Johann Sebastian Bach

Five Baroque Dances from the Cello Suite in C Minor BWV 1011

Allemande – Courante – Sarabande – Gavotte I & II – Gique

Setting for the Kala UBass (or potentially for any bass tuned to EADG) by Klaus Smedegaard Bjerre (2012)

A tiny contrabass instrument in form of the Kala UBass entered my home in late July of 2012. It is shaped and sized close to a baritone ukulele. It is its special strings and its electrical amplification that make it sound astonishingly similar to a plucked upright bass. Its 21" scale is much kinder on my hands than is my upright bass, so I started toying around on the UBass. Melody playing is quite easy and it is hard to avoid testing its chord capabilities because the frets are so short. You may have seen my simple arrangements of a few hymns, a kids' tune, and a spiritual. (Plus a few dances from some of the other cello suites by Bach).

I never played Bach on any string instruments, but I have been woodshedding several movements from his cello suites a few decades ago. On the trombone! That took the faking of the multiple stops that come so naturally to the cello. The UBass is tuned to fourths as opposed to the fifths of the cello, which allows for a much gentler editing of the multiple stops as with the trombone. Bach uses the highest and the lowest notes very expressively, so I didn't want to change their relative positions. Hence these dances from the C Minor suite have been transposed to E Minor allowing the note of the cello's open C string to be represented by the open note of the UBass' equivalent E string.

I first had cast my eyes on the Gavottes and the Gique of this present suite, but couldn't avoid realising that the Allemande, the Courante, and the Sarabande also were within the range of the UBass when transposed to E Minor. So this presents all the dances of the C Minor Suite BWV 1011.

The tempos are the ones I found right for the music. Only with the Gavottes I had to compromise. I would want the first one being somewhat faster, but as the same tempo should be kept through both Gavottes, the second would have become very rushed. My tempo suggestions only are guidelines for the performer anyway.

The appoggiaturas and trills have been written out according to baroque performance practices. However you may easily find recordings of cello interpretations done in each their own and very different fashion. Which is part of the liberal baroque practice. This edition is rather kept on the simple side.

If the double stops are awkward, one or more of the lower notes may be omitted, yet they are important in defining the tonality and as sound effects. The four-note chords may be strummed rather than plucked thereby reflecting the cello's bowing.

The tablature transcription goes for as few position shifts as possible, yet the performer should modify his/hers fingerings as needed for personal comfort.

Korsør - September 15th - 2012

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Kala U-Bass
(or any bass tuned to EADG)

