LUDOVICO RONCALLI: *Sonata, Ottavo Tuono (Suite in G-major)*

by Craig H. Russell

In recent editions of *Soundboard,* I offered performing editions of several works by accomplished baroque guitarists such as Giovanni Battista Granata and François Le Cocq. Continuing in this series, this issue includes an arrangement for classical guitar of a complete suite by Ludovico Roncalli. The "Sonata, Ottavo Tuono" is the first of nine suites found in Roncalli's only known publication, the *Capricci Armonici sopra la Chitarra Spagnola* (Bergamo, 1692), pp. 1-7.[1]

Roncalli's suites normally follow the order:

1. Preludio	
2. Alemanda	
3. Corrente	(missing in 2 suites)
4. Gigua	(missing in 2 suites)
5. Sarabanda	(missing in 2 suites)
6. Gavotta	(present in 5 suites)
7. Minuet	(present in 6 suites)
(Passacaglii)	(present only in 1 suite)

Observe that the standardized "textbook" ordering of *allemande-courante-sarabande-gigue* is not present in any of Roncalli's suites. Note, for example, that he has the sarabande *following* the gigue instead of preceding it, and in no instance does he conclude the suite with a gigue. He opts instead to draw things to a close with either a gavotte, a minuet, or—in one instance—a passacaglia. In truth, this ordering and these characteristics are much more common among Roncalli's fellow baroque guitarists than the supposed "standardized" ordering that freshmen music-majors are forced to carve indelibly into their memories. Other guitarists from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries such as Robert de Visée, François Campion, Henry Grenerin, and Santiago de Murcia preferred concluding their suites with a gavotte or minuet. Roncalli is thus hardly anomalous. I bring up this point because many recording artists repeatedly cut apart suites and repaste them together in the "correct" order as if the composer, in his ignorant confusion, had somehow gotten it all wrong. I urge performers to play the pieces in the order that Roncalli intended—he knew what he was doing and does not need any "fixing"!

Roncalli is imaginative and varied in his ornamentation. He liberally sprinkles in expected ornaments such as slurs, vibrato, mordents, and trills. The modern guitarist should be reminded that in most cases, baroque trills should be prepared—that is, the upper neighbor to the notated pitch should be struck on the strong part of the beat even though there is no visible indication of this upper neighbor on the page itself: the guitarist should then "pull-off" to the main note and execute the trill's repercussions. When time permits, the performer should exit the warbling of the trill's repercussions by striking in

anticipation the same pitch that will follow on the heels of the trill. (For a few notated examples, see the second page of the "Preludio.") Of course, *schneller* trills that have only one curt repercussion (omitting the preparatory upper neighbor altogether) are also allowable and appropriate when used judiciously. They sound quite pleasant, for instance, when applied to the trills in measures 7 and 8 of the "Corrente."

Of great interest are Roncalli's cross-string trills in the "Alemanda" where he executes the trill's repercussions on two different strings—as opposed to obtaining the two pitches on the same string by hammering-on and pulling-off. Wherever possible, I have tried to preserve this effect by similarly fingering Roncalli's cross-string trills on two separate strings.

A curious compound ornament is found in the "Corrente" (measure 4 after the double bar). Roncalli notates a lower-note appoggiatura on the third string against a trill on the open second string. Although Roncalli's intentions are anything but clear, I feel an accurate—even elegant—rendition of this ornament is achieved by striking the appoggiatura on string three simultaneously against the open second, and then immediately executing a single-repercussion trill by hammering-on and pulling-off on the open second that is already sounding. The resulting ornament resembles a 'turn' in its contour and rhythm, but has the added pungent bite of the initial appoggiatura. (See the musical example at the bottom of page 2 of the "Corrente.")

Other Performance Observations

Roncalli indicates an arpeggiated G-chord at the beginning of the "Preludio" which can be executed in a number of ways. For one sample realization, consult the notated example at the bottom of page 1 of the "Preludio." The "Alemanda" is particularly graceful if one applies the lilting elegance of *notes inégales* to the sixteenth notes; i.e., gently "swing" each pair of sixteenth notes so that the first is slightly longer than its companion that follows. In phrasing the melodic lines of the "Corrente," pay attention to the ambivalent metric changes between 3/4 and 6/8 time.

I have added a *petite reprise* indication to the "Gavotta." To perform a *petite reprise* one takes all written repeats and then plays the very last phrase once more (the beginning of which is marked with a special symbol). The *petite reprise* was a structural feature of French binary-dance movements, including gavottes. Even when a *petite reprise* is not notated, its addition is appropriate: the performer can add a *petite reprise* to any of the other movements in this suite if he or she feels so inclined. Also, I offer an alternate arrangement of the "Gavotta's" final phrase that can be used in the repeat or the *petite reprise*. Similar types of changes can be applied to the other movements.

Take care to play the "Gavotta" at a brisk tempo. Too many performers lumber along through gavottes when they should instead play with the verve and energy of a gigue—but in duple meter. Also, if the guitarist immediately silences the strings after playing the "Gavotta's" final chord, the effect is quite stunning, with the abrupt silence following fast on the heels of the sonorous strum. It is a far more effective way to close the suite than to let the final chord fade mushily into the sunset.

Editorial Procedure

I should remind the reader that my arrangement of the suite is only that—an *arrangement* and not a transcription. Given the peculiarities of re-entrant tuning on the baroque guitar and its low-tension gut strings, many of the effects that are possible on that instrument are not reproducable on its modern 6-string cousin. For instance, the elegant interplay between strummed chords and plucked notes that is so enchanting on the baroque guitar can sound extremely clumsy on the modern guitar (even in the hands of a superb performer). I have therefore chosen to replace many of the strummed chords with plucked ones, especially in the "Alemanda" and the "Sarabanda." In addition, I have utilized the bass strings of the modern guitar—even though they are absent on the baroque guitar. The resulting changes in fingerings have sometimes necessitated the omission of a trill or mordent in Roncalli's tablature, or conversely, have suggested an additional ornament not found in the original. My hope in providing this arrangement is not to provide a rigid and historically accurate version of Roncalli's suite, but merely to spark an interest in his music among modern guitarists by providing a playable, idiomatic rendition for the six-string guitar. The serious guitarist is encouraged to consult the original tablature and develop his own arrangement of the piece. Or better still, buy a baroque guitar and play it as Roncalli intended!

