1

Bass

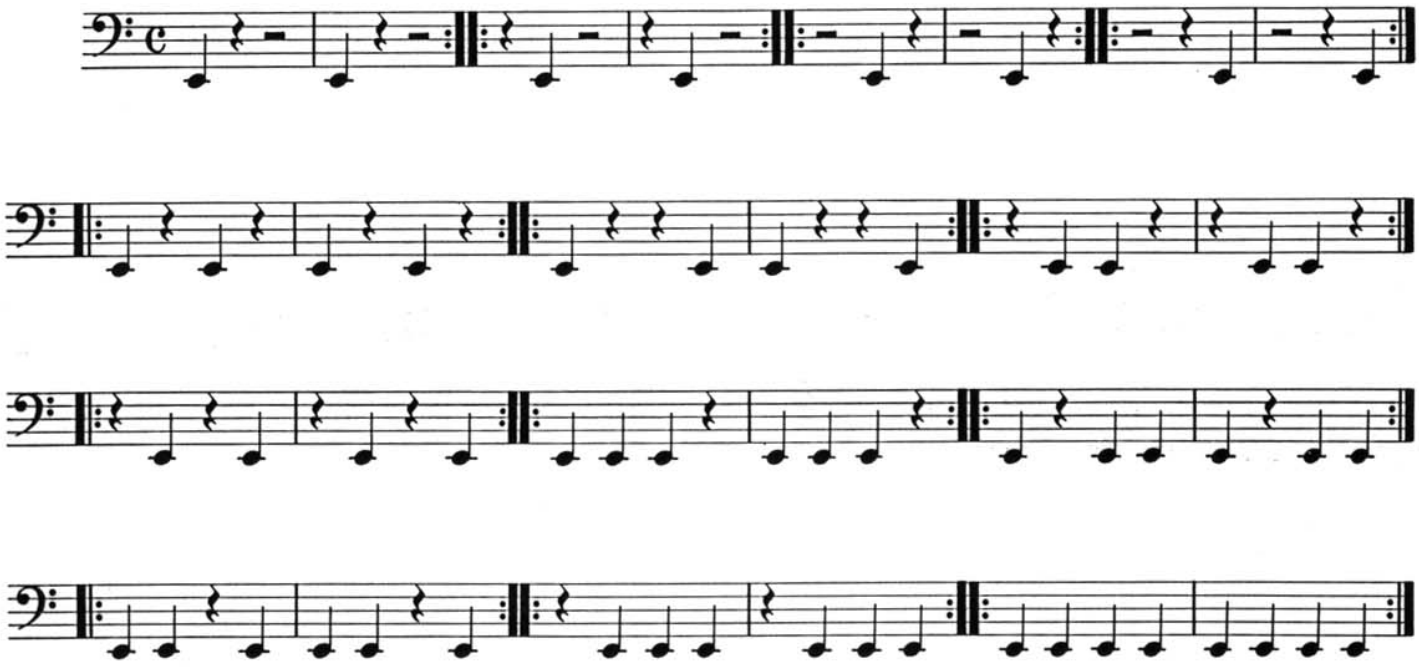
b. A percussive attack is characteristic of slap-bass playing. This percussive sound is produced by the string striking the fingerboard and frets of the bass, not by how hard you hit the string. You must strike the string firmly and accurately, but it isn't necessary to smash it!

c. A good sustaining note can be the most difficult thing to control. While it is very important to have the ability to sustain notes, it is more important to be able to control that sustained sound. One of the major problems involved with the recording of slap bass is background noise. If you are not always in control of the sounds coming from your instrument, you will almost certainly receive complaints from engineers and producers about background noise in your sound. There are several ways to control the amount of sustain of a given note. For instance, in many situations you may simply lay the fingers of your left hand across the strings at the instant you wish to mute the strings. This is a technique you probably use already in your everyday playing. Another muting technique which works well with slap-bass playing involves the heel of the right hand. You will be striking the strings of the bass with your thumb on what I will call the down-stroke (see Fig. 1). On the up-stroke you can allow the heel of your right hand to touch the strings just enough to mute them (see Fig. 2). With a little practice this can be a very effective muting technique.

