Prelude

Lute Suite No. 4, BWV 1006a

J.S. Bach

Transcribed for guitar

by

Richard Yates

About this edition

This edition of the Bach Prelude to Lute Suite No. 4 is experimental in several ways. The original key was E major. Nearly all guitar transcriptions are in that key rather than in D major as I am presenting here. D major has the advantage that the scale includes more open strings, especially in the sections that modulate to other keys. In E major these sections more often require full barré fingering for arpeggios and have fewer open strings with which to smoothly shift positions up and down the neck in scale passages.

Overall, D major allows a fuller resonance through sympathetic vibration of non-plucked strings that is especially suitable both for the texture of a Baroque prelude, and for an imitation of the Baroque lute with its open D minor tuning.

Fingering has been selected with two priorities: 1) efficiency of movement and, 2) resonance of sound. To this end, wherever practical, lines that outline chords have been assigned across several strings rather than along one string. It is not always possible to completely reconcile these two priorities.

To contrast scale movement with arpeggios, an unusually large number of slurs have been marked. They are there to indicate the places that slurs are possible given the fingering rather than as indicating that they all necessarily be played. One particular scale figure, as exemplified by the first three notes of the prelude, is nearly always assigned to one string. This is in contrast to other editions in which that figure is fingered in a more haphazard way.

Also not usually seen in other editions is the separation, through the notation, of embedded voices that are shown as a single line in the original. While this may clarify the texture it also has the risk of complicating the appearance of the score.

Concerning the right-hand, the texture and lute analogs suggest frequent use of the thumb in alteration with first or second finger in scale passages, especially those involving the lower strings. This will frequently resolve string-crossing puzzles.

