



YOUR GUIDE TO 5 POWERFUL POPPER ETUDES

[LEARN MORE AT TONEBASE.CO](https://tonebase.co)

INTRODUCTION

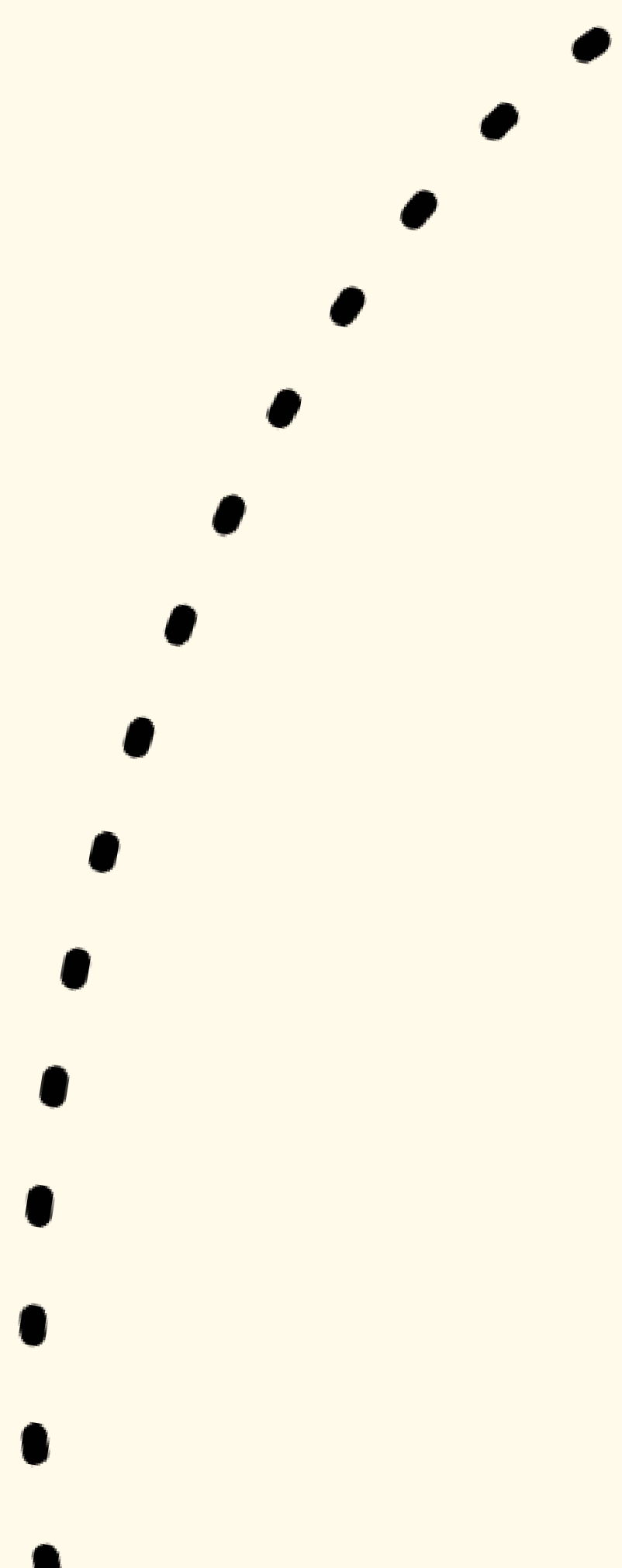
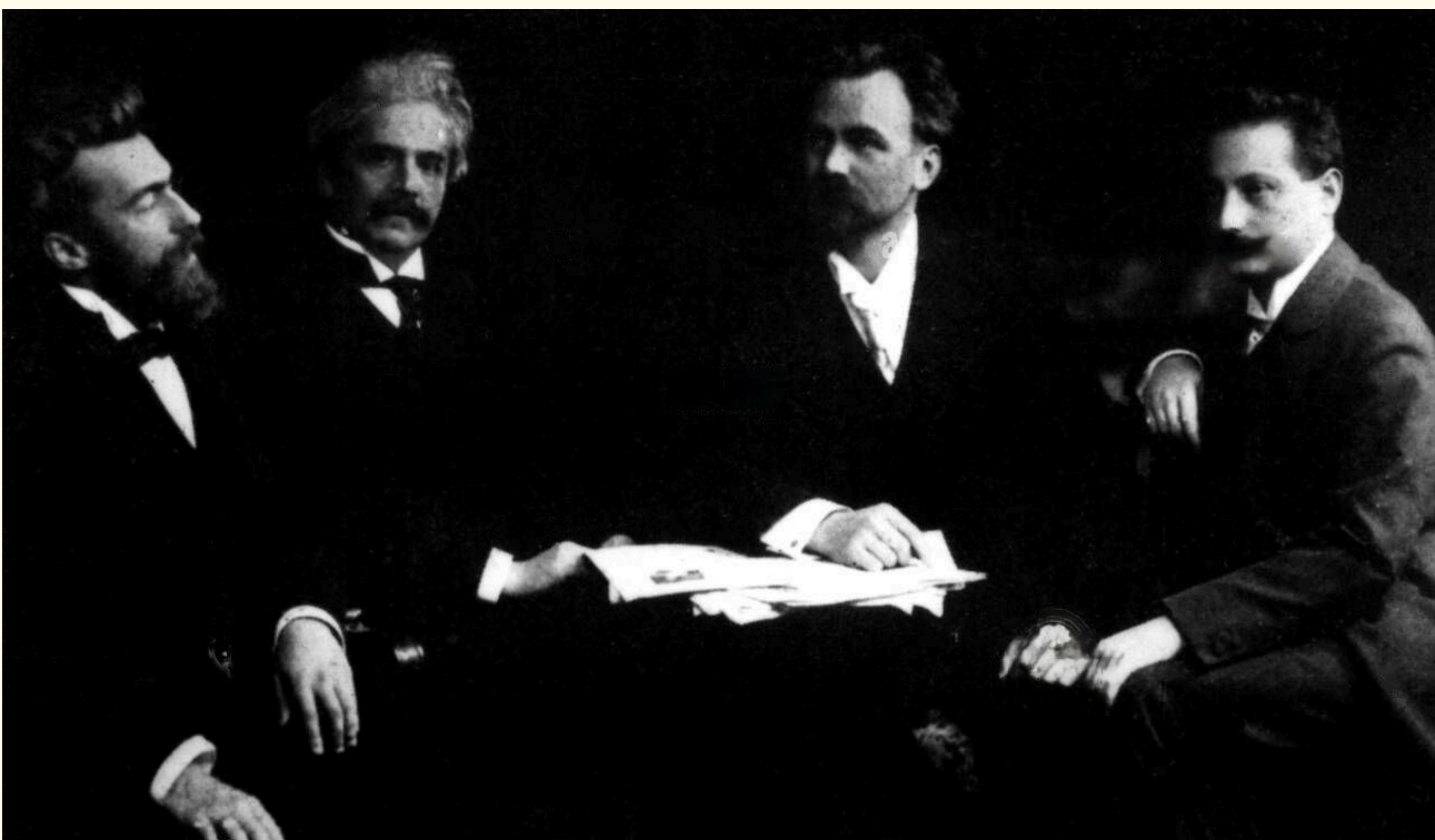
David Popper (1843–1913) was one of the most important figures in cello playing. Known in his time as a virtuoso cellist, he played principal cello in the Hungarian and Vienna State Operas, including as first cellist under Mahler. Mahler believed Popper was the greatest cellist he had heard, and Popper was legendary for his incredible dexterity and virtuosity on the cello. Popper knew all the great composers of the day, such as Brahms, Liszt, Wagner, Grieg, and Tchaikovsky.



