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WARMING UP WITH PURPOSE

BY AREG NAVASARDYAN

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VIOLIN

Introduction & Outline

Warming up isn’t just a formality. It’s a crucial part of developing consistency, precision, and confidence on the violin. In this guide, Areg Navasardyan shares the warm-up routine he’s used for over seven years to prepare for every performance, rehearsal, and practice session.

This approach is about more than getting your fingers moving. It’s about setting your mind and body in sync before you start working on demanding repertoire, so you know that every challenge you face later in your session is musical, not mechanical.

Philosophy 02

I. Left-Hand Fundamentals 03

II. Schradieck Exercises 04

III. Repertoire-Based Warm-Up 05

IV. Advanced Finger Stretches 06

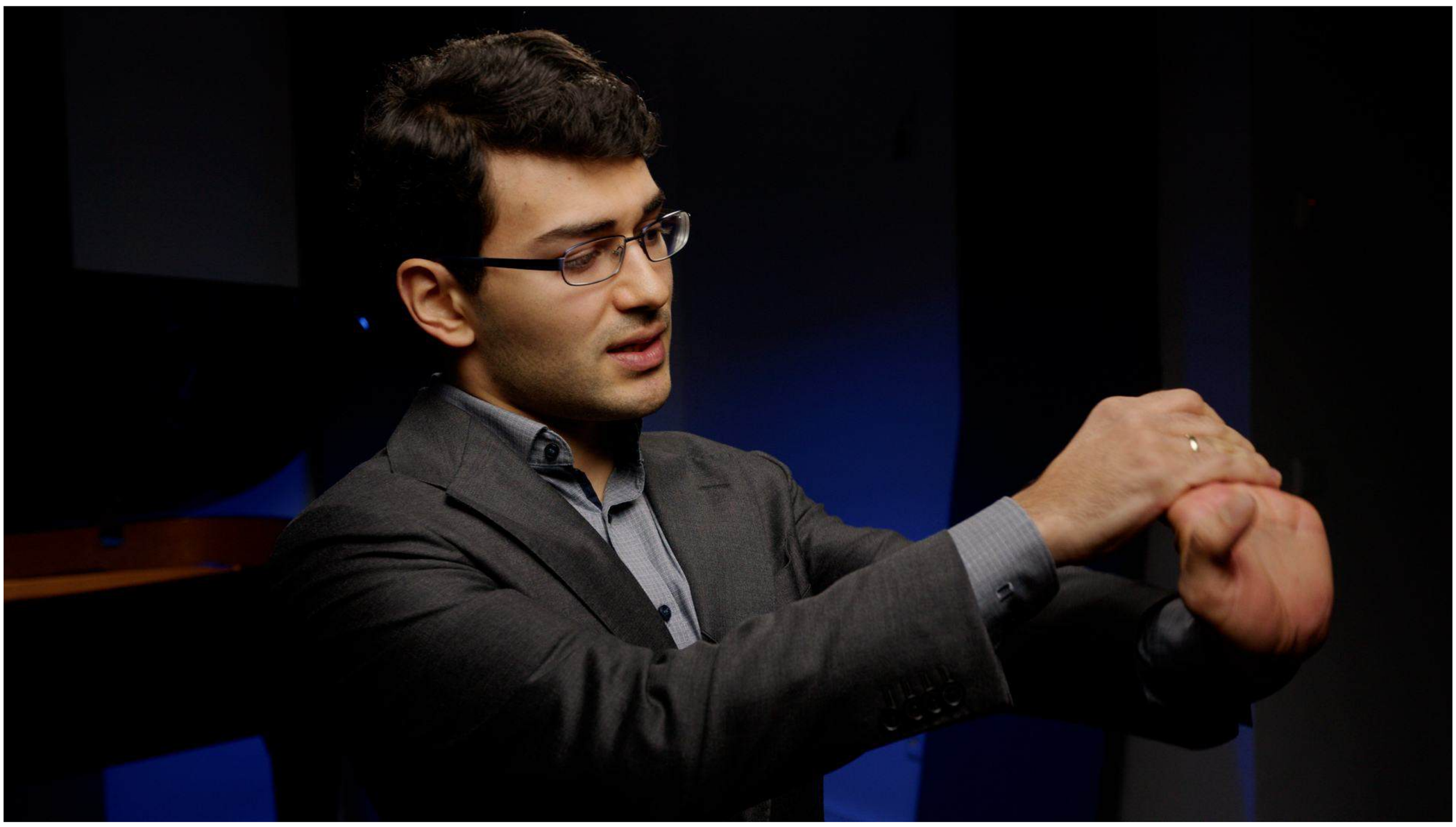
V. Virtuosic Speed Builders 07

Philosophy

Every warm-up begins with awareness. The goal isn’t to play fast or flashy right away, but to prepare your left hand to respond freely and comfortably. Warming up helps you play more accurately, avoid injury, and assess your real technical needs. If you skip this step, you might spend your entire practice session wondering whether mistakes are due to lack of control or simply a lack of preparation.

Before touching the violin, take a few moments to connect with your body. Massage your fingers, roll your wrists, and stretch gently. If you ever feel sharp pain or significant discomfort, **stop immediately!** Pushing through pain won’t earn you progress, only setbacks. Let the blood flow return, breathe, and reset before continuing.

This warm-up can be done in just a few minutes, yet it lays the foundation for almost anything you’ll play on the violin, from simple études to virtuosic showpieces.



I. Left-Hand Fundamentals (No Bow)

Start your routine in first position using pizzicato. This allows you to focus entirely on left-hand form without worrying about the bow. Turn your left hand slightly toward the fingerboard to maintain a consistent hand frame across all strings. This small adjustment stabilizes your intonation and keeps your elbow steady and relaxed.

