SHIFTING IN PASSAGES

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SHIFTING IN PASSAGES

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APART from any consideration of the bow, shifting is the chief disturbing factor in passage work on the violin, as the necessary and usually quick movement of the hand and arm is likely to disarrange the position of the fingers in relation to the strings.

The position of the hand in shifting is usually treated in a haphazard manner, the intonation of the note being the main concern. Granted the violinist possesses a "good ear," most important for good intonation and clean passage work is the accurate and systematic placing of the hand in positions that bring the notes comfortably under the fingers.

If, in the following exercises, the physical aspect of shifting be kept uppermost, using intonation merely as a proof of the correctness or otherwise of the hand position, it should become habitual for the student to sense these positions so correctly that the hand will be placed with comfort and certainty, leaving the mind free for other things.

*) Before making a shift, have the objective position clearly in mind. As clearness, of thought in this matter is often taken for granted without its being present, it is suggested that in the following exercises, before the note preceding the shift is played, the oncoming note and its position be named *aloud*.

Get to know exactly where the hand should be placed for each position, and in shifting ignore the intervening distance. Think only of the position of the hand for the objective note and insist on taking up definitely the same position whether approaching from above or below. *This is the essence of this study.*

Insist on the three unused fingers being kept above and equidistant from the string in use.

Keep the shifting finger barely in contact with the string—not pressed down while shifting.

Do not grip with the thumb.

Keep the bow moving during shifts.

Do not allow the violin to move either to right or left.

Frequently practise placing the hand silently in any chosen position without preparation, testing the position by sounding a note.

Do not use vibrato.

For clear articulation: first play the passage slowly and loudly, using the whole bow. Treat each note as an individual note, with a quick and complete pressing of the string to the fingerboard and a quick release of the fingers. Make each note "click."

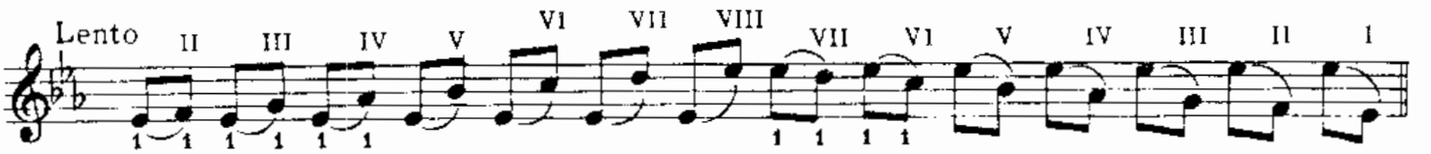
Give the dotted notes their full value with full tone.

As certainty increases, increase the speed, playing more softly and using less bow.

In Variation 4 of each exercise see that the 5th and 6th notes of the first group, and the 1st and 2nd notes of the second group are played evenly and firmly — especially do not wait on the first note of the 2nd group.

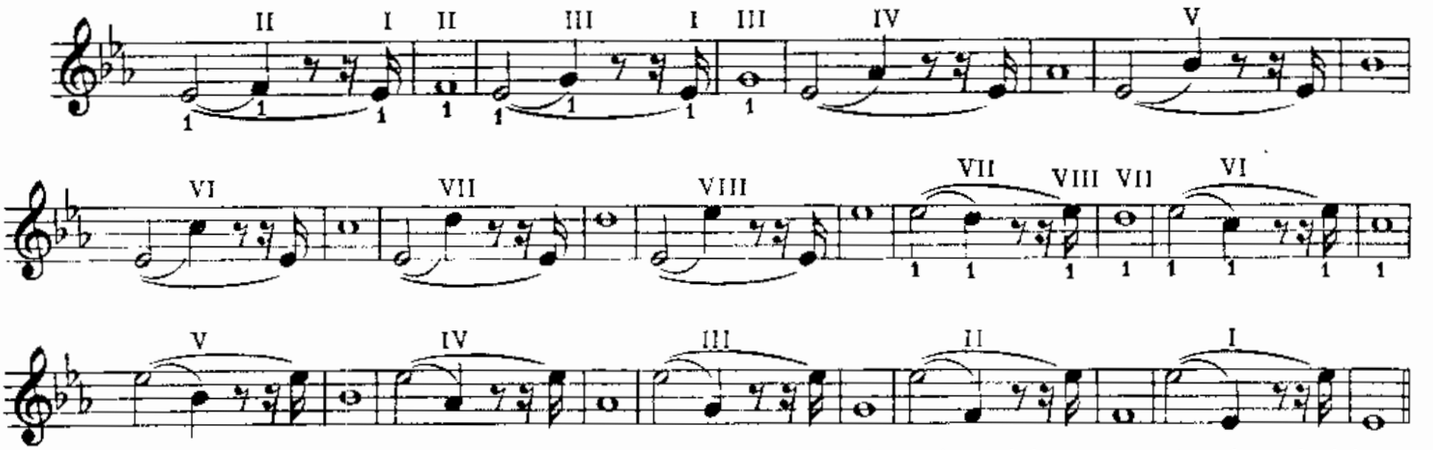
*) *Read this frequently.*

First Finger Shifts



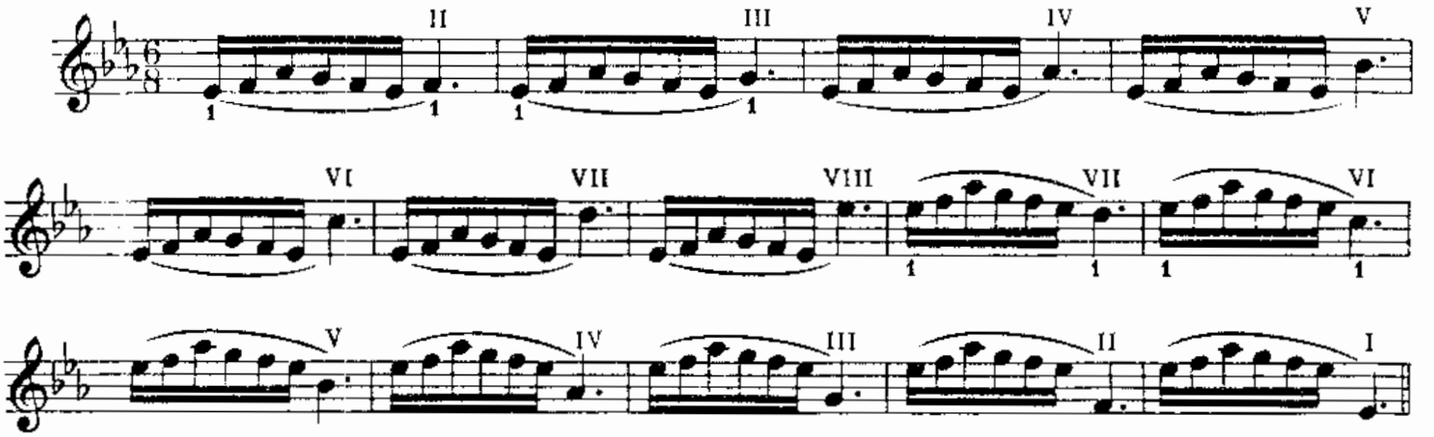
Play the above also from memory, naming the notes and positions.

VARIATION I

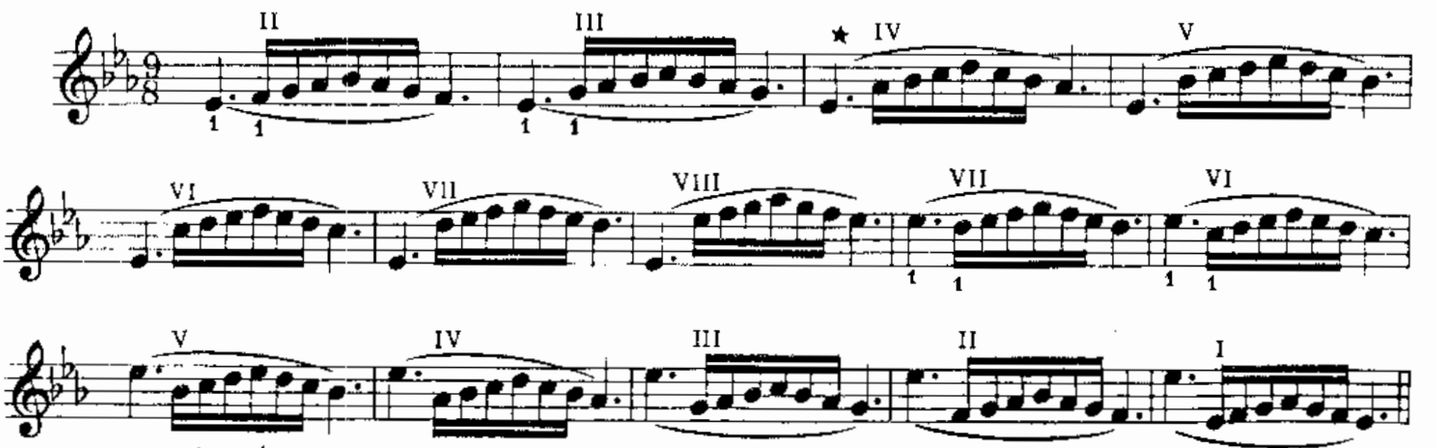


During the rests, quickly place the hand back in the original position, retaining in mind however, the exact position of the hand for the objective note, so that the ensuing quick shift may be done confidently.

VARIATION II: The shift at the end of a passage



VARIATION III: The shift at the beginning of a passage



★ Watch the A♭ & D♮ in this bar.

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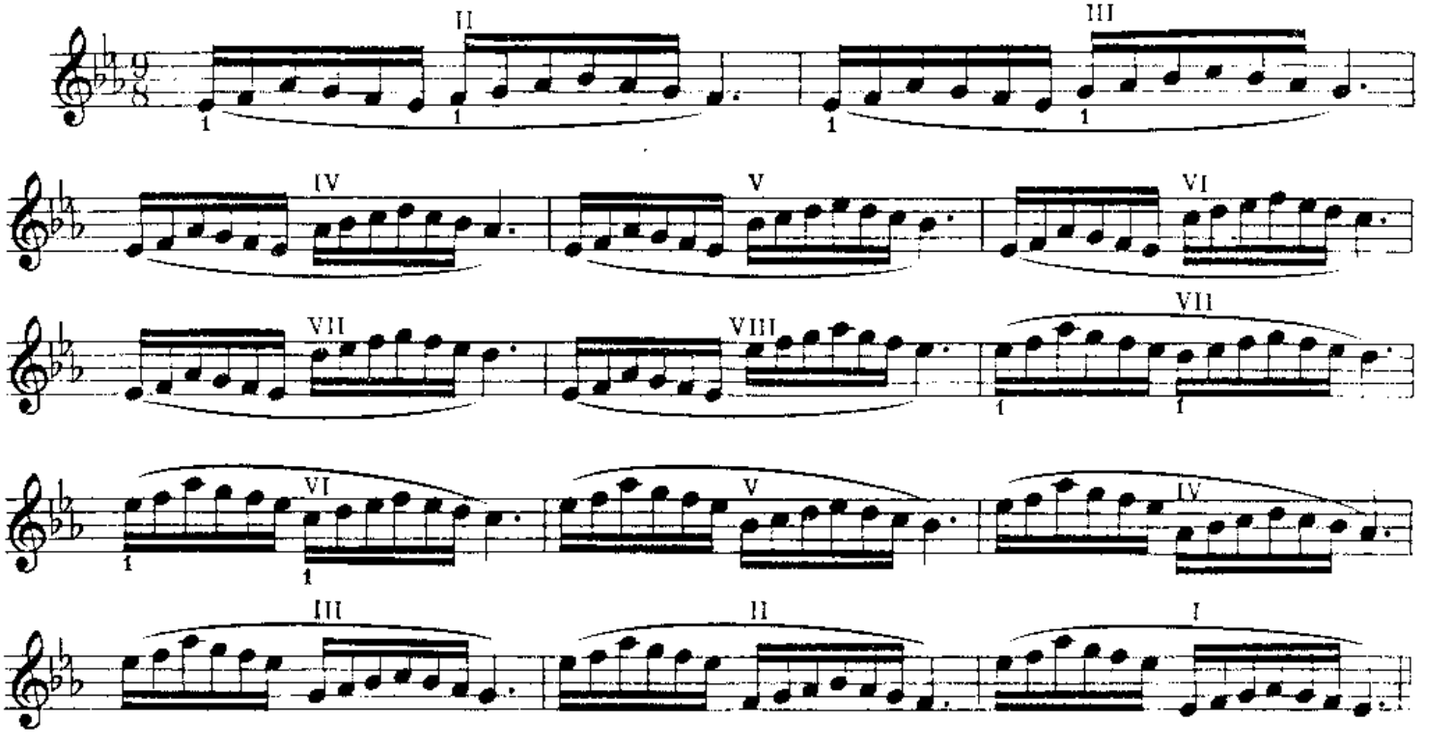
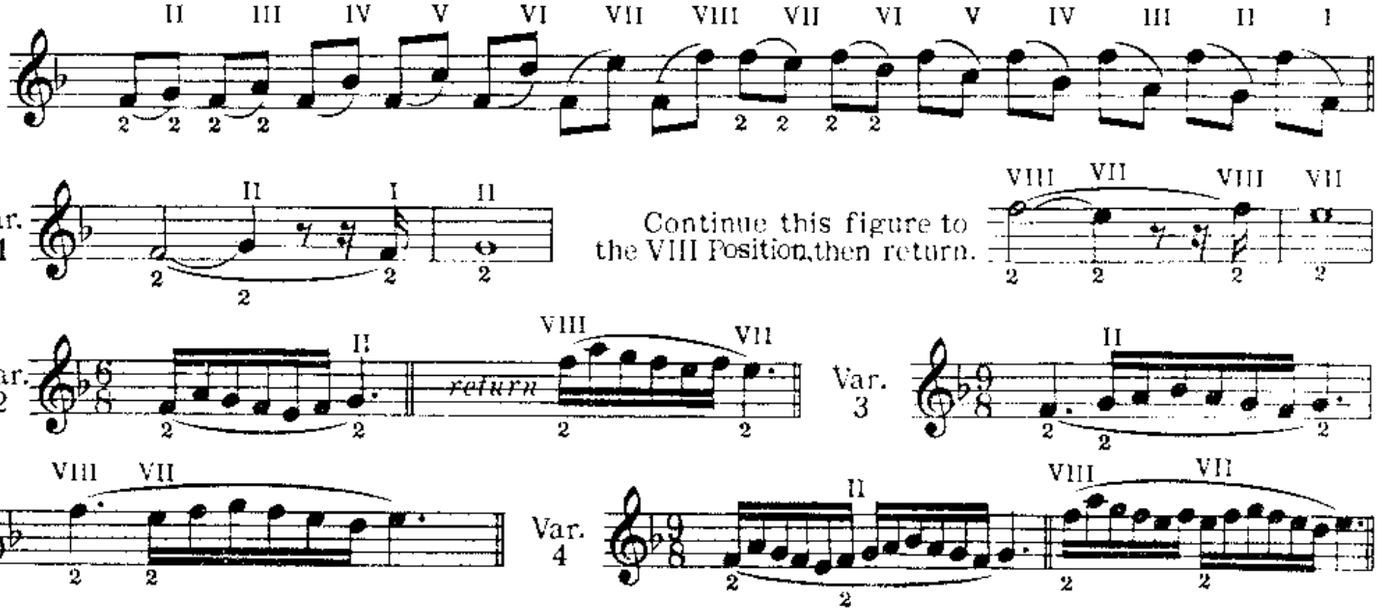
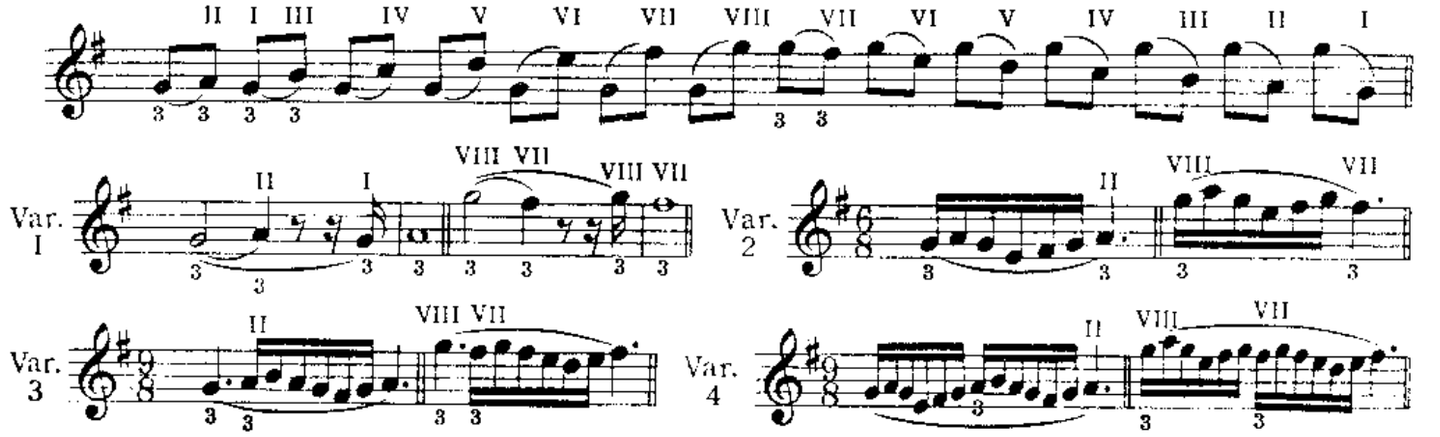
VARIATION IV: The shift in the middle of a passage



