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Four-mallet Salsa exercises and etudes for the vibraphone

Lautz, Robert Henry, M.A.

San Jose State University, 1994

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FOUR-MALLET SALSA
EXERCISES AND ETUDES FOR THE VIBRAPHONE

A Project Report

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Music

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Robert H. Lautz

May, 1994

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Robert H. Lautz

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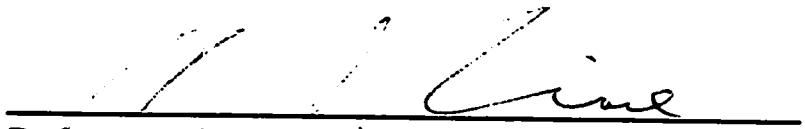

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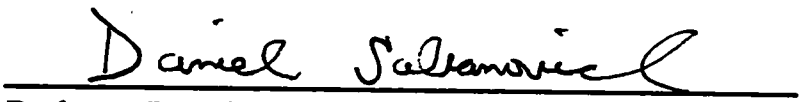

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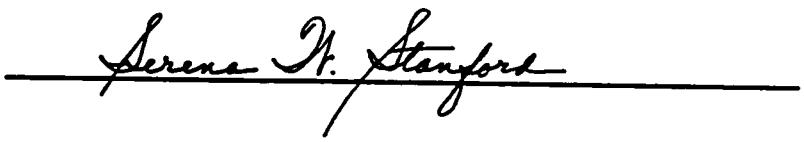

ABSTRACT

FOUR-MALLET SALSA
EXERCISES AND ETUDES FOR THE VIBRAPHONE

By Robert H. Lautz

This project report is designed to be a method book to develop four-mallet technique for the vibraphone using the music of Salsa for source materials. The polyrhythmic nature of Salsa makes it uniquely suited to the development of sophisticated rhythmic concepts, and its popularity and influence make it an important music for study. The goal of the book is to equally educate the student in matters of technique and the Salsa genre, simultaneously presenting some musically rewarding and performable solo pieces.

The main body of the book is divided into chapters according to three major Salsa styles. Each chapter contains a brief description of the style, exercises to develop skills, and an original etude written for the vibraphone. Much of the material is derived from the piano ostinato parts known as *montunos*. Preliminary chapters include a brief history of Salsa, an explanation of *clave*, and a study of *montuno* construction.

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Introduction

The exercises in this book are designed to develop mallet technique as well as introduce the student to the music of Salsa and some basic tools for its performance. The rewards are hopefully an improved technical facility and an inspired desire to play Salsa as well as other forms of Latin music.

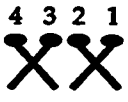
The rhythmic textures of Salsa are created by the layering of multiple syncopated parts. It is music to be played by an ensemble and it is not the intent of this book to turn a vibist into a one person Salsa band. However, each exercise should be treated as a musical phrase with the goal of creating a sense of rhythm and motion.

Most of the exercises are based on the ostinato phrases, played by the piano, known as *montunos*. By combining with the *montunos* other rhythm section parts such as *clave* or *tumbao* (the bass line), complex polyrhythms and syncopations are achieved. Practicing these exercises will develop a strong rhythmic concept and two-hand independence.

The etudes that follow each chapter are original compositions intended for performance. Considering that they are solo vibraphone works, they are not presented as examples of typical Salsa but are intended to capture the flavor of the style they are based on.

Guides for practicing:

1. Use a metronome. Set the metronome to click on beats one and three of each measure.
2. Sticking. Always hold four mallets, even when less are required. Where needed, stickings are indicated. Mallets are numbered from 1 to 4, from right to left. For double



stops use both hands, either mallets 1 and 3 or 2 and 3 depending on the technique preferred.

3. Pedaling. Generally, pedal the exercises twice per bar, grouping notes of the same chord and anticipating downbeats with the harmony. Where left unmarked, pedaling in the etudes is implied by note duration. If parts conflict, the melody or notes of longer duration take precedence. "Broken" chords may be allowed to ring together at the player's discretion.

4. Two-hand Independence. For exercises involving two-hand independence, practice singing along with either hand until you can feel the phrase independently of the other part. Also, try practicing with mallets of differing hardness in each hand to help distinguish a particular part.

Salsa

The name Salsa describes a music that draws from the musical traditions and practices of multiple cultures. It is a music whose origins can be traced from Africa to Cuba to New York City, and whose history extends back to the 16th century.

The actual term Salsa, meaning "sauce," was coined in the late 1960's during a period of extensive commercialization. The music itself had its beginnings in the Caribbean in the 1700's. Its creation was a result of the interaction between the enslaved peoples of western Africa, brought over to work the plantations, and the predominantly Spanish European settlers already there. Over its long development musical contributions have come from the United States and a variety of Caribbean countries, but it was specifically in Cuba where the foundations of Salsa were laid.

Cuba was unique in the New World in that the Africans brought there were allowed to continue and maintain their own musical traditions. This tolerant view of the Spanish might be attributed to Spain itself having been a cultural melting pot, blending European, Arabic, and Indian influences among others. What the Africans brought were dances, songs, and a tradition of drumming, both sacred and secular, along with musical elements such as call and response singing, polyrhythms, and pentatonic scales. The one thing they could not bring with them were their instruments. Although they recreated many, others were banned by the colonists and permanently lost.

African dance and music first gained acceptance in the rural areas of Cuba where they mixed with Spanish country music. Gradually they became a part of Cuban popular music moving into the urban areas and coming into

contact with the music of the upper classes, that is, the music of the military, the theaters, and the church.

The fusion of African and European rhythms, melodies, harmonies, and instrumentation led to the creation of a popular Cuban music that became one of the most influential of the Western hemisphere. There are three forms in particular that represent this consolidation and from which virtually all of modern Salsa can trace its roots: *rumba, son,* and *danzón.*[1] The *rumba,* of which there are three styles, *yambú, guaguacó,* and *columbia,* is a secular form of drumming and dancing with call and response singing. The *son,* perhaps the most influential form on today's Salsa, was a popular dance of the 19th century working class. The *danzón,* developed in the late 1800's, is derived from European court and country dances.[2]

Instrumentation in Latin music has varied greatly over the years depending on the style of music to be played, and the availability of instruments. The resources to draw upon were large. Besides the plethora of African drums and hand percussion instruments, there were European orchestral and keyboard instruments, and guitars from Spain. A typical *rumba* ensemble consisted entirely of percussion instruments with wooden crates used as drums. The *orquestra típica* of the 19th century generally consisted of two clarinets, two horns, trumpet, two violins, contrabass, *güiro* and timpani which were later replaced by *timbales.* The *charanga* of the early 20th century replaced the horns with just one flute, creating the classic *charanga* sound of flute and strings. Eventually one *conga* drum was added

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[1] Rebeca Mauleón, Salsa Guidebook for Piano and Ensemble. (Petaluma, Ca.: Sher Music Co.,1993) 1.
[2] Ibid. 254.

to the rhythm section. There were and are many other ensembles of varying size and instrumentation. A typical Salsa band today has a rhythm section consisting of piano, bass, *timbales, congas, bongos,* and hand percussion. Horn sections vary in size from two to six or more using trumpets, trombones, saxophones, and flutes. Added to all this would be a lead singer and perhaps three background singers.

In the early part of this century the music of both the United States and Cuba began to impact upon each other. This was greatly facilitated by the advent of radio and the phonograph. In the 1920's, American dances, jazz band instrumentation, and jazz harmonies became very popular in Cuba and their influence began to change Cuban music. Conversely, émigrés from Cuba and Puerto Rico were coming to the United States, specifically to New York City, establishing it as one of the centers for Latin music, as it still is today. Subsequent decades felt the merging of Cuban and American music. There was the *rumba* craze of the 1930's in the United States and the creation of Afro-jazz by Dizzy Gillespe and Chano Pozo in the 1940's. By the 1950's Cuban popular music had established itself as an integral part of American entertainment[3] and had influenced other styles such as jazz and rhythm-and-blues. Many non-Latinos, such as Cal Tjader, were forming bands to play Afro-Cuban music. The fifties also saw the inclusion of the Puerto Rican *bomba* and *plena* into the Latin music scene and their influence upon it.

In the 1960's, due to Cuba's political isolation, New York actually became the center of Afro-Cuban music. Ironically, by this time there were

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[3] Vernon Boggs, Salsiology: Afro-Cuban Music and the Evolution of Salsa in New York City. (New York: Excelsior Music Publishing Co., 1992) 101.

more New York Puerto Ricans, or Nuyoricans, than Cubans playing Salsa in New York. It was in the late 60's that the name Salsa was given to the music. This was done specifically by Fania Records as a part of an extensive promotional campaign for their own records and those of smaller labels which they also distributed. Since then many other influences have acted upon Salsa and become part of the music, but Cuba is still looked upon as the leading innovator and seen by many as Salsa's only true source. It's not uncommon to find a Salsa record from the seventies where no credit is given for a particular composition when in fact it was plagiarized from a Cuban recording not available in this country.

Today, Salsa shows a broad influence of styles and idioms. Besides the contributions of jazz, blues, and Puerto Rican music already mentioned, other elements incorporated include *samba* (Brazil), *merenque* (Dominican Republic), rock, funk, and *songo*, a new idiom created in Cuba in the eighties. There has also been a new influx of Cubans to the United States, a result of the Mariel Boatlift, that are revitalizing the music. Salsa is now played by musicians from all over Latin America and the U. S. and instrumentation can include such things as electric guitar, electronic drums, and synthesizers.

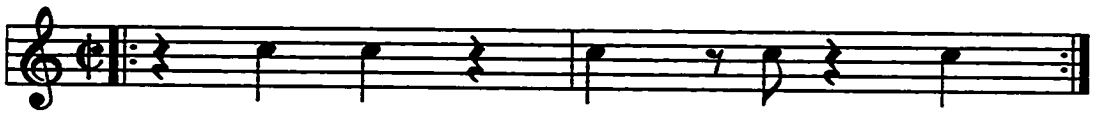
Clave

Clave is a five note, two bar rhythmic phrase that is the foundation for Salsa as well as most Latin music. Played by the striking together of two wooden dowels known as *claves* it is the part to which all others orient themselves. *Clave* is derived from a similar 6/8 African rhythm and is divisible into two parts often referred to as the "three side" and the "two side," so named for the amount of notes they contain. *Clave,* also known as *son clave,* can begin with either measure. Starting on the three side is called forward *clave* and starting with the two side is called reverse. The direction of *clave* is detemined by the melodic phrases of the music which will imply a particular *clave.* Once begun, *clave* never changes direction although compositions often contain odd numbered phrases thus effectively turning the *clave* around.

The only syncopated note in *clave* occurs on the "an" of two on the three side and is called the "*bombo.*" The *bombo* is usually accented. There are other types of *clave* such as *rumba clave,* or Brazilian *clave,* but their role remains the same.

Forward Clave (3 - 2)

Reverse Clave (2 - 3)



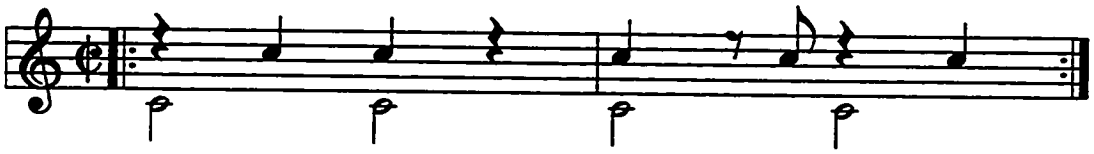
Clave with Pulse

Forward

1

Reverse

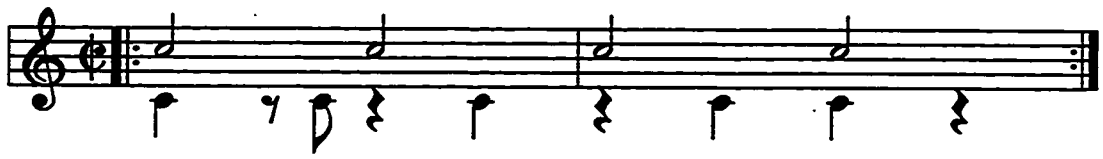
2



Clave with Pulse (continued)

Forward

3



Reverse

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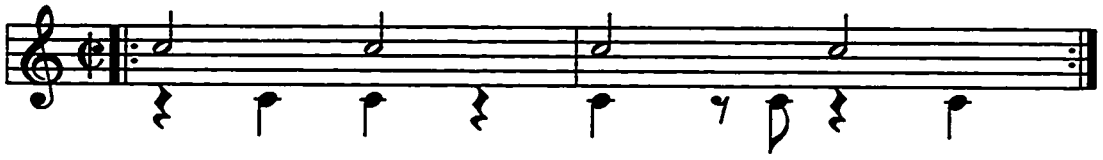
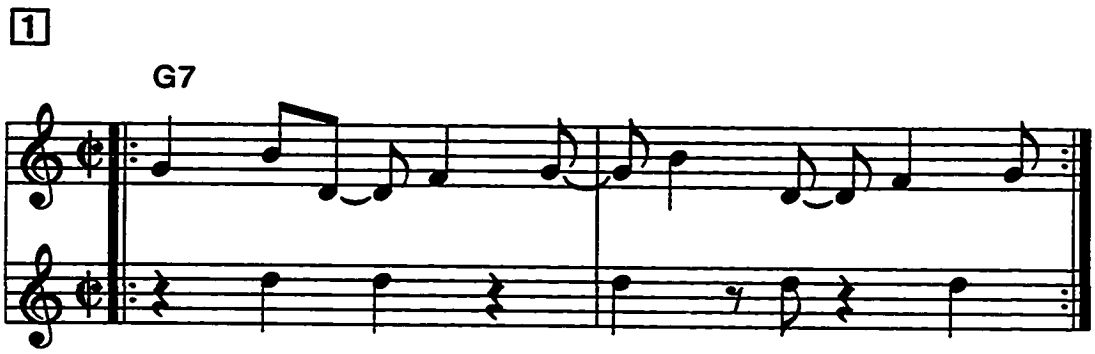


Montuno

The *montuno* is a syncopated ostinato pattern played by the piano. Also known as a *guajeo,* a *montuno* is essentially a two bar phrase, but it can be extended into larger phrases depending on the needs of the music. There are many "standard" *montuno* patterns some of which work for a variety of rhythmic styles and others that are associated with just one particular style. All *montunos* can be varied in a variety of ways.

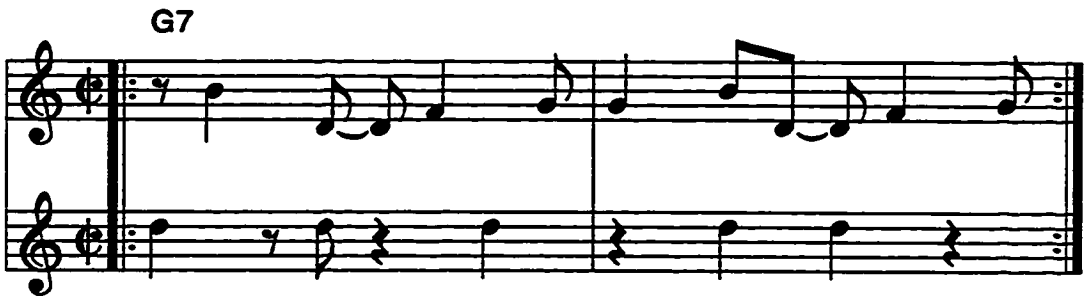
Montunos have primarily two functions, rhythmic and harmonic. Rhythmically, *montunos* need to line up with *clave,* as do all parts. The example below is a very common *montuno* pattern. Note that in the *montuno's* two bar phrase, the bar containing the downbeat on beat one occurs on the two side of clave. Understanding this is essential for playing *montunos.*

Montuno and 2-3 Clave



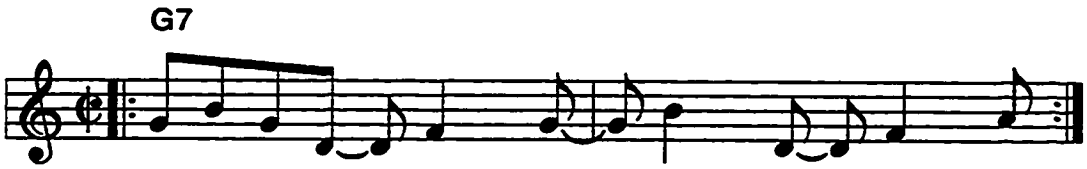
Against a 3-2 *clave* pattern the *montuno* would look like this:

2



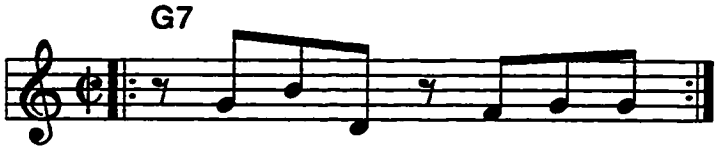
Rhythmically, *montunos* can be varied by the addition of eight notes. The newly created downbeats do not change a *montuno's* relation to *clave* but these variations are generally done on the "two" side.

