Chapter 15

Notes of Smaller Value
Grouping

In addition to the wholes, halves, quarters, and eighths that you have already learned, you will need to transcribe notes and rests of smaller value: 16ths, 32nds, 64ths, and very occasionally 128ths or even 256ths.

15.1 Notes and Rests of Smaller Value

There are no new braille signs to learn for the smaller values. Each of the signs for the larger values also stands for one of the smaller ones. The use of the same braille character for two different time values is feasible because the number of notes in a measure nearly always makes it easy to determine the values. In those rare situations where there could be doubt (discussed later), a smaller-value or larger-value sign is used to clarify the value.

Note values in the following chart are illustrated with the note C. Signs and procedures for 256th notes are not included here but are presented in MBC-2015 in case you ever need them.

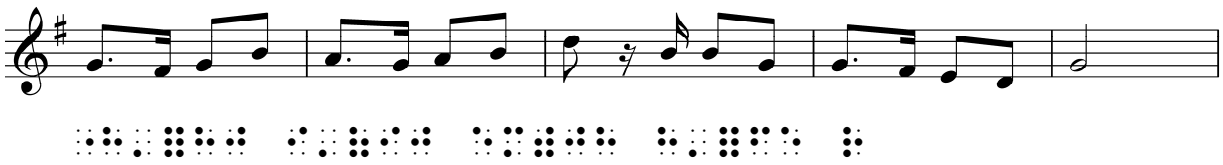
Note and Rest Values

Eighth and 128th				
Quarter and 64th				
Half and 32nd				
Whole and 16th				

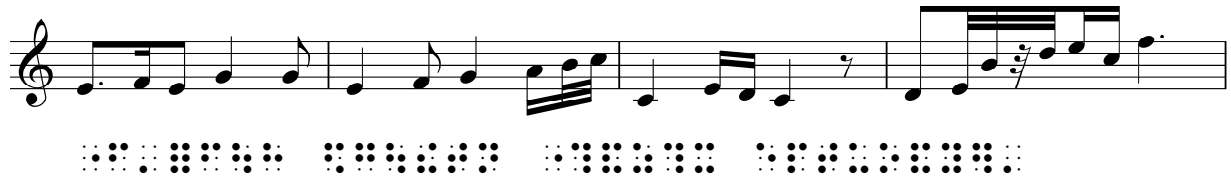
15.2 Examples for Study and Practice

The following examples are presented here for study and brailling practice.

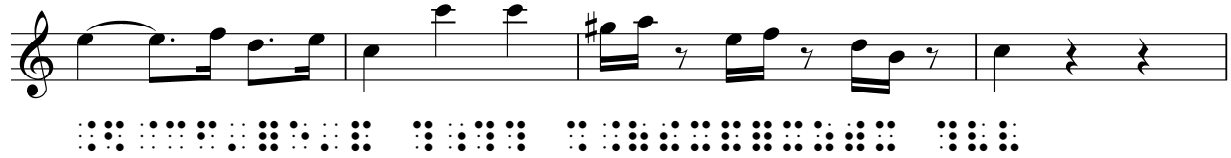
Example 15.2.1



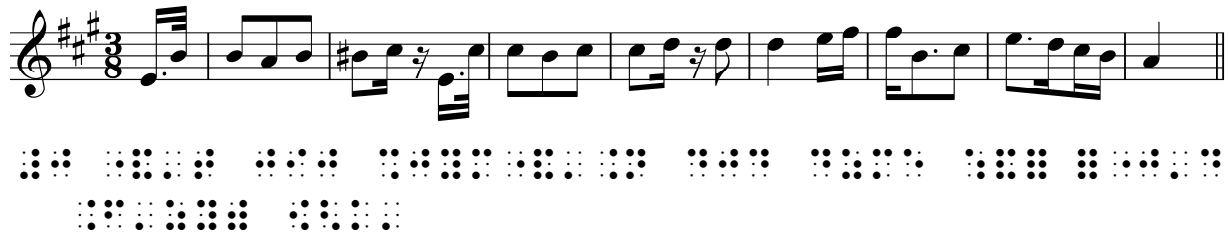
Example 15.2.2



Example 15.2.3



Example 15.2.4



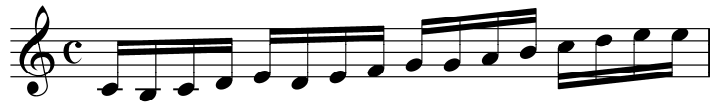
15.3 Regular Grouping of Notes of Similar Value

