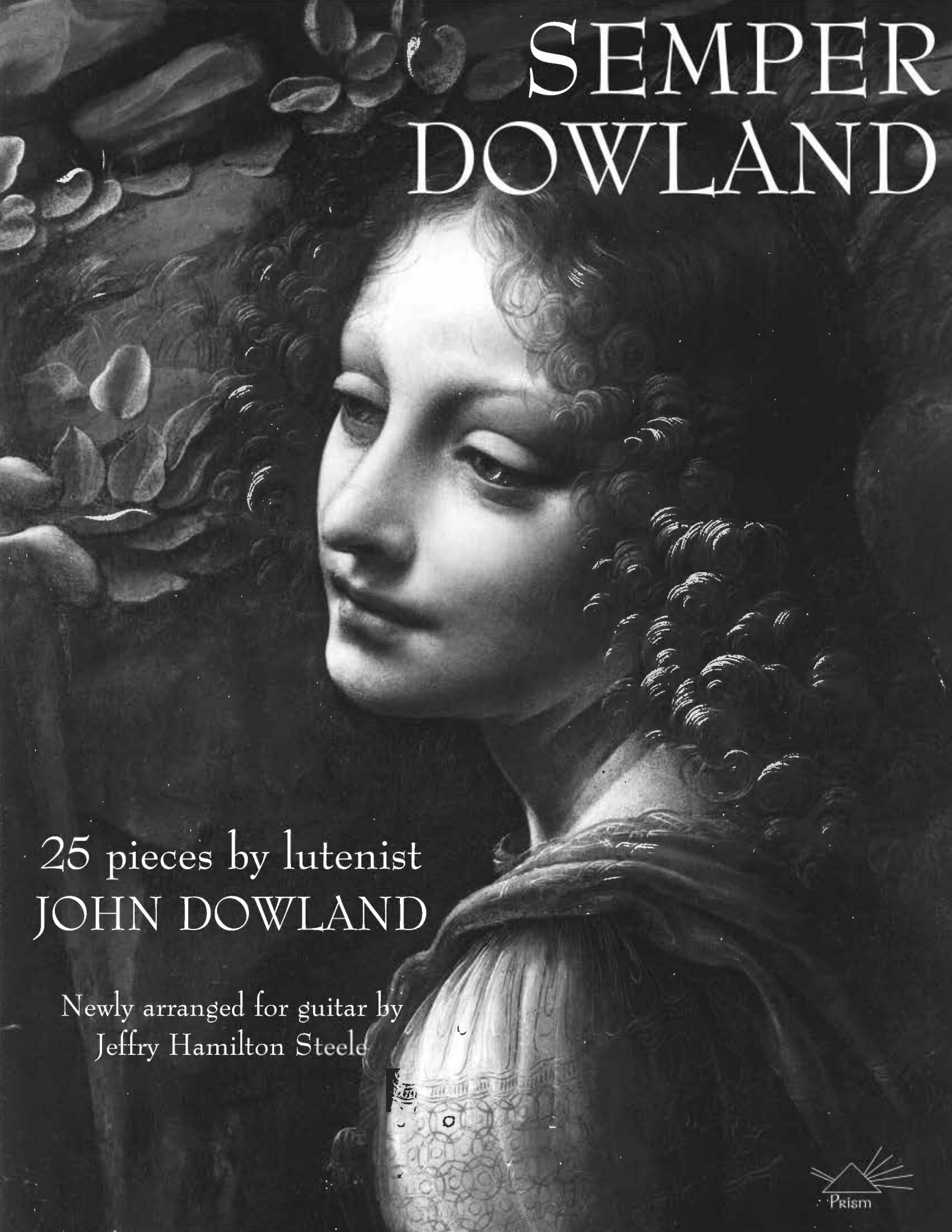

SEMPER DOWLAND

25 pieces by lutenist
JOHN DOWLAND

Newly arranged for guitar by
Jeffry Hamilton Steele

Prism

SEMPER DOWLAND

25 pieces by lutenist JOHN DOWLAND

Arranged for Guitar by Jeffry Hamilton Steele

ALMAINS
Mrs. Clifton's Almain
Lady Hunsdon's Puffe

GALLIARDS
Captain Digorie Piper's Galliard
Melancholy Galliard
Galliard to Lachrimae
John Dowland's Galliard
Mrs. Vaux's Galliard
Lady Clifton's Spirit
Earle of Essex, His Galliard
Mr. Knight's Galliard
A Galliard (on a Bacheler galliard)
A Galliard (on Walsingham)

PAVANS
Piper's Pavane
Lachrimae
Semper Dowland Semper Dolens

FANTASIES
A Fancy (#6)
A Fancy (#7)
A Fantasie
A Fantasia
Farewell (an "In Nomine")
Forlorn Hope Fancy

OTHER
Mrs. Vaux's Jig
The Shoemaker's Wife, A Toy
Weep You No More, Sad Fountains
Aloe

When I played once for a man who both built and performed on lutes he enthused that my Michael Cone guitar, with its greater projection and sustain, brought something to lute music that his period instruments could not. And, with its bright high end and thin bass, it didn't have the inappropriately lush sound of the modern guitar.

This inspired me to re-examine The Collected Lute Music of John Dowland (Faber Music, Diana Poulton and Basil Lam, editors), which I had purchased twenty years earlier. Here I found that while some of the pieces "sang" on guitar when fingered *as intabulated*, many others did not — each offering a puzzle to be solved. With the help of notation software, I could print up versions of Dowland pieces in a variety of keys until each one somehow fell into place.

Out of the 25 pieces I chose as favorites, only four seemed to mandate that the third string be tuned down a half-step (as was the lute's). A number of others worked best fingered in the lute "keys" but with the retention of standard tuning. But when pieces made use of the lute's diapason (extra bass string), I pitched them higher to maintain the full range of the notes. Another challenge comes from the guitar's longer string length, making many of the stretches routinely used by lutenists impossible for most of us. I found many solutions to this problem through mixing and matching open strings or natural harmonics with regularly fingered notes. To those purists who argue that natural harmonics are not appropriate to early music I say: if you can open to hearing this music on guitar in the first place, you can open to hearing judicious use of the instrument's inherent resources.

All of these pieces were written for lute solo except "Weep you no more" which I arranged from the song for voice and lute, much as Dowland had done with many of his other songs. For the remaining pieces, I worked from the Poulton/Lam transcriptions except in the case of "Semper Dowland Semper Dolens", where I used ideas from the Jane Pickering Lute Book. While I generally made use of the Poulton/Lam rendering of voicings, I frequently reinterpreted voice movement – either out of technical or motivic considerations. Bearing in mind that many of these pieces came down to us from one-of-a-kind lute books written out in the hand of a particular player (often an amateur), I have made composer's choices in passages that I felt could help the music better live up to its promise, in its new life on the guitar.

I have highlighted *stretto* (imitative) melodies and motifs with grey rectangles to assist the player in bringing them out. Keeping in mind that most professionals prefer to finger their own music, I limit my fingering suggestions to the "Specific Notes" section. In addition to specifying the tuning, I'll say only that the notes in each voice are to be sustained to their full notated value in most every case.

I sequenced the pieces for this collection so that retuning and page turning would be kept to a minimum — which is why some otherwise related pieces do not immediately follow each other — while maintaining reasonable variety from one piece to the next.

I am also indebted to Diana Poulton's 1972 book, John Dowland (U. of CA Press), which I found at a college library. I recommend it for information about these pieces and the people named in them, some of which I relate in my notes below. Here is where I learned that Dowland rhymes with Poland.

John Dowland's music has much of the timeless universality, and classical mastery of contemporary idiom, one finds just over a century later in the music of J.S. Bach. With the inclusion of a Leonardo image on the cover, I propose a third genius — from one century earlier in this case — who also might opt to keep company with Dowland and Bach in the pantheon of universal masters.

Jeffry Hamilton Steele

SEMPER DOWLAND

Selected Lute Music of John Dowland

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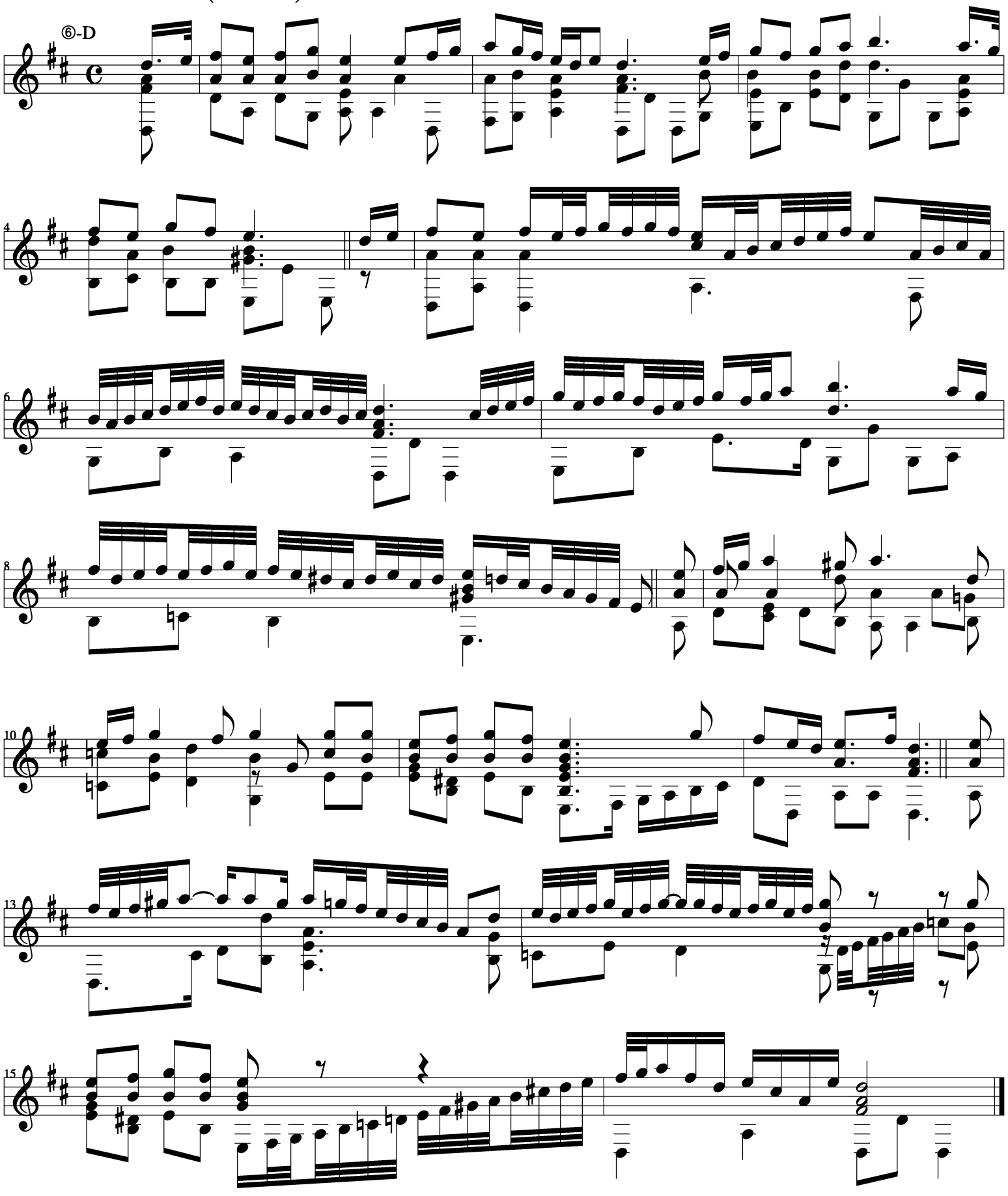
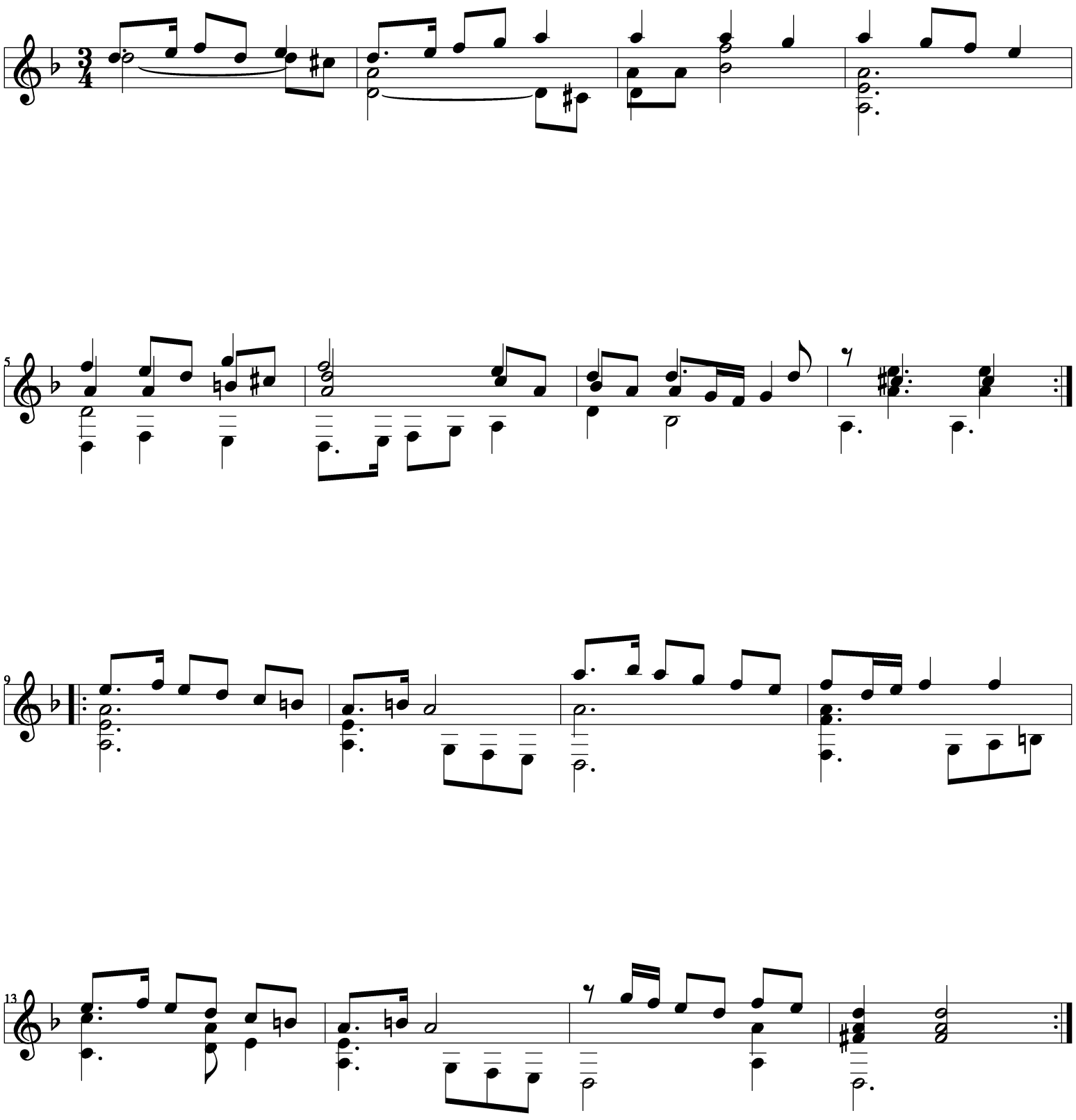
Mrs. Clifton's Almain

John Dowland (1563-1626)



John Dowland's Galliard

⑥-D



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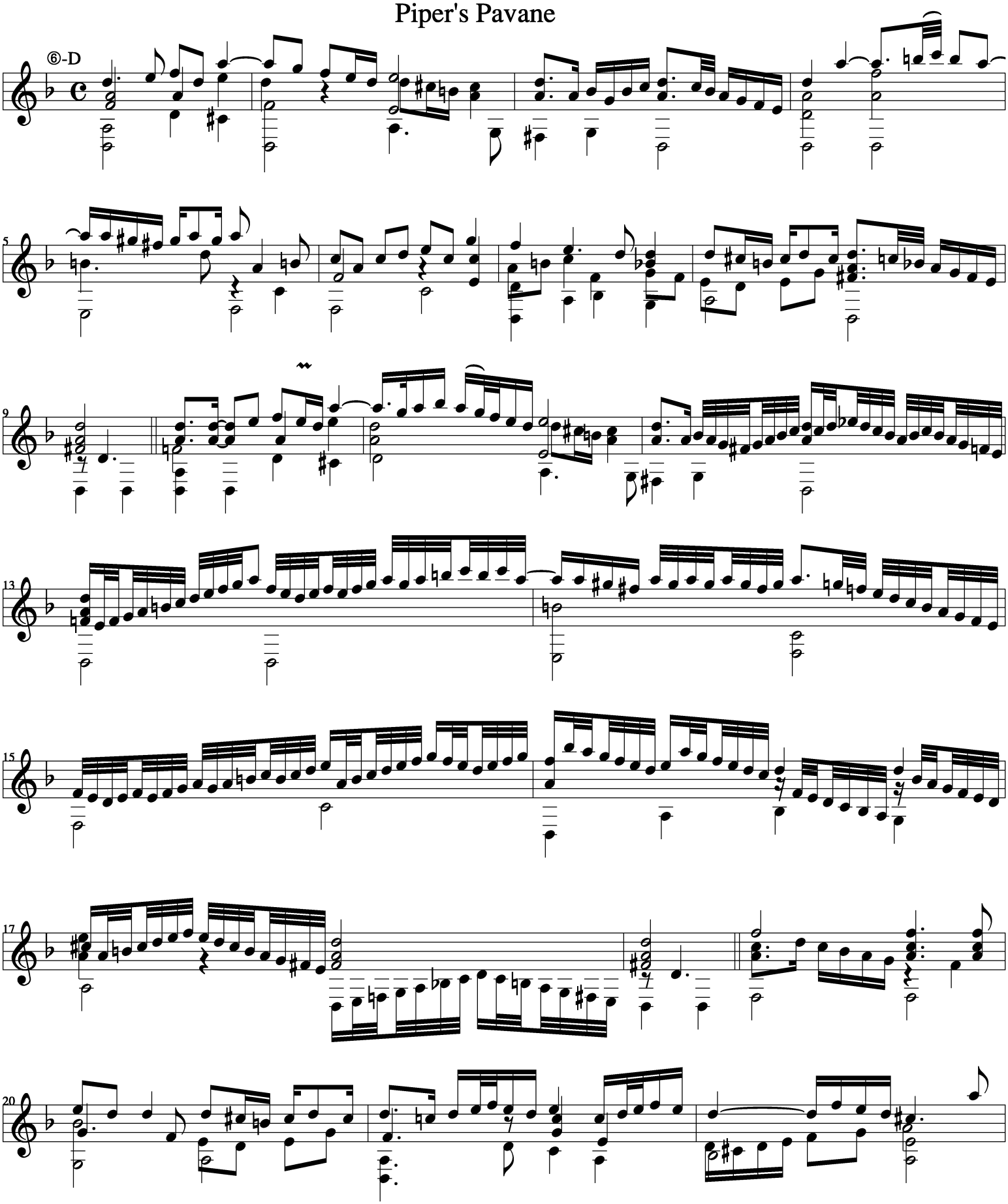

