David N. Baker's

Contemporary Techniques for the Trombone

Against the Grain Playing - Volume 2

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CHAPTER V

AGAINST THE GRAIN PLAYING

This term is one coined by the author, to describe a way of playing trombone which obviates the necessity of tonguing. Because of the manner in which the trombone is constructed and the relationship of one overtone series to another whenever the slide moves in the opposite direction of the note a natural break occurs, i.e., the notes move higher as C to D and the slide moves lower (smaller to a larger number) 3 to 4. Conversely when the slide and the note move in the same direction without a compensating attach a smear results, i.e., $\frac{3}{C}$ to $\frac{1}{D}$. We all know the effect in "Lassus Trombone," the "Firebird Suite," and much Dixieland music featuring tailgate trombone. The smear, rip or slur has been used most effectively in both dramatic and comic situations throughout the history of the slide trombone.

By using the technique which I label "against the grain playing" a multiplicity of advantages may accrue

1. Dramatic effect approximating a valve action.
2. Speed and technique often not possible using the tongue.
3. Rips and slurs not unlike those produced by the French Horn in certain contemporary works.
4. A smooth legato, not obtainable with any modification of basic tonguing techniques.
5. Many others limited only by the player's imagination.

Because of the pervasive importance and implications of "against the grain playing" a great deal of space has been dedicated to exercises, explanations, explication, melodies, etc., designed to thoroughly indoctrinate the player in this technique.

In the following exercises, scales, arpeggios, chords, etc., the player is offered countless possibilities and alternatives in virtually every instance. When possible entire scales are positioned in a single direction. Otherwise as many notes as possible are offered in a single direction or in recurring symmetrical or assymmetrical patterns. Through use of the charts of the overtone series the player may uncover possibilities for any scale, arpeggio, melodic passage, etc.

EXAMPLES AGAINST THE GRAIN

Willie Dennis, "Move" (throughout solo)

John Eaton, "Myshkin"

Lester Lashley, "Sound" (throughout solo)

Roswell Rudd, "Wherever Junebugs Go" (throughout solo)

Phil Wilson, "Never Will I Marry" (throughout solo)

Phil Wilson, "My Favorite Things" (throughout solo)

Britt Woodman, "Sultry Serenade" (pickups to (F) and (I) 6)

