



The United States Army Field Band

The Musical Ambassadors of the Army
Washington, DC

Basic Trumpet Playing

by

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Playing the trumpet is a fantastic thing—the trumpet is one of the most stylistically versatile instruments ever created. It can be played in a symphony orchestra, chamber orchestra, brass band, wind ensemble, jazz orchestra, jazz combo, marching band, brass quintet, Dixieland band, funk band, and many other groups of varying sizes and styles. Try that with a harpsichord! With all of these groups in which to play, and diverse performance styles to learn, a trumpet student has a substantial challenge.

Playing up to one's greatest potential should be a common goal for all performers. Realizing that goal requires the integration of two elements: artistic interpretation and technical expertise. Artistic interpretation is a function of each individual's life experience, personality, and musical taste. The most effective way to enhance one's concept of dynamics, articulation, rhythmic variables, and tone is through many hours of careful listening. These concepts can only be translated into performance through physical application. This clinic, therefore, concentrates on the physical aspects of trumpet playing.

BREATHING

Obviously, breathing is essential for survival, as well as for playing the trumpet. Breathing is a complicated muscular process that the body performs naturally. Trumpet players must learn how to control their natural breathing tendencies in order to play without causing hernias, hemorrhoids, or ruptures. Use the following exercise to improve lung capacity, develop breath control, and visually check the muscular breathing process. Without a horn, walk at a steady pace, breathing in evenly and slowly for seven steps; immediately exhale steadily for the next seven steps. Begin and end with the same amount of air in the lungs. Gradually increase the number of steps to thirty for breathing in and thirty for breathing out. Place a hand on the stomach while doing the exercise to make sure the stomach moves *out* while inhaling and *in* while exhaling. Once the thirty step exercise

is easy to do, improve breath control by gradually reducing the number of inhaling steps down to one.

POSTURE

Posture is directly related to proper breathing. If there is stiffness in any area of the body, there is a chance for injury. On the other hand, if a player is too relaxed, poor posture is likely. Whether standing or sitting, never slump over. While seated, sit up straight and resist pushing the back against the chair. Keep the shoulders relaxed and avoid tilting the head excessively in any direction. Never rest the arms on the body.

TONE

When producing a tone on the trumpet, the ultimate goal is to create a pleasing sound. Tone is determined by physical factors as well as the equipment used. The shape of the teeth, tongue, lips, and roof of the mouth all greatly influence tone. While the teeth and roof of the mouth are not normally altered, the shape of the tongue and lips can be changed quite easily by the performer. To understand how the tone is changed by the tongue, say "o, e, o, e." Notice how the "o" sounds more full or open, while the "e" sounds more compact and penetrating. Normally "o" is used in the lower and middle registers of the horn. The "e" is used in the upper register, above the staff for B-flat trumpet.

The lips must be moved to change partials on the trumpet. Slur from a C below the staff to a G in the staff. The lips have to compress, with the top and bottom lips pressing together, in order to slur upwards to the G. The lips must do the opposite to slur downwards. Do not stretch the corners of the mouth outward or inward to ascend or descend. In order to have the lips compress and decompress easily, the mouthpiece must be placed on the lips without the player first "smiling" or stretching the lips. The mouthpiece may be placed high, centered, or low on the lips or even a little to one side or the other. Place it where the best results are achieved. There is no single placement for everyone to use.

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The tone can also be affected by changes in equipment. Search to find what comfortably produces the best tone and response for the individual player. A medium/large horn with a medium-sized mouthpiece is a good starting point.

ATTACK

An attack is defined as articulating or beginning a note. It controls how the air is released or interrupted. Say the word “total.” Notice how much more emphasis is put on the first “t.” Without thinking, one simply makes the sound for that word. The “t” sound is articulated twice when saying “total.” The physical motion made is similar to playing two eighth-notes. In trumpet playing, attacks are made using syllables such as “doh,” “doo,” “dah,” “dee,” “toh,” “too,” “tah,” “tee,” “koh,” “koo,” “kah,” and “kee.” These syllables are range-dependent; syllables ending with “oh” are used for the lowest notes, “oo” for the low to middle register, “ah” for the middle to upper register, and “ee” for the upper register. Experiment to see what kind of attacks result using these syllables. Use the “k” only when double-tonguing (ta-ka) or triple-tonguing (tah-tah-kah). The “d” is usually used for soft or light attacks. The most frequently used syllable is “too.”