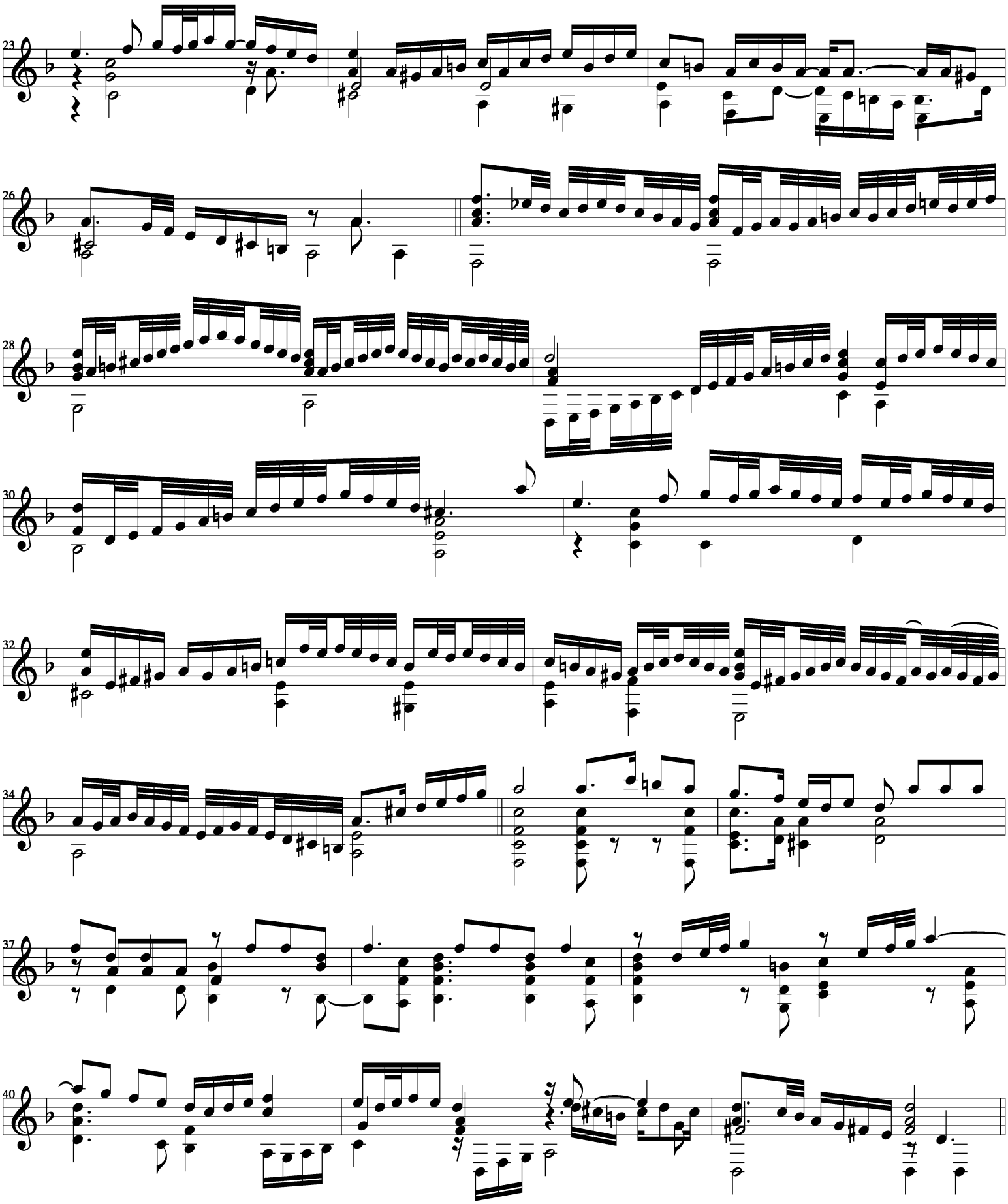

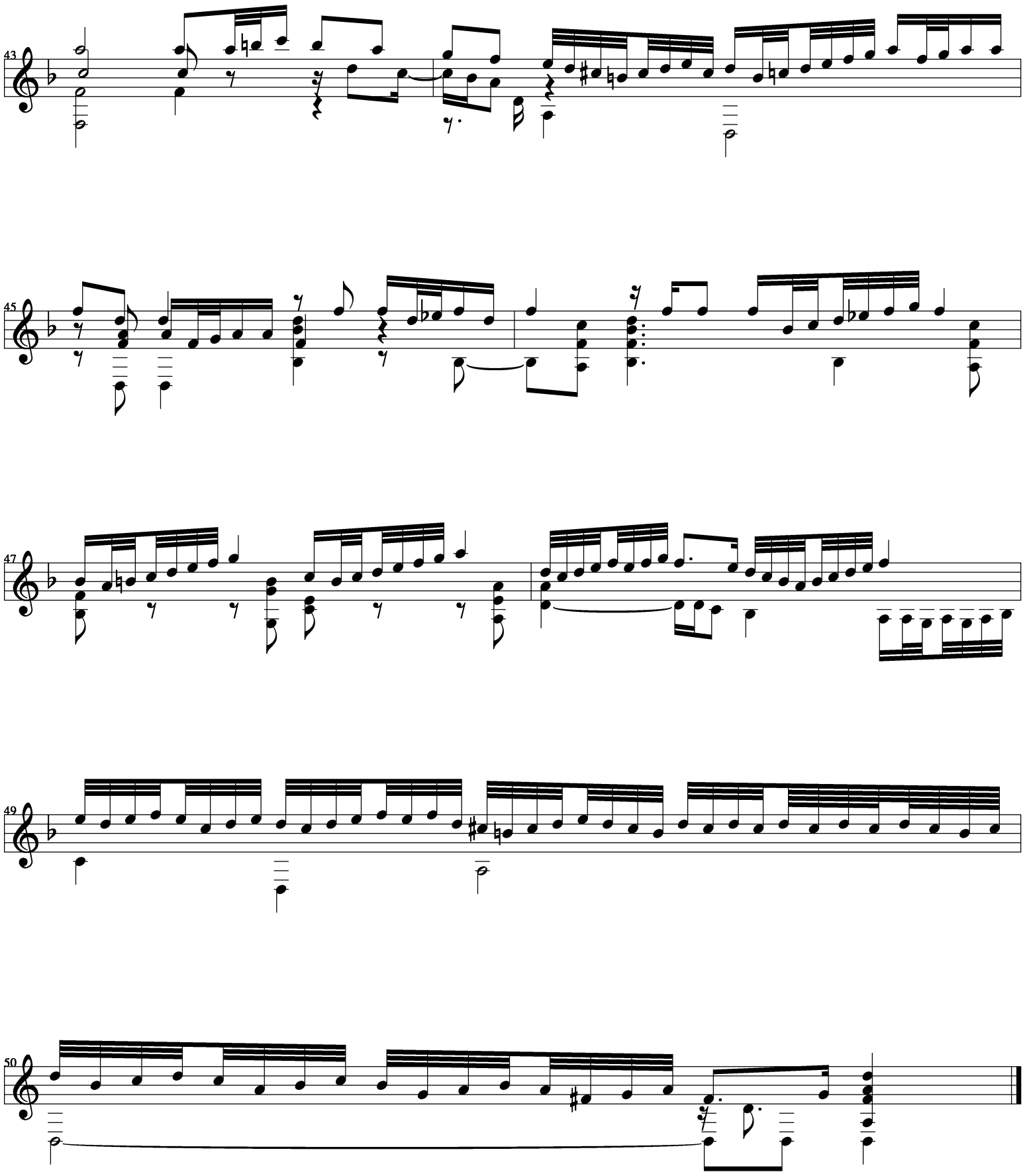
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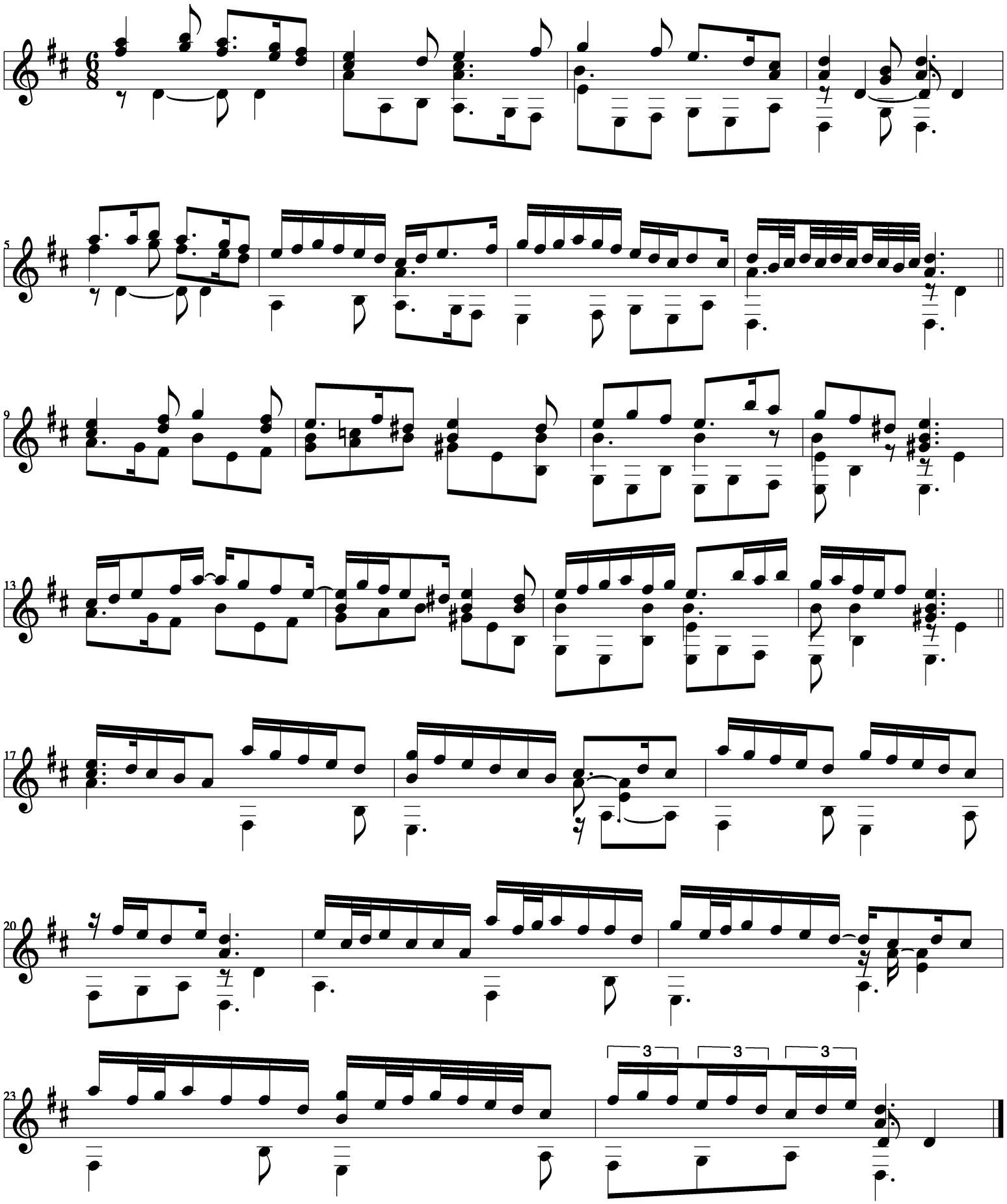
The Shoemaker's Wife, *A Toy*



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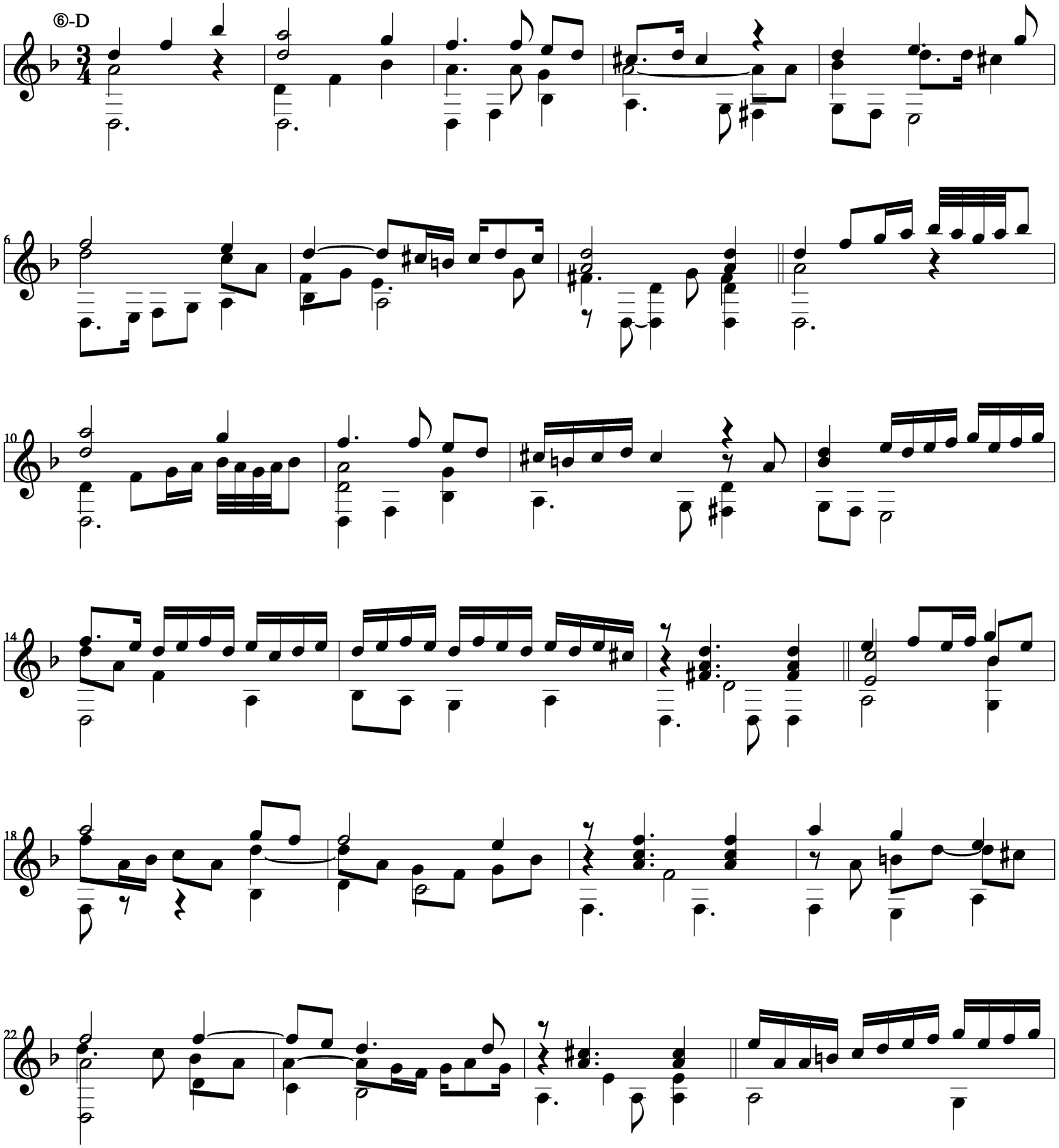
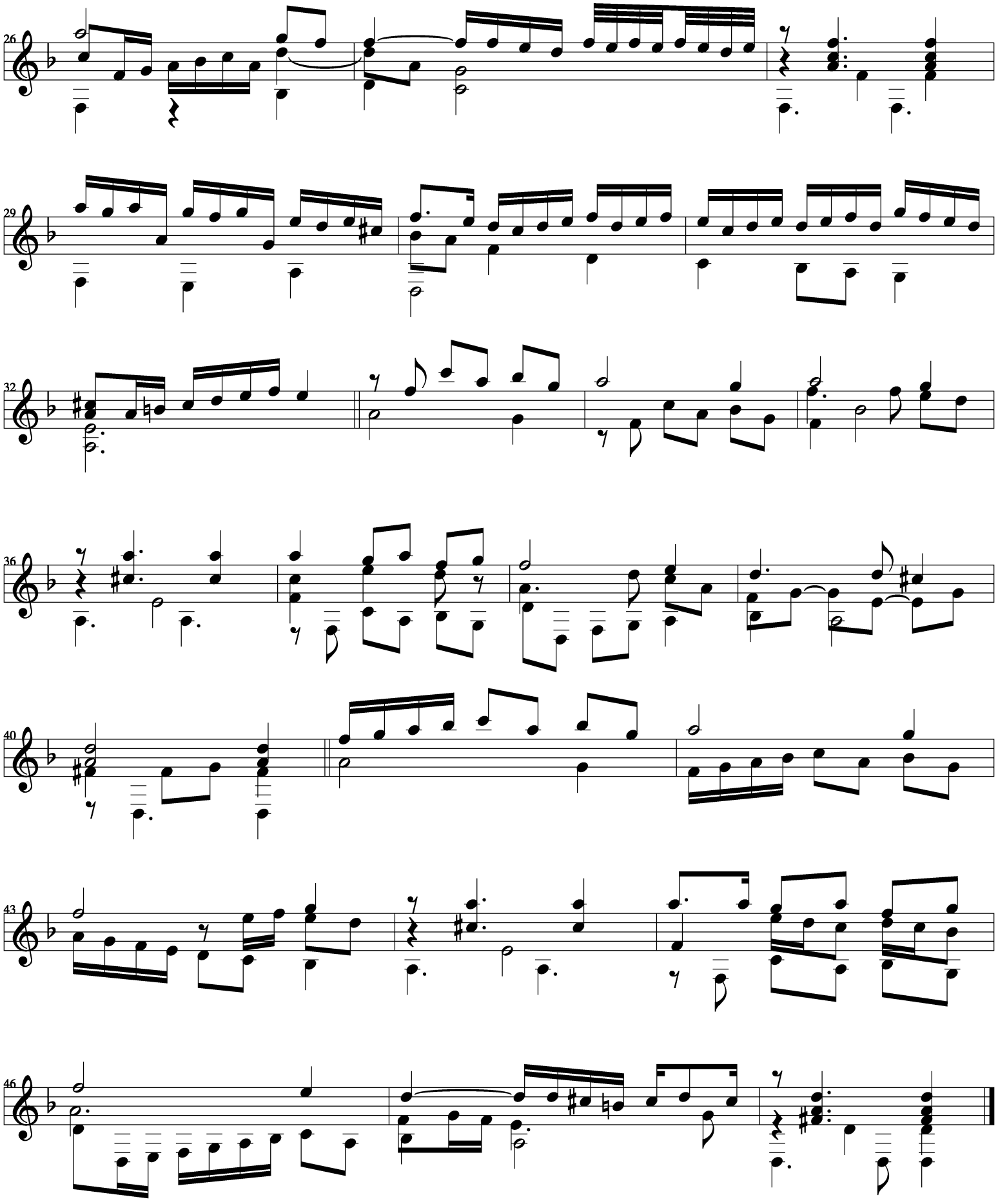
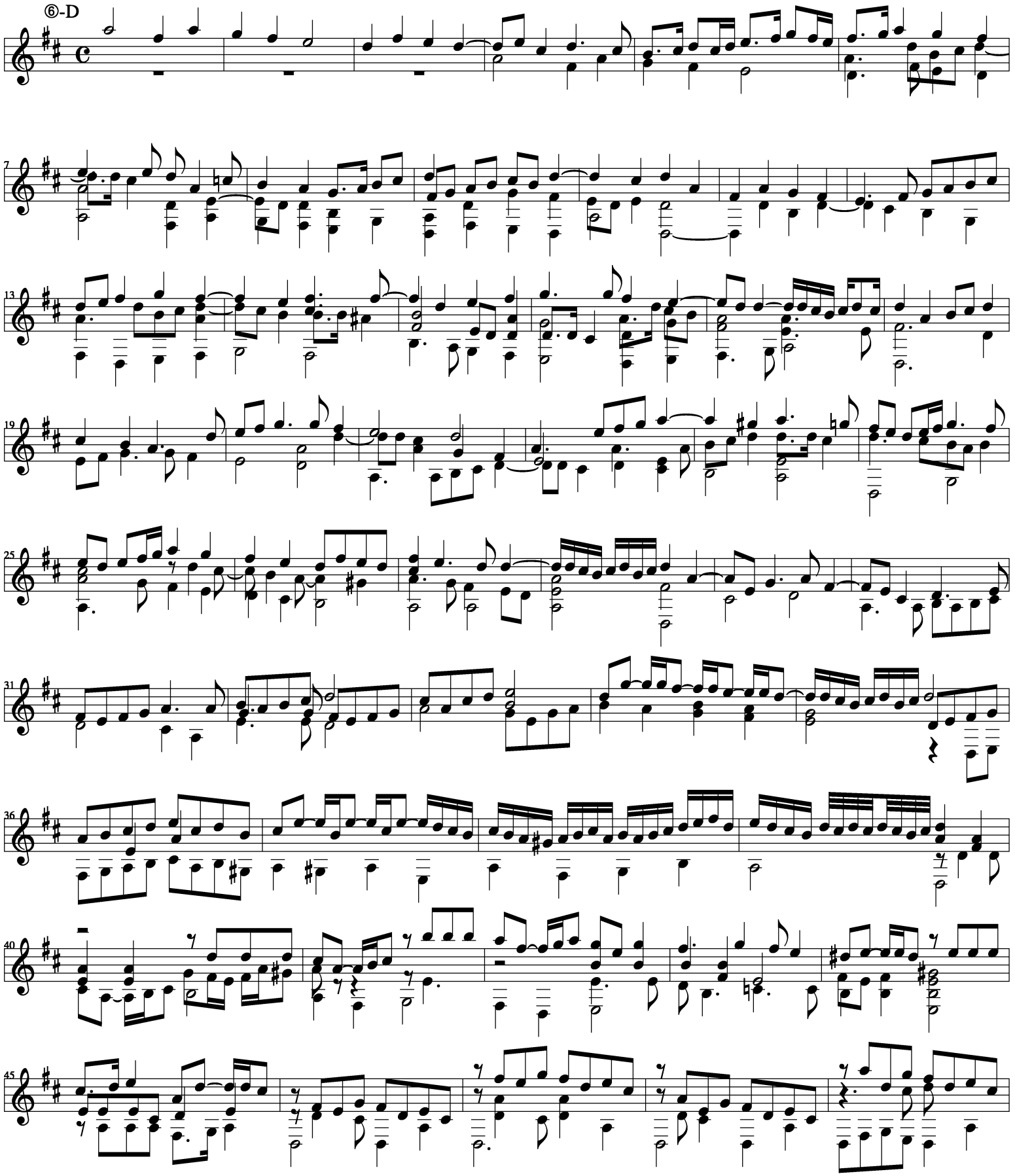
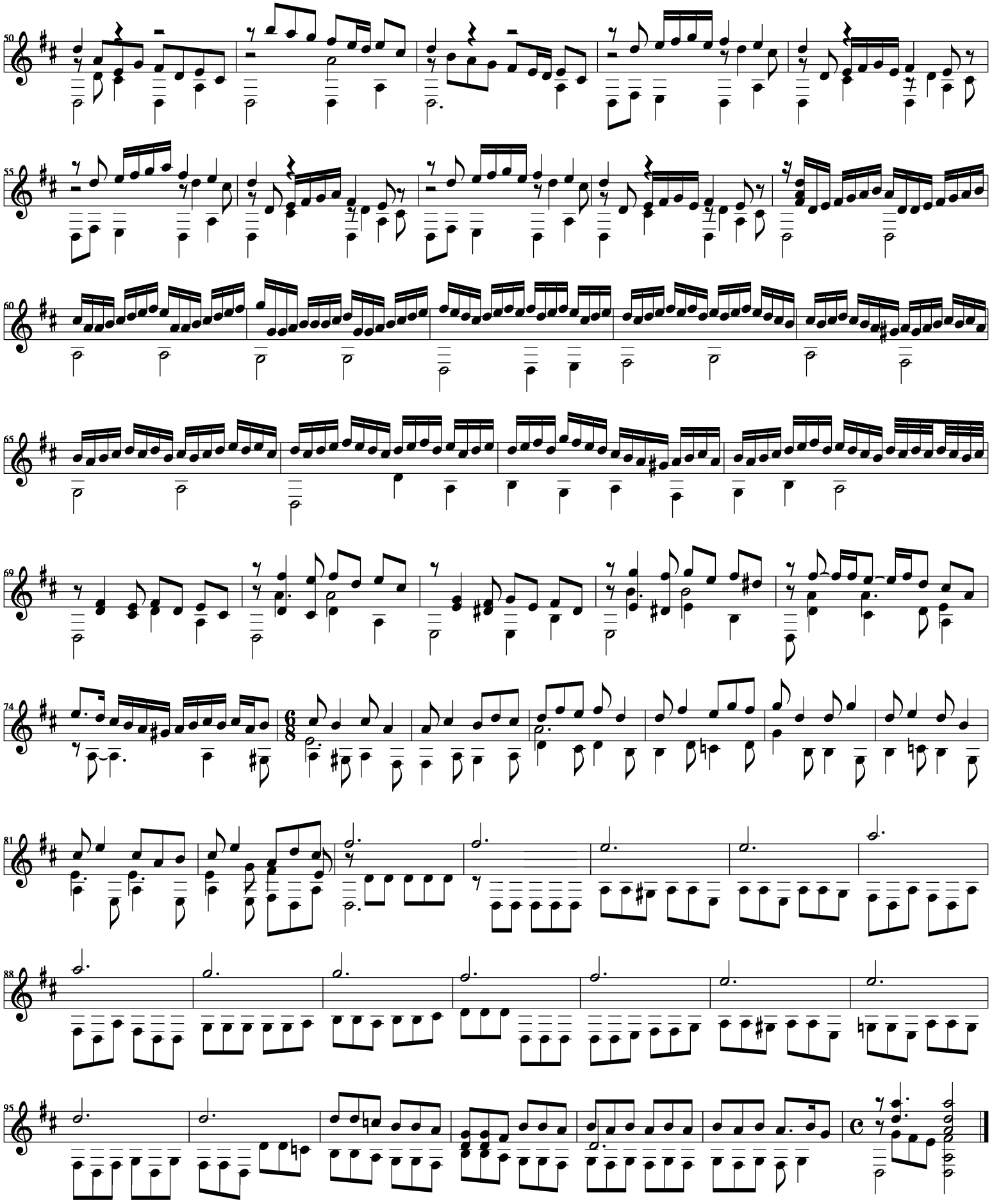