When consecutive notes of smaller value form beats or part-beats, in print music they are usually beamed together by means of a ligature or ligatures (a heavy horizontal bar or bars joining the stems of the notes). This beaming procedure enables the sighted reader to instantaneously organize the notes into the correct rhythm.

The equivalent braille procedure, called "grouping," can be used for 16ths, 32nds, and 64ths. The first note of the group is brailled at true value; the remaining notes of the group are brailled without lower dots. Strict rules must be followed for braille grouping so that the braille reader will not mistake the grouped notes for true eighths.

To understand the usefulness of braille grouping, compare the two transcriptions in the following example:

Example 15.3.1



a. Grouping of 16ths:

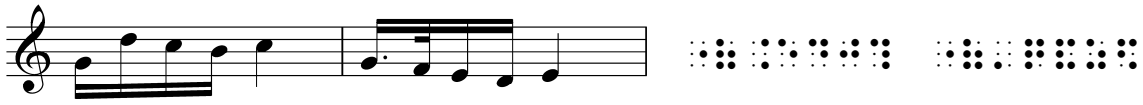
b. No grouping of 16ths:

The grouping in transcription "a" enables the braille reader to immediately see that each of the four beats consists of four sixteenth notes. By contrast, transcription "b" appears to the braille reader as a disorganized jumble which requires slow, careful measuring and counting. Such examples could be endlessly multiplied from intricate instrumental and vocal music—the standard repertoire that serious musicians must study and master.

15.4 Differences between Print Beaming and Braille Grouping

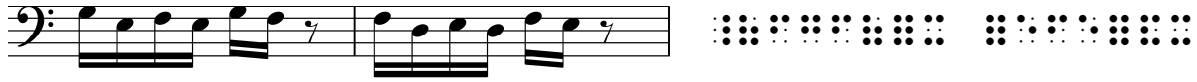
Certain groups, commonly beamed in print, cannot be grouped in braille. For example, all notes in the braille group must have precisely the same value. None may be dotted. Thus, in the next example, braille grouping may be used in the first measure but not in the second, even though print beaming is feasible in both measures.

Example 15.4.1



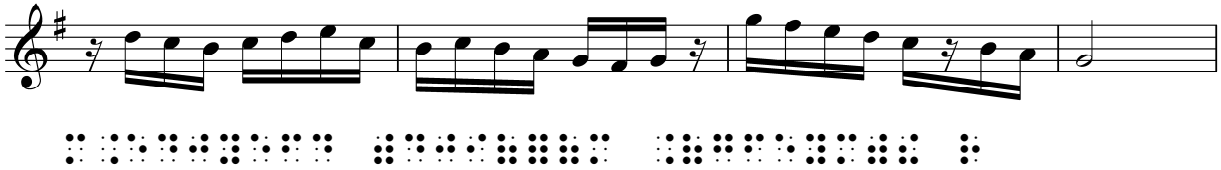
Furthermore, the braille group must be composed of at least three notes. In print, by contrast, beaming may be used for two notes that form a beat or part-beat.

Example 15.4.2



In braille, a rest of the same value may take the place of the first note in a group. If the rest is located in any other position, braille grouping is not permitted and all notes must be brailled at true value.