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

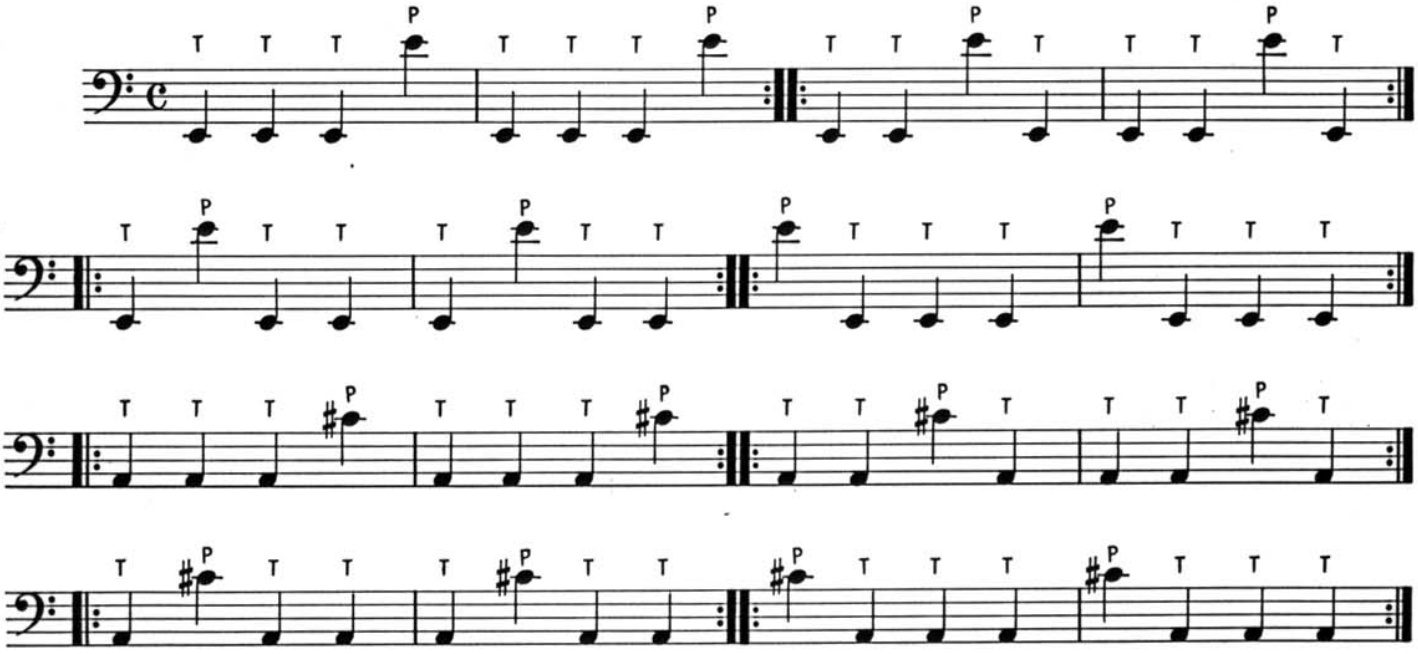
This exercise should be practiced as written without stopping between sections. ALWAYS USE A METRONOME!



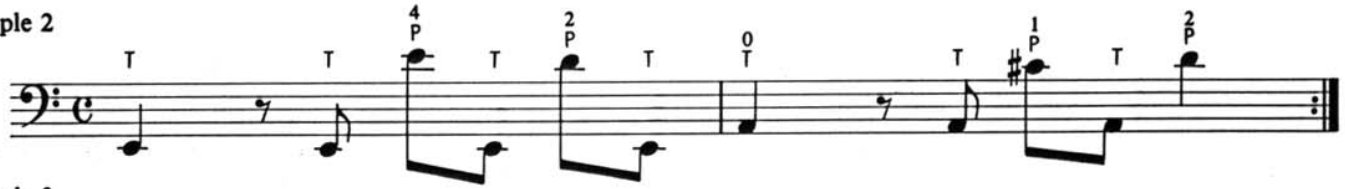
I suggest that you use your first finger to pop the strings. The best way to facilitate alternation between your thumb and first finger is to make sure that your first finger touches the bass each time your thumb hits a string (see Fig. 1). This way your first finger will be in position on every up-stroke to pop a string (see Fig. 3). As you practice the exercises you will develop a feel for this. Please take it easy at first; it is possible to develop some nasty blisters if you overdo it!