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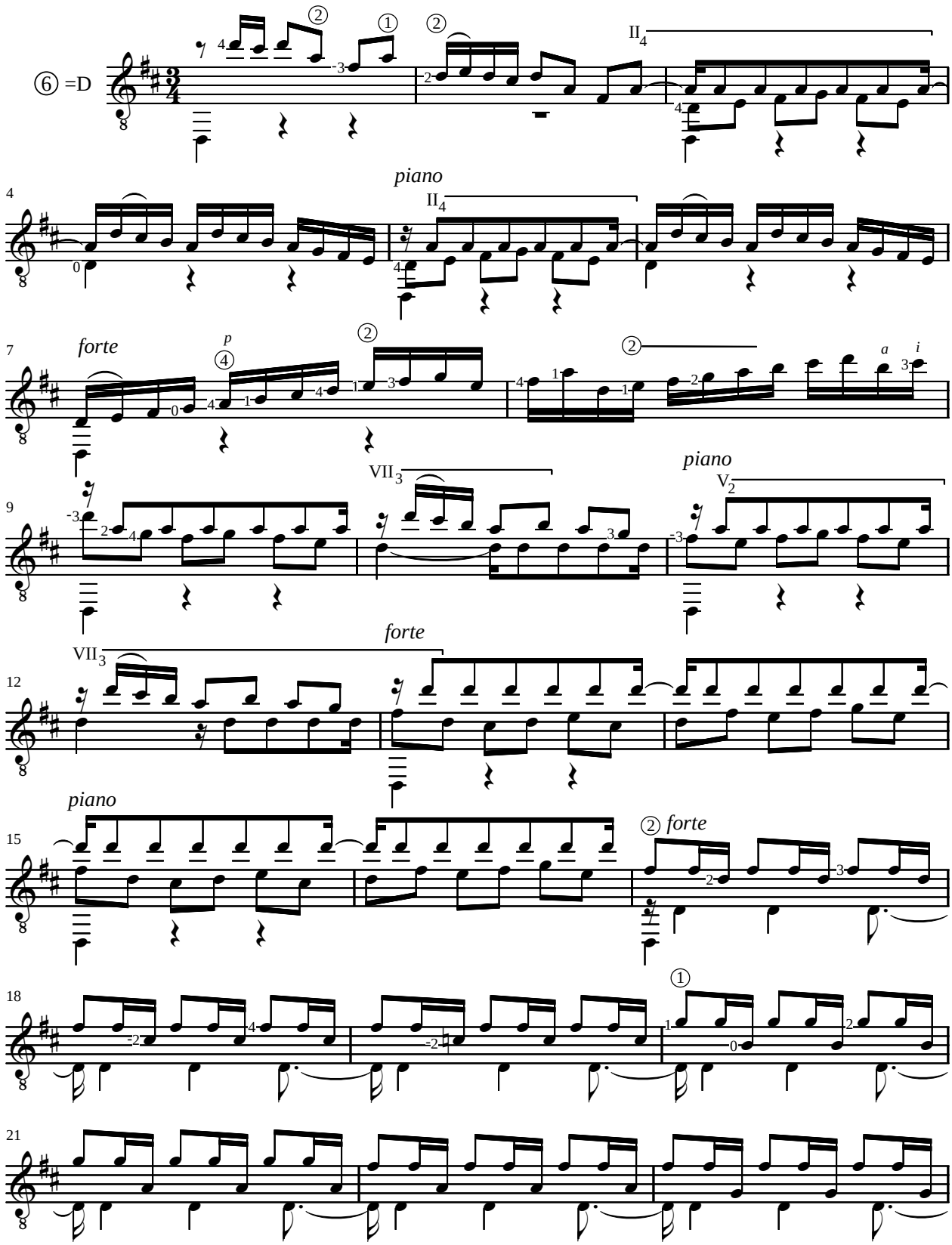
