Creative Harping

Modes for Moods

and their Use in Improvisation

The Aeolian Mode

Evocative, Dreamy, Melancholic, Quiet

There are seven modes used with the major scale, and four of them are considered to be minor modes. They are the Dorian, Phrygian, Aeolian and Locrian modes and they all have a minor 3rd in common.

The Aeolian Mode is sometimes referred to as the "natural minor" mode. Its one special feature is that lowered leading tone which makes it so similar to the Dorian and Phrygian modes. Intimate and poetic, this mode has a sweet quality to its melodies.

In Kay Gardner's book, Sounding the Inner Landscape, she writes:
"MUSICAL ORIGINS - Ancient Greek modes are named for the tribes of peoples who traveled through the ancient empire. The three major tribes were the Ionians from Asia Minor, the Aeolians from the island of Lesbos, and the Dorians of the Peloponnesus..... Each tribe or culture, residing in a particular geographical locations, would have a set of sounds from which to draw its music. The wind blowing across artic plains would be very different from the wind blowing across a densely forested or mountainous area. Rain in a tropical forest would sound very different from a downpour on grasslands. Various peoples, in their imitations of these natural sounds, would, as a result, have a very different collections of sounds. It is for these geographical reasons that each country, each region, each tribe has its specific and unique musical scales, modes, and ragas reflecting the sounds of Nature and the sounds of these societies at work."

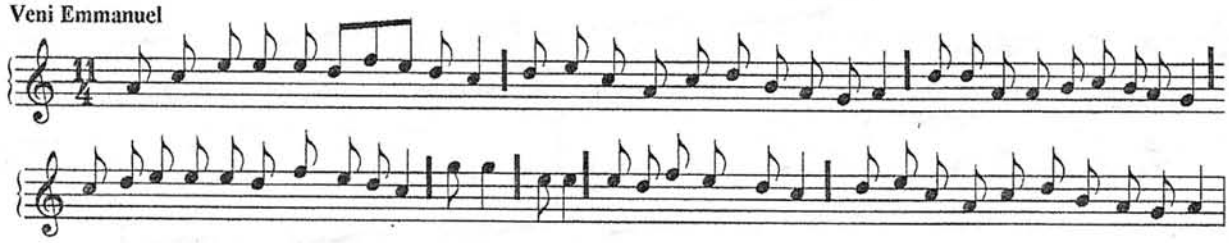
The Aeolians inhabited the Greek Island of Lesvos - (Lesbos). The lush, green island of Lesvos is like no other. It is the third largest in the Aegean Archipelago behind Crete and Evia. Here is some history on Ancient Lesvos:

The evidence that archeological excavations have bought to light indicates that Lesvos has been inhabited since at least the Neolithic period. During the Bronze age it had already developed an exceptionally advanced civilization. The excavations that were carried out in the nineteen-thirties by the English archeologist Winifred Lamb in the area around Thermi, exposed settlement structures of small towns. After the discovery the settlement was covered up but visitors can see the portable finds at the Mytilini Museum: clay pots, figurines, tools weapons and so forth. These excavations have revealed that a civilzation developed on the island similar to the Trojan and Mycenean. The geographical location of the island allowed it to be influenced by the neighboring Troy.

In 1507 B.C. the island was colonized by the Pelasgians. In 1393-1184 it was ruled by the Aecheans and from 1100-1000, by the ***Aeolians*** *who intermingled with the old population and gave the island their language and culture. The people of Lesvos became extremely active on the sea and colonized the coast of Asia Minor which became known as the Coast of the Mytilinians. At Troy they build Achilleio in honor of Achilles and a little further north they built Sigeio. Their command of the sea brought them into conflict with the Athenians. A note: The Apostle Paul came to the island in 52 AD.*

Many of the beautiful medieval tunes were written in the Aeolian mode. While playing the harp for people walking the labyrinth at Chartres Cathedral in France, the mood of this 800 year old divine place would only call forth medieval tunes in the Aeolian mode. *Christina Tourin (Here is a beautiful Aeolian Medieval plainsong)*