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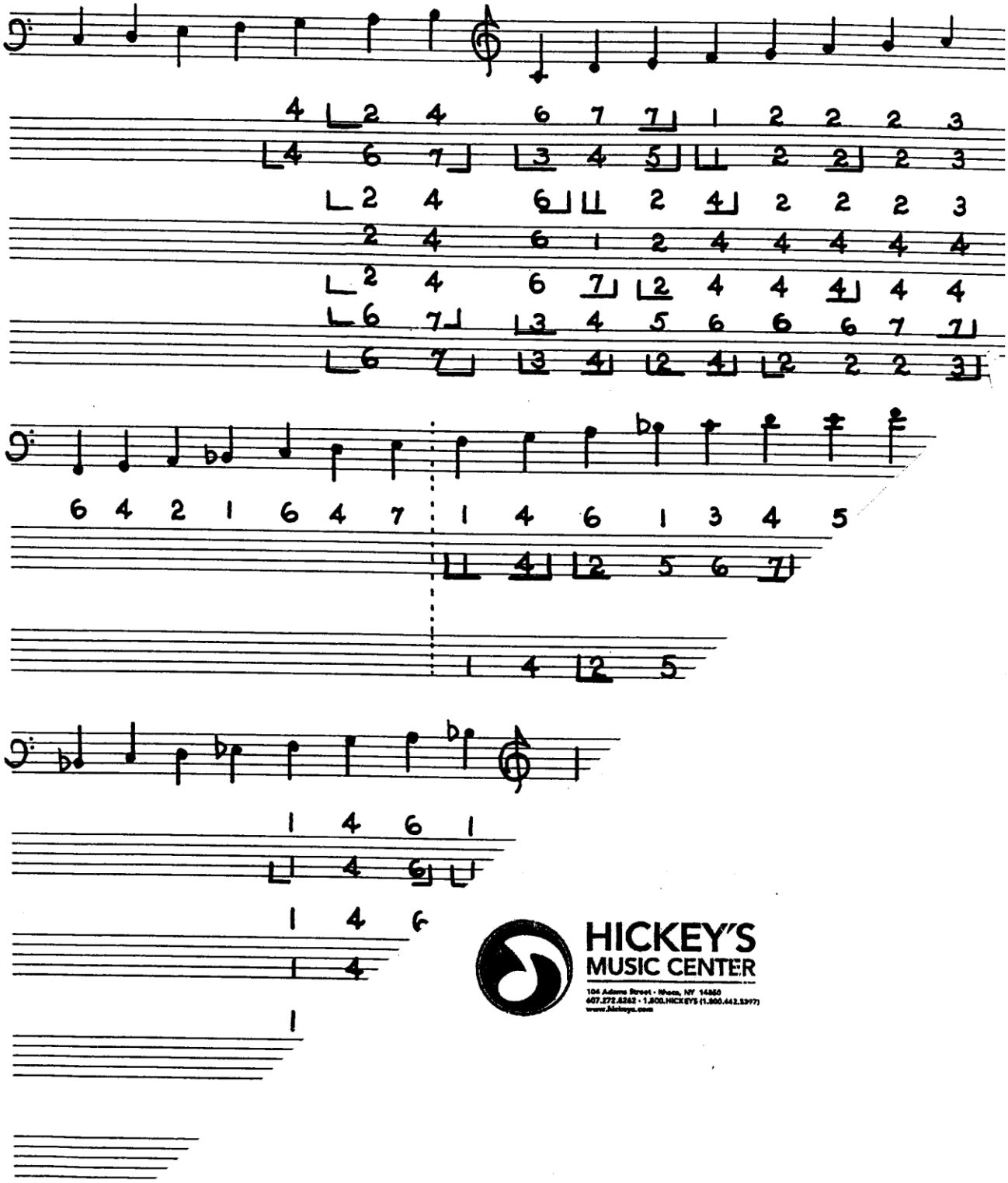
Major Scales



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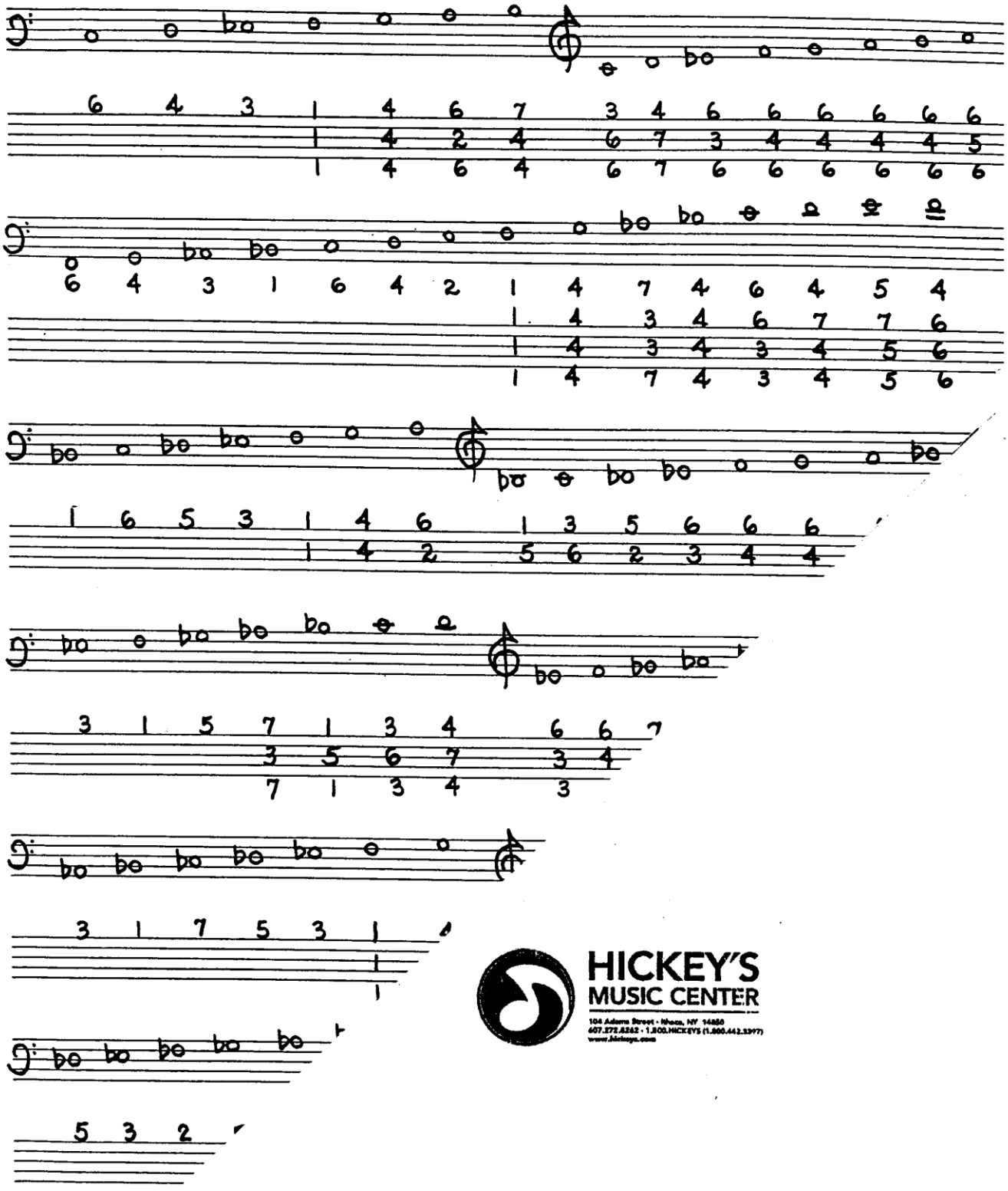
Against the Grain Scales

