THREE SUITES for CELLO

by

J.S.Bach

Arranged for Theorbo

ARRANGED BY: ROB MACKILLOP

FRENCH TABLATURE BY: MILES DEMPSTER

PUBLISHED
BY
Score Conversions, Montréal

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French tablature by: Miles Dempster

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INTRODUCTION

This arrangement is the result of a few months without a 13-course baroque lute, and an insatiable appetite for the music of J.S. Bach. I decided to arrange the first of the 'cello suites for the instrument I had closest to hand: the theorbo (a large one in A and a small one in D). I was immediately struck as to how suitable the instrument is to the music. Due to its pitch and resonance it became very clear that no notes need be added to the original scores, almost as if the suites were originally written for the theorbo. All that remained was to decide how to map out the notes over the fretboard. I have chosen a campanella approach to scale passages, a technique used from the earliest surviving theorbo manuscripts and publications (Picinnini, Kapsberger et al.) to the work of the great master of the theorbo, lute and guitar from Bach's own time, Robert de Visée. I have added nothing to the notes supplied in the earliest manuscript.

Each suite has a different tuning for the diapasons, and no string is tuned more than a semi-tone from its normal pitch. Due to the chromatic nature of Bach's music there are a small number of changes (all octave displacements) which are detailed in the Appendix. The opportunity to exploit the campanella effects and the re-entrant tuning of the theorbo proved very seductive, and although my choice of fingering could never attempt to satisfy all performers, it should give the majority a firm, intabulated version to work from. The performer might wish to add notes to chords, fill out a bass line, add or take out slurs, or any other number of emendations. What is presented is my own personal interpretation, one which is constantly under revision as new discoveries within the music make themselves known.

Various sources were consulted, mainly that of Bach's second wife, Anna Magdelena. The original keys are: G major, D minor and C major.

Rob MacKillop, Edinburgh 1998

The tablature was produced using my own typsetting program 'Omnitab' which allows for many different options and styles in laying out tablature. Since the music is by J.S Bach I had to consider the argument for simulating the style of 18th century tablatures: choice of font, flagging system etc. However, this is less an excercise in historical reconstruction than it is a new arrangement, so we opted for all the features which would make the edition as clear and easy to read as possible. The most important of these is that sequences of notes of the same duration value are flagged into groups; in original tablatures it was common to show a duration flag only when a change takes place. Page turns have been avoided whenever possible, and sections always start at the beginning of the staff, providing a natural visual cue for repeats.

Miles Dempster, Montréal, 1998

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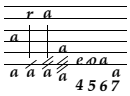
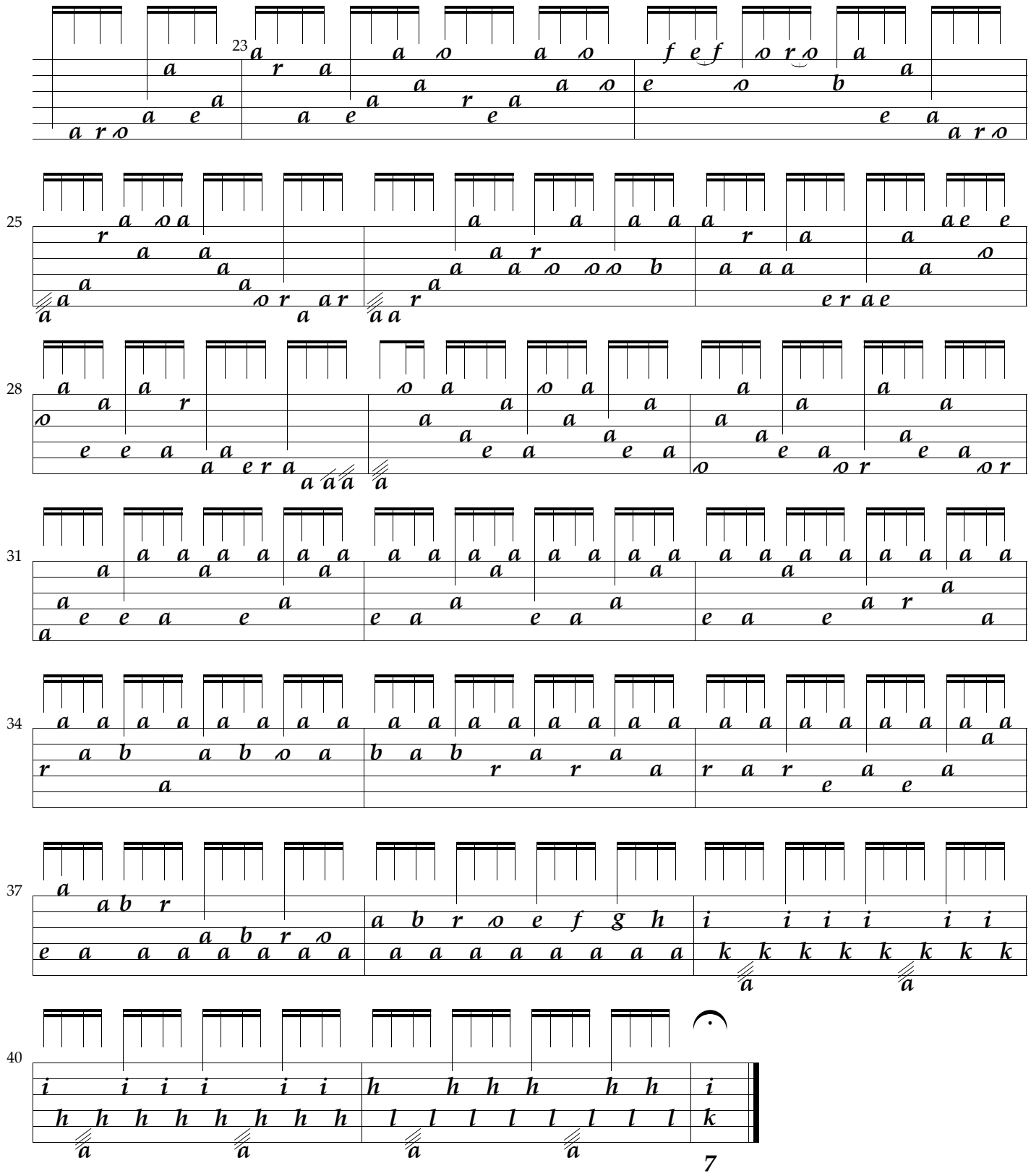
BWV 1007 - Prelude

J.S. Bach

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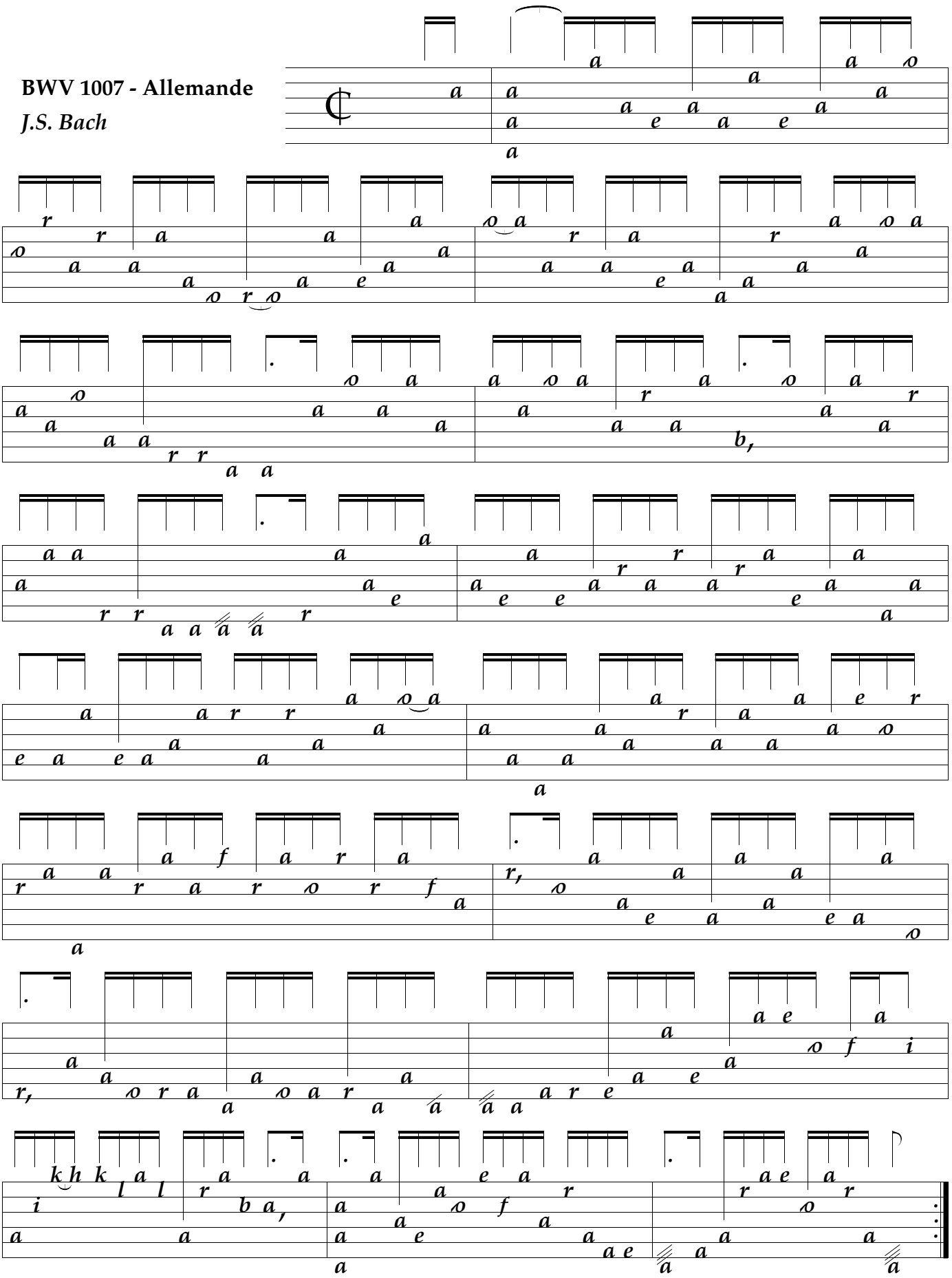
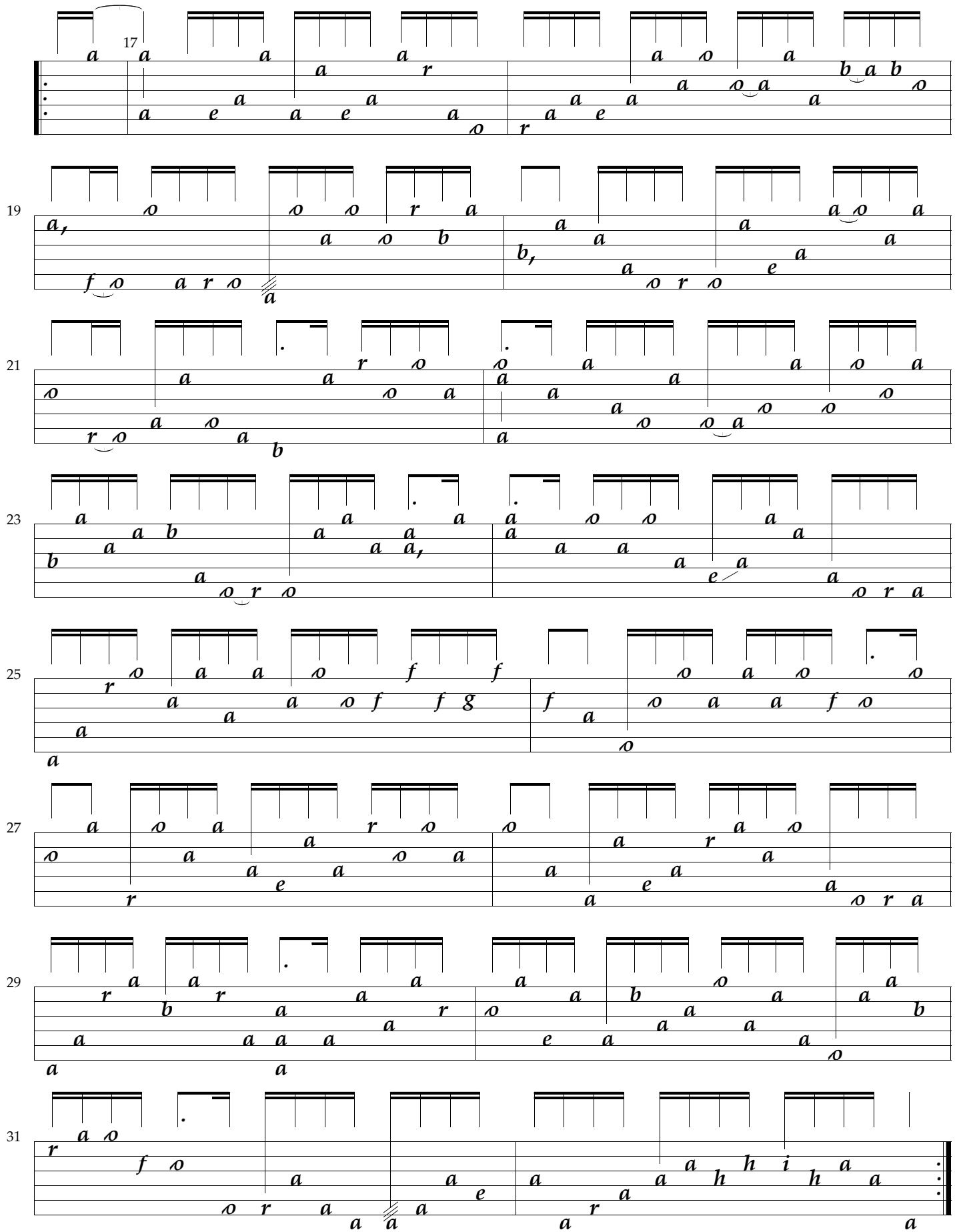
BWV 1007 - Allemande

