Carlos Seixas

Sonata 23, 24

transcription and fingerings by Rebeca Oliveira

José António Carlos de Seixas, born in Coimbra, on June 11th 1704, was a leading figure in the 18th century Portuguese music. Born in a family of musicians, he started to compose and playing the organ from an early age, and at only 14 years old succeeded his father as organist of Coimbra's Cathedral. Only two years later, he moves to Lisbon, where he obtained the position of organist at the Royal Chapel, for the rest of his life. Unlike his contemporary colleagues who had worked in Rome, Seixas never left Portugal. His technique comes mainly from the study of the 17th Century Iberian Organ School, passed to him by his father. Although he lived a short life (dying at 38 years old in August 25th 1742), he was one of the most prolific composers in Portuguese History. It is acknowledged that he composed more than 700 Sonatas and Toccatas, but only around 100 survived until our days. The Lisbon earthquake of 1755 is responsible for the destruction of most of Seixas' works. Seixas' importance as a composer lays especially on his keyboard Sonatas. Their style has often been compared to those of Domenico Scarlatti's. From 1720 the two composers worked in the Royal Chapel in Lisbon, a professional association which lasted for eight years until Scarlatti's departure to Spain. As recalled by José Mazza (1771-1797): when they first met Scarlatti 'recognized the giant by the finger'.

Seixas' Sonatas are typical examples of the stylistic ambiguity of the transitional period between the Baroque and Classical styles. They go from the reminiscent of the Baroque Toccata to some suggestion of the idiom of the Mannheim School, while only a minority reflects Scarlatti's style in form and technical display. The main difference between the two composers is the way they approach the Sonata form: Seixas continued to write sonatas in three, four and even five movements, with some reminiscence of the Suite form.

This transcription follows the tradition of the old guitar masters of arranging baroque keyboard Sonatas such as the ones by Antonio Soler and Domenico Scarlatti. These two sonatas are contrasting in character and therefore complement each other: Sonata 23 being more melancholic and with a wide range of lyricism, with a consuming expression, dynamic contrast, chromaticism and unprepared dissonances, and Sonata 24 being more of virtuosic nature and with nearly symmetrical sections. In these Sonatas it is possible to appreciate a juxtaposition between the European music of the time and the melancholic and nostalgic Portuguese character.

