The End Times Are a'changin'

(2018)

for guitar solo
(and optional multimedia)

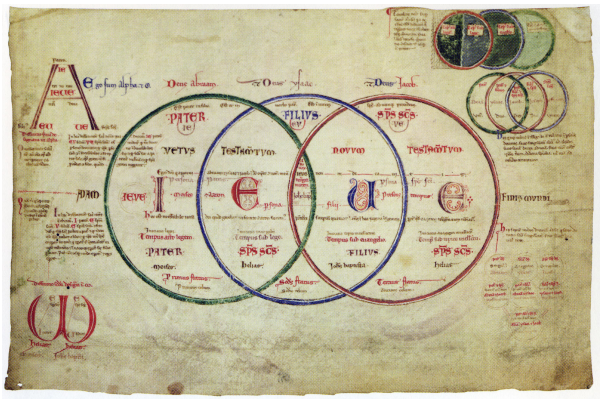
Derek Keller

The End Times Are a'Changin'

Fantasia on a Theme by Dylan

Program and Performance Notes

This piece is inspired by the musicianship and intellectual interests of my colleague and dear friend, Colin McAllister. Over the last year or so, Colin has shared with me illustrations and writings by theologian Joachim di Fiore (1135-1202). Fiore's (in)famous illustrations, collected shortly after his death in the *Liber Figurarum*, are vivid and arresting in their color and detail. I am compelled by his ability to communicate his thinking about the Trinity, its epochs, and ever-impending apocalypse. In one particular illustration, he represents the triune god through three interlocking rings; epochs of the Father, the Son, and The Holy Spirit.



Fiore represents the Father, creator of nature, with a green ring. The blue ring stands for the Son, heaven-sent. The Holy Spirit's love is expressed in a red ring, which, for Fiore, was in the future, having yet to manifest. These rings have provoked and urged me to ponder the way in which we perceive ourselves this moment, in our time. The rings invoke a foreboding curiosity concerning the way in which 'it' will all end. To the question of *when?*, Fiore's illustration seems to paradoxically provide both a definitive answer, and sublimely (heretically, to some) give none at all.

When Colin asked me for a new piece, I was coincidentally revisiting the work of Bob Dylan, following his recent induction to the Nobel Laureate. The lyrics of his "The Times They Are a'Changing" are hauntingly prescient – now, in this era of rising sea levels, world-warming and world-waring, and 'strong man' politics that care not for the human race – as they were forty-plus years ago. Times are indeed "a'changin'". One era flows to the next, with *endless apocalypses*.

With these sentiments in mind, I have composed a piece, a theme and variations, the form of which can take many shapes, or paths. The performer can also present this modular work in three different ways:

I. Solo, Stand-Alone Work (11-16 minutes): the guitarist is encouraged to play the movements in any order as along as "Theme", "Blues I", and "Blues II" are separated by other movements or improvisational material. The 'Material for Improvisation' is designed to bridge movements, or act as doorways into another movement where musical material is shared or re-contextualized. The piece can be played with breaks between movements or continuously. All 'titled' movements must be performed in their entirety over the course of the performance. The duration of the performance can range between 11 and 16 minutes, depending on the degree to which the performer wishes to integrate the improvisational material. I intend for the guitarist to take advantage of the improvisational aspects of the piece and present it somewhat differently at each performance.

II. Solo with Audio-Visual Accompaniment (12.5 minutes): The guitarist may choose to present a video intended for accompaniment. The content of the video draws from the illustrations of Fiore. This video can be projected or sent via email or text to audience members who wish to participate with the performer in advance of the concert. All of the afore mentioned performance conditions apply, except that the music and video should begin and end within 5-10 seconds of each other.

III. Solo with Interactive Multimedia (11-16 minutes): The guitarist, a computer musician, and willing participants of the audience can all take part in an immersive, interactive experience. Each have a role: the computer musician or the guitarist (or both) can guide a performance of the work; the audience provides the spatialized audio that sounds as accompaniment to the guitarist, and audio-visual experience to the audience. At moments throughout a performance, these roles may seem blurred, which is my intention. See below for the ways in which the guitarist and or computer musician can guide a performance:

a. Guitarist as guide: In a predetermined or improvised way, the guitarist will shape the form of the composition and the computer musician will improvise an accompaniment for the audience to execute.

To compose or generate this accompaniment, the computer musician will need a messaging application (such as Slack), to communicate with the audience-participants' mobile devices, and a way to project images and videos (with accompanying audio). These images and videos are available for download HERE. Their content is inspired primarily by the illustrations of Fiore. Whichever messaging application the computer musician uses, they must be able to send messages to individual participants or groups. This fosters the ability to move sound around the performance space.

The computer musician will draw and distribute image files (jpegs) and video files to willing audience participants via the messaging app. Audience members will receive these images, videos, and messages, the latter of which will direct them to watch the videos on their mobile devices (with the volume all the way up and ringers off!), and at times, stand and speak short phrases.

The computer musician may also choose to act as a 'VJ' or video-jockey, projecting videos in an improvised way, or present the fixed length video as described in Scenario II. All image and video files must be distributed to the audience and played back before the end of a performance. The performance must be no longer than 15 minutes.

b. Computer musician as guide: Using the system described above, the computer musician will draw and distribute image files (jpegs) and video files to both the guitarist and willing audience participants. To the guitarist, the computer musician will send images that have concise notation for the guitarist to determine what to play at any moment. To prevent lulls in musical activity, the guitarist should make use of the 'Material for Improvisation'. To audience members, the computer musician will draw and distribute image and video files (which have audio accompaniment as well). Just as described above, the audience members will receive messages that direct them to watch videos on their mobile devices (with the volume all the way up and ringers off!), and at times, stand and speak short phrases.

c. Guitarist *and* Computer Musician as guides: If the material of the composition is well understood, there is indeed the possibility that a performance can be guided and improvised by both the guitarist and computer musician.

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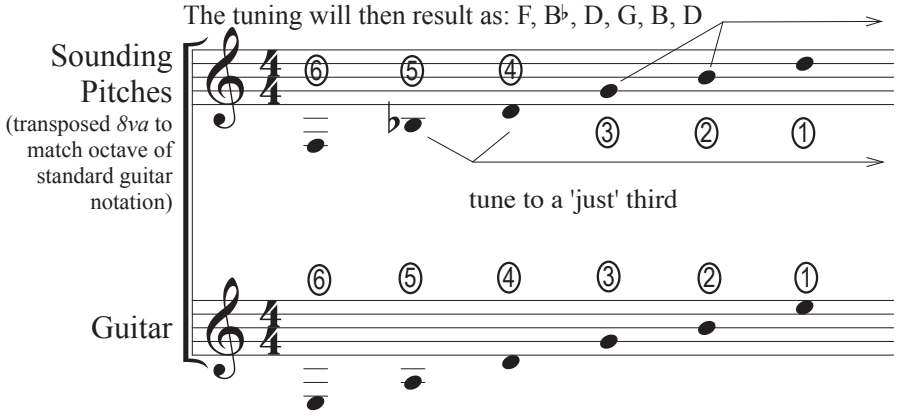
Fantasia on a Theme by Dylan

Performance Techniques and Notation

Scordatura: E, A, C♯, G, B, D

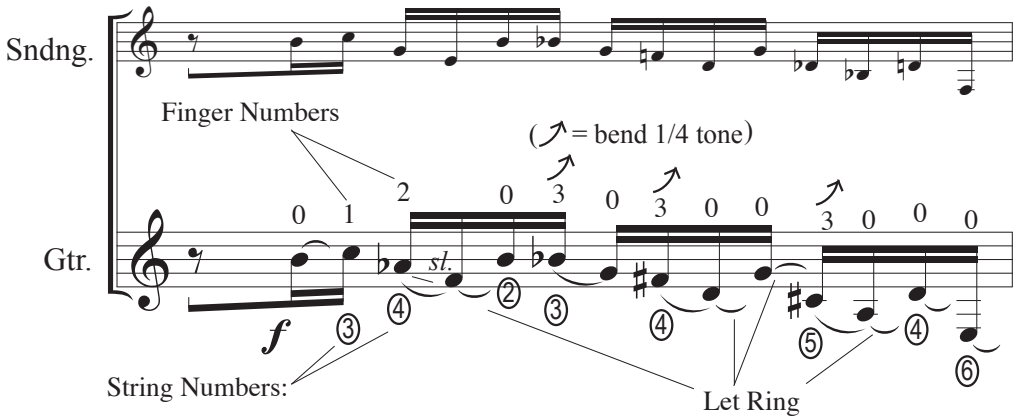
Place *capo* at fret I on bottom three strings.

The tuning will then result as: F, B♭, D, G, B, D

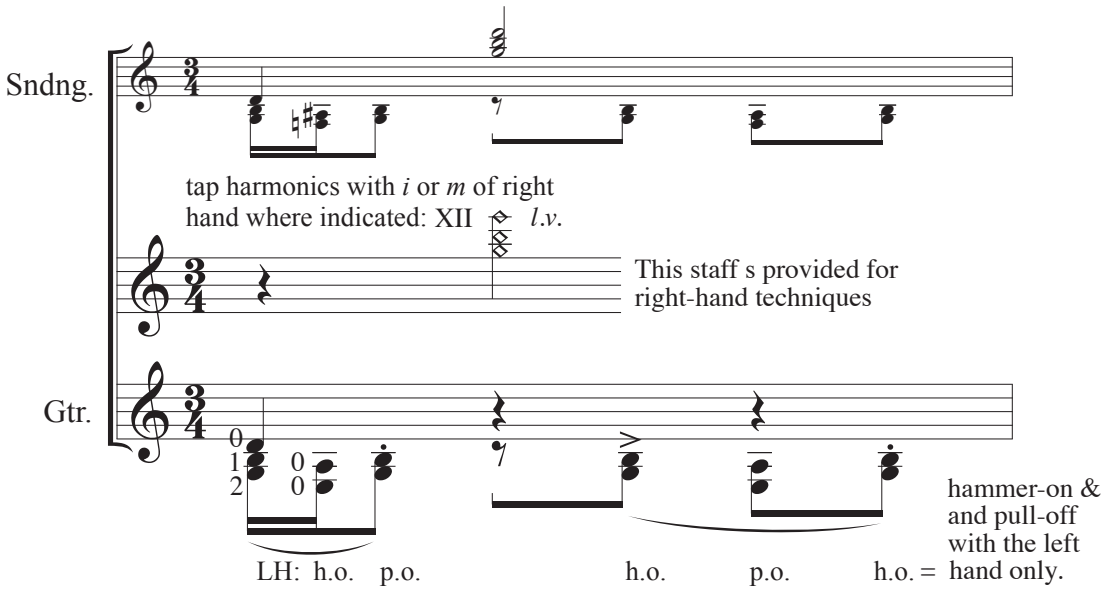


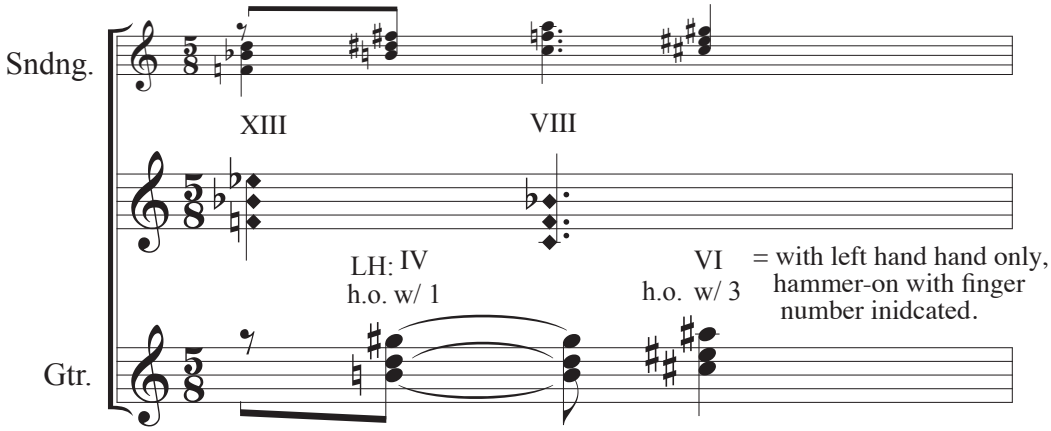
Due to two pairs of strings being tuned 'justly', the upper four strings will be lower in pitch than equal temperment.

