Mel Bay Presents

Edvard Grieg: 16 Lyric Pieces

Transcribed for Solo Guitar by Richard Yates

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Edvard Grieg
16 Lyric Pieces

Grieg and the Guitar

Edvard Hagerup Grieg (1843-1907) occupies a position in music history between Chopin and Debussy. Like Chopin his best works were written for piano and are short, lyrical, intimate and with a poignant harmonic sense. Both composers drew heavily on the folk melodies of their homelands: Chopin on Poland; Grieg, Norway. In later years, Grieg's harmonic experiments approached the impressionism of Debussy.

The classical guitar is at its best with music of smaller proportions that is personal, evocative, and imbued with opportunities for subtle, expressive nuances in performance. Like the piano it must stitch together discrete and fading notes into continuous melodies supported by a harmonic background. The joining of Grieg's music and the classical guitar seems to be a most obvious and fruitful one. My experience of exploring this union has shown the truth of this to be even better than the expectation. Yet, as I have found piece after piece that translates so easily and elegantly to the guitar, I have become ever more astonished that this wealth of wonderful music has been so overlooked by guitarists.

Edvard Grieg

Although Grieg was born in Norway, his musical training from age fifteen was in the international style that was prominent in Europe in the middle to the Nineteenth Century. He completed a full four year course of study at Leipzig Conservatory before moving to Copenhagen to develop his skills and to search for his personal style.

Contact with the composers Niels W. Gade and Rikard Nordraak led him to realize that his gifts were best expressed through close association with the folk music of his native Norway. This theme suffused the music that he would compose for the next forty years. He built a one room wooden cabin in the woods on a small hill overlooking a landscape of deep fiords, shining glaciers and majestic mountains. There, drawing inspiration from the views, he composed music that, after years of hard work, came to be played in homes and salons across the world. The tremendous popularity of his work, for more than a century and with all levels of musicians, demonstrates the universality of his musical genius.

Beginning in 1867 and continuing for more than three decades, Grieg produced a series of ten piano collections titled Lyric Pieces. These are mostly (on the piano) technically uncomplicated pieces that capture a great variety of textures and moods within the context of small musical forms. Despite their apparent simplicity, they require- or rather, reward- the highest degree of musicianship and attention to detail.

Transcription

The transcriber of music from the piano to the guitar is most frequently faced with the fundamental problem of scope. Piano music, compared with guitar music of similar difficulty, often has a wider range, larger stacks of notes in chords, and more contrapuntal complexity. Pianos are louder and faster than guitars. So, the transcriber usually must make the music smaller in several ways. The puzzle is how to do this without undue damage to the original music, that is, how to preserve what is *essential* in the original while transferring it to the new instrument. There is no short and universal answer to this problem. Different transcribers may perceive something different as essential. Even relatively simple music can have a bewildering variety of characteristics that must weighed and assessed.

Just as important, different transcribers will have different thresholds for saying, "I cannot make a transcription of this music that preserves what I consider to be essential." I have, thankfully, had to make this decision infrequently in preparing this collection. Indeed, Grieg's Lyric Pieces are so suitable for the guitar that a considerable number of the pieces in this collection required few hard decisions of any kind.

The introductory notes for each piece describe some

of the factors that I weighed in particular situations but, generally, my approach is a conservative one. In actual practice Grieg's music required relatively few changes, and you will find one piece here that required none. Although it is a largely subjective, if carefully considered, judgment, I think that Grieg would not be displeased with the liberties that I have taken with his music to make it accessible to guitarists.

Fingering decisions

The most important considerations that govern fingering choices are: efficiency, security, musical expression, and playability. In this context, *efficiency* means selecting fingerings to minimize the distance and speed with which fingers must move. *Security* refers to how accurately and reliably movements can be made. By *playability* I mean overall technical difficulty particularly with reference to the individual differences in hand shape, size and flexibility, as well as the pure technical ability of the guitarist. *Musical expression* is, of course, the fundamental point of musical performance and selection of fingerings can greatly aid or hinder this end. Ideally, all four of these factors could be independently maximized. In the real world, however, there are always tradeoffs among them. The best solutions to fingering problems are often not easily discovered. One of the pleasures of transcribing great music is in discovering the elegant solutions to these problems.

I expect that players will change fingerings, indeed it is necessary that they do so when the balance for which I have aimed is outside a player's capabilities. I would hope, however, that before making such changes, it will be recognized that the fingerings in this edition have been selected only after careful and thorough weighing of the possibilities. There are reasons for each of them, even if the reasons are not at first apparent.

Some of the reasoning behind choices is explained in the introductory notes for each piece.

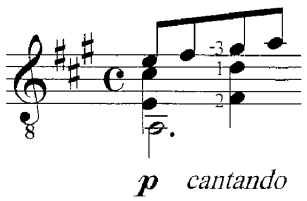
Fingering Notation

In preparing a guitar transcription, there is first the problem of deciding what fingerings to use to play the piece, but then comes a whole series of other questions about which of these fingerings to indicate in the score. Some players want as much guidance as possible while others prefer very little. With transcriptions in particular, the solution of fingering puzzles is an essential element of the package whose whole purpose is to show *how* this music can be played. I have tried to find a useful balance between assisting the player where necessary and avoiding a cluttered score. Even where a particular fingering solution is shown, there are often some deductions that still must be made to discern my intent, and my hope is that I have made these conclusions easy to find. Generally, in this collection, if there are no fingerings indicated then you can follow these guidelines:

- Use the simplest or most idiomatic fingering in the lowest position, or
- Duplicate the fingering in a previous section that is repeated exactly, or
- Continue the pattern that was previously written out as part of a sequence, or
- There is more than one way to finger the section, all of which are of equal utility.

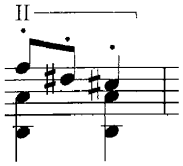
While fingering notation for the guitar has yet to be entirely standardized, there is agreement on most symbols. As this collection is intended for use by intermediate to advanced players I assume a basic familiarity with these symbols. In the interests of clarity, I have listed here are the notation conventions that I have used in this book and found to be the most efficient, practical, and informative. I have indicated right-hand fingerings very sparingly where they have been helpful to me as reminders. The letters *p*, *i*, *m*, and *a* refer to the right-hand thumb, index, middle and ring fingers respectively.

Left-hand fingerings are indicated by small numbers placed immediately before the note to which they refer: 1 = index finger, 2 = middle finger, 3 = ring finger, and 4 = little finger. The number 0 shows an open string. When the same finger can be used on successive notes, called a guide finger, it is shown by a short dash in front of the number. There are several varieties of guide fingers that I will explain as they occur in individual pieces.

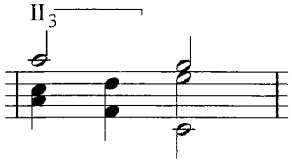


The third left-hand finger can slide up the first string from the F sharp to the G sharp.

The position of a barré, in which the index finger of the left hand holds down several strings at once, is shown by a roman numeral that indicates the fret. A small number to the right and below the roman numeral shows how many strings need to be barréd. If there is no small number, then all six strings need to be barréd. A thin horizontal line with a hook may extend from the right side of the roman numeral. This shows how long the barré must be held. If there is no thin line, then the barré is for that note or chord only.

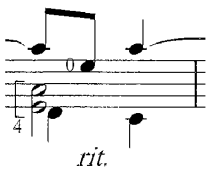


Place a barré across all strings at the second fret. Hold the barré for two quarter notes.



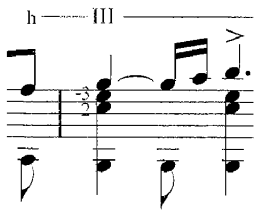
Place a barré across only the first three strings.

Occasionally it works best to have a barré that covers two or three strings but does not include the highest pitched string. This is called an interior barré. It is shown by a vertical square bracket that includes the notes that are to be held by the index finger.



