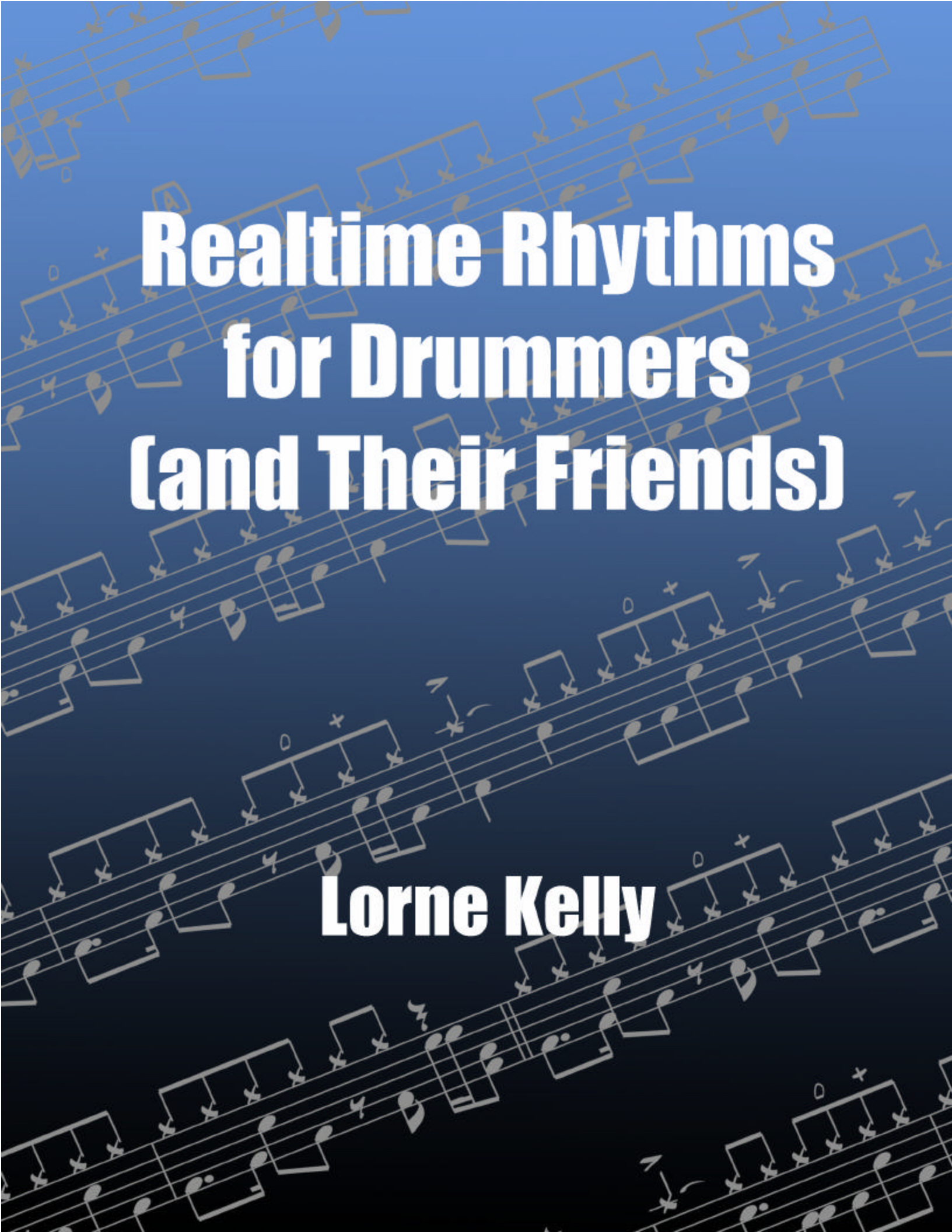
Realtime Rhythms
for Drummers
(and Their Friends)
Lorne Kelly

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Acknowledgements

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Special thanks to my students for all you have taught me!

In memory of Bob Sabourin: “For your own amazement!”

Preface

Rhythm is a part of all music and the responsibility of everyone in the band. Although drummers are known to spend a lot of their practice time learning to play rhythms comfortably and accurately, the skill is essential for all musicians. Realtime Rhythms for Drummers (and Their Friends) is an exercise book to help you learn and play rhythms and rhythmic phrases. The material presented here is prevalent in blues, rock, pop, funk, swing, jazz, country and most other popular music styles.

This book is meant as an aid for teachers and students - a reference to be used for practice and continued development. Rhythmic phrases should be practiced with a metronome, or other time reference. New rhythms should be played slowly first, with accuracy as the main goal. Speed should always follow accuracy.

The rhythms and phrases in this book are written on the traditional 5-line music staff but with no clef indicated. The phrases can be interpreted on any percussion instrument or used as the rhythmic basis of a melody on a melodic instrument. For the drum set patterns at the end of book the hi-hat or ride part is notated above staff with “x” note heads; the snare drum part in the second space and the bass drum part in the bottom space of the staff.

Setup for Drums

My drum set teaching is rooted in a proper grip and setup. I teach a grip based on finger control.

The Grip:

Hold stick between side of first joint of first finger, and pad of thumb.

Stick lies in the center groove of the hand, in line with the forearm.

Pads of the second and third fingers should always be on the stick.

The back of hand faces up flat.

Arms and elbows relax at your sides

To play: Throw wrist straight back, and pull stick down with the fingers.

Setup for Snare Drum and Practice Pad:

Upper arm hangs straight down, forearm is parallel to the floor.

Upper leg is parallel to the floor.

Feet are equally spaced in front of you, flat on the pedals, back of the heel in line with the center of the knee.

Hands are 15 to 20 cm apart.

Setting Up Your Drum Kit:

1) Sit on throne.

2) Place snare drum directly in front of you (imagine you are a catcher - your snare drum is home plate so you are not too close).

3) Place bass drum and hi-hat so the pedals are equally spaced on either side of snare drum (both will be on a slight outward angle).

4) Set ride cymbal directly to right* of bass drum.

5) Add tom toms in positions of optimum comfort.

6) Add first crash cymbal to left* of bass drum.

7) Add additional crash and effect cymbals, cowbells, Latin percussion, electronic percussion, etc. in positions conducive to a relaxed effort in playing them.

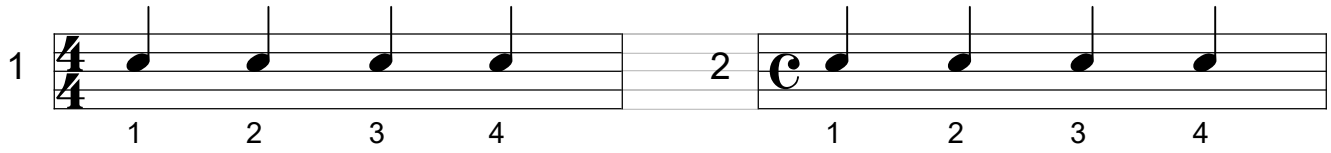
*The opposite applies for left-handed players.

Time Signature

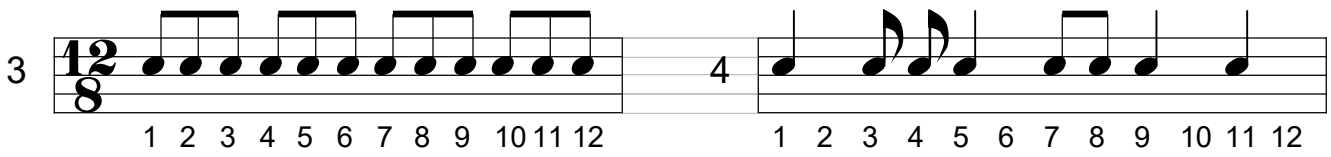
All the rhythms and exercises in this book are written in four-four time.

A time signature of 4/4 or C indicates that the music is counted in four-four or common time.
This means there are 4 beats, or counts, in each bar and each beat is the duration of a quarter note.

Time Signature Format (for simple time):
The top number specifies the number of beats to a bar.
The bottom number specifies the note duration of each beat.

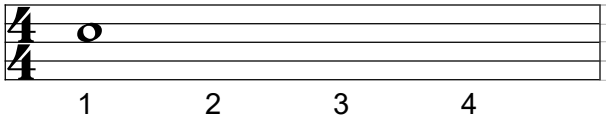


By constrast, the examples below are in twelve-eight time -an example of compound time. In compound time the upper number represents the number of beat subdivisions in the bar and the lower number the duration of each subdivision.
Here the music is still felt as four beats to a bar but each beat is subdivided into three eighth notes.
(Notice how the beaming in the first example suggests four beats.)

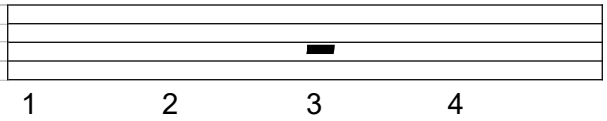


Note and Rest Values in 4/4 Time

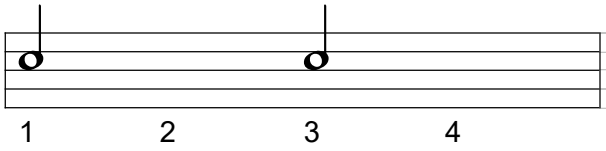
whole note = 4 beats



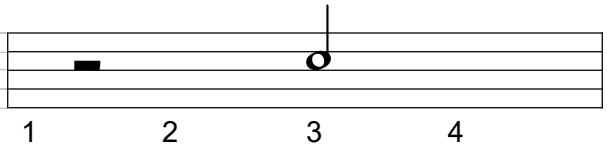
whole rest = 4 beats



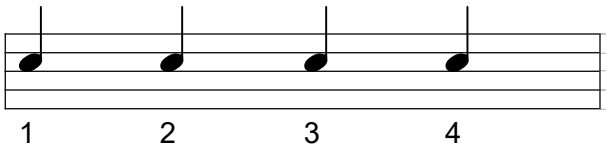
half note = 2 beats



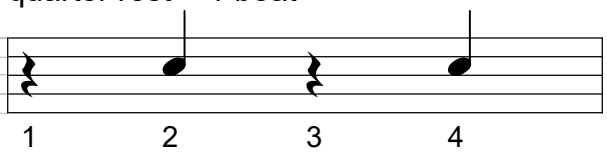
half rest = 2 beats



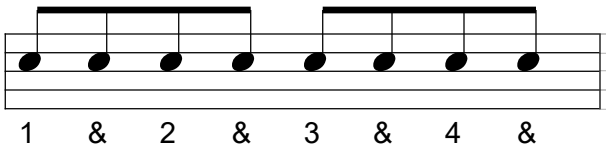
quarter note = 1 beat



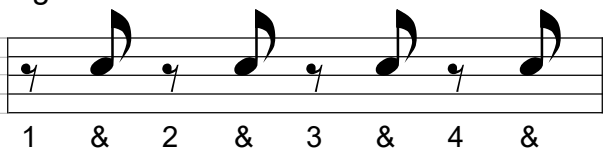
quarter rest = 1 beat



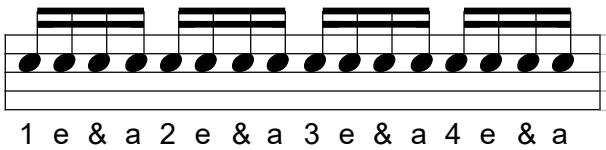
eighth note = 1/2 beat



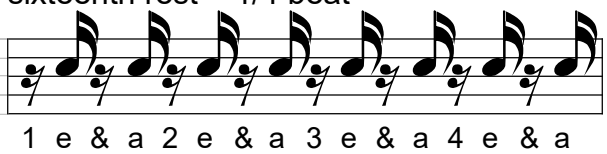
eighth rest = 1/2 beat



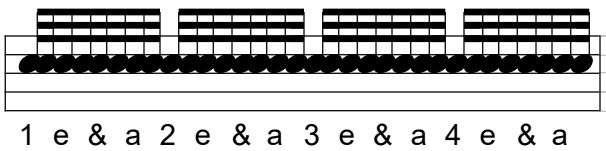
sixteenth note = 1/4 beat



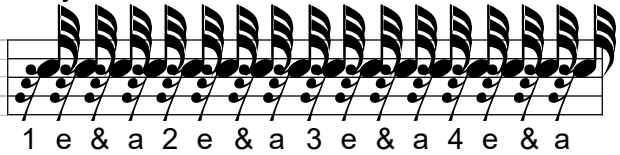
sixteenth rest = 1/4 beat



thirty-second note = 1/8 beat

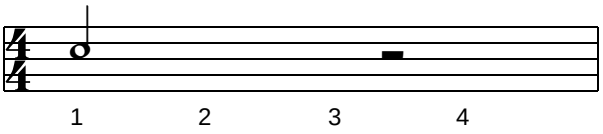


thirty-second rest = 1/8 beat

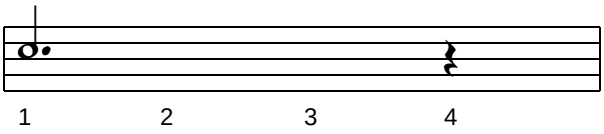


Dotted Notes and Rests

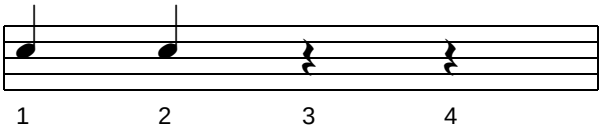
A dot placed after a note or rest increases its duration by half its face value.
Stated another way:
A dotted quarter note has a duration of a quarter note plus an eighth note.
A dotted eighth note has a duration of an eighth note plus a sixteenth note.



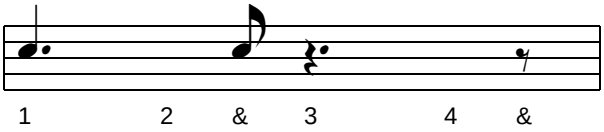
A half note, or rest, receives two beats.



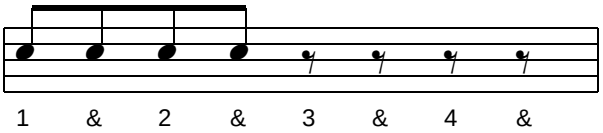
A dotted half note, or rest, receives three beats.



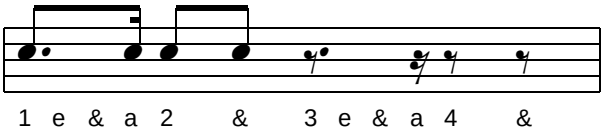
A quarter note, or rest, receives one beat.



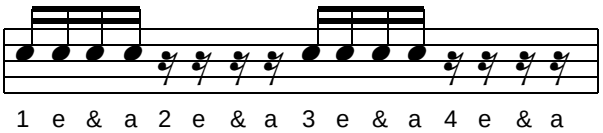
A dotted quarter note, or rest, receives 1 and 1/2 beats.



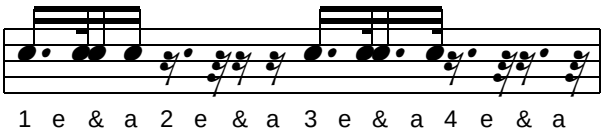
An 8th note, or rest, receives 1/2 a beat.



A dotted 8th note, or rest, receives 3/4 of a beat.



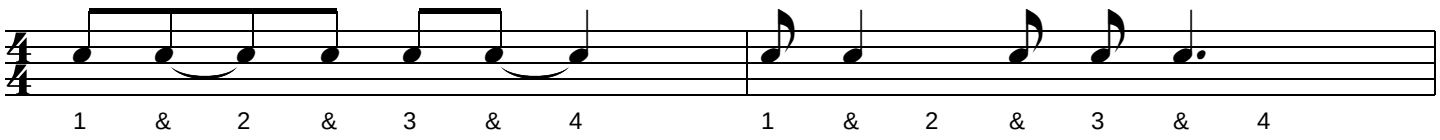
A 16th note, or rest, receives 1/4 of a beat.



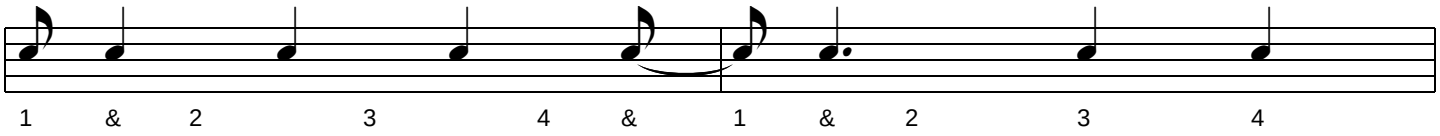
A dotted 16th note, or rest, receives 3/8 of a beat.

Tied Notes

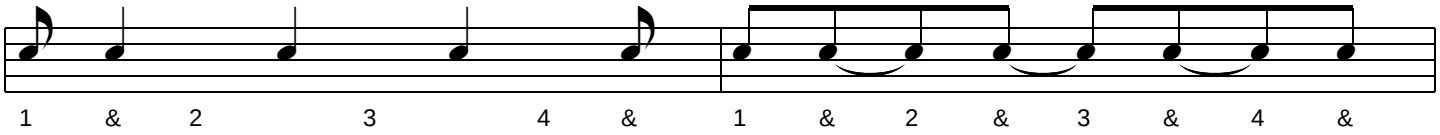
When two or more notes are tied their durations are added together.
For example, two 8th notes tied together are played as a single note with the duration of a quarter note. A quarter note and an 8th note tied together are played as a single note with the duration of a quarter note plus an 8th note (or a dotted quarter note).



This bar is rhythmically the same and played as the next.



Ties are necessary to notate phrases that cross the bar line.

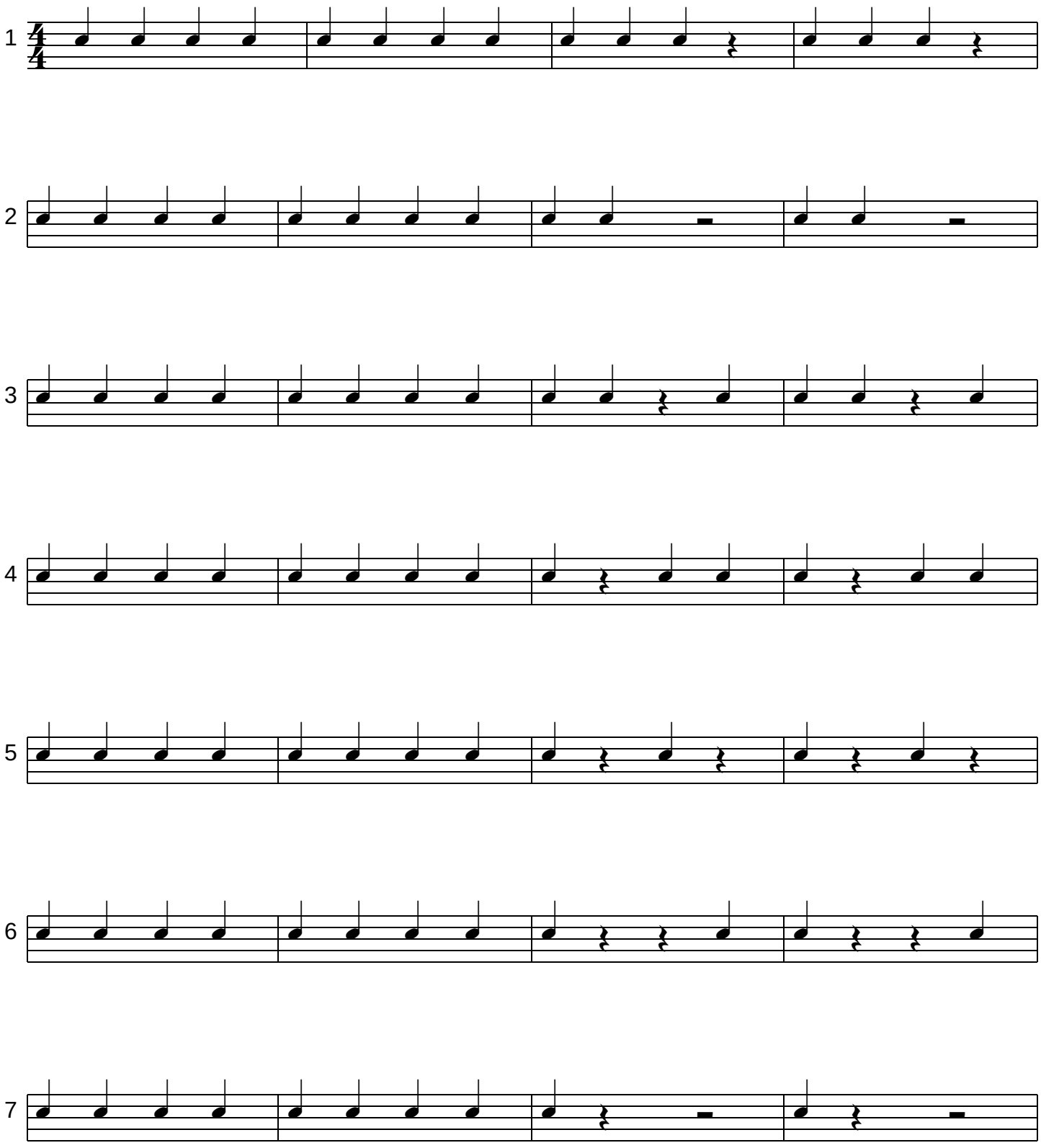


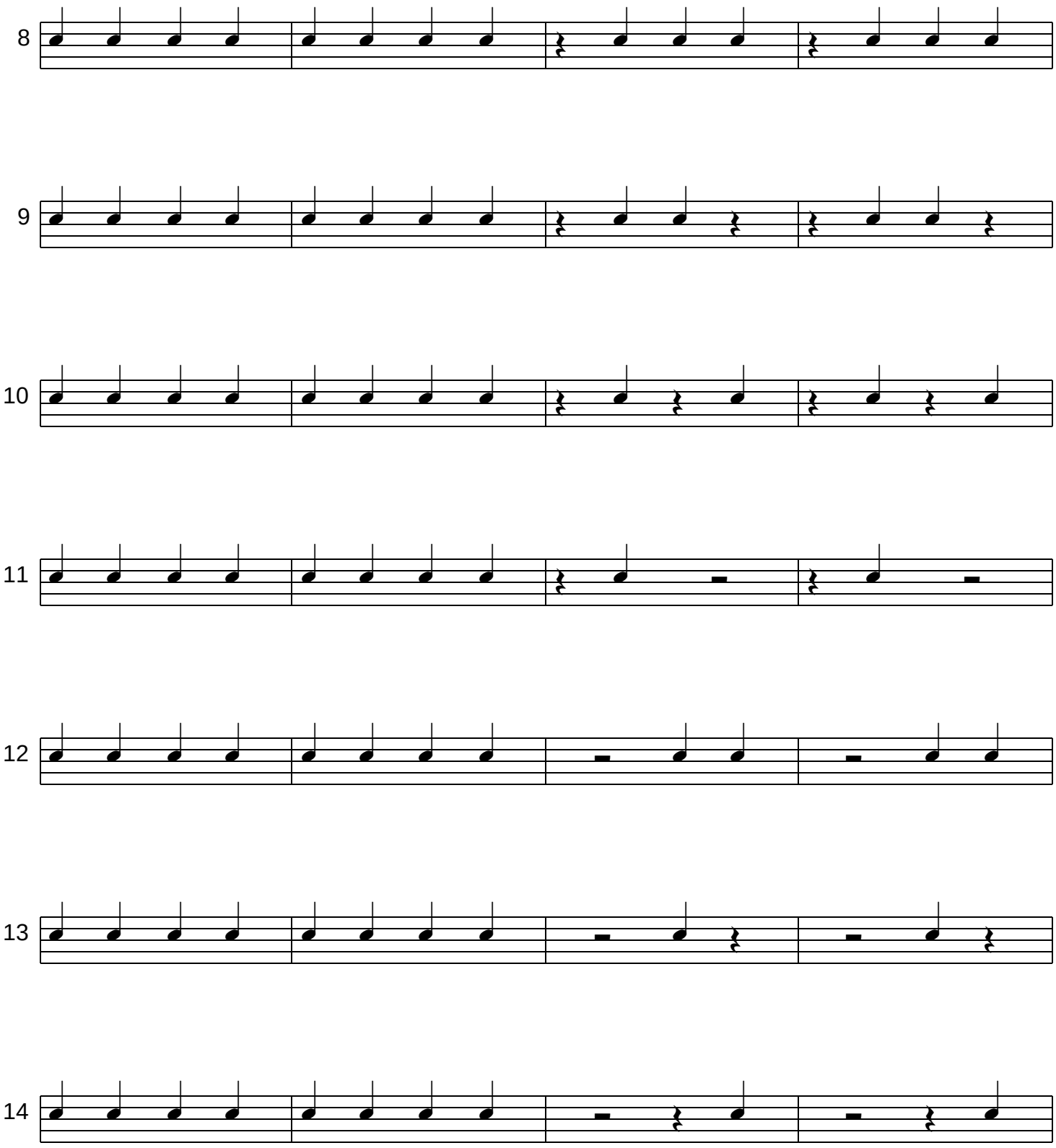
This figure can be hard to read because the downbeats aren't "visible".

