

Martin Widmaier

Die wichtigsten Tonleitern Basic Scales

für Klavier / for piano

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Preliminary Note

Scales are no excuse for spending an hour or two at the keyboard without engaging the brain and the perception system. They aren't patterns which are learned beforehand and miraculously turn into music later. Scales are music. They are a good opportunity to get in contact with the landscape of the instrument, and a good chance to find out more about metre and rhythm, harmony and melody. By practising scales in an attentive manner, we become better and better musicians.

The fingerings given here are tried, tested and ready for use – they stand in the tradition of experts such as Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778–1837), Carl Eschmann-Dumur (1835–1913) and Moritz Moszkowski (1854–1925). Admittedly, the counter-concept in the tradition of Carl Czerny (1791–1857) and Charles Louis Hanon (1819–1900) has found wider acceptance. However, Czerny's idea of projecting the standard fingering of the one-octave scale onto the full major scale wherever possible has proven troublesome with regard to the left hand. For a first impression, compare Hummel's A-major fingering as given on page 5 with the popular Czerny version. The longer the scale, the bigger the advantage of the Hummel approach.

For more information and technical advice, please consult my online essay *Scales for Brain Users*. This present compendium doesn't explain the principles behind the so-called 'corresponding' fingerings, nor does it tell you how to perform and practise, say, the thumb-under and hand-over movements. It attempts something else: to provide exercises worth spending time on.

Basic Scales is dedicated to Jeerarat Eiamcharoen.

Martin Widmaier

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Basic Scales

for piano

► One-octave scales in C major

One-octave scales are very common in piano music. They usually start on a white key; the standard fingering is three plus five fingers. In the following exercise, the one-octave scales start on every degree of the C-major scale. The accompaniment features the eight intervals from prime to octave.

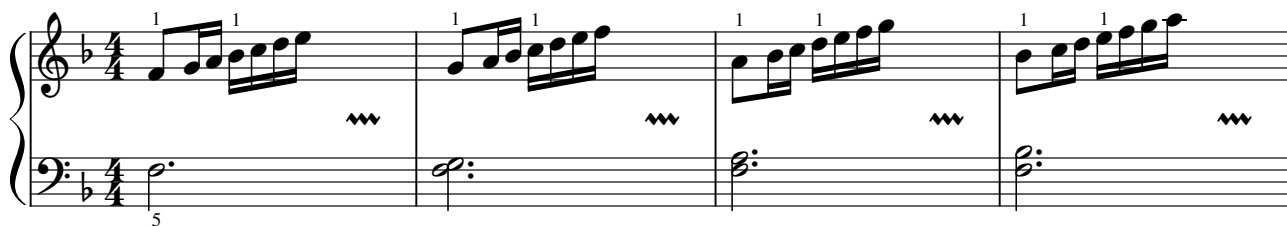
The musical score is written for piano in 4/4 time. It consists of four systems, each with a right-hand part (treble clef) and a left-hand part (bass clef).
System 1: The right-hand part contains an ascending and descending scale starting on C4, with fingering 1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-1. The left-hand part contains a simple accompaniment pattern with eighth notes and a final chord.
System 2: The right-hand part contains an ascending and descending scale starting on D4, with fingering 1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-1. The left-hand part contains a more complex accompaniment pattern with eighth-note runs and a final chord.
System 3: The right-hand part contains an ascending and descending scale starting on E4, with fingering 1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-1. The left-hand part contains a simple accompaniment pattern with eighth notes and a final chord.
System 4: The right-hand part contains an ascending and descending scale starting on F4, with fingering 1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-1. The left-hand part contains a more complex accompaniment pattern with eighth-note runs and a final chord.

► Also accompany with a syncopated rhythm:

The musical score is written for piano in 4/4 time. It consists of a single system with a right-hand part (treble clef) and a left-hand part (bass clef). The right-hand part contains a simple accompaniment pattern with eighth notes. The left-hand part contains a syncopated rhythm pattern with eighth notes and a final chord.

► One-octave scales in other keys

One-octave scales can show up in any major or minor key. In a piano piece, always adapt fingering to the black and white keys. For exercise, in contrast, it is a good idea to always use standard fingering regardless of convenience. Here are the first four positions in F major:



- For a start, practise F major and G major.
- Also accompany with a syncopated rhythm.

