# Cross-String Ornaments Part 3 of 3

## By Douglas Niedt

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Let's look at some real pieces where we can use cross-string ornaments. Let me remind you once again that the use of ornaments will vary with the:

1. Time period in which the piece was written

2. Composer

3. Country

4. Musical context

5. Instrument

6. Time value of the ornament and the notes preceding and following it.

7. Tempo

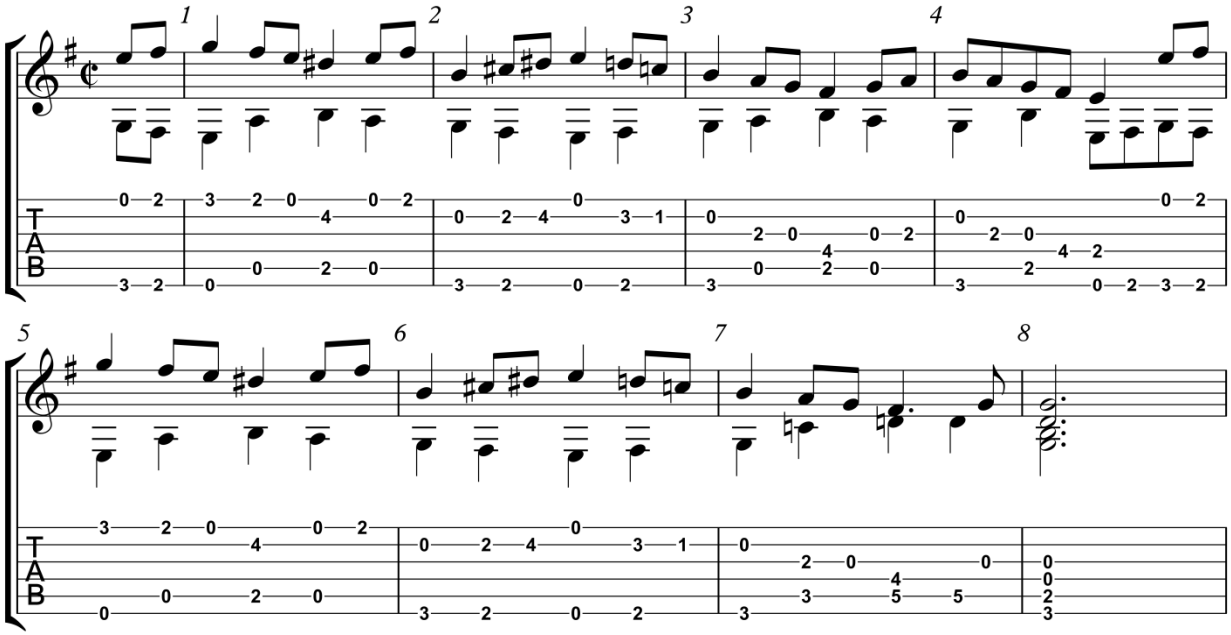
8. Style of the music

9. Personal taste and opinion of the performer

## The Bach Bourée

Below are the first eight measures of the *Bourée* from J.S. Bach's *Lute Suite No. 1 BWV 996*.

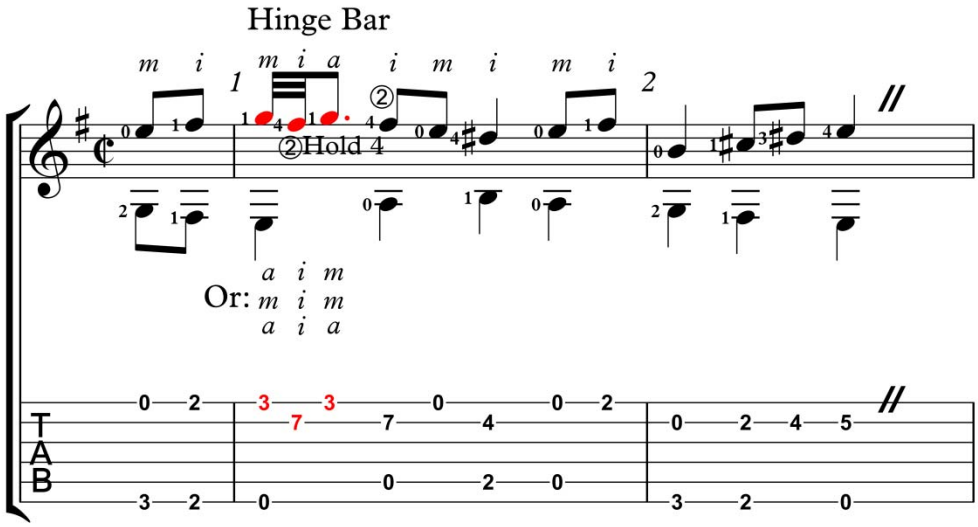
This is the first half of the piece (measures 1-8) with no ornamentation:



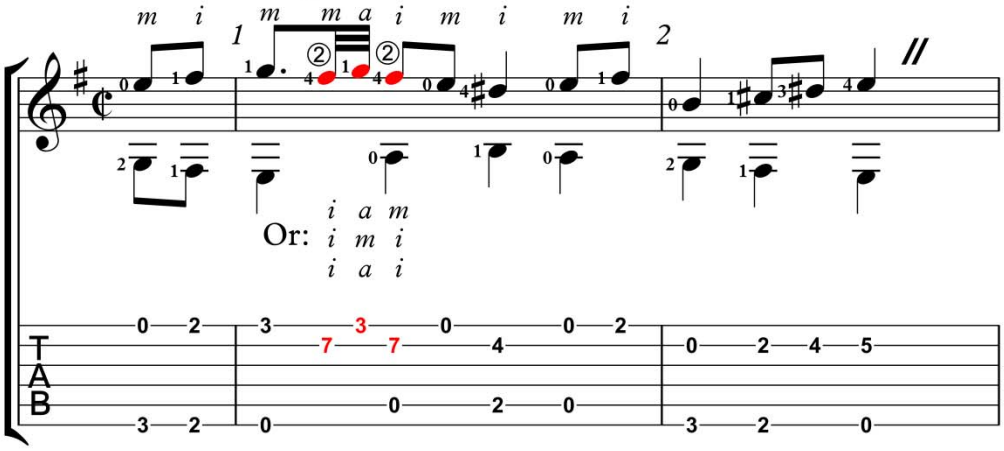
Next, I have written out some possible ornaments for each of these first eight measures. These are by no means all the possibilities, but you will see that I can ornament almost every beat!

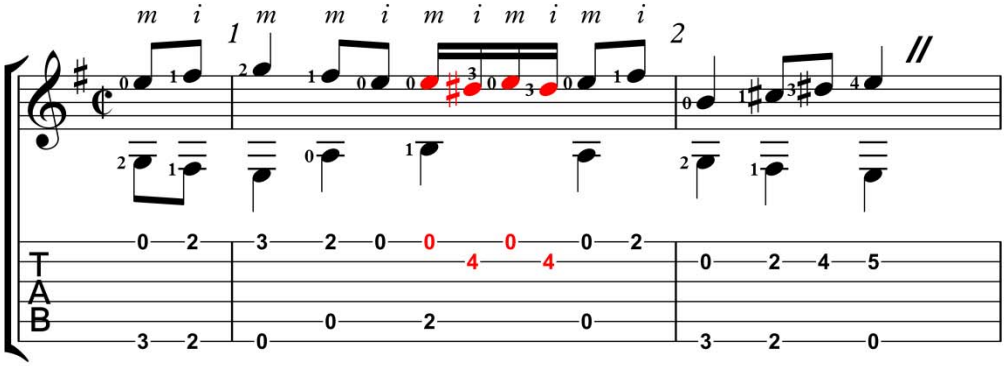
Some possible ornaments for measures 1-8