California Polytechnic State University

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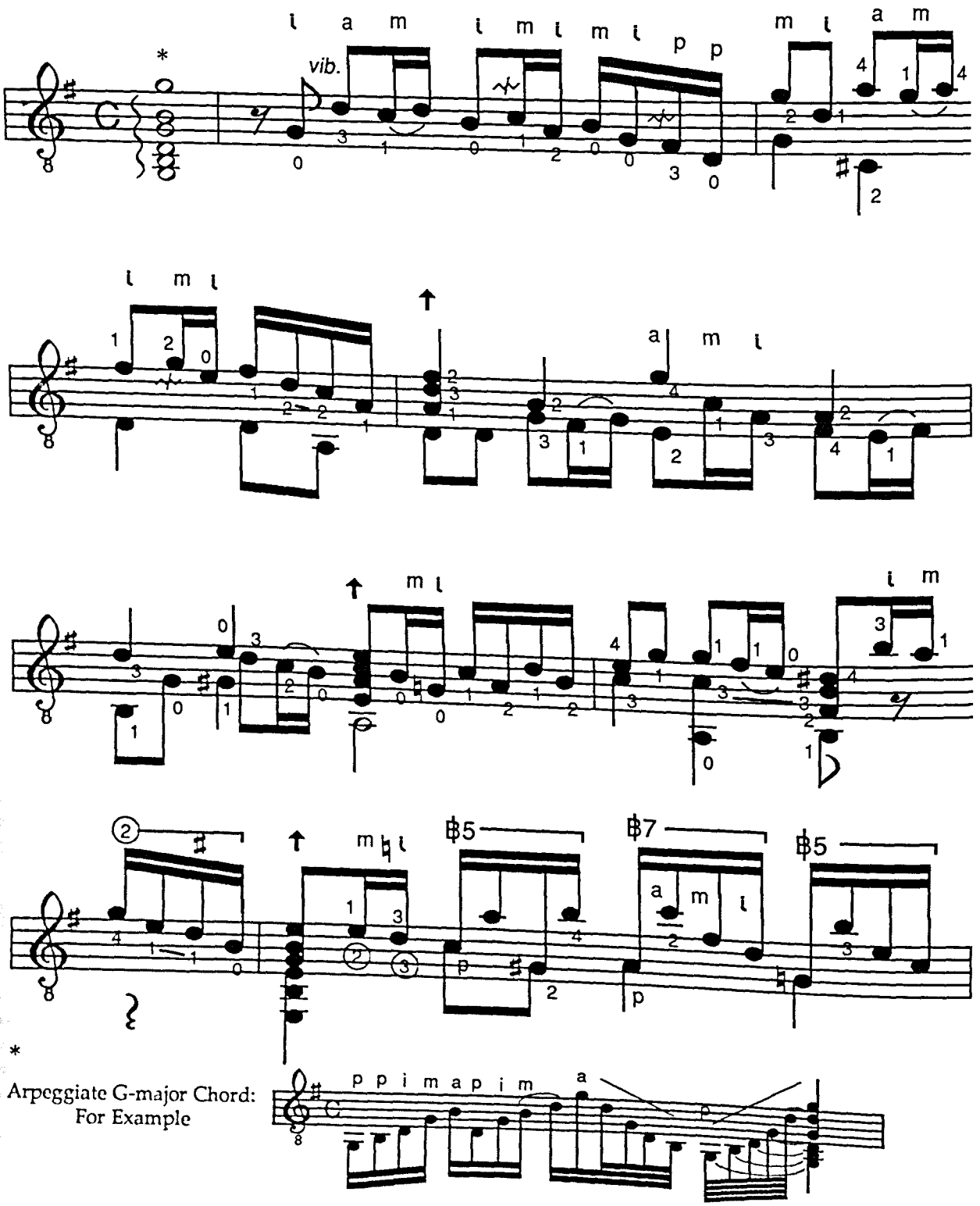
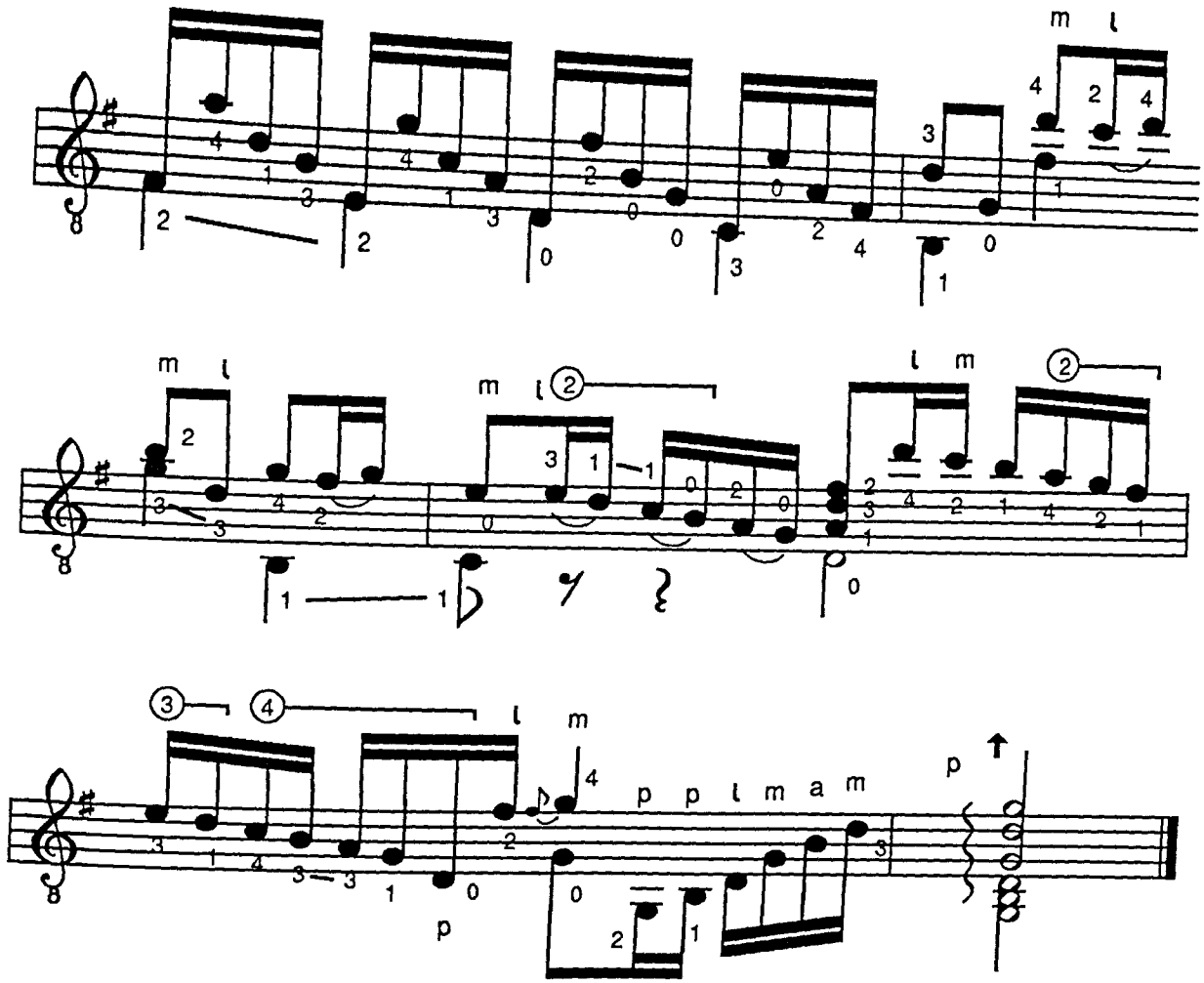
[1] Roncalli, *Capricci Armonici* , facsimile edition with an intro. by Michael Macmeeken (Monaco: Editions Chanterelle, 1979). The table of contents for the *Capricci Armonici* has nine headings, but it may actually contain *ten* suites, given that the order of movements of the suite in "Primo Tuono" suggests a subdivision into two autonomous works. The first suite would have the movements: Preludio, Alemanda, Gigua, Minuet. The second would consist of: Alemanda, Corrente, Sarabanda.

