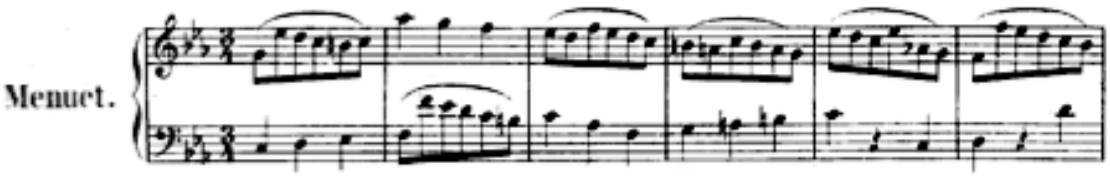
Bard Conservatory Seminar I
Halle-Laki
9/27/07

I. Modulation

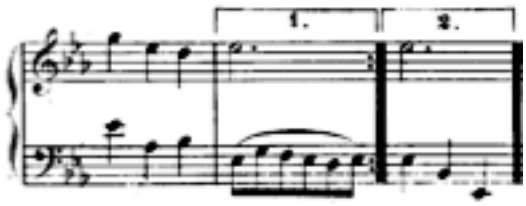
As we just discussed, scale degree harmonies (most commonly IV, V, vi-and III in minor keys) are often preceded by "applied" or "secondary" dominant chords which result in the harmony in question being heard as a temporary tonic. When this occurs the harmony is referred to as tonicized, and the process is referred to as "tonicization".

When the move to a new tonic is clear and unambiguous rather than provisional we refer to this as **modulation**. In general, this shift to a new key will occur gradually with a few chords functioning simultaneously in two keys at once. These ambiguous chords-ambiguous in that they allow for two interpretations-are referred to as pivot chords. The definitive indication that a modulation, as opposed to a tonicization, has occurred is the presence of a perfect authentic cadence.

Bach-Minuet from C minor French Suite



c: i *VI6 ii*
Eb: vi ? *IV6 V*

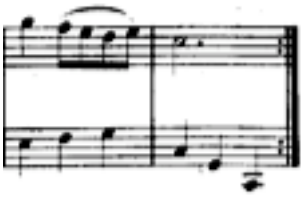


III? VI??
I IV V I

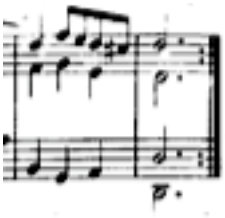
The italicized chords indicate the region where the modulation occurs. Outside of this region the harmonic analysis in one or the other key become gradually less plausible. When it first appears, the vi in the key of Eb suggested by the Eb-C dyad in the fifth measure is only one possible direction the music could be progressing to. It could also just a reasonably be analyzed as II in the key of Bb or IV6 in an eventual key of Ab. These analyses are quickly filtered out and Eb becomes the only possible option. Similarly, while the Eb-C are most naturally heard as a tonic resolution of the previous dominant chord in C minor, this analysis becomes impossible in the last two measures.

What removes C minor from the ear's consideration as a key area and what confirms the modulation is the perfect authentic cadence in Eb in the final two measures. The PAC (and, to a lesser degree other cadences) is heard as a kind of musical punctuation whose function is to indicate closure in a key. In order to assume this function, the melodic structure of the cadence must be generic-similar to other cadential formulae which assume this function, and by the absences of its connection to the basic motives which define the piece. We call these generic patterns cadential formulas: they are formulas for creating a sense of closure and are reused constantly.

The above pattern is a typical formula of minuets of the baroque period and can be found in numerous other minuets by Bach and other composers. Another characteristic cadential formula of the minuet (probably more common) is a quarter followed by four eights. This is the cadential pattern which concludes the C minor minuet

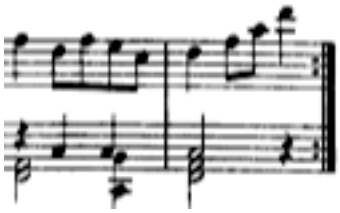


as well as many others:



Other composers throughout the classical period make use of the same cadential formula for the minuet:

(Schubert, Minuet in D, D. 300)