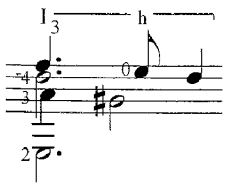
Place an interior barré across the third and fourth strings only.

A hinge barré involves extending the index finger straight as for a regular, full barré but using it to stop only some of the strings. The 'hinge' can be at either end. Most commonly it is used to stop only the first string in preparation for a full barré immediately following.



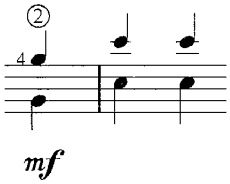
Use the hinge barré to stop only the first string at the second fret, then slide it to a full barré.

However, it also can be used to show a temporary lifting of the barré from the higher strings so that an open string can sound.



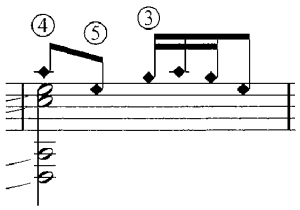
Lift the barré from only the first string, but maintain it on the G sharp.

Sometimes it is helpful to show which string a note is to be played on. Numbers inside circles are used for this purpose. A thin line may extend from a string number to show that several notes are to be played on the same string. The absence of a string number does not automatically mean that an open string or the lowest position should be used.

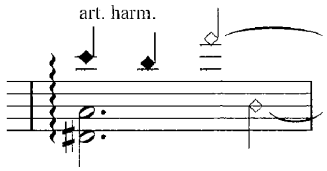


Play the high G on the second string.

Harmonics are shown by diamond-shaped noteheads. These may be either *natural* harmonics, where the left hand touches the string lightly and the right hand plucks the string, or they may be *artificial* harmonics, where the left hand frets the string and the right hand touches the string lightly with one finger and plucks it with another. In most cases I have explicitly marked artificial harmonics as *art. harm.*



Play the natural harmonics A, E, and G on the indicated strings at the seventh, seventh, and twelfth frets.



Use artificial harmonics for the C sharp, B, and F sharp on the second, second and first strings, respectively.

Folk Song
Op. 73, No. 4

Allegretto tranquillamente
Original key: A flat major
Published: 1905 in Moods

"Grieg shied away from the larger forms of musical expression, such as the symphony and opera, but in his preferred field - as a miniaturist - he is without equal. His music, highly individual and with a nationalist flavour, has almost universal appeal."
- Johan Alkerstedt, music historian

With the publication in 1901 of the tenth book of Lyric Pieces, Grieg tried to curb his predilection for composing miniatures, but his affinity for Scandinavian folk tunes led to the writing of several pieces that might well have been included in an eleventh book. One of these is Folk Song, Op. 73, No. 4. It was published in a collection titled *Moods* that included the seven pieces that were his last piano compositions.

The tune came from a collection of folk tune transcriptions, in this case a goat horn melody from Valdres, made by Ludvig Lindeman. I have made it the first selection in this collection because, although not from the books of Lyric Pieces, it fully embodies their character.

Measure 1: The sixth string tuned down to D can bring out a wonderful sonority in the guitar. With the bottom three strings comprising the tonic, fifth and octave in the key of D major these open strings reinforce and sustain each other. The risk is that this can, if not carefully moderated, lead to muddiness in the music. With the first measure I have taken a small step to prevent this, and to remind the player to attend to this aspect in performance. The high A is played as a natural harmonic at the seventh fret of the sixth string. This, of course, prevents the initial low D from sounding too long. It also encourages the player to keep the dynamic level of the base line low so that the melody will sound through clearly.

Measure 3: The arpeggiation of this chord, and the many other places in this piece, are all explicit in the original piano score. Guitarists tend to overuse this technique as it is so natural to do on our instrument, so it is welcome to see the composer call for it.

The triplets in the melody continue throughout and give a gentle rolling motion to the music. Phrasing will be enhanced by a very slight accelerando, as the contour falls gradually down to the D note in the following measure.

Measure 4: The motive is echoed in the bass. Be sure to make these notes loud enough - playing a bit ponticello (toward the bridge) will help.

Measure 7: Notice the tenor voice that starts here on the note B. Although the notation indicates that this note is silenced for the second half of the beat, it also starts a chromatically descending line over four measures. Take care to keep the A pedal points soft enough that the tenor can be heard as a separate line.

Measure 13: The chord starting the second beat is one that seems a miracle when it appears to the transcriber. A four note chord with a three note cluster that can be easily played on the guitar is exceedingly rare. Here it gives a lush piquancy that you can relish four times.

Measure 14: The harmonic is an indulgence that I took where the original score has the A an octave lower. Here it works by providing variety and by foreshadowing the harmonics that come later.

Measure 15: This and the following measure are an echo of the two immediately preceding. Use some means of contrasting with them such as using a different timbre.

Measure 17: I suggest making this a slow arpeggio with the thumb always ensuring that the top note sounds clearly.

Measure 19: Again use a full thumb stroke, but soften the sound, perhaps by using less nail. As in measure 17 the top note must emerge from the arpeggio as a melody note.

Measure 22: Notice that the fingering does allow the two D notes to ring for the whole measure. Try to place the left hand fingers exactly vertical so as not to muffle these notes. This applies to measure 24 also.

Folk Song

Op. 73, No. 4

Transcribed for guitar
by Richard Yates

Edvard Grieg
(1843-1907)

Andante pastorale

⑥=D

p

cresc.

f

dim. e poco rit.

a tempo

dim.

tranquillo

pp *dolcissimo*

tranquillo sempre

ppp *p* *ppp* *rit.*

At the Cradle

Op. 68, No. 5

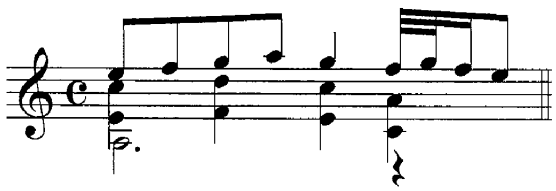
Allegretto tranquillamente
Original key: E major
Published: 1899 in Lyric Pieces, Book IX

"Are you beginning to recover from your great loss? It will go with you as it did for Nina and me: The memory will come to be like a beautiful dream. But it takes time for it to develop in this way."
- Edvard Grieg, 1906, in a letter consoling a friend over the death of his daughter.

A daughter, Alexandra, was born to Edvard and Nina Grieg in the spring of 1868. Grieg soon thereafter wrote a Cradle Song set to a poem by Ibsen. Alexandra died shortly after her first birthday and, although they had no more children, Grieg continued to write music of this genre for the rest of his life.

The difficulty level of this transcription seems at first to be higher than warranted for placement so early in this collection. This appearance is deceptive, however. The marked fingerings ease the difficulty if they are carefully attended to.

Measure 3: The ornament, an upper mordent, is characteristic of much folk music and often occurs in Grieg's music. It is always played quickly and on the beat although our notation conventions do not show this very well. In this instance, it should sound like this:



Measure 6: The major mode answer to the previous measure is played farther up the neck to enhance the sonority and the use of vibrato.

Measure 7: The shift up to the chord on the third beat is made much easier by using both the 4 and the 1 finger as guide fingers. This means keeping the 1 finger on the G sharp from the second beat until it moves up the third string to the C sharp. The 2 and the 3 fingers can then easily find their correct places.

Measure 10: The bass line and the lower third in the melody coincide here on the note B, but can be heard separately by using both the fourth and the second strings.

Measure 15: The high E cannot be sustained here. However, its pitch is picked up sympathetically in the overtones of the sixth and fifth strings. While this effect does not fully sustain the note, it does soften its premature ending.

Measure 17: If the A in the chord on the third beat is too difficult to play cleanly it may reasonably be omitted.

