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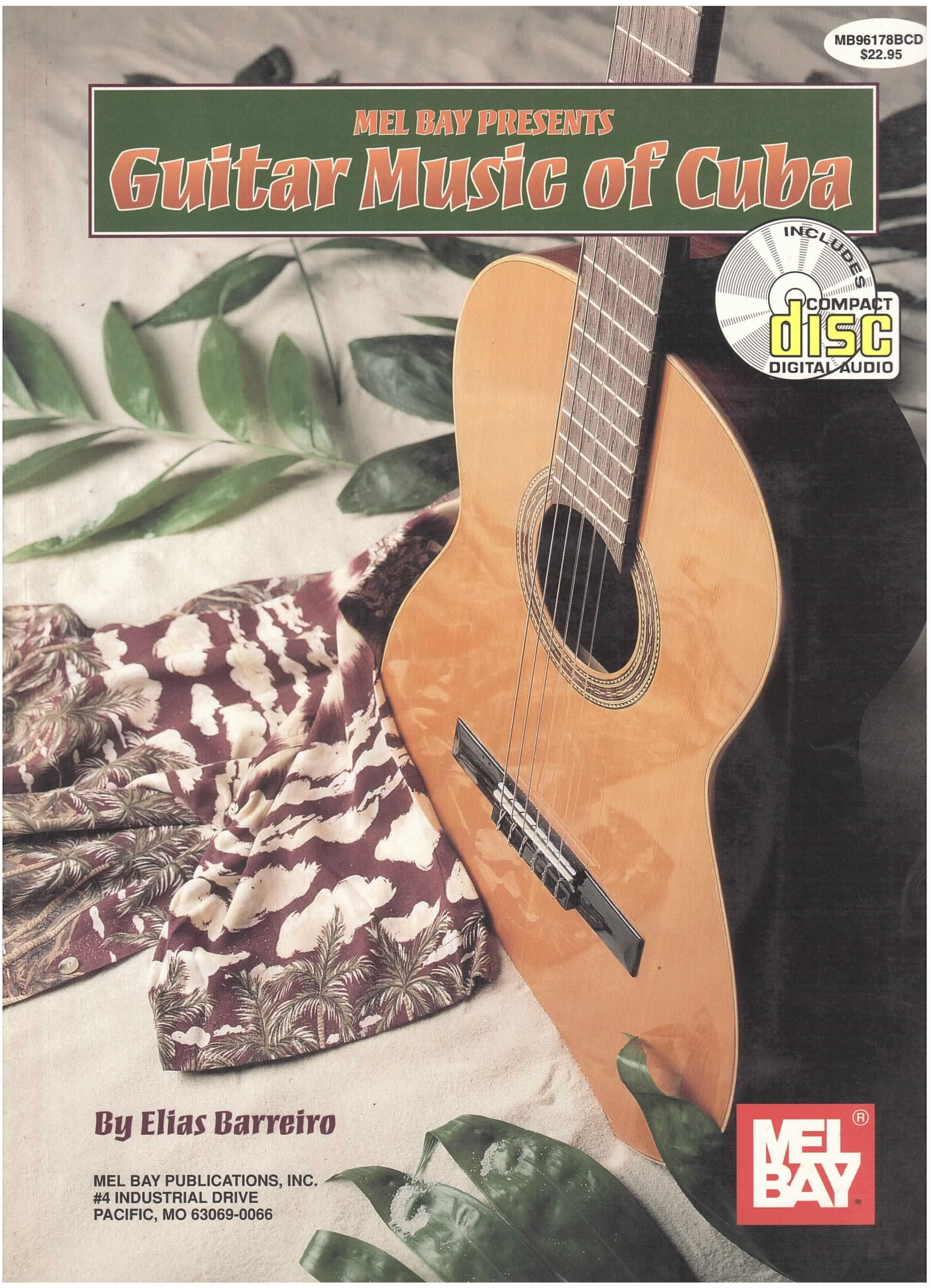
Guitar Music of Cuba



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The Music

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La Maria

Contradanza

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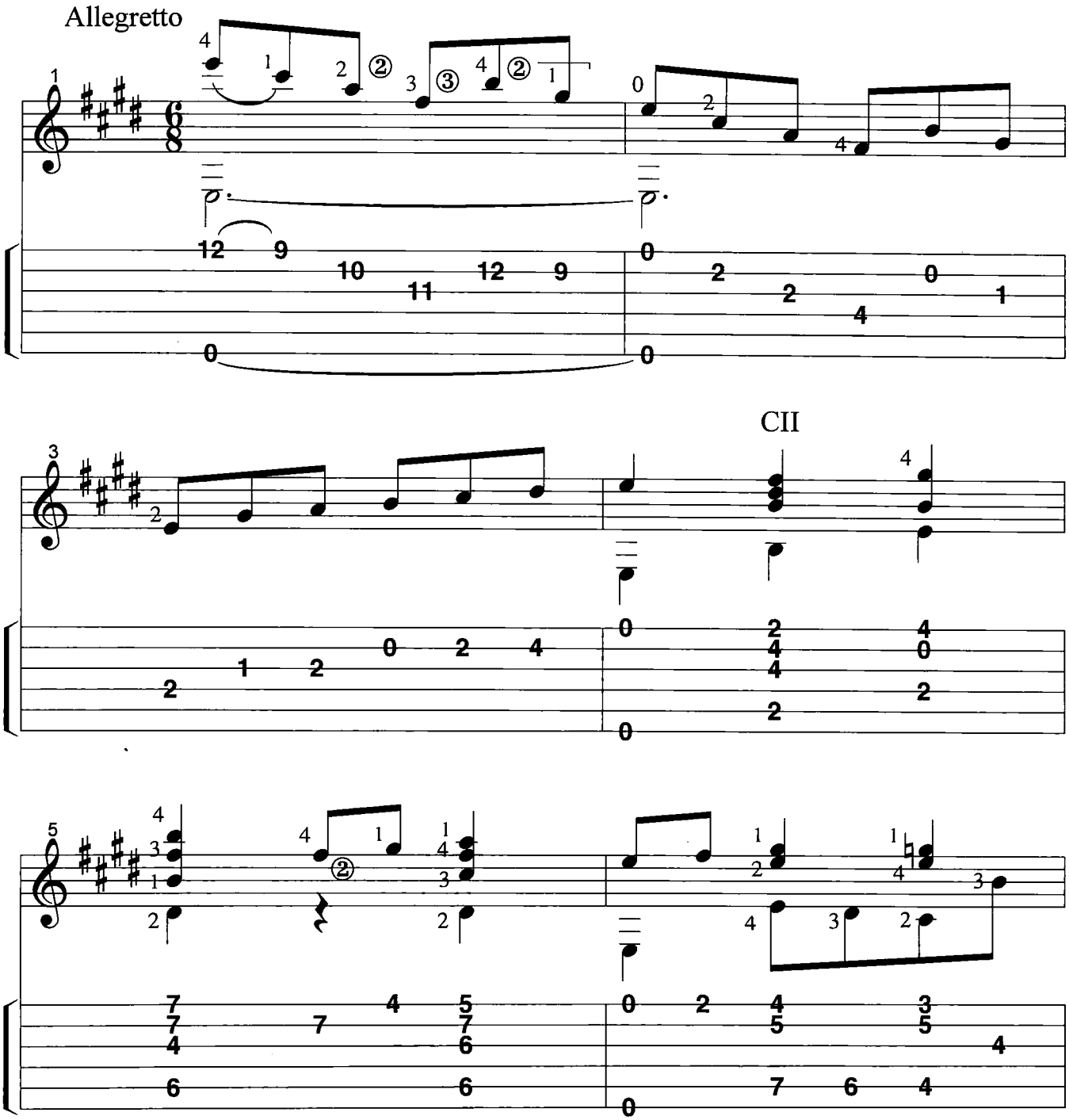
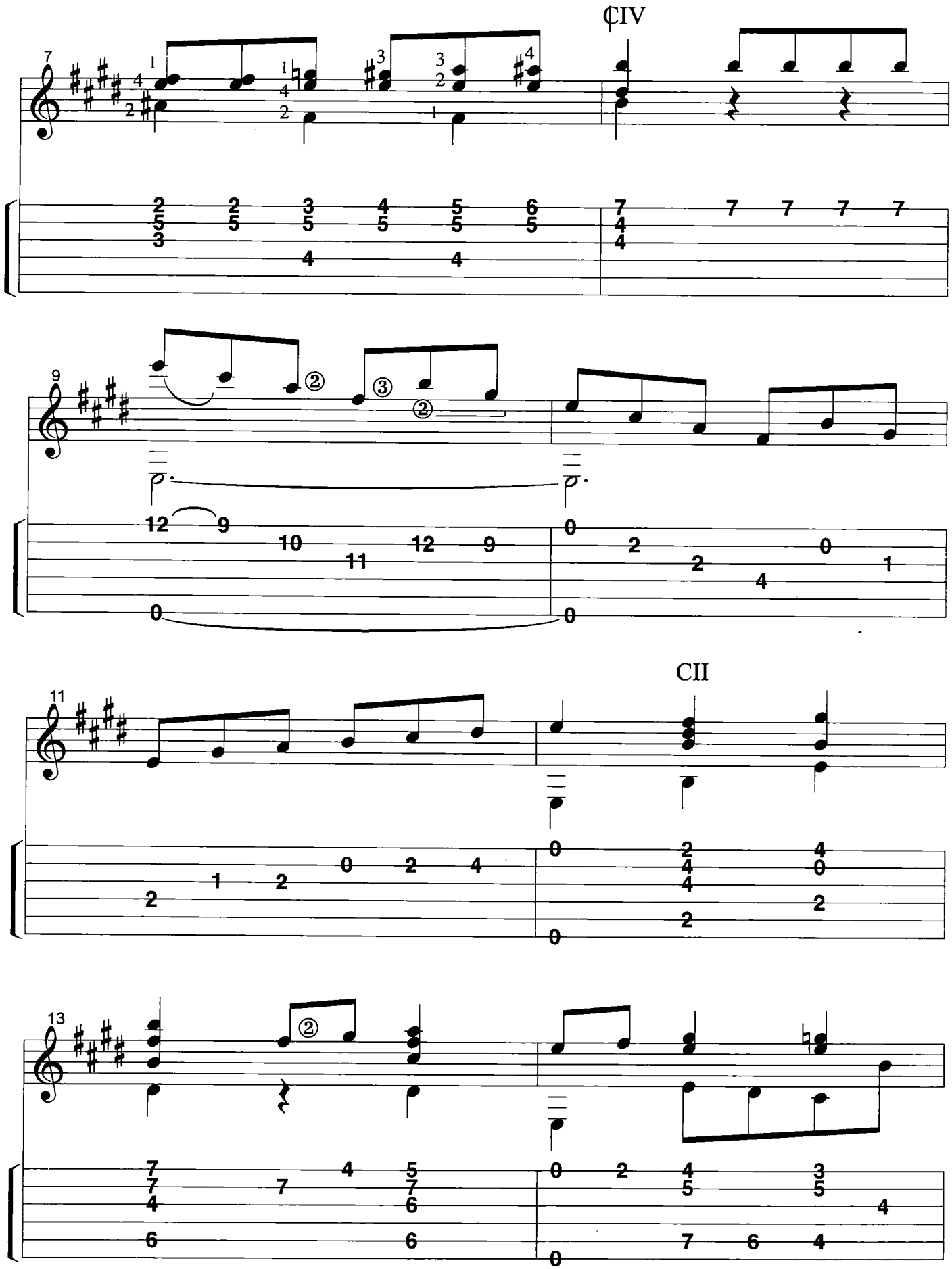
(1817-1870)

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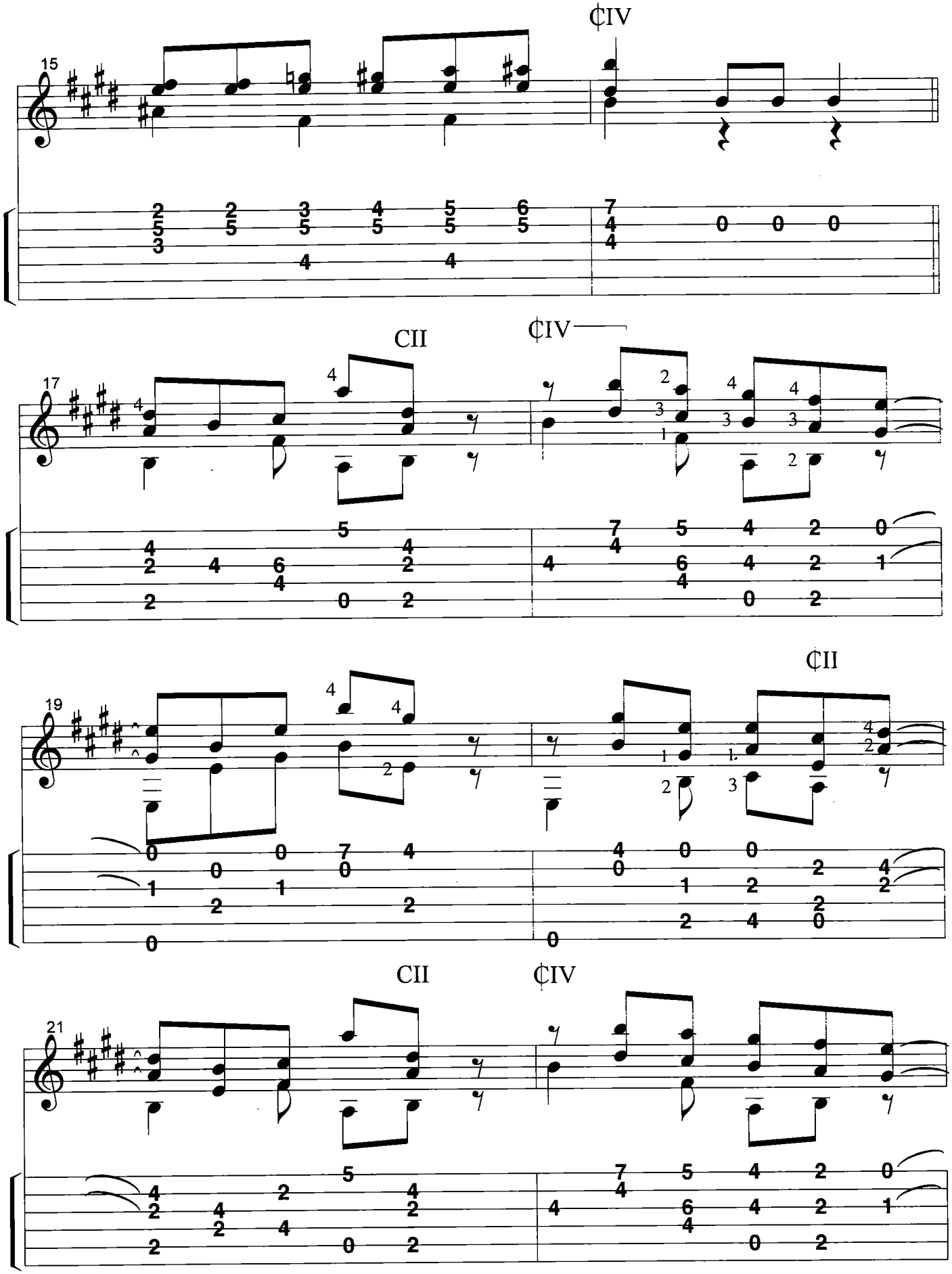
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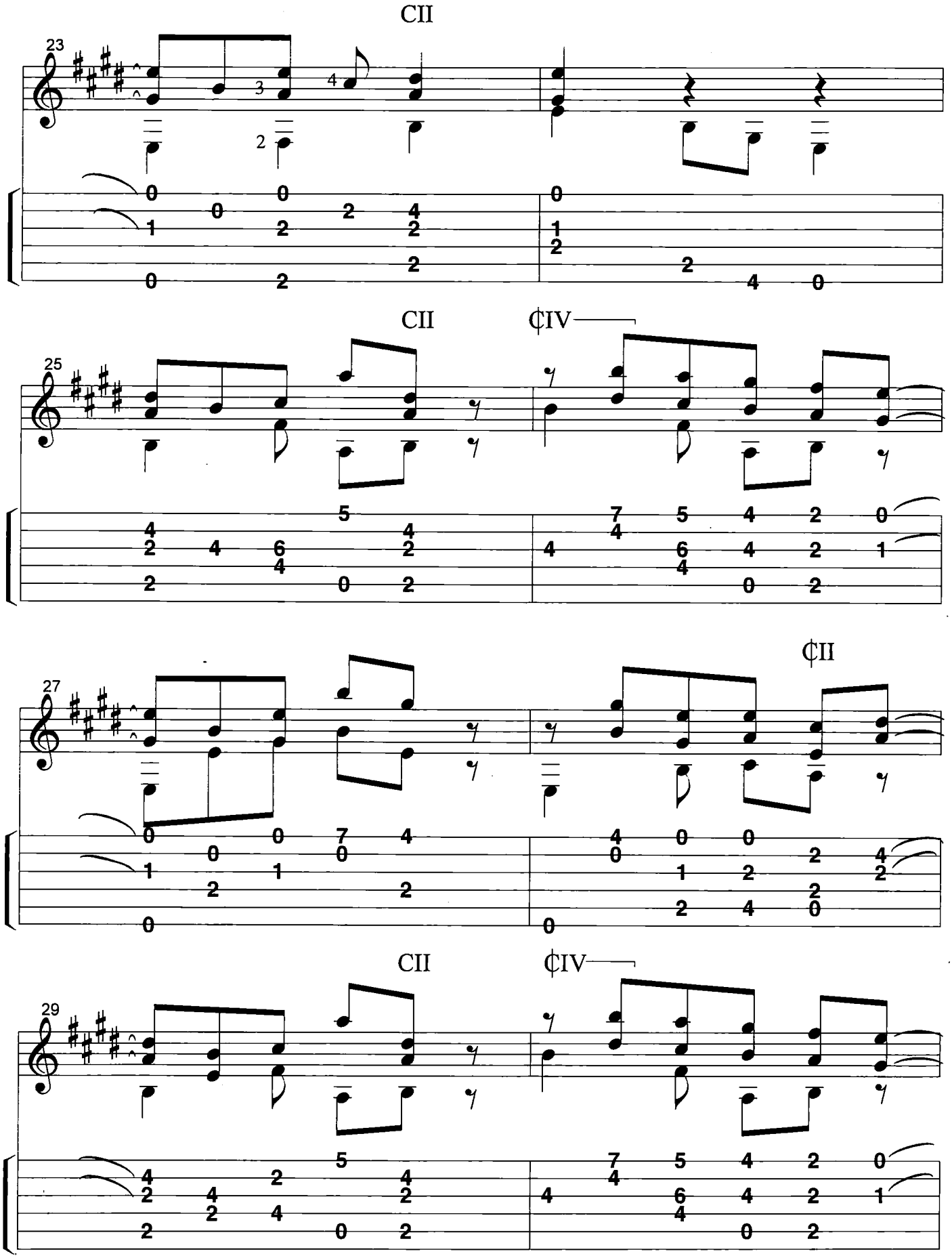
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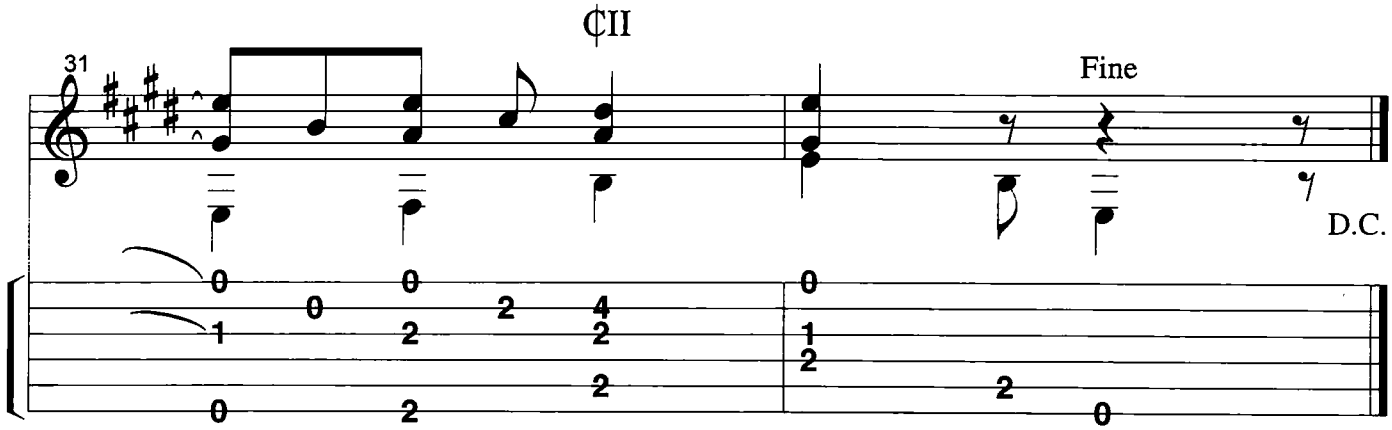
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La Tedesco

Contradanza

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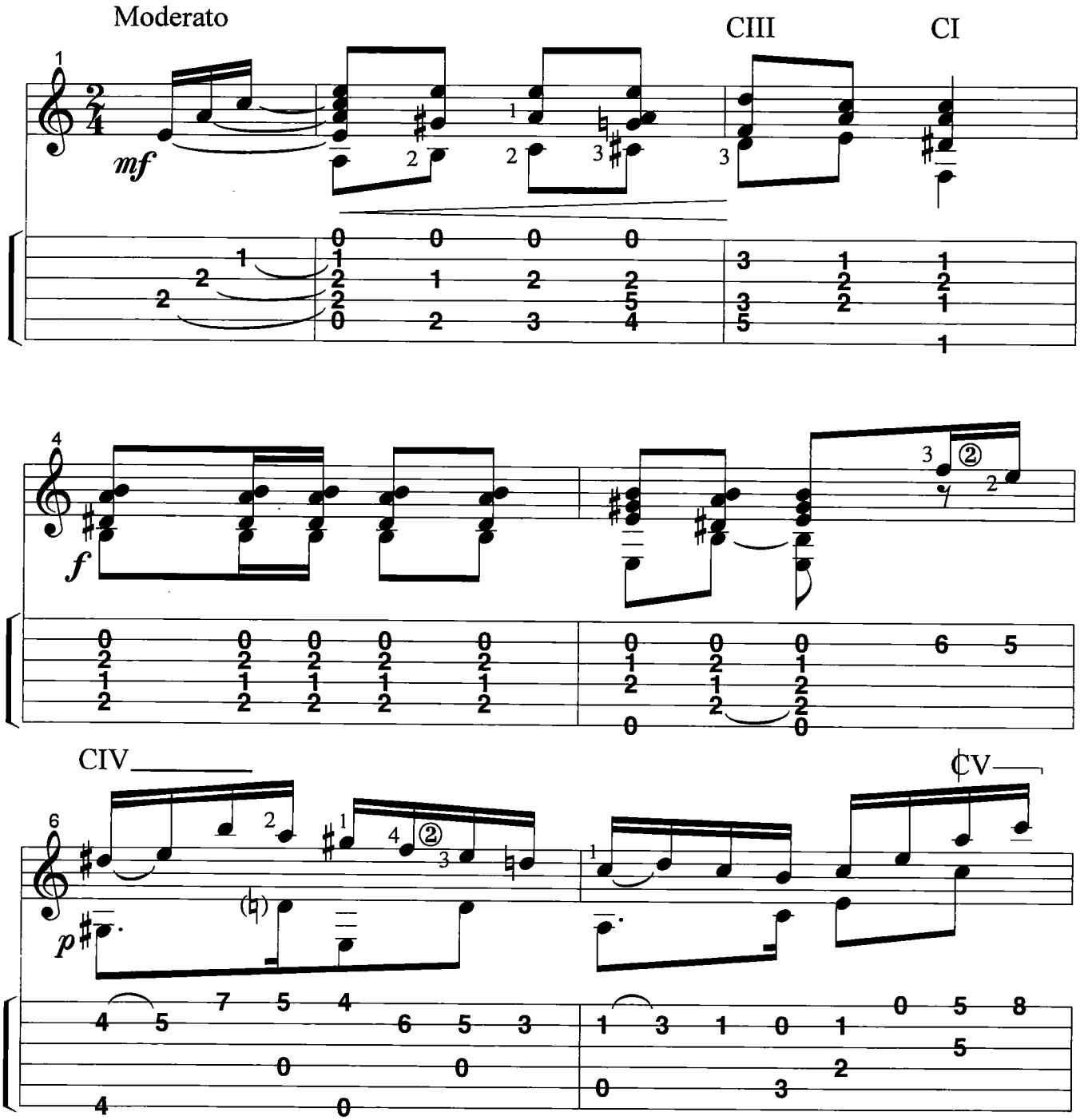

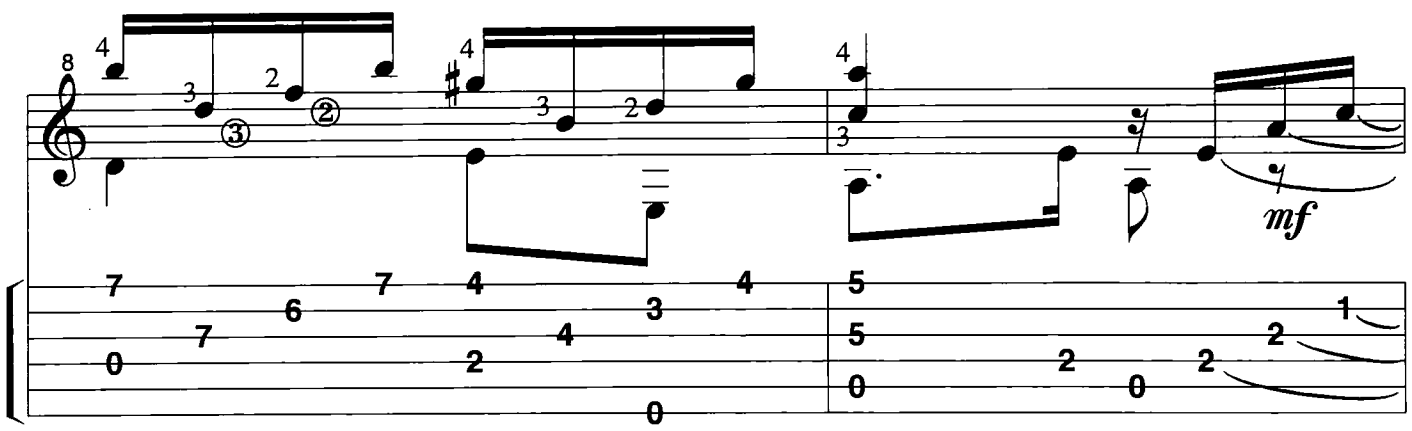
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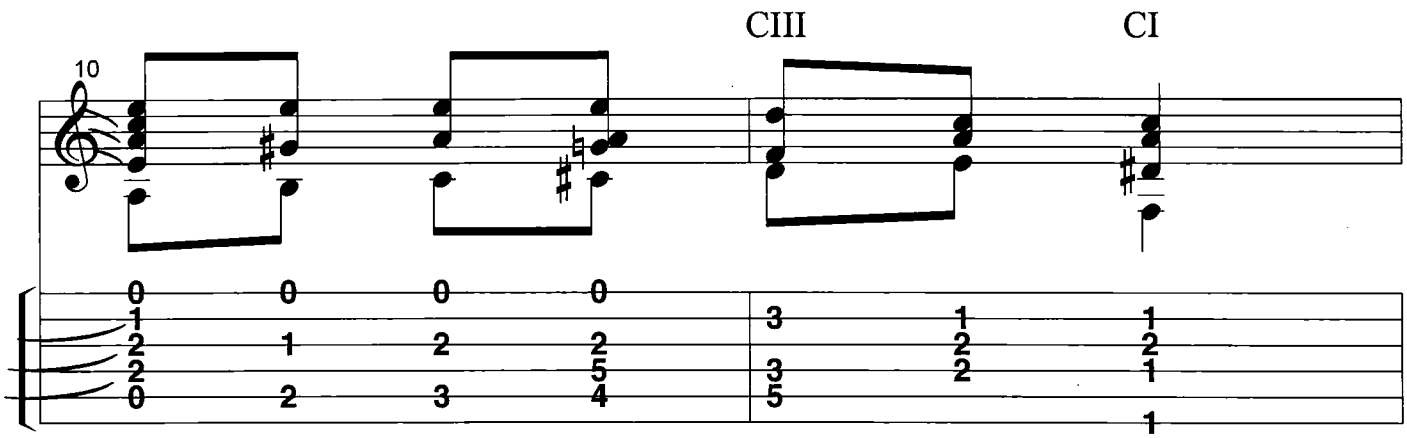
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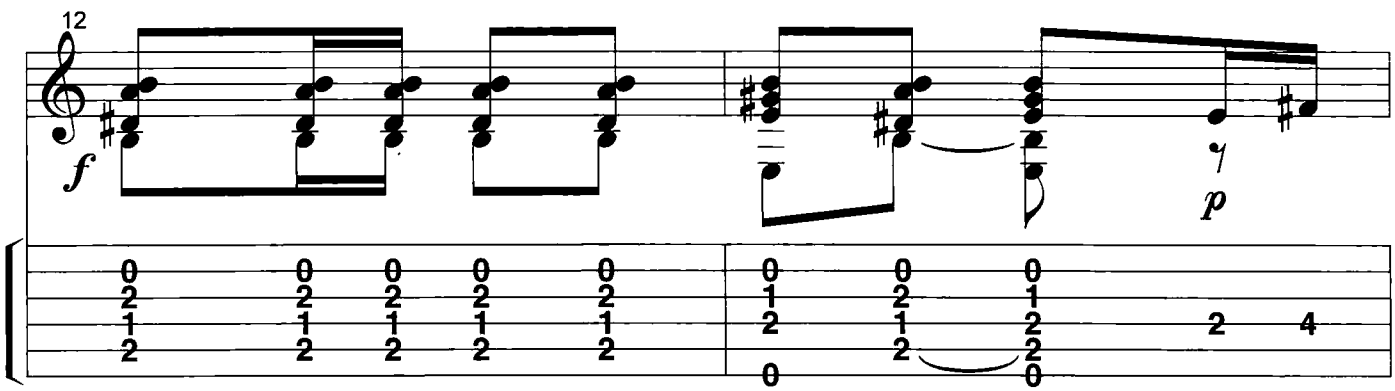
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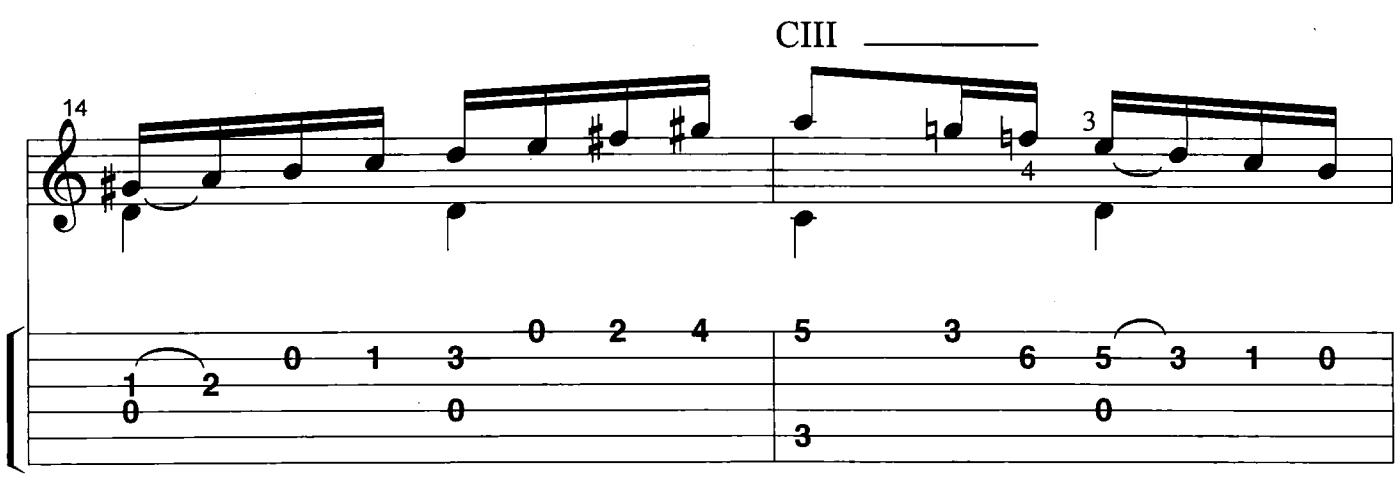
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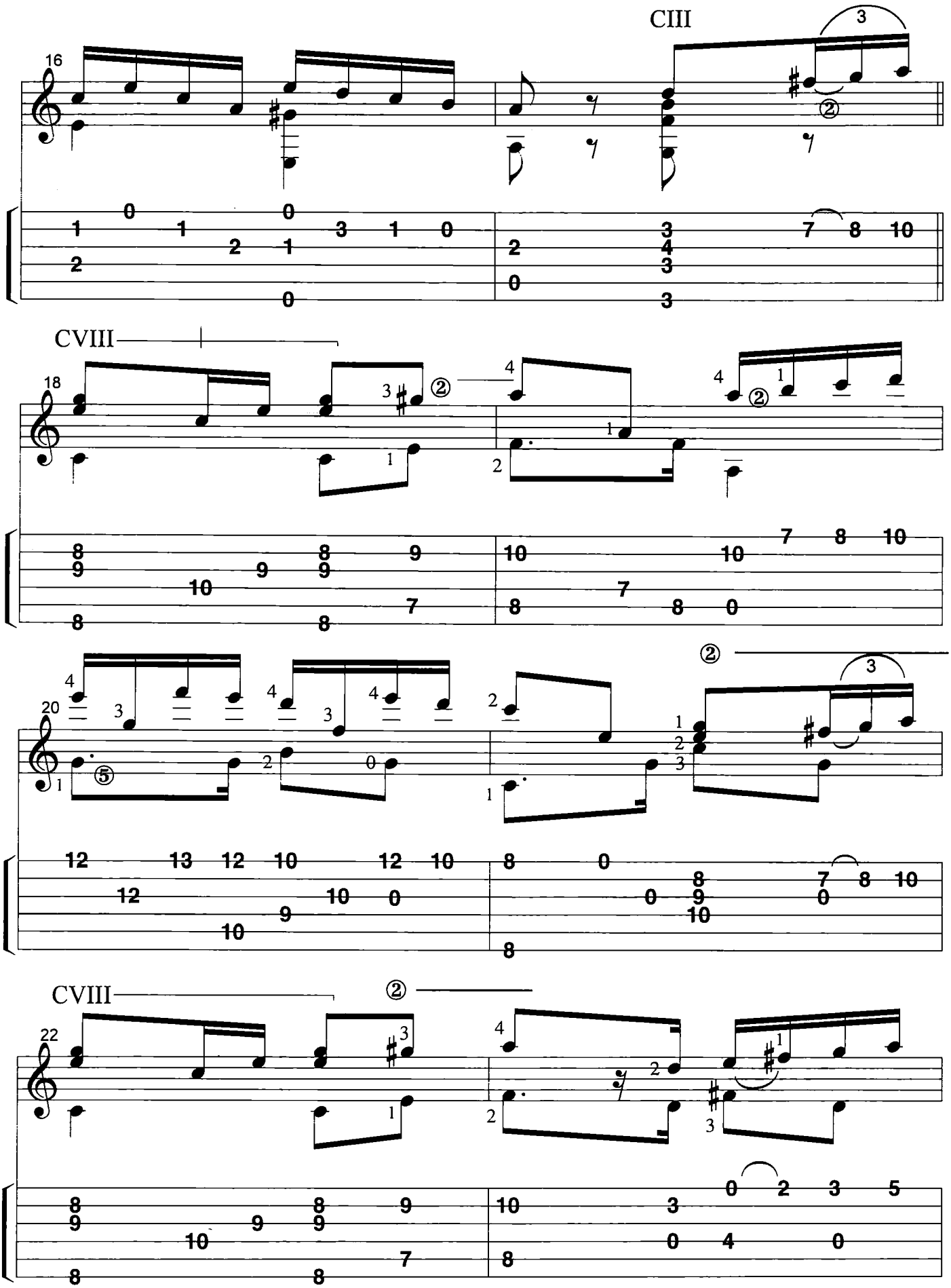
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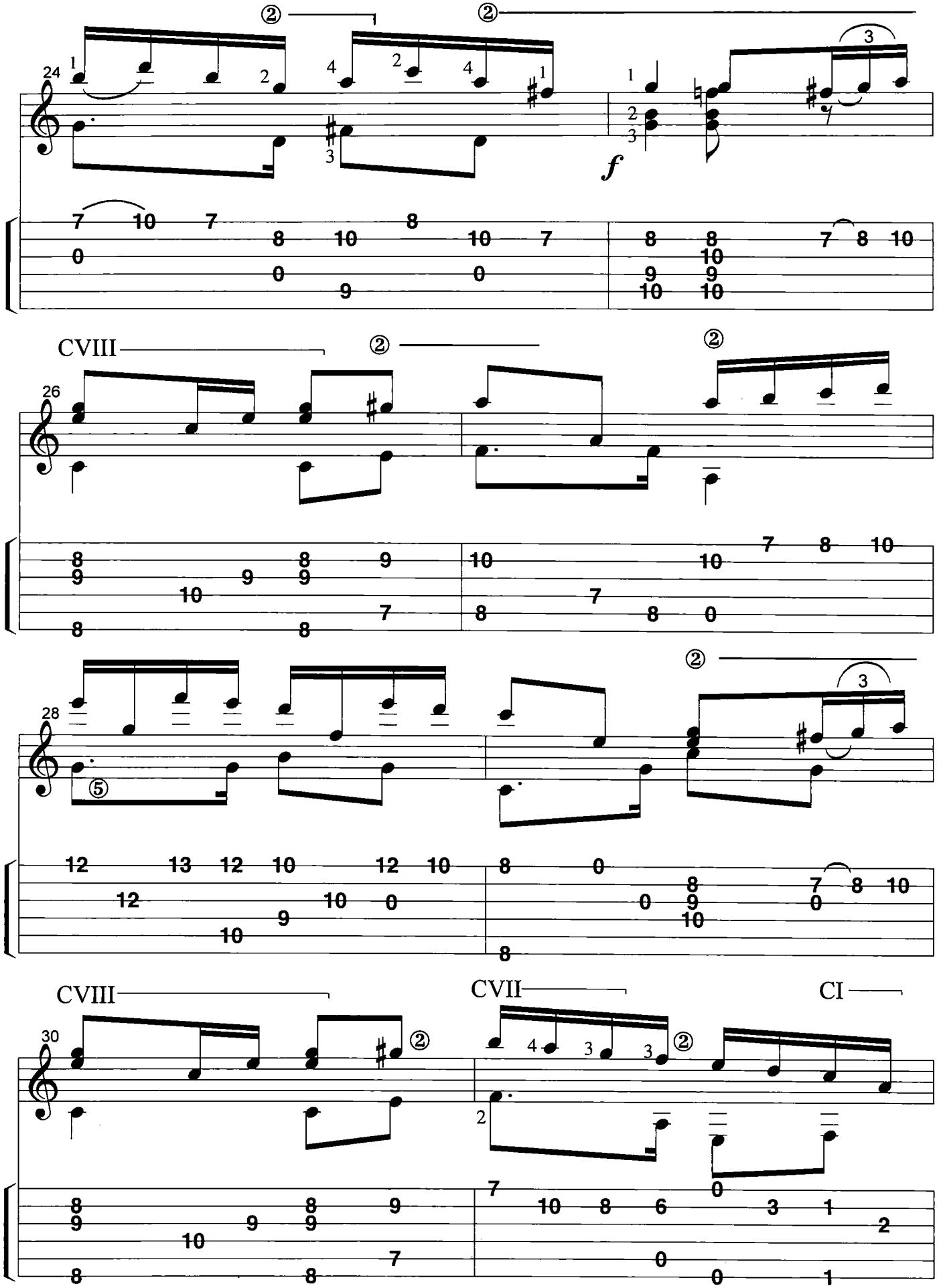
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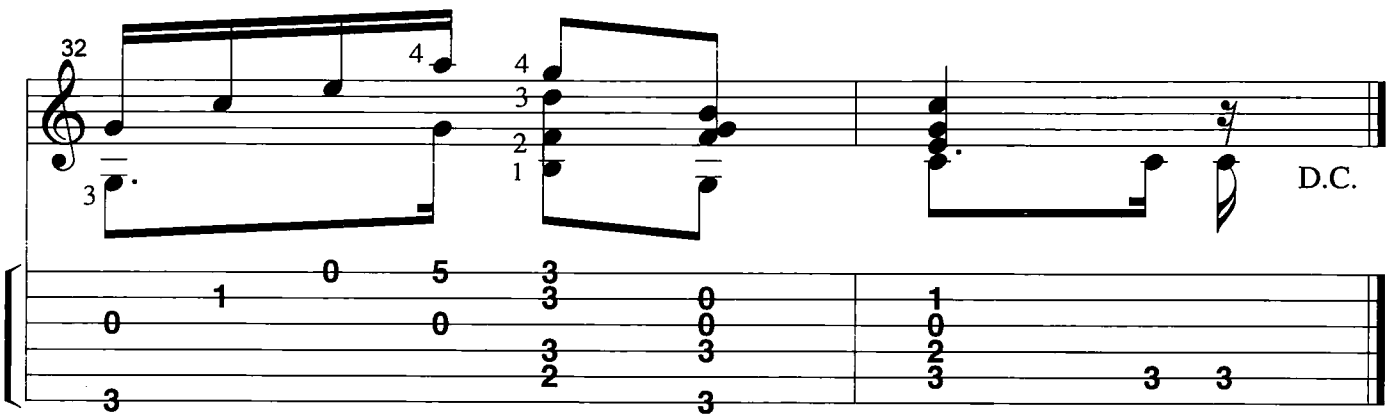
32
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La Caridad

Contradanza

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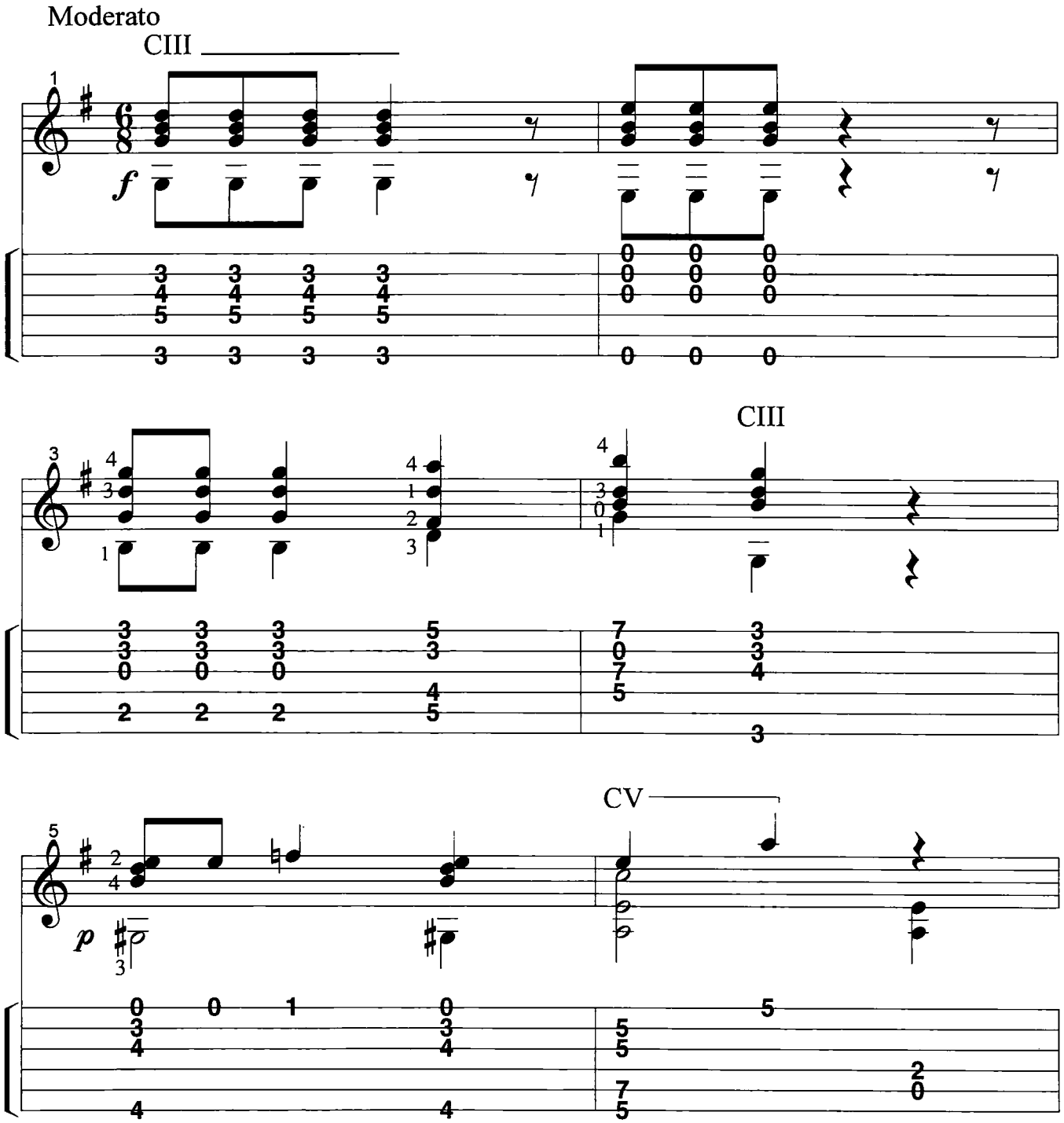

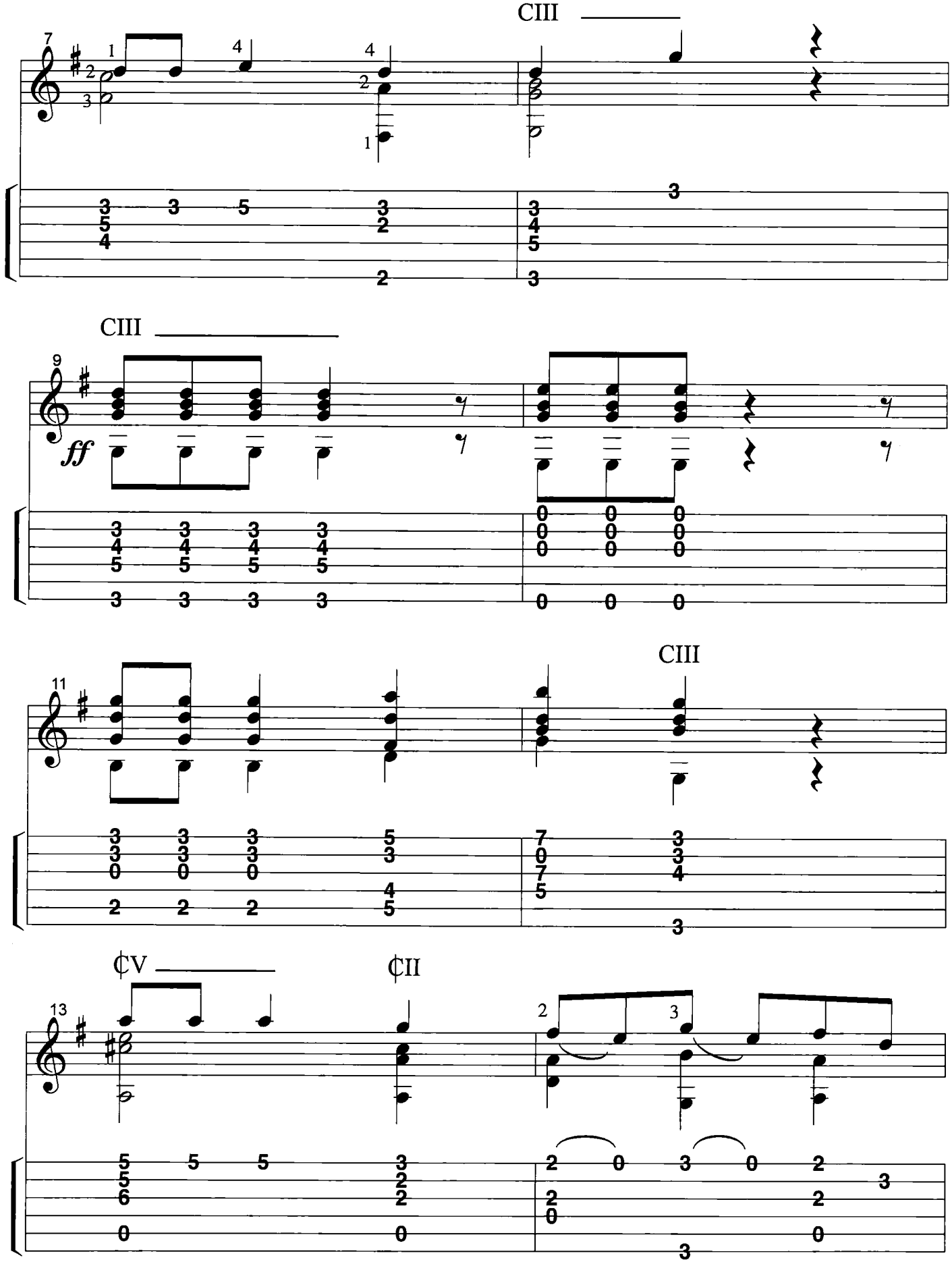
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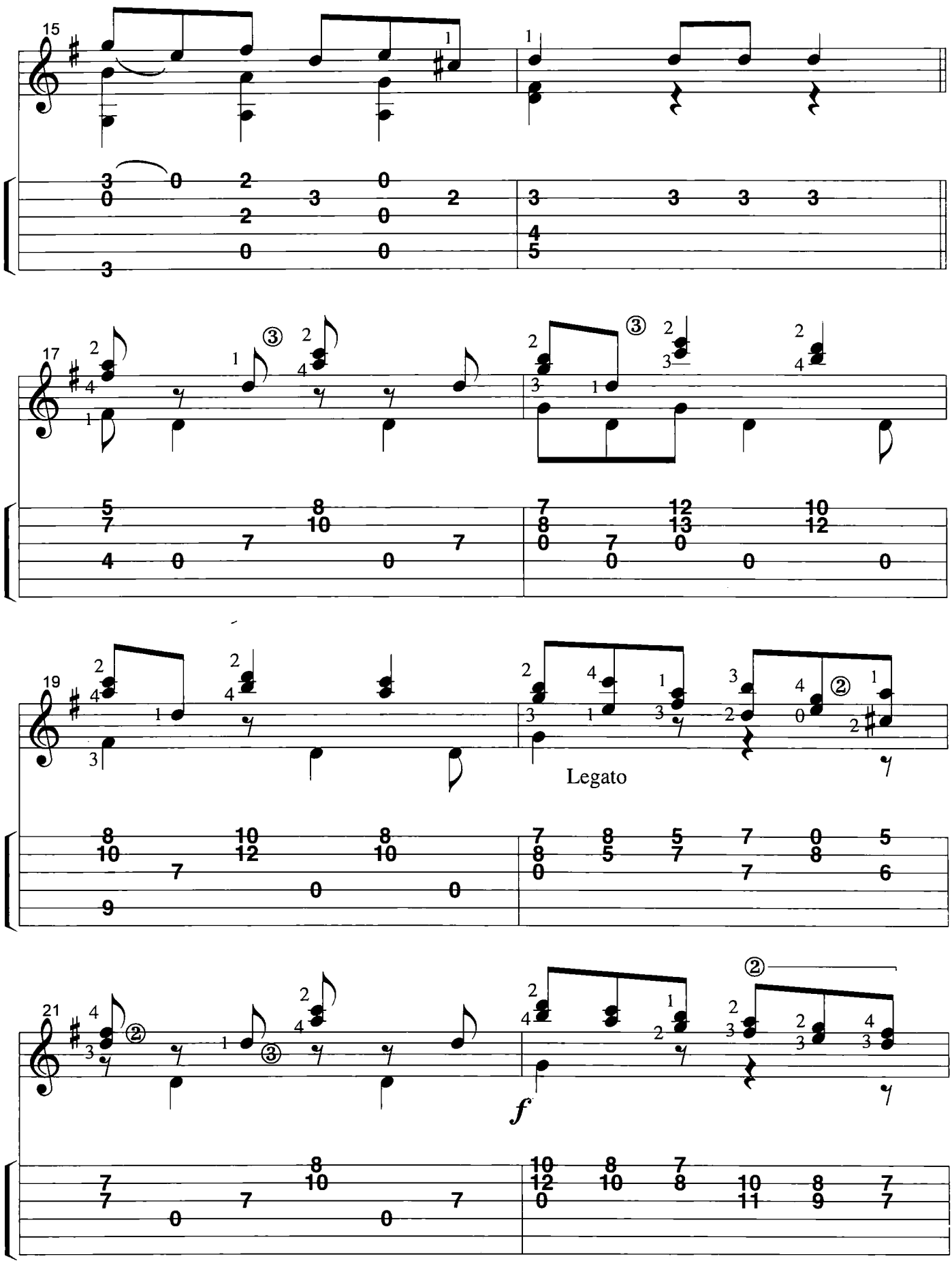
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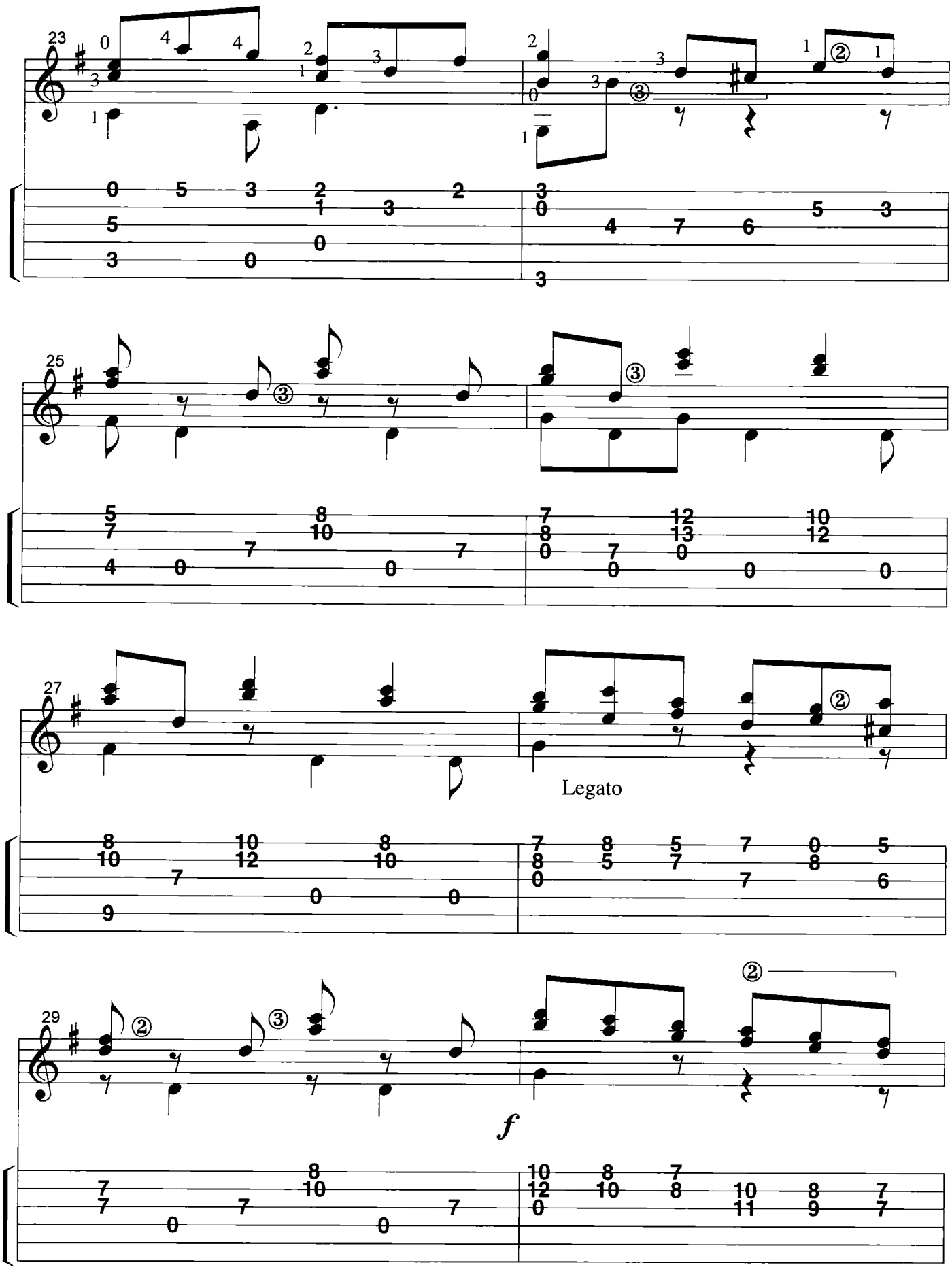
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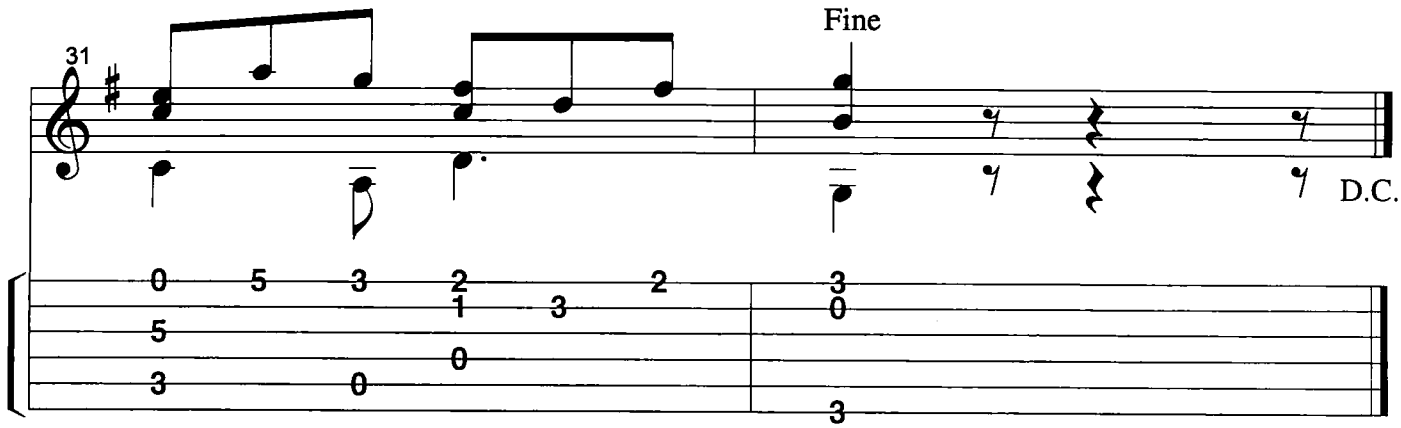
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Los ojos de Pepa

Contradanza

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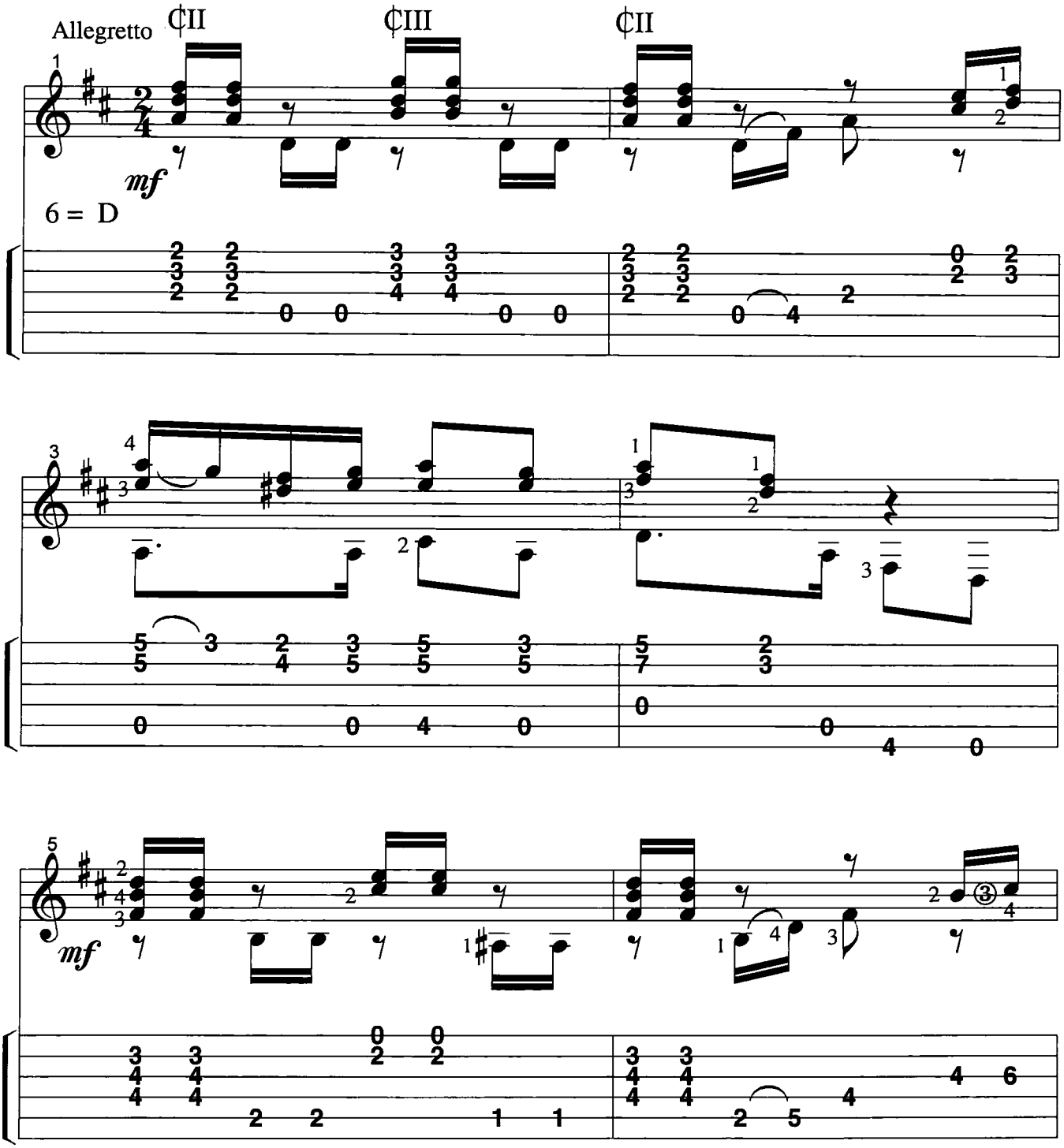

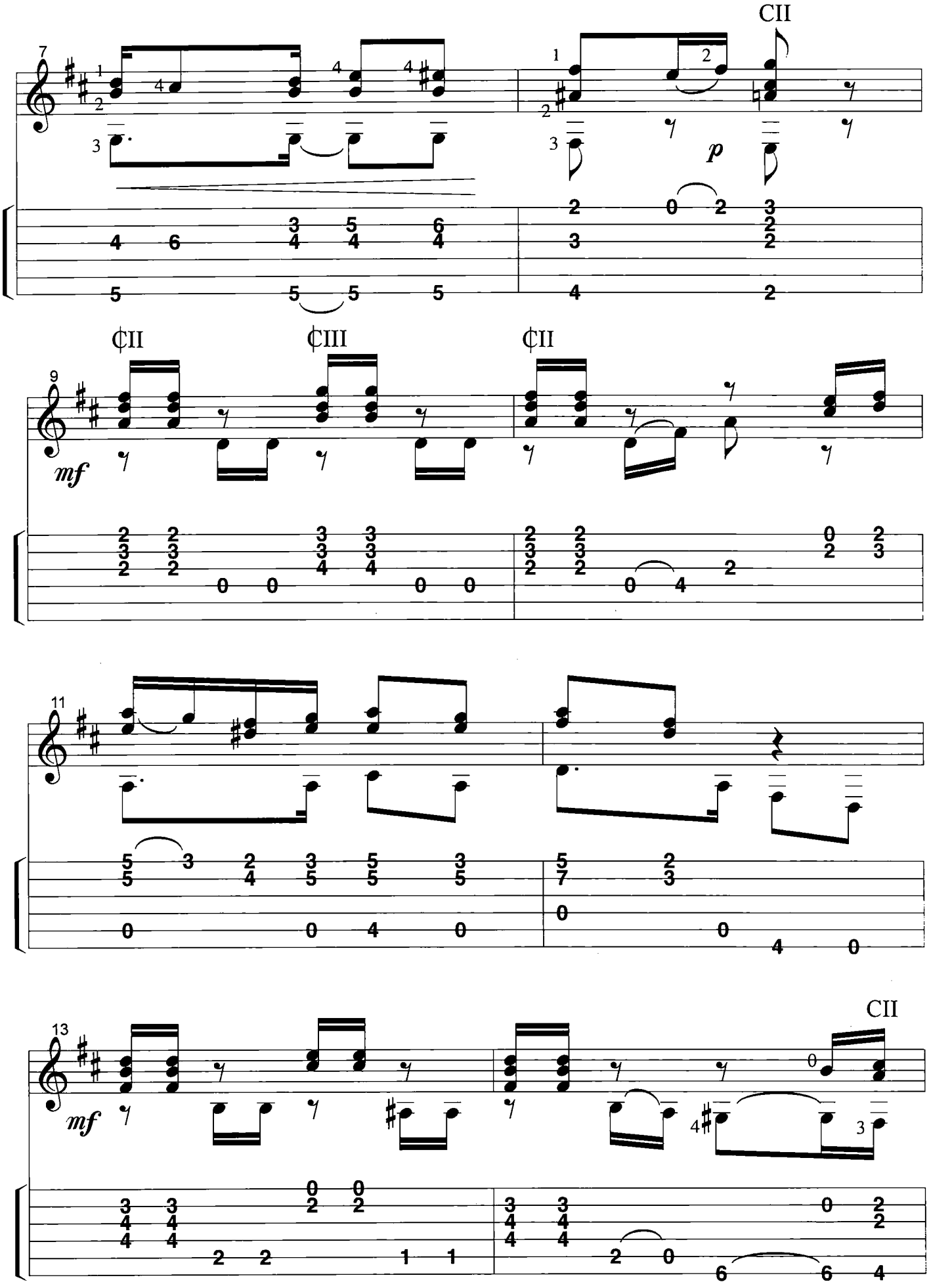
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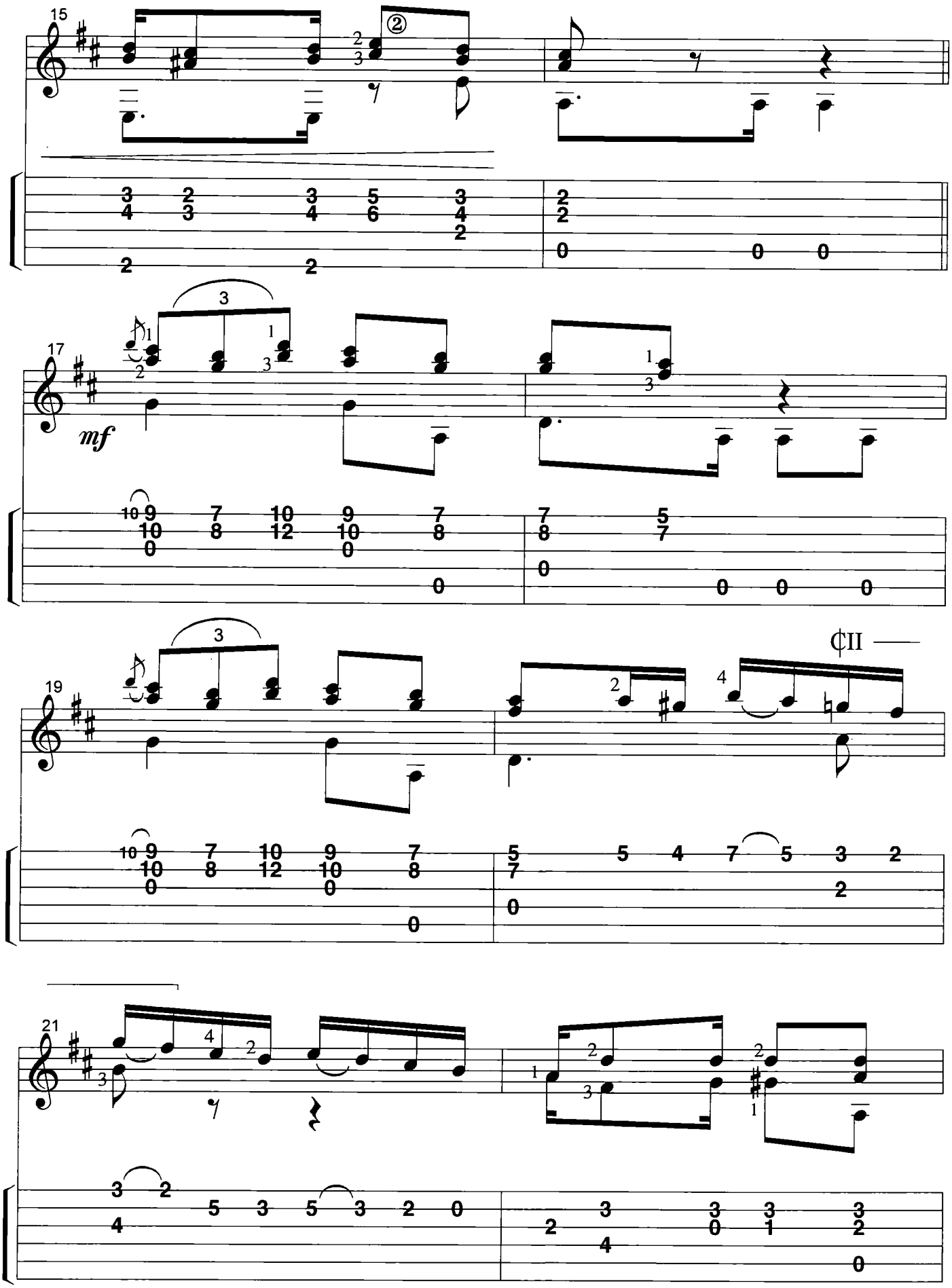
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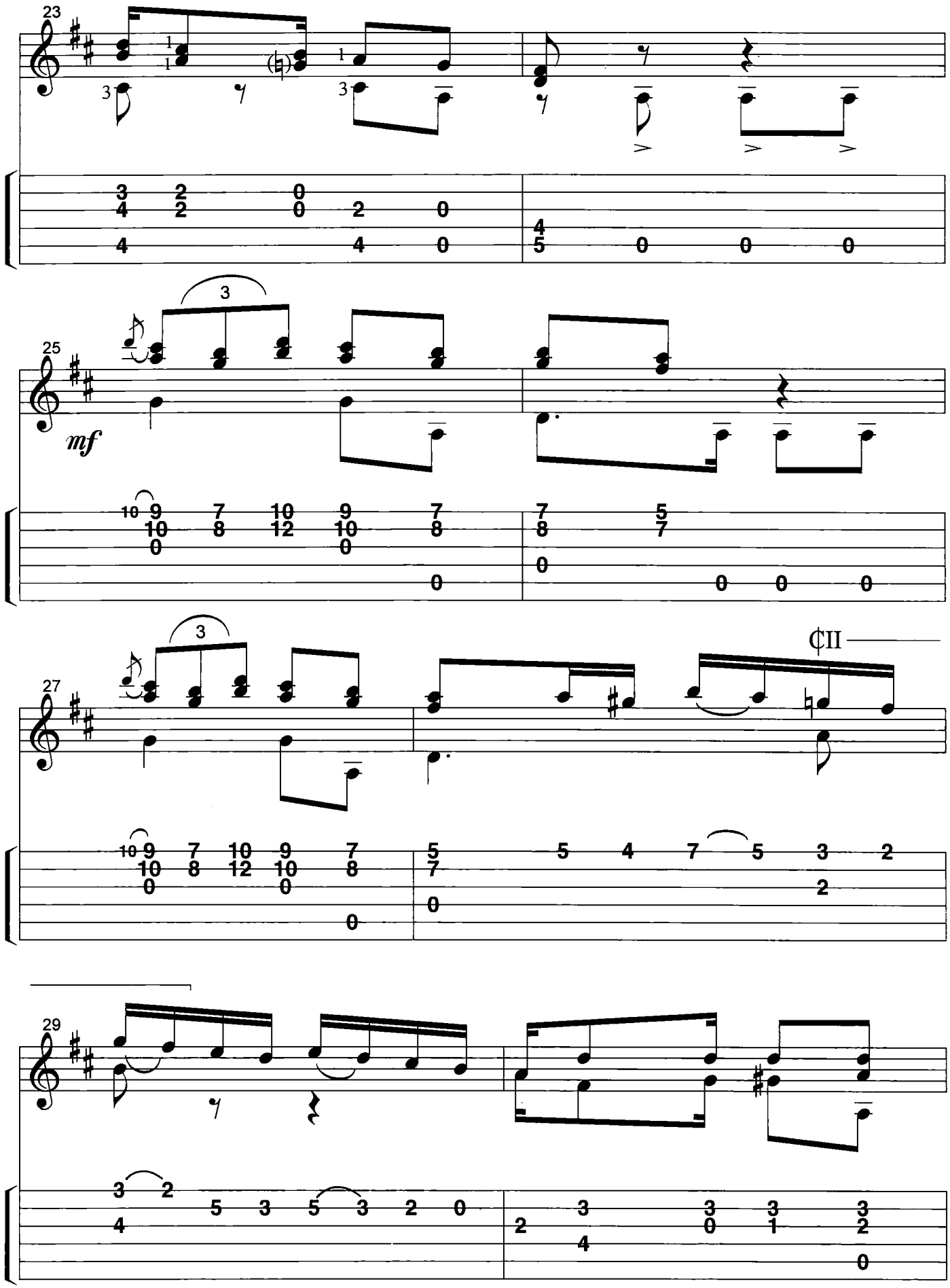
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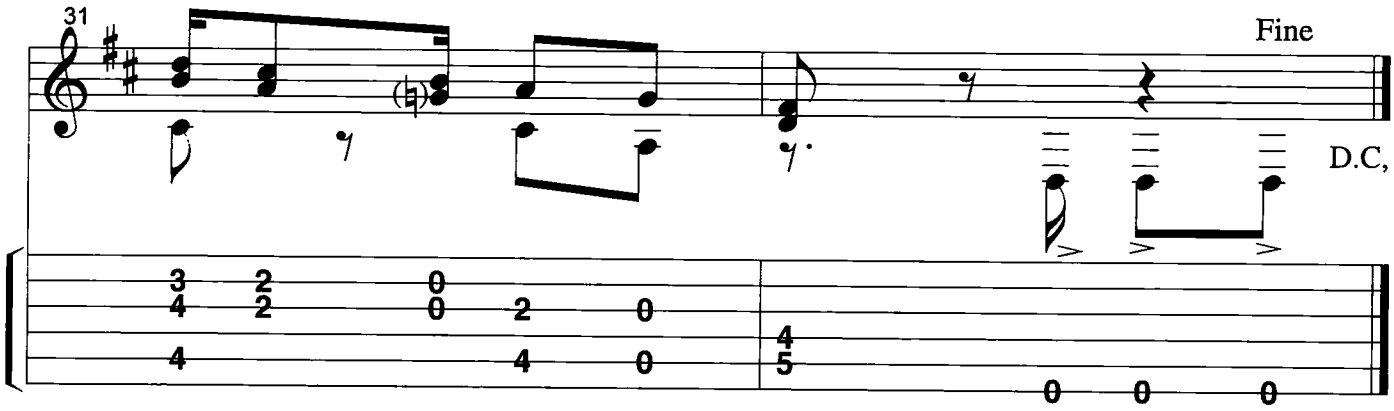
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La virtuosa

