RANGE DEVELOPMENT

As inovative arrangers keep pushing their pens harder - and writing brass parts higher, mastery of the uppper register becomes, "the name of the game". Consistent range, power, and endurance are essential if we wish to be successful in any field of contemporary music. Should we attempt to confront these 'demons' by guesswork? If so, we are likely to run in to all sorts of complications. Many talented brass players defeat themselves in their attempt to develop a powerful upper register by forsaking basic common sense.

Generally speaking, performing in the upper register has always been a source of respect and status for brass instrumentalists. This is especially true of trumpeters - many of whom have enjoyed great success as a result of their ability to perform artistically in the extremely high register. The popularity attached to range is, in great measure,due to the difficulty of acquiring this facility. This also accounts for the fact that among the thousands of competent brass men, relatively few have actually succeeded in mastering the extreme high register.

Actually, it's not the difficulty of acquiring range, but the fact that many of us take the wrong approach which prevents us from developing this skill. Until we adopt the correct mental concept - and the correct practice habits - we will never be rewarded with a relaxed and singing upper register.

On the other hand, devoting all our energies to the development of range alone is not the key to vesatile musicianship. This is only one facet of accomplished artistry. Let's not neglect all the other important ingredients that contribute to making one a good musician and enable one to express individual creativity.

We are all capable producing high notes - but first we must understand nature's requirements. We cannot just disregard the limitations of our physical endowments by over anxiously forcing our range without taking the preliminary steps to prepare ourselves for this exciting physical feat! It is quite possible that some of us may require less time and preparation to extend our upper register. We may have the benefit of unusually great elasticity and resiliency in both our facial muscles and lip tissues. As a general rule, however, our physical endowments and developmental requirements run pretty much the same. The important thing is that we maximize our own potential, and ensure the smooth development of this ability by taking care not to injure our lips.

Strong Arm Tactics Taboo

Any attempt to master the upper register by brut force is doomed to failure. Strong-arm tactics only hinde our progress by binding our embouchure, destroying the responsiveness and elasticity that is so essential to rang development. If we take the stong-arm approach it make no difference how much musical genius we may be gifte with - we will never raise above the level of mediocrity.