3 2-3 Clave



A similar variation is the one bar *montuno* which is useful and necessary for odd measured phrases.

4

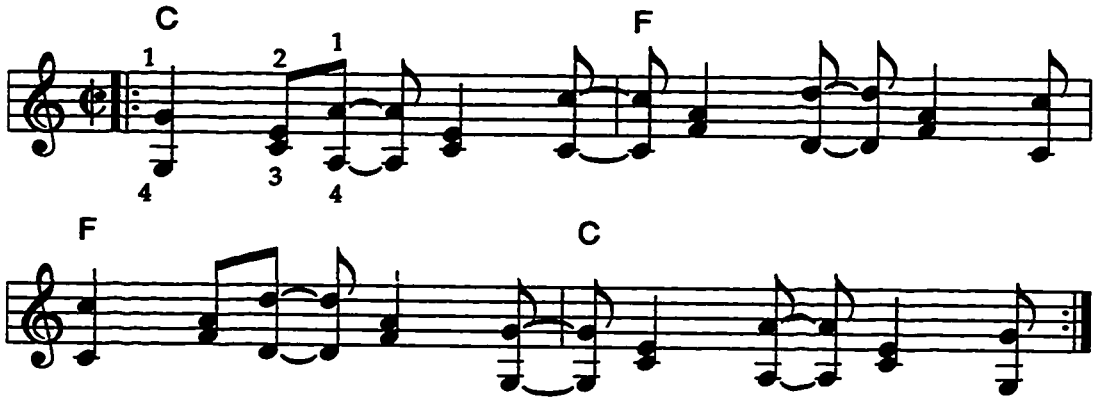


Montunos can be based on just one chord, or a series of chords. Harmonically they are created in two basic ways. One is through arpeggiation, as previously shown, and the other is through harmonic movement. This movement is usually created by the alternation of two notes, perhaps the 3rd and 4th degrees, in contrast with other notes in the chord, perhaps the root or 7th, which remain stationary.

Often, pianists (or vibists) are required to create a *montuno* on the spot based on a set of given chord changes. Here are some examples on how to do this using some typical chord progressions.

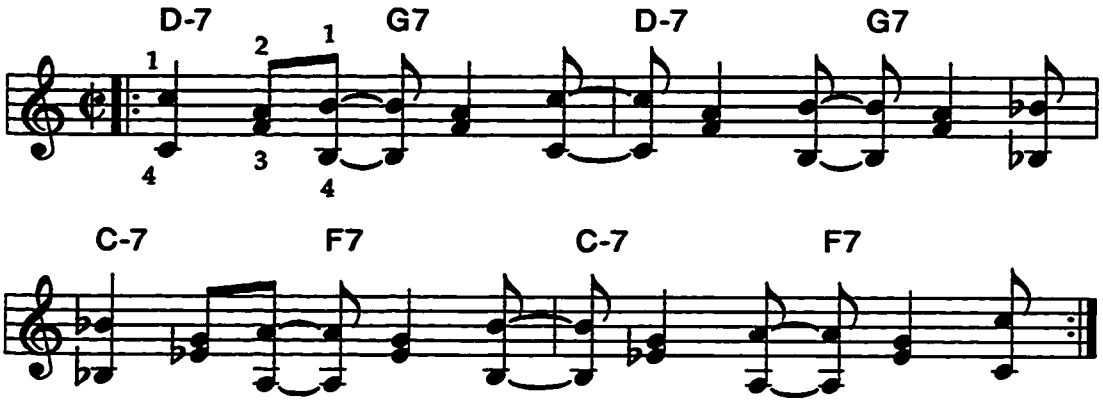
Although example [5] is a four bar phrase, rhythmically it is still a two bar phrase. Harmonically, motion is created within each chord by the 5th and 6th degrees. This is a common device for major chords.

[5]



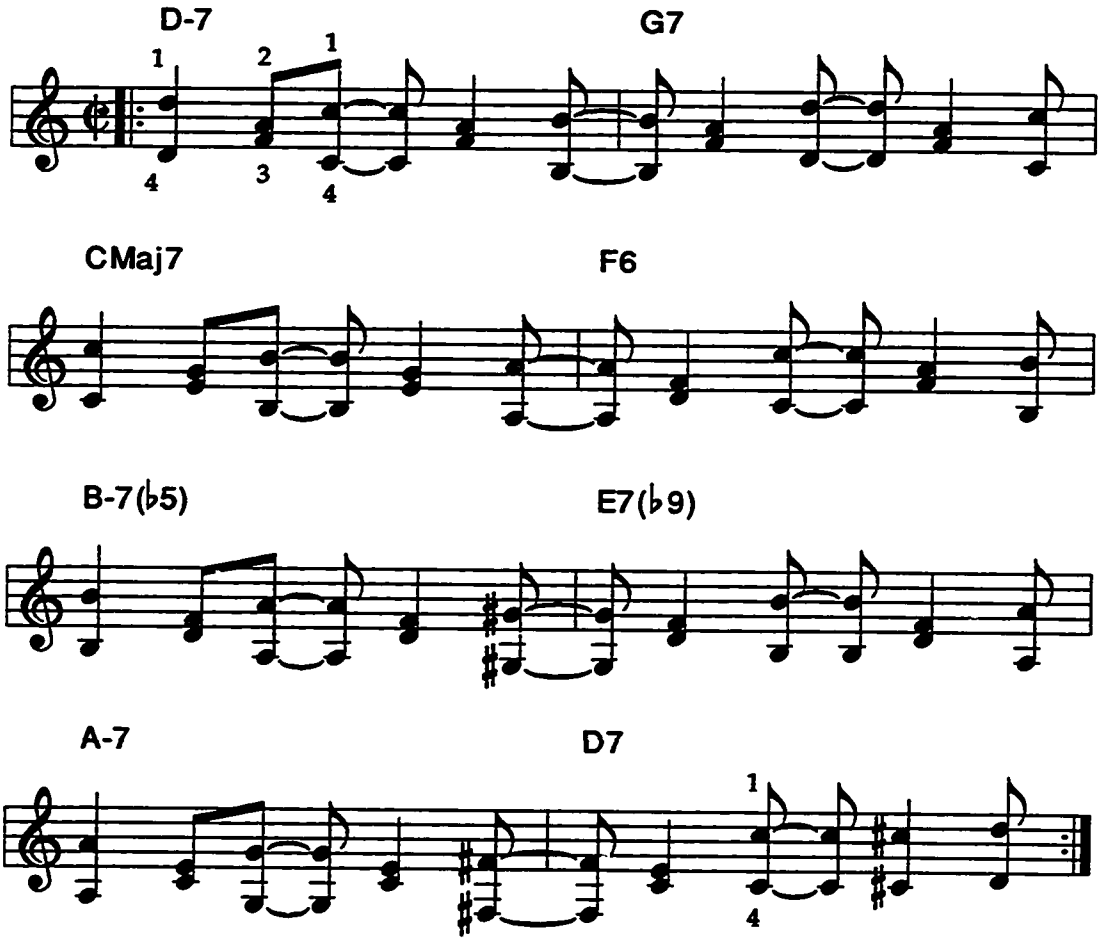
Example 6 is a typical *montuno* for a II-7 - V7 progression. Note the half-step motion from the 7th of the II-7 chord to the 3rd of the V7. This same *montuno* could be used for just a Dominant 7th chord (i.e. two bars each of G7 and F7).

6



Example 7 takes the two bar *montuno* and extends it over an eight bar, eight chord progression. Notice how once again most of the harmonic motion is created by the 3rds and 7ths of each chord although in the Cmaj7 the motion is from the root to the major 7th. Also note the chromatic approach in the last bar leading back to the top.

7



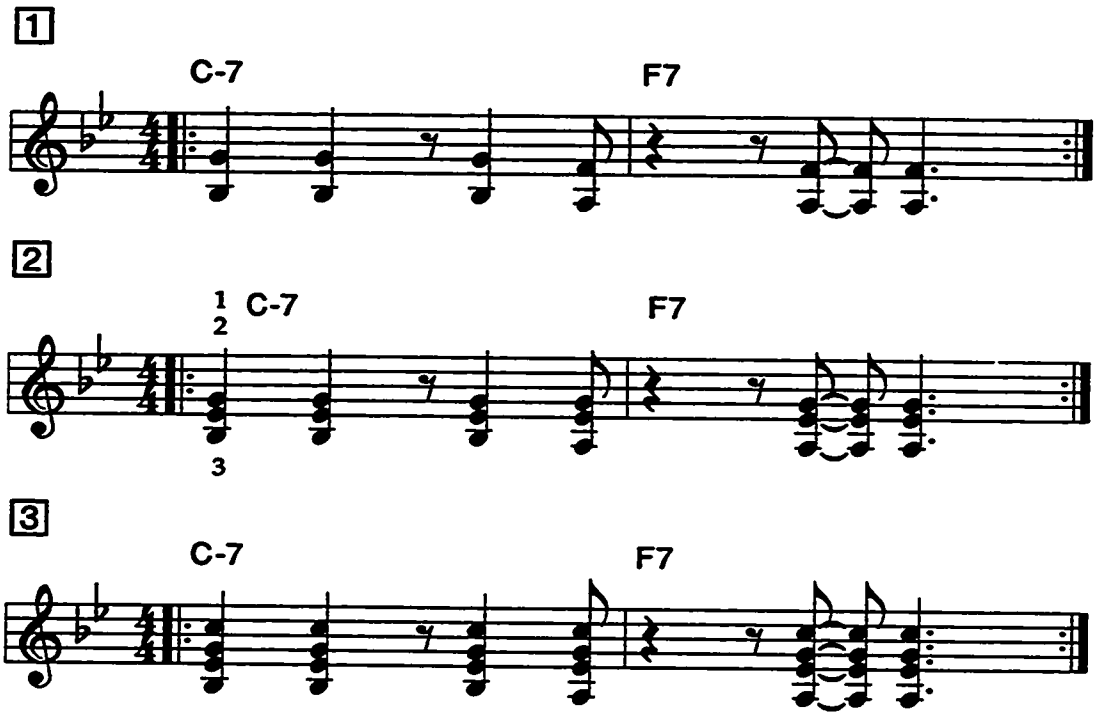
Cha-cha-chá

The *cha-cha-chá* is a dance and a rhythmic style derived from an open vamp section, also called the *mambo* section, added to the end of the Cuban *danzón*. It was created in the 1950's by violinist Enrique Jorrín who so named it for the scraping sound made by the dancer's feet.

The *cha-cha-chá* is of moderate tempo with the pulse of each quarter note being felt. Harmonically, the II-7 - V7 progression is most commonly associated with the *cha-cha-chá* along with two distinct rhythmic patterns for the piano. The first is a comping pattern where rhythmically both hands play together. In the second, they alternate with the right hand playing on the downbeats and the left hand playing on the upbeats. Both these patterns are explored in the exercises (as *montunos* 1 and 2) along with *clave* and *tumbao*. All of these elements are in turn combined to create exercises to develop two-hand independence.

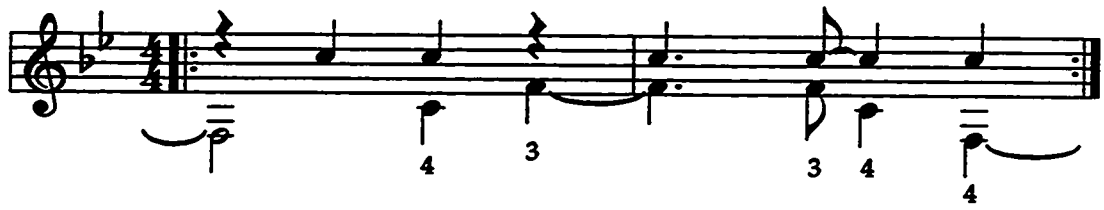
Some of the classic *cha-cha-chás* are "*Oye Cómo Va*," by Tito Puente; "*Sofrito*," by Neil Creque; and "Morning," by Claire Fischer.

Montuno 1



2-3 Clave and Tumbao

4



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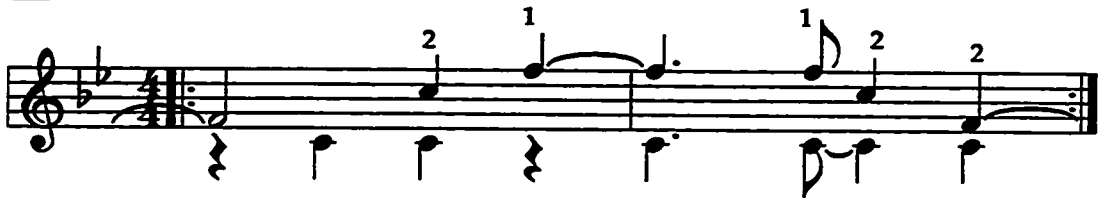

3-2 Clave and Tumbao

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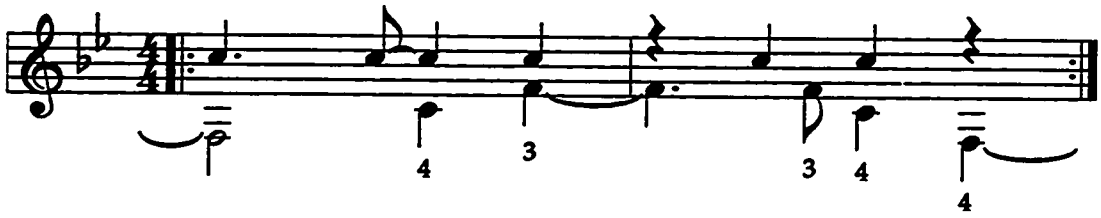

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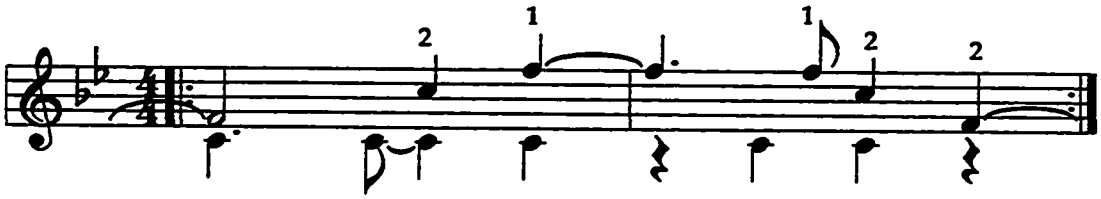
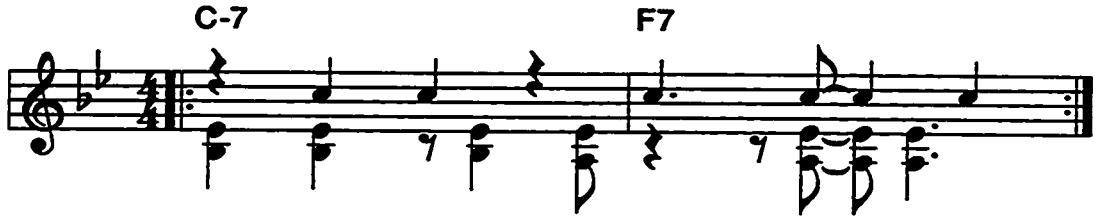