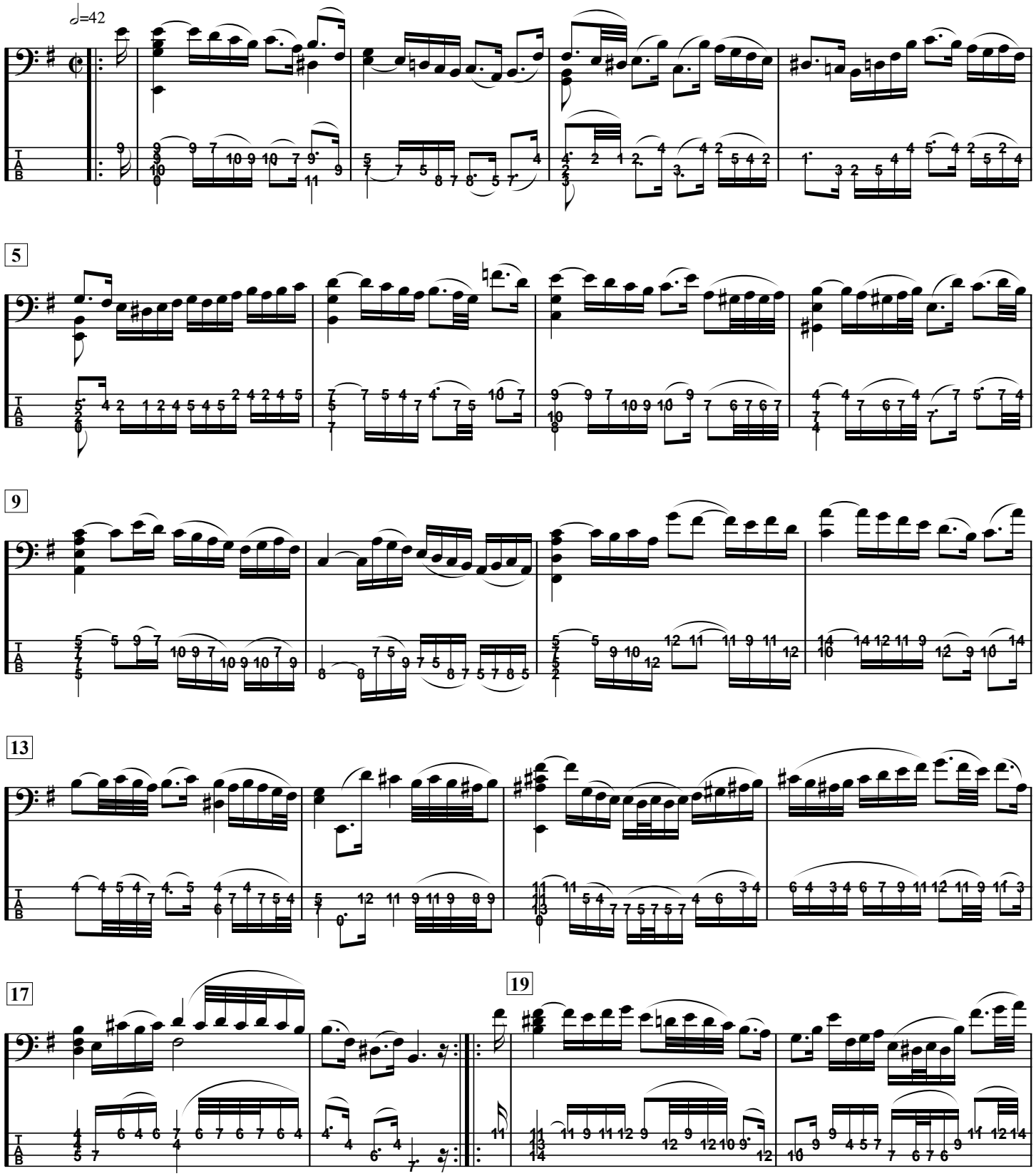
Five Baroque Dances

from the Cello Suite in C Minor BWV 1011

(here transposed to E Minor)

J. S. Bach around 1720
Arranged 2012 by
Klaus Smedegaard Bjerre

Allemande



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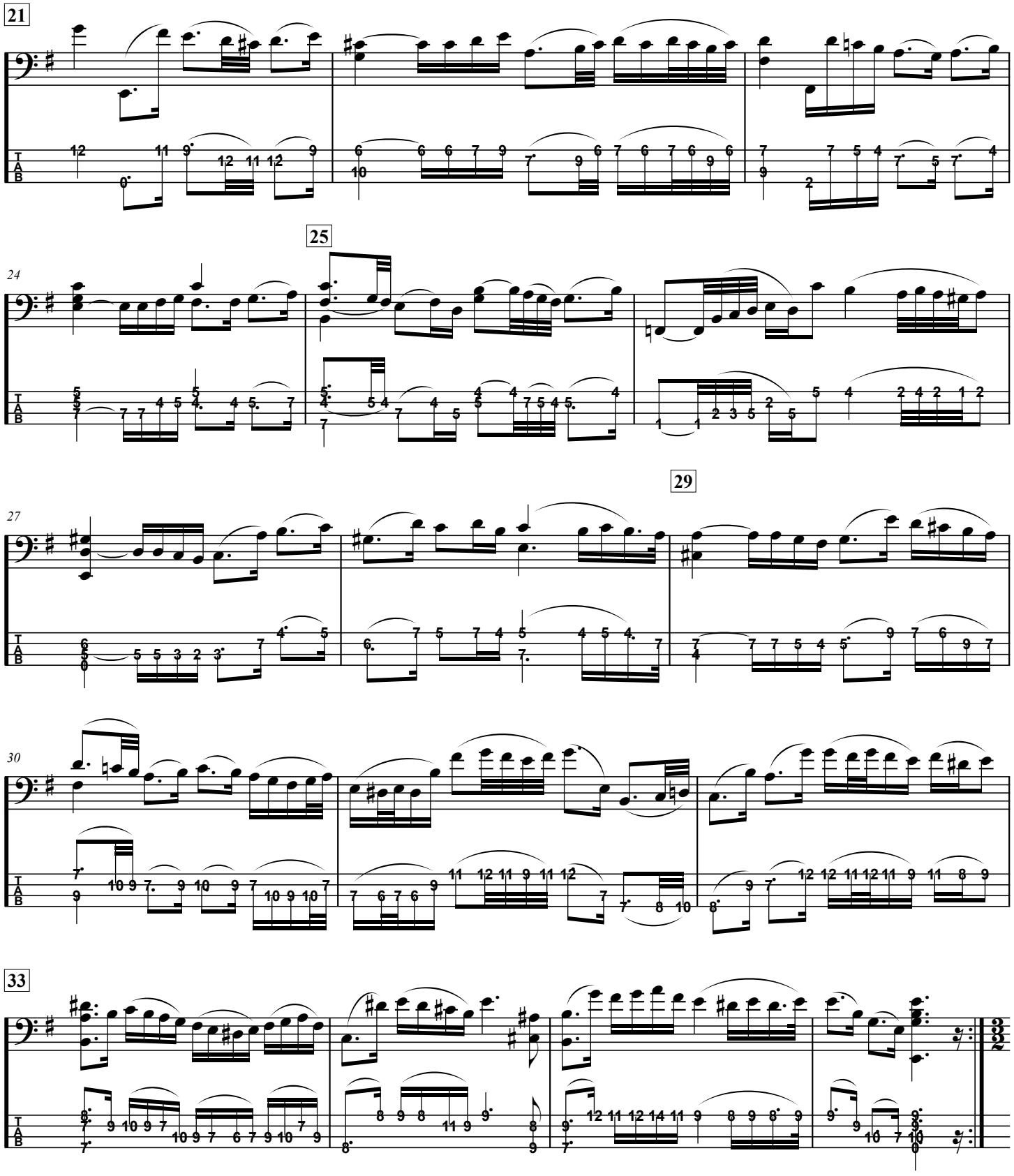