Ascending Melodic Minor



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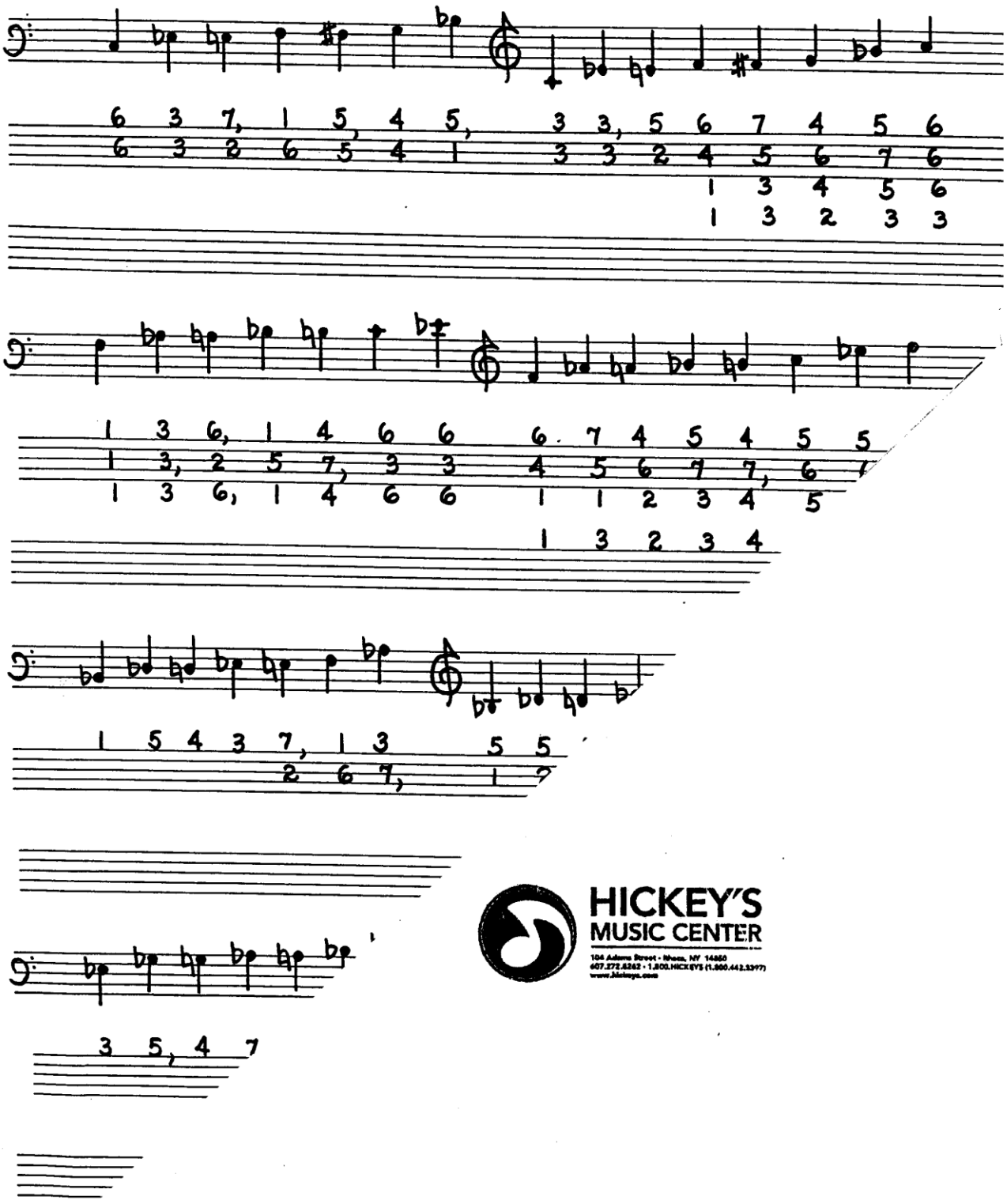
Blues Scale