This figure is equivalent to the previous but the down beats are easier to find.

Ties should be used to help the clarity of reading.

Quarter Notes

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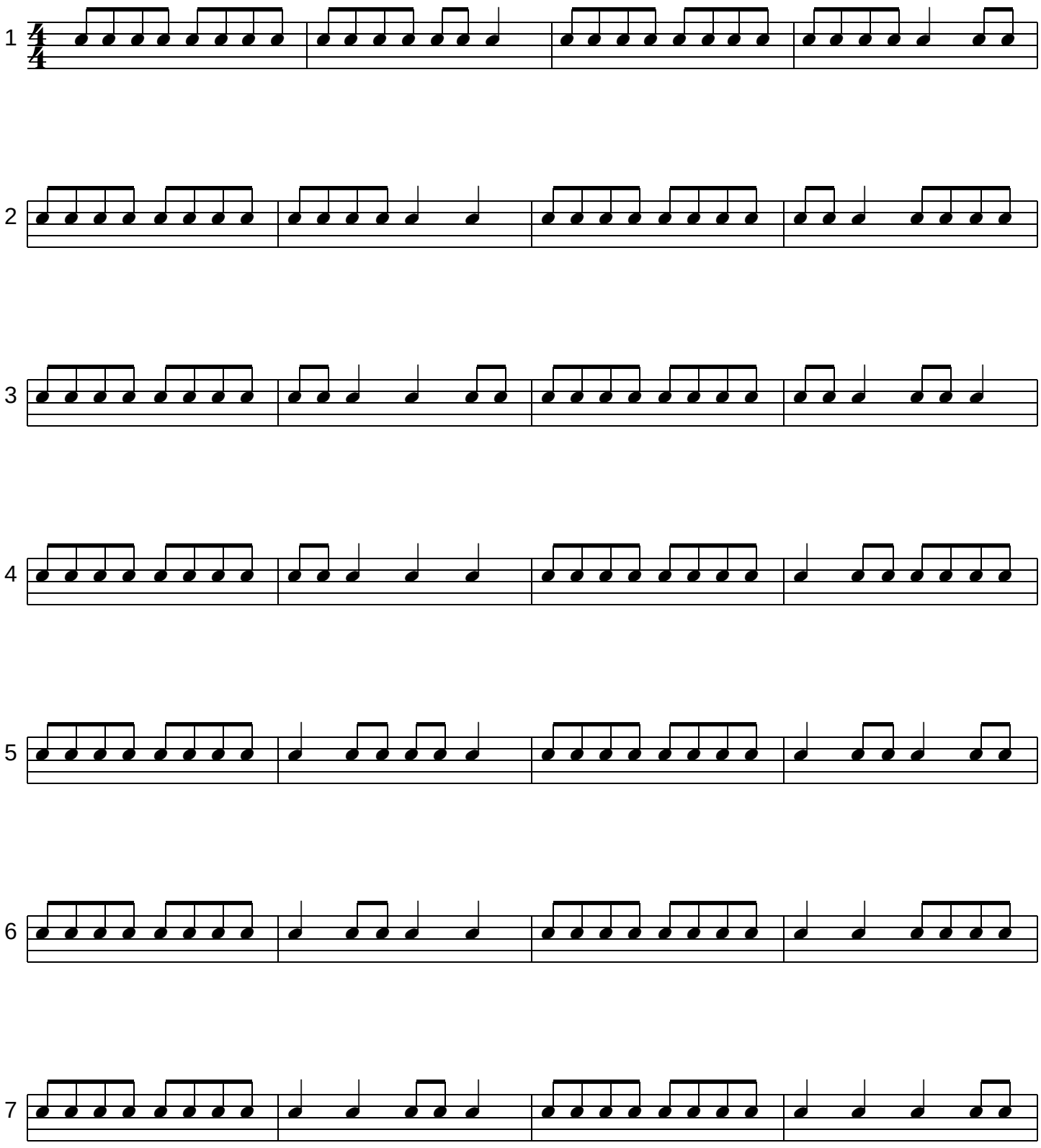
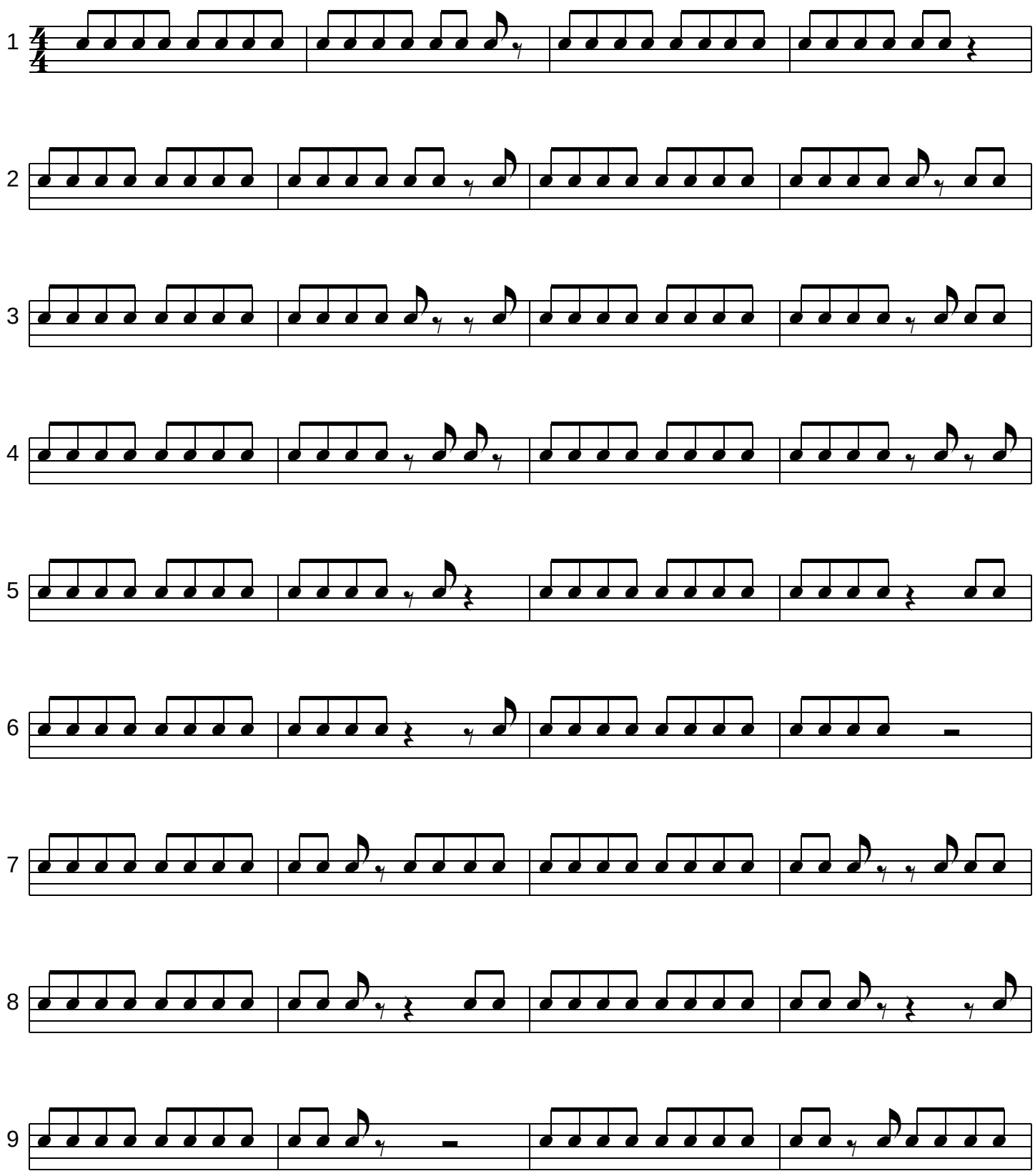
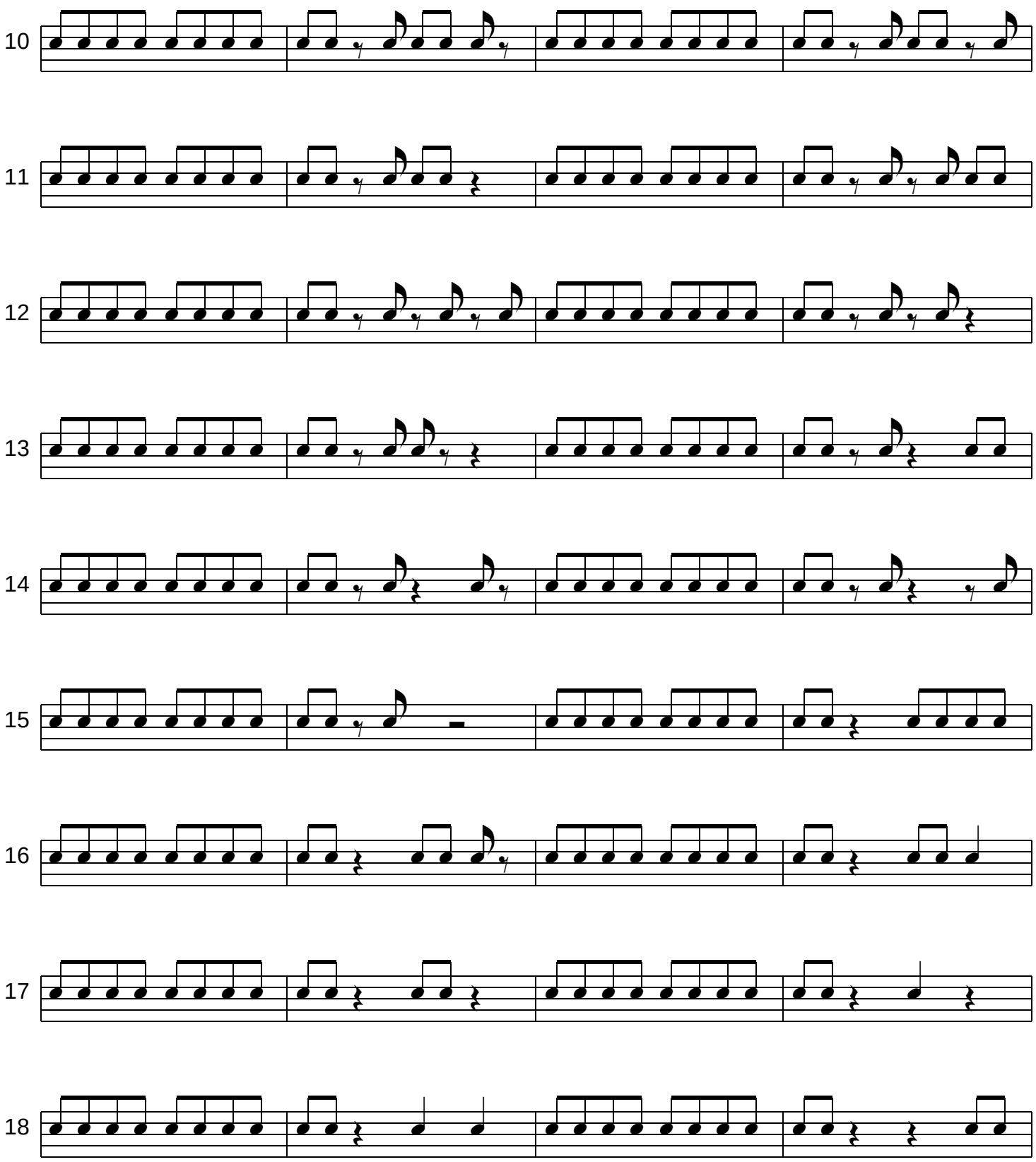
8th Notes



Eighth Notes with Quarters and Rests

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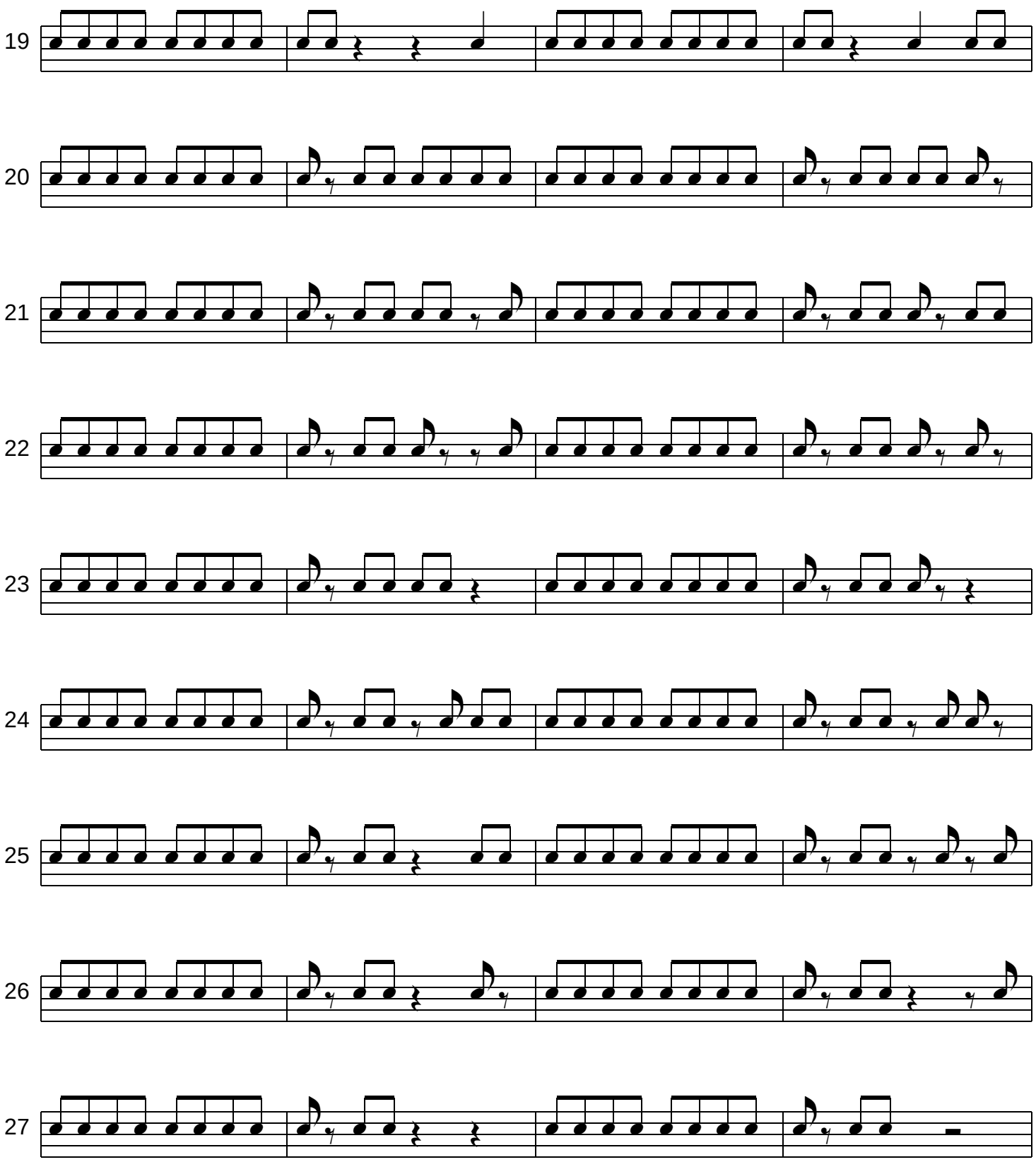
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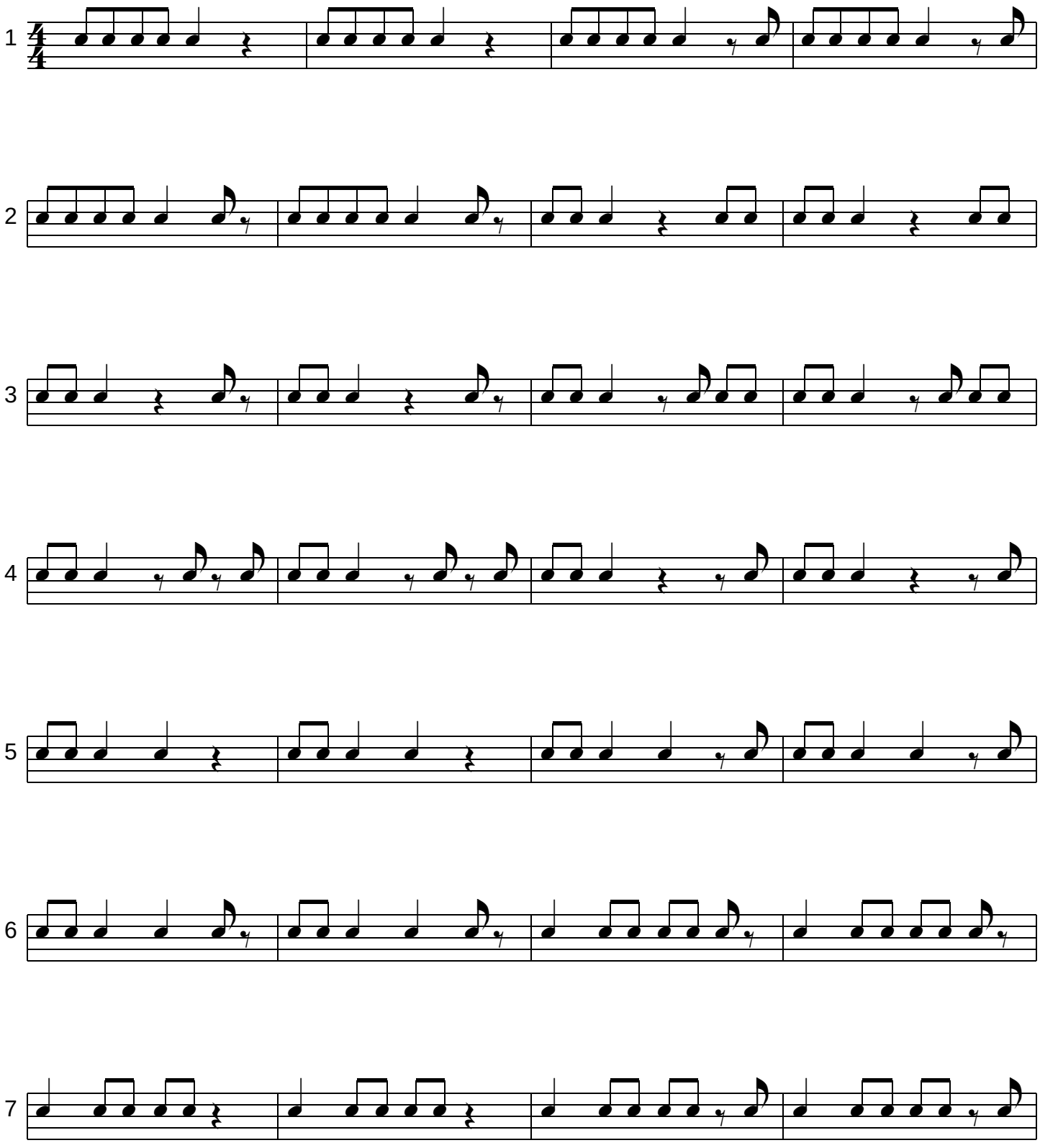
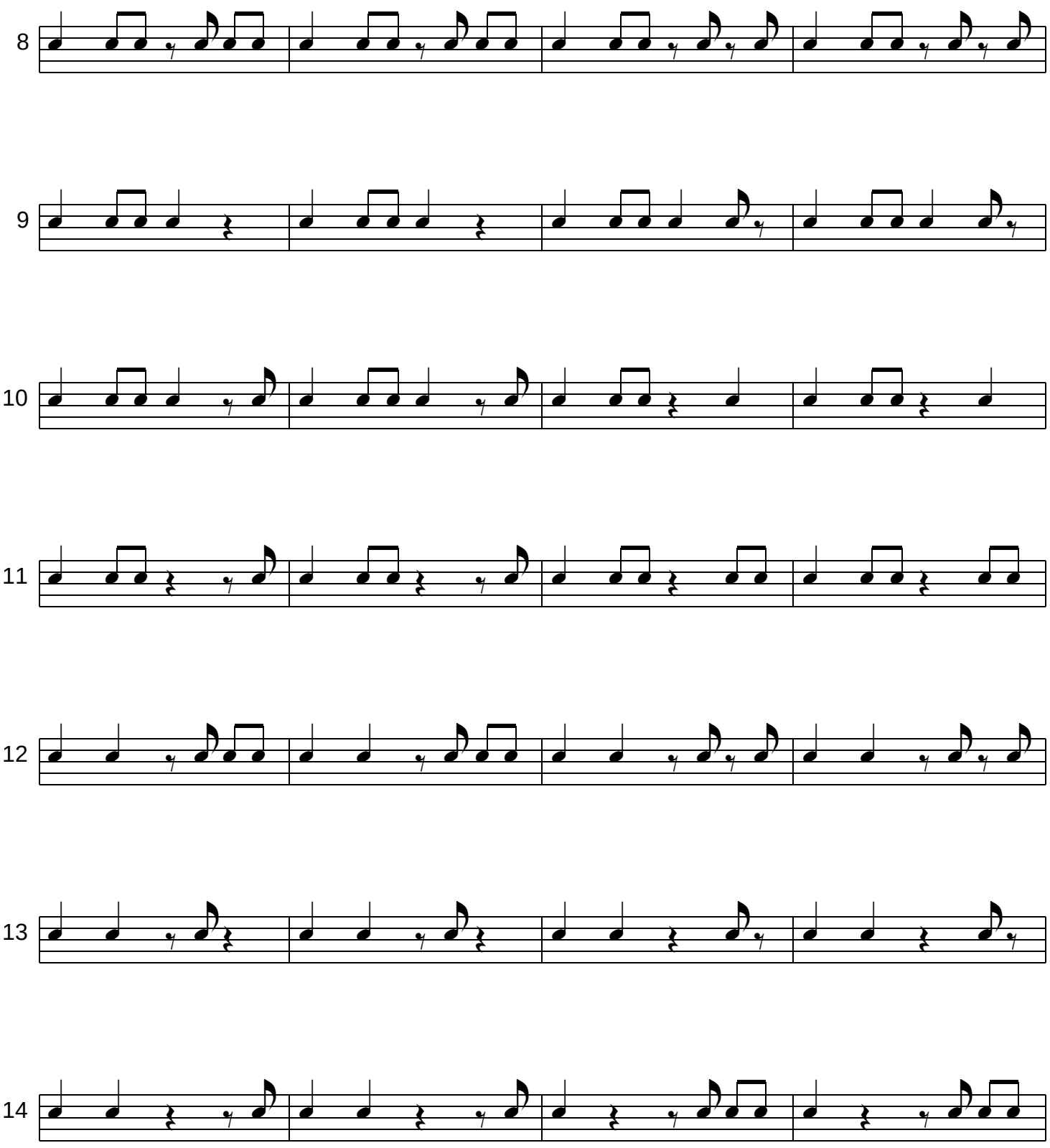
Combined 8ths, Quarters and Rests