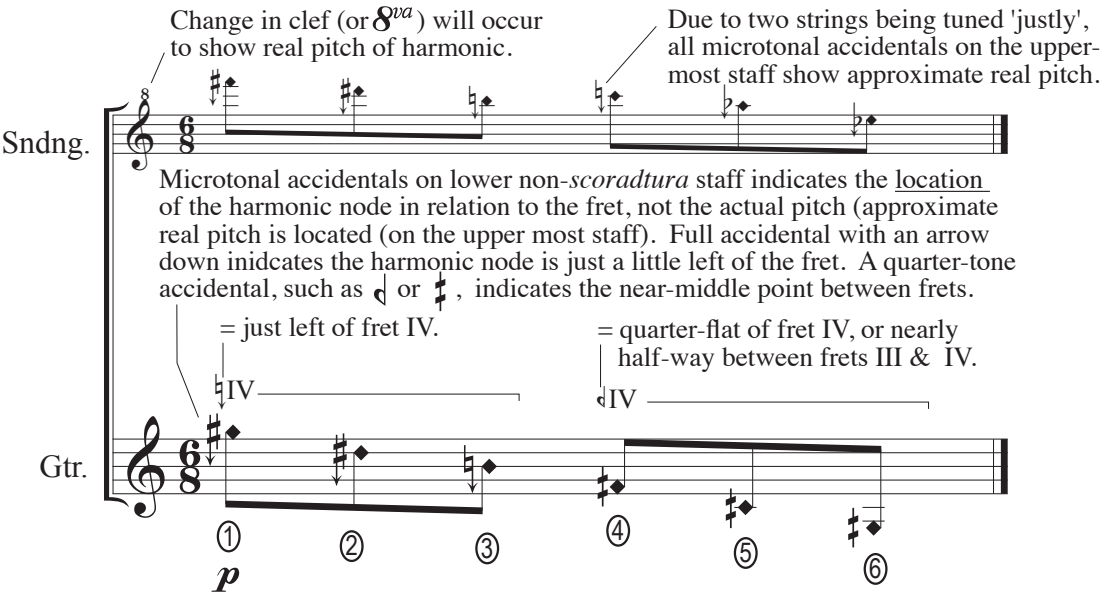
Staff is transposed as if there were no *scordatura*, and the guitar remained in standard tuning.



Remember that a capo is holding the bottom three strings. However, at moments that you are playing an open string, it will appear as if no change in tuning has occured or the *capo* was not present. Thus, a written E on ⑥ will sound F in the 'sounding pitch' staff.





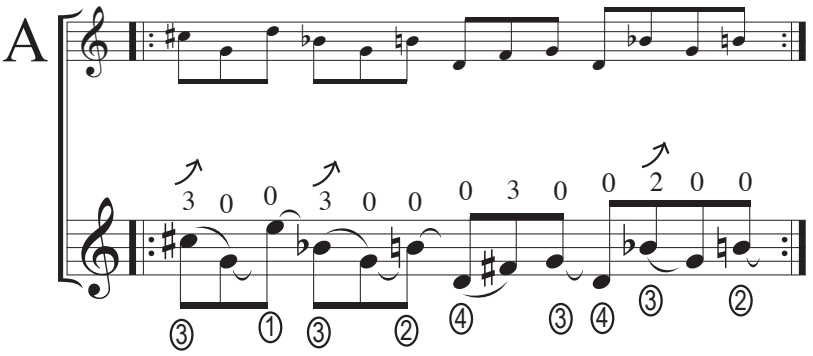


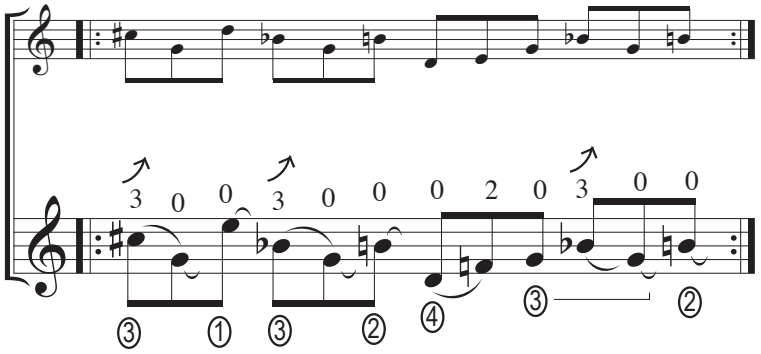
Since there is a capo at the first fret, there will be well-sounding harmonics at frets that are not common. For example, the resulting harmonic at the 5th fret (V), on the 6th string (open F) is the 5th partial, or sounding A (albeit a bit flat).

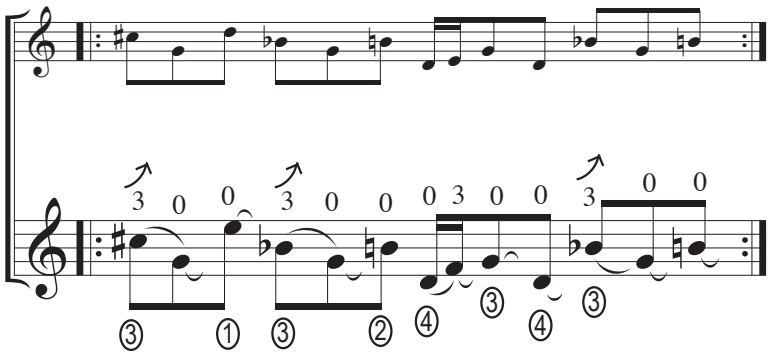
Material for Improvisation: Blues Licks

This material is designed to bridge movements, or act as doorways into movements that share this material. Below are variations on 'blues licks' A & B. These licks can be isolated and 'grooved', or strung together to make more or less complicated grooves. The performer is encouraged to create or improvise further variations.

A







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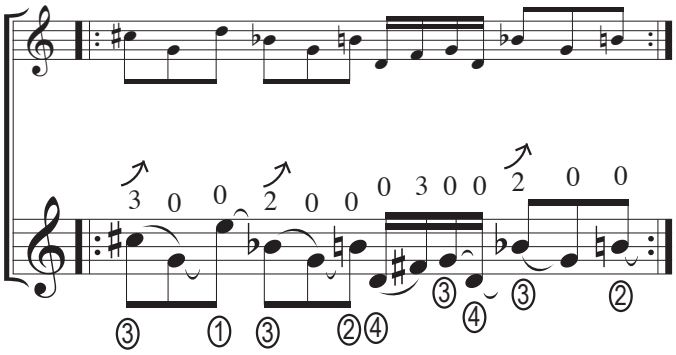
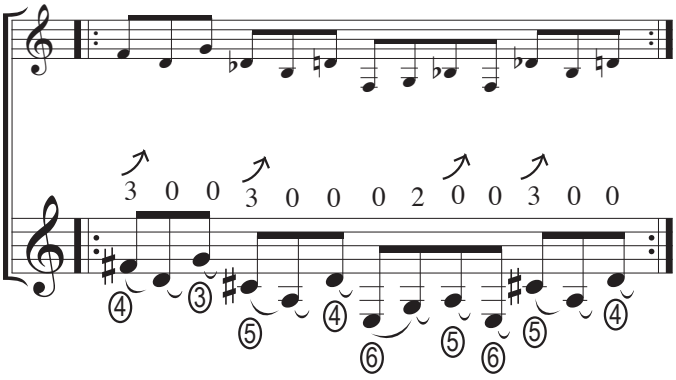
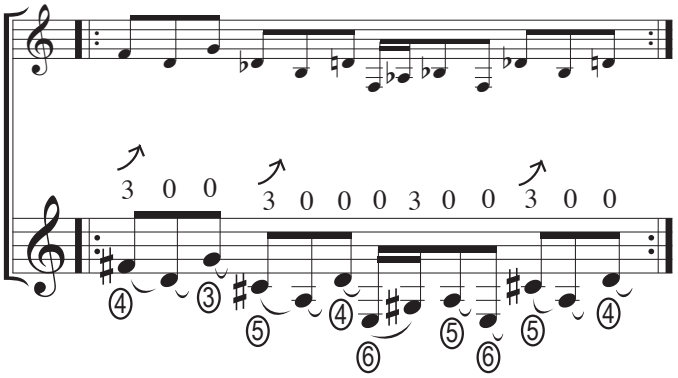
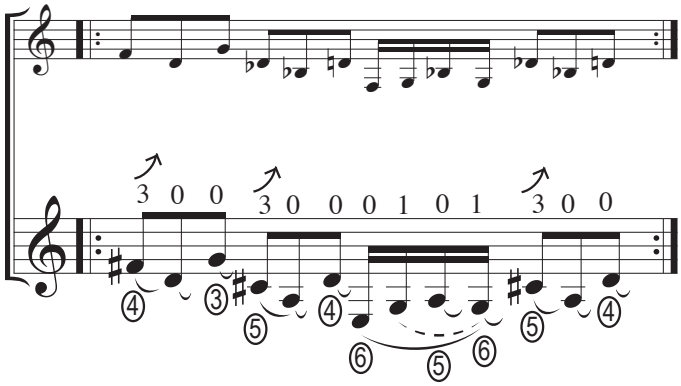


B

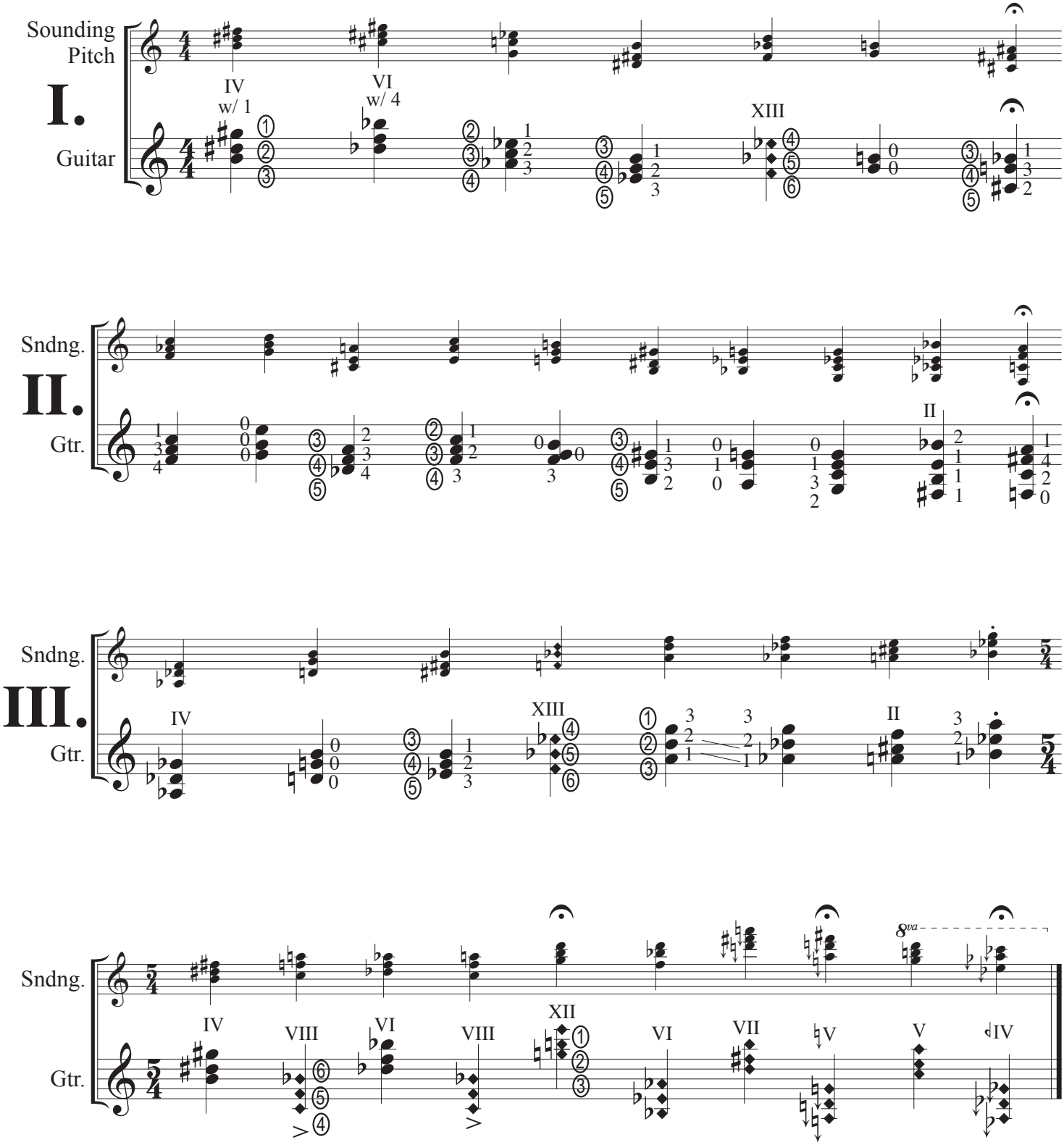






Material for Improvisation: Triad Progressions

This material is designed to bridge movements, or act as doorways into movements that share this material. These three progressions can be executed at different tempi, with variable timbres, and played forwards or backwards. The performer may choose to isolate a couple or a few chords and repeat shorter phrases. Triads found at harmonic nodal points can be caused to sound by plucking in an ordinary way, or through striking the strings at nodal points with the right hand.