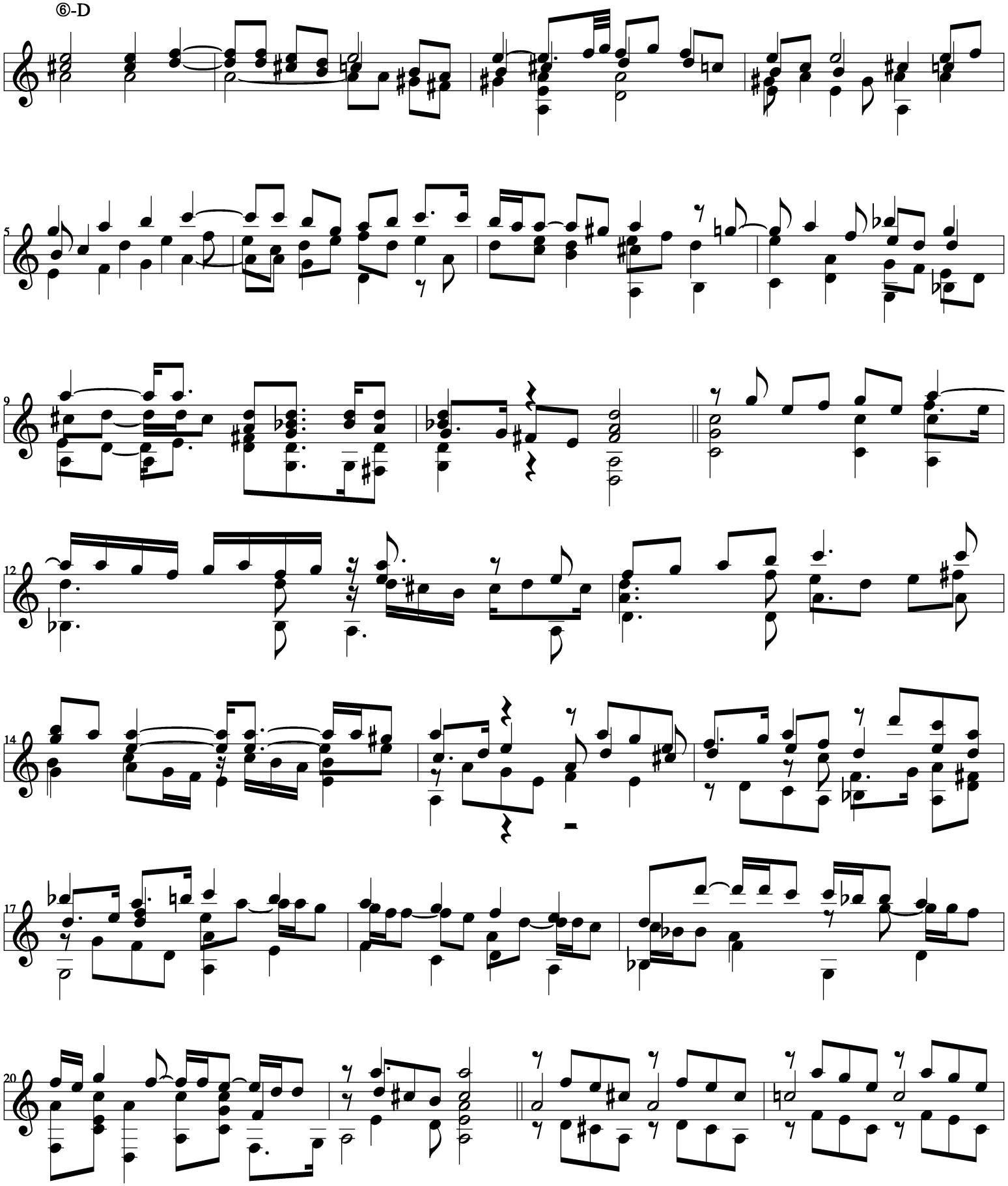


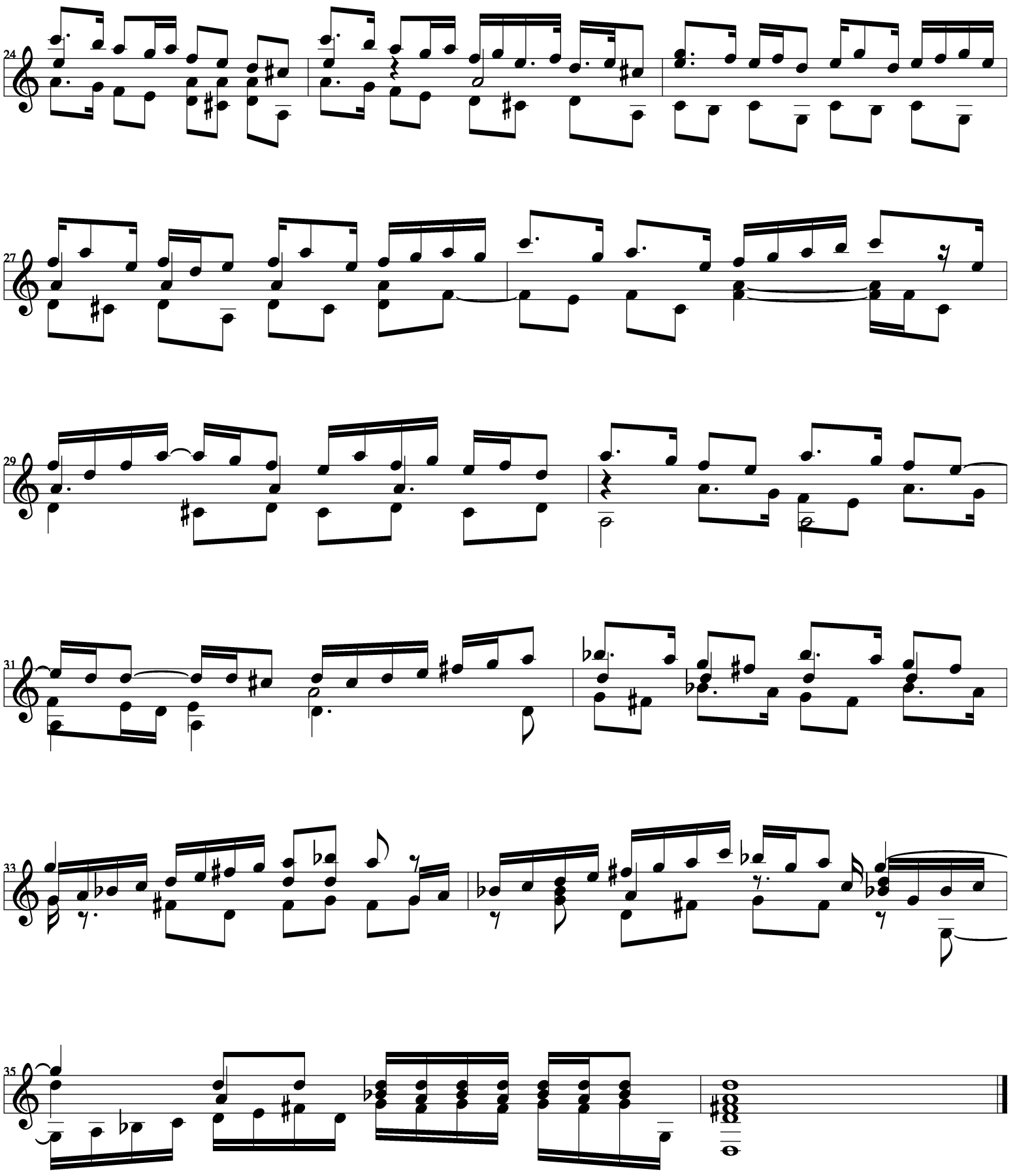
A Fantasie





Semper Dowland Semper Dolens

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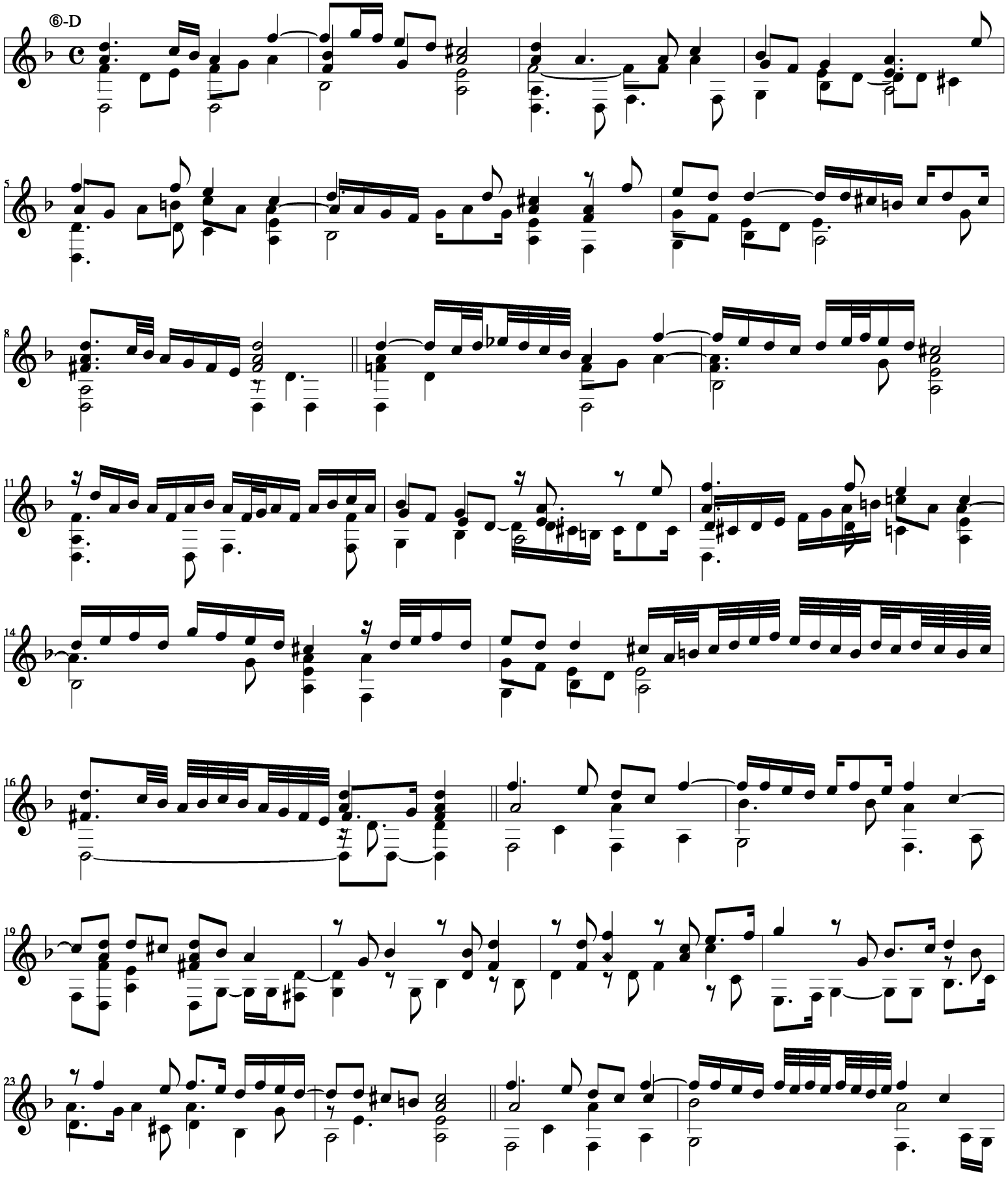
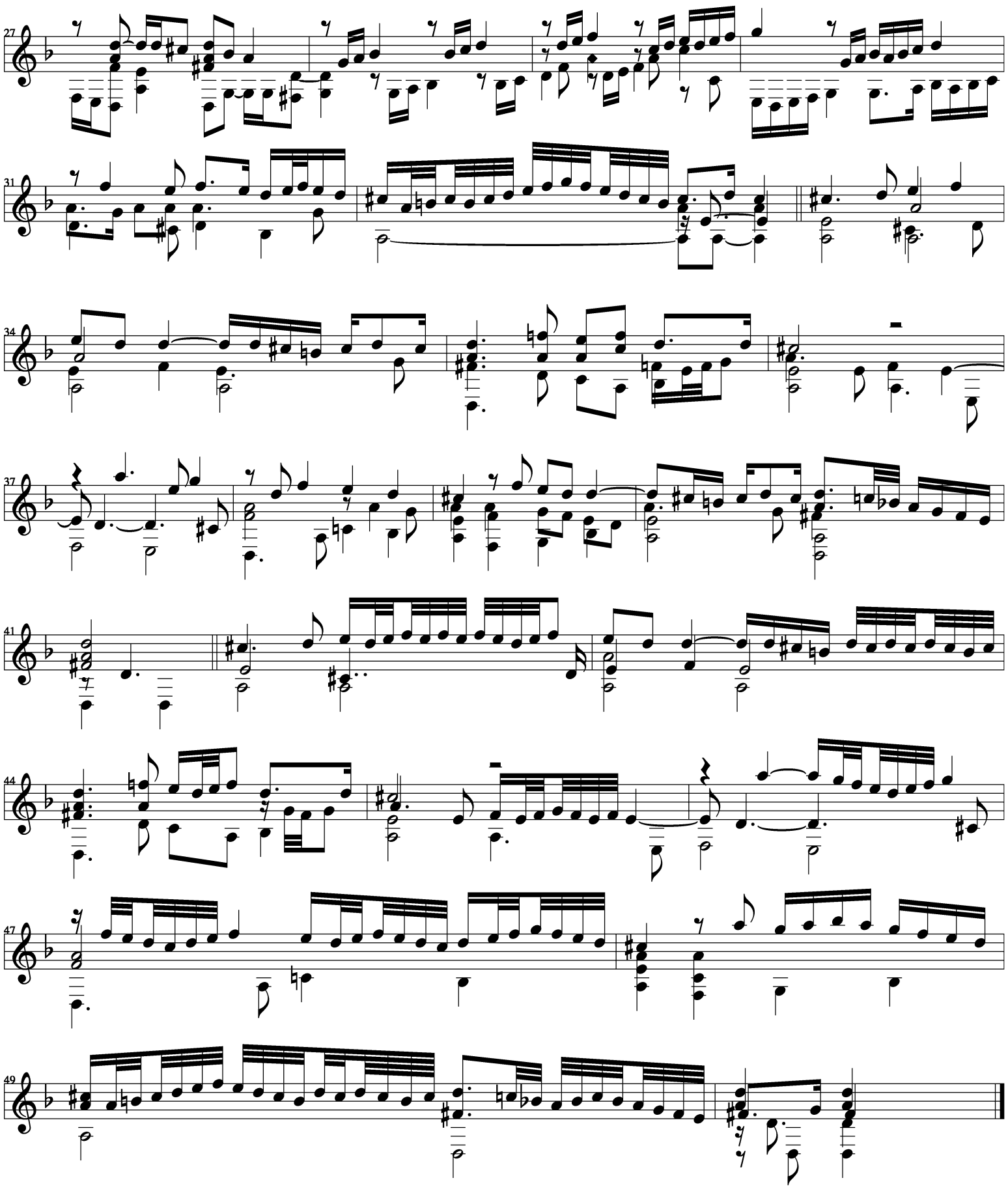
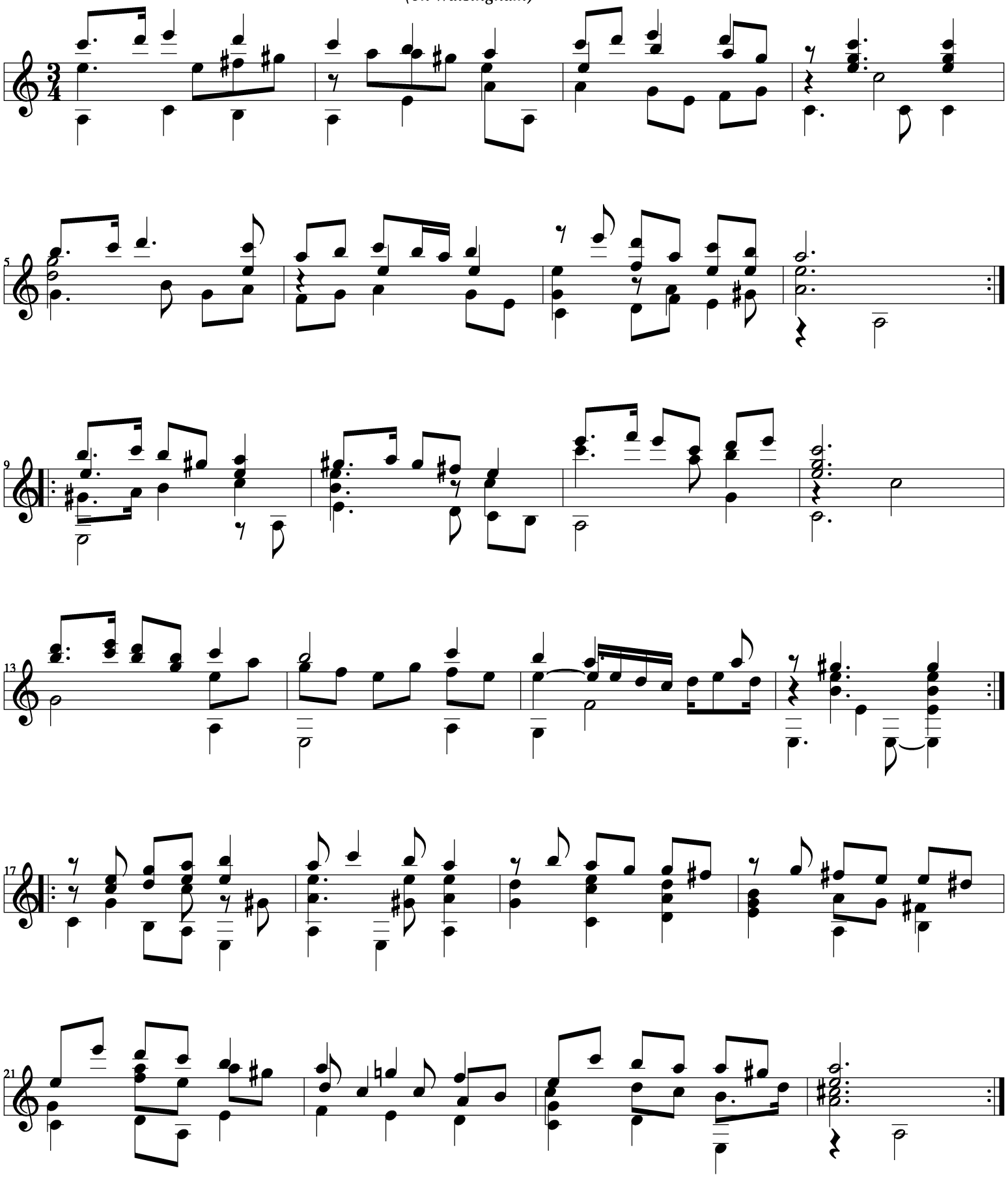
Lachrimae



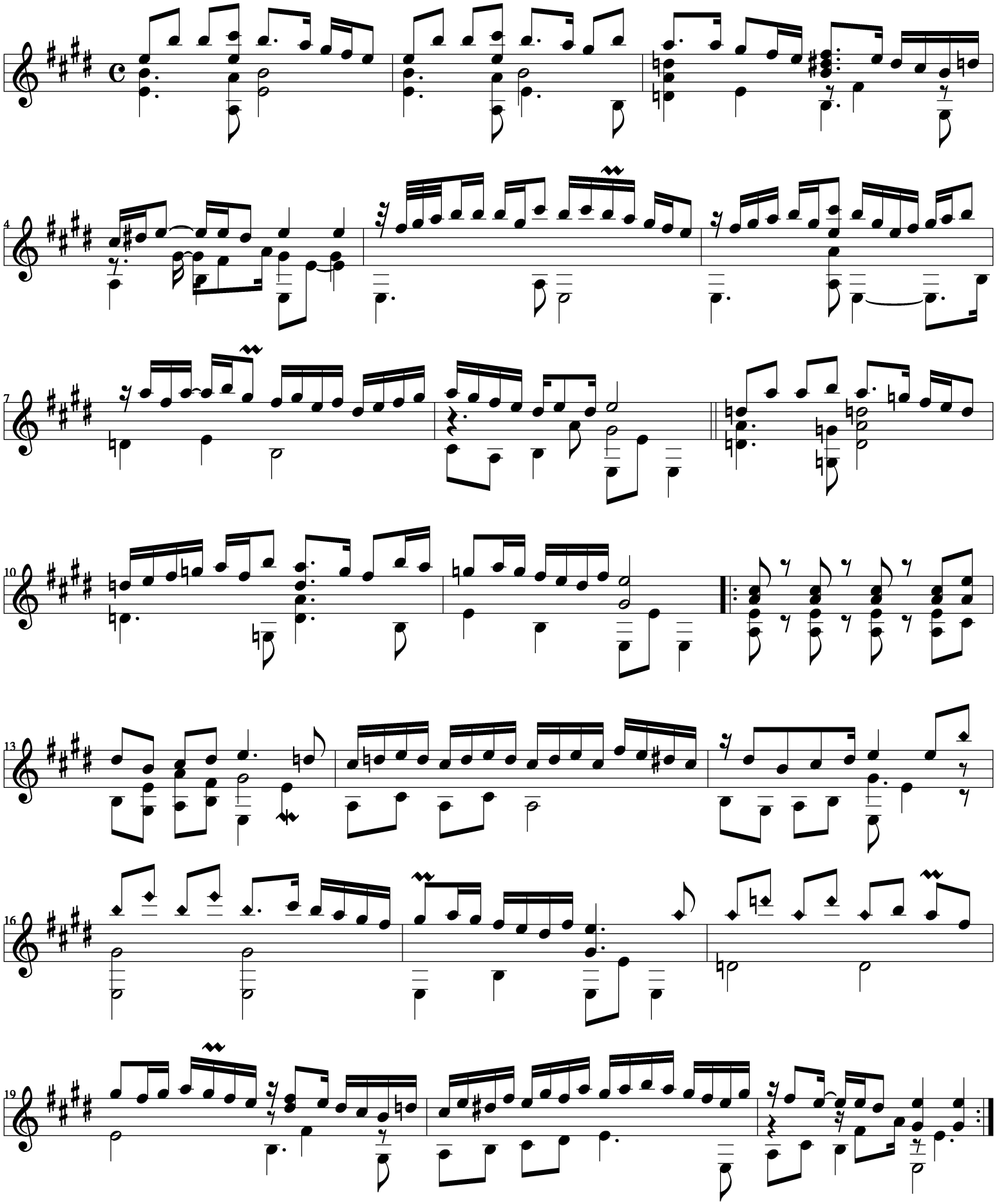


A Galliard

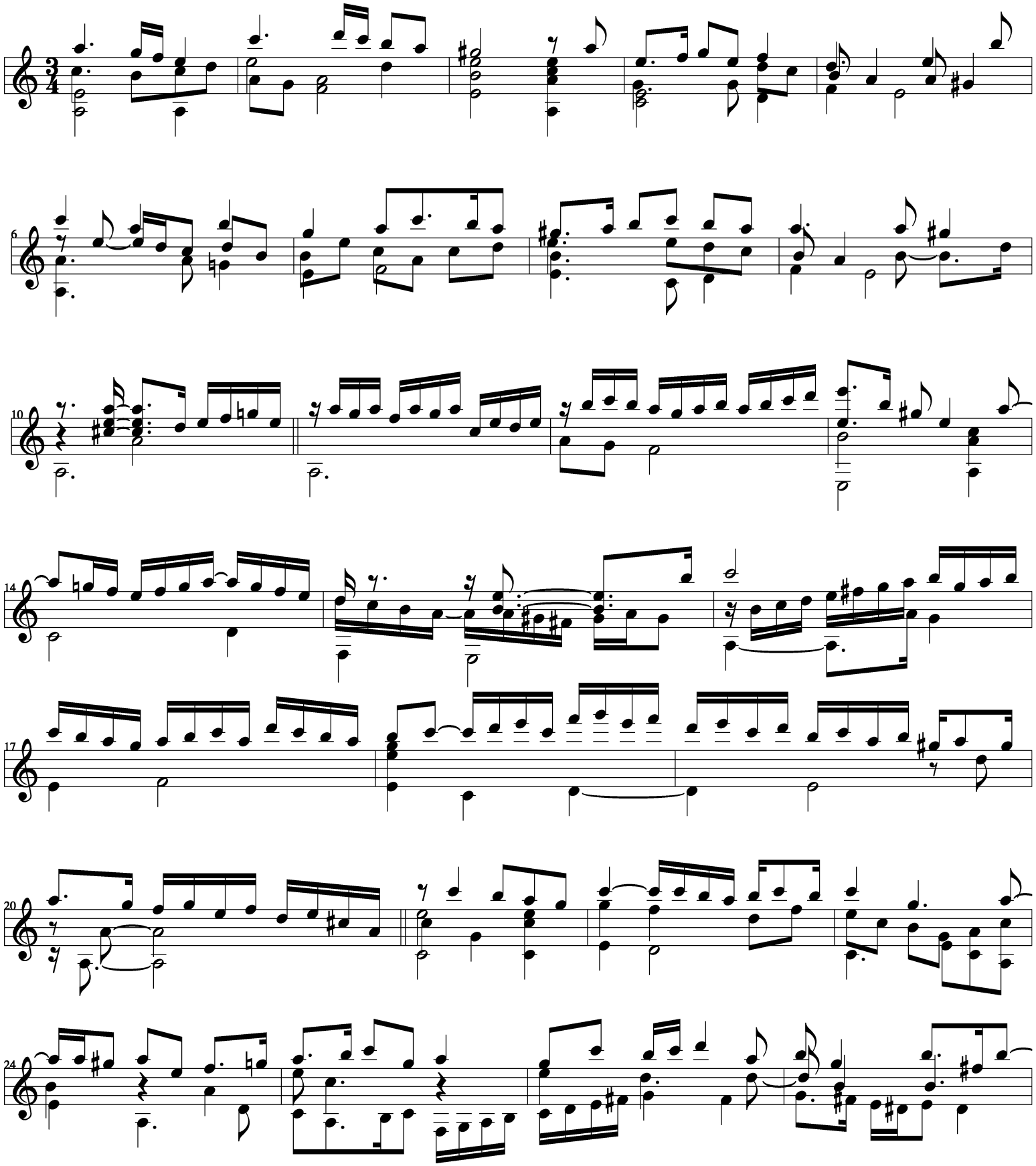
(on Walsingham)

