Intermediate Études

for Guitarists in the 21st Century

Michael Bemmels

2021

Études for Guitarists in the 21st Century

This unique set of 30 études draws upon influences from both classical and popular styles of music, depicting the experience of musicians in this current digital era. Through the internet, radio, TV, and my work as a music teacher in a multicultural metropolitan area, I am unceasingly exposed to an enormously large variety of musical styles. As such, in my own mind, it seemed perfectly natural to compose in a way that melded so many different styles together.

As these are études, and intended to carry pedagogical purposes, I might wish to use this opportunity to share my ideas about how they should be performed. Many details of a musical piece are fairly objective and easy to explain: the pitches, rhythms, articulations, etc. I hope that I have succeeded in communicating this information clearly enough in the notation in the score.

What about the ambiguous, yet highly sought advice concerning more subtle facets of musical interpretation: dynamics, tempo fluctuations, tone, fingerings, etc.? I have attempted to notate some suggestions which seemed reasonable to me in the score, but actually, I am not the one to tell you how to perform these études: *you* are the only person who can discover how you should perform them! Whatever do I mean?! I would like to suggest that musical performance should involve the *personal feeling intuition* of the performer.

How can a performer engage his or her *feeling intuition?* To give a few brief pointers, you can start by bringing conscious attention to the centre of your chest (your heart area). Take a few deep breaths, ask your heart how it feels, and silently, spaciously listen for an answer. Allow it to speak whatever it is trying to speak. Switch off your scrutinizing brain, and remove all critical constraints. You may find that a regular practice of meditation or journalling will help develop your skills in quieting the mind and getting in touch with your feelings. If you can practice connecting to the music with your heart open and freed in this manner, then a genuine and feeling musical interpretation will begin to emerge as you play. I don't know what this is going to be for you, you have to play the music and find out for yourself!

Though it is not often spoken of, I believe that authentic feeling engagement is an absolutely essential part of musical performance. Ask your brain how to understand the objective, technical matters, but ask your heart how to execute the music with feeling. They must ultimately work together; they are *both* valuable sources of information. You might discover different answers on different days, and surely *your* answers will be different than the answers that another performer discovers. In my view, as long as the performer is being sincere, then the performance will be valid and acceptable. Remember: even though I am the composer, my performances of these études embody just one of my own personal interpretations of them. This is the way that musical performance works! It's subjective, it's personal, it's temporary, it's constantly changing, it's something that cannot be documented definitively…

I hope that these will be inspiring and enjoyable pieces of music, and I look forward to hearing your own interpretations of these works, as varied and unique as they all might be.

Michael Bemmels
July 2022

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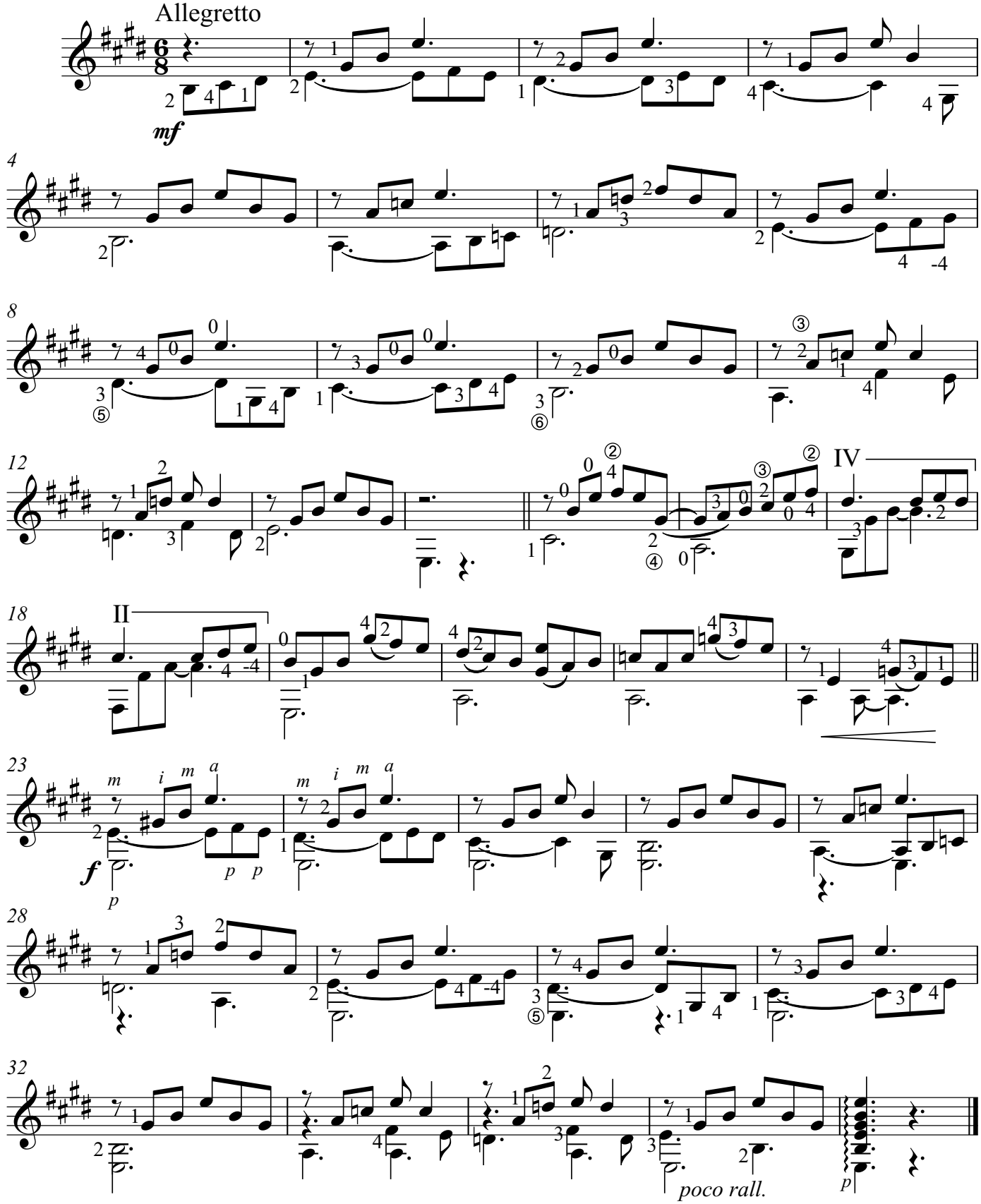
No. 1 - To Be Young Again