Contradanza – Minuetto

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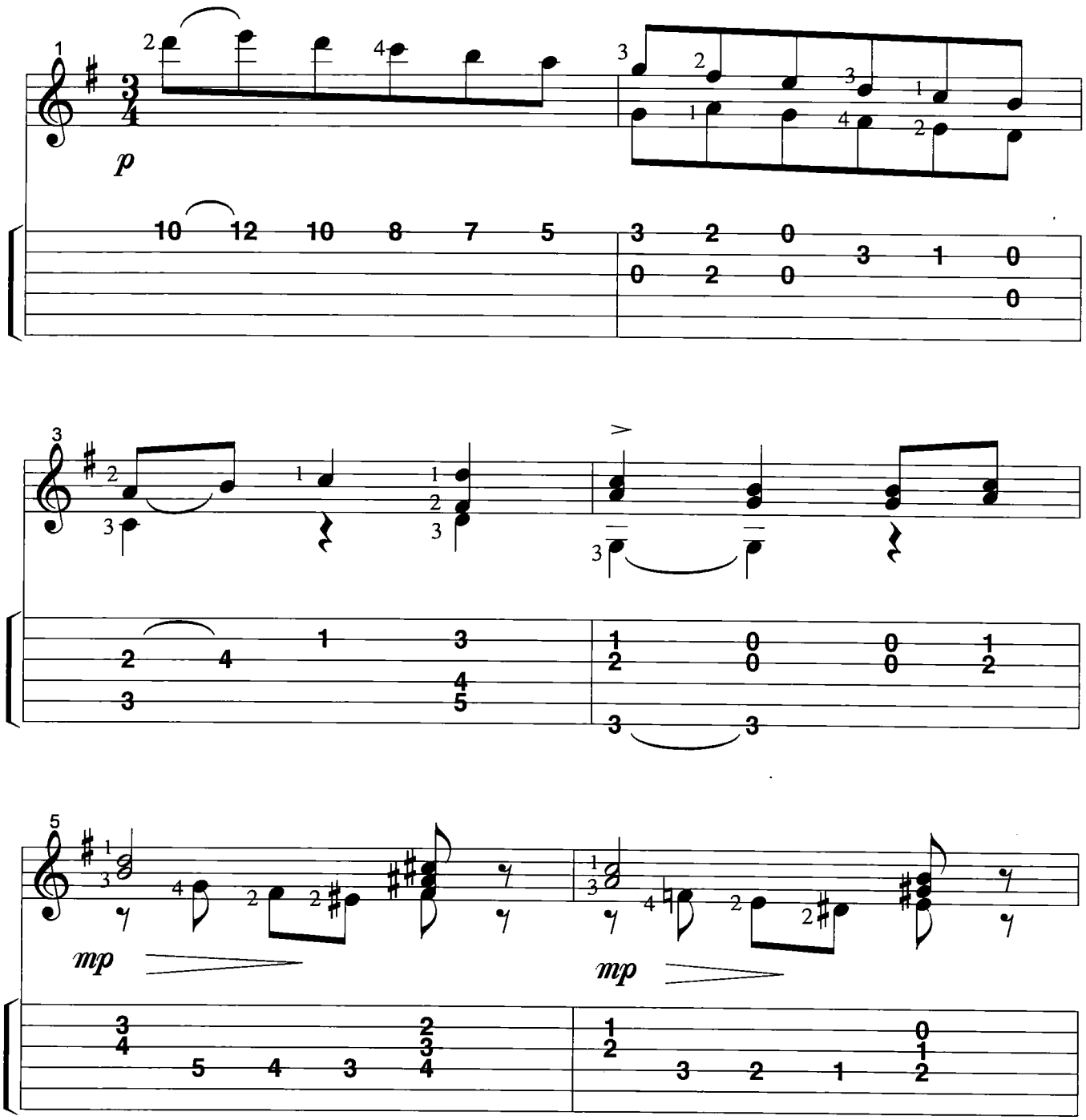

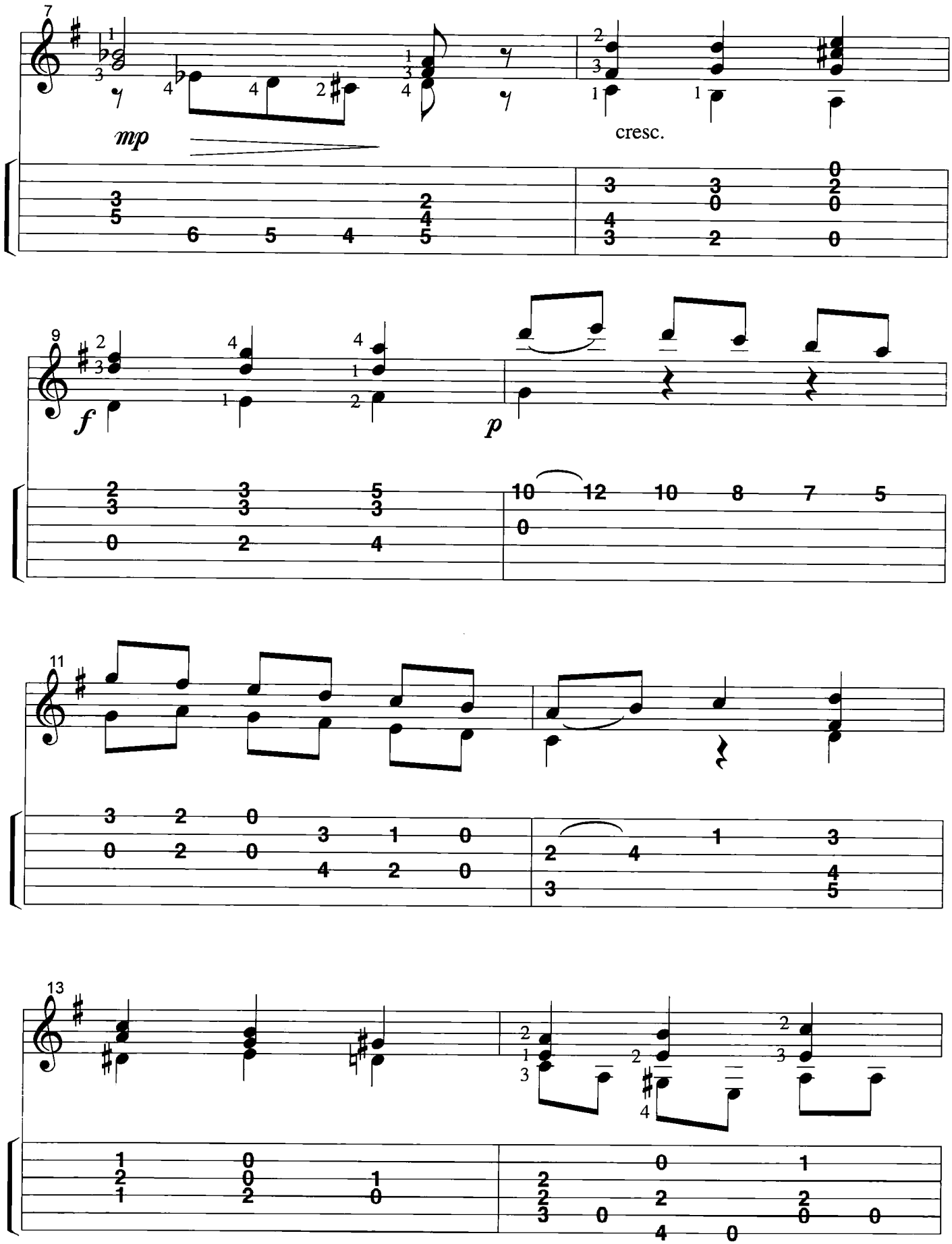
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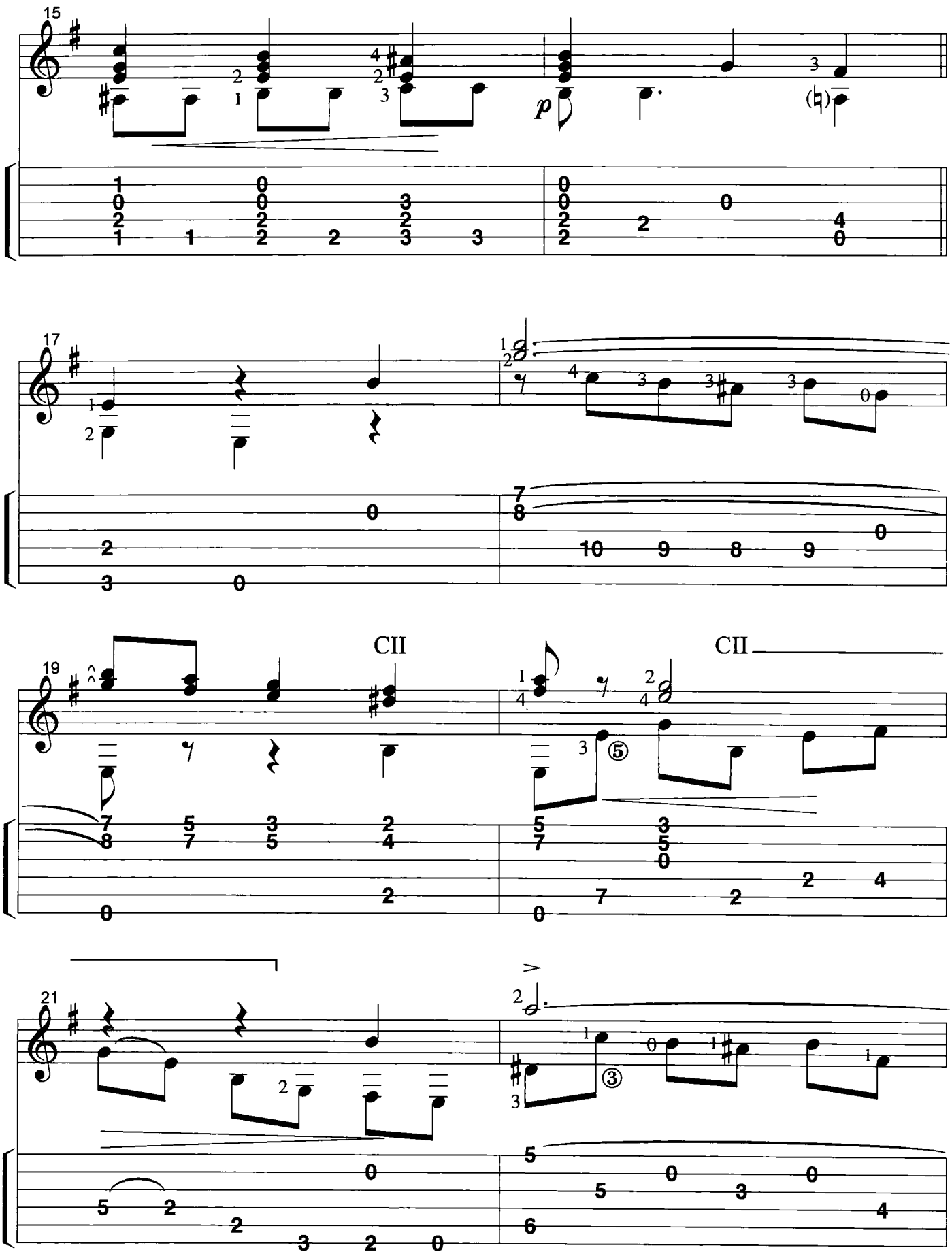
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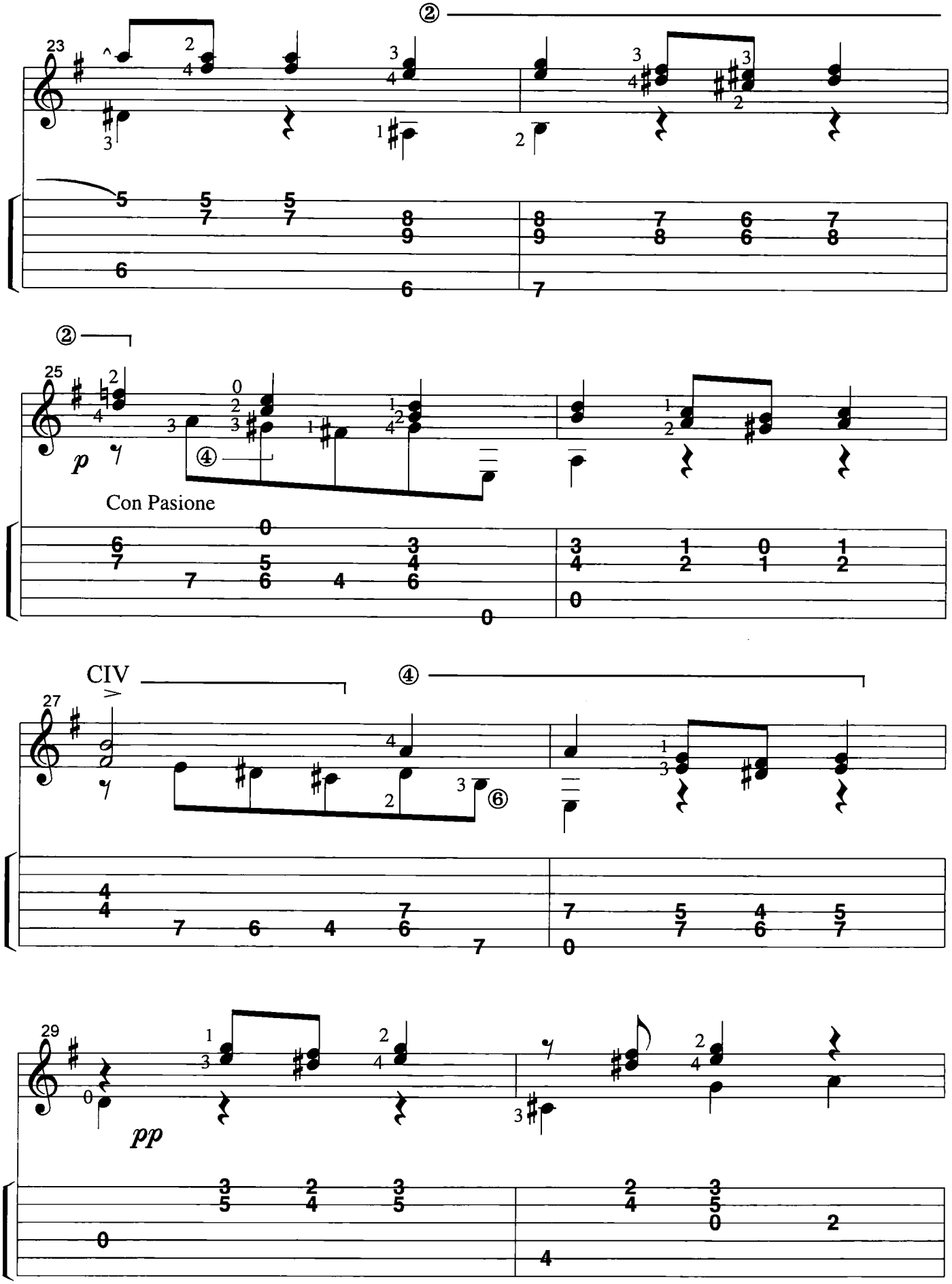

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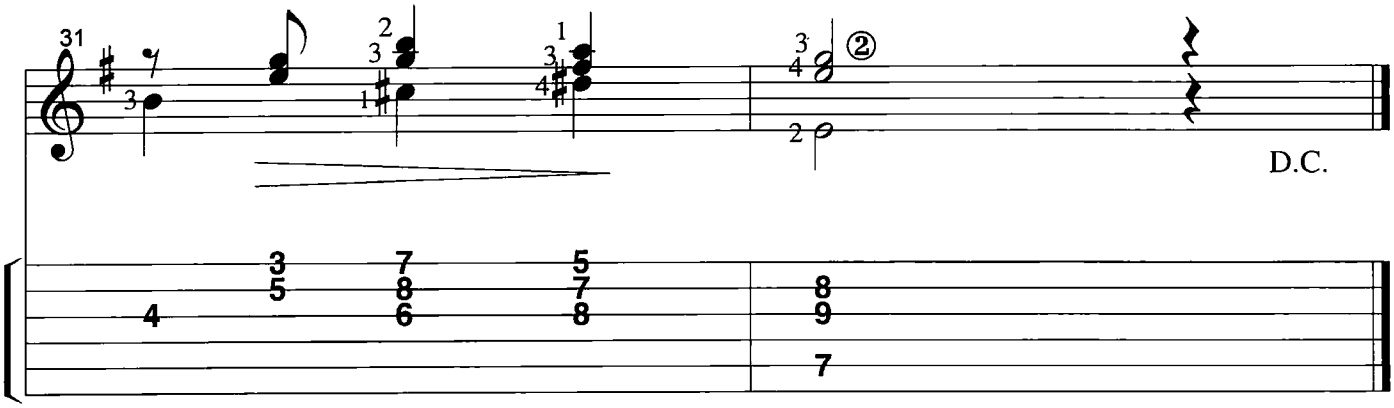
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El pañuelo de Pepa

Contradanza

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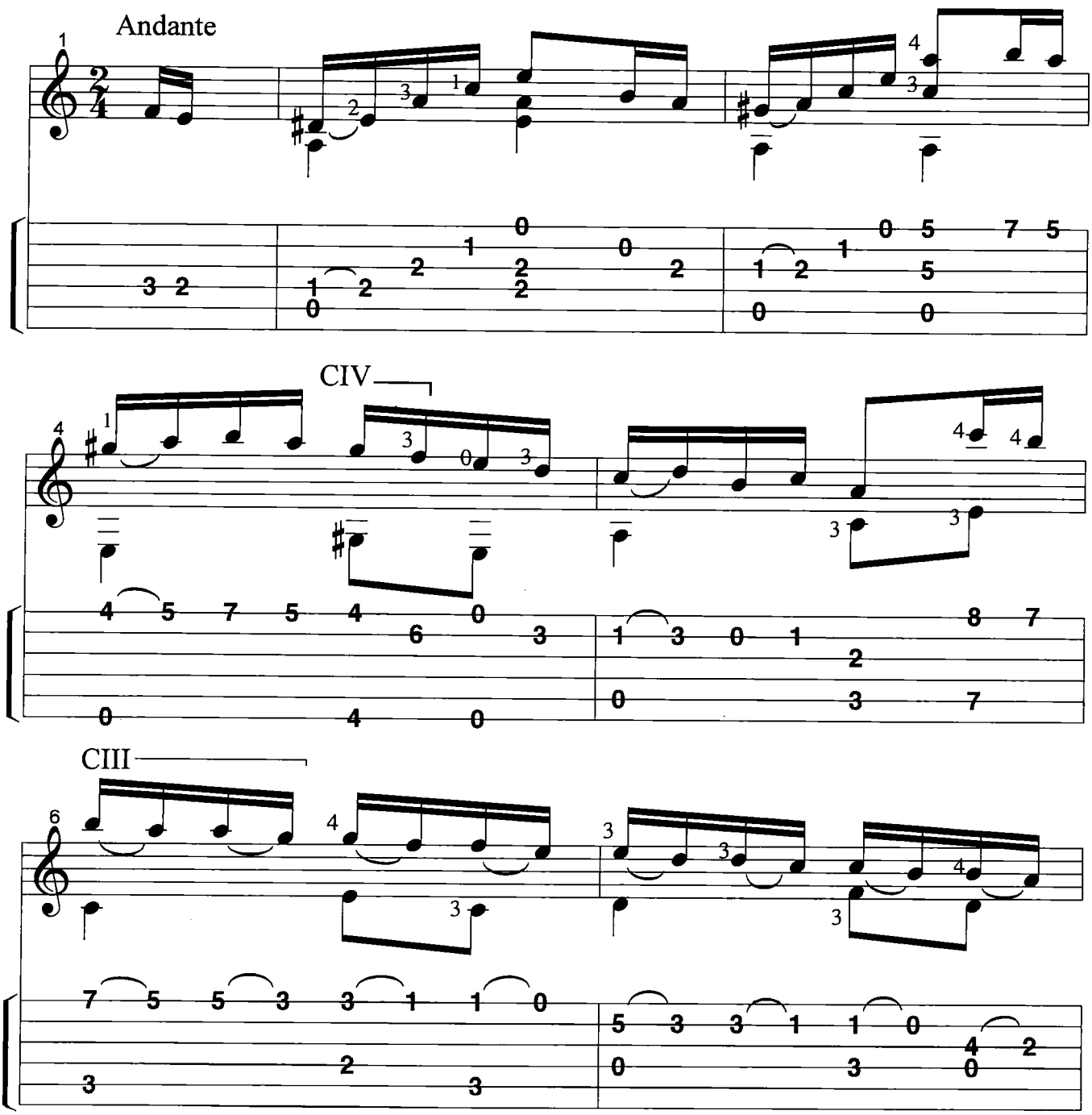

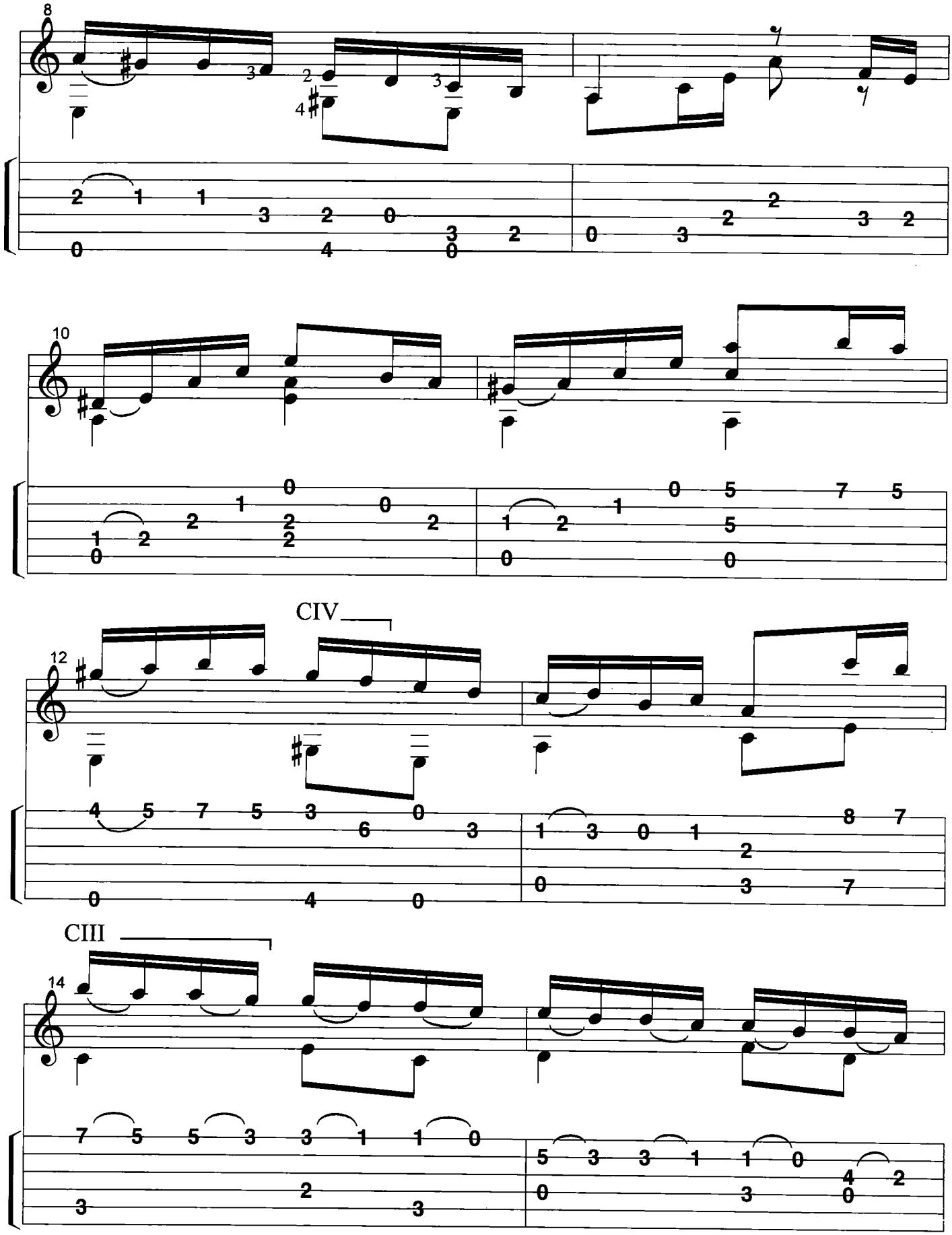
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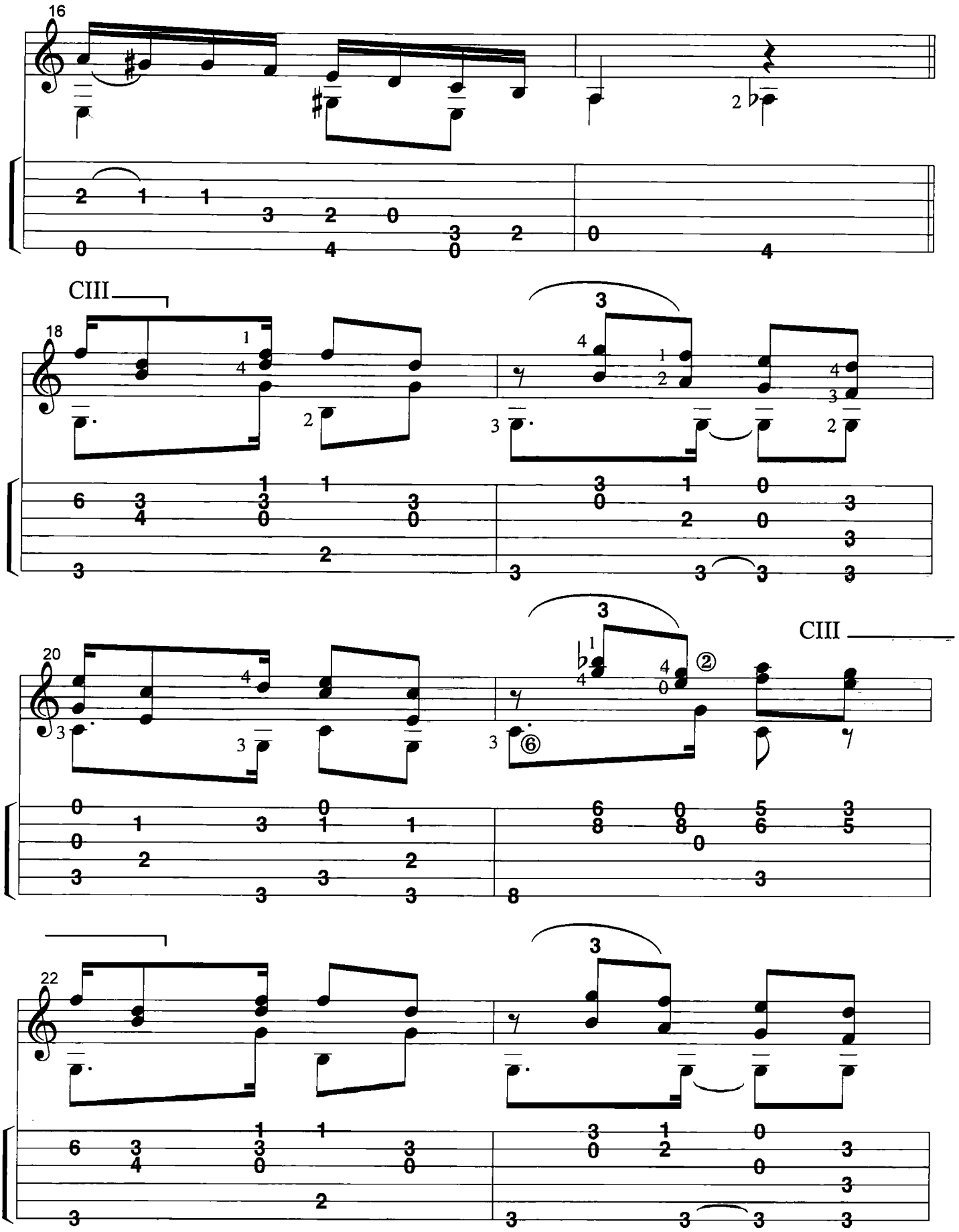
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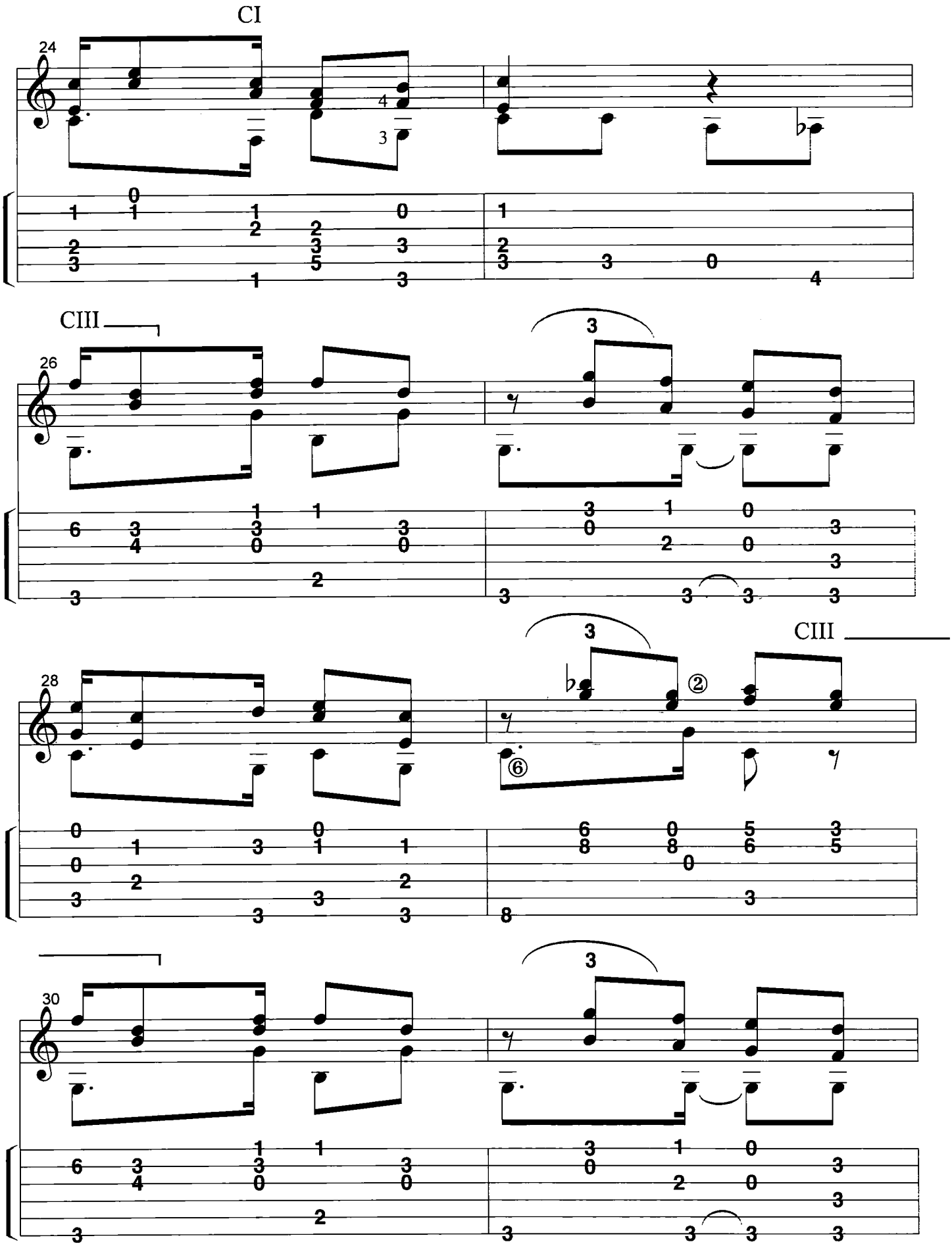
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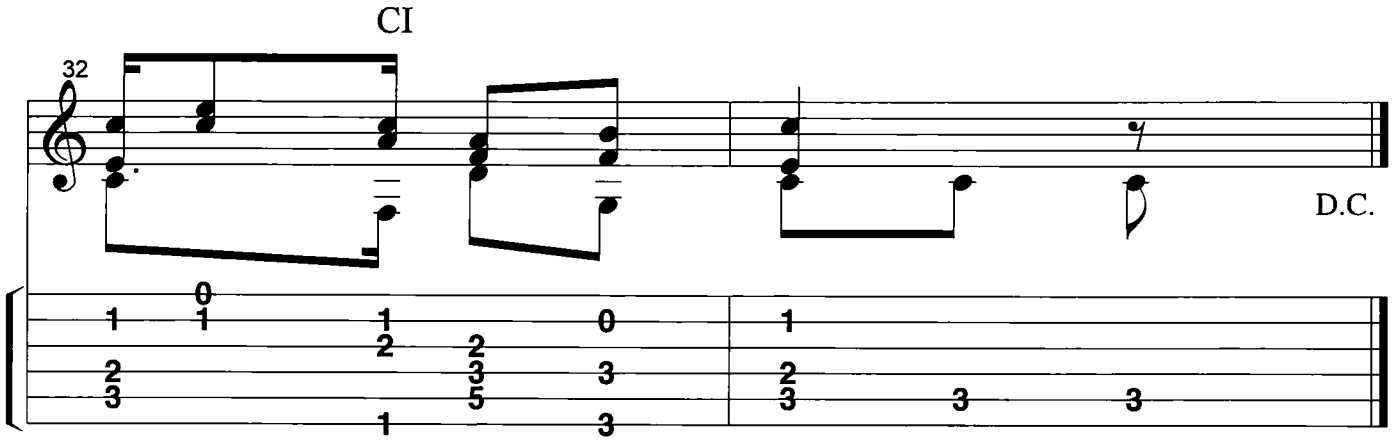
CI
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Recuerdos tristes

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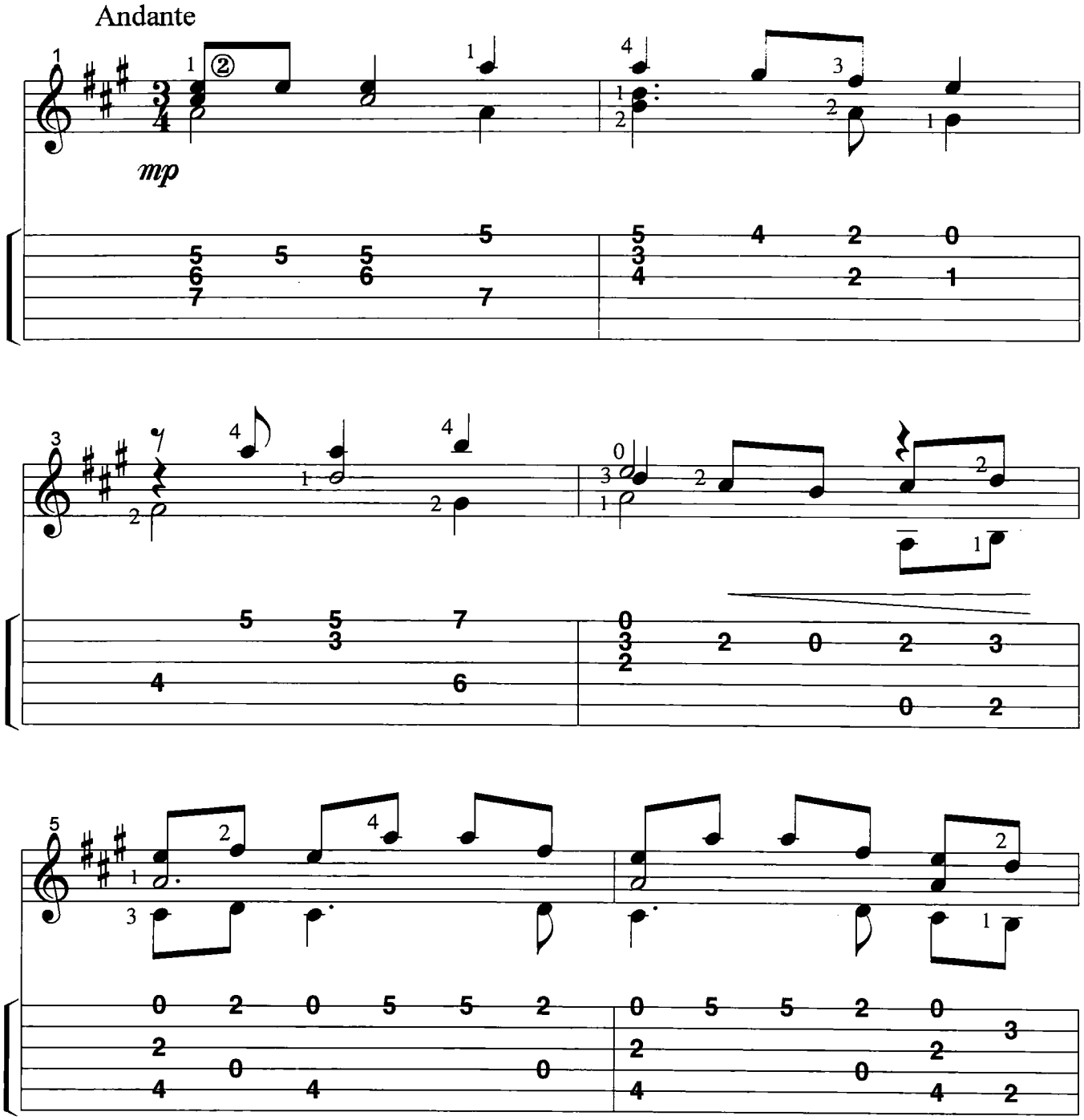
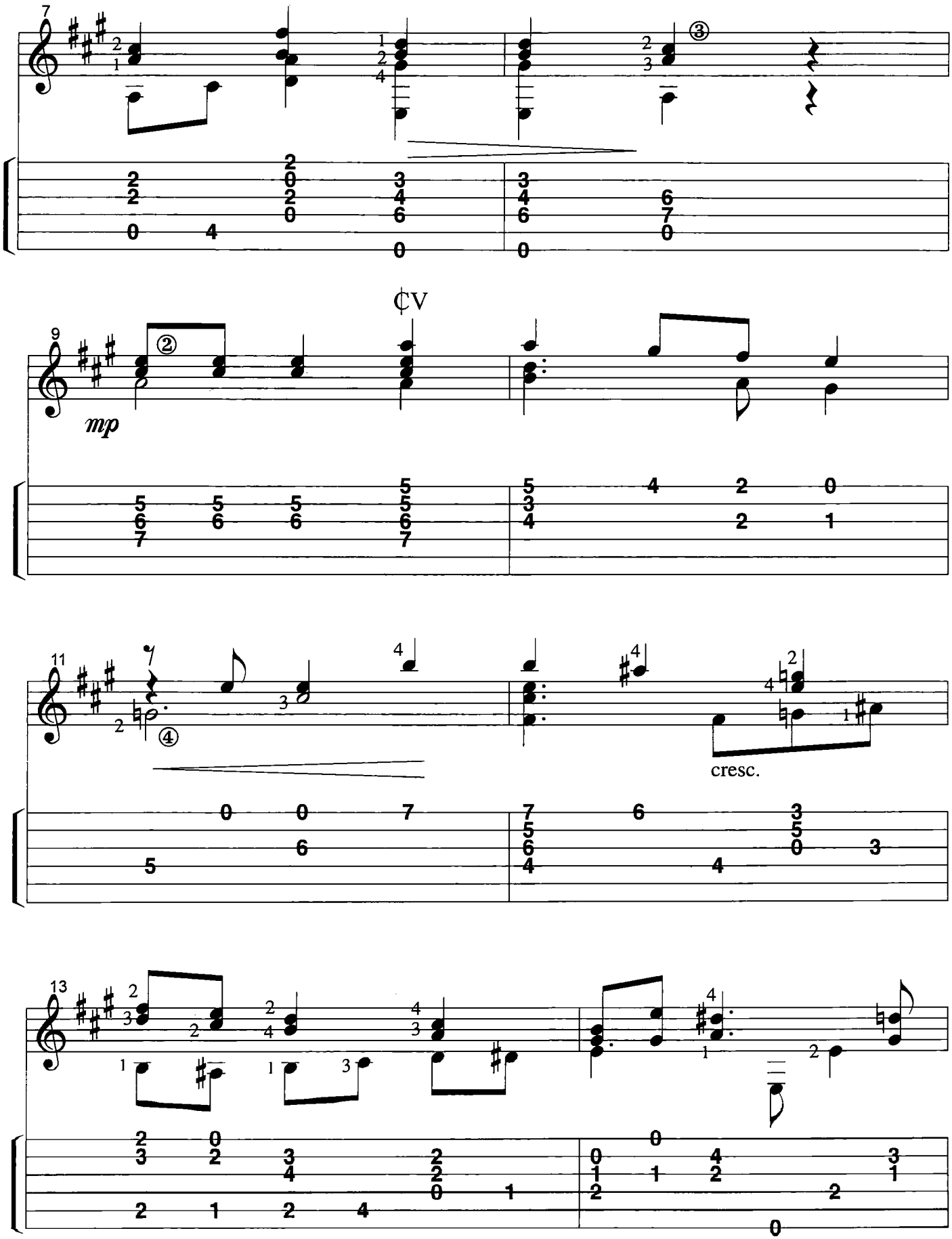
Andante

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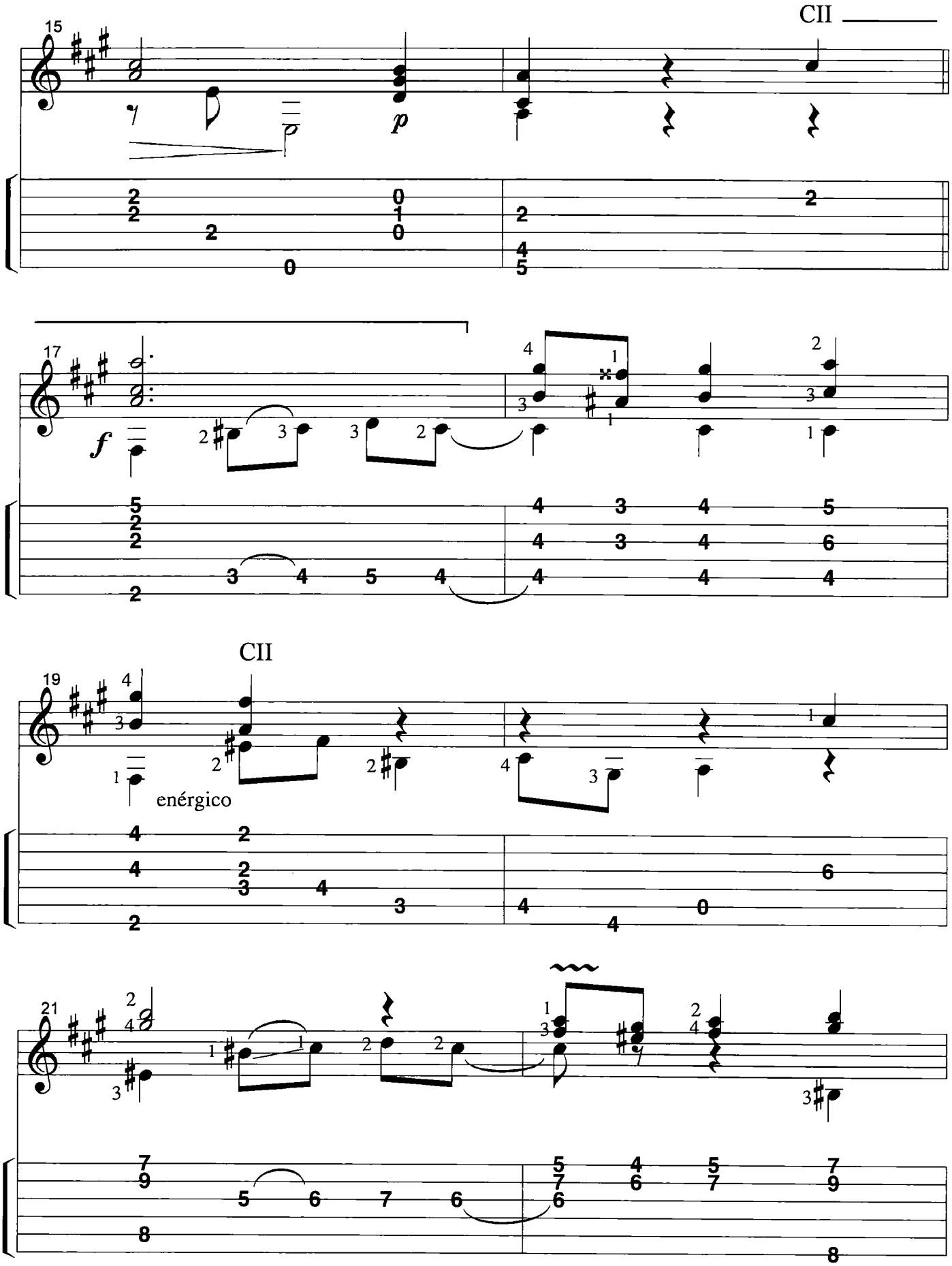
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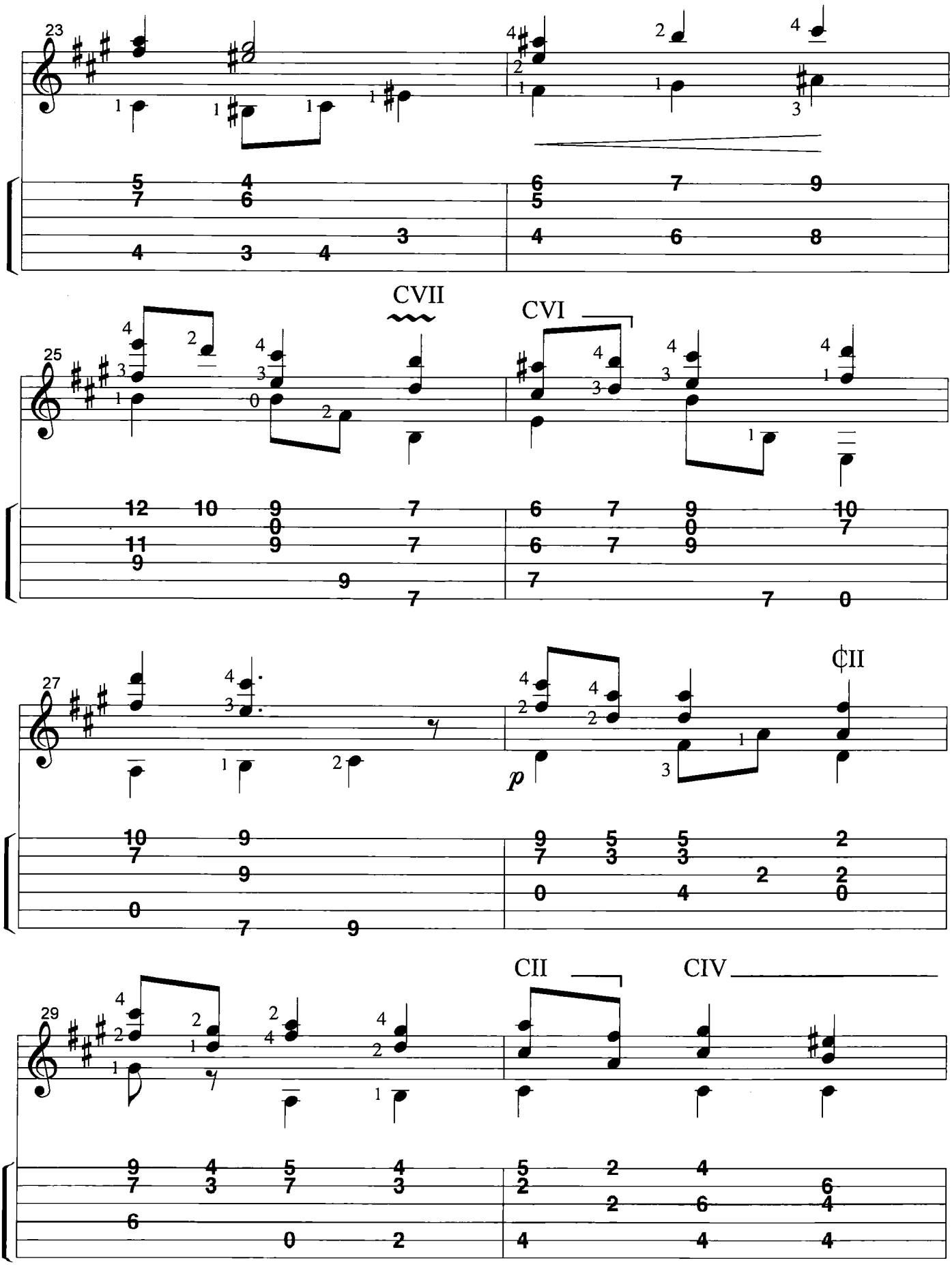
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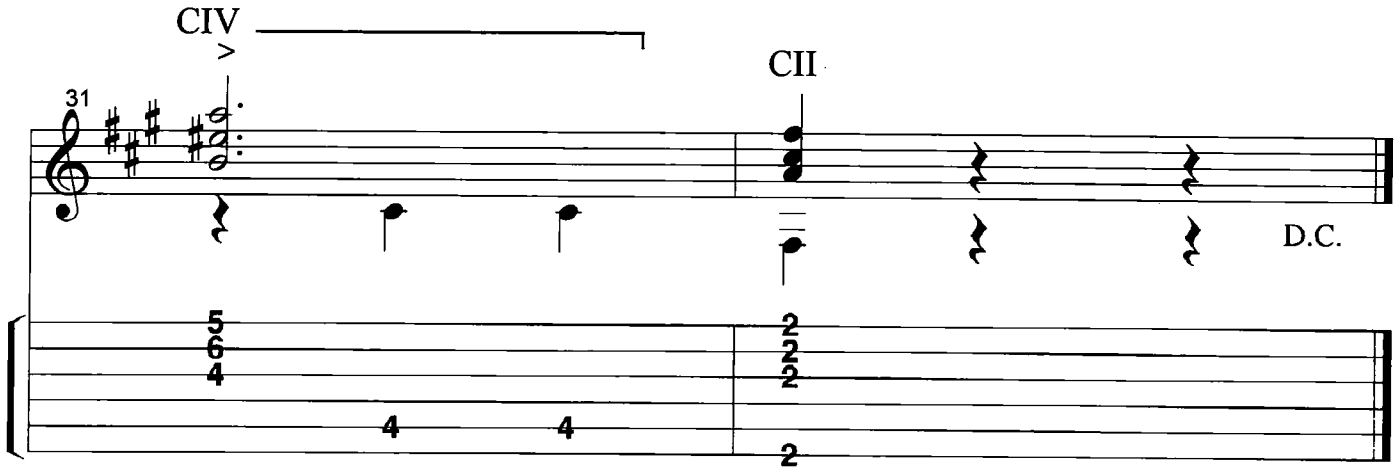
CIV
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D.C.

La gota de agua

Contradanza

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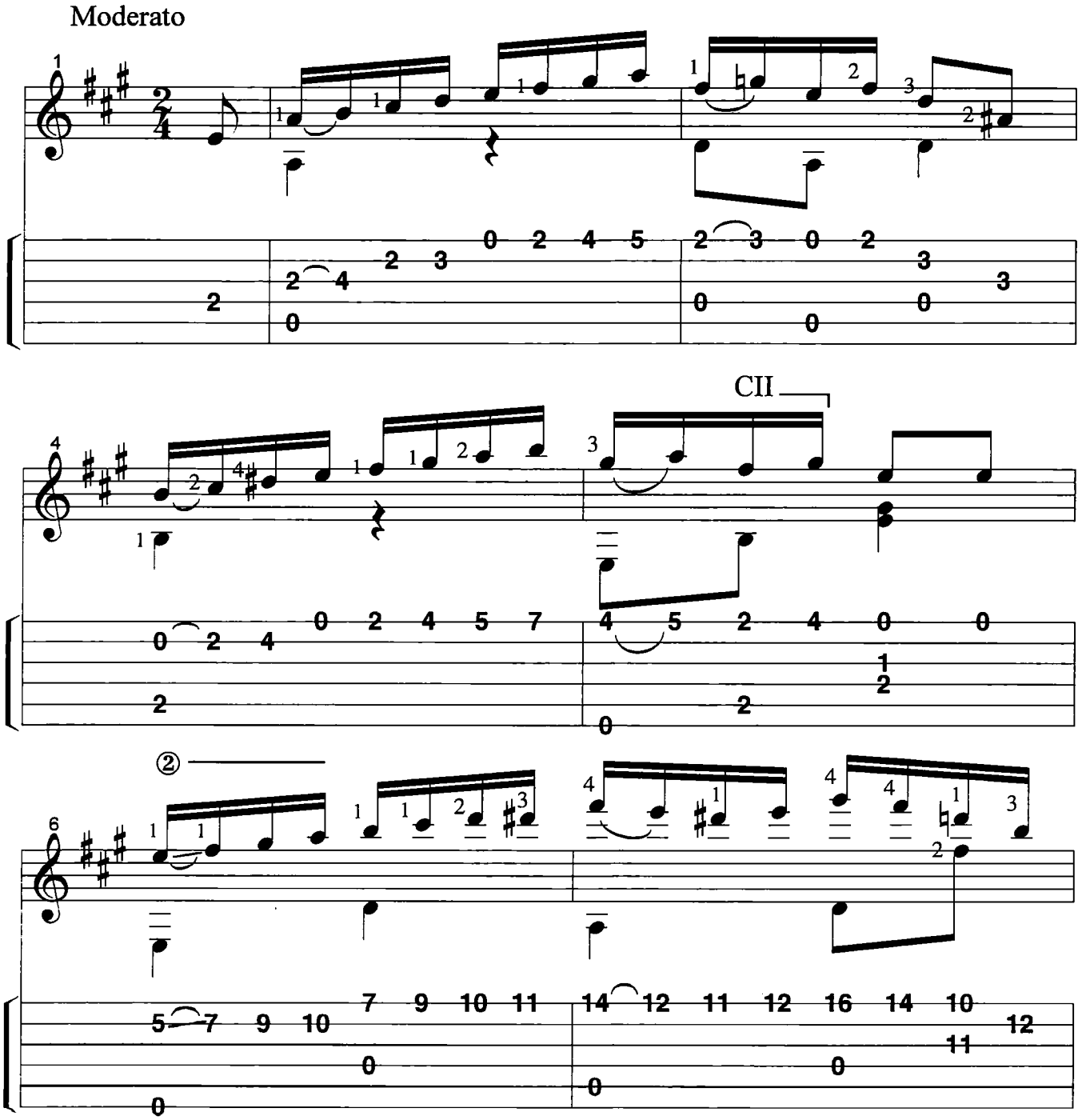
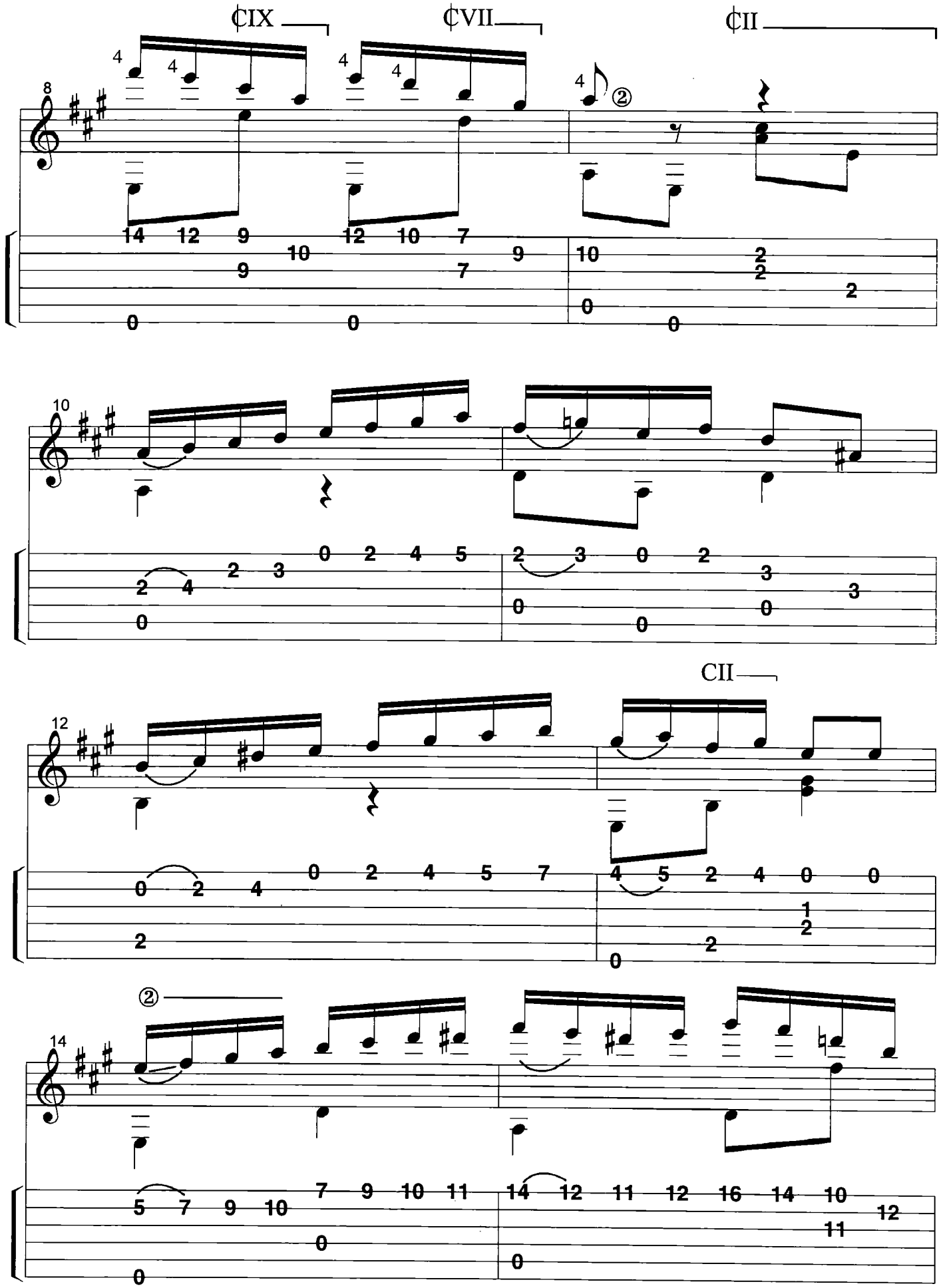
(1817-1870)

Moderato

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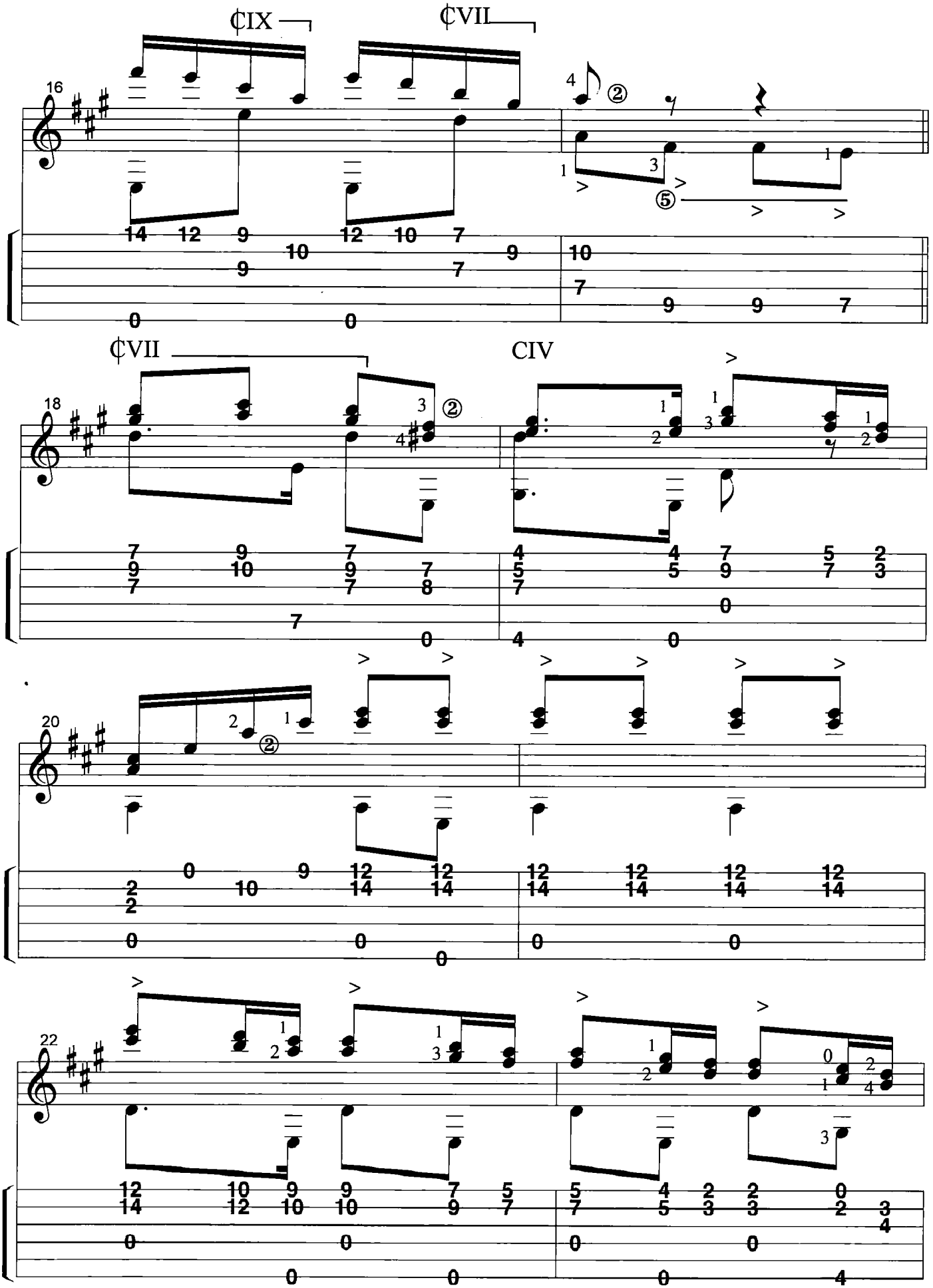
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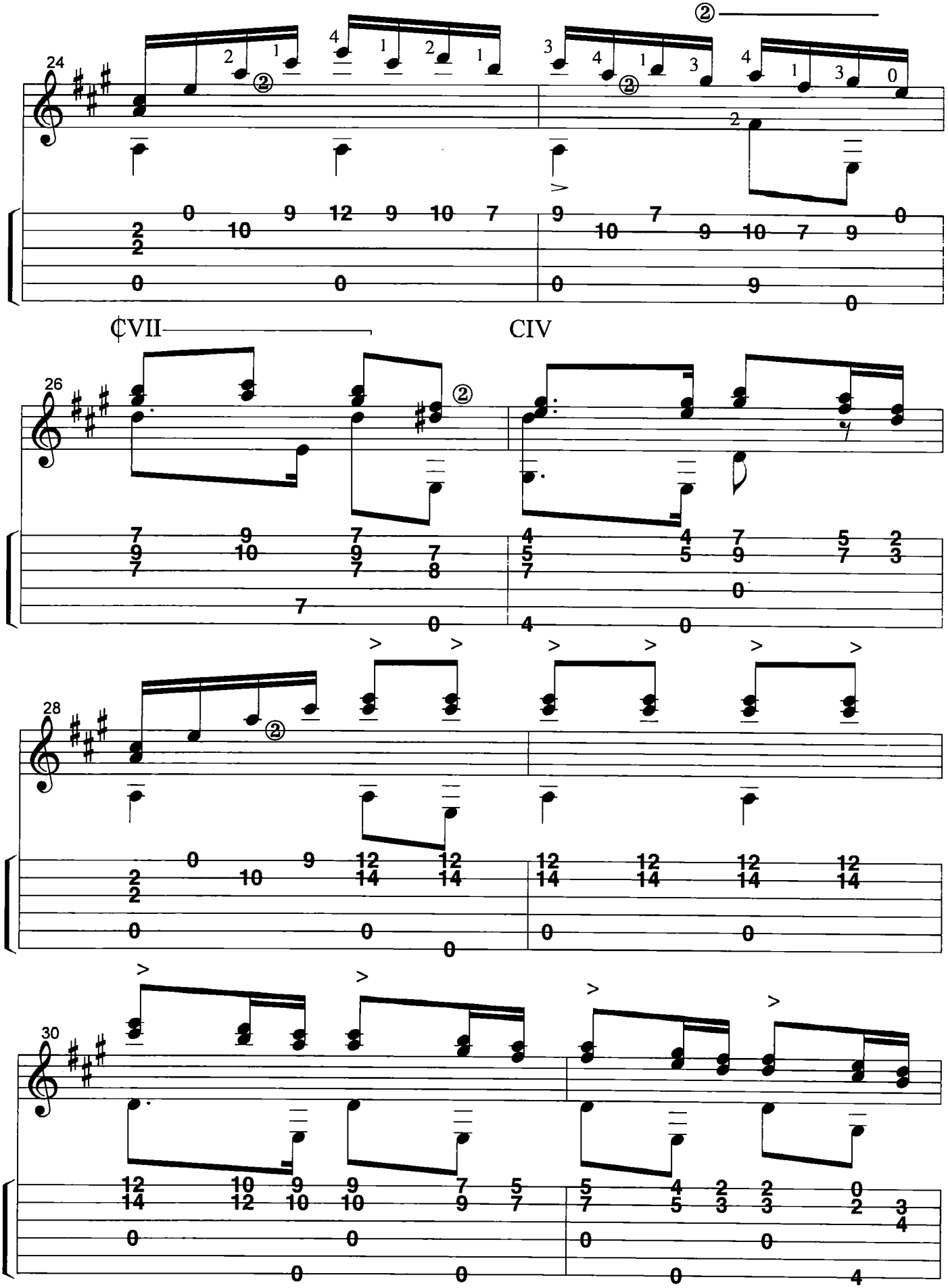
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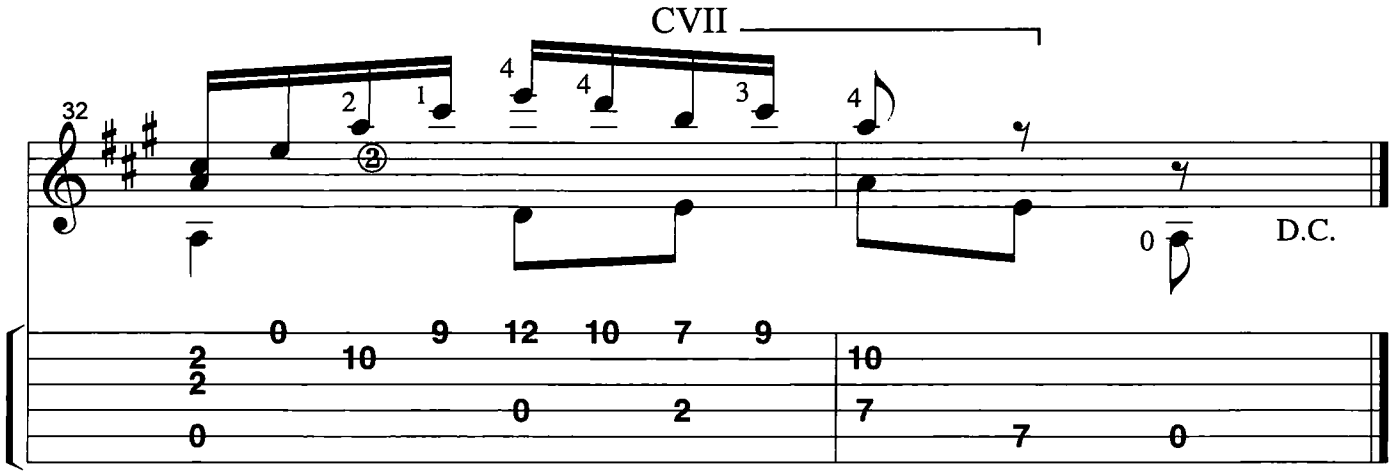
CVII
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D.C.