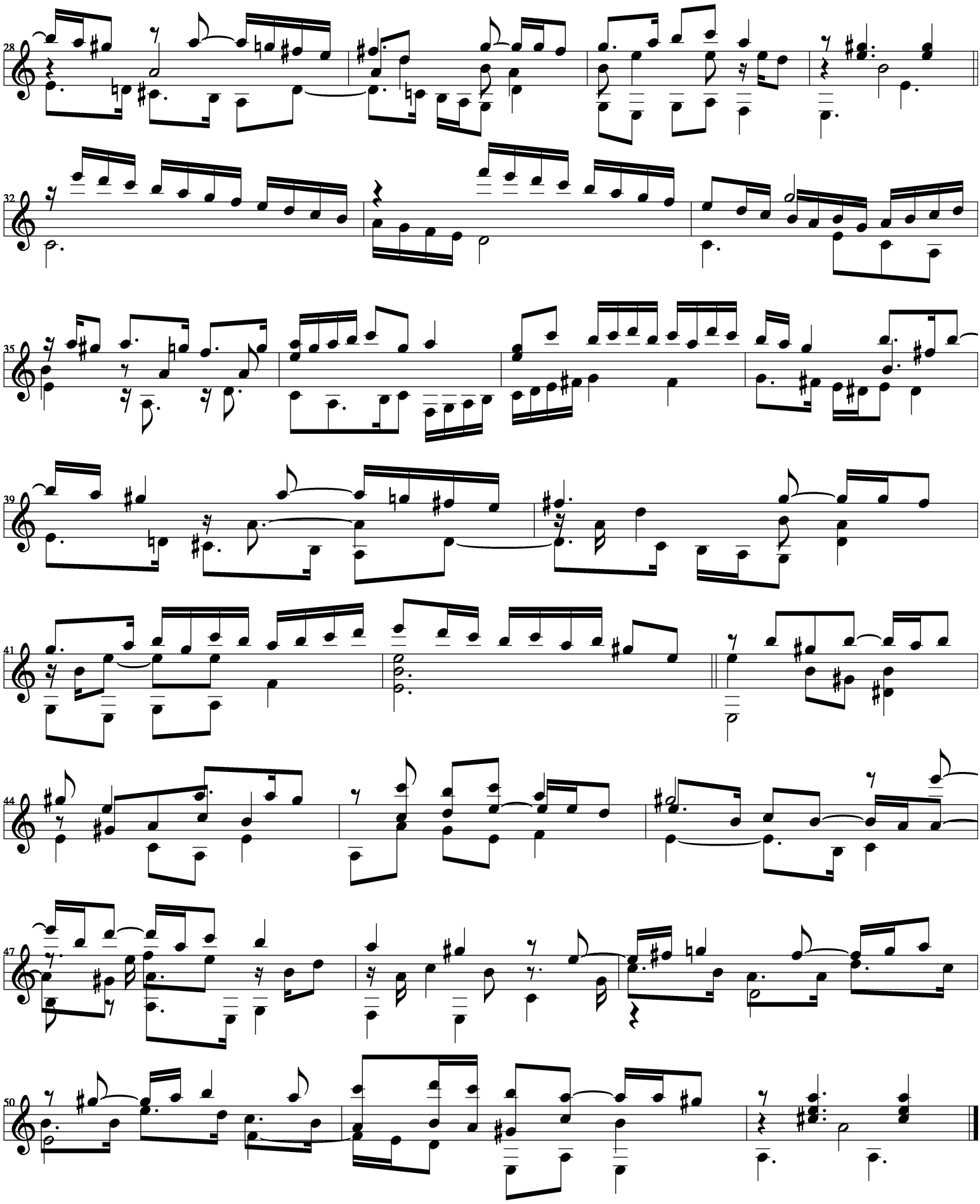


Lady Hunsdon's Puffe



Galliard to Lachrimae

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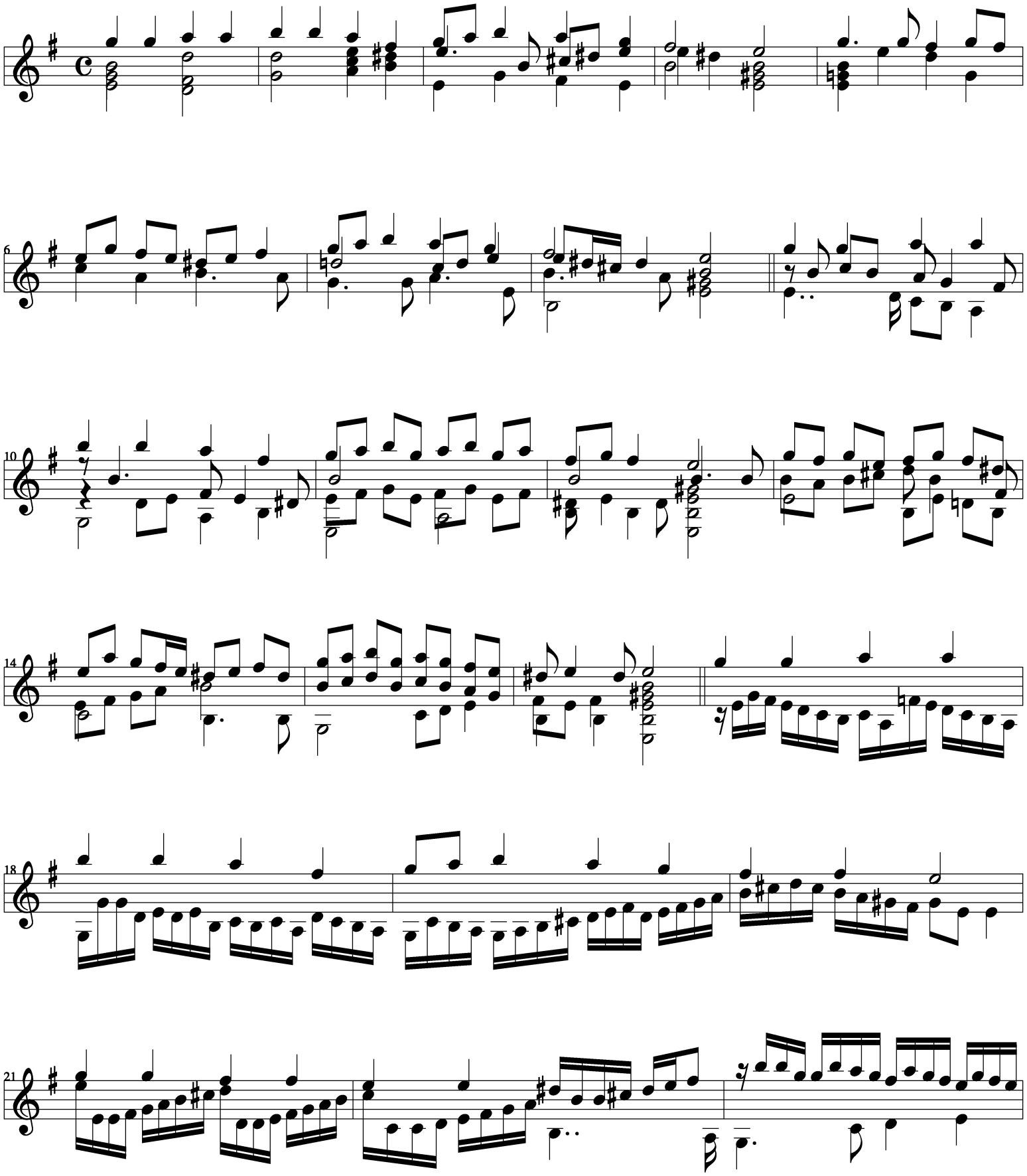
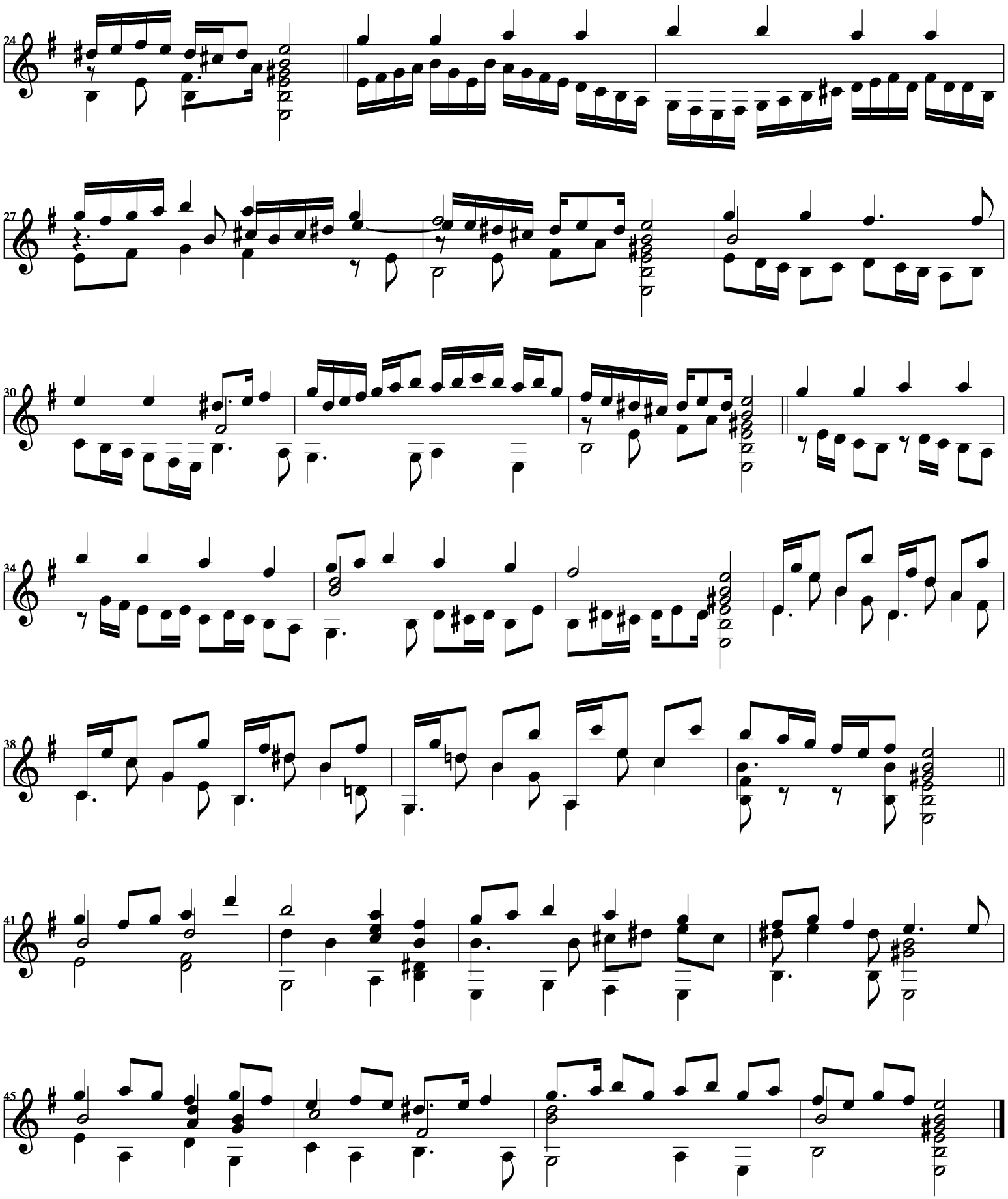
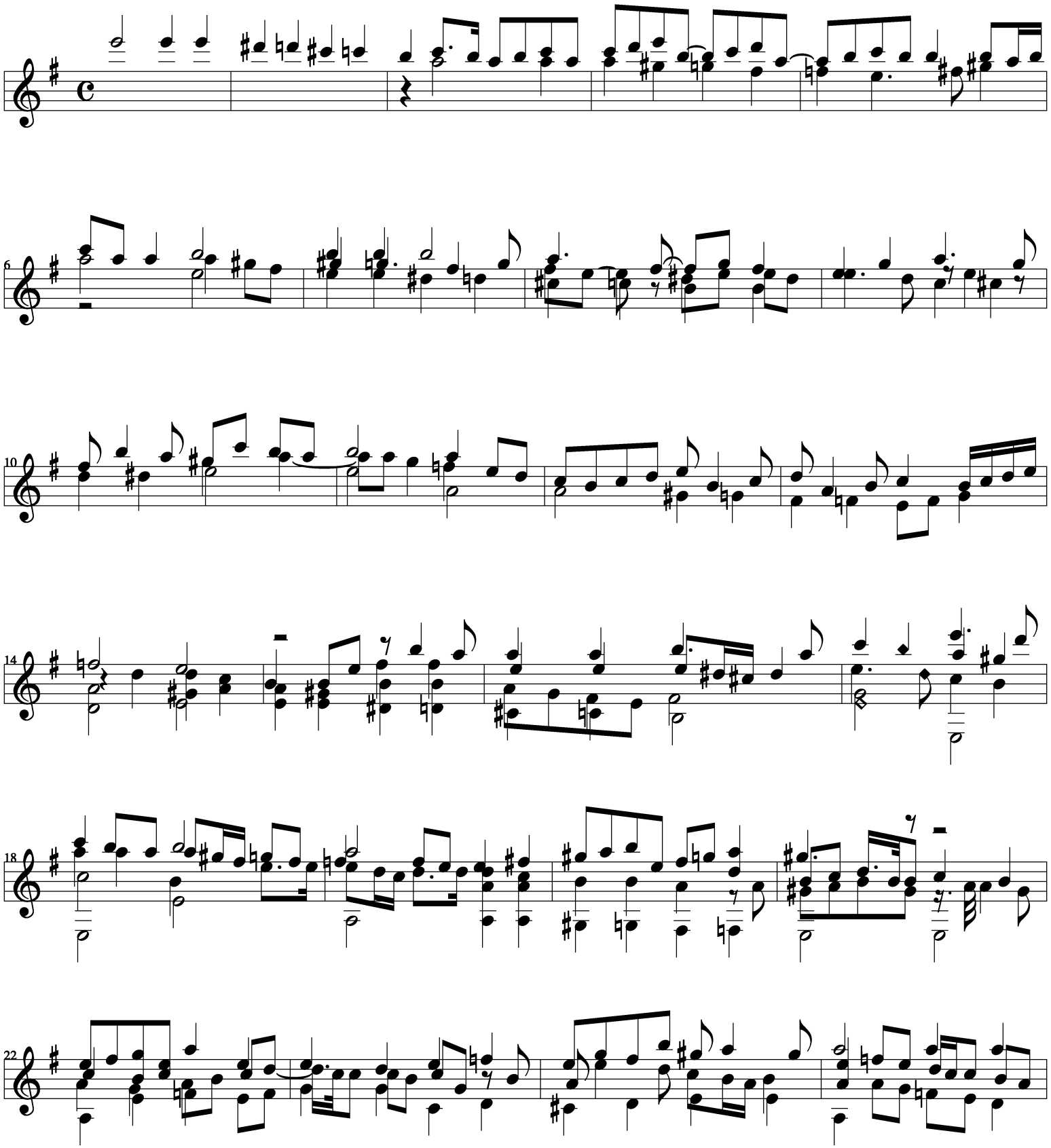
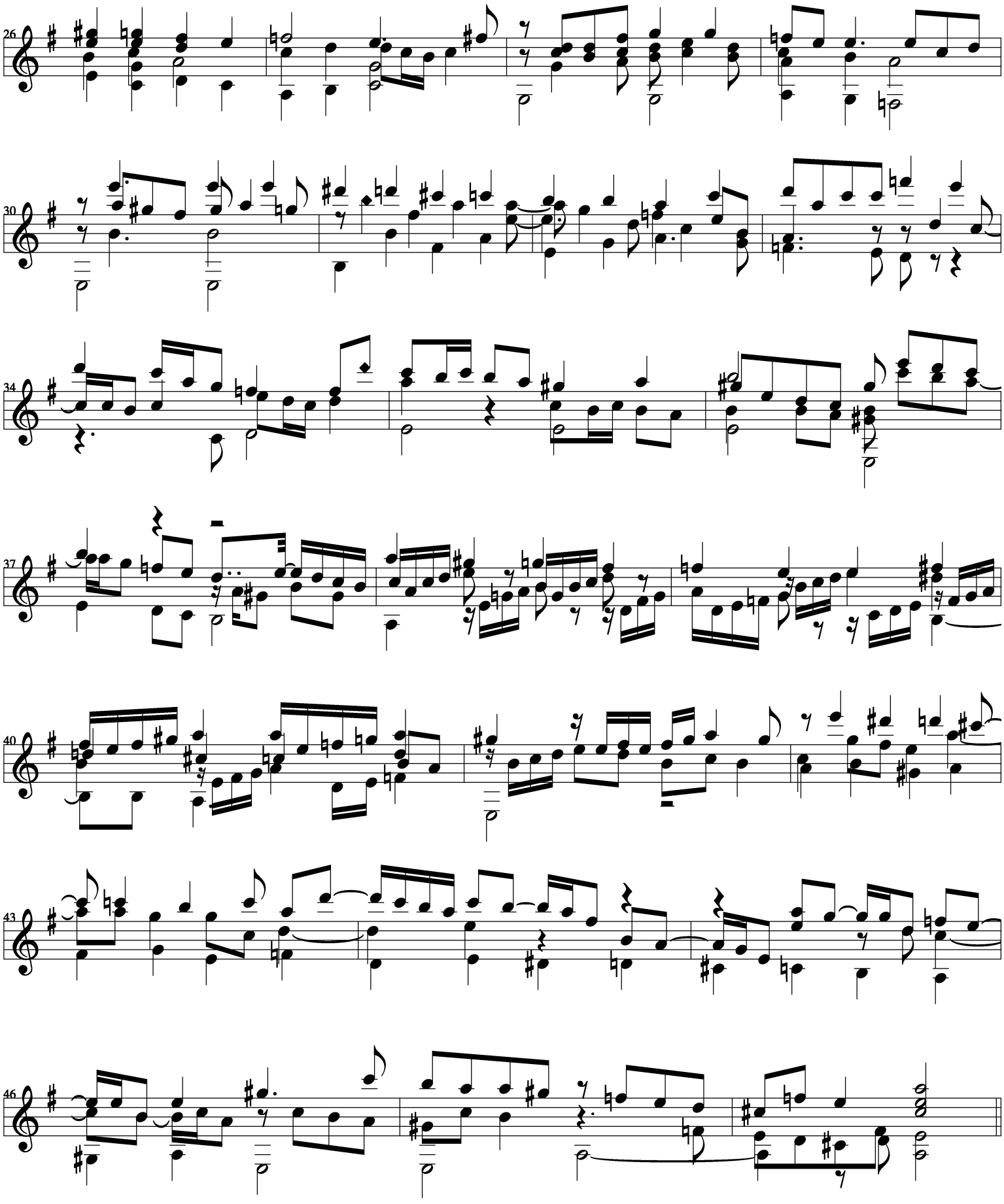
Aloe