Sonata, Ottavo Tuono (1692)
(Suite in G-major)

1. Preludio

Ludovico Roncalli
arr. by Craig H. Russell



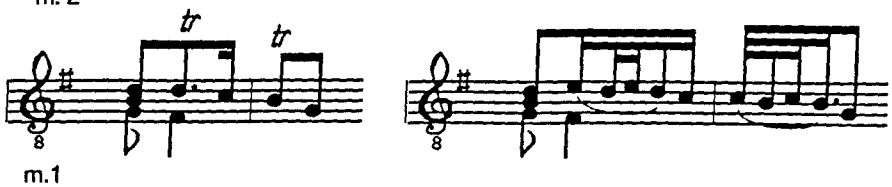


Trills: 1) normally should be prepared by playing the upper neighbor on the strong beat

Examples:

Alemanda

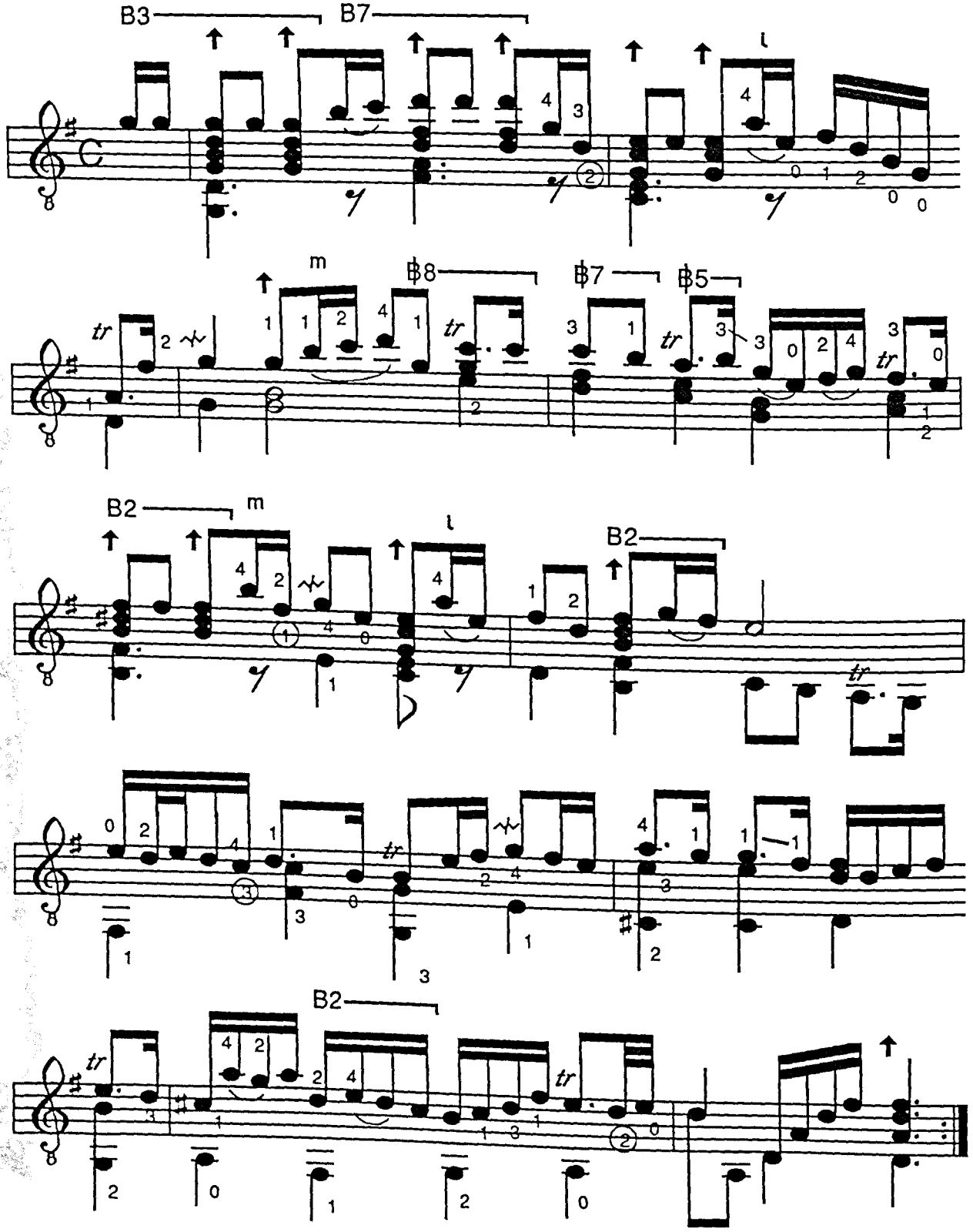
Corrente

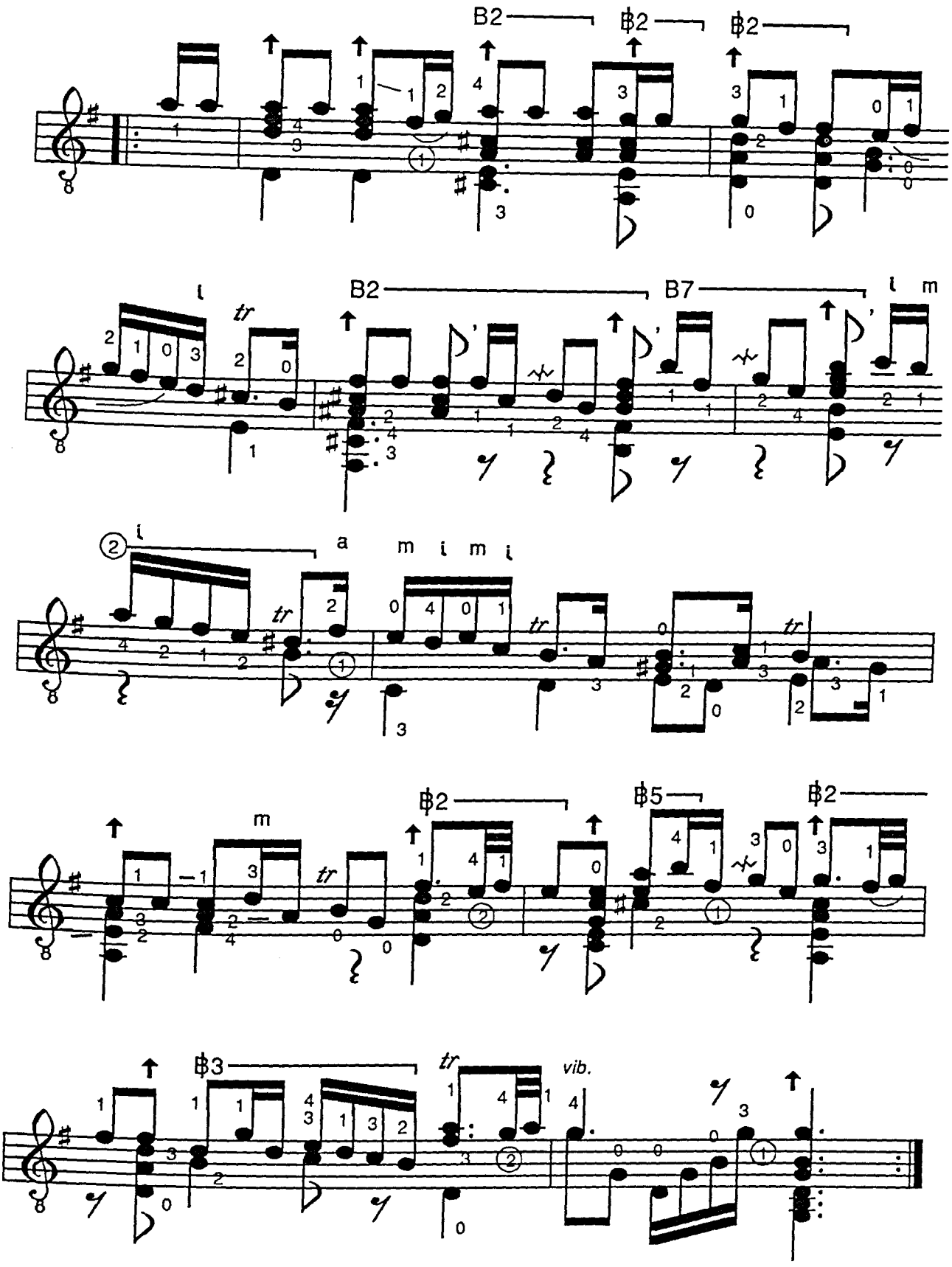


2) When time permits, close the trill with an anticipation of the next pitch

