FROM THE SOUNDBOARD ARCHIVE

J.N. Bobrowicz's Grand Polonaise, op. 24

The Guitarist's Album

MATANYA OPHEE (1988)

THE EARLIEST BIOGRAPHICAL SOURCE on Jan Nepomucen Bobrowicz is the entry in Wojciech Sowiński's *Les musiciens polonais et slaves*, published in Paris in 1857.[1] Sowiński says (my translation):

> BOBROWICZ (J.N.), head of the Foreign Library in Leipzig, is at the same time one of the best guitarists of the epoch. He was born in Kraków on May 12th, 1805, and his teacher was the celebrated Giuliani, who made him acquire rapid progress on his instrument. He was nominated a member of the Kraków Musical Society around 1822 and played often in meetings of this Society. He acquired the reputation of being a brilliant performer. Feted and admired by his compatriots, Mr. Bobrowicz was often asked to participate in concerts of foreign musicians who appeared in Kraków. He also performed in many charity concerts and obtained a great success in the quintetti [*sic*!] of Paganini, which he played with the celebrated Karol Lipiński in his concert in Kraków. Since 1821, the time of his debut, until 1830, Mr. Bobrowicz appeared in public more than thirty times; at the same time, he composed many pieces for the guitar. In 1829, he was offered a position in the secretariat of the Kraków senate, but the events of 1830 did not permit him to keep this post for long. He enlisted in the military and took part in the campaign of 1831 as a second lieutenant in a regiment of horse artillery. He was decorated with the Cross of Military Virtue, and in 1832 he moved to Leipzig, where he was invited to play in the subscription concert of the Gewandhaus, made famous by artists of the first order who played there. In 1833, Mr. Bobrowicz played with such a great talent in the concert of Clara Wieck (Mme Schuman) that a reviewer for the *Gazette Musicale* called him "the Chopin of the Guitar." Finally, his reputation was established in all of Germany, and his works became much sought after and were published by

1 The prefix "de" used by Bobrowicz on most of his compositions, as well as on his literary works, may indicate a connection with Polish nobility. More genealogical studies would establish this question for certain.

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publishers in Leipzig, Dresden, Vienna, Warsaw, L'vov, and by those of London. He is the author of forty-one works and a *Method* that had the honor of a reprinting in Warsaw by G. Sennewald. His first work for the guitar appeared in 1826 in L'vov, published by F. Piller. Since 1833, Mr. Bobrowicz has been occupied with literature, and he has founded in Leipzig a magnificent publishing house of foreign literature for the publication of Polish classics.

The earliest biography of Bobrowicz to appear in a guitar publication was written by P.J. Bone and published in the New-York-based guitar magazine *Cadenza* in 1903.[2] This biography was later repeated, almost verbatim, in Bone's *The Guitar and Mandolin* of 1914 and its second edition in 1954. From this biography, it appears that Bobrowicz learned to play the guitar from Giuliani at a tender age.

I suspect that most of Bone's information about Bobrowicz is elicited from the Sowiński entry quoted above. Bone, however, includes several intriguing details about Bobrowicz that are not mentioned by Sowiński. His statement that Bobrowicz's selections in the Clara Wieck concert were his transcriptions of four mazurkas by Chopin is a case in point.

We are presenting here Bobrowicz's *Grand Polonaise*, op. 24, as a public service to Western guitarists who wish to participate in the Silesian Guitar Autumn in Tychy, Poland, this coming October. This is one of the test pieces of the competition.

The present edition is based on a copy found in the New Hampshire State Library in Concord, call no. M787.6B563.[3] It was published by Fr. Kistner in Leipzig around 1836. The original title page reads as follows:

Première / GRANDE POLONAISE / pour la / Guitare / composée et dédiée à Monsieur/ JEAN PADOVETZ / par / J. N. DE BOBROWICZ. / Oeuvre 24. [Pl. Nr. 1057]

The dedicatee, Jean Padovetz, is the Croatian guitarist, contemporary of Bobrowicz, Ivan Padovec. The name also appears as Johann Padowetz and other variants. The original has no fingering, with the exception of open-string zeros to indicate the open B-string in lines 5 and 6 of the first page. The notation implies the use of the left-hand thumb, a common practice at the beginning of the nineteenth century. This edition preserves the original pagination exactly. In general, the notation follows the original with these exceptions:

All fingering indications, with the exception of the open-string zeros mentioned above, are editorial and based on the non-use of the left-hand thumb.

