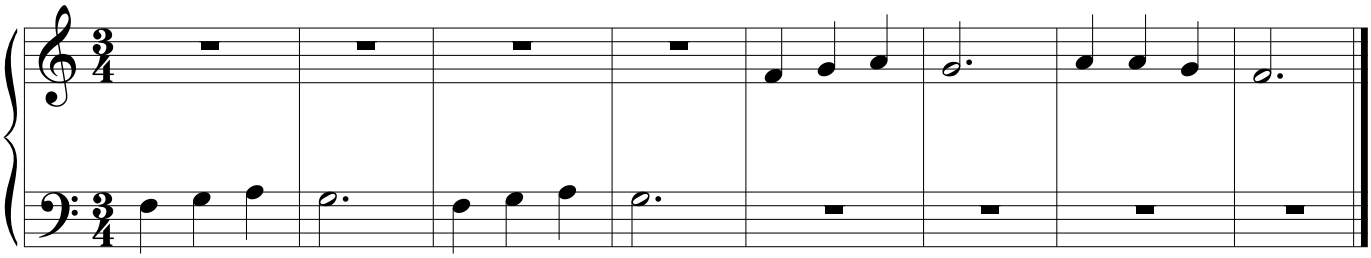
Sit in the center of the keyboard and keep eyes focused on the page.
Practice the rhythm first.
Study the pitches and intervals to determine a logical fingering.
Set a tempo before you play, slow enough for good accuracy.
Keep going.
When you finish, determine what needs more work.
Increase the tempo gradually to capture the character of the piece.
Learn to see groups of notes, not just one at a time.

Au Clair de la Lune

French melody

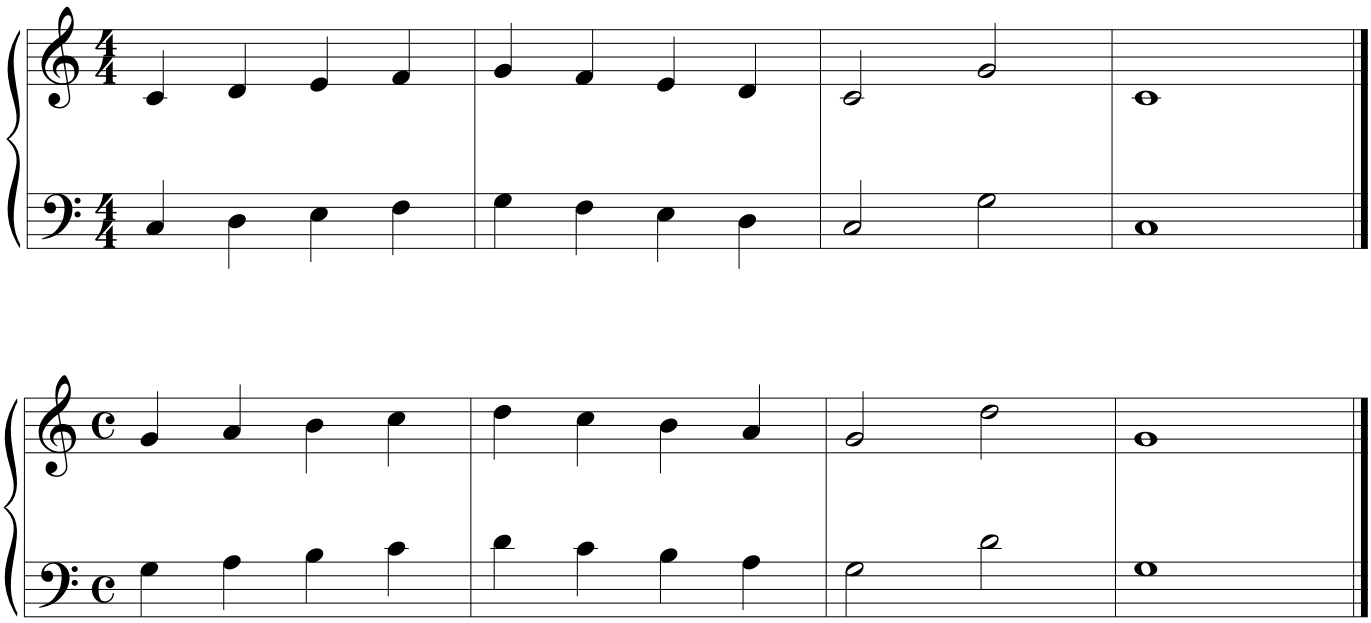


Willowy Tree



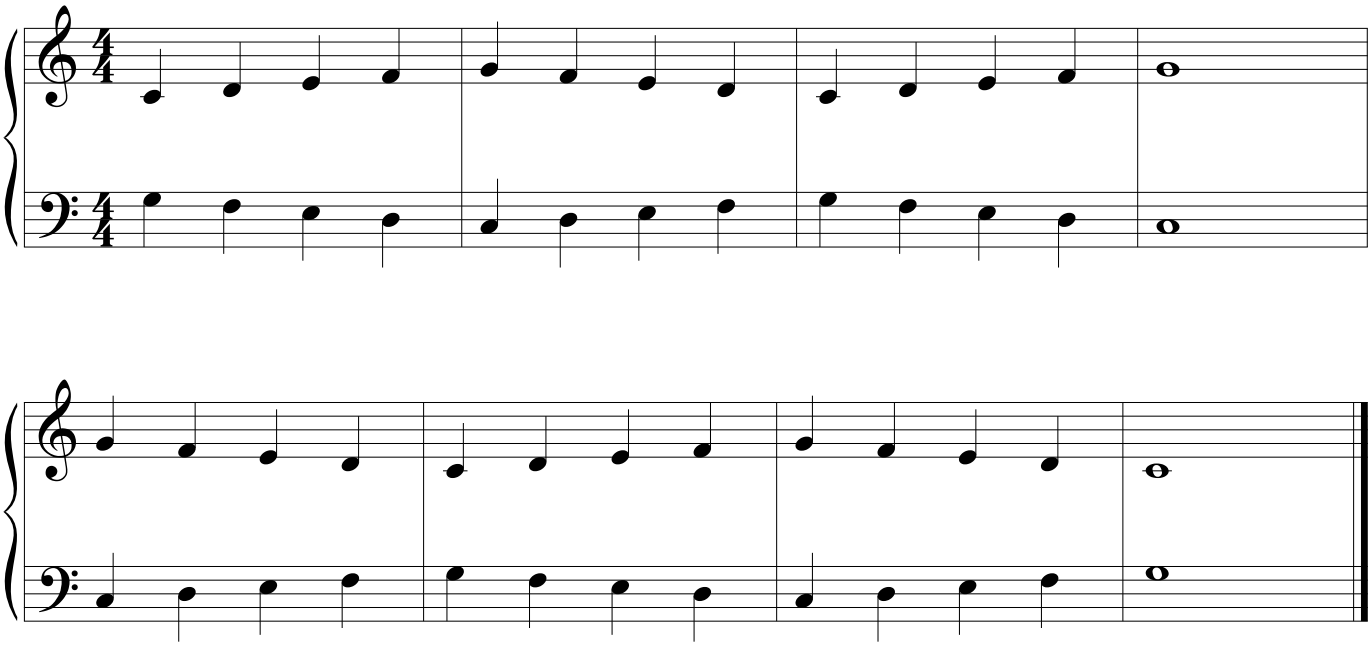
Pentascale Exercise

The Pentascale uses just the first 5 tones of the octave scale.



Contrary Motion Exercise

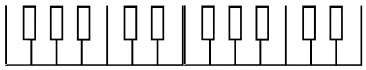
Play the same fingers of each hand simultaneously, not the same letter names.



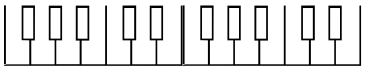
Major Pentascales

Chart the **Major Pentascale** on each keyboard.
Mark a 1 on the Tonic key.
Build upward by steps from the **Tonic: Whole, Whole, Half, Whole** for 2, 3, 4 and 5.
Check to be sure the Half step comes between tones 3 and 4.

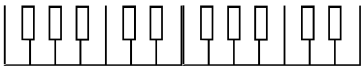
C Major



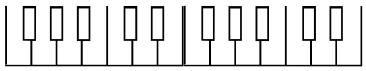
G Major



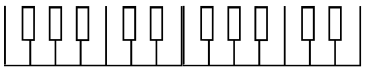
F Major



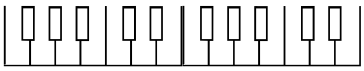
D Major



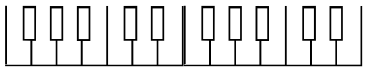
A Major



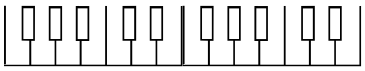
E Major



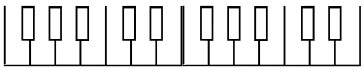
D♭ Major



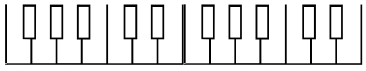
A♭ Major



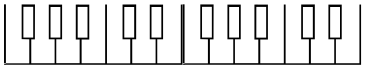
E♭ Major



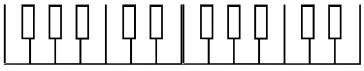
B Major



F♯ Major

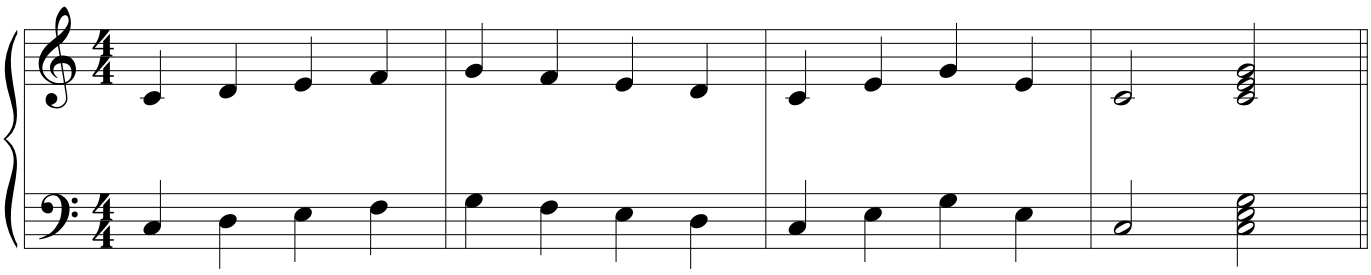


B♭ Major

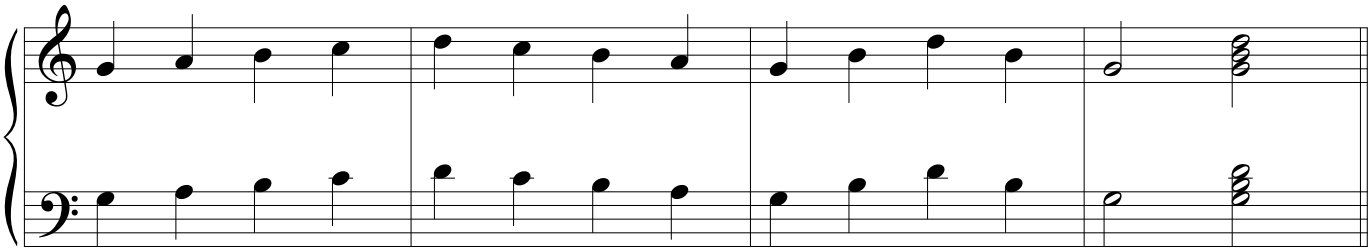


Major Pentascale and Triad Exercise

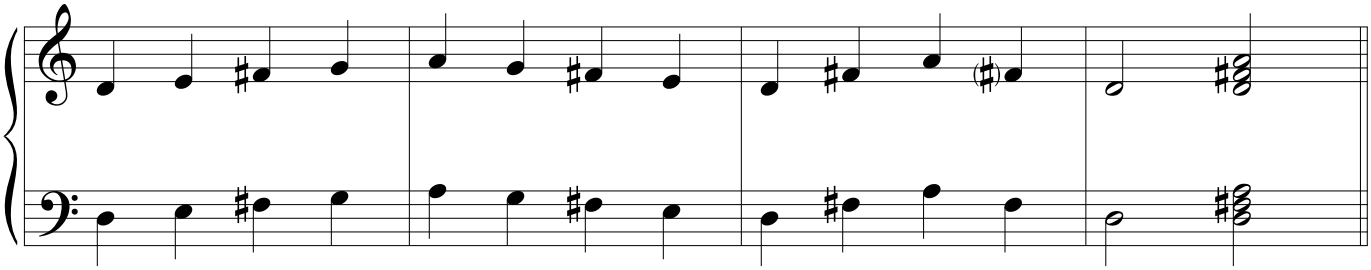
C major



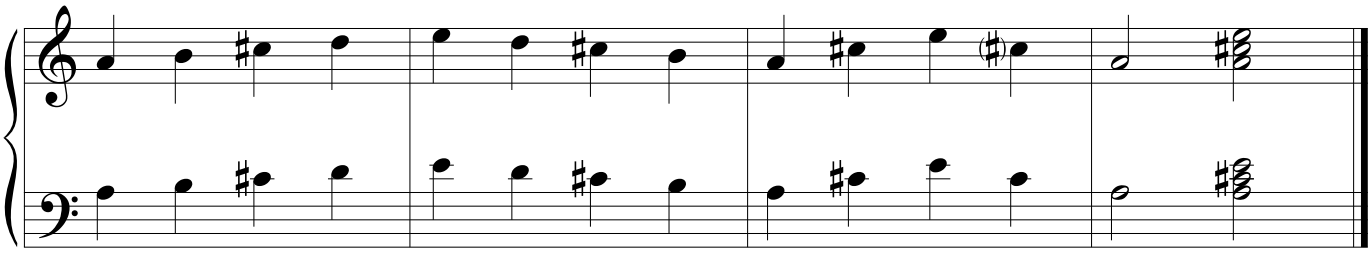
G major



D major

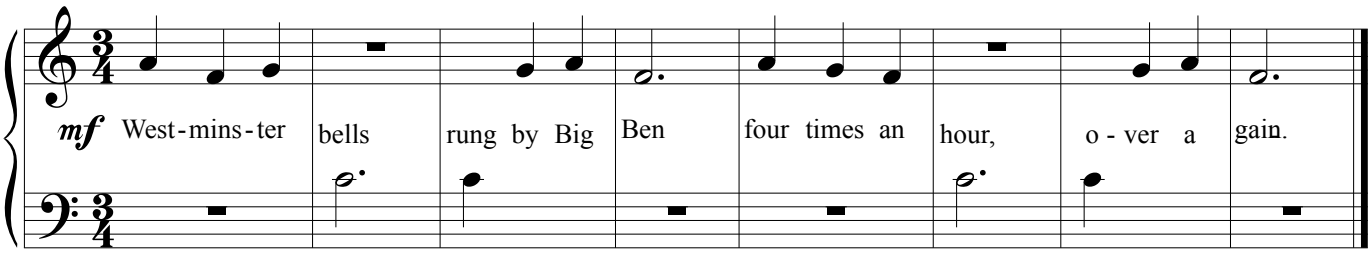


A major

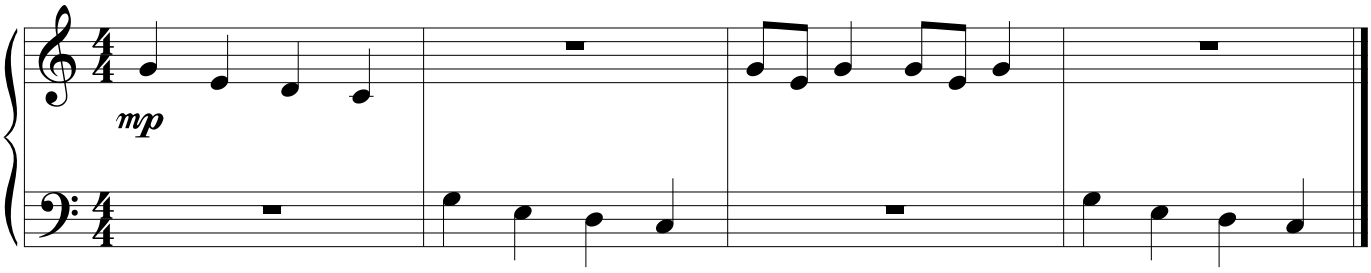


Practice the rhythm before playing:
Set a tempo by counting one measure at a comfortable speed, then tap on your lap, treble notes with RH and bass notes with LH, counting aloud.

Westminster Bells



Rain, Come Wet Me

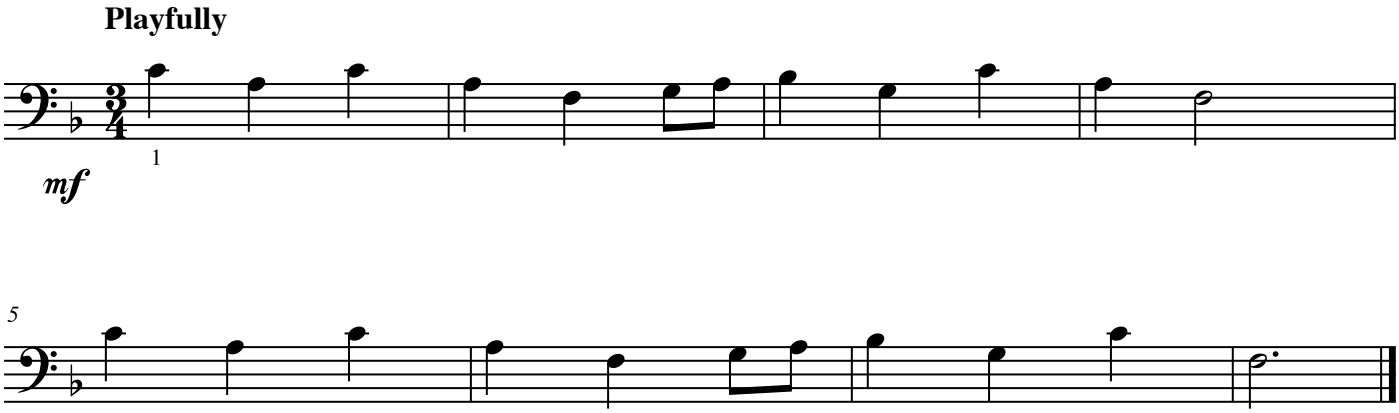


Oranges and Lemons

Bells of London

Traditional English

Key of F major
There is one flat in the key signature, and the final pitch is F: F is the Tonic.

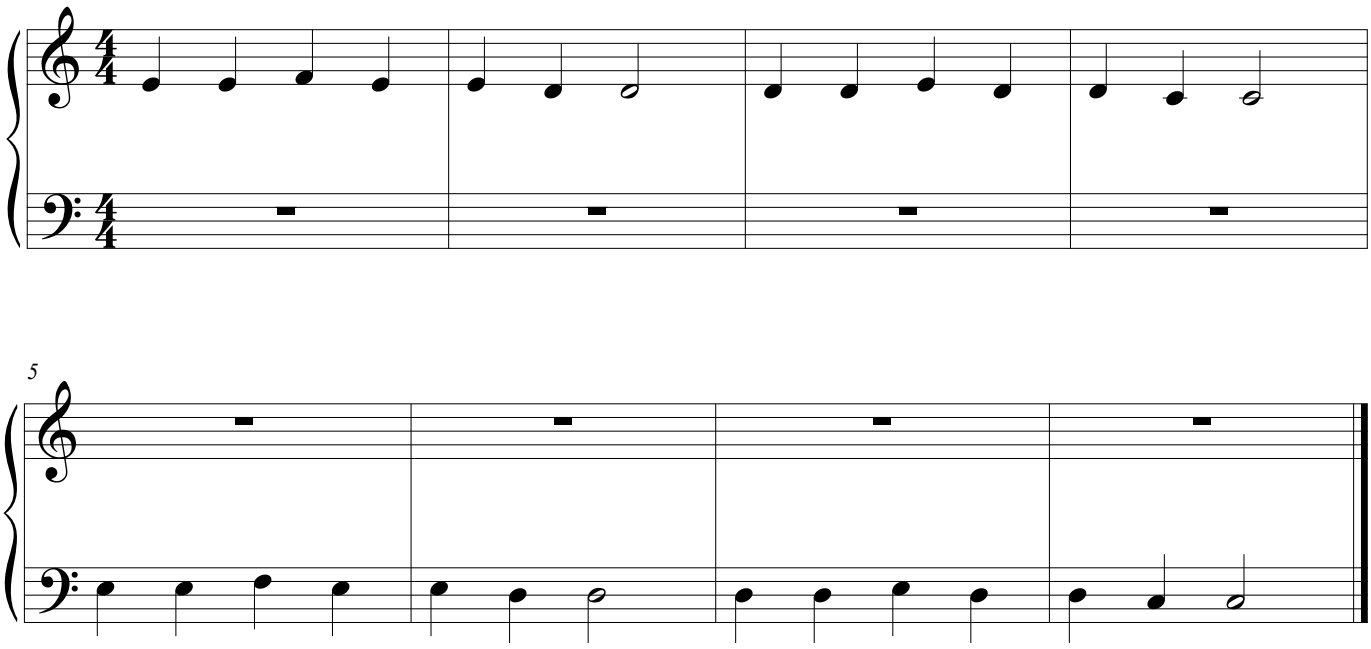


Key signatures are sharps or flats that appear at the **beginning of each staff**,
indicating they are to be used throughout the piece.
The sharps or flats represent pitches needed for a one octave scale,
but the piece may not actually require them all.
More information regarding key signatures is found near the end of the Study Guide.

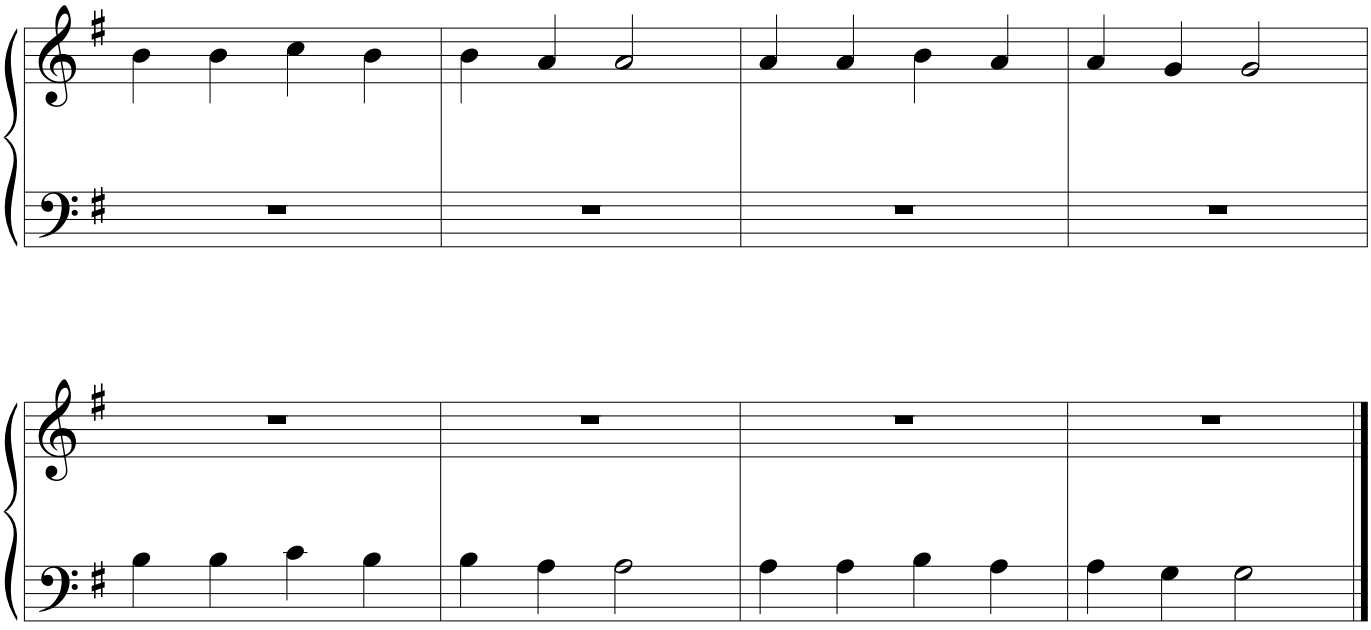
Second Spiritual

If You Want To Get To Heaven

Key of C major: there are no sharps or flats in the key signature, and the final pitch is C.

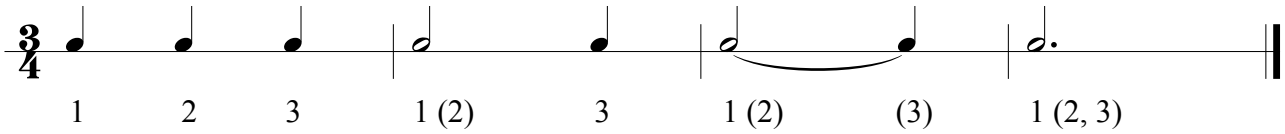


Key of G major: there is one sharp in the key signature, and the final pitch is G.

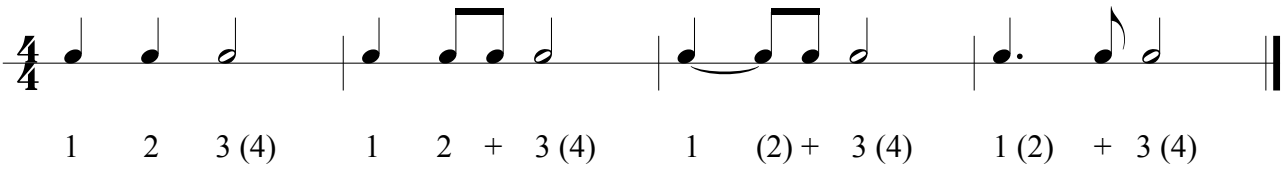


Dotted Rhythms

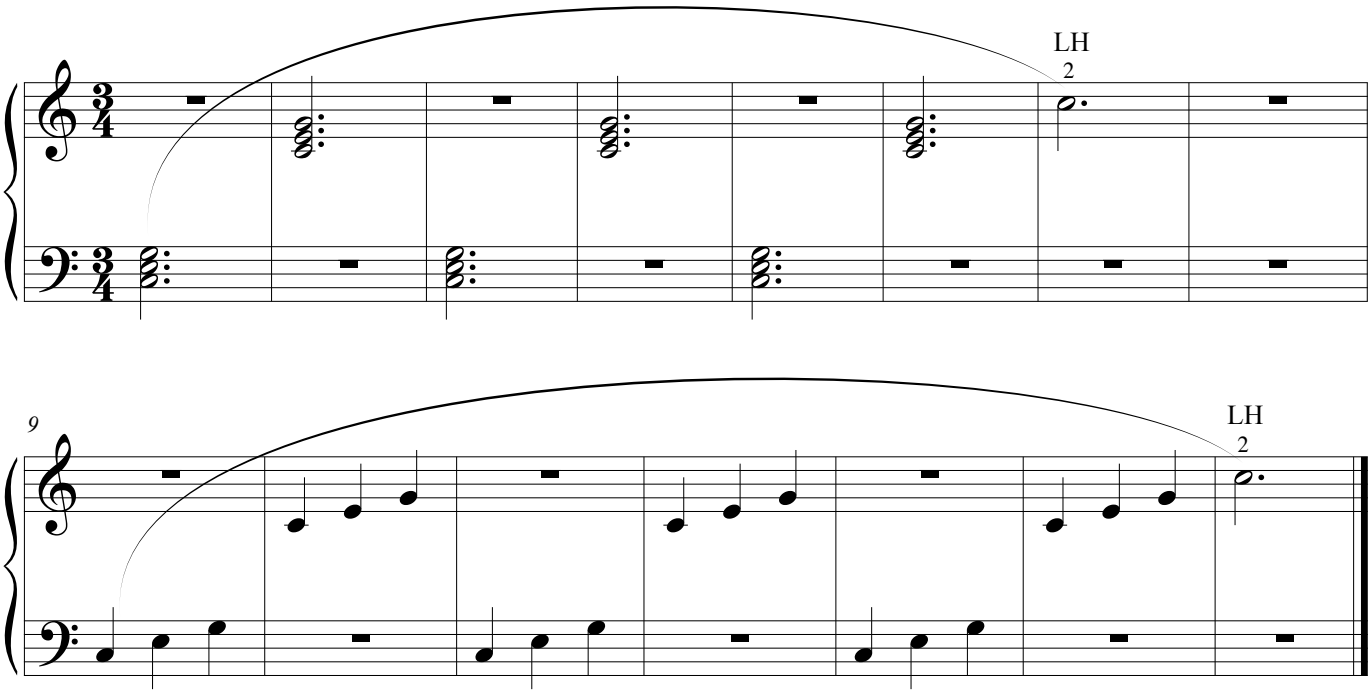
A dot following a note increases its duration by 50%.
In 3/4 time, the half note lasts 2 beats.
The dotted half note lasts 3 beats.