Michael Bemmels

Capo 1st Fret



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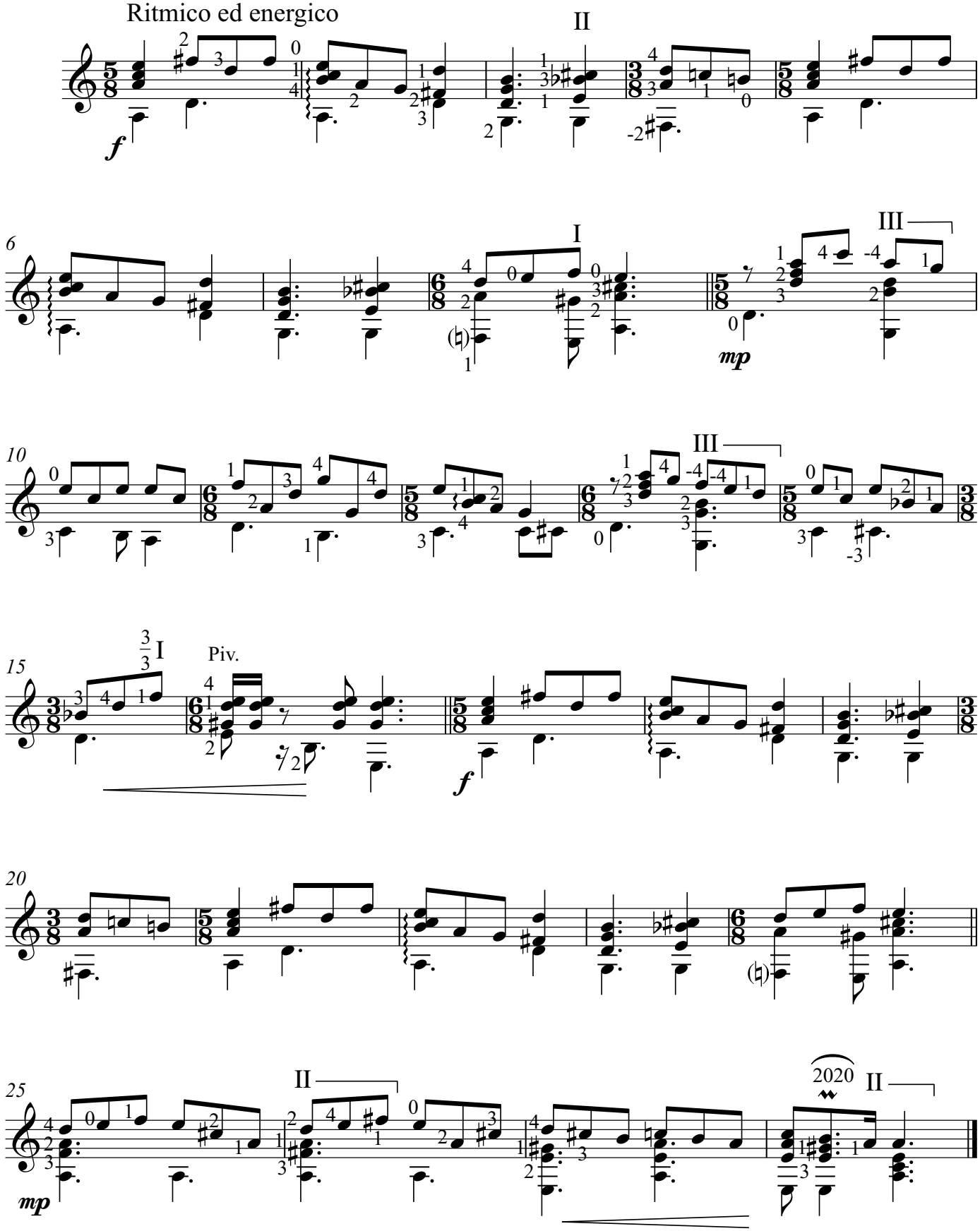