2 Vol. 9, no. 8 (April 1903): 10–11.

3 I found this edition in New Hampshire in 1975. My friend George Marshal forwarded a copy of it to Prof. Josef Powrozniak in Poland, who published it shortly thereafter. Hence, the Polish edition selected for the Tychy competition is identical to the present edition, with the exception of the fingering and the notational changes indicated here, which Prof. Powrozniak chose not to incorporate in his edition.

The notation of dotted eighth notes (♫.) in the melodic line has been replaced with the more current tied notation (♫♪).

The duration of the bass line in page 4, line 4, last measure, as well as in the next measure, has been changed to conform to the fingering given. The original full quarter note is only possible with the use of the left-hand thumb.

Performance Suggestions

It is too easy to regard this work as a Polish version of Giuliani's music. While one may detect the use of typical "Giulianisms" by Bobrowicz, who was a student of Giuliani and prided himself on the fact, the work is much more influenced by the work of Chopin, a composer whom Bobrowicz must have known. As a Polish patriot, his intentions must have been the desire to create a Polish piece, using the idioms of one of the best-known musicians among his countrymen—Frédéric Chopin. Hence, the proper interpretation of this work should be one that models itself on Chopin's own well-known polonaises. Careful listening to recordings by such masters as Mieczysław Horszowski, Emanuel Ax, Vladimir Ashkenazy, etc., would give you the proper flavor of this music. There is no tempo indication in the original. It is, however, quite lively and susceptible to considerable alterations and rubati. Have fun with this, and, of course, I hope to be able to listen to your playing of the piece in Tychy and elsewhere.

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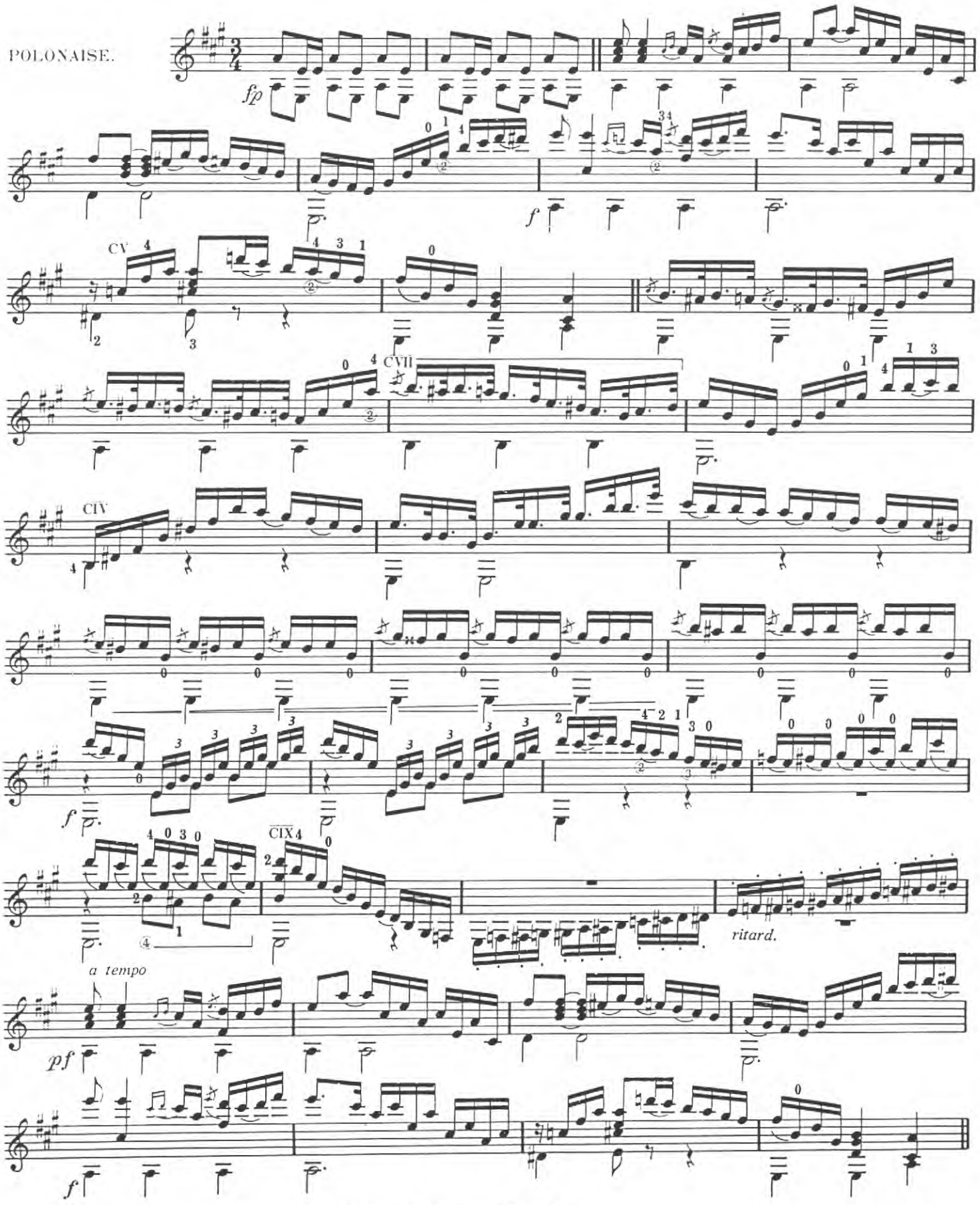
Grand Polonaise