In 4/4 time, the quarter note lasts 1 beat and eighth notes each last half a beat.
The dotted quarter lasts one and a half beats.
The eighth note that follows appears with a flag rather than the beam.



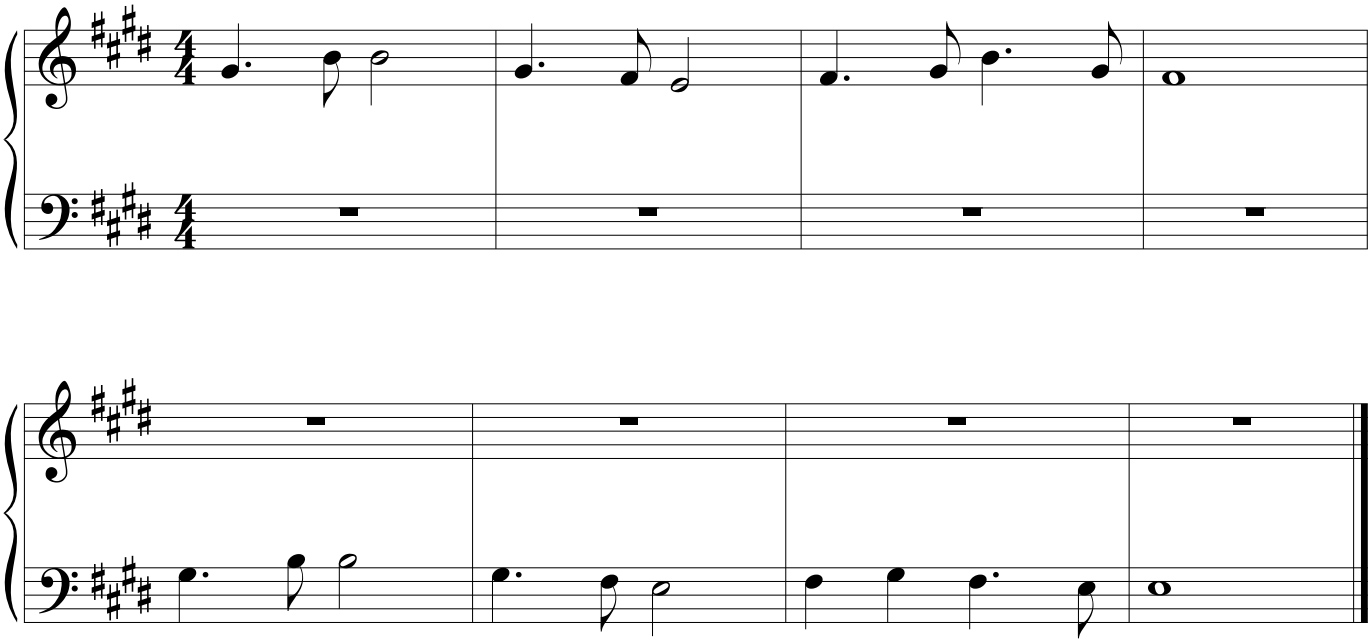
Block and Broken Chord Exercise



Largo

from the New World Symphony

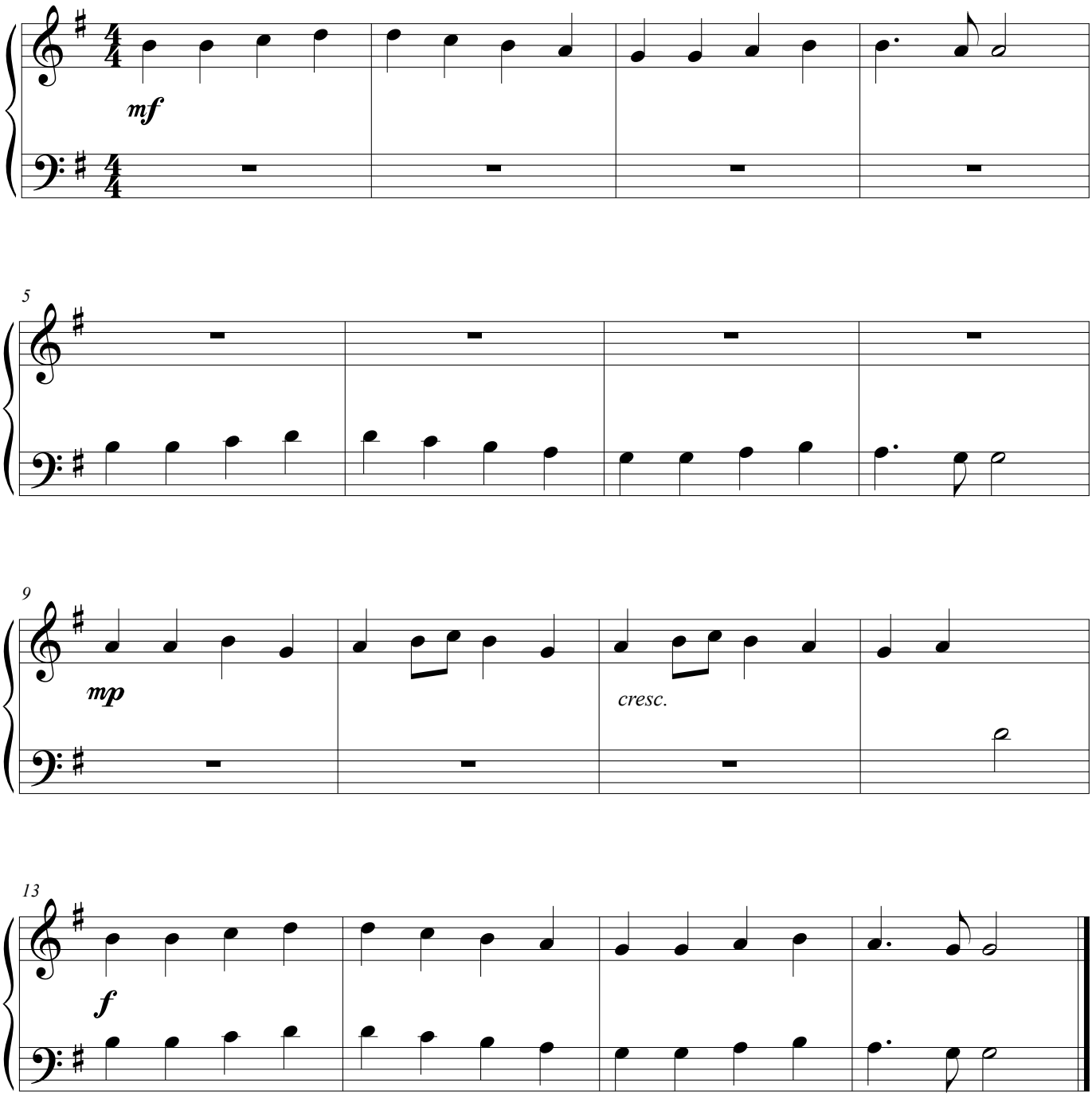
Antonin Dvorák
(1841-1904)



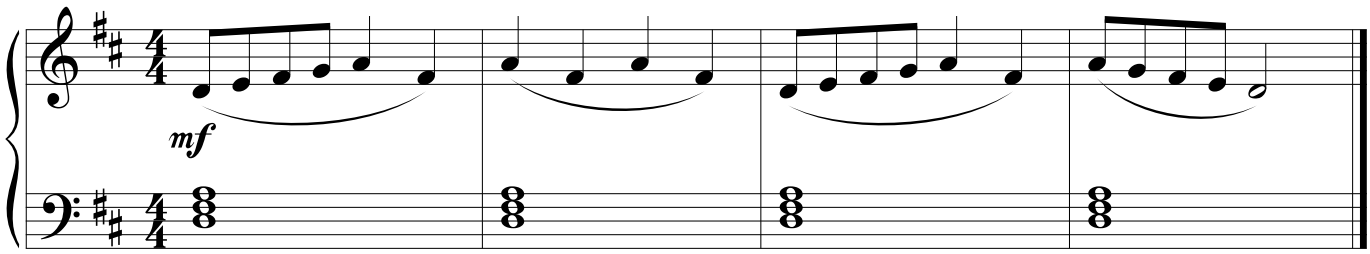
Ode to Joy

from Symphony No. 9

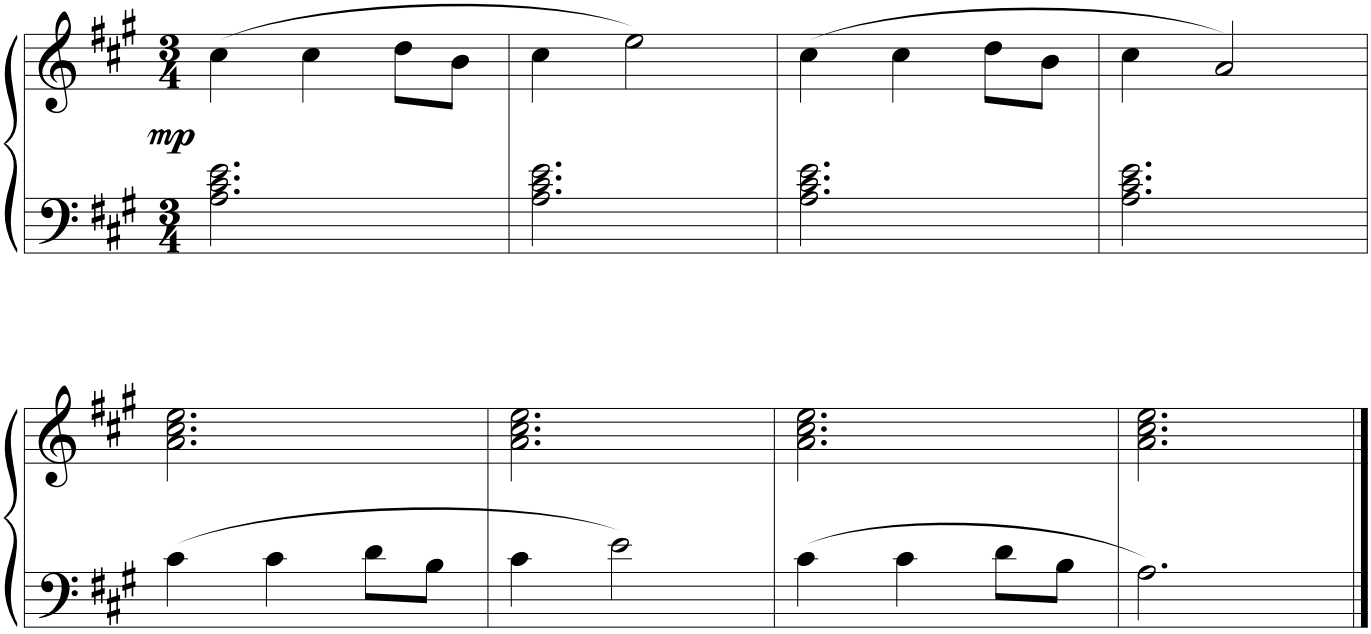
Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)



Singing Game

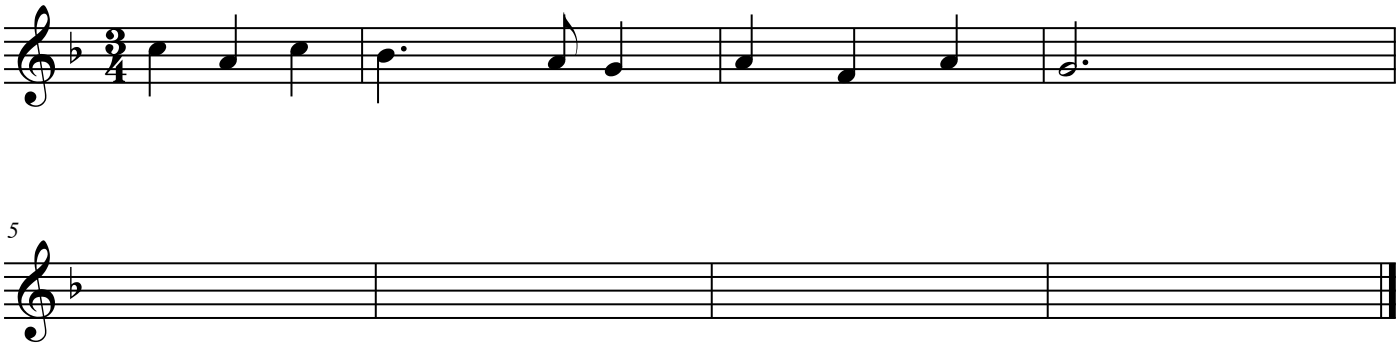


Lullaby



Parallel Phrase Melody

Create a parallel phrase melody:
Copy measures 1 and 2 onto the staff below to become measures 5 and 6.
In measure 8 supply the Tonic as a long note value.
Compose measure 7 as a bridge between measure 6 and the Tonic at the end.



About Key Signatures

Key signatures may contain sharps or flats.
Each signature has a unique number of sharps or flats, from zero (C Major) to seven.
Sharps and flats always appear in the same order, making them easy to memorize:

♯ **F C G D A E B**

(One popular mnemonic is: Fat Cats Go Down Alleys Eating Bananas.)
The last sharp in the signature is degree 7 of the major scale: go up one half step to find the tonic.

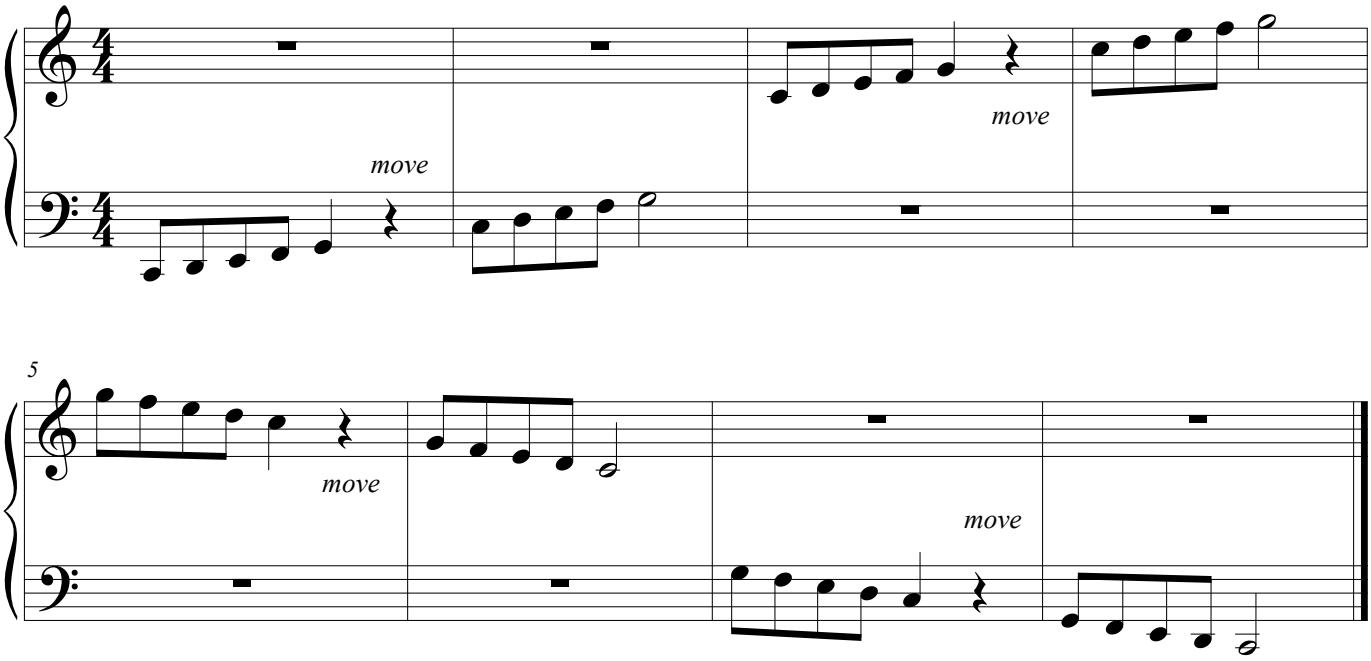
The order of flats is exactly backwards from the order of sharps:

♭ **B E A D G C F**

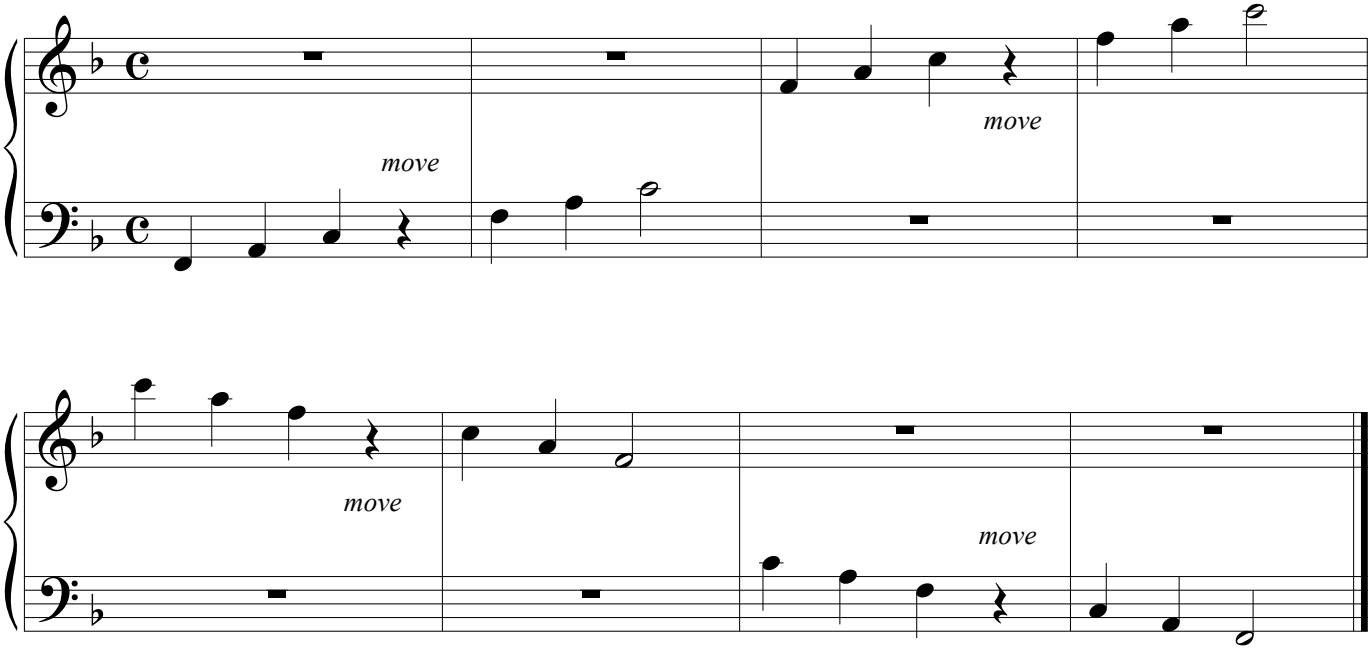
The last flat in the signature is degree 4 of the major scale: count down a fourth to find the tonic, or look at the next to last flat.

Shifting Ranges

No. 1: Two ledger lines below the Bass Staff is Low C, two octaves below Middle C.



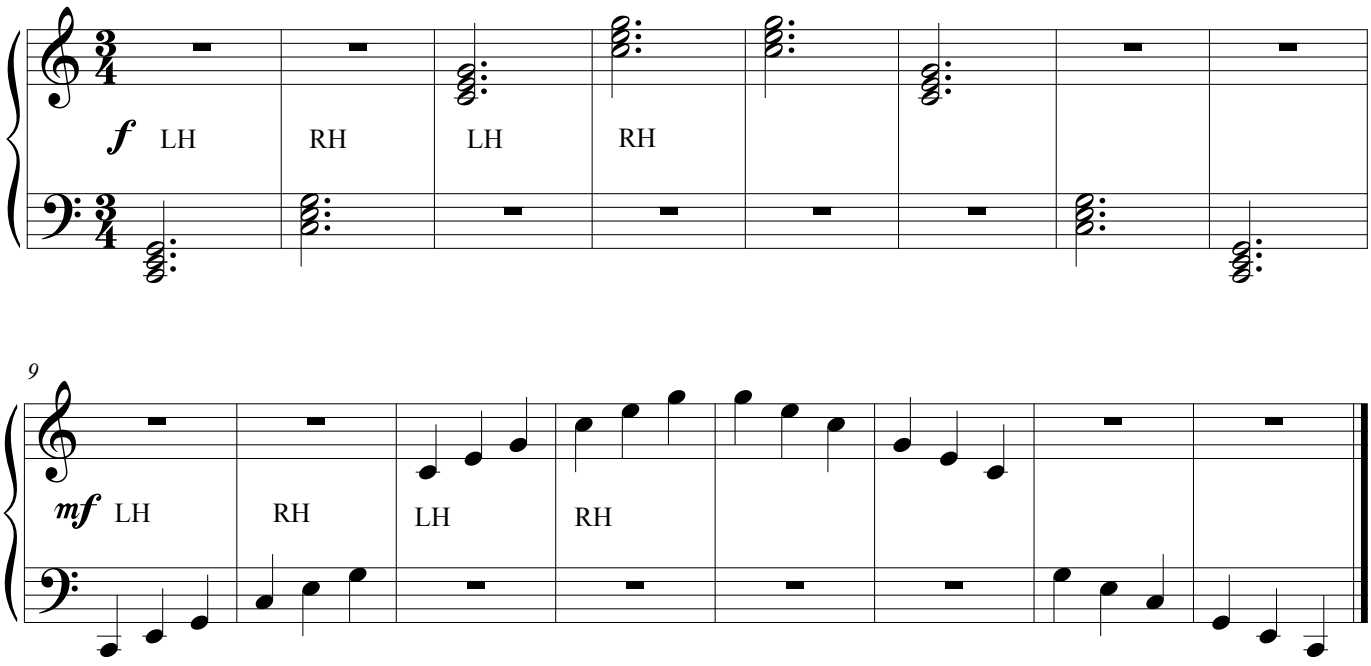
No. 2: One octave below Bass F is Low F.



Two ledger lines above the Treble Staff is High C, two octaves above Middle C.

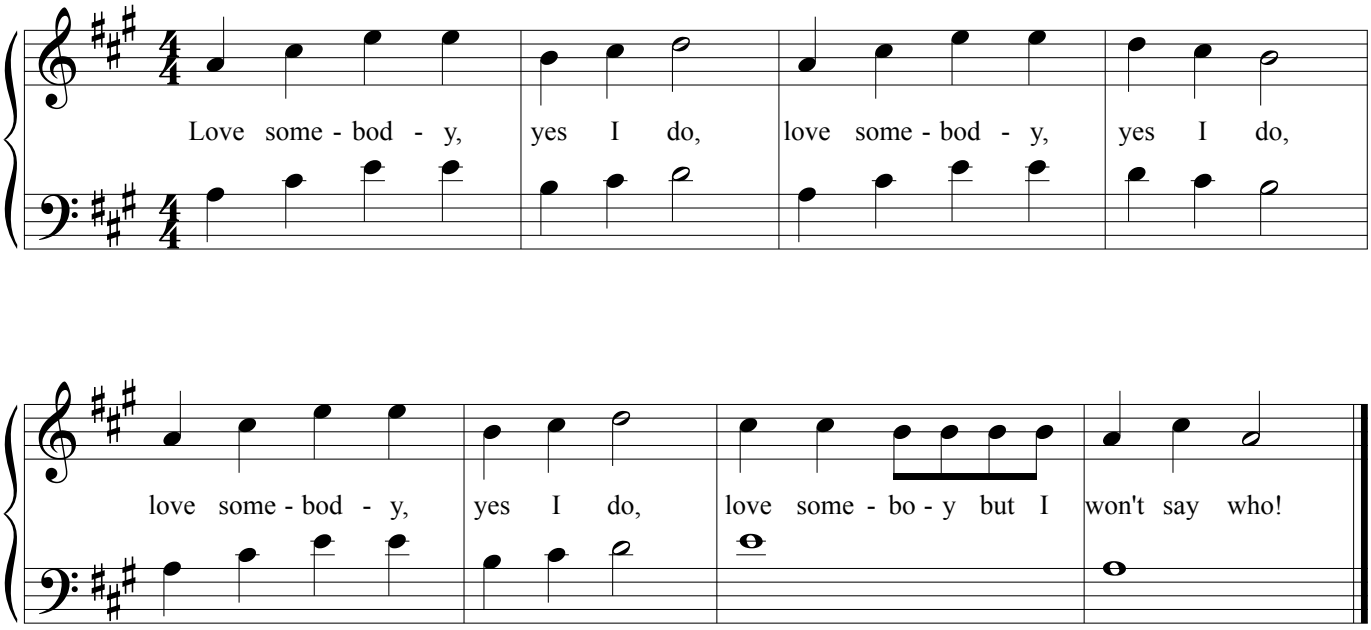
Block and Broken Chords no. 2

One hand crosses *over the top* of the other. You may add damper pedal for a full resonant sound.



