Jean-Philippe Rameau

Premier Livre de Pièces de Clavecin
(Paris, 1706)

Edited from the original printing
By Tom Ó Drisceoil

2011

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Premier Livre de Pièces de Clavecin

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PREFACE

Up until fairly recently, the only edition of Jean-Philippe Rameau's *Premier Livre de Pièces de Clavecin* that was widely available on the internet was the old *Œuvres Complètes*, edited by Camille Saint-Saëns in 1895[1]. This edition (reprinted by Dover) was the first modern edition of this previously little known collection; and, while it was excellent for its time, it is deficient in a number of respects. The ornaments were 'modernised' to suit late-19th century practice. Almost all *ports de voix* and *cadences* were changed to trills, appogiaturas and other such ornaments common to romantic music, and *pincés* were removed entirely; all *arpeggements* were written out – sometimes incorrectly. In a number of instances, the harmony was changed (most notably in the *Prélude*).

It was not until 1958 that a proper scholarly edition was finally prepared to suit historically informed practice. This was edited by Erwin Jacobi, and was published by Bärenreiter, receiving several revisions and 15 separate printings (as of 2006). However, Jacobi carried a number of mistakes and faulty readings forward from the Saint-Saëns, and a few of these were not corrected in any revision.

Twenty-one years later, in 1979, Kenneth Gilbert prepared a new and exemplary edition for Heugel's *Le Pupitre* series[2]. It was Gilbert who first recognised that the sign at the end of the unmeasured section of the Prélude (interpreted by both Saint-Saëns and Jacobi as a tie) is in fact a *chapeau*, and indicates that the unmeasured section is to be repeated.

The lack of a freely available reliable edition of the *Premier Livre* on the internet seemed to me a gaping hole (considering the work's importance), and so I decided to create this present edition.

The *Premier Livre*

In 1706, when the *Premier Livre* was published, Rameau was relatively unknown. A friend of Louis Marchand, he had recently moved to Paris to establish himself as a composer. Rameau's book follows on from a number of fairly recent publications by important composers such as Marchand (1702), Clérambault (1704), Dandrieu (1704) and Gaspard Le Roux (1705), and it comes just before the second book of Jacquet de La Guerre (1707).

The work is comprised of the single suite in A minor, though it is not identified as such. Though the influence of Marchand and Jacquet de La Guerre can be detected in this single suite, nevertheless, the composer's individuality can be sensed quite clearly. The first *Allemande* and *Courante*, for instance, can stand alongside their longer counterparts in the *Nouvelles Suites*. The pair of Sarabandes are unusual in French music, and they are presumably intended to be played in an ABA design, the first being repeated after the second[3]. The *Prélude* is perhaps the most interesting movement in the present work. It is one of the latest examples of an unmeasured prelude, and its design shows the influence of Louis Couperin and of Jacquet de La Guerre (both of whom incorporated measured

1 Paris: Durand, 1895.
2 Paris: Heugel, 1979. (LP 59)
3 Bates: French harpsichord music in the first decade of the 18th Century. (Early Music, May 1989), p.186.

sections into unmeasured preludes).

The original printing of the *Premier Livre* survives in a single exemplar, preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (shelf-mark Rés. Vm^7 677). The scarcity of the work might possibly indicate that it was not terribly popular. Indeed, Rameau moved back to Dijon in 1709 to take up his father's post as organist of the Cathedral of Saint-Bénigne. A second printing, issued in 1741, survives (also in a single exemplar) in the collection of the Bibliothèque Municipale of Bordeaux, where it bears the shelf-mark M. 623. It is bound with copies of Rameau's harpsichord books of 1724 and 1726/7 - and for this reason, it escaped notice until the 1970s. Except for the title-pages and the presence of a royal *privilège* in the 1741 issue, the two printings are identical – no corrections were made to the plates.

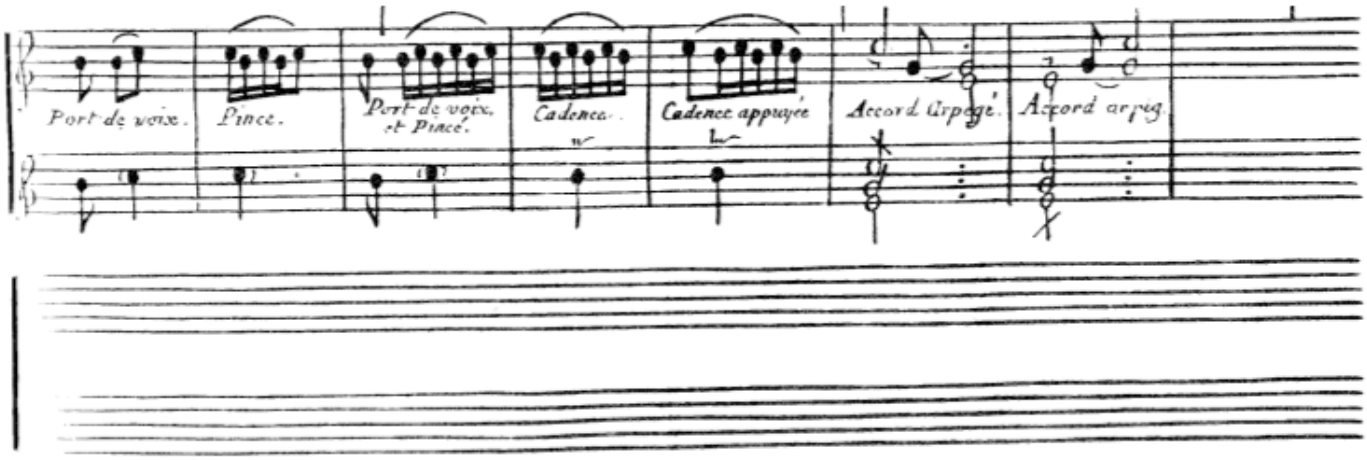
The fact that the music was re-issued in 1741 (the same year as the *Pièces en Concerts*) is quite interesting, especially considering that it would have been considered quite old-fashioned by then. Unmeasured préludes, for instance, were not written much after the present work (with the exception of Siret). Rameau's pre-eminence in the Parisian music scene in the 1740s did not seem to encourage the public in purchasing the work, as its survival in only one exemplar will demonstrate.

Editorial method

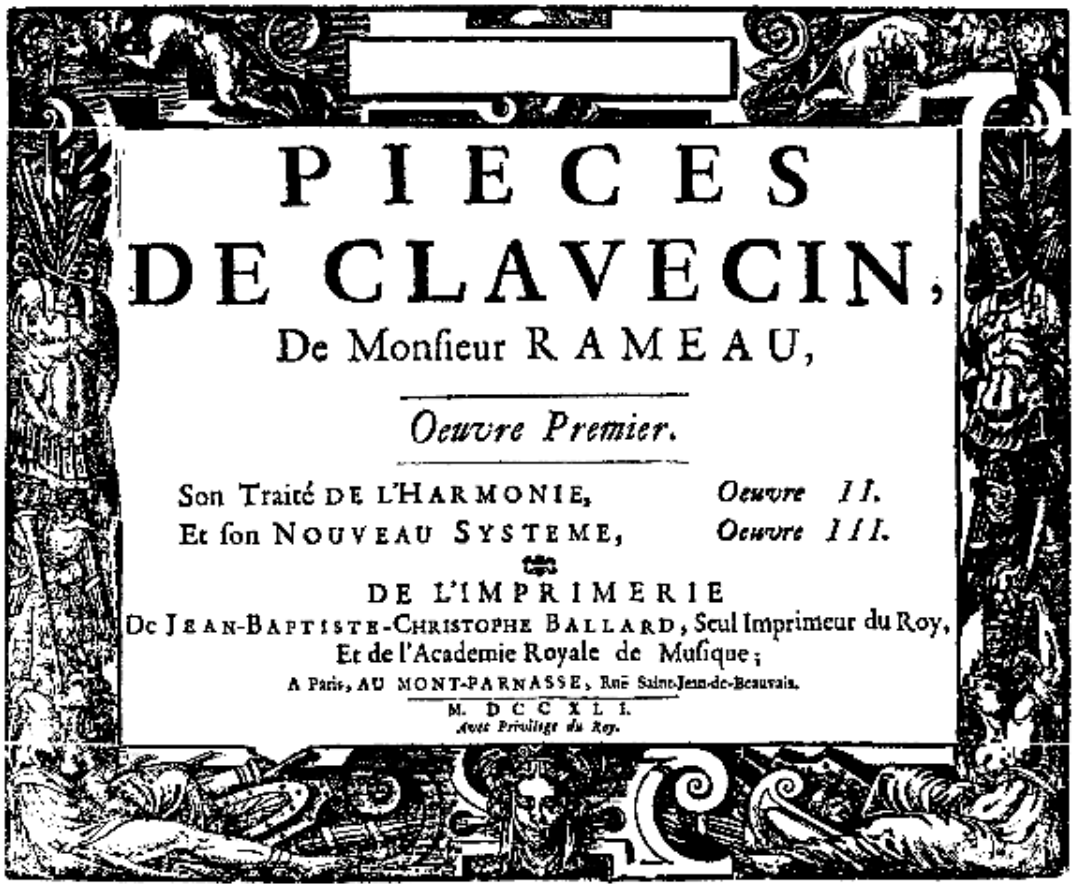
This present edition is based solely on the 1706 printing found in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. I have decided to reproduce the orthography of the original where this is practical. However, the needs of modern-day performers necessitated departure from this in a number of respects. Time-signatures have been changed to suit modern use (in the *Courante*, the *Gigue* and the *Vénitienne*). With the exception of the unmeasured section of the *Prélude*, accidentals follow modern convention, where these last for the duration of the bar in question. Cautionary accidentals always appear as ficta. The *cadences* vary in their appearance in the original printing, and they have been regularised to the 𝆑 symbol. Repeat signs follow the modern convention, rather than the mixture of *chapeaux* and *renvois* used by Rameau - with the exception of the *Vénitienne*, where I have reproduced Rameau's orthography exactly. Clefs have also been modernised, an incipit is given at the start of every movement indicating the clefs and key signature of the original, while clef-changes present in the original print are noted in the Critical Commentary. The spelling of movement titles have not been modernised.