Fig. 3

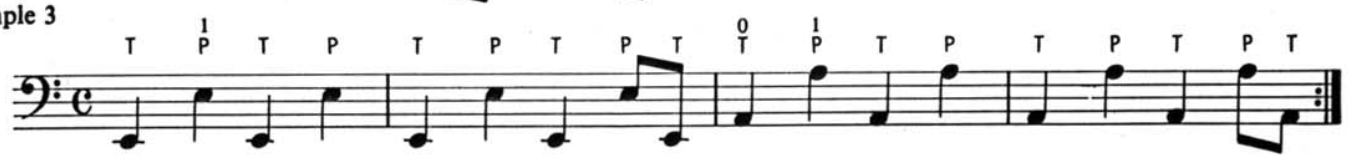
When practicing these exercises let your wrist do the work involved in popping the string, not your finger. Use the up-stroke to pop the string with your first finger, and the down-stroke to slap the string with your thumb. DON'T FORGET TO USE A METRONOME!



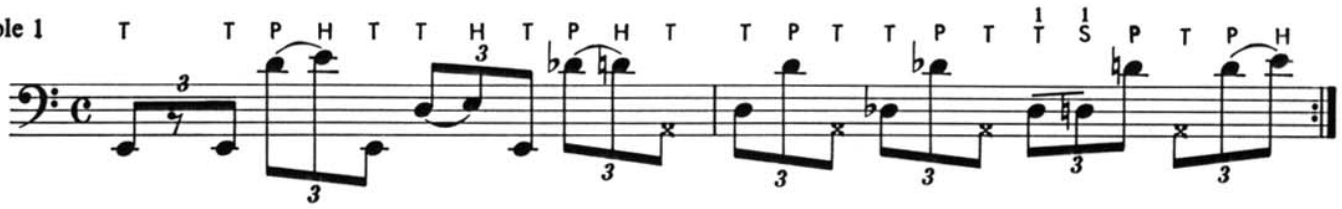
Example 2

