VOLUME ONE

All 48 Preludes and 48 Fugues of the Well-Tempered Clavier

J.S. Bach

THE COMPLETE WELL-TEMPERED GUITAR

Adapted by J.A. Blyth

A New Approach to Transcription, in Four Volumes

J.S.Bach
48
Preludes and Fugues

adapted by
J.A.Blyth
The Well-Tempered Guitar

All of the preludes and fugues
of Das Wohltemperiete Klavier
in a new medium

Notes about playing this music. Are you sure this is what you want?

The guitar isn't just a different instrument from the harpsichord, it's a different world. Notes left will still resonate if there are open strings that have those pitches as part of their harmonic spectrum. It's a much more pleasant experience for player and listener alike if one doesn't hang onto long notes for their full value: sound decays swiftly on the guitar anyway, so if you want sustain, either play in a resonant space or enhance your sustain electronically. That's why, for most of these fugues, the individual voices are not delineated: you can discover them as you become familiar with the music, although what is happening at the top and the bottom of the musical texture ought to be clear in this respect.
Many of the ornaments customary in music of this style are impossible or very awkward to play consistently in music of this complexity, even in the original, but especially on the solo guitar; accordingly I've left all of Bach's ornamental indications out. A lot of this repertoire is playable, ornaments, original pitches and all, if there is more than one player, and there are arrangements out there in the world for two or more guitars. However the only way to play this music completely, as would not surprise or dismay its composer, is on a two manual harpsichord. These adaptations have a rather limited original purpose: to allow a guitarist - me - to develop a more intimate feel of aspects of these peerless compositions, and indeed to wallow in them. I know a great deal about the performance practice styles appropriate to this music, however my aim here is not scholarly, but self-indulgent, and I find it necessary to ignore many things in order to have these adaptations exist at all.

Bach's fugues are about balance.

They balance elements that, in the rest of life - and even in much of the rest of music and art generally - go together only rather unevenly or unequally if at all.
Ideas are worked out with some rigour, while expression is always there - frequently the expression not of the austerity of the process and procedures (which do often have their own Affekt). His fugue subjects are constructed in such a way as to be both amenable to particular contrapuntal and harmonic elaboration while having a sufficiently unique and striking character as to be able to be picked out by listeners as the music becomes more complex. Additionally they are usually immediately memorable, having a character that strikes us and doesn't fade. They are often versions of fugue subjects which already have a long history in music before Bach.
In the case of the first book of The Well-Tempered Clavier, Bach is always ready to allow some leeway in the strictness for expressive purposes, sometimes even in the most rigorous sections. For all his immense intellectual capacity and ingenuity, the expressiveness and the humanity come first, certainly to a greater extent than in his later music. If intellectual perfection is approached impressively in these works, perfect humanity is everywhere evident.
Fugues in general - and especially in the jealous guild-like world of Eighteenth-Century European music - are supposed to follow various kinds of rules, depending on the kind of fugue (yes, there are many kinds of fugue!). All of the works here have in common the principle that voices enter in canon at the fifth - whether the subject is modified at such an entry or not - and then subsequent entries alternate tonic and dominant, until all of the voices have been heard.
After this sequence of canon there is usually an episode which may be canonic itself or not, but is generally felt to be simpler and less strict, although the very first fugue of the Wohltemperirte Klavier dispenses with episodes and continues with stretti (singular: stretto, an Italian word meaning 'strict') of increasing density. a typical fugue alternates these demanding - on both player and listener - sections but this one wants to make a point that its author is a master of his craft and that he can be trusted with what is to follow.

Balance is what must be employed in listening to Bach's fugues (and playing them!), since one can't consciously attend to everything that is going on at once. There is a notion, apocryphally attributed to Bach, that an attentive ear can't really pick out more than three things happening simultaneously, to which I might add: except by taking attention away from the experience to work things out. While I listen to a Bach fugue I find there is certainly enough to occupy my attention, even although I have been very familiar with these pieces as a listener for almost forty years, and have often played them through, slowly and haltingly, since I am not a keyboard player, on the piano; hence my need for these adaptations, since I do play guitar, read guitar music well, and, being left-handed, have the optimum manually dexterity for polyphonic music on that instrument.

The guitar is a peculiar instrument though, with many things that would flow smoothly on the even-handed and naturally virtuosic keyboard being awkward or simply impossible. It also has a rather limited range, of which the top fifth - in the classical instrument - allows full counterpoint only strenuously and insecurely, as a result of the string tension and the force needed to have those notes sound well. The classical guitar has beauties that other instruments can't compare with, but they do come at a price.
So something will be lost in an adaptation of music written for keyboard. There are many places where notes cannot be sustained against each other for as long or as sonorously, and places where the chords and close harmony that fall so naturally under the fingers of a harpsichord player are simply not possible without simplification. The limited range of the instrument is a factor: the guitar has a range about the same as that of a choir, and although Bach had choral virtues and limitations partially in mind as he wrote his music, he does go outside of that range with what for a keyboard player would be indifferent ease. Some chains of suspensions can only be hinted at in the guitar, and sometimes voices will be merged. Contrasts of register will now have to be contrasts of tone or expressivity, fortunately both the guitar's forte.
There is a long history of adaptation for first lute and then guitar, of music intended for other forces. Valentin Bakfark adapted many choral works in this fashion, and I've found that many of the four-part arrangements in a standard hymnbook can be played on guitar with hardly any modification. Bach adapted his own music and that of other composers on numerous occasions, a process which essentially translated the virtues of one instrument into those of the new one. In his case, though, the adaptations were in the direction

of an instrument or ensemble with more freedom, rather than less. Ah well.

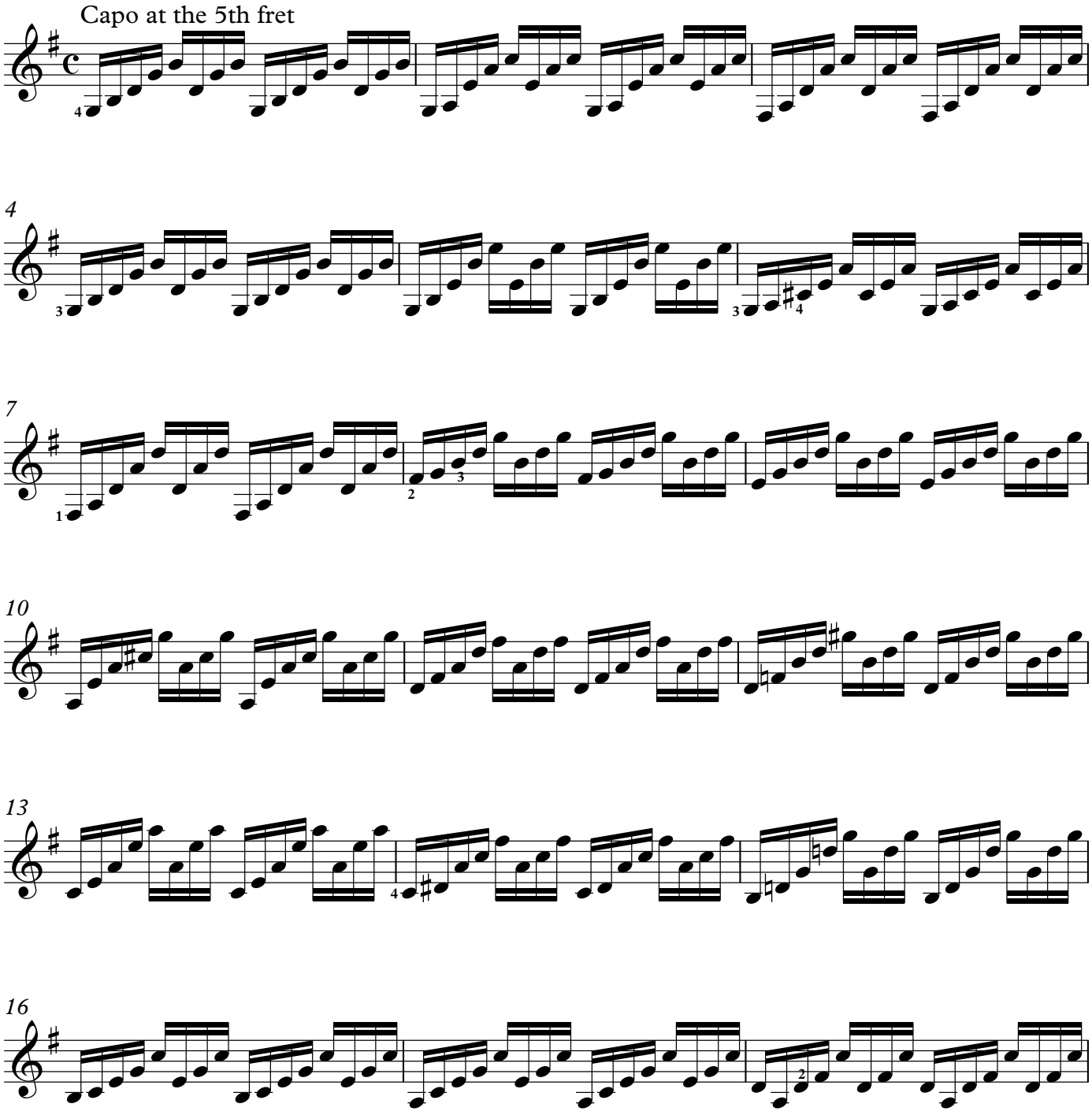
I've made these adaptations - not "arrangements" - for myself, because I love this music not just for the intellectual rigour - some portion of which may be lost here, although hopefully not much - but for the power of the harmonic sequences, the beauty of the melody and working out, which can still easily be felt and heard. Just as a painting of a natural scene may hint at its beauties and have beauties of its own unseen in the intricate original, so too - I hope - beauty and satisfaction may be found here.
On the guitar some keys are simply awkward, either increasing the likelihood of hitting discordant notes by accident, or decreasing the sonorous possibility of open strings, which also allow for tiny respites in the athletic grappling of the fingers with the tensions of the instrument. Accordingly some of these pieces have experienced not just the often necessary octave transpositions but have been entirely rendered into more natural and resonant keys, chosen so that the employment of a capotasto may restore the original tonality (bearing in mind that Bach had nothing like modern pitch in mind when he composed this music).

Why me? Well, I play guitar and love Bach, and fugues generally - especially his. Among my hundreds of compositions are almost as many fugues as Bach wrote, and in which I've frequently had to similarly adapt my own ideas for my own instrument, the truculent guitar. I've had to struggle with the kind of balance that Bach has, between the ideals and the possible, between the intellectual and the expressive. looking at Bach's music in depth I can see those instances where he's had to make compromises - even in the contour of a melody - for practical reasons. I see and hear his music not just as an enthusiastic listener and player, but as someone who has faced the same compositional challenges and found similar solutions. But perhaps there is a requisite arrogance in thinking that I could dare to tamper with the reputedly crystalline perfection of the works of this great musician. Bach is best though. Though. If you find - and if you play guitar you will find - satisfaction here, consider the different satisfaction of these works on their original instruments, or in easier, more complete, adaptations. These are suggestive sketches of a world of wonder indeed. I confess, though, my belief that, for most listeners, and for many players, the beauty of this new medium will more than make up for intricacies lost from the original.

The Well-Tempered Guitar

BWV 846 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Prelude No. 1 in C major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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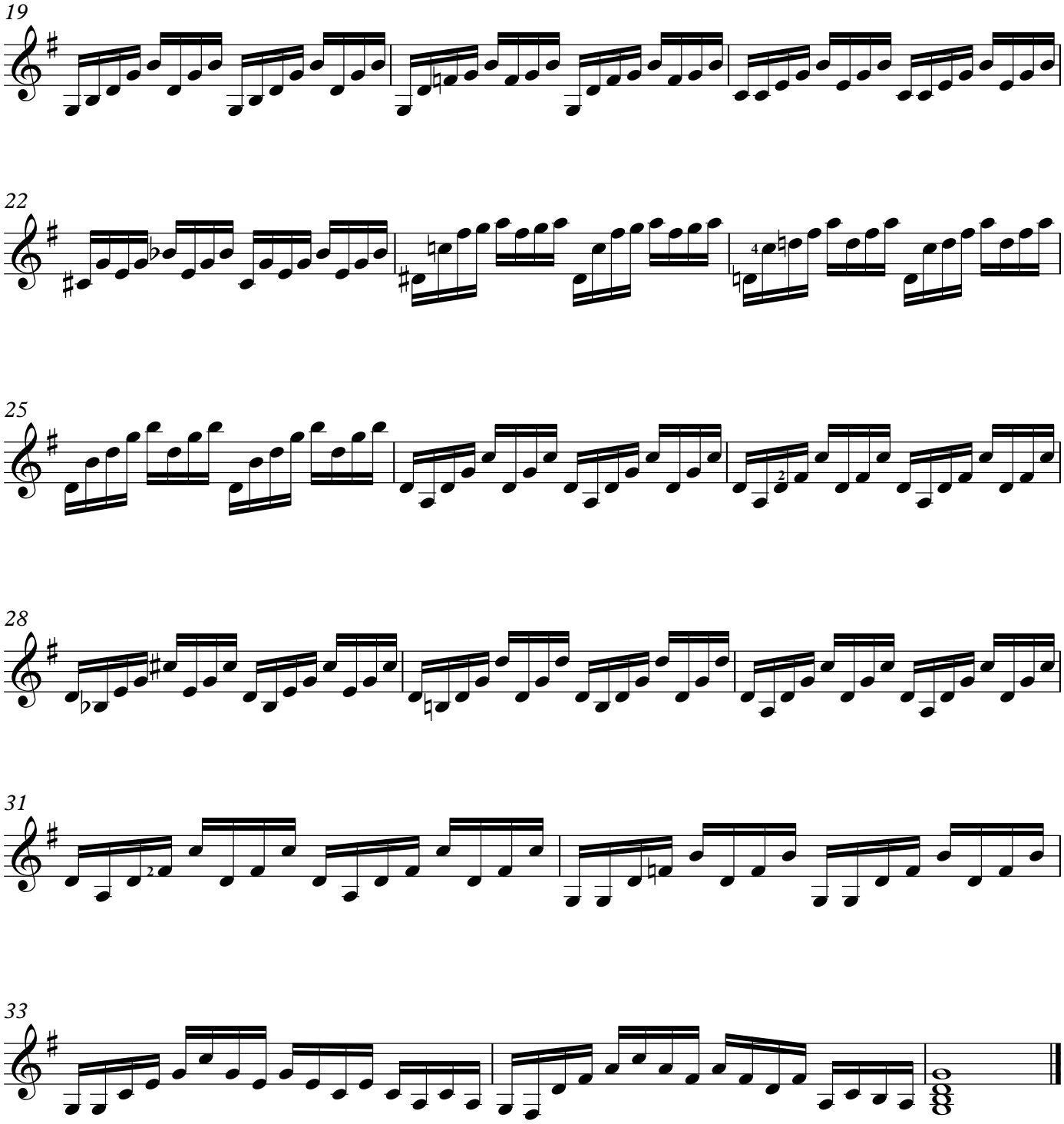
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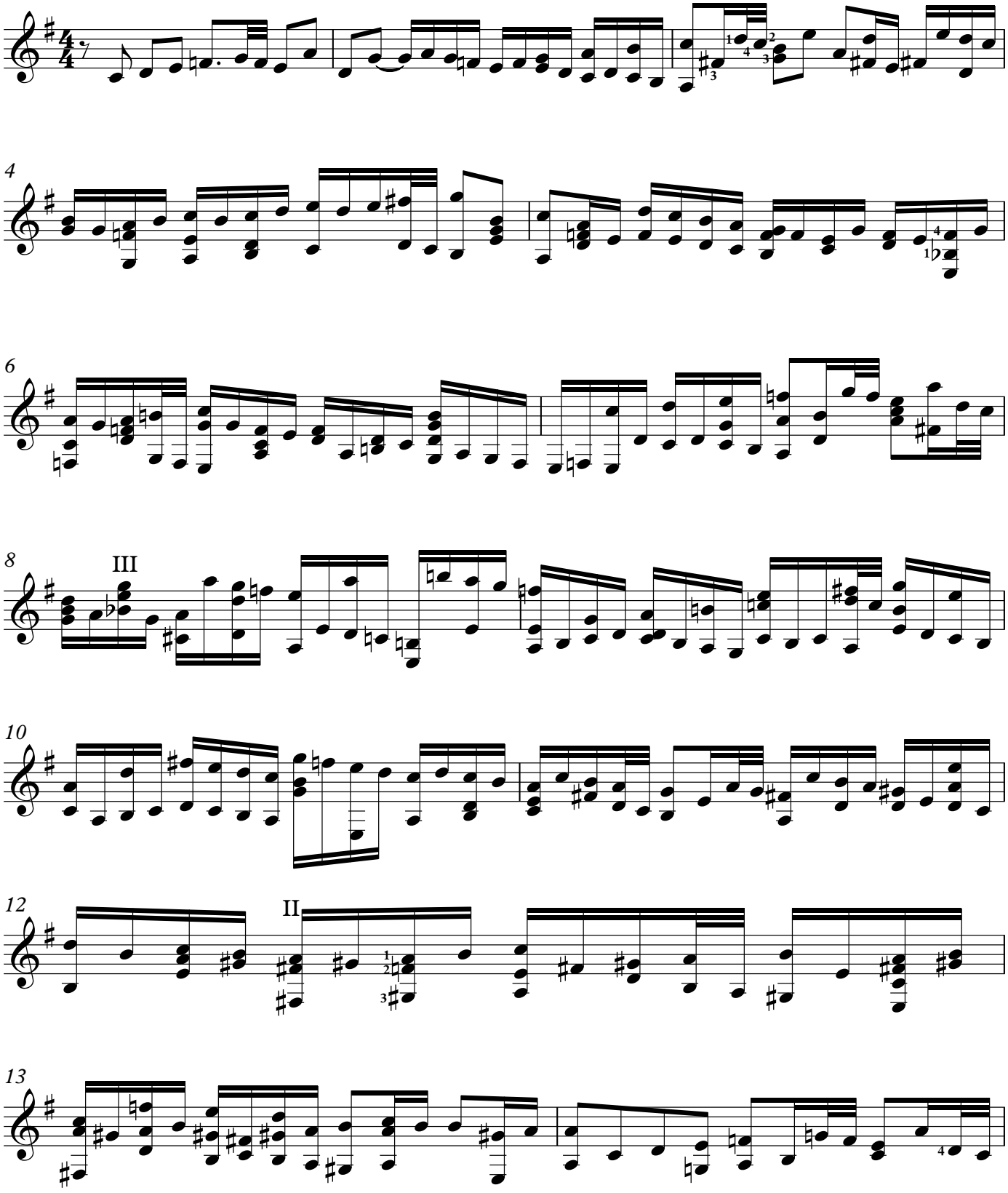
BWV 846 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Fugue No. 1 in C major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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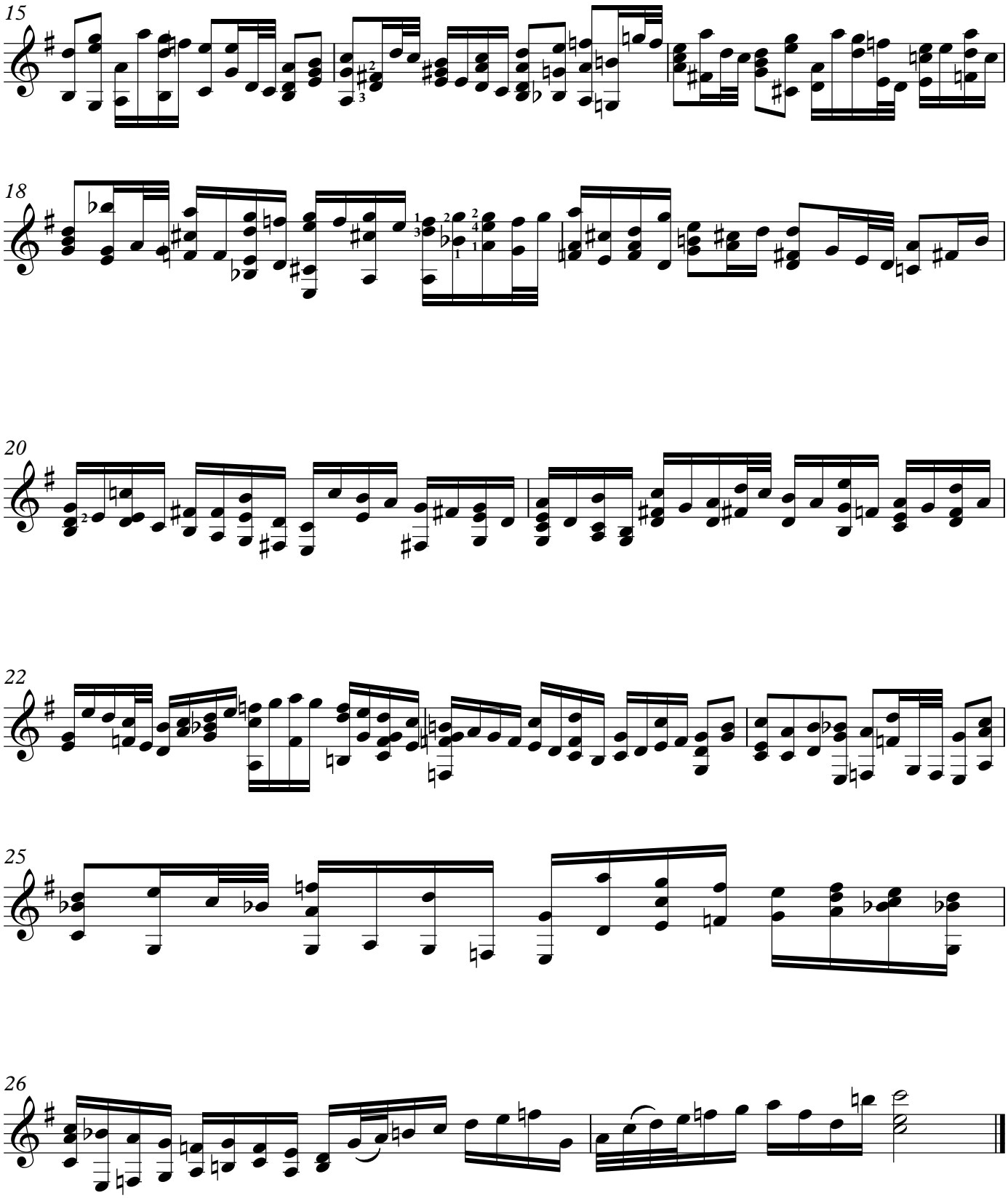
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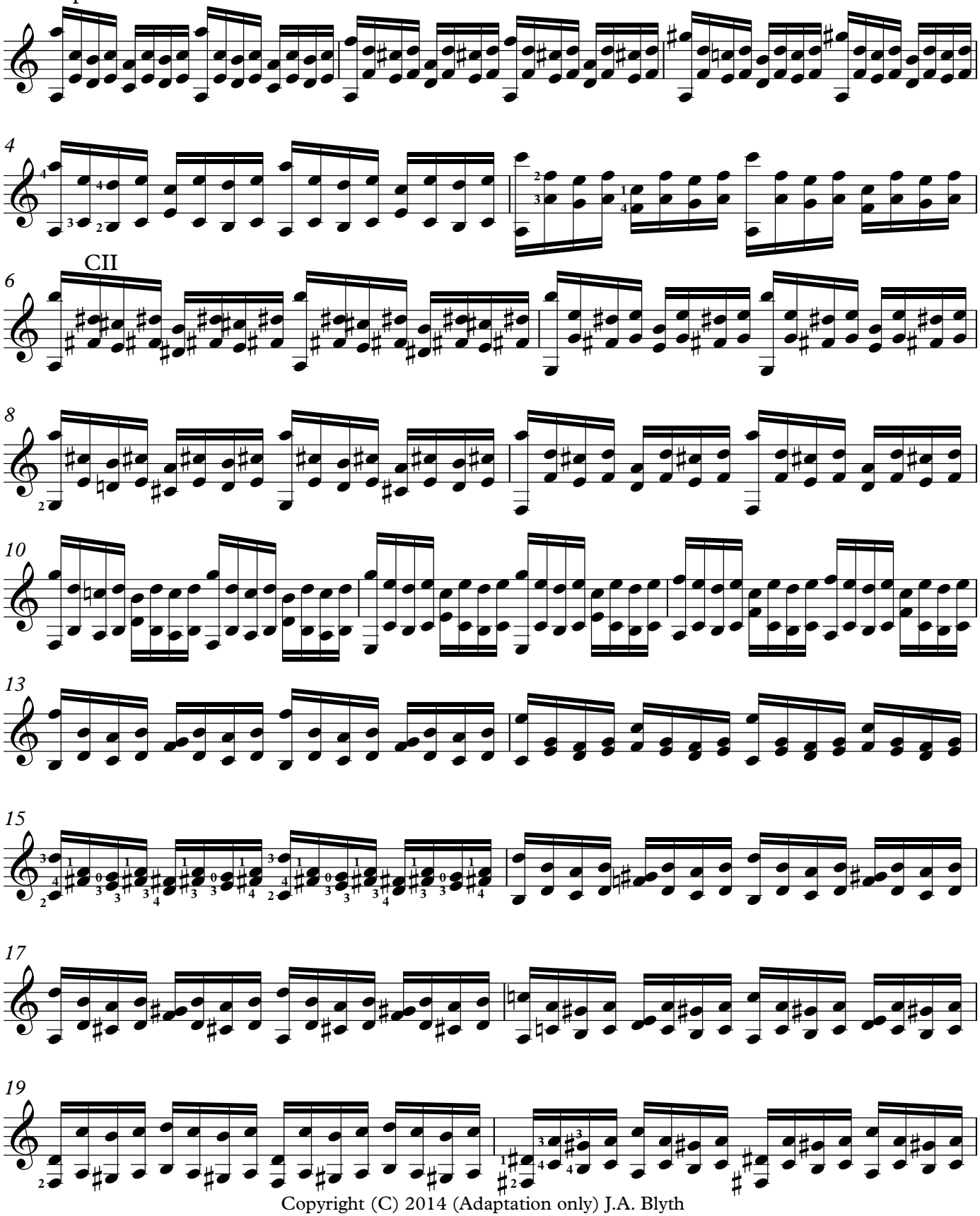
BWV 847 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Prelude No. 2 in C minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 3rd fret



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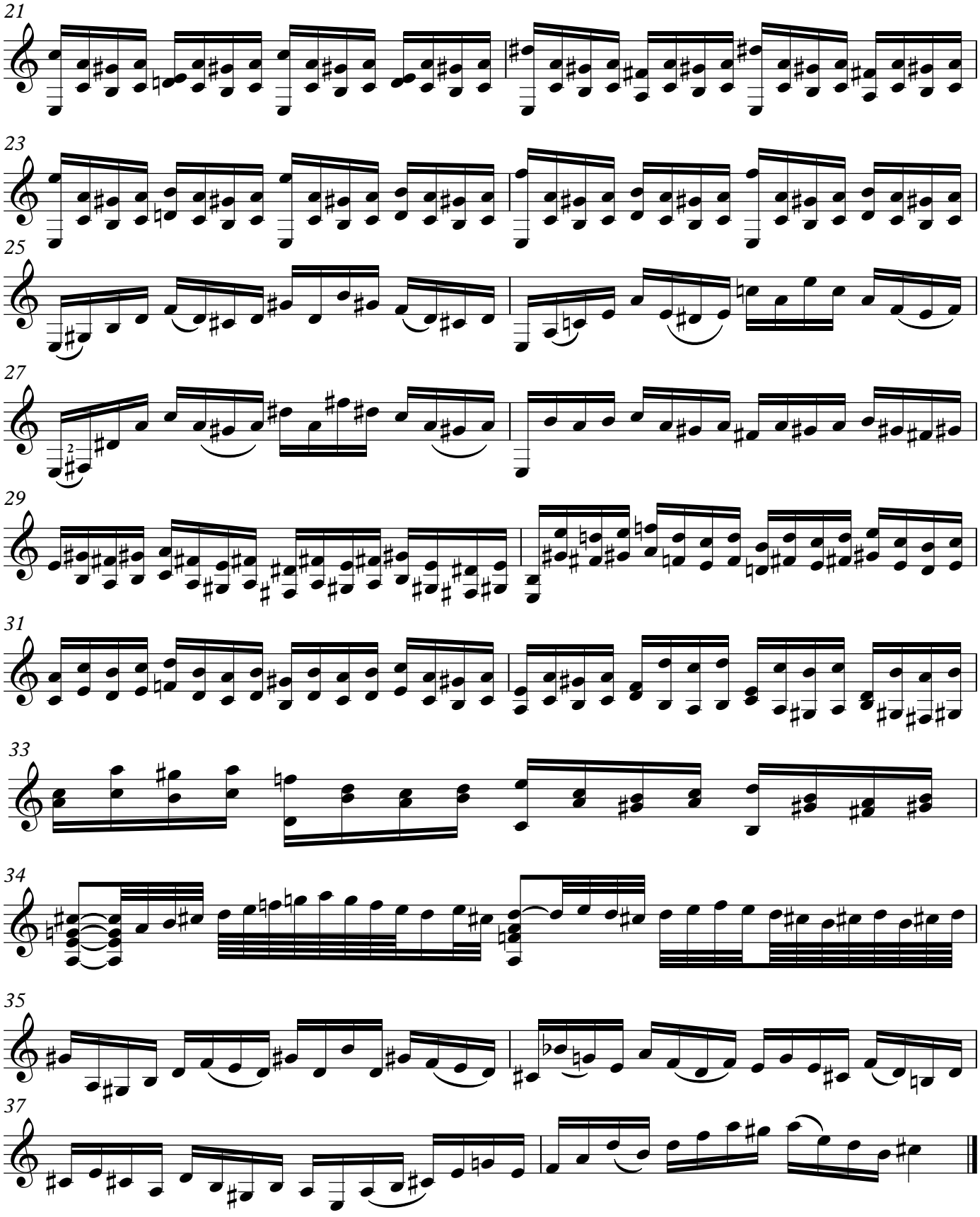
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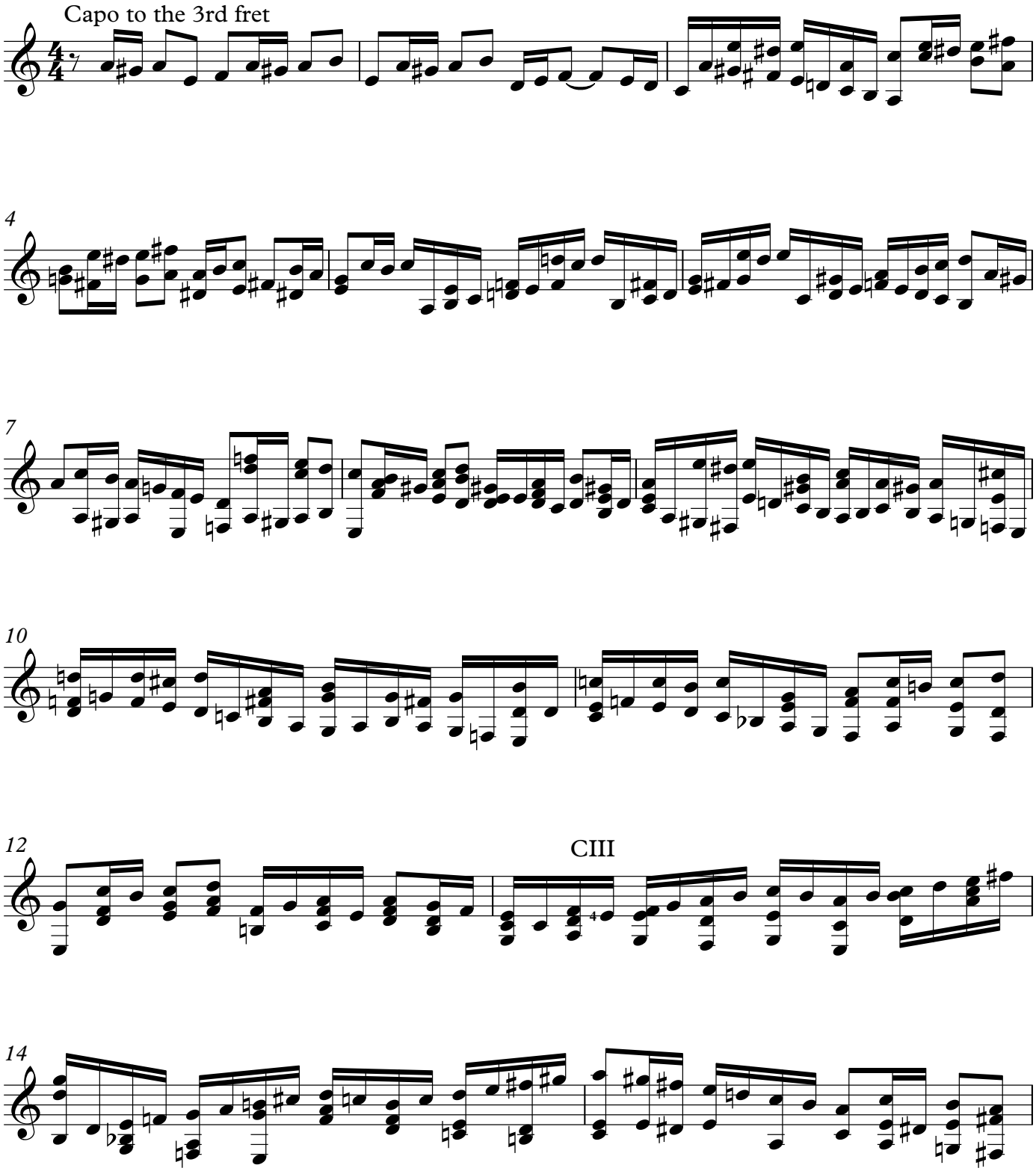
BWV 847 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Fugue No. 2 in C minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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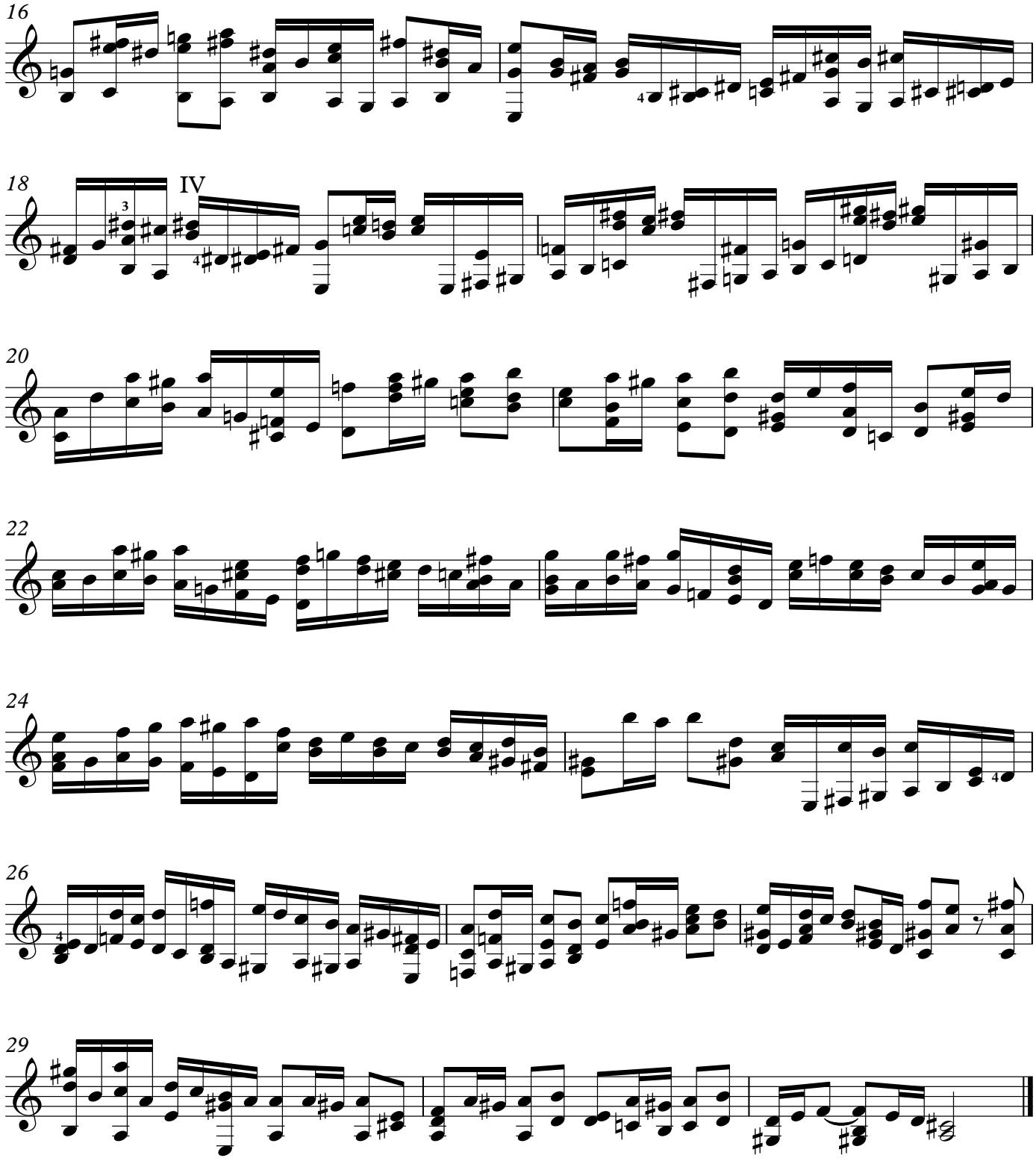
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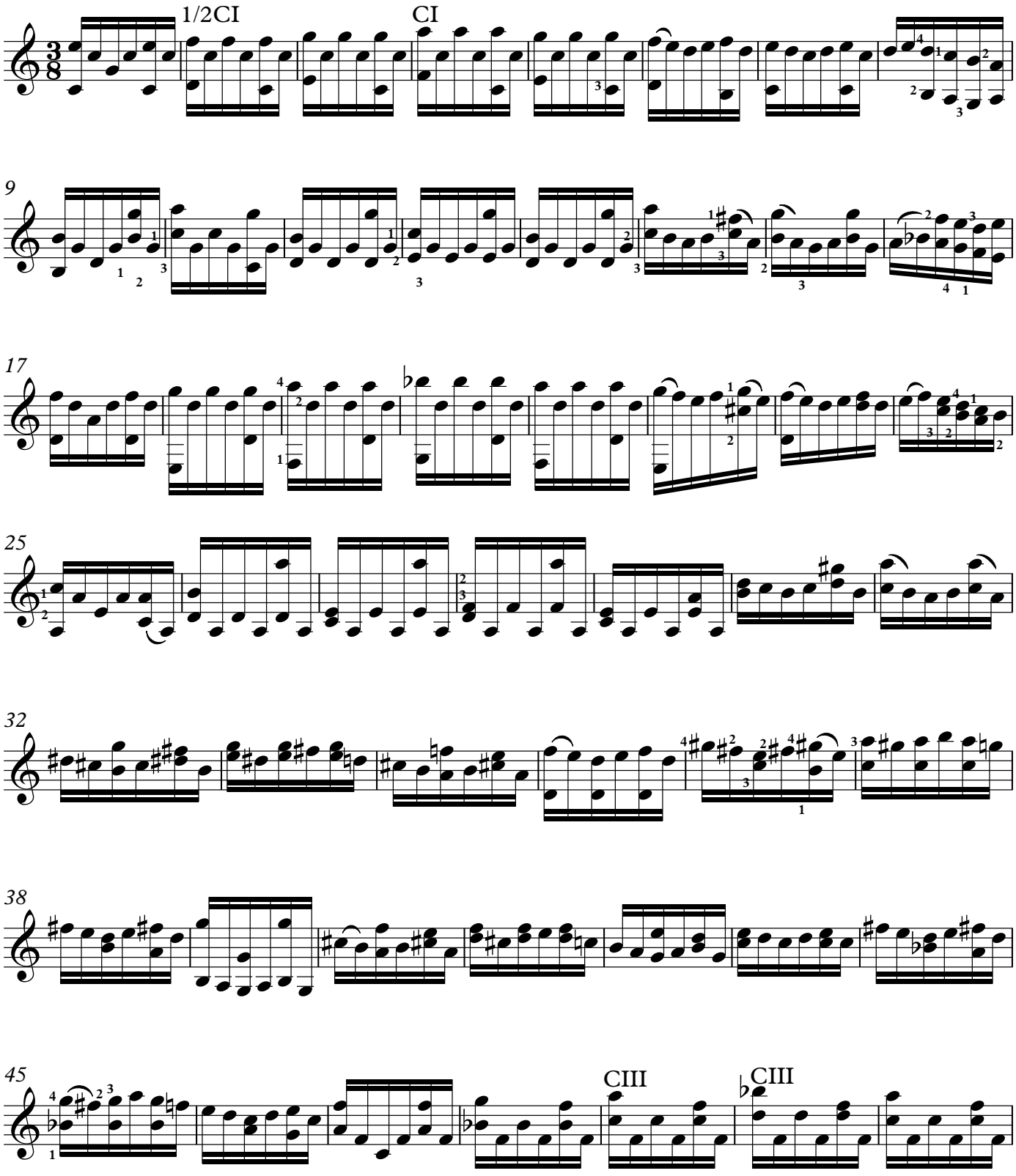
BWV 848 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Prelude No. 3 in C-sharp major

Capo at the 1st fret

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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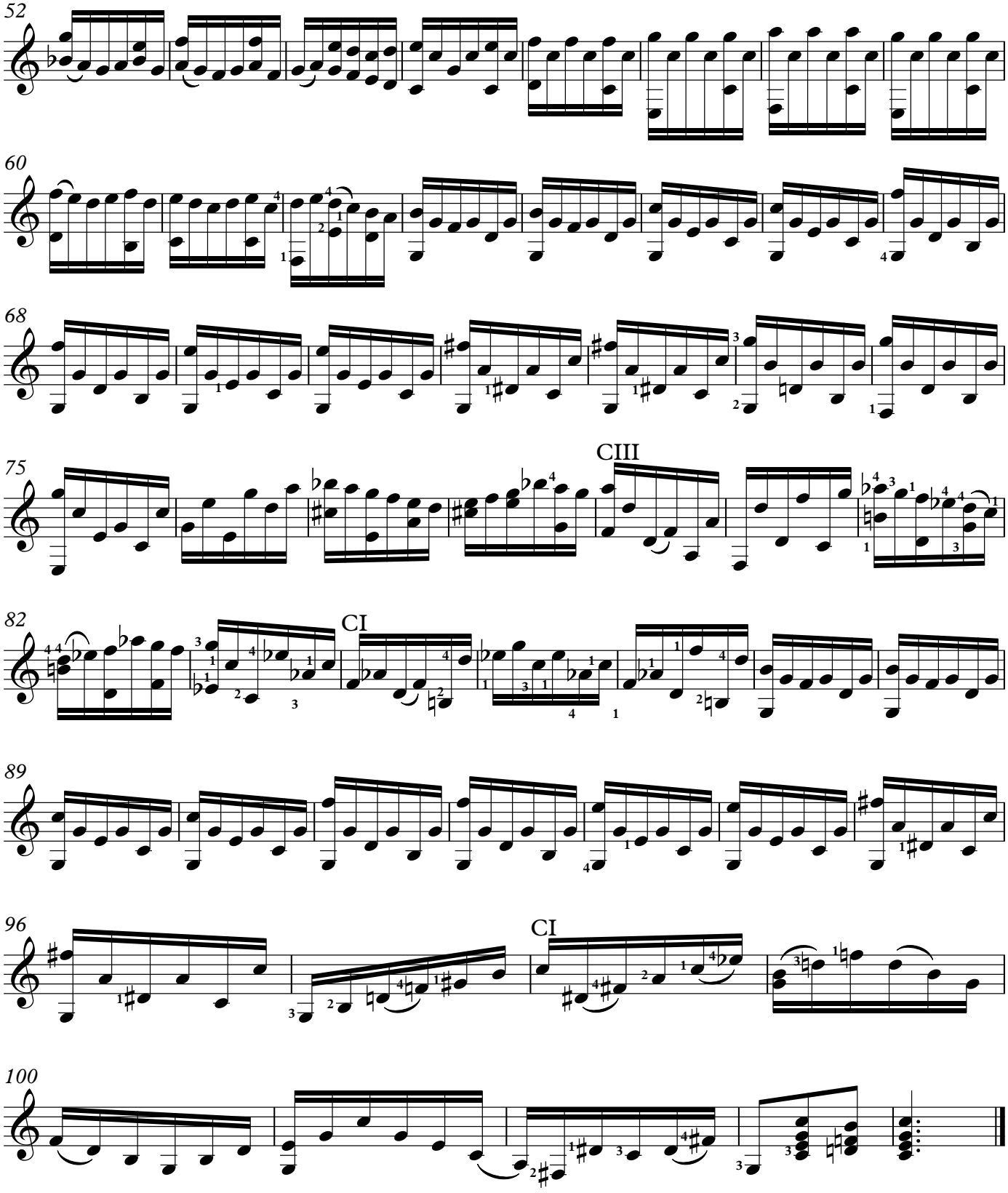
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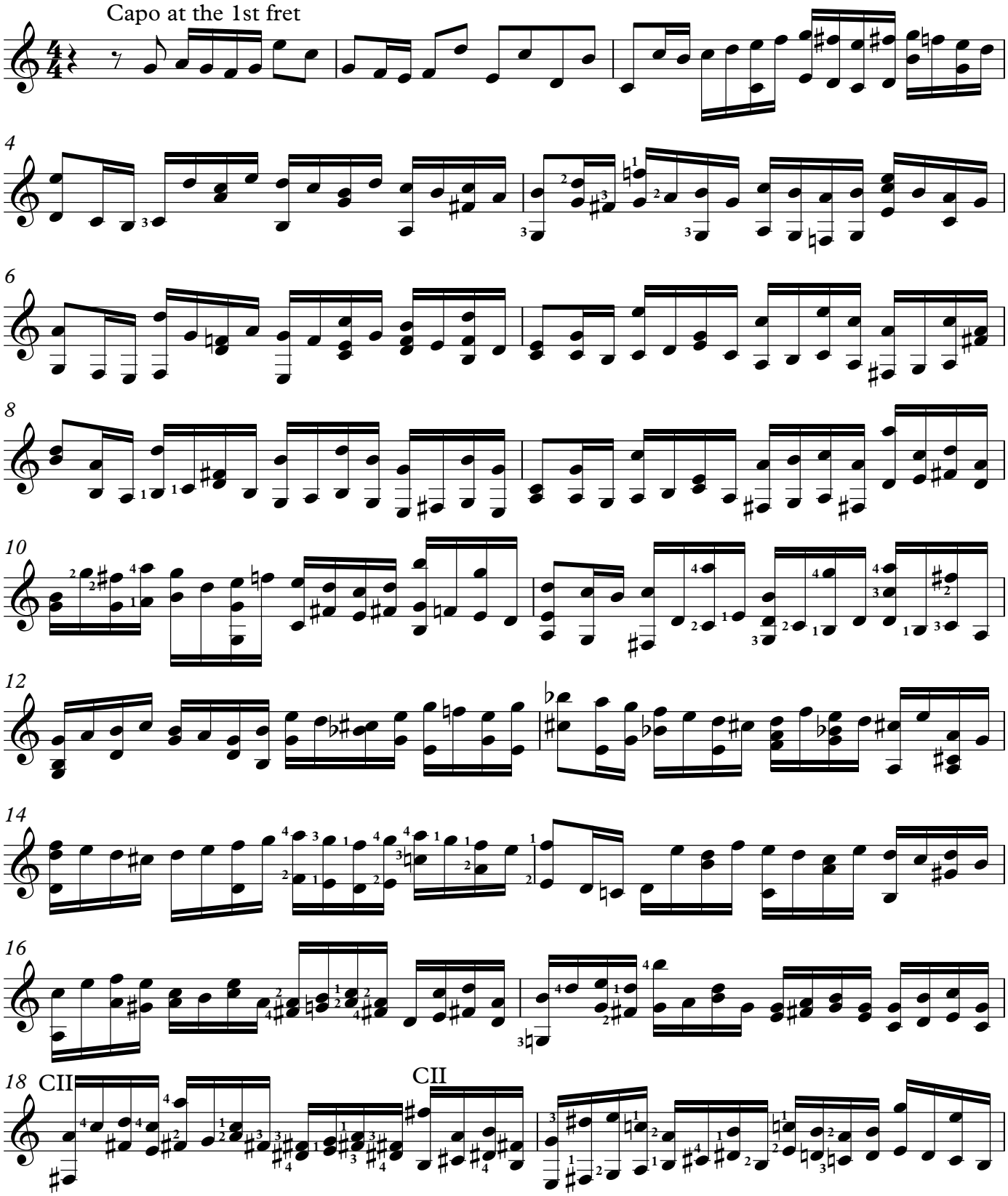
BWV 848 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Fugue No. 3 in C-sharp major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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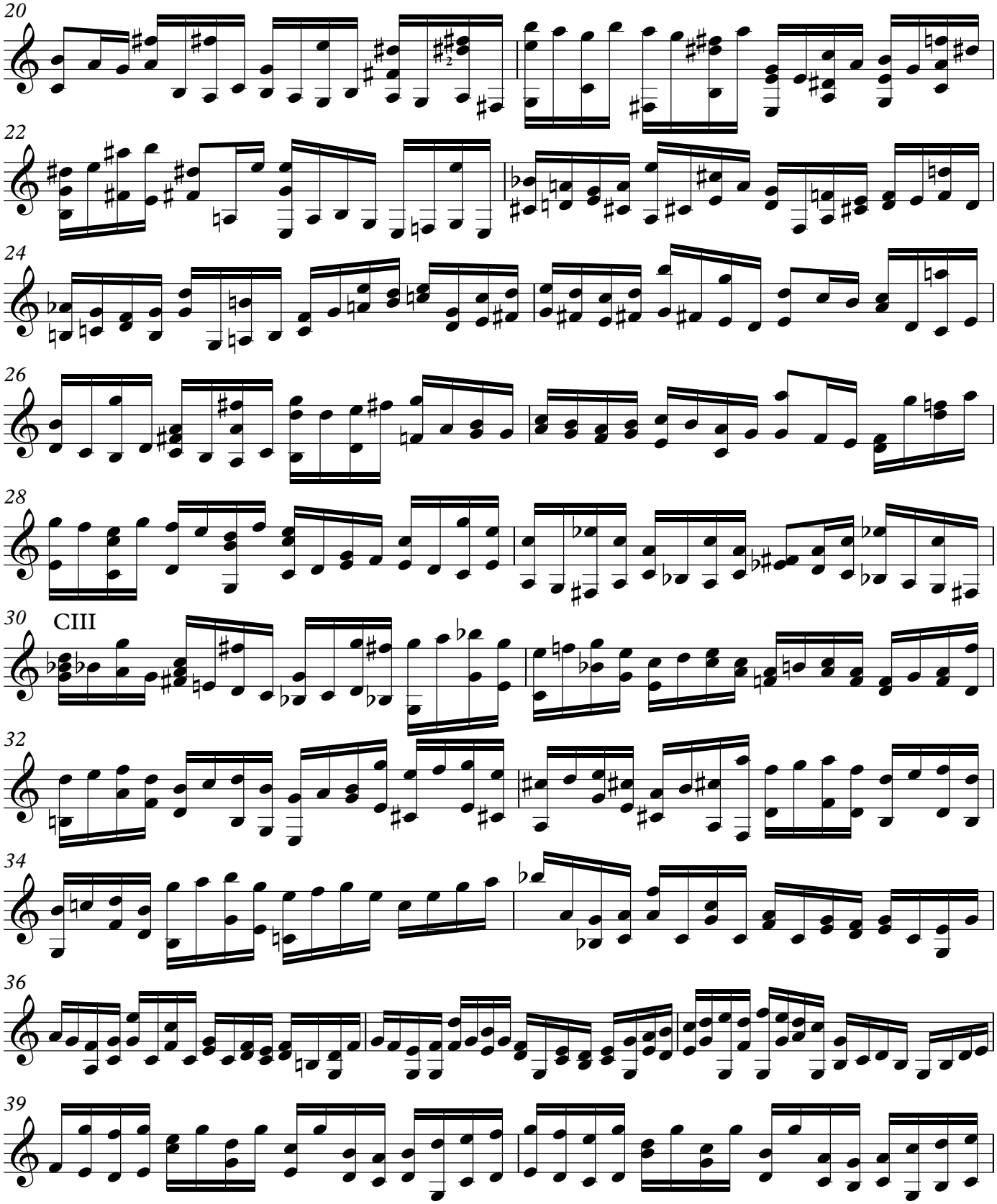
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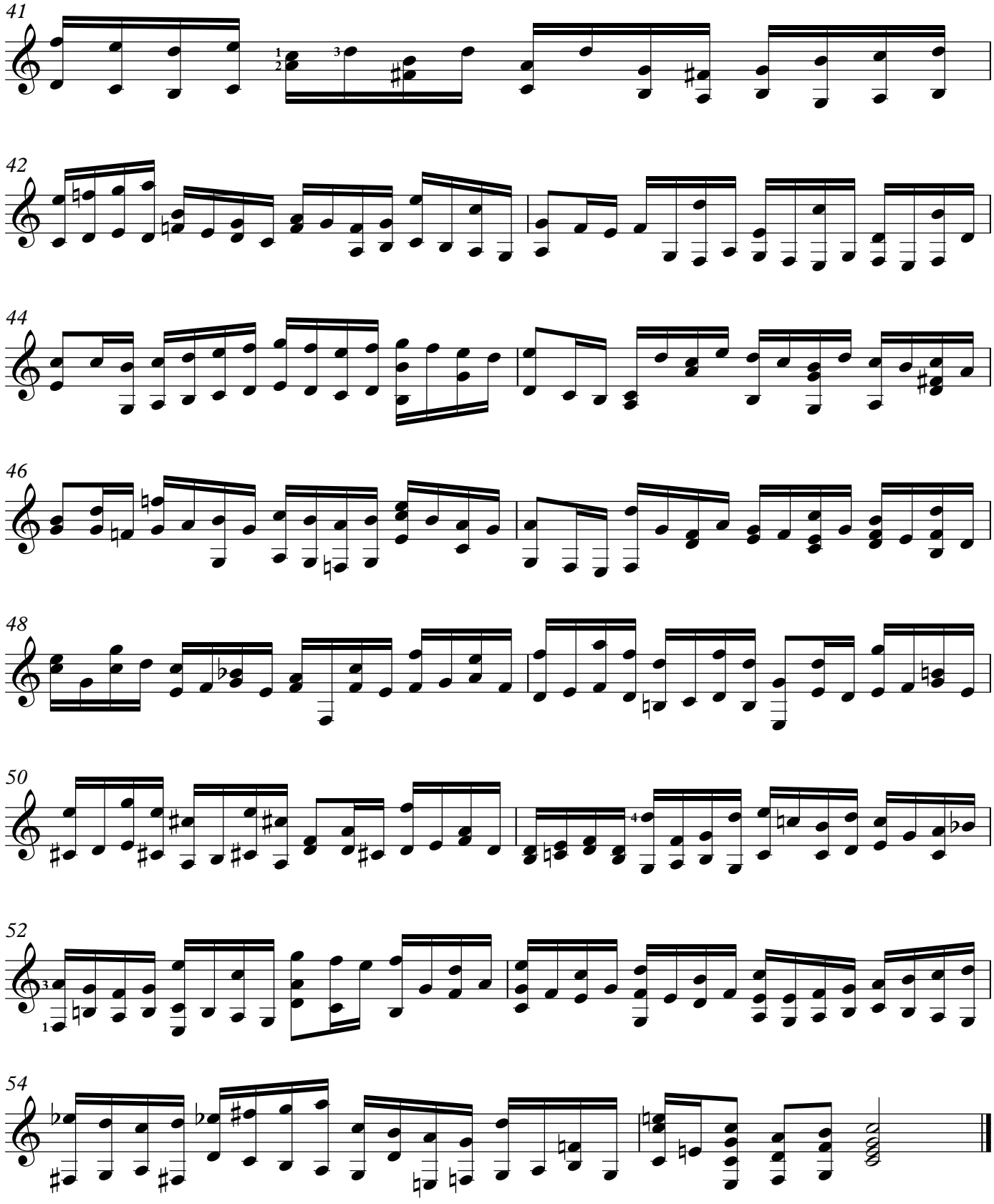
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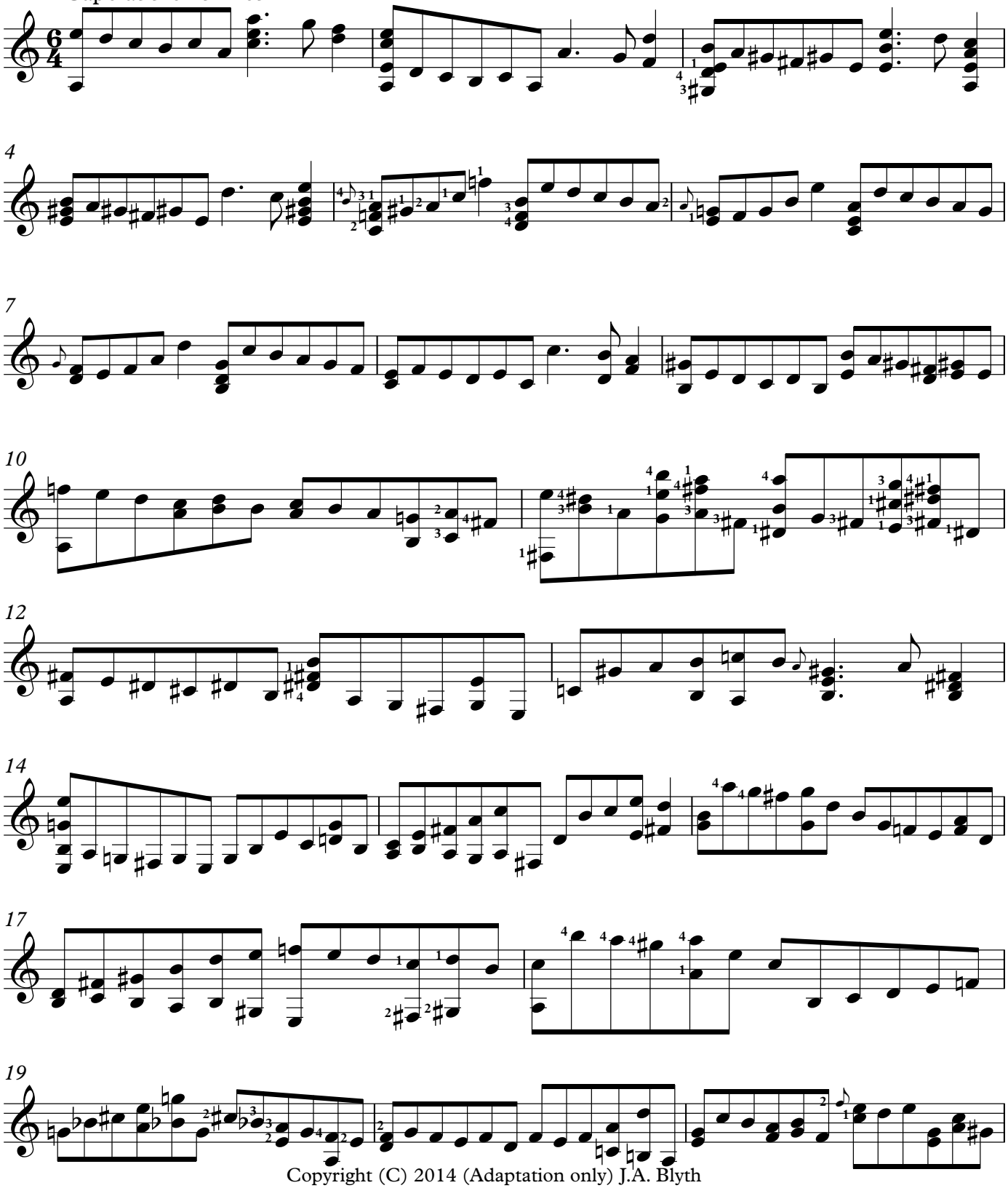
BWV 849 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Prelude No. 4 in C-sharp minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 4th fret



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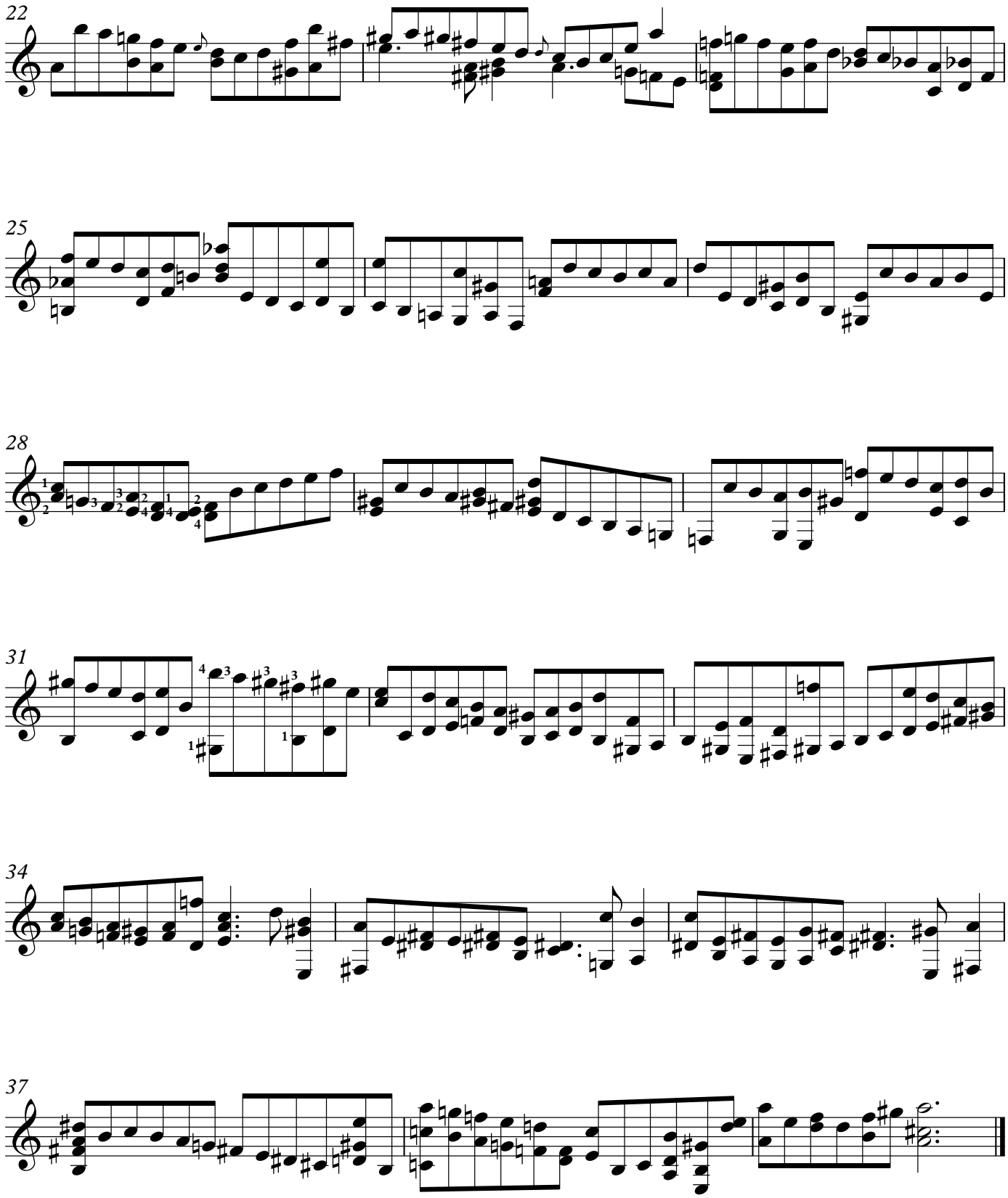
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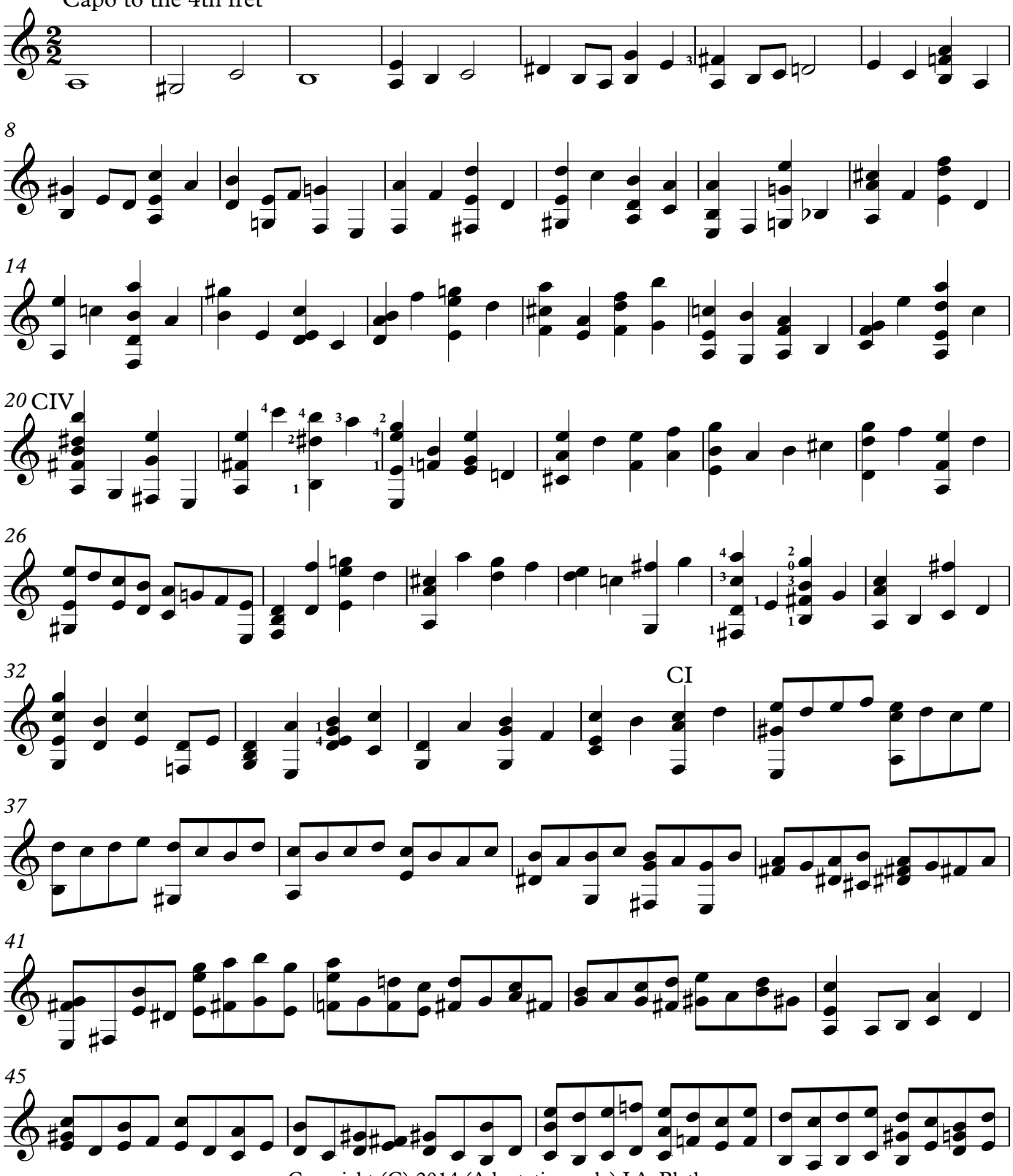
BWV 849 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Fugue No. 4 in C-sharp minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo to the 4th fret



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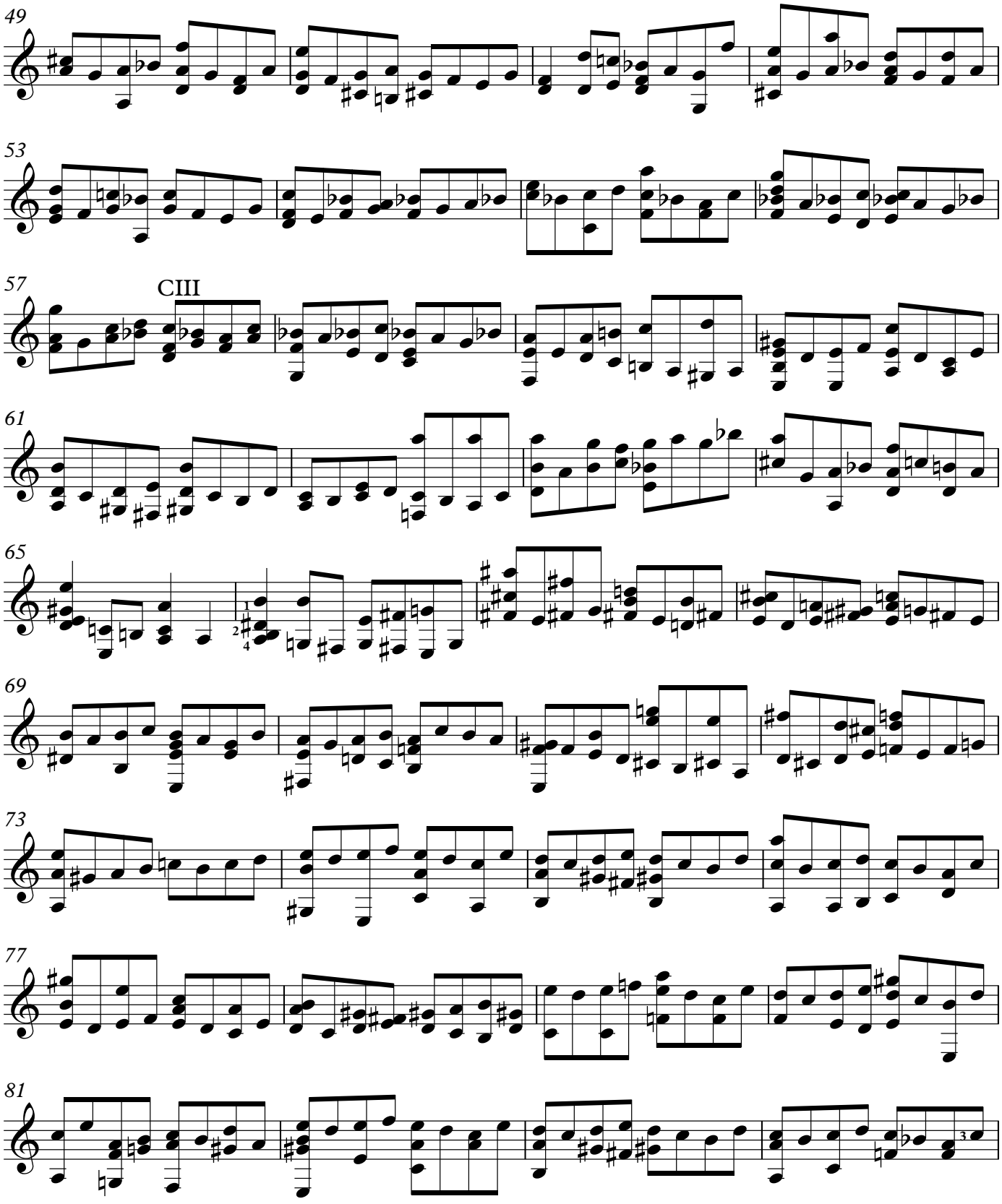
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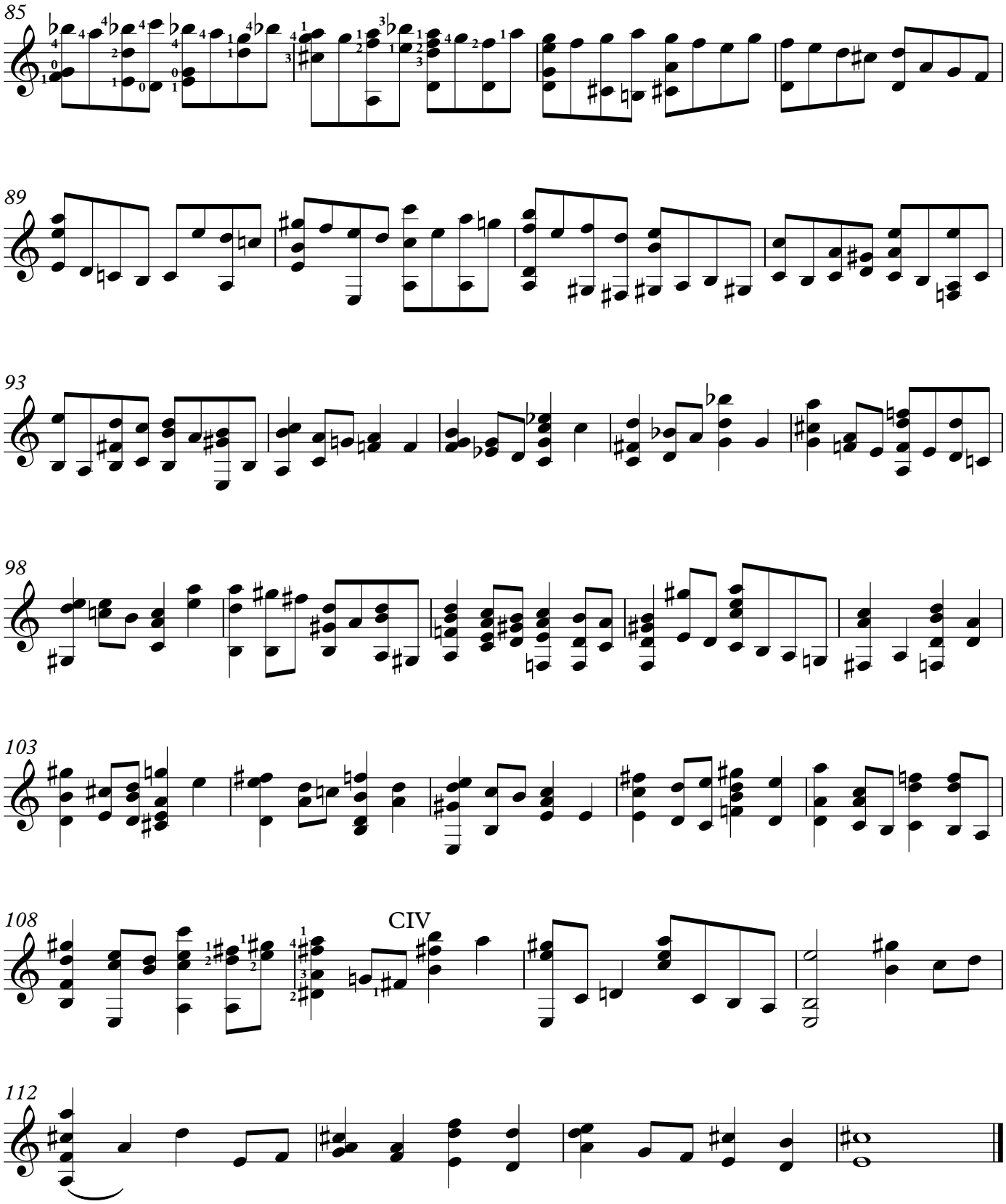
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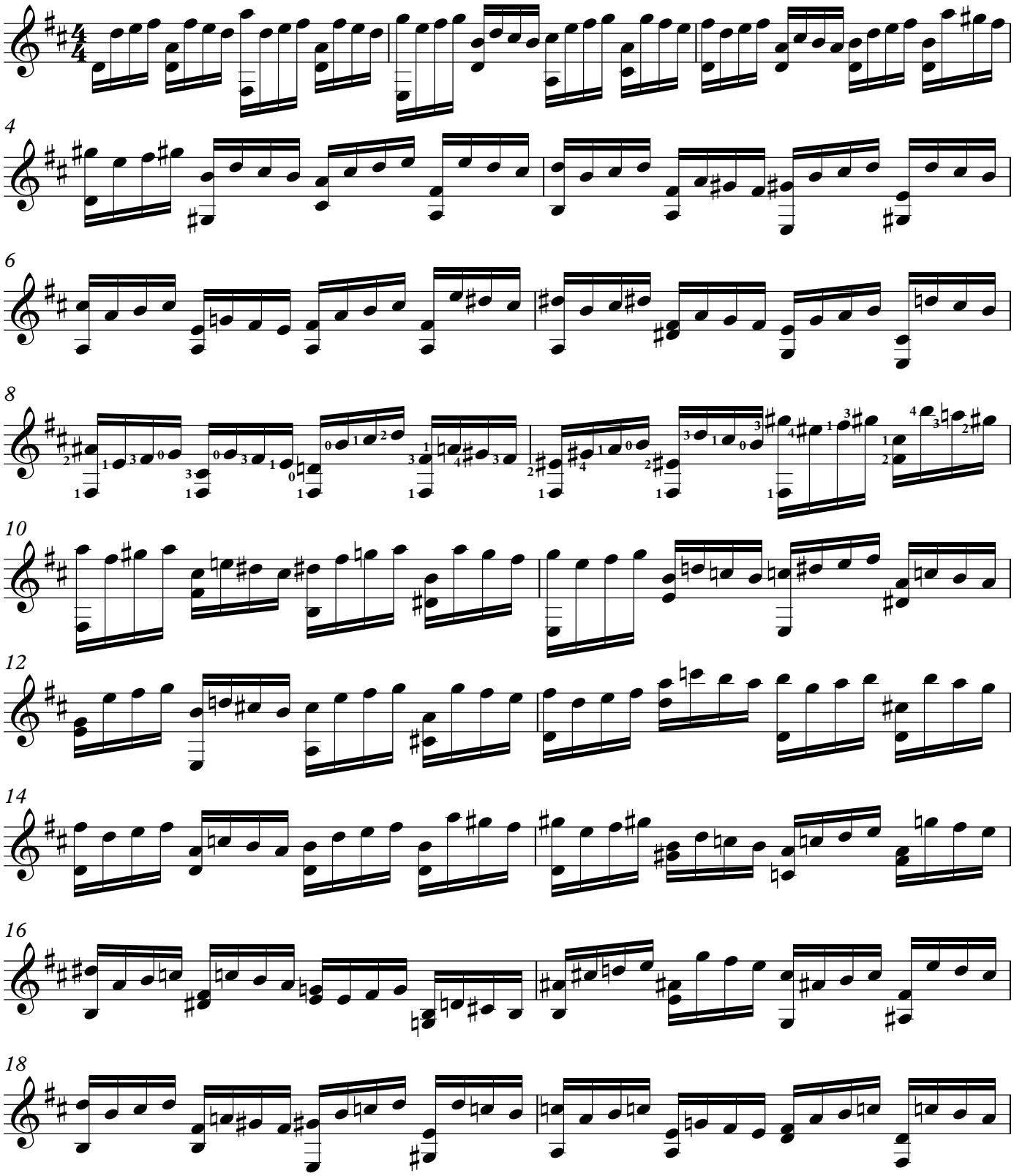
BWV 850 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Prelude No. 5 in D major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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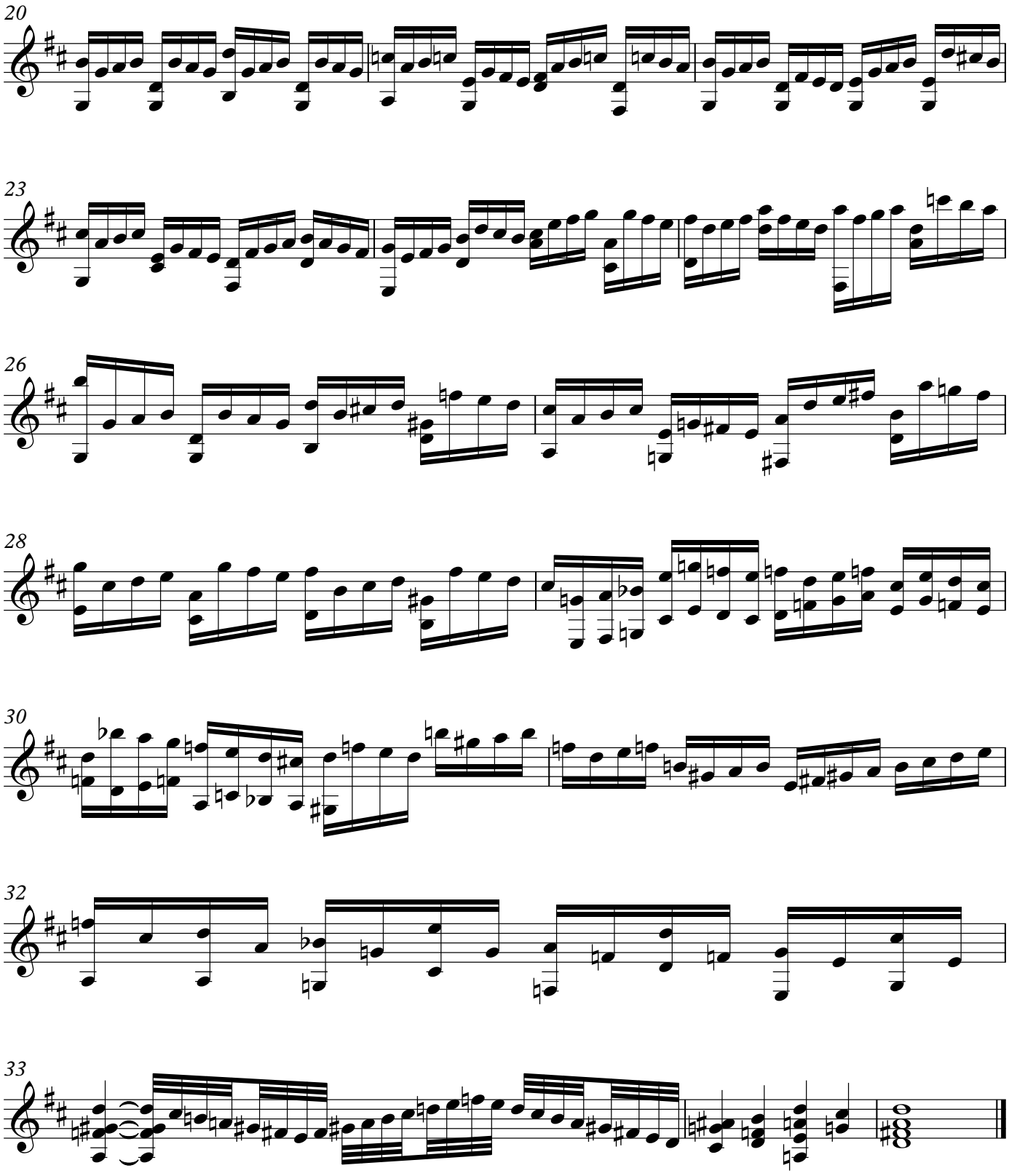
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BWV 850 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Fugue No. 5 in D major

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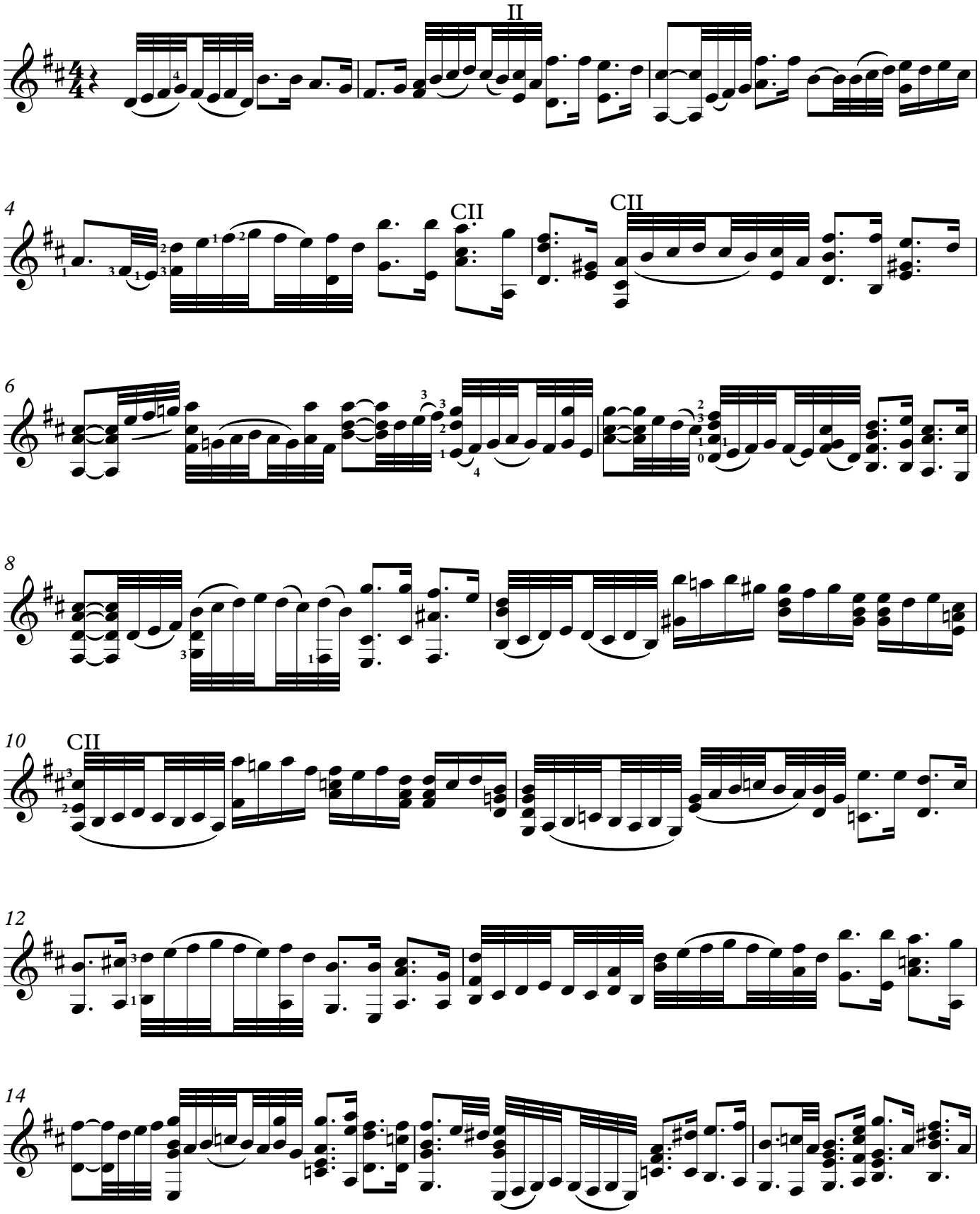

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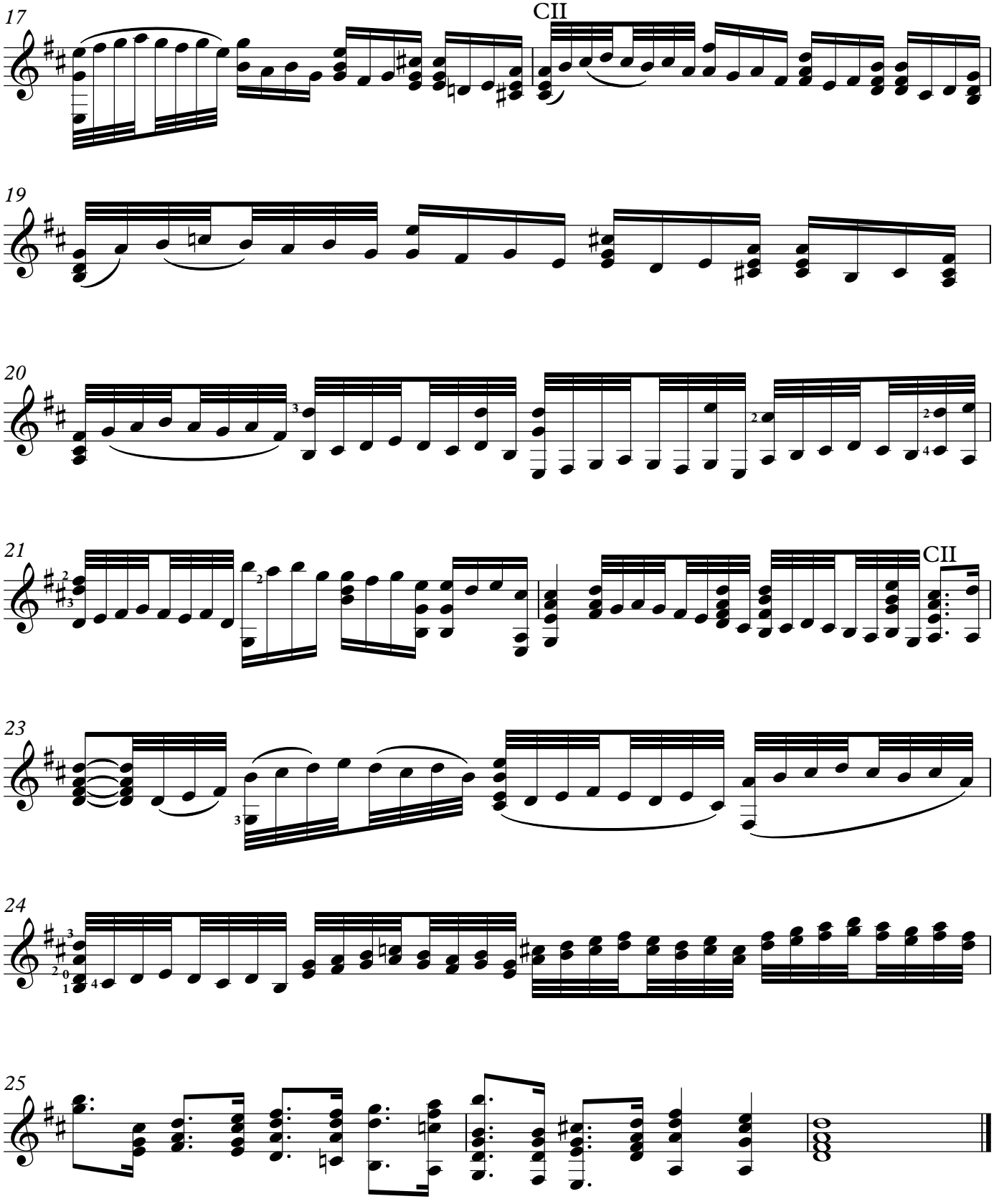
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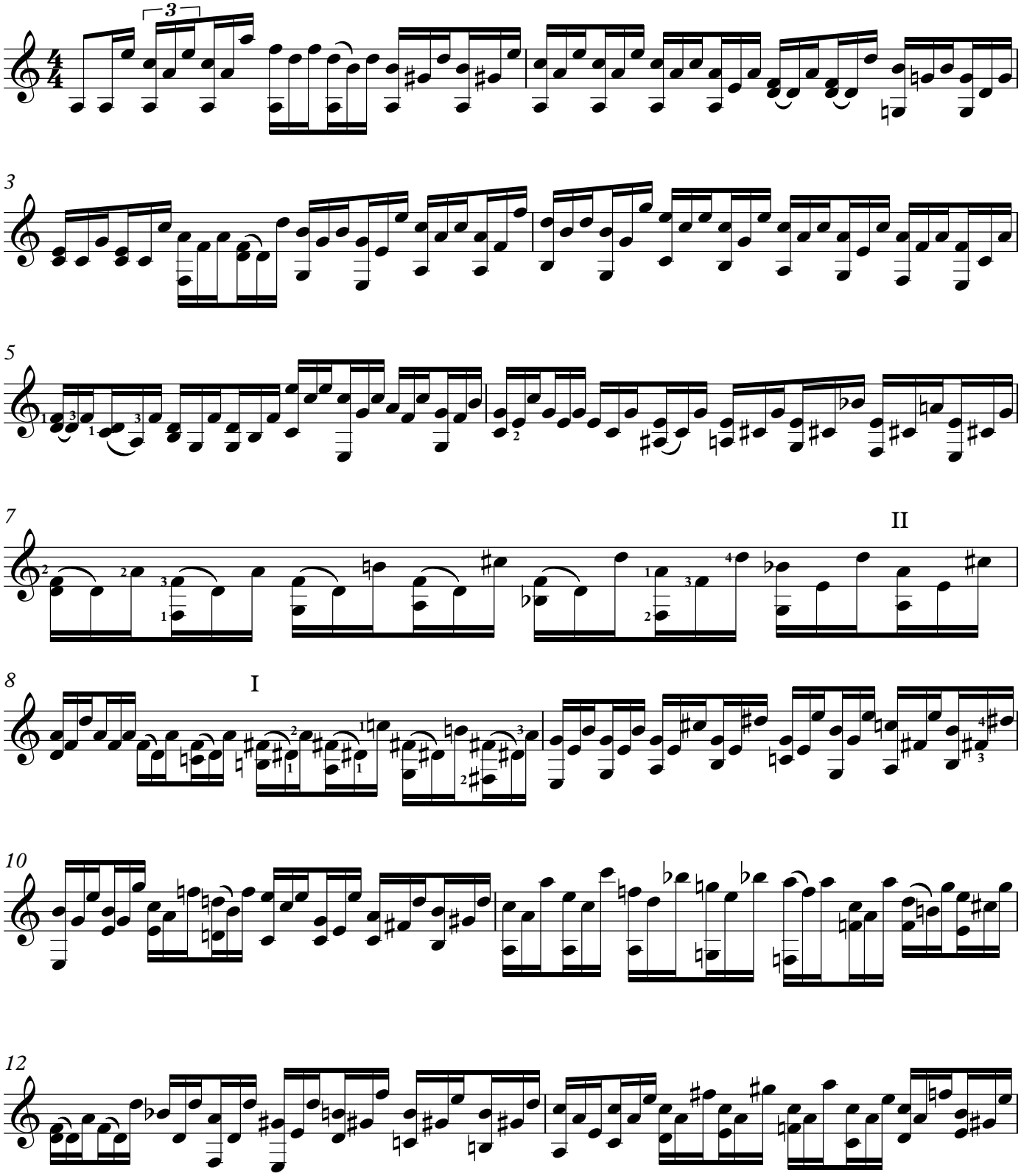
BWV 851 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Prelude No. 6 in D minor

Capo at the 5th fret

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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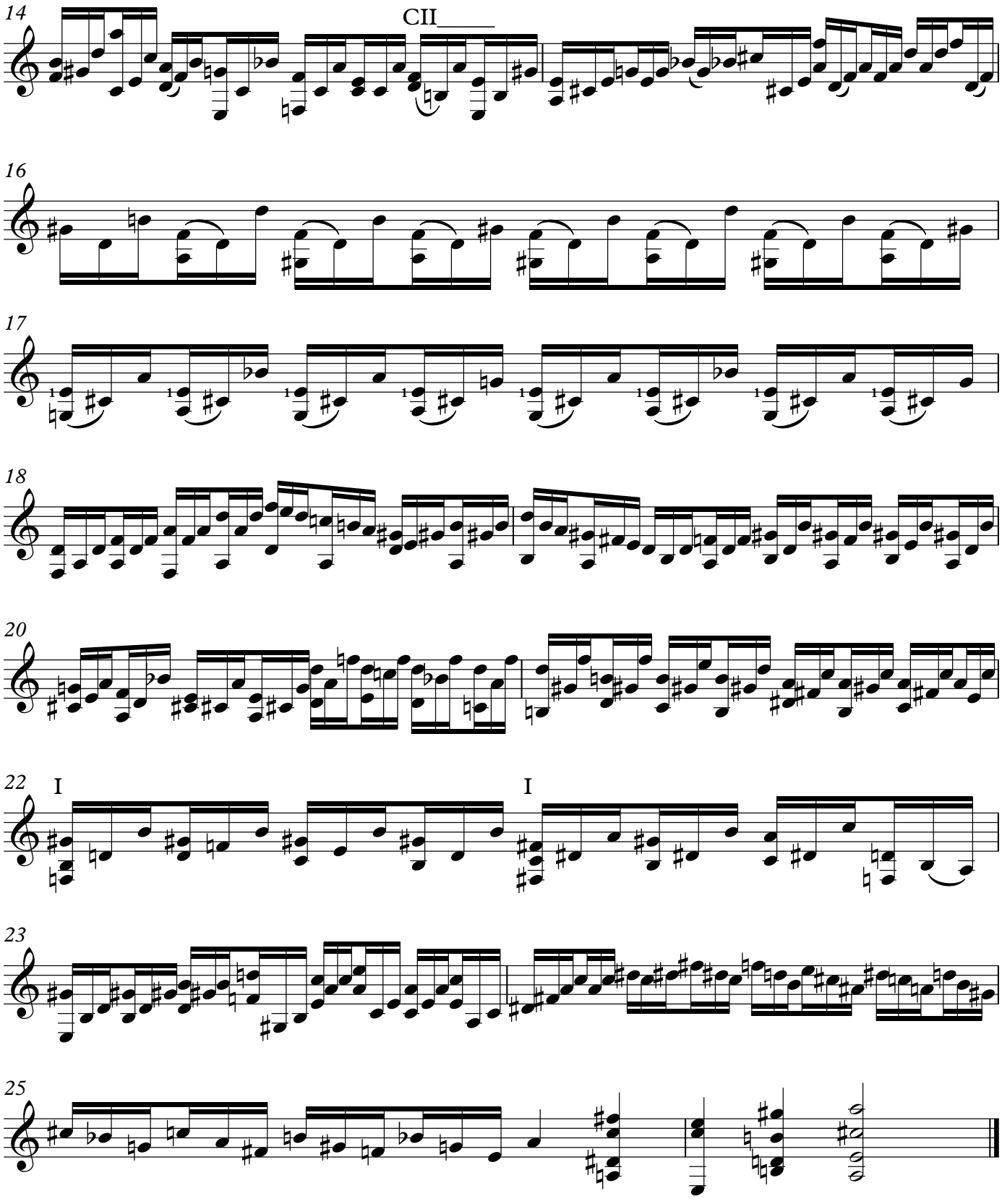
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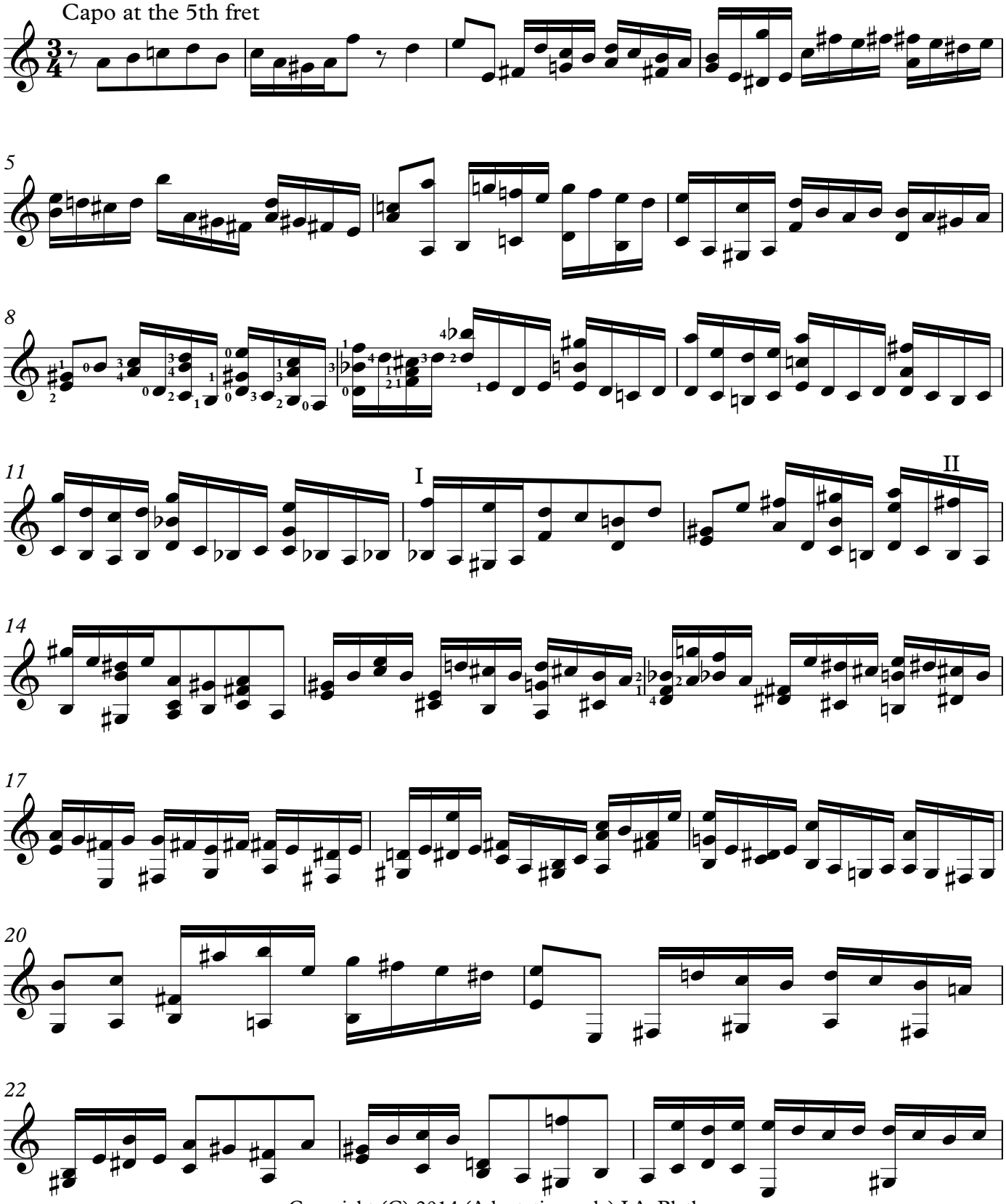
BWV 851 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Fugue No. 6 in D minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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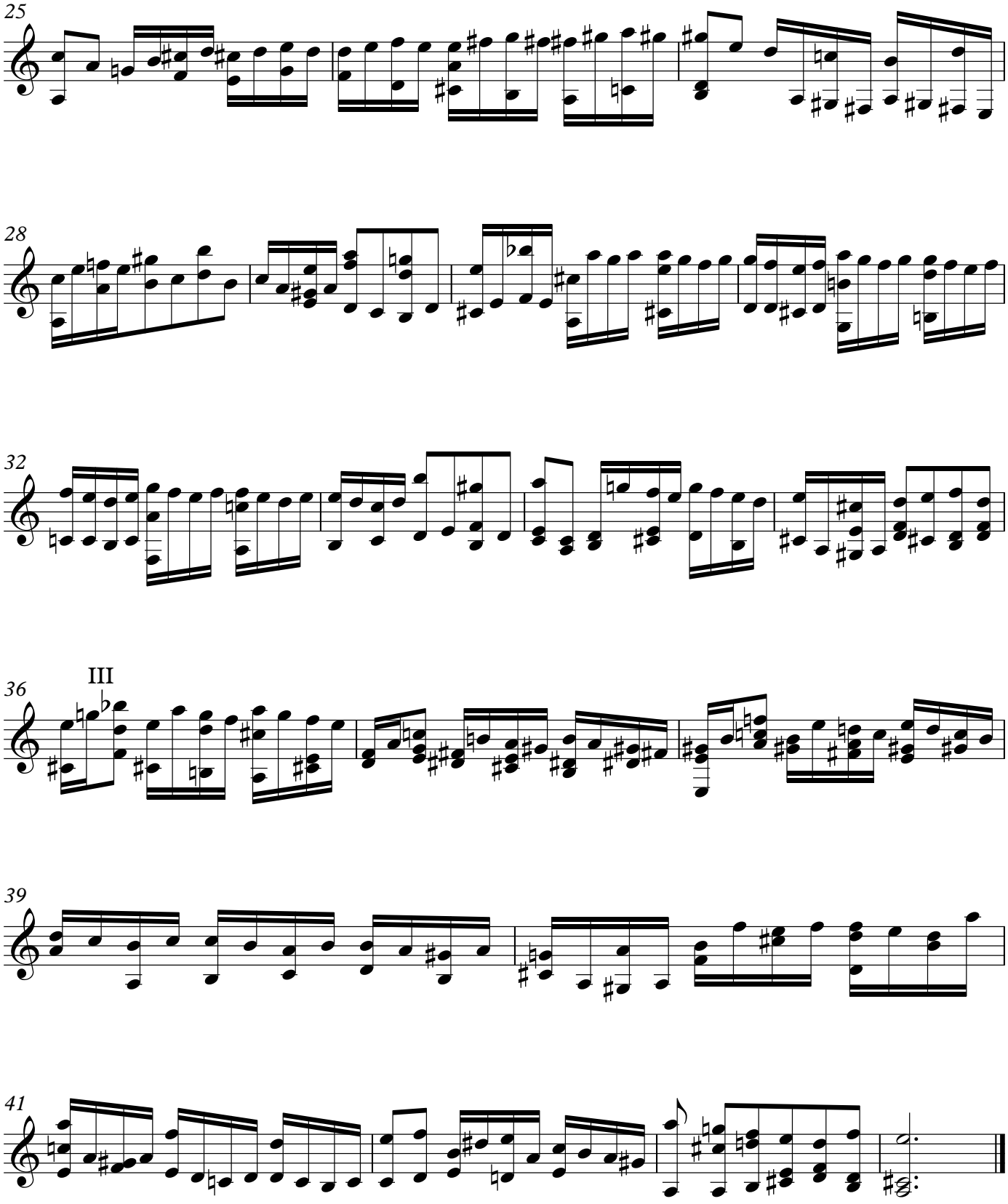
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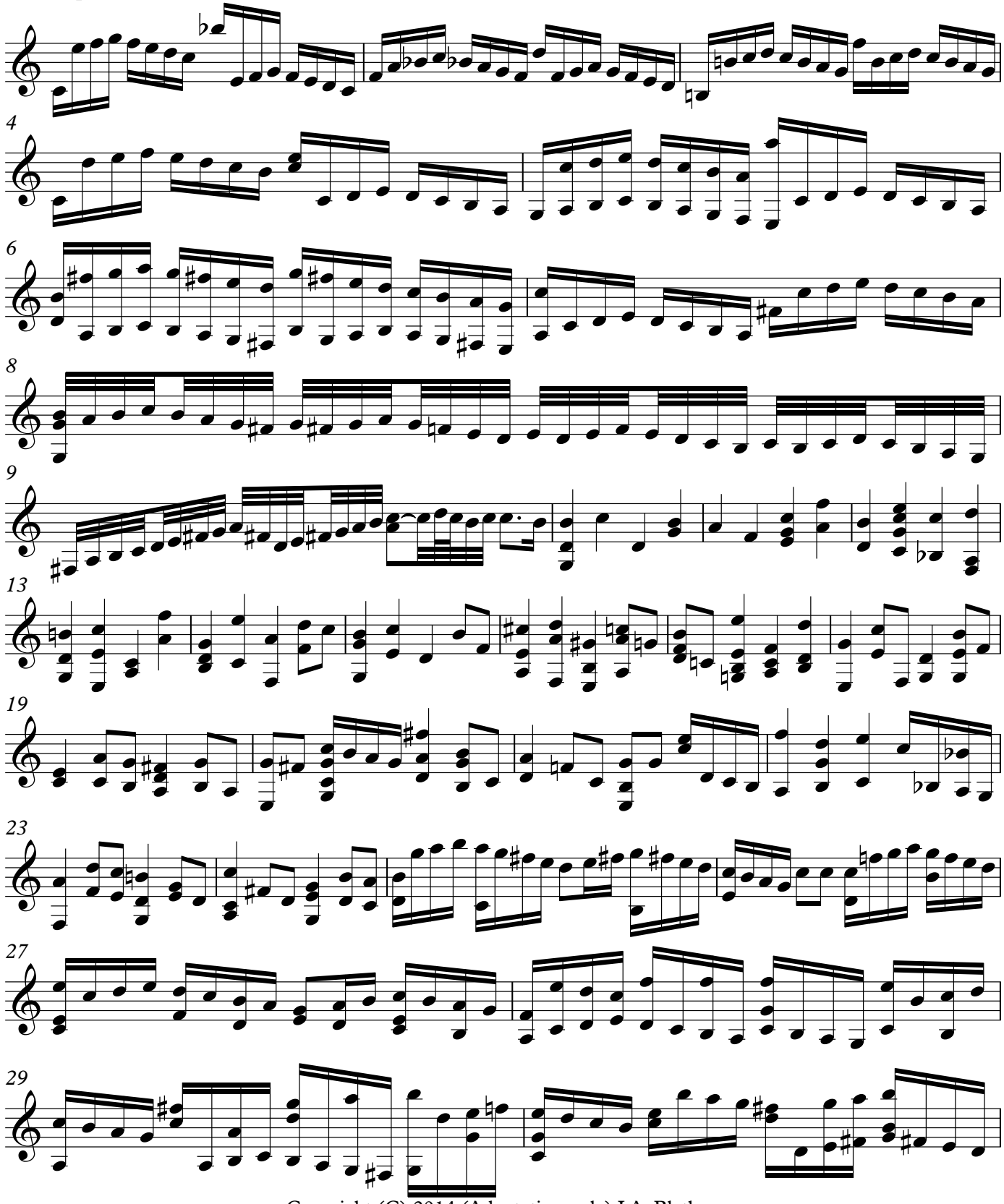
BWV 852 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Prelude No. 7 in E-flat major