J.S. Bach

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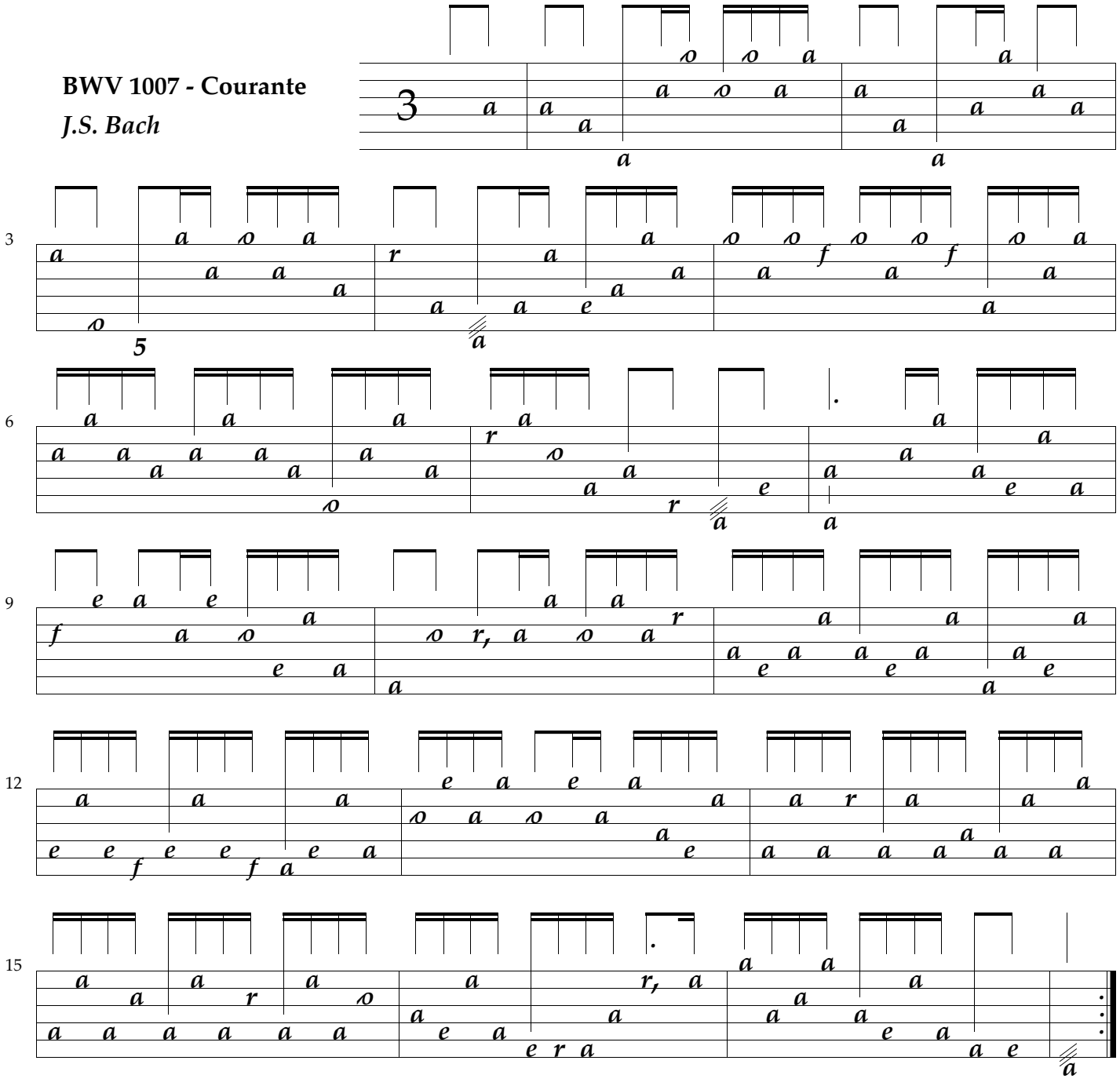
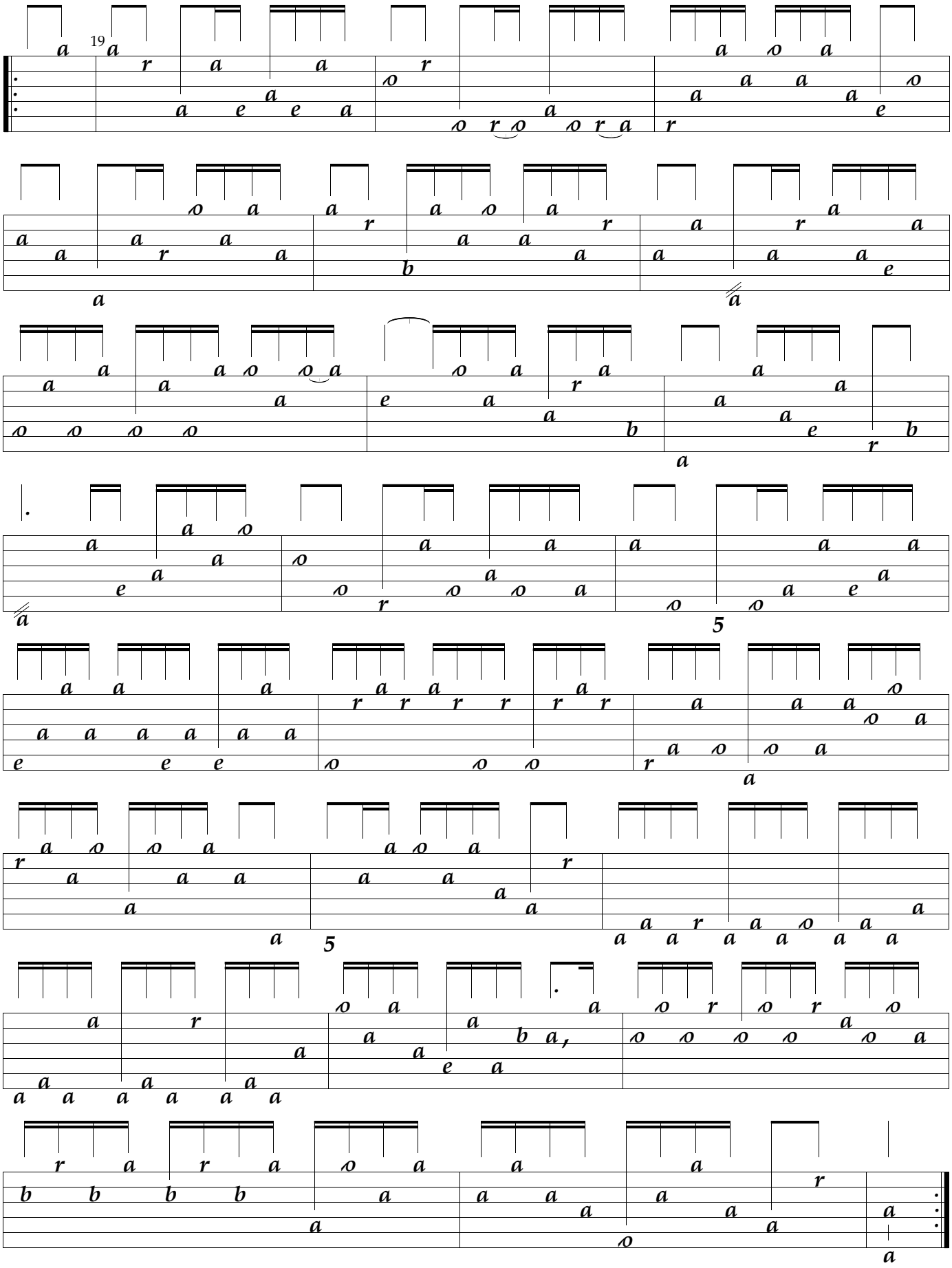
BWV 1007 - Courante

J.S. Bach

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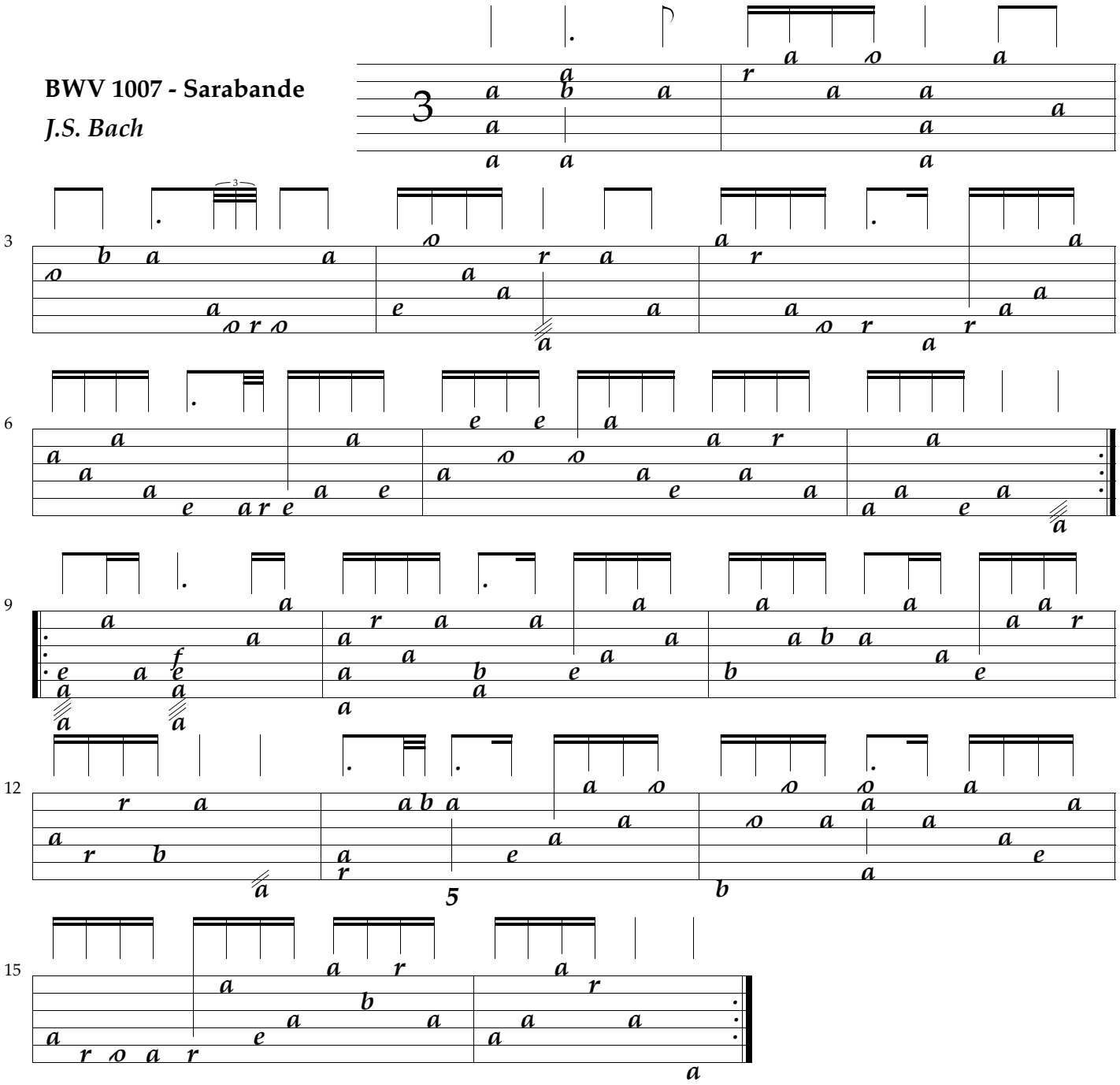
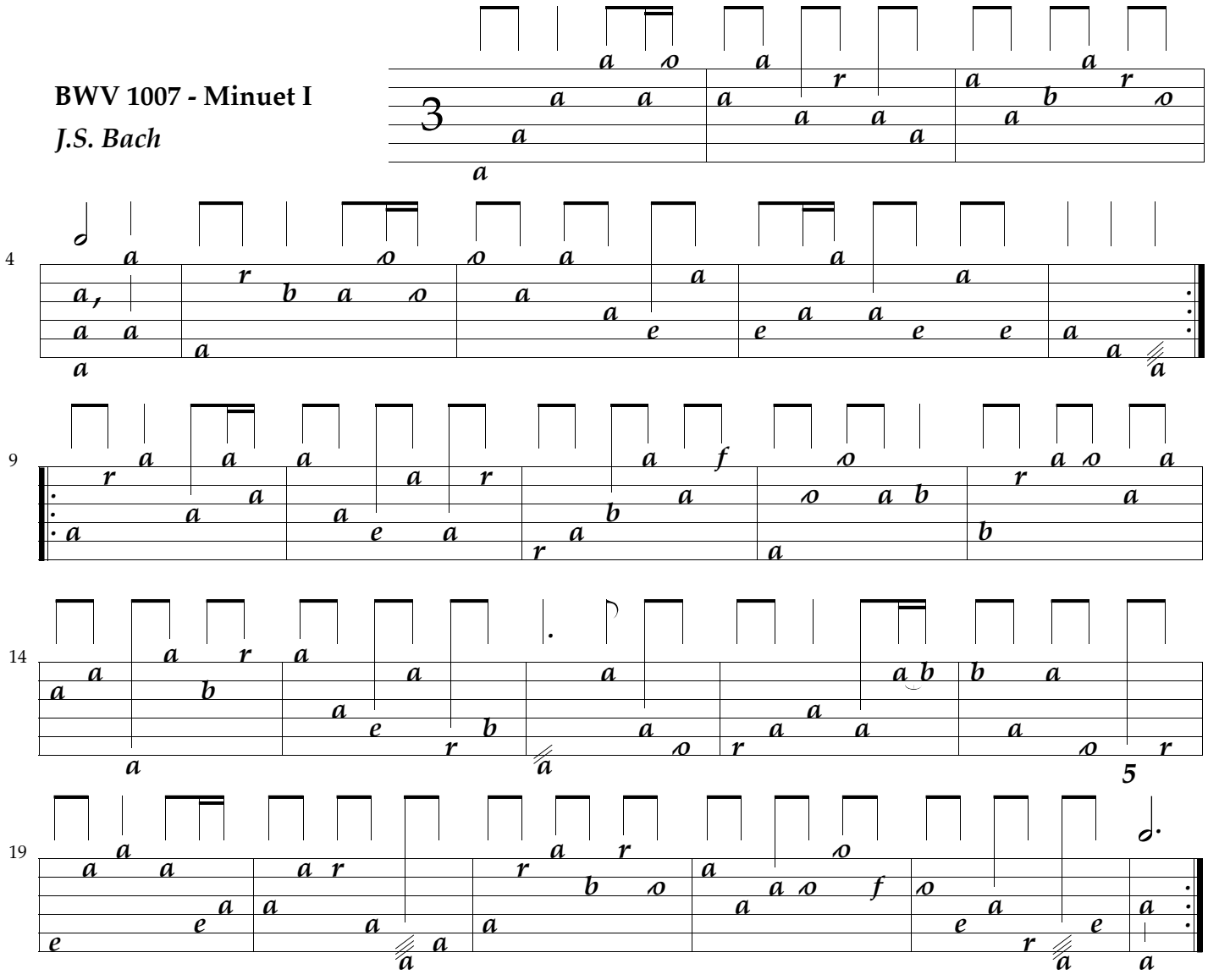
BWV 1007 - Sarabande