Clave and Montuno

8



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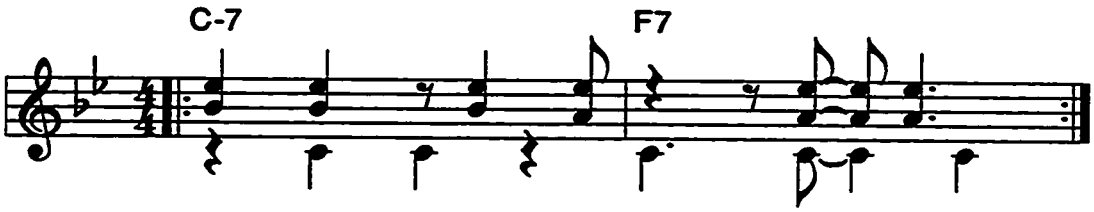
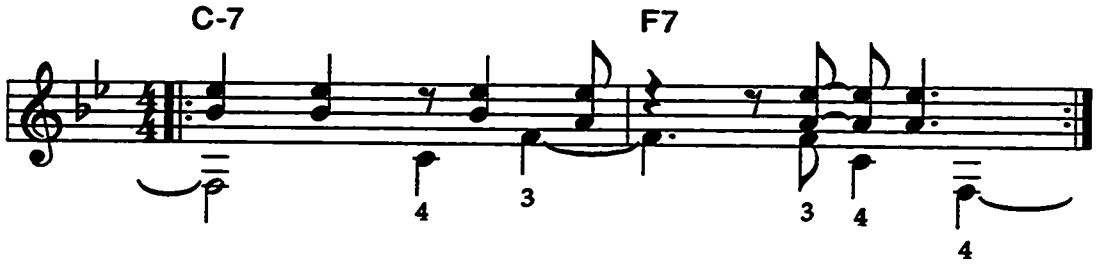


Montuno and Tumbao

10



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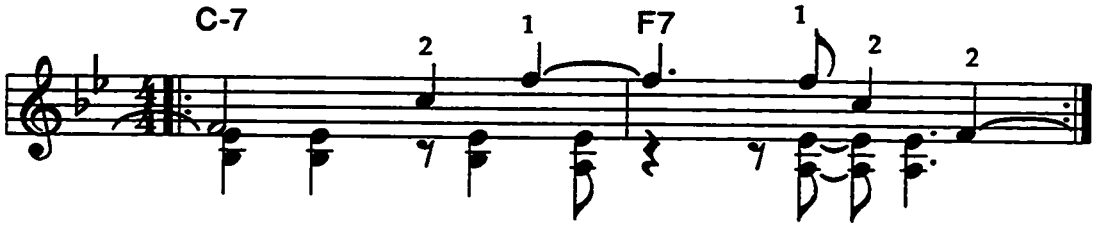

Montuno 2

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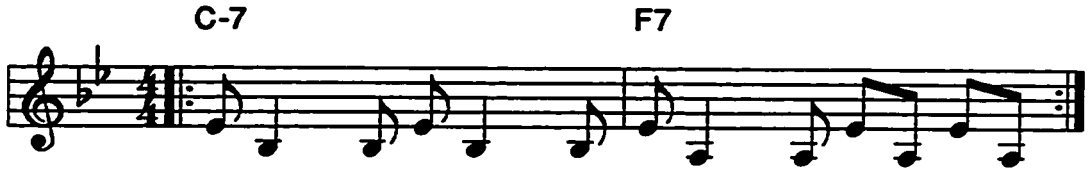

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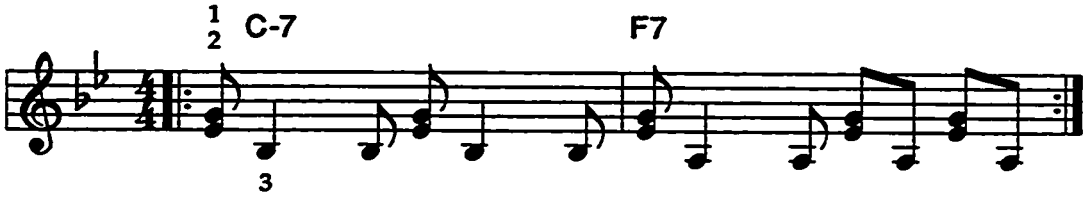

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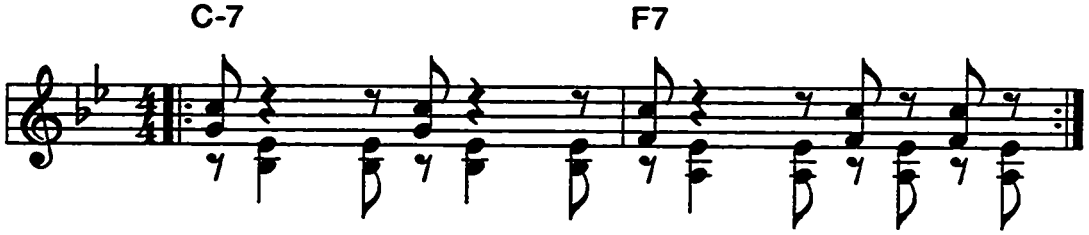

Montuno and Clave

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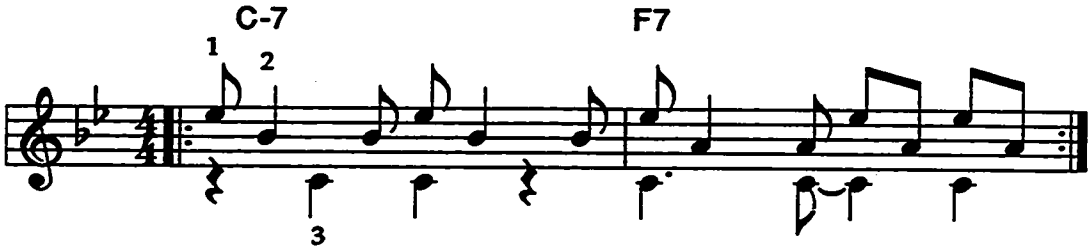

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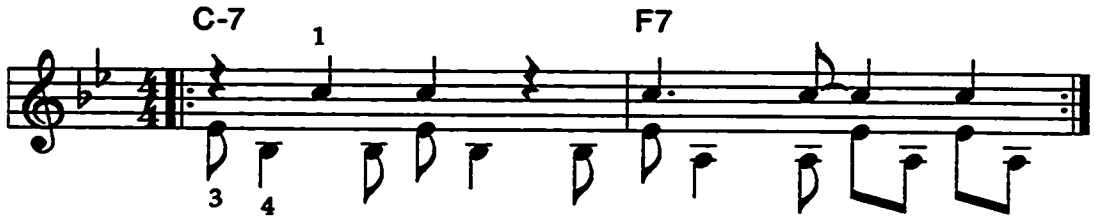

Montuno and Tumbao

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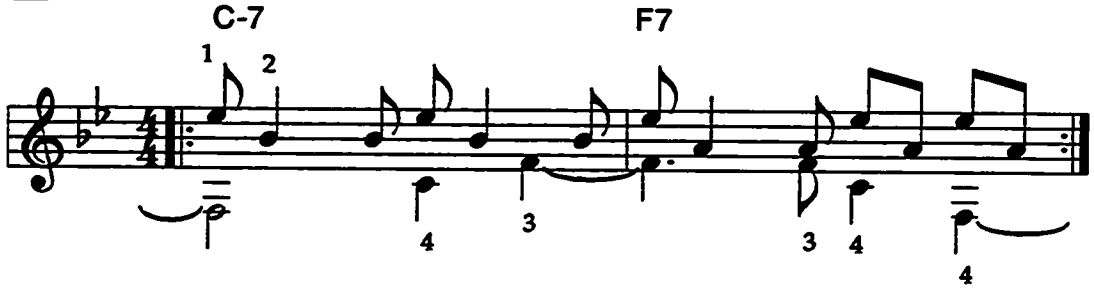

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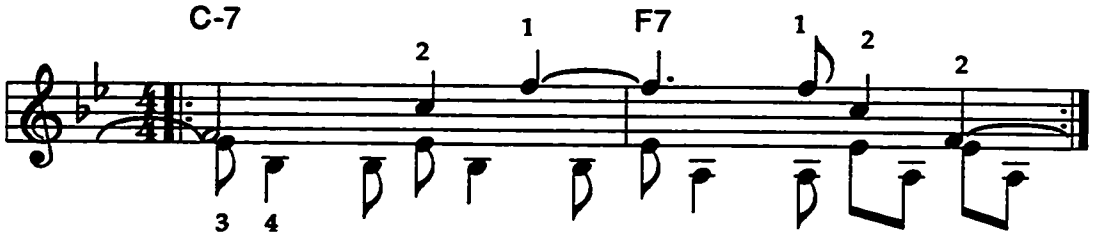

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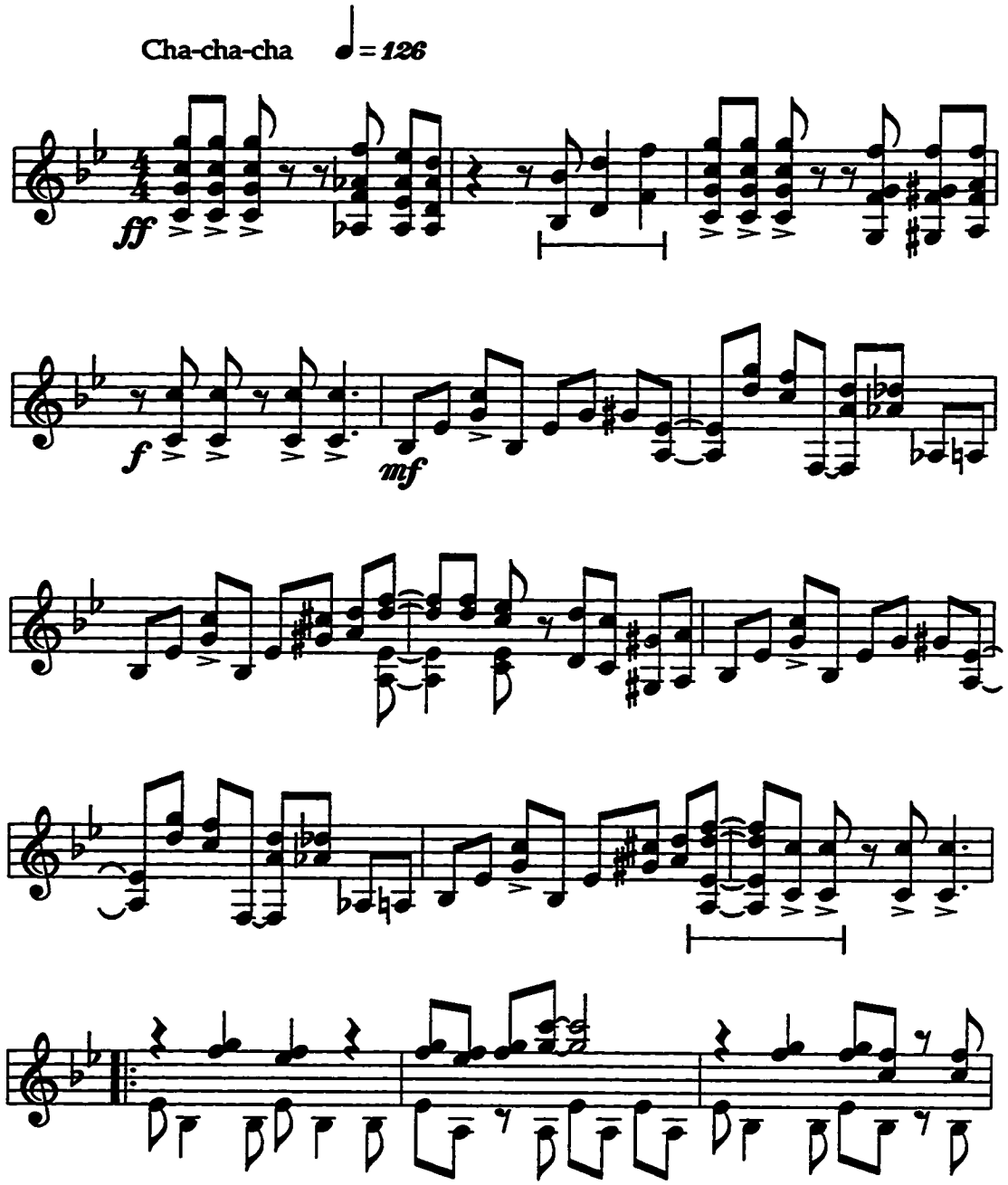

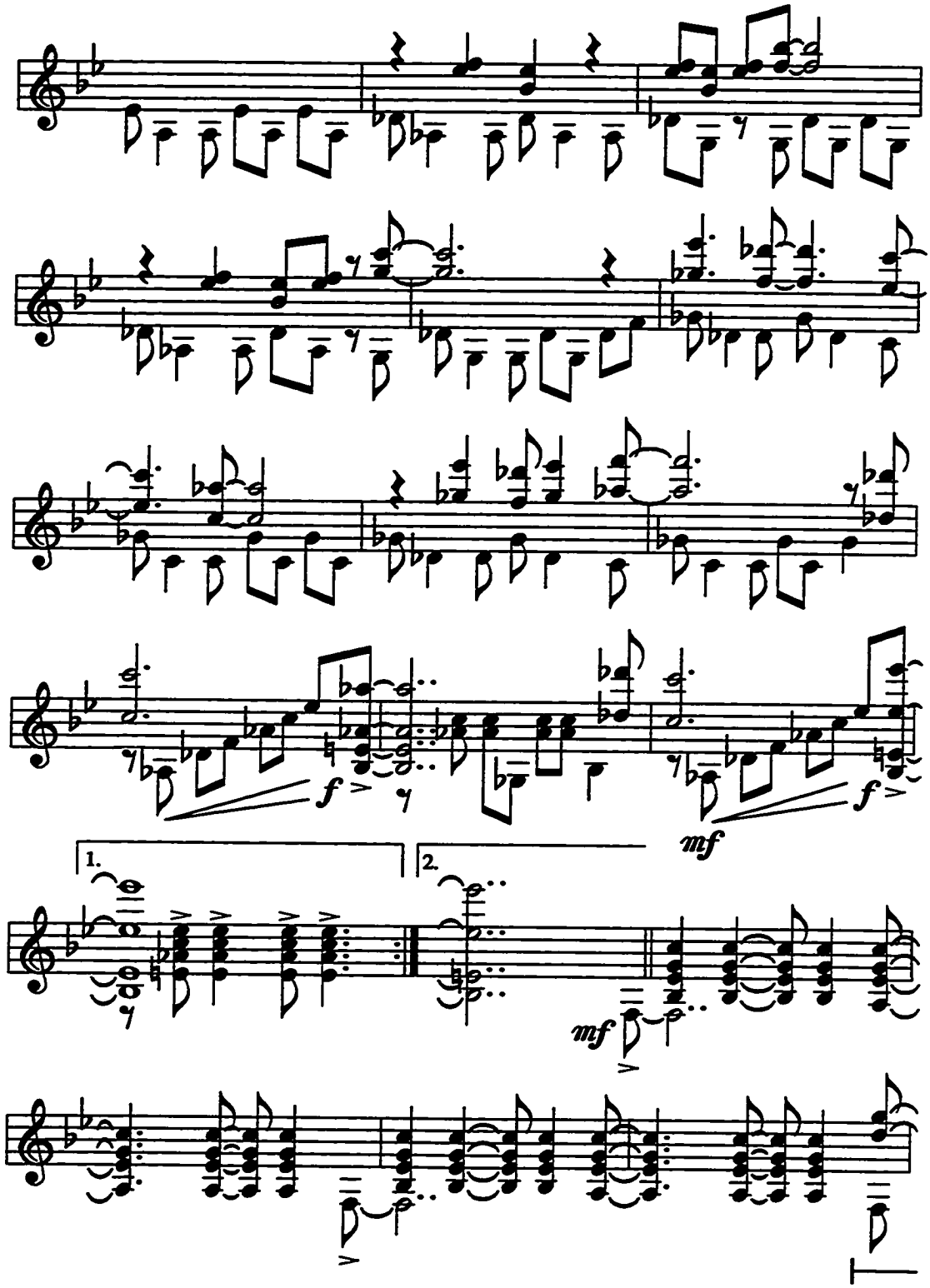
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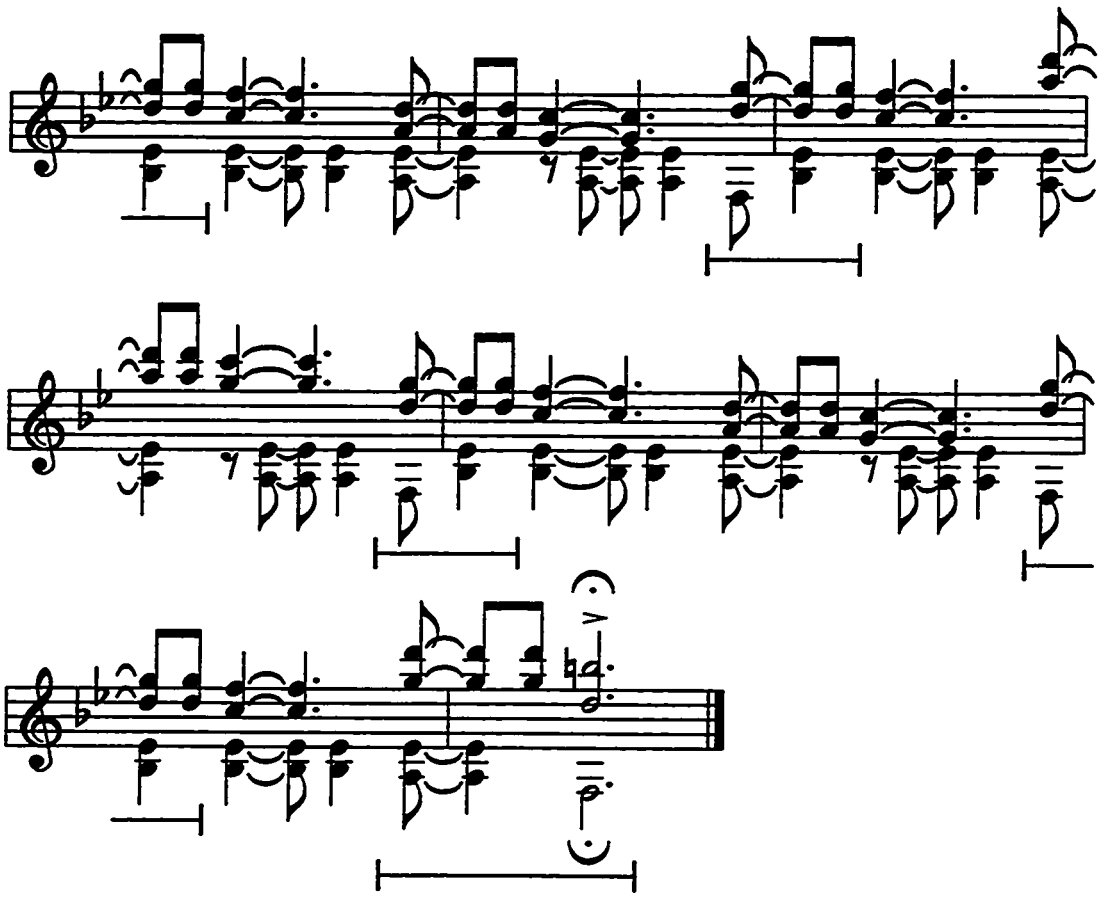