PITCH

Pitch is what one listens for when tuning the trumpet; it is one of the most important elements in performing music. Musicians should all own and practice with tuners in order to see whether or not they are playing in tune. Electronic tuners, which are relatively inexpensive and available in most music stores, can be used to hear what it sounds like to be flat or sharp. Before tuning, make sure that the trumpet is not too cold or hot. Blowing air through the horn for a minute will ensure this.

Tuning is easy if the player remembers which way to move the tuning slide. When under the pitch, or flat, the main tuning slide must be pushed in. When above the pitch, or sharp, the same slide must be pulled out. Pay close attention to every note played. Some notes should be adjusted by the use of slides on the first and third valves. The D-natural and C-sharp below the staff normally need to be lowered in pitch by moving the third valve slide out using the fingers of the left hand. Some trumpets require the left thumb to pull out the first valve slide by trigger or saddle in order to bring the pitch down on A above the staff and/or the F at the top of the staff. Generally, most notes can be played in

tune by minor physical adjustments in lip “compression” that will come naturally when the player hears where the note should be placed.

PRACTICE HABITS

Remember to always set a specific goal when practicing. Never waste time by practicing what can already be played. Concentrating on practicing for twenty minutes a day beats an hour of just playing. Always remember to rest the same amount of time that it took to play the last exercise or passage. If one plays for thirty seconds, immediately rest for thirty seconds. Never practice to the point of muscle or mental failure. If any pain is felt, quit practicing immediately.

RANGE

Almost every young trumpet player focuses on range expansion as the most important aspect of trumpet playing. Sometimes this is caused by directors that demand notes that are simply beyond the physical ability of a developing player. Often, trumpet players cannot seem to help themselves when it comes to wanting to play higher than others. Good rules to remember when trying to expand one’s range are to monitor posture, avoid using too much pressure on the lips, and control the air stream at all times. Range normally develops a little bit at a time.

Use the following exercise to improve range, tone, response, and endurance. Play a slurred chromatic scale, quarter notes at 120 beats per minute, from G in the staff up to the G just above the staff as quietly as possible, while maintaining a good sound. Hold the top note for four beats and stop with the mouthpiece still on the lips. Do not adjust the lips from this playing position. Immediately exhale through the nose. Take in a breath through the nose and quietly attack the G just above the staff; then slur chromatically down to G in the staff playing quarter notes. Hold the last note until no more air is left. Rest the amount of time it took to play the exercise. Once this exercise can be performed comfortably, move up to G-sharp, then A, etc. Also move downward to F-sharp, F, E, etc.

ENJOYING MUSIC

Playing the trumpet allows one to enjoy music from the performer’s viewpoint. It will offer a greater appreciation of what music really is. Always remember that music should be fun!

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Method Books

- Arban's Complete Conservatory Method for Trumpet and Cornet* F. Goldman and W. Smith
- Technical Studies for the Cornet* Herbert L. Clark
- Etudes for Trumpet* Vassily Brandt
- Lip Flexibilities* Charles Colin
- Mitchell on Trumpet* (four volumes) Harold Mitchell
- Etudes Transcendantes* Theo Charlier

Recordings by the Following Artists

- Soloists Maurice Andre, Wynton Marsalis, Adolph Herseth, Timofei Dokschitzer, Doc Severinsen, John Thompson, Vince DiMartino, Tony Plog, Phil Smith
- Orchestral Brass Jim Thompson, Adolph Herseth, Susan Slaughter, and Phil Smith. Any major orchestra (Chicago, New York Philharmonic, St. Louis, Atlanta, Cincinnati, etc.) will have great players to emulate
- Jazz Soloists Louis Armstrong, Clark Terry, Dizzy Gillespie, Chet Baker, Clifford Brown, Wynton Marsalis, Roy Hargrove, Roy Eldridge, Kenny Dorham, Bobby Shew, Tim Hagans, Tom Harrell, Blue Mitchell, Miles Davis, Freddie Hubbard, Lee Morgan, Conte Condoli