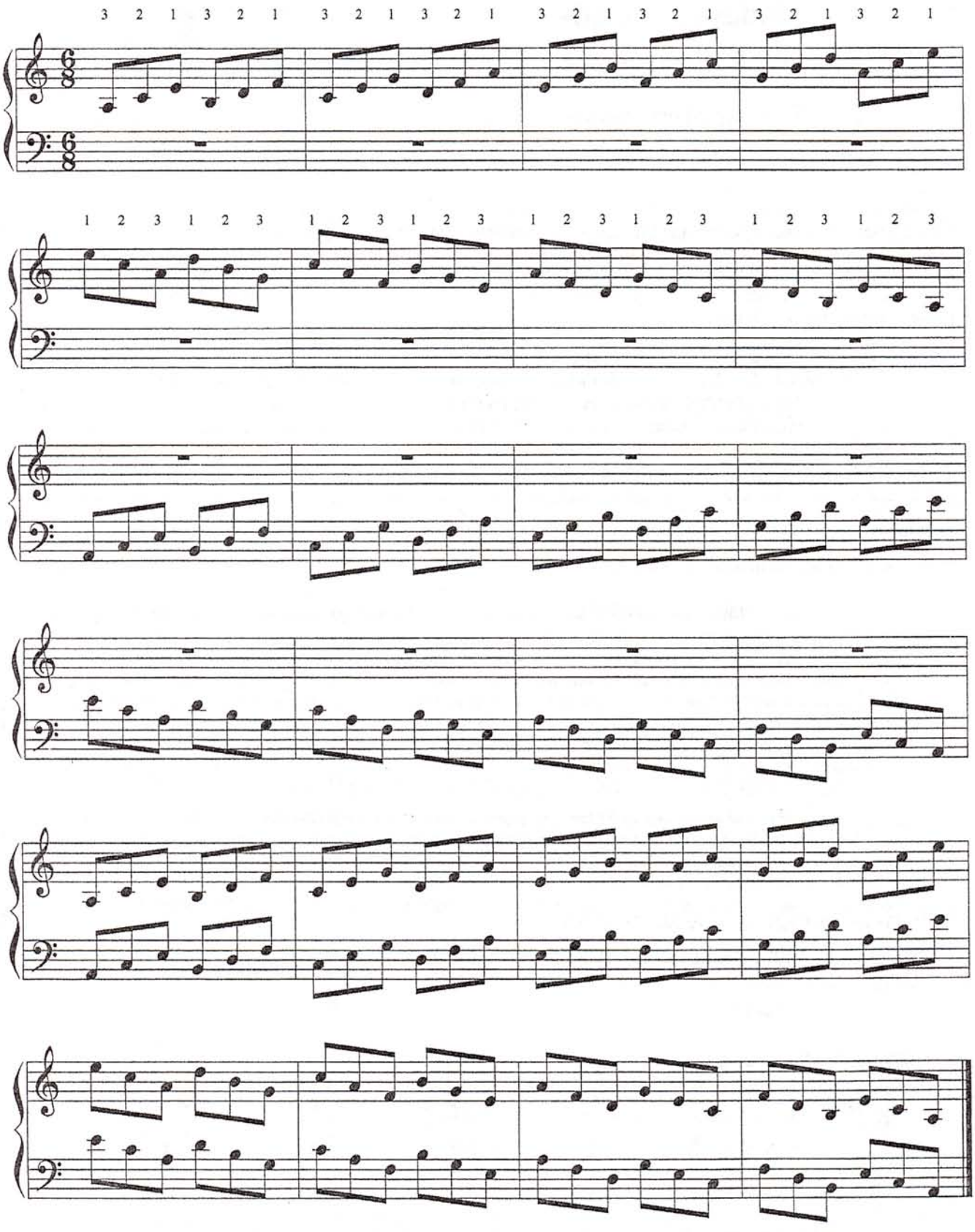
Veni Emmanuel



In hospital and healing areas, we use the Aeolian Mode when a patient is resting in a fetal position and is in a reflective and introspective mood. The Aeolian Mode can transition nicely from the Ionian Mode and it also blends well with the Dorian Mode.