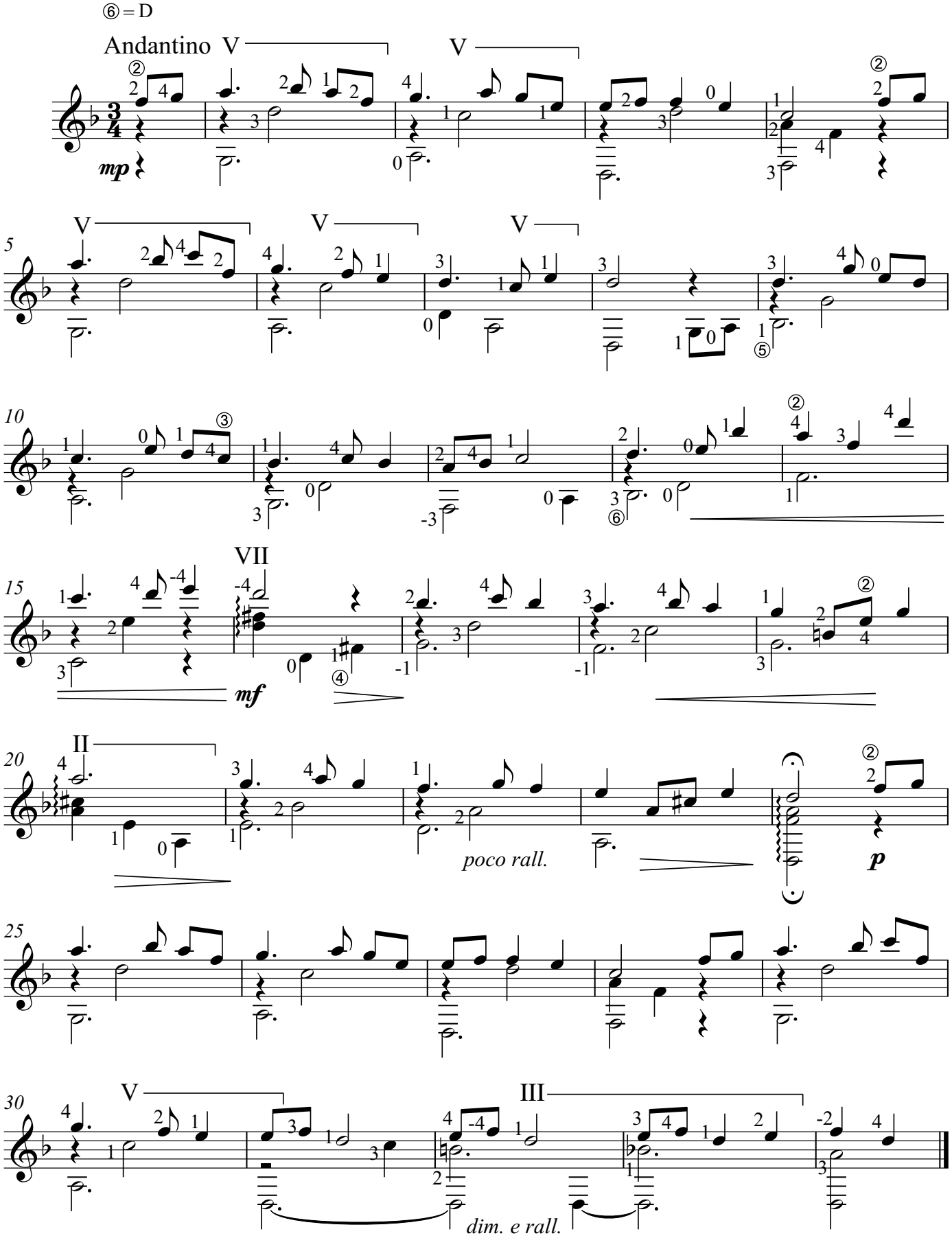
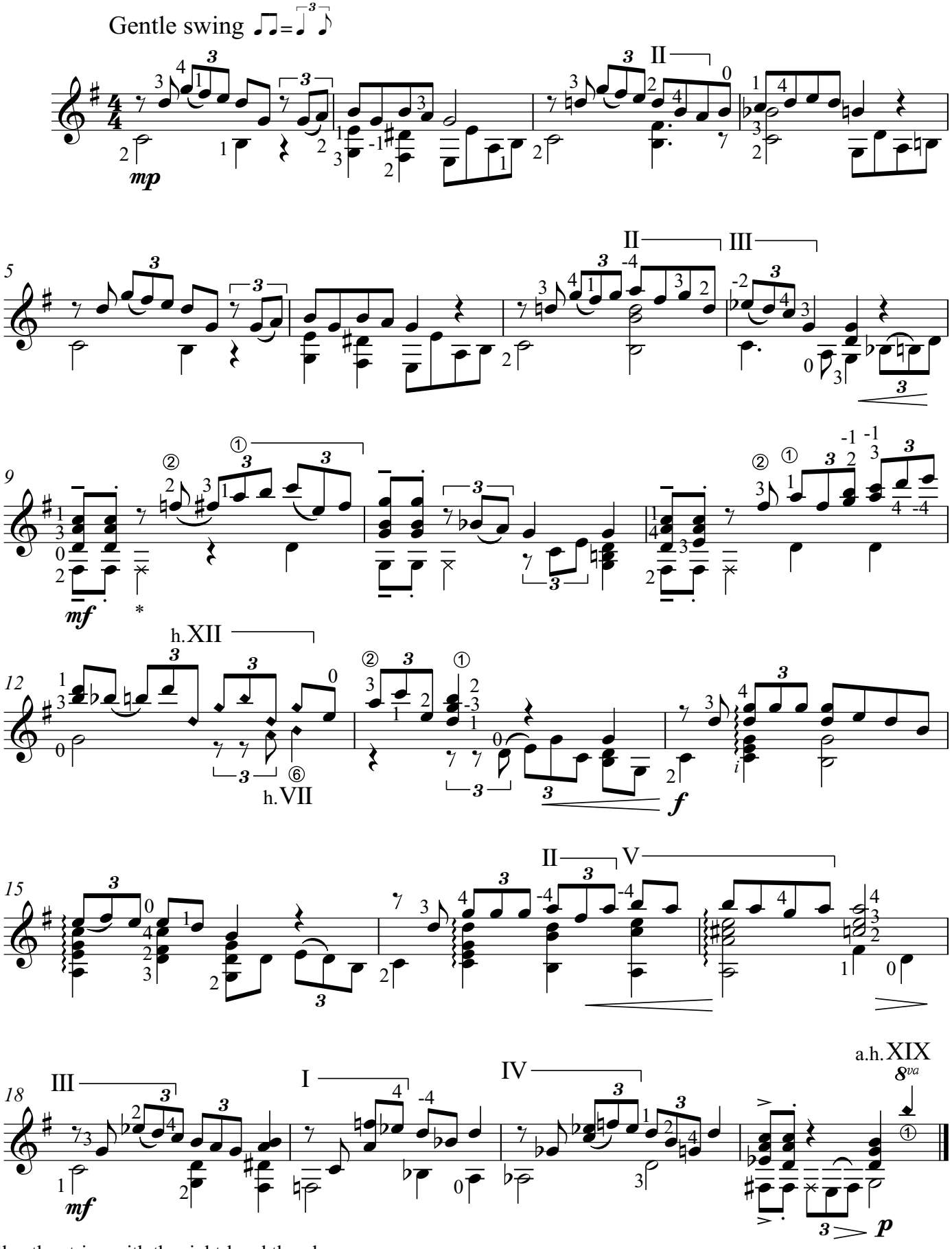
No. 2 - Tossing and Turning