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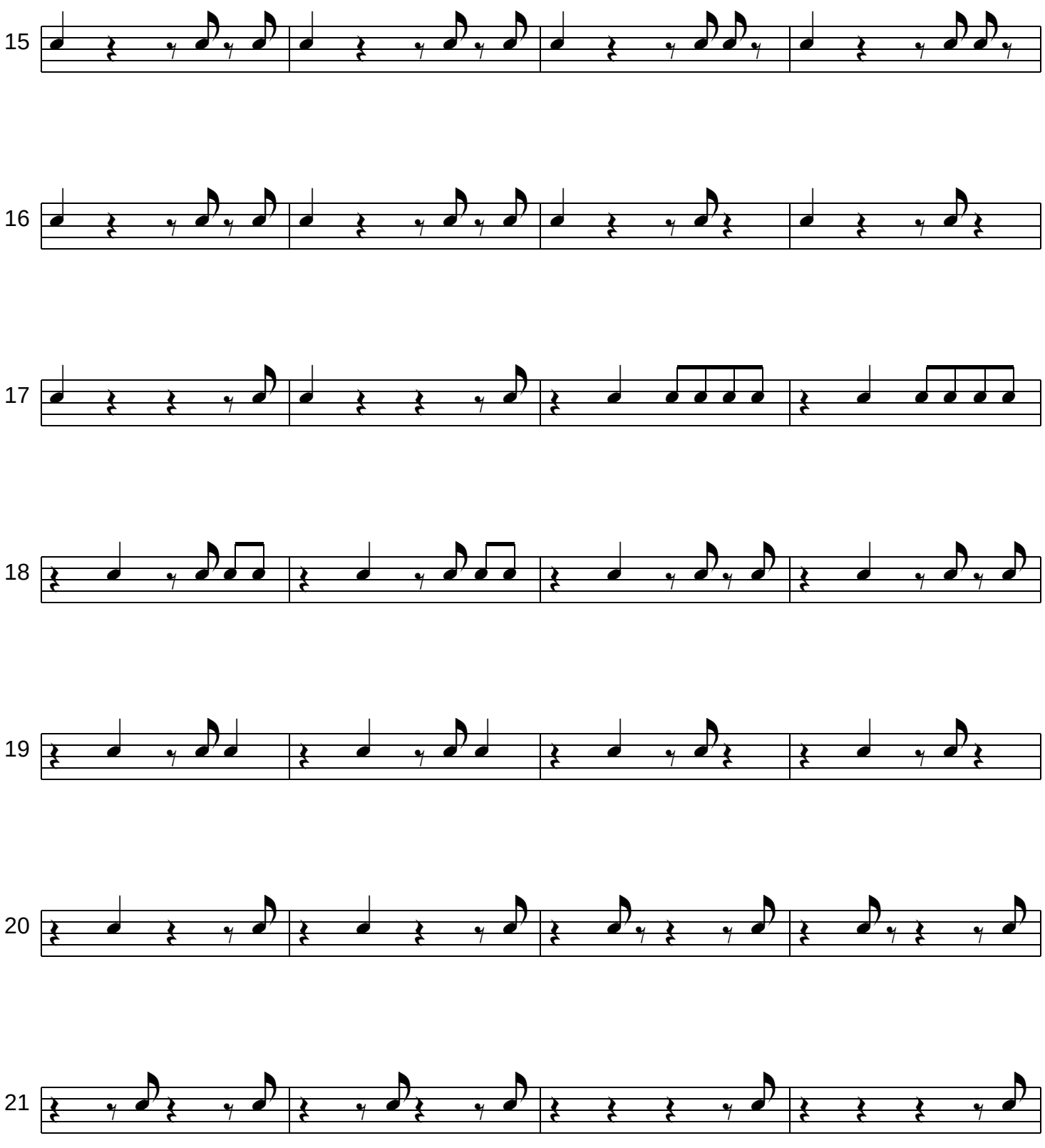
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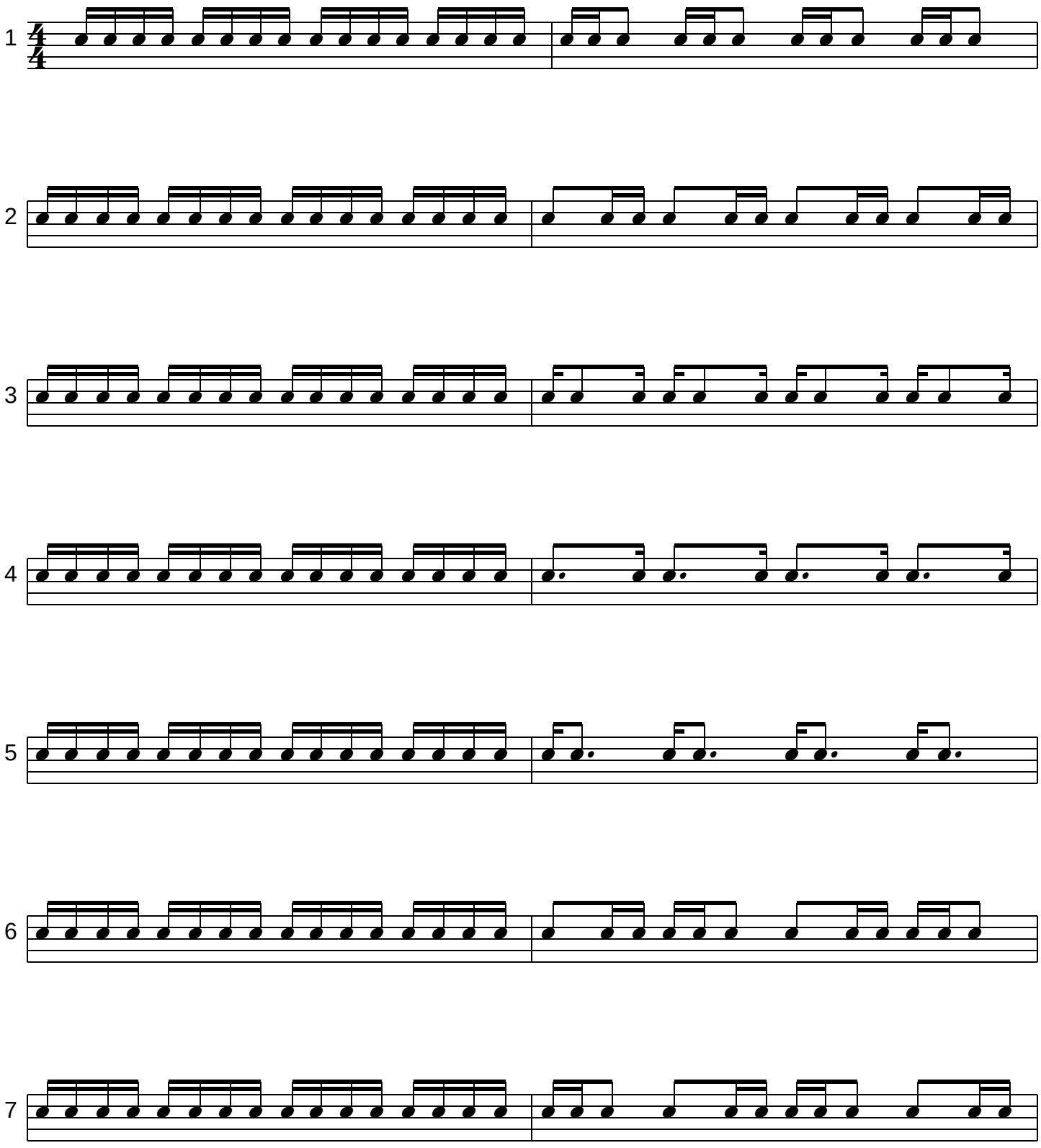
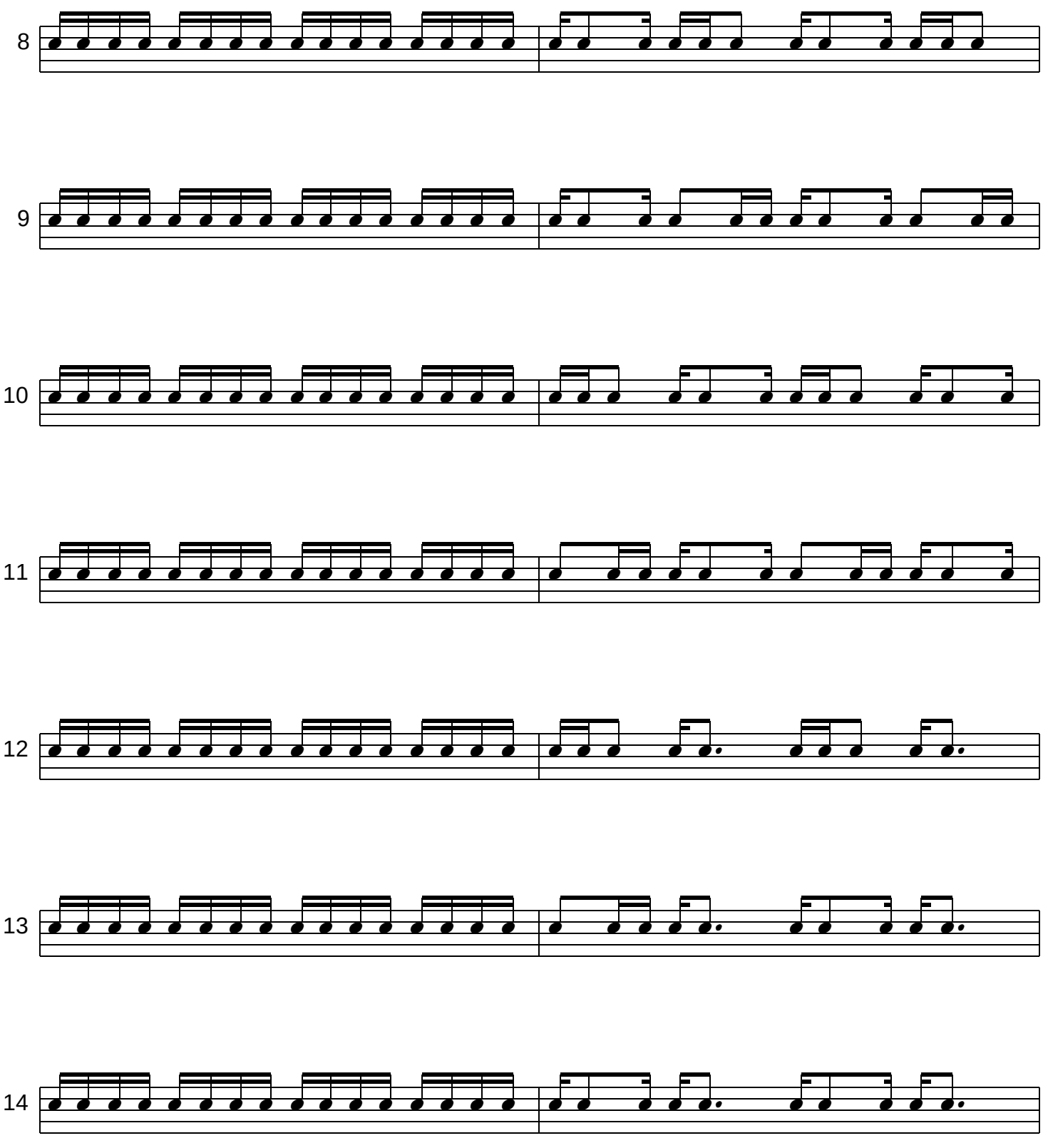
16th Notes

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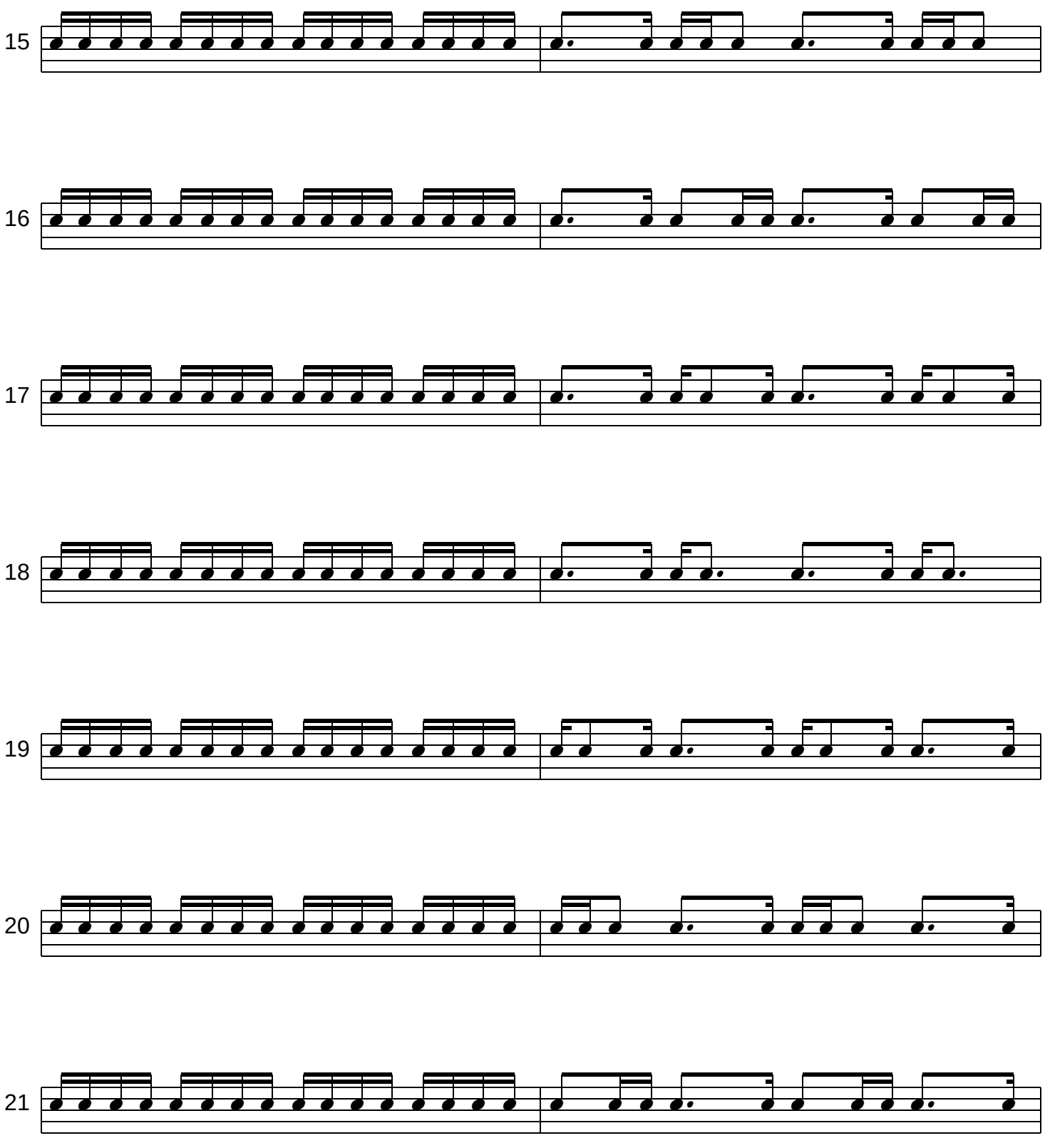
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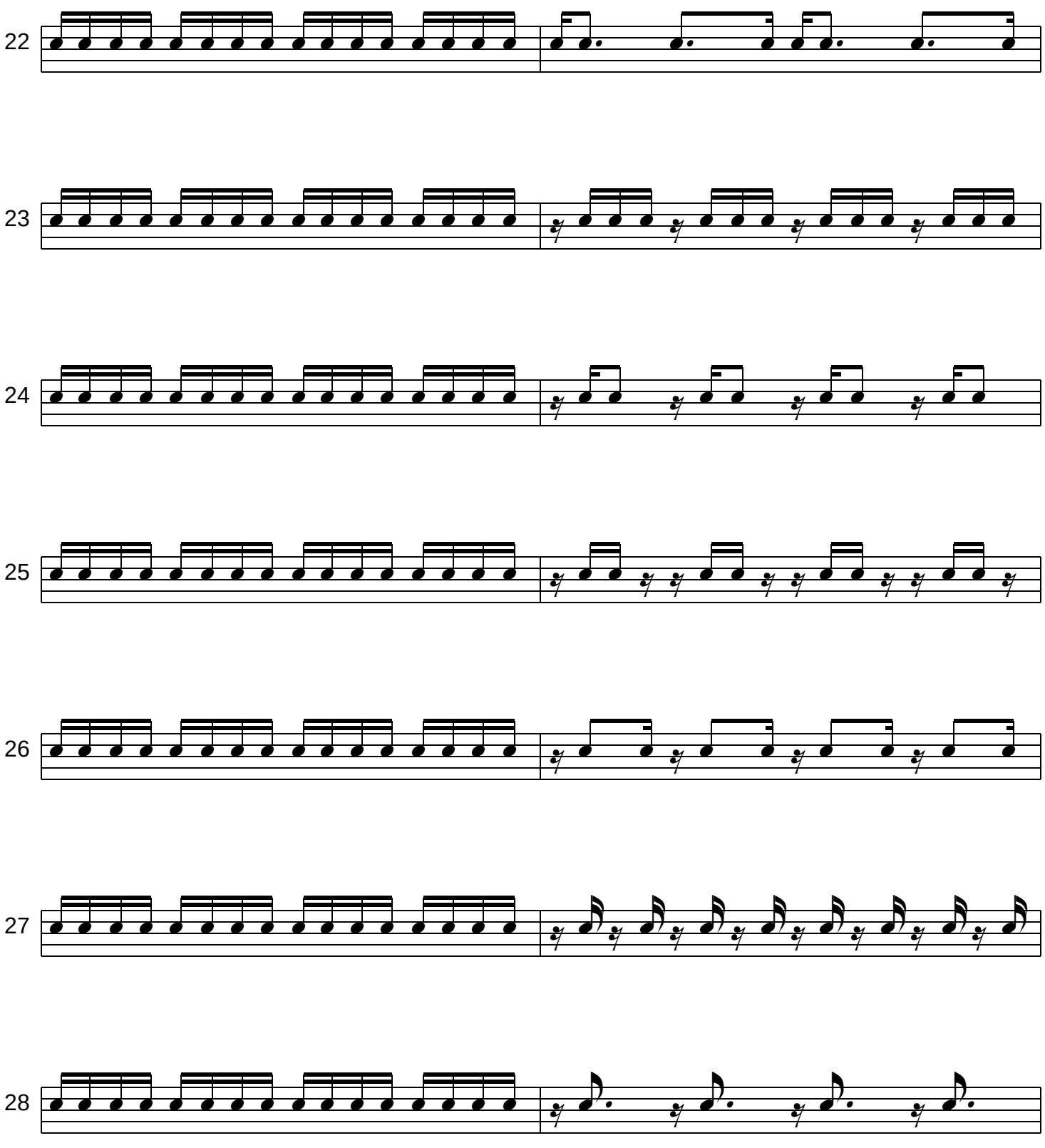
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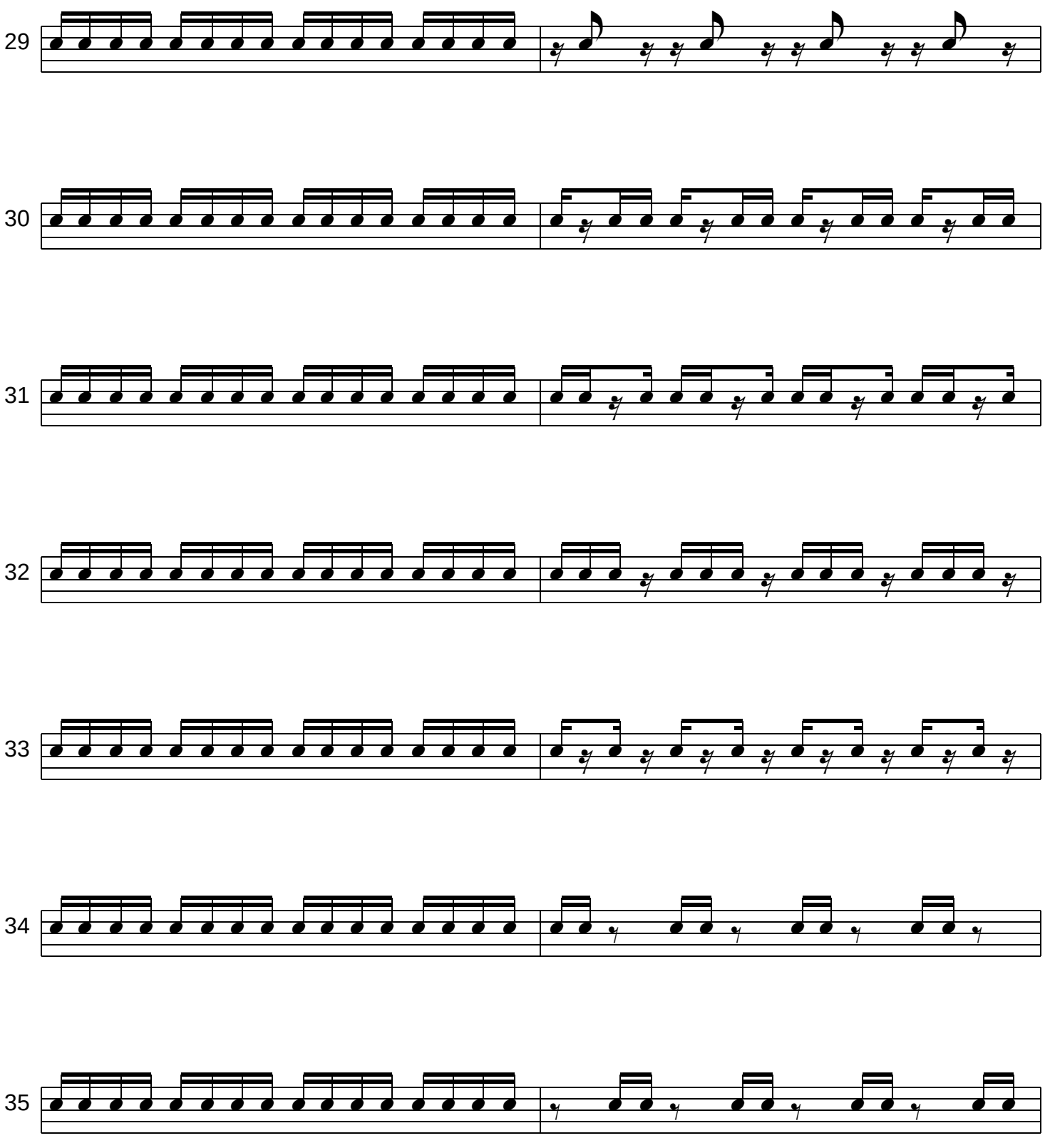
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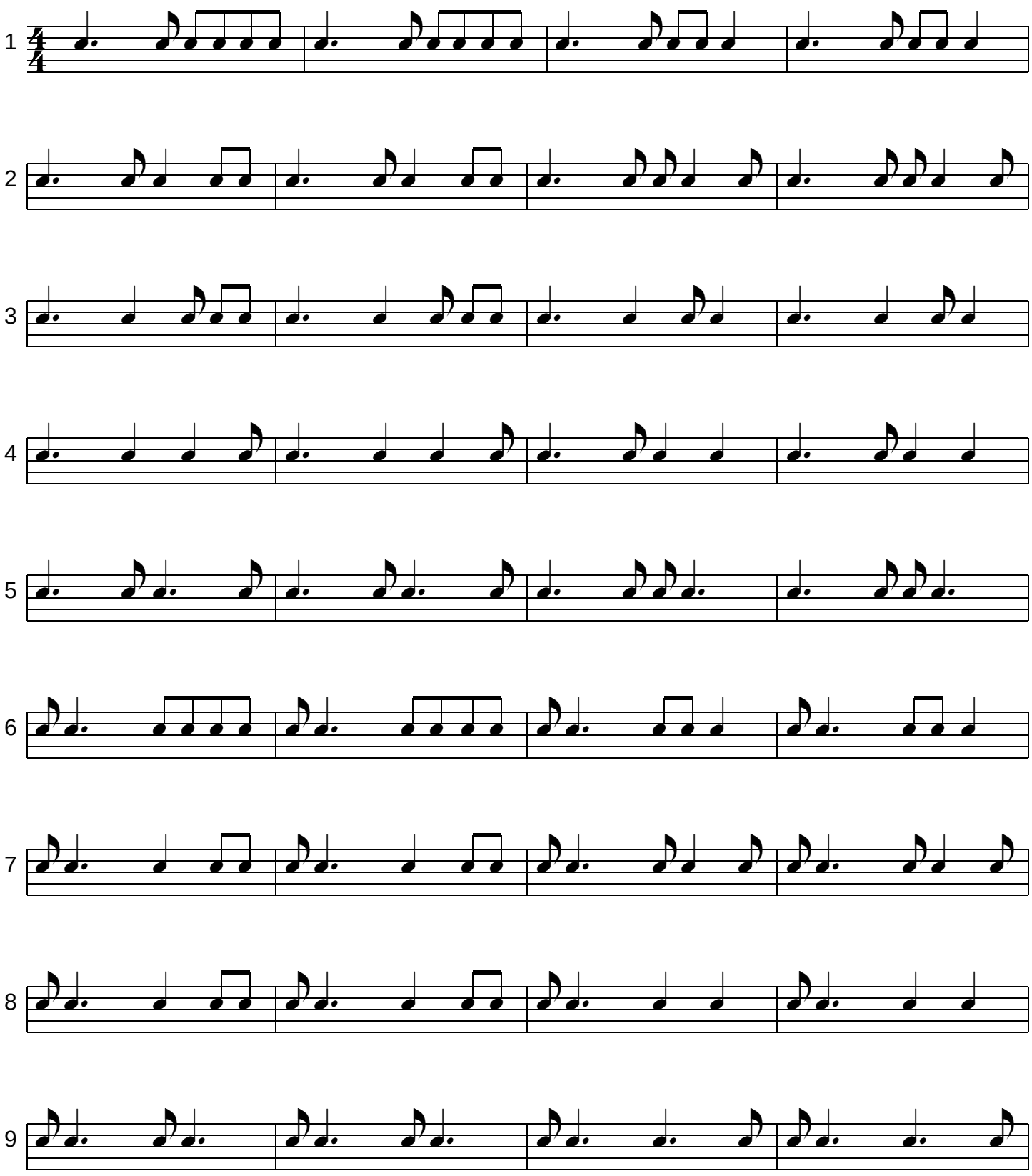
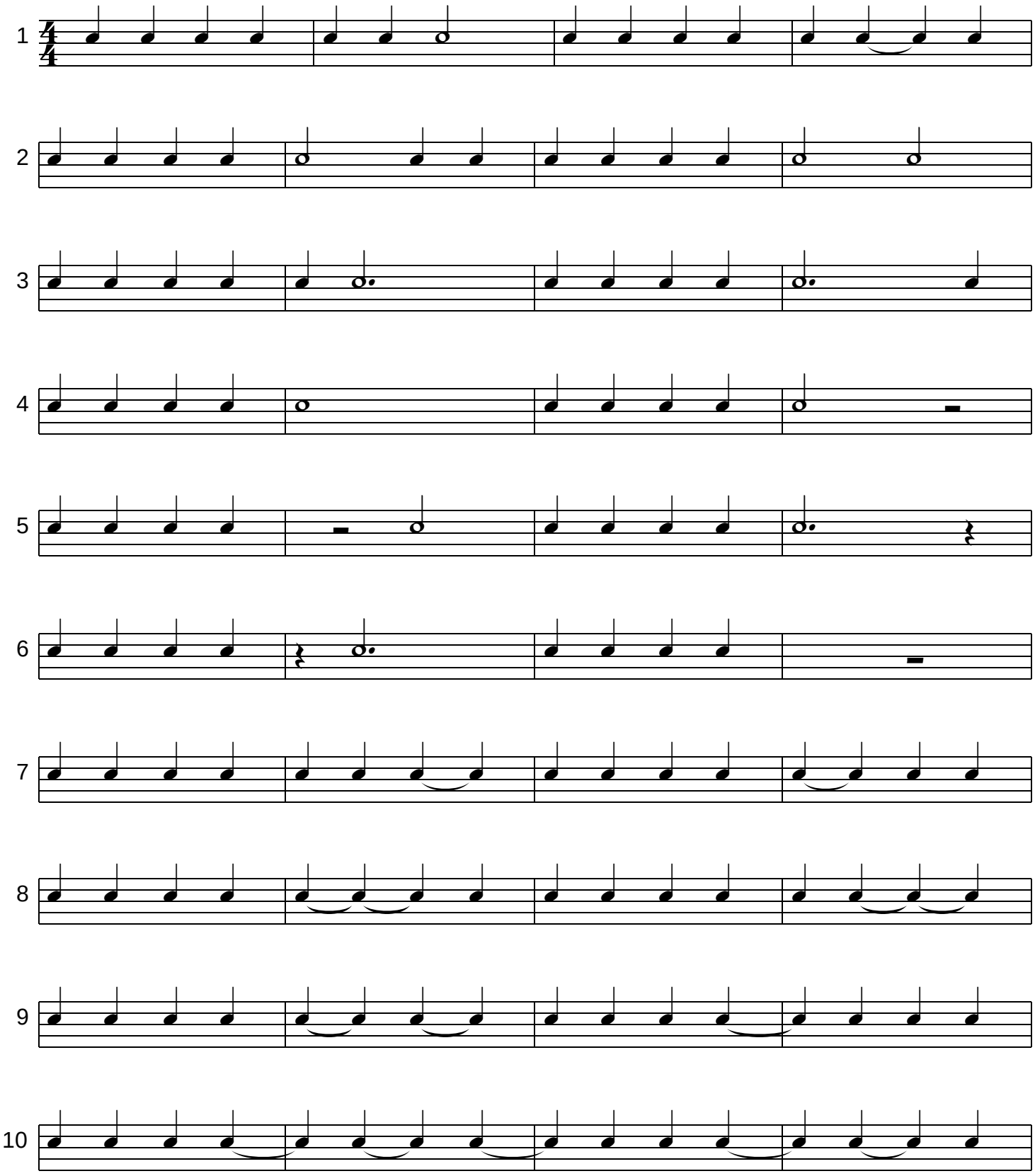
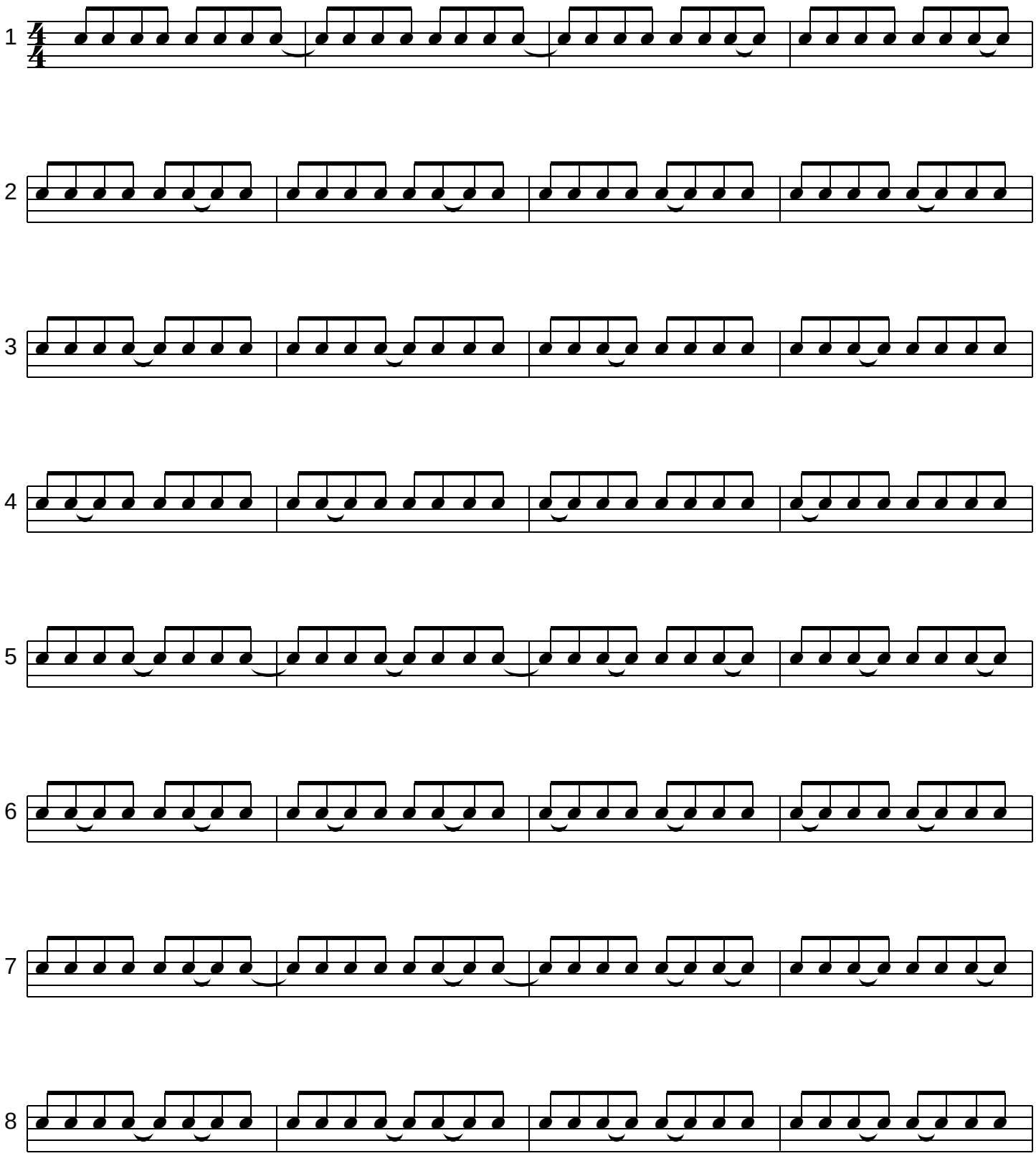
Dotted Quarter Notes