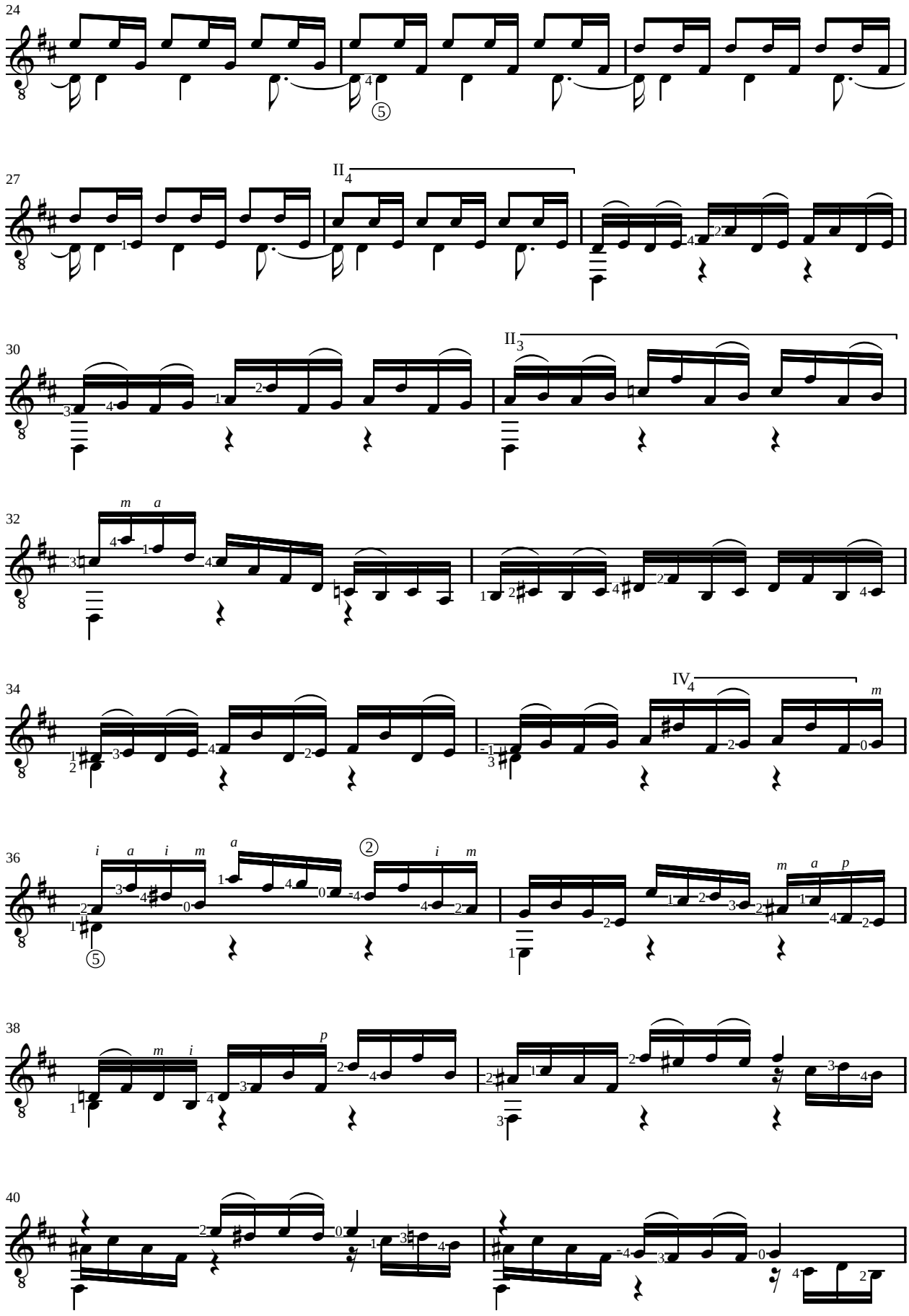
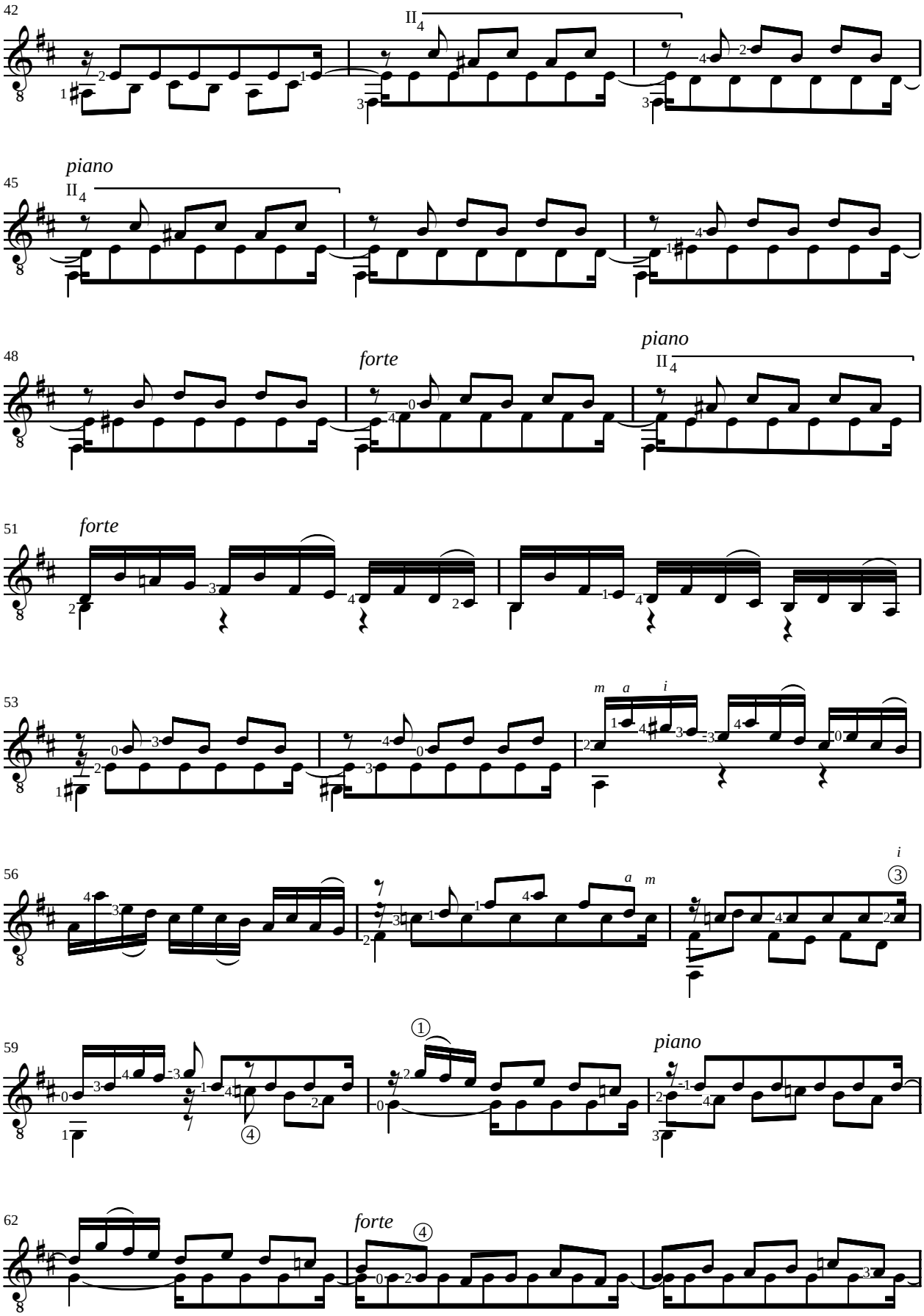
J.S. Bach
(1685–1750)