Popper wrote many pieces for cello himself – concerti, short pieces, and virtuoso works. But of course, nothing is more legendary (or infamous!) than his 40 études for cello, which he called the “High School of Cello Playing.” These 40 studies are an incredible tour through all the difficulties of cello playing—spiccato, legato, shifting, and complicated bowing techniques. They are musically fascinating and technically difficult, with a style all their own. The great Hungarian cellist Janos Starker, whose own teacher Adolf Schiffer was a student of Popper, said that these Popper études teach, better than anything else, “the geography of the cello.”

The tonebase cello team has selected the five most crucial Popper études from the book of 40, and we have written some practice comments and guidelines to help you. Remember that studying this fantastic book of repertoire is a long process. Whether you are just beginning your Popper journey or have been working on these studies for twenty years, work slowly, calmly, and methodically. Improvement will come gradually as you train your ear. Don’t forget to take a break if you feel stiff or tired, record yourself often, and play for your friends! As usual, the tonebase cello team is here to answer any questions you may have. Don’t hesitate to reach out!

Jeno Hubay and David Popper Quartet



ETUDE NO. 2

This is a classic Popper étude for practicing shifting, string crossing, and bow division at **the same time**. The final result should be smooth and lyrical, and you should take Popper's own direction "gently sliding" literally! Here are some things to keep in mind when practicing:

1. Try to maintain a beauty of tone throughout. One way to approach this is by practicing with shorter slurs, such as two beats per bow or even one beat (four notes), to get a beautiful sound.
2. Leave early for shifts! This is a common theme for many Popper studies. Especially when we have long shifts, leave early, and shift in the most relaxed manner possible.
3. Prepare string crossings! We can often lose a lot of time crossing strings if we do not prepare, and with so many notes to fit under a slur, we can't afford to lose any precious bow. So prepare and anticipate, which means getting the bow as near as possible to the next string you're going to play so it is ready to go.



Popper and his students

Etude No. 2

from 40 Etudes: High School of Cello Playing, Op. 73

David Popper

(1843-1913)

Andante

p with very steady bow

3

5

7

9

gently sliding

G-----D----- G-----D----- G-----D----- G-----D----- A-----

11

13

Popper – Etude No. 2

15

mf

17

V

19

f

21

G----- D----- A-----

23

f *p*

25

p

27

f *p*

Popper – Etude No. 2

29

Measures 29 and 30 of the piece. Measure 29 contains a triplet of eighth notes (F#4, G4, A4) followed by a quarter note (B4), a quarter note (A4), a quarter note (G4), a quarter note (F#4), a quarter note (E4), a quarter note (D4), a quarter note (C4), and a quarter note (B3). Measure 30 contains a quarter note (B3), a quarter note (A3), a quarter note (G3), a quarter note (F#3), a quarter note (E3), a quarter note (D3), a quarter note (C3), a quarter note (B2), a quarter note (A2), and a quarter note (G2). Both measures are marked with a '3' above the first note of the triplet and a '2' above the second note of the triplet. A slur covers the entire measure 29, and another slur covers the entire measure 30.