for Solo Guitar
Op. 24

Revised and edited by
Matanya Ophee

Jan N. de Bobrowicz
(1805 – 1881)



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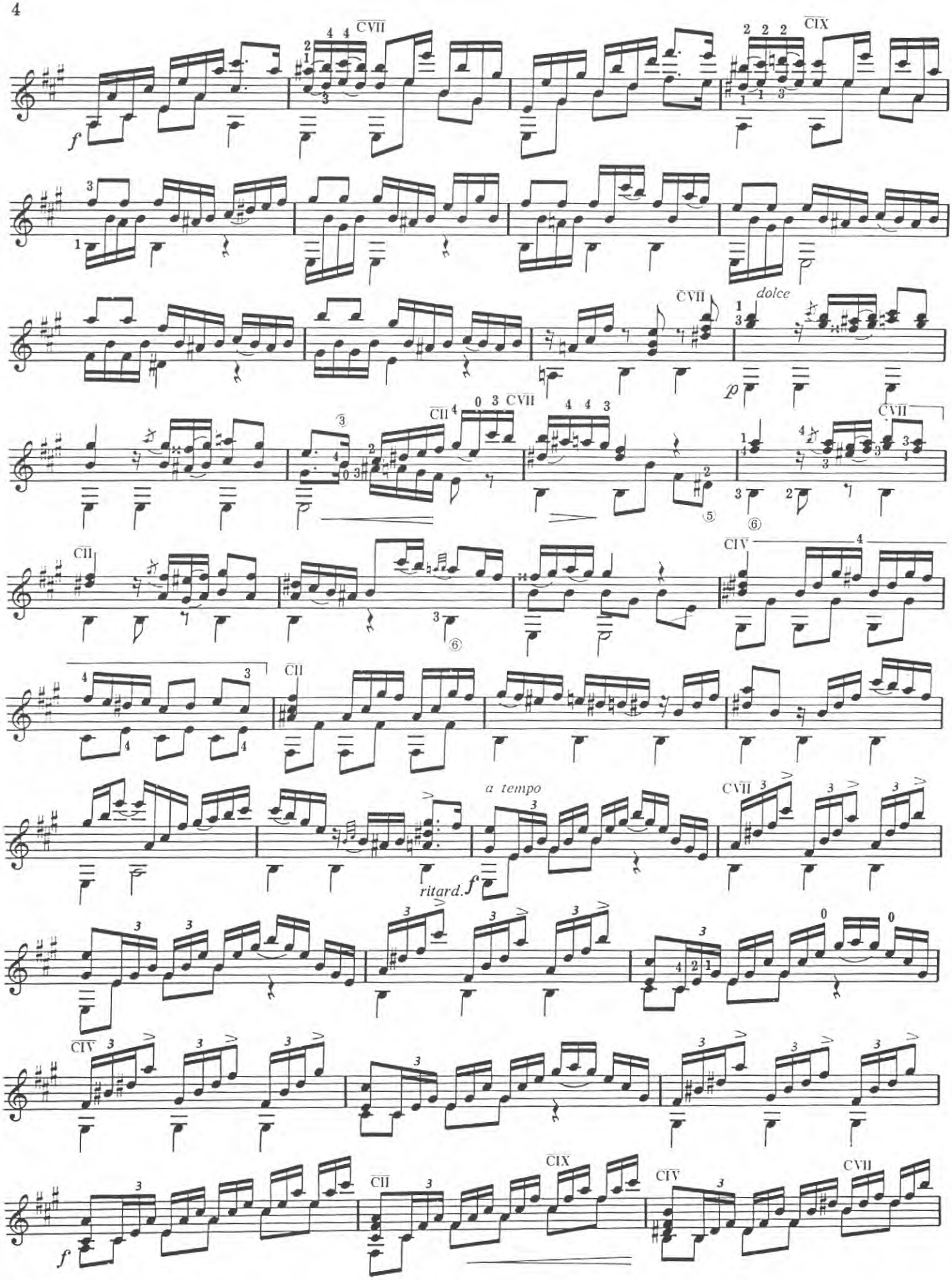
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