24
27
II 4
30
II 3
32
m a
34
IV 4
m
36
i a i m
a
②
i m
m a p
38
m i
p
40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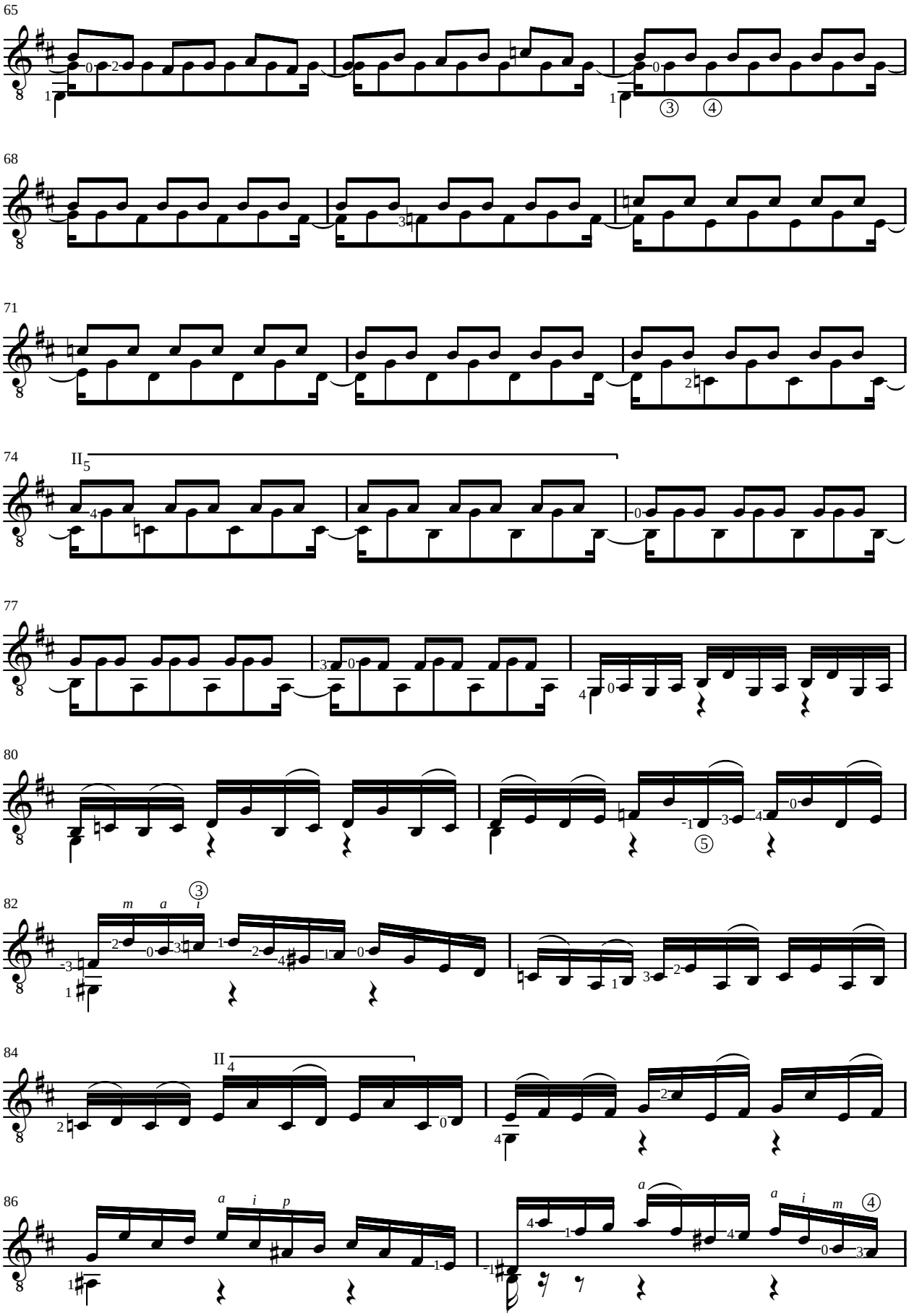
II 4
piano
45
II 4
48
forte
piano