Red notes are the added or altered notes

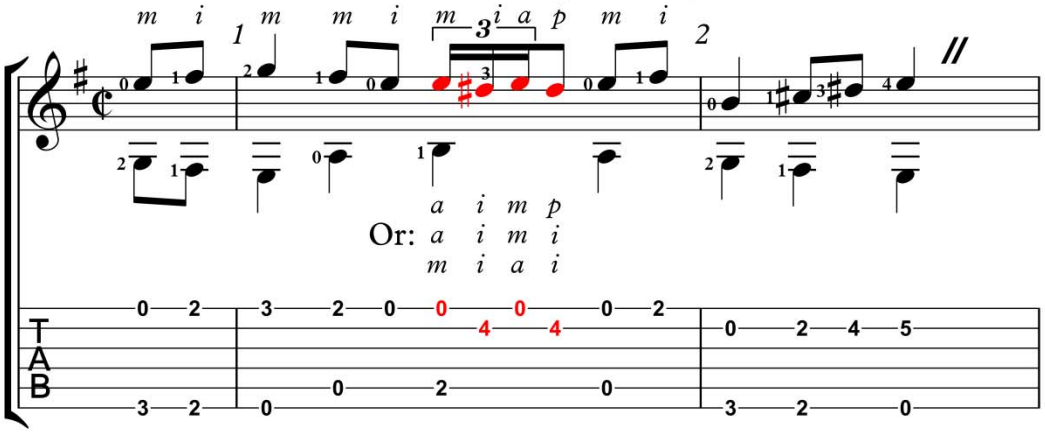


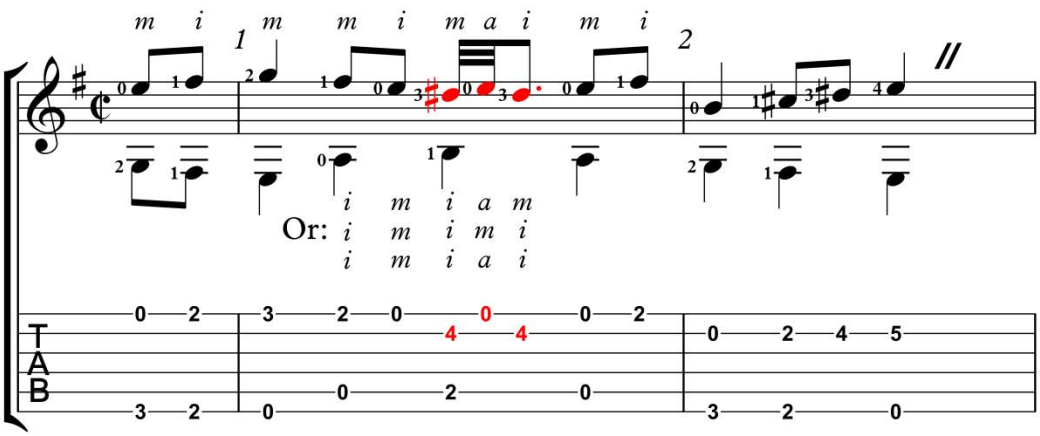
Hinge Bar

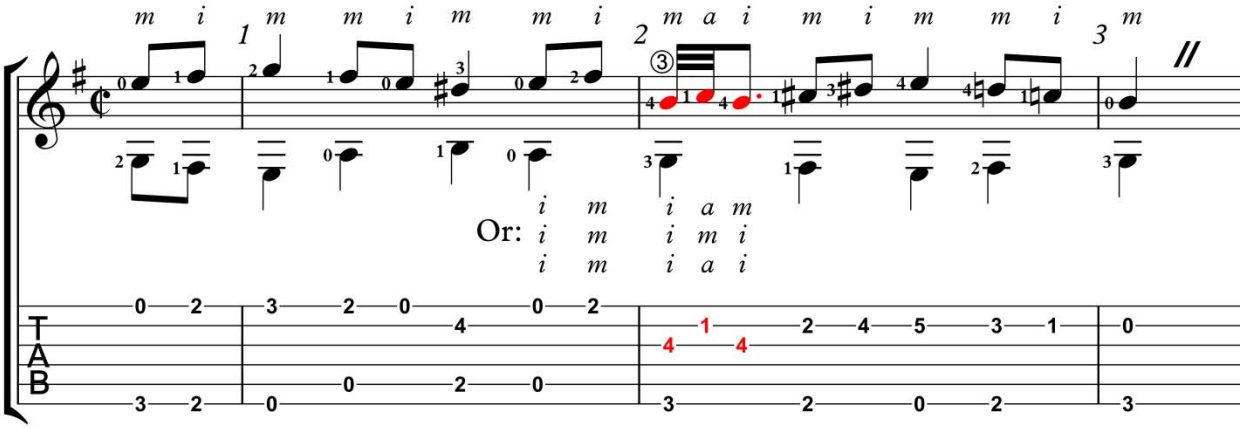


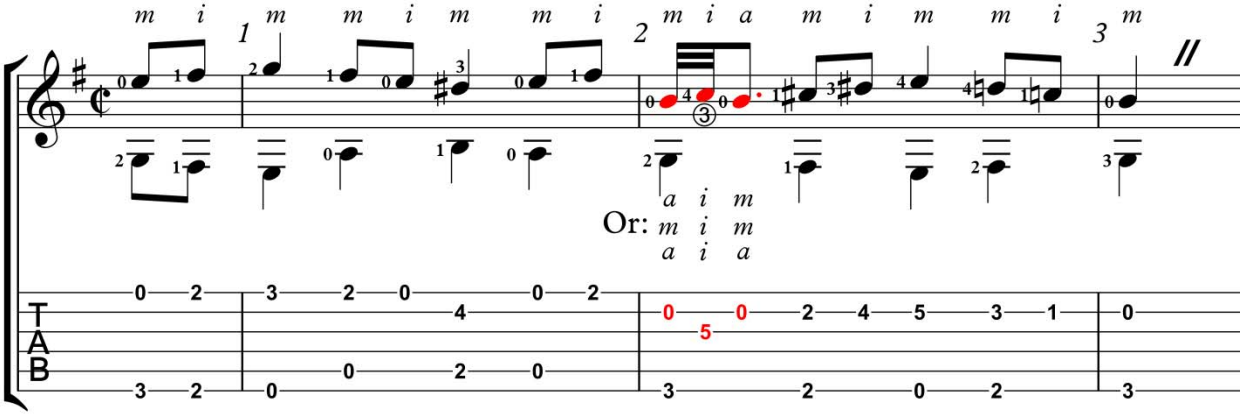

Same ornament in quicker rhythm

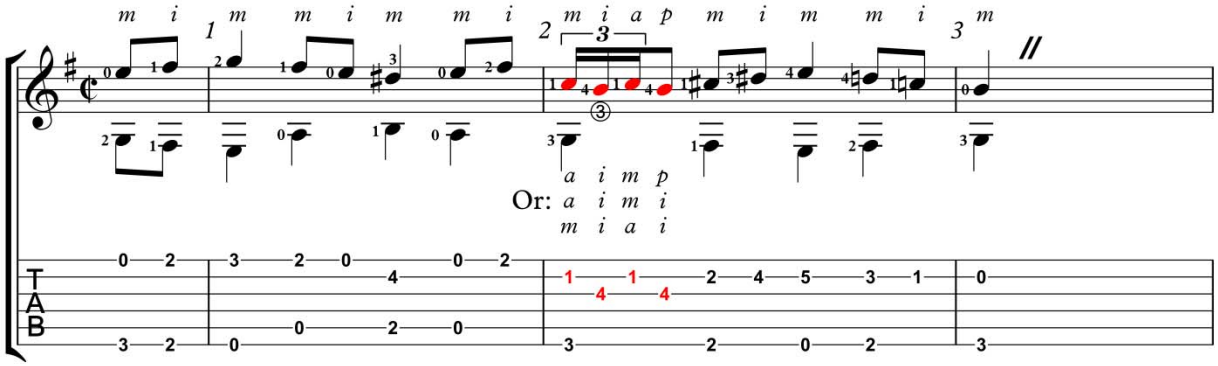




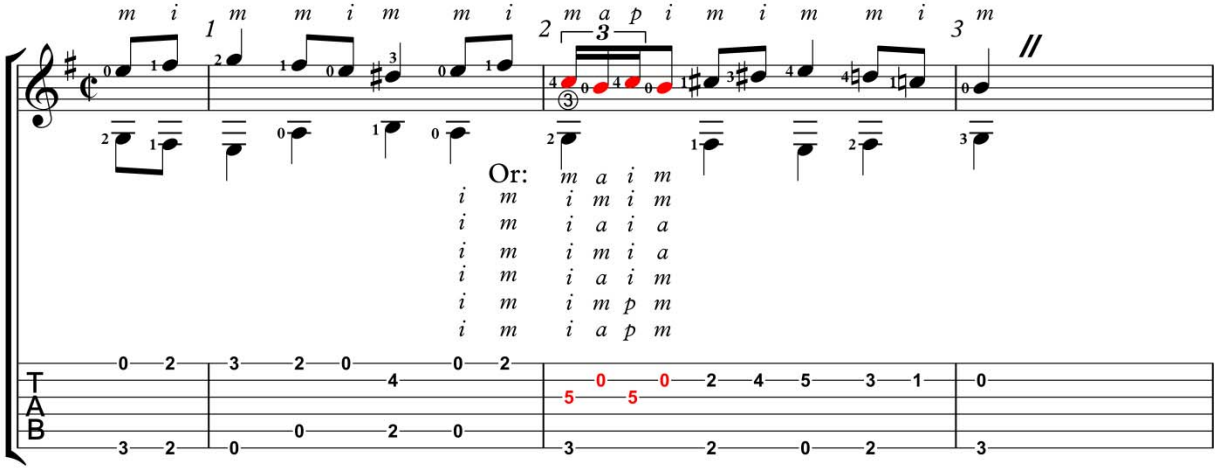



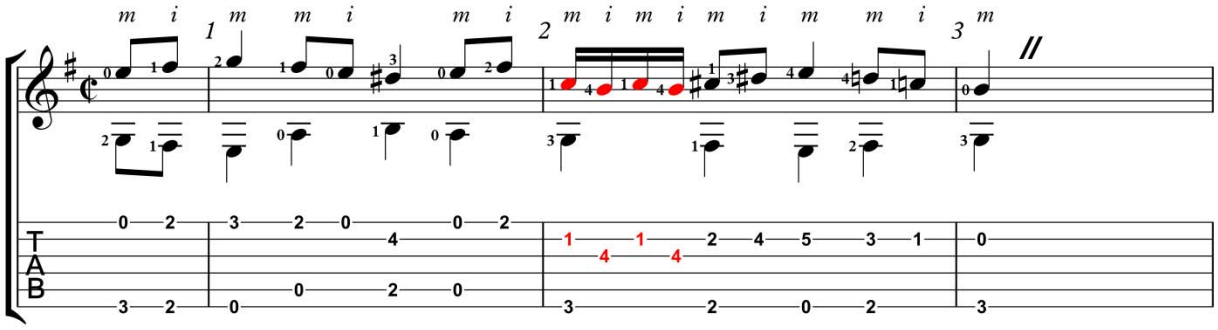

The same ornament using open string



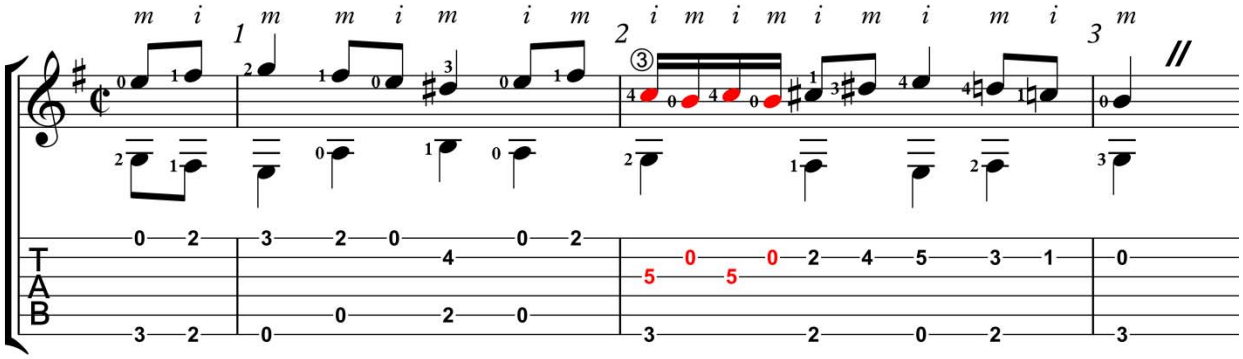


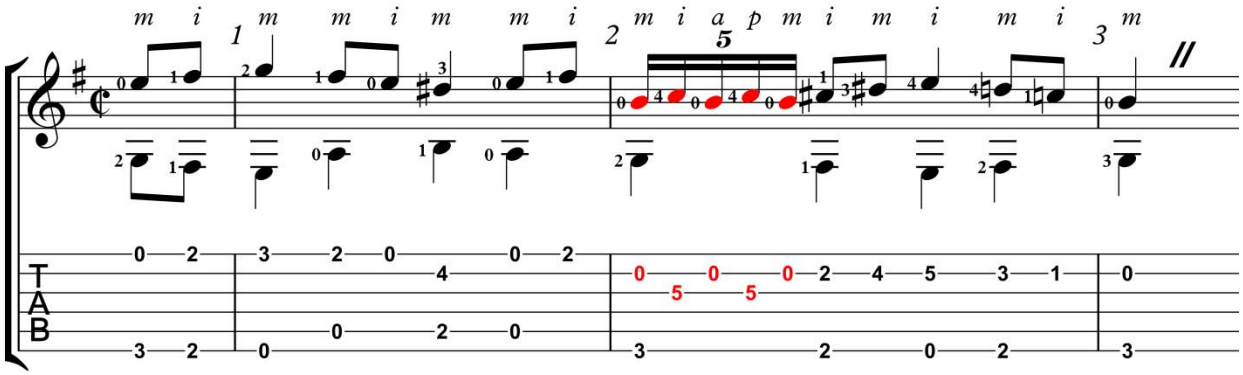

The same ornament using open string

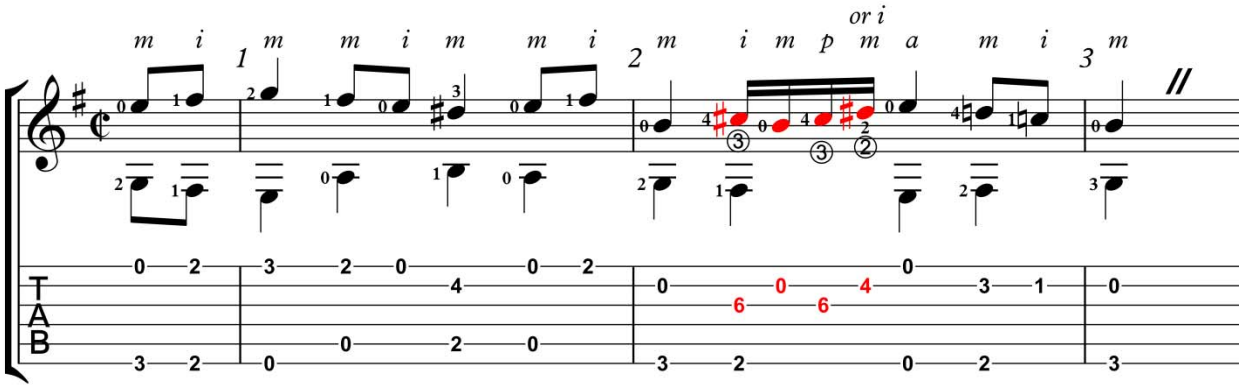


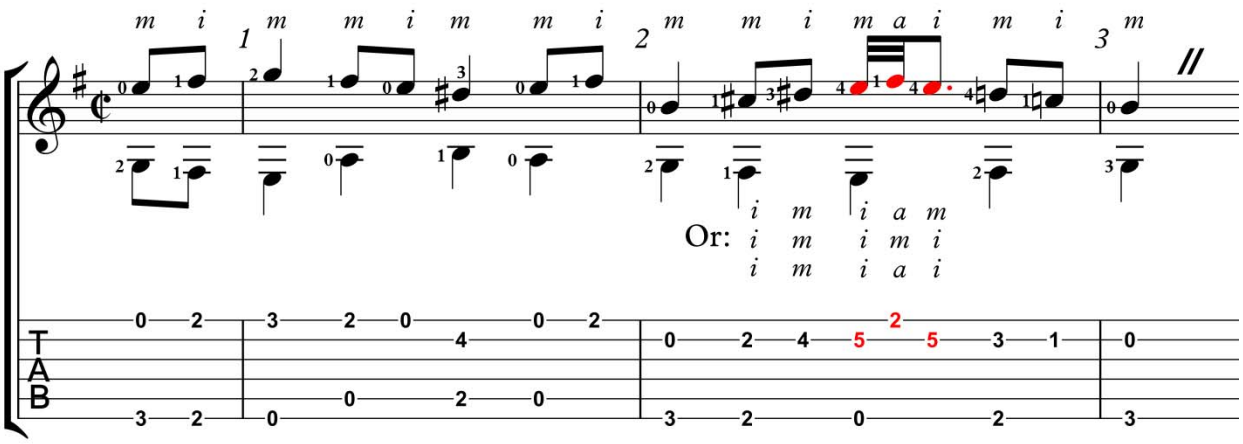



The same ornament using open string





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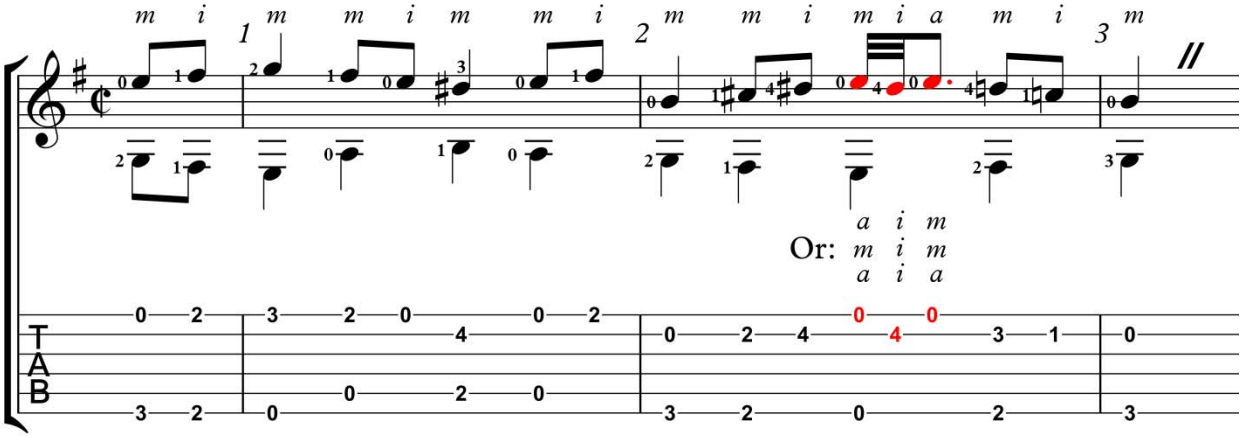
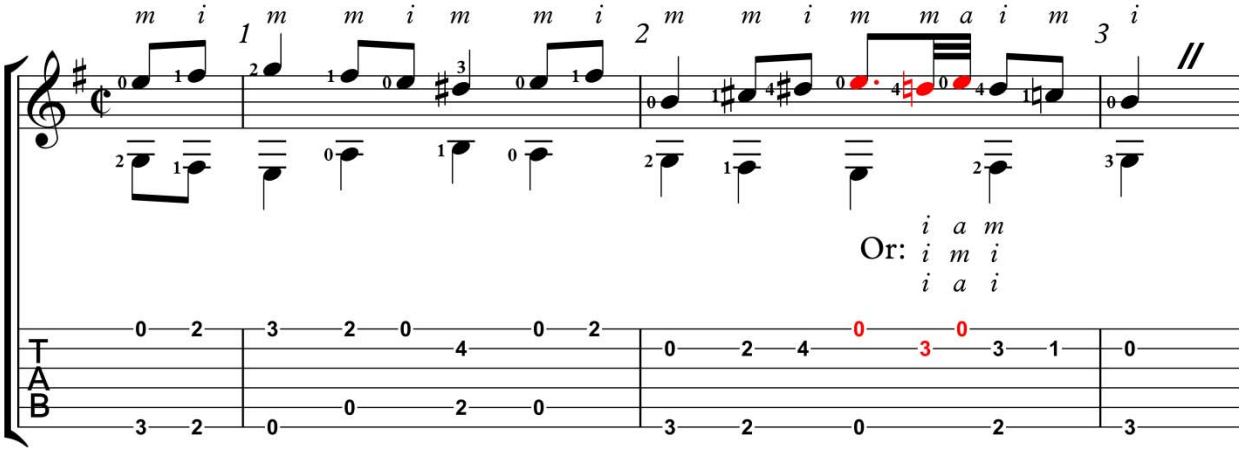
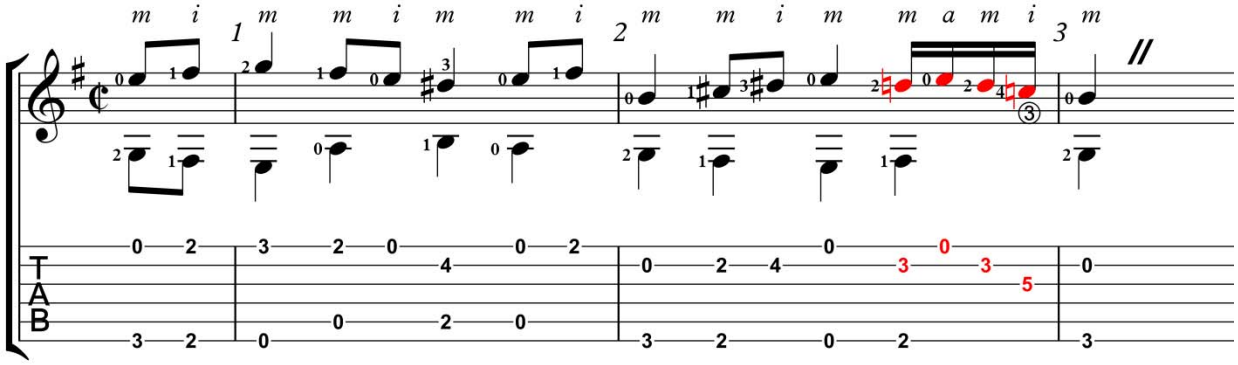
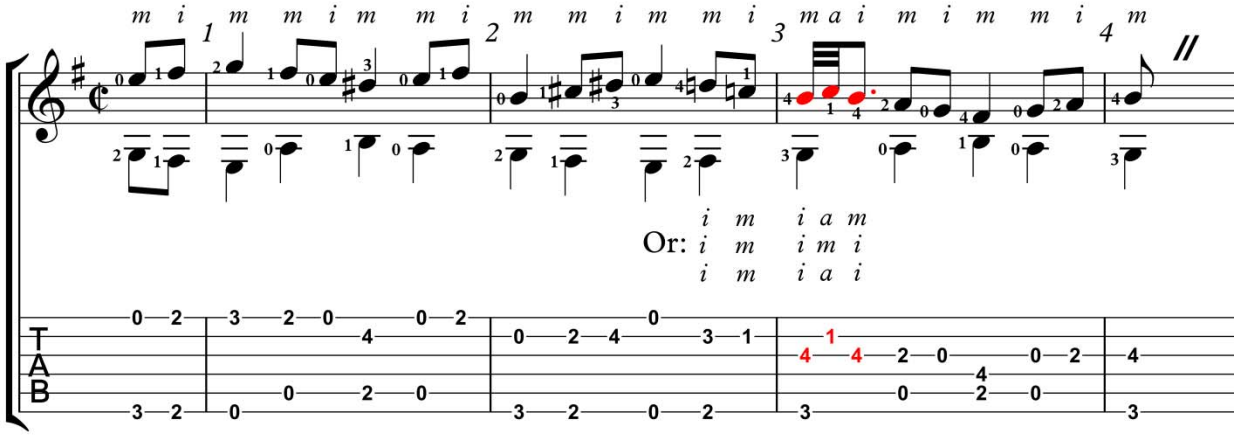
Or: i m i m i
Or: i m i a i

