ALEX DE GRASSI
GUITAR COLLECTION

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The music in this book was originally conceived without any thought as to how it would appear as a collection of dots on a page. These guitar pieces generally started out as intuitive improvisations in unusual 'open' tunings. The discovery of new voicings and sonic textures often provided the basis for developing something more 'composed' that eventually jelled into a more or less 'fixed' piece. I think of them as impressions, stories, and portraits that have filtered through me, through my fingers, and then through the guitar and back into the ether again. In short, a clear method behind the writing has never revealed itself. However, I have made some observations over the years about style, form, and some of the technical devices which may shed some light on bringing these pieces back to life from the printed page.

While some pieces like "Children's Dance" and "Southern Exposure" come close to having a recognizable song form or an even number of measures in a given section, the general trend is towards a more convoluted form that repeats fragments of itself as it moves from beginning to end. I have generally opted to write out sections that might have been printed as a partial repeat or second and third coda so as to avoid confusion for the reader. For that reason, many pieces will appear long in print even if they are relatively short.

Perhaps the most dominant stylistic character of these pieces is the way the melodies, countermelodies, and motifs seem to emerge and disappear from a fabric of arpeggios and chord shapes. The process of transcribing has forced me to choose whether notes belong to a melody, an inner voice, a bass line, an arpeggio, or some combination thereof. It is fairly common in this music for a melody to split into two (ie. "McCormick," "Causeway") or for a bass note or notes to function as part of the melody (ie. "Slow Circle"). The final transcription never seems to entirely describe the total effect, but, I have tried (with the help of my editor) to show in the notation what is not always so obvious in the tablature.

I like to make the visual analogy between the 'depth of field' concept used in photography and my style of playing. Some notes are in the 'foreground,' others in the 'middle ground,' and others even less present are heard in the 'background.' In reality, there are infinite degrees in-between which give the music a continuous 'depth of field' or three dimensional quality. The extent to which this 'depth of field' is achieved in performance depends on how the individual notes are accented. I think of this as a 'hierarchy of accents.' Not only are some passages loud and others soft, but, within any given phrase there is considerable variation in how hard individual notes are played. We considered developing a system for ranking individual notes within this 'hierarchy of accents' for this book, but, ultimately we felt that the end result would look overcrowded in print. So, we simply used traditional accent marks. The notes in parenthesis are to be played extremely softly; they usually exist only for subtle rhythmic purposes and may or may not fit into one of the 'voices' of the music.

A friend of mine once dubbed my style 'guitar pointillism,' after the turn of the century style of the neo-impressionist painters in which a juxtaposition of different colored and sized dots or points combine to create the overall hue and texture. These 'pointillistic' or 'depth of field' qualities are readily heard in the pieces "Mirage" and "Turning." In "Mirage" the melody is often played as the accented up-beat and seems to 'pop-out' of an endless series of arpeggios which have their own internal 'hierarchy of accents.' Sometimes the same note played in the same position is a mere inner voice and then one beat later it is heard as a part of the melody (see performance notes), resulting in a layered or overlapping sound. In "Turning" the melody might be though of as 'foreground,' while the inner voice motifs create a rhythmic 'background.' The bass line and countermelodies fill the 'middleground.'

Timbre, or tone color, also plays a big role in how these pieces sound. The range of shading from bright to dark achieved by playing (right hand) near the bridge or up by the sound-hole will add a lot of character. Again, in "Turning," the inner voice 'echoes' the melody (see performance notes) when it is played *metalico* in juxtaposition to the warmer sound of the melody. This is also true on the third page of "Inverness." The fluid transition back and forth between the two tone colors adds a sense of movement to the passage.

Most of these pieces are written for 'open-tunings.' The use of these tunings tends to scramble the logic used in standard tuning and allows for unusual chord and arpeggio voicings. Open-tunings also reinforce certain resonances in the guitar. The contrast between open and fretted strings often becomes a dominant character of the pieces. Open strings are often used to sustain long notes, while fretted notes can take on a vibrato, staccato, or muted quality. I tend to let many notes notes resonate or 'ring-out,' finding their own natural duration within the above mentioned 'hierarchy of accents.' I have tried to notate these durations where possible. some pieces like 'Slow Cirle' might appear to be overwritten in this regard — with lots of extra tied notes — but it is an attempt to reflect the way it actually sounds. In other places I have used more conventional and theoretical durations to avoid confusion.

Finally there may be a few minor variations between the transciptions in this book and the original recorded versions. A slight change in tempo, the omission of a repeat, or the use of an alternate bass note simply reflect my most recent preference for playing the piece. For the most part however, they are true to the original recording.

Children's Dance

CAPO IV

P. 9 MEASURE 6 — THE NOTES IN PARENTHESES ARE "PUSH-OFF" OR RHYTHM NOTES WHICH ARE THEN HAMMERED-ON TO BECOME PART OF THE CHORD WHICH FOLLOWS.

P. 12 MEASURE 10 — THE NOTE IN PARENTHESES "A" IS HAMMERED-ON WITH WITH THE LEFT HAND EVEN THOUGH IT IS NOT PLUCKED WITH THE RIGHT HAND

P. 13 MEASURE 4 — THE F# IS HAMMERED-ON WITH THE LEFT HAND EVEN THOUGH IT IS NOT PLAYED

McCormick

CAPO II

P. 15 MEASURE 6 — TWO "C" NOTES ARE PLAYED; ONE FRETTED USING VIBRATO, THE OTHER IS OPEN AND GIVES A CHORUS EFFECT

P. 20 MEASURE 10 — THE BASS NOTE "B" WAITS FOR THE MELODY TO RETURN TO "F" BEFORE SLIDING DOWN TO "A." THIS MUST BE DONE WITH FORCE TO MAKE THE NOTE SOUND CLEARLY.

Southern Exposure

CAPO II

P. 22 MEASURE 1 — THE OPENING BASS NOTE "F" SLIDES DOWN TO "E" AT THE SAME TIME THE OPEN "C" IS PLAYED IN THE MELODY. THIS MUST BE DONE WITH FORCE TO SOUND THE NOTE CLEARLY. ALTERNATIVELY, THE "E" CAN BE PLUCKED AGAIN WITH THE THUMB.

Western

P. 28 MEASURE 7 — THIS IS THE FIRST OF SEVERAL SECTIONS IN WHICH THE "M" AND THE "I" FINGERS SHOULD BE PLAYED TOGETHER WITH MACHINE-LIKE PRECISION WITH EMPHASIS ON THE OFFBEATS.

Slow Circle

P. 35 MEASURE 2 — THE OPEN 5TH STRING "B" HAMMERS-ON TO THE THE "E" AT THE SAME TIME THAT THE "A" IS HAMMERED-ON BY A HALF BARRE WHICH COVERS THE 6TH STRING EVEN THOUGH THE 6TH STRING IS NOT PLUCKED

P. 35 MEASURE 11 — THE MELODY NOTE "B" SLIDES DOWN TO THE OPEN STRING WITH THE FOURTH FINGER AND THEN THE FIRST FINGER IMMEDIATELY SLIDES BACK UP TO THE "F"

Causeway

p. 40 measure 6

p. 41 measure 6

The tempo momentarily expands and contracts to let the phrase breathe.

Mirage

p. 54 measure 18

Notice how the "C" is played twice on the second string in this measure: The first time as an eighth note and part of the "inner voice" arpeggio, the second time as an eighth note tied to a dotted half and as part of the melody.

Turning

p. 58 measure 5, 7

p. 59 measure 9, etc.

The two sixteenth notes and the eighth note at the end of the measure are played "metalico" to sound like an echo of the melody note. This becomes a recurrent motif.

Overland

p. 69 measure 6, 11

These slides have no specific destination, only a direction, (up or down) but give the end of the phrase a sense of rapid movement.

p. 69 measure 12

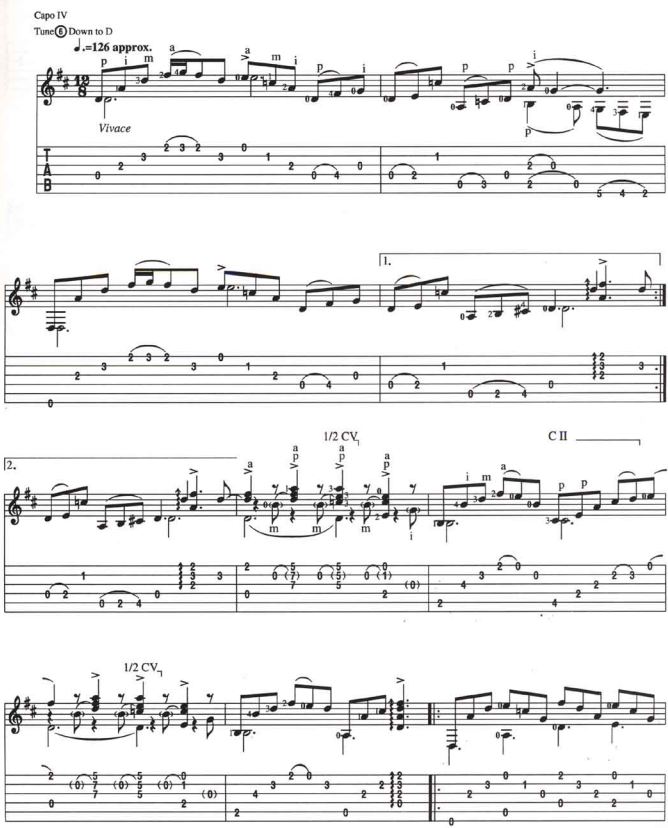
Stop the open second string by fretting at the first fret but don't pluck or sound the string.

A note about the tunings:

The tunings and consequently the notation for "Inverness," "Causeway," and "Turning" can be transposed down from EBEFBE to DADEAD to allow for less string tension. For the same purpose the tuning for "Slow Circle" can be lowered from EBEGAD to DADFGC. Originally, I played and recorded them with the higher tension, but now I find the lower tension preferable depending on the type of guitar used.

Children's Dance

By Alex de Grassi



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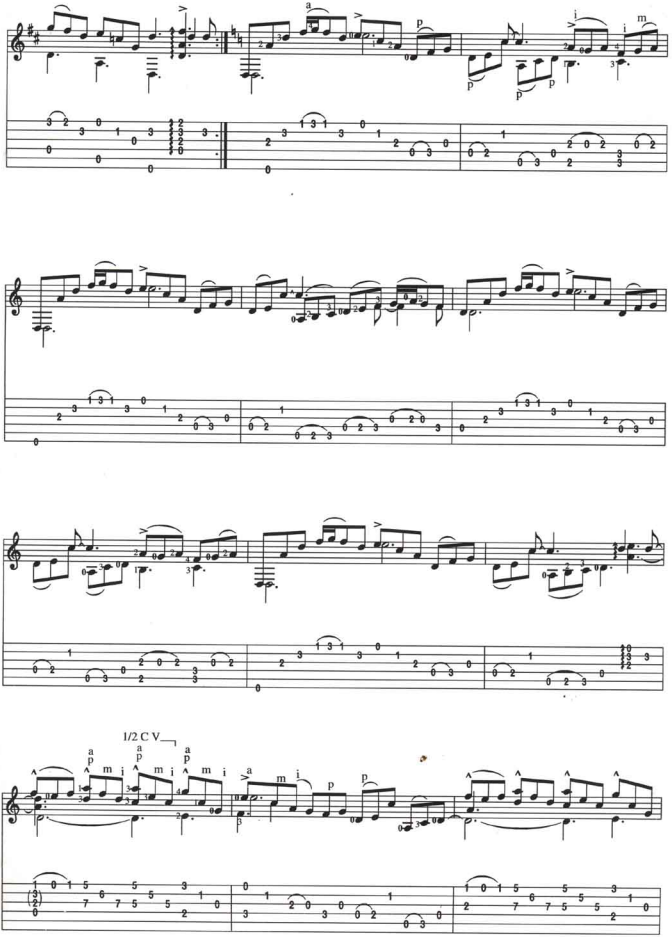
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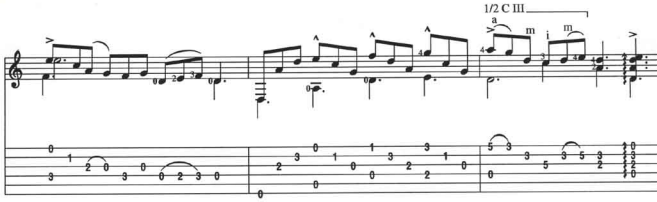
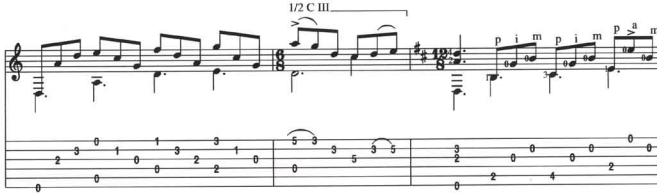
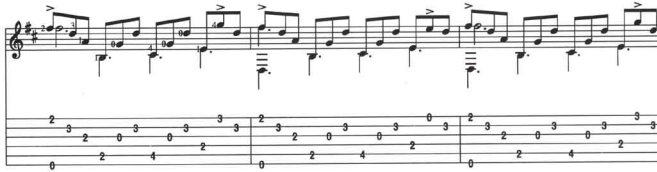
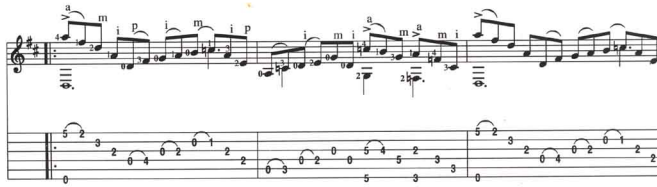
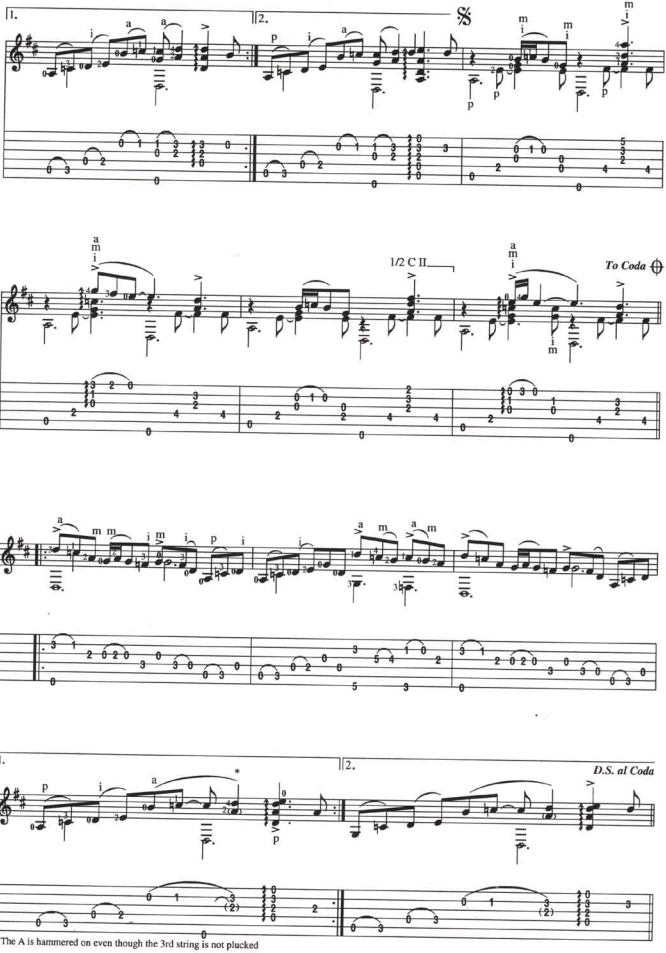