Be sure to place all fingers
before playing

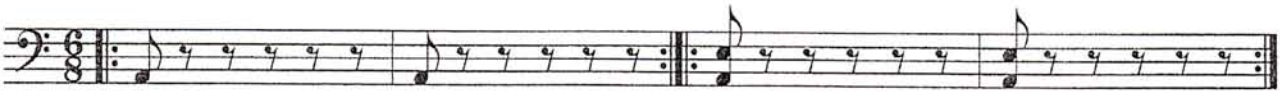
Exercise in the Aeolian Mode



Left Hand Patterns
Aeolian Mode

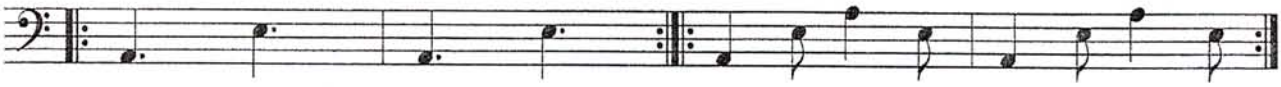
1st pattern - single note

2nd pattern - 5th interval



3rd pattern - broken 5th

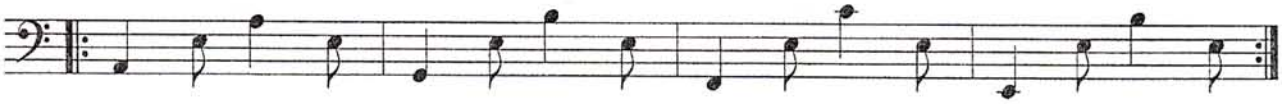
4th pattern - octave rock



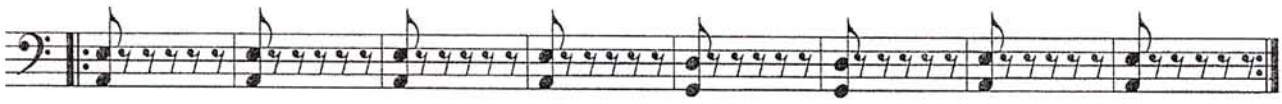
5th pattern - roving thumb

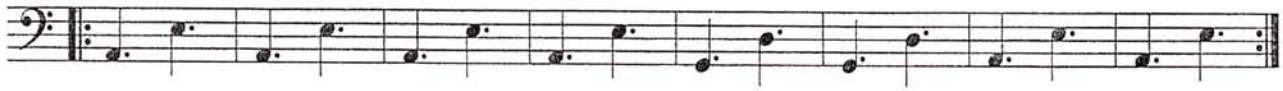
6th pattern - roving 4th

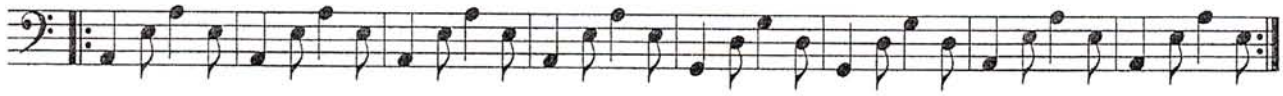
7th pattern - roving thumb and 4th

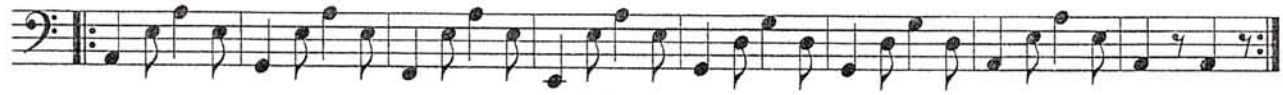


8 Bar Chord Change Phrases

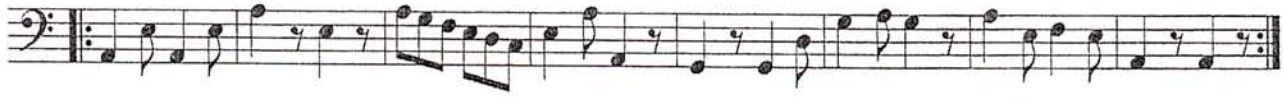








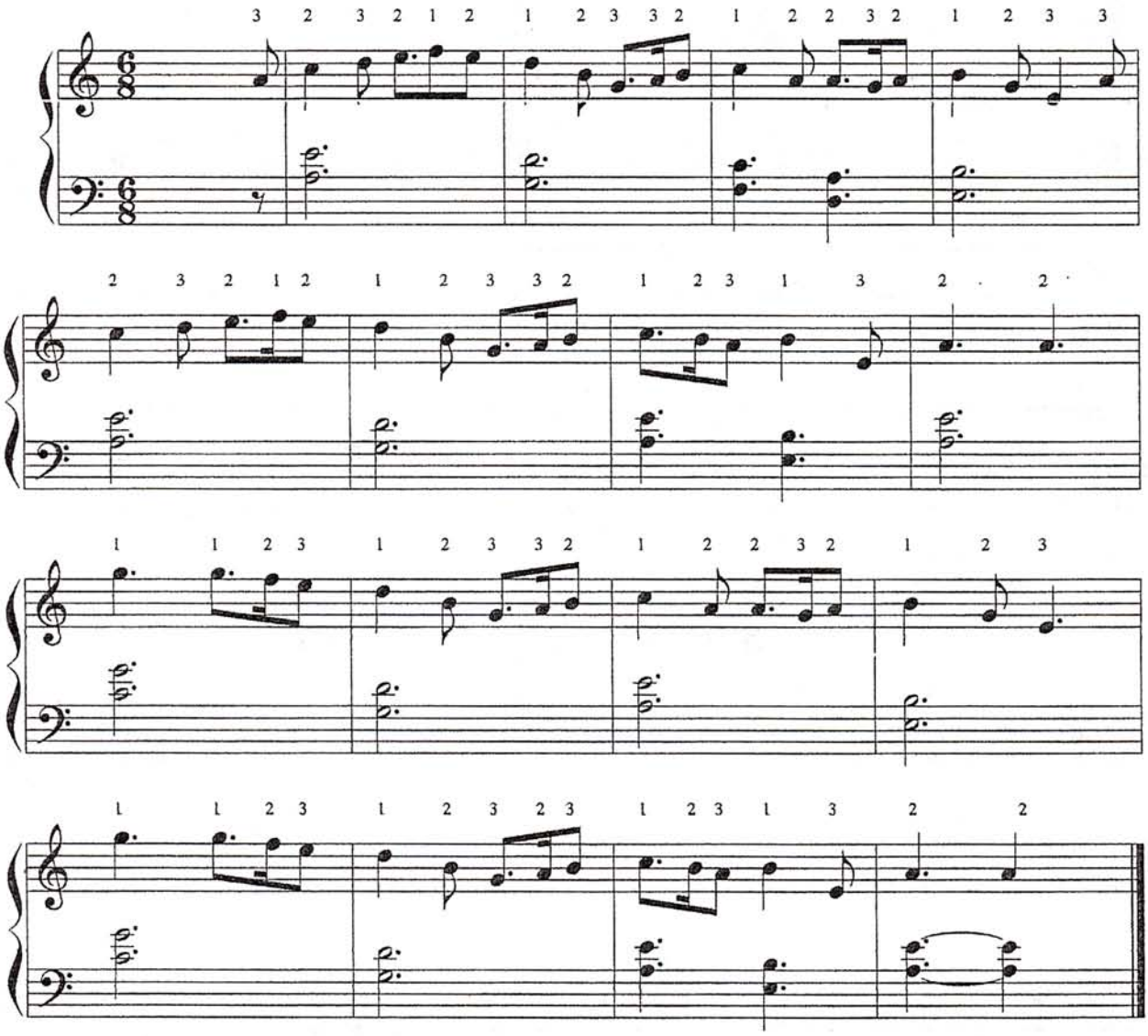
mix and match



Note: Remember - the right hand needs to play along (without looking at it.) If your right hand does not seem to move along, then you have attempted a left-hand pattern that is beyond your challenge point.