1 ♭3 ♮3 4 ♯4 5 ♭7 8



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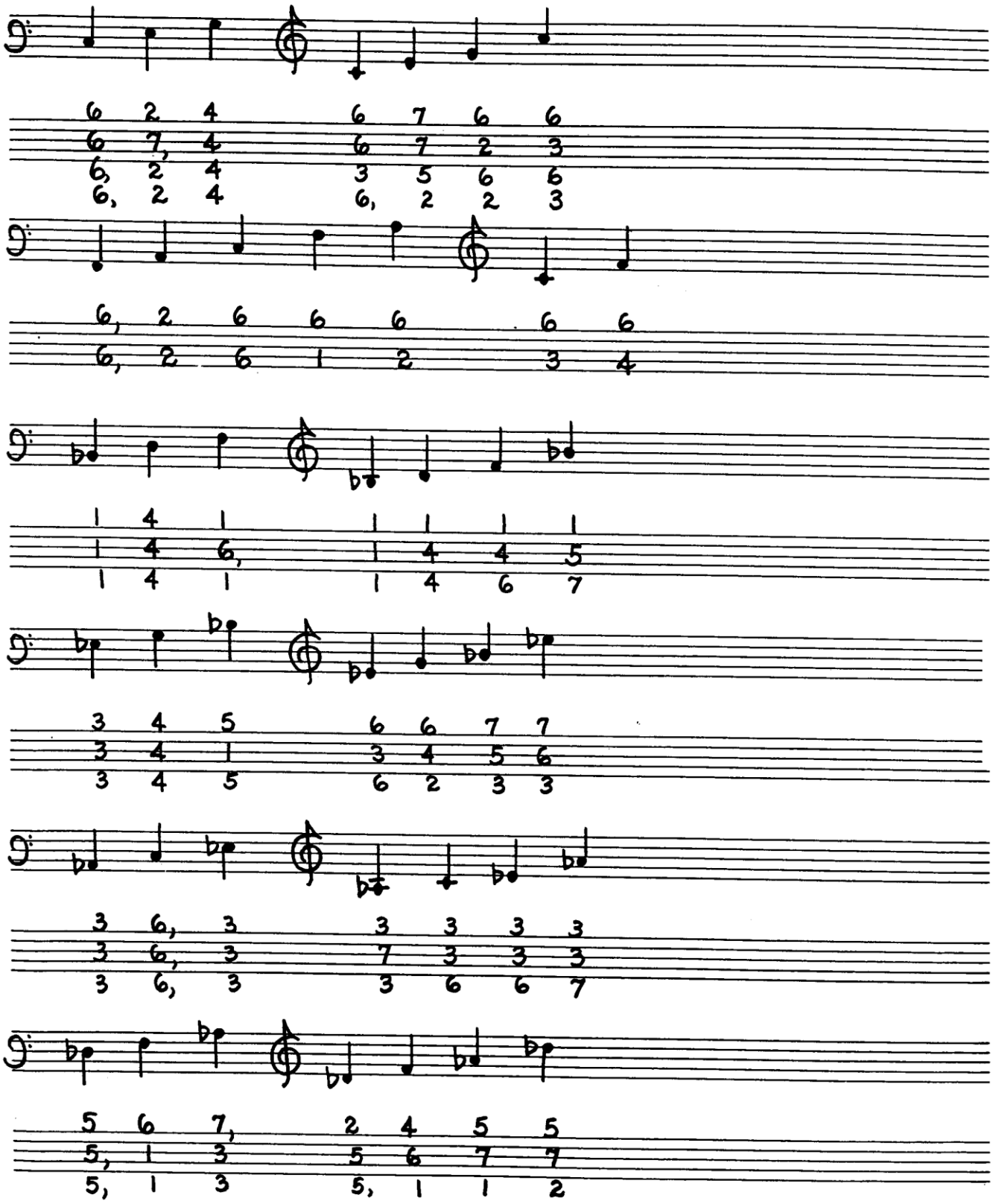
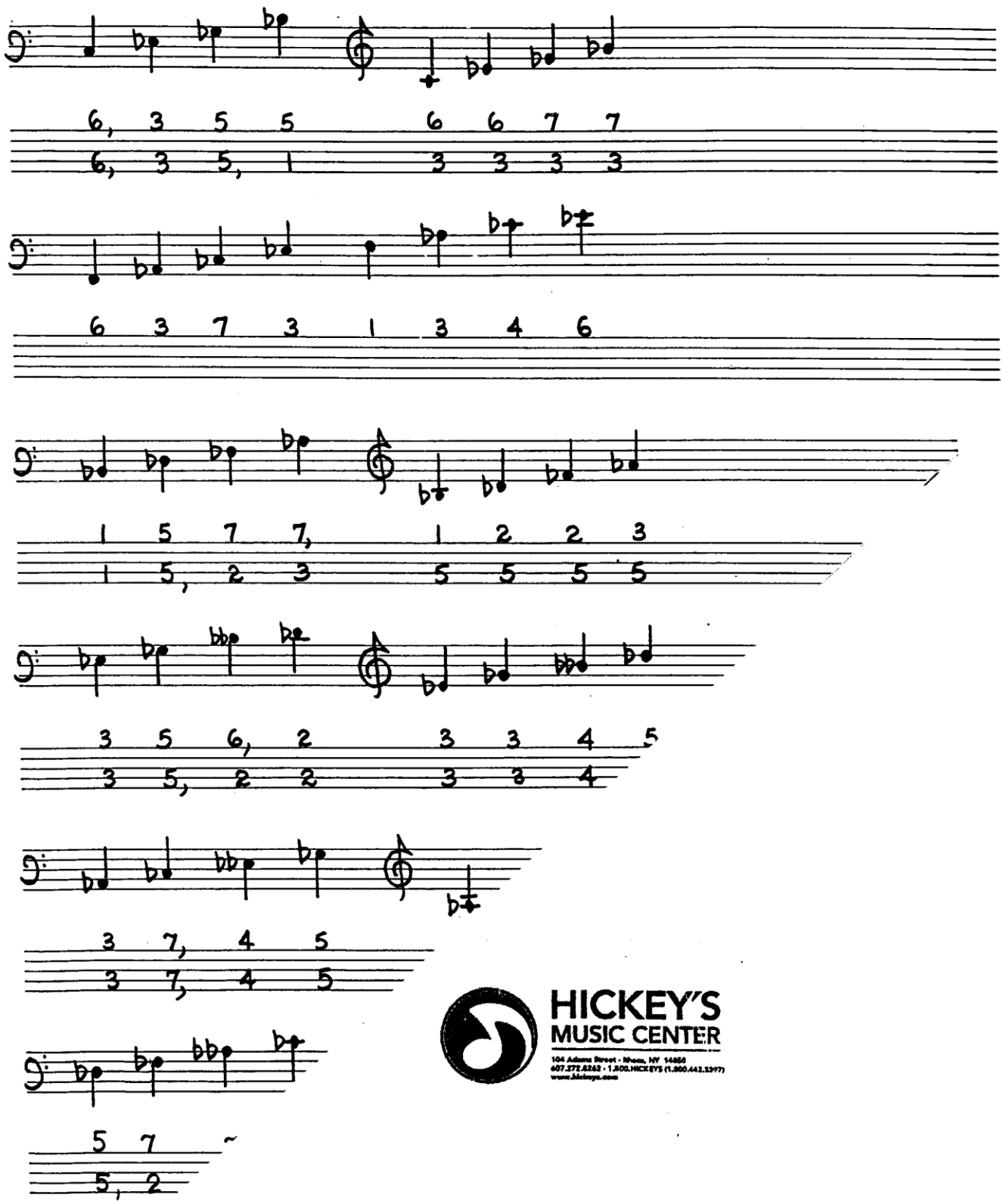
Against the Grain Chords