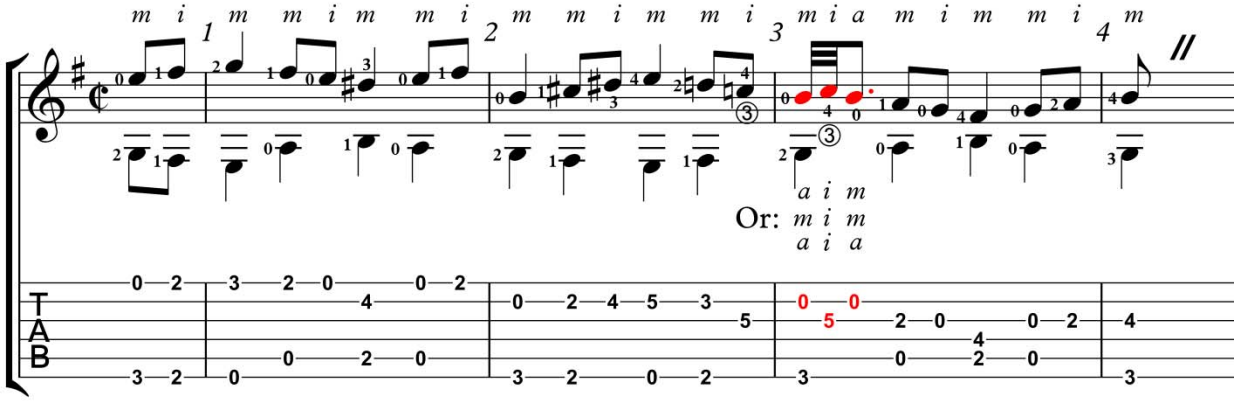

Or: a i m
Or: m i m
Or: a i a

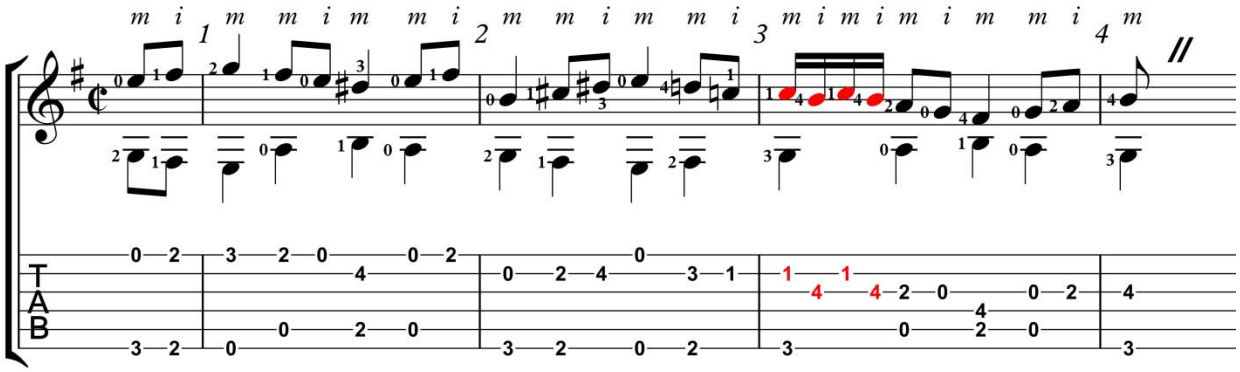

Or: i a m
Or: i m i
Or: i a i



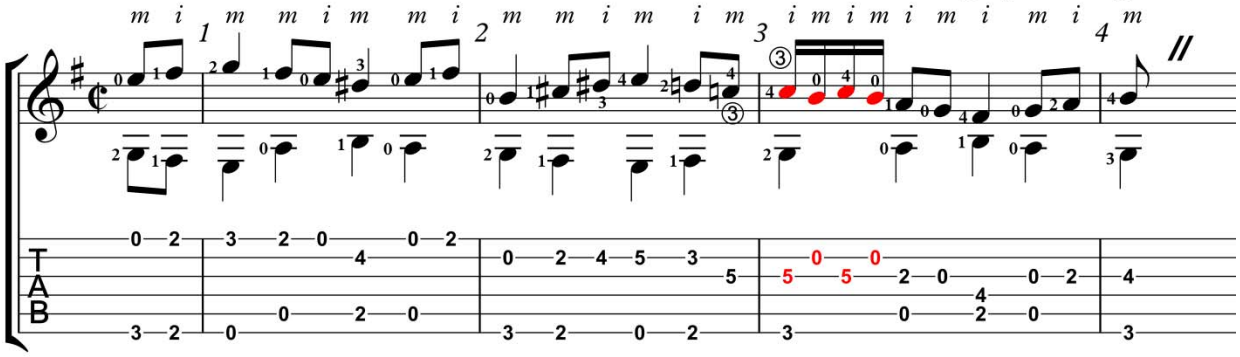



The same ornament using open string

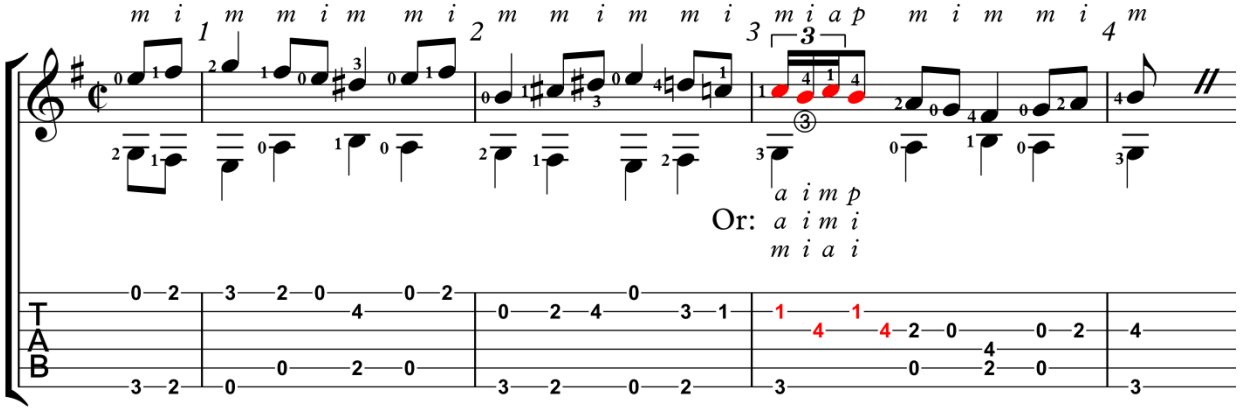




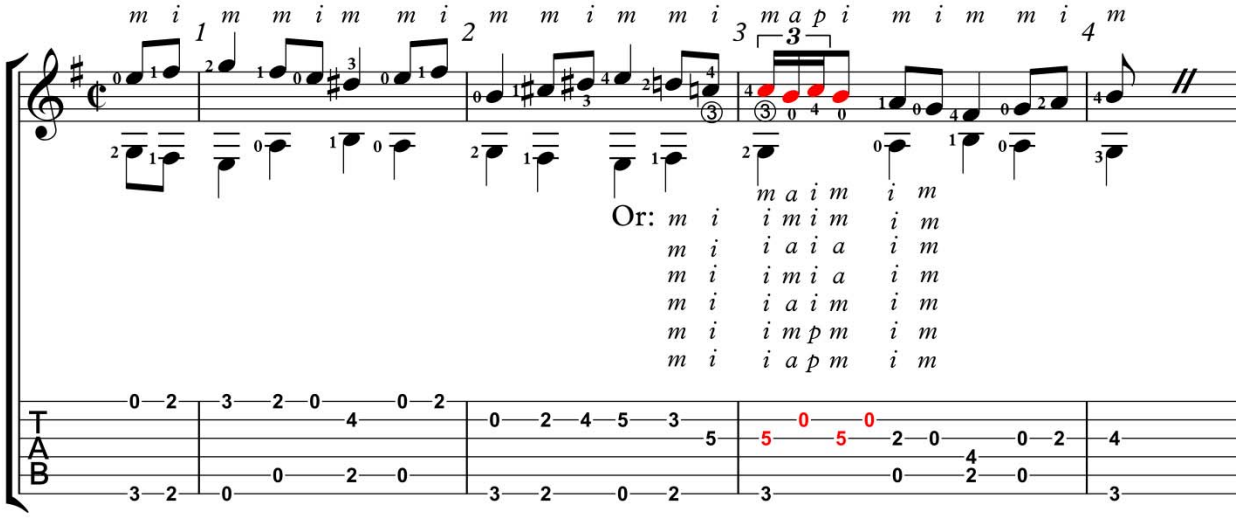
The same ornament using open string

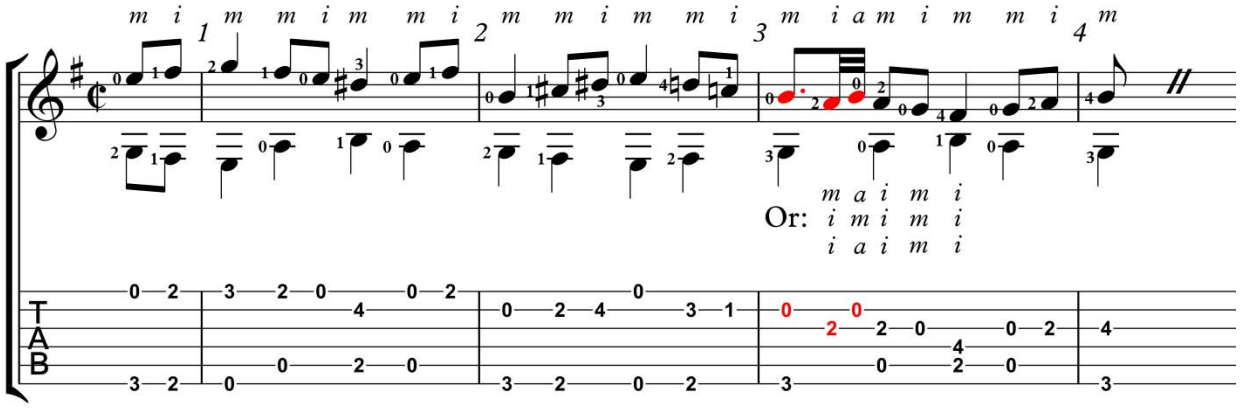


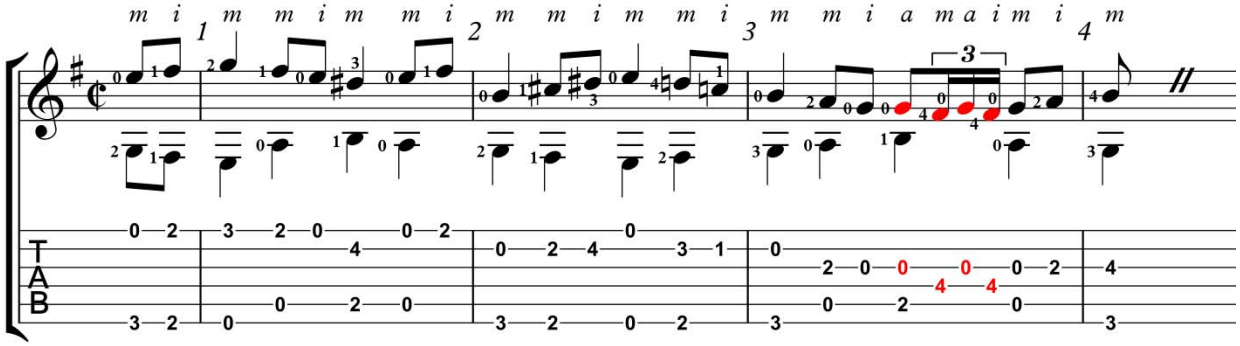
Same ornament in quicker rhythm

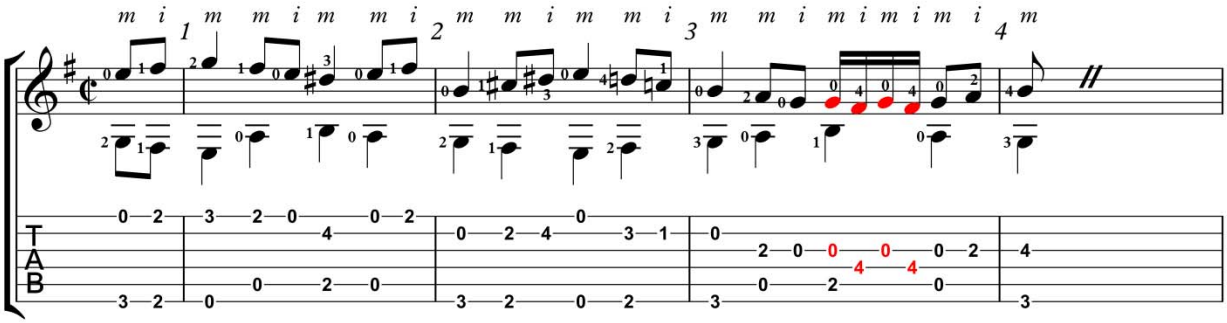


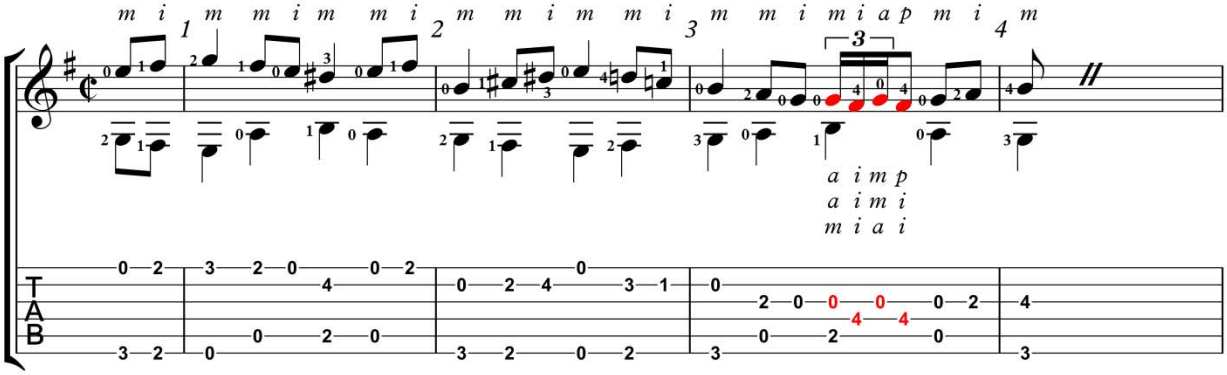
The same ornament using open string

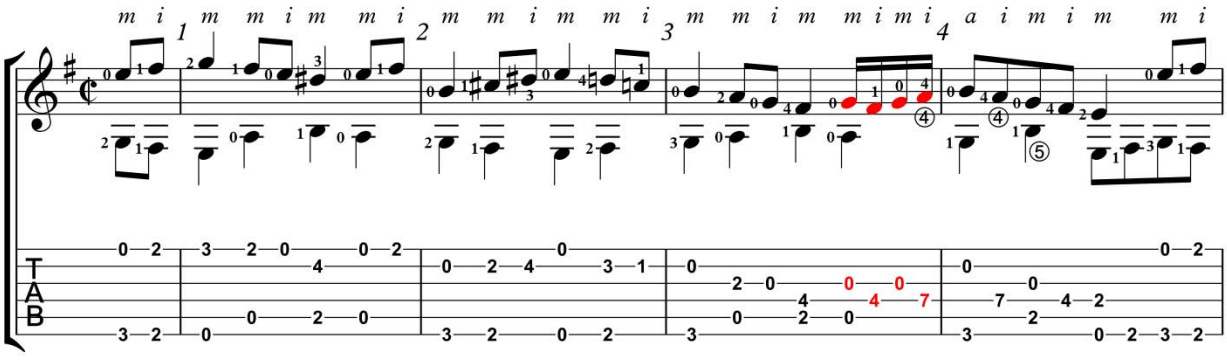


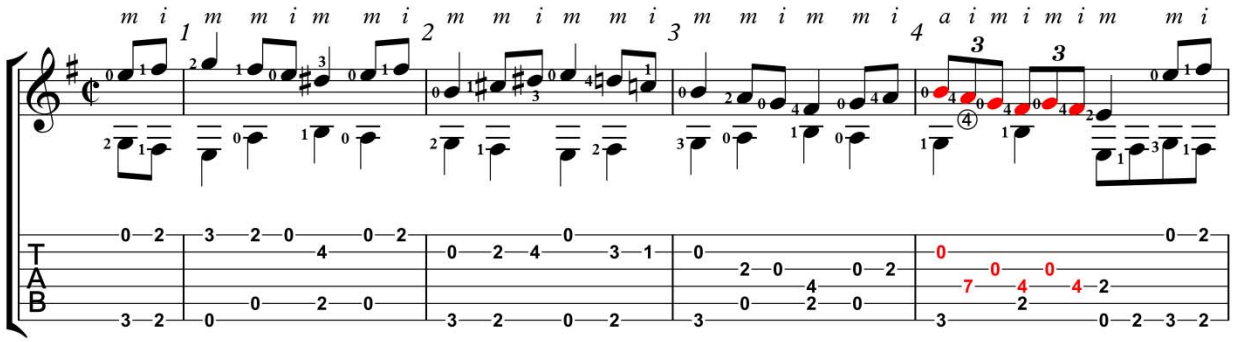