Tom Ó Drisceoil
Cork | 23 March, 2011.

The title page of the original edition



The ornament table of the original edition



PIECES DE CLAVECIN,

De Monſieur RAMEAU,

Oeuvre Premier.

Son Traité DE L'HARMONIE, *Oeuvre II.*
Et ſon NOUVEAU SYSTEME, *Oeuvre III.*

DE L'IMPRIMERIE
De JEAN-BAPTISTE-CHRISTOPHE BALLARD, Seul Imprimeur du Roy,
Et de l'Academie Royale de Muſique;
A Paris, AU MONT-PARNASSE, Rue Saint-Jean-de-Beauvais.
M. DCCXLI.
Avec Privilege du Roy.

The title page of the 1741 re-issue

ATTRIBUTION DE LA CHARGE de Seul Imprimeur du Roy pour la Muſique.

PAR Lettres Patentes du Roy, données à Fontainebleau le cinquiéme jour du mois d'Octobre, l'An de Grace mil ſix cent quatre-vingt-quinze, Signées, LOUIS; & ſur le replis, Par le Roy, PHELYPEAUX; Scellées du grand Sceau de cire jaune; Confirmées par Lettres de Surannation, données à Marly le vingt-huitiéme May mil ſept cent quinze; Signées comme deſſus: Toutes leſdites Lettres Verifiées & Regiſtrées en Parlement le ſept Juin 1715. Il eſt permis (à J-B-Chriſtophe Ballard, Seul Imprimeur du Roy pour la Muſique, & Noteur de la Chapelle de Sa Majeſté,) d'Imprimer, faire Imprimer, Vendre & Diſtribuer toute ſorte de Muſique, tant Vocale qu'Inſtrumentale, de quelque Auteur ou Auteurs que ce ſoit, avec très-expreſſes inhibitions & défenſes à tous Imprimeurs, Libraires, Tailleurs & Fondeurs de Caracteres, & autres Perſonnes generalement quelconques, de Tailler, Fondre, ny Contrefaire les Notes, Caracteres, Lettres griſes, & autres choſes inventées par ledit Ballard; ny d'entreprendre ou faire entreprendre ladite Impreſſion de Muſique, en aucun lieu de ce Royaume, Terres & Seigneuries de l'obéïſſance de Sa Majeſté, nonobſtant toutes Lettres à ce contraires, ſans le congé & permiſſion dudit Ballard; A peine de confiſcation des Livres ou Exemplaires, Notes, Caracteres, & autres Inſtruments ſervant au fait de ladite Impreſſion de Muſique, & de ſix mille livres d'Amende; Ainſi qu'il eſt plus amplement declaré eſdites Lettres: Sadite Majeſté voulant qu'à l'Extrait d'icelles mis au commencement ou fin deſdits Livres imprimez, foy ſoit ajoûtée comme à l'Original.