Scale Supplement

The fifteen major and minor scales make up our musical “ABCs.” Just as a person wishing to read learns the alphabet first, a musician cannot expect to master an instrument without first learning the basic set of scales. By diligently practicing the major scales and all three forms of the minor scales, they will become automatic, just like reading the alphabet. This will make playing, especially sight reading, much easier so that the musician can concentrate towards the ultimate goal—making music!

Each scale below should be played slowly at first, ensuring that each note is played correctly. Gradually work for speed, but do not rush. Use a metronome whenever possible to guarantee evenness and a steady tempo. The player should practice difficult scales twice as often as easy ones to develop competence in all keys. As skills increase, change rhythmic patterns and increase tempos. Advanced players can still use scales to work on intonation, technique, range, and dynamics.

Use the following patterns one at a time or in combination to get even more benefit from scale practice:

A

D

B

E

C

F

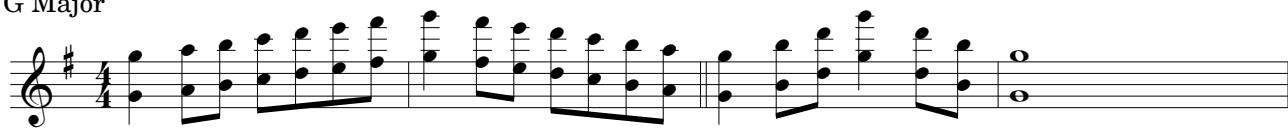
C Major

A natural minor A harmonic minor

A melodic minor

Scale Supplement

G Major

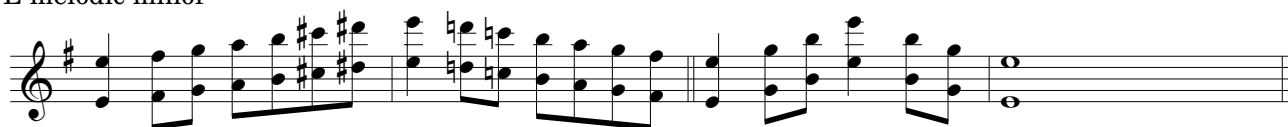


E natural minor

E harmonic minor



E melodic minor



F Major