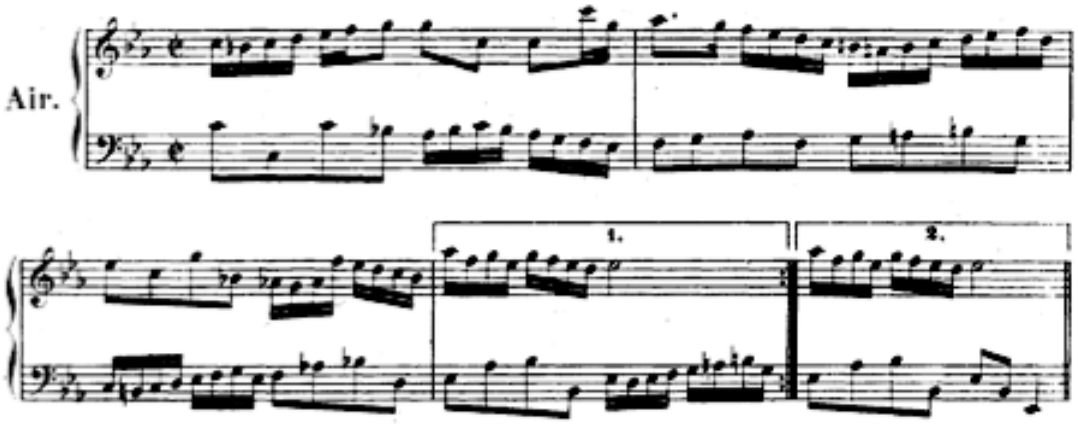
Other types of pieces will make use of generic cadential formulae. What these are will depend on the style and function not of the particular piece but of the genre of which it is representative.

II. Modulations and Tonal Distance

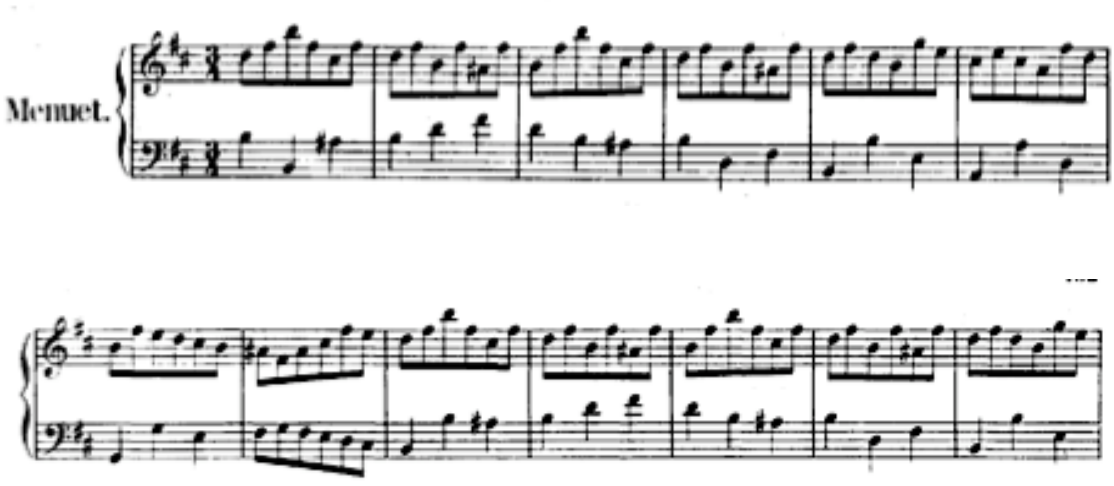
For most of the baroque and classical periods, modulations were confined to a few relatively closely related keys. In particular, the initial section of dance forms progress to with major modes modulating to the dominant V while minor modes move, in the majority of instances modulating to the relative major.

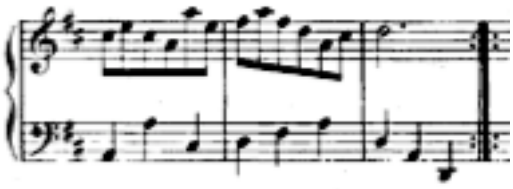
Exercise: Please identify which keys the following pieces modulate to, then locate and identify possible pivot chords through which the modulation is achieved.