Major Triads



Half Diminished 7ths



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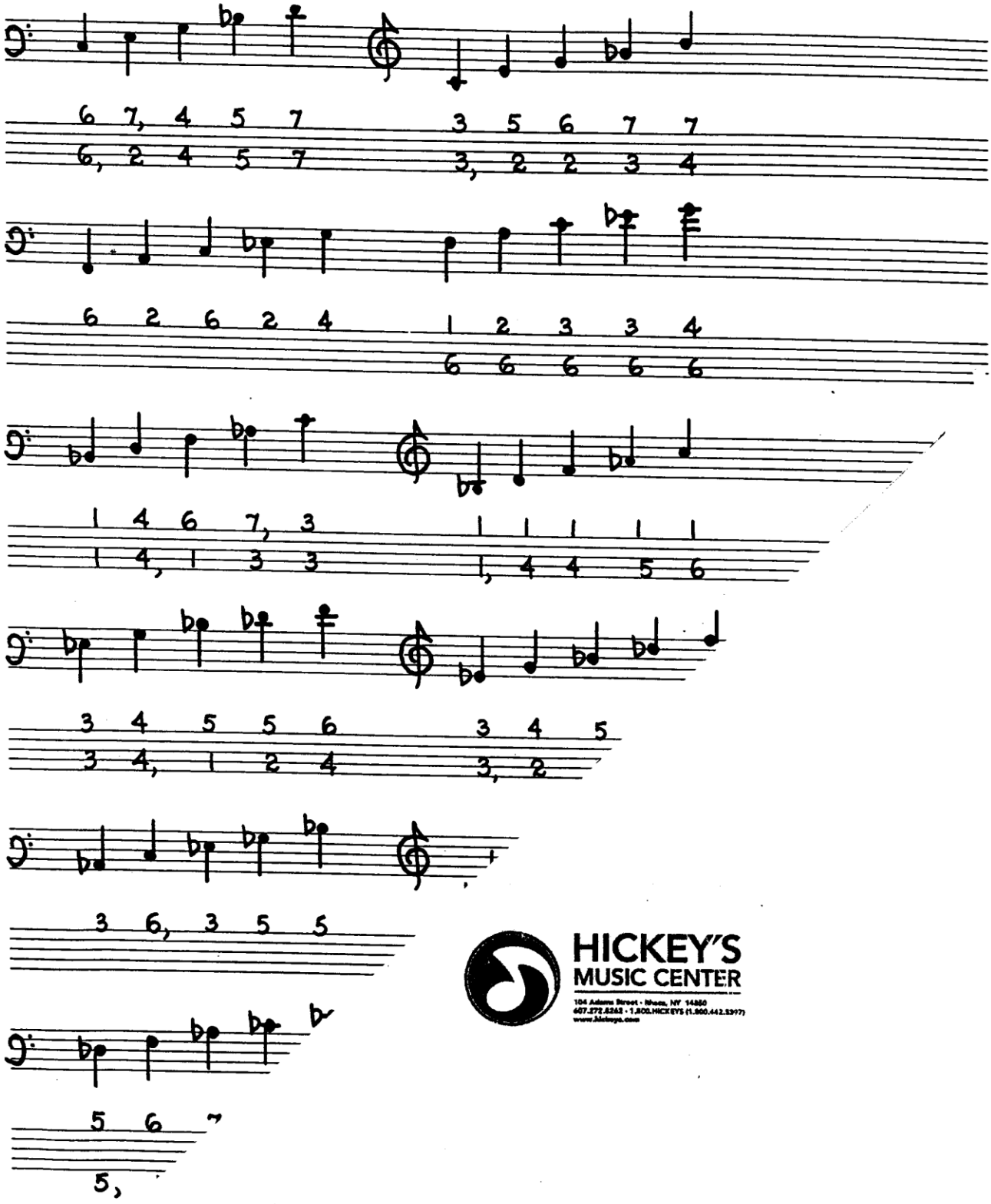
Dominant 9ths