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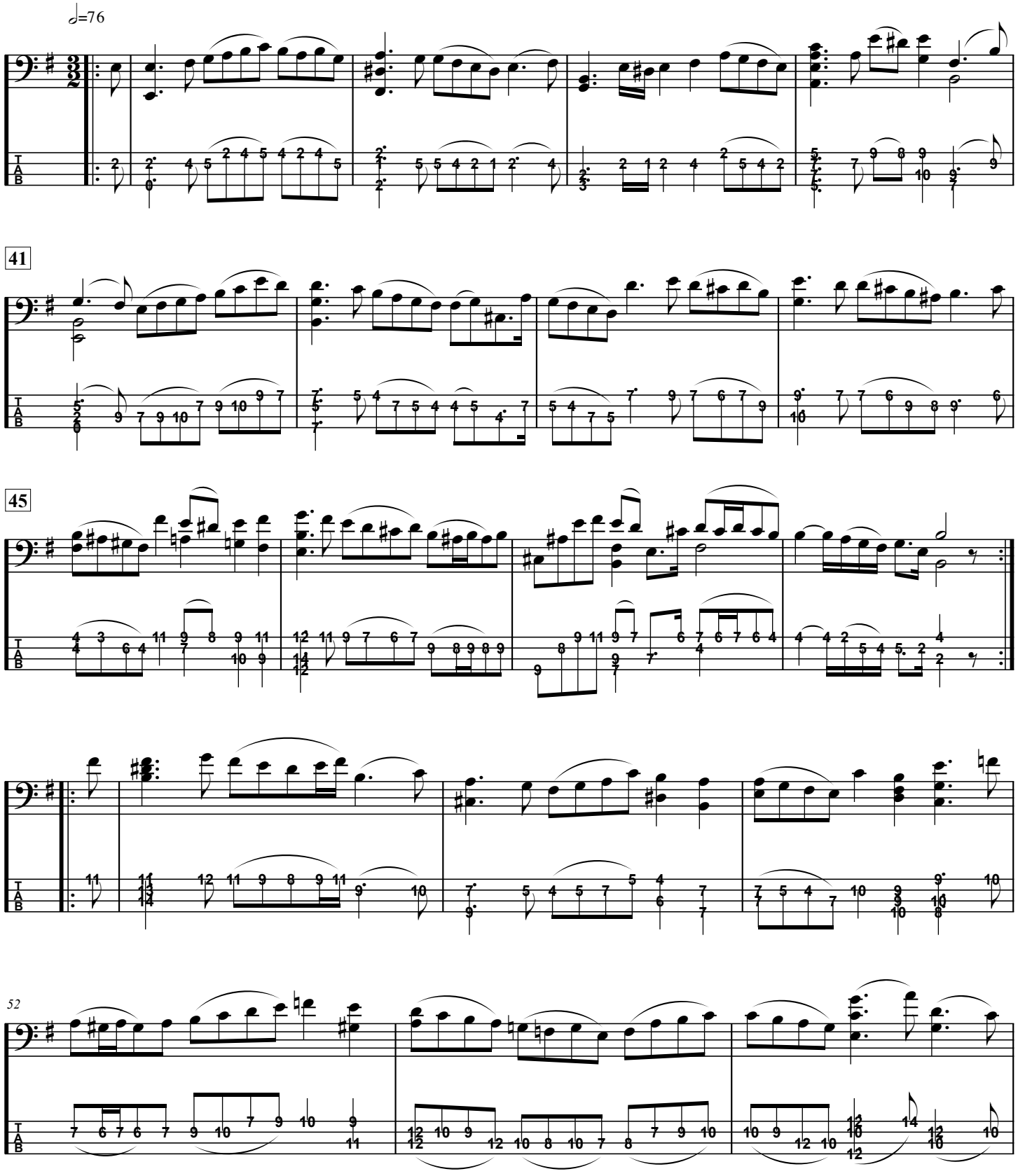
Courante