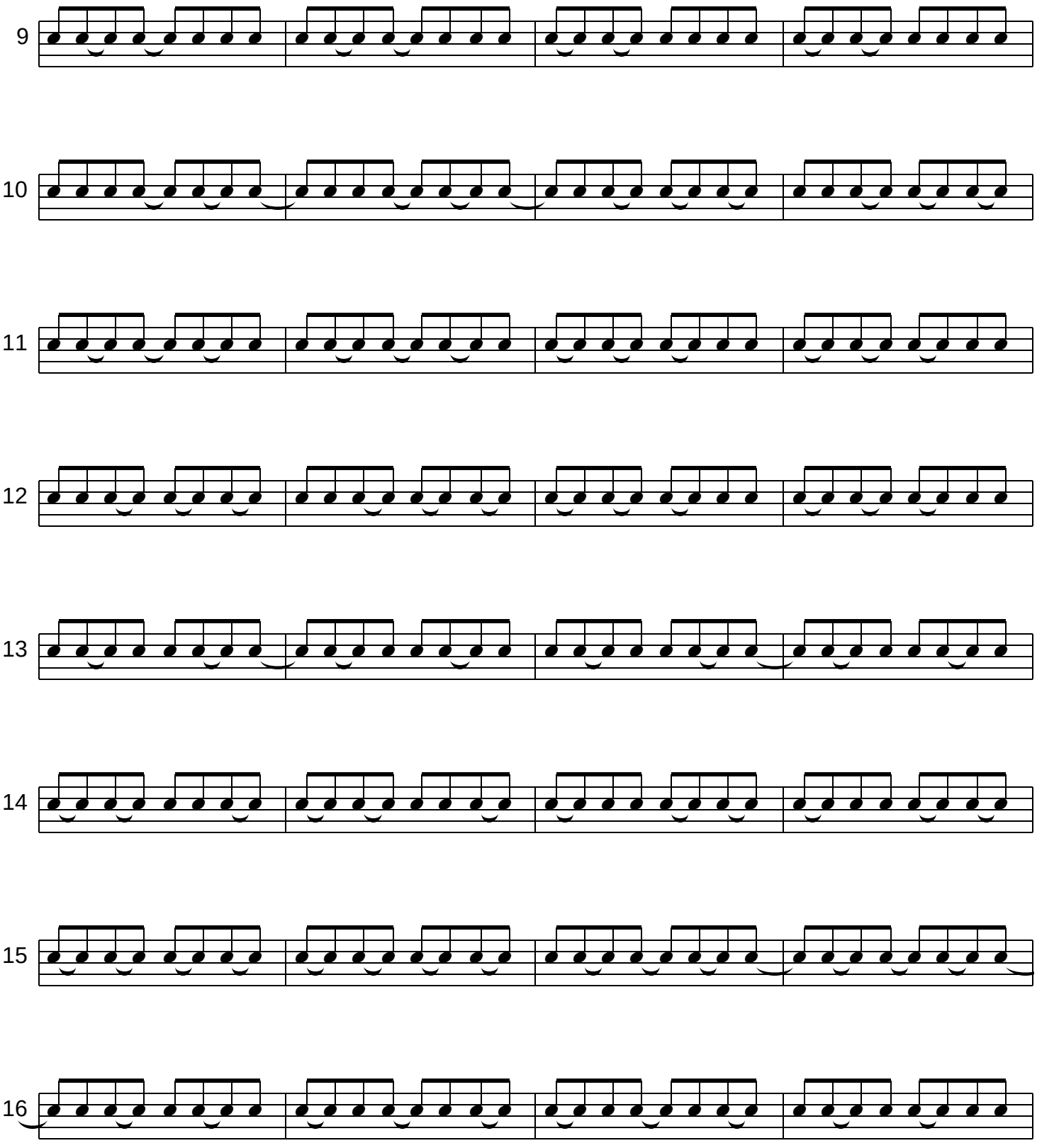


Long Notes



Tied 8th Notes

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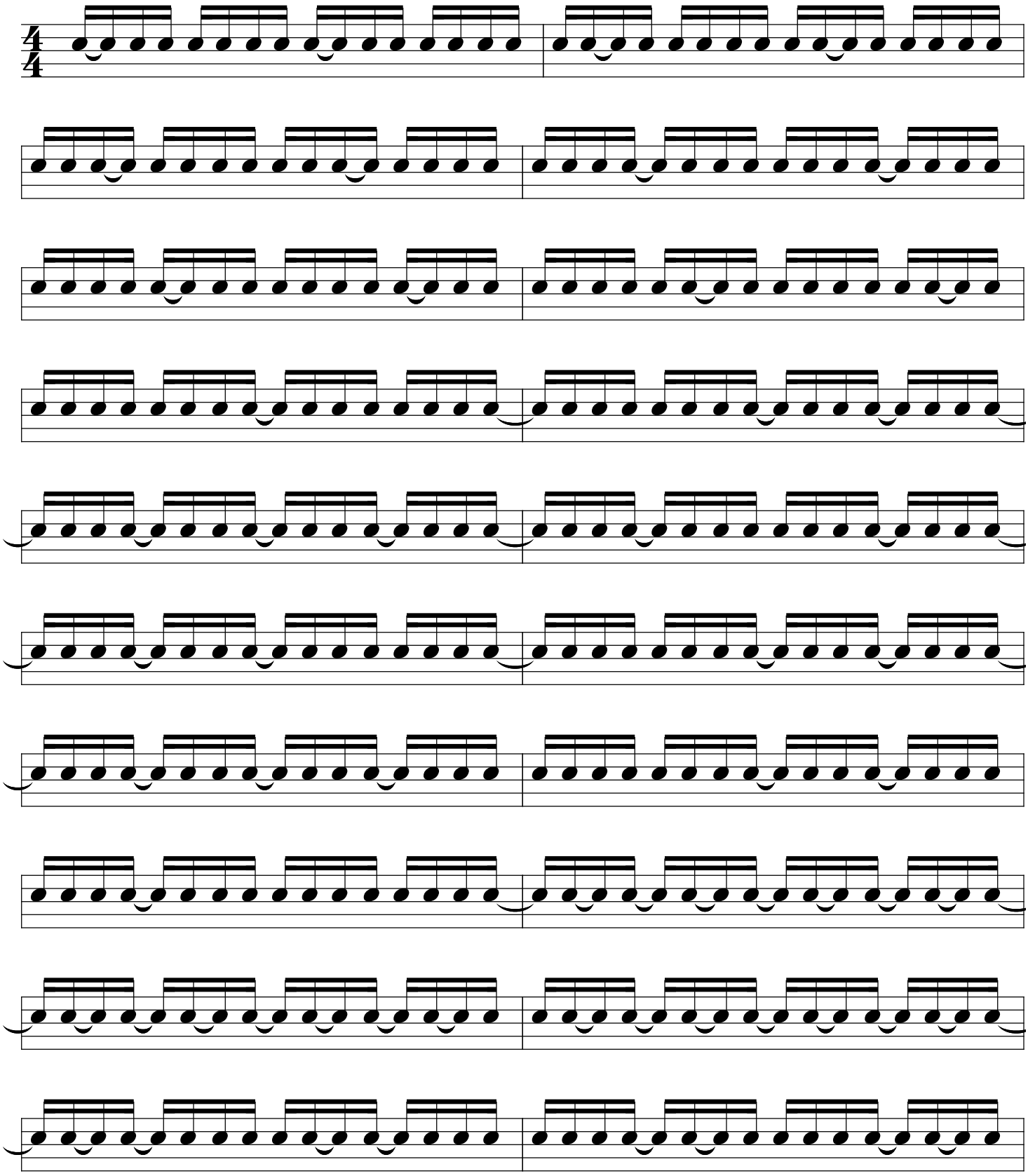
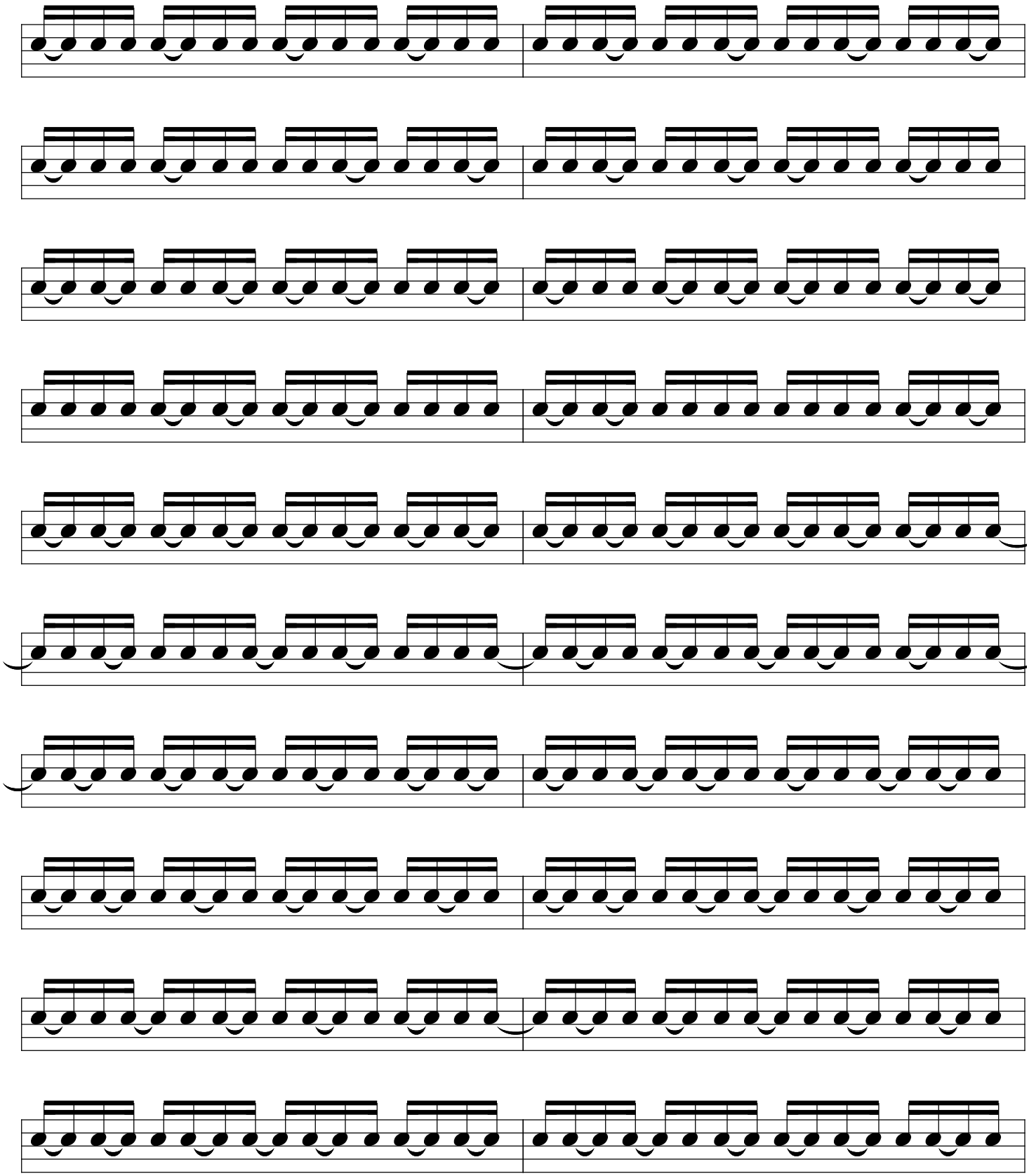
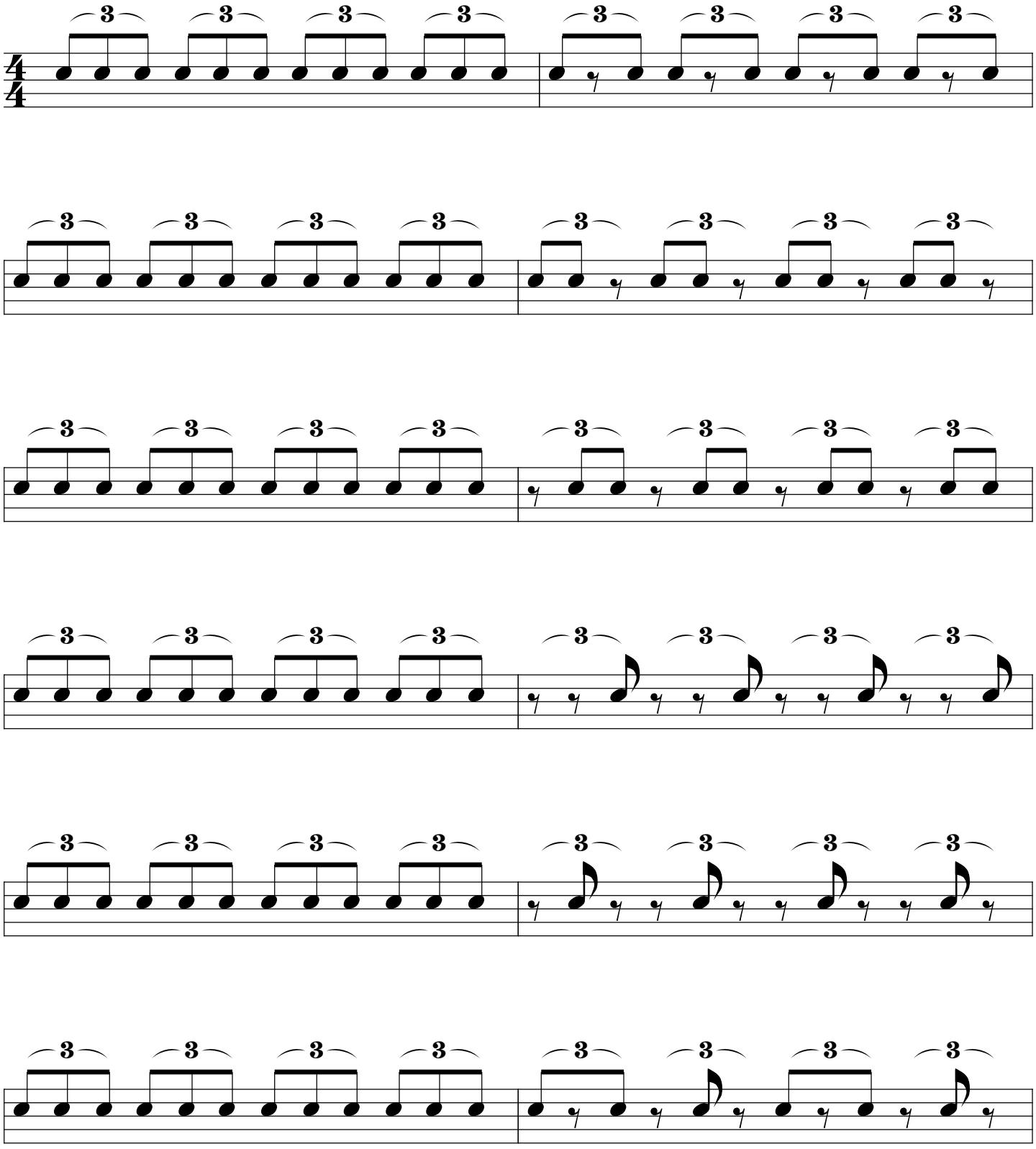
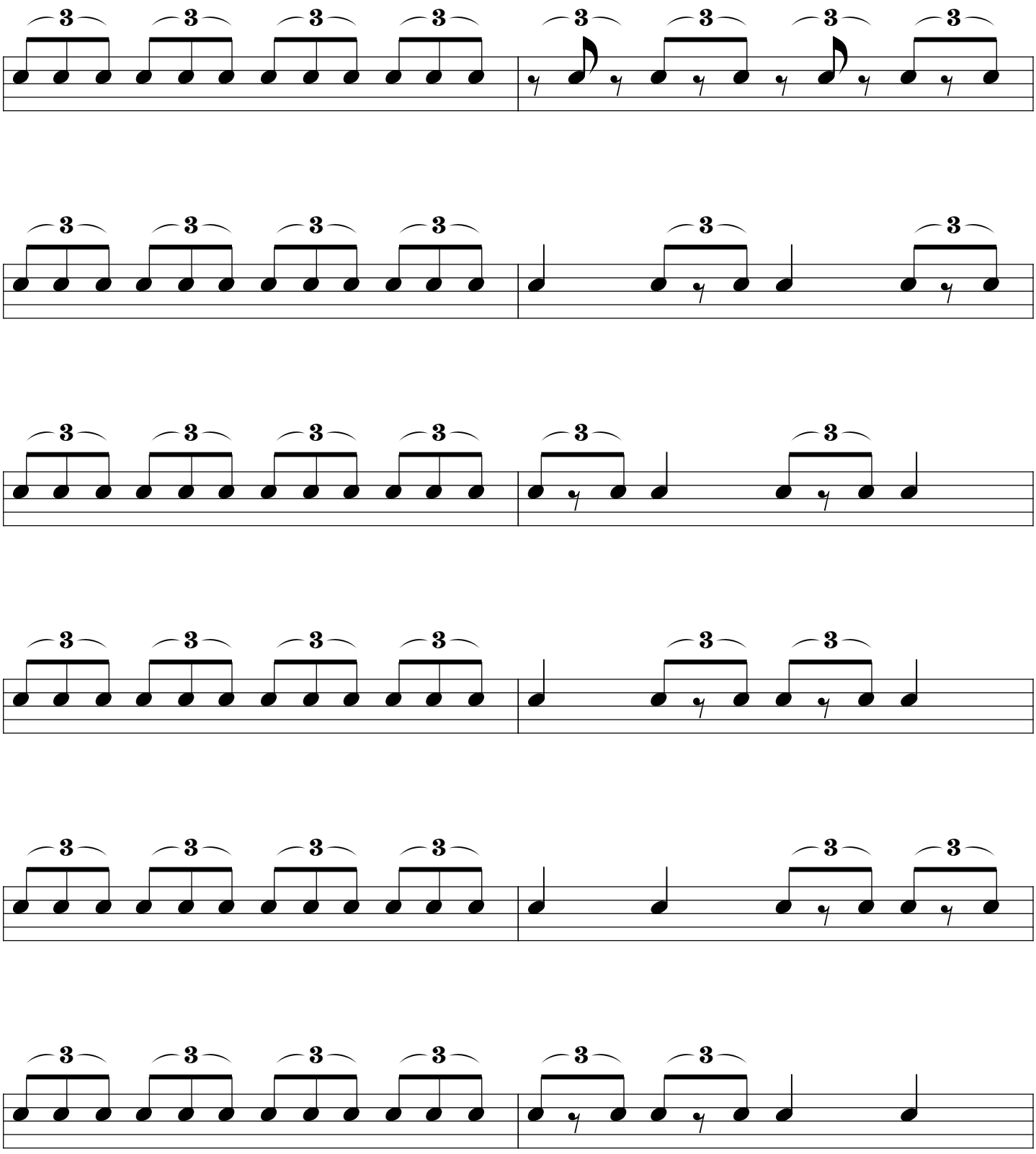
Tied 16th Notes

