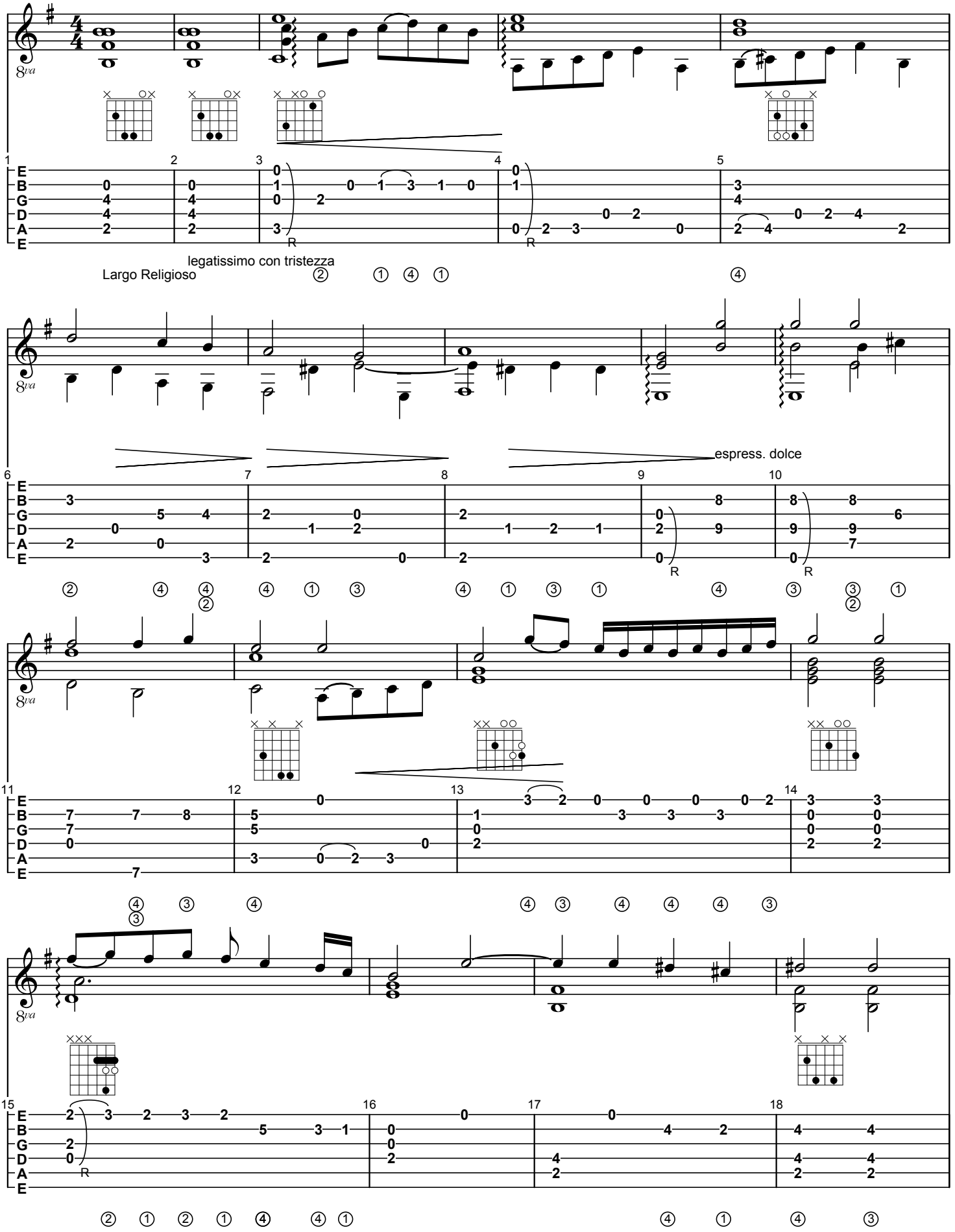
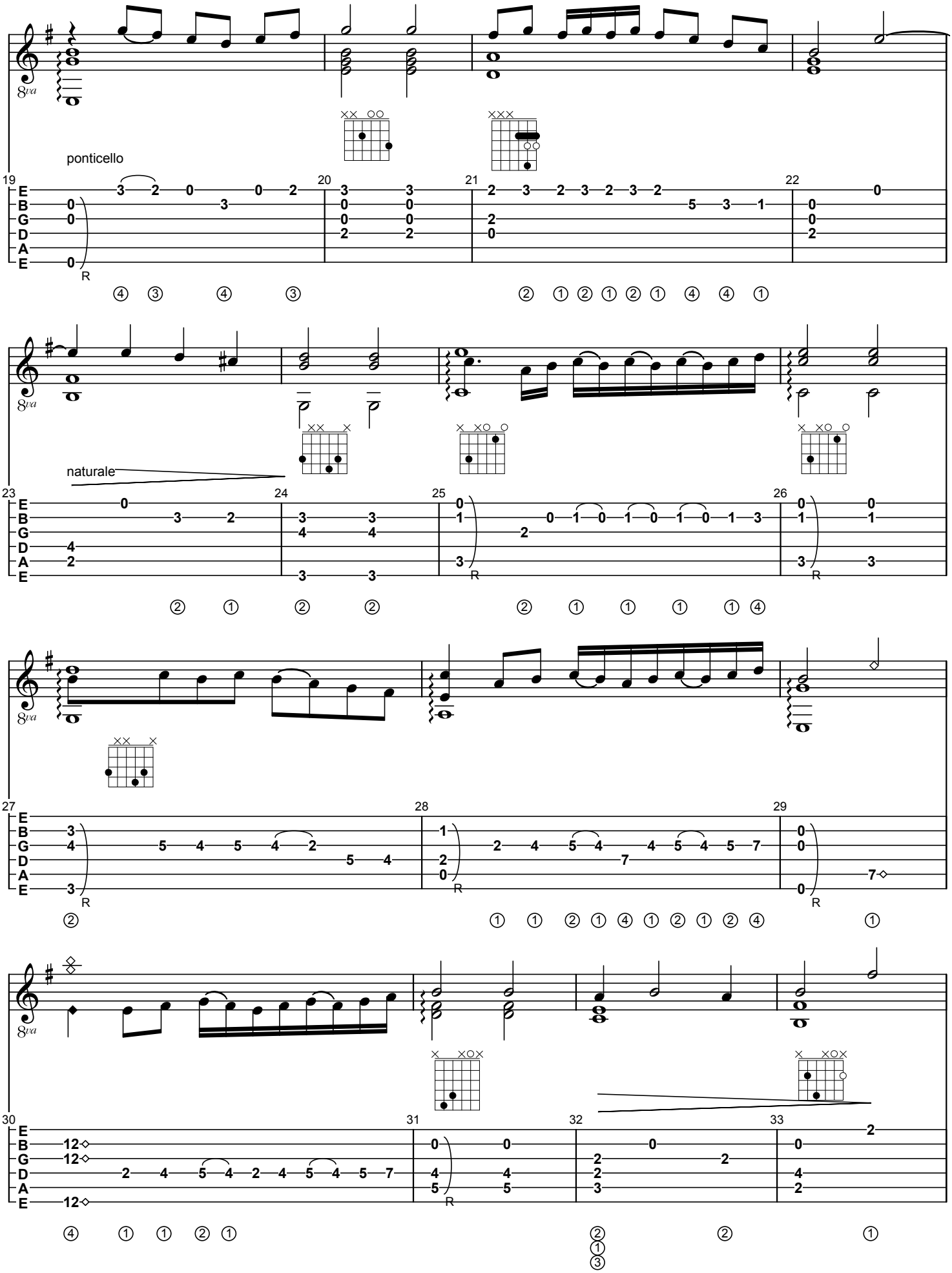
Cancion del Emperador

Luys de Narvaez (1500-1560)

Ornamental Version

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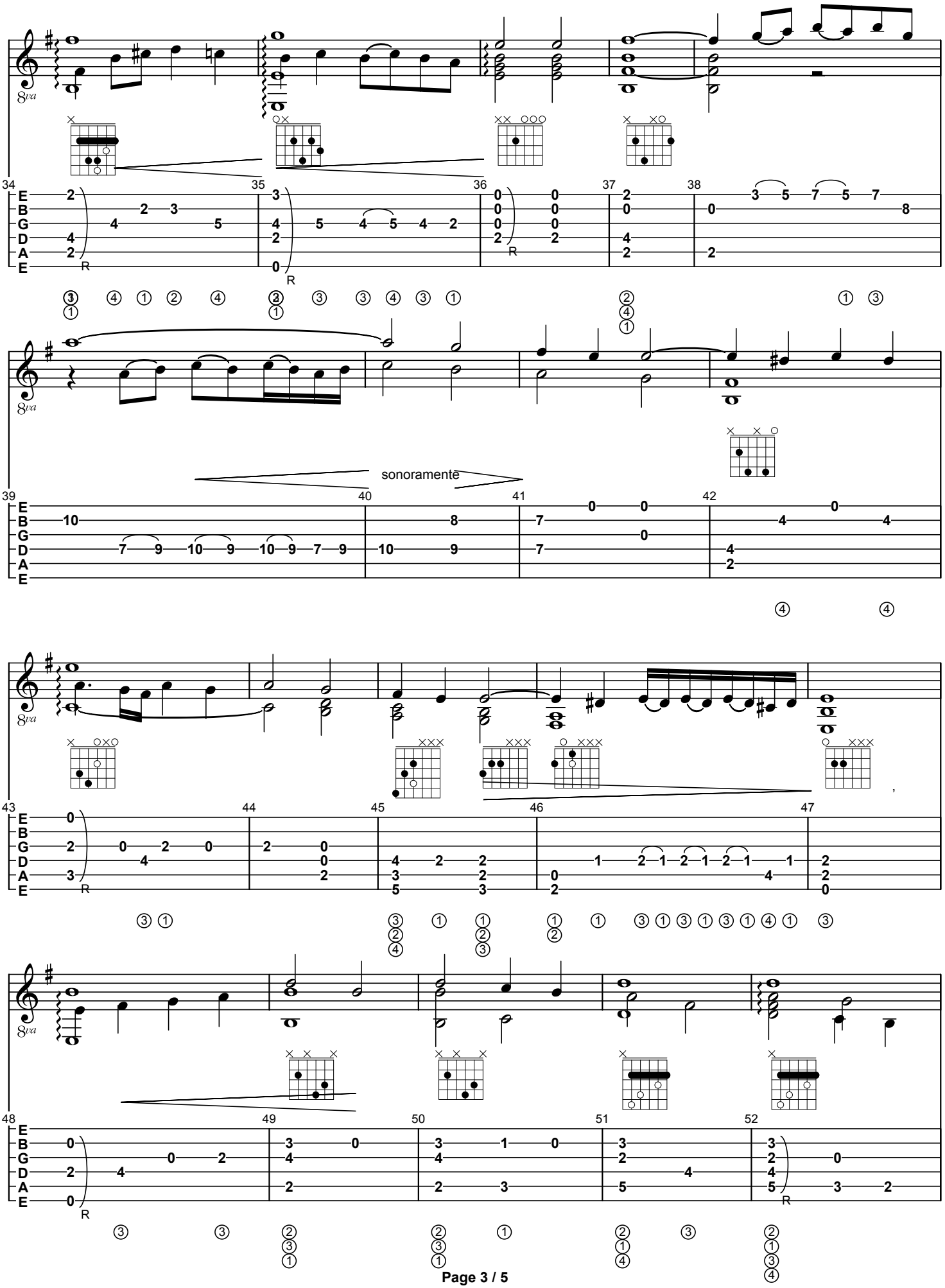
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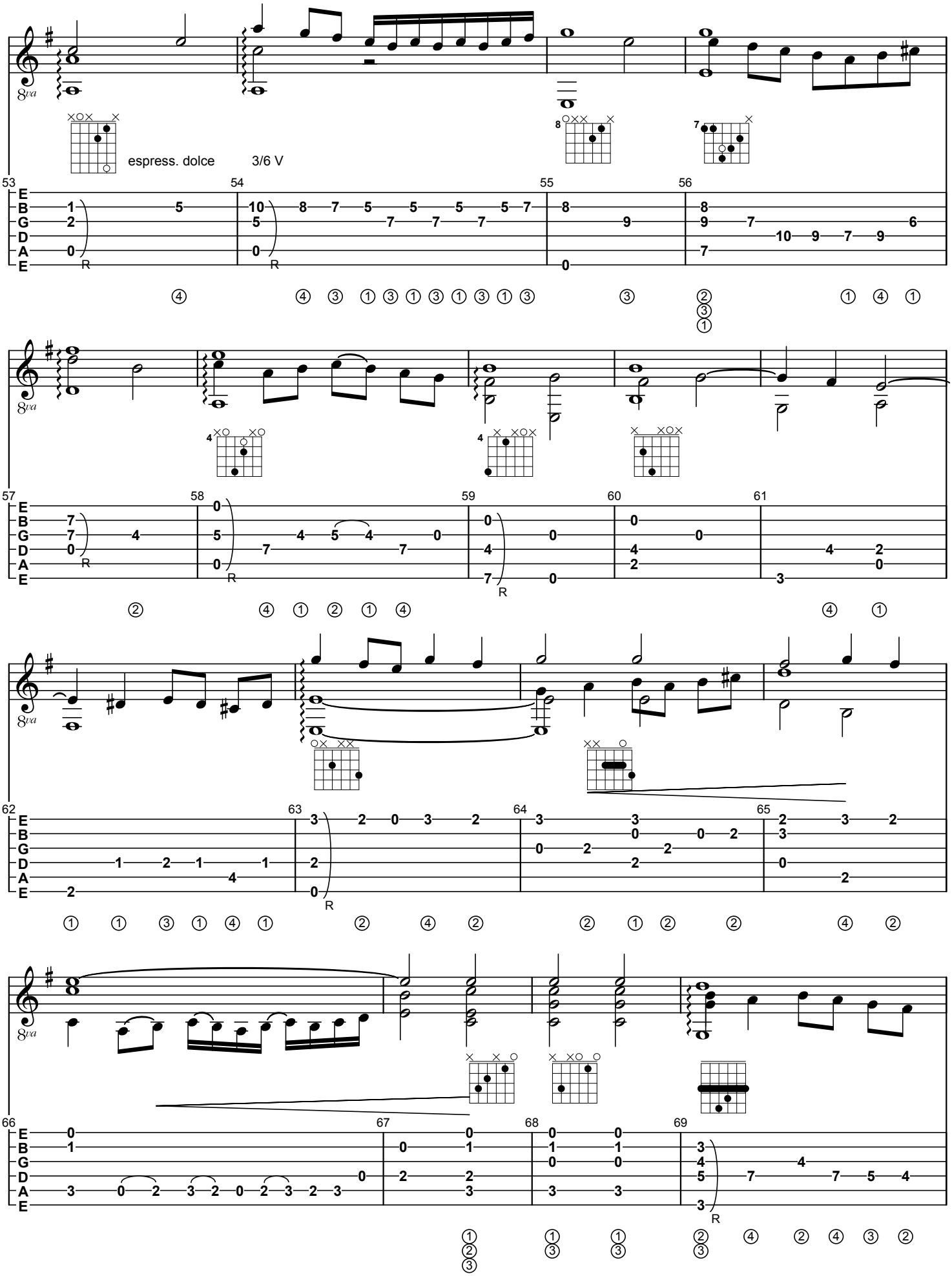
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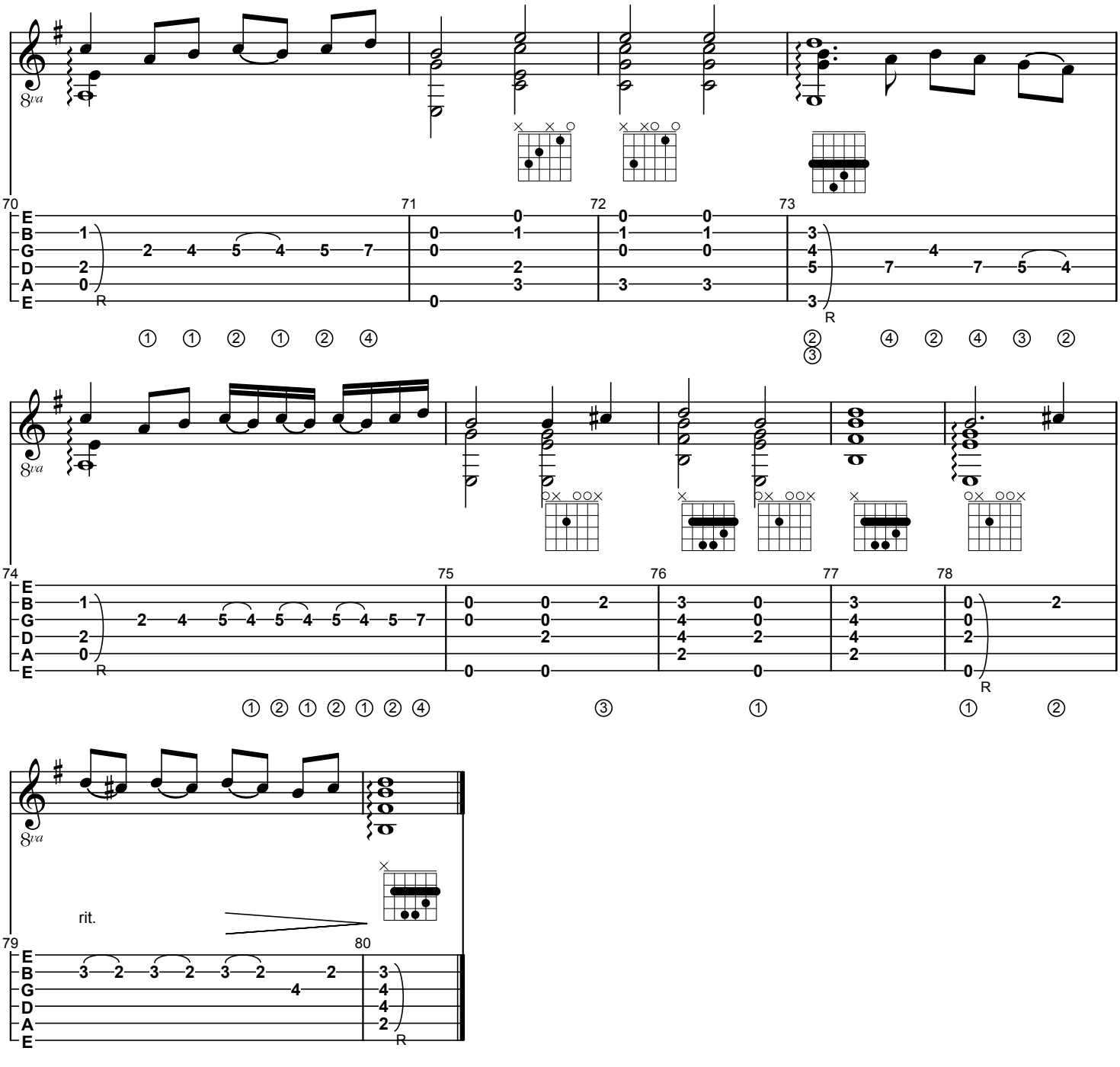