Gravure / *Engraving*: Sylvain Lemay

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SONATA 23

D minor

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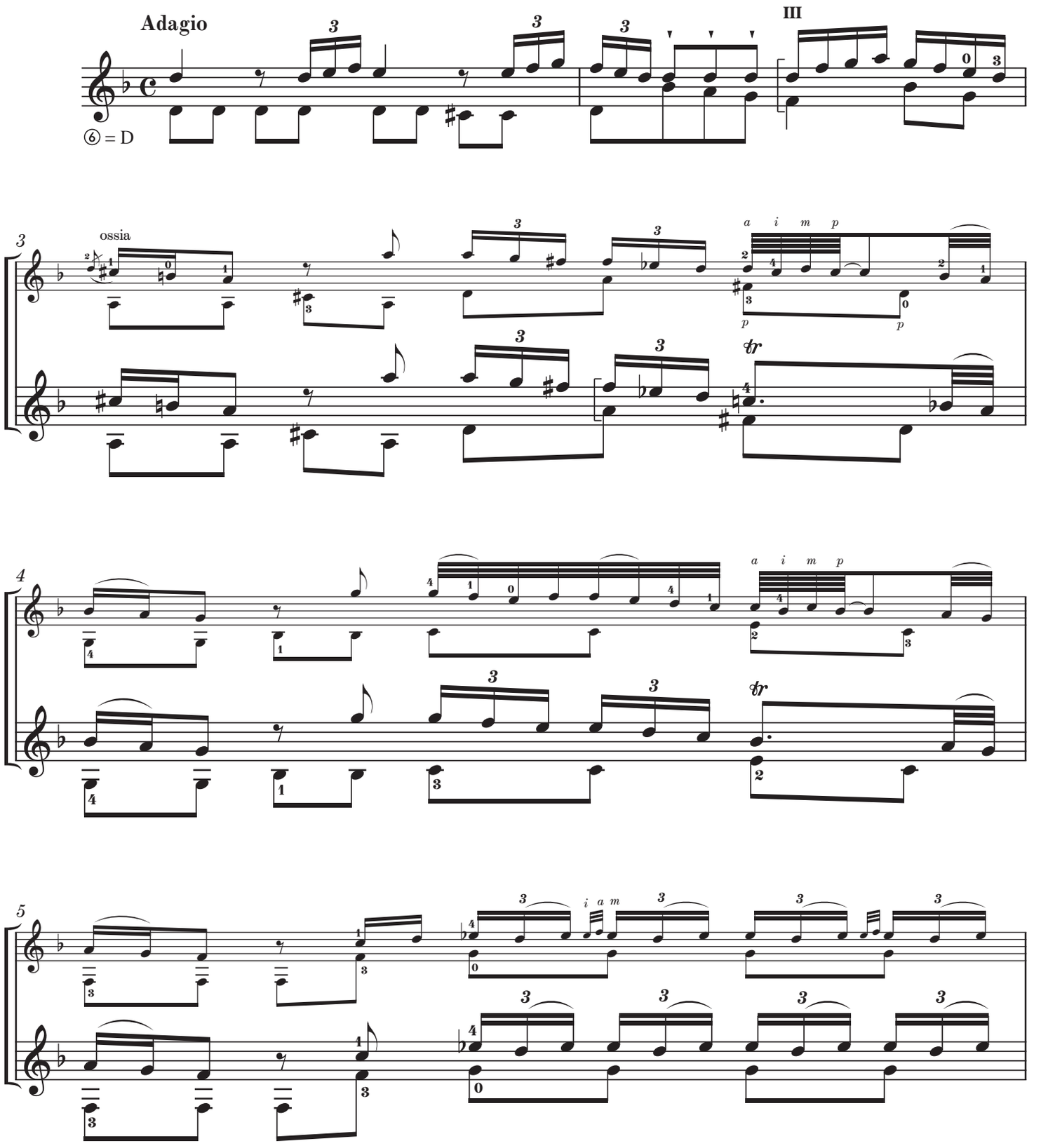
Carlos Seixas
1704-1742