31

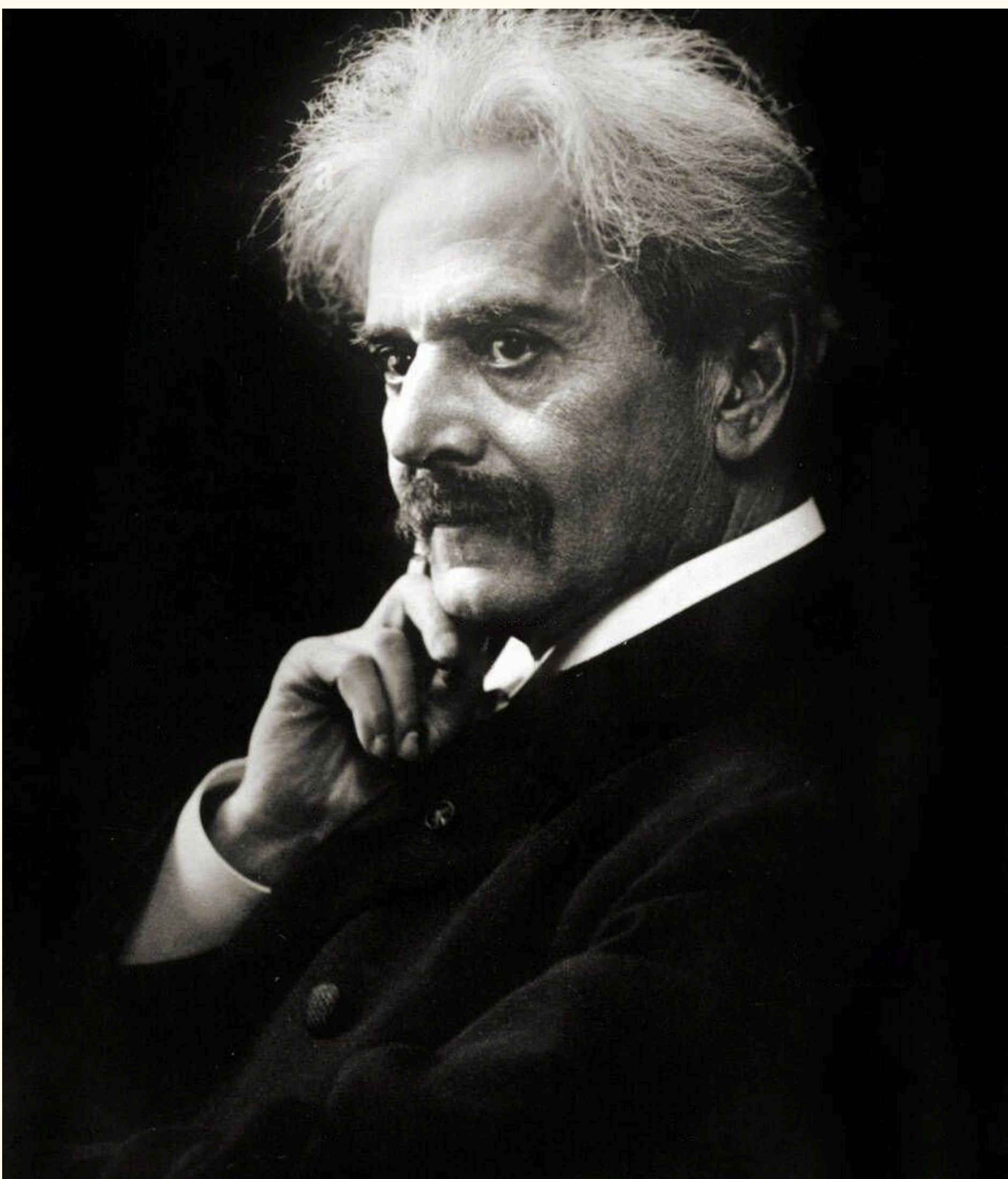
Measures 31, 32, 33, and 34 of the piece. Measure 31 contains a triplet of eighth notes (F#4, G4, A4) followed by a quarter note (B4), a quarter note (A4), a quarter note (G4), a quarter note (F#4), a quarter note (E4), a quarter note (D4), a quarter note (C4), and a quarter note (B3). Measure 32 contains a quarter note (B3), a quarter note (A3), a quarter note (G3), a quarter note (F#3), a quarter note (E3), a quarter note (D3), a quarter note (C3), a quarter note (B2), a quarter note (A2), and a quarter note (G2). Measure 33 contains a quarter note (B3), a quarter note (A3), a quarter note (G3), a quarter note (F#3), a quarter note (E3), a quarter note (D3), a quarter note (C3), a quarter note (B2), a quarter note (A2), and a quarter note (G2). Measure 34 contains a quarter note (B3), a quarter note (A3), a quarter note (G3), a quarter note (F#3), a quarter note (E3), a quarter note (D3), a quarter note (C3), a quarter note (B2), a quarter note (A2), and a quarter note (G2). Both measures are marked with a '3' above the first note of the triplet and a '2' above the second note of the triplet. A slur covers the entire measure 31, and another slur covers the entire measure 32. A slur covers the entire measure 33, and another slur covers the entire measure 34. The piece ends with a double bar line.

pp

ETUDE NO. 9

This is one of the more difficult études in the book, but if you practice methodically, it will get easier with time. A good general rule is any time we are playing in thirds, sixths, and octaves—play the lower note slightly stronger than the upper one! This helps keep our sense of pitch and is more pleasing to the ear. Here are some things to remember when practicing:

1. Practice each line separately to develop the muscle memory of the distances and get the melodic shape in your ear.
2. Try to vibrate to keep the left hand loose! Especially on longer-duration notes, adding a little vibrato can be very useful to relax the left hand and wrist.
3. Play as legato as possible, connect all bow changes, and play out all shifts. One of the best ways to learn how to play legato thirds is by not hiding the shifts with the bow. It might not be pretty at first, but your ear will be trained faster and more accurately by audibly playing through the shift.



LEARN MORE AT [TONEBASE.CO](https://tonebase.co)

Etude No. 9

from 40 Etudes: High School of Cello Playing, Op. 73

David Popper

(1843-1913)

Andante sostenuto

The musical score for Etude No. 9 is written for cello in 2/4 time, marked 'Andante sostenuto'. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The score is divided into systems, with measures numbered 1 through 20. The notation includes various musical elements: notes, rests, fingerings (1-4), and dynamic markings (*mf*, *p*, *dim.*). The piece features several triplets and slurs. The first system (measures 1-3) is marked *mf*. The second system (measures 4-6) continues the *mf* dynamic. The third system (measures 7-9) includes a *p* marking and a *longa* marking. The fourth system (measures 10-12) is marked *p*. The fifth system (measures 13-15) is marked *mf*. The sixth system (measures 16-18) includes a *dim.* marking. The seventh system (measures 19-20) is marked *p*. The score concludes with a final chord in measure 20.