Capo at the 3rd fret

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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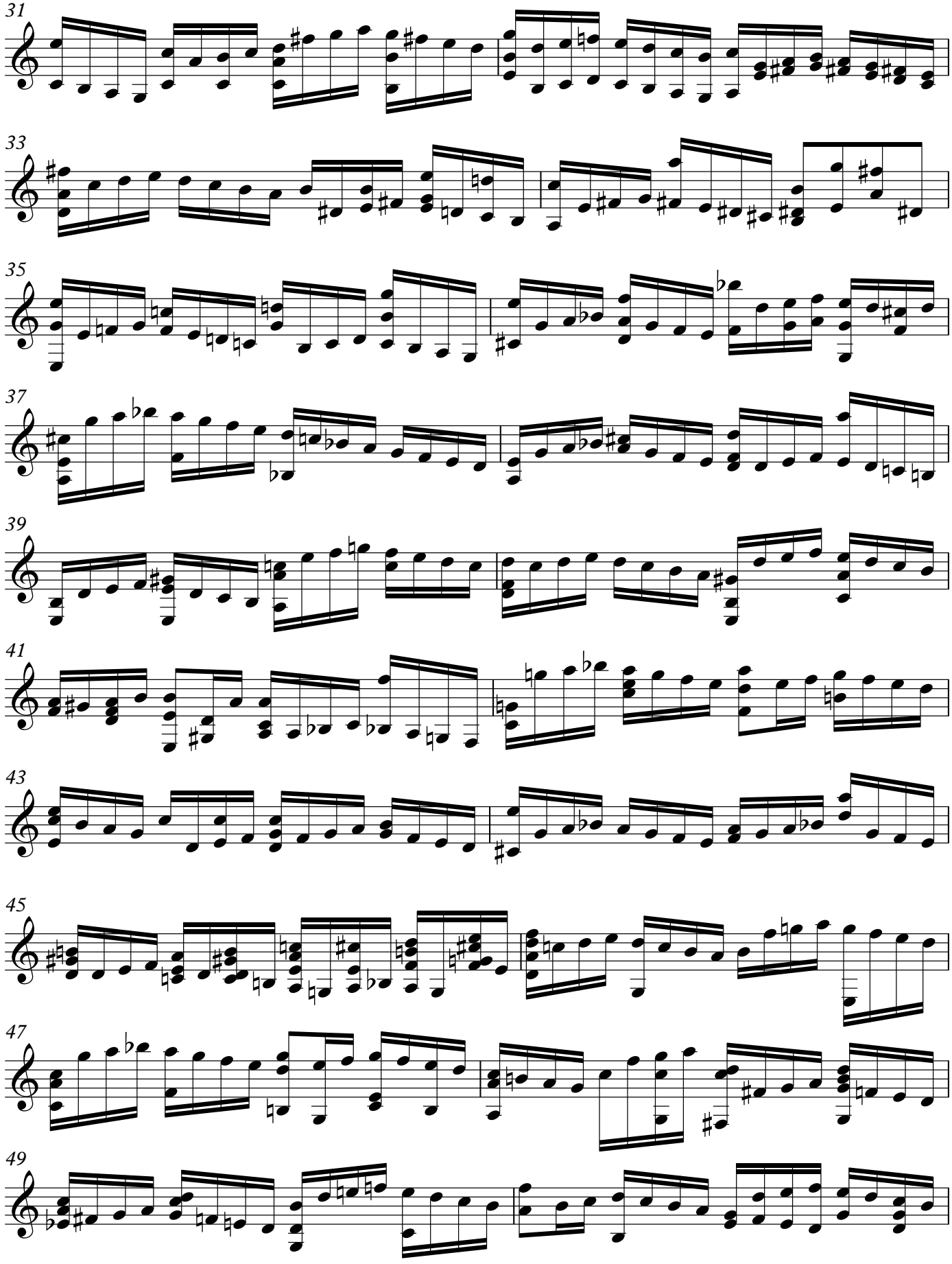
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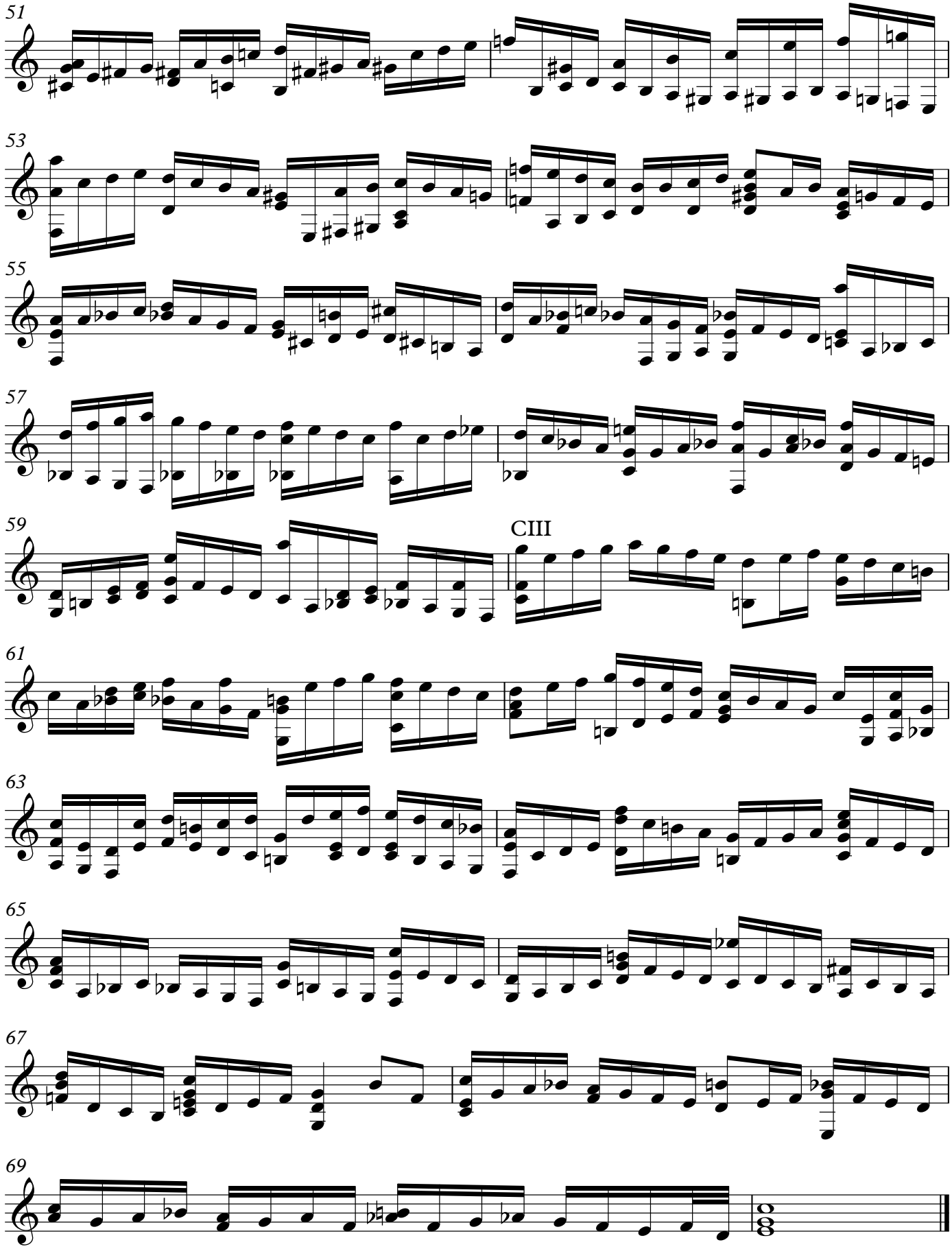
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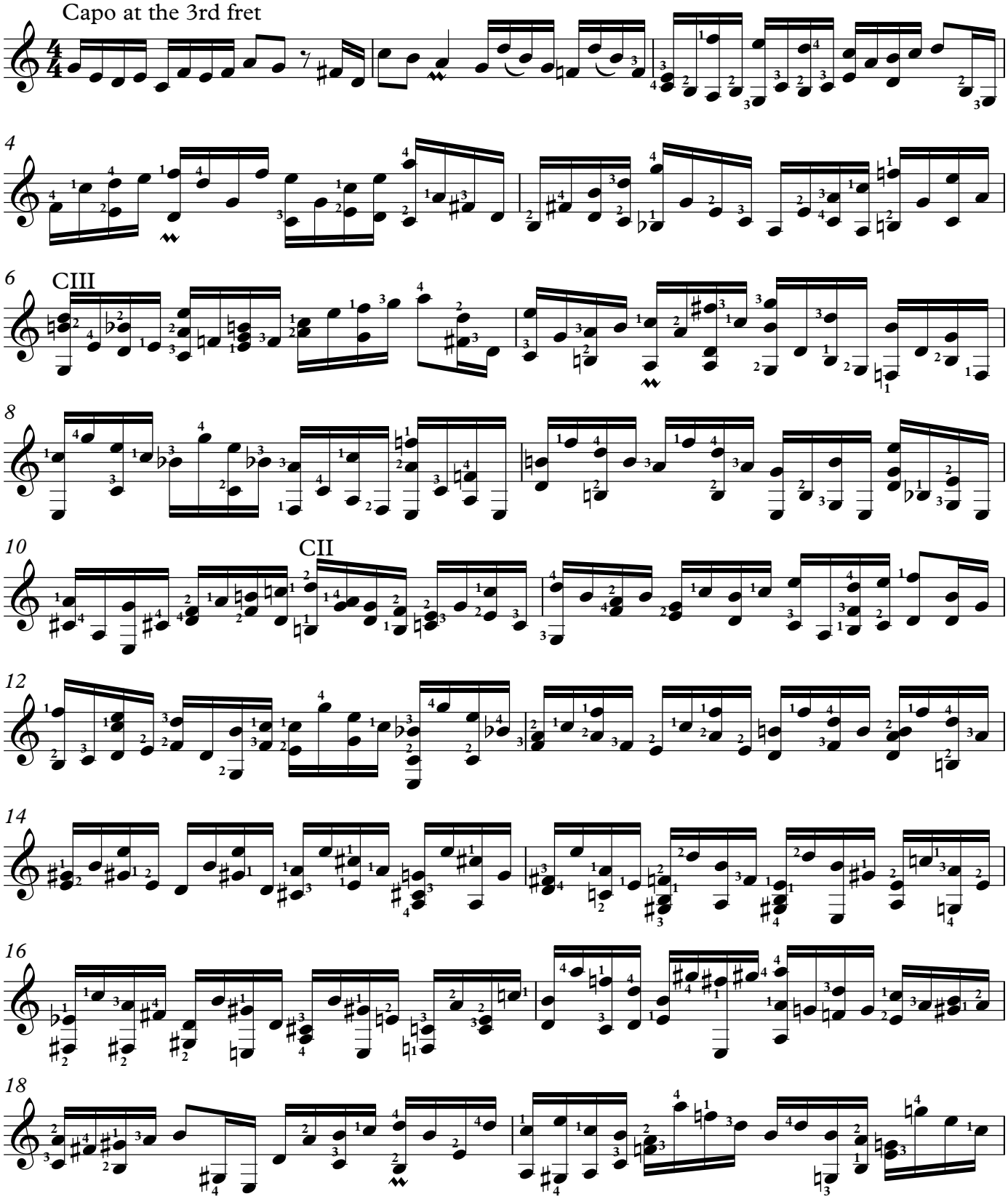
BWV 852 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Fugue No. 7 in E-flat major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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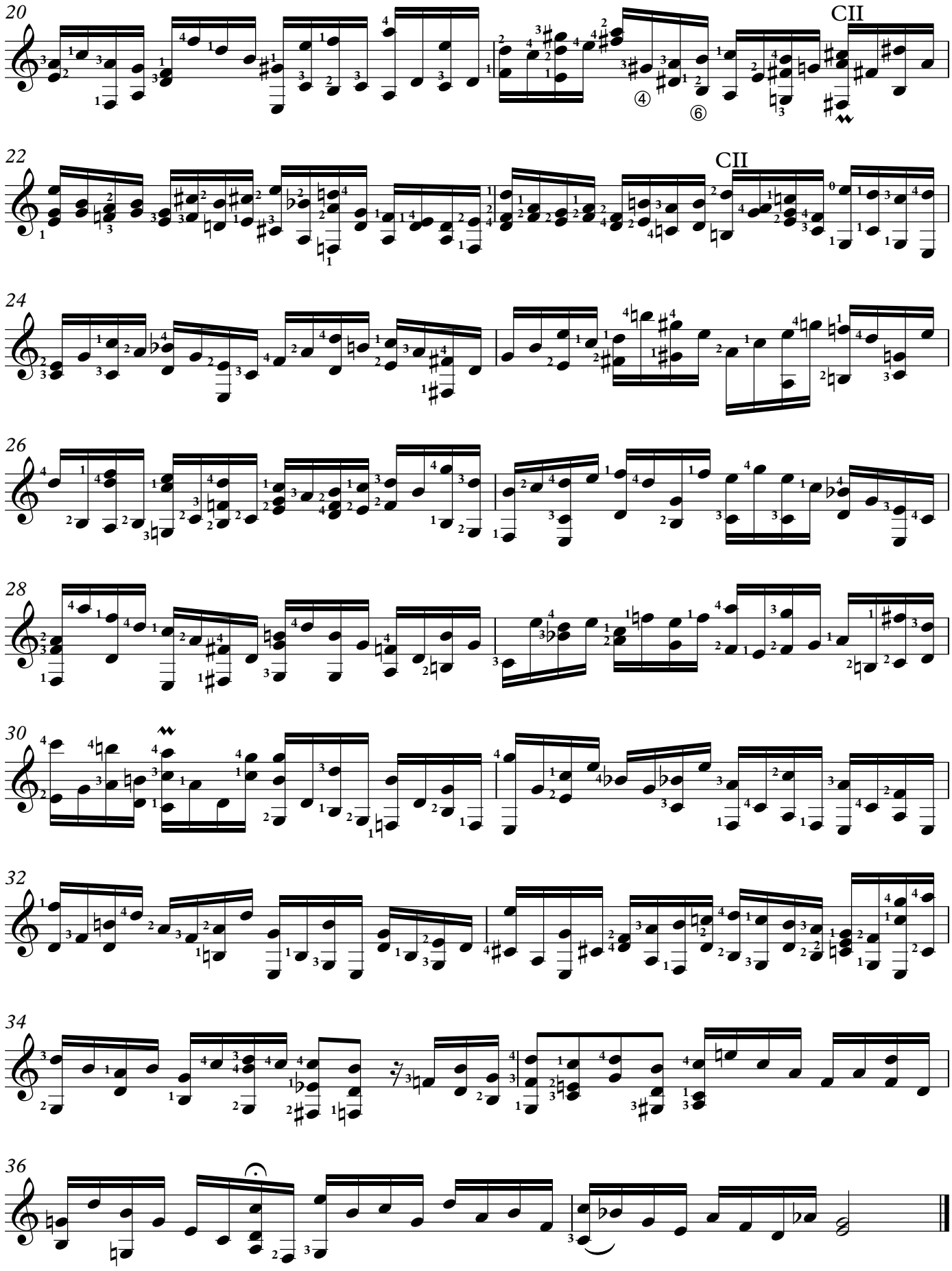
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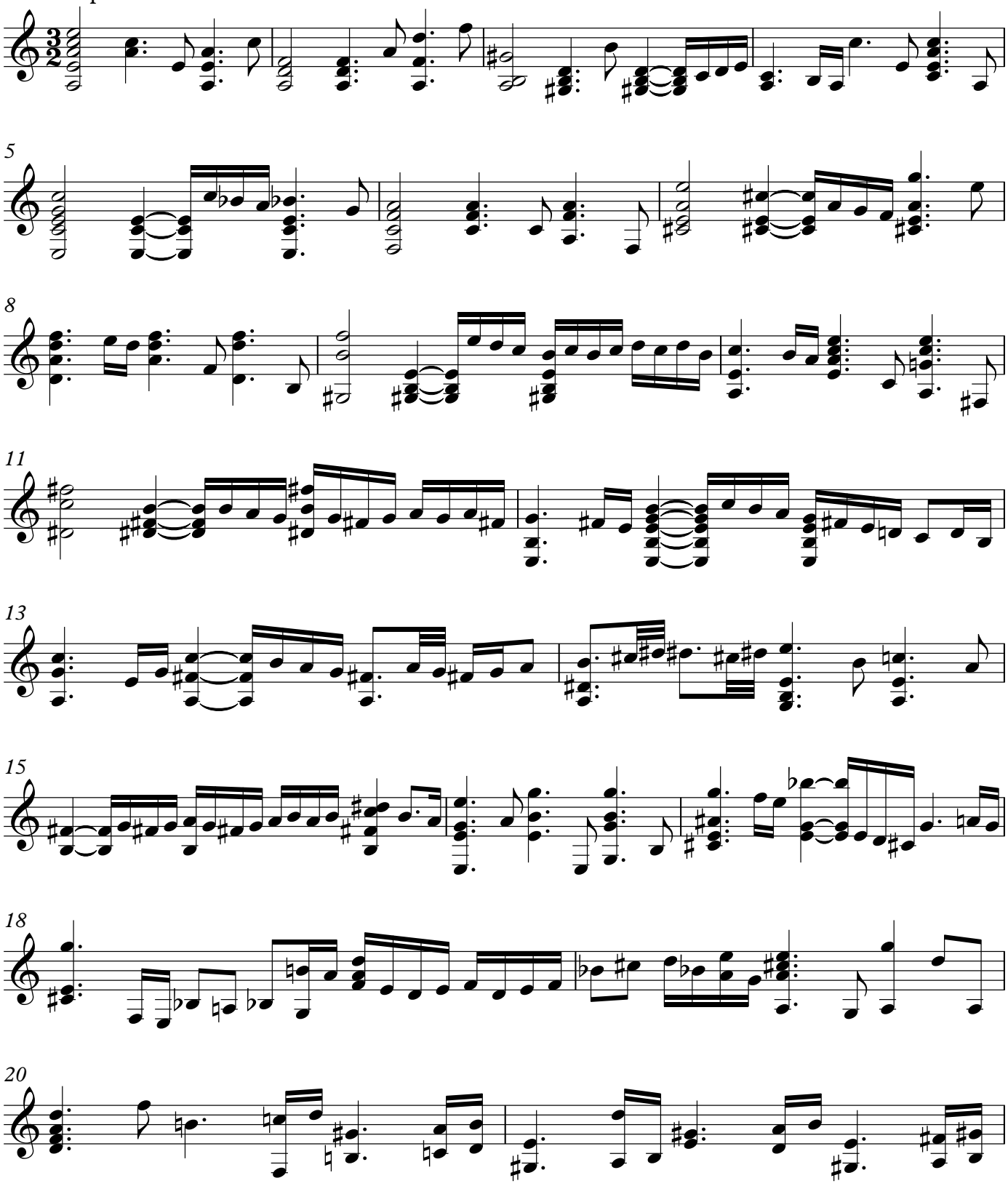
BWV 853 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Prelude No. 8 in E-flat minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 6th fret



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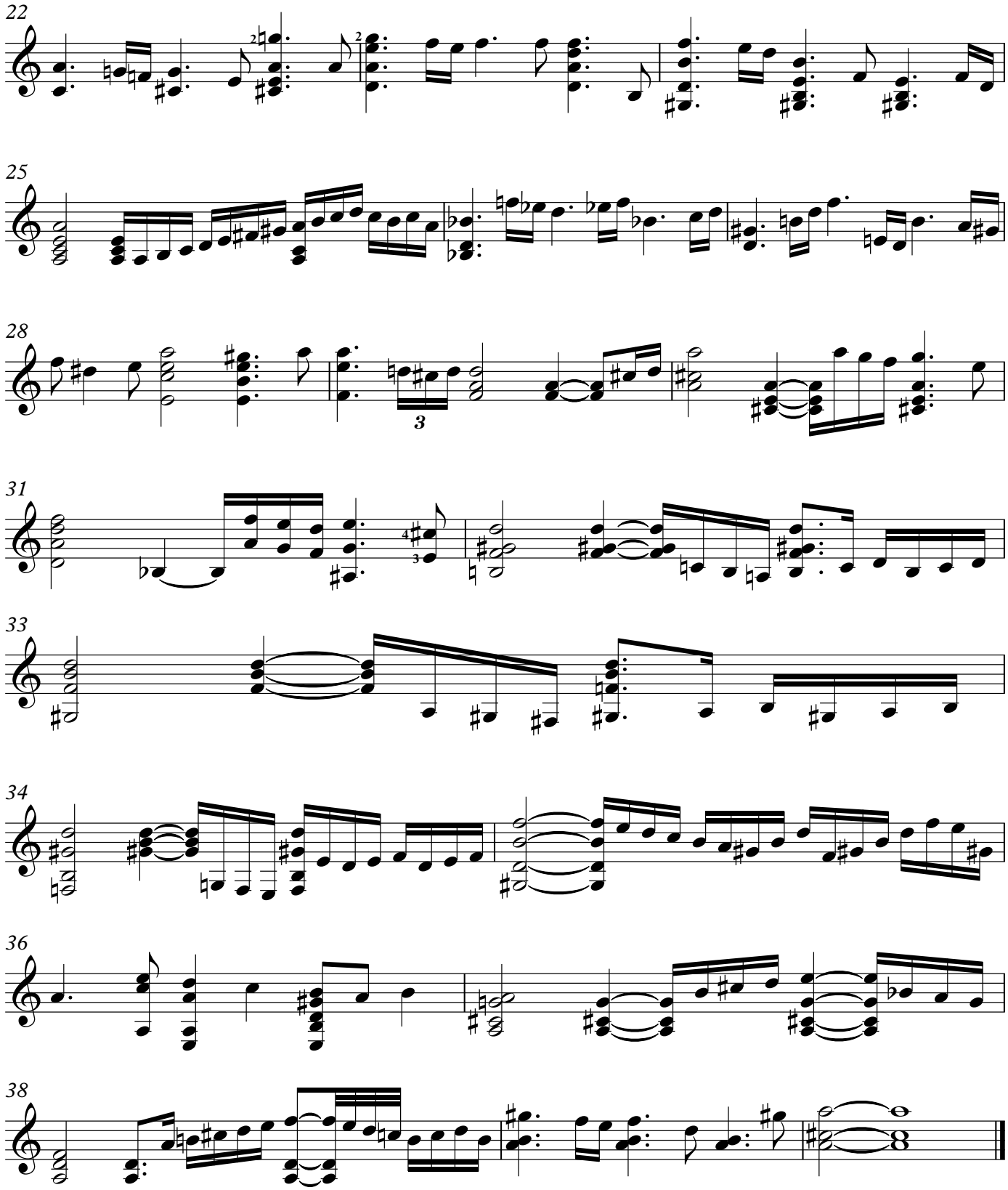
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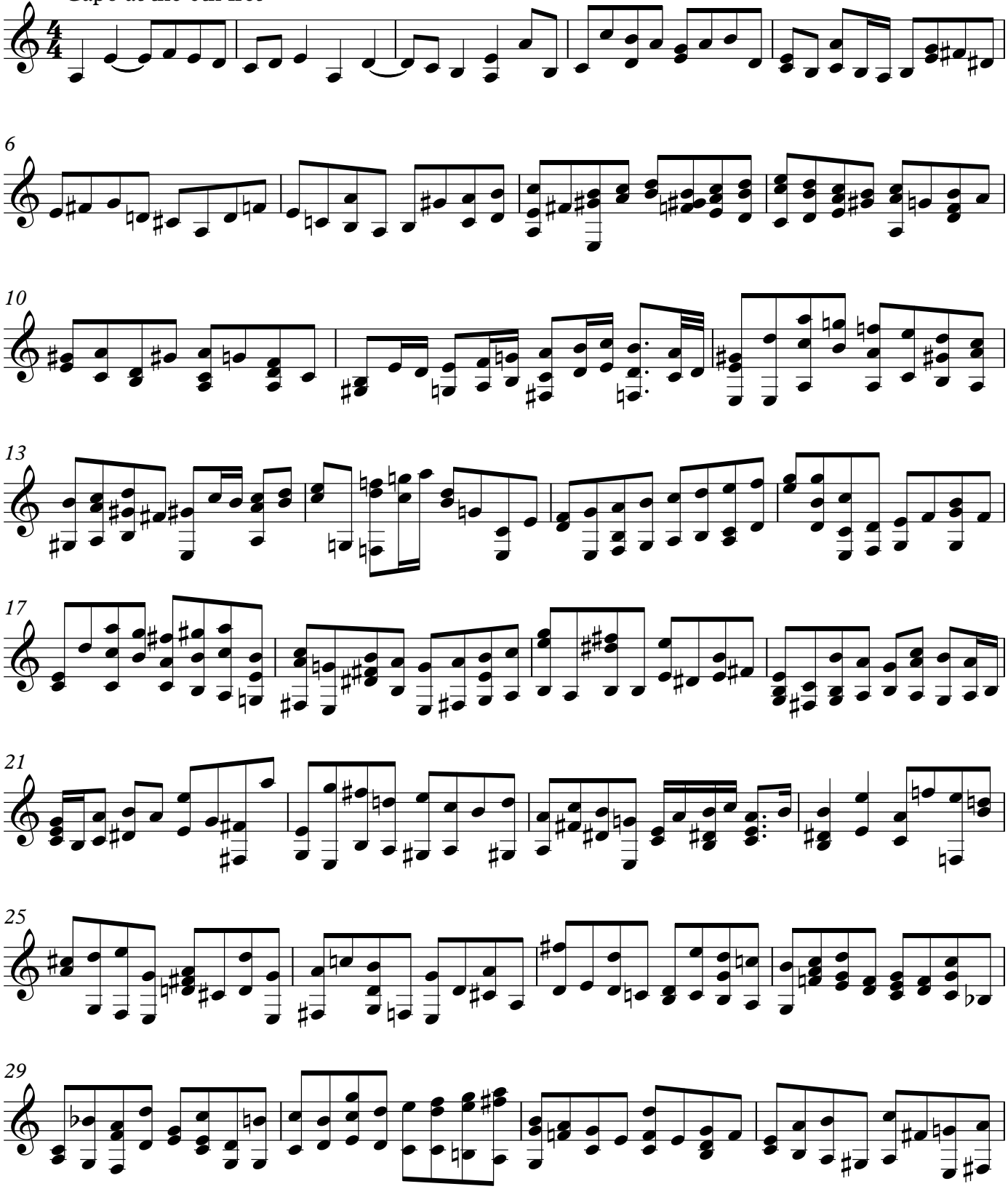
BWV 853 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Fugue No. 8 in E-flat minor

Adapted for guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 6th fret



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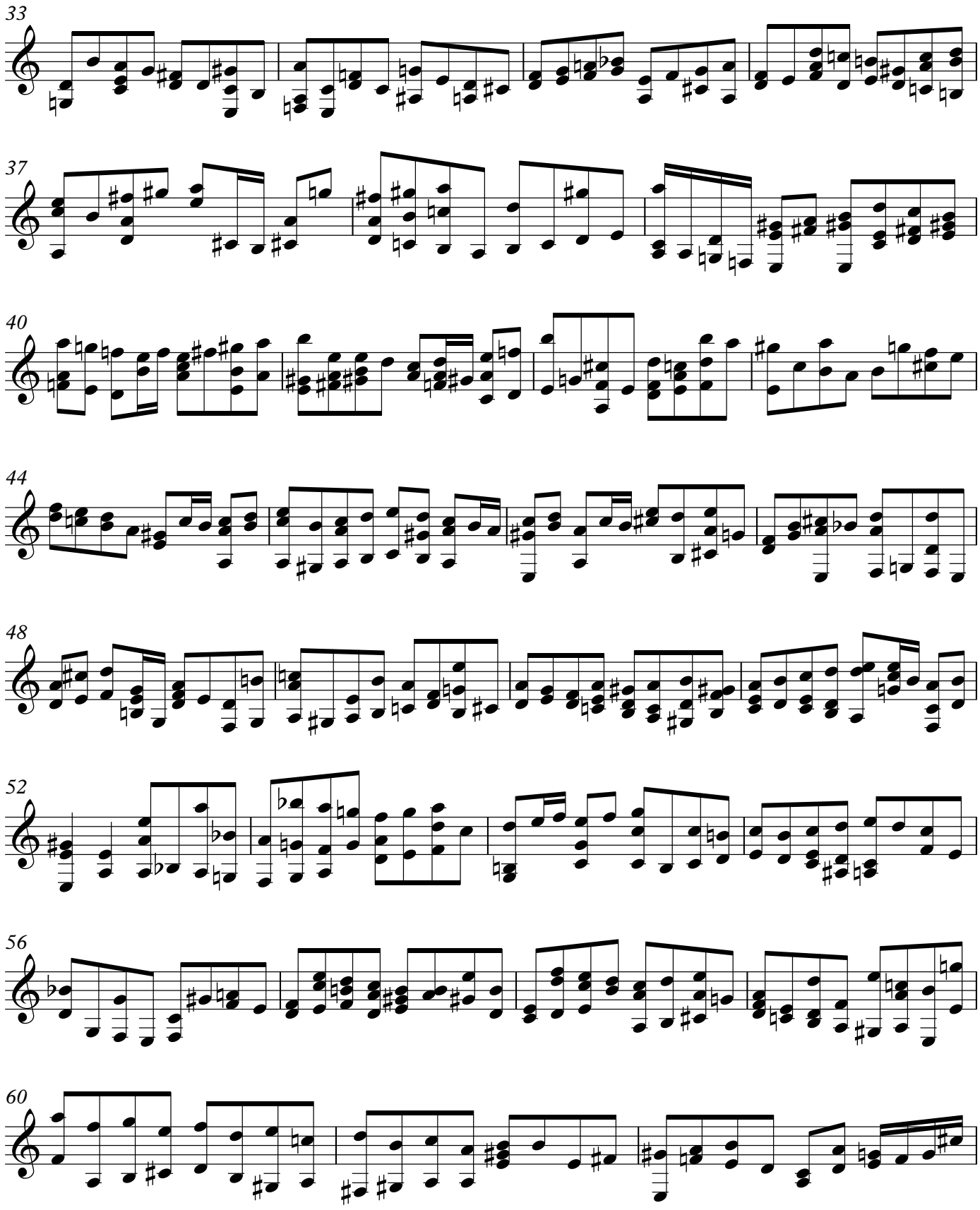
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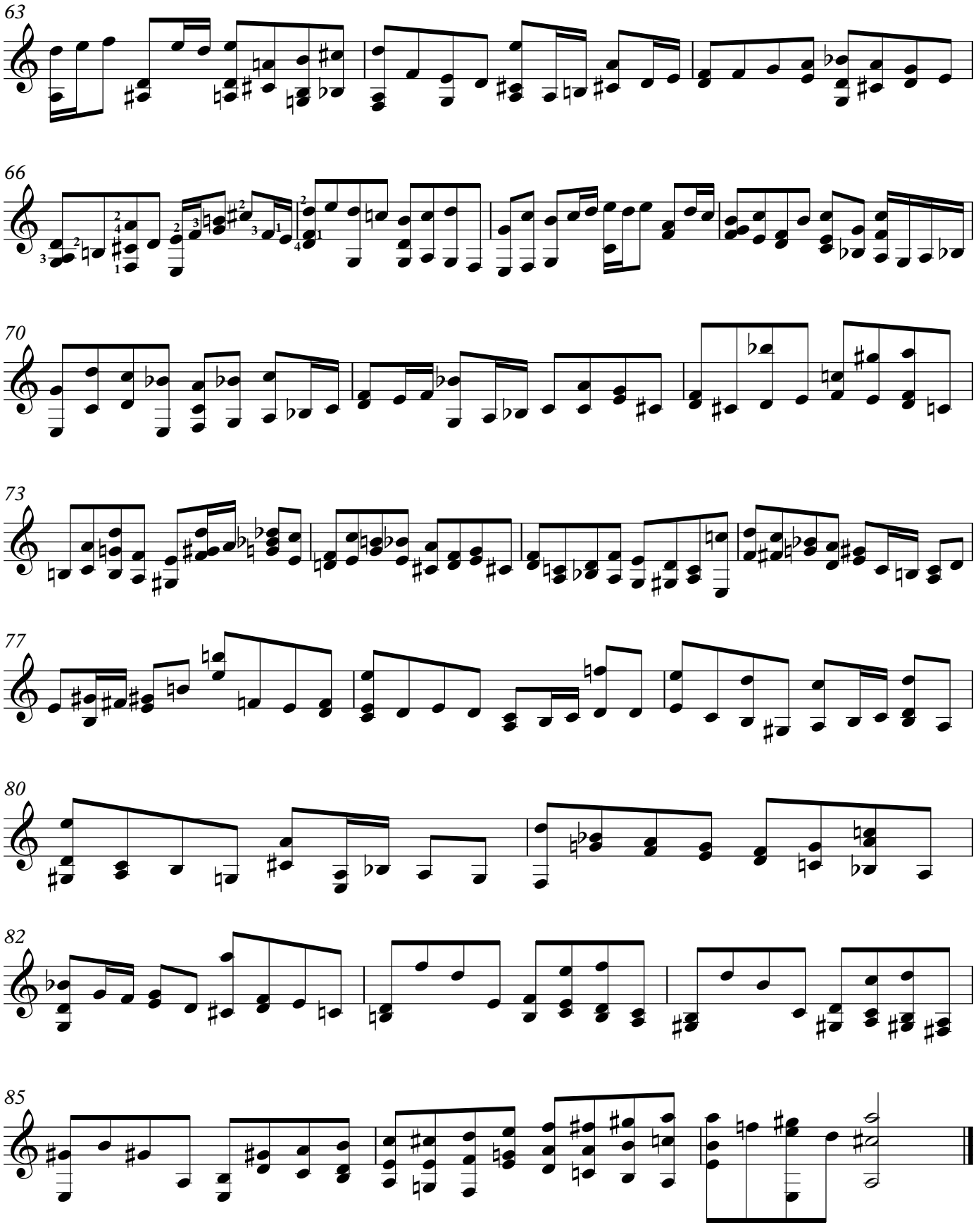
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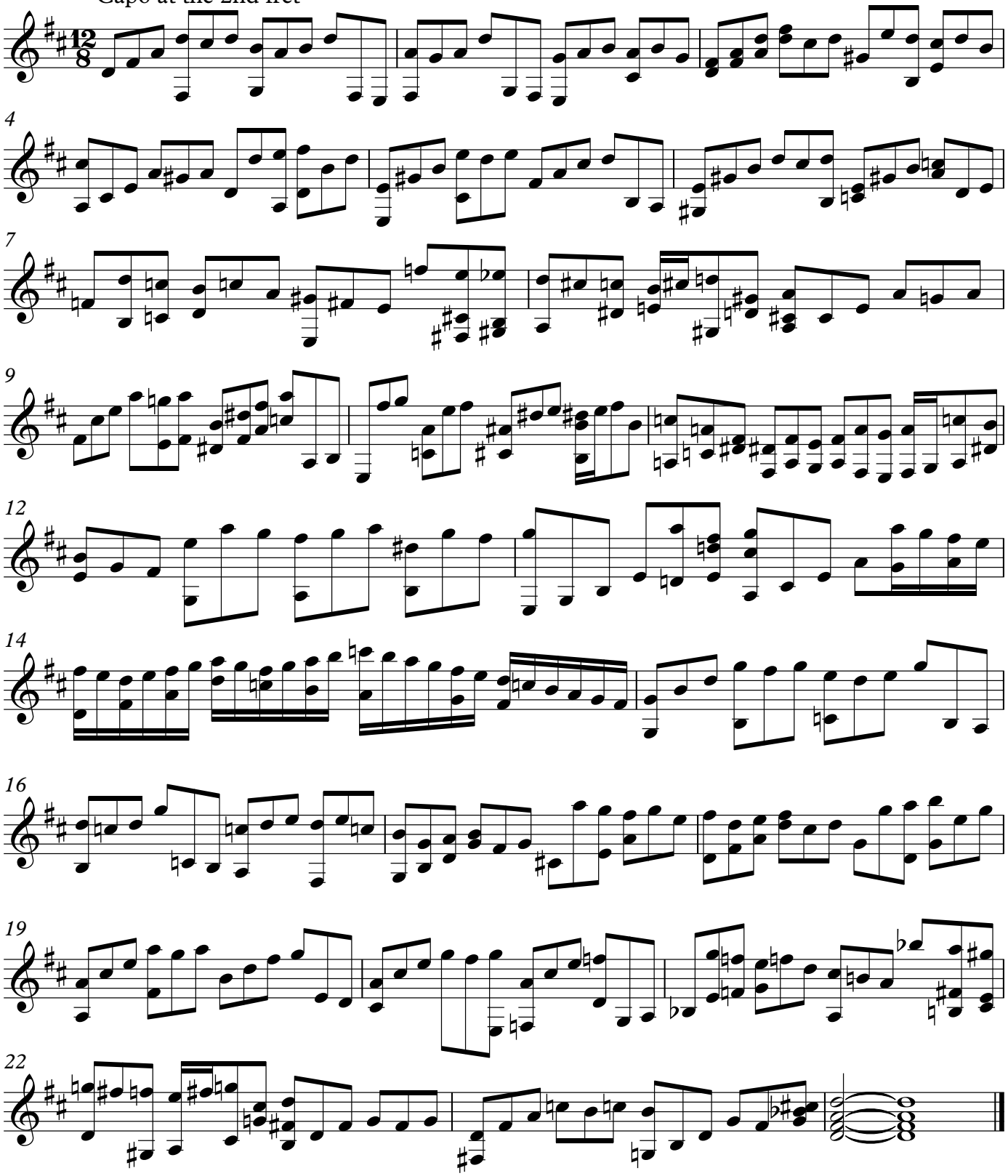
BWV 854 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Prelude No. 9 in E major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 2nd fret



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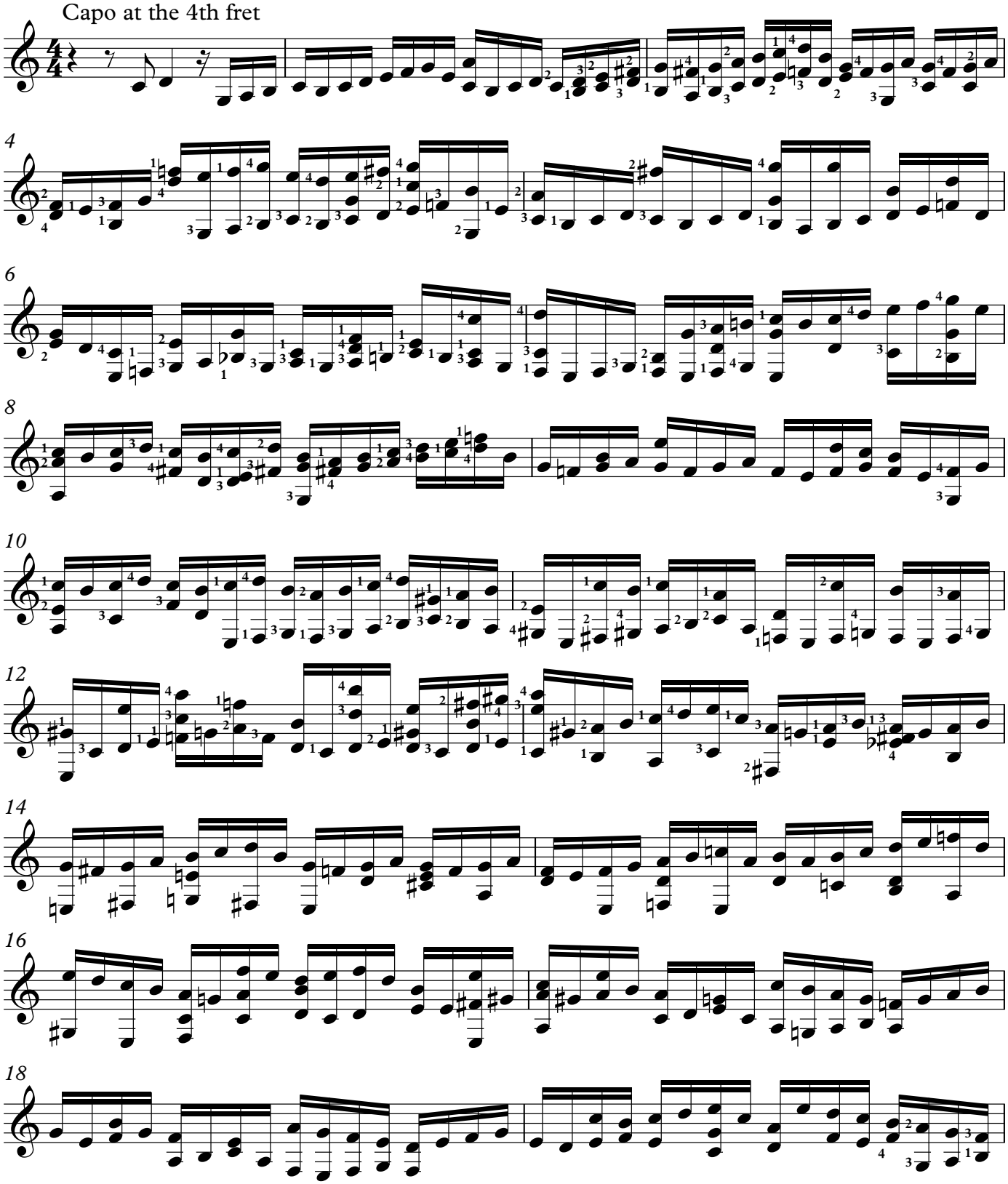
BWV 854 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Fugue No. 9 in E major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 4th fret



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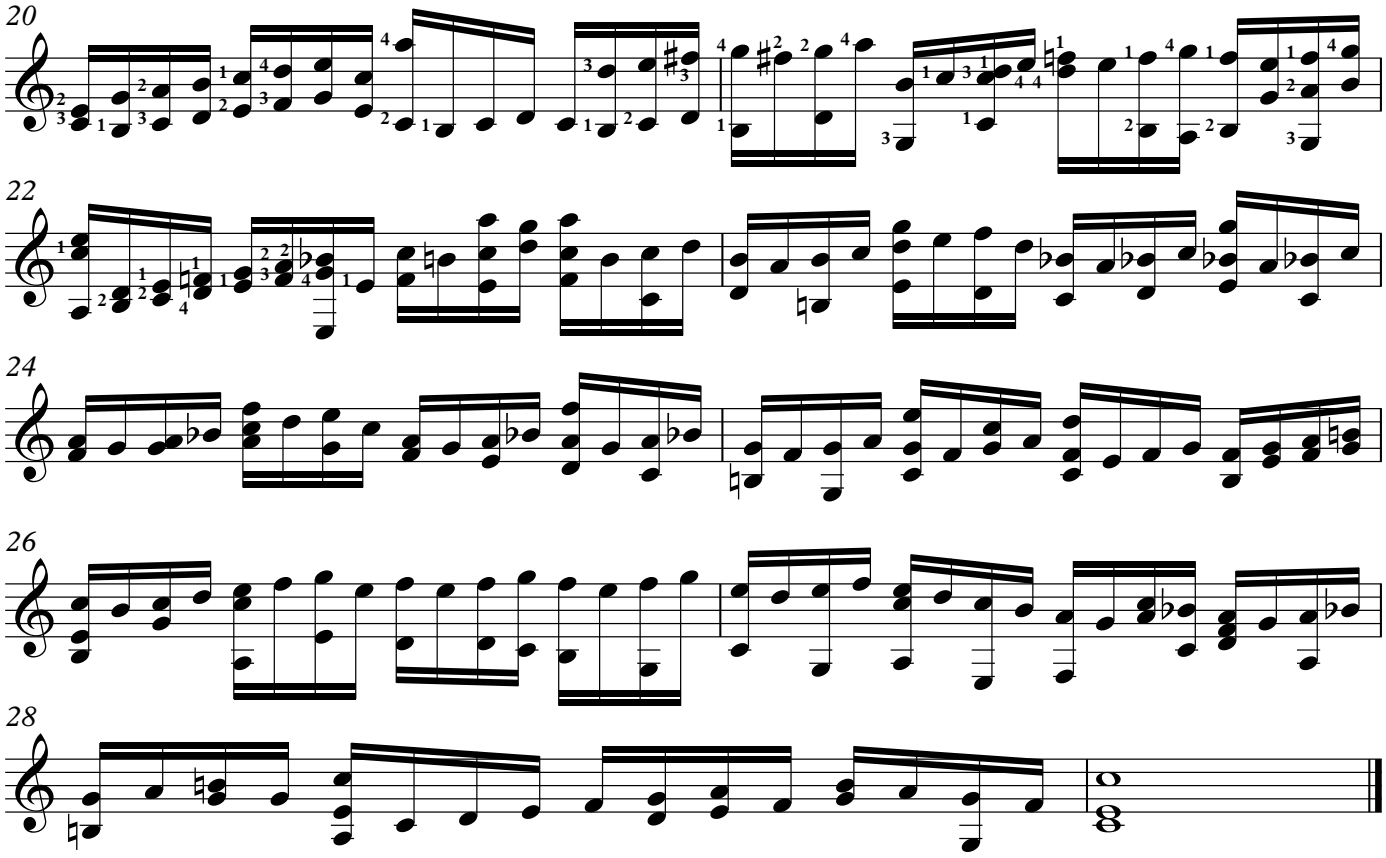
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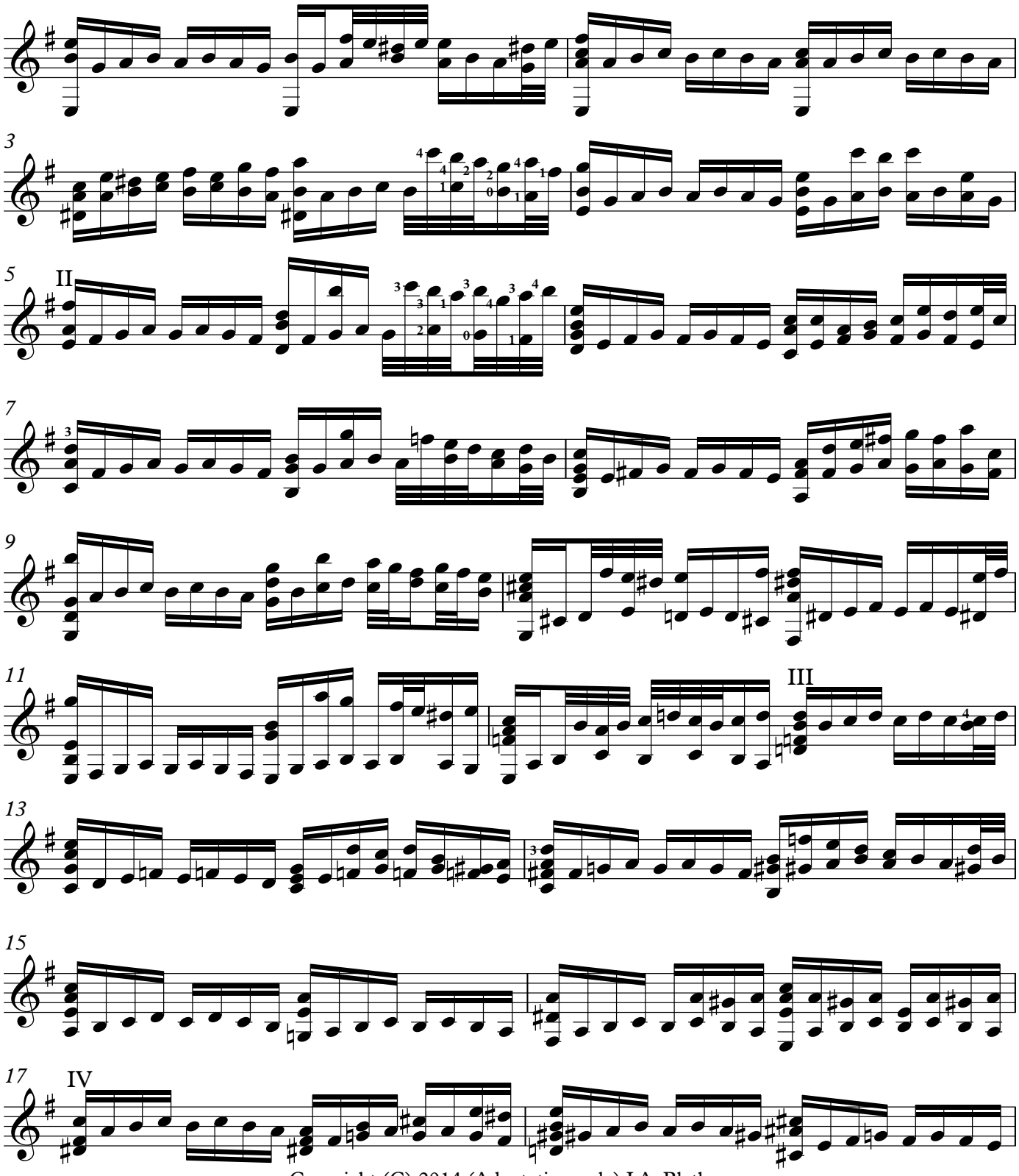
BWV 855 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Prelude No. 10 in E minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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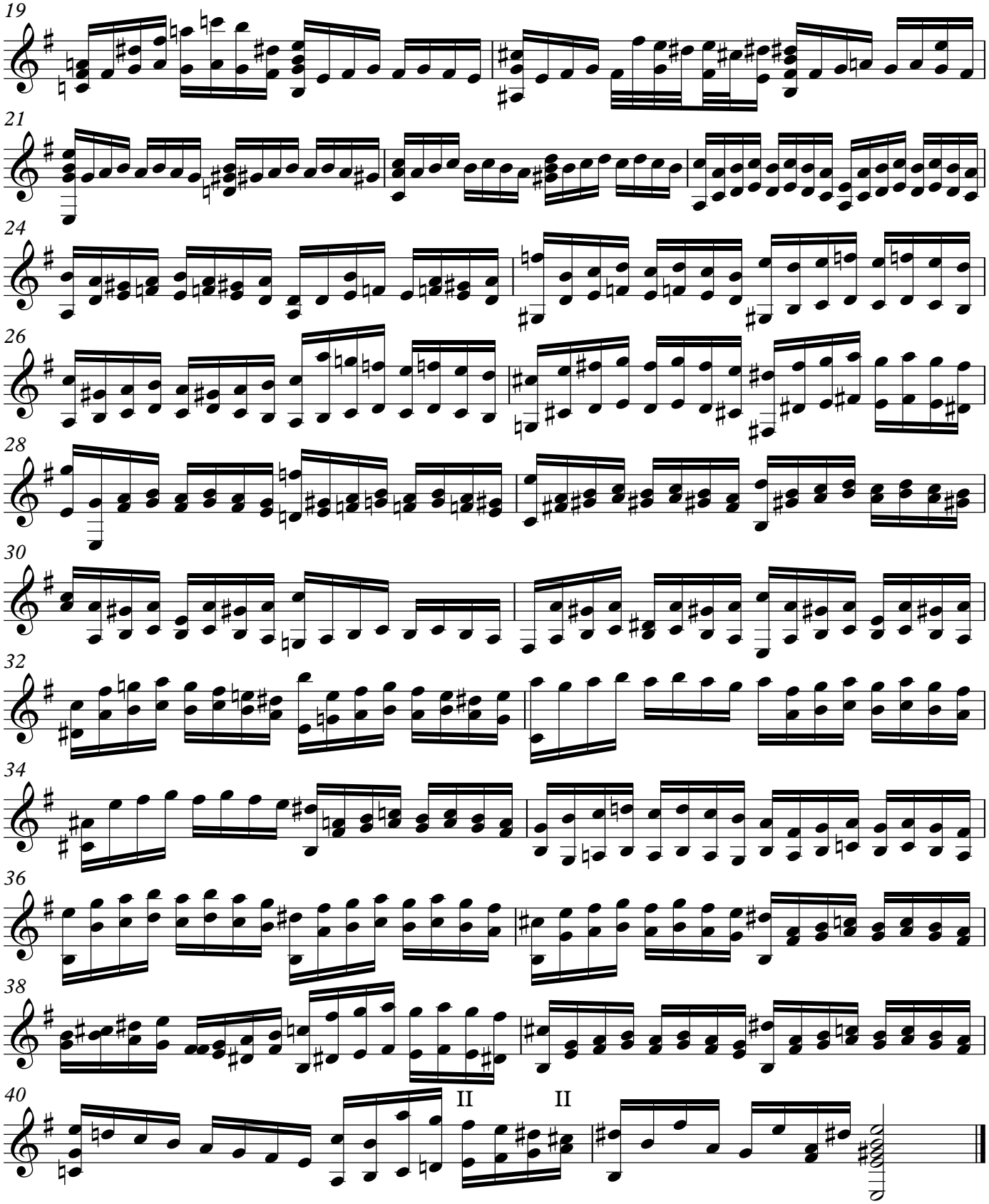
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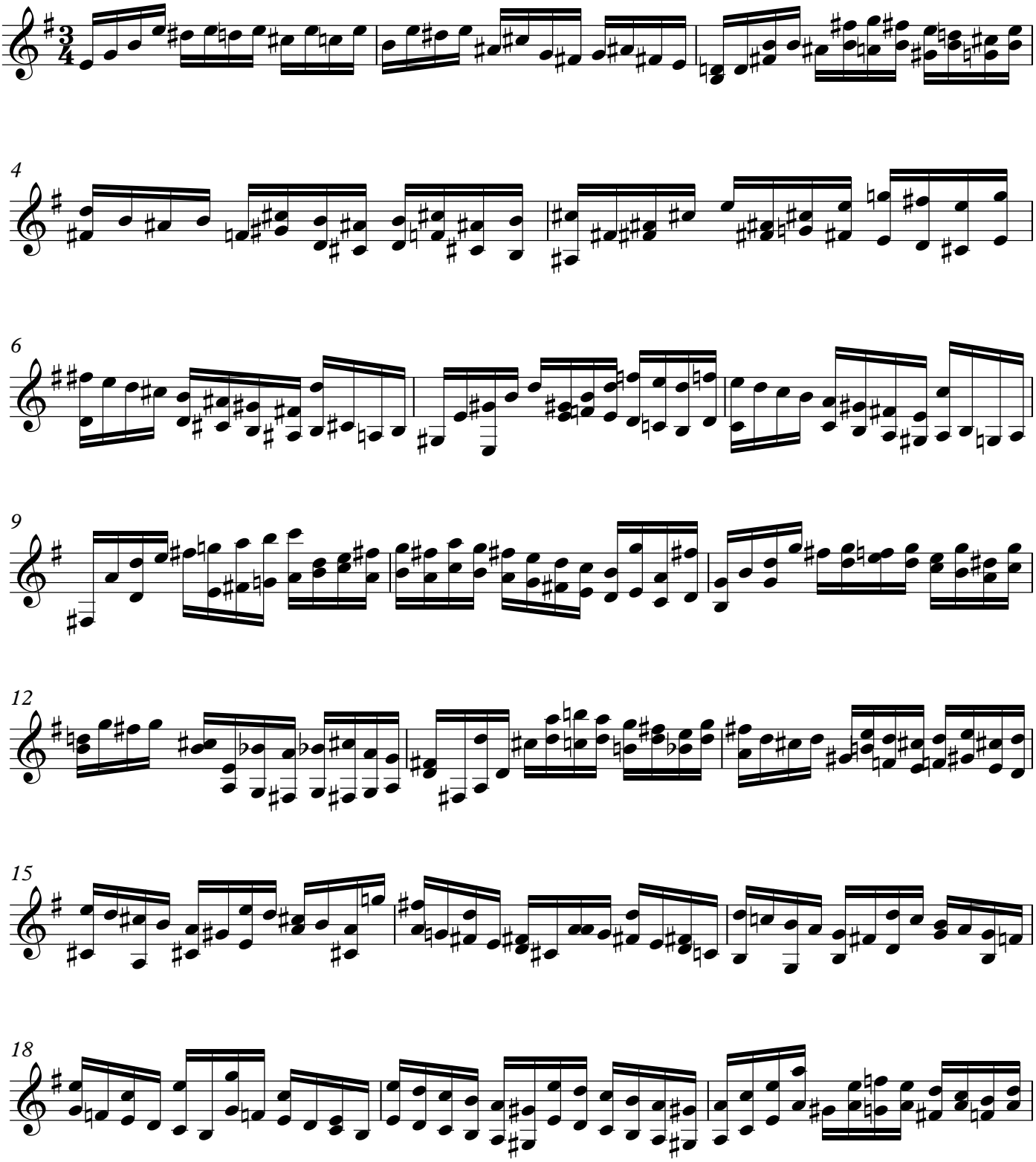
BWV 855 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Fugue No. 10 in E minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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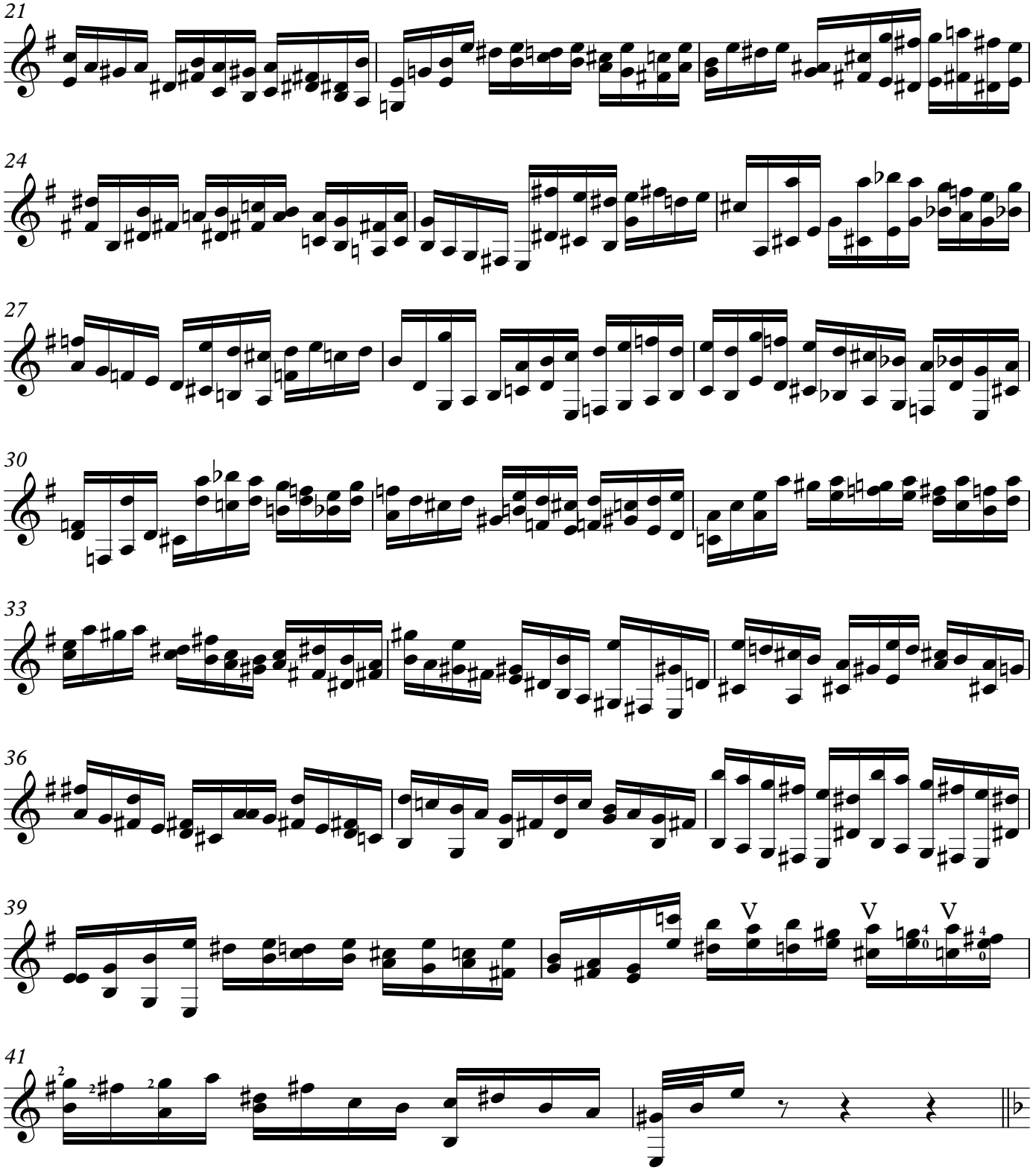
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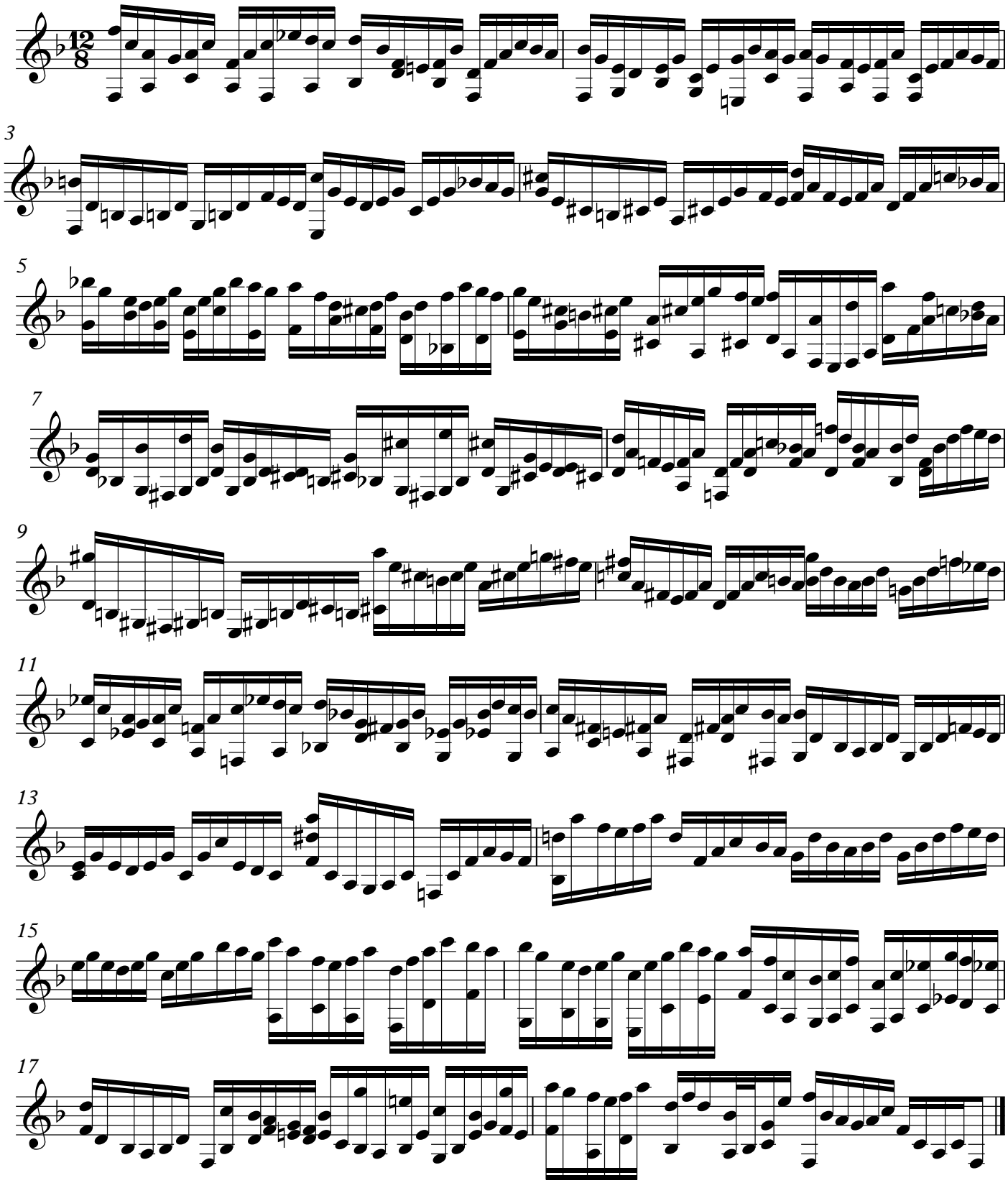
BWV 856 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Prelude No. 11 in F major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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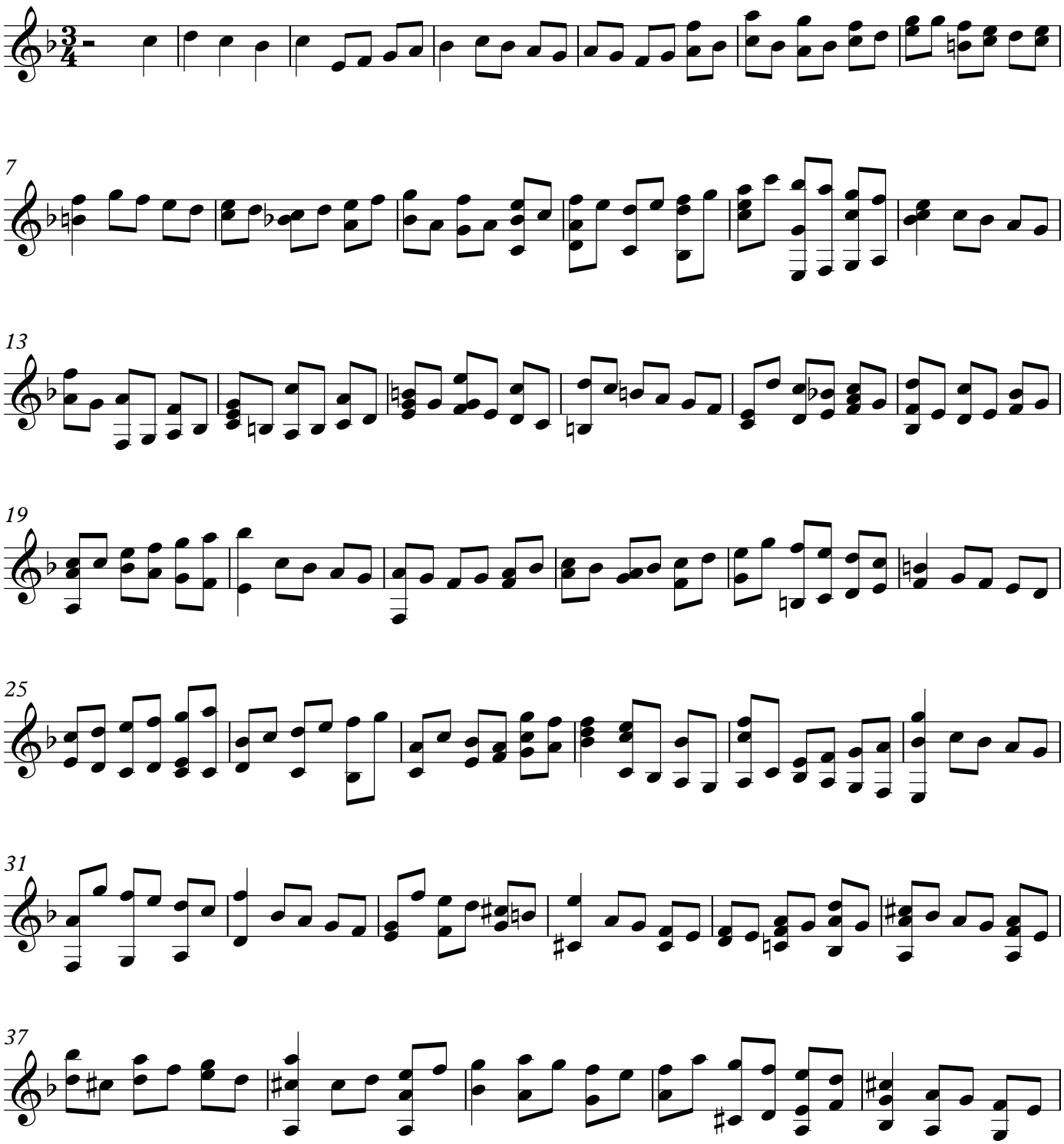
BWV 856 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Fugue No. 11 in F major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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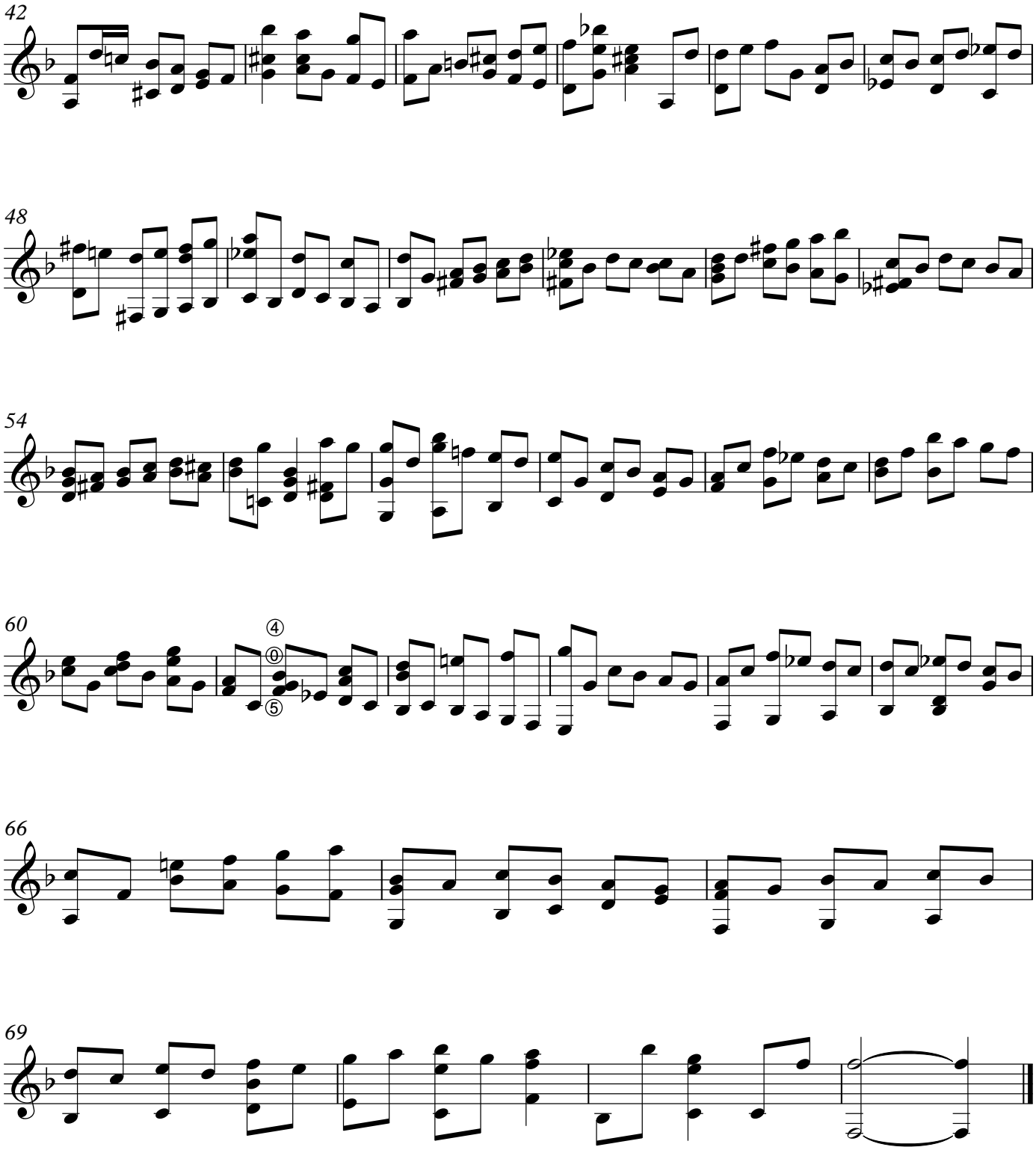
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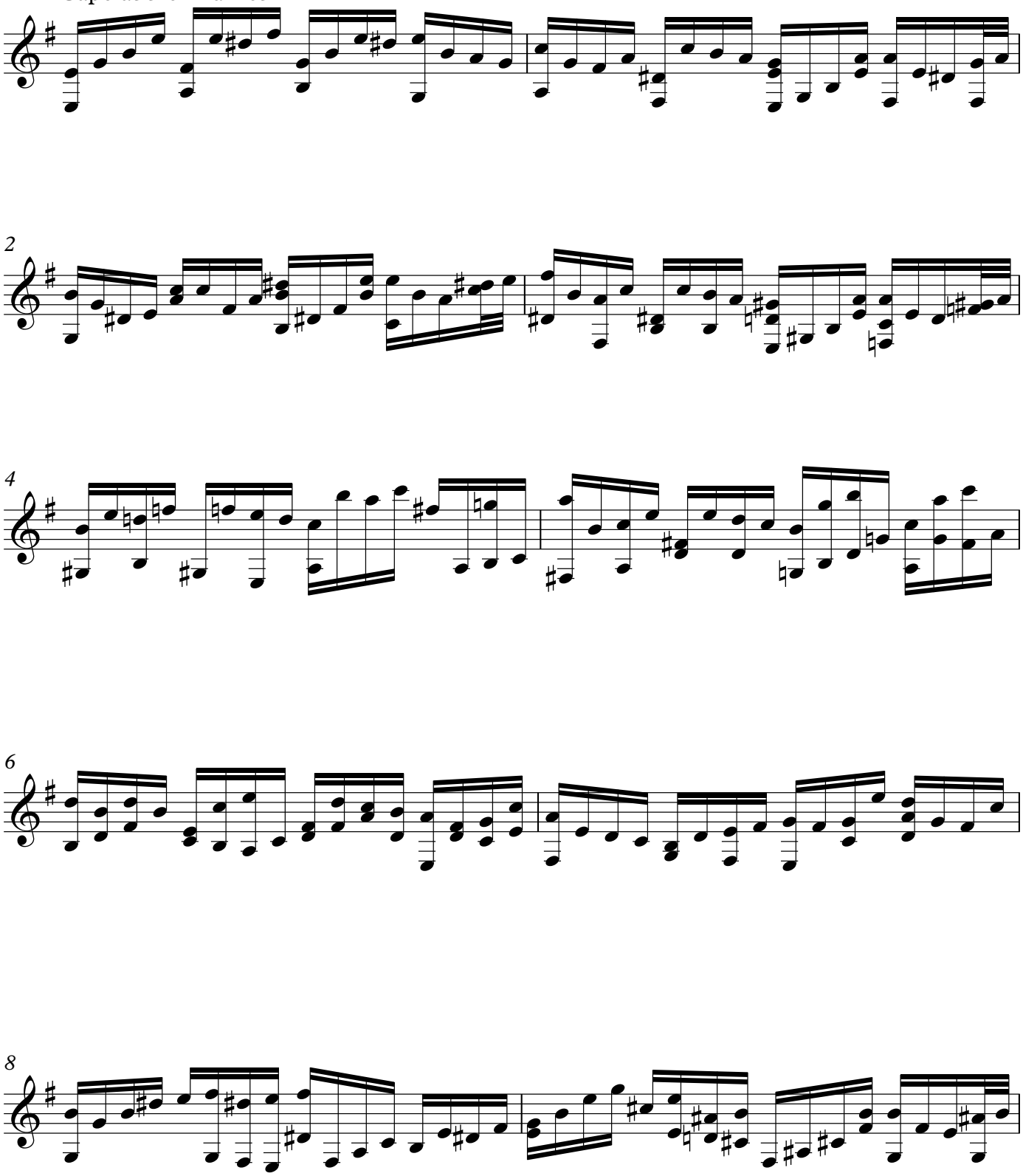
BWV 857 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Prelude No. 12 in F minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 2nd fret



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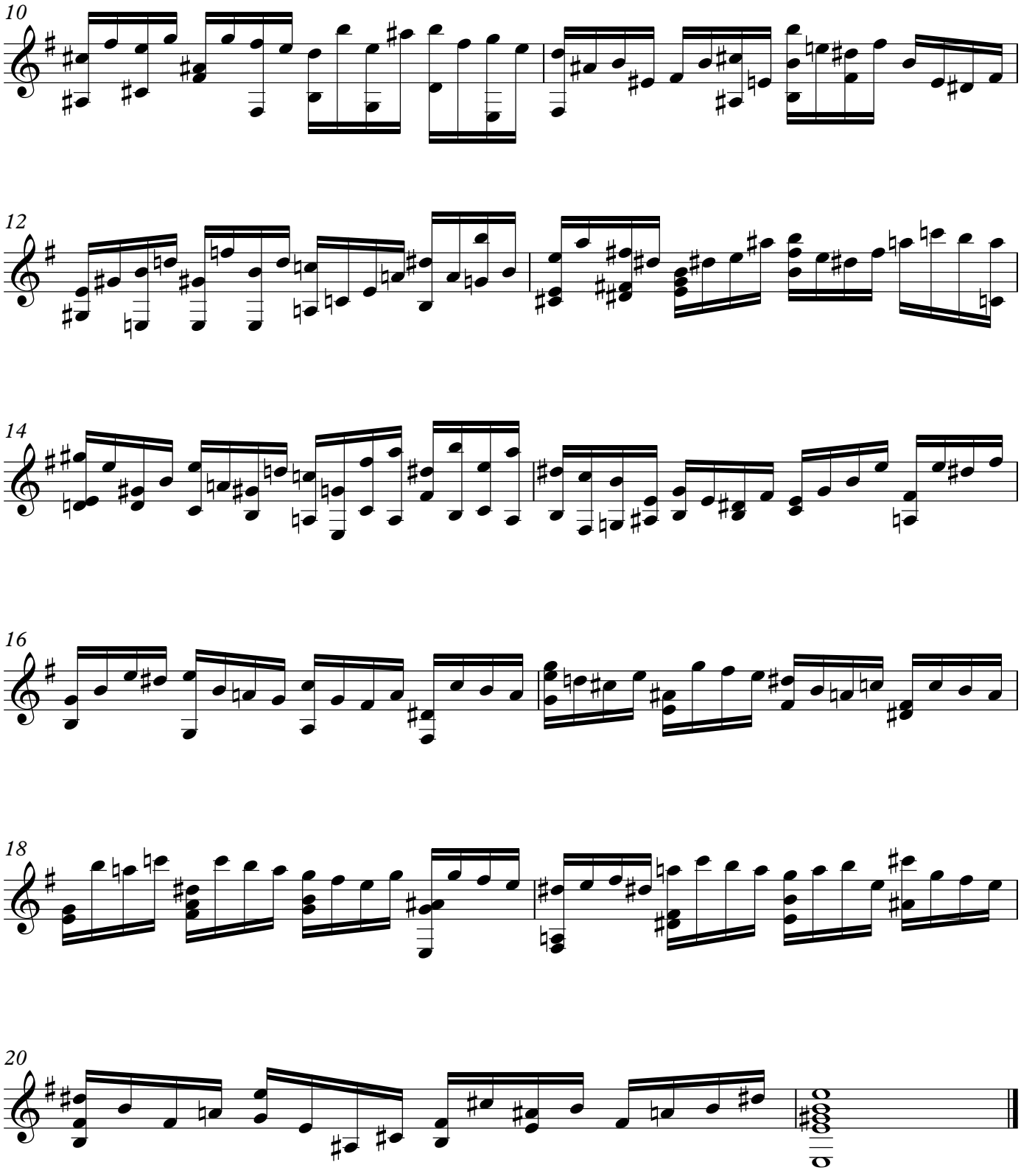
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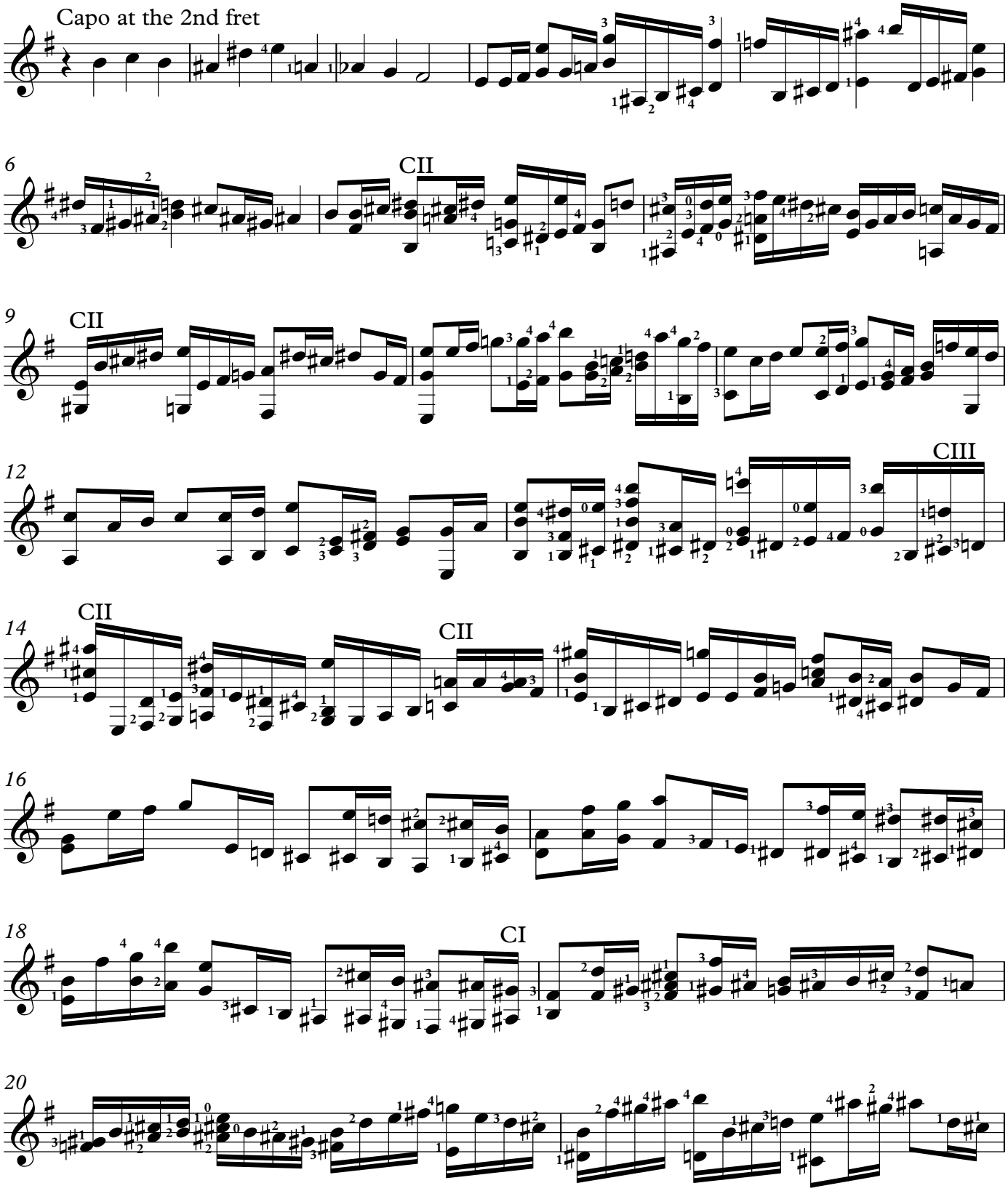
BWV 857 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Fugue No. 12 in F minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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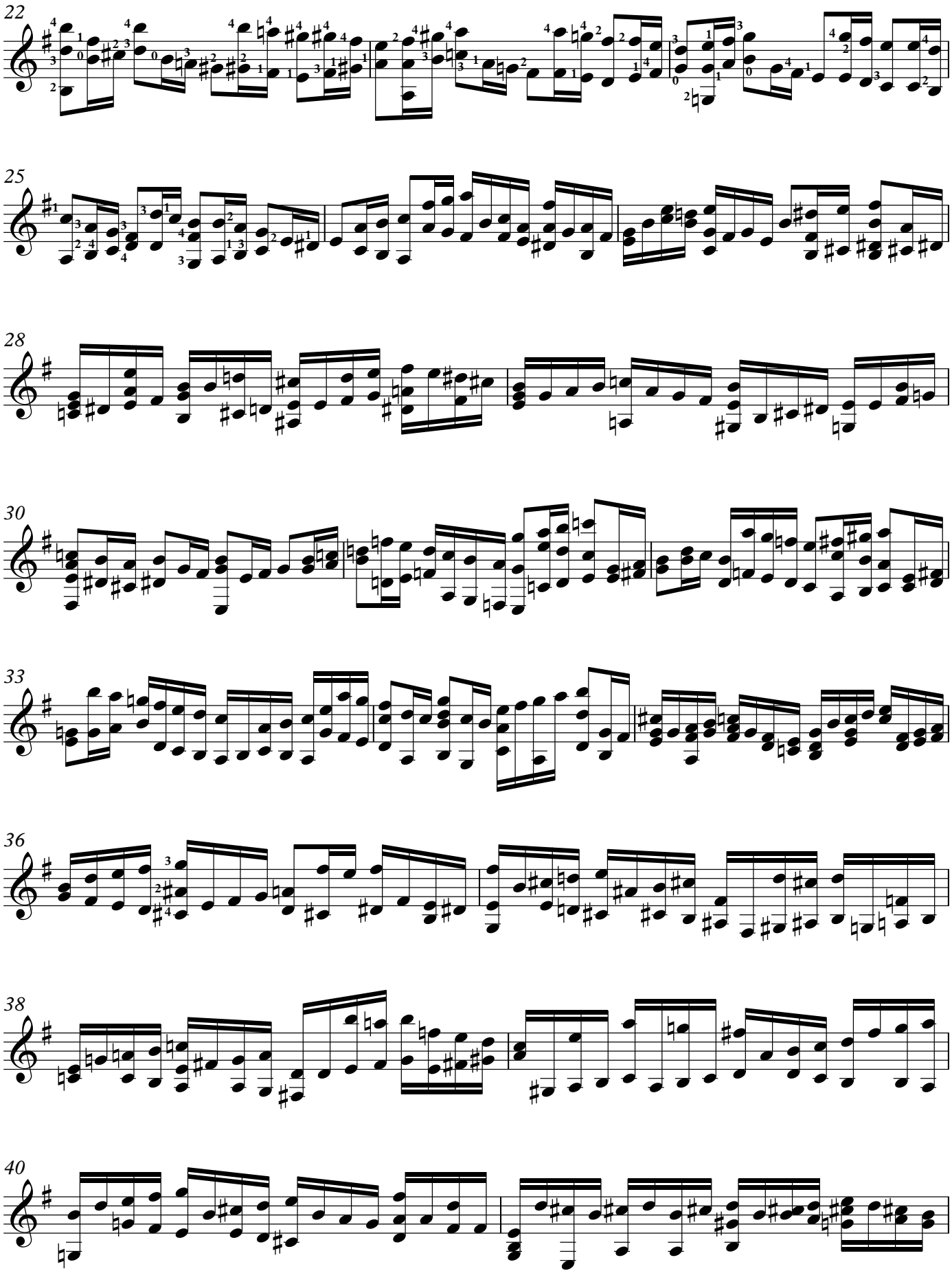
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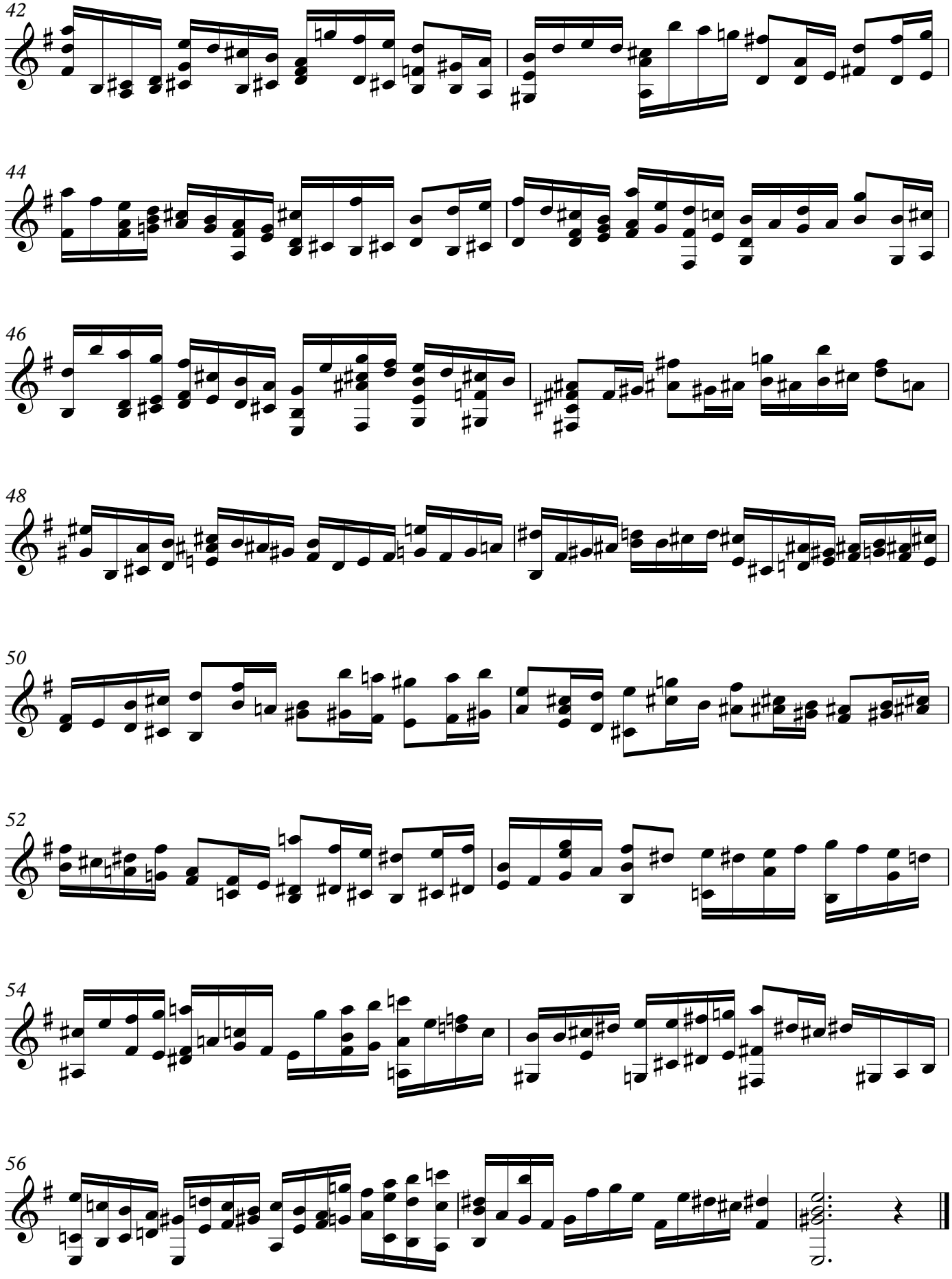
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VOLUME TWO

All 48 Preludes and 48 Fugues of the Well-Tempered Clavier

J.S. Bach

THE COMPLETE WELL-TEMPERED GUITAR

Adapted by J.A. Blyth

A New Approach to Transcription, in Four Volumes

About this edition

I wondered at various was of showing the music.The guitar has some limitations which simply don't exist for keyboard instruments. The most notable consequence of this, and perhaps the reason why I know of no similar project coming to completion, is that some voices will have to drop out, or have sudden octave transpositions. Rather than mess around with many impossible details I hit upon a basic programme to simplify not only the transcription process but the appearance of the final score: neither voices nor voice-leading would be indicated, so new voicings could be imagined.

Trills and other ornaments would mostly be omitted, or incorporated into the text (and sometimes simplified (such as in BWV 893's fugue) without comment (such as appoggiature). In practice listeners (including the player) will hear the music in much the same way as if it were played from more conventional notation.

Note durations would be not be indicated except in single-line passages, with the result that rhythm is indicated in a way analogous to rhythm notation in lute tablature.

Many of these pieces have gone through numerous versions, trying out different transpositions, fingerings and edits. Some octave transpositions were made so that I could read the music more easily, and might not be necessary in the case of a normal guitarist who learns and memorizes. For the first four and a half decades of my life I had got used to having perfect vision, so when I started to need reading glasses I was in denial for a while. Now I find that it is very hard to be able to see both the fingerboard and the computer screen at the same time, and some of this music (and certainly the preliminary performances) will reflect that difficulty.

I've learned to play 96 compositions of often the highest complexity in little more than a year: if I can do that, it ought to be possible to take this music to a significantly higher pitch of virtuosity, given more normal practice conditions, and some of the earlier more technically demanding versions could be perhaps revisited. At the moment though I will still with one version per piece.

These adaptations were made with one kind of guitarist in mind me so they might not suit you quite as well.

I am left-handed;

the only kind of guitar I play is classical (there were some dabblings in lute and jazz electric, decades ago);

I read very well, and don't memorize (a skill find very difficult);

while I have some interest in quite a lot of different kinds of music, it is serious, dramatic contrapuntal music, such as these works by Bach, that I actually love;

I mostly don't like pop music, or anything that is unvarying in pulse, tempo or volume, although there are some exceptions;

I am much more comfortable with standard notation than with TAB;

I don't really care about tone all that much except that I like warmth and some dirtiness and character most classical guitar playing sounds just a little antiseptic to me but expression is very important to me;

although I have studied the music of this composer and period extensively (also utilizing fully the resources of the classical music library where I work) I am more concerned about simply getting what I can out of the delightful patterns/blueprints which Bach has left me, on my own terms;

although I have a degree in music, my approach to this music probably owes a lot more to my personality than to any training I was already an enthusiastic and naïve listener long before I studied music with any kind of formality;
although a few pieces and trouble-spots have been thoroughly fingered, most of the time these scores don't have very much in the way of guidance, especially since the fingering will likely vary considerably if you decide to put more ornaments back in.