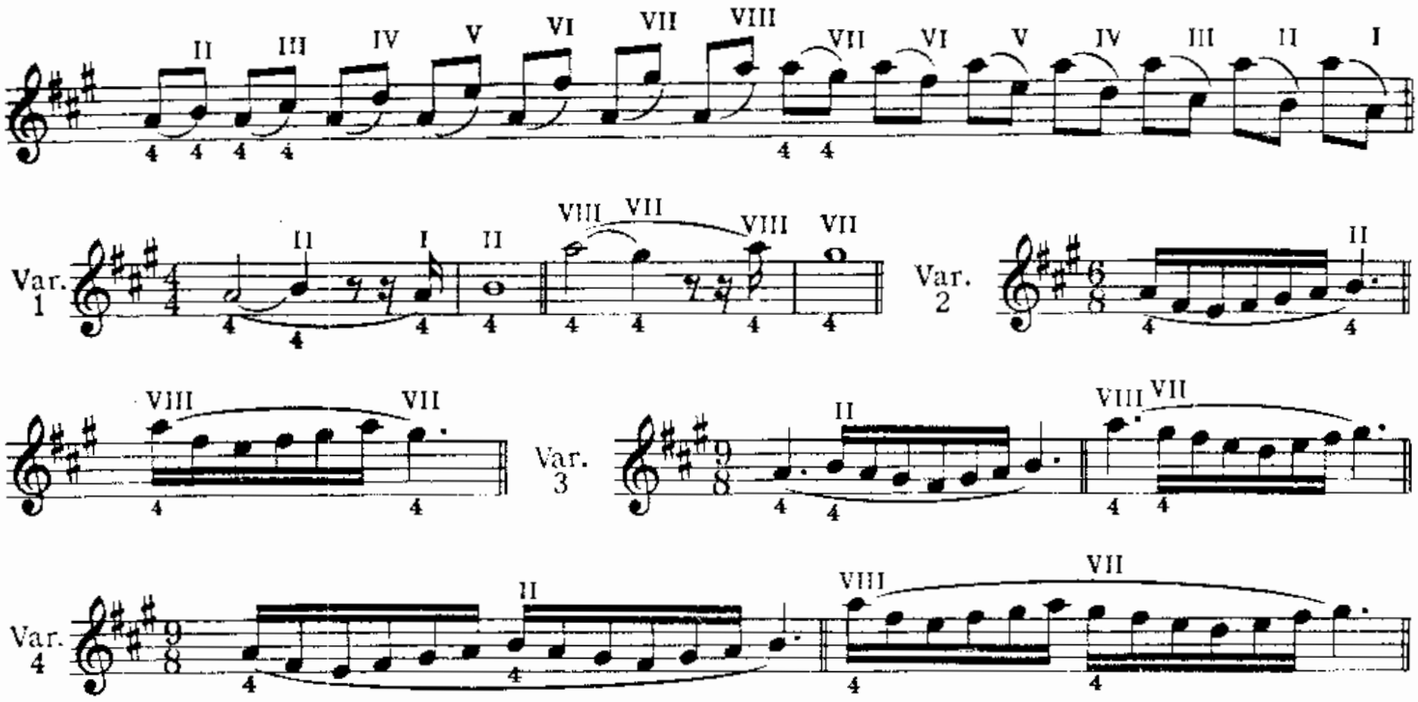
Second Finger



Third Finger



Fourth Finger



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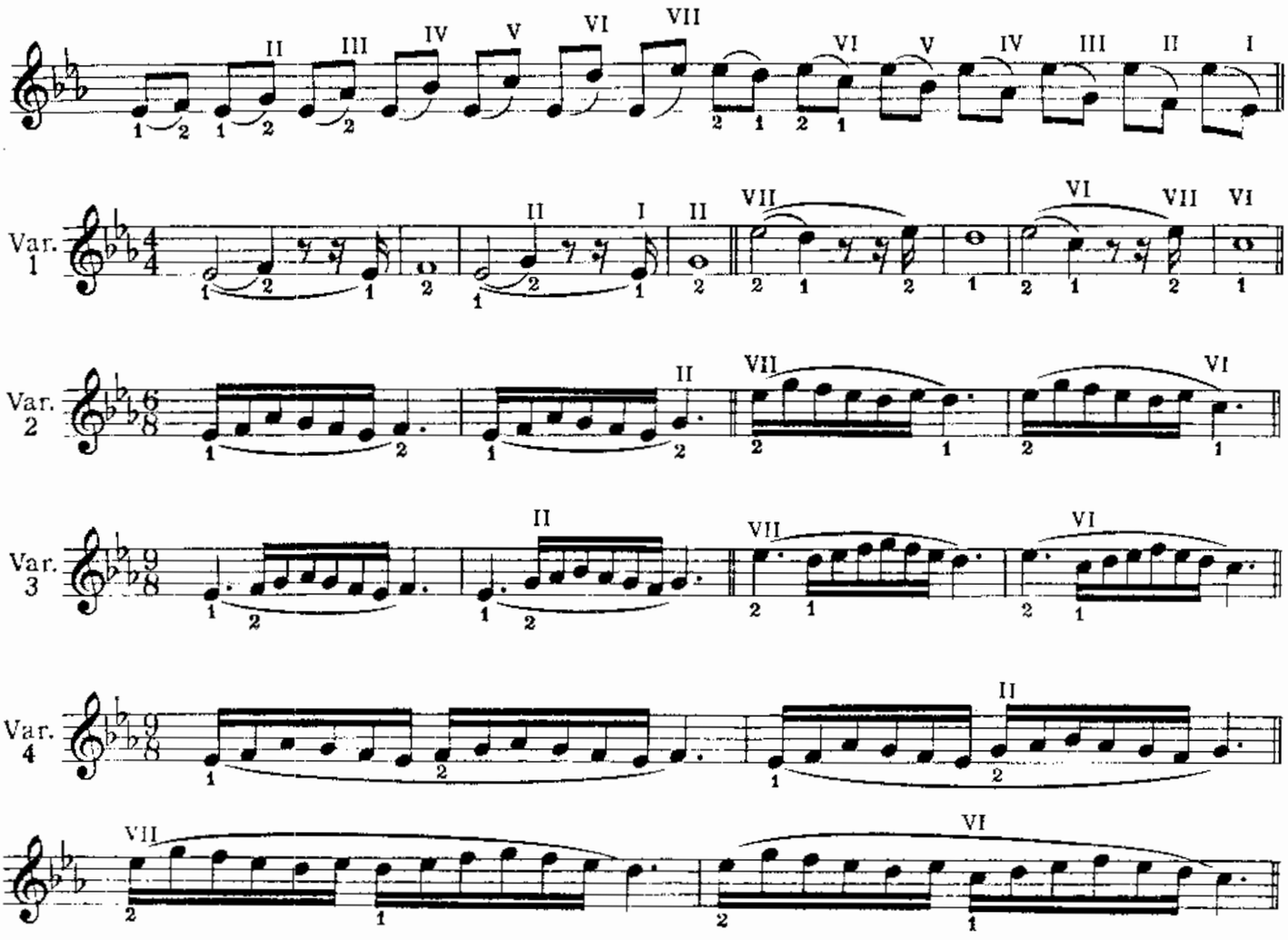

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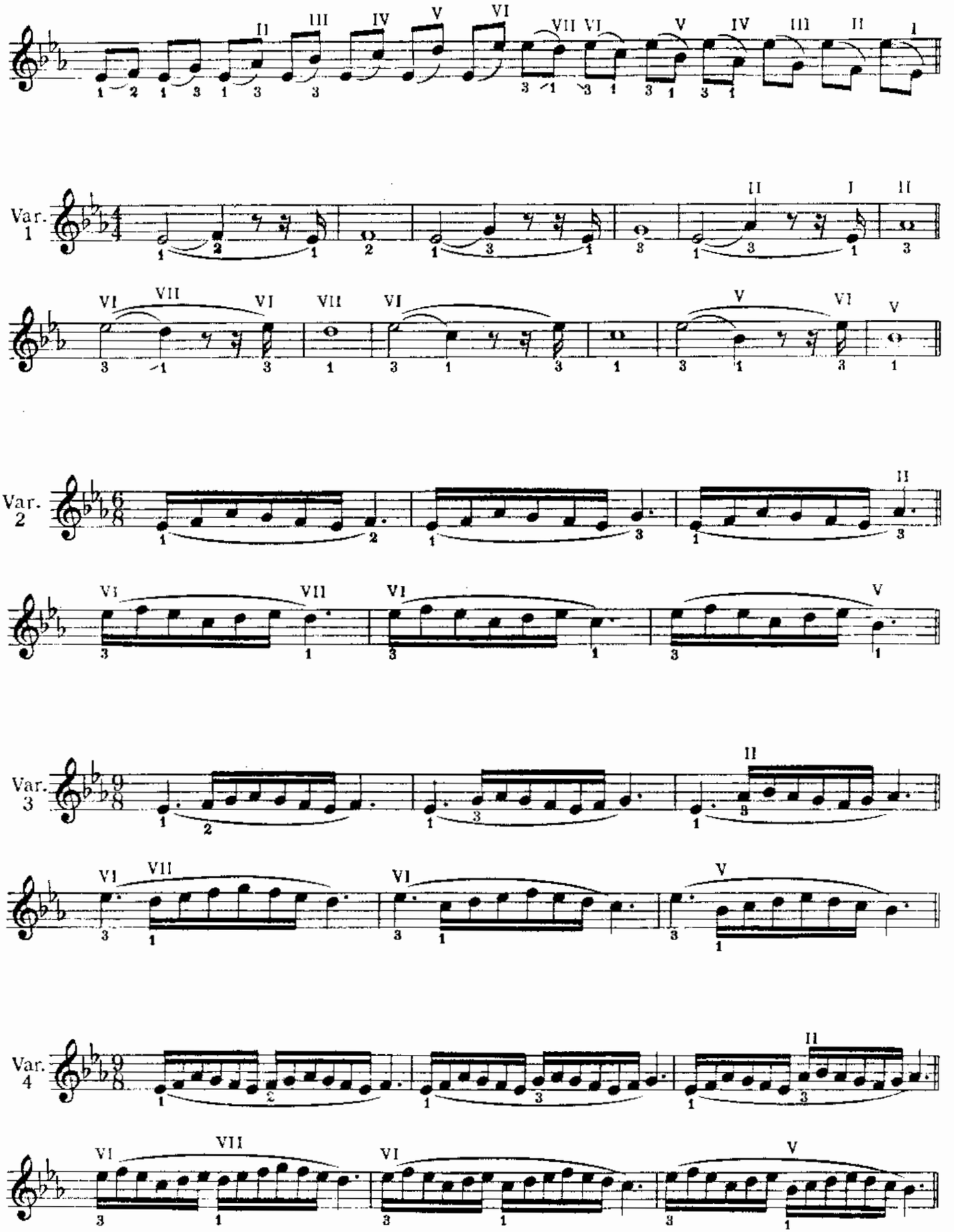