Measure 24: In this context, the artificial harmonics are about as simple as they can be and are an ideal opportunity for players to learn this technique. Notice that the left-hand fingering for measures 23 and 24 (and for measures 26 and 27) are identical allowing the luxury of 'practicing' the fingering once before having to play the melody with harmonics.

Measure 26: For all of the gentleness of At the Cradle, here is a rather remarkable modulation. A common device of Grieg's was direct repetition of a phrase in a different key. Here the interval between the phrases is a tritone, an interval that is normally thought of as at least disorienting, if not harsh. Grieg's exquisite judgment is evident, however, as the music gracefully and naturally returns to the opening theme in measure 29.

Measure 27: The harmonics on G, C and F are played at what would be the twentieth fret. Most guitars do not have frets that high, but the correct place can be easily judged with a little practice.

Measure 29: Notice that in the return to the opening theme Grieg has changed the harmonic setting slightly.

Measure 33: The melody here is in the tenor voice. I have placed it all on the fourth string to aid its continuity and sonority.

Measure 39: The first bass E cannot be sustained but, as mentioned earlier, its pitch is sustained to a degree in the sixth string. Also, articulating the following bass B and low E, so that they also have shortened durations can help them be heard as a connected line. While it may seem paradoxical to connect a line by shortening its notes, the ear does notice the connection through their similarity even where the line descends over large intervals. This kind of performance detail greatly enhances the coherence of the music and the effectiveness of performance.

