Frank A. Wallace

Polyphonic Exercises

and Examples

how to balance
multi-voiced textures
and create more depth
in your musical art

please search #techandtone or go to
http://www.frankwallace.com/techandtone/polyphonic-technique-part1/
for articles and videos on this and other technical issues

Gyre Publications

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PO BOX 339
Antrim NH 03440
www.gyremusic.com

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HELPFUL HINTS

1) If one uses the three combination strokes described, all the various dynamic combinations can be accomplished. It is crucial to think only about each individual combination at first, before trying to make music.
2) Be physical! A forte is a forceful stroke, piano is light. Forte presses the string and you feel its tension, piano is like a brush glancing over the string, up and away. Conceiving of the physical sensation between thumb and fingers is essential to understanding and execution and actually hearing the result. Force has both magnitude and direction, use it.
3) Rest stroke forte comes from the base knuckle of the finger, piano free stroke from the mid-joint with very little follow through.
4) Take advantage of each fingers natural position - the a is more separate and distant from the thumb, so *ponticello* is possible while playing *tasto* with the thumb…explore how this aids dynamics.

BACKGROUND

I spent more than twenty years devoted to the music of Renaissance Spain. Seven composers left about 700 works for the *vihuela de mano* that still exist. The vast majority of them are intricate polyphonic fantasías, inspired by Josquin and other famous authors of the day. The clear presentation of these magnificent works became my passion.

The skills required for these fantasías, and my two included etudes, as well as many many other works, require a knowledge of imitation. Musical imitation is the same as any other, a motive or phrase is repeated in its identical form, at a different time and/or pitch. It is essential that the imitation be exact in expression (dynamic, color) as well as form. When these iterations overlap is when the fun begins and when the guitarist needs the techniques described in this volume to achieve clarity and continuity. Bach reached the ultimate expression of this concept in The Art of the Fugue.

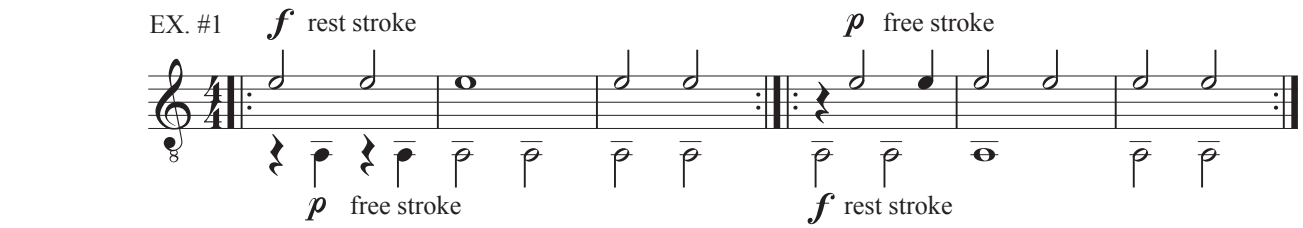
My two "simple" etudes presented at the end of this booklet use repeated notes as motives, thus requiring little left hand preoccupation and total focus on right hand control: dynamic, articulate and timbral. The judicious use of rest stroke and free stroke with a continuous flow of timbral changes enhance the auditory effects. In other words, when playing a forte, use rest stroke and *sul ponticello,* for piano: free stroke and *sul tasto.* It is then essential, after mastering the three basic combination strokes, that more subtle gradations become possible and useful. Play as if you are singing!

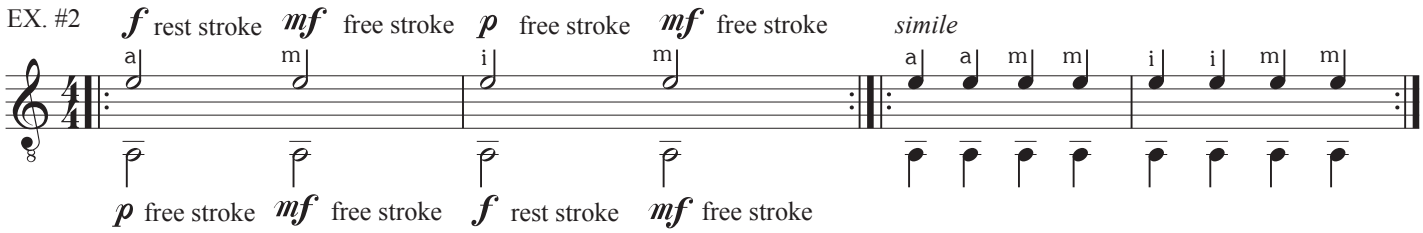
Any texture can be colored in this manner: arpeggios, repeated chords, pointillistic sections. Indeed the purpose of arpeggio or tremolo is to create a more sustained texture, but that texture can be constantly shifting in hue. Take advantage of the inherently different tone of each nail, or each finger's proximity to the bridge. Don't just alternate i and m because it's what your supposed to do – rather explore using one finger or changing not only attack, but timbre for an accented note. Mastery of these techniques will lead to new modes of expression in non-imitative music. Dissonance or consonance can be greatly enhanced by the use of color – try playing the dominant chord nasally and the resolution more roundly: or use an *e* vowel on the dissonance and an *ah* to resolve it.