Tu sonrisa

Contradanza

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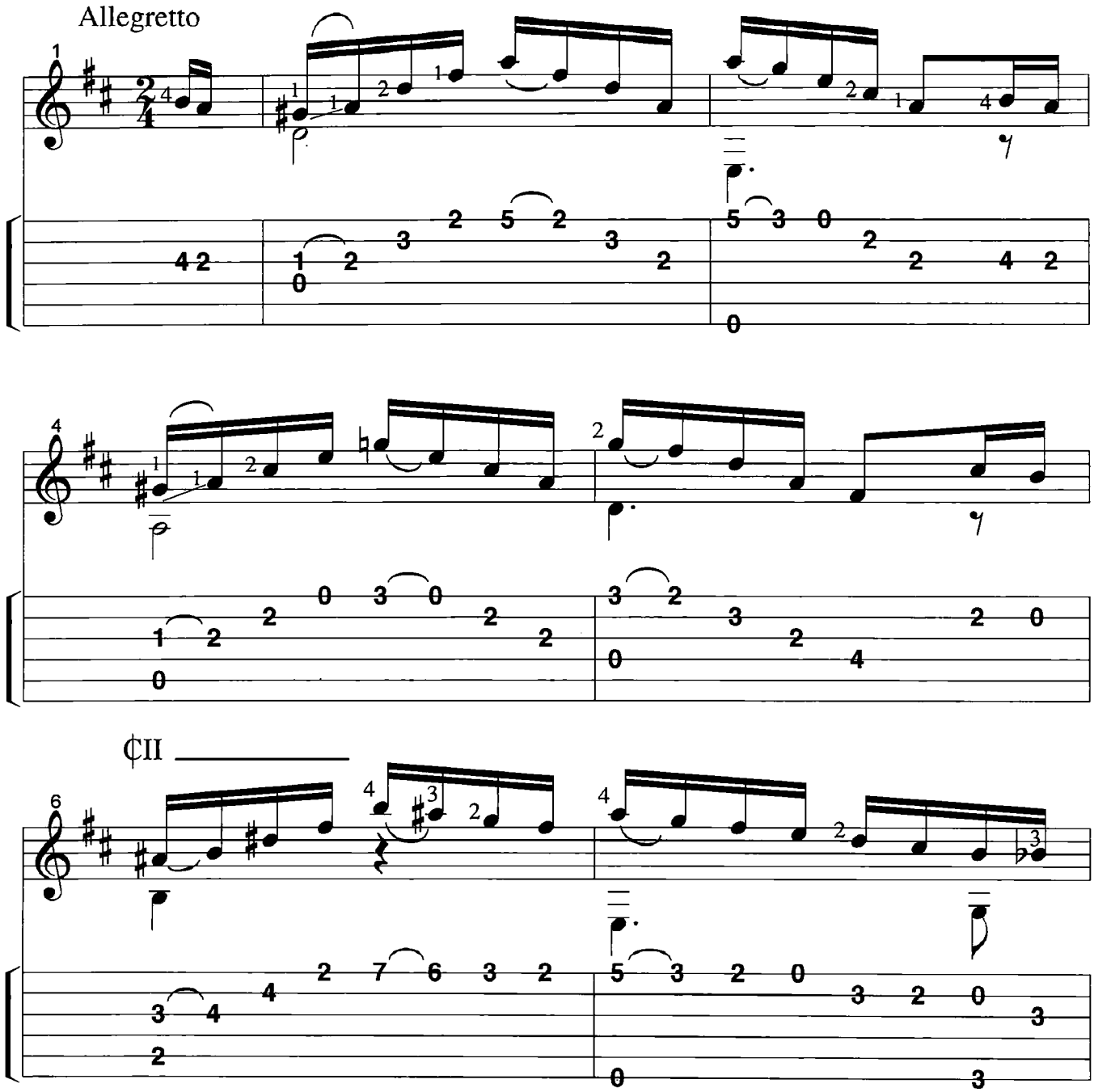

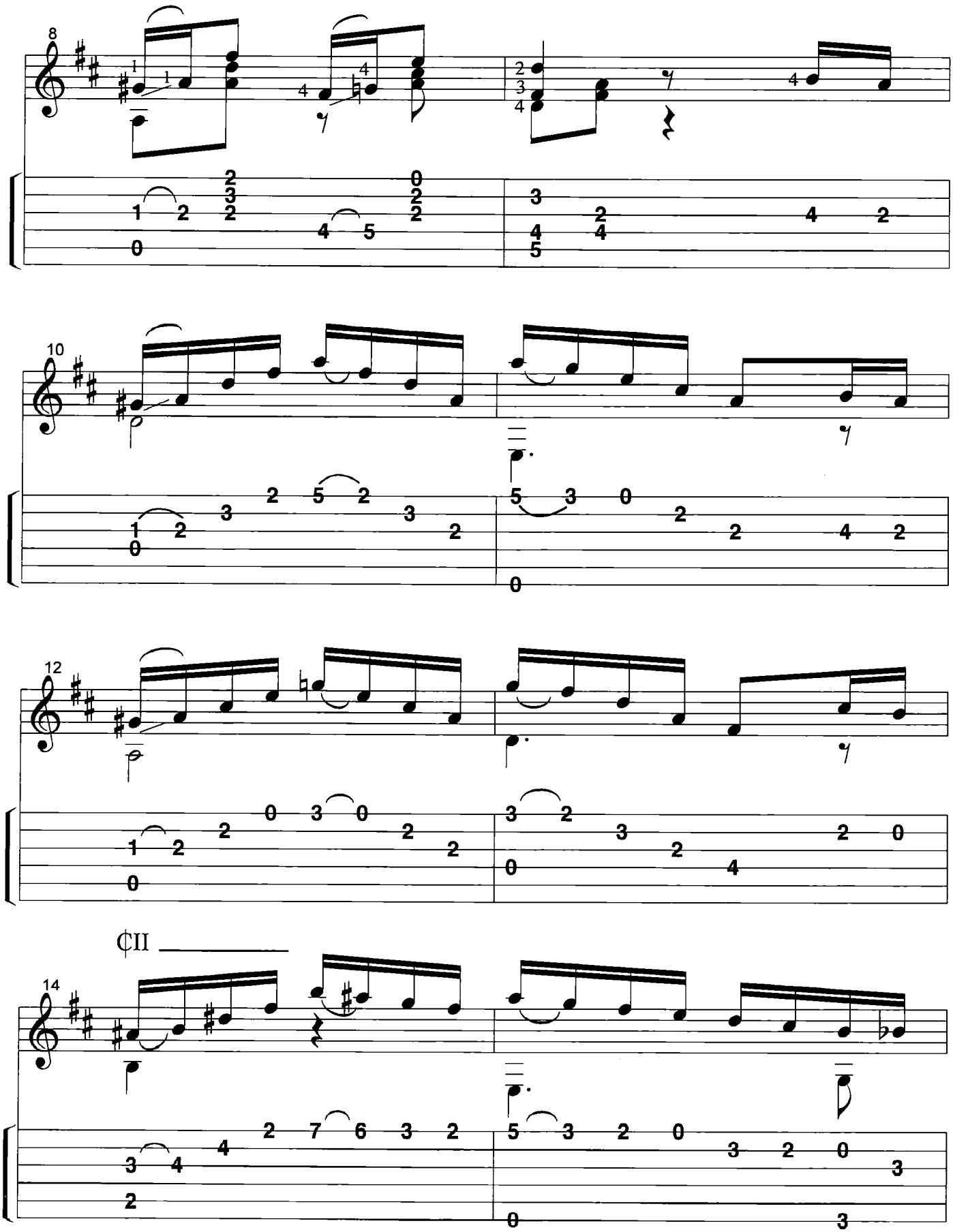
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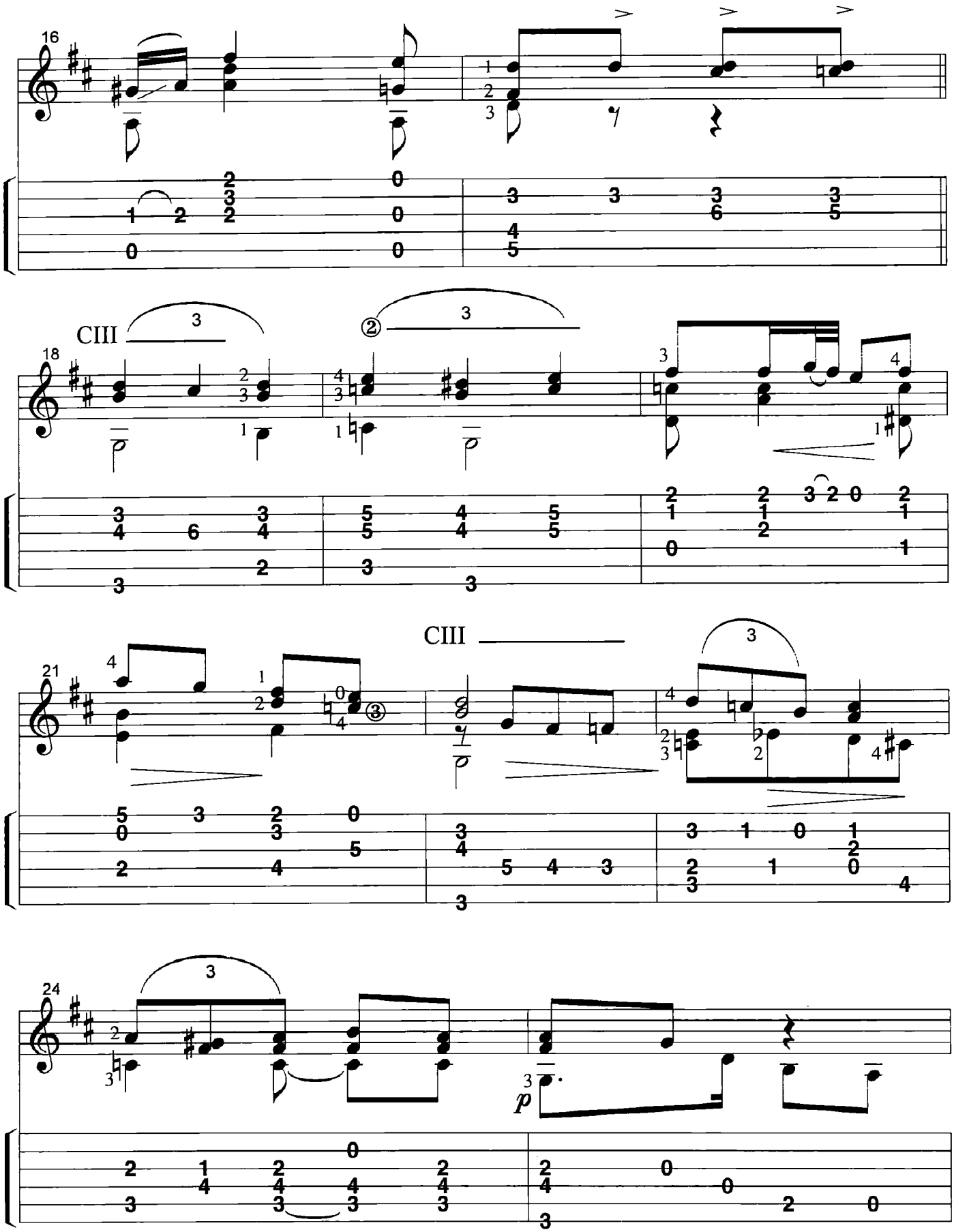
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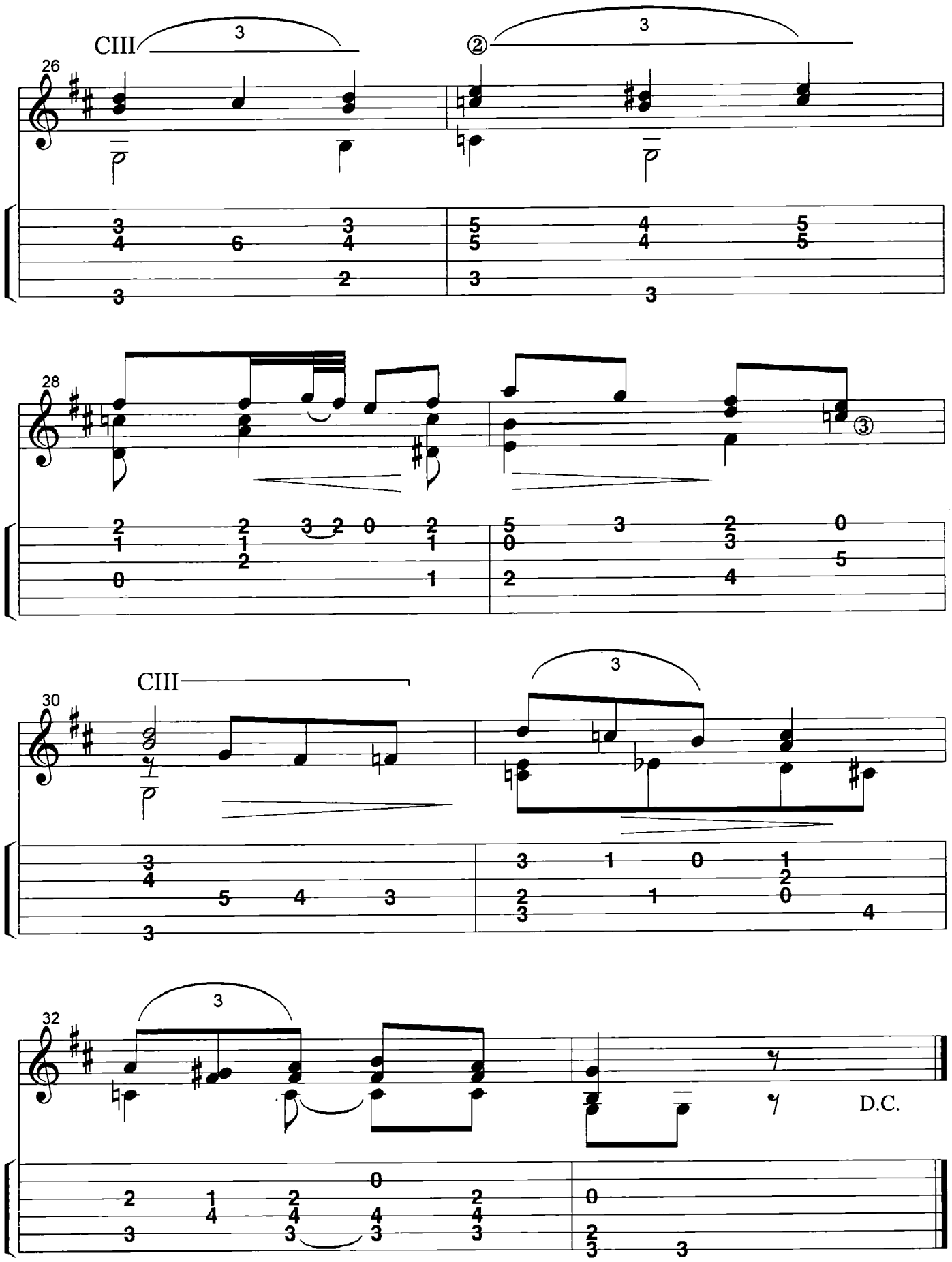
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③
CIII
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32
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La quejosita

Contradanza

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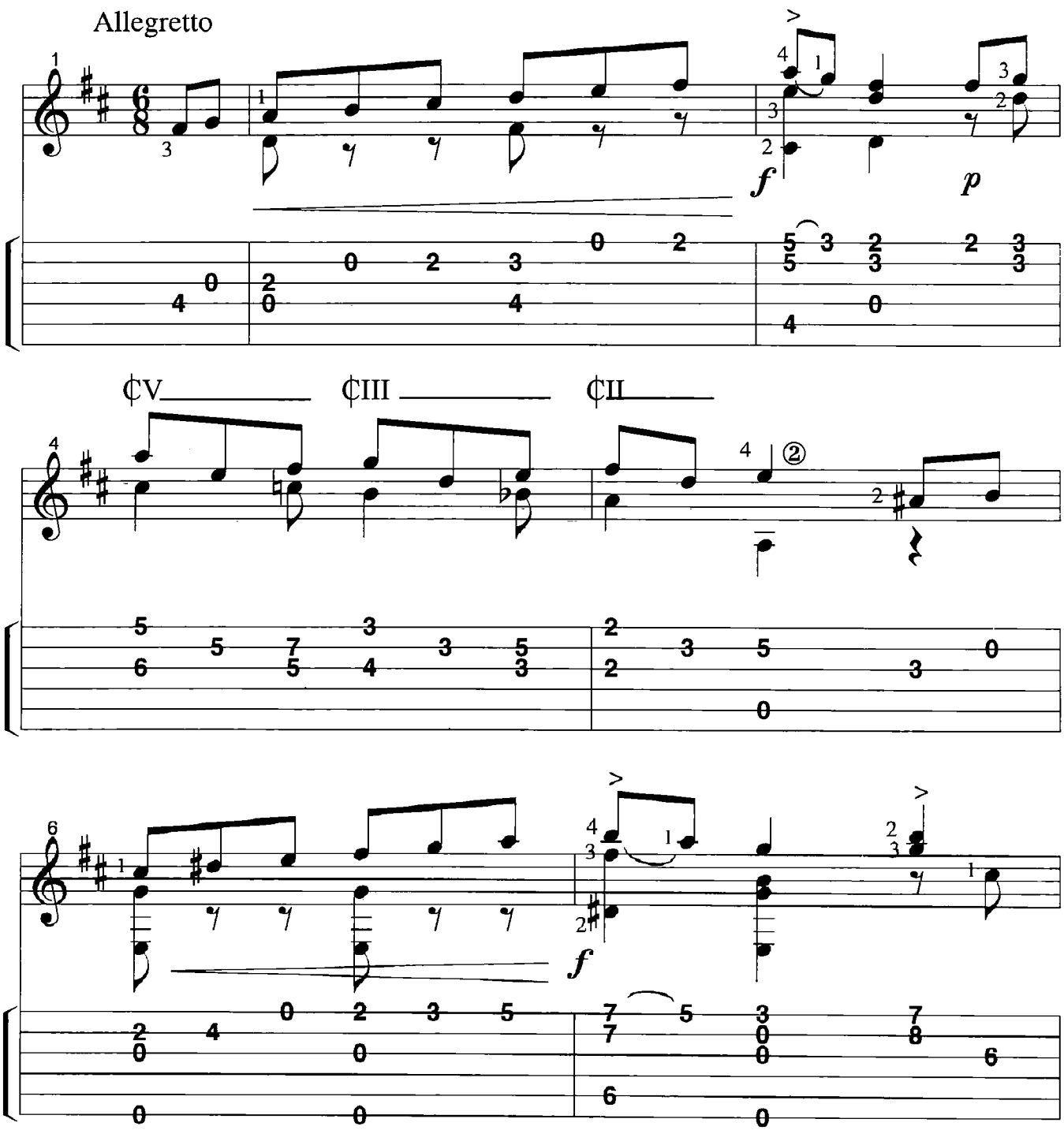
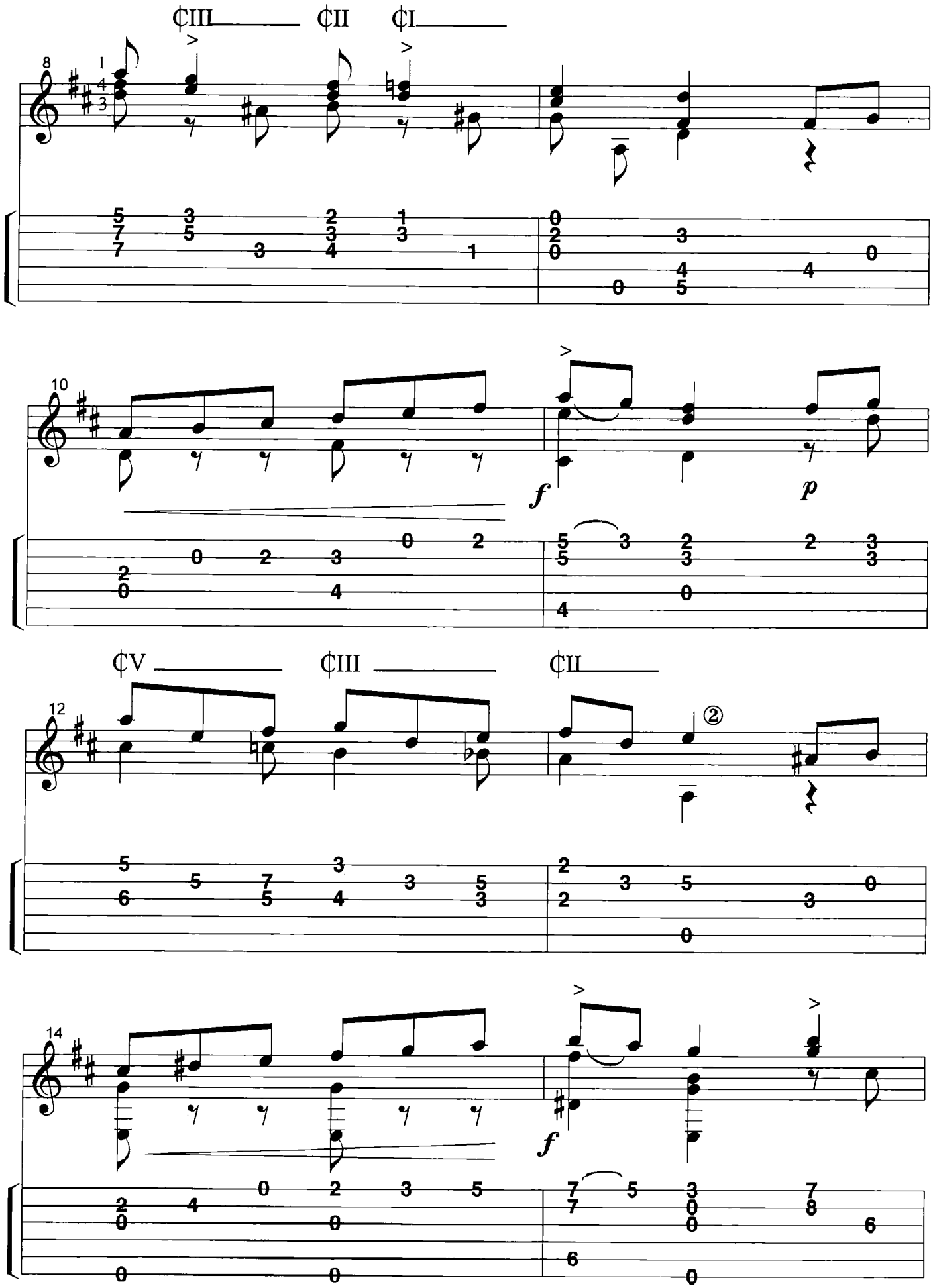
Manuel Saumell
(1817-1870)

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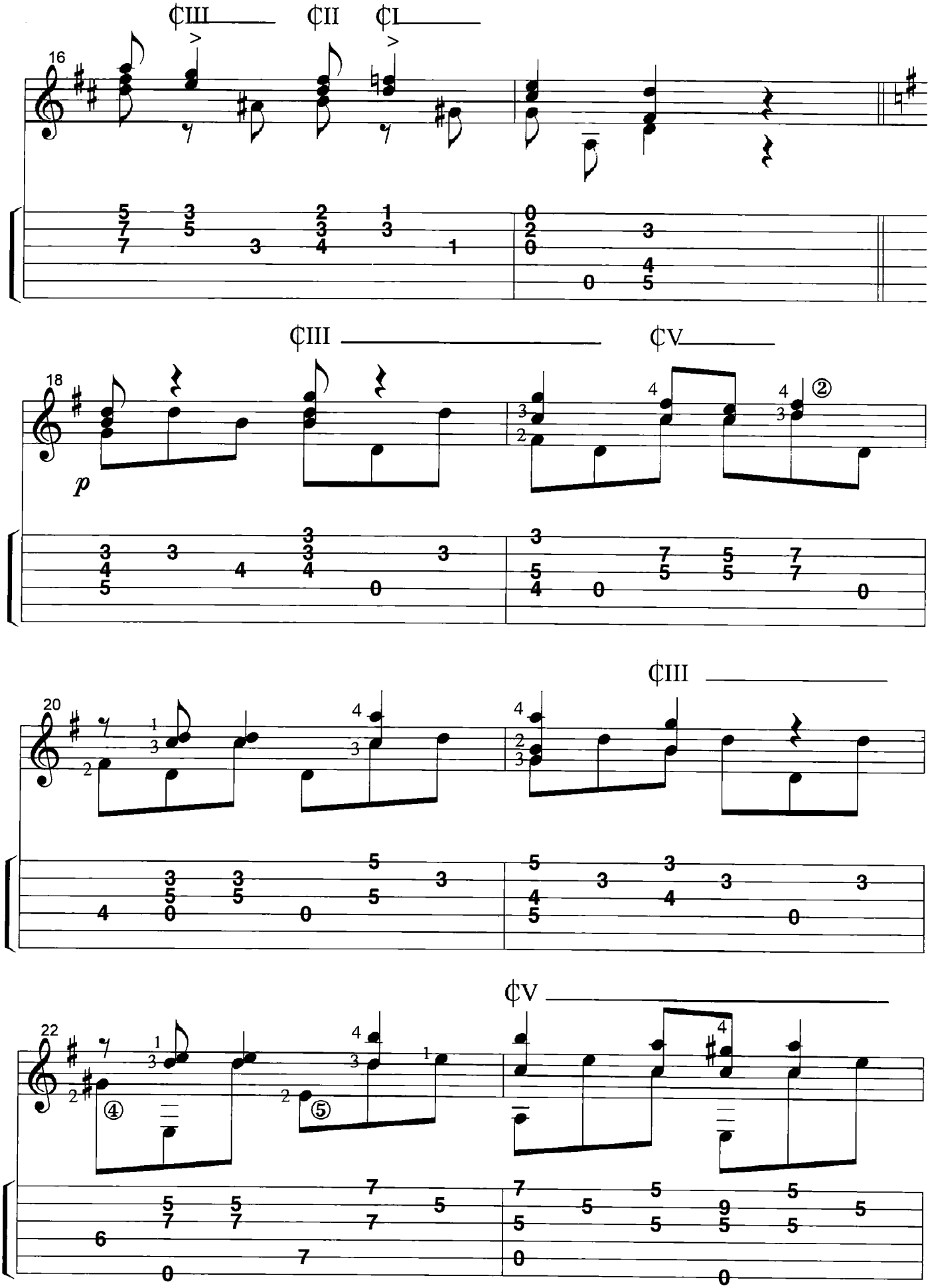
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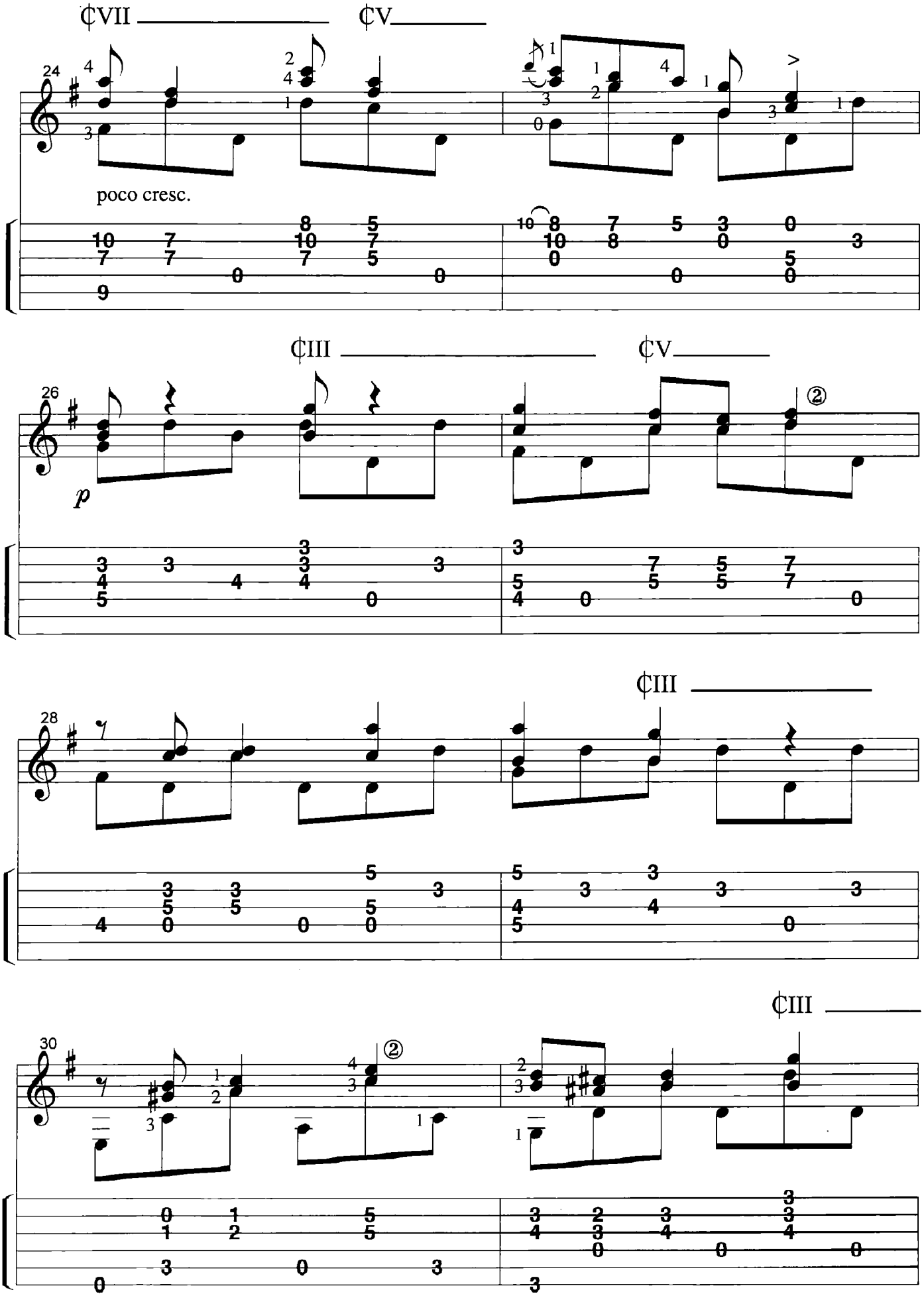
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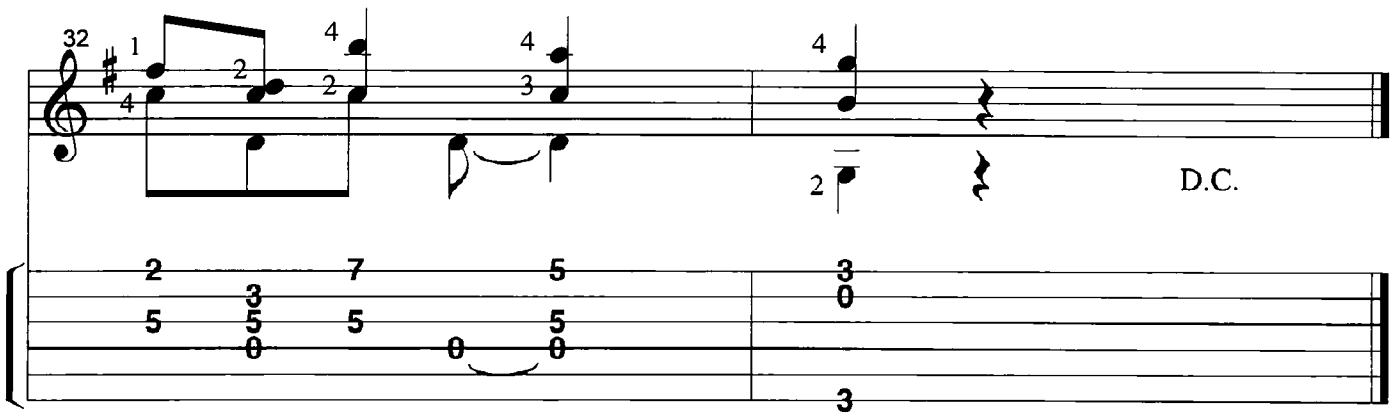
32
D.C.

La Matilde

Contradanza

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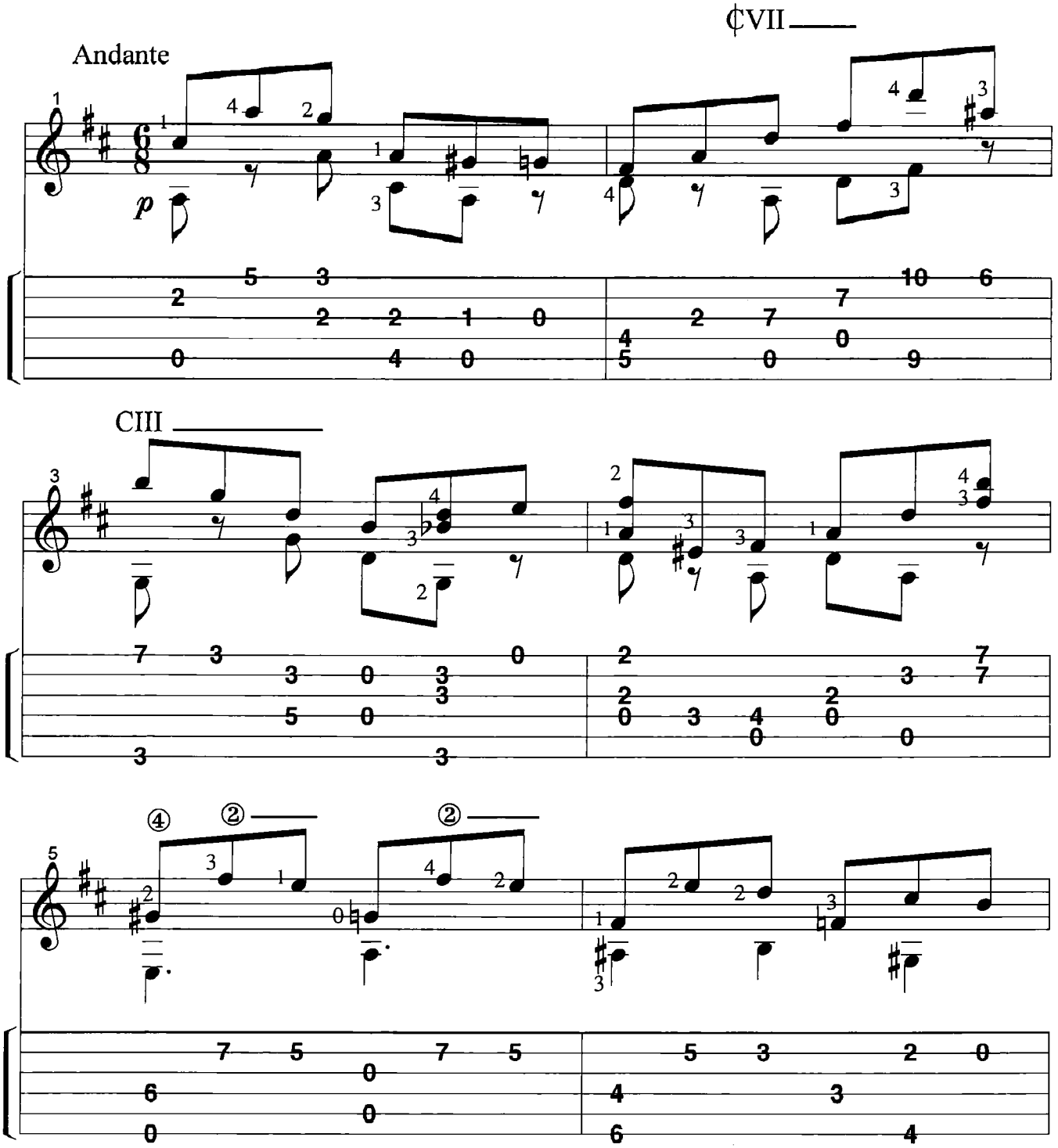
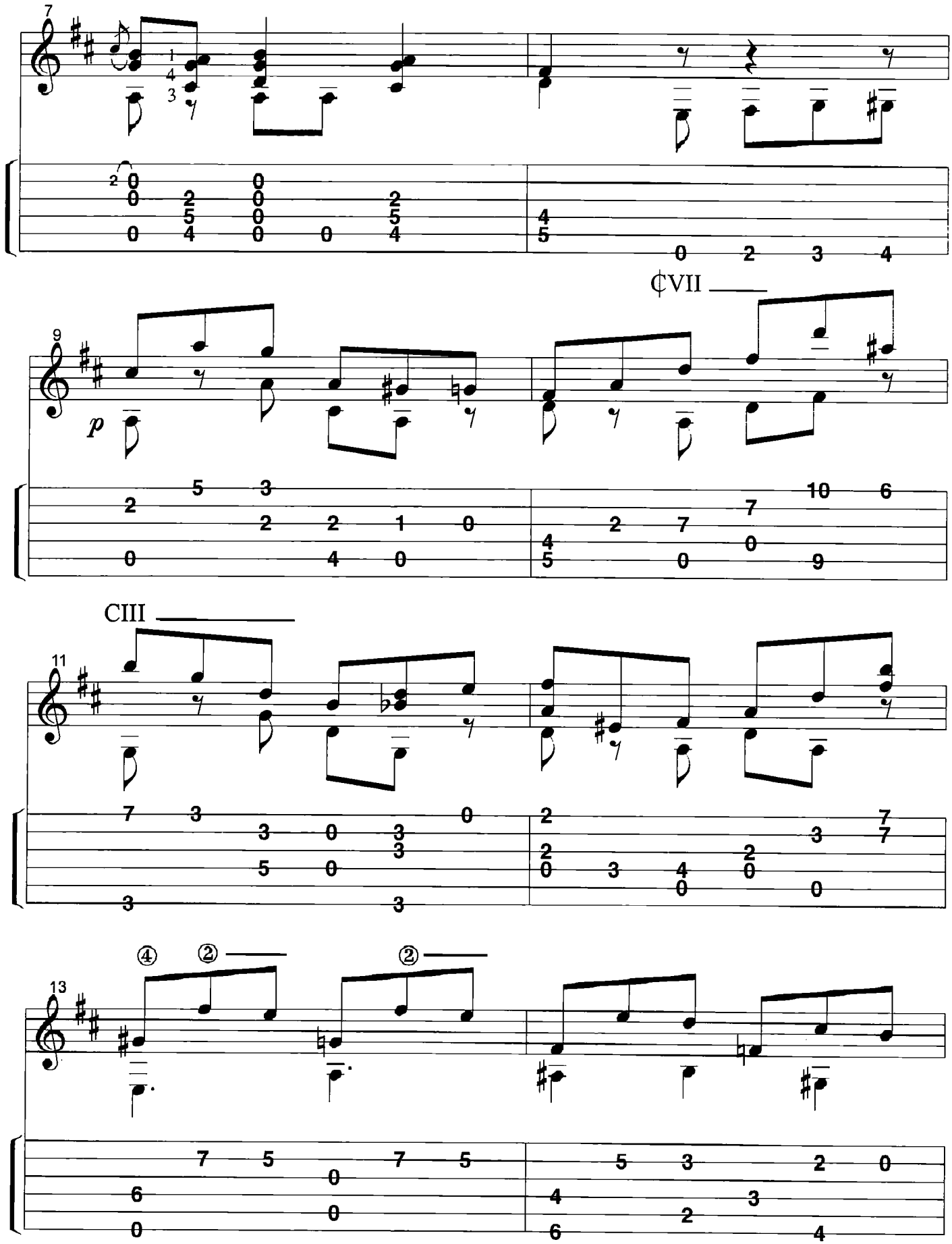
Manuel Saumell
(1817-1870)

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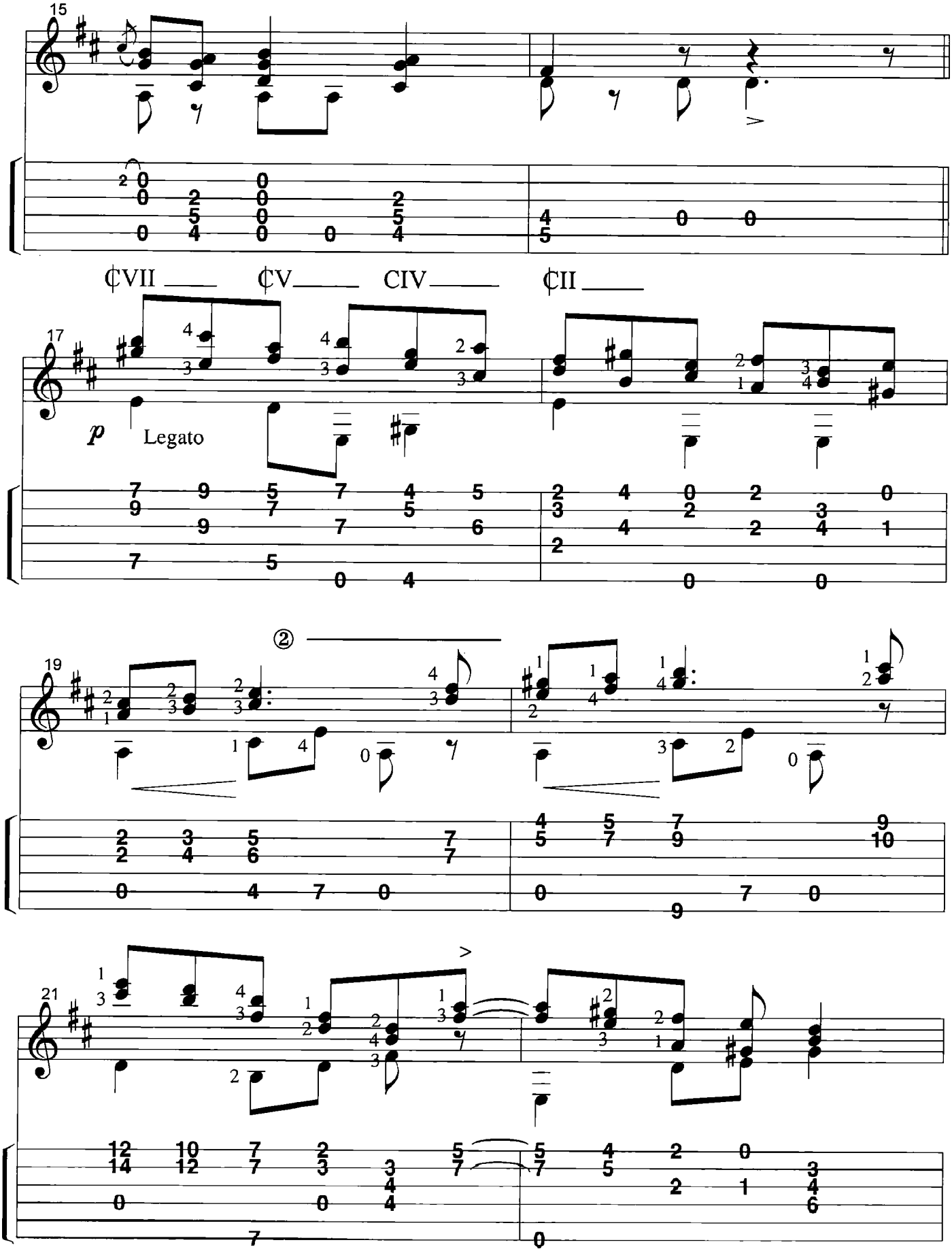
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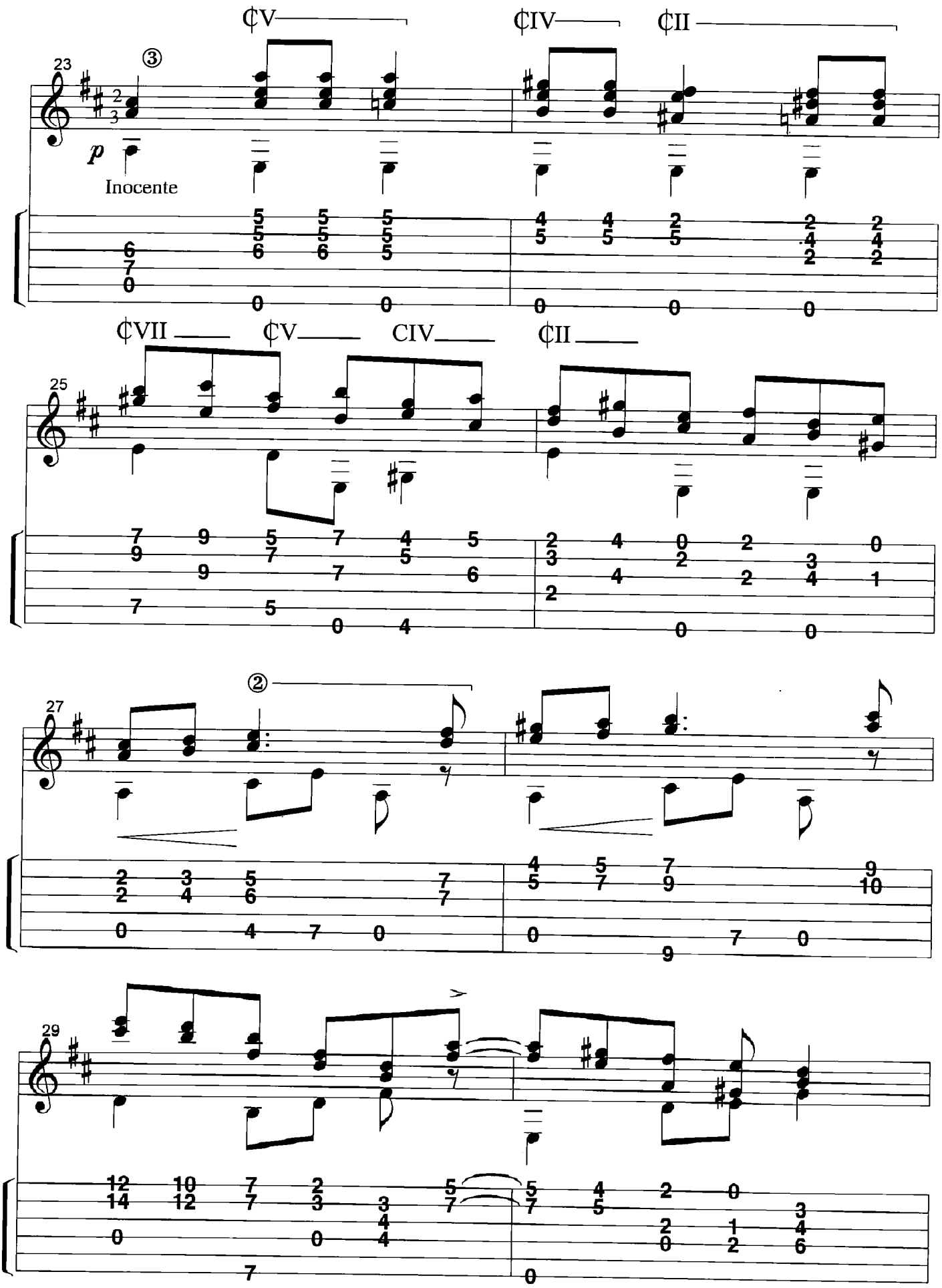
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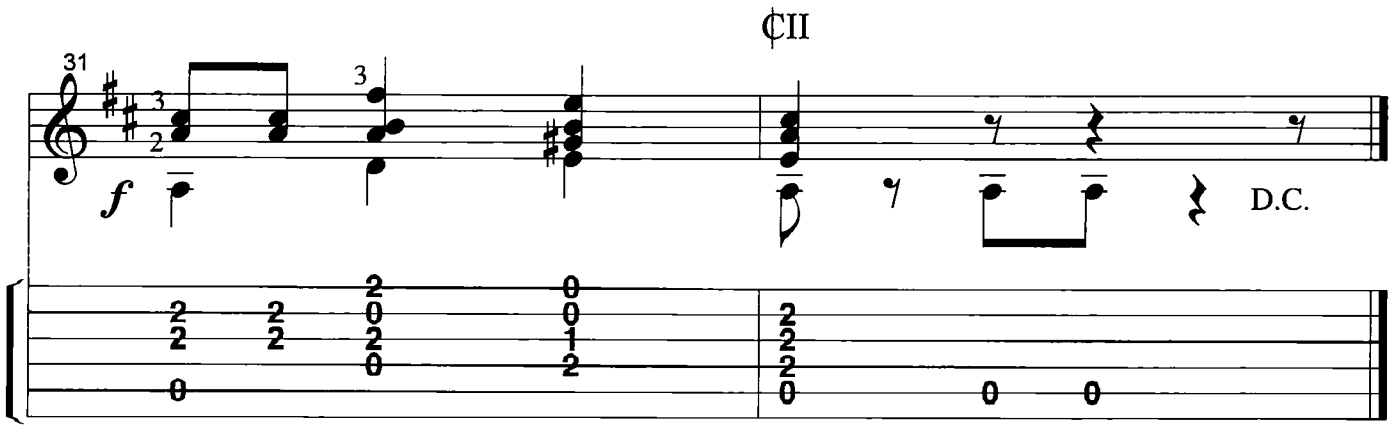
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D.C.

Ignacio Cervantes
1847–1905

In his book *La Música en Cuba*, Cuban author and music critic Alejo Carpentier refers to Ignacio Cervantes as the most important Cuban composer of the 19th Century. Although Cervantes respected the binary form established by his predecessor, Manuel Saumell, it was the romanticism of Cervantes' dances which distinguished the final evolutionary phase of the *contradanza*.

Cervantes was a child prodigy who began composing *contradanzas* when he was ten years old. He was also a versatile pianist capable of playing any genre of piano literature supremely well. In his late teens, his father took him to Paris where he was admitted to the Paris Conservatory. He won an important piano competition at the conservatory in 1866 as well as first prizes in harmony, fugue, and counterpoint. Franz Liszt is said to have knocked on Cervantes' door after hearing him play while walking through the streets of Paris. The maestro requested entry to the young student's quarters so that he might listen for awhile; the stunned Cervantes complied.

Although in demand as an accompanist to the best *bel canto* singers in Paris, Cervantes returned to Havana in 1870. It wasn't long before he realized the city could not provide the artistic opportunities he deserved, and he fell into a severe, prolonged depression. Nonetheless, he continued to compose in a wide variety of idioms combining the harmonic palette of the European romantics with characteristically Cuban rhythms. He wrote operettas, an opera, the *Symphony in C Major*, various orchestral pieces, transcriptions of his own work and that of others, pieces for voice and piano, and chamber music. His 37 *Dances for Piano*, many of which are contradanzas, deserve particular mention as brilliant, beautifully structured compositions.

The following guitar transcriptions were also originally written for the piano, and conceived by Cervantes as "a page in the album of the Romantic Century." Together with improvised components, they reflect the popular melodic and rhythmic unity which reached its apex in Cuban dances as performed at dance academies. The overall effect was described by Richard H. Dana in 1859 as "a rondo of constantly returning, delicious melody."

The *contradanza* titles assigned by Cervantes were equally eccentric as those coined by Saumell. Unfortunately, titles were prone to change with the publication of different editions and it is uncertain whether any of those originally assigned by Cervantes have survived. This uncertainty of nomenclature is of minor importance in terms of their interpretation as long as the pieces are played with particular attention to dynamic markings.

Ignacio Cervantes

Te quiero tanto 62
Mis amores 67
Lejos de ti 72
La tarde está amorosa 77
El velorio 82
Un recuerdo 87
Intima 92
La celosa 95
Siempre si 100
Adiós a Cuba 105

Te quiero tanto

Danza

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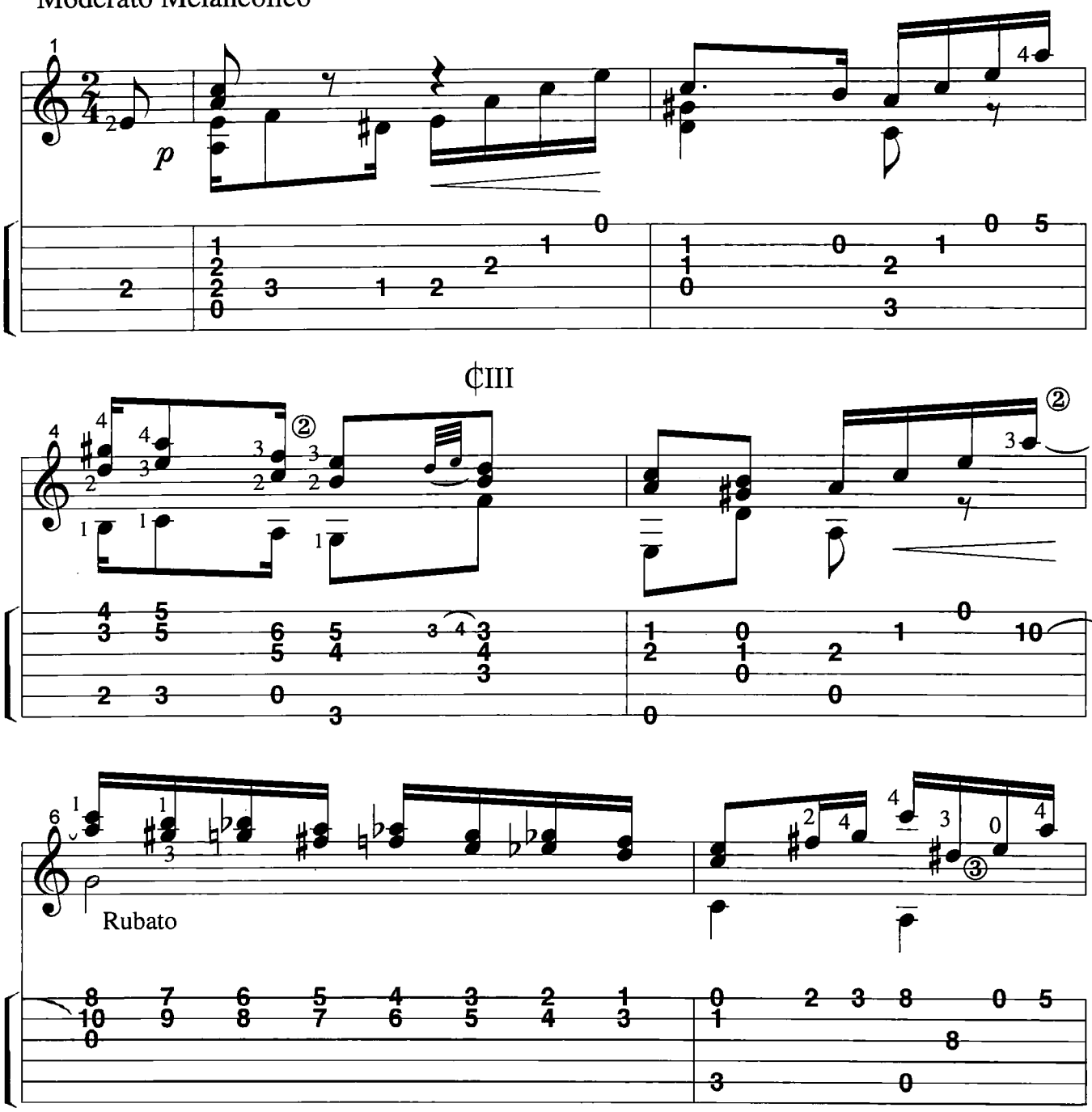
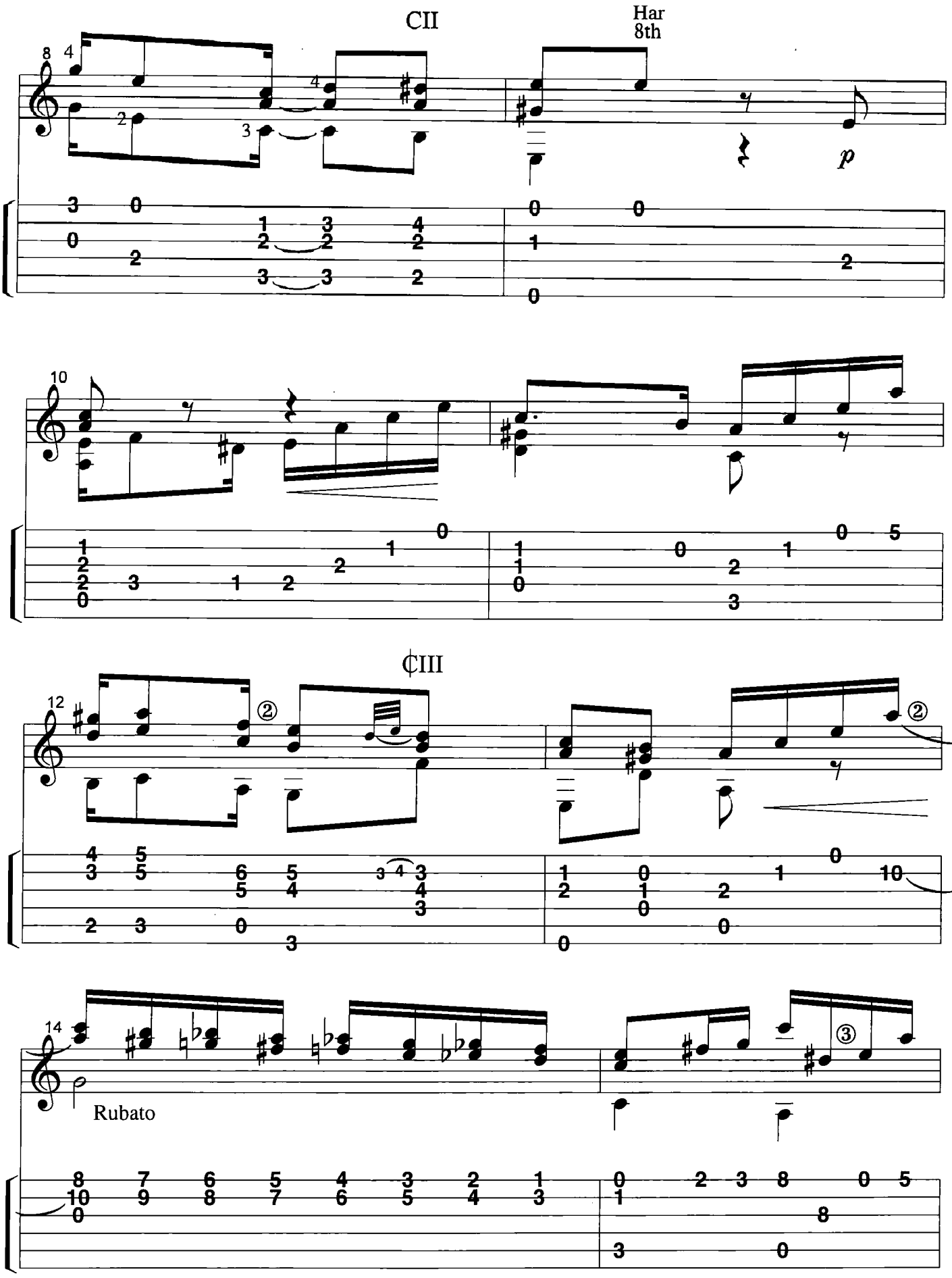
Ignacio Cervantes
(1847-1905)

Moderato Melancólico

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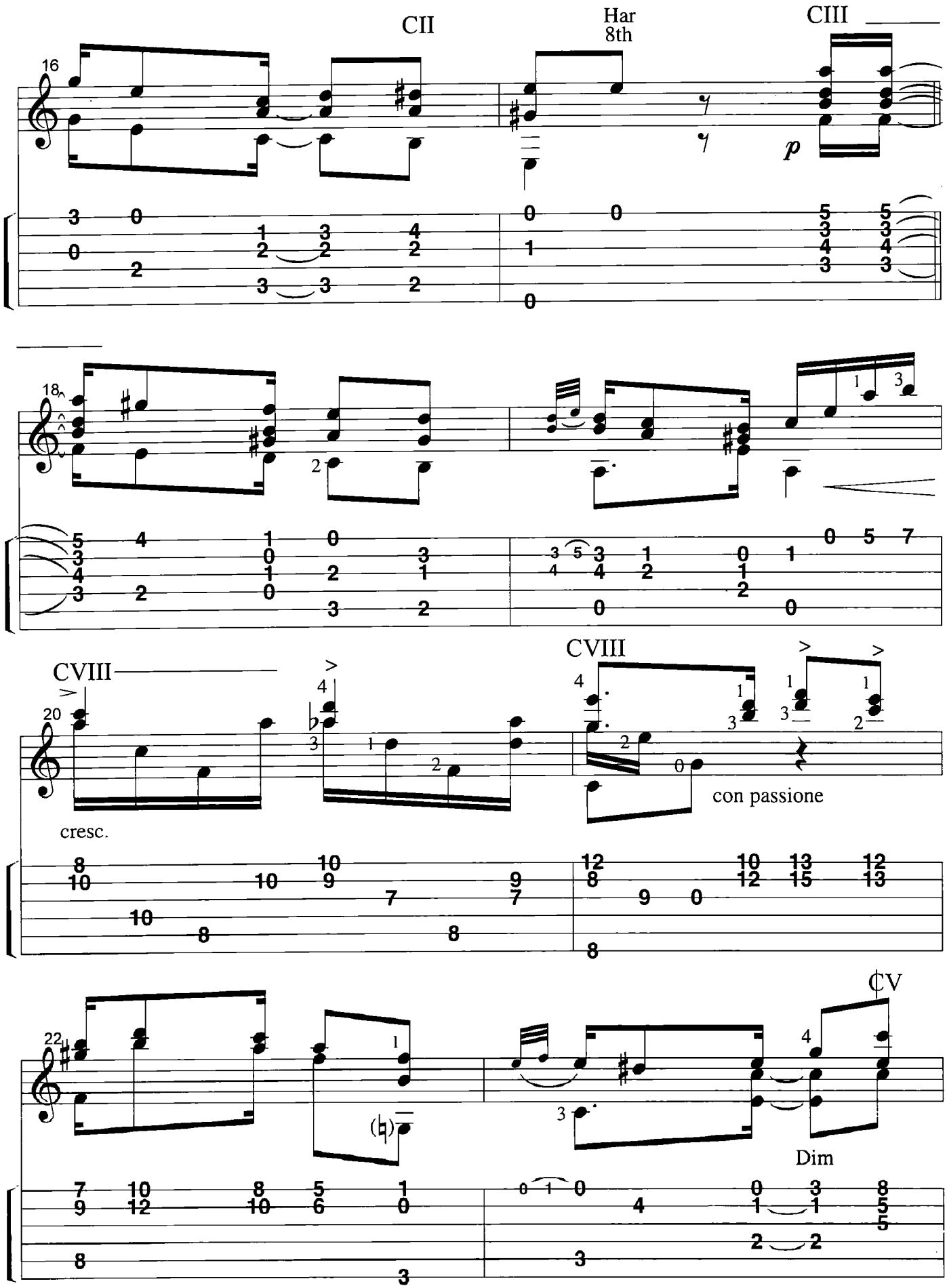
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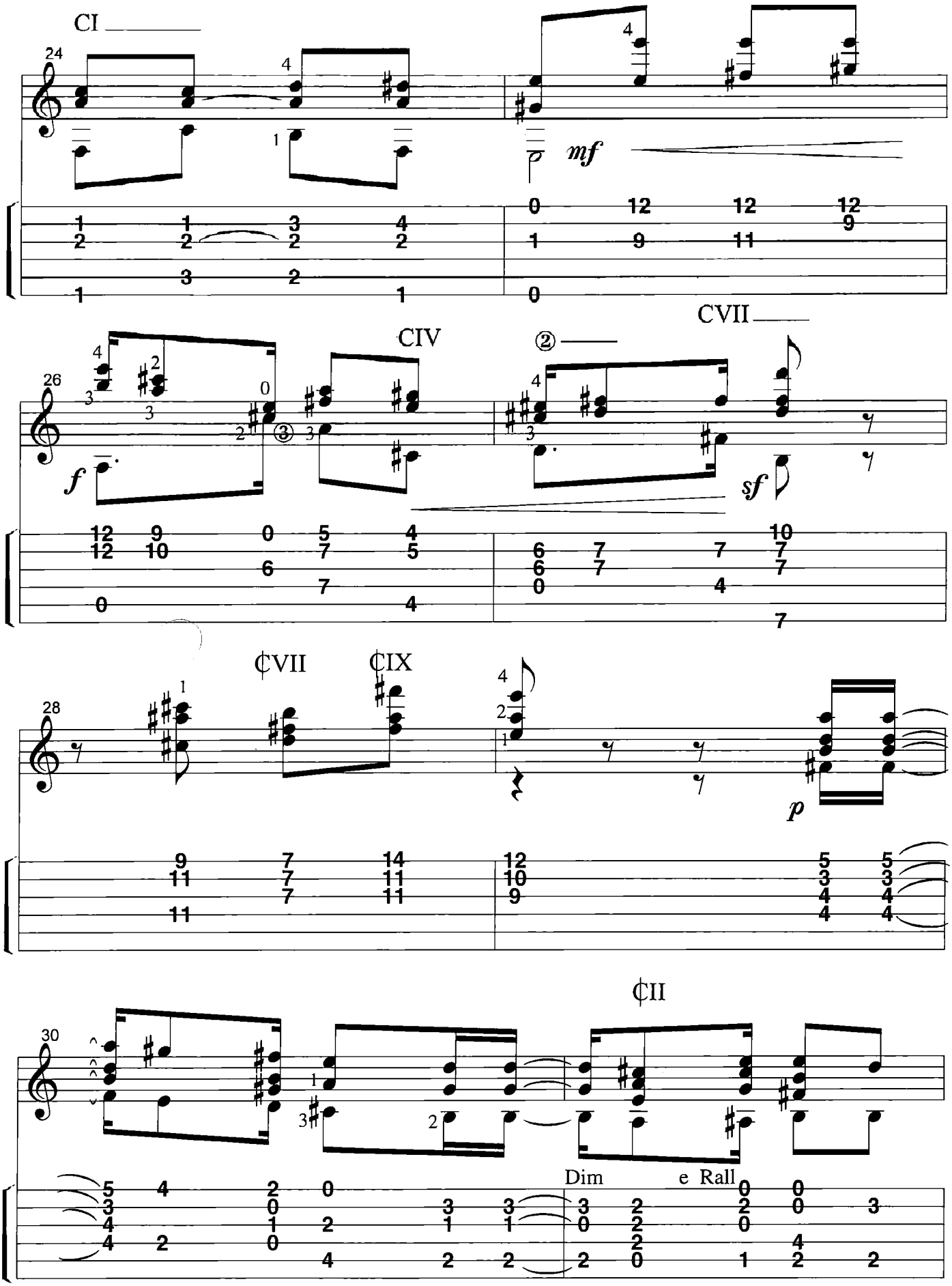
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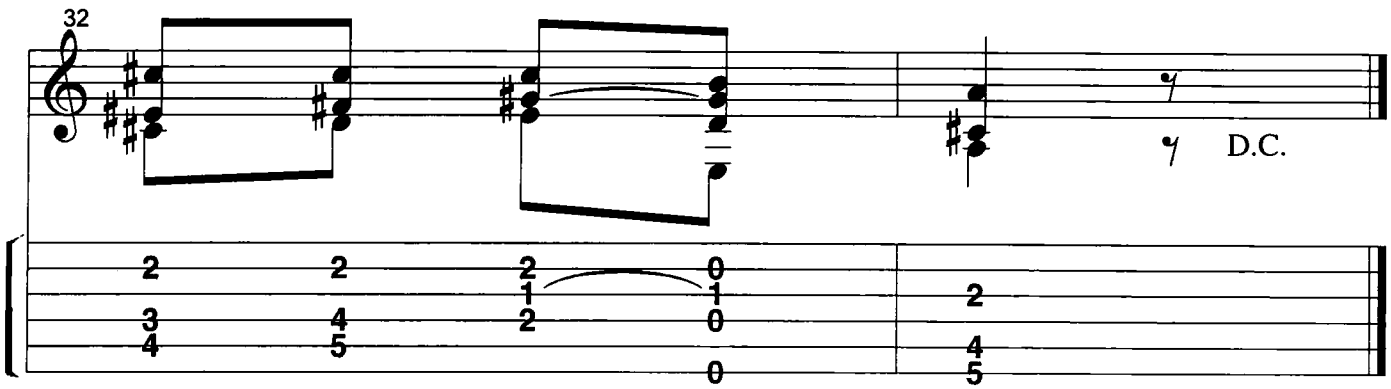
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D.C.

Mis amores

Danza

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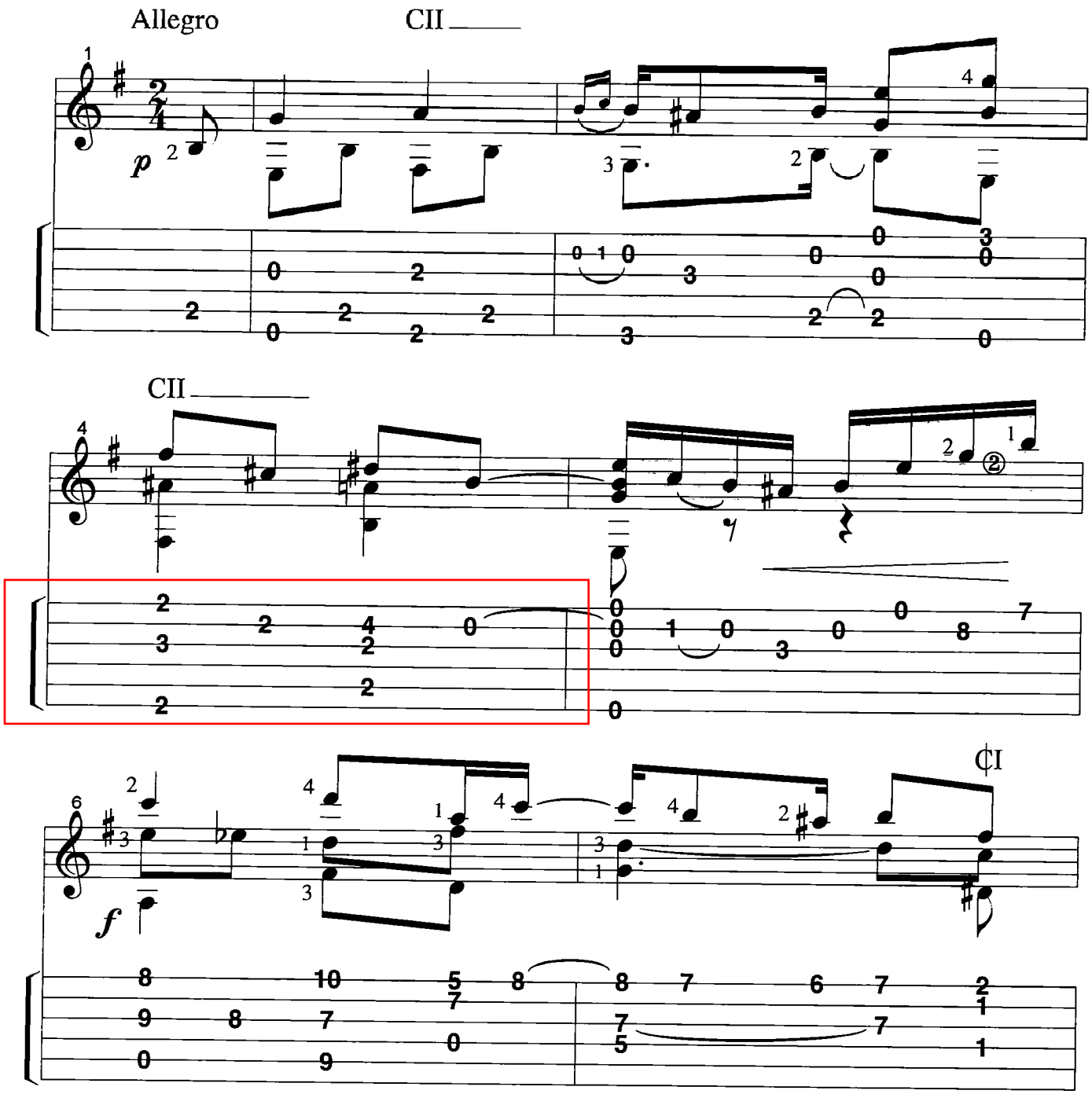
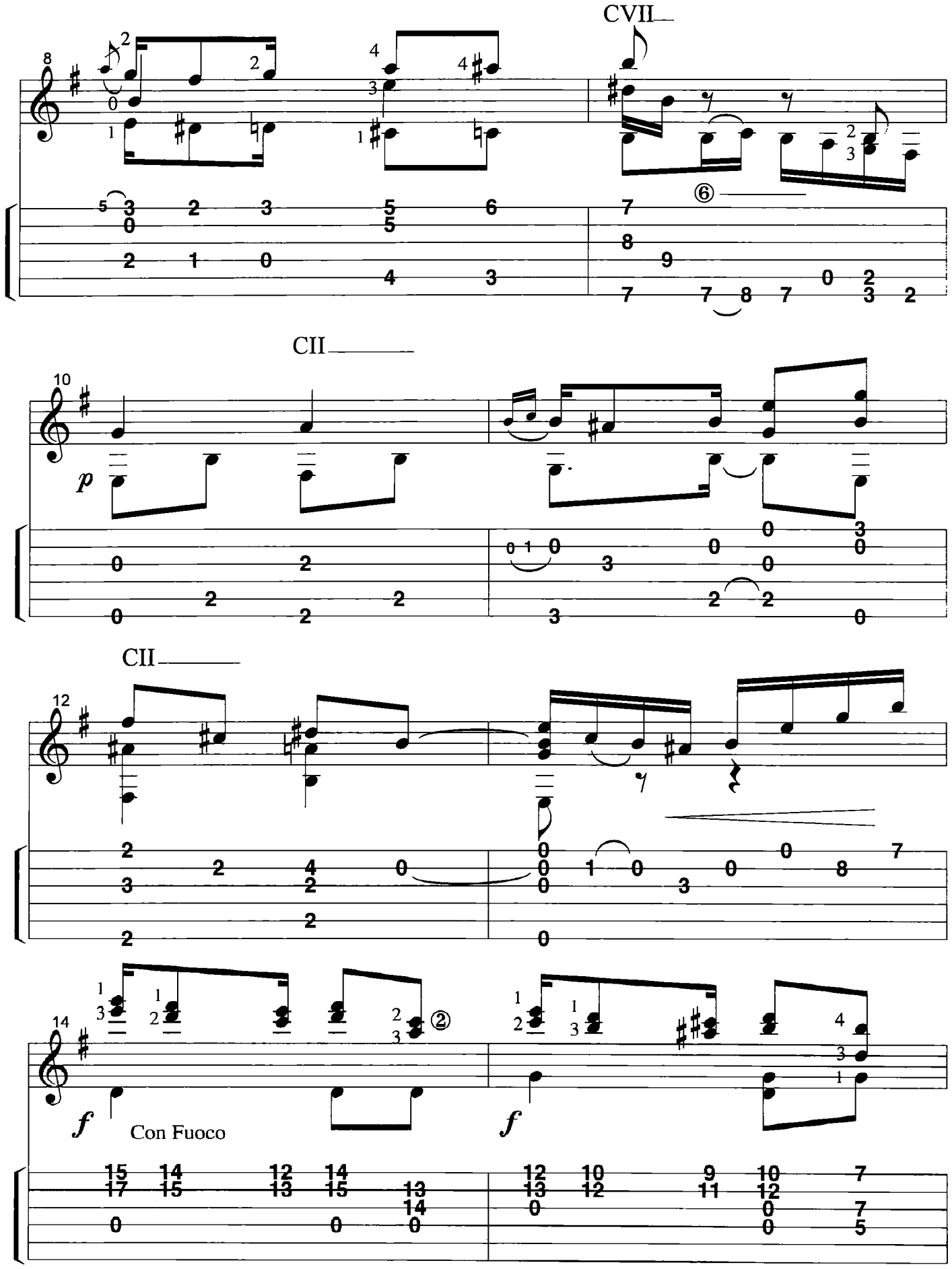
Ignacio Cervantes
(1847-1905)

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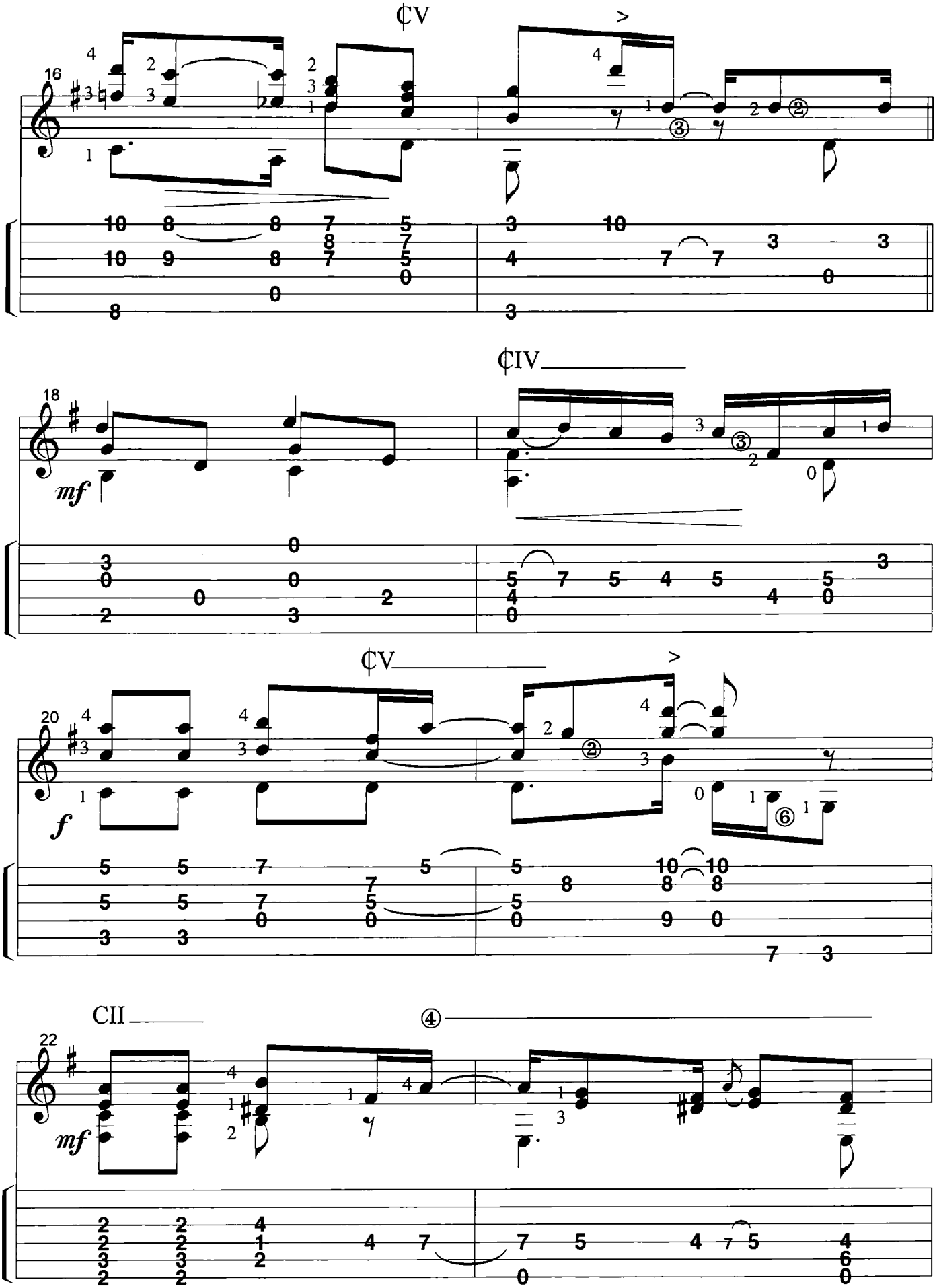
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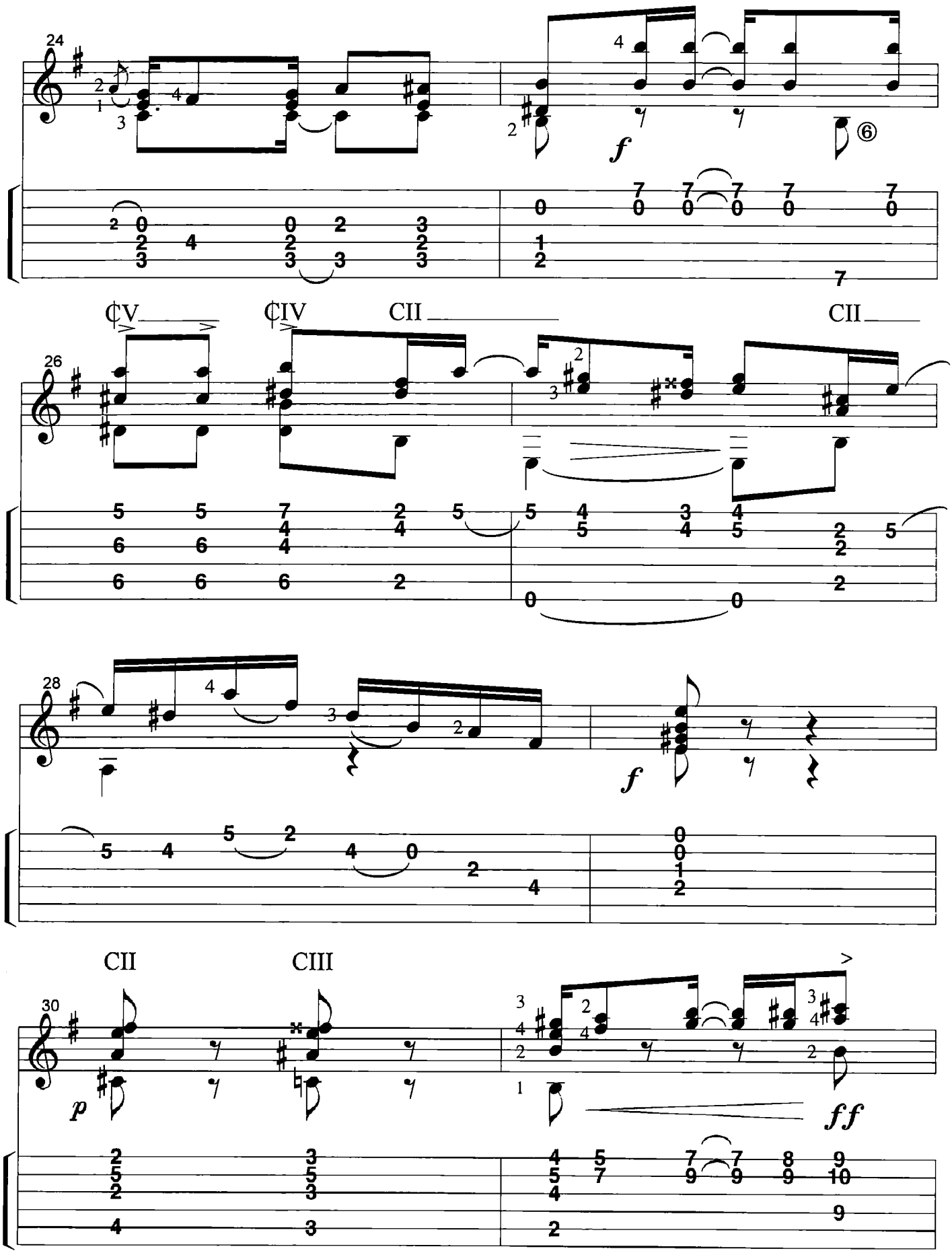
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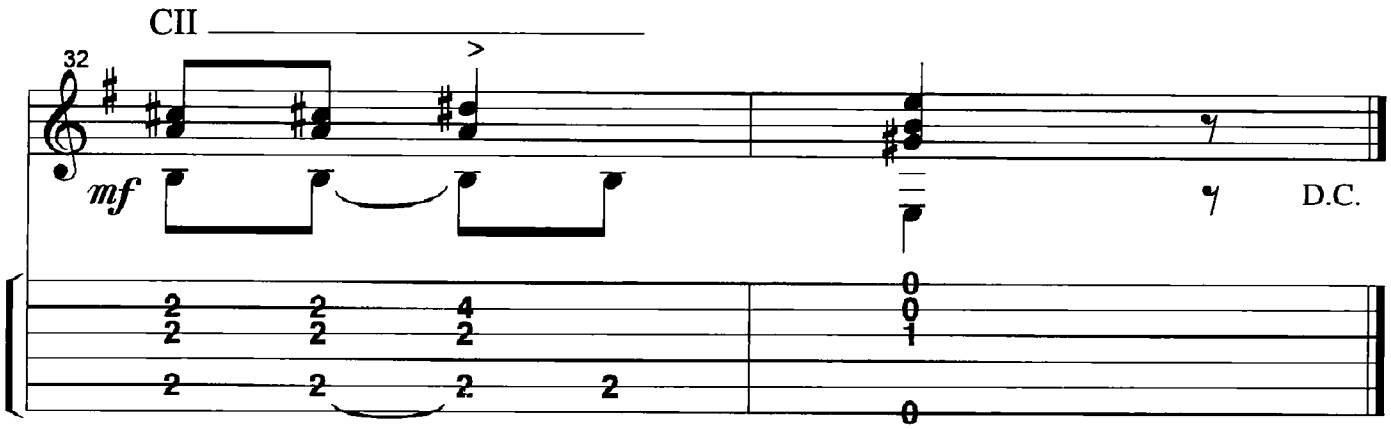
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Lejos de ti