Popper – Etude No. 9

24

27

30

34

38

42

46

50

f

longa

mf

pp

p

p

pp

ETUDE NO. 19

If there is one most famous (or infamous!) Popper étude that focuses on spiccato, this is it! Don't worry about speed at first—that will come with time. Most important is that you train your ear for the particular chromatic changes and learn about the half steps, as there are many small and large position changes! Here are some things to keep in mind when practicing:

1. When playing spiccato, focus on the suppleness of the right wrist and fingers. This is not a whole arm motion, and your shoulder and upper arm should not be doing the work! Practice open-string spiccato as a warm-up.
2. When beginning, think of the tempo in triplets before you start, and have the bow ready to go near the string. This way, you are connecting your brain and hands before beginning, increasing the chances of a successful opening.
3. Think about varying the bow stroke as you go through the study. When it is louder or higher, you can play a little longer or heavier bow strokes. And when it is shorter and softer, keep the light, compact bow in mind so the music has a sprightly feel.



LEARN MORE AT [TONEBASE.CO](https://tonebase.co)

Etude No. 19

from 40 Etudes: High School of Cello Playing, Op. 73

David Popper

(1843-1913)

Allegro

The musical score for Etude No. 19 is written on a single bass staff in C major, 4/4 time. The tempo is marked 'Allegro'. The piece begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The notation includes various technical markings such as fingerings (1-4), slurs, and accents. The score is divided into measures, with measure numbers 4, 8, 12, 16, 20, and 23 indicated at the start of their respective lines. The piece concludes with a final measure marked with a double bar line and a *p* dynamic.