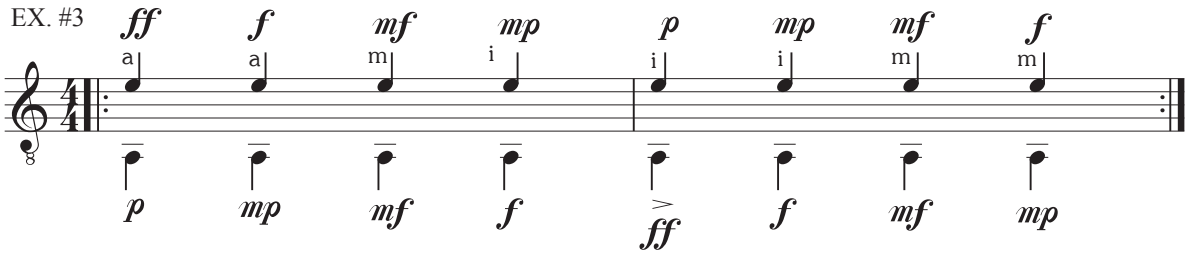
Find blogs, tweets and videos on technique and tone by searching my handle #techandtone

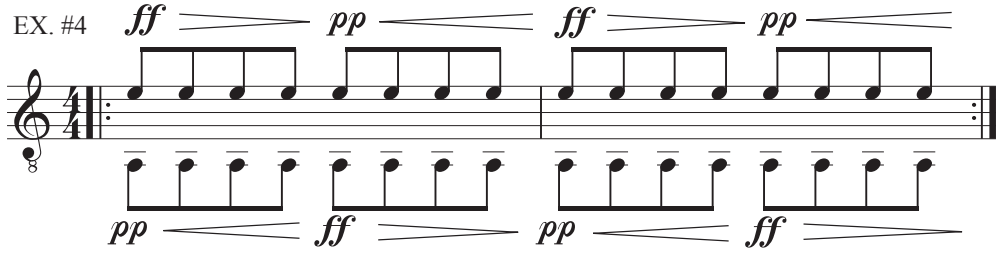
Polyphonic Exercises

Frank A. Wallace



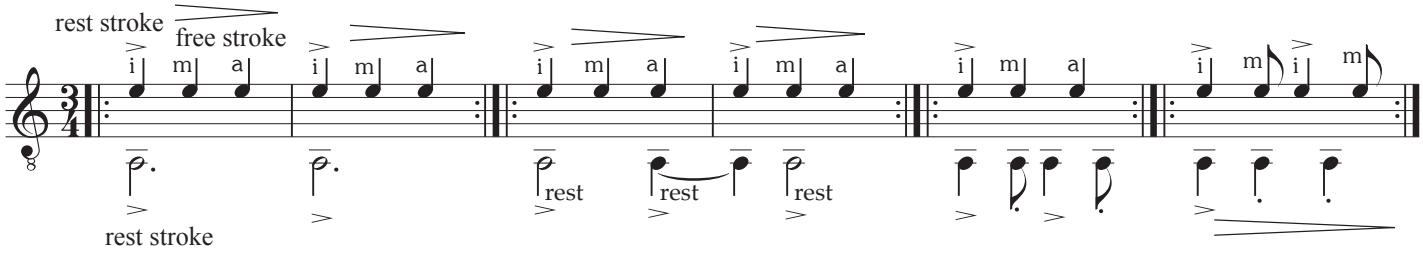






EX. #5 — Hemiola (3 against 2)

The goal of this exercise is to use timbral and dynamic changes together to aid definition of the rhytmic structure. Emphasize the difference in the timbre of i, m and a, so that the i is fat and round close to the hole, m is moderate and a is more ponticello, thinner and weaker.



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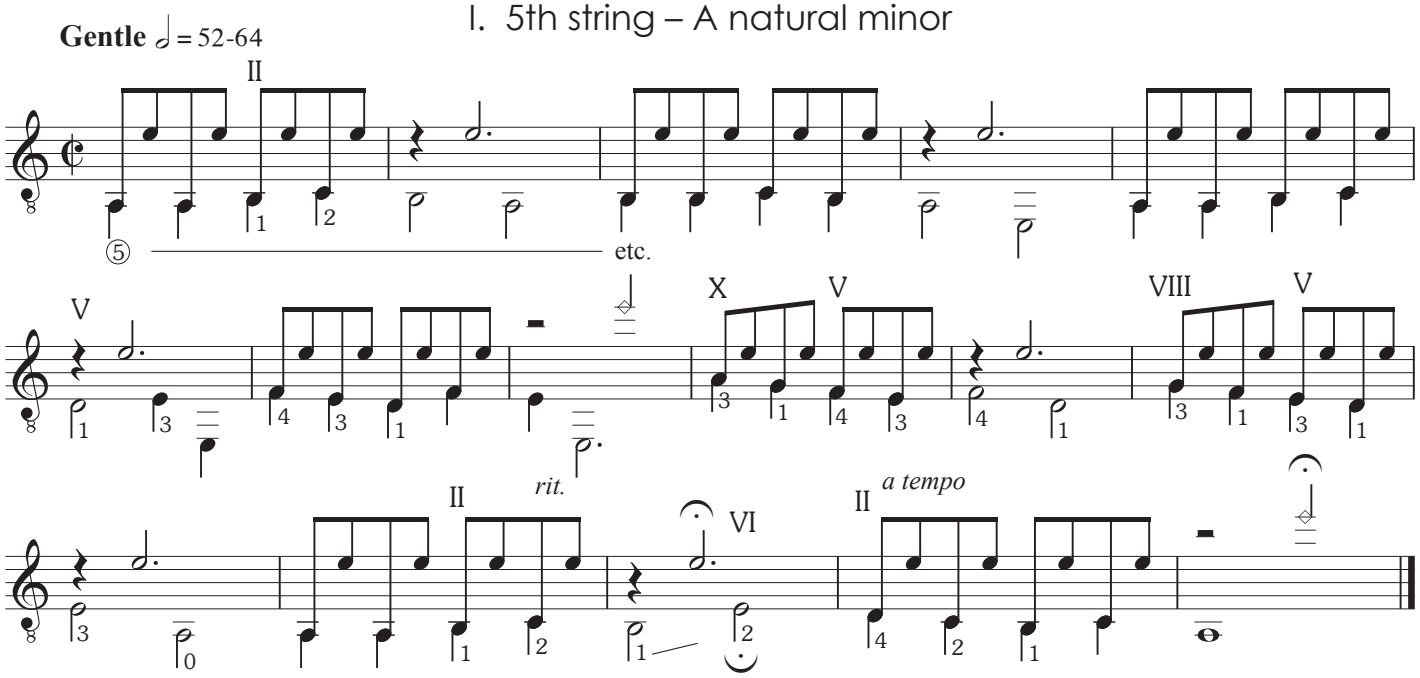
Preparatory Exercises