The royal *privilege* of the 1741 re-issue

Premier Livre

de Pieces de Clavecin

Composées

par Monsieur Rameau Organiste

**des RR. PP. Jésuistes de la Rue St. Jacques,
et des RR. PP. de la Mercy.**

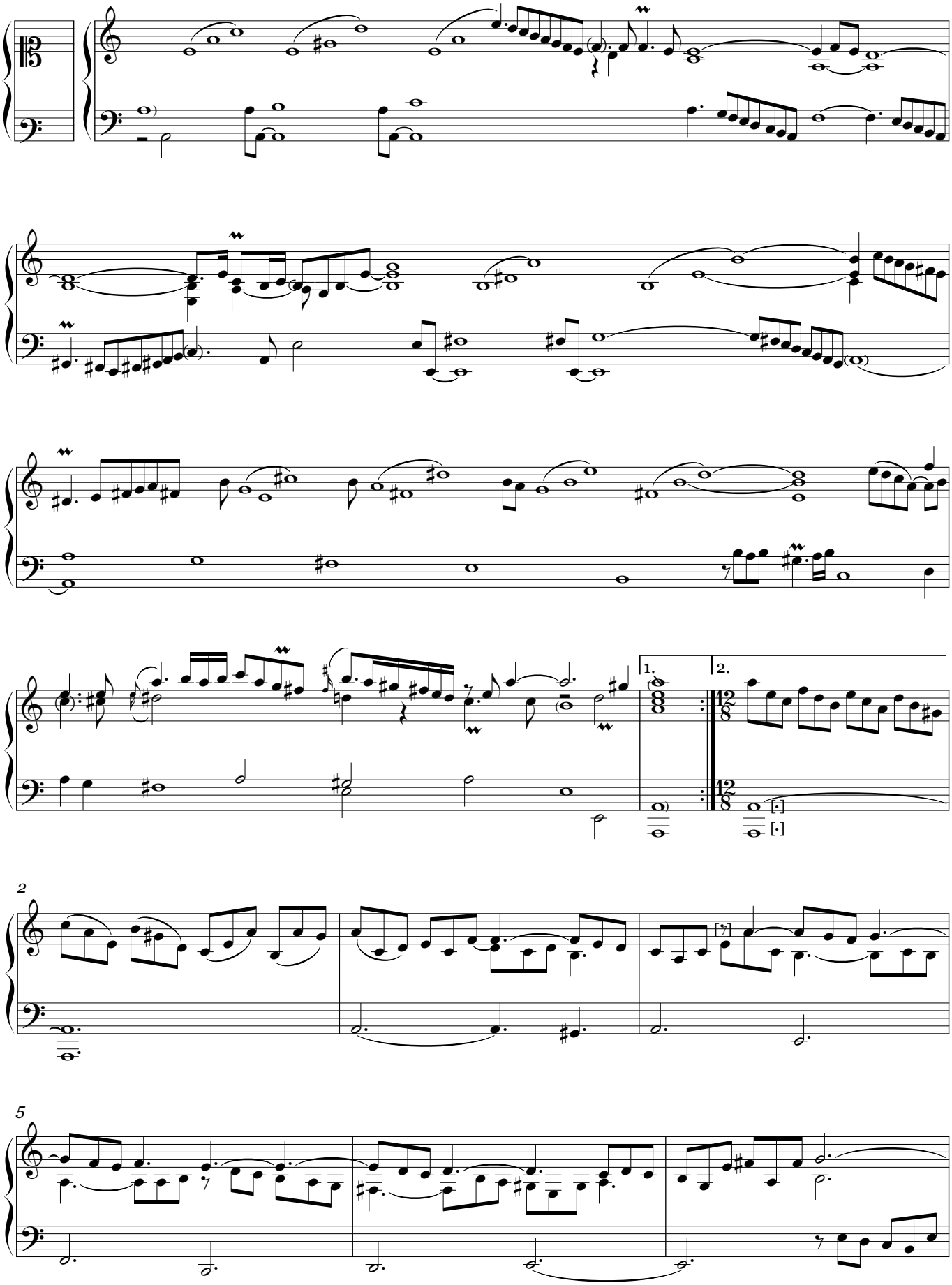
Gravées par Roussel
1706