Love Somebody

American Folk Song

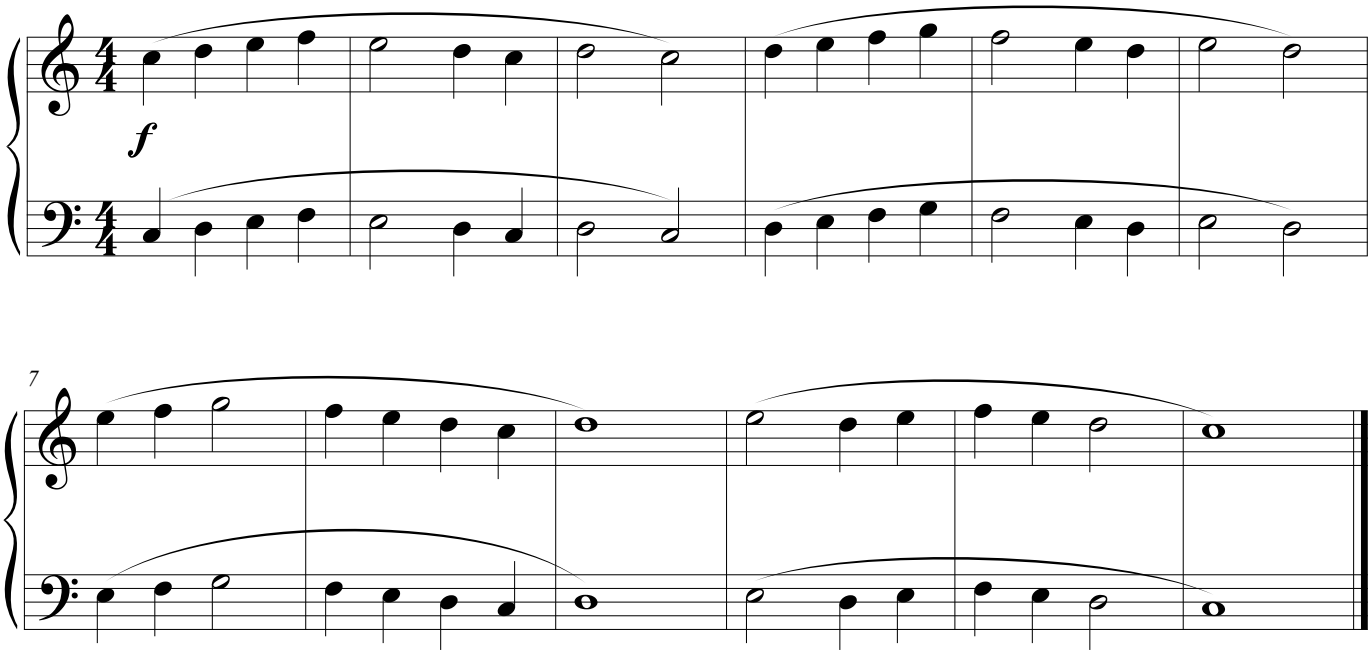


First Term at the Piano

Béla Bartók
(1881-1945)

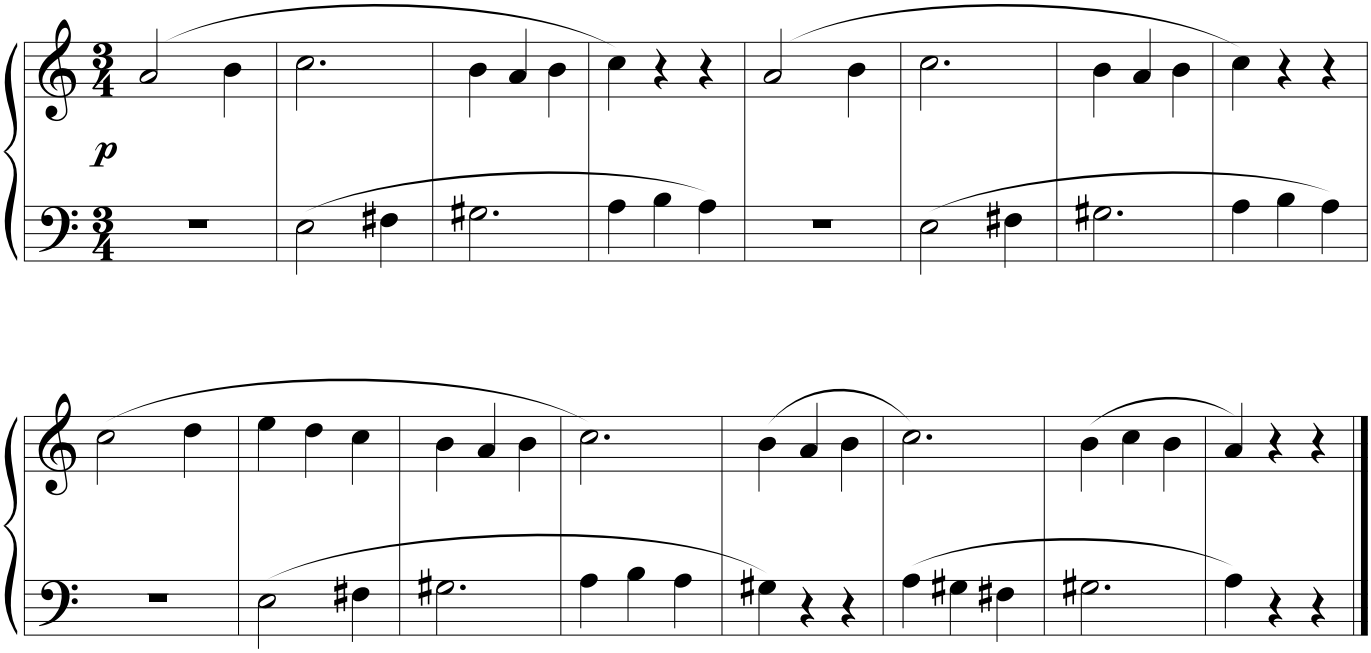
No. 2

Moderato



No. 4

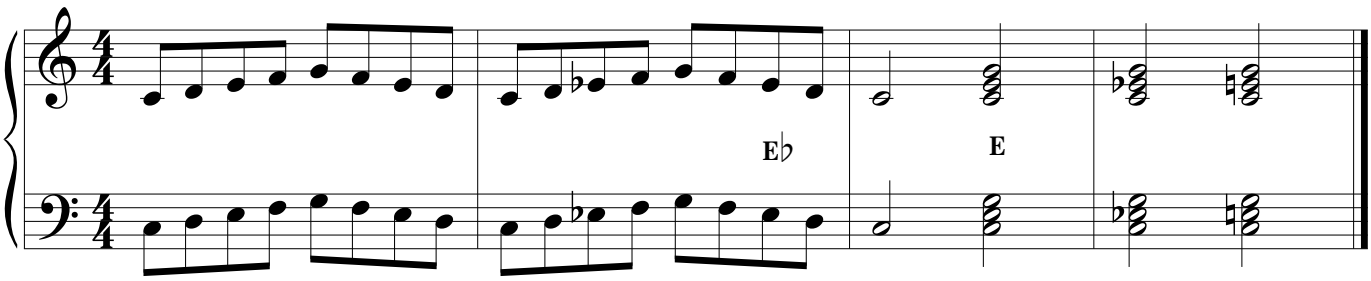
Moderato



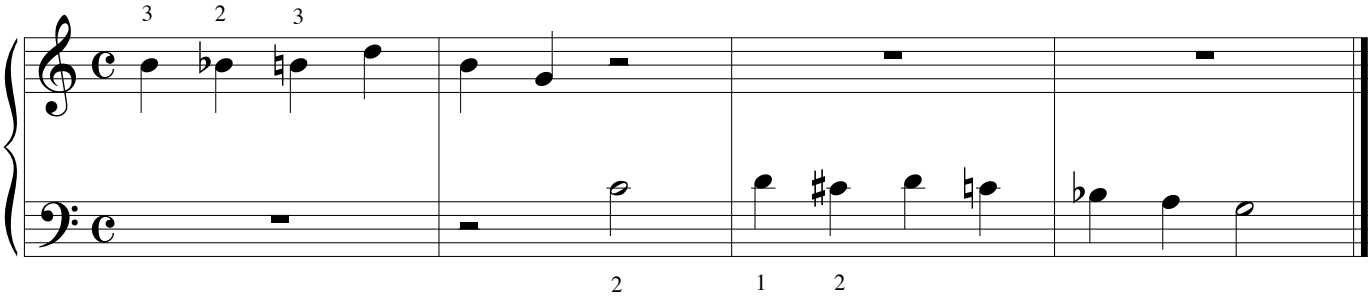
Major and Minor Pentascales and Triads

Flats or sharps occuring as *accidentals,* or just before a note,
can be canceled by either a bar line or a *natural sign.*

Refer to your chart on page 18 to transpose this exercise to all keys.



Naturally Blue



Key Signature Quiz

Name_____

Piano 1

Date_____

Key signatures may contain flats or sharps.
Each key signature has a unique number of sharps or flats, from zero (C Major) to seven. Sharps and flats always appear in the same order, making them easy to memorize.

The order in which sharps occur in key signatures is:

♯ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

The last sharp in the key signature is degree 7 of the major scale: go up one half step to find the tonic.

The order in which flats occur in key signatures is:

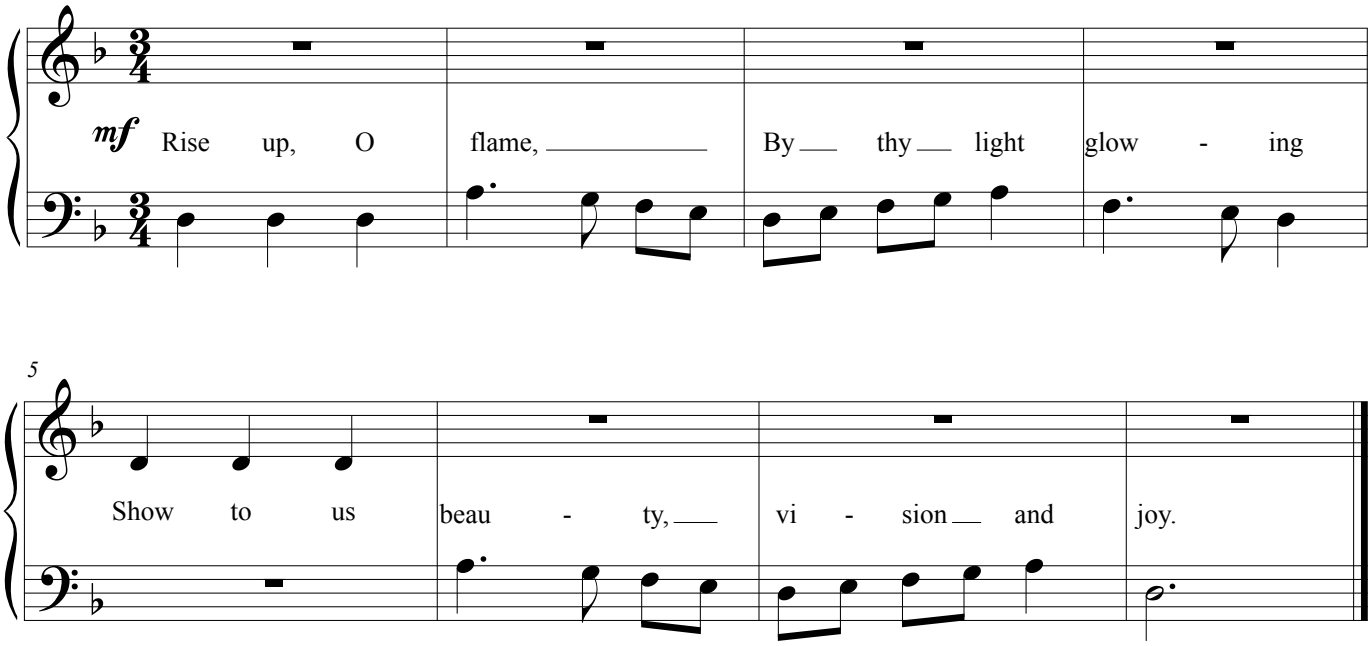
♭ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

The last flat in the key signature is degree 4 of the major scale: count down a fourth to find the tonic, or look at the next to last flat.

Rise Up, O Flame

Campfire Song

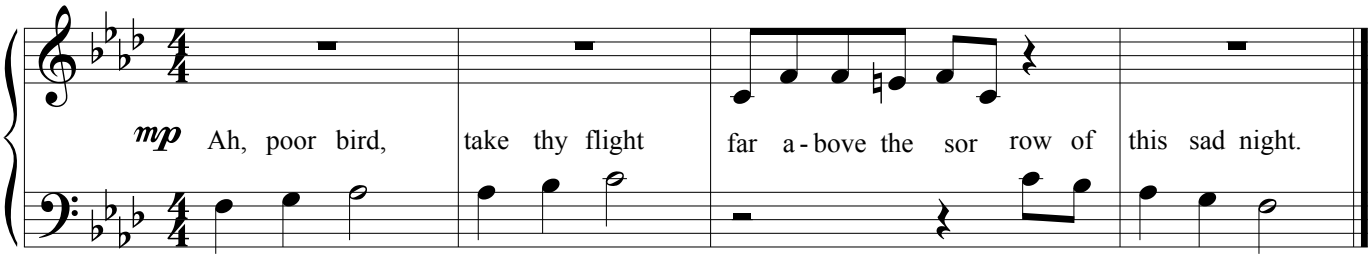
Briskly



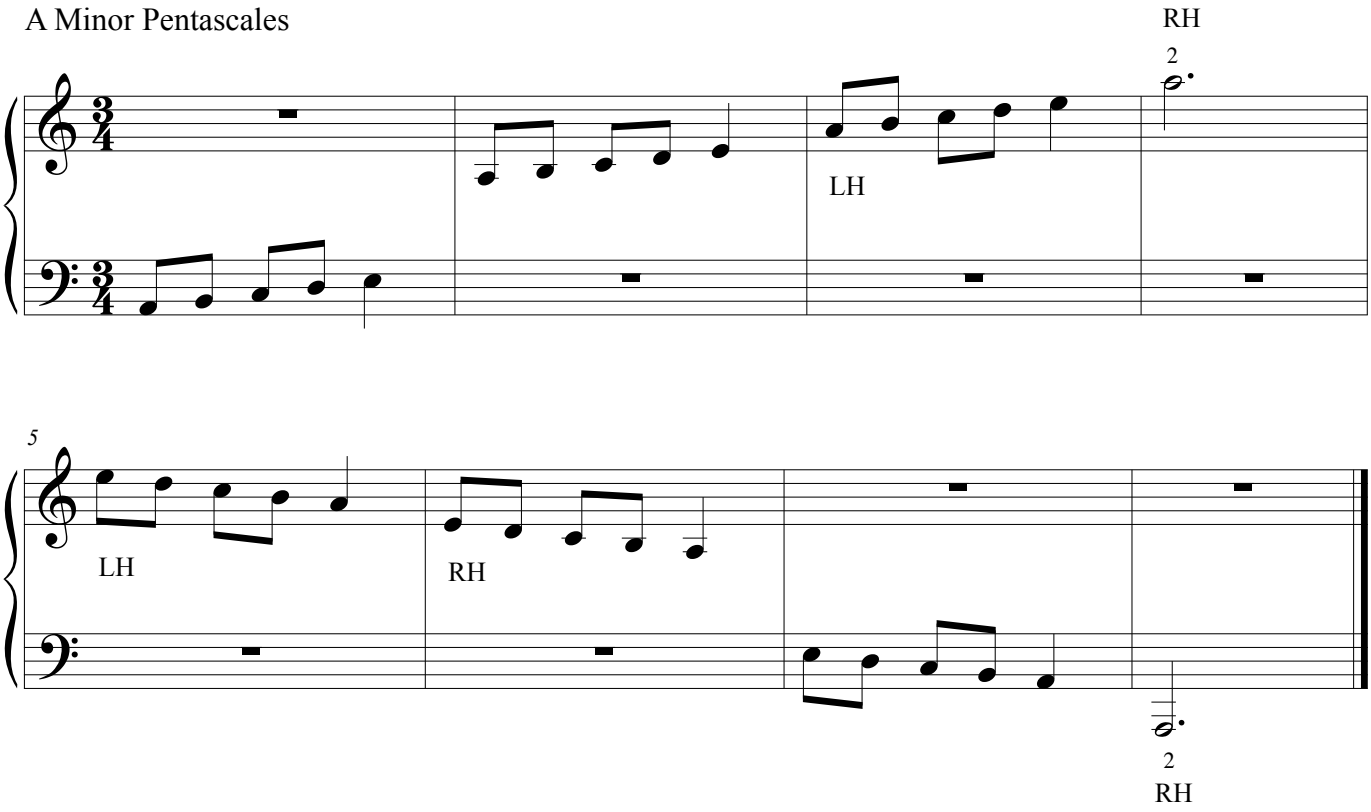
Ah, Poor Bird

English Canon

Mournfully



Shifting Ranges in Minor



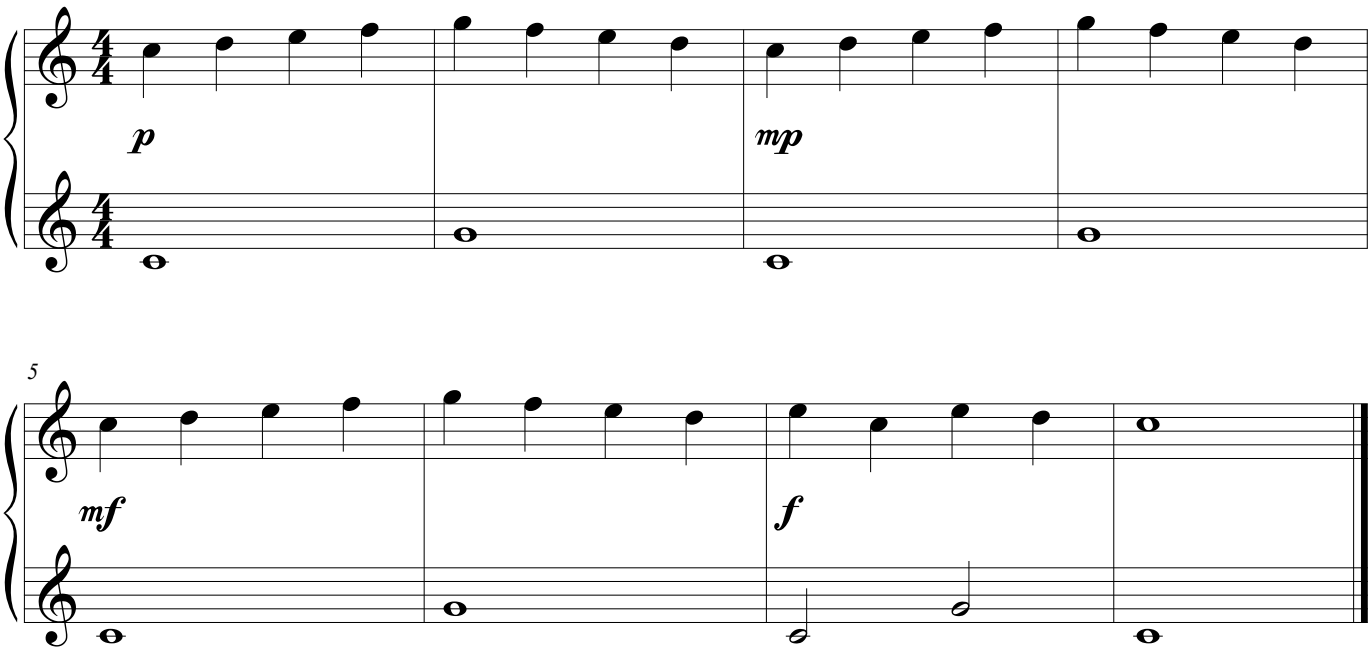
More About Key Signatures

Every key signature can represent a minor key as well as a major key. Check the final notes to see where the music comes to rest: this will usually be the tonic.

Moderato

Op. 101, No. 12

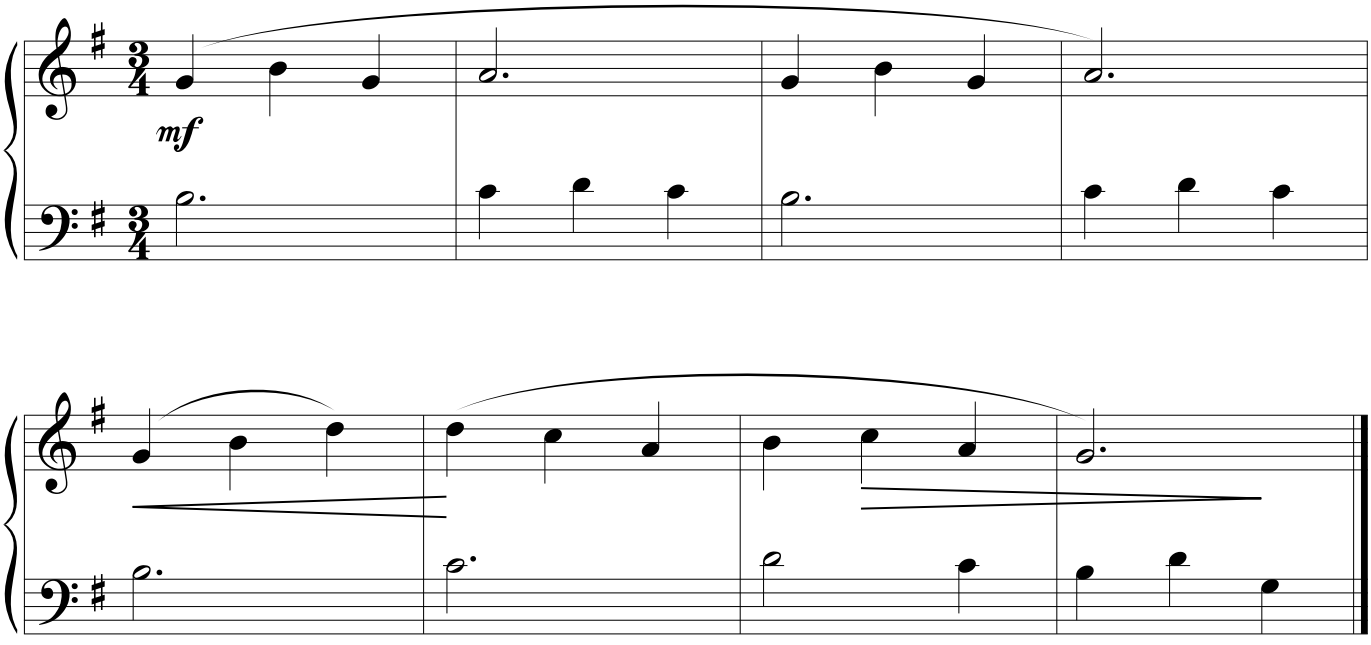
Ferdinand Beyer
(1803-1863)



Allegretto

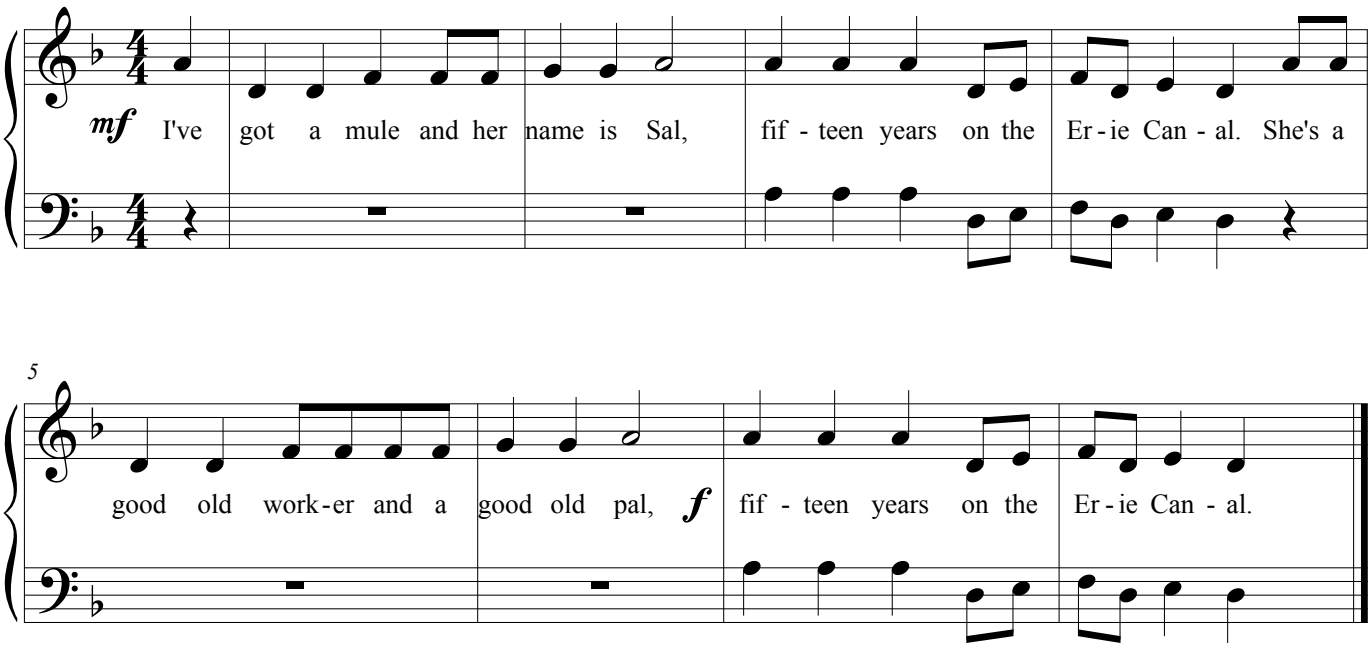
Op. 101, No. 37

Ferdinand Beyer
(1803-1863)



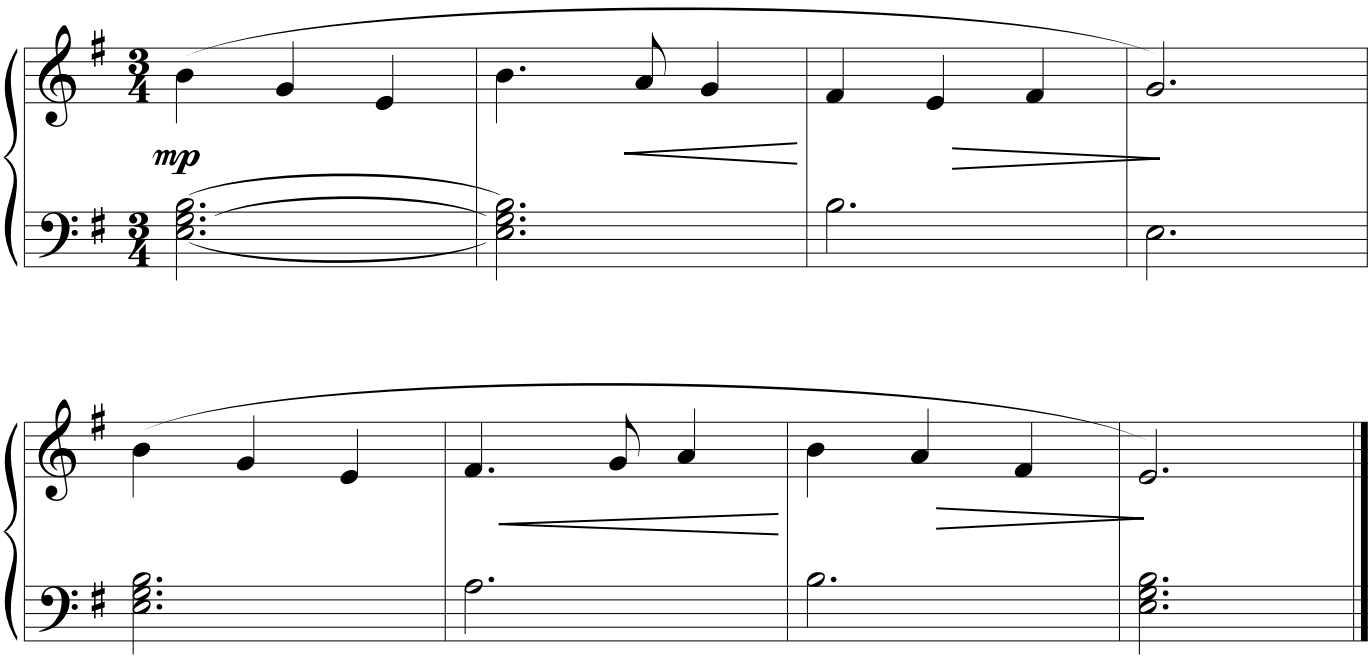
Erie Canal

American Folk Song



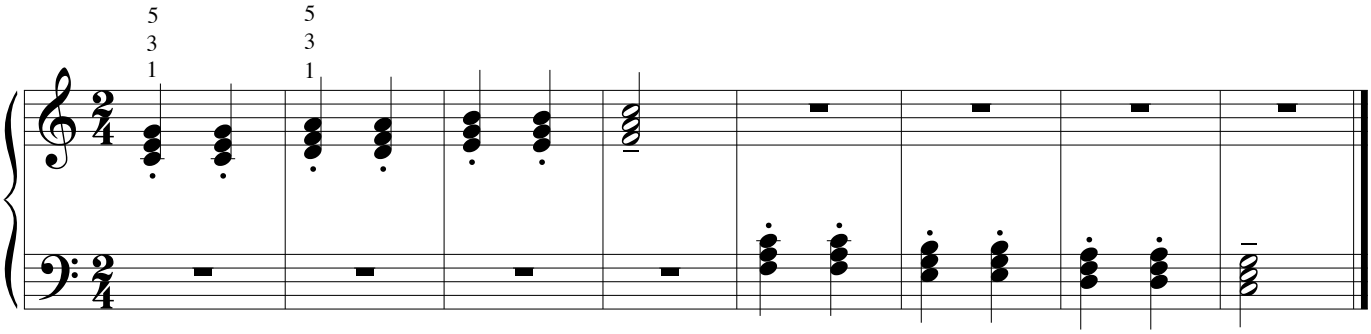
Mules towed flat bottom barges transporting goods east and west.