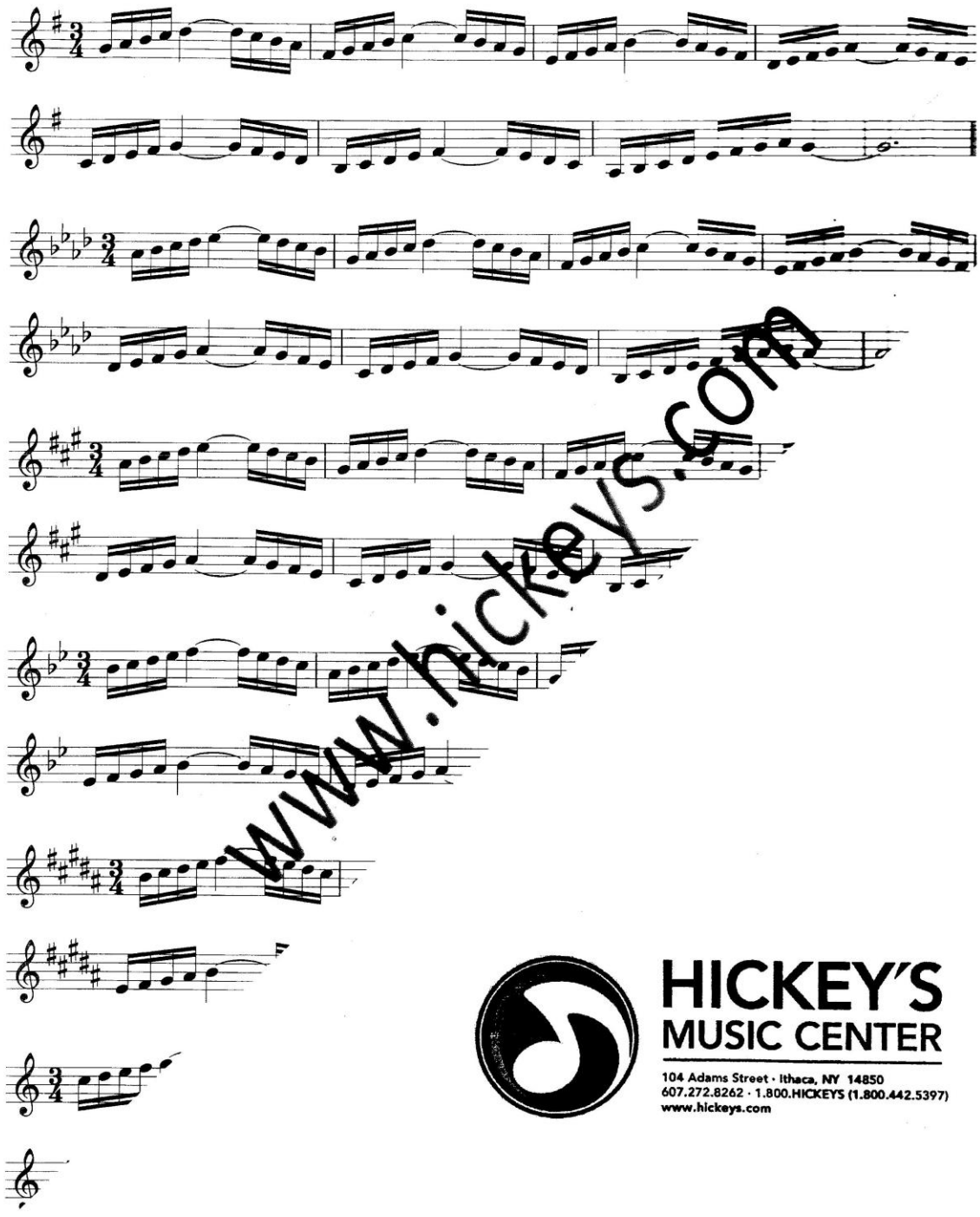
Since our body is the true instrument, common sence dictates that it must never be abused - but rather strengthened consistently through sound practice habits. Nature has given us only one body and it is irreplaceable If we fail to take proper care of this true instrument, the best teachers and the best equipment in the world will never help us play.

We must never struggle with, or force our upper register. It is much wiser to build our practice routine around a comfortable range. Using this as a foundation, we can then gradually expand our range step by step. Through patience and dedication we can develop the muscular coordination that is so essential for building range. Remember - save the strong-arm for playing sports - not in playing an instrument!