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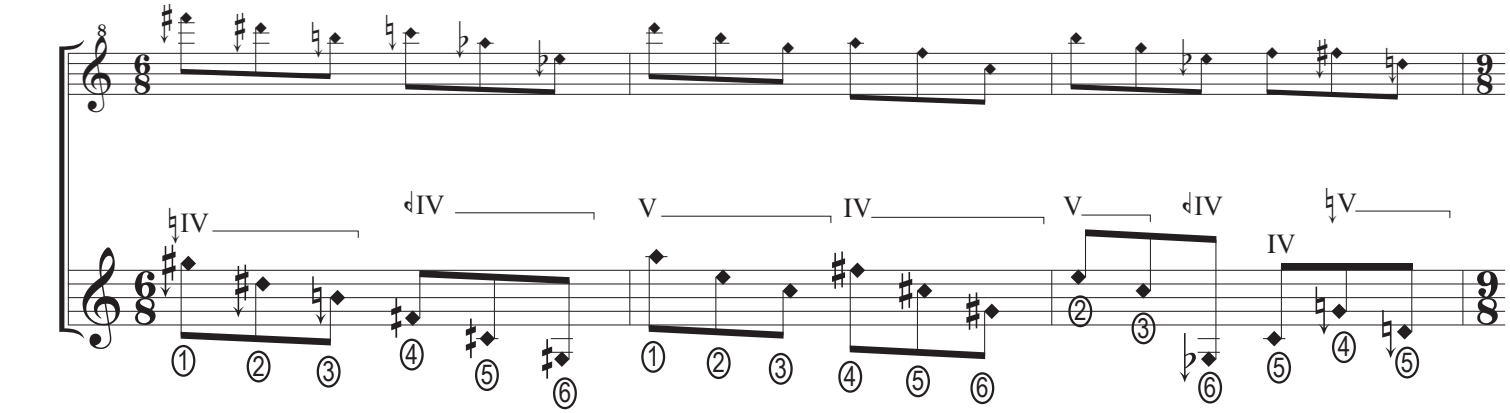
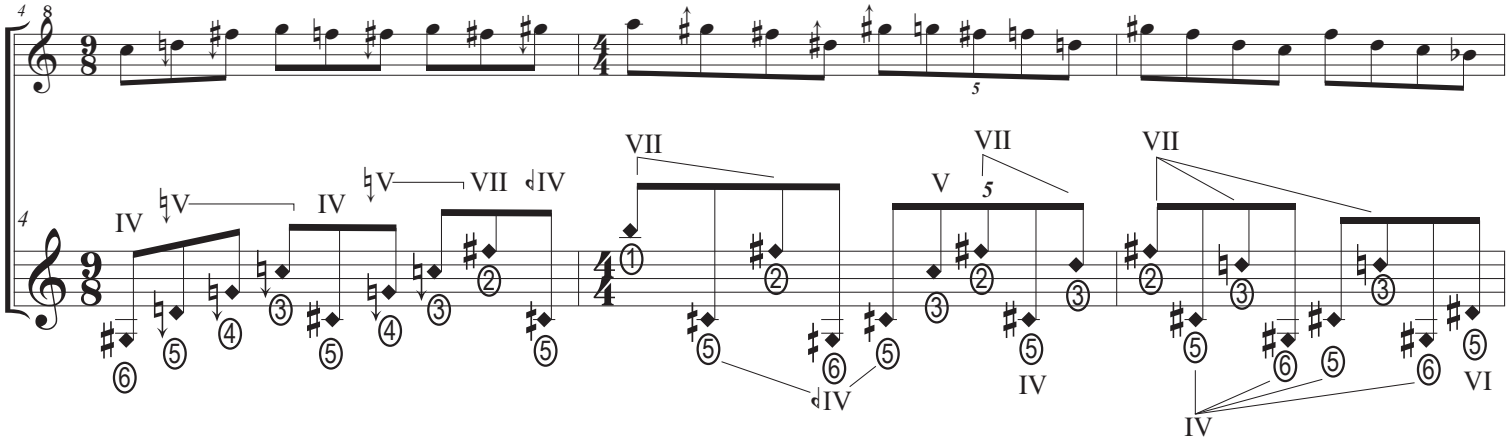
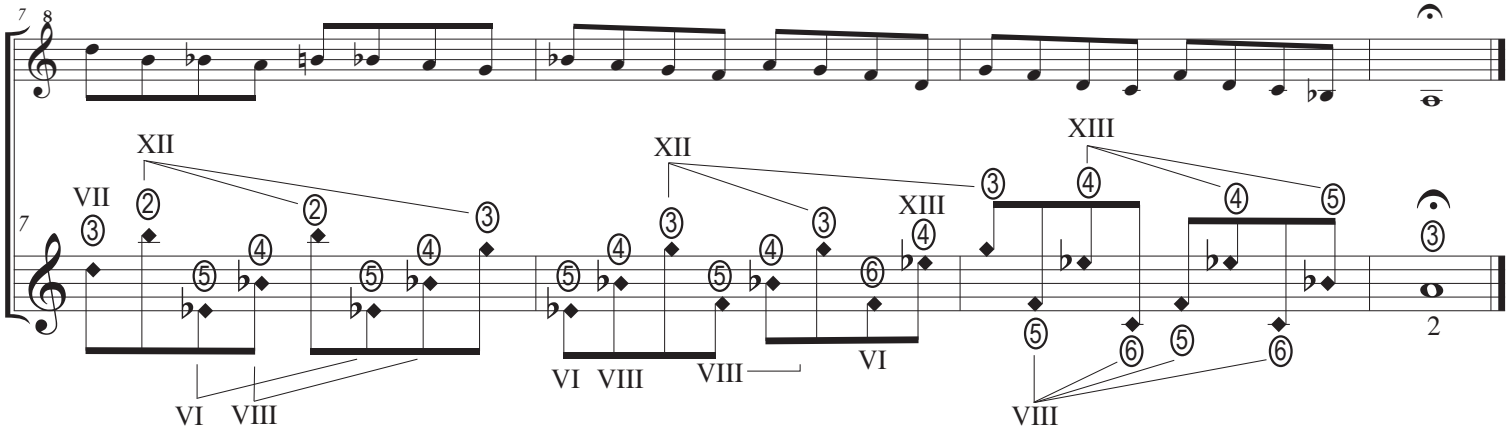
Material for Improvisation: Harmonics

This material is designed to bridge movement or act as doorways into movements that share this material. These strings of harmonics can played as written, combined into short re-peating patters, and played forward or backwards







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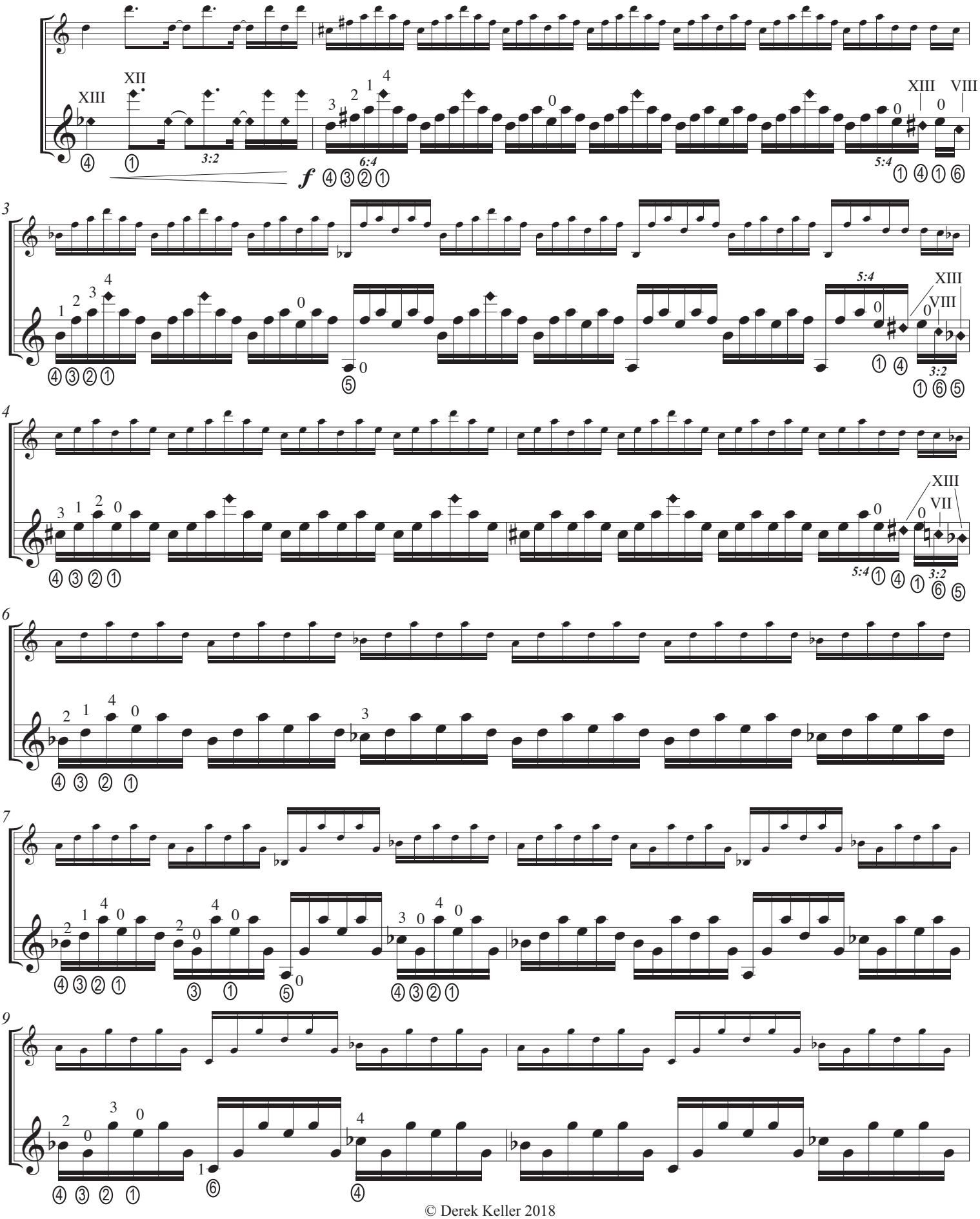
Progressing

♩ = 88-106, *whiring, ebbing, flowing, as sustained as possible, with rubato as necessary, yet always expressively*