II 4
51
forte
53
m a i
56
a m
i
59
piano
62
forte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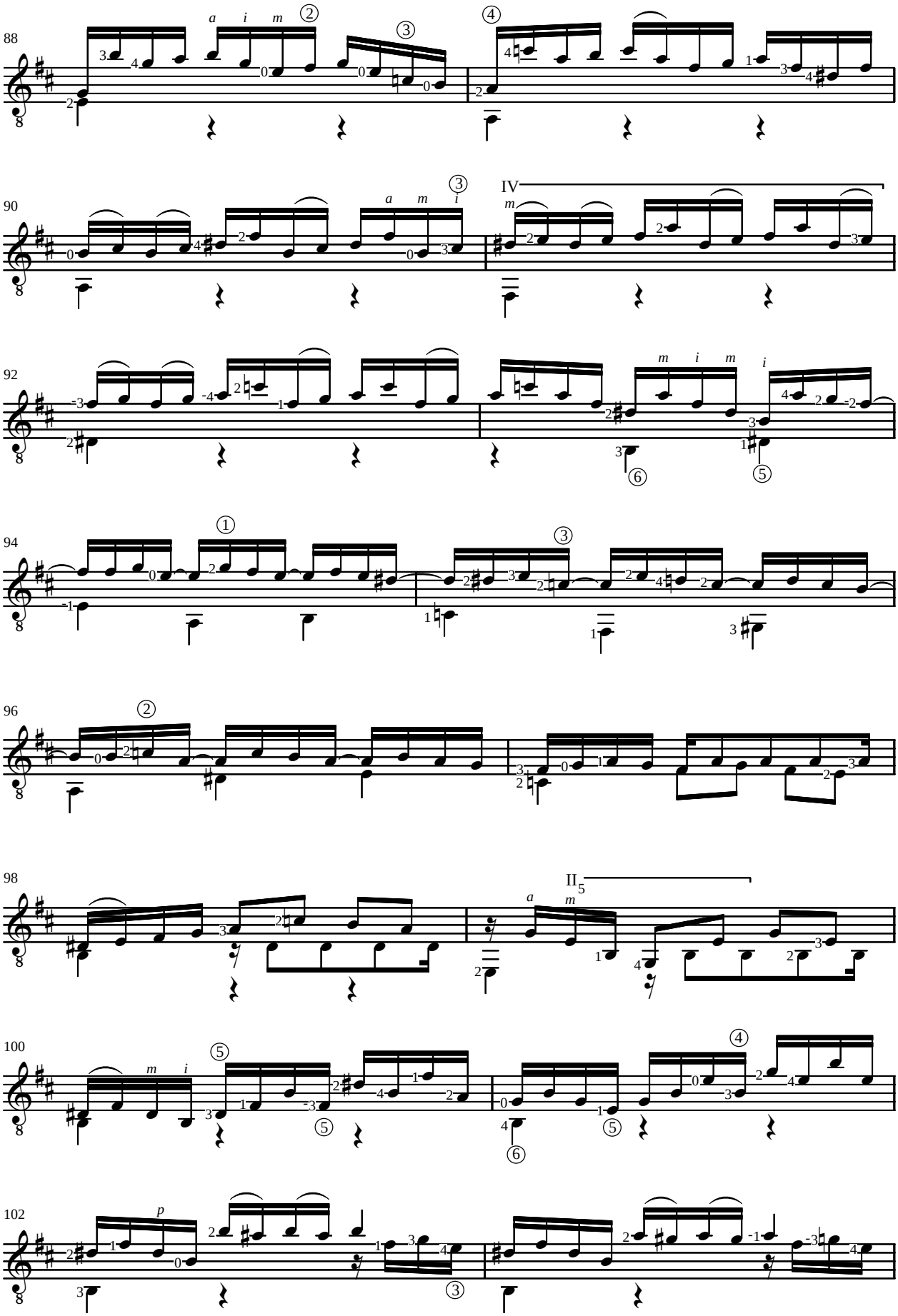
68
71
74
II 5
77
80
82
m a i
84
II 4
86
a i p