No. 3 - Reflections at Dusk



No. 4 - For the Rural Folk

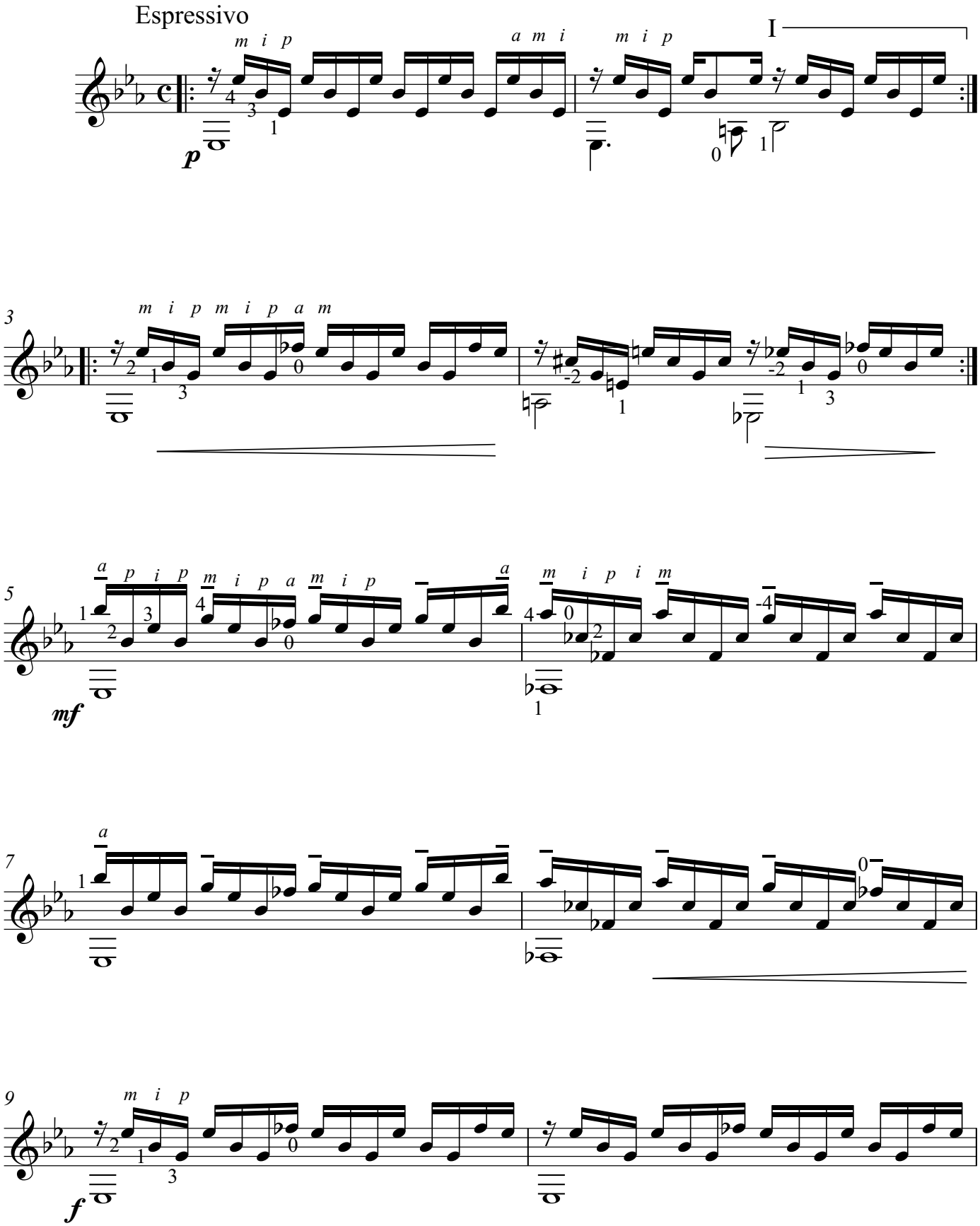


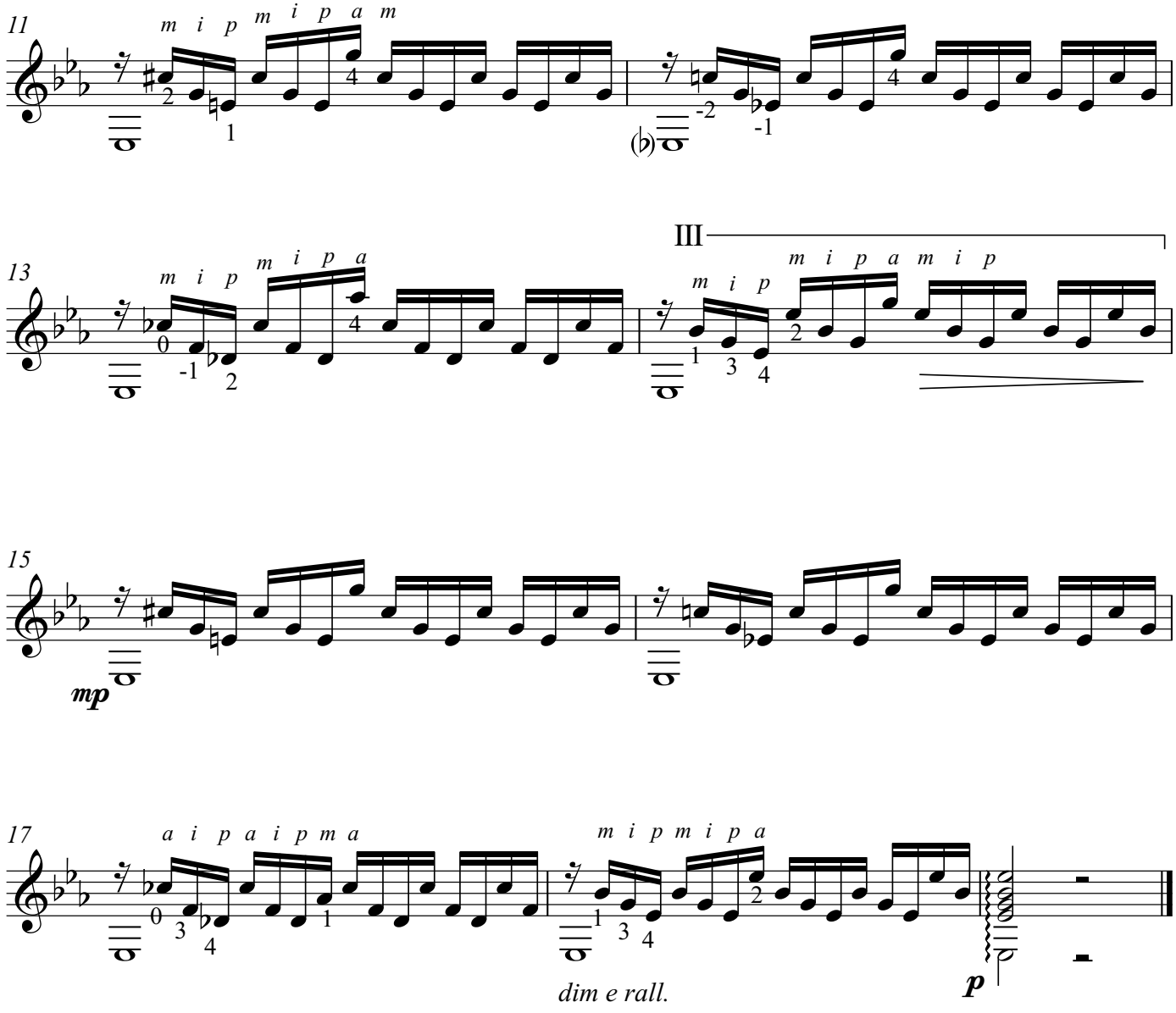
*Slap the string with the right-hand thumb