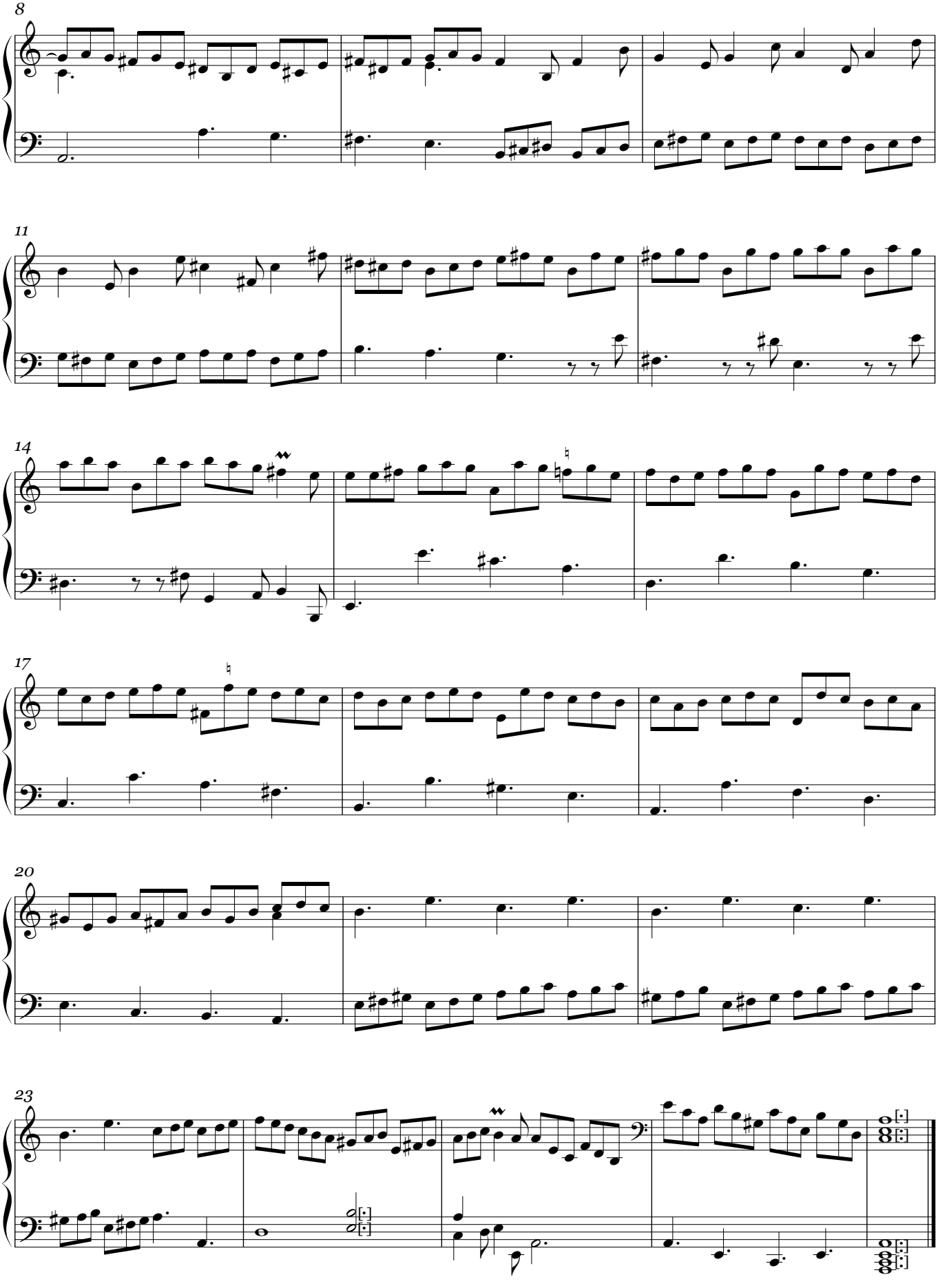
Et nouvellement editées par

Tom Ó Drisceoil

Prélude

Jean-Philippe Rameau
ed. Tom O Drisceoil 2011

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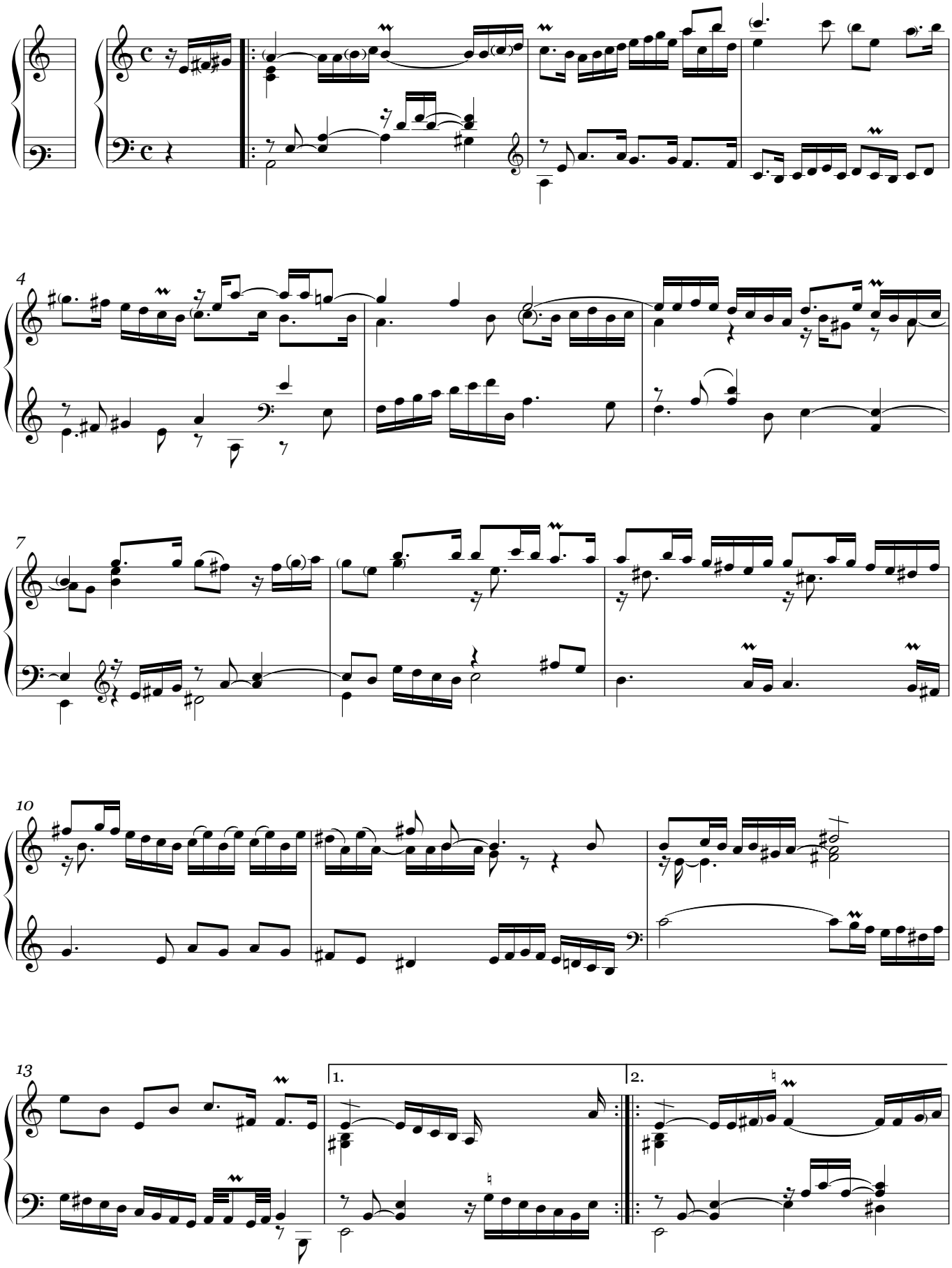
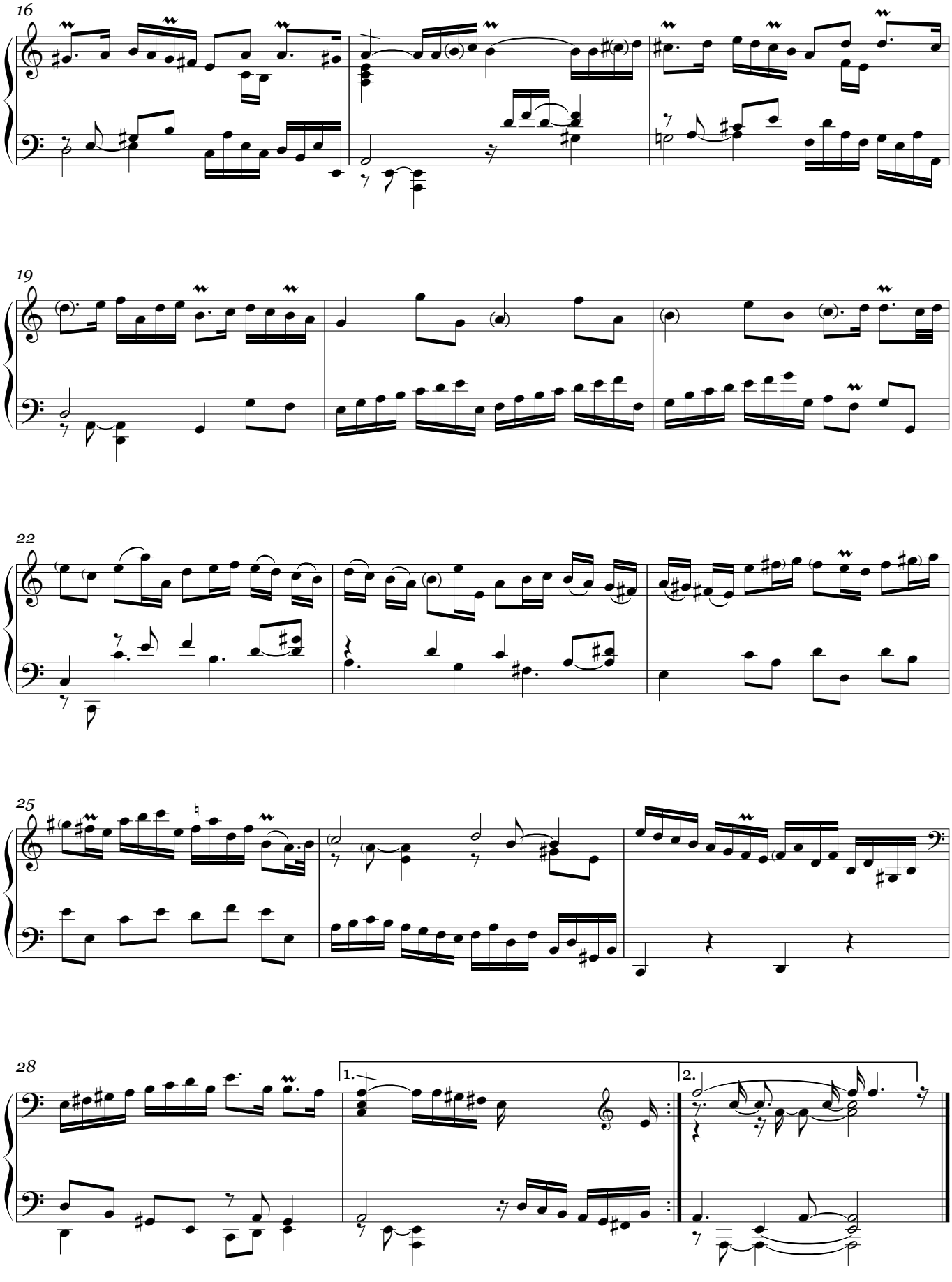
23