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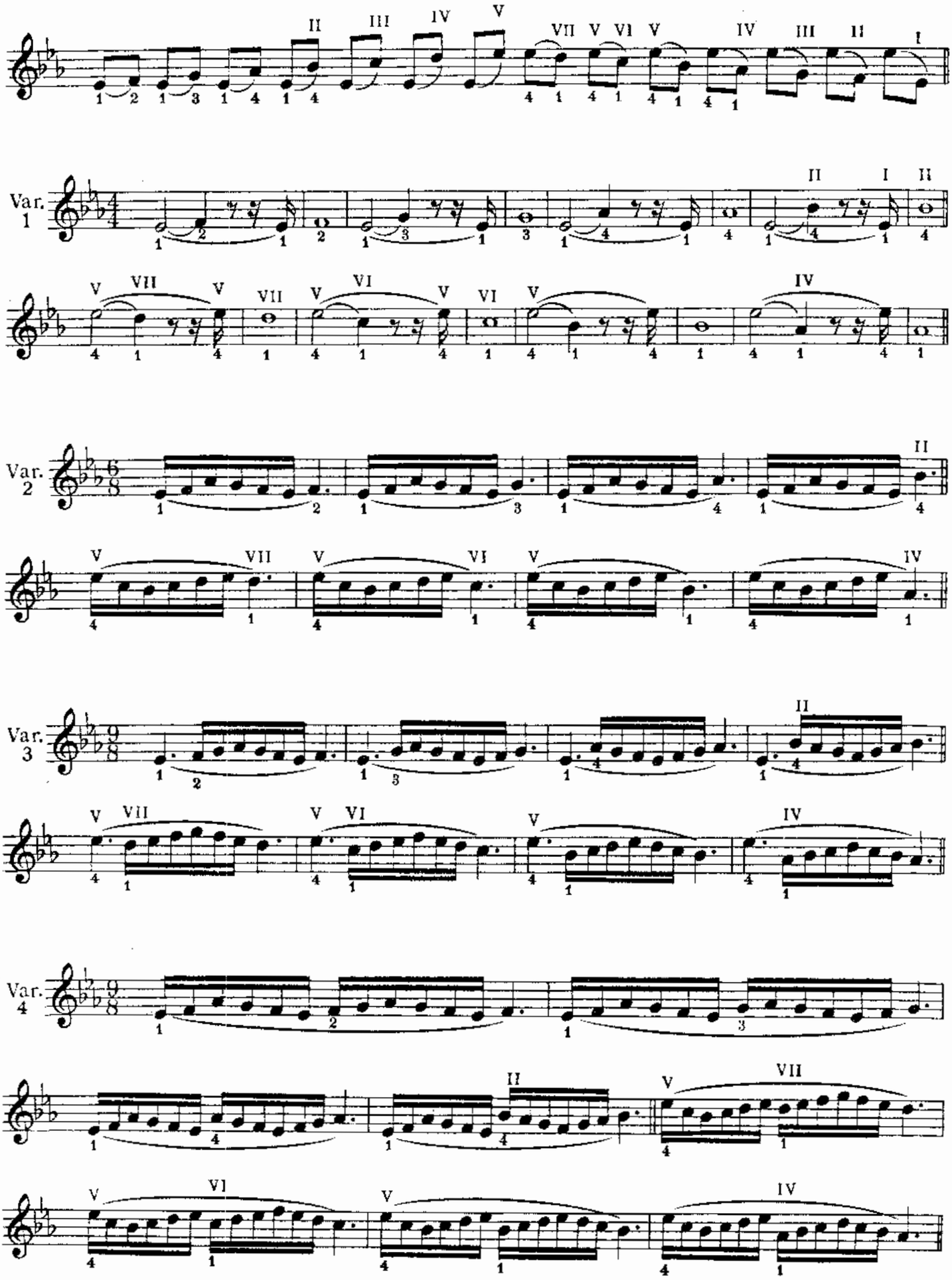

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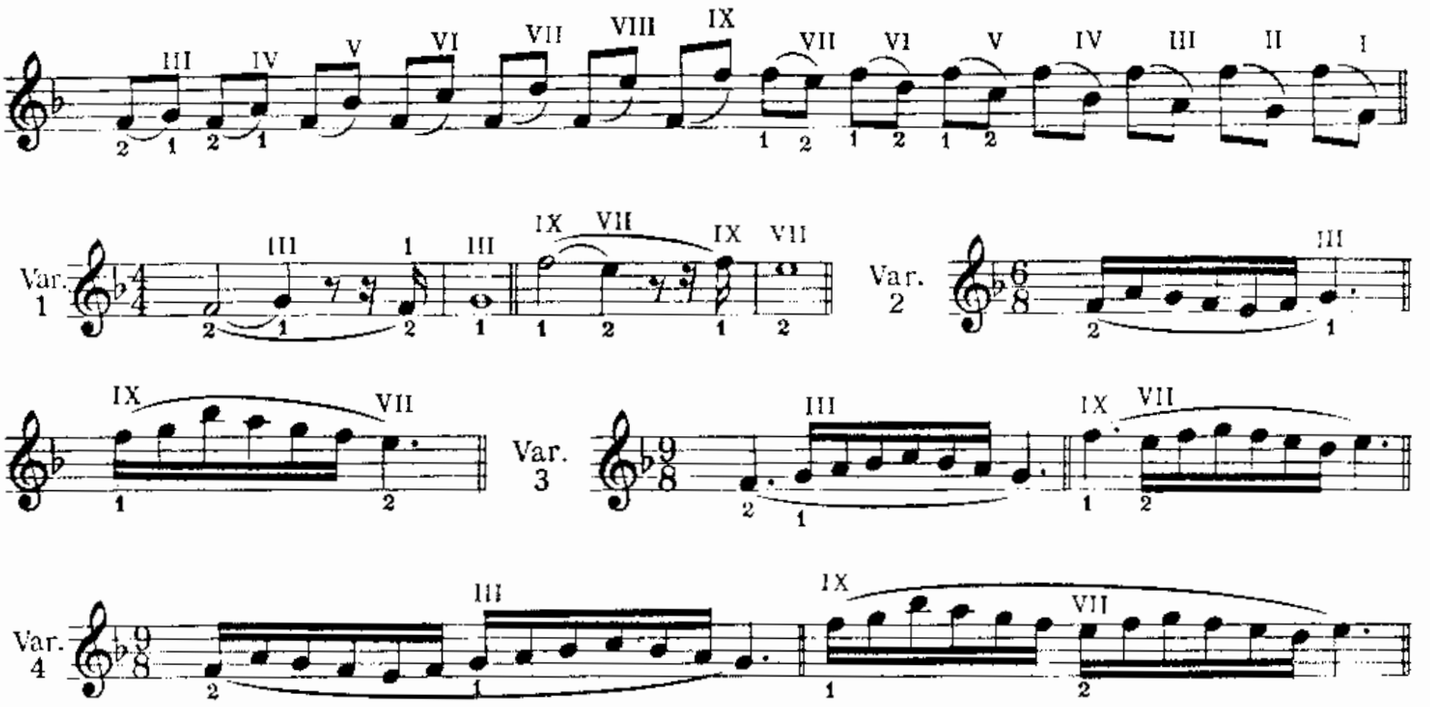

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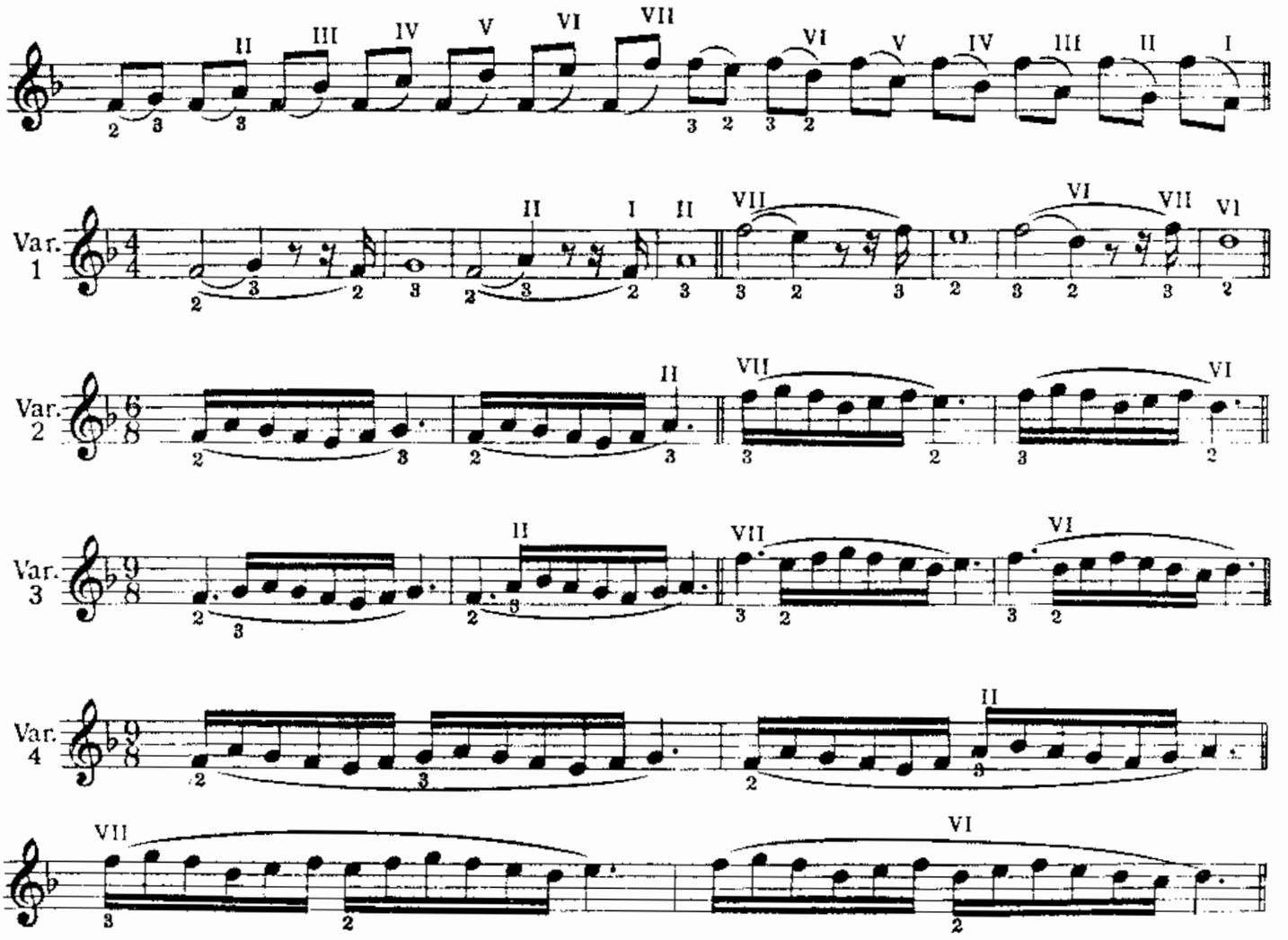

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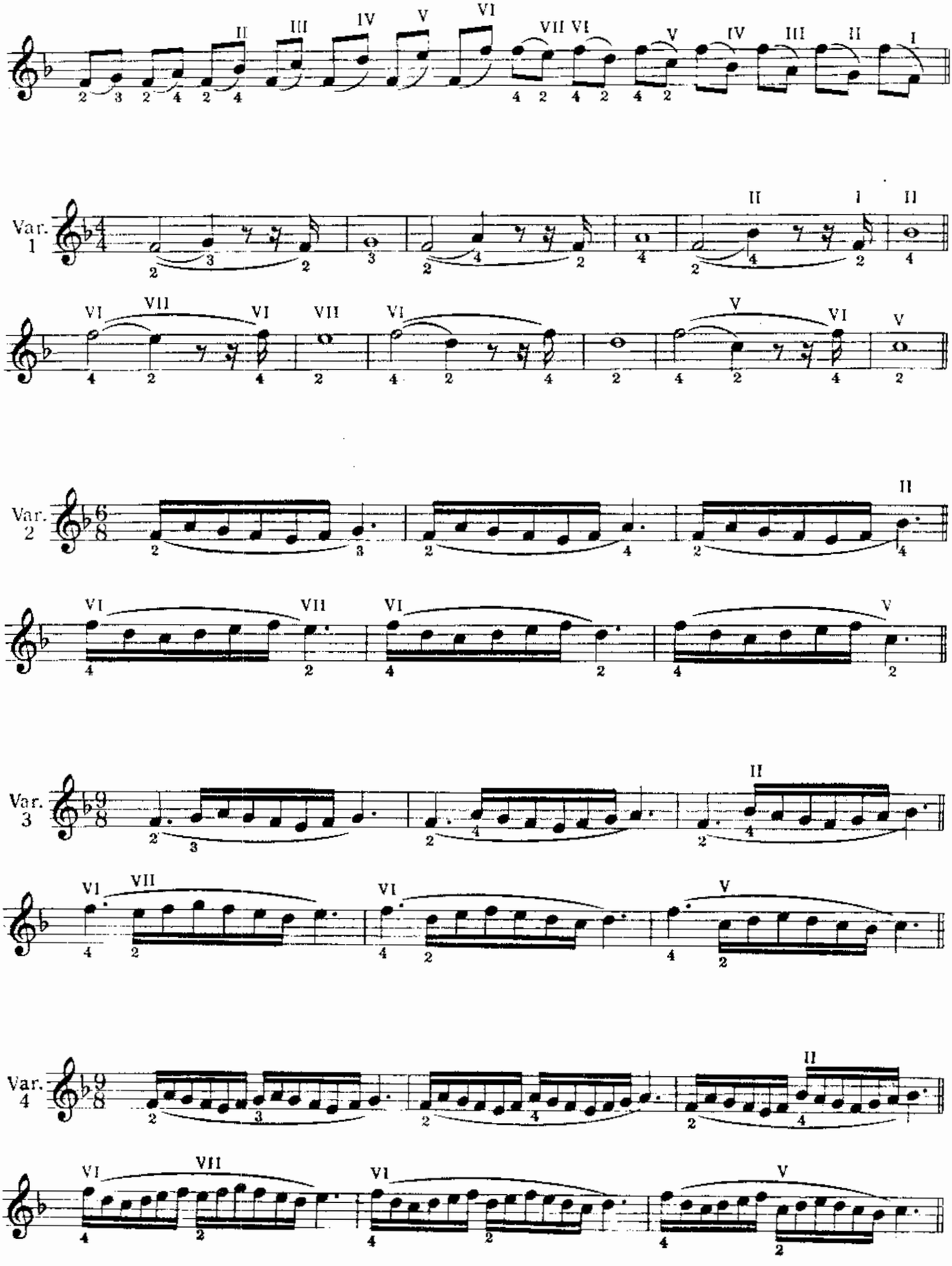