a i m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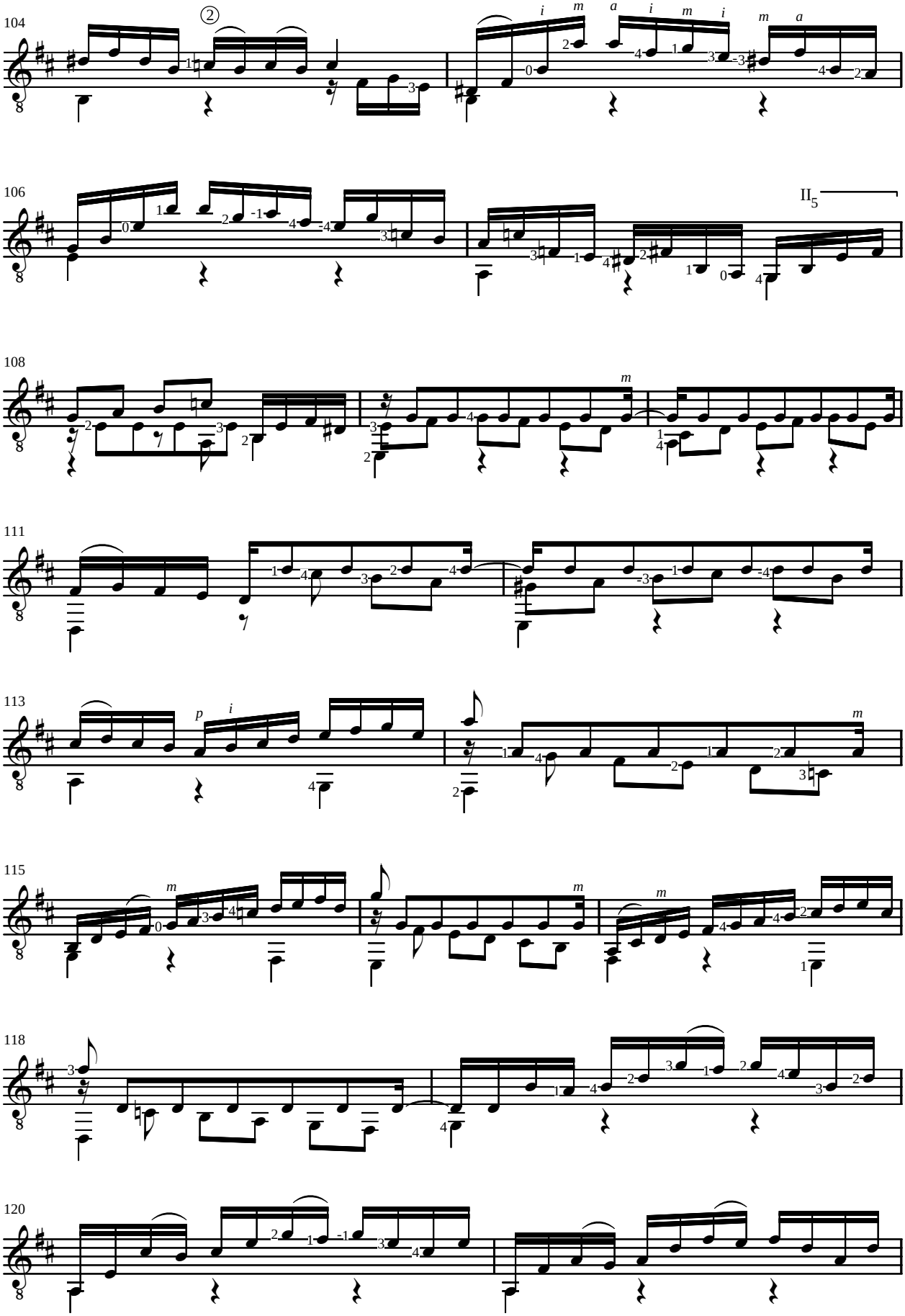
98
100
102
IV
II 5
p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II5
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115