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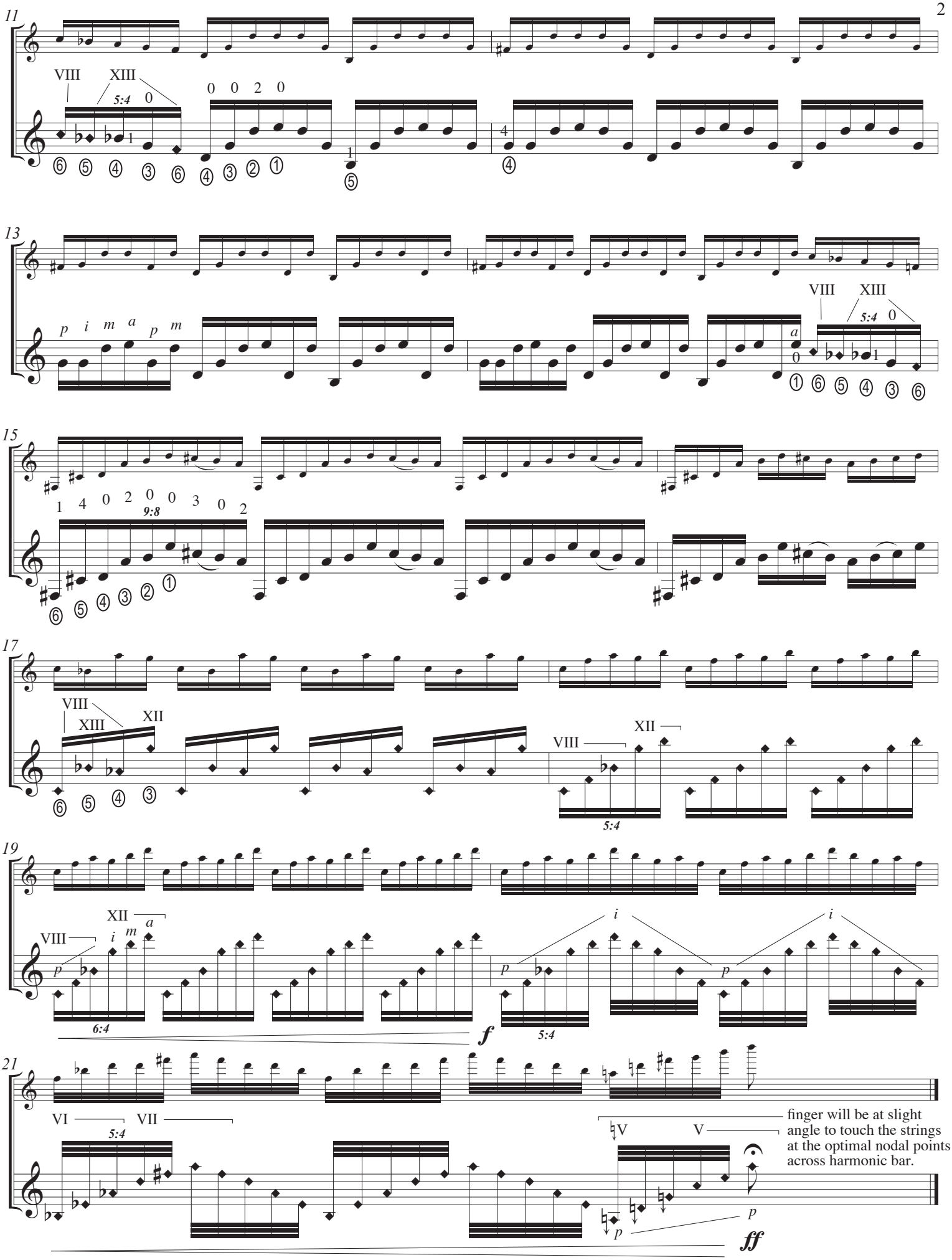
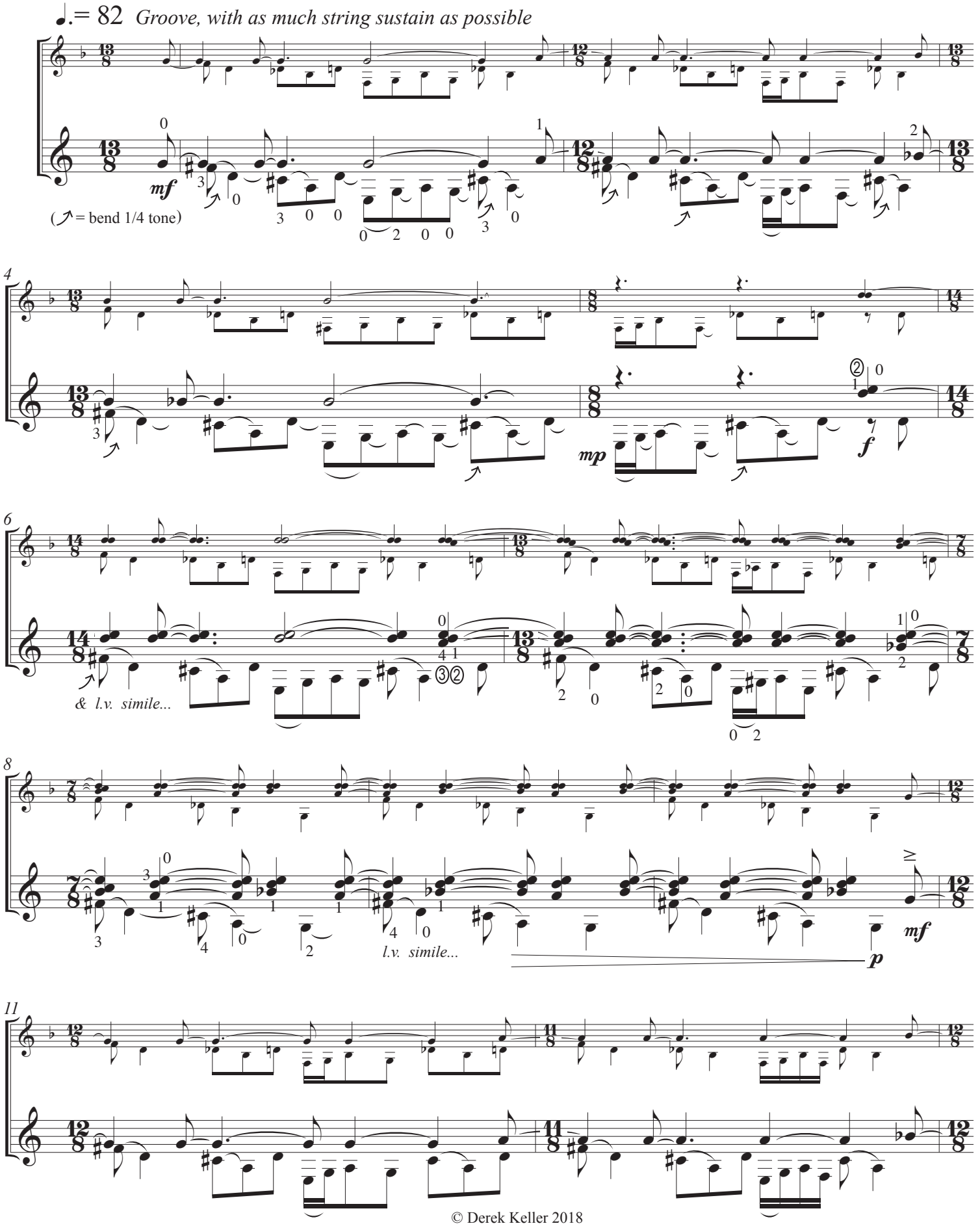

11
VIII
XIII
5:4
13
15
9:8
17
XII
19
6:4
5:4
21
VI
VII
finger will be at slight angle to touch the strings at the optimal nodal points across harmonic bar.

Blues I



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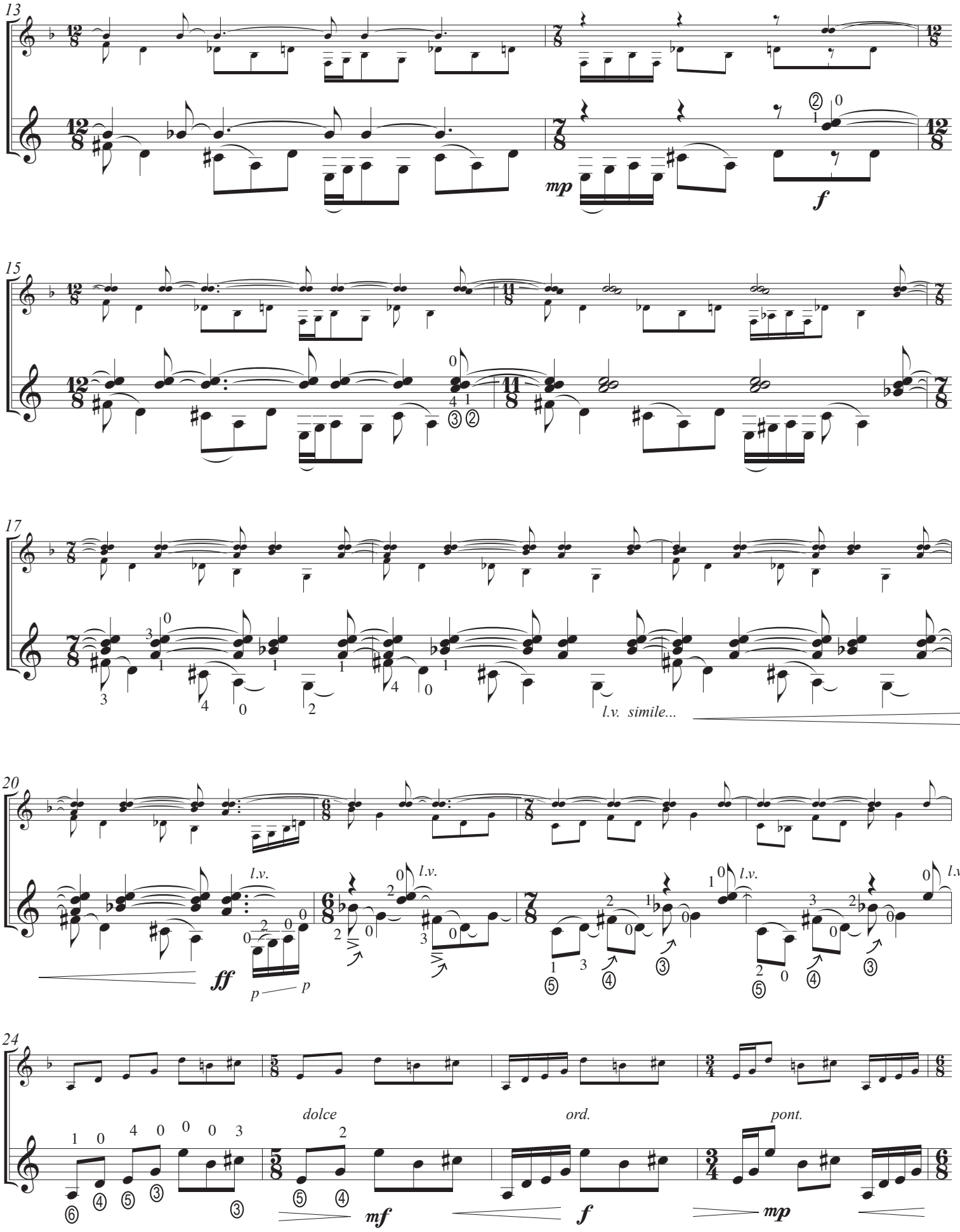
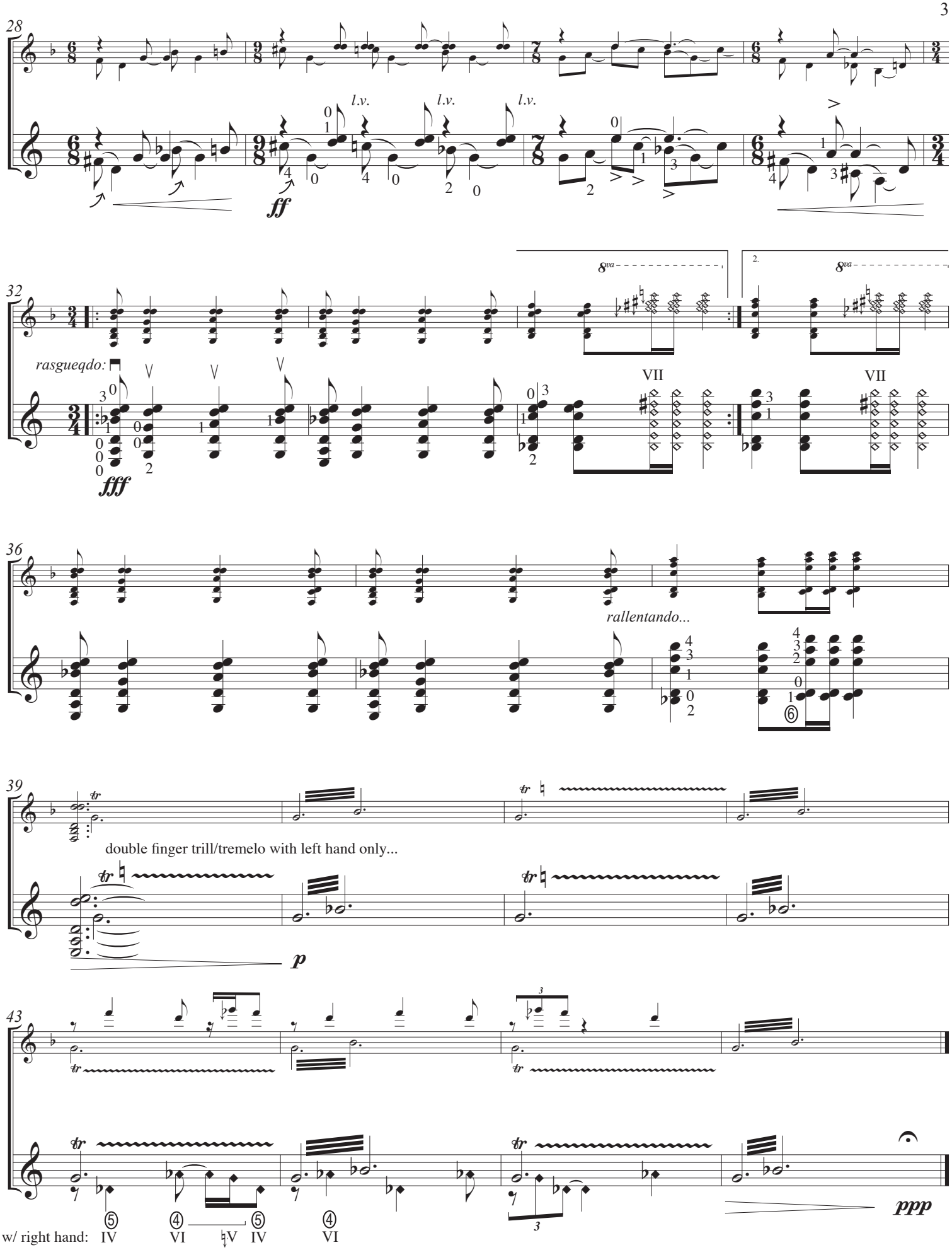
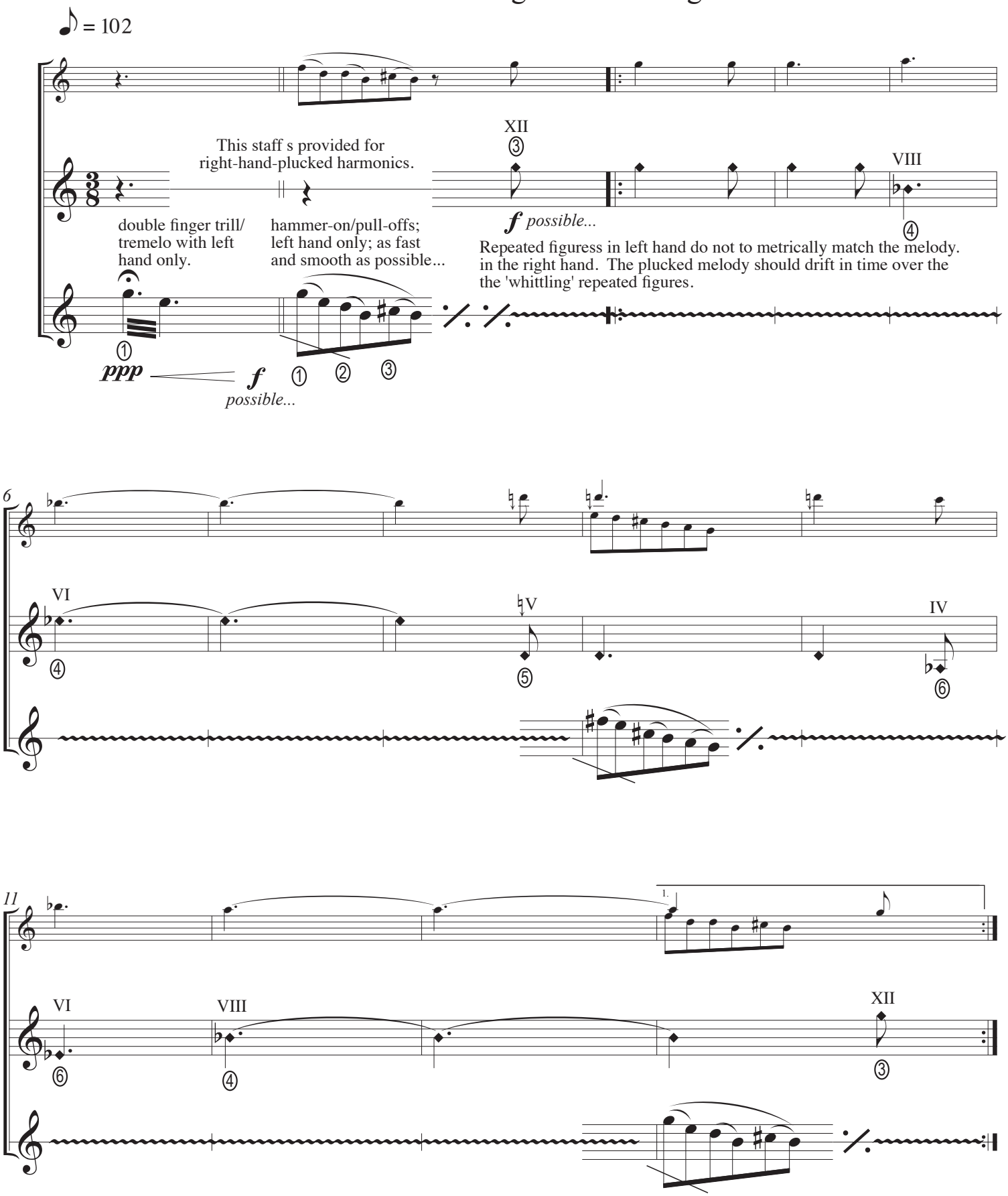