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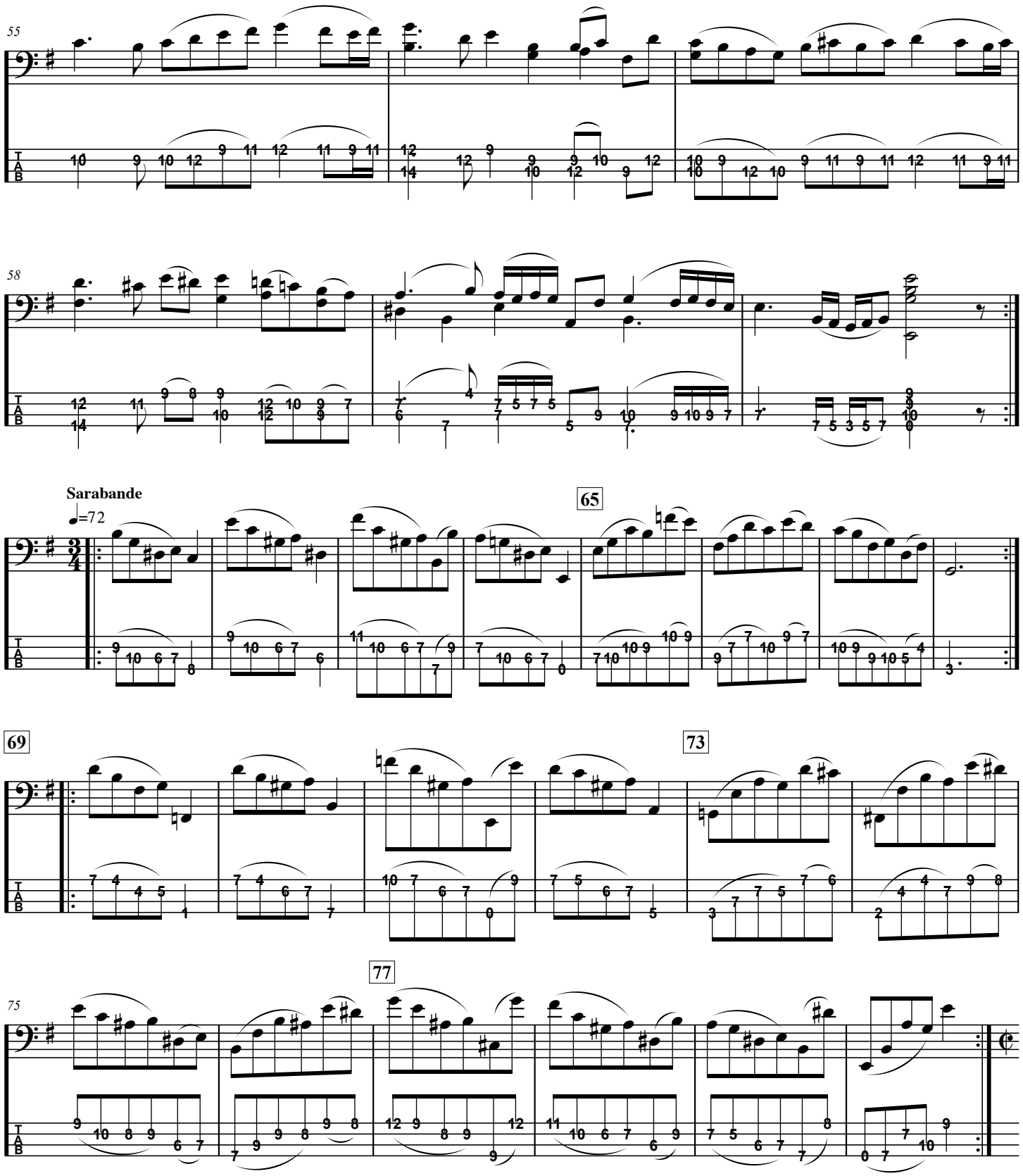