Mambo

The *mambo* originated in the late 1930's as a section added to the end of the *danzón* and soon evolved into a dance and musical style of its own. The creation of the *mambo* was spurred by the addition of *congas* to the traditional *charanga* instrumentation. In a final section known as the *montuno,* violins would play repeated phrases (*guajeos*) against the percussion and the syncopated bass or *tumbao.* Another innovation soon to follow was the addition of the cowbell to the *timbale* set.

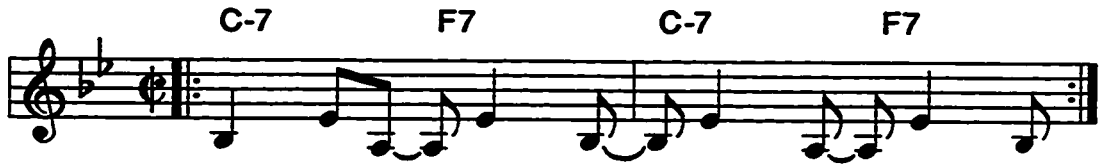
The first *mambo* was written in 1938 by Orestes Lopez for the group Arcaño y sus Maravillas of which he and his brother were members. The group enjoyed great popularity in Cuba in the 1940's with their only competition coming from Arsenio Rodriguez who is also credited with the invention and spread of *mambo.* The height of *mambo* popularity was in the 40's and 50's with big band style ensembles featuring large horn sections.

Mambo is actually similar to other styles such as the *son-montuno* and the *guaracha.* What distinguishes *mambo* is its brighter tempo. The *montuno* used for these exercises is almost generic in that it could be used for a number of styles. What is important is to get the feel and phrasing of these very syncopated phrases along with the *clave* and the bass *tumbao* and the subsequent combinations. The pulse is the half note and the exercises should be felt in "2".

Some classic *mambos* are "*Mambo* Inn," by Bauza, Samson and Woodlen; "A Night in Tunisia," by Dizzy Gillespie; and "Ran Kan Kan," by Tito Puente.

Montuno

1



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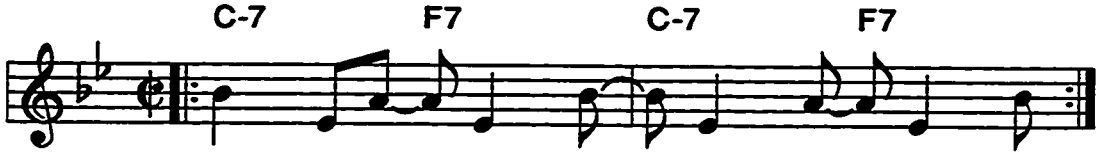

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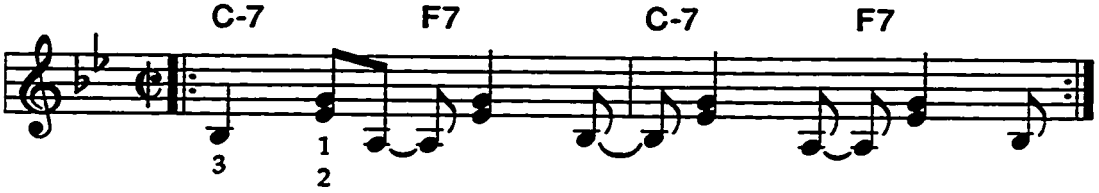

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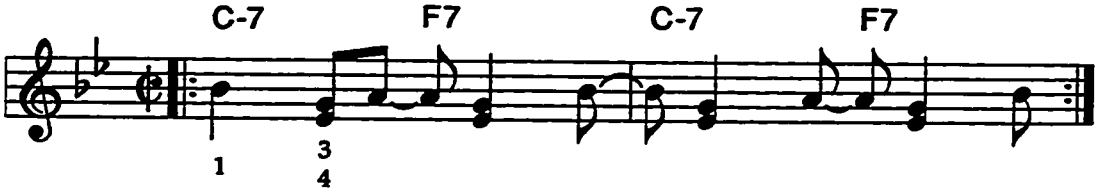

Montuno (continued)

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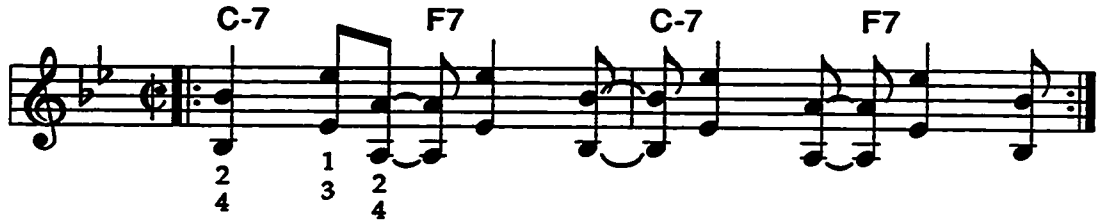

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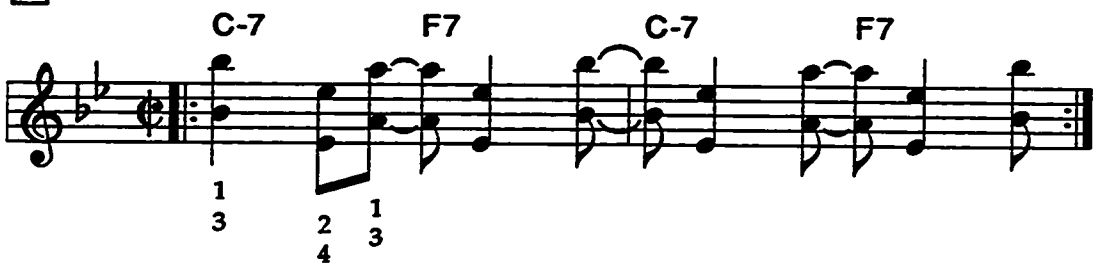

Alternate Stickings for examples 5 and 6

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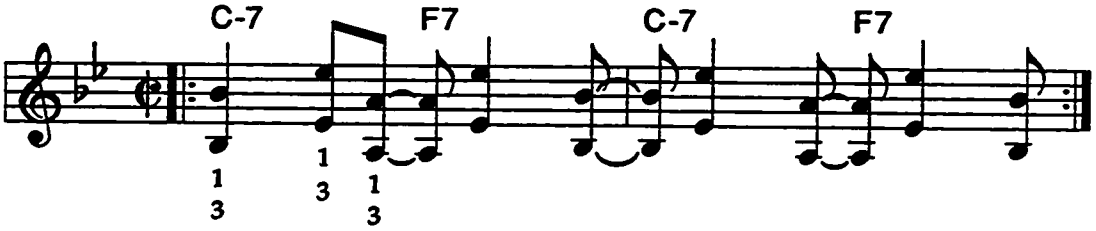

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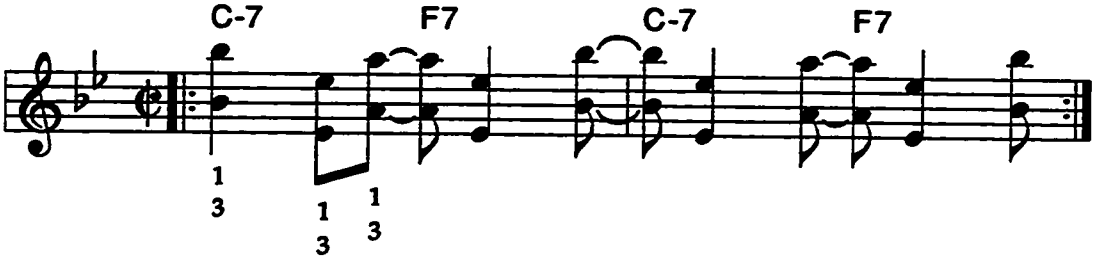

Montuno (continued)

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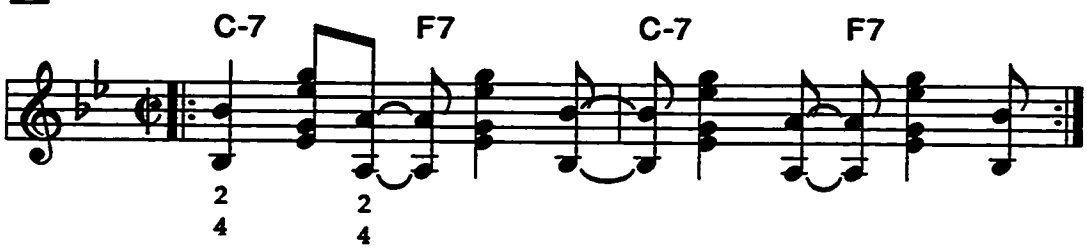

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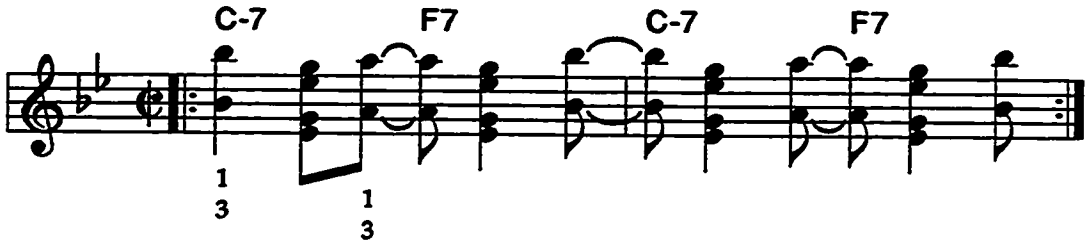

More Variations

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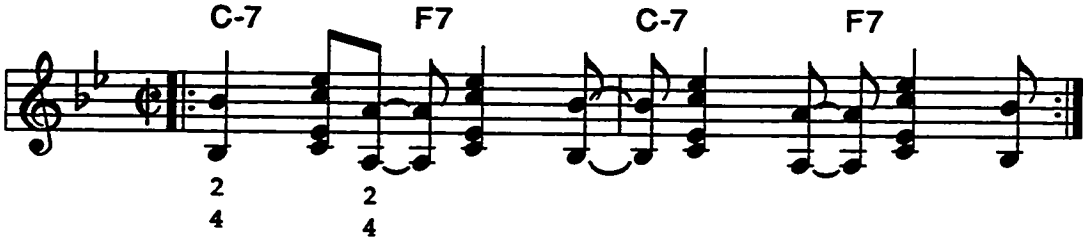

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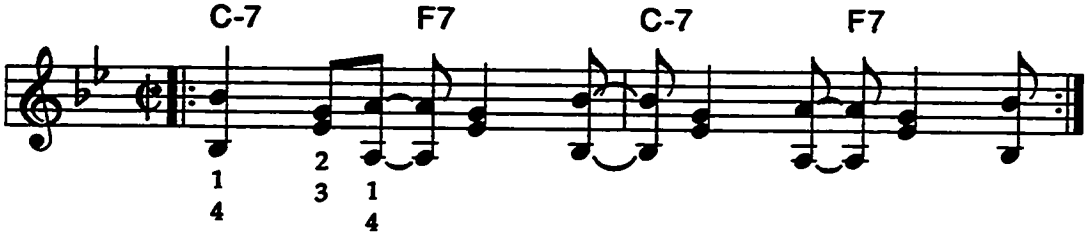

Clave and Tumbao

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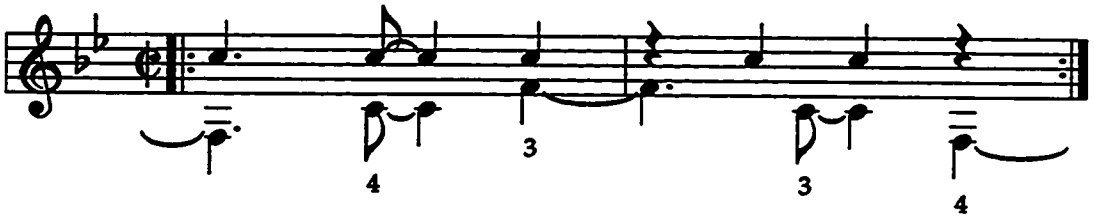

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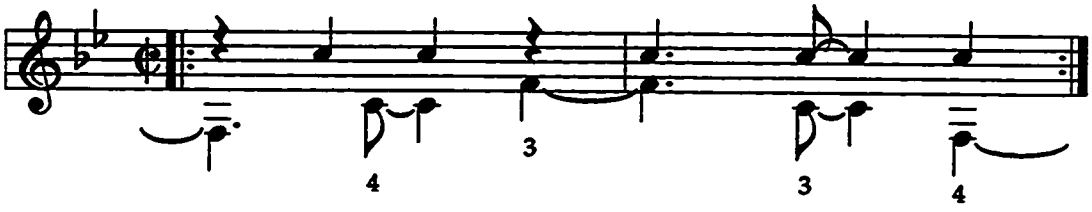

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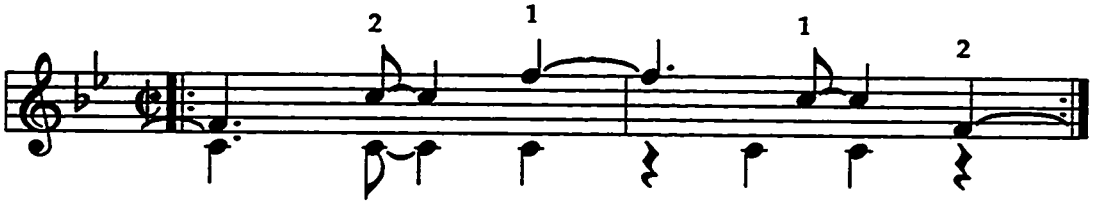