► Full major scales – 3/4 metre – Db major and B major

In flat keys, the LH is the 'leading' hand, in sharp keys, the RH. The simple reason is that in these hands, the three-finger group always falls onto the first three degrees of the scale.



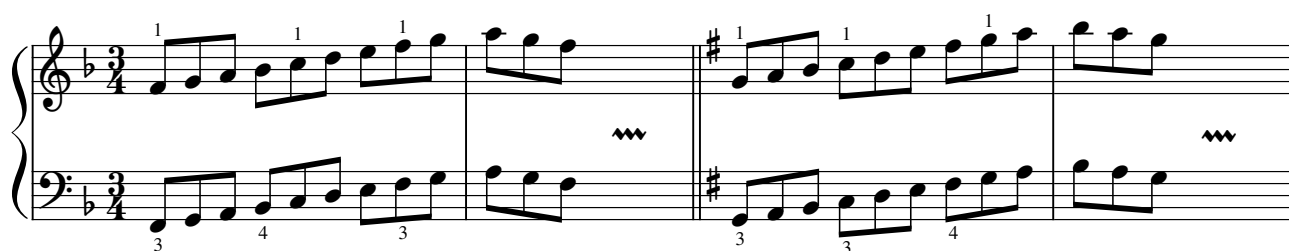
- In a flat key, practise the LH first, in a sharp key, the RH.
- With hands together, also play one hand legato, the other staccato.
- Or employ special articulations:



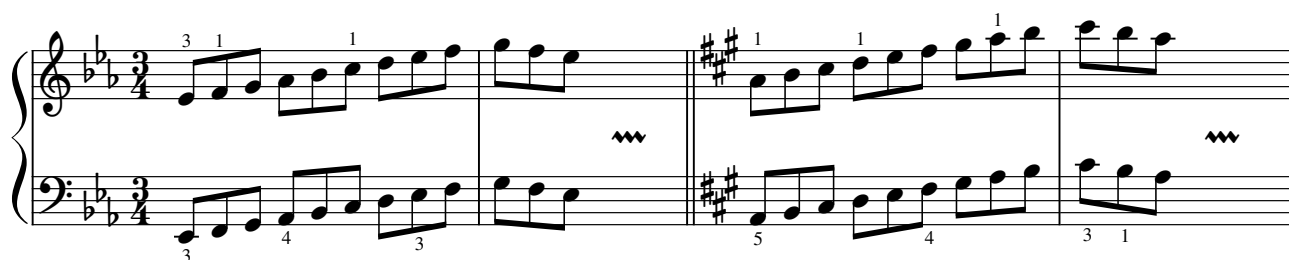
- Also employ the following rhythms:



► Full major scales – 3/4 metre – F major and G major

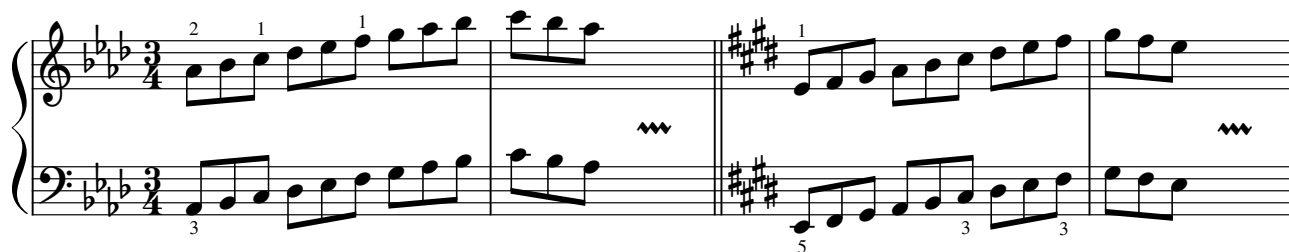


► Full major scales – 3/4 metre – Eb major and A major

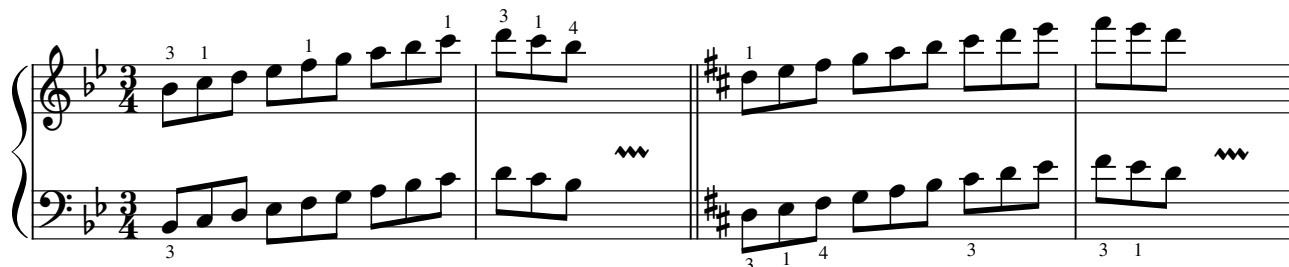


► Full major scales – 3/4 metre – Ab major and E major

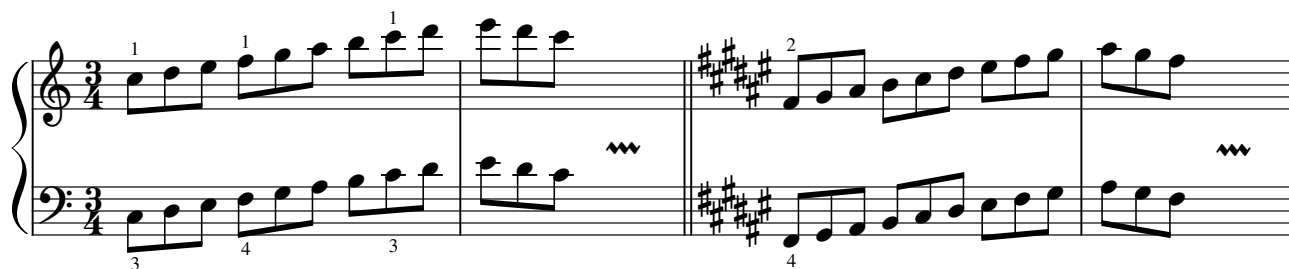
Due to the more or less favourable situation on the black and white keys,
the four scales above are easy to play, while the four scales below have their pitfalls ...



► Full major scales – 3/4 metre – Bb major and D major



► Full major scales – 3/4 metre – C major and F#/Gb major



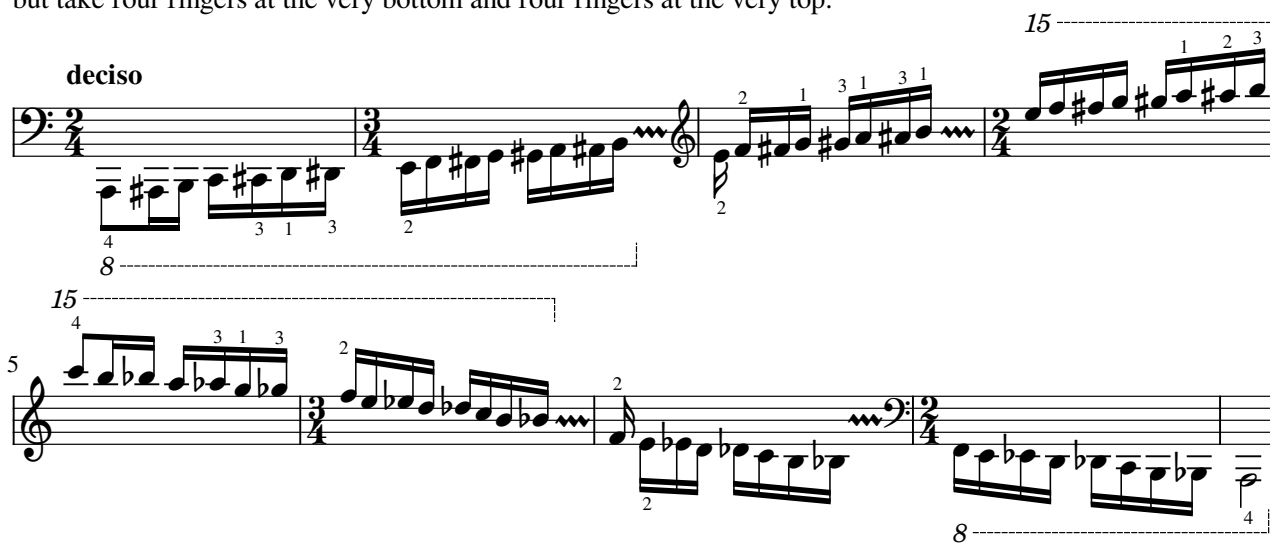
► Full major scales – 3/4 metre – contrary movement

This extensive exercise starts in E♭ major, rises chromatically and ends in D major. With every new section, the old tonic note becomes the new leading note.