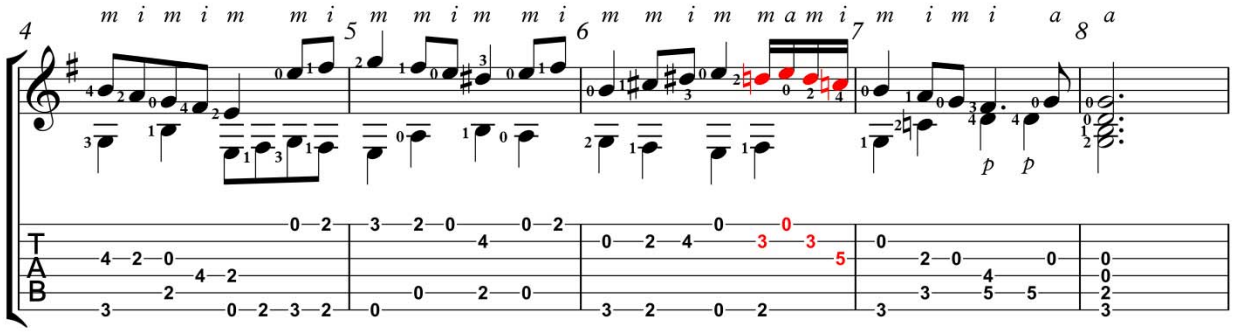


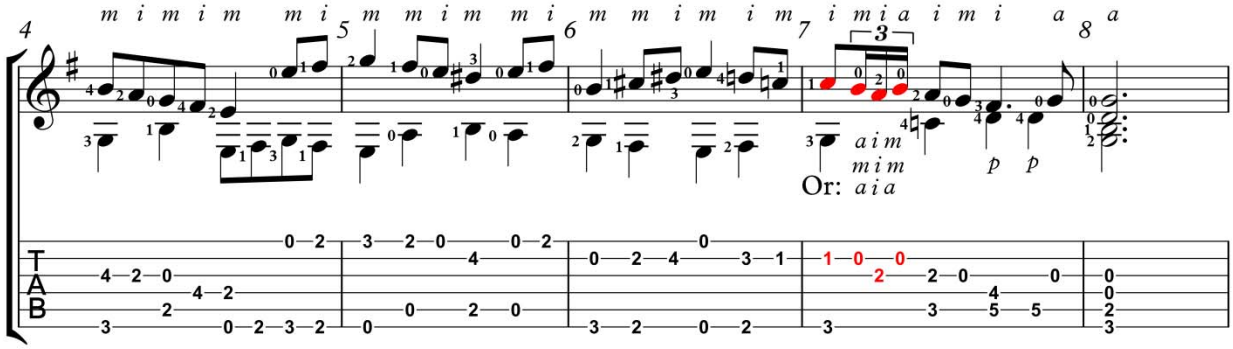


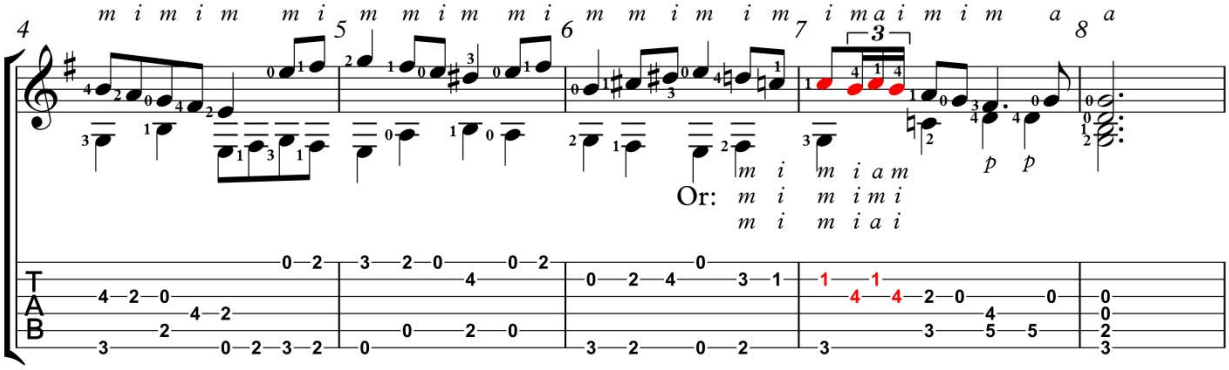




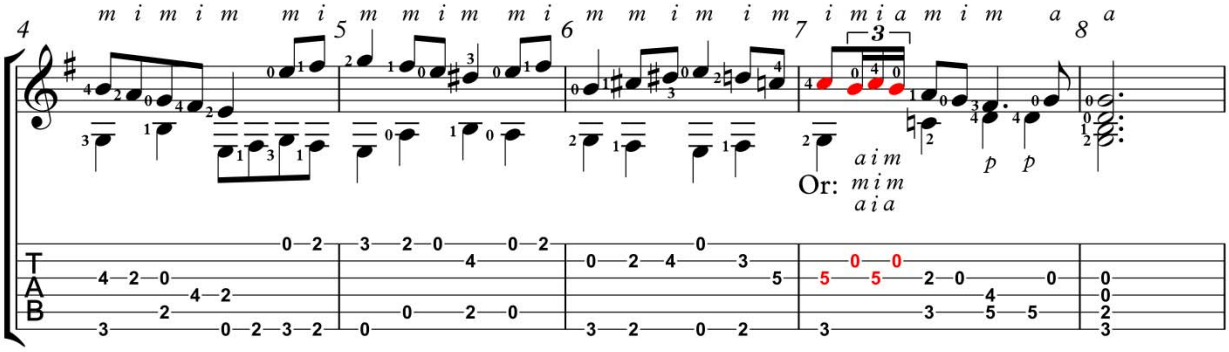
Measures 5 and 6 can use any of the ornaments shown for measures 1 and 2.

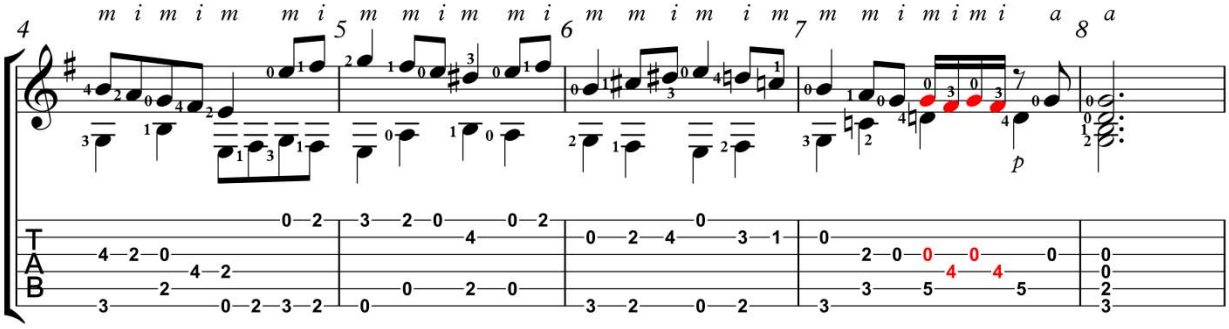


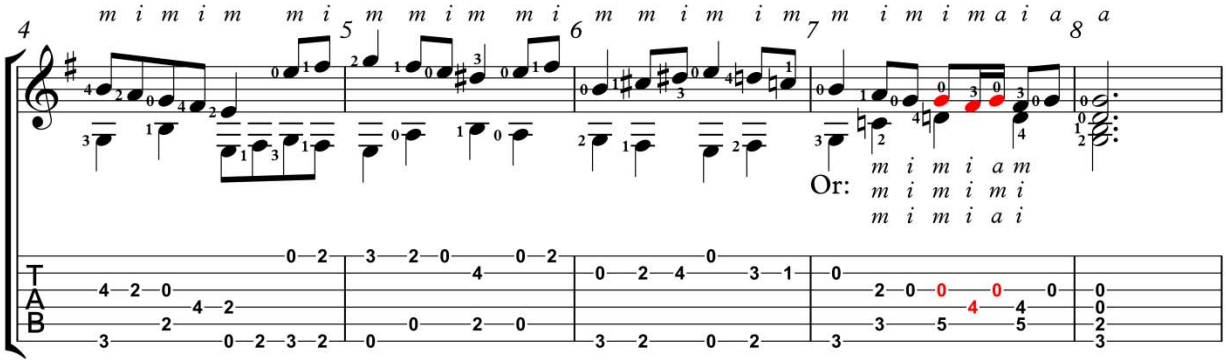




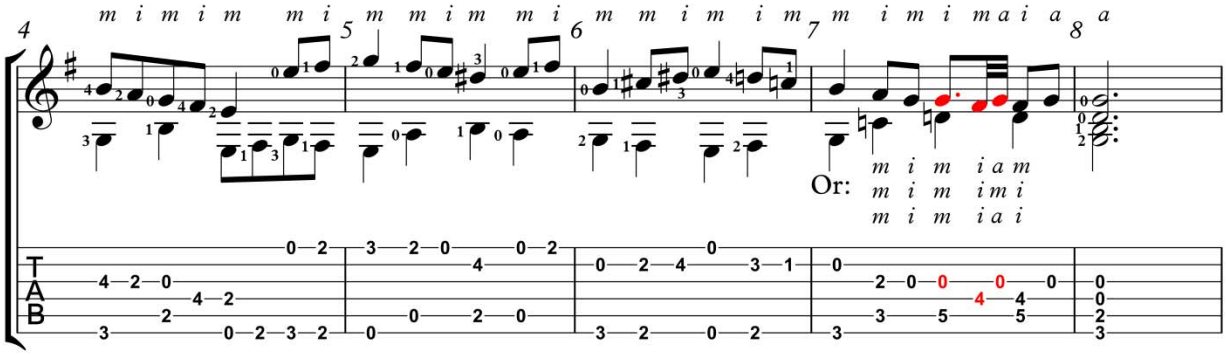

The same ornament using open string

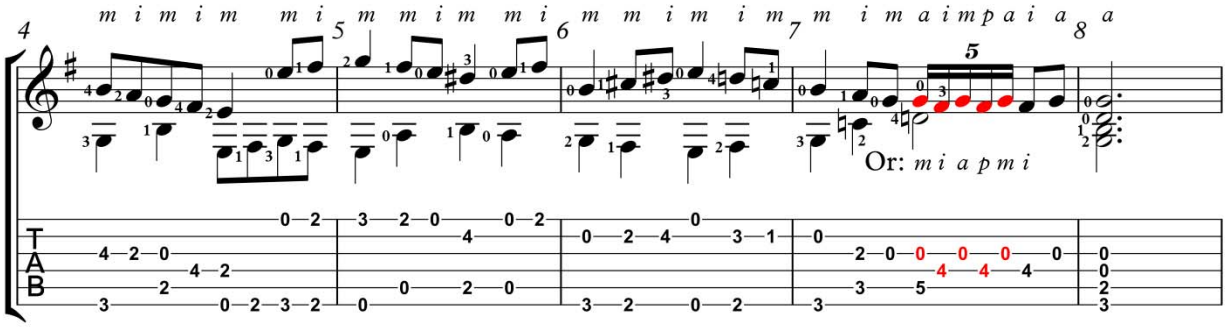


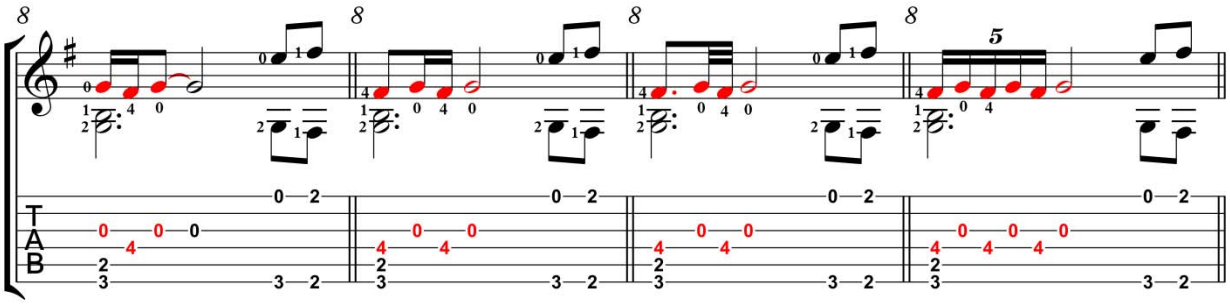



Same ornament in quicker rhythm



For the final measure, many versions and right-hand fingerings are possible for the ornaments. Mixing in the thumb to play the F#s is especially helpful.