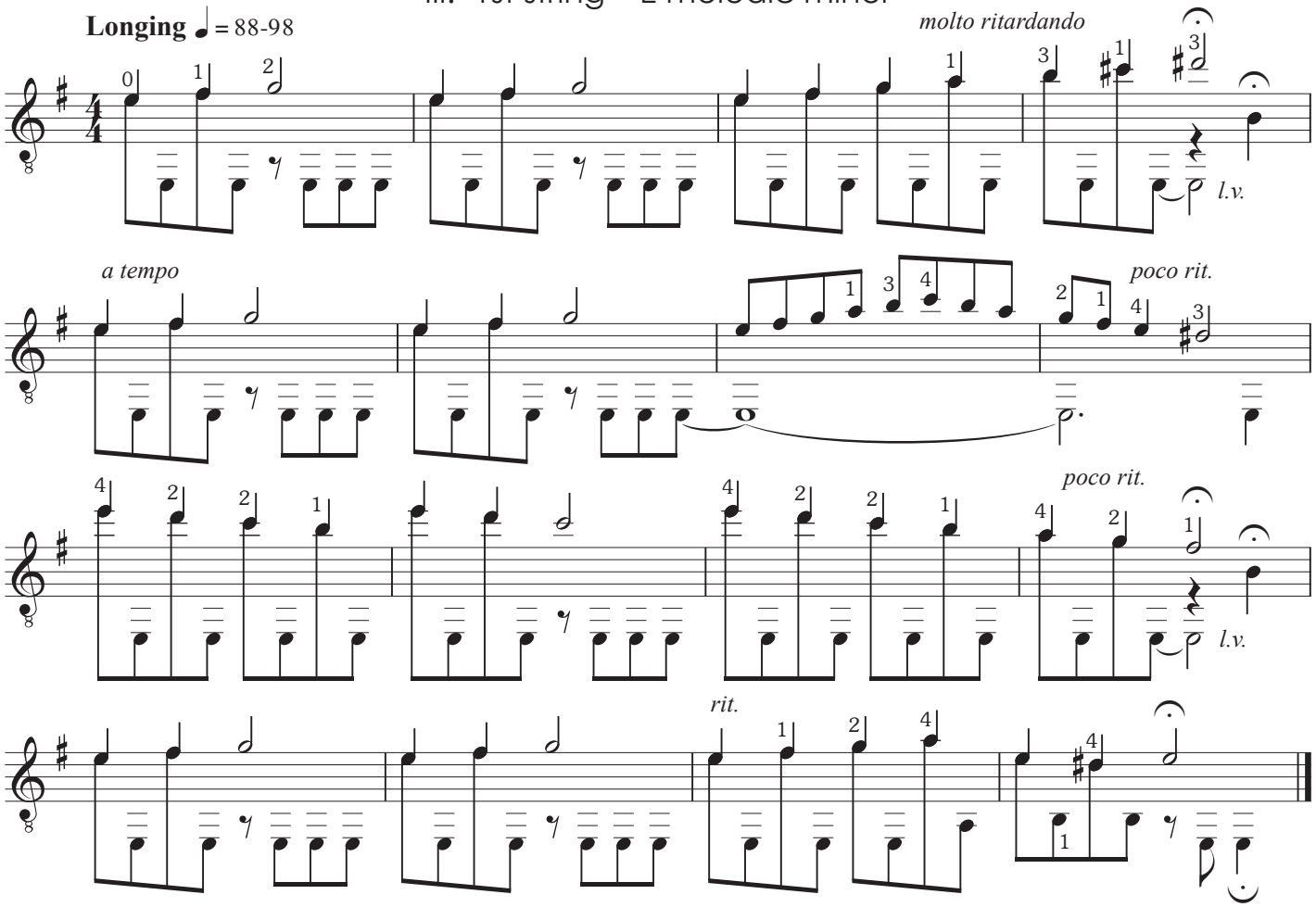
Single String Studies from Sketches I

alternate loud rest strokes on melody and soft free strokes accompany

I. 5th string – A natural minor

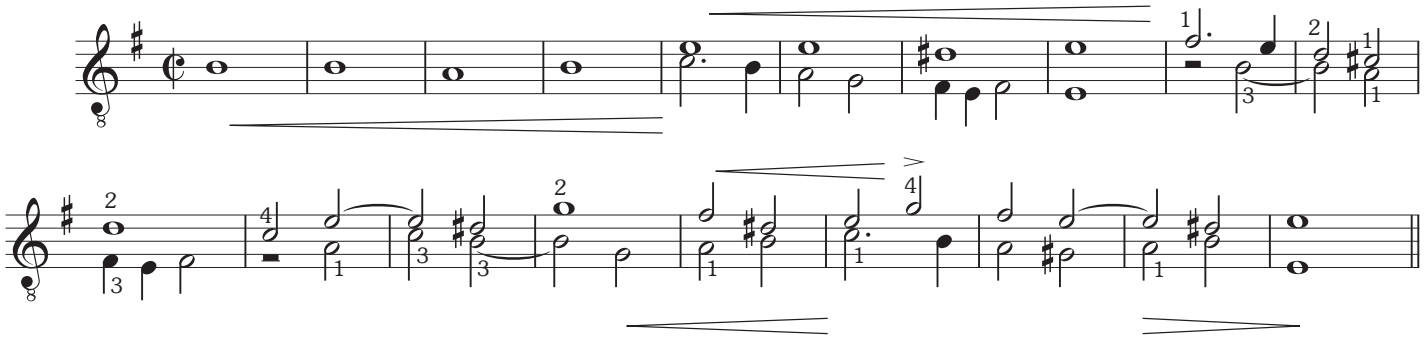