J.S. Bach



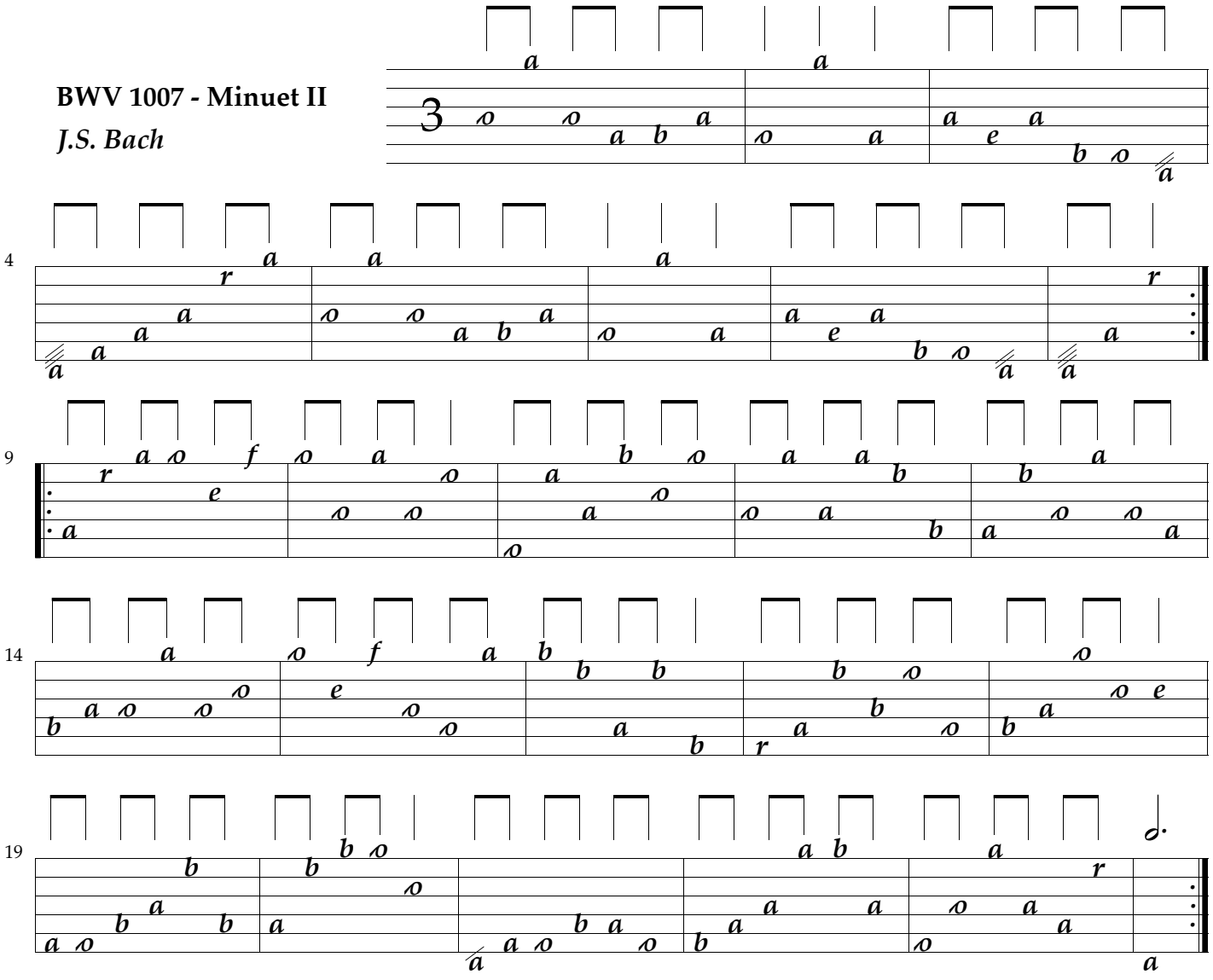
BWV 1007 - Minuet I

J.S. Bach



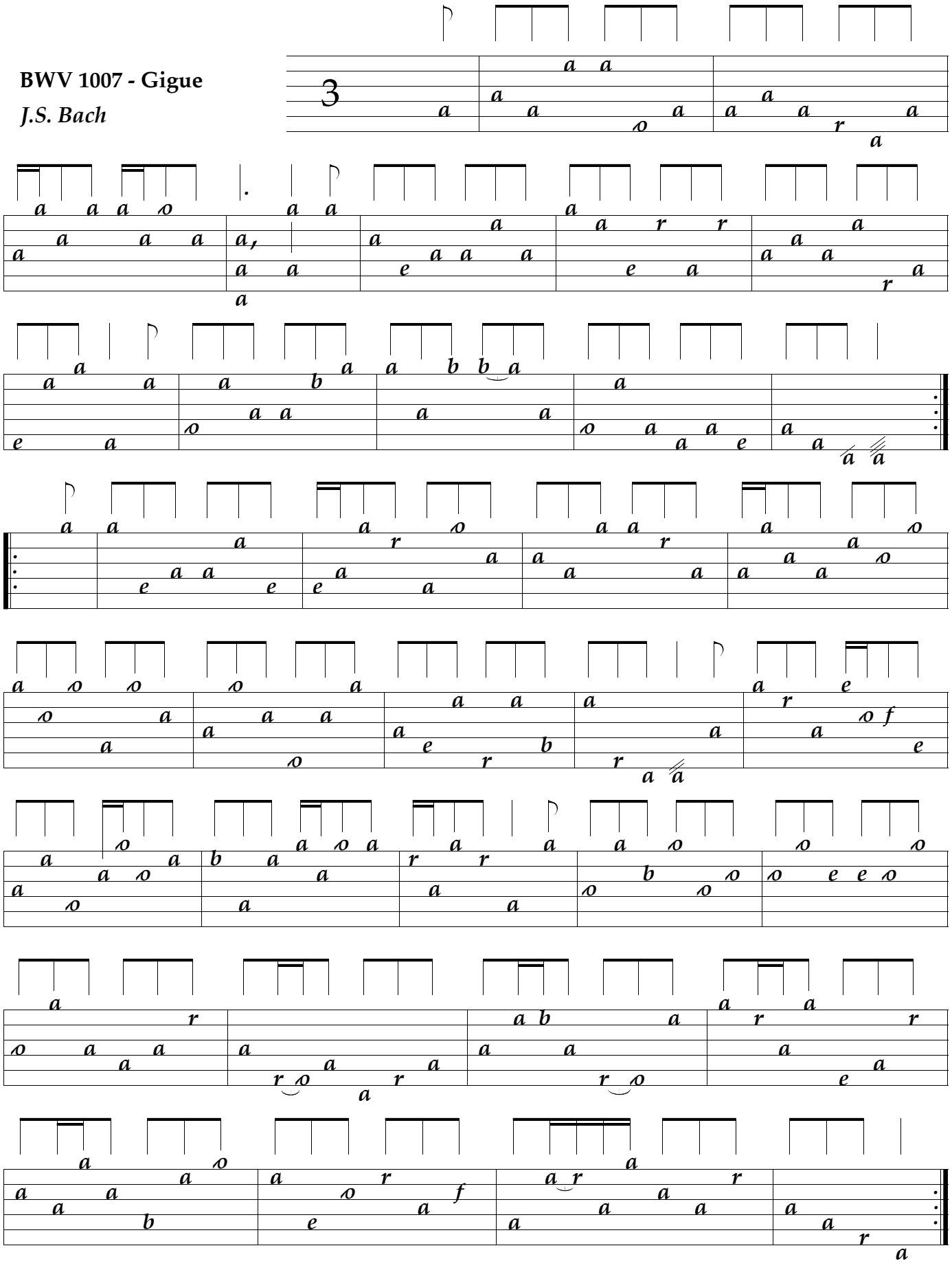
BWV 1007 - Minuet II

J.S. Bach



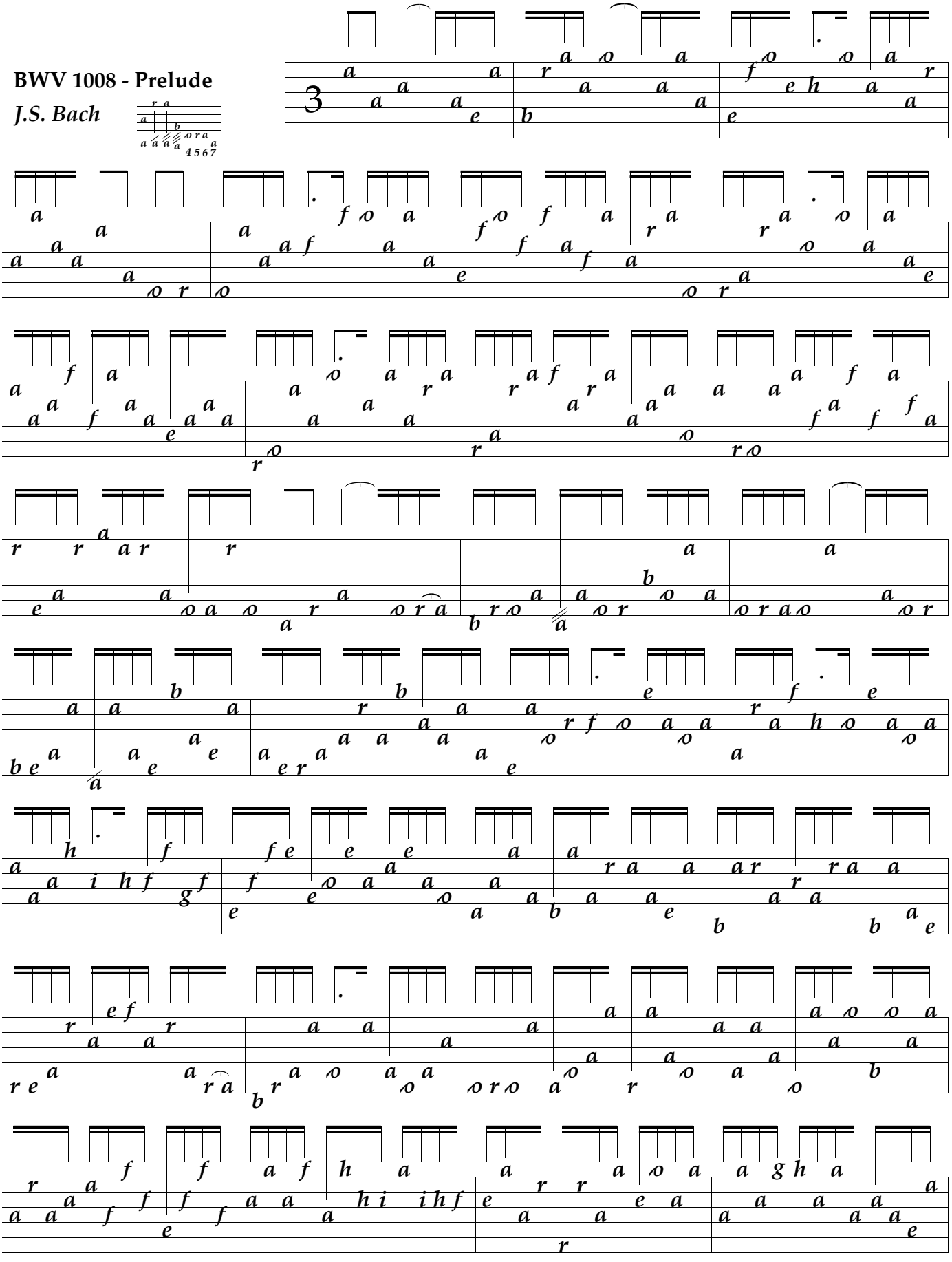
BWV 1007 - Gigue

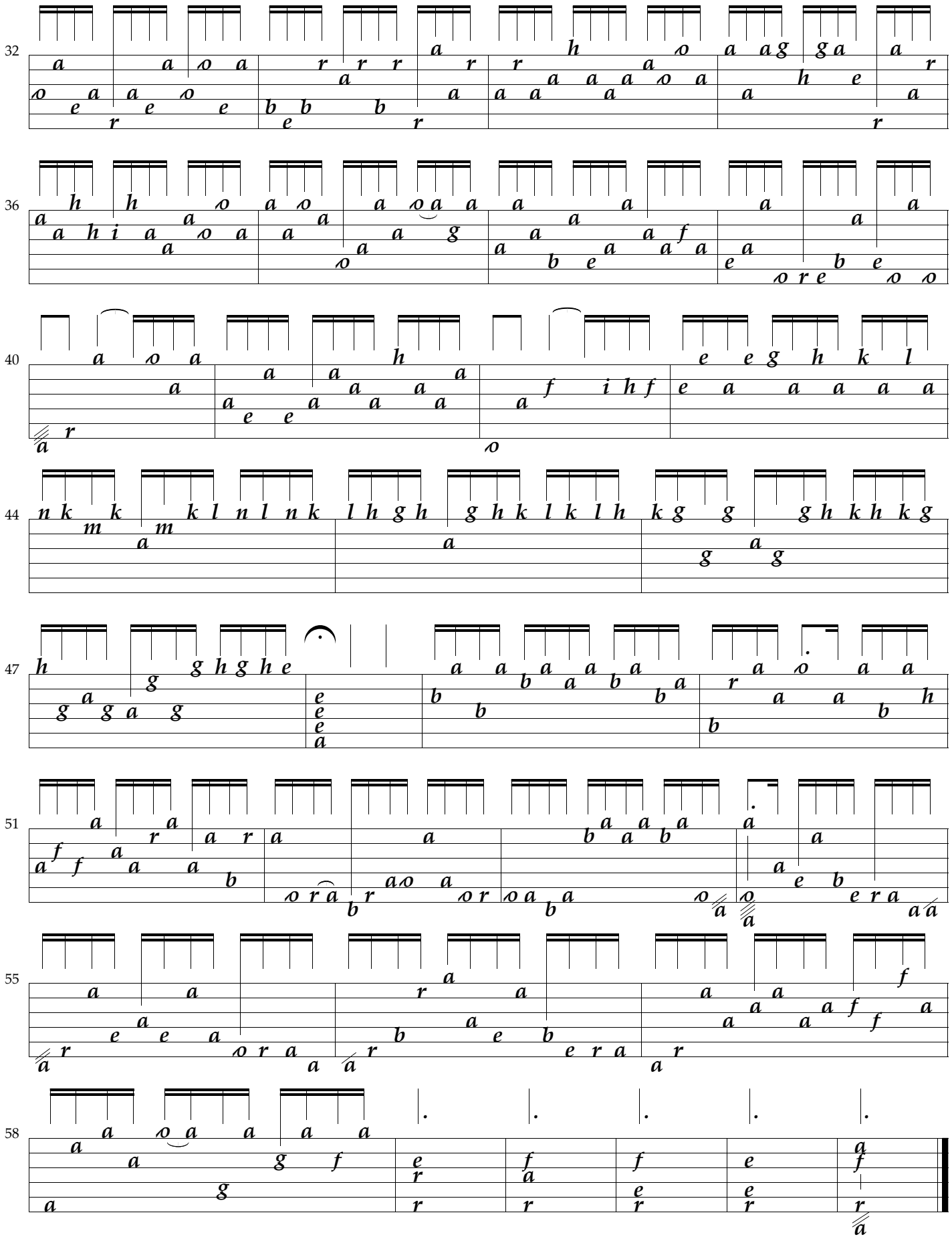
J.S. Bach



BWV 1008 - Prelude

J.S. Bach

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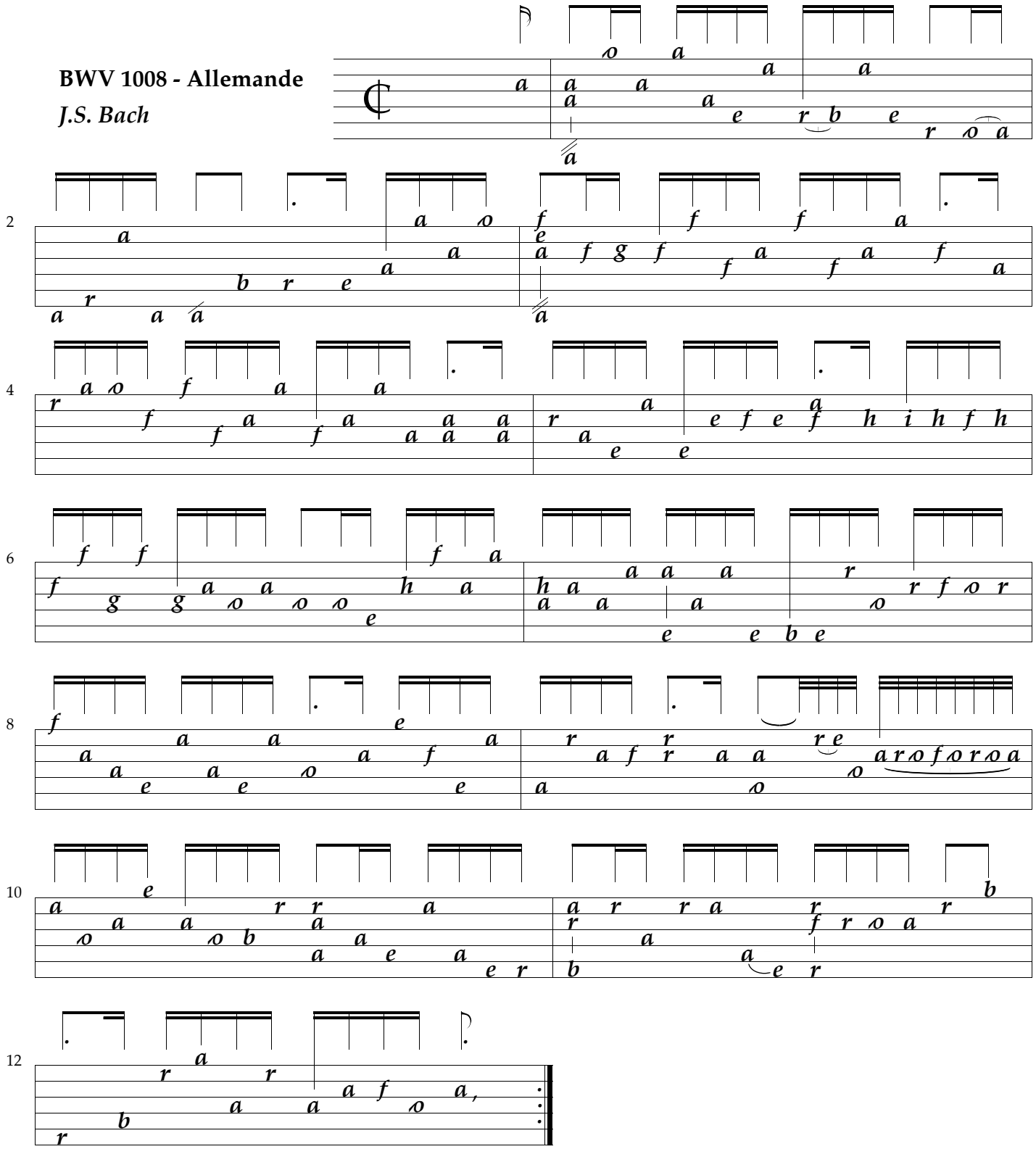