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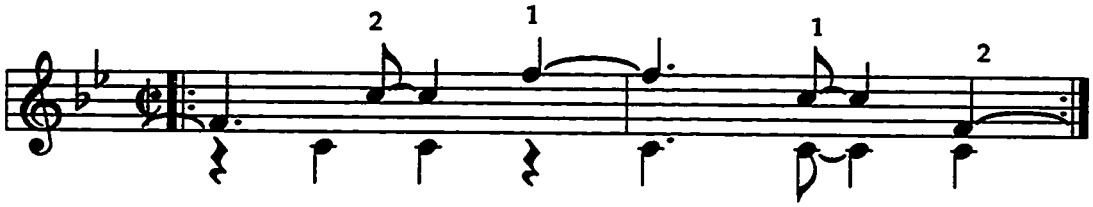

Harmonized Clave and Tumbao

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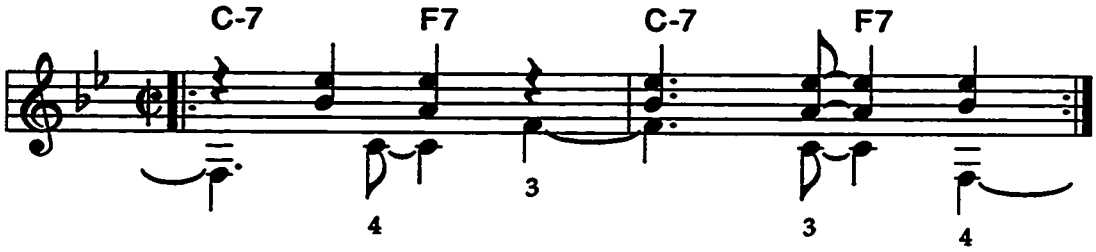

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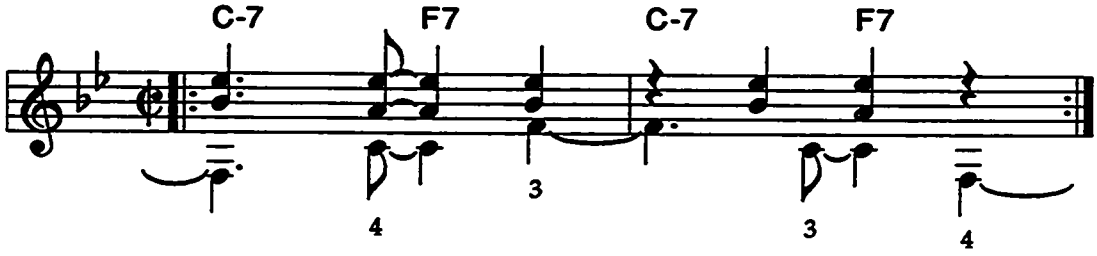

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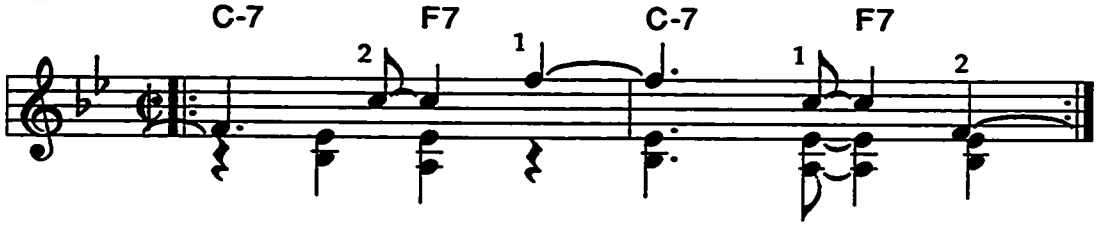

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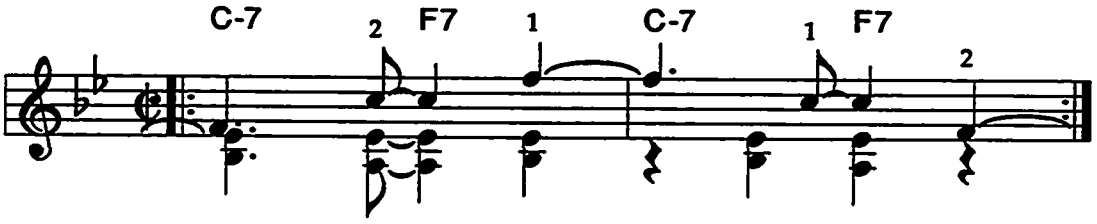

Montuno and Clave

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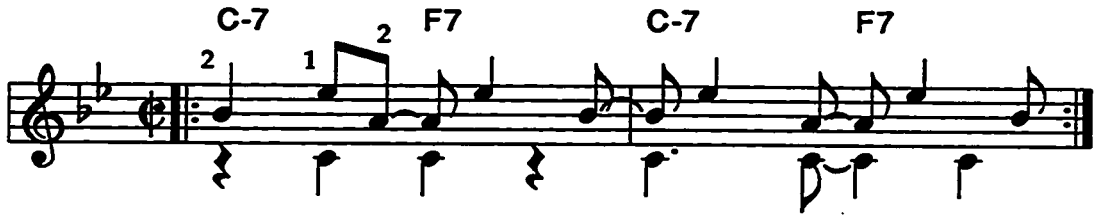

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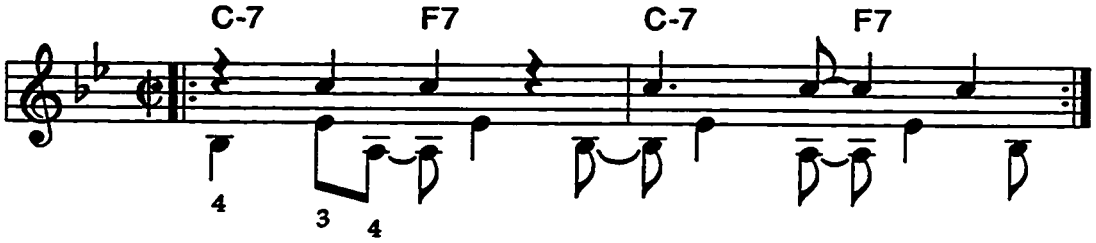

Montuno and Tumbao

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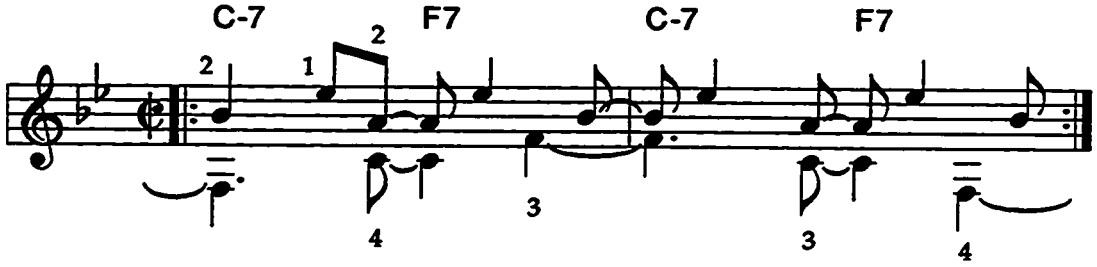

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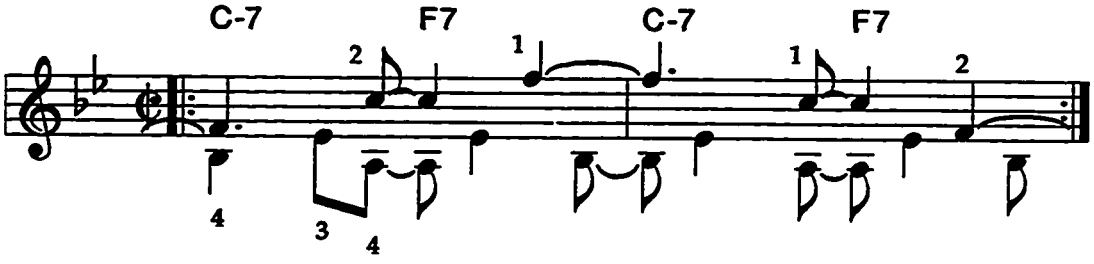

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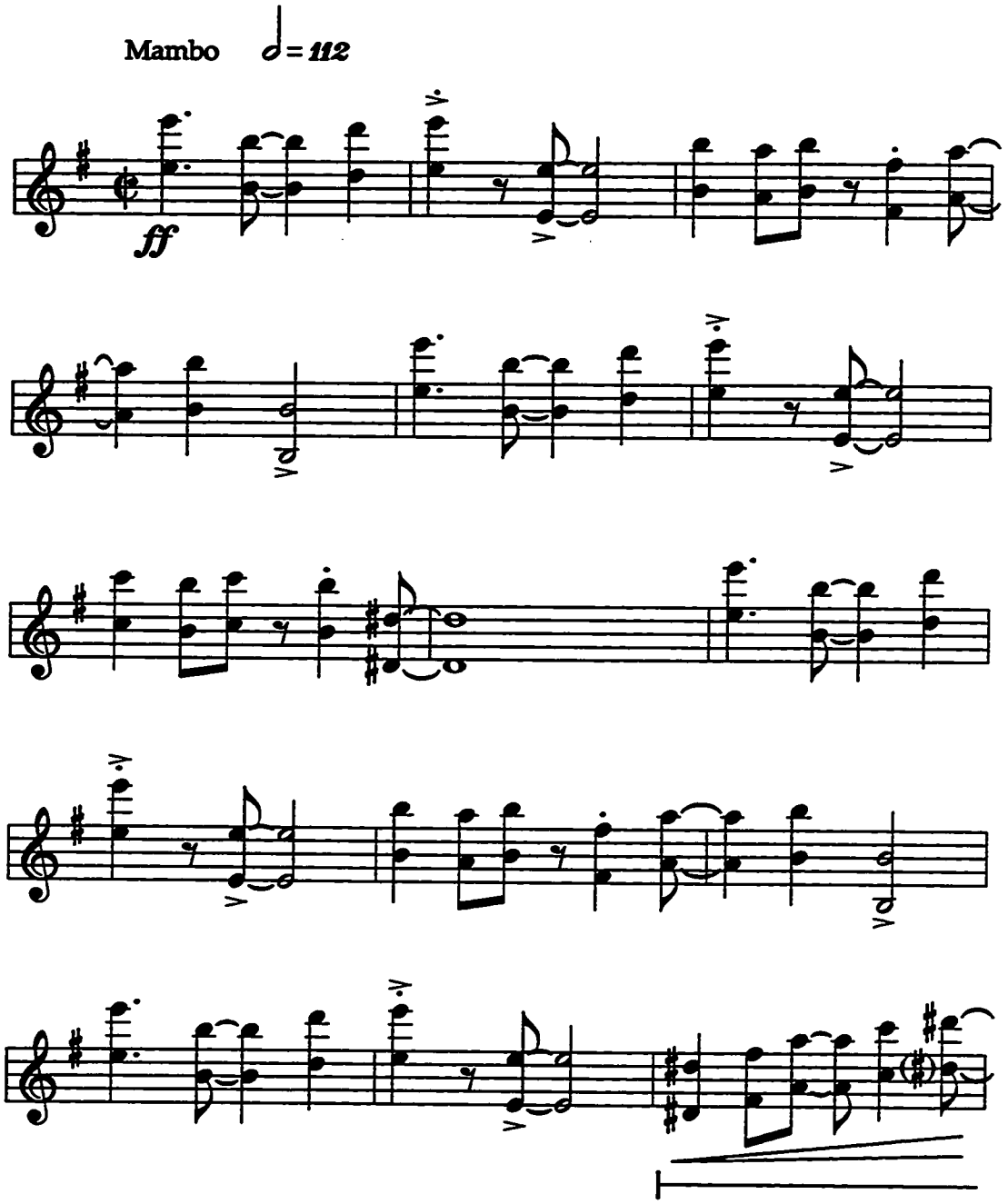