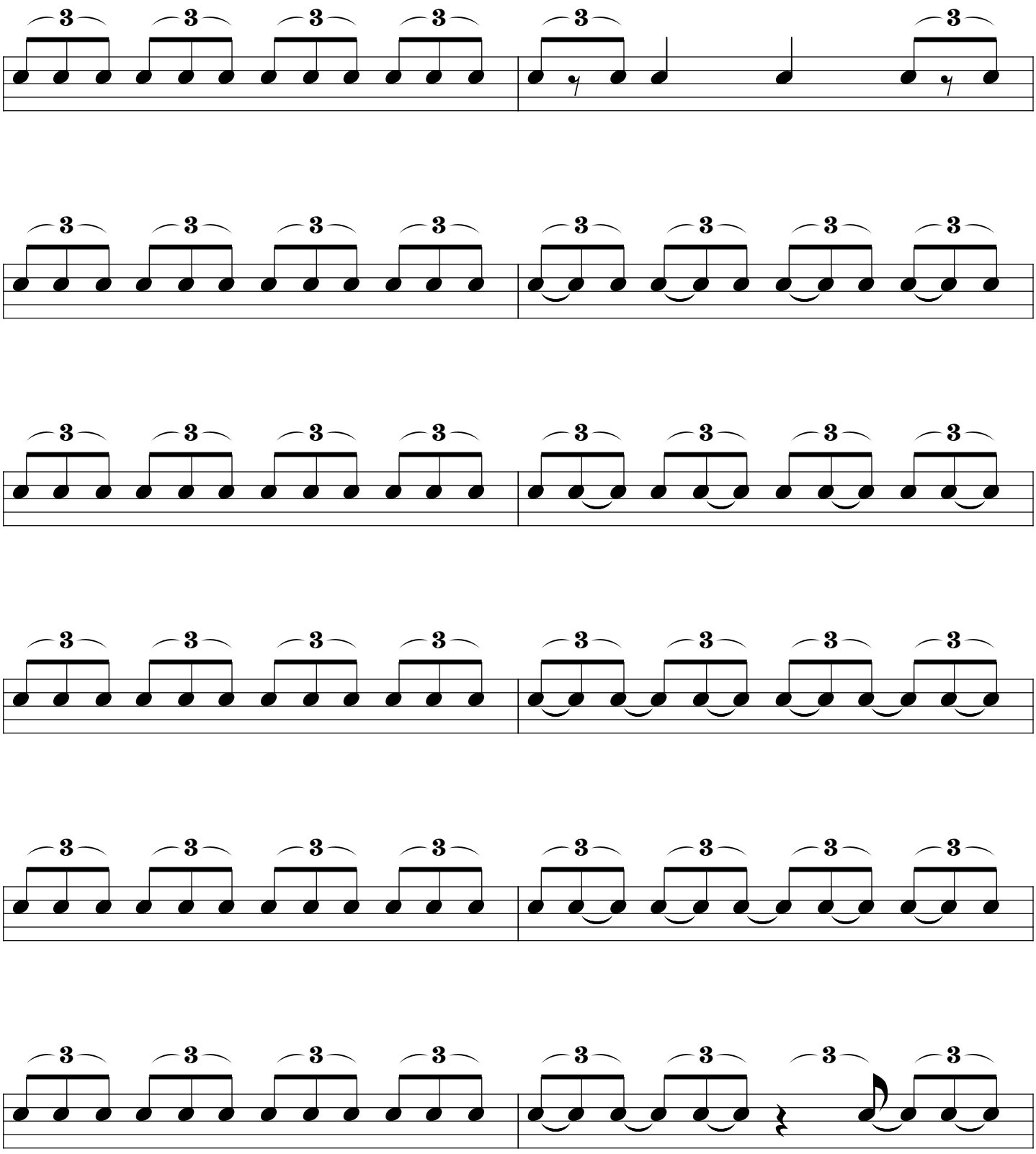




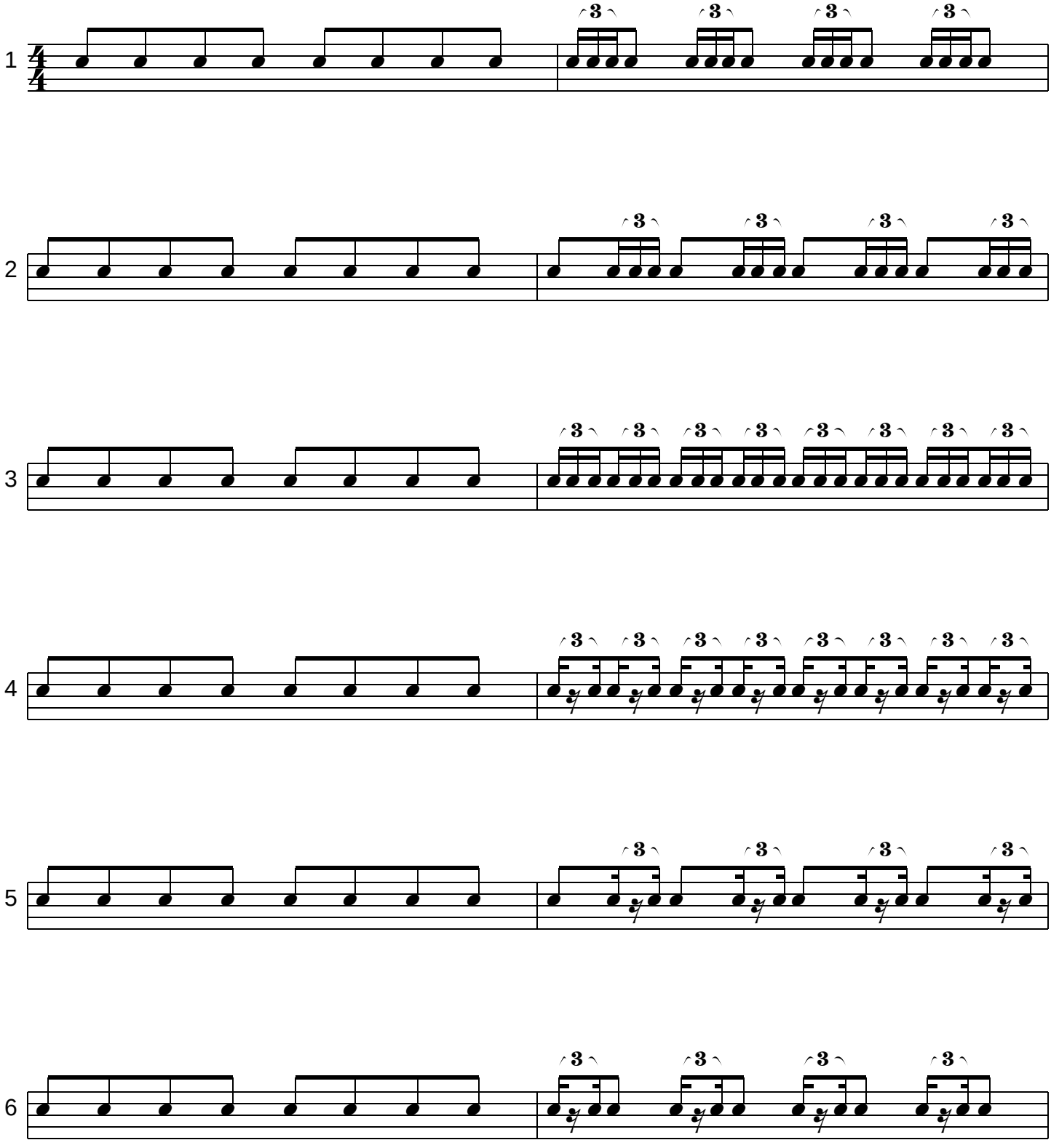
8th Note Triplets



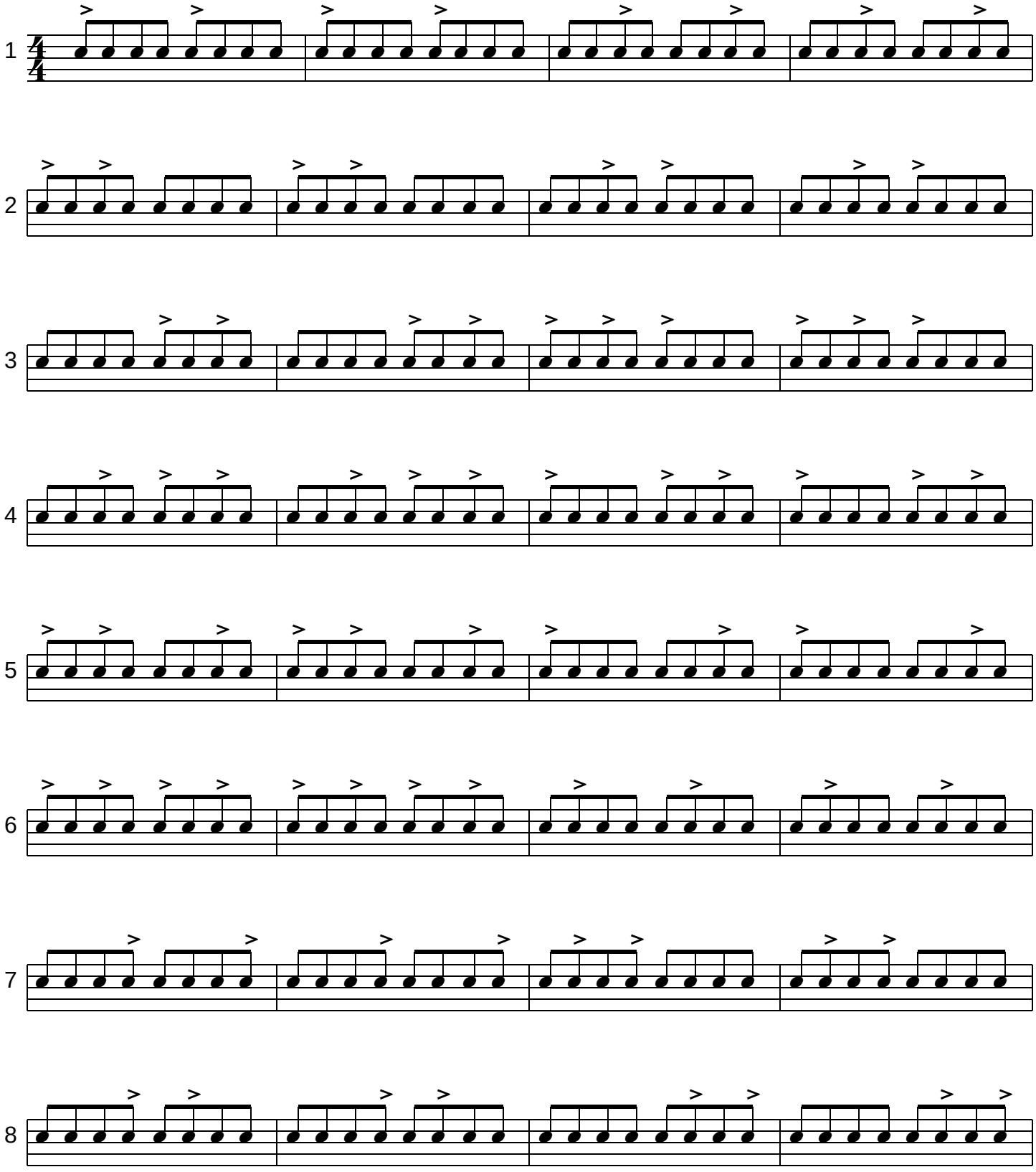


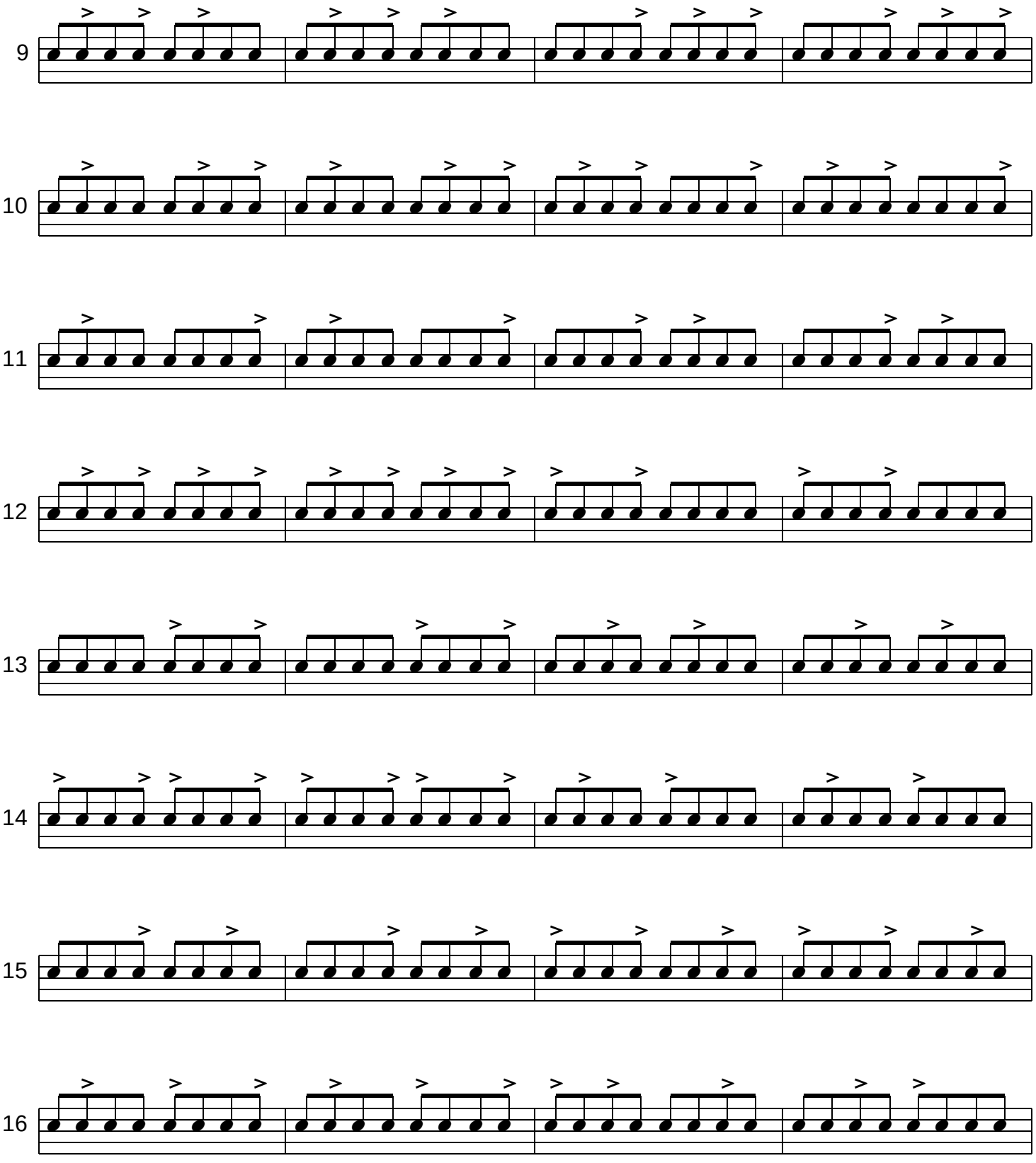


16th Note Triplets



Accented 8th Notes

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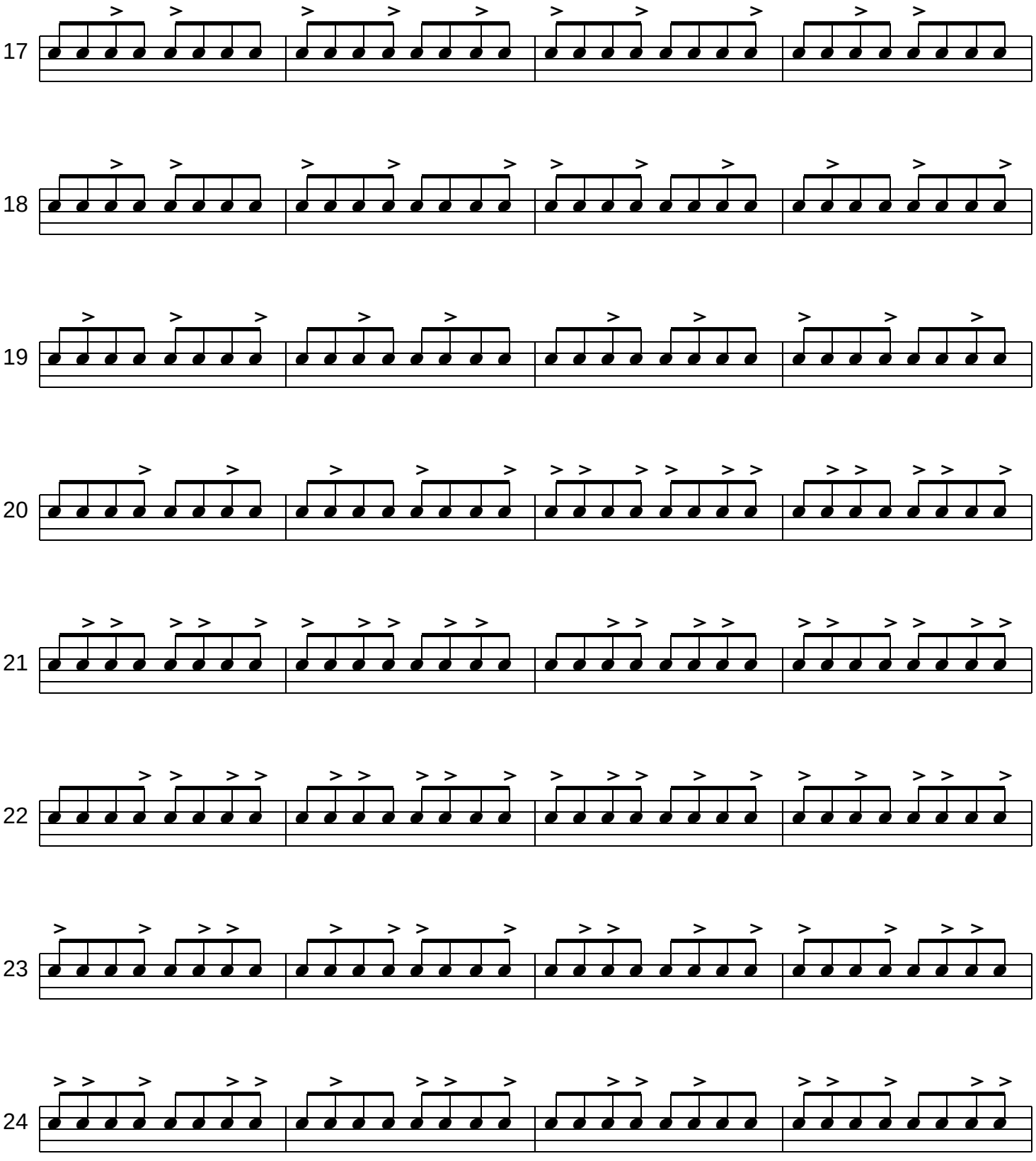
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Rhythmic Turnarounds

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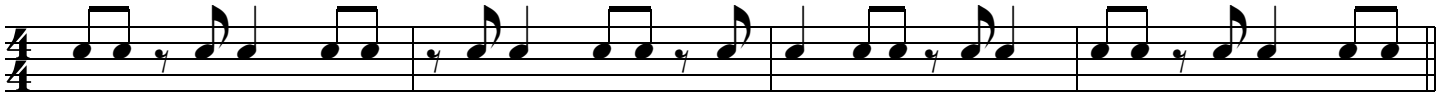

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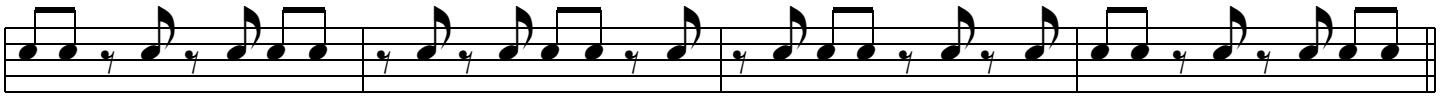