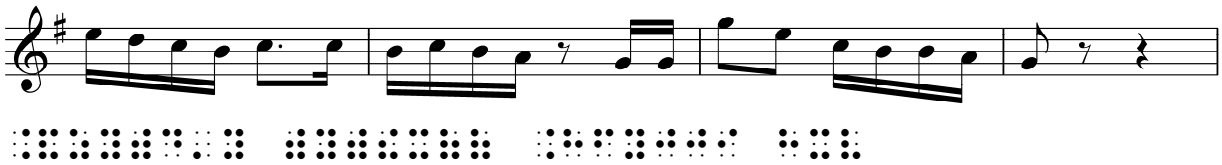
Example 15.4.3



15.5 More Rules for Braille Grouping

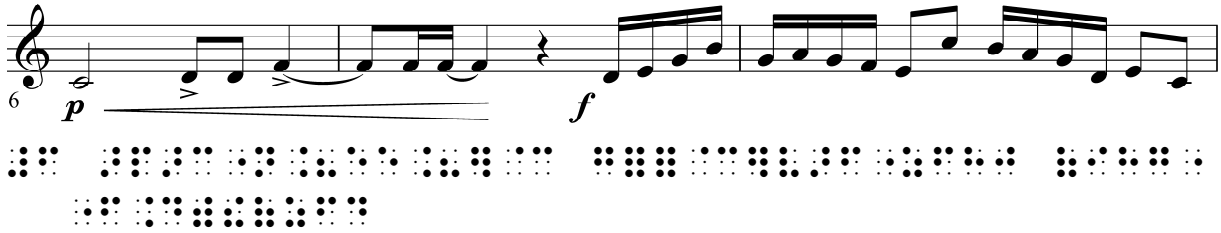
If the notes in the group are immediately followed by an eighth note or rest (or dotted eighth), braille grouping is not permitted. Braille grouping may be used, however, if the eighth is located in a new measure.

Example 15.5.1



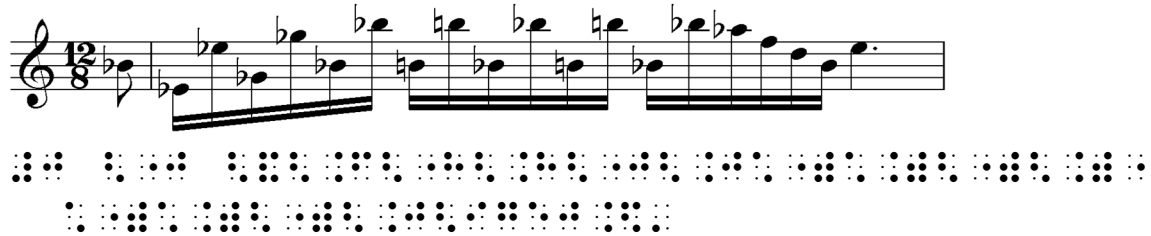
If the measure is divided between braille lines, braille grouping may be used if the eighth note or eighth rest is located on a new line of braille.

Example 15.5.2



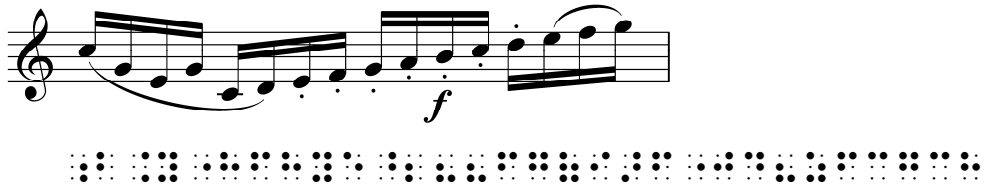
All notes of the braille group must be placed in the same line of braille. If the notes are divided between braille lines, all notes must be brailled at true value.

Example 15.5.3



Braille grouping may not be used if the group is interrupted by a music hyphen or by any kind of bar or double bar. Other signs, however, do not prevent braille grouping. Slurs, single word-sign expressions, and symbols of expression may intervene between the notes of a braille group. Similarly, such signs as accidentals, octave marks, finger marks, and ties are regarded as so closely related to the note that they do not interrupt the grouping process.