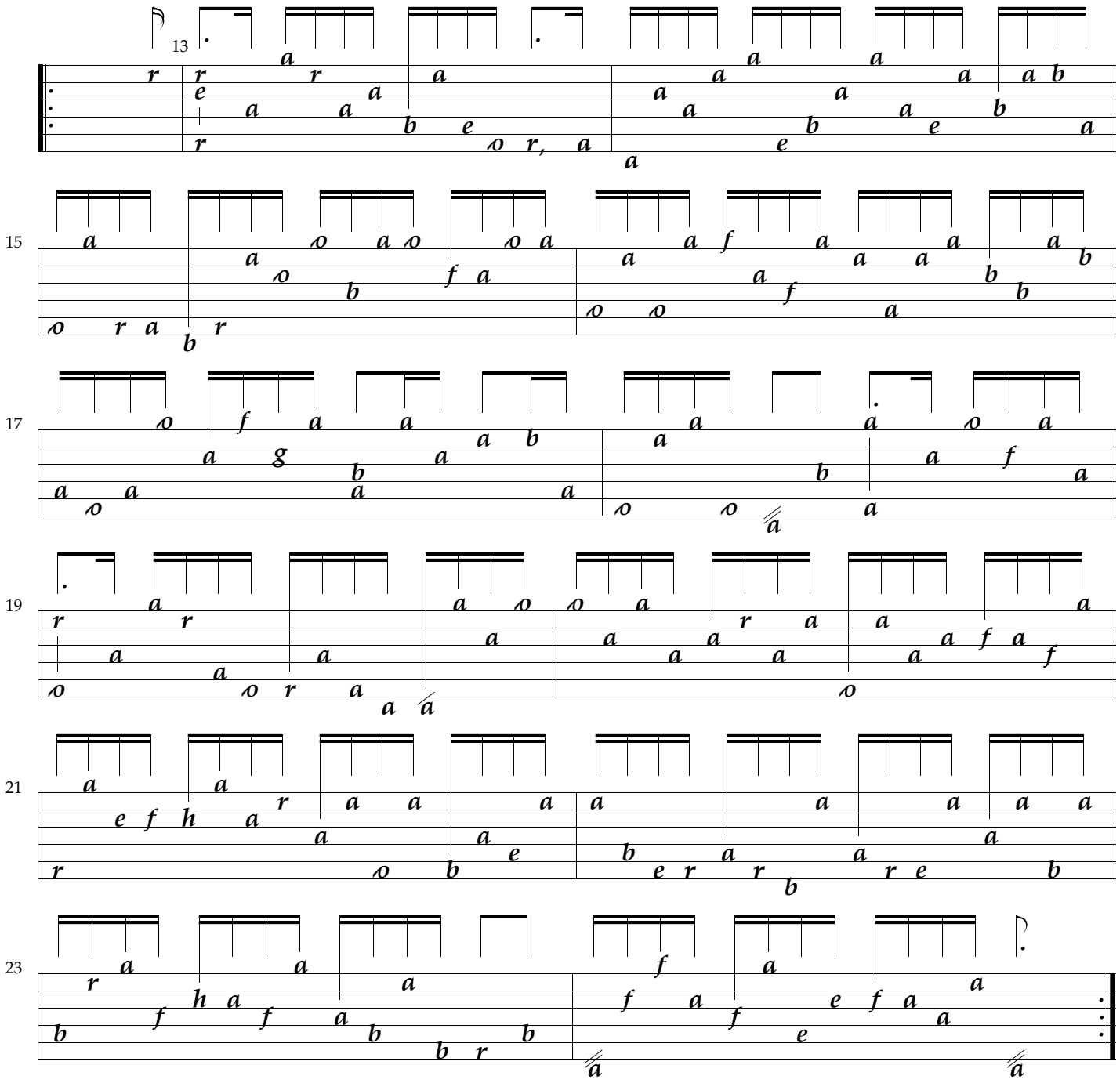
BWV 1008 - Allemande

J.S. Bach

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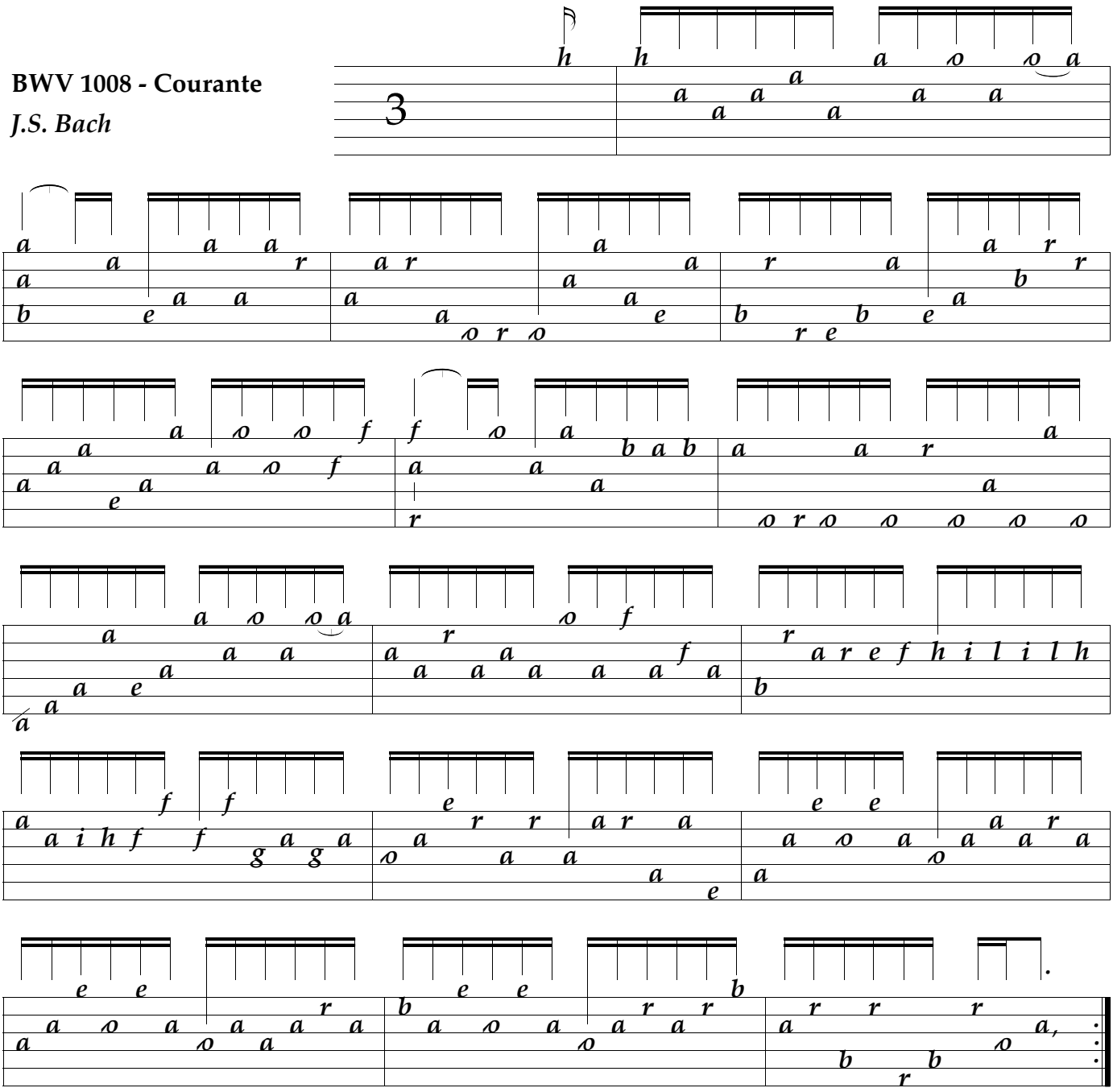
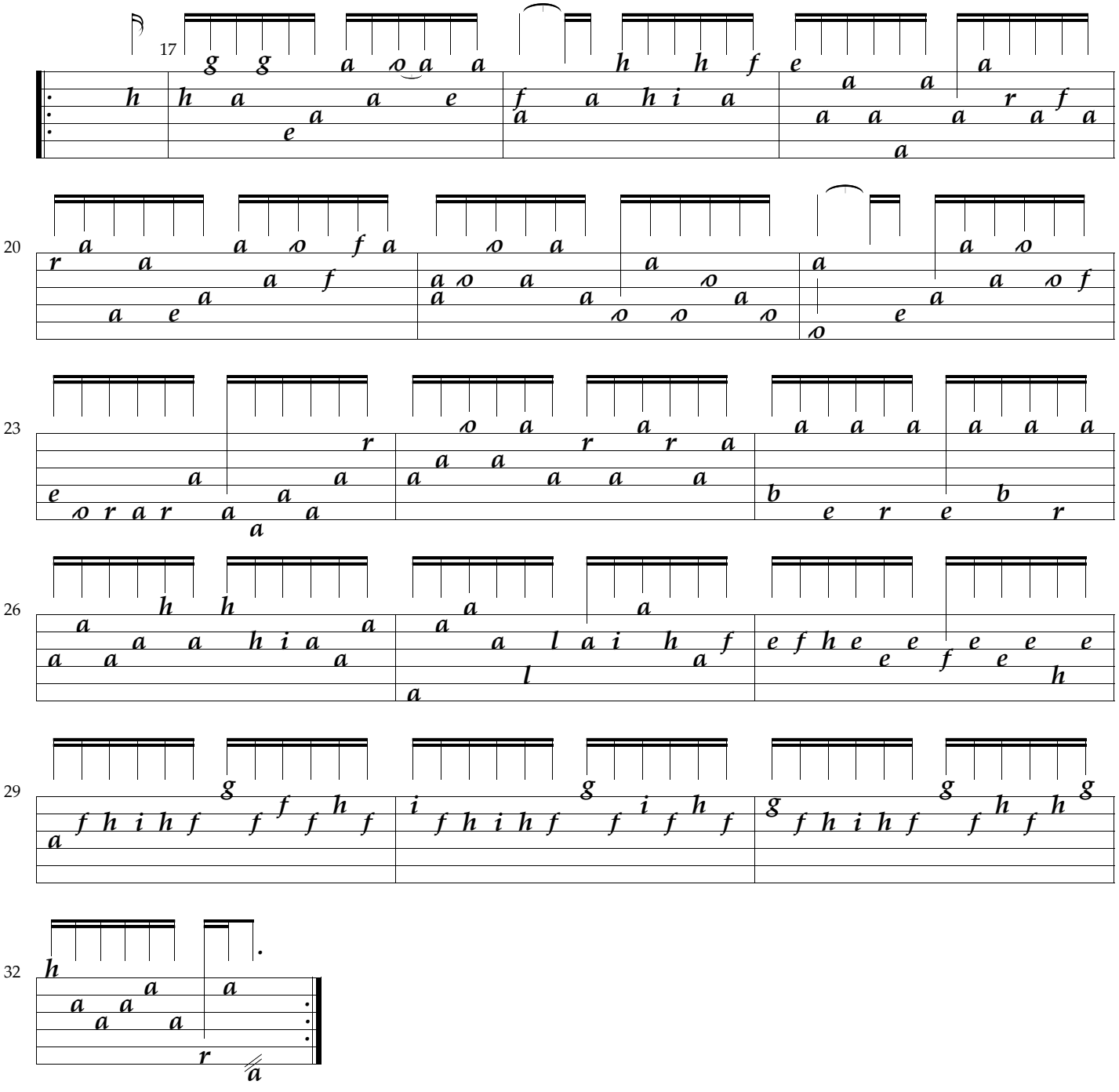
BWV 1008 - Courante

J.S. Bach

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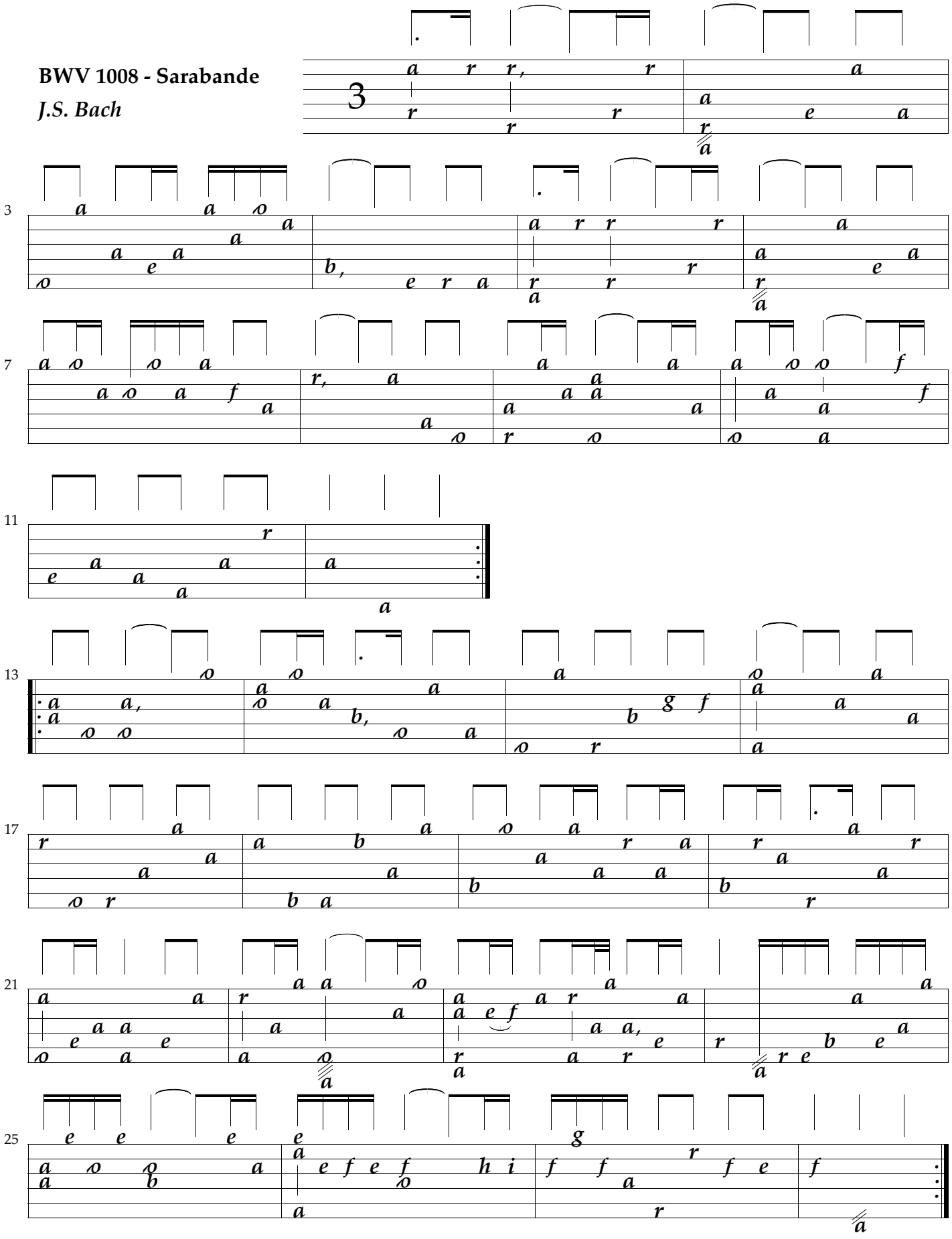
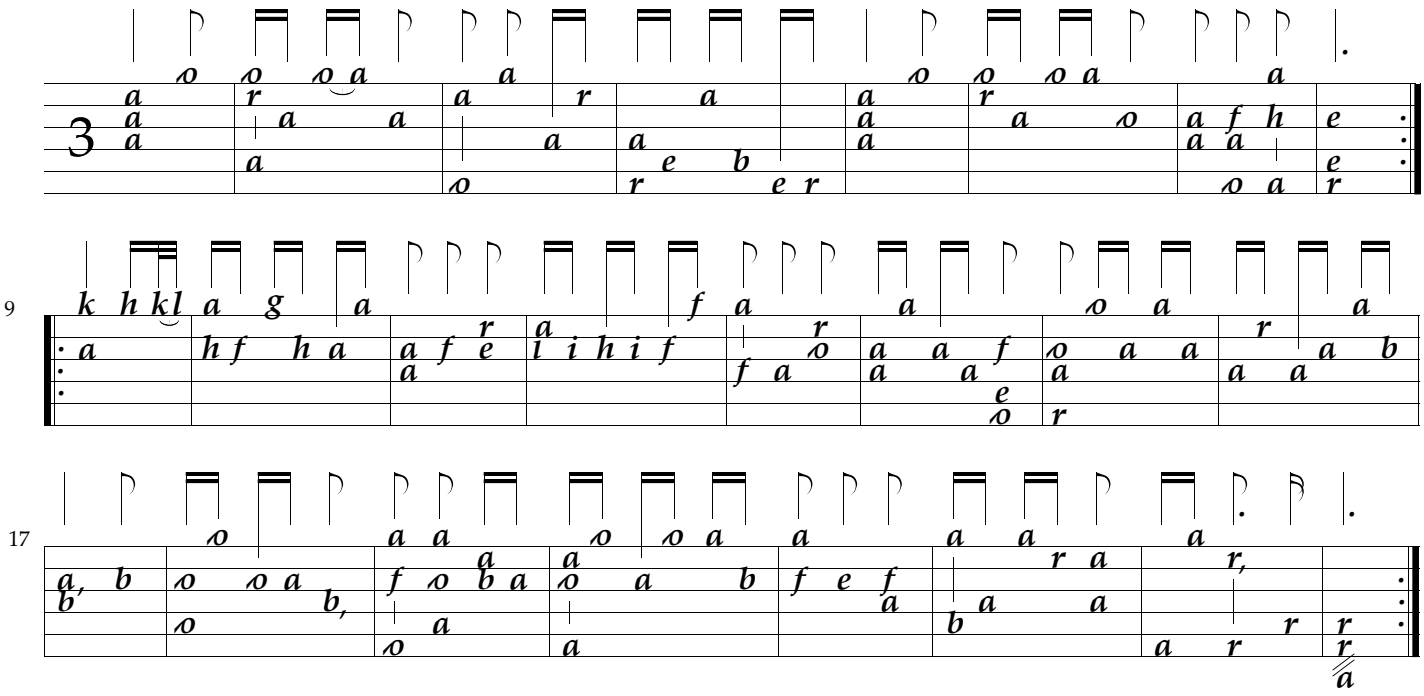
BWV 1008 - Sarabande