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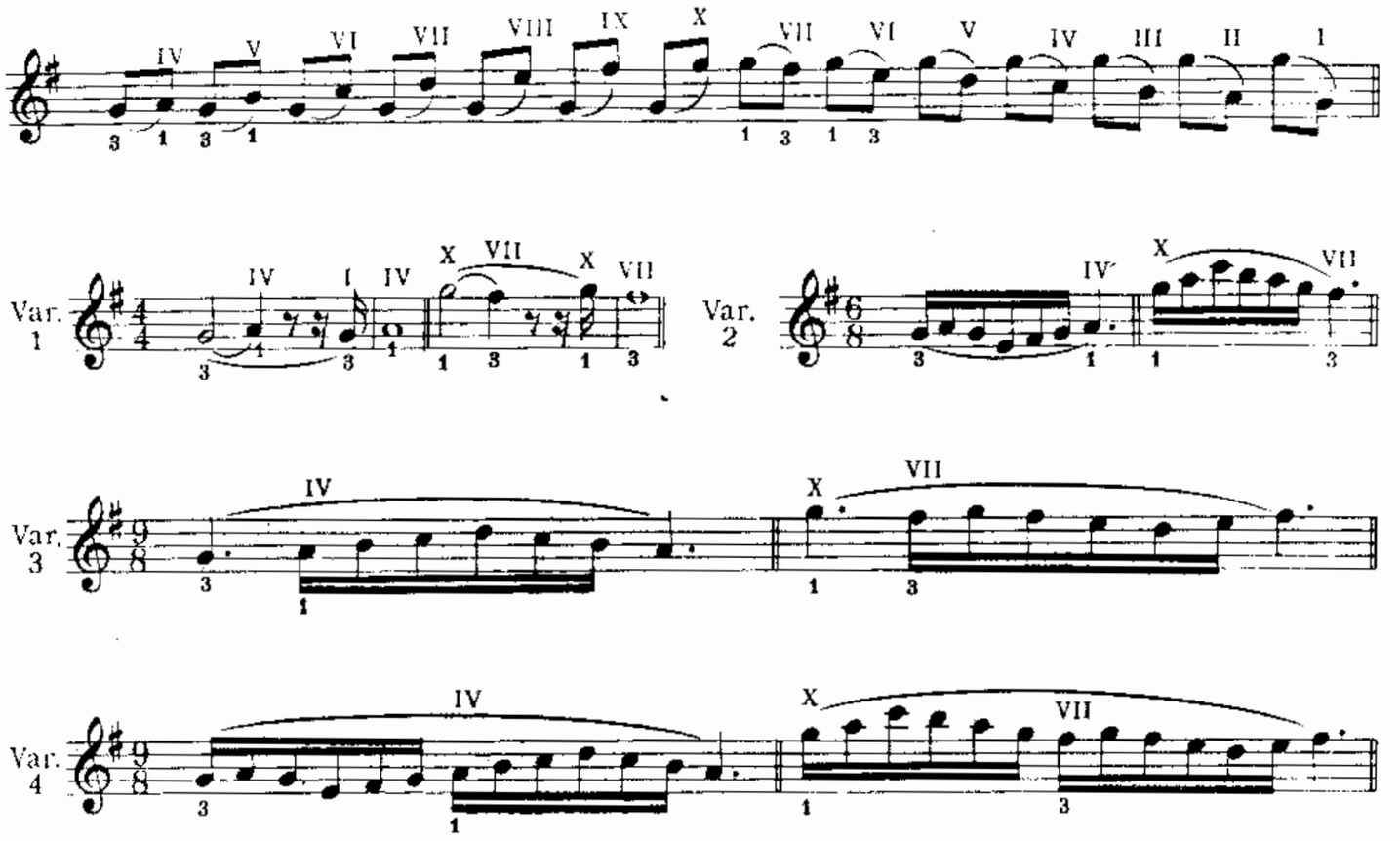

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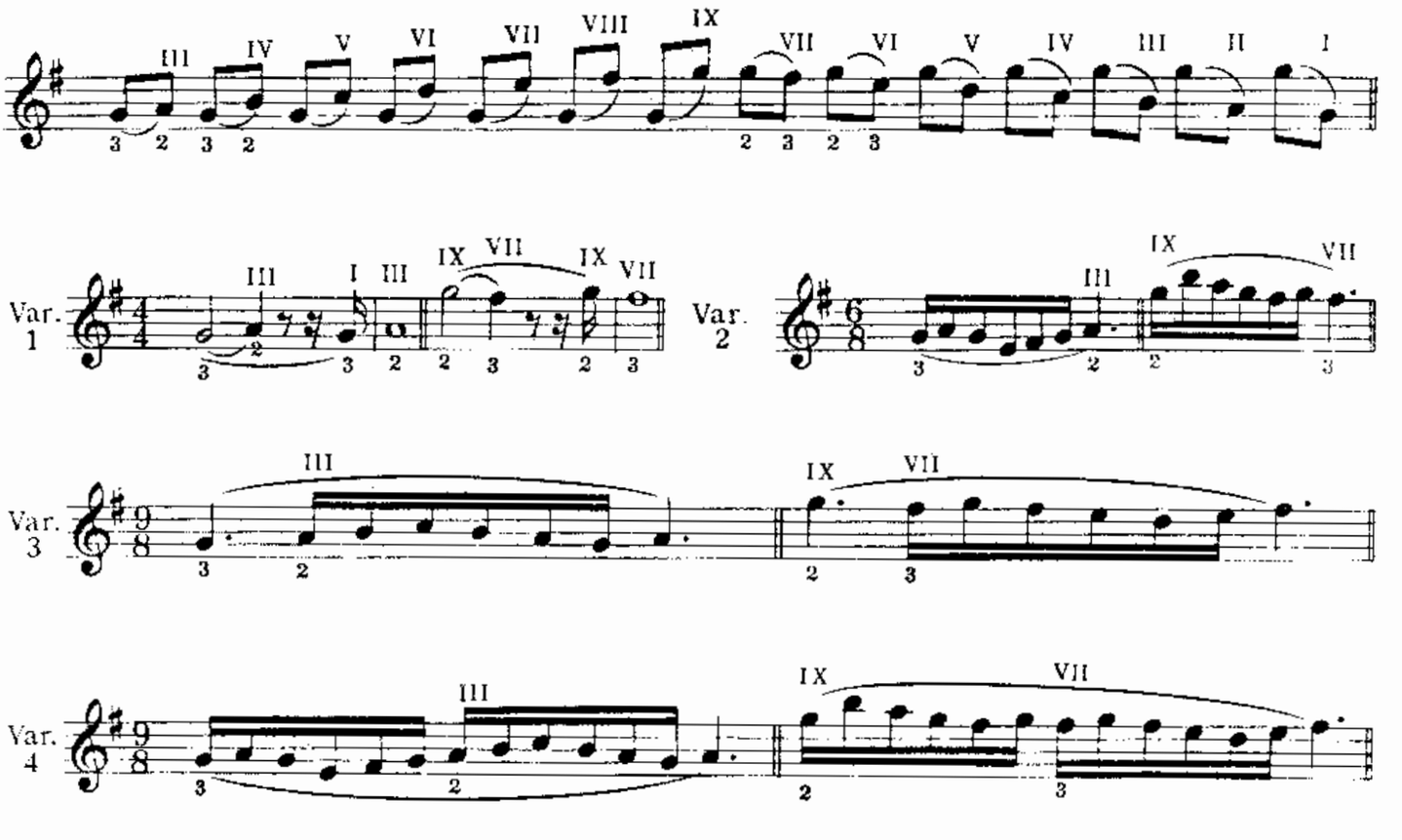

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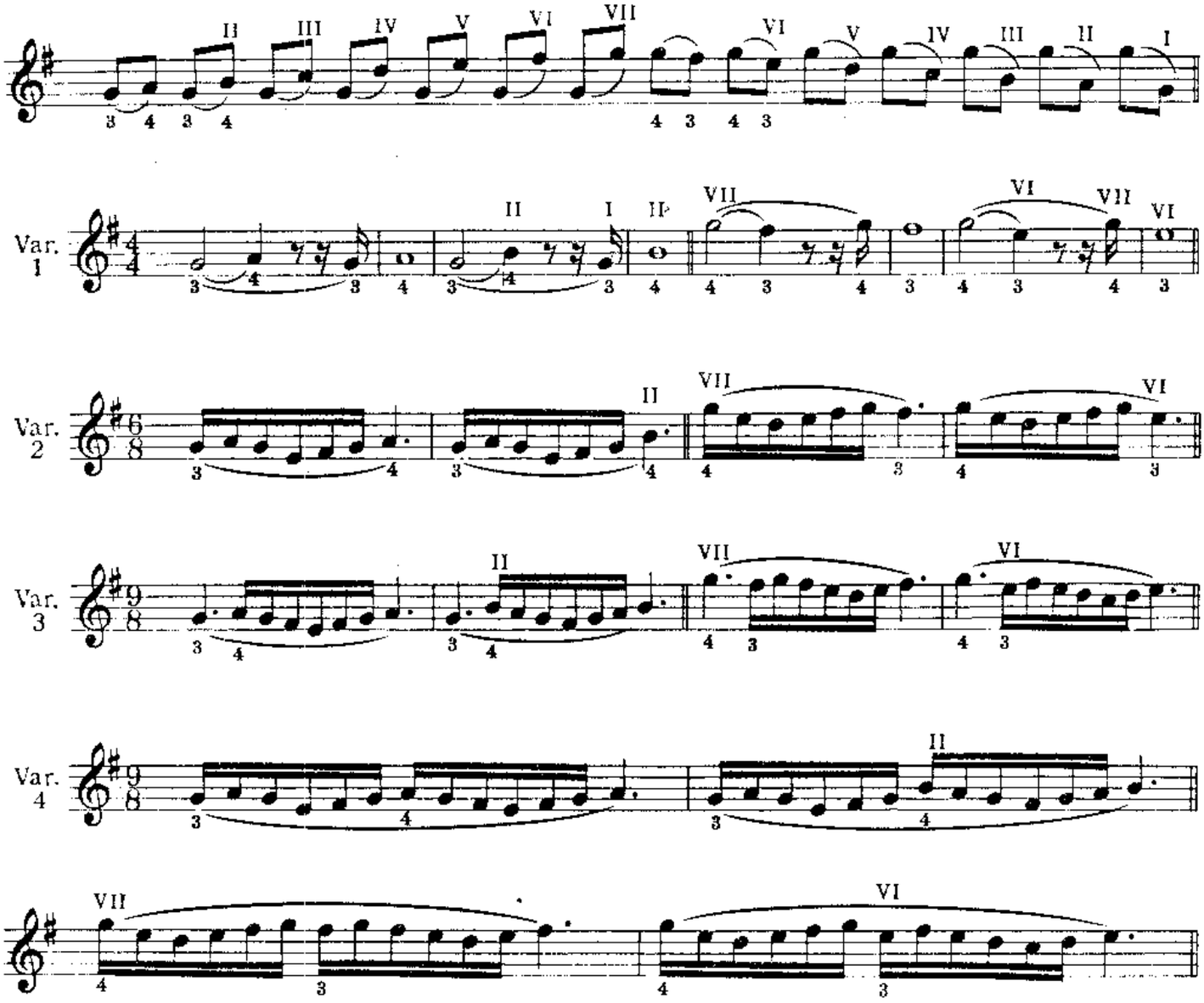

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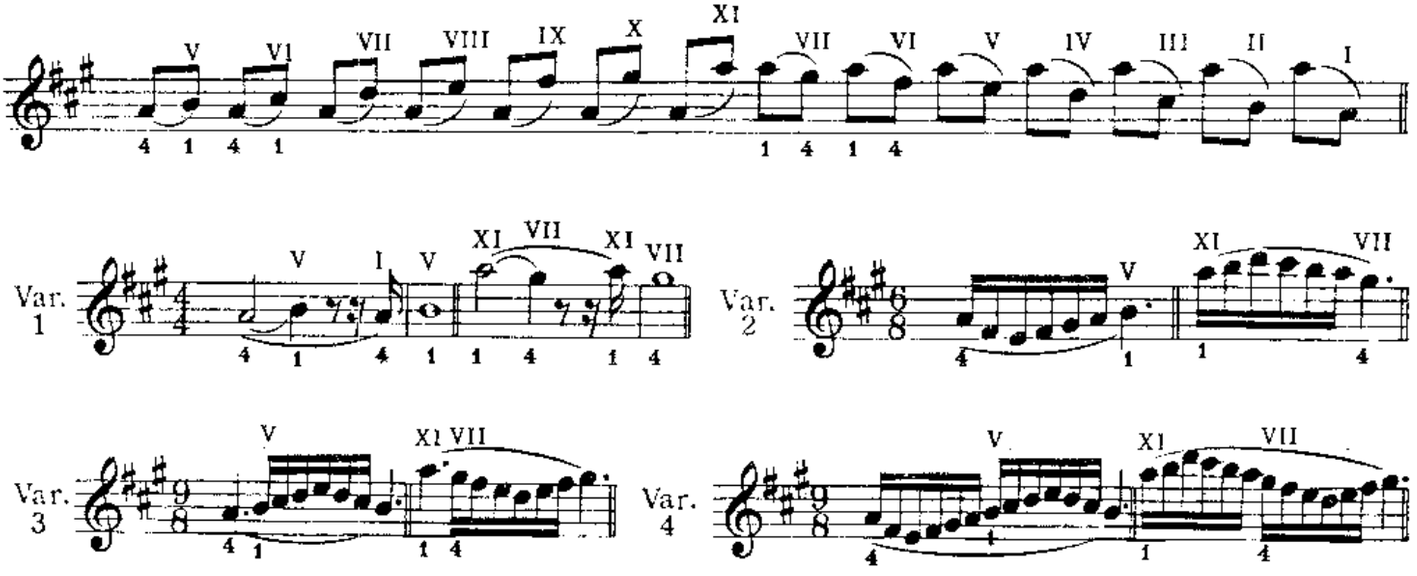

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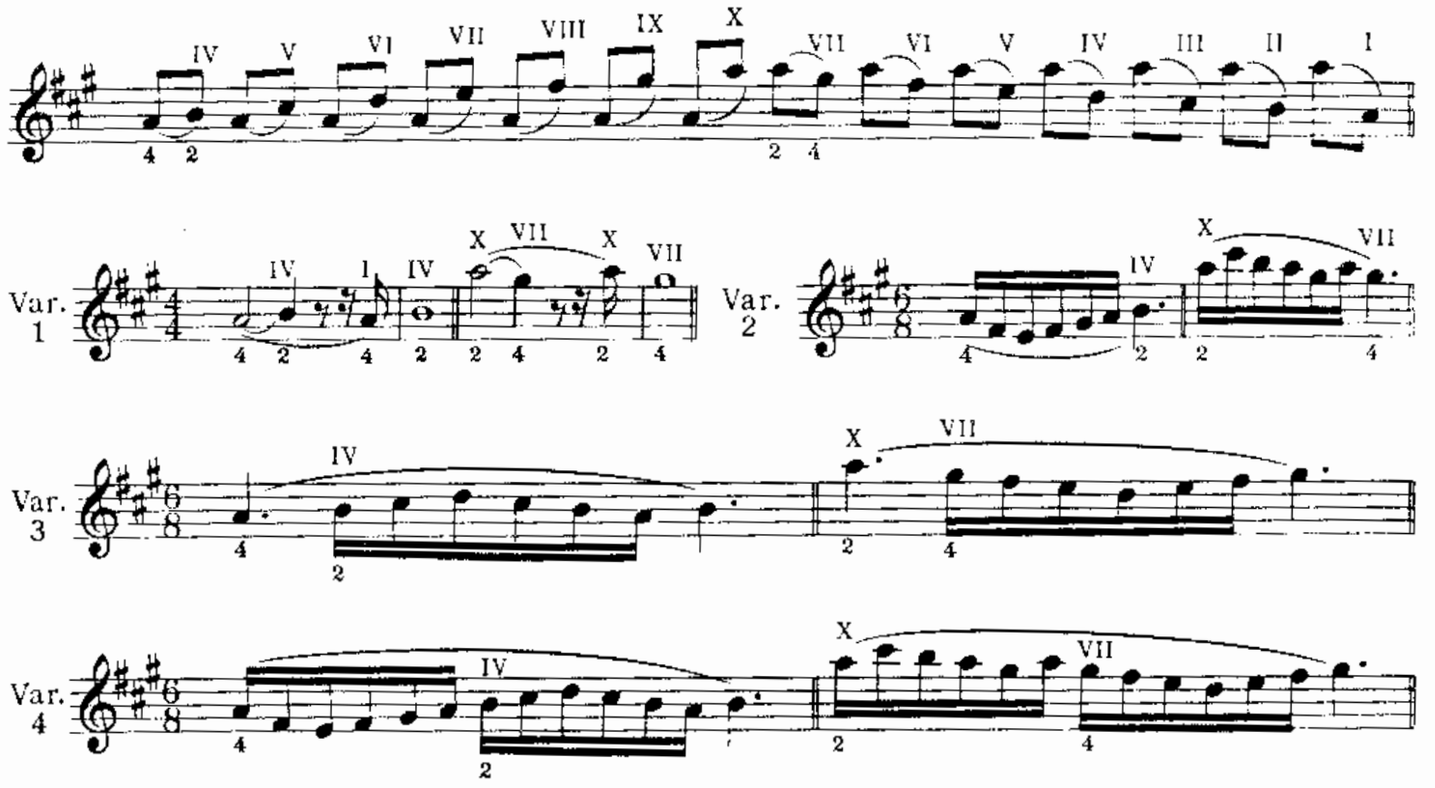