Greensleeves

Beginner
England

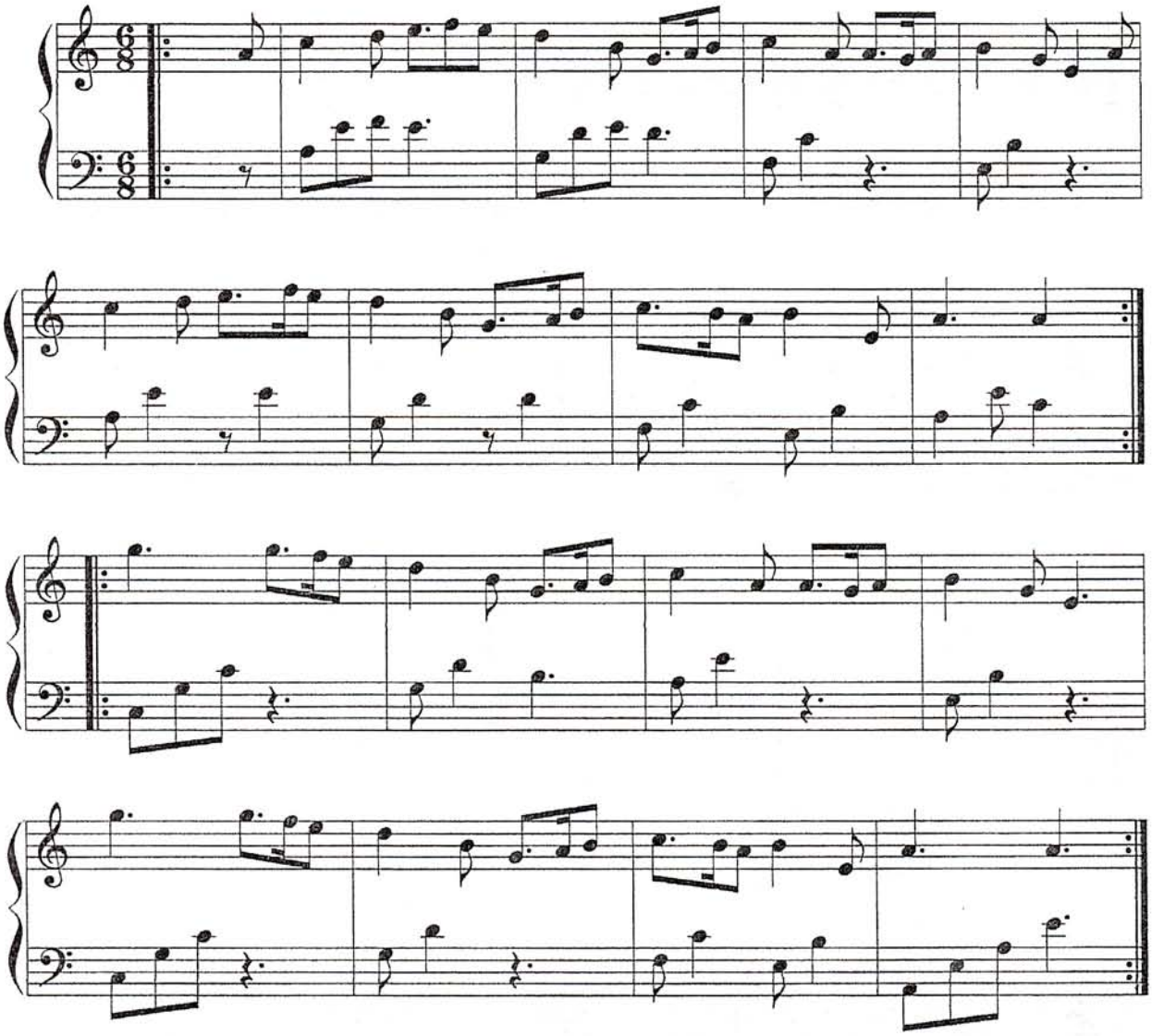


An Improvisational Pattern

A23456 **A**23456 **G**23456 **A**23456 repeat this pattern

Greensleeves

Intermediate