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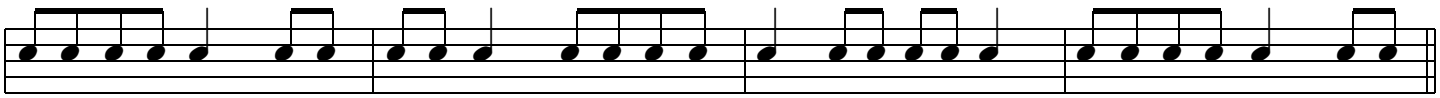

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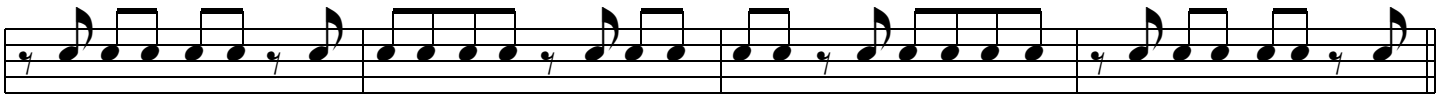

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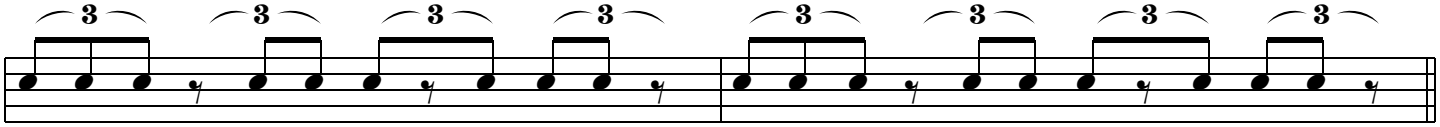

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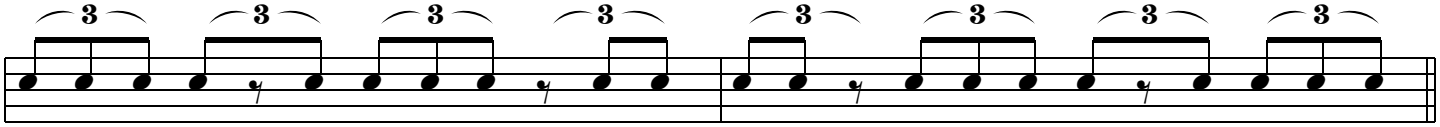

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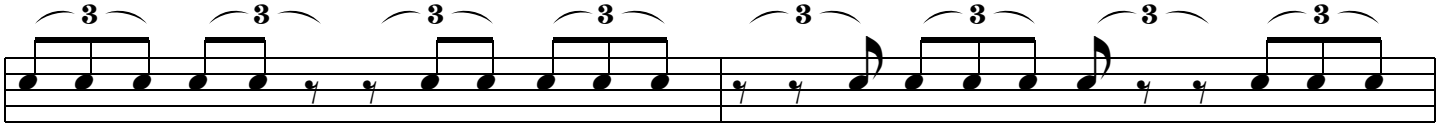
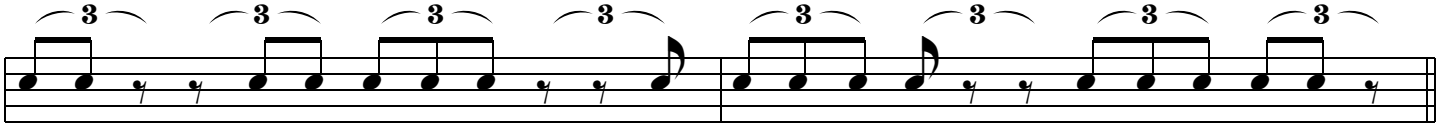
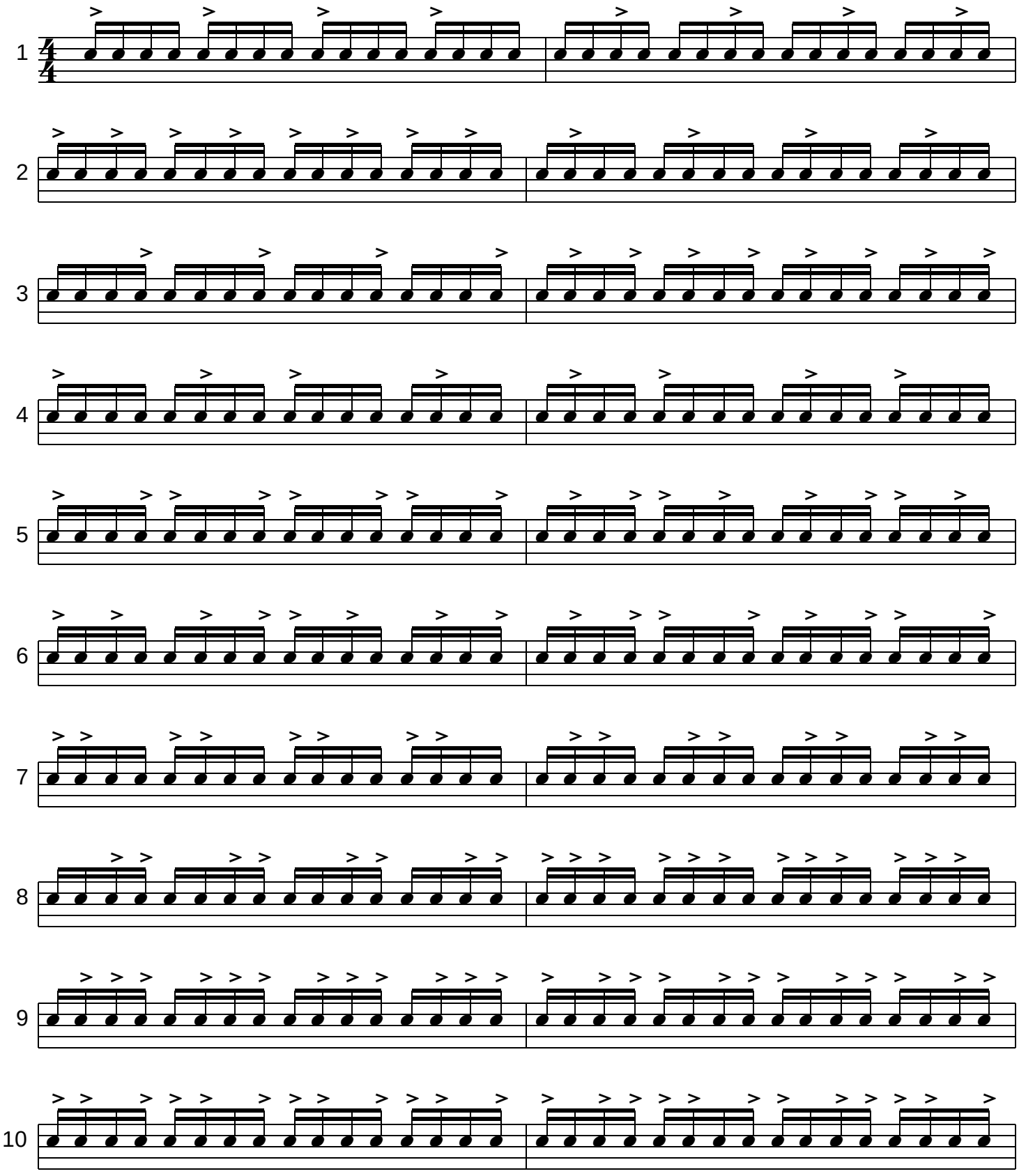
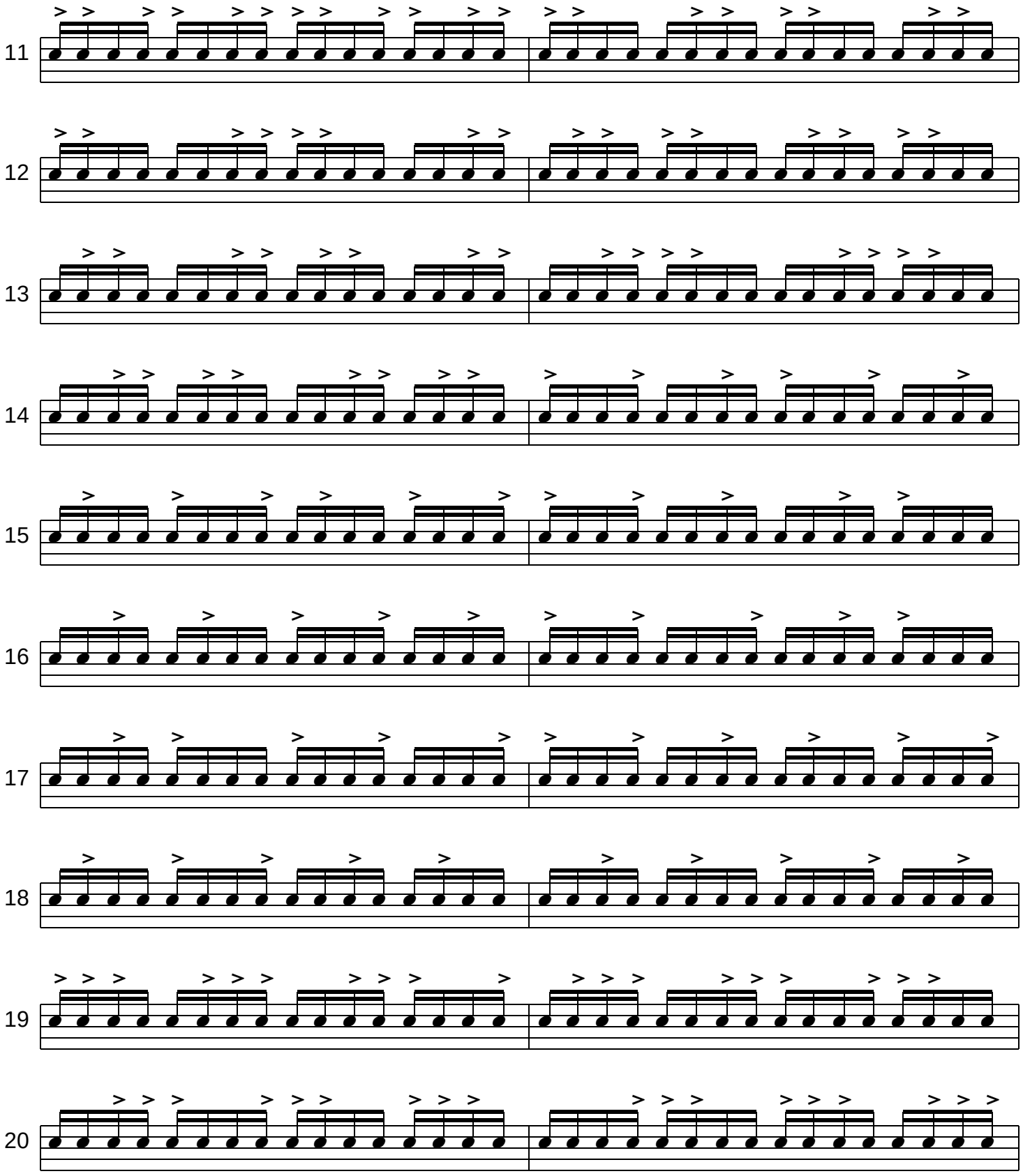




Accented 16th Notes

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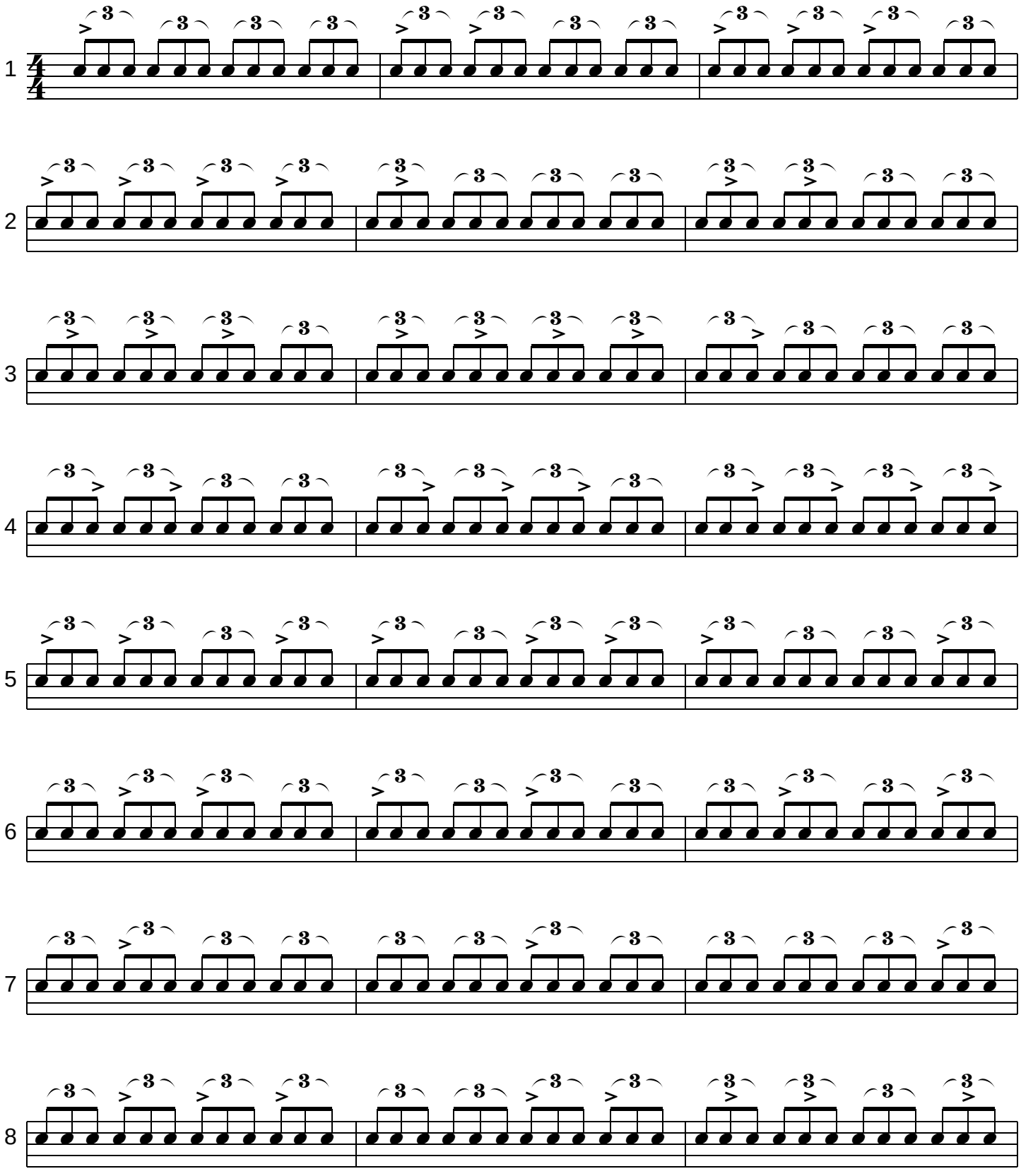
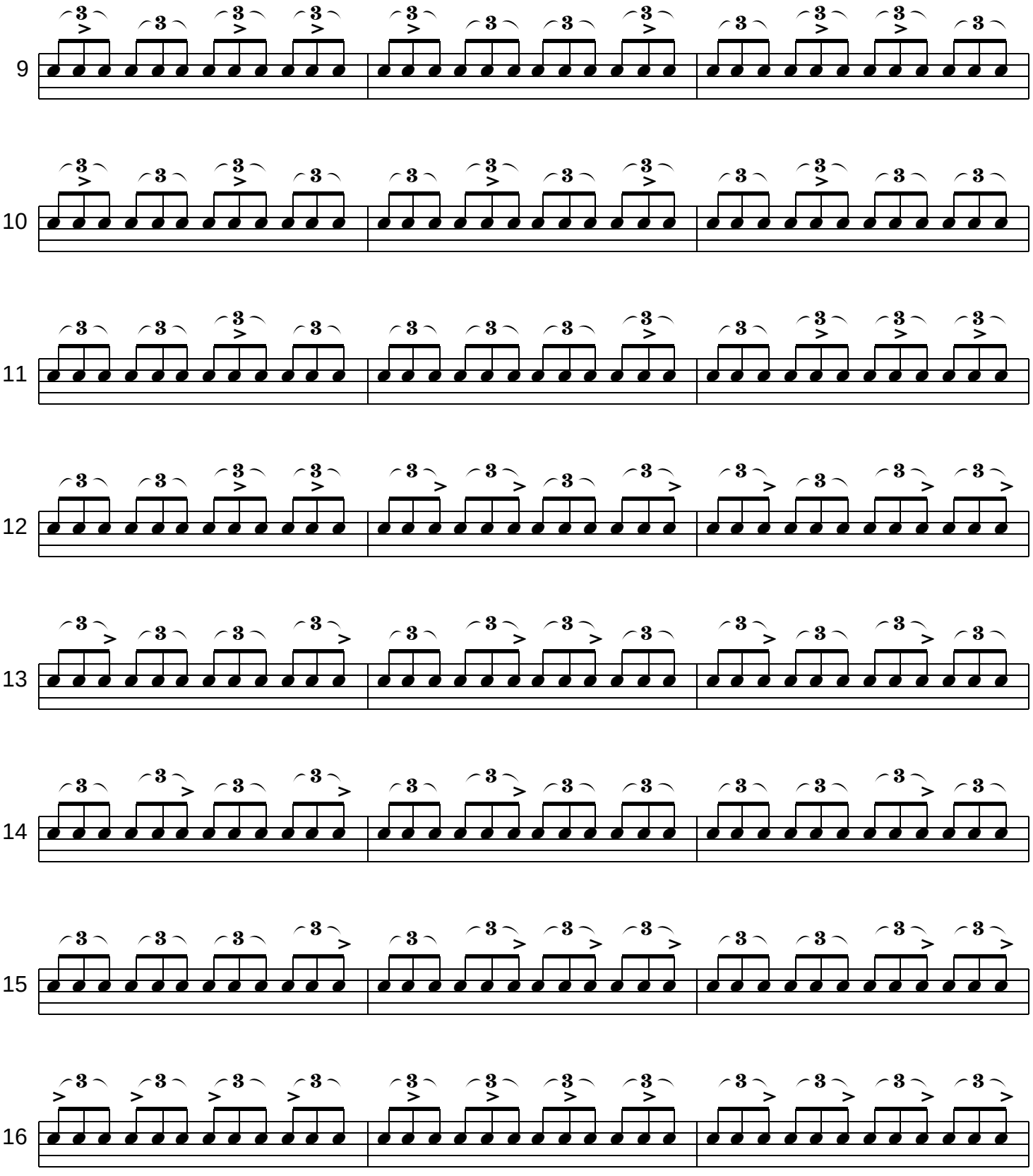
8th Note Triplets with Accents

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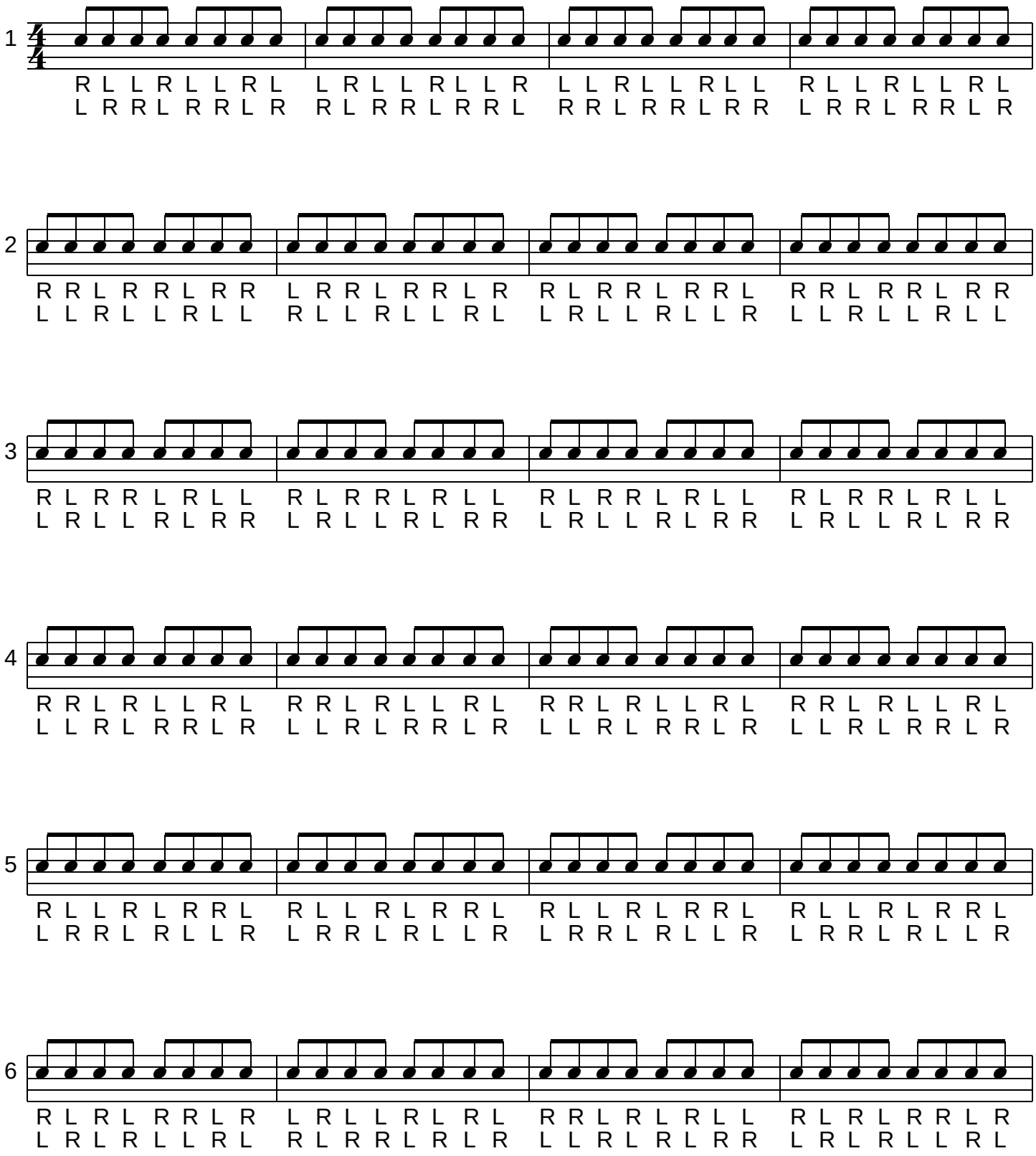
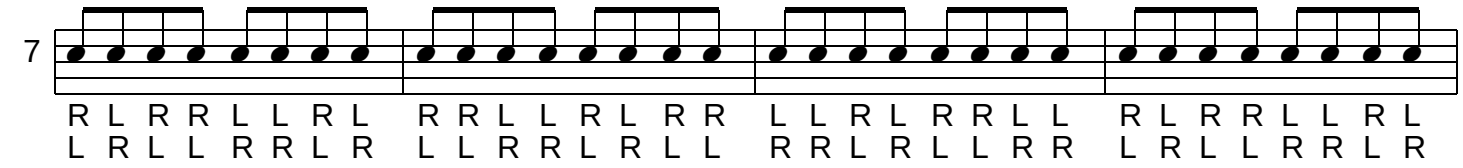
8th Note Stickings