► Piano inspection scale

This smart scale covers the whole range of the keyboard. Use standard fingering (see next exercise), but take four fingers at the very bottom and four fingers at the very top.



► Chromatic scale with 1-2-3 and 1-3

There are many ways to play the chromatic scale.

Here is the standard fingering; below, you will find two more options.

A musical score for a chromatic scale in 3/4 time. The treble staff starts on C4 and ascends chromatically to C5, while the bass staff descends chromatically from C4 to C3. The score is divided into three measures. Fingering is indicated by numbers 1, 2, and 3 above or below the notes. The first measure shows the initial fingering for the first two notes in each direction. The second measure continues the scale. The third measure shows the final notes with specific fingering (1, 3, 1, 3) for the final two notes in each direction. A wavy line indicates the continuation of the scale.

► Also choose a 4/4 metre and fill in quaver triplets.

► Also employ the following rhythms:

Eight different rhythmic patterns (a-h) for a chromatic scale in 3/4 time, shown in the bass staff. Each pattern starts on C4 and ascends chromatically to C5. The patterns are: a) 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4; b) 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4; c) 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4; d) 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4; e) 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4; f) 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4; g) 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4; h) 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4, 1/4. Each pattern is followed by a wavy line indicating the continuation of the scale.

► Chromatic scale with 1-2-3 and 1-2-3-4

A musical score for a chromatic scale in 3/4 time, showing fingering (1-2-3 and 1-2-3-4) for both treble and bass staves. The treble staff starts on C4 and ascends chromatically to C5, while the bass staff descends chromatically from C4 to C3. The score is divided into three measures. Fingering is indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 above or below the notes. The first measure shows the initial fingering for the first two notes in each direction. The second measure continues the scale. The third measure shows the final notes with specific fingering (1, 2, 3, 4) for the final two notes in each direction. A wavy line indicates the continuation of the scale.

► Chromatic scale with 3-4-5 and 3-5

A musical score for a chromatic scale in 3/4 time, showing fingering (3-4-5 and 3-5) for both treble and bass staves. The treble staff starts on C4 and ascends chromatically to C5, while the bass staff descends chromatically from C4 to C3. The score is divided into three measures. Fingering is indicated by numbers 3, 4, and 5 above or below the notes. The first measure shows the initial fingering for the first two notes in each direction. The second measure continues the scale. The third measure shows the final notes with specific fingering (3, 4, 5) for the final two notes in each direction. A wavy line indicates the continuation of the scale.

► Full major scales – 4/4 metre

The full major scales in 4/4 metre exceed those in 3/4 metre by one octave.
Practise in every key. Here is D $\flat$ major:

- In a flat key, practise the LH first, in a sharp key, the RH.
- With hands together, also play one hand legato, the other staccato.
- Or employ special articulations.
- Also employ the following rhythms:

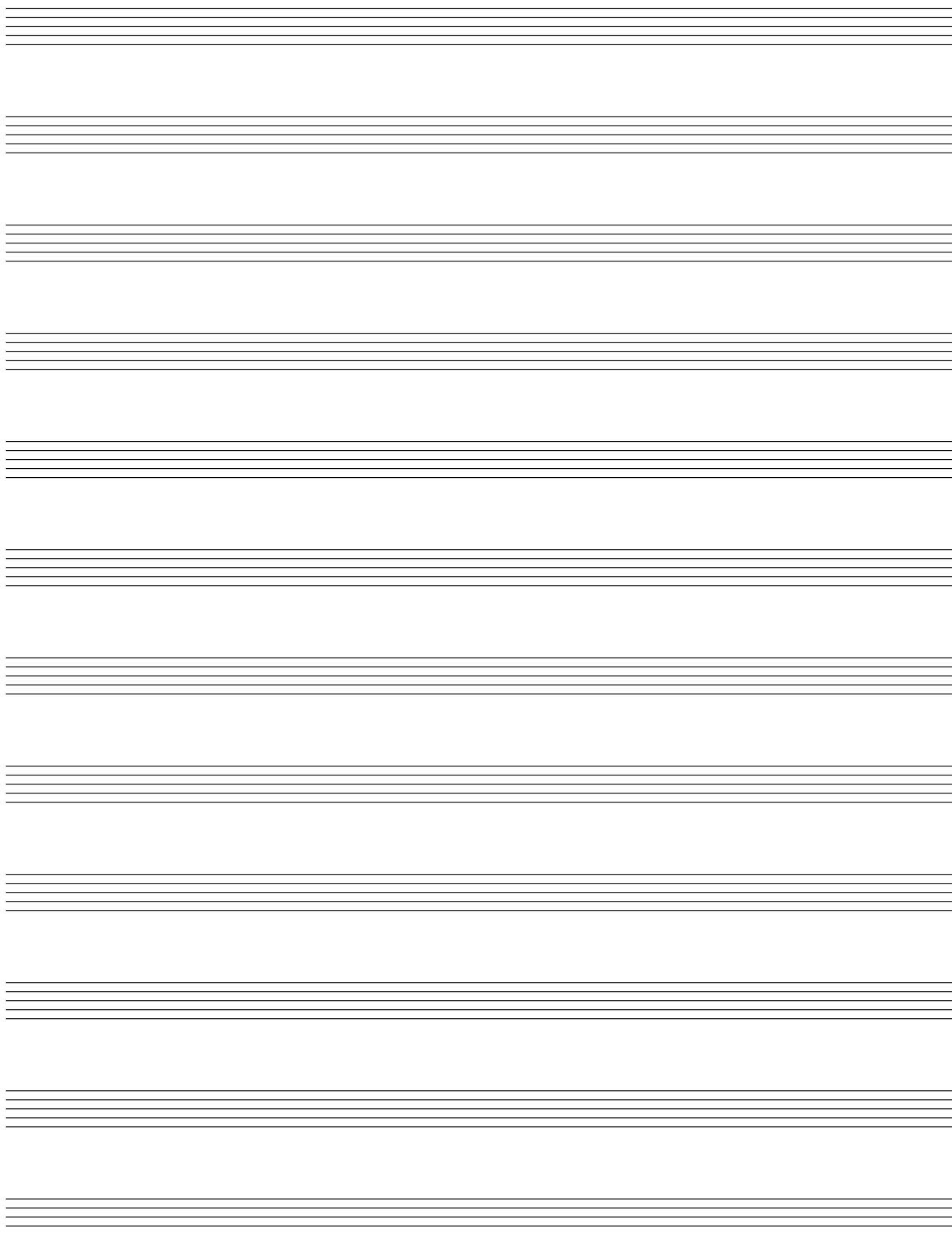
► Full major scales – 4/4 metre – tenths and sixths