No. 5 - Arid Caravan

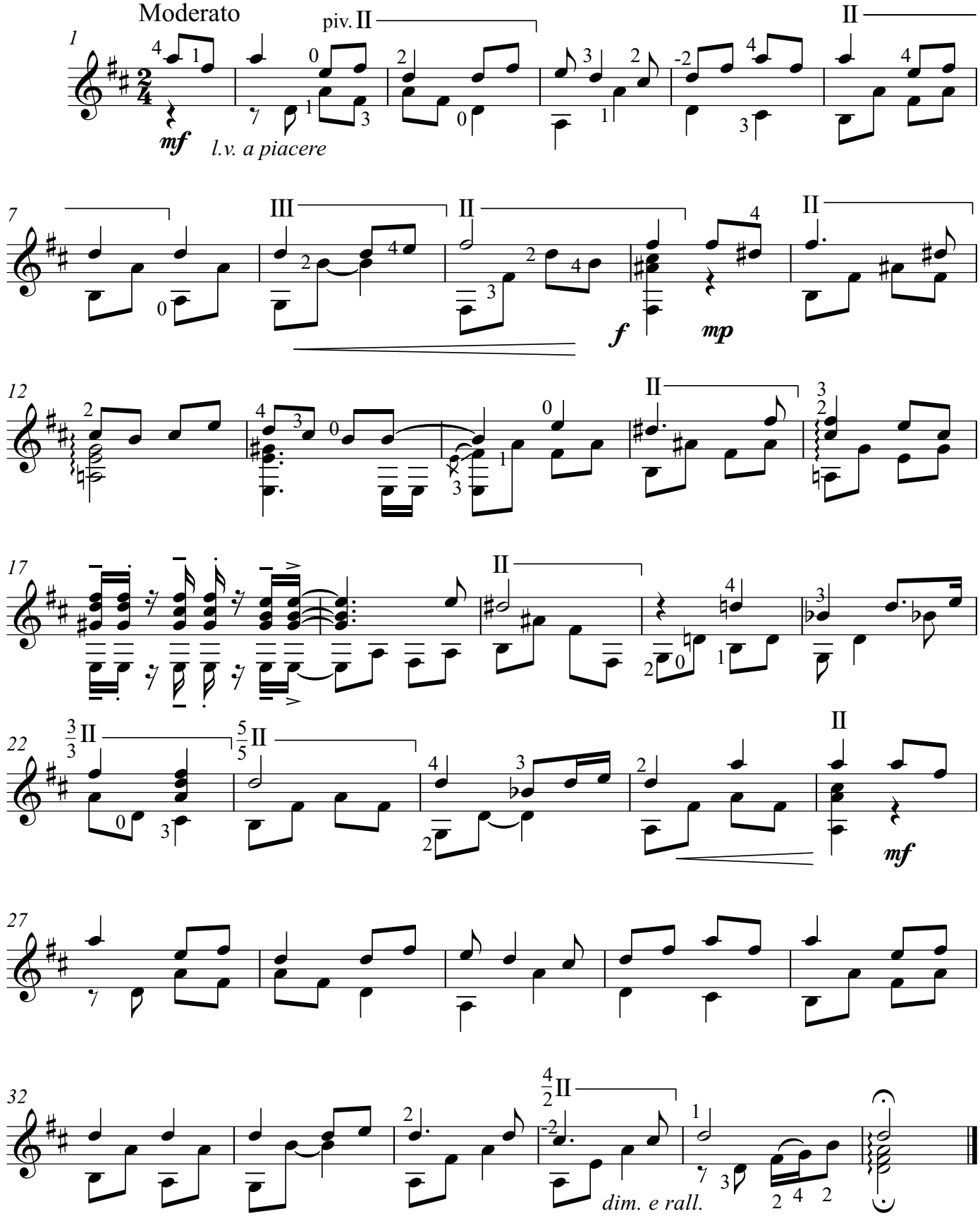
⑥=Eb

Espressivo



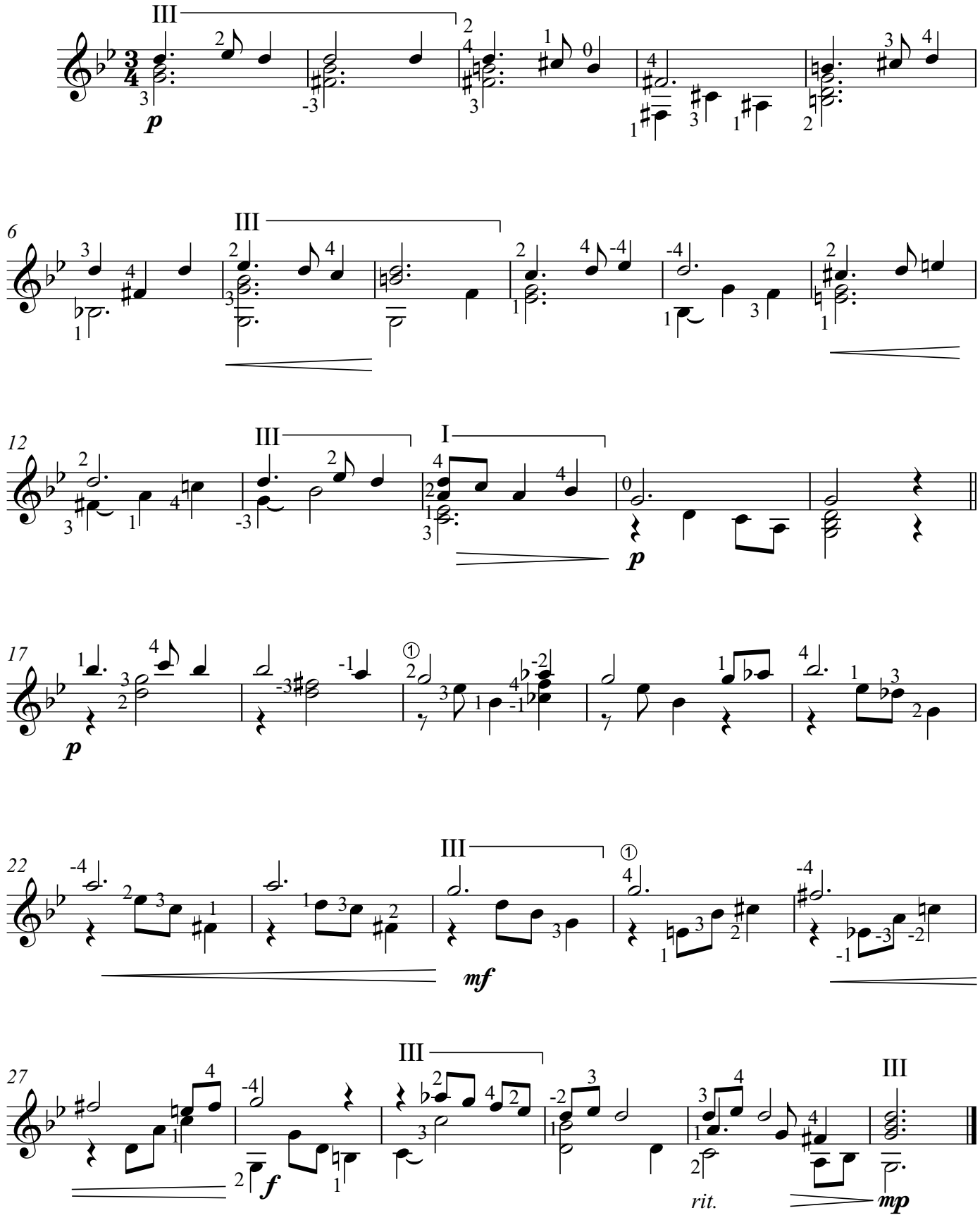

11
m i p
m i p a m
13
m i p
m i p a
III
m i p
m i p a m i p
15
mp
17
a i p a i p m a
m i p m i p a
dim e rall.
p