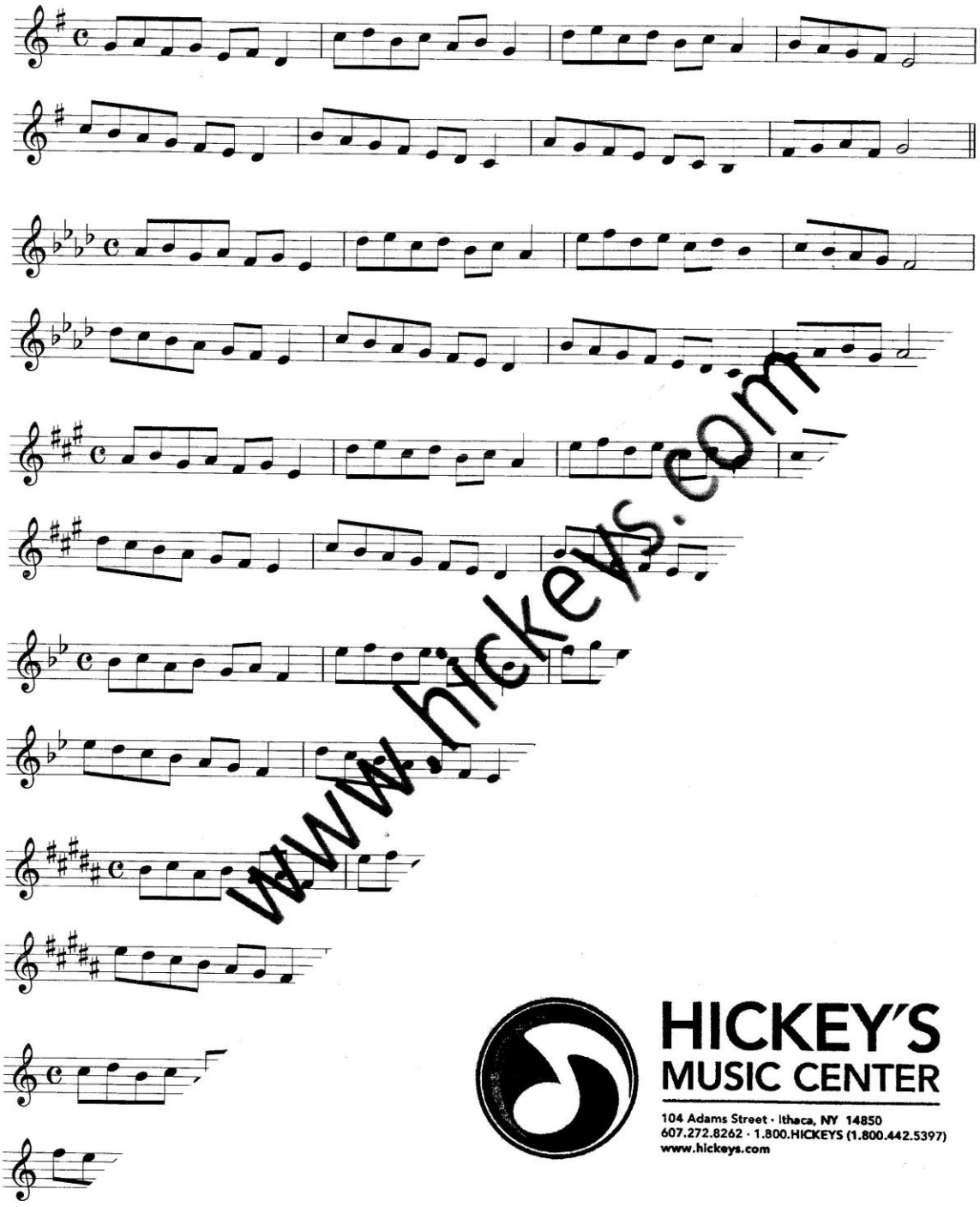
No" Lipping Up"

The phrase "lipping up or lipping down" are misnomers. Unfortuneately, they convey an erroneous mental concept and may therefore lead a brass student t form some faulty playing habits. In order to adjust our facial muscles for upper register playing, our tongue mus be arched toward the roof of the mouth. The lower jaw wi automatically move in tandem with the arched tongue. This movement sets the embouchure and facial muscles. The tongue-jaw action is determined by the formation of the interchanging breath syllables. The breath syllable that we select will depend on the particular pitch level tha we wish to play in. Similarly, by lowering the tongue arch slightly, and by relaxing the jaw somewhat, (in tandem with the movement of the arched rear tongue), we can slow down the frequency of the lip's vibration. This will, of course, lower the pitch. It is crucial that we place the emphasis on the action of our air-stream, rather than on the lips. There should be no apparant lip movement. Our lips will automatically be influenced by the formation of the breath syllables.