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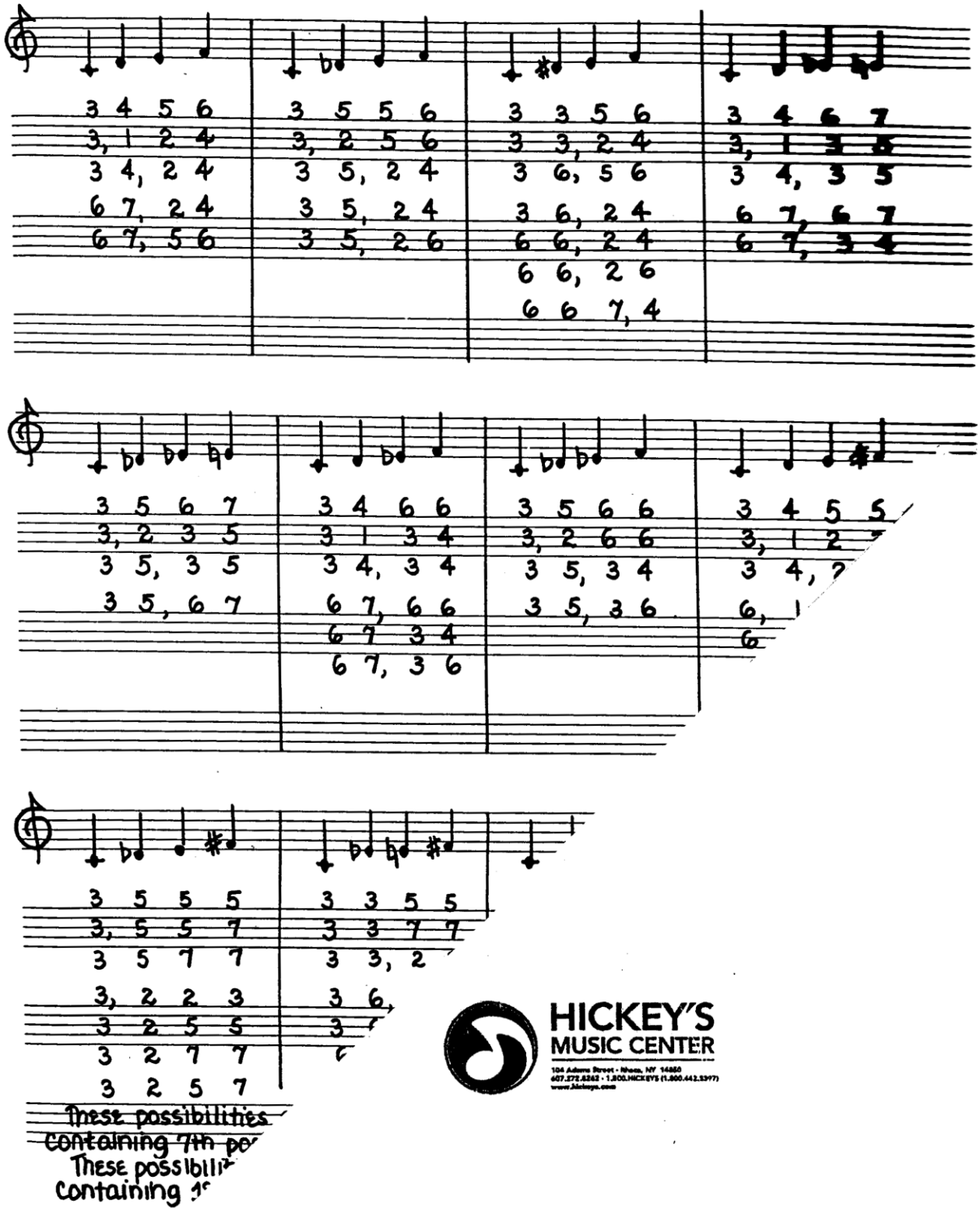