Alemande

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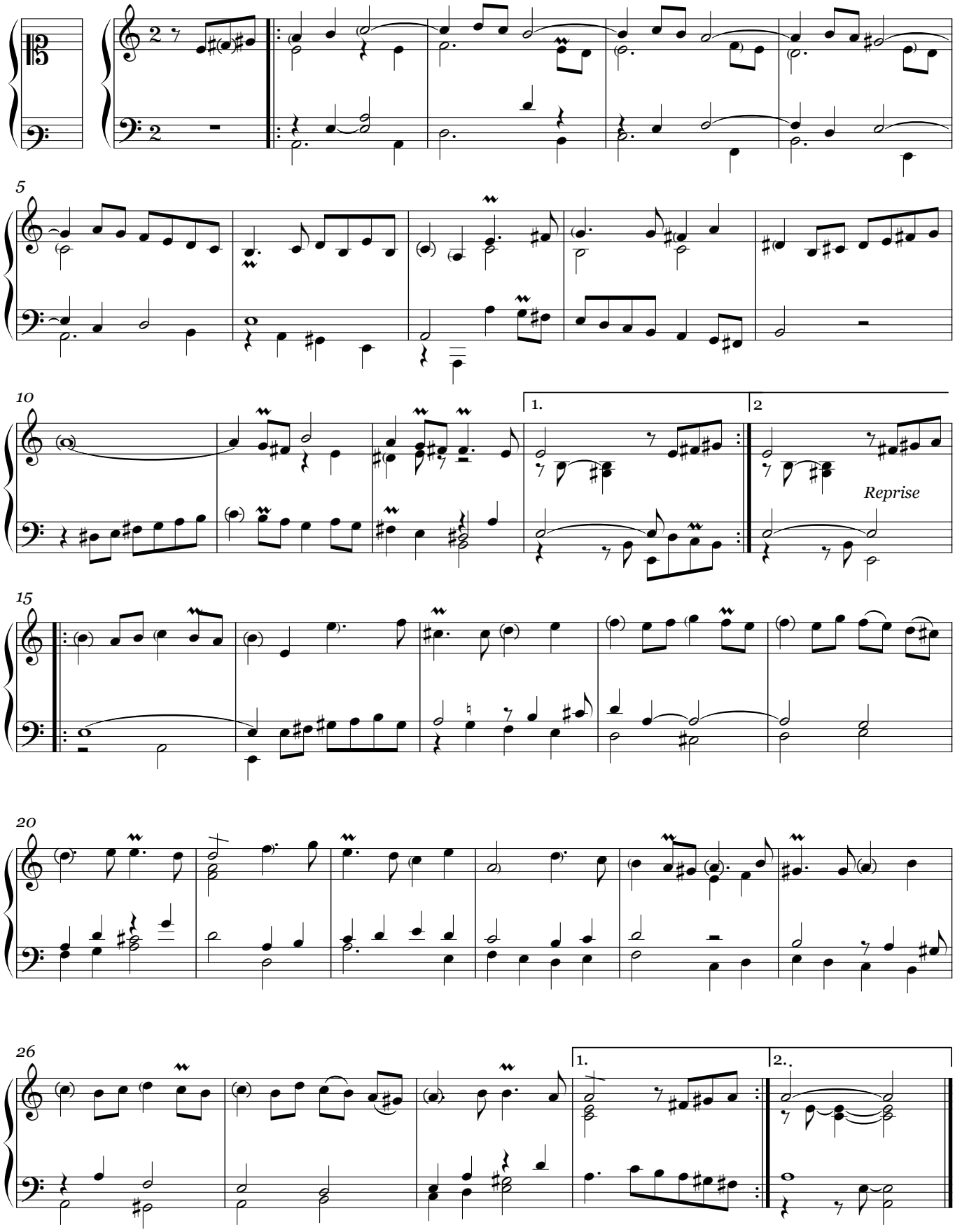
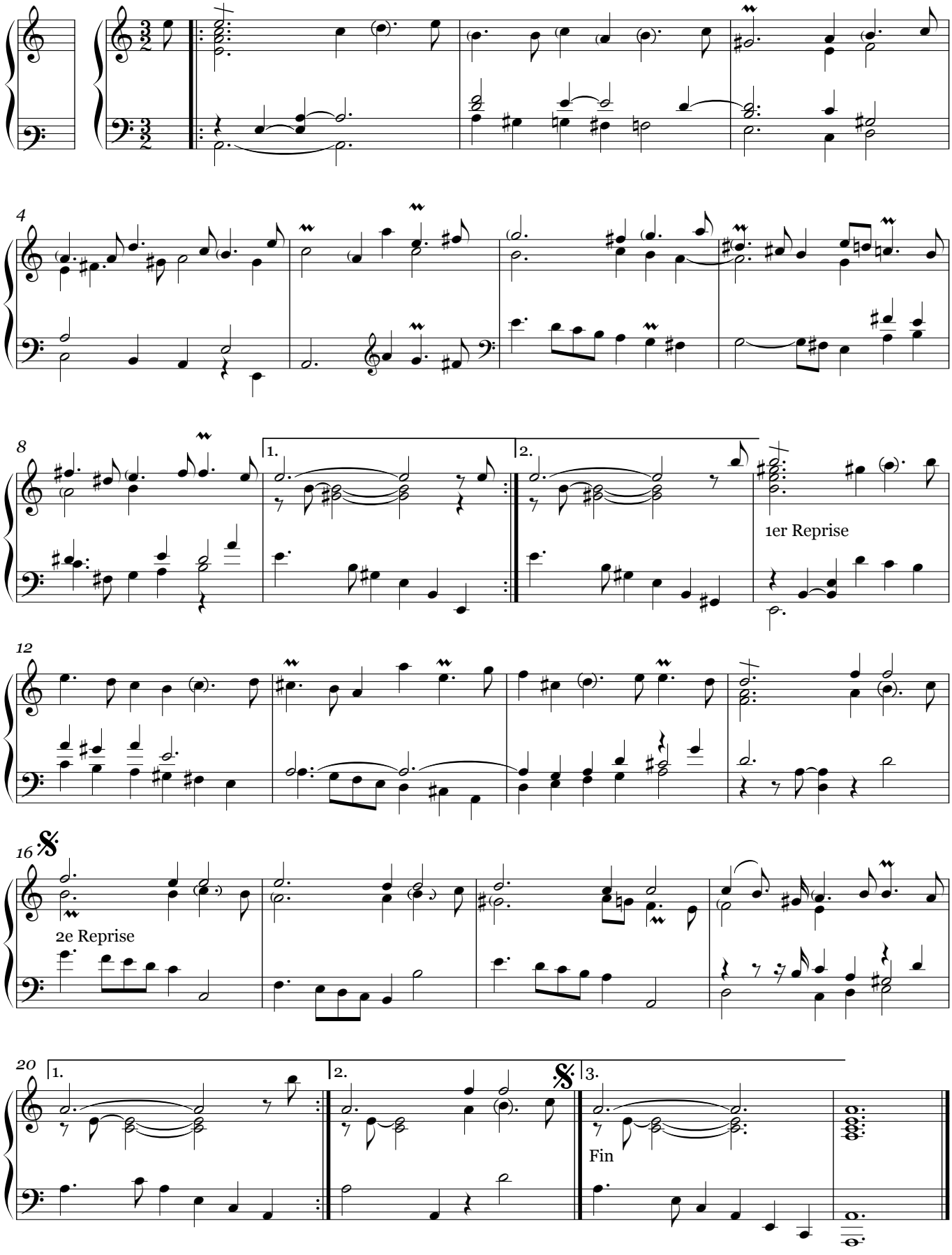
1.
2.