Autumn

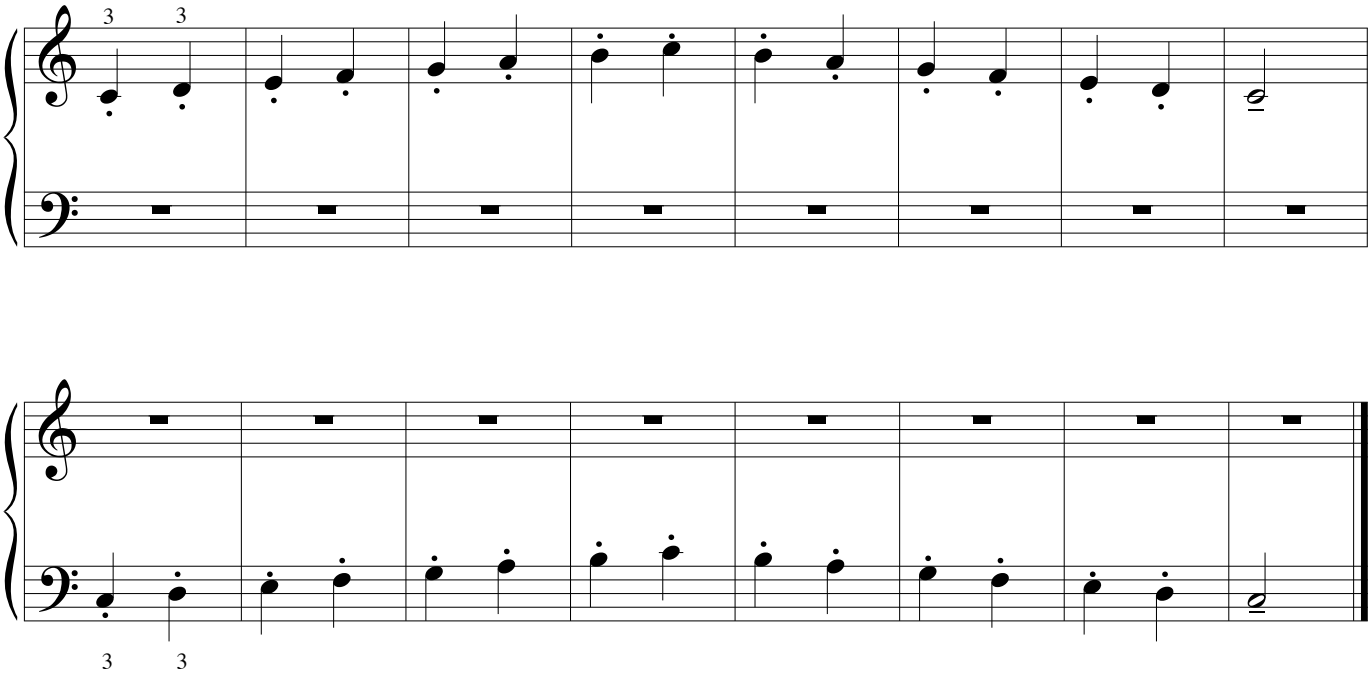


Staccato Studies

The **staccato** dot appears above or below a notehead, indicating a short, detached sound.
The horizontal line on the half notes is called **tenuto**, and emphasizes their full duration.

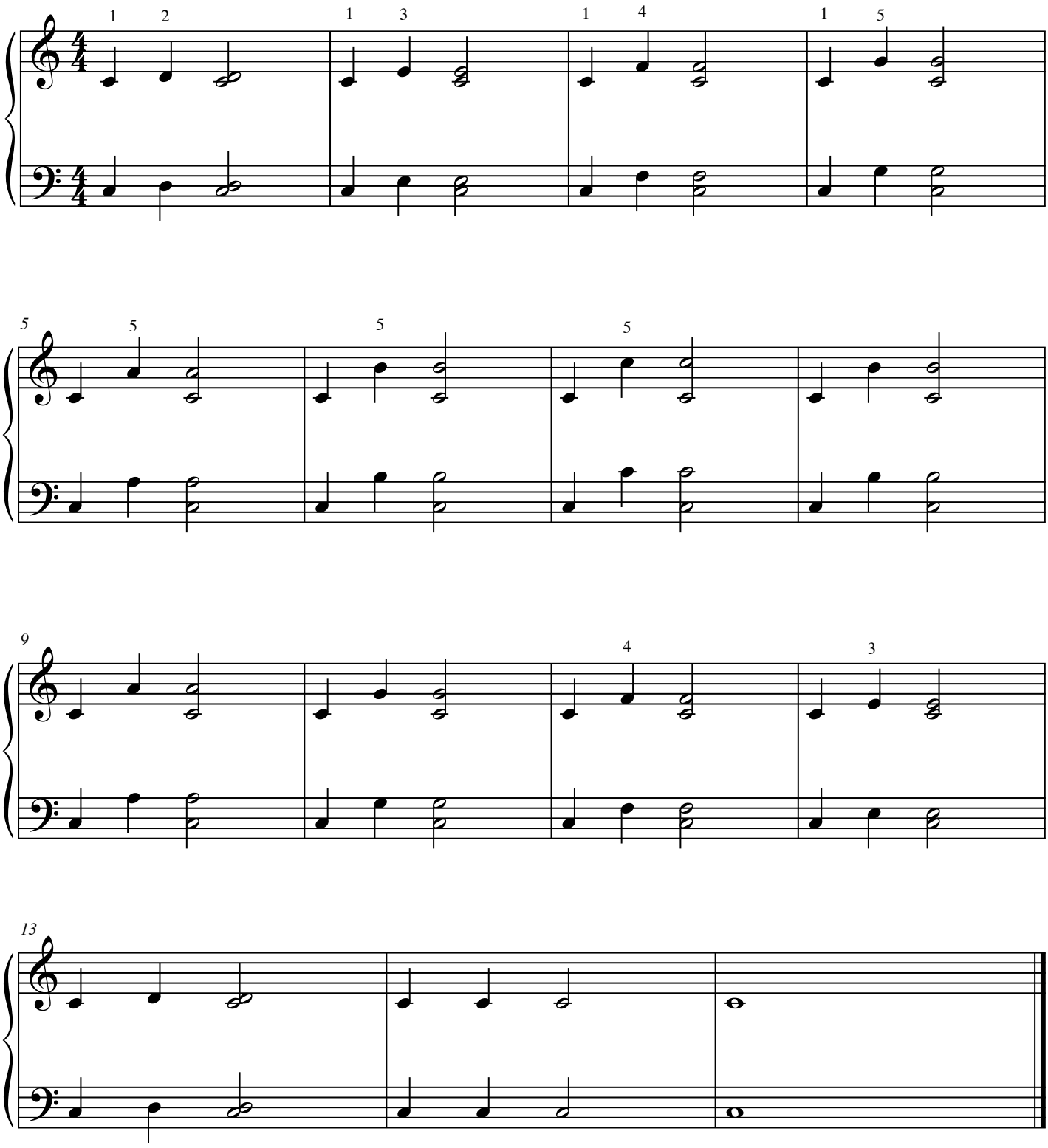


Play the C major scale by bouncing one finger from note to note.



C Major Scale Intervals

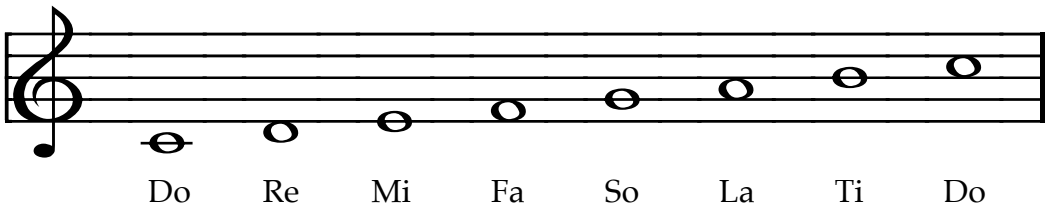
To transpose this exercise to all other major keys, refer to the signatures near the end of the Study Guide.



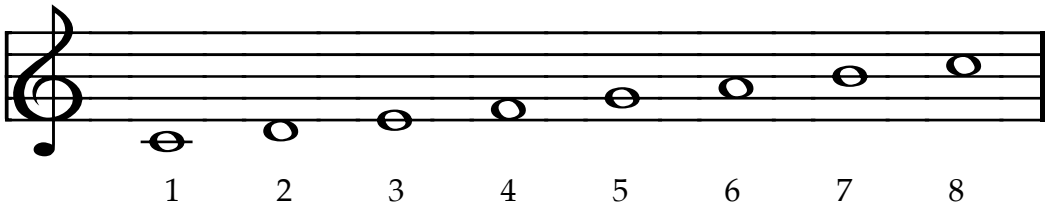
About Major Scales

The tones of a major scale can be named in a variety of ways.

Solfege Syllables



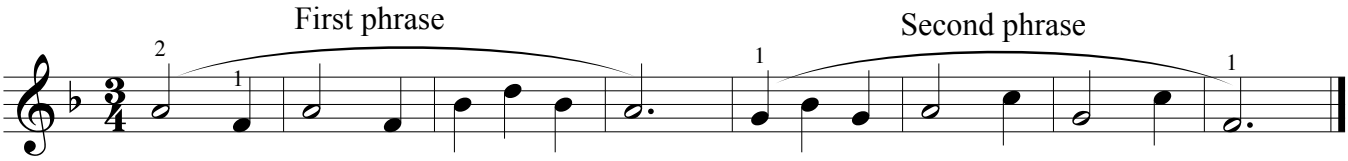
Scale Degree Numbers



Music Theory Terms

1 Tonic
2 Supertonic
3 Mediant
4 Subdominant
5 Dominant
6 Submediant
7 Leading Tone
8 Tonic

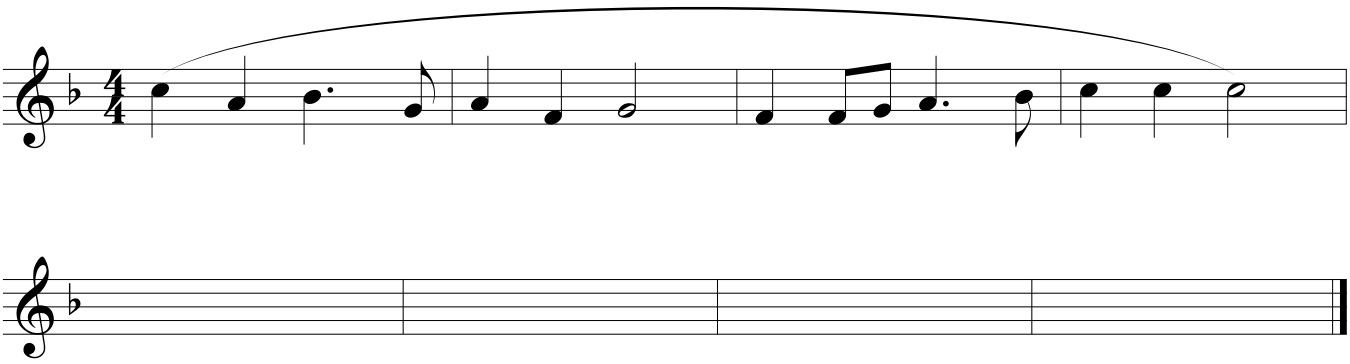
Country Dance



The use of intervals of a third and similar rhythms in the first and second phrases gives this **contrasting phrase melody** a sound of continuity.

Contrasting Phrase Melody

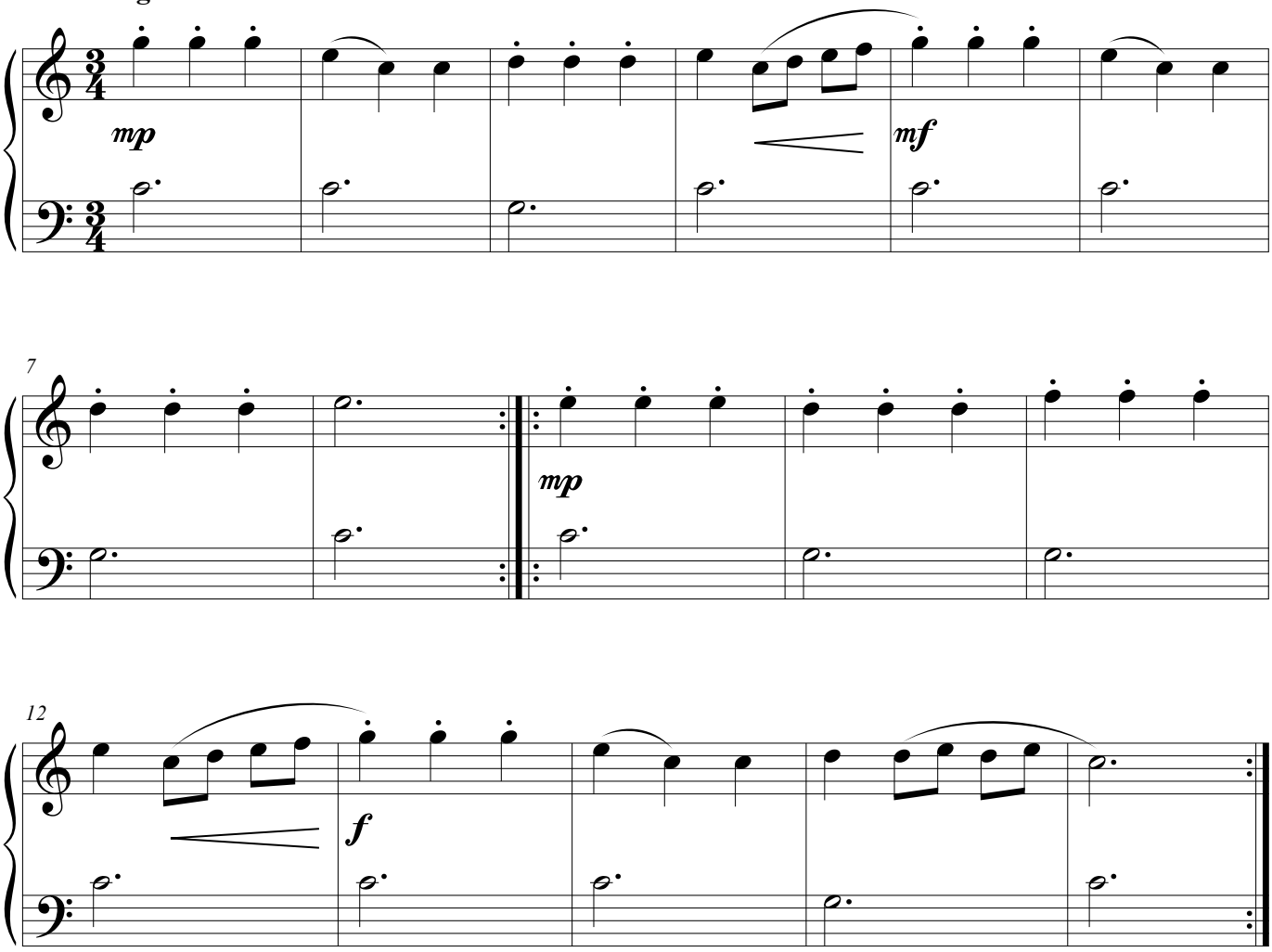
Create a contrasting second phrase that uses some similar rhythms and intervals as in the first phrase. Be sure to come to rest at the end on the Tonic.



Minuetto

Alexander Reinagle
(1756-1809)

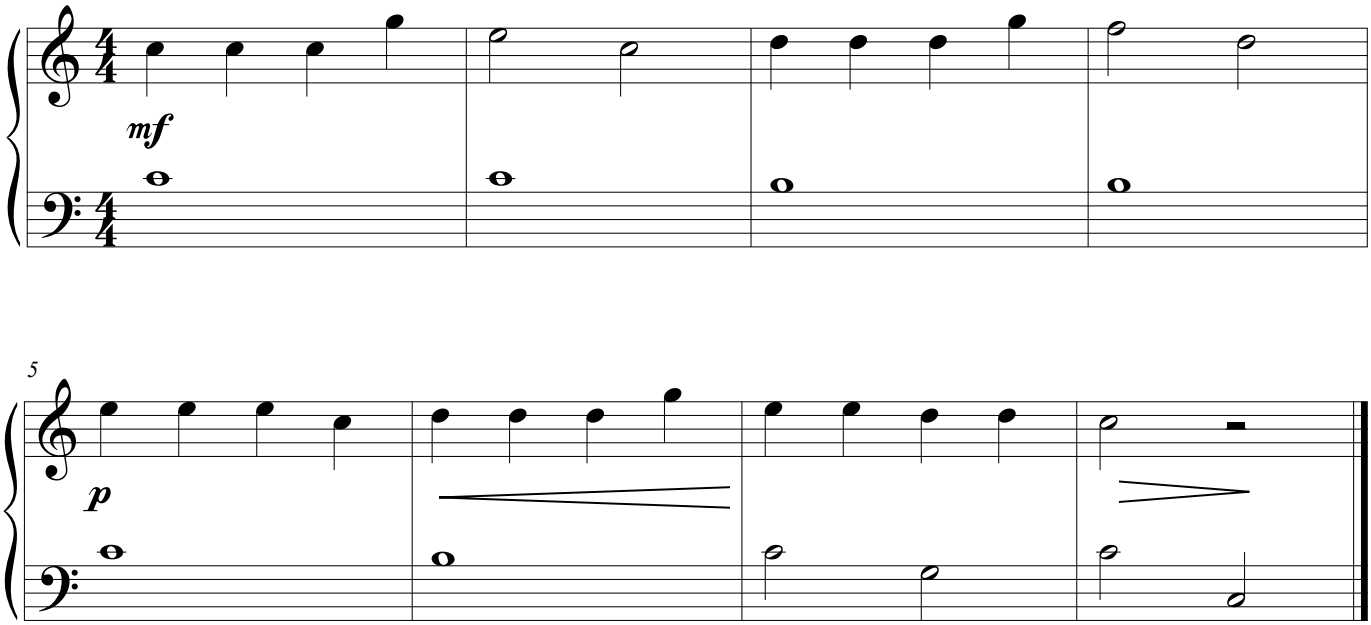
Allegretto



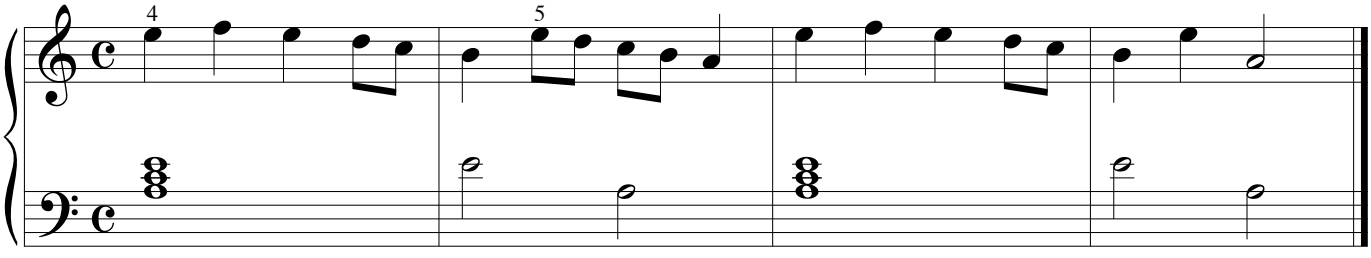
Minuetto is the Italian form of the word *minuet* or *menuet.* Immensely popular throughout Europe during the 1700's, this style of dance was characterized by elegant, small steps.

Study No. 1

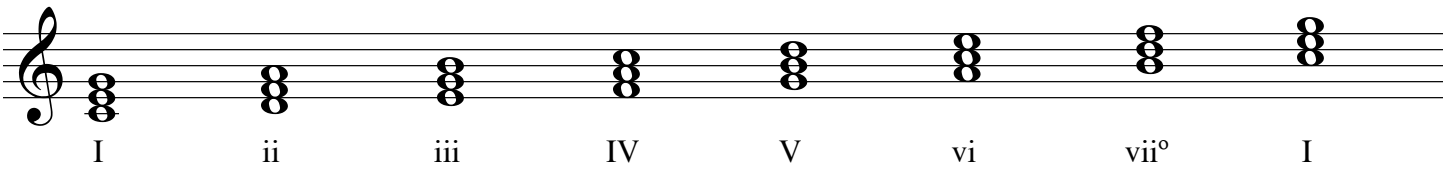
Daniel Gottlob Türk
(1756-1823)



Windy Night



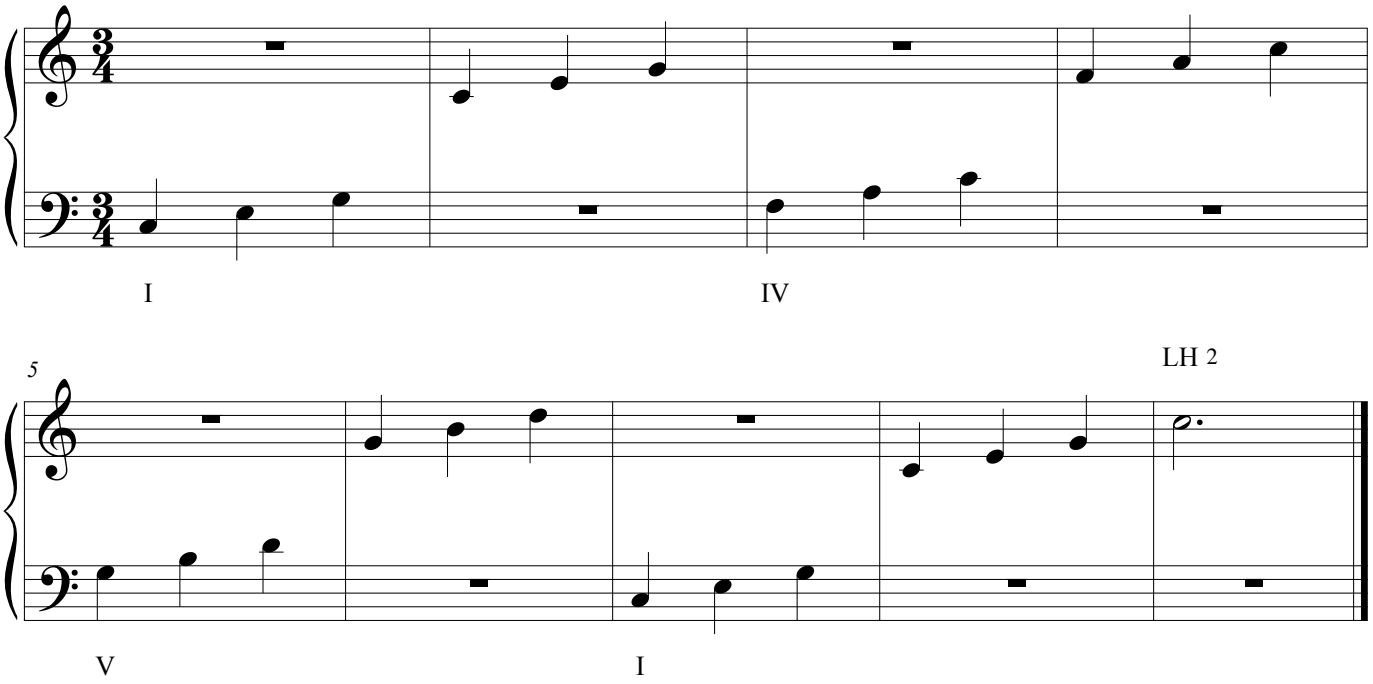
Diatonic Triads



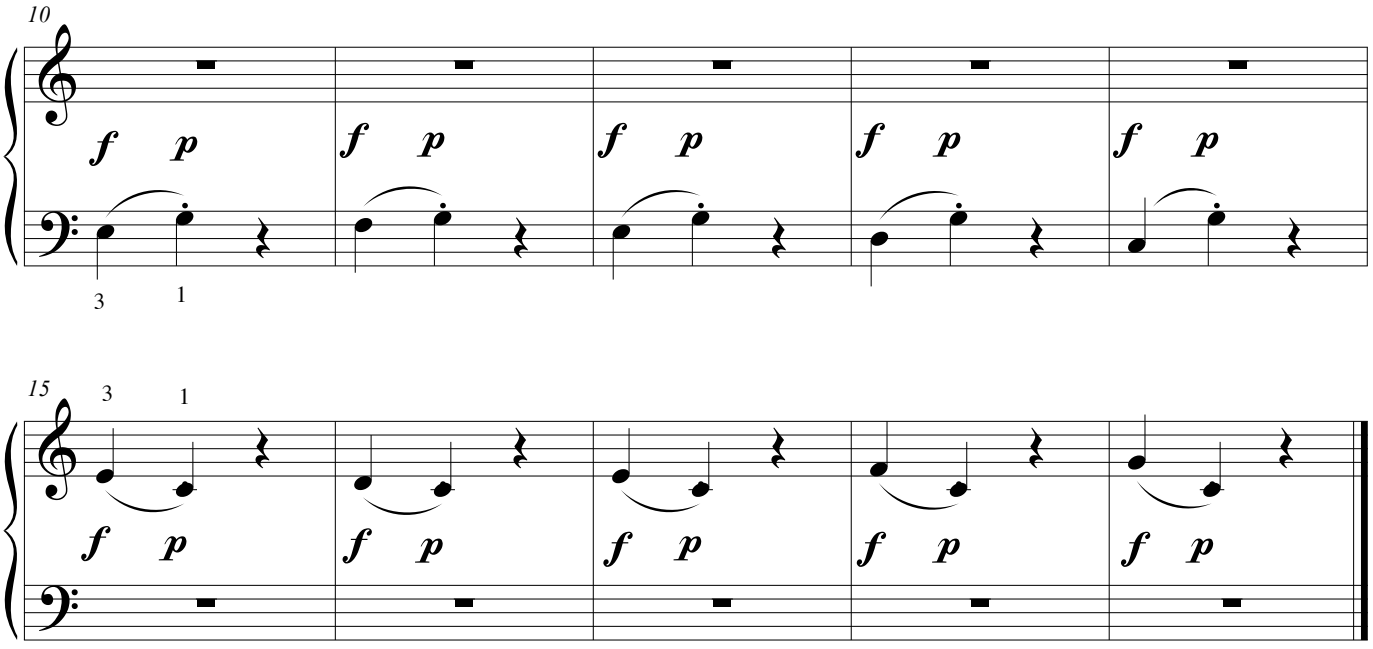
Diatonic Triads are chords built on each tone of a scale. In this example, triads appear on each step of the C Major scale. When only pitches in the major key are used, a pattern emerges: Triads I, IV and V are always major, and triads ii, iii, and vi are always minor. Triad vii° is neither major nor minor, but *diminished*. Listen to the B-D-F chord: known as the leading tone triad, the vii° chord is very unstable and leads the ear toward resolution on the Tonic.

The Major chords, I, IV and V are called Primary triads; they are of first importance when harmonizing major melodies.
The minor and diminished chords, ii, iii, vi and vii° are called Secondary triads.

Primary Triad Arpeggios

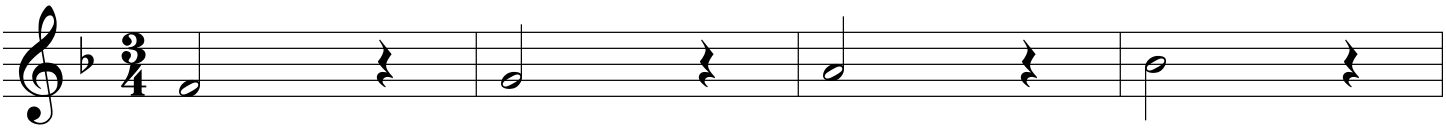


Drop-Lift

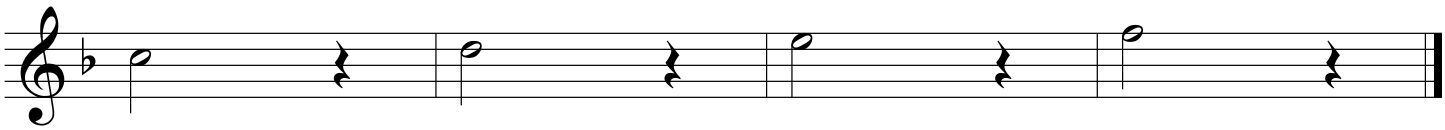


Up, Down, Move

Use only RH2 to play this scale.
Use the damper pedal to create a legato line.
On Beat 1, the damper pedal is up. On Beat 2, the pedal is depressed and stays down during Beat 3 while the hand releases and moves to the next note.