Popper – Etude No. 19

26

II II

29

Example 29

32

II III II

mf

36

1 4 1 4 2 0 4 4 2 0 1 2 2 4

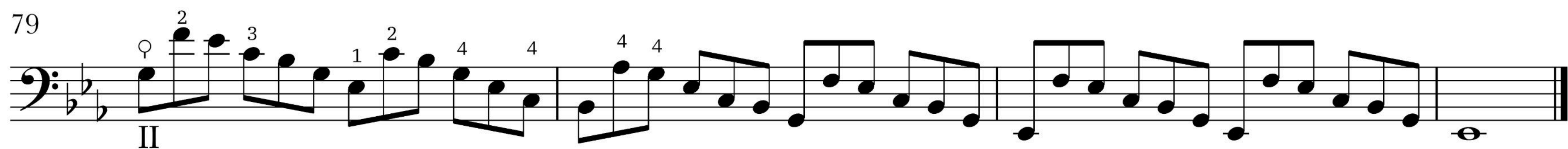
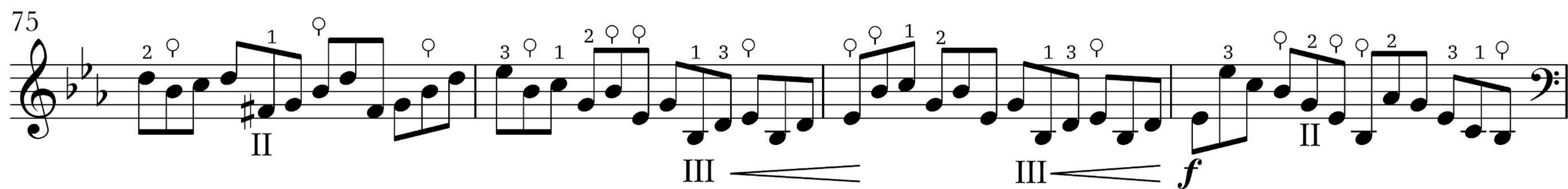
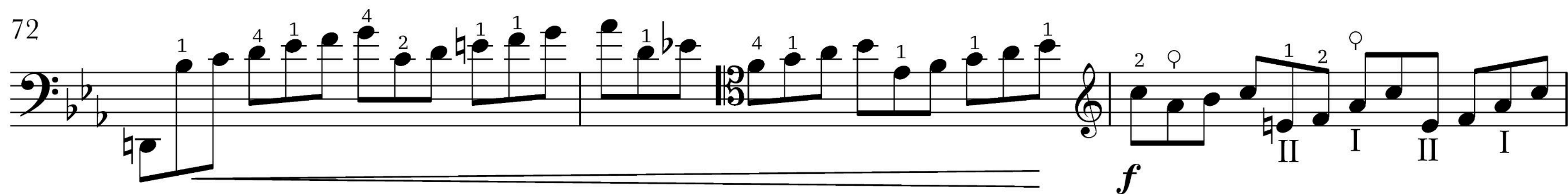
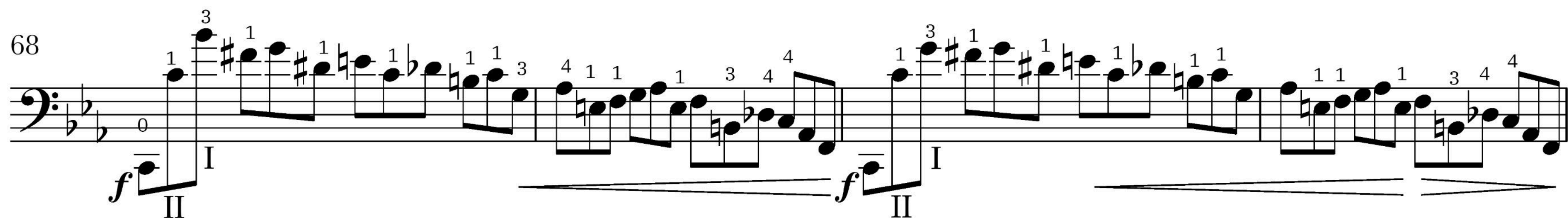
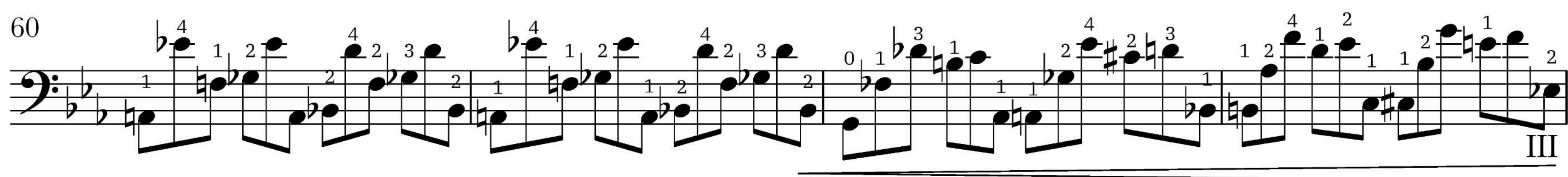
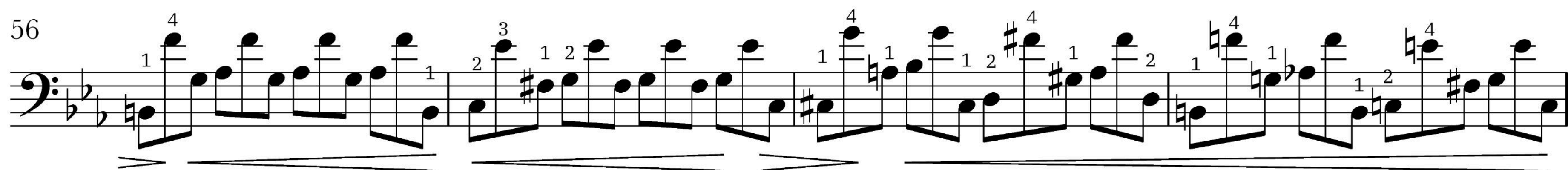
mf

40

The 40th measure of the musical score for 'The Rose Tree' is shown. It is a single staff in bass clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The measure contains a sequence of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some notes beamed together. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 above the notes. There are also some slurs and a final sharp sign at the end of the measure.

[illegible][illegible]

Popper – Etude No. 19



ETUDE NO. 28

With this étude, the goal is to sound as effortless and seamless as possible. It is challenging for both the left and right hands, but for different reasons. The most obvious challenge is the intonation and using the fourth finger in thumb position. This was commonplace in earlier days of cello playing (you see this all the time with Romberg, for example), but in modern cello playing, it is not employed often. Here are some things to keep in mind when practicing:

1. Start practice extremely slowly, just two notes per bow. The left hand may feel somewhat awkward initially, but don't despair! Slow, methodical practice will train the hand to "feel" the positions.
2. Slide between all shifts and feel the distances. This is one of those studies that require lots of shifting on the thumb, which can feel strange at first. Think of the thumb like any of the other fingers. Don't forget to anticipate shifts with the elbow and keep everything relaxed and loose. If you feel your arm tightening or getting tired, take a break and do something else! Come back a few minutes later. Shifting with the thumb is a long game.
3. On the second page, think about your bow division when you have a single note followed by five notes under a slur. Make sure to pull the bow very fast so you have enough bow on the upbow for the next group. It should sound energetic and fun!