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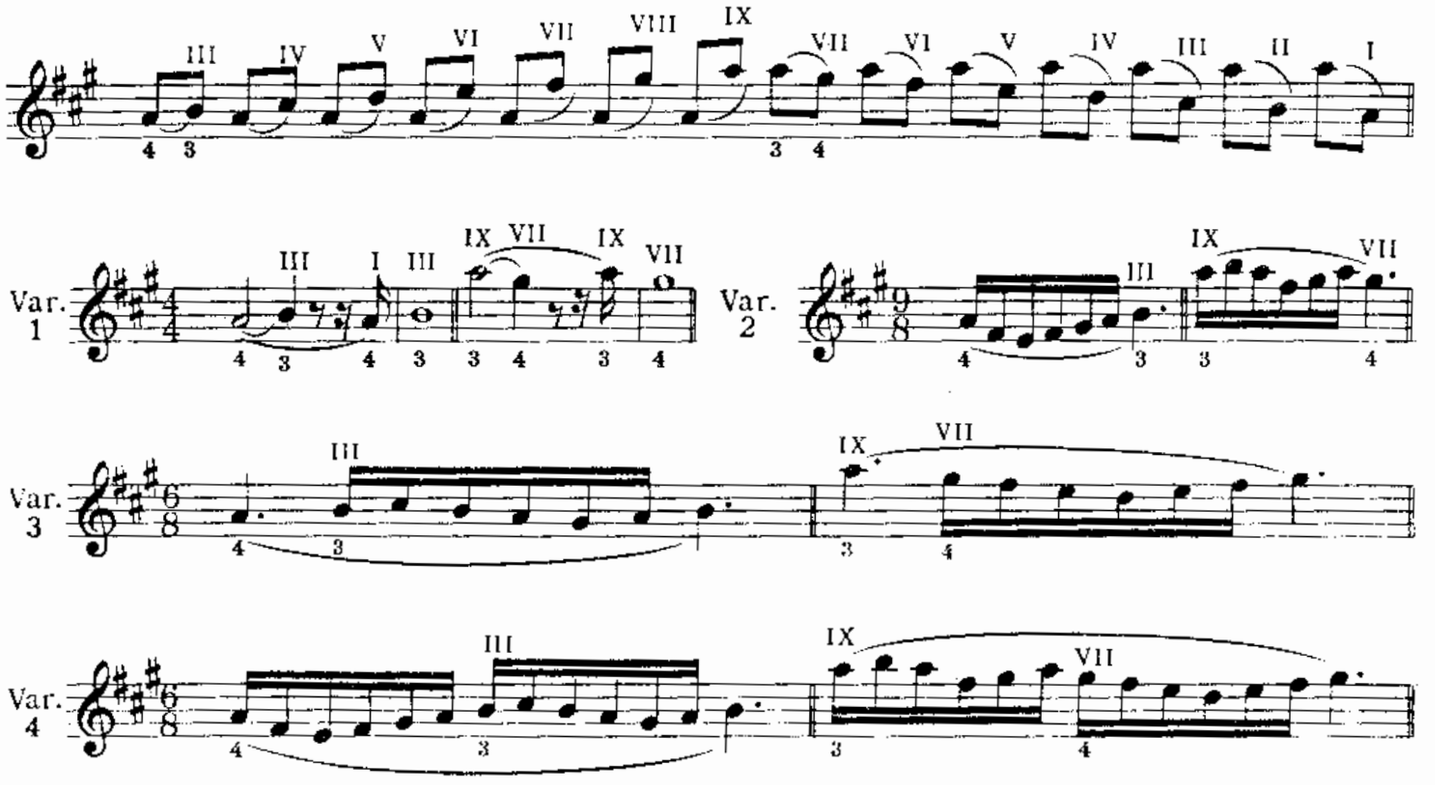
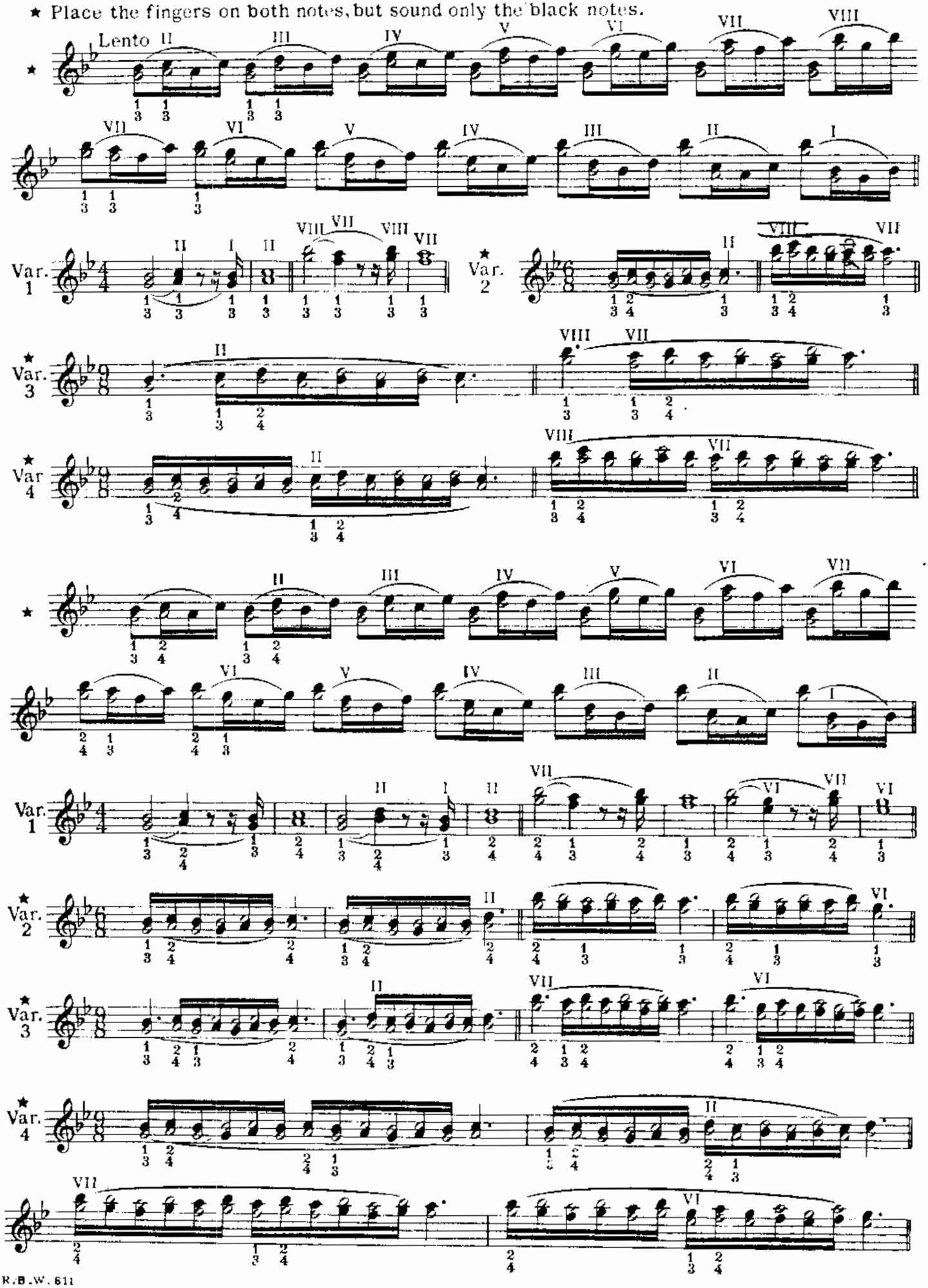
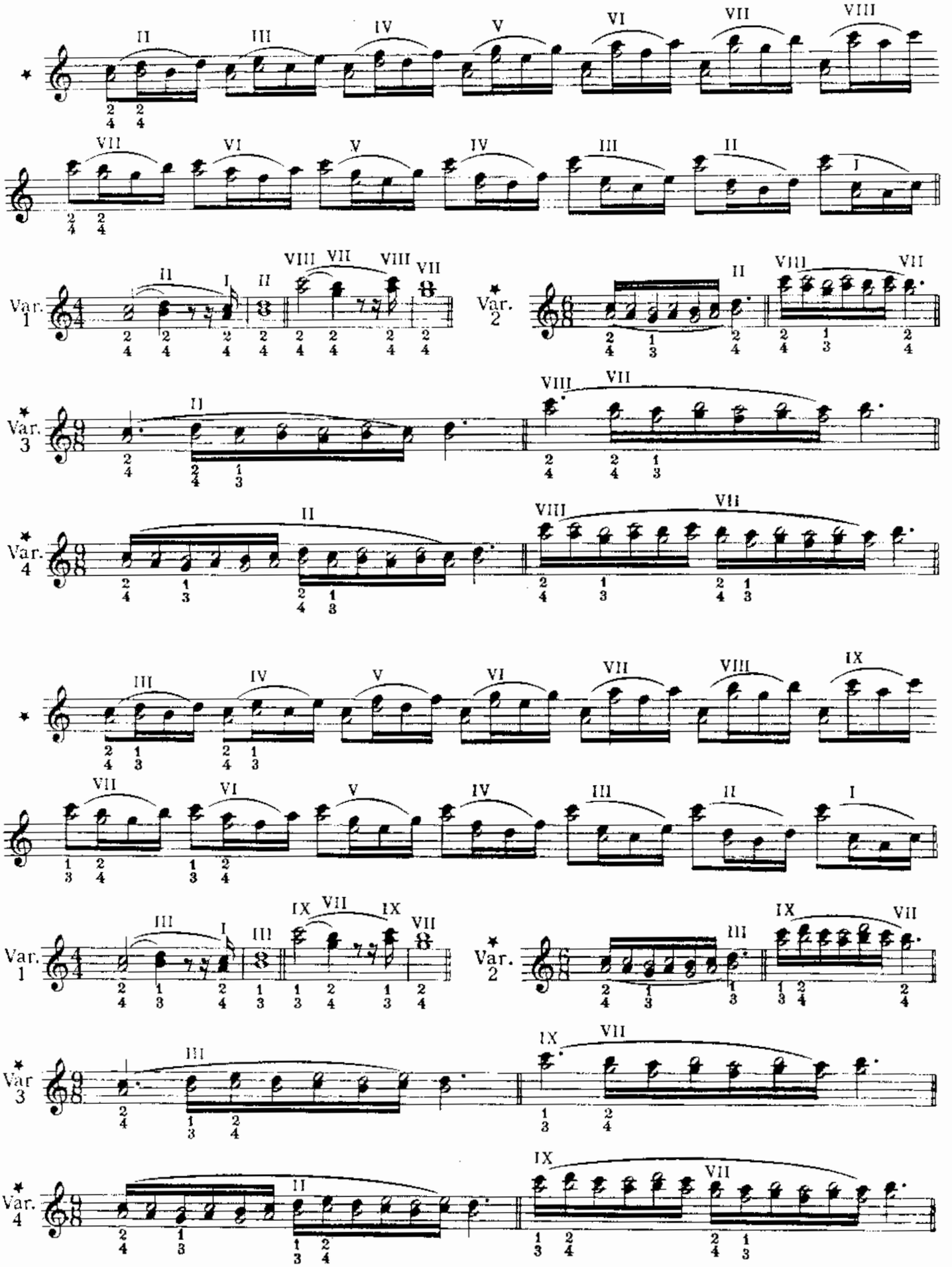


These exercises have been placed purposely on the D String to shape the hand and arm to the more awkward part of the instrument, but they should be worked out on the other three especially on the E String, as much of the passage work in the higher positions is written for this string.

Shifting Exercises in Thirds

★ Place the fingers on both notes, but sound only the black notes.