13
mp
f
15
17
l.v. simile...
20
ff
l.v.
p
24
dolce
mf
ord.
f
pont.
mp


28
l.v.
l.v.
l.v.
ff
32
8va
2.
8va
rasgueqdo:
fff
VII
VII
36
rallentando...
39
tr
double finger trill/tremelo with left hand only...
p
43
ppp
w/ right hand: IV VI ♭V IV VI

Frittering and Whittling



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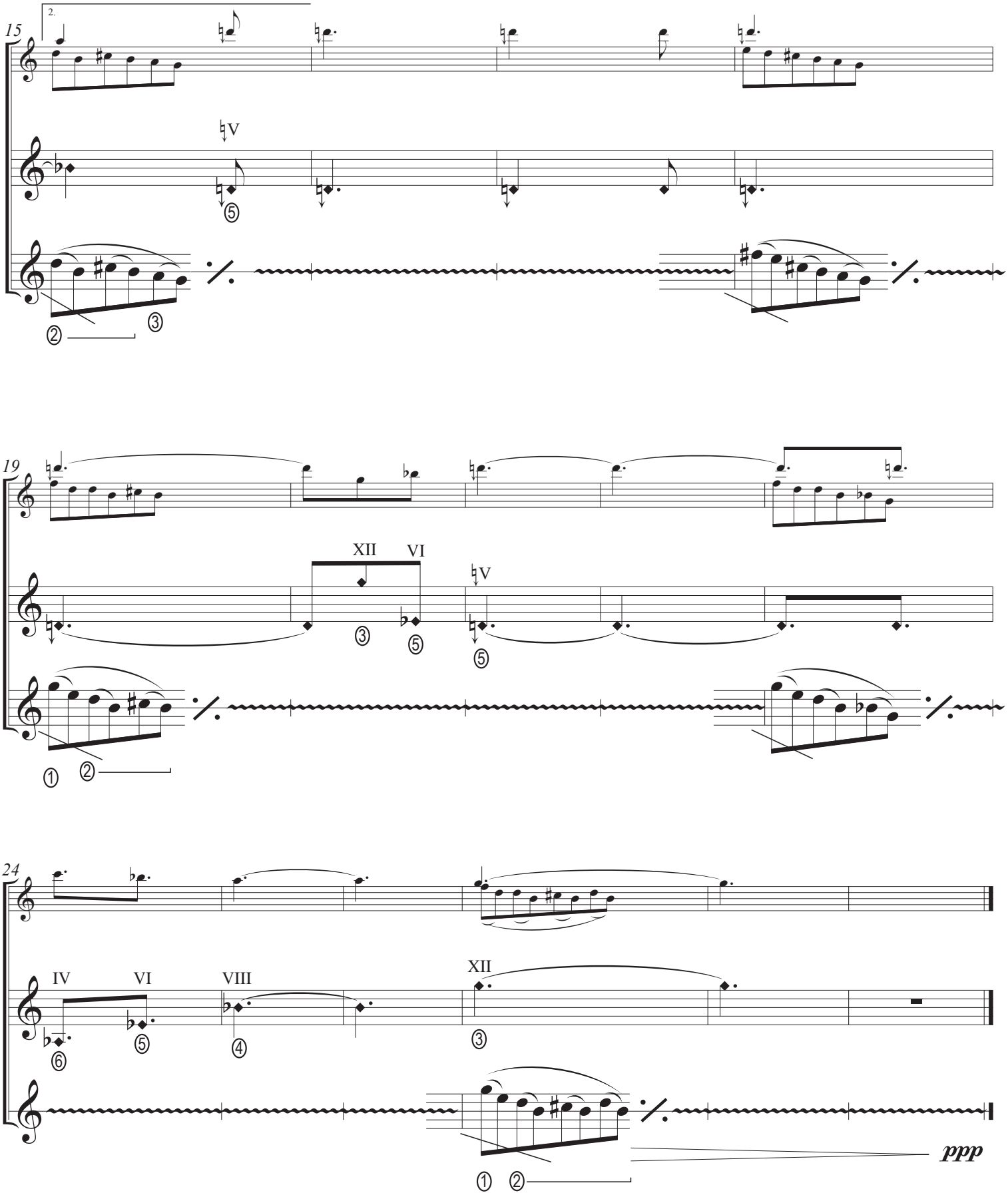
15
2.
V
⑤
②
③
19
XII
VI
V
③
⑤
⑤
①
②
24
IV
VI
VIII
XII
⑥
⑤
④
③
①
②
ppp

The End Times Are a'Changin'

Derek Keller

Fantasia on a Theme by Dylan

♪ = 126

Folky, yet mysteriously expressive, flowing, with rubato Theme

ease into tempo, vamp...