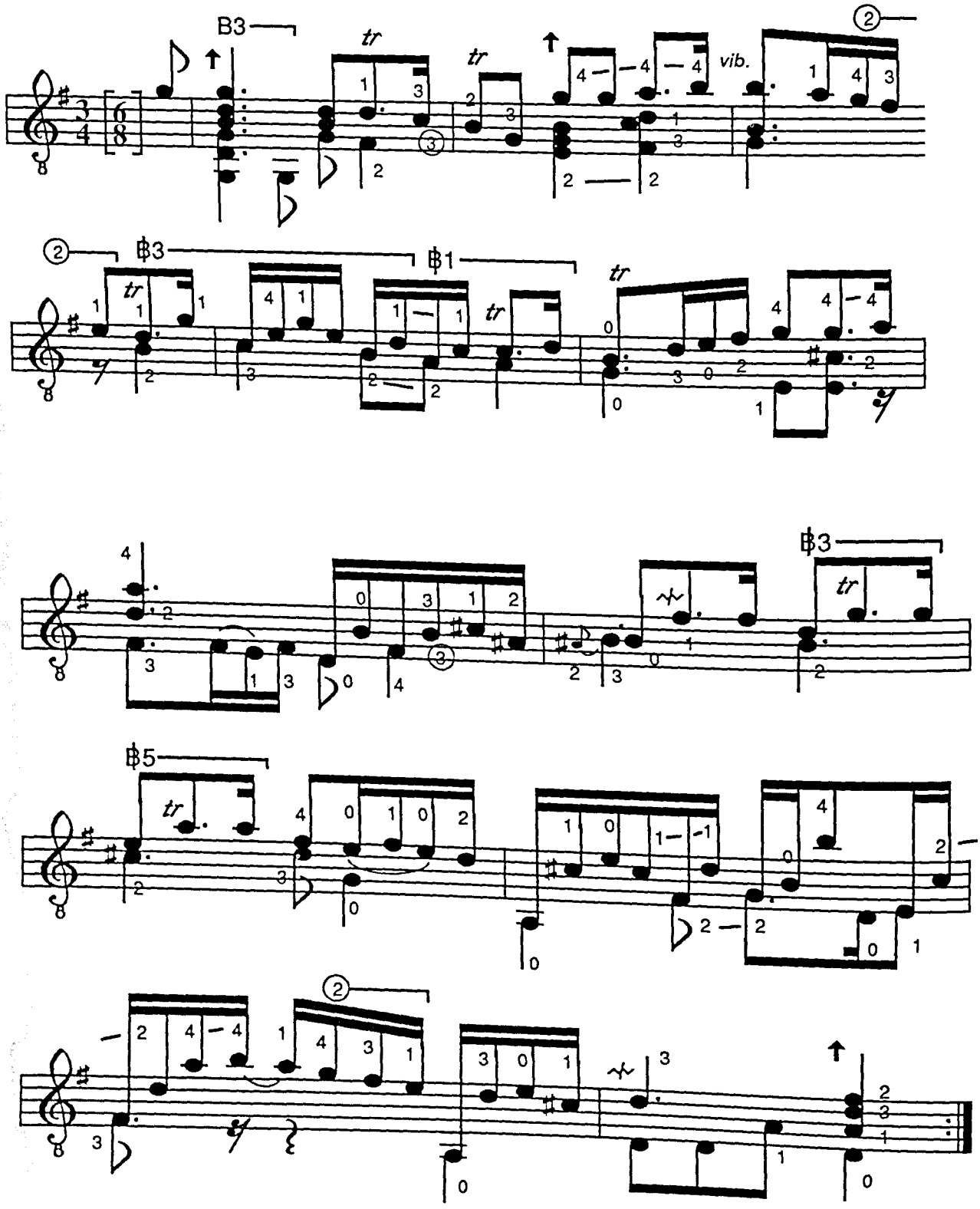
Sarabanda

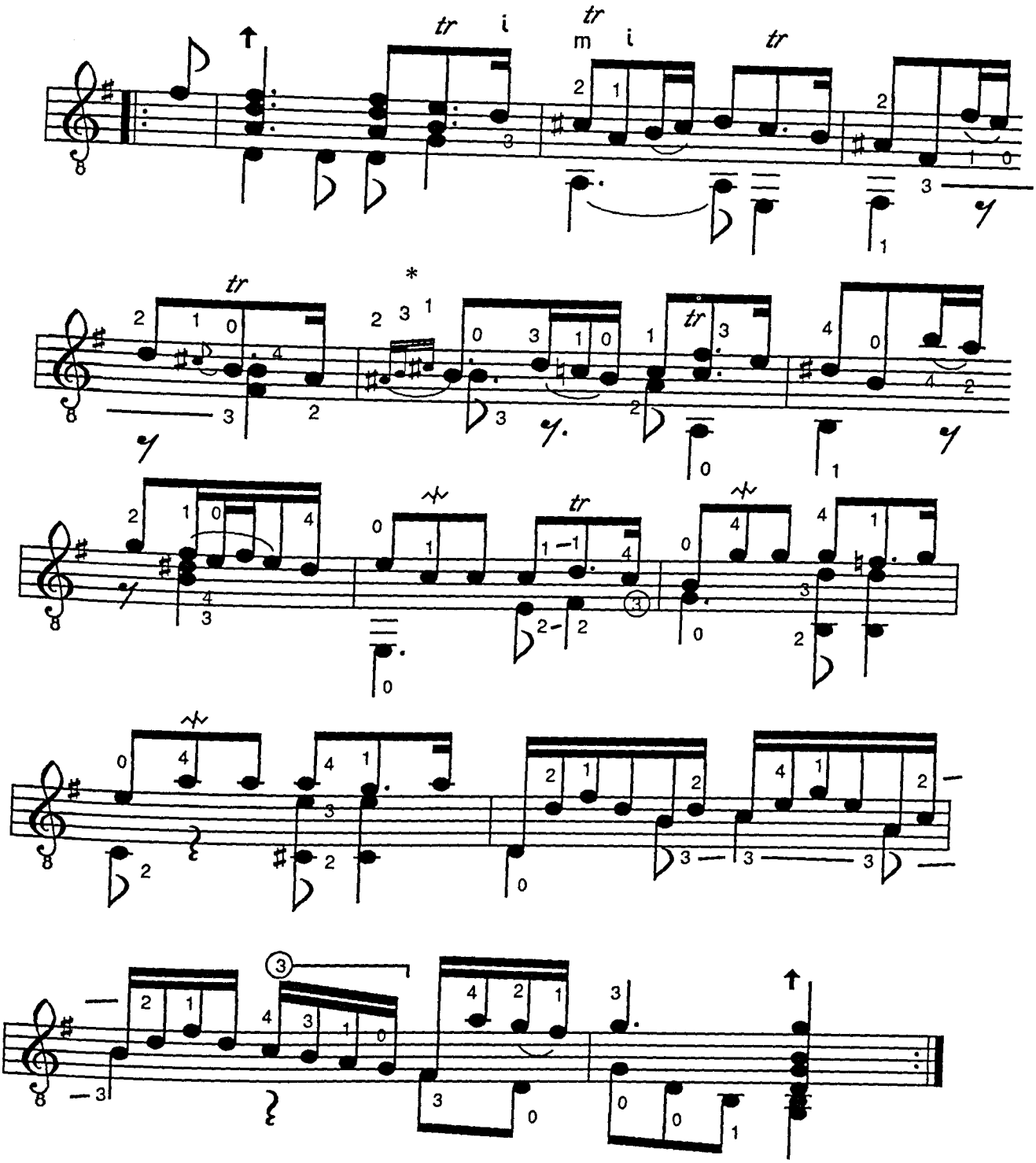
2. Alemanda



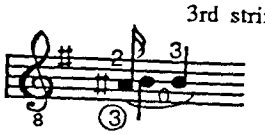

B2
♯2
♯2
i
tr
B2
B7
i m
i
a
m i m i
tr
tr
tr
♯2
♯5
♯2
m
tr
♯3
tr
vib.