118
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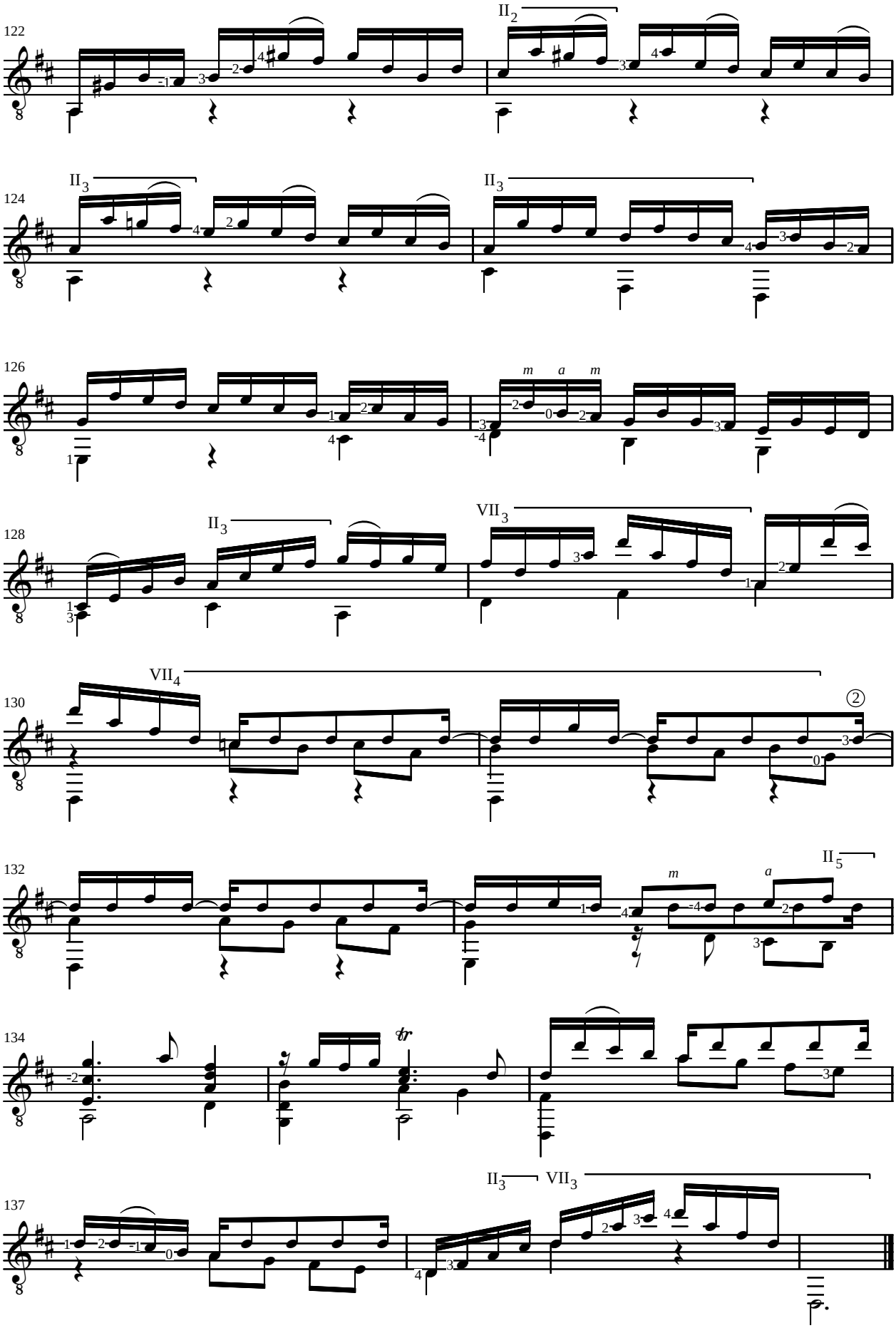
122
II2
124
II3
II3
126
m a m
128
II3
VII3
130
VII4
②
132
II5
m
a
134
tr
137
II3
VII3