Avoid gripping the neck. Instead, let the violin rest naturally on your left thumb. You should even notice a small gap between your index finger and the neck, preventing tension from building up. Keep gentle space between your fingers as well, rather than squeezing them together.

When pressing down the strings, aim for a **rounded, balanced hand shape.** Your fingertips should contact the string with the soft, pillowy side. Think of your nails as sloping like the windshield of a Ferrari, not the flat windshield of a truck.

Let your fingers fall naturally, like **piano hammers** striking keys, never slamming down or pressing harder than necessary. In first position especially, it only takes minimal pressure to produce a clear sound. When lifting, do so quickly and lightly, as if you've just touched a **hot stove**, keeping your fingers close enough to drop back efficiently.

"Truck windshield" finger positions

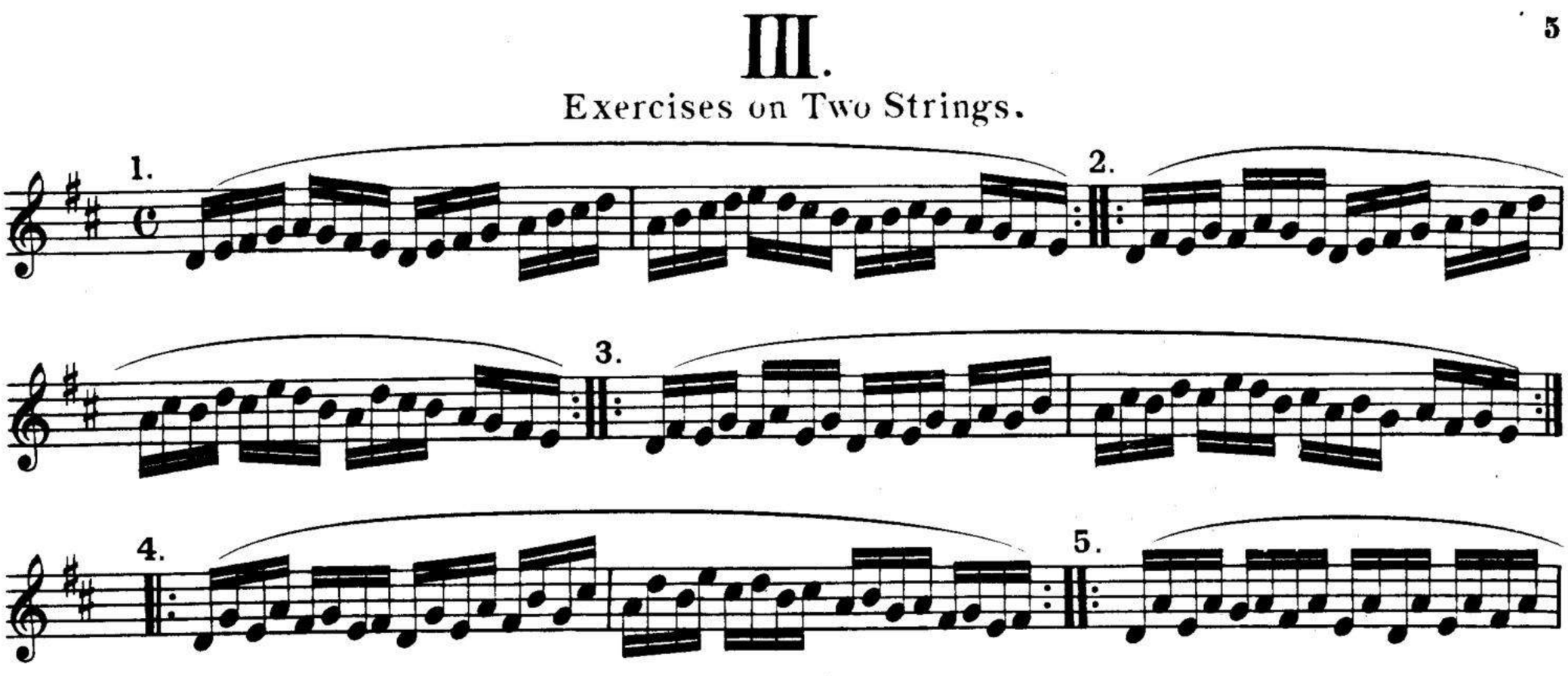
Optimal Ferrari windshield finger positions

II. Schradieck Exercises

Once your hand feels loose and balanced, move into **Schradieck's Book I, Part III exercises**. These are essential for building coordination, strength, and evenness in the left hand.

Maintain the same relaxed, rounded hand position you established in the pizzicato stage. Begin slowly, using a metronome, and focus on clarity of sound and consistency of finger motion. Gradually increase the tempo only when your control remains steady.

These exercises train your fingers to stay close to the fingerboard and move independently, a vital skill for clean shifts and fast passages later on.