poco rallentando

pp *sl.*

cresc. *poco a poco*

6 *a tempo*

10

14

19

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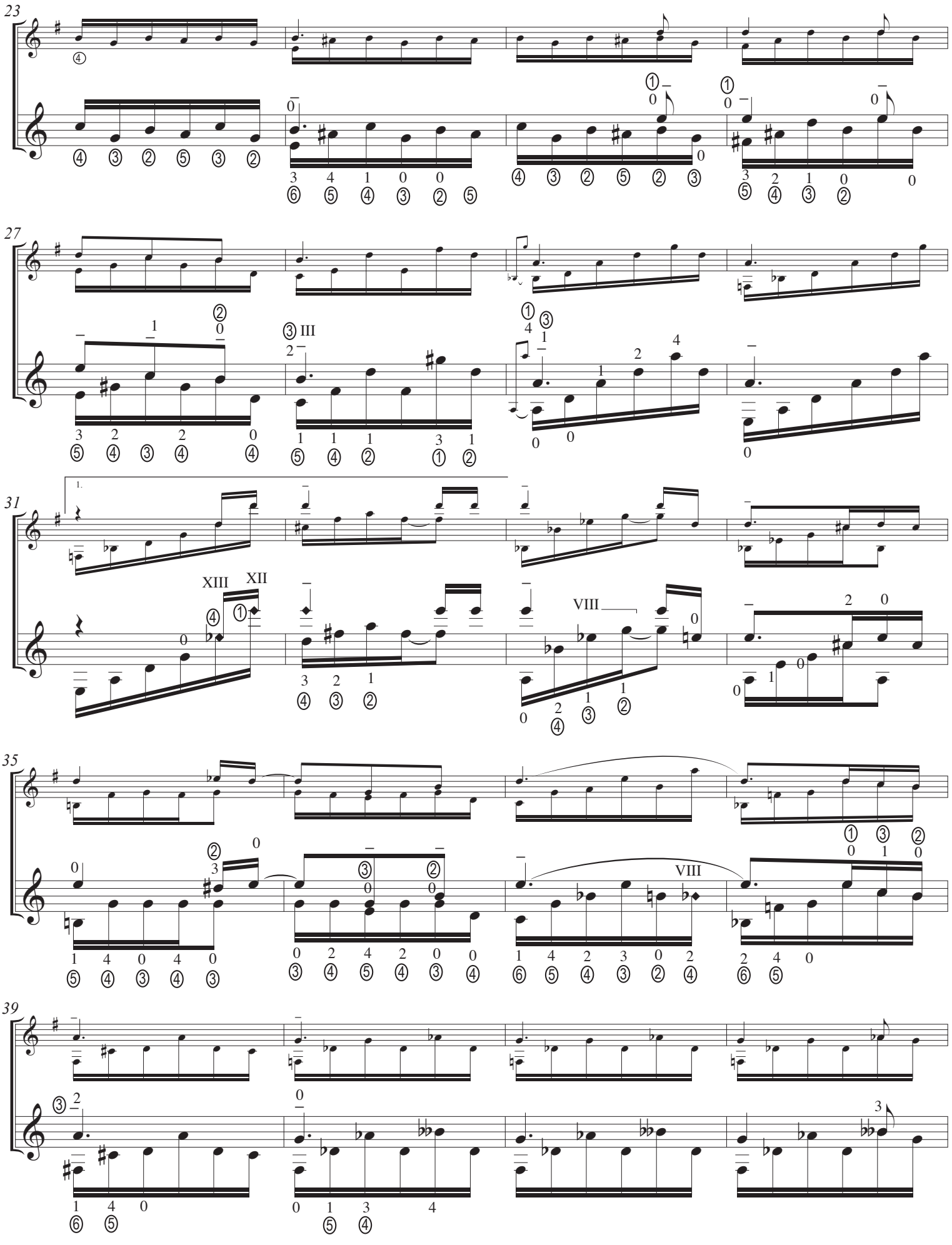
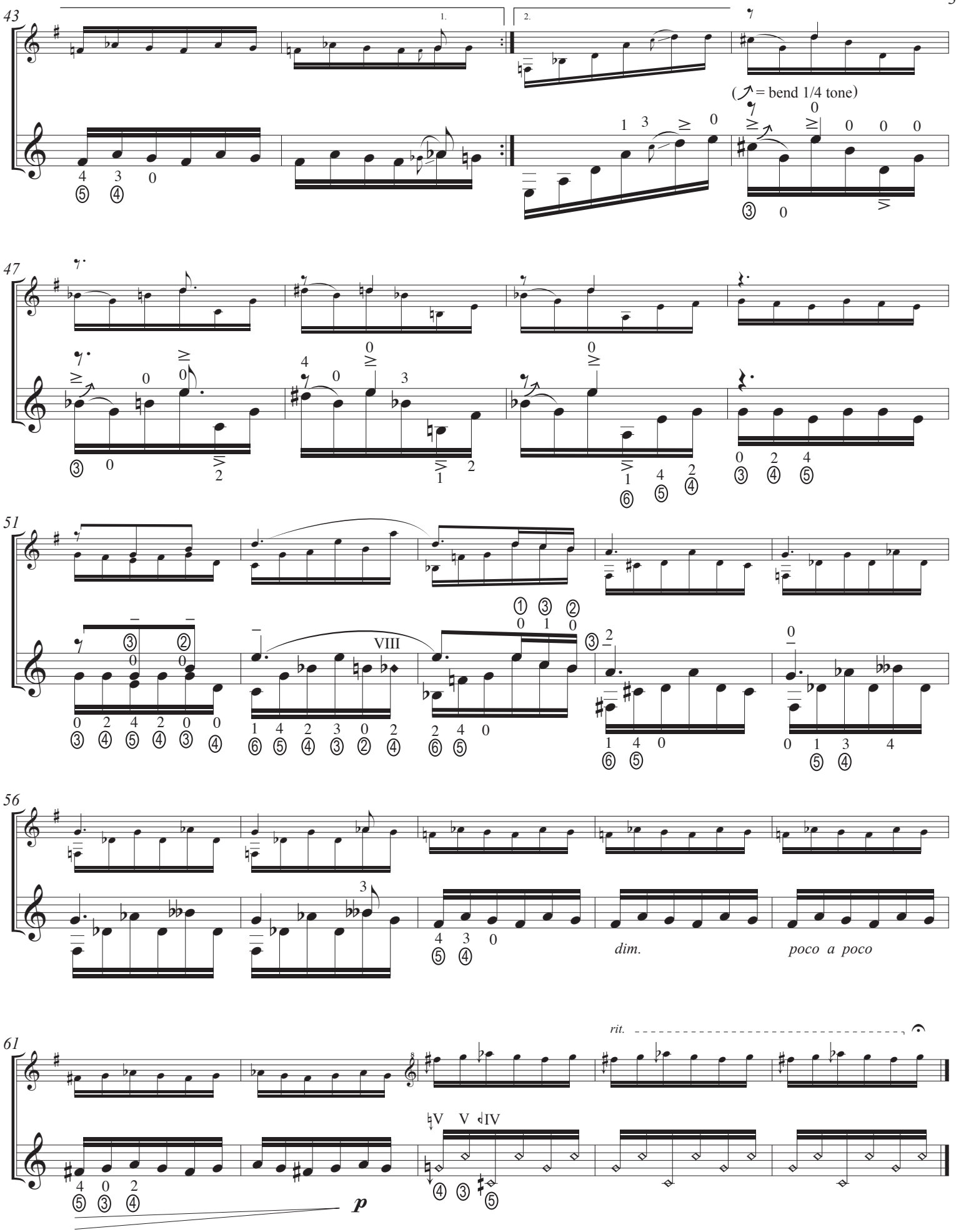
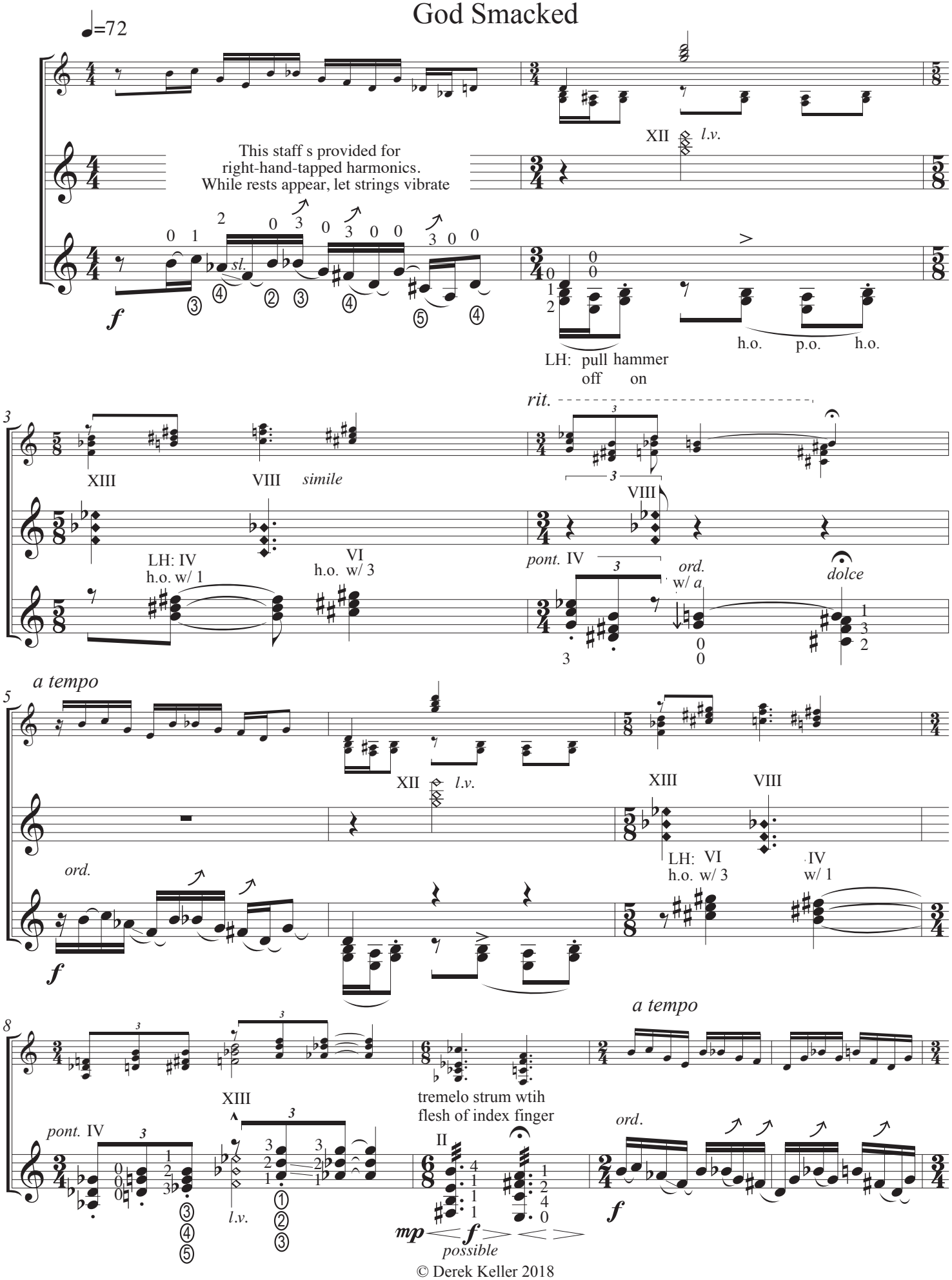