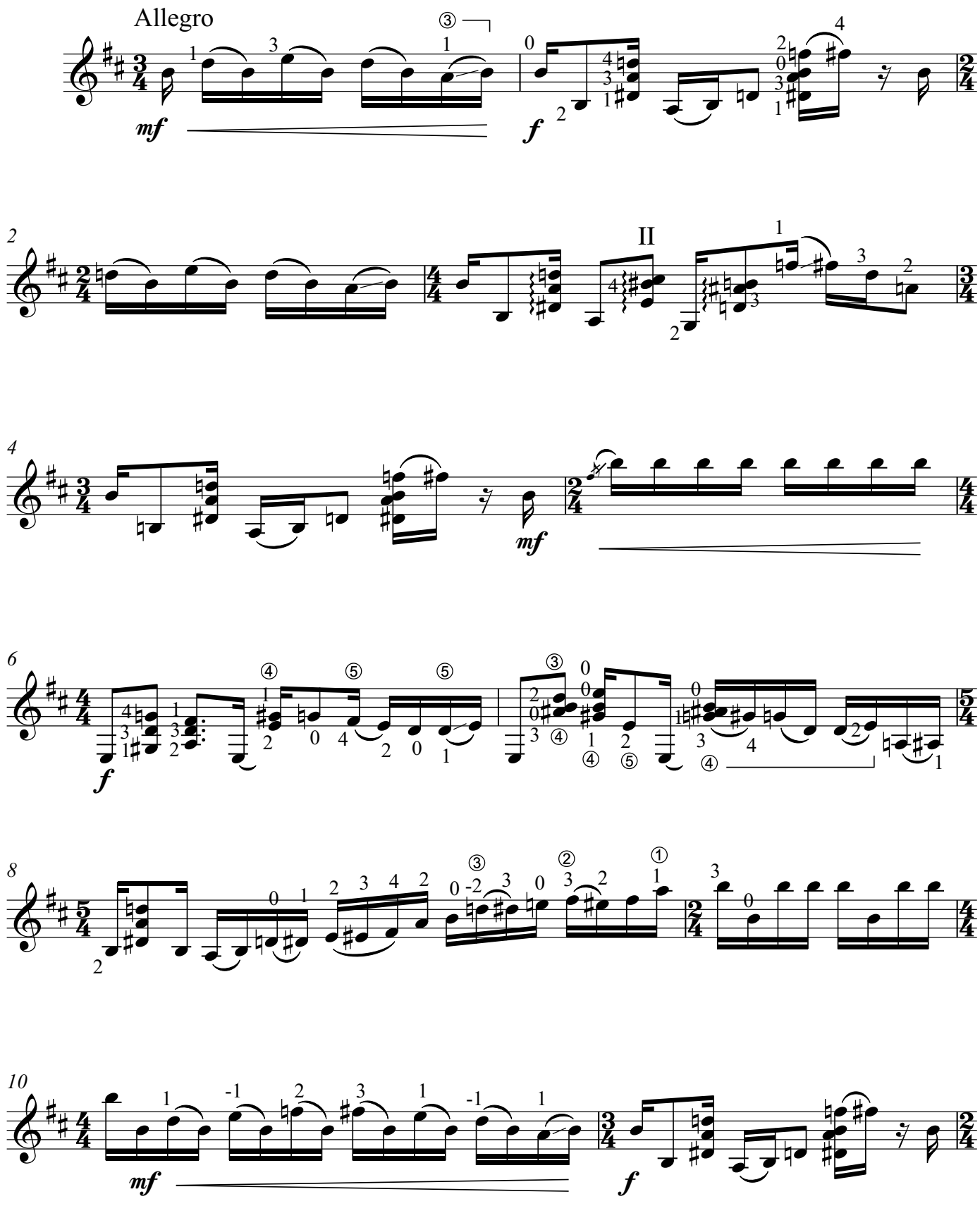
No. 6 - Delight in a Daydream

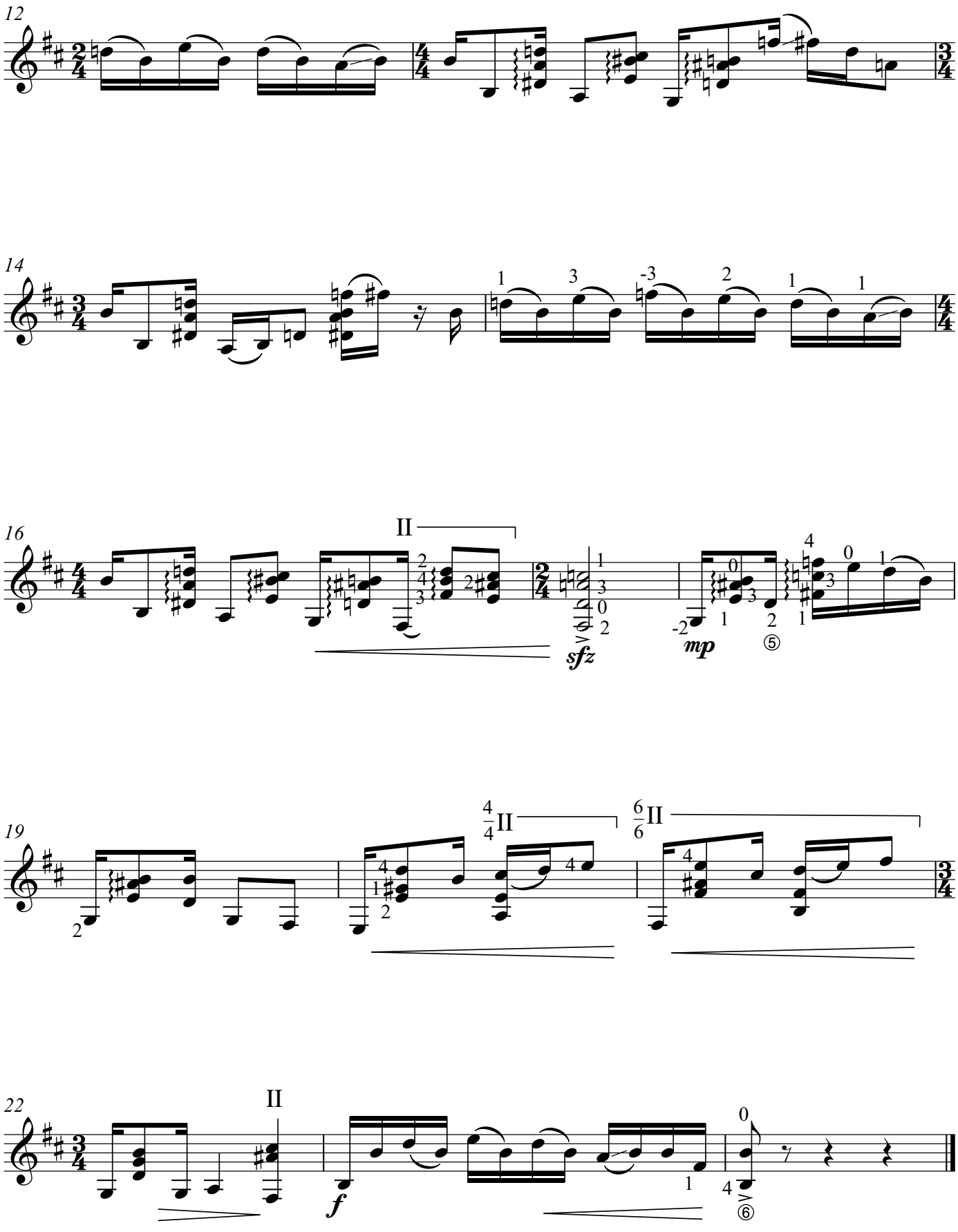


No. 7 - The Beauty of Melancholy