1/2 C III

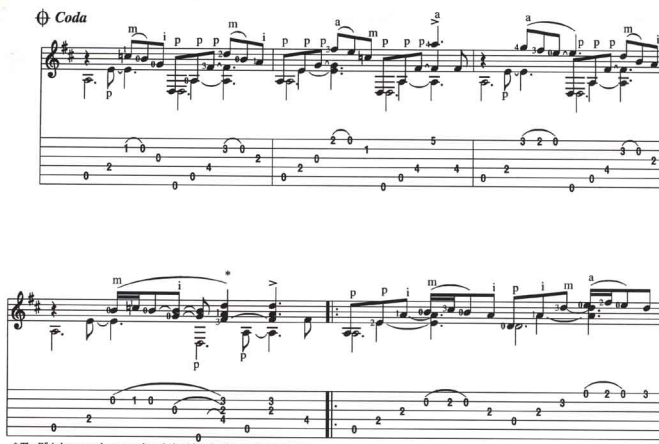

1/2 C III

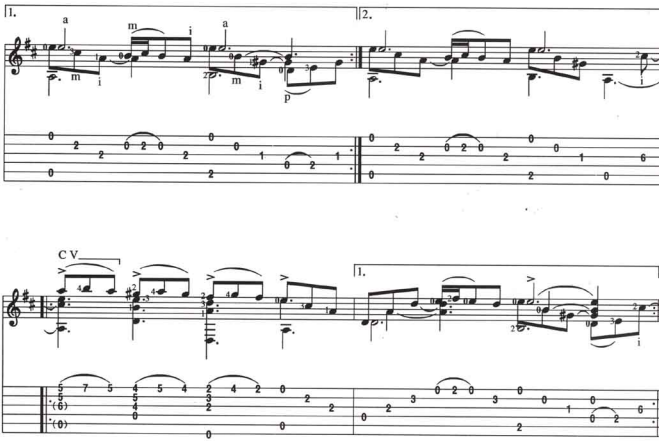


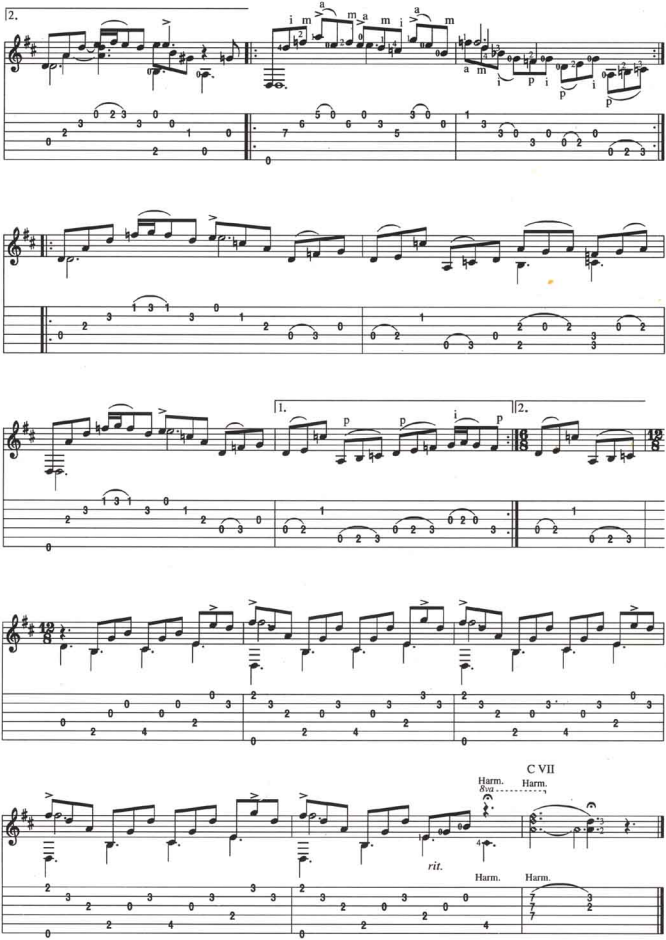




* The A is hammered on even though the 3rd string is not plucked


Coda
* The F♯ is hammered on even though the 4th string has not been plucked


1.
2.
C V
1.


2.
1.
2.
C VII
Harm.
Harm.
8va
rit.
Harm.
Harm.

McCormick

By Alex de Grassi

Capo II

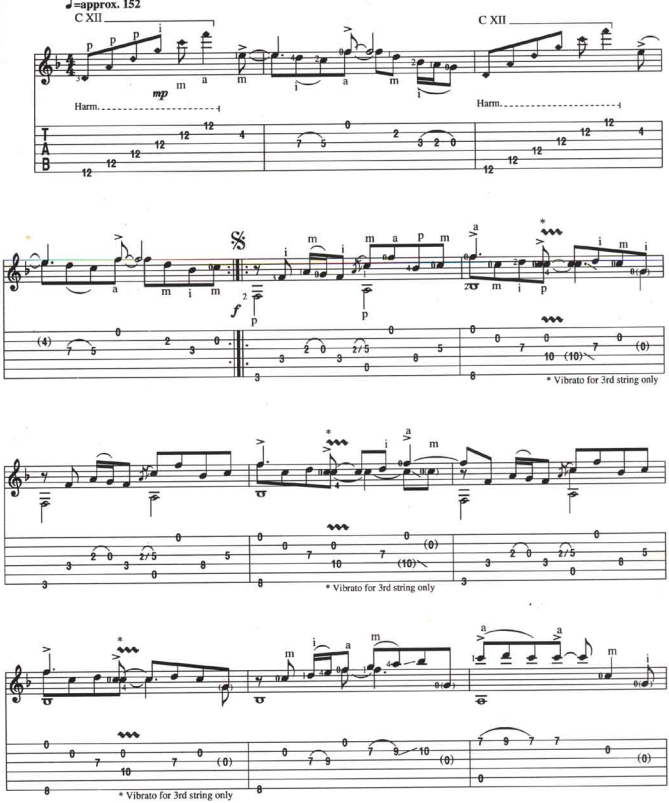
Tuning

①=F ②=C

③=G ④=D

⑤=A ⑥=D

♩=approx. 152



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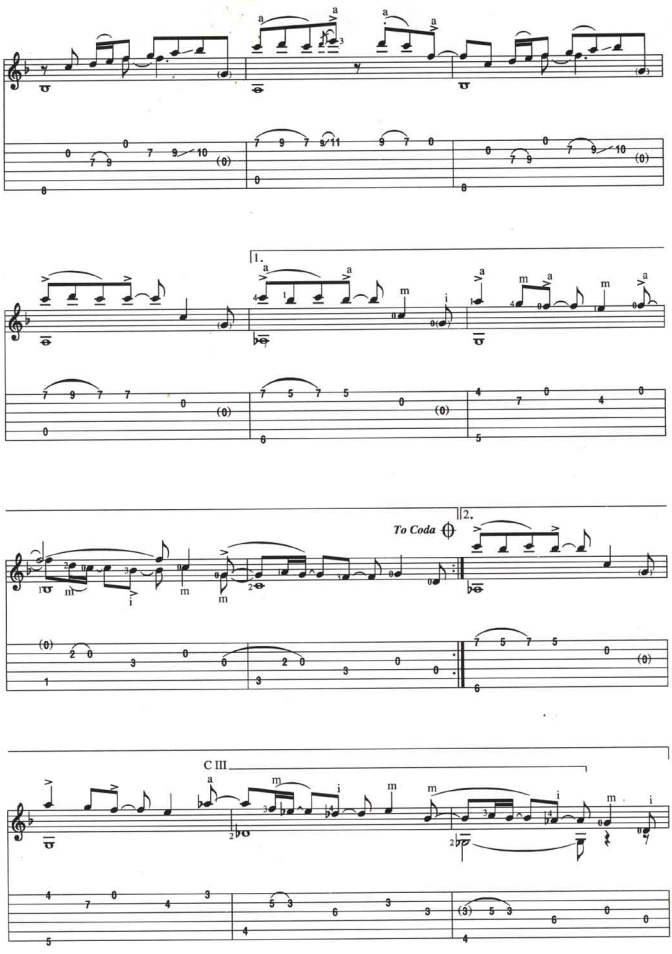
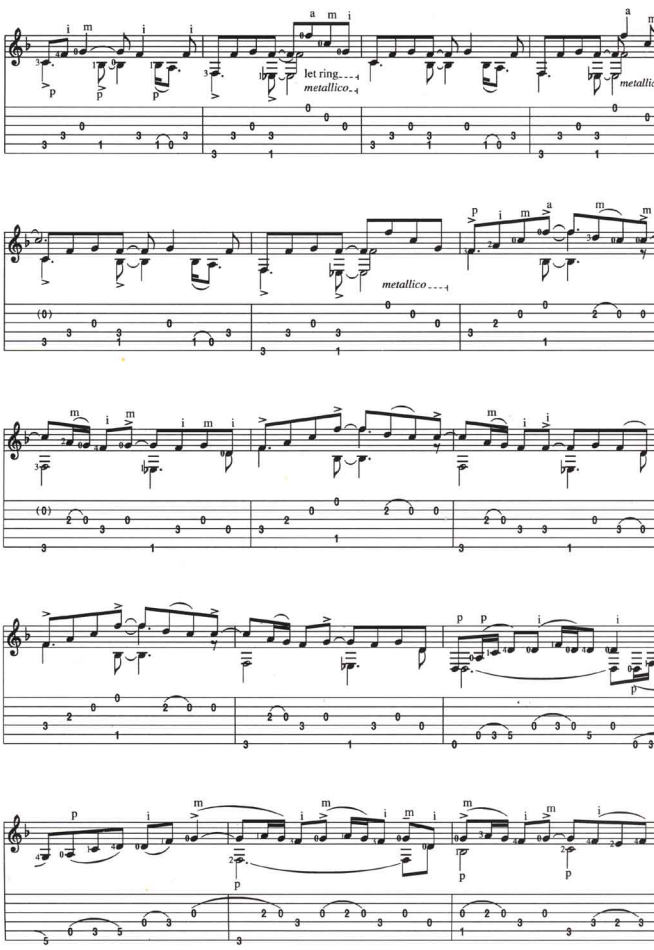
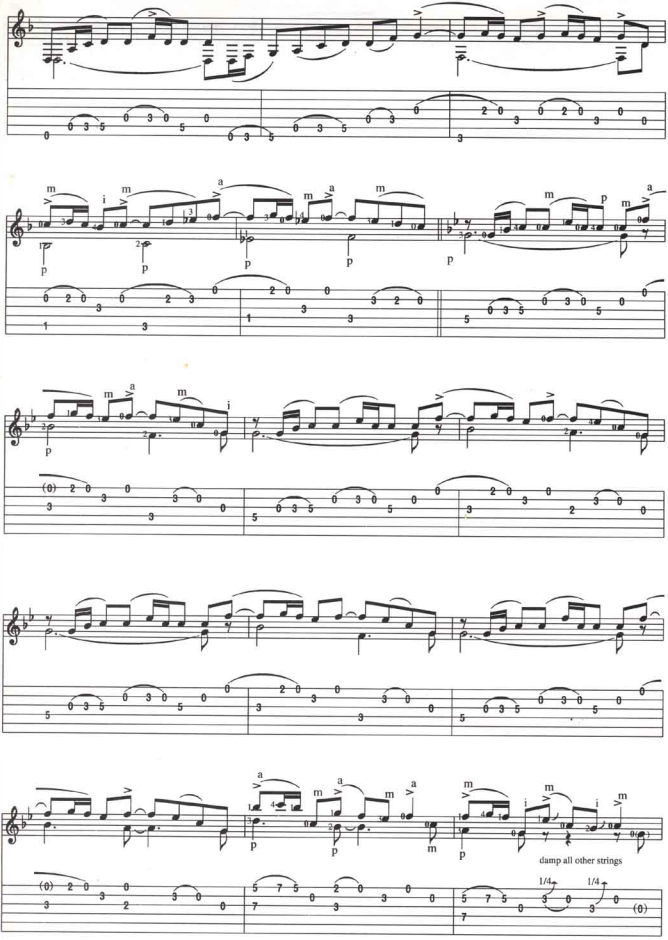
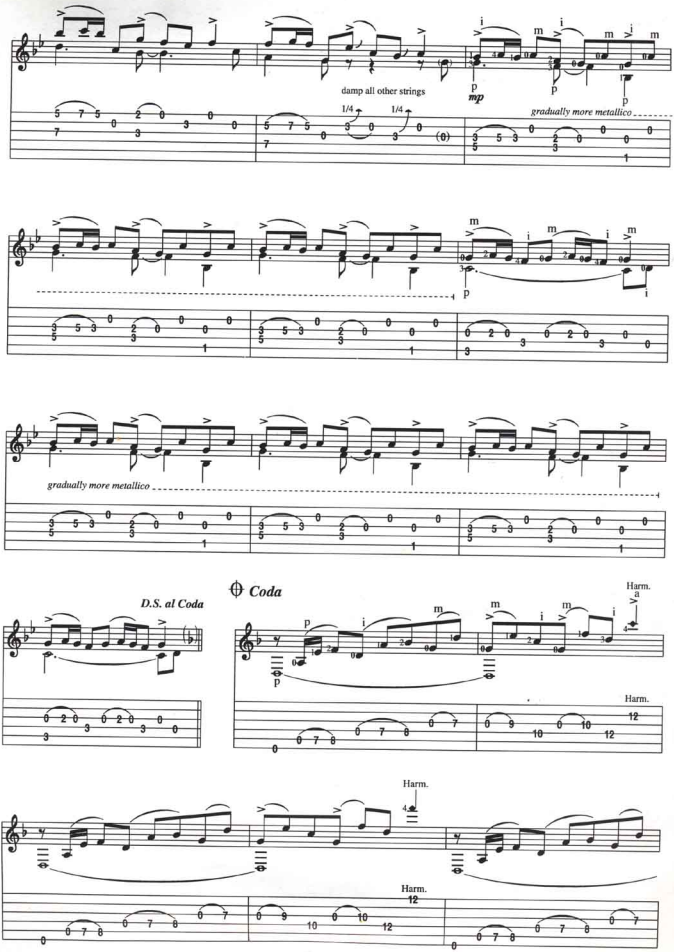
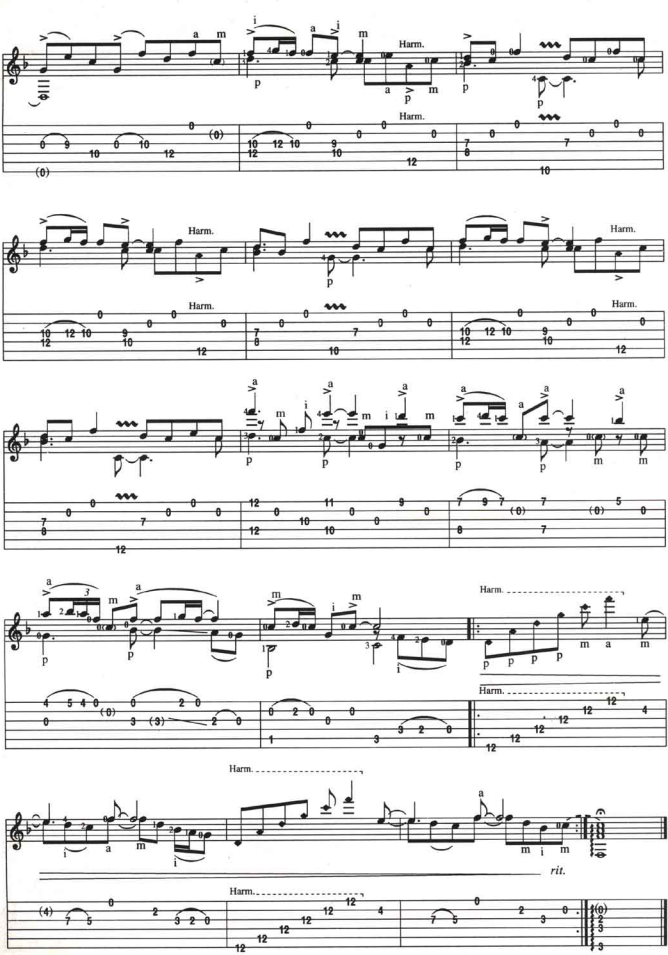

1.
2.
To Coda
C III


let ring
metallico
metallico
metallico
metallico


damp all other strings
1/4
1/4


damp all other strings
mp
1/4
1/4
gradually more metallico
p
gradually more metallico
D.S. al Coda
Coda
Harm.
Harm.
Harm.
Harm.