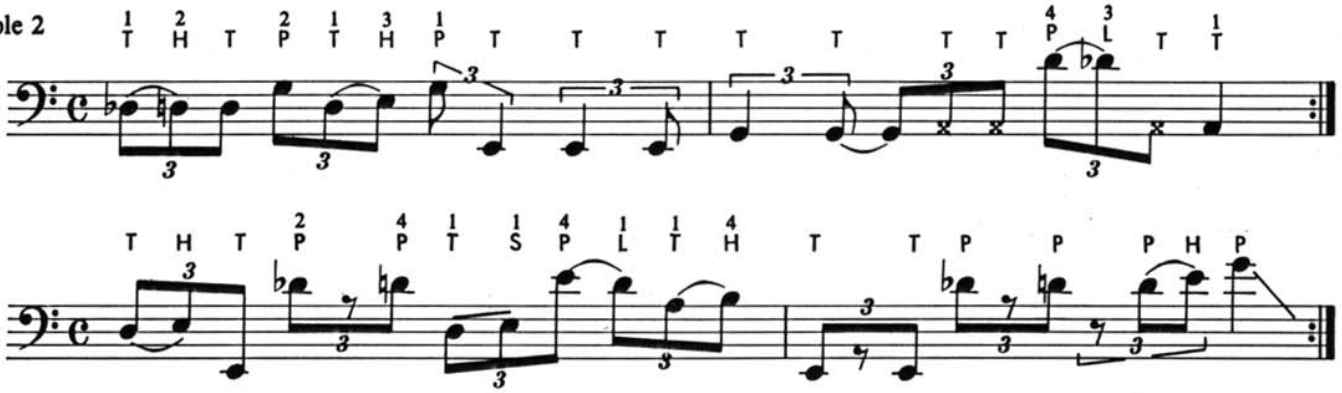


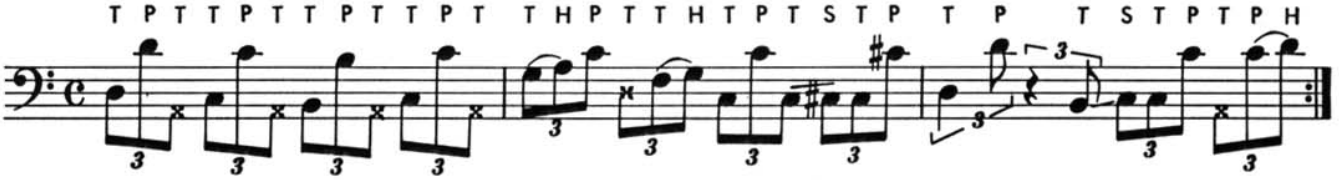
Example 3



Example 1







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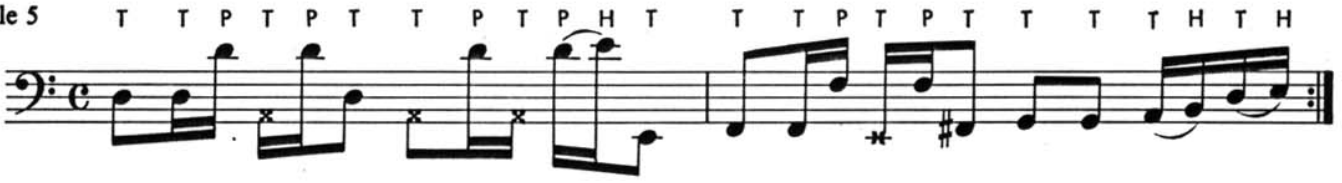
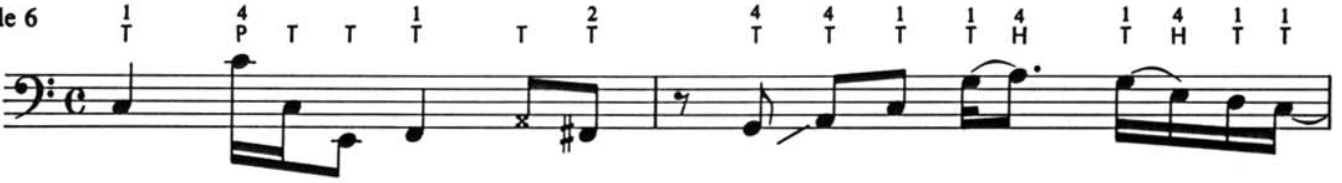
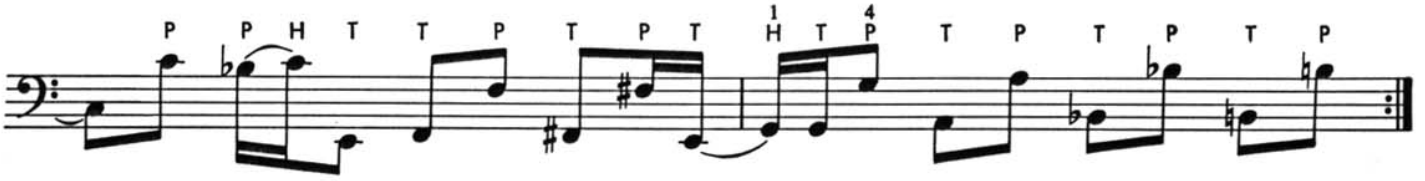
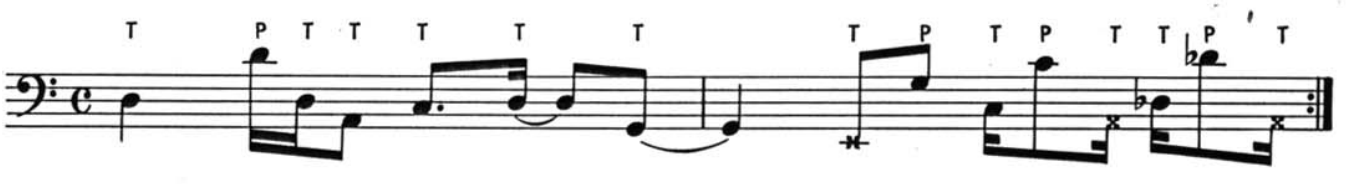
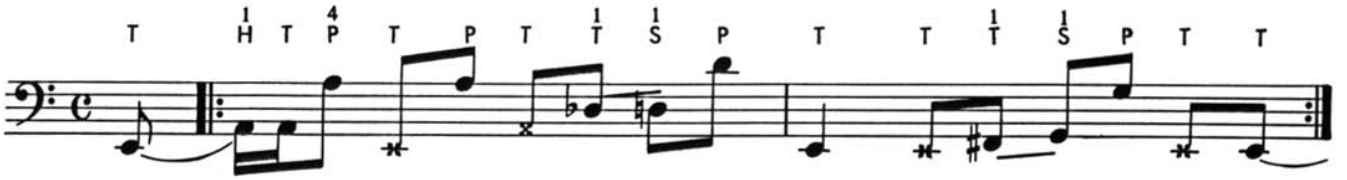