III. 1st string – E melodic minor

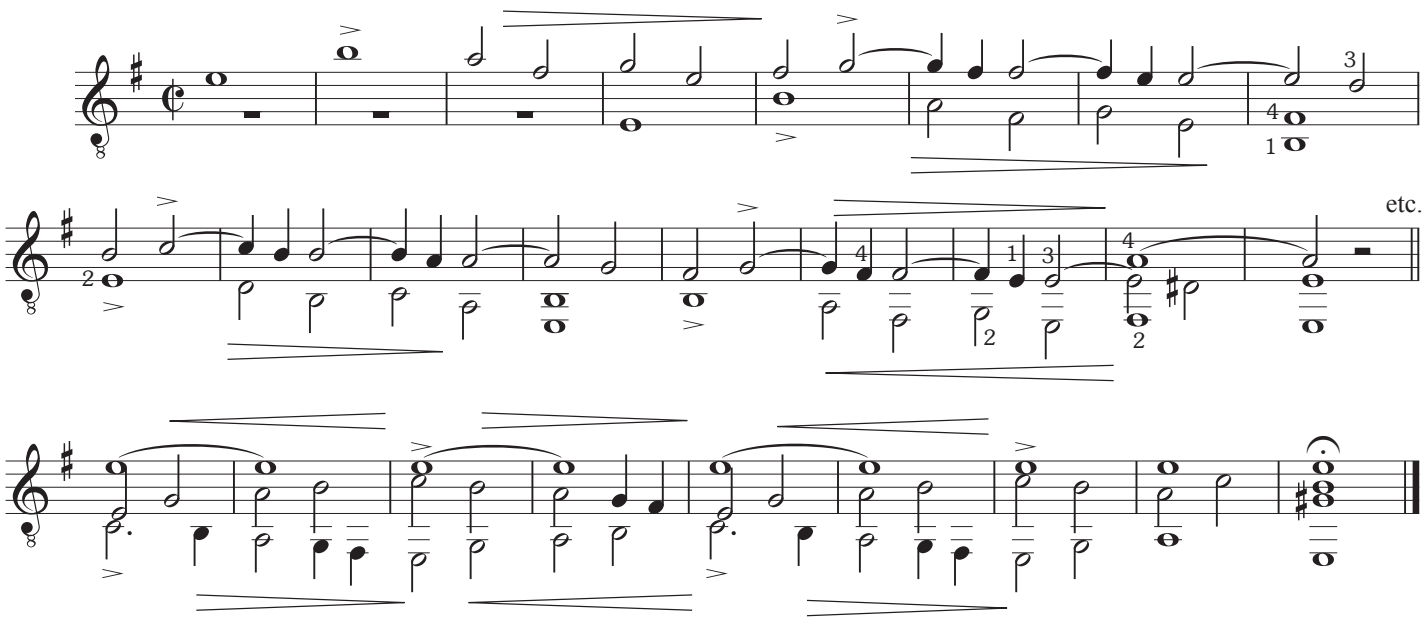


Examples

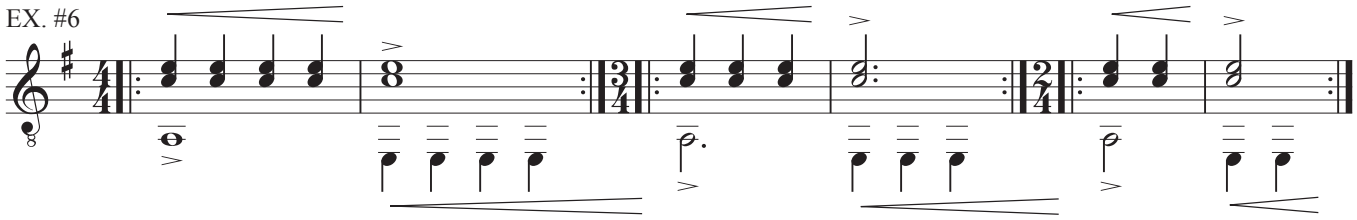
from Duo de Josquin - Fuenllana



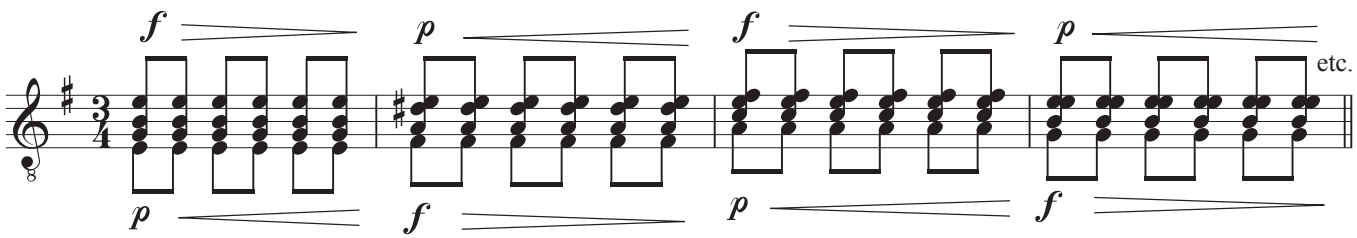