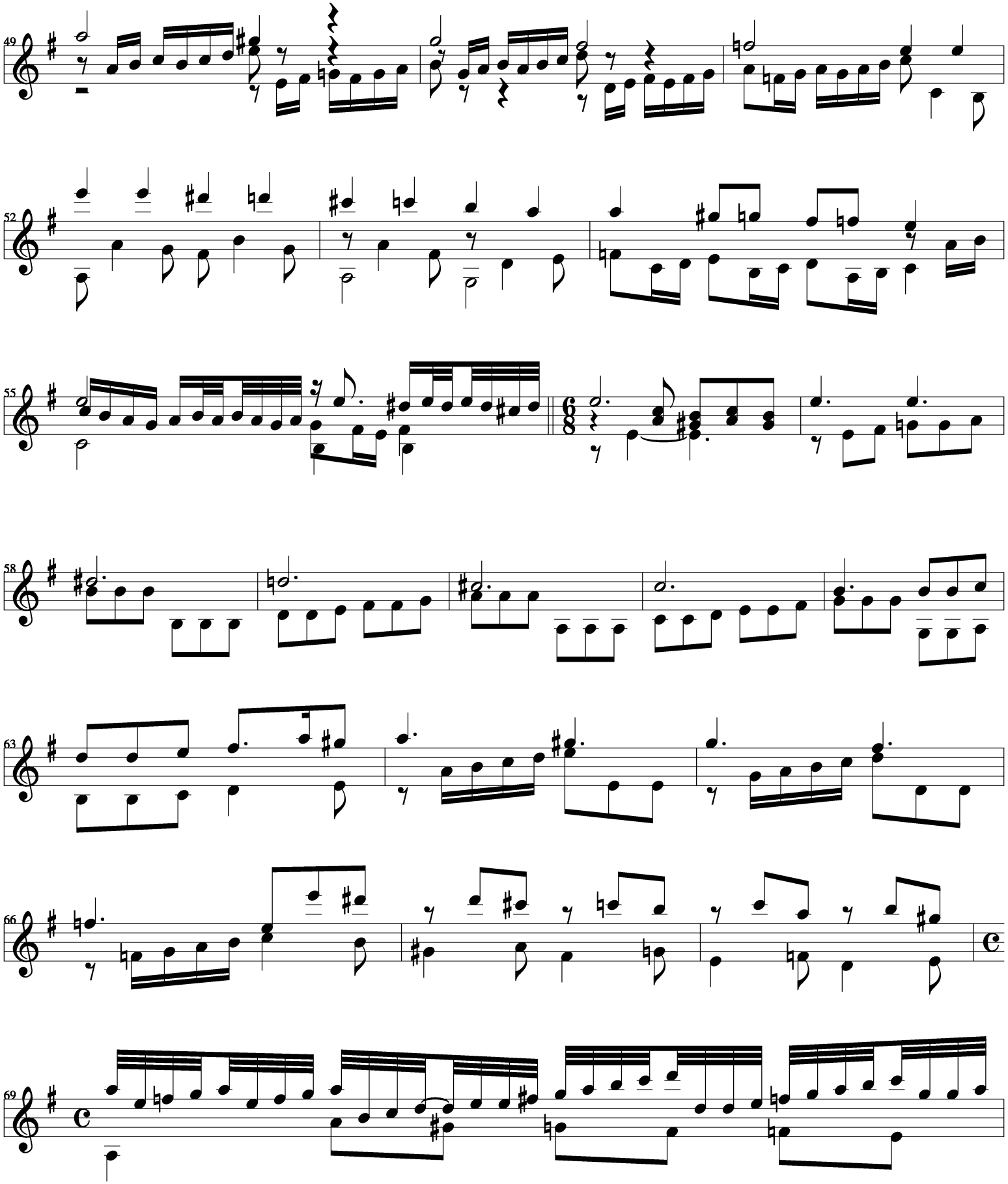


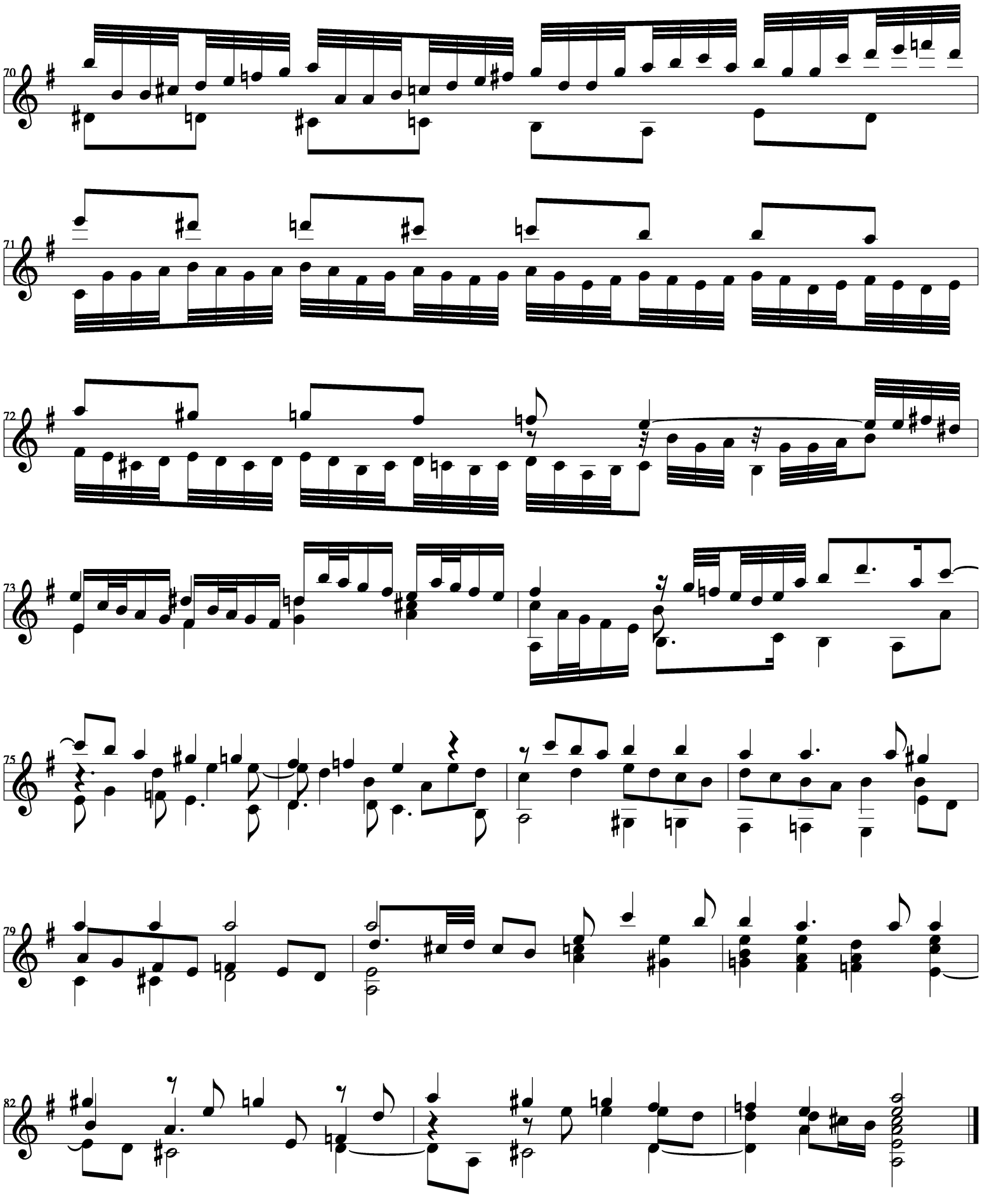


A Fantasia





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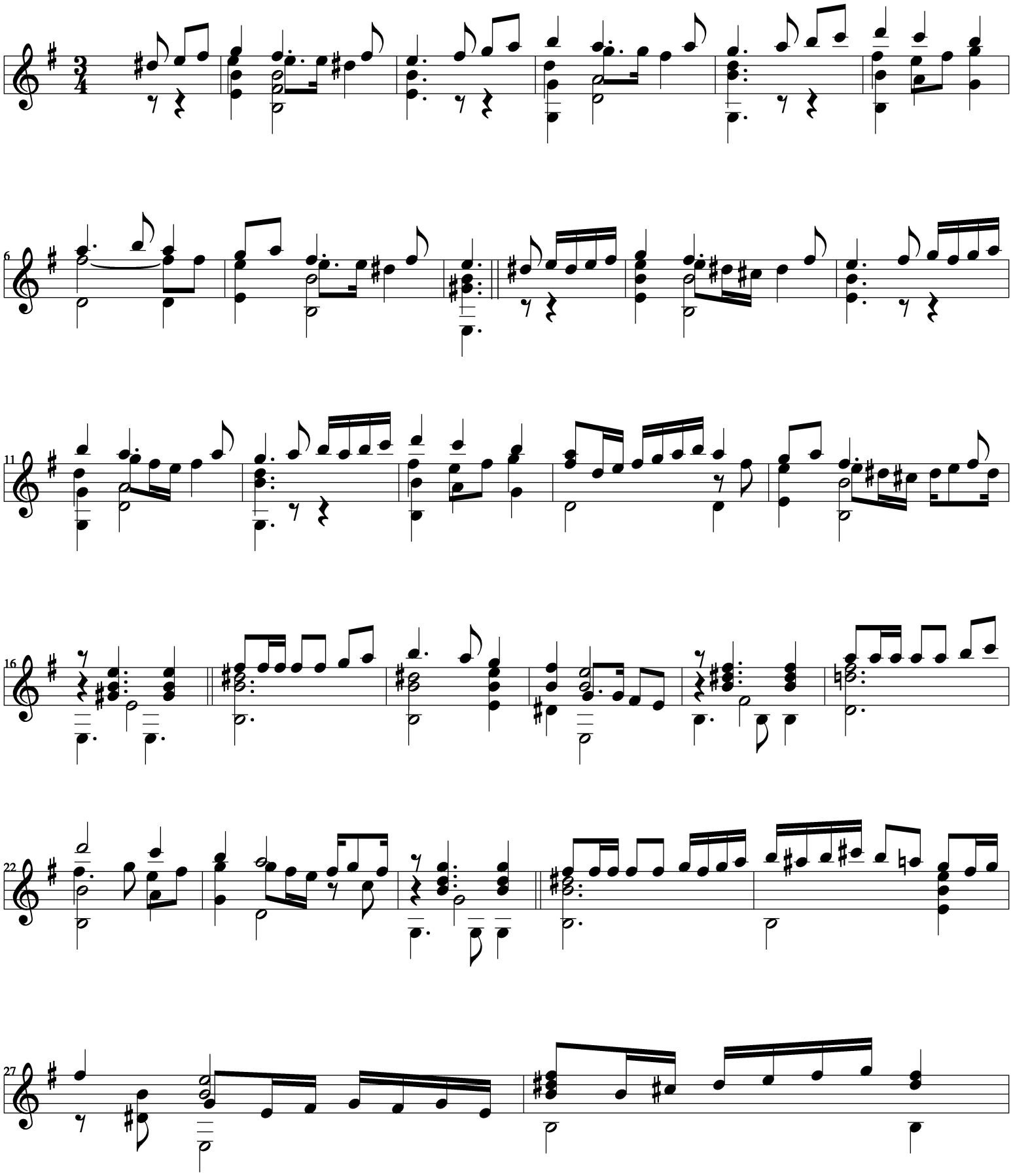
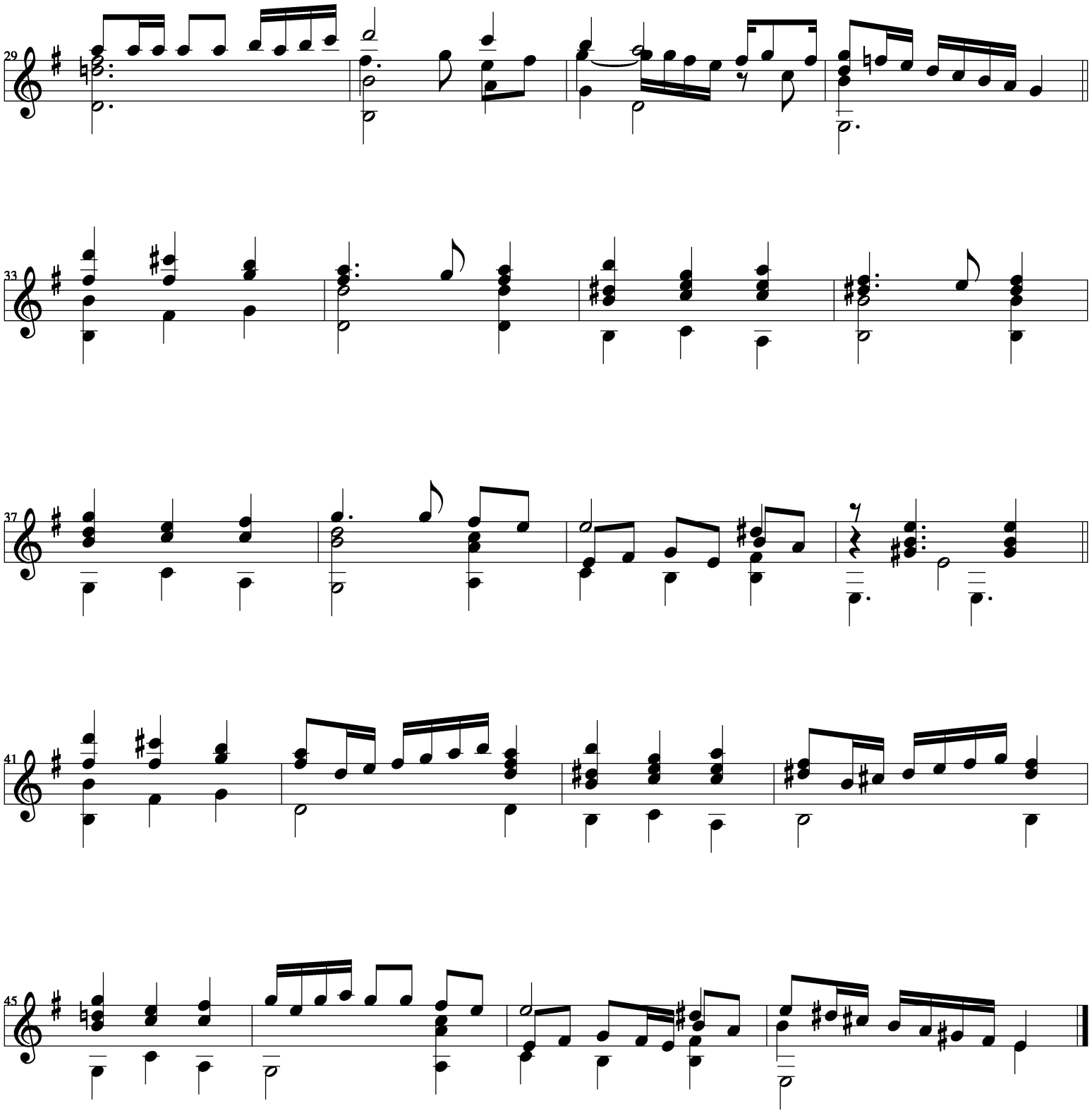
Melancholy Galliard

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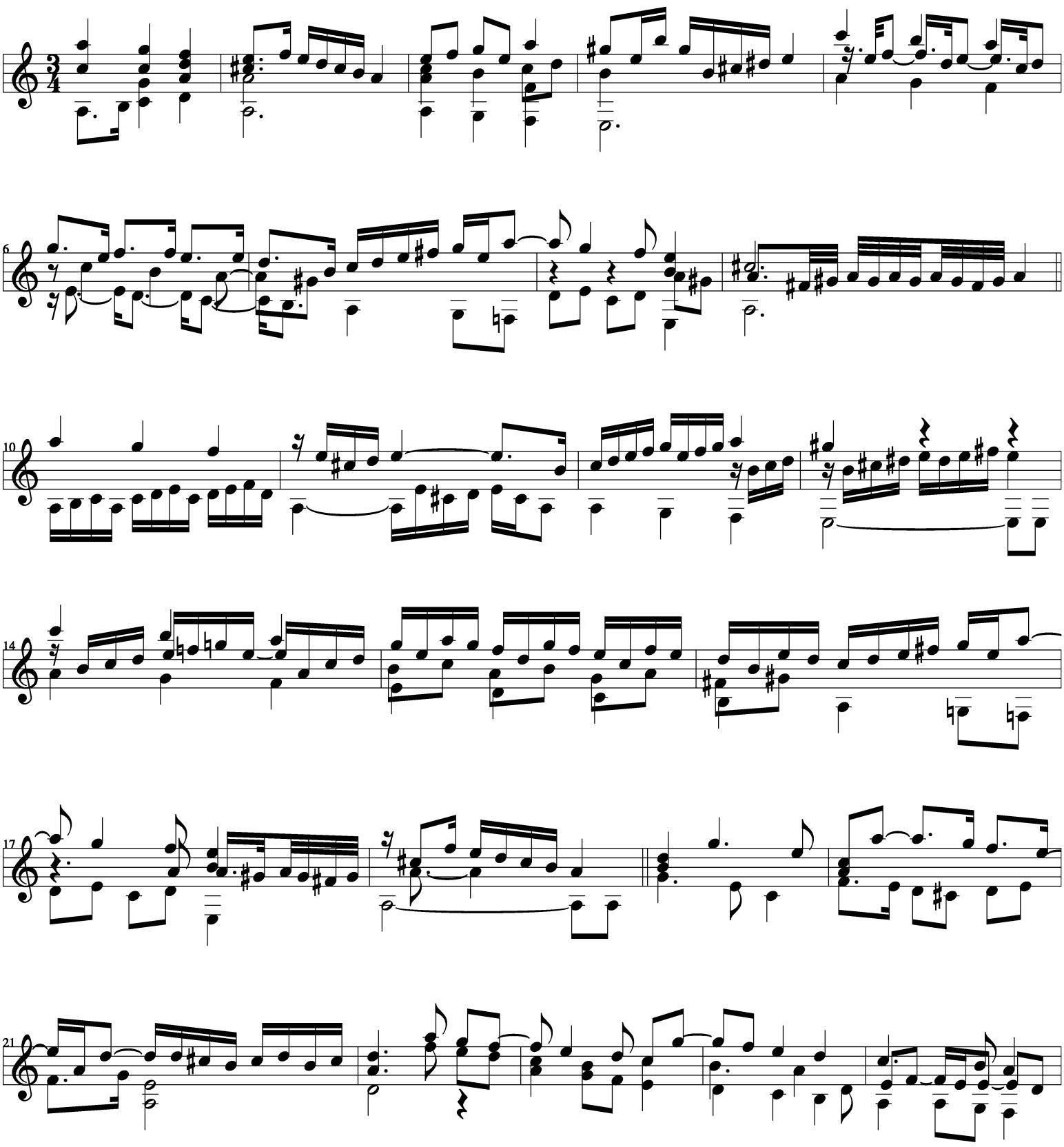
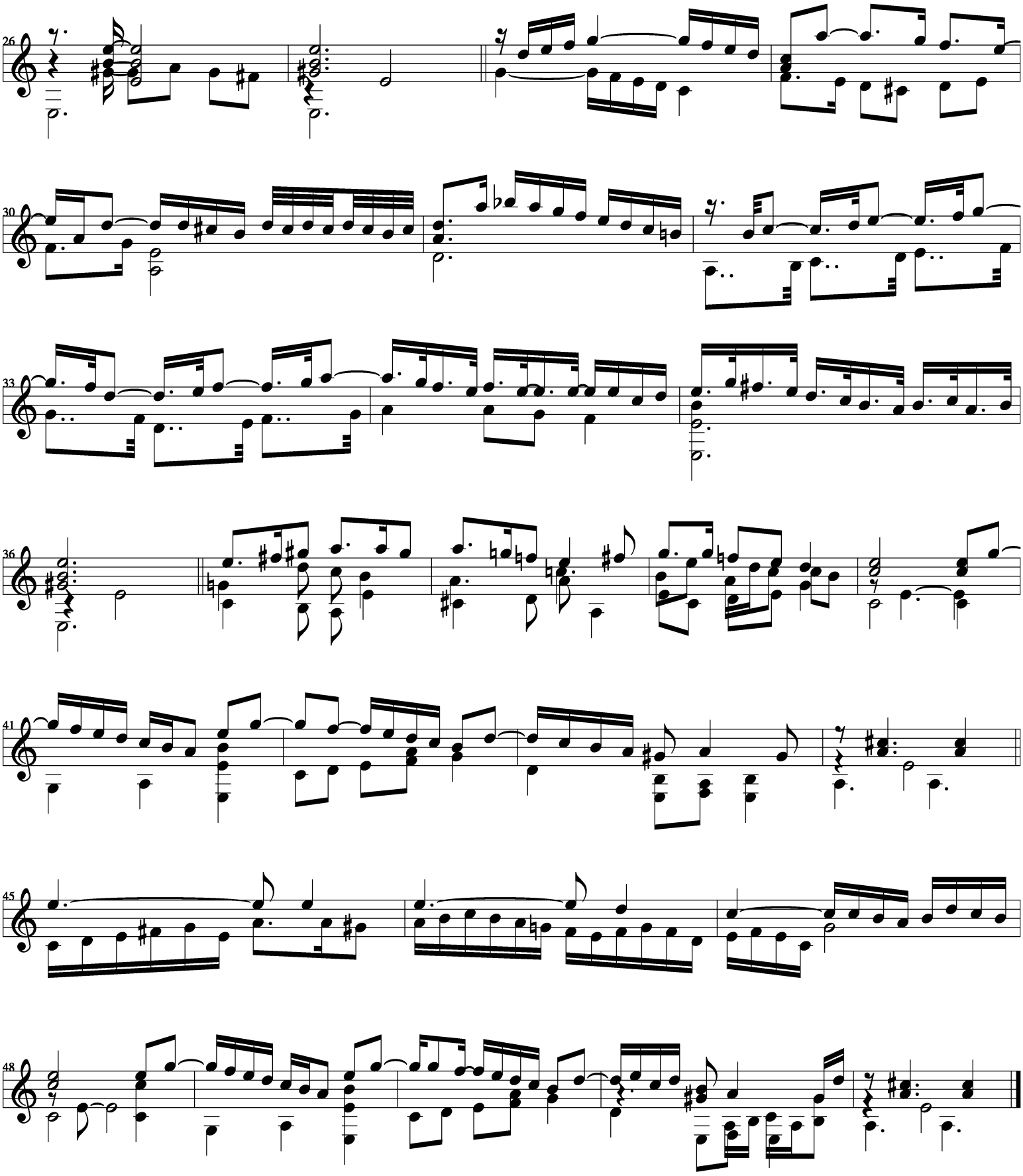
A Galliard

(on a galliard by Daniel Bacheler)

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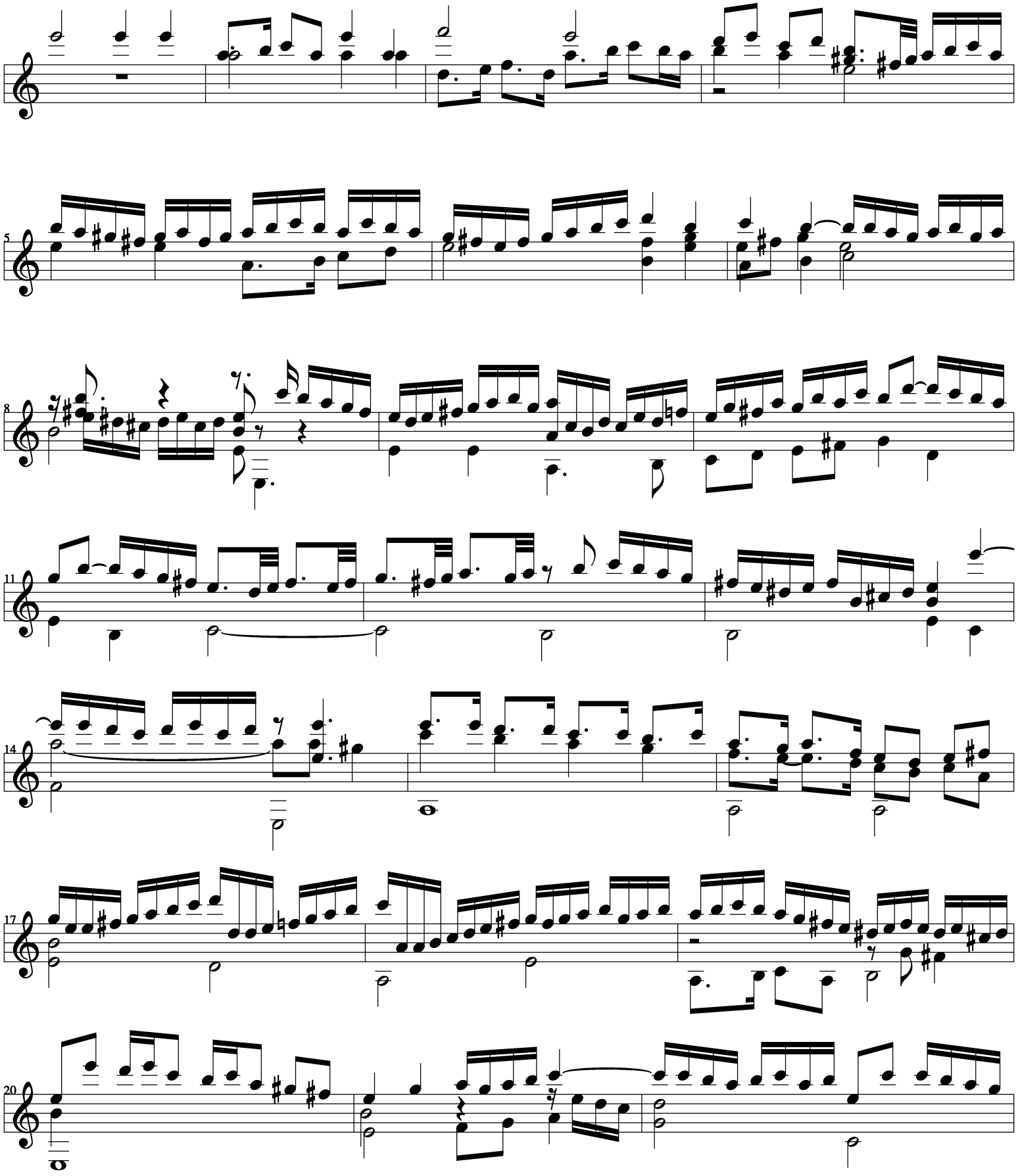