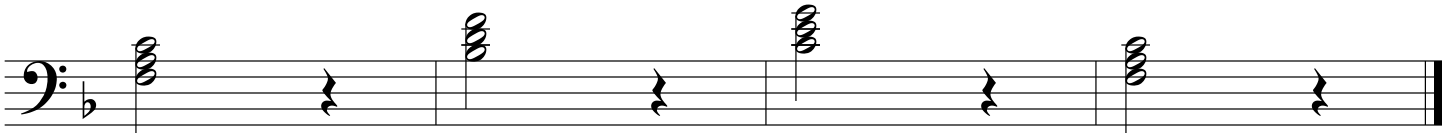


Up, down, move; Up, down, move; Up, down, move; Up, down, move;



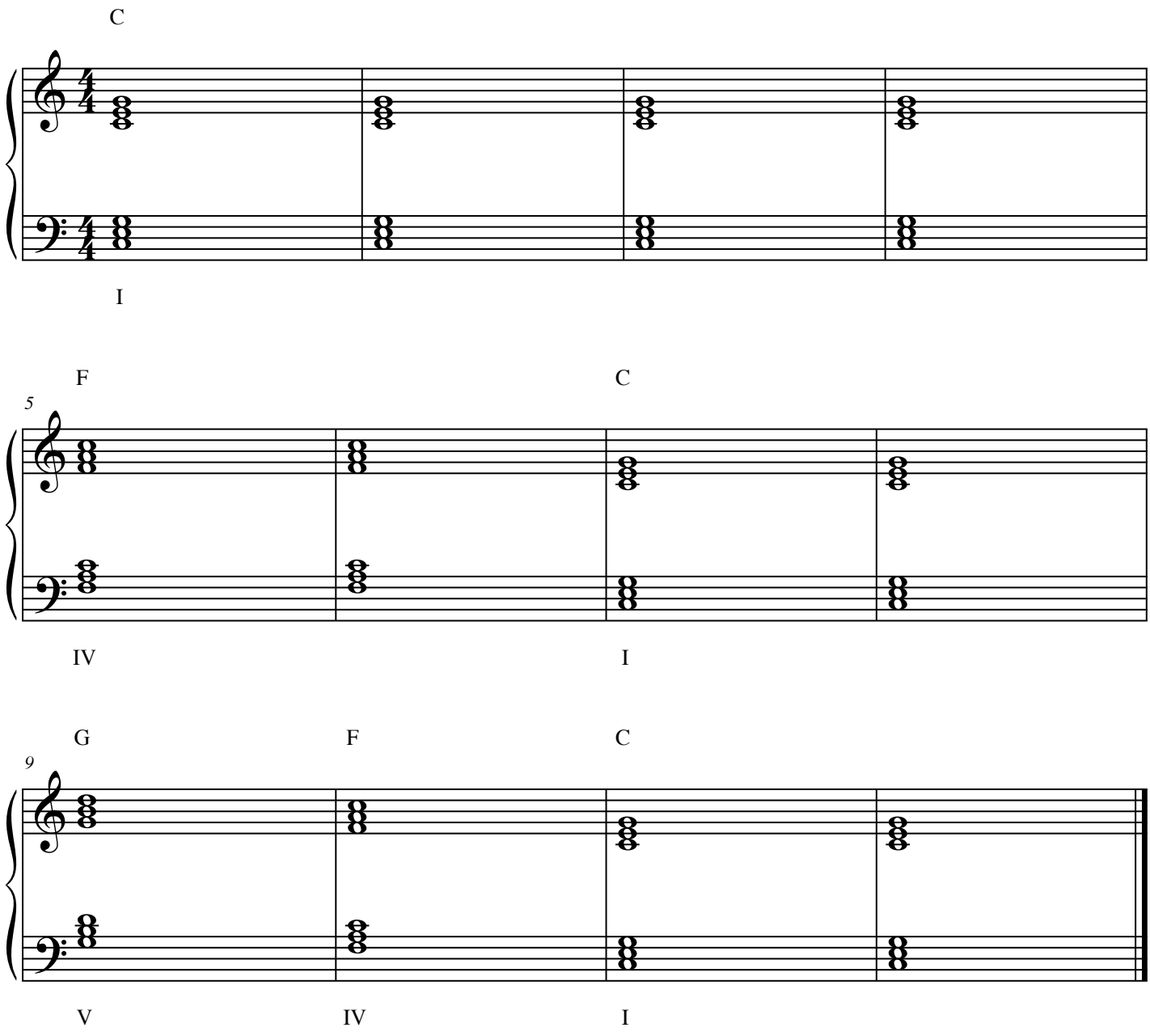
Up, down, move; Up, down, move; Up, down, move; Up, down, move.

Play the Primary Triads of F Major.
Use the damper pedal to create a legato transition from chord to chord.
Use the same procedure as above.

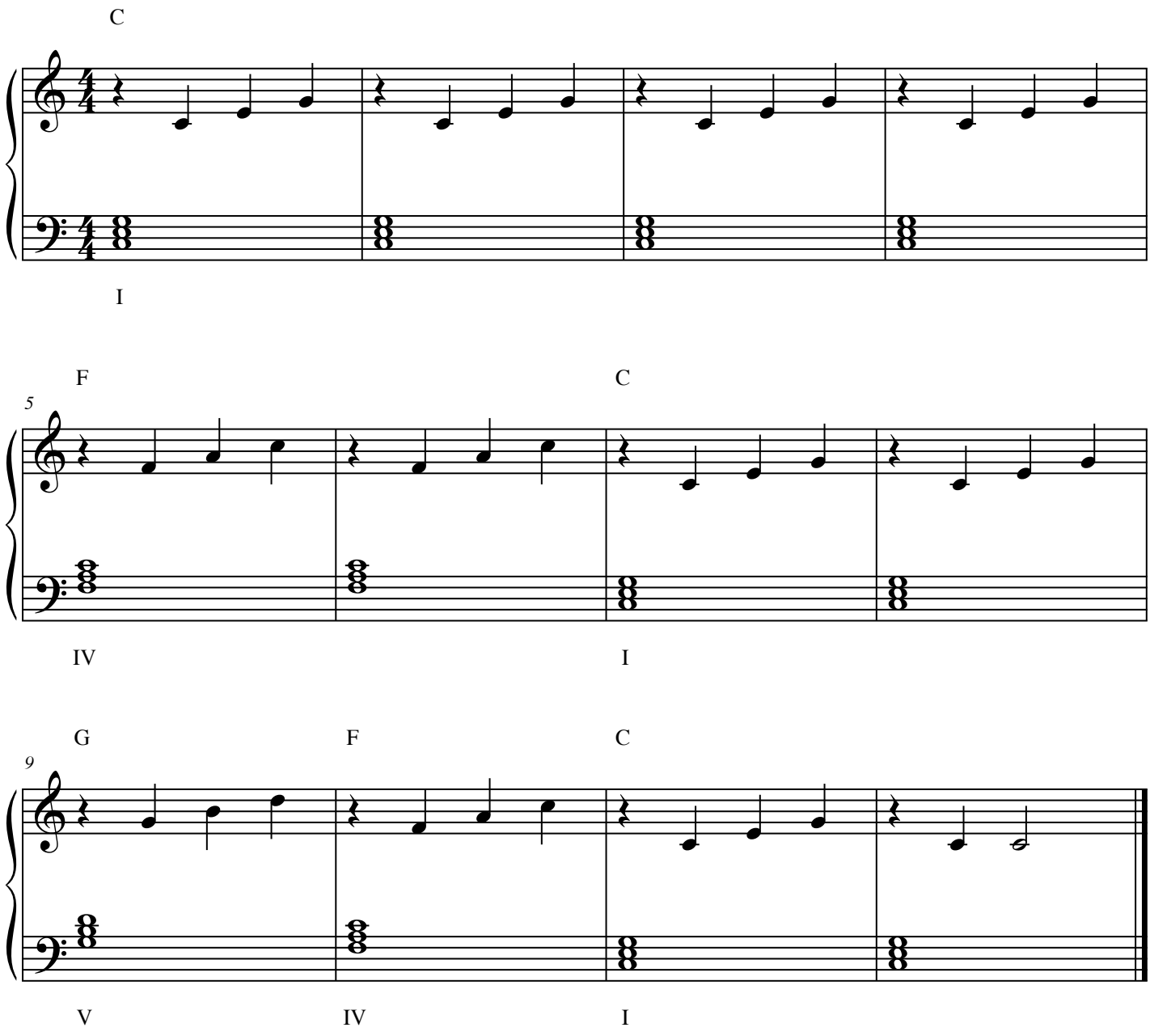


I IV V I

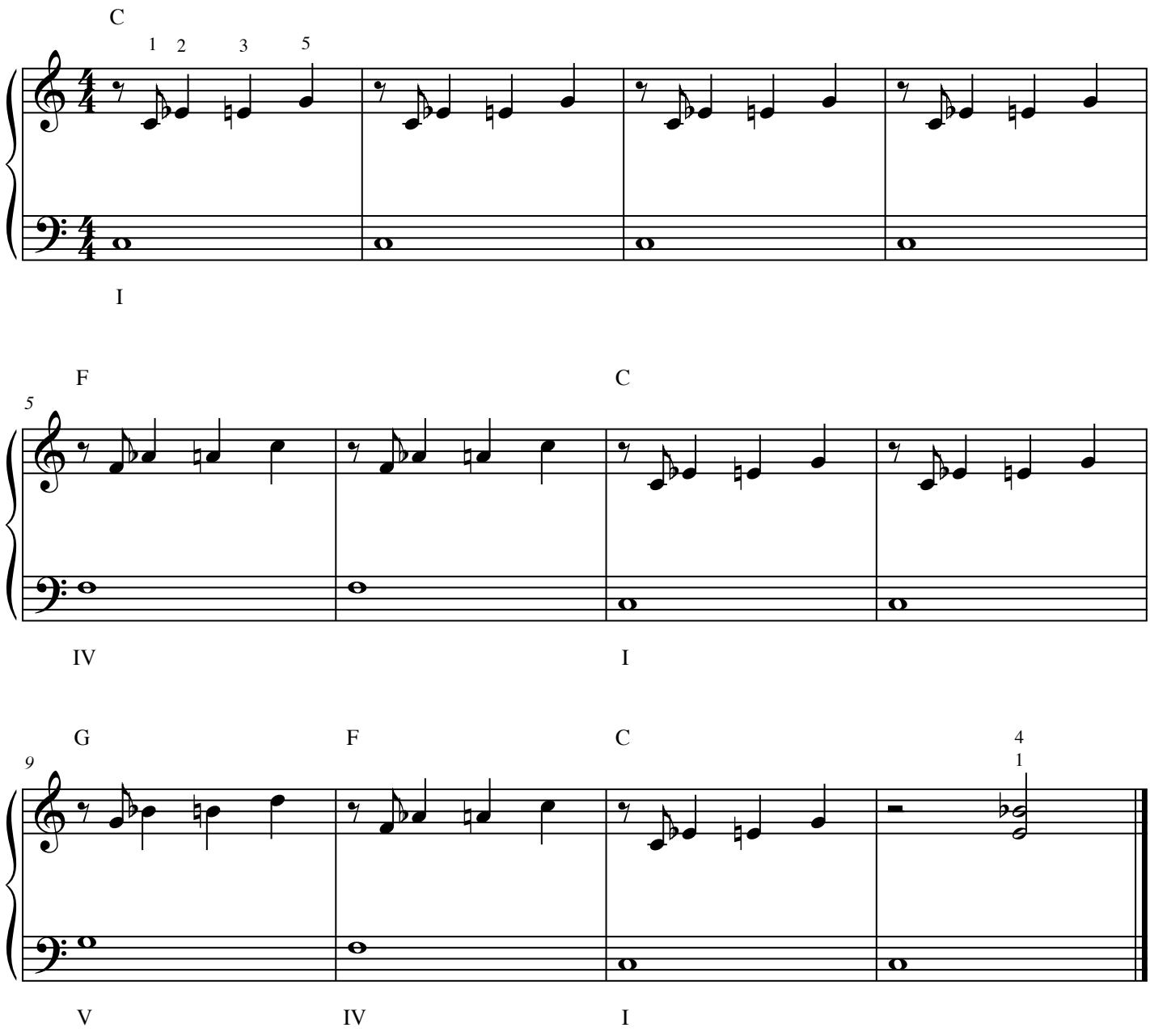
12 Bar Blues Progression



Broken Blues

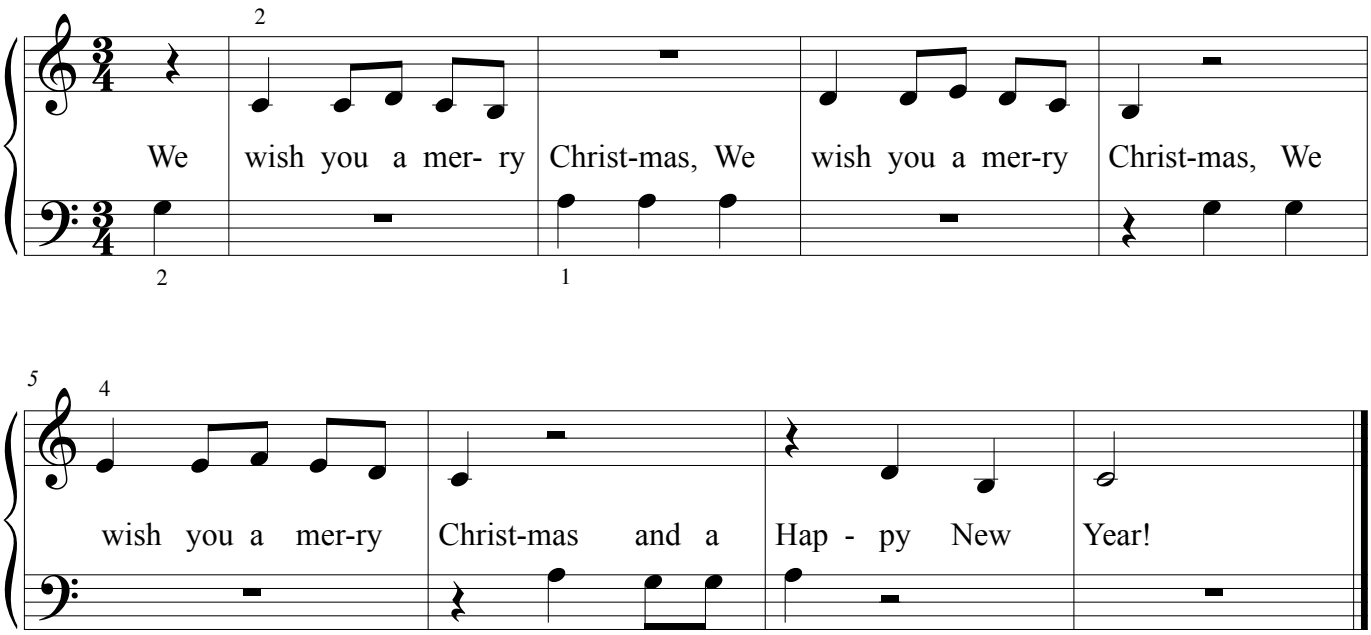


Flat Blues

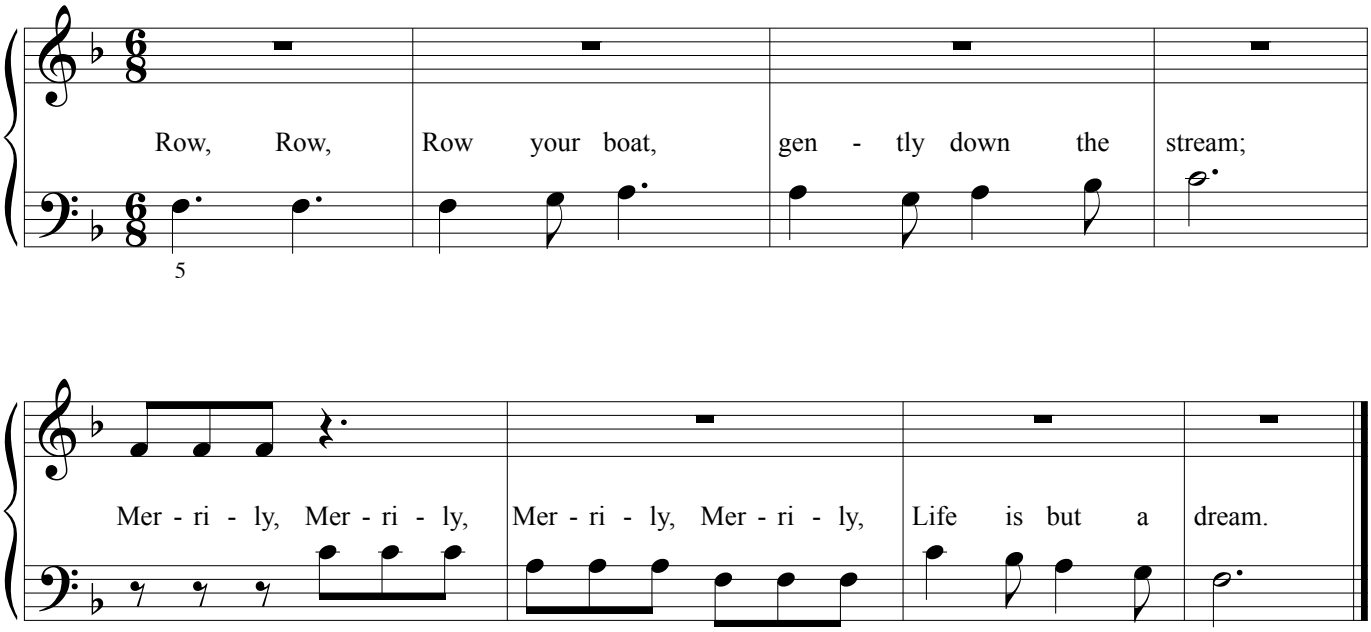


Simple and Compound Meters

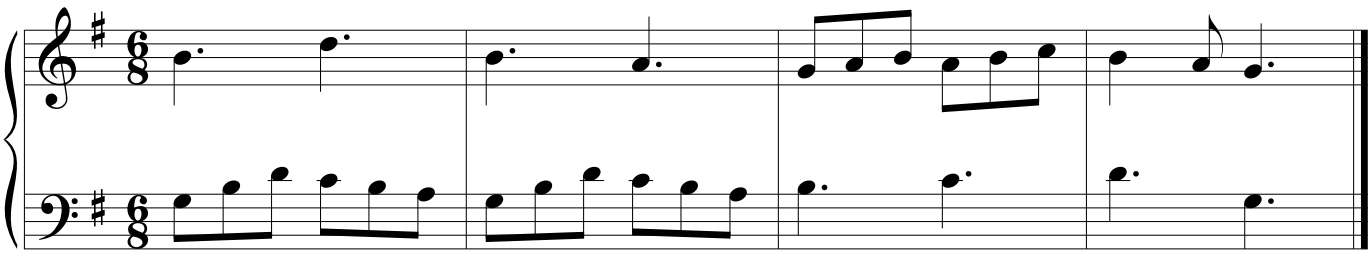
Simple Triple Meter: Three quarter note beats can each be divided into two eighth notes.



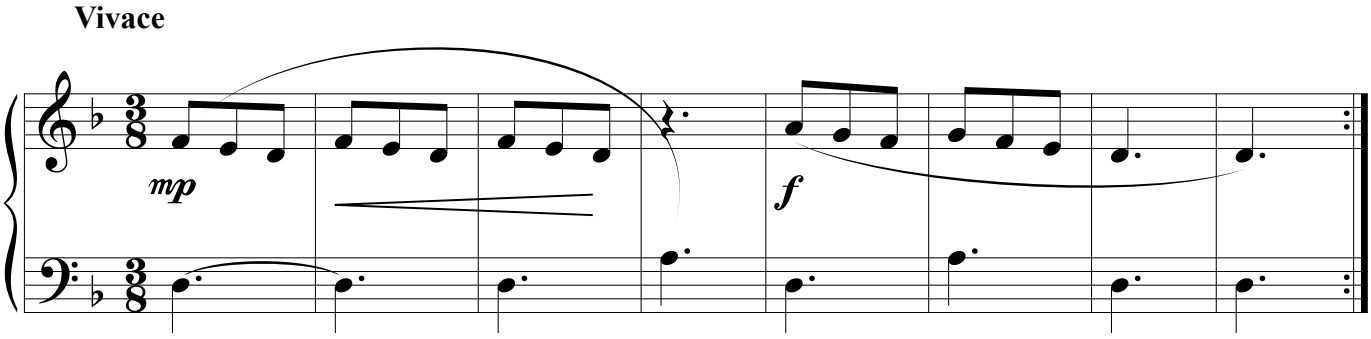
Compound Duple Meter: Six eighth notes are in two groups of three, equal to two dotted quarter beats.



Moderato



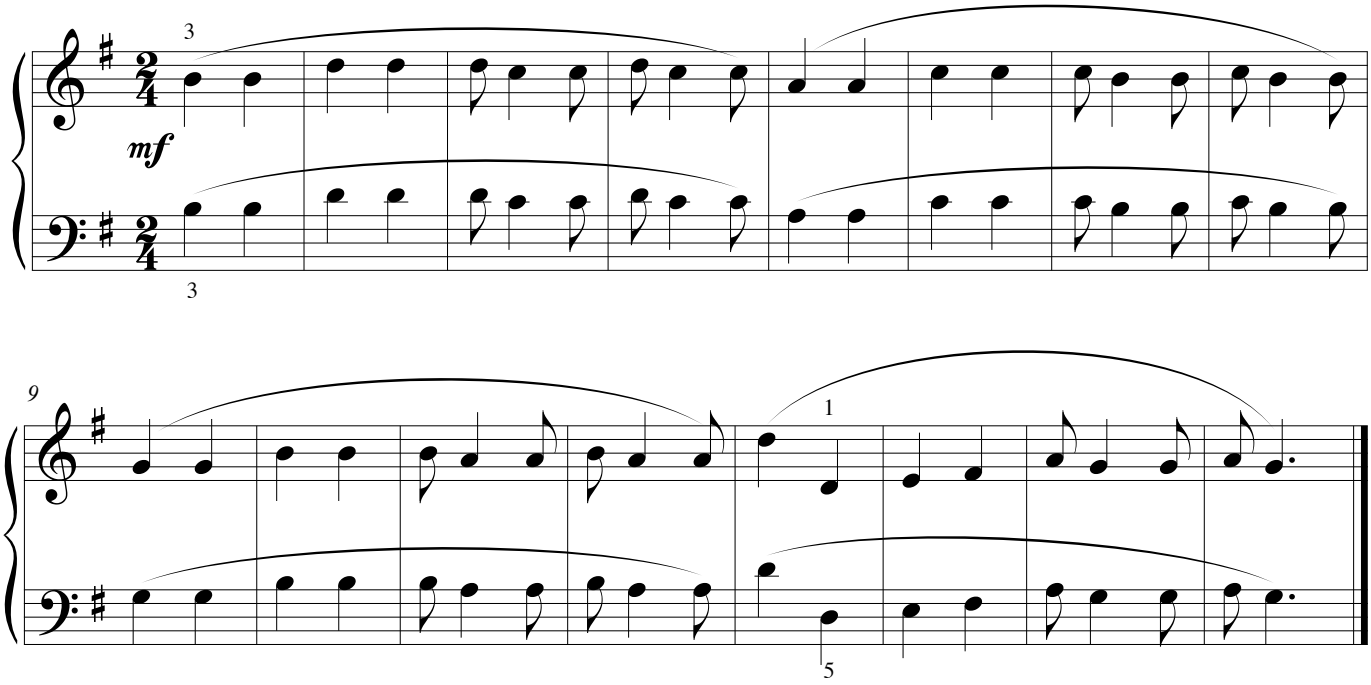
Tarantella



Tancuj

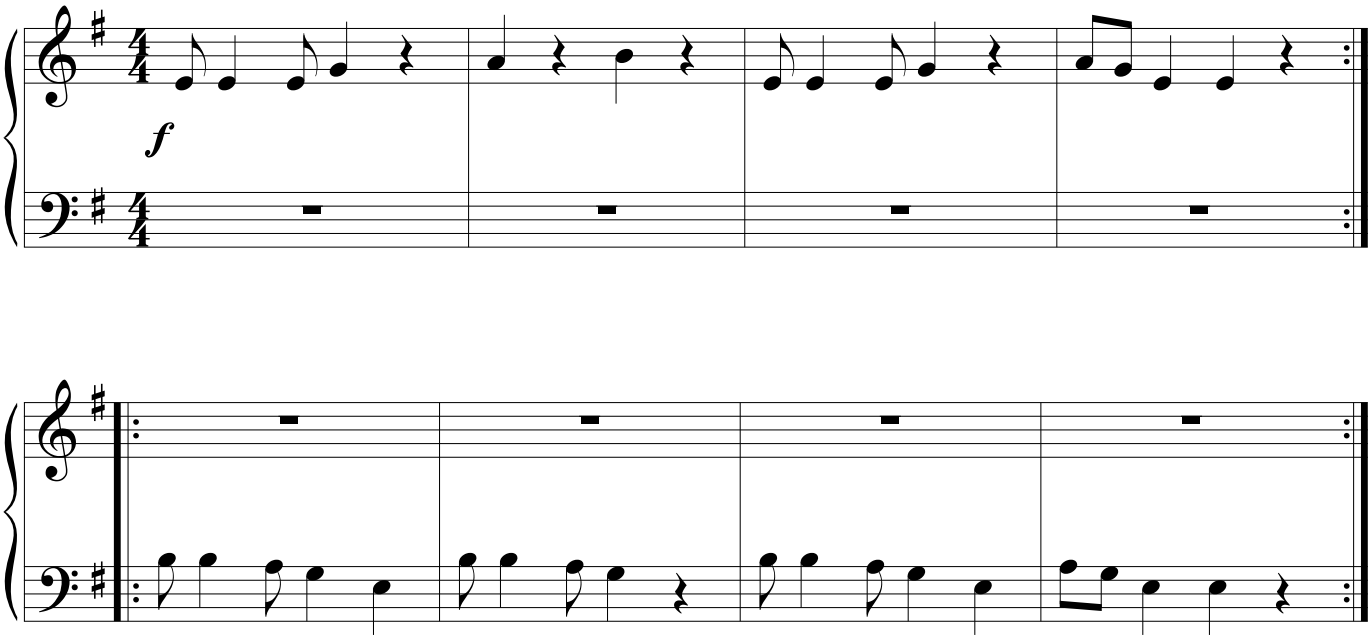
Czech: Dance!