J.S. Bach

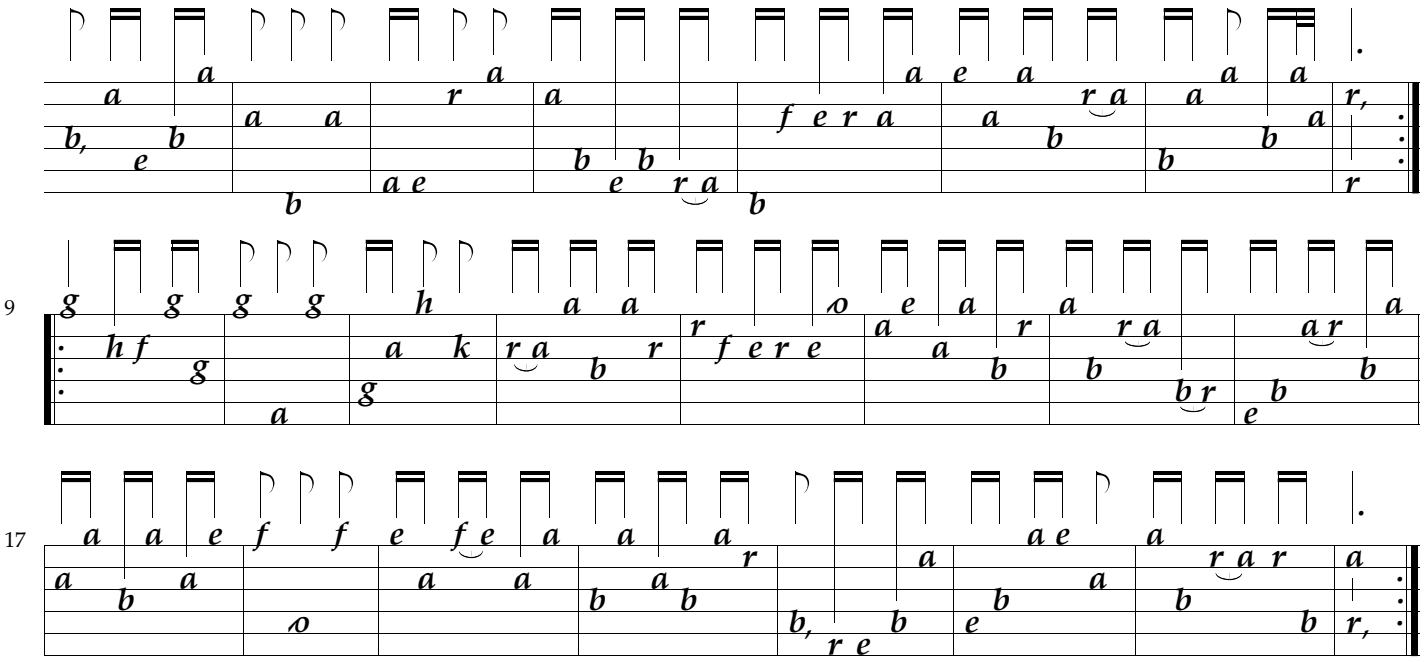


BWV 1008 - Minuet 1

J.S. Bach

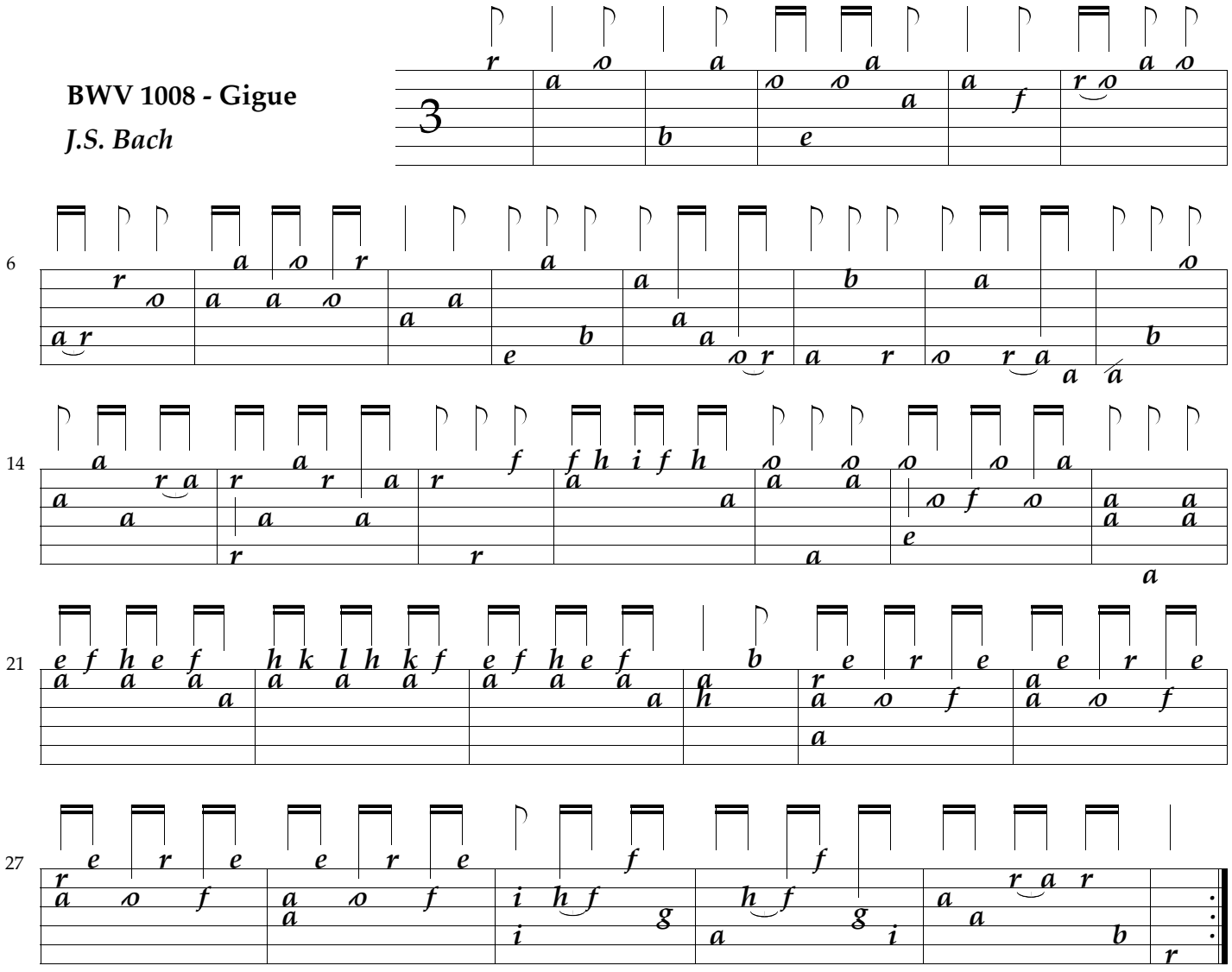


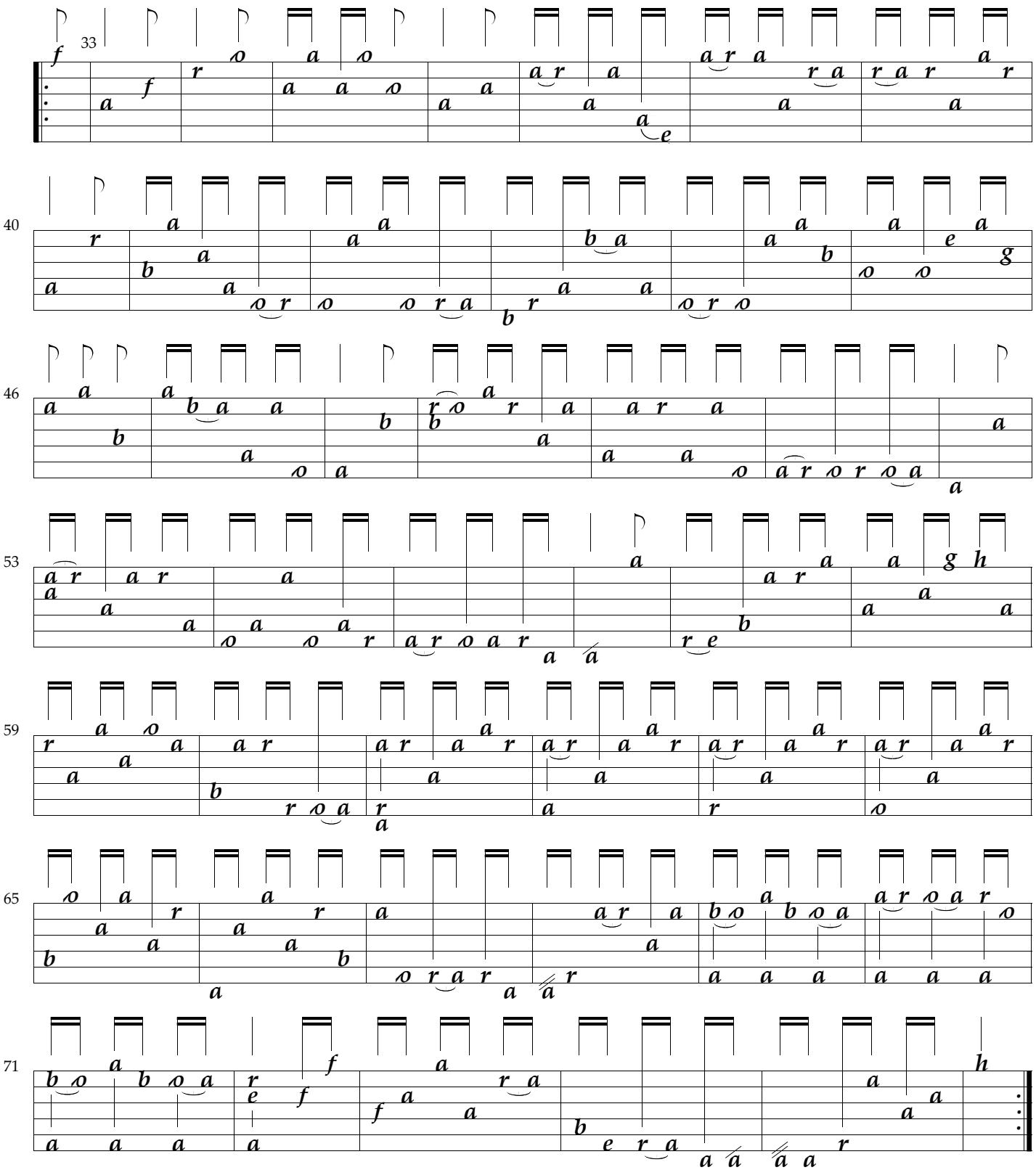
Minuet 2



BWV 1008 - Gigue

J.S. Bach

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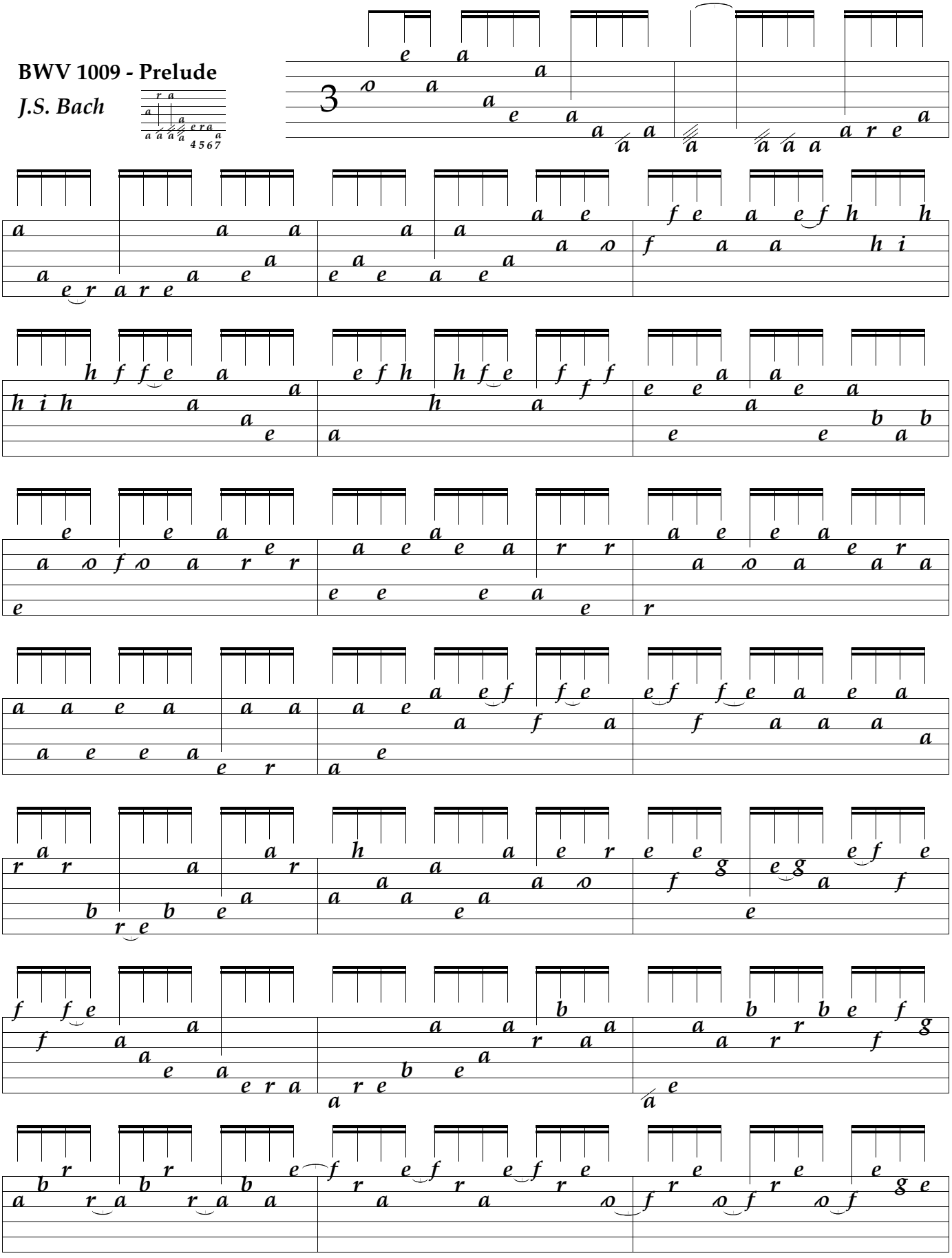
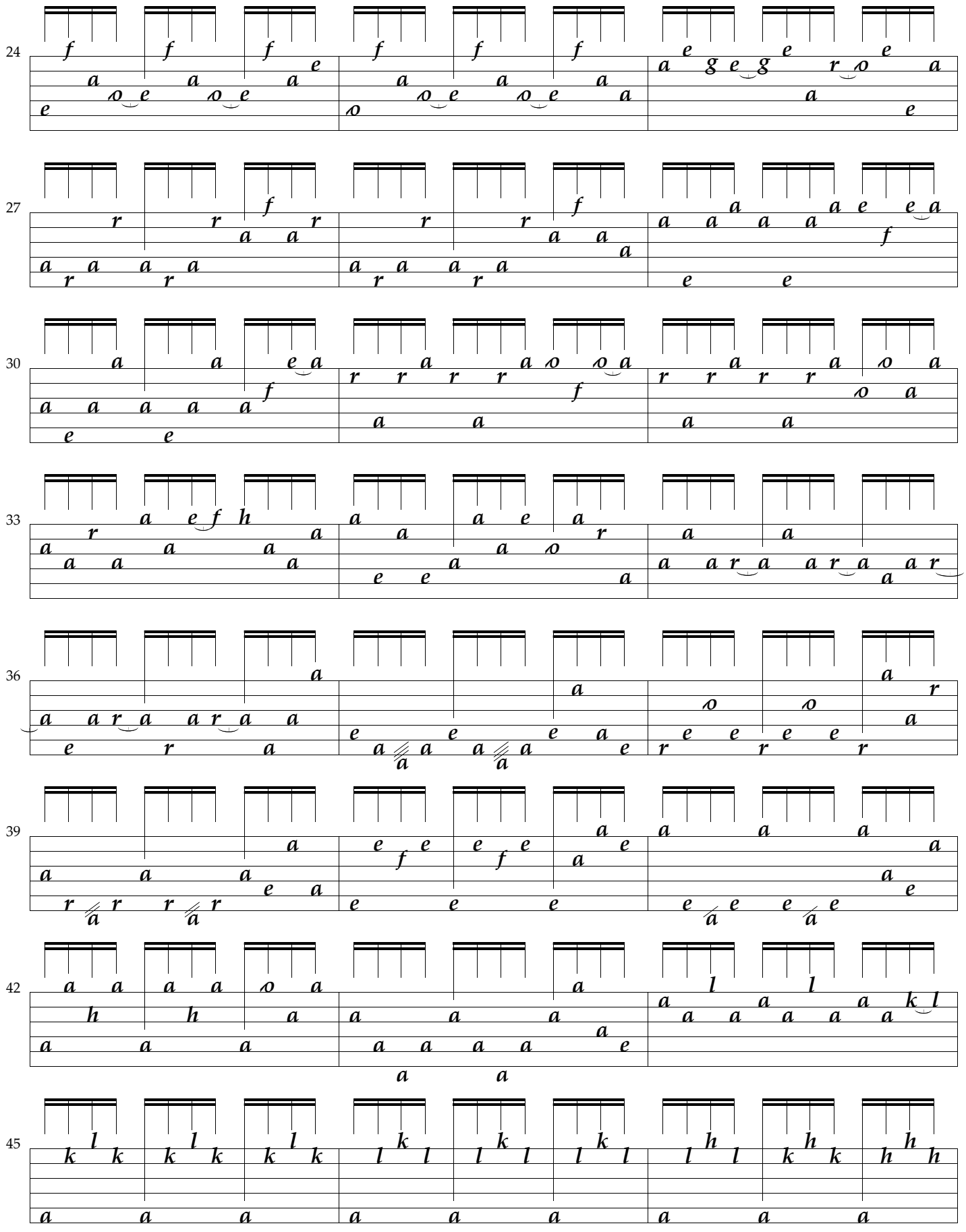