3. Corrente

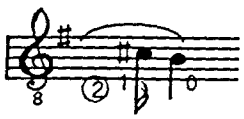




* Performed: 1) hammer-on, 3rd string



2) hammer-on, then pull-off, 2nd string (sustain 3rd string)



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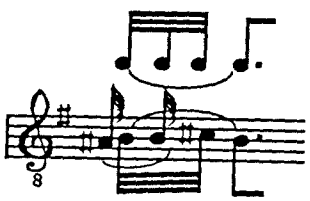
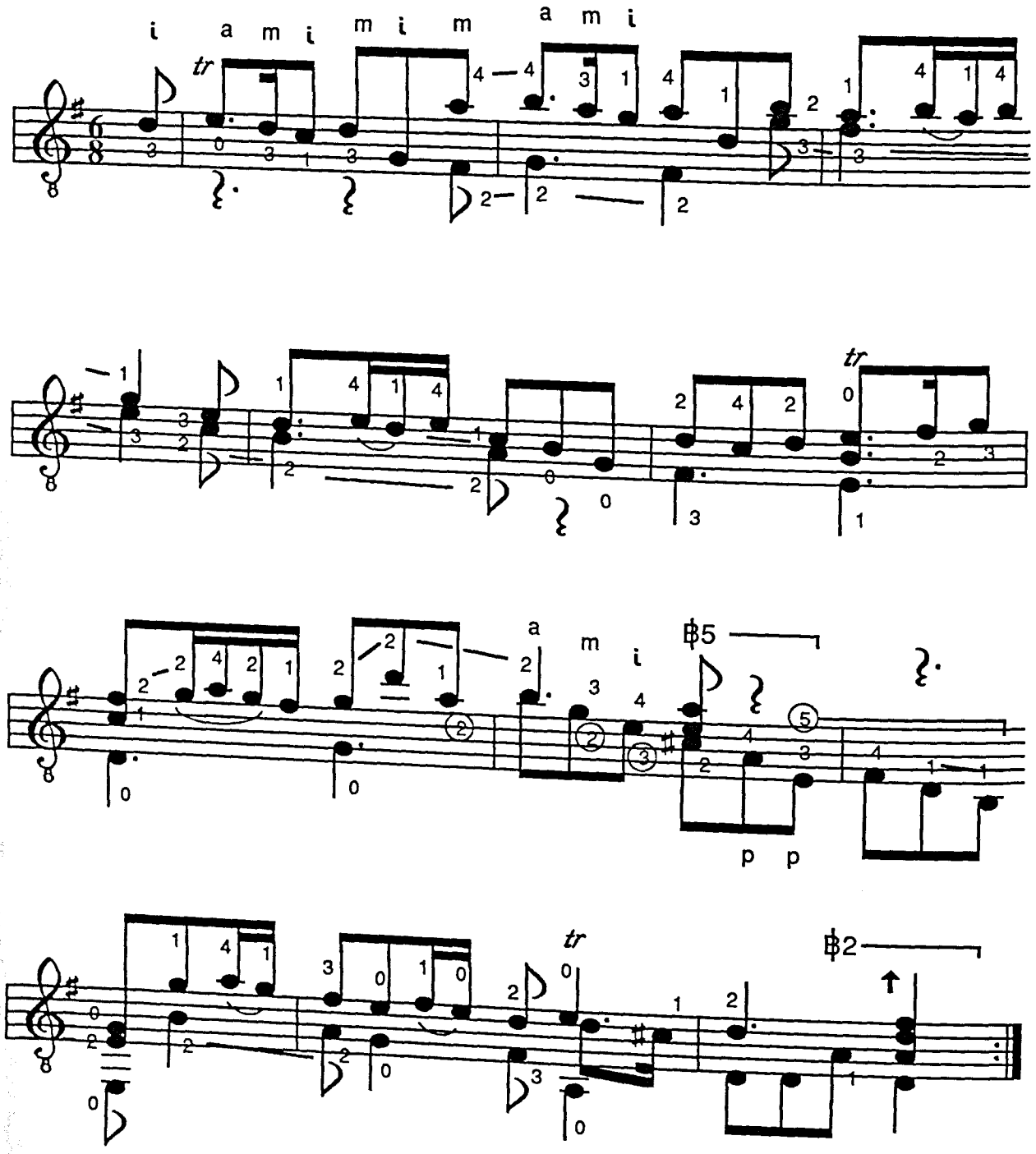
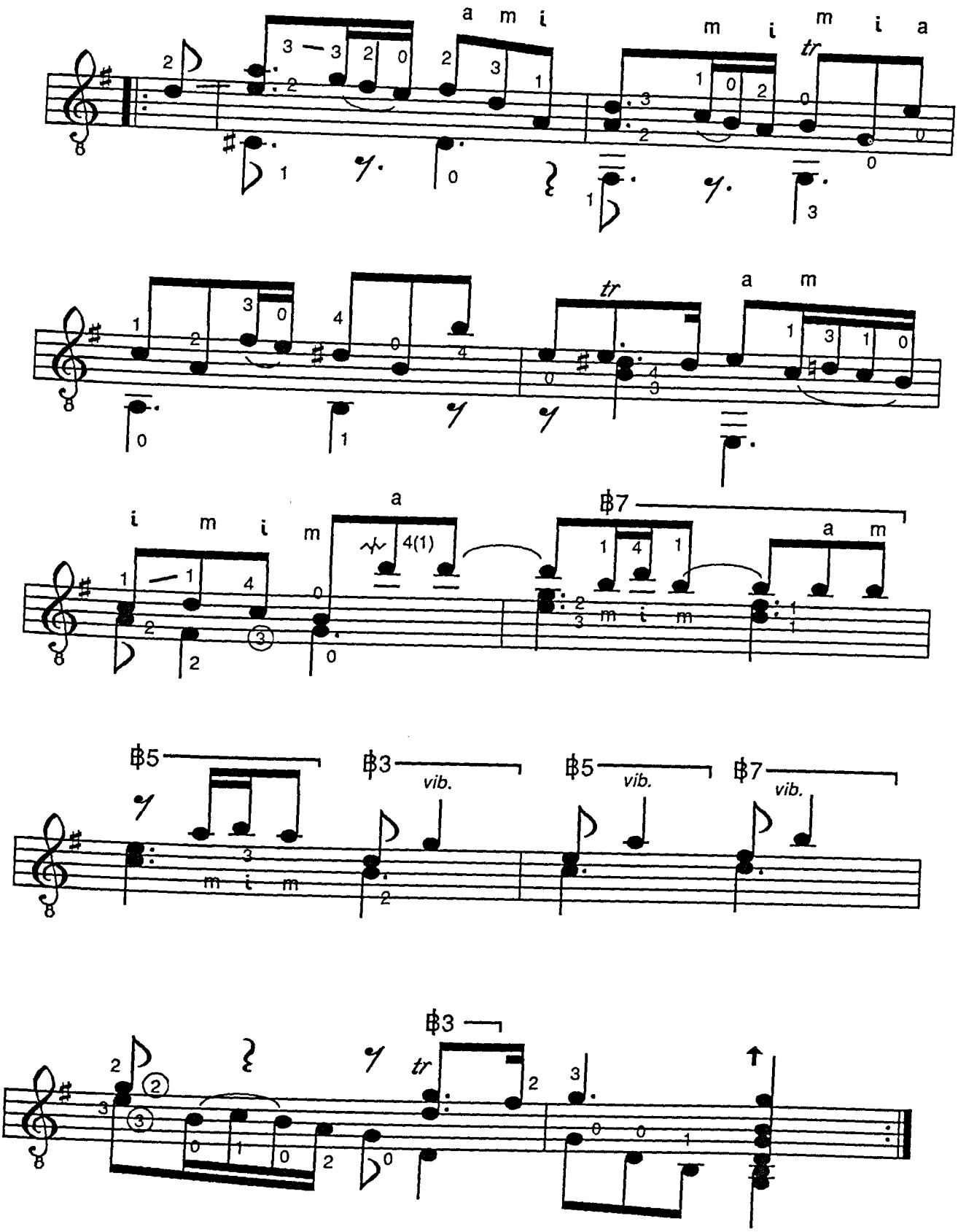
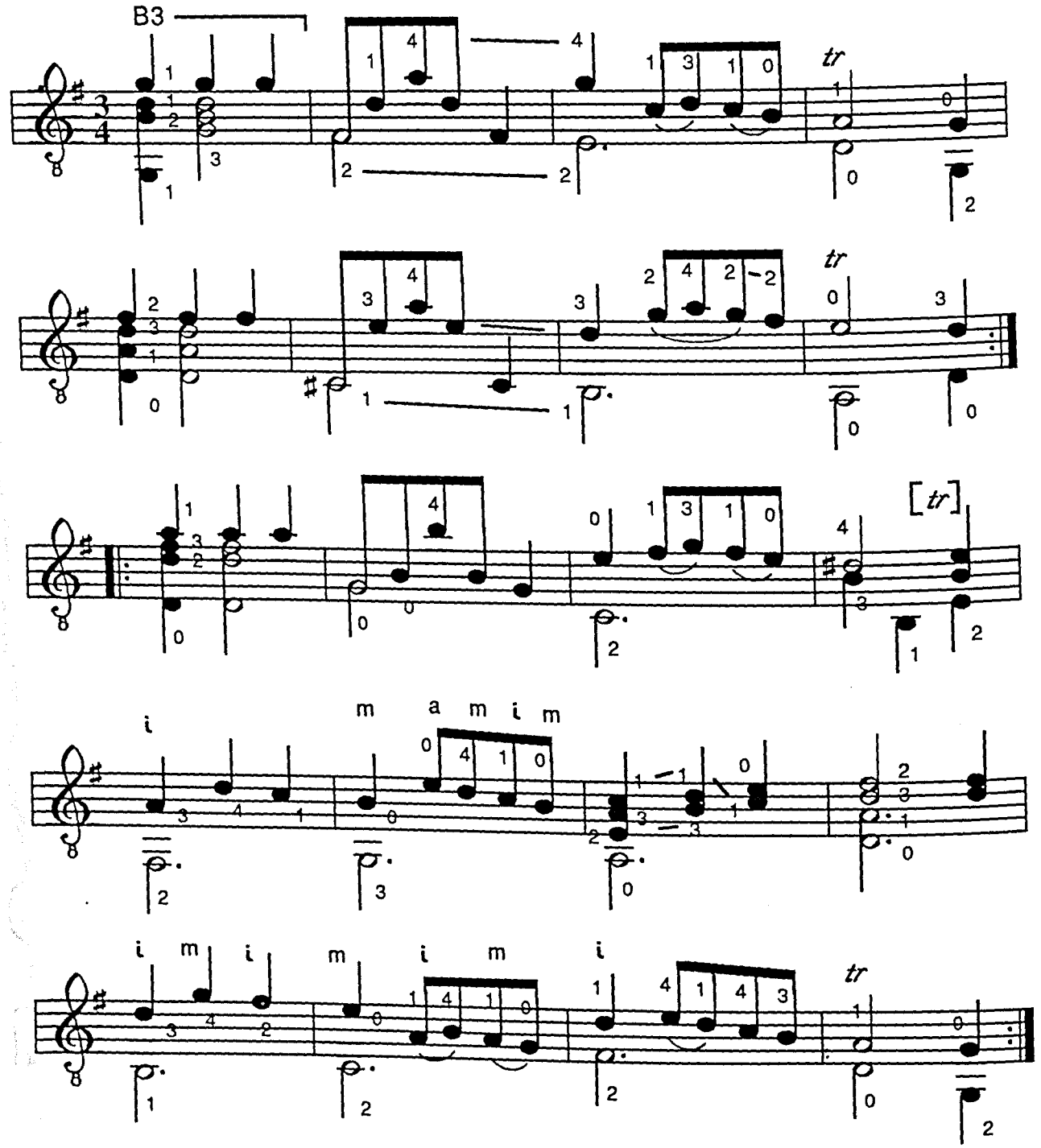