Giocoso



Elijah Rock

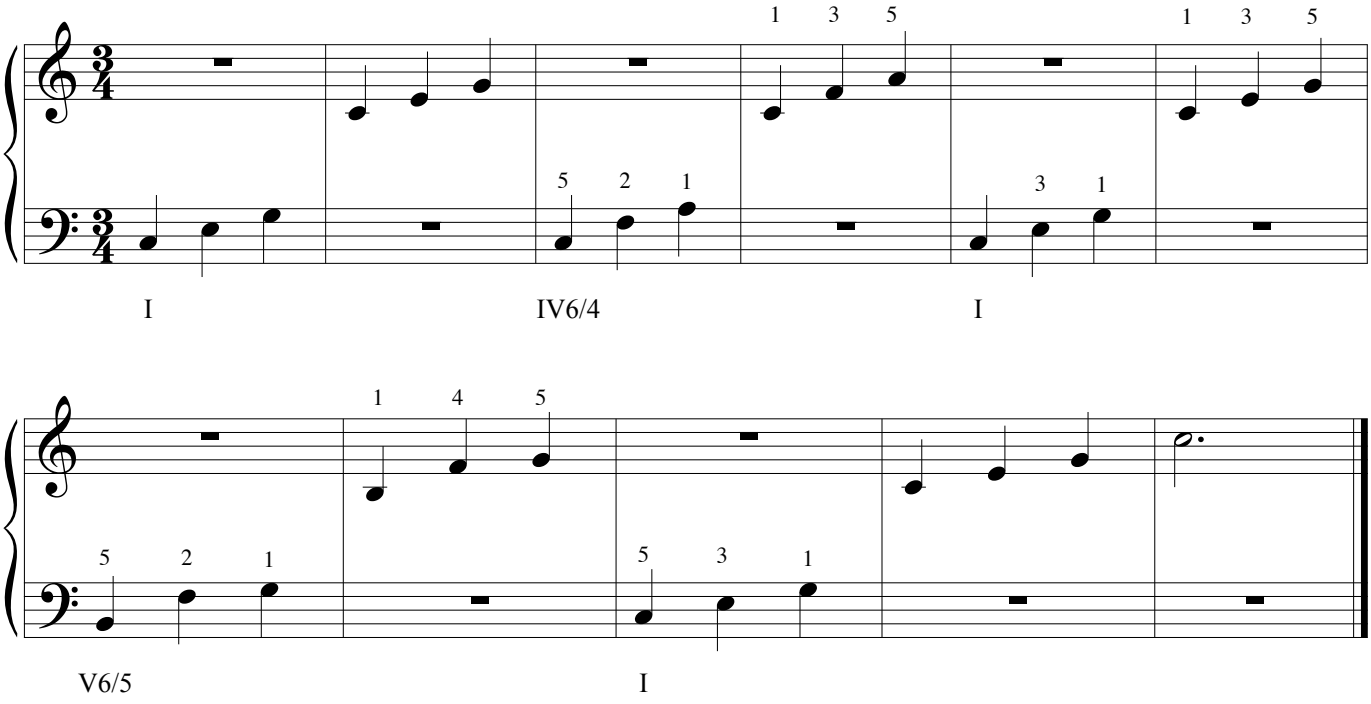
Driving



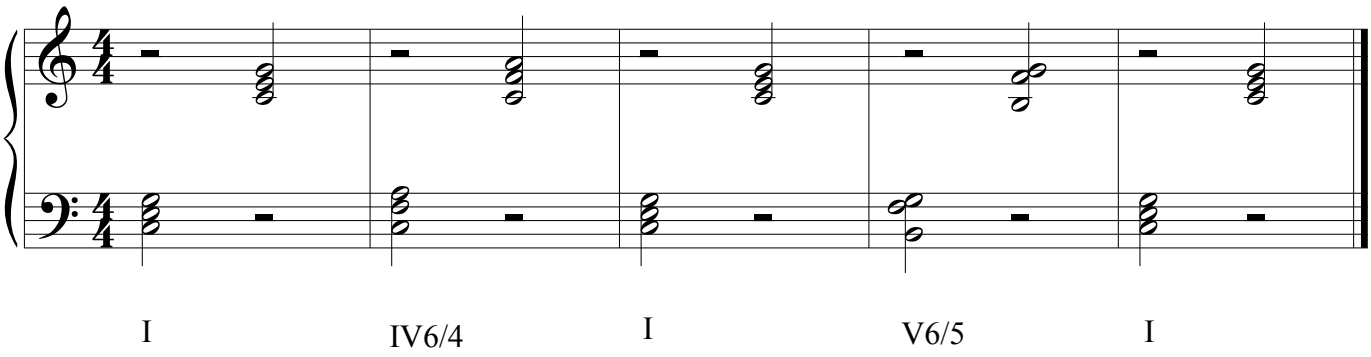
Chord Studies

In C Major

No. 3 Use the fingerings given.



No. 4 Use the same fingerings as above.

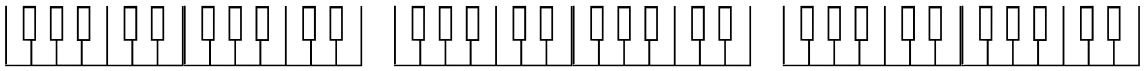


Primary Chords in Major Keys

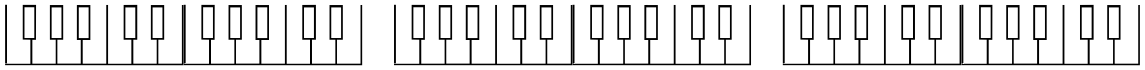
Piano Position Inversions for Harmonizing

Chart the **Primary Chords** on each keyboard.
The **I** chord uses scale degrees 1, 3, and 5.
The **IV6/4** chord uses scale degrees 1, 4 and 6.
The **V6/5** chord uses scale degree 7 below degree 1, and degrees 4 and 5.

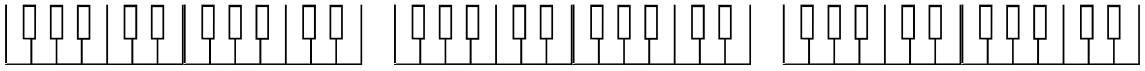
C Major **I** **IV6/4** **V6/5**



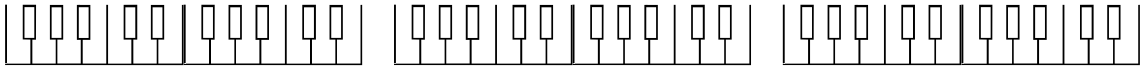
F Major **I** **IV6/4** **V6/5**



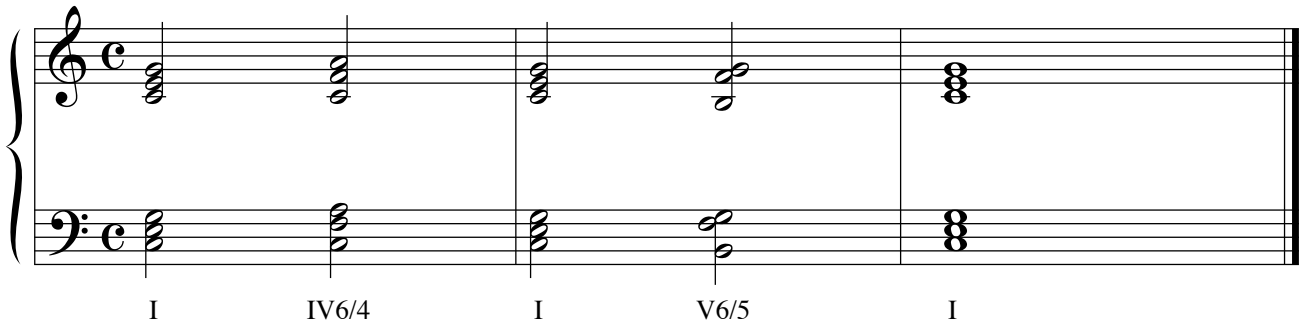
G Major **I** **IV6/4** **V6/5**

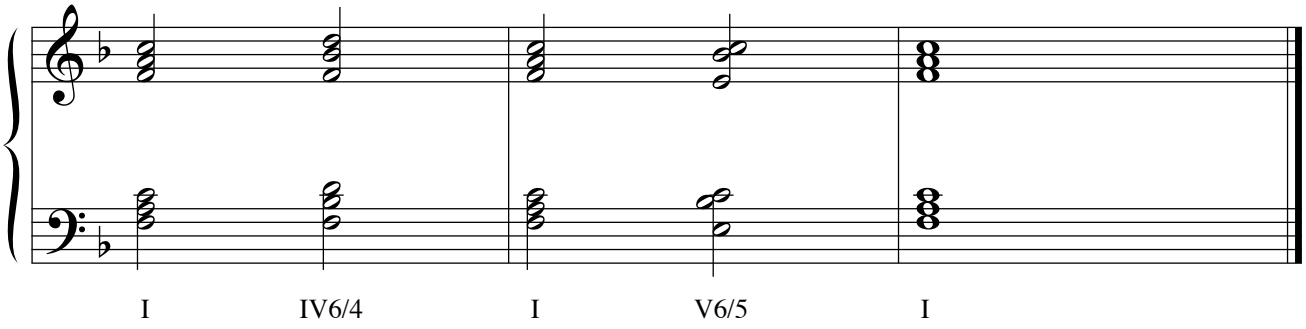


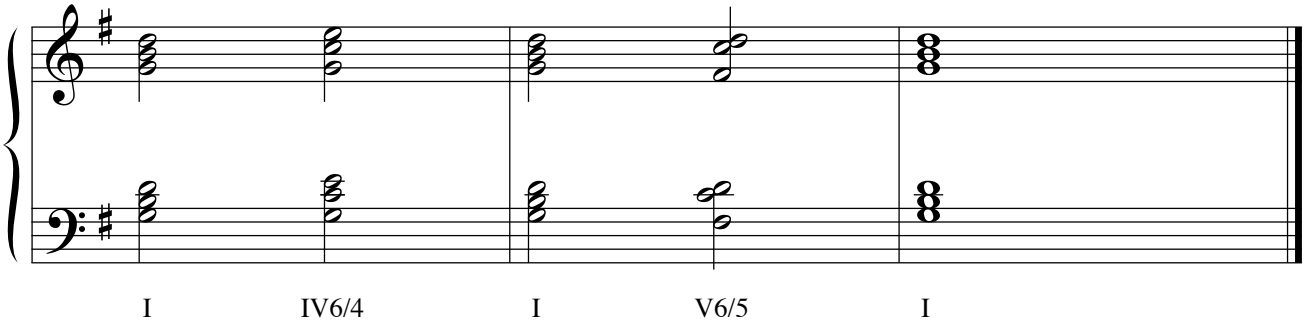
D Major **I** **IV6/4** **V6/5**

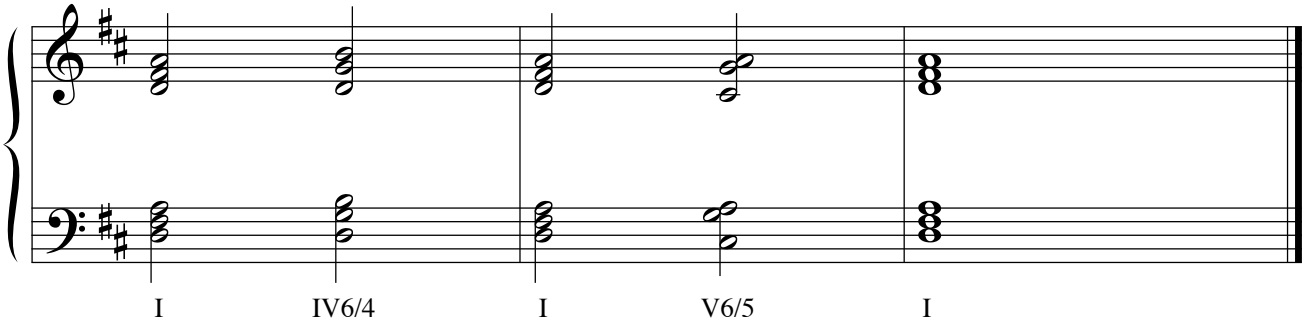


Primary Chord Progressions





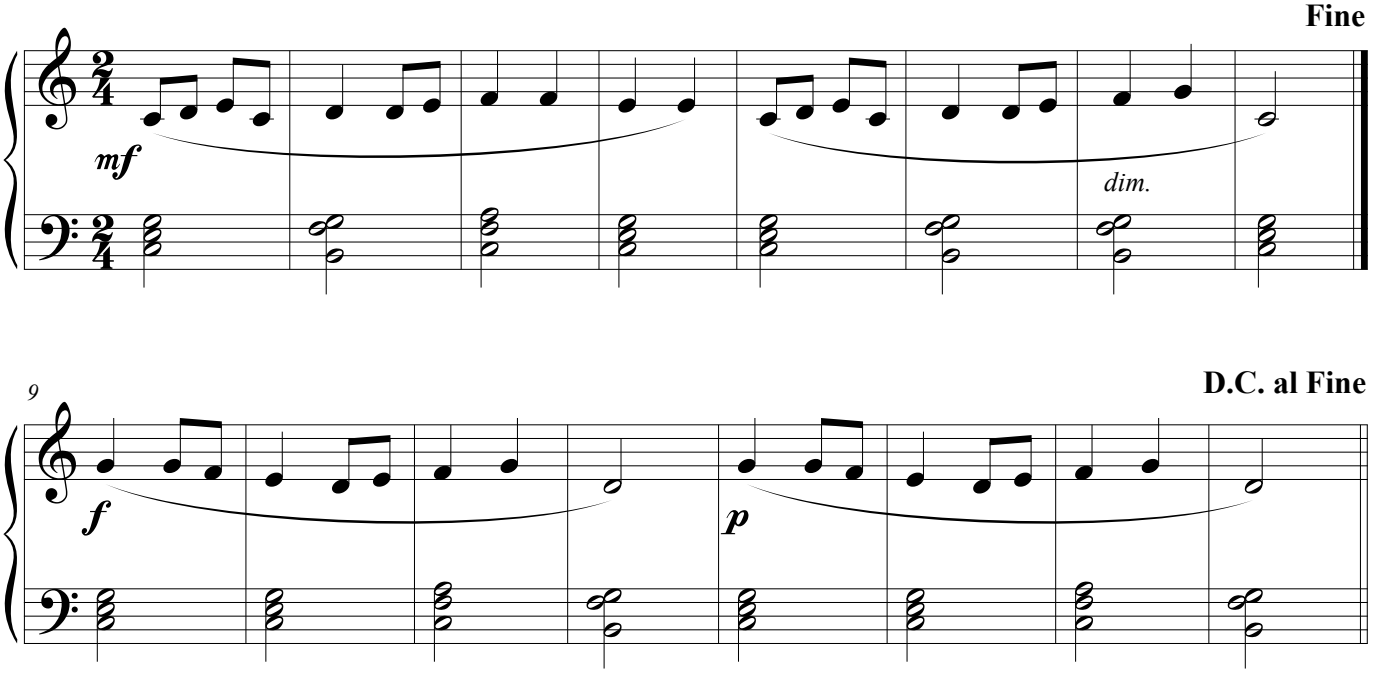




J'ai du bon tabac

I have good tobacco in my snuff box and you will get none.

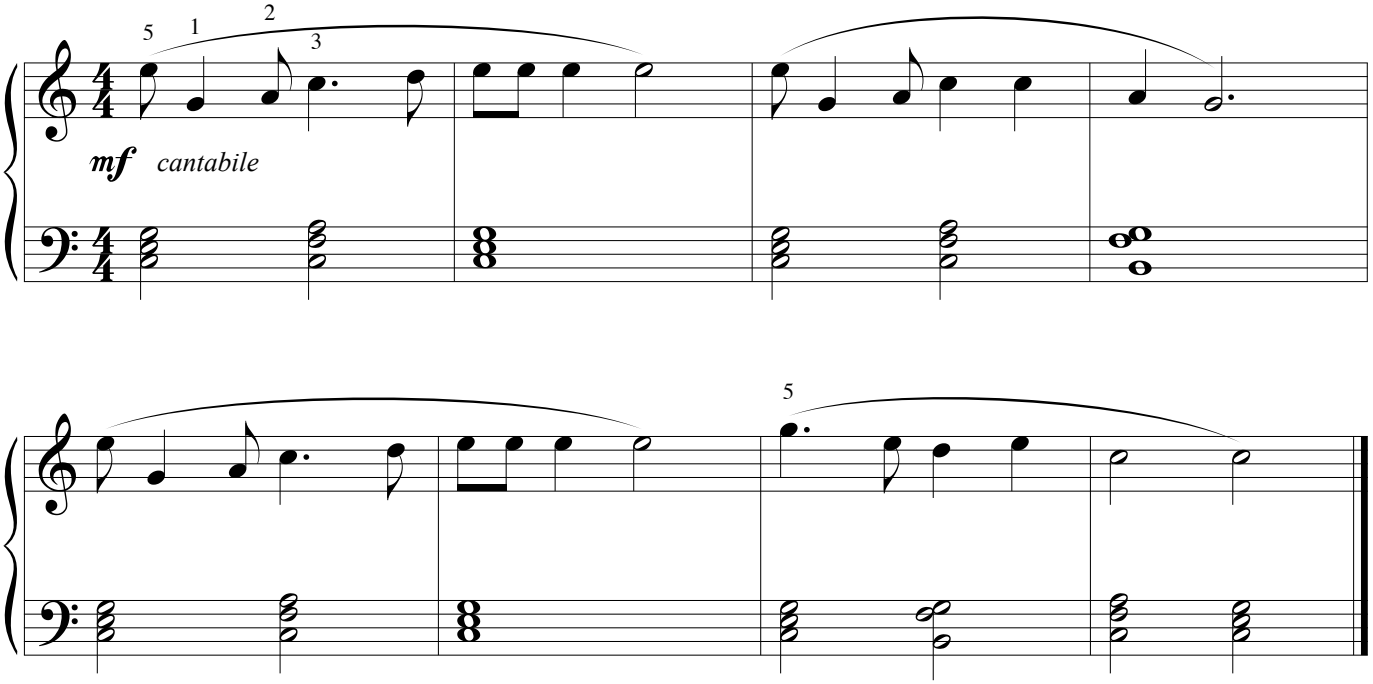
French Folk Song



Melody notes that occur as steps between chord member notes are called *passing tones.*

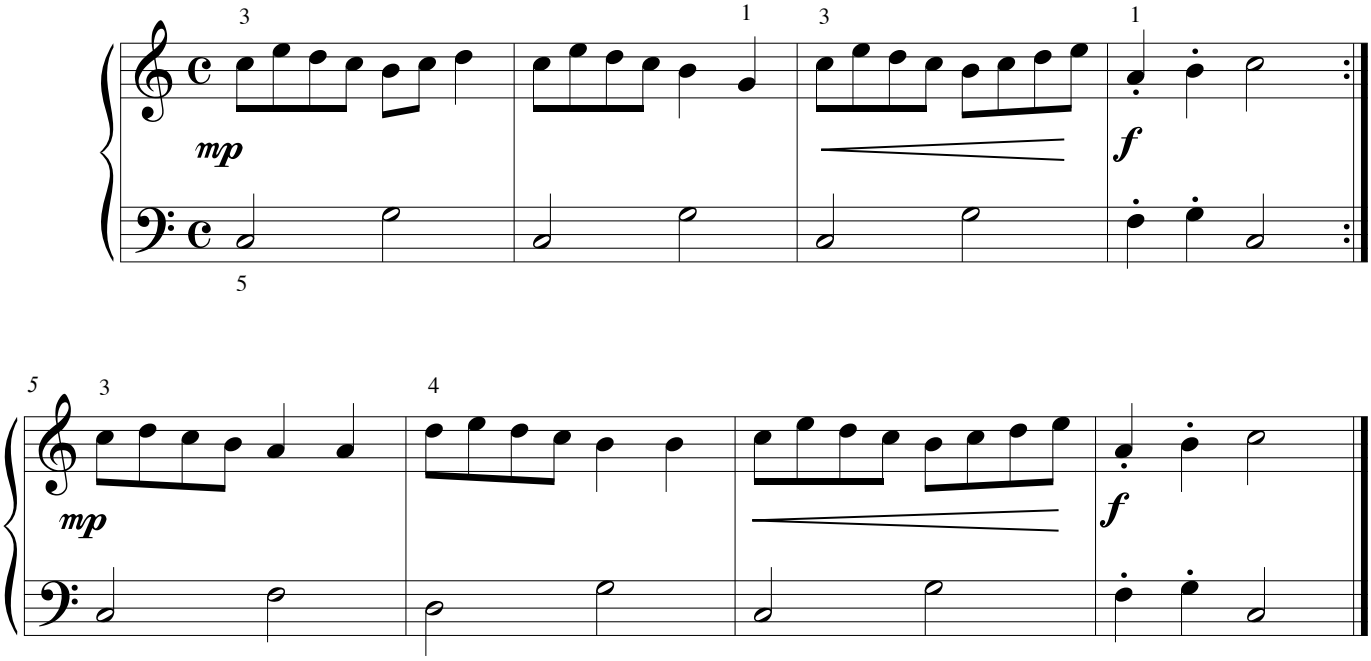
Nobody Knows

American Spiritual



Allegretto

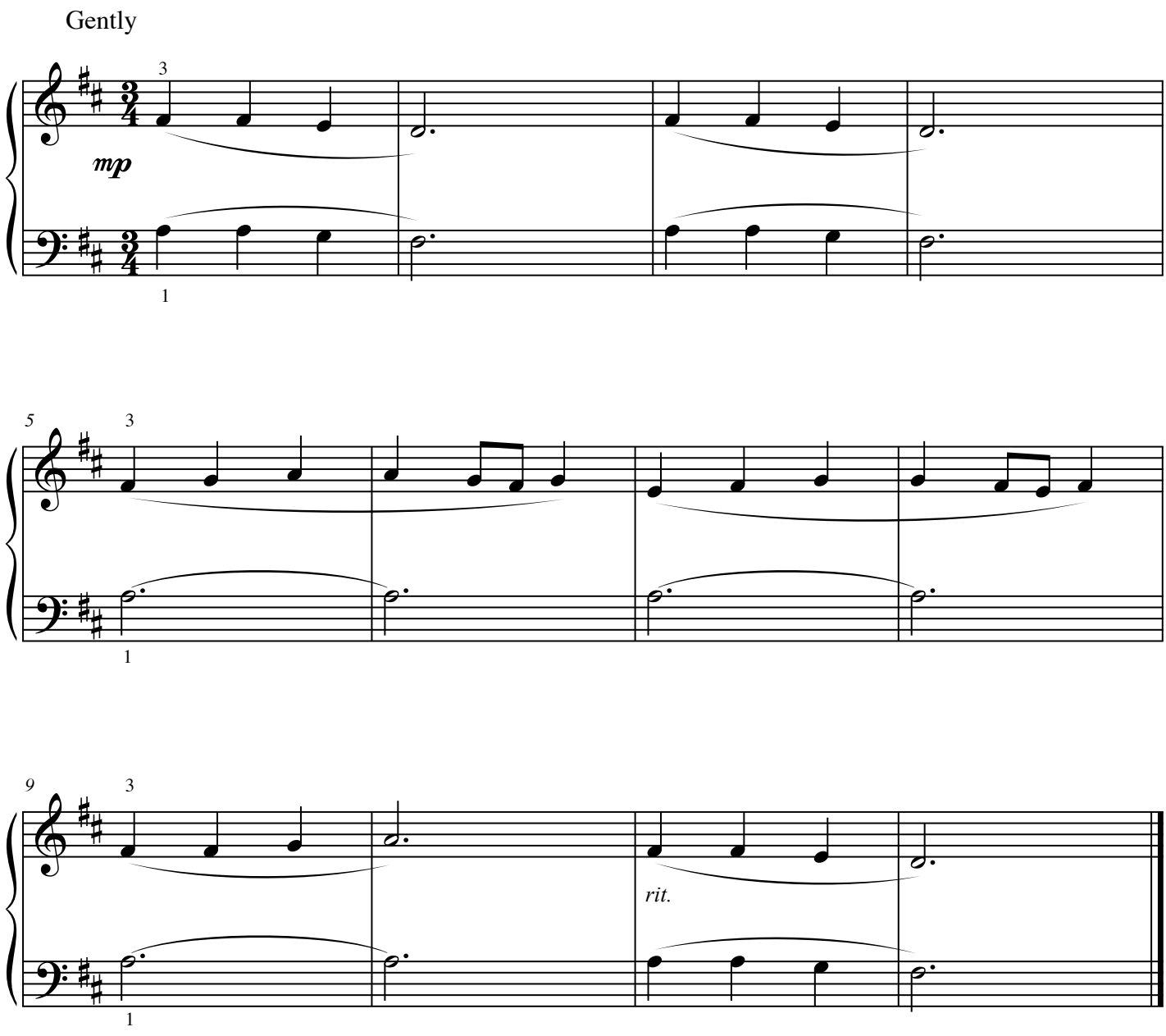
Alexander Reinagle
(1765-1809)



Non-harmonic tones are melody notes that are not members of the accompanying chord.
Passing tones, Upper Neighbors and Lower Neighbors are examples you may find in your pieces.