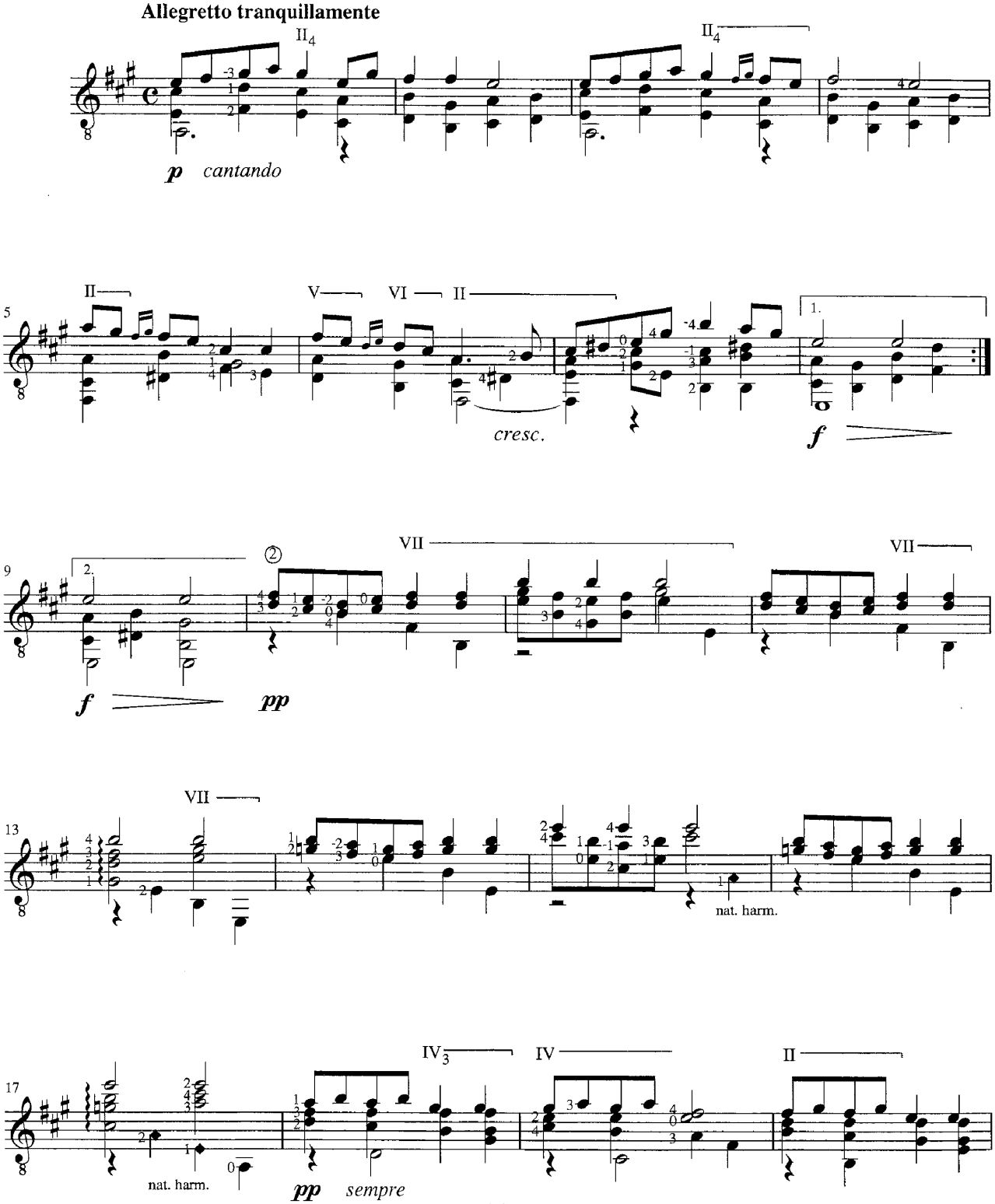
At the Cradle

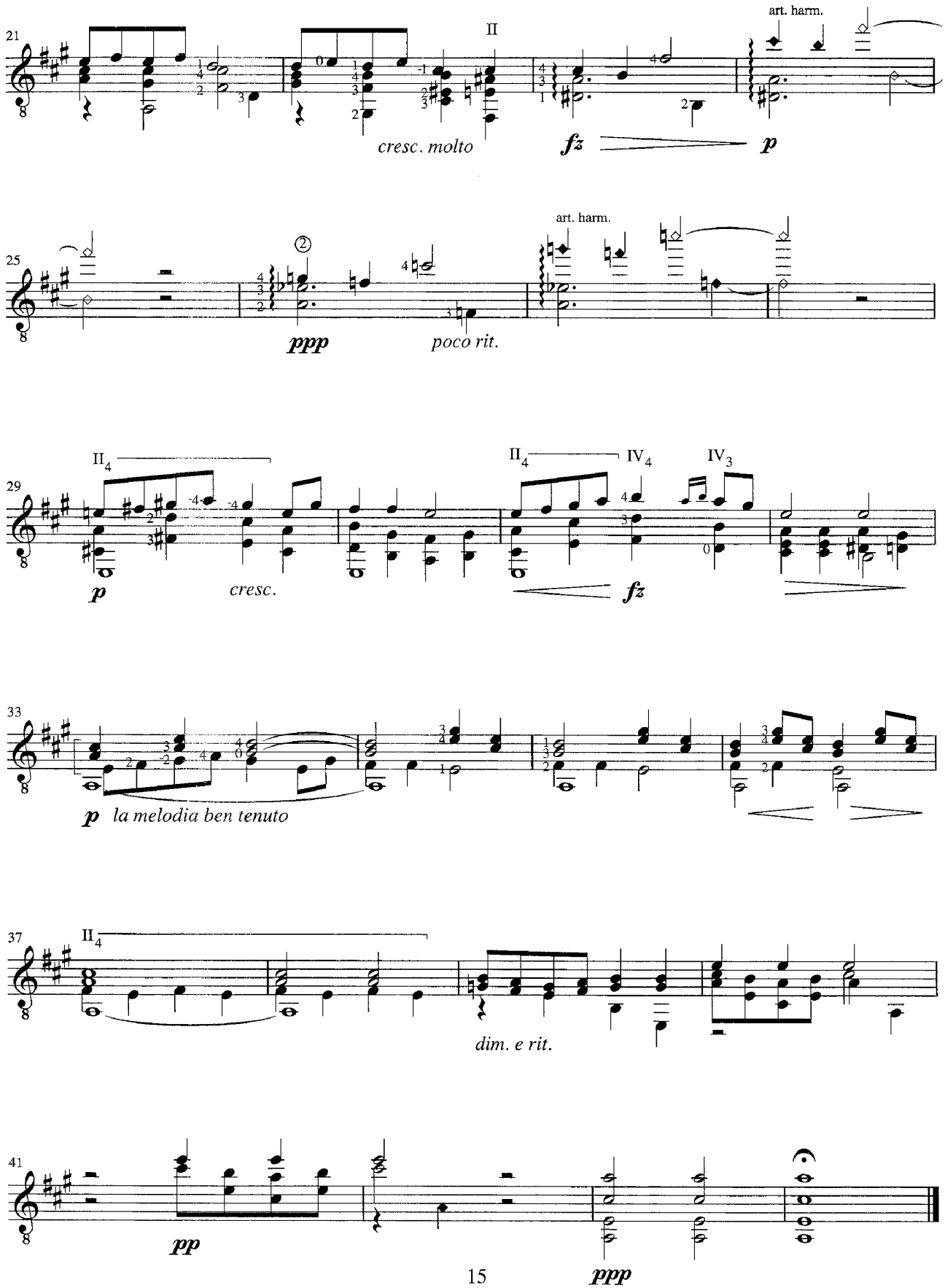
Op. 68, No. 5

Transcribed for guitar
by Richard Yates

Edvard Grieg
(1843-1907)

Allegretto tranquillamente




21
II
art. harm.
cresc. molto
fz
p
25
art. harm.
ppp
poco rit.
29
II4
II4
IV4
IV3
p
cresc.
fz
33
p la melodia ben tenuto
37
II4
dim. e rit.
41
pp
ppp

Watchman's Song

Opus 12, No. 3

Molto andante e semplice
Original key: E major
Published: 1867 in Lyric Pieces, Book I.

"Though simple, it is a true masterwork."
- Einar Steen Nøkleberg, pianist and editor

Watchman's Song was composed late one night when Grieg returned from seeing a performance of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Play the middle section with the stealth, drama and intrigue of the play.

The tempo is marked *Molto andante* yet the time signature is cut time which implies more forward movement. *Semplice* means 'simple', and in this context probably suggests avoiding overly large contrasts of dynamics and tempo in the opening and closing sections. This will also help to contrast the dramatic and dark middle section starting on the second page.

Watchman's Song is remarkable, and unique in this collection, in that it was moved from the piano to the guitar with only the smallest possible modification: only one note was dropped - a B natural in the middle of the chord in the third beat of measure 7. The key is the same as the original and there have been no octave transpositions. The introductory notes accompanying other pieces discuss the issues and problems involved in transcription, but this piece demonstrates how Grieg's music is so eminently suited to the guitar.

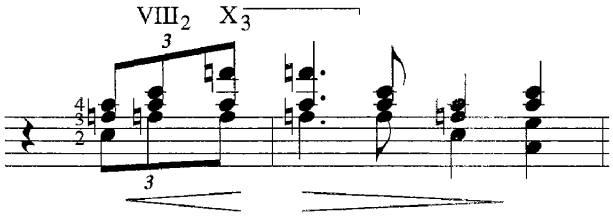
Measure 7: The fingering for the second beat is unusual but has the benefit of avoiding awkward leaps between strings by several fingers at once. If you want, play the open string B in the third beat chord (here and in the equivalent spots in measures 15 and 36). I omitted this note because it requires rolling the chord to play all five notes and is perhaps incompatible with the rolled chord that Grieg marked in measure 8.

Measure 9: The barré on the eleventh fret with notes to the fourteenth may look daunting at first but is actually simple to play once you know the fingering.

Measure 17: The subheading 'Geister der Nacht' means 'Spirit of the Night'. The dynamic under the arpeggios is marked pianissimo but must also be crystal clear. Try to avoid a blur of notes, possibly by playing closer to the bridge. The chords themselves and the texture are startlingly guitar-like. My recommended right hand fingering, as shown, is to rake the 'a' finger across the strings in the descending half of the arpeggio. This is the simplest and quickest technique, once you are accustomed to it. It has the added attraction of being thoroughly idiomatic to the guitar.

Measure 20: Although only two strings must be barréd, if a full barré is used it may make a vibrato easier and so add needed life and sustain to the sound.

Measure 22: The last beat is the hardest technical spot as it requires a two fret barré on the thirteenth fret. Getting to this position is much easier if the small barré is prepared by setting it at the preceding chord. The 2 finger is free on that chord and easily drops onto the third string for the high A note. The alternative is to re-voice the chord like this:



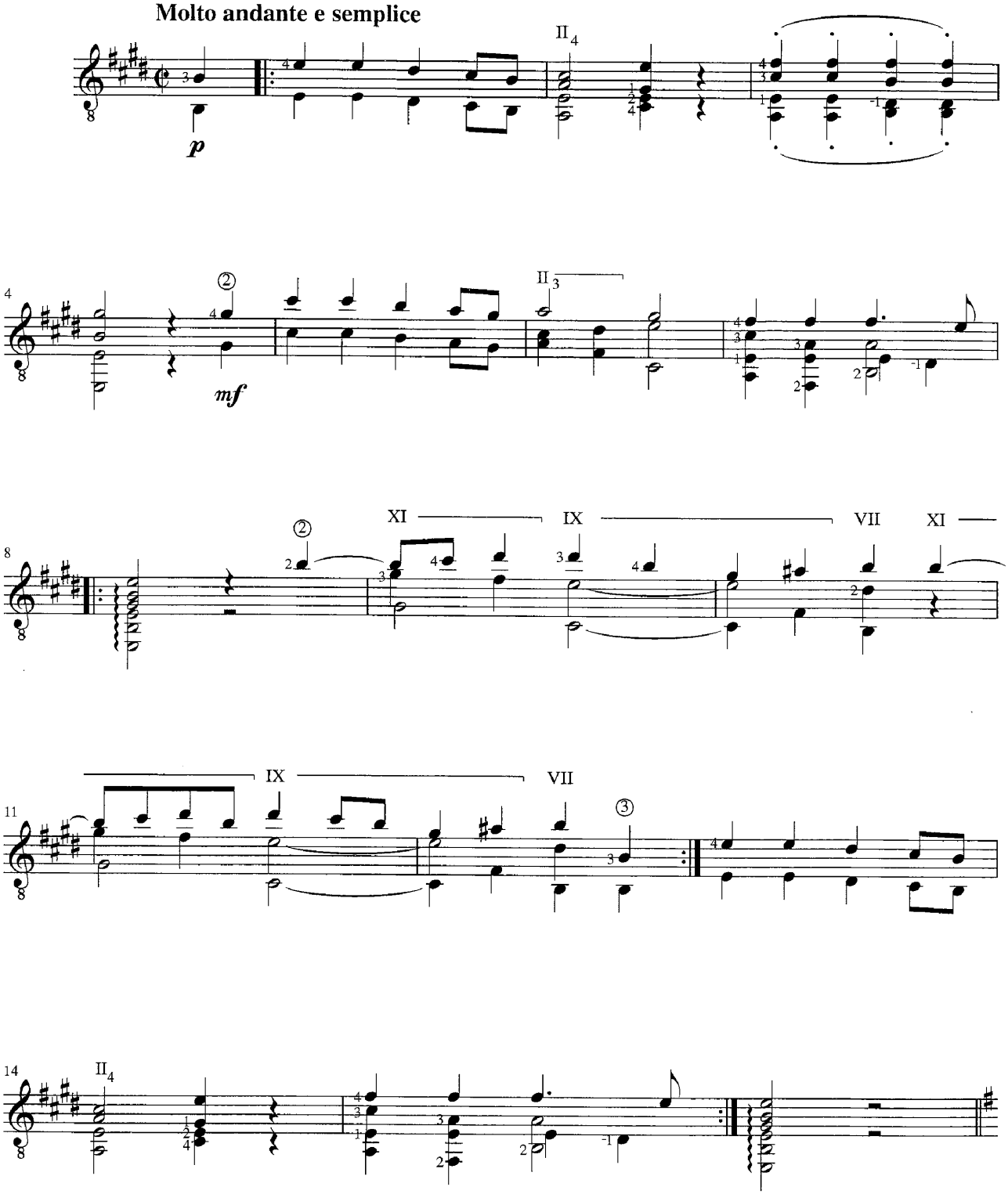
Watchman's Song

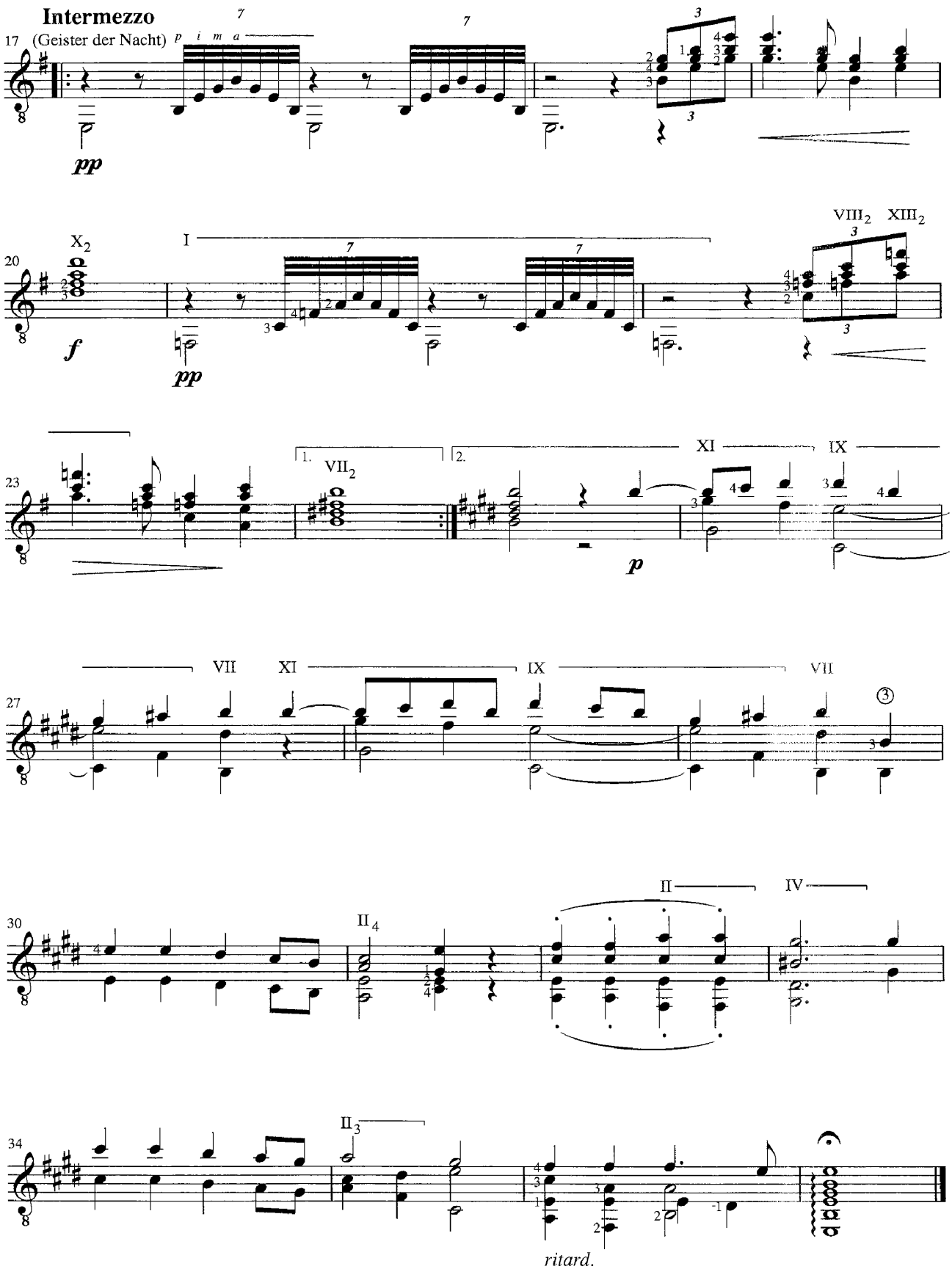
Opus 12, No. 3

Transcribed for guitar
by Richard Yates

Edvard Grieg
(1843-1907)

Molto andante e semplice




Intermezzo
17 (Geister der Nacht)
p i m a
pp
20
X2
I
VIII2 XIII2
f
pp
23
1. VII2
2.
XI
IX
p
27
VII
XI
IX
VII
30
II4
II
IV
34
II3
ritard.

Lullaby
Op. 66, No. 7

Allegretto con moto
Original key: D minor
Published 1897 in Nineteen Norwegian Folk Songs

"I had a wonderful moment recently. A letter from Gjendine was its cause, to be permitted once again to be soft - really tender-hearted - for that I would gladly give up much... for tears actually wet the paper. What she wrote was so beautiful and genuine."
- Edvard Grieg, 1905

In 1891, while on a hiking and riding trip into the Norway mountains, Grieg and his companions were entertained in song one evening by a local farm family. The nineteen year old daughter, Gjendine, in particular had a clear and natural voice. Grieg later arranged some of the melodies that he heard that night and included them in his collection Nineteen Norwegian Songs. Number seven is marked *Allegretto con moto*, but you must still aim for a mood of tranquility.

Measure 1: The melody is presented first plainly, in octaves. There are many ways in which to finger this, the only restriction being to avoid open strings that cannot be stopped from ringing longer than their indicated duration.

Measure 15: Attention is needed to the relative loudness of the voices to allow the descending sixth in the melody to be heard as a melody note.

Measure 16: The note B in the third beat chord cannot be held for its written duration. Because of this, the note F in the chord should be played louder than the others so that the melodic movement is heard as F up to G, rather than as B down to G.

Measure 17: The marking *sforzando* should not be too sudden but, rather, a gentle emphasis and lingering. You would not want to awaken the baby! The guide finger dash (-) on the 4 finger is a reminder that this finger can remain where it is from the preceding measure. The hinge barré sign (h) is an instruction to lift just the lower end of the barré so that the open first string can be played while allowing the G sharp on the third string to continue. Use a spare right-hand finger to then stop this open string when the melody descends to the D.