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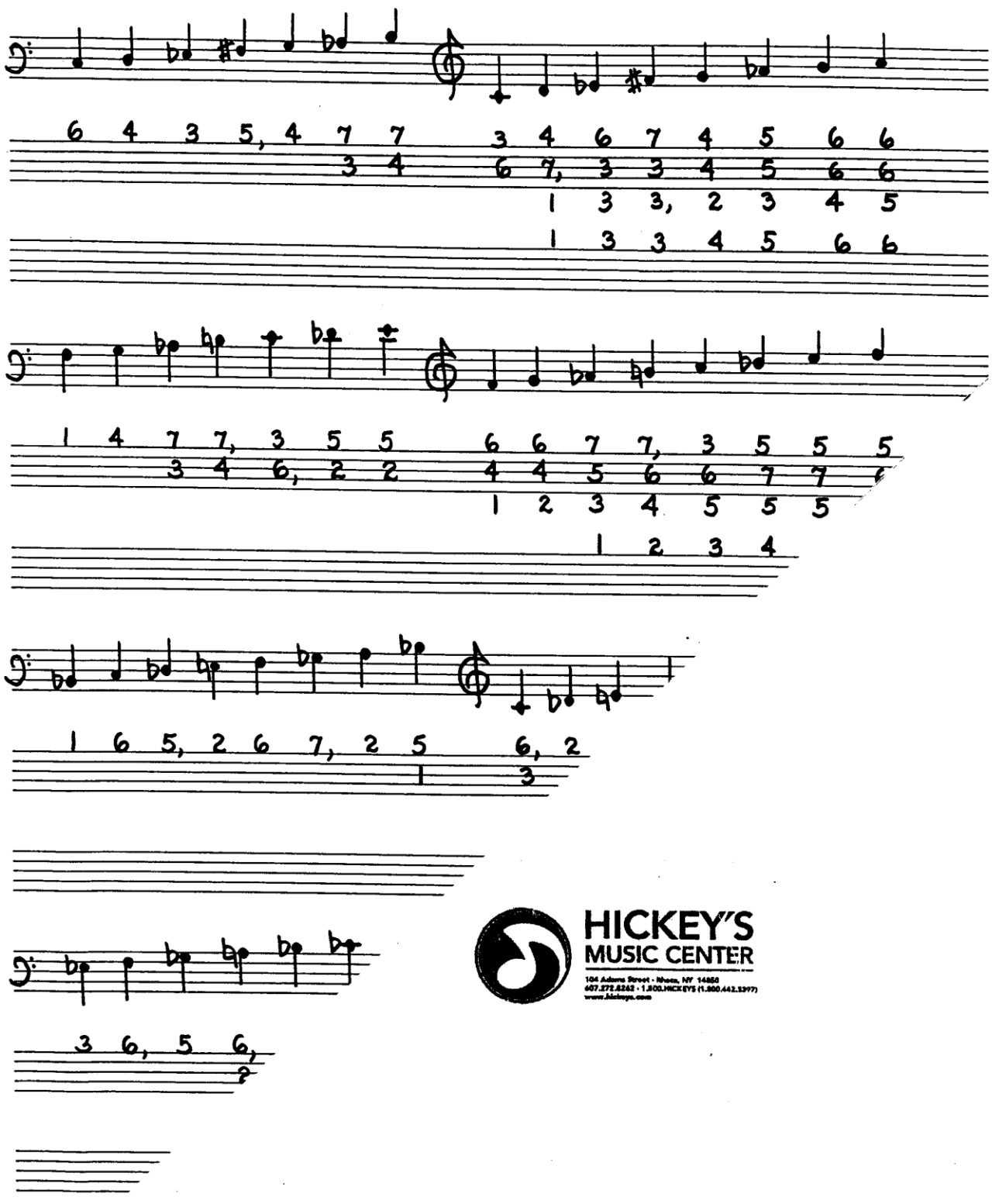
Augmented Gypsy

1 2♭3 #4 5♭6 7 8



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