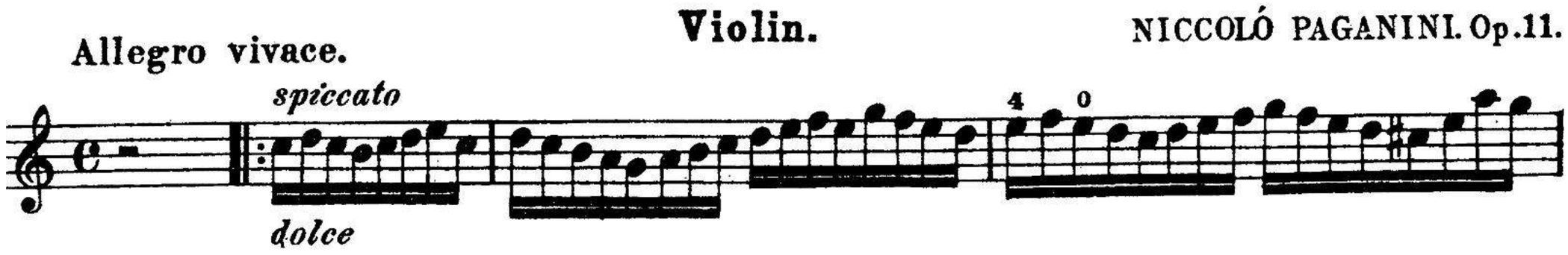
Schradieck LH Exercises (full score in back)

III. Repertoire-Based Warm-Up

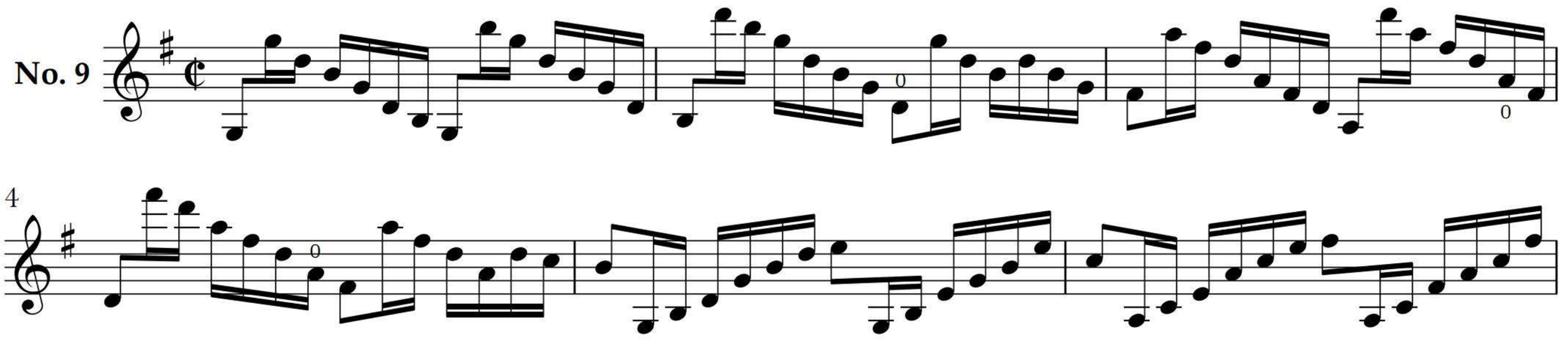
After working through the Schradieck exercises, bring your technique into a more musical context. Areg often alternates between ***Kreutzer Étude No. 9*** and the opening measures of **Paganini's *Moto Perpetuo*** as a bridge between drills and real repertoire.

Loop a few bars of these pieces and play them with a metronome, gradually increasing the tempo as long as every note remains distinct. You can even vary your speed mid-phrase – starting slowly, then accelerating – to train control and explosiveness.

If you do this consistently, you'll notice stronger coordination, better synchronization between left and right hands, and greater endurance for fast passages. Over time, your fingers will feel "ready for anything" before you begin your main practice session.



Paganini's *Moto Perpetuo* (full score in back)



Kreutzer Etude No. 9 (full score in back)

IV. Advanced Finger Stretches

Next, stretch your hand gently and evenly with **fingered octaves**, beginning from first to third position. Alternate between these stretches and Schradieck to balance flexibility with precision.

Once comfortable, add **tenths**, starting in third position and gradually extending your fourth finger to its comfortable limit. Descend slowly through the positions, stretching just far enough to feel engagement without strain.

To develop independence, experiment with other interval patterns: play octaves with 2-3, 1-2, 3-4, and 1-3 finger combinations. This helps awaken lesser-used pairings and improves overall reach and stability.

As always, listen to your hand. If it feels tense or overextended, ease back and rest. Stretching should feel active, never forced.