Danza

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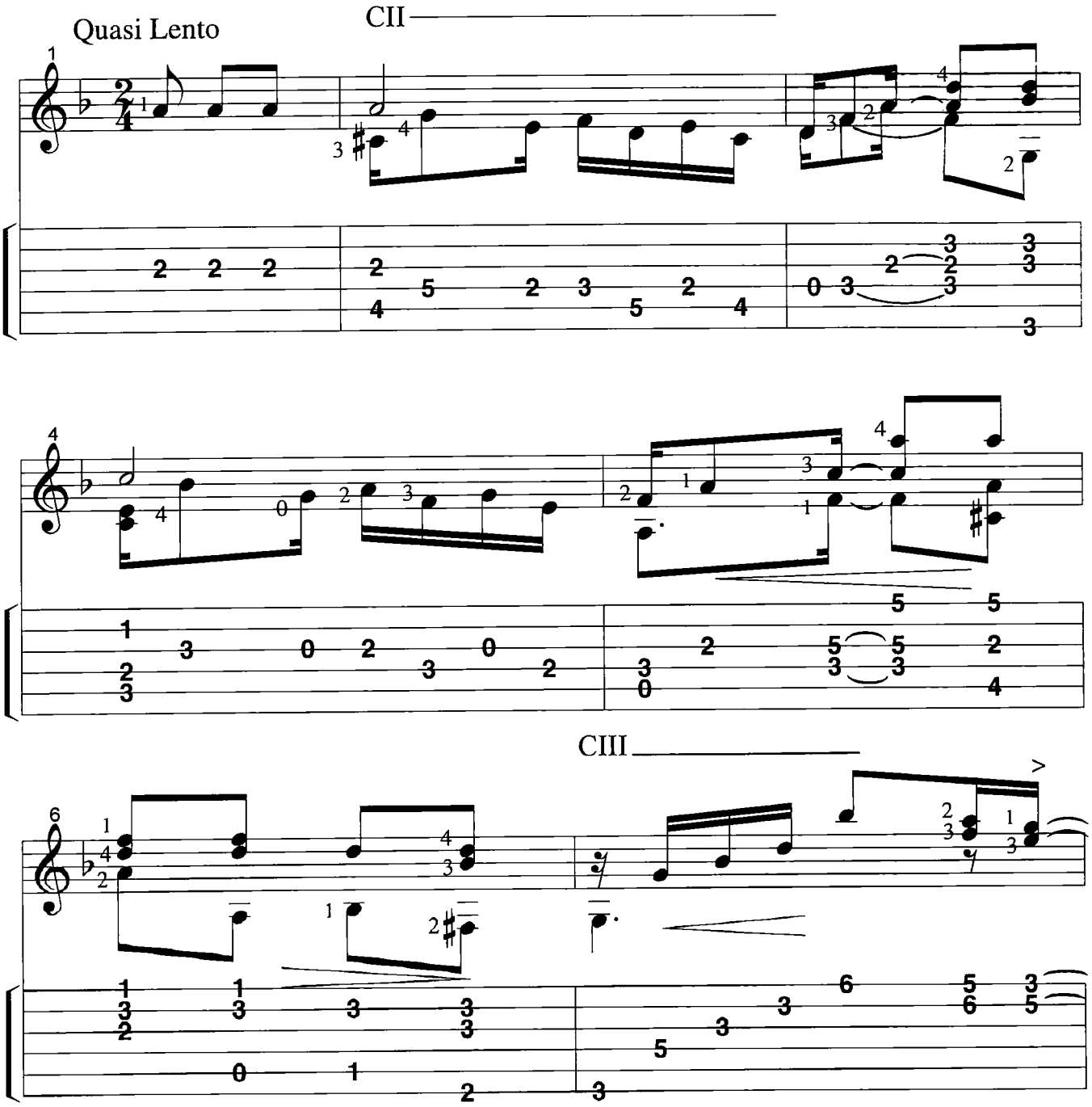
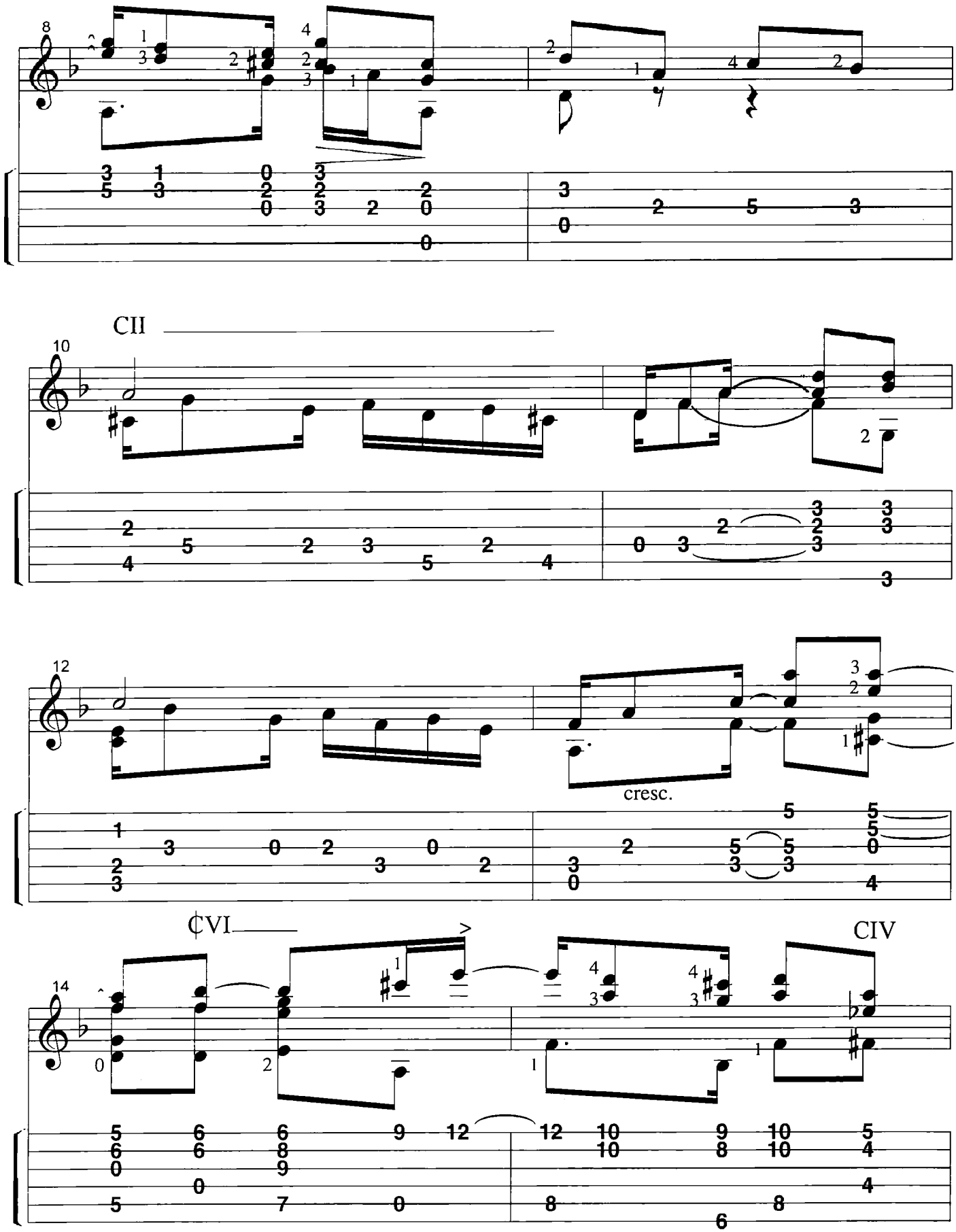
Ignacio Cervantes
(1847-1905)

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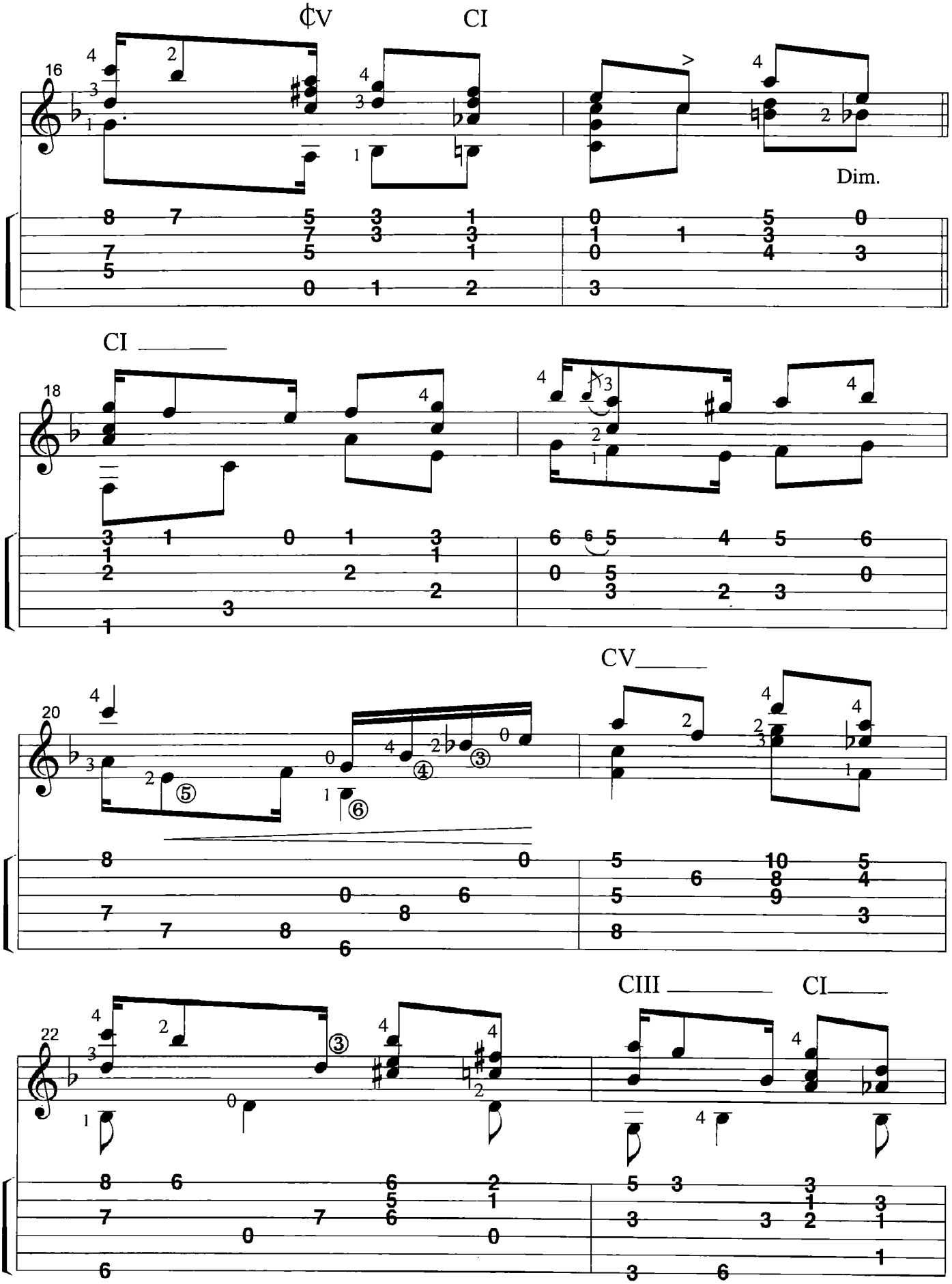
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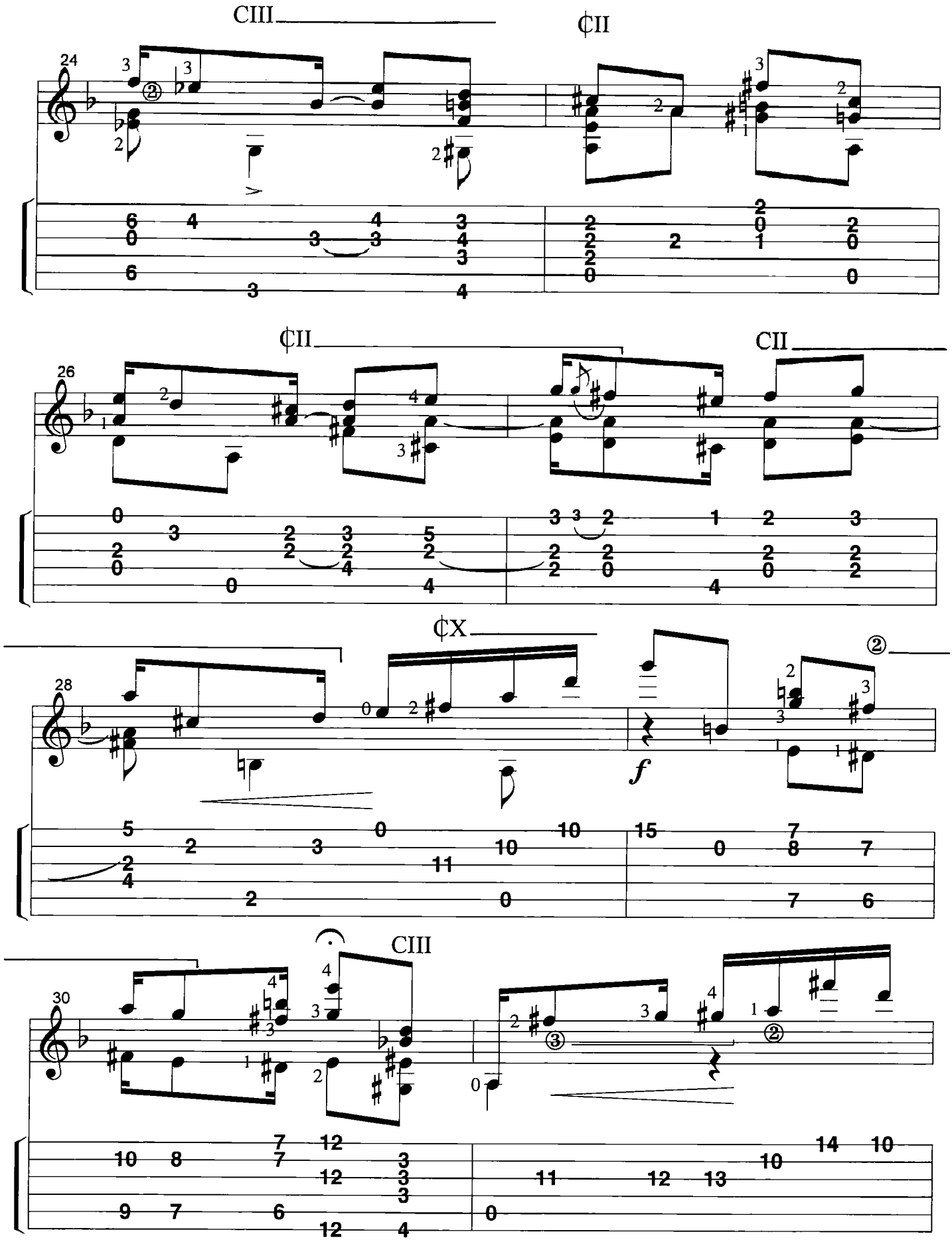
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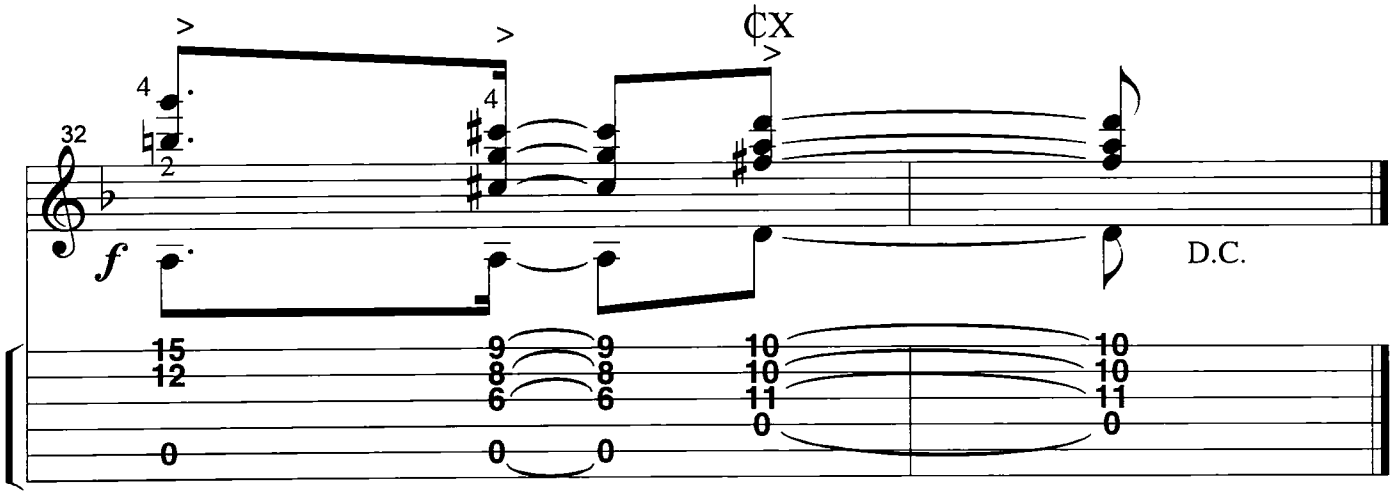
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La tarde está amorosa

Danza

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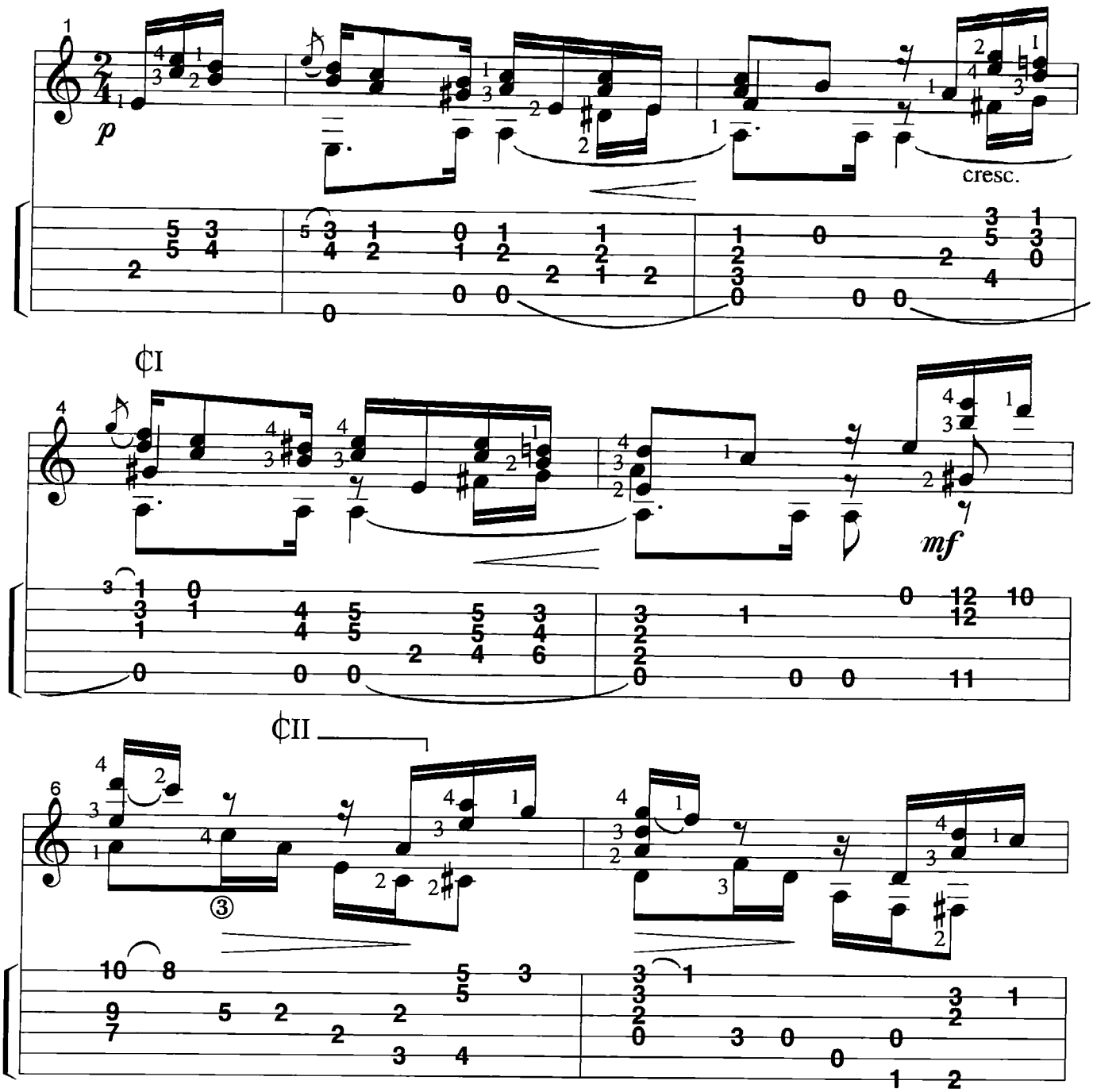
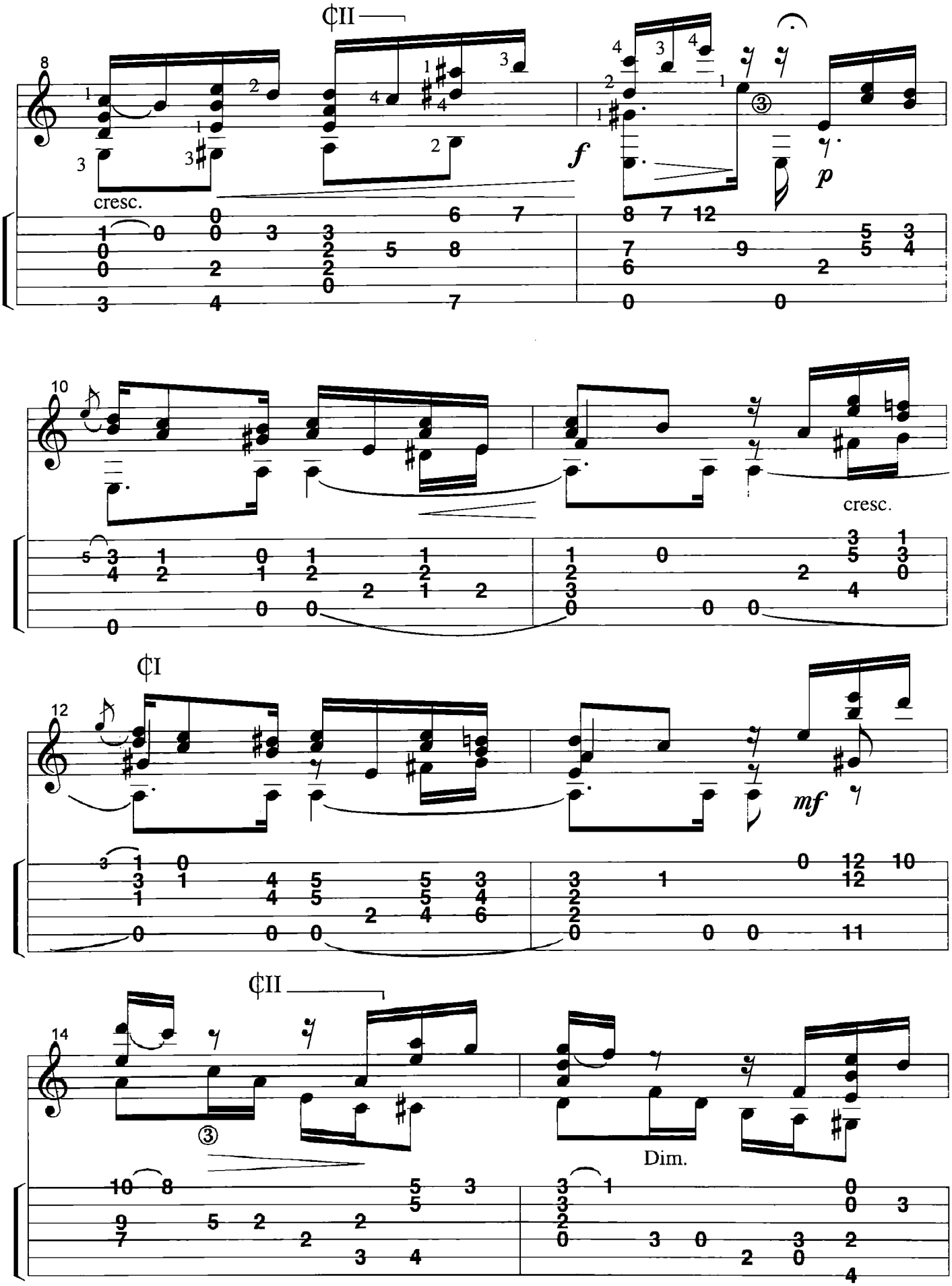
Ignacio Cervantes
(1847-1905)

Moderato Appassionato

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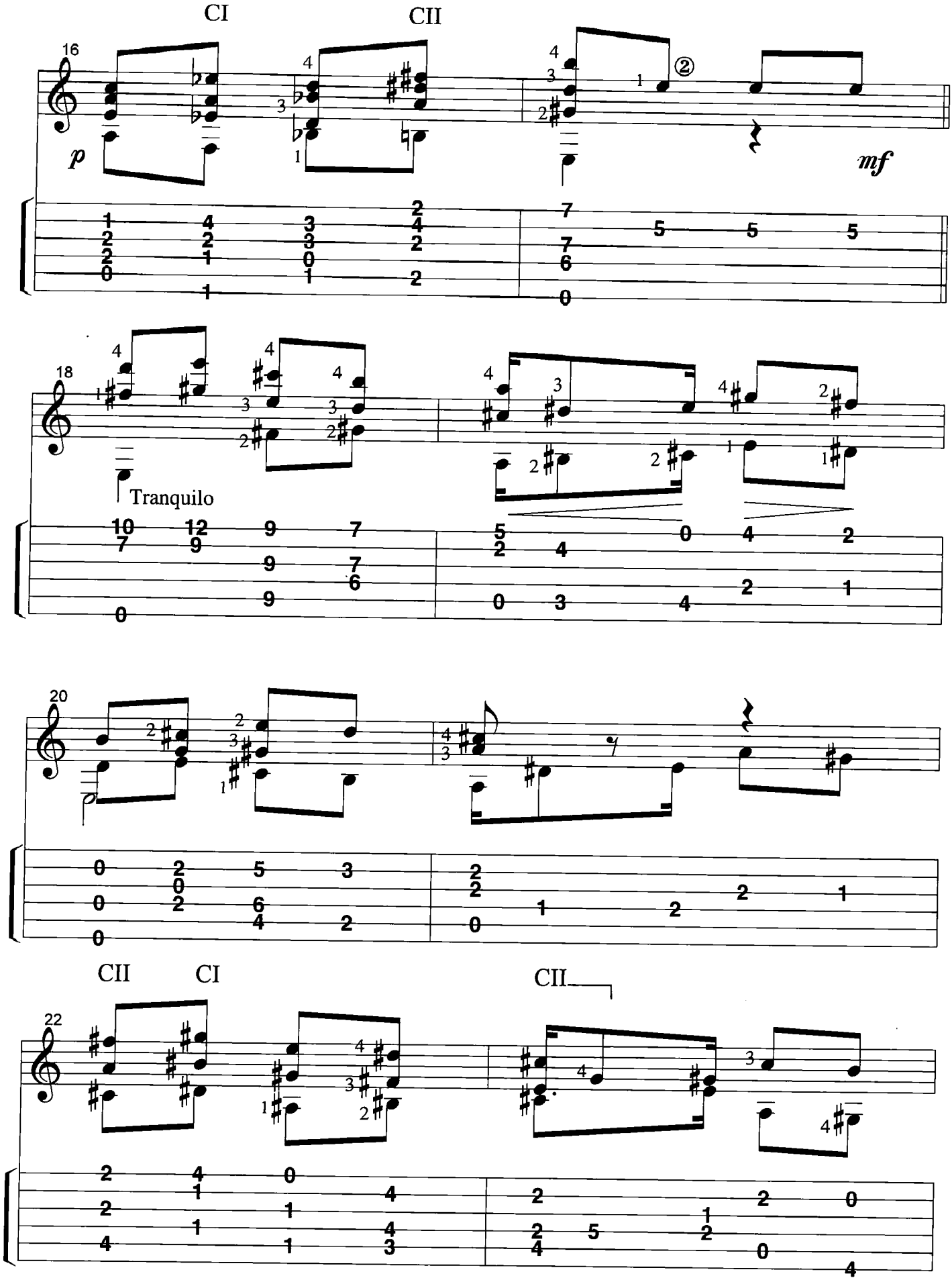
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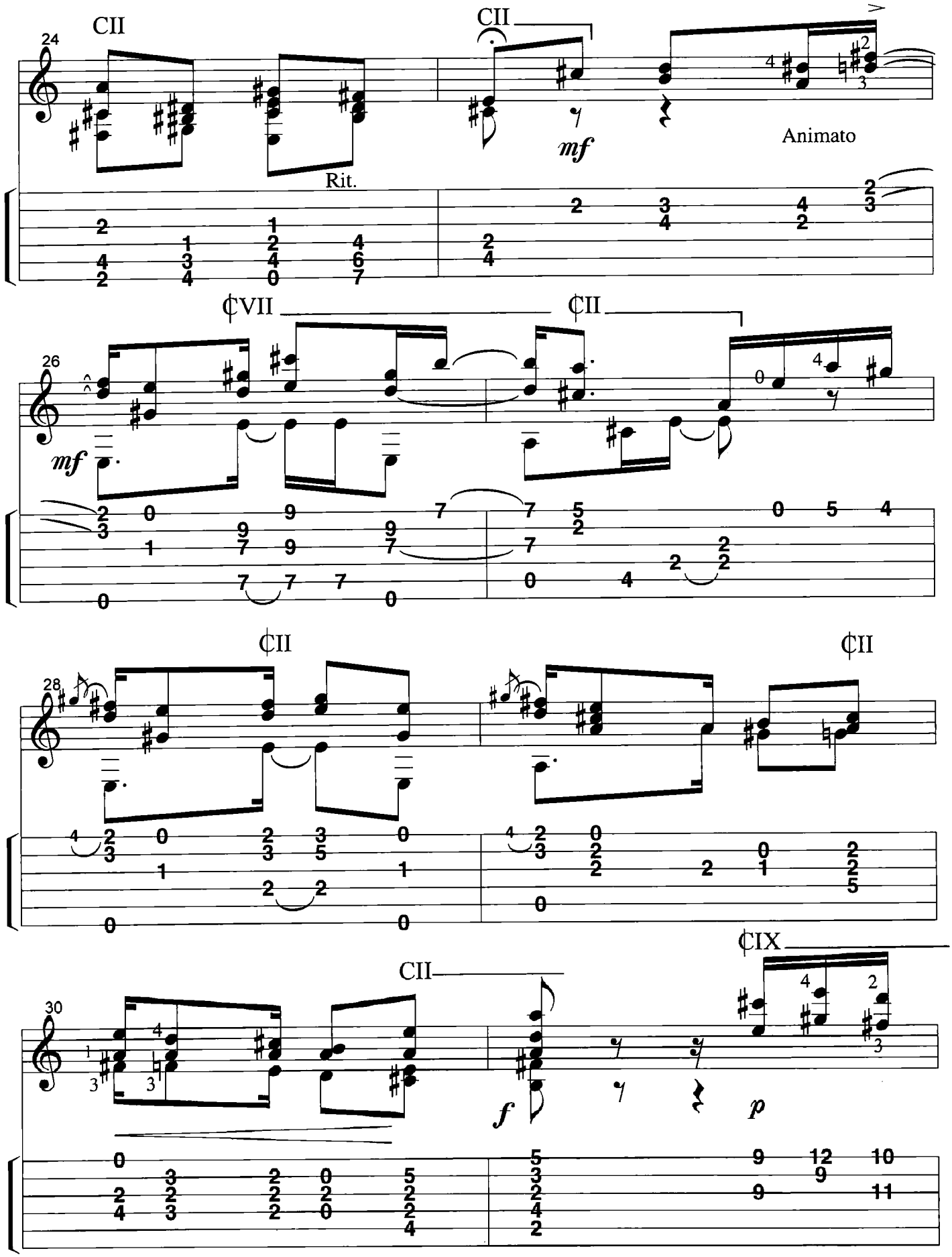
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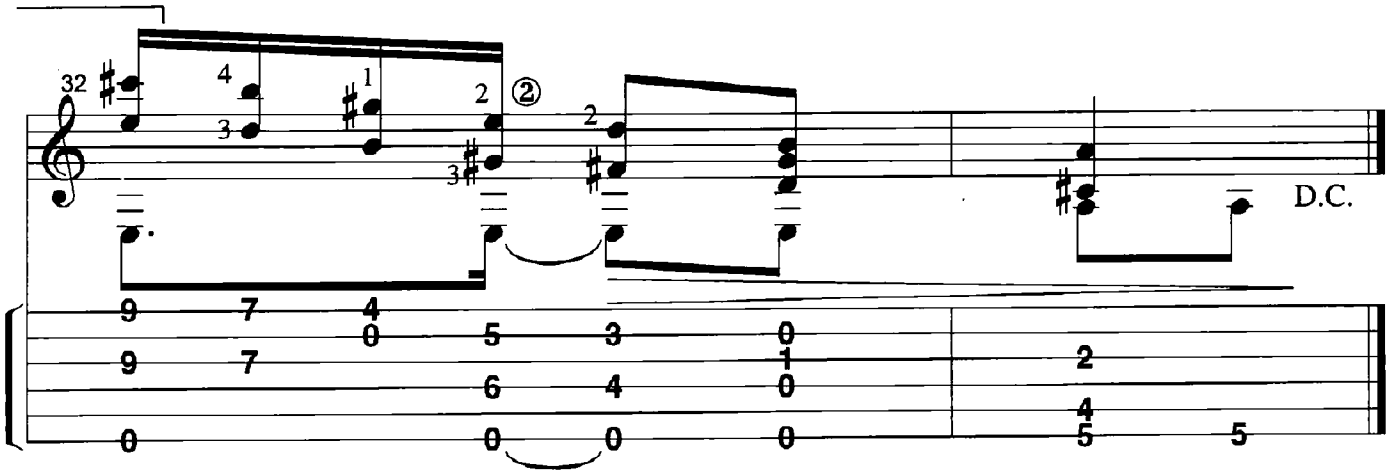
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El velorio

Danza

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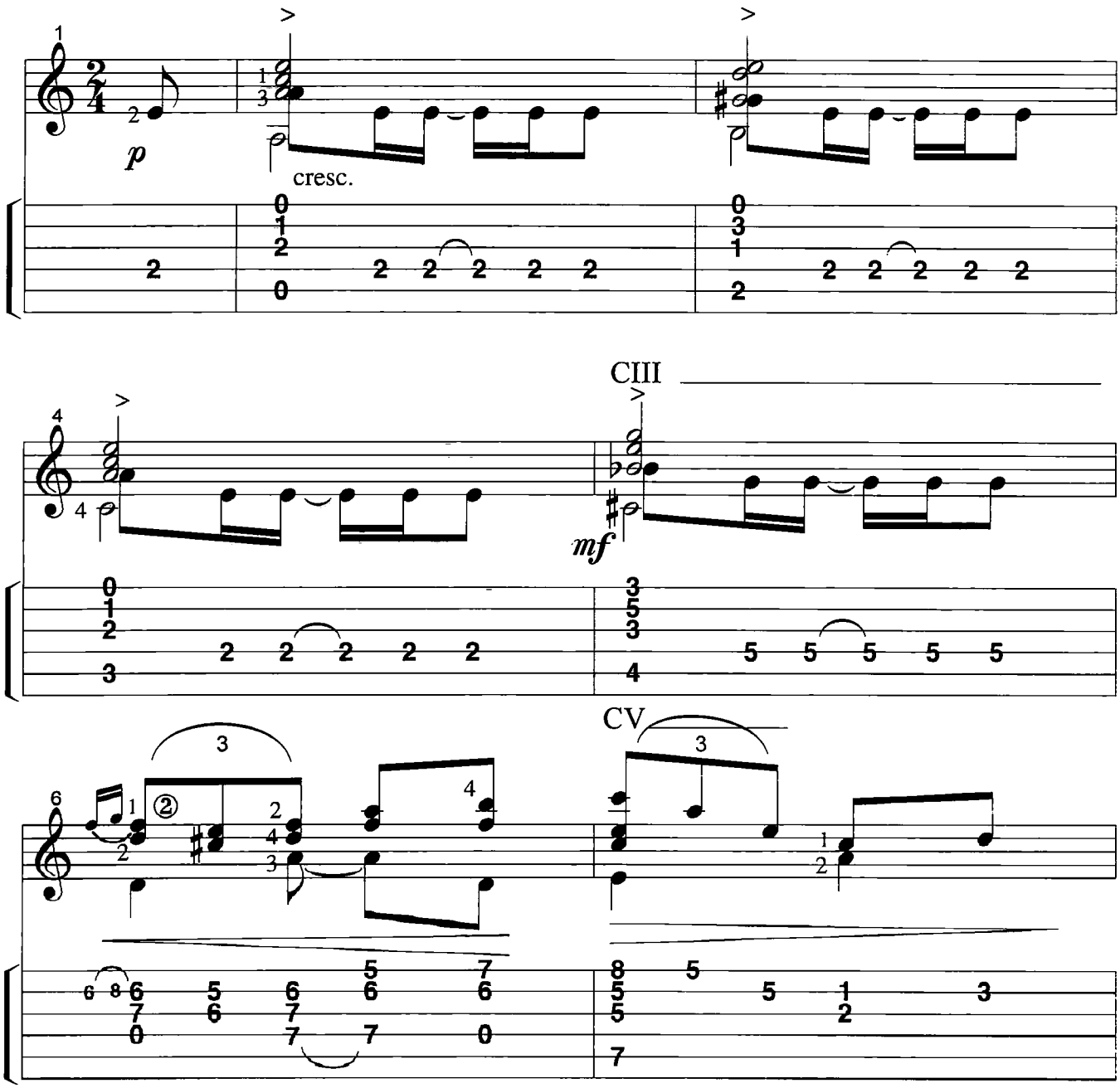
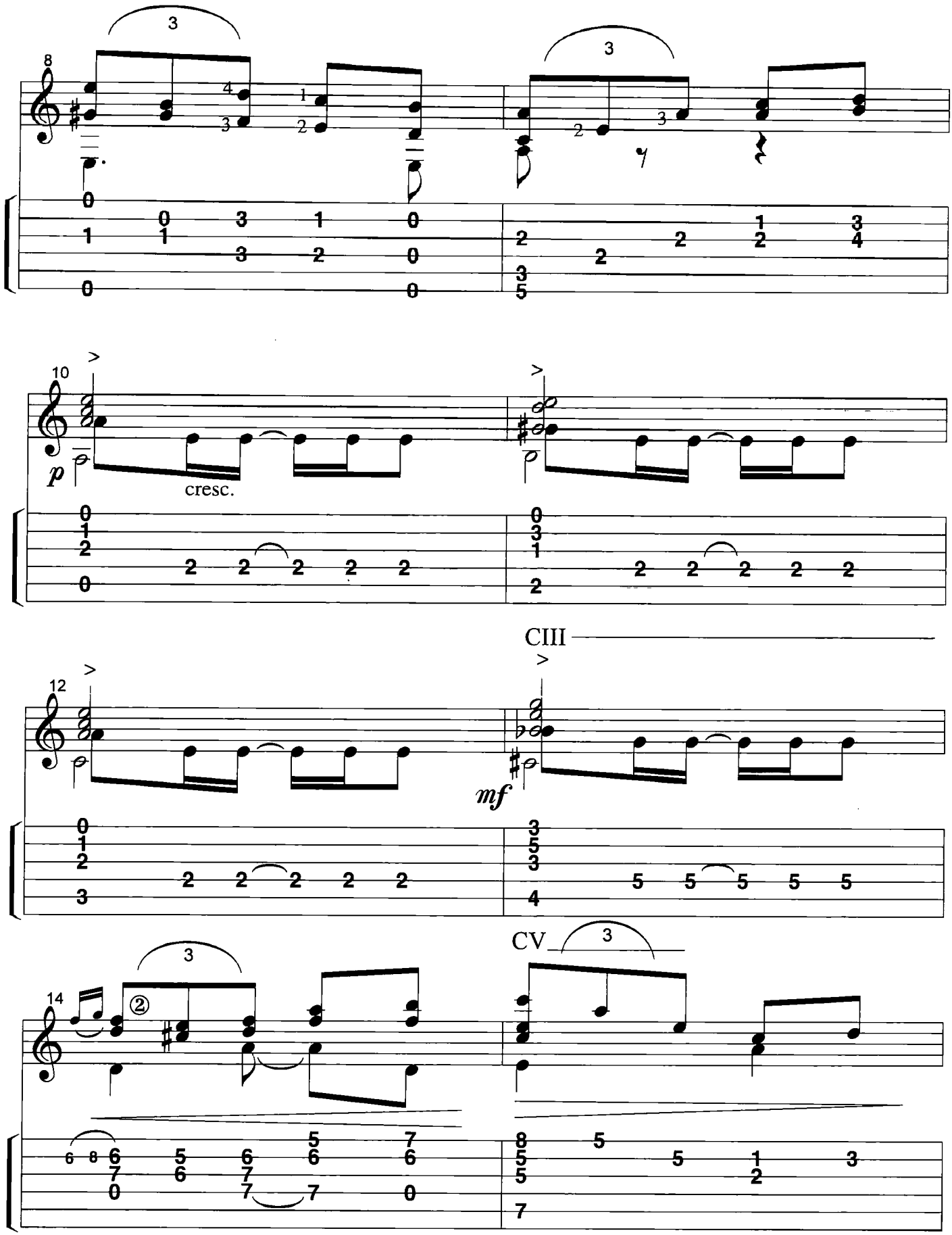
Ignacio Cervantes
(1847-1905)

Allegro Moderato

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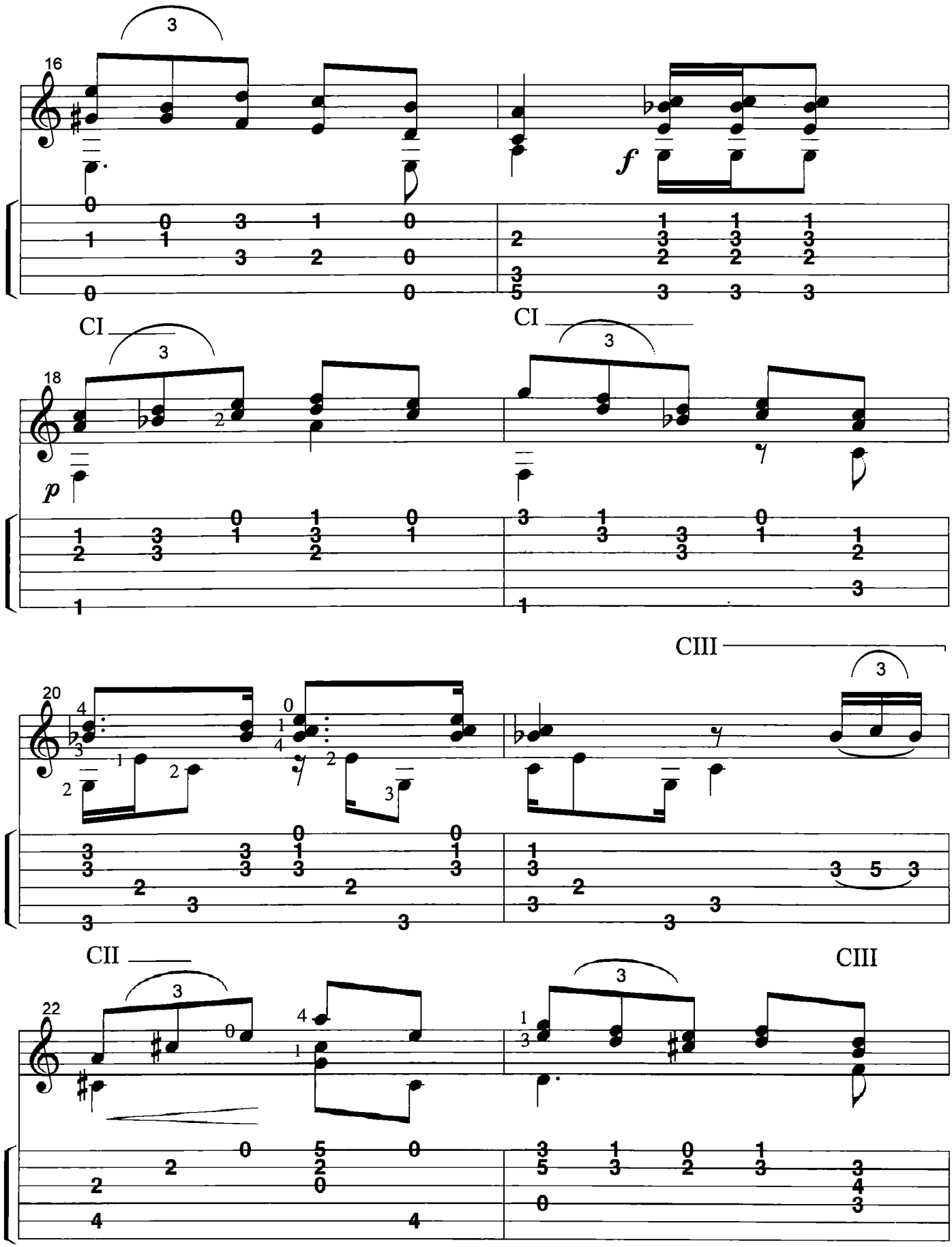
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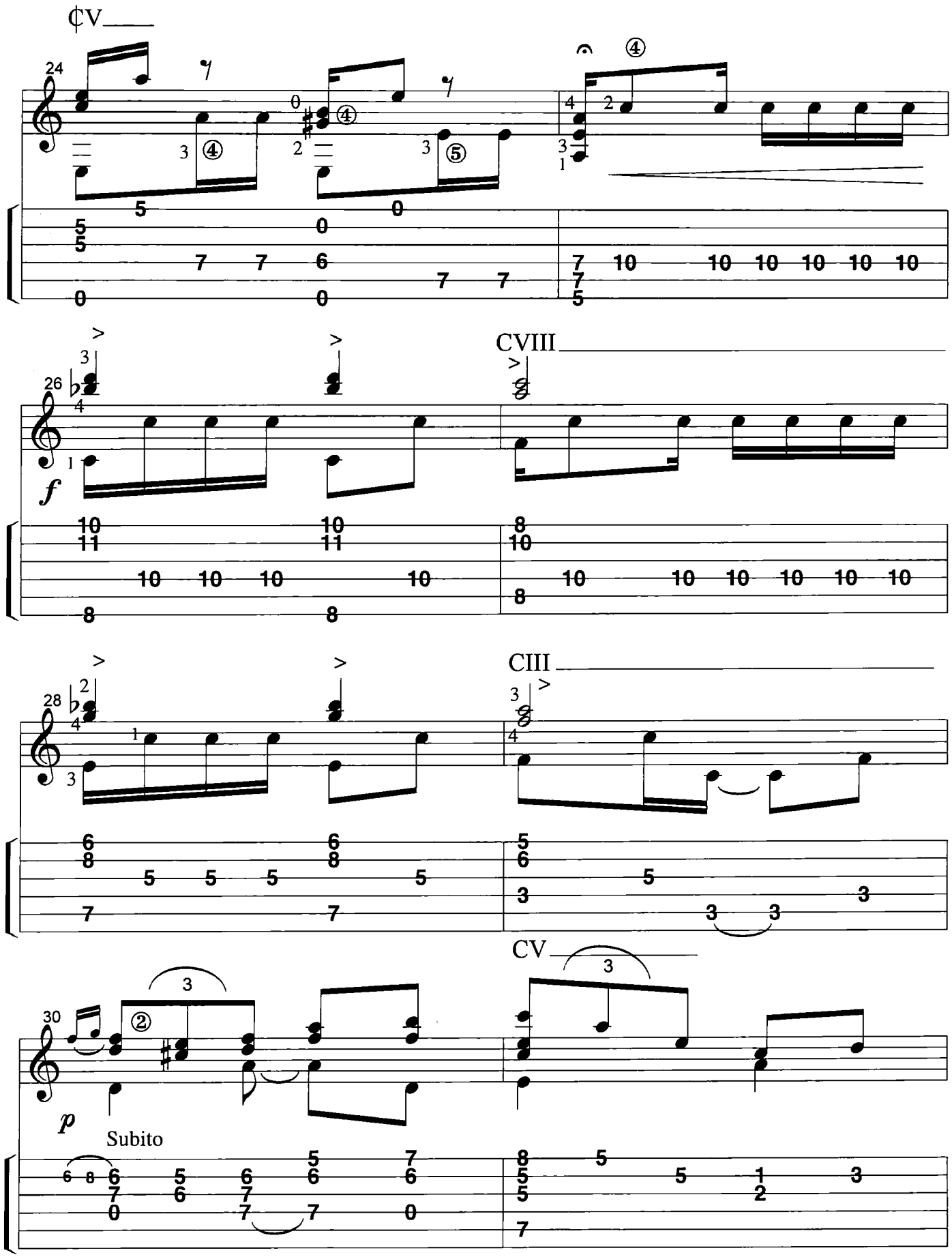
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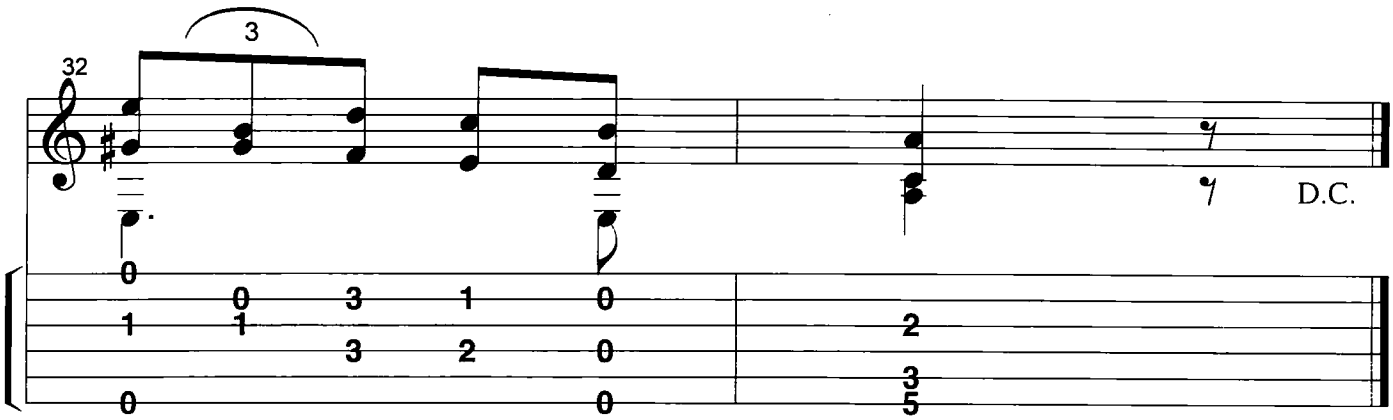
32
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D.C.

Un recuerdo

Danza

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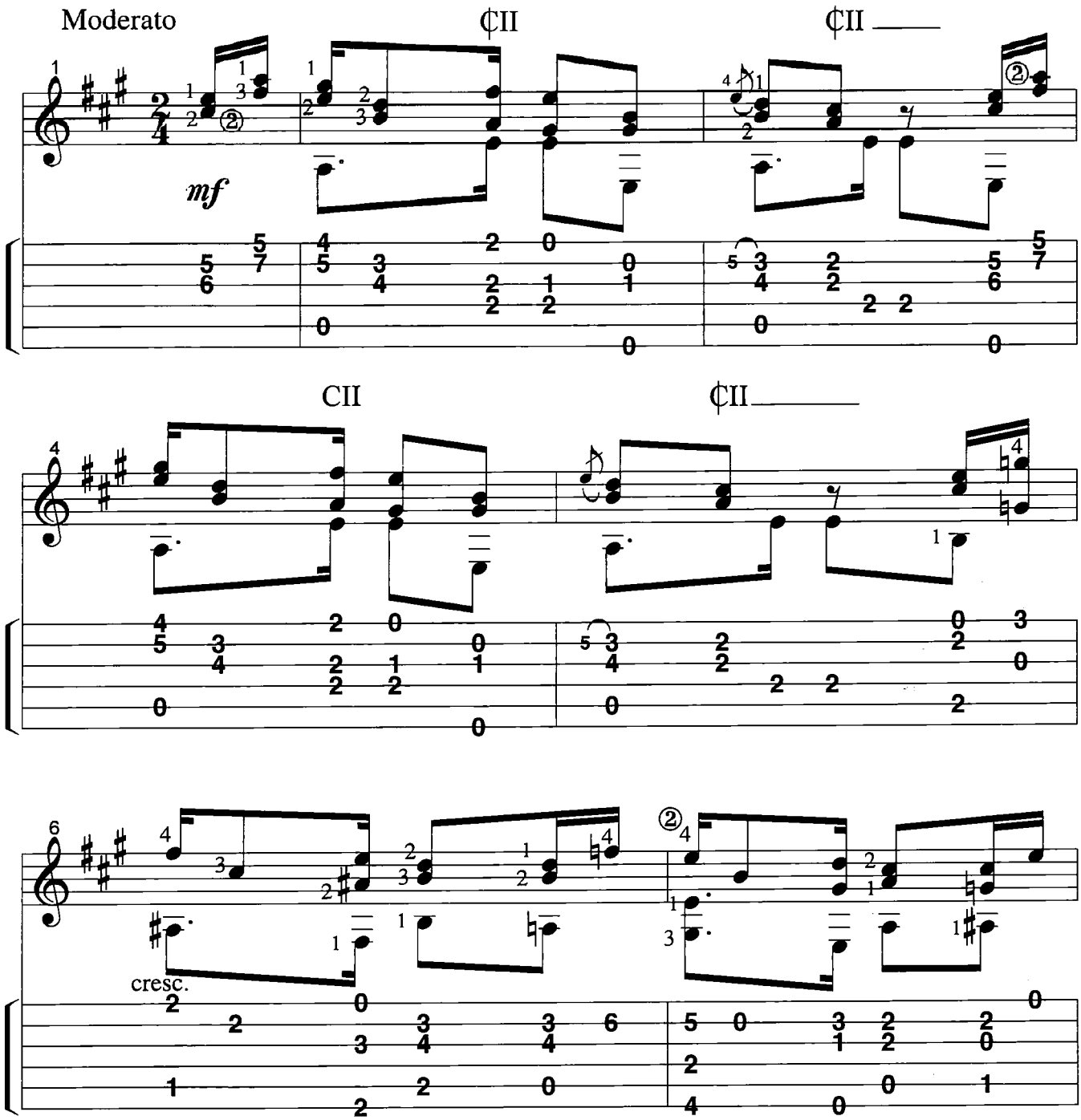
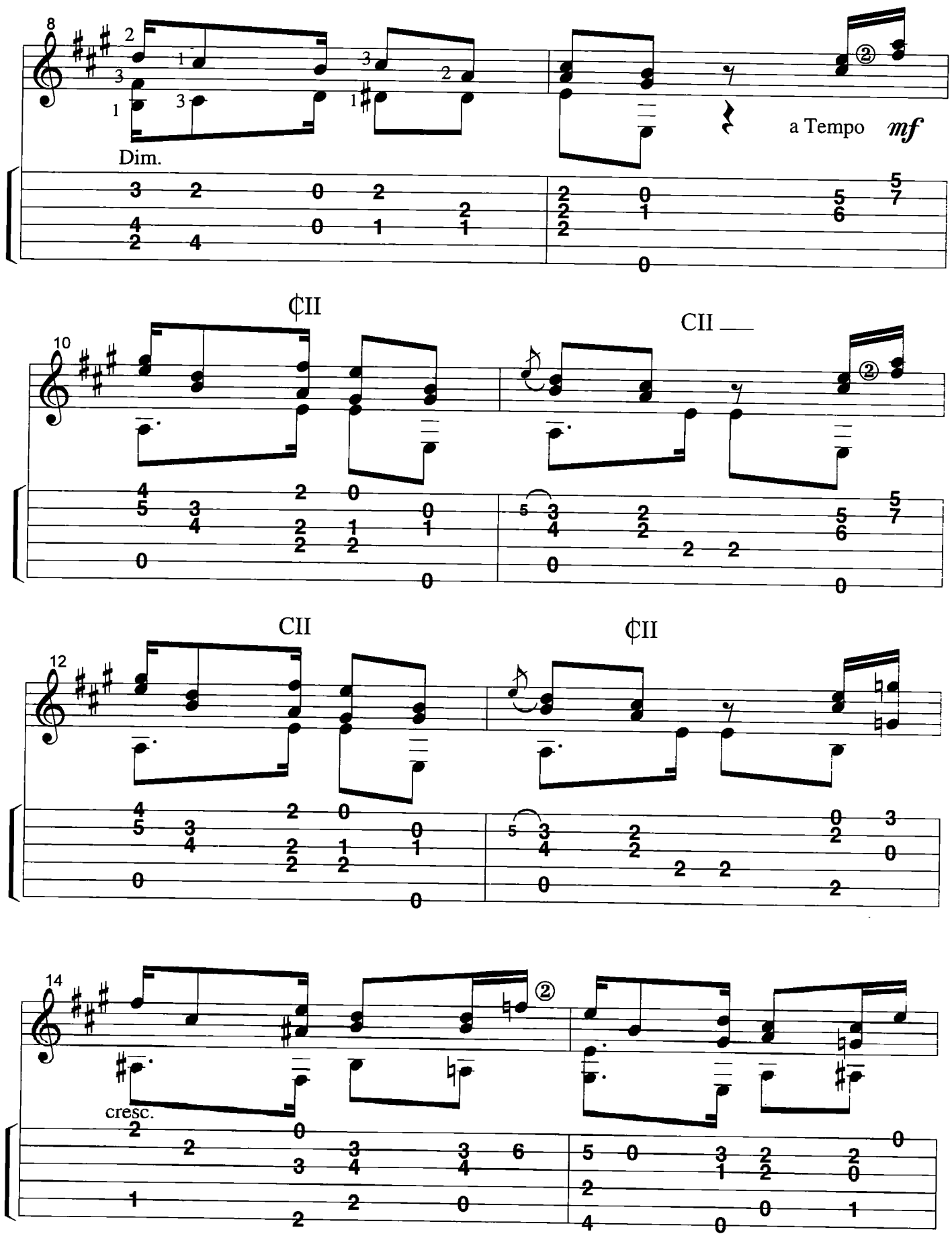
Ignacio Cervantes
(1847-1905)

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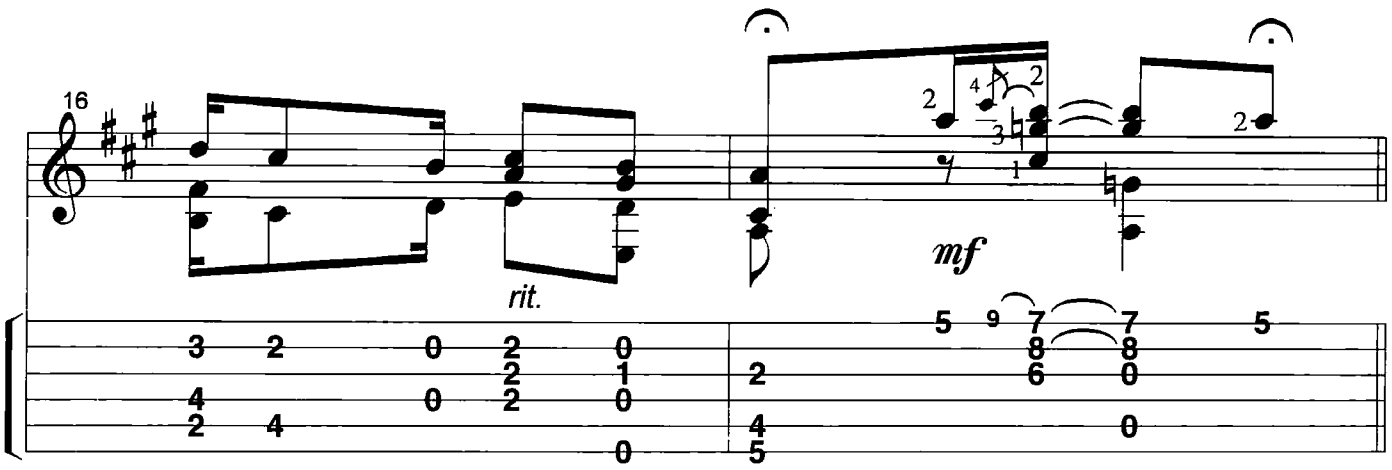
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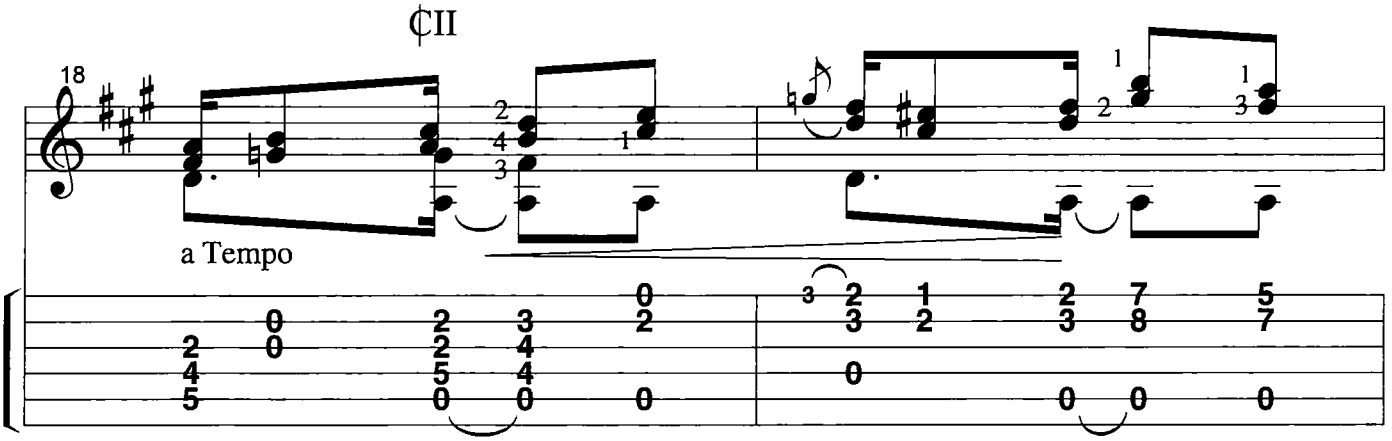
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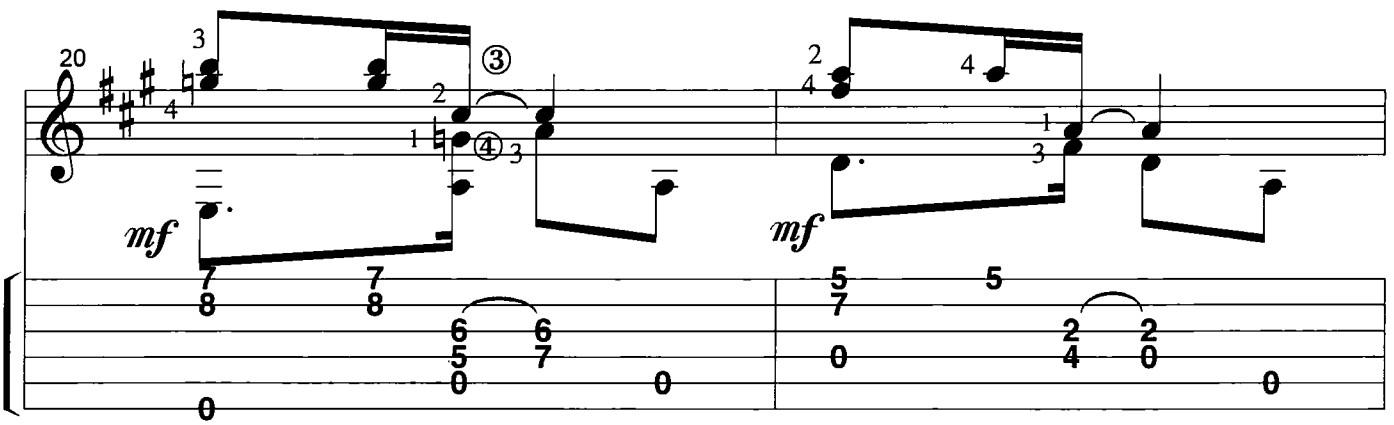
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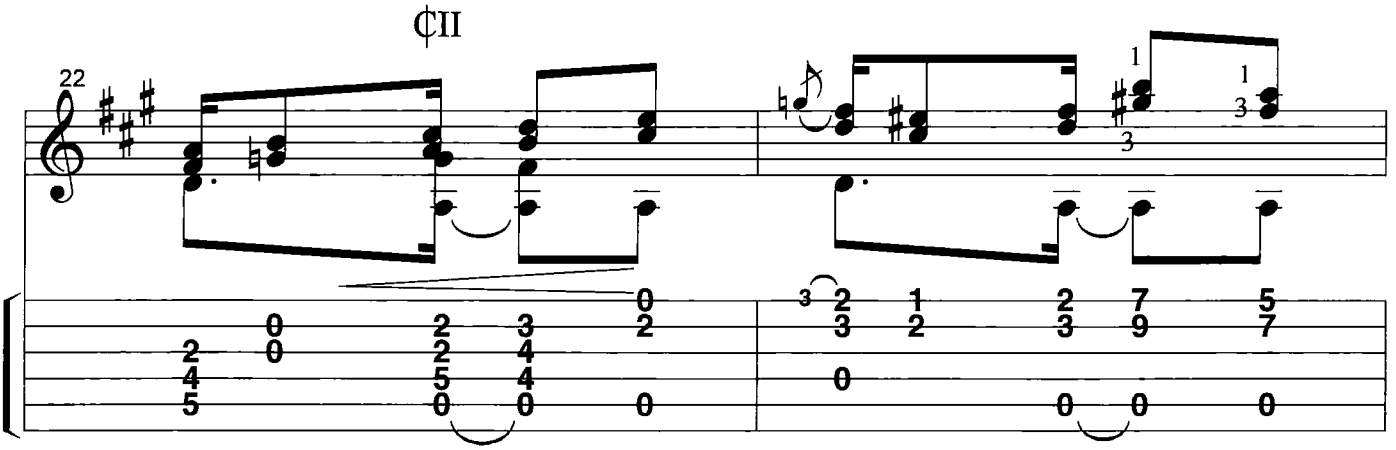
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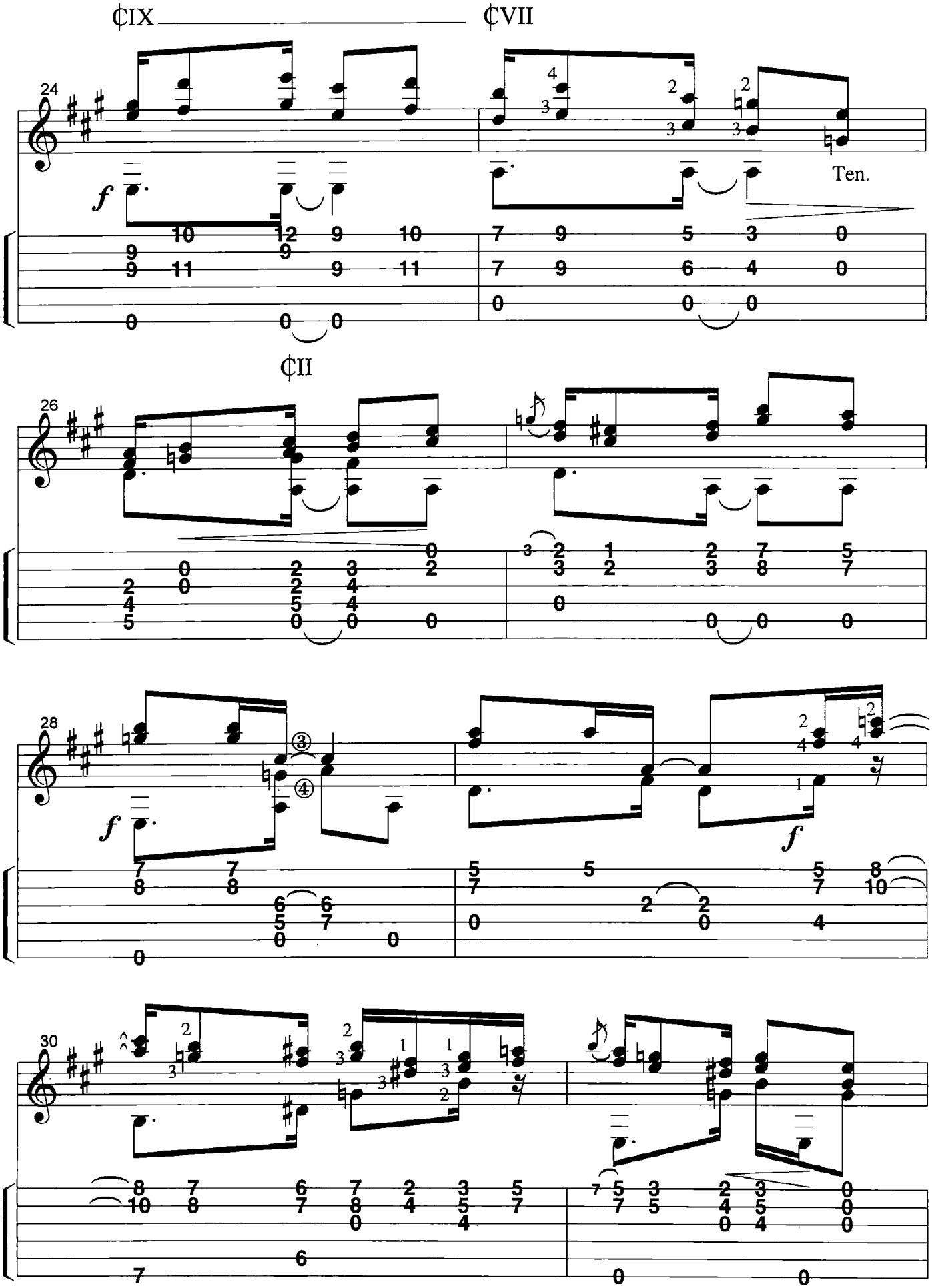
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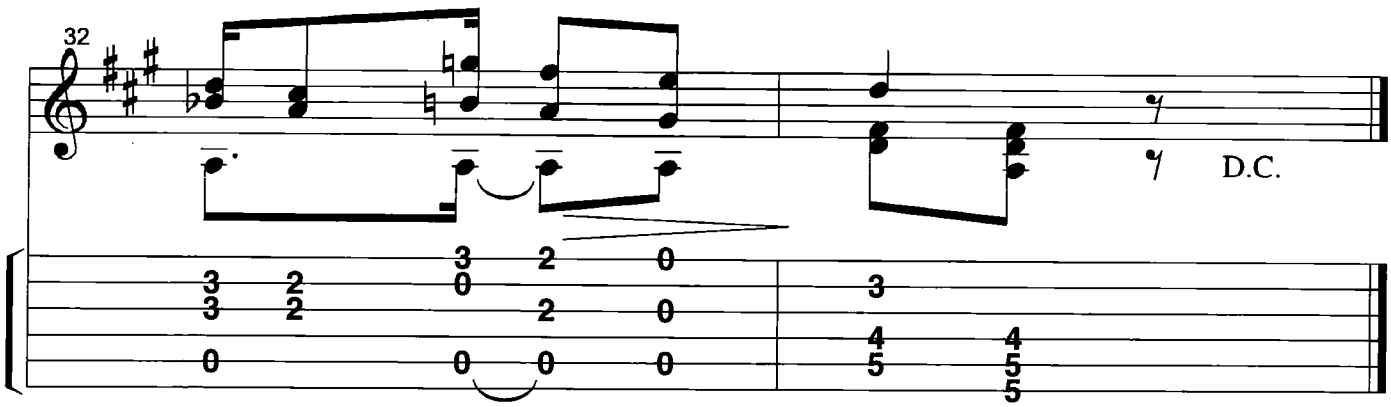
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Intima