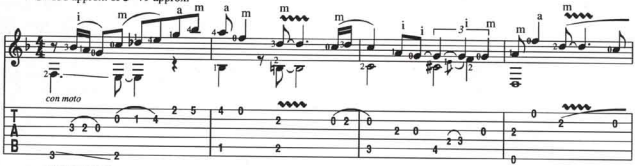

Harm.
Harm.
Harm.
Harm.
Harm.
Harm.
Harm.
Harm.
Harm.
rit.

Southern Exposure

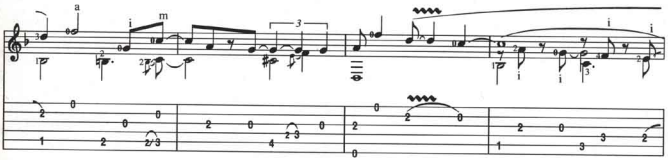
By Alex de Grassi

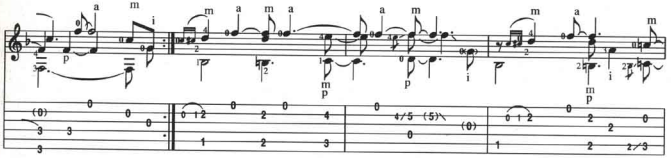
Capo II
Tuning
①=F ②=C
③=G ④=D
⑤=A ⑥=D

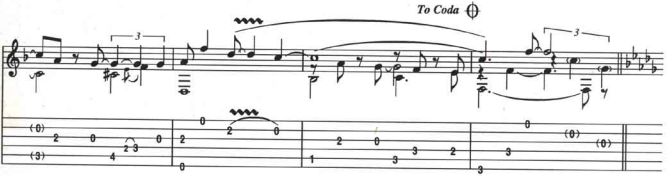
* ♩=158 approx. or 𝅗𝅥=79 approx.



* Felt in cut time







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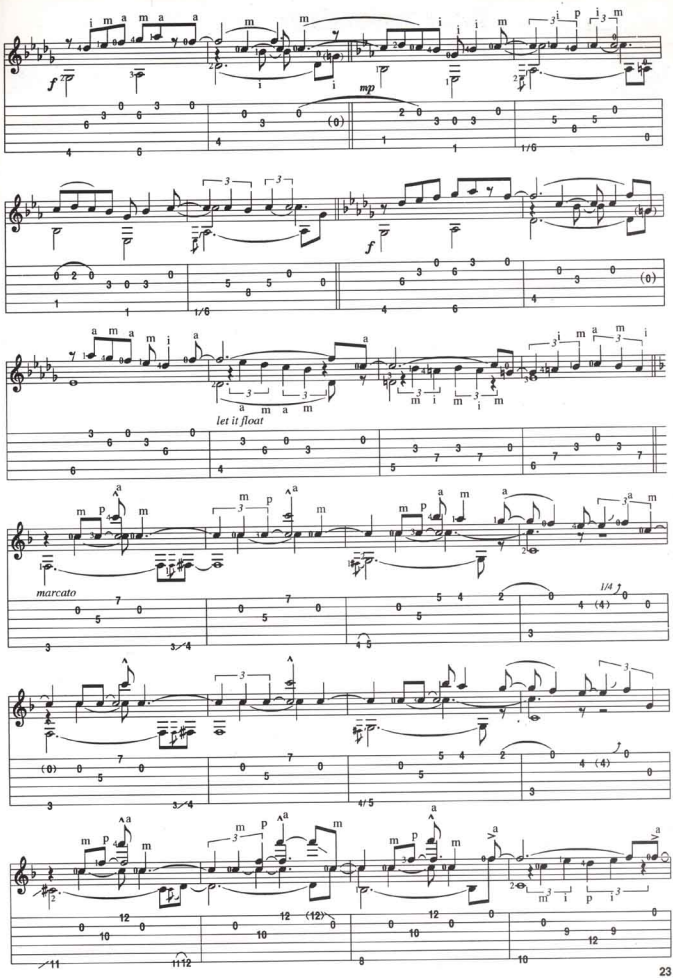
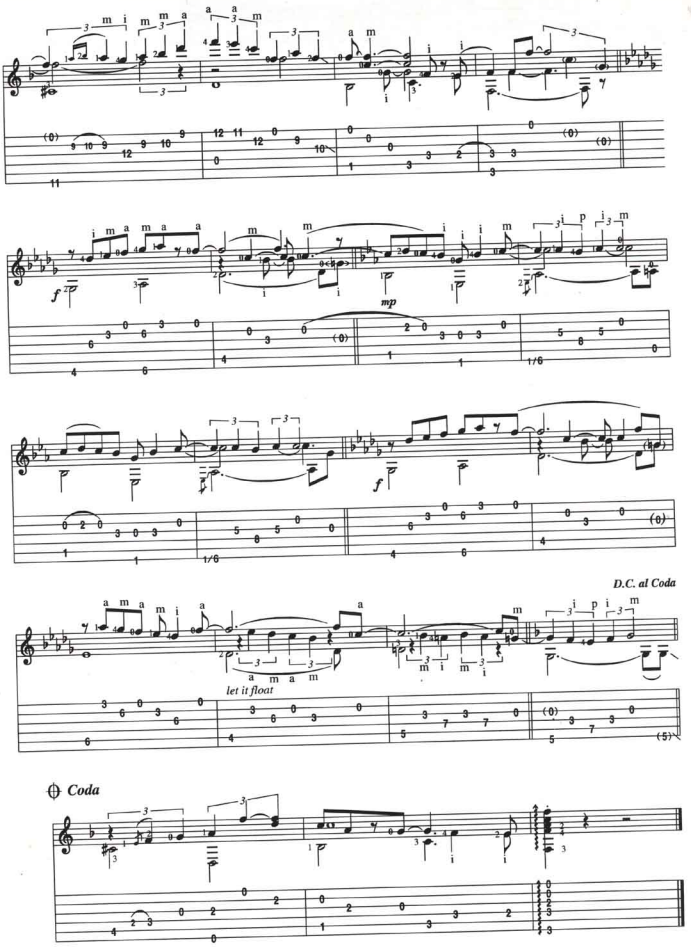

f
mp
f
let it float
marcato


f
mp
f
D.C. al Coda
let it float
Coda

Western

By Alex de Grassi

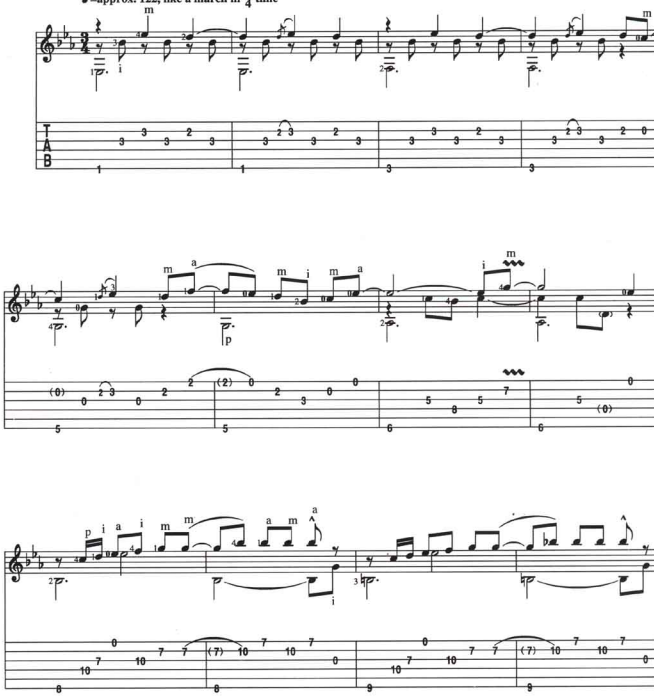
Tuning

①=E♭ ②=C

③=G ④=D

⑤=A ⑥=D

♩=approx. 122, like a march in $\frac{3}{4}$ time



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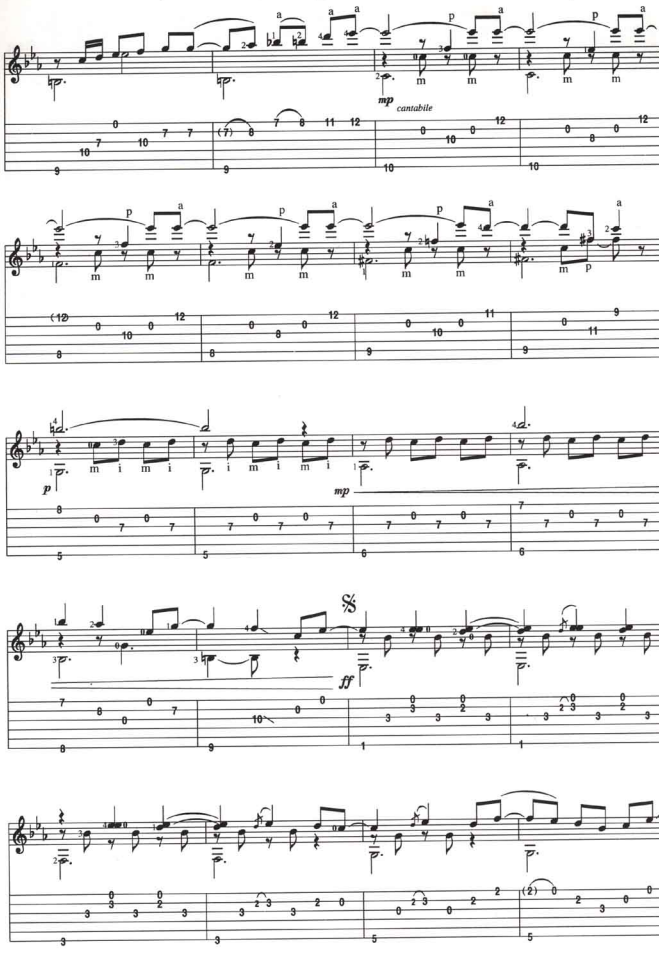
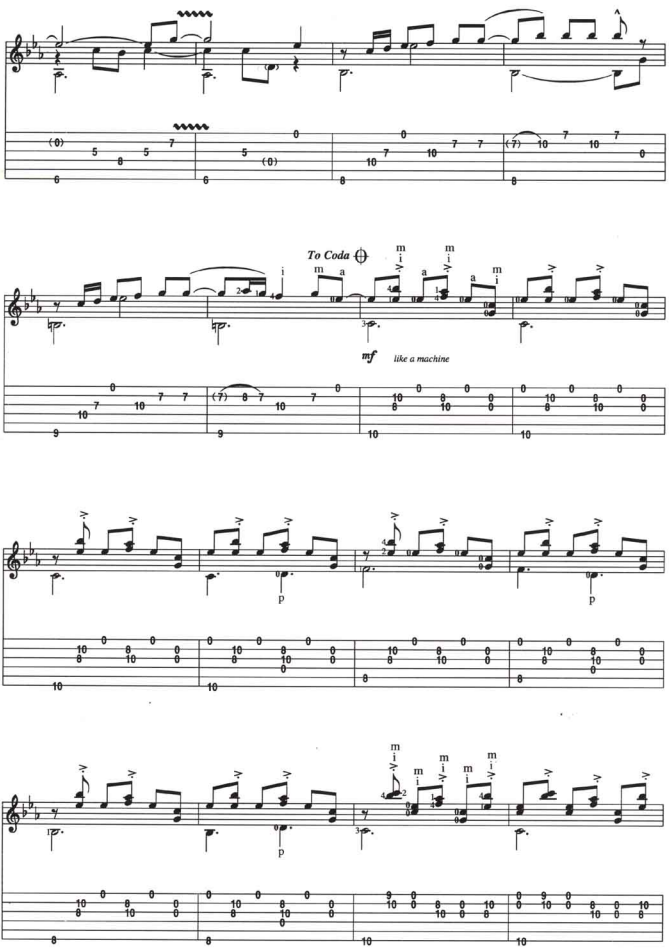
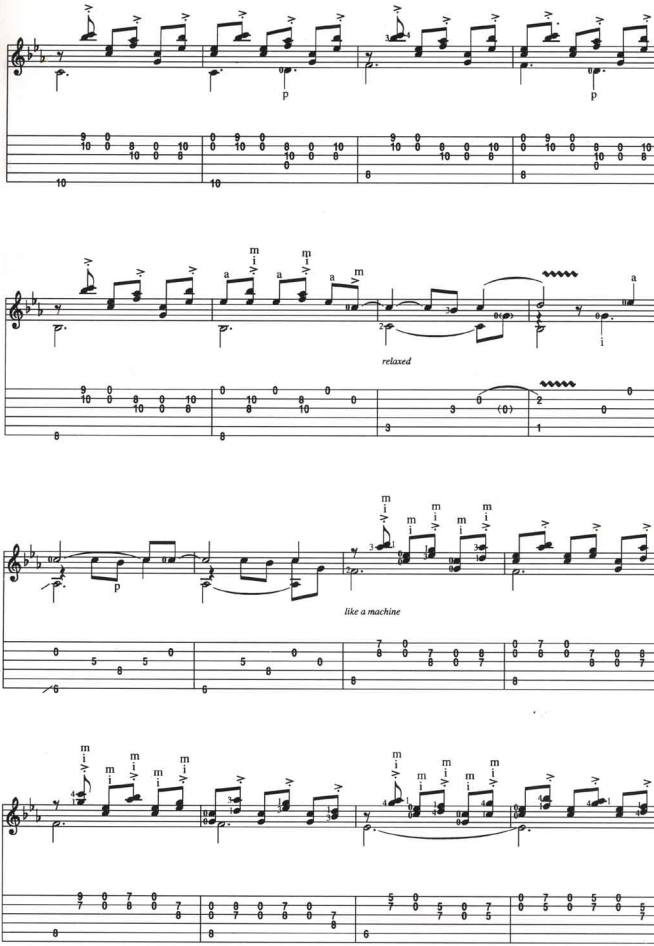
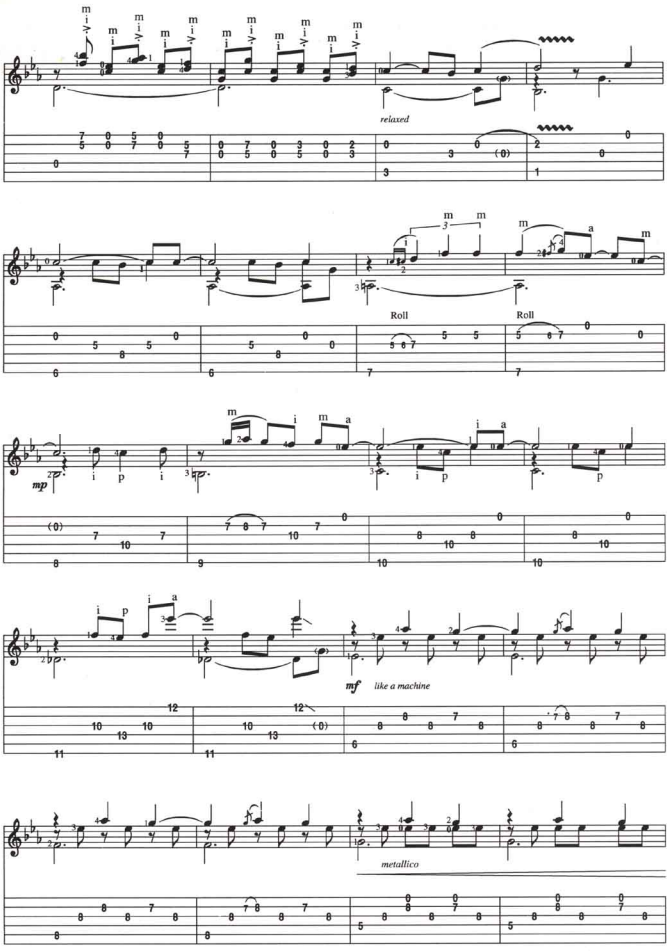
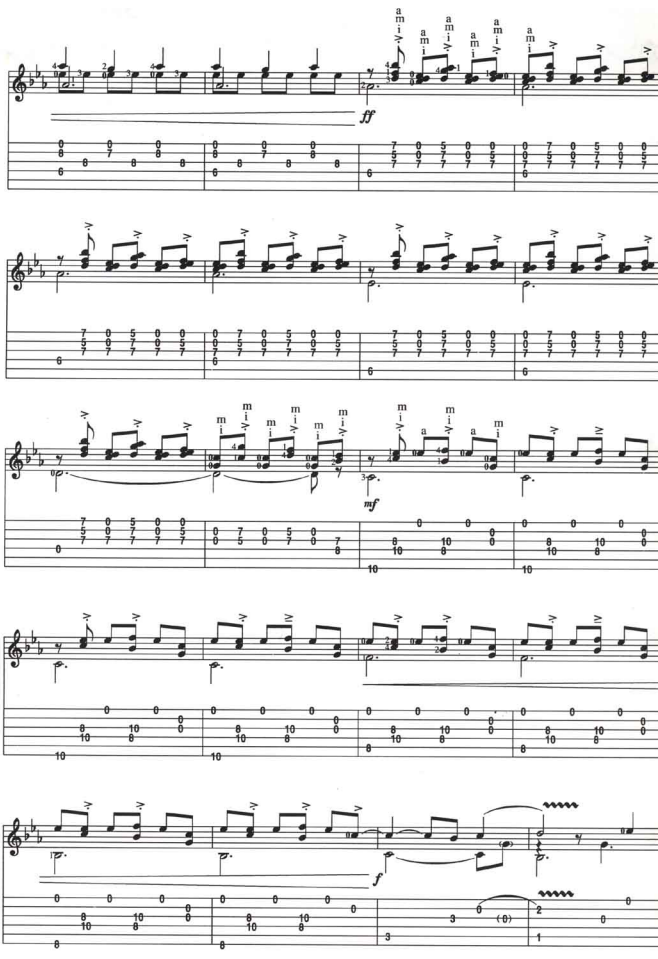
Harm.
Harm. 8va
Harm. Harm.