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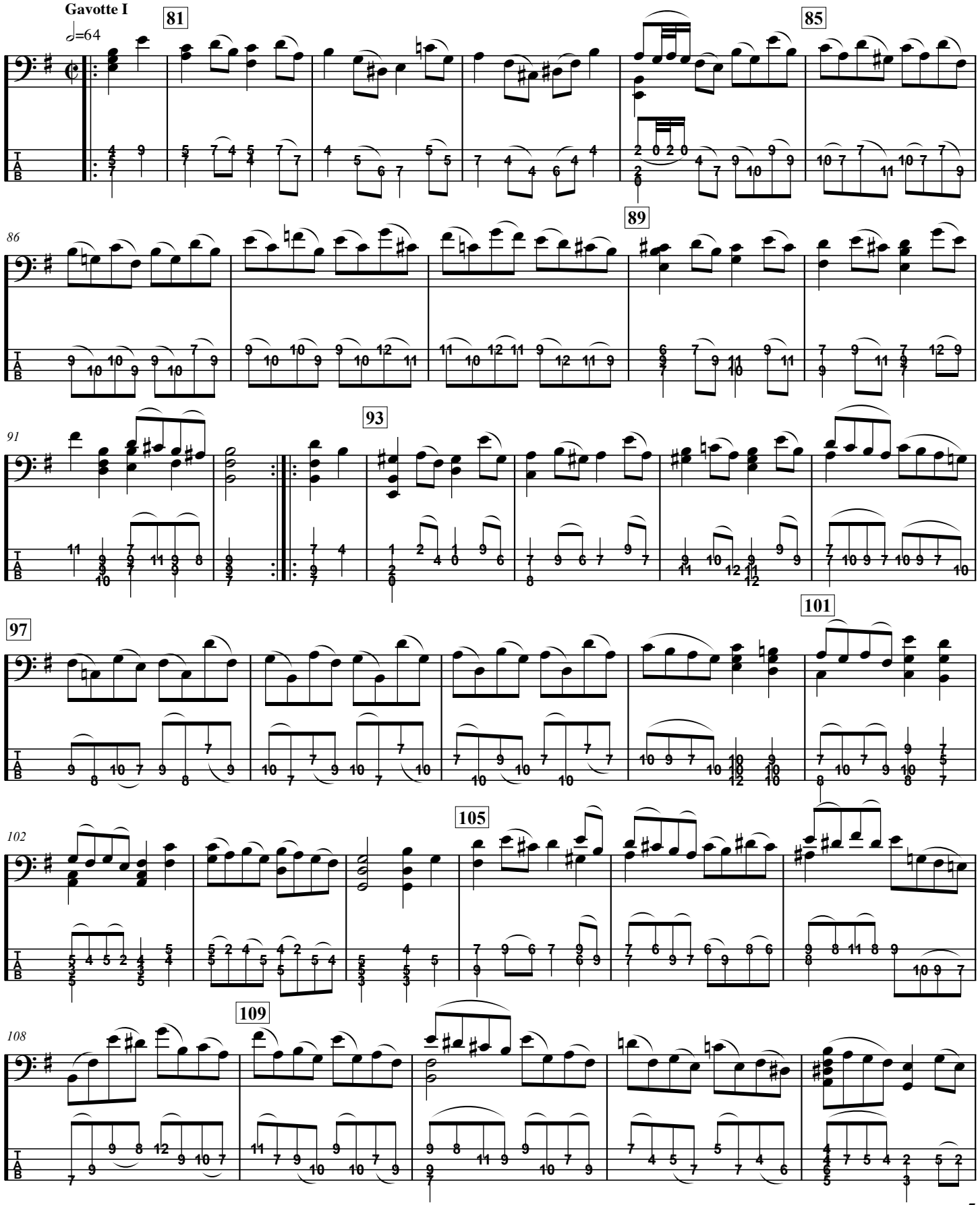
Gavotte I