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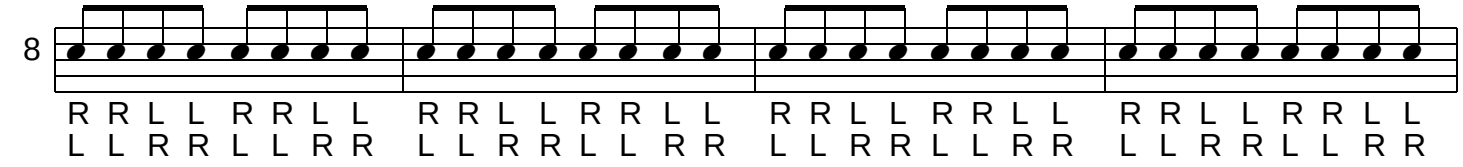
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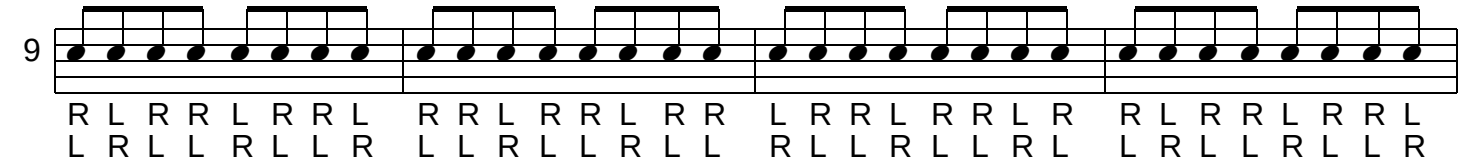
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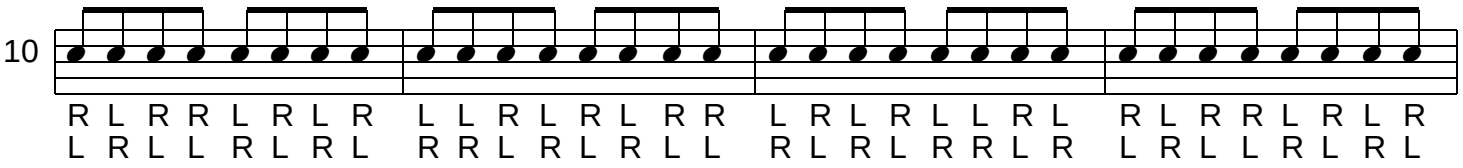
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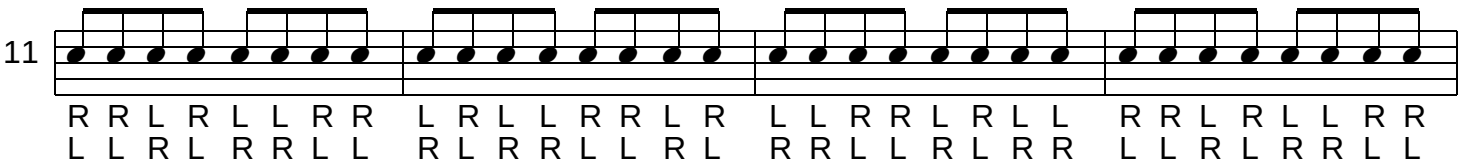
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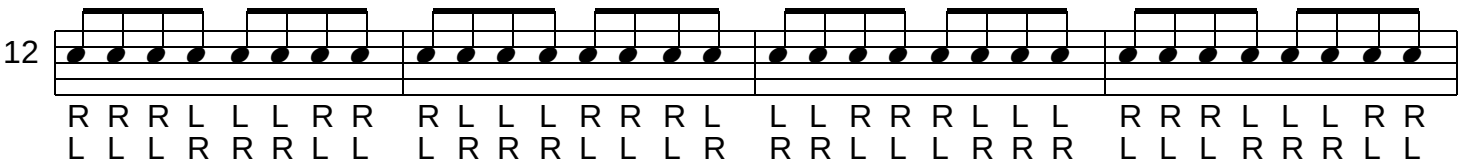
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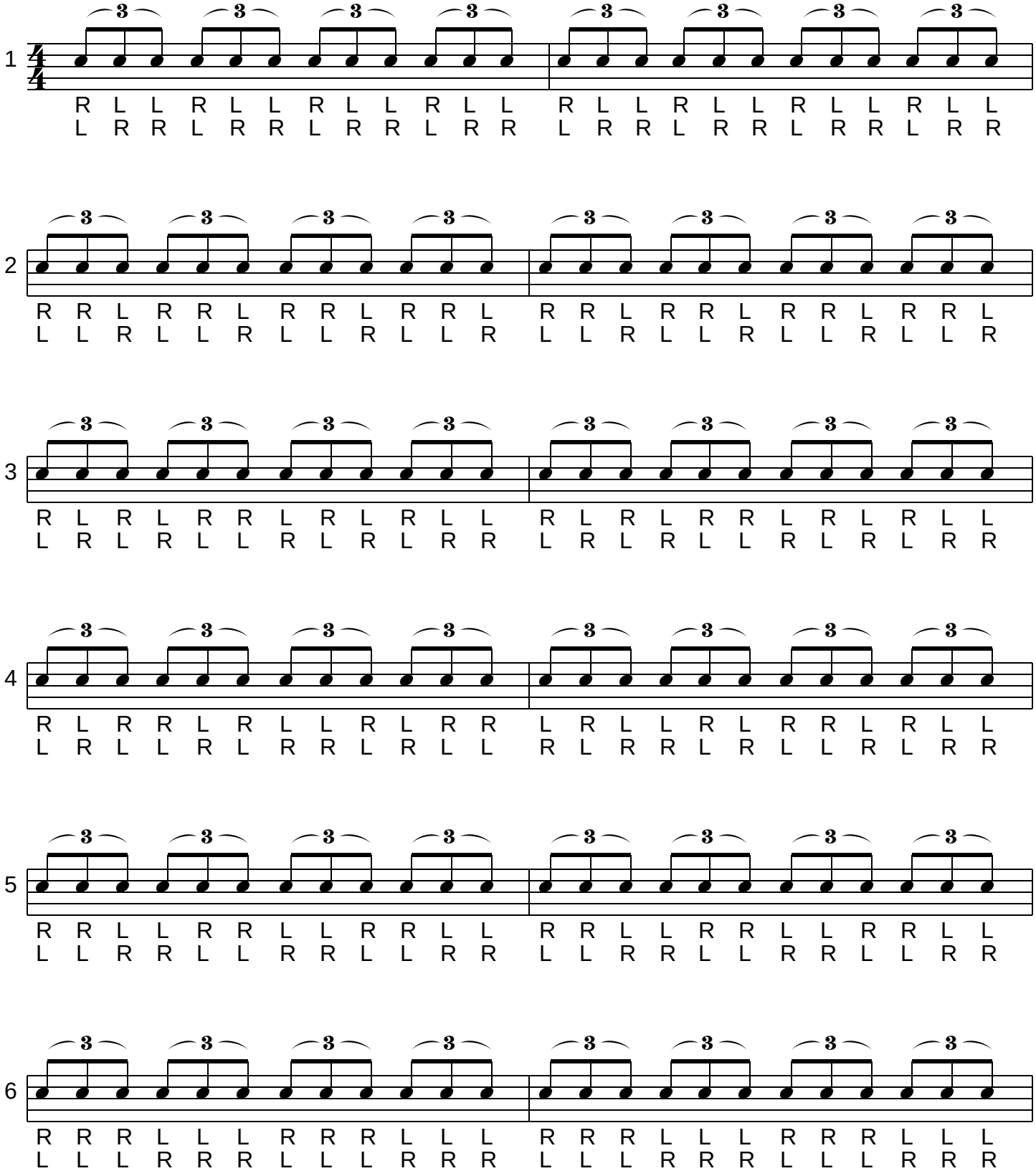
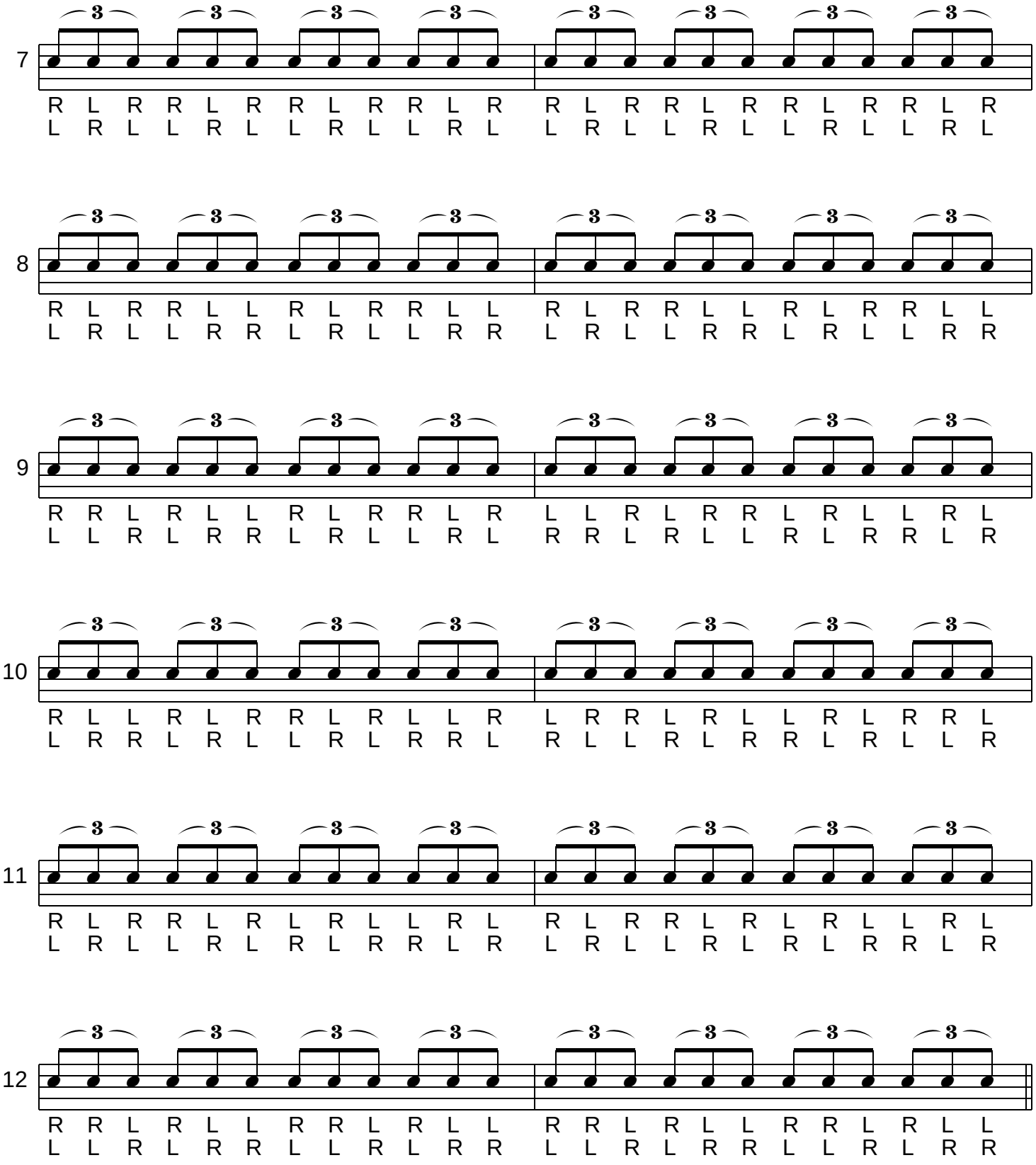
Triplet Stickings

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L R L L R R L R L L R R L R L L R R L R L L R R
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L L R L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L R L R R L R
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L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L R
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R L R R L R L R L L R L R L R R L R L R L L R L
L R L L R L R L R R L R L R L L R L R L R R L R
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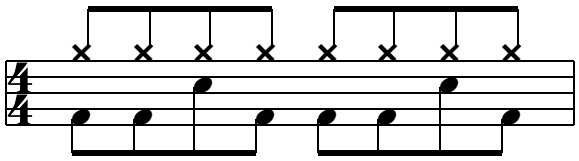
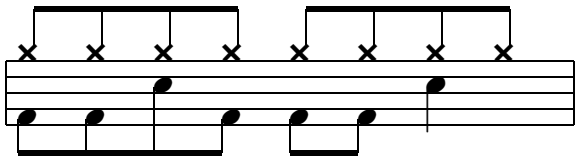
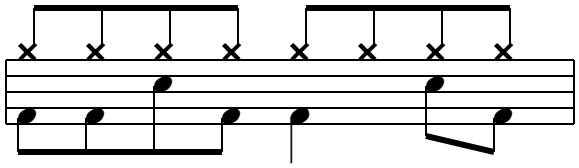
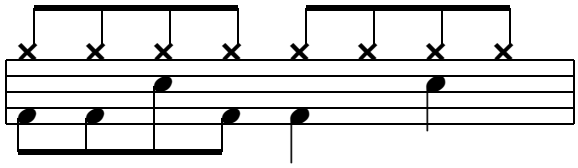
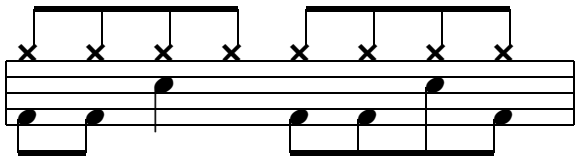
Rock Beats

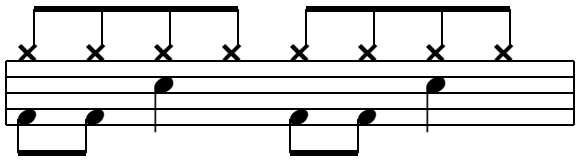
1 

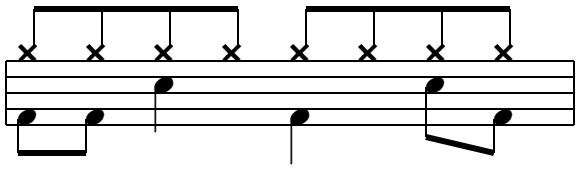
2 

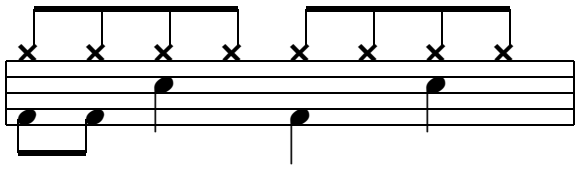
3 

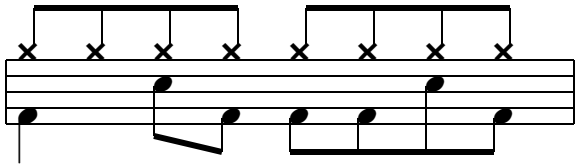
4 

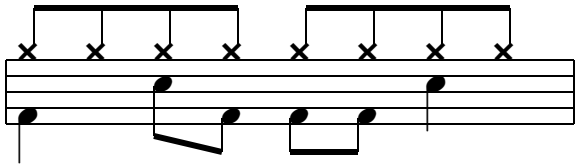
5 

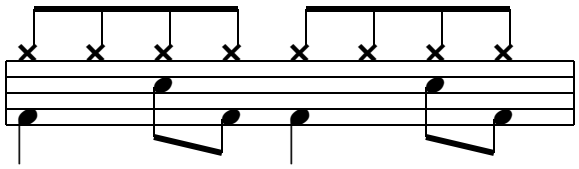
6 

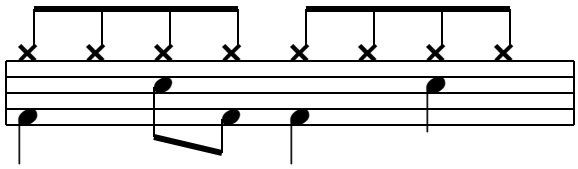
7 

8 

9 

10 

11 

12 

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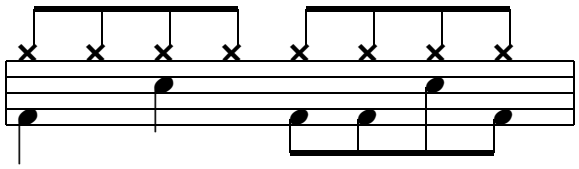

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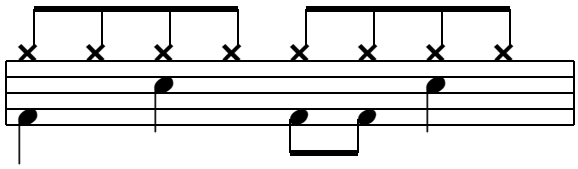

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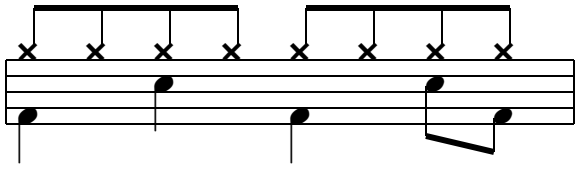

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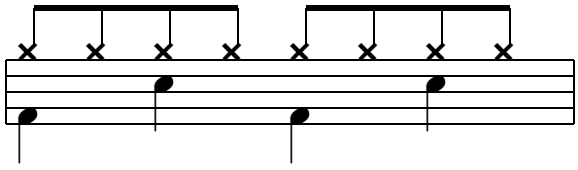

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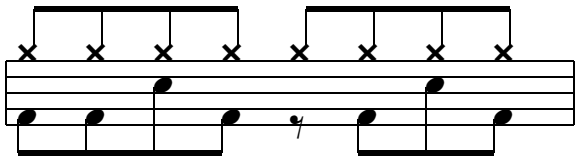

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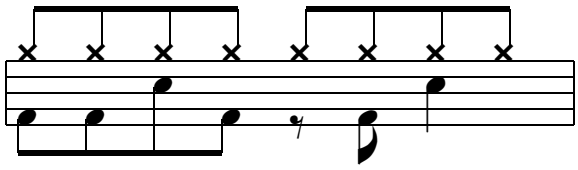

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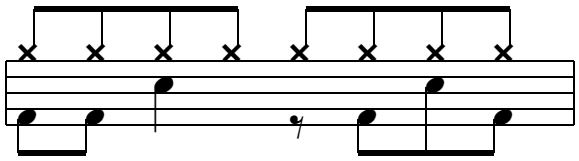

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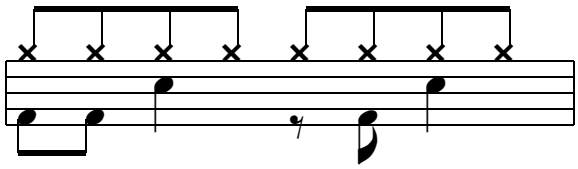

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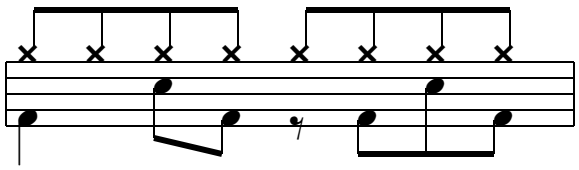

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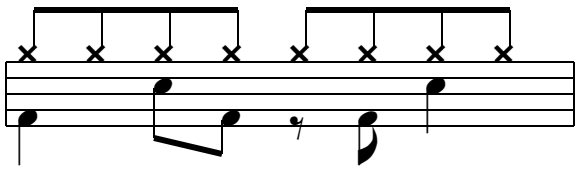

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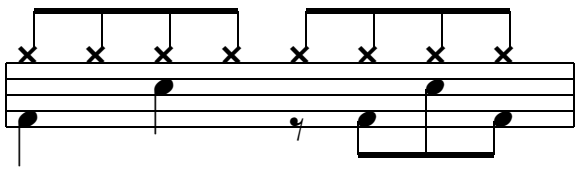

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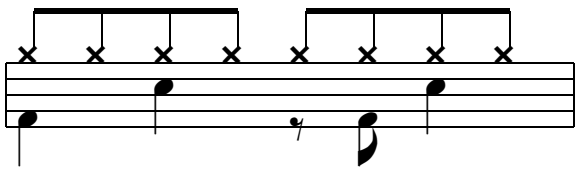

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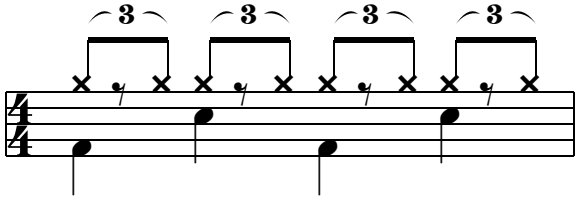

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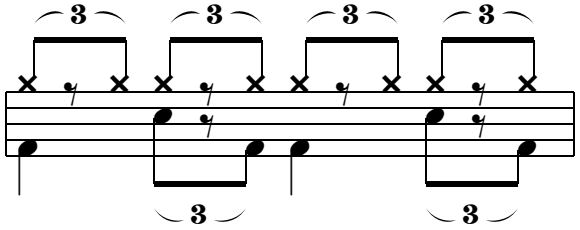

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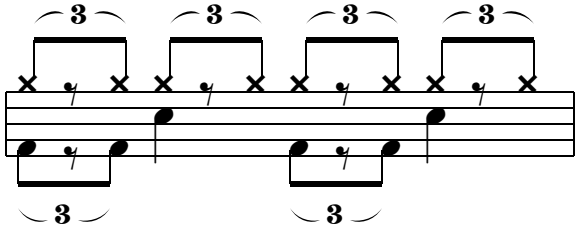

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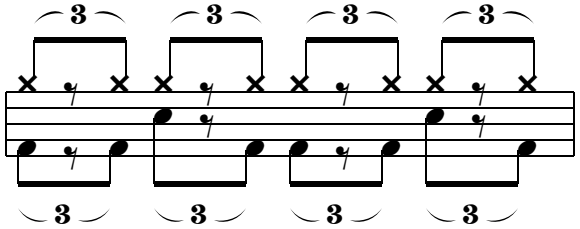

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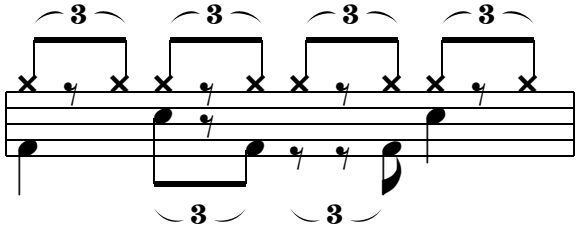

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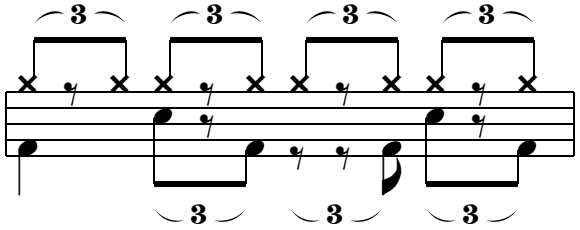

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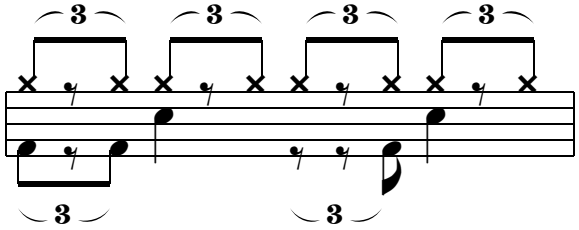

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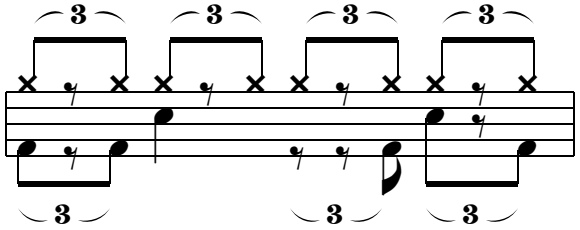

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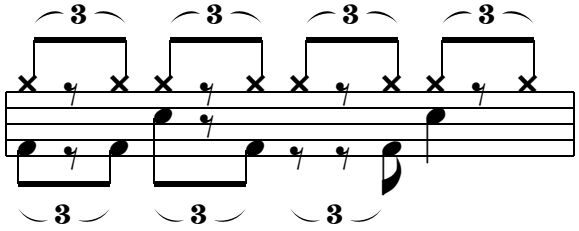

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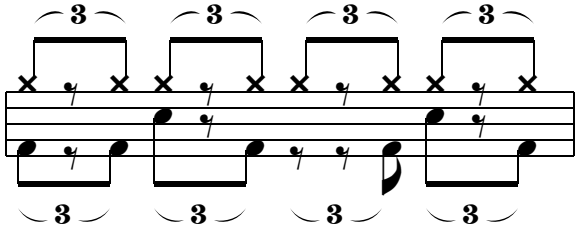