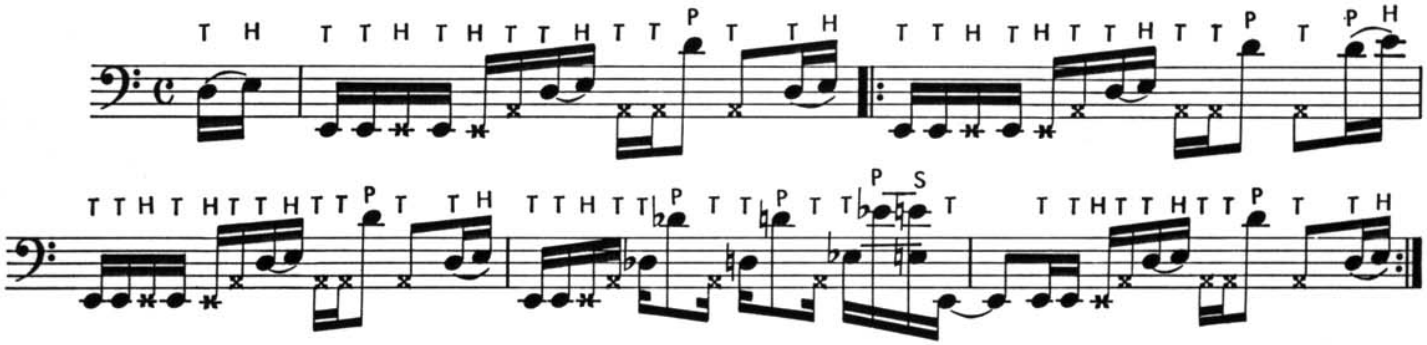
Example 6



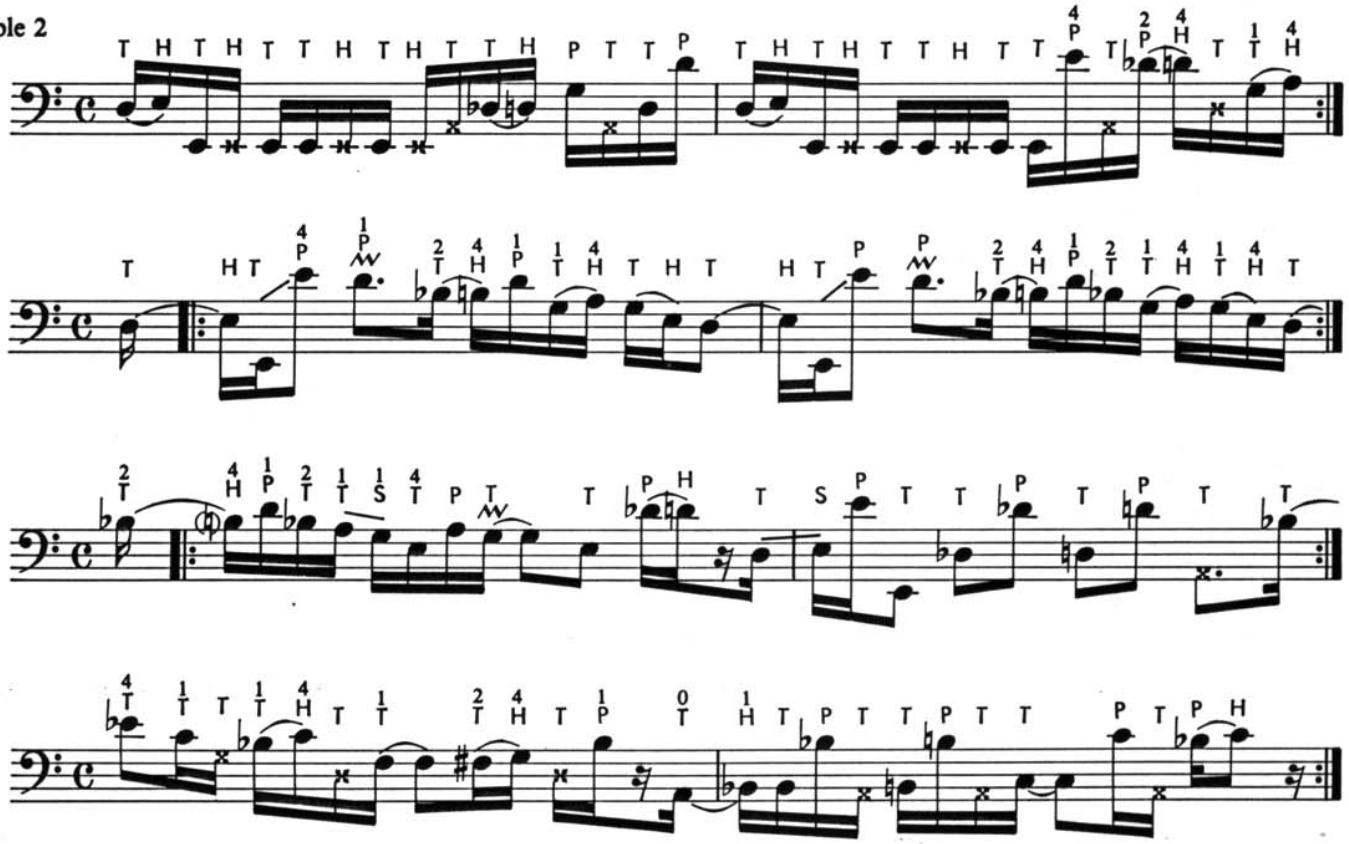