John Alexander Blyth, Brandon, Manitoba, Canada, Thursday 14th August 2014

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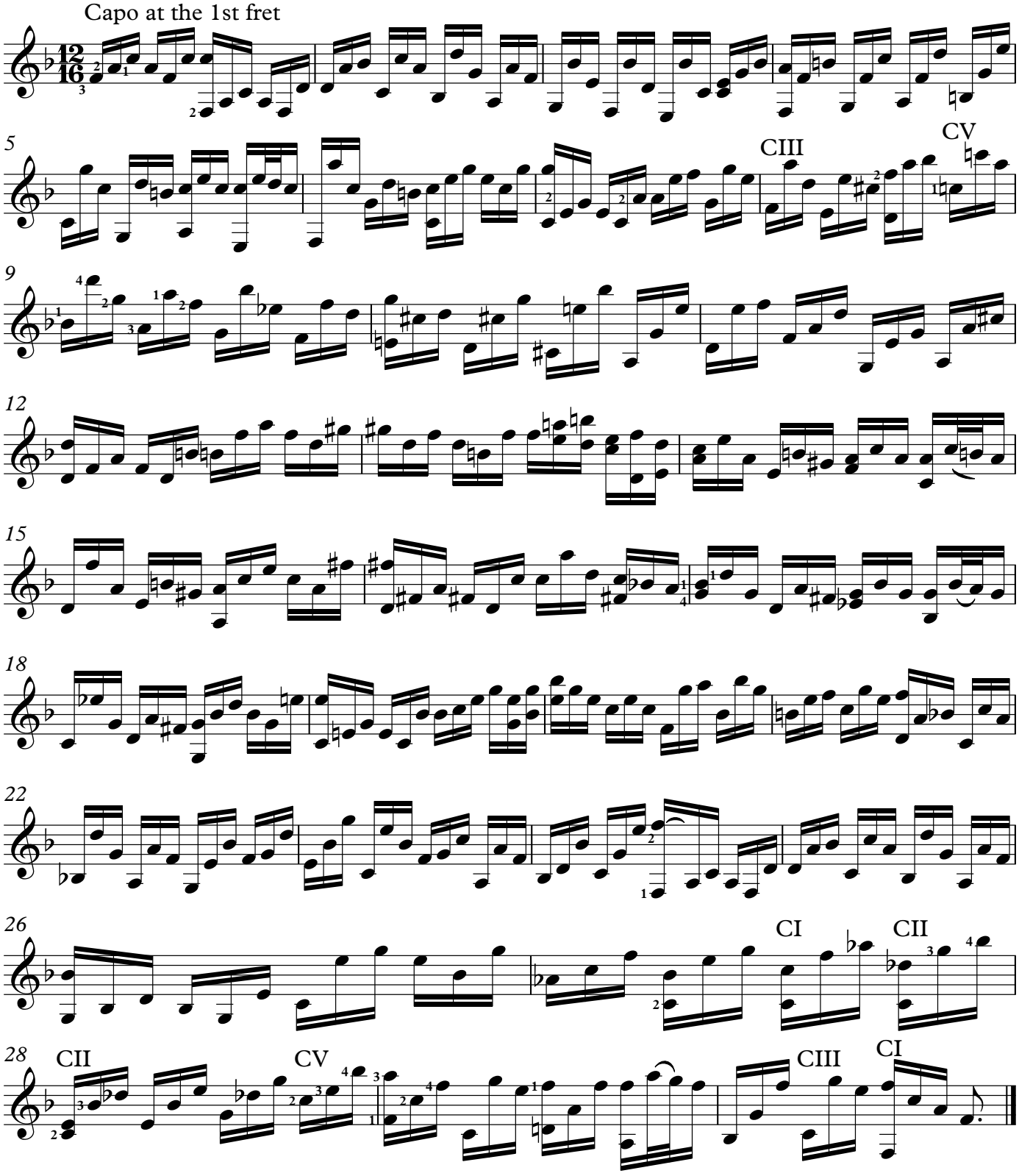
BWV 858 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Prelude No. 13 in F-sharp major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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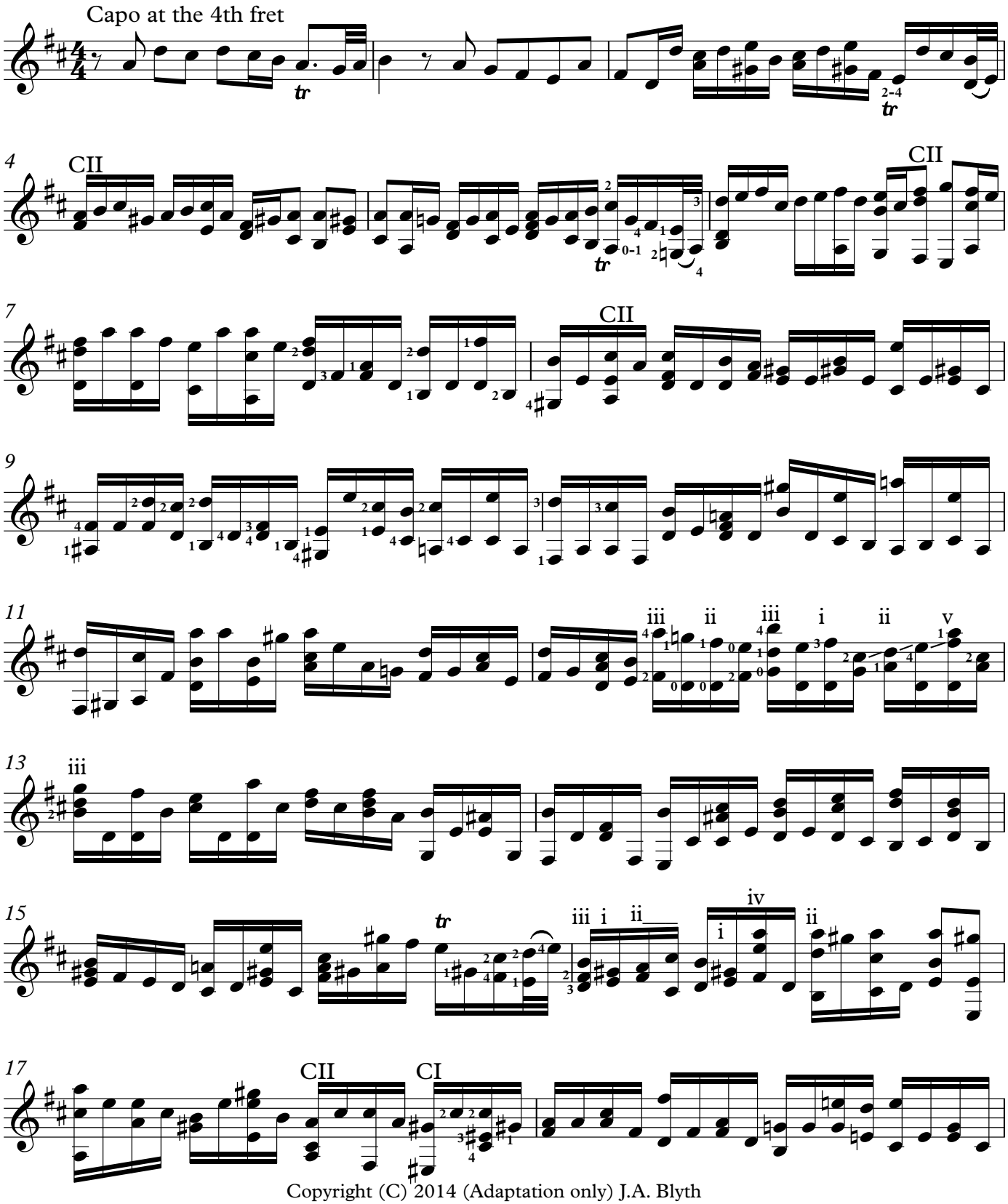
BWV 858 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Fugue No. 13 in F-sharp major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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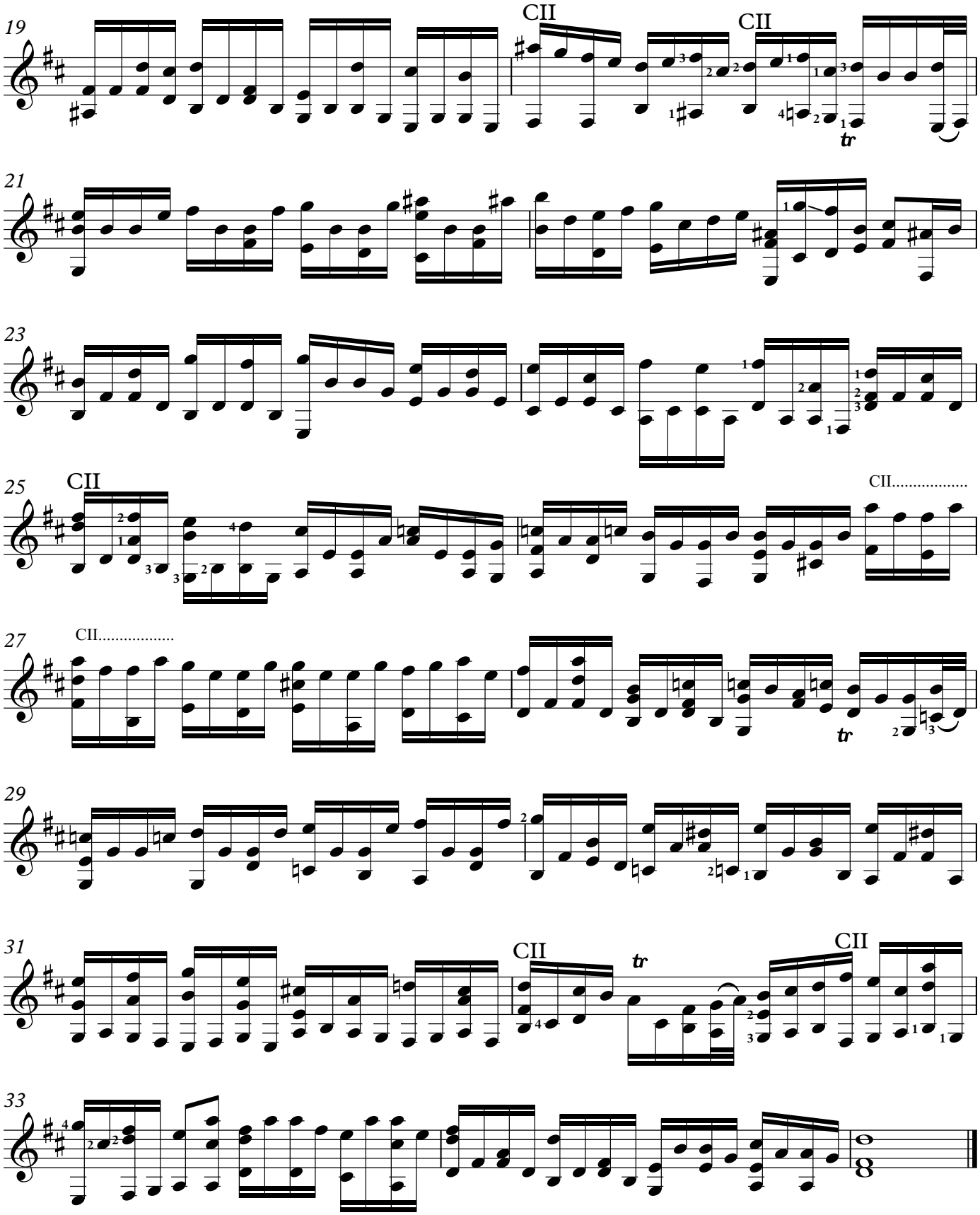
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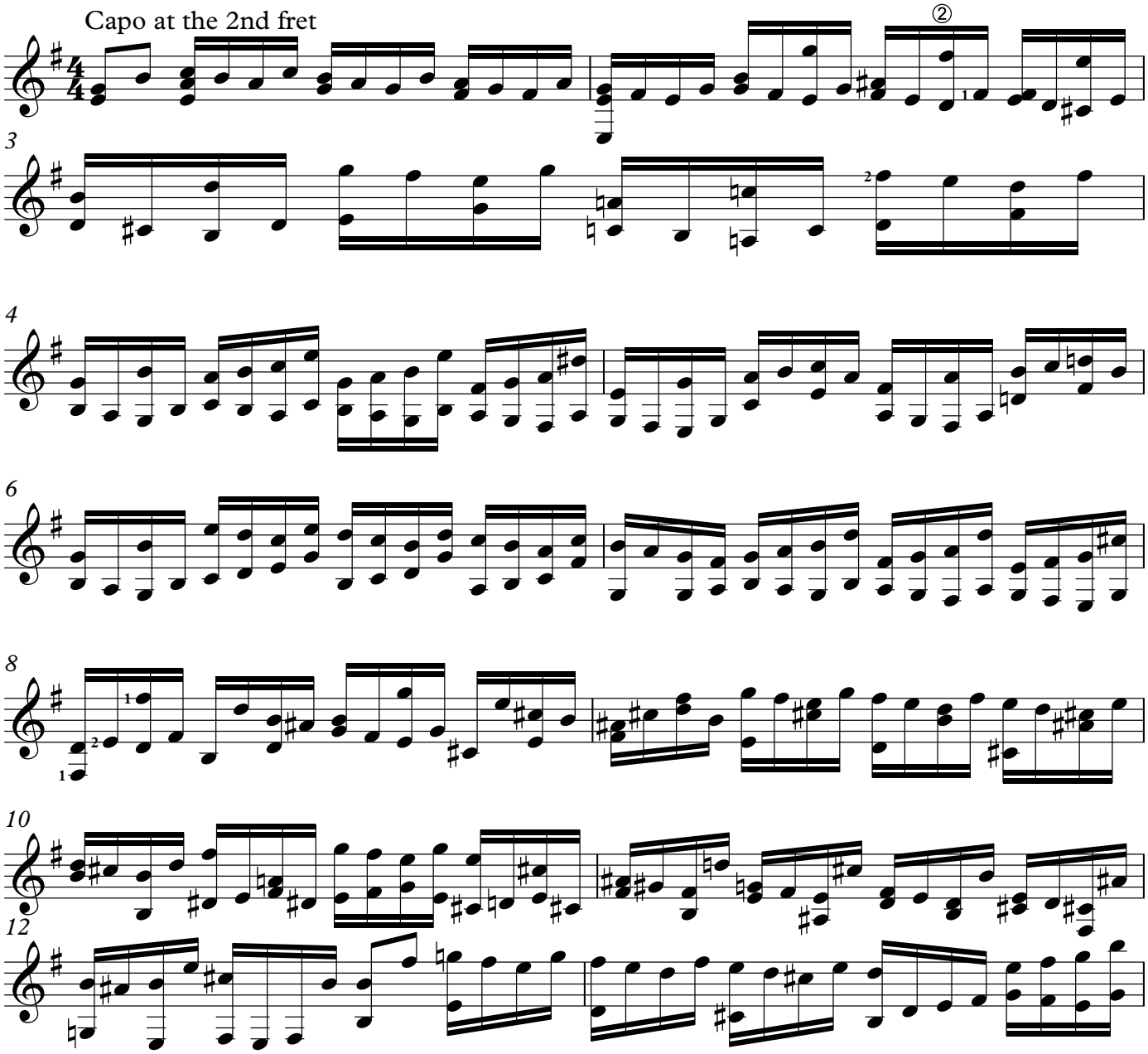
BWV 859 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Prelude No. 14 in F-sharp minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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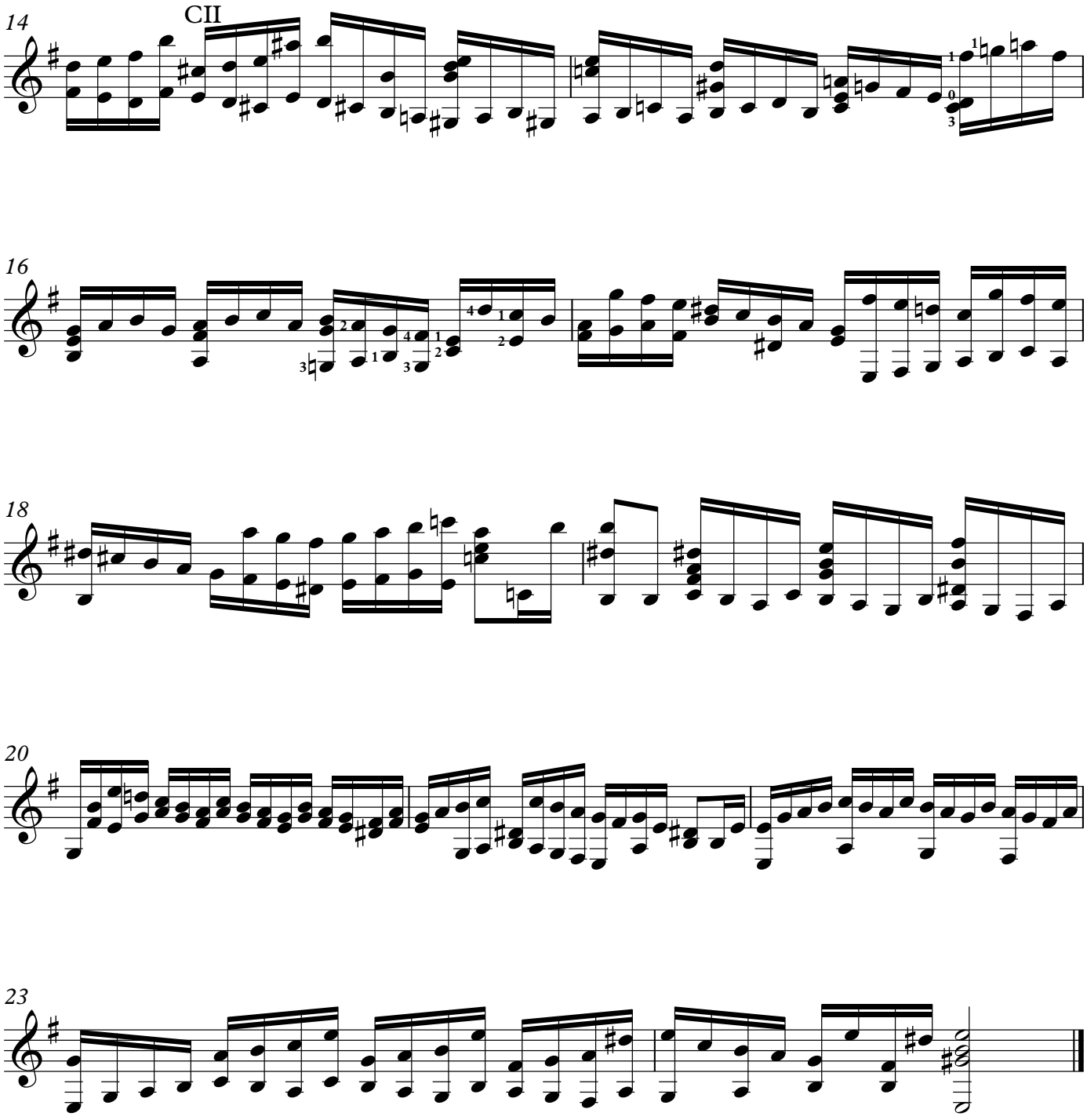
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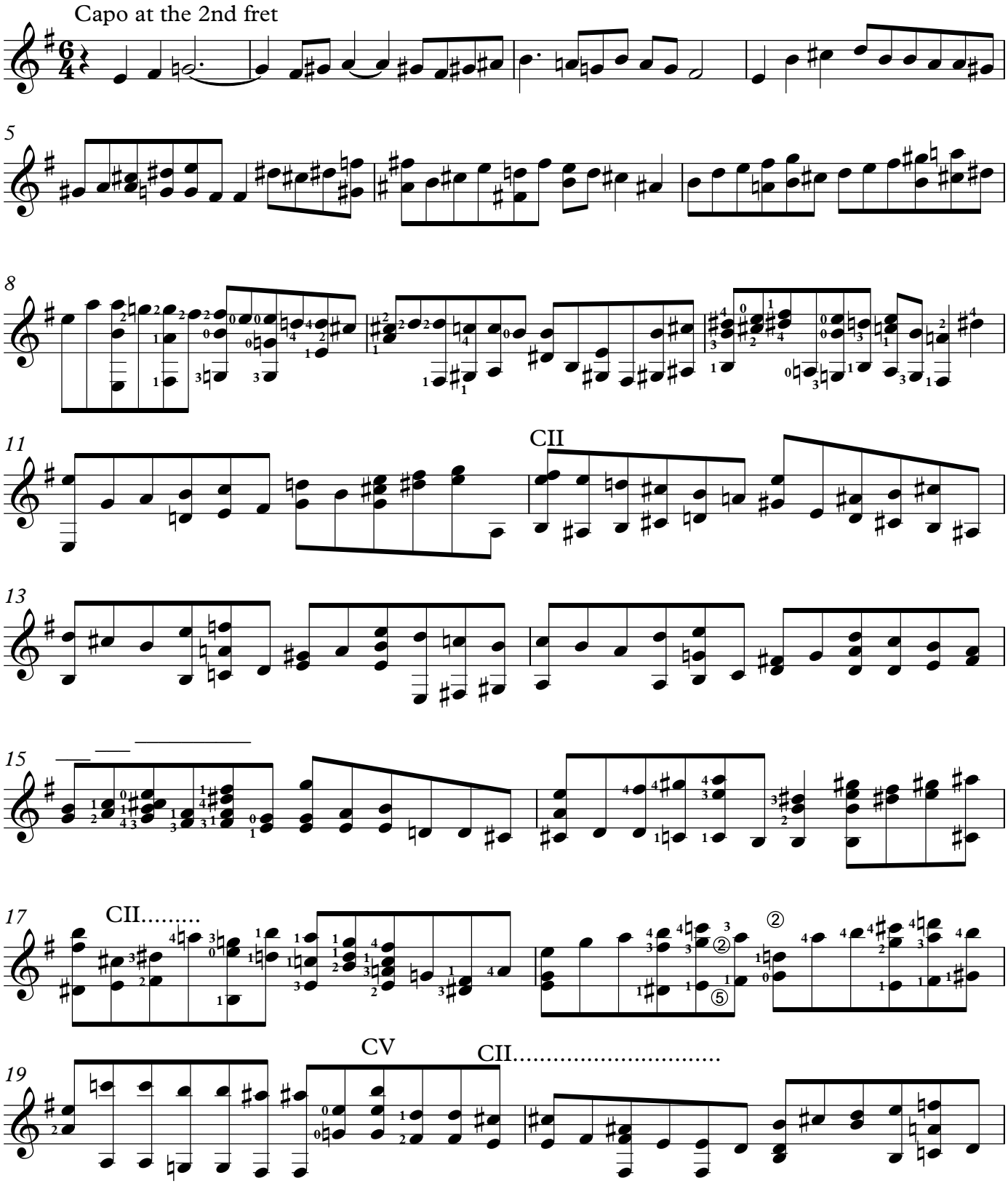
BWV 859 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Fugue No. 14 in F-sharp minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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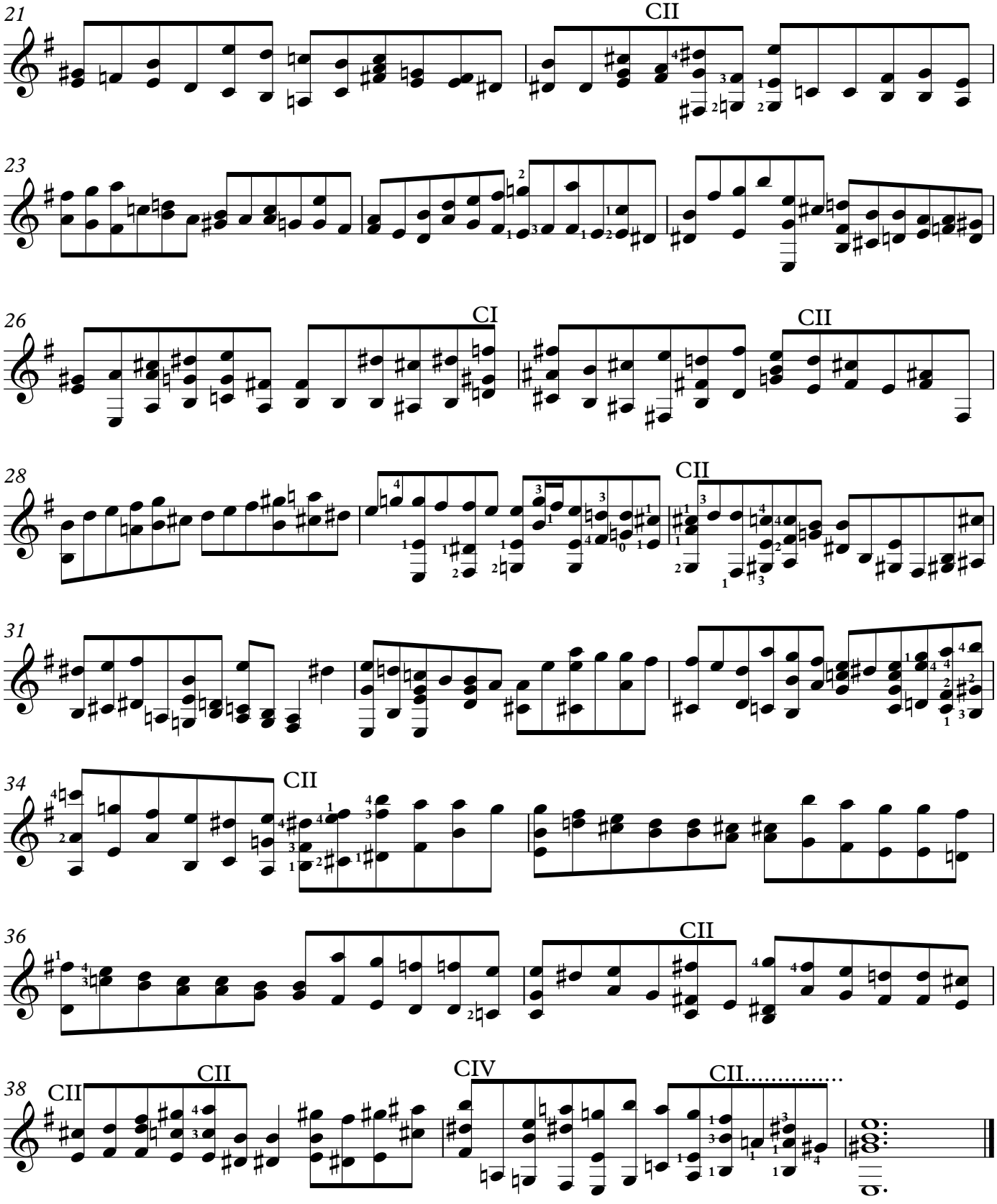
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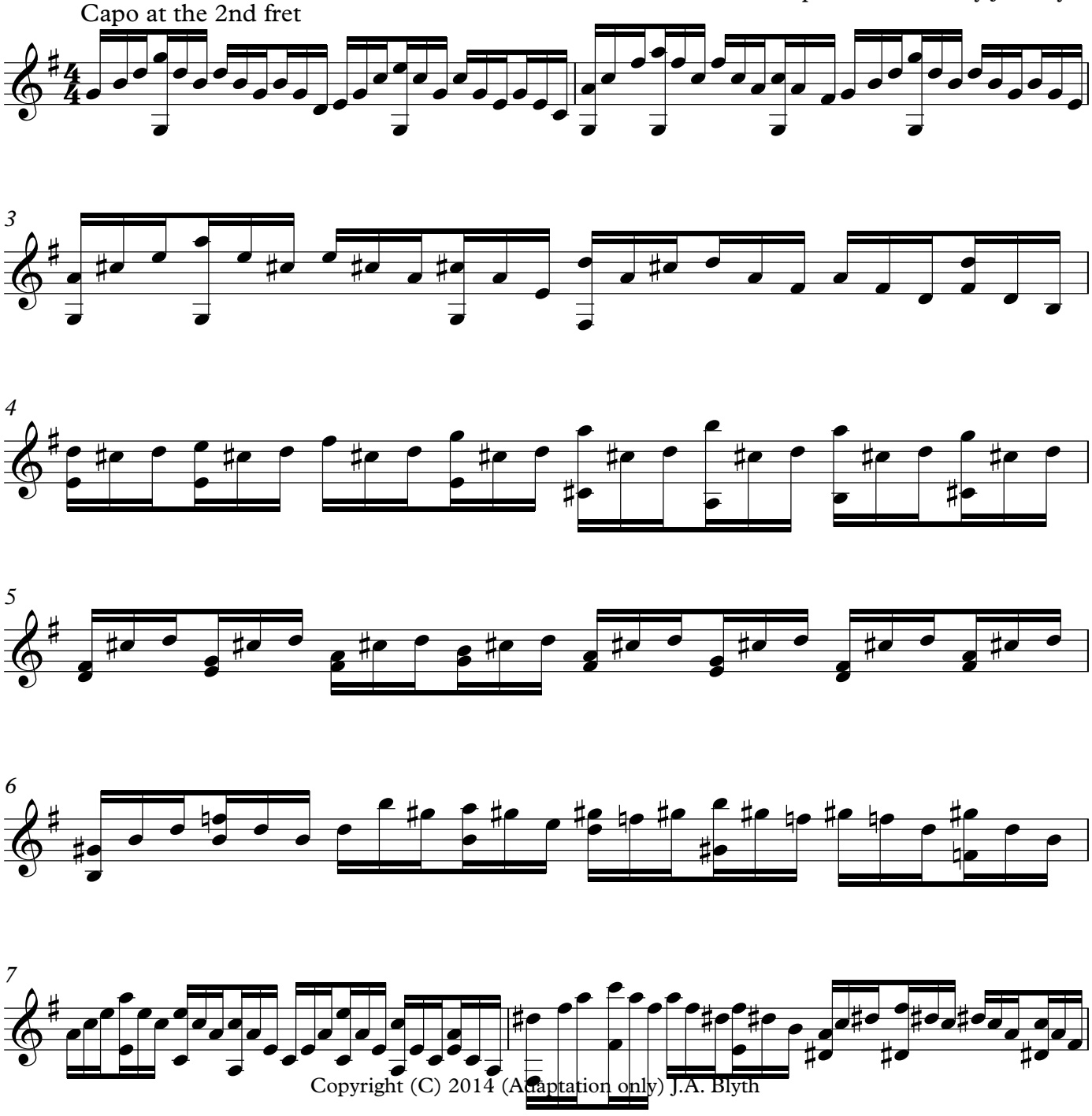
BWV 860 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Prelude No. 15 in G major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 2nd fret



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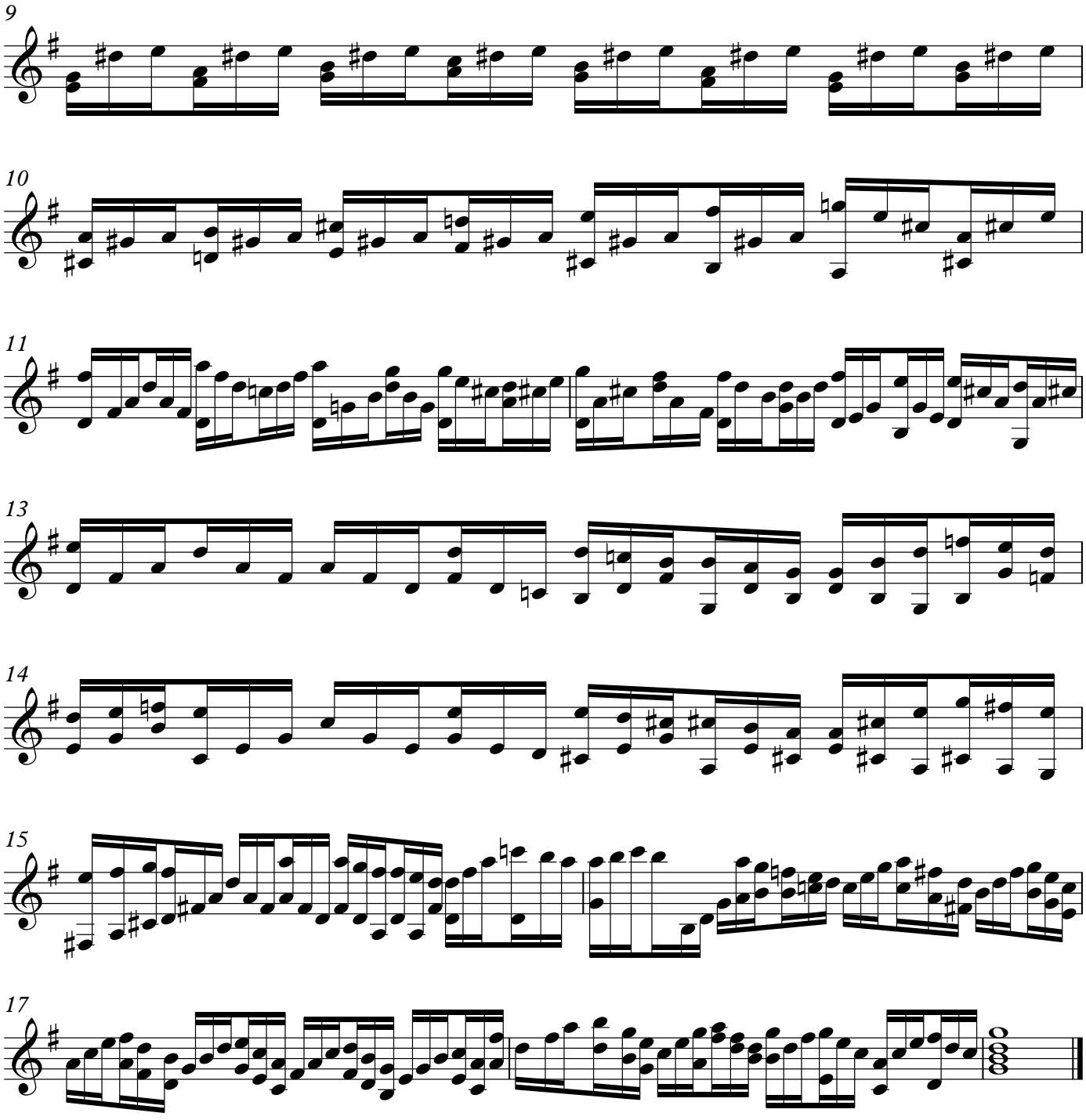
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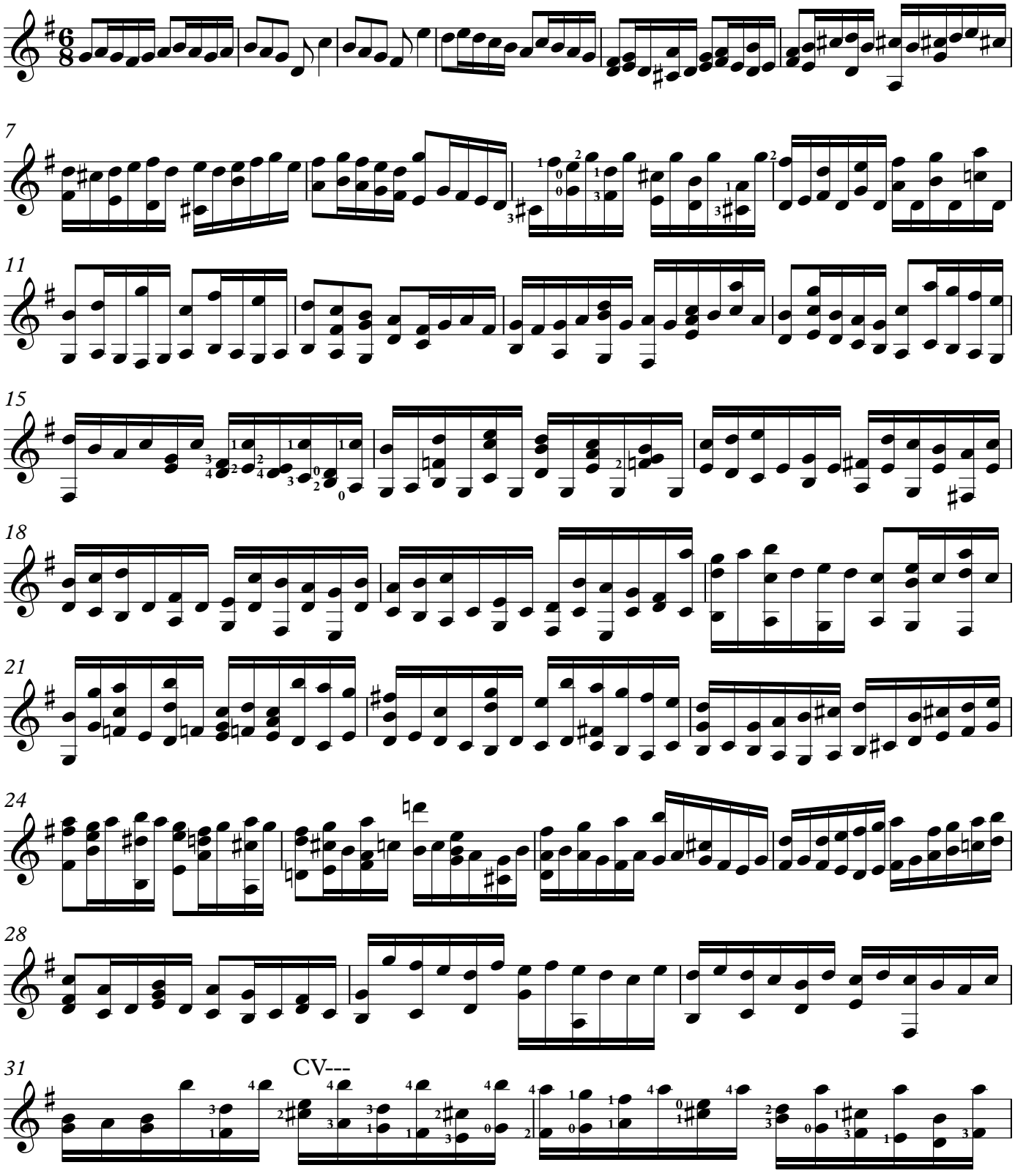
BWV 860 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Fugue No. 15 in G major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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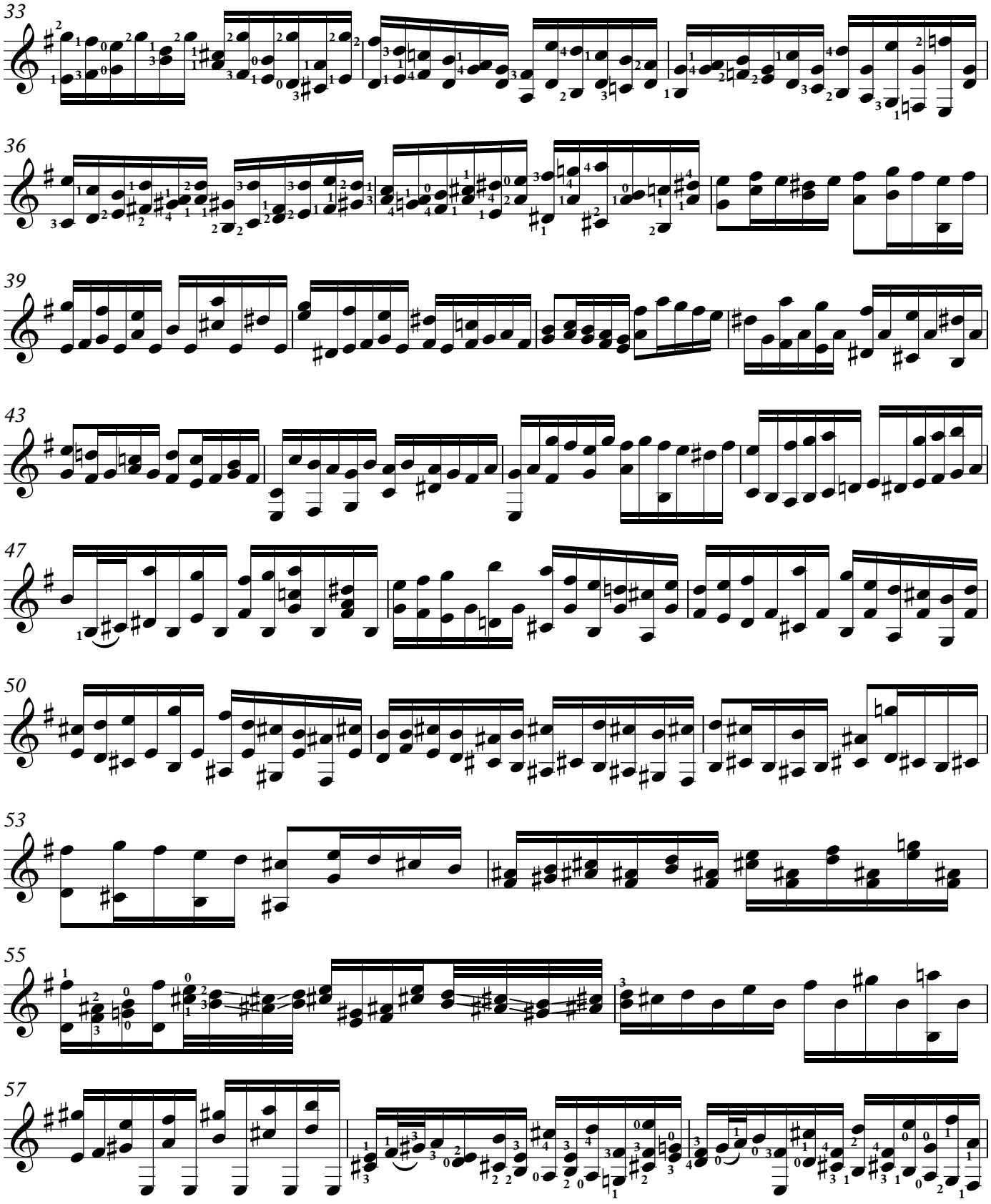
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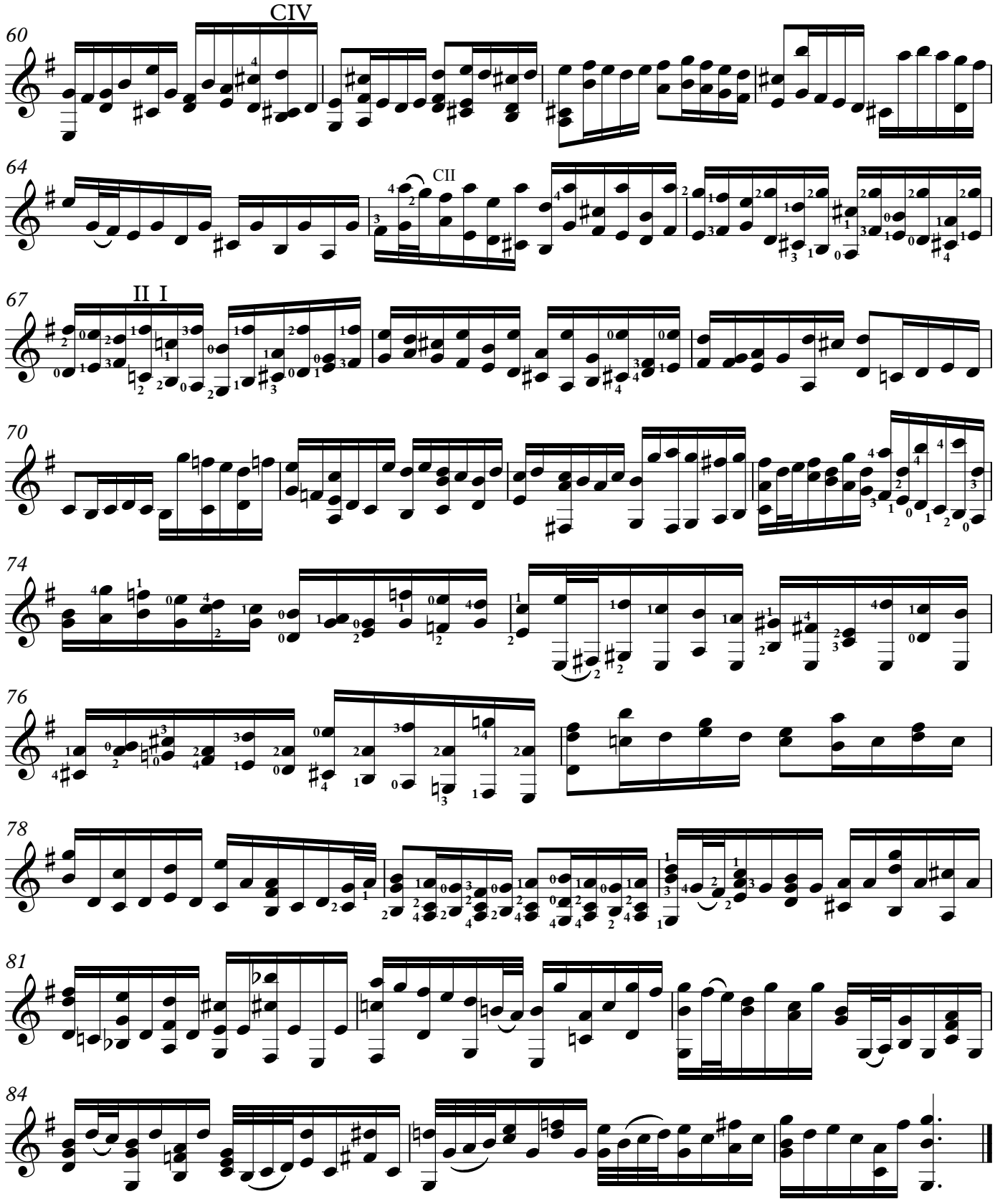
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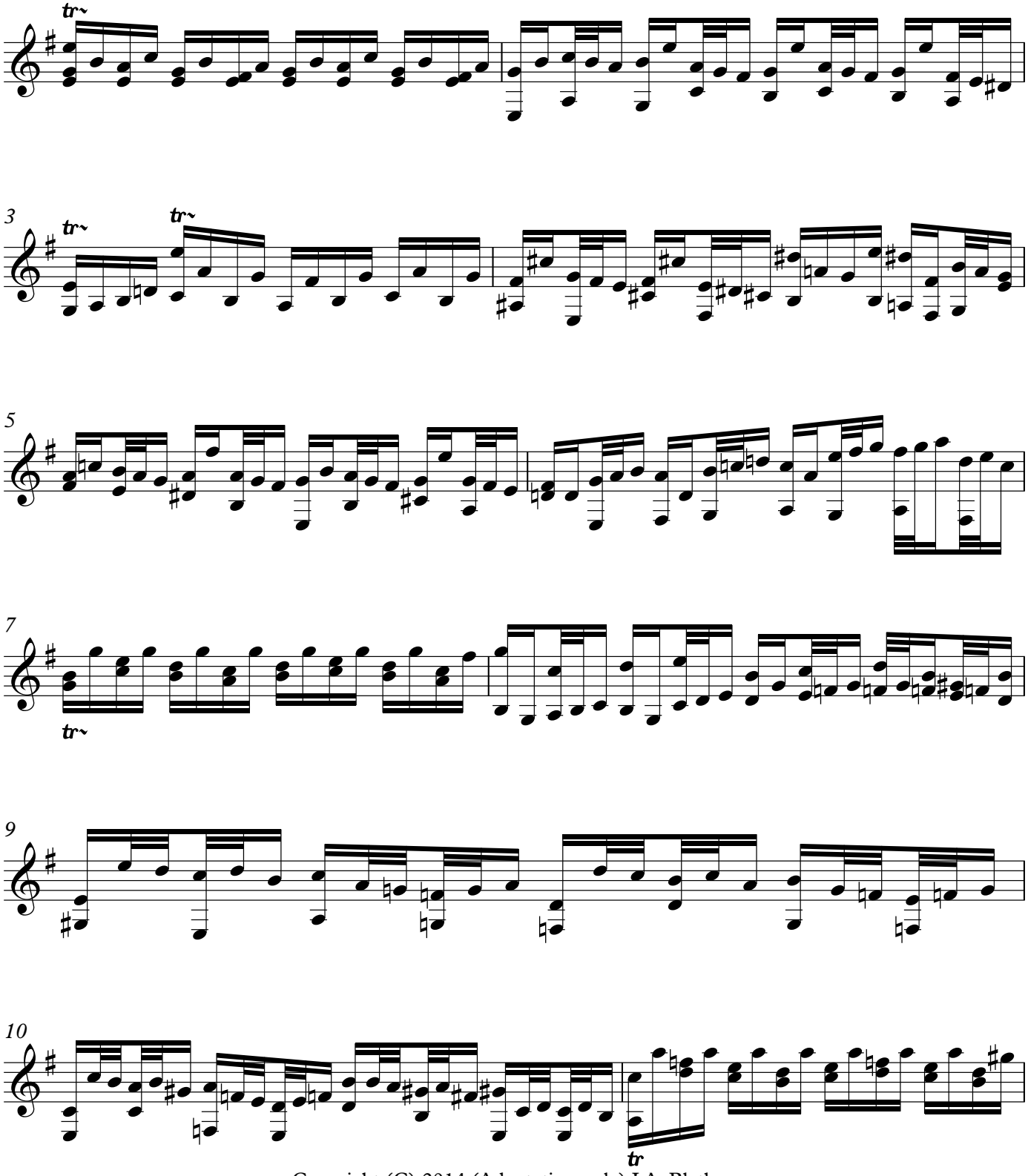
BWV 861 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Prelude No. 16 in G minor

Capo at the 3rd fret

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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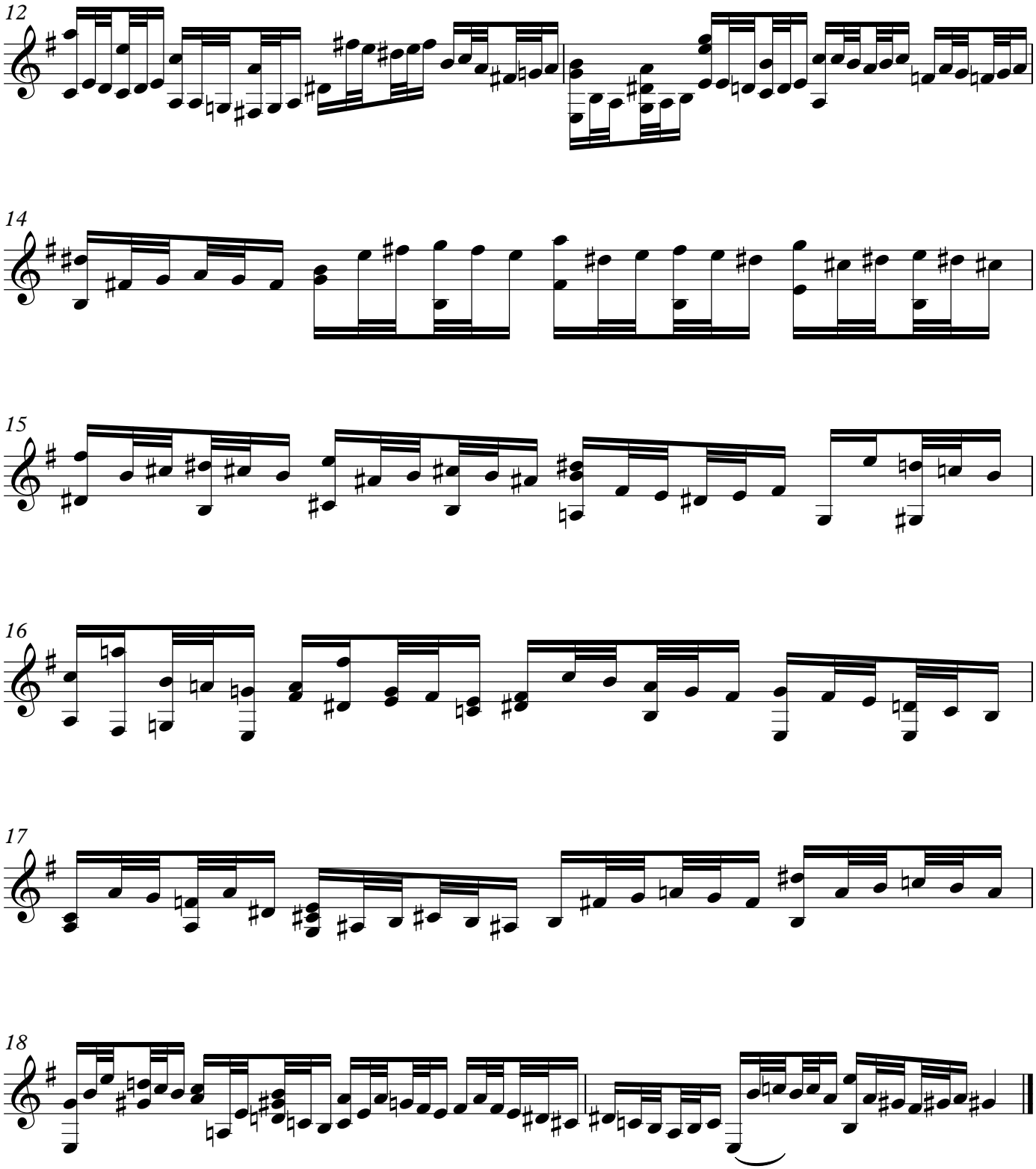
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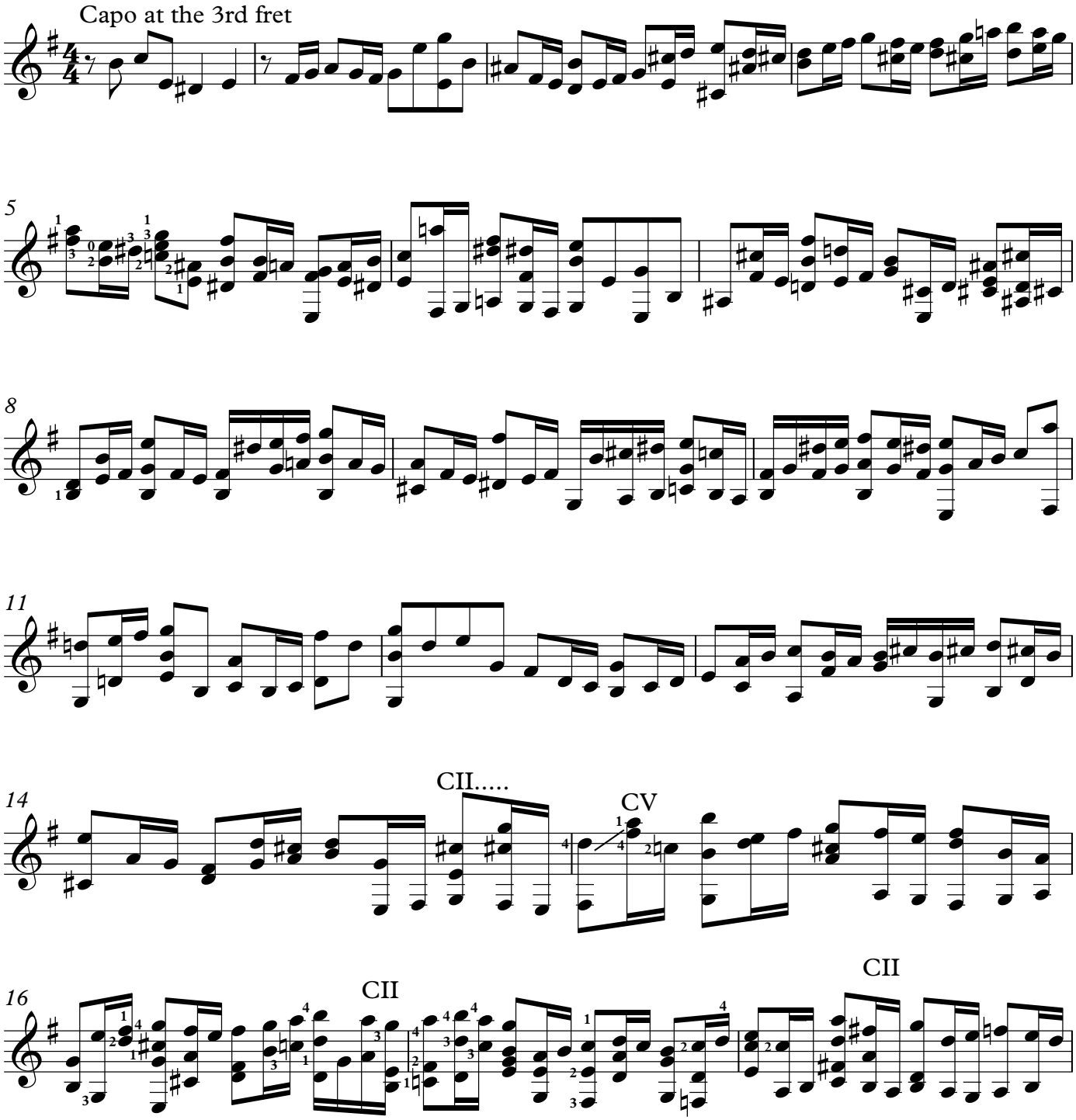
BWV 861 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Fugue No. 16 in G minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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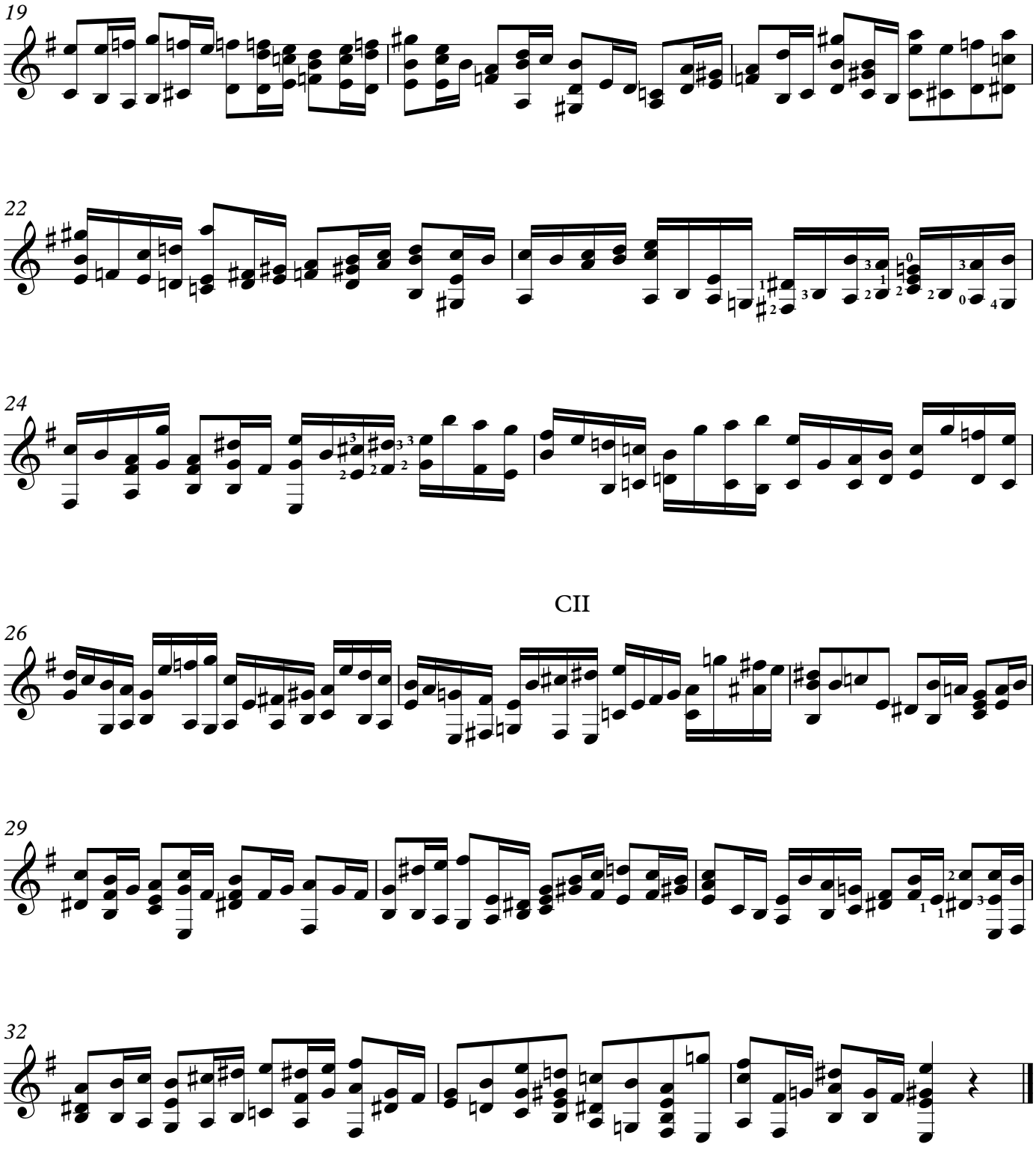
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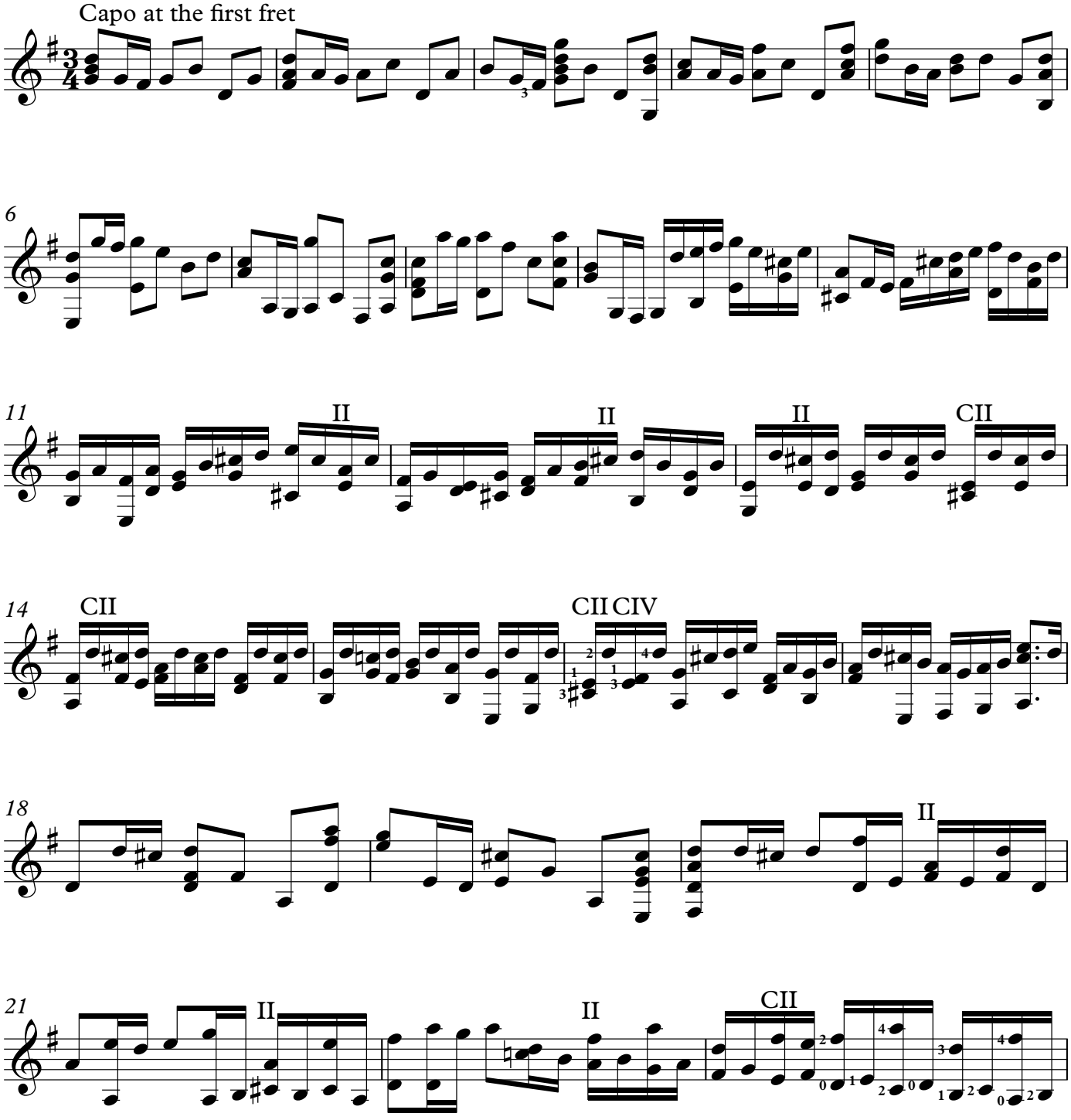
BWV 862 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Prelude No. 17 in A-flat major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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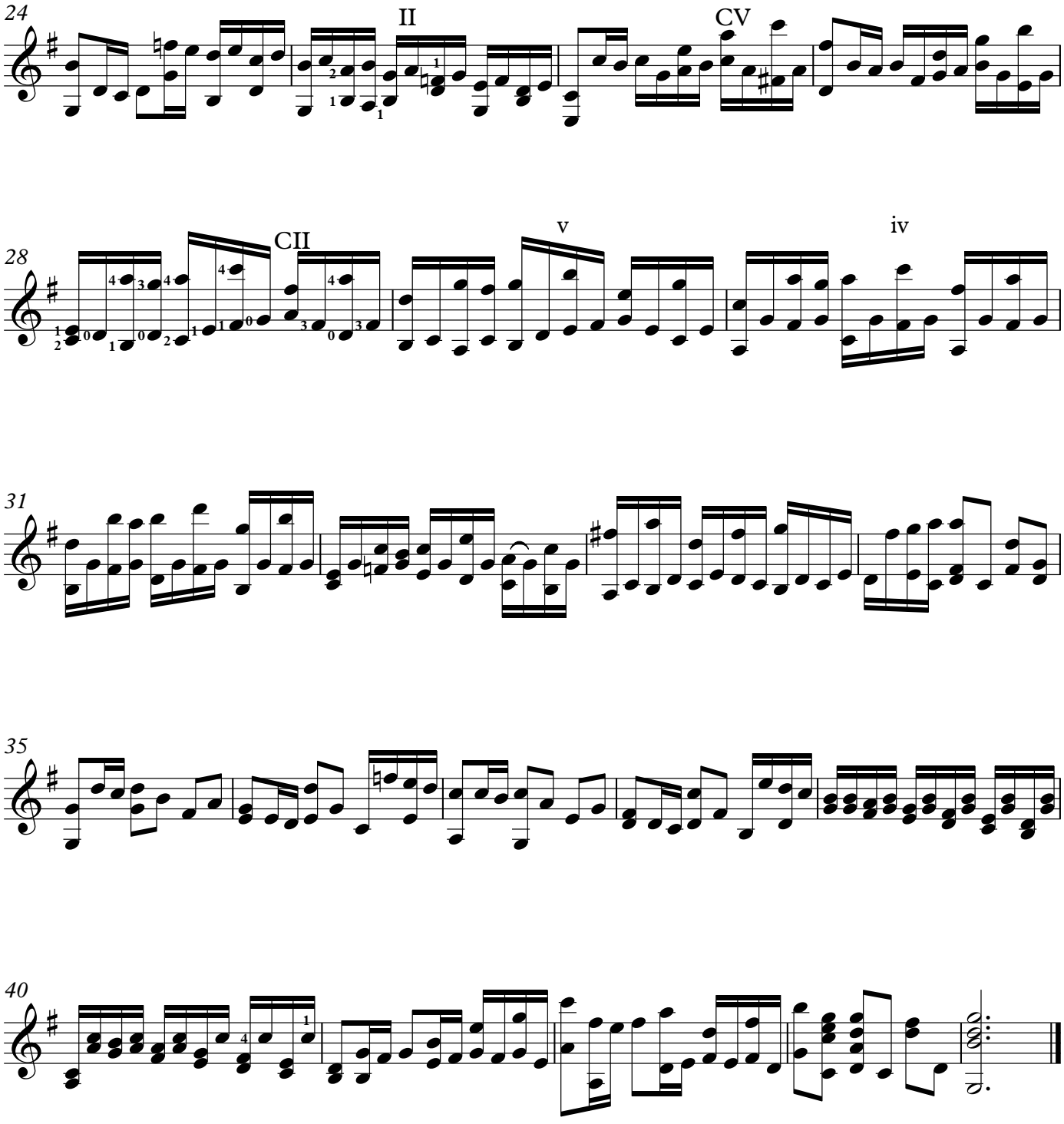
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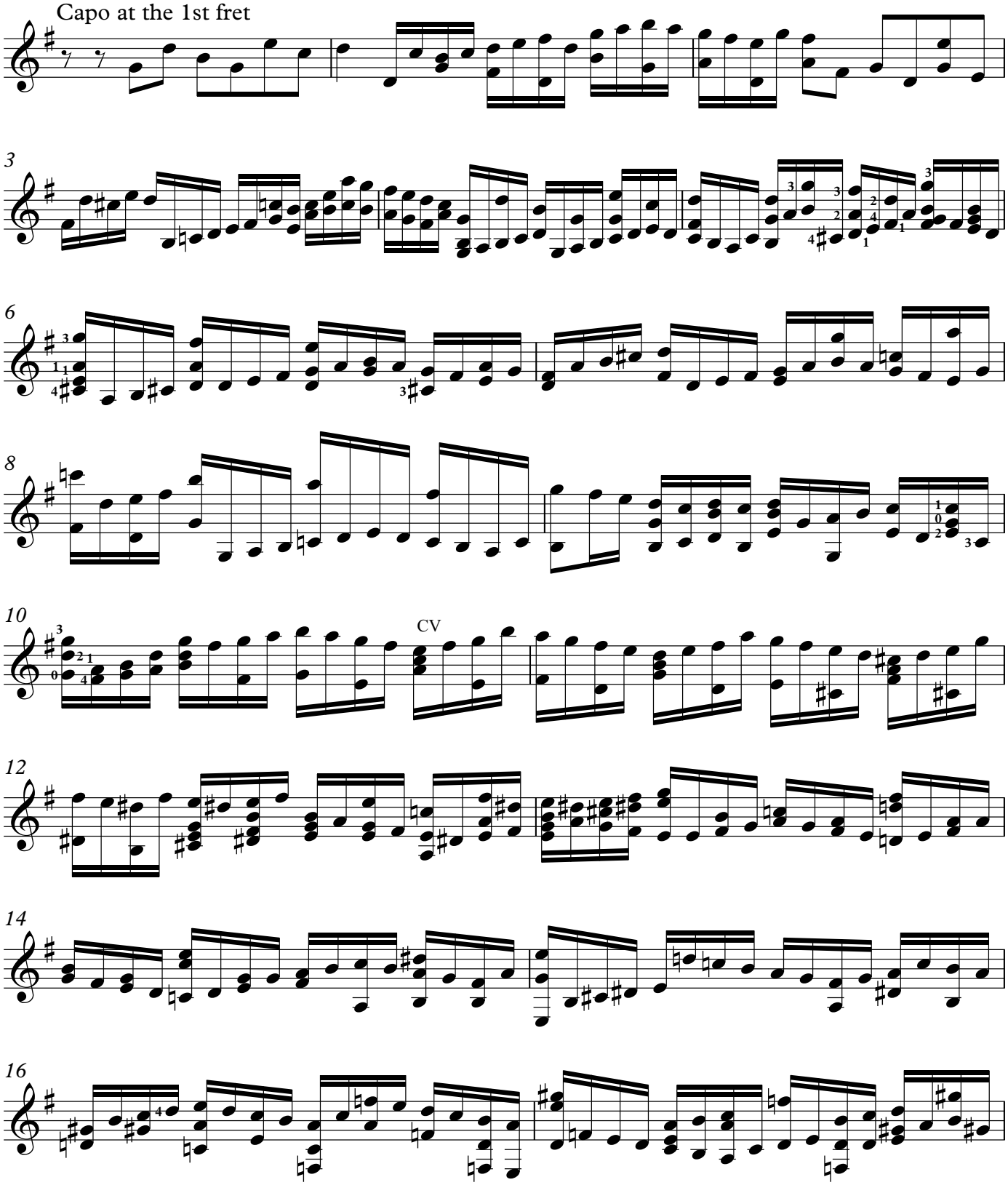
BWV 862 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Fugue No. 17 in A-flat major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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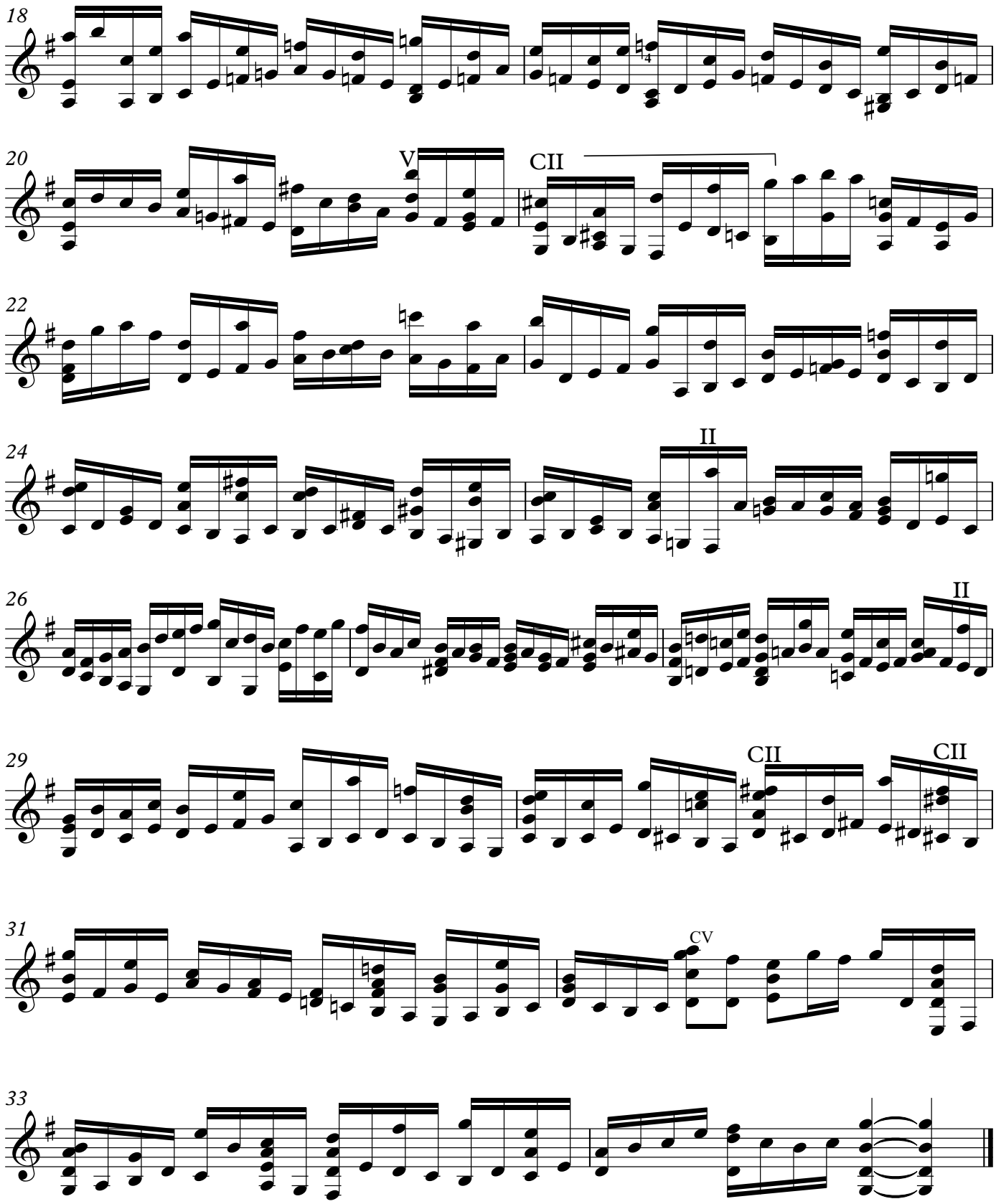
18
20
V
CII
22
24
II
26
II
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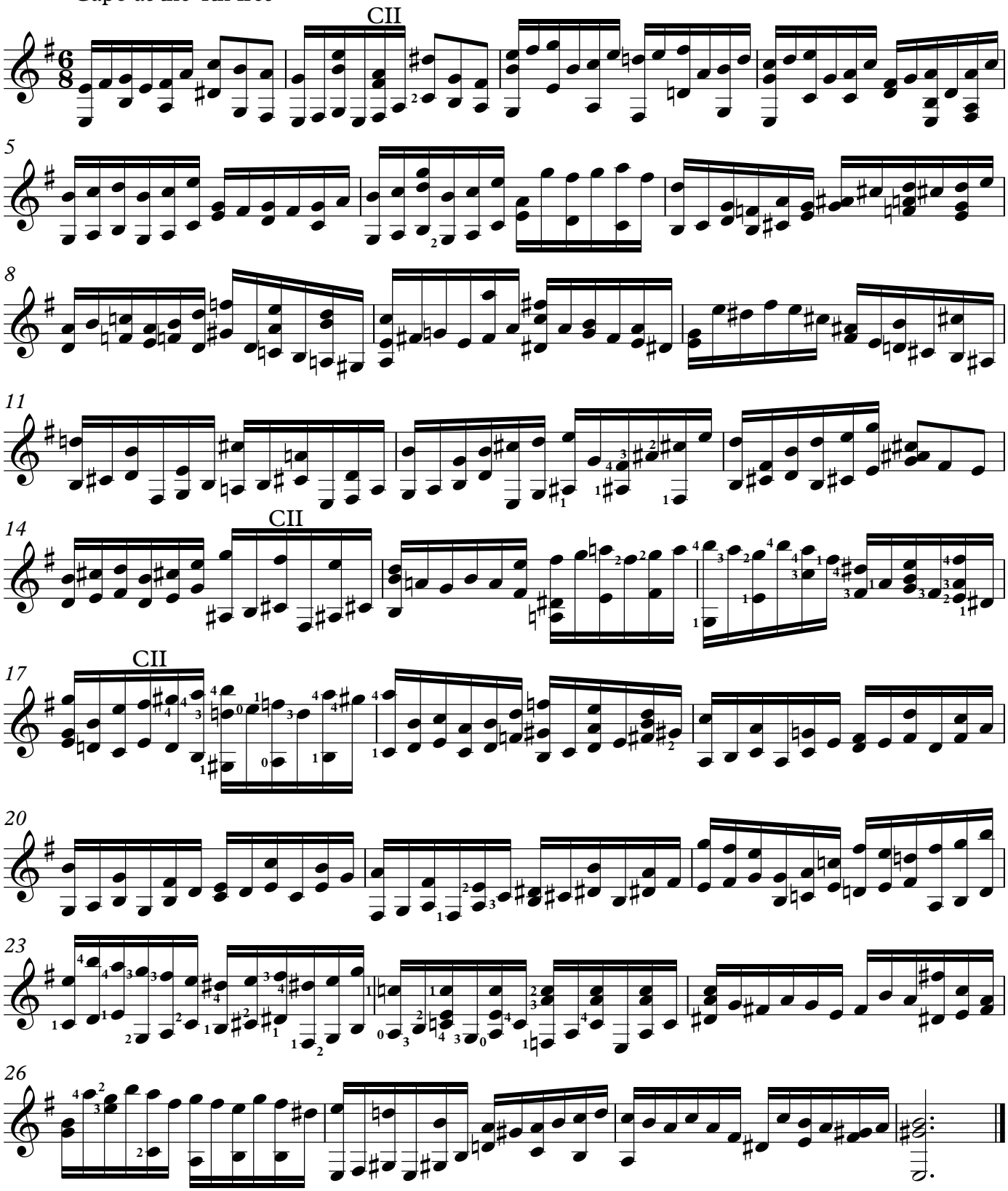
CII
CII
31
CV
33

BWV 863 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Prelude No. 18 in G-sharp minor

Capo at the 4th fret

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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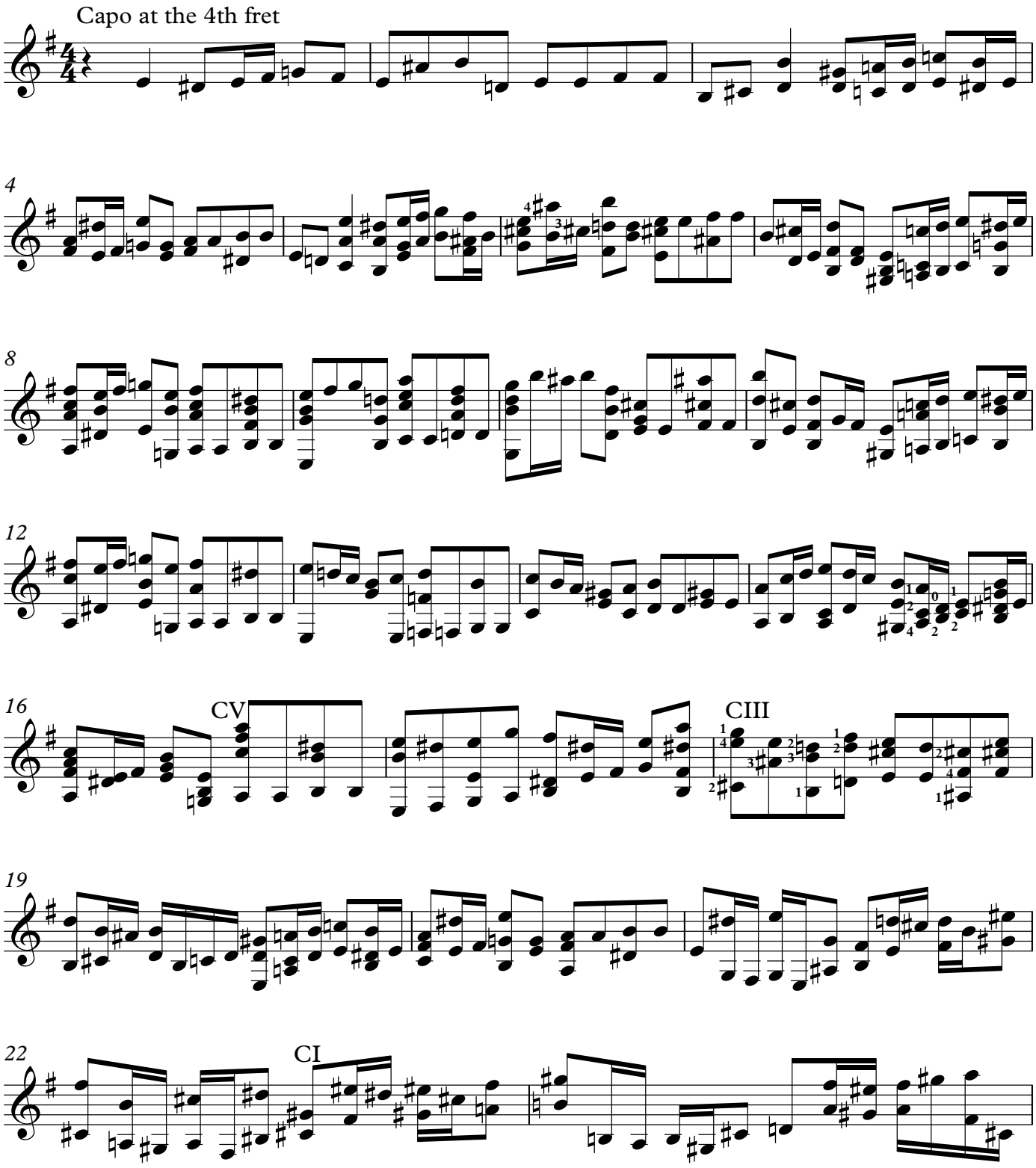
BWV 863 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Fugue No. 18 in G-sharp minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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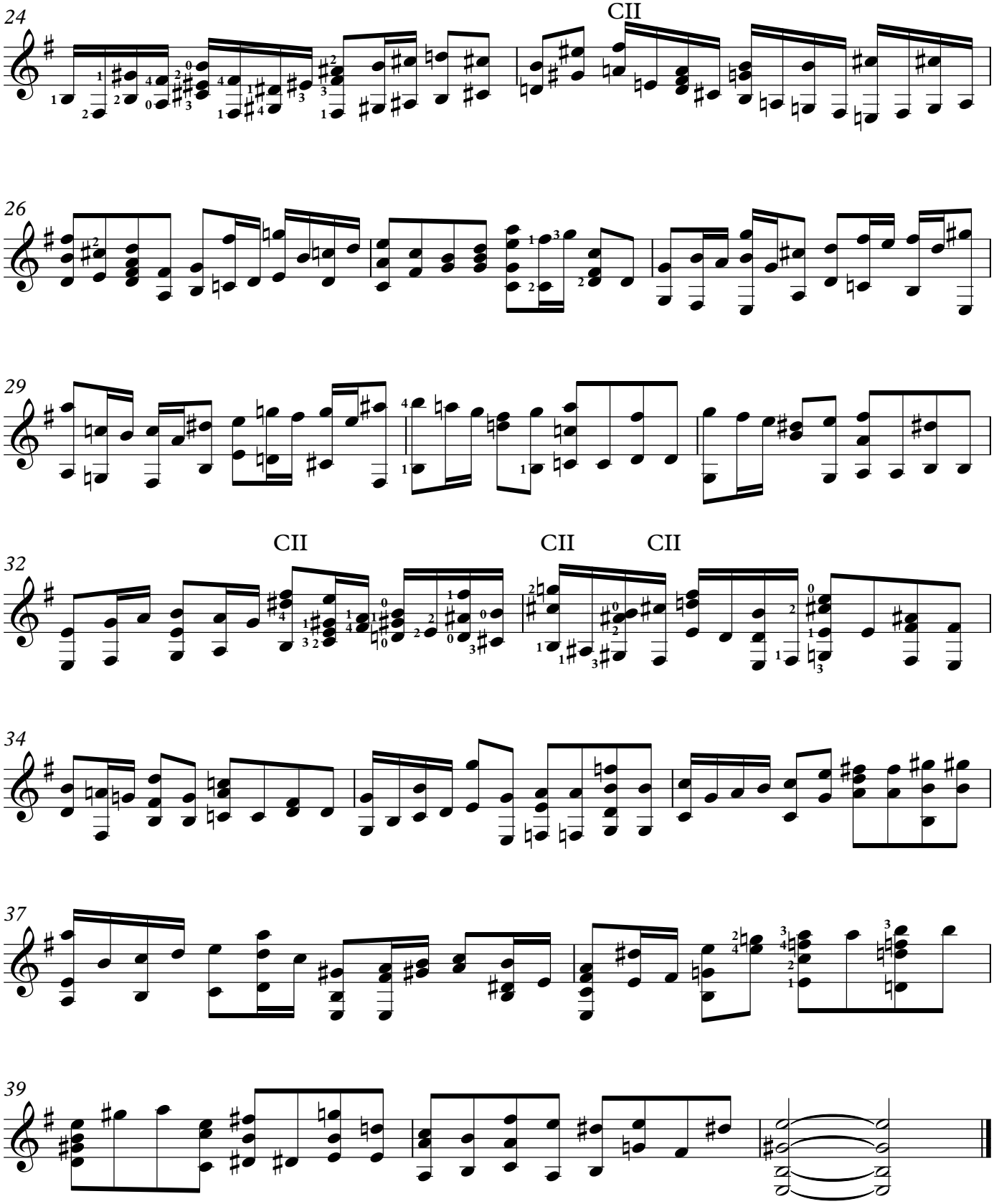
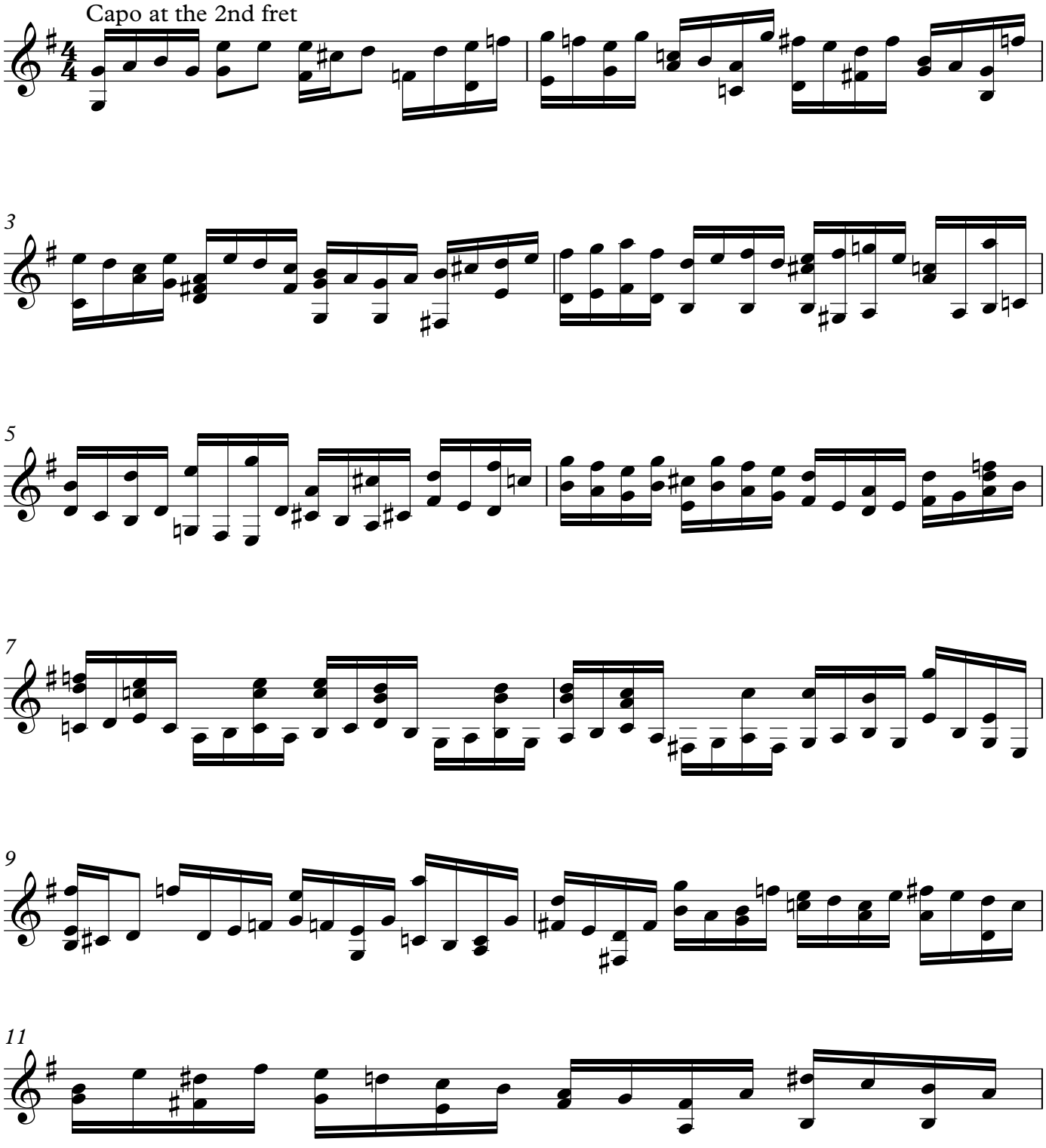

24
CII
26
29
32
CII
CII
CII
34
37
39

BWV 864 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Prelude No. 19 in A major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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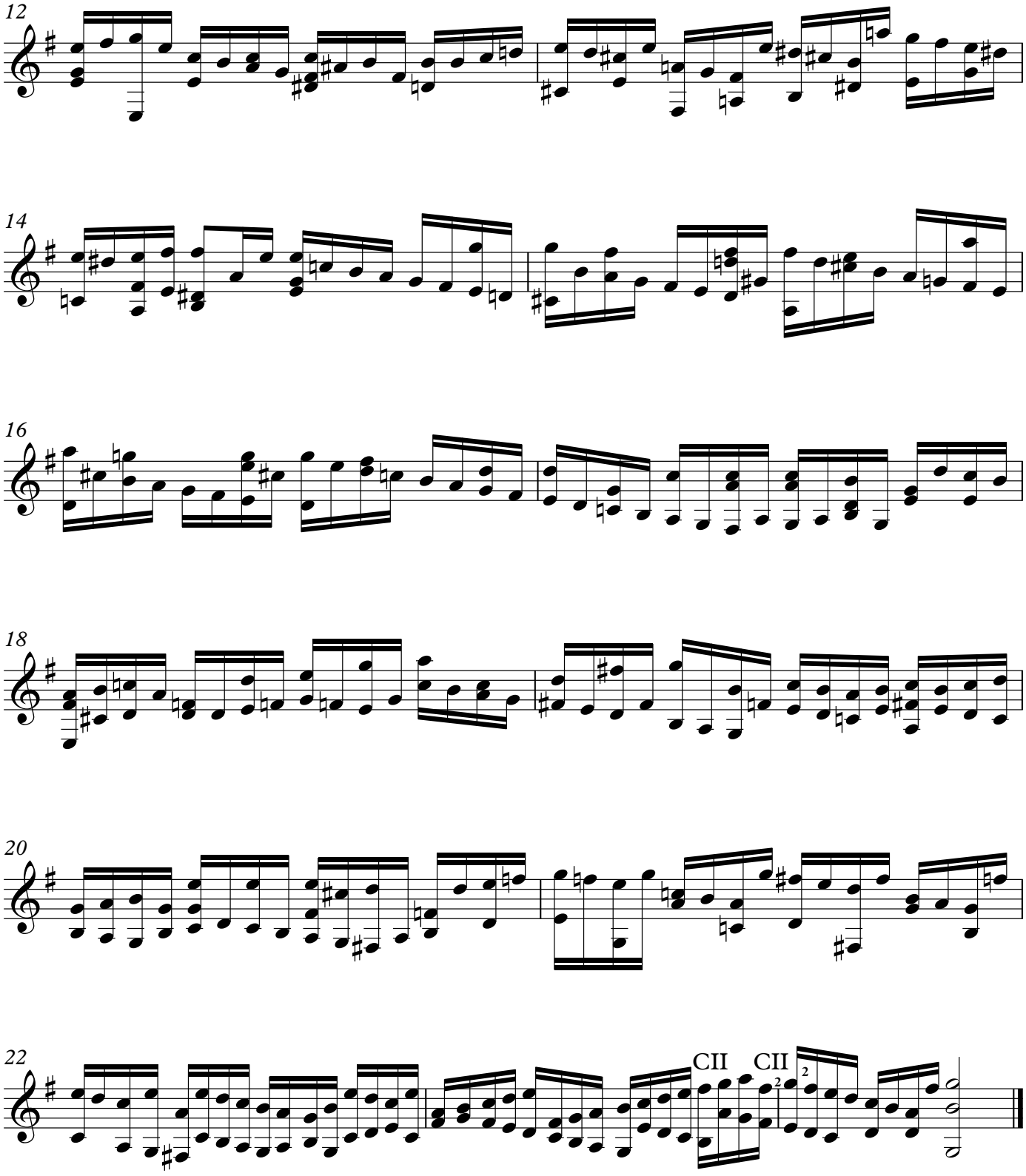
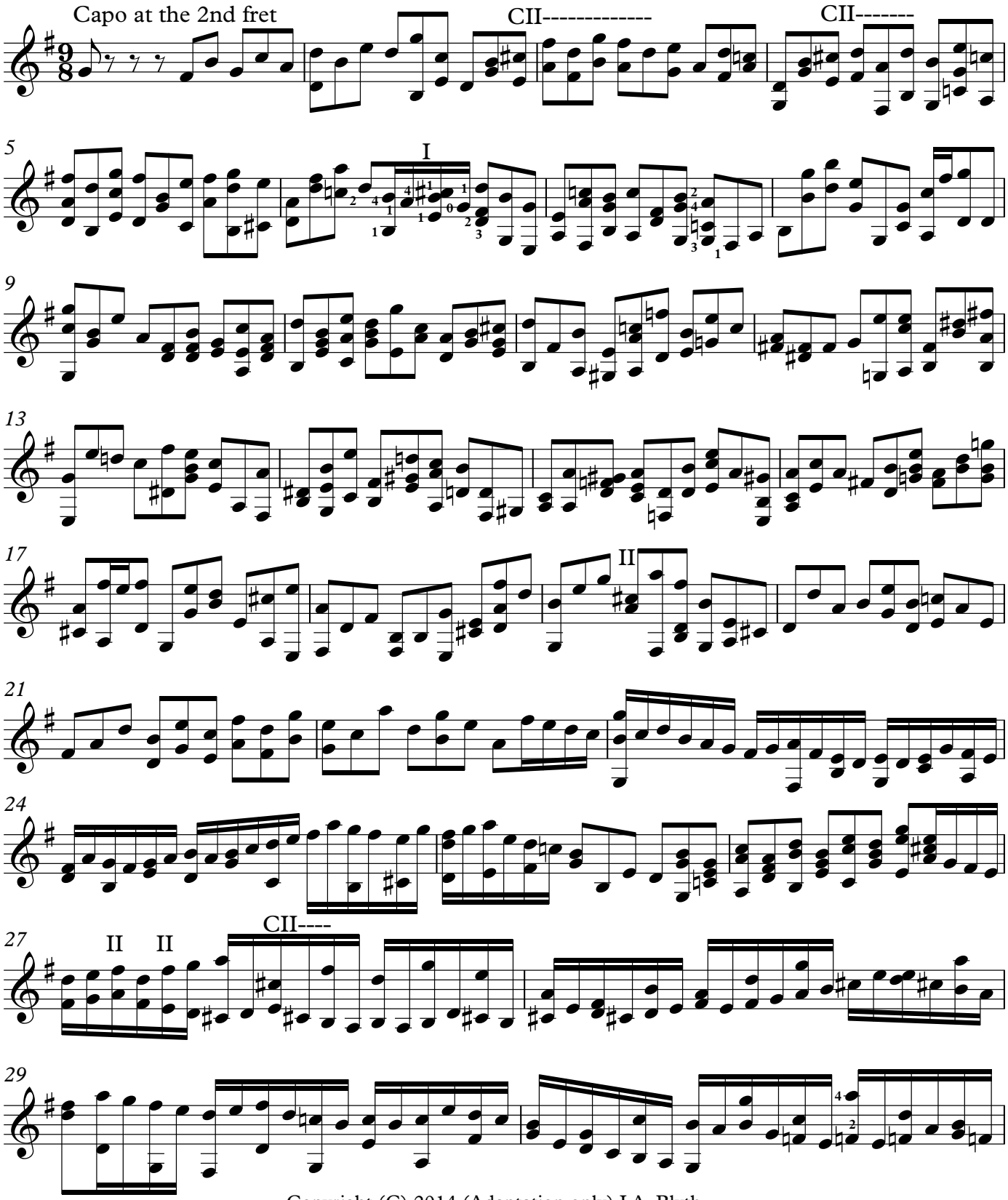

12
14
16
18
20
22
CII
CII

practice at m=116
to develop, then freer and faster

BWV 864 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Fugue No. 19 in A major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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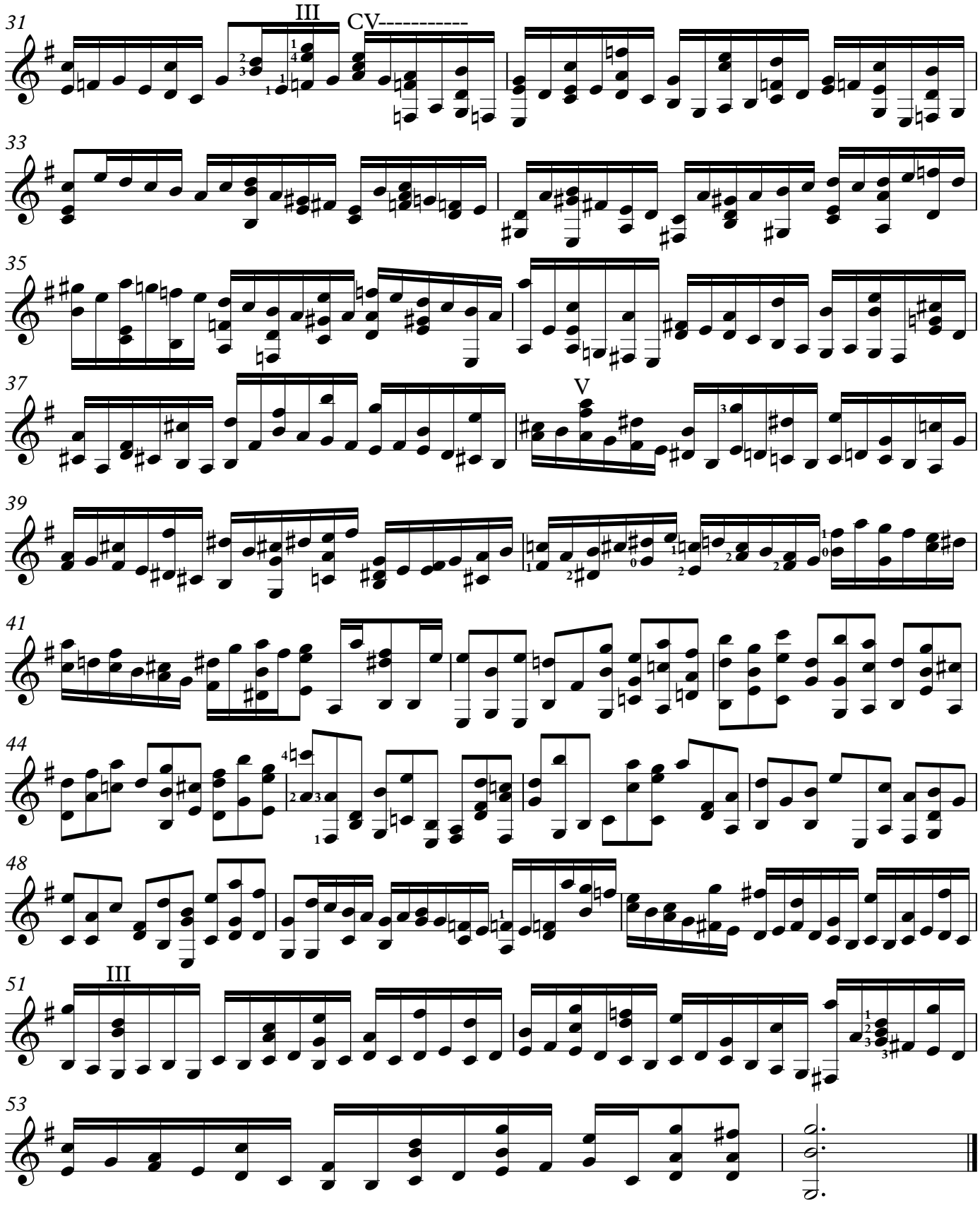
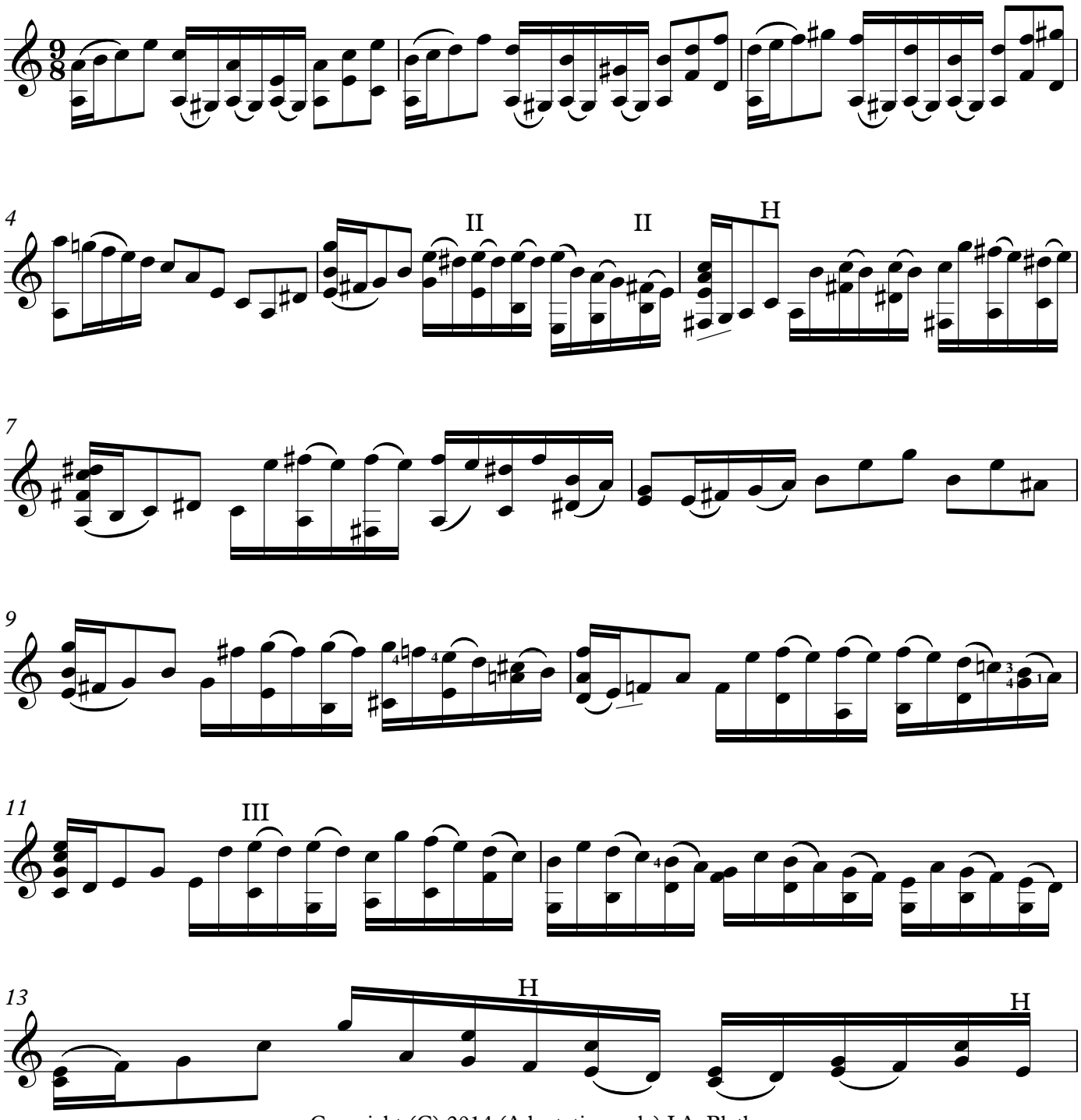