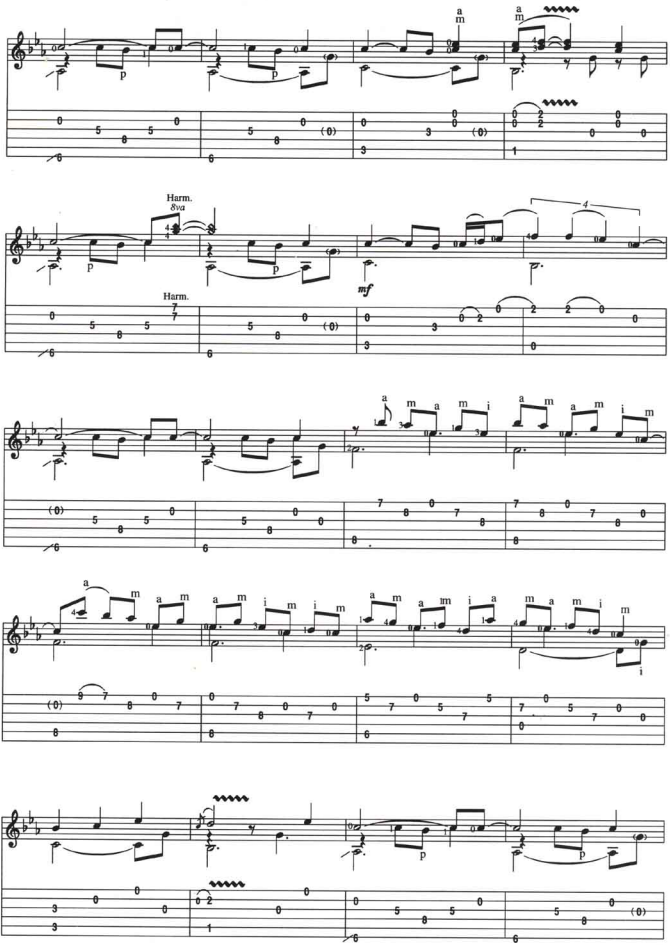

mp
cantable
p
mp
ff

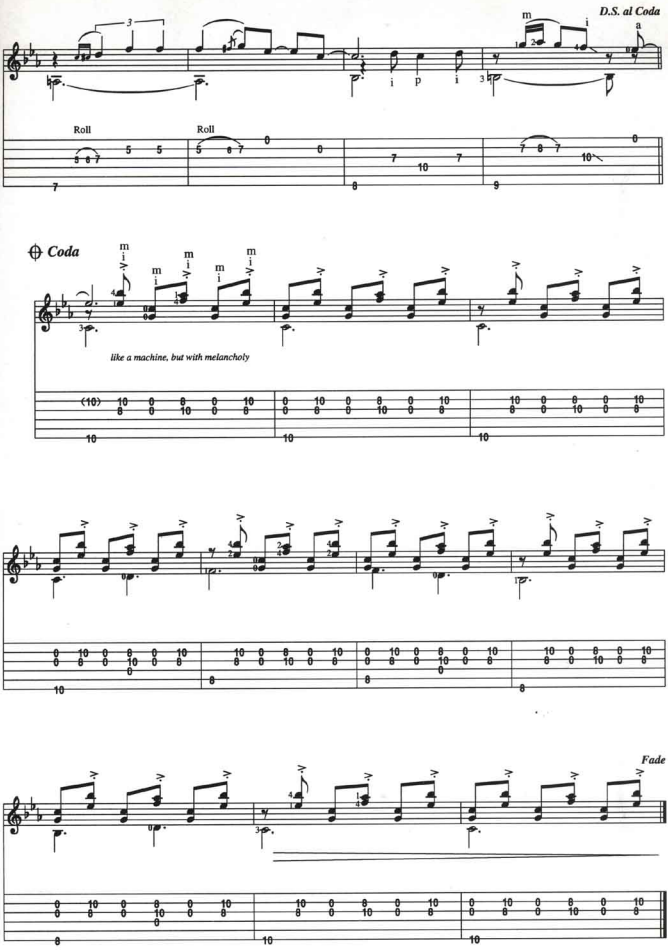

To Coda
mf
like a machine
p
p


p
p
relaxed
like a machine


relaxed
Roll
Roll
mp
mf
like a machine
metallico


ff
mf
f


Harm.
8va
Harm.
mf


D.S. al Coda
Roll
Roll
Coda
like a machine, but with melancholy
Fade

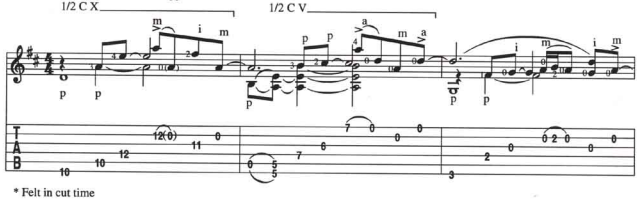
Slow Circle II

By Alex de Grassi

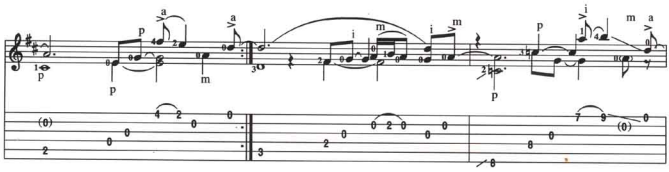
Tuning

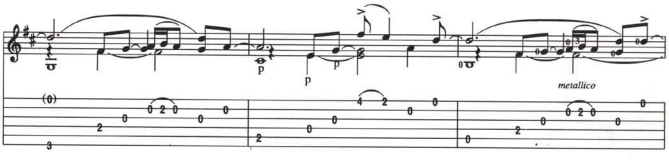
① = D ② = A
③ = G ④ = E
⑤ = B ⑥ = E

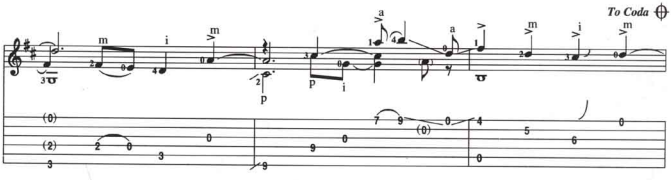
* ♩=146 approx. or ♩=73 approx.



* Felt in cut time







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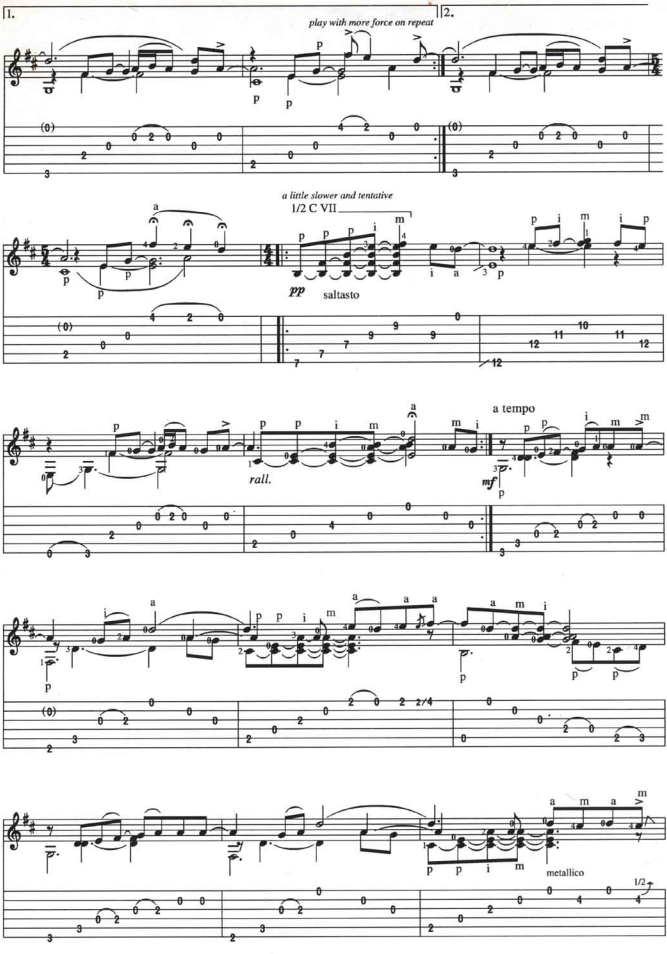
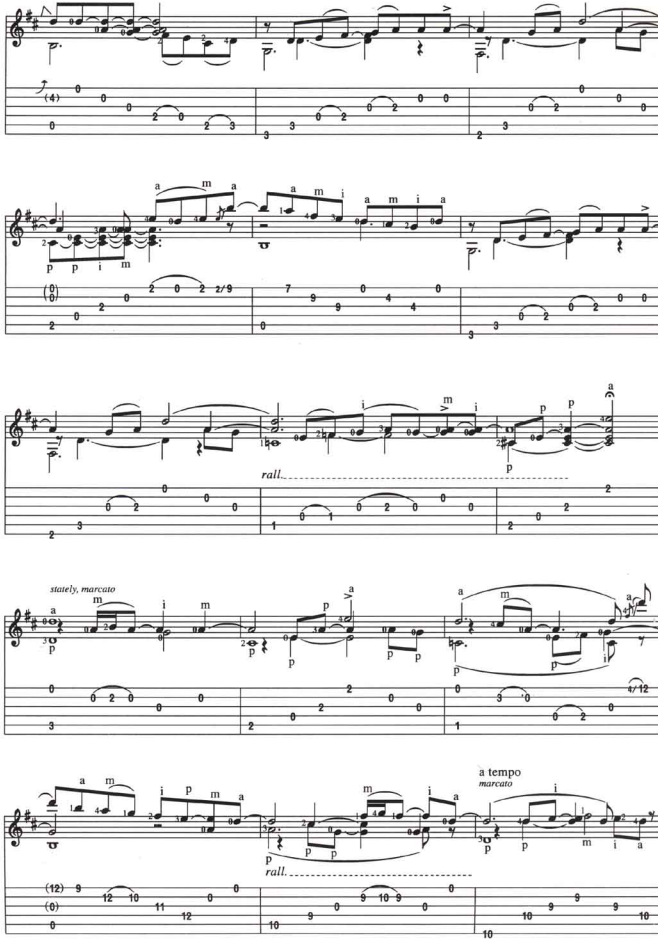
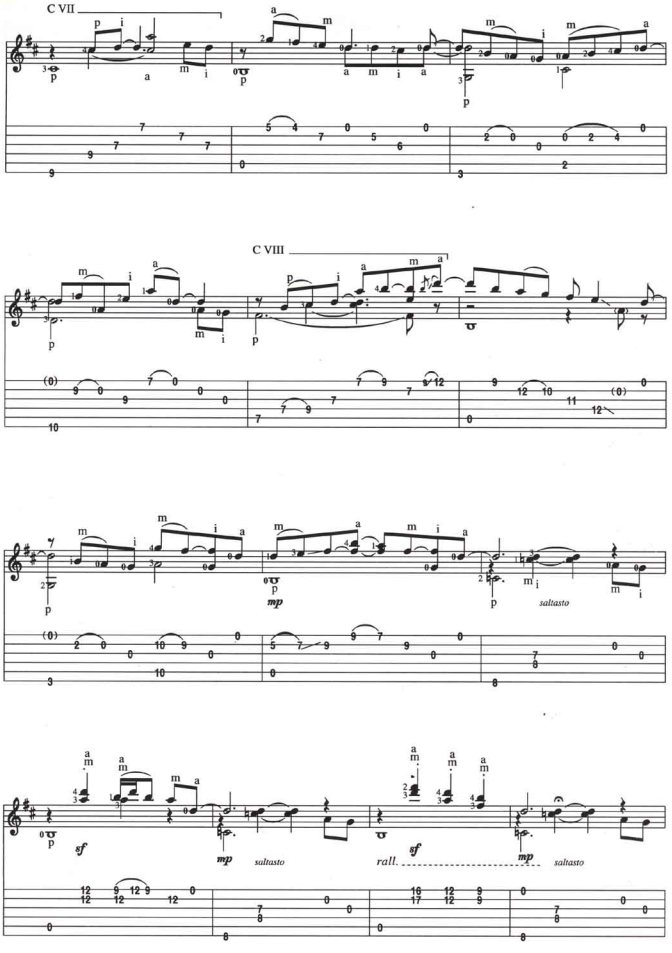
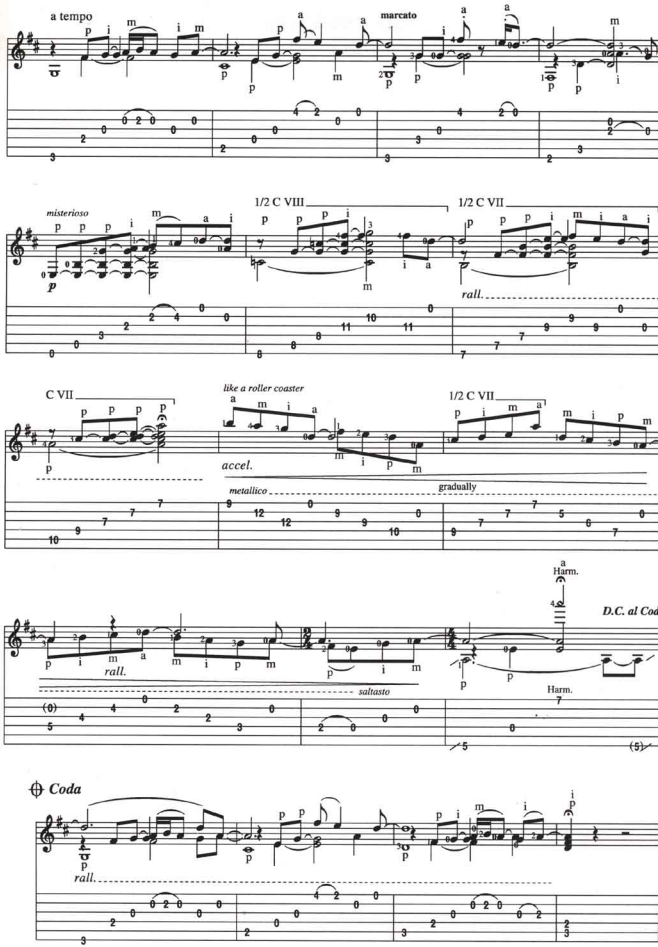