Fingered octaves

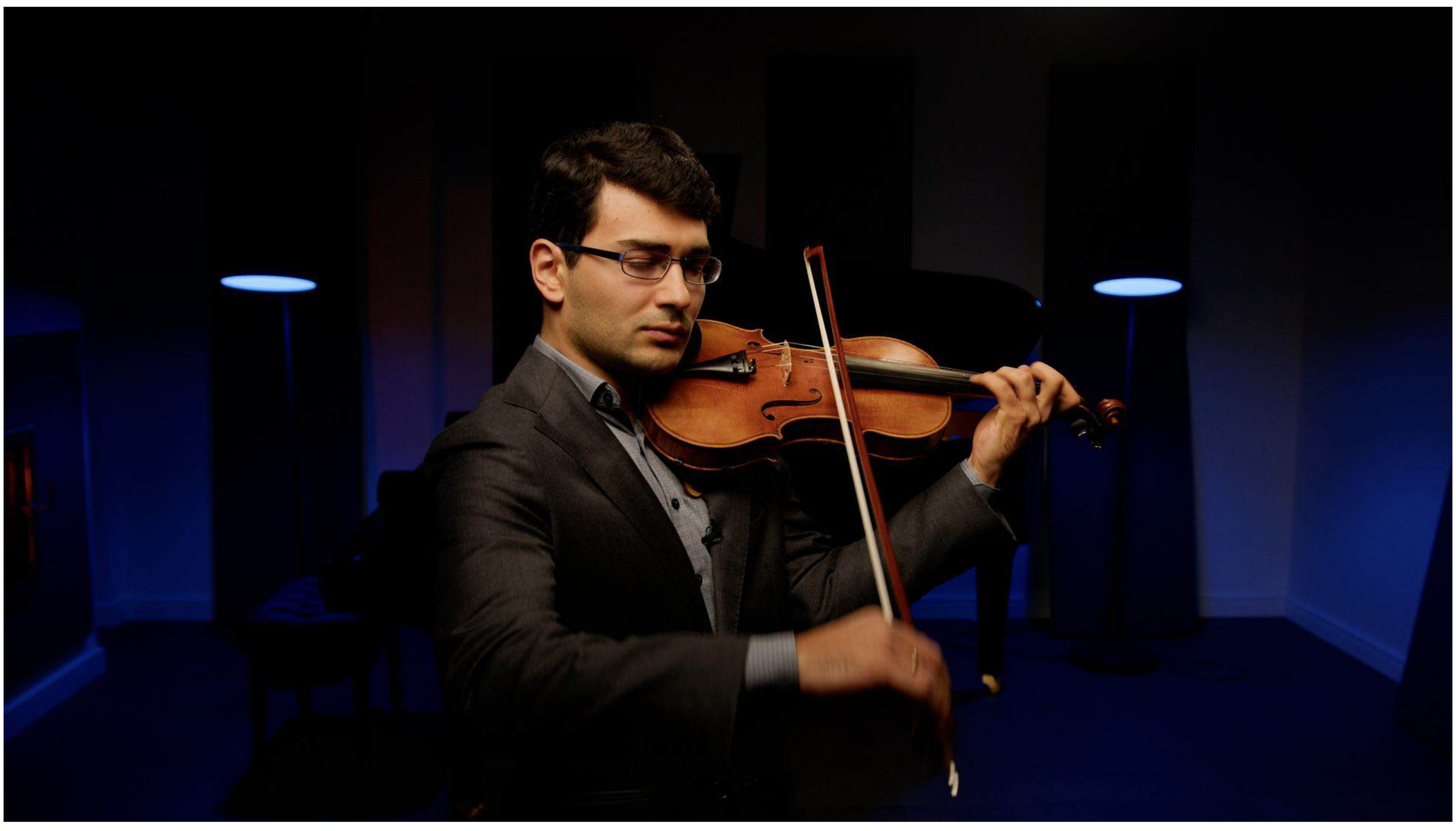
Advanced stretches

V. Virtuosic Speed Builders

The final phase of Areg's warm-up routine focuses on **maximum velocity and control.** Pick a fast passage from your current repertoire and drill it methodically with a metronome. Increase speed only when every note remains clearly audible and even.

When he isn't preparing a specific piece, Areg often turns again to **Paganini's *Moto Perpetuo***, which he has practiced almost daily for years. Played regularly, it builds stamina, precision, and speed endurance. Over time, he has pushed this piece beyond 200 bpm. Not for show, but to develop absolute control under pressure.

Think of this stage as your sprint: the culmination of all your earlier balance, strength, and awareness work. When you reach this point, your hands will be fully warmed, alert, and ready for any challenge.



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Conclusion

Used consistently, this warm-up routine develops the three pillars of violin mastery: **speed, flexibility, and control.** It blends technical precision with musical purpose, helping you feel confident in your hands before every session.

Whether you're preparing for the stage or simply aiming for a more productive practice, take the time to warm up with focus and intention. As Areg says, *"This is the routine I've done every single day for seven years, and it's never failed me."*

About Areg

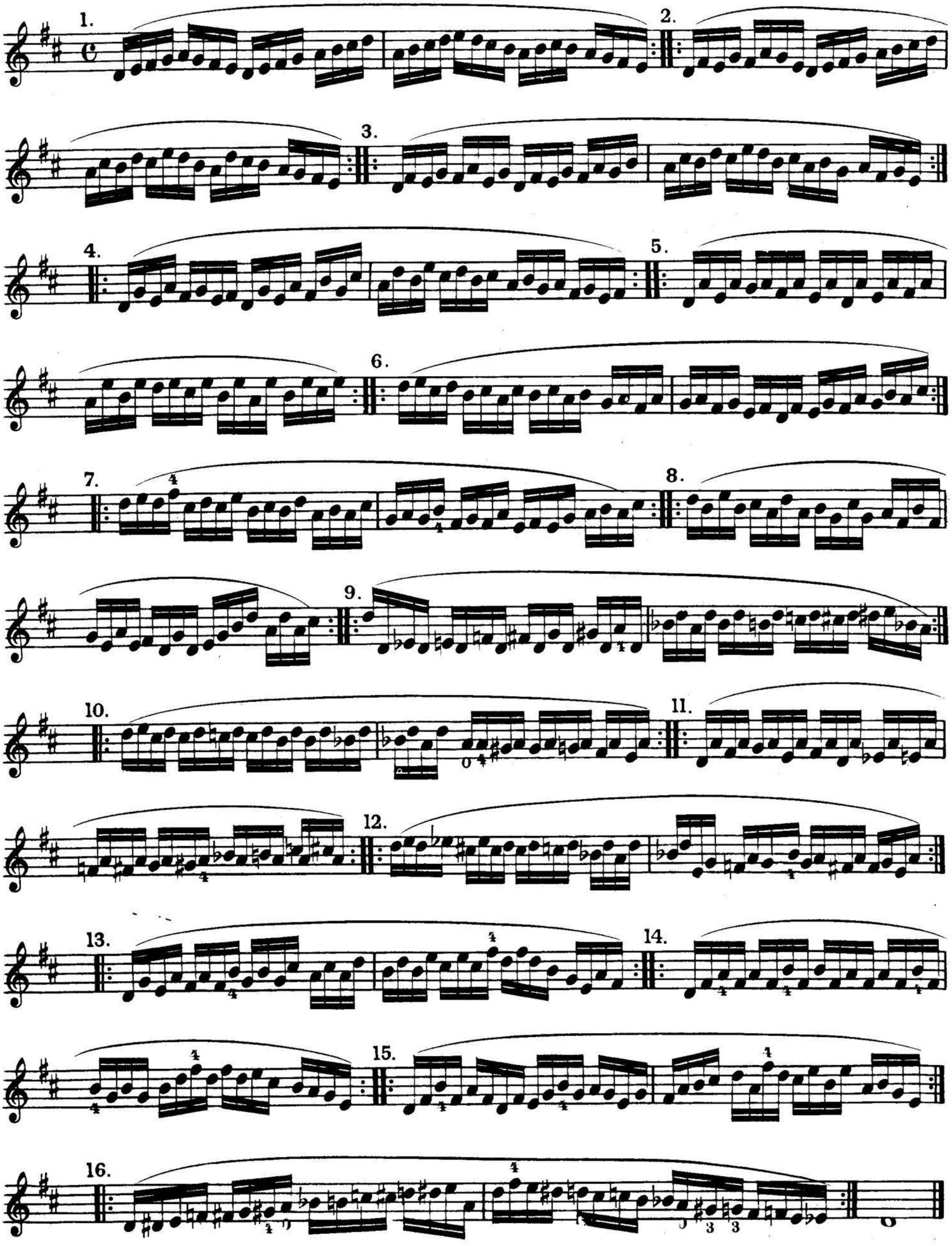
Armenian violinist **Areg Navasardyan** has achieved recognition in numerous international competitions. He won prizes at the Demidovski International Competition (2019), the HarmoniumOnlinePlus competition (2020), and the China-Spain International Competition (2021). He secured second prize in the New York International Artists Competition in 2014 (with no first prize awarded) and won first prize with the best performance award at the American Protégé International Competition in 2013.