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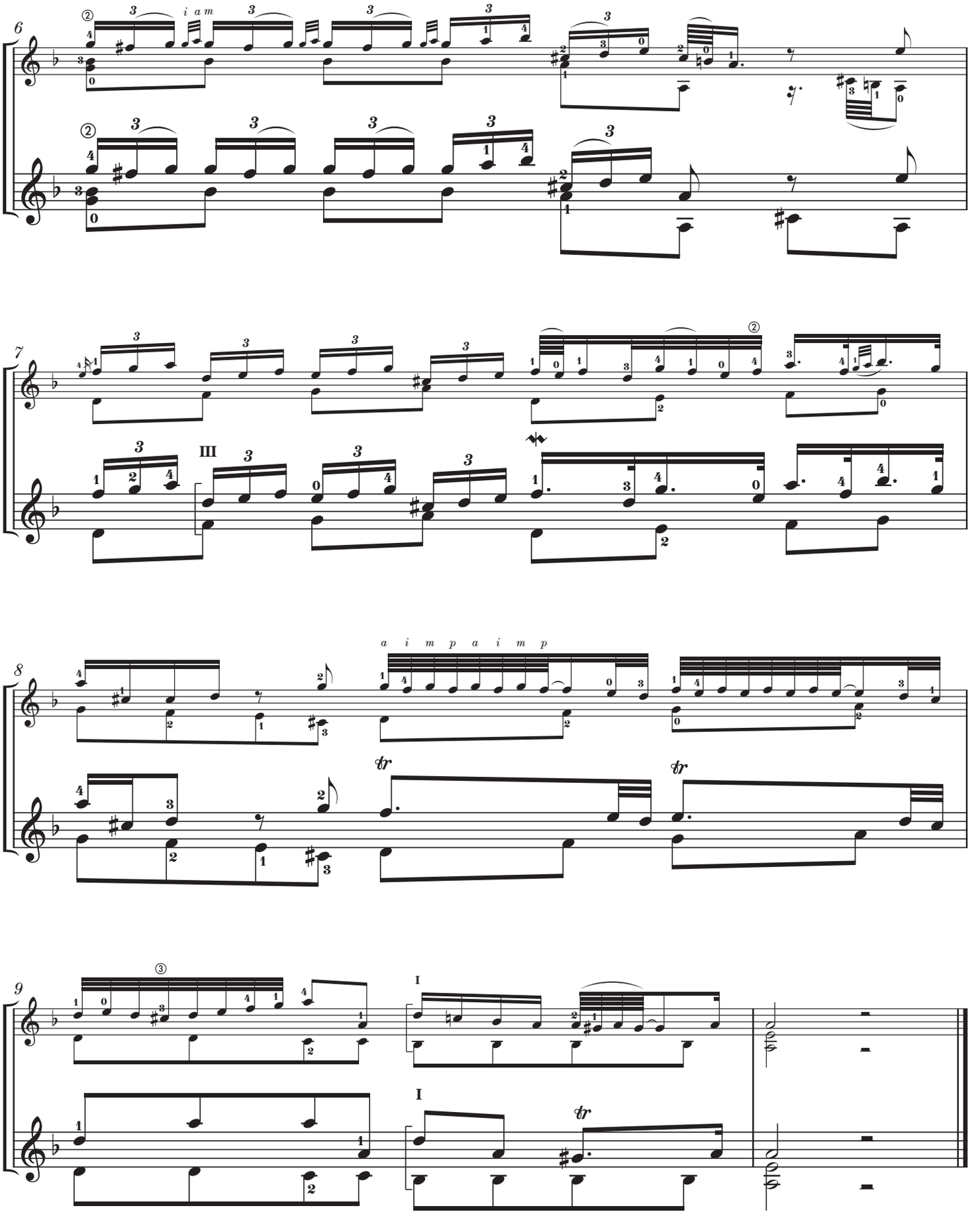
6
i a m
7
III
8