1.
2.
play with more force on repeat
a little slower and tentative
1/2 C VII
saltasto
a tempo
rall.
metallico
1/2

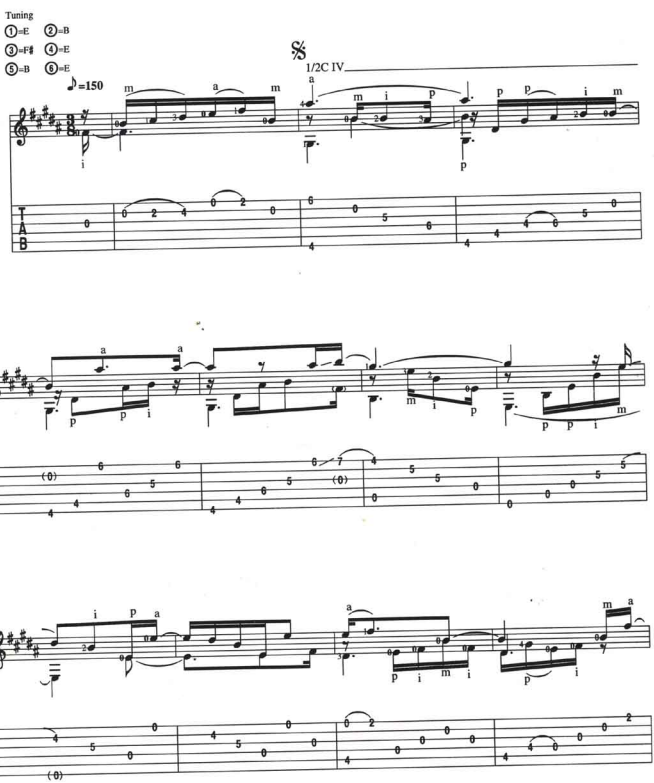

rall.
stately, marcato
a tempo
marcato
rall.


C VII
C VIII
mp
saltasto
sf
rall.
saltasto


a tempo
marcato
misterioso
1/2 C VIII
1/2 C VII
rall.
C VII
like a roller coaster
1/2 C VII
accel.
metallico
gradually
Harm.
D.C. al Coda
rall.
saltasto
Harm.
Coda
rall.

Causeway

By Alex de Grassi



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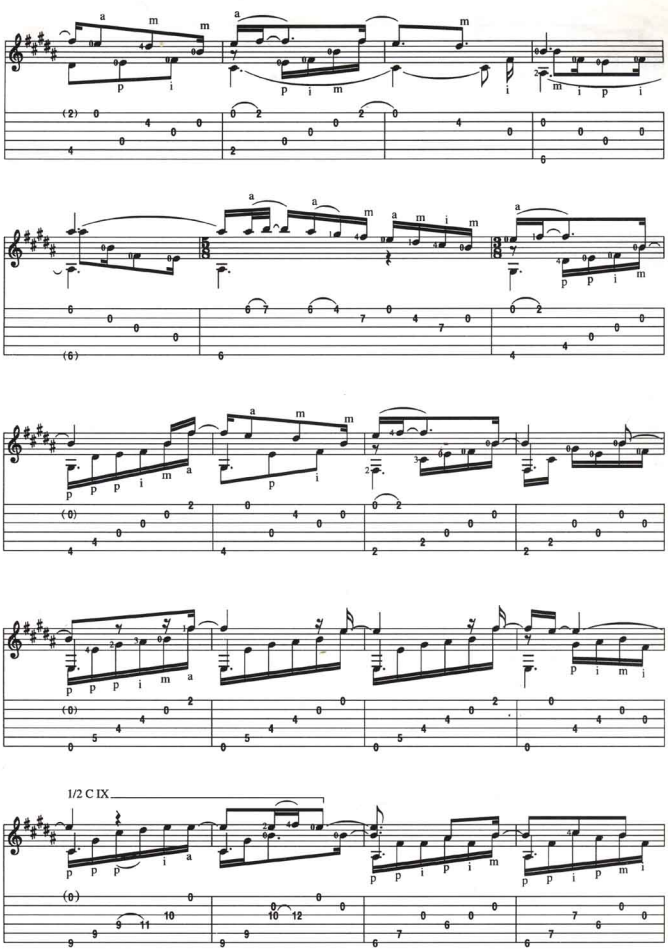
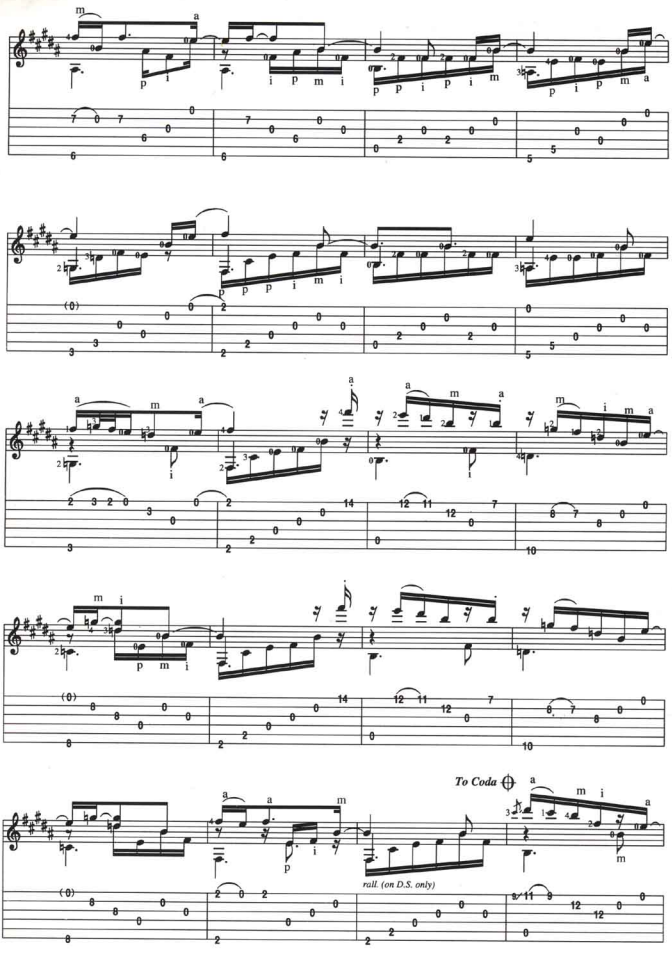
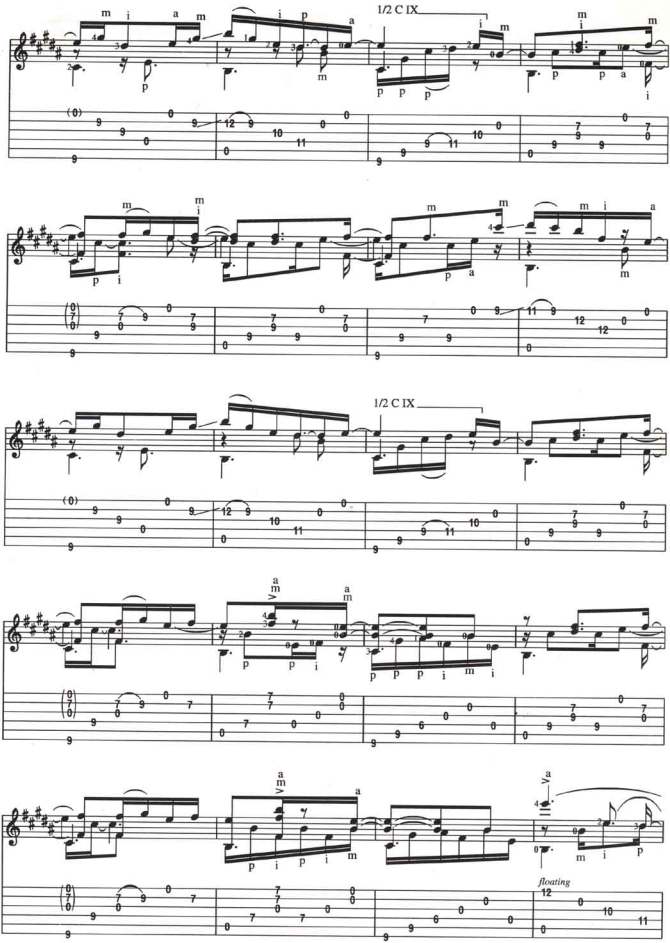
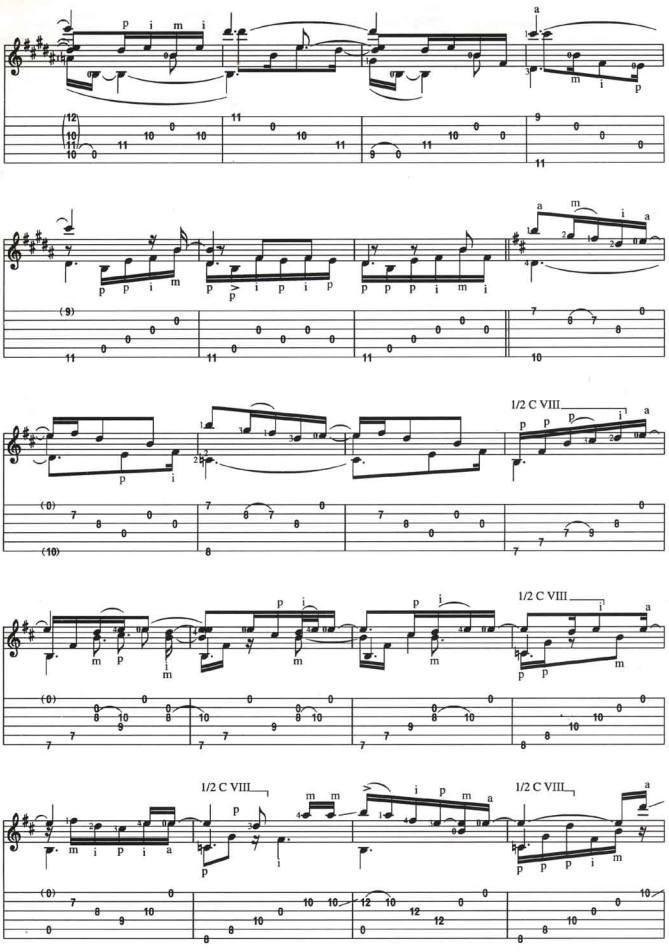
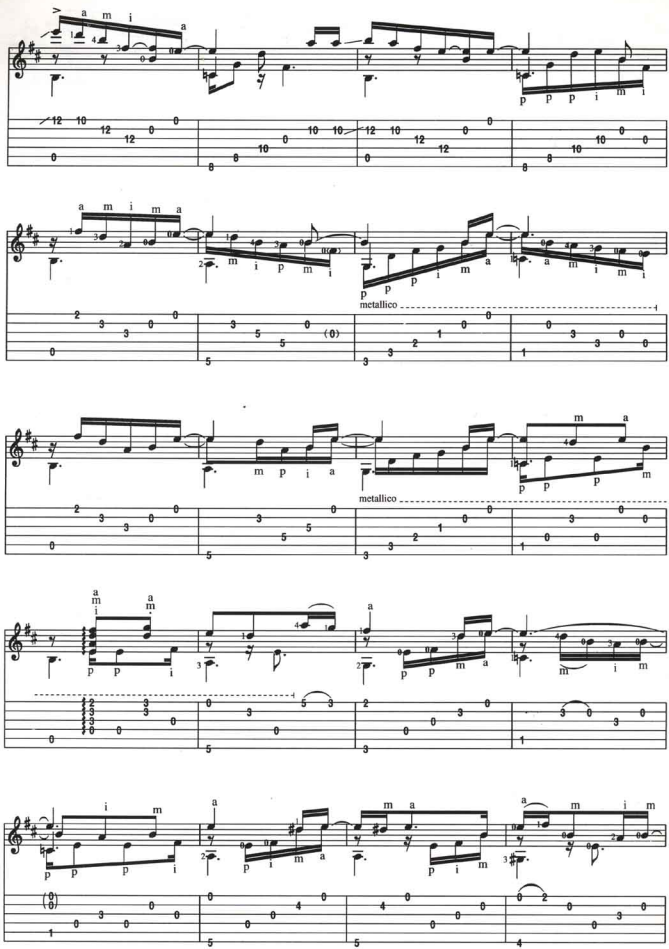
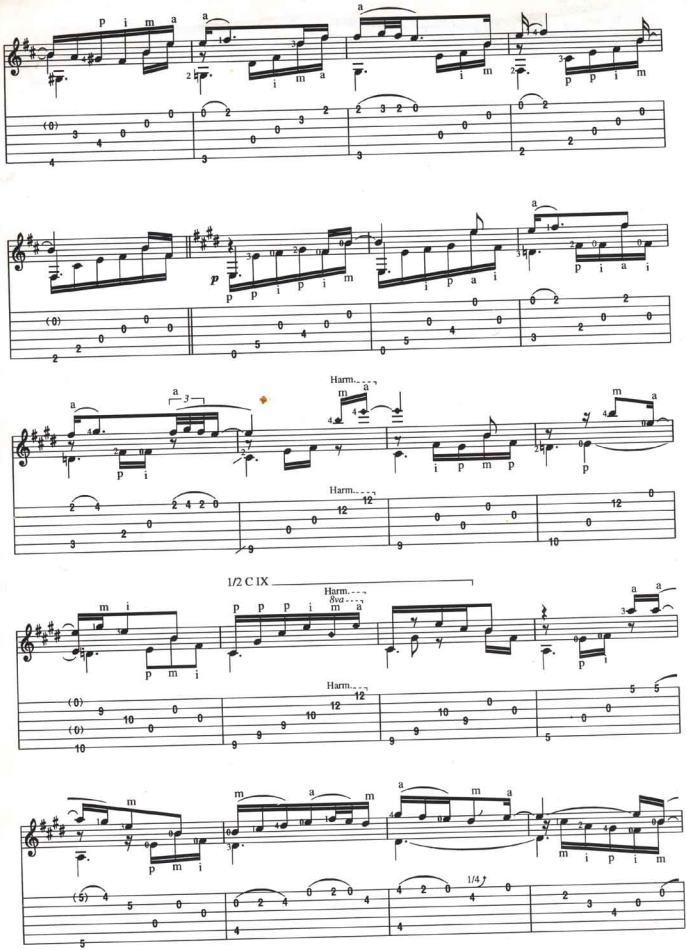