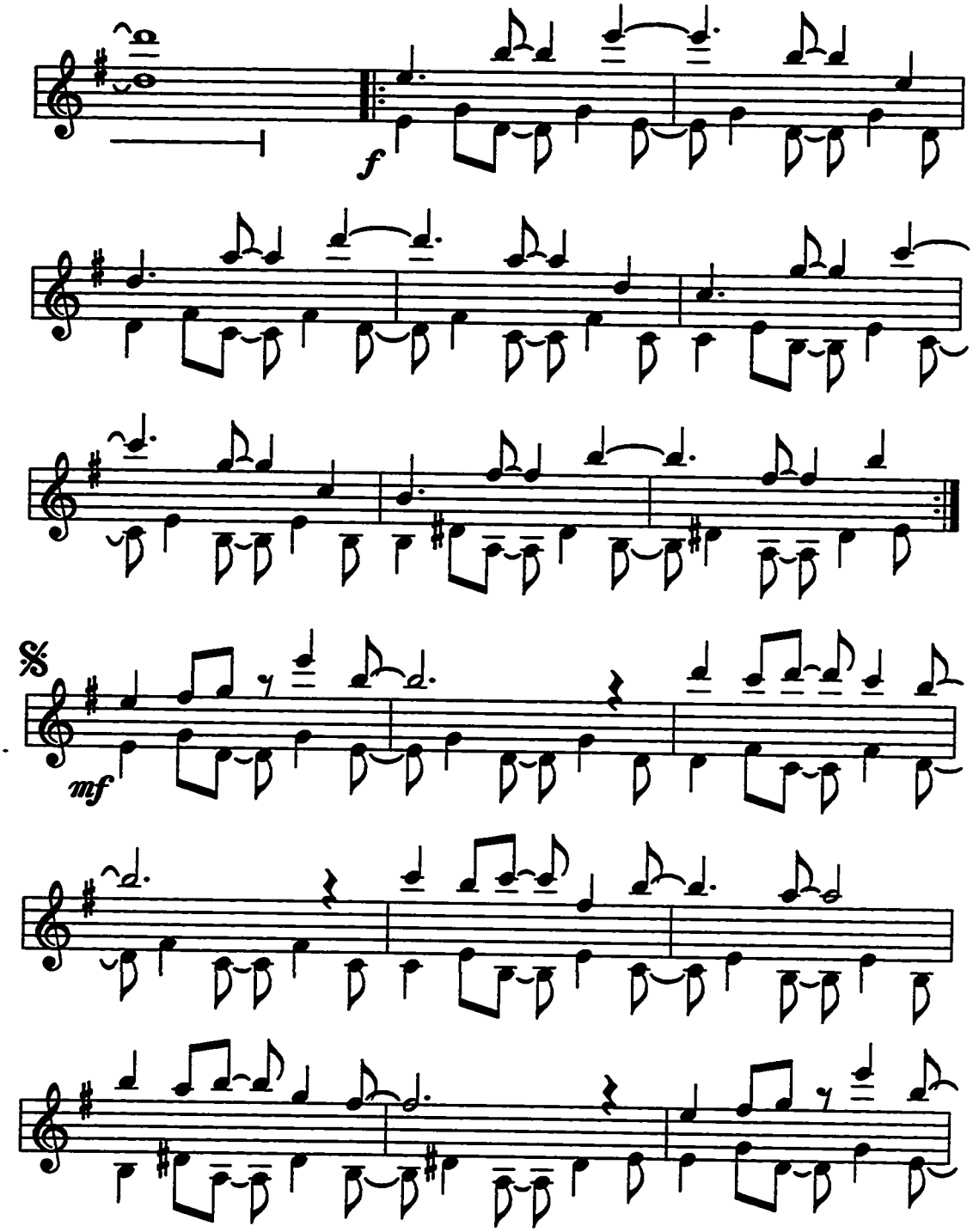
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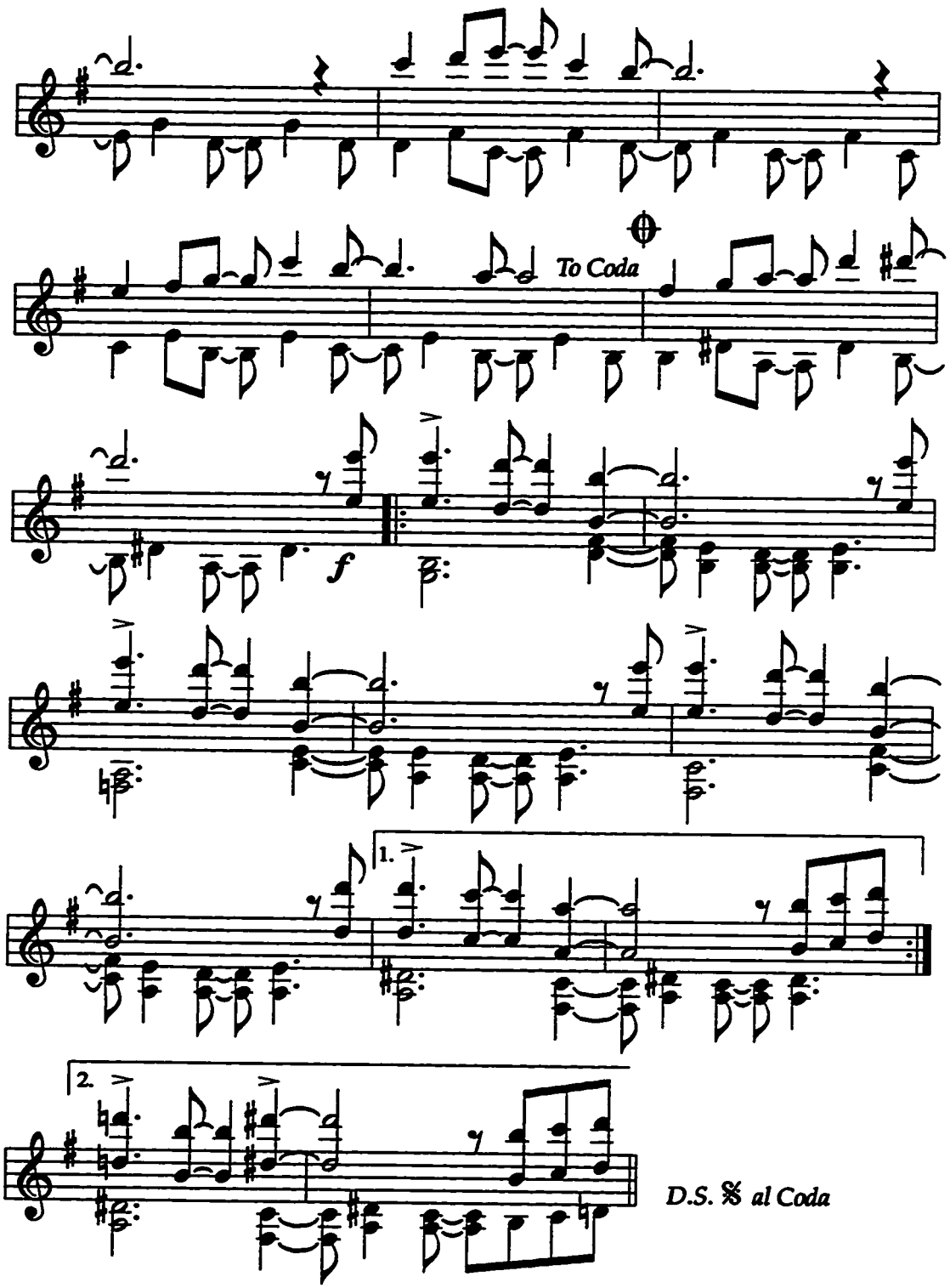
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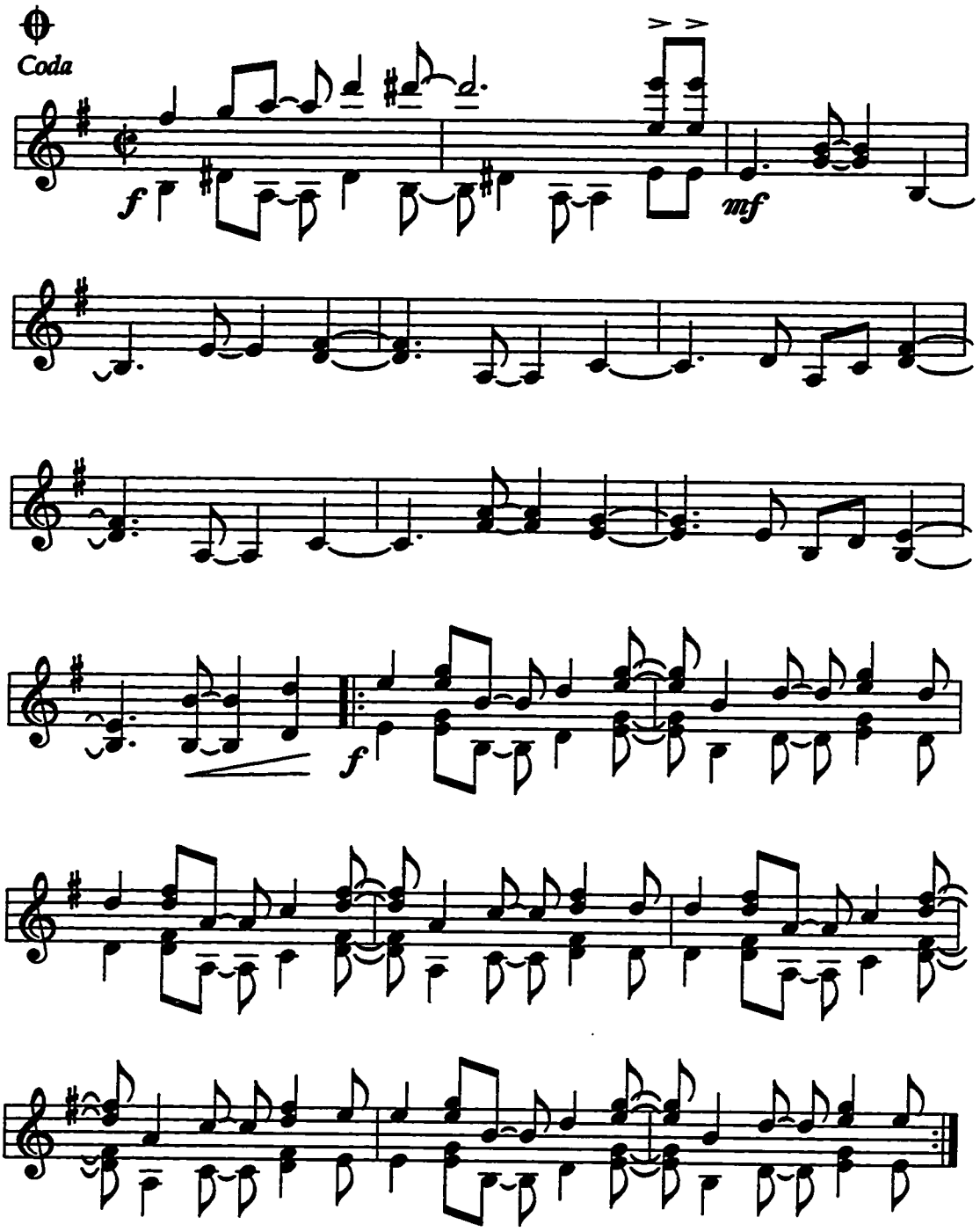
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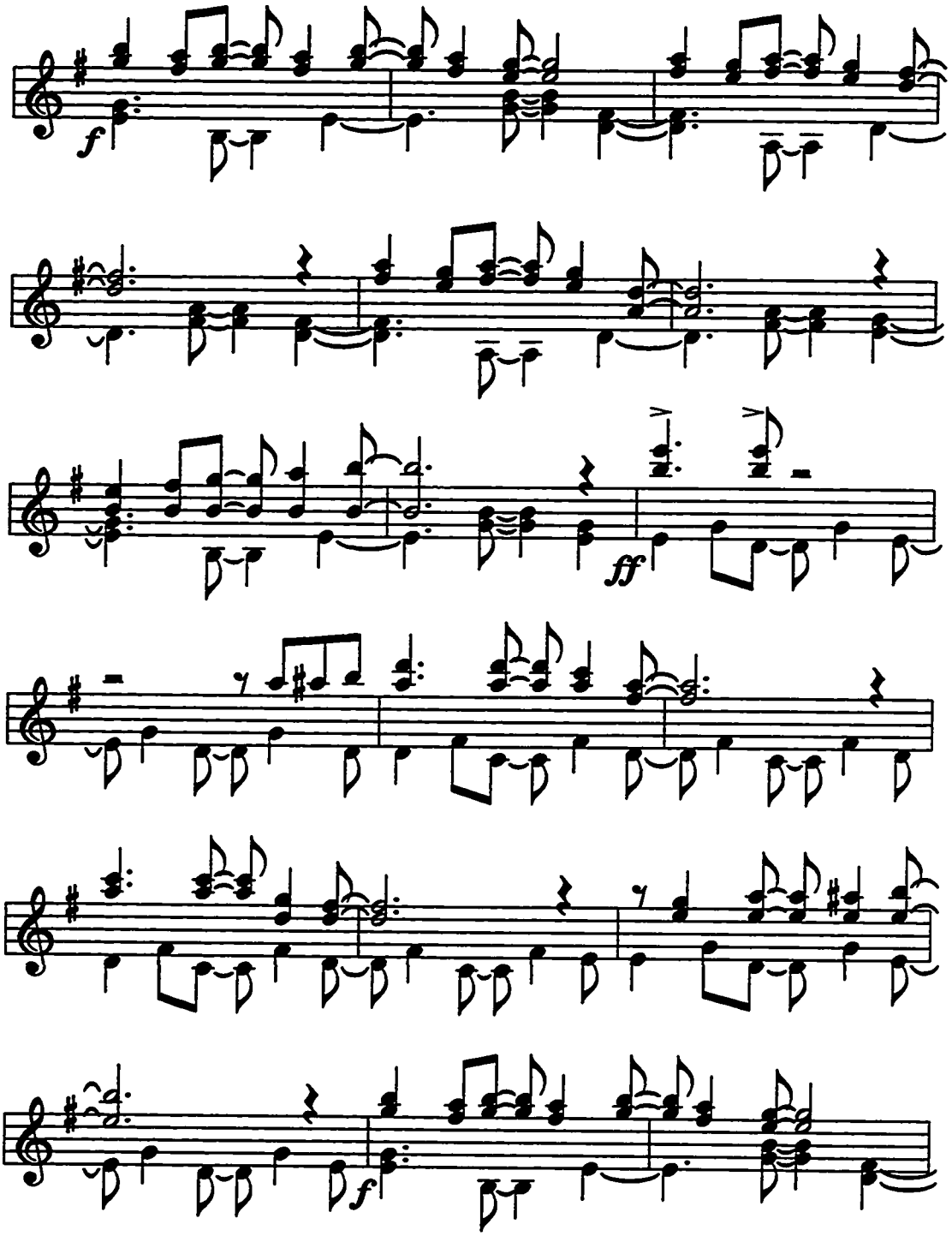
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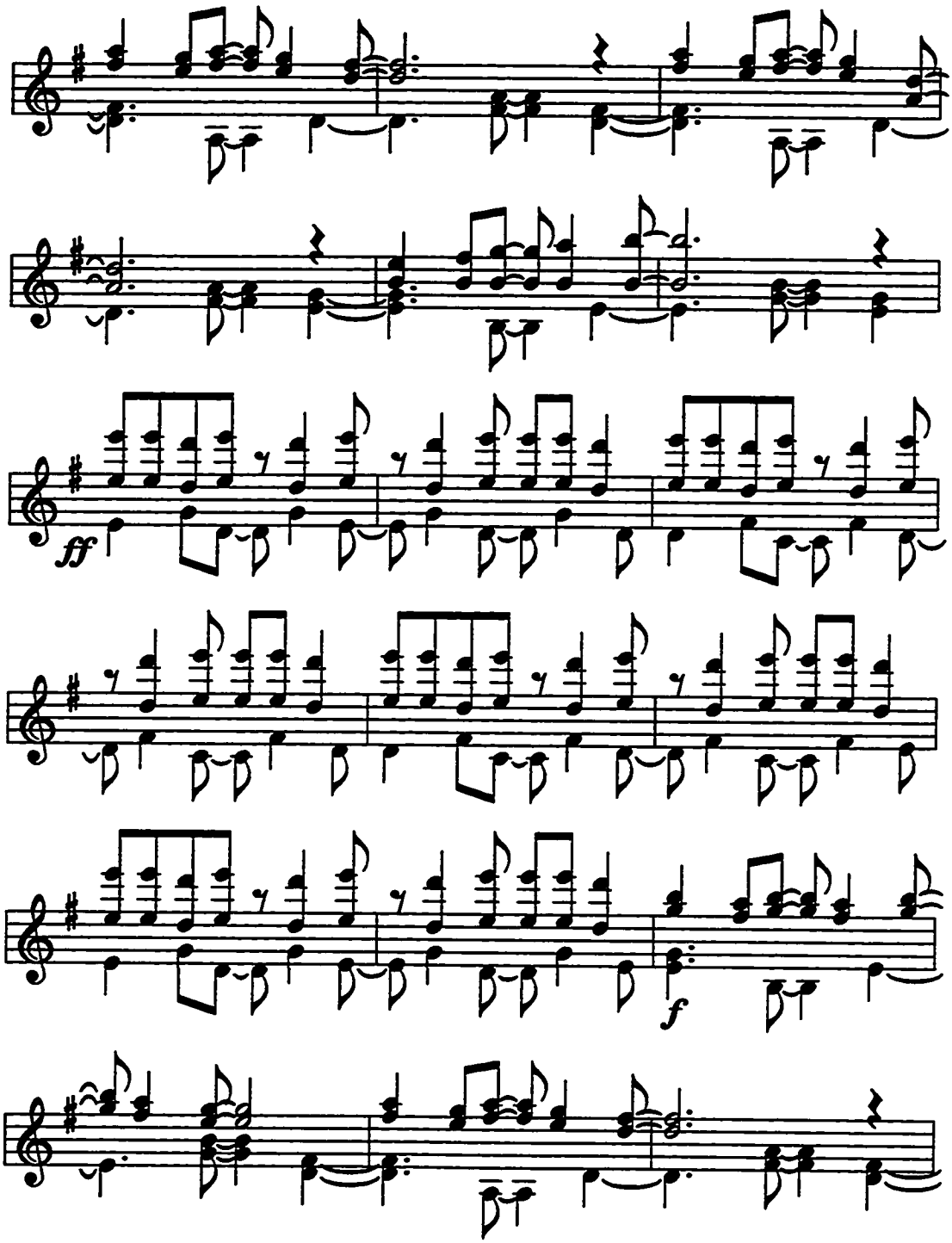
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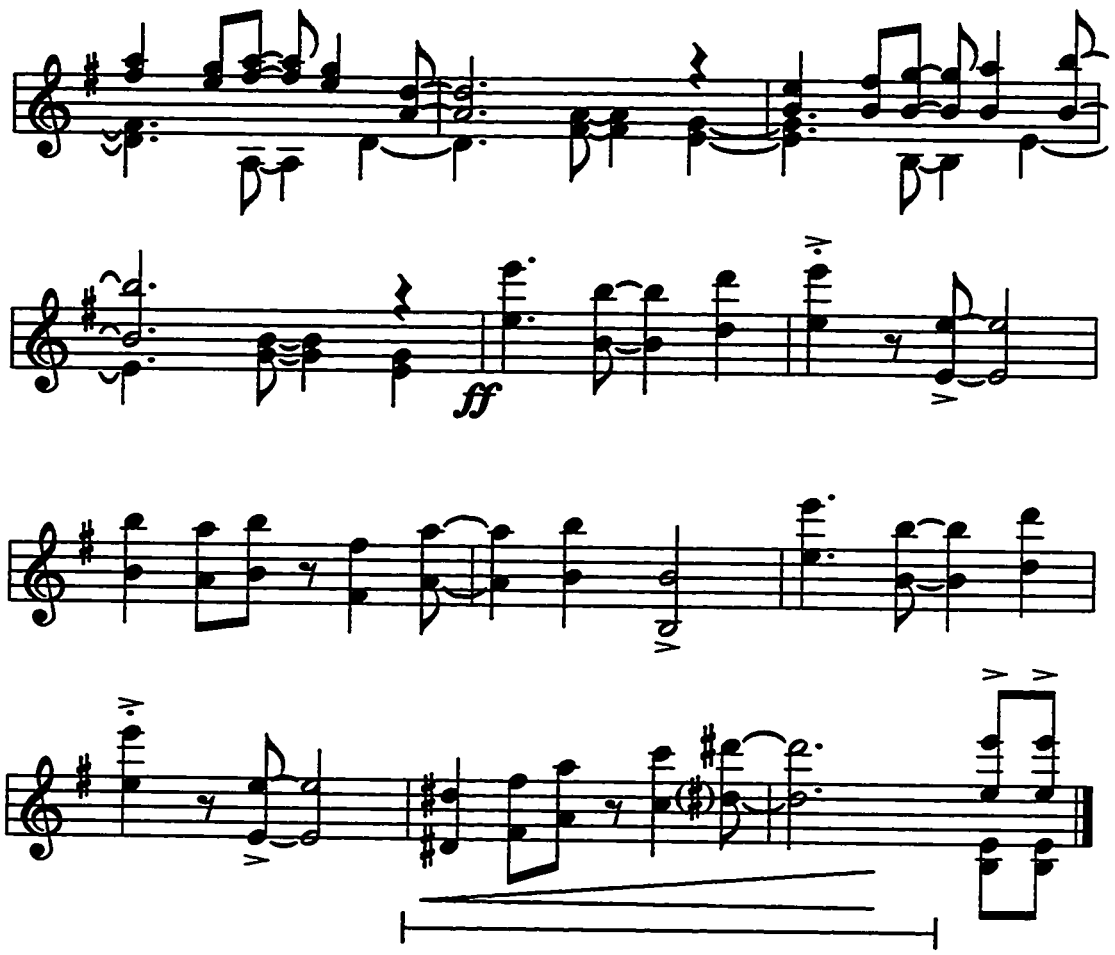
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Güiro

The *güiro* rhythm, in 6/8, is a descendent of African religious music. Traditionally it is performed with just bell and *chékere*, a gourd covered with beads. Unlike the *guajira* and the *guaracha*, two forms originally in 6/8 that later evolved into 2/4, the *güiro* has remained in 6/8, and is also interpreted by larger ensembles.