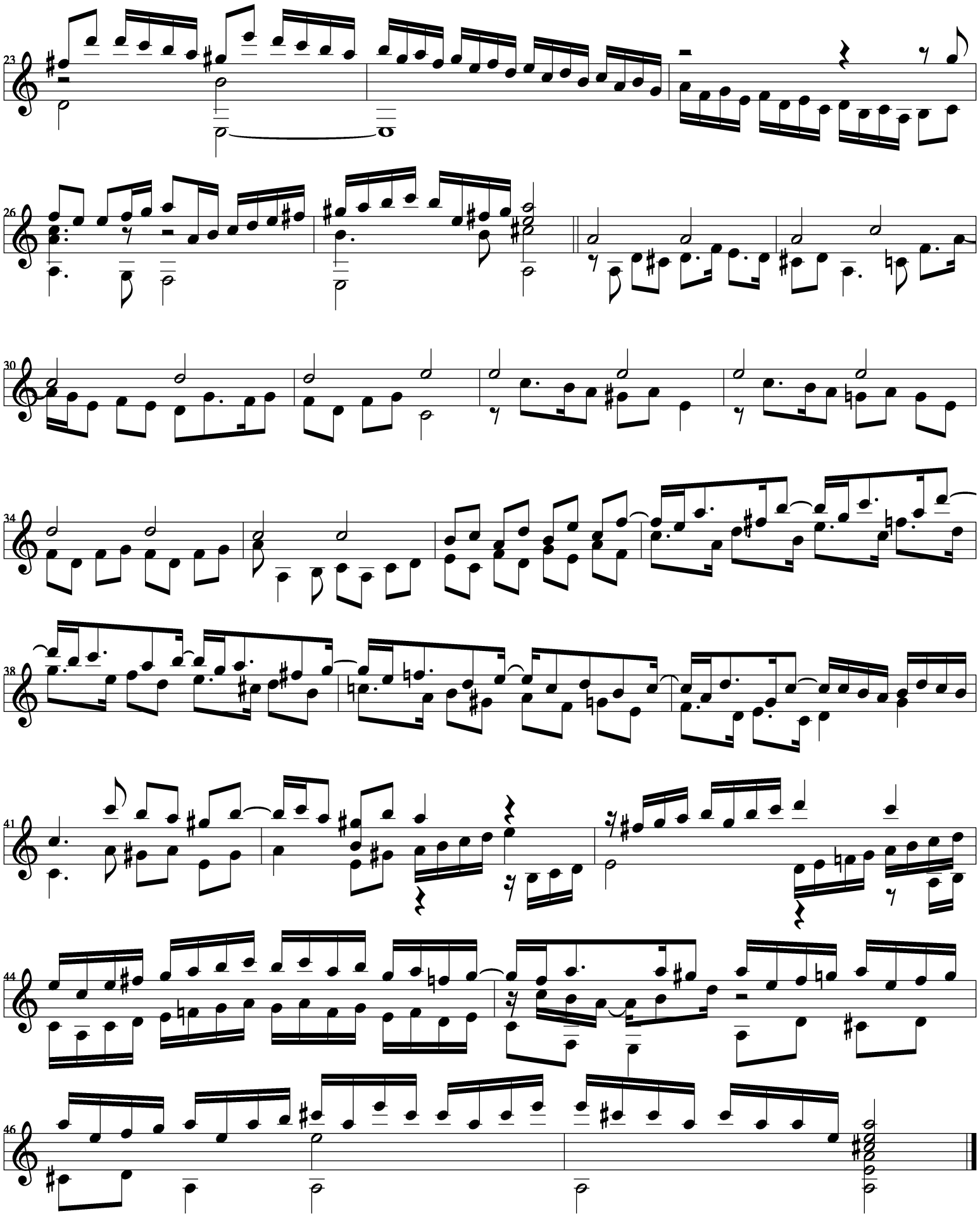
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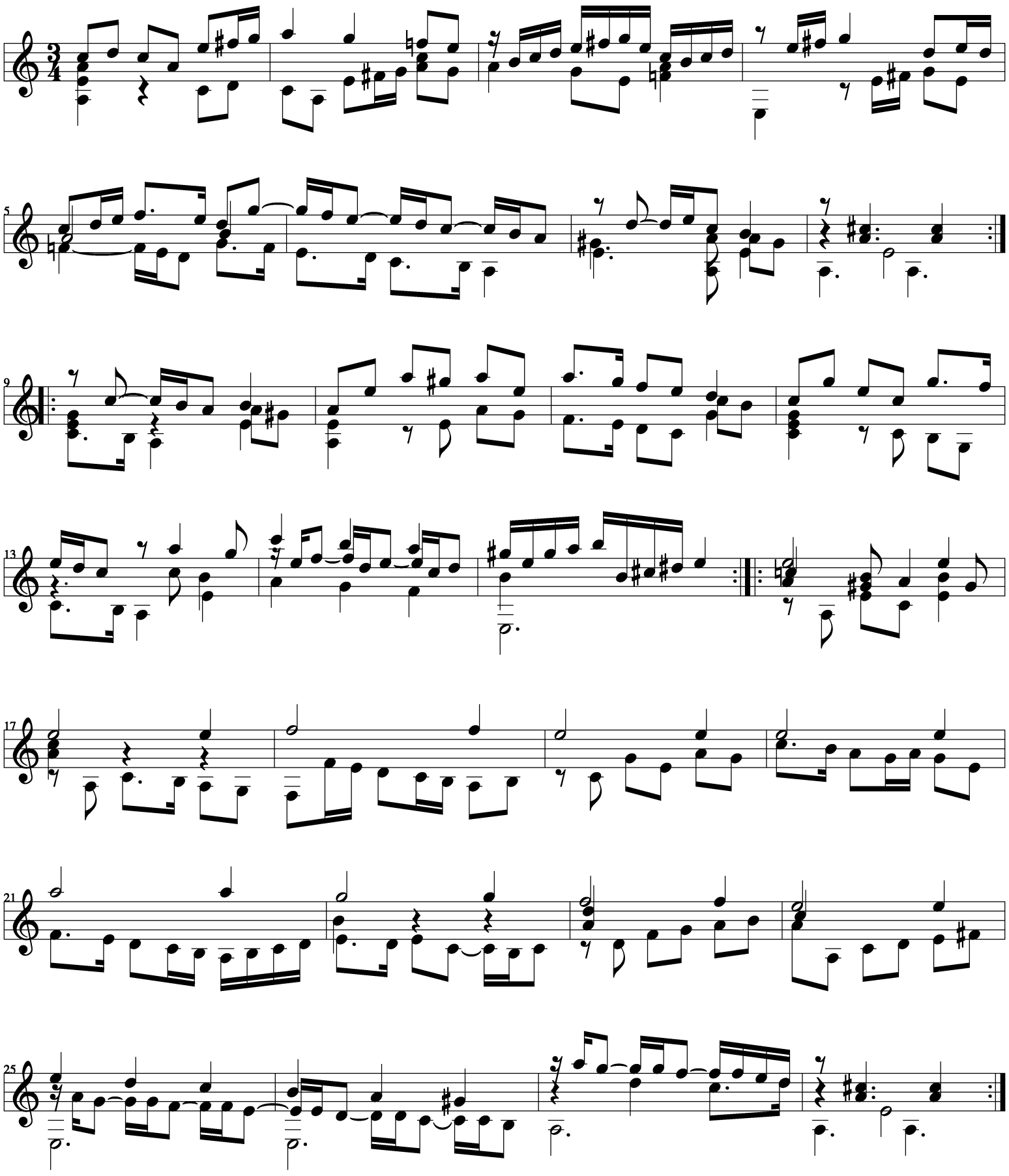
Mrs. Vaux Galliard



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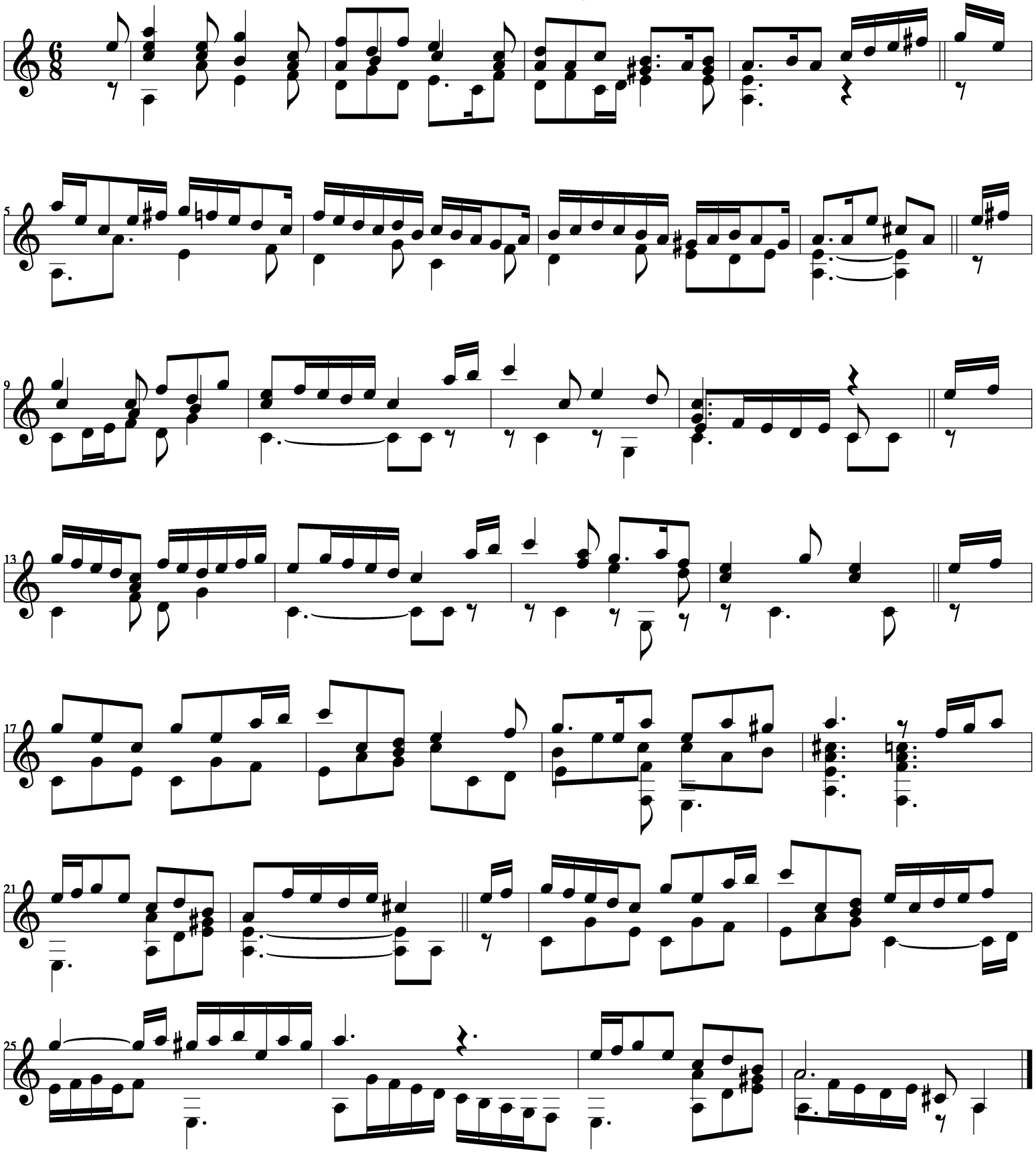

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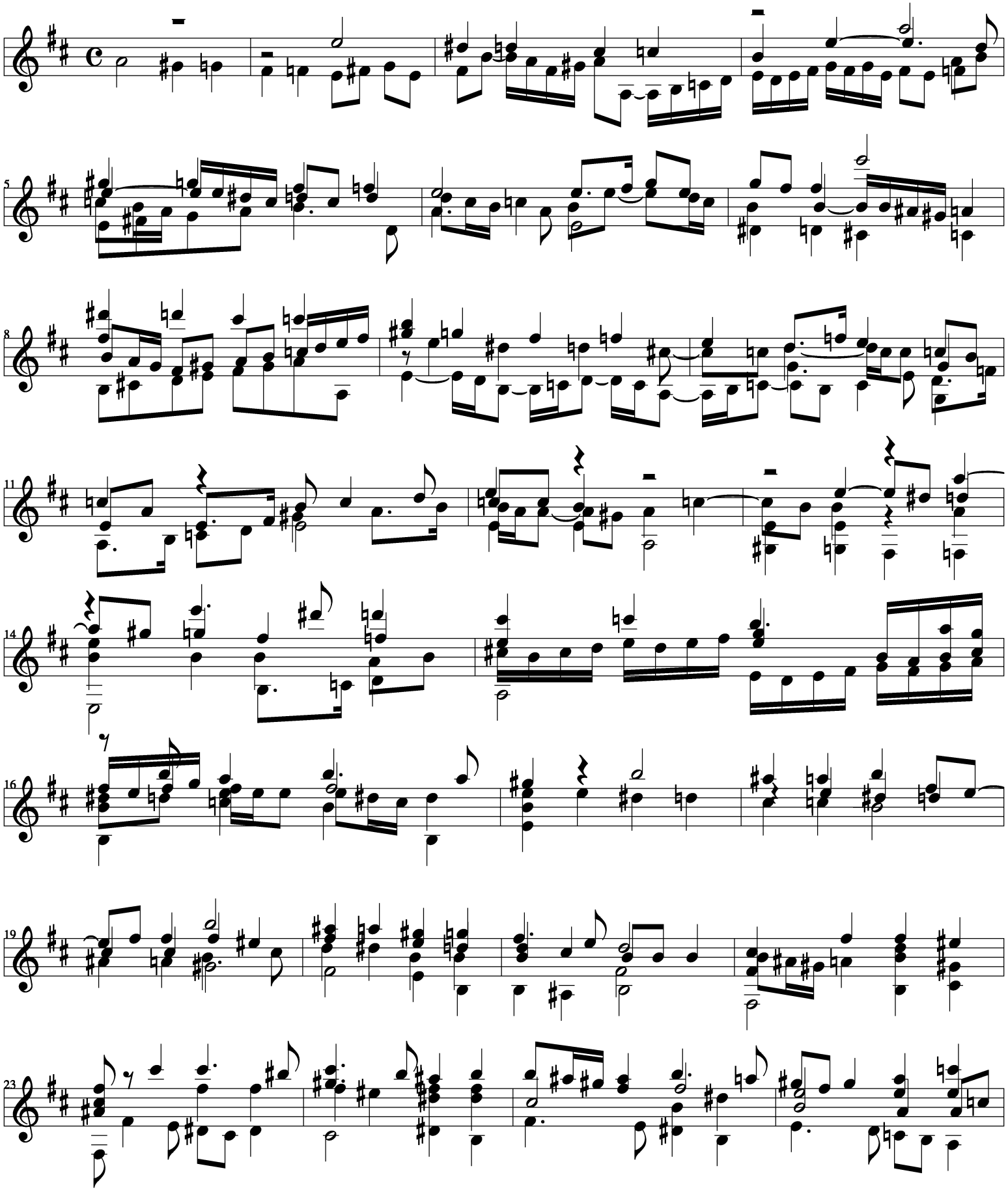
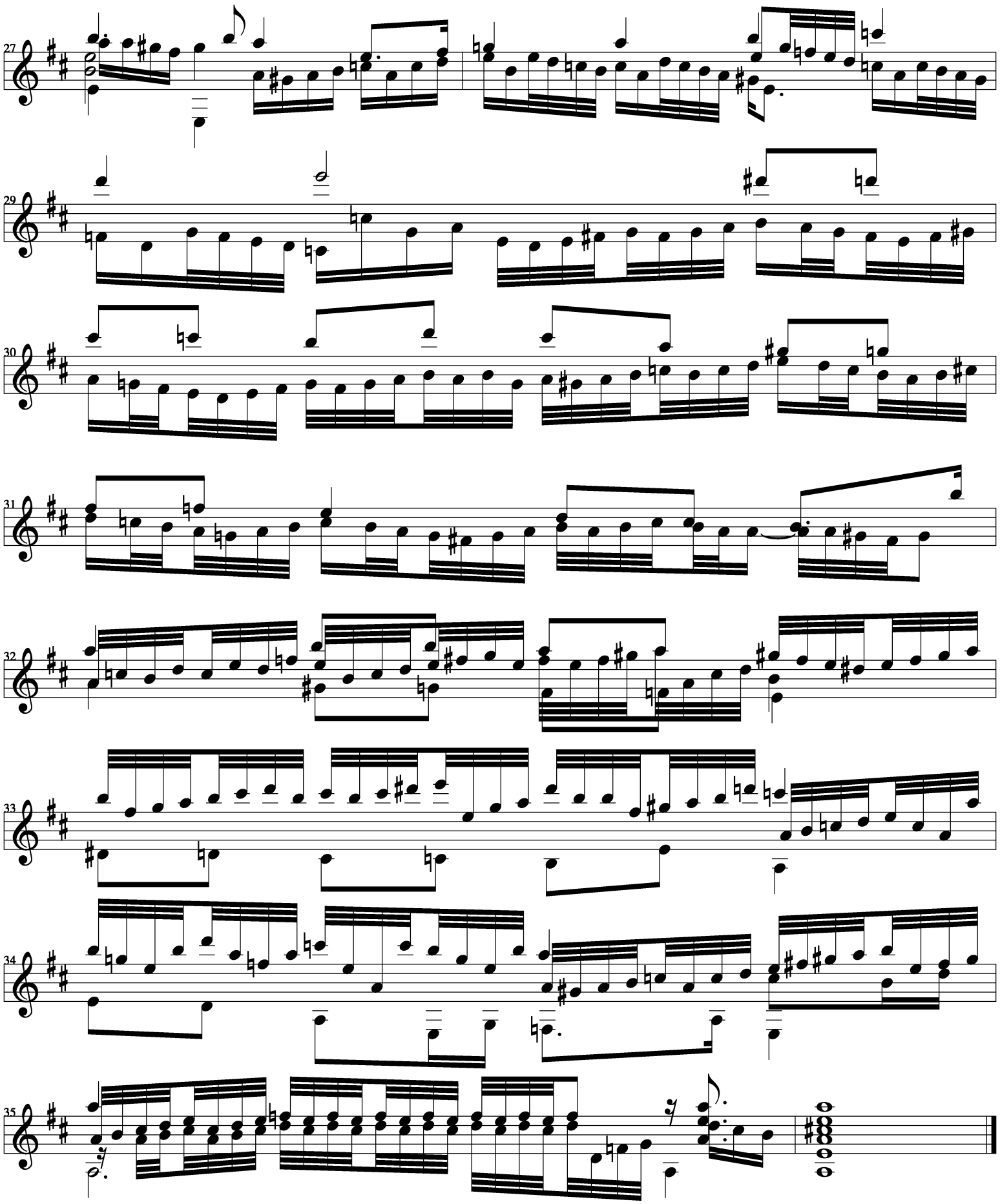
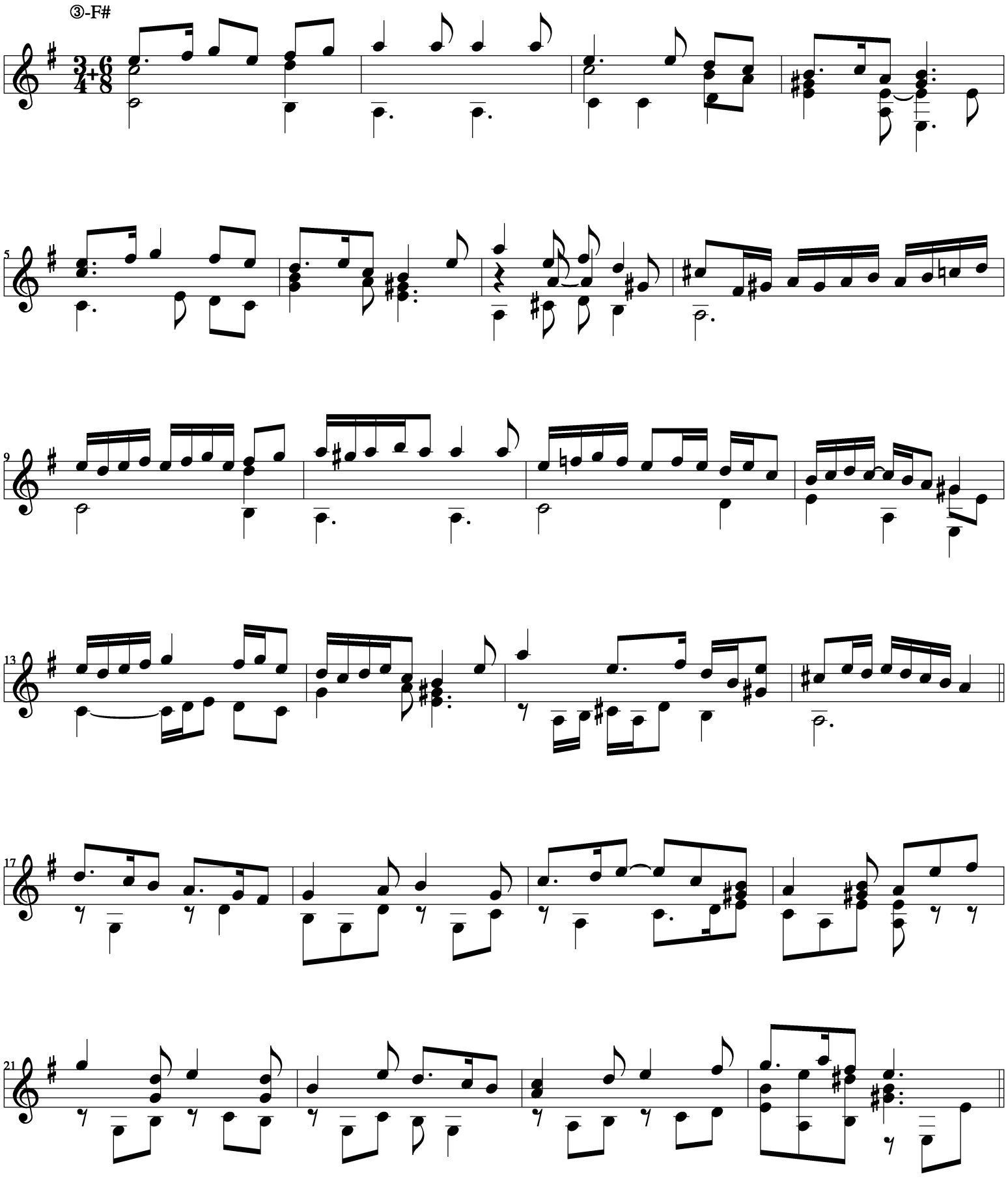
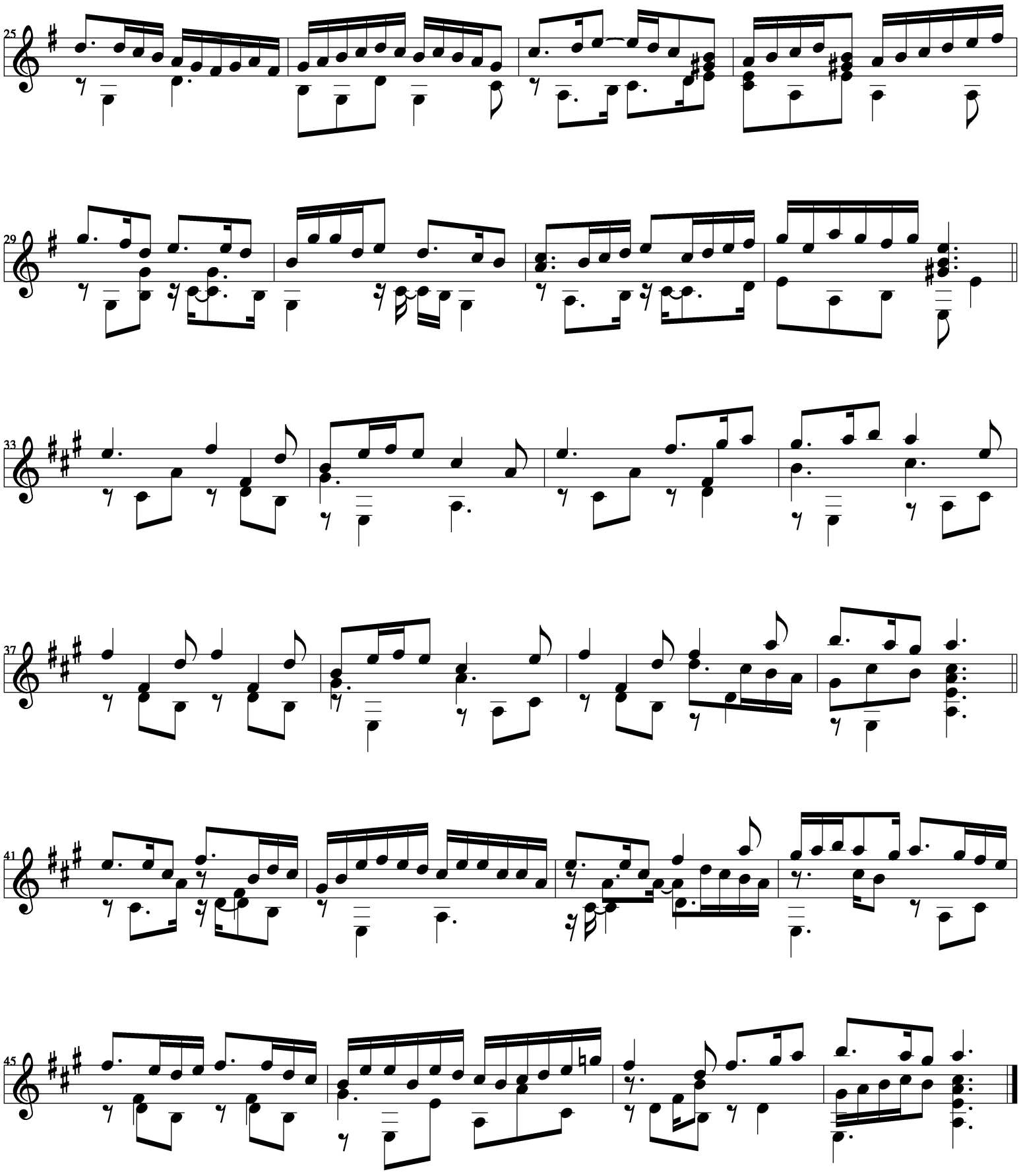