Most people today would probably say that using that much ornamentation is overdoing it. But I must point out that in other arts of the period such as baroque architecture, furniture making, and plasterwork, *almost every surface is highly decorated*. Look at these examples:

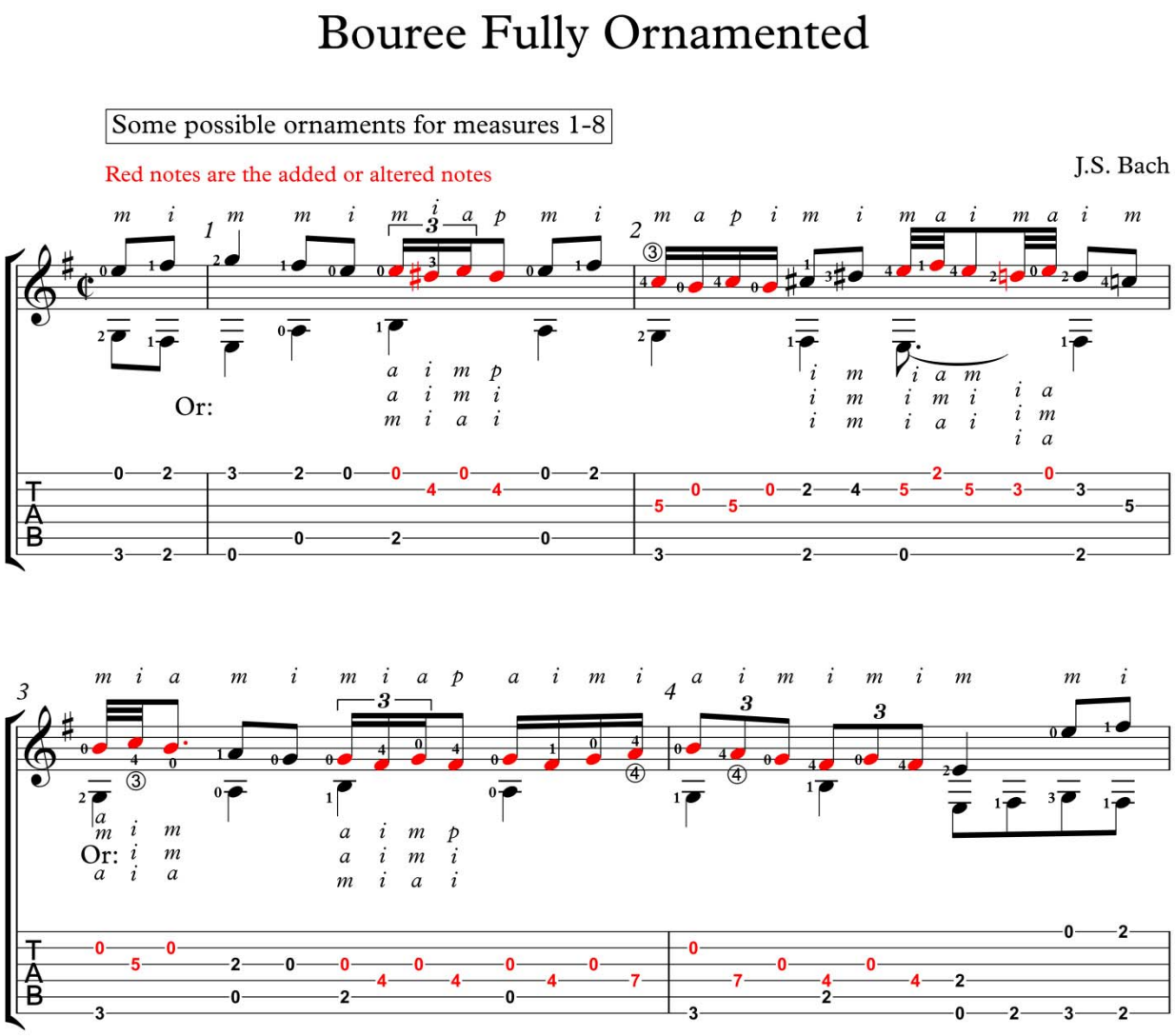
artes

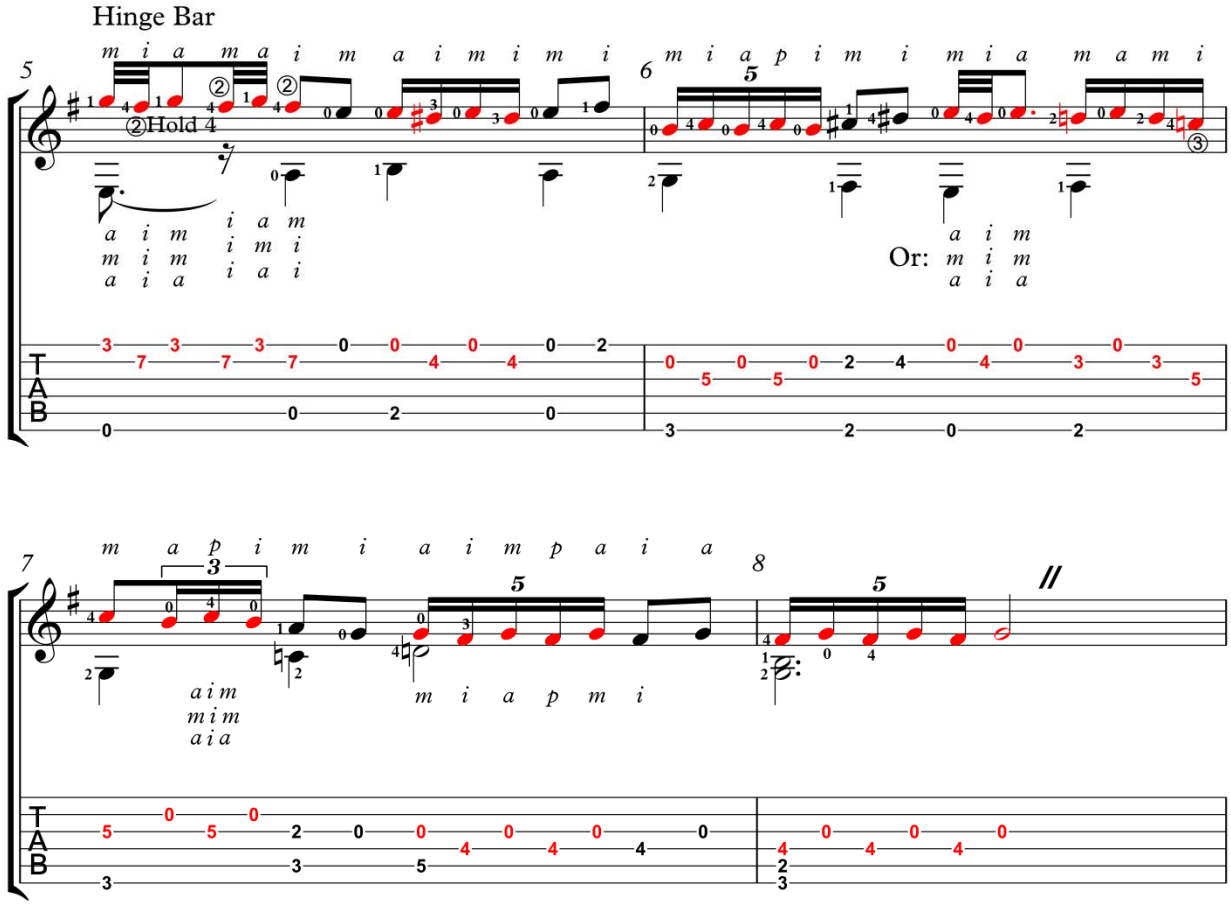
Granted, musicians and writers of the baroque period often spoke of using ornaments *tastefully*. But one must maintain perspective. Based upon the artistic aesthetic of the time, my best wild guess is that what was tasteful to them would be considered overdone today.

Another important point to remember is that musicians of the baroque era prided themselves on their skills of improvisation. Musicians as accomplished as Bach seldom played a piece the same way twice. One of the primary methods to "change it up" was to vary the ornamentation in a piece. To me, the aesthetic of the period and the improvisational bent of its musicians point to a generous rather than sparing use of ornamentation.

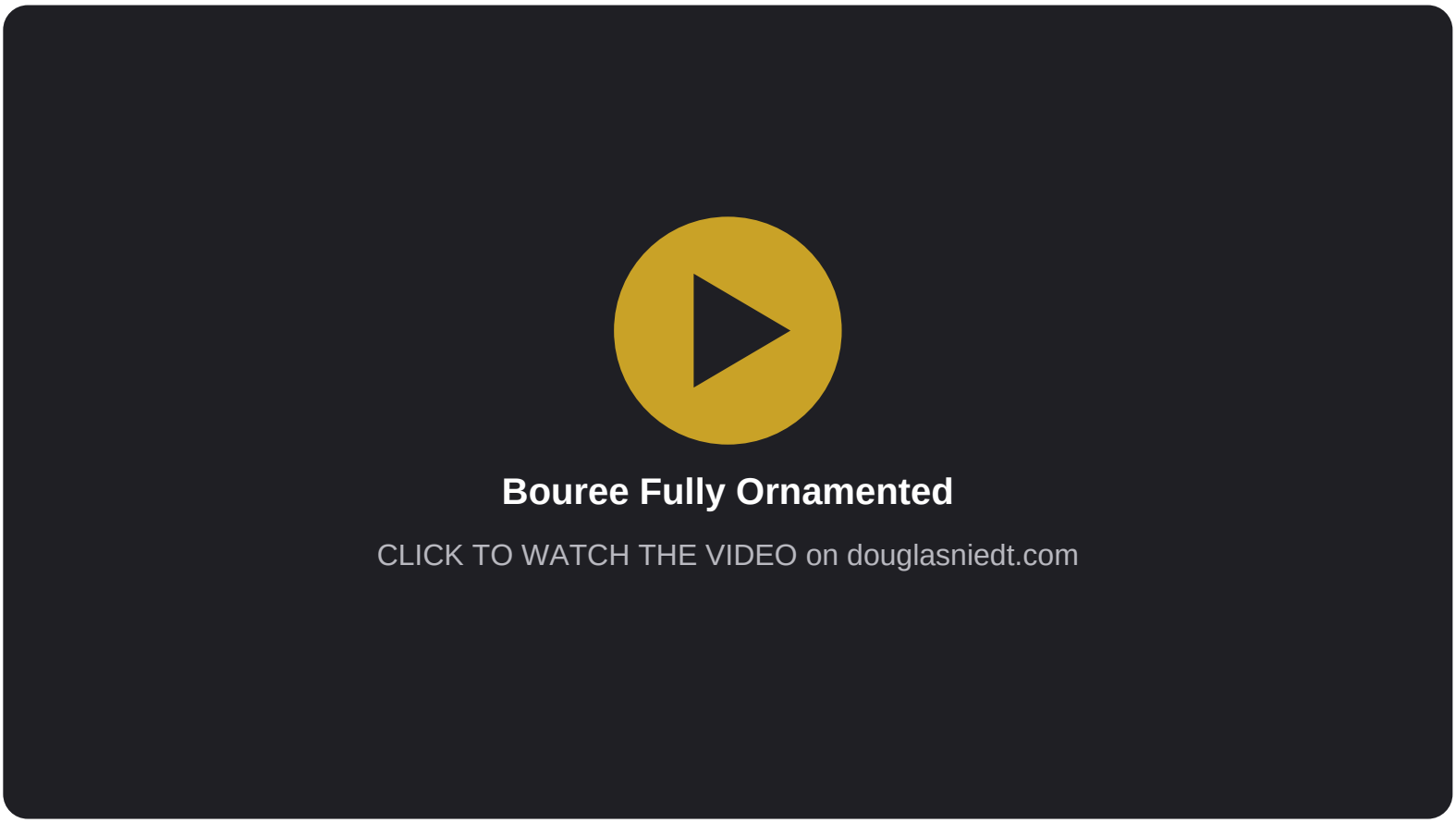
My advice is that if you wish to be "authentic", use lots of ornaments. But if you wish to conform to current taste, by all means use ornamentation sparingly.

Here is a fully ornamented version of the first eight measures:






Now, listen to me play it.



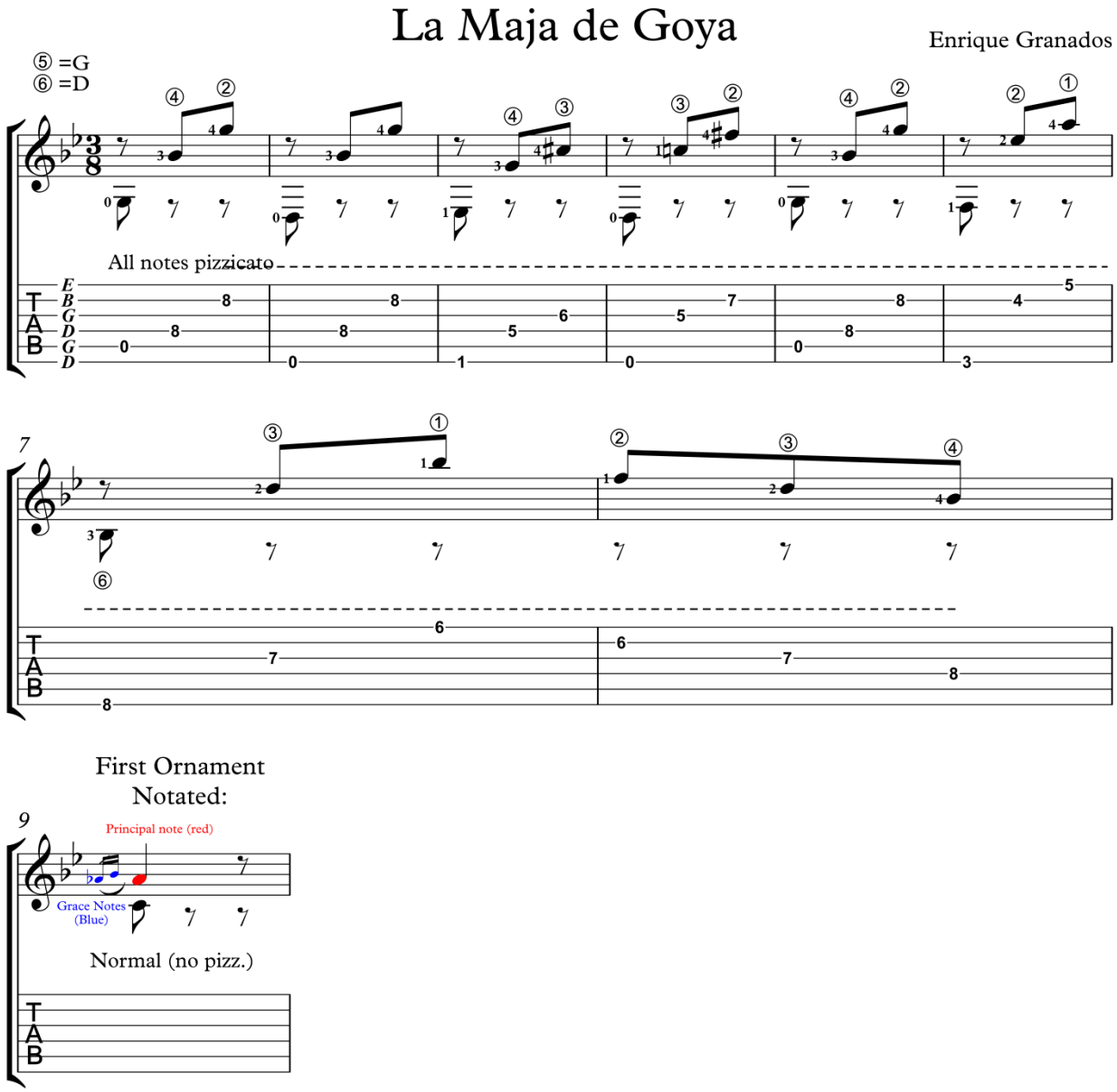

## La Maja de Goya

*La Maja de Goya* by pianist Enrique Granados is an example of a very different style of piece in which cross-string ornamentation may be used. It is in the style of the Romantic Era rather than the Baroque. Ornaments of the period are often written as grace notes in front of the principal note.