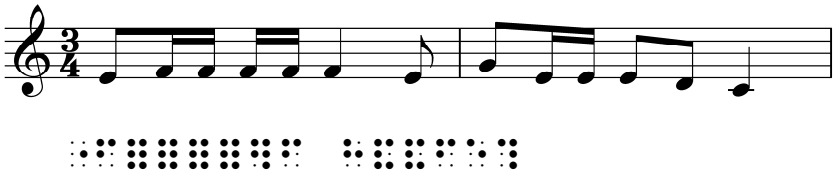
Example 15.5.4



It is crucial to understand that braille grouping must not be used if the notes cross the beat. The notes of the braille group must be located in the same natural beat of the measure. In the next example, for instance, the

four 16th notes cannot be grouped. In 3/4 time, the first two 16th notes belong to beat 1, and the next two 16th notes belong to beat 2. Braille grouping would "cross the beat" and therefore is not allowed.

Example 15.5.5



15.6 Table for Grouping according to Time Signatures

Music meter or time is defined by a time signature. The top number defines how many beats or units will be in a measure; the bottom number defines what kind of note gets one beat.

Simple meters include all time signatures with the numeral 2, 3, 4, 5 or 7 on the top. Each beat is a unit and smaller value notes should be grouped as single units.

Compound meters are simple meters multiplied by three and include all time signatures with the numeral 6, 9, 12 or 15 on the top. The beats, in this case, can be subdivided into smaller units/beats, depending on what kind of note gets one beat.

The following table will serve as a useful guide for understanding the general rules of grouping.

A. Simple Time

2/2 3/2 4/2 2/4 3/4 4/4 5/4	16ths, grouped by fours 32nds, grouped by fours 64ths, grouped by fours	⠿⠿⠿⠿ ⠿⠿⠿⠿ ⠿⠿⠿⠿
3/8 4/8	16ths, grouped by the full measure only 32nds, grouped by fours 64ths, grouped by fours	⠿⠿⠿⠿⠿⠿ ⠿⠿⠿⠿⠿⠿⠿⠿ ⠿⠿⠿⠿ ⠿⠿⠿⠿
4/16 5/16	16ths, no grouping 32nds, grouped by the full measure only 64ths, grouped by fours	⠿⠿⠿⠿ ⠿⠿⠿⠿⠿ ⠿⠿⠿⠿⠿⠿⠿⠿ ⠿⠿⠿⠿⠿⠿⠿⠿⠿ ⠿⠿⠿⠿

Smaller values are not likely to be encountered

B. Compound Time

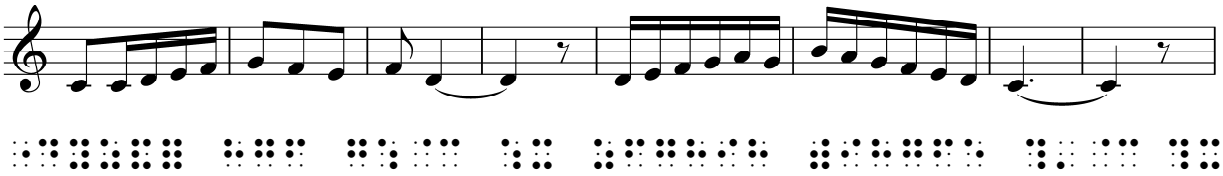
6/8 9/8 12/8 15/8	16ths, grouped by sixes	⠿⠿⠿⠿⠿⠿
	32nds, grouped by fours	⠿⠿⠿⠿
	64ths, grouped by fours	⠿⠿⠿⠿
6/16 9/16 12/16	16ths, grouped by threes	⠿⠿⠿
	32nds, grouped by sixes	⠿⠿⠿⠿⠿⠿
	64ths, grouped by fours	⠿⠿⠿⠿
6/2 6/4 9/4 12/4	All small values grouped by fours	

You will encounter 16ths more than any other smaller value. Remember that when the lower numeral of the time signature is 4 or 2, the 16ths will be grouped by fours. When the lower numeral is 8 or 16, the 16ths will not be grouped by fours.