Danza

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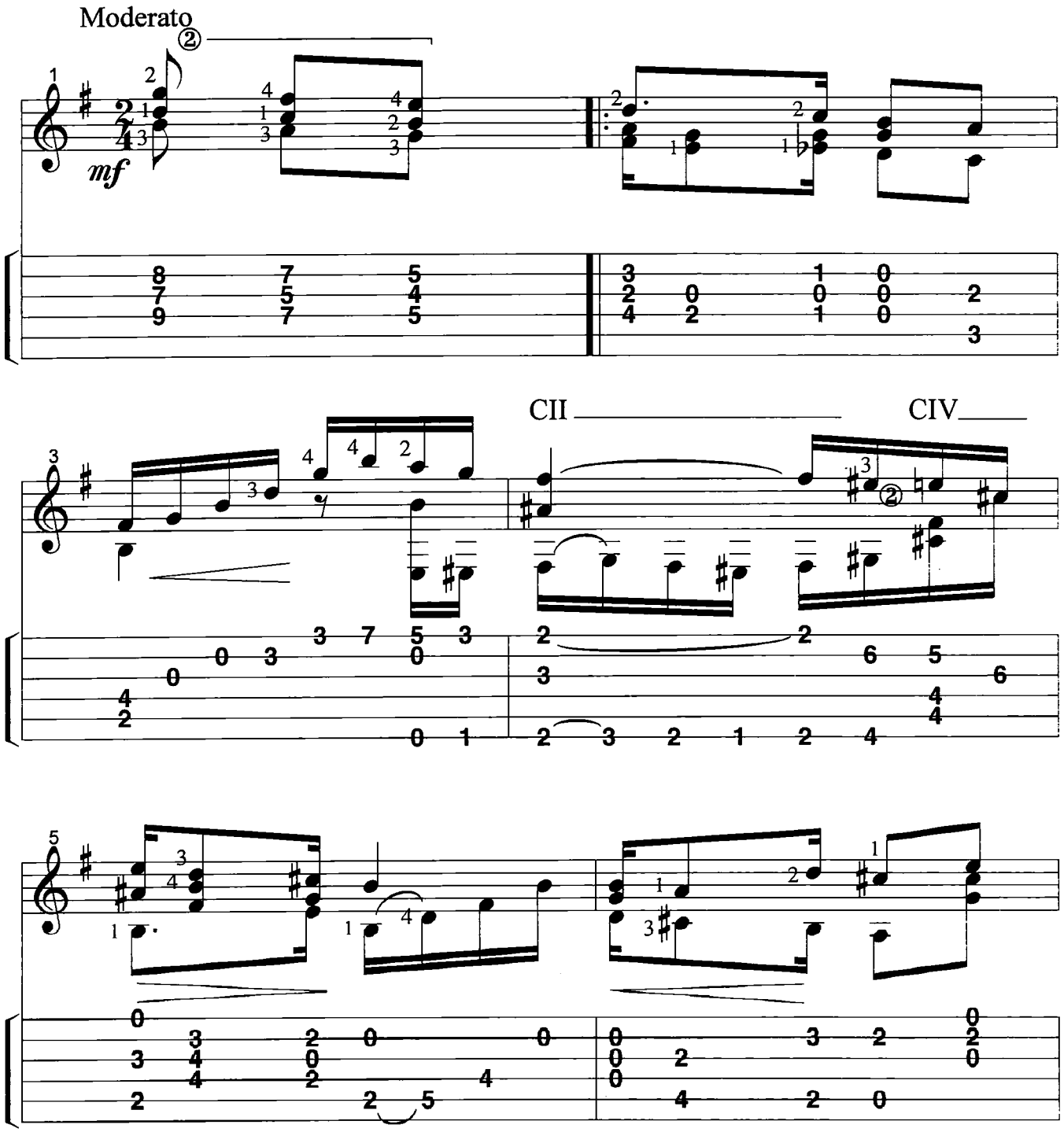
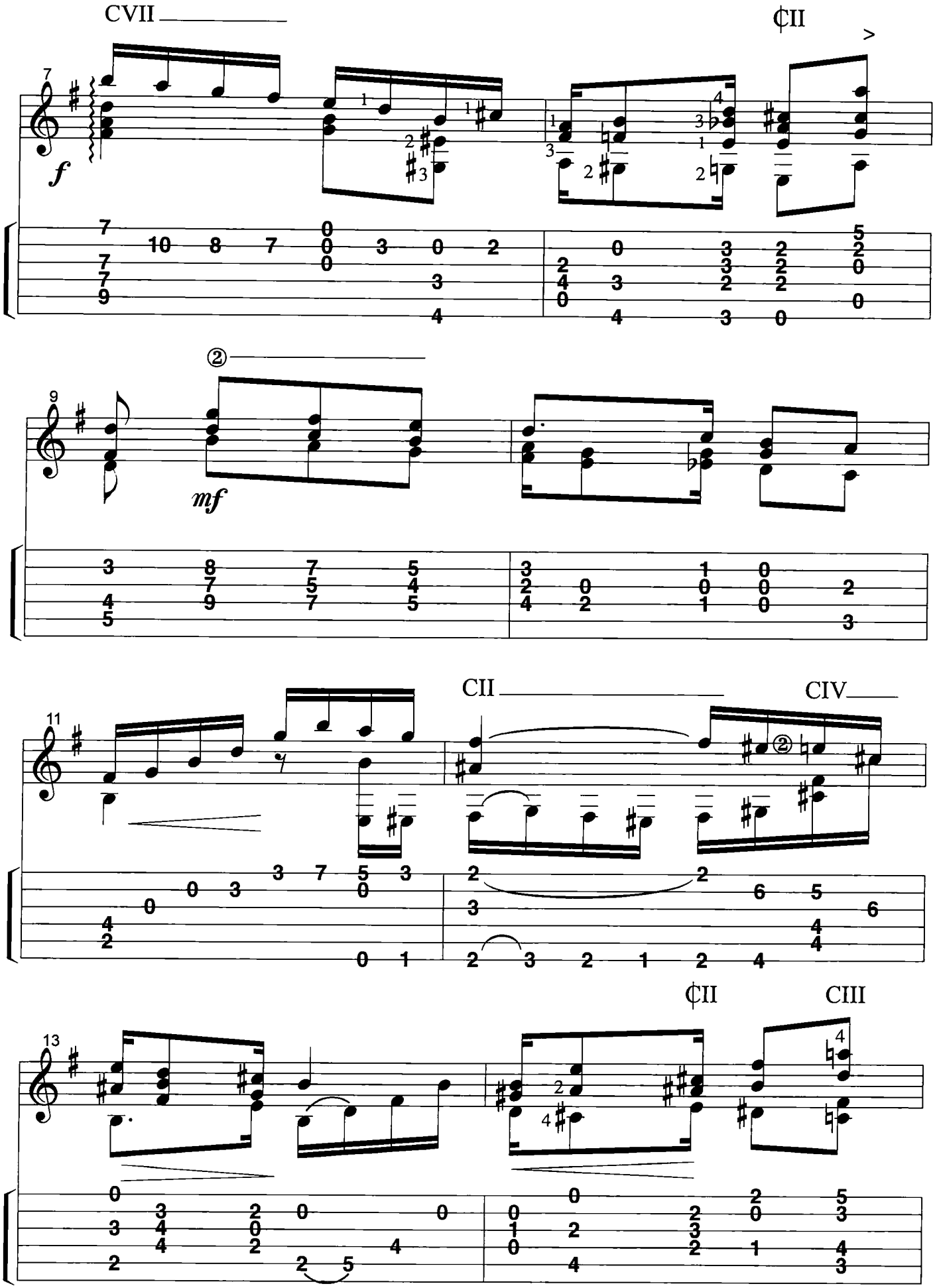
Ignacio Cervantes
(1847-1905)

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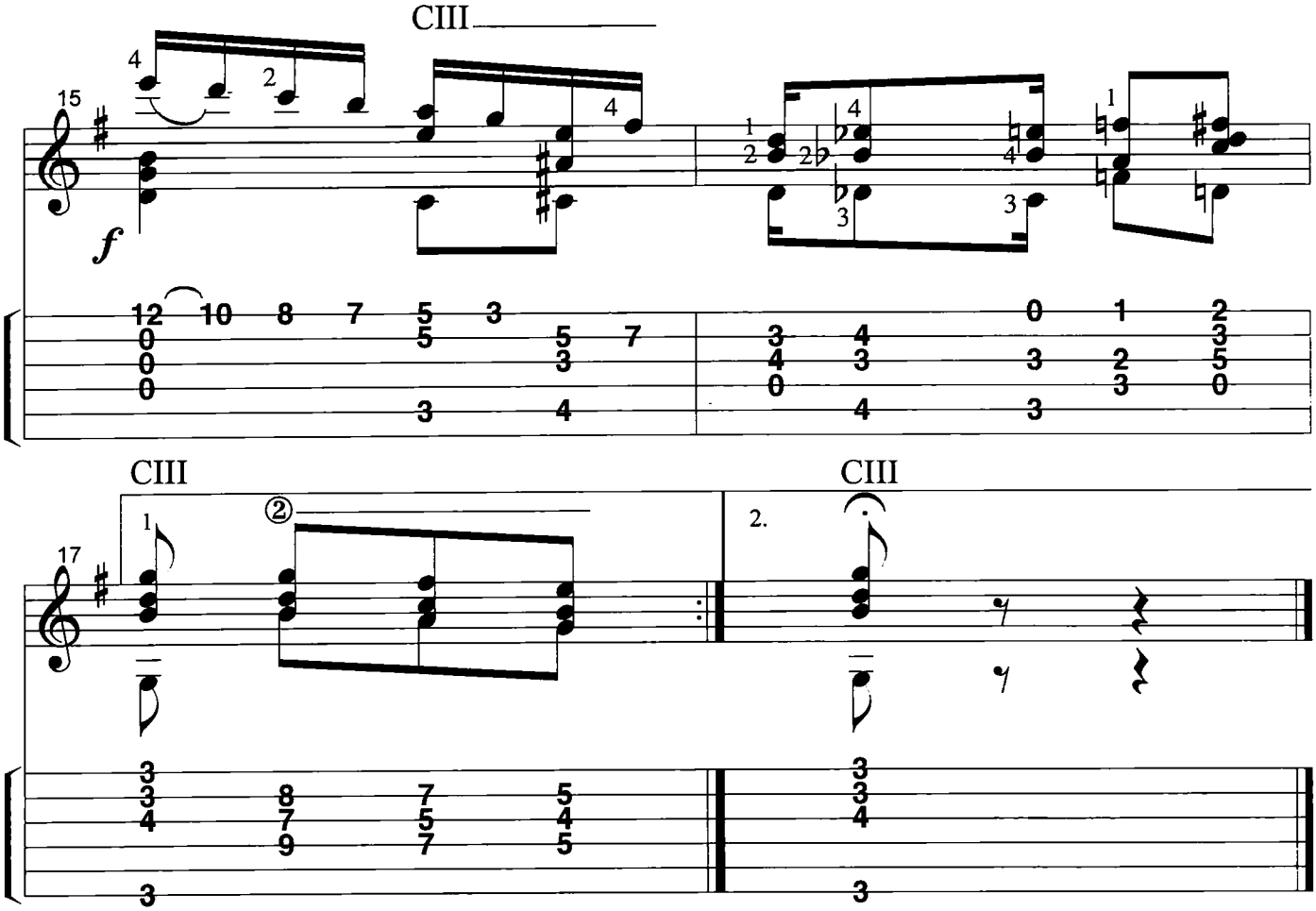
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La celosa

Danza

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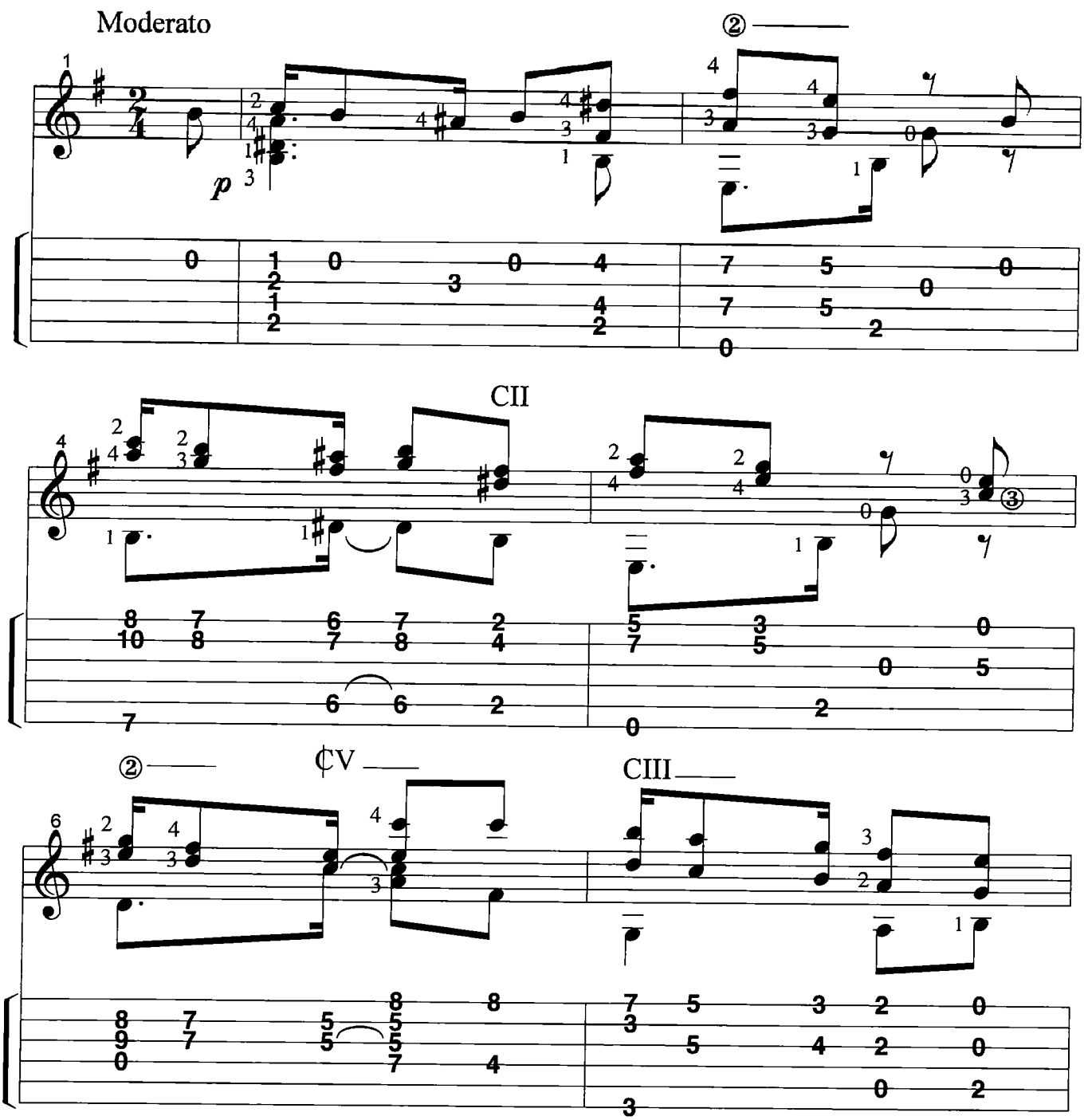

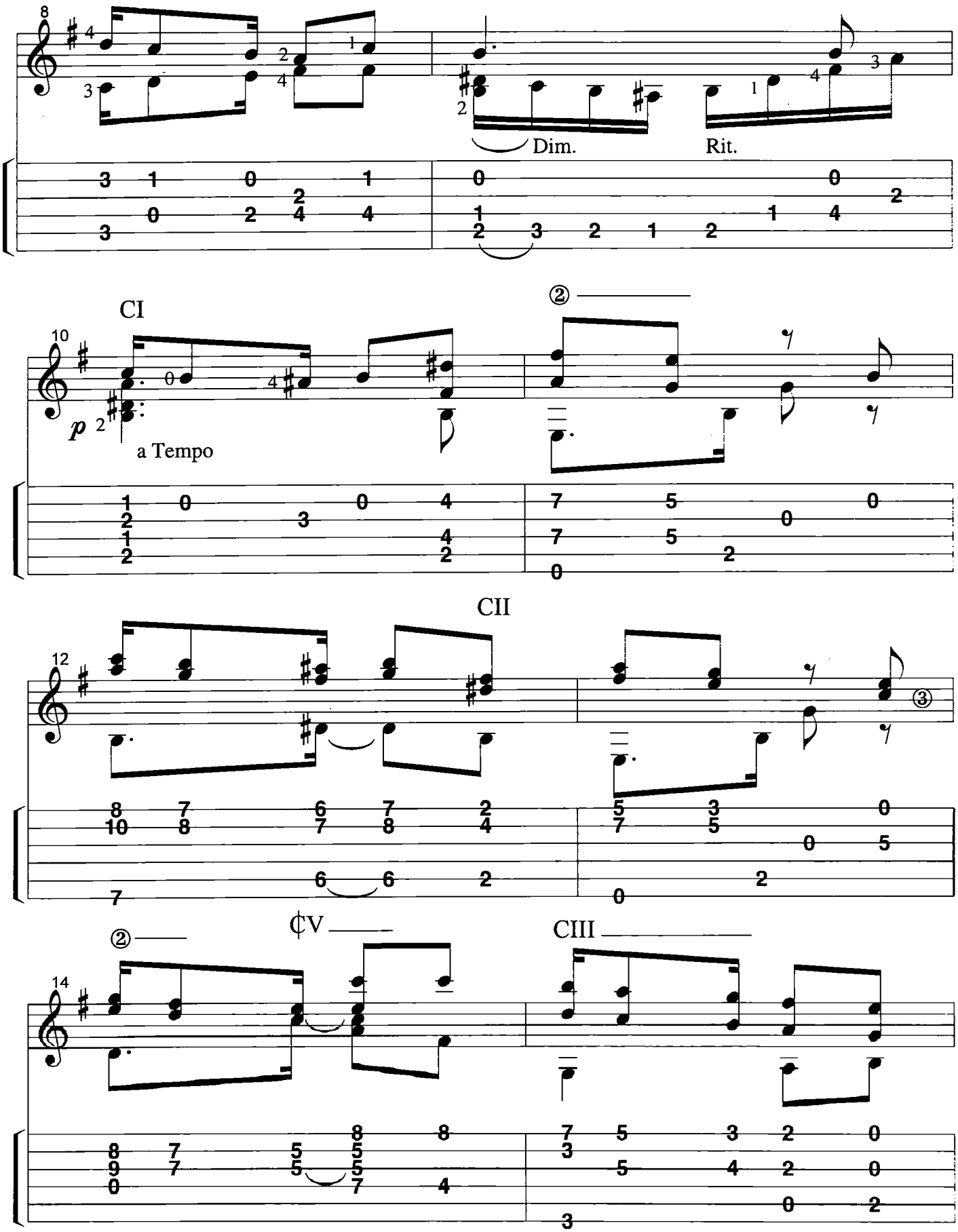
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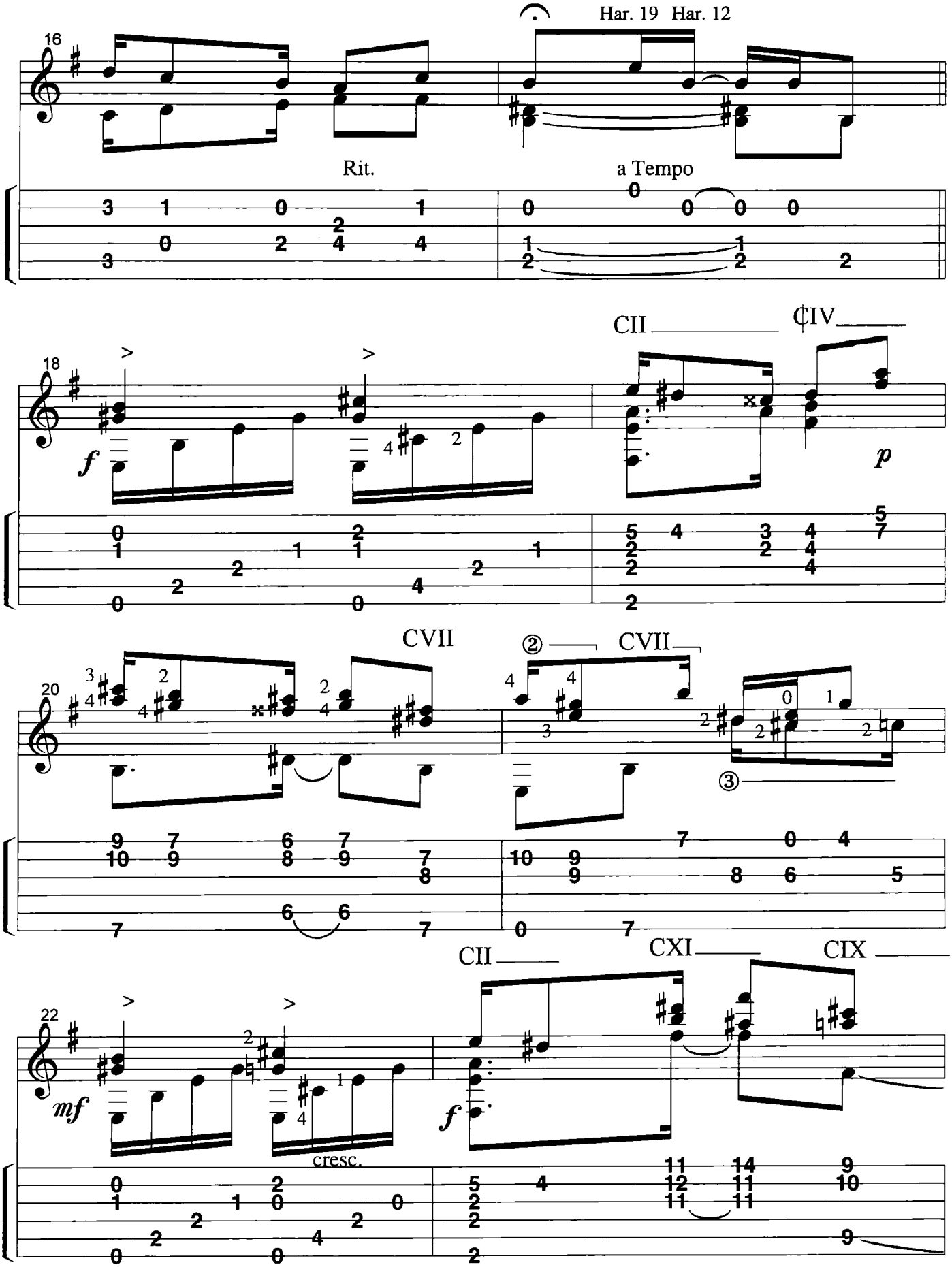
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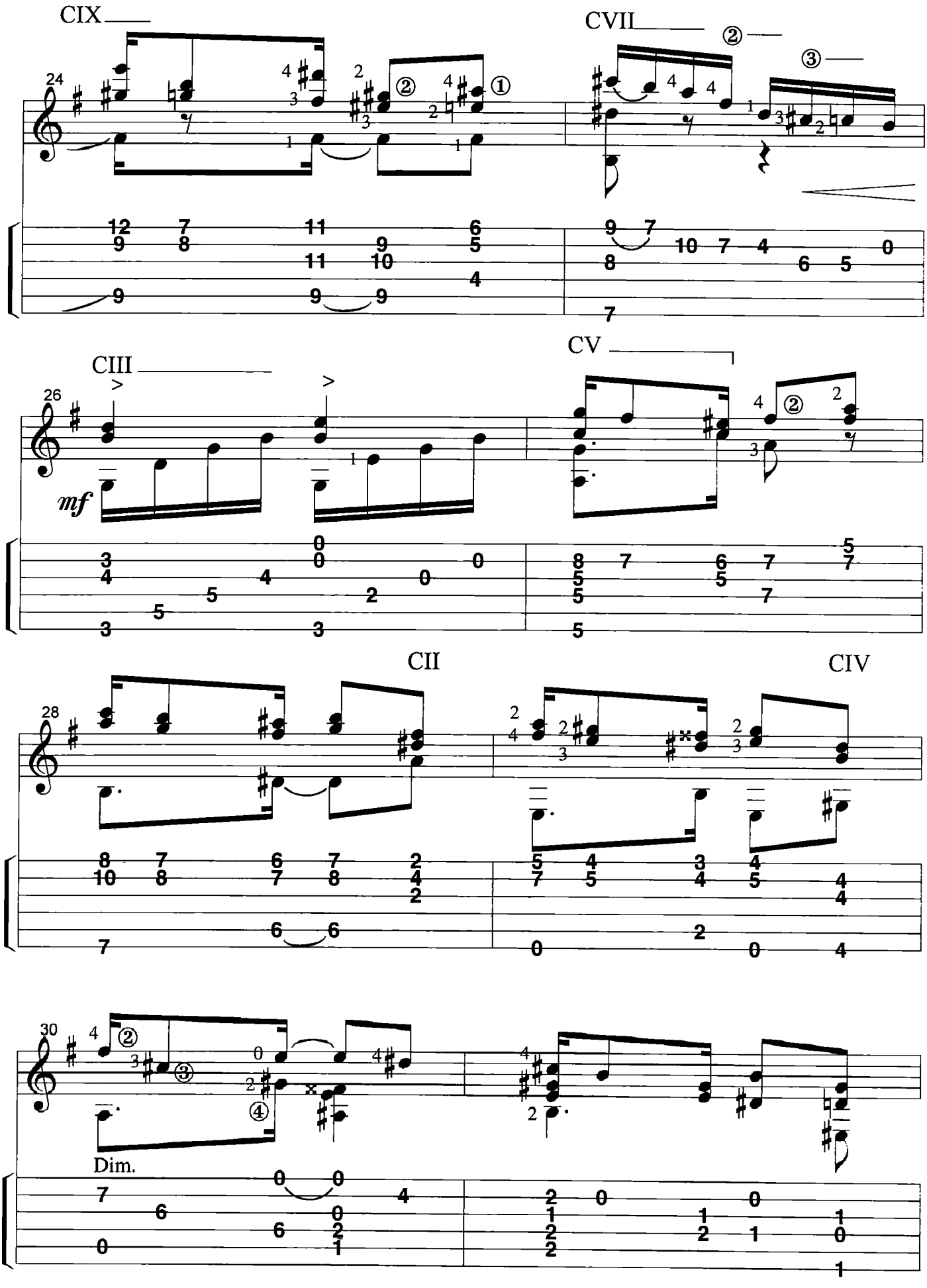
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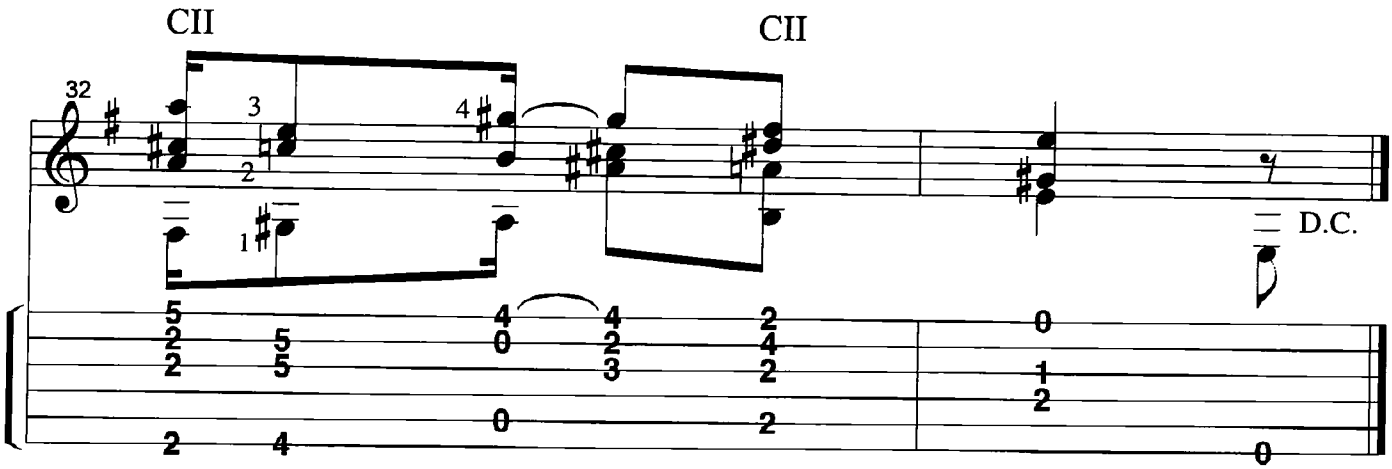
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Siempre si

Danza

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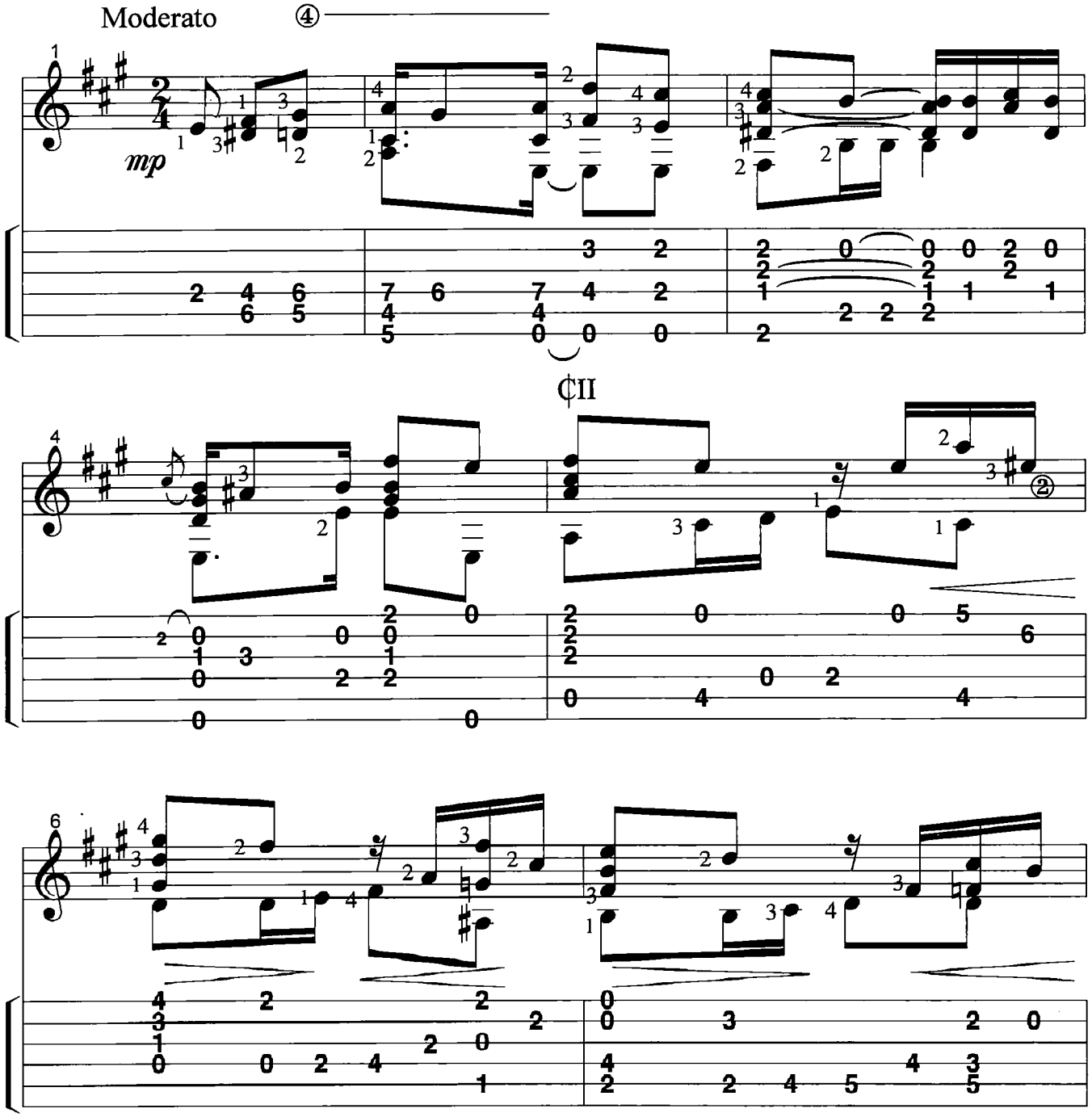
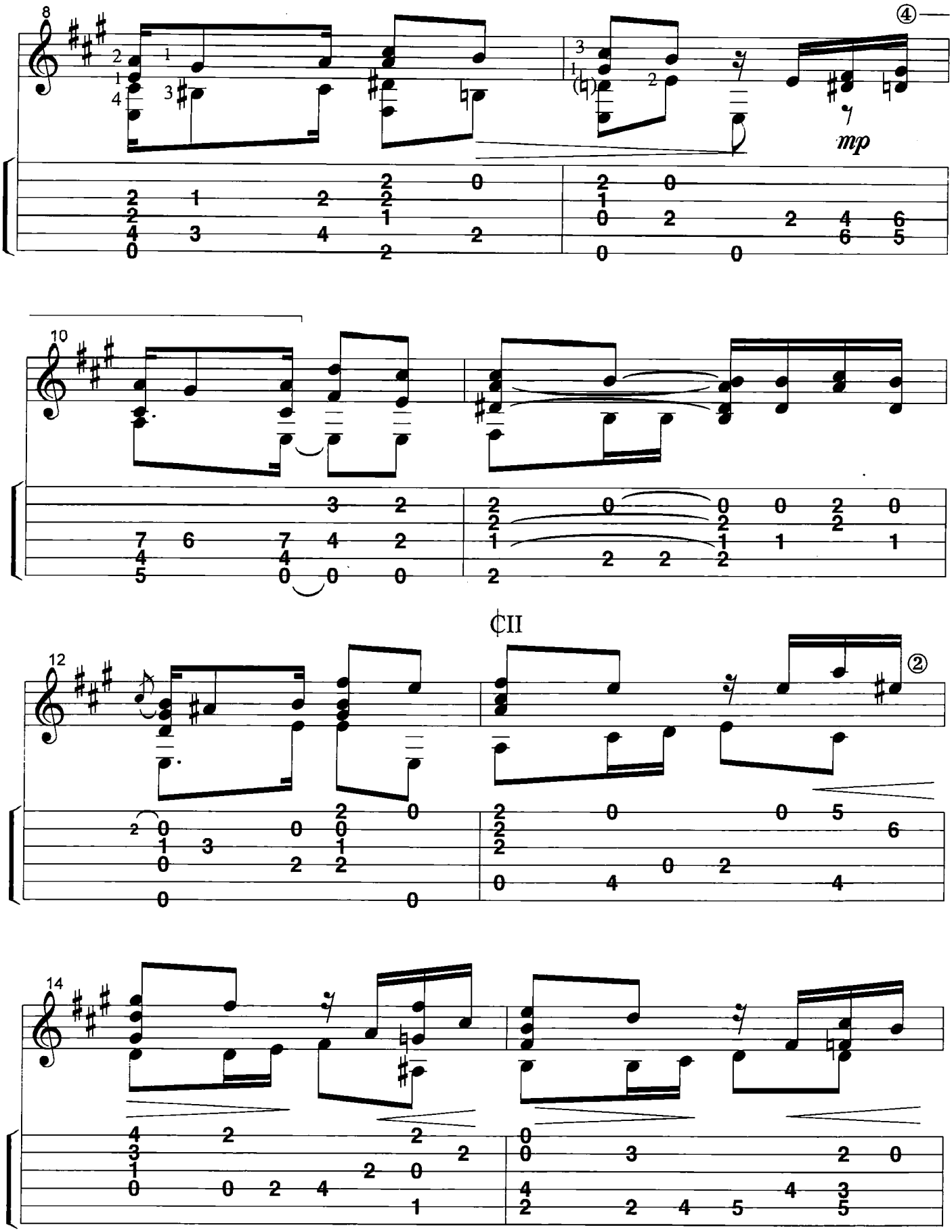
Ignacio Cervantes
(1847-1905)

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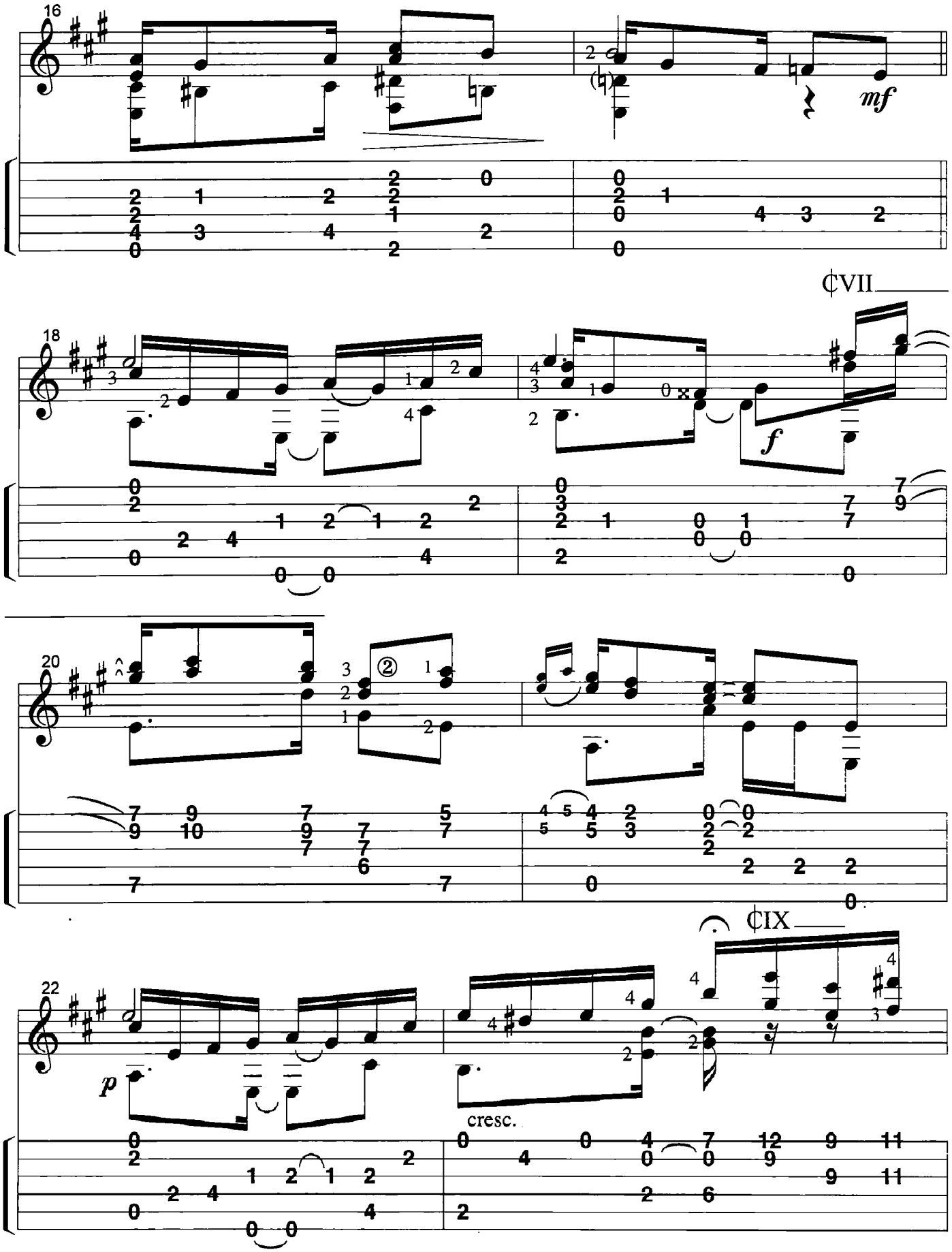
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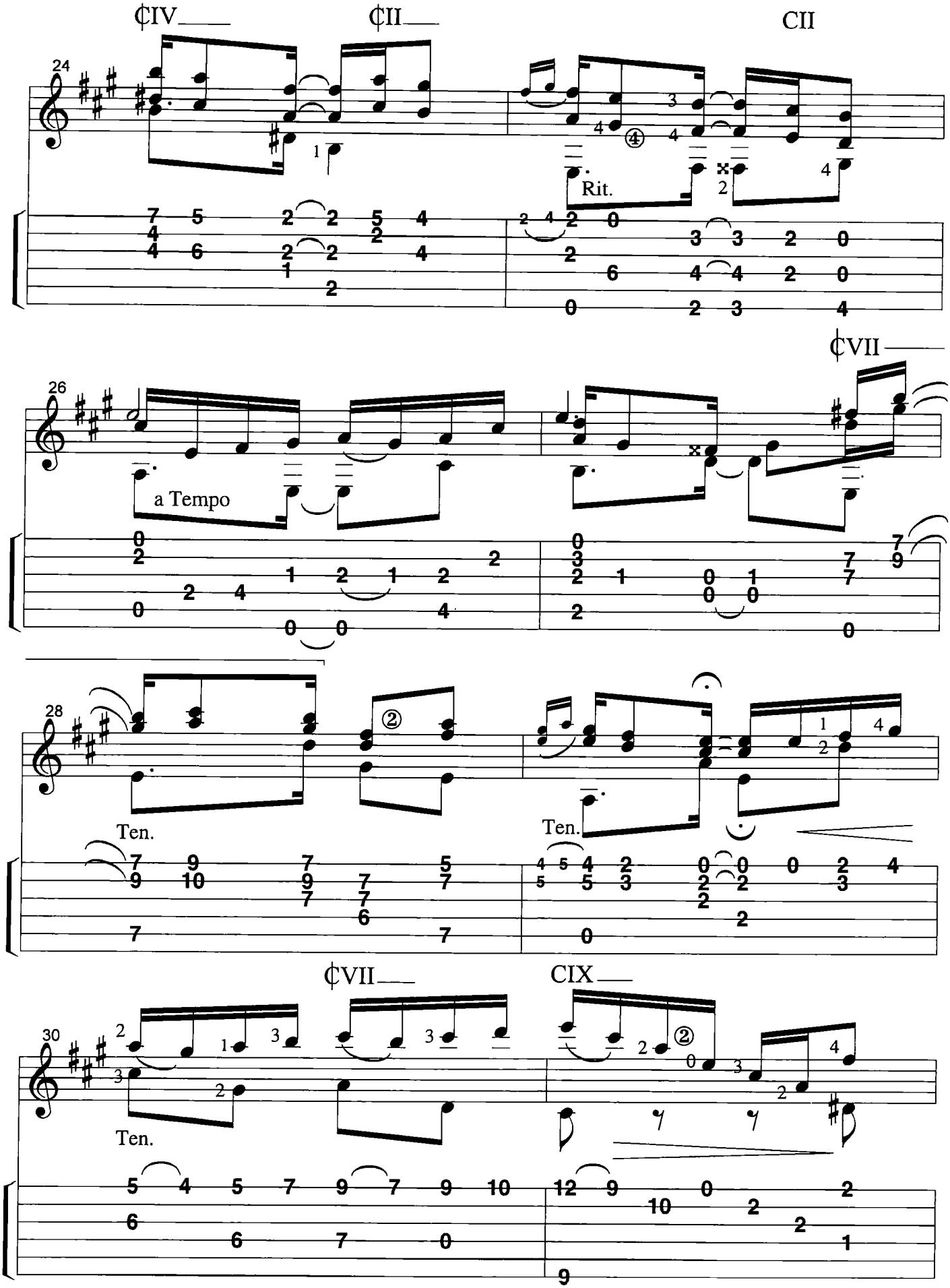
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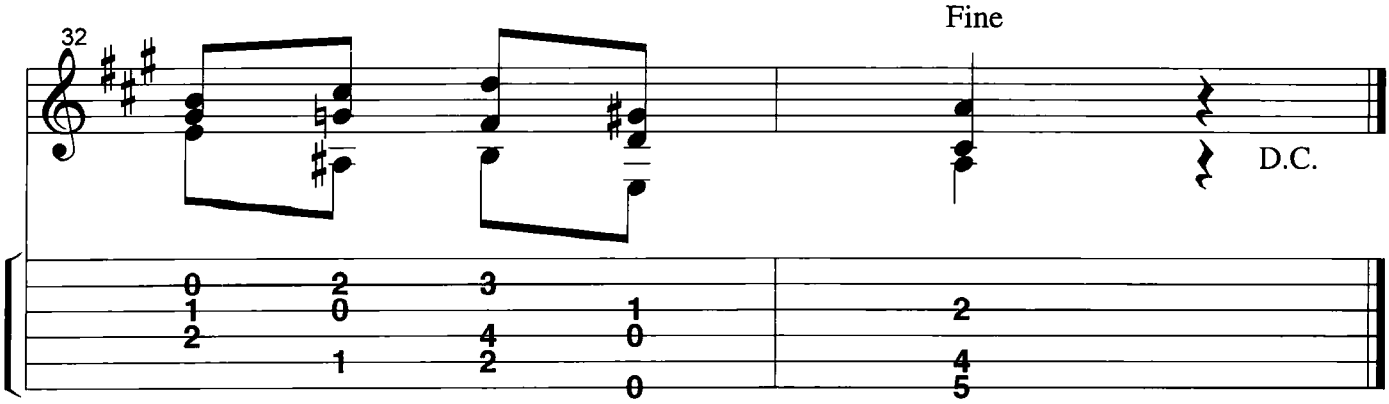
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Adiós a Cuba

Danza

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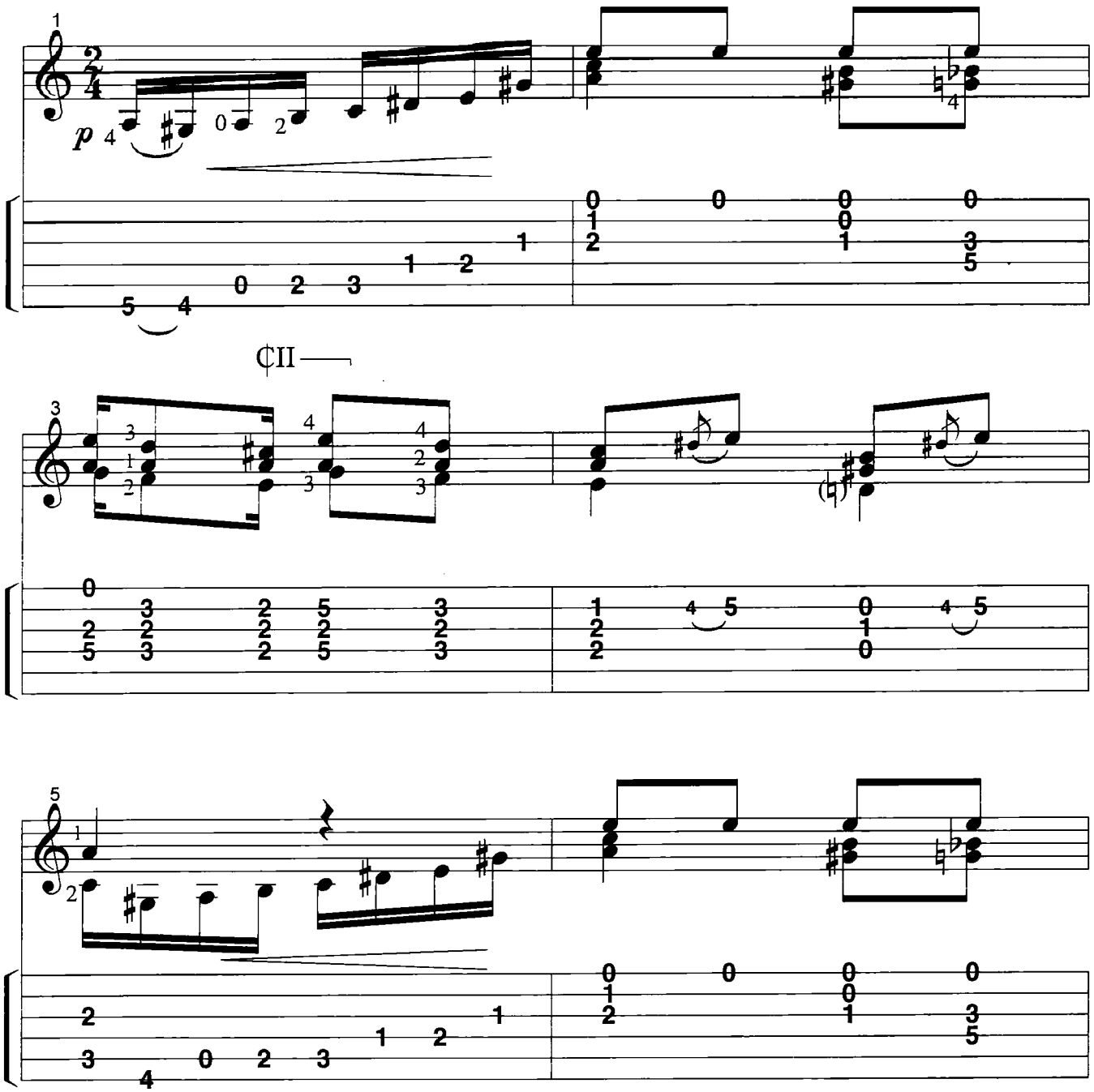
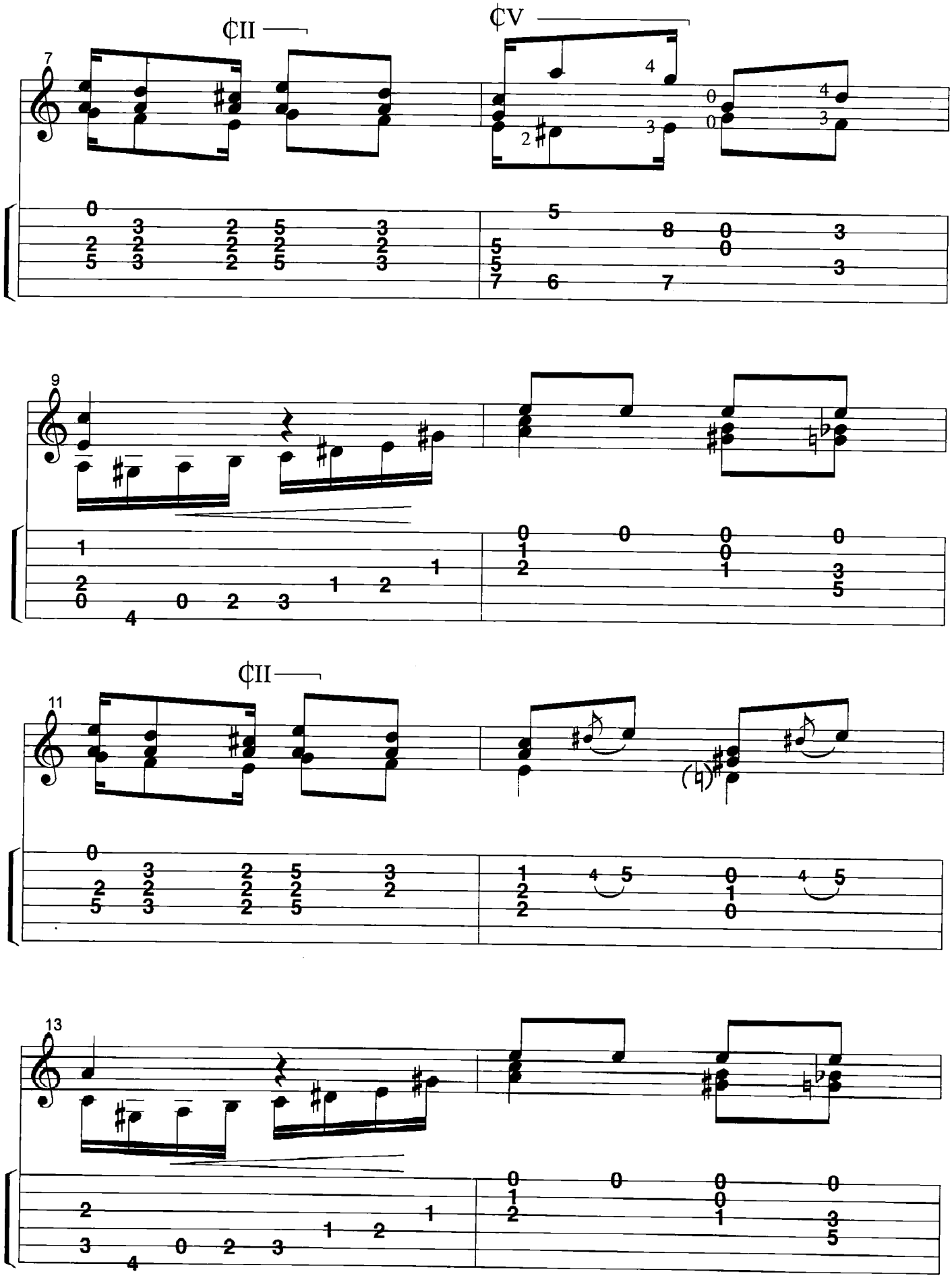
Ignacio Cervantes
(1847-1905)

Adagio Melancólico

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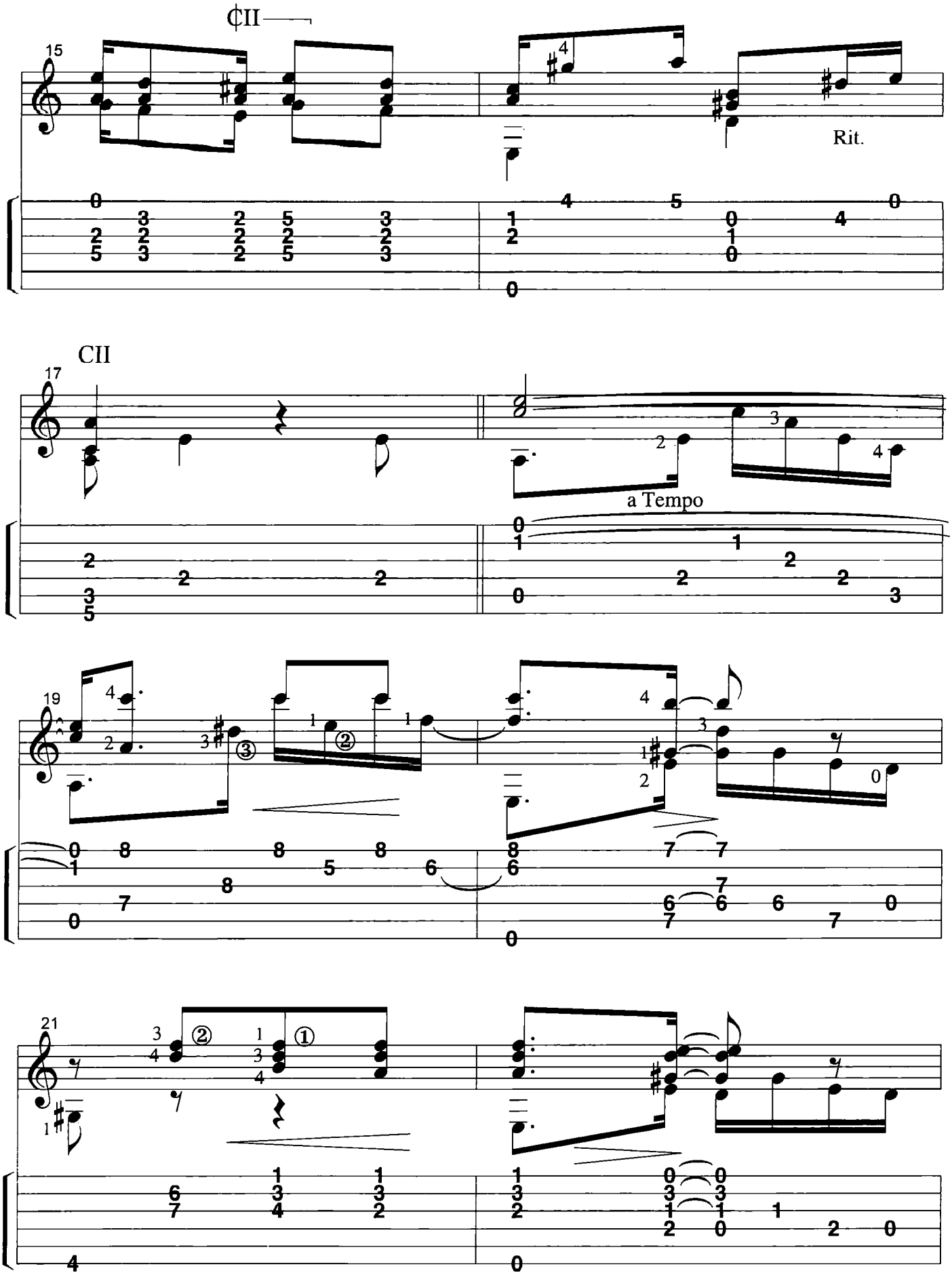
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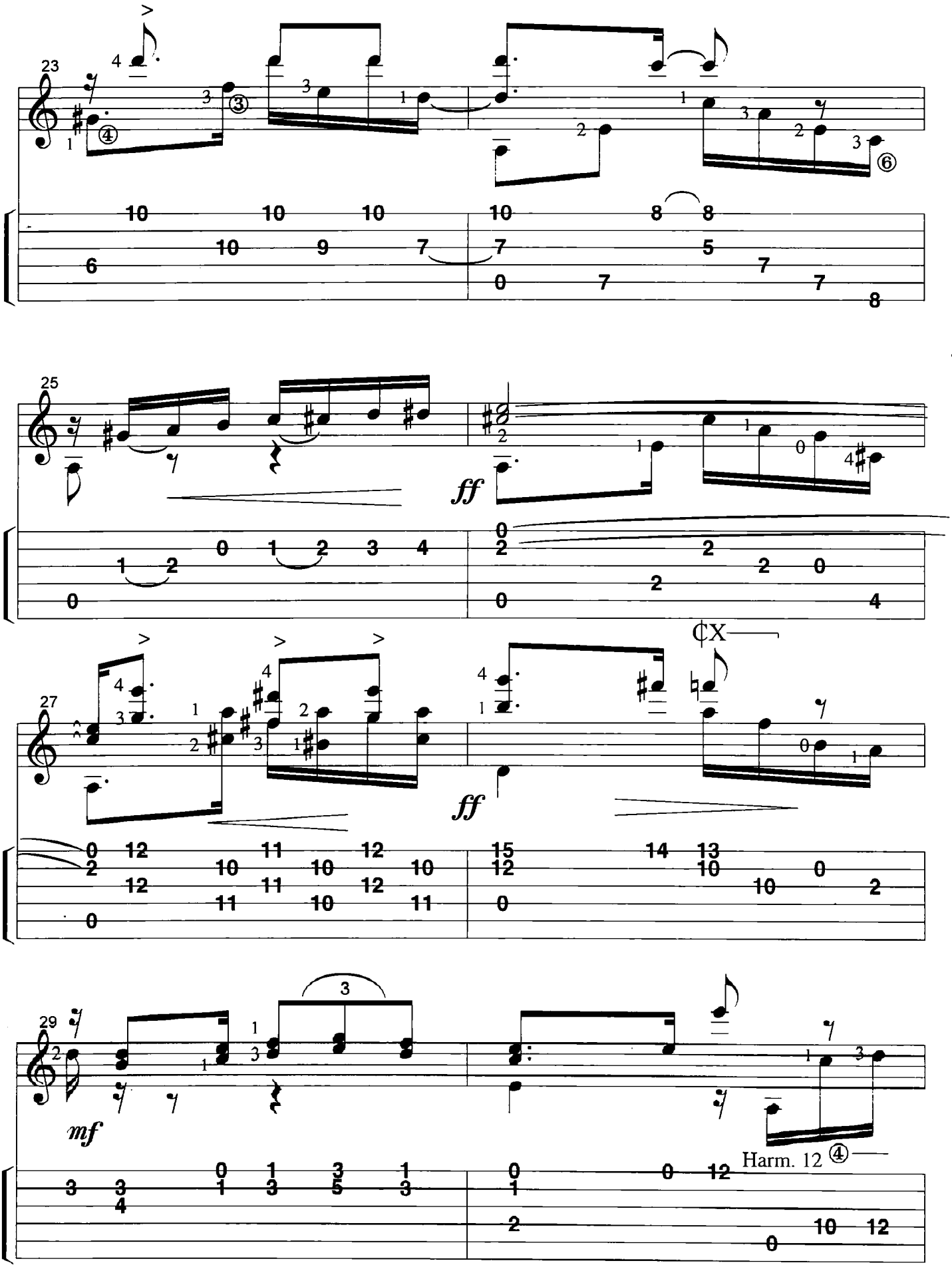
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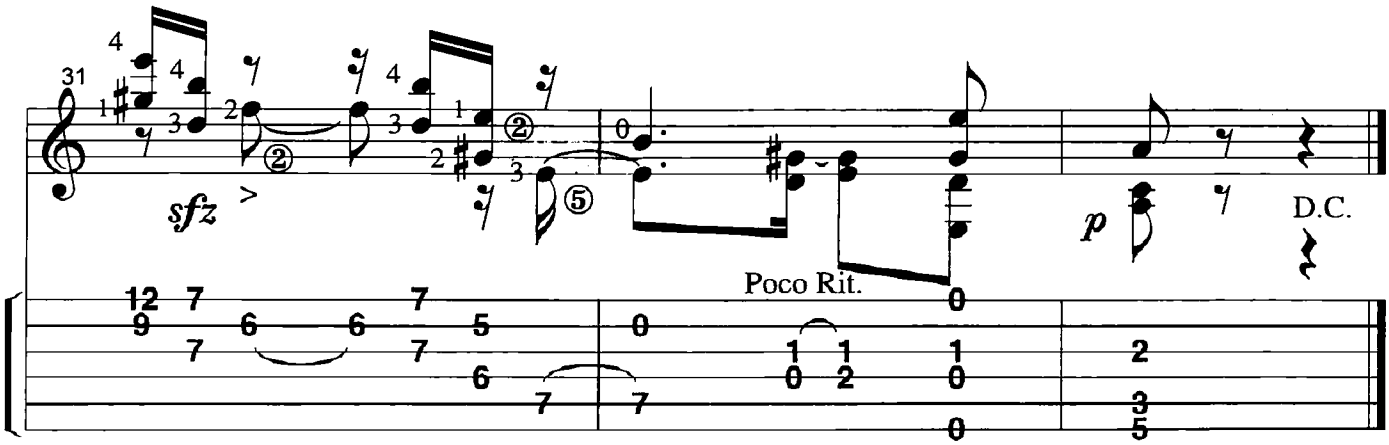
31
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D.C.

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Victor Pacheco

1835–1910

Clarinetist Victor Pacheco lived nearly all his life in the city of Camagüey where he fathered a family of musicians and directed the orchestra in the Teatro Principal. He also established an academy of music and the first music shop in the city. In both peace and wartime, Pacheco was a bandsman throughout his life.

In 1895 he joined the Cuban Army of Liberation and founded a military band even in dense jungle conditions. Imprisoned and condemned to death by the Spanish colonial regime, he was freed upon the condition that he accept a position with the [Spanish military] Band of Isabel the Catholic. Even in wartime, these bands offered public concerts at military barracks and fortifications; it is evident that not all of the selections performed at these concerts was martial in character, but rather reflected both universal and local popular sentiments and stylistic traits. Pacheco fled his mandatory post to rejoin the Cuban rebels, ending the war with the rank of captain. Among other works, he composed *Tropical, Campamento, La aurora*, and *El triunfo*.

El campamento

Waltz

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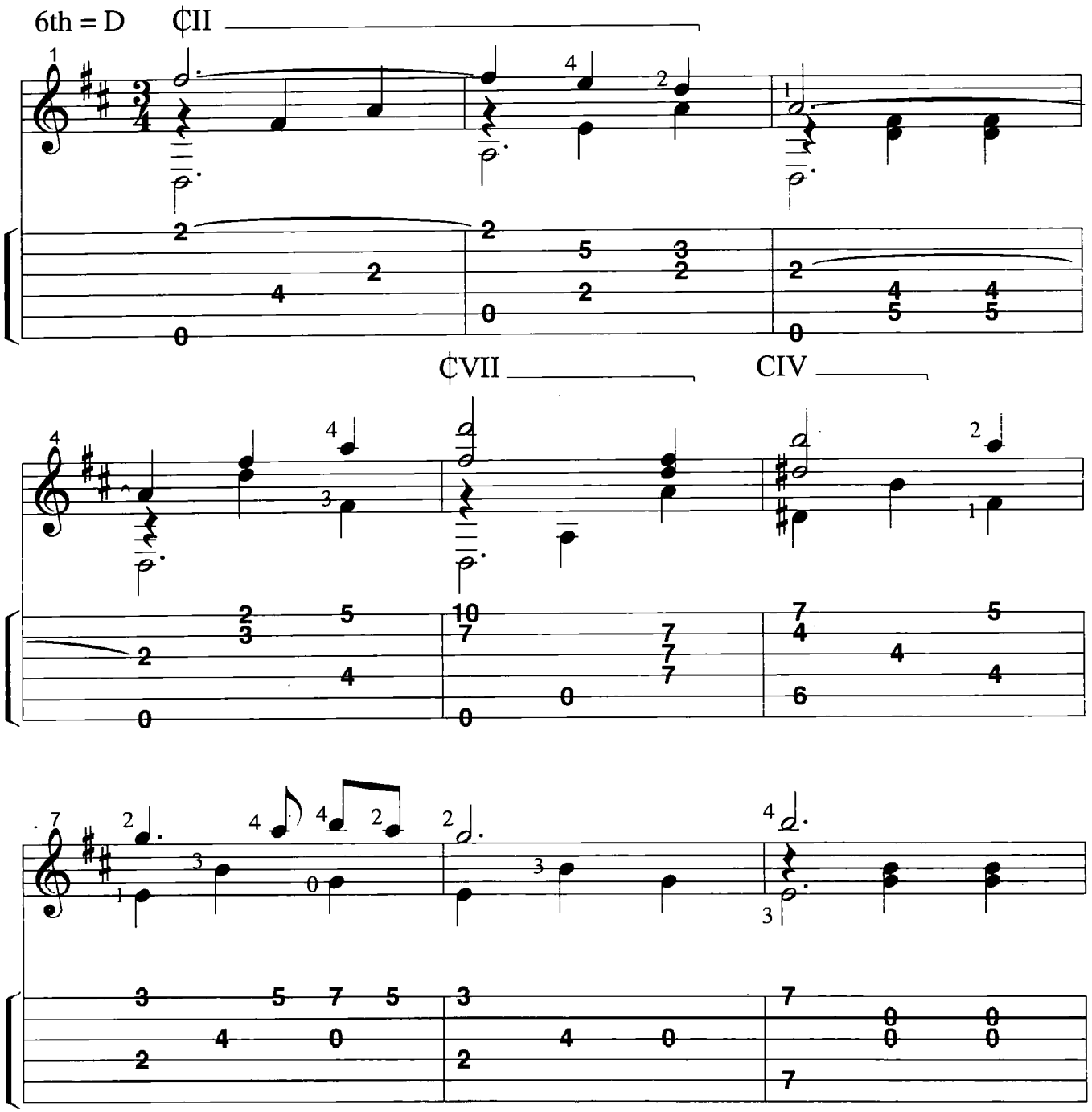
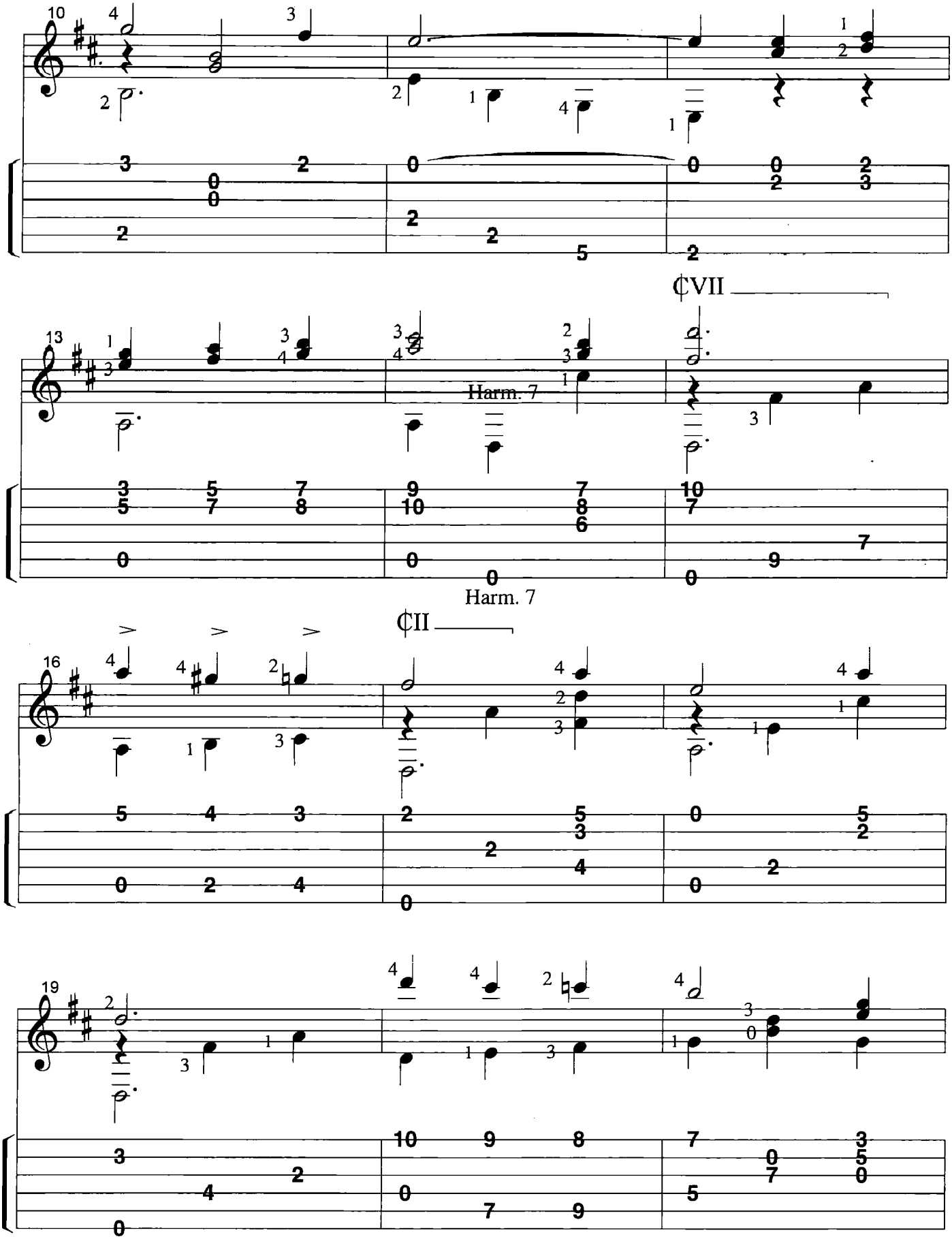
Victor Pacheco
(1835-1910)