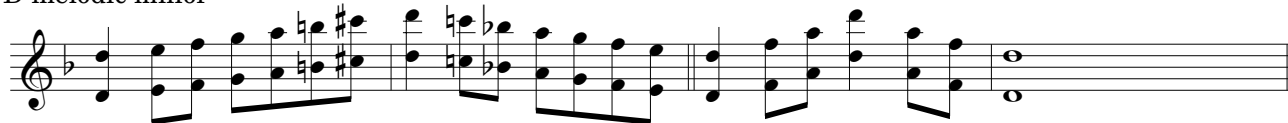


D natural minor

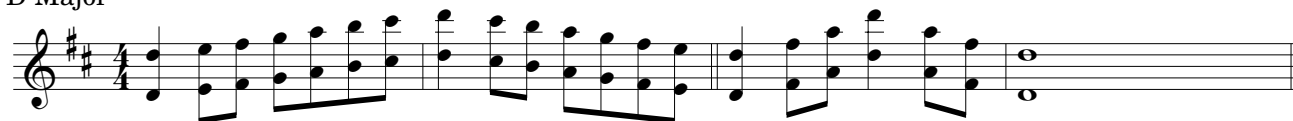
D harmonic minor



D melodic minor



D Major

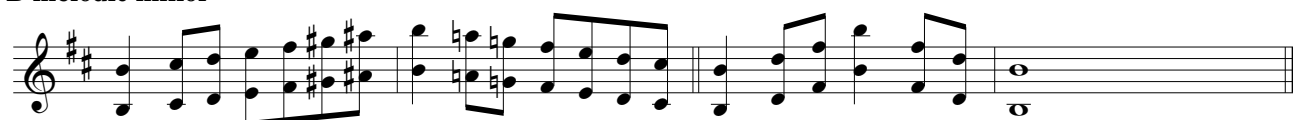


B natural minor

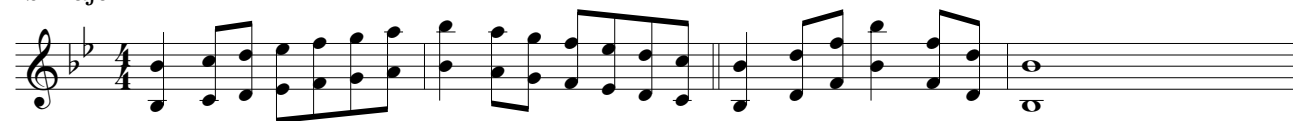
B harmonic minor



B melodic minor

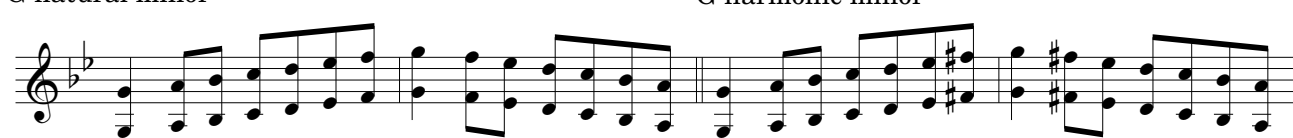


Bb Major

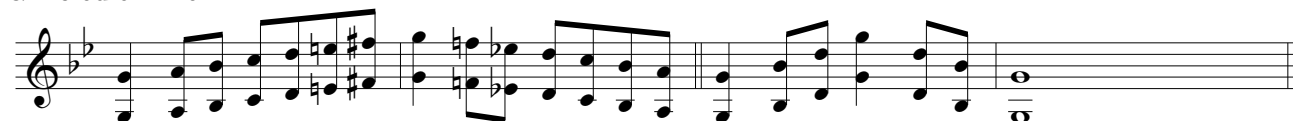


G natural minor

G harmonic minor



G melodic minor



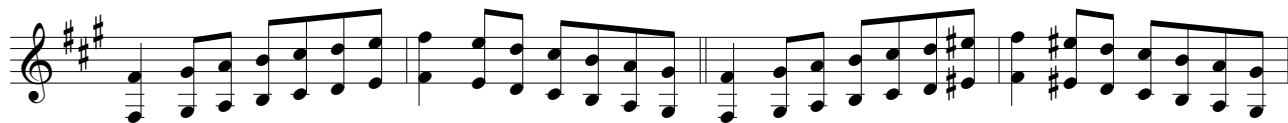
Scale Supplement

A Major

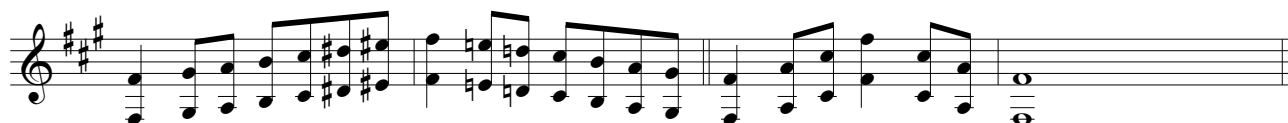


F# natural minor

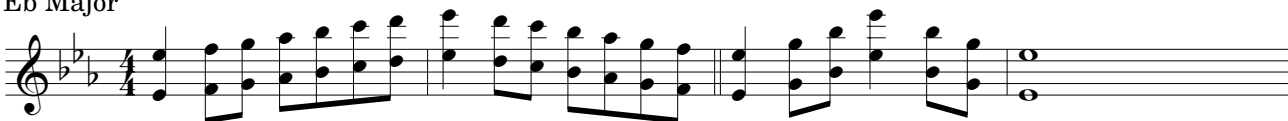
F# harmonic minor



F# melodic minor

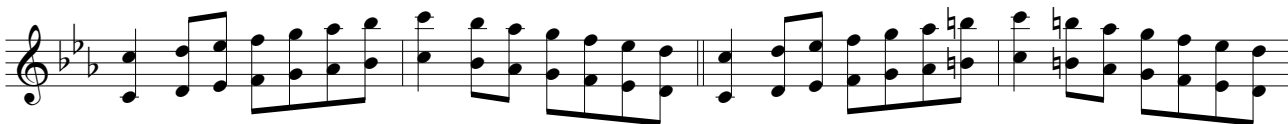


Eb Major