1/2 C IX

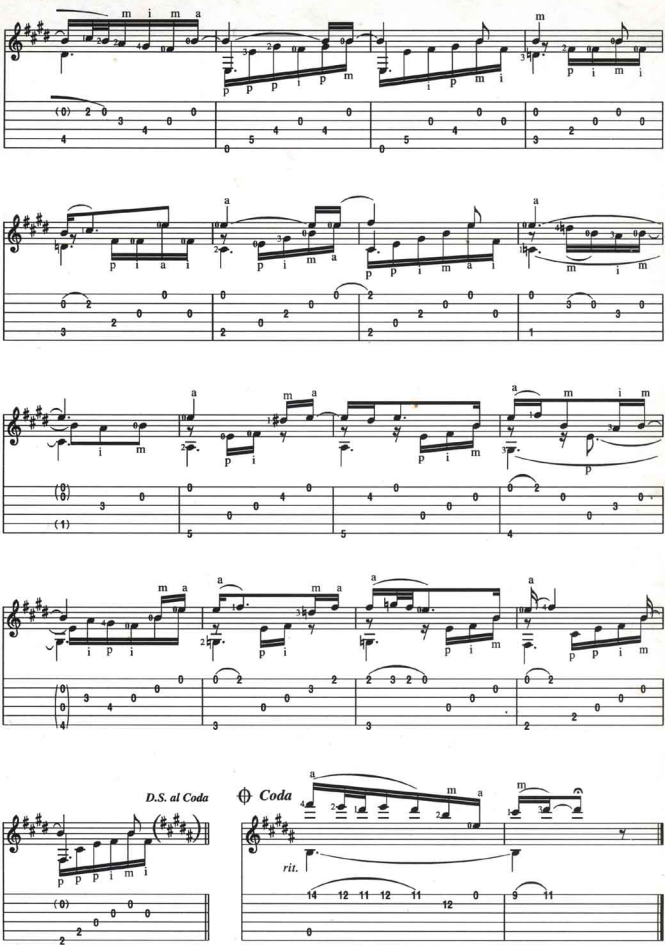

To Coda
rall. (on D.S. only)


1/2 C IX
1/2 C IX
floating


1/2 C VIII
1/2 C VIII
1/2 C VIII
1/2 C VIII


metallico
metallico


Harm.
Harm.
1/2 C IX
8va
Harm.
Harm.
1/4

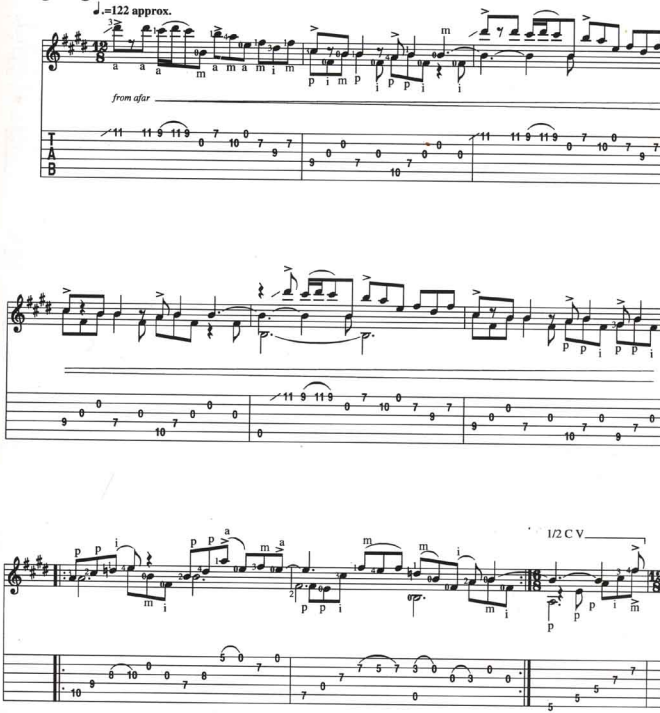

D.S. al Coda
Coda
rit.

Inverness

By Alex de Grassi

Mixolydian Mode in B
Tuning
① = E ② = B
③ = F♯ ④ = E
⑤ = B ⑥ = E

♩.=122 approx.



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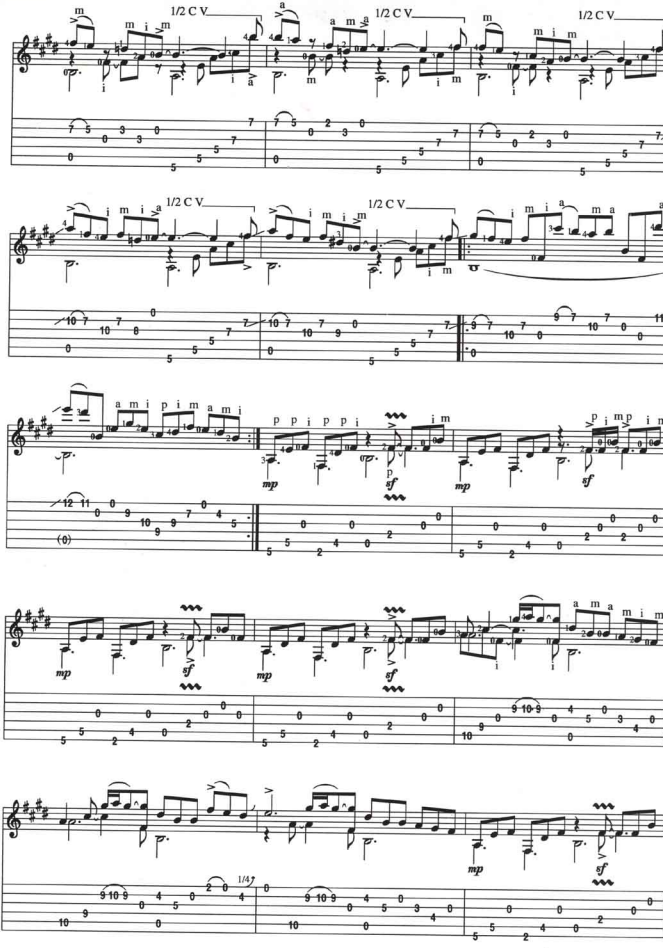
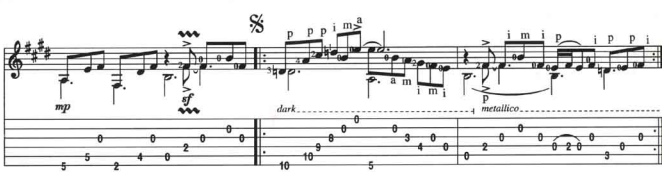
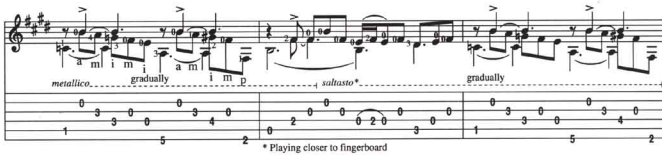
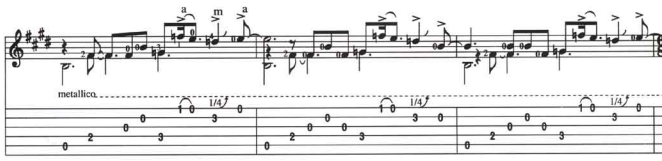
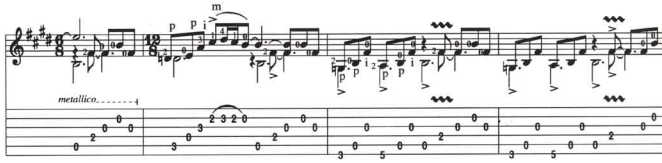

1/2 C V
1/2 C V
1/2 C V
1/2 C V
mp
tf
mp
tf
mp
tf
mp
tf
1/4

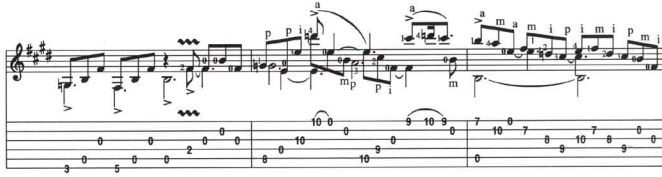


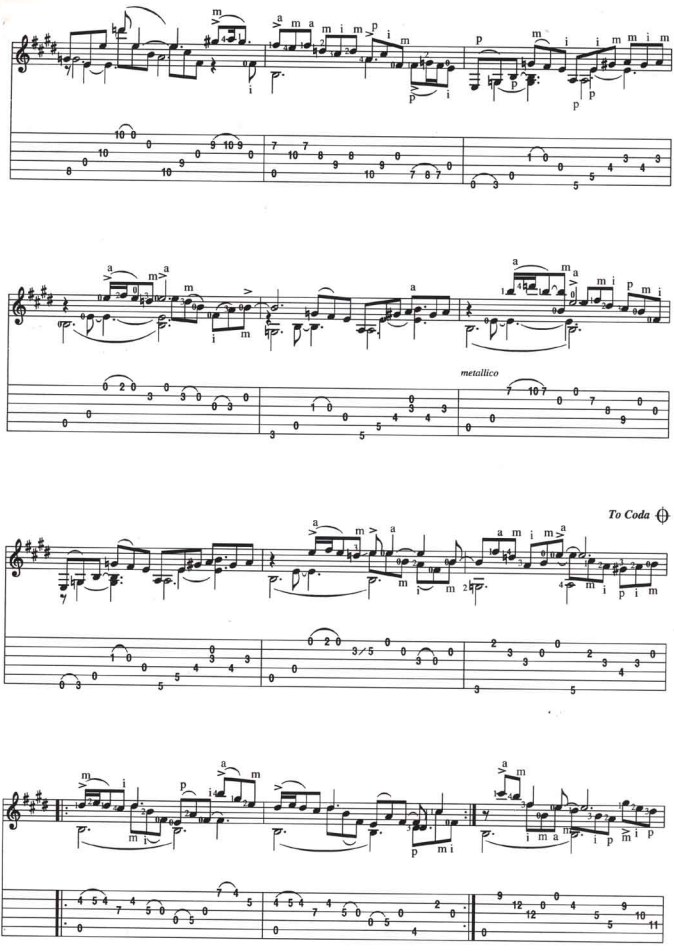


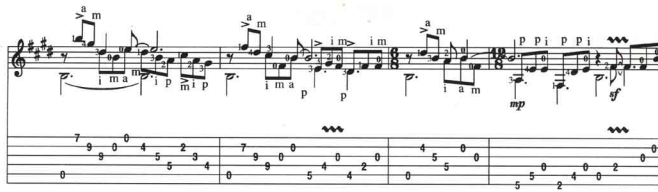
* Playing closer to fingerboard

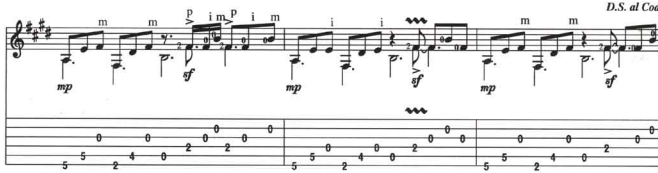


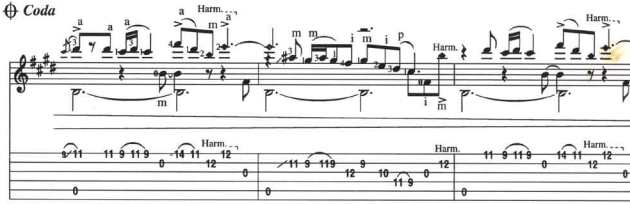


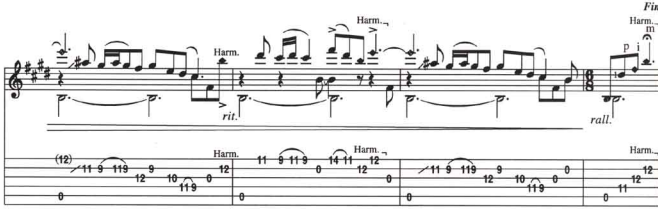



metallico
To Coda


mp
sf


D.S. al Coda
mp
sf


Coda
Harm.

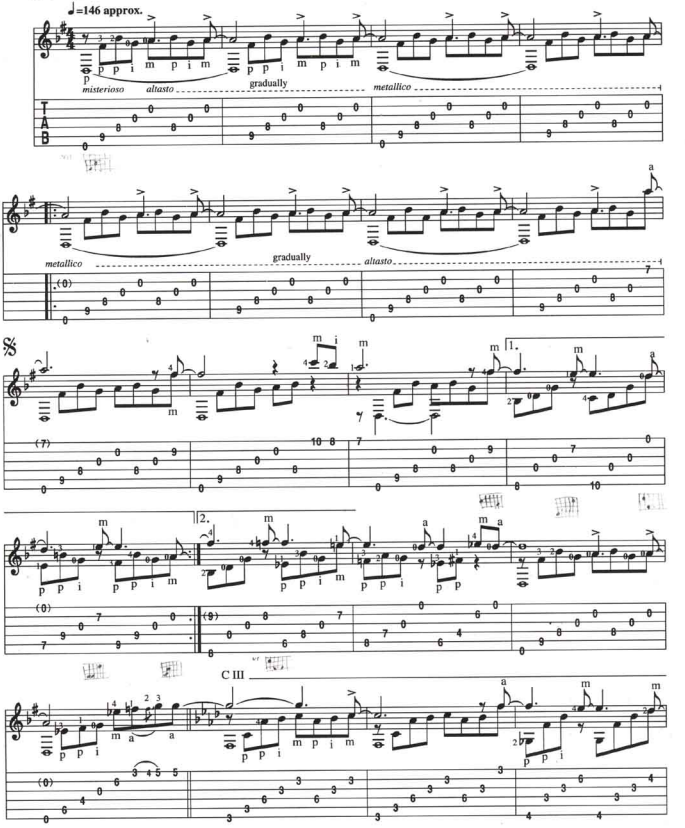

Fine
Harm.
rit.
rall.