England



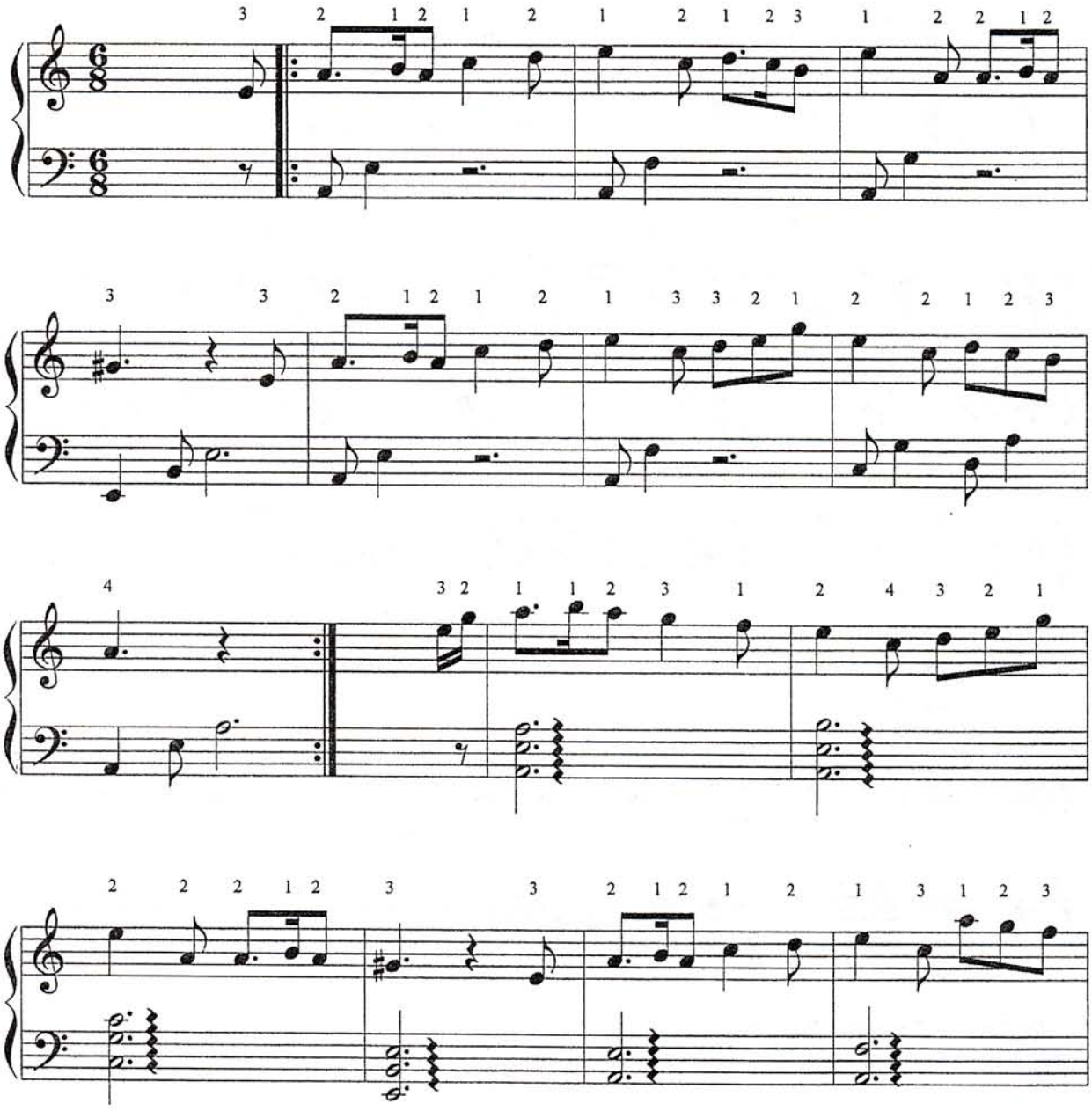
An Improvisational Pattern

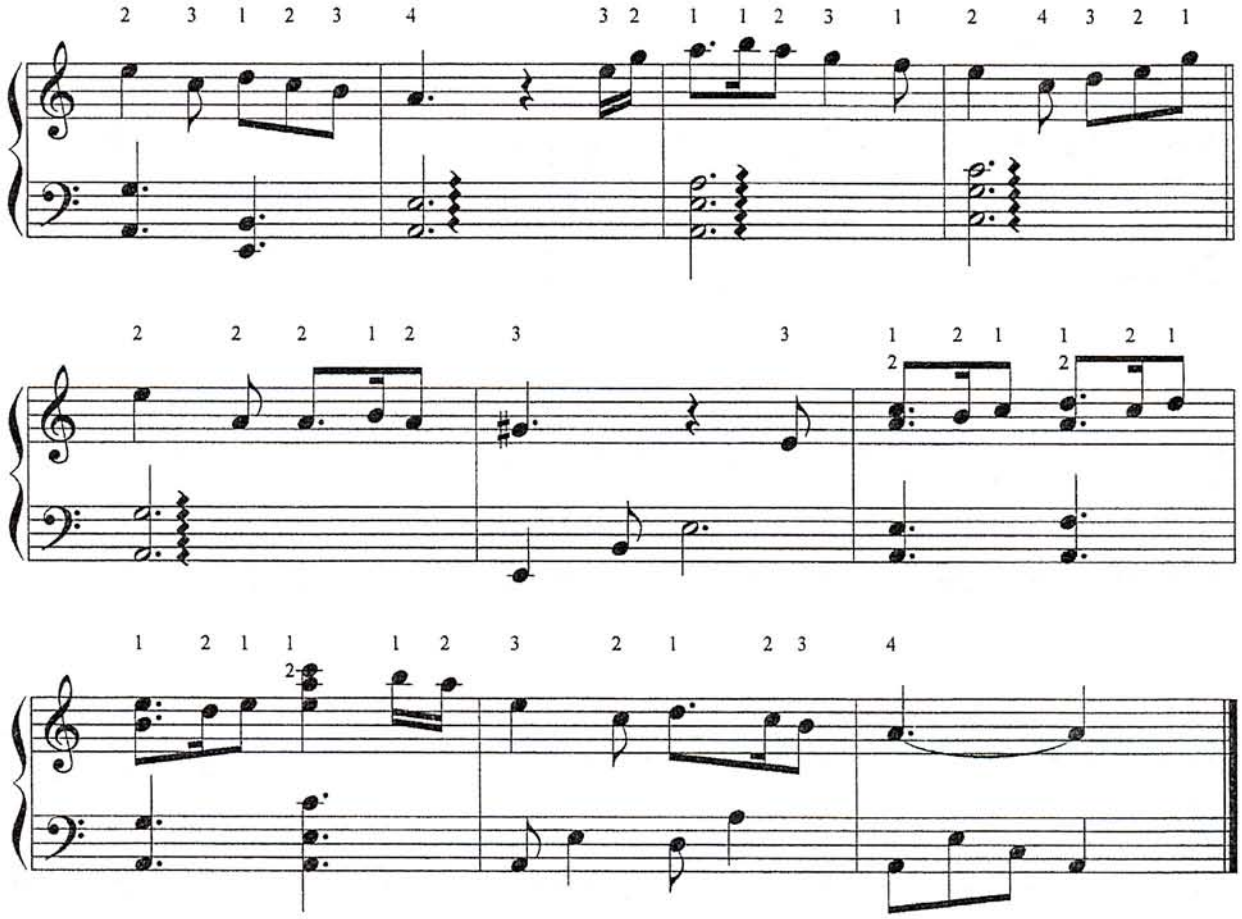
A23456 **A**23456 **G**23456 **A**23456 repeat this pattern