The Right Honorable The Lady Clifton's Spirit

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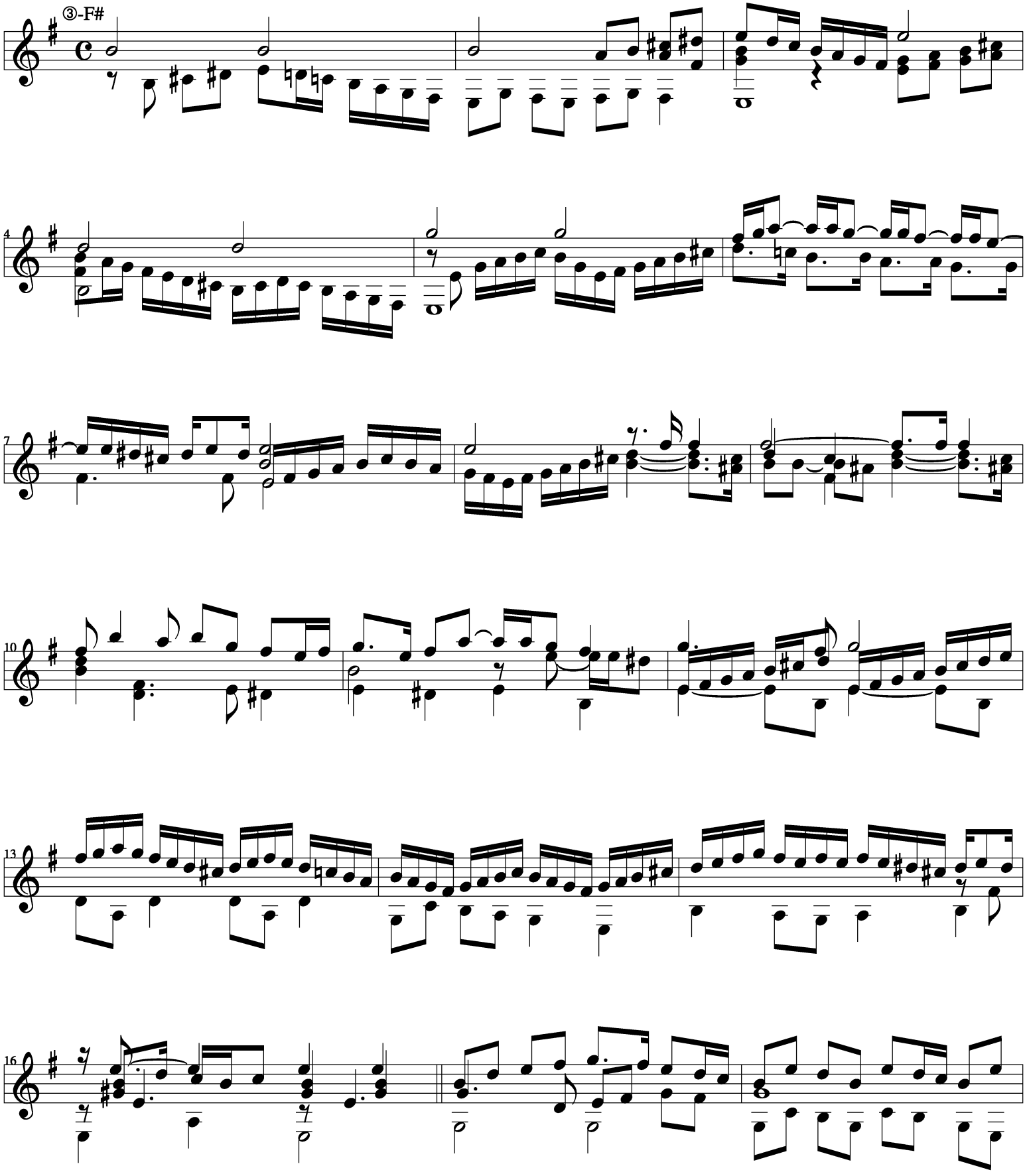

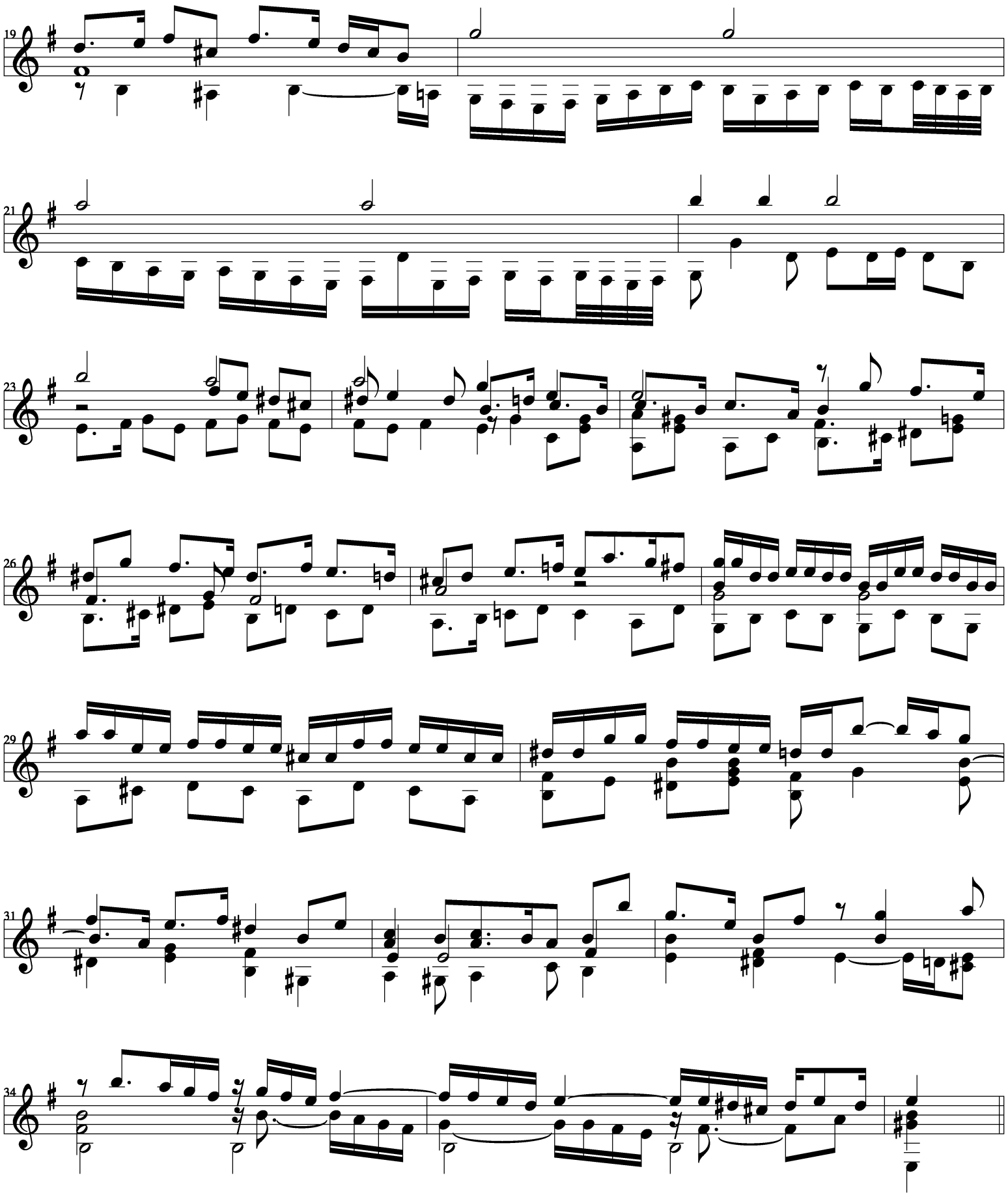

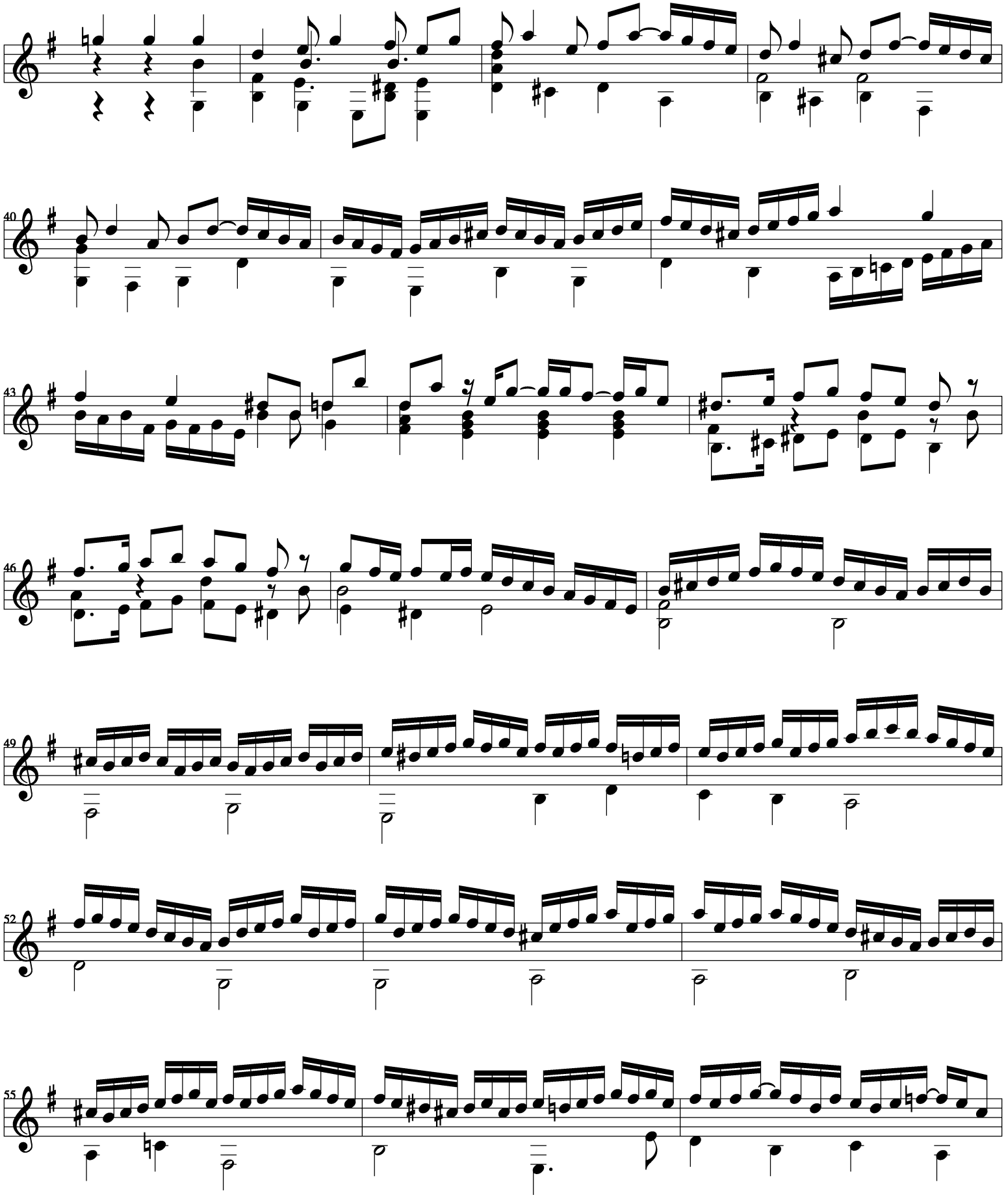
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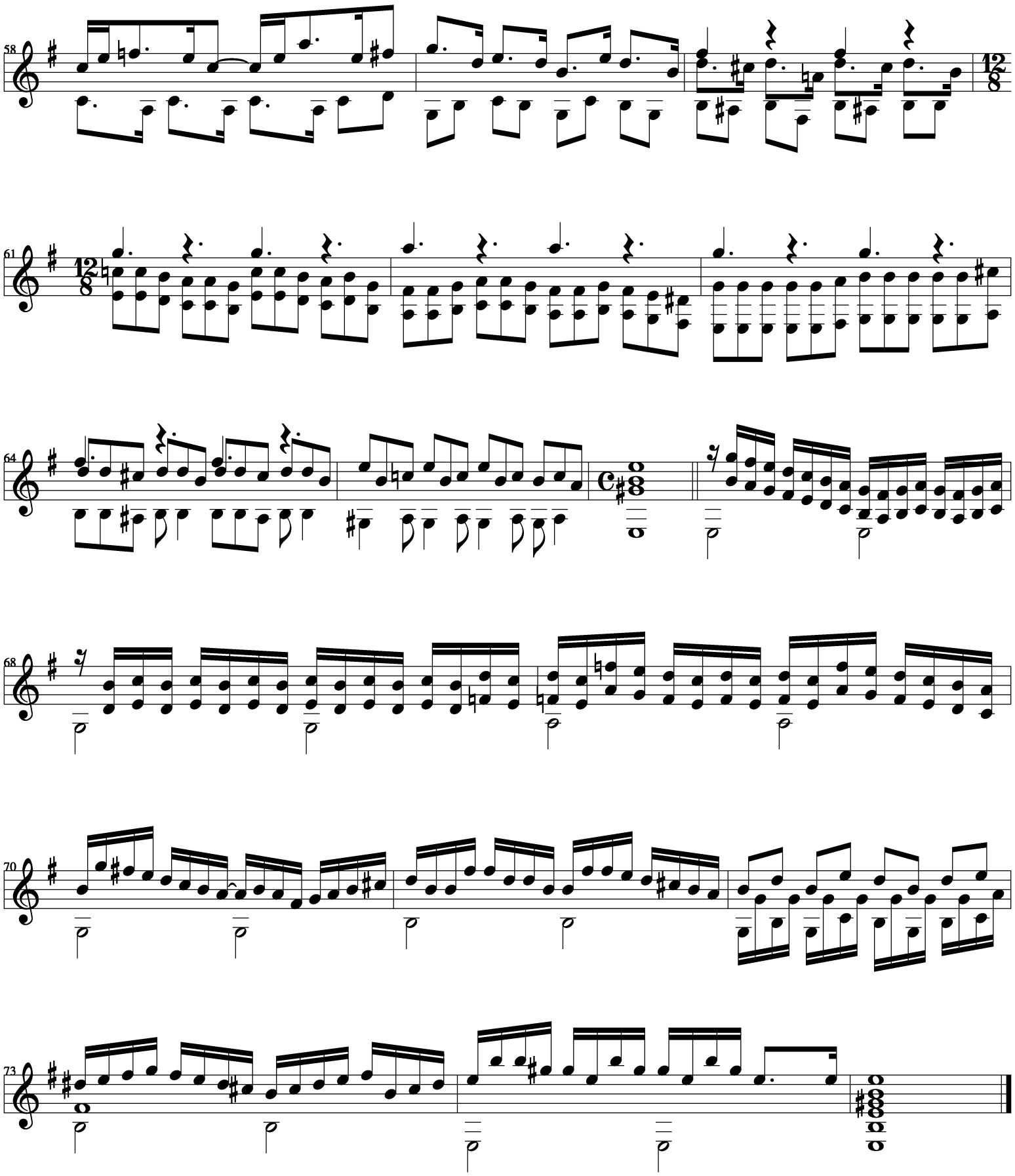
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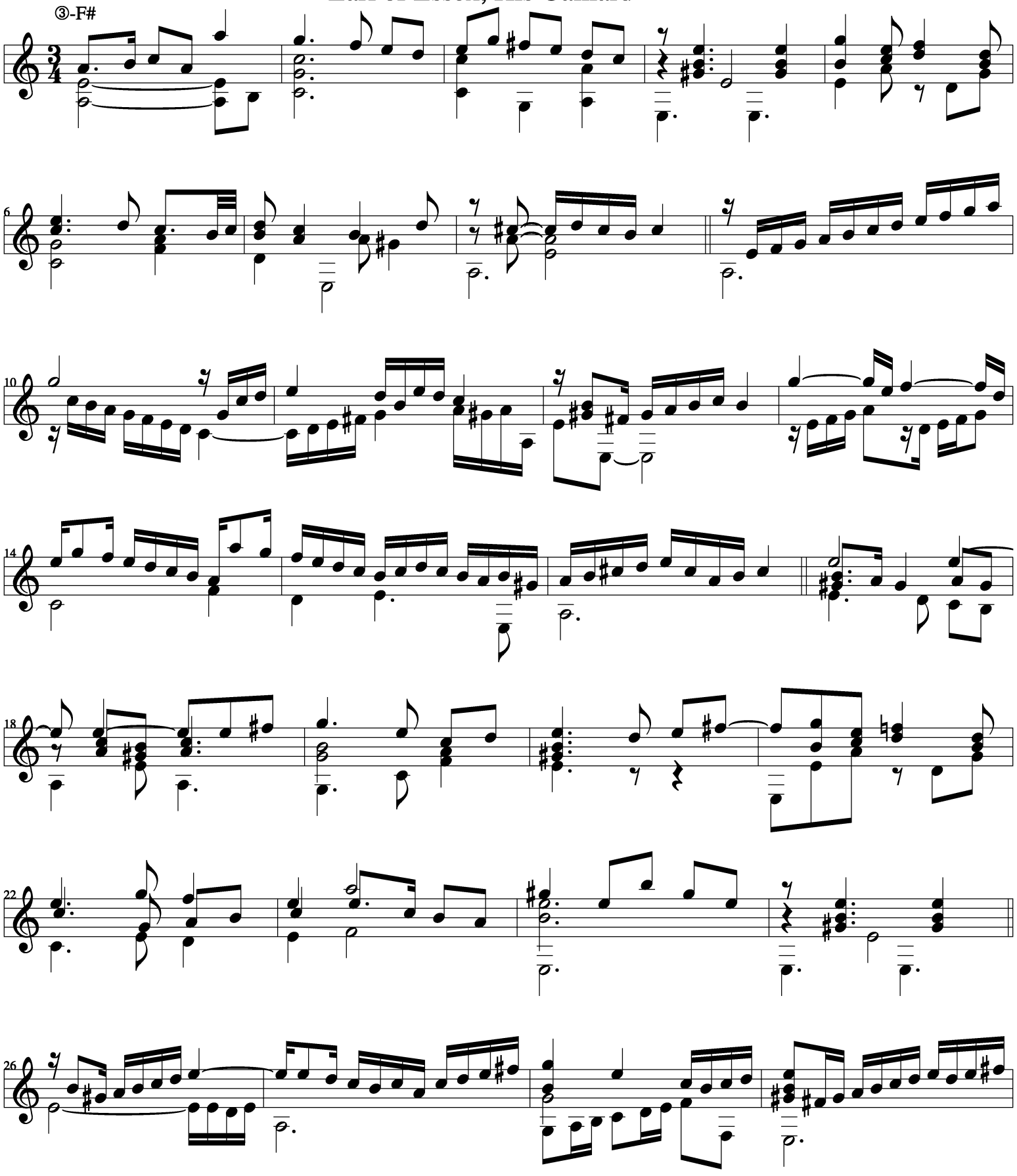
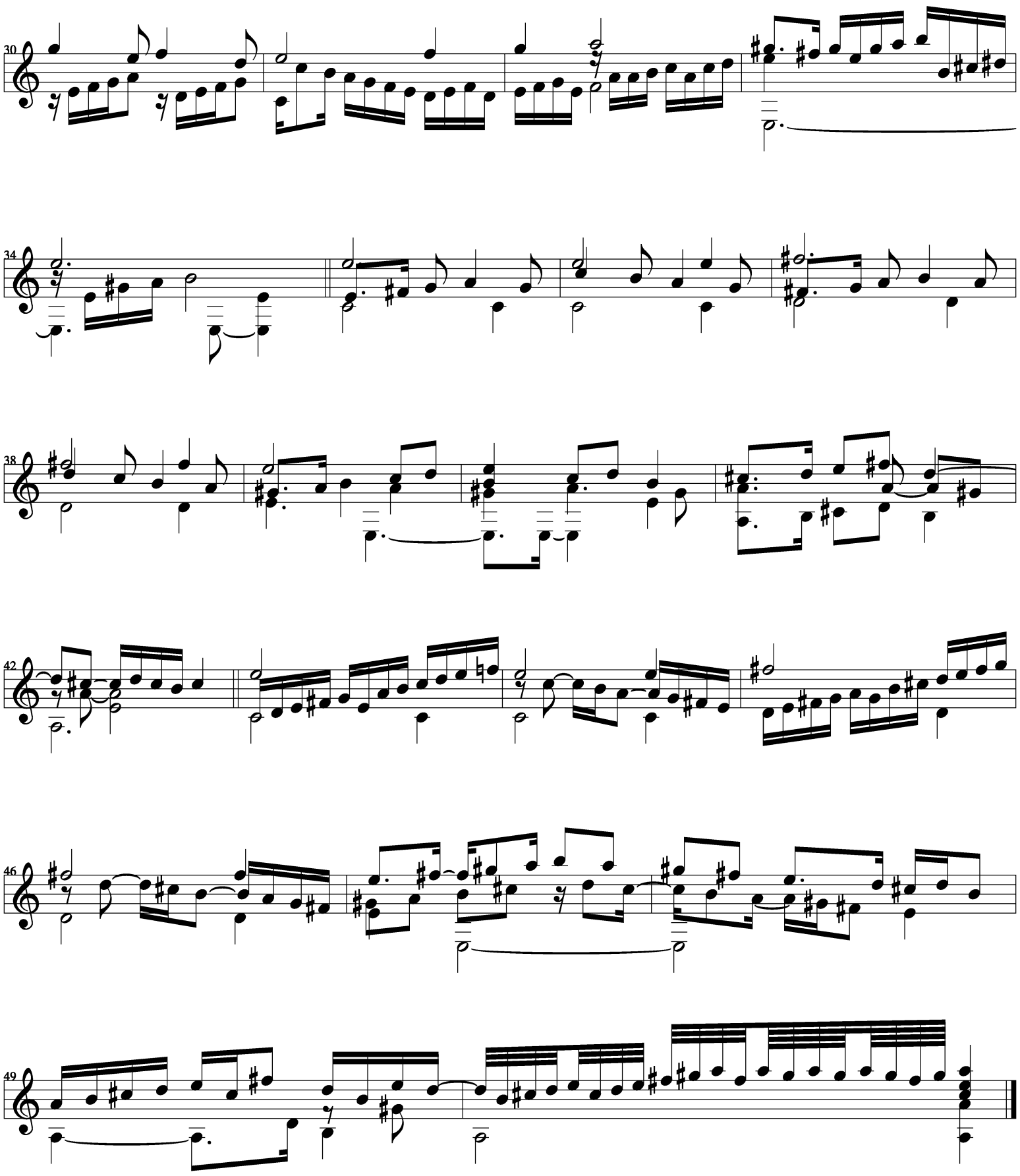
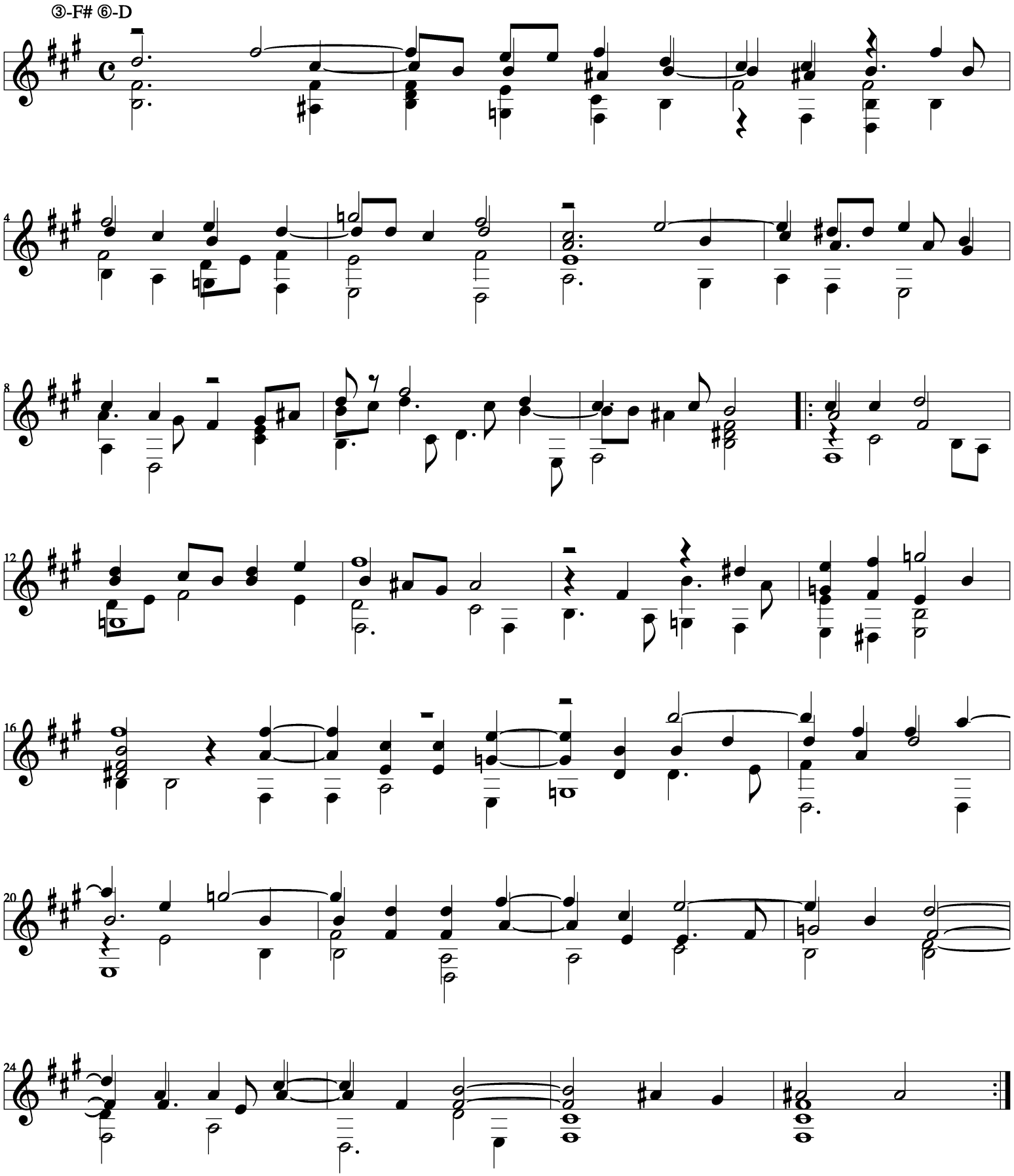
The Right Honorable Robert, Earl of Essex, His Galliard