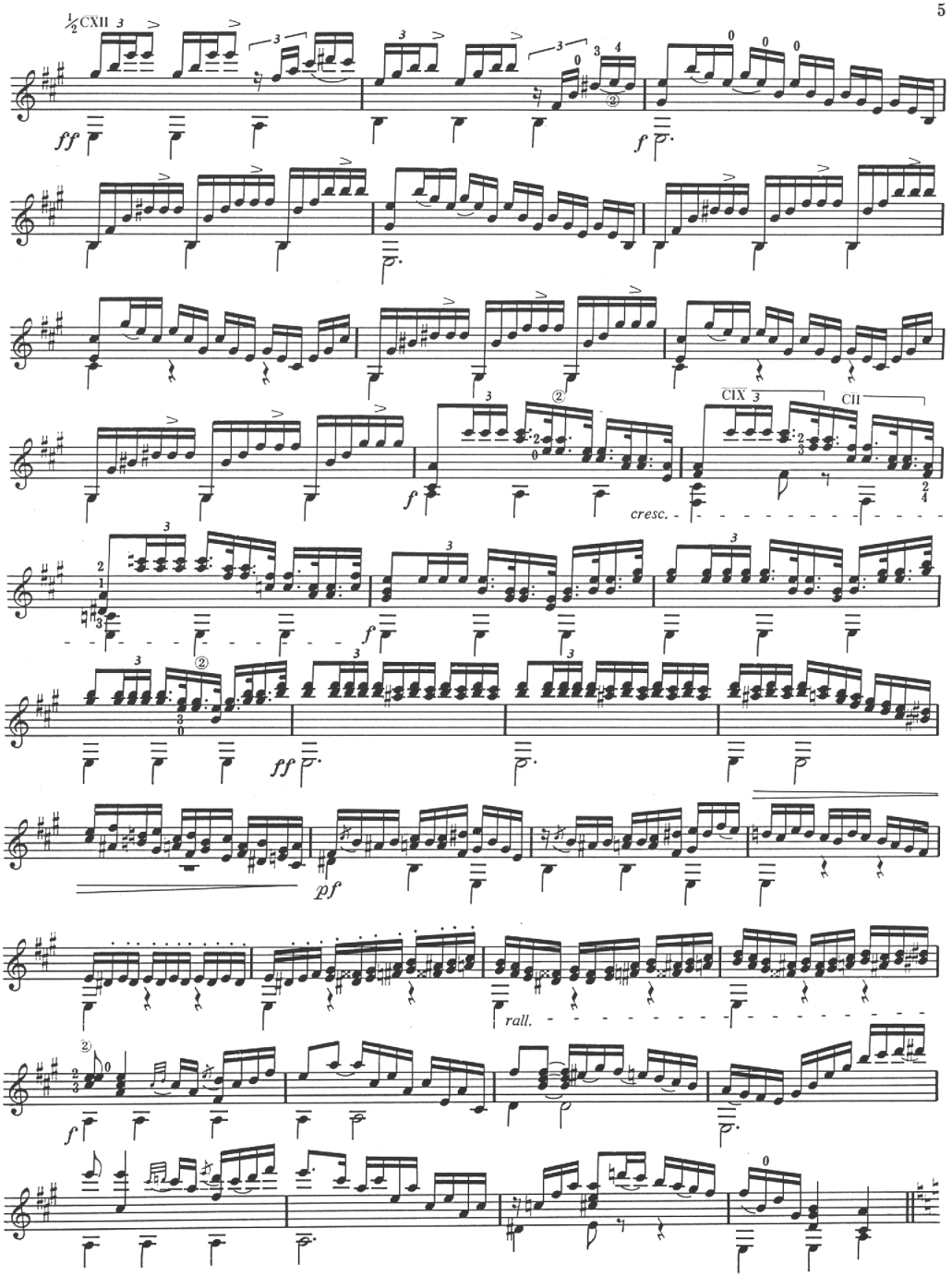
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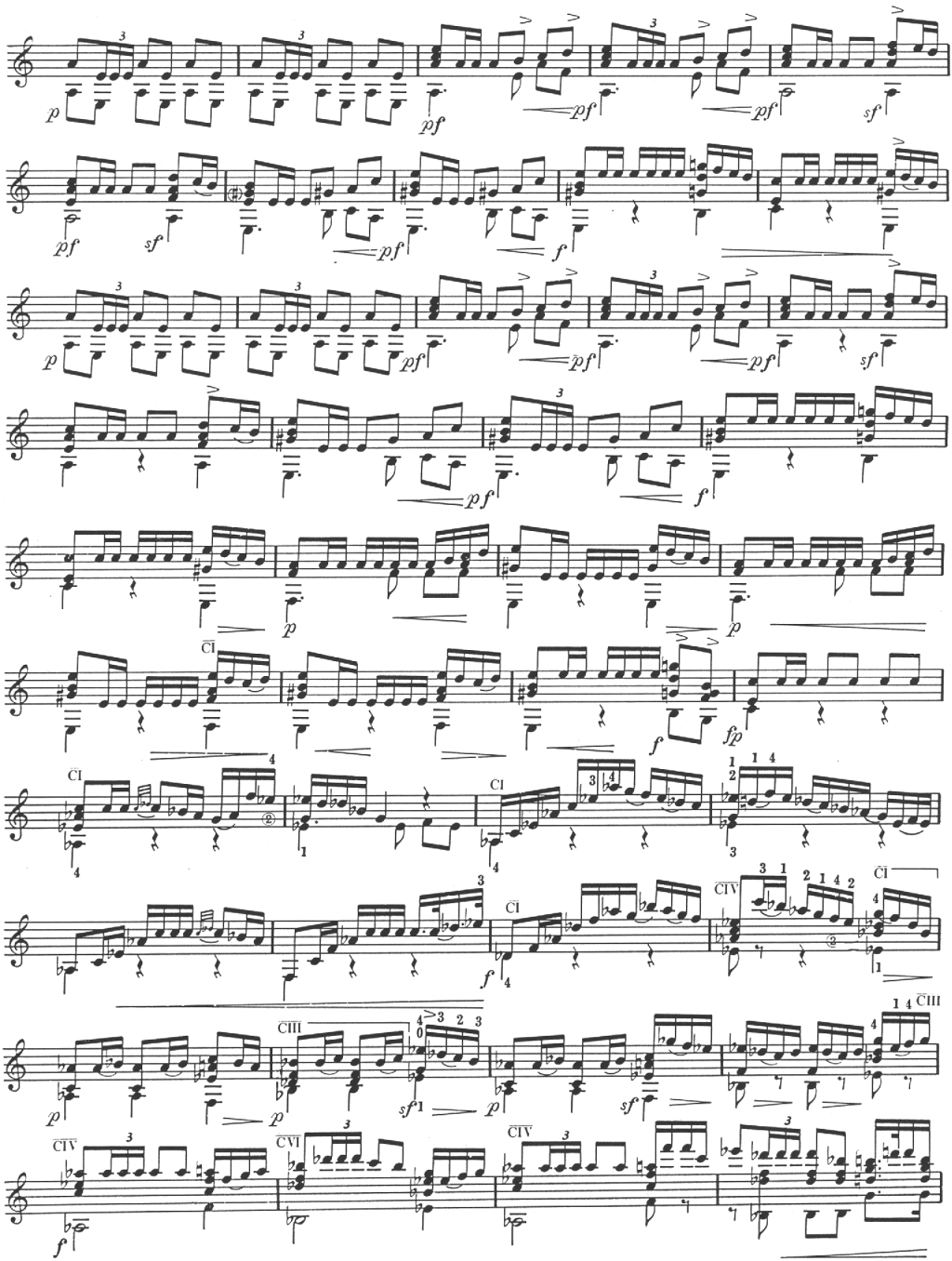