Sleep, Baby, Sleep

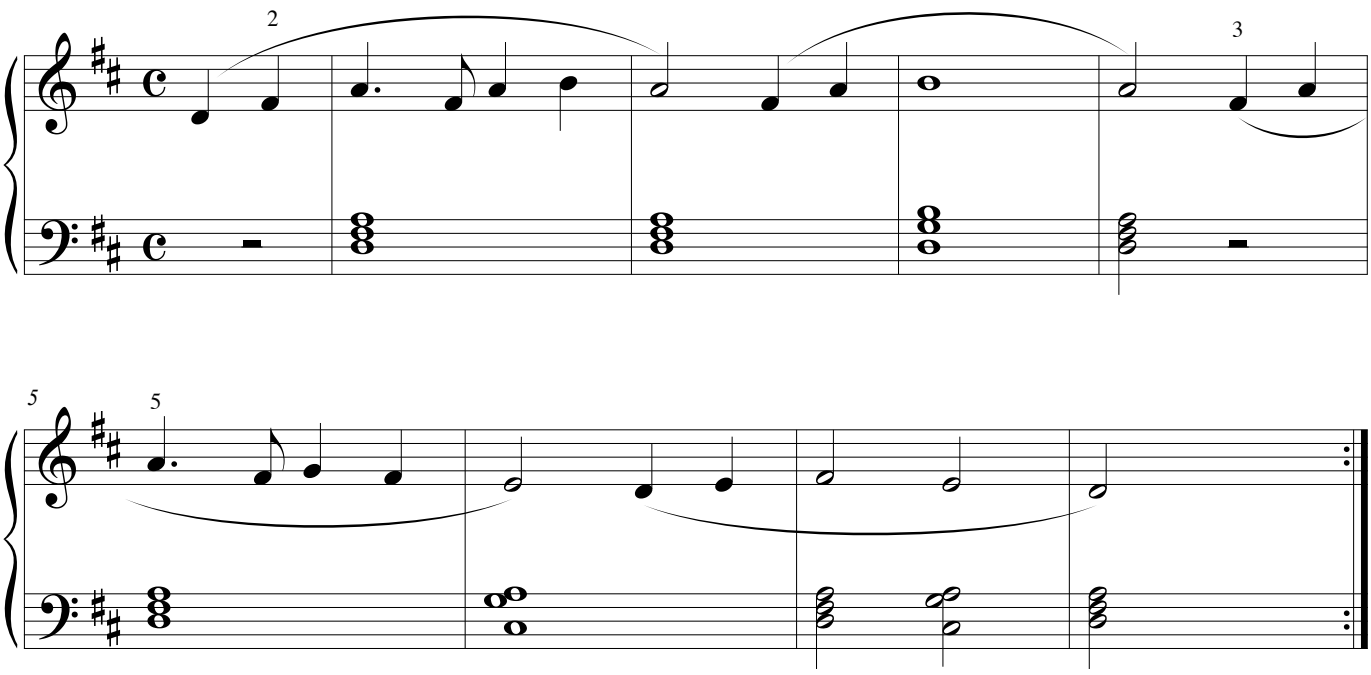
Traditional



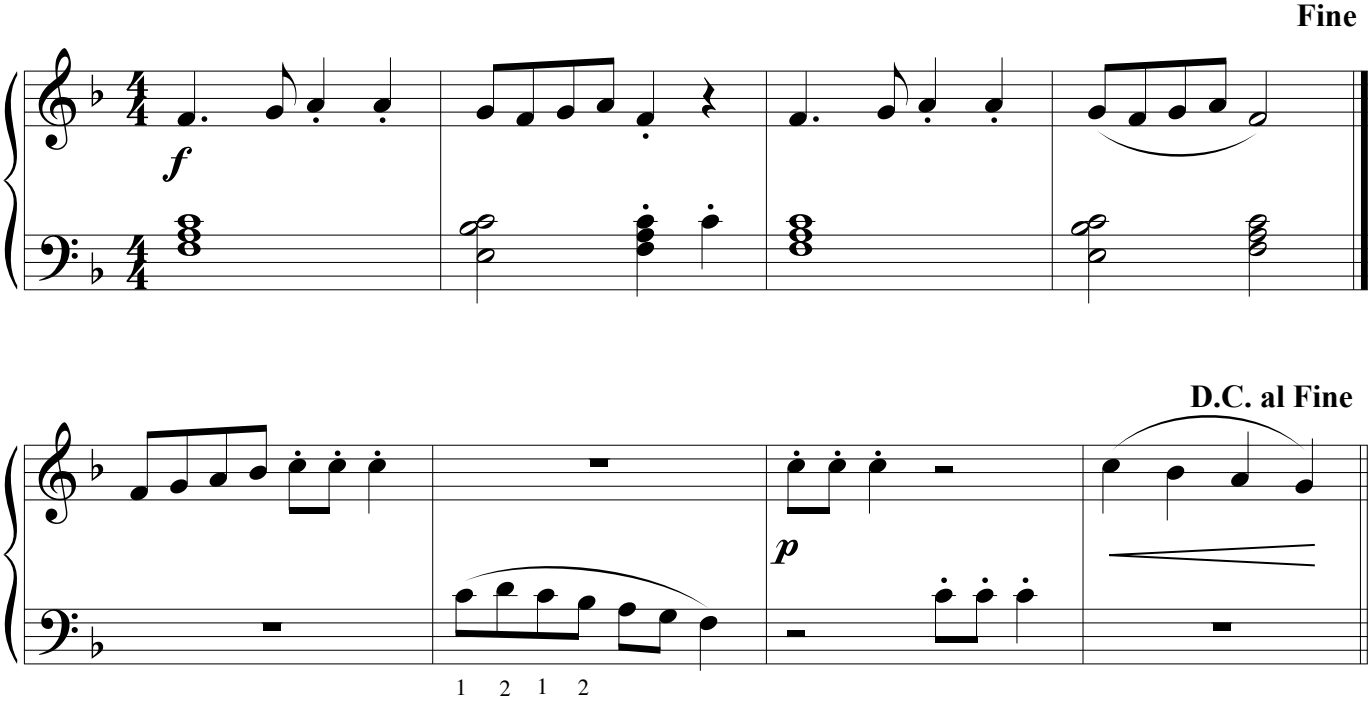
rit. is the abbreviation for *ritardando*, Italian for **gradually slower.**

Michael, Row

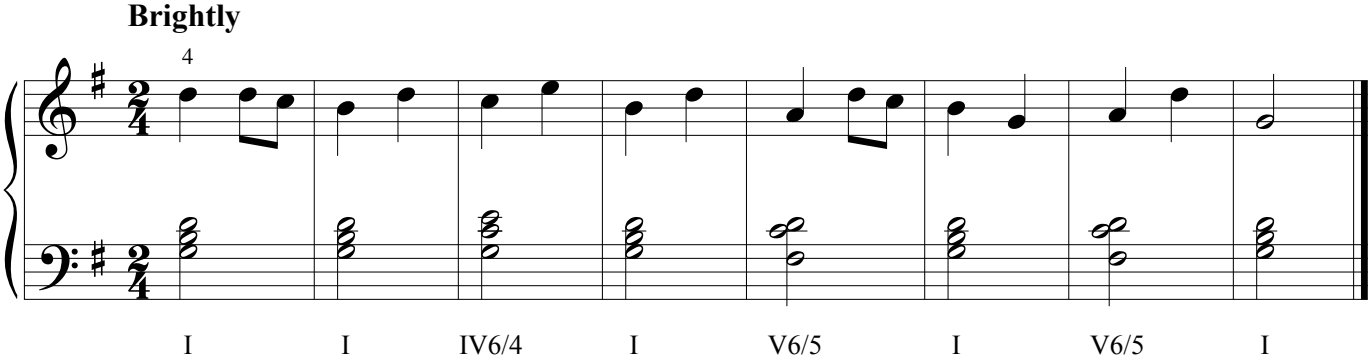
American Spiritual



Alouette

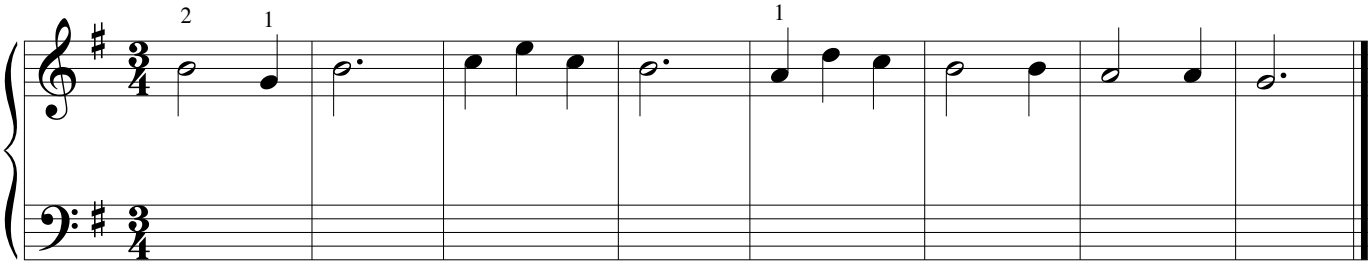


Two-Step



Waltz in G

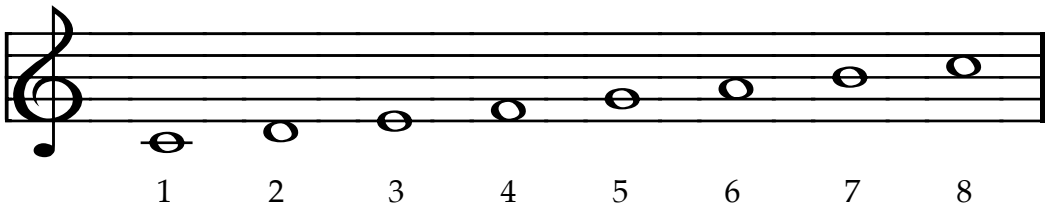
Harmonize this melody with I, IV6/4 and V6/5 chords.
Match the chords to the pitches in the melody.



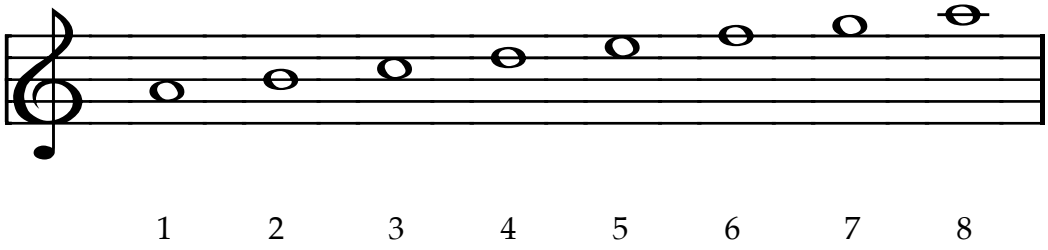
About Minor Scales

Every major scale shares its key signature with its **relative minor** scale.
Degree 1 of the relative minor is the same pitch as Degree 6 of the major scale.
C major and A Minor are relatives, sharing the same key signature of zero sharps or flats.

C Major Scale



A Minor Scale, Natural Form



Major scales have half steps between degrees 3 – 4 and 7 – 8.

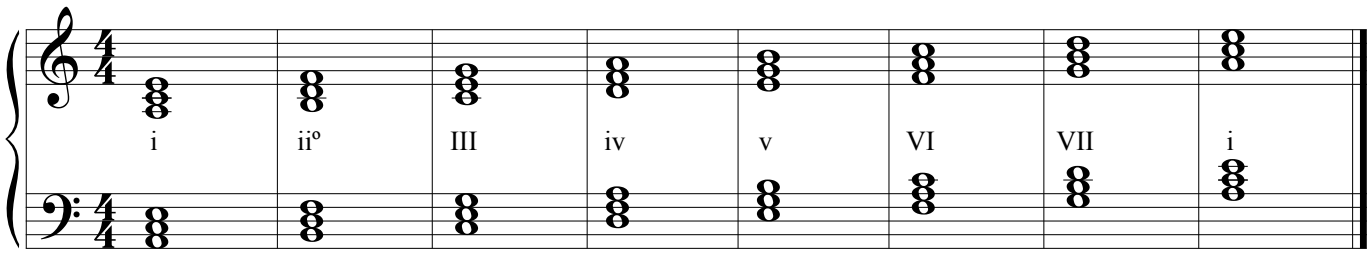
Minor scales in their natural form have half steps between 2 – 3 and 5 – 6.

When harmonizing minor melodies, the 7th degree is often raised.
This is done with an accidental; the key signature is unchanged.
This form, called harmonic minor, has half steps between 2-3, 5-6 and 7-8.

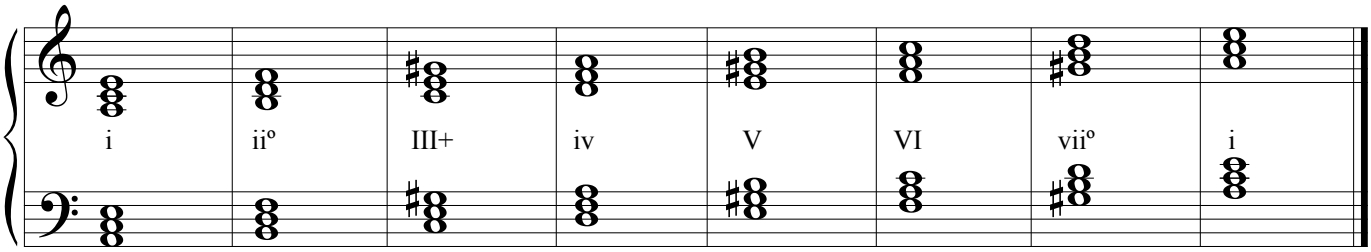
Major keys and minor keys that share the same Tonic are called **parallel**.
C major uses no sharps or flats; its parallel minor, c minor, uses 3 flats.

Diatonic Triads in Minor

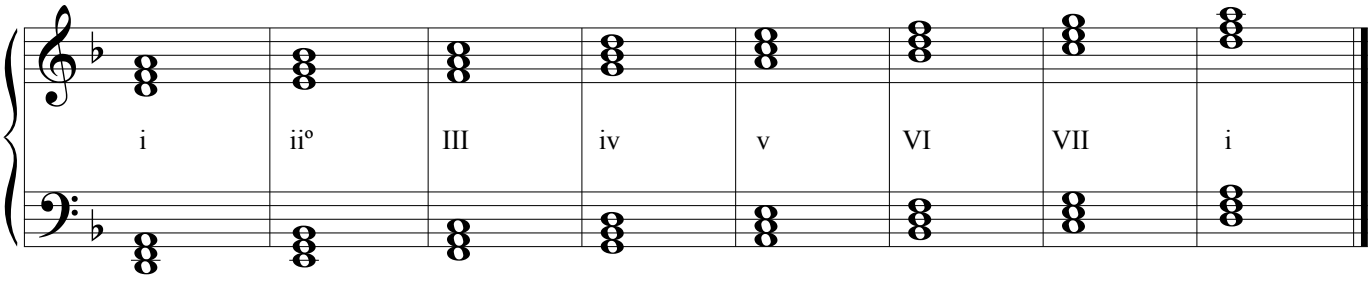
A Natural Minor



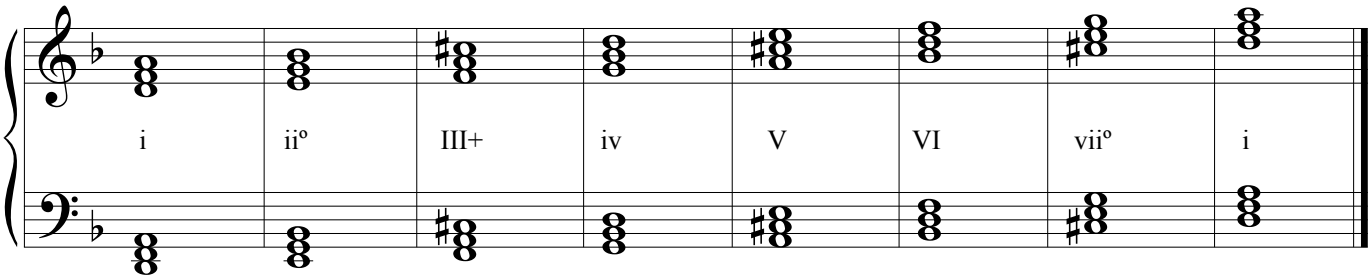
A Harmonic Minor



D Natural Minor



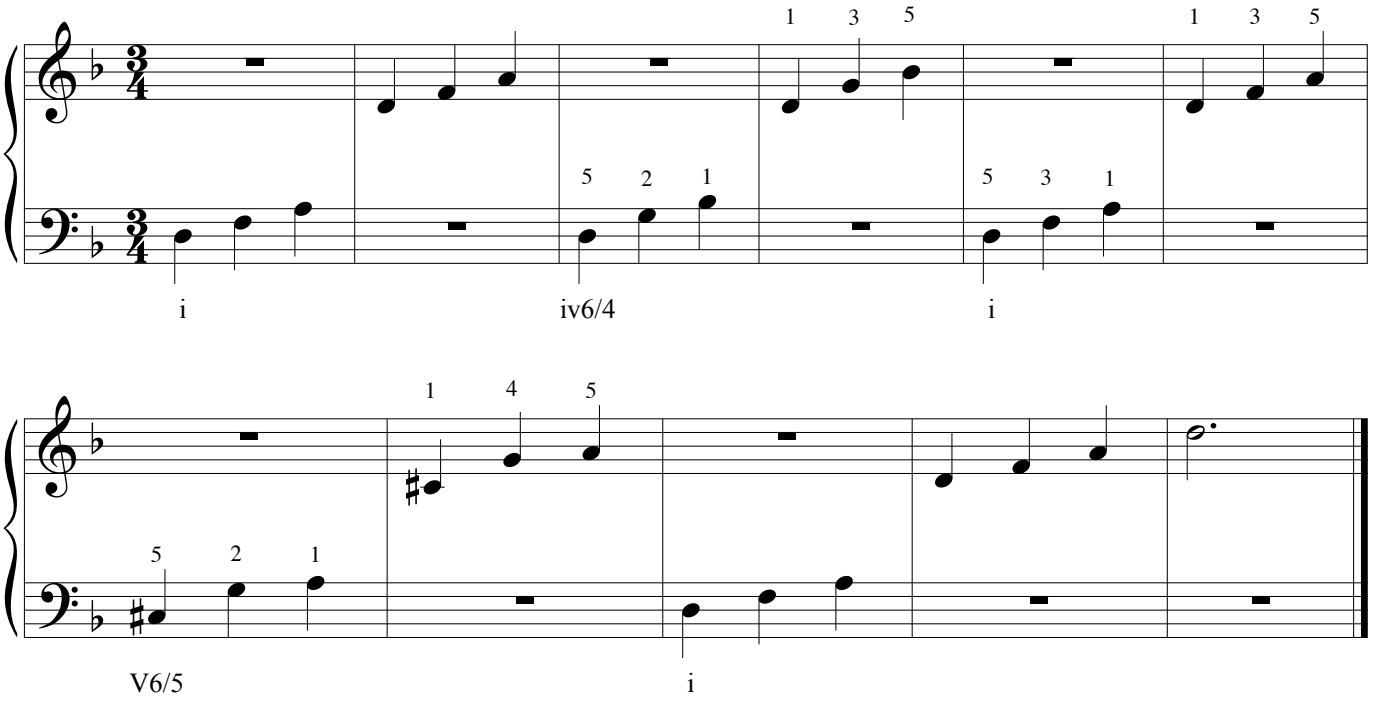
D Harmonic Minor



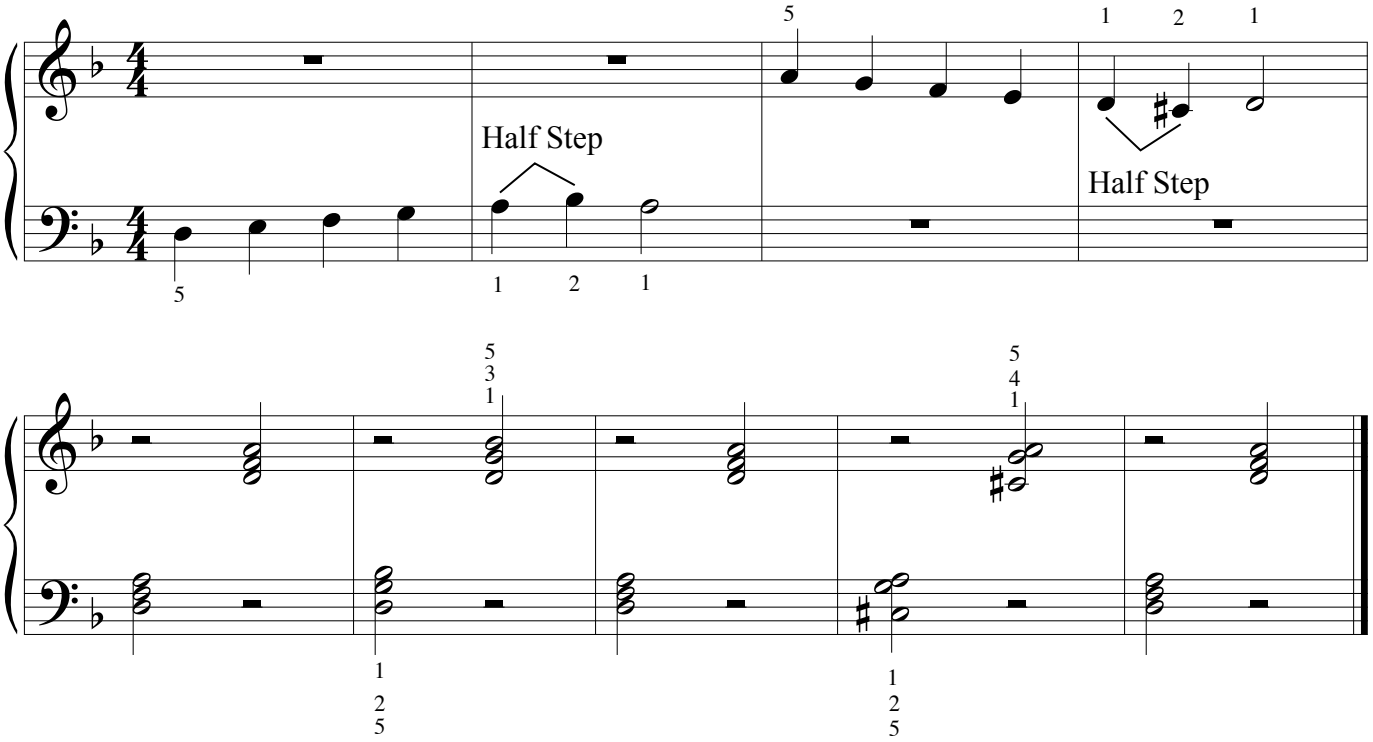
Chord Studies

In D Minor

No. 5 Use the fingerings given.



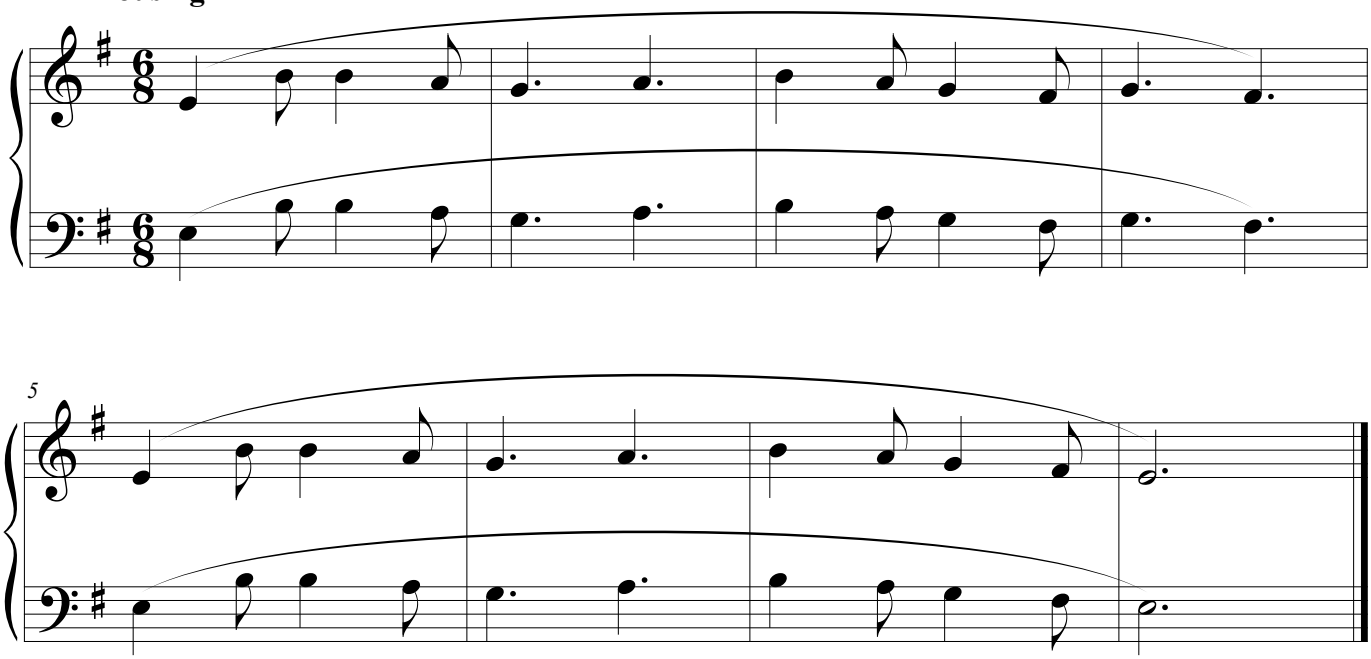
No. 6 In the first line Finger 2 crosses over the thumb to reach the half step.
Also review the fingerings for the chords in the second line.



Masters in This Hall

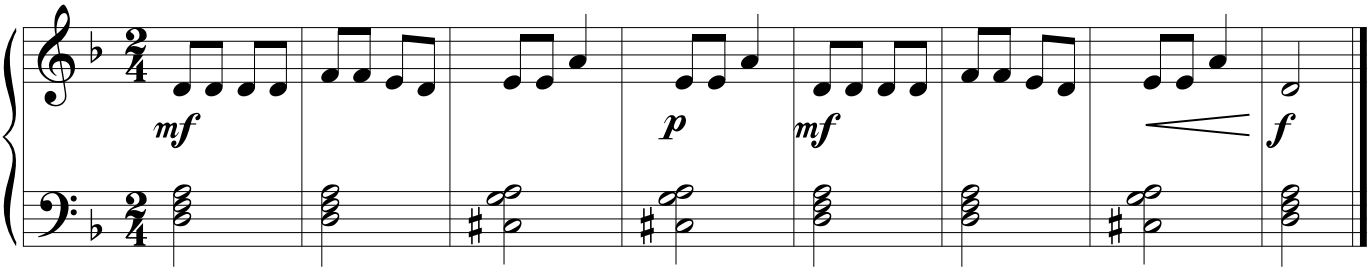
English Carol

Rousing



Quick Dance

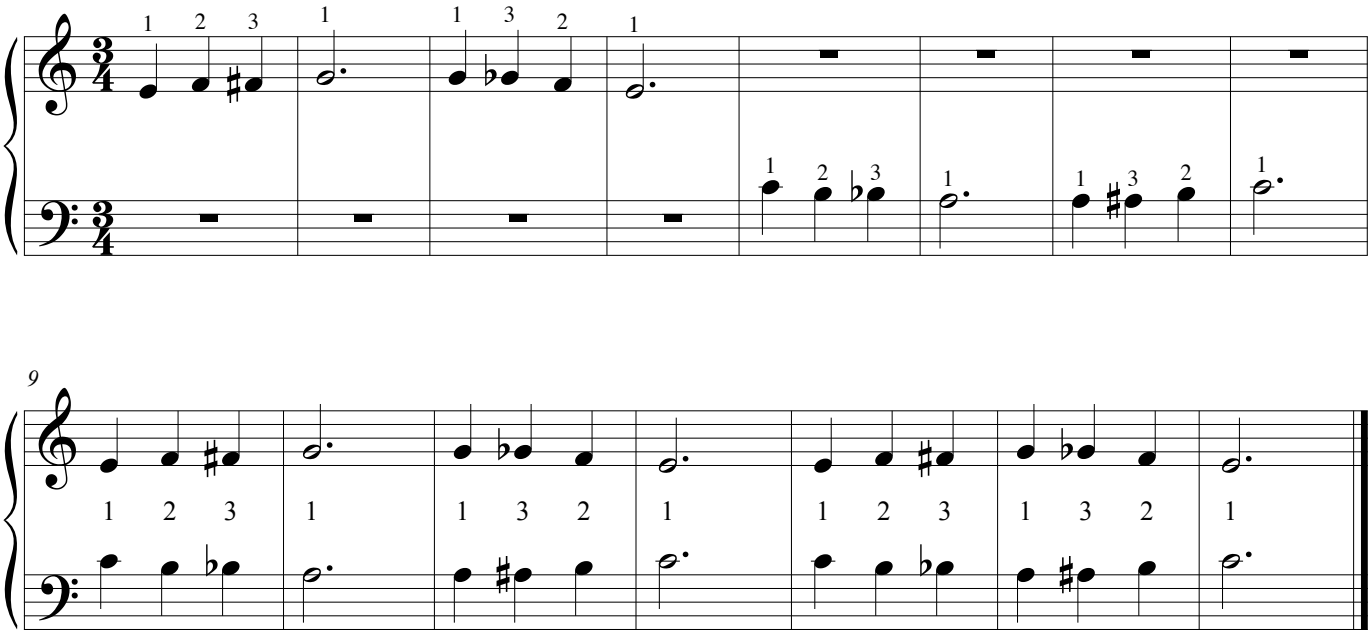
Vivace



Chromatic Exercises

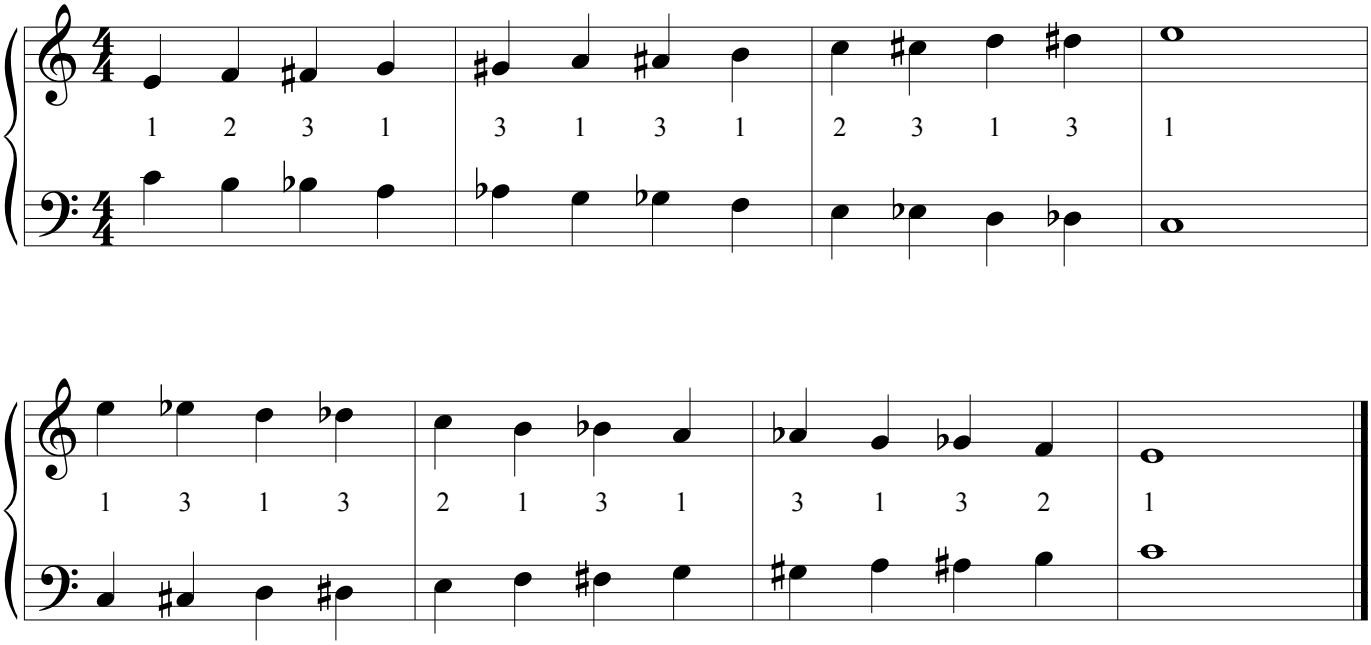
No. 1

In this contrary motion exercise, the same fingering pattern is used in each hand.