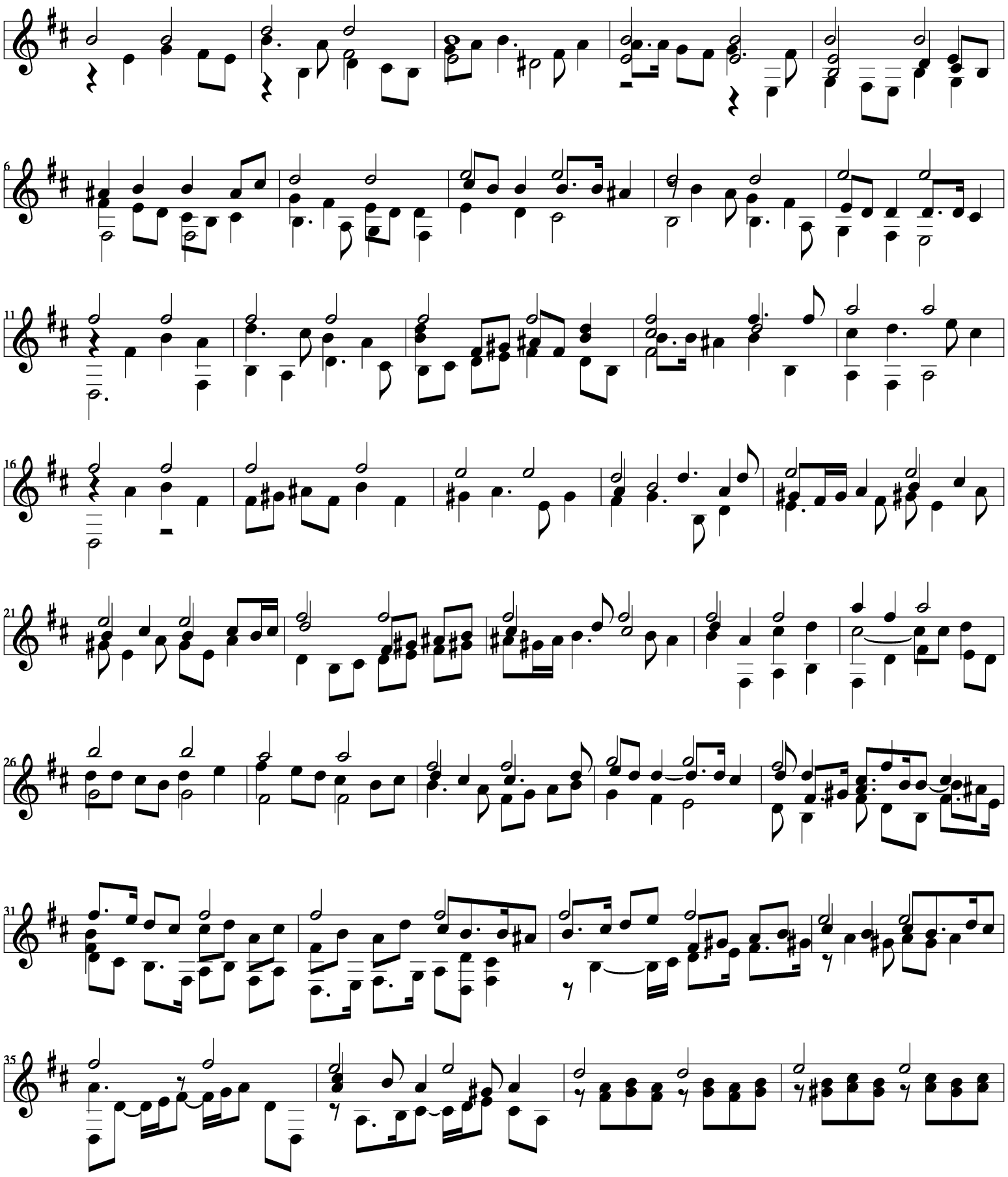
Weep You No More, Sad Fountains

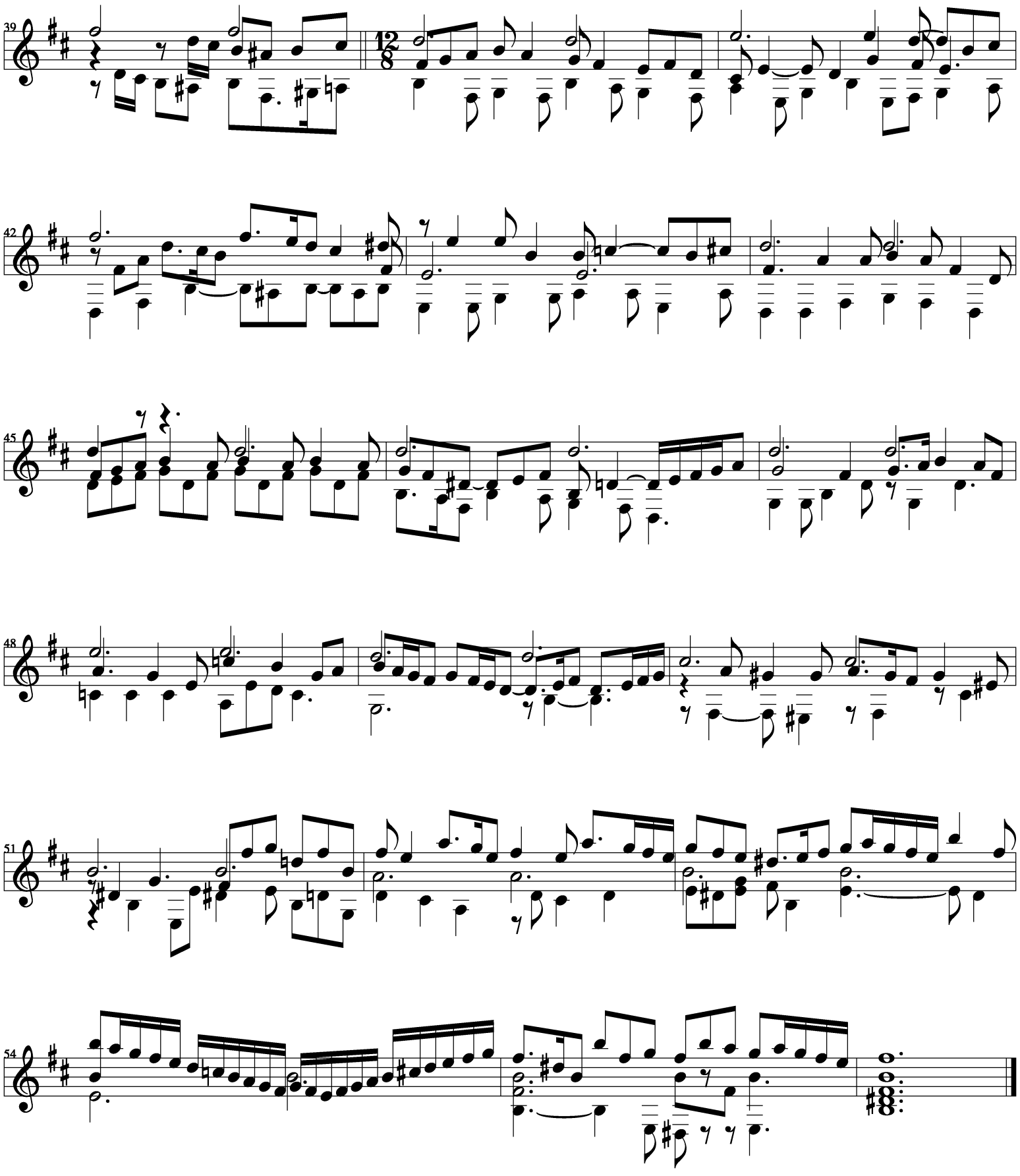


Farewell

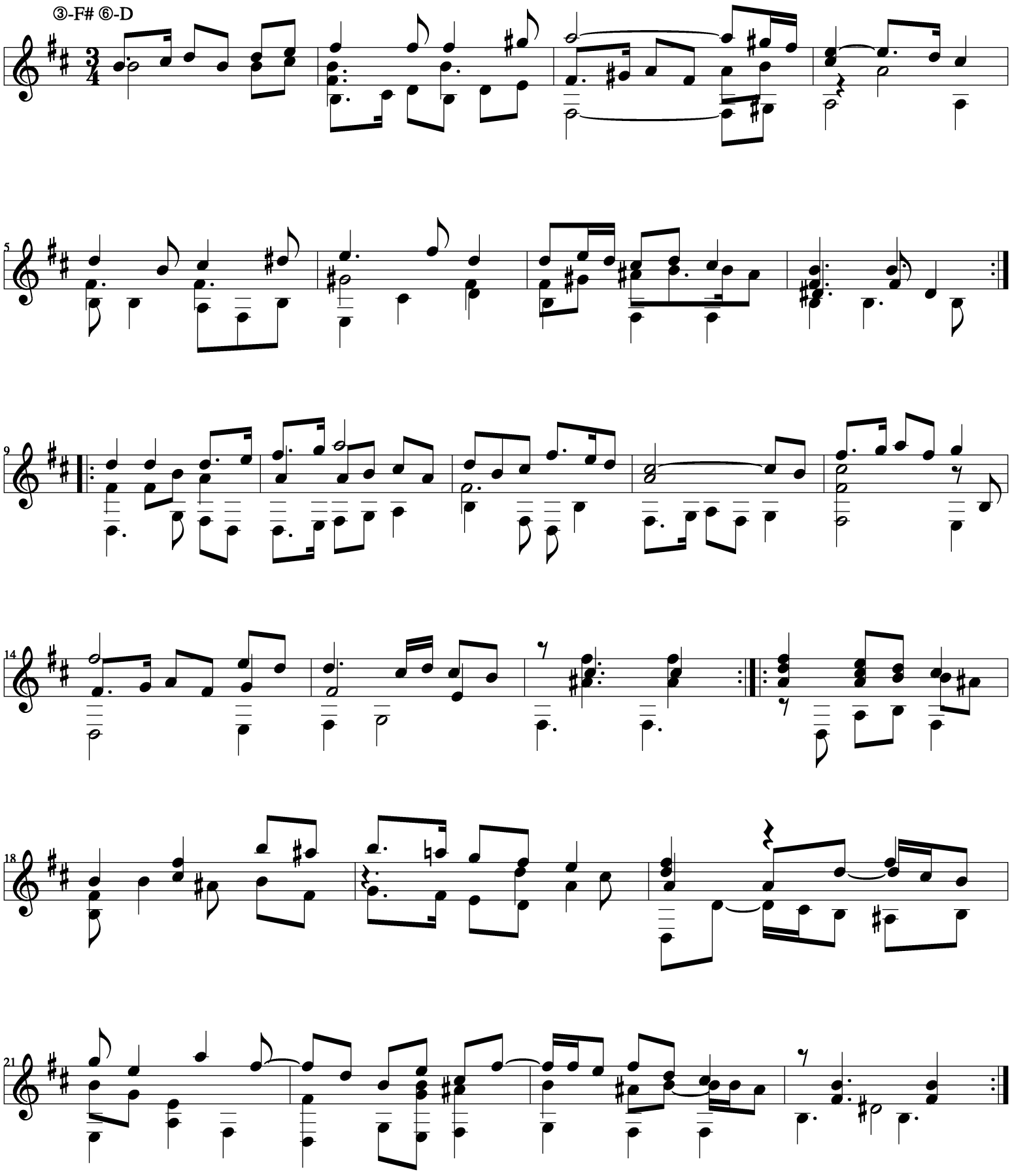
(An "In Nomine")

③-F# ⑥-D





Mr. Knight's Galliard



Mrs. Clifton's Almain Mrs. (Lady) Clifton and her husband apparently loaned Dowland money on one or more occasions. The form is typical of Dowland's shorter dance movements, with brilliant divisions (variations) written out for each of two phrases.

John Dowland's Galliard No title for this piece was left by Dowland himself, and no divisions were written out for this confident ditty. One might be tempted, in m. 3, to lower the **Bb** by an octave so that it leads by half-step into the **A** were it not for the fact that Dowland uses this coloristic device in other pieces with clear intention.

Piper's Pavane I chose Dm for the deep sonority of the dropped sixth string as well as for the possibility of rendering scale and trill passages across the first three strings. The slurs I propose at mm. 4, 11 and 33 may seem overly "Spanish", but see what you think. Captain Digorie Piper was in Queen Elizabeth's navy and assigned to pirate Spanish ships, which he so enjoyed that he took it upon himself to pirate ships from other countries as well. Dowland must have felt a loyal friendship to Piper, as he went ahead and published pieces inscribed to the convicted pirate *while employed* by King Christian of Denmark — whose ships had been preyed upon by none other than Captain Piper.

The Shoemaker's Wife Of similar form to Mrs. Clifton's Almain, but with a third phrase and division. This is the form for the majority of Dowland's dance movements and is represented by ten of the pieces in this collection.

Captain Digorie Piper's Galliard See above for the Piper story. I borrowed some ideas from the 1954 Karl Scheit arrangement of this piece (which did not include the divisions), adding some seasoning of my own.

A Fantasie This is the best known of Dowland's *Fantasias.* For years, I played this number in E with the third string dropped as originally intabulated. In D, however — with the sixth string dropped — new magic takes place, not the least of which is the availability (once again) of trills across the first three strings. The bass of the subdominant no longer being the open A-string introduces some interesting challenges, however. In the repetitive passages between m. 46 and 58, I hear the conversing groups of winds located in different areas of the performance space as in a Gabrielli *canzona.*

Semper Dowland Semper Dolens (Forever Dowland, Forever Sad) While rhythmically a *pavane,* this somber piece unfolds more like a *fantasia.* Sacred vocal music by masters such a Josquin is emulated in the heart-wrenching polyphony of mm. 4-7, 15-20 and 30-32. A sense of triumph, of transcending the sorrow, building through mm. 22-29, is tempered by the descent in m. 30, and returns with less vigor — though more resolve — in the final measures.

Lachrimae This was Dowland's most famous piece in his own, and subsequent, times. He sometimes even signed his name "John Dowland of Lachrimae". This relatively early work displays the dramatic power that distinguished him from contemporary composers. Though perhaps even more well-known as the song "Flow my Tears", this lute solo preceded it. Most versions have a major chord on the last beat of m. 5; I made it minor — so that when it *does* appear in the major in the following measure, the ear welcomes it.

A Galliard (on Walsingham) Dowland also wrote a set of variations on this elegant air, but this version is both more cogent and more musical.

Lady Hunsdon's Puffe This is the second *Almain* of the collection, and is by far the most serendipitous. In this version, Dowland gives us a four-bar phrase, a division, another four-bar with *no* division, and concludes with a *ten*-bar phrase which I have chosen to enclose with repeat brackets. The ornaments are my addition (↜ means slur to the note *below* and back). Mm. 15, 16 and 18 struck me as congenial to natural harmonics, but feel free to switch them back.

Galliard to Lachrimae The last part of Dowland's life was characterized by discouragement, even though he had finally achieved a long-sought position in the English court. This is apparently the only solo lute piece he wrote during those years. He leaves us an asymmetrical A-A'-B-B'-C format, which may reflect an inner state of having nothing further to say.

Aloe No, this does not have to do with the plant that heals burns, but with a contemporary personage named George Aloe. It presents an eight-bar theme with five divisions.

A Fantasia This may be the most sophisticated, and perhaps the most difficult, of the collection. For me, getting through m. 71 requires liberal use of the open B and G strings. The harmonics in m. 17, though not necessary, help notes overlap (I finger the high C on the second string and the E below it open); in m. 32 harmonics are the only way to maintain notes to their full value.

Melancholy Galliard While this may not initially seem the most melancholy of Dowland's galliards, you can make it poignantly so by taking it at a very slow tempo with substantial breaths between phrases.

A Galliard (on a galliard by Daniel Bacheler) By contrast, we have here one of Dowland's most ecstatic galliards which, in spite of its minor key soars playfully and heroically.

A Fancy *(#6)* The word playful comes to mind again for this relatively brief *fantasia*, which offers a variety of moods and textures that suggest liberal use of *rubato*. "6" is the number given for this piece in Poulton's edition.

Mrs. Vaux Galliard While this A-B-C form offers no divisions, there so much going on that one might assume that the theme was left out and only divisions retained. Symmetry is avoided in the number of measures per section: 8+7+13.

Mrs. Vaux's Jig How this relates to the previous galliard is less than obvious. The measures also total 28, but they are divided into a scheme of 4(A)+4(A')+4(B)+4(B')+6(C)+6(C'). The contour of the opening phrase is similar to the galliard, as is the shift from A minor to C major between the first two sections.

Forlorn Hope Fancy We must bear in mind— when distracted by the oxymoron inherent in this title — that "Fancy" means *fantasia*. It is based of the same descending chromatic line as is *A Fantasia* above, which is given similar towards the end. But while the longer *Fantasia* smolders after its fiery display, *Forlorn Hope* concludes in full blaze. A man who ends a piece with such energy must still have hope in reserve.

The Right Honorable The Lady Clifton's Spirit If not accustomed to the endearing titles used for dance forms during the Elizabethan period, one might assume this piece depicts the antics of a dearly departed Lady Clifton. This is the familiar A-A'-B-B'-C-C' form coupled with a delightful ambiguity of meter and key — ranging between C, A minor, G, and finally settling on A major.

Fancy *(#7)* This is the only piece in which I altered pitches to keep them within the guitar's range (m. 21). There is such a clear break in the music before the second beat of m. 36 that I chose to put the page turn there. What this piece lacks in continuity it makes up for in improvisatory delights. Measures 52-59 do seem to refer back to mm 26-30, though the phrases are reordered.

The Right Honorable Robert, Earle of Essex, His Galliard This virtuosic romp in counterpoint is based on the song "Can She Excuse My Wrongs" which, according to Poulton, Dowland wrote about the love/hate relationship between the Earl of Essex and Queen Elizabeth. After Robert was executed — at the Queen's orders — for attempting an uprising against her, Dowland made his loyalty to his "right honorable" friend (and perhaps his bitterness towards to Queen) quite obvious to all through the publication of this *galliard* — its unwieldy title likely to command attention.

Weep You No More Sad Fountains Being one of Dowland's most beautiful songs, I could not resist arranging it for solo guitar. The vocal melody begins on the second beat and fits neatly atop the lute part throughout with the exception of m. 9, where careful inflection is required to distinguish the top line.

Farewell *(An "In Nomine")* The subtitle of this piece would suggest that it is based on plainsong, and while the Poulton's transcription shows an apparent *cantus firmus* in half notes throughout, she does not offer its origin. I have found it necessary to break up the half note "cantus" in places where either imitative phrases would be obscured or where the note simply cannot be held. Of all his solo works in the polyphonic style, this one has the greatest diversity of rhythms: be it the sudden doubling of tempo in mm. 30-36 or the metric feud between voices in the 12/8 section.

Mr. Knight's Galliard Poulton was unable to identify the mysterious Mr. Knight. As in the Essex *Galliard* (and elsewhere), Dowland alternates mischievously between 3/4 and 6/8 rhythm. As in "Mrs. Vaux Galliard" (and elsewhere), there are clever imitations between voices throughout.

— JHS

SEMPER DOWLAND

Selected Lute Music of John Dowland

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