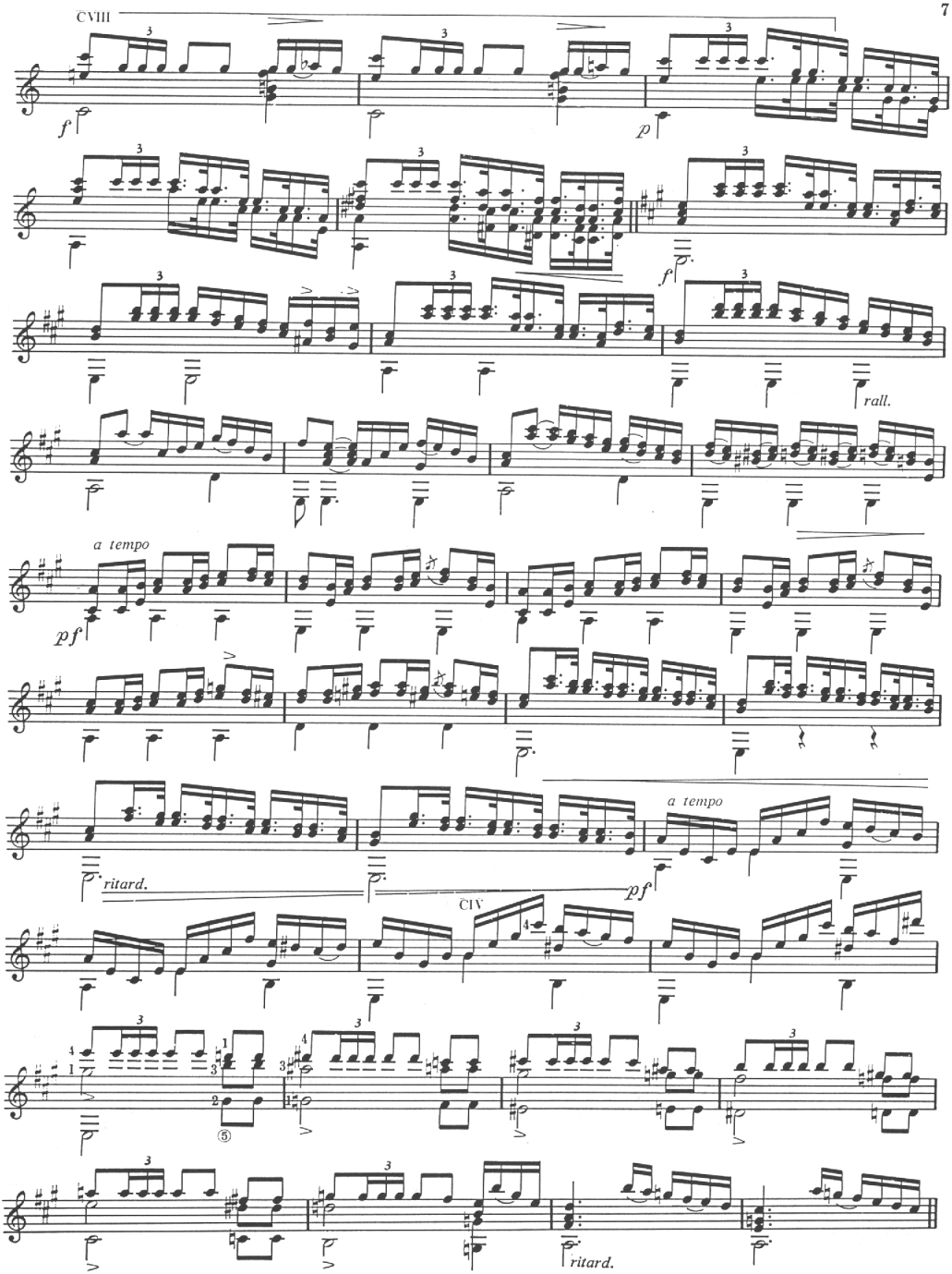
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