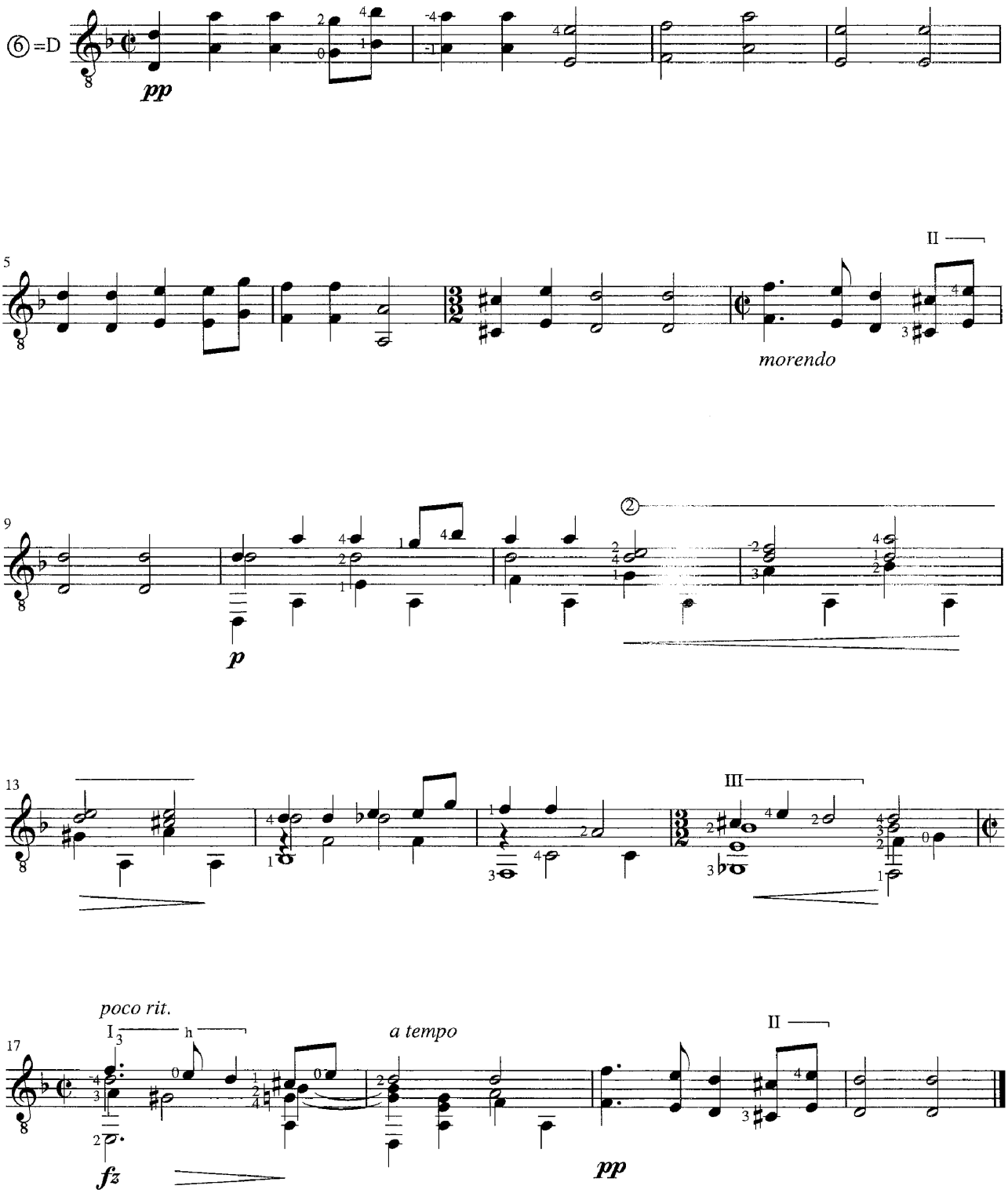
Lullaby

Op. 66, No. 7

Transcribed for guitar
by Richard Yates

Edvard Grieg
(1843-1907)

Allegretto con moto



Album Leaf
Op. 12, No. 7

Allegretto e dolce
Original key: E minor
Published: 1867 in Lyric Pieces, Book I

"Suddenly a mist fell from my eyes and I knew the way I had to take."
- Grieg, at his first meeting with a young Norwegian composer, Rikard Nordraak, in 1864, decided to devote his musical career to composing in the spirit of Norwegian folk music and history.

The texture of this piece is remarkably well-suited to the guitar, and is one that has been used by guitar composers for centuries. Its attractiveness is in the slipping and sliding quality of the melody and the placement of the melody in alternating ranges as if two voices were in conversation. I have indicated many glissandi in this transcription. These, of course, are editorial, not original, but they are consistent with the guitar performance practices of the time. Besides that, they are simply fun to do and I encourage you to change them or include others. Because there are so many little ornaments I have tried to be more detailed in their notation in this piece.

Measure 2: The glissando is played by sliding the 4 finger up the string until it reaches the B on the seventh fret and then re-striking it together with the bass note E. The smaller sized note B shows to slide and then re-strike. It is also possible, though a bit more difficult and less common, to slide up without re-striking, but instead playing the bass note just as the high B is reached. In this case there would be no small note B. (Although I have made this distinction in this piece, generally in this edition a glissando line always implies re-striking the note.)

Measure 3: There are many grace notes in this transcription - all occur in the original piano score. Some of these are slurred; some must be played across two strings. For clarity, in this piece only, I have shown the former with slur symbols. The grace note in measure 3 is slurred. All of the grace notes should be played quickly and on the beat.

Measure 4: Although this grace note could be slurred, I have arranged it here across the third and second strings.

Measure 9: The melody is in the lower voice and is fingered so that it stays almost entirely on the fourth string. This promotes consistency of timbre and a legato, singing quality. With the accompaniment in the top voice, it is important to keep it soft enough that it does not obscure the melody. This end can be facilitated by taking care to play all of the eighth rests, that is, to stop the top line notes from sounding longer than their written duration.

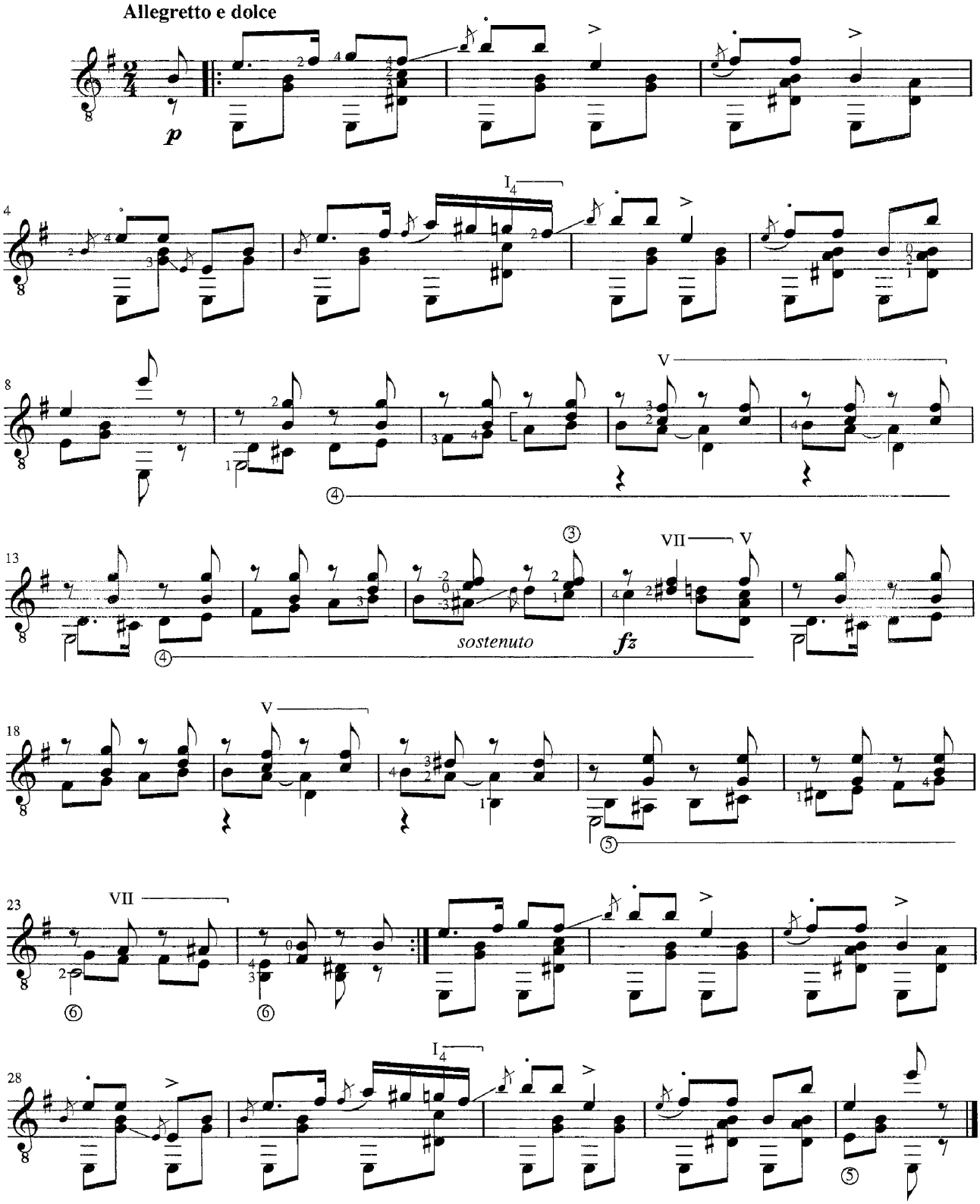
Album Leaf

Op. 12, No. 7

Transcribed for guitar
by Richard Yates

Edvard Grieg
(1843-1907)