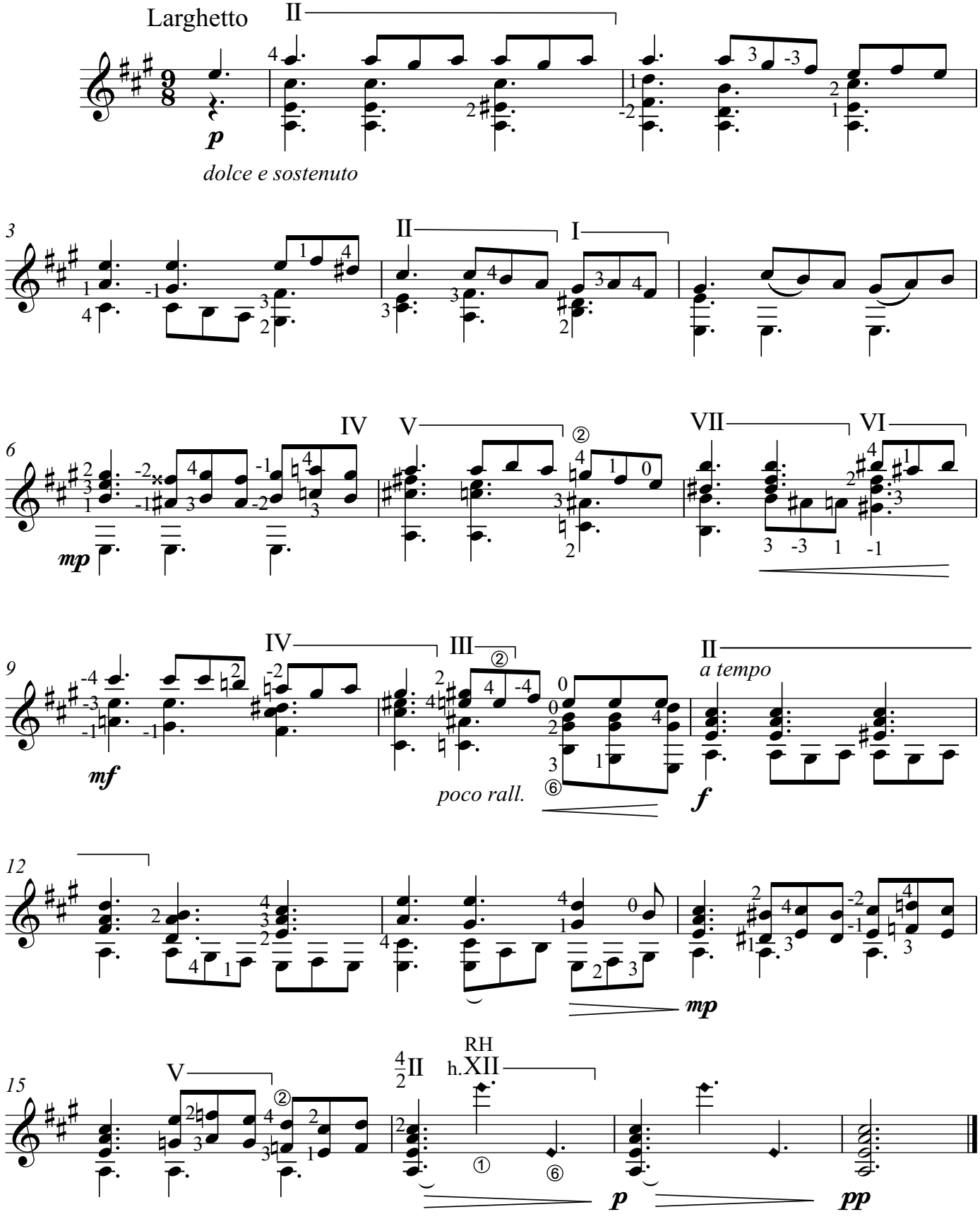
Andante malinconico



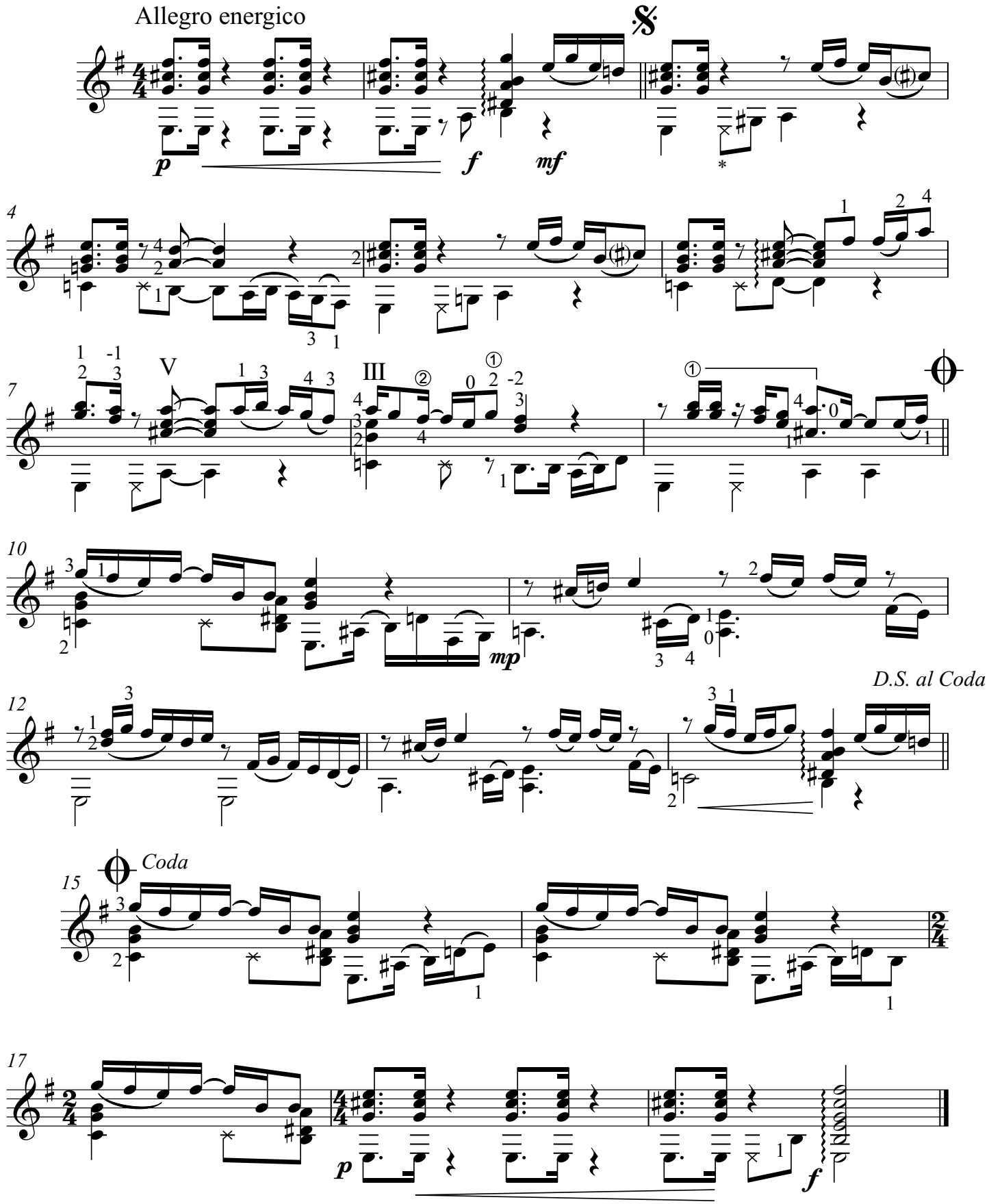

Allegro
mf
f
II
mf
f
mf
f


12
14
16
II
sfz
mp
19
II
II
22
II
f

No. 9 - O Pious Dawn



No. 10 - Tropical Splurge



*Slap the string with the right-hand thumb.