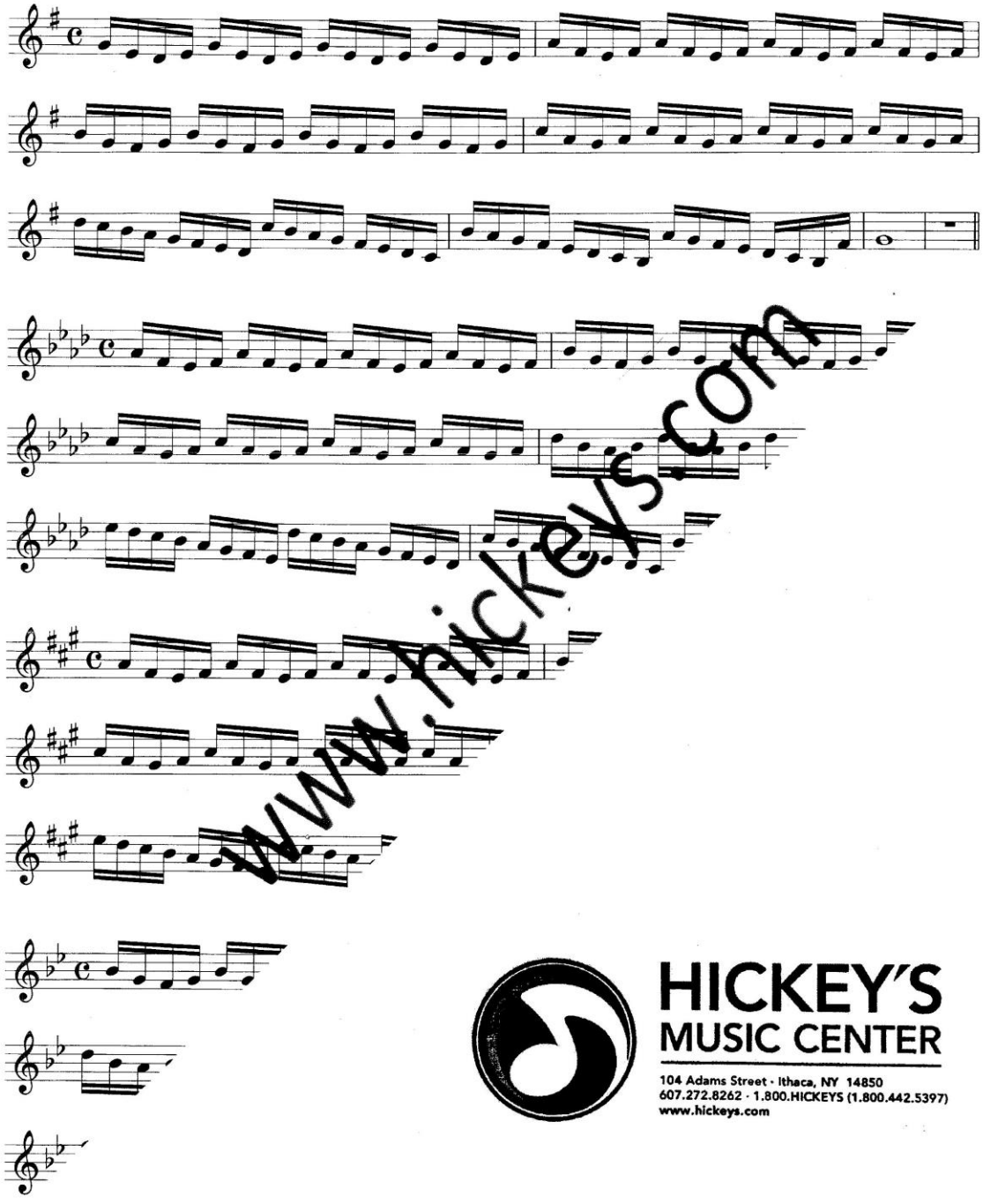
Exercise 1



Exercise 2

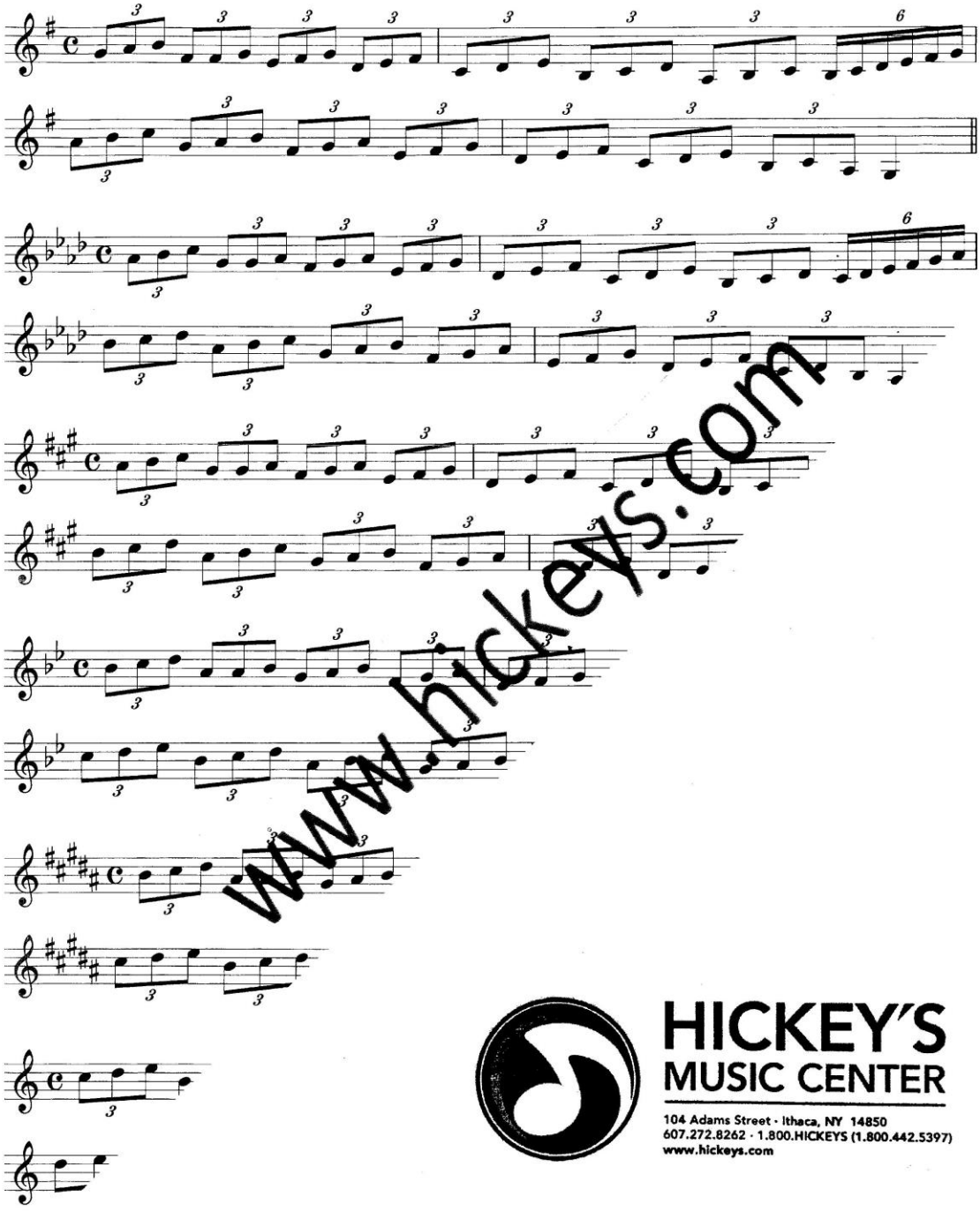