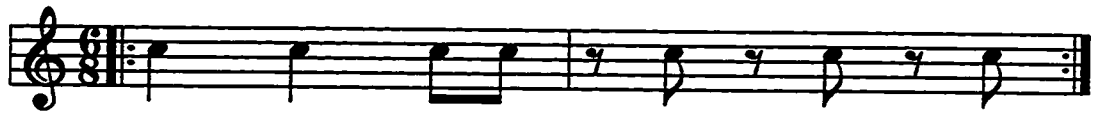
The 6/8 *clave* pattern is markedly different from the 4/4 *clave* of the other forms previously discussed. Instead of the five note pattern of *son clave*, 6/8 *clave* is a seven note pattern. Although the meter is 6/8, the notation is in 3/4 to emphasize the contrast of the downbeats in the first bar to the upbeats in the second. As with the *son clave*, 6/8 *clave* can be either forward or reverse. Reverse 6/8 *clave* would start with one bar of all upbeats. The 6/8 *clave* is actually a precursor to the *son clave*. If you remove the last note of each bar from the 6/8 *clave* you get a pattern very similar to *son clave*, which is how the *son clave* evolved.

In interpreting 6/8, the piano parts are less like the syncopated *montunos* of other styles and instead use variations on *clave* as comping patterns. Two of the more common ones are used for the exercises along with *clave* and a typical 6/8 bass pattern. The basic pulse of *güiro* is the dotted quarter note, four to each two bar phrase.

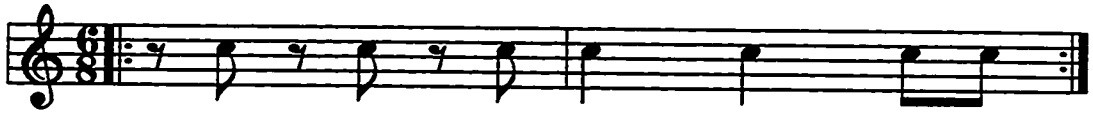
The classic 6/8 salsa tune is Mongo Santamaria's "Afro Blue."

6/8 Clave

Forward



Reverse



Clave with Pulse

Forward

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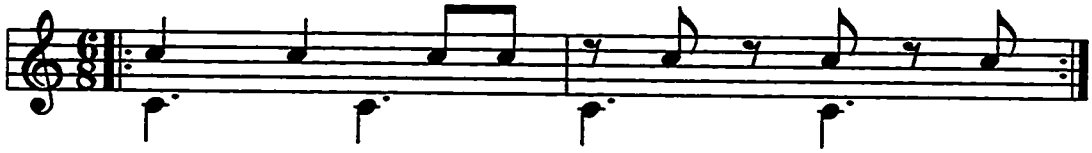

Reverse

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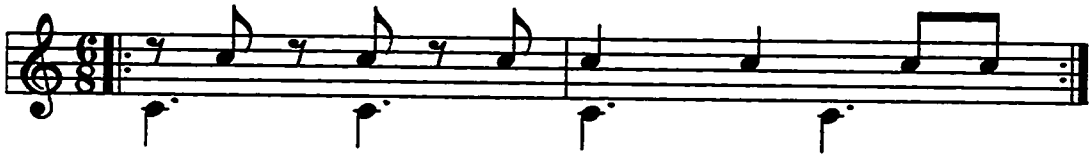

Clave and Pulse (continued)

Forward

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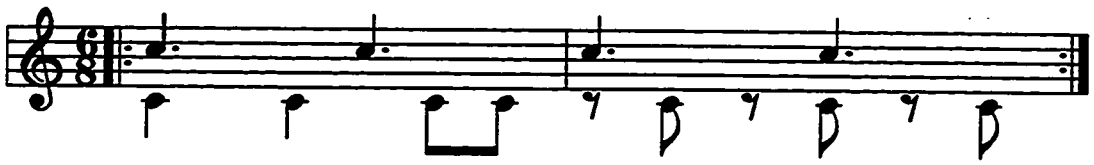

Reverse

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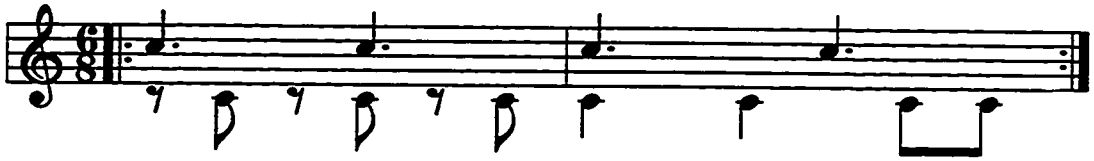
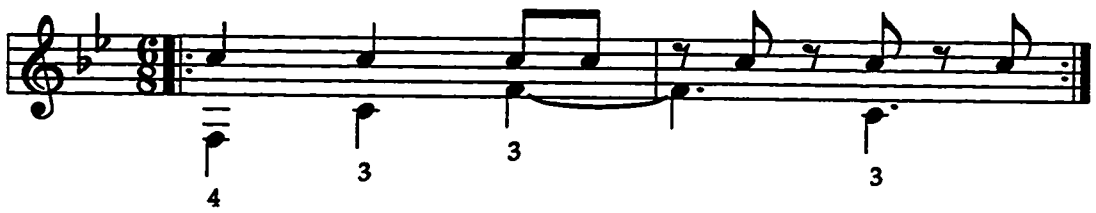


Clave and Tumbao

5



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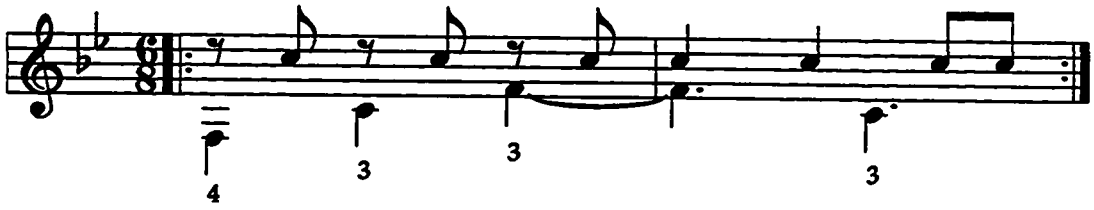

Clave and Tumbao (continued)

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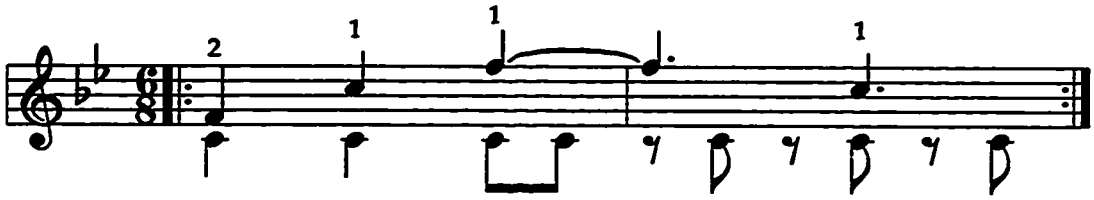

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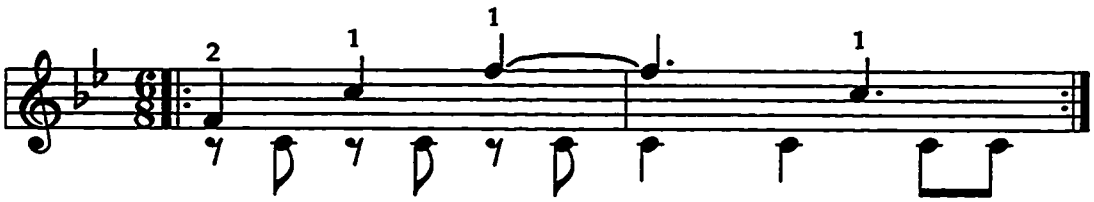
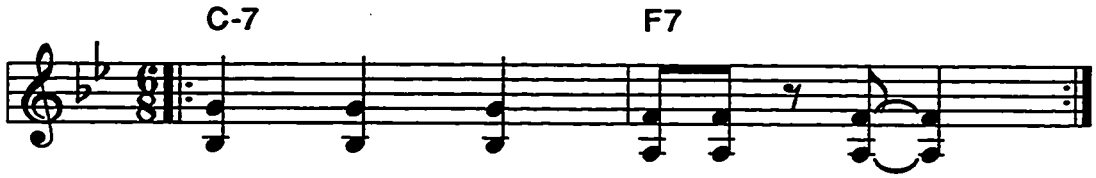


Comping Pattern 1

9



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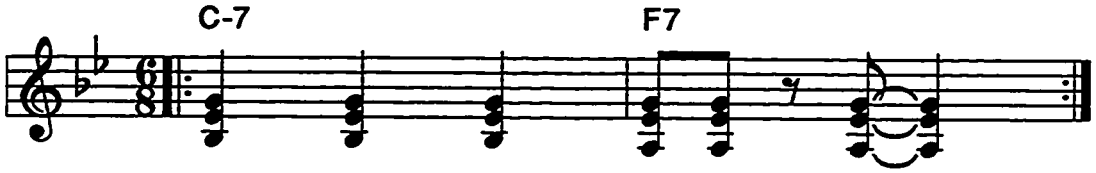

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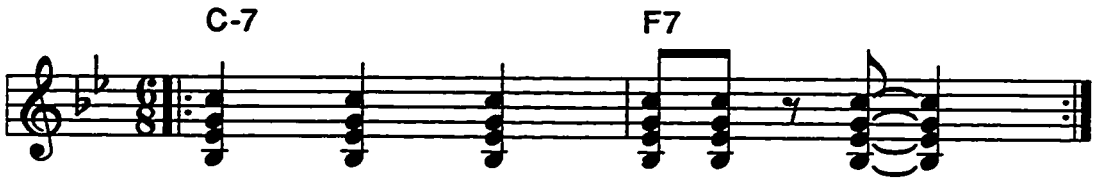
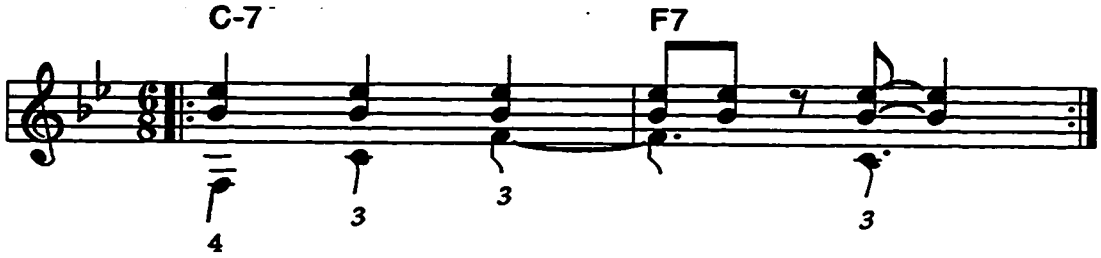


Comping Pattern 1 and Tumbao

12



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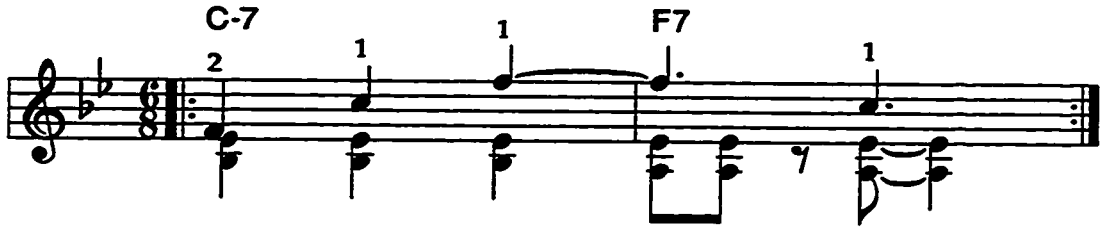

Comping Pattern 2

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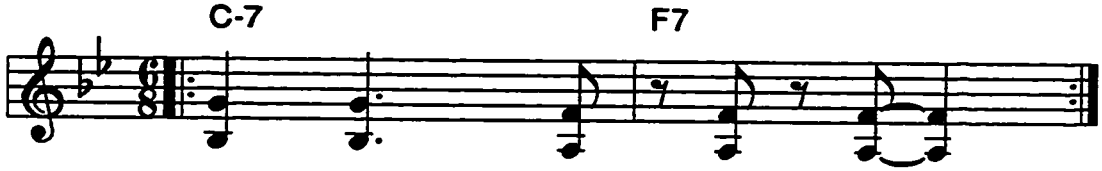

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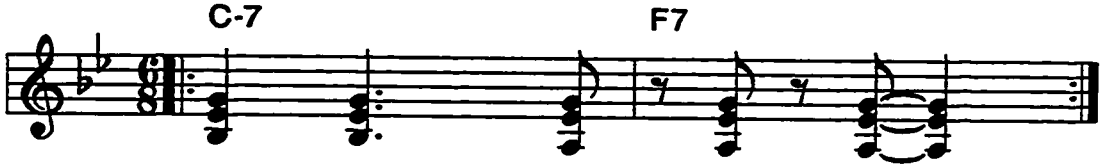
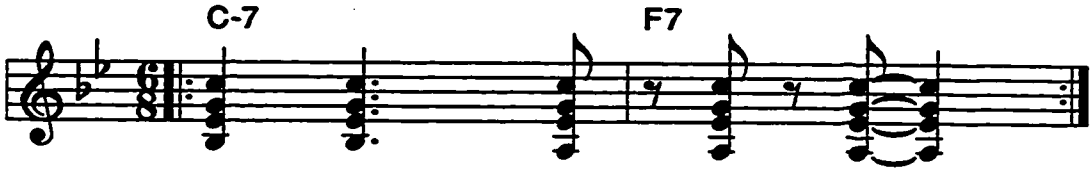


Comping Pattern 2 (continued)

16



Comping Pattern 2 and Tumbao

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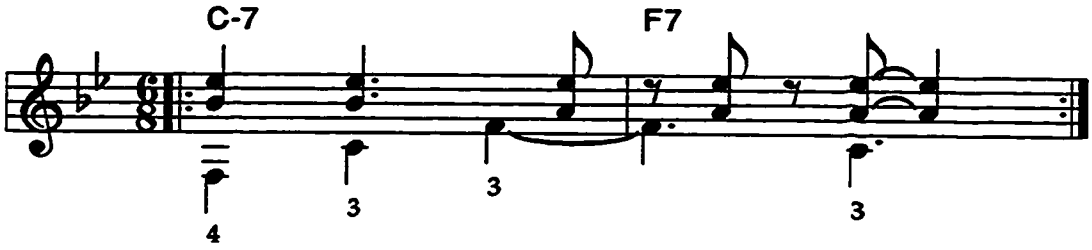