LEARN MORE AT [TONEBASE.CO](https://tonebase.co)

Etude No. 28

from 40 Etudes: High School of Cello Playing, Op. 73

David Popper

(1843-1913)

Andantino grazioso

3 2 4 2 2 1 3 2 4 1 1 4 1 1 2 4

* *p* II I II I

3 1 3 2 1 1 3 2 1 3 3 1 3

5 3 2 1 3 1 1 4 1 2 4

II I

7 1 3 2 1 1 3 1 3 3 2 1 3 3 2 1

I

9 3 1 2 3 2 1 2 3 1 3 3 2 1 2 3 1 2 3 2 1 2

11 3 1 2 3 2 1 2 3 1 3 3 2 1 2 3 1 2 3 2 1 2

13 3 1 2 3 2 1 2 3 1 3 3 2 1 2 3 1 2 3 2 1 2

f

* The first note of each sextuplet to be emphasized slightly and melodically.

Popper – Etude No. 28

16 *mf* *f*

18 *mf* *f*

20 *mf*

22 *mf*

24 *f*

26 *cre -*

28 *scen - do*

Popper – Etude No. 28

30

ff

32

ff

34

mf *p*

36

p

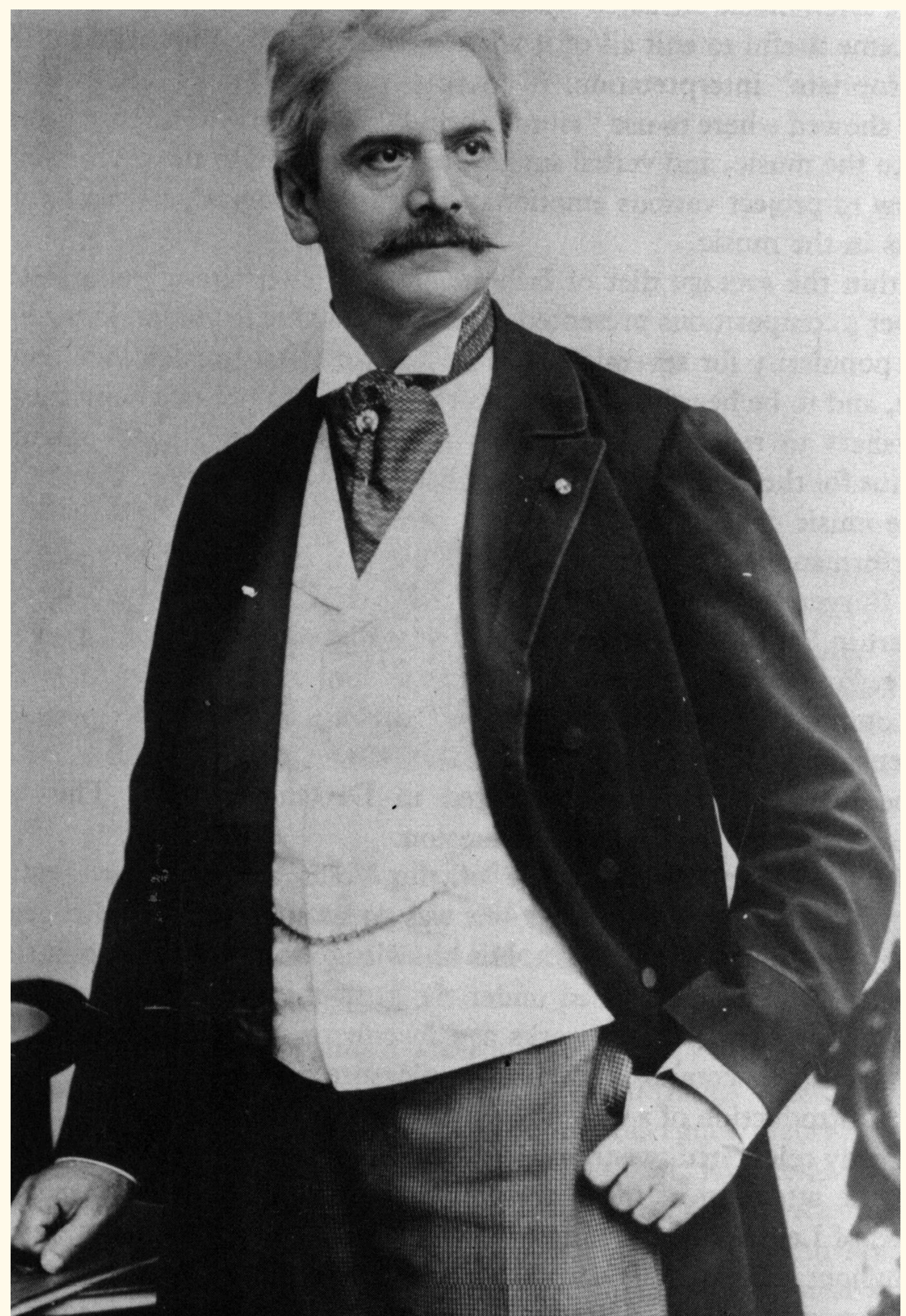
38

f *ff* *ff* IV

ETUDE NO. 37

Although Popper writes “study in mordents” at the top, this is really a study in shifting **more than anything else**. If you can play this étude well, you will have a great understanding of the fingerboard—all strings and all positions. Be sure to follow Popper’s fingerings, as it’s important to learn the positions as he wants you to, as the application to pieces in the repertoire will be more effective. Here are some things to keep in mind when practicing:

1. Keep your right wrist loose while playing, and use a flatter hair. The goal is to get the most sound quality for the least effort, and by using a flatter hair, we can maximize efficiency.
2. Take your time when you shift—don’t “jump” to a new position, but feel the distance as you make your way around the fingerboard. Already in measure 2, we have various large shifts to make, and it’s important to give the left hand time to get to where it needs to go.
3. Keep the strength in the left-hand fingers through the mordents. This can be tiring at first, especially in the higher positions, but with time your fingers will gain strength. The most important thing is to remember to keep consistency in the turns. The ability to play the entire piece through will come measure by measure.



LEARN MORE AT [TONEBASE.CO](https://tonebase.co)

Etude No. 37

from 40 Etudes: High School of Cello Playing, Op. 73

David Popper

(1843-1913)

Andante

The musical score for Etude No. 37 is written for cello in G major (three sharps) and common time (C). It consists of seven staves of music, each containing various musical notations and fingerings. The tempo is marked 'Andante'. The score includes a variety of musical elements such as eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and dynamic markings. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4 above the notes, and bowings are indicated by 'v' (downbow) and 'v' (upbow) symbols. The staves are numbered 1 through 14, with some staves containing multiple measures. The notation is complex, featuring many slurs and ties, indicating a technically demanding piece. The key signature is G major, and the time signature is common time. The score is written in a standard musical notation style, with a single staff per system. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of three sharps. The subsequent staves continue the melodic and harmonic development of the piece, with various fingerings and bowings indicated throughout. The score concludes with a final measure on the seventh staff.

Popper – Etude No. 37

16

II I II III

18

II I

III II I

1 4 3 2

23

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

33

4 1 4 1 4 0 2 0 1 0

II I 2 1

Popper – Etude No. 37

35

38

II

40

42

II

II

44

47

50

52

I

Popper – Etude No. 37

[illegible]

57

III II I

59

The musical score for measures 59 and 60 of 'The Swan' by Camille Saint-Saëns. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/4. The notation includes various musical symbols such as eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and triplets, along with fingerings and articulation marks.

61

63

1 2 4 2 4 4 4 0 4 2 4 3 2 3 4 0 1 2 3

II III I I III I I III I III II III

65

rit.

mf

II

II

[illegible]

71

The second system of the musical score, starting at measure 71. It continues with the same bass clef and key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The time signature changes to 3/8. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with fingerings 1, 2, 3 indicated. The accompaniment is a steady eighth-note pattern. The system ends with a repeat sign and a fermata over the final note.

II - - - -

Popper – Etude No. 37

73

76

79

ff

pizz.

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for measures 73 through 79 of Popper's Etude No. 37. The score is written for a single melodic line, likely for the cello. Measures 73-75 are in 3/4 time and feature a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The notation includes various fingerings (1, 2, 3), slurs, and accents. Measure 76 begins a new section with a key signature change to two sharps (F#, C#). Measures 77-79 continue this section, with measure 79 ending with a double fermata and a forte (ff) dynamic marking. A pizzicato (pizz.) instruction is also present in measure 79.



If you have any corrections, comments, or critiques relating to this PDF,
please send them to team@tonebase.co. We strive to deliver the
highest quality enrichment experience. Thank you!