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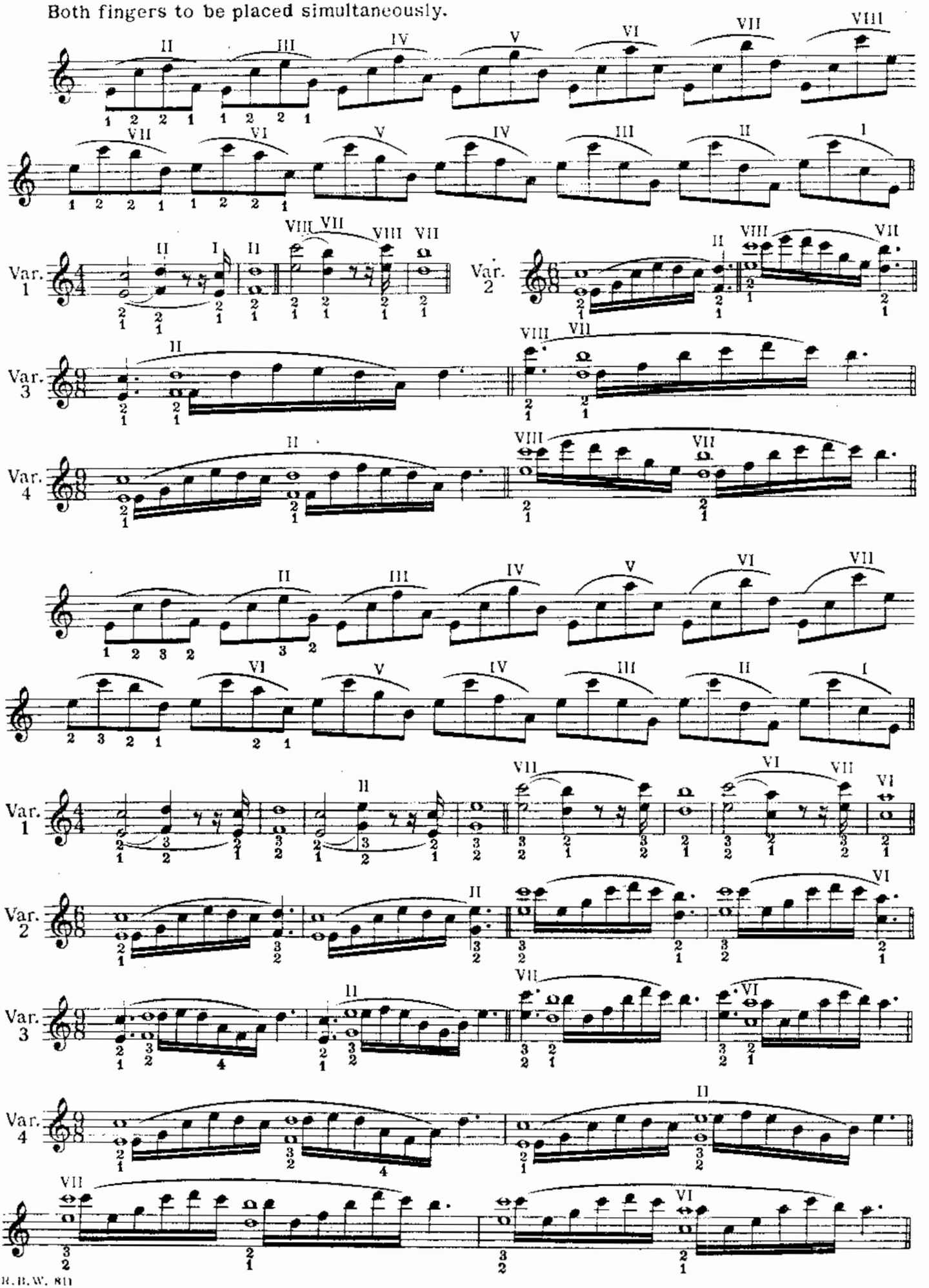
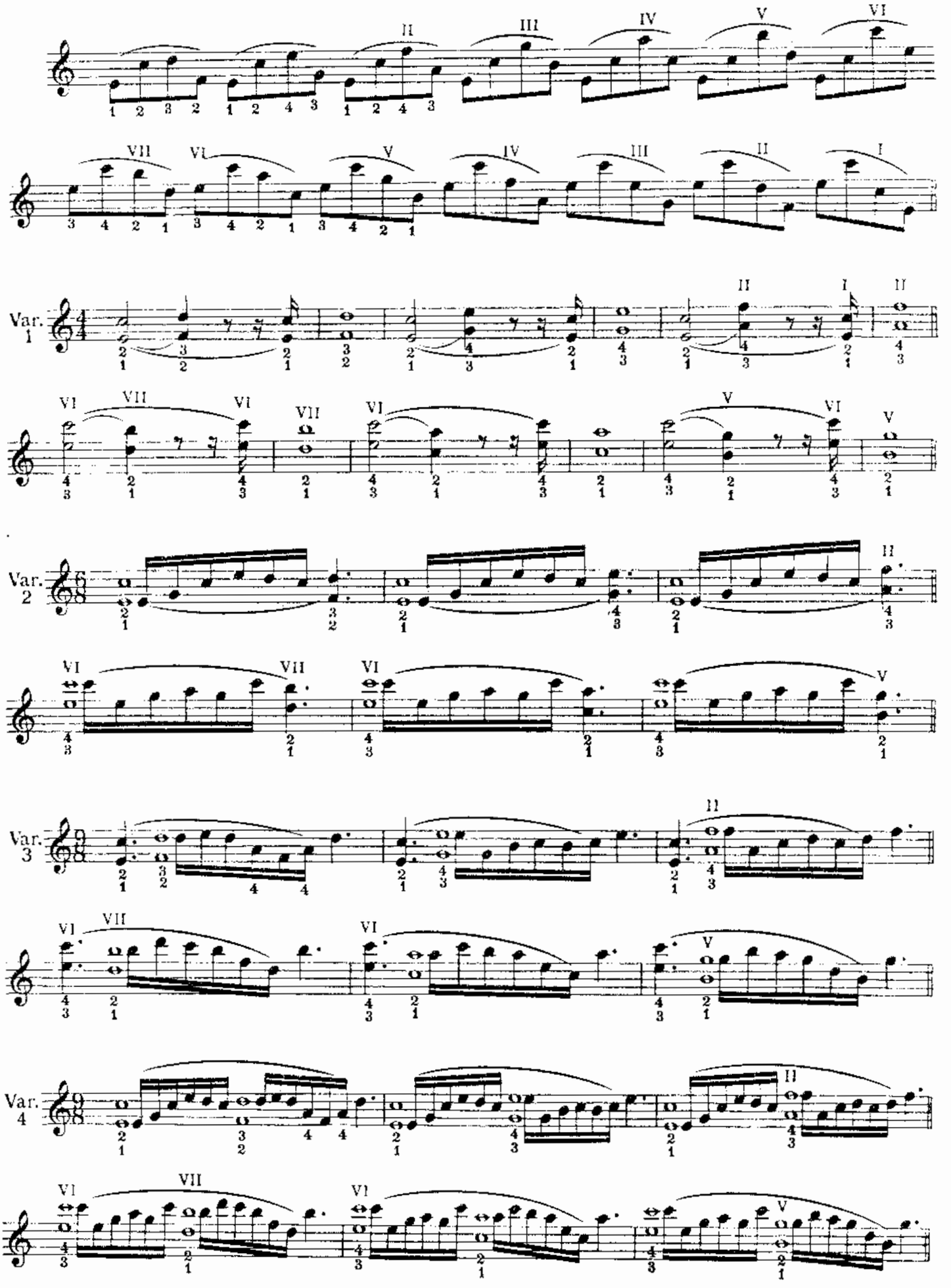
Sixths

Both fingers to be placed simultaneously.

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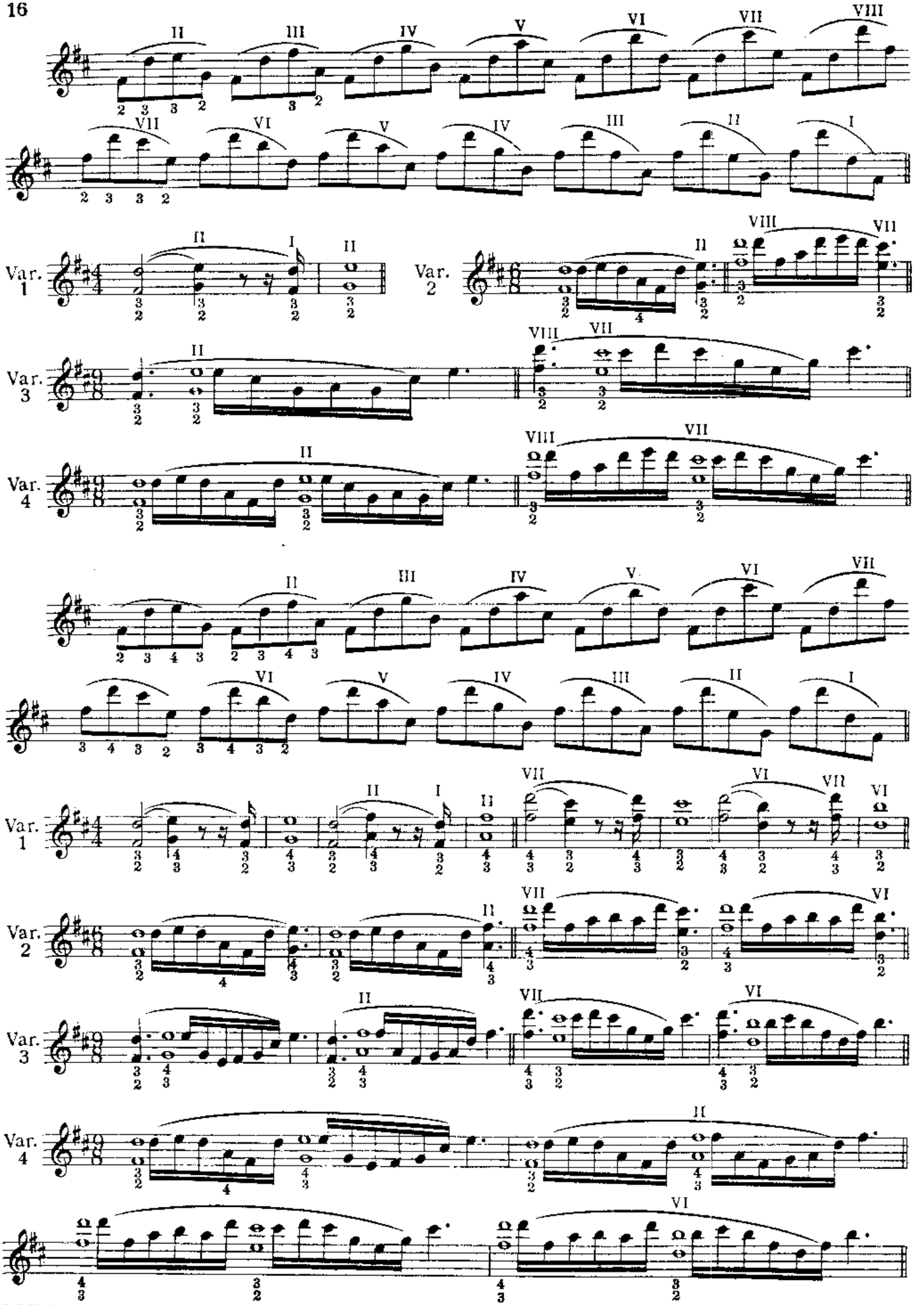