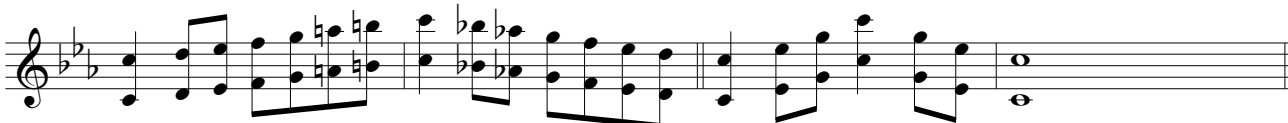


C natural minor

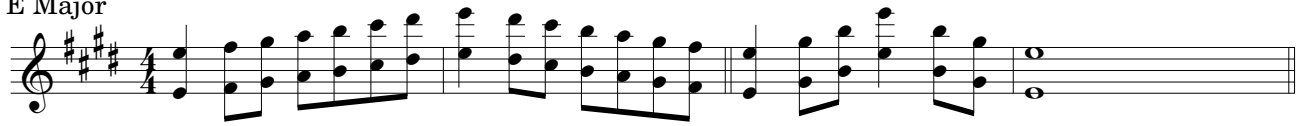
C harmonic minor



C melodic minor

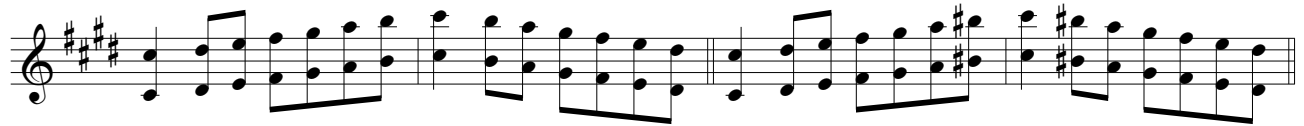


E Major

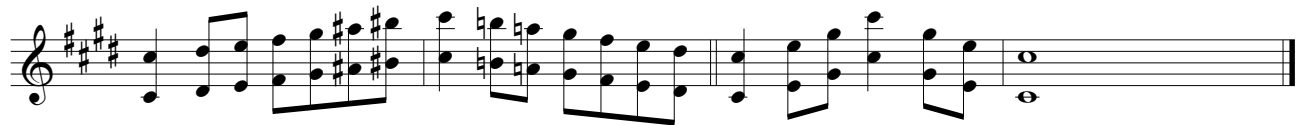


C# natural minor

C# harmonic minor



C# melodic minor

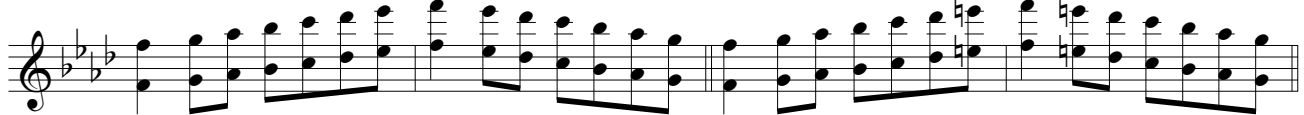


Ab Major

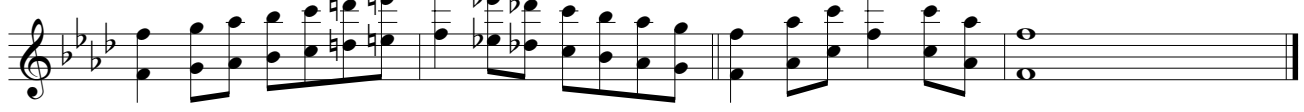


F natural minor

F harmonic minor

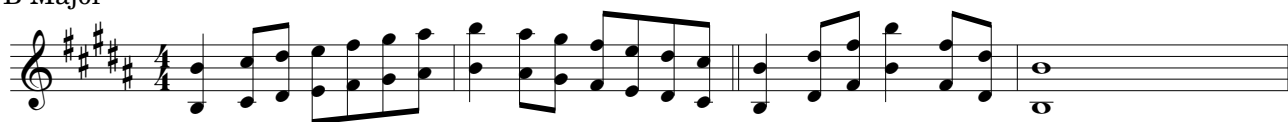


F melodic minor



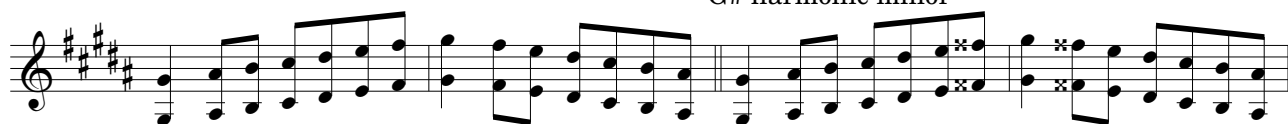
Scale Supplement

B Major



G# natural minor

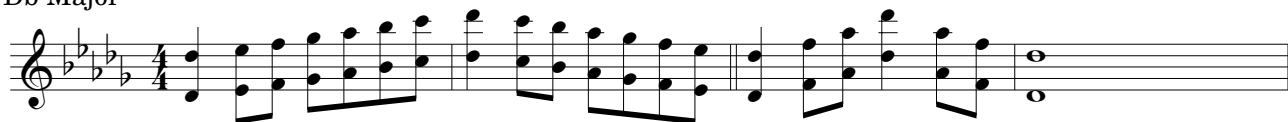
G# harmonic minor



G# melodic minor

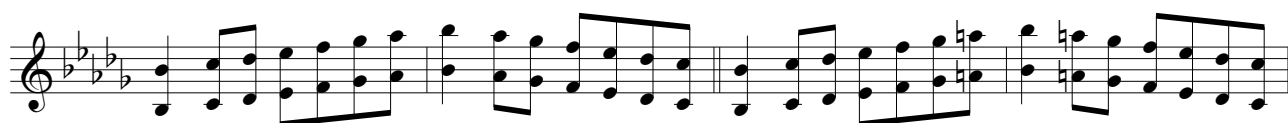


Db Major