Mirage

By Alex de Grassi

Tuning
① =D ② =A
③ =G ④ =D
⑤ =A ⑥ =D

♩=146 approx.



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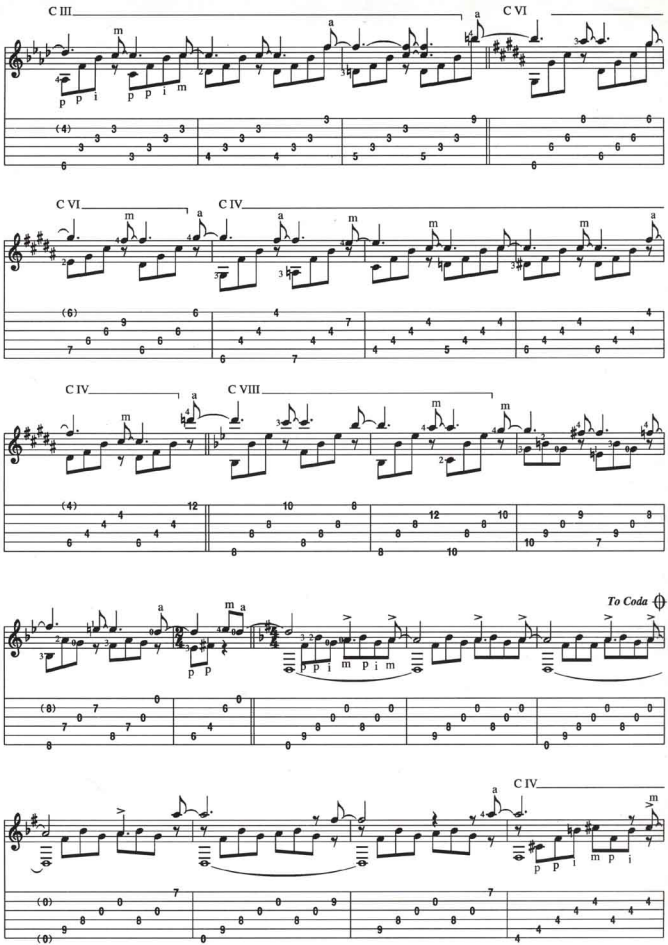
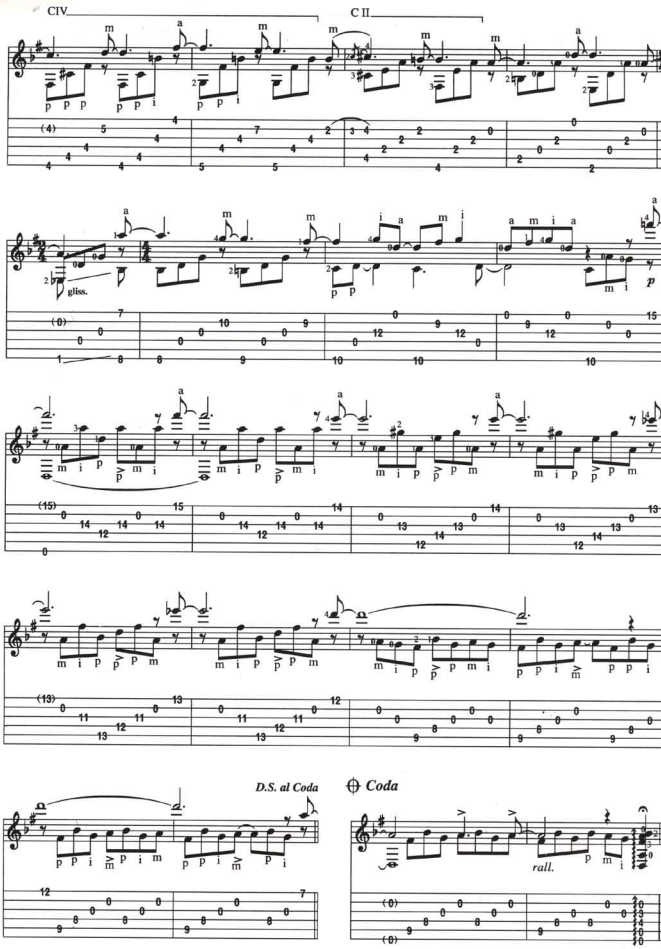
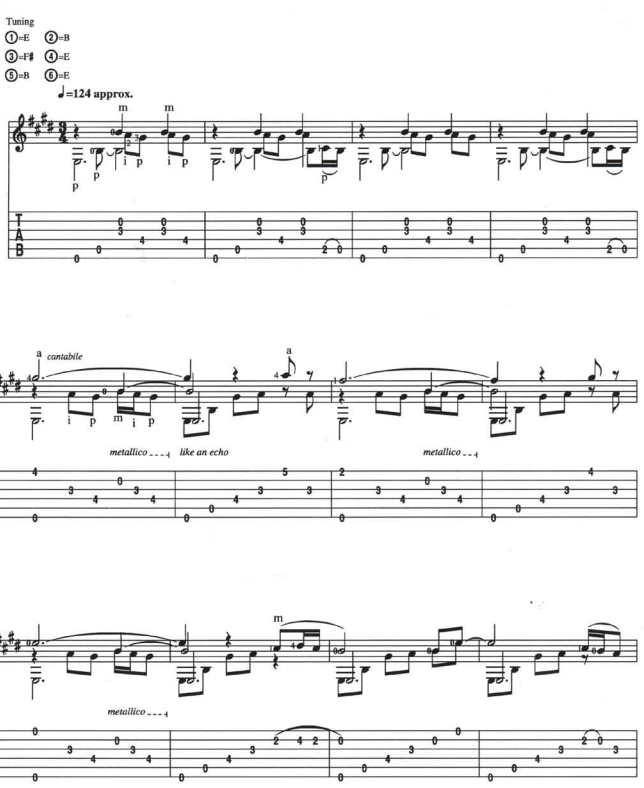

C III
C VI
C VI
C IV
C IV
C VIII
To Coda
C IV


CIV
C II
gliss.
D.S. al Coda
Coda
rall.

Turning

By Alex de Grassi



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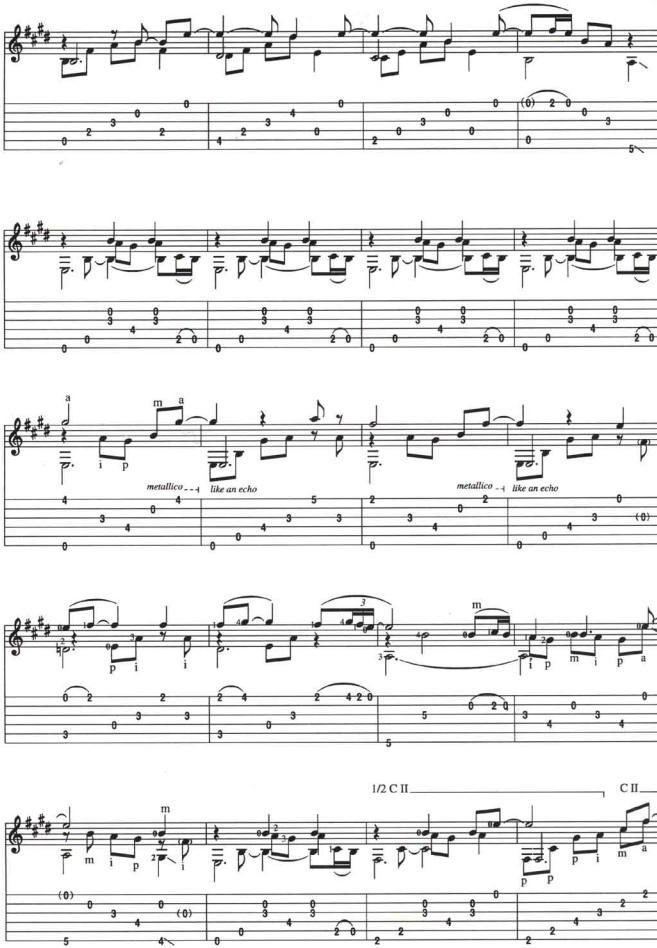
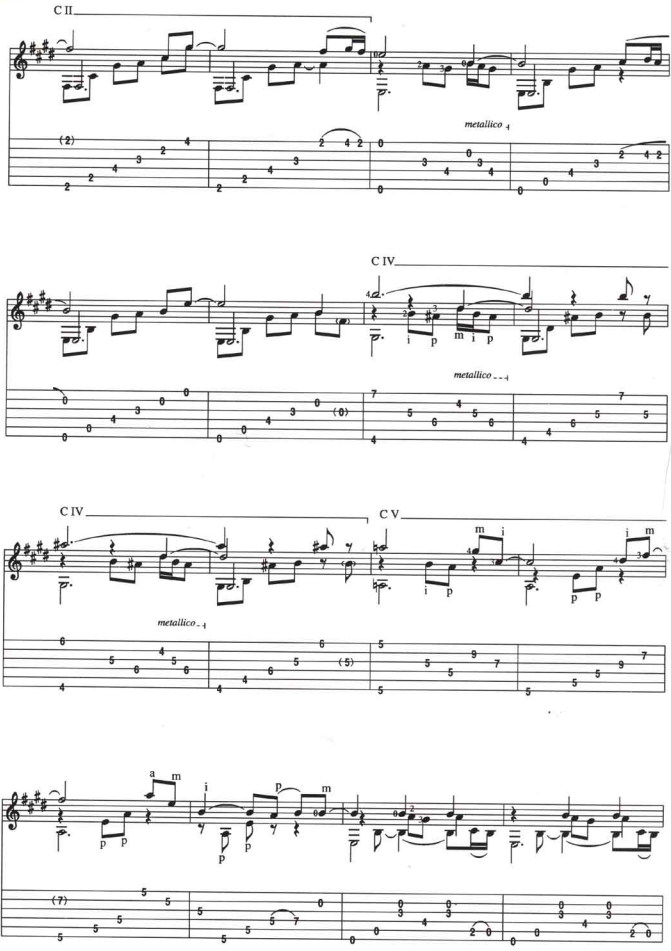
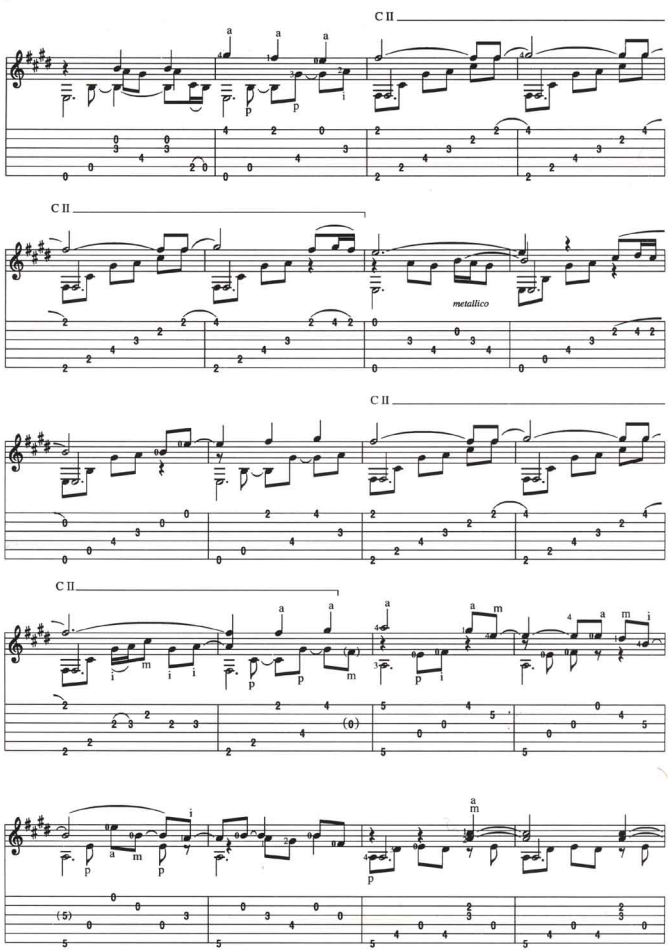
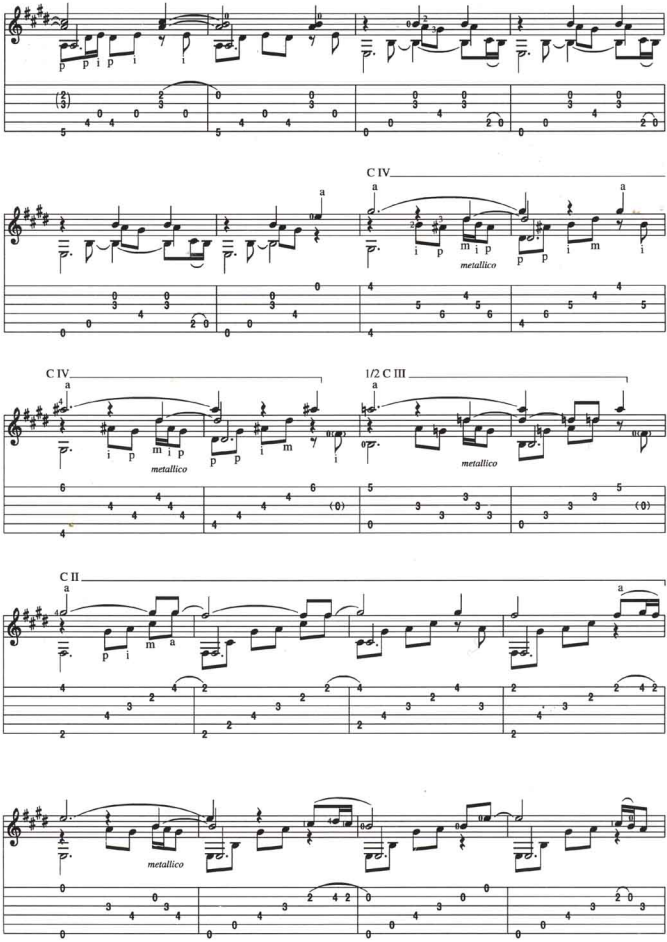
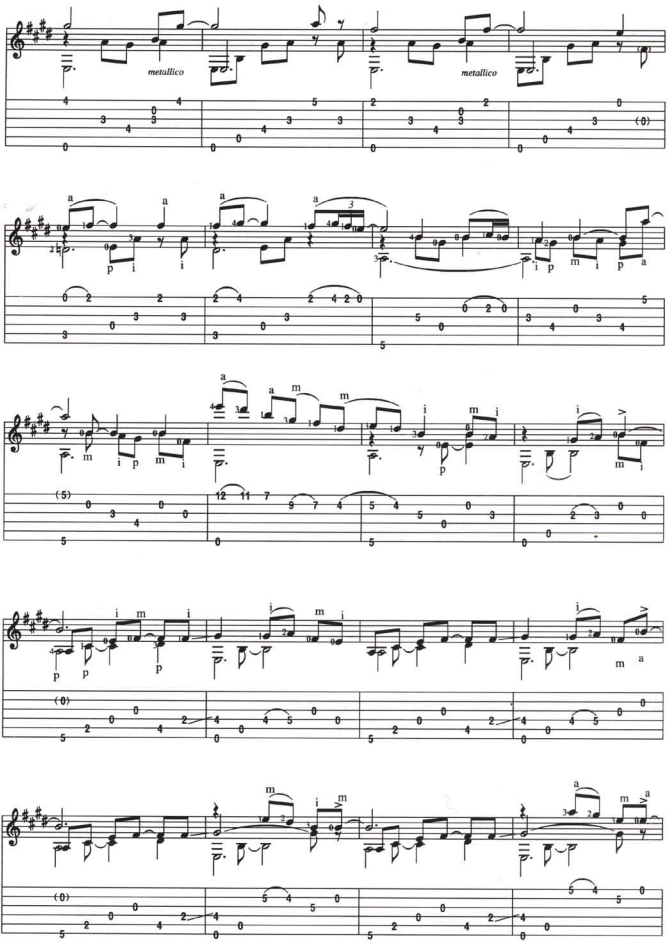
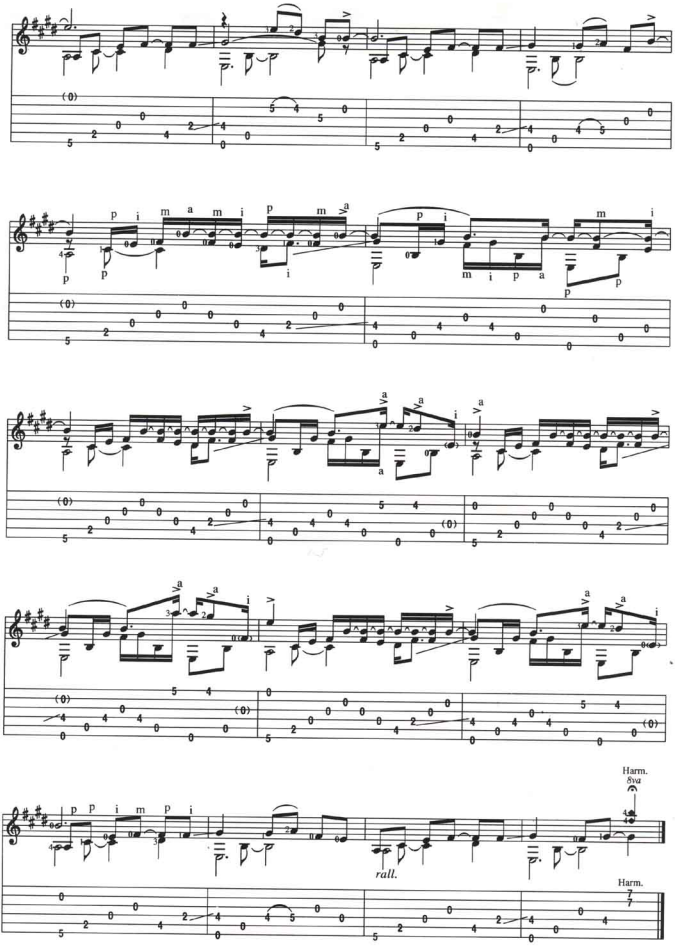