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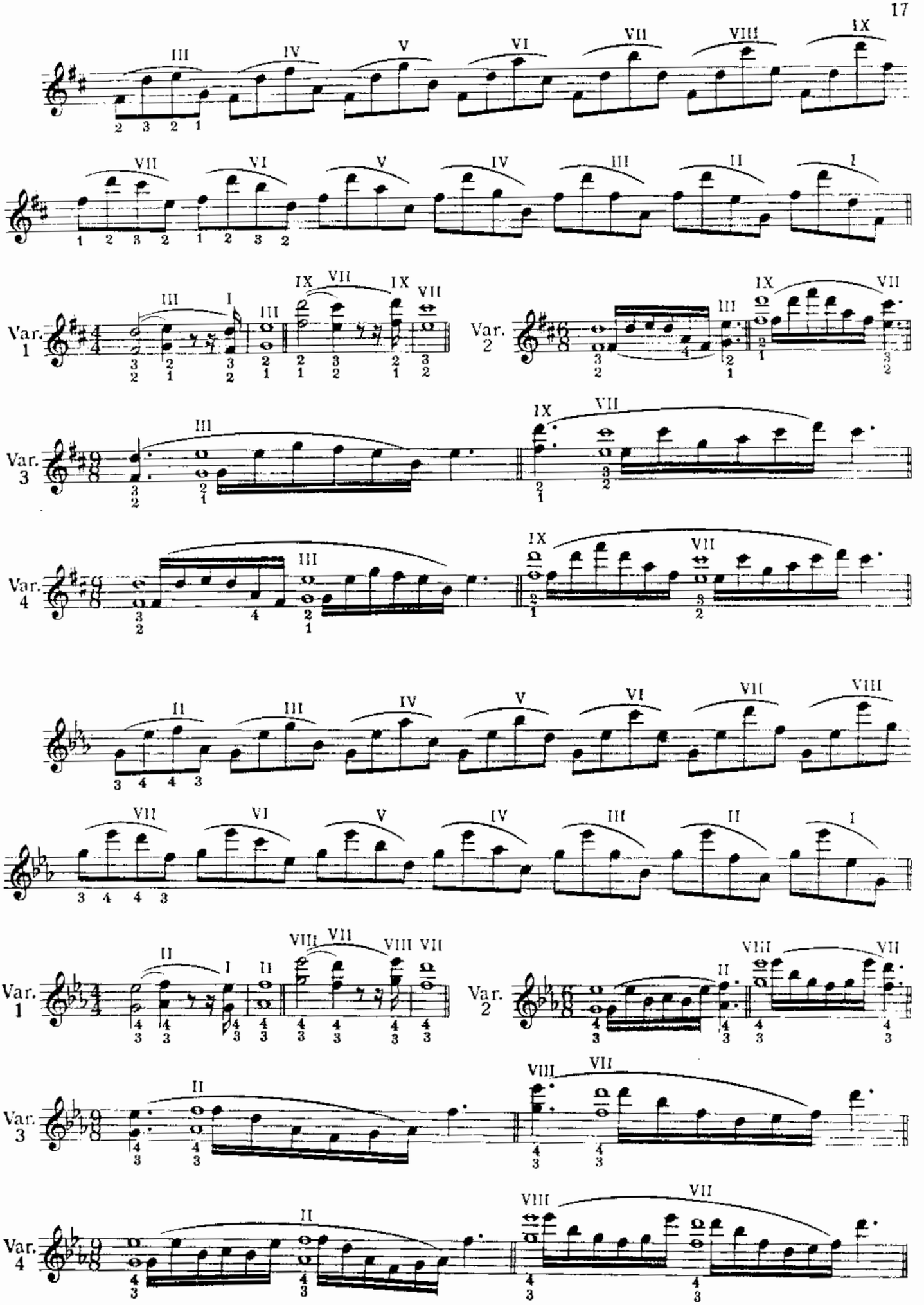
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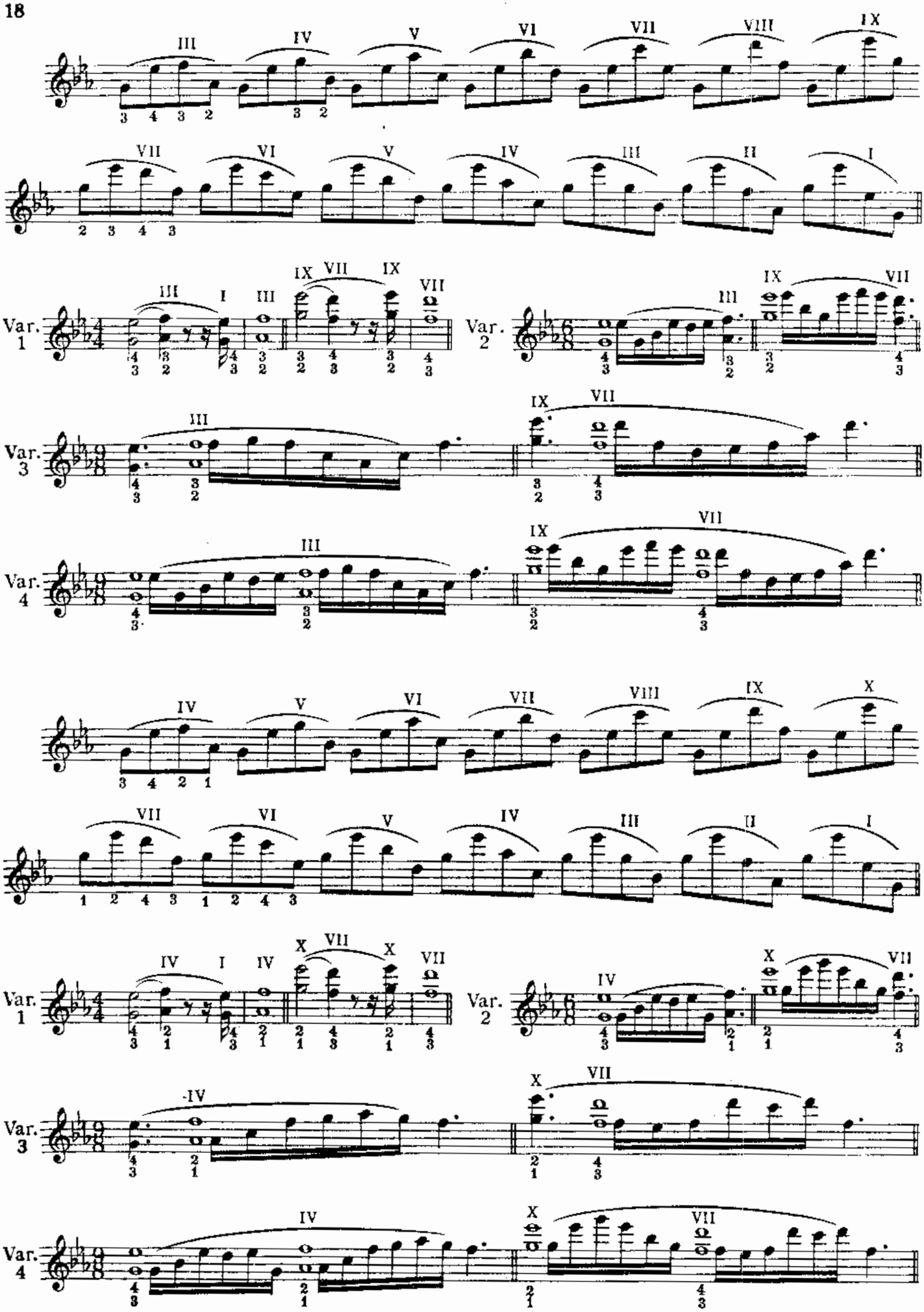
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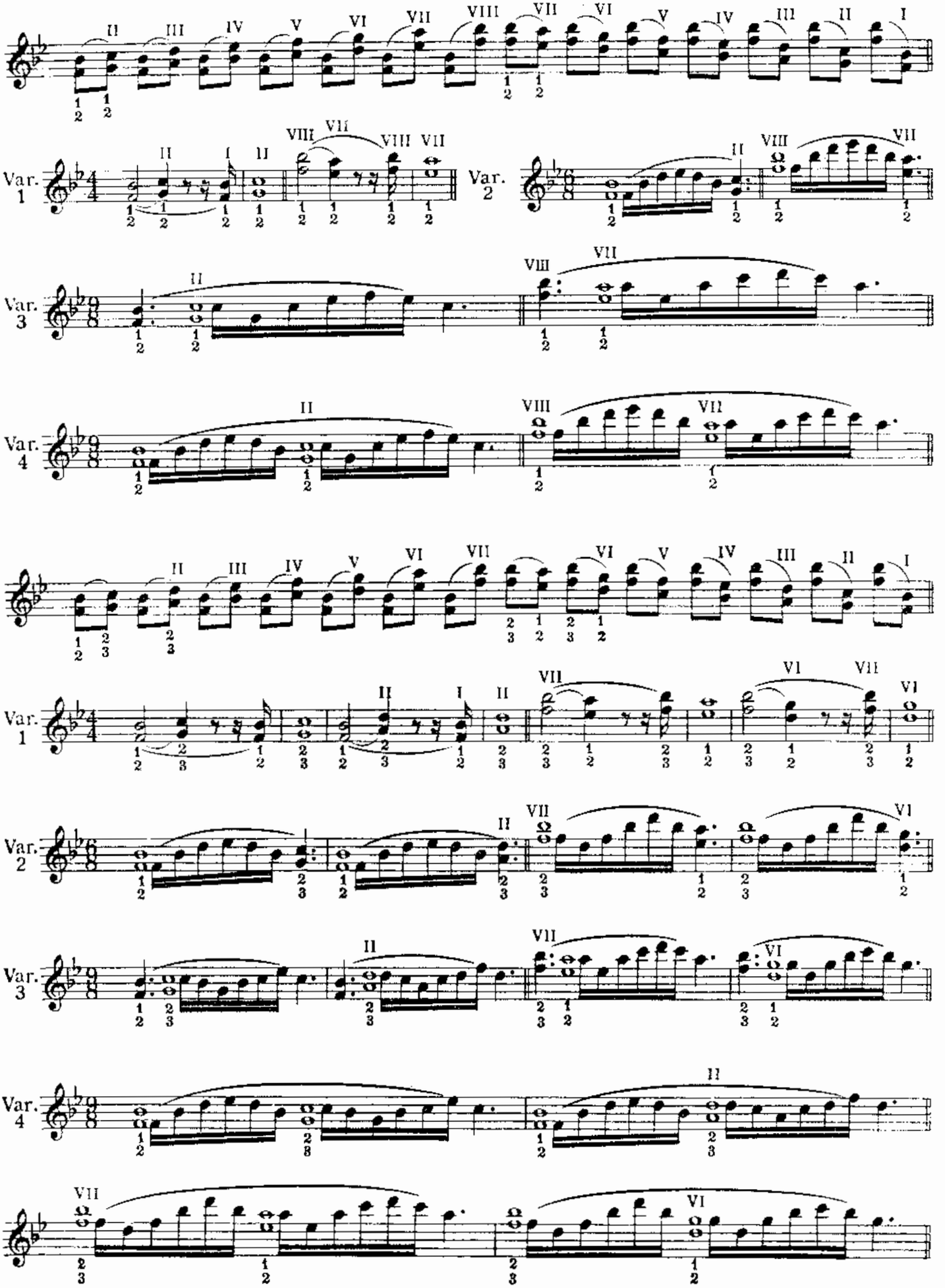
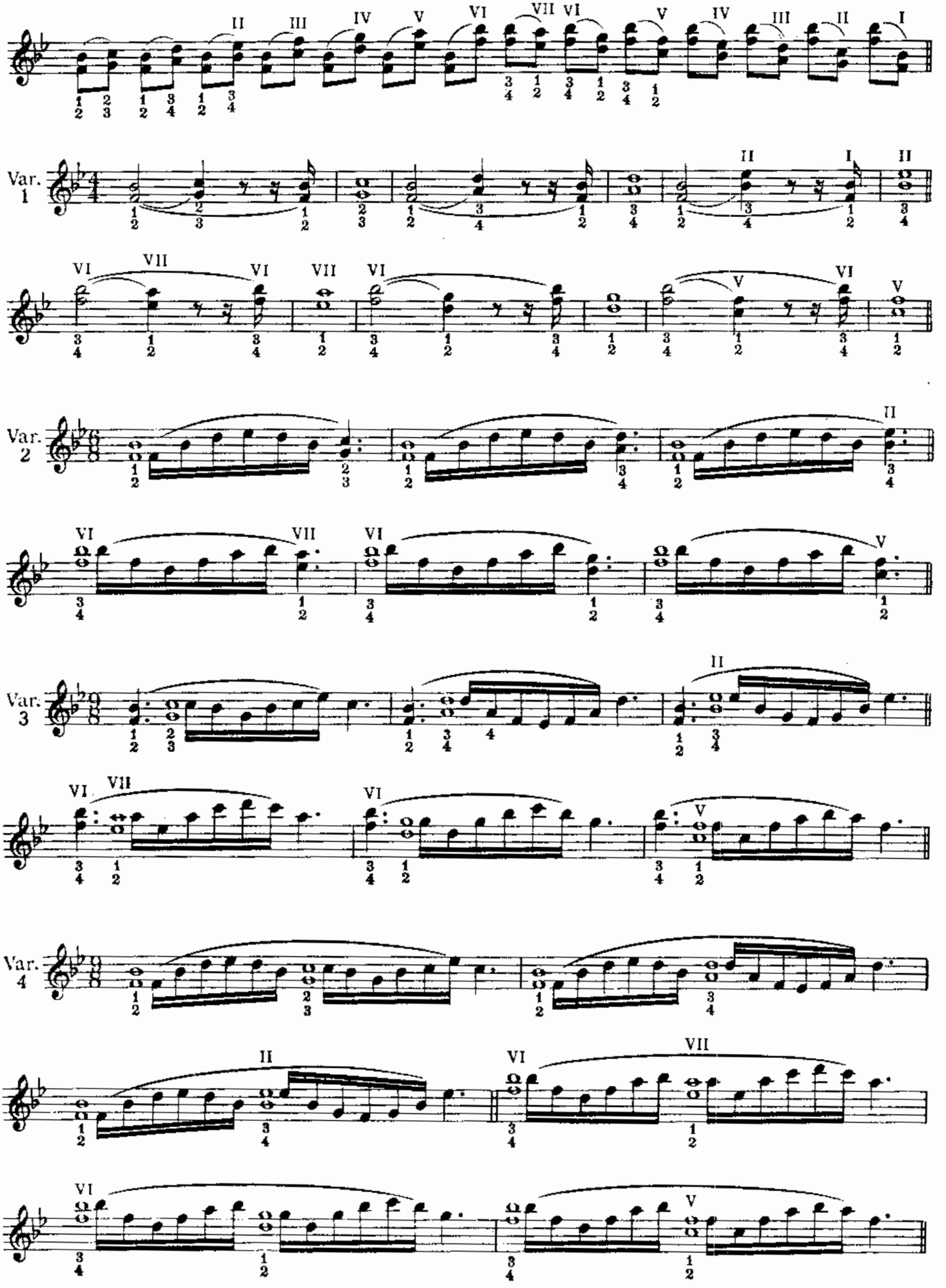
Fourths