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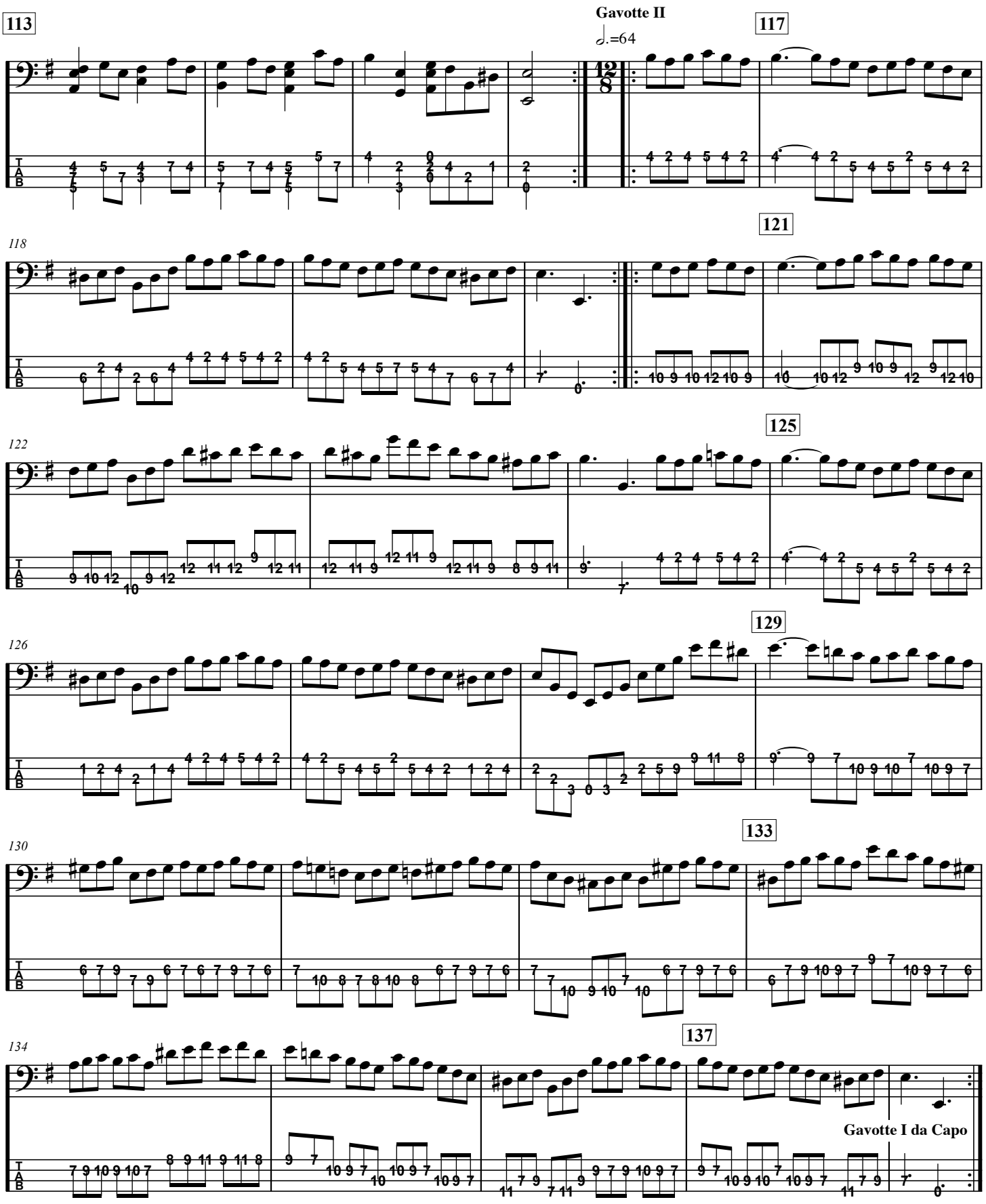