Allegretto e dolce



Melody
Op. 47, No. 3

Allegretto
Original key: A minor
Published: 1888 in Lyric Pieces, Book IV

"To have the ability to withdraw into oneself and forget everything around one when one is creating. That, I think is the only requirement for being able to bring forth something beautiful. The whole thing is a mystery."
- Edvard Grieg

Although the haunting melody is typical of Grieg, the shape of this piece, with its long curves, is not. Here, however, these two features fit together wonderfully but demand careful planning of the dynamics and phrasing.

In the original, the accompaniment is always in three and four note chords. Literal transcription to the guitar would be technically demanding, if not impossible, but, more importantly, it would make a much too thick texture and obscure the melody which is, of necessity, closer on the guitar. The transcriber's goals in this kind of situation are to simplify the texture without deleting essential harmony notes and to keep a consistent pattern. In this instance, deleting harmony notes that were duplications of melody notes and also deleting the fifths of chords was sufficient to accomplish both goals.

Measure 8: Switching to the 3 finger on the second B helps prepare the big chord at the start of measure 9. Also, it is helpful to place the 2 finger on the A early. Although this requires shortening the F sharp melody note a bit and reaching the 2 finger around behind the 3 finger, the 2 finger is then perfectly placed as a pivot around which the 1 and the 4 finger can securely reach their positions. Small tricks like this can reduce the difficulty of much guitar music, but they must be painstakingly sought out.

Measure 14: Another example of an often overlooked fingering solution is shown here. Leave the 2 finger on the F natural and to use the 1 finger for the D.

Measures 16-33: Beginning here there is a long building of pitch, loudness, tempo and intensity that culminates at measure 33. This section must be carefully paced in all of these aspects or there will be nothing left at the end for the *sforzando*. The octave ascension means that the pitch starts fairly low. A slight ponticello at the beginning will provide needed clarity.

Measure 19: In the original, the chords are played with each bass note. By thinning the texture horizontally in the transcription all of the harmonic and rhythmic information is retained but, as in pruning a rose bush, light and air are allowed into the music where it would be too congested otherwise.

Grieg modulates through remote regions in this passage. This is unfamiliar territory for most guitarists, and is avoided by some, but is well worth the effort. As is often the case with such explorations of Grieg, the fingering remains the same but at a different fret.

This passage also requires considerable left hand endurance. Several spots, such as at measure 29, do not require a barré although they could be played with one. Use these opportunities to give your hand a rest by not using a barré. There is also a tendency for most players to exert more (unnecessary) force with the left hand as the intensity of the music increases. Here that can lead to exhaustion, so be aware of this as you play.

Measure 33: The musical climax and the technical crux occur together on this chord - one that is particularly sensitive to faulty placement. Precision of hand placement works better than strength. Practice the shift from measure 32 to measure 33 slowly and in isolation.

Measure 35: Note that there are two fingers, the 3 and 4, that both serve as guide fingers to make this long shift quick and secure.

Measure 36: The hinge barré sign (h) means that the 1 finger, extended as in a barré, is placed at the second fret but only stops the first string F sharp. It then easily slides up one fret for the full barré starting measure 37.

Measure 41: The original piano score includes this repeat from the beginning but it is not always played by pianists. If you do take the repeat, the challenge is to provide variety and interest rather than a literal repetition.

Measure 56: Leave the 4 finger down on the E. This seems awkward at first with the 3 finger going to the second string F natural, but is necessary to avoid difficulty moving to the next measure by using the 2 as guide finger.

Measure 57: The vertical bracket indicates to use the 1 finger to stop both the fourth and the third string in preparation for the next chord.