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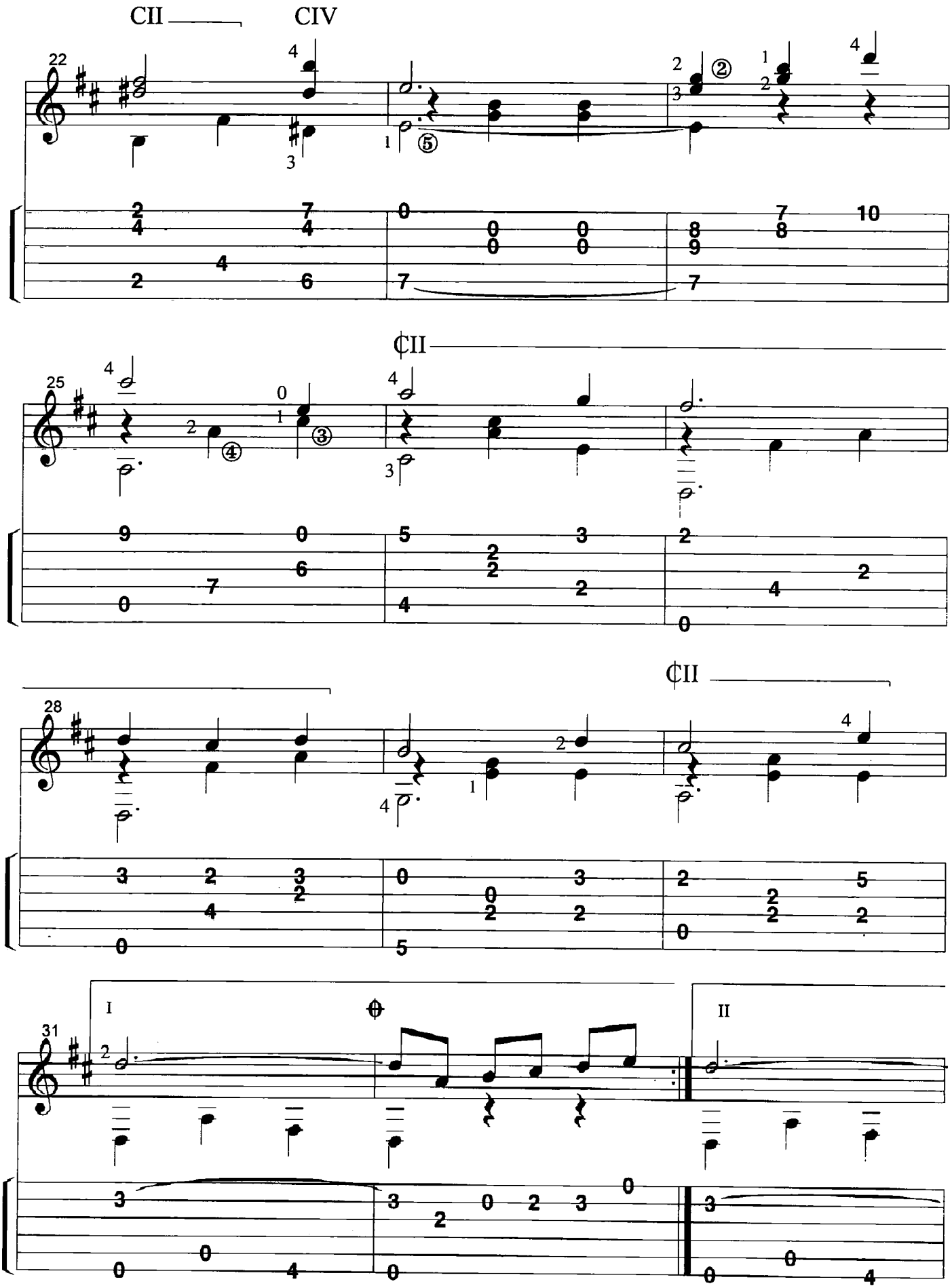
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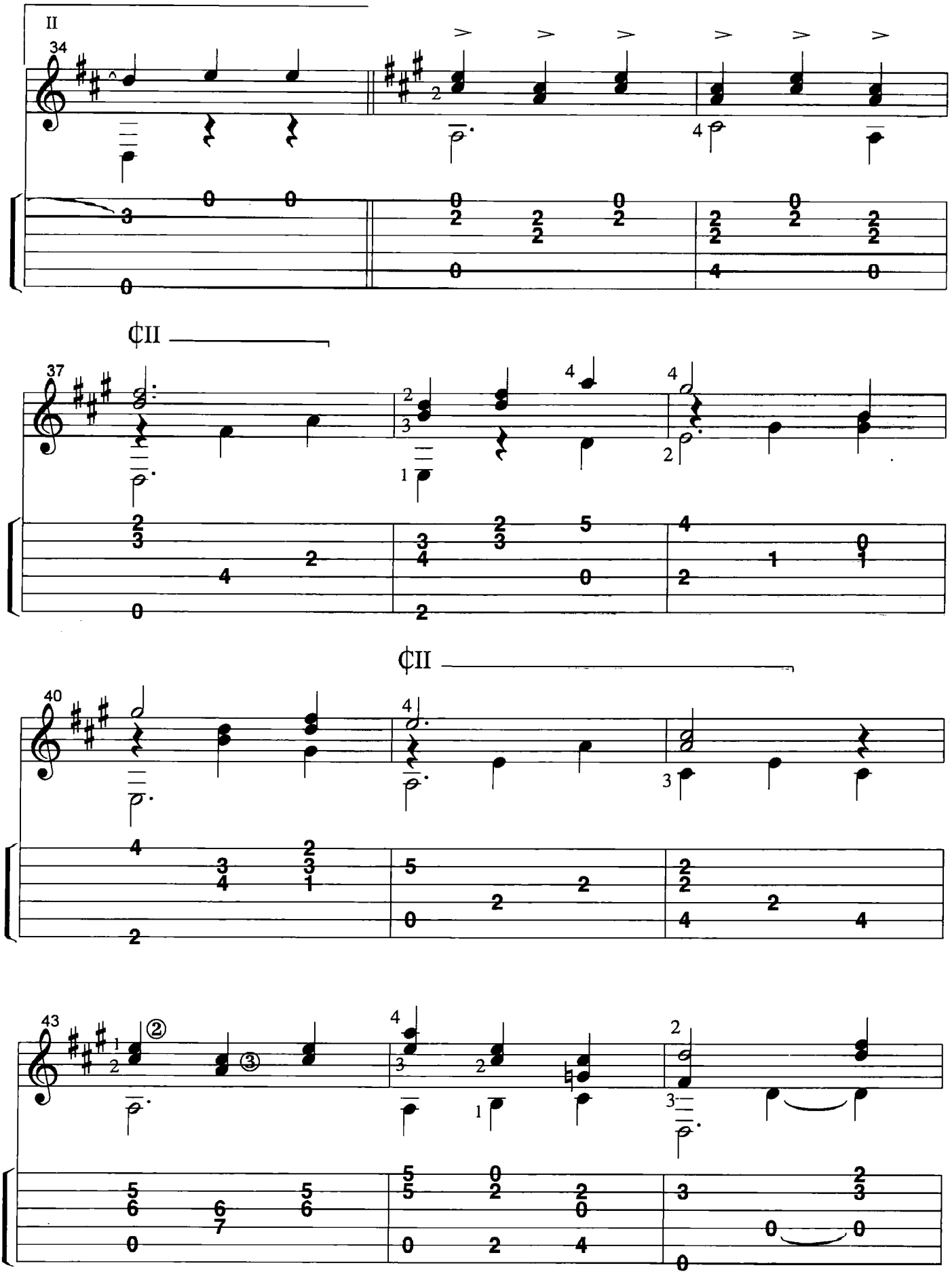
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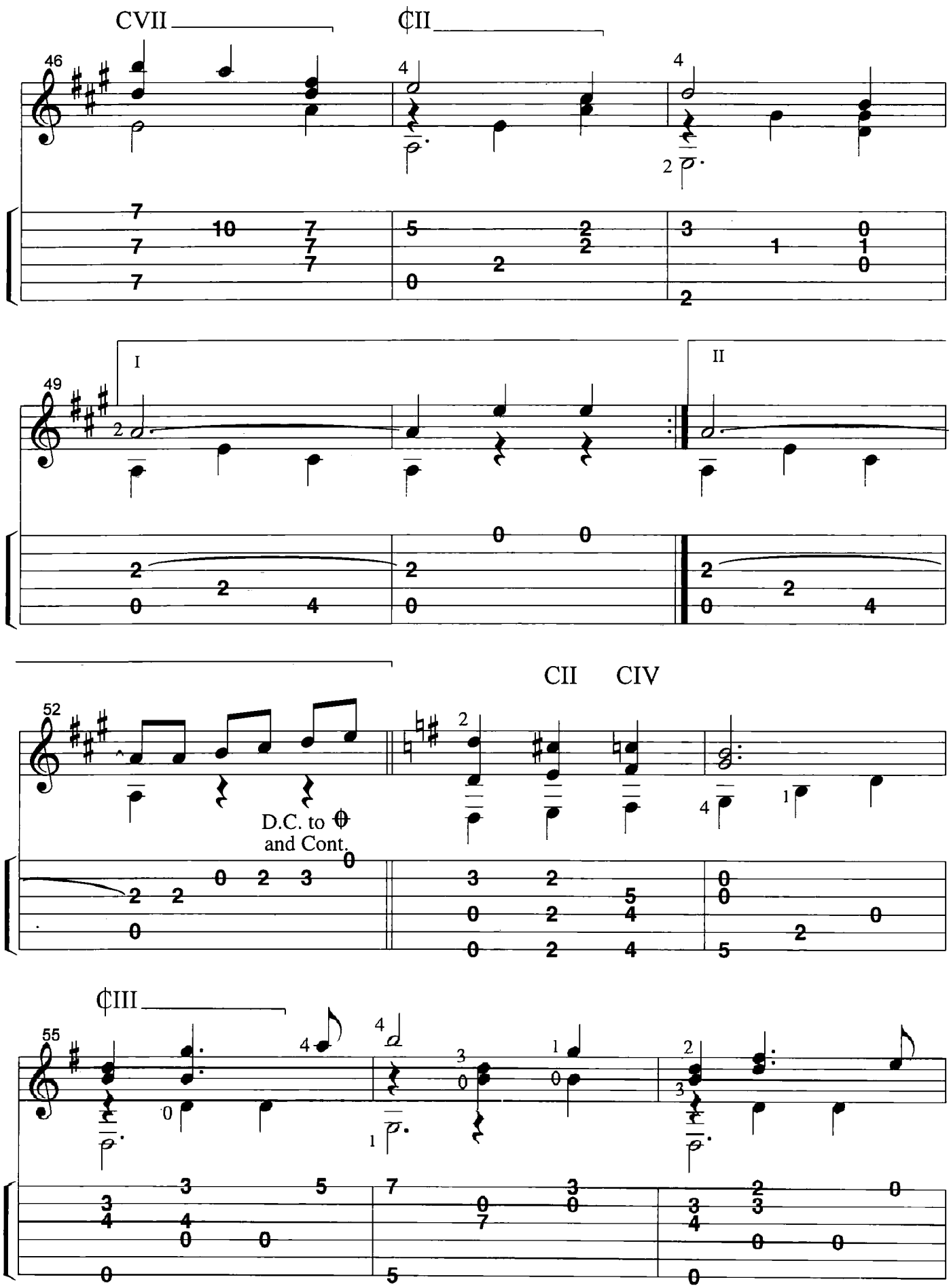
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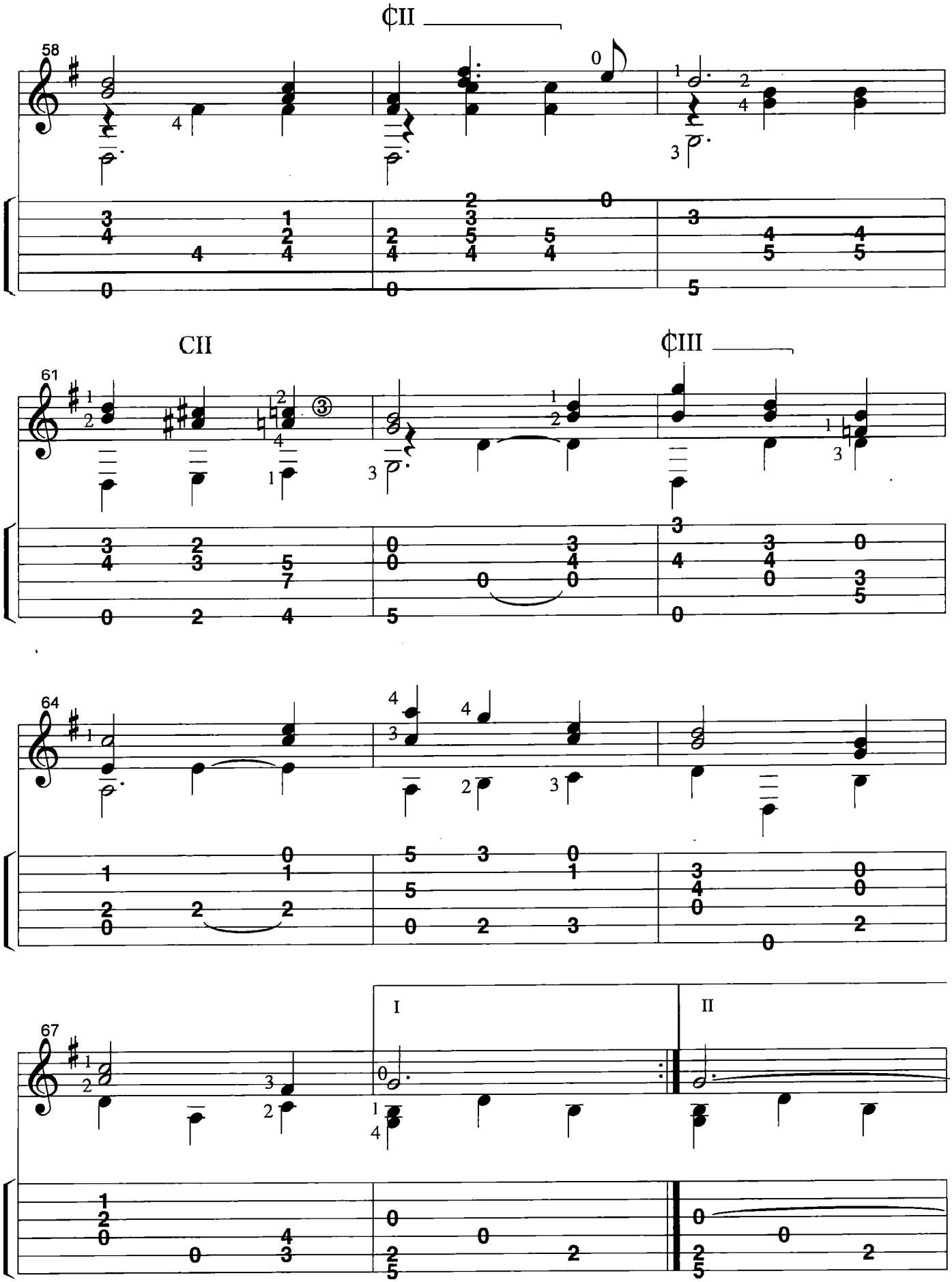
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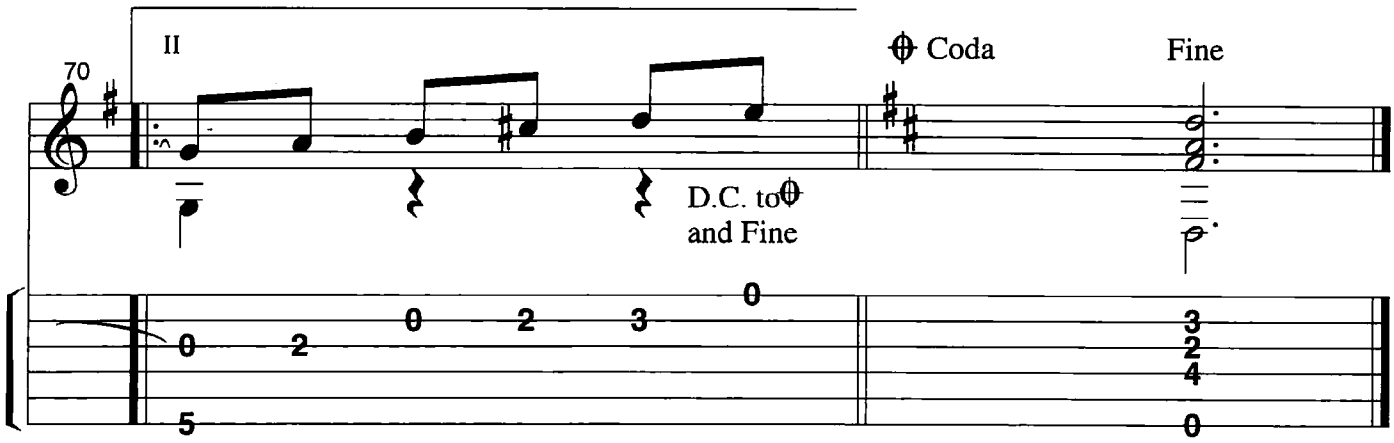
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José Marín Varona

1859–1904

Born in Victor Pacheco's home town of Camagüey, José Marín Varona began composing at the end of one century and was able to sustain his productivity into the next. At the age of 15 he was already an accomplished pianist. While still an adolescent, he joined the insurrection effort in the Ten Year War after which he moved to Havana. In the capital, he taught music and directed the city's Italian opera and Spanish *zarzuela* [light opera] companies. He later conducted orchestras throughout Latin America.

In 1903, Varona founded the Havana-based music magazine, *Cuba Musical* and the following year was named director of the First Band of the Cuban Republic. Varona produced *zarzuelas* and other works but is best known for his beautiful song, *Es el amor la mitad de la vida* [Love is Half of Life].

Es el amor la mitad de la vida

Canción

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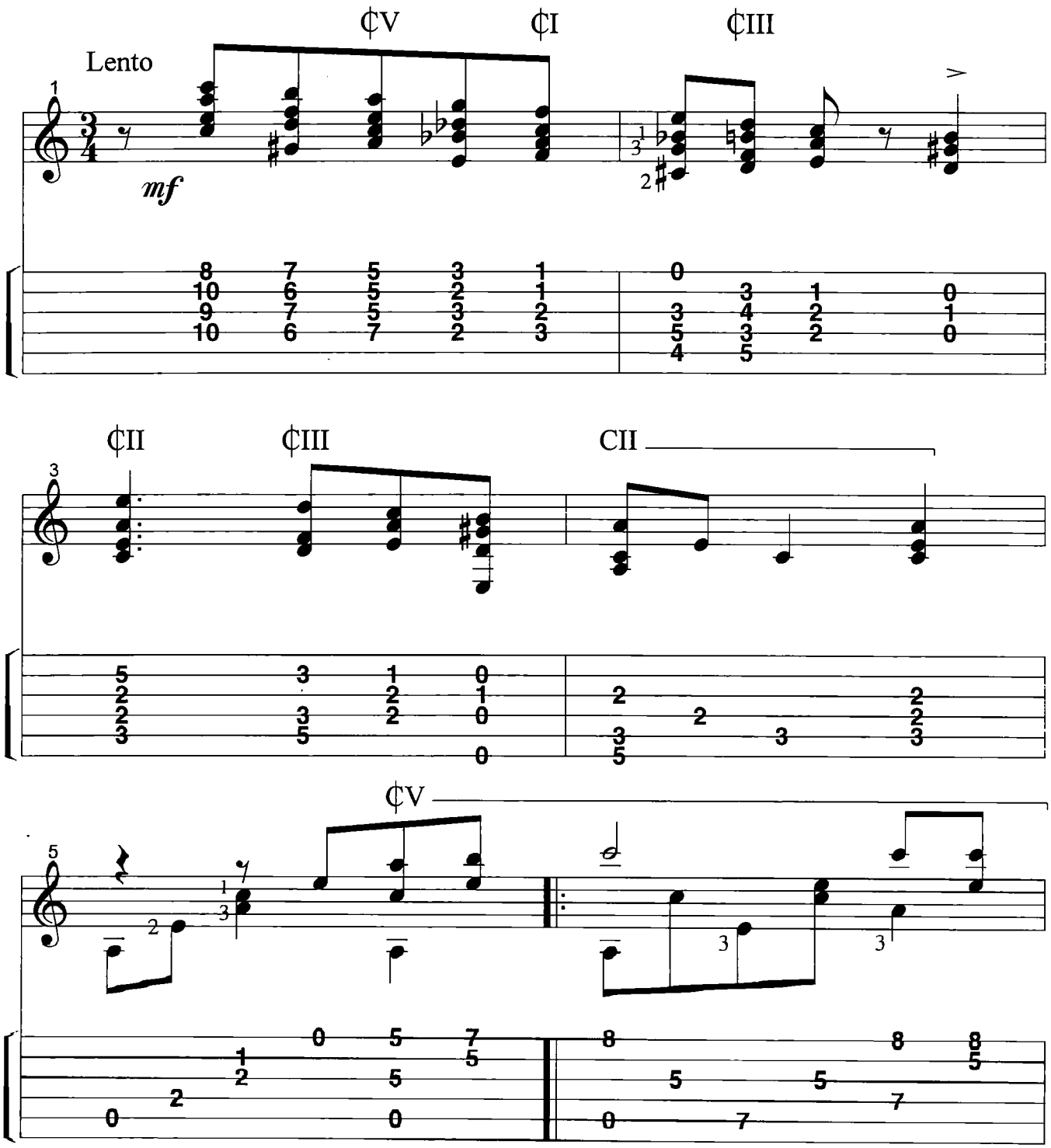
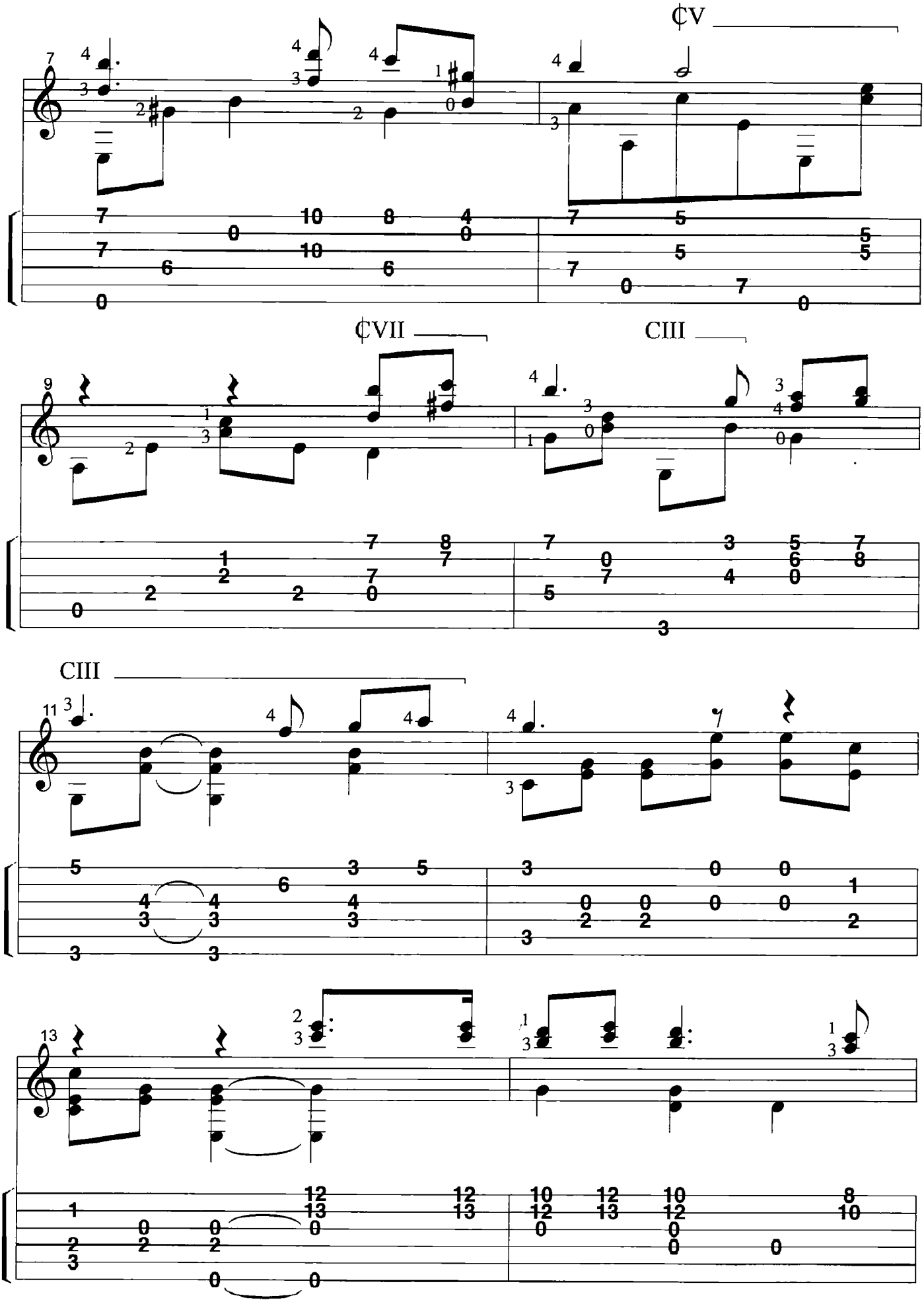
José Marín Varona
(1859-1912)

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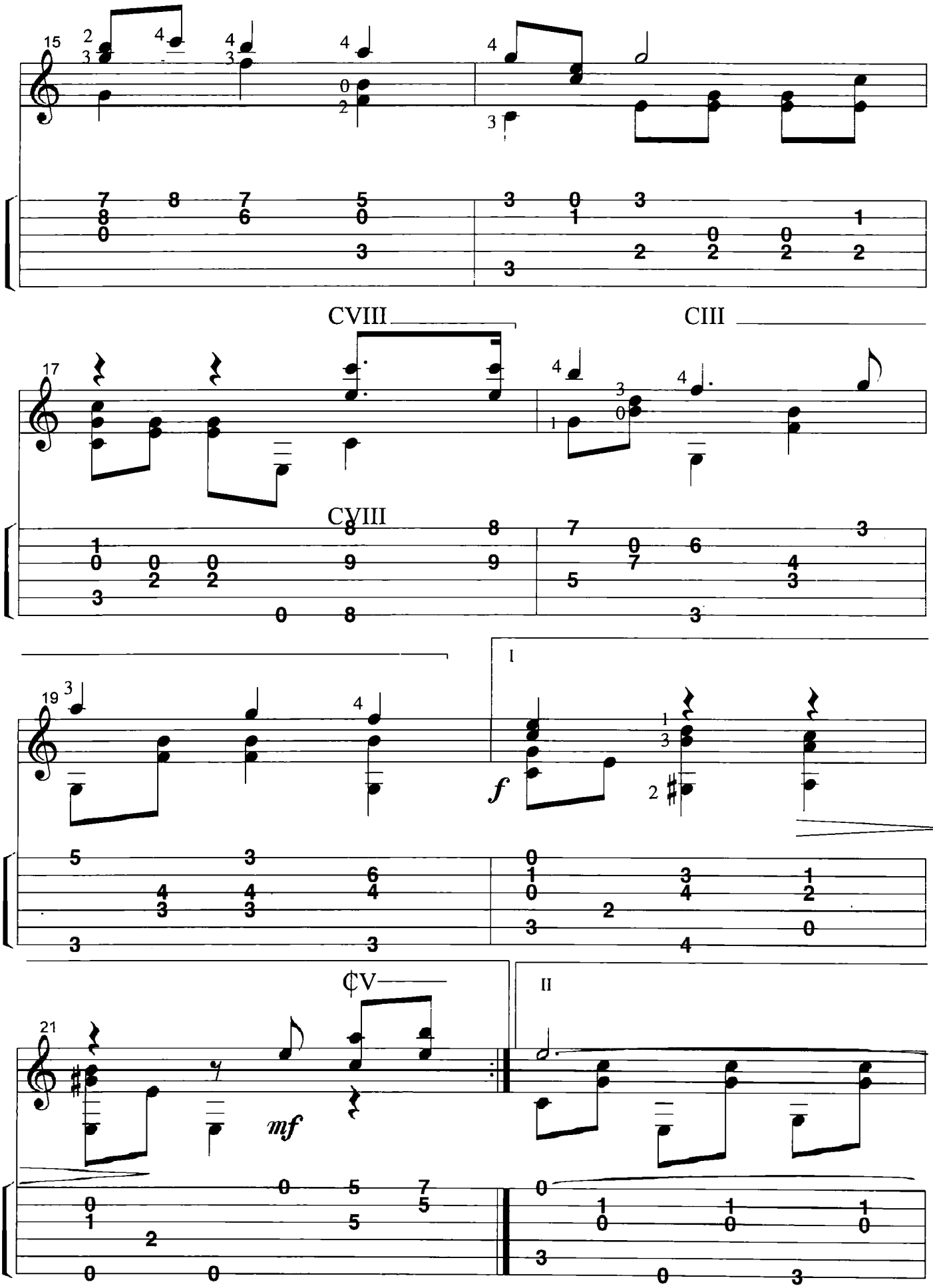
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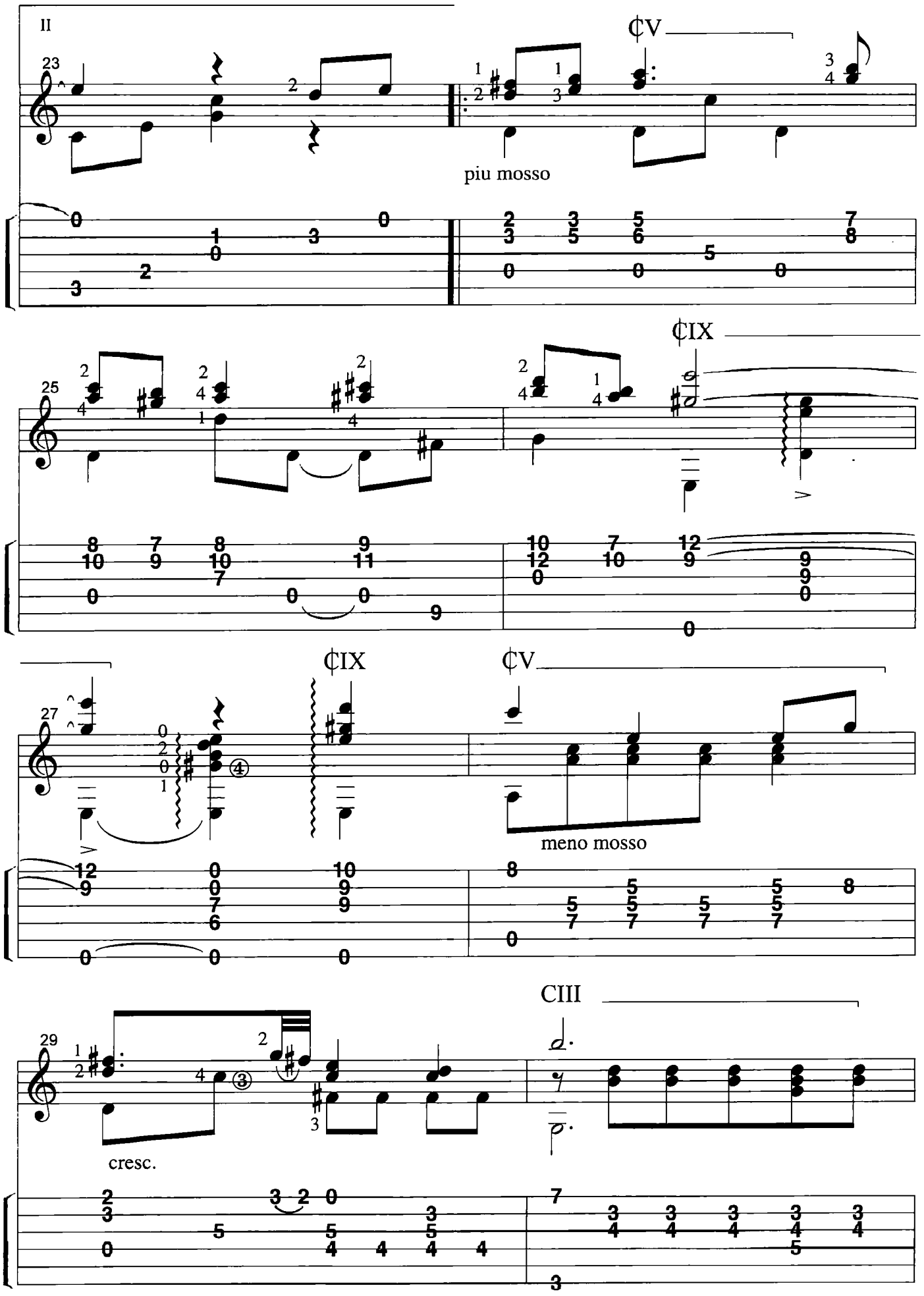
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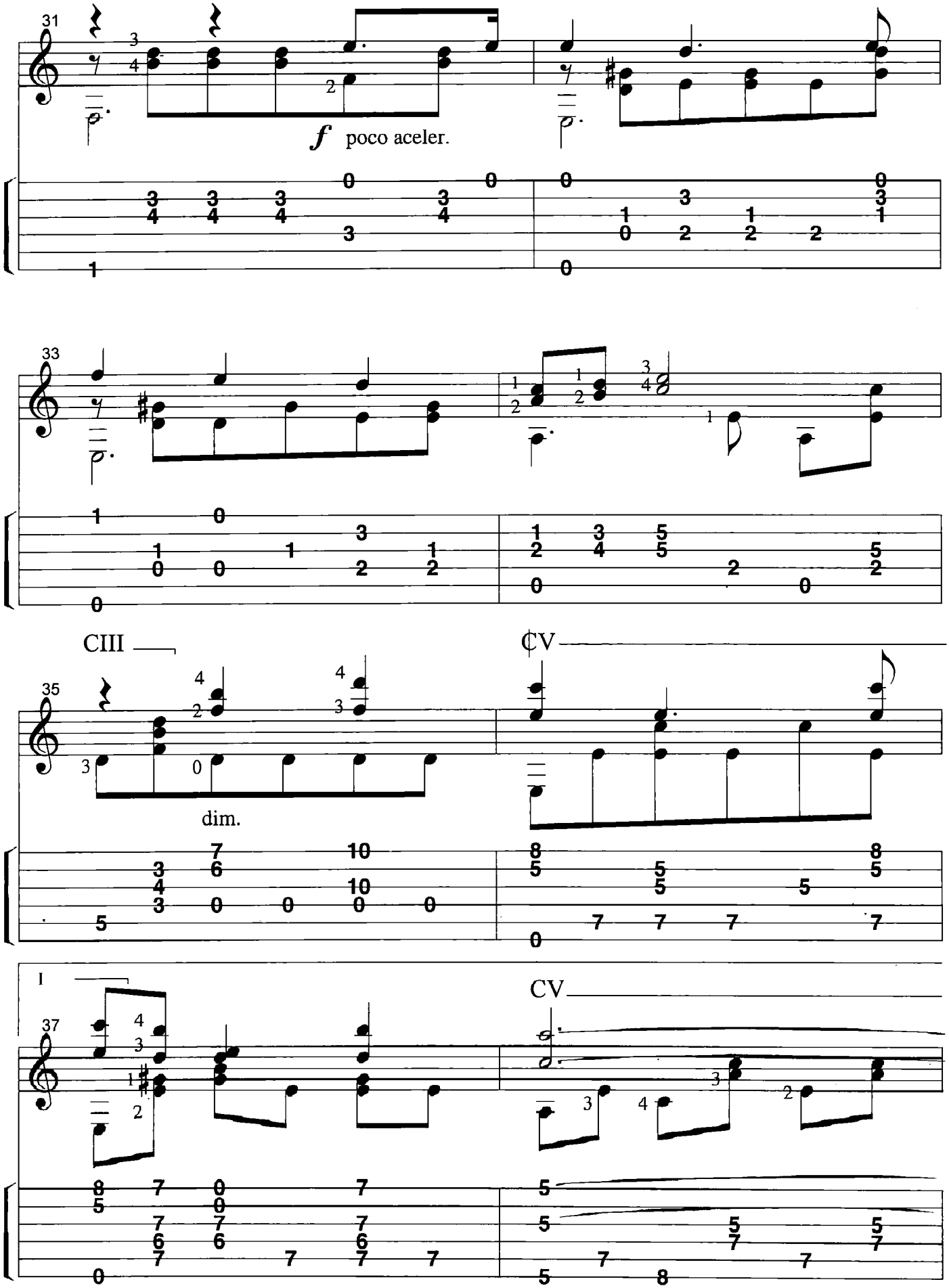
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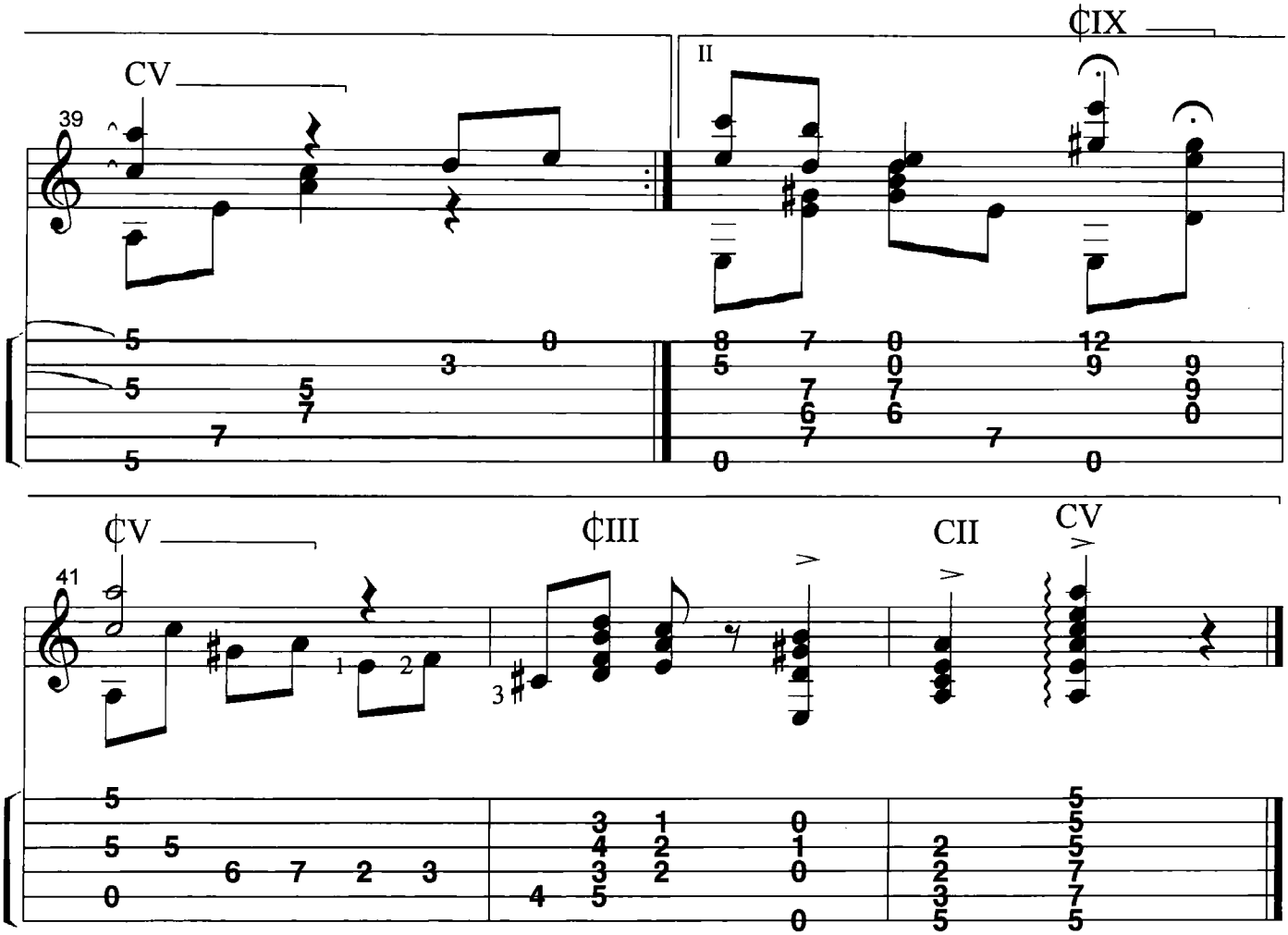
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Jorge Ankermann

1877–1941

At the age of eight, Jorge Ankermann began his musical education under the tutelage of his father. This early, disciplined instruction produced a brilliant composer pianist and bass violist as well as an orchestral director fluent in a variety of styles. As early as age 10, Ankermann was called upon as a substitute conductor in a performance of a light operatic work, and at 15 he directed a company of Cuban comic singers performing with the Orrín Circus in Mexico City. After touring Mexico and California extensively with this group, Ankermann resided in Mexico another two years supporting himself as a music teacher.

Upon his return to Havana, he dedicated himself entirely to his dual musical calling as an orchestral director and as a composer of theatrical pieces. In twenty years of non-stop work, he produced more than 500 works in various formats including *zarzuelas*, musical reviews, and comical sketches. He achieved international acclaim for his works for the musical stage as well as his songs and dance tunes in varied styles.

Destellos

Criolla

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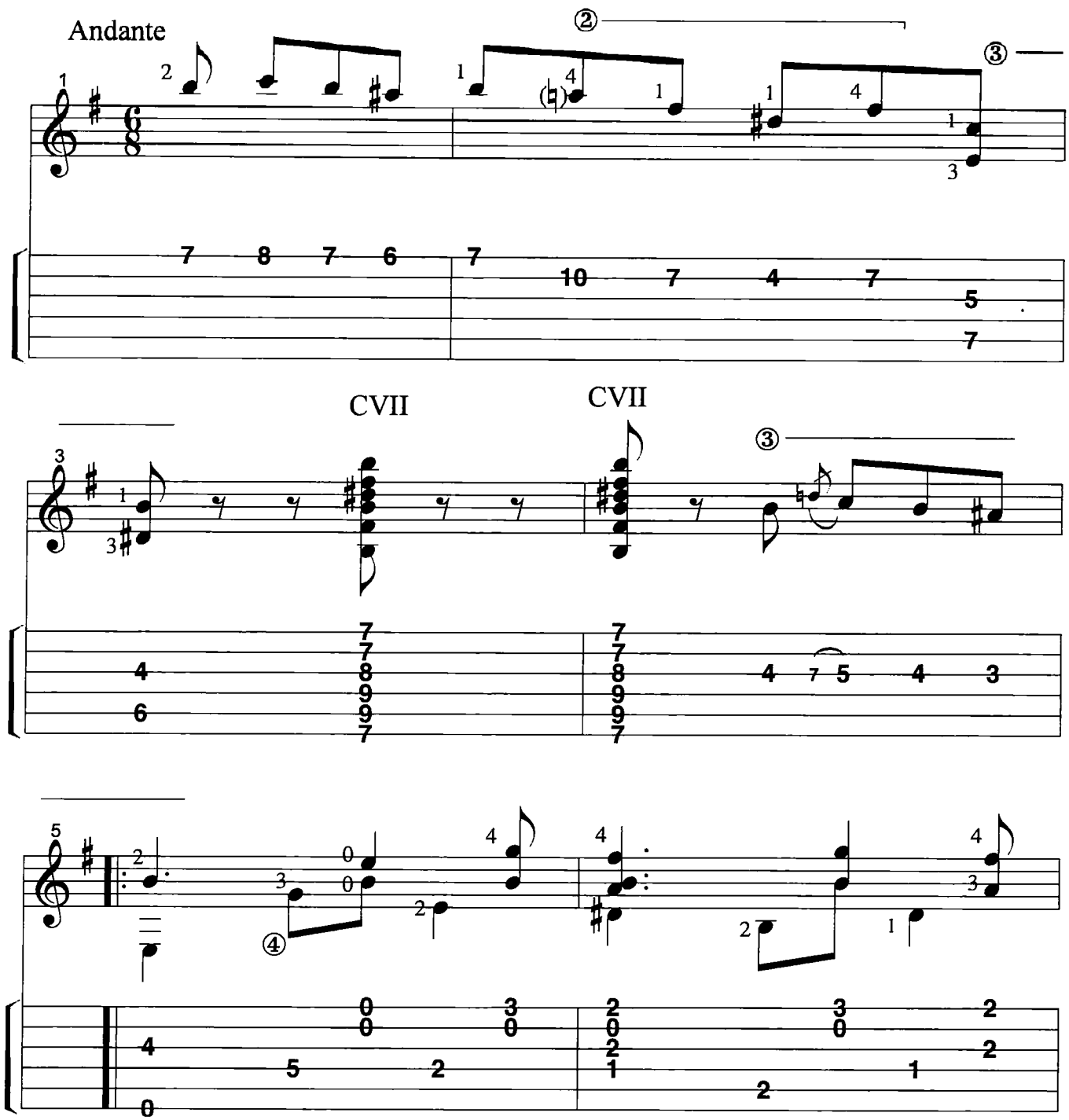
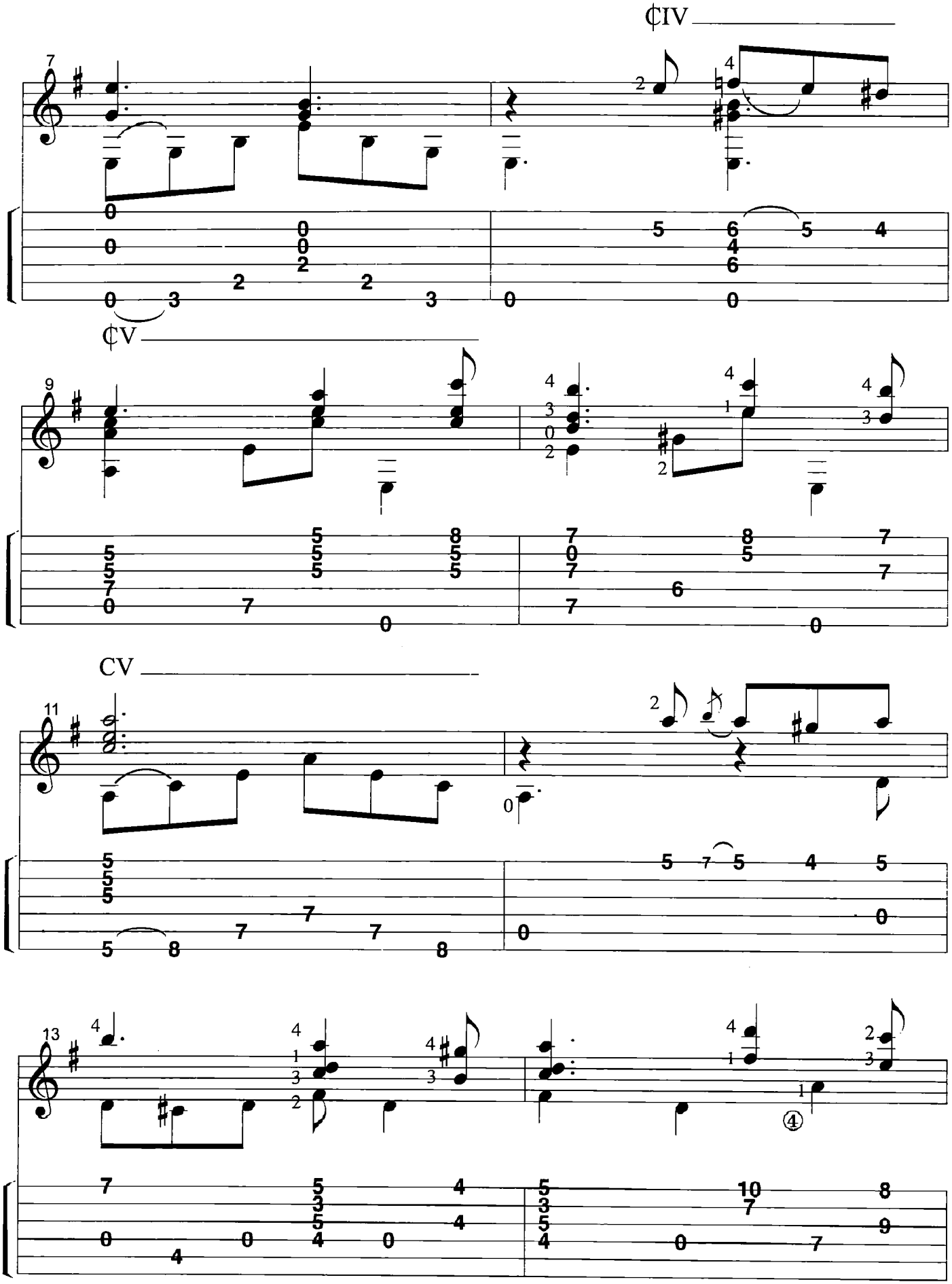
Jorge Ankermann
(1877-1941)

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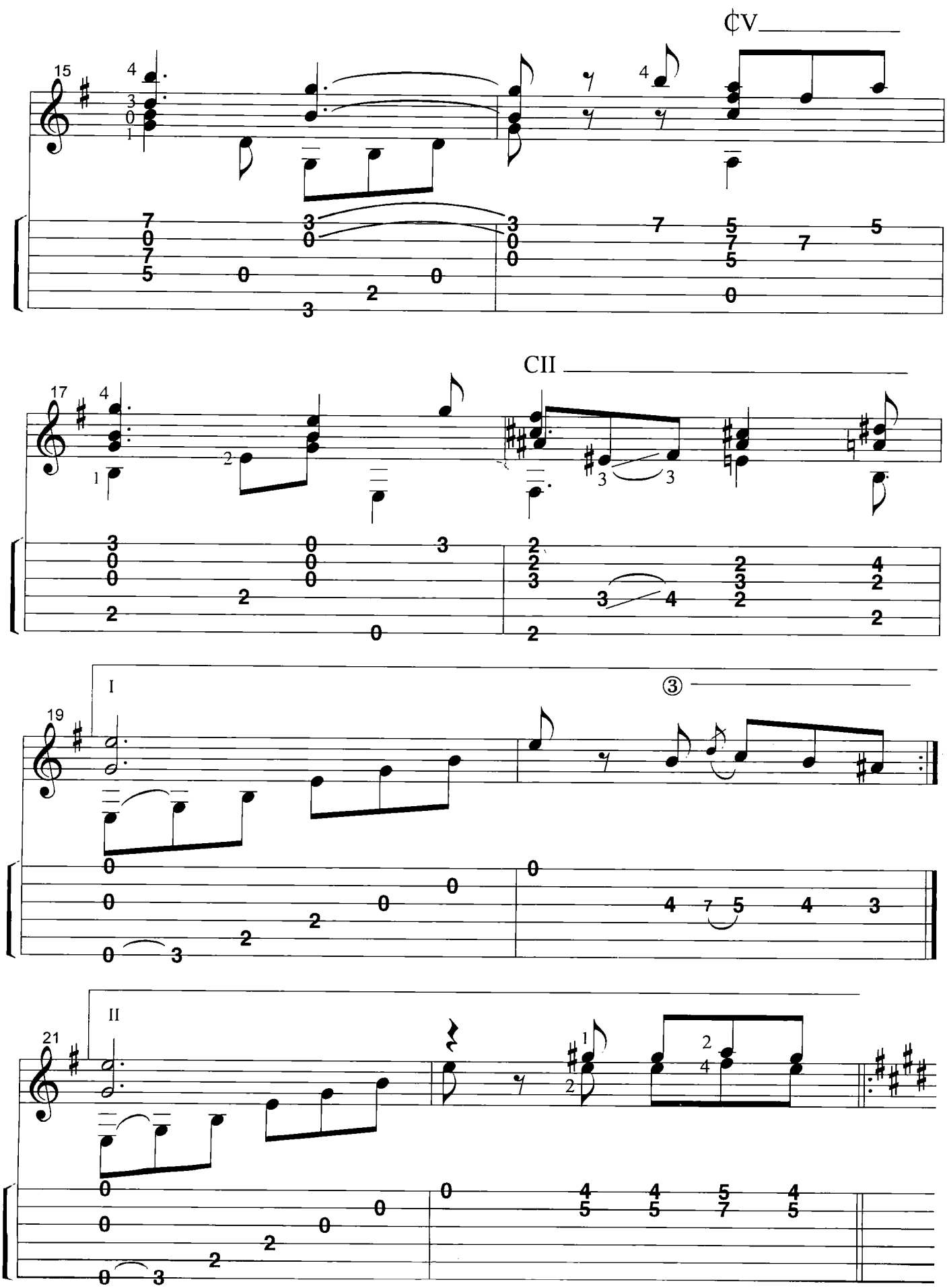
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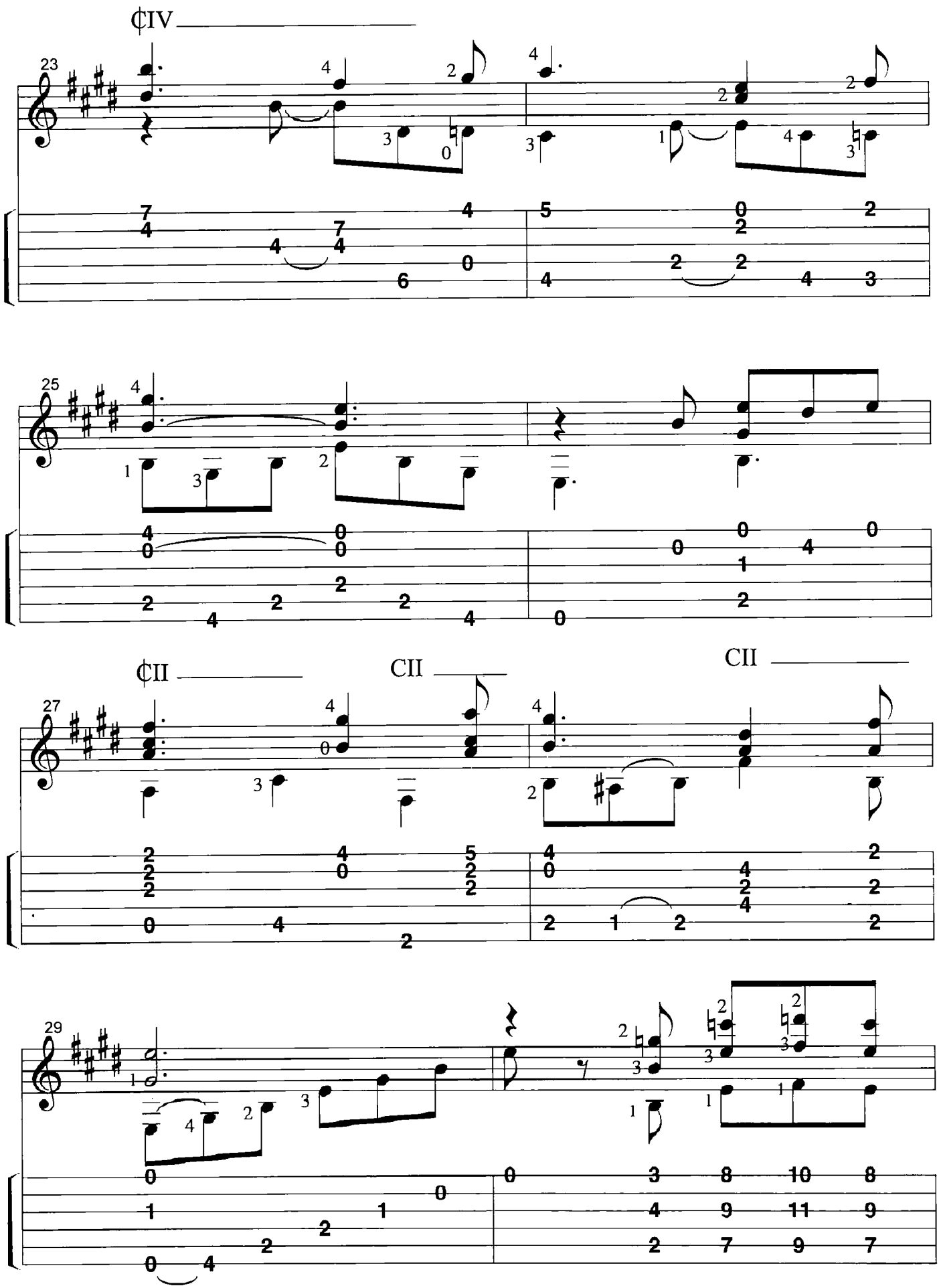
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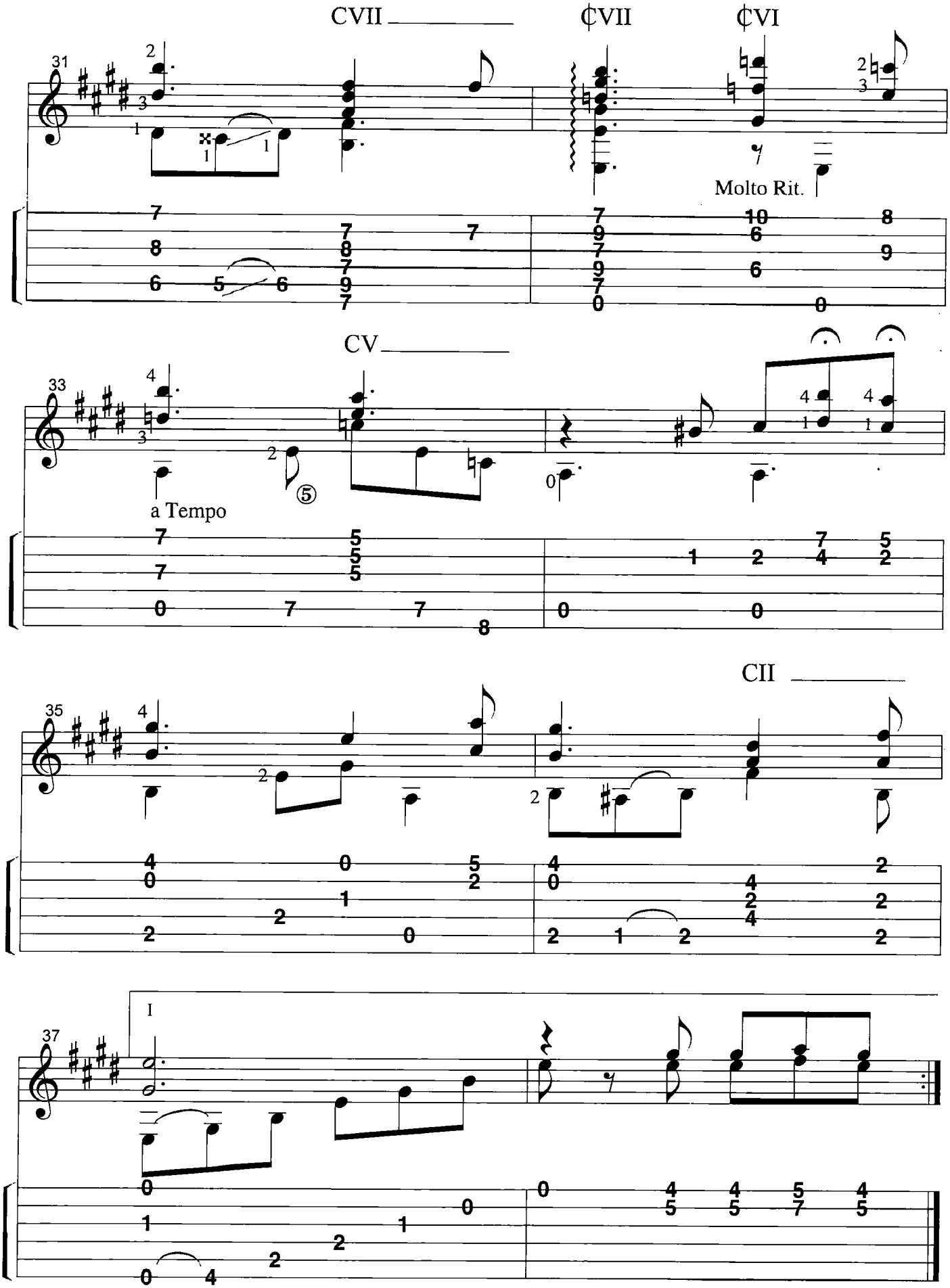
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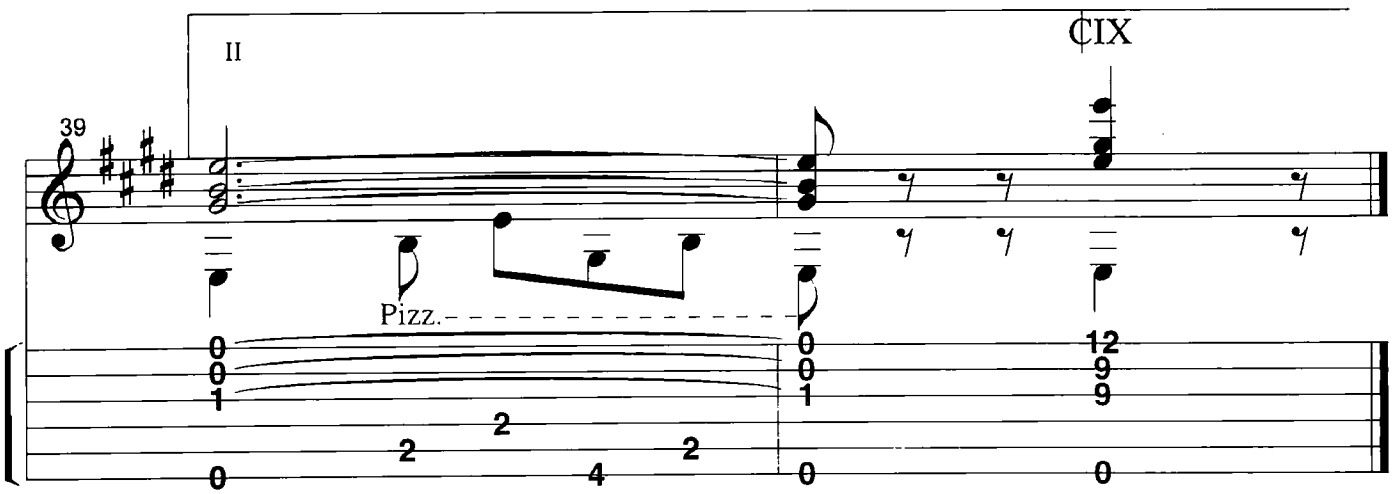
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Pizz.

Eduardo Sánches de Fuentes
1874–1944

Eduardo Sánchez de Fuentes was perhaps the most representative musician of the transitional period in which he lived. Born the son of a poet in a family of distinguished intellectuals, Ignacio Cervantes was one of his first teachers. In 1892 at the age of 16, Sánches de Fuentes composed one of the most famous *habaneras*; entitled *Tu* [You], the song enjoyed enormous success in Spain and Latin America. In the War of Independence that began in 1895, Cubans borrowed the tune and sang it with patriotic lyrics; it was more or less stolen and published in several other countries without the author's consent, often with a different title. The melody became so well-known that Sánchez de Fuentes was delighted to hear the second half sung perfectly by a caged mockingbird at the Hotel Venus in Santiago de Cuba.

It is important to note that the word "*habanera*" never constituted a type of music peculiar to Havana itself. As with the term "cubism" the creators of the style did not name the style themselves; in this instance, the traditional Cuban contradanzas were re-edited and published abroad first as *danzas habaneras*, or *danzas americanas*, and later generically designated simply as *habaneras*. What was novel about *Tu* was that the 8-bar first phrase was preceded by a 6-bar introduction, and the tune's relaxed tempo allowed it to be sung as a romantic ballad.

At 24, Sánchez de Fuentes completed the task that Saumell had conceived; he wrote a Cuban nationalistic opera called *Yumurí* which premiered in 1898 complete with a libretto in Spanish. The opera's theme centered around the relationship between Yumuri, the daughter of an Indian chief, and a conquistador. The work was flawed in that it attempted to portray the music of aboriginal Indians in Cuba when the indigenous people had long been extinct, and by the fact that the composer refused to acknowledge any African influences in Cuba's past. Two more operas (*El náufrago* and *La Dolorosa*), a musical setting in one act of a lyric poem (*El Caminante*), an oratorio (*Navidad*), several *Leider* and other major works would follow — but historically, Sánchez de Fuentes will be remembered for such popular songs as *Tu* and *Corazón*.

Corazón

Canción

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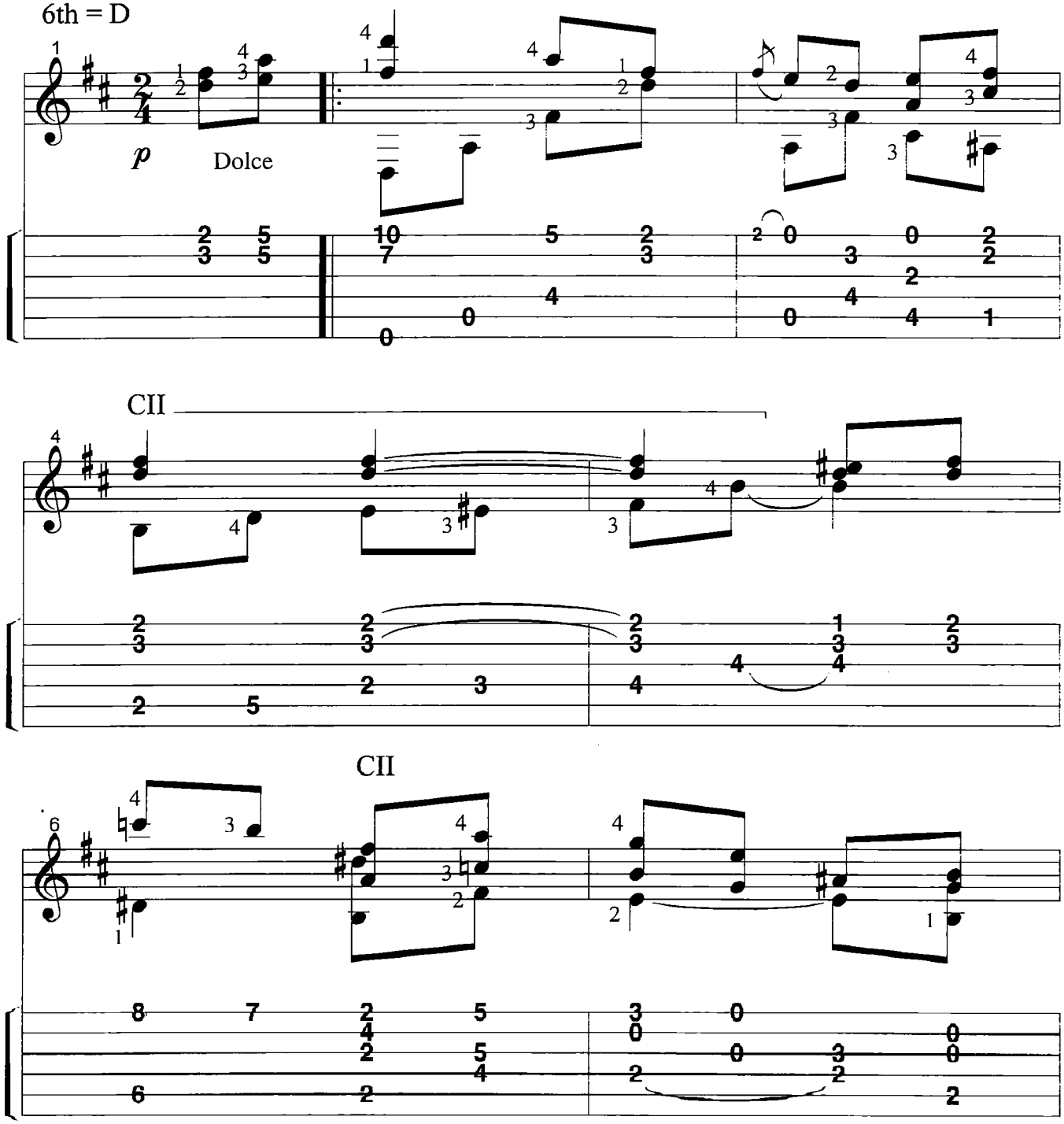
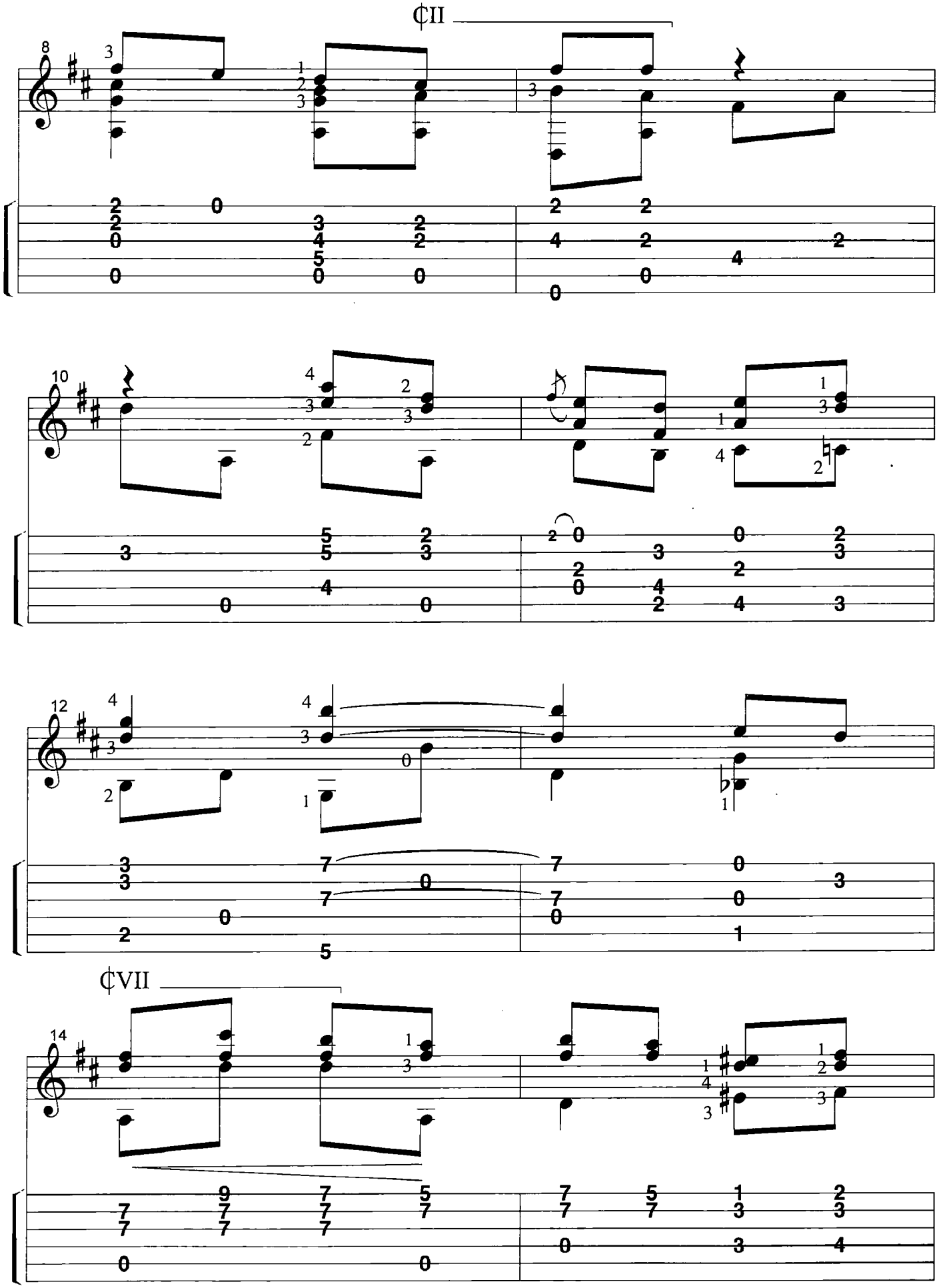
Arranged by Elias Barreiro

Eduardo Sanchez de Fuentes
(1874-1944)

Quasi Allegretto

6th = D

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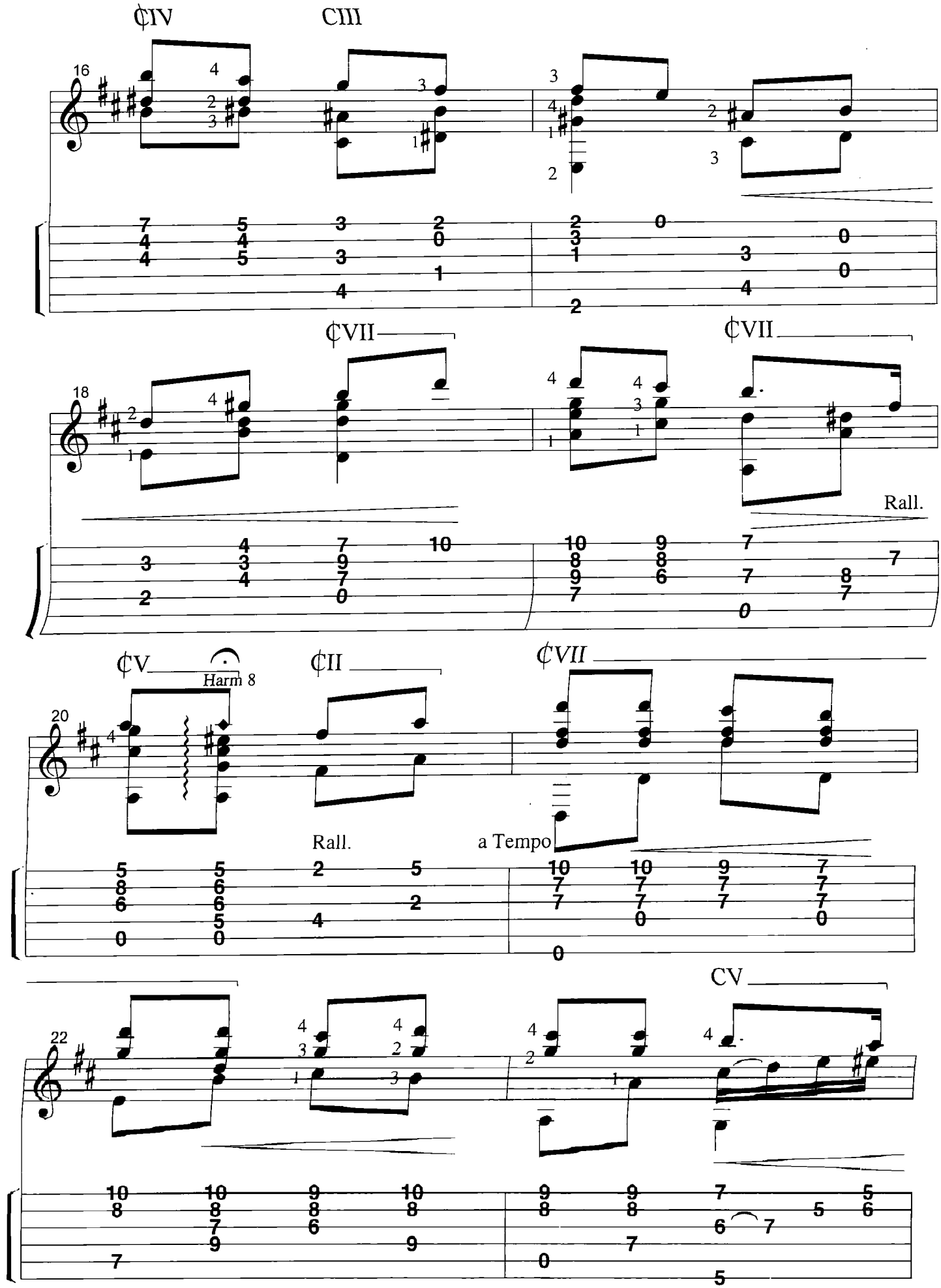
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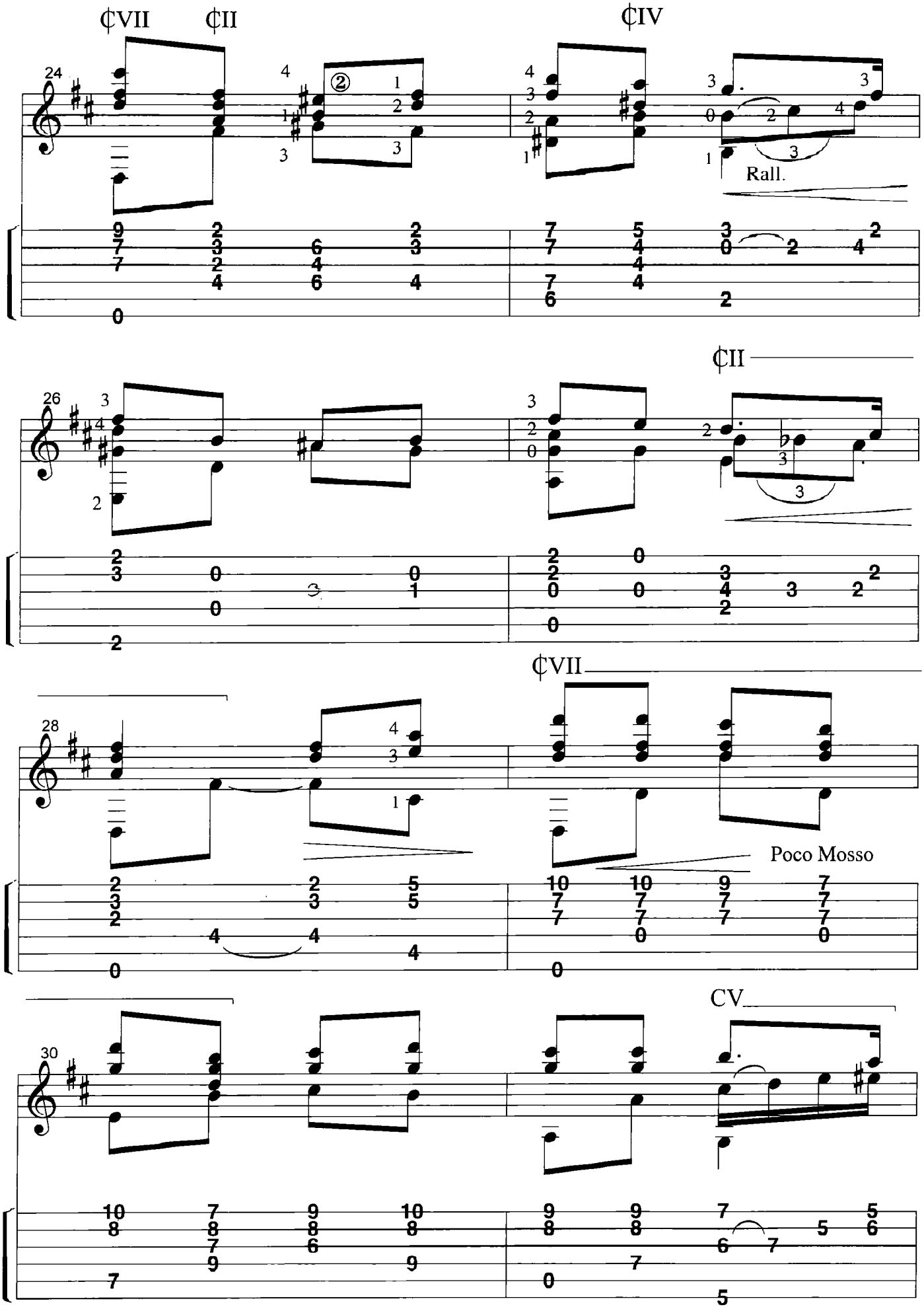
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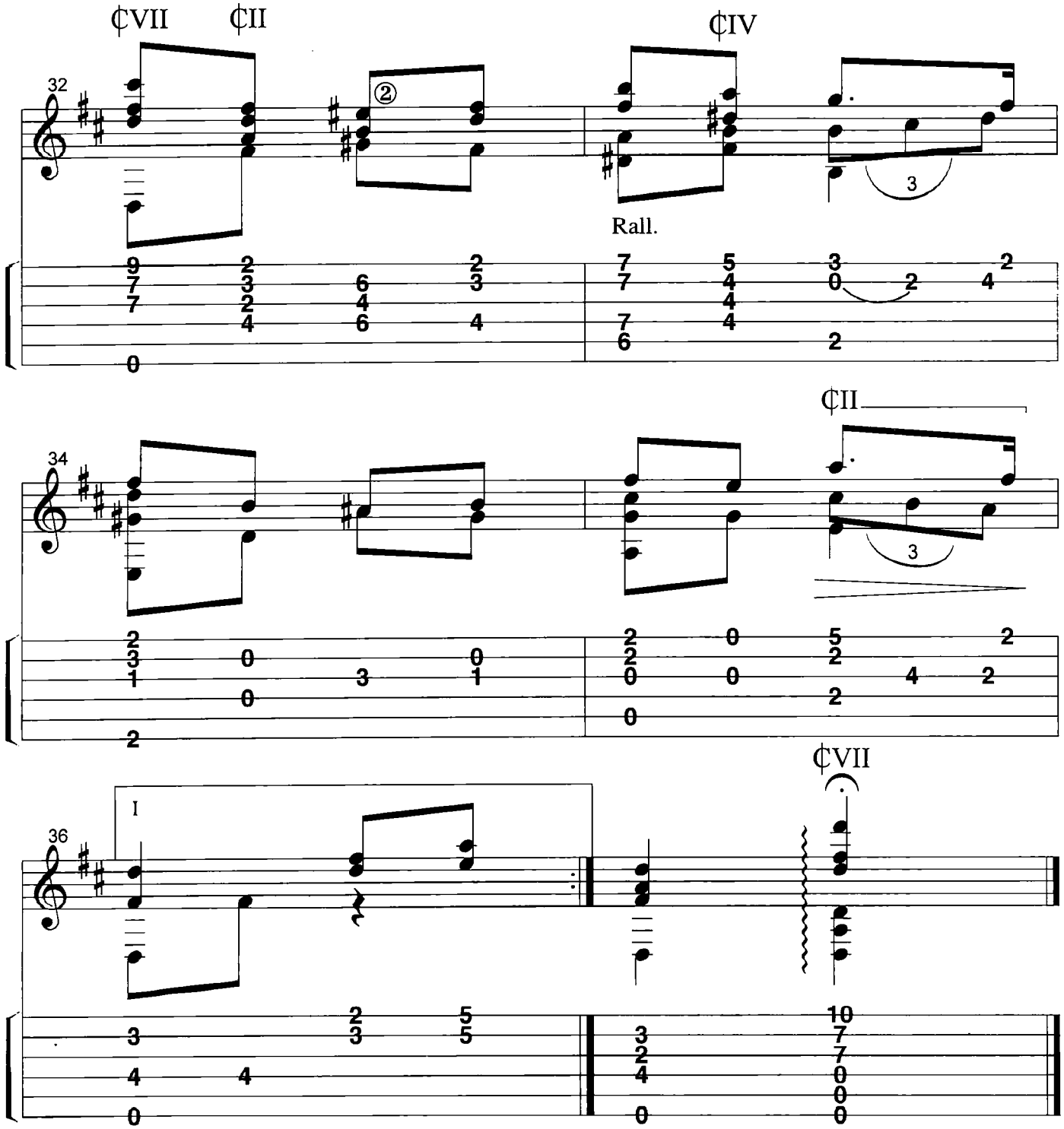
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Luis Casas Romero

1882–1950

Luis Casas Romero created the generic song form known as the *criolla*. Although its lyrics are frequently concerned with pastoral themes, this genre of song hatched and evolved in an urban environment. The *criolla* is characterized by a fluid melody line in 6/8 superimposed over an accompaniment in marked 3/4 meter.