a i m p a i m p
tr
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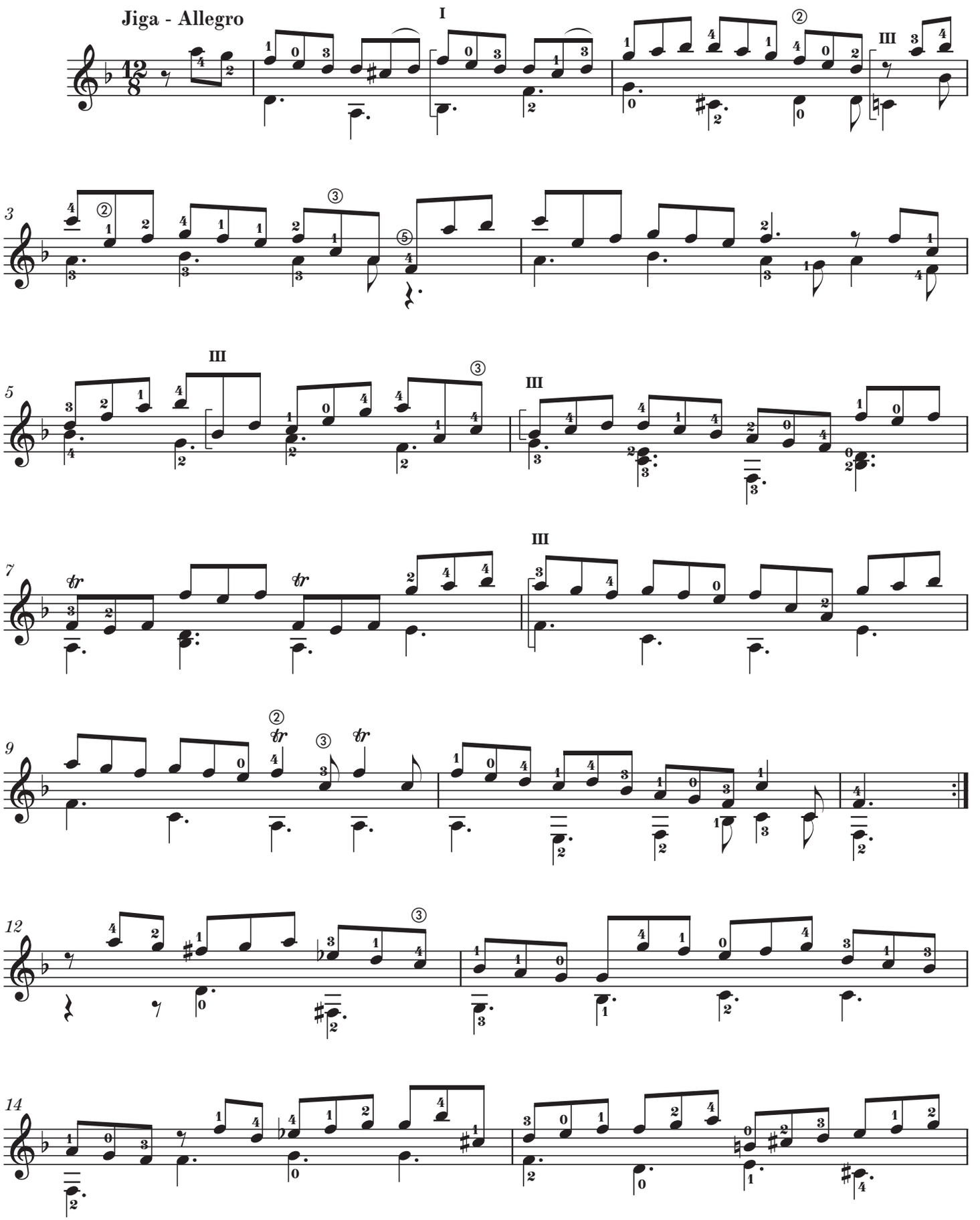
9
I
I
tr