Mary, Young and Fair

Set G# above Middle C or play B if you do not have a G lever

Scottish
arr. by C. Tourin

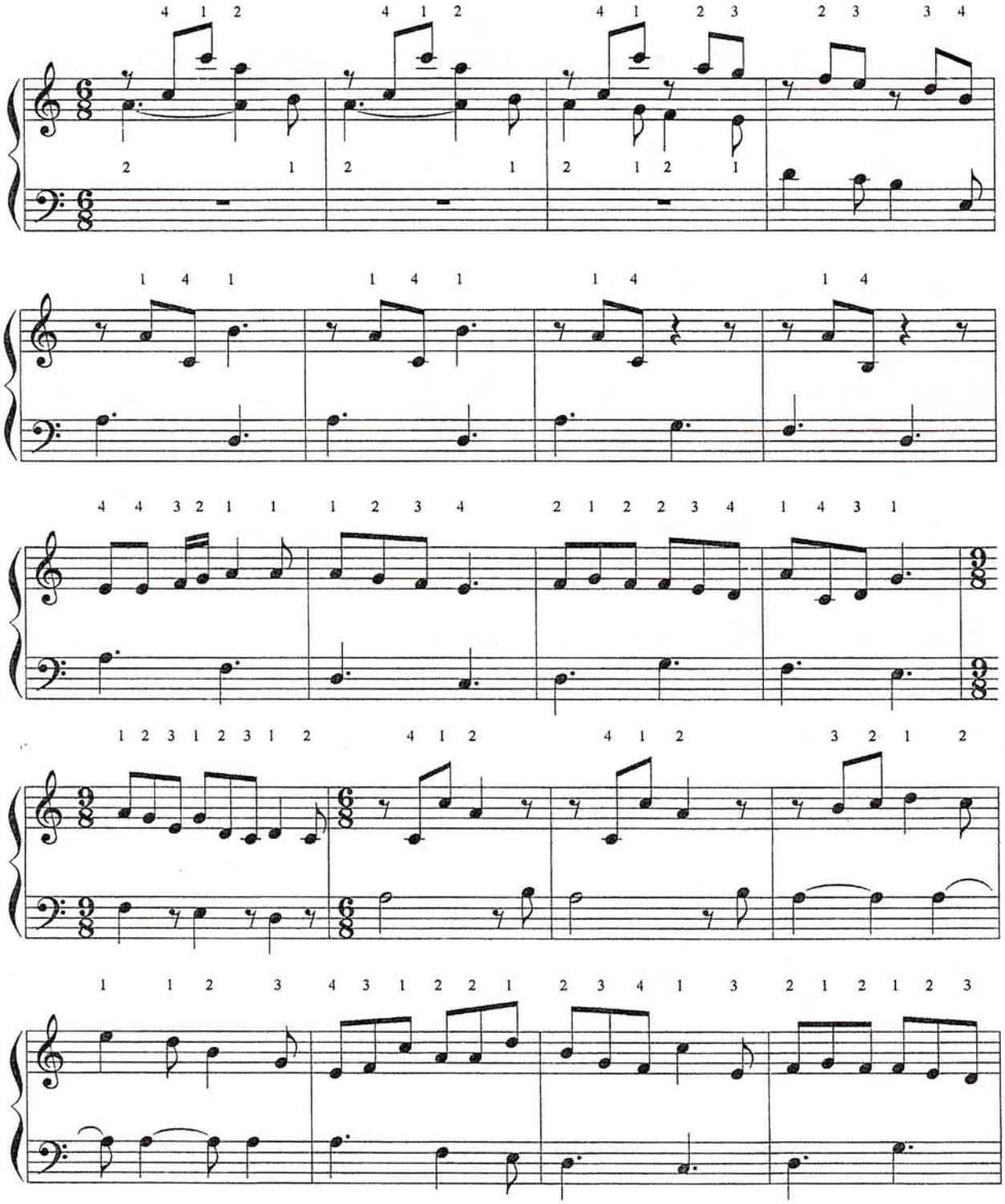


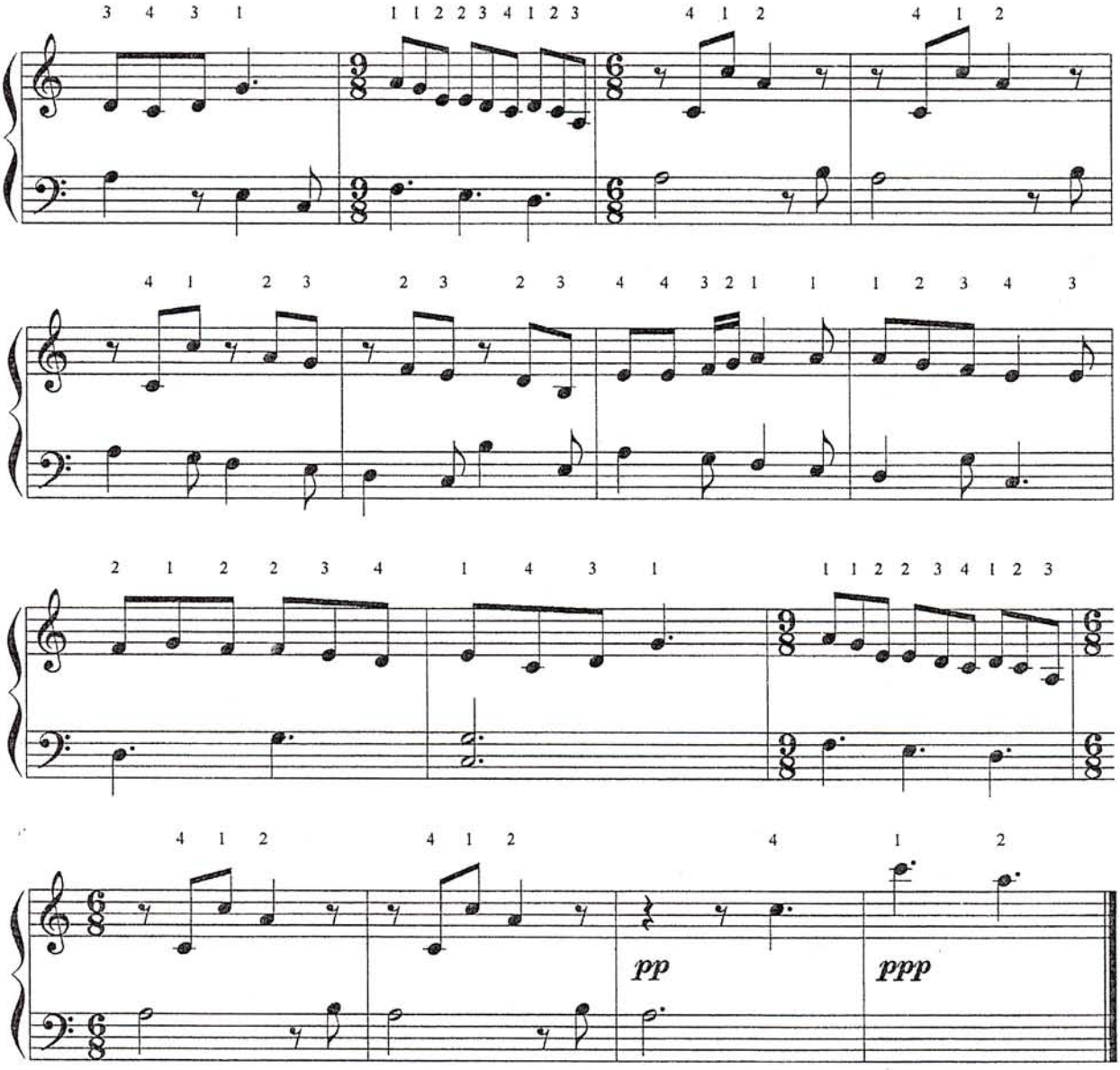


Little Boats

arr. by Herbert Hughes
Taken down from a singer at
Drogheda at end of 18th c.
rearr. for harp - C. Tourin

Andante (♩= c.52)