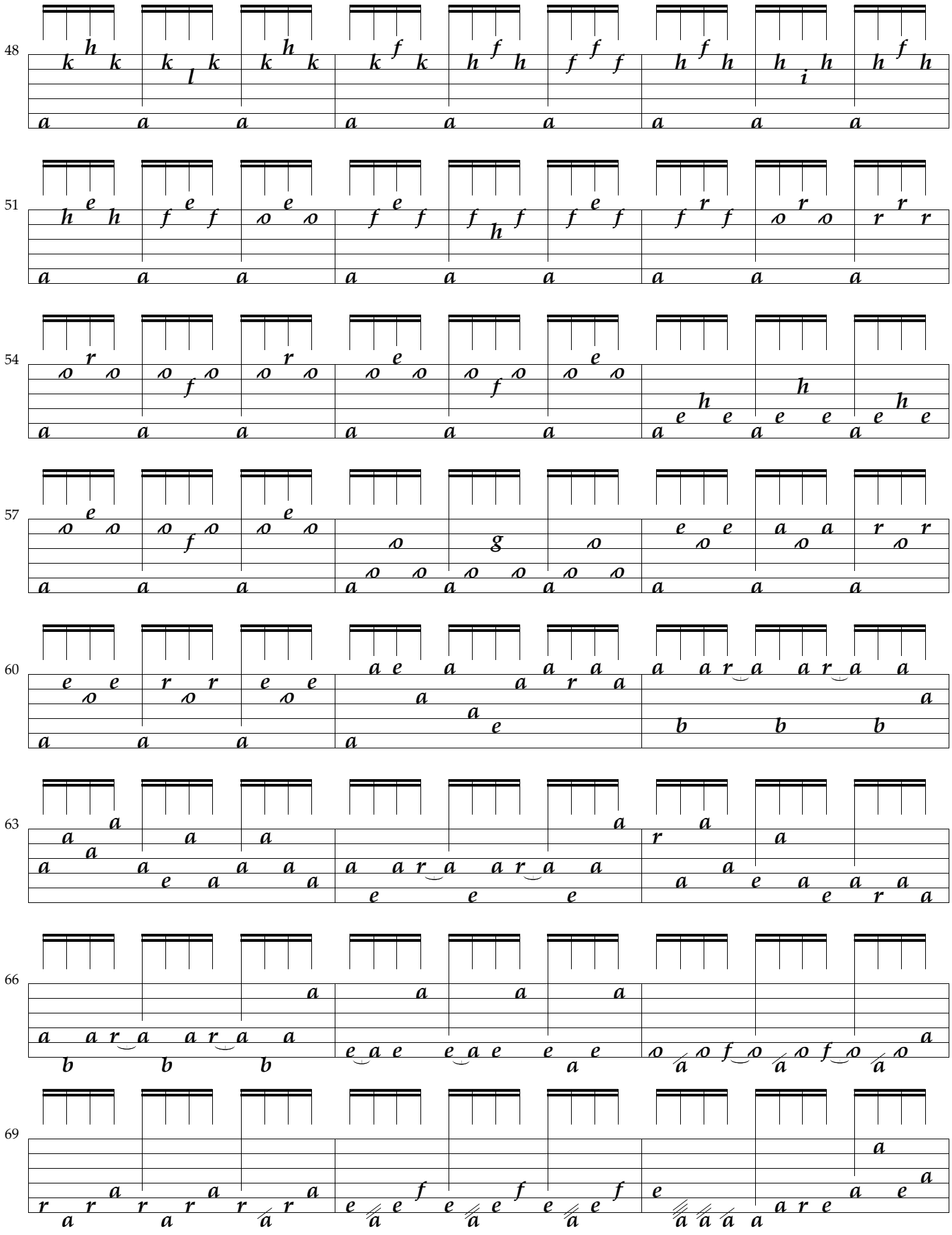
BWV 1009 - Prelude

J.S. Bach



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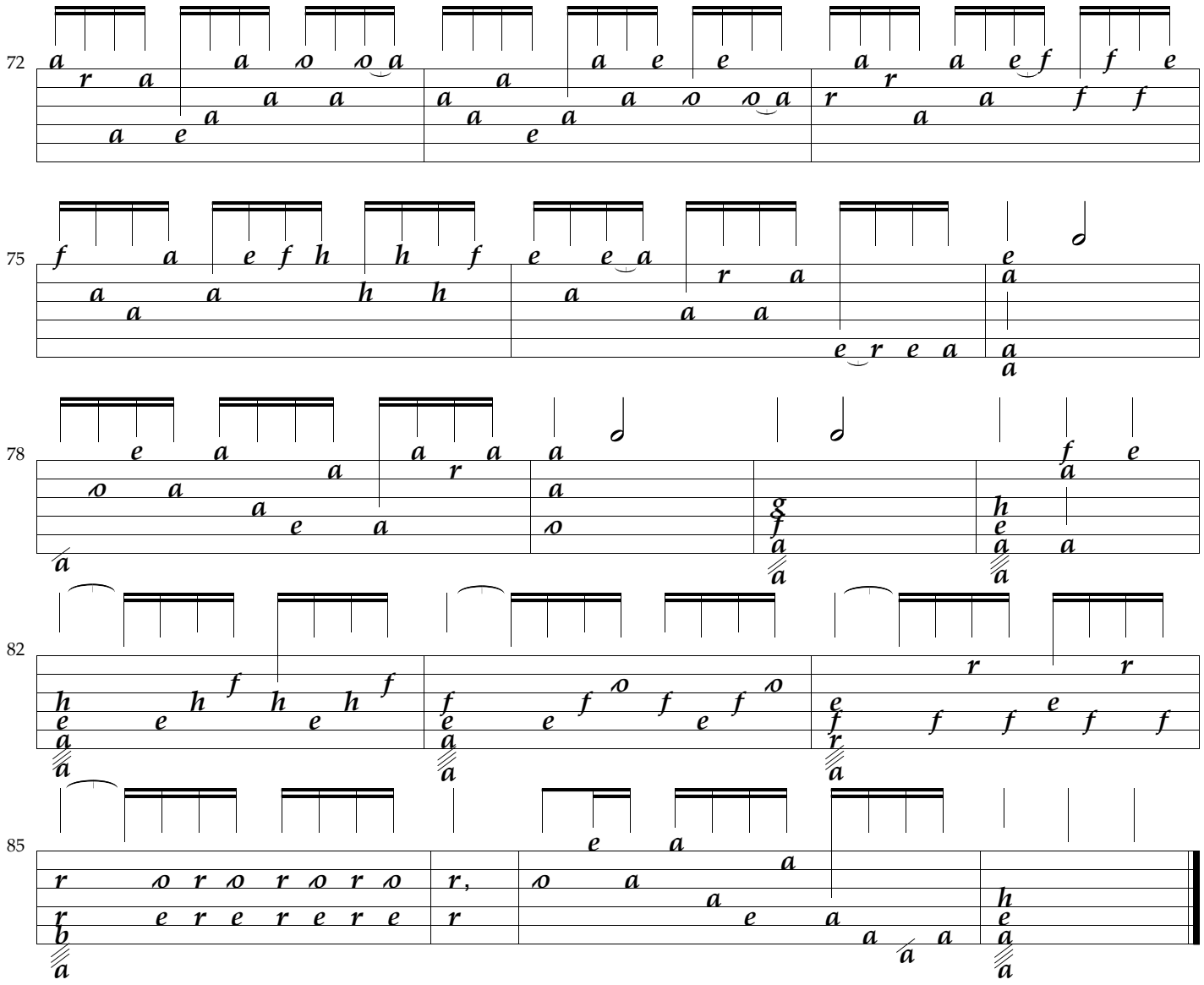
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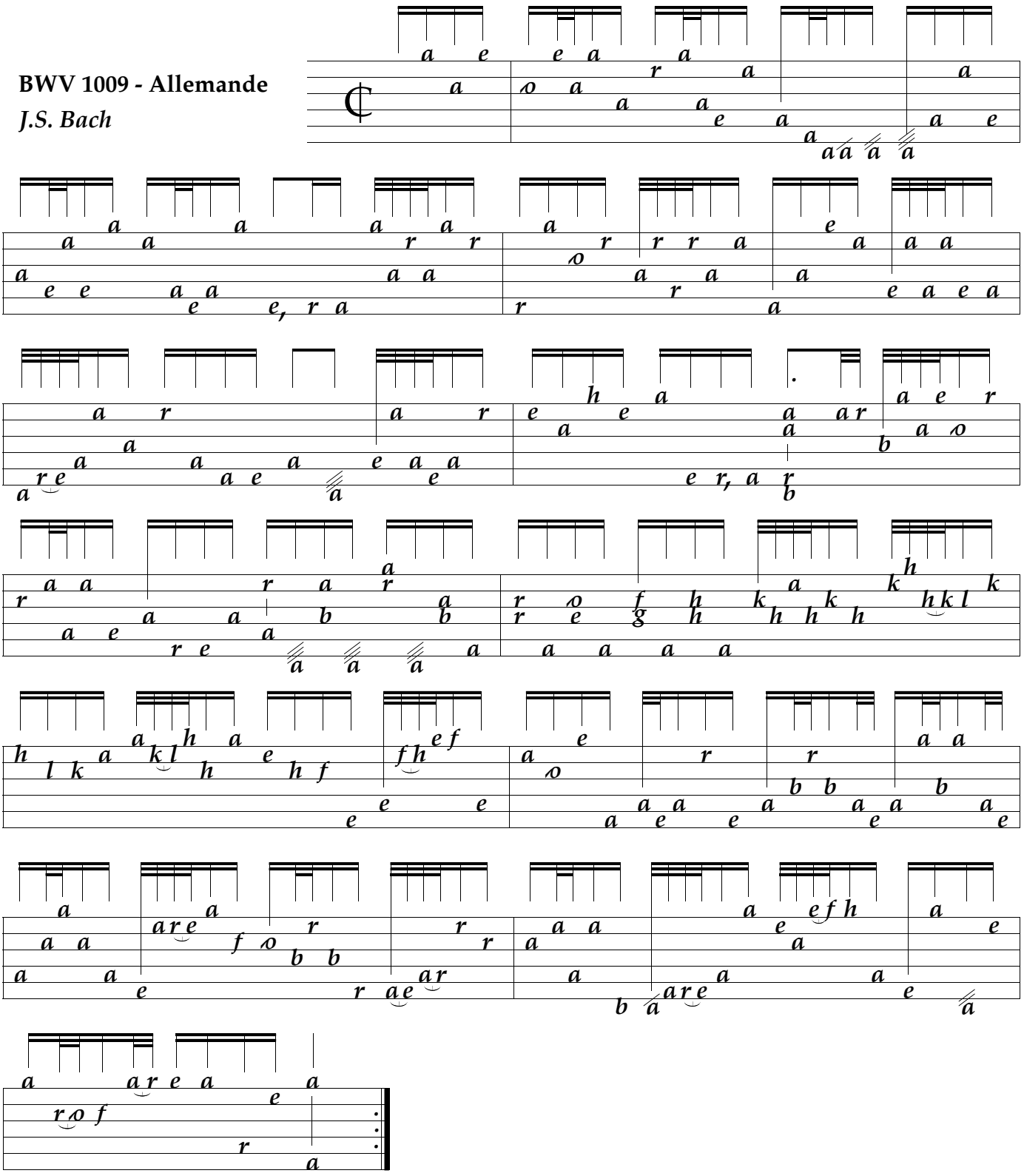
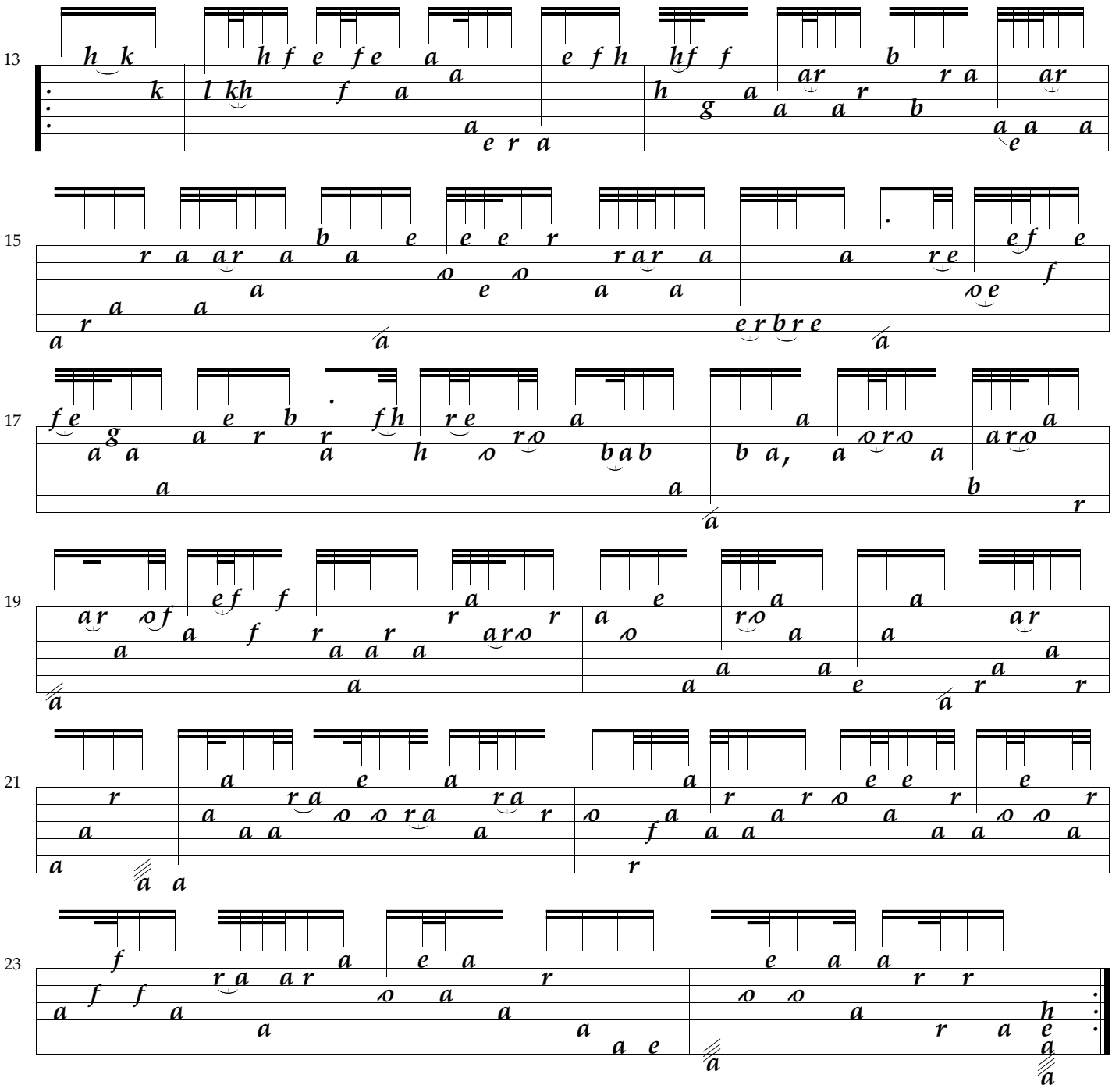
BWV 1009 - Allemande