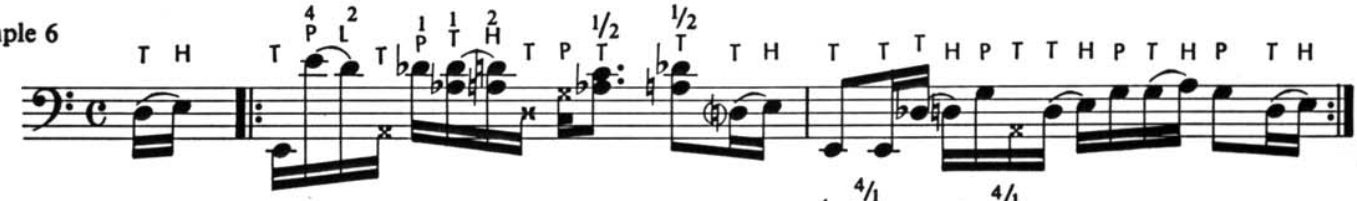




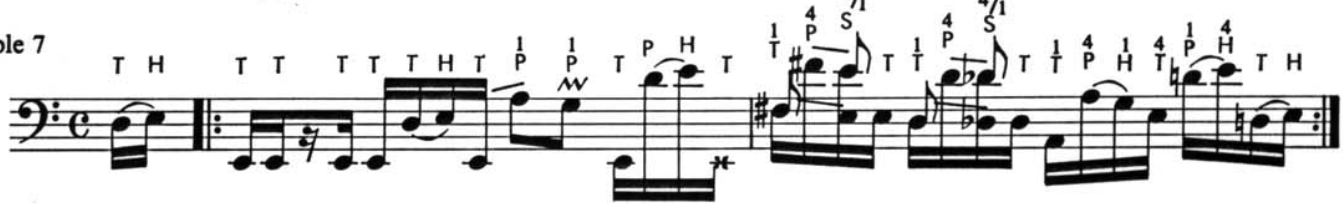
Example 2



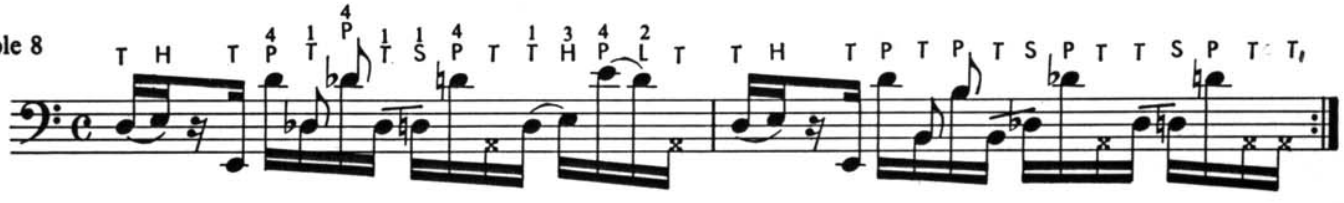