Jiga - Allegro
I
III
III
III
III
tr
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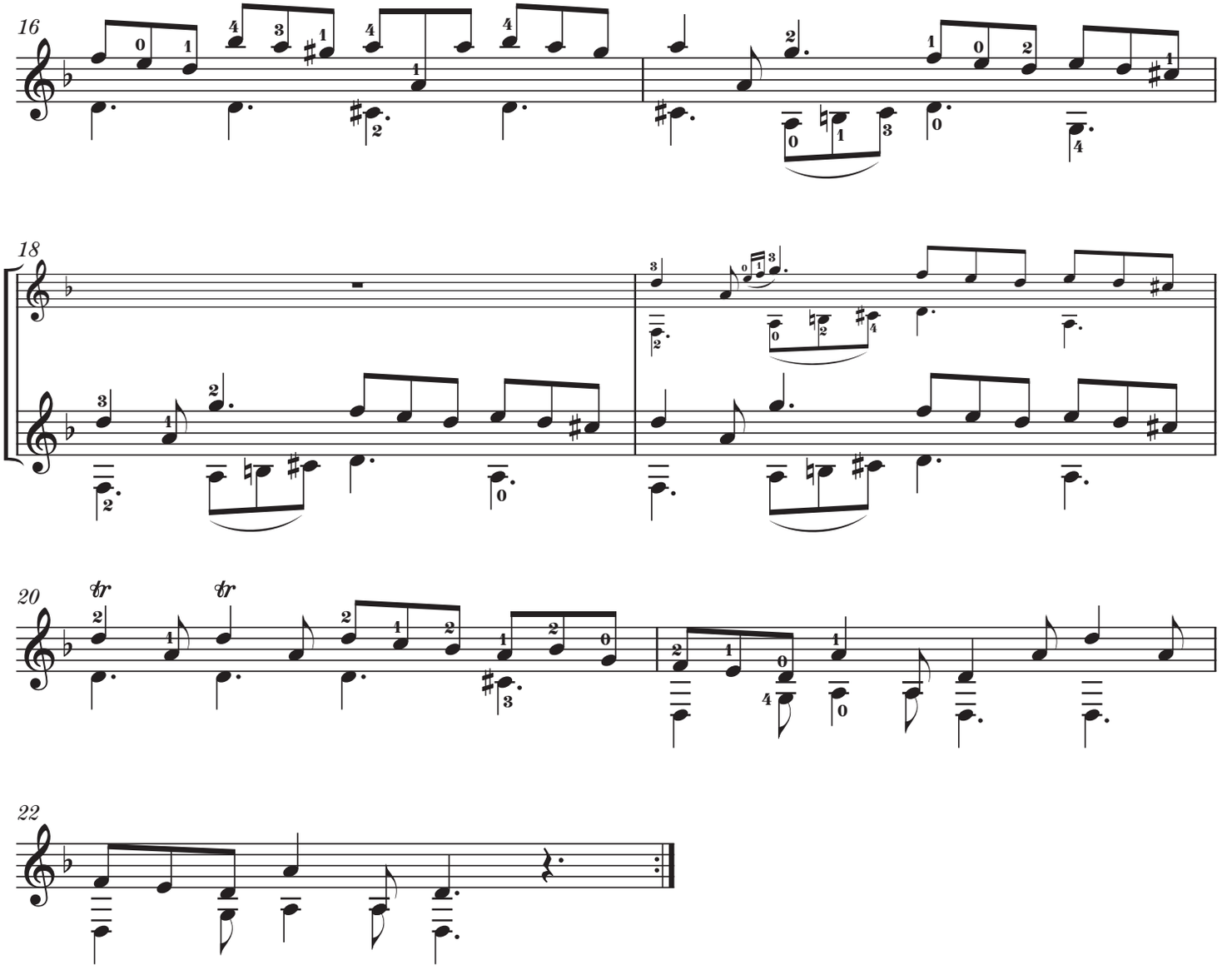