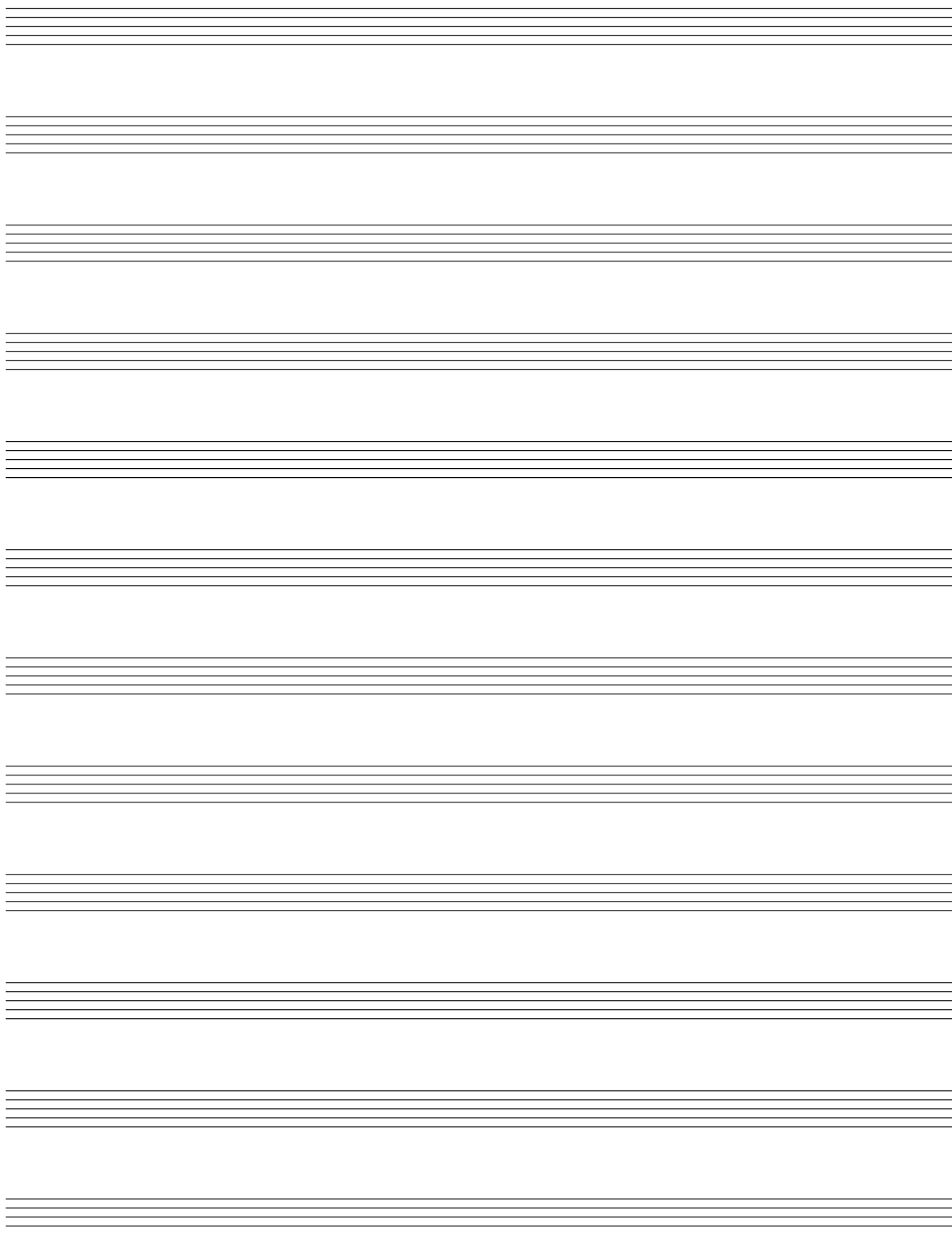
Again, this extensive exercise starts in E $\flat$ major, rises chromatically and ends in D major.

► Diminished-seventh chord arpeggios

Having studied major in detail, it is not necessary to practise minor in a similar fashion. For melodic minor, try my *Plain Studies* Nos. 1 and 3. For harmonic minor, practise diminished-seventh chord arpeggios in order to gain experience with augmented seconds. Start from the seven white keys.

- Also play the crotchets legato, the quaver triplets staccato – and vice versa.
- Or employ special articulations.





Offline Publications

Orange Blue: *In Love with a Dream. Songbook*,

with piano arrangements by Burkhard Scheibe and Martin Widmaier, Peer, Hamburg 2001

Martin Widmaier: *Das kleine Land* (2 volumes), Peters, Frankfurt 2005/2006

Martin Widmaier: *24 Eight-Bar Studies after Frédéric Chopin*, Peters, Frankfurt 2012

Claude Debussy: *Préludes for Piano* (2 volumes), edited by Thomas Kabisch,

with fingerings by Martin Widmaier, Bärenreiter, Kassel 2014/2021

Martin Widmaier: *Basic Scales for Piano*, Naresuan University Publishing House, Phitsanulok 2015

Martin Widmaier: *Zur Systemdynamik des Übens*, Schott, Mainz 2016

August Halm: *Klavierübung* 1918/1919, edited by Thomas Kabisch, Linde Großmann

and Martin Widmaier, Ortus, Beeskow 2019

For **Online Publications**, see www.martinwidmaier.de