metallico
like an echo
metallico
like an echo
1/2 C II
C II


C II
metallico 4
C IV
metallico - - - 4
C IV
C V
metallico - 4


C II
C II
metallico
C II
C II


C IV
metallico
C IV
metallico
1/2 C III
metallico
C II
metallico


metallico
metallico


Harm.
8va
rall.
Harm.

Overland

By Alex de Grassi

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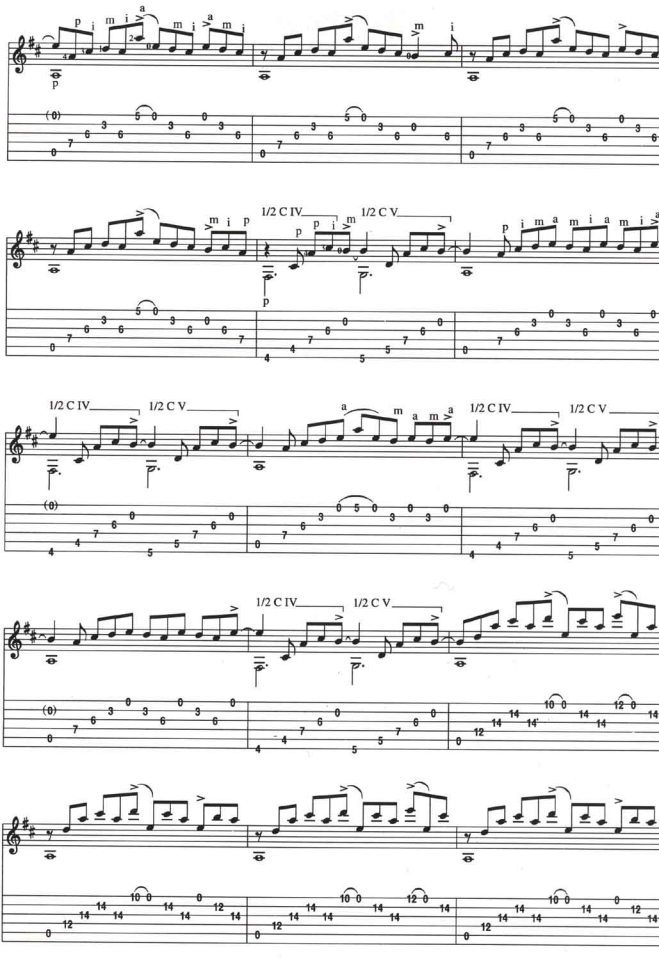
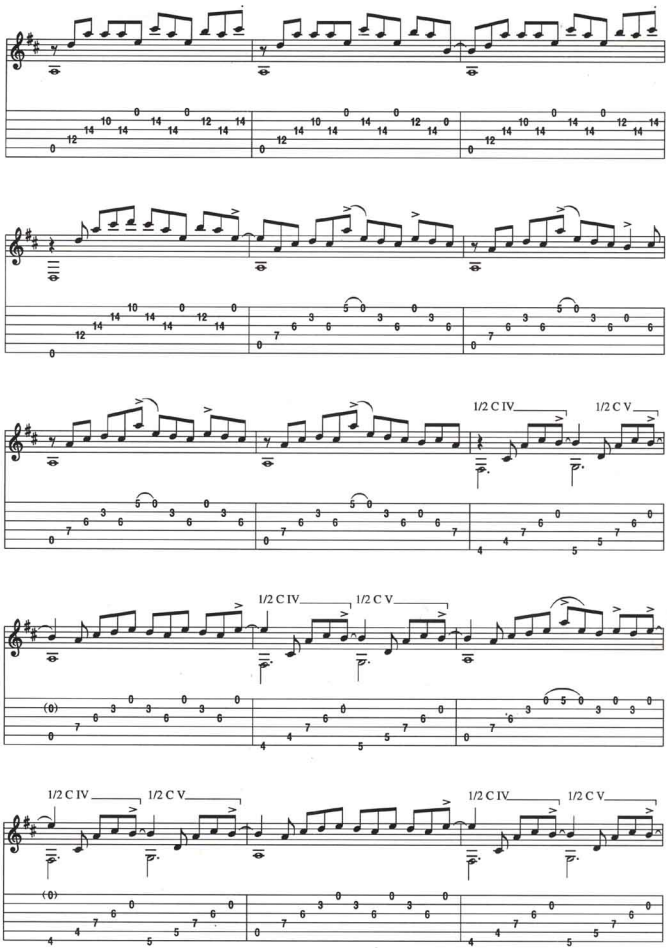
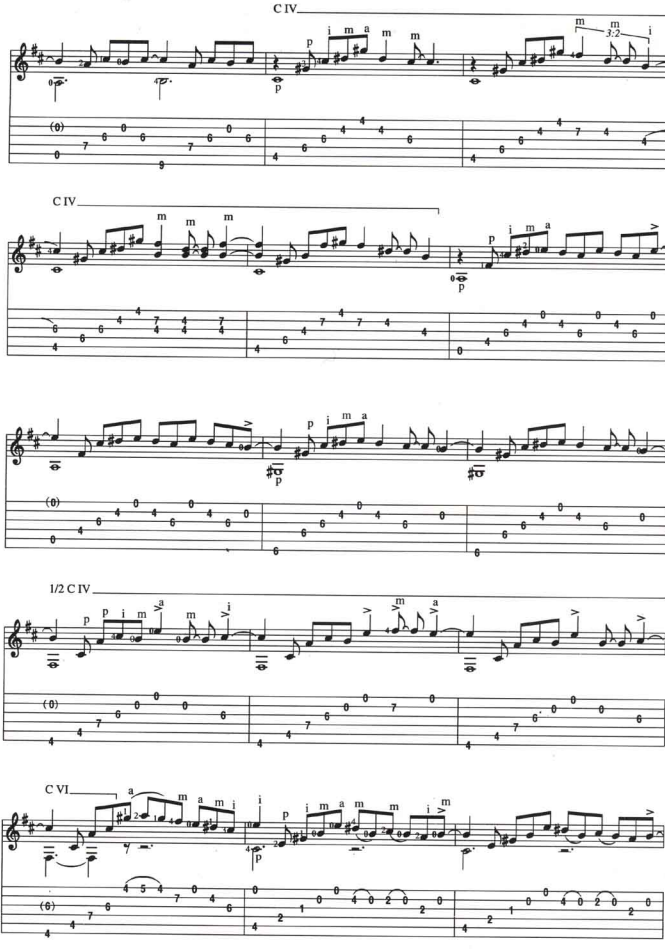
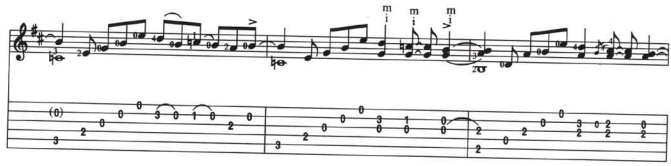
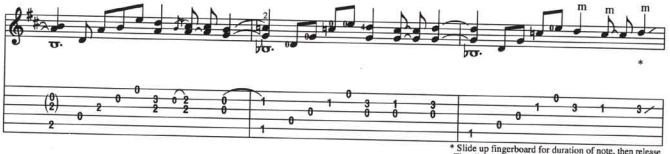

1/2 C IV
1/2 C V
1/2 C IV
1/2 C V
1/2 C IV
1/2 C V
1/2 C IV
1/2 C V

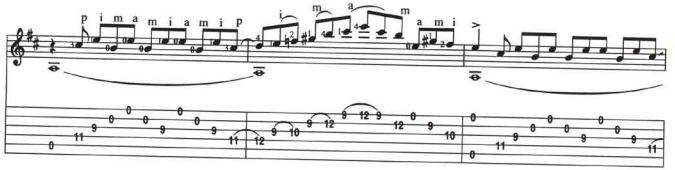

1/2 C IV
1/2 C V
1/2 C IV
1/2 C V
1/2 C IV
1/2 C V
1/2 C IV
1/2 C V

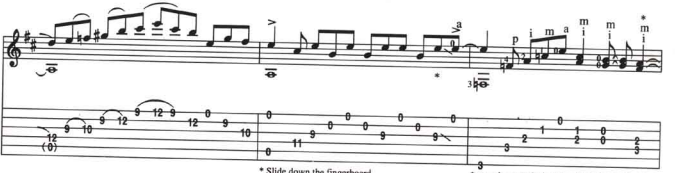

C IV
C IV
1/2 C IV
C VI





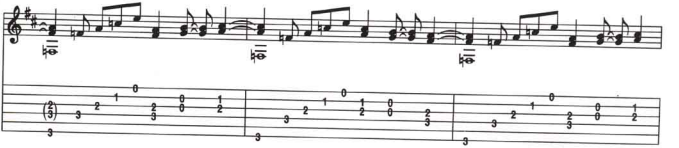
* Slide up fingerboard for duration of note, then release. The slide has no particular destination but adds a "zip."

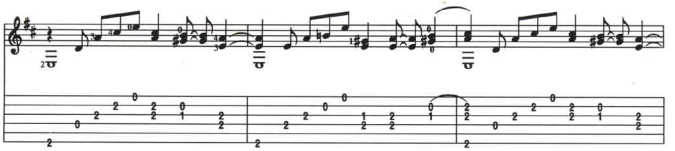


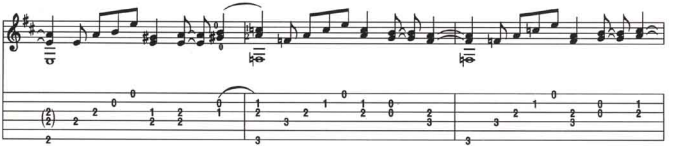


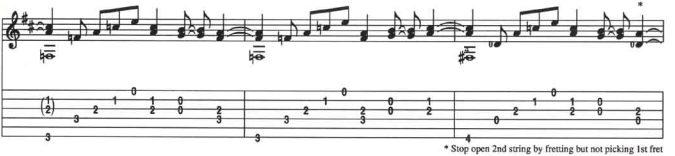
* Slide down the fingerboard

* stop the open 2nd string by fretting 1st fret, but not picking the string.

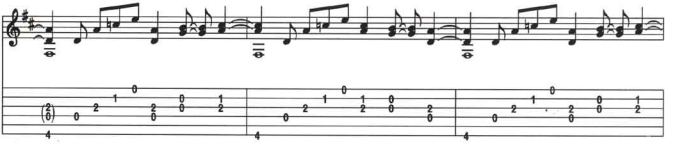


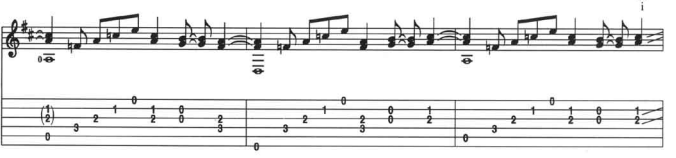


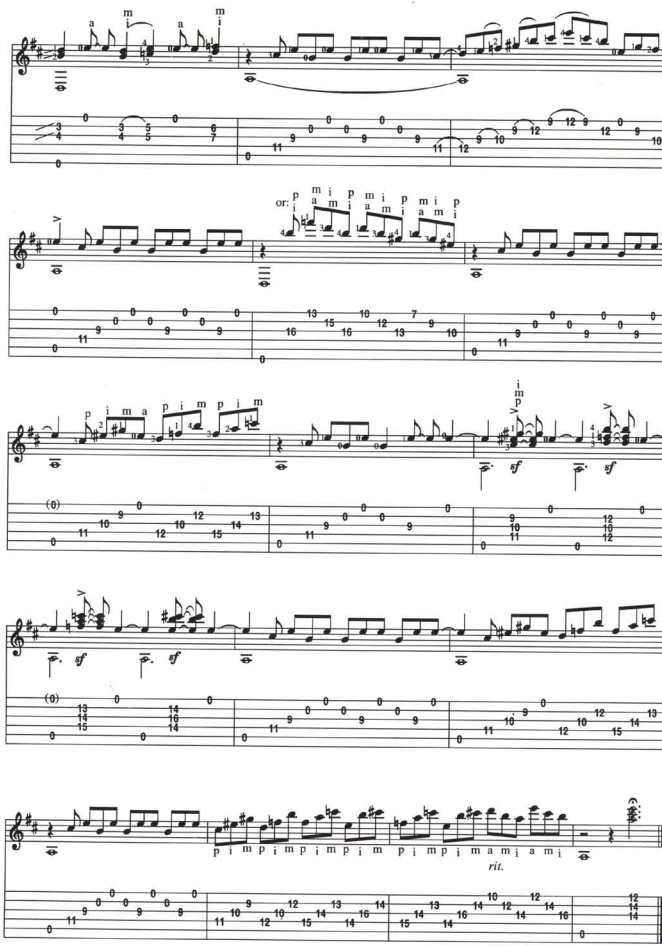




* Stop open 2nd string by fretting but not picking 1st fret






or:
sf
sf
sf
sf
rit.