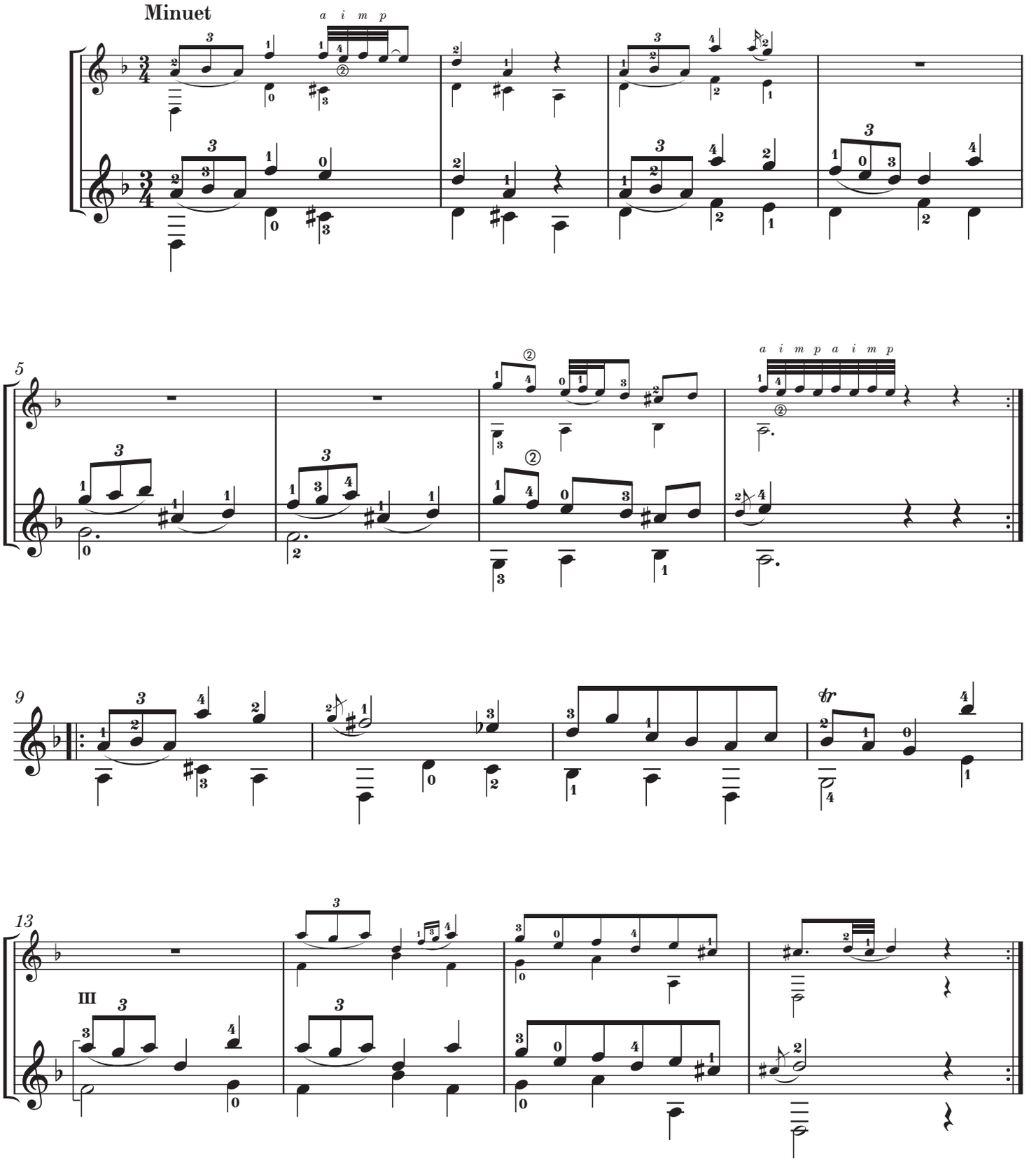
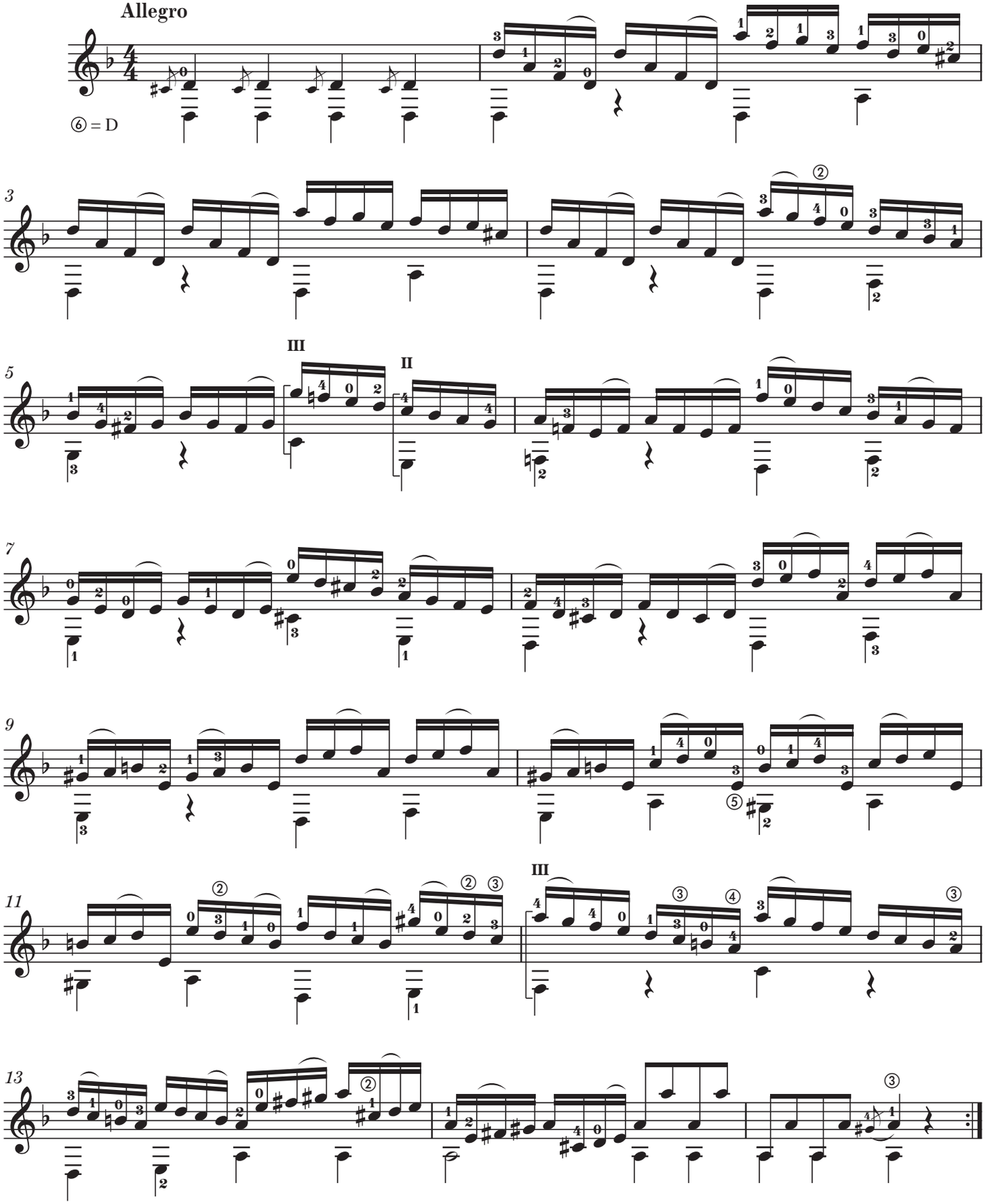