31
III
CV----------
33
35
37
V
39
41
44
48
51
III
53

BWV 865 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Prelude No. 20 in A minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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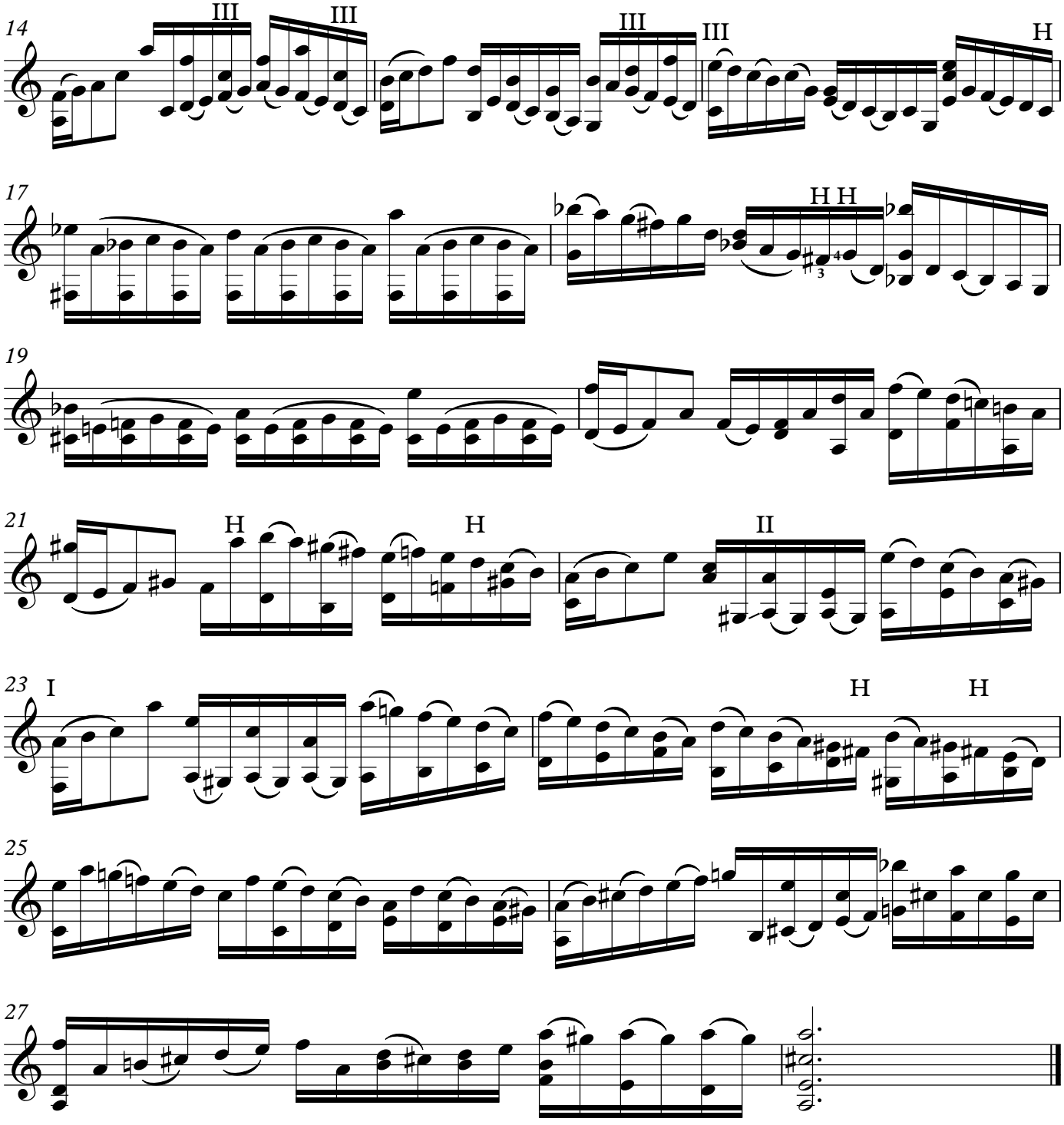
14
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III
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III
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17
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19
21
H
H
II
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I
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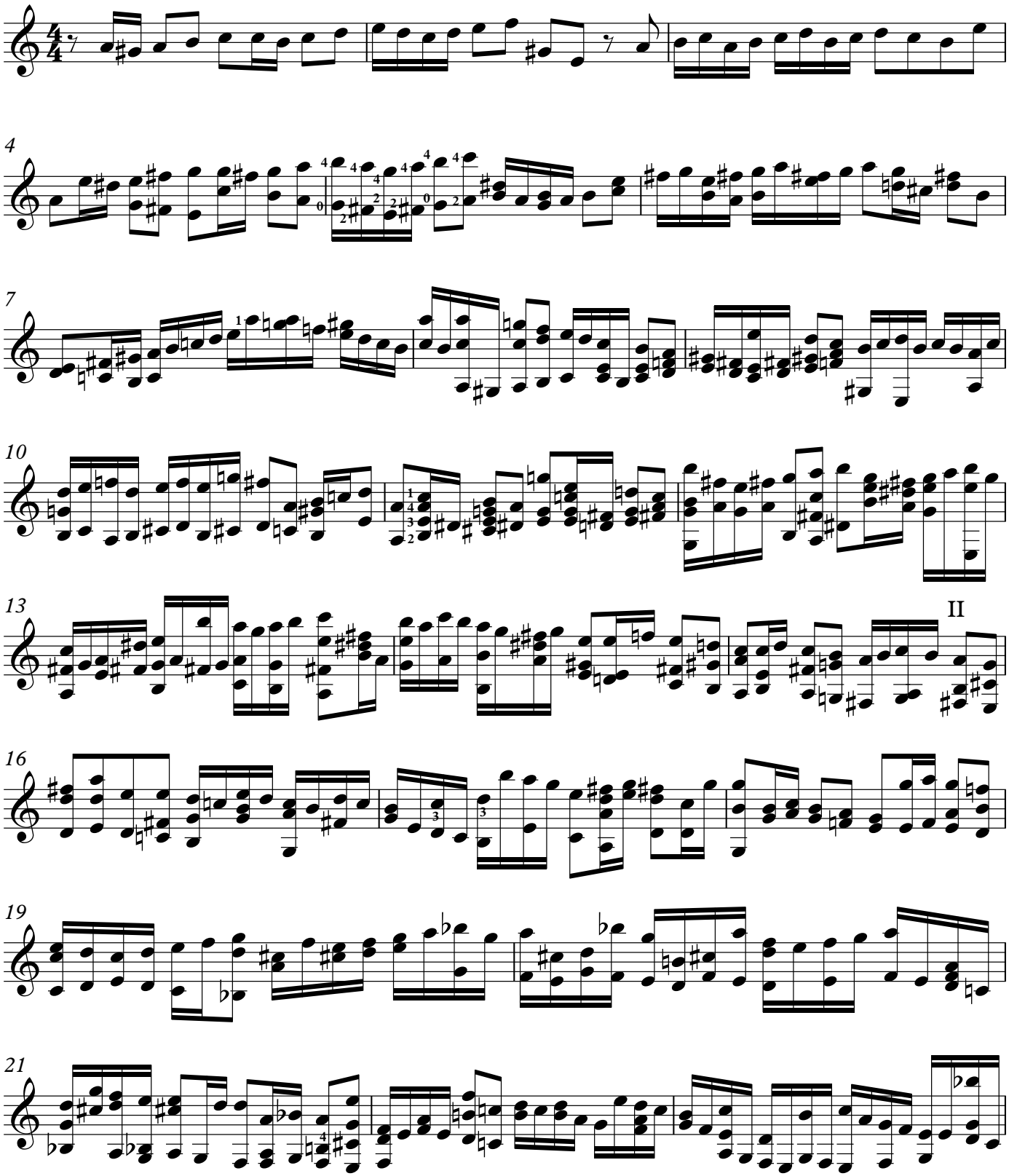
BWV 865 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Fugue No. 20 in A minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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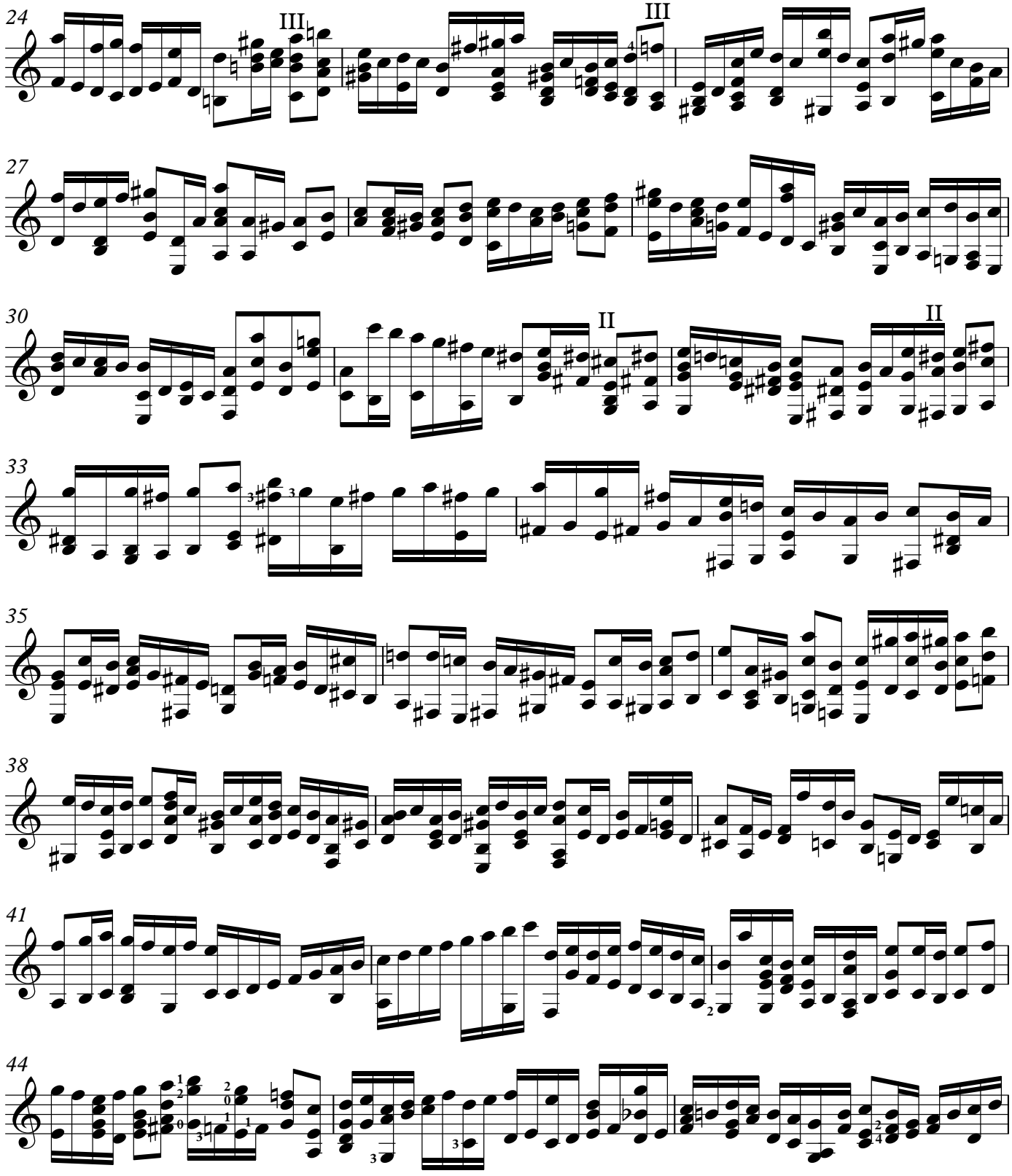
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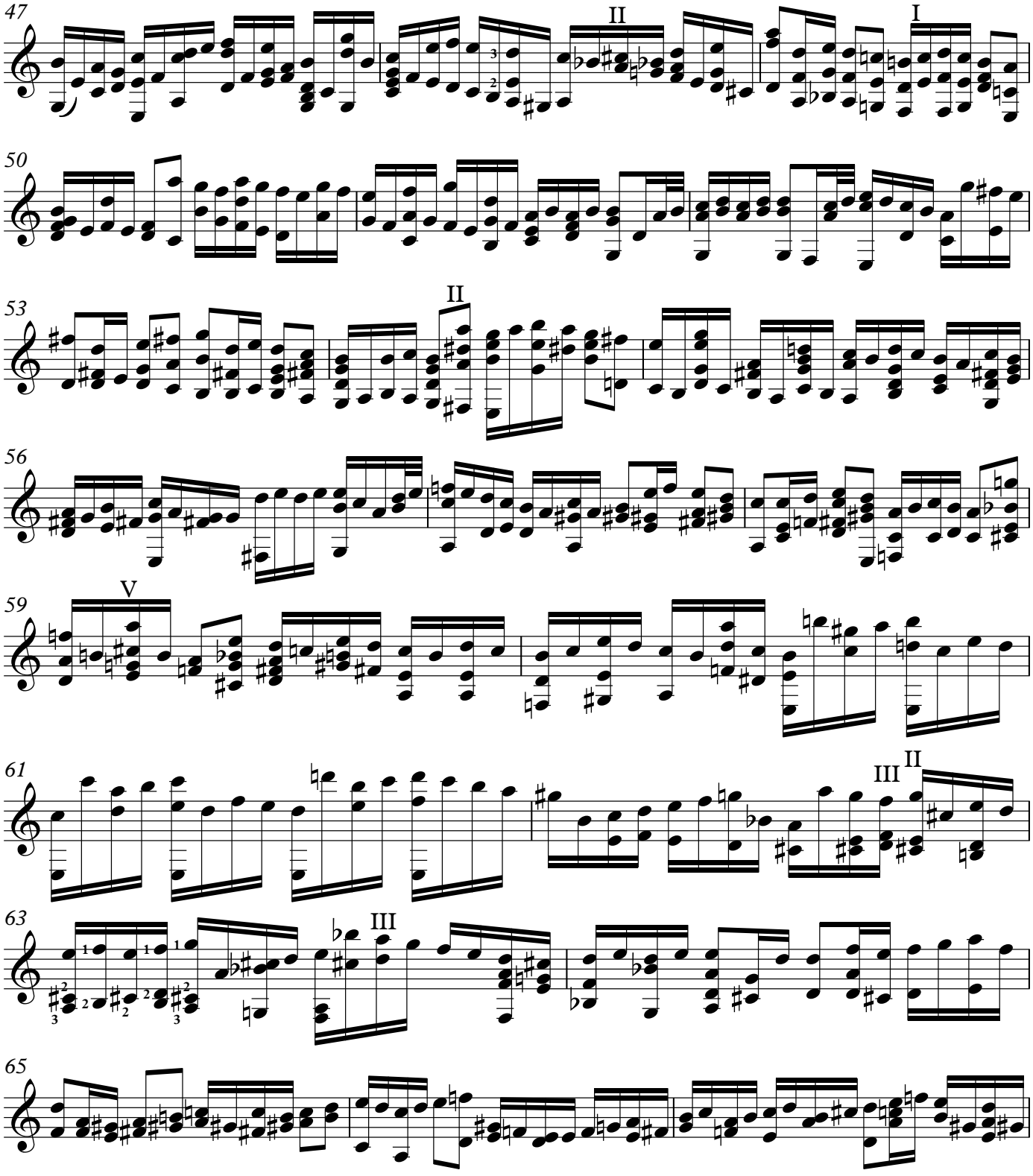
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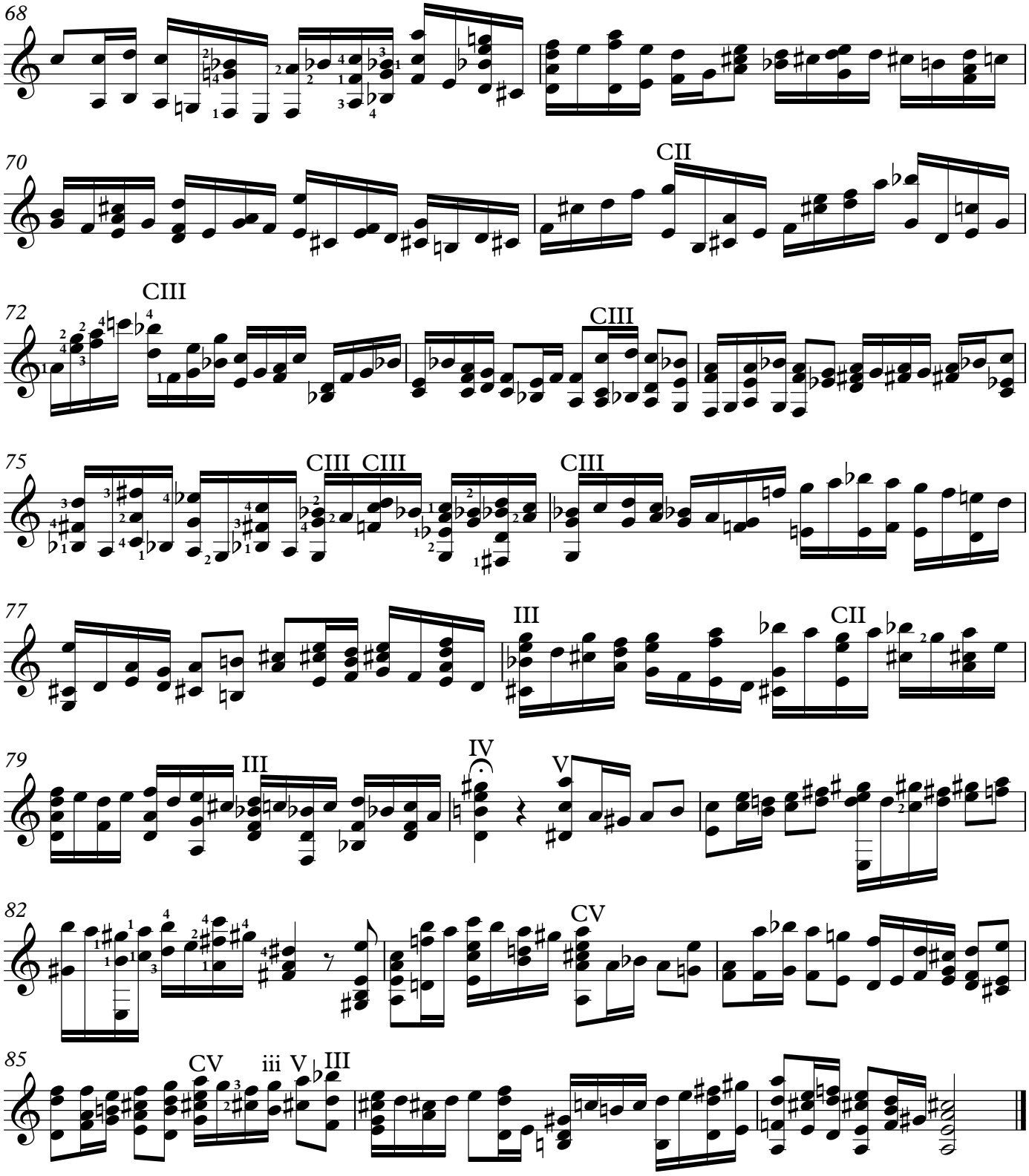
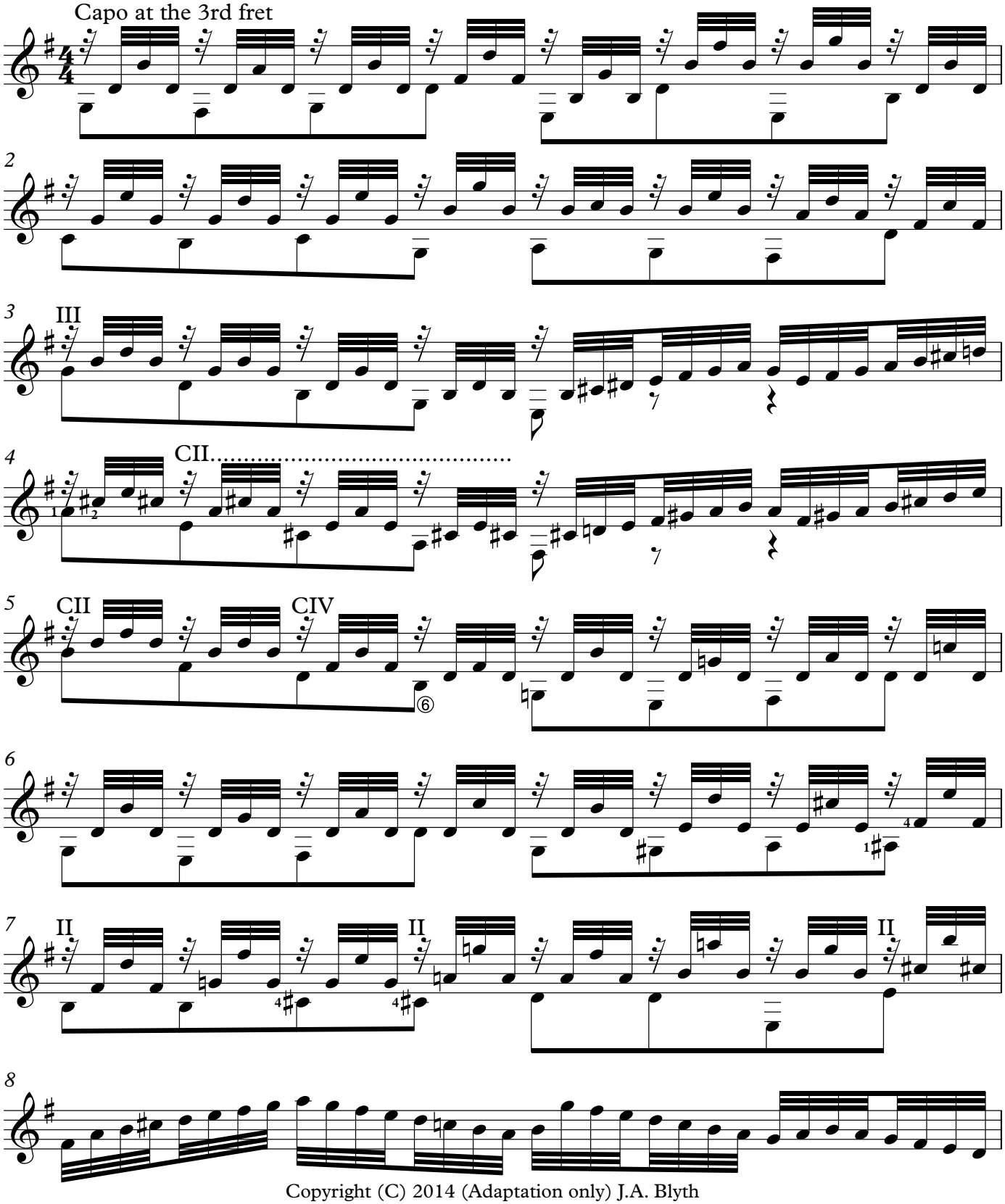

68
70
CII
72
CIII
CIII
75
CIII CIII
CIII
77
III
CII
79
III
IV
V
82
CV
85
CV
iii
V
III

BWV 866 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Prelude No. 21 in B-flat major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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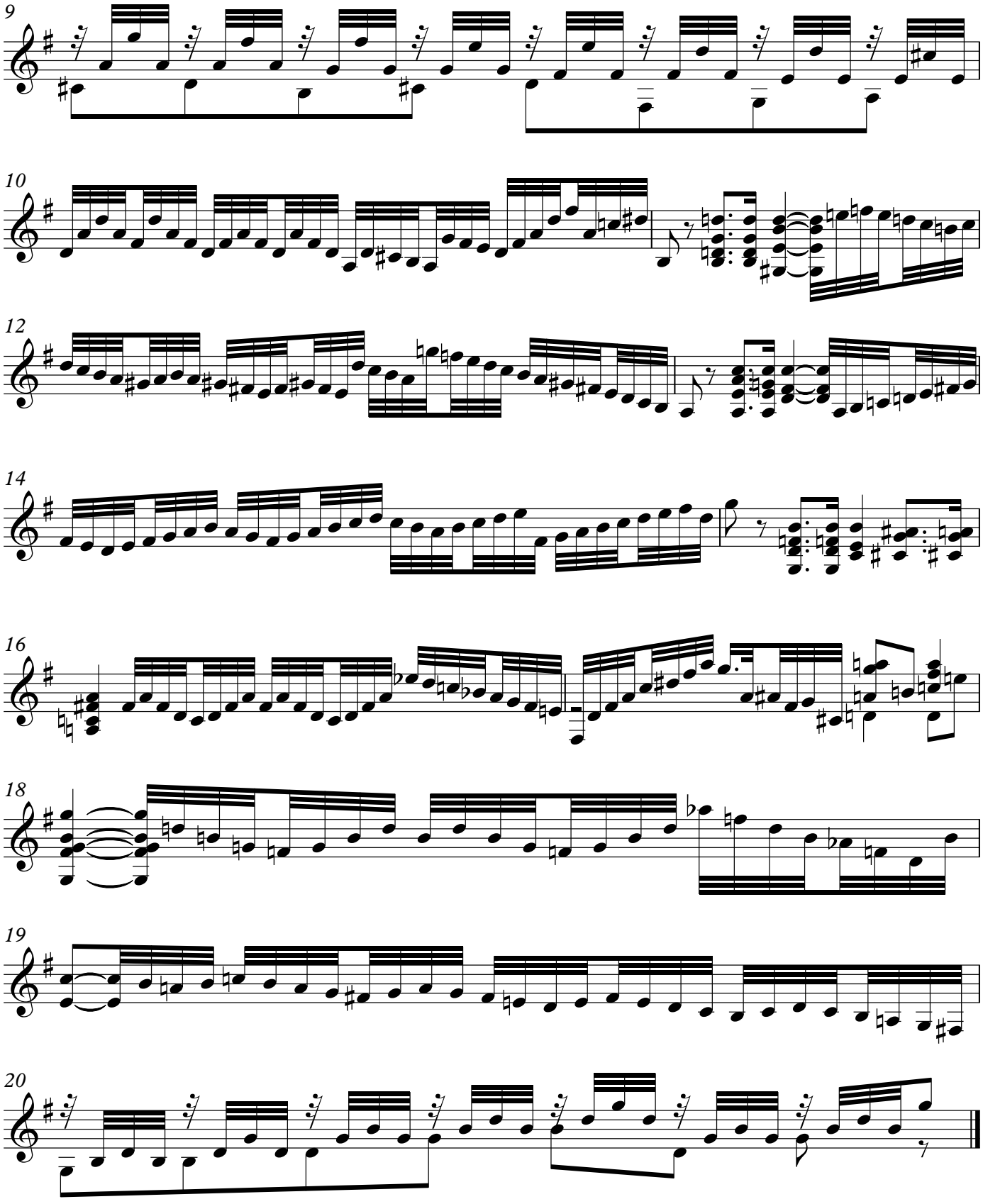
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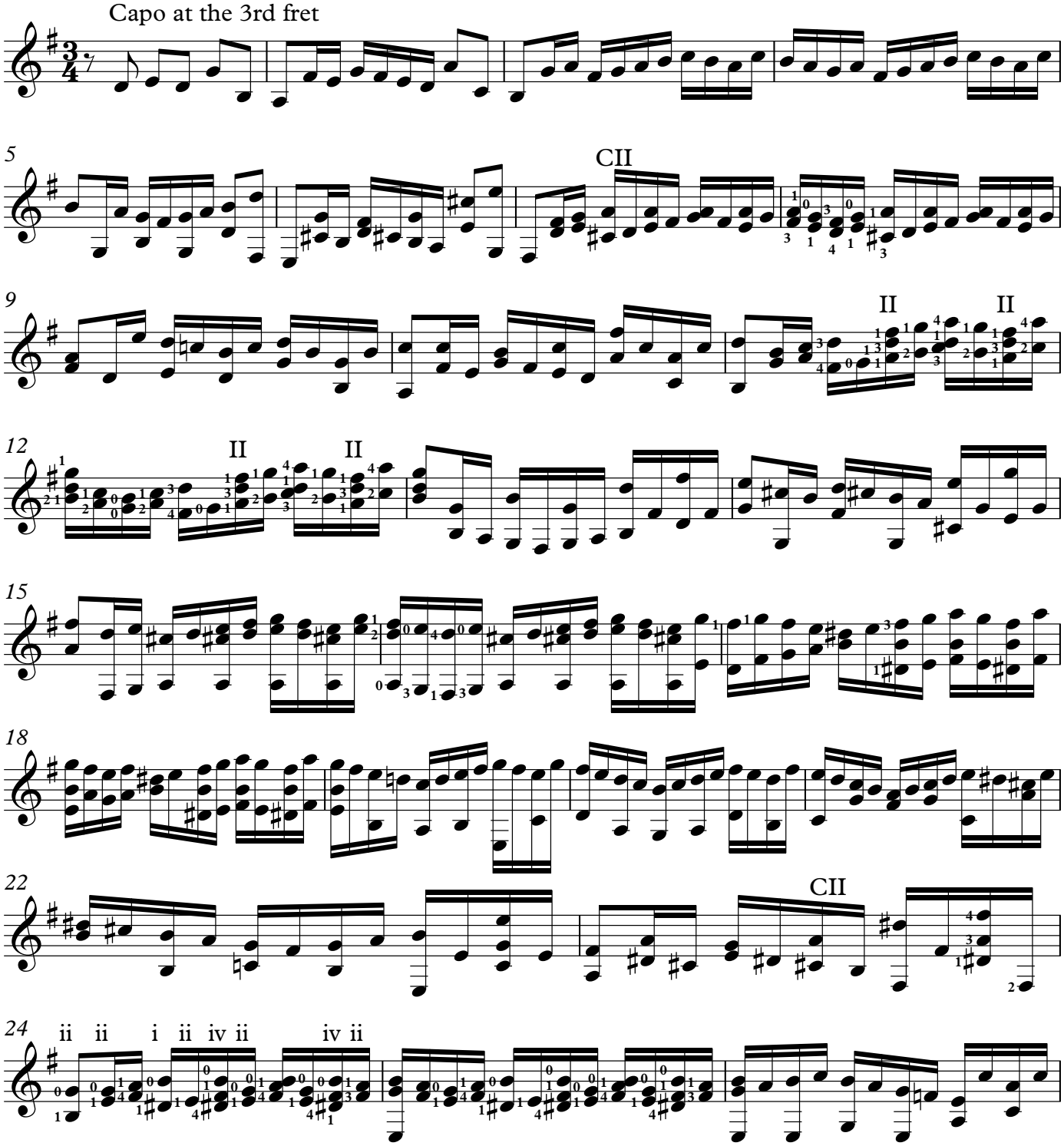
BWV 866 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Fugue No. 21 in B-flat major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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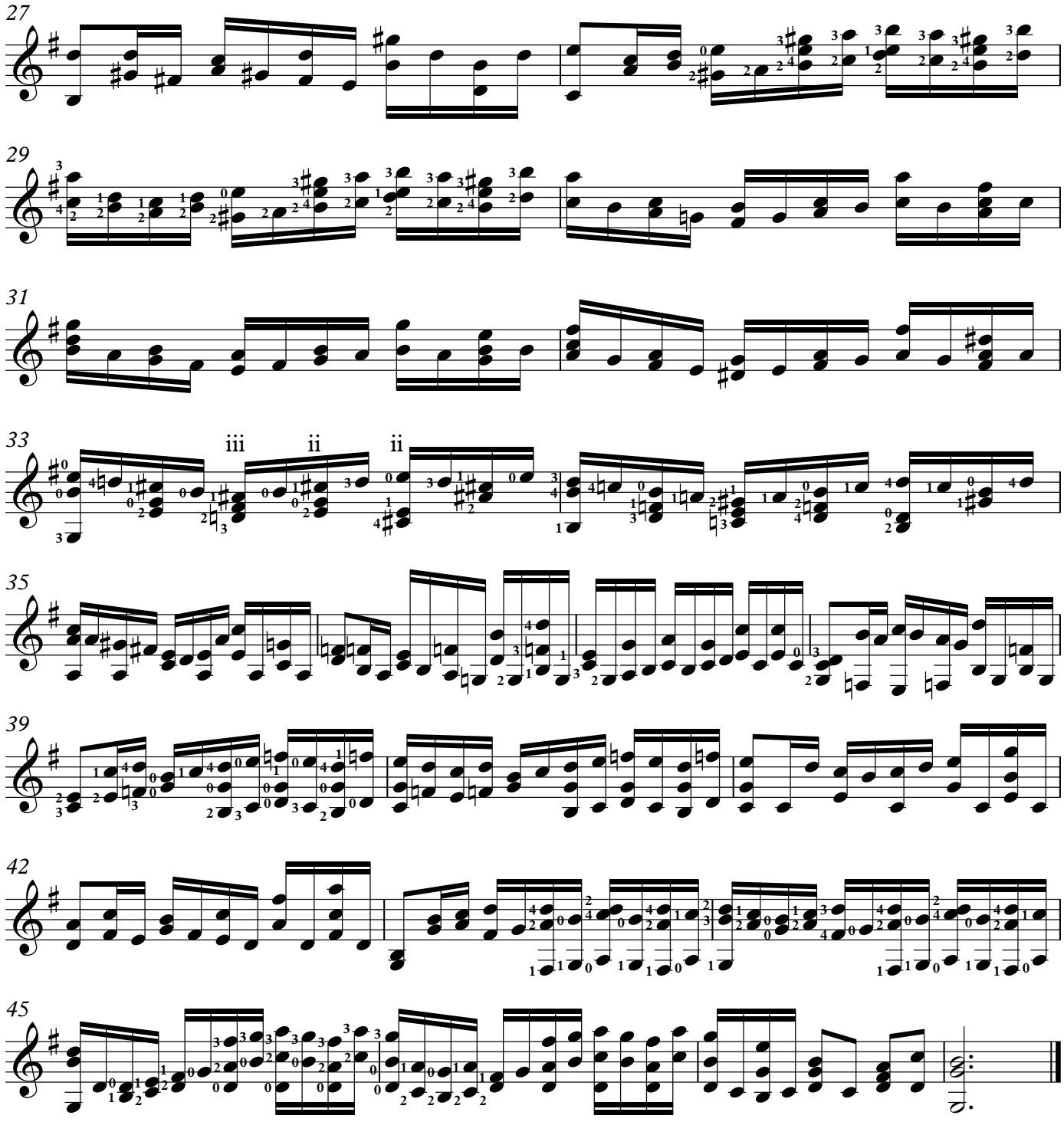
27
29
31
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iii
ii
ii
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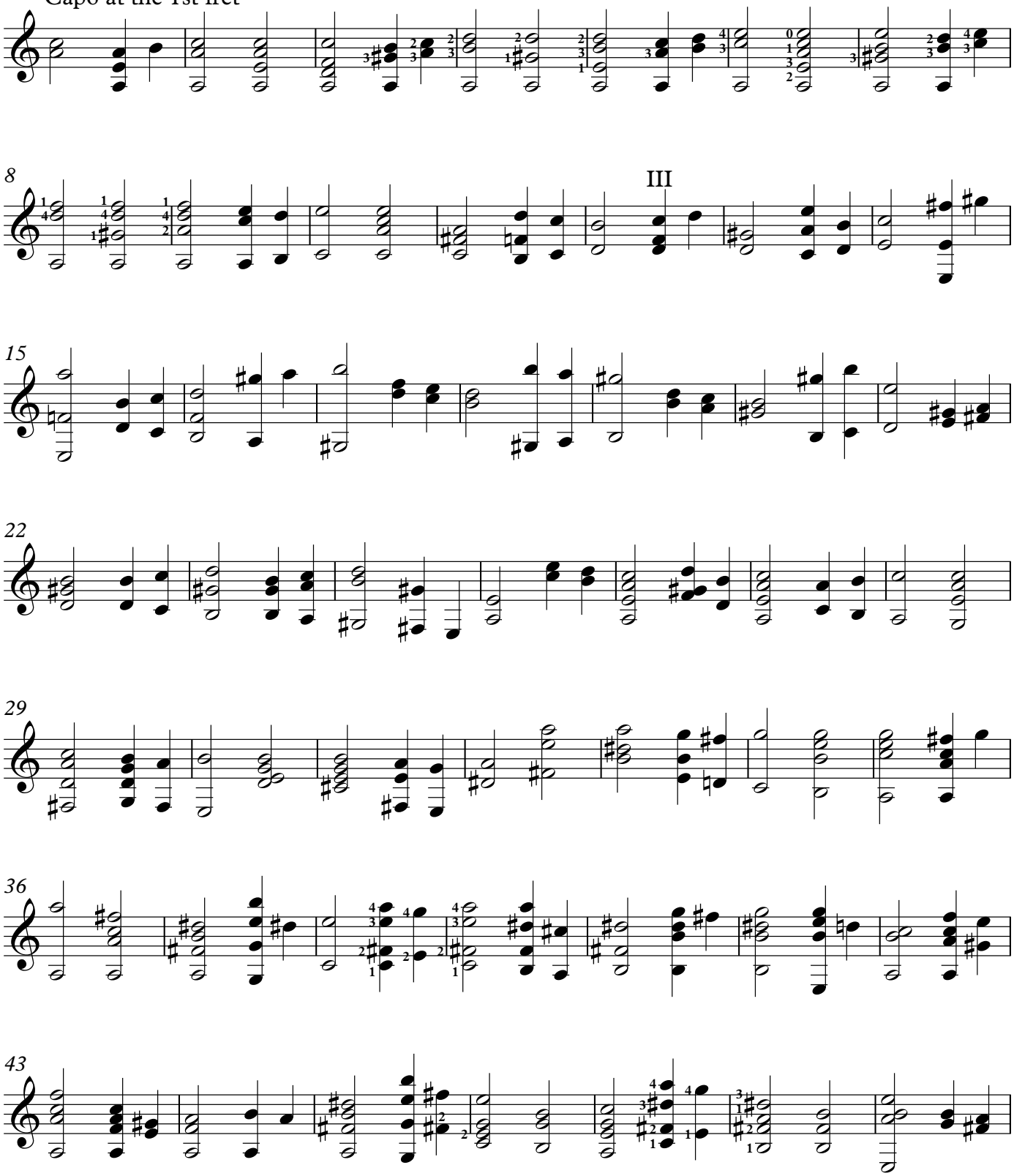
42
45

BWV 867 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Prelude No. 22 in B-flat minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 1st fret



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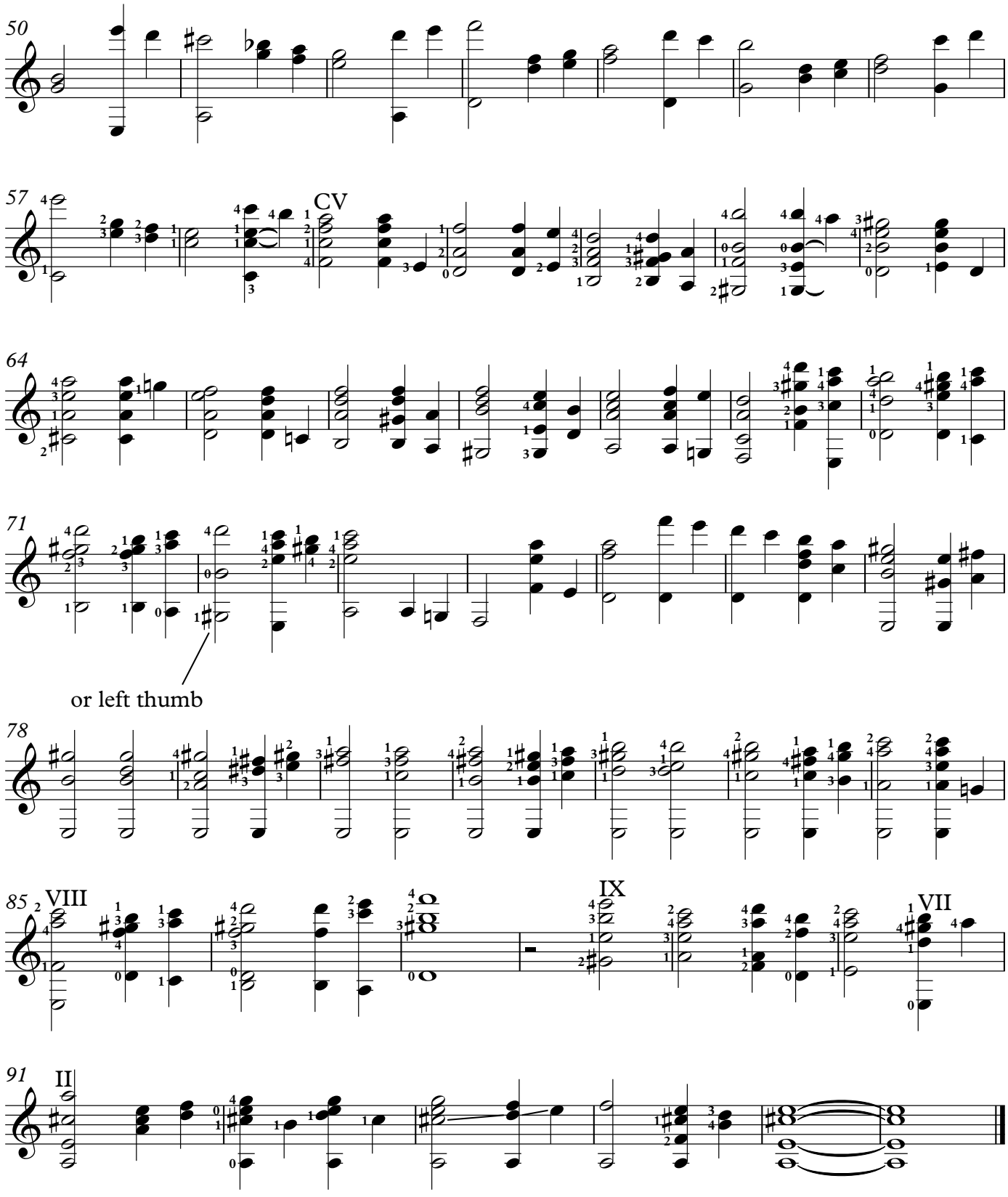
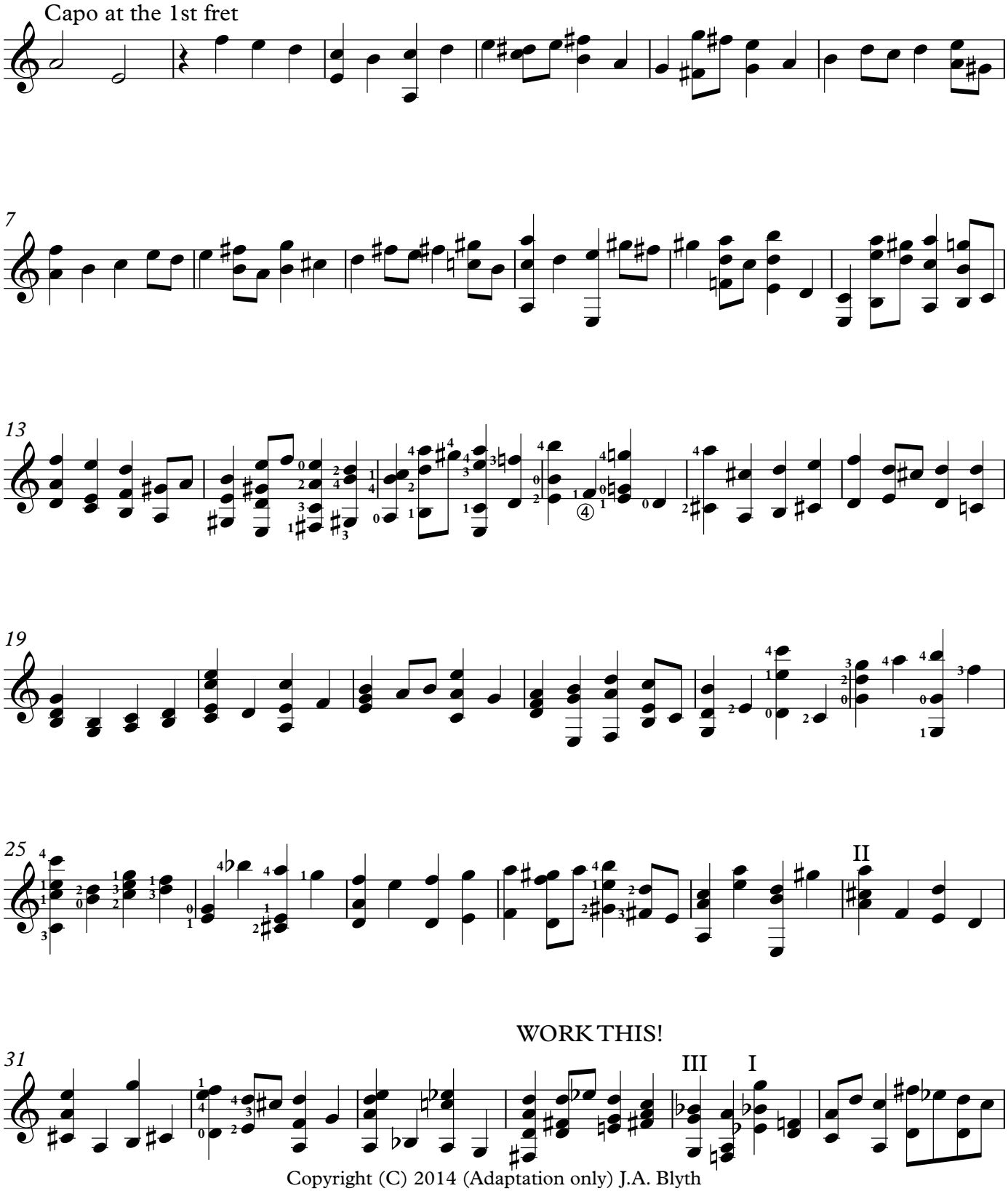

50
57
CV
64
71
or left thumb
78
85
VIII
IX
VII
91
II

BWV 891 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Fugue No. 22 in B-flat minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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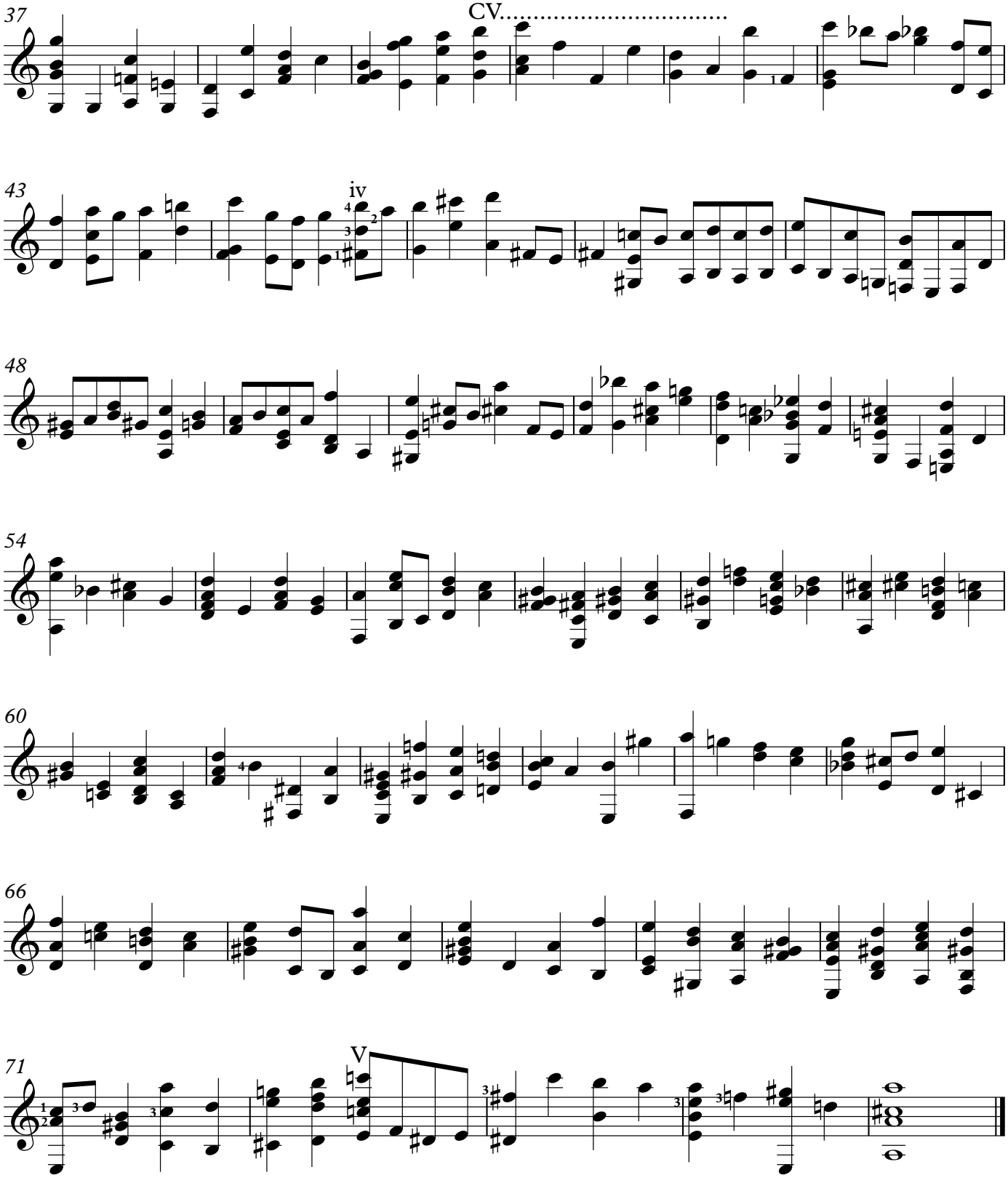
37
CV.....
43
iv
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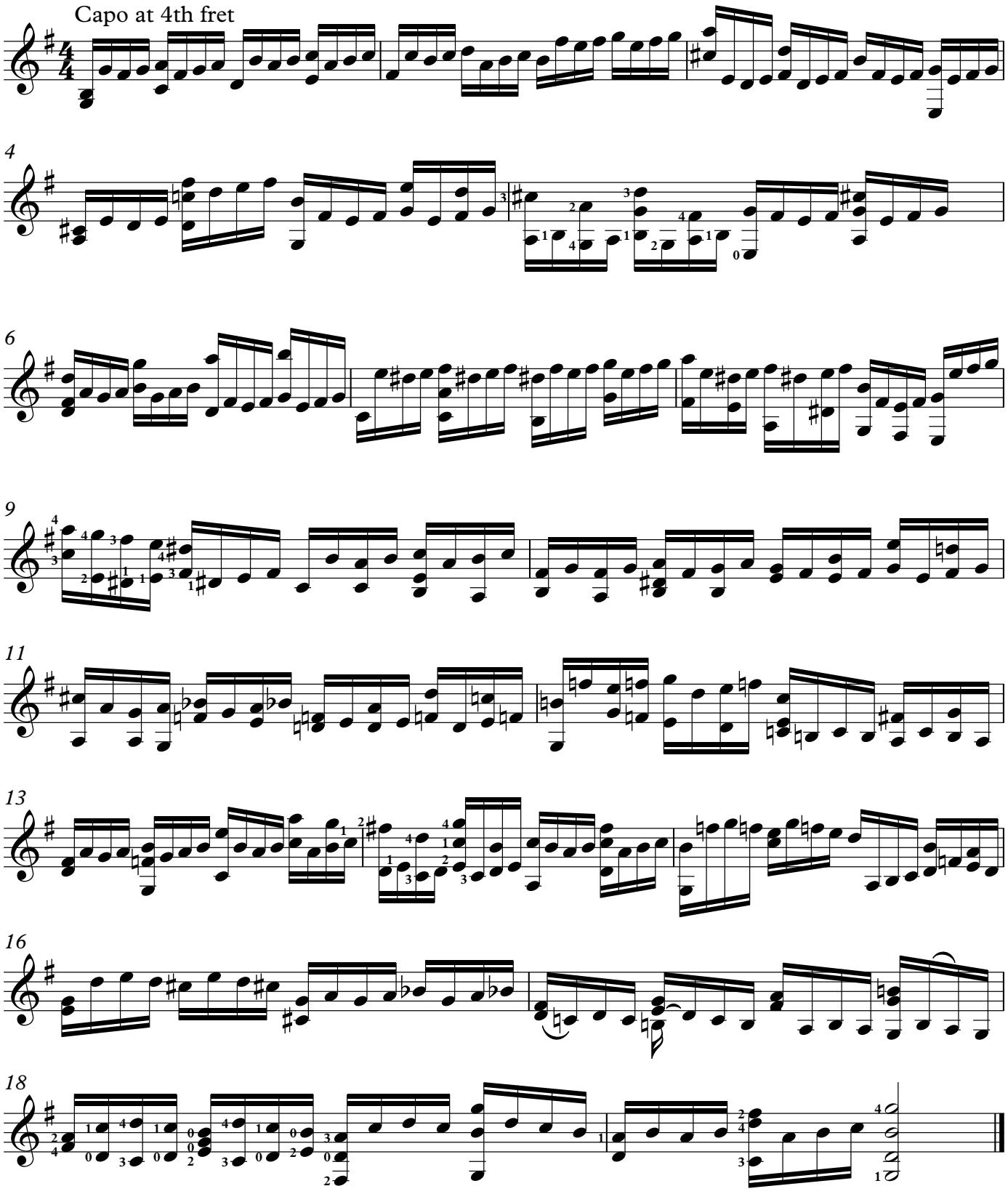
71
V

BWV 868 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Prelude No. 23 in B major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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BWV 868 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Fugue No. 23 in B major

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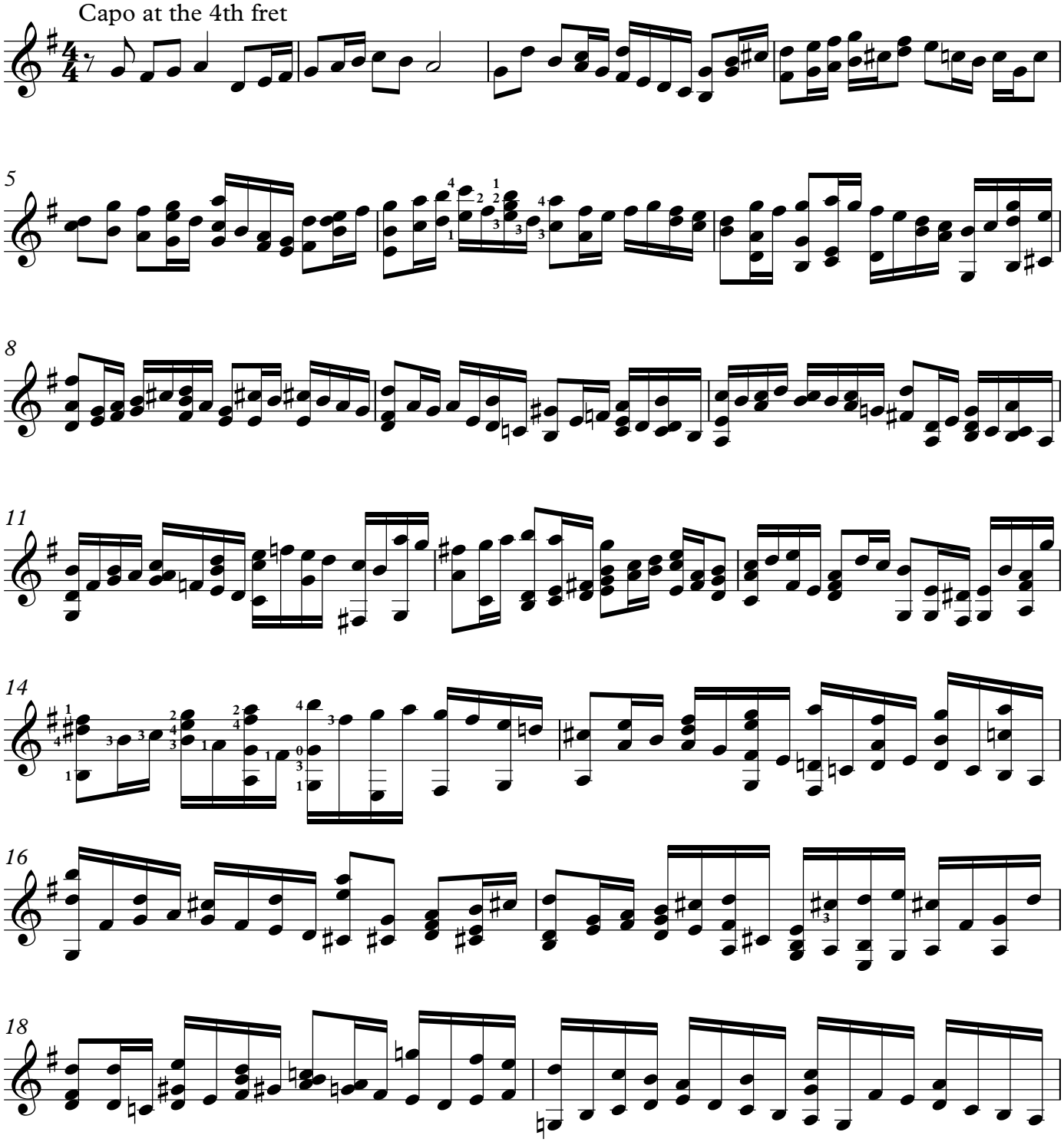

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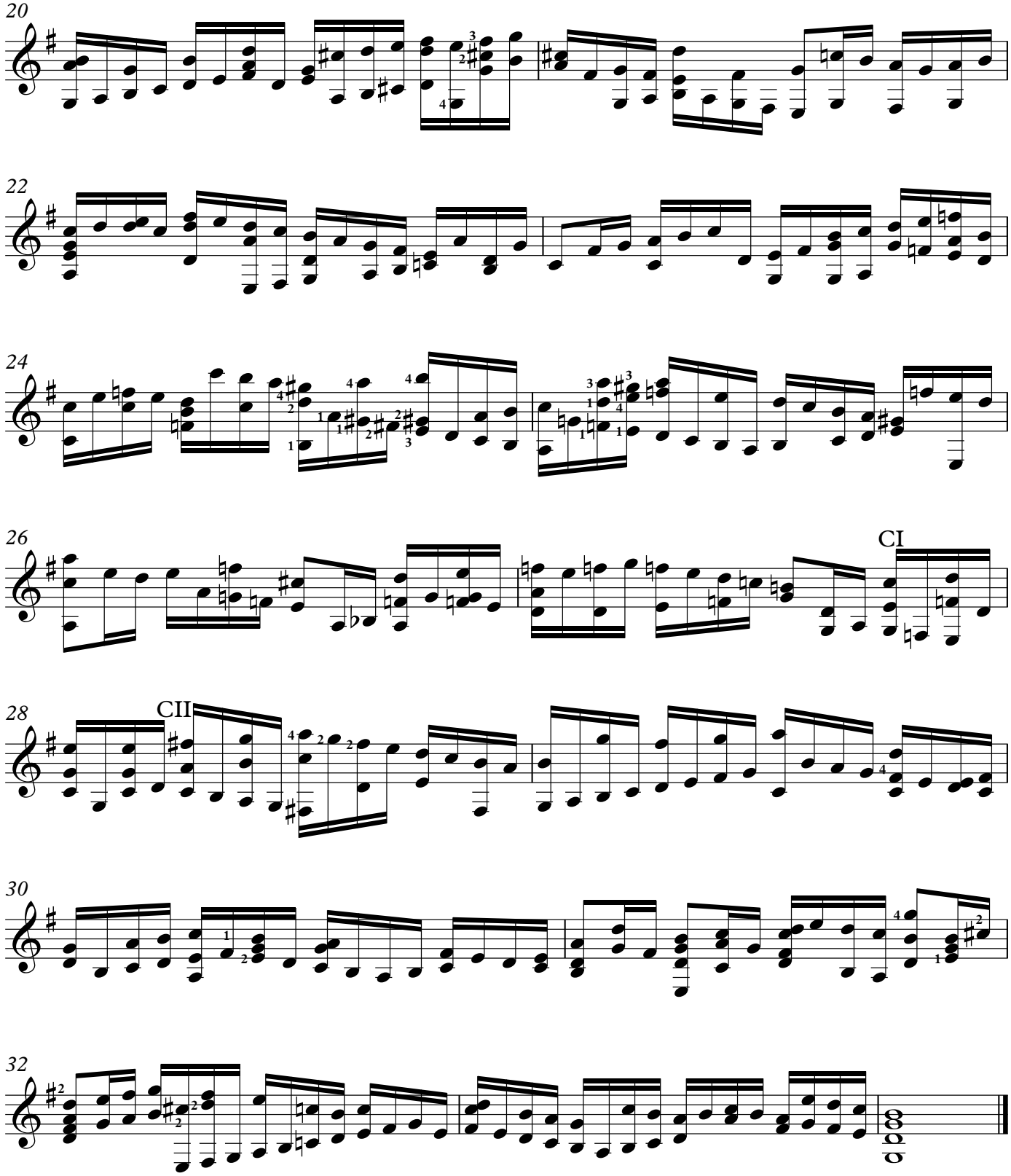
20
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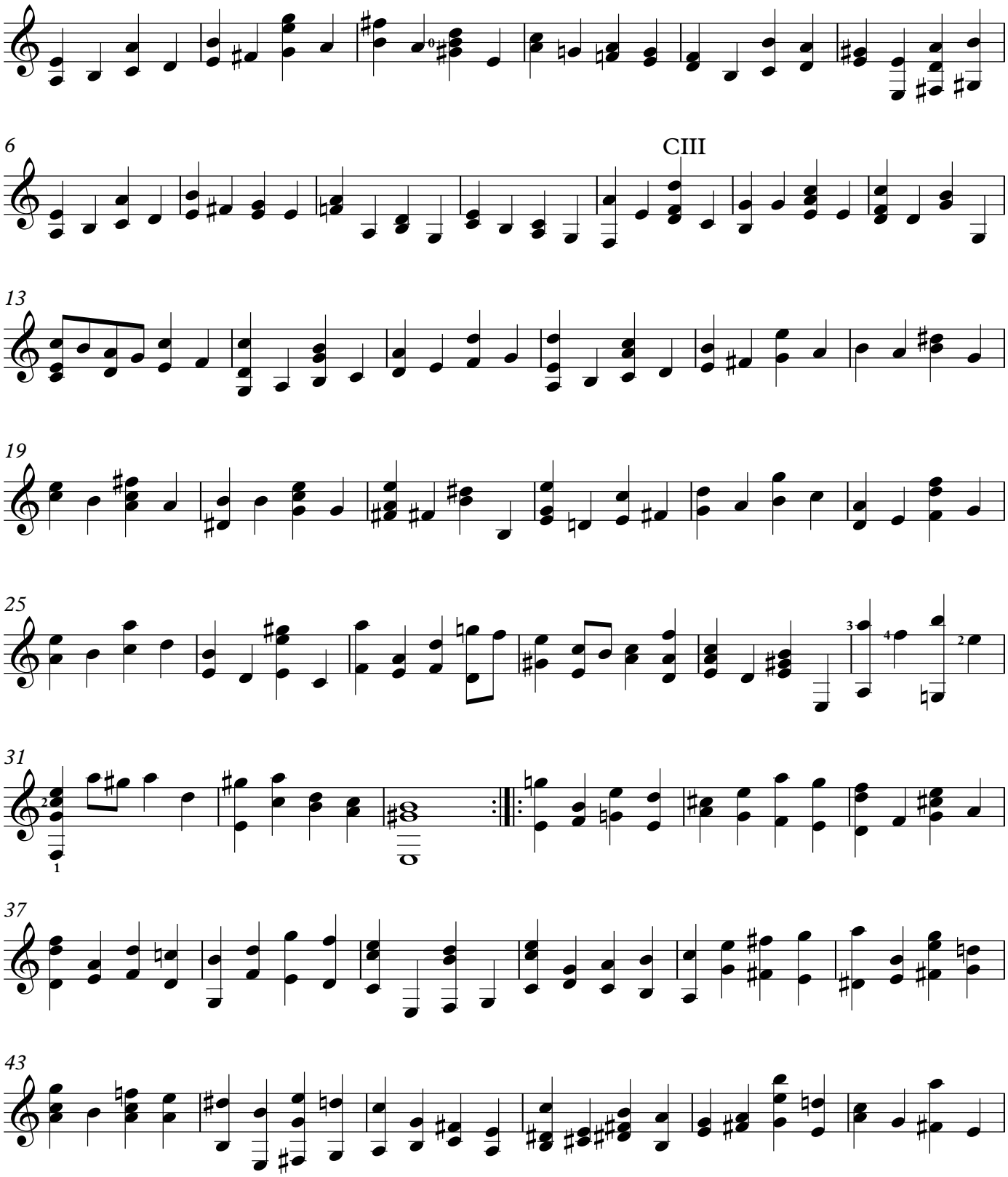
BWV 869 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Prelude No. 24 in B minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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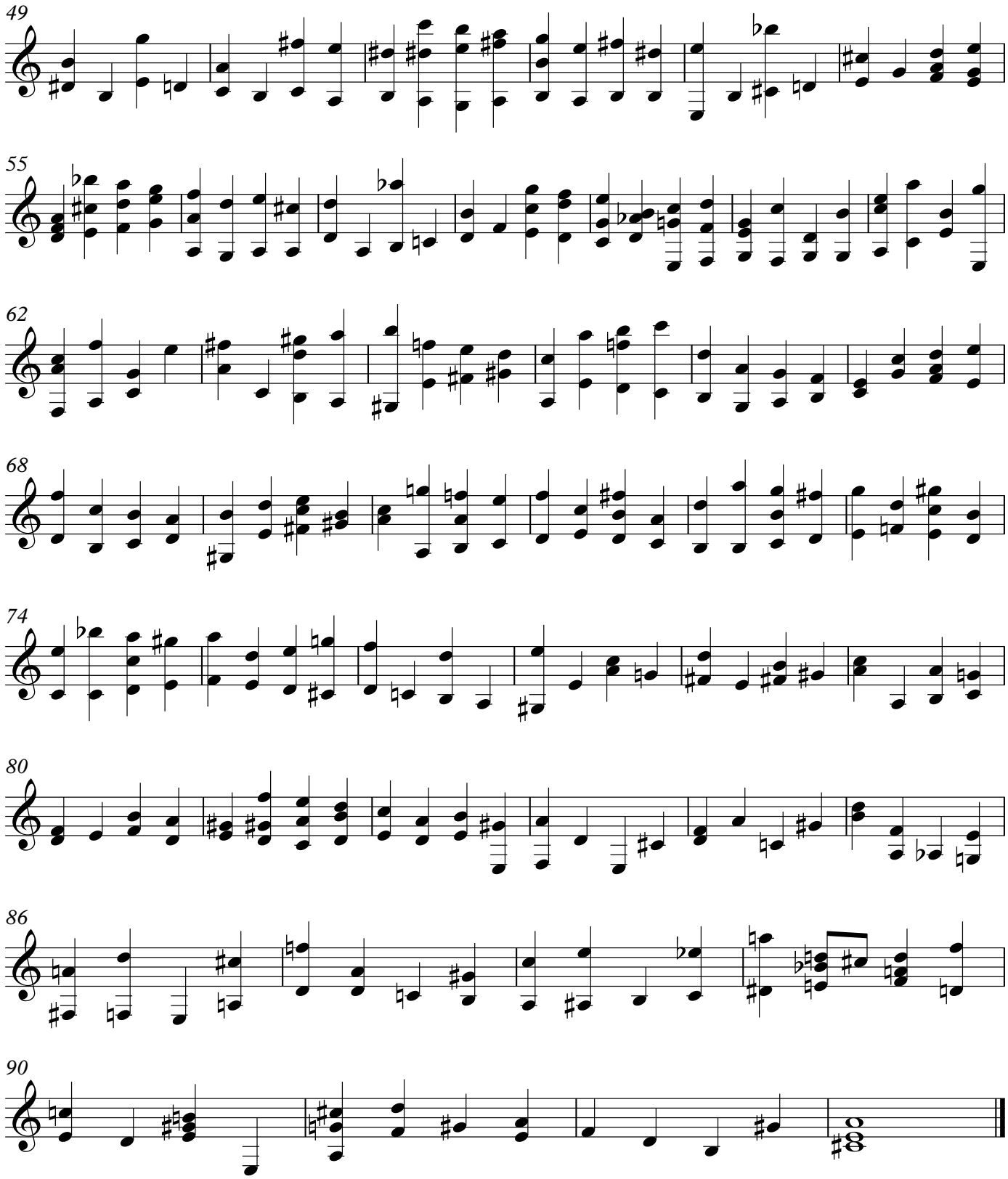
49
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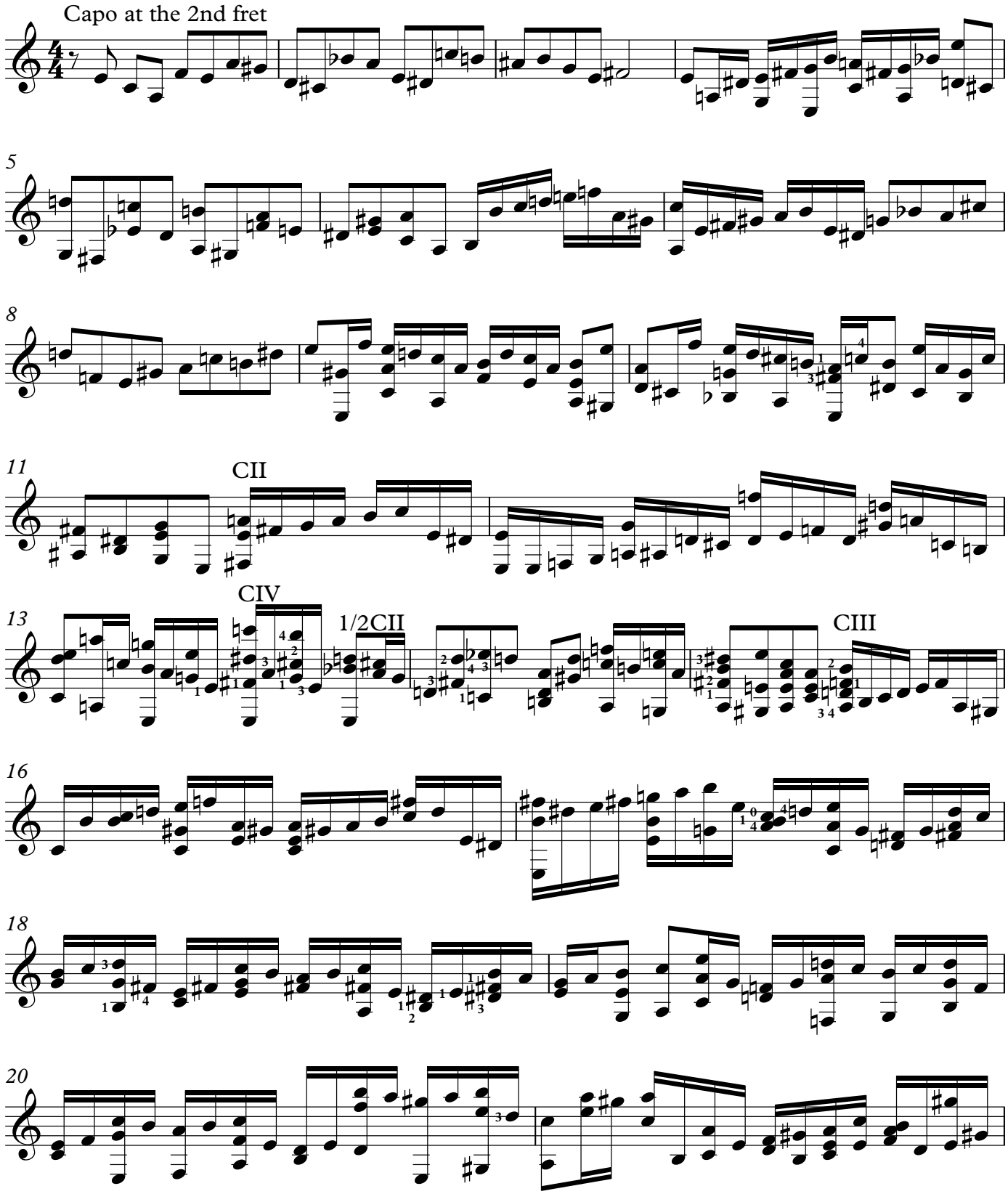
BWV 869 – J.S. Bach
Book 1: Fugue No. 24 in B minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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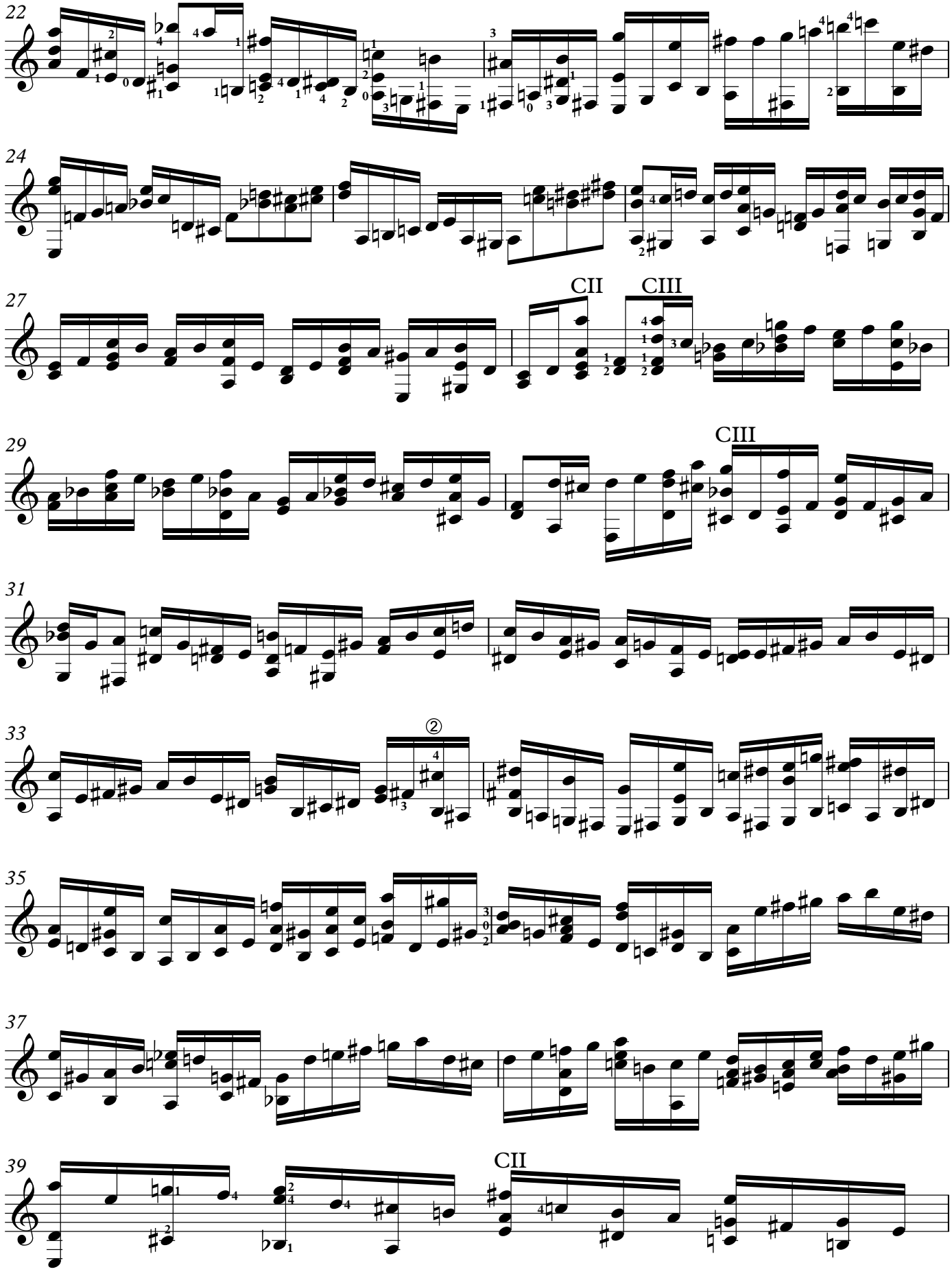
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CIII
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CIII
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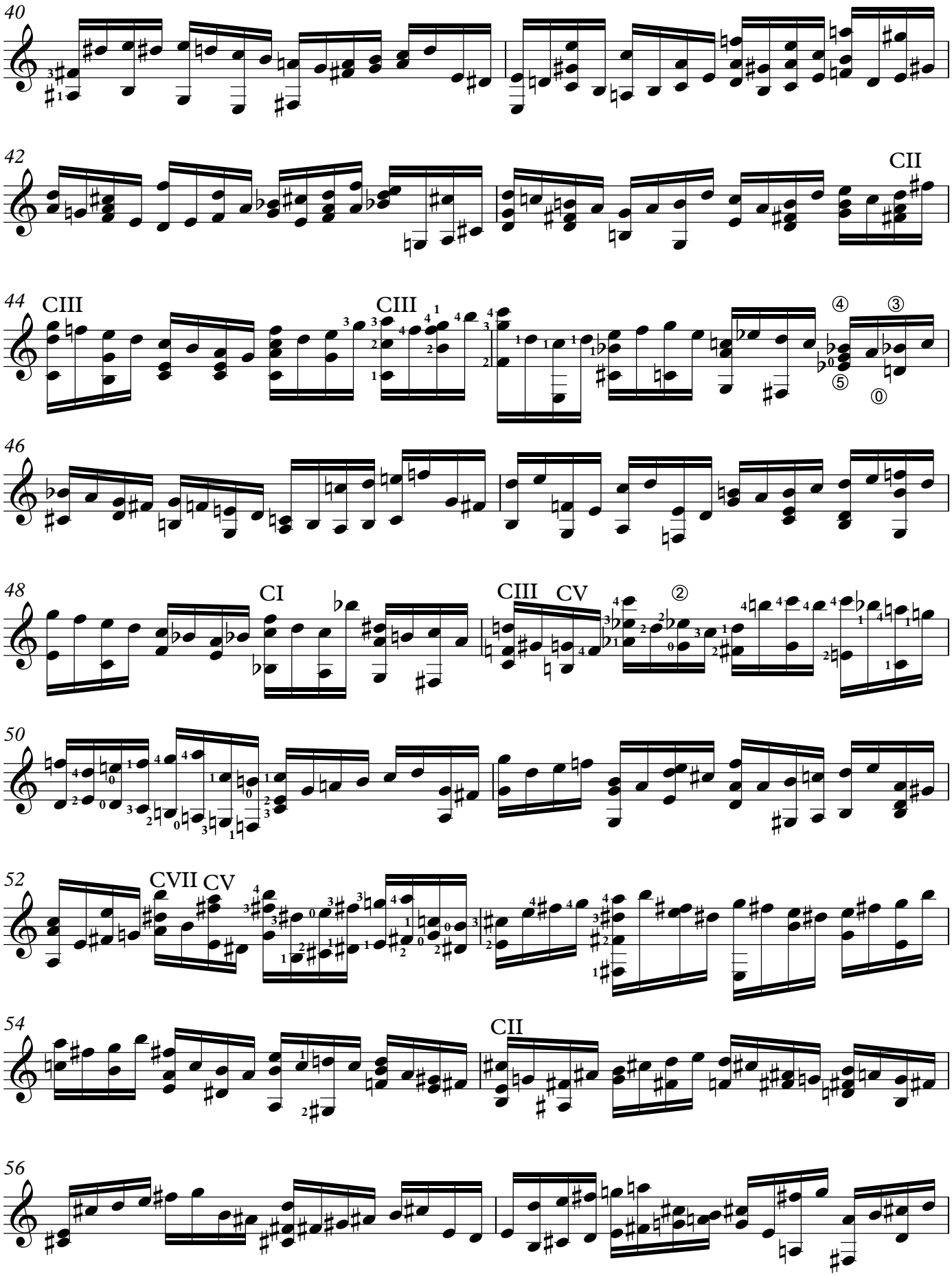
CII


40
42
CII
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CIII
CIII
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CV
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CII
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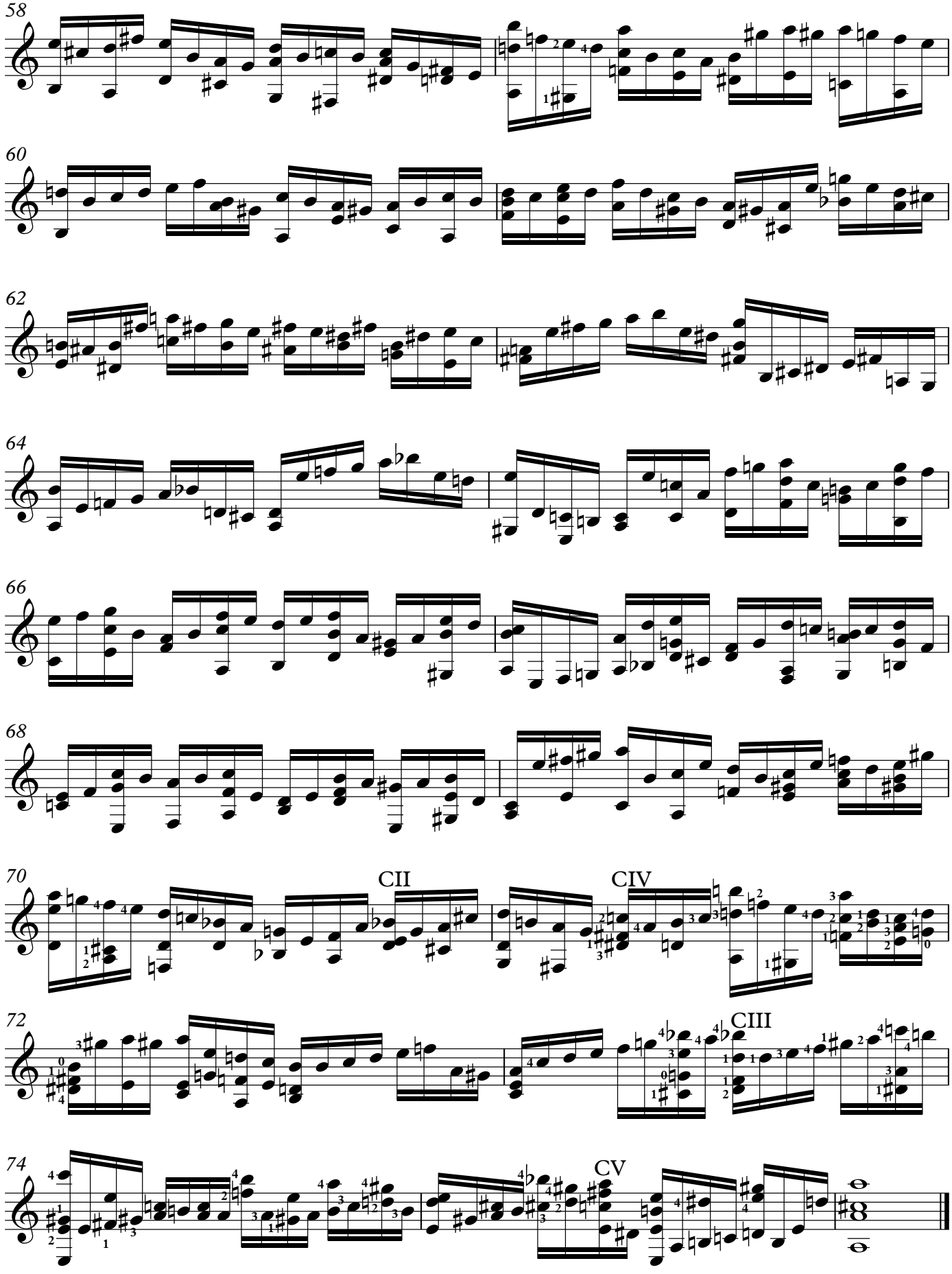

58
60
62
64
66
68
70
CII
CIV
72
CIII
74
CV

VOLUME THREE

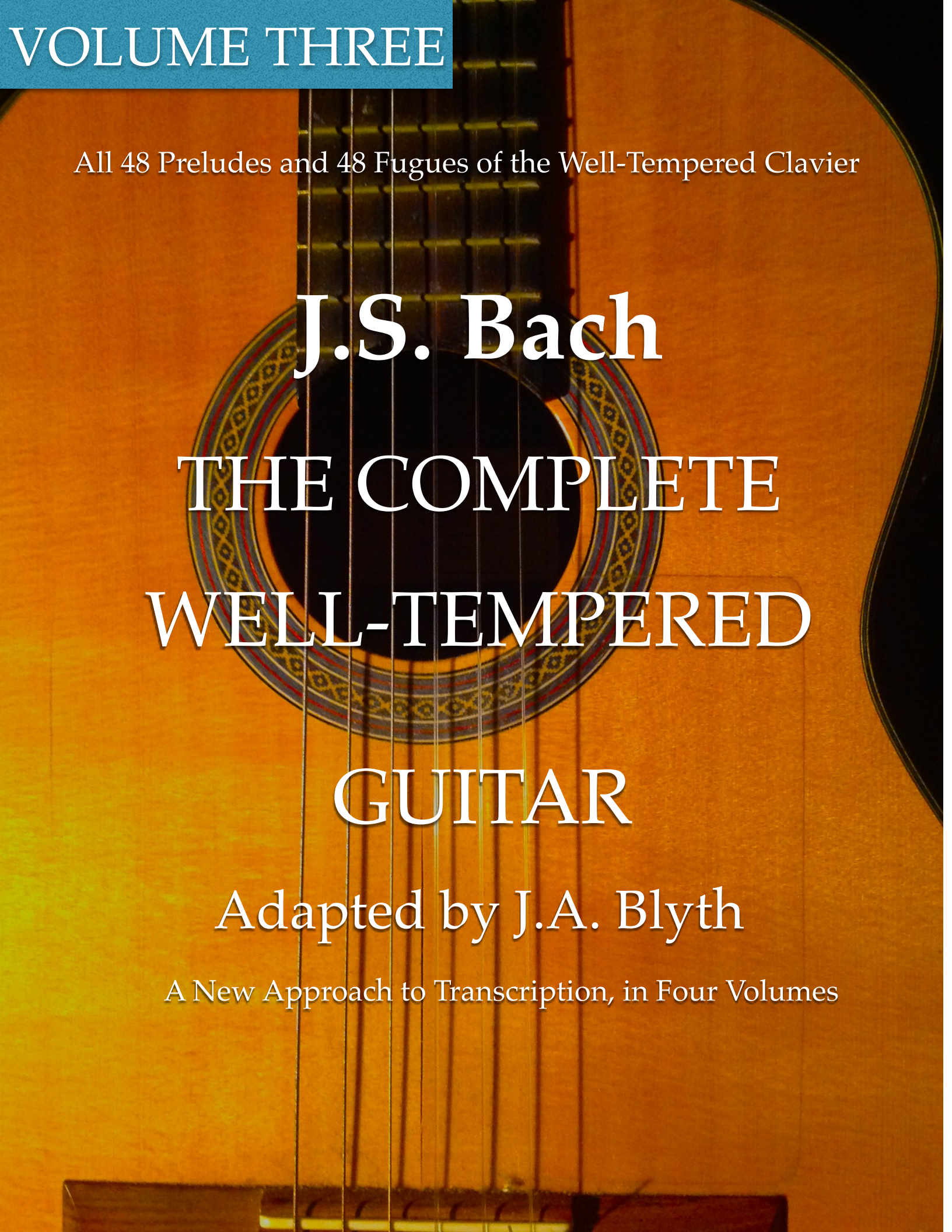
All 48 Preludes and 48 Fugues of the Well-Tempered Clavier

J.S. Bach

THE COMPLETE WELL-TEMPERED GUITAR

Adapted by J.A. Blyth

A New Approach to Transcription, in Four Volumes



About this edition

I wondered at various was of showing the music.The guitar has some limitations which simply don't exist for keyboard instruments. The most notable consequence of this, and perhaps the reason why I know of no similar project coming to completion, is that some voices will have to drop out, or have sudden octave transpositions. Rather than mess around with many impossible details I hit upon a basic programme to simplify not only the transcription process but the appearance of the final score: neither voices nor voice-leading would be indicated, so new voicings could be imagined.

Trills and other ornaments would mostly be omitted, or incorporated into the text (and sometimes simplified (such as in BWV 893's fugue) without comment (such as appoggiature). In practice listeners (including the player) will hear the music in much the same way as if it were played from more conventional notation.

Note durations would be not be indicated except in single-line passages, with the result that rhythm is indicated in a way analogous to rhythm notation in lute tablature.

Many of these pieces have gone through numerous versions, trying out different transpositions, fingerings and edits. Some octave transpositions were made so that I could read the music more easily, and might not be necessary in the case of a normal guitarist who learns and memorizes. For the first four and a half decades of my life I had got used to having perfect vision, so when I started to need reading glasses I was in denial for a while. Now I find that it is very hard to be able to see both the fingerboard and the computer screen at the same time, and some of this music (and certainly the preliminary performances) will reflect that difficulty.

I've learned to play 96 compositions of often the highest complexity in little more than a year: if I can do that, it ought to be possible to take this music to a significantly higher pitch of virtuosity, given more normal practice conditions, and some of the earlier more technically demanding versions could be perhaps revisited. At the moment though I will still with one version per piece.

These adaptations were made with one kind of guitarist in mind me so they might not suit you quite as well.

I am left-handed;

the only kind of guitar I play is classical (there were some dabblings in lute and jazz electric, decades ago);

I read very well, and don't memorize (a skill find very difficult);

while I have some interest in quite a lot of different kinds of music, it is serious, dramatic contrapuntal music, such as these works by Bach, that I actually love;

I mostly don't like pop music, or anything that is unvarying in pulse, tempo or volume, although there are some exceptions;

I am much more comfortable with standard notation than with TAB;

I don't really care about tone all that much except that I like warmth and some dirtiness and character most classical guitar playing sounds just a little antiseptic to me but expression is very important to me;

although I have studied the music of this composer and period extensively (also utilizing fully the resources of the classical music library where I work) I am more concerned about simply getting what I can out of the delightful patterns/blueprints which Bach has left me, on my own terms;

although I have a degree in music, my approach to this music probably owes a lot more to my personality than to any training I was already an enthusiastic and naïve listener long before I studied music with any kind of formality;
although a few pieces and trouble-spots have been thoroughly fingered, most of the time these scores don't have very much in the way of guidance, especially since the fingering will likely vary considerably if you decide to put more ornaments back in.

John Alexander Blyth, Brandon, Manitoba, Canada, Thursday 14th August 2014

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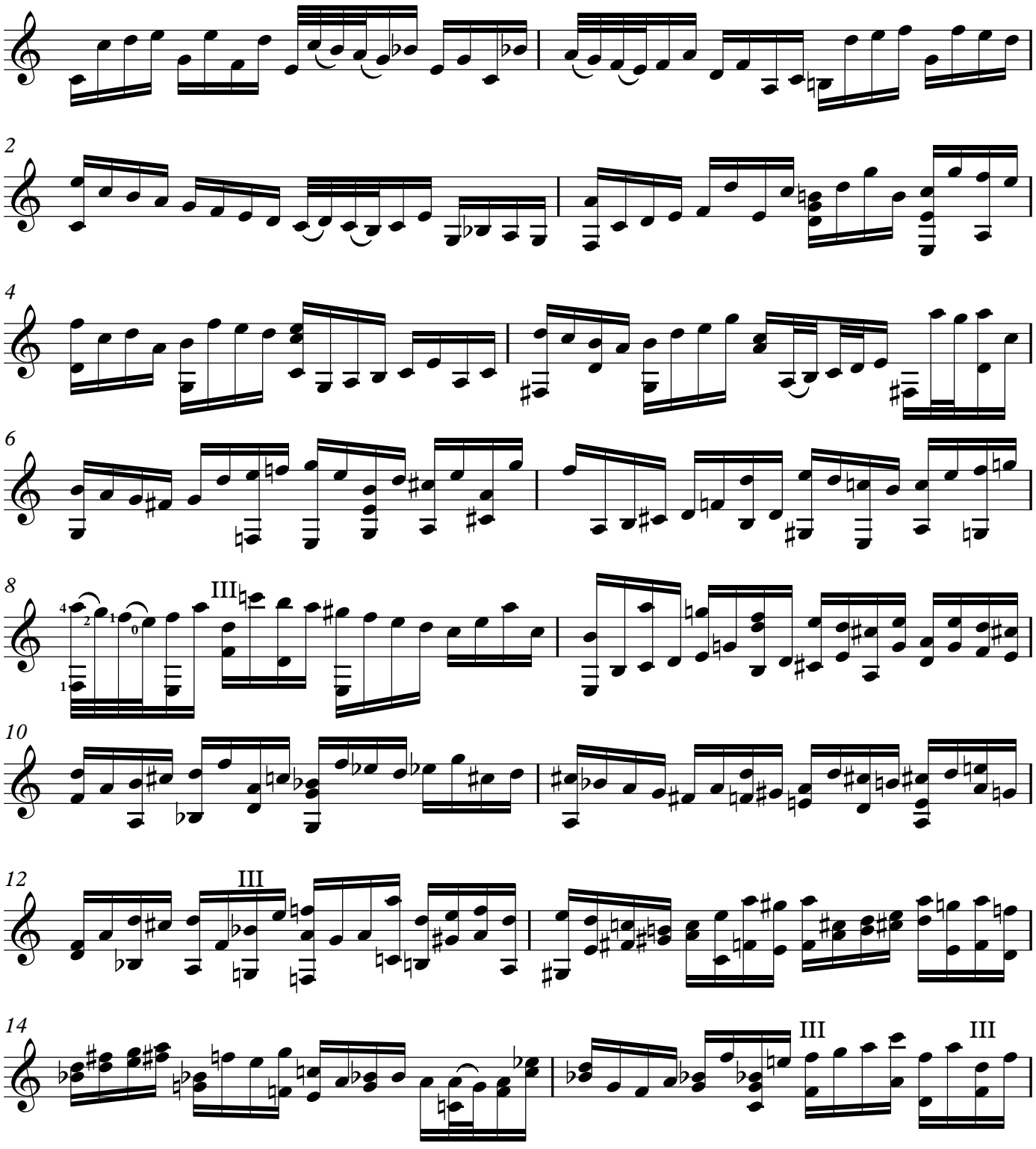
BWV 870 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Prelude No. 1 in C major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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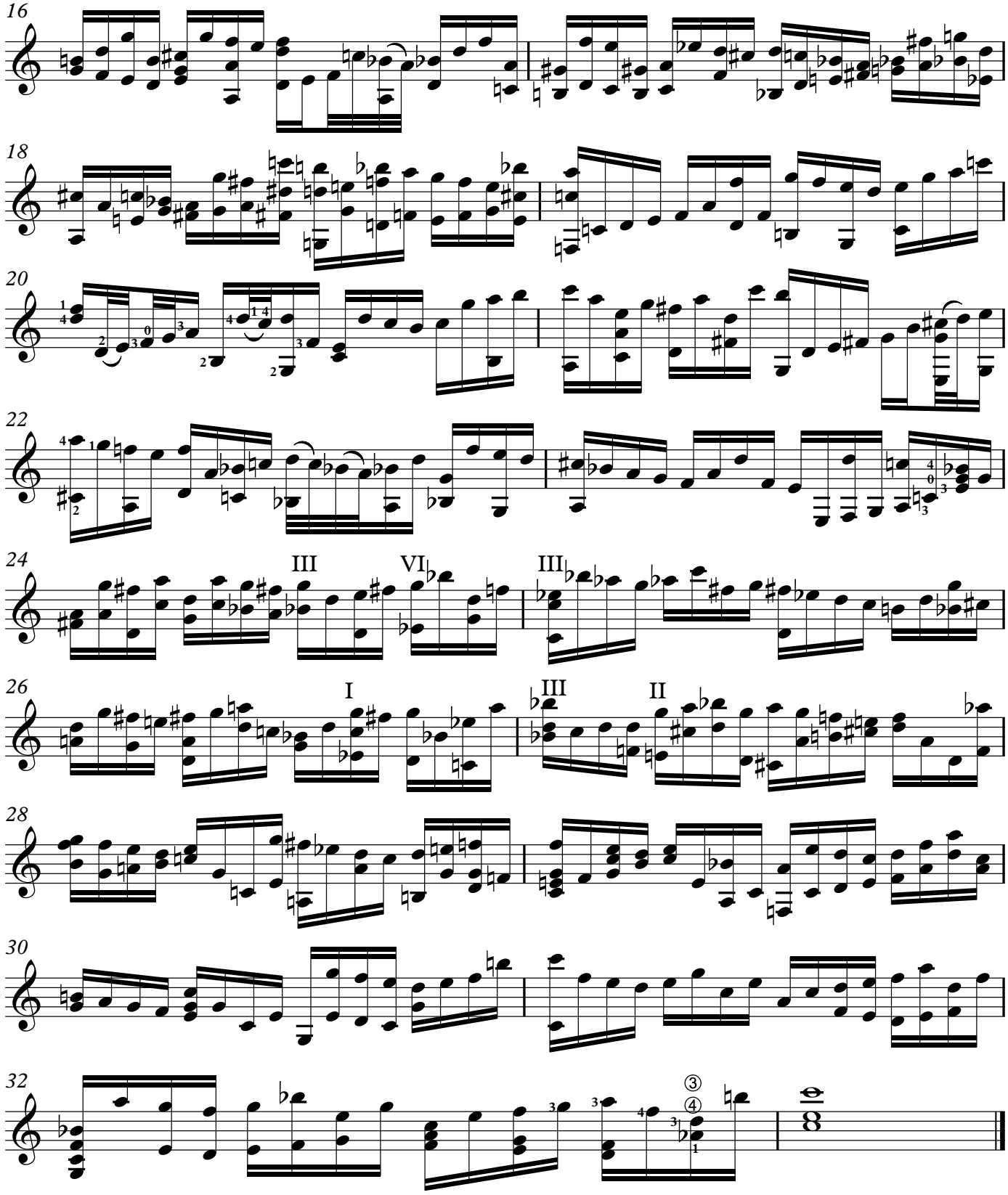
16
18
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24
III
VI
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I
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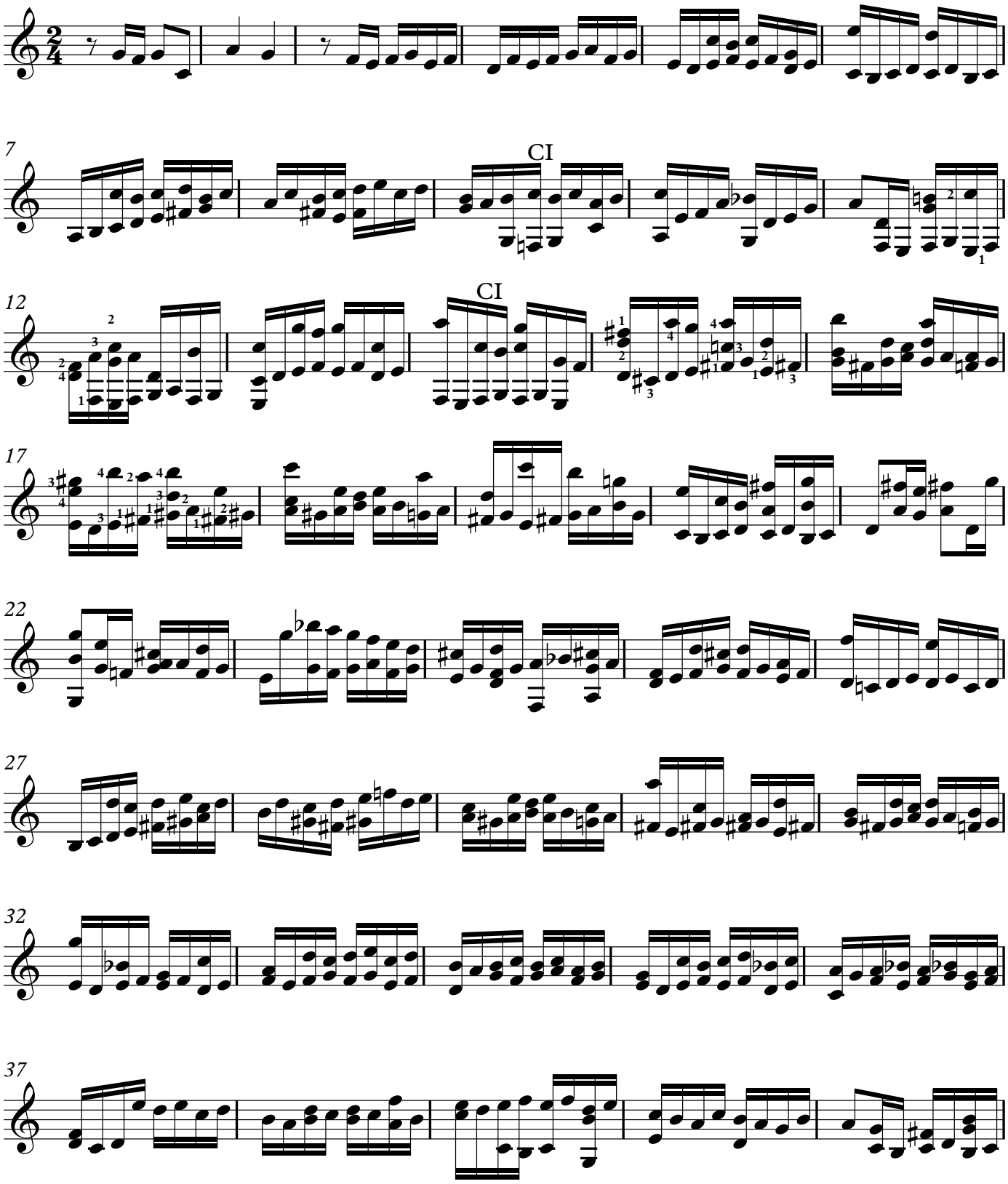
32

BWV 870 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Fugue No. 1 in C major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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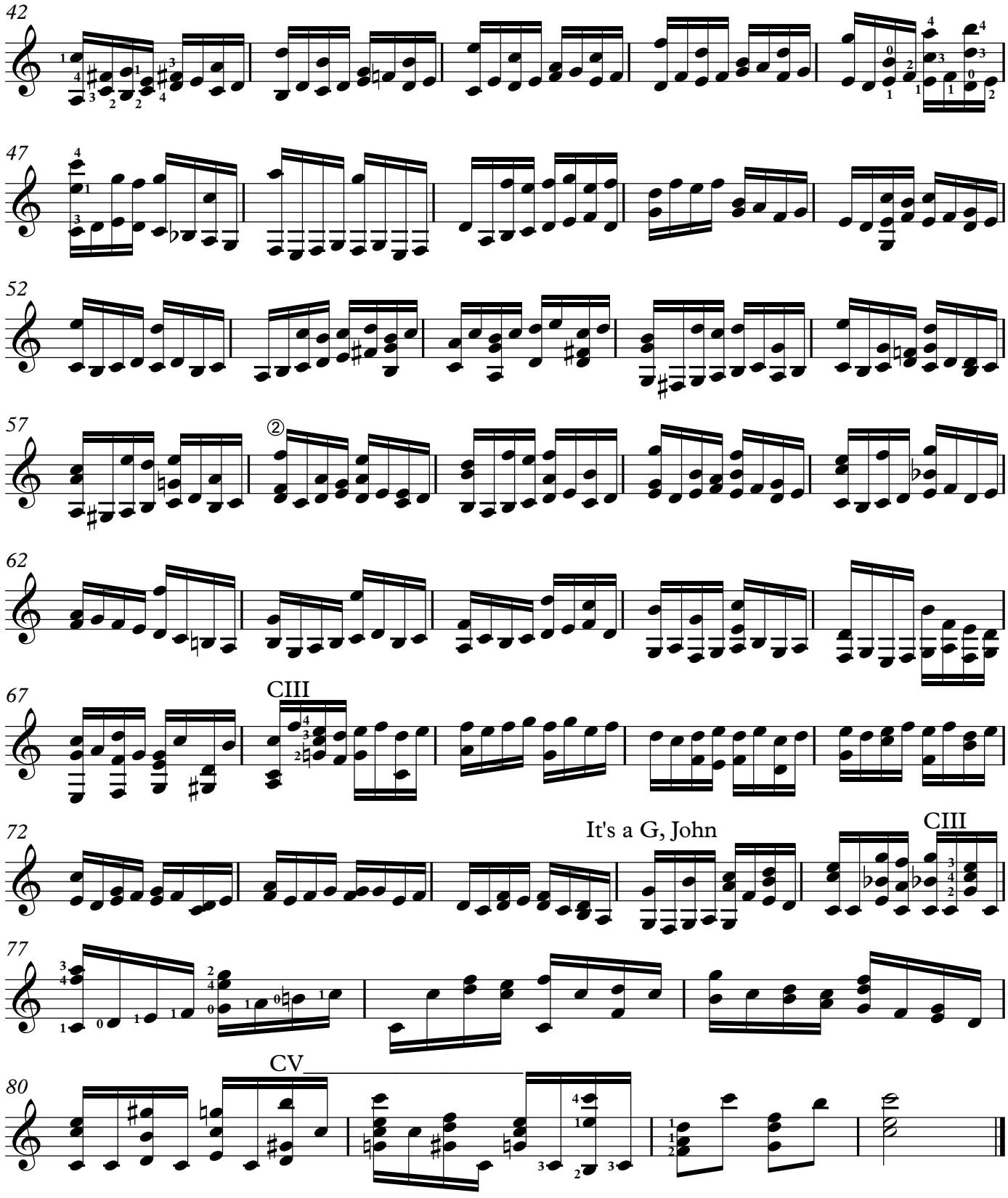
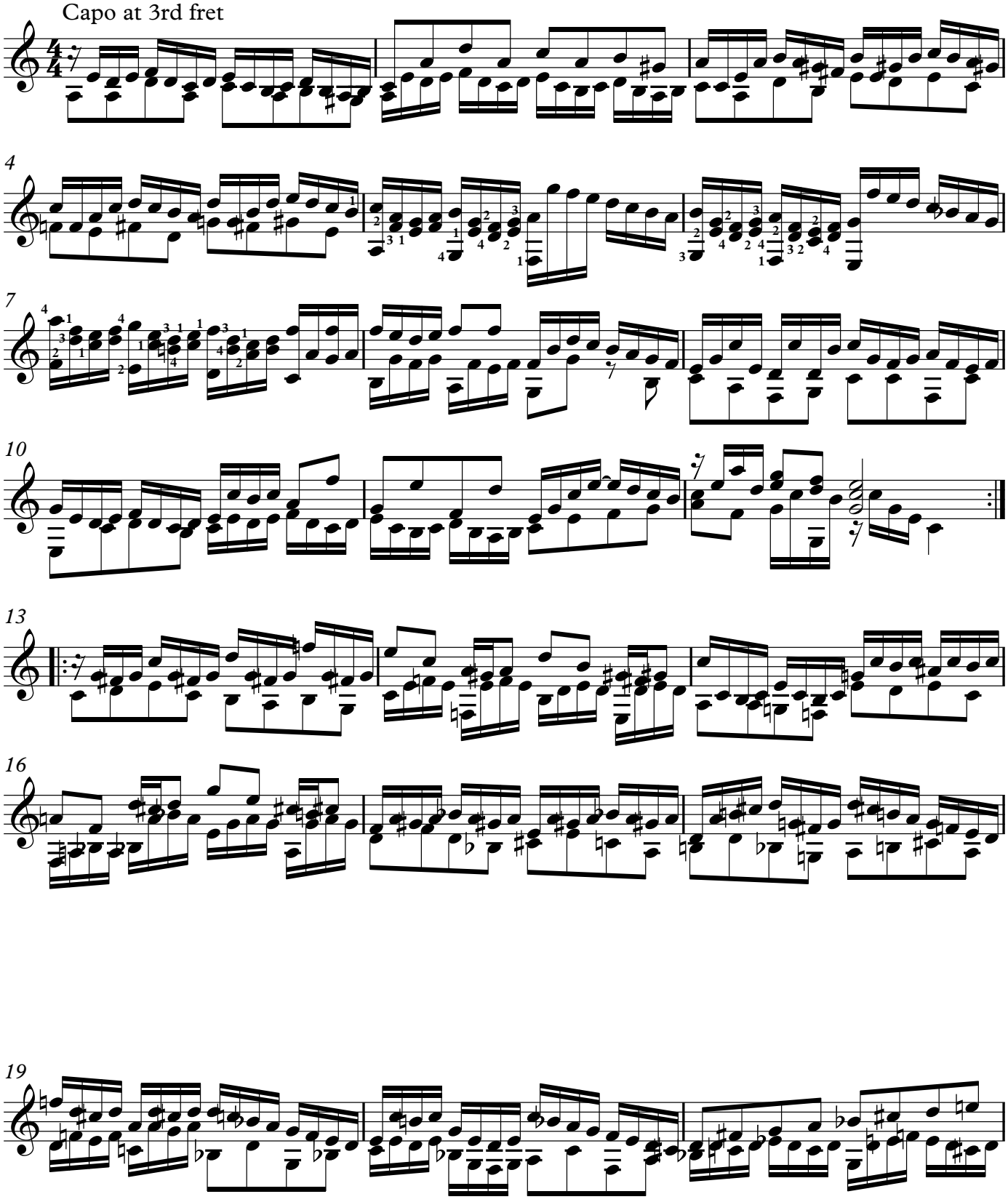

42
47
52
57
②
62
67
CIII
72
It's a G, John
CIII
77
80
CV

BWV 871 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Prelude No. 2 in C minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at 3rd fret



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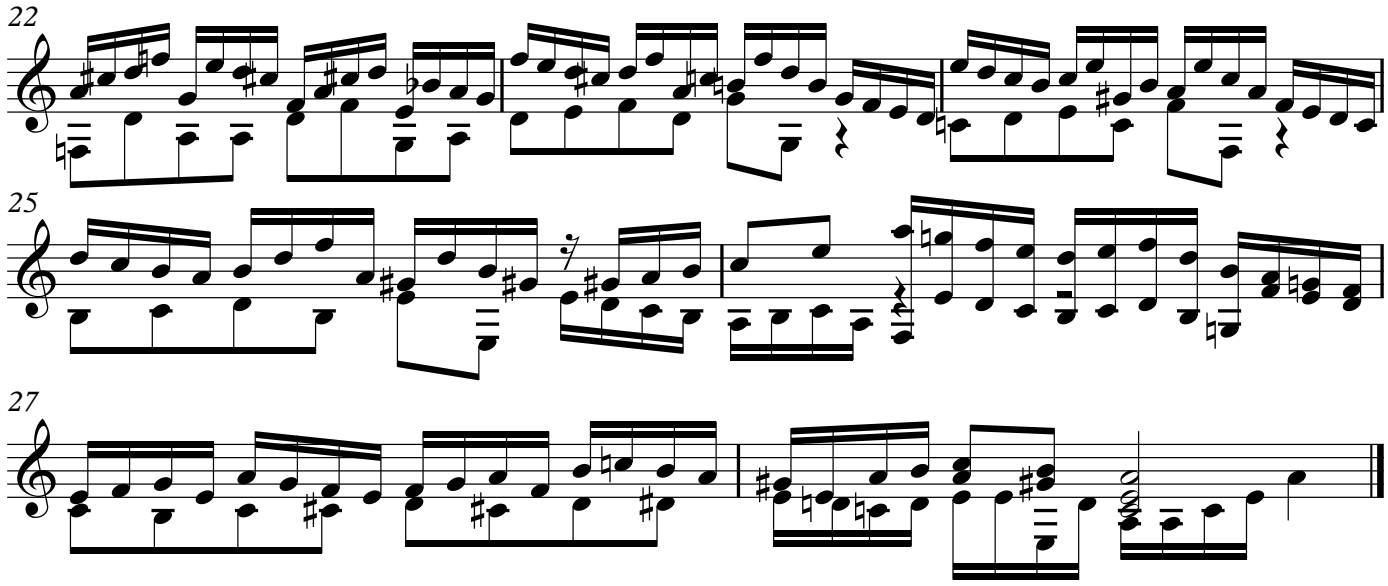
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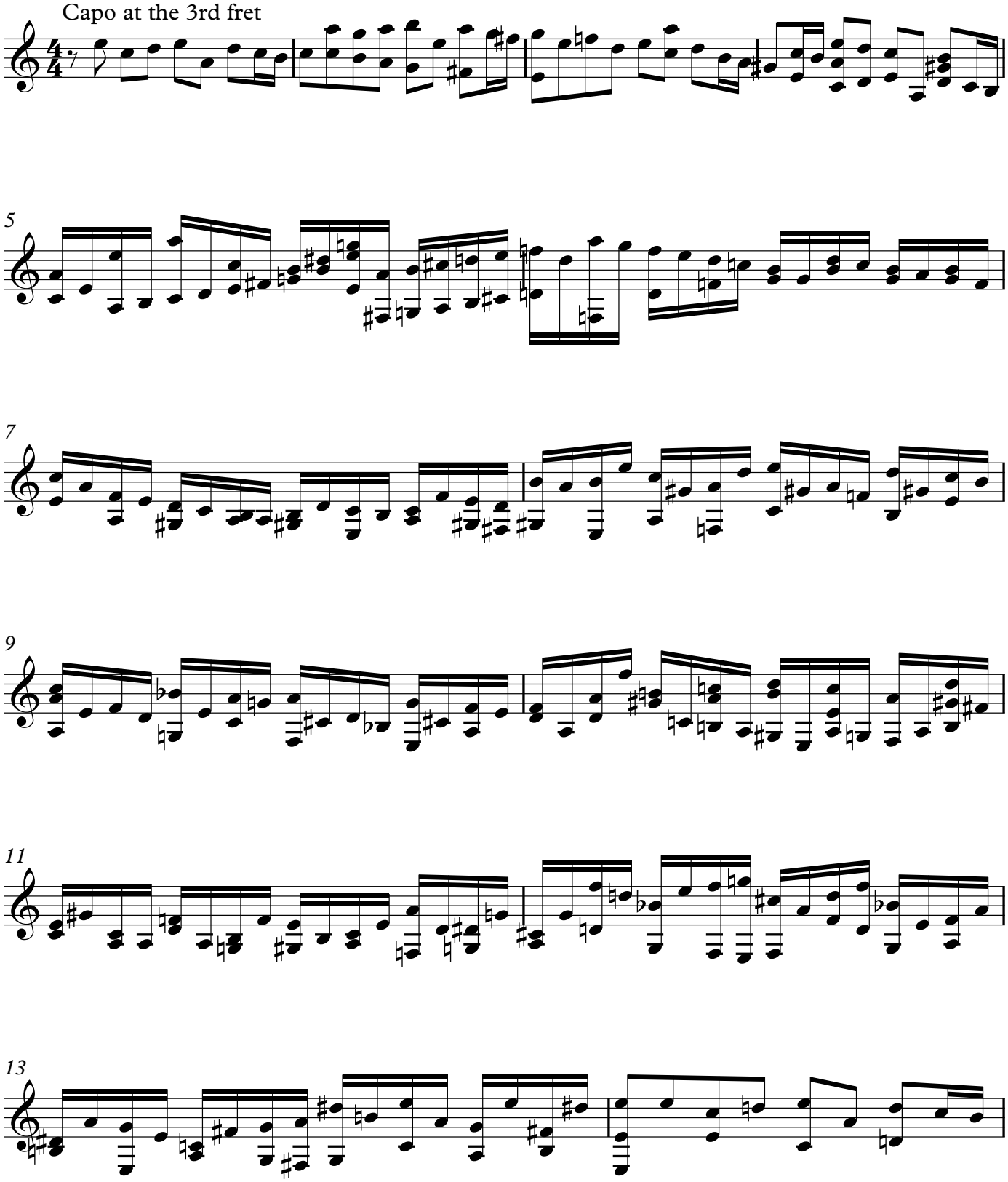
BWV 871 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Fugue No. 2 in C minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 3rd fret