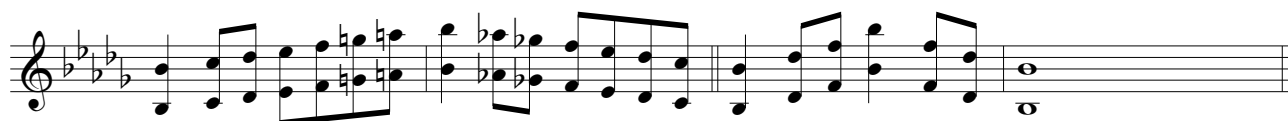


Bb natural minor

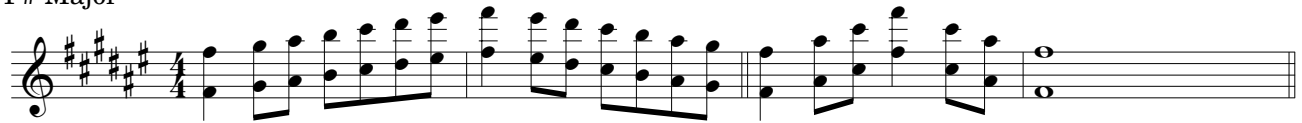
Bb harmonic minor



Bb melodic minor

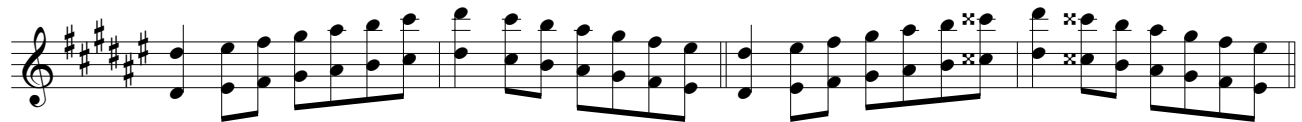


F# Major

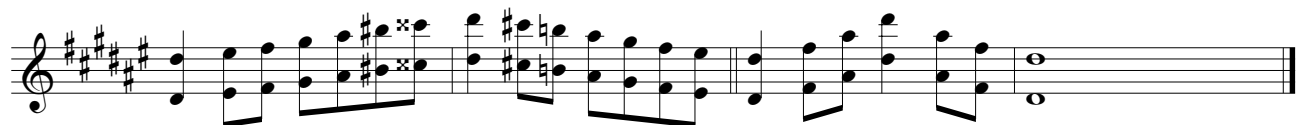


D# natural minor

D# harmonic minor



D# melodic minor

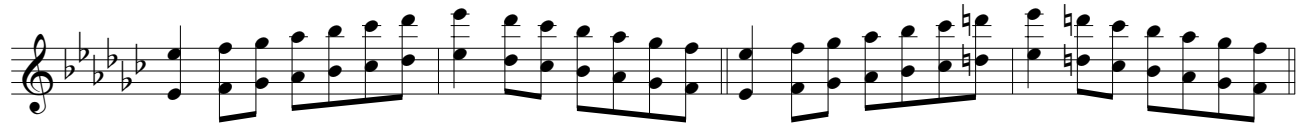


Gb Major



Eb natural minor

Eb harmonic minor

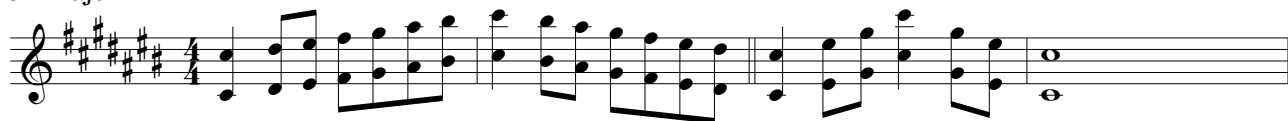


Eb melodic minor



Scale Supplement

C# Major

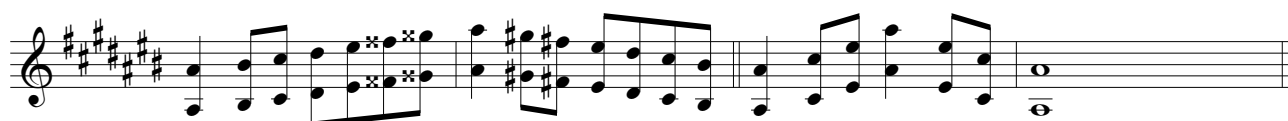


A# natural minor

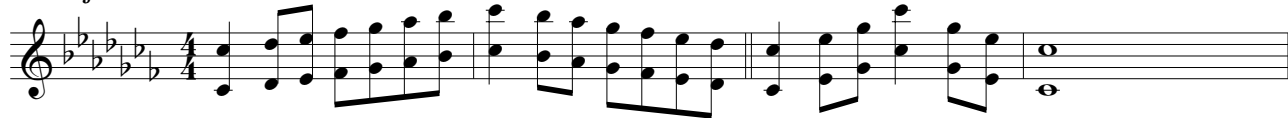
A# harmonic minor



A# melodic minor



Cb Major



Ab natural minor

Ab harmonic minor



Ab melodic minor