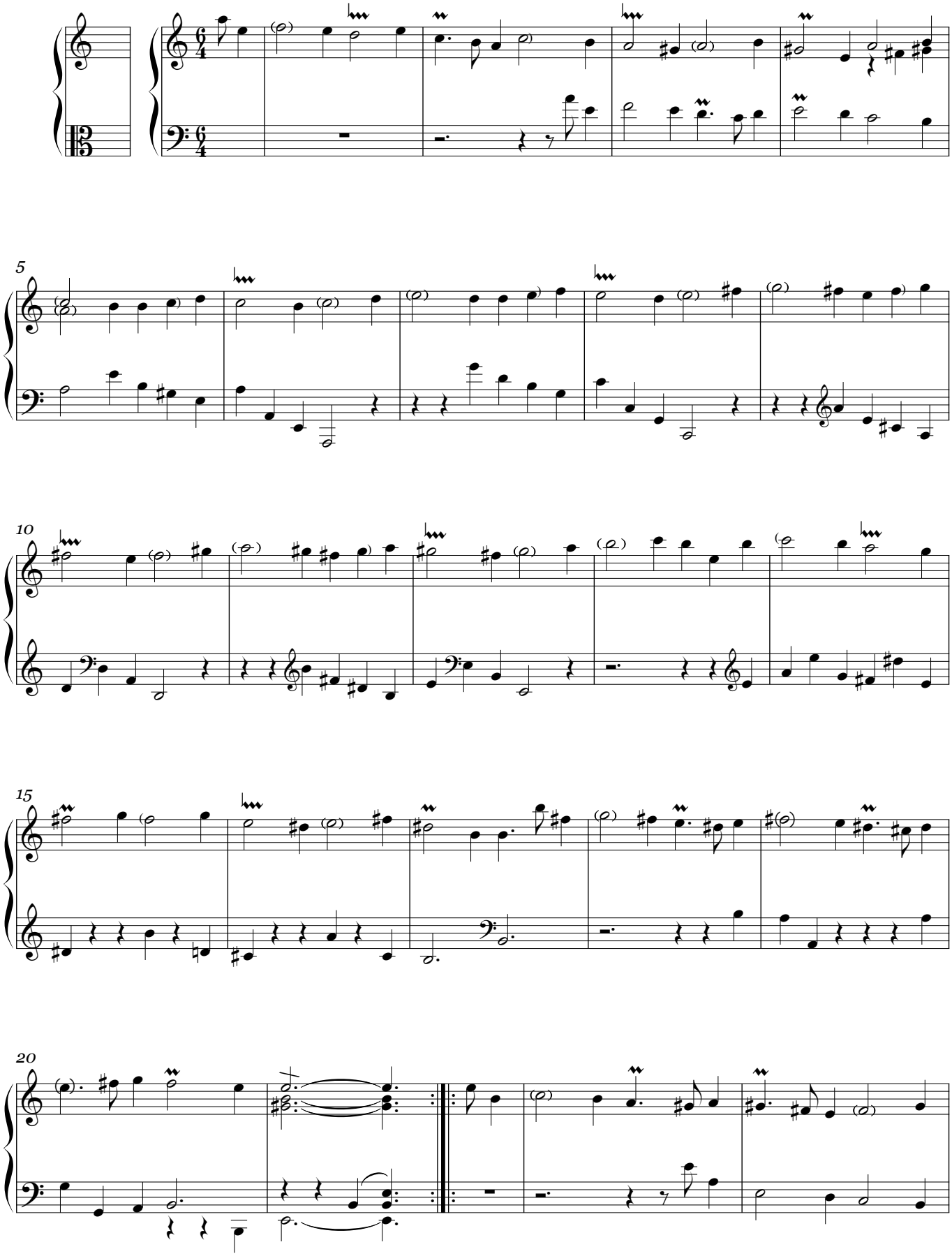
2e Alemande

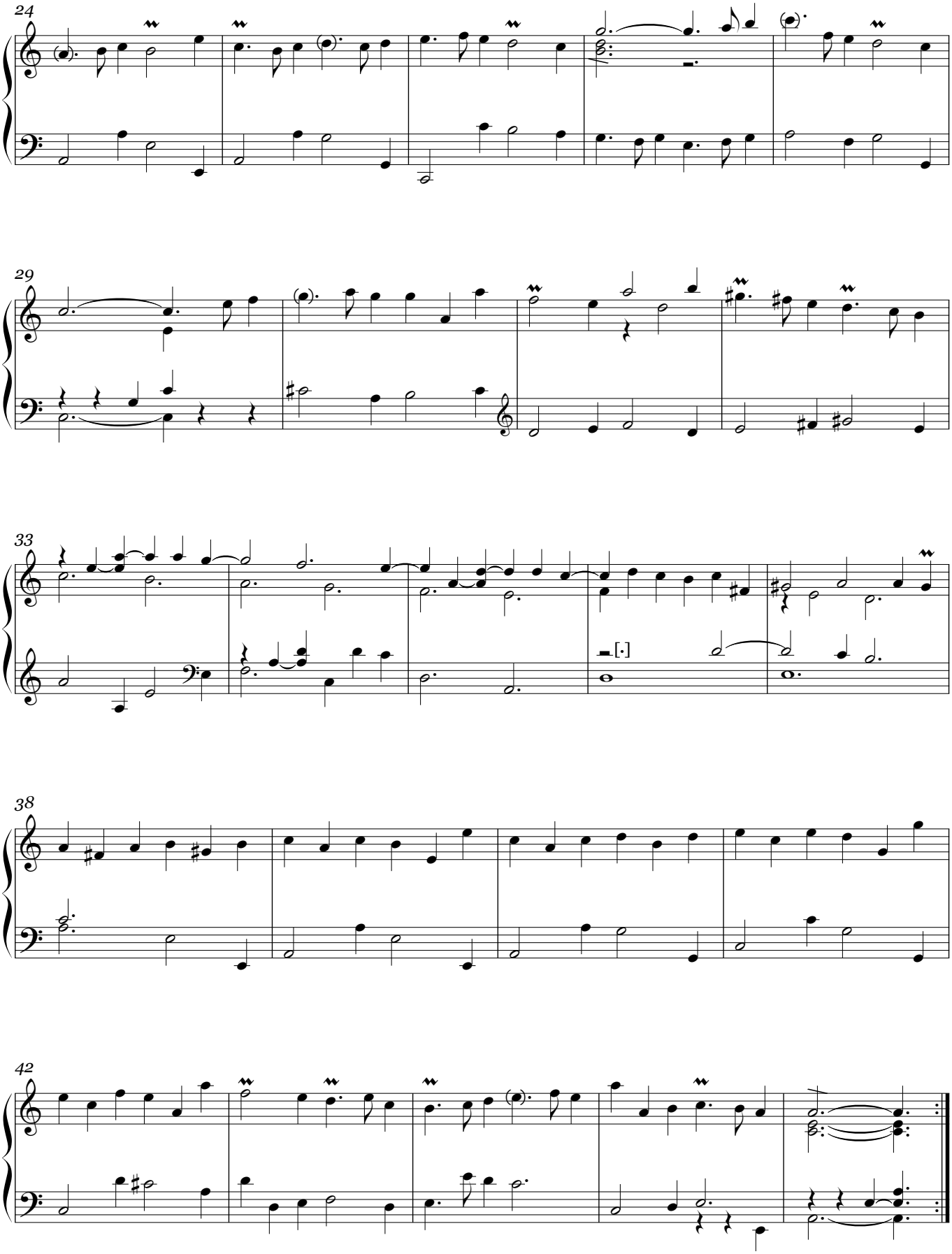


Courante



Gigue

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