23
27
31
35
39
1.
III
XIII
XII
VIII


43
1.
2.
(↗ = bend 1/4 tone)
47
51
VIII
56
dim.
poco a poco
61
rit.
♭V V ♮IV
p

God Smacked



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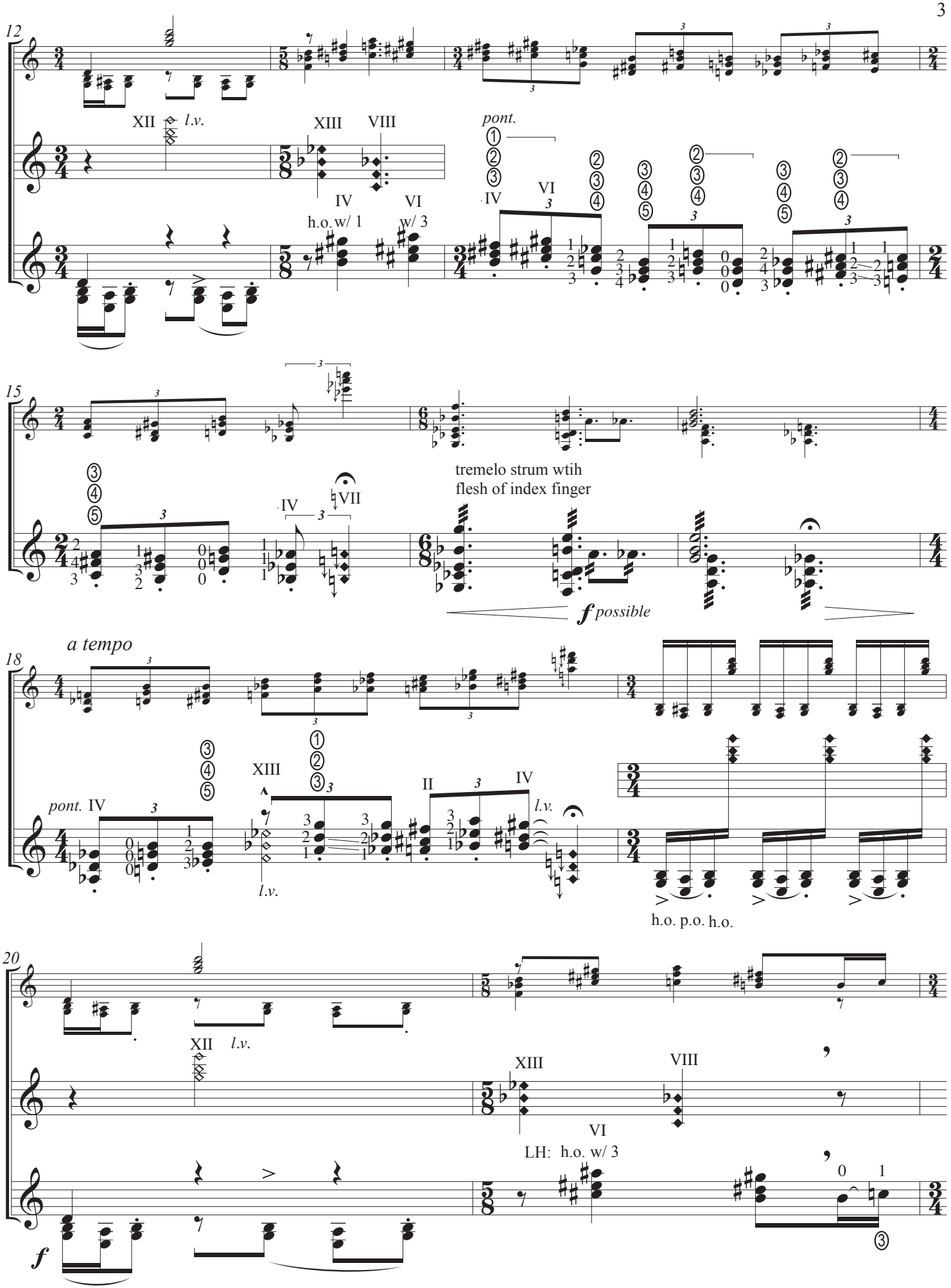
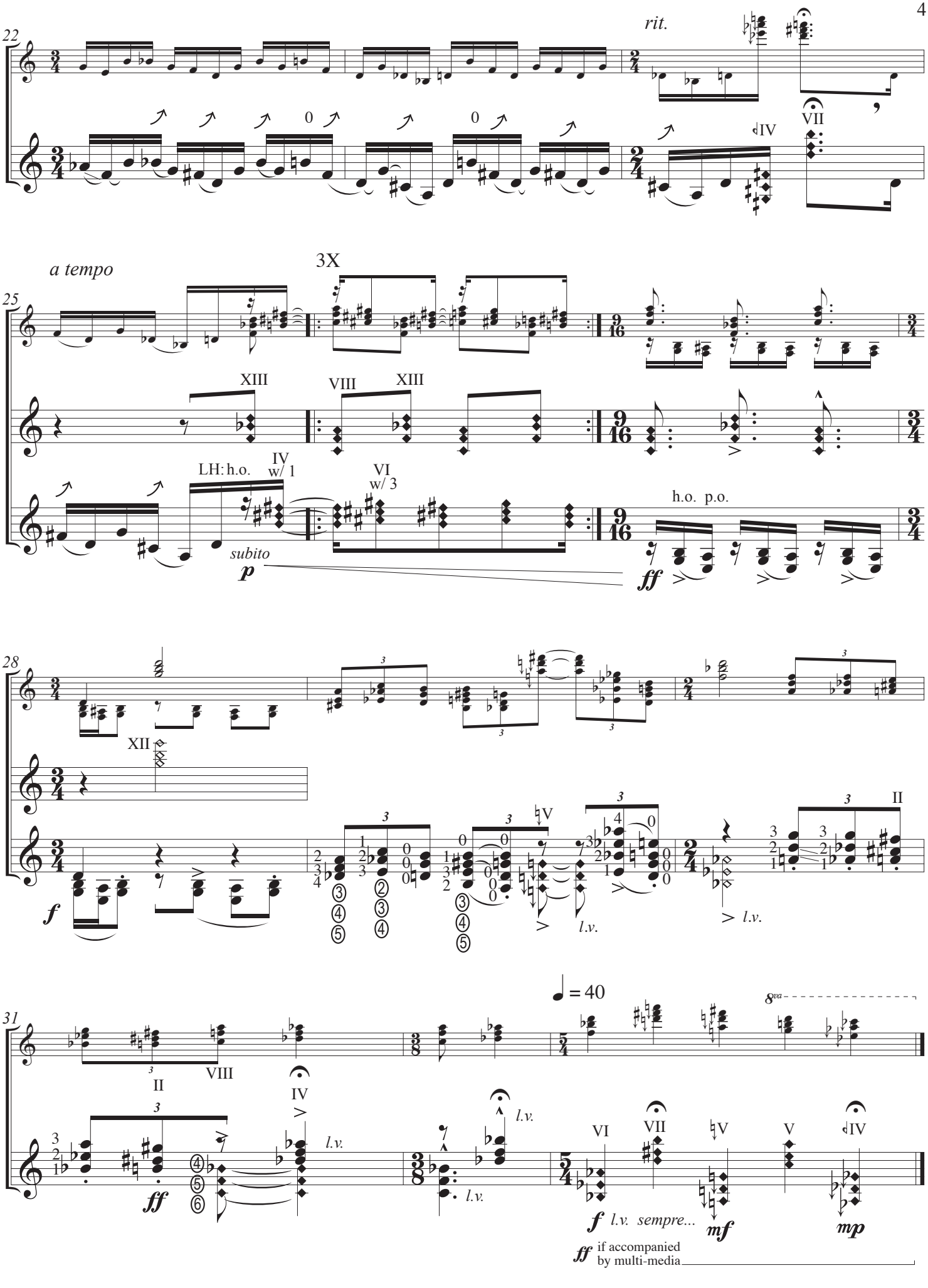
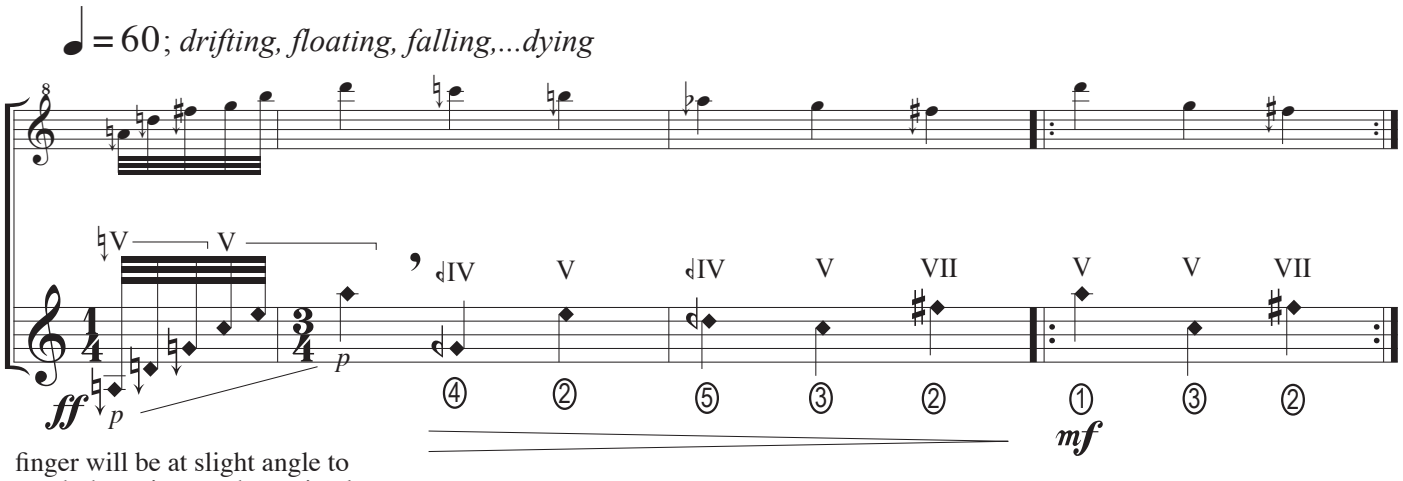
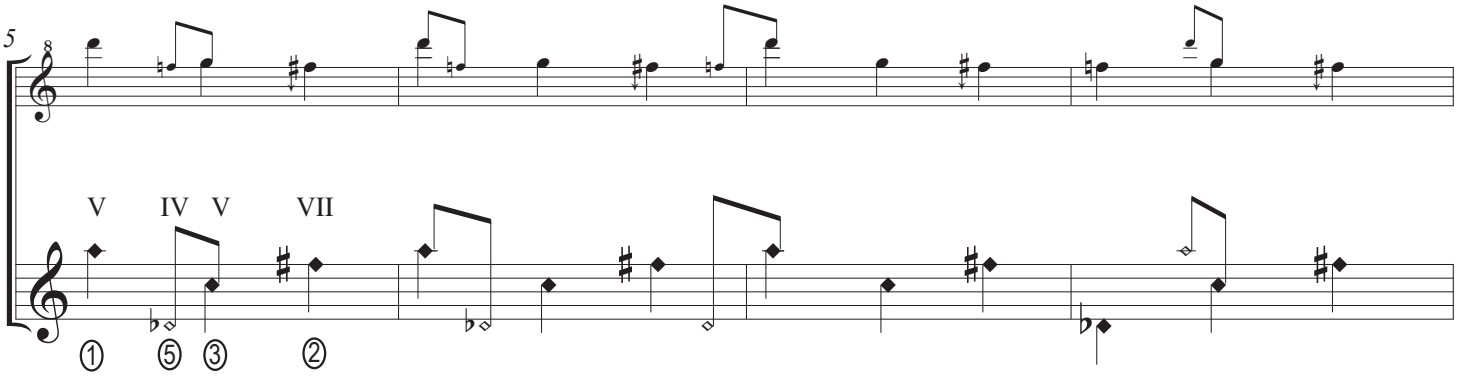
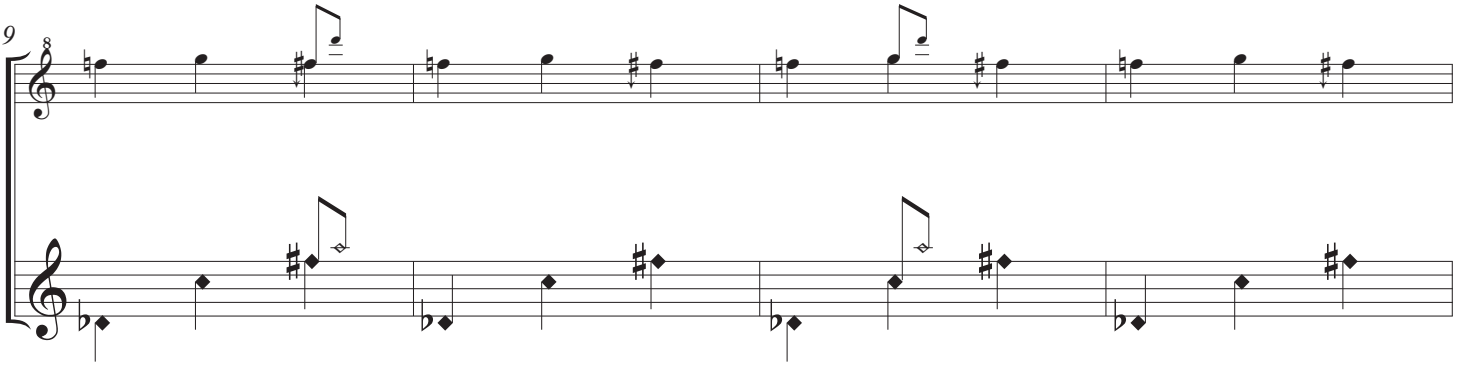

12
XII
l.v.
XIII
VIII
IV
VI
h.o. w/ 1
w/ 3
pont.
15
tremelo strum wtih
flesh of index finger
VII
f possible
18
a tempo
pont. IV
XIII
l.v.
II
IV
h.o. p.o. h.o.
20
XII
l.v.
XIII
VIII
VI
LH: h.o. w/ 3
f


22
rit.
IV
VII
a tempo
25
3X
XIII
VIII
XIII
LH: h.o.
IV
w/ 1
VI
w/ 3
h.o. p.o.
subito
p
ff
28
XII
f
V
II
l.v.
31
II
VIII
IV
ff
l.v.
♩ = 40
8va
VI
VII
V
IV
f l.v. sempre...
mf
mp
ff if accompanied by multi-media