Example 6



Example 7



Example 8



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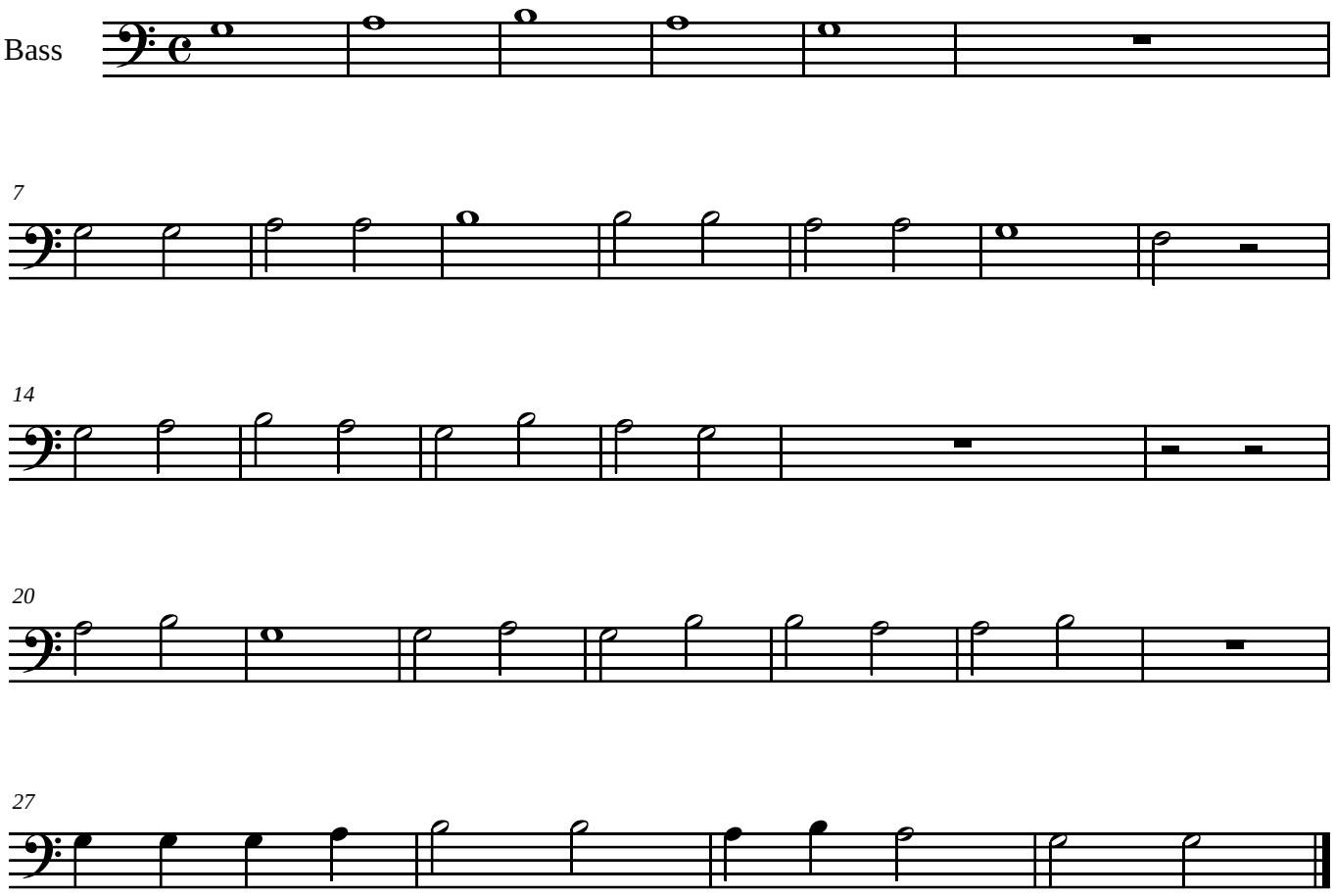
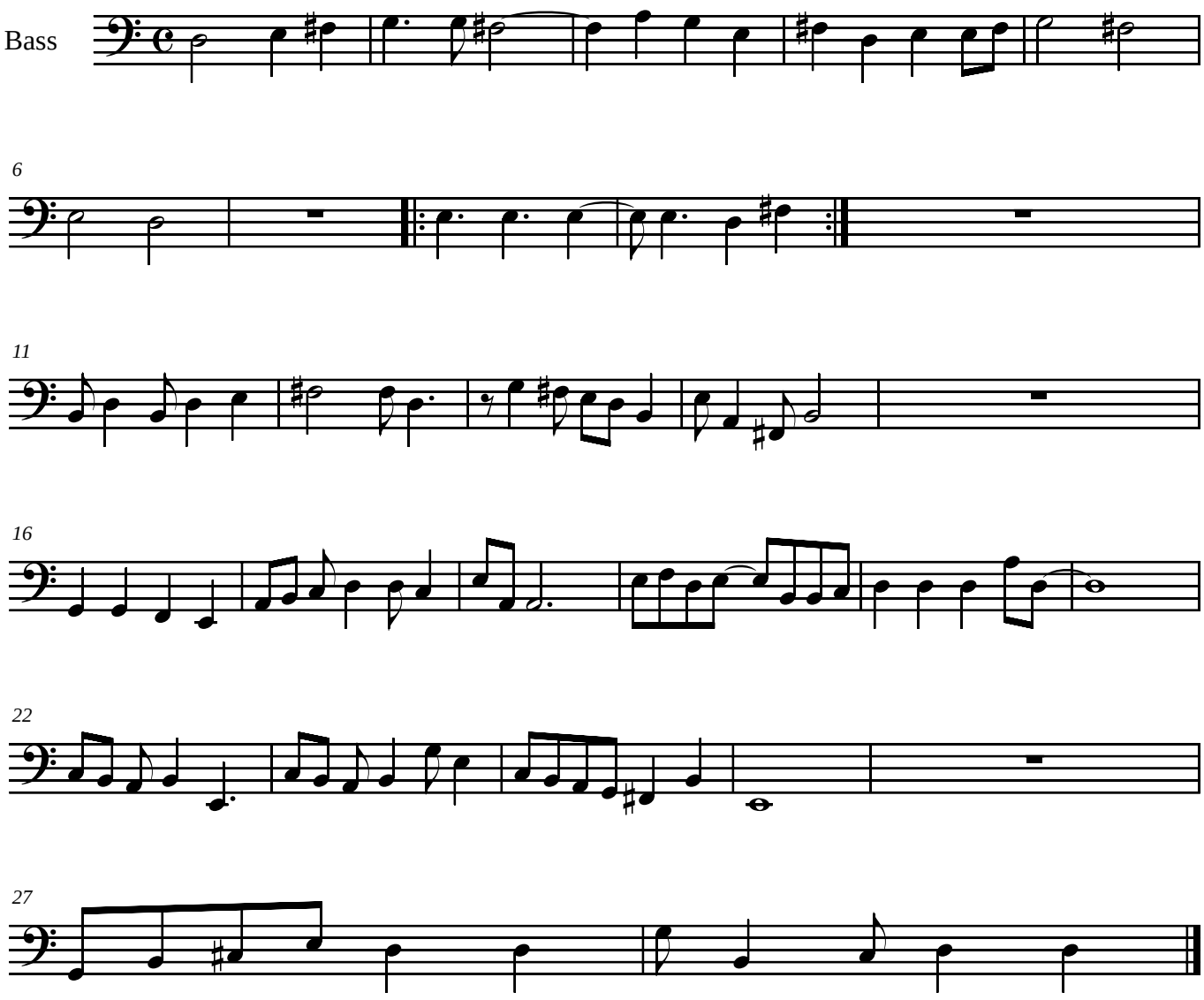
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