15.7 More Examples of Grouping

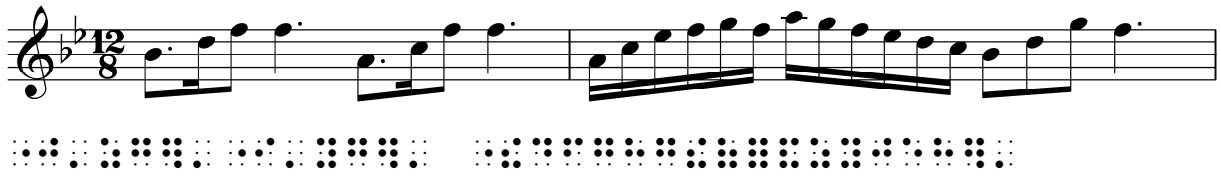
In this example, the four 16ths in the first measure cannot be grouped. They constitute two beats in 3/8 time.

Example 15.7.1



In the compound 12/8 time signature, the six 16ths at the beginning of the second measure are grouped because they constitute a compound beat. The next group of six 16ths also constitutes a compound beat, but they cannot be grouped in braille since they are immediately followed by an eighth.

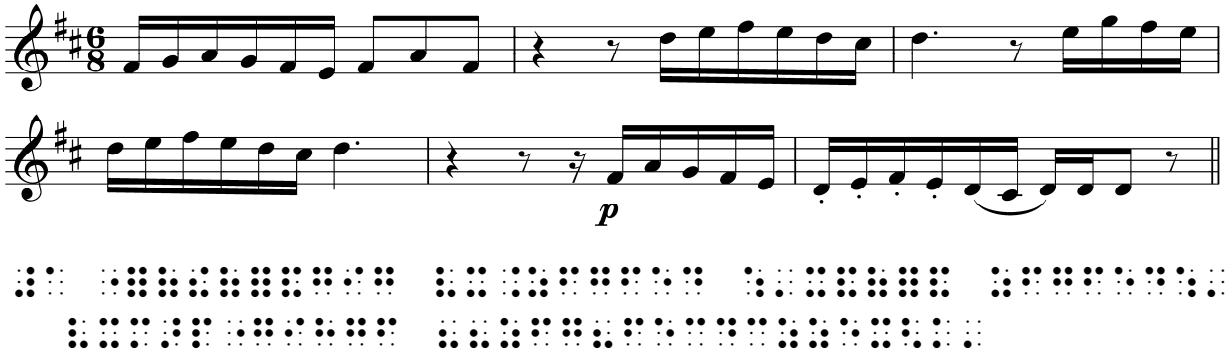
Example 15.7.2



Here is another example in compound time. The six 16ths in the first measure constitute a compound beat, but because they are immediately followed by an eighth note, they cannot be grouped. The four 16ths at the end of measure 3 constitute two simple beats, and therefore they cannot be grouped in braille. In measure 5 the braille grouping of the compound

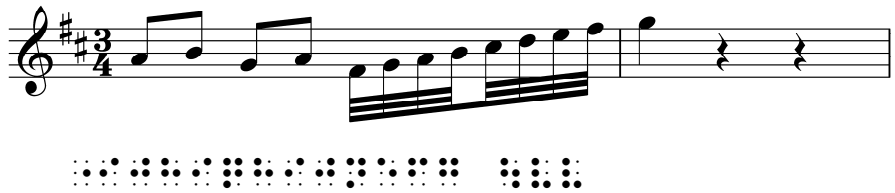
beat begins with the 16th rest, and the "piano" word-sign expression does not prevent the grouping. Similarly, in the first compound beat of measure 6, the staccato marks and slurs do not prevent braille grouping.

Example 15.7.3



In this example, the eight 32nd notes of beat 3 are transcribed as two braille groups of 4, each representing half a beat.