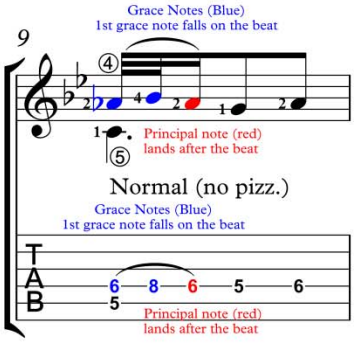
Guitarists usually play these ornaments using slurs (hammer ons and pull offs). They play the grace note furthest to the left *on the beat* (simultaneously with any bass and accompaniment notes). This results in the principal note falling *after the beat*.

However, most pianists play the grace notes *ahead of the beat* and place the principal note *on the beat*. Any accompaniment and bass notes are played with the principal note on the beat. The pianistic style is well-captured on the guitar using cross-string ornaments.

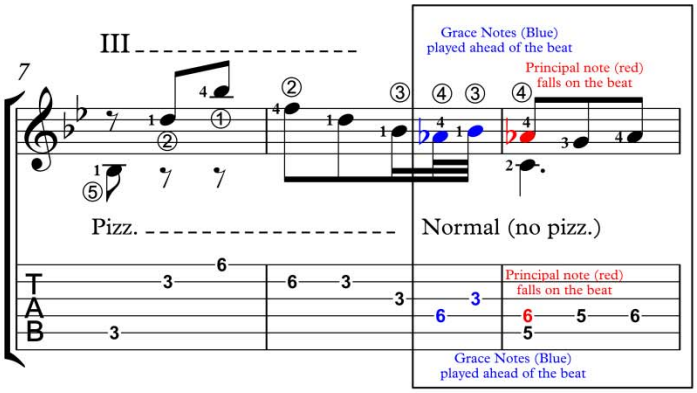
In the following example I show you the original notation for each ornament, its execution using traditional guitar slur technique, and execution using the cross-string ornament technique:

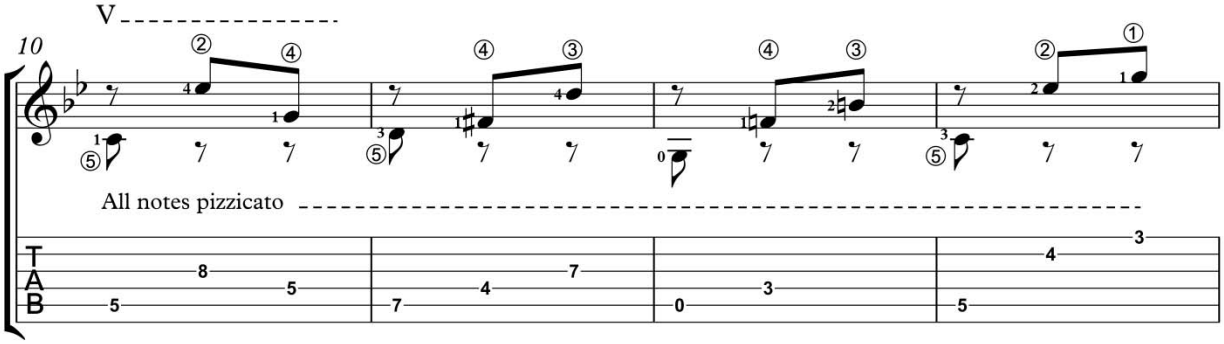


Execution of first ornament using slur,
playing first grace note on the beat.
Principal note falls after the beat:

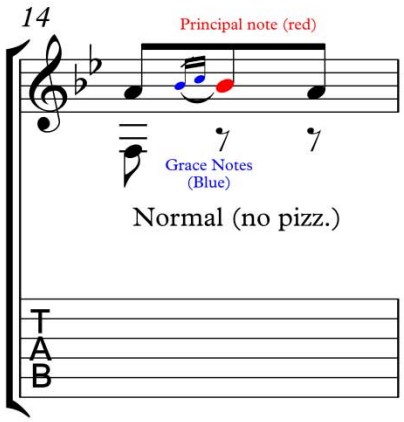



Execution of first ornament as cross-string ornament
playing grace notes ahead of the beat (no slur):

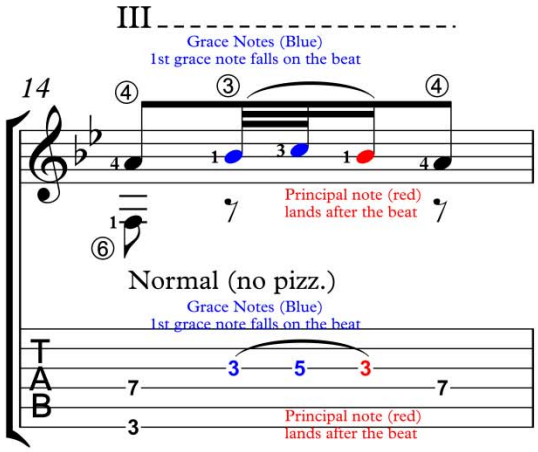


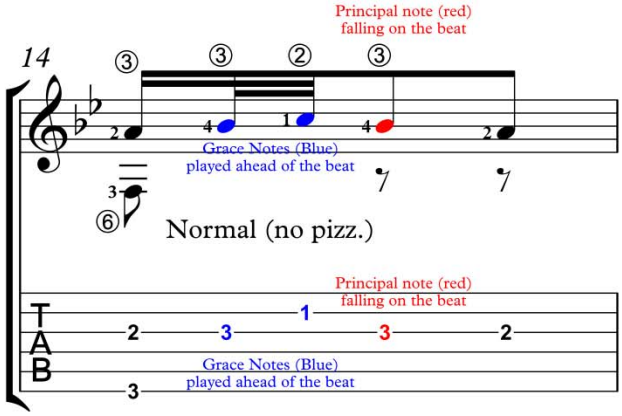
Second Ornament Notated:

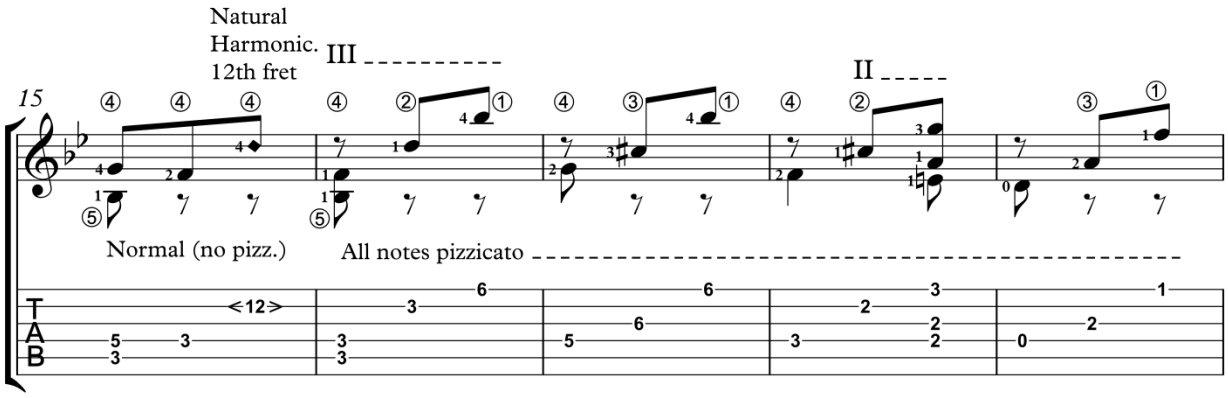



Execution of second ornament using slur,
playing first grace note on the beat.
Principal note falls after the beat:

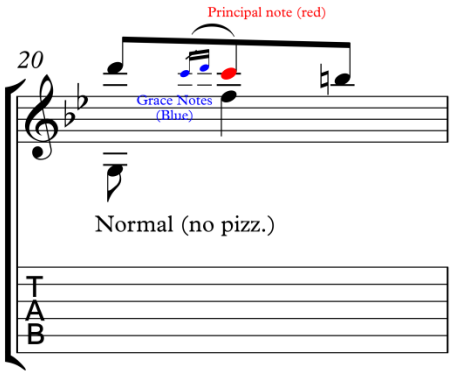



Execution of second ornament as cross-string ornament
playing grace notes ahead of the beat (no slur):

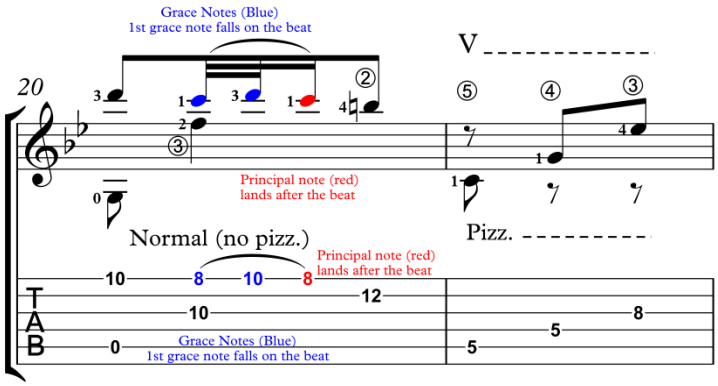




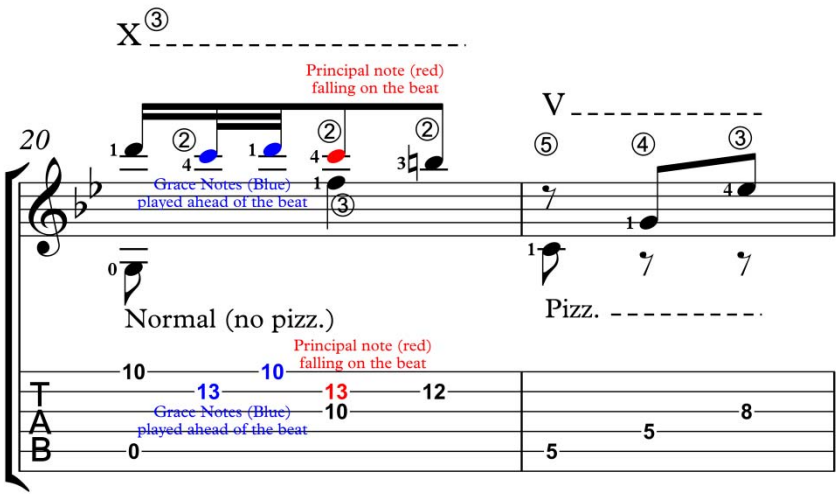

Third Ornament Notated:



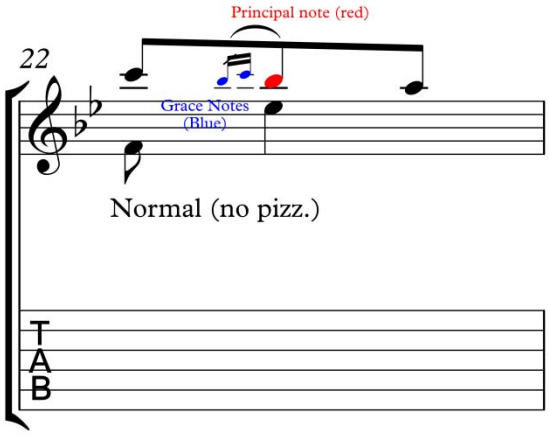

Execution of third ornament using slur,
playing first grace note on the beat.
Principal note falls after the beat:



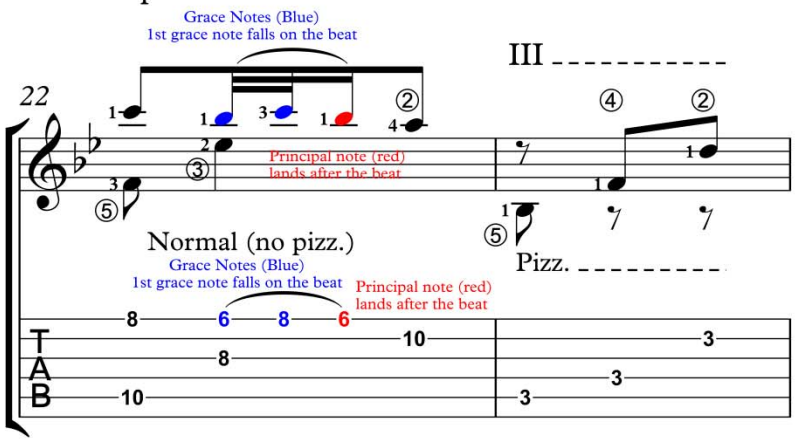
Execution of third ornament as cross-string ornament playing grace notes ahead of the beat (no slur):



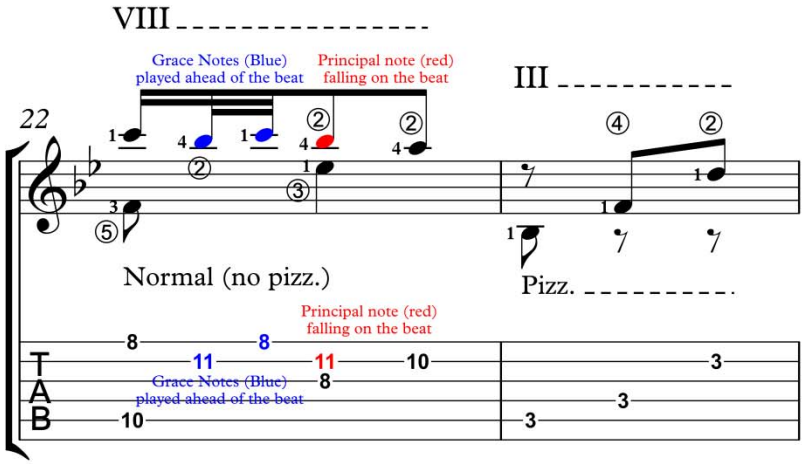

Fourth Ornament Notated:



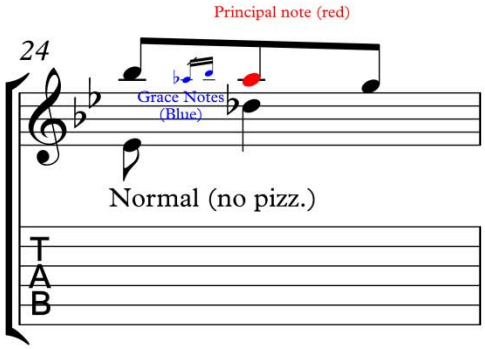
Execution of fourth ornament using slur,
playing first grace note on the beat.
Principal note falls after the beat:



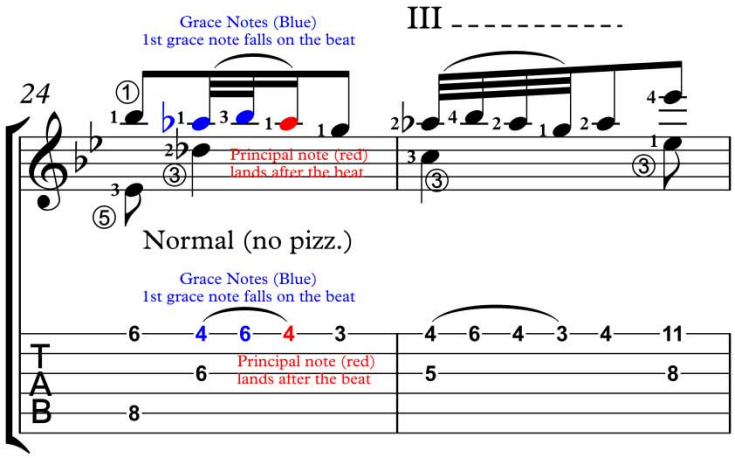

Execution of fourth ornament as cross-string ornament
playing grace notes ahead of the beat (no slur):



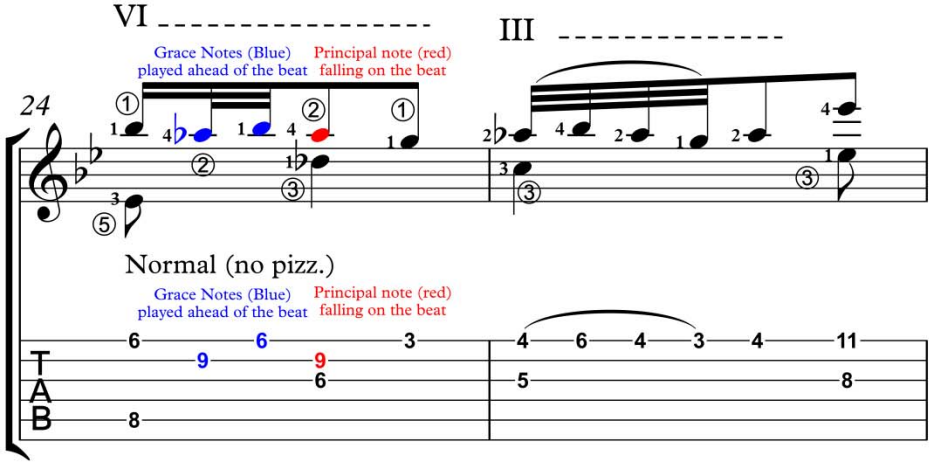

Fifth Ornament Notated:



Execution of fifth ornament using slur,
playing first grace note on the beat.
Principal note falls after the beat:




Execution of fifth ornament as cross-string ornament
playing grace notes ahead of the beat (no slur):



Listen to the first several measures played in the traditional guitar manner with slurs:

Now, listen to these measures played in the pianistic style with cross-string ornaments:

Now, here is an A-B comparison of each ornament using the two styles of execution:

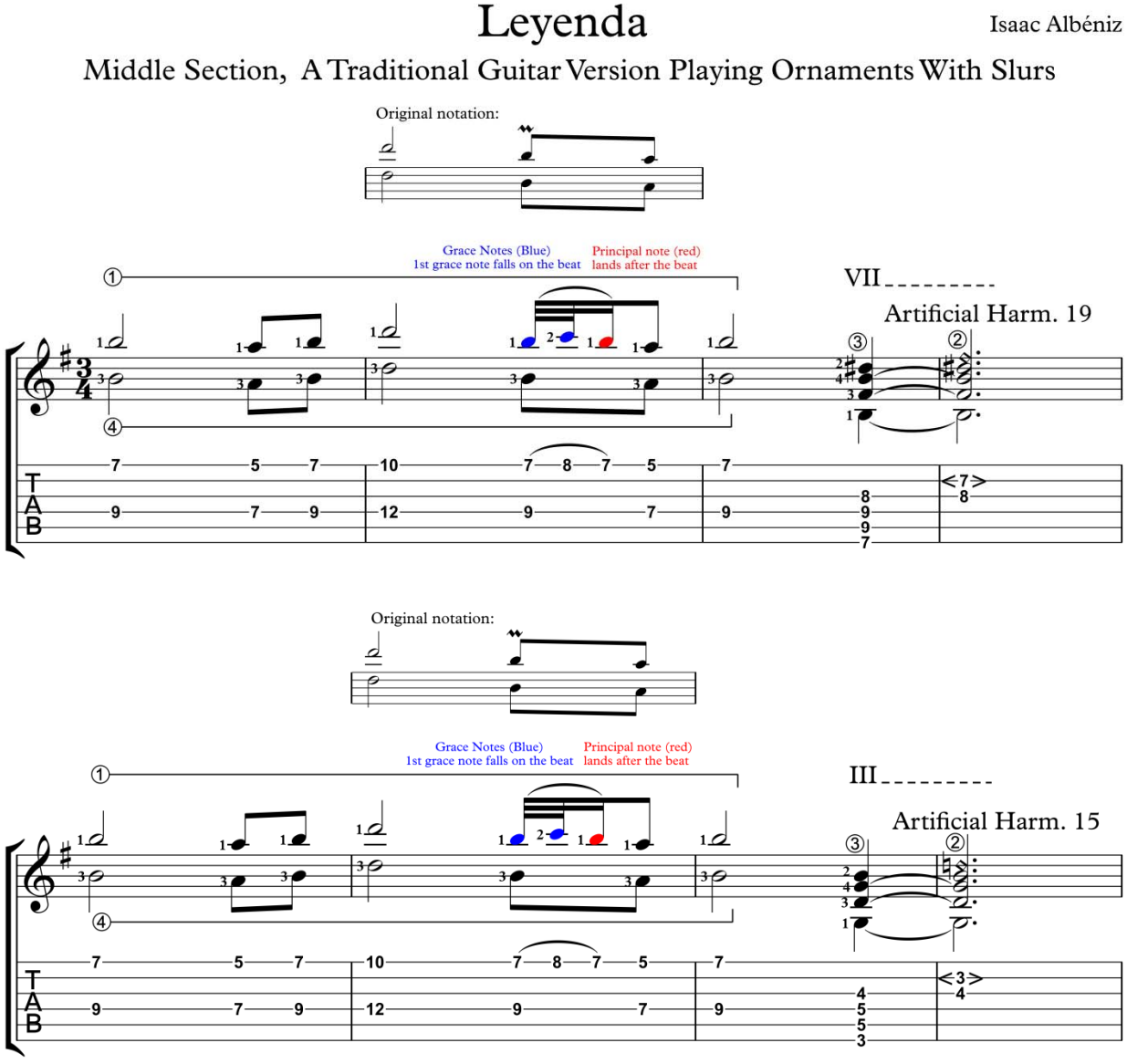
## Leyenda (Asturias)

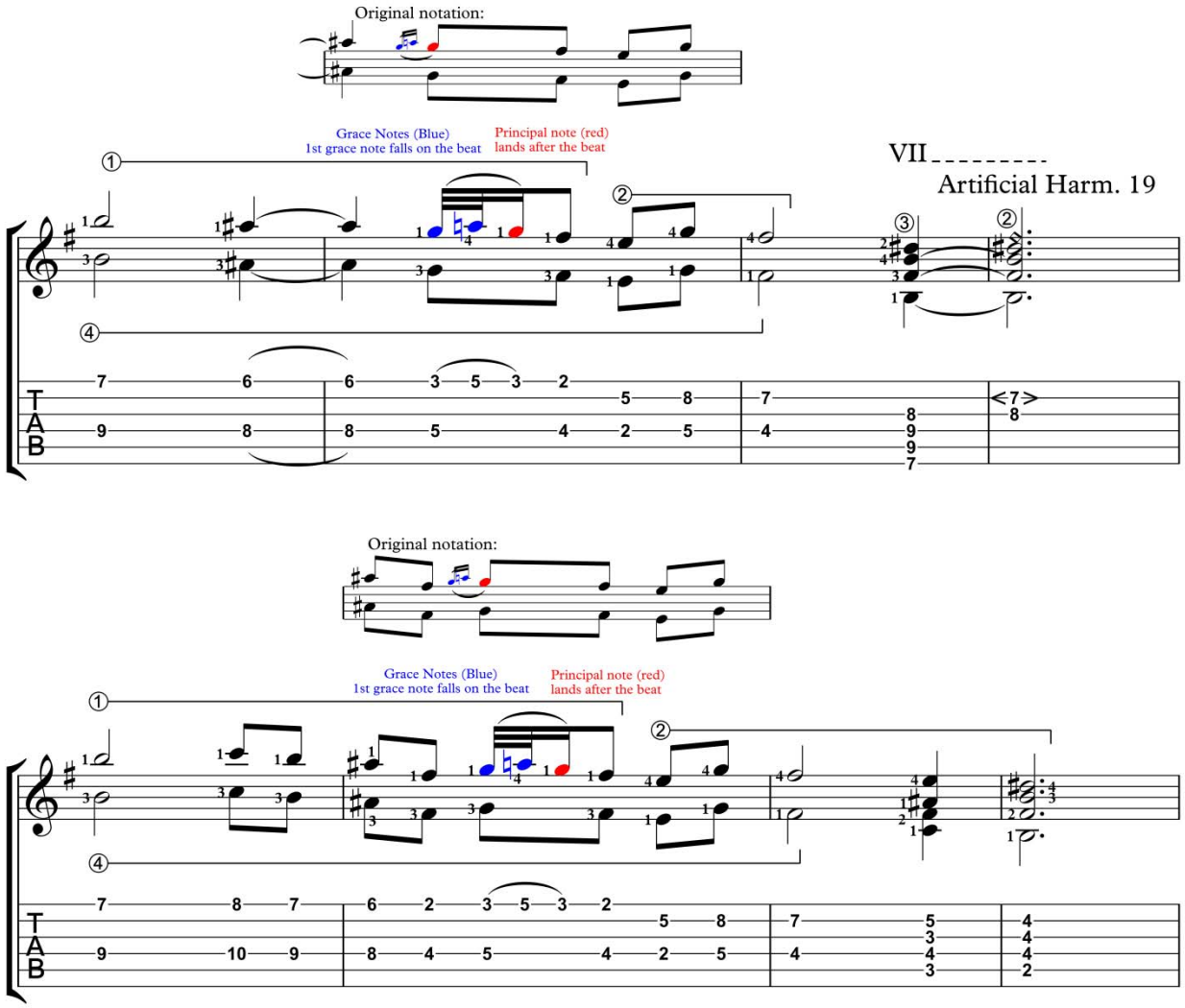
Our beloved *Leyenda* or *Asturias*, is also a piece from the Romantic period. The ornaments in the middle section are candidates for playing with the cross-string ornament technique.

Once again, guitarists usually play these ornaments using slurs (hammer-ons and pull-offs). They play the grace note furthest to the left *on the beat* (simultaneously with any bass and accompaniment notes). This results in the principal note falling *after the beat*.

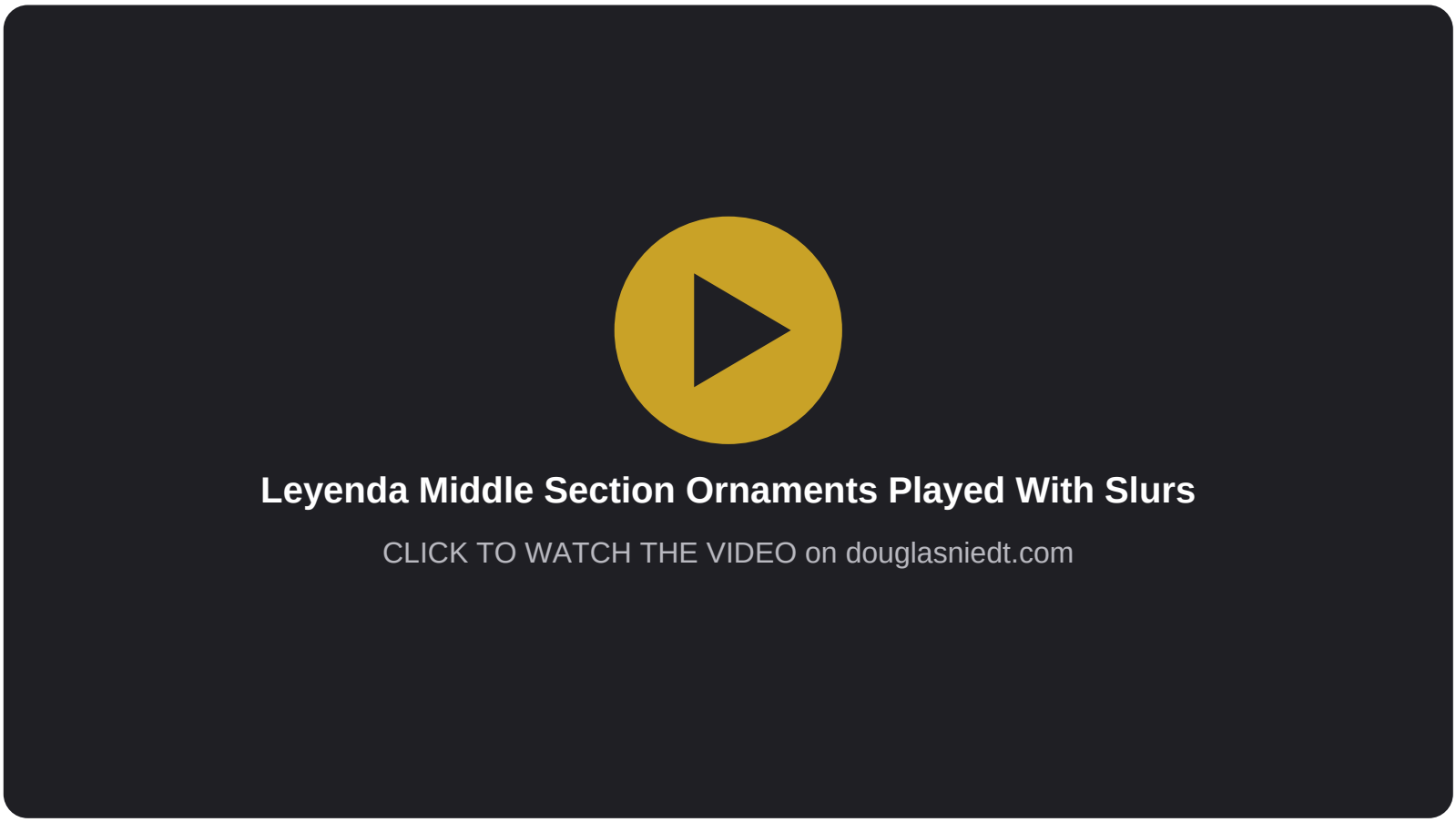
Pianists who play the piece play the grace notes *ahead of the beat* and place the principal note *on the beat*. Any accompaniment and bass notes are played with the principal note on the beat. Again, the pianistic style is well-captured on the guitar using cross-string ornaments.