Falling,...Dying







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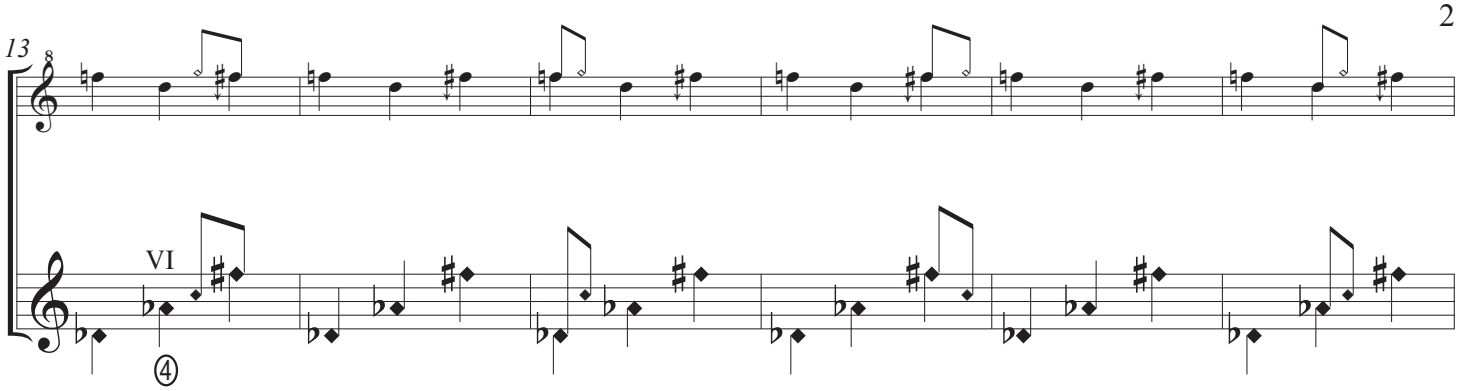
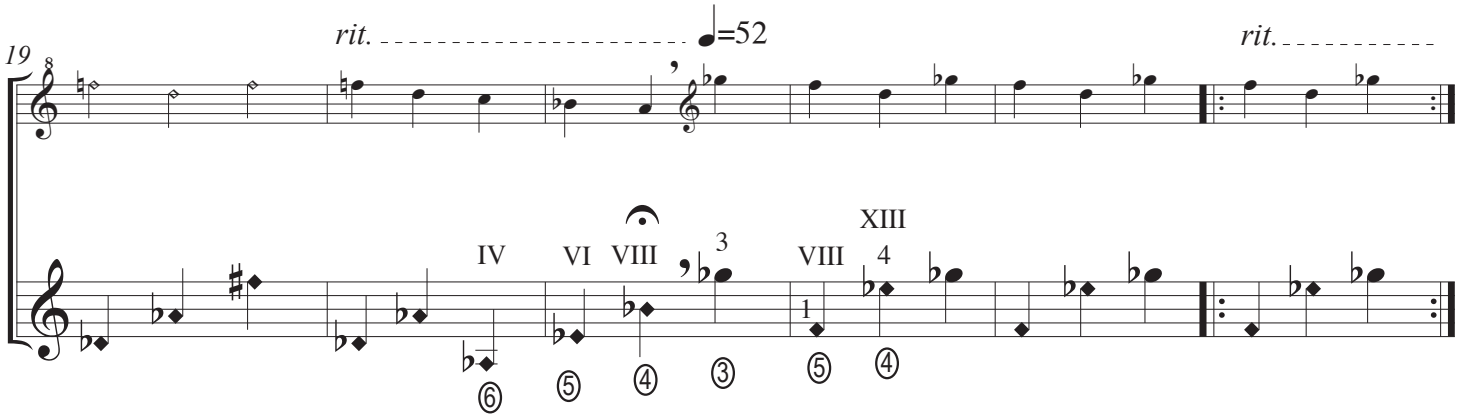
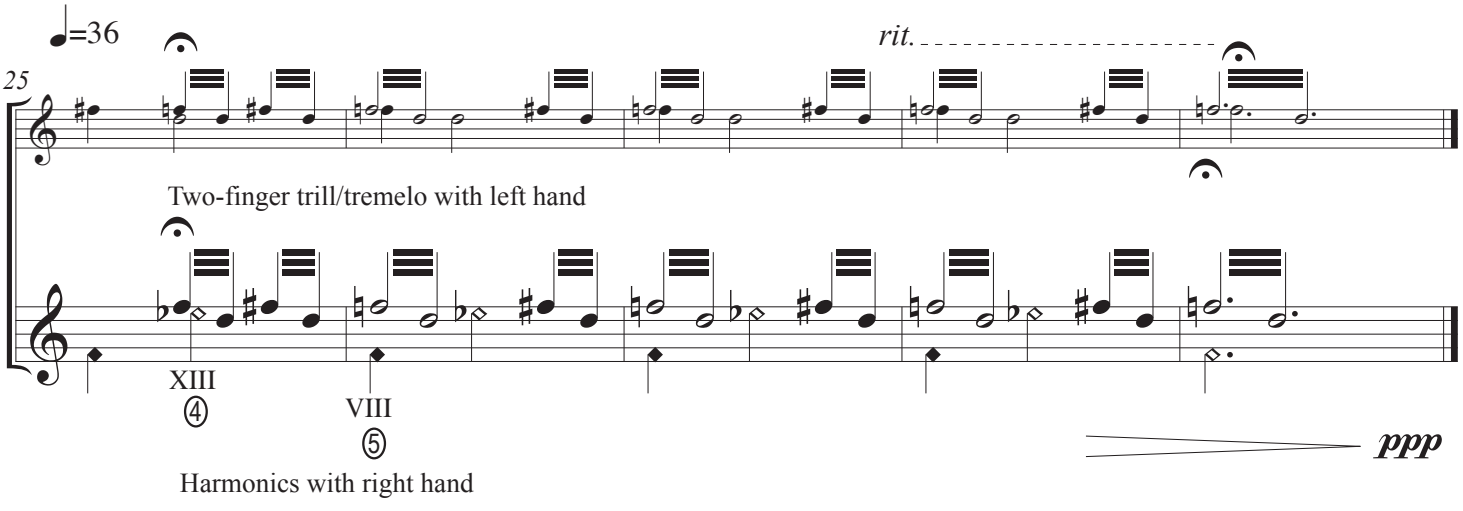
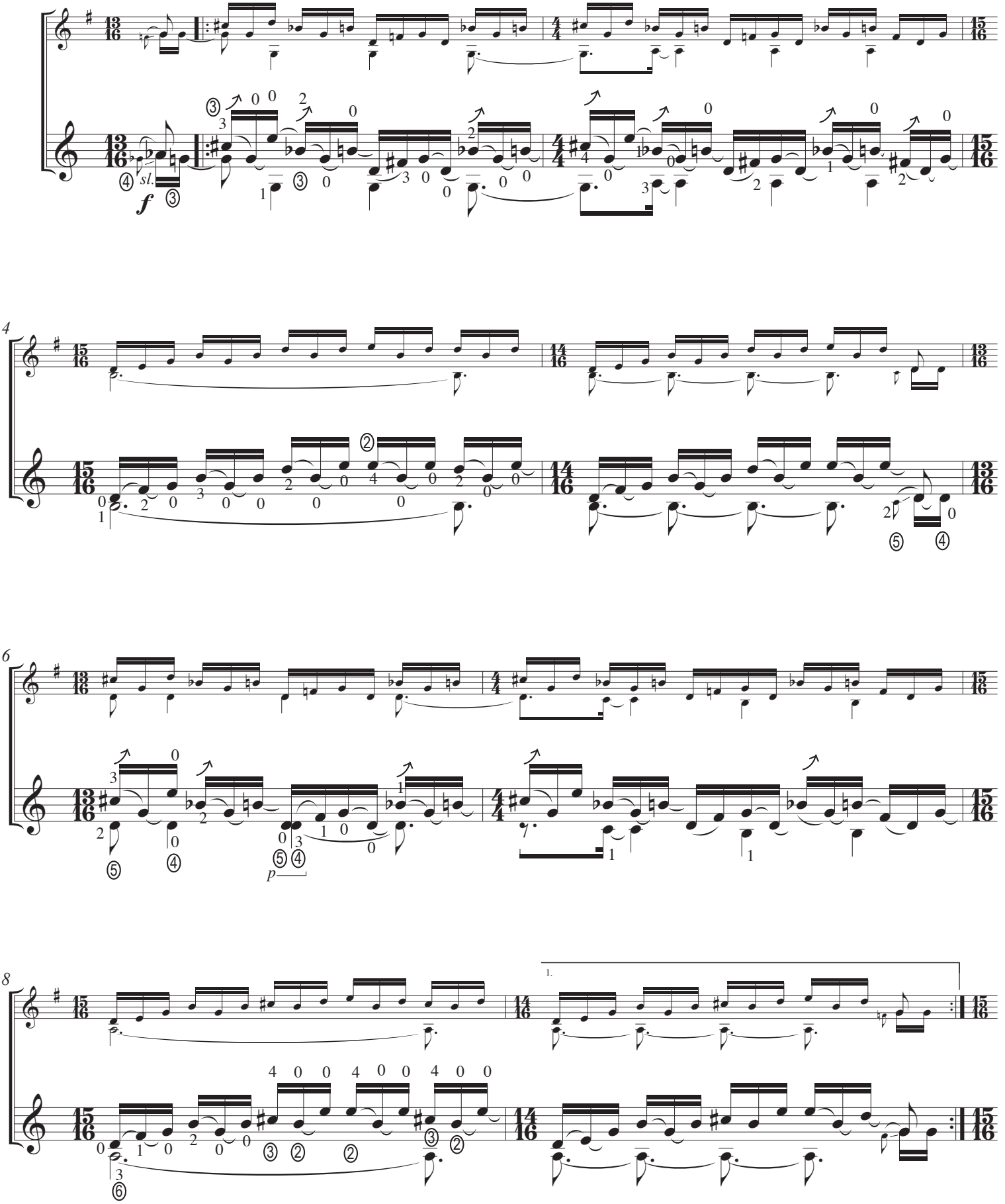

13
VI
④

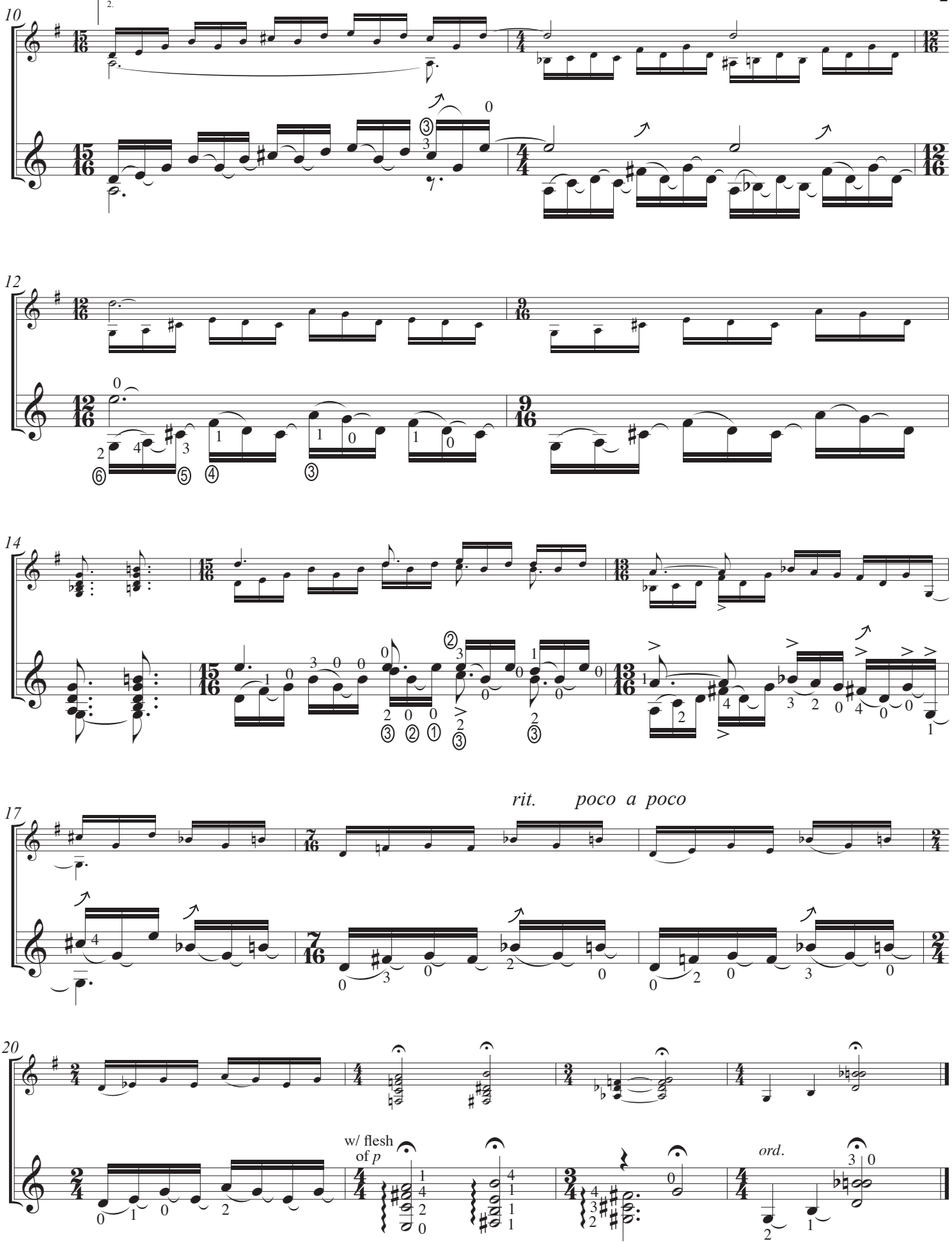

19
rit.
♩=52
rit.
IV
VI
VIII
3
VIII
XIII
4
1
⑥
⑤
④
③
⑤
④


♩=36
25
rit.
Two-finger trill/tremelo with left hand
XIII
④
VIII
⑤
Harmonics with right hand
ppp

Blues II

♪ = 126 *Folky, yet mysteriously expressive, flowing, with rubato*




10
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17
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poco a poco
20
w/ flesh
of p
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