Like José Marín Varona, Luis Casas Romero was born in Camagüey, Cuba. He played flute in a local orchestra from age 12 and, after his military service in the war for independence of 1895, he returned to his home town to organize a children's band. He also played in a dance orchestra, while holding a day job as a type. In 1904, he moved to Havana with a contract to direct the orchestra at the Teatro Martí, simultaneously serving as principal flutist with many of the theater orchestras in the city. In 1909, while serving as director at the Teatro Payret, he wrote and premiered his first *criolla, Carmela*. He subsequently toured Mexico, Santo Domingo, the United States, and Canada where his music was well-received.

Upon his return to Cuba, Casas Romero became a professor of flute, music theory, solfege, harmony, and composition. In 1913 he was appointed sub-director of a major military band, and later its principal director. His most popular *criollas* are: *El Mambí* (The Freedom Fighter), *Carmela, Soy cubano (I am Cuban), Mi casita (My Little House),* and *Camagüeyana*. He also composed *zarzuelas*, overtures, musical reviews, and more than 100 songs and dances. Casas Romero published several articles in Cuban magazines, and was awarded various prizes for his creative efforts.

El Mambí

Criolla

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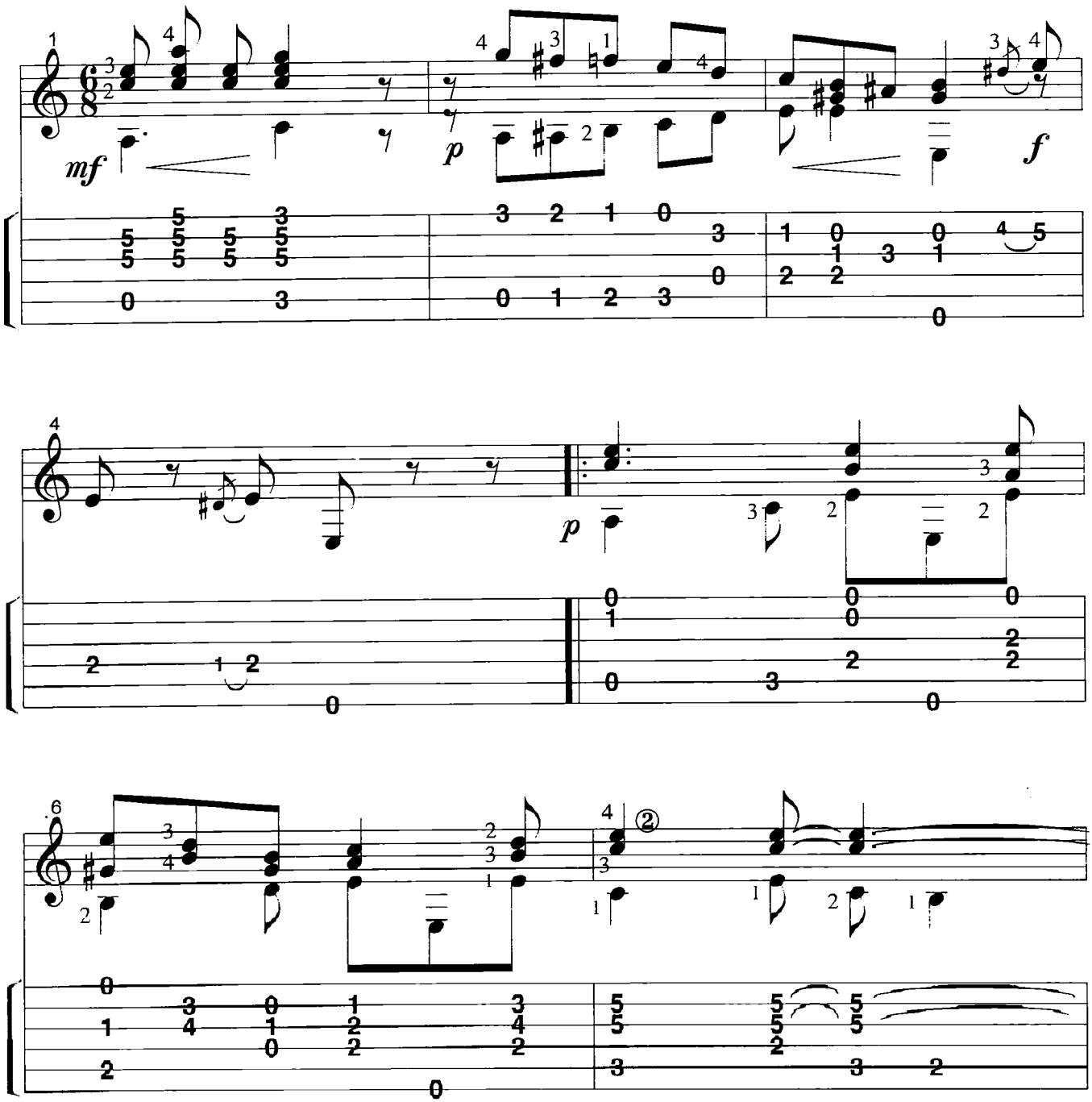
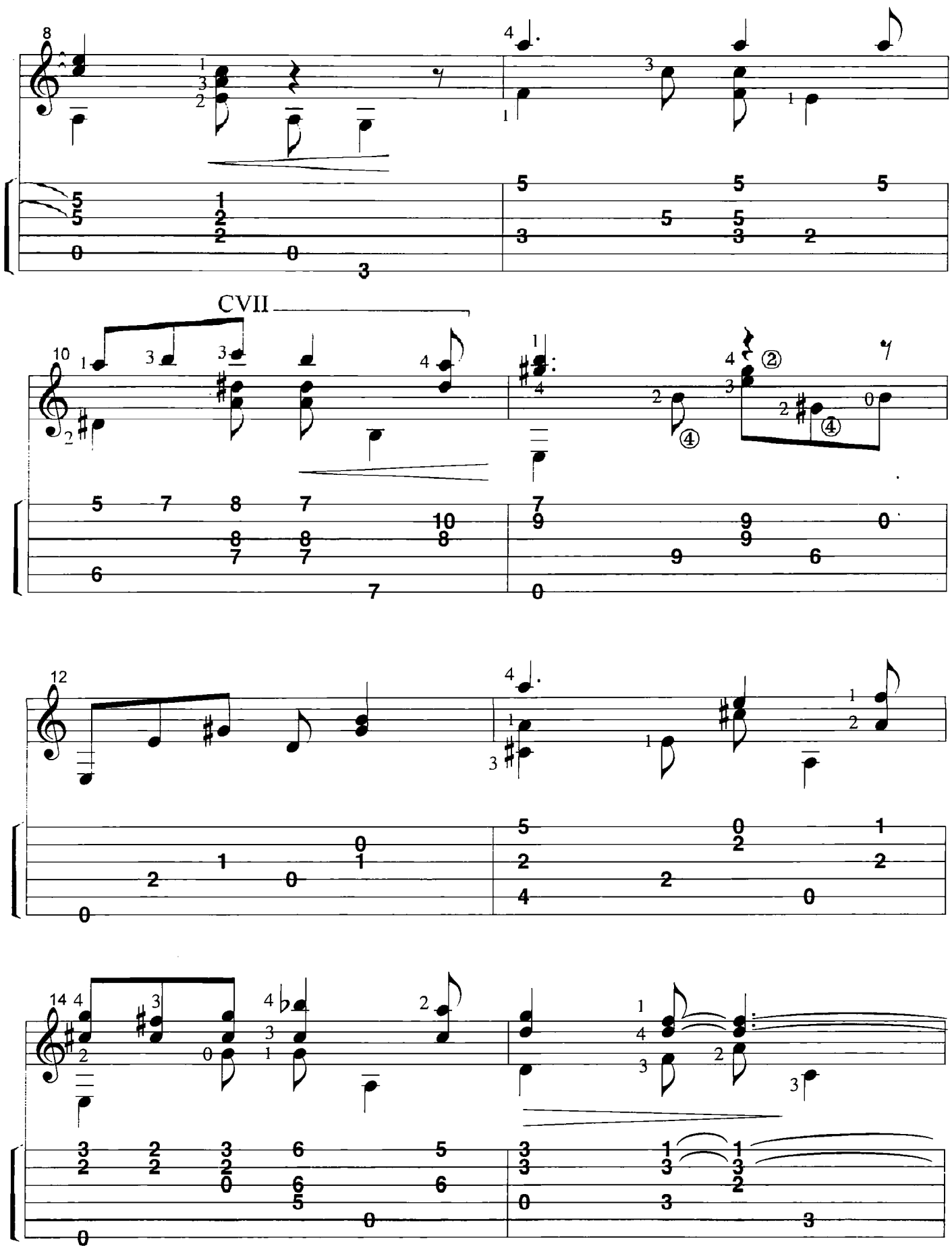
Arranged by Elias Barreiro

Luis Casas Romero
(1882-1950)

Moderato CIII

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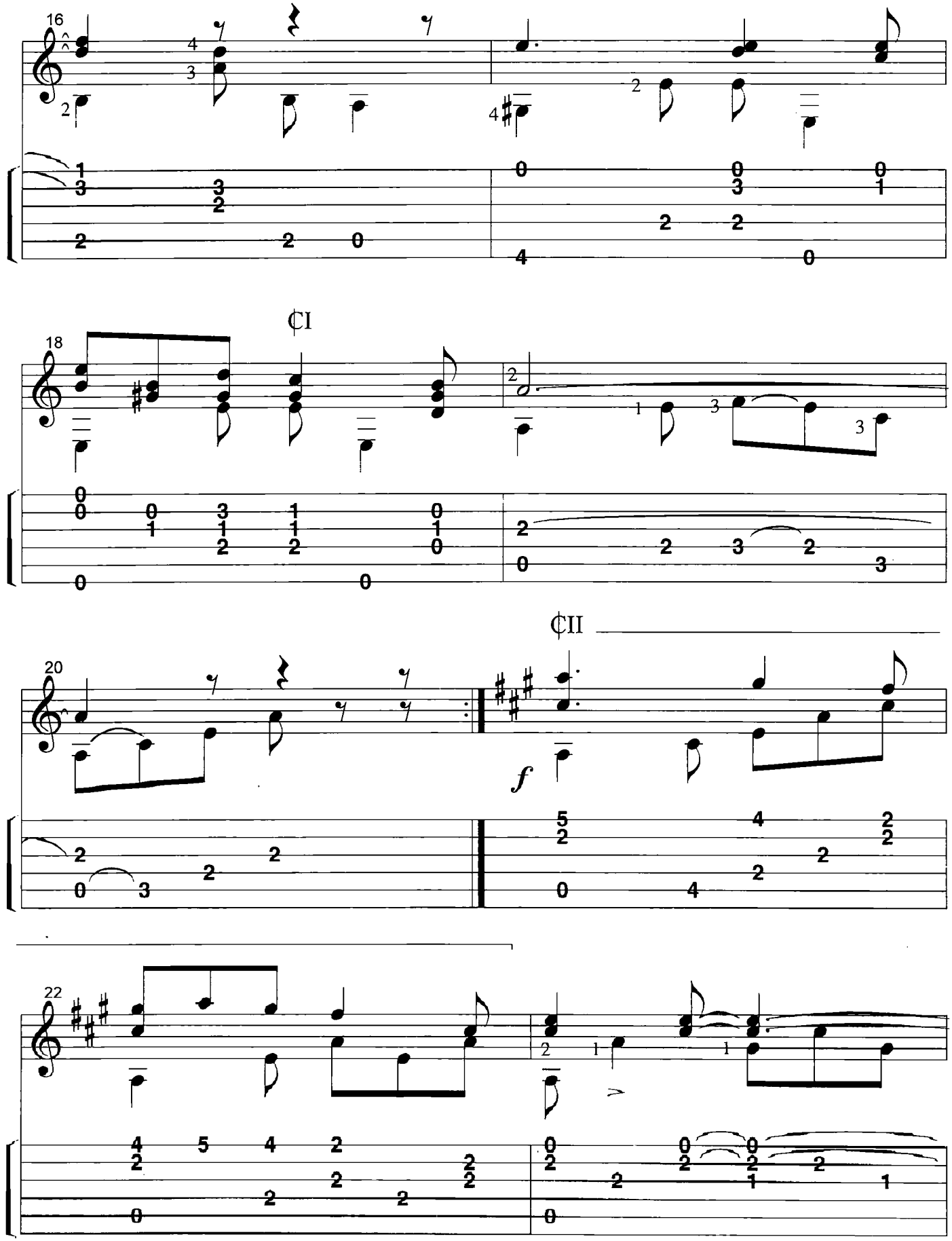
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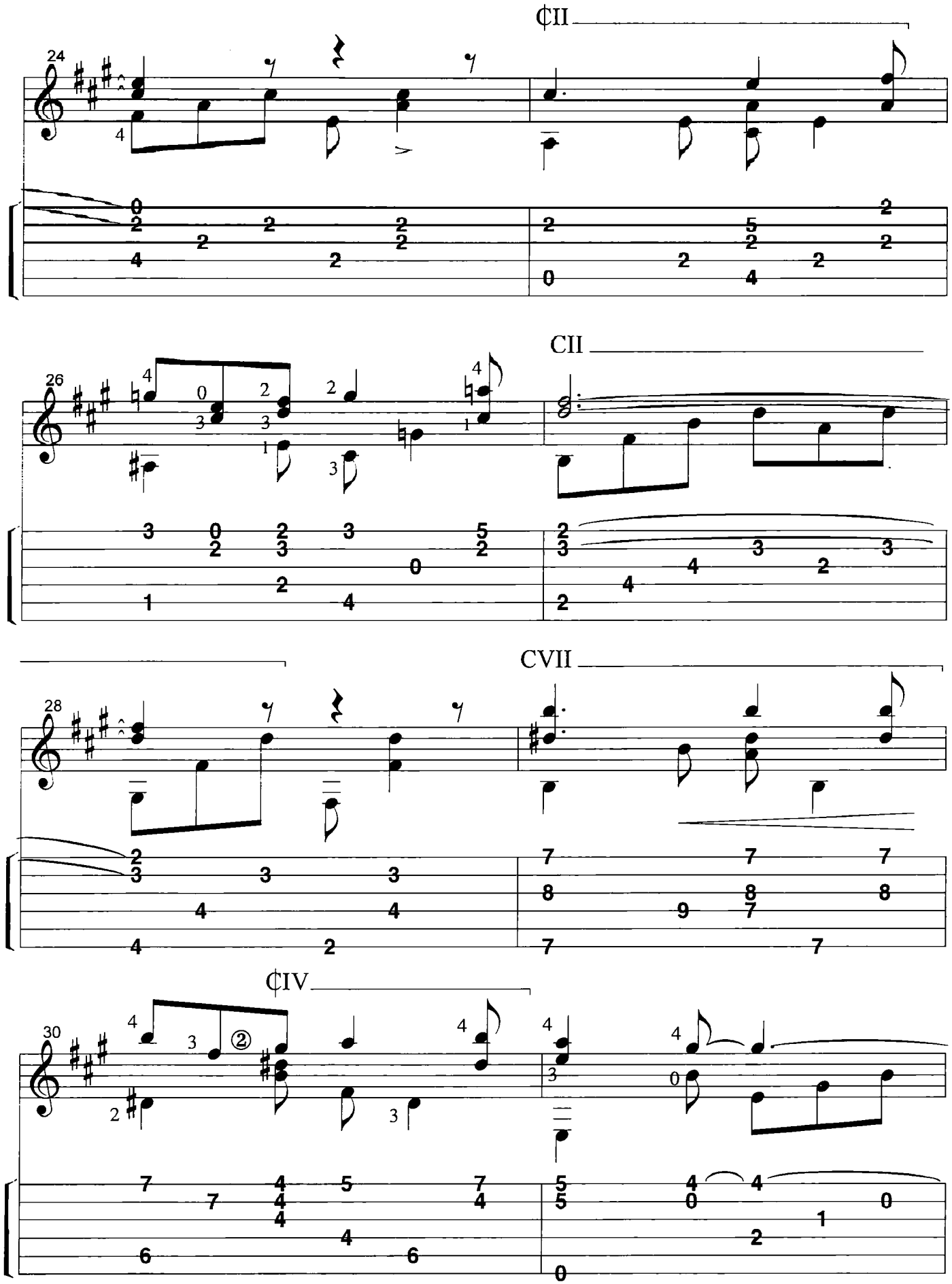
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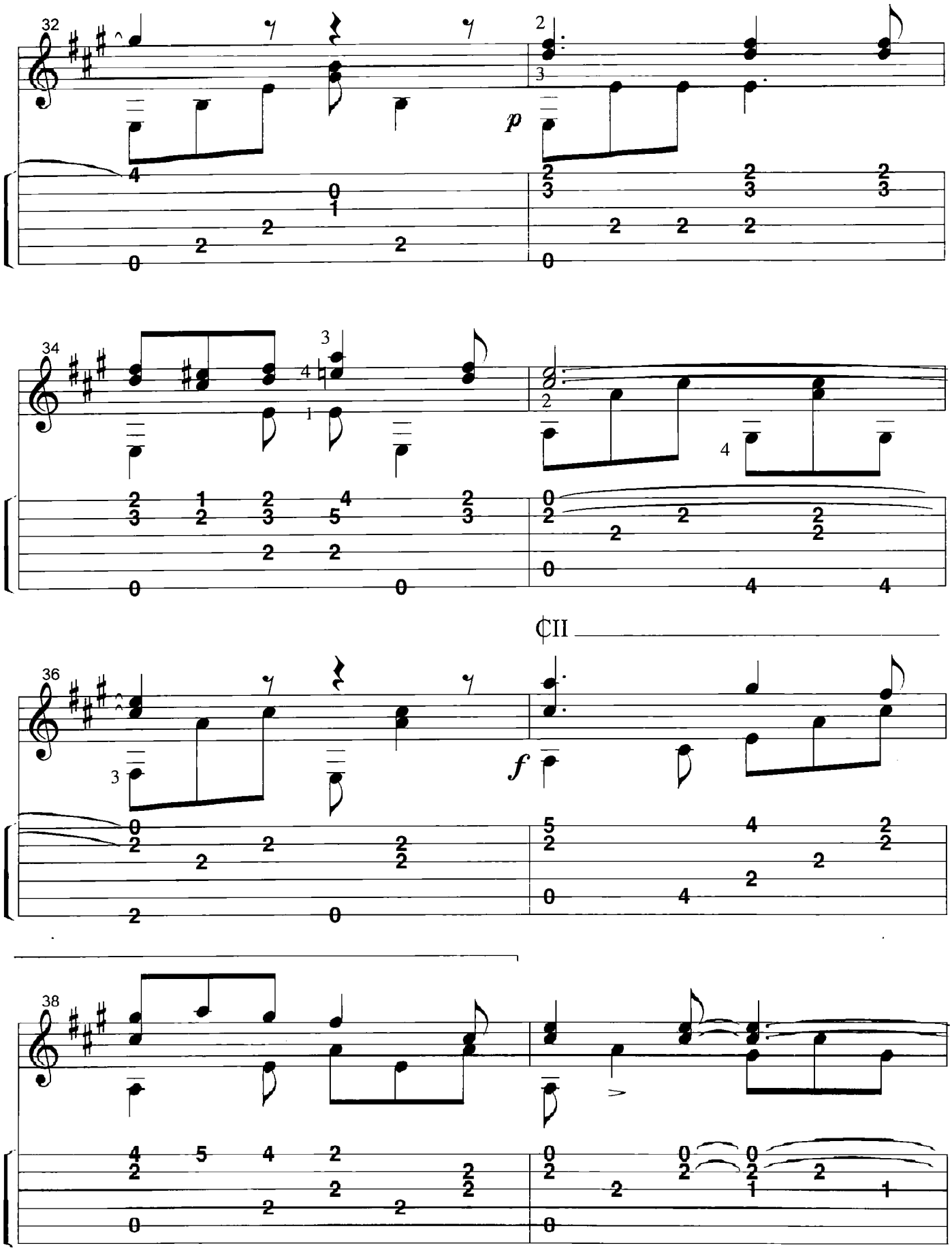
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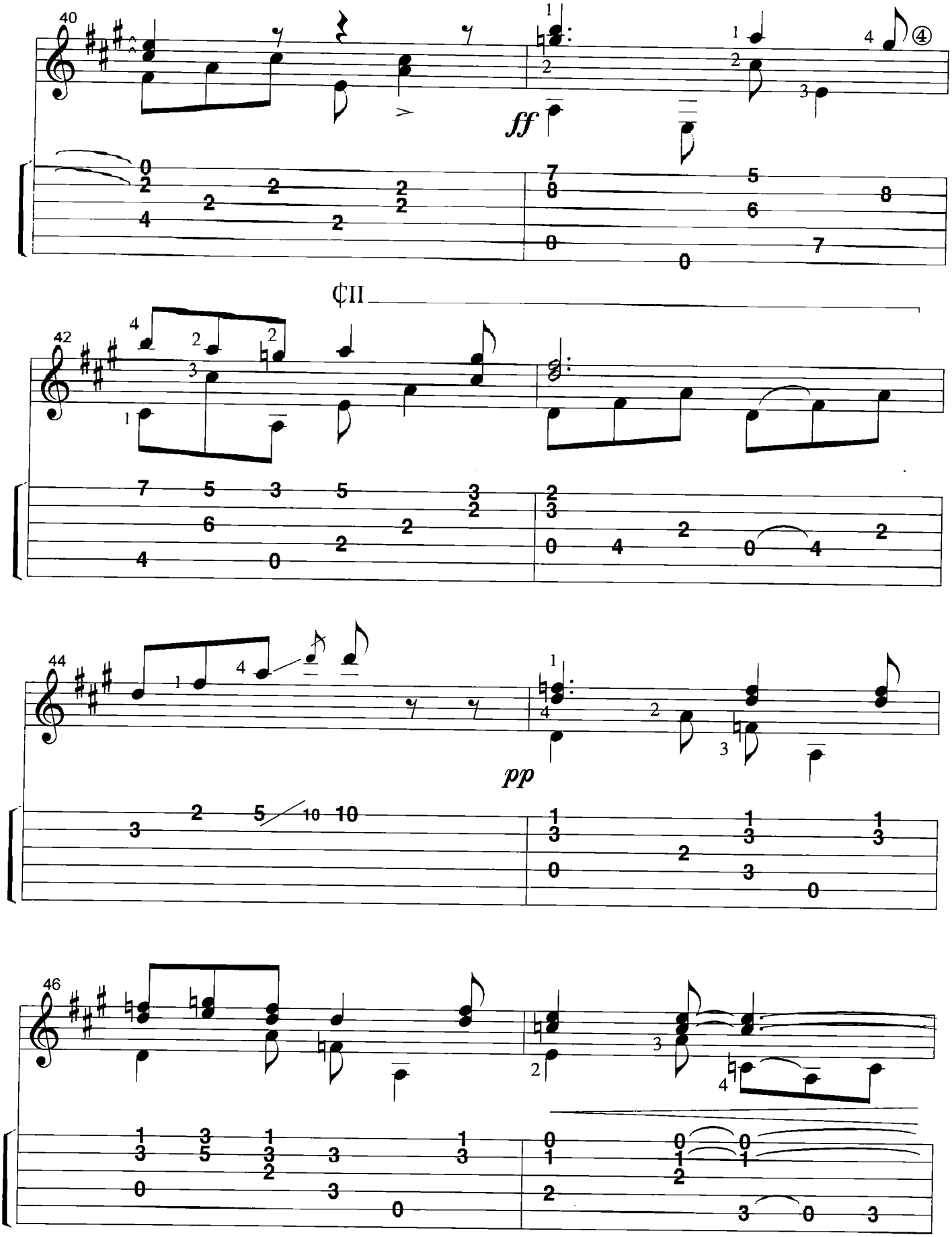
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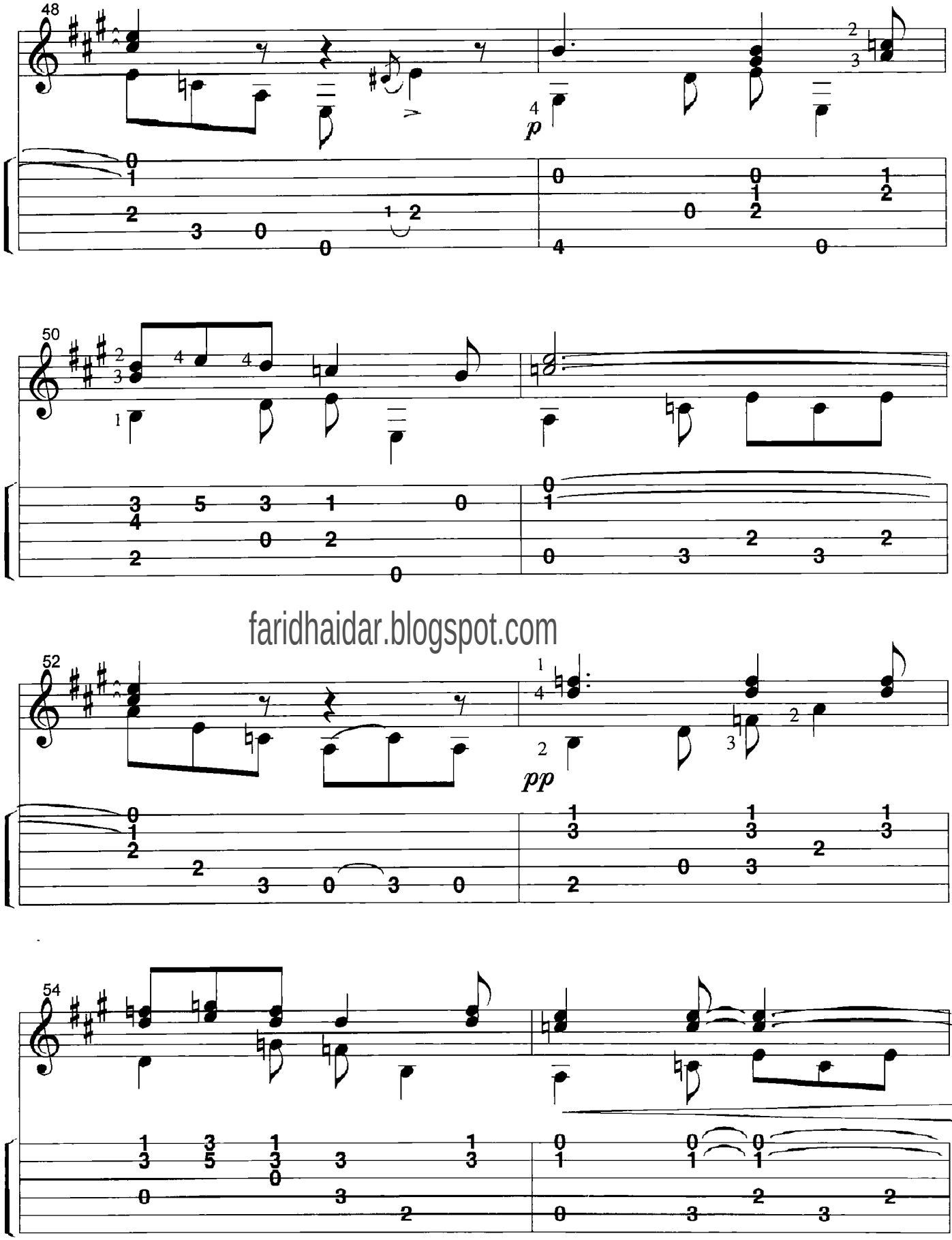
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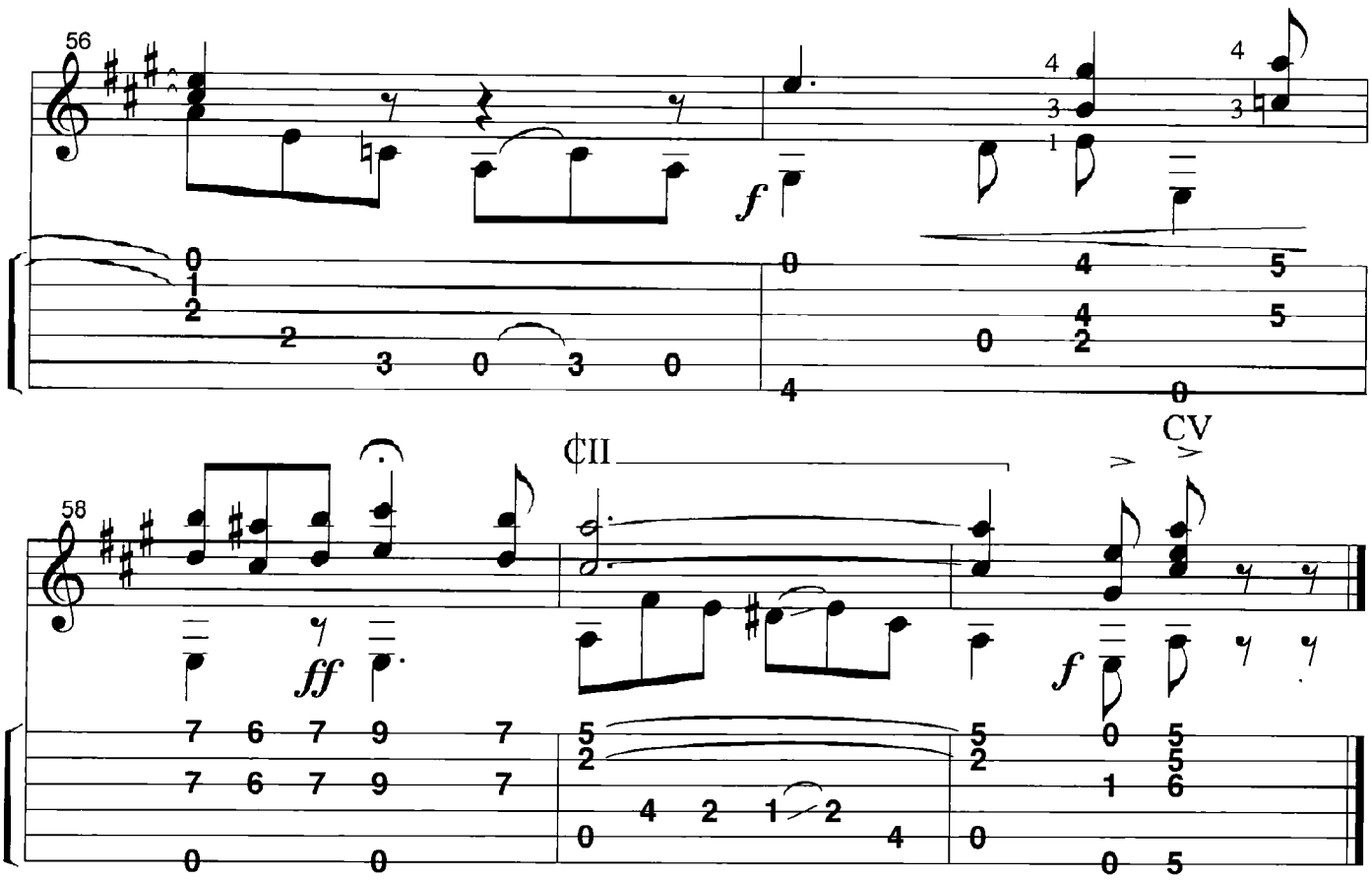
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José Lino Fernandez de Coca

1830–?

Another composer of Cuban *contradanzas*, José Lino Fernandez de Coca reintroduced the figure of the quintuplet in the Cuban rhythmic palette. His compositions are unusual in that they display occasional chromaticism and may change from major to minor mode between the A and B sections. His newly composed *contradanzas* were so hotly anticipated by adoring fans that many were published in Havana's weekly musical news magazines. In addition to being a composer of hit tunes in the *contradanza* genre, Fernandez de Coca was an accomplished pianist who was much sought after as a teacher for young high-society ladies.

Ecos del alma

Contradanza

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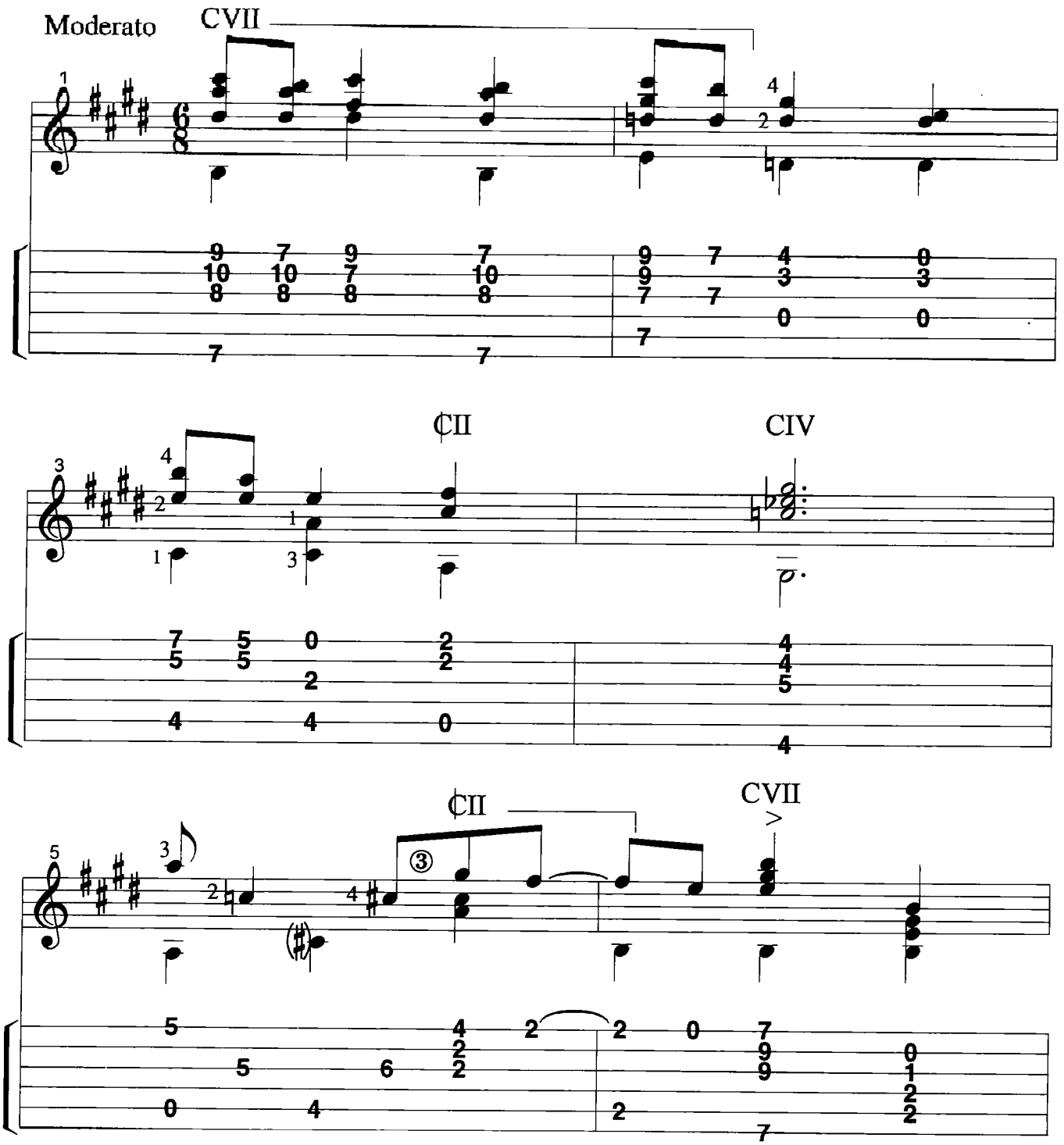
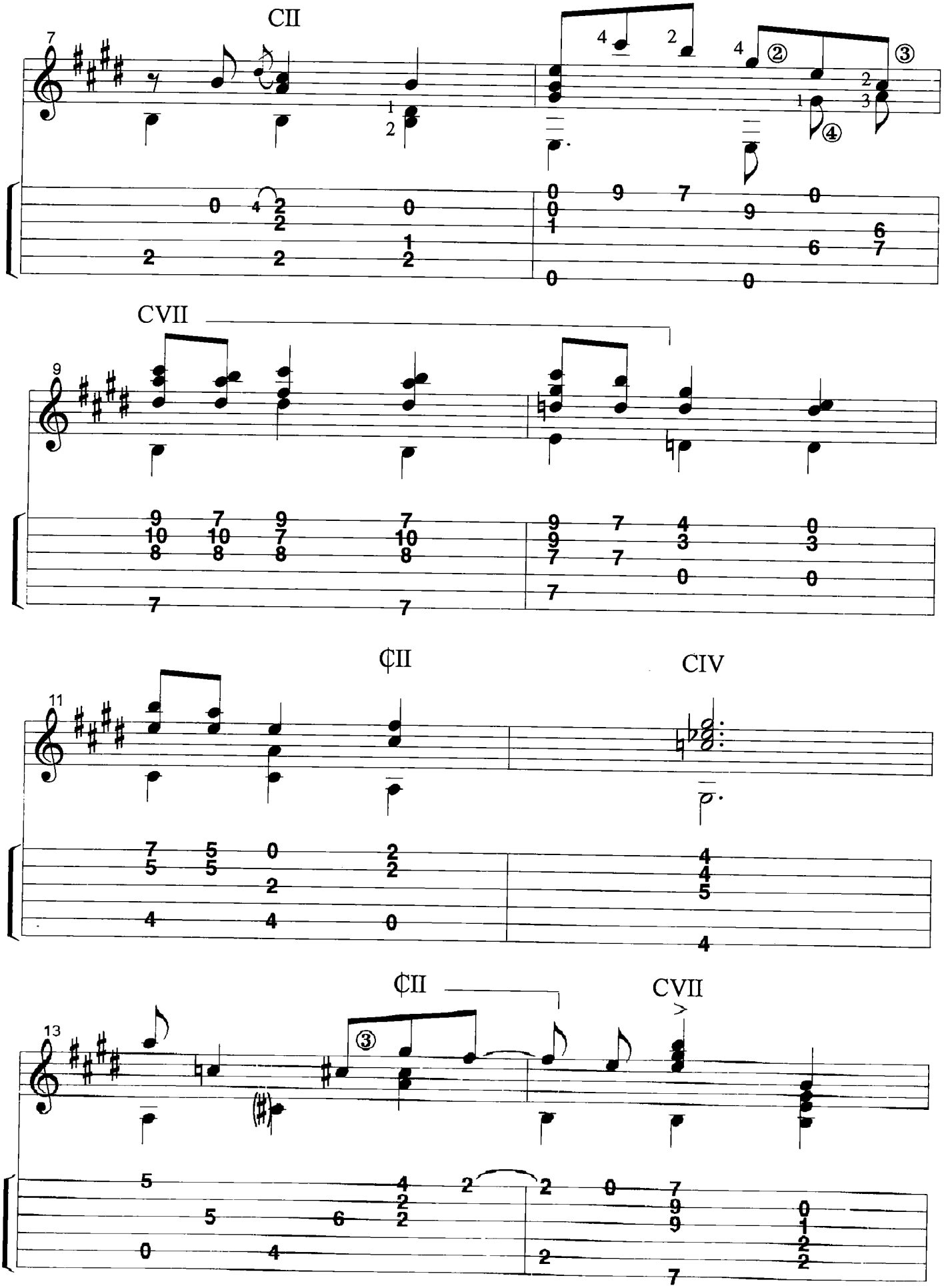
Arranged by Elias Barreiro

Jose Lino Fernandez De Coca
(1830-?)

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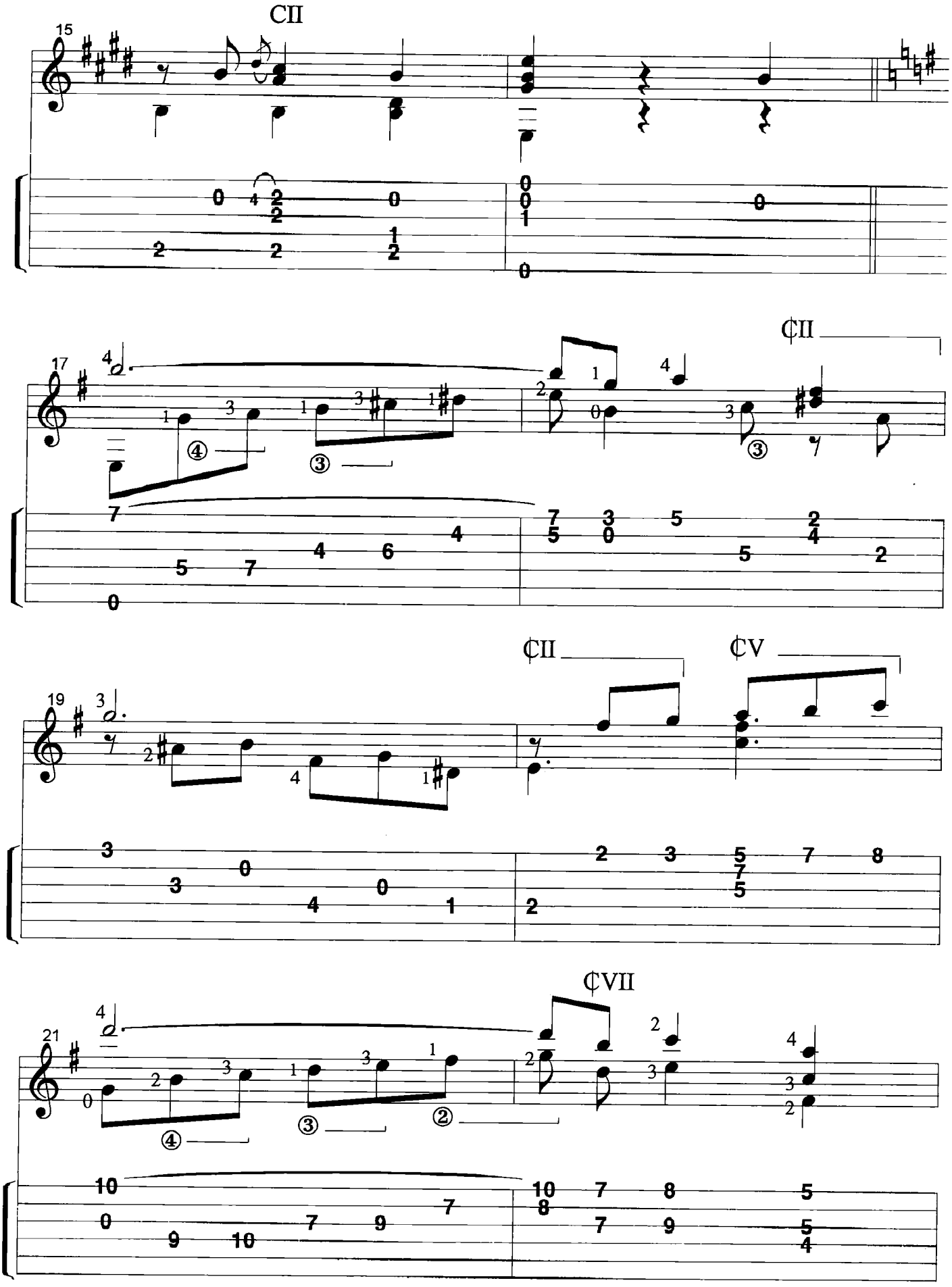
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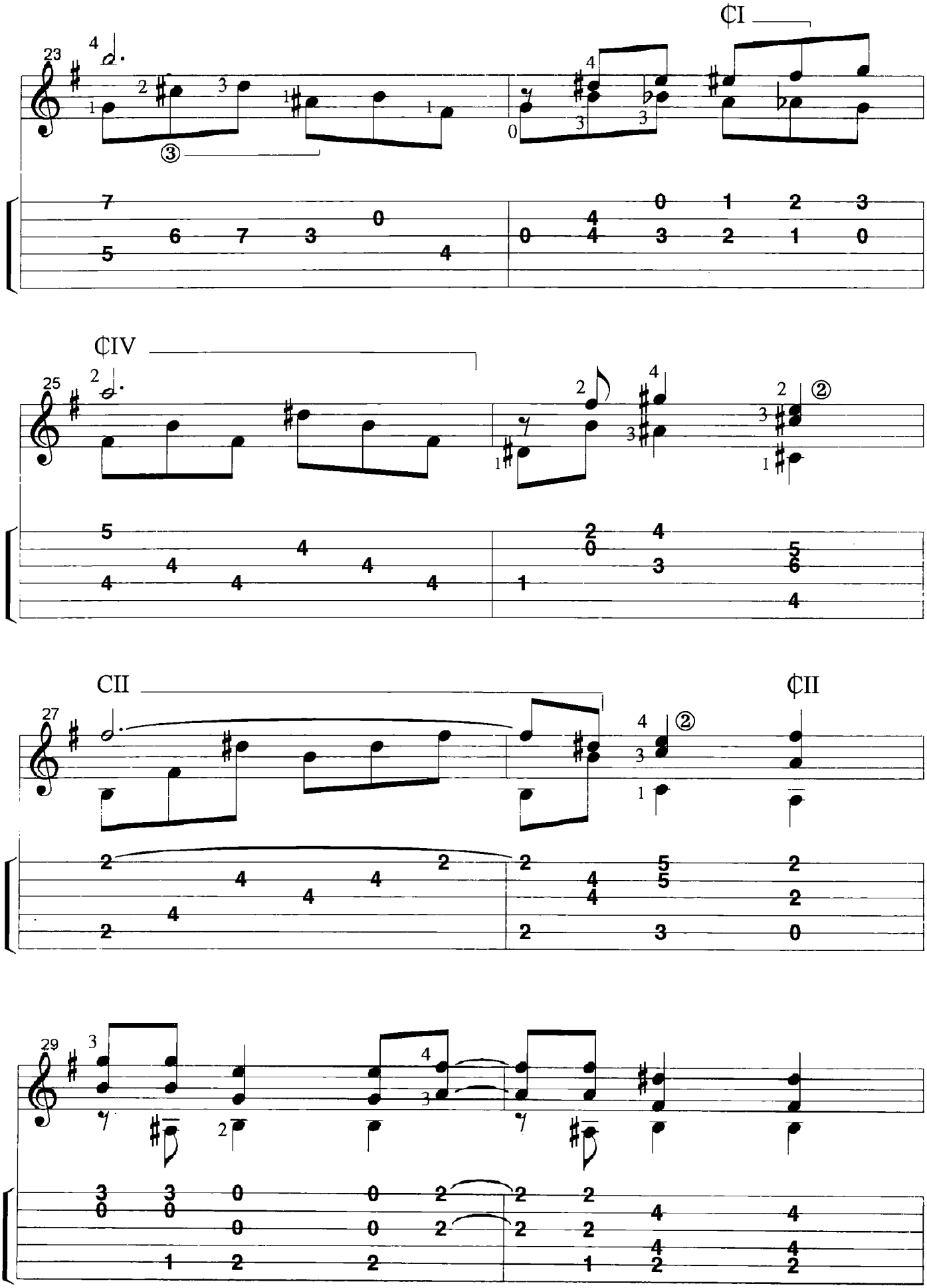
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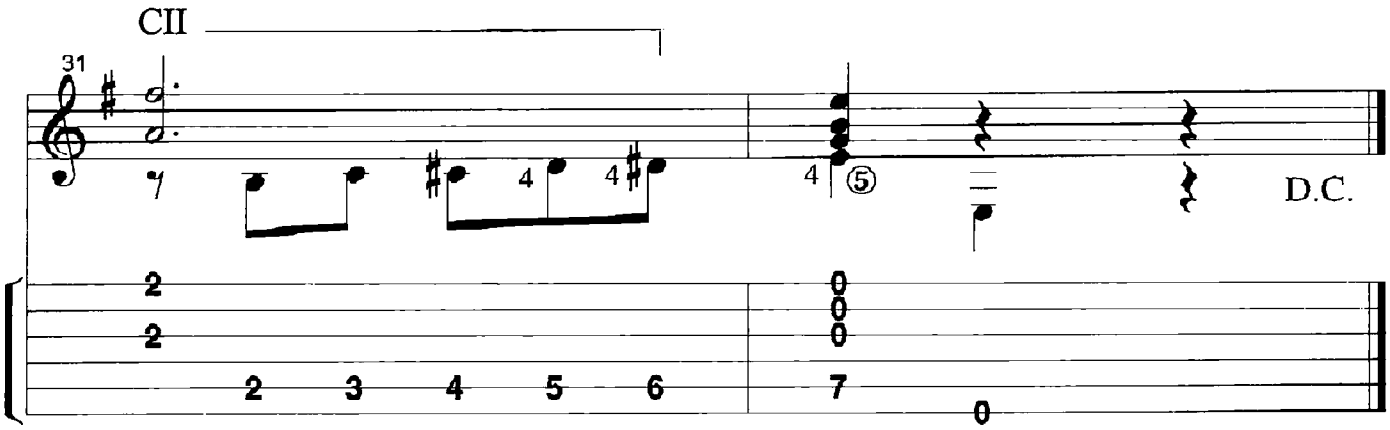
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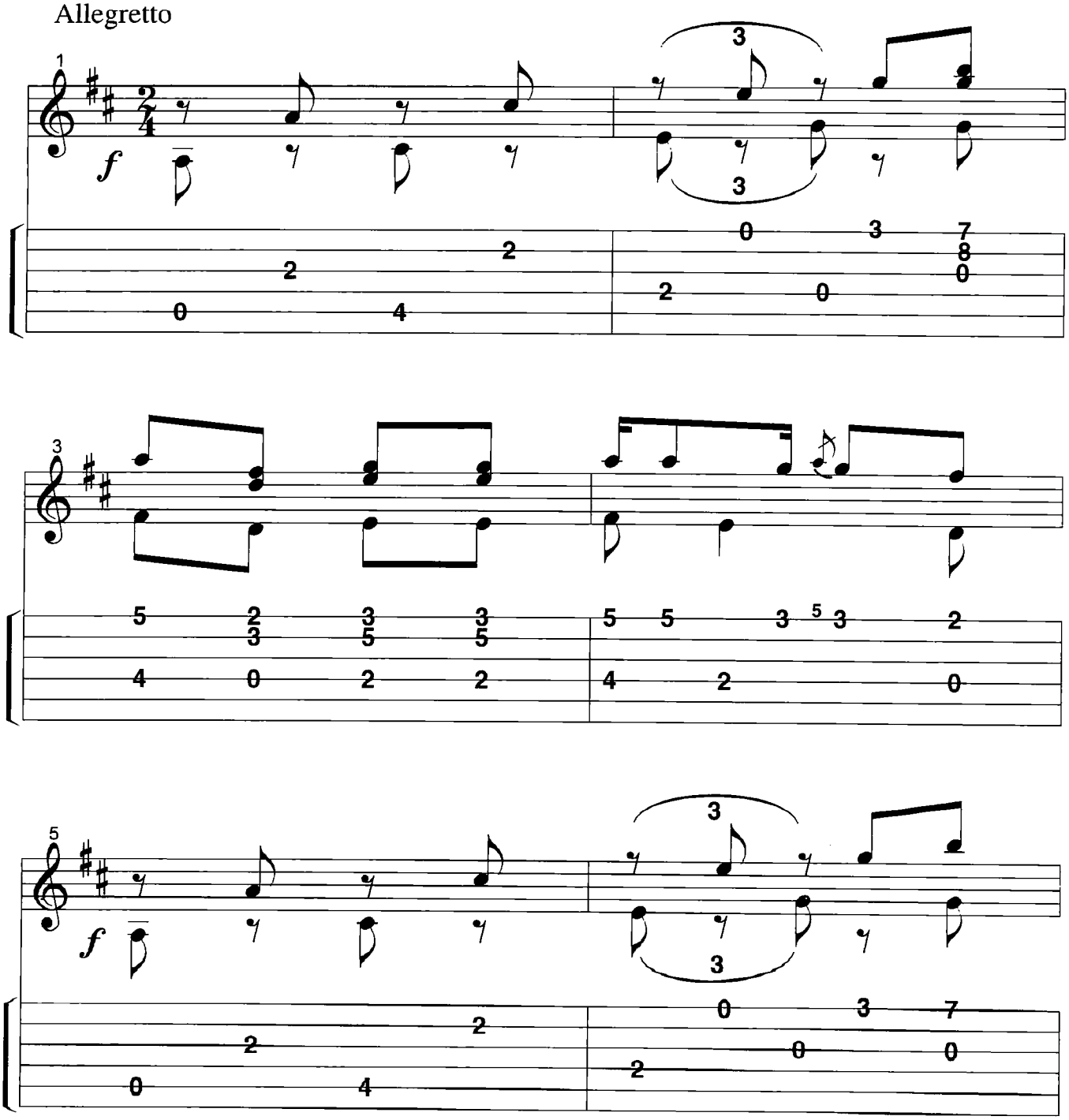
Cambujá

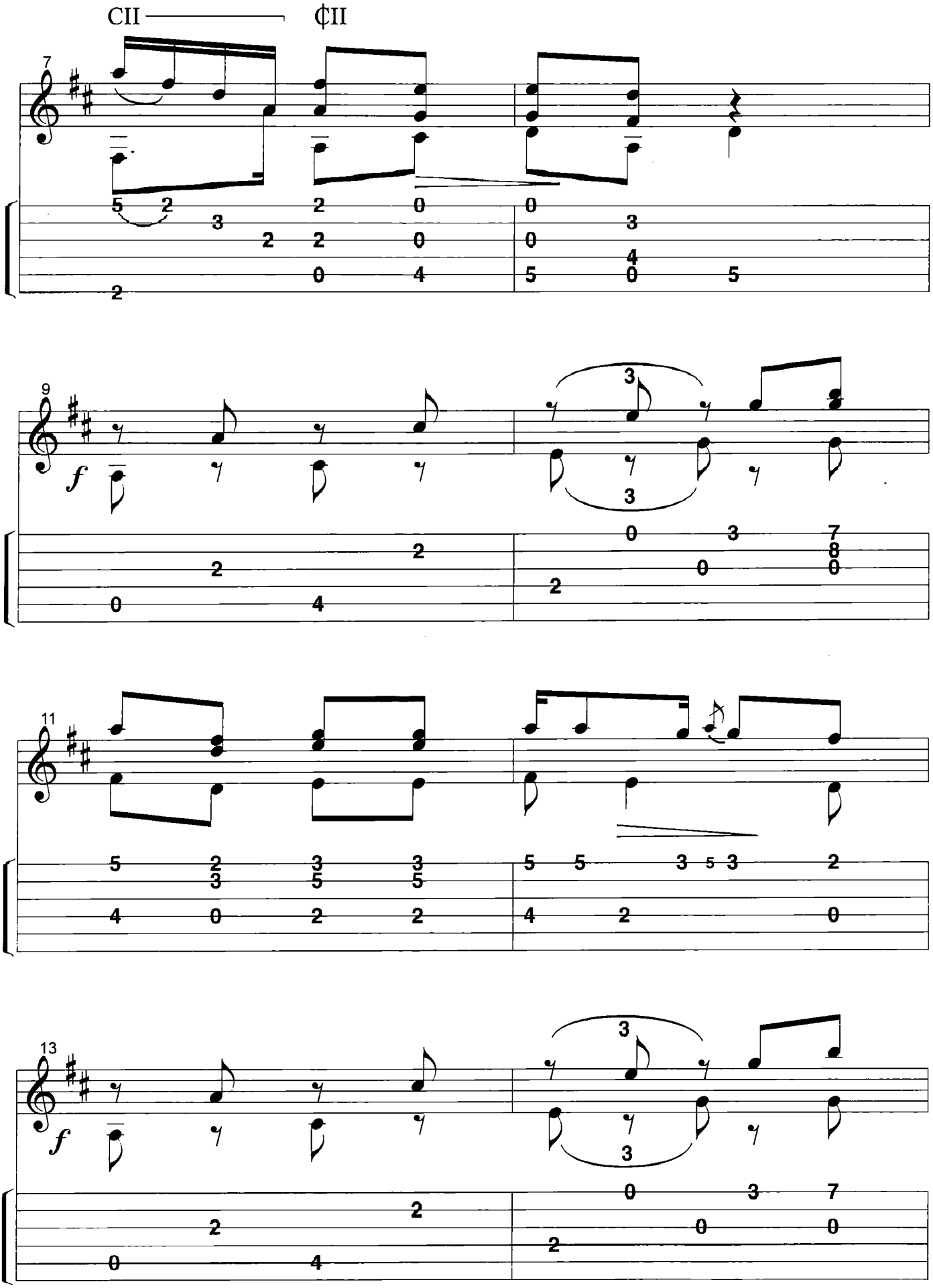
Contradanza

Arranged by Elias Barreiro faridhaidar.blogspot.com Jose Lino Fernandez De Coca

(1830-?)

Allegretto

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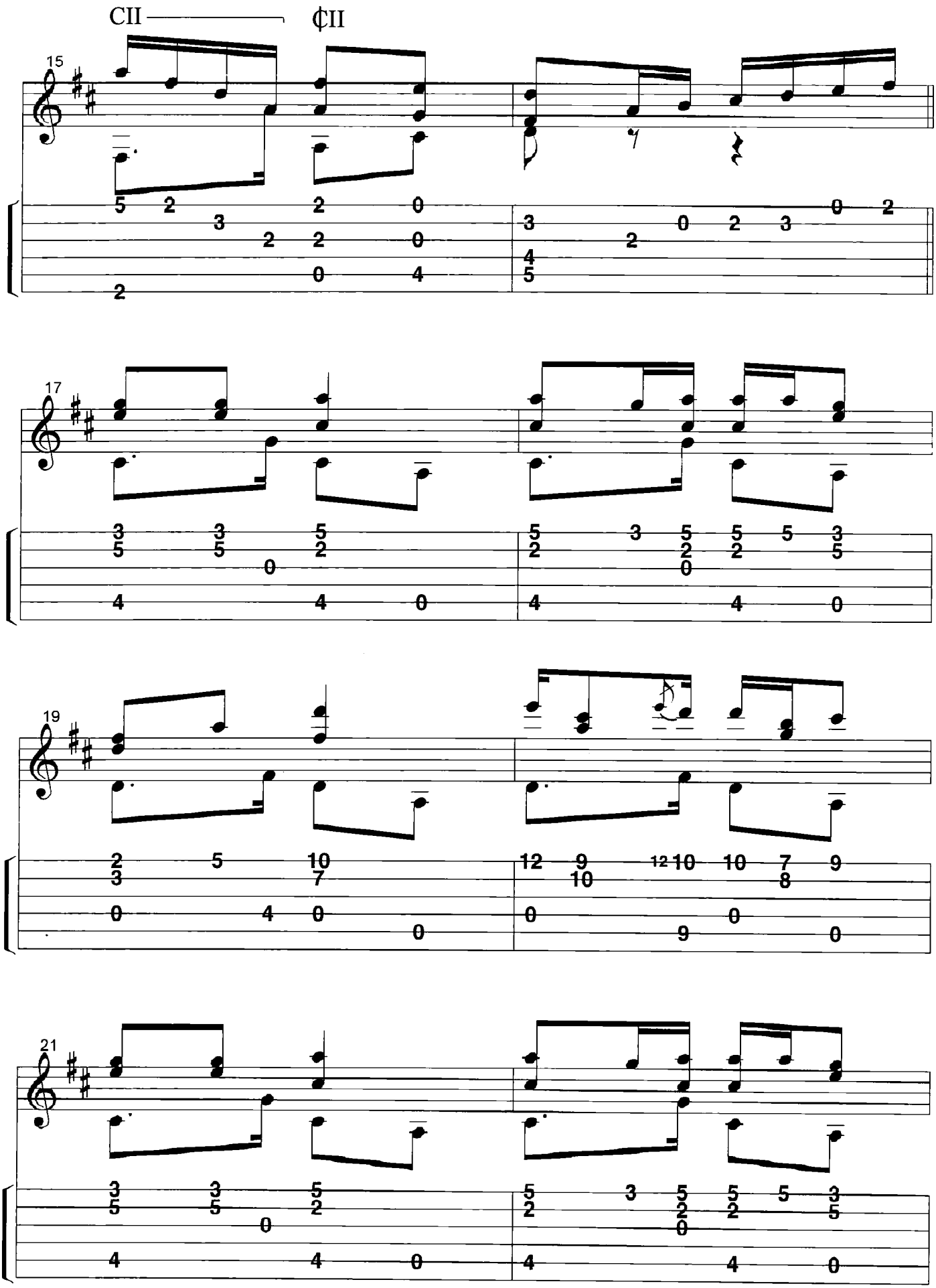
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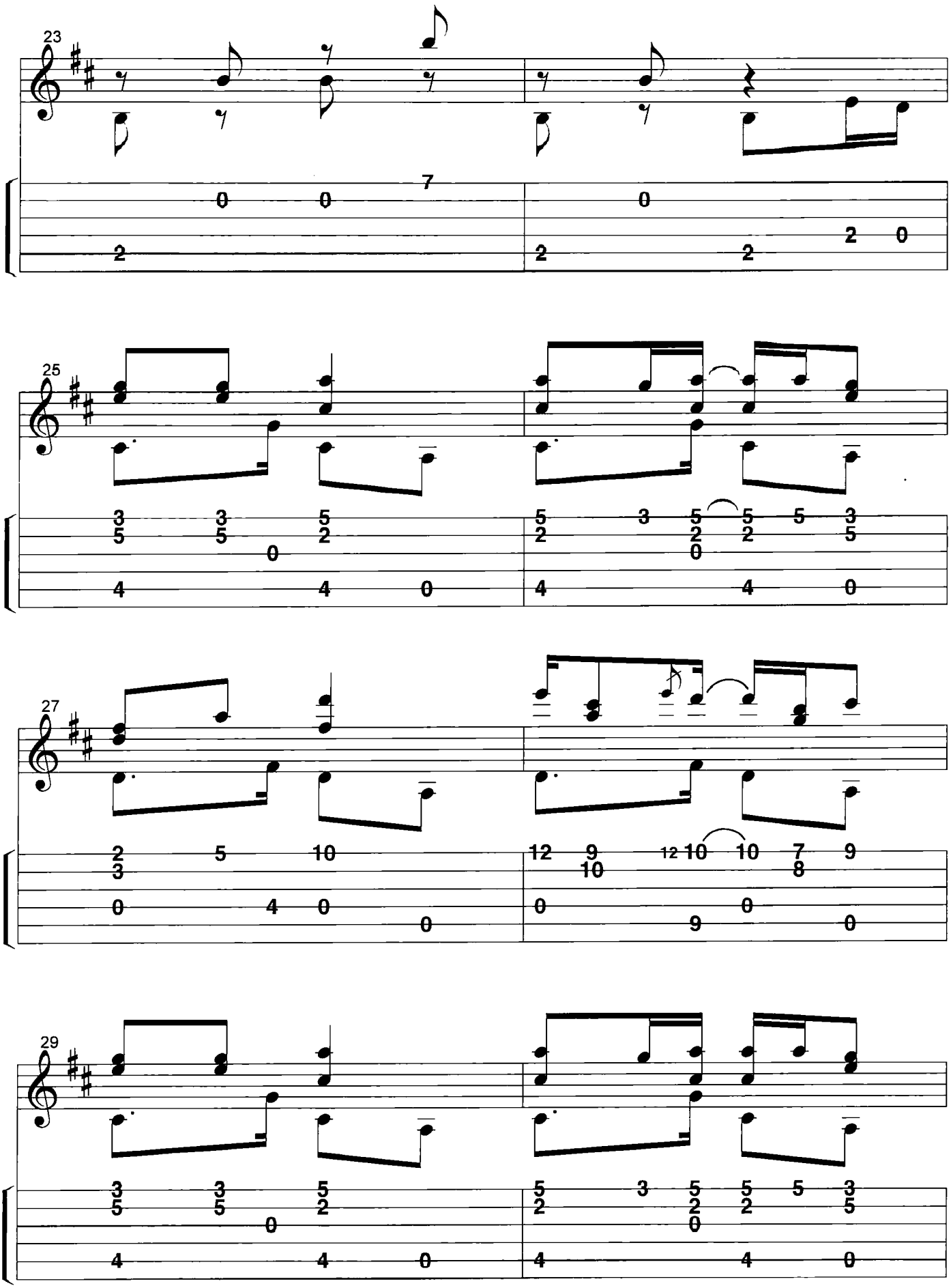
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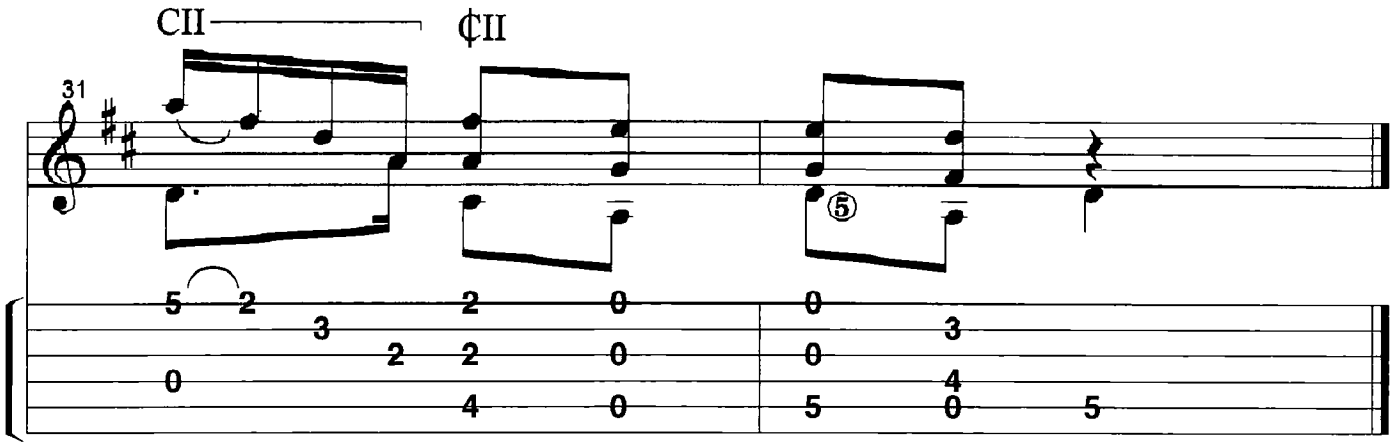
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Tomás Buelta y Flores
1794–1844

Tomás Buelta y Flores was a black man who distinguished himself as a self-taught orchestra director and composer of popular songs as well as sacred works. He is best known for his masterful *contradanzas* and waltzes, reaching the apex of his popularity from 1830 to 1843. One can only speculate upon the nature of his work had he been afforded the formal study his talent merited. Buelta y Flores taught the viola and cello, played in various orchestras, directed military bands, and was also musical director at the Tívoli theatre where he commissioned *contradanzas* of Manuel Saumell.

In 1843, Buelta y Flores was suspected of conspiring to incite slaves to rise against the Spanish colonial regime. He was imprisoned, tortured, and finally deported. His treatment was so severe that he died of the injuries he received at the hands of his captors. Buelta y Flores was one of the earliest composers of the Cuban *contradanza*. *La Valentina* figures among his best-known works and is distinguished by its clearly African elements.