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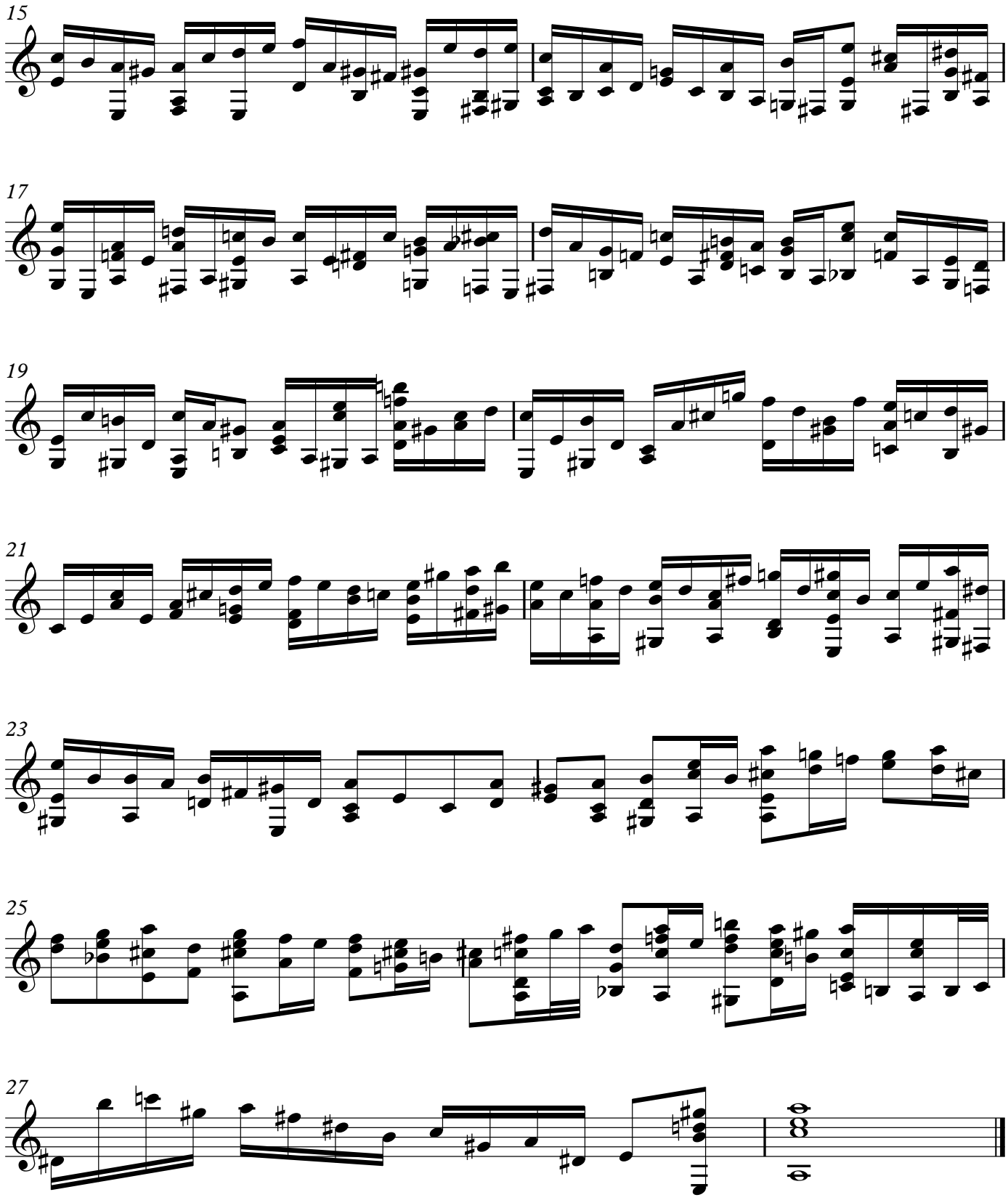
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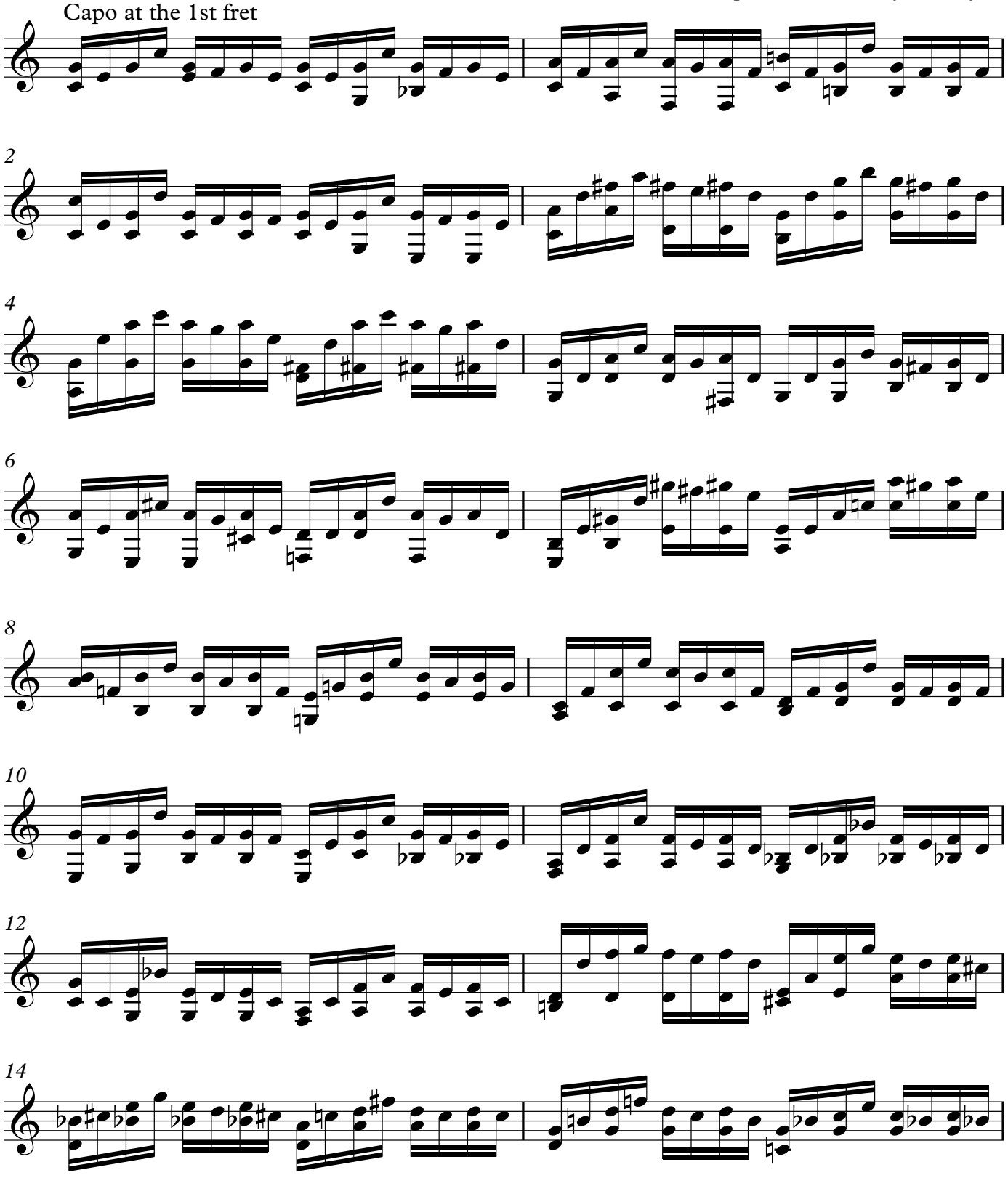
BWV 872 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Prelude No. 3 in C-sharp major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 1st fret



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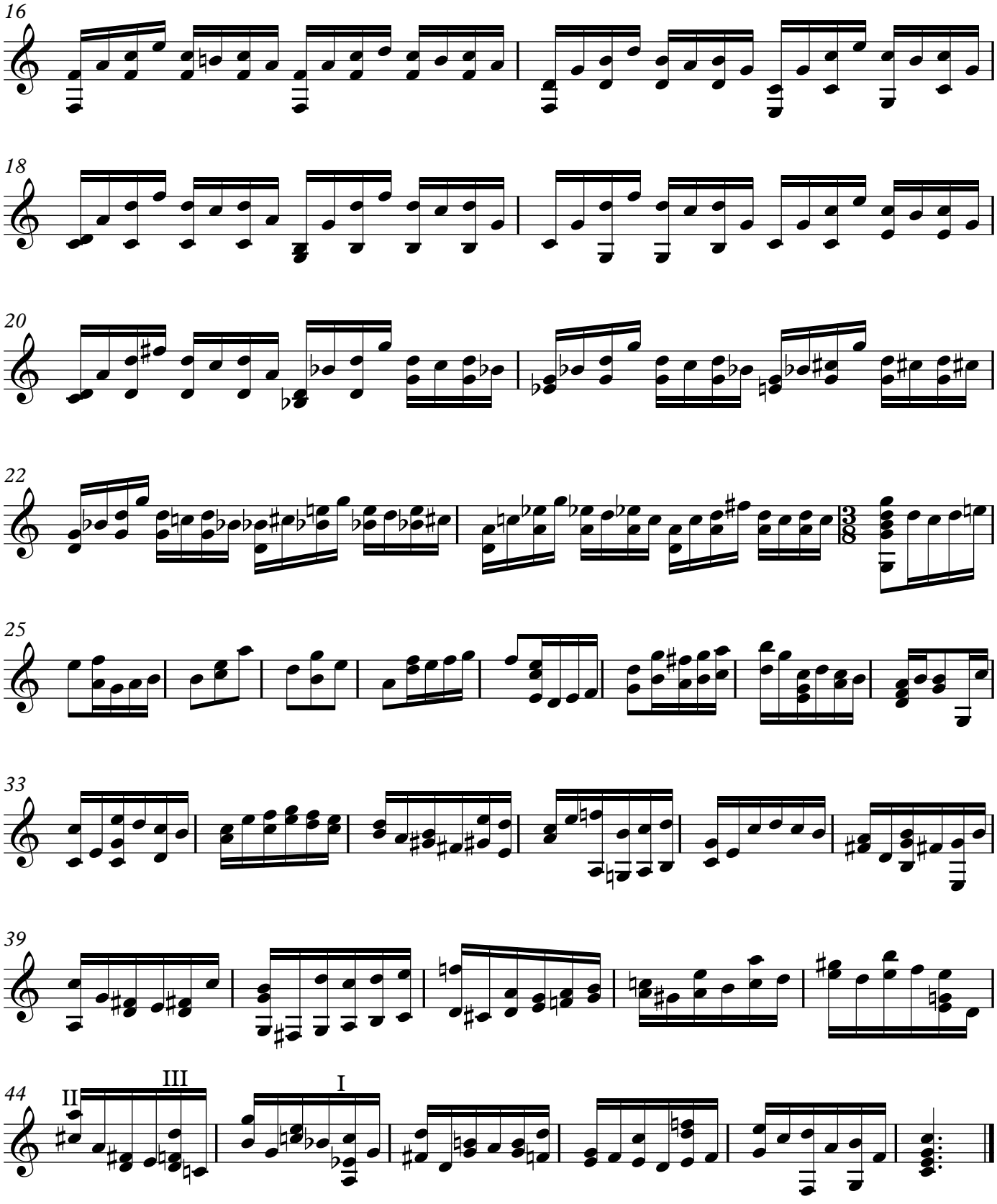
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3/8
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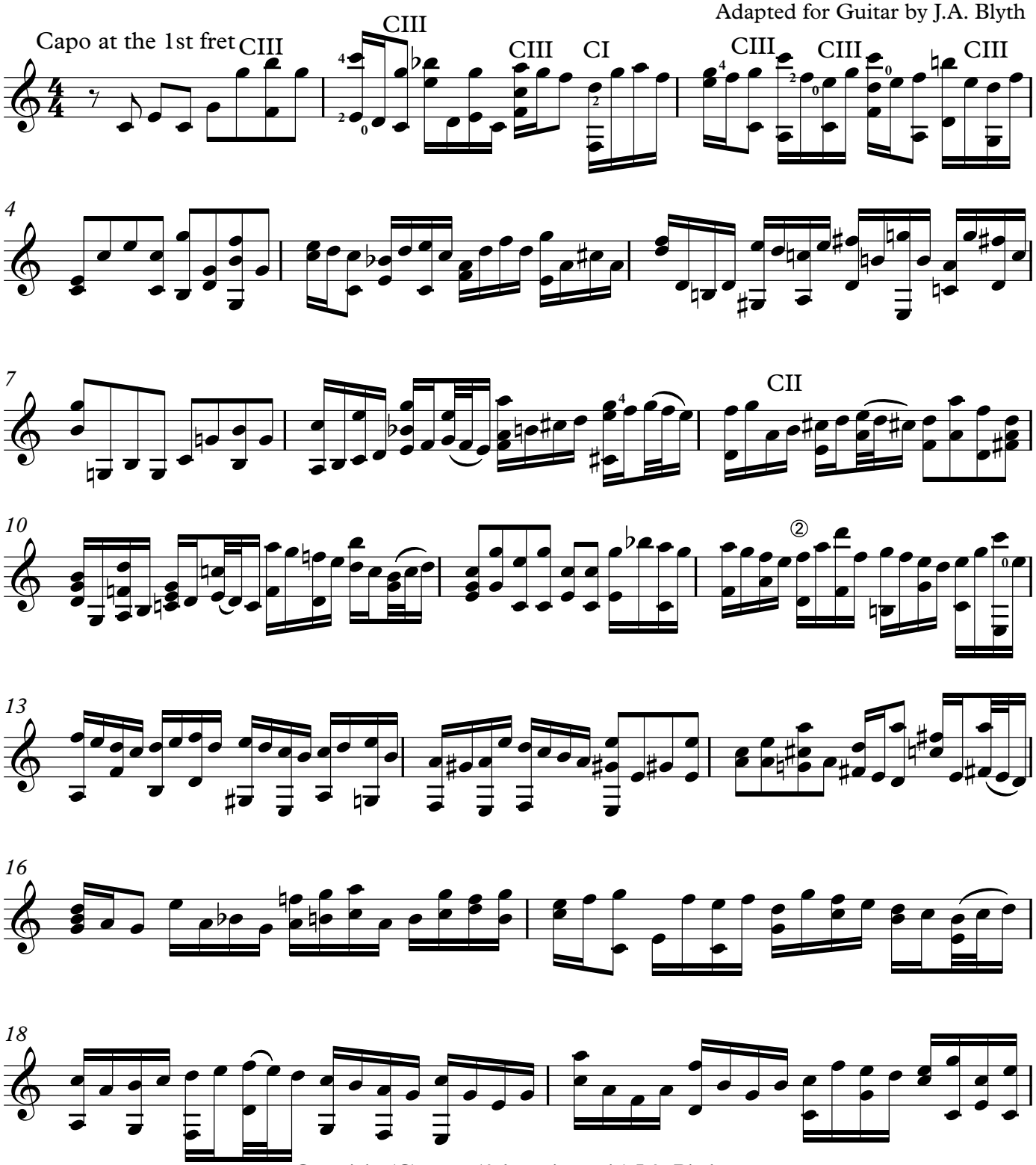
III
I

BWV 872 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Fugue No. 3 in C-sharp major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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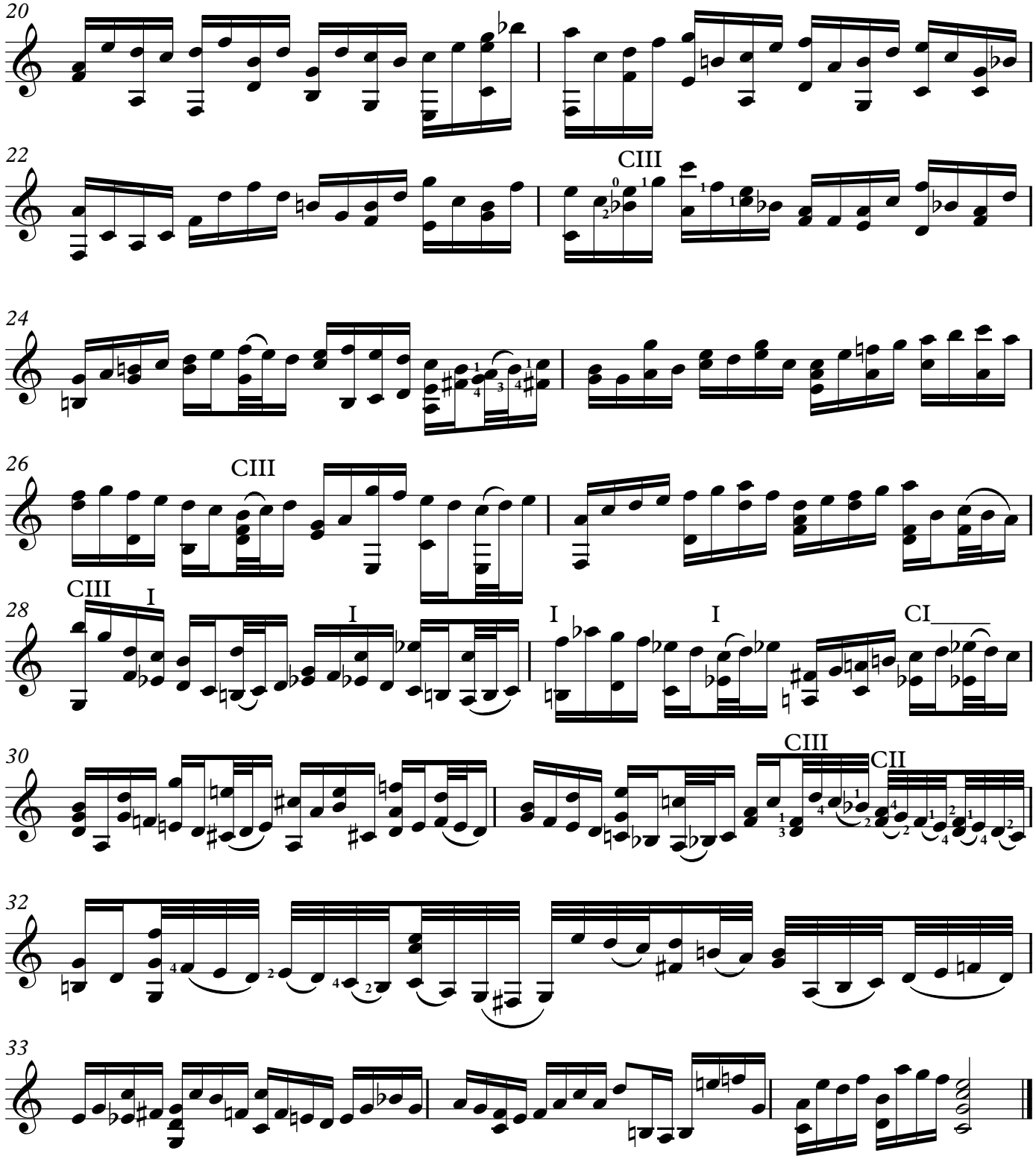
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CIII
I
I
I
I
CI
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CIII
CII
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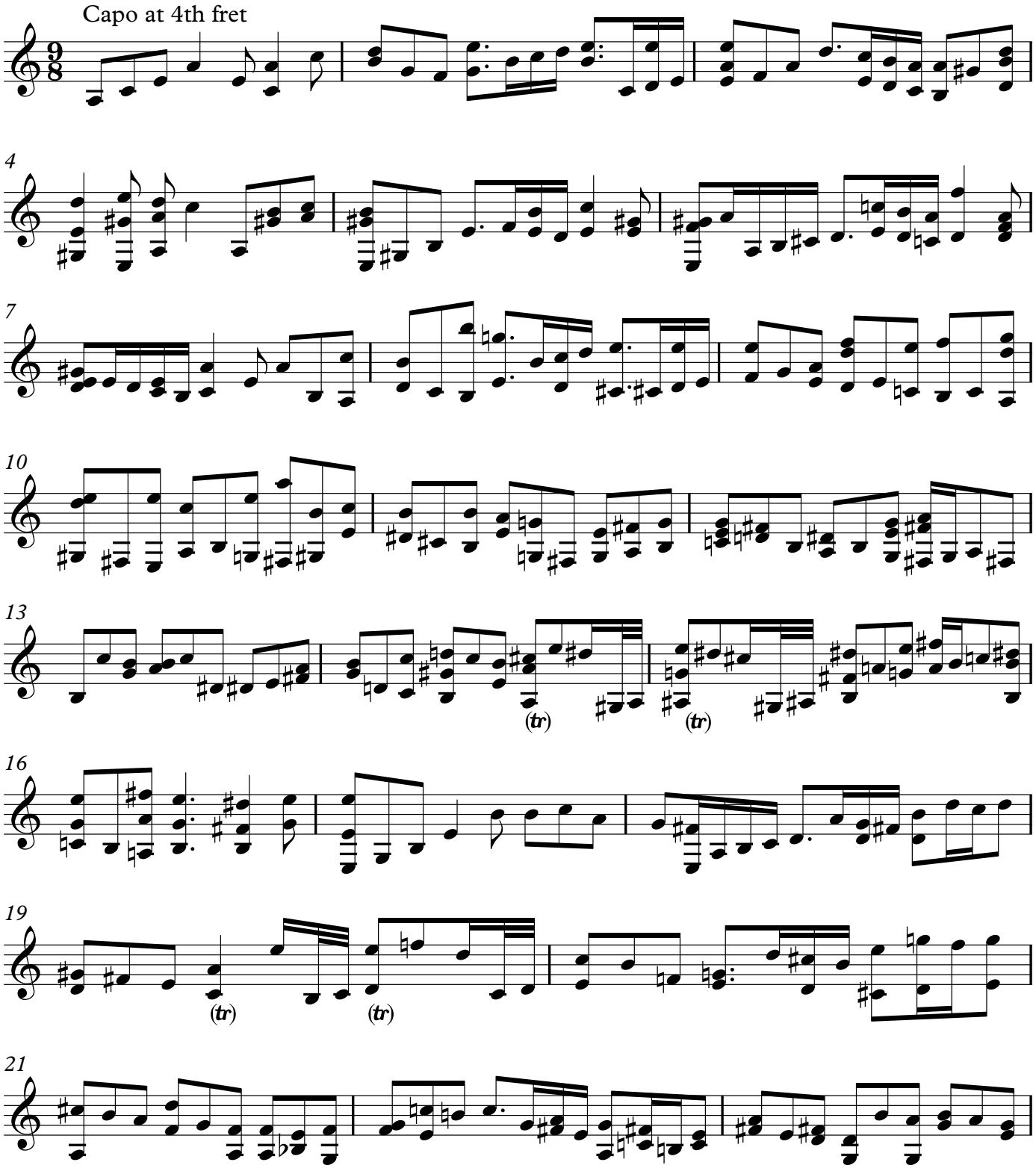
BWV 873 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Prelude No. 4 in C-sharp minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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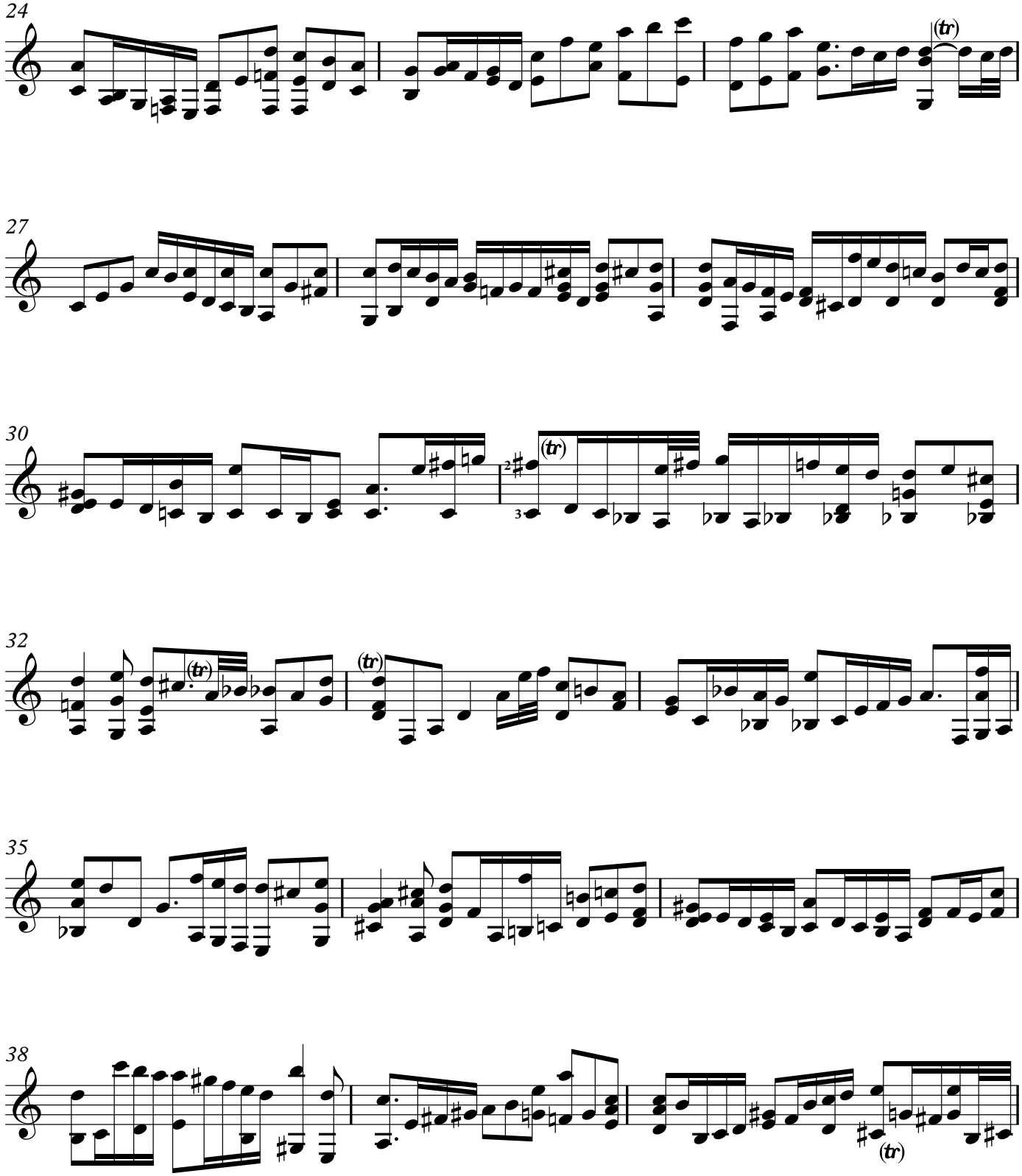
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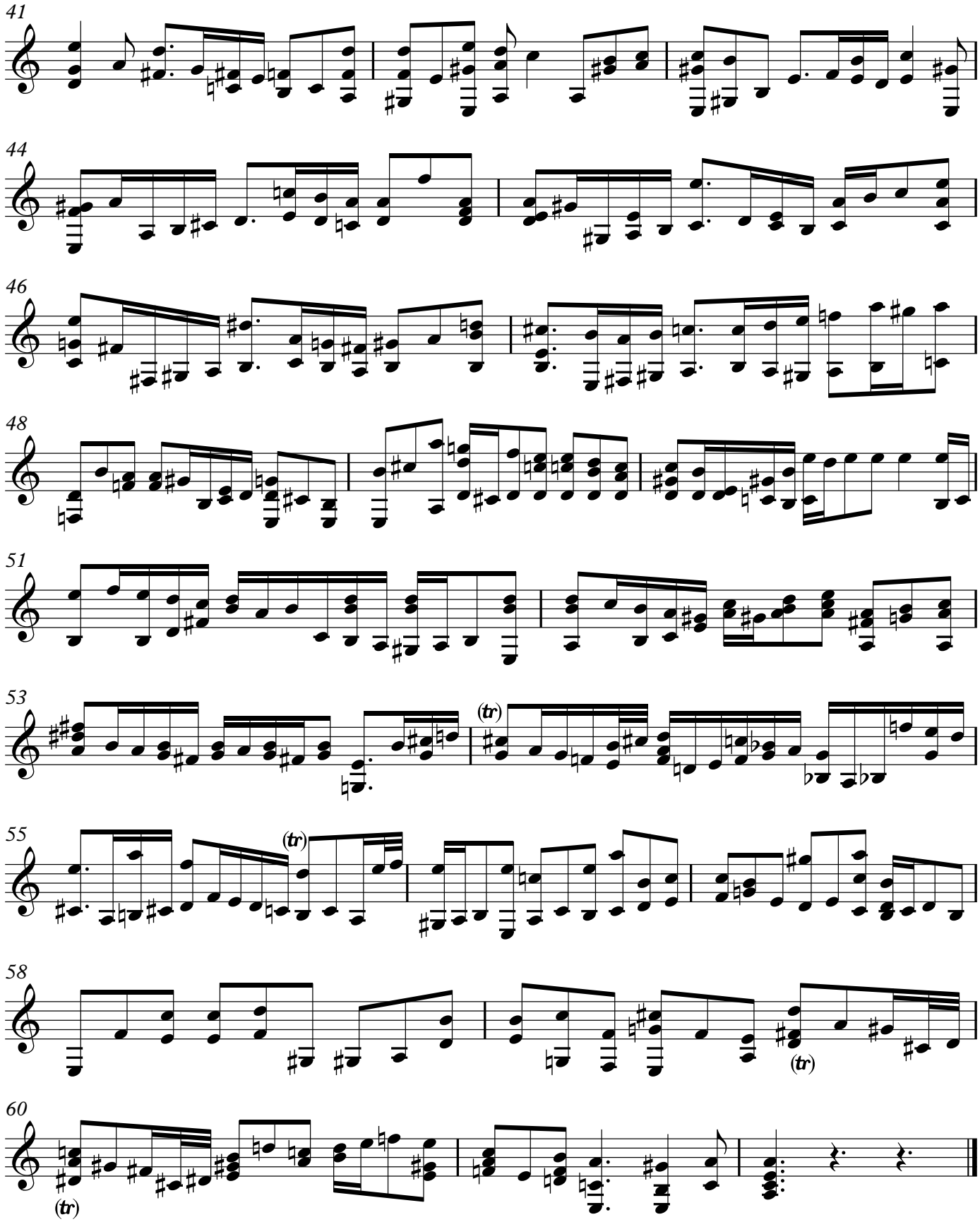
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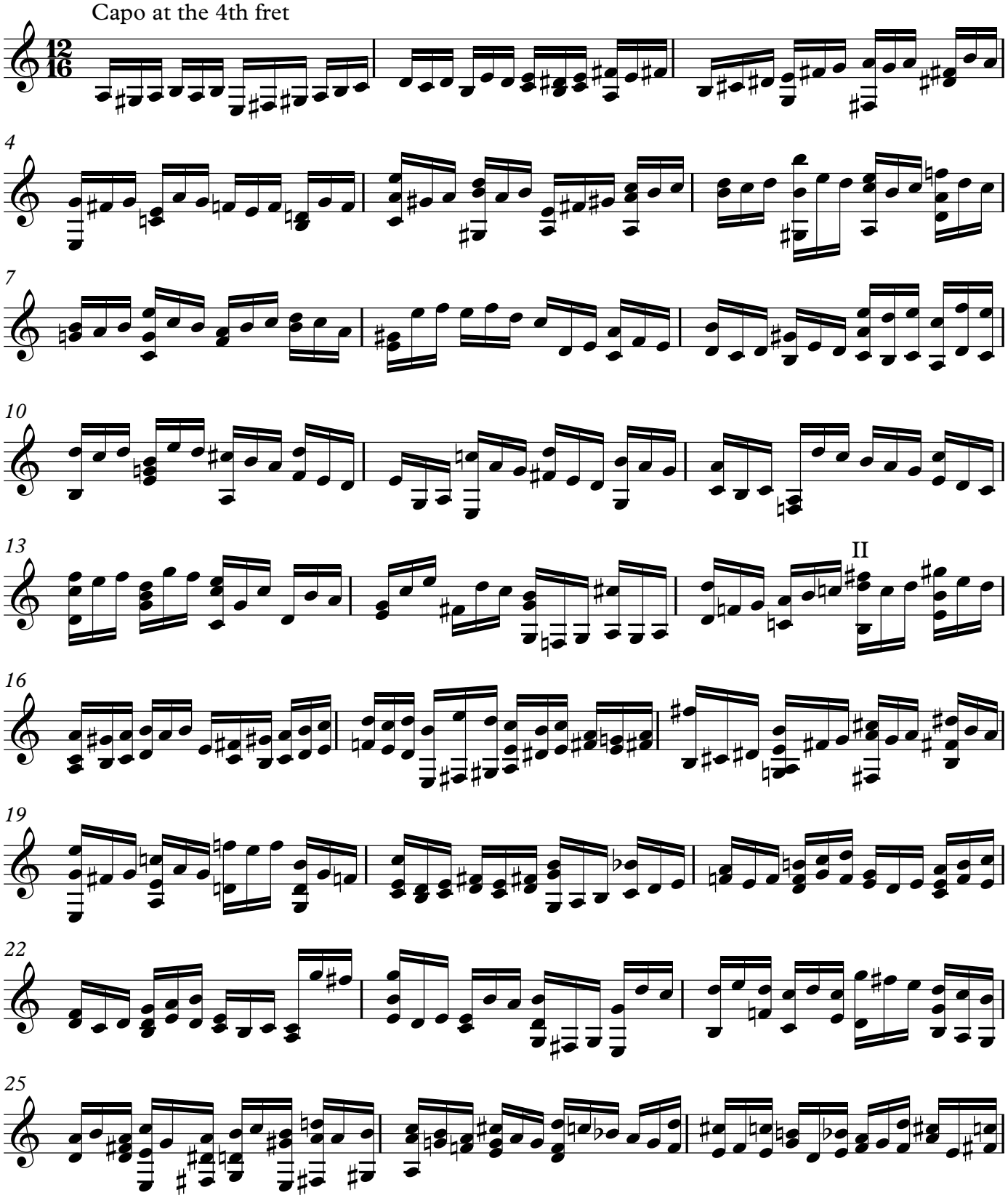
BWV 873 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Fugue No. 4 in C-sharp minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 4th fret



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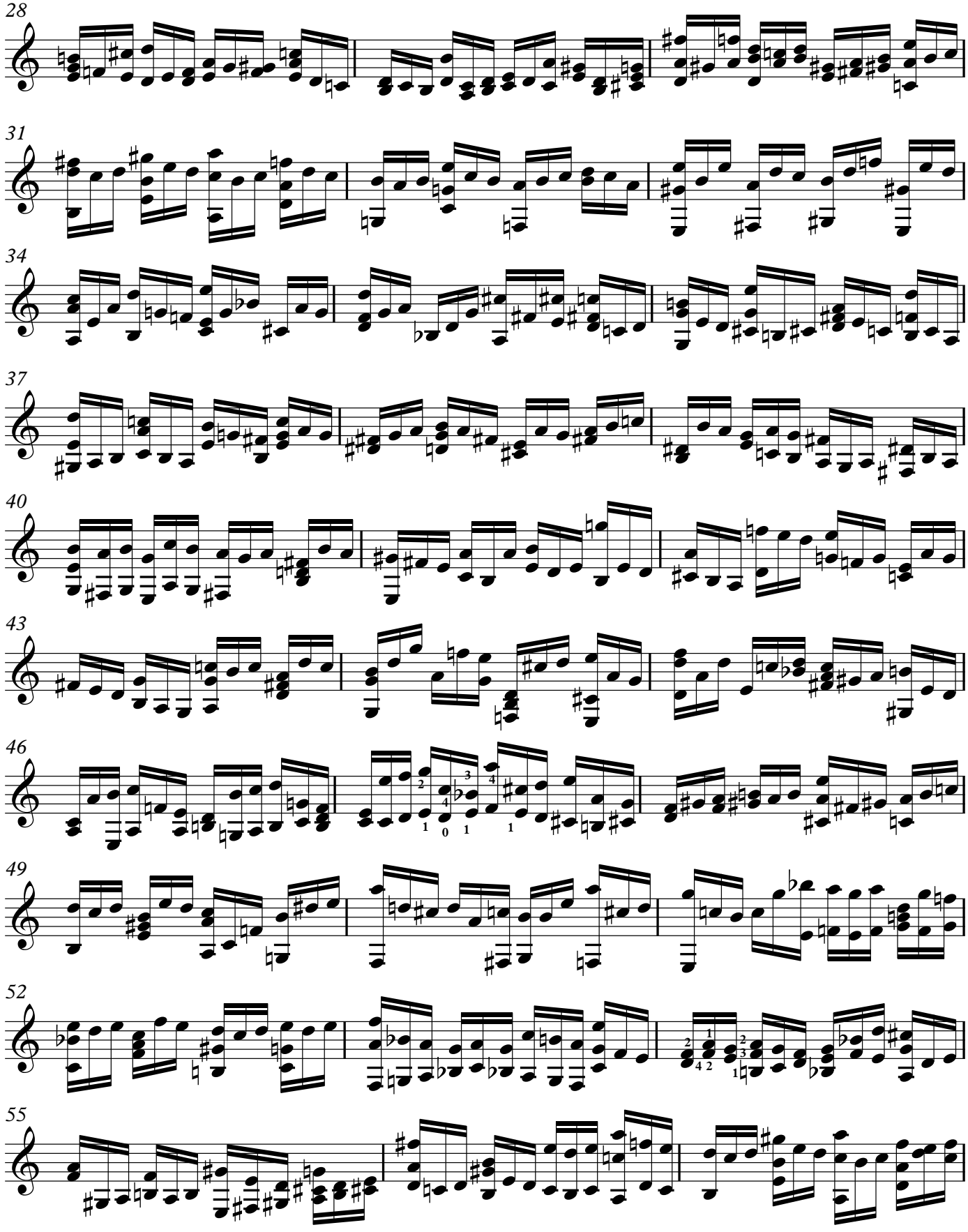
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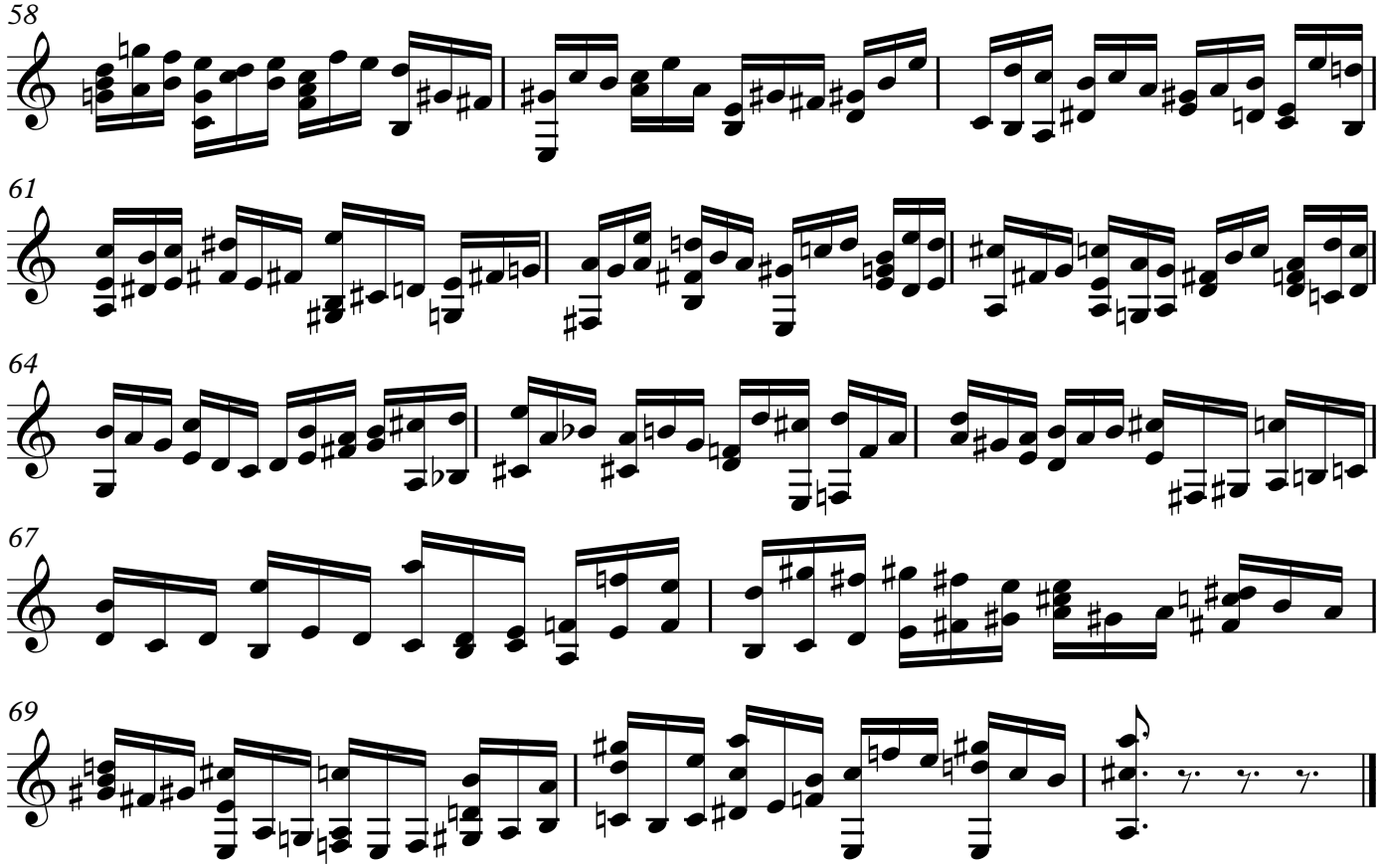
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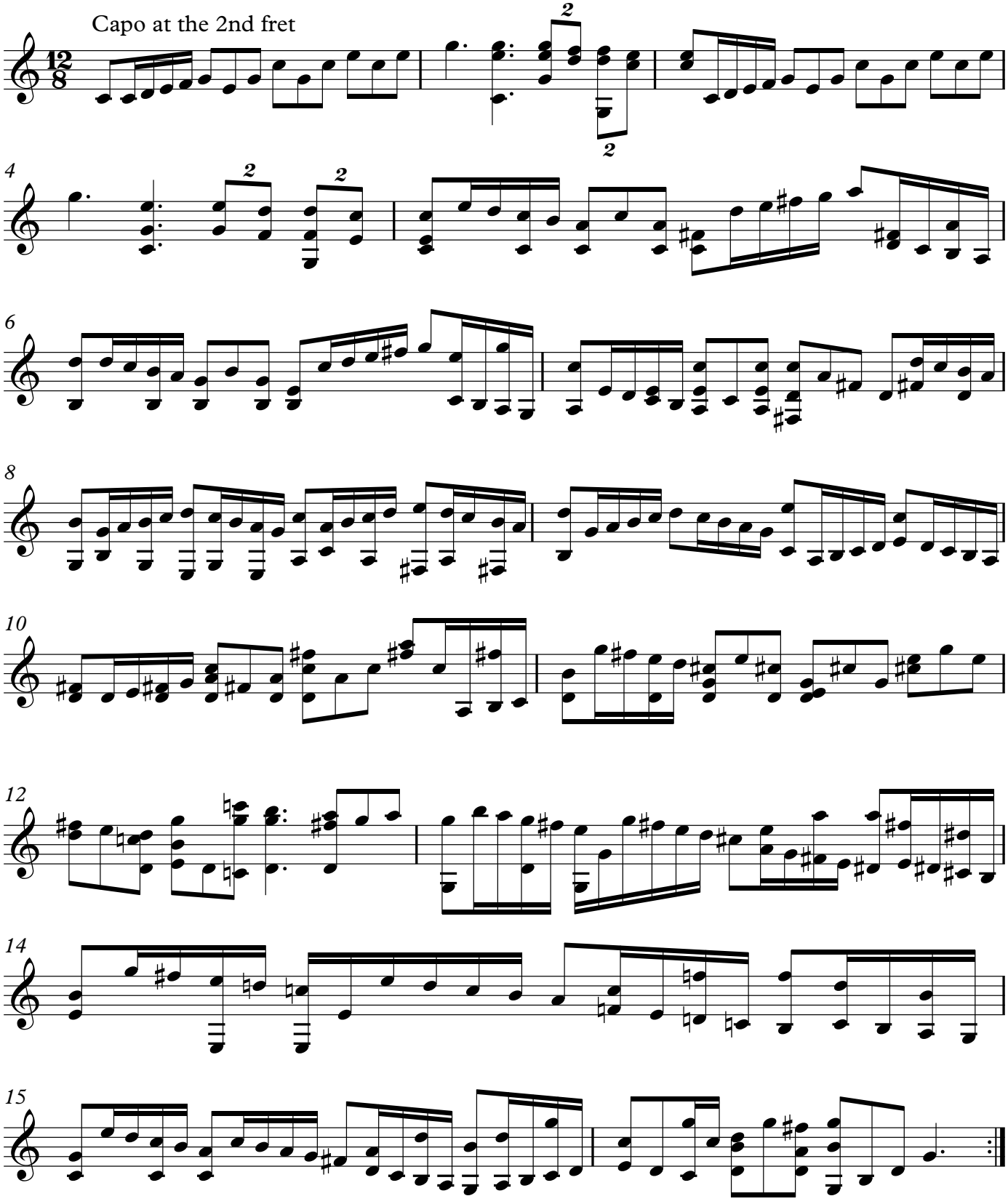
BWV 874 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Prelude No. 5 in D major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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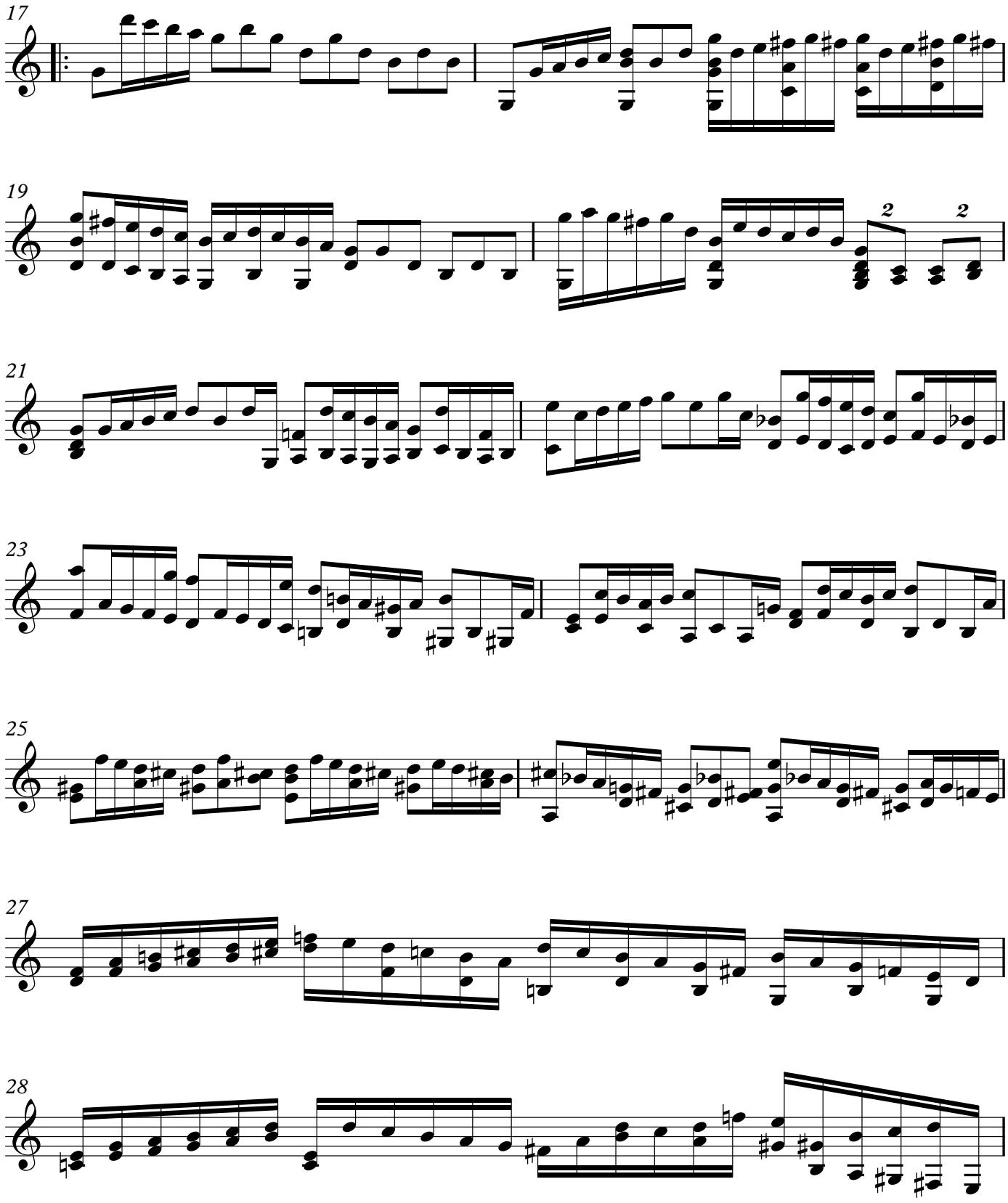
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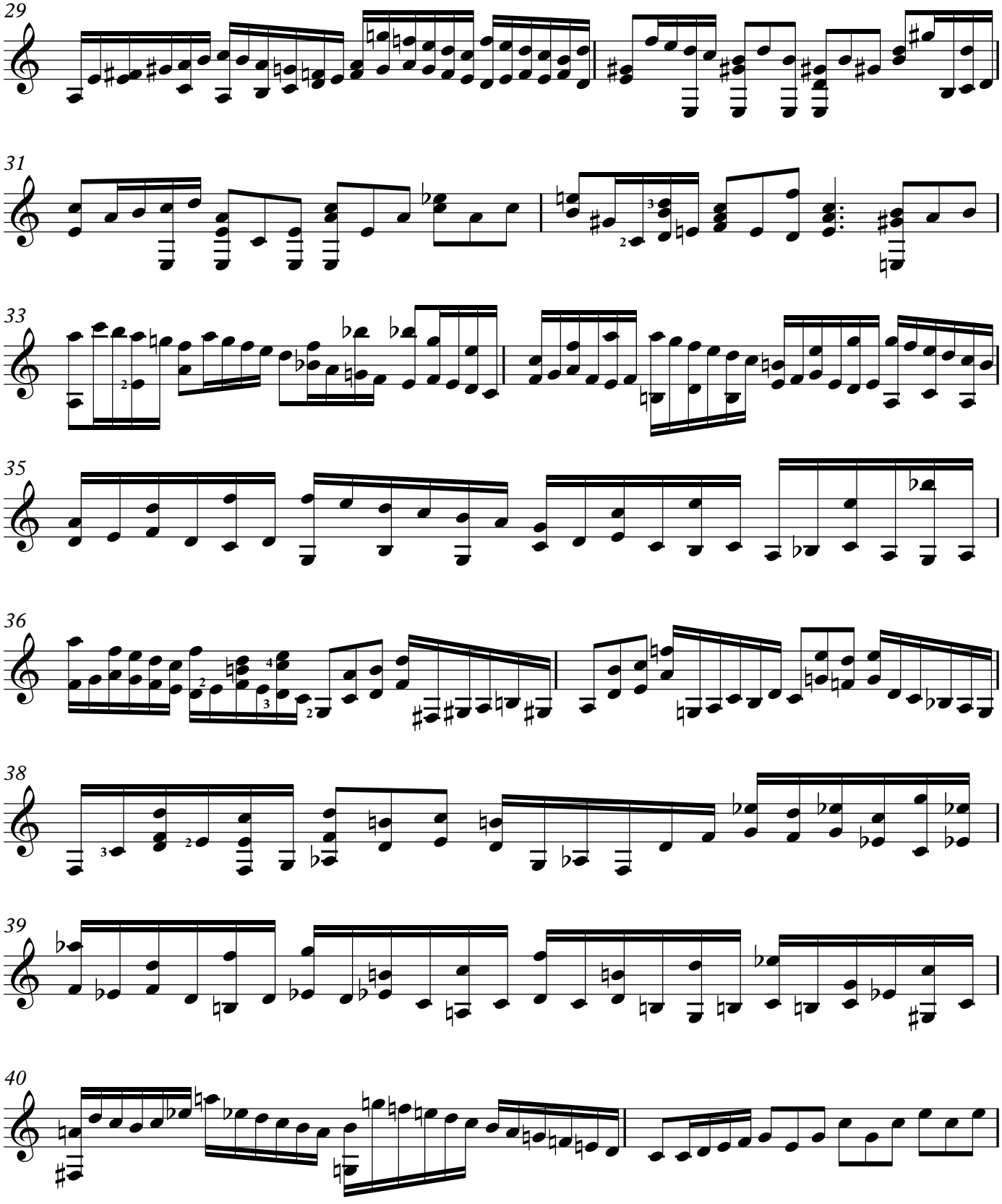
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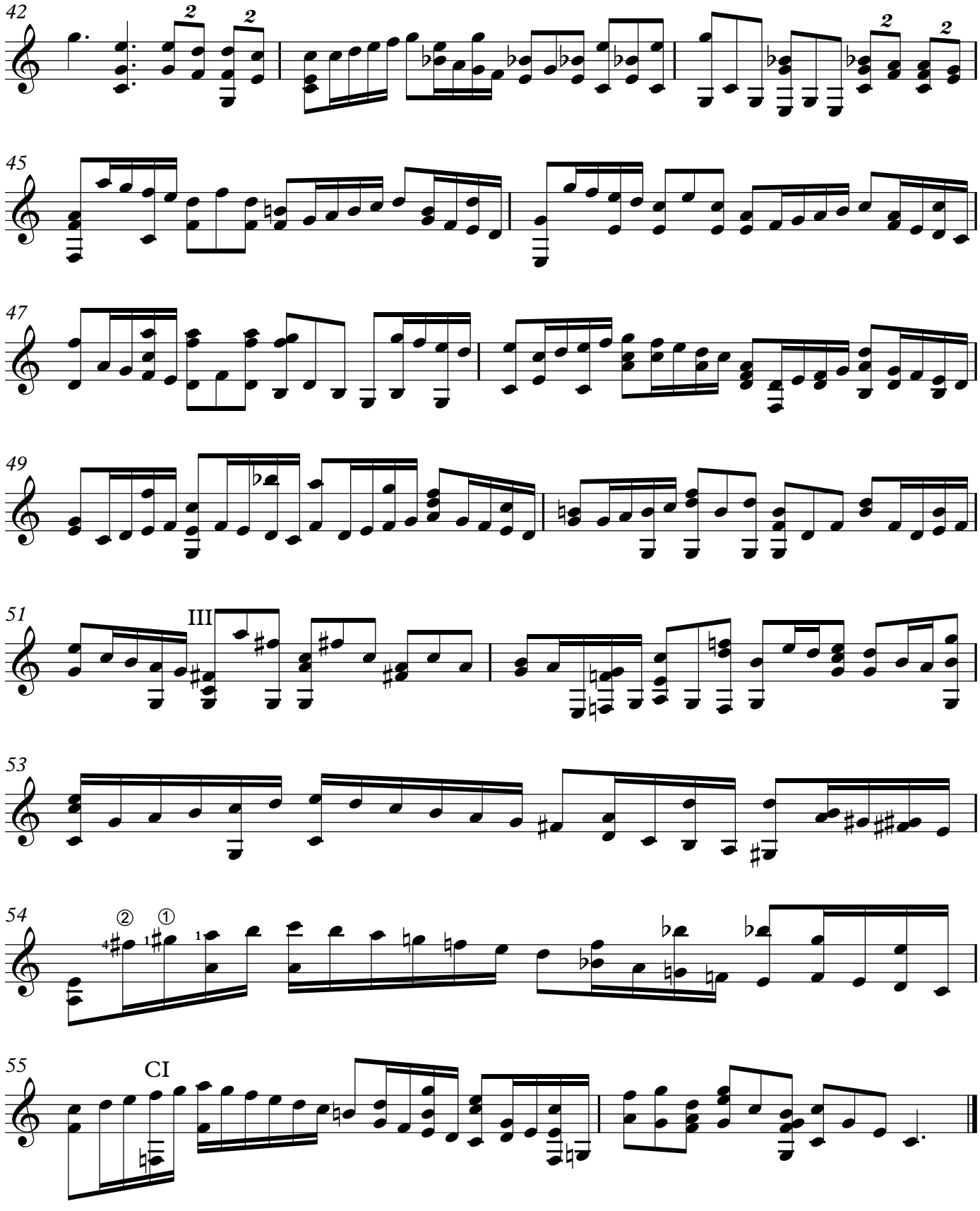
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III
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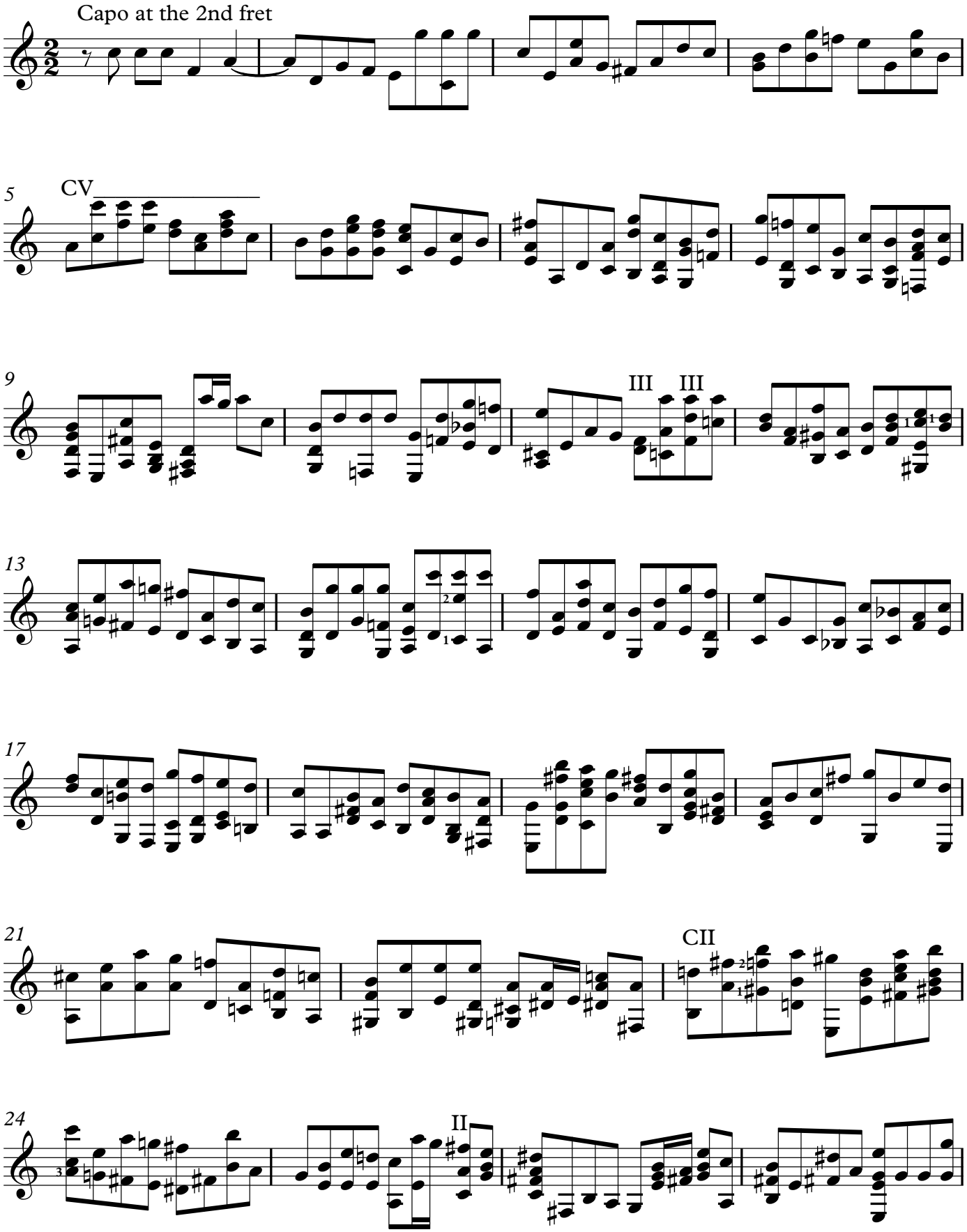
BWV 874 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Fugue No. 5 in D major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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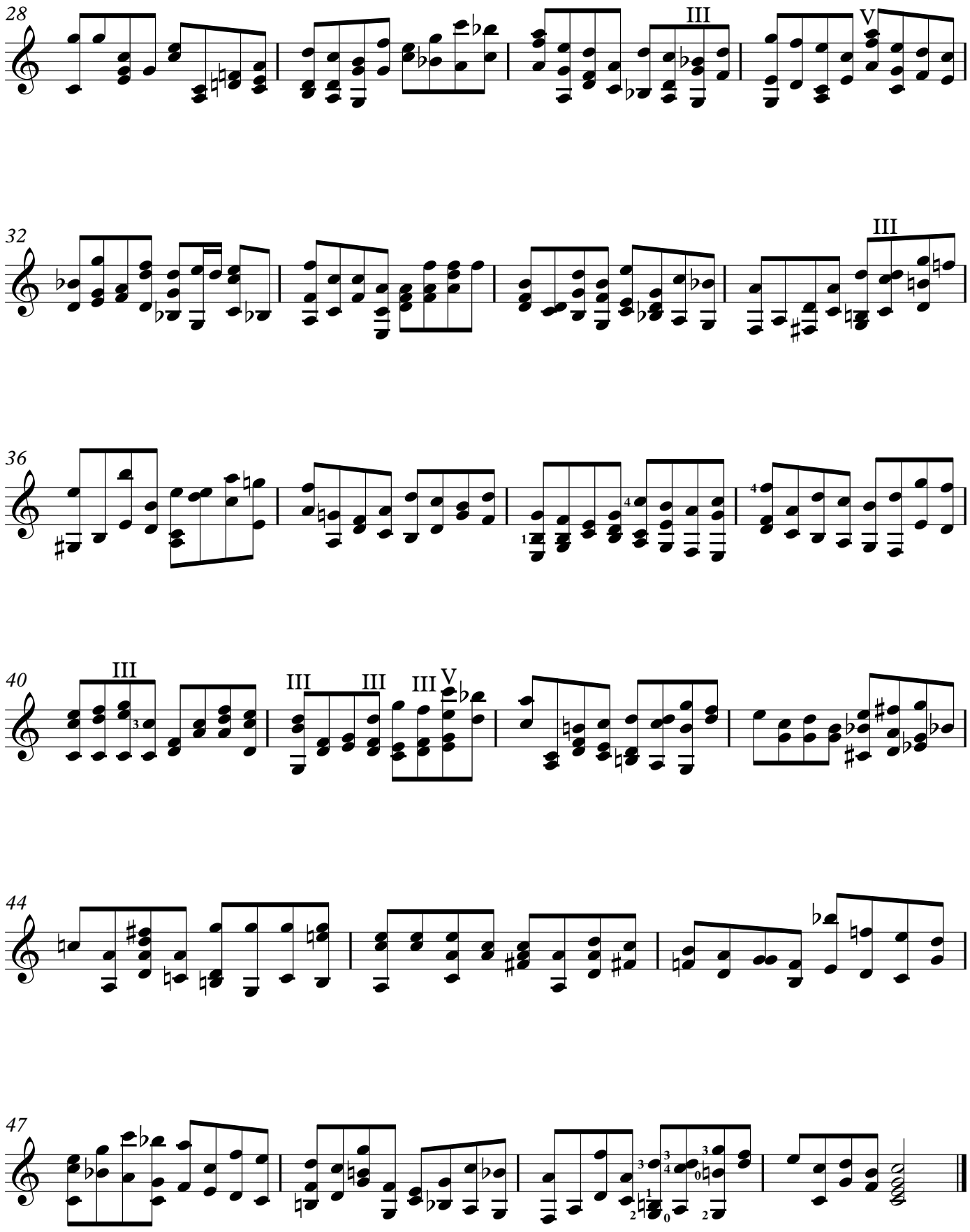
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III
V
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III
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III
III
III
III
V
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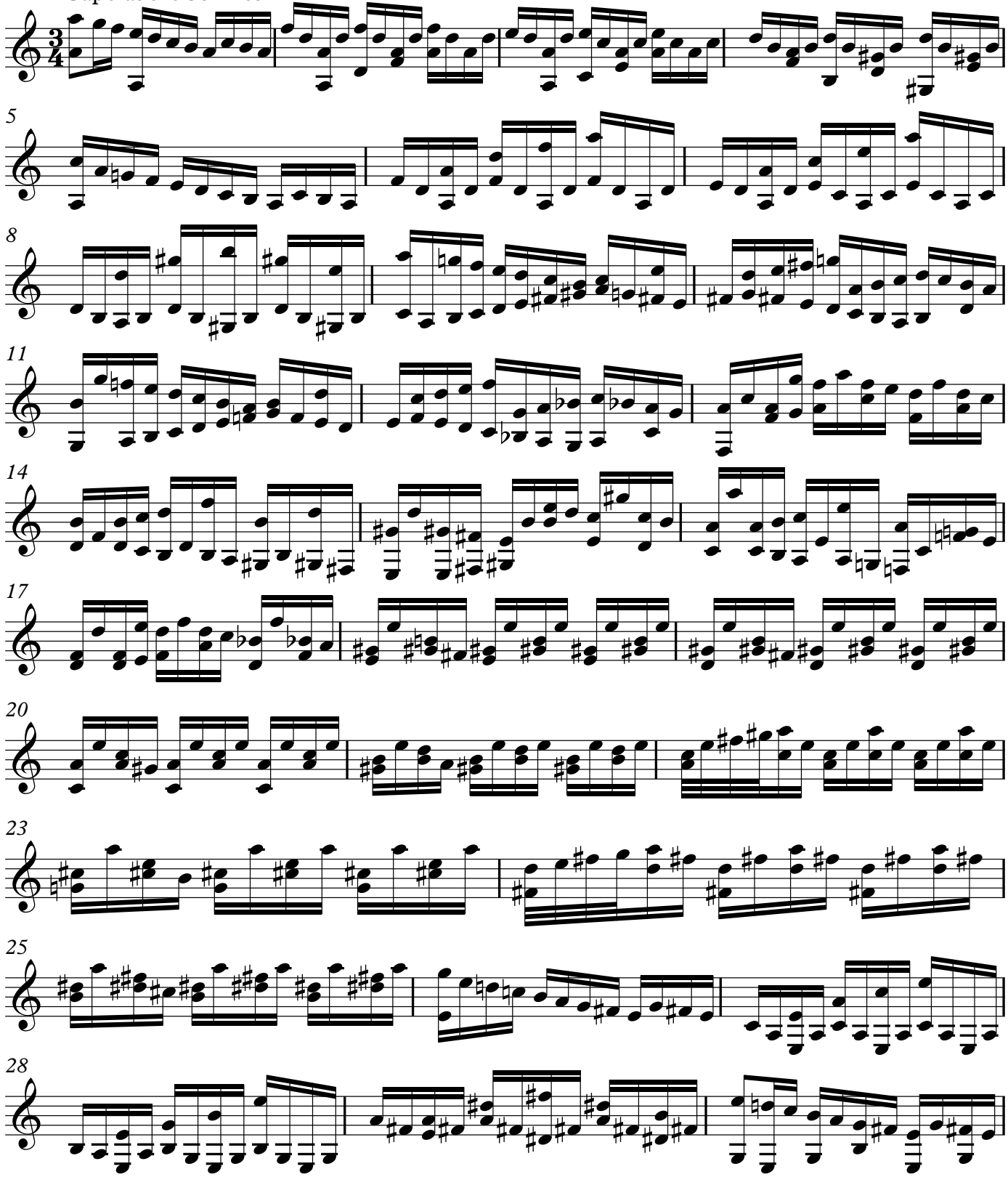
BWV 875 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Prelude No. 6 in D minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 5th fret



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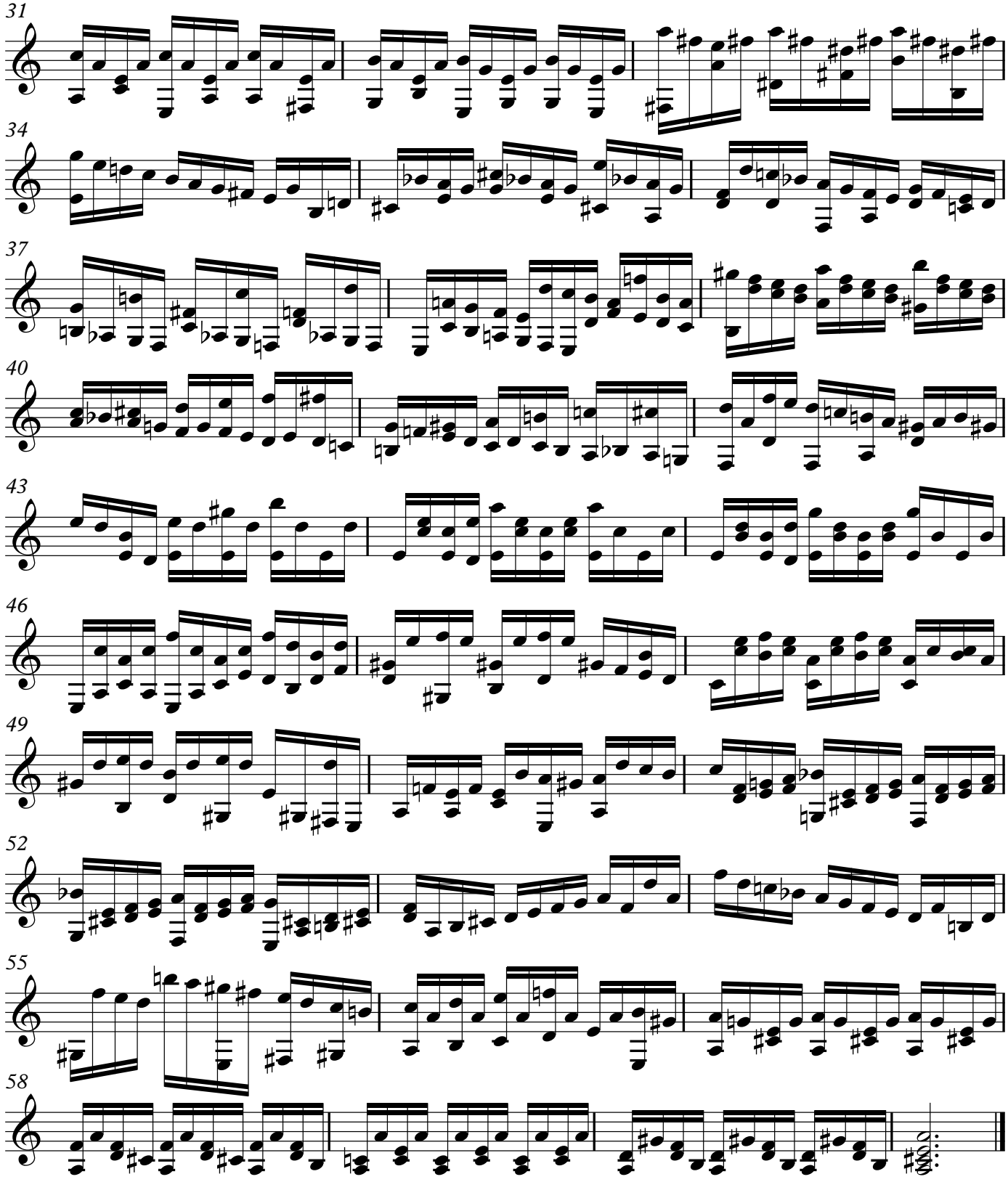
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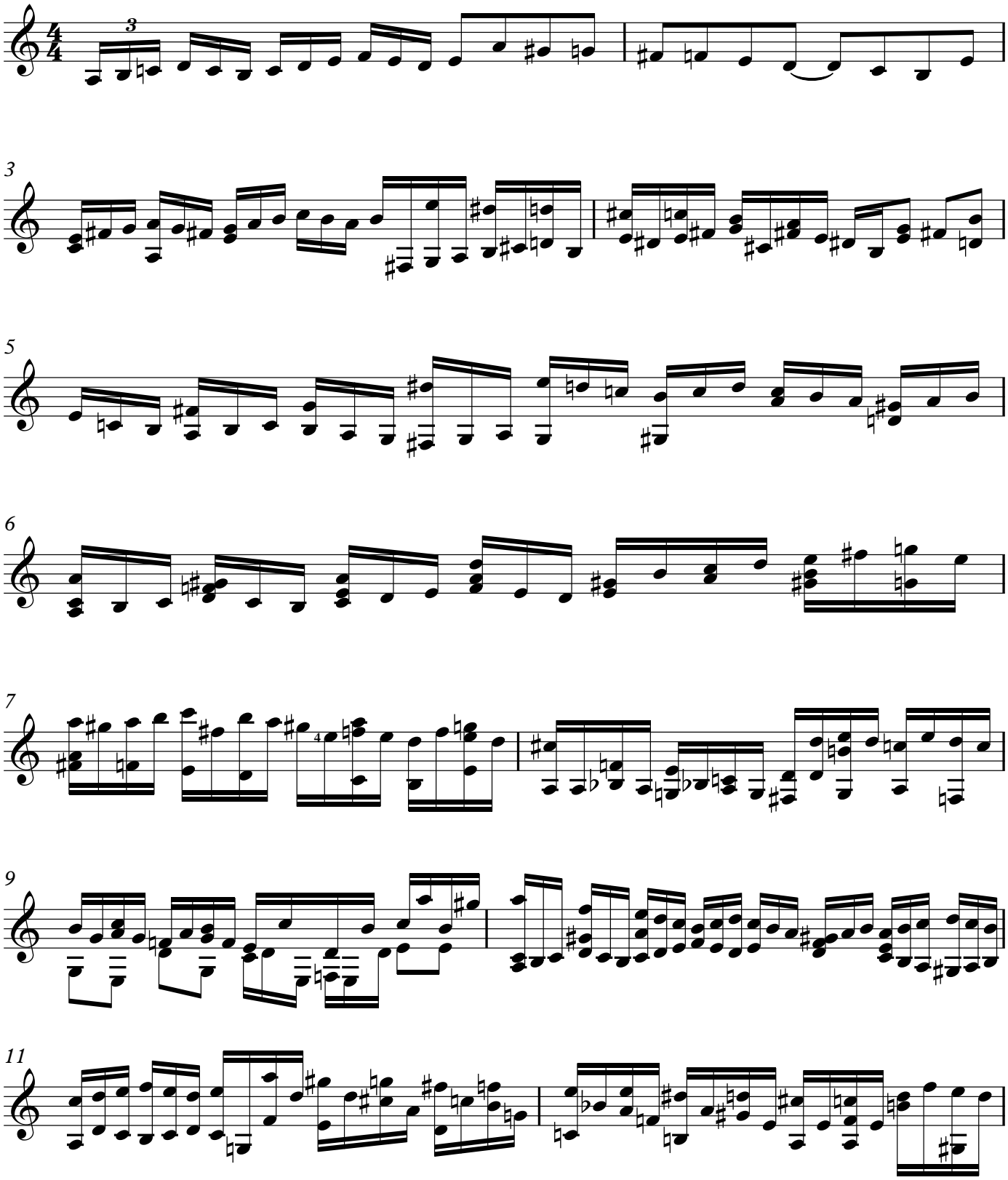
BWV 875 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Fugue No. 6 in D minor

Capo at the 5th fret

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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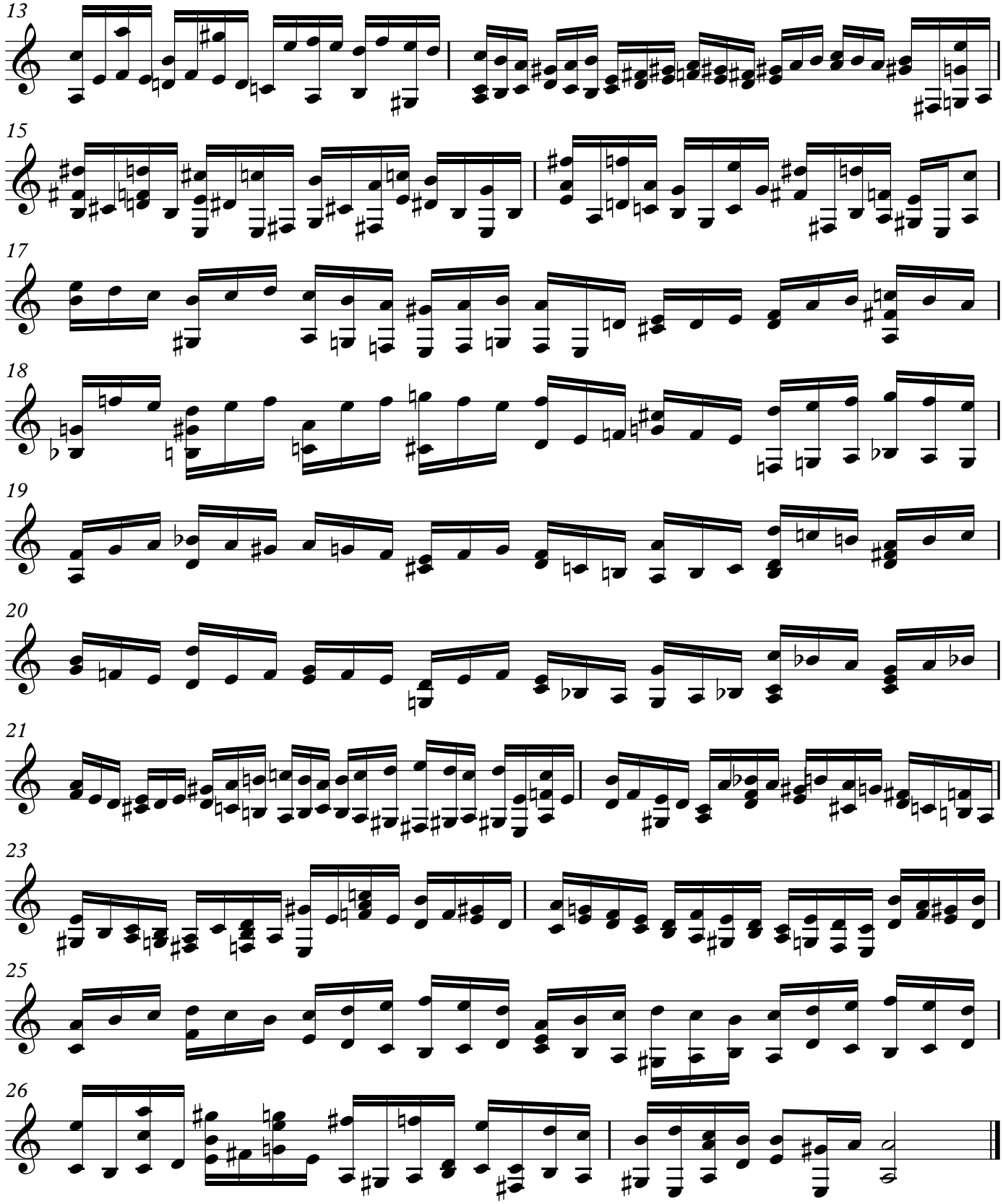
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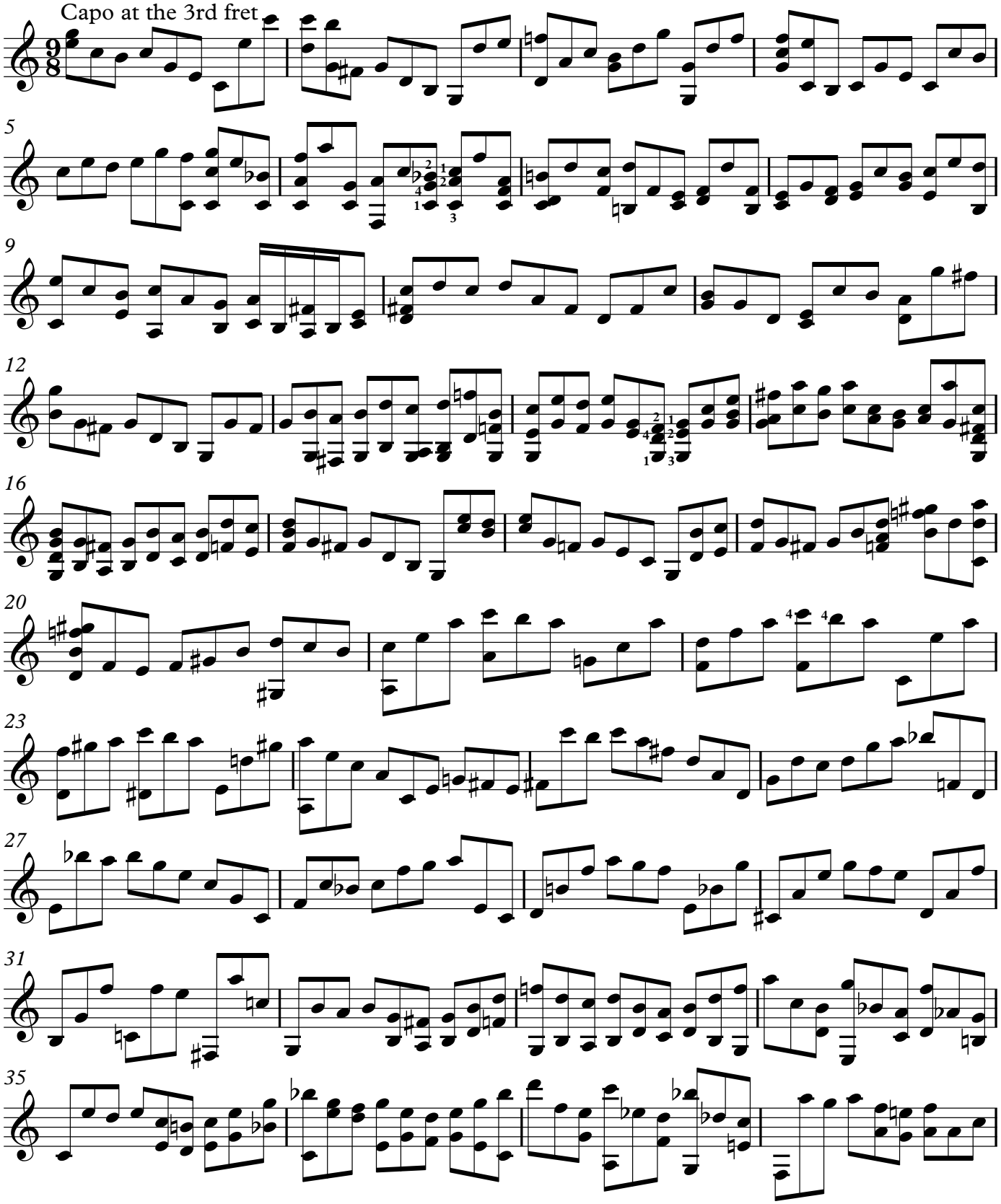
BWV 876 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Prelude No. 7 in E-flat major

J.S.Bach, adapted by J.A.Blyth

Capo at the 3rd fret



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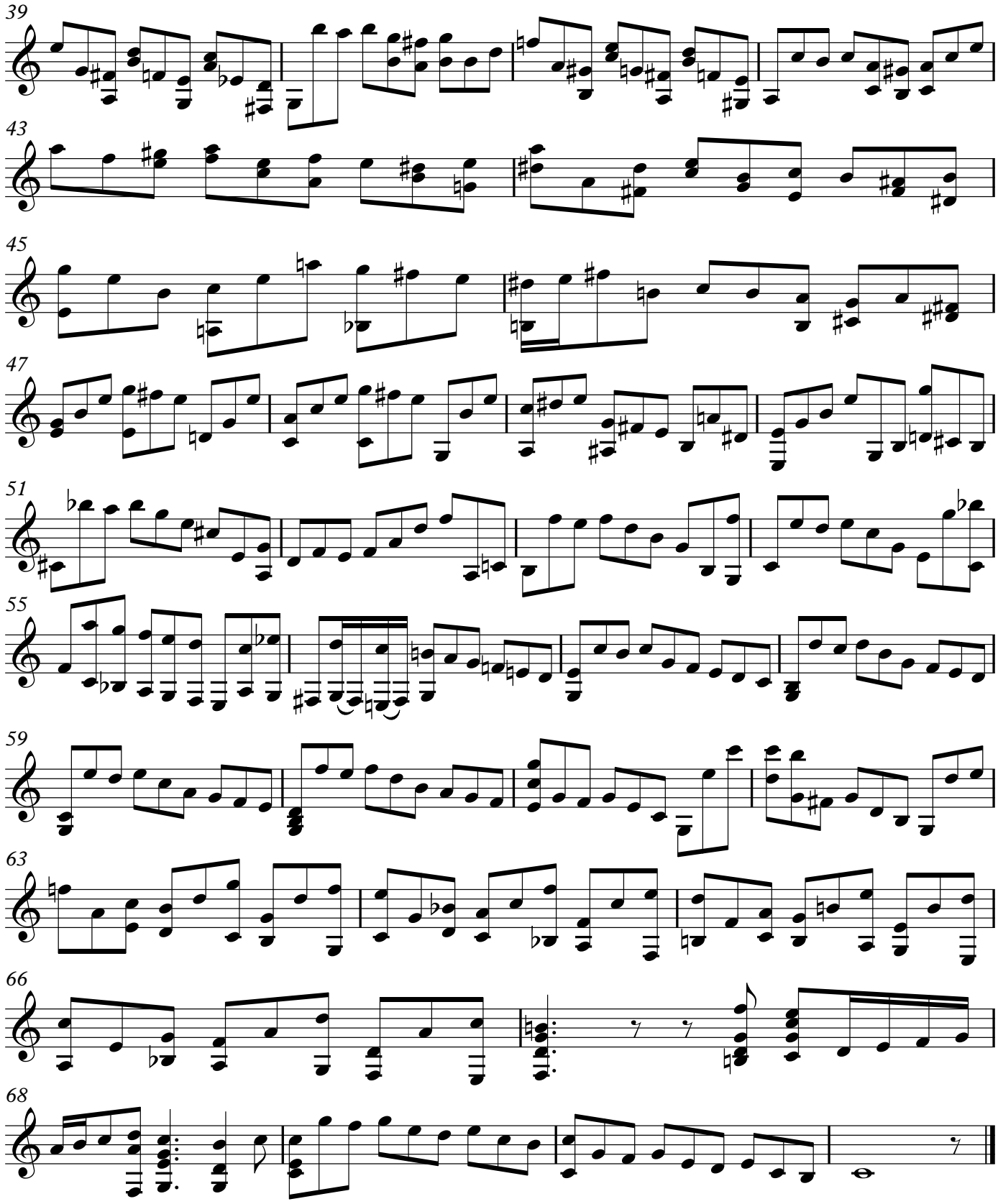
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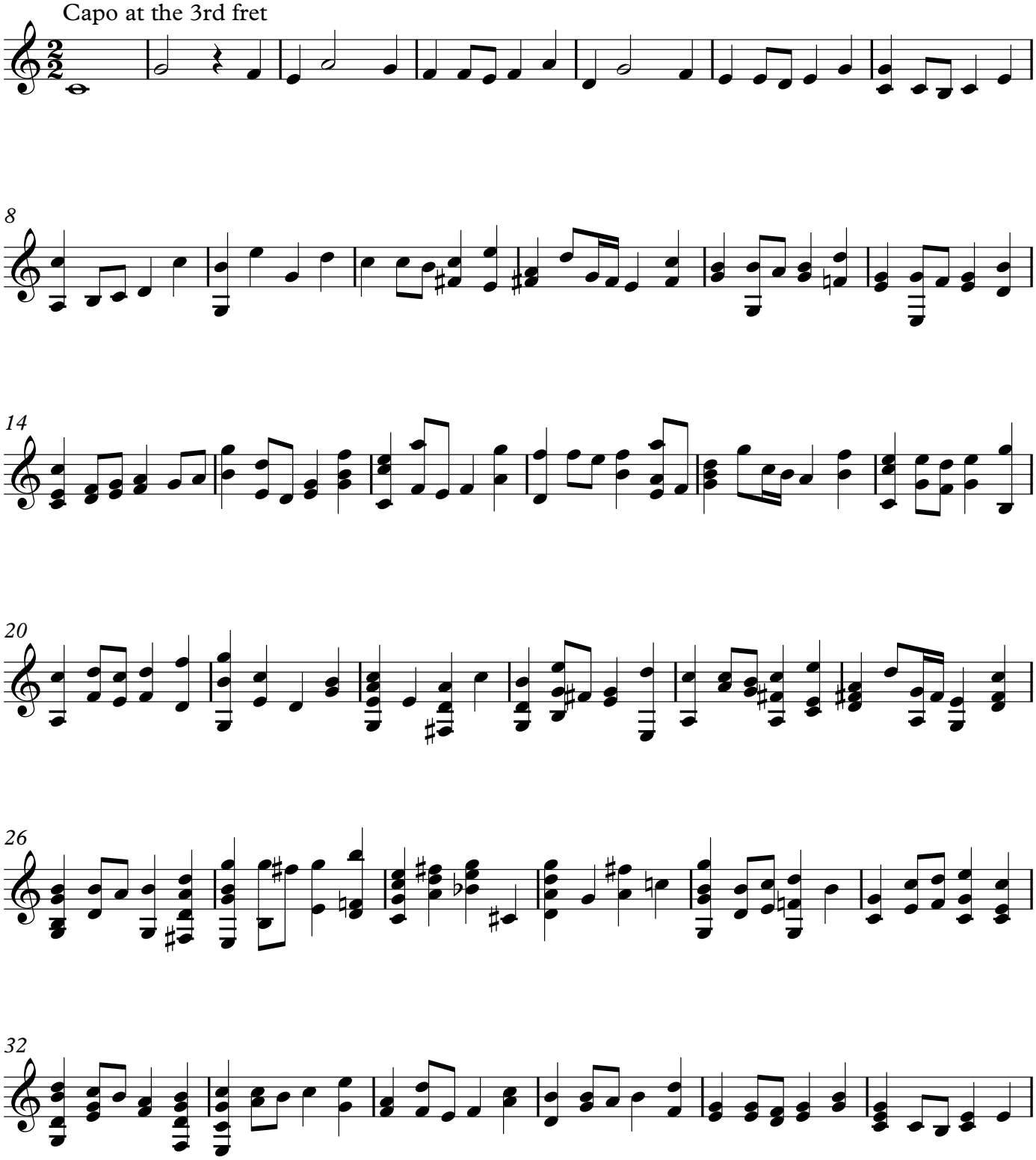
BWV 876 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Fugue No. 7 in E-flat major

J.S.Bach, adapted by J.A.Blyth

Capo at the 3rd fret



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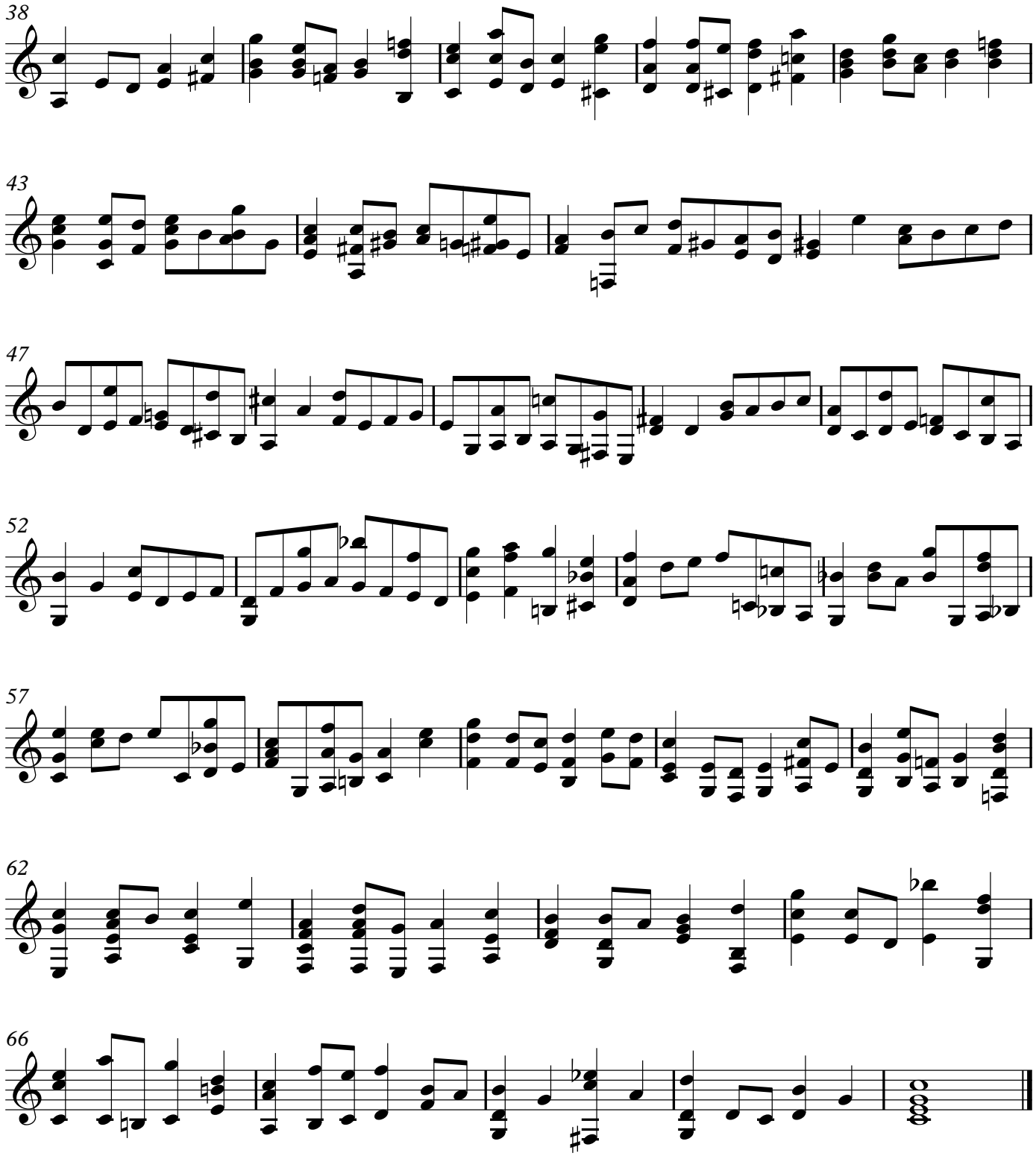
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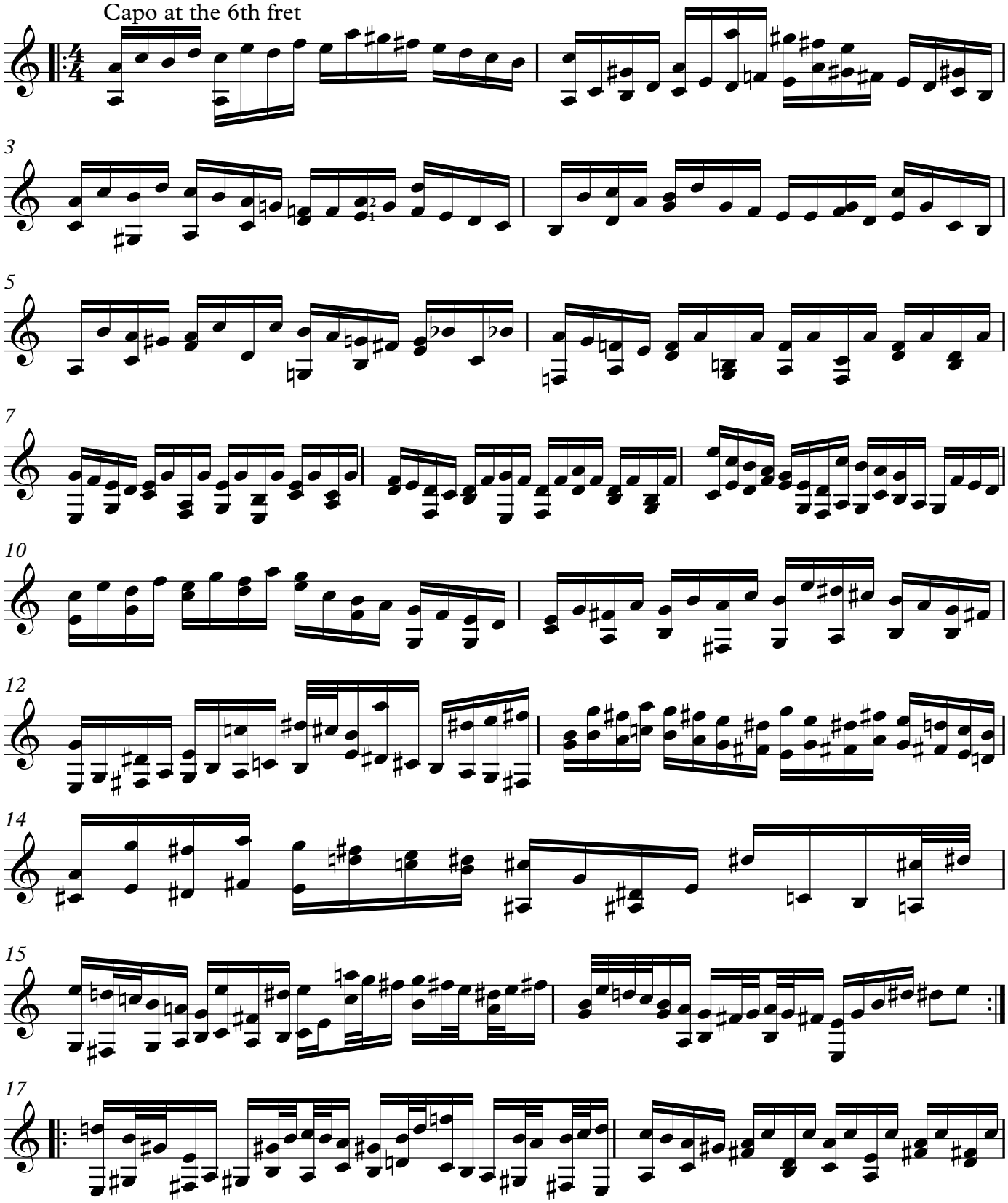
BWV 877 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Prelude No. 8 in D-sharp minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 6th fret



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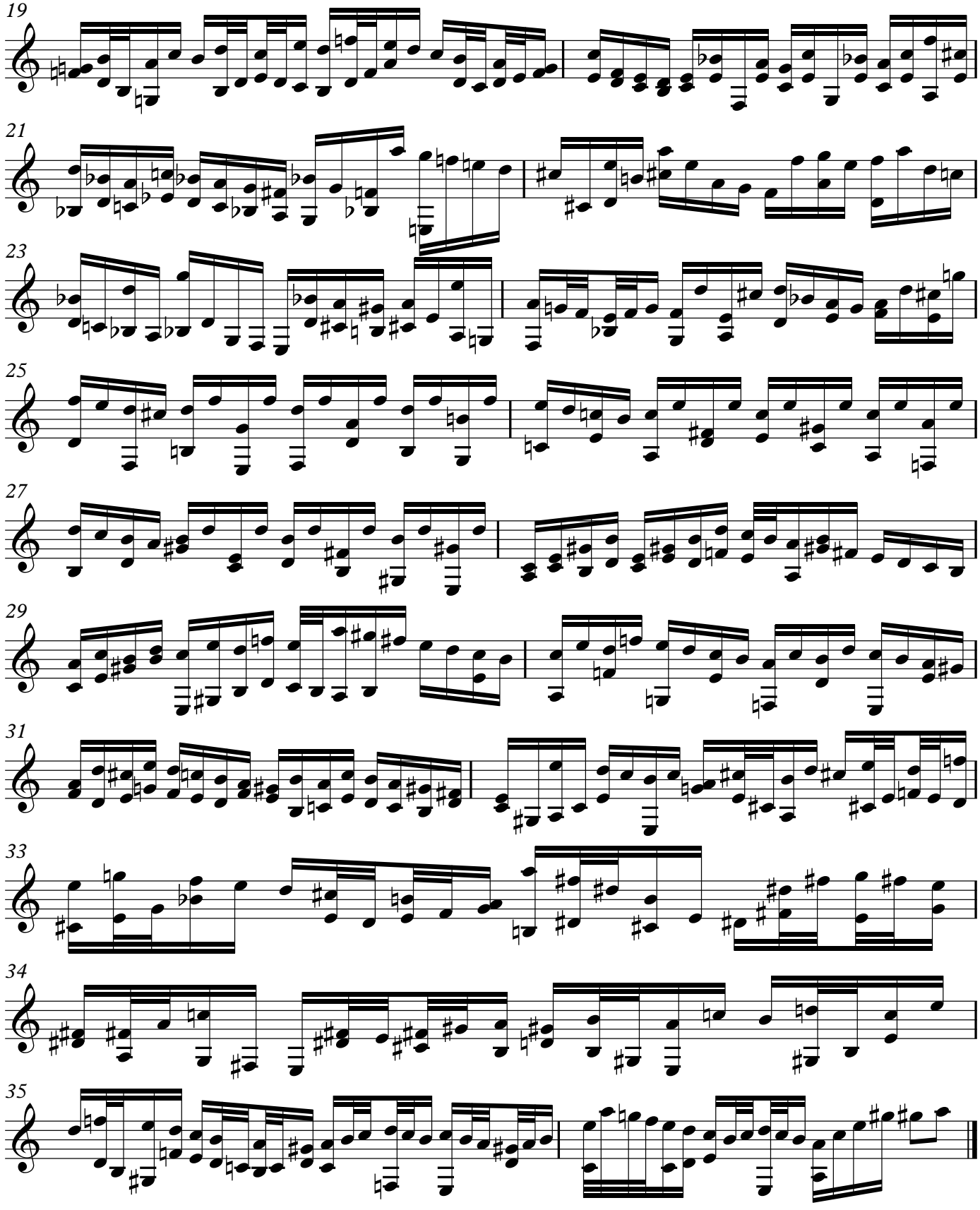
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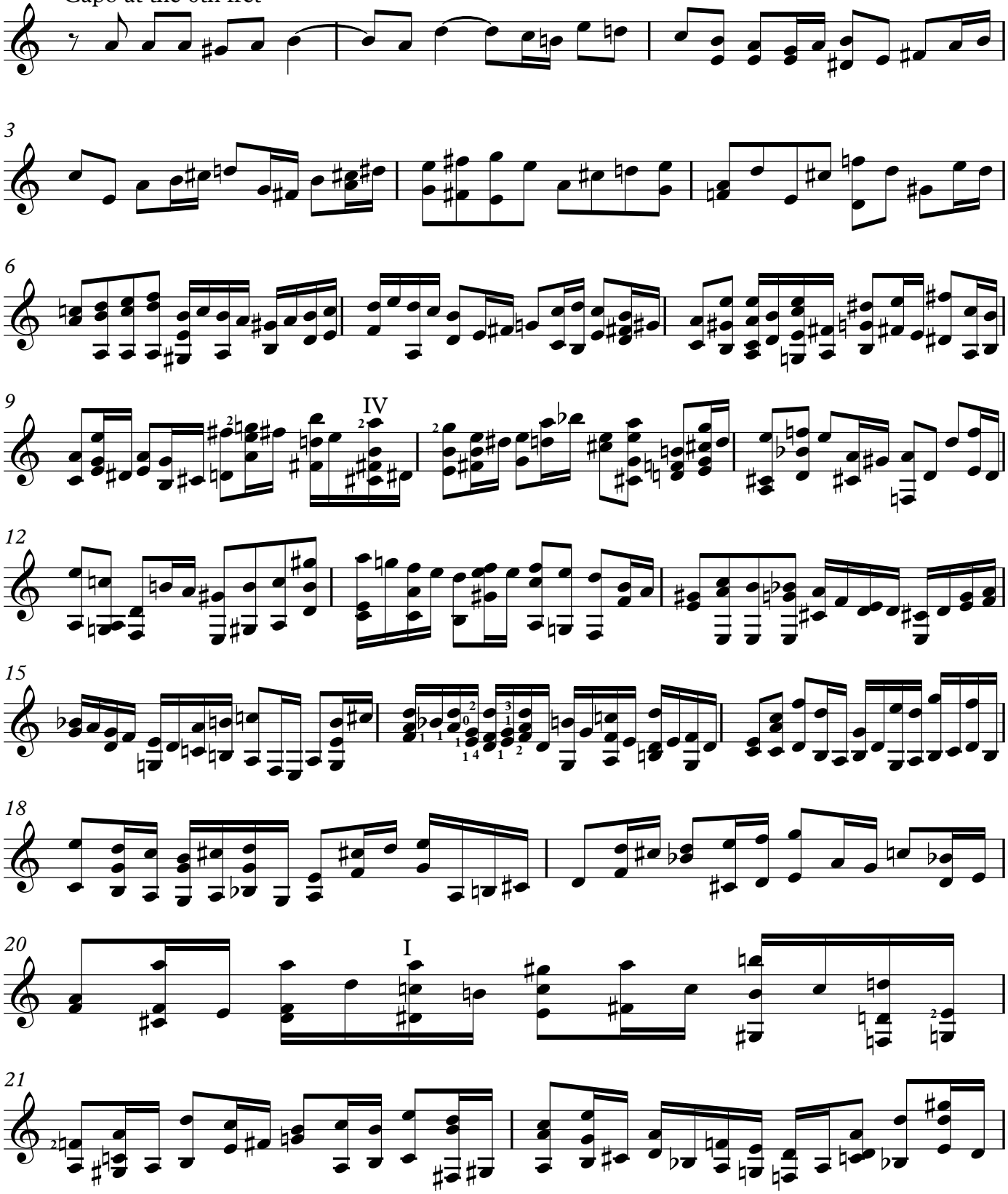
BWV 877 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Fugue No. 8 in D-sharp minor