1) Bach C minor French Suite



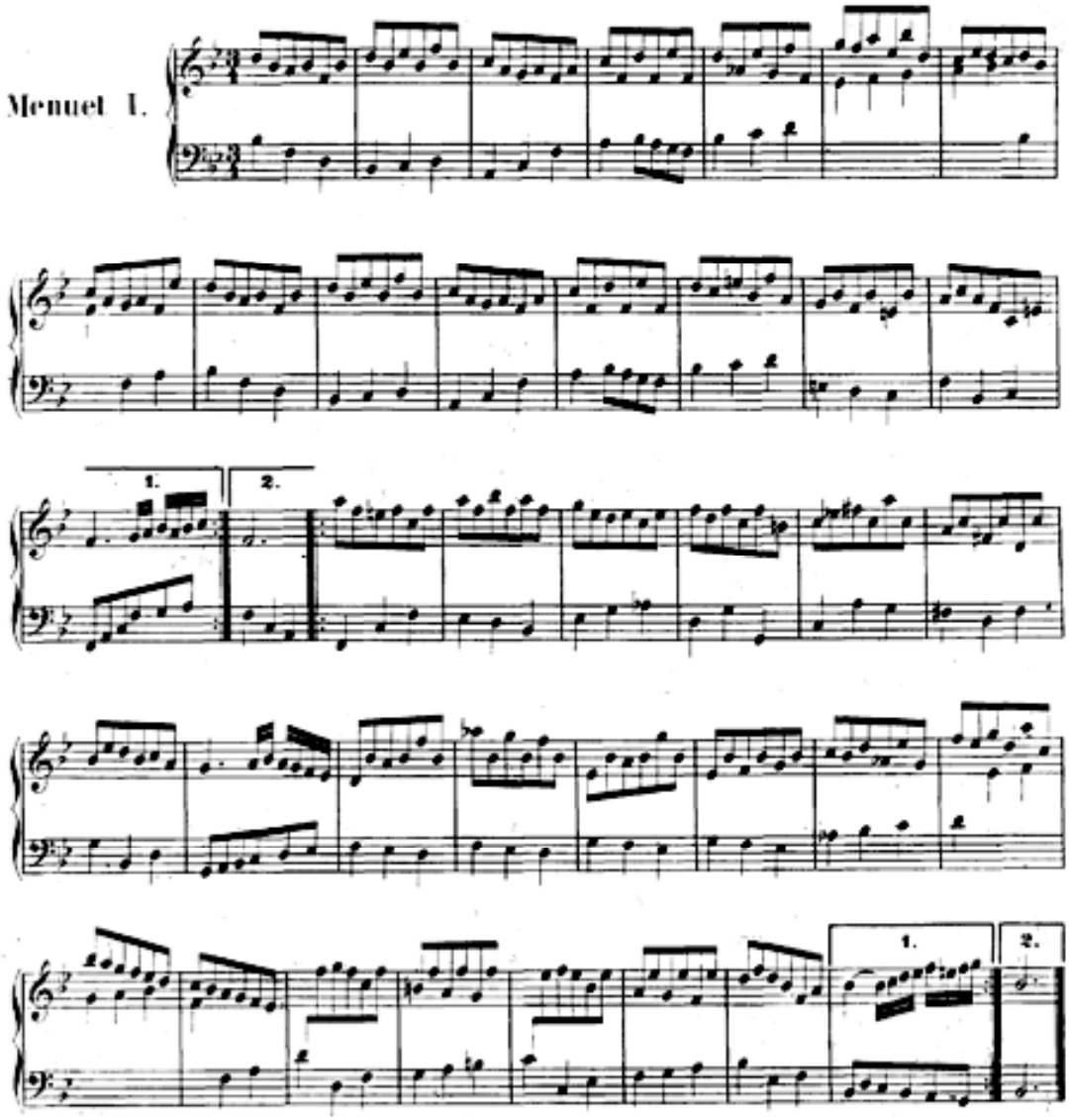
2) Bach B minor French Suite





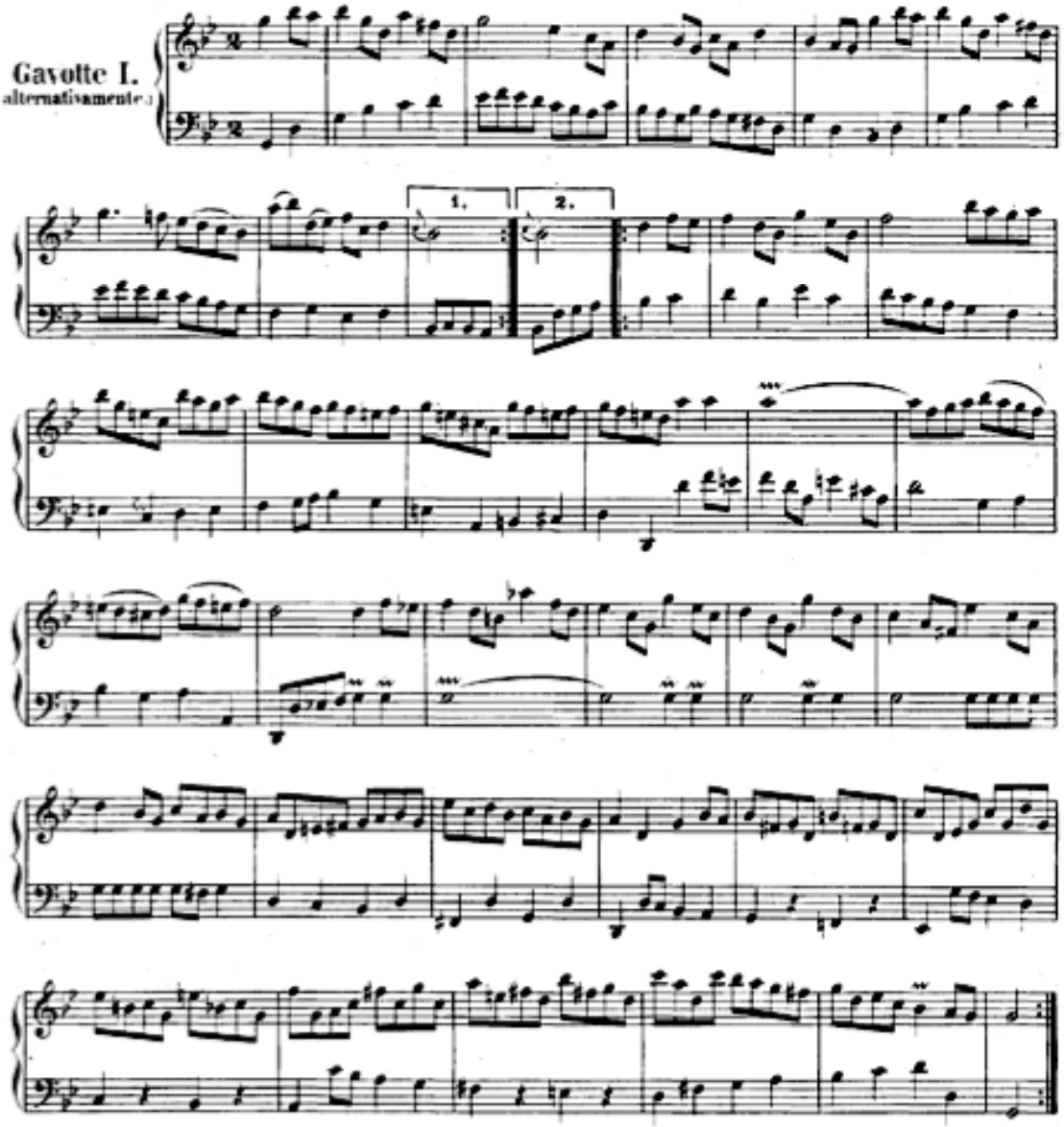
Following the initial modulation of the piece at the double bar, there is usually an additional key which is more or less definitively arrived at. In major keys this tends to be the relative minor vi, and is almost always confirmed by a perfect authentic cadence.

Exercise: Please find the cadence to the modulation to relative minor vi. Locate and identify the relevant pivot chords through which the modulation is achieved.



Since the relative major of minor keys has, in most instances, already been reached at the double bar, the key area III is not available for the secondary modulation in minor key works.