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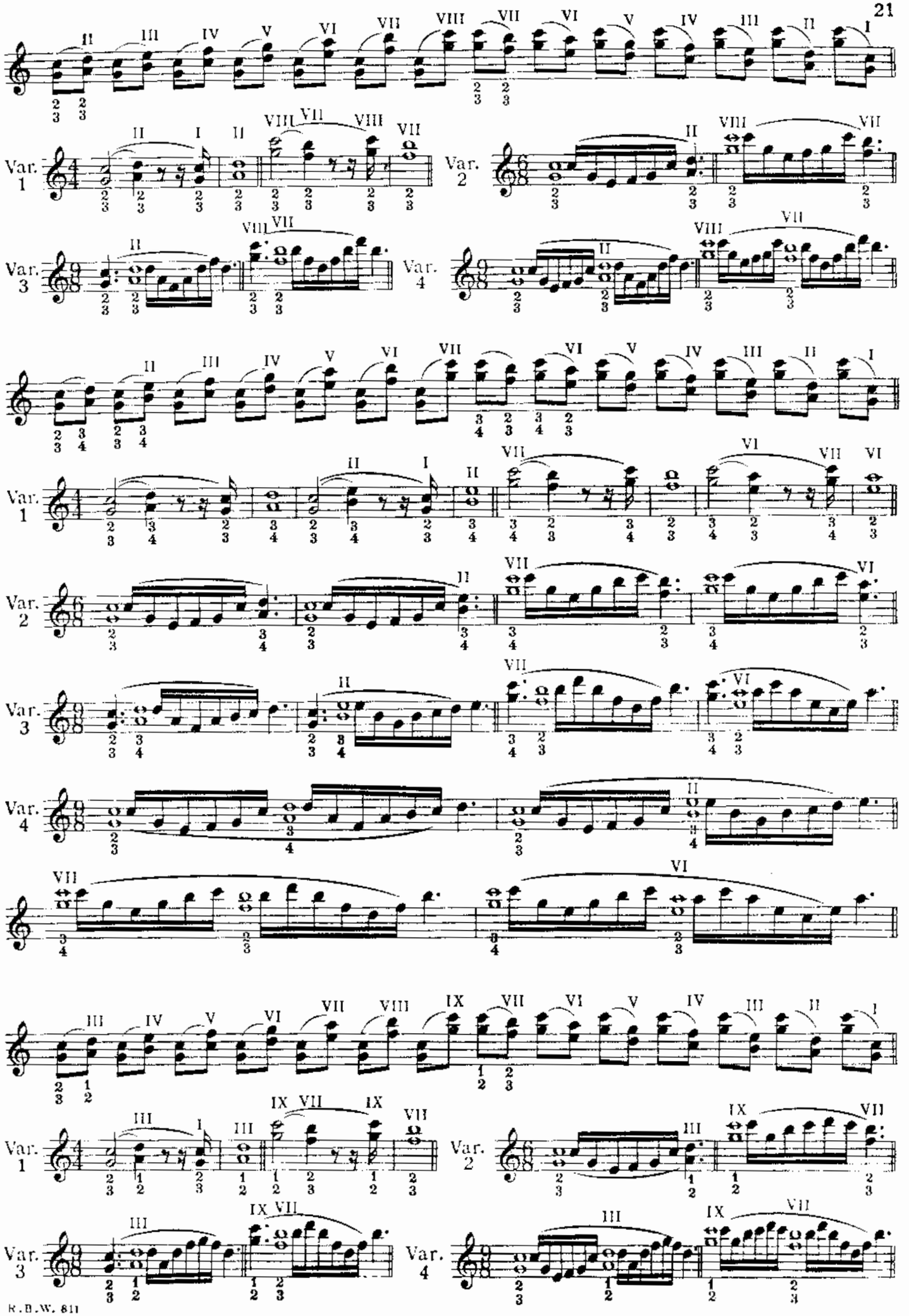
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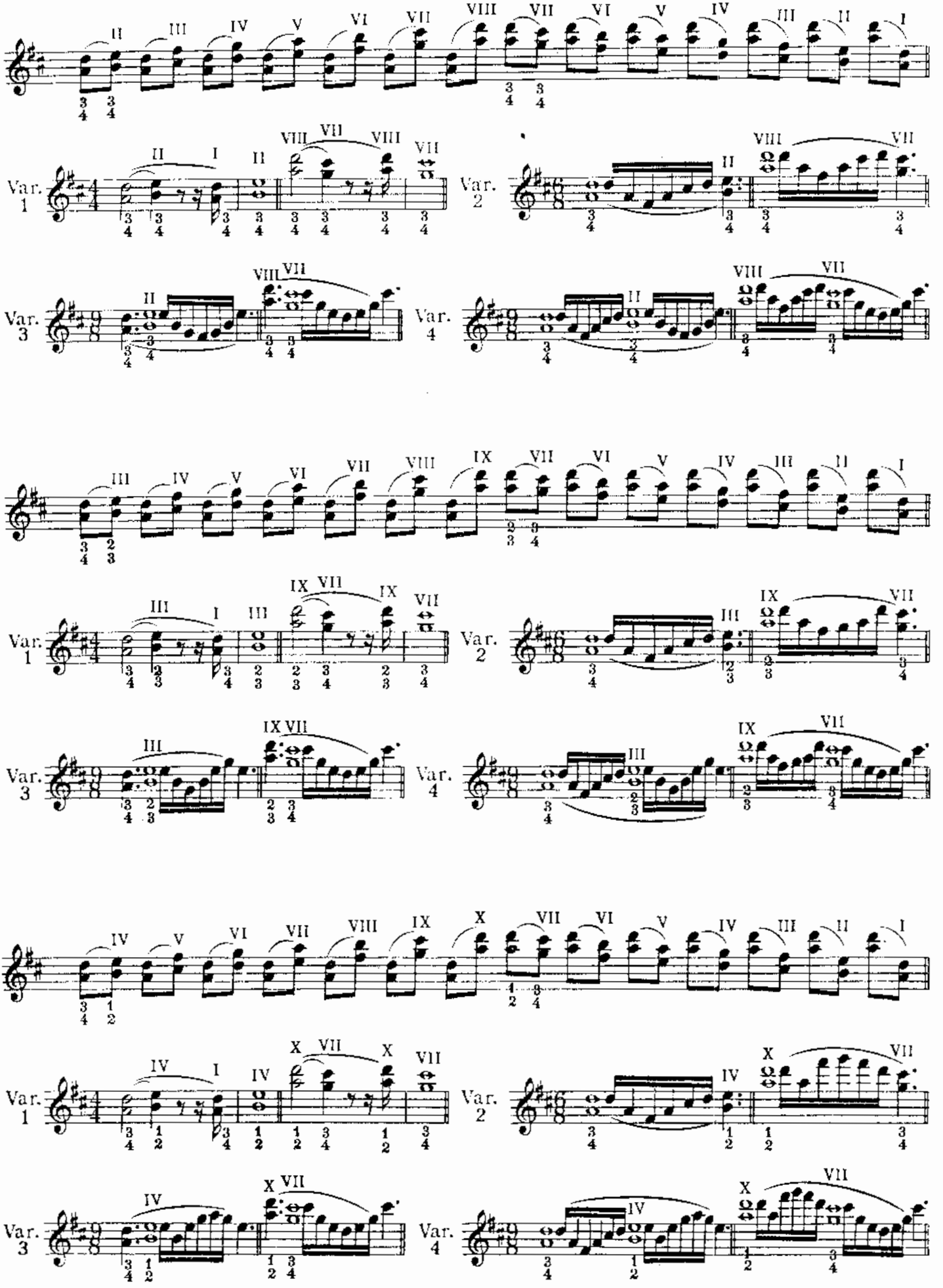
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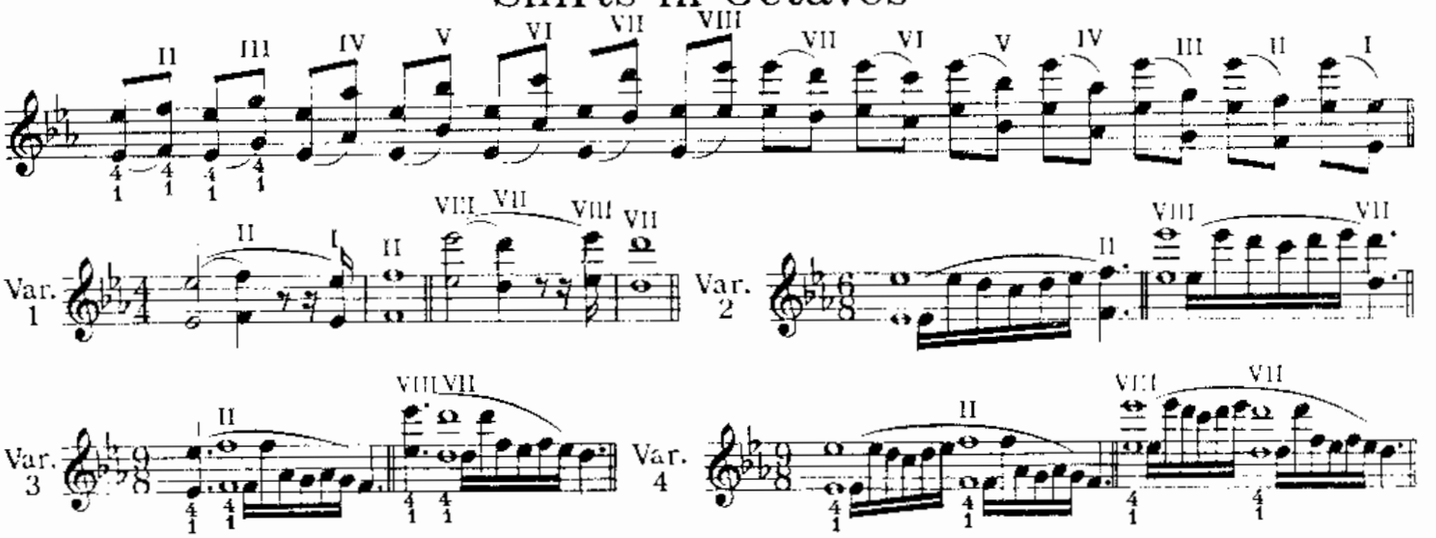
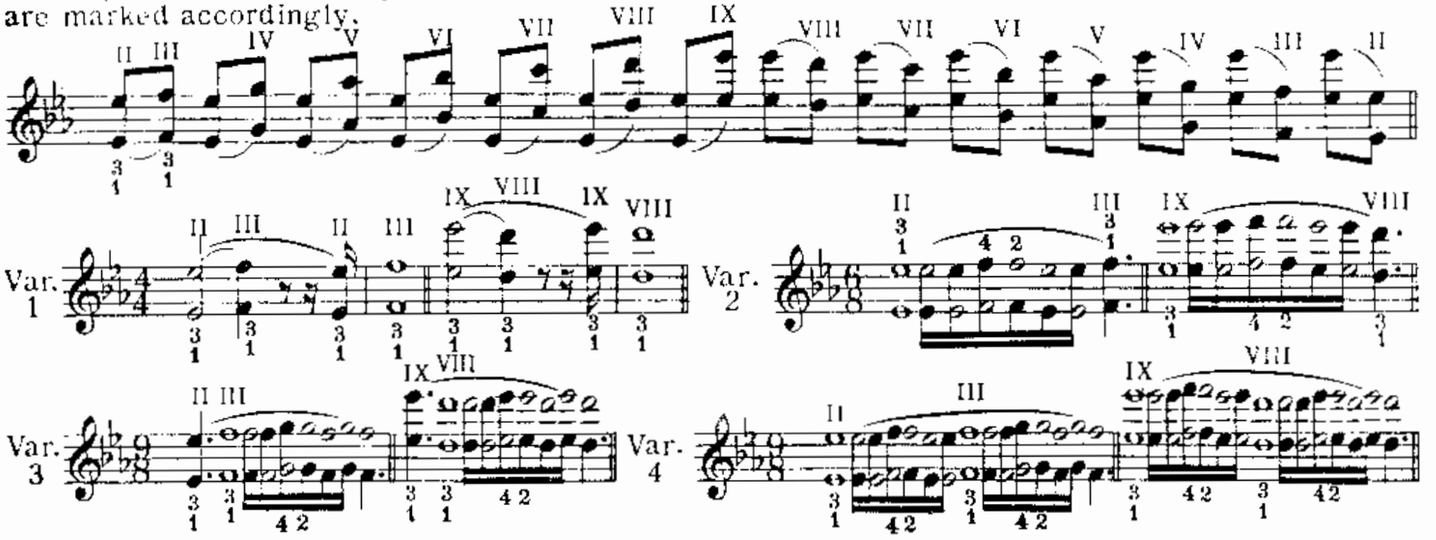
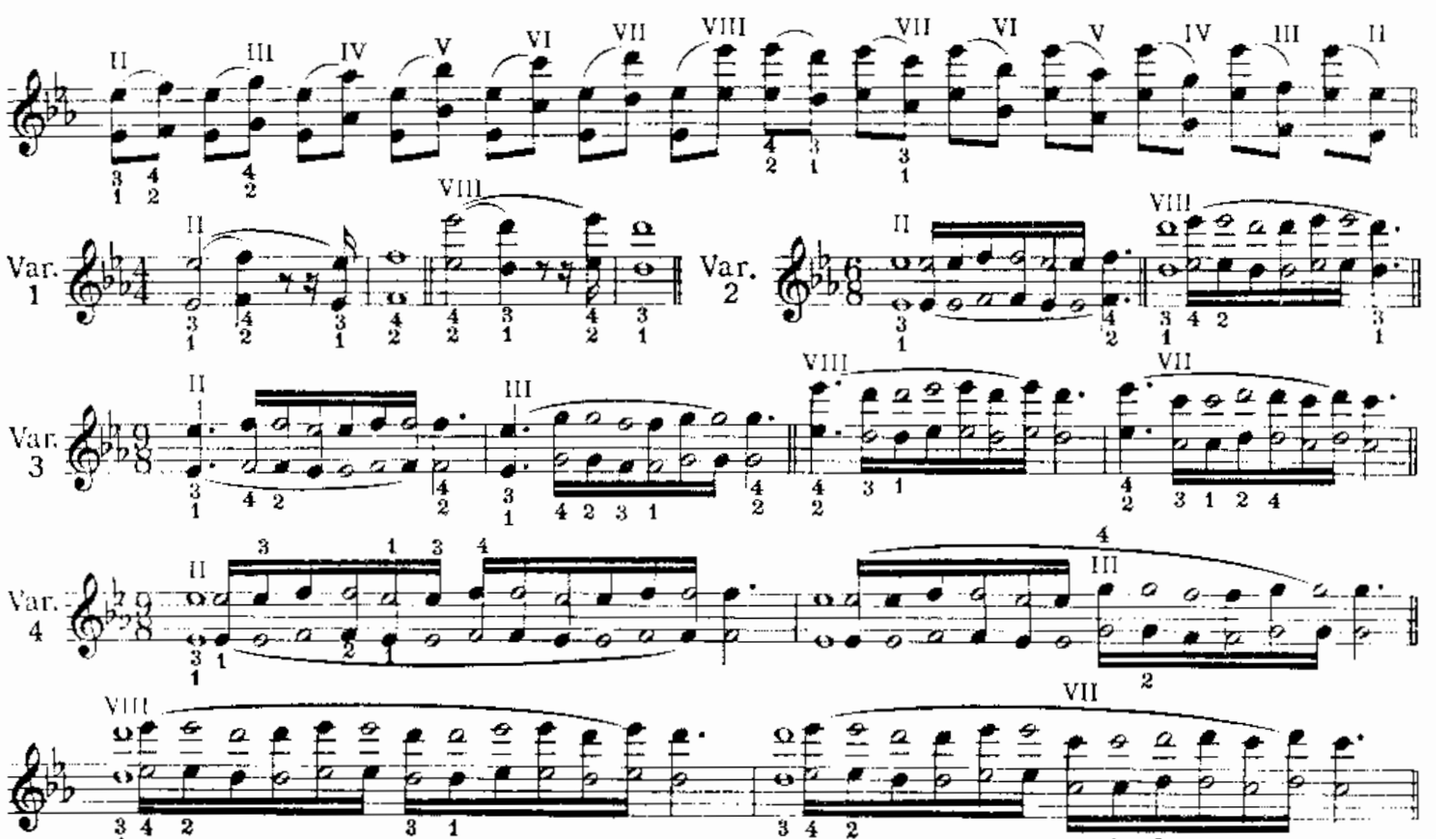
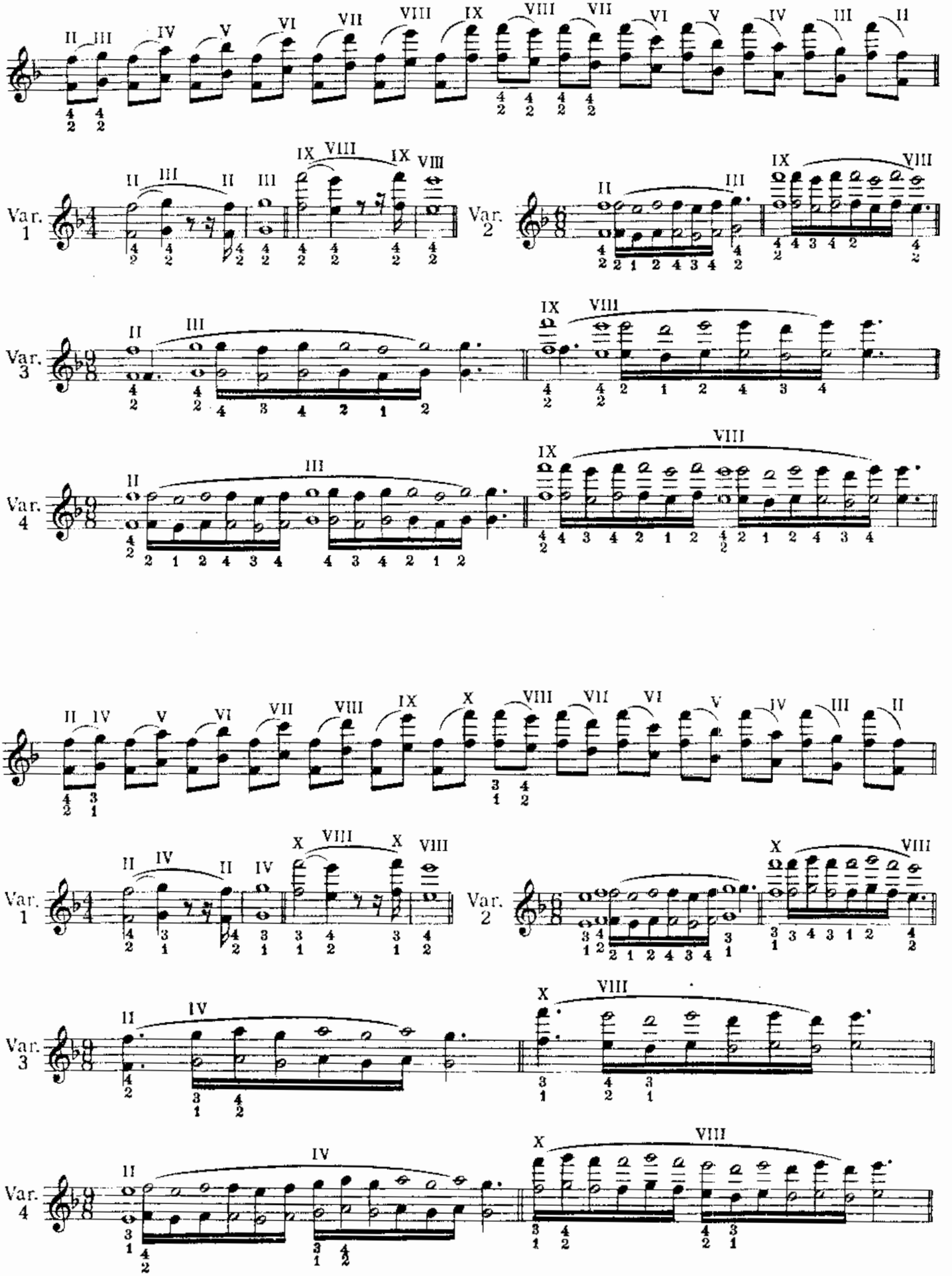
Shifts in Octaves



For most violinists the playing of "fingered octaves" entails a stretching back of the first and second fingers. Therefore the positions in the following exercises are determined by the upper note, and are marked accordingly.



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