Example 15.7.4



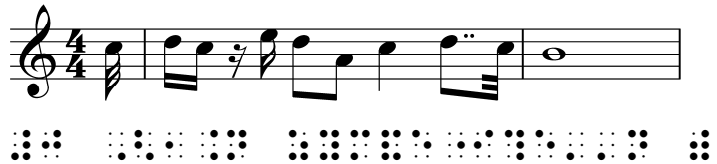
15.8 Value Signs

The larger value sign:

The smaller value sign:

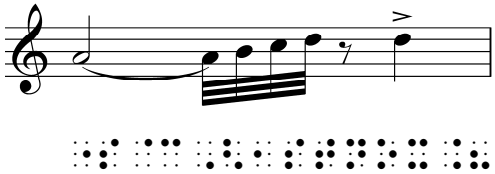
The value sign is brailled before the note to clarify uncertainty about whether the value of the note is large or small. When, for example, a piece begins or ends with an incomplete measure, there can sometimes be doubt about the value of a note or rest. In such a case the smaller-value sign is used if the note or rest has the smaller of the two possible values. Thus, in the following example, the smaller-value sign enables the braille reader to immediately see that the isolated note at the beginning of the piece is a 32nd, not a half note.

Example 15.8.1



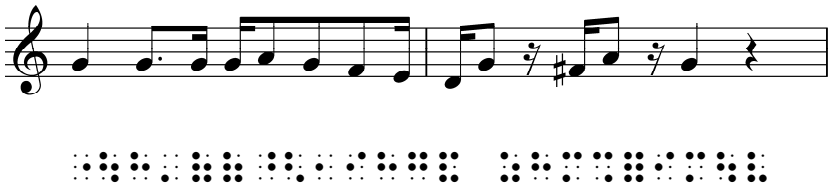
Another important use for value signs is the clarification of "differing consecutive values"—situations in which, for instance, halves and 32nds occur together.

Example 15.8.2



Value signs are useful, too, in those rare instances where true eighths, immediately brailled after a note of smaller value, might be misread as braille grouping. Such misreading could occur, for instance, in the following example where the first note of beat 3 in measure 1 is a sixteenth followed by three true eighths. The larger-value sign, brailled immediately before the first of the true eighths, shows the braille reader that grouping is not occurring here.

Example 15.8.3



Value signs are also used in cadenzas and other kinds of unmeasured music where it is often difficult to distinguish the values.

15.9 Order of Signs

Preceding the note:

reminder tie
simple word-sign expression or abbreviation
line of continuation sign
opening bracket slur
larger or smaller value sign
signs of expression or execution that precede a note
(staccato or staccatissimo, accent, tenuto)
accidental
octave mark

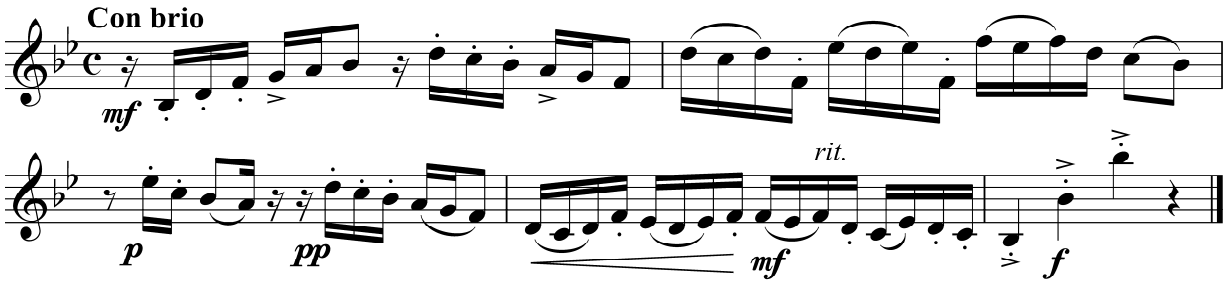
Following the note:

dot
finger mark
fermata
single slur, opening doubled slur
closing bracket slur
tie
termination sign for line of continuation or "hairpin"
breath mark
double bar
music hyphen