from Fantasía 6, Book 2, Narvaez



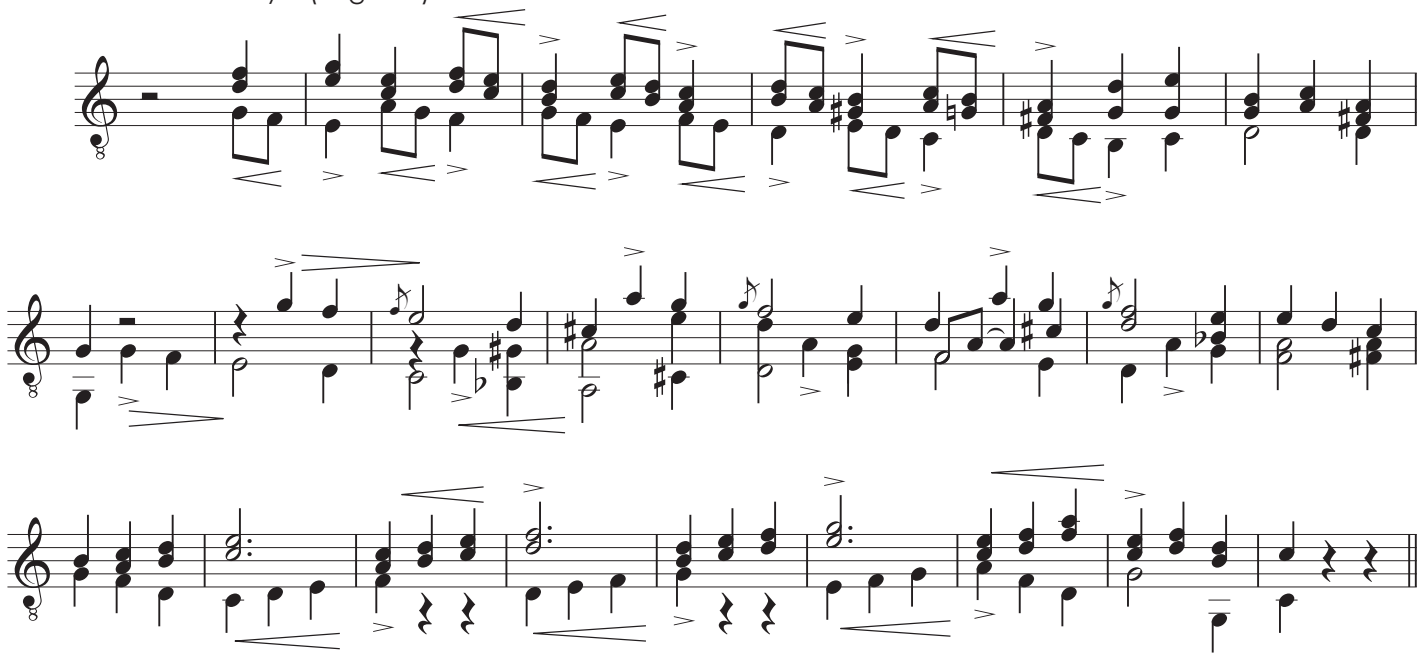
EX. #6



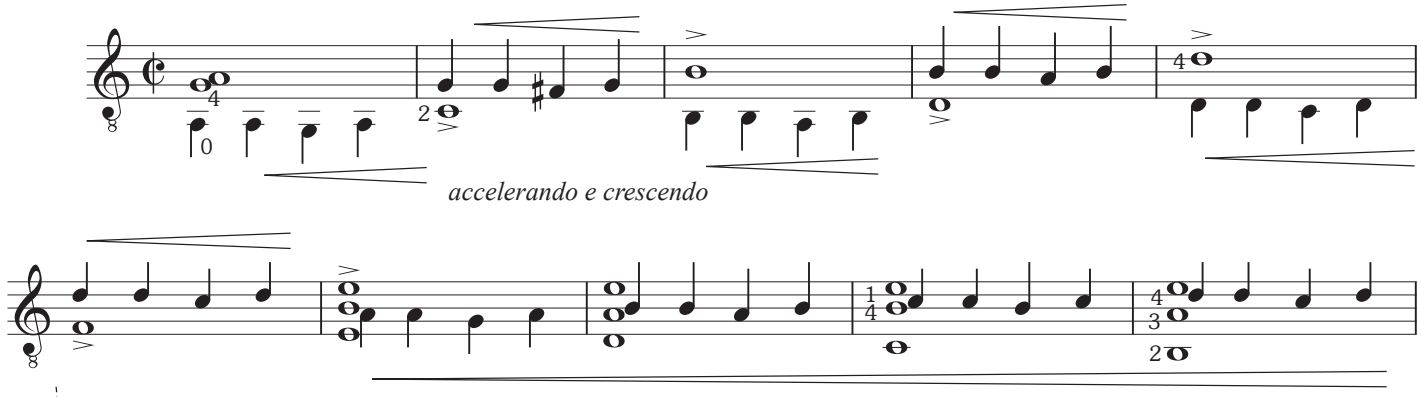
EX. #7 (from Vlilla-Lobos Prelude #4)

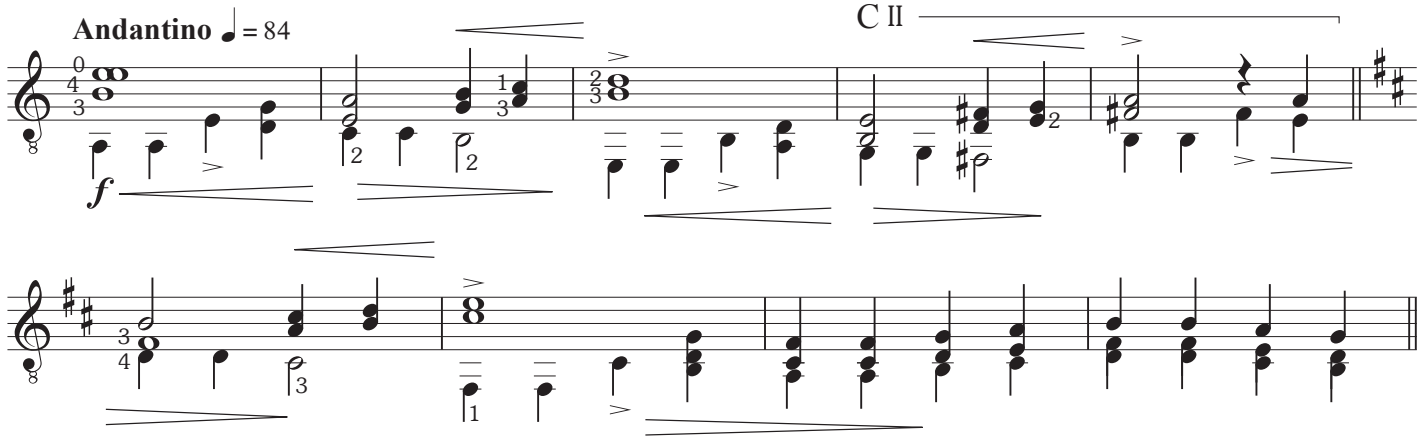


from F. Sor Study 1 (Segovia)