J.S. Bach

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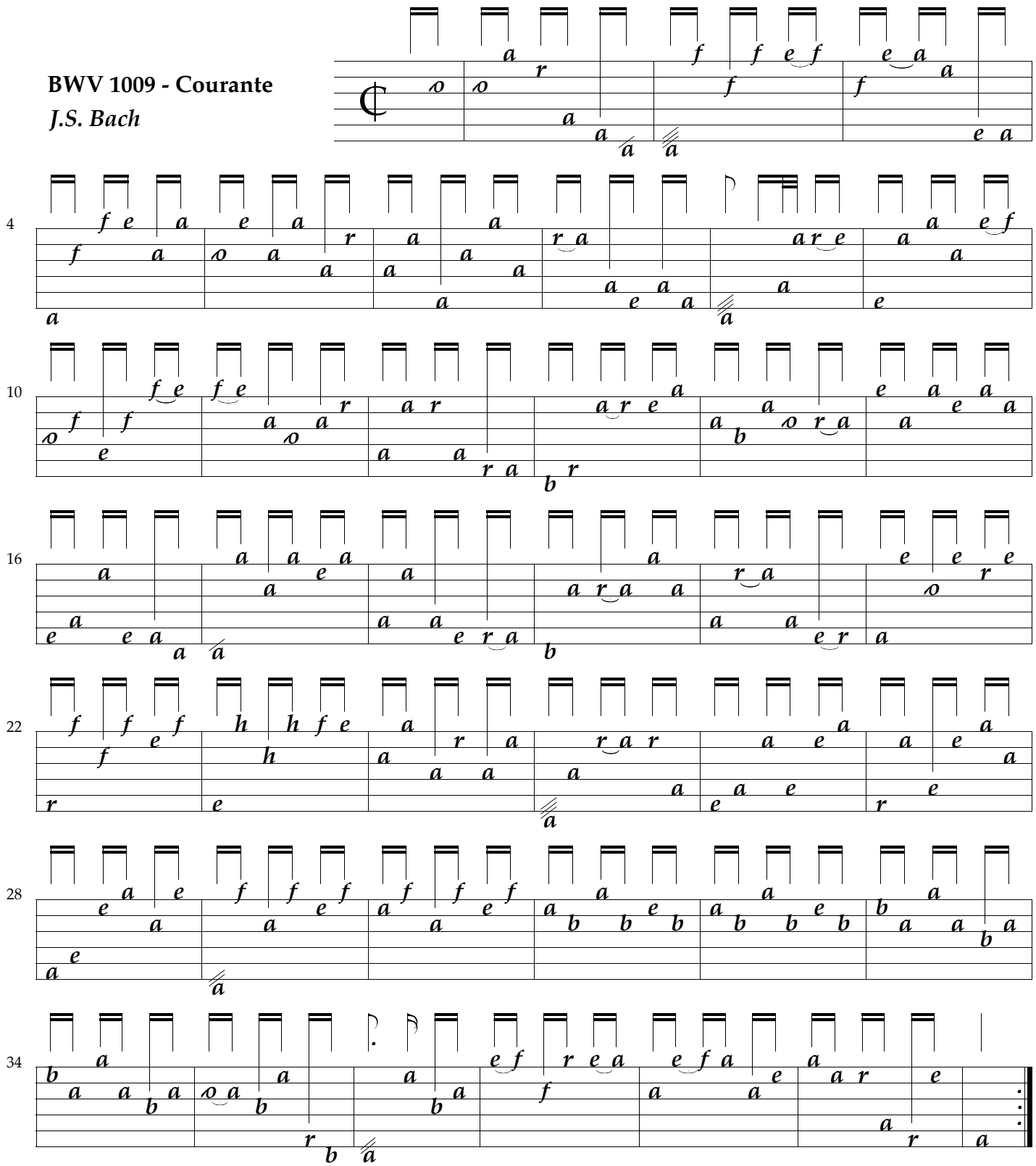
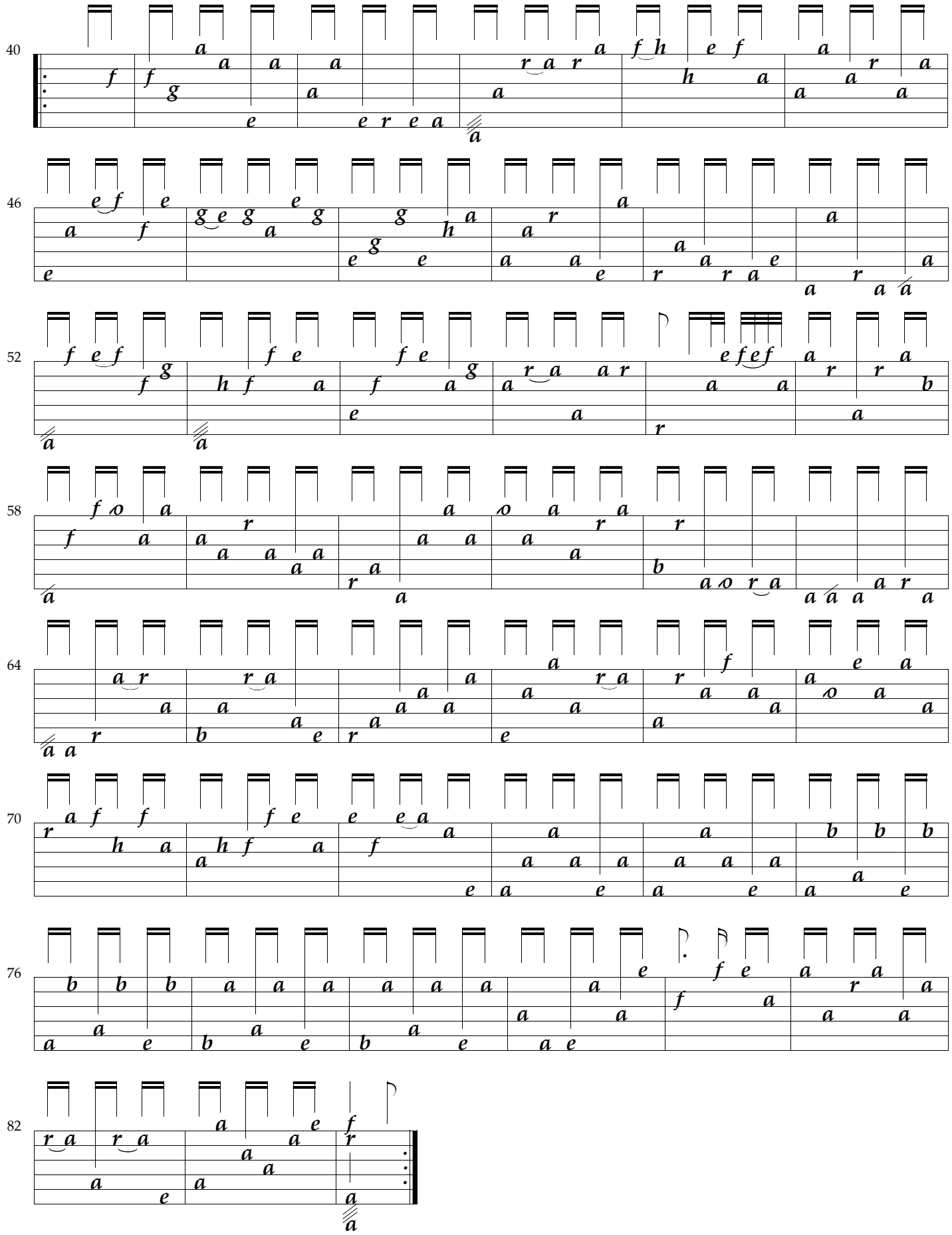
BWV 1009 - Courante