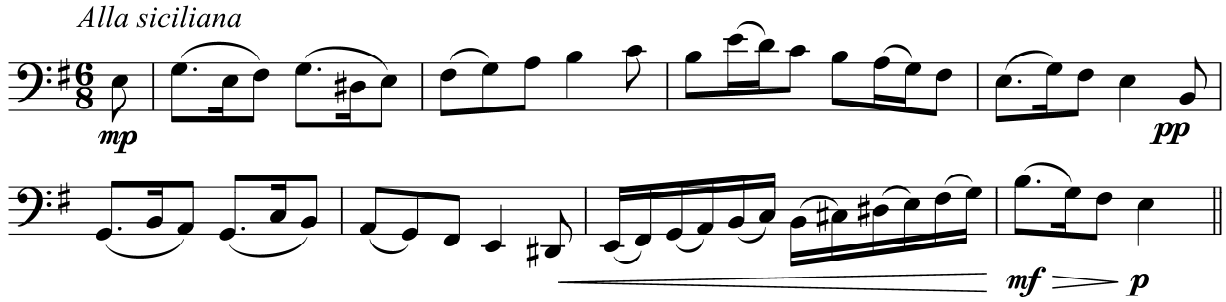
Drills for Chapter 15

(Correct transcriptions of these drills are at the end of this chapter)