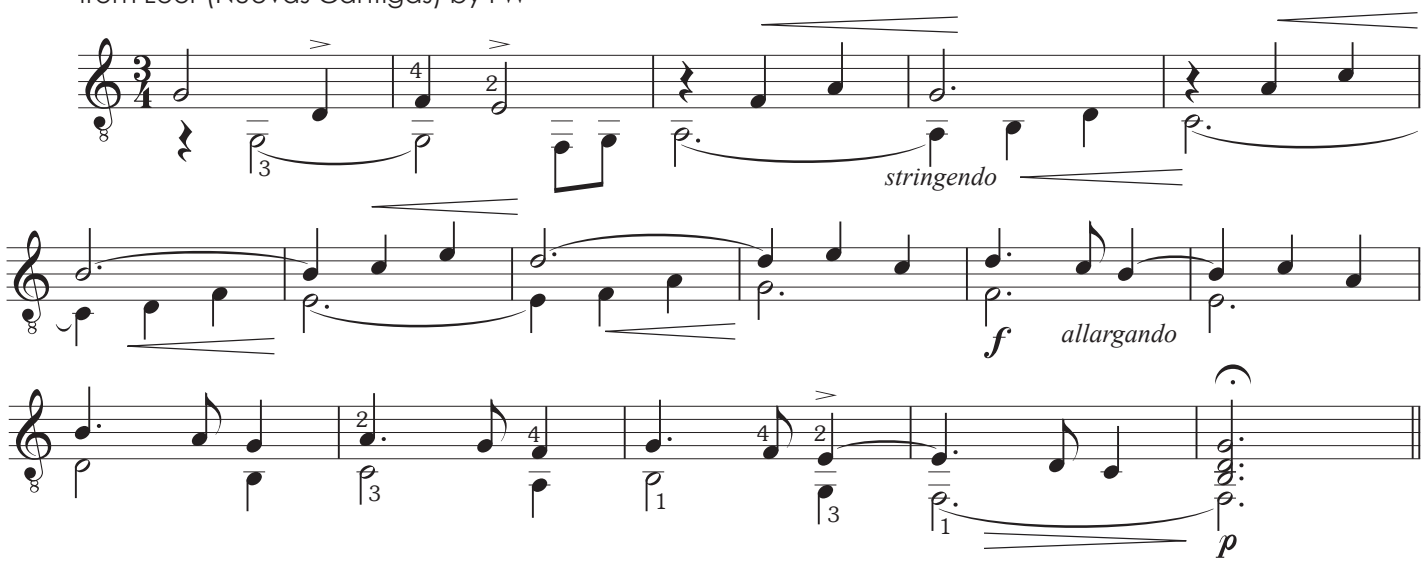


from Cunctipotens Genitor,by FW

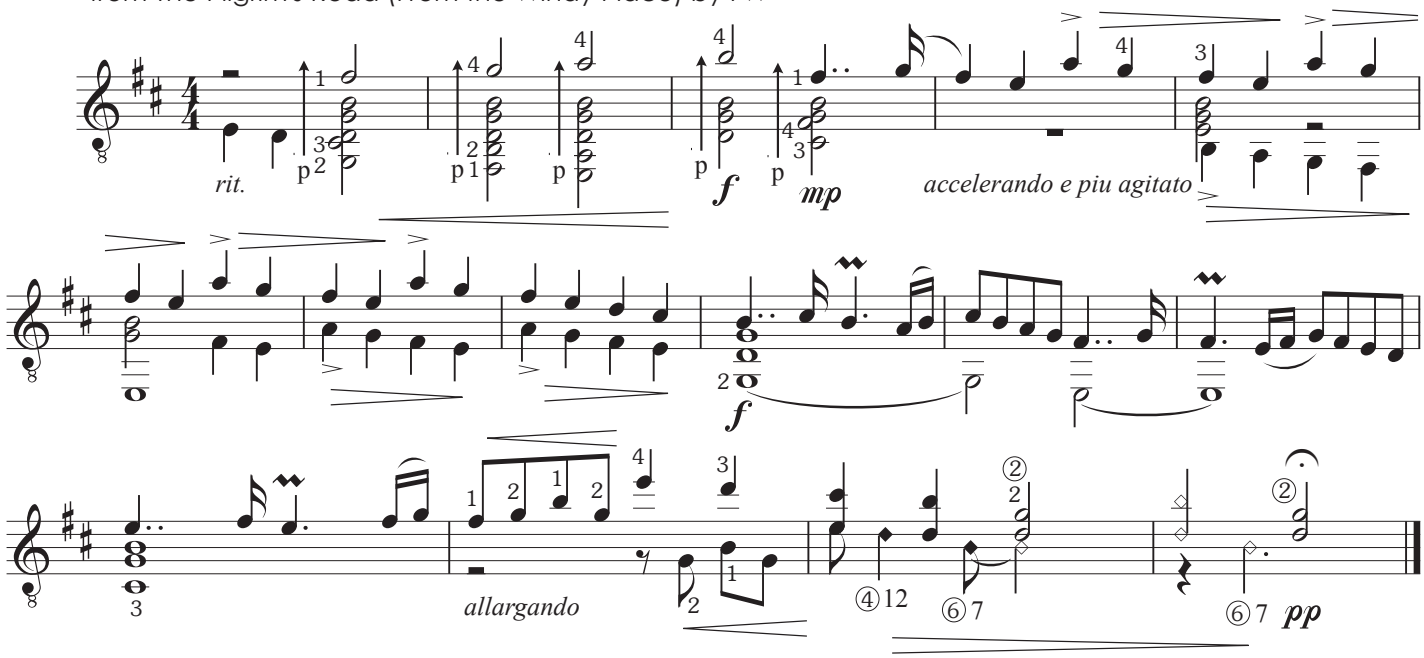




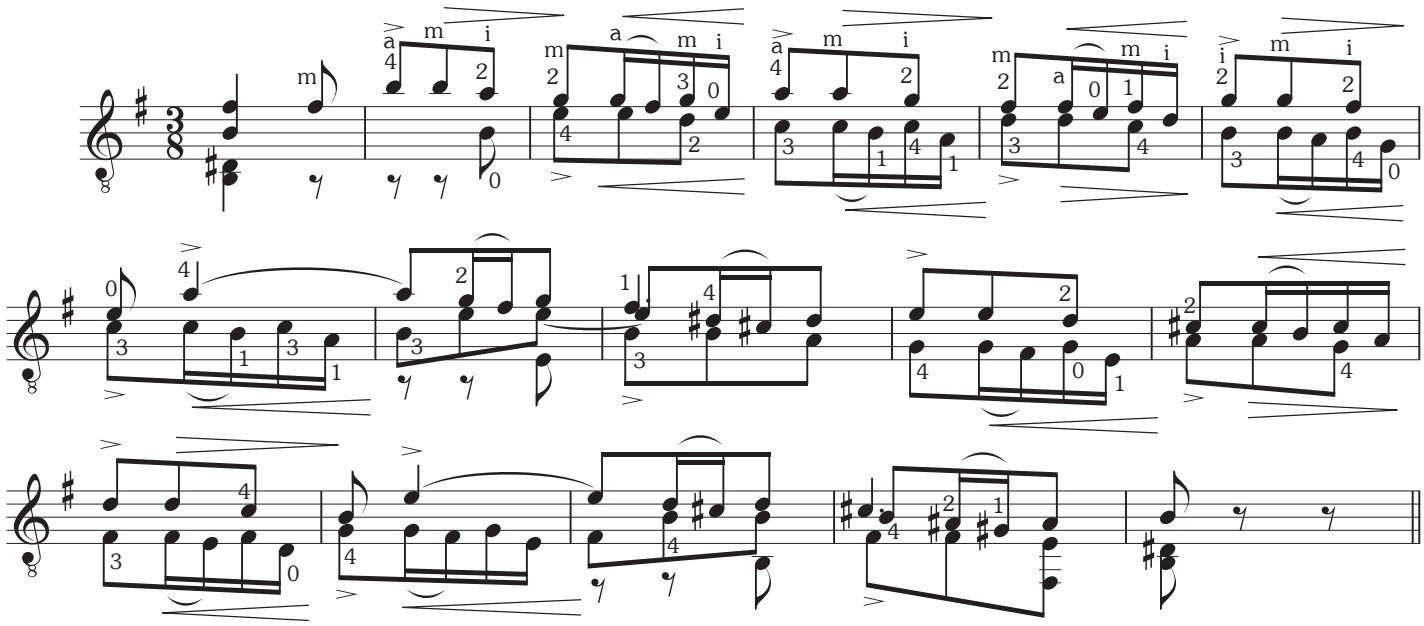
from Loor (Nuevas Cantigas) by FW