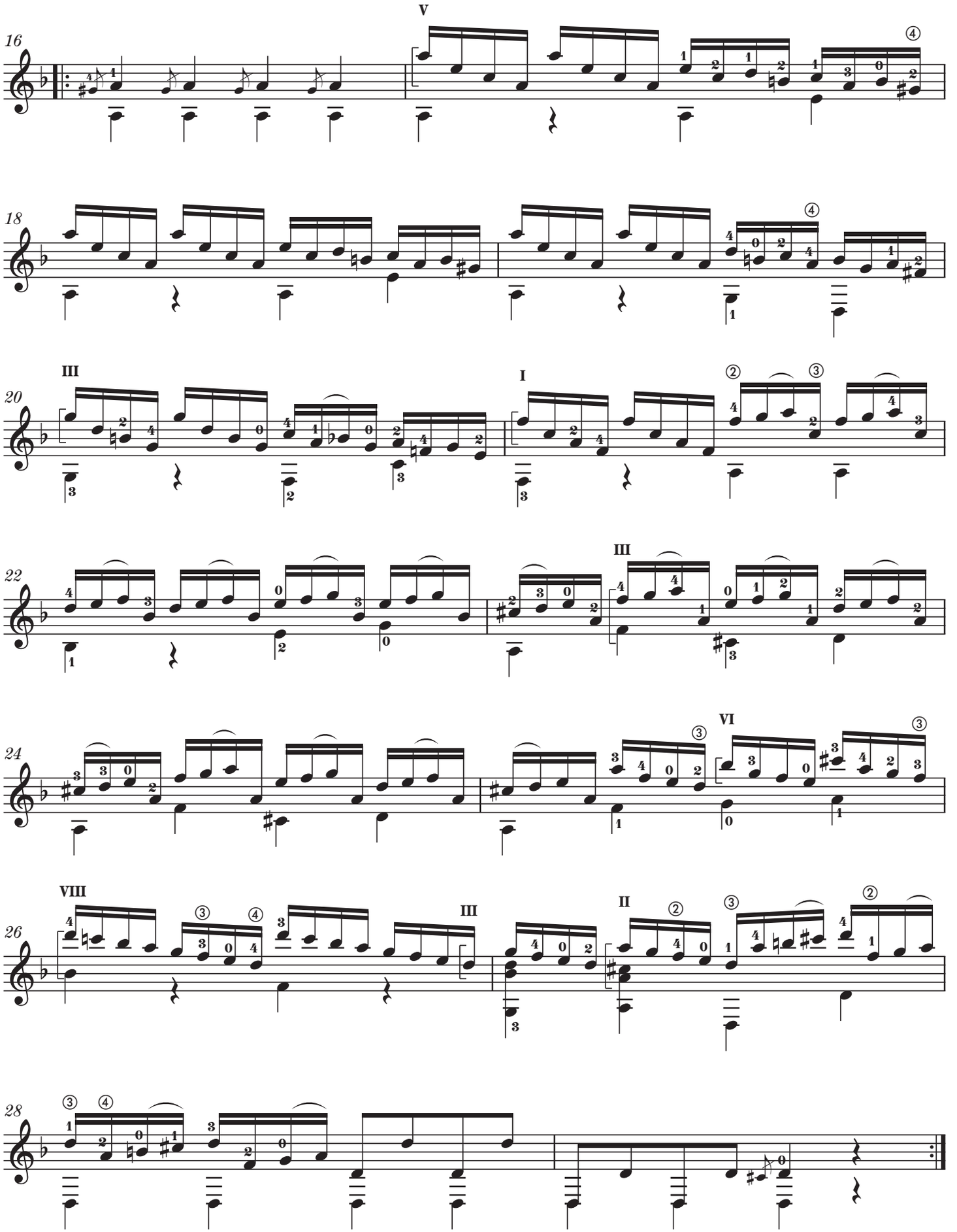
tr


16
18
20
tr
tr
22


Minuet
a i m p
5
a i m p a i m p
9
tr
13
III

SONATA 24

D minor