Cancion del Emperador (The Emperor's Song) is from the book of vihuela compositons "Los seys libros del Dephin de musica de cifras para taner Vihuela" (published in Valladolid in 1538) by Luys de Narvaez, who was court vihuelist to King Phillip II of Spain. It is an instrumental arrangement of the song "Mille Regretz" (A Thousand Regrets) by Josquin de Pres (c.1440-1521), which was said to be the favorite of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V (hence the name, "The Emperor's Song"). Because its primary techical demands are in terms of its legato requirements, it makes a good warm-up piece. For example, Segovia opened his Sunday March 11, 1979 performance at the White House for President and Mrs. Carter with it.

This ornamental version is based on research which shows that 16th century vihuela music shoud be ornamented, at least slightly. This version uses two types of ornamentation applied to specific notes and called "graces". First, the "groppo" is a cadential trill that takes place between the tonic and the note a half step below. It starts on the tonic and ends by passing to the third below the tonic and returning stepwise (see measure 79). Second, the "tremolo" is a rapid alternation between a main note and its upper or lower neighbor (see measures 13,21,25,28,30,39,46,54,66, and 74). During the Renaissance, ornamentation was optional rather than obligatory (as it became in the Baroque). Segovia played this piece without ornamentation. This alternate version shows how it might actually have been played in Renaissance practice.