Here is the notation for executing the ornaments with the traditional slur technique:




Original notation:
Grace Notes (Blue)
1st grace note falls on the beat
Principal note (red)
lands after the beat
VII
Artificial Harm. 19
Original notation:
Grace Notes (Blue)
1st grace note falls on the beat
Principal note (red)
lands after the beat

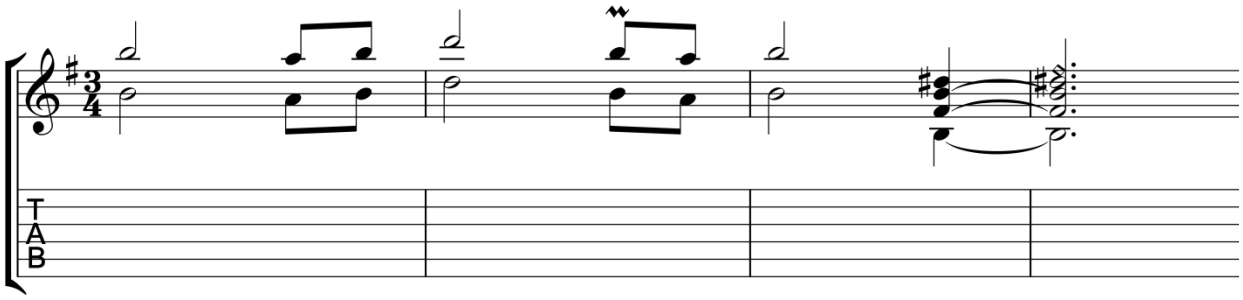
Listen to the first several measures played in the traditional guitar manner with slurs:



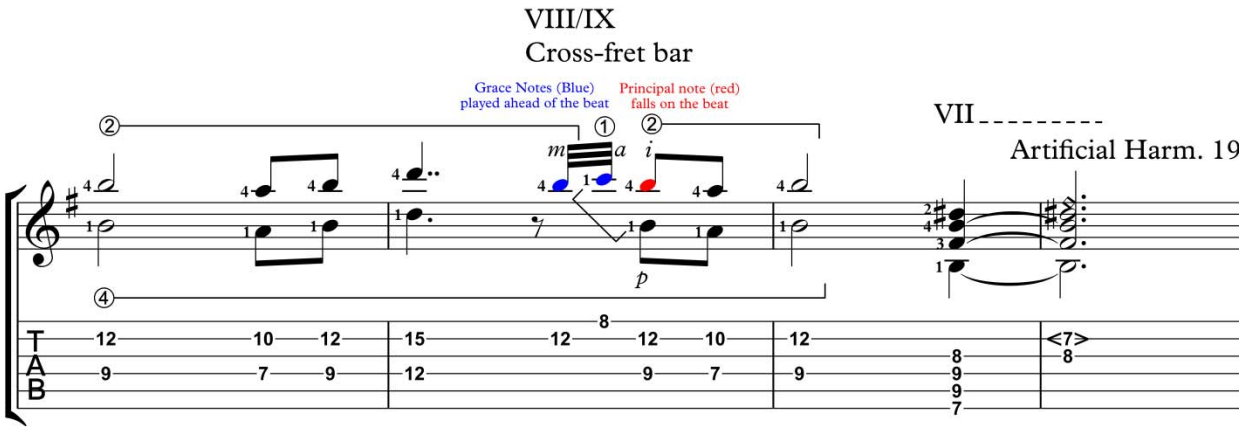
Here is the notation for executing the ornaments with the cross-string ornament technique:

# Tech Tip Cross-String Ornaments Leyenda

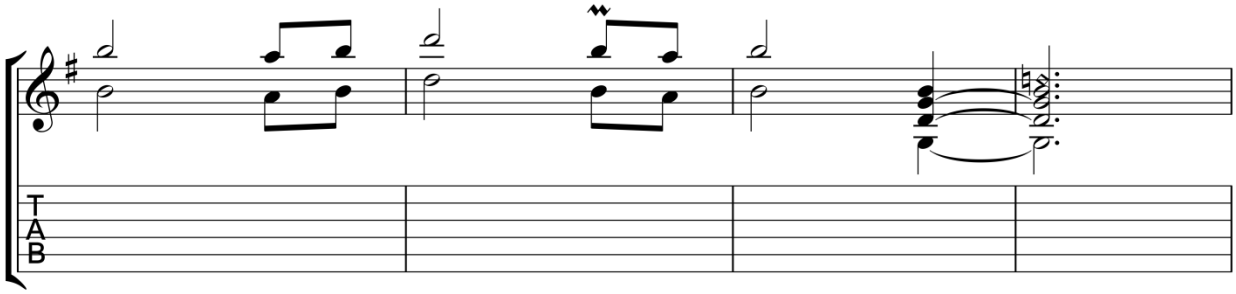
Phrase 1. In the piano score, the passage is notated with an inverted or upper mordent symbol:



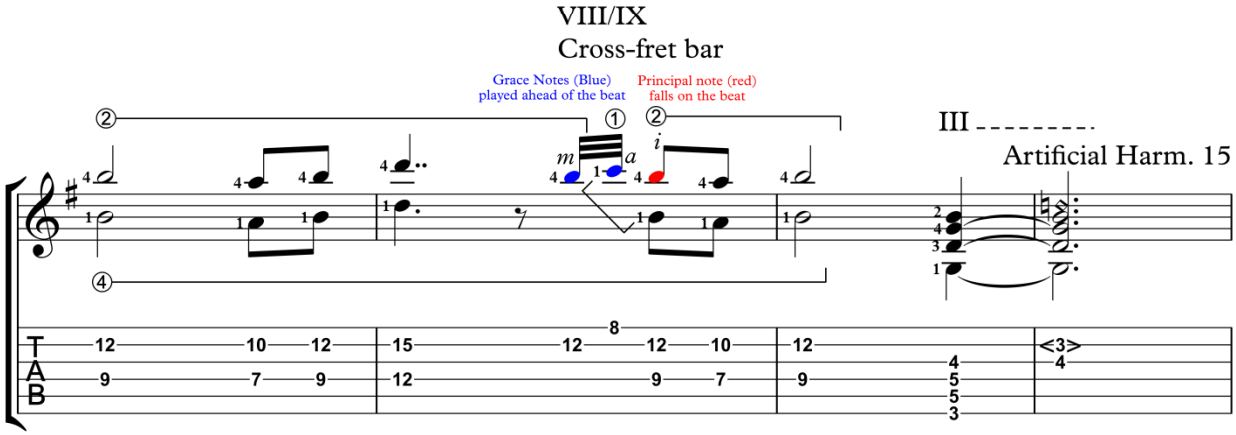

Phrase 1. Executed with cross-string ornament ahead of the beat:



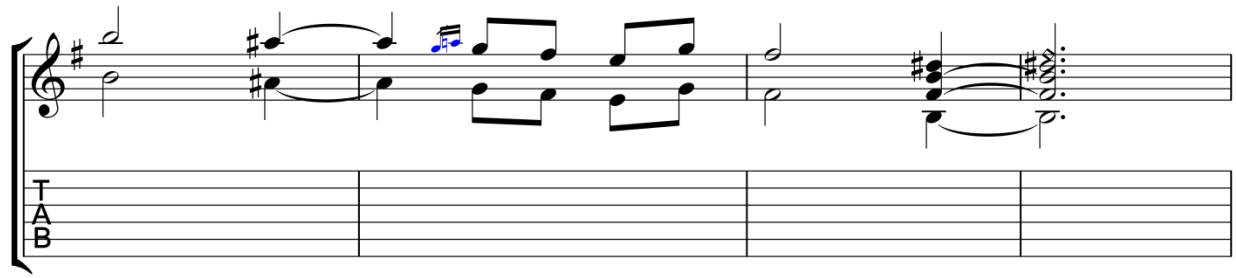
Phrase 2. In the piano score, the passage is notated with an inverted or upper mordent symbol:



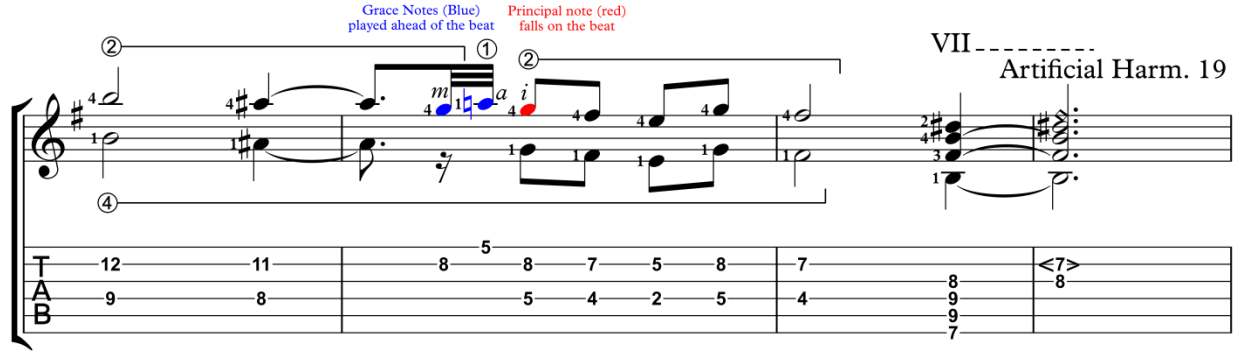
Phrase 2. Executed with cross-string ornament ahead of the beat (same fingering as phrase #1):



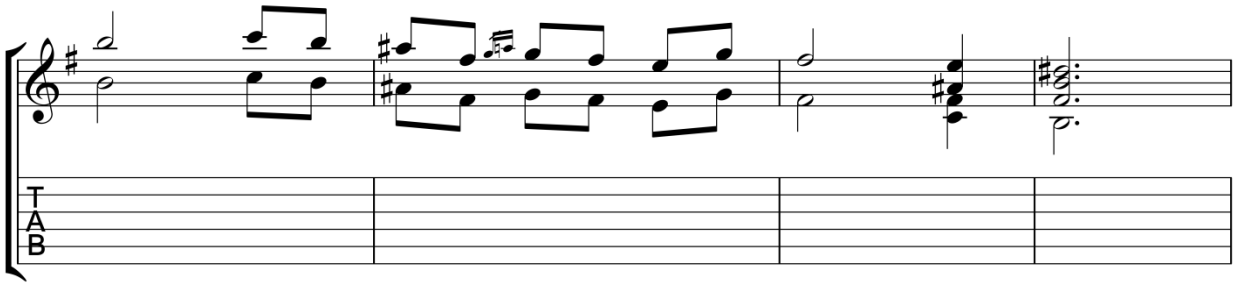

Phrase 3. In the piano score, the ornament is notated with grace notes
(some scores show the grace note A as A#):



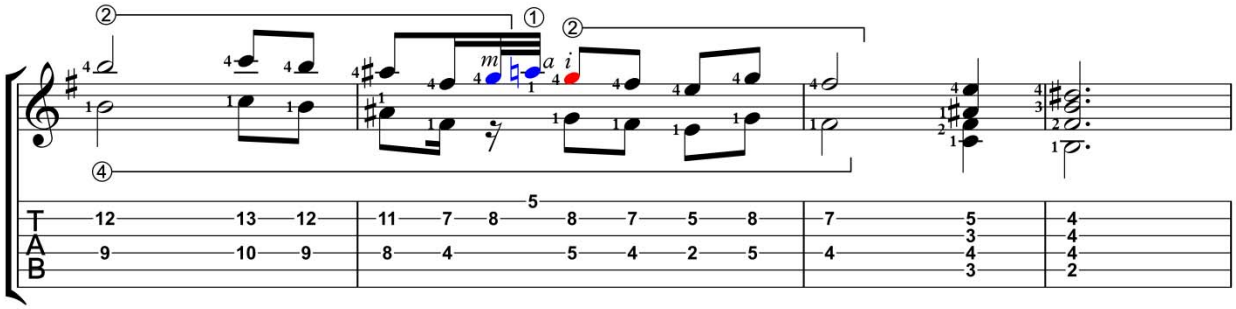
Phrase 3. Executed with cross-string ornament ahead of the beat:



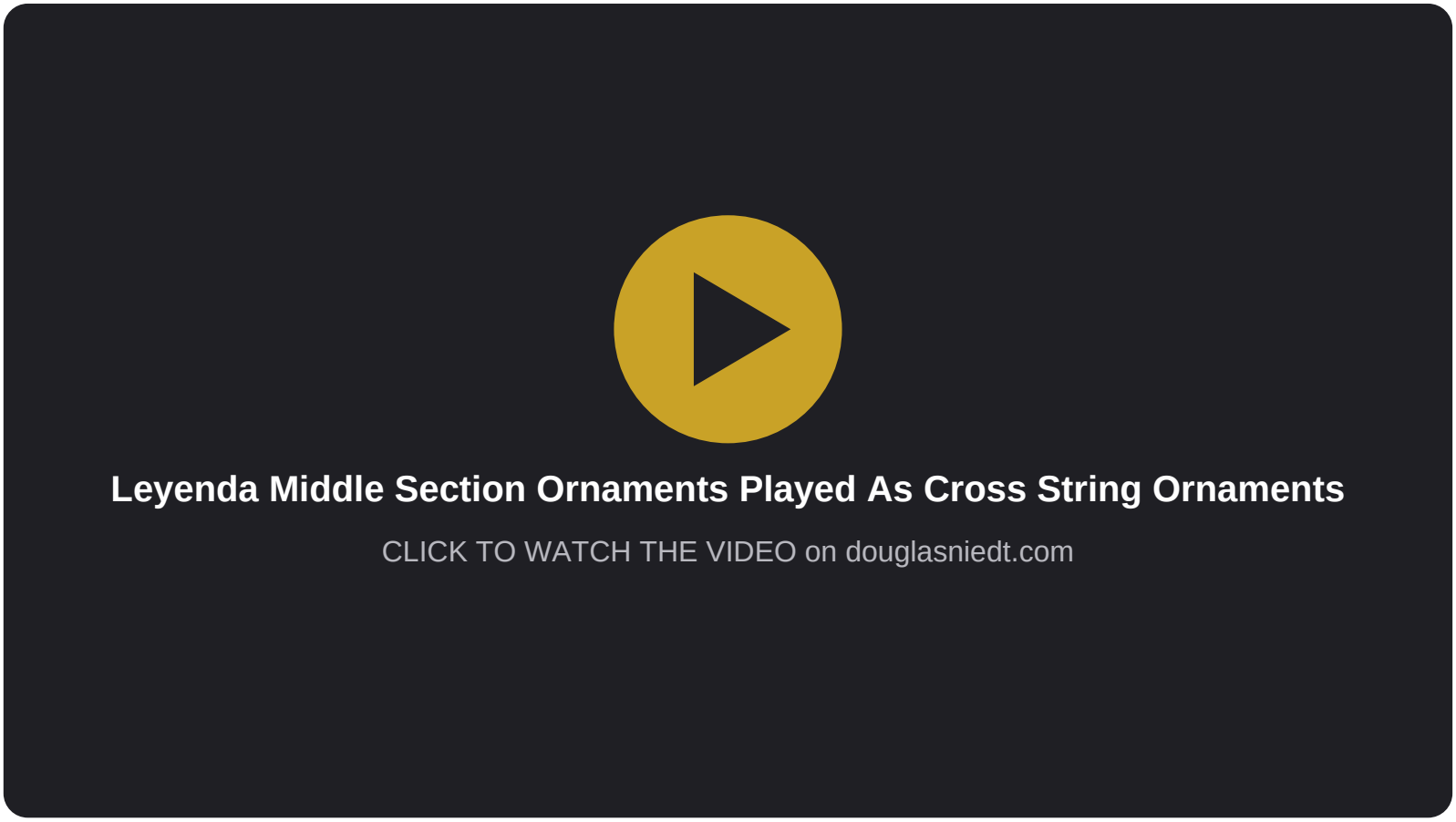
Phrase 4. In the piano score, the ornament is notated with grace notes (some scores show the grace note A as A#):



Phrase 4. Executed with cross-string ornament ahead of the beat:



Now, listen to these measures played in the pianistic style with cross-string ornaments:




## Final Thoughts

Love them or hate them, cross-string ornaments can be used in a variety of repertoire. Once you learn the basic technique of execution, they are actually fun to play. I believe they have many positive attributes when used in the right situations. Don’t like them? Use the traditional technique of slurs produced with hammer-ons and pull-offs.