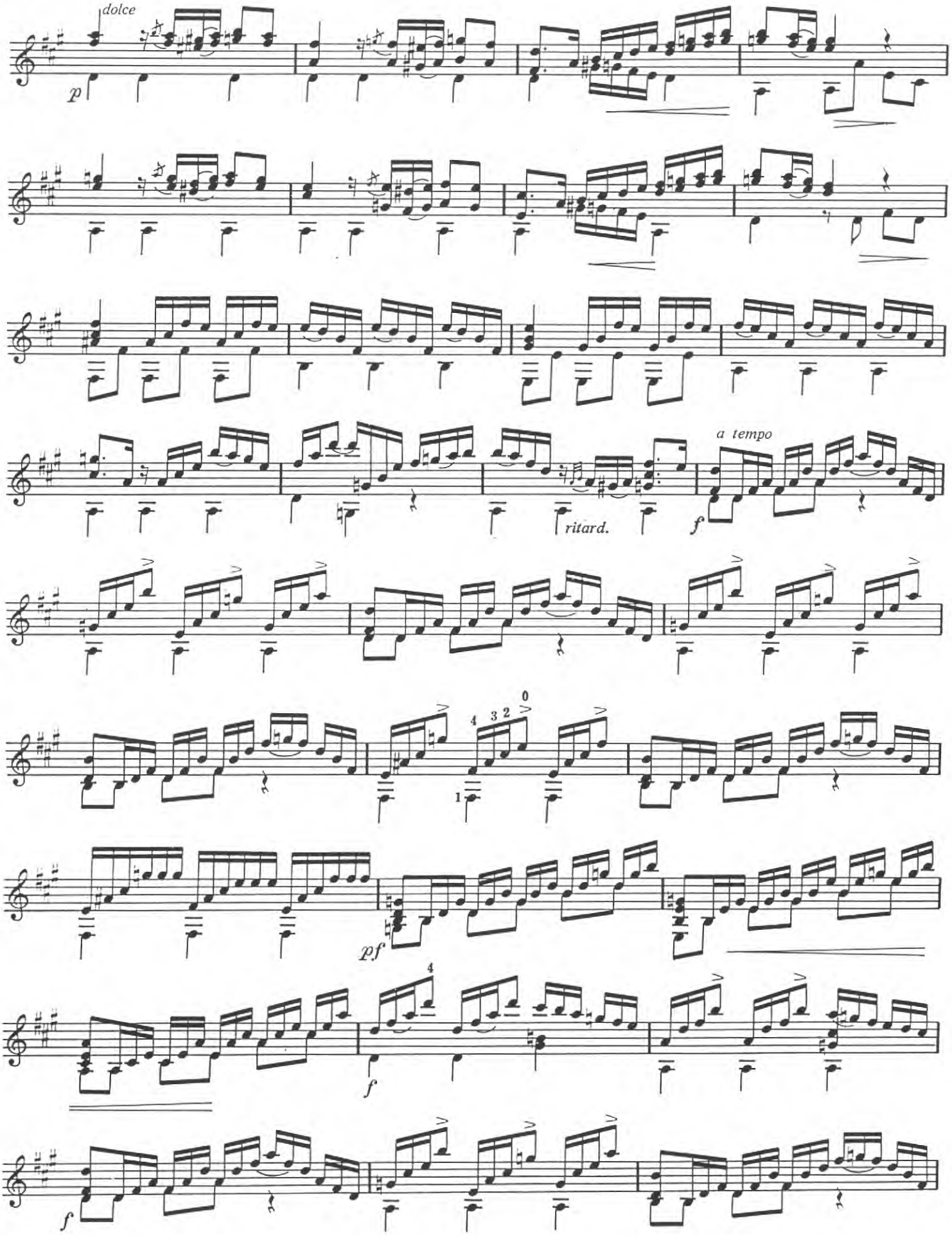
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