Areg began his violin studies at the age of five under the guidance of Professor Gagik Smbatyan at the Yerevan Tchaikovsky Specialized School of Music. From 2015 to 2019, he studied with Professor Boris Kuschnir at the Graz University of Music and Performing Arts. He completed his Bachelor's degree at the Vienna Private University of Music and Performing Arts (MUK) with Professor Pavel Vernikov. He is currently pursuing his Master's degree at the Musikhochschule Münster under Professor Koh Gabriel Kameda, supported by the prestigious DAAD scholarship.

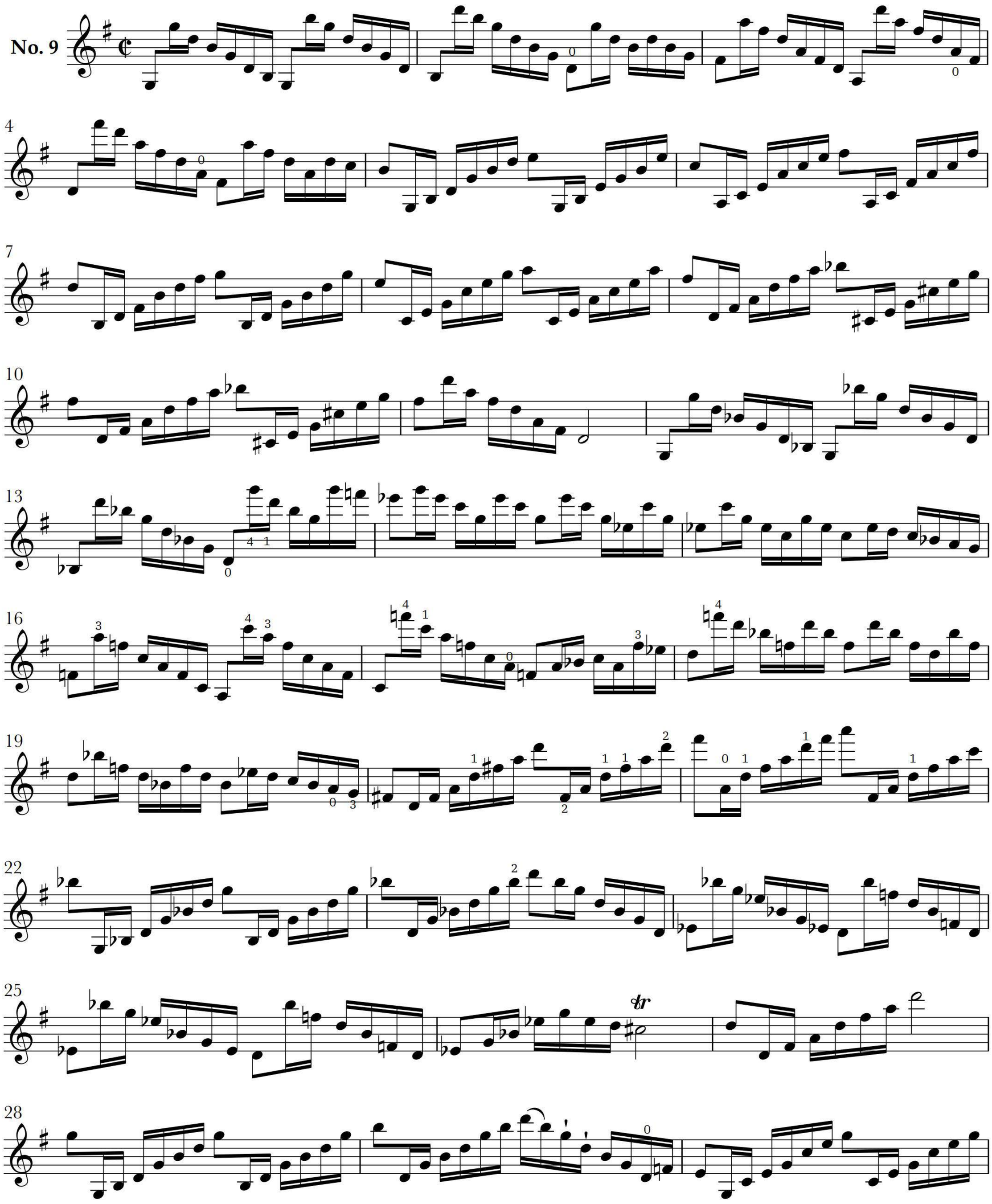
He has performed in various concerts and festivals across Armenia, Georgia, Germany, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, Russia, Hungary, and the United States, including at Carnegie Hall and in concerts organized by UNESCO.