4. Gigua

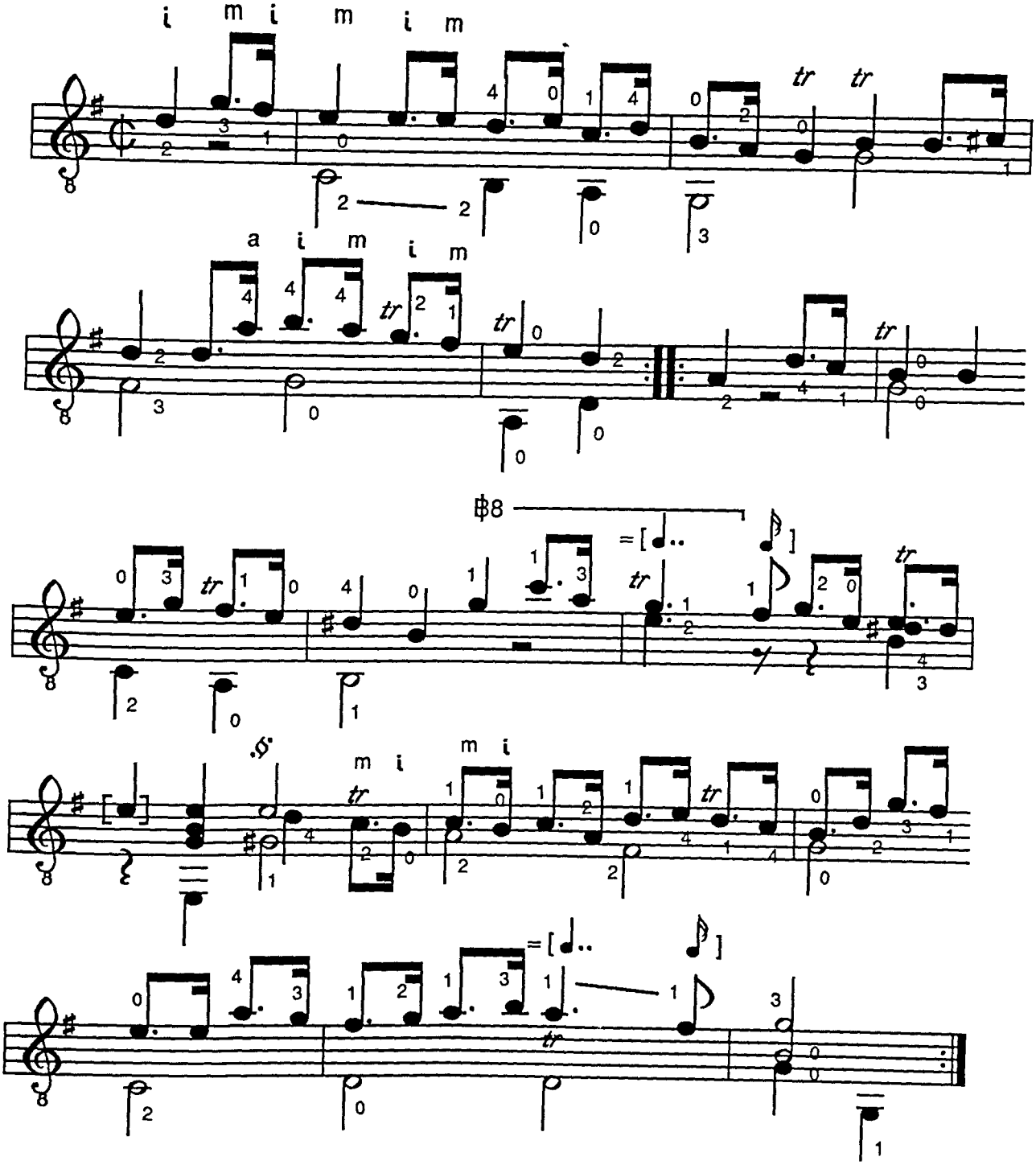
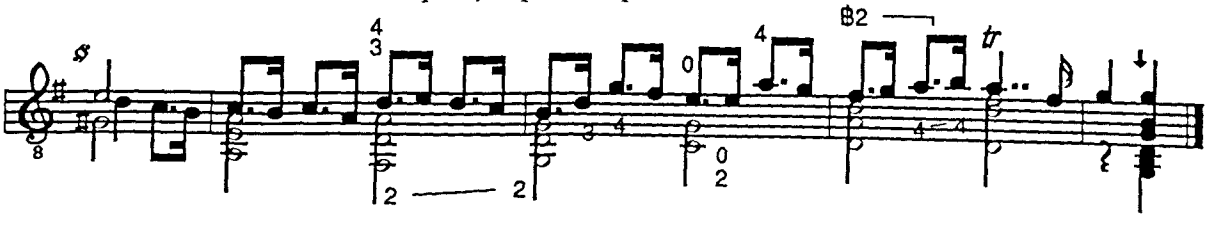



a m i
m i m i a
tr
a m
tr
i m i m
a
4(1)
♭7
a m
m i m
♭5
♭3
vib.
♭5
vib.
♭7
vib.
m i m
♭3
tr

5. Sarabanda



6. Gavotta



Alternate version for the 2nd repeat, or petite reprise