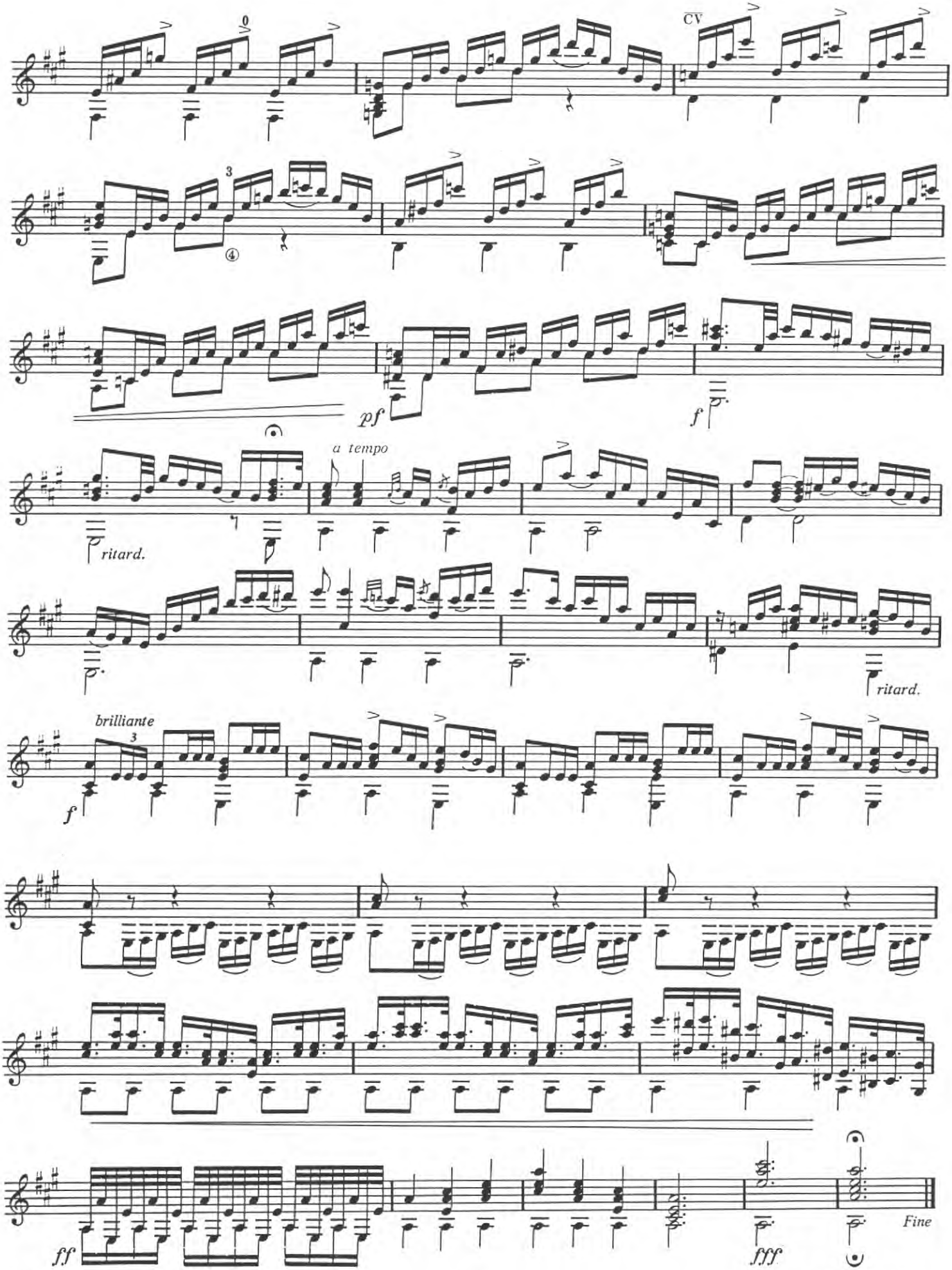
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