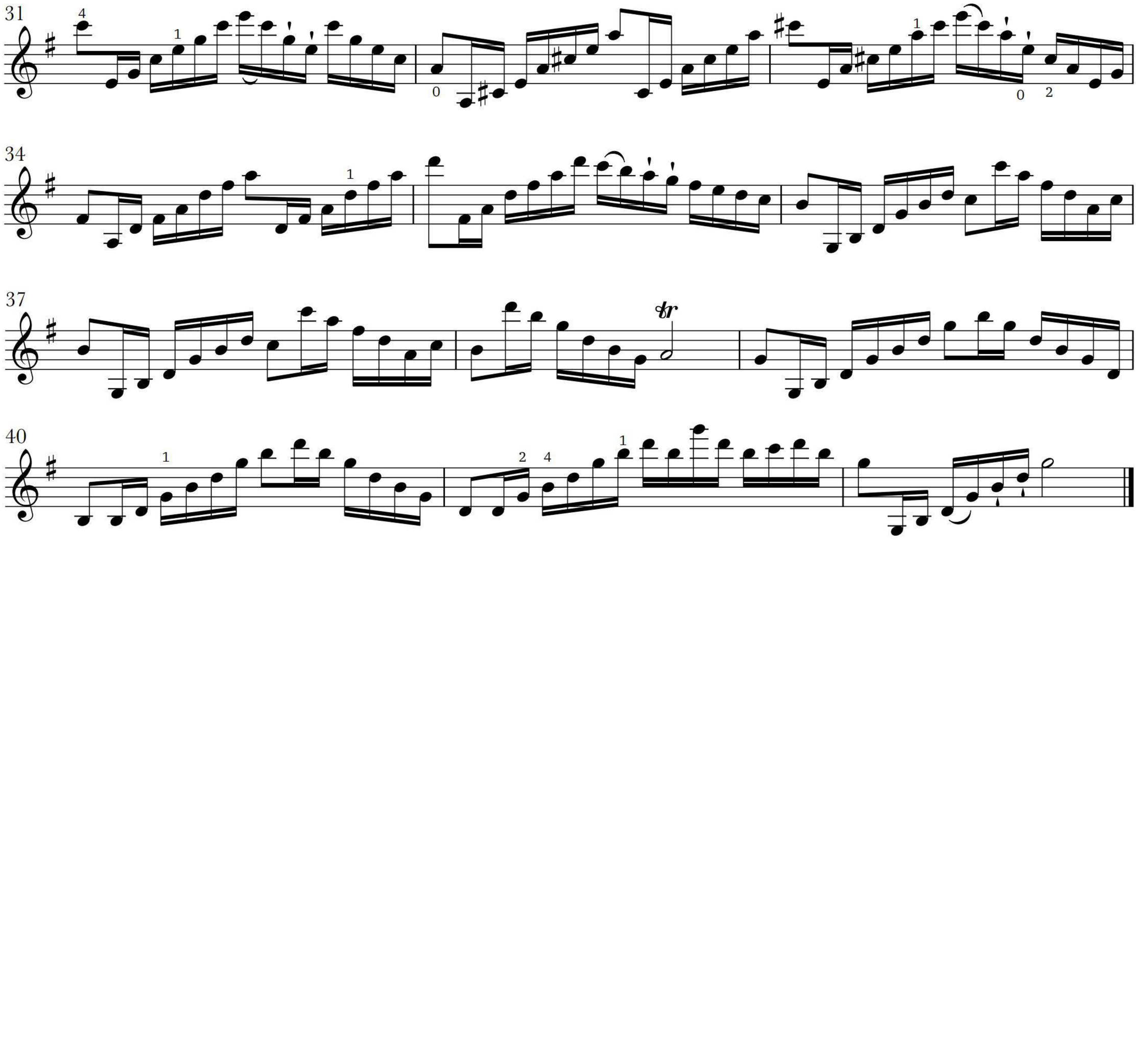
III.

Exercises on Two Strings.