Capo at the 6th fret

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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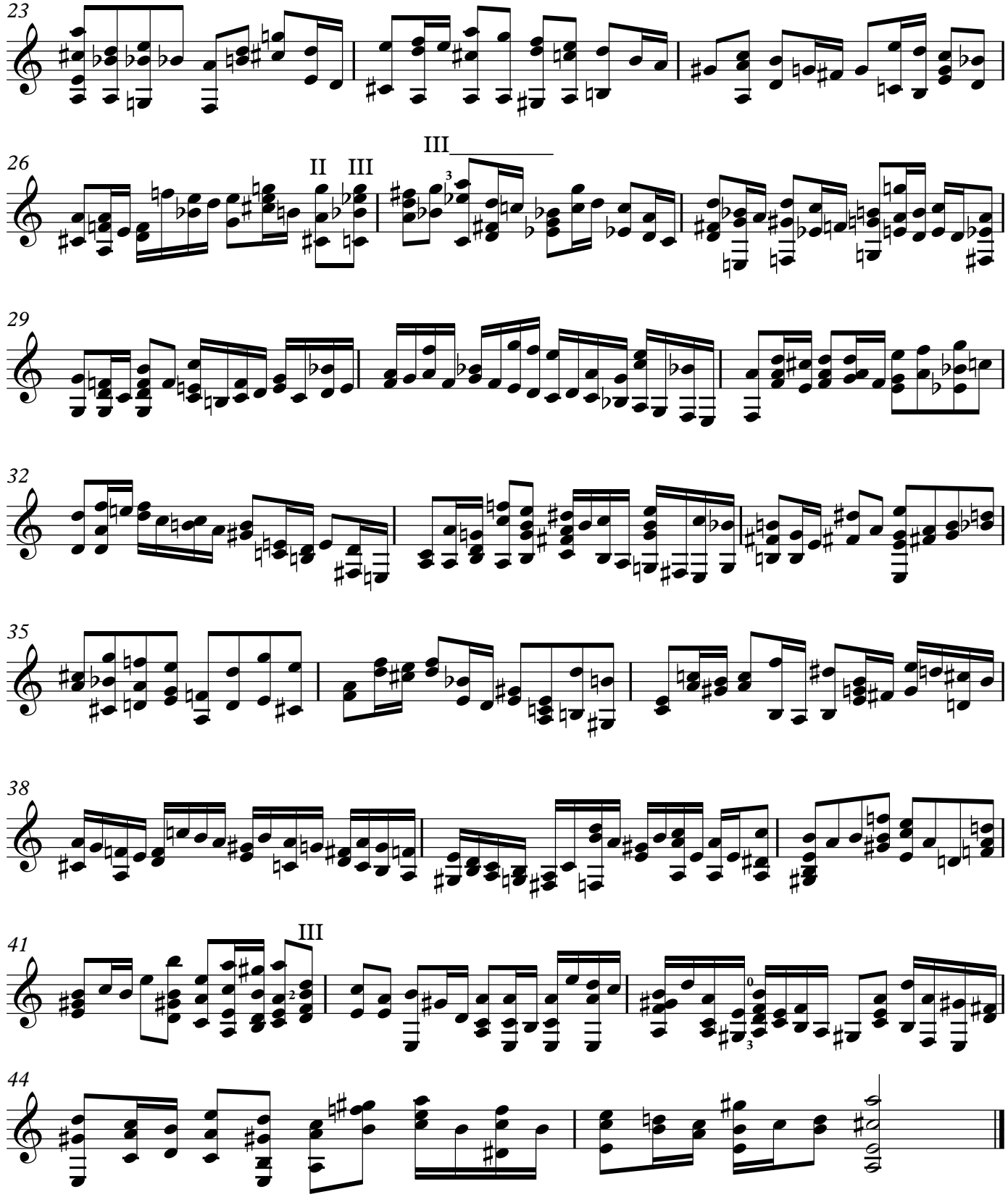
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II III
III
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III
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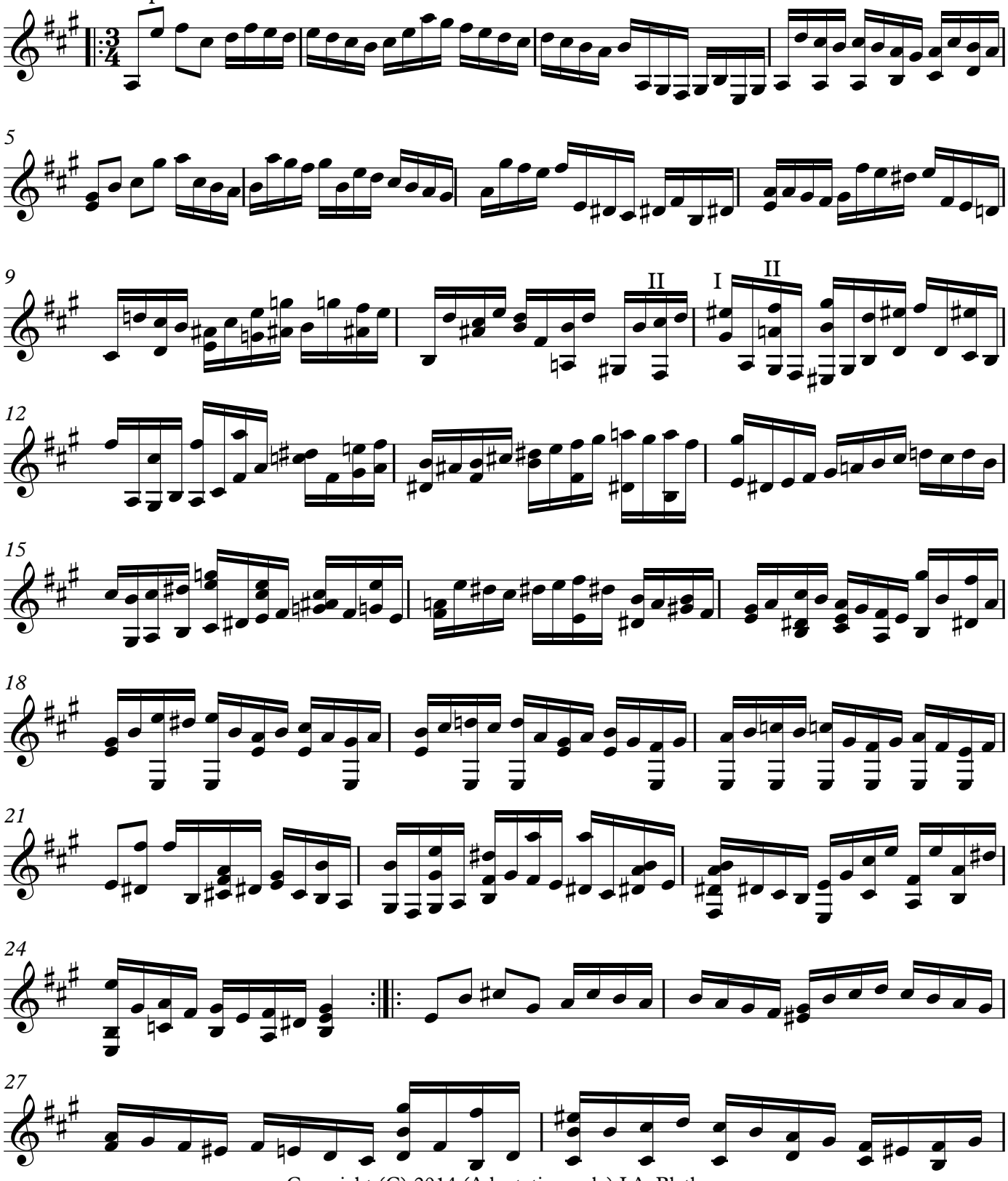
BWV 878 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Prelude No. 9 in E major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 7th fret



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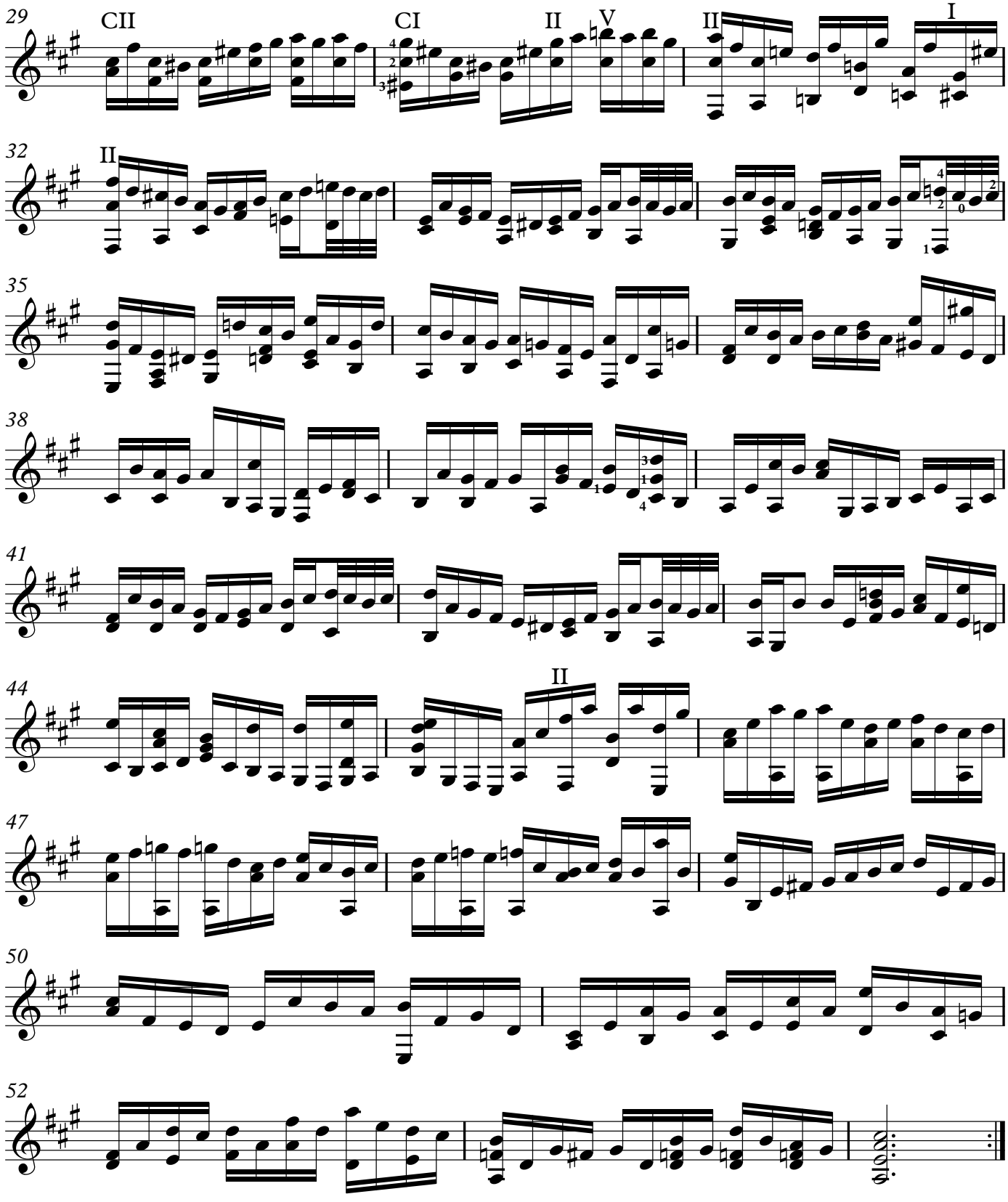
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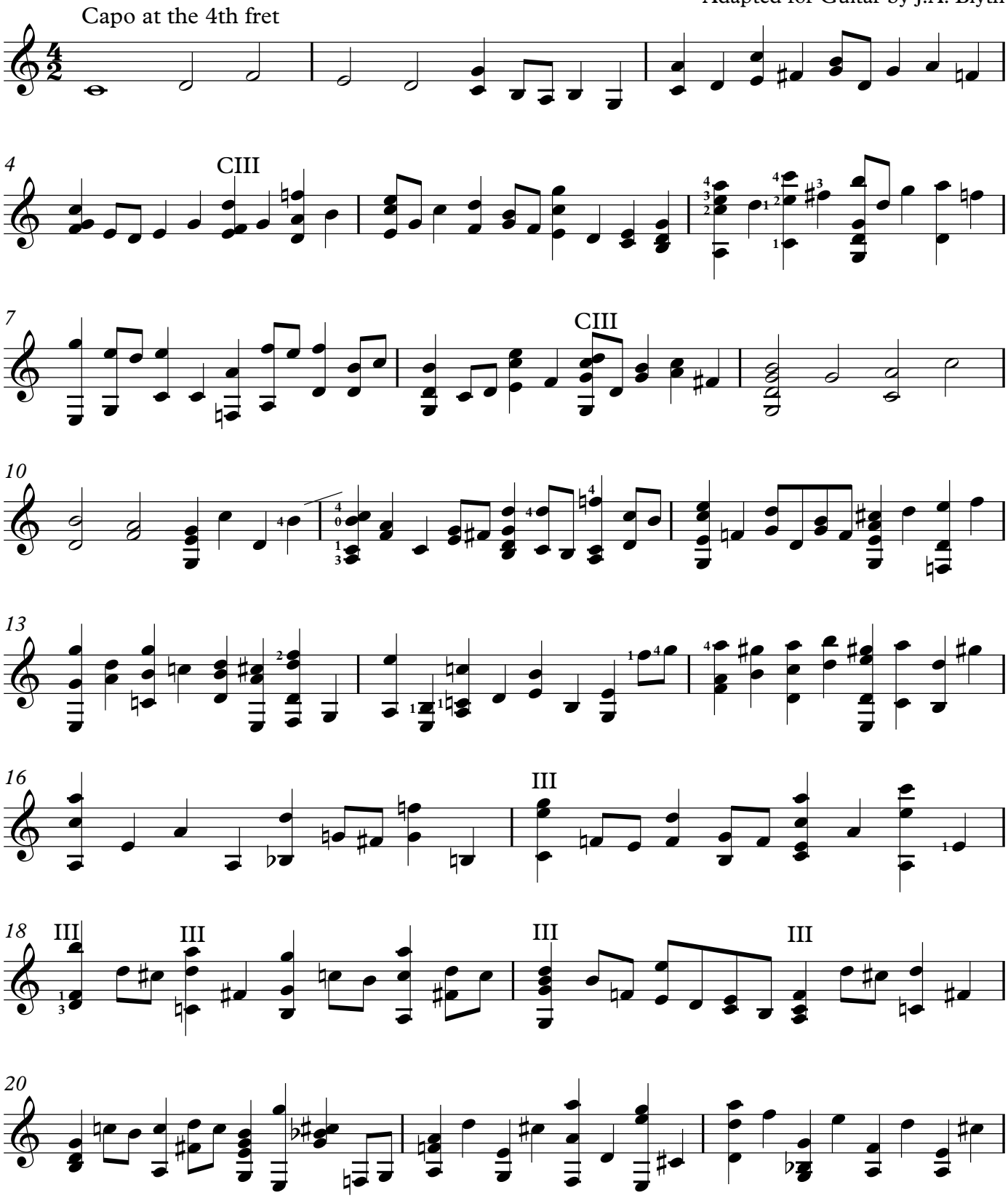
BWV 878 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Fugue No. 9 in E major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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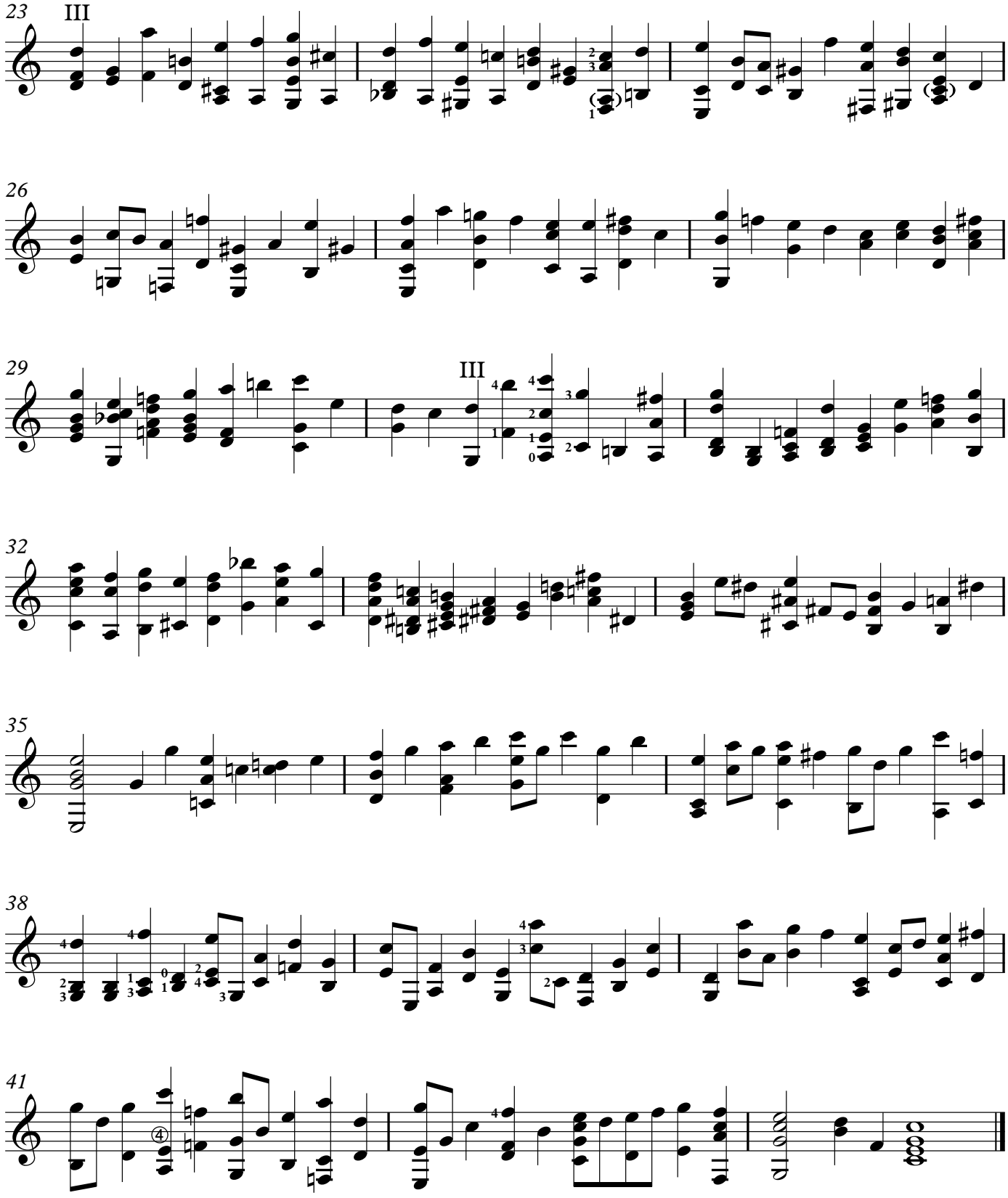
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III
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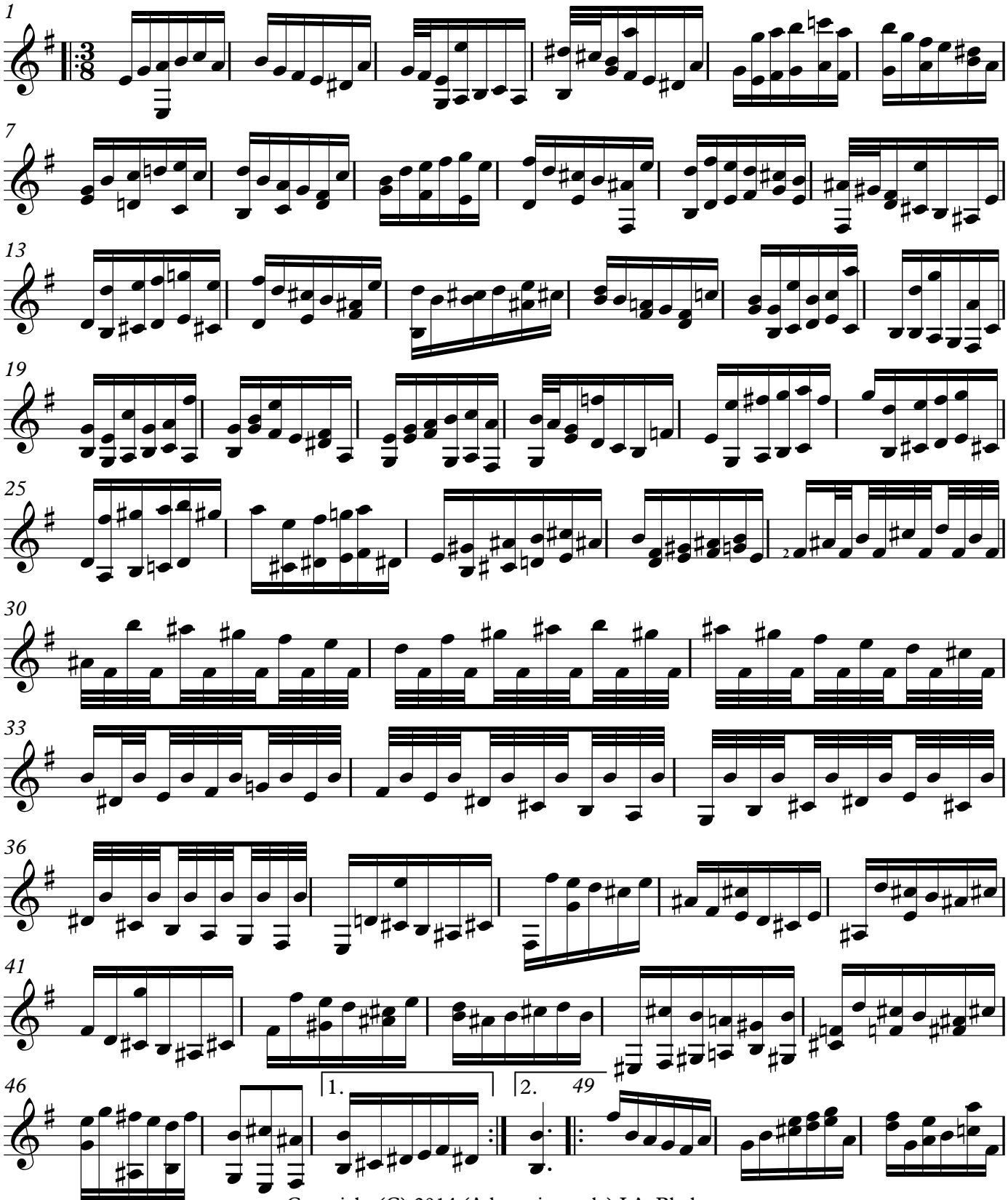
BWV 879 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Prelude No. 10 in E minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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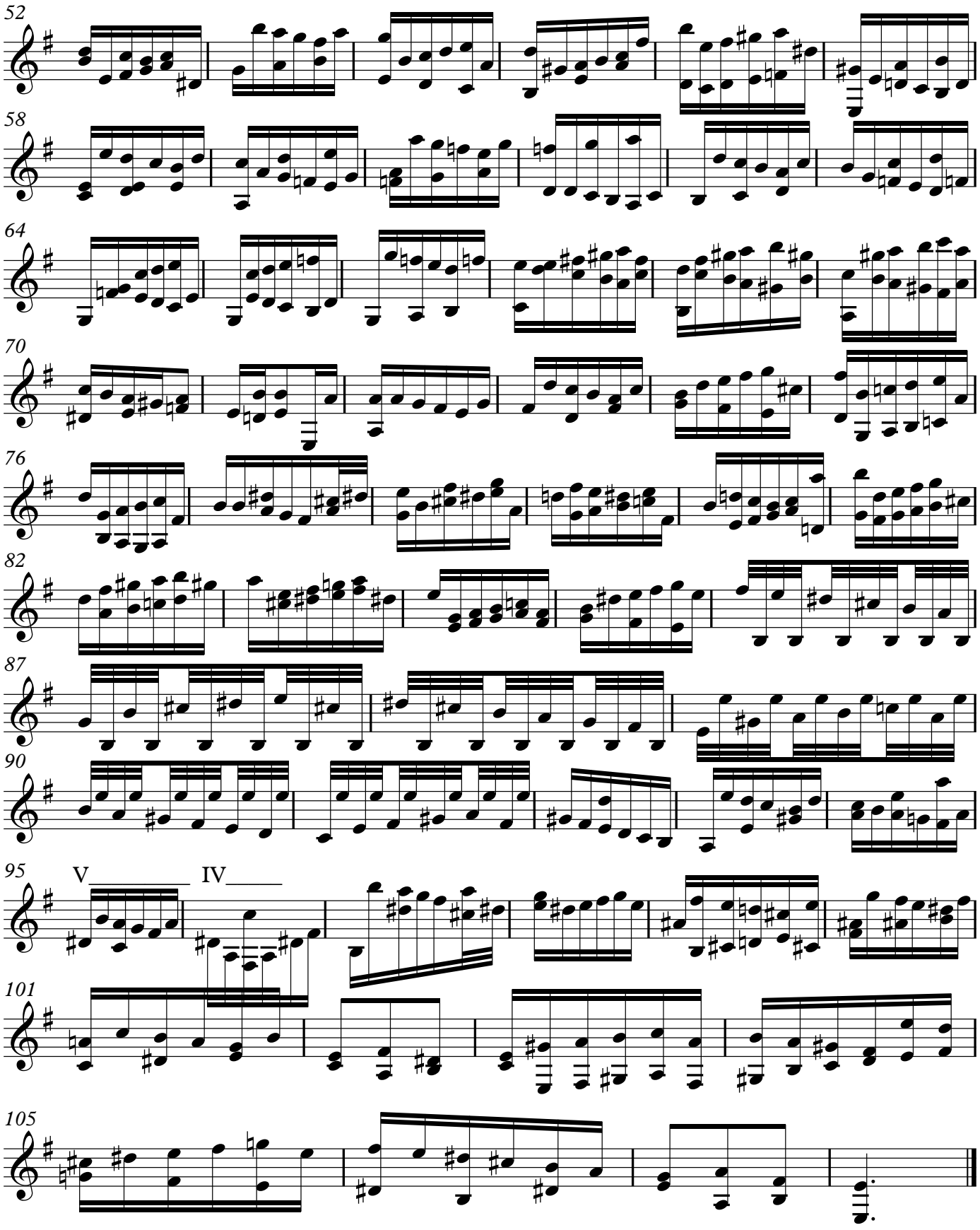
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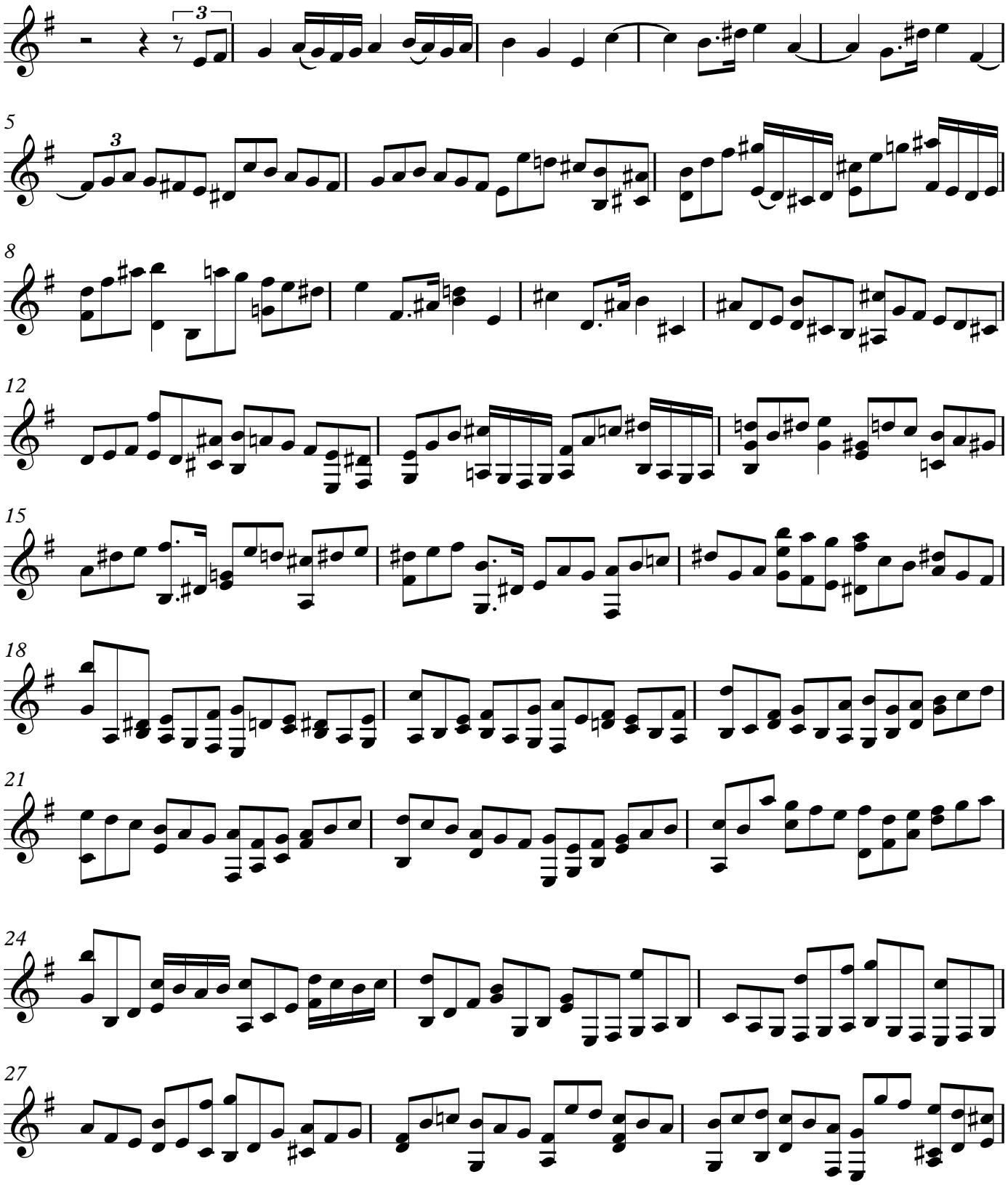
BWV 879 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Fugue No. 10 in E minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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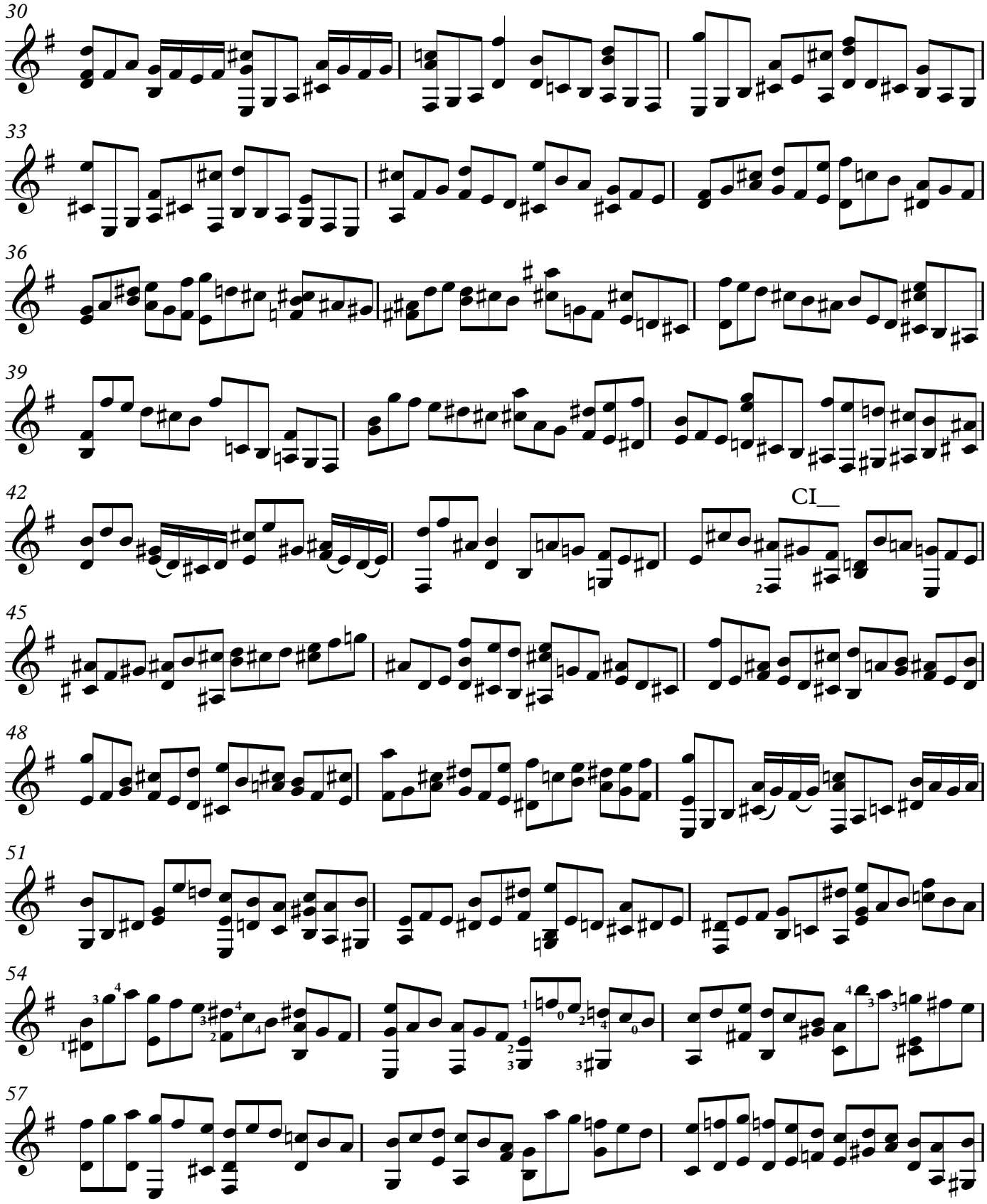
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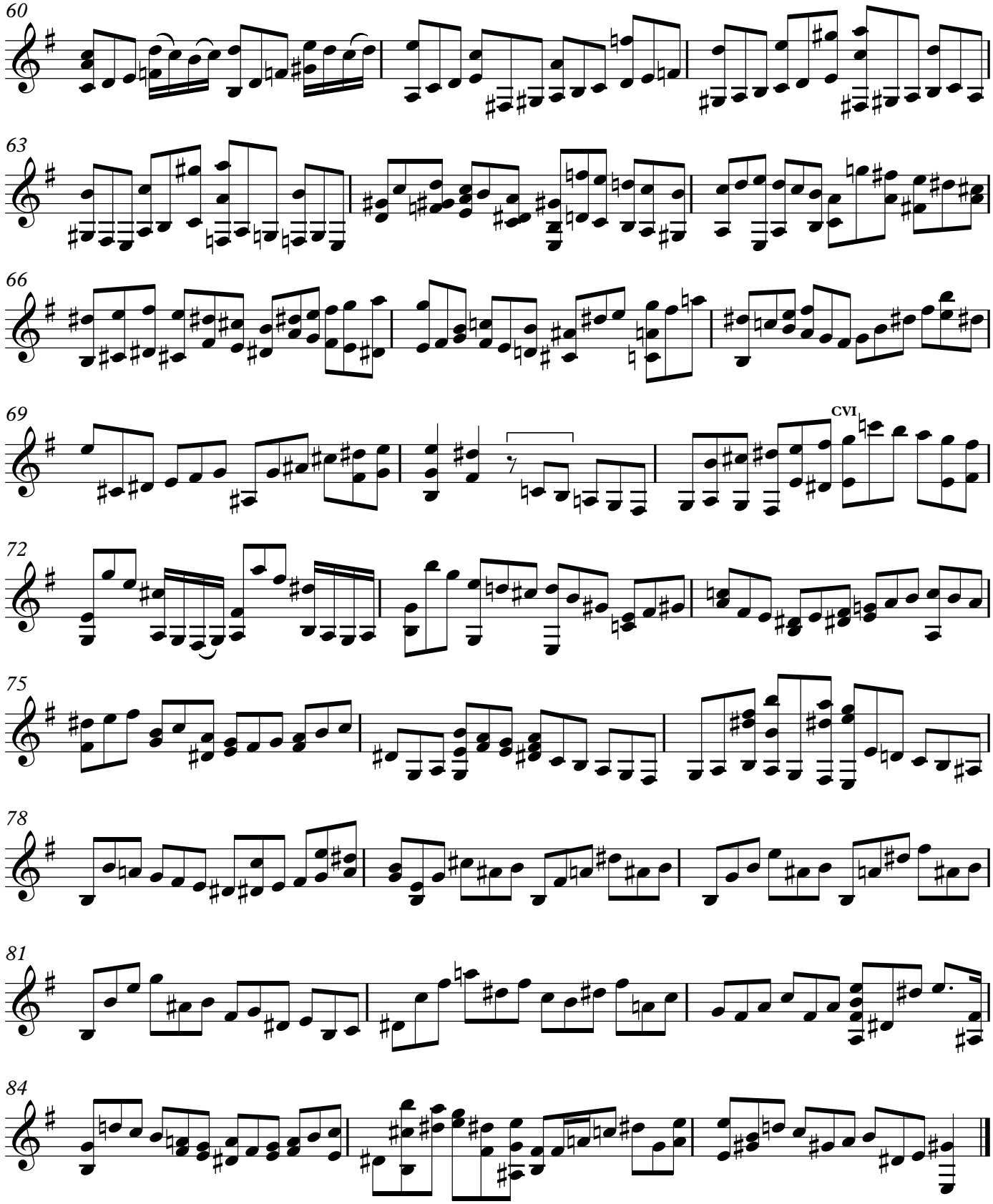
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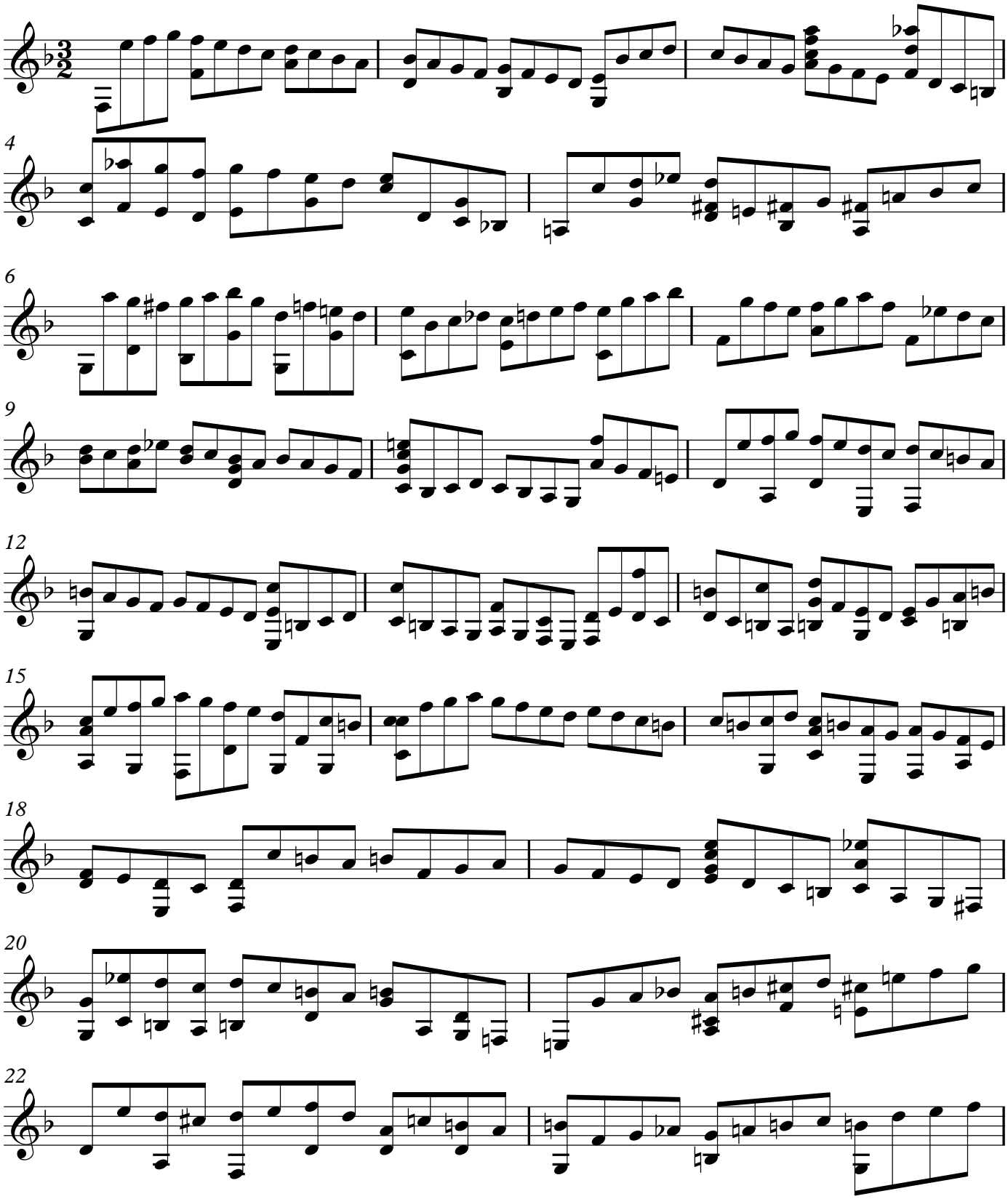
BWV 880 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Prelude No. 11 in F major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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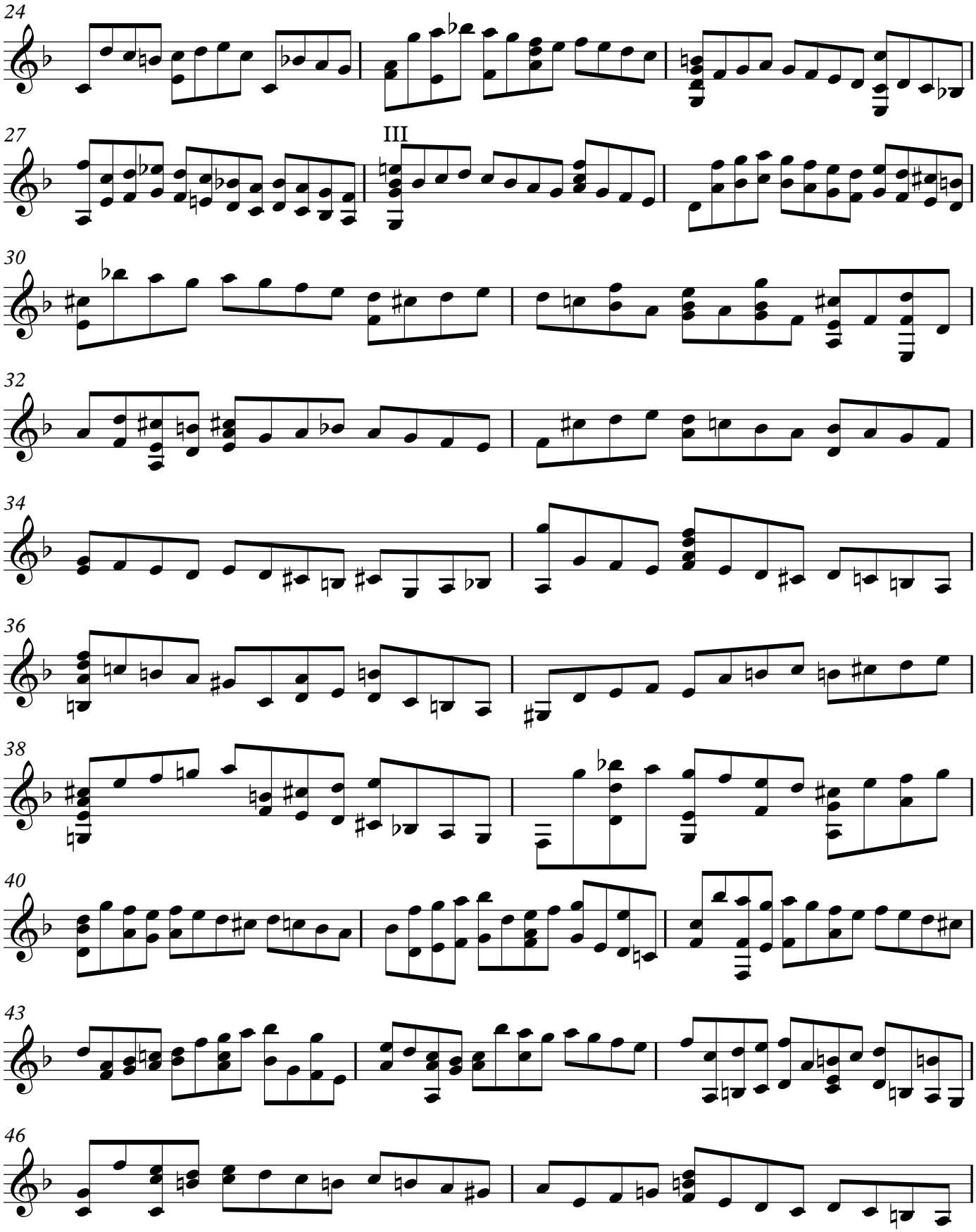
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27
III
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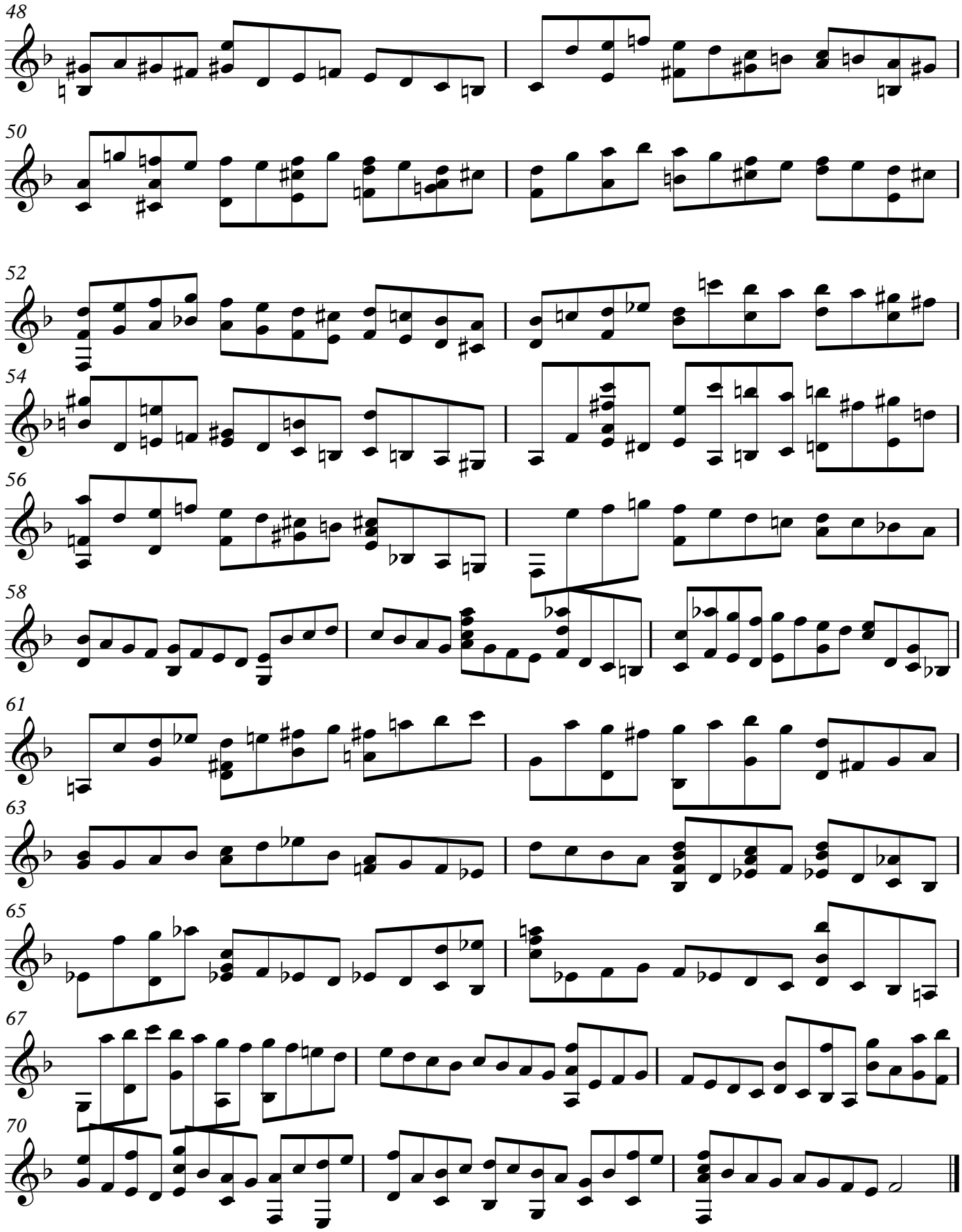
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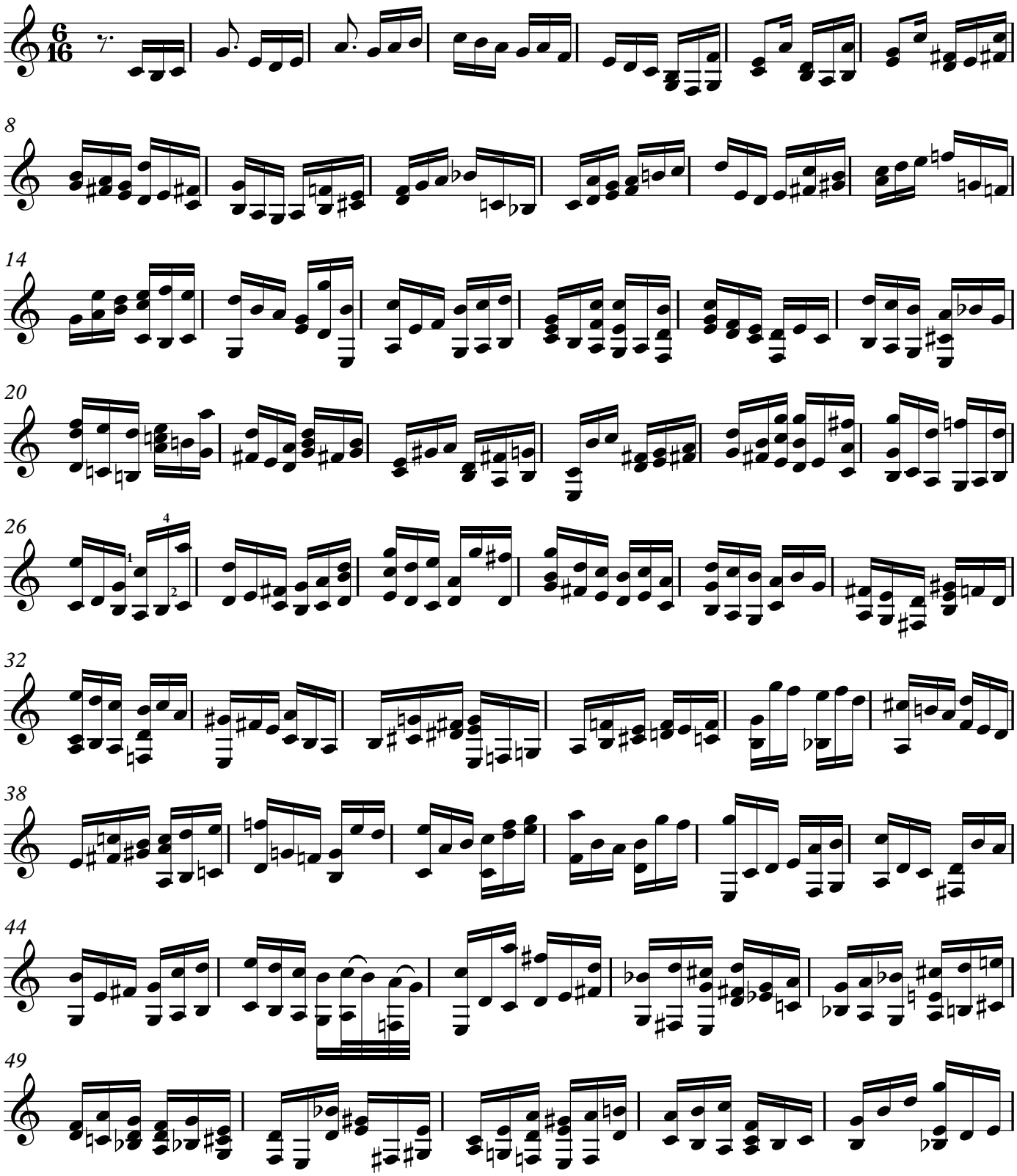
BWV 880 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Fugue No. 11 in F major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 5th fret



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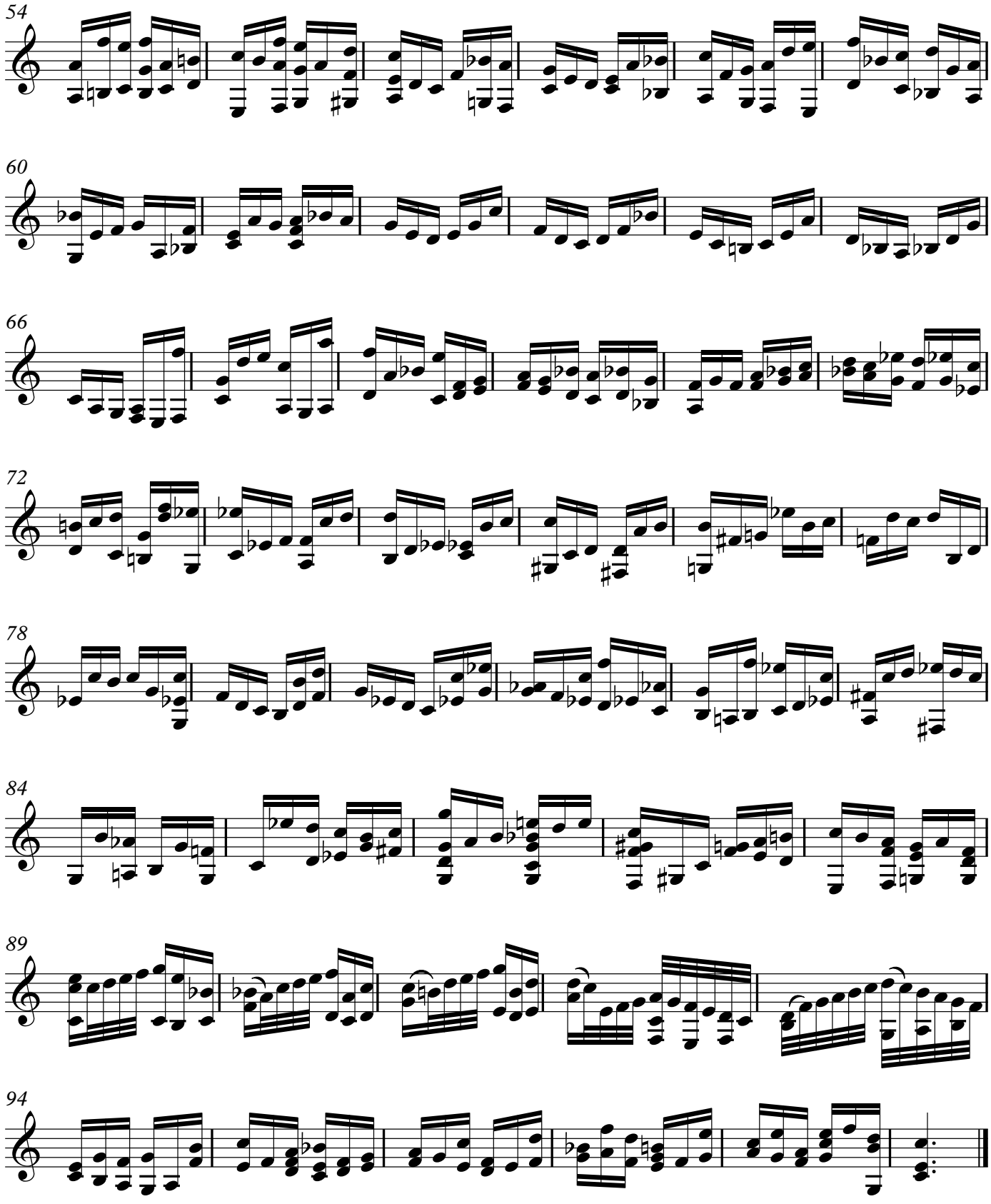
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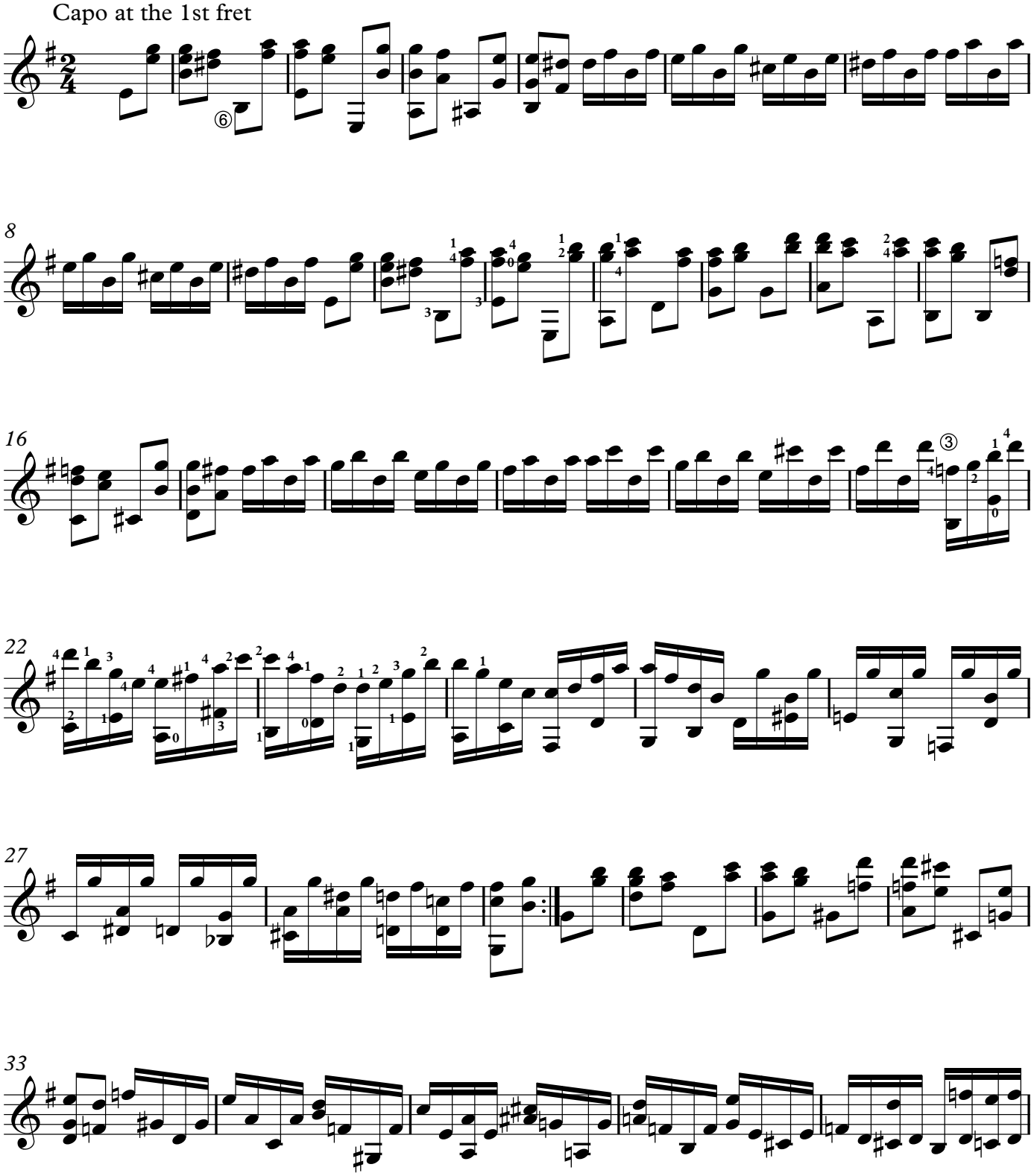
BWV 881 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Prelude No. 12 in F minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 1st fret



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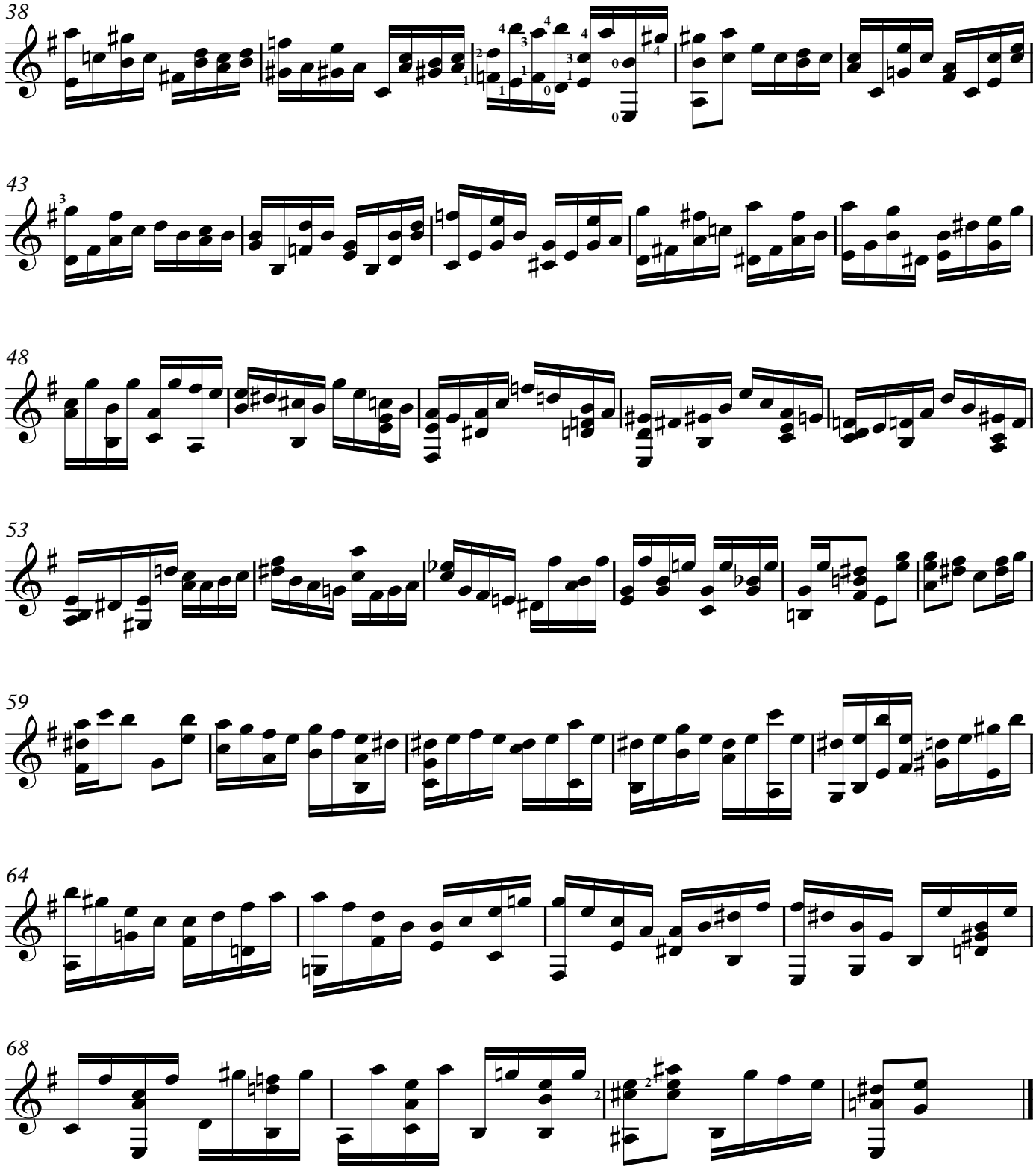
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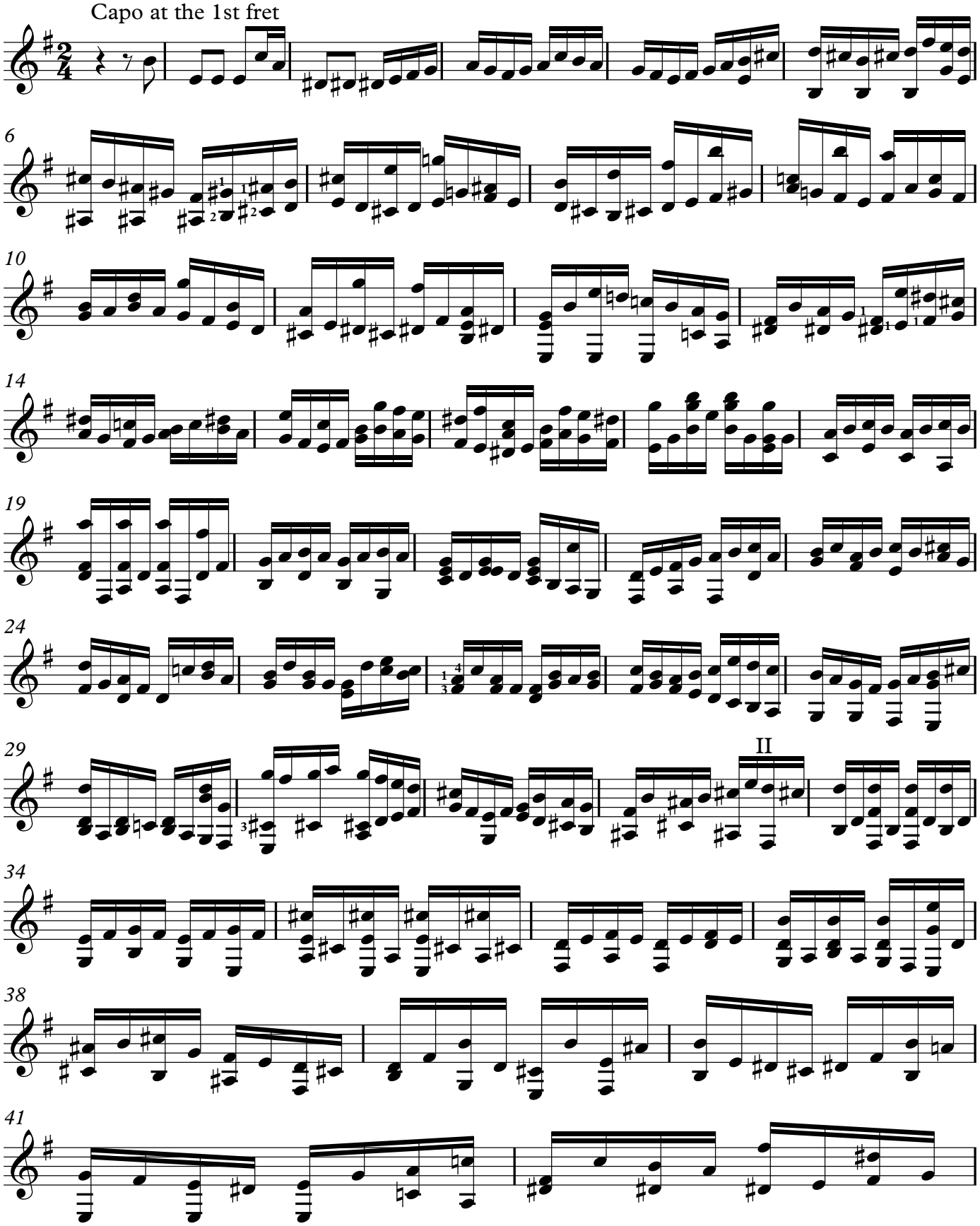
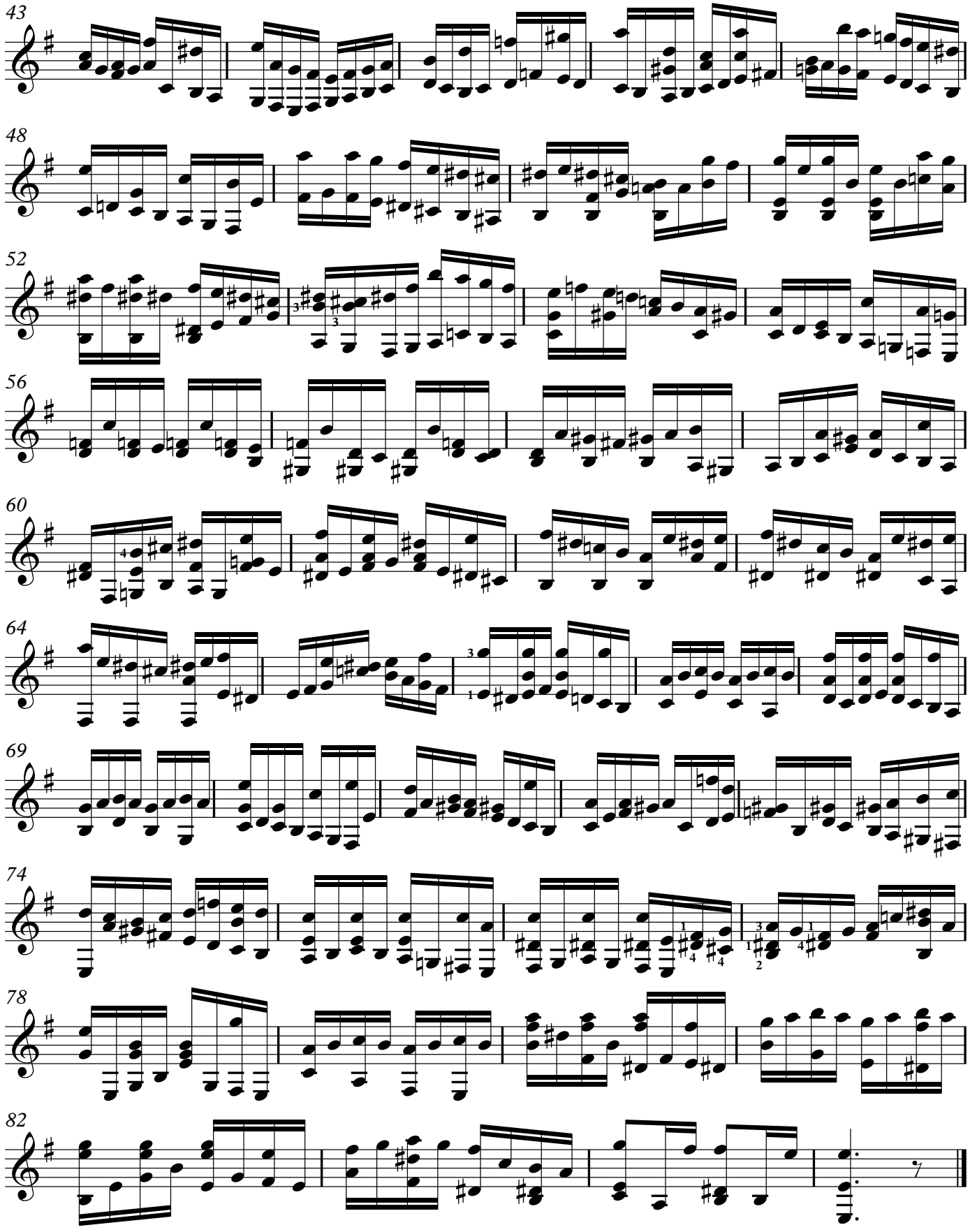
BWV 881 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Fugue No. 12 in F minor

Capo at the 1st fret

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VOLUME FOUR

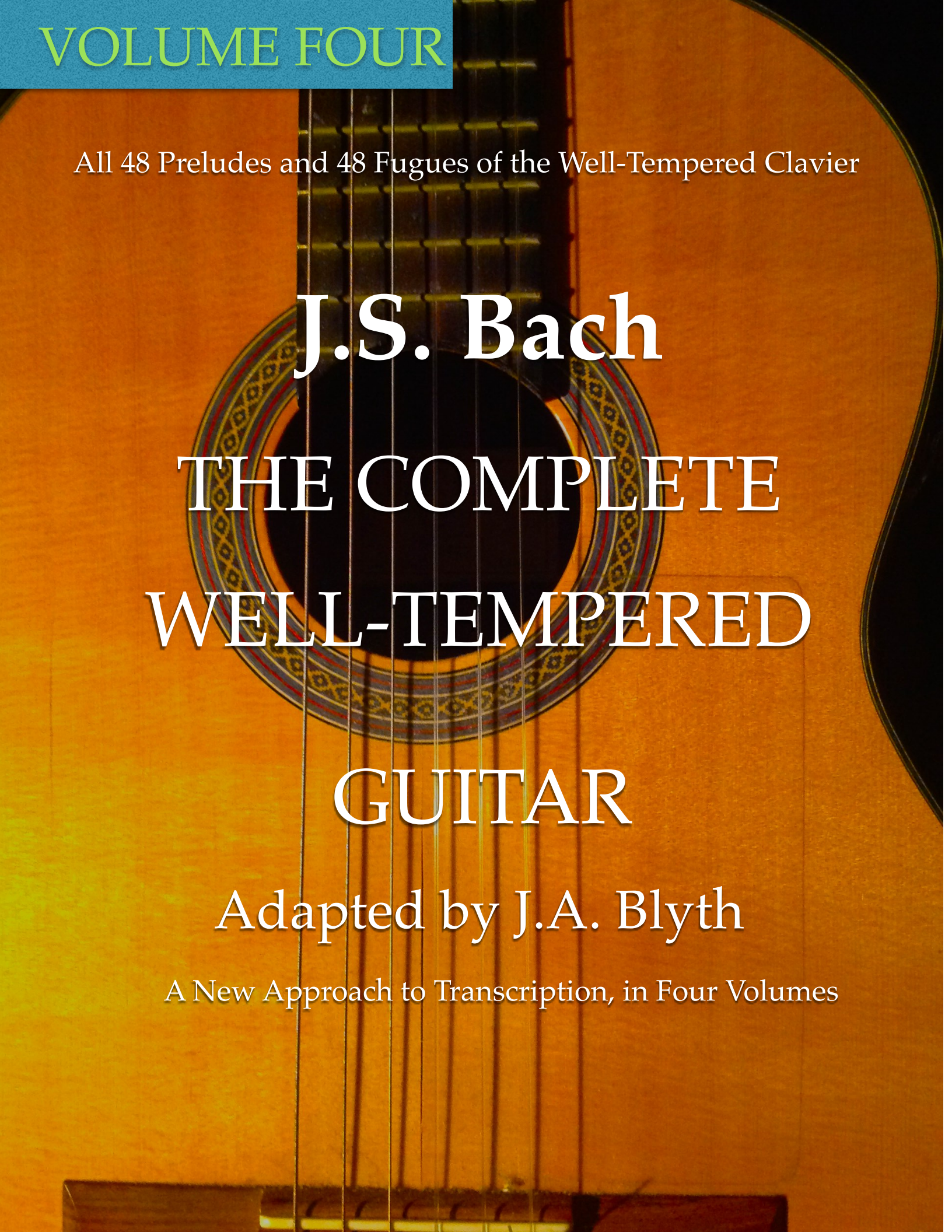
All 48 Preludes and 48 Fugues of the Well-Tempered Clavier

J.S. Bach

THE COMPLETE WELL-TEMPERED GUITAR

Adapted by J.A. Blyth

A New Approach to Transcription, in Four Volumes



About this edition

I wondered at various was of showing the music.The guitar has some limitations which simply don't exist for keyboard instruments. The most notable consequence of this, and perhaps the reason why I know of no similar project coming to completion, is that some voices will have to drop out, or have sudden octave transpositions. Rather than mess around with many impossible details I hit upon a basic programme to simplify not only the transcription process but the appearance of the final score: neither voices nor voice-leading would be indicated, so new voicings could be imagined.

Trills and other ornaments would mostly be omitted, or incorporated into the text (and sometimes simplified (such as in BWV 893's fugue) without comment (such as appoggiature). In practice listeners (including the player) will hear the music in much the same way as if it were played from more conventional notation.

Note durations would be not be indicated except in single-line passages, with the result that rhythm is indicated in a way analogous to rhythm notation in lute tablature.

Many of these pieces have gone through numerous versions, trying out different transpositions, fingerings and edits. Some octave transpositions were made so that I could read the music more easily, and might not be necessary in the case of a normal guitarist who learns and memorizes. For the first four and a half decades of my life I had got used to having perfect vision, so when I started to need reading glasses I was in denial for a while. Now I find that it is very hard to be able to see both the fingerboard and the computer screen at the same time, and some of this music (and certainly the preliminary performances) will reflect that difficulty.

I've learned to play 96 compositions of often the highest complexity in little more than a year: if I can do that, it ought to be possible to take this music to a significantly higher pitch of virtuosity, given more normal practice conditions, and some of the earlier more technically demanding versions could be perhaps revisited. At the moment though I will still with one version per piece.

These adaptations were made with one kind of guitarist in mind me so they might not suit you quite as well.

I am left-handed;

the only kind of guitar I play is classical (there were some dabblings in lute and jazz electric, decades ago);

I read very well, and don't memorize (a skill find very difficult);

while I have some interest in quite a lot of different kinds of music, it is serious, dramatic contrapuntal music, such as these works by Bach, that I actually love;

I mostly don't like pop music, or anything that is unvarying in pulse, tempo or volume, although there are some exceptions;

I am much more comfortable with standard notation than with TAB;

I don't really care about tone all that much except that I like warmth and some dirtiness and character most classical guitar playing sounds just a little antiseptic to me but expression is very important to me;

although I have studied the music of this composer and period extensively (also utilizing fully the resources of the classical music library where I work) I am more concerned about simply getting what I can out of the delightful patterns/blueprints which Bach has left me, on my own terms;

although I have a degree in music, my approach to this music probably owes a lot more to my personality than to any training I was already an enthusiastic and naïve listener long before I studied music with any kind of formality;
although a few pieces and trouble-spots have been thoroughly fingered, most of the time these scores don't have very much in the way of guidance, especially since the fingering will likely vary considerably if you decide to put more ornaments back in.

John Alexander Blyth, Brandon, Manitoba, Canada, Thursday 14th August 2014

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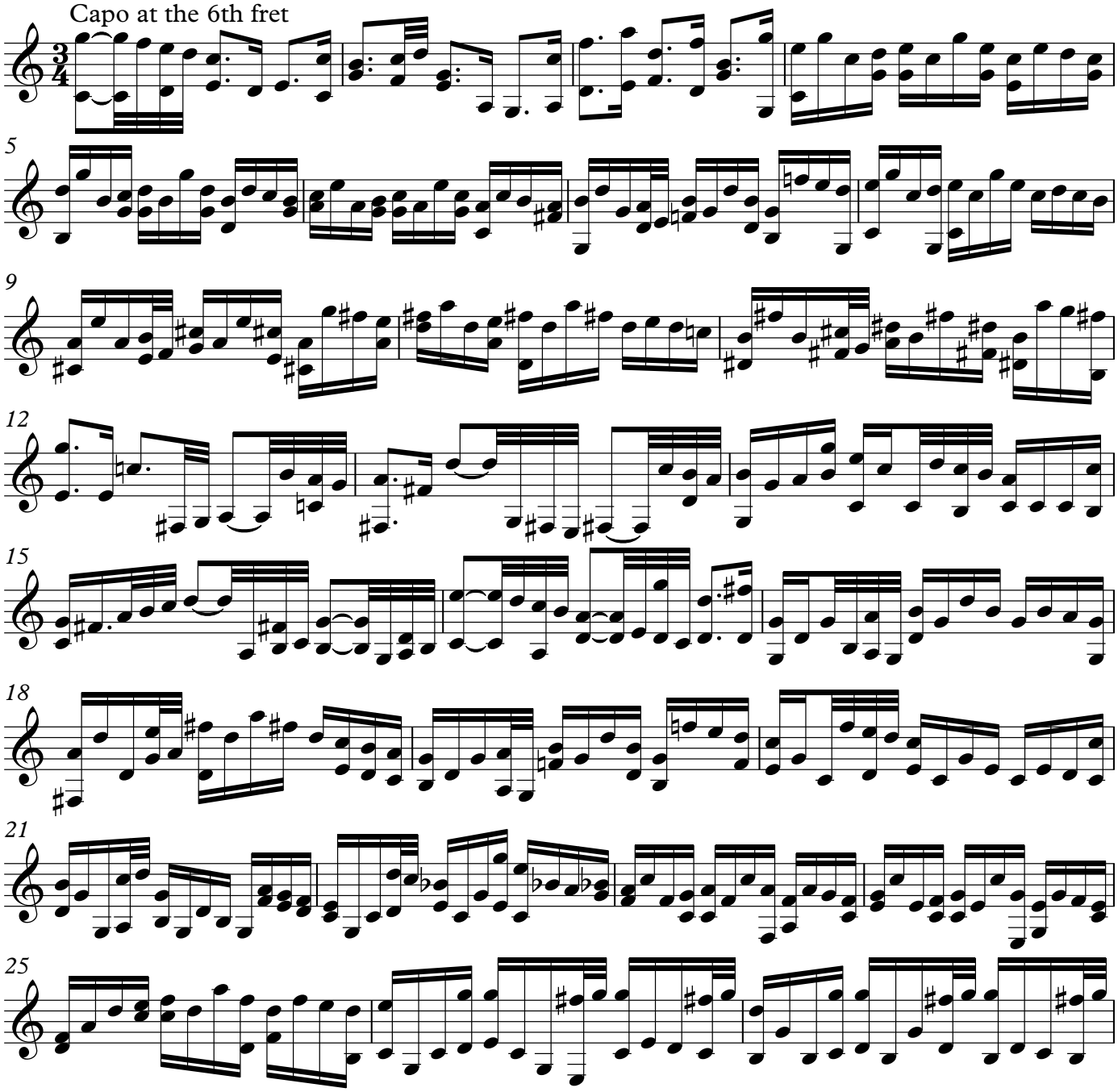
BWV 882 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Prelude No. 13 in F-sharp major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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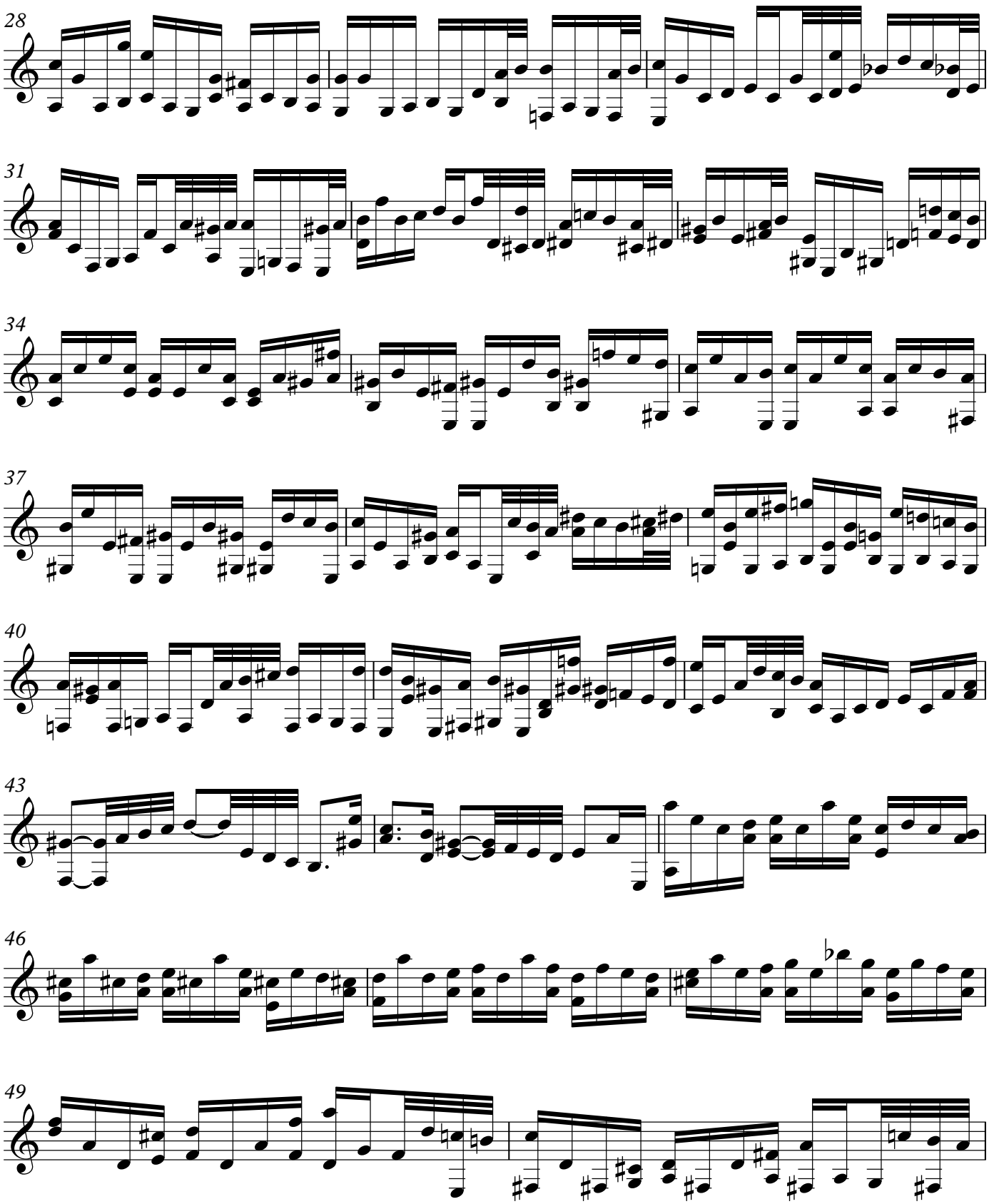
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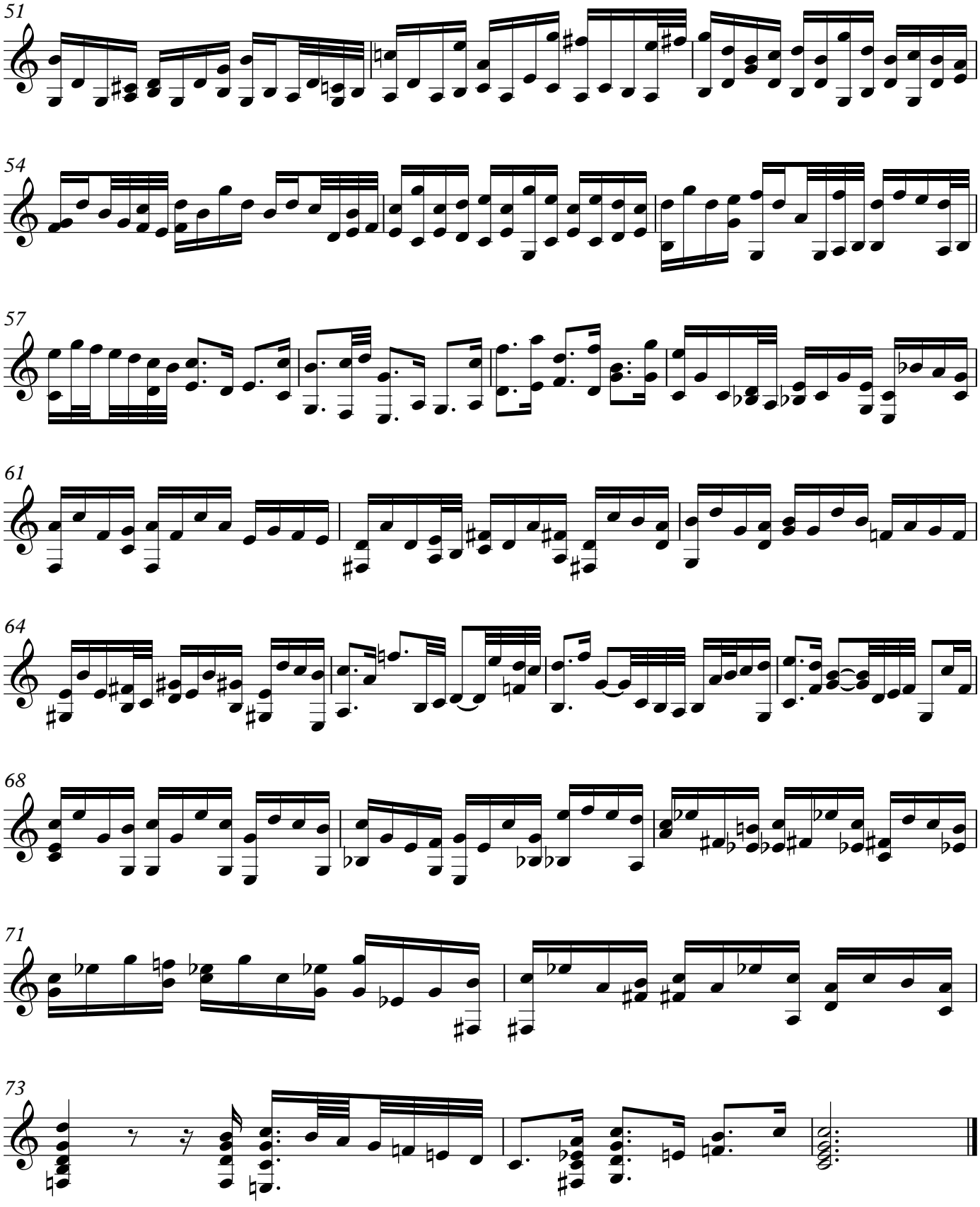
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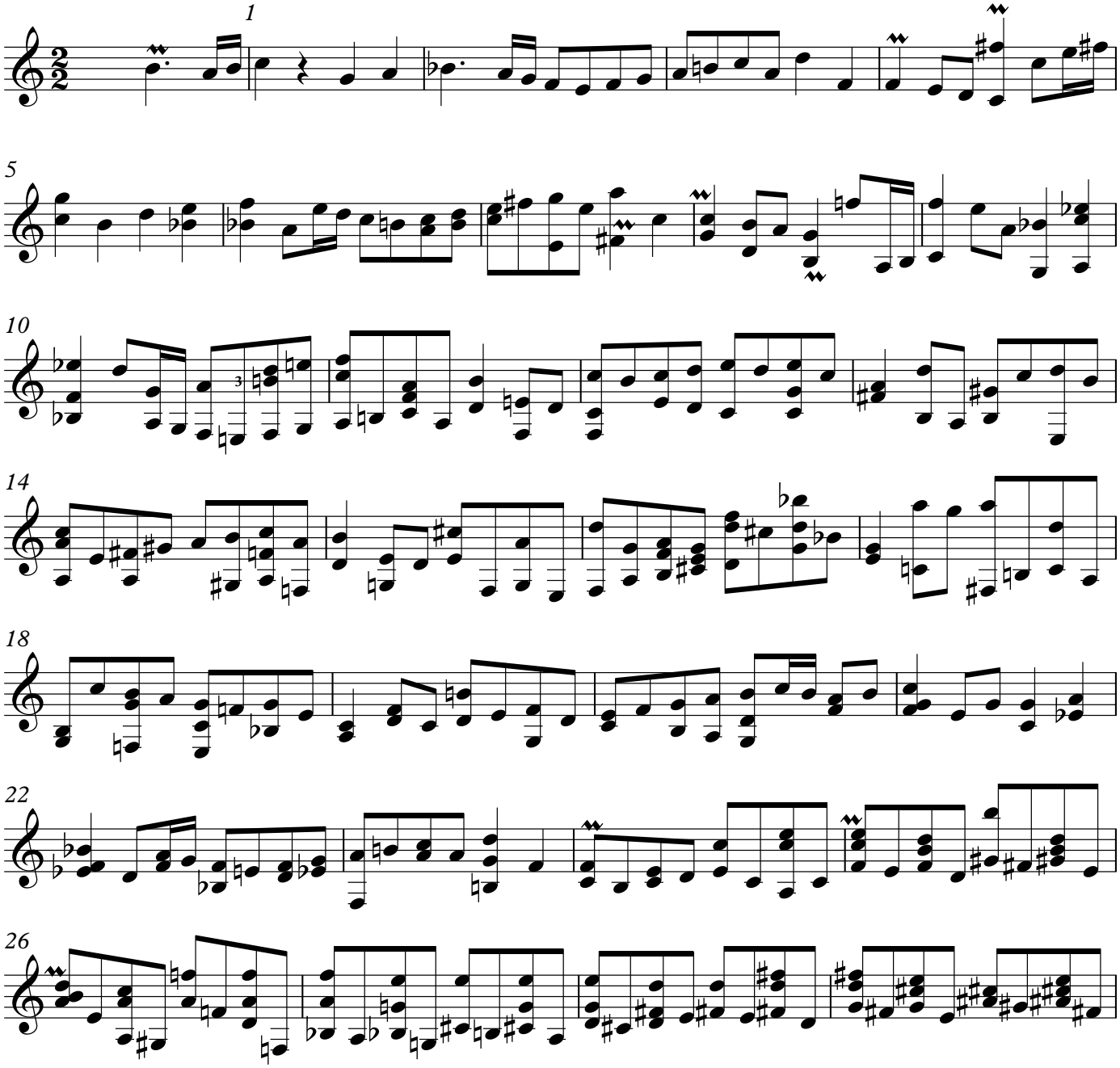
BWV 882 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Fugue No. 13 in F-sharp major

Capo at the 6th fret

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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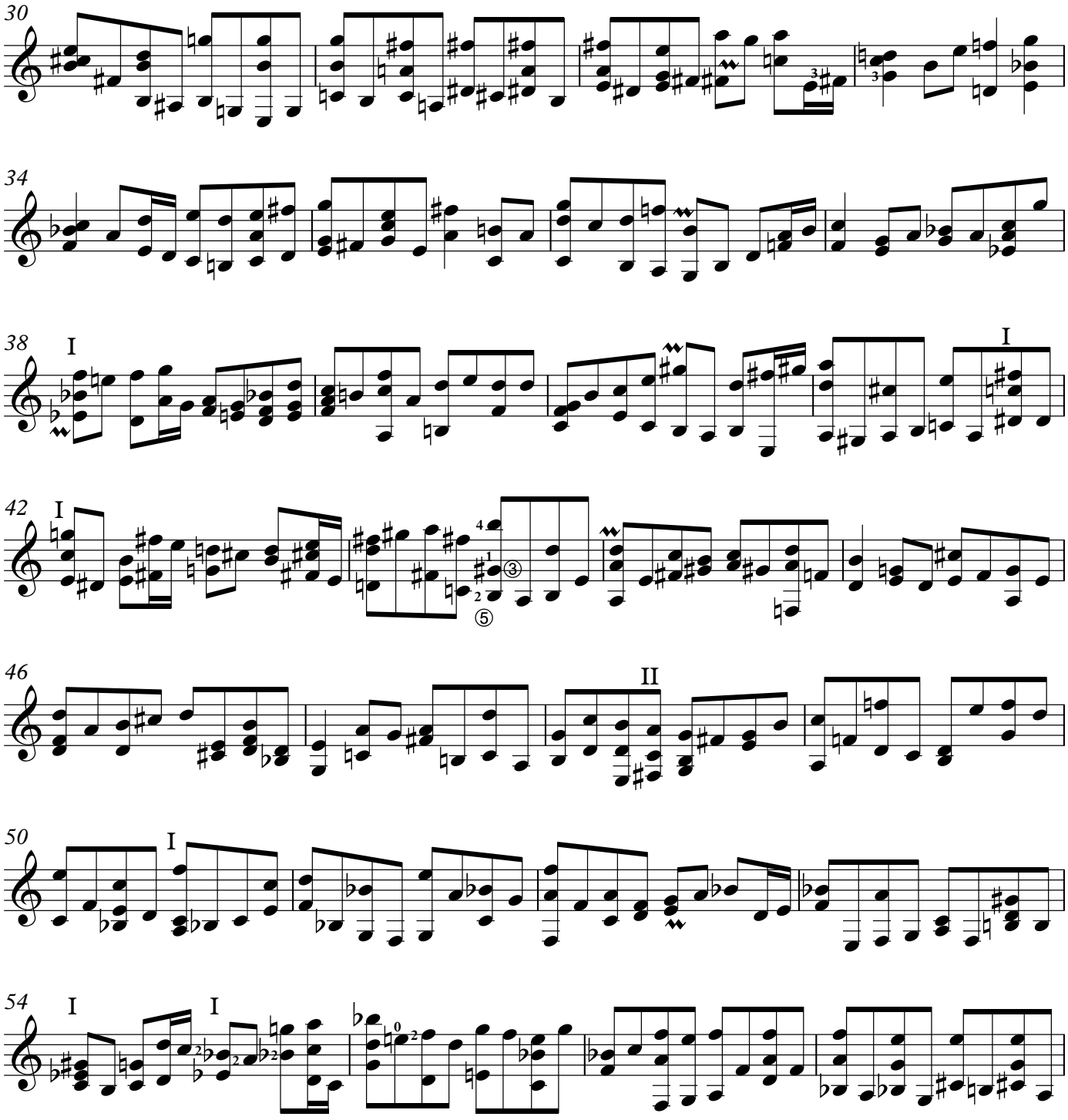
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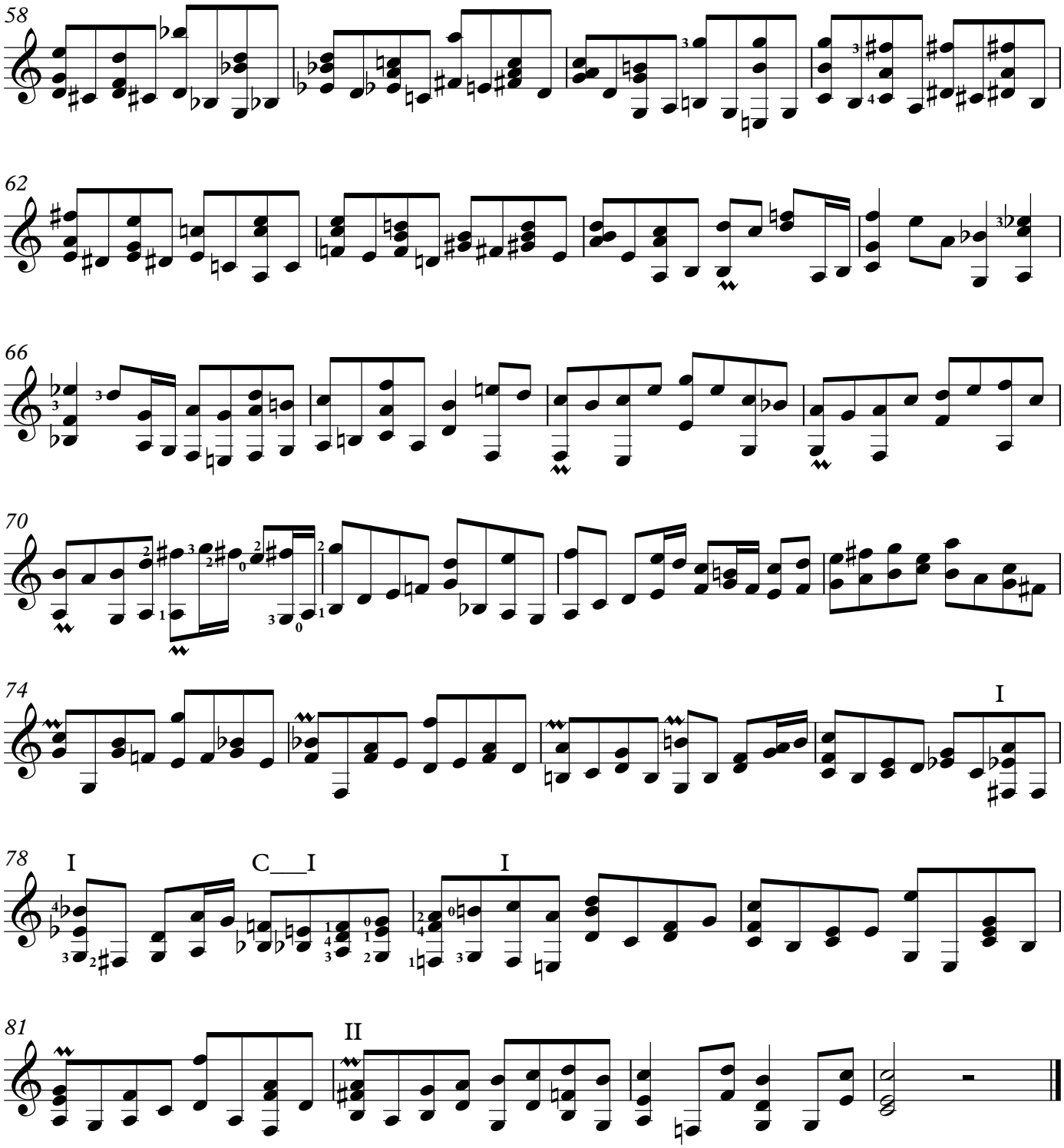
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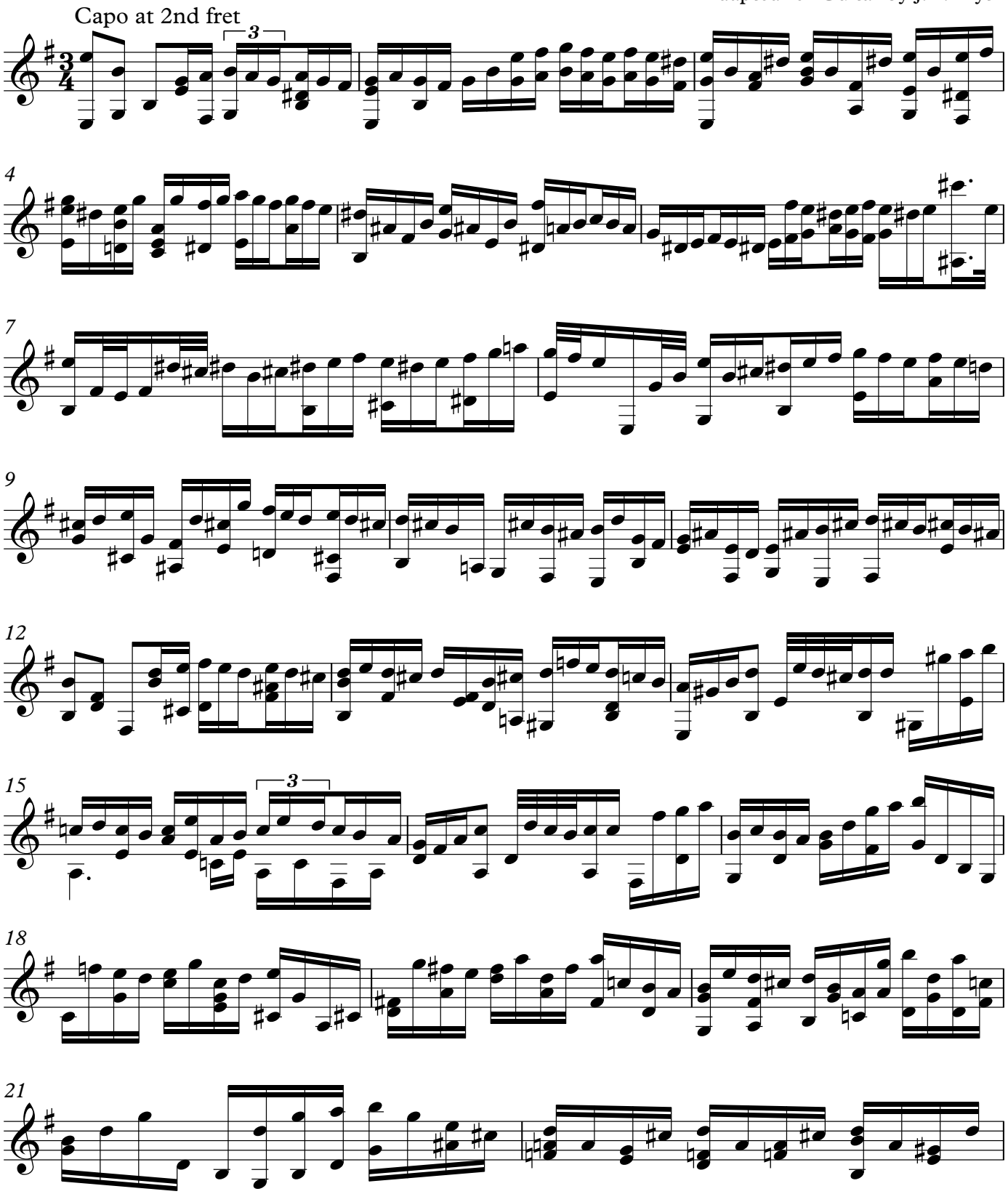
BWV 883 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Prelude No. 14 in F-sharp minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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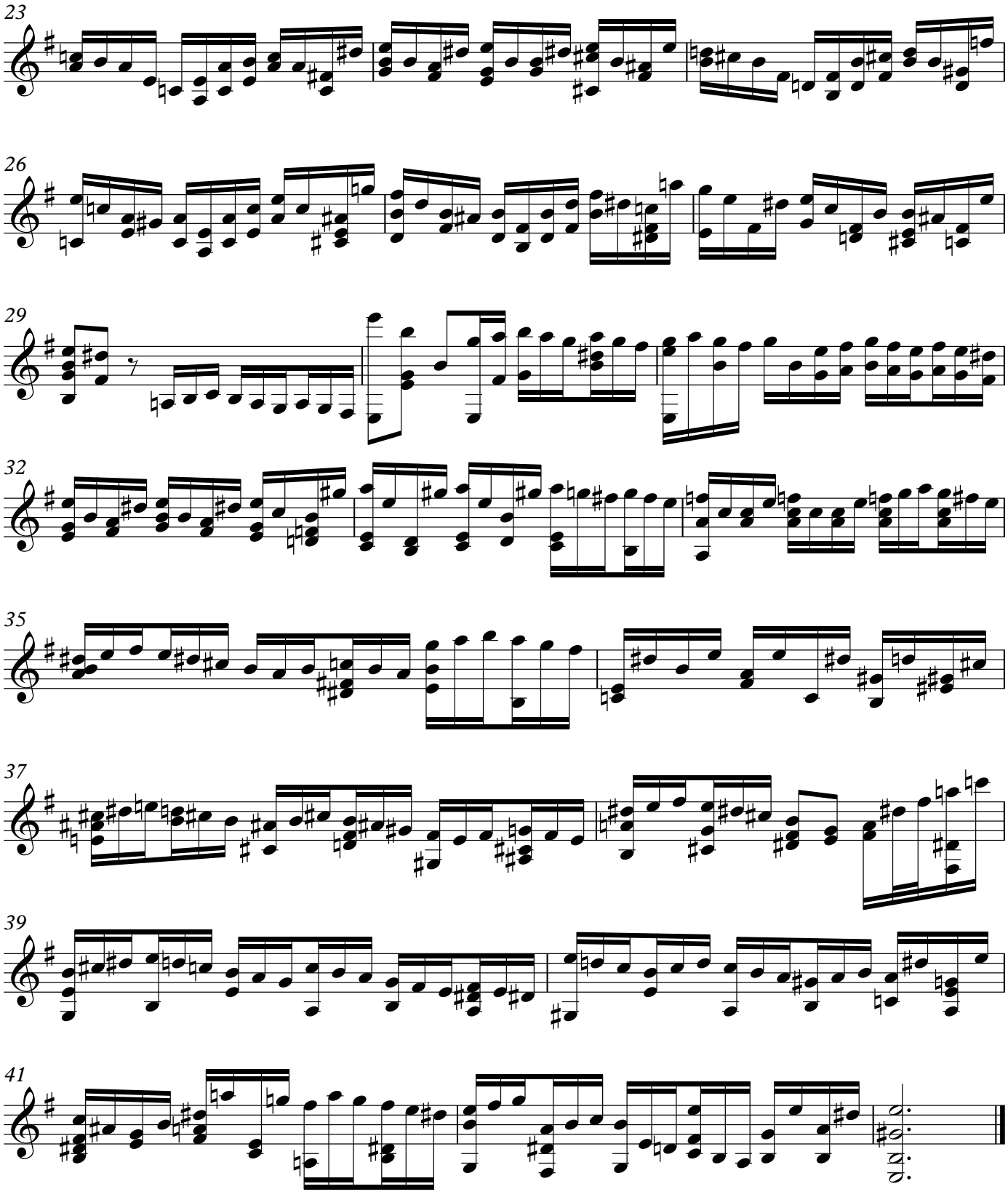
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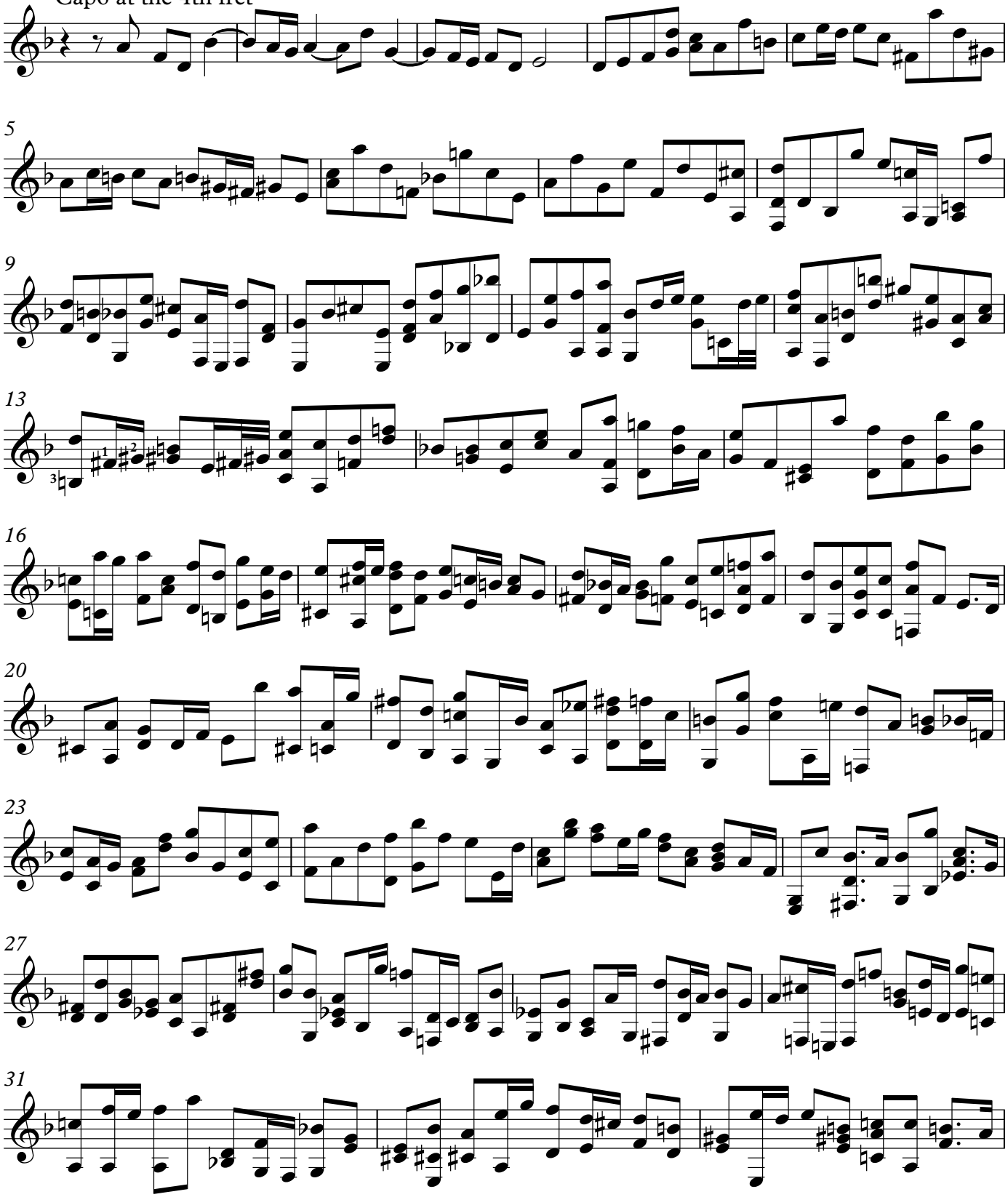
BWV 883 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Fugue No. 14 in F-sharp minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 4th fret