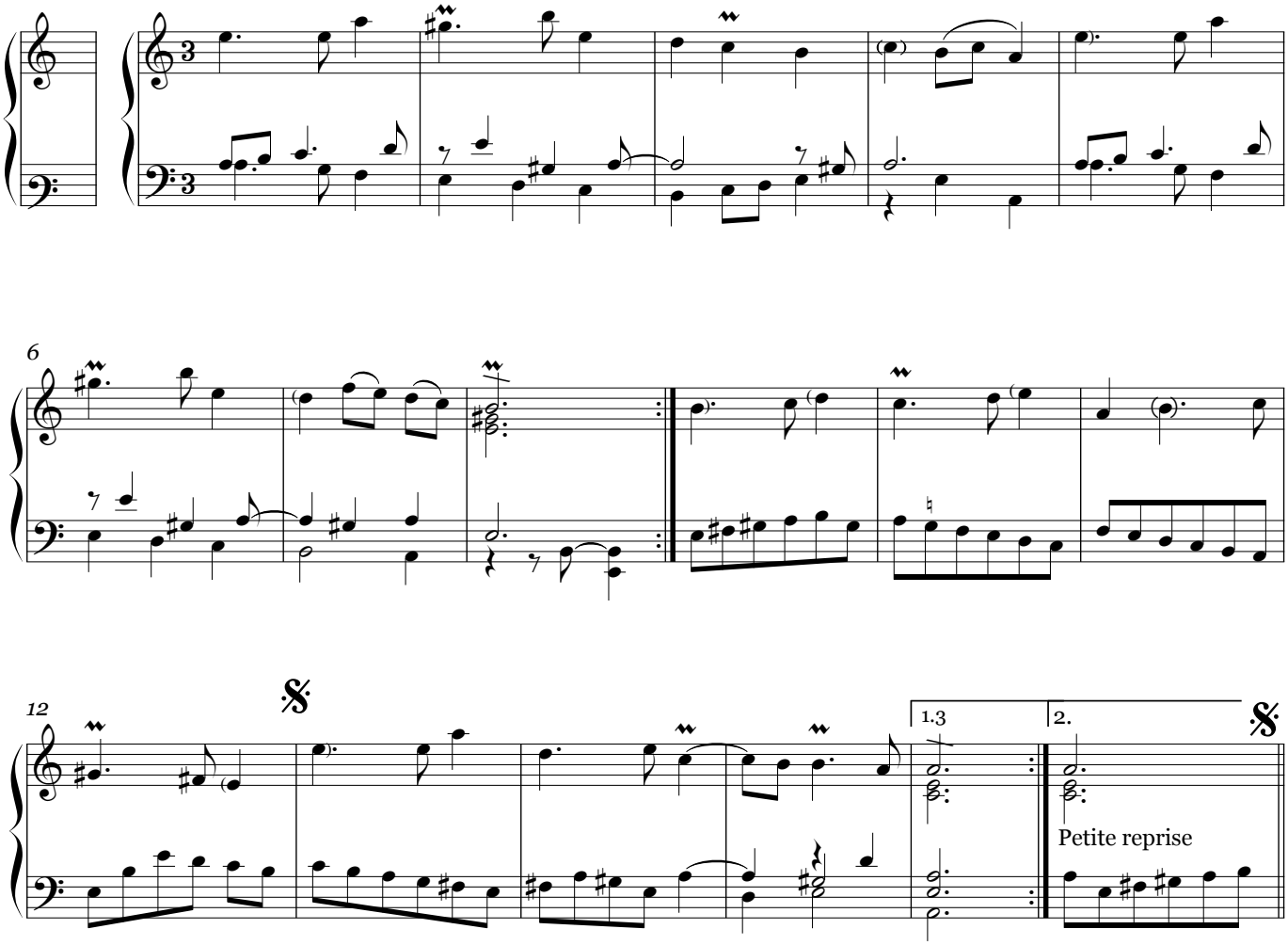
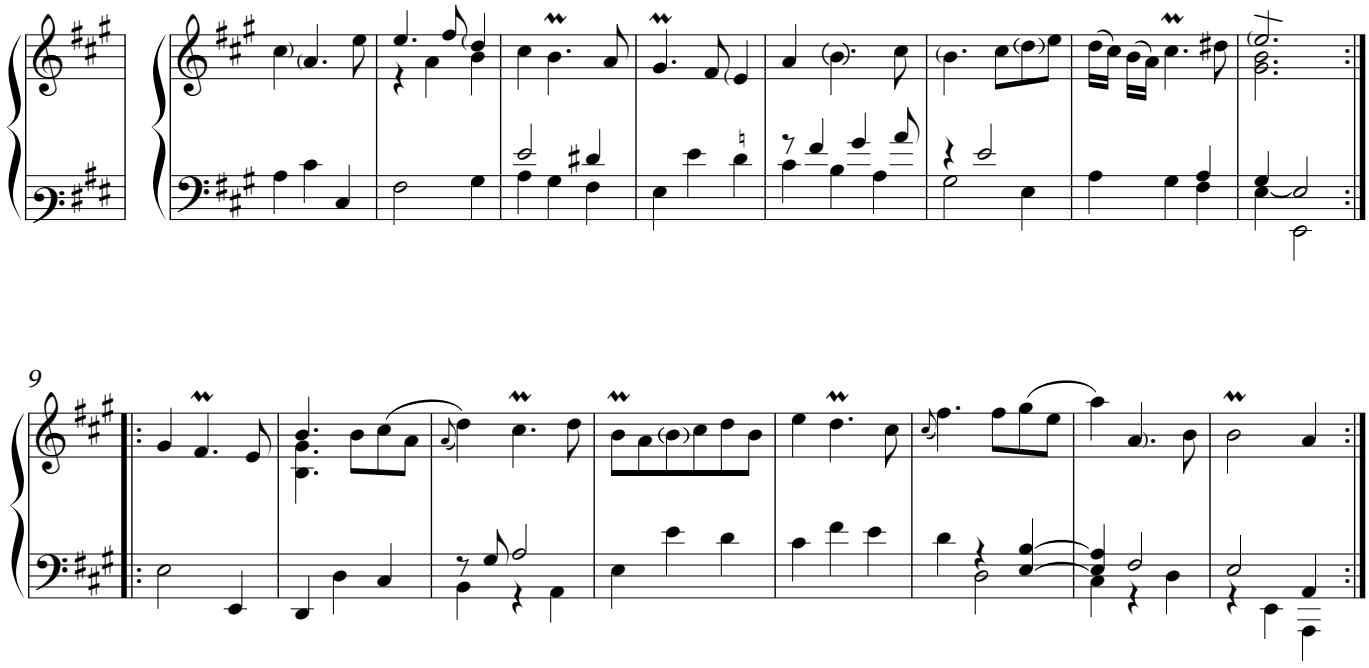
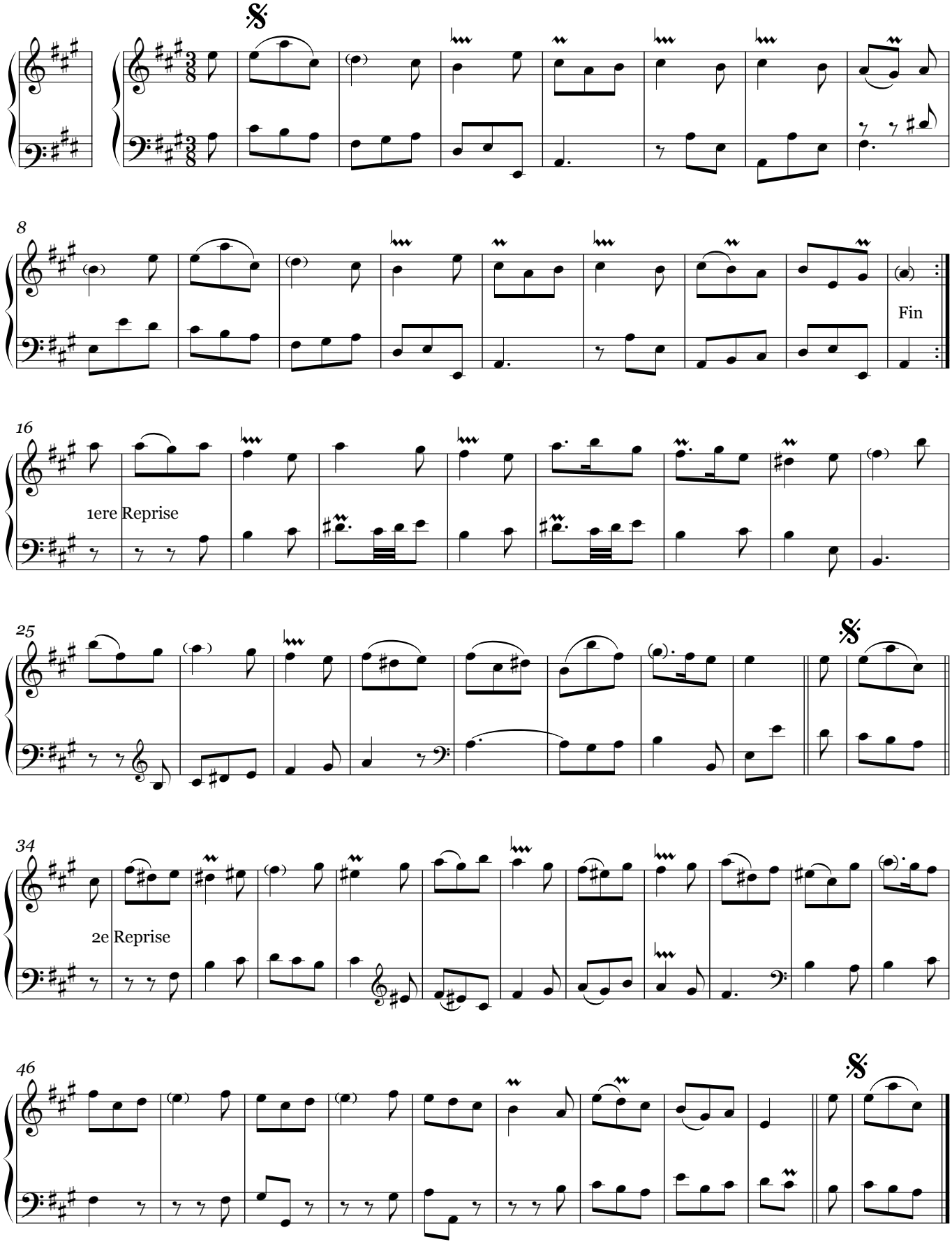
1ere Sarabande