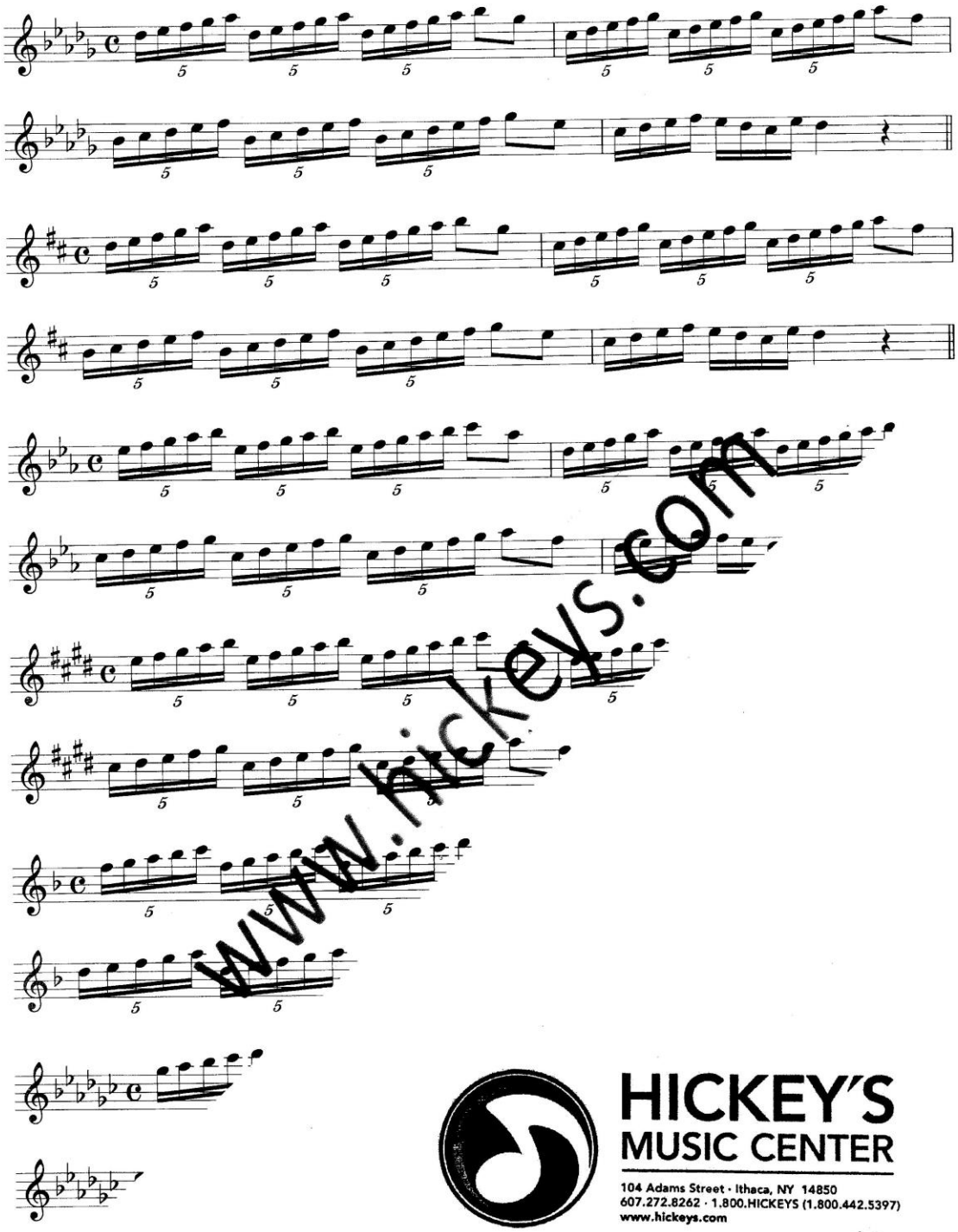
Exercise 6



Exercise 17

slur and articulate





HICKEY'S
MUSIC CENTER
104 Adams Street · Ithaca, NY 14850
607.272.8262 · 1.800.HICKEYS (1.800.442.5397)
www.hickeys.com