Kreutzer – 40 Études for Violin



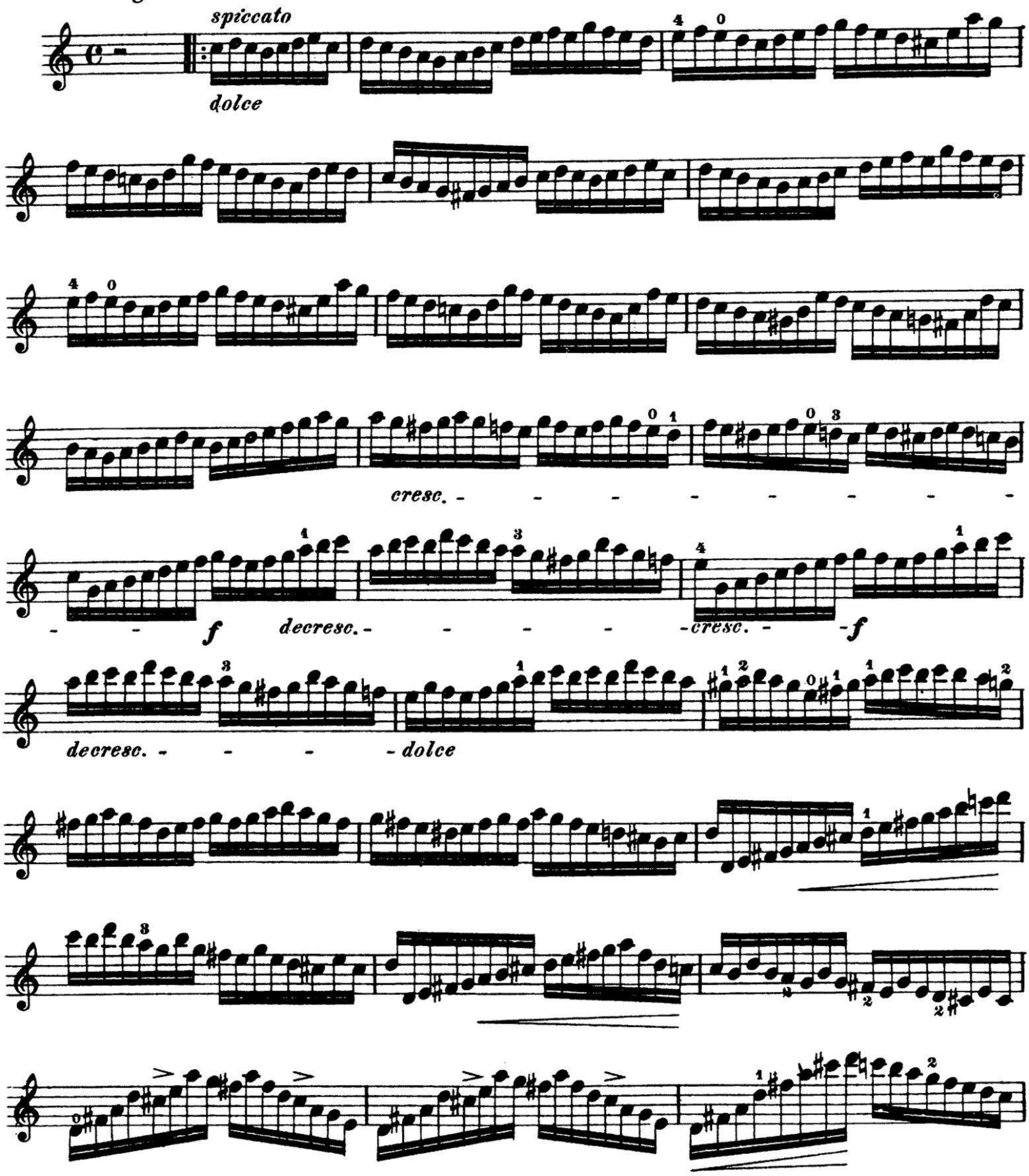

31
34
37
40

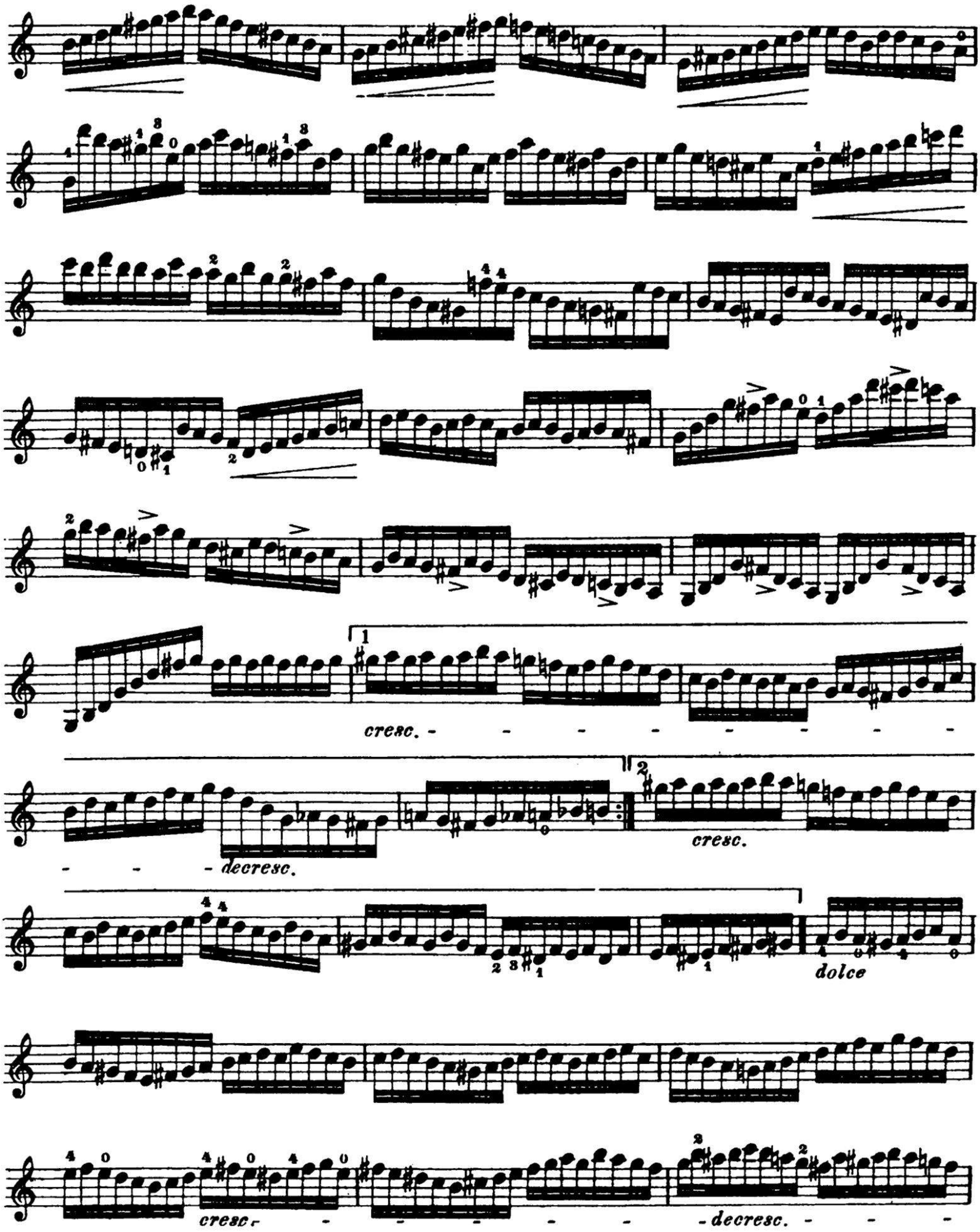
Moto perpetuo.