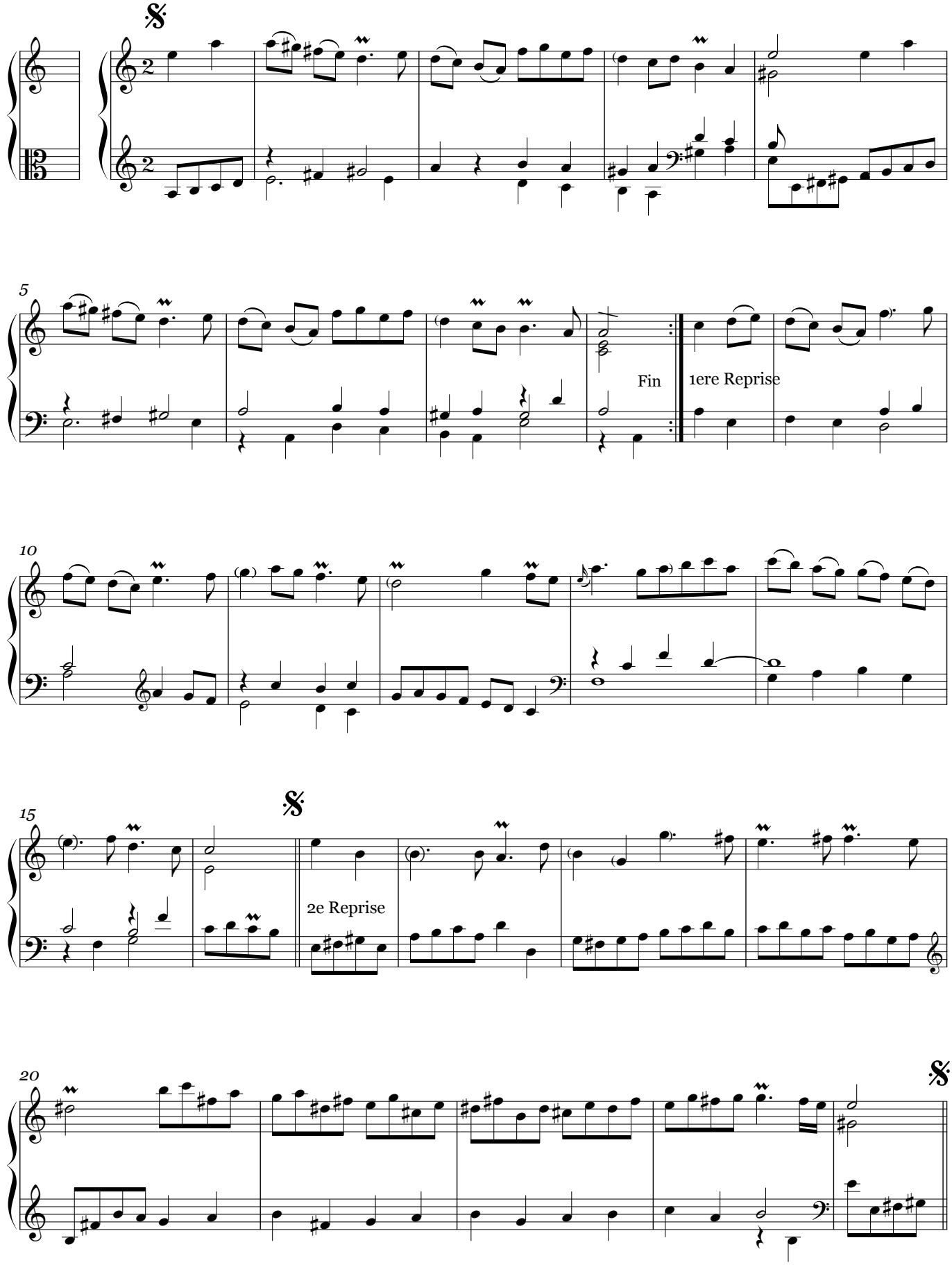
2e Sarabande

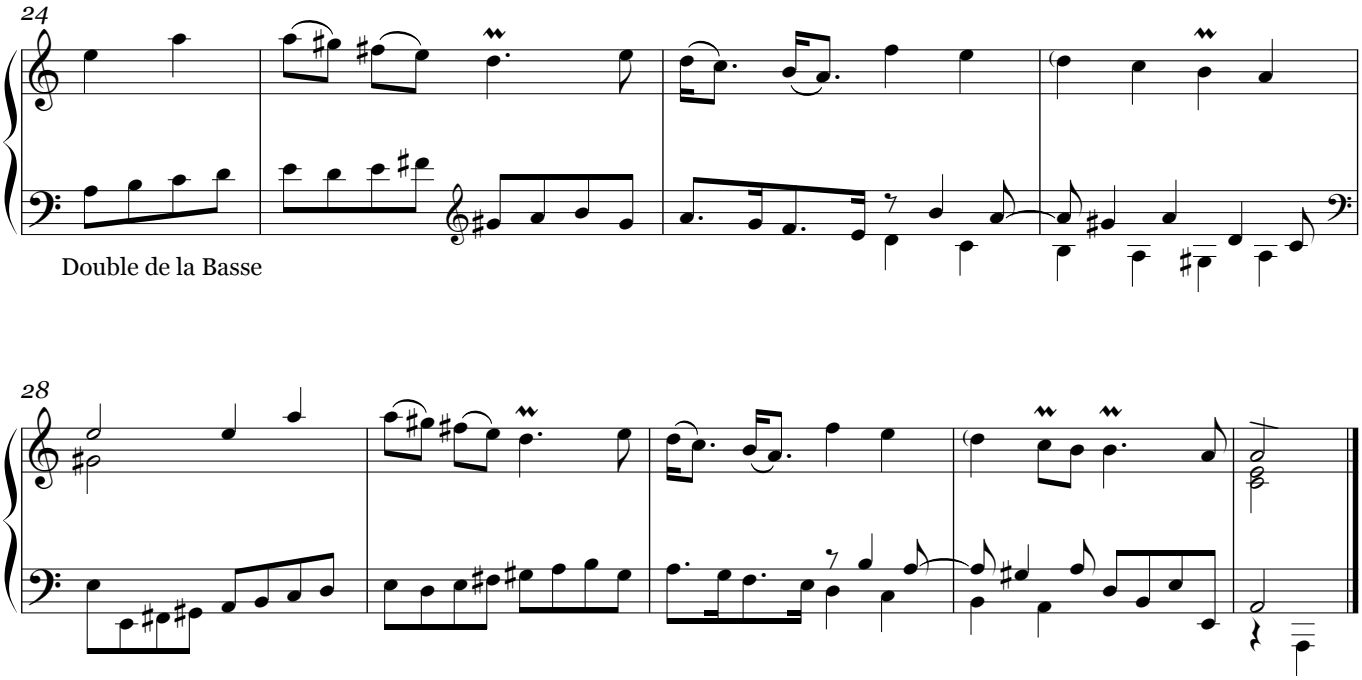


Vénitienne

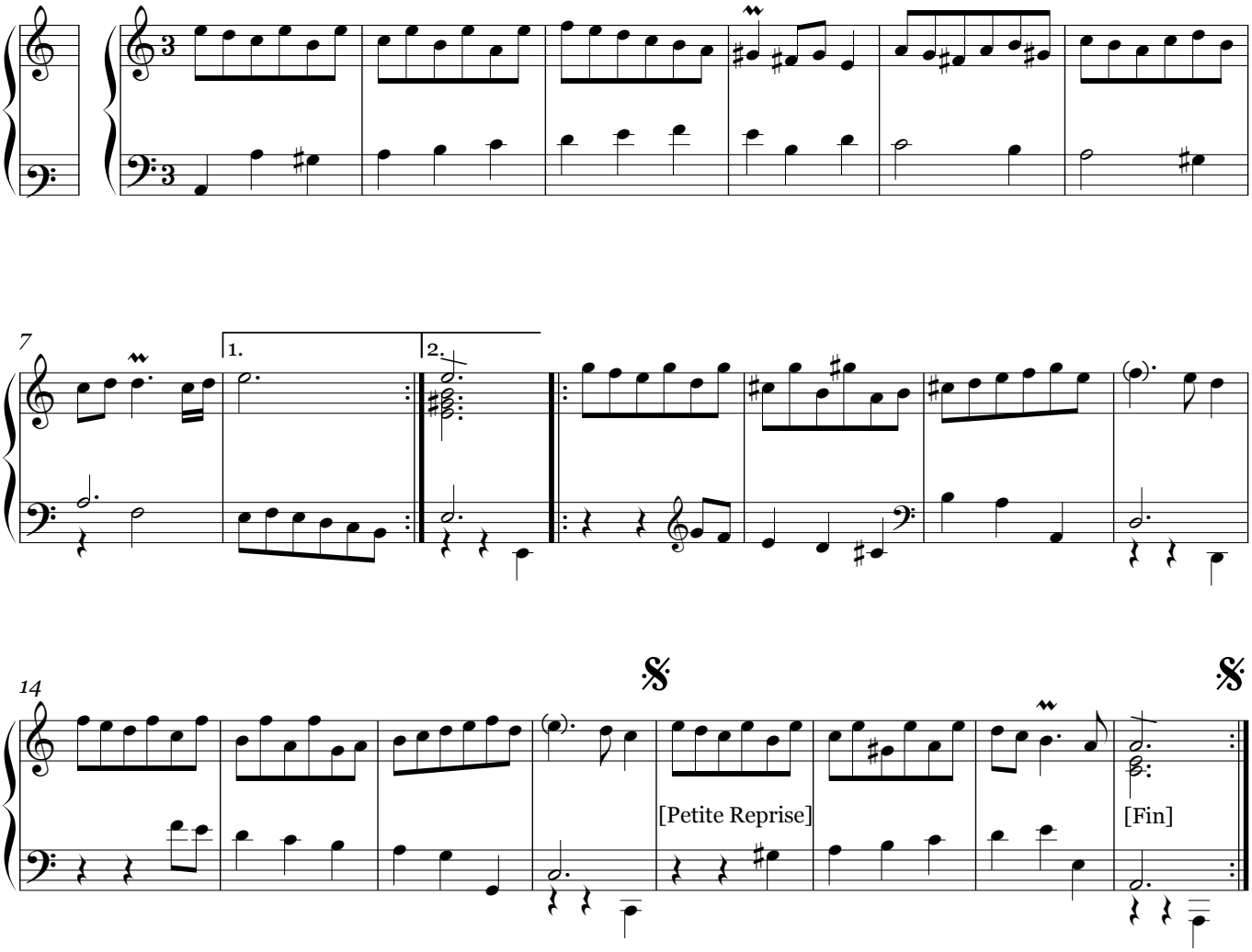


Gavote





Menuet



CRITICAL COMMENTARY

Commentary is identified by the bar number (or system number, in the unmeasured section of the prelude), the hand to which it applies (left or right), and the placing of the note (or beat) within the bar (e.g. first note). Voices are indicated from the top down.

Prélude

- 2nd line, right hand, first note. Completion of the tie from previous system lacking.
- 3rd line, left hand, first note. Completion of the tie from previous system lacking.
- Bar 2, left hand, first note. Completion of the tie from previous bar lacking.
- Bar 4, right hand, fourth note, first voice. Jacobi and Gilbert both place a quaver e here, doubling the second voice. I have followed the original print and left this out.
-

Alemande

- Bar 1, left hand, second beat. C3 clef
- Bar 4, right hand, last note, top voice. Beginning of tie to the next bar lacking.
- Bar 5, left hand, first beat. F3 clef.
- Bar 7, left hand, 2nd beat. C1 clef.
- Bar 12, left hand. F3 clef.
- Bar 15, left hand, 3rd beat, 3rd note. Tie to the *a* in the next beat missing.
- Bar 21, last beat, 2nd and 3rd notes. These are semiquavers in 1706.
- Bar 23, 3rd and 4th notes. Slur missing here.
- Bar 27, right hand, 3rd beat. C3 clef.

2e Alemande

- Bar 15, left hand, top voice. Beginning of tie to *e* in next bar missing.
- Bar 27, first note. Dot missing

Courante

- Time signature in the original is 2/3.
- Bar 5, left hand, 2nd note. C3 clef.
- Bar 6, left hand. F3 clef.
- Bar 15, right hand. 2nd voice, 3rd note. Dot missing after *b*.

Gigue

- Time signature in the original is 3/2.
- Bar 6, left hand. F3 clef.
- Bar 7, left hand. C3 clef.
- Bar 8, left hand. F3 clef.
- Bar 9, left hand. C3 clef.
- Bar 11, left hand. F3 clef.
- Bar 11, left hand. The first two rests are missing.
- Bar 12, left hand, 2nd note. C3 clef.
- Bar 13, left hand. C1 clef.
- Bar 17, left hand, 2nd note. F3 clef.
- Bar 29, left hand, first note. Tie to the next is missing.
- Bar 31, left hand. C3 clef.
- Bar 34, left hand. F3 clef.

1ere Sarabande

- Bar 17, right hand. Dots missing on all three notes of this chord.
- Bar 17, right hand, 3rd voice. Ledger line missing.

2e Sarabande

- Bar 10, right hand, first beat. Dots missing on both *b*'s.

Vénitienne

- Time signature in the original is 3/2.
- Bar 1. The *segno* here, as elsewhere, is given a bar later in Gilbert's edition. I have followed the original here.
- Bar 38, left hand, 3rd beat. C3 clef.
- Bar 44, left hand. F3 clef.

Gavote.

- Bar 4, left hand. F3 clef.
- Bar 10, left hand 2nd beat. C3 clef.
- Bar 13, left hand. F3 clef.
- Upbeat of 2e Reprise, left hand. C3 clef.
- Bar 28, left hand. F3 clef.