I

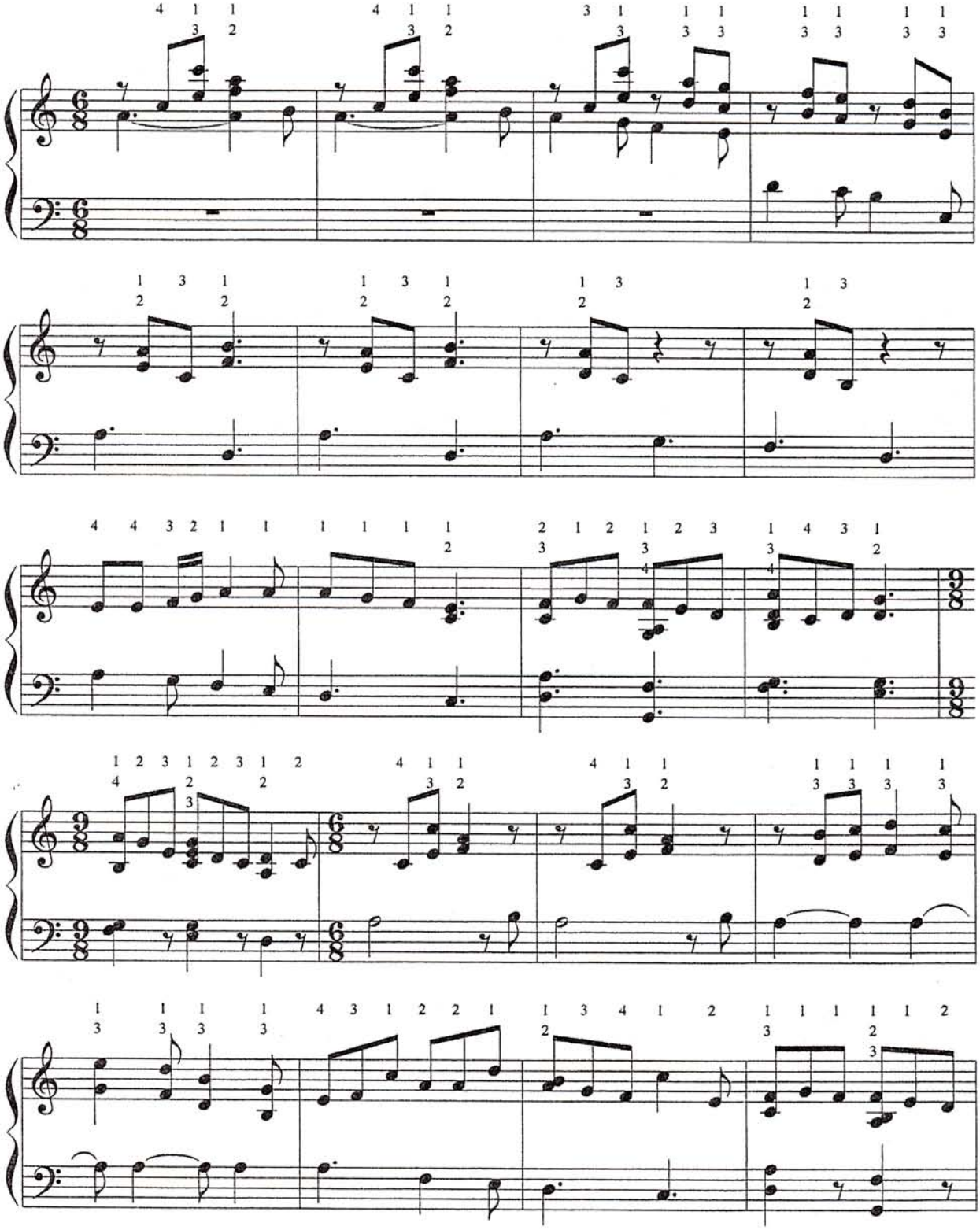
Improvisation

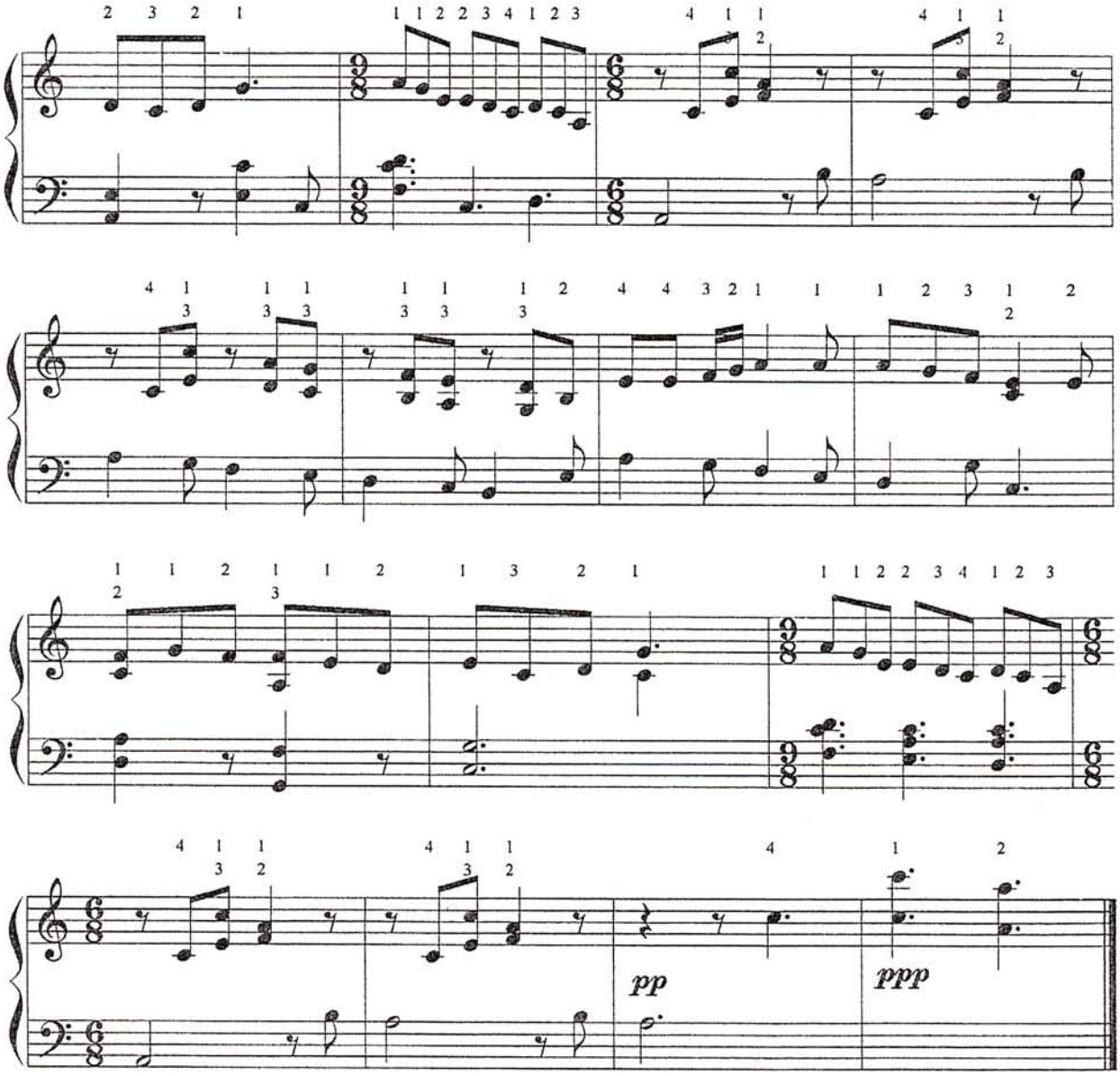
You can focus on only Am:	A23456 A23456 A23456 A23456 -- keep repeating
or add a Dm	A23456 A23456 D23456 A23456 -- keep repeating
or you can go from Am to G:	A23456 A23456 G23456 A23456 -- keep repeating

Little Boats

arr. by Herbert Hughes
Taken down from a singer at
Drogheda at end of 18th c.
Advanced version

Andante (♩= c.52)





Improvisation

You can focus on only Am:	A23456 A23456 A23456 A23456 -- keep repeating
or add a Dm	A23456 A23456 D23456 A23456 -- keep repeating
or you can go from Am to G:	A23456 A23456 G23456 A23456 -- keep repeating