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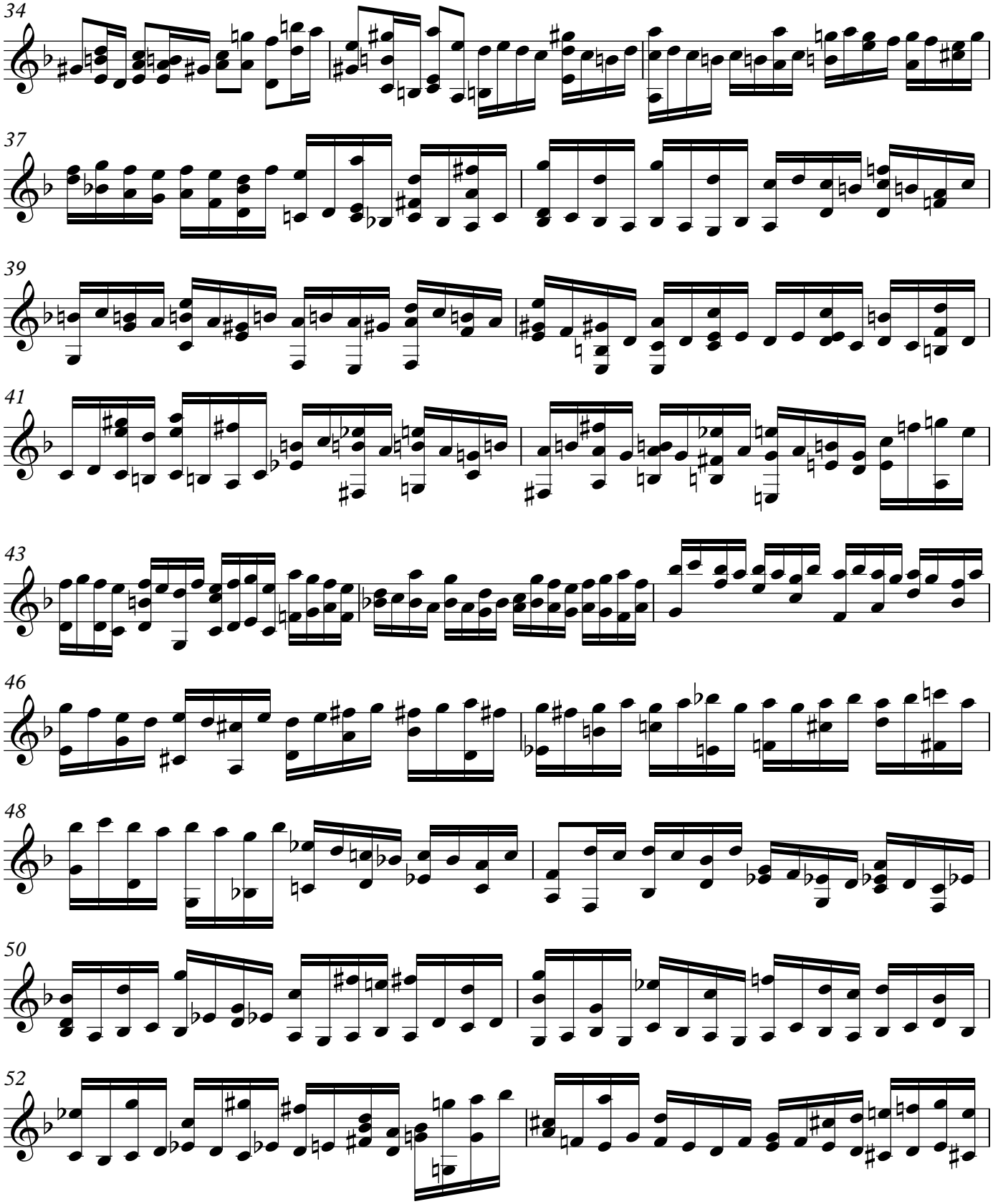
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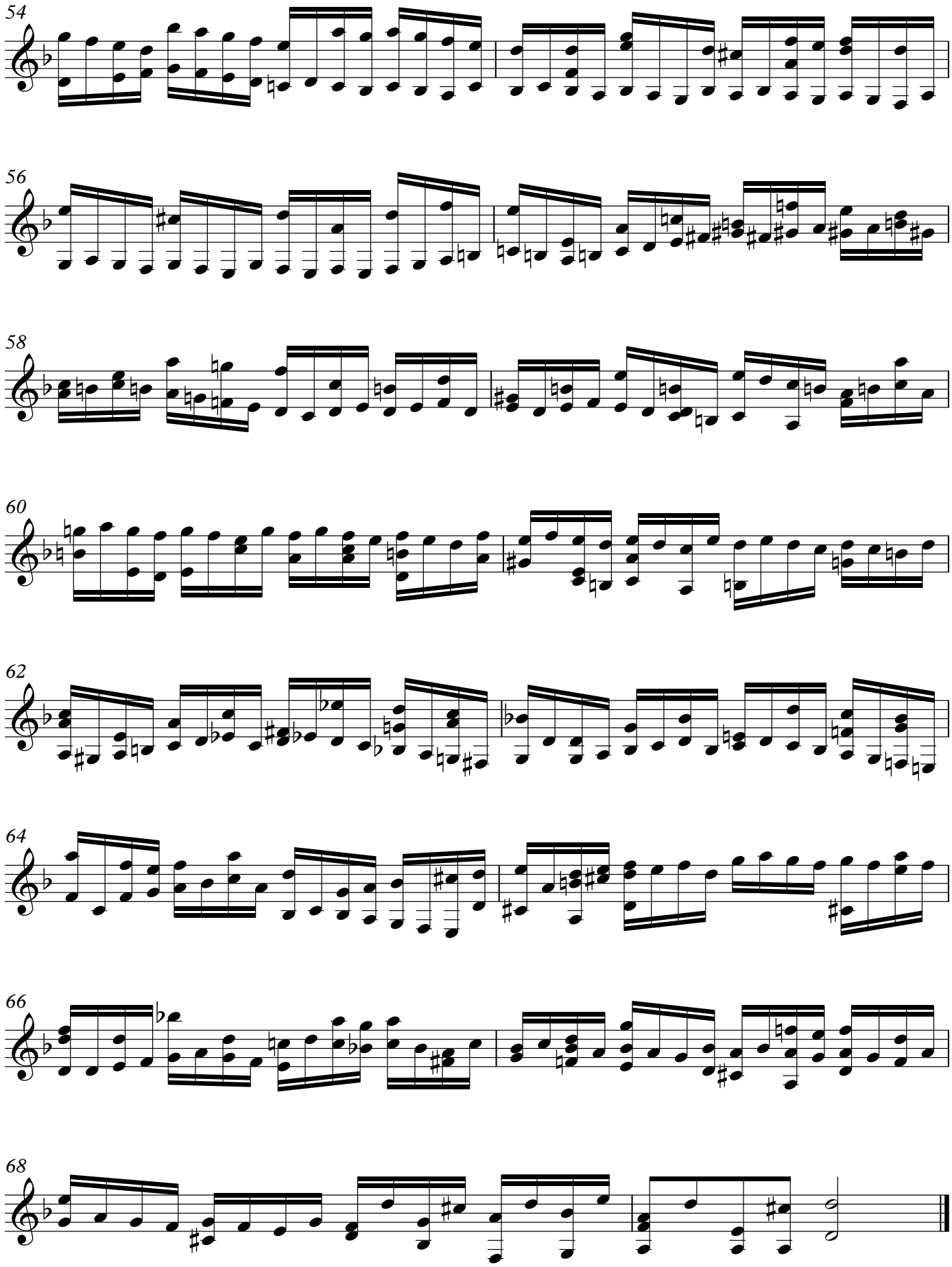
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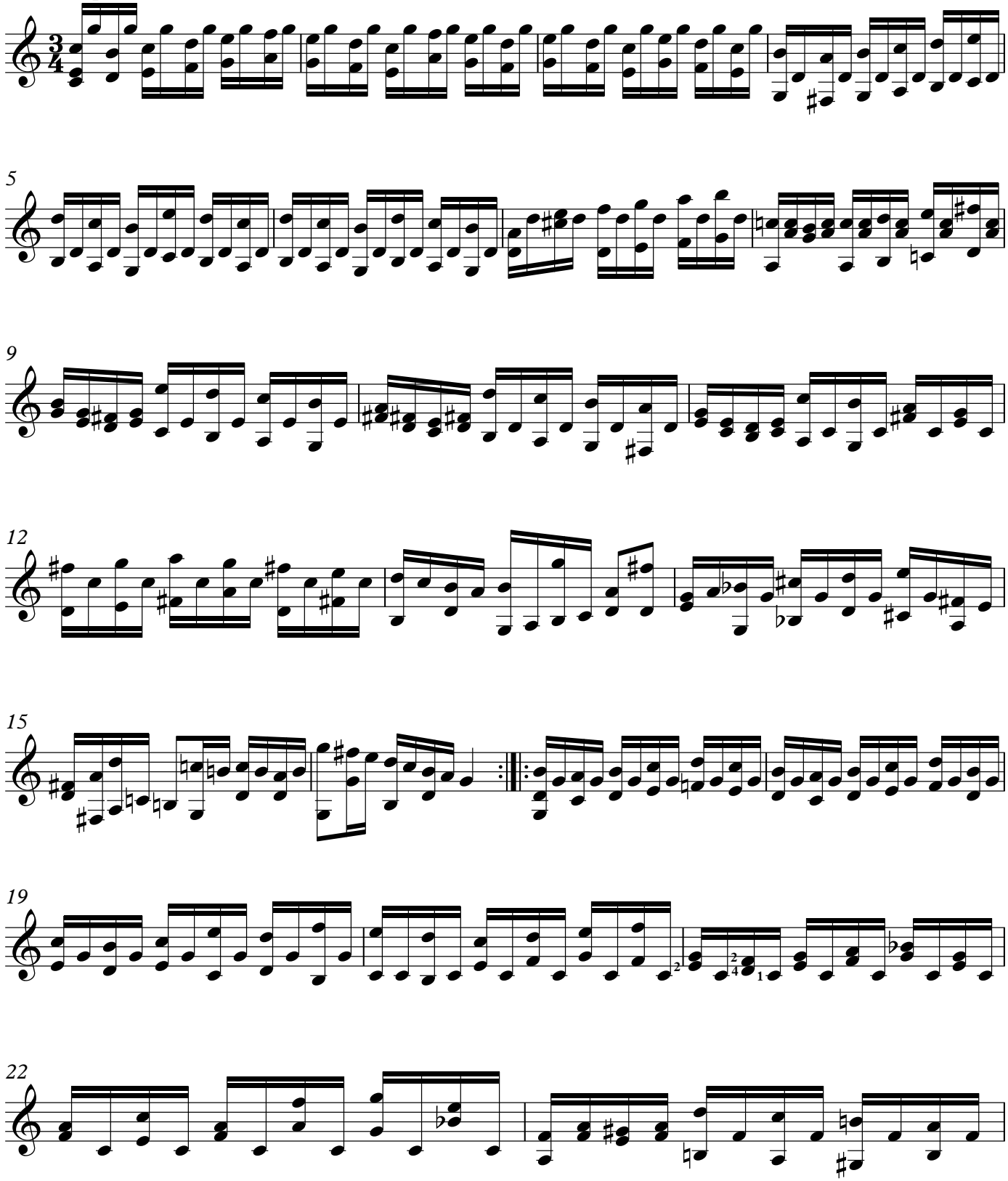
BWV 884 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Prelude No. 15 in G major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 7th fret



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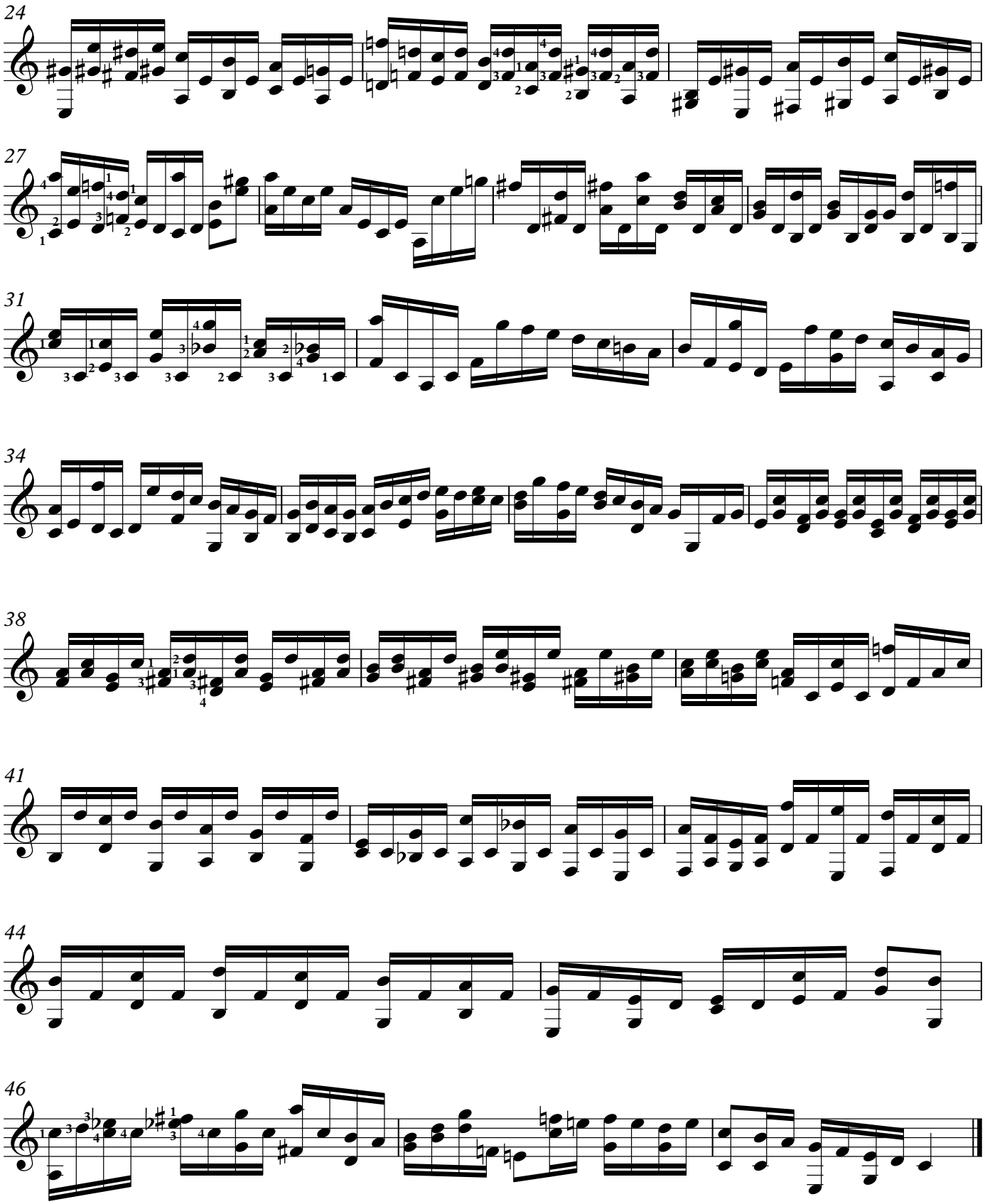
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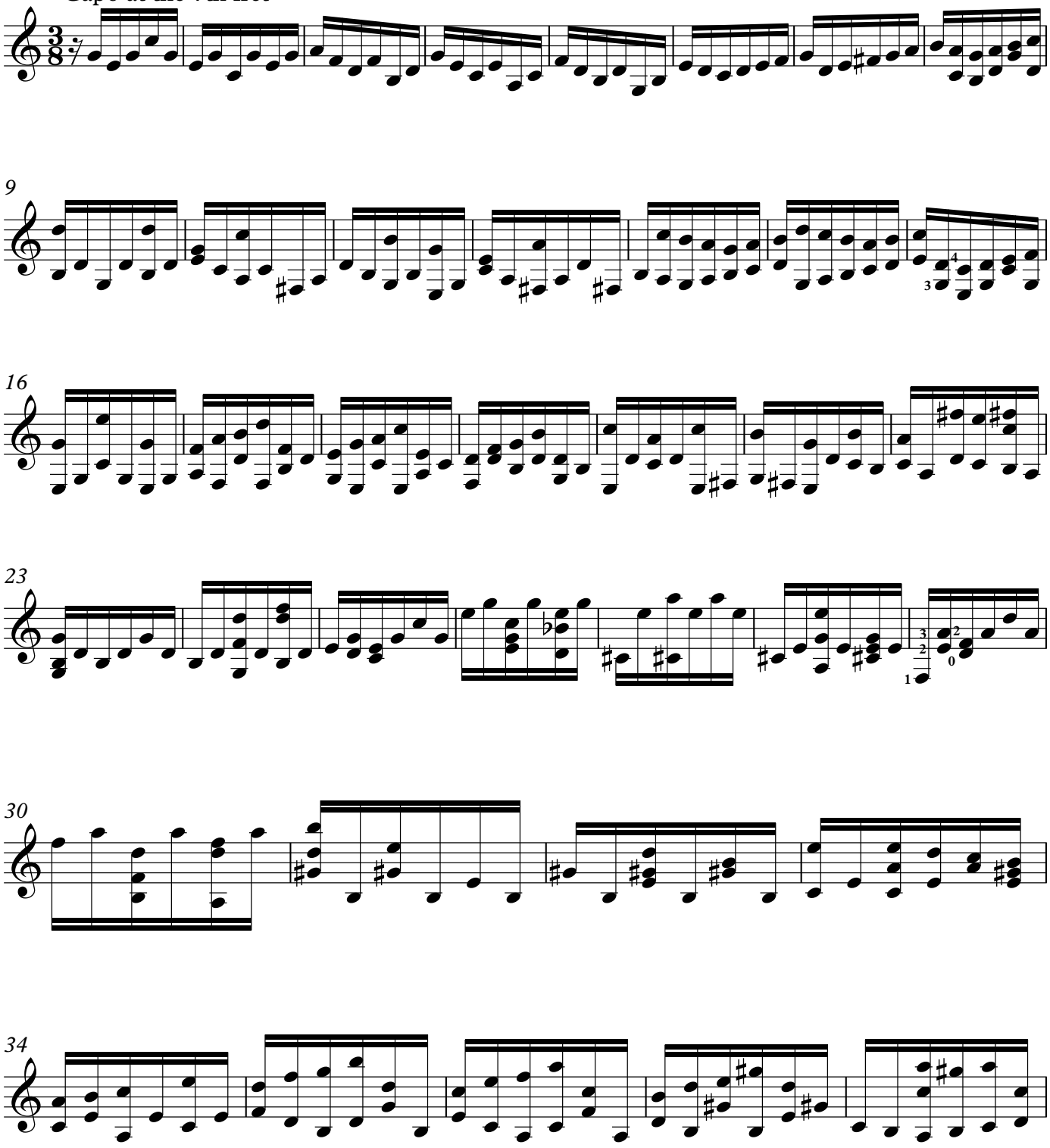
BWV 884 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Fugue No. 15 in G major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 7th fret



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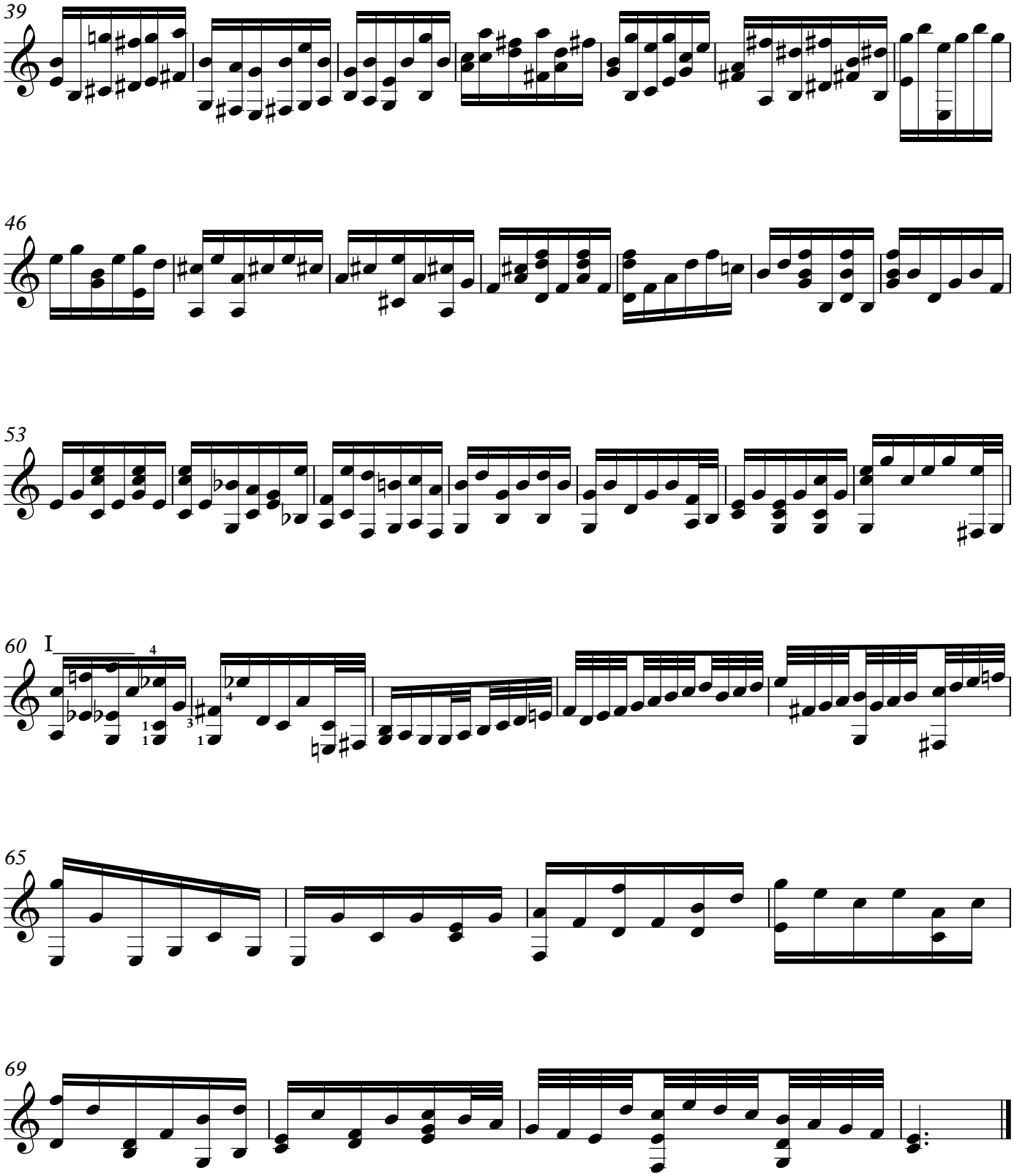
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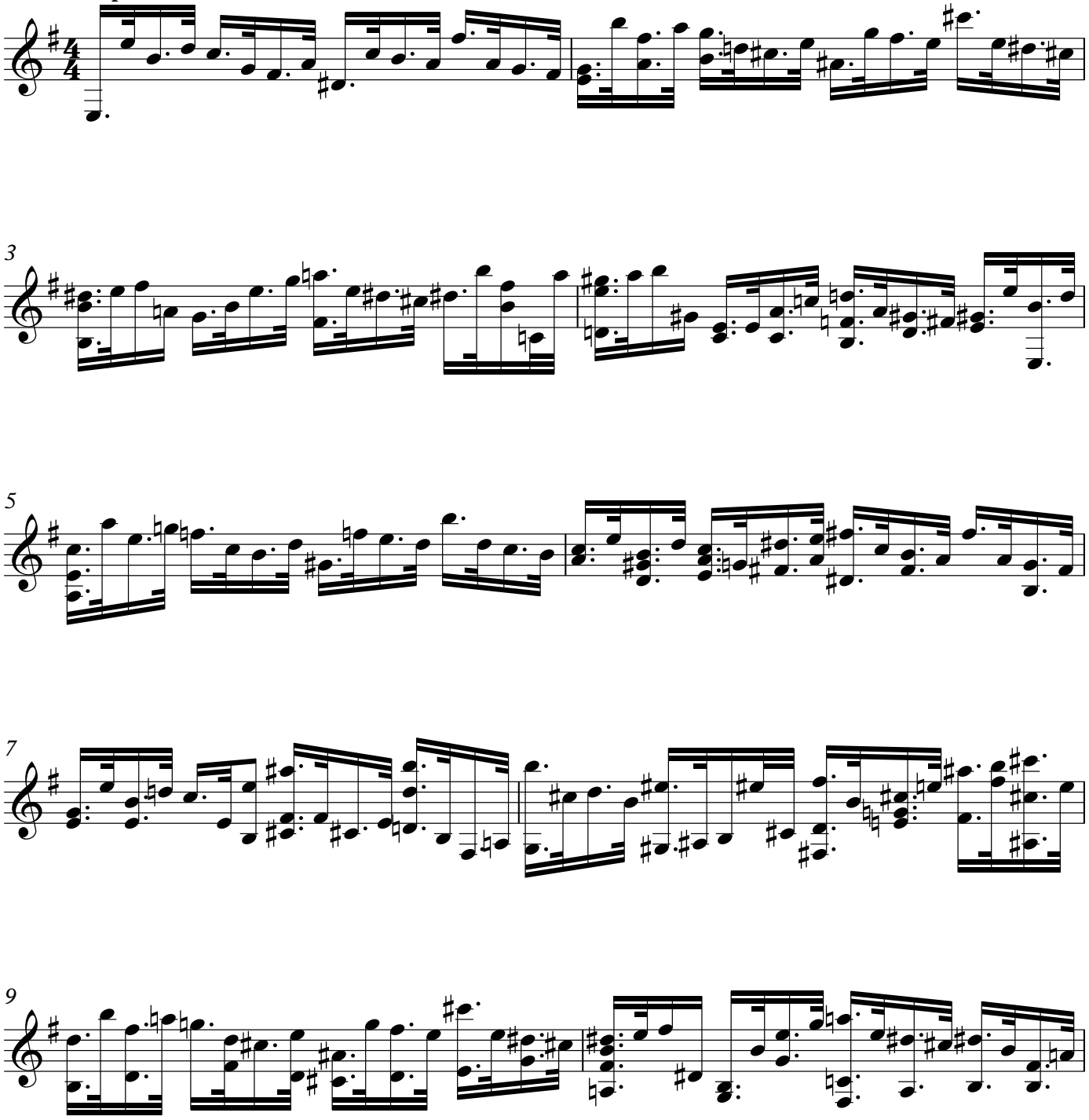
BWV 885 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Prelude No. 16 in G minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 3rd fret



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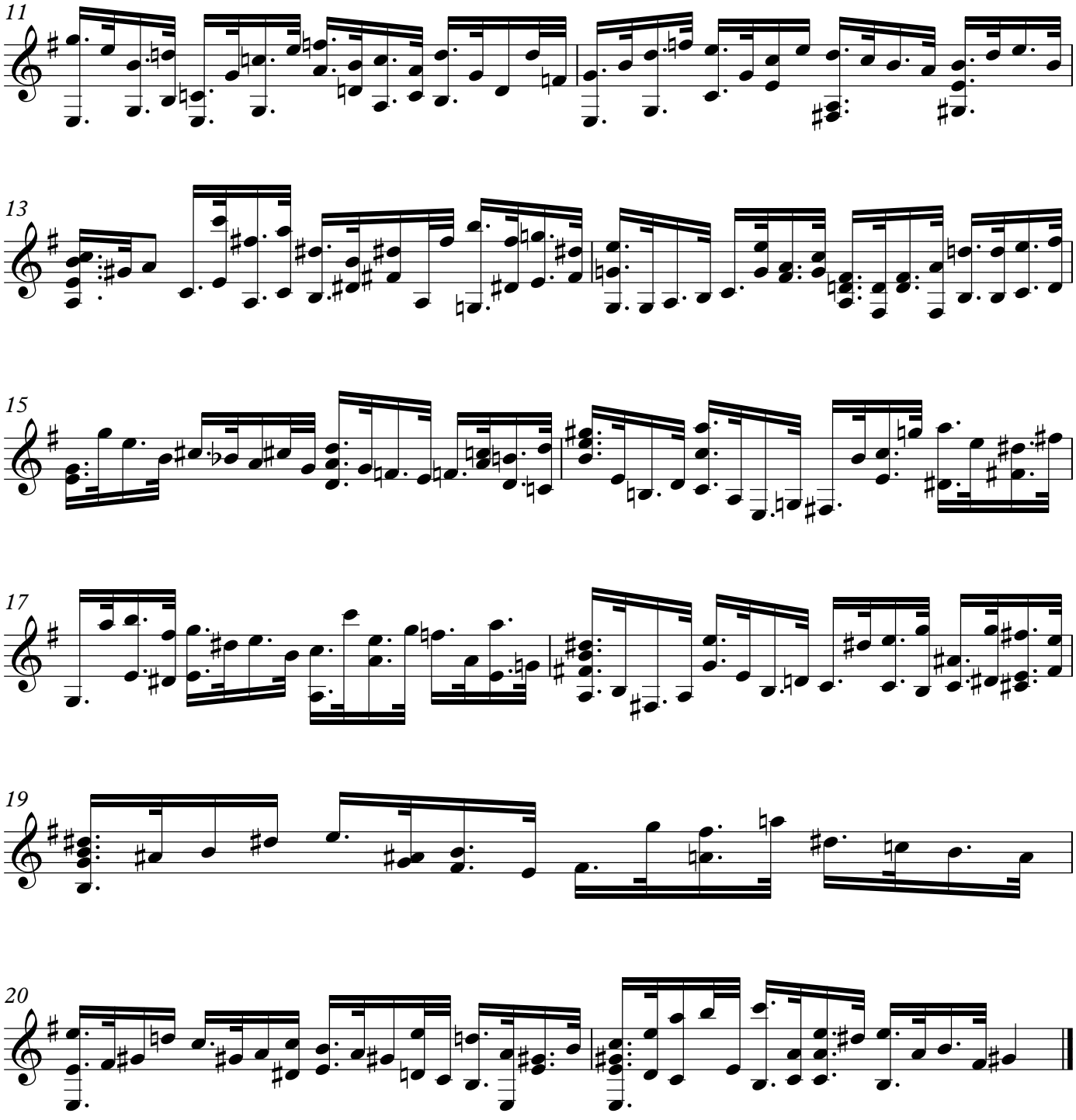
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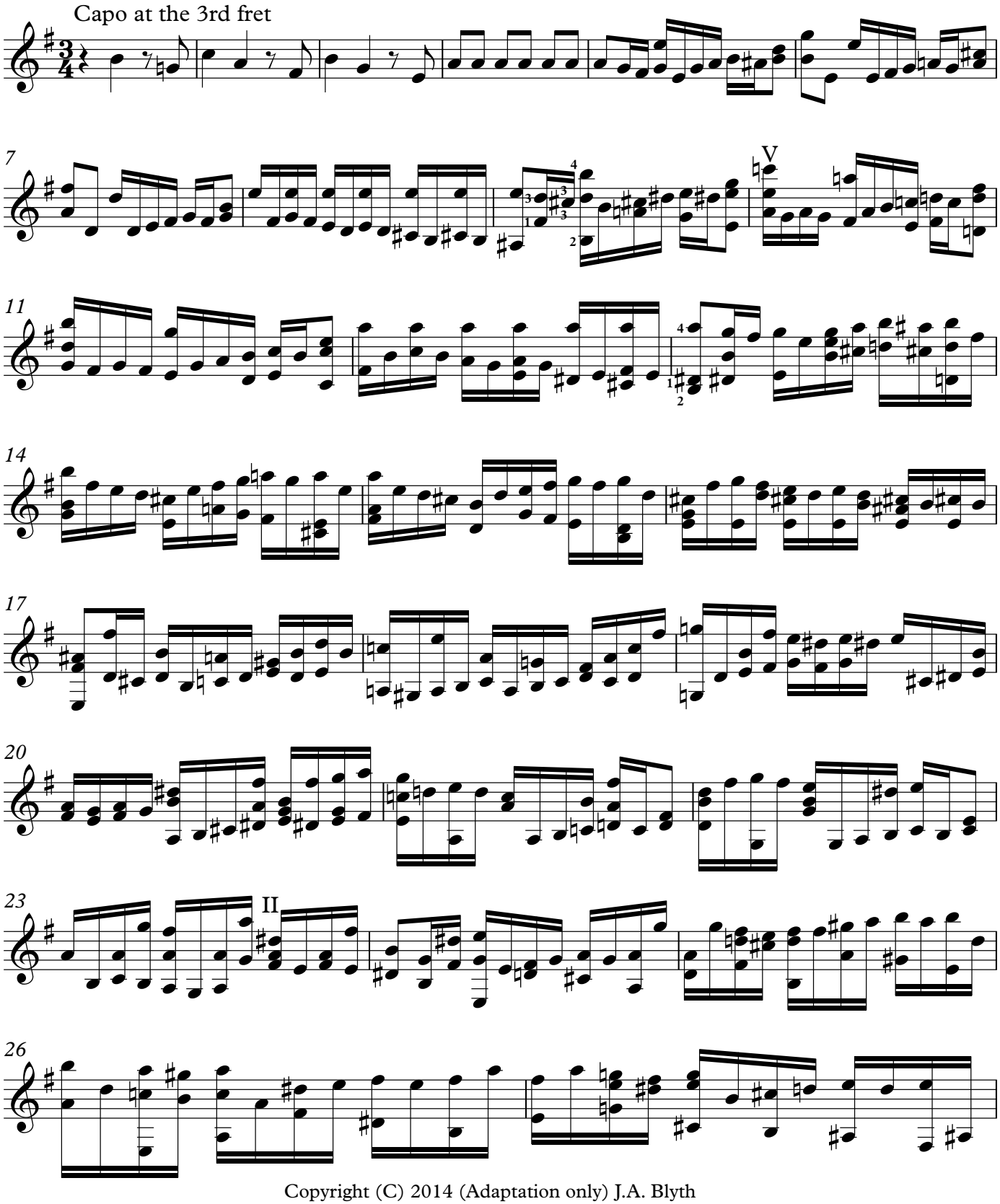
BWV 885 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Fugue No. 16 in G minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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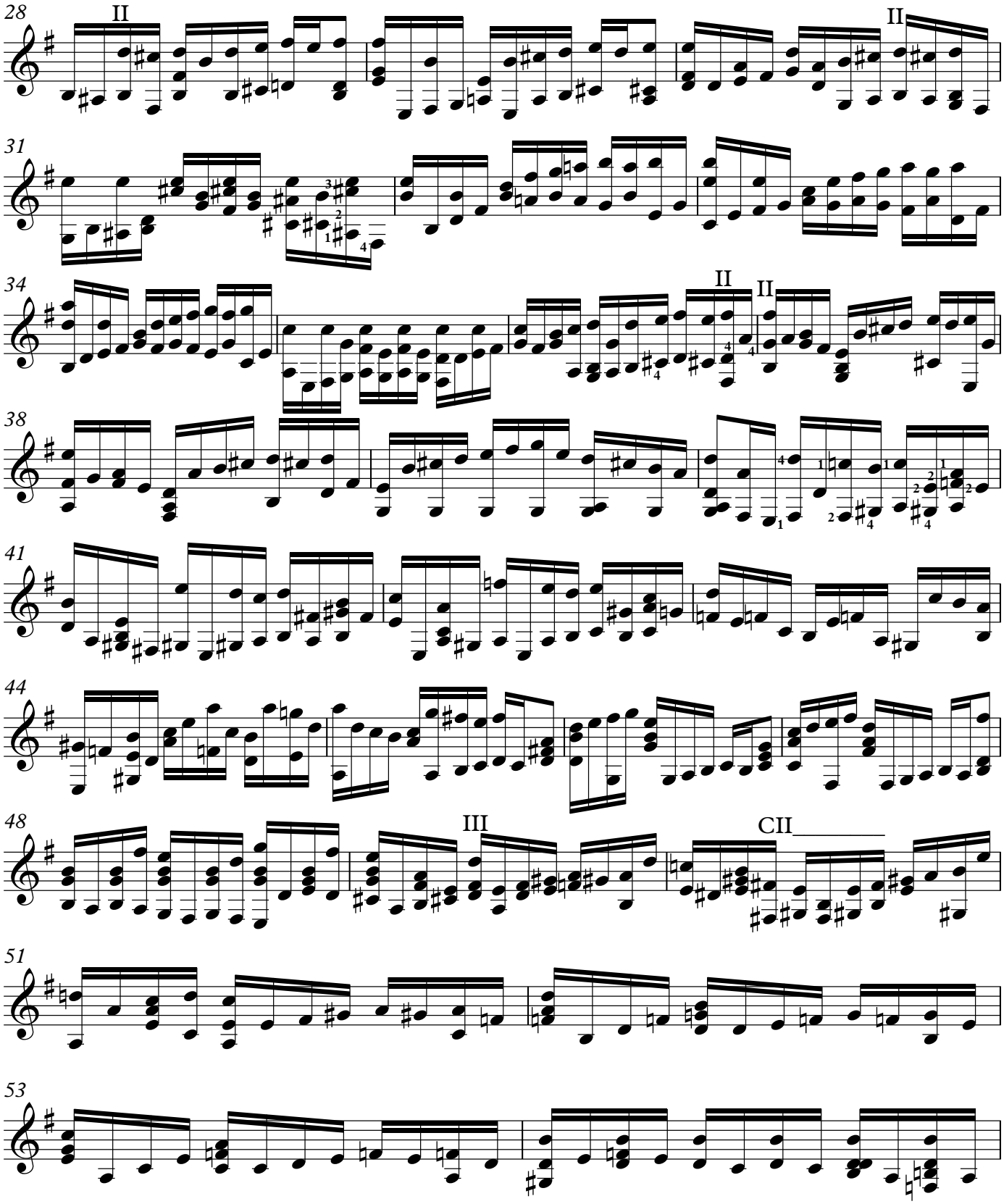
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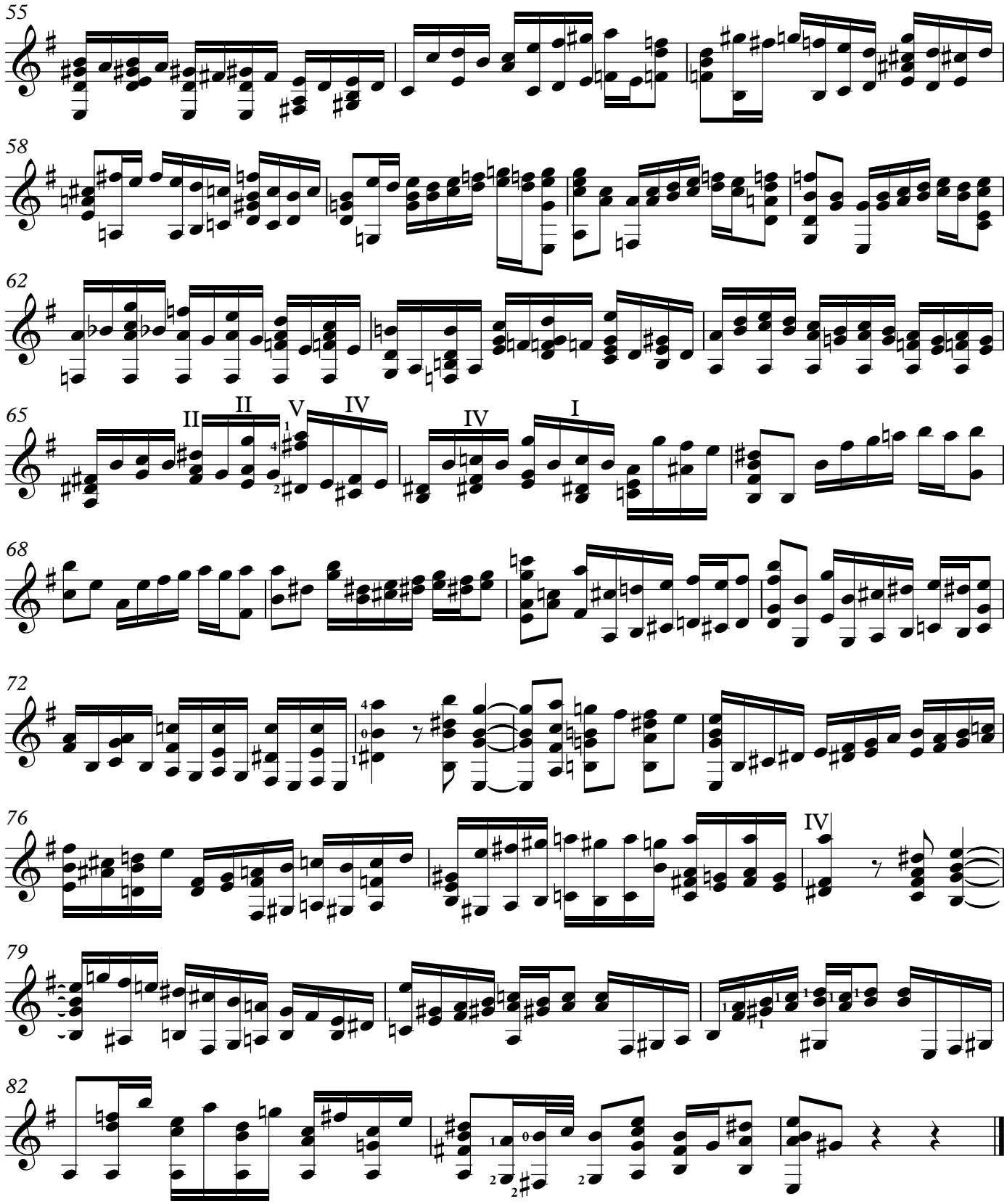
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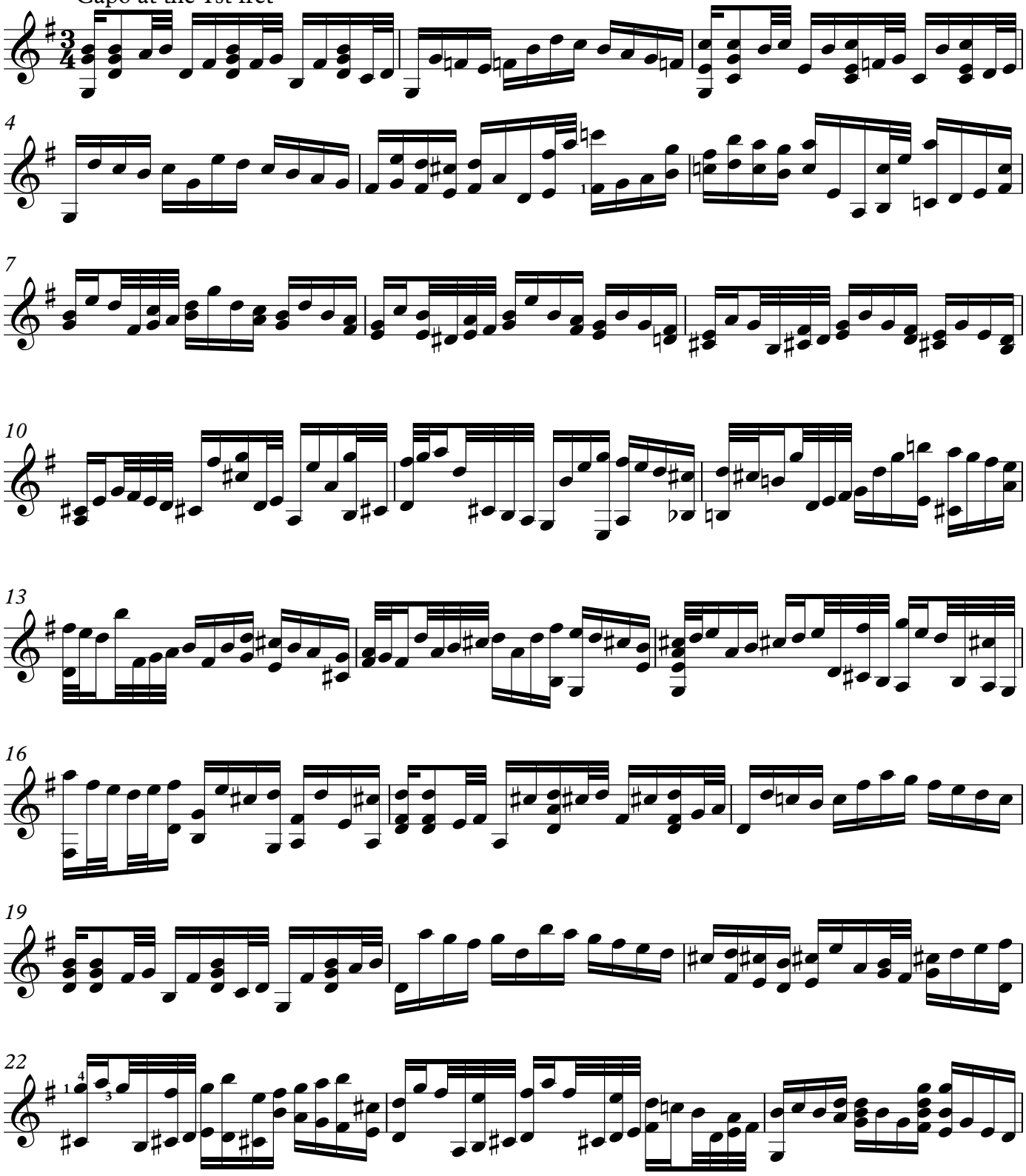
BWV 886 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Prelude No. 17 in A-flat major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 1st fret



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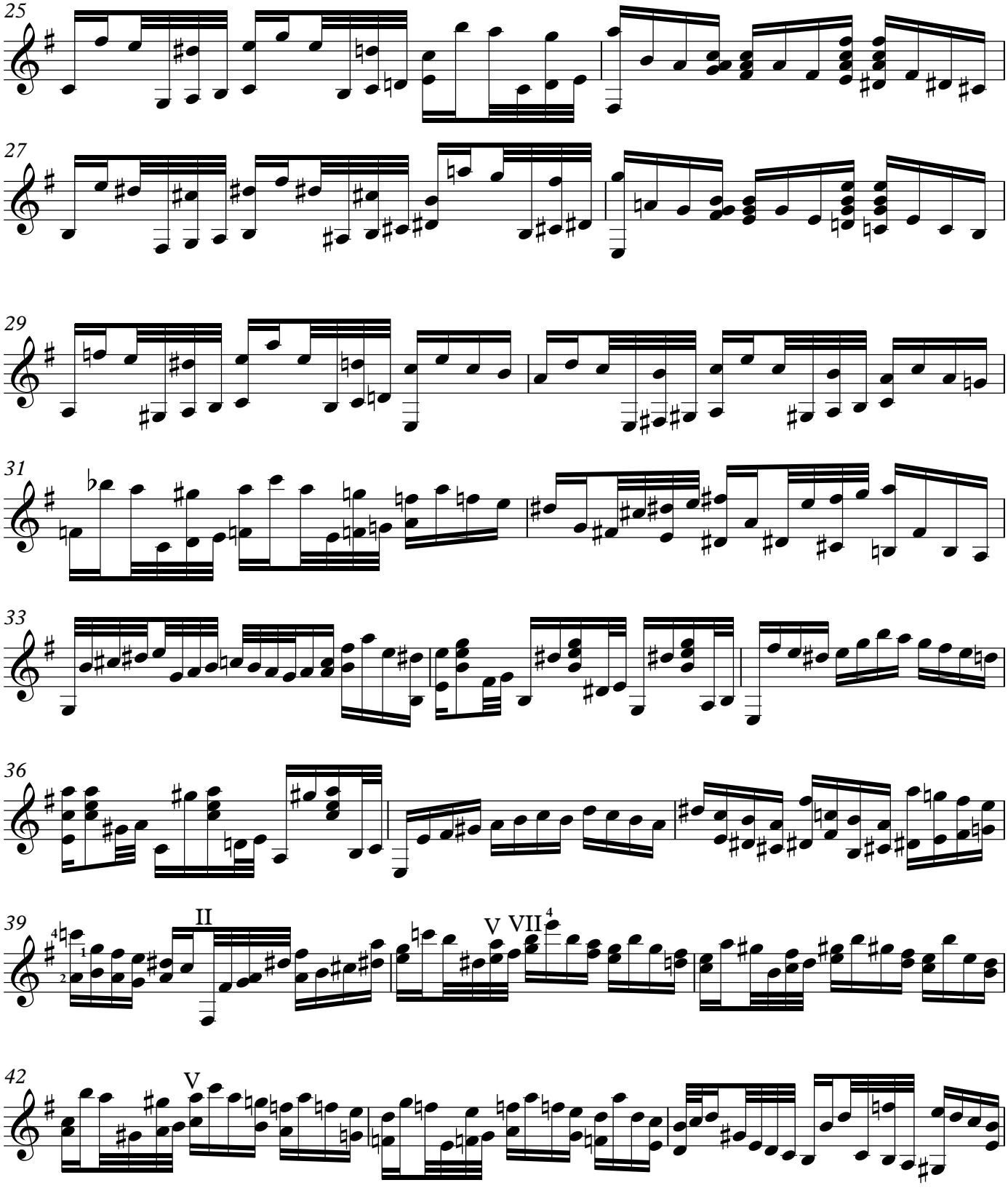
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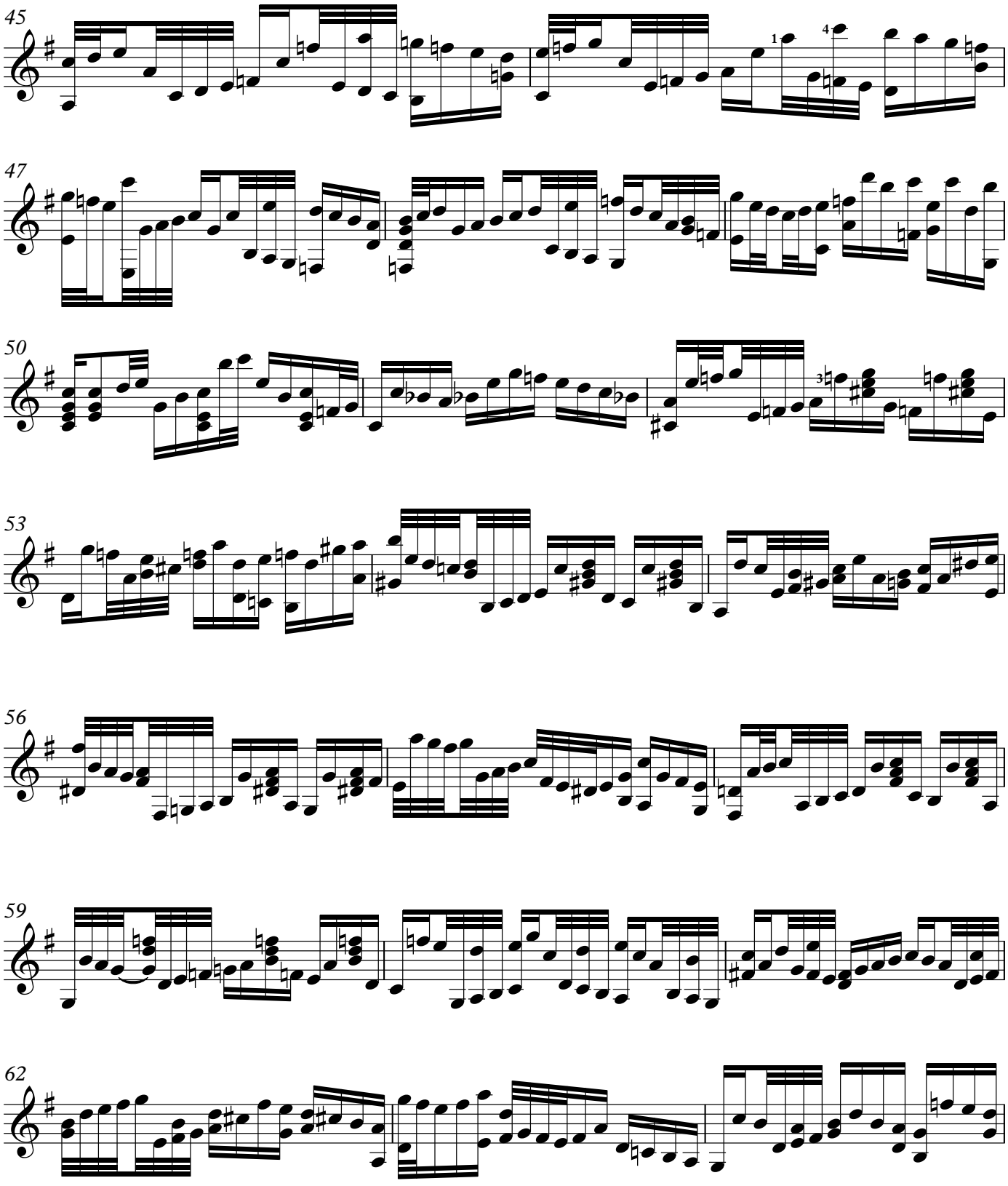
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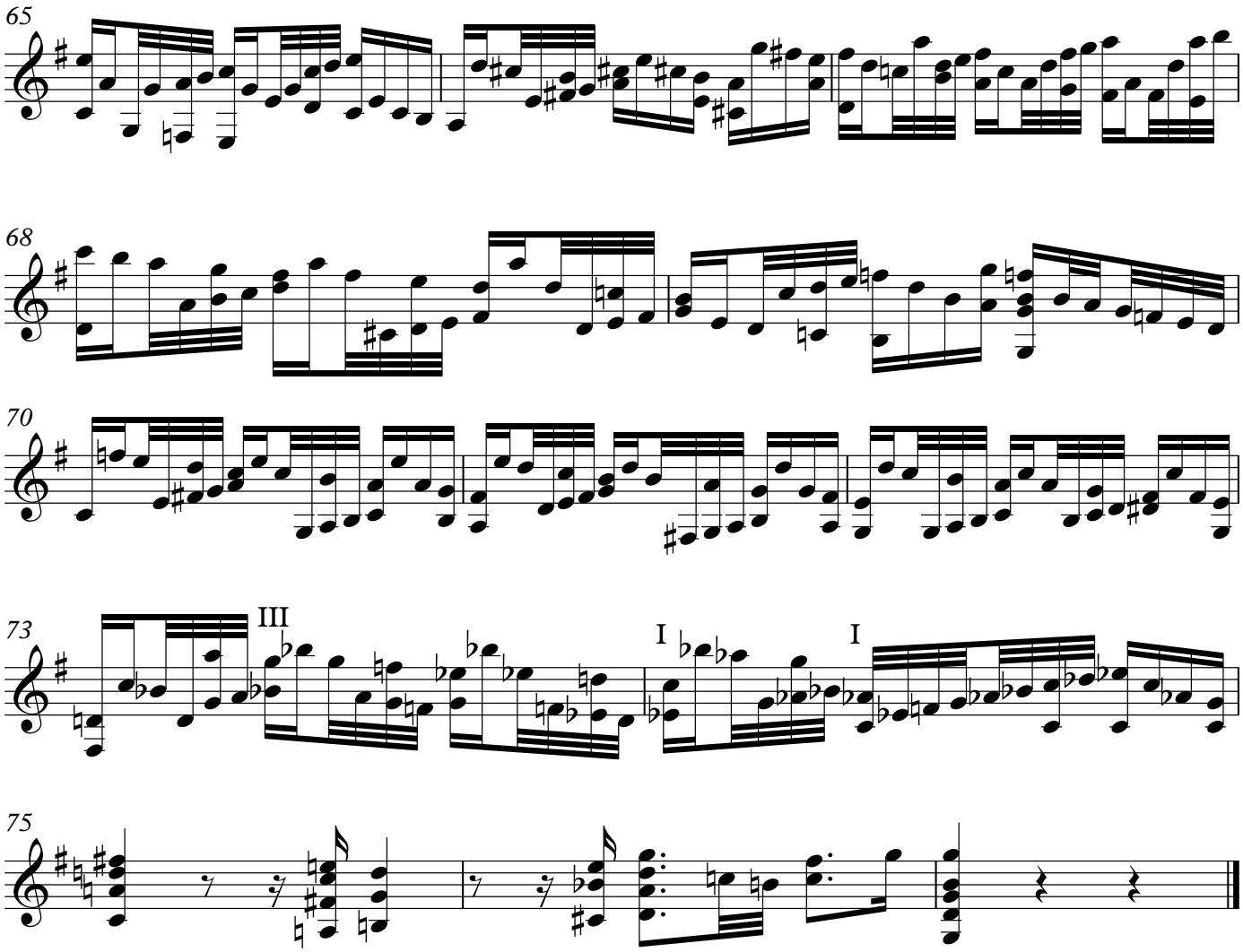
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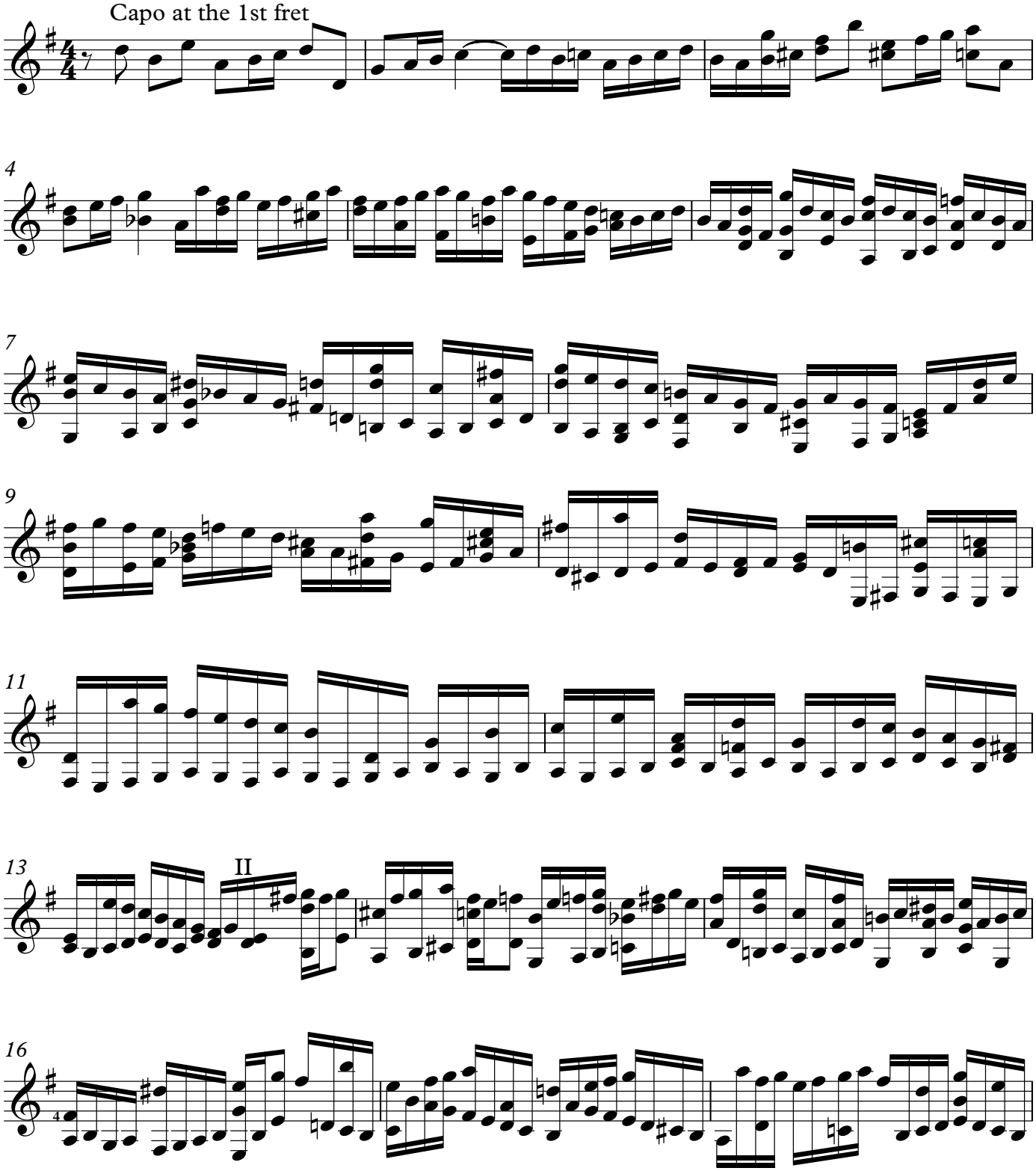
BWV 886 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Fugue No. 17 in A-flat major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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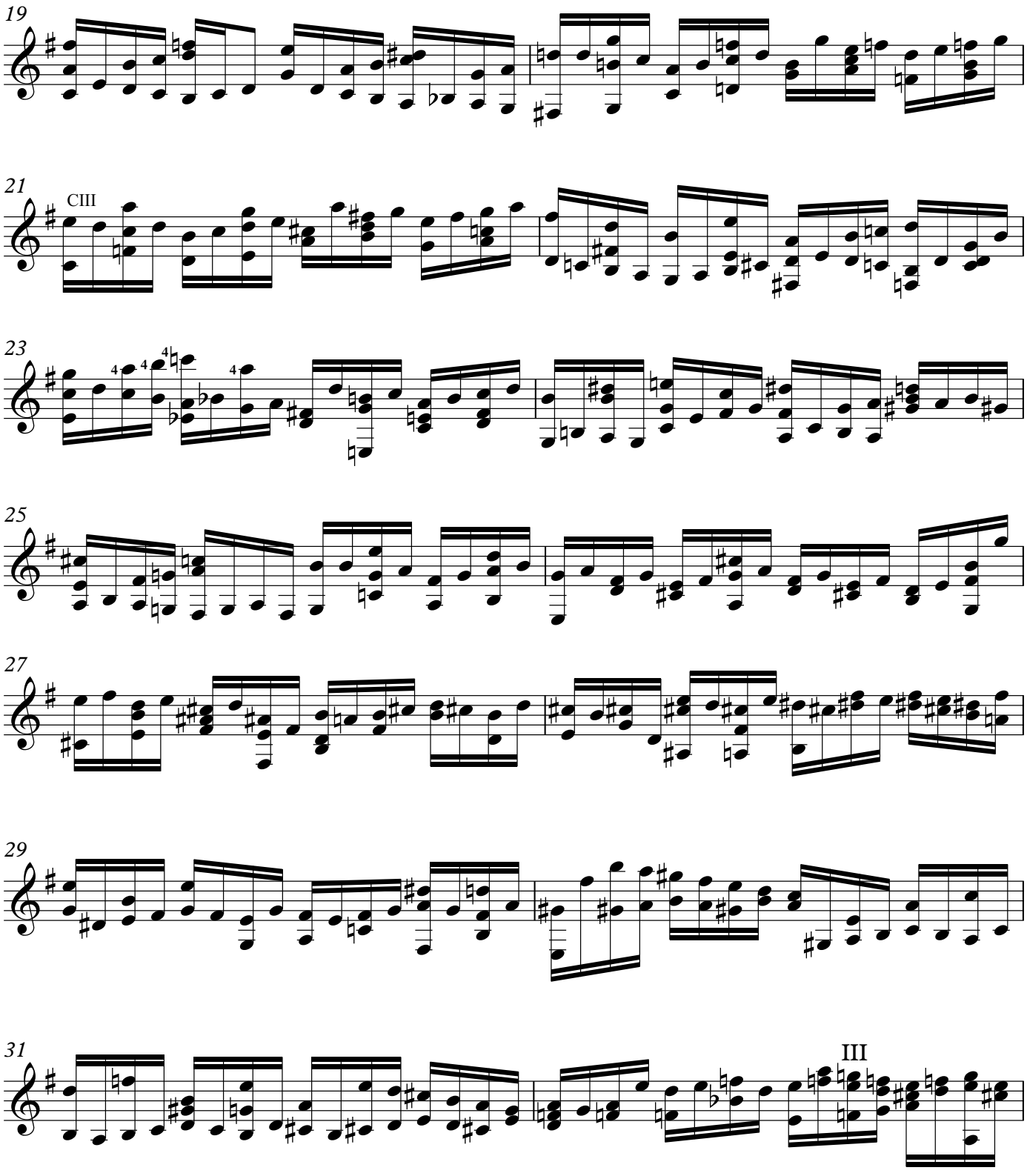
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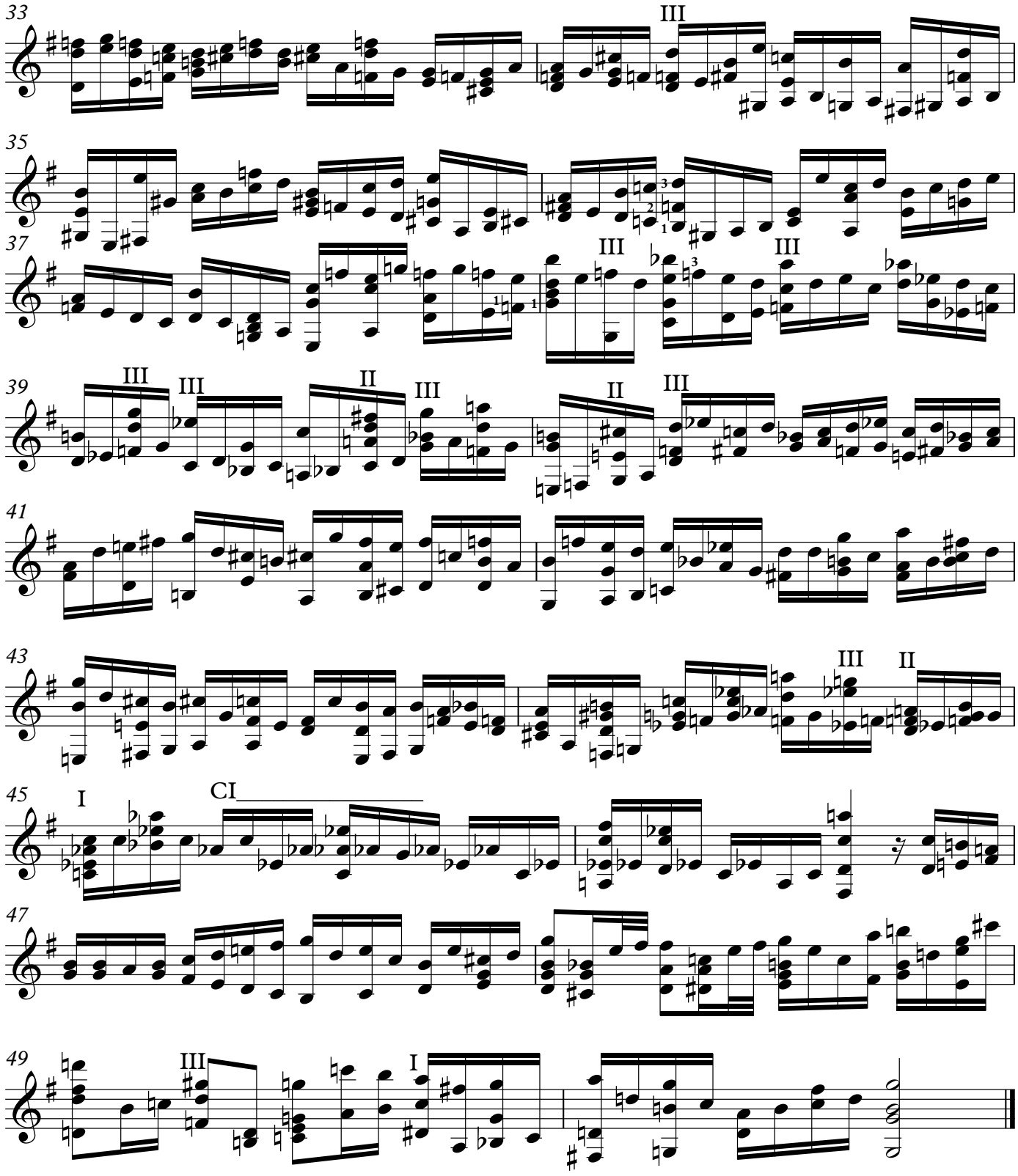
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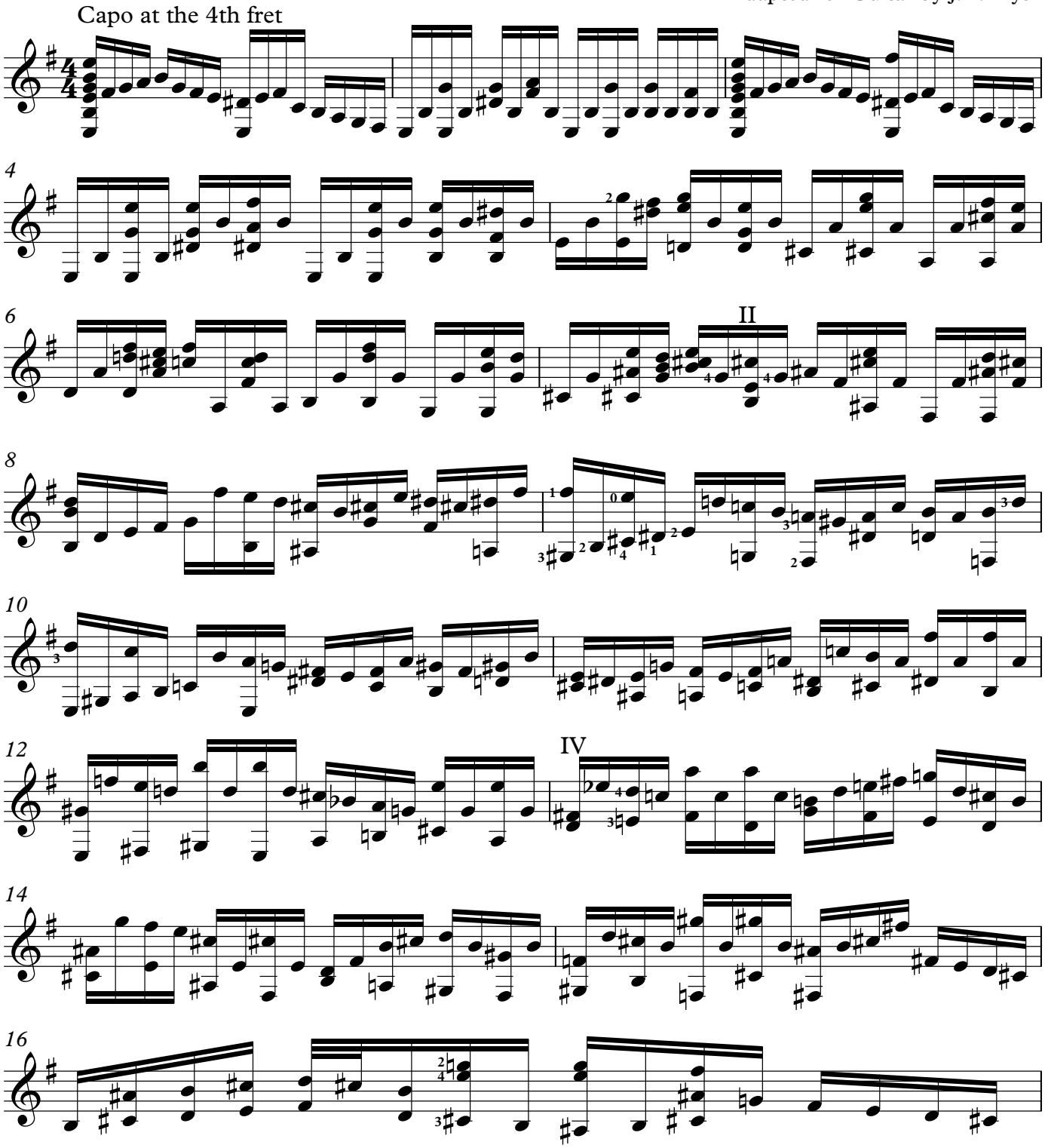
BWV 887 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Prelude No. 18 in G-sharp minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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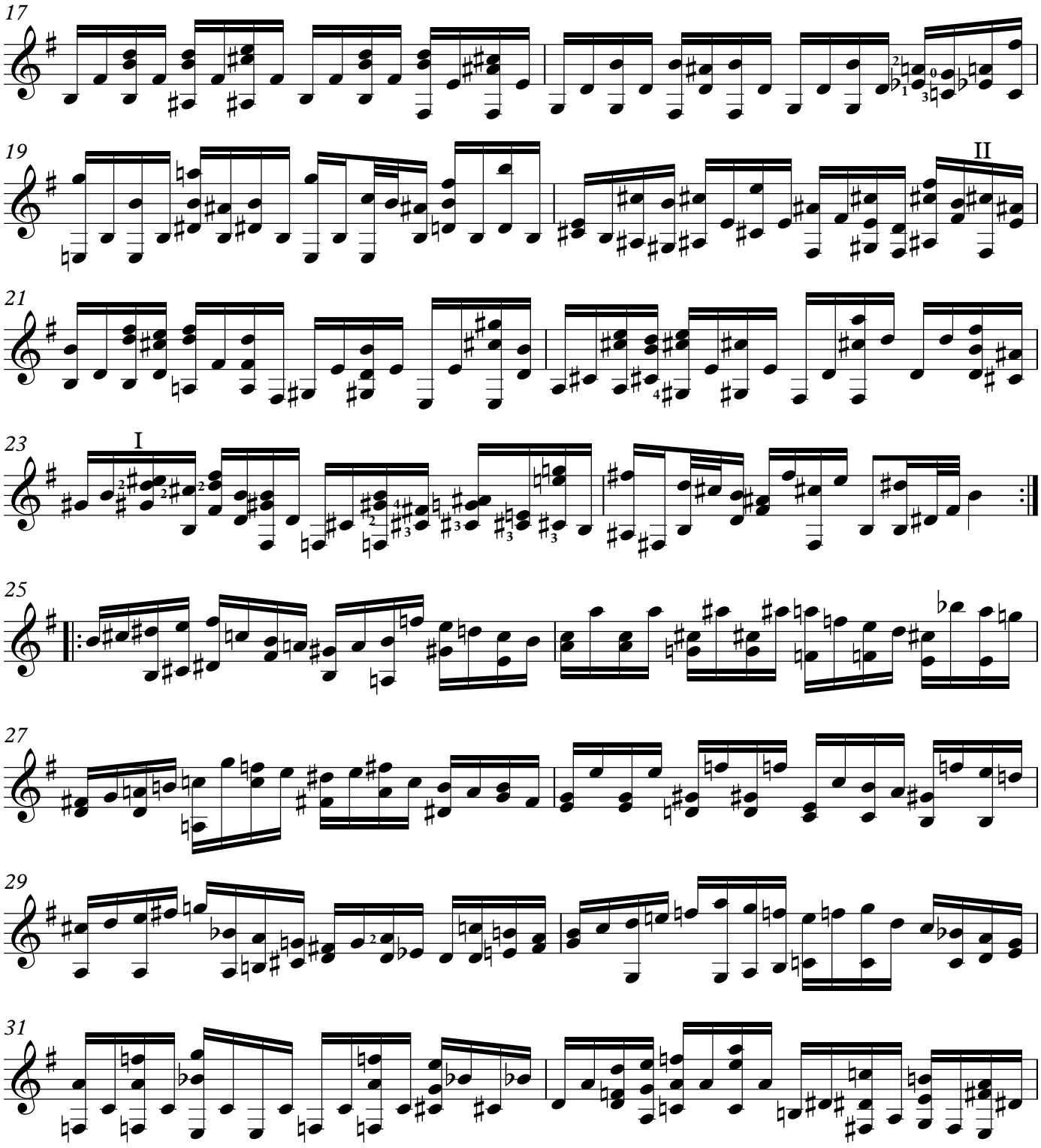
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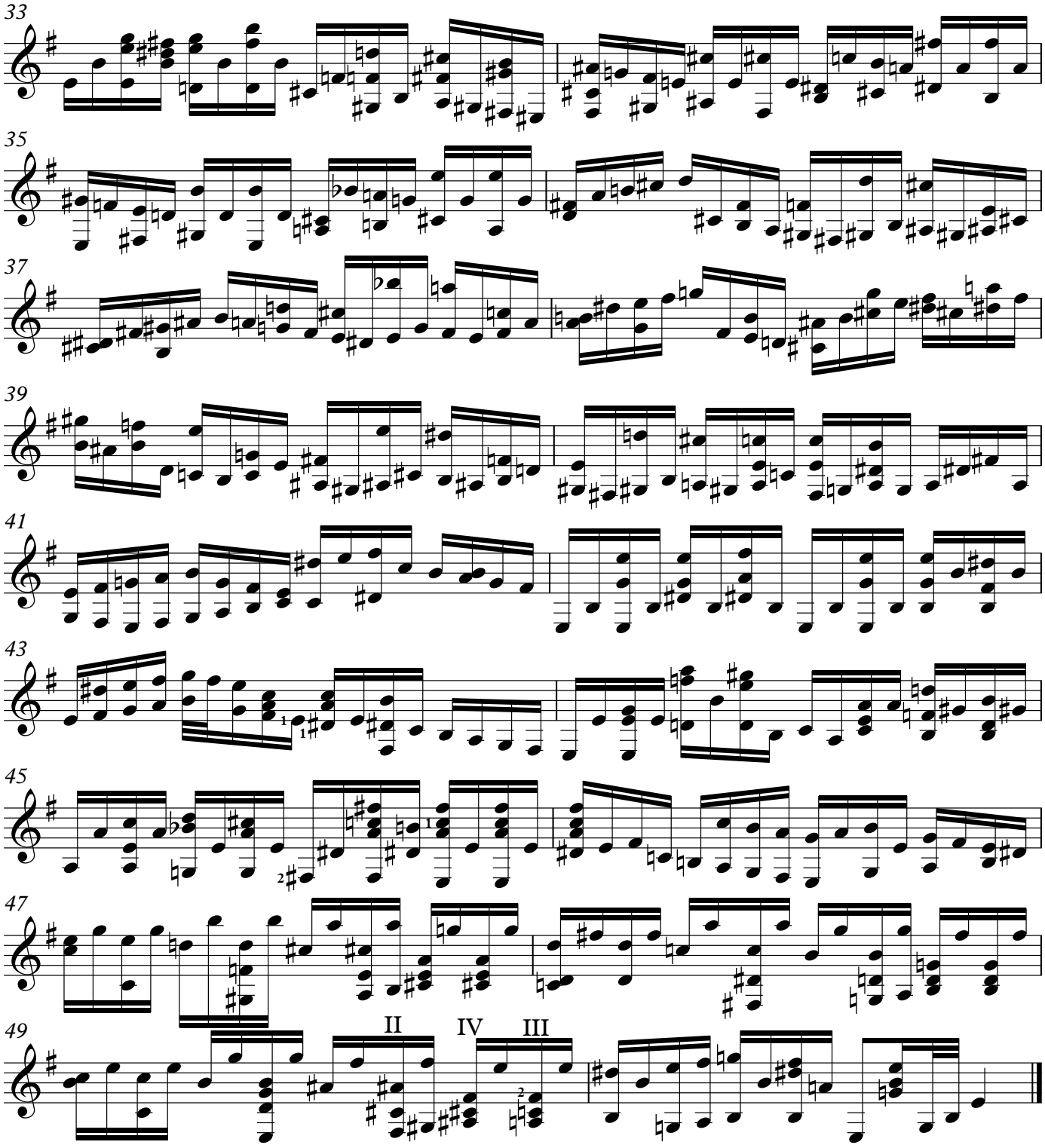
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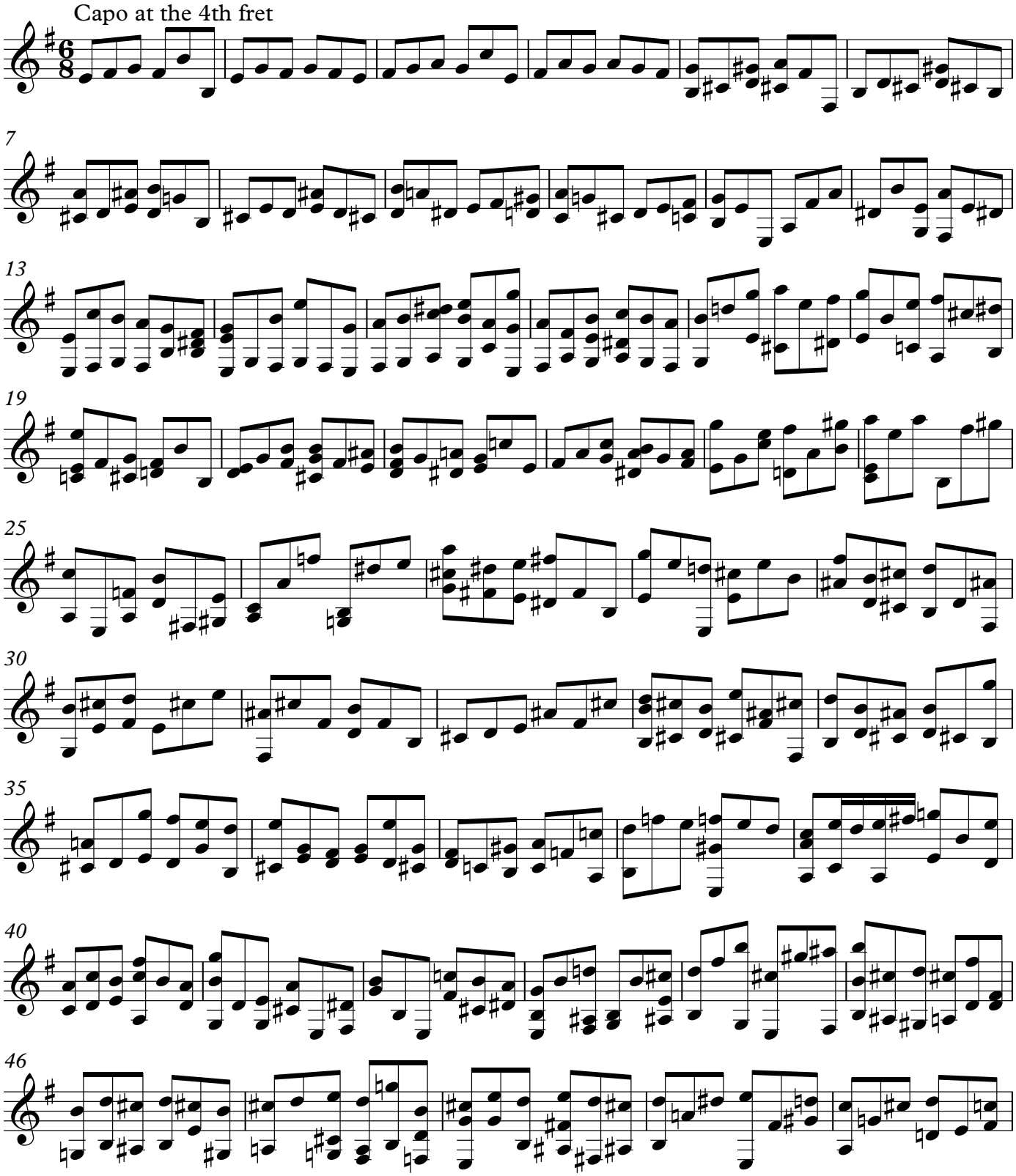
BWV 887 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Fugue No. 18 in G-sharp minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 4th fret



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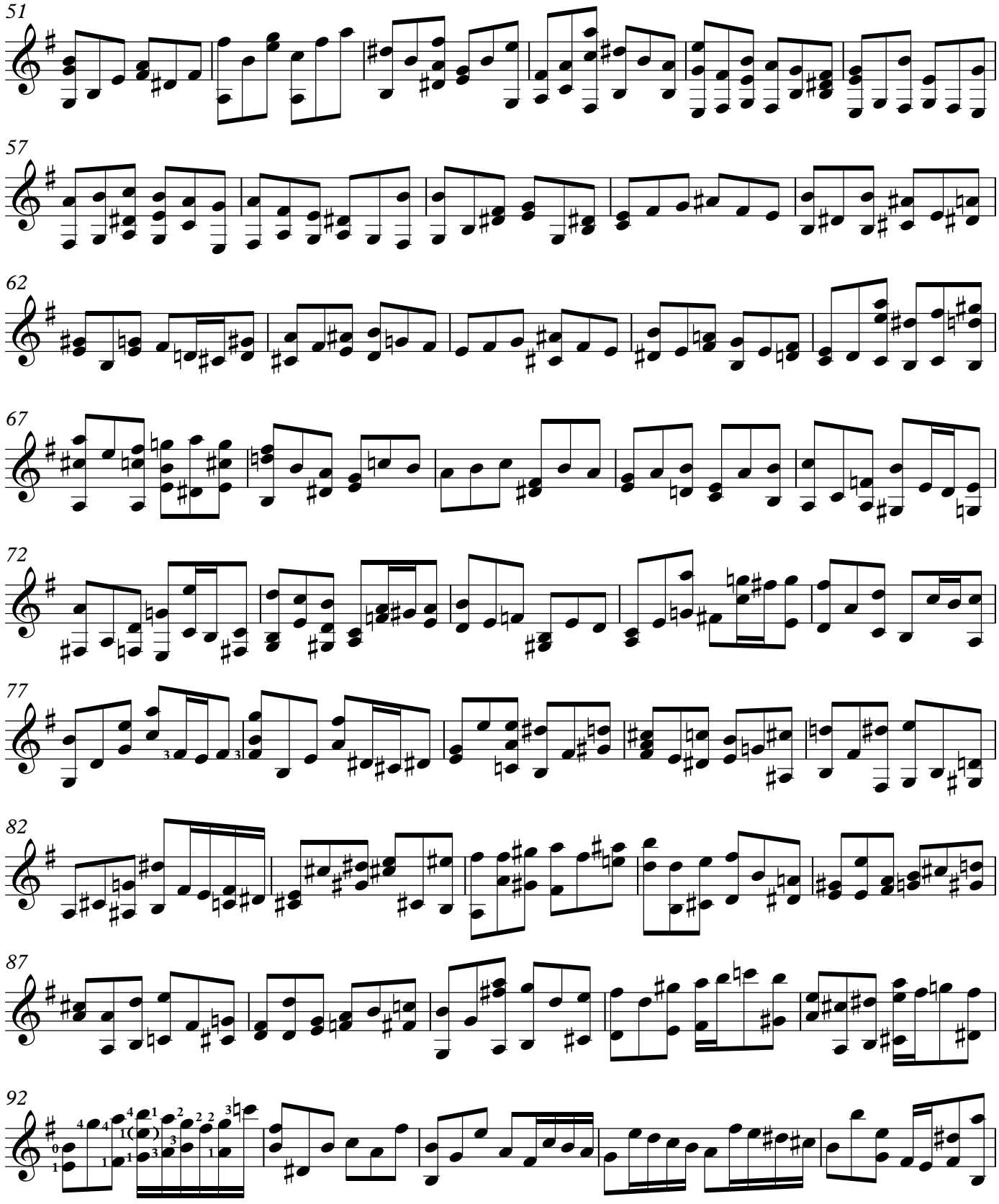
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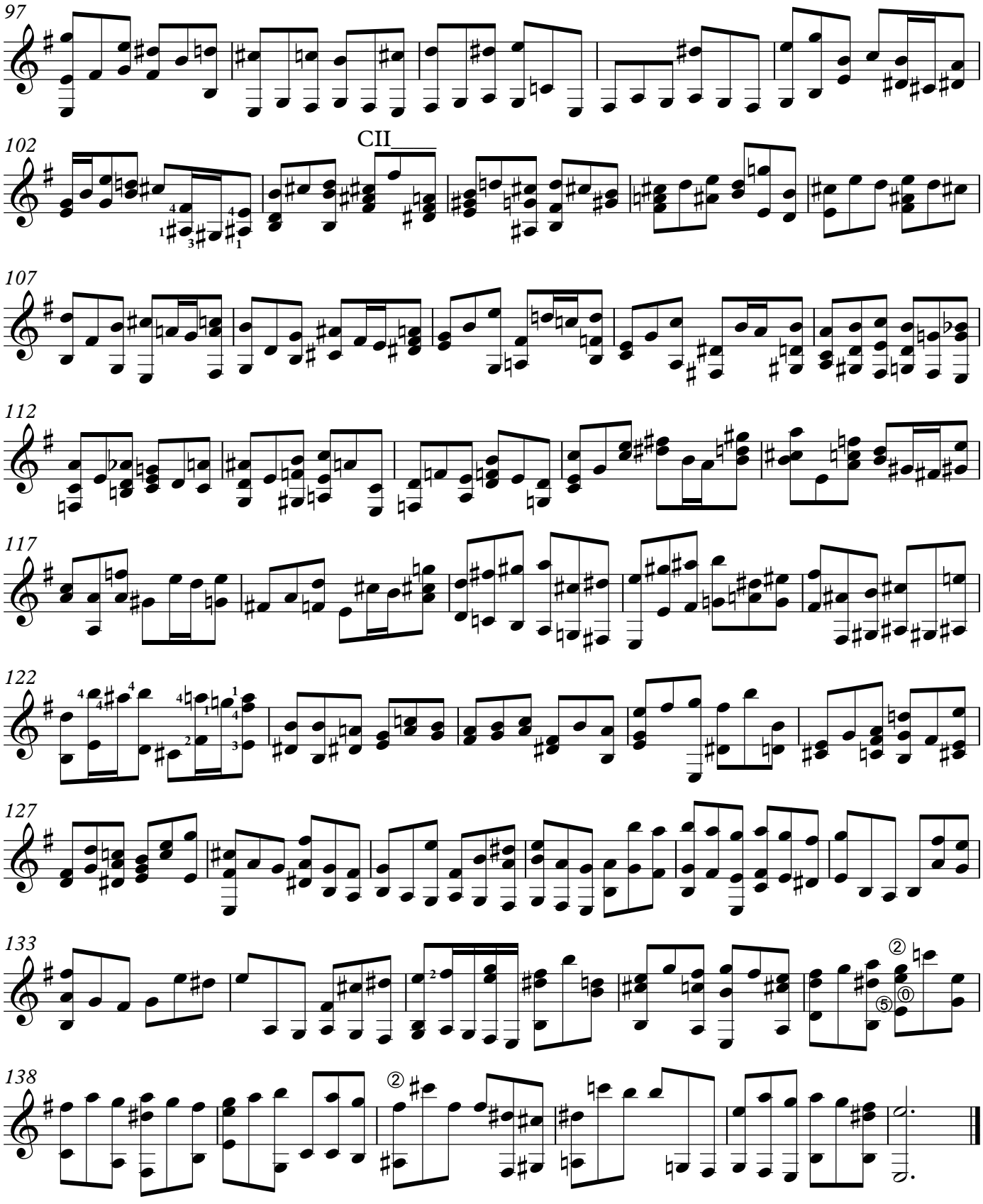
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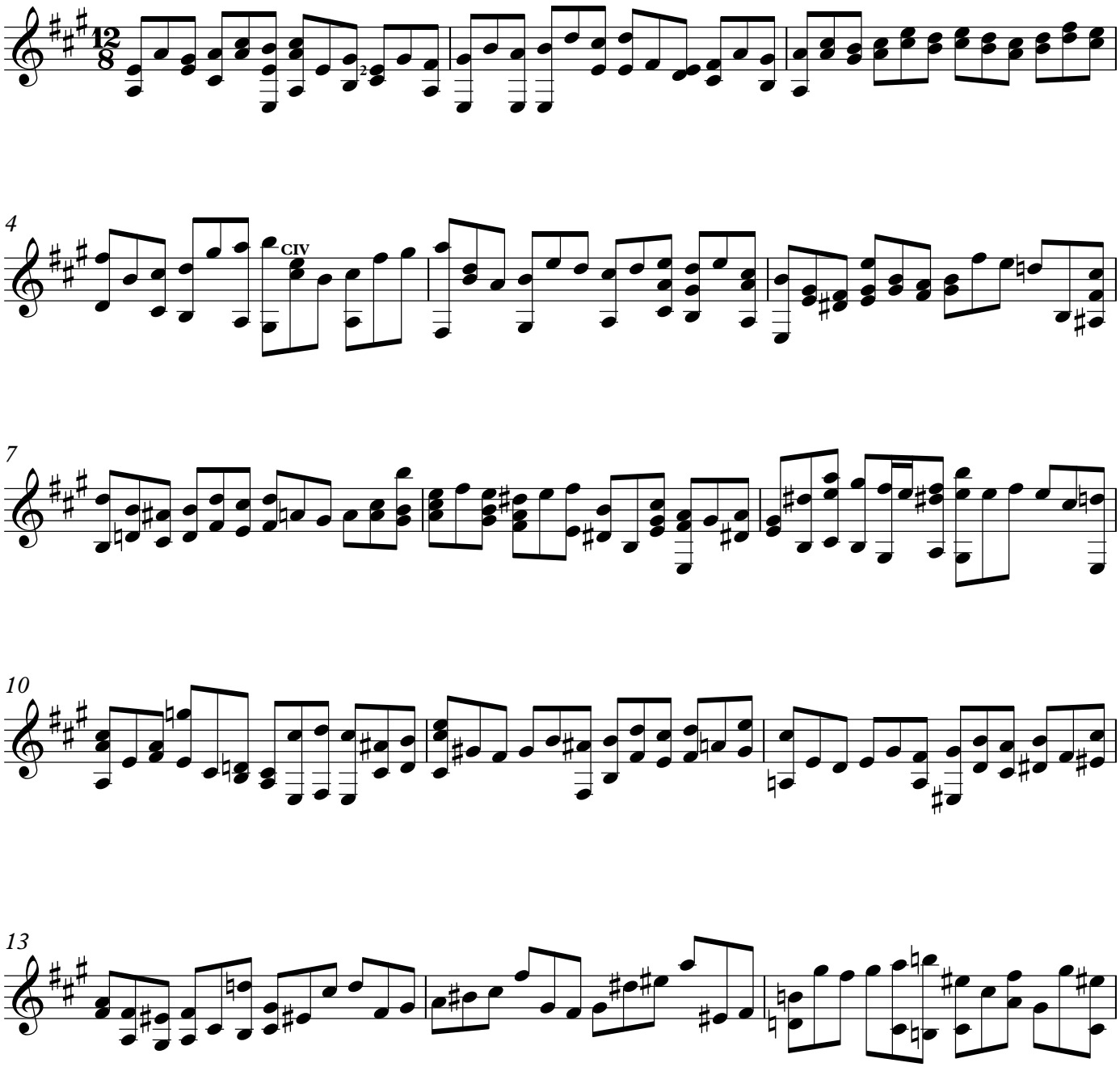
BWV 888 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Prelude No. 19 in A major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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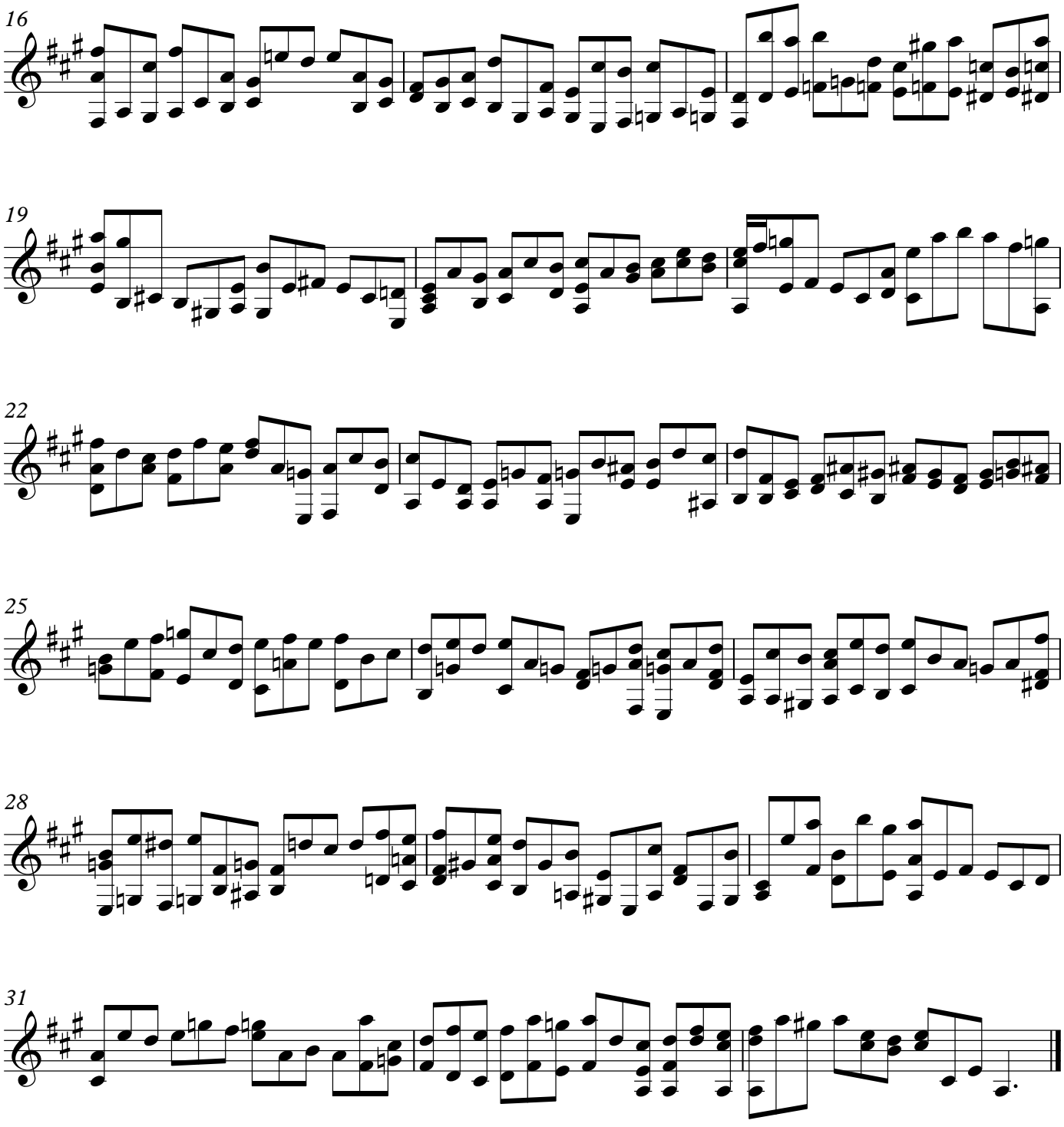
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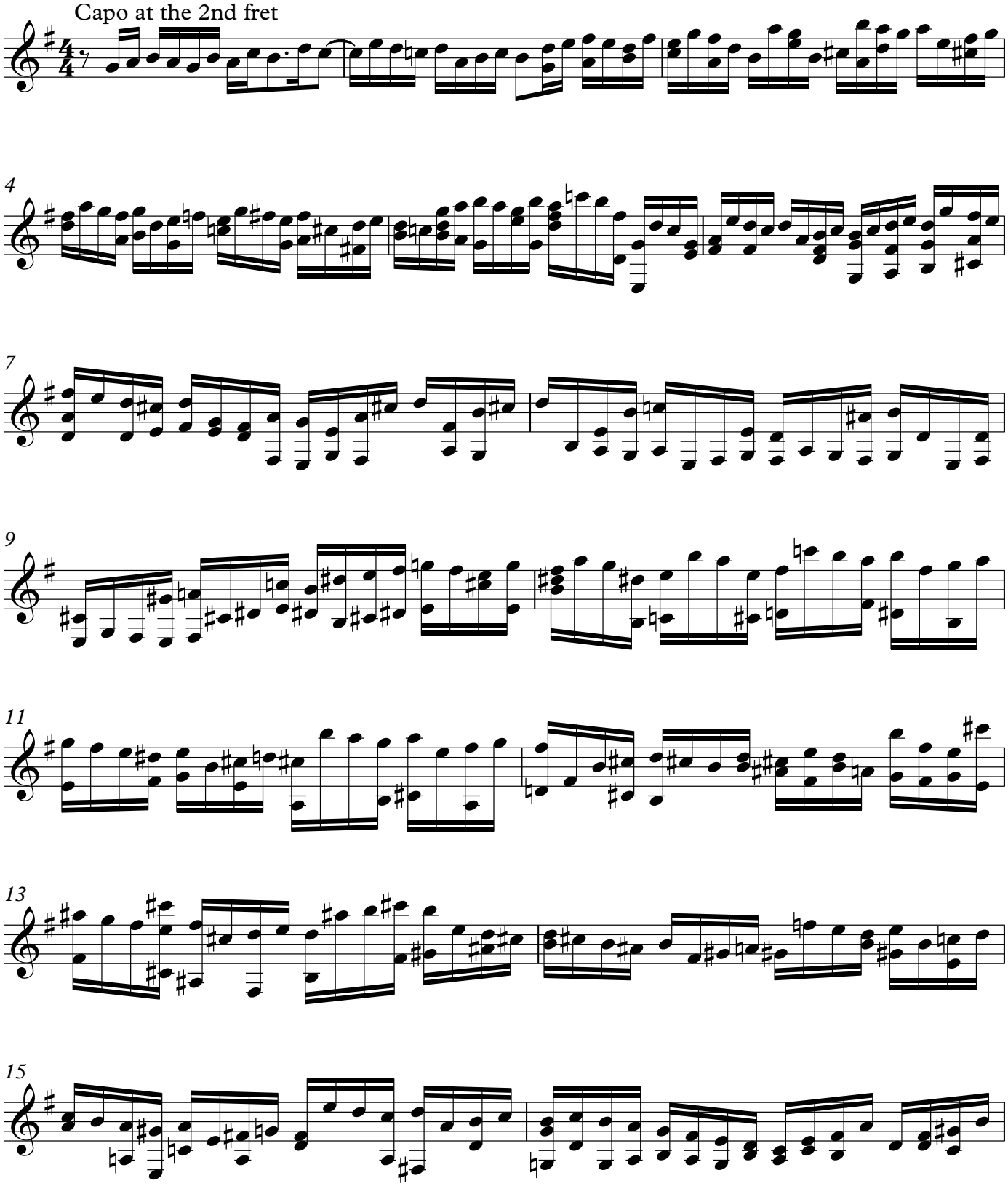
BWV 888 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Fugue No. 19 in A major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 2nd fret