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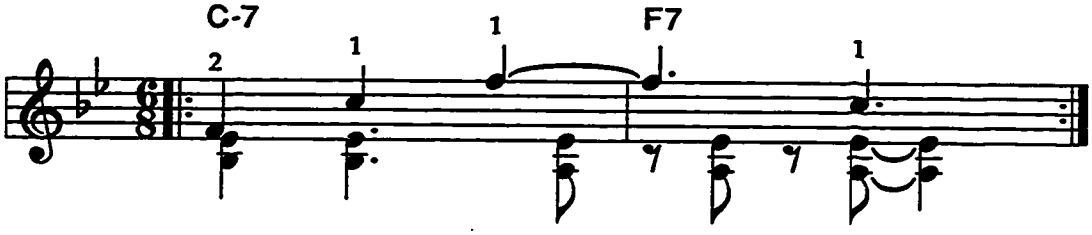
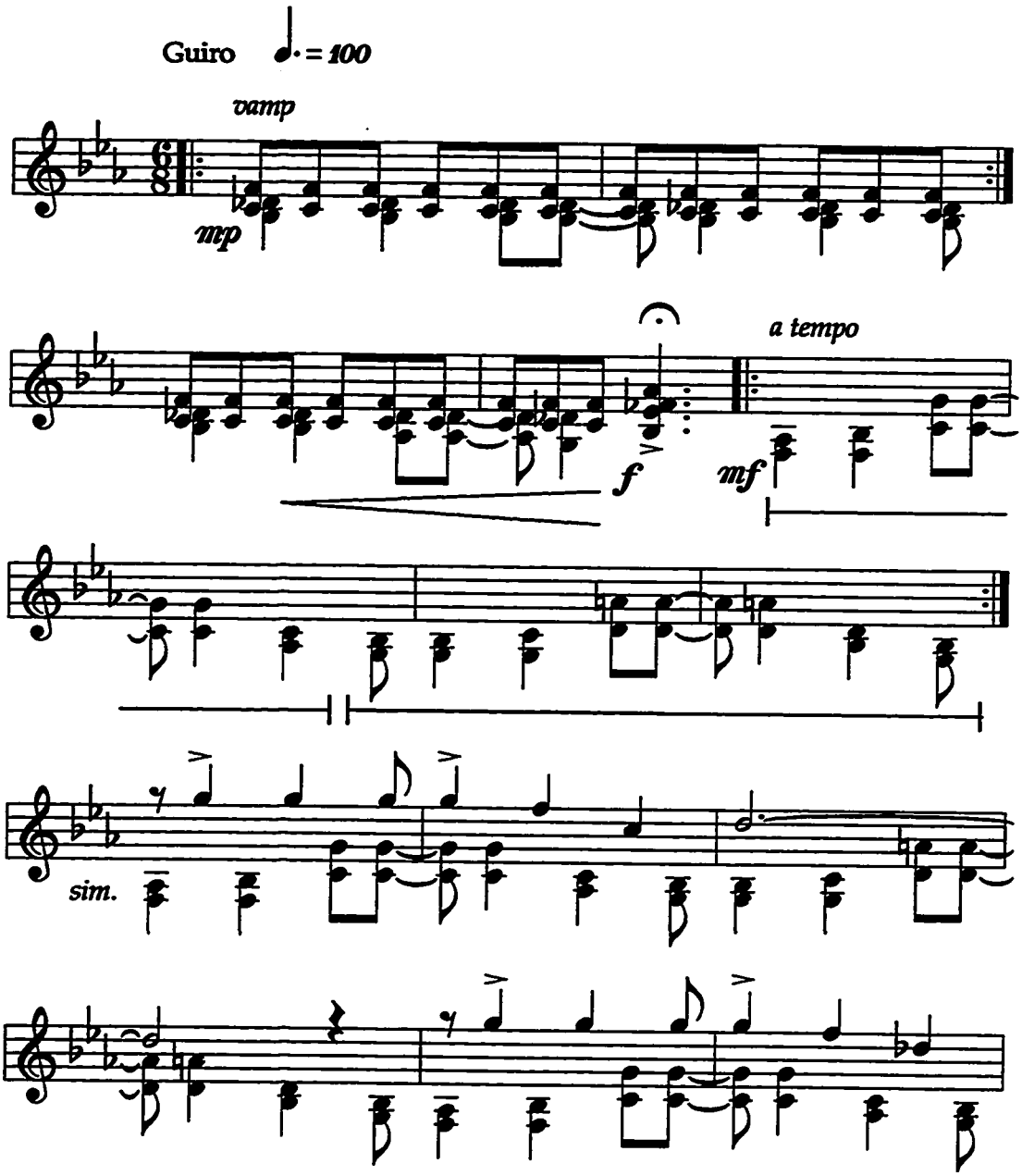
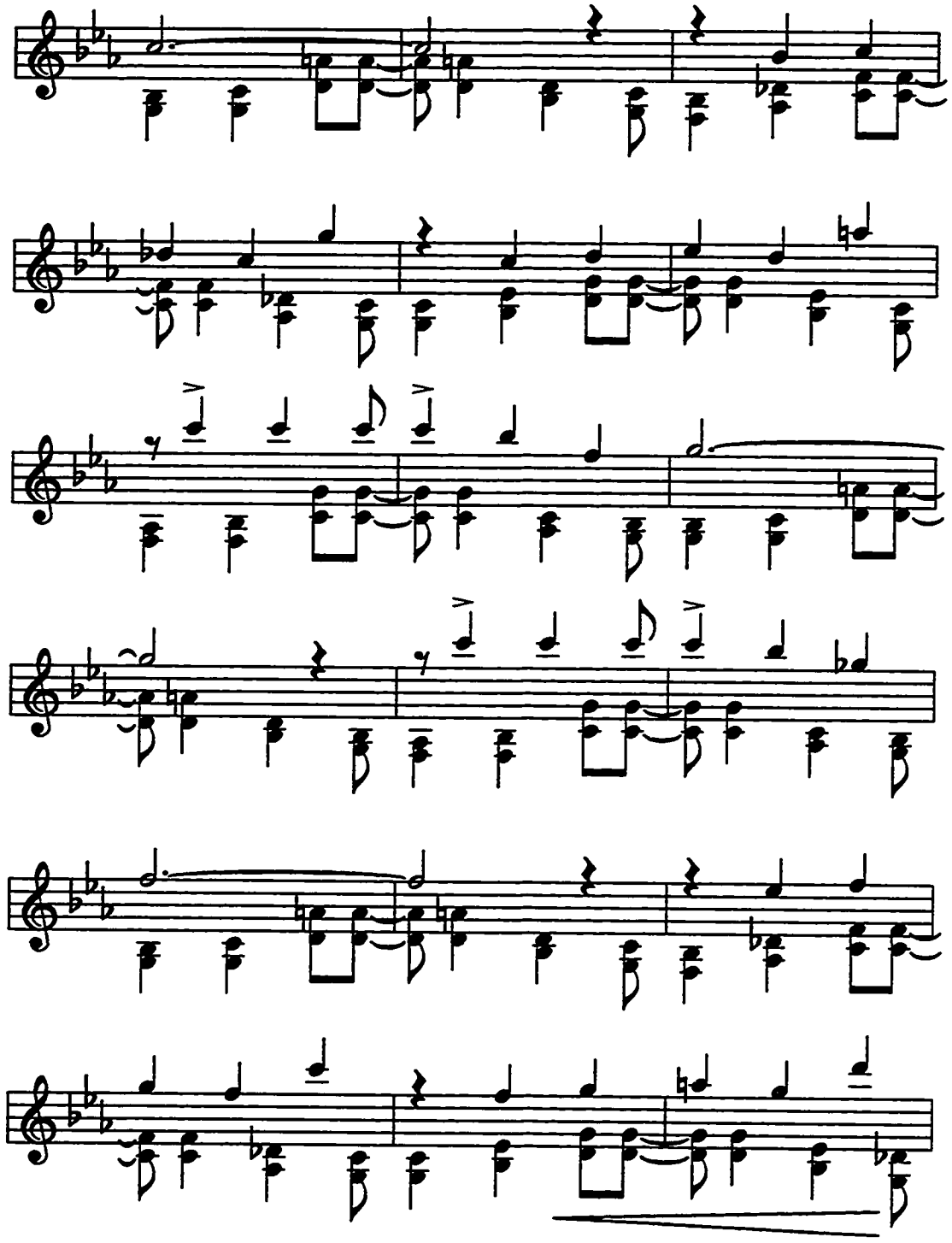
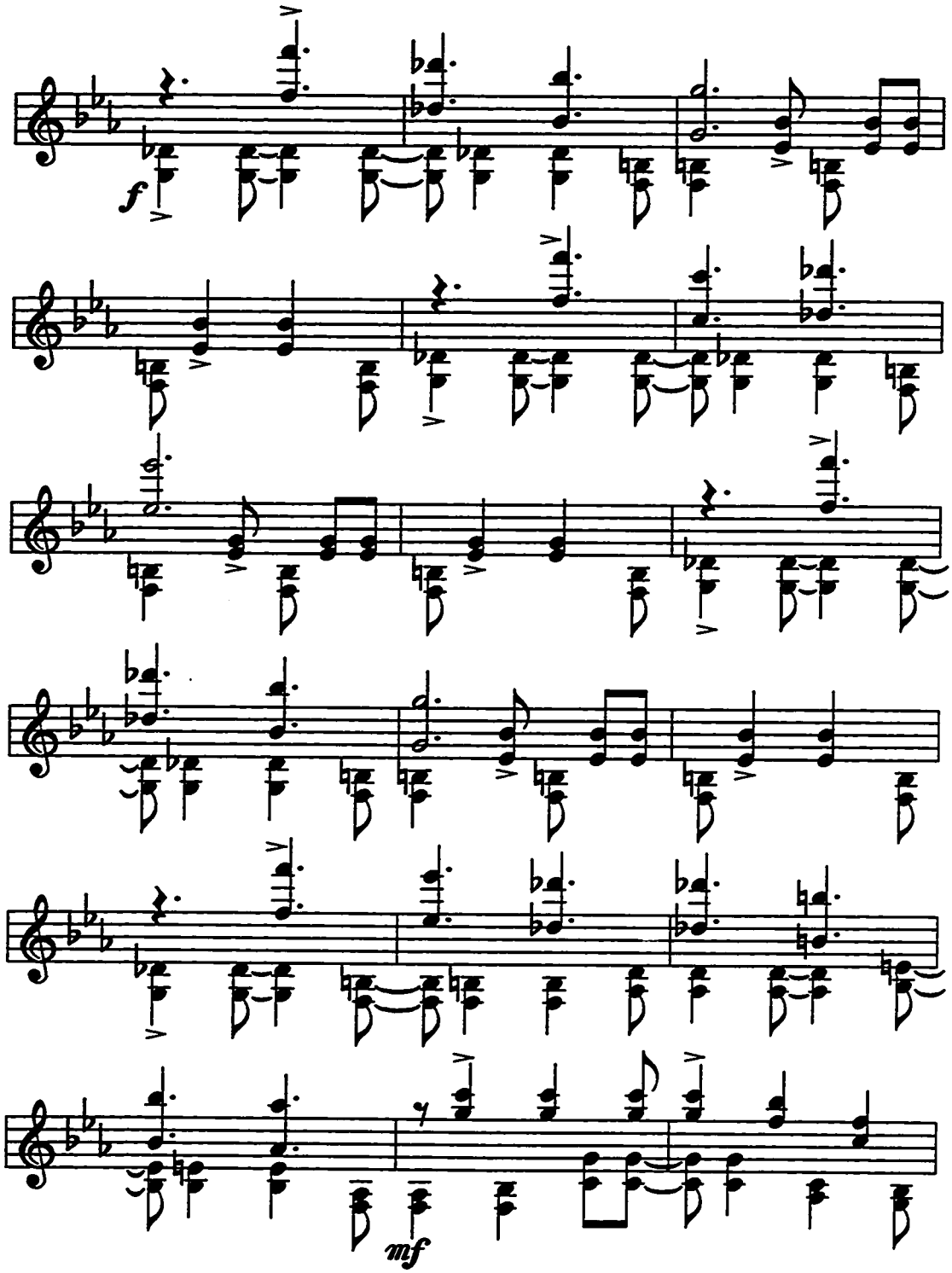


Etude No. 3



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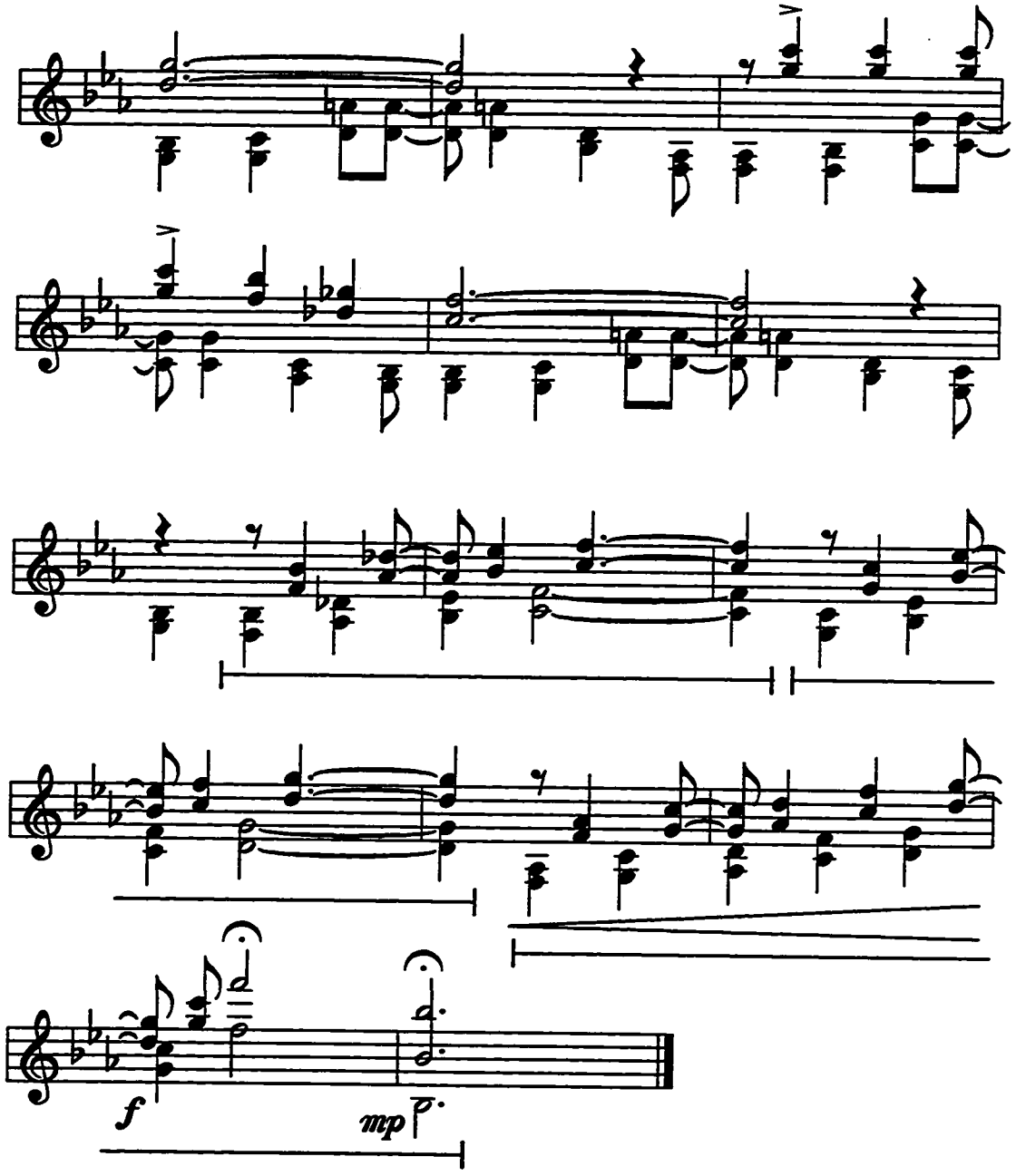
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