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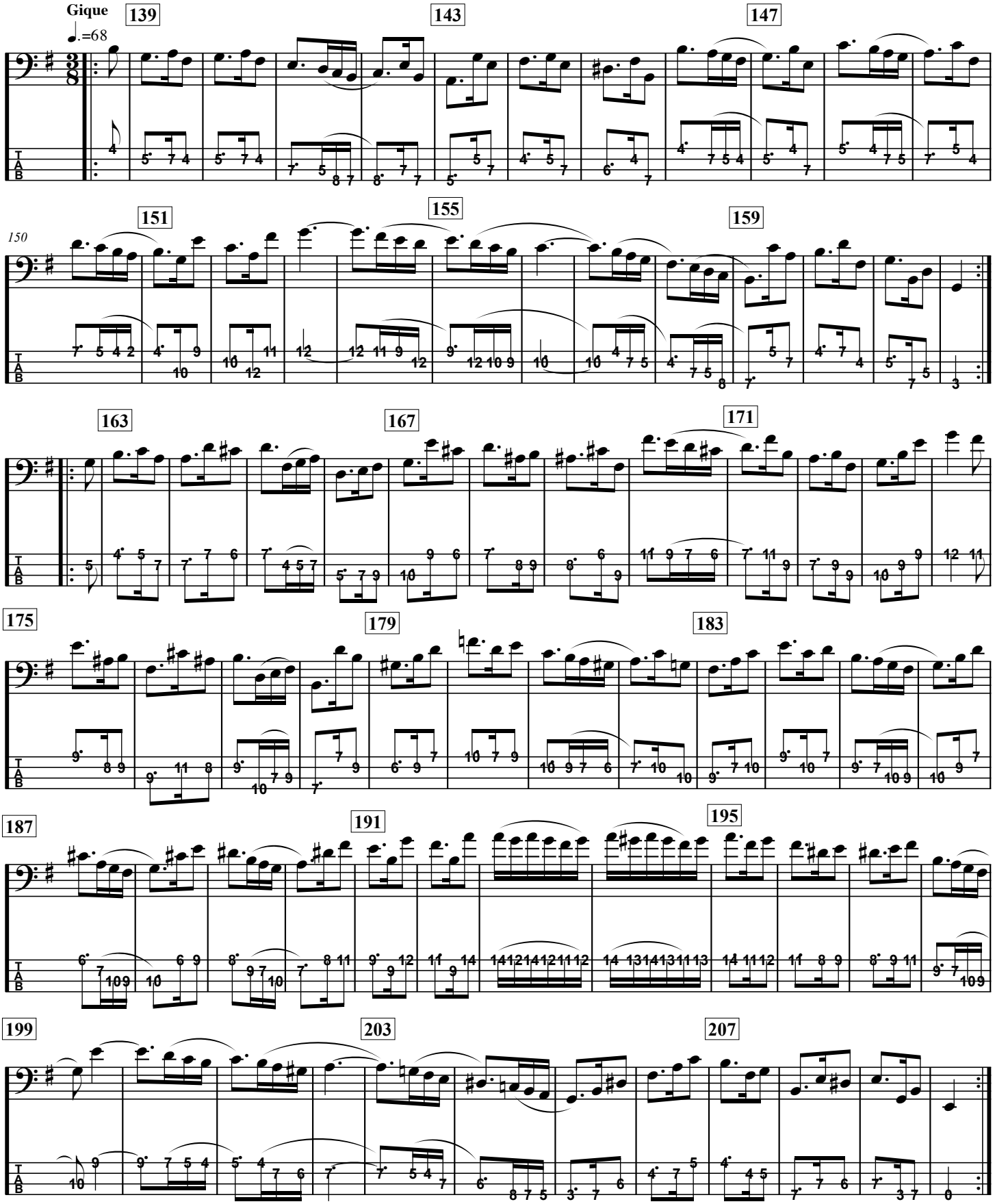
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