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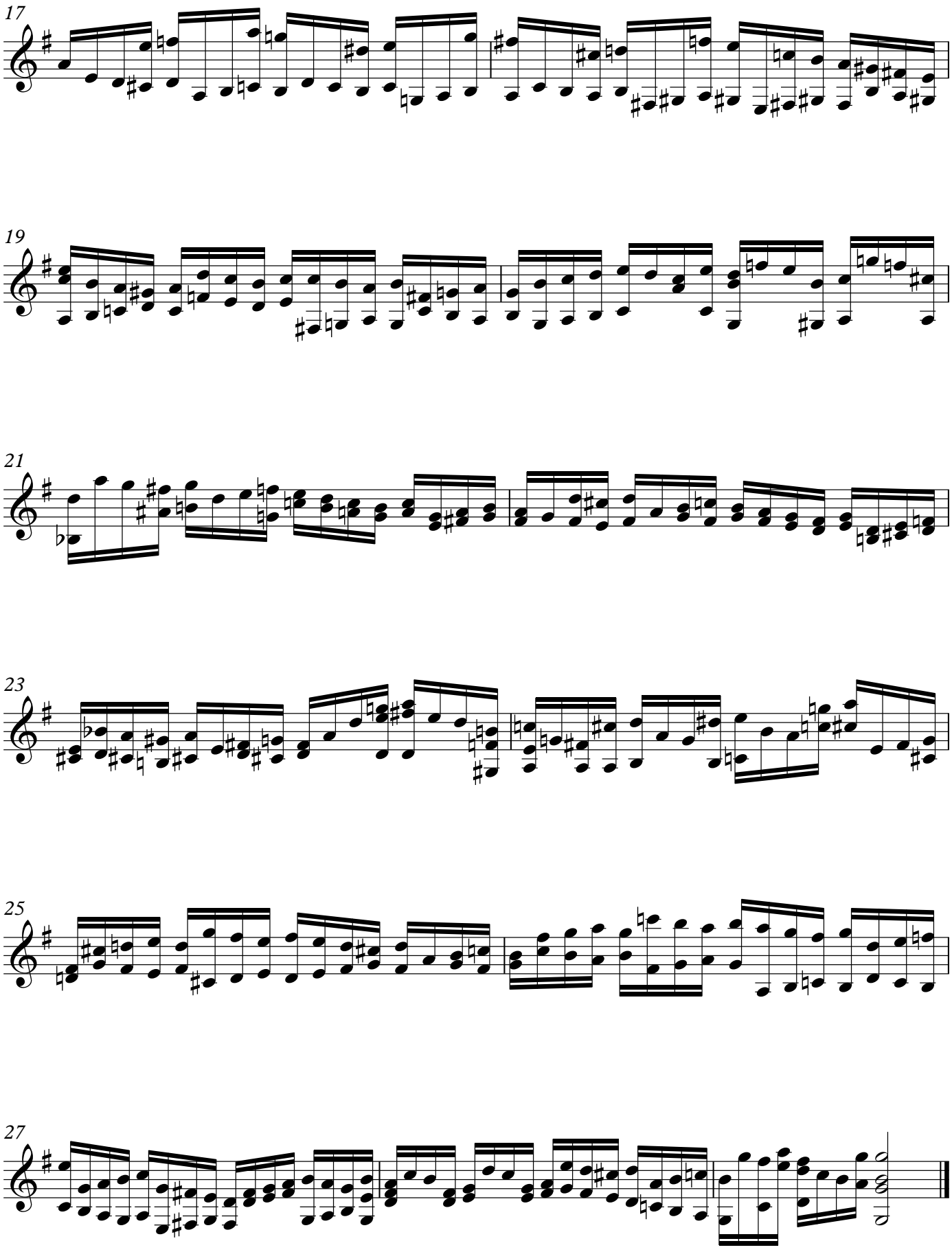
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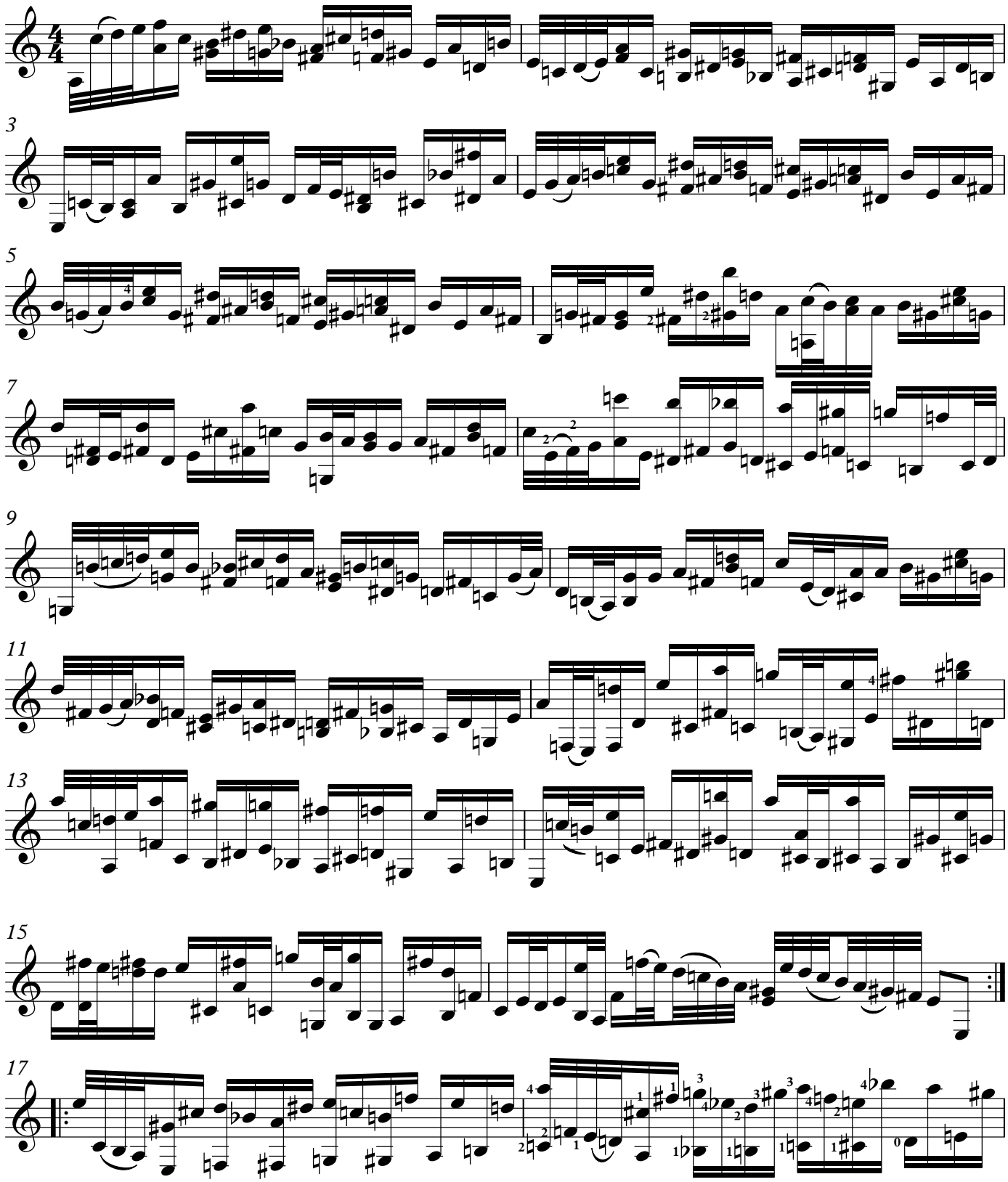
BWV 889 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Prelude No. 20 in A minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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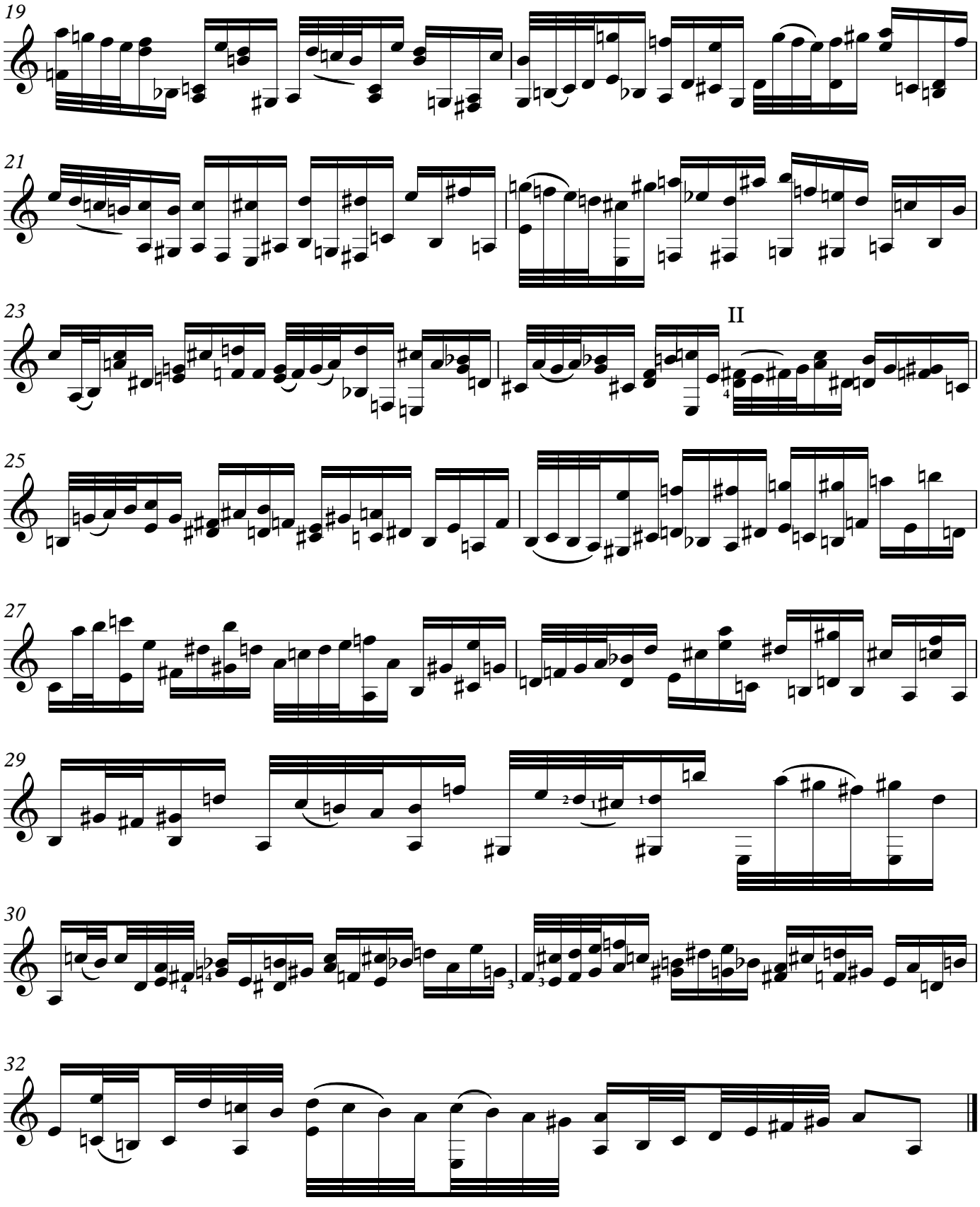
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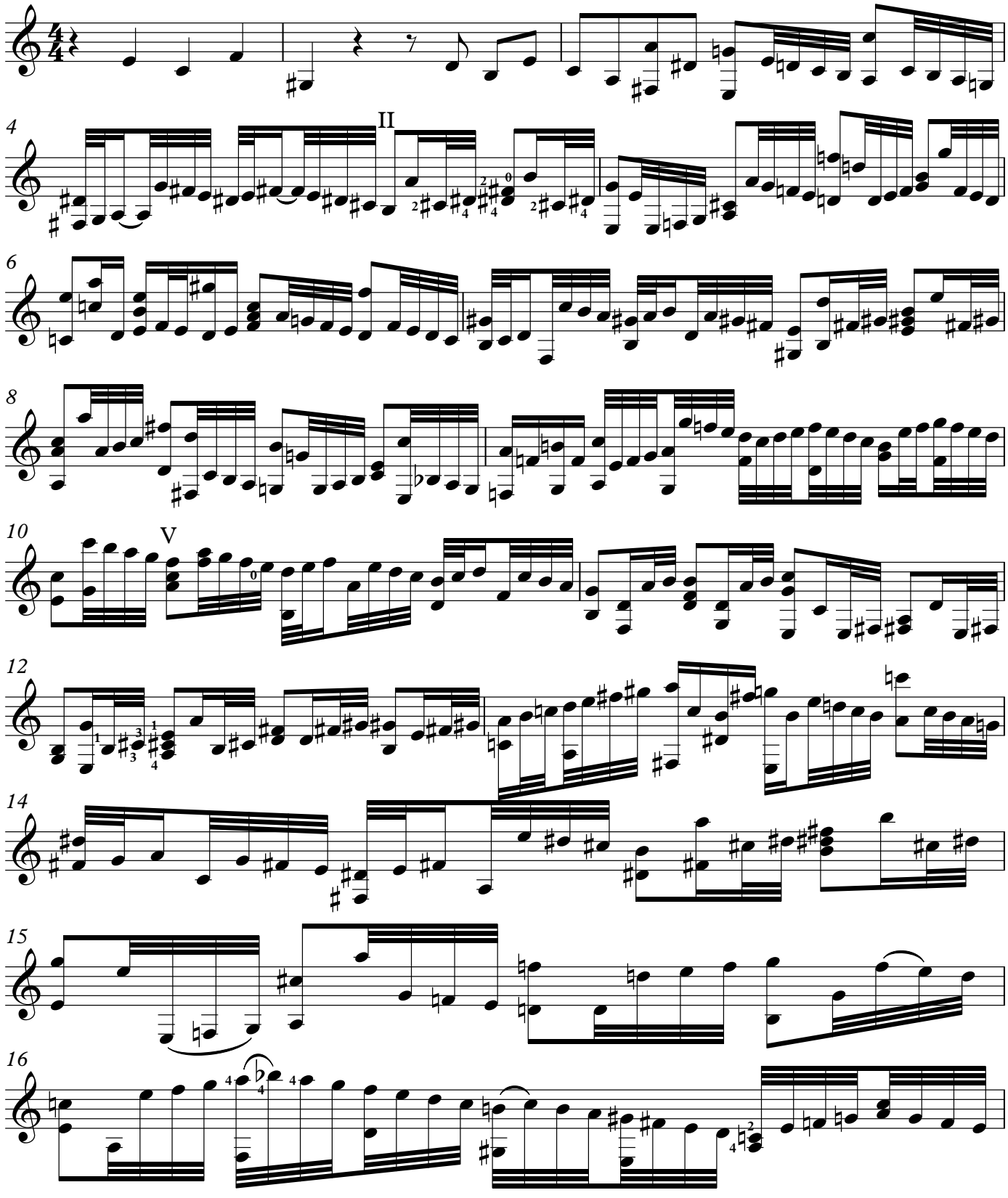
BWV 889 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Fugue No. 20 in A minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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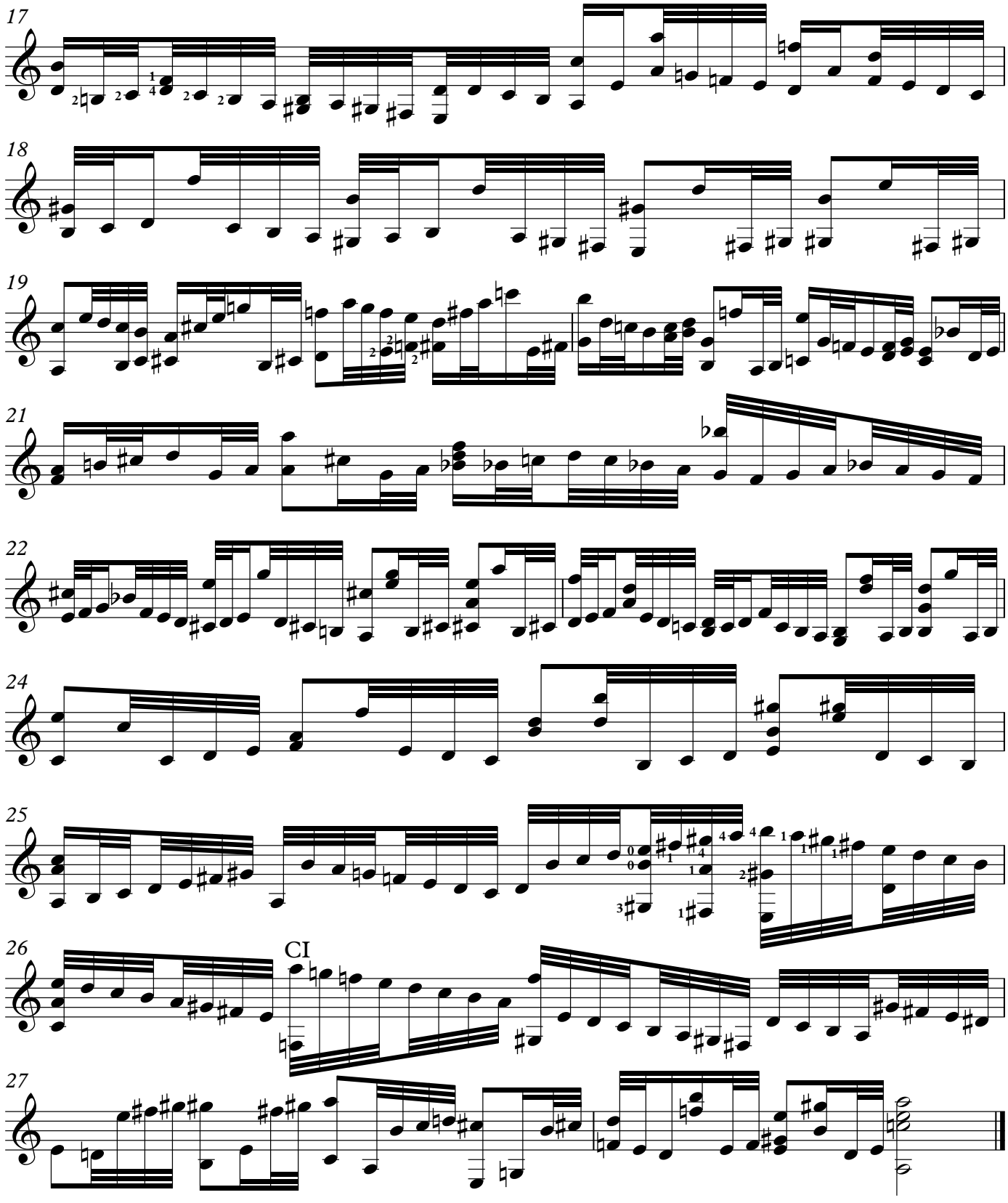
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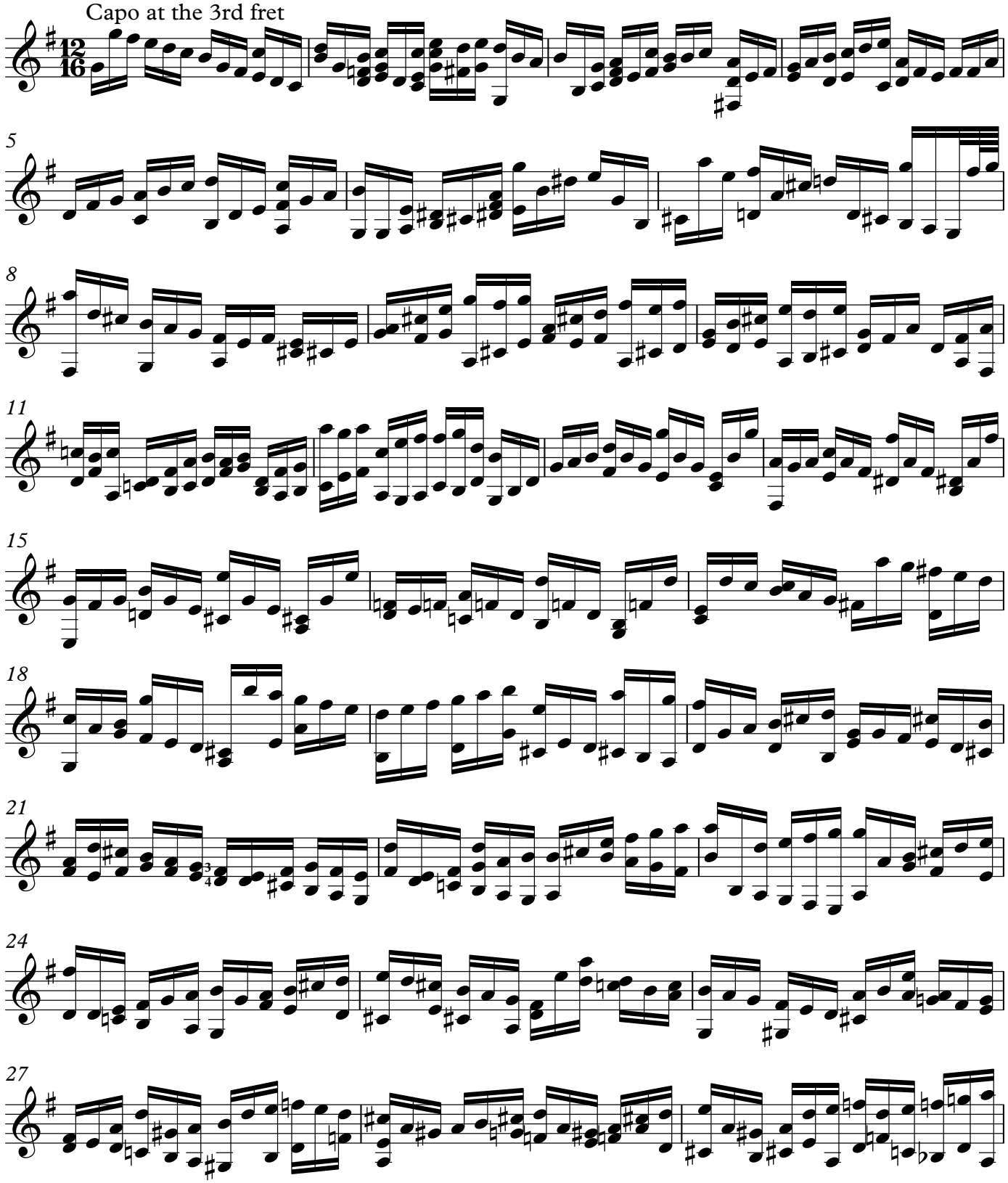
BWV 890 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Prelude No. 21 in B-flat major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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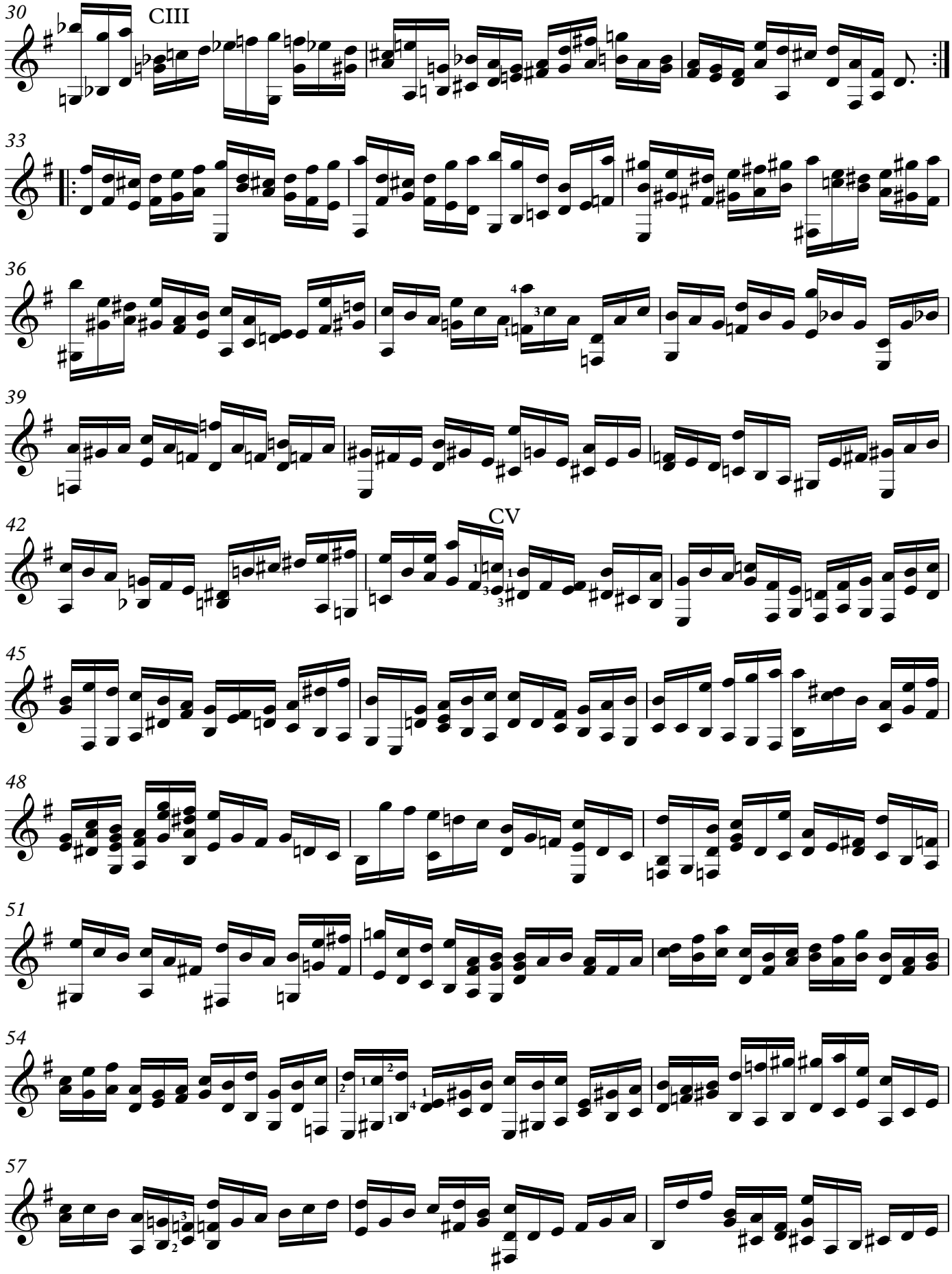
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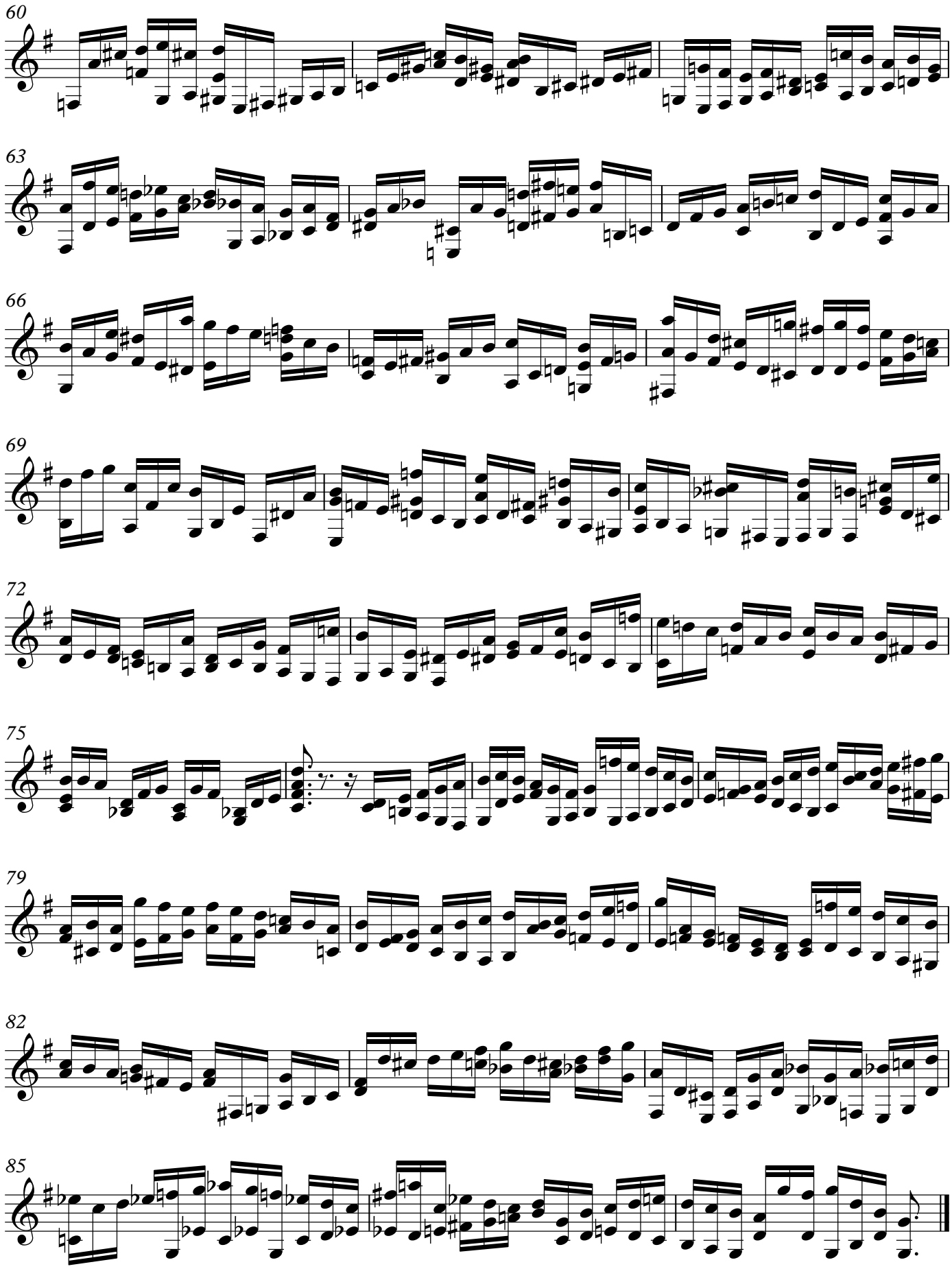
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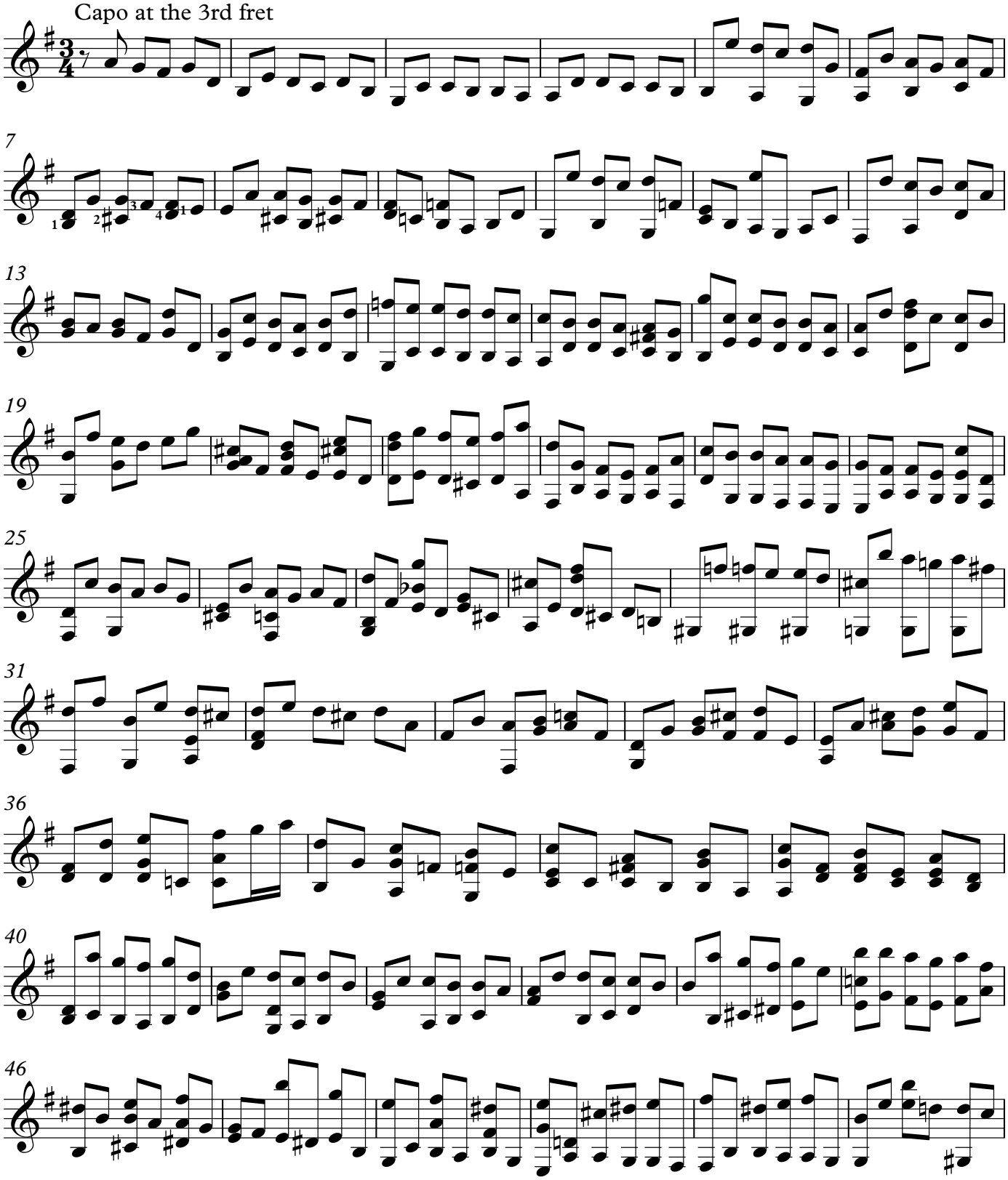
BWV 890 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Fugue No. 21 in B-flat major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 3rd fret



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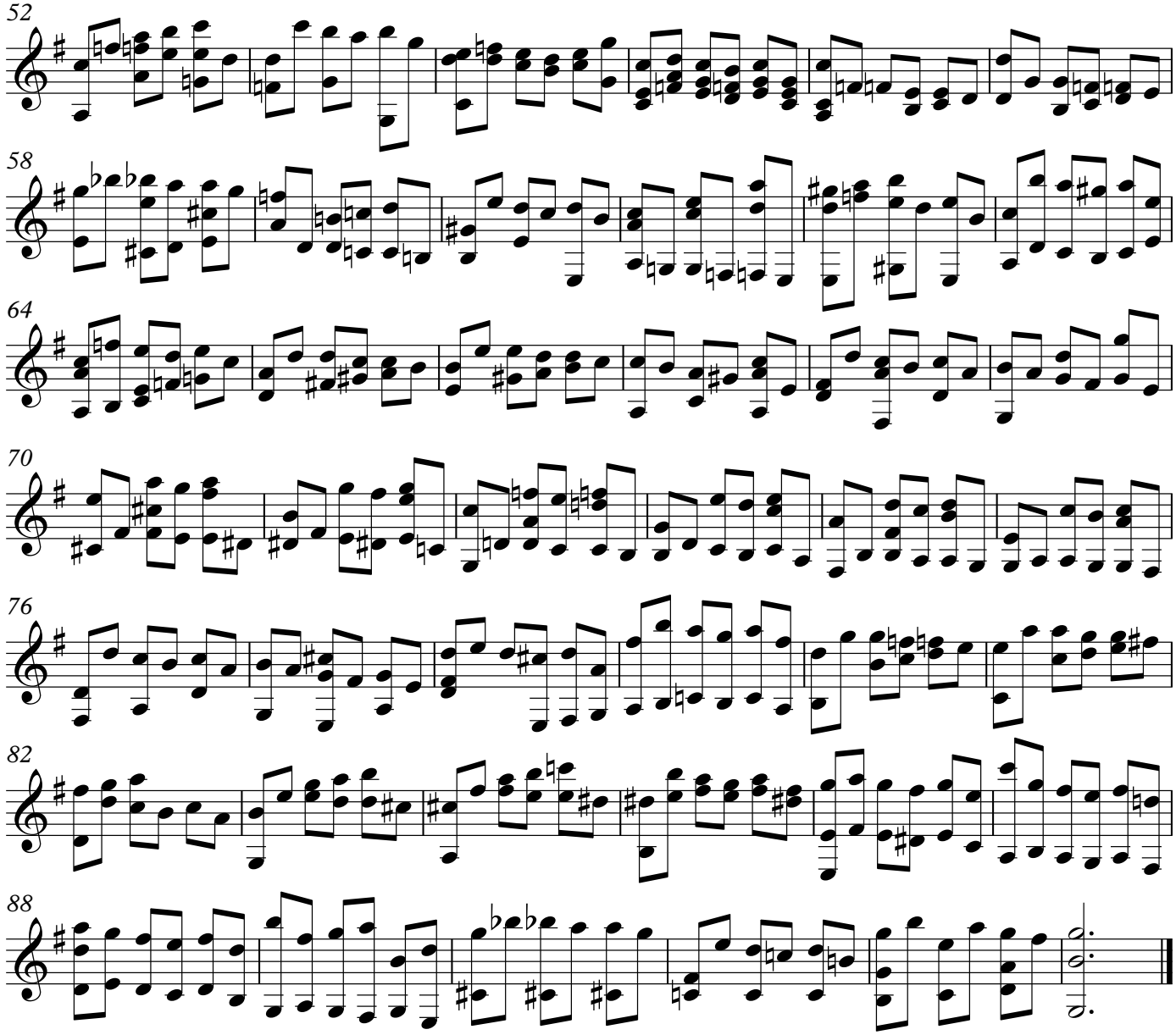
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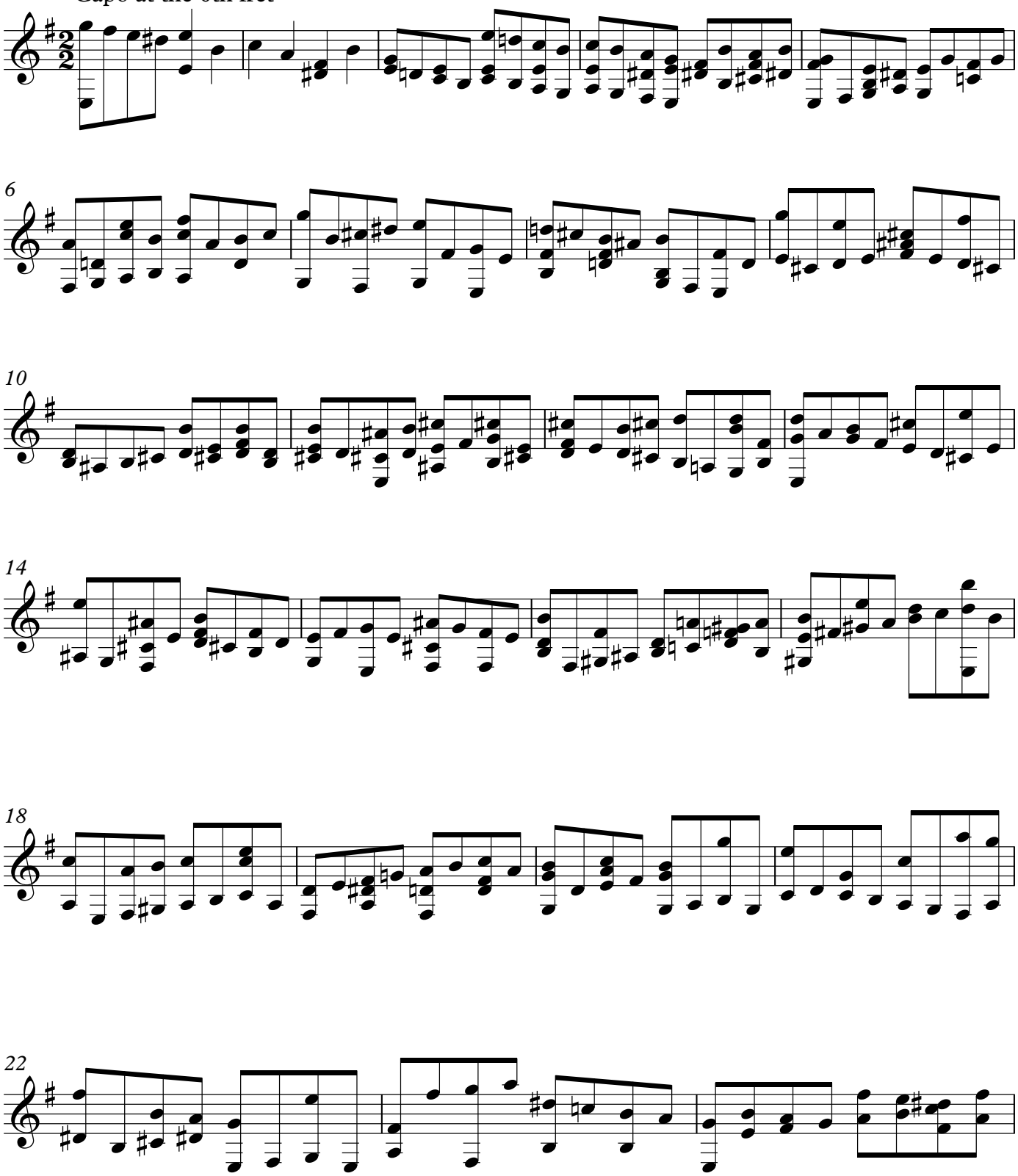
BWV 891 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Prelude No. 22 in B-flat minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 6th fret



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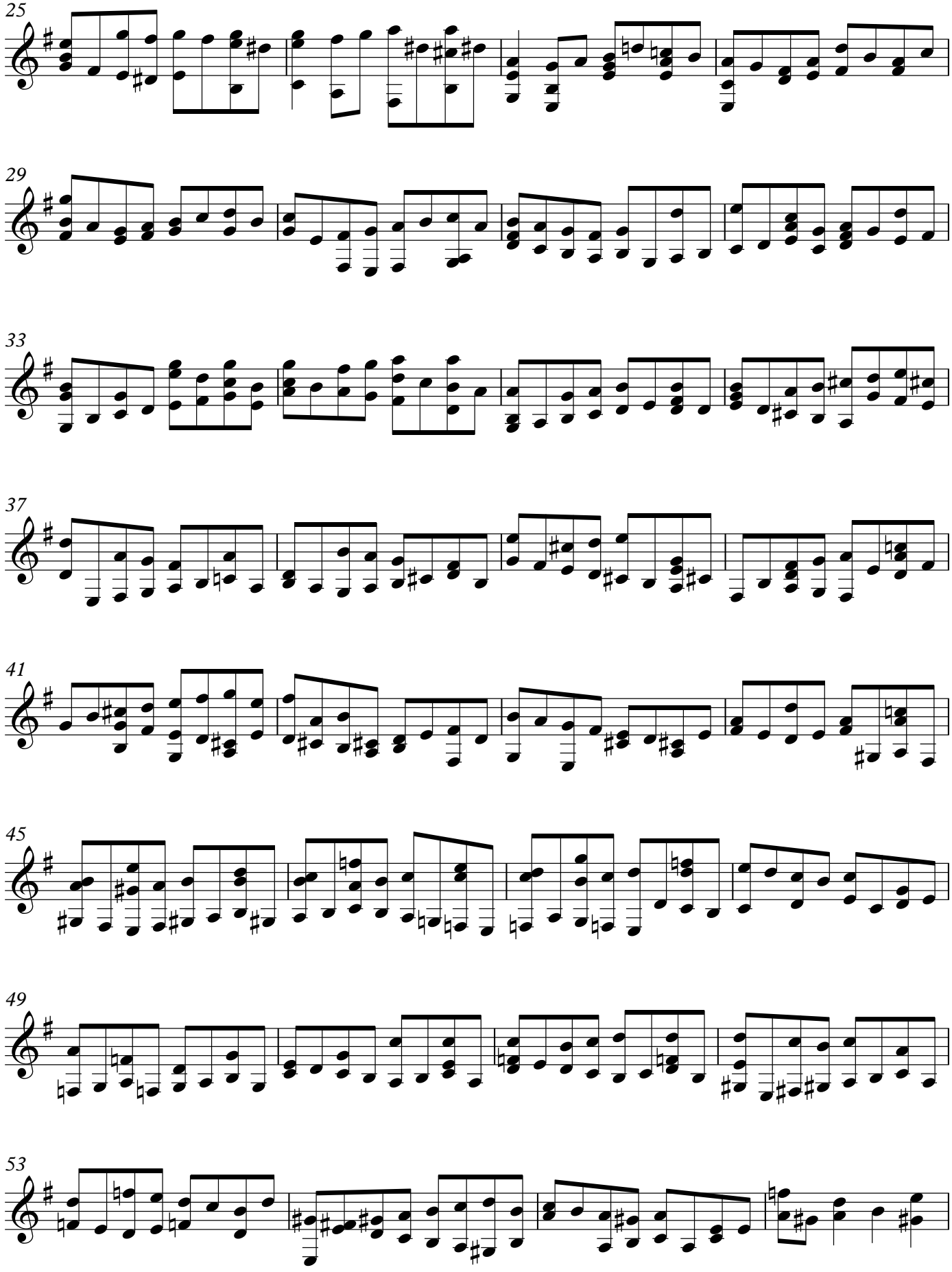
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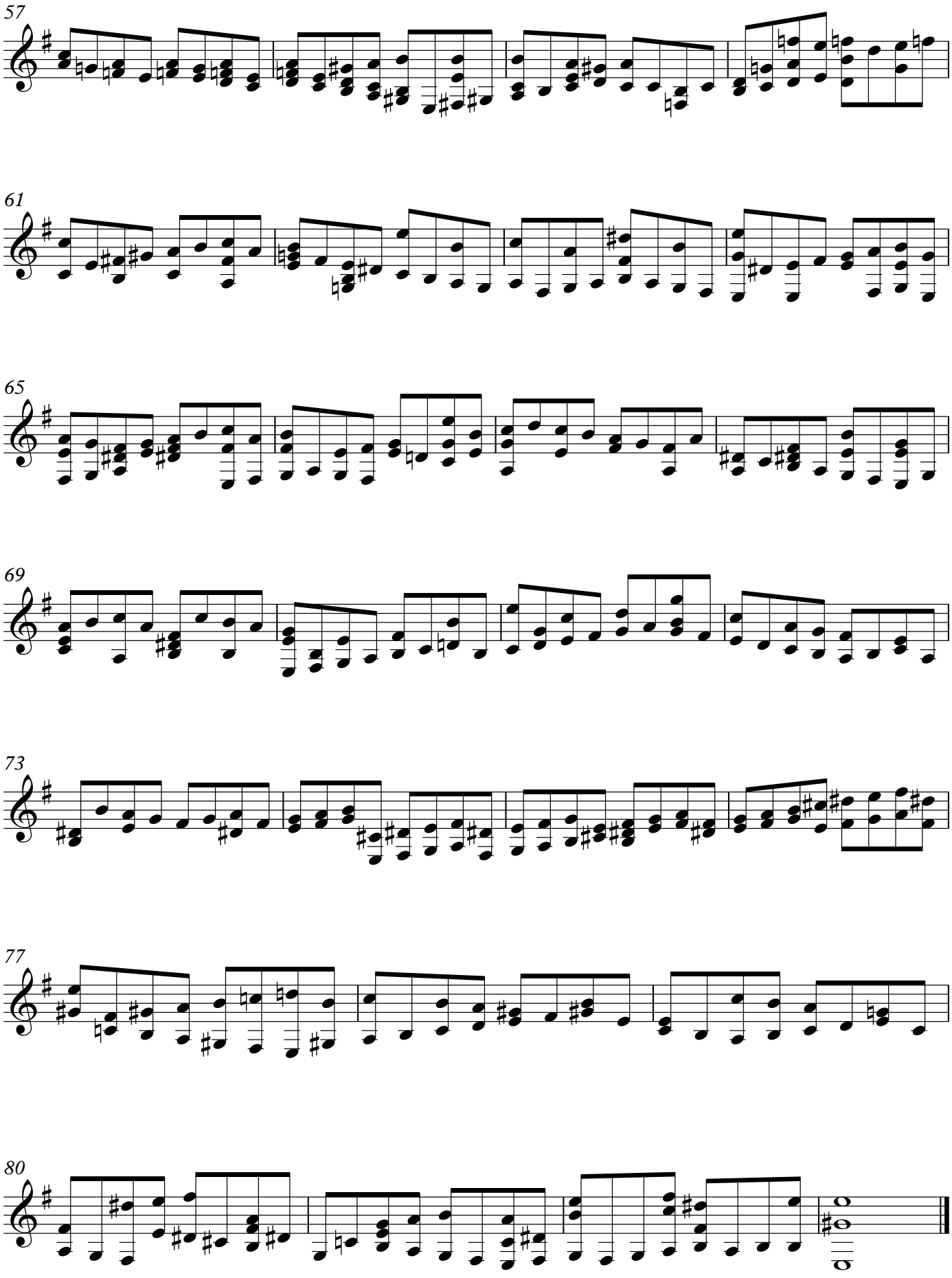
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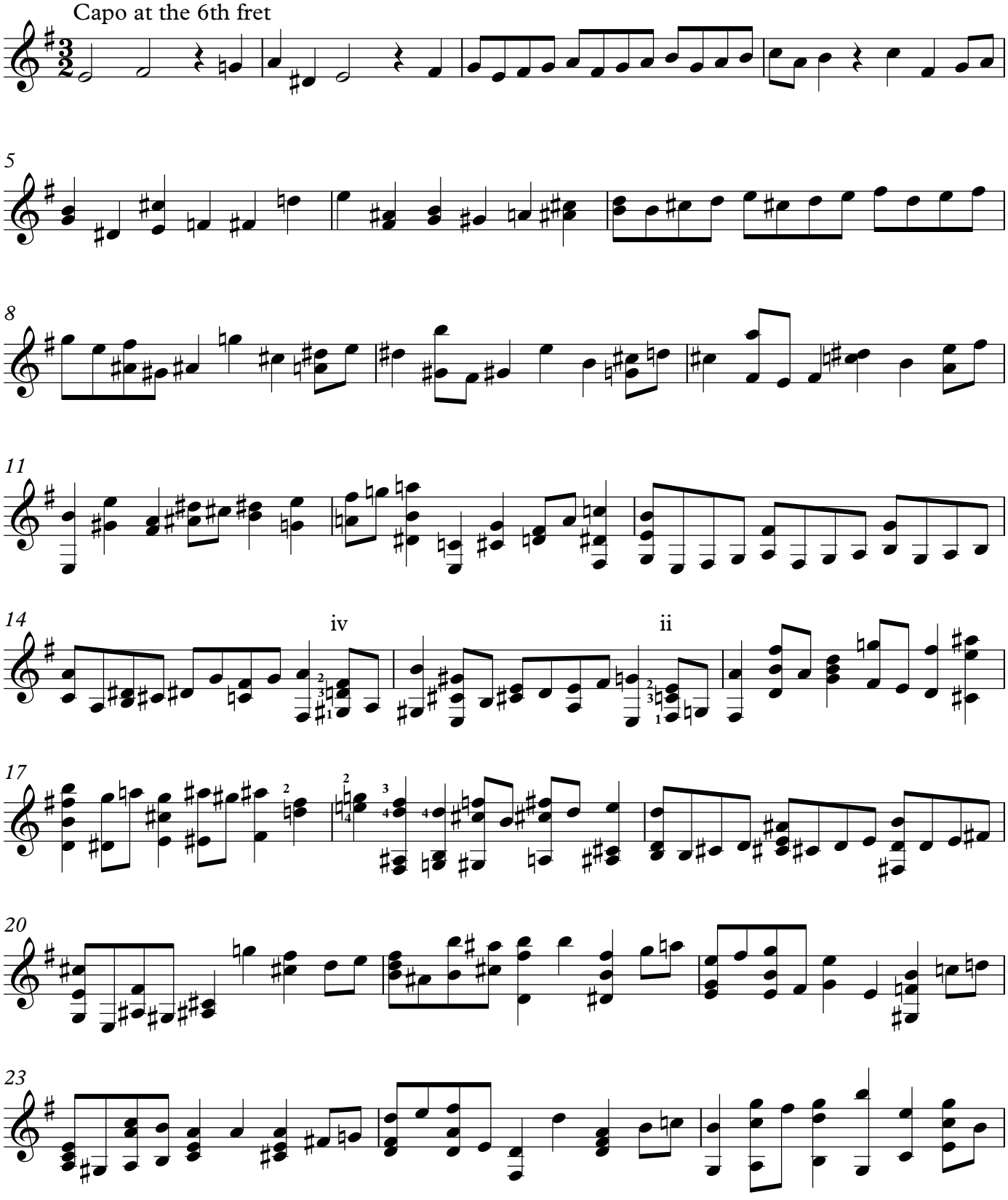
BWV 891 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Fugue No. 22 in B-flat minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 6th fret



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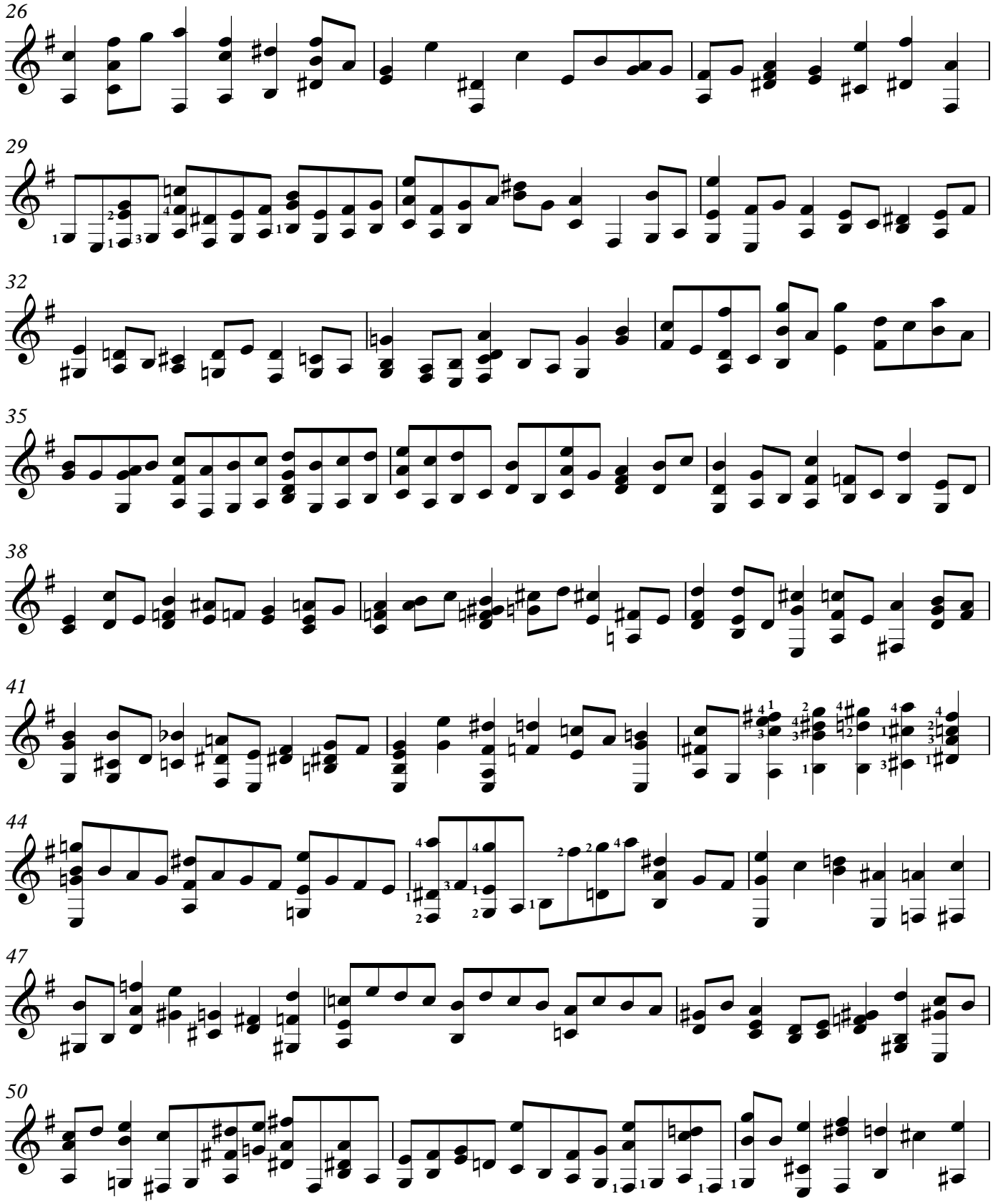
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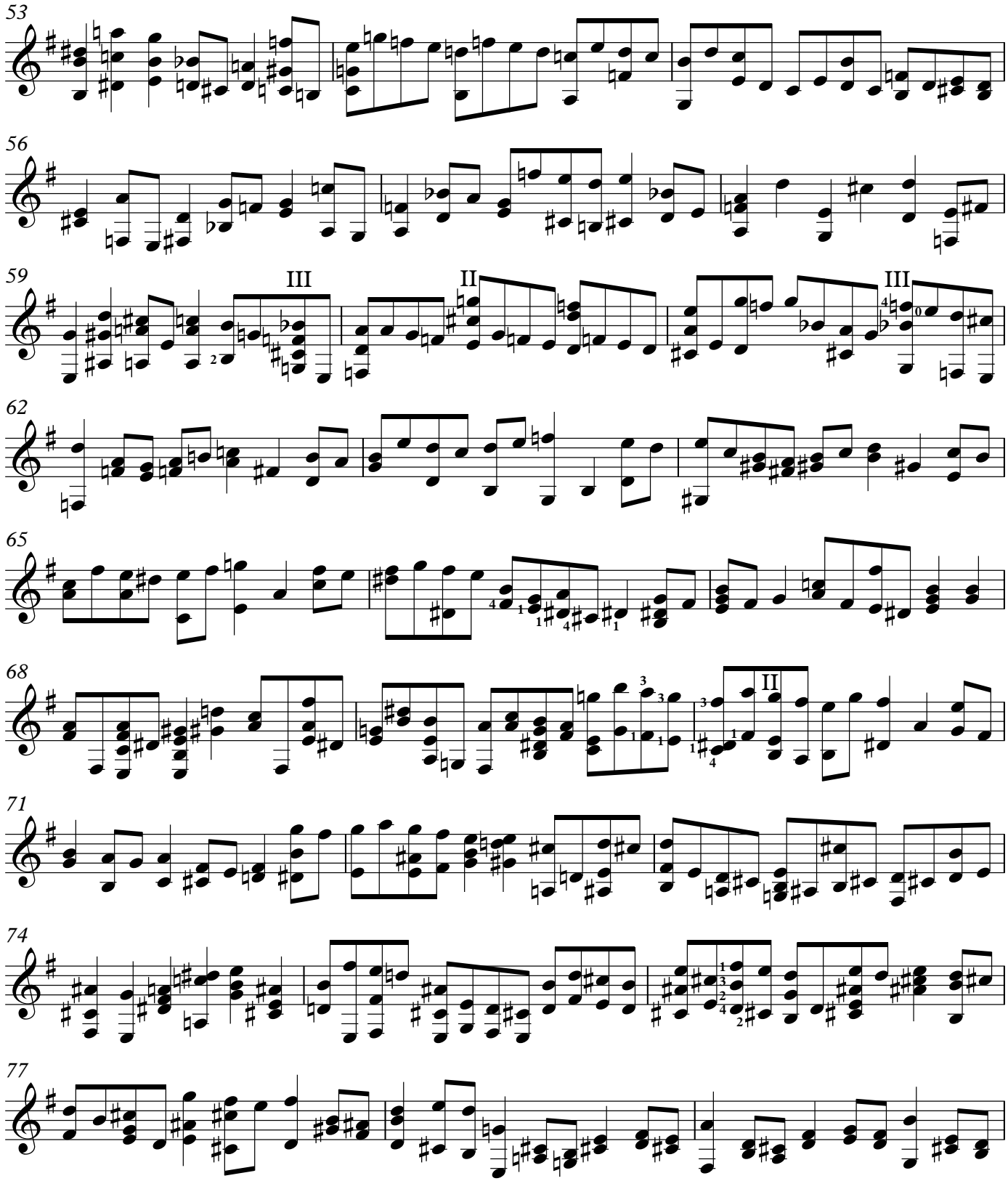
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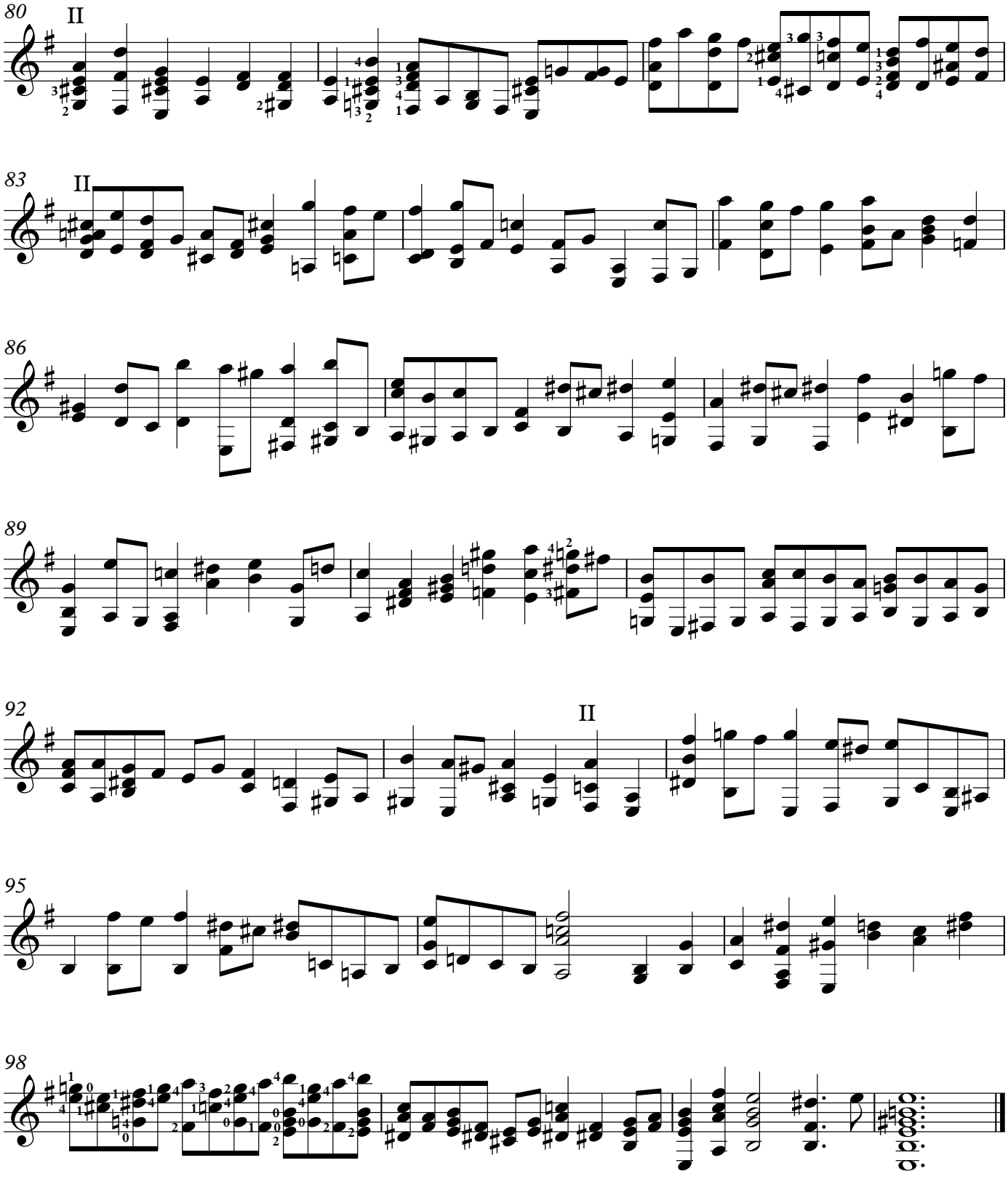
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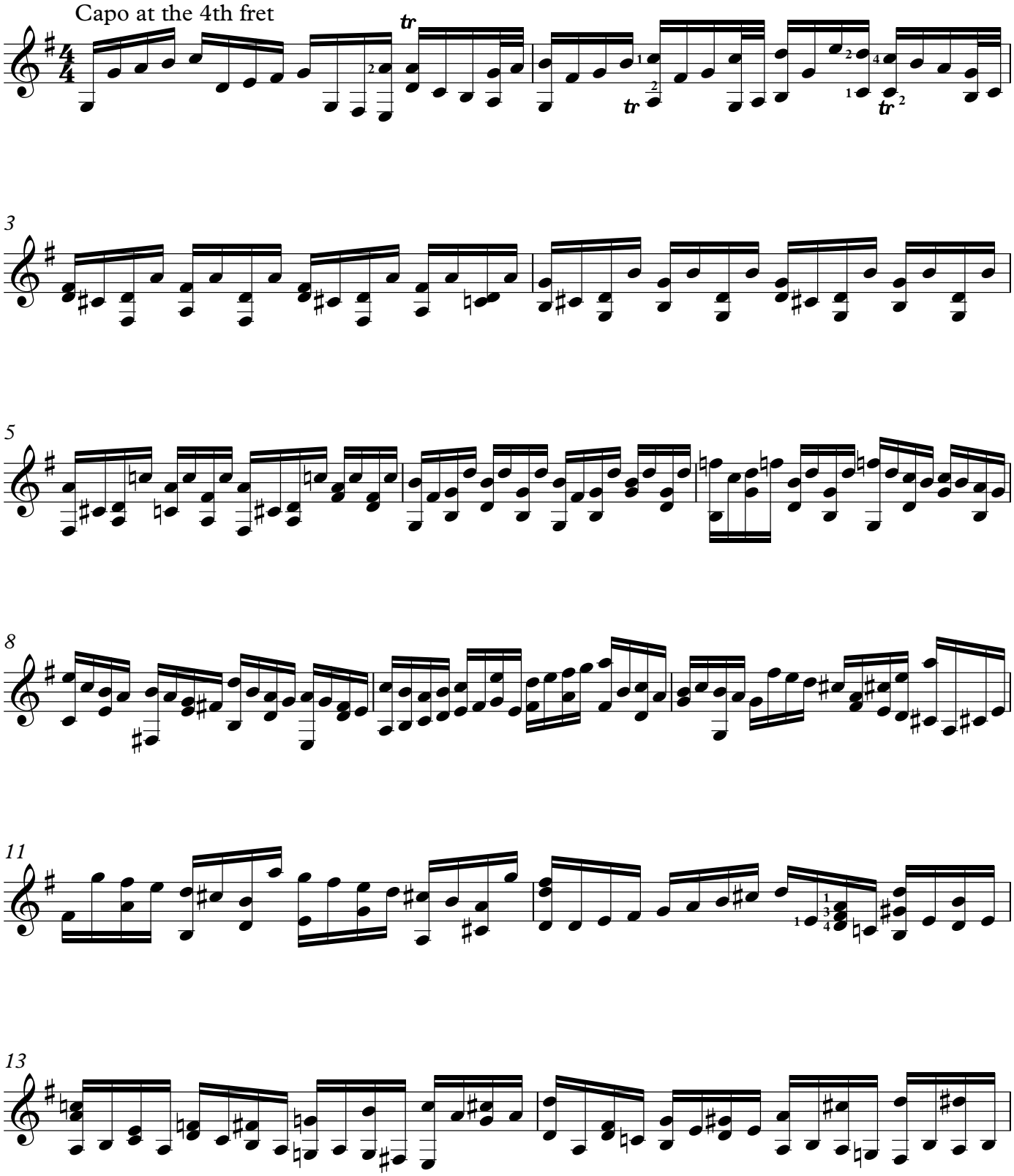
BWV 892 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Prelude No. 23 in B major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 4th fret



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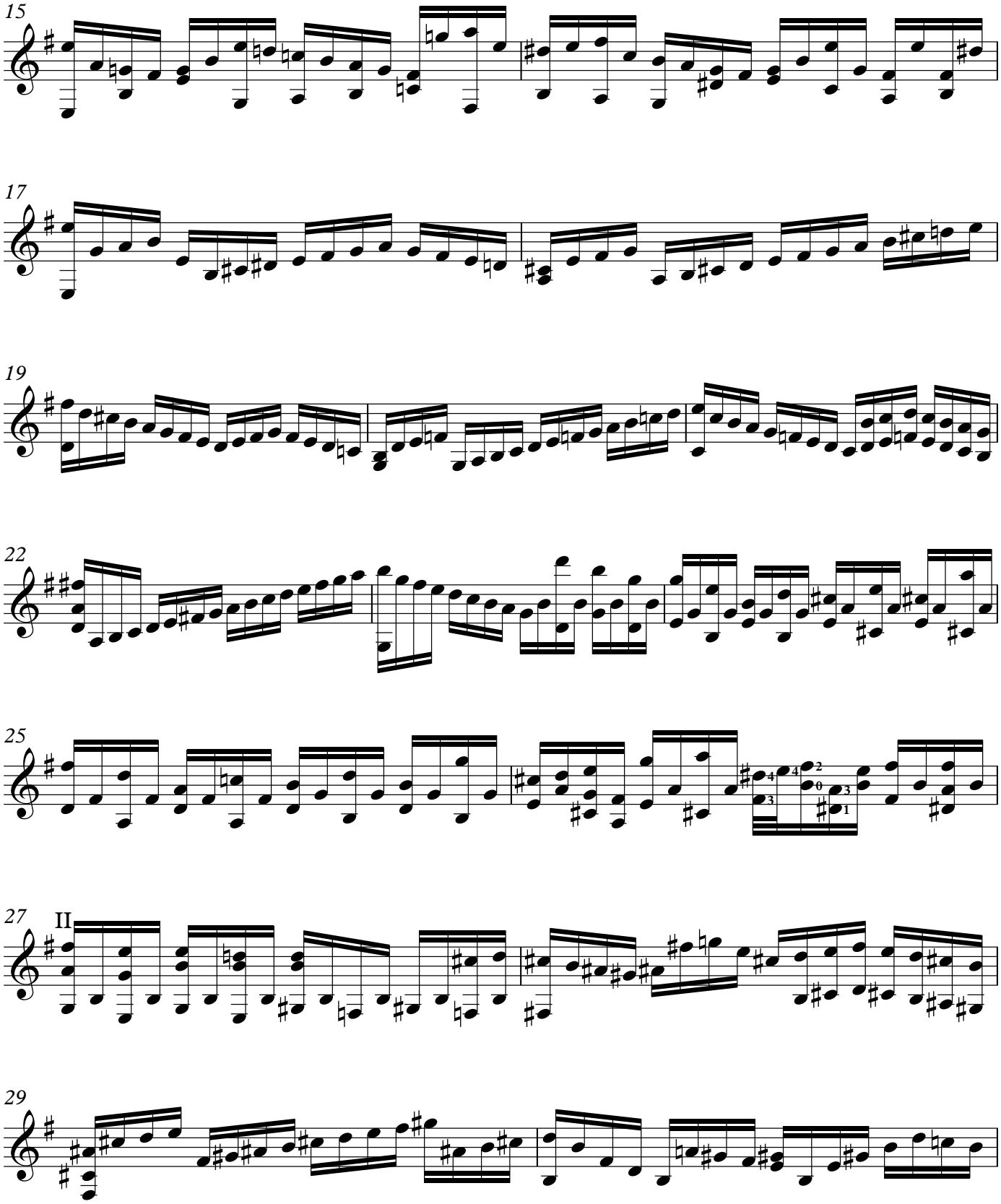
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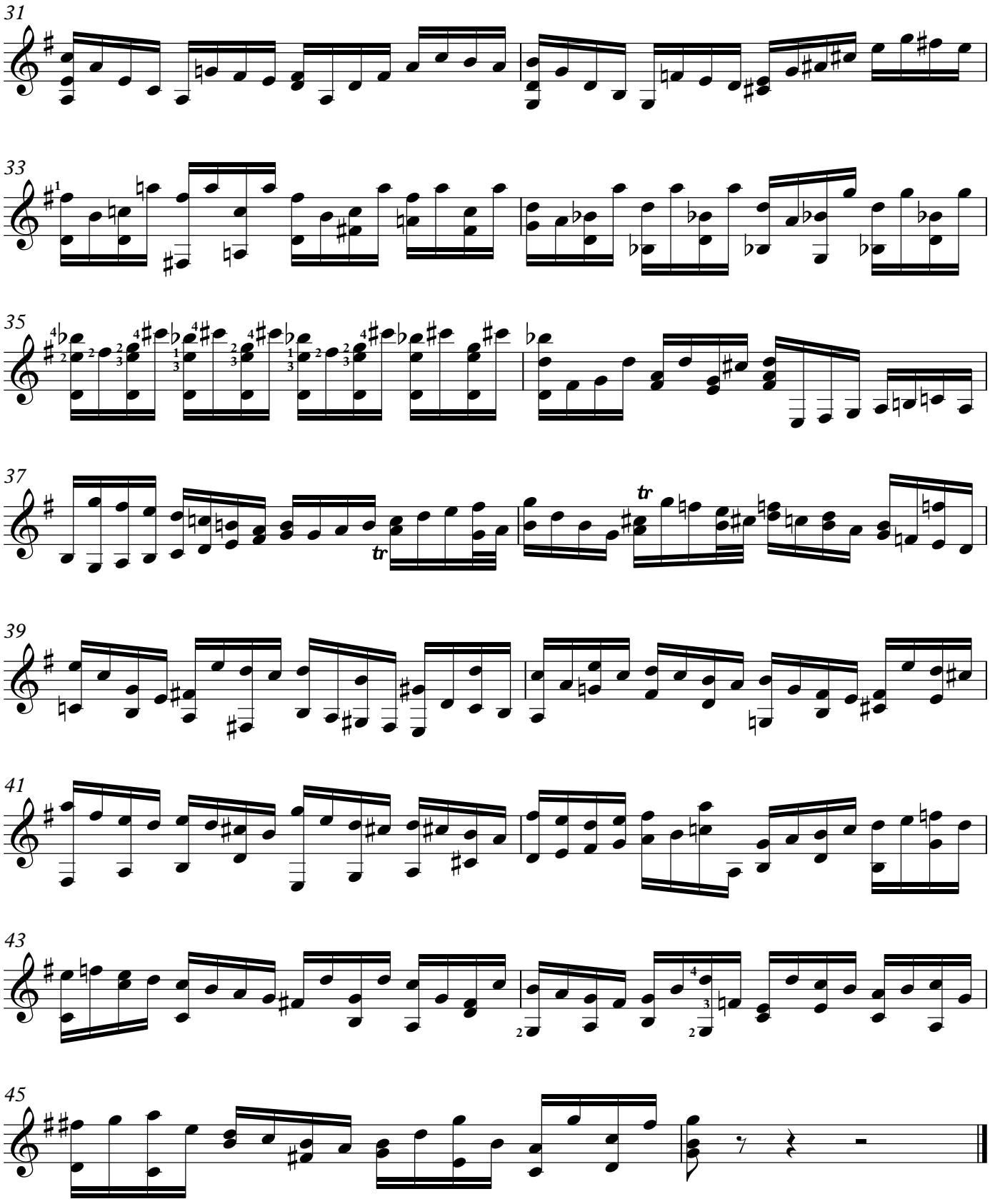
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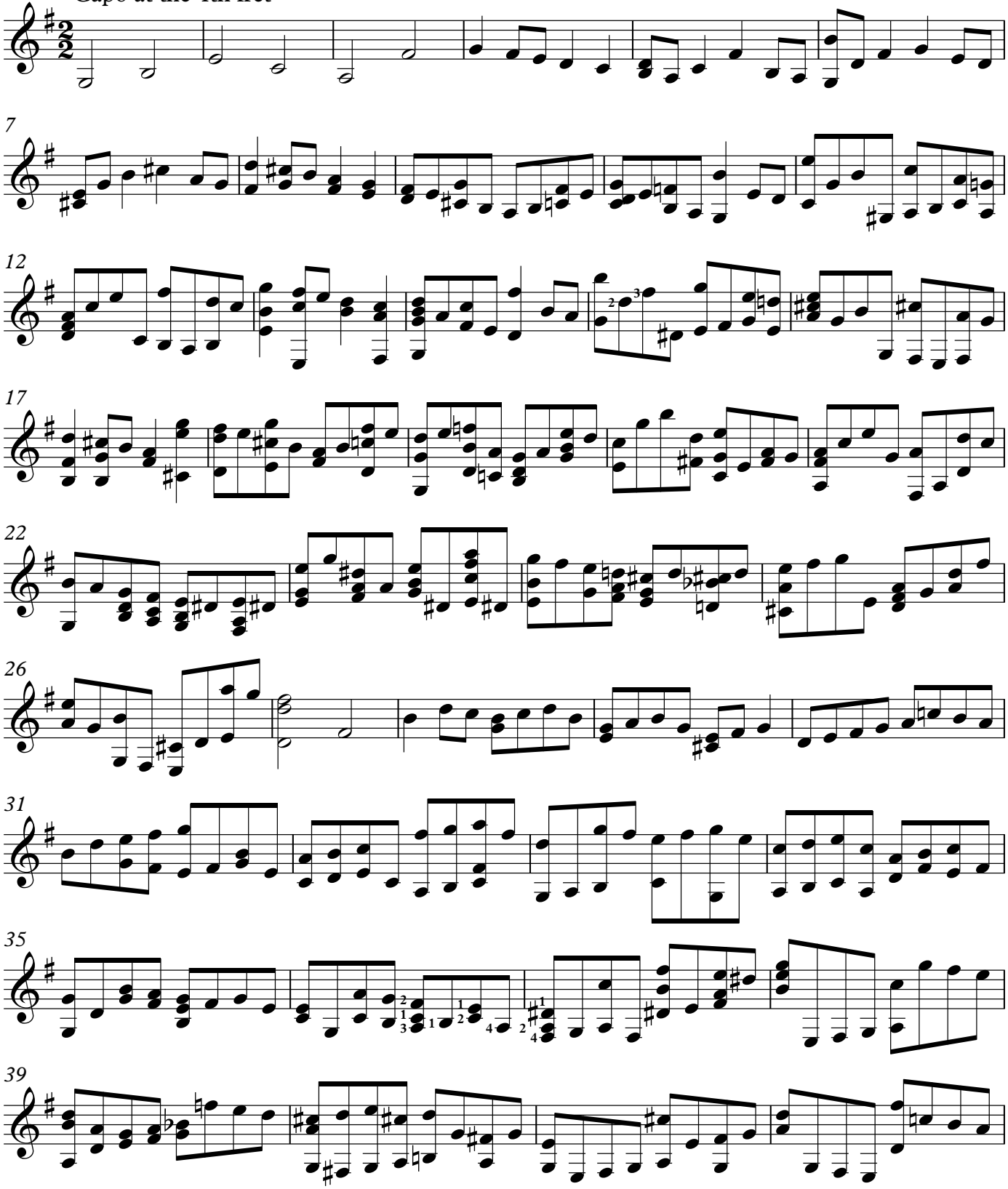
BWV 892 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Fugue No. 23 in B major

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth

Capo at the 4th fret



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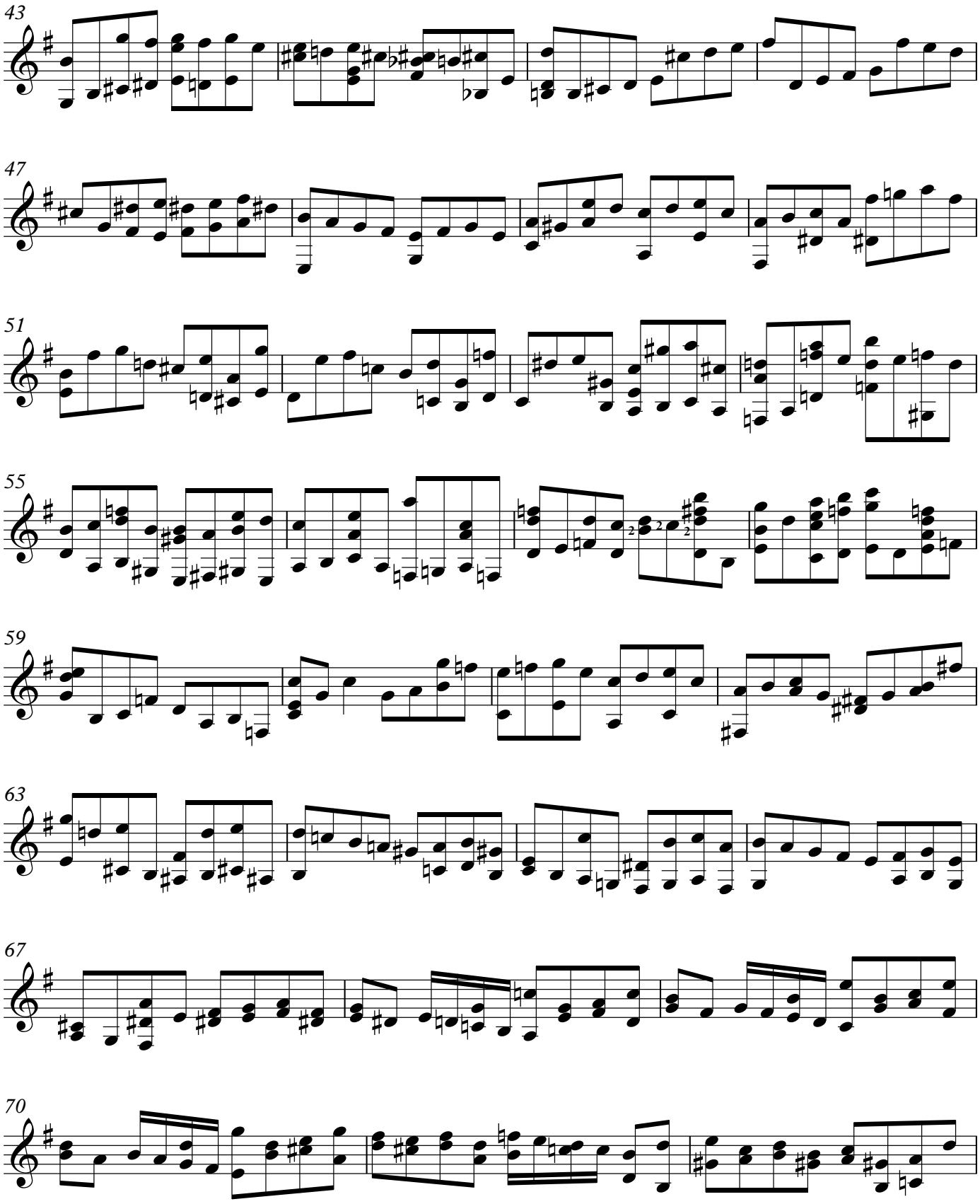
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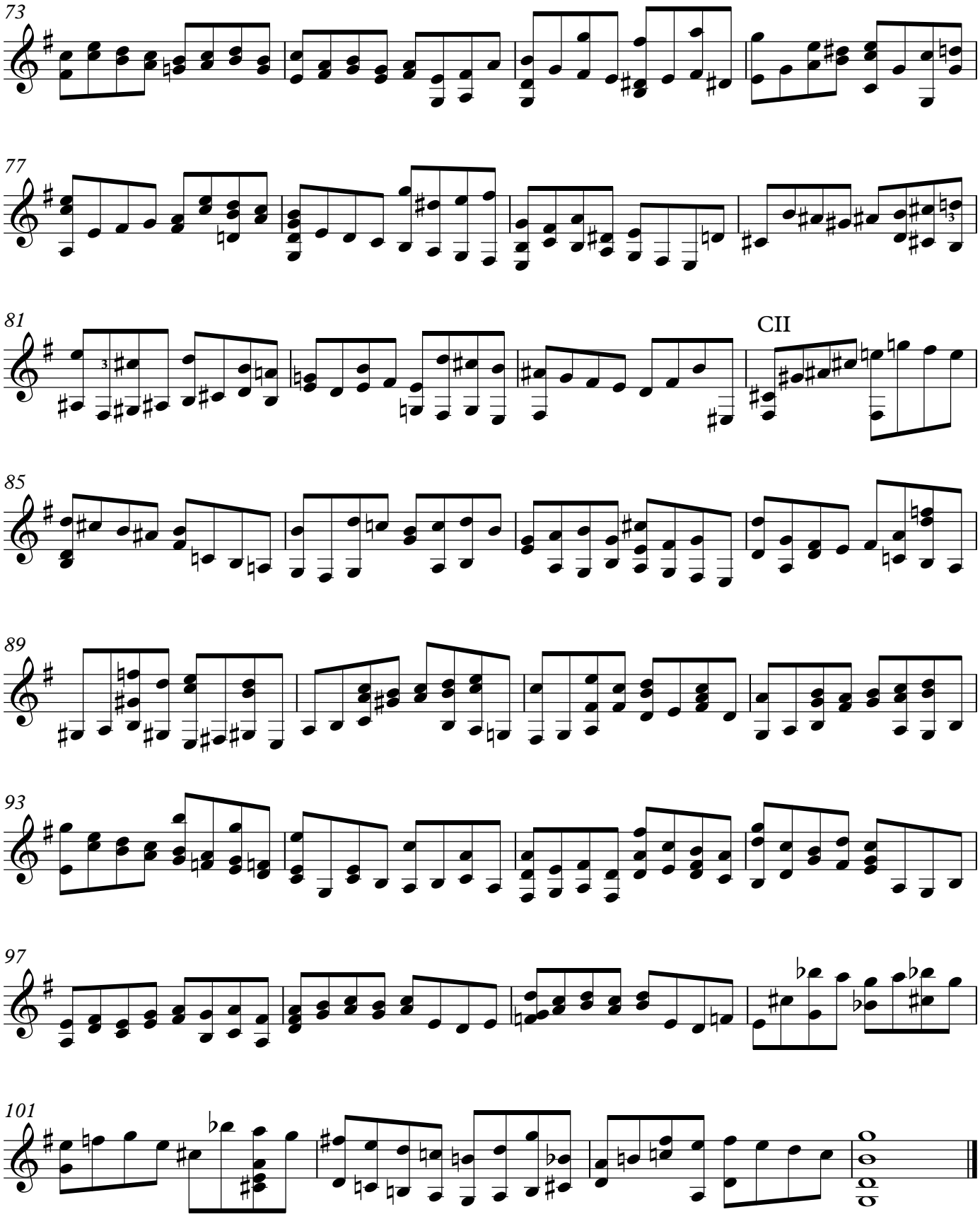
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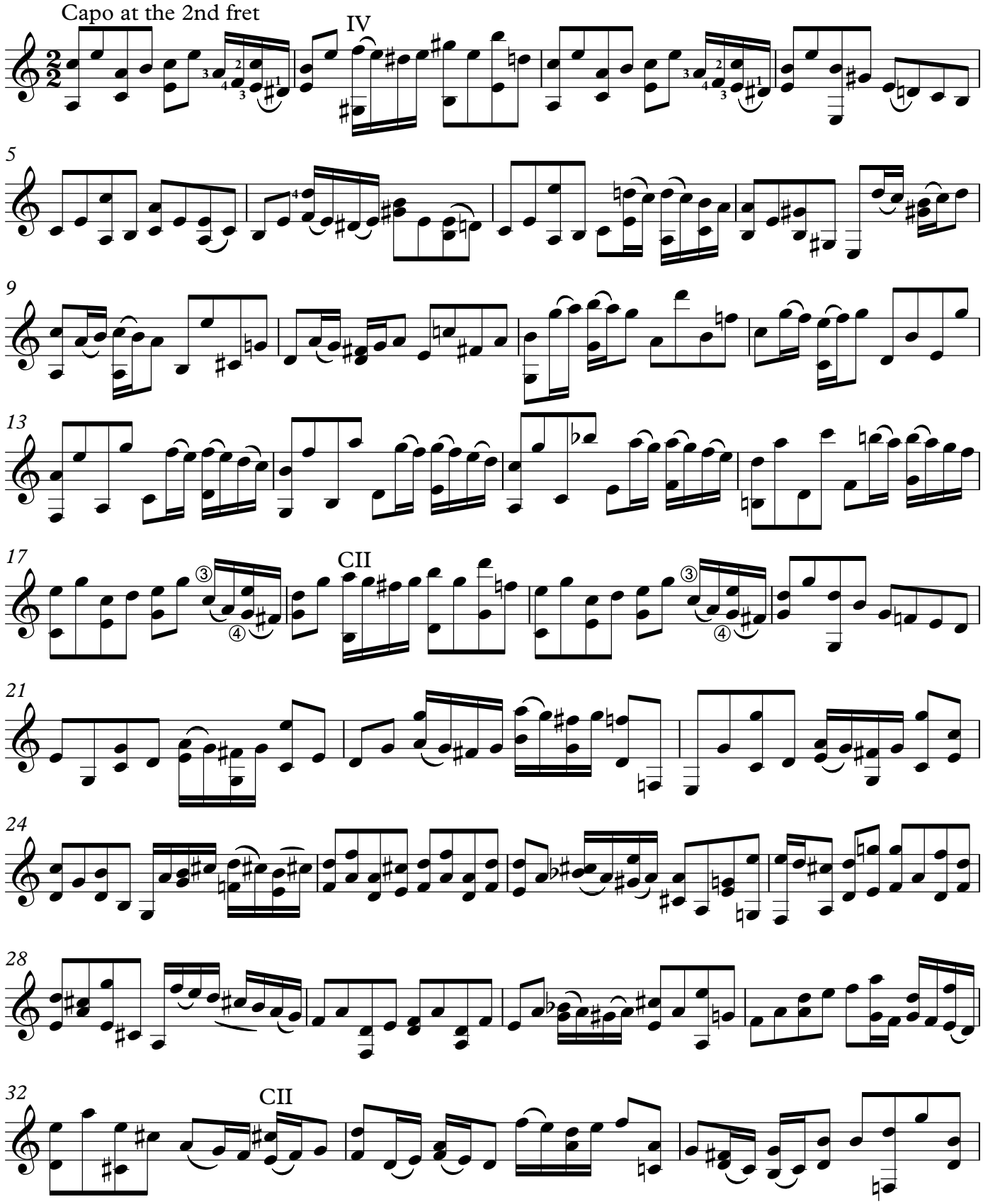
BWV 893 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Prelude No. 24 in B minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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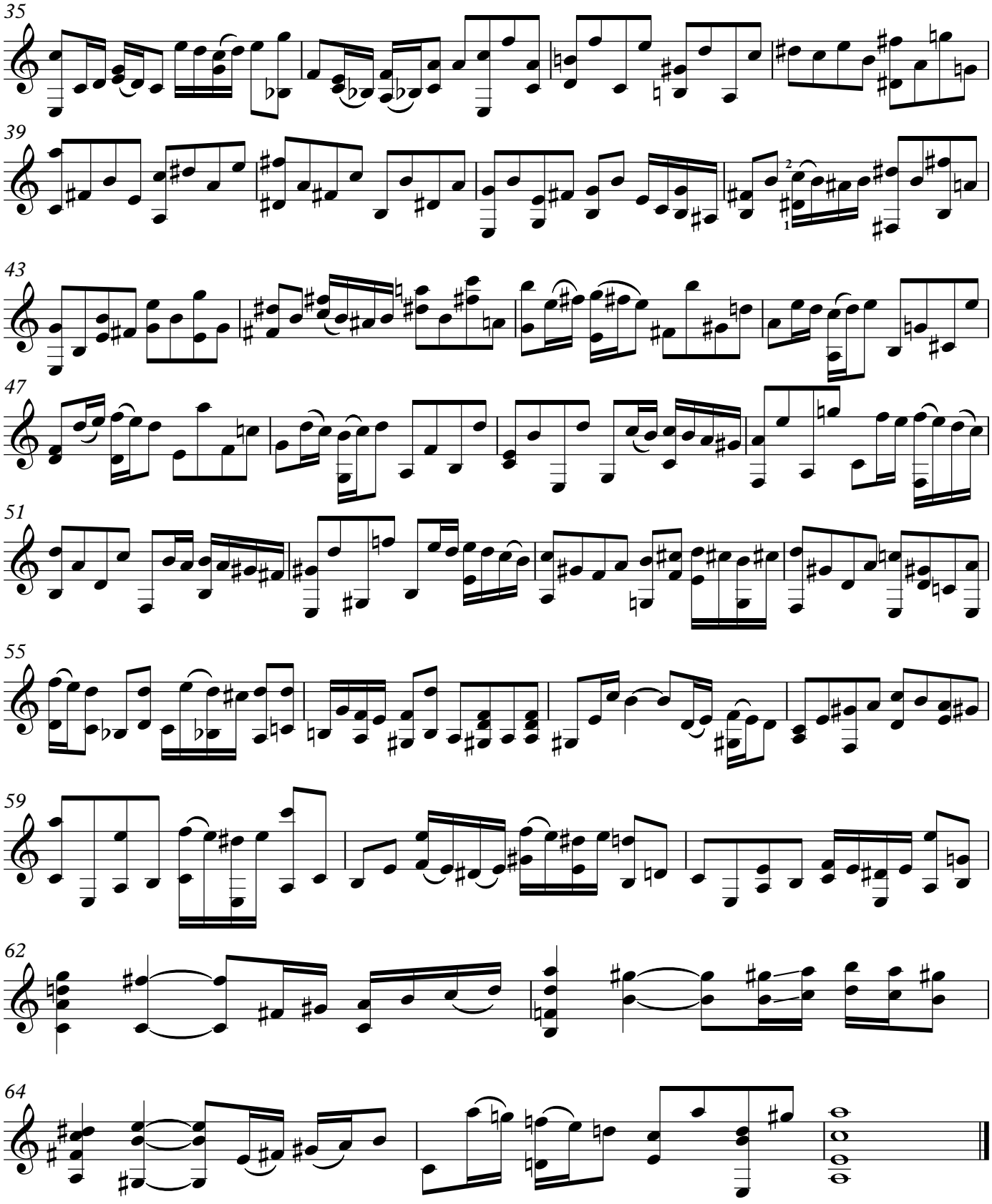
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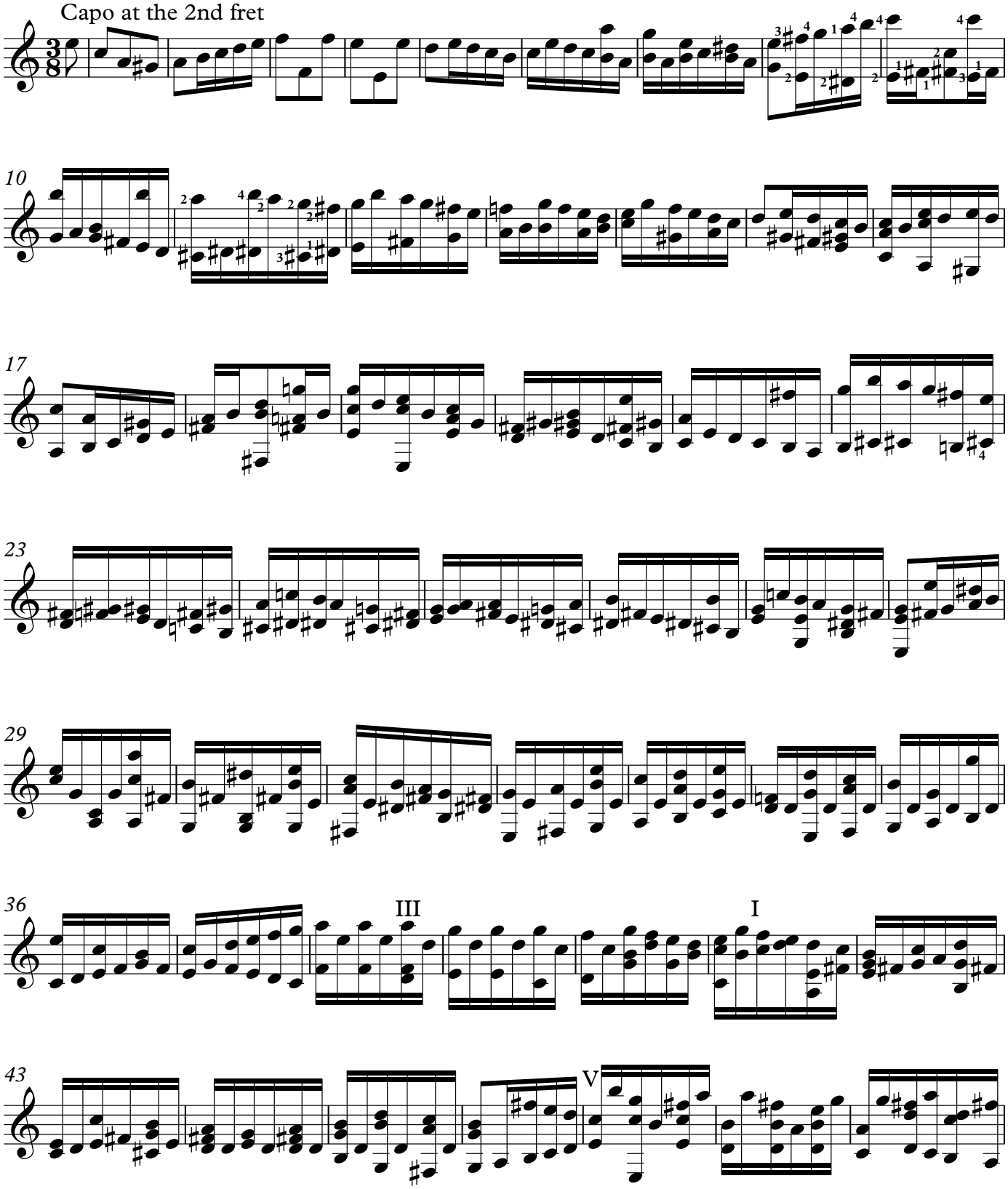
BWV 893 – J.S. Bach
Book 2: Fugue No. 24 in B minor

Adapted for Guitar by J.A. Blyth



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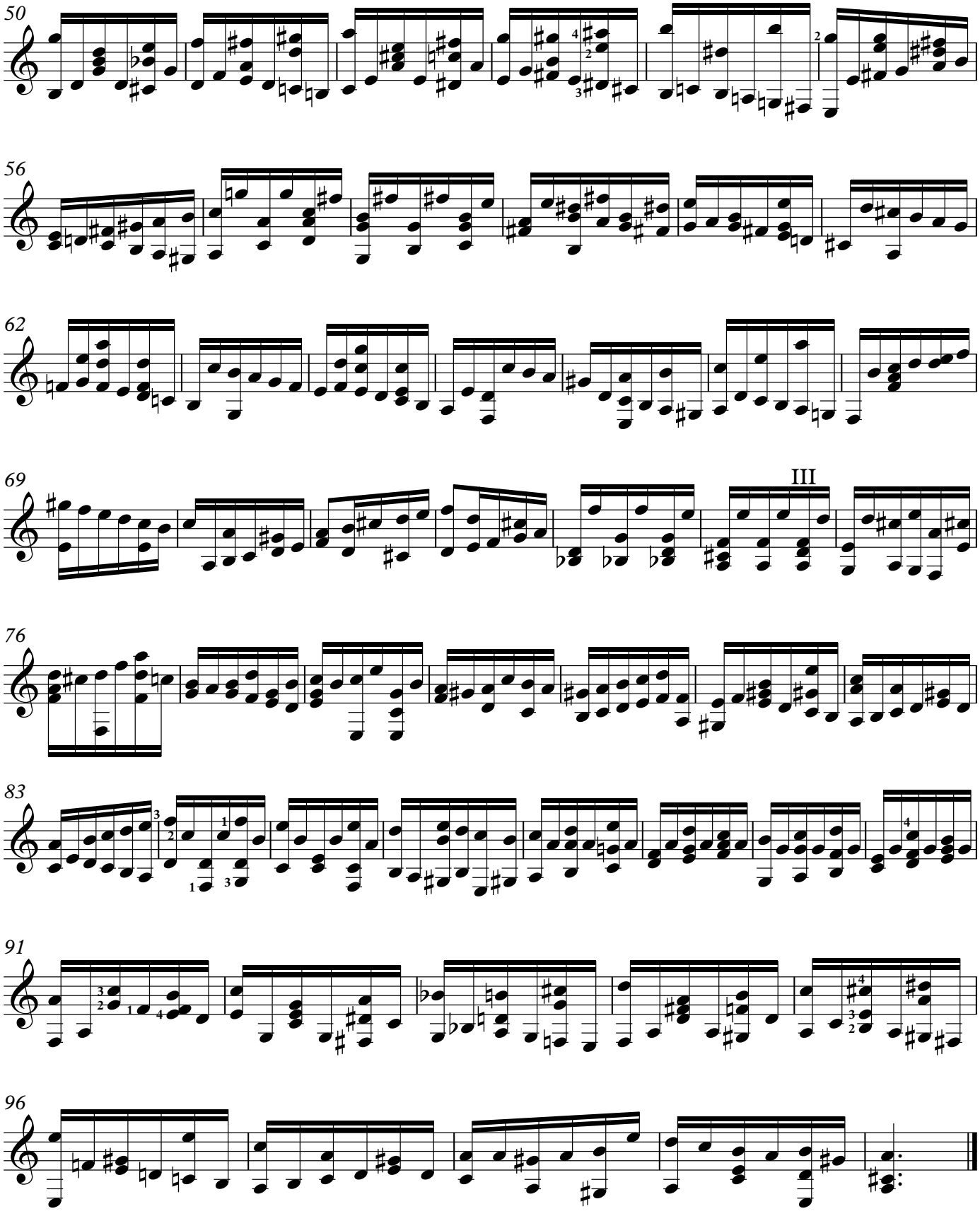
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