from The Pilgrim's Road (From the Windy Place) by FW

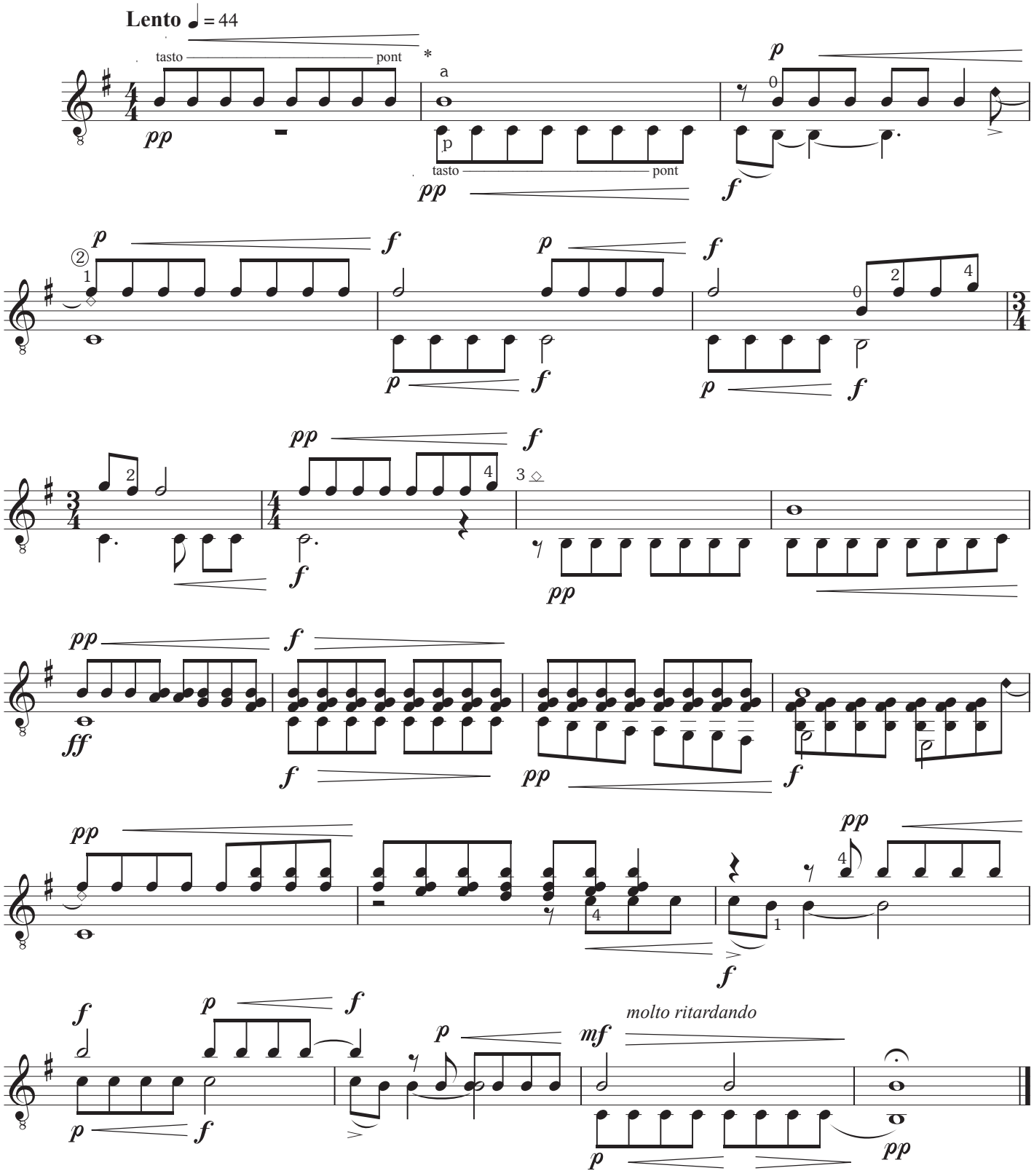


from First Lute Suite – JS Bach



VI. Polly #1

for Trevor LaBarge

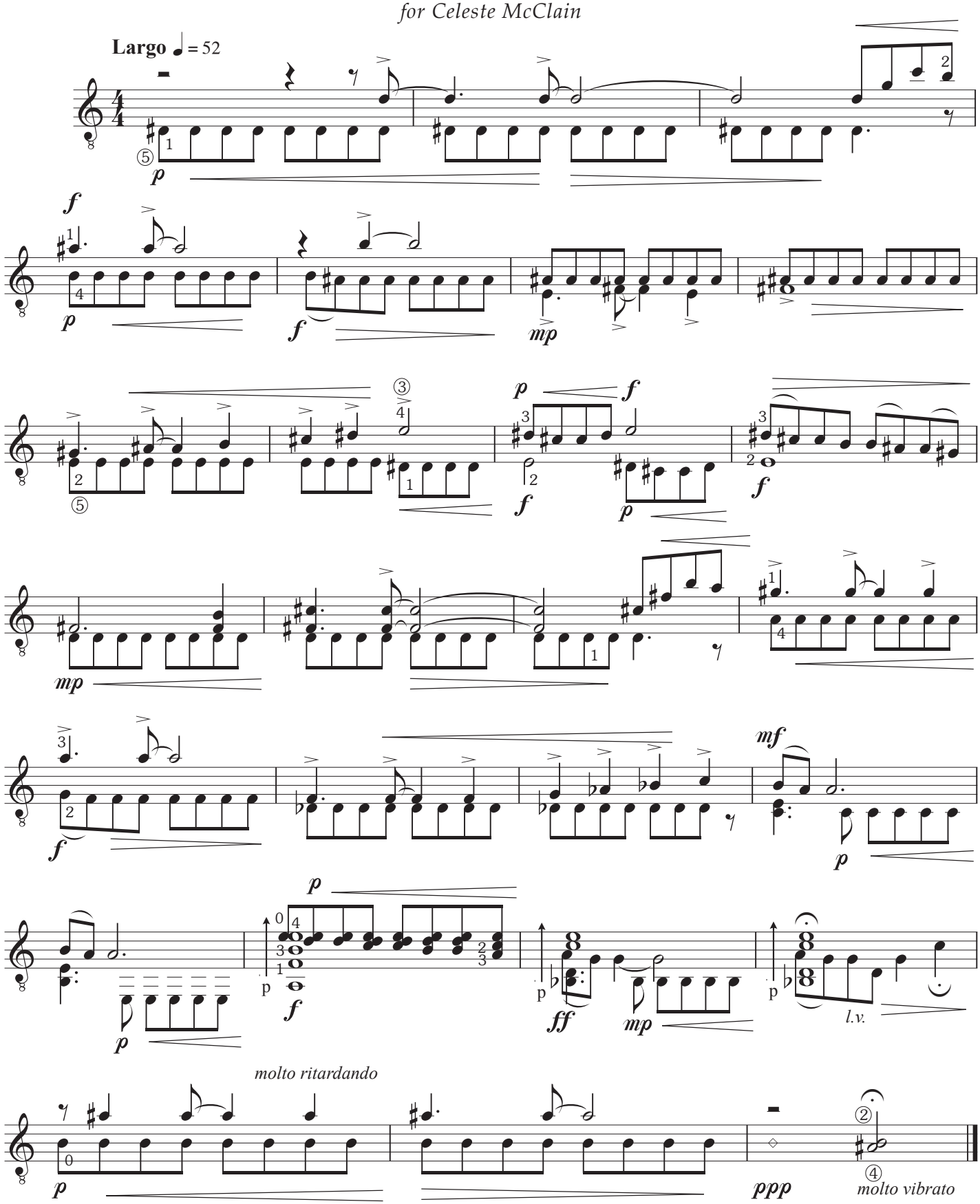


* Use timbre (position of attack in right hand) combined with type of stroke (rest or free) to enhance dynamics and seaparaion of voices.

December 18, 2019
Croton Falls, NY

VII. Polly #II

for Celeste McClain



January 12, 2020
Croton Falls, NY