Exercise: What is the secondary key area reached (after the double bar) in these pieces. Indicate the cadence and also the pivot chords through which the modulation is arrived at.
1)



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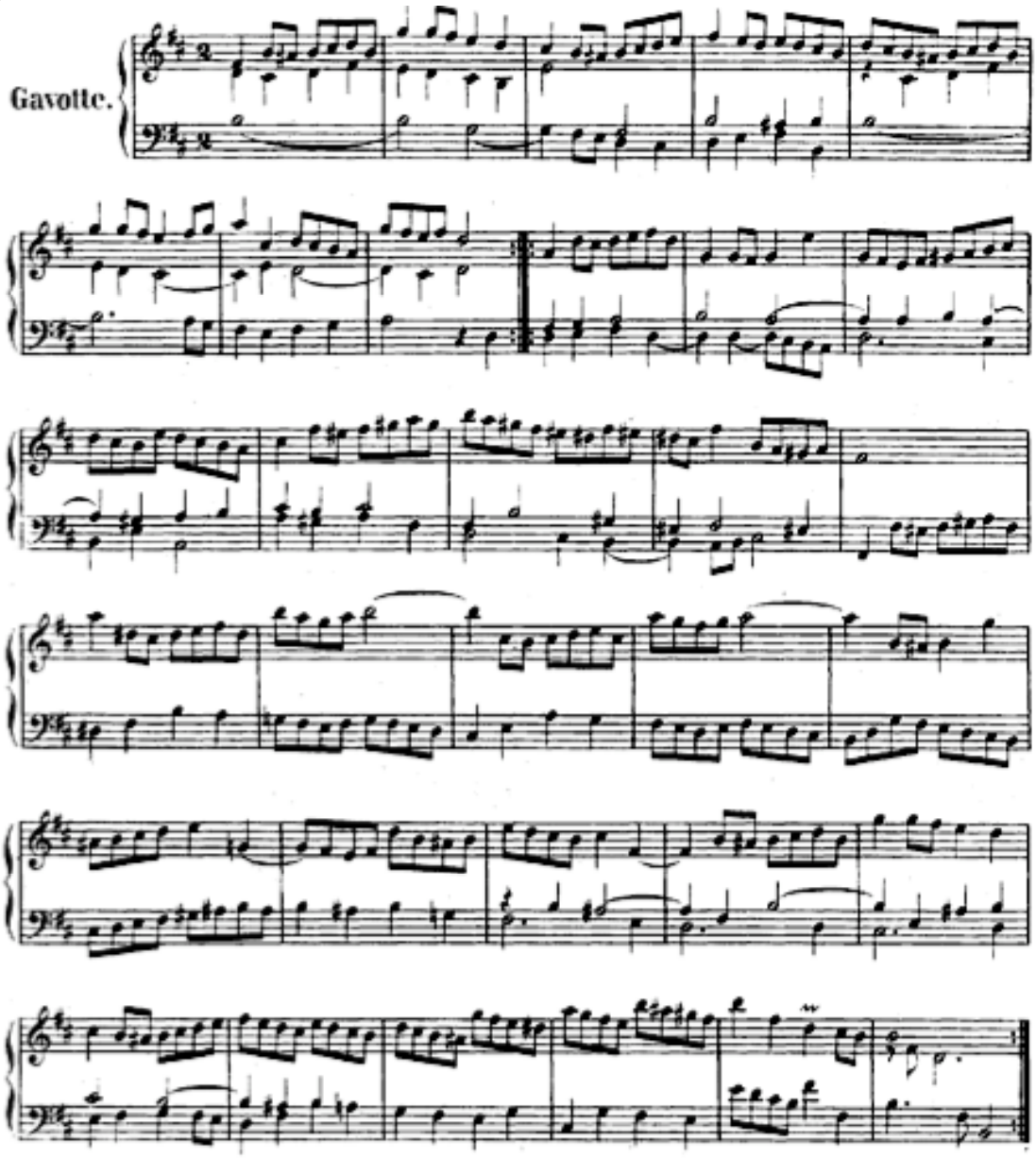
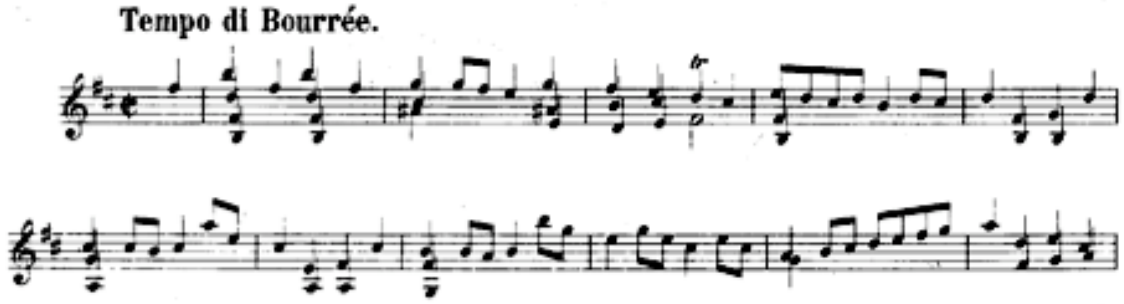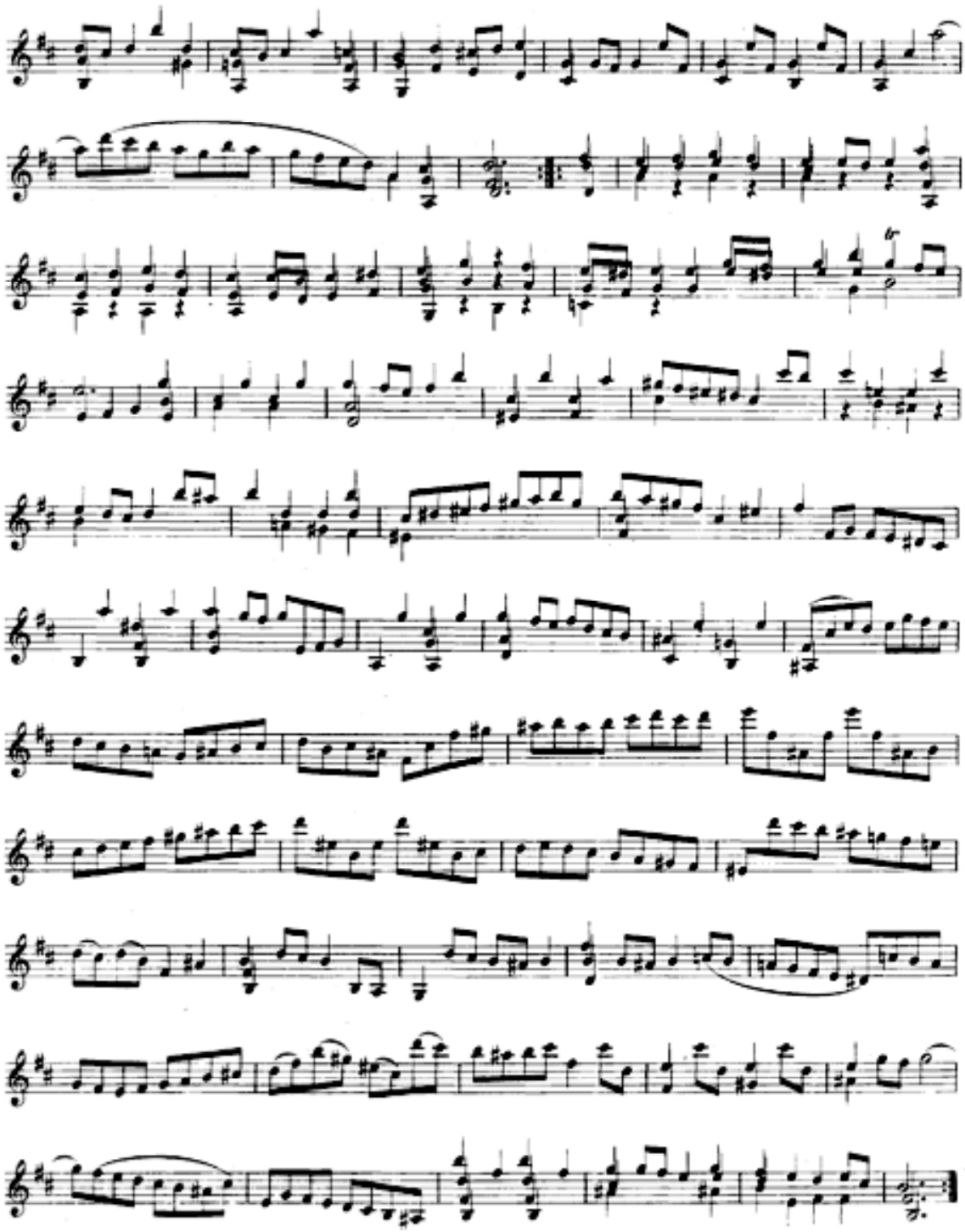
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