No. 2

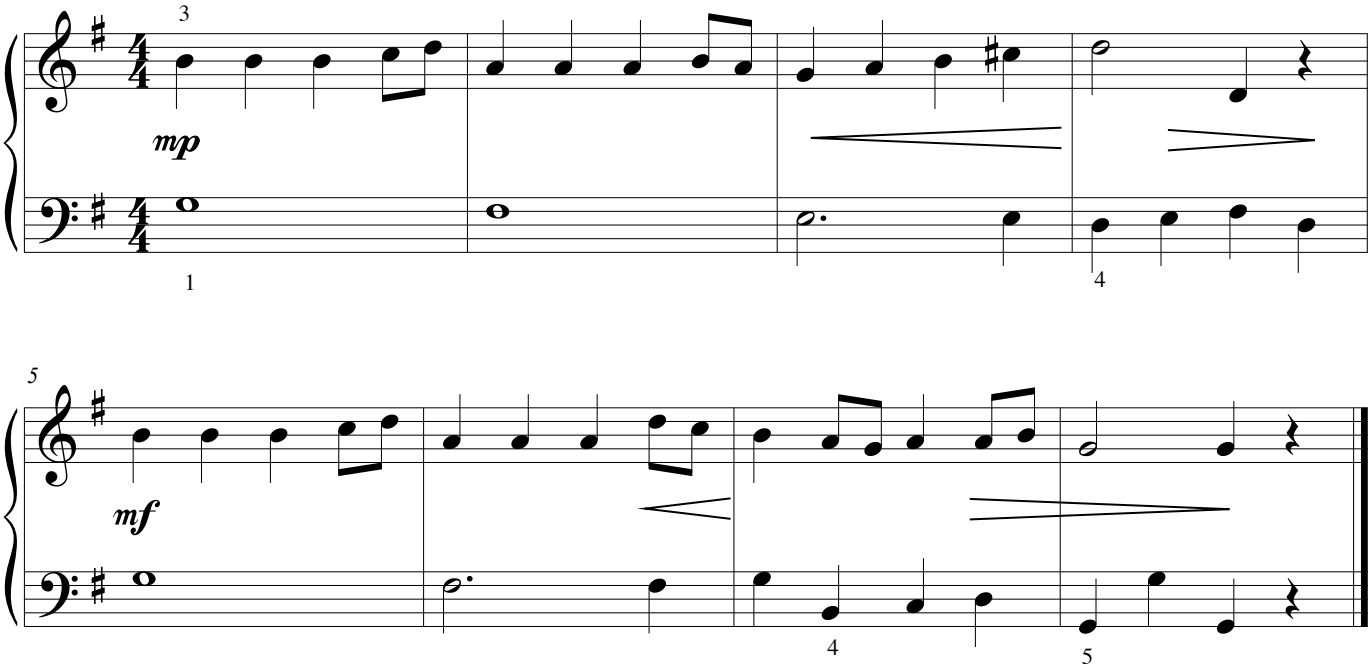
Say the finger numbers aloud as you play hands separately, then together.



Study No. 4

Daniel Gottlob Türk
(1756-1813)

Allegro Moderato

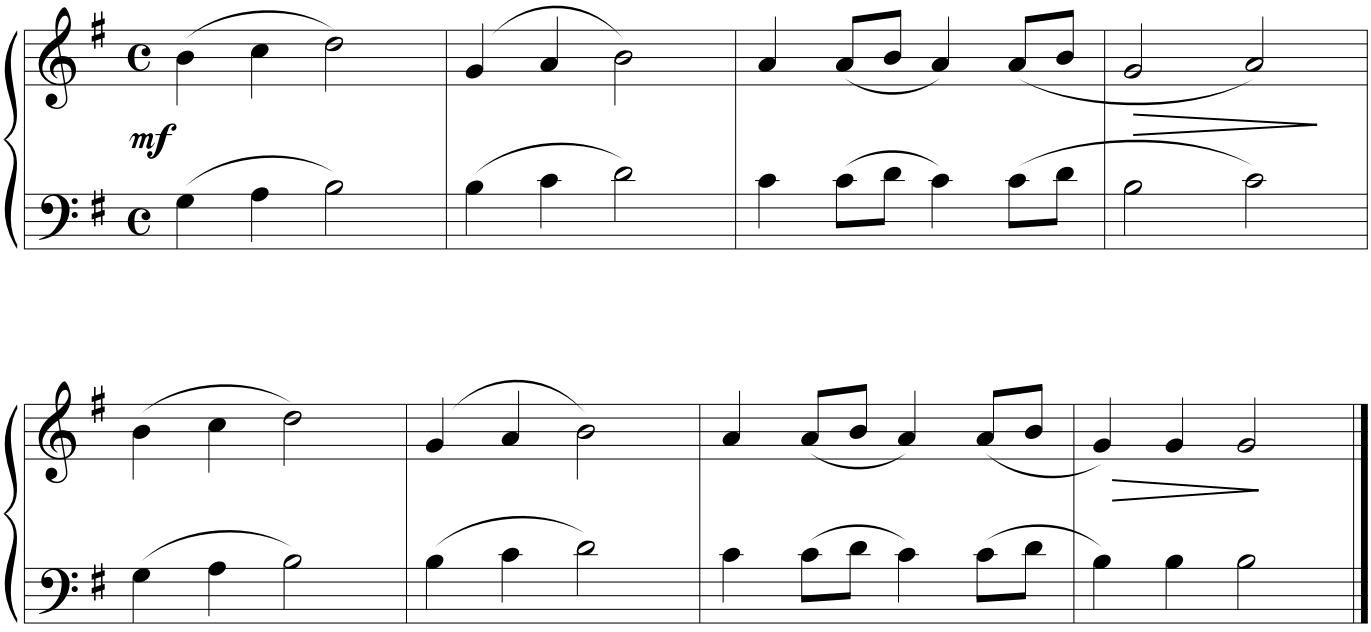


Melody

Op. 218, No. 18

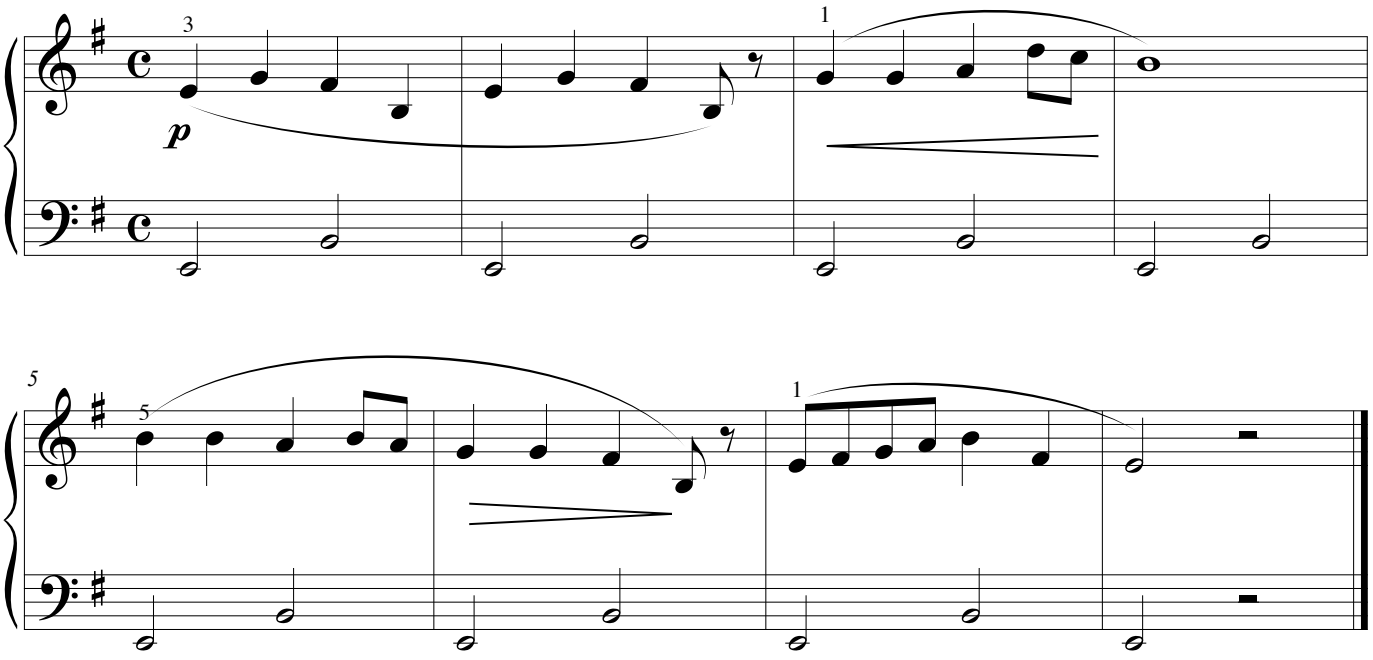
Louis Köhler
(1820-1886)

Moderato



Schlaf Mein Kind

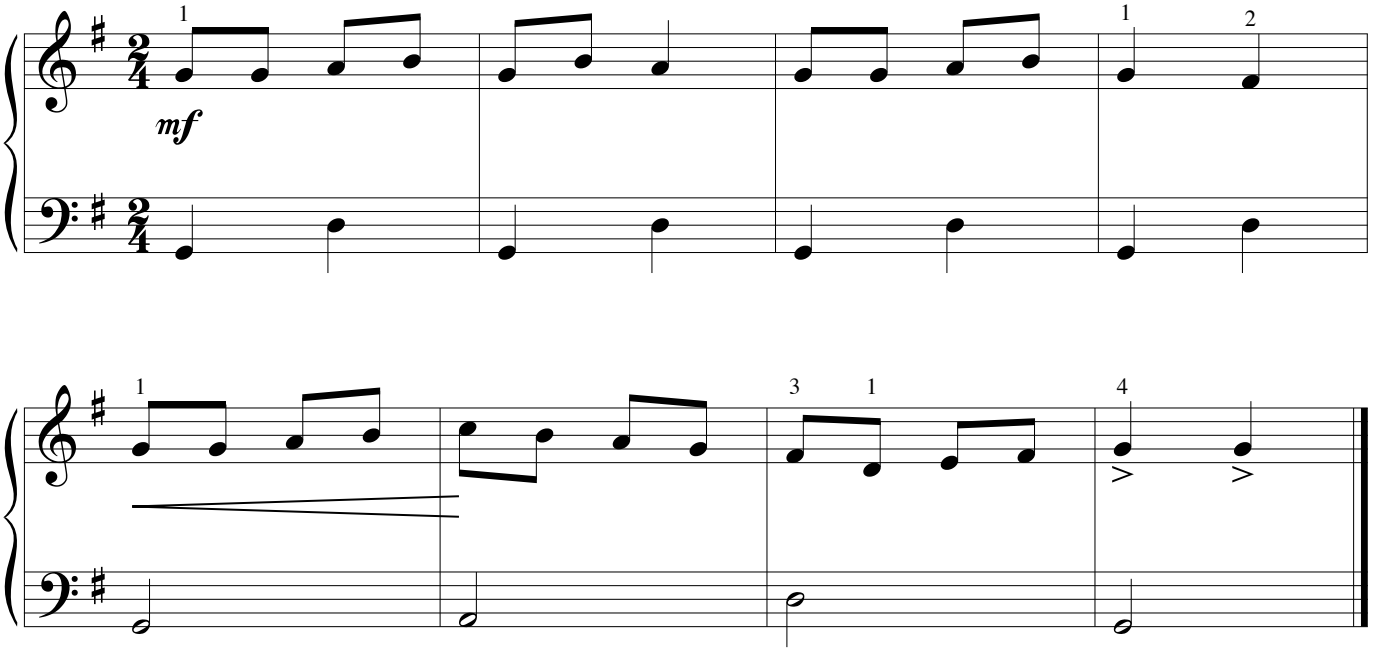
Russian Lullaby



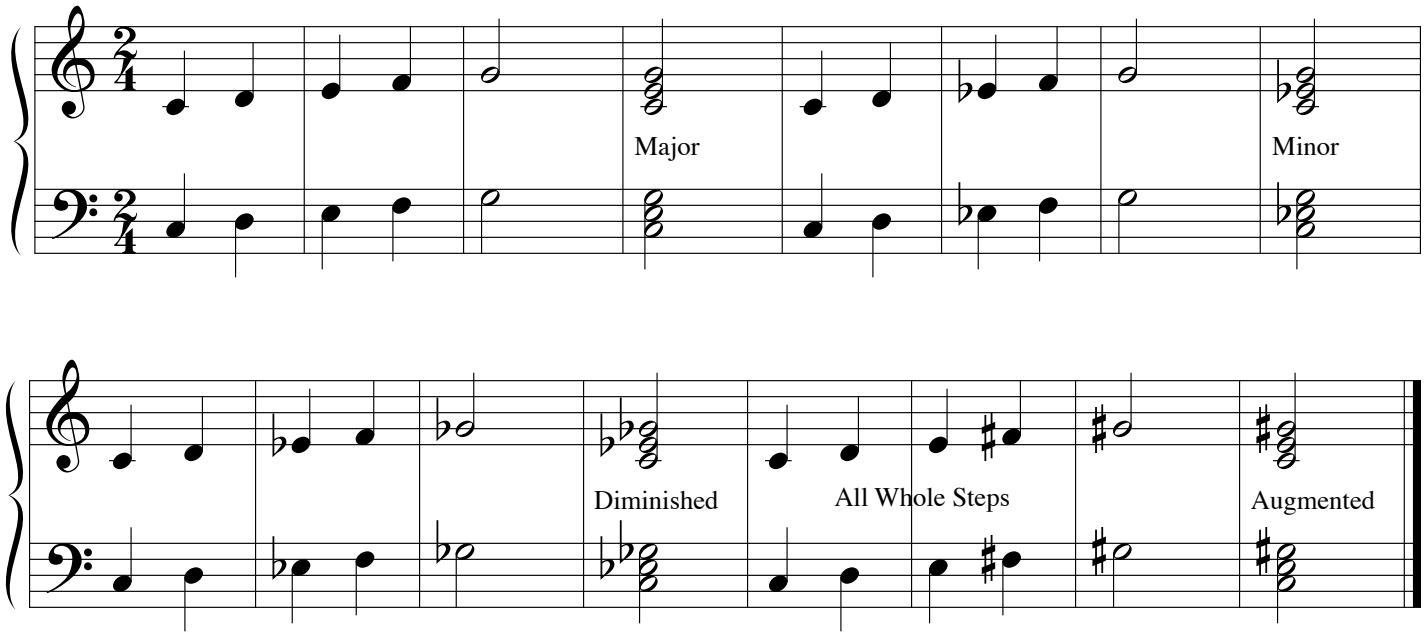
May be performed as a four-part round.

Yankee Doodle

Traditional American

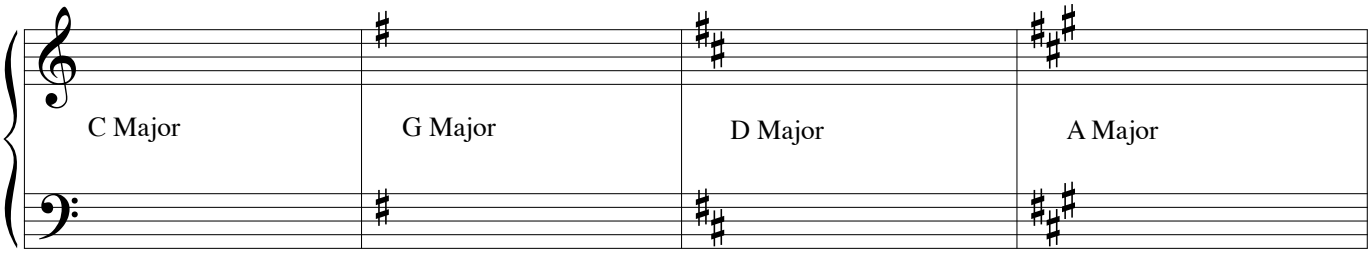


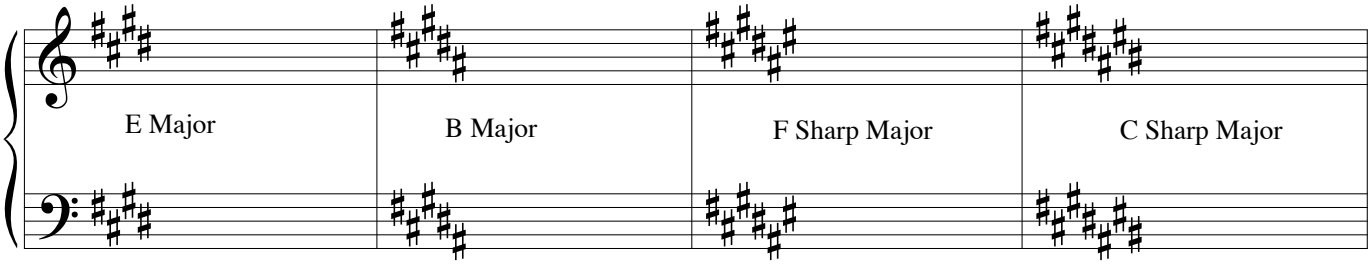
Major, minor, diminished, and Augmented Triads



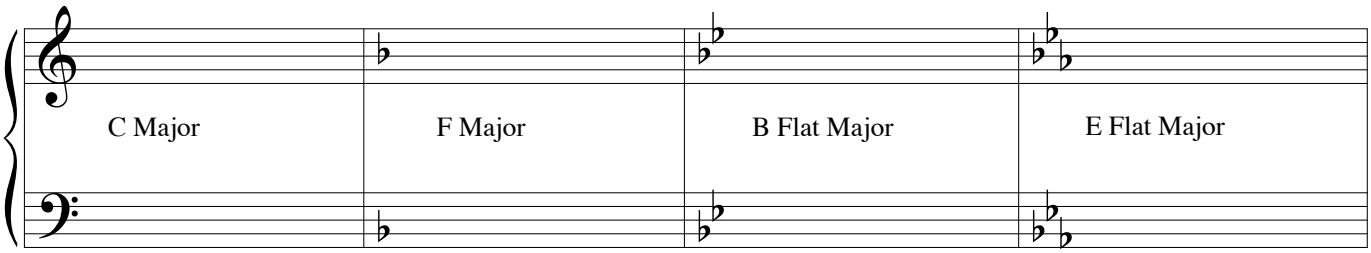
About Major Key Signatures

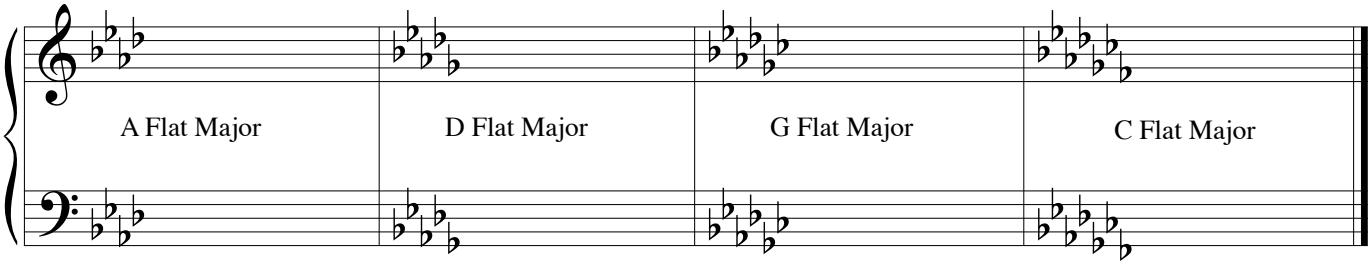
Order of sharps: **F C G D A E B**
The last sharp in the key signature is degree 7 of the major scale.
Go up one half step to name the keynote.





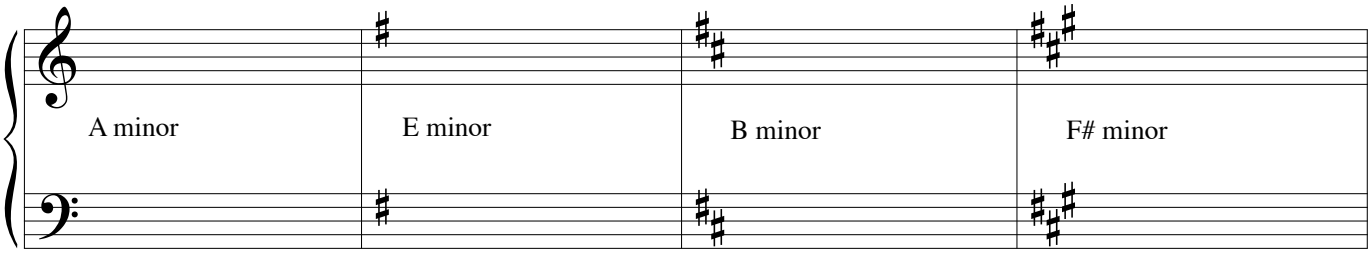
Order of flats: **B E A D G C F**
The last flat in the key signature is degree 4 of the major scale.
Go down a fourth to name the keynote, or look at the next to last flat.

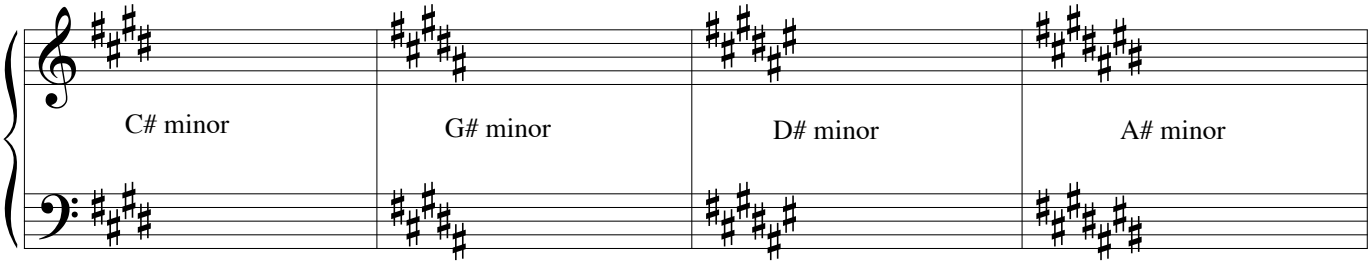




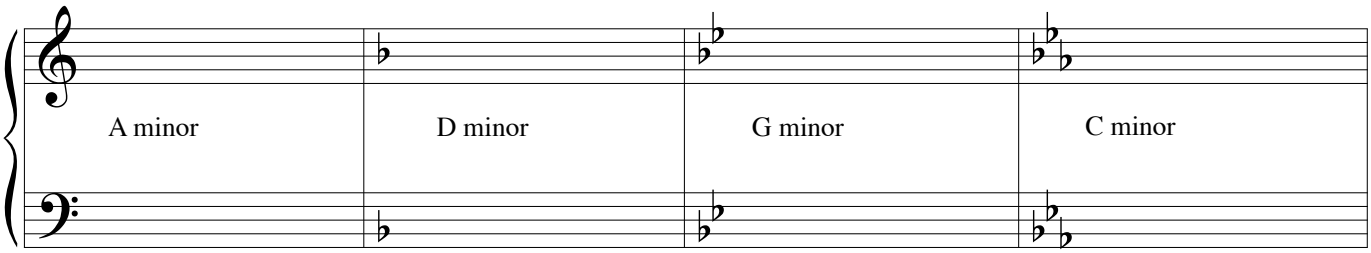
About Minor Key Signatures

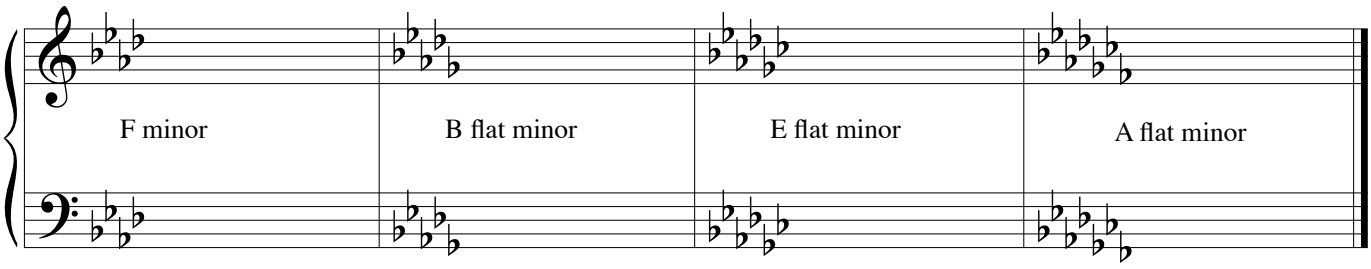
Every key signature can represent a minor as well as a major key.
The relative minor can always be found down a minor third from the Major keynote.





In flat key signatures, follow the same procedure as above:
Go down a minor third from the Major keynote to find the relative minor.





Concert Guidelines for Performers and Listeners

For Performers:

1. Warm up before your performance by playing exercises and familiar music. If your piece is very long, conserve your energy and think through it.

2. Dress appropriately for presenting yourself to the audience. Your appearance should not distract from the music. Be sure shoes are comfortable if pedaling and sleeves do not interfere.

3. Arrive at the performance site early. Silence your devices. Prepare yourself to be calm, focused, confident and poised. Do not perform with gum or candy in your mouth.

4. When it is time to play, walk to the piano and make a small bow. Do not announce excuses or apologies to your audience before playing.

5. Take time to prepare at the piano. Adjust the bench, checking your distance from the keyboard and pedal. Adjust the music rack, or if playing from memory, fold the music rack down.

6. With your hands in your lap, think the tempo of your piece. Spot where on the keyboard you should place your hands to begin the piece. Move your hands together to their starting place.

7. Double-check your position. In your head, count yourself in.

8. Remain poised during the performance. Do not make faces or speak from the bench if you make a mistake or need to start over. Little slips do not spoil the music when you can stay calm and finish well.

9. Acknowledge applause at the end with a simple bow.

10. Respond to compliments graciously. Do not make excuses or belittle your performance.

For Listeners:

1. Be seated before the performance begins. Silence your devices. If you arrive late, wait to enter during applause between numbers, and take your seat quickly and quietly.

2. Relax and give the performance your full attention. Whispering and rustling papers can distract performers and other listeners.

3. Keep your mind and your ears open. You may not like everything you hear, but there is always something to be learned.

4. Some pieces are performed in movements or sets. The audience will save their applause until the conclusion. An exception to this rule is in jazz performances, where players are often applauded during the piece after their solos. Follow knowledgeable audience members in what is appropriate to the venue.

5. Whistling and shouting are usually not appreciated, especially by the person sitting next to you.

6. Plan to stay until the end of the concert, including encores.

7. If you must get up and leave, do so quickly during applause between pieces.

8. Give some thought to dressing appropriately for the venue.