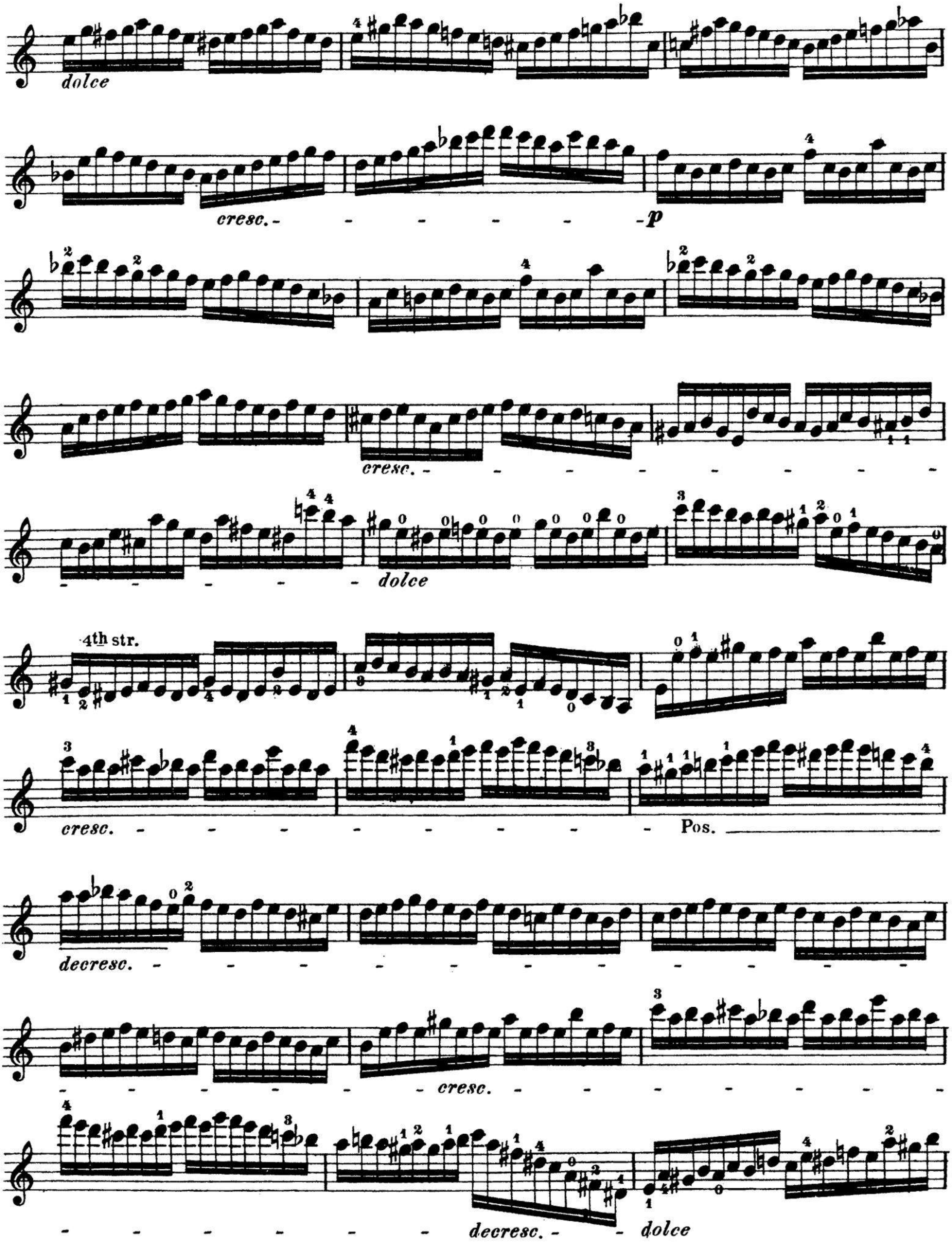
(Perpetual Motion.)

Violin. NICCOLÓ PAGANINI. Op. 11.

Allegro vivace.




cresc.
decresc.
cresc.
dolce
cresc.
decresc.


dolce
cresc.
p
cresc.
dolce
4th str.
cresc.
Pos.
decresc.
cresc.
decresc.
dolce

cresc.

dolce

dolce

cresc. 5th Pos.

cresc.

cresc.

f

decresc.

dolce

p

cresc.

p 4th Pos. cresc.

f p

cresc. fz

1st Pos.

cresc. Pos.

fz cresc.

ff