J.S. Bach

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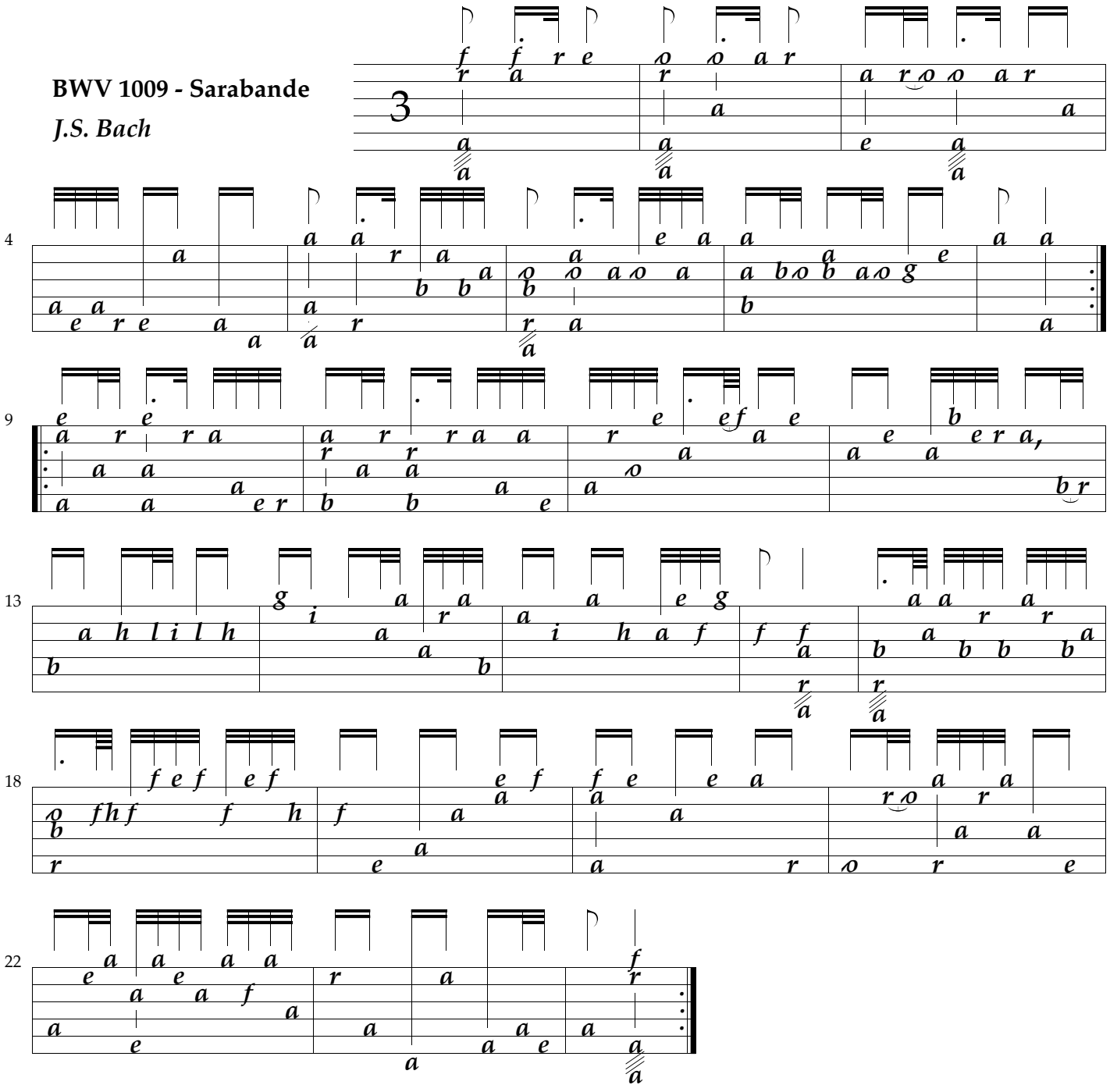
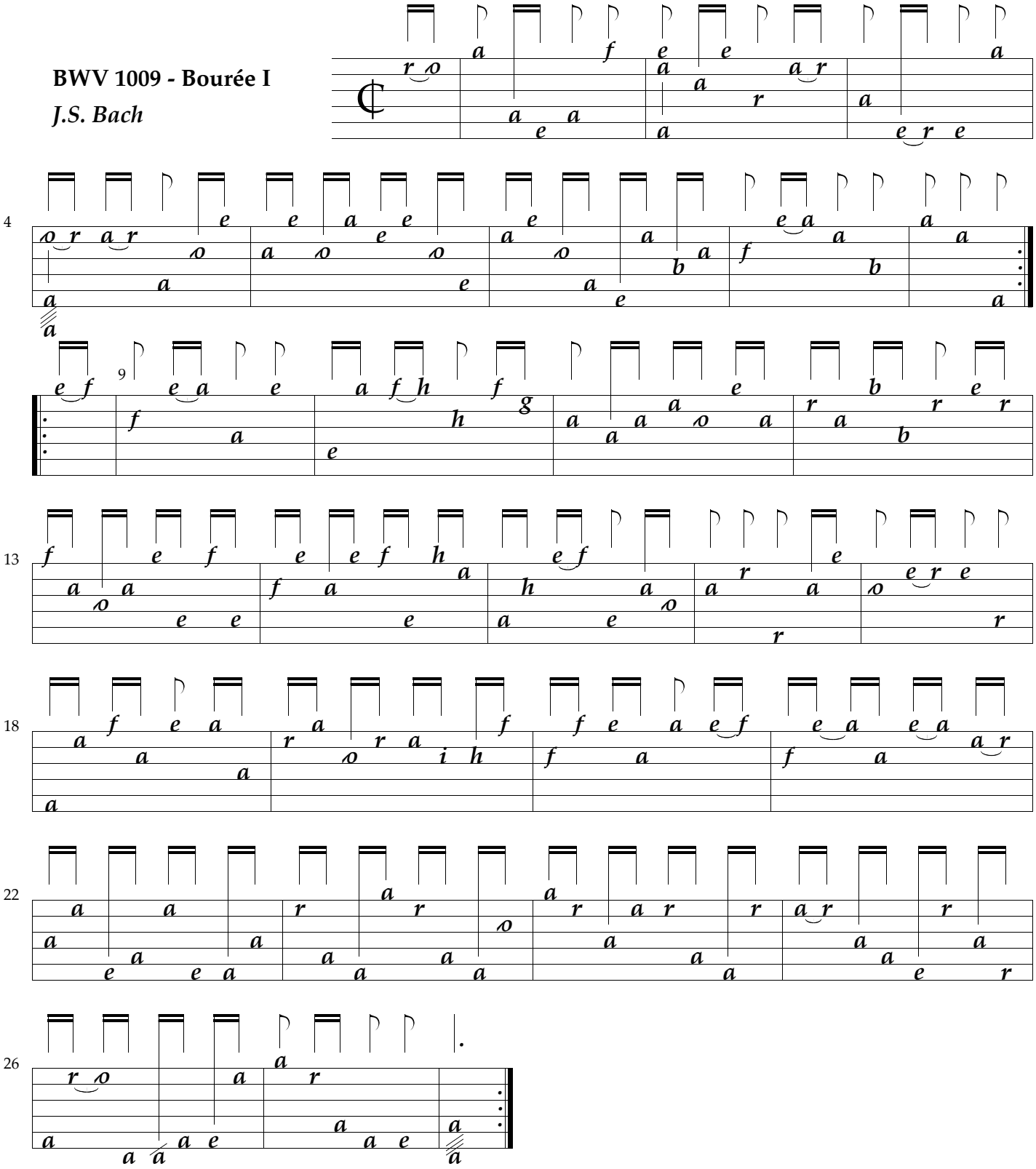
BWV 1009 - Sarabande

J.S. Bach



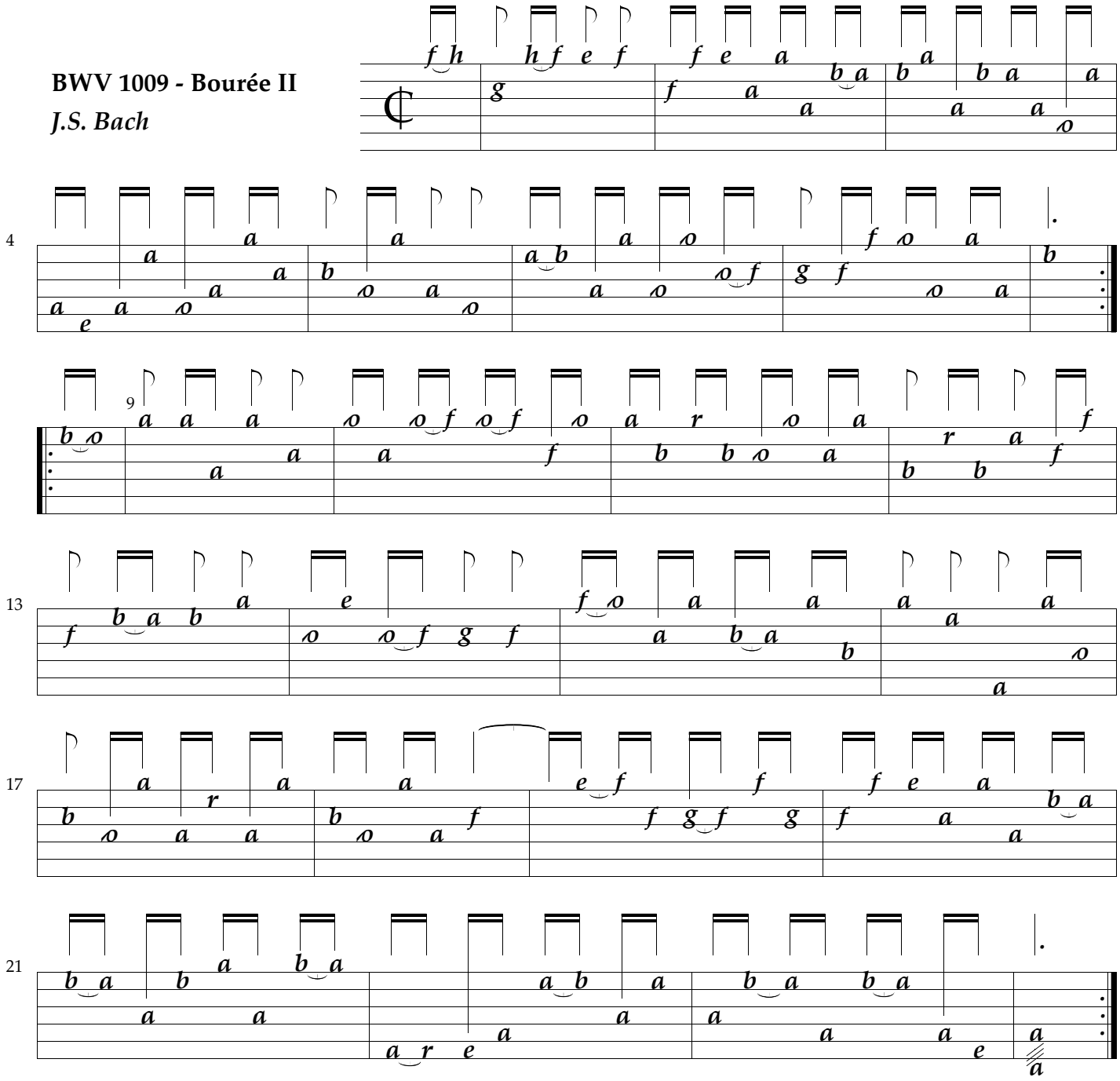
BWV 1009 - Bourée I

J.S. Bach



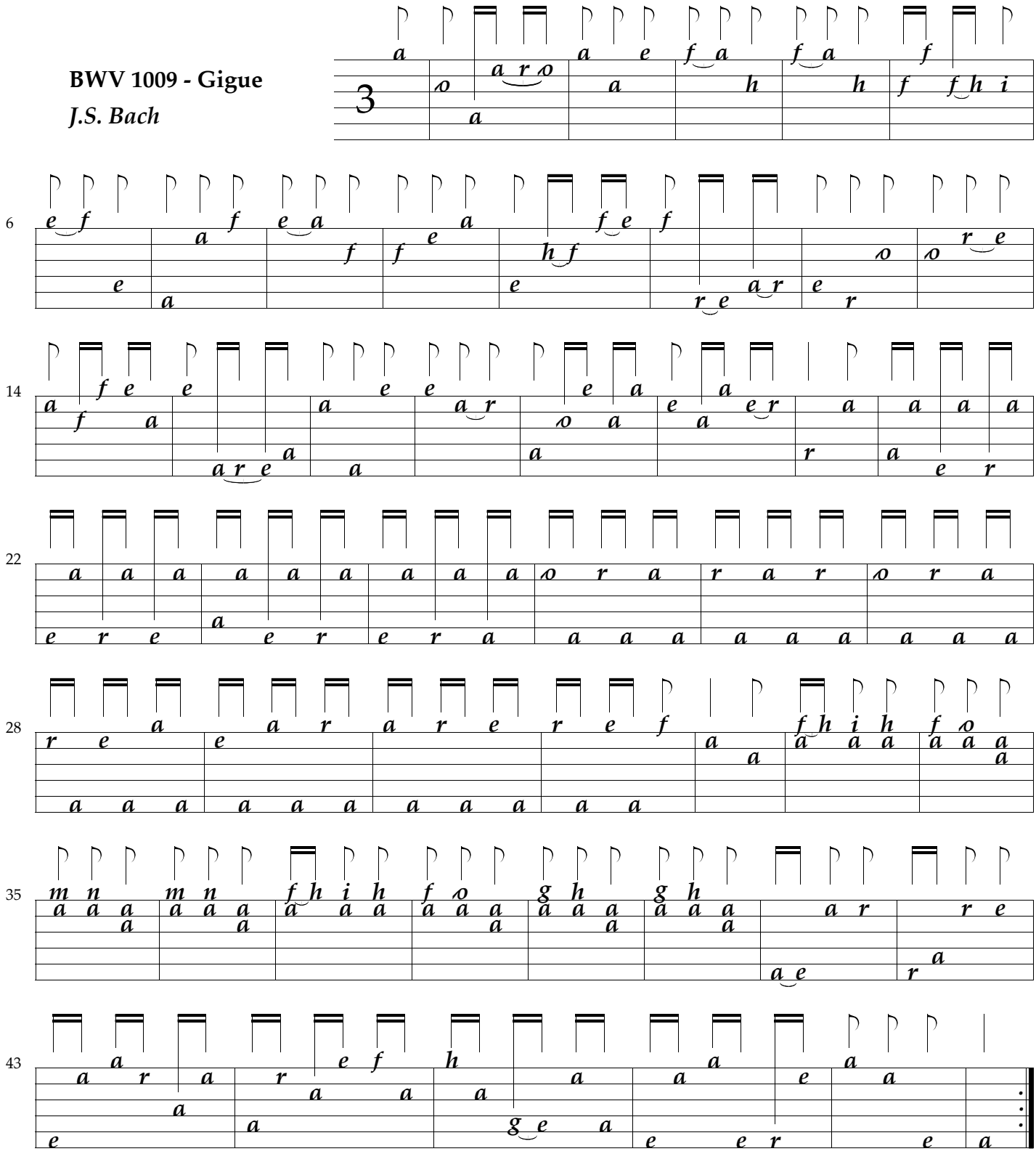
BWV 1009 - Bourée II

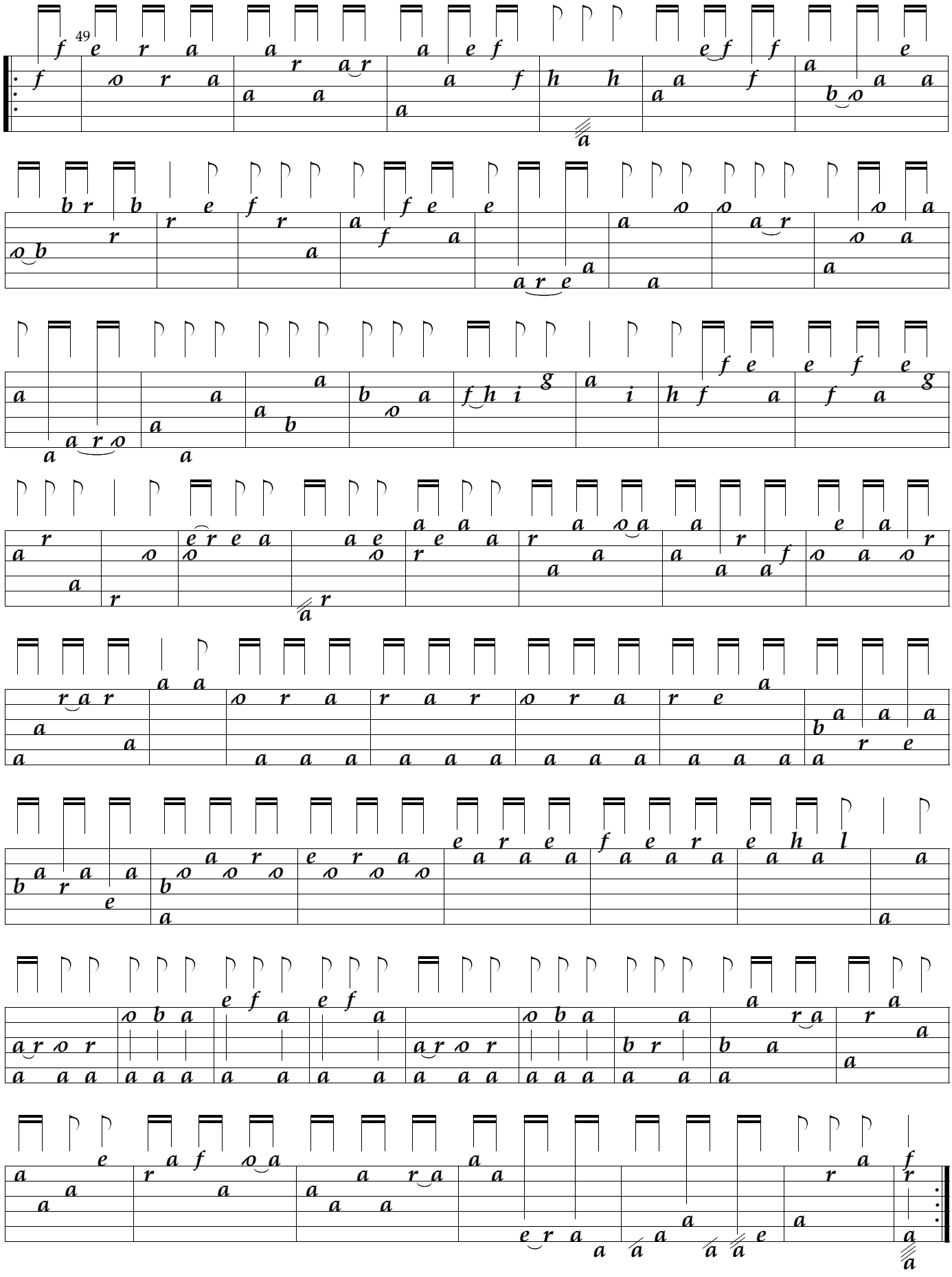
J.S. Bach



BWV 1009 - Gigue

J.S. Bach

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APPENDIX

The following notes were originally down an octave. Most of them are acheivable if one's theorbo has eight fingered strings (à la Maltot):

BWV 1007
Minuet II Bar 1: last note
Bar 2: first note. These changes are repeated in Bars 5 and 6.

BWV 1008
Prelude Bar 53: notes 5 through 10
Courante Bar 23: ninth note

BWV 1009
Prelude Bar 79: lowest note of chord originally down an octave

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