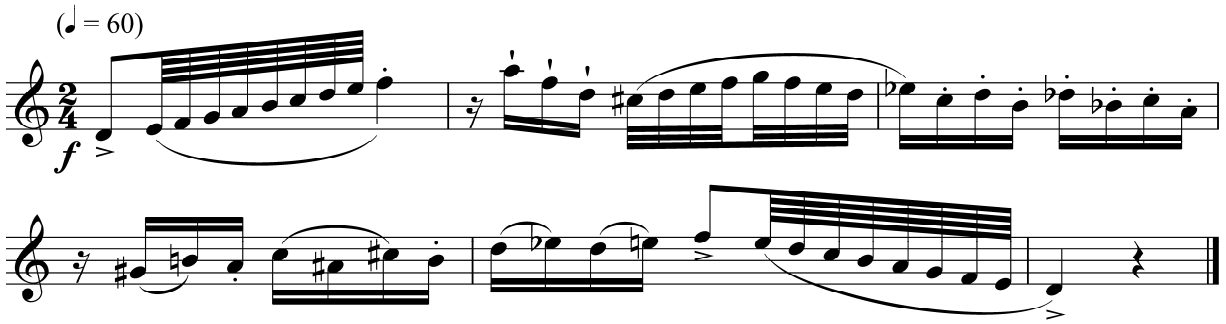
Drill 15.1



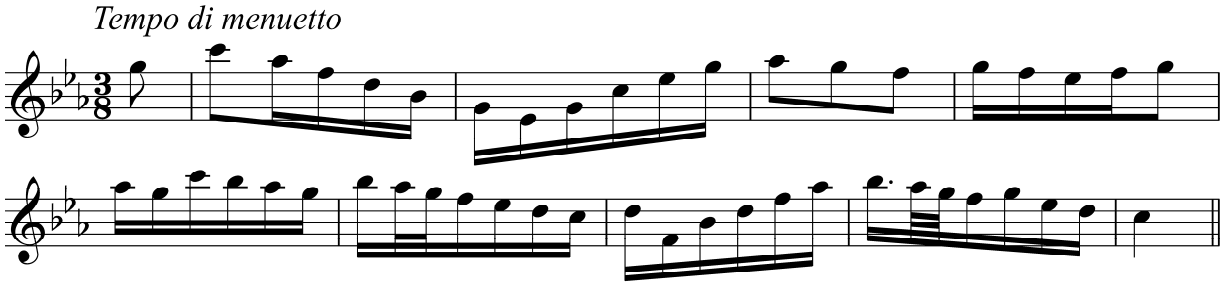
Drill 15.2



Drill 15.3



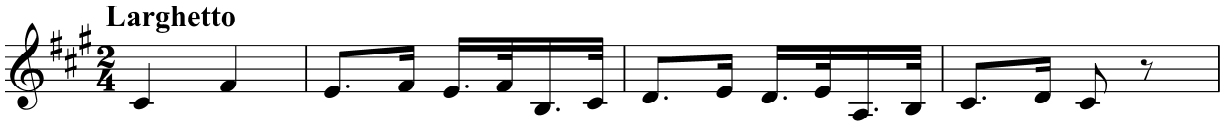
Drill 15.4



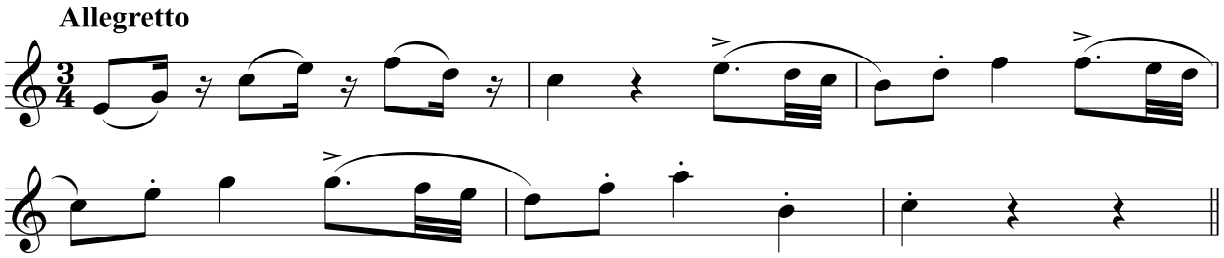
Exercises for Chapter 15

(Submit the following exercises to your instructor in BRF file format)

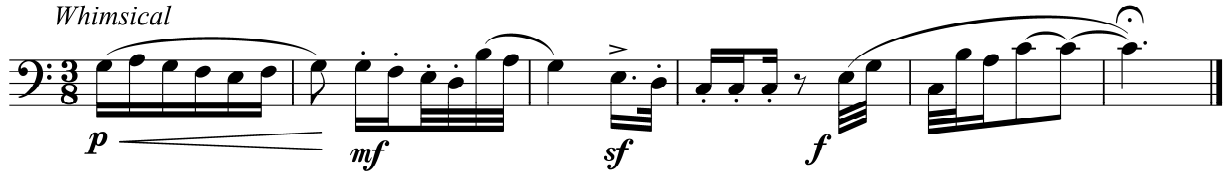
Exercise 15.1



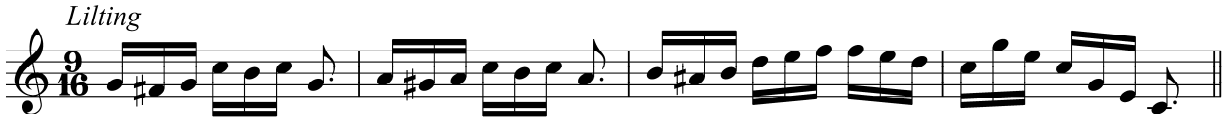
Exercise 15.2



Exercise 15.3

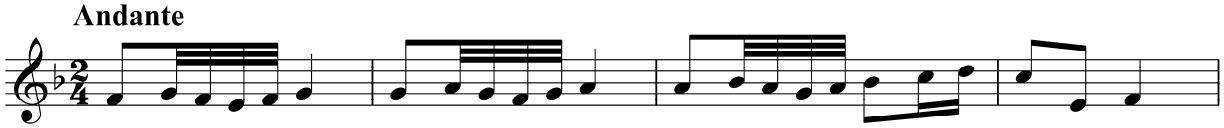


Exercise 15.4



Exercise 15.5

Exercise 15.6



Correct transcriptions of the Drills for Chapter 15