El Himeneo

Contradanza

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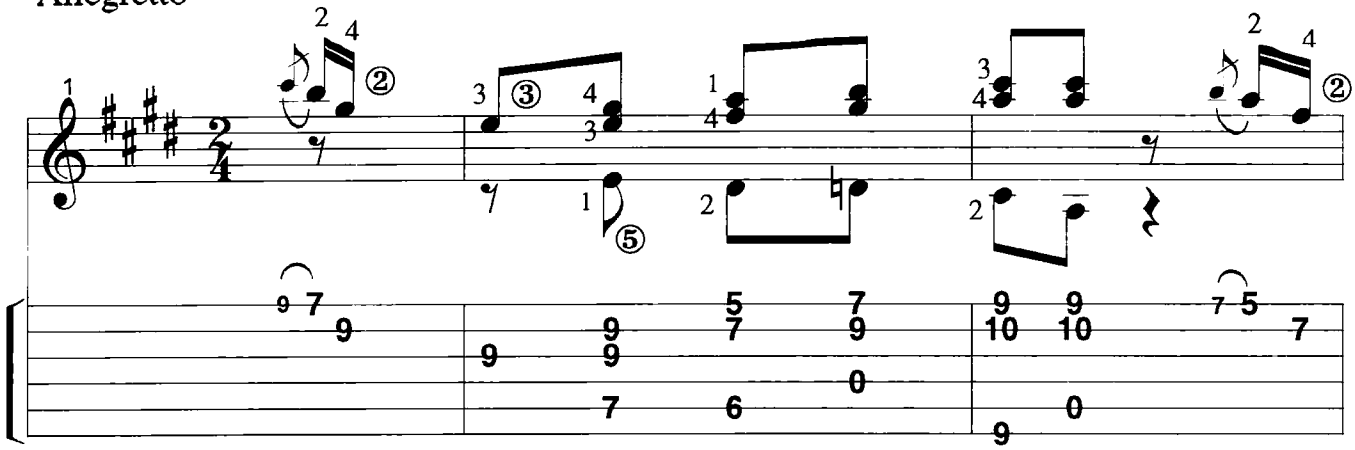
Arranged by Elias Barreiro

Tomás Buelta y Flores
(1794-1844)

Allegretto



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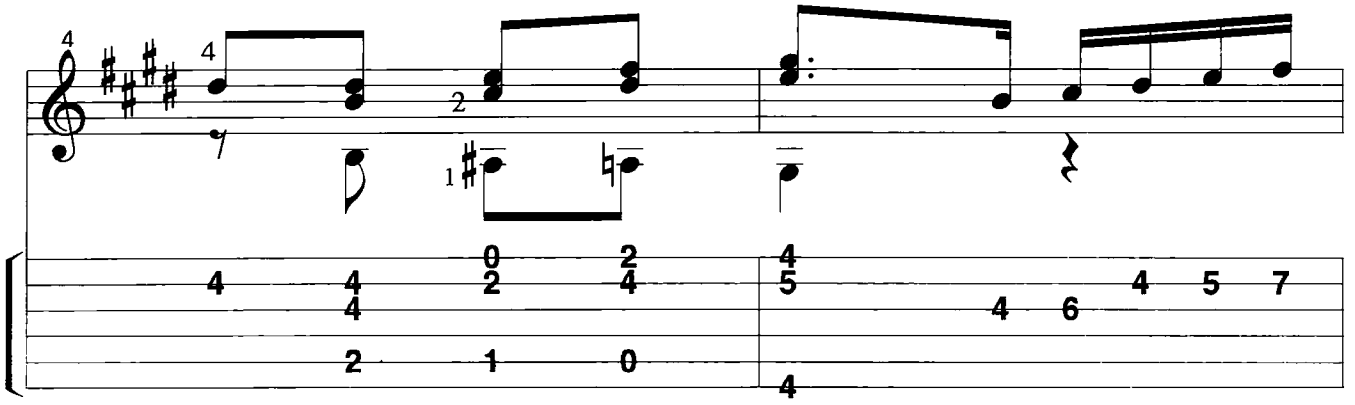

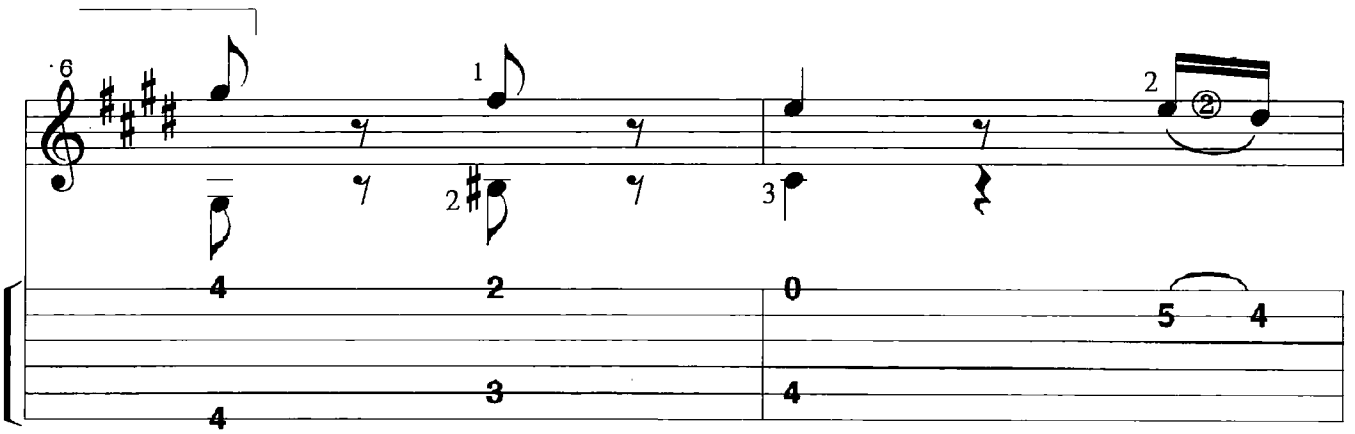

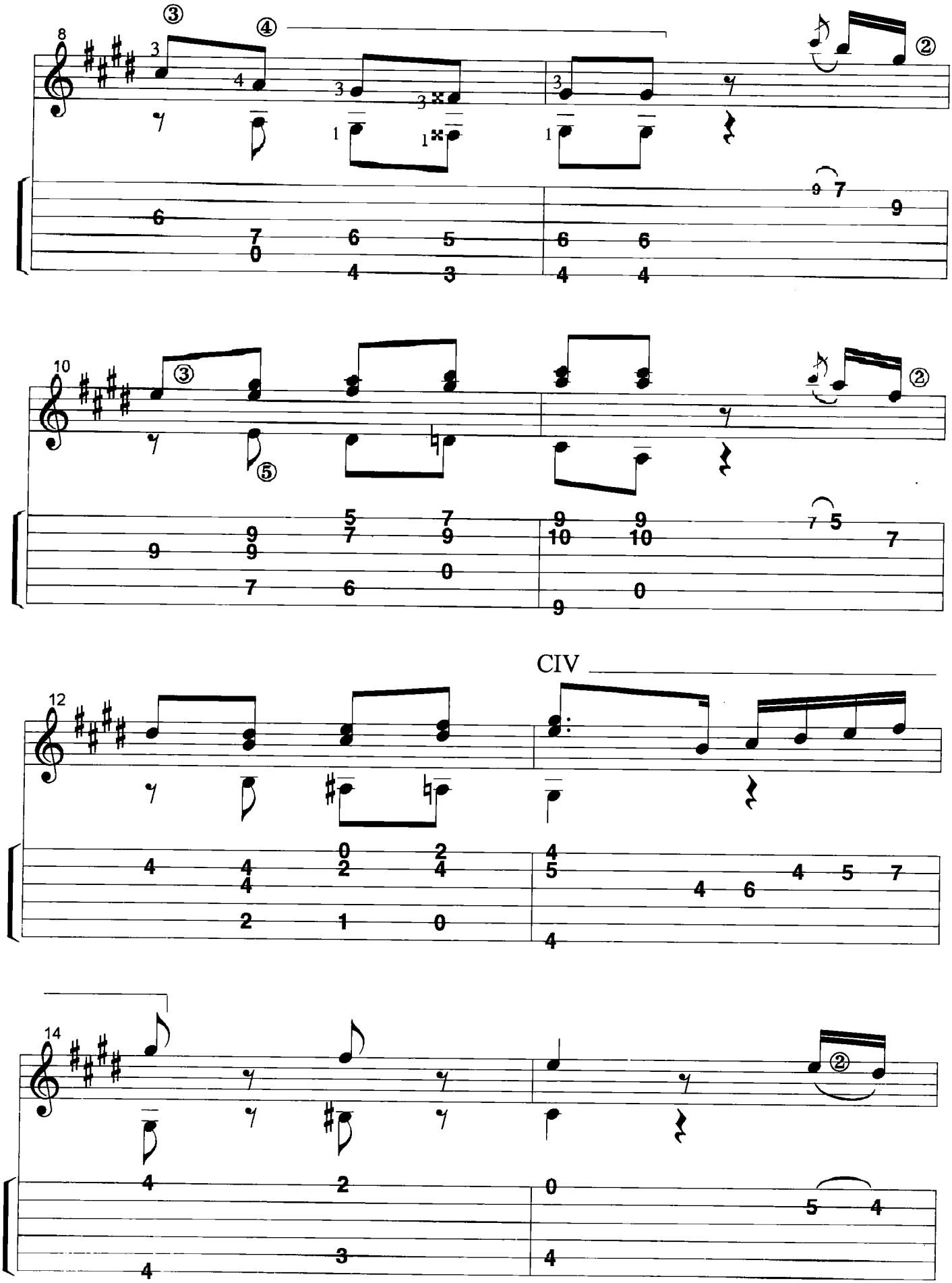
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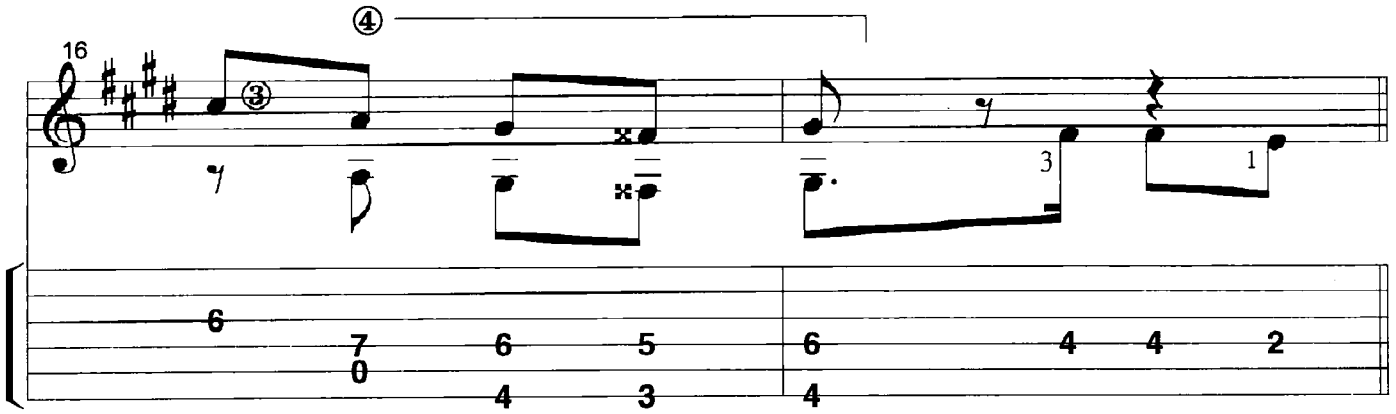

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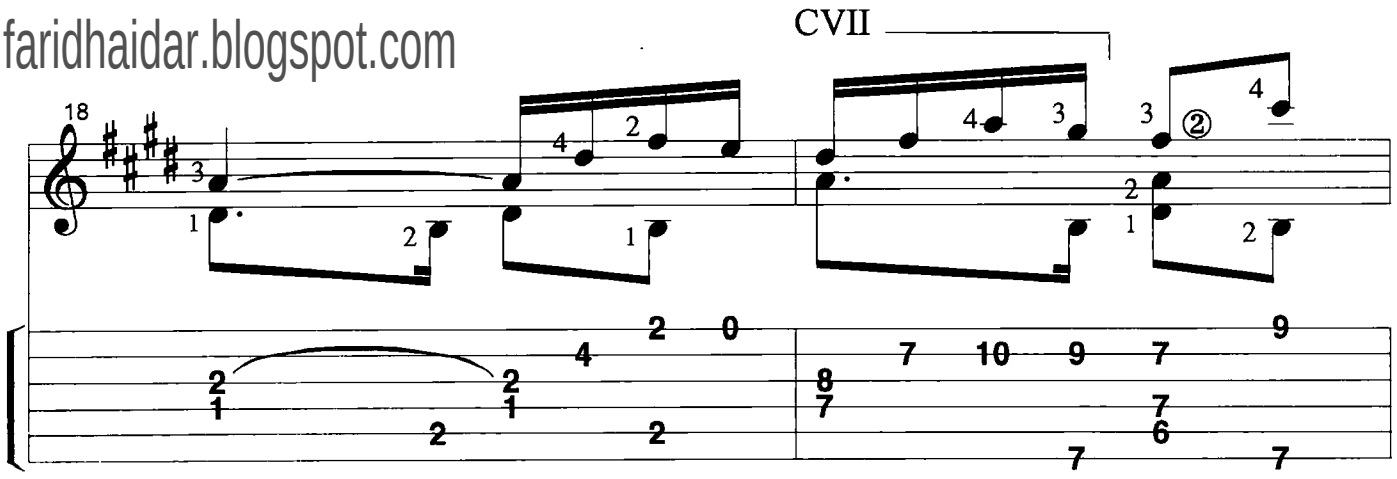

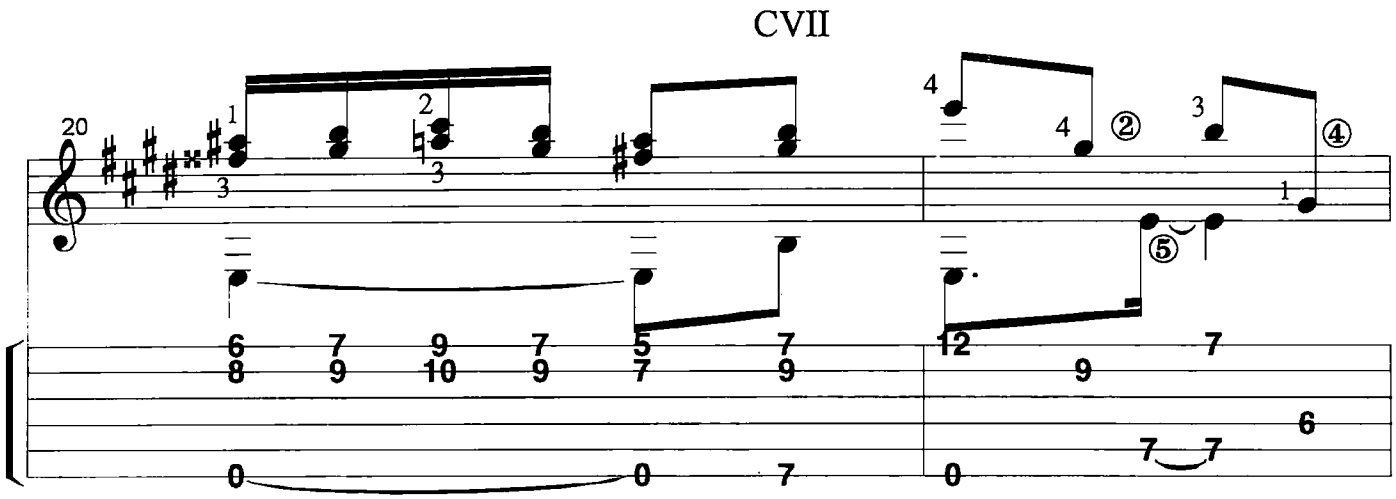

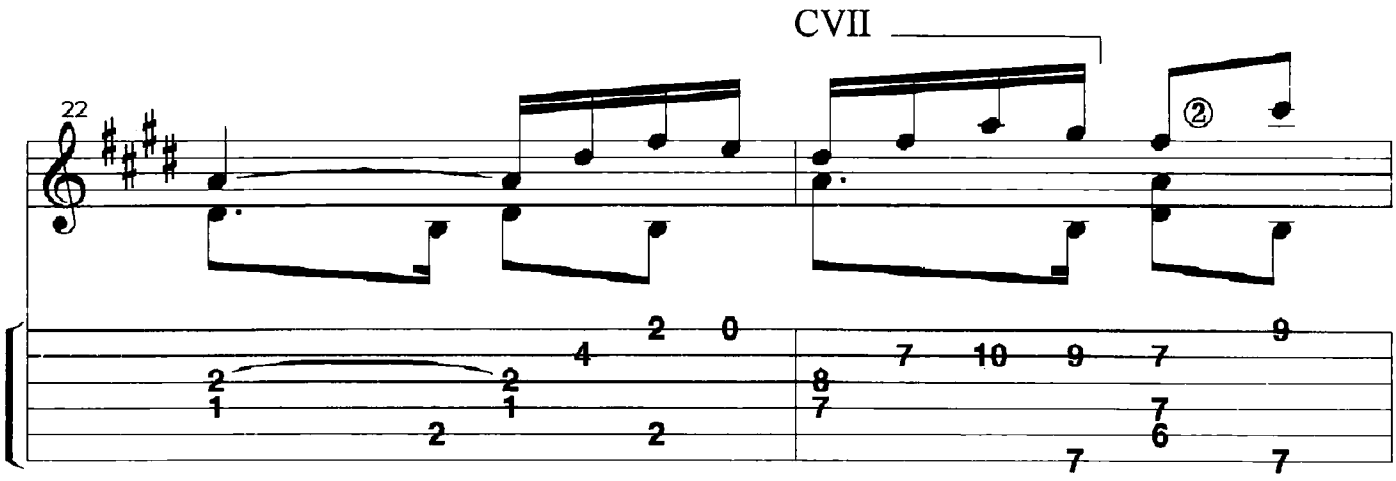

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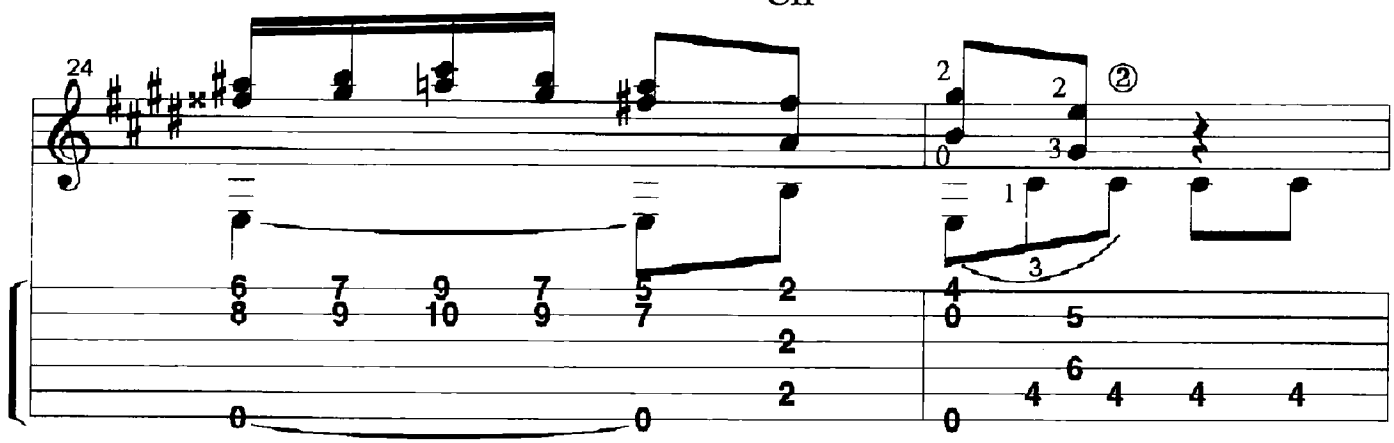

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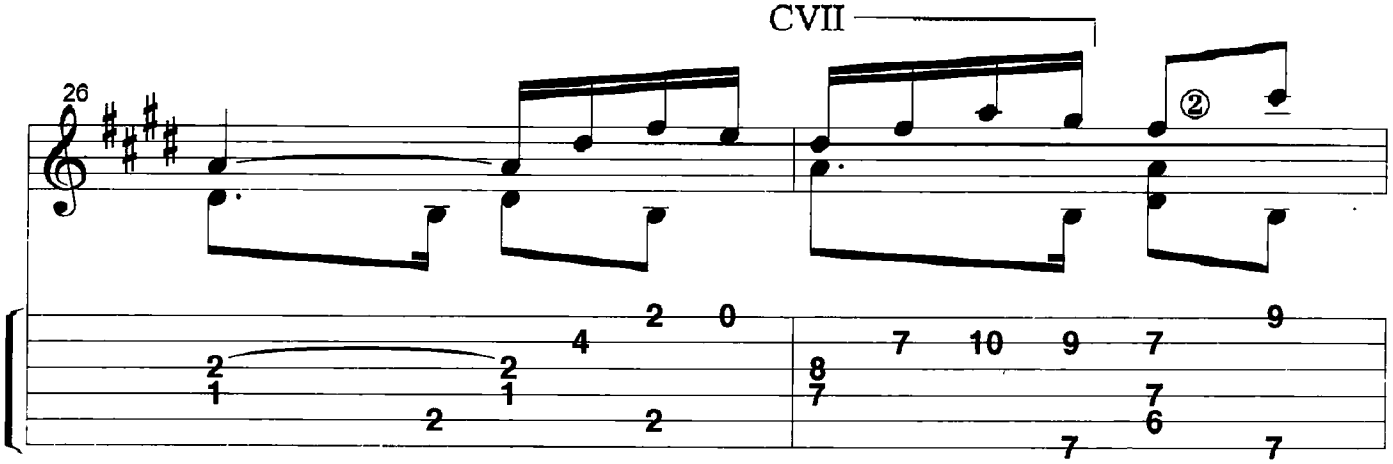

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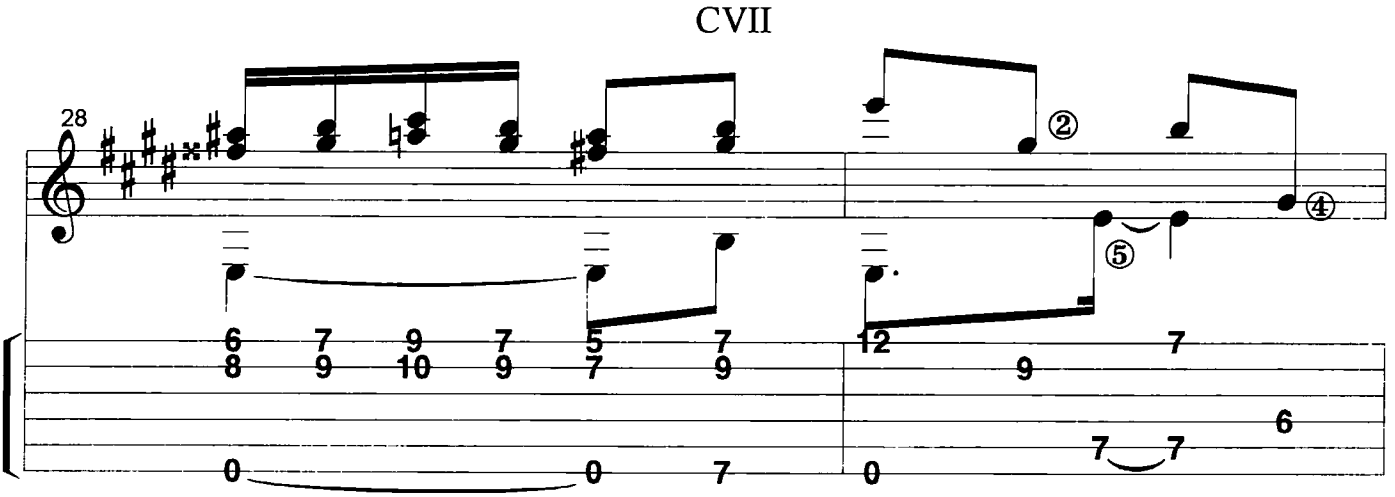

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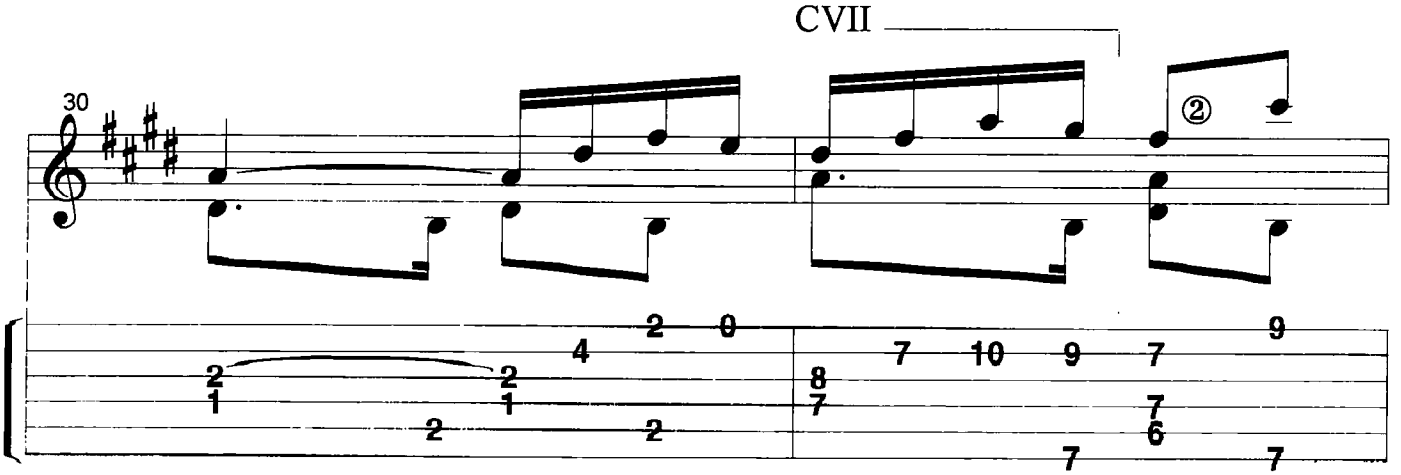

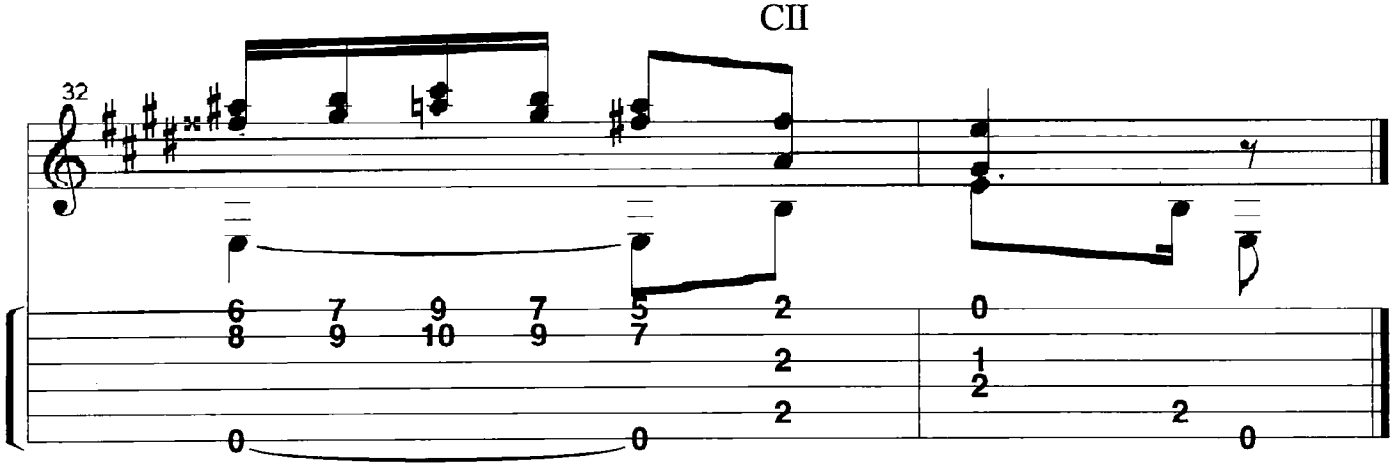
32

La Valentina

Contradanza

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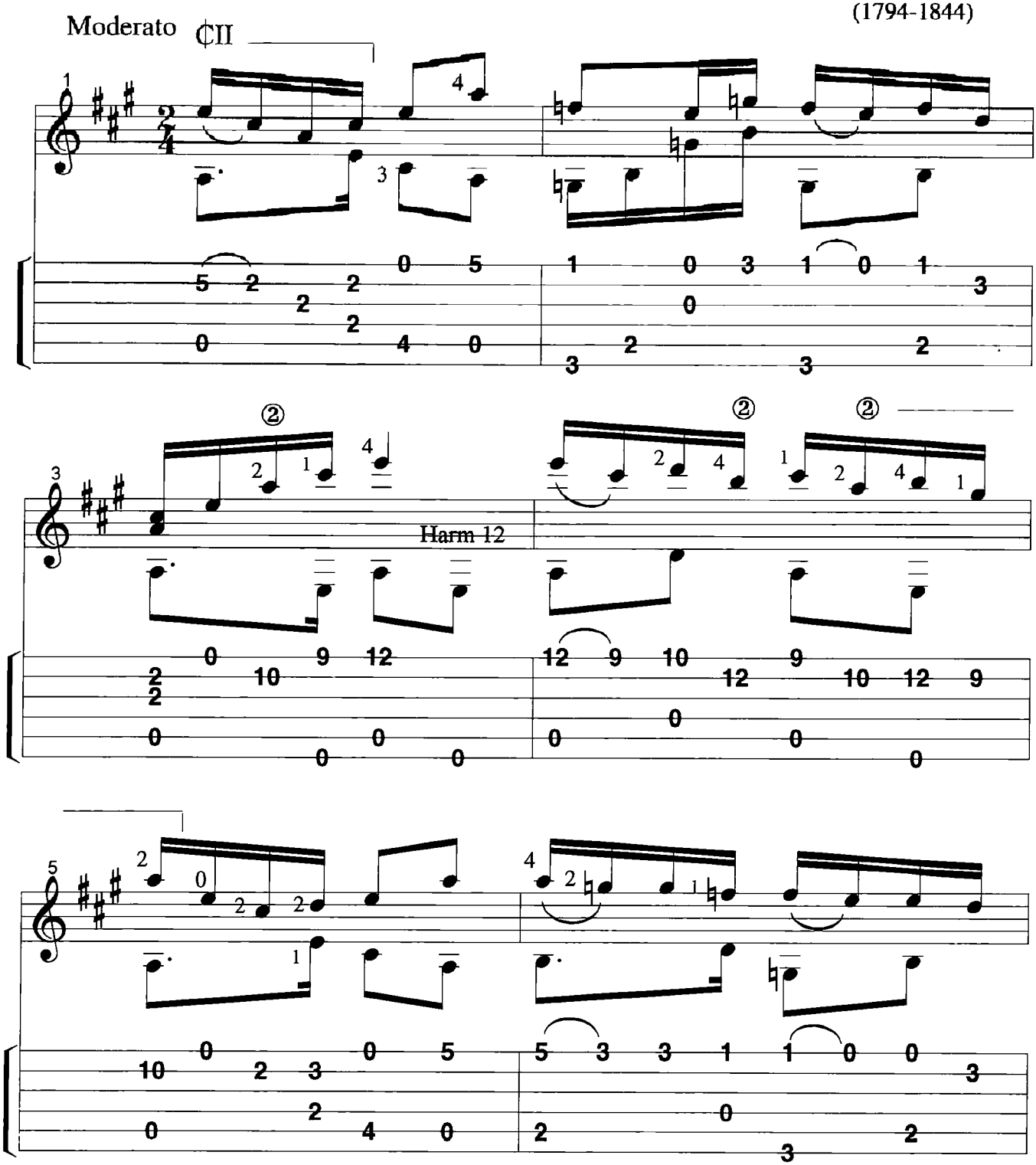
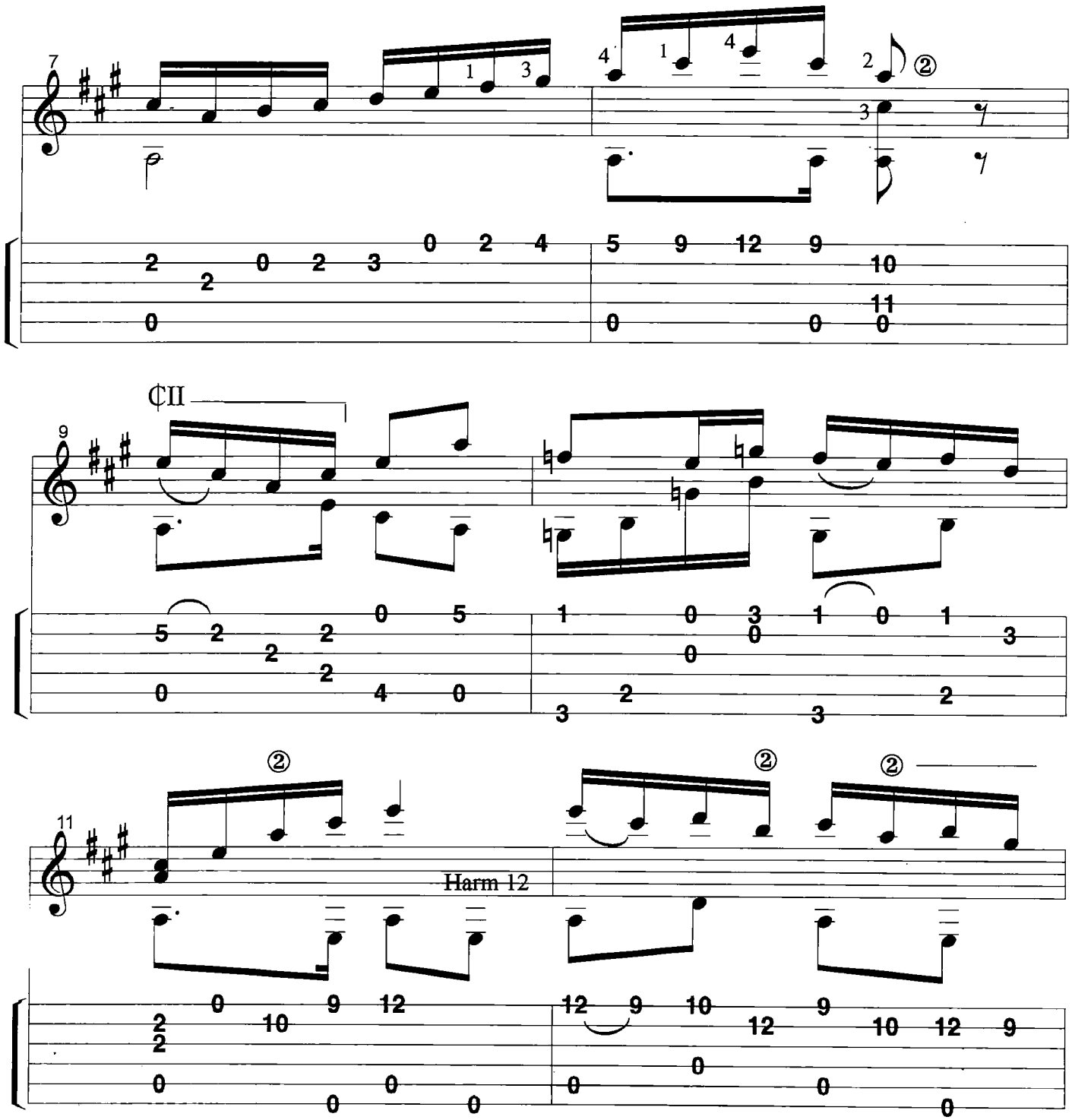
Arranged by Elias Barreiro

Tomás Buelta y Flores
(1794-1844)

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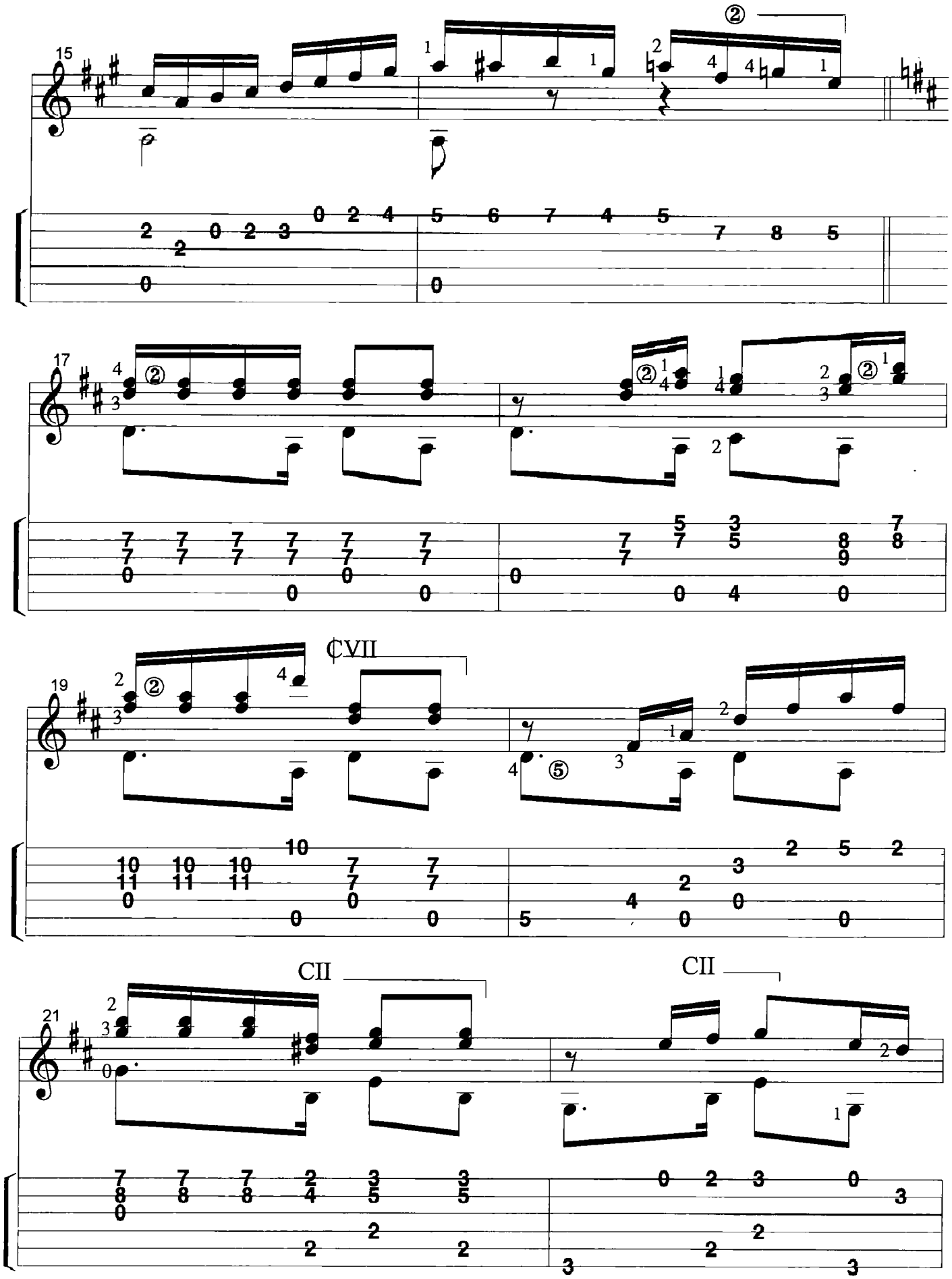
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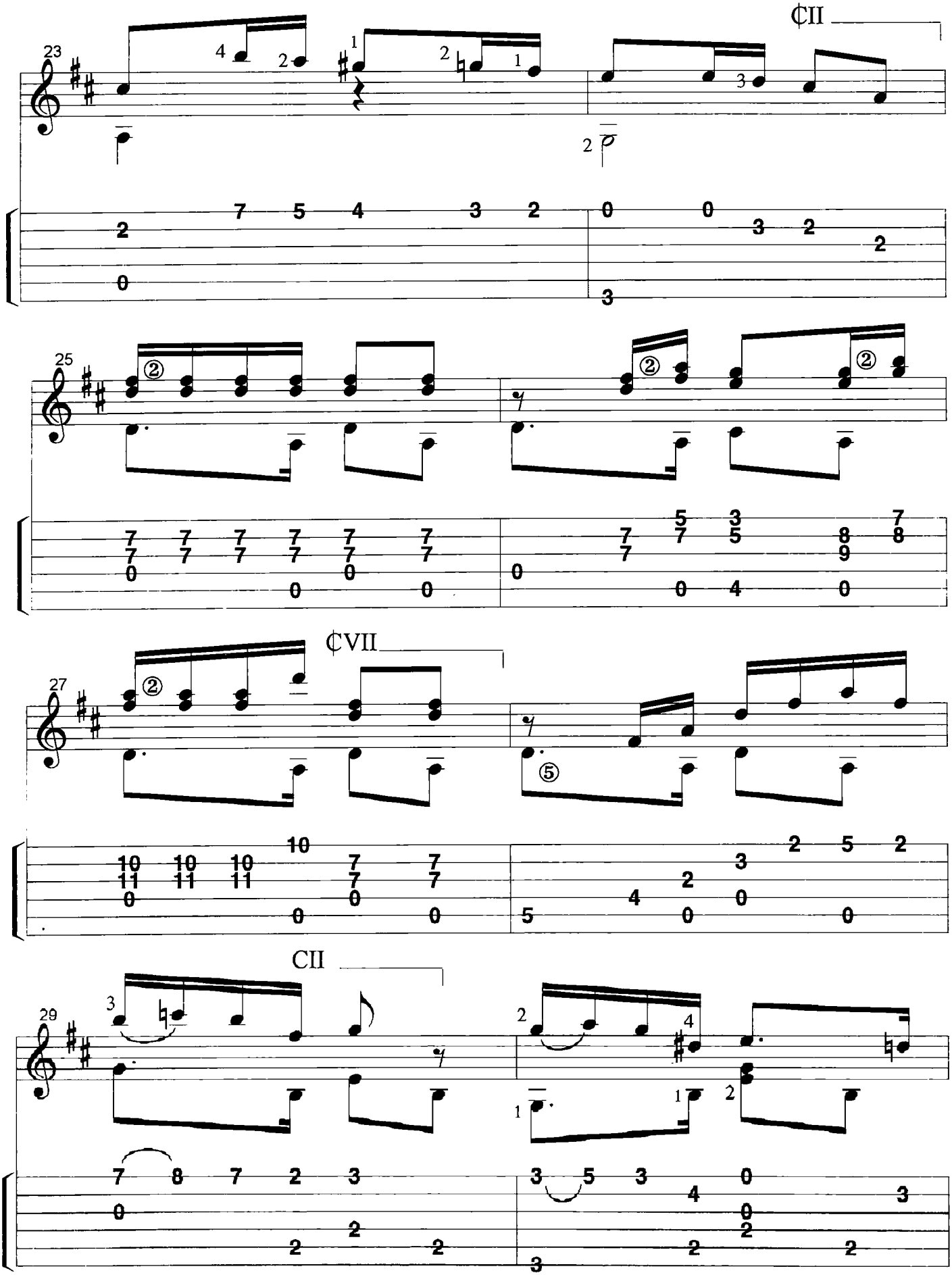
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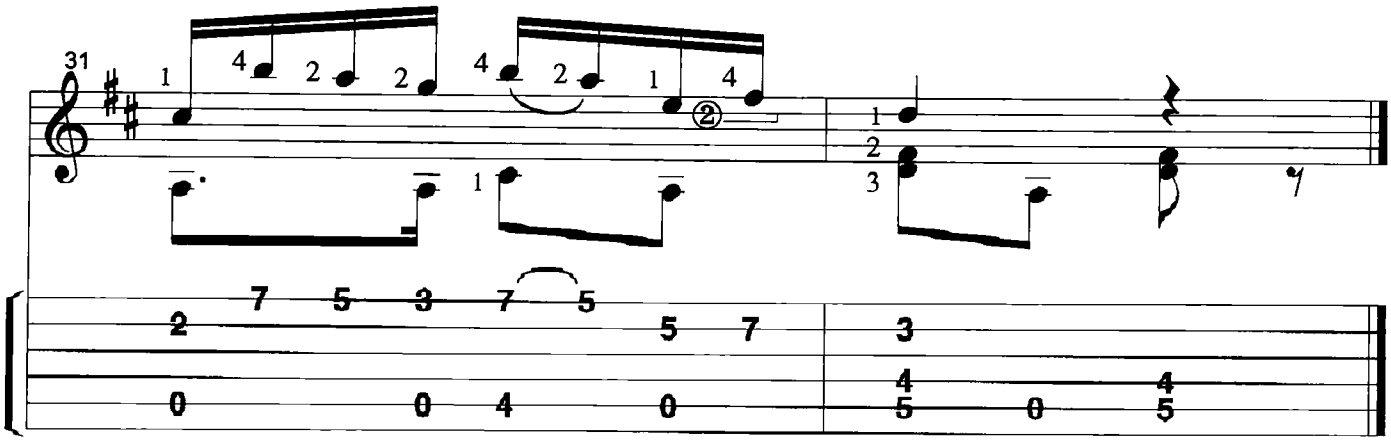

31

San Pascual Bailón

Anonymous

Published in Havana in 1803, this composition is the oldest extant Cuban *contradanza.* As with many of the popular pieces of this era, its composer is unknown.

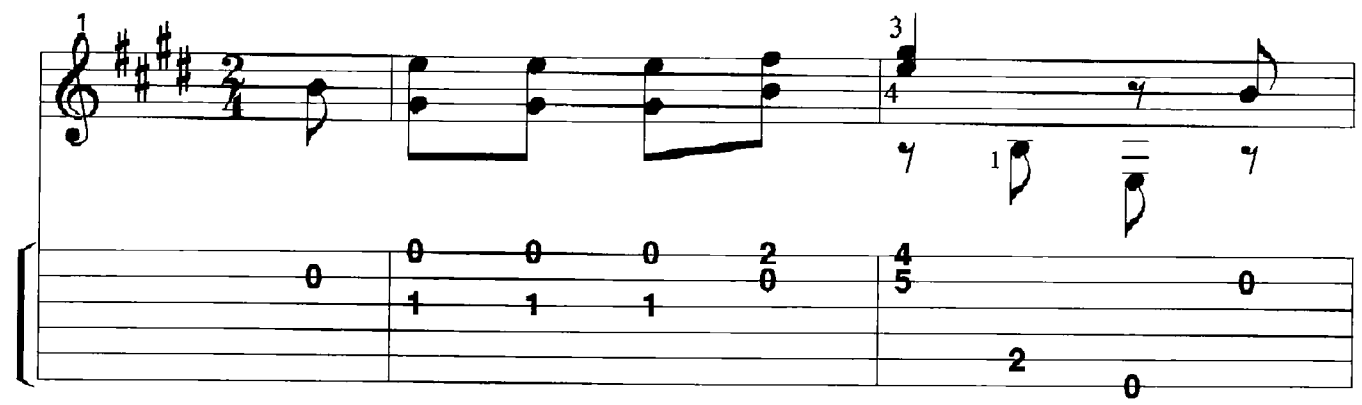
San Pascual Bailón

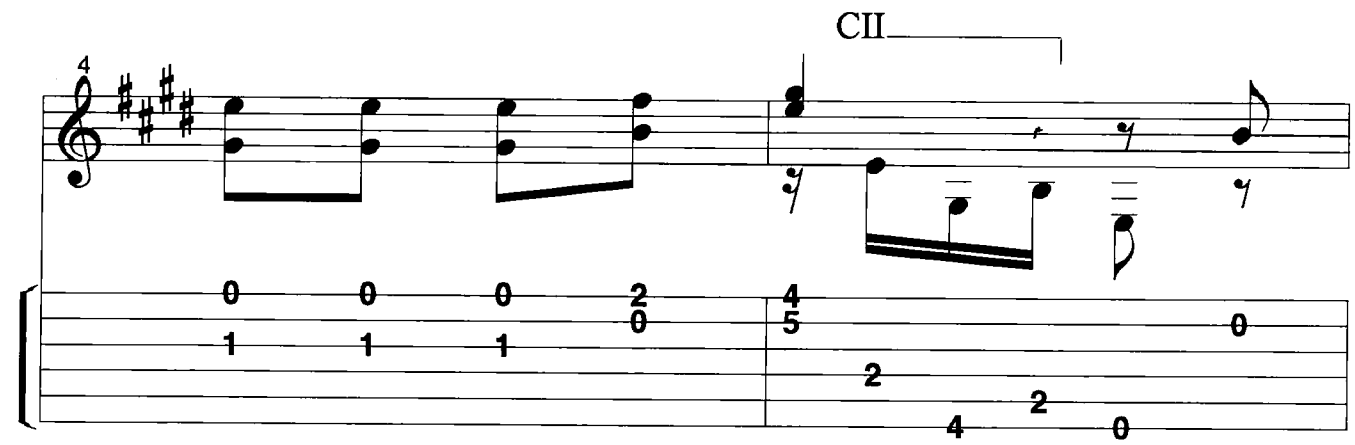
Contradanza

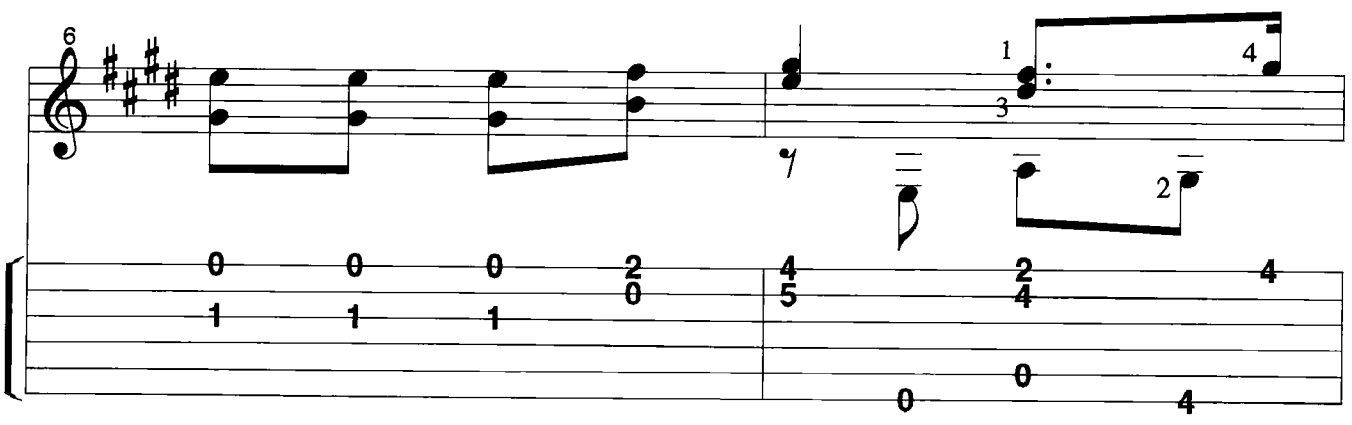
Arranged by Elias Barreiro faridhaidar.blogspot.com

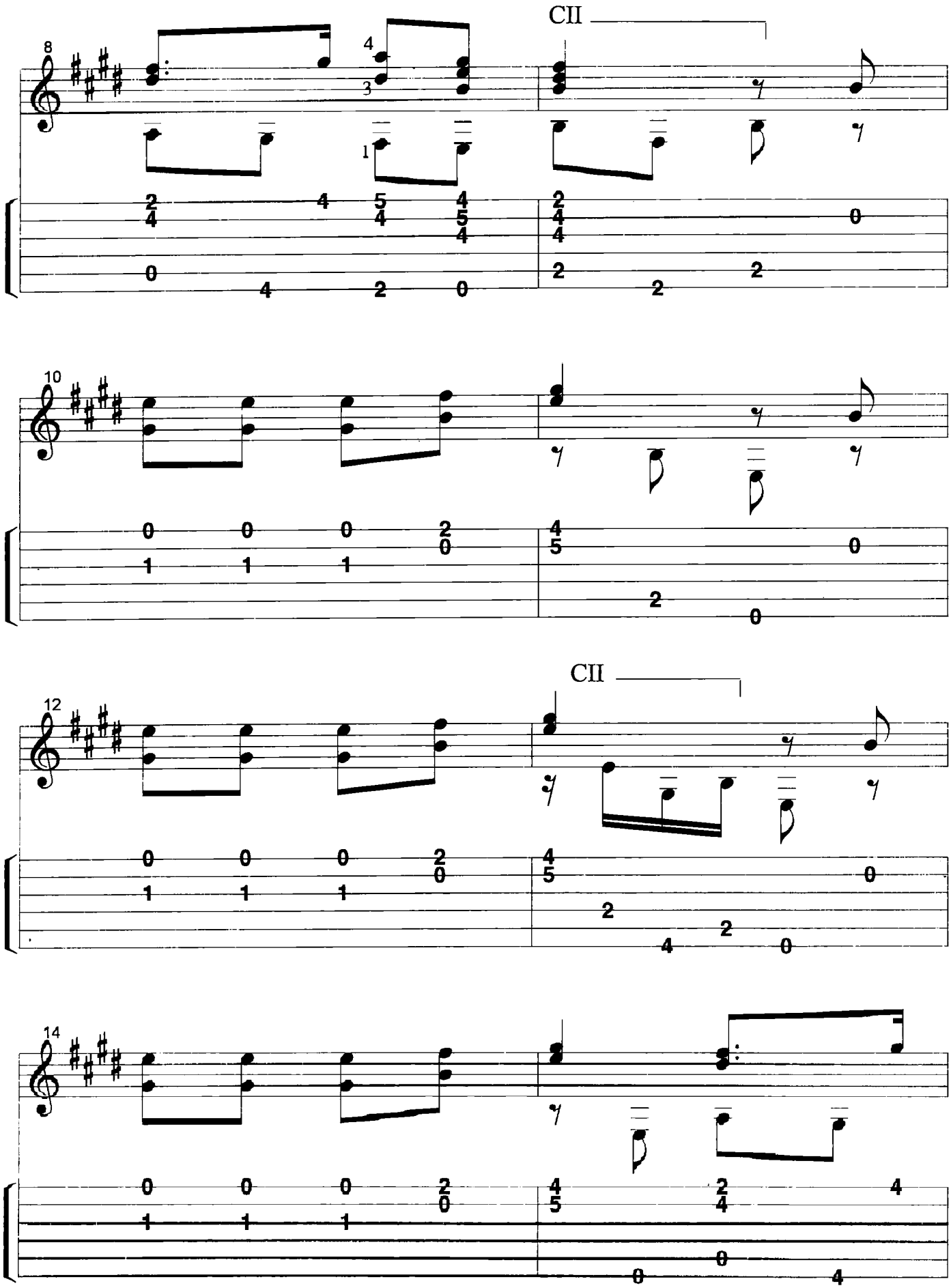
Anonymous
(1803)

Moderato





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CII
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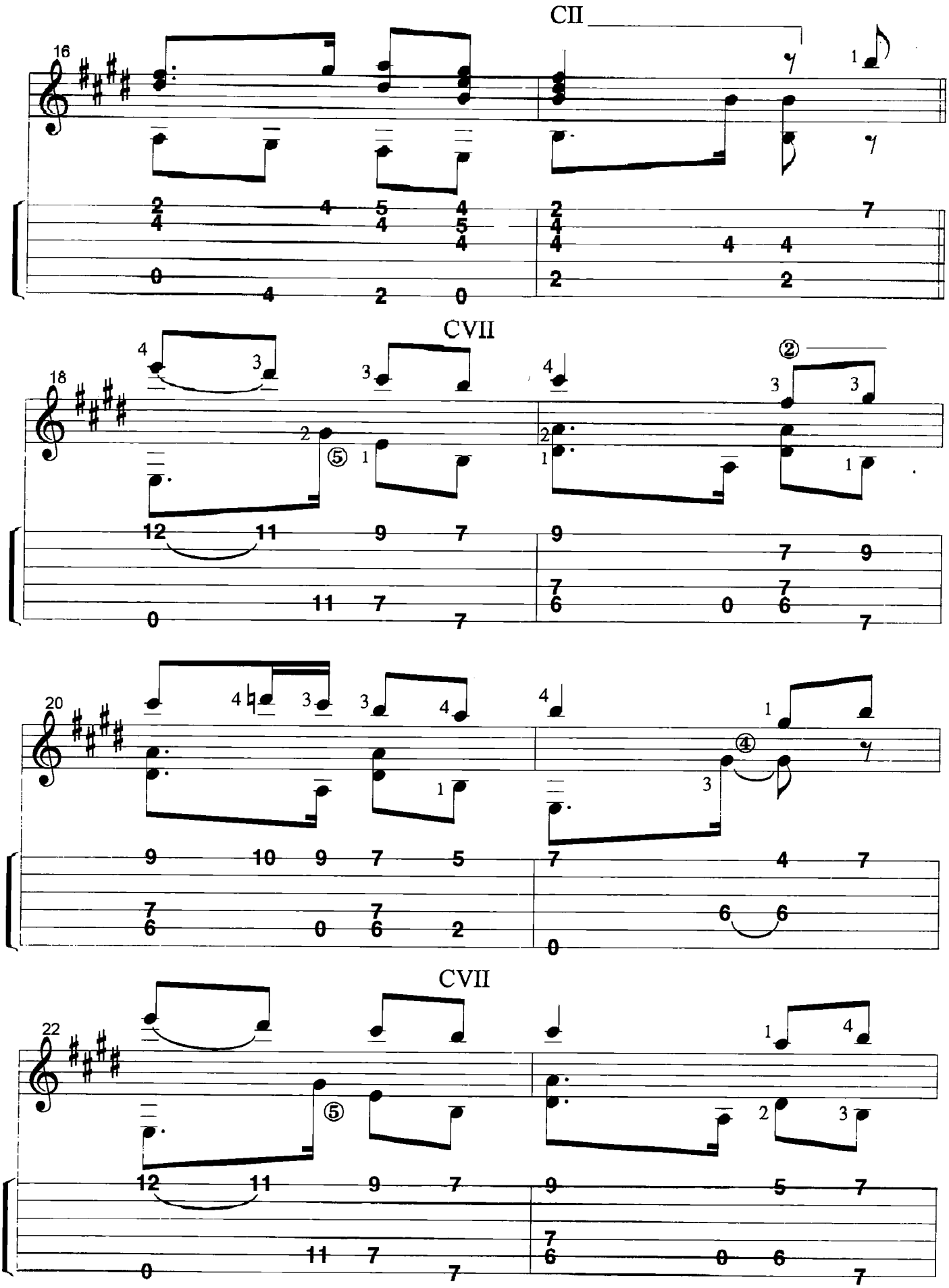
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CVII
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CVII
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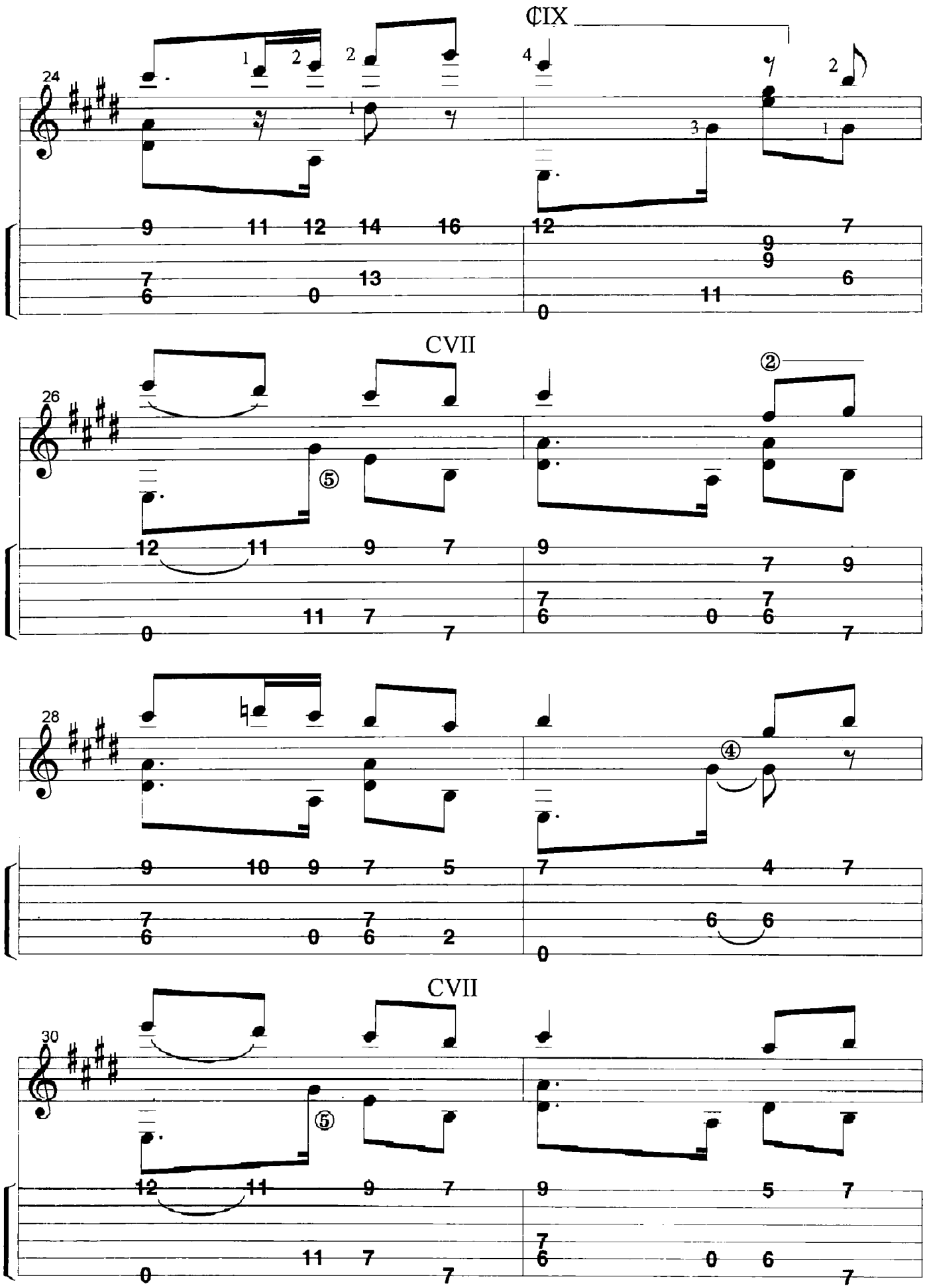
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CVII
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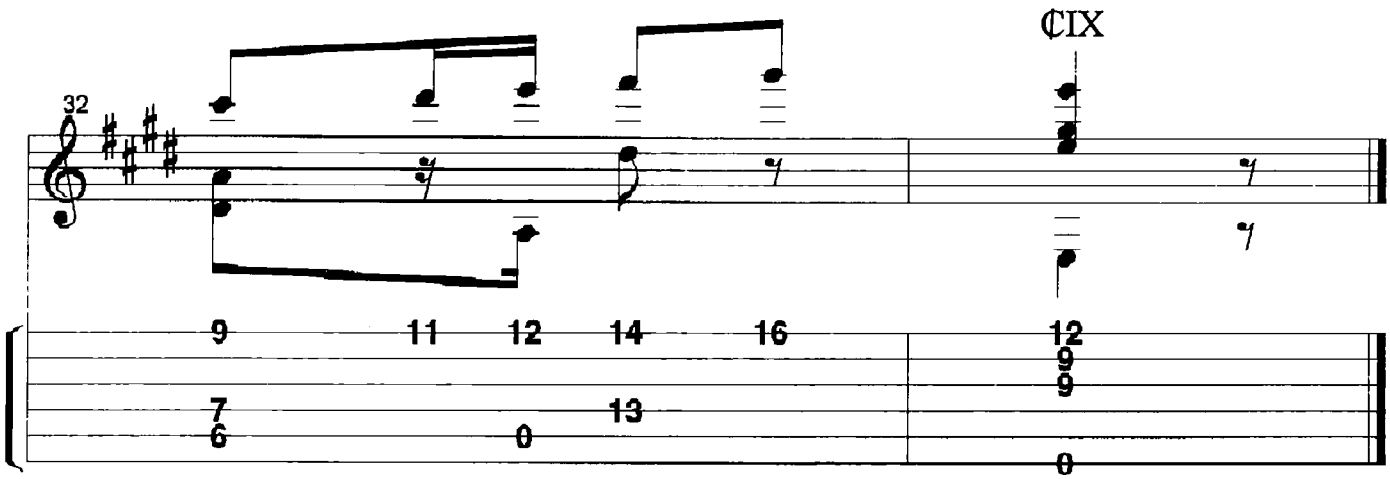
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Victor Moreno

19th Century Cuban composer

Victor Moreno was a composer of popular *contradanzas* played by various orchestras in Havana. He lived in a prolonged period of economic crisis during which there were no music publishers in Cuba. Consequently, composers were dependent upon weekly publications which would print the most popular *contradanzas* in the final pages of their magazines. Moreno was a frequent contributor to those pages.

This *contradanza, La nueva cañonera,* was written to commemorate the USA's building of a new battleship used by the Spanish to pursue guerrilla convoys in the War of 1868.

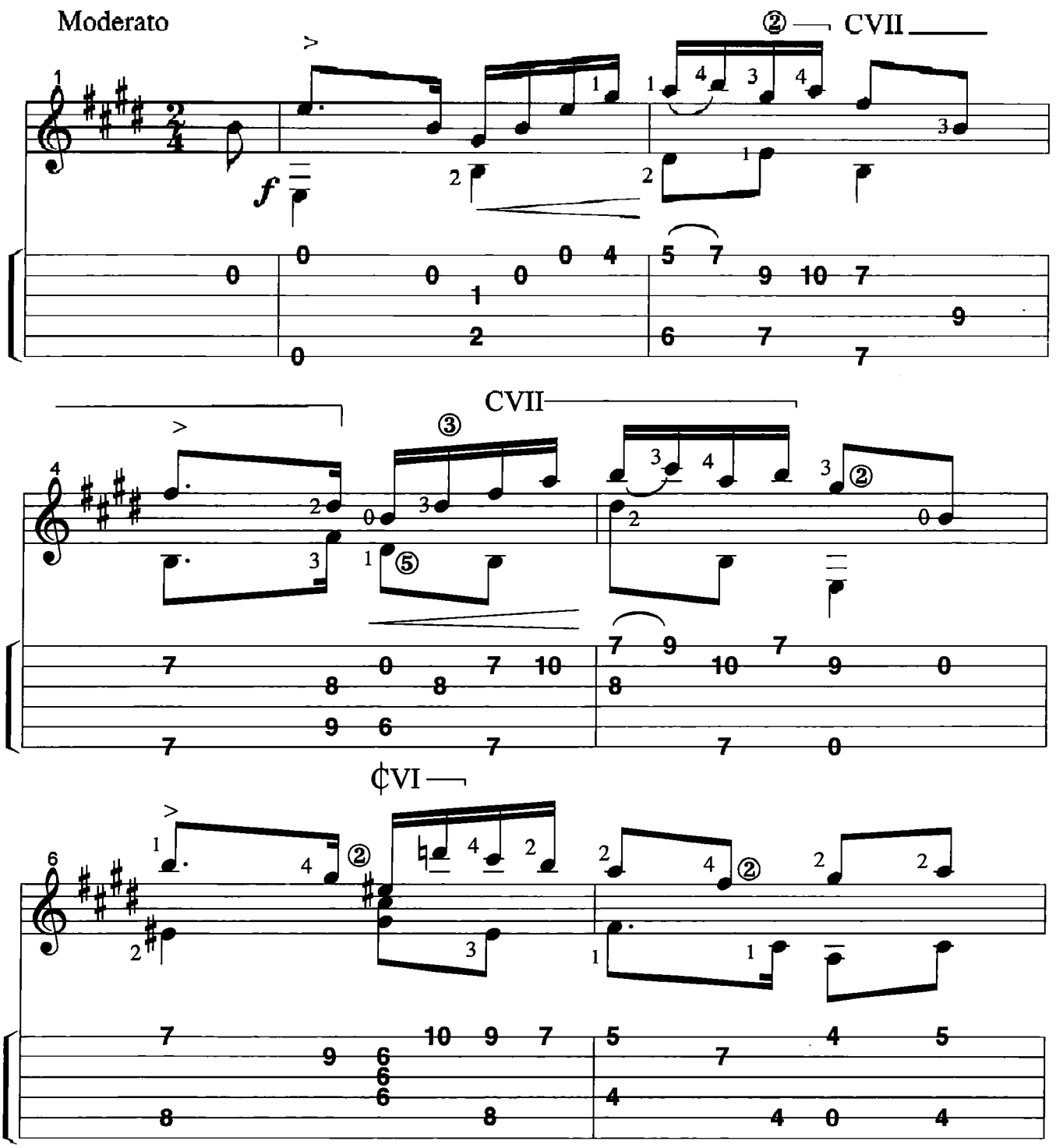
La nueva cañonera

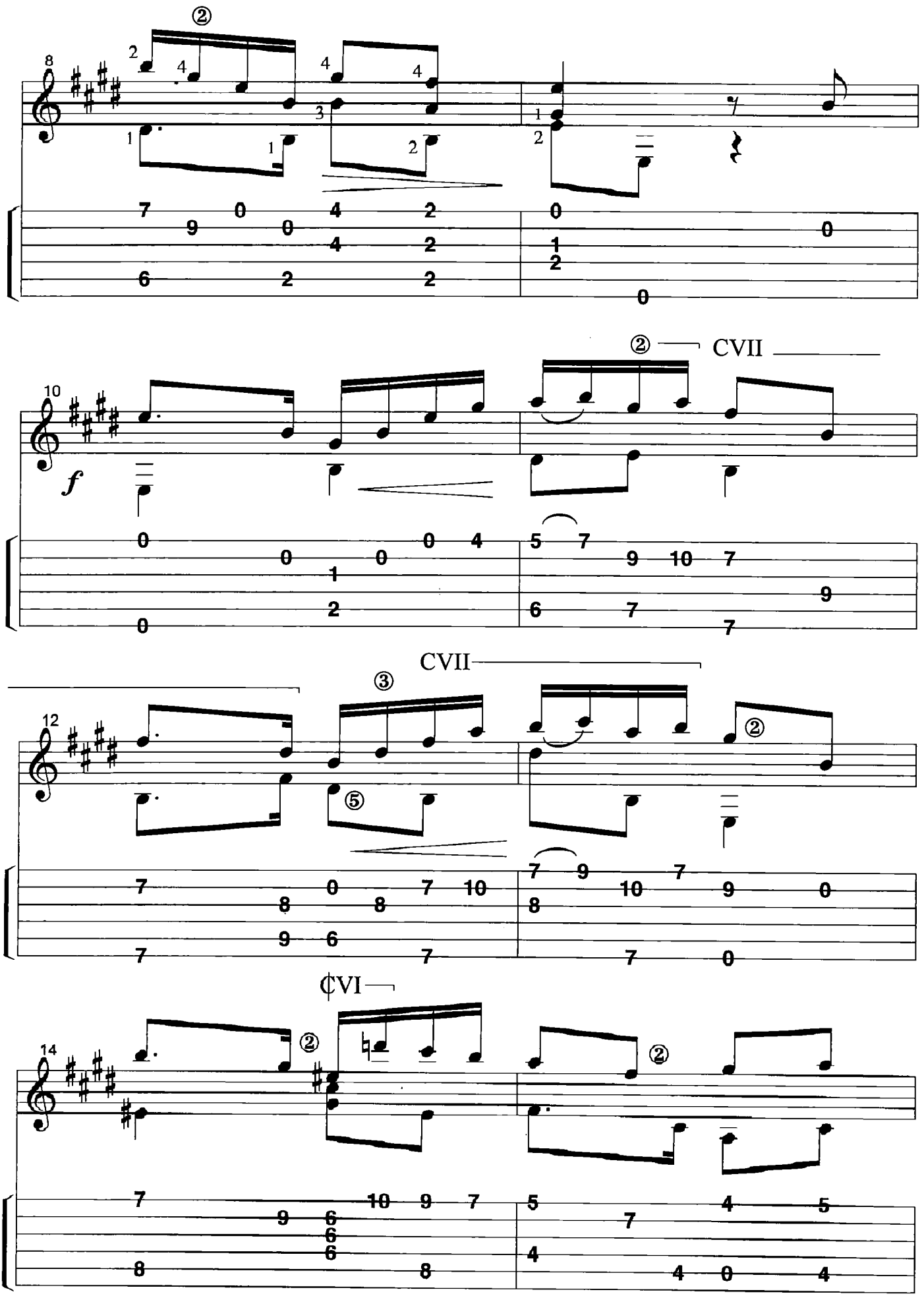
Contradanza
(1860's)

faridhaidar.blogspot.com

Arranged by Elias Barreiro

Victor Moreno
(XIX)

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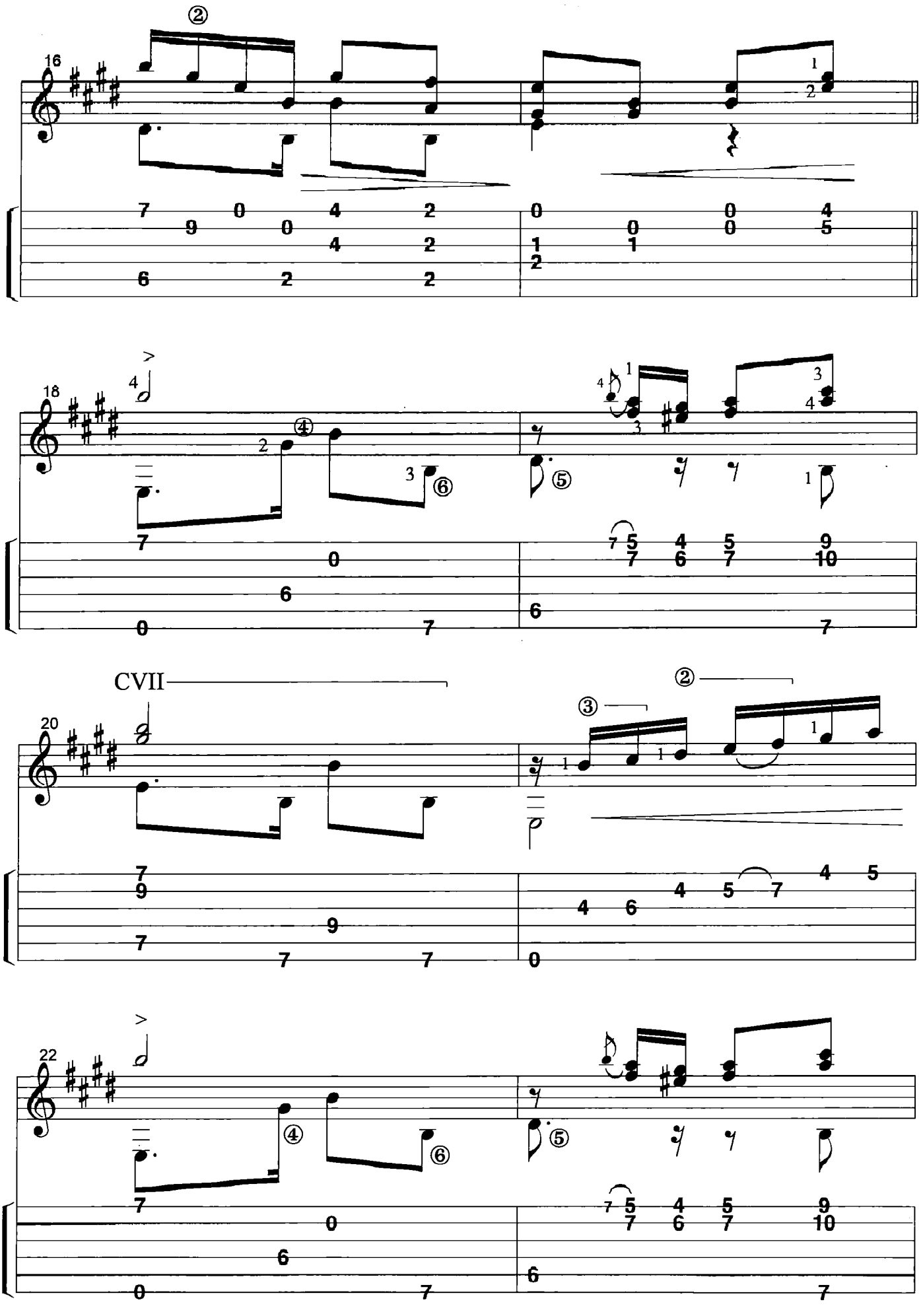
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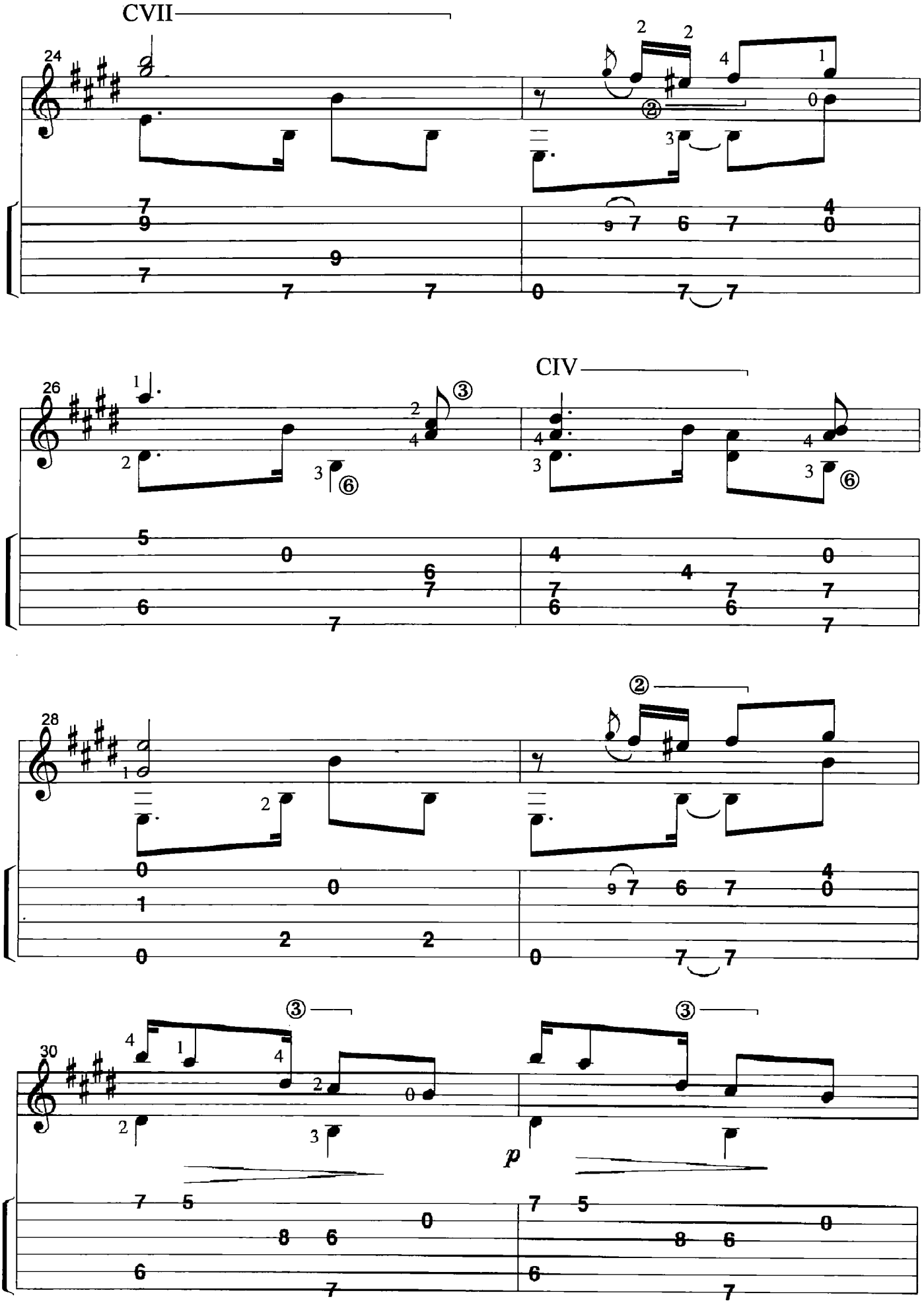
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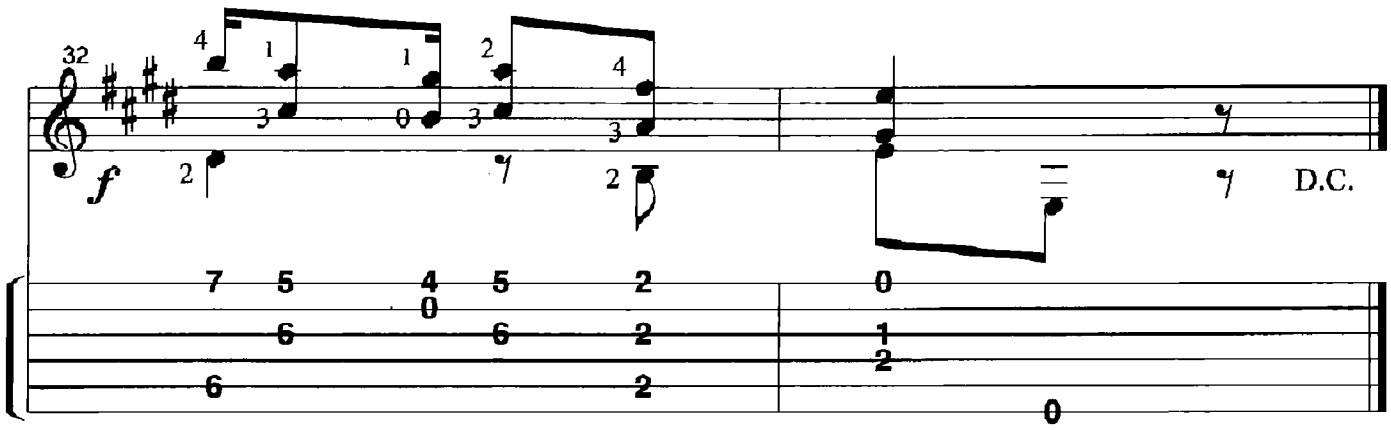

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