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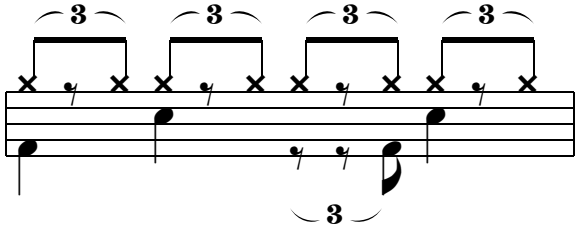

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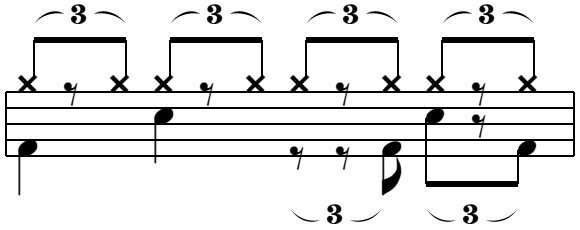

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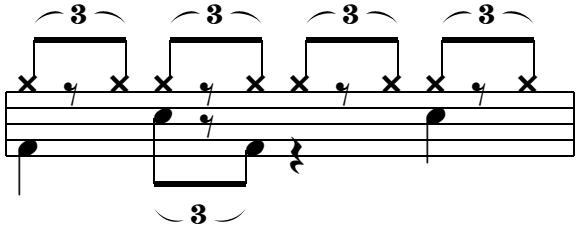

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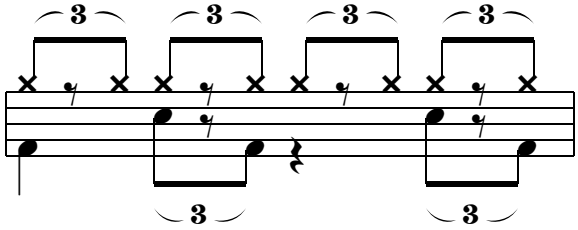

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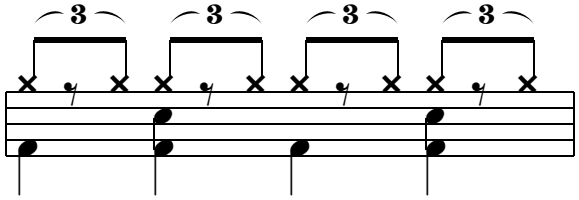

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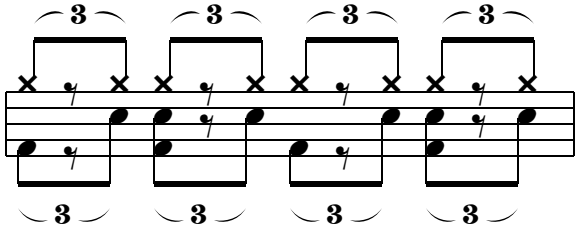

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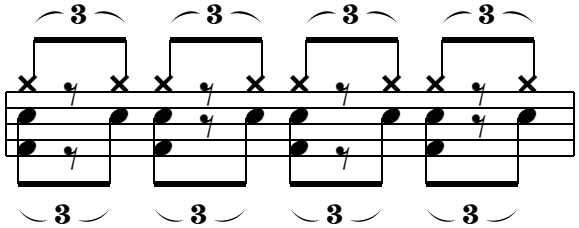

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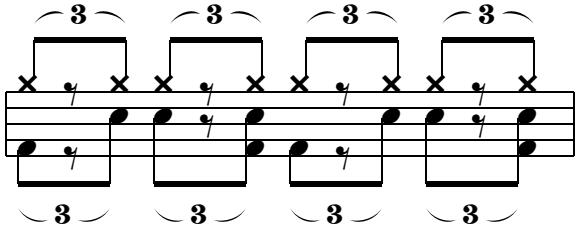

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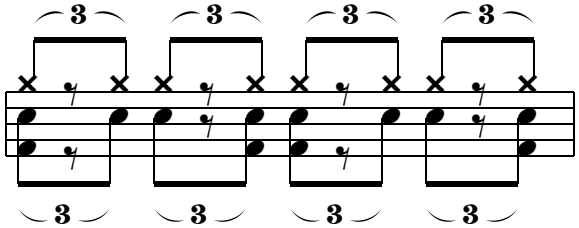

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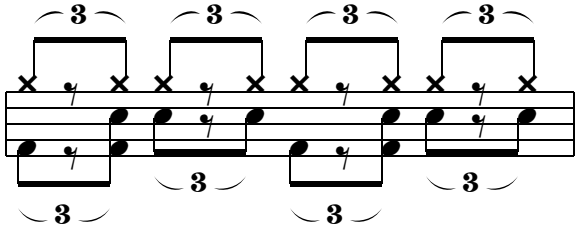

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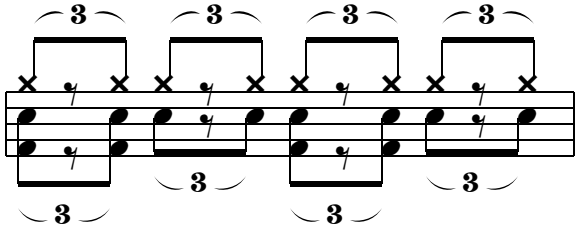

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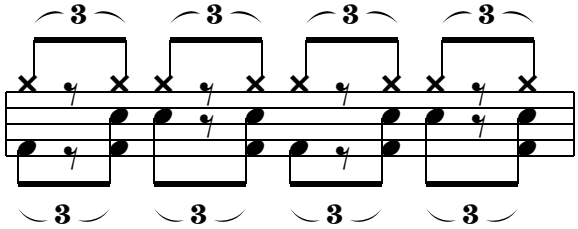

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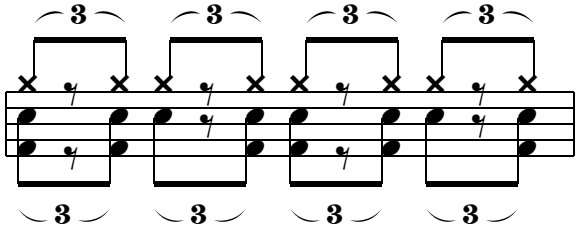

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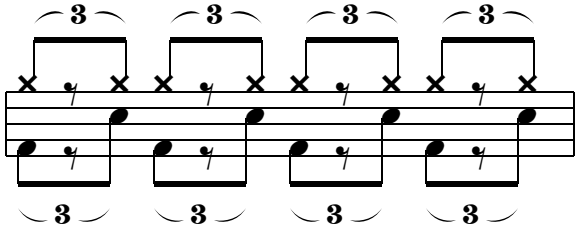
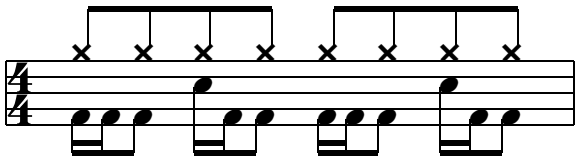
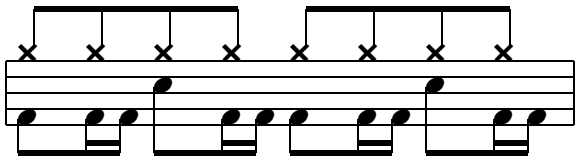
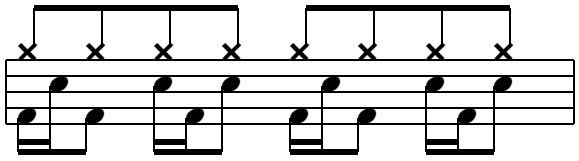
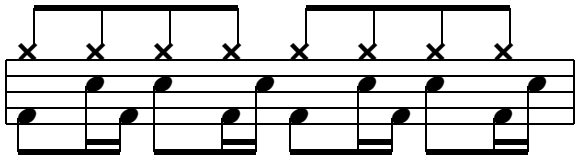


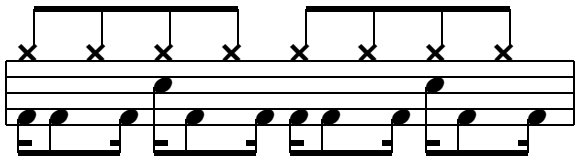
Funk Snare Drum/Bass Drum Patterns

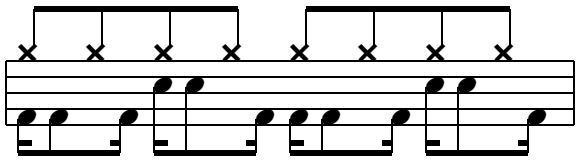
1 

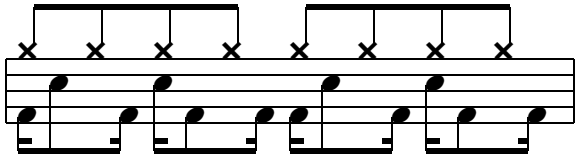
2 

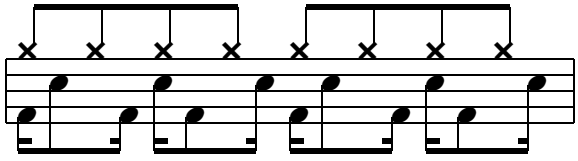
3 

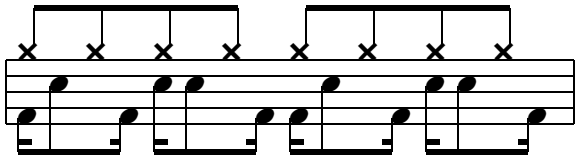
4 

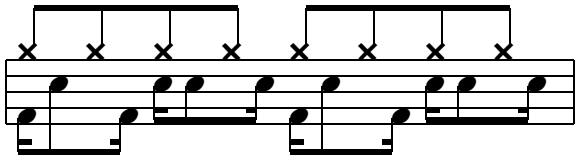
5 

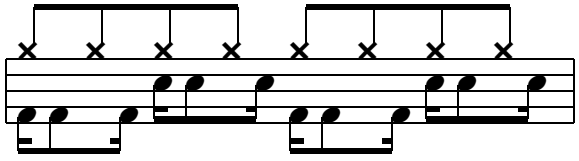
6 

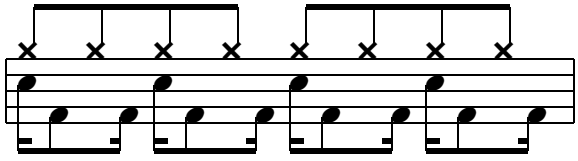
7 

8 

9 

10 

11 

12 

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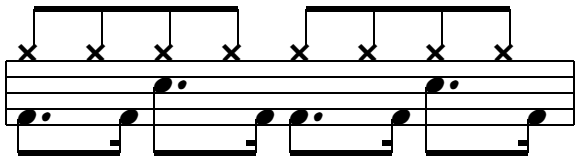

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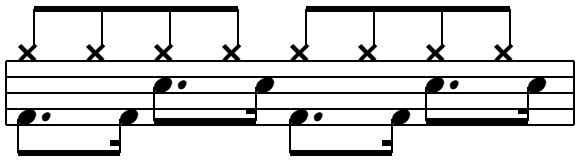

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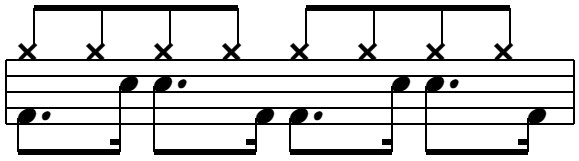

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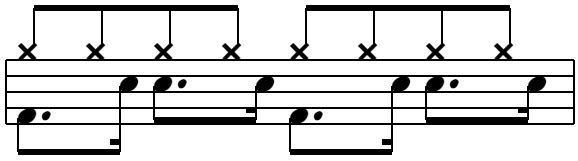

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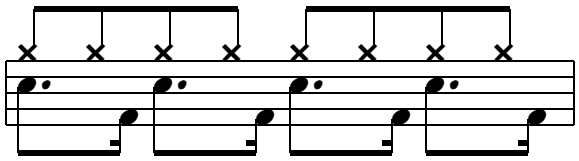

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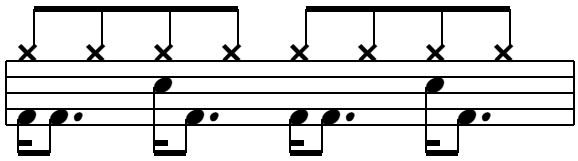

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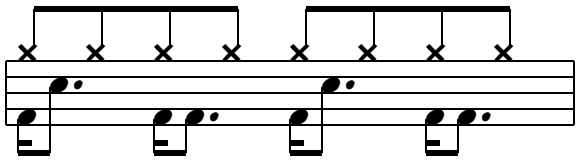

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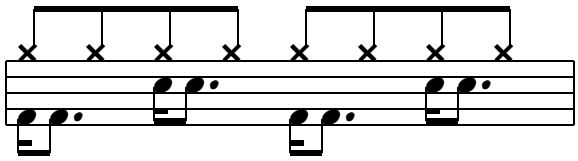

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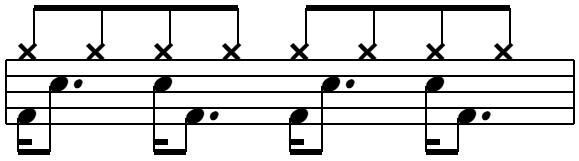

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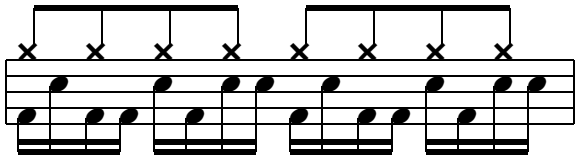

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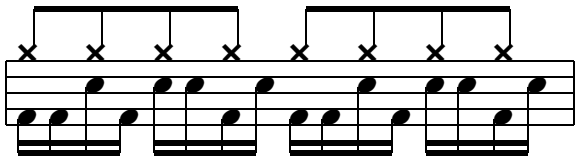

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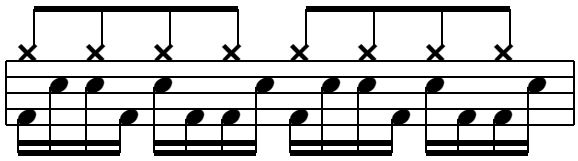
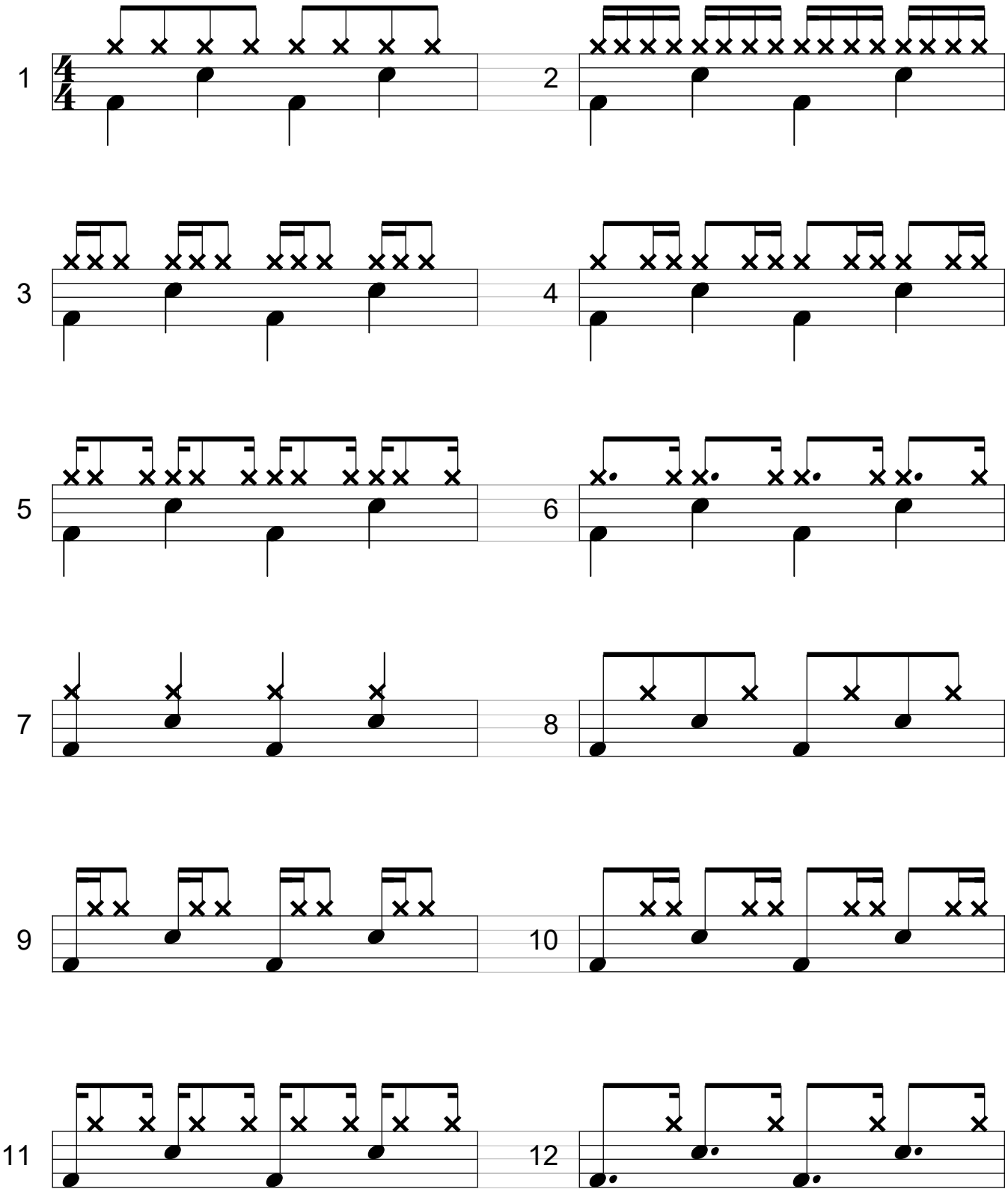


Funk Hi-Hat/Ride Patterns



About the Author

Lorne Kelly toured with Toronto-based Freedom/RCA Recording Artists Mondo Combo, and with Sneezy Waters. He performed at the Ottawa International Jazz, Blues and R&B Festivals and on CBC National Television and Radio. He shared the stage with Dan Akroyd, Stevie Ray Vaughan, The Platters, Doug And The Slugs, The Funk Brothers, Leahy and John Allan Cameron. Lorne appears on Wayne Eagles' critically acclaimed fusion CD *How's Now* available on Audiophile Imports. Lorne also performed on CDs by Country Music Hall Of Fame's Claudette Lefebvre, alternative rock singer Eloa and various film and TV soundtracks. With over 30 years playing and 25 years teaching experience, he taught drums for Carleton University's B. Mus. Program and for Algonquin College's Music and Audio specialty. Lorne maintained a private teaching studio in downtown Ottawa, Canada. He was a member of the Vic Firth Education Team and wrote for *Modern Drummer Magazine* (U.S.A.) and for *Drums Etc.* (Canada).

Lorne is the author of *Realtime Rhythms For Drummers (And Their Friends).* He had endorsement contracts with Pearl Drums, Vic Firth Drumsticks, Sabian Cymbals.

Illustration of the author: André Séquin

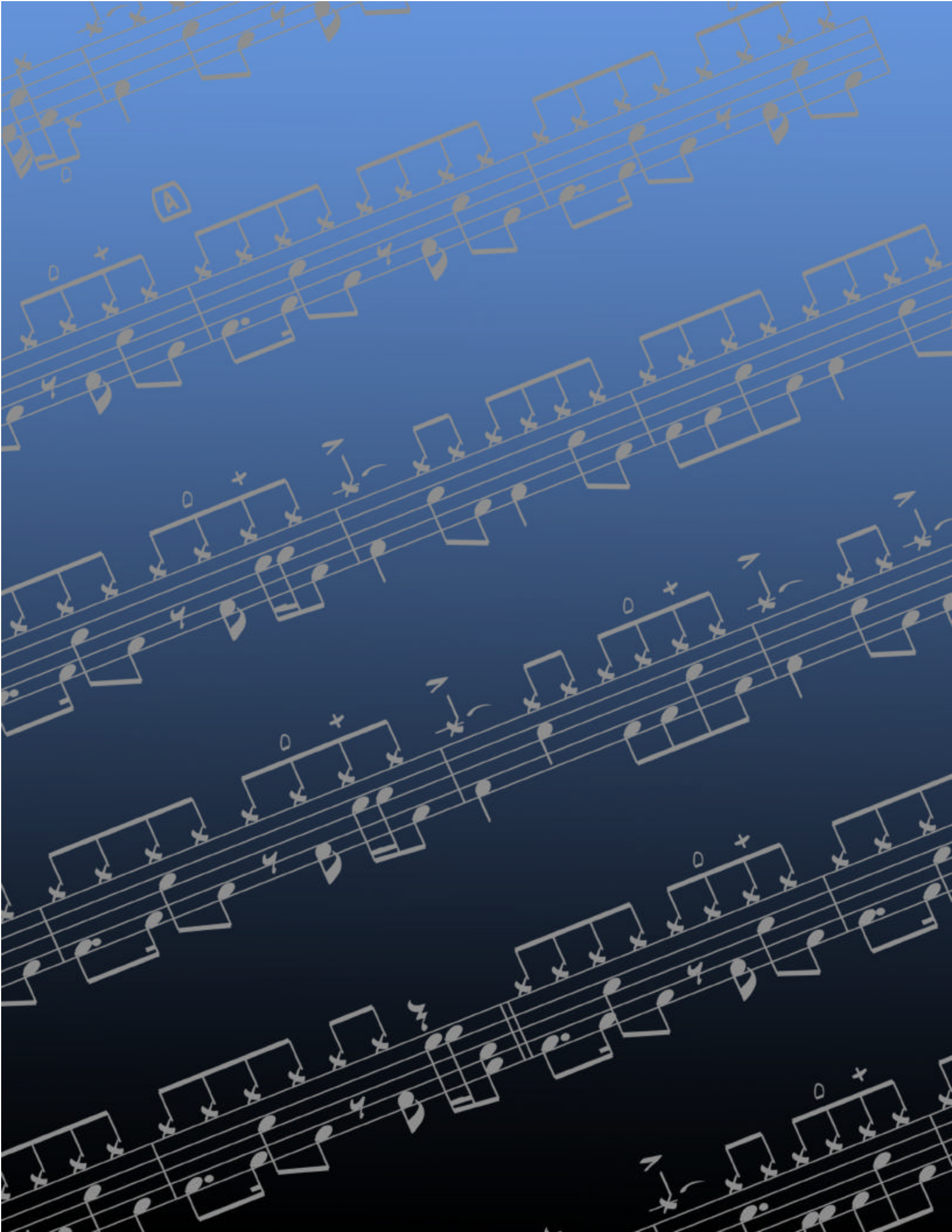
About this Book

Lorne Kelly passed away during the late stages of writing this book. I have completed it on his behalf. I believe I have correctly captured Lorne's vision and content and that I was in a unique position to do so.

Lorne was my drum teacher for many years and we became good friends. When he first envisioned this book he wanted to capture his ideas on the computer using a score editing program. He tried several of the most popular score editors on the market to write drum transcriptions but became frustrated with them. He mentioned this to me and asked if I could help. At first I thought it was just his unfamiliarity with these programs that caused the frustration, but the more I used them myself the more I also felt they were not well suited to his way of writing transcriptions. Since my day job was that of professor of computer science at Carleton University in Ottawa, Lorne challenged me to write a score editor that would work more "naturally". Naively, I accepted the challenge.

With the help of my 4th year honours project students we created a prototype score editor (called Arborsong) and Lorne was the guinea pig on which it was tested. He used it to write a series of articles on famous Canadian drummers which included transcriptions of their playing. These articles were published in the *Drums Etc.* music trade magazine. Each article required new features be added to the score editor and we would work together to ensure that the resulting transcriptions were camera ready for publication.

Lorne also used Arborsong to write this book and with each page he requested changes to its features. He would email me each new page and explain what problems he was having and how he wanted the page to look. We would have many discussions on what the results should look like. As such, I had the unique opportunity to work with Lorne on almost every page he wrote. I believe I've presented for you exactly what he intended.

Lorne was a dedicated teacher and an inspiration to me. It was his wish that this material be made accessible to whoever might find it useful.

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