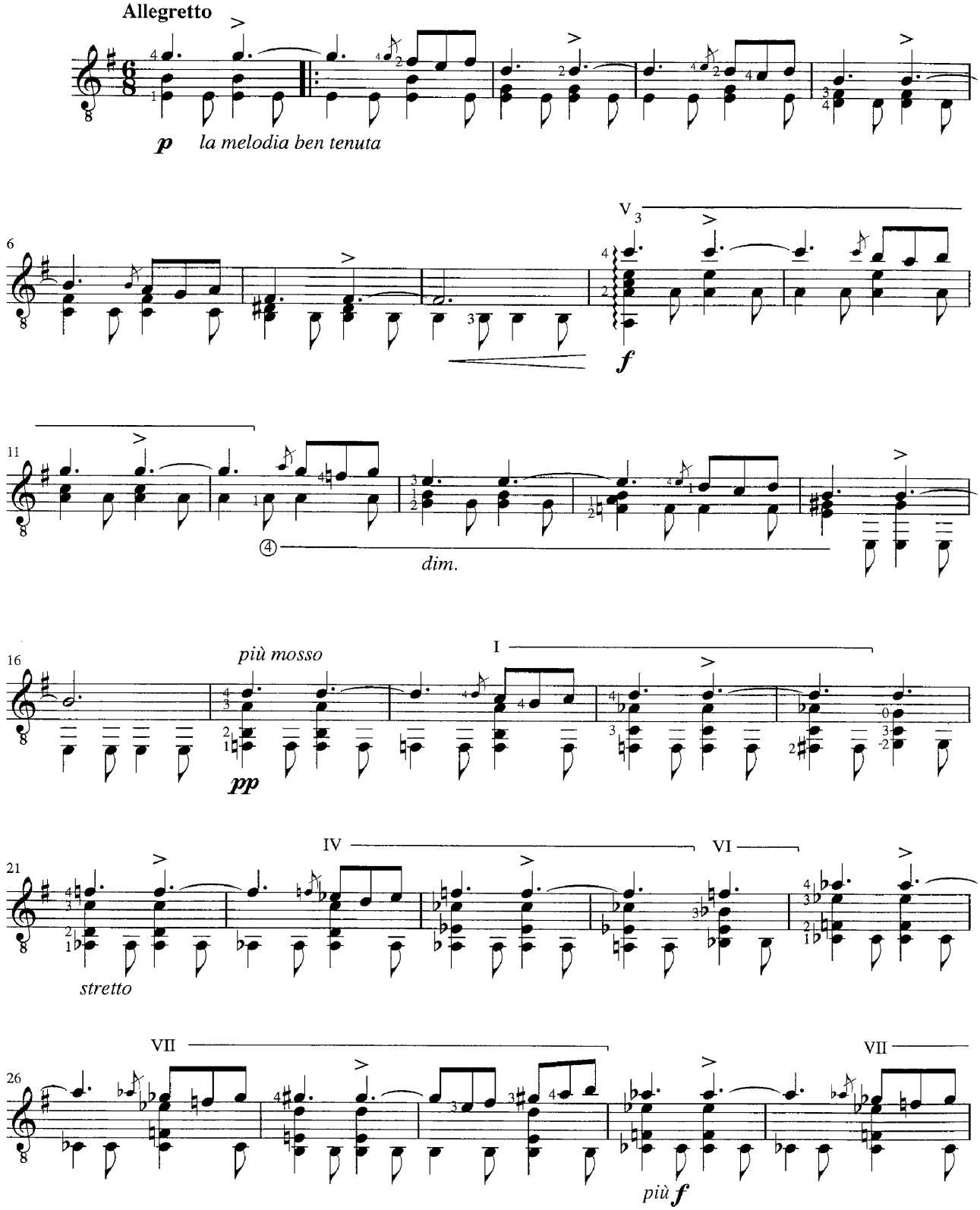
Melody

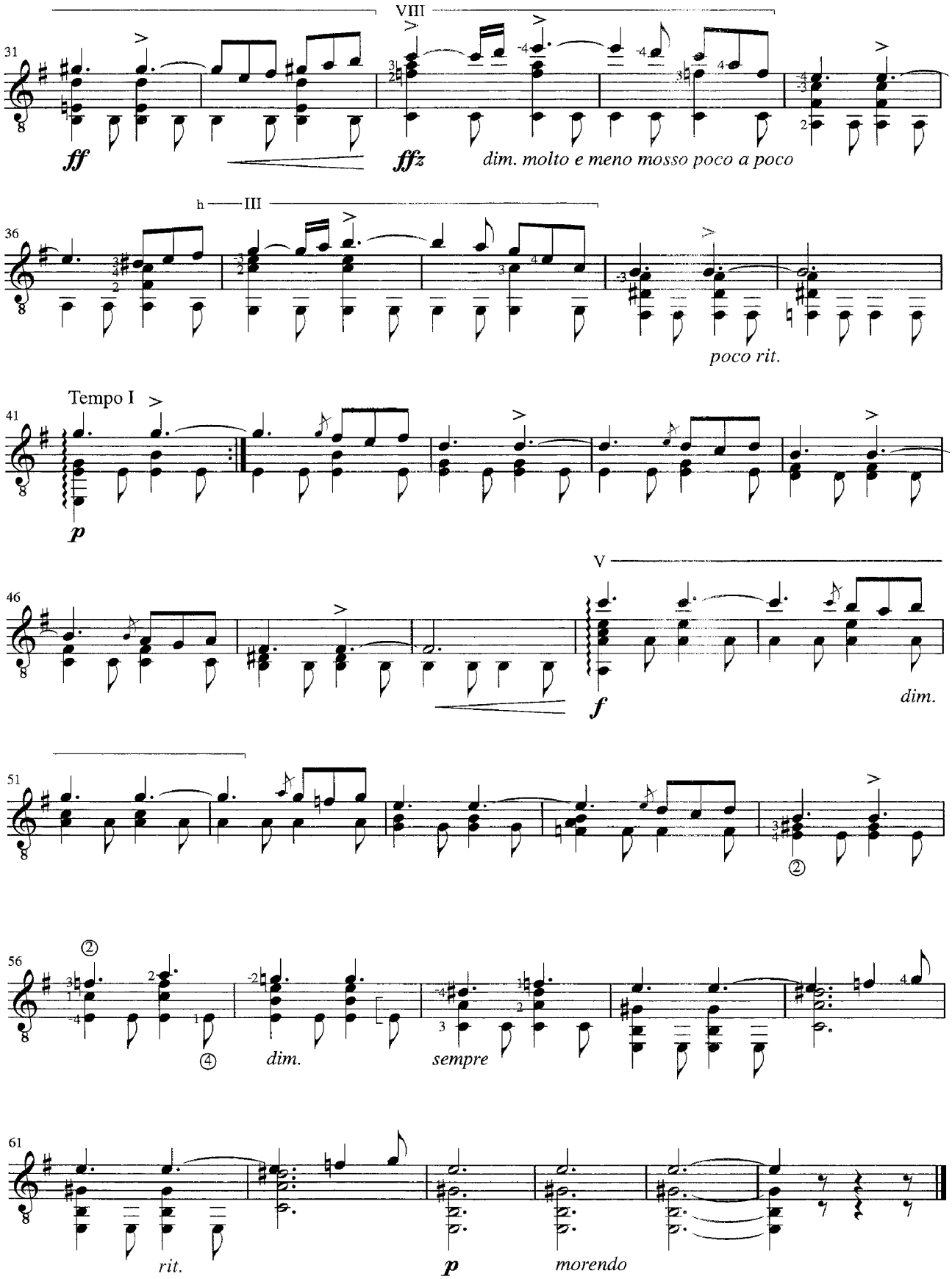
Op. 47, No. 3

Transcribed for guitar
by Richard Yates

Edvard Grieg
(1843-1907)

Allegretto




VIII
31
ff
fffz
dim. molto e meno mosso poco a poco
h
III
36
poco rit.
Tempo I
41
p
V
46
f
dim.
51
②
56
④
dim.
sempre
61
rit.
p
morendo

Waltz
Op. 12, No. 2

Allegro moderato
Original key: A minor
Published: 1867 in Lyric Pieces, Book I

"The Chopin of the North"
-Hans von Bülow

As one of his most familiar and popular waltzes, this piece can be kept fresh and interesting by careful attention to details of articulation and dynamics. The tempo must be lively and with crisp articulation to avoid it becoming pedestrian. While it has the inimitable Griegian perspective on harmony, the form is still eminently Viennese.

Measure 1: The open sixth string notes are convenient but care must be taken that they remain in the background, either because they are quieter, or are articulated or, ideally, both. Arranging to stop these notes from ringing on too long is problematic but, as you can see from the score, they are always followed on the second beat by the note B on the fifth string. A technique for stopping such notes that is well worth cultivating is to use the back or side of the right-hand thumb as it moves in to pluck the fifth string.

The characteristic waltz rhythm can be promoted by playing the rest of the bass notes, especially the second beat, slightly *staccato.*

Measure 11: The original score does not call for a louder dynamic here, but it certainly seems called for. This should not be exaggerated, however, and hold enough in reserve that the accent on the first beat of the following measure is clear.

The left-hand fingering shifting to the second chord may feel difficult at first. Practice the movement slowly and with particular attention to relaxing the tension between the 3 and 4 fingers. It is the separation of these two fingers that is the problem - the other fingers will then fall easily into place.

Measure 12: The tempo of the triplets is important. It is tempting, as shown in many piano recordings, to play them too quickly - almost as if they were sixteenth triplets. Resist this urge.

Measure 14: Use dynamics and timbre to separate and highlight this and the following two measures. In this type of situation the guitar has far more expressive resources than the piano, so use them!

Measure 18: Note the change from *forte* to *piano*. This happens suddenly and with the assistance of the *staccato* on the first beat to create a graceful and unexpected effect at the cadence. It also has the function of preparing the dynamic level for either a return to the beginning or continuing on to the next section.

Measure 19: The middle section is especially susceptible to an unfortunate slowing of the tempo. With the melody in the lower voice, a shift to mode major and a sweet sonority it is easy to allow the pace to lag too much and impair the shaping of the phrases.

As is always true in such textures, the melody should be clear and connected. It has been placed higher on the fingerboard so as to facilitate a contrasting sonority and the use of vibrato.

Measure 34: The last three measures entail a crescendo culminating in a *forte*. Most guitars will have a hard time producing a true *forte* here so it is advised to harbor resources and make finer dynamic distinctions in approaching this peak. Strong vibrato can both extend the impact of the notes and also create an illusion of more volume. It helps that the following measure is *pianissimo*.

Measure 35: Notice that, although the opening material is repeated exactly, the dynamic is *pianissimo* rather than *piano*. This intentional and explicit direction should be reflected in your performance. Grieg calls for no change of dynamics until the *crescendo* in measure 50, but it is reasonable to bring the level up before that, especially with the block chords in measures 45 and 47.

Measure 56-60: The middle voice notes A, G sharp, and G natural all cannot be held for their written durations but must be shortened to eighth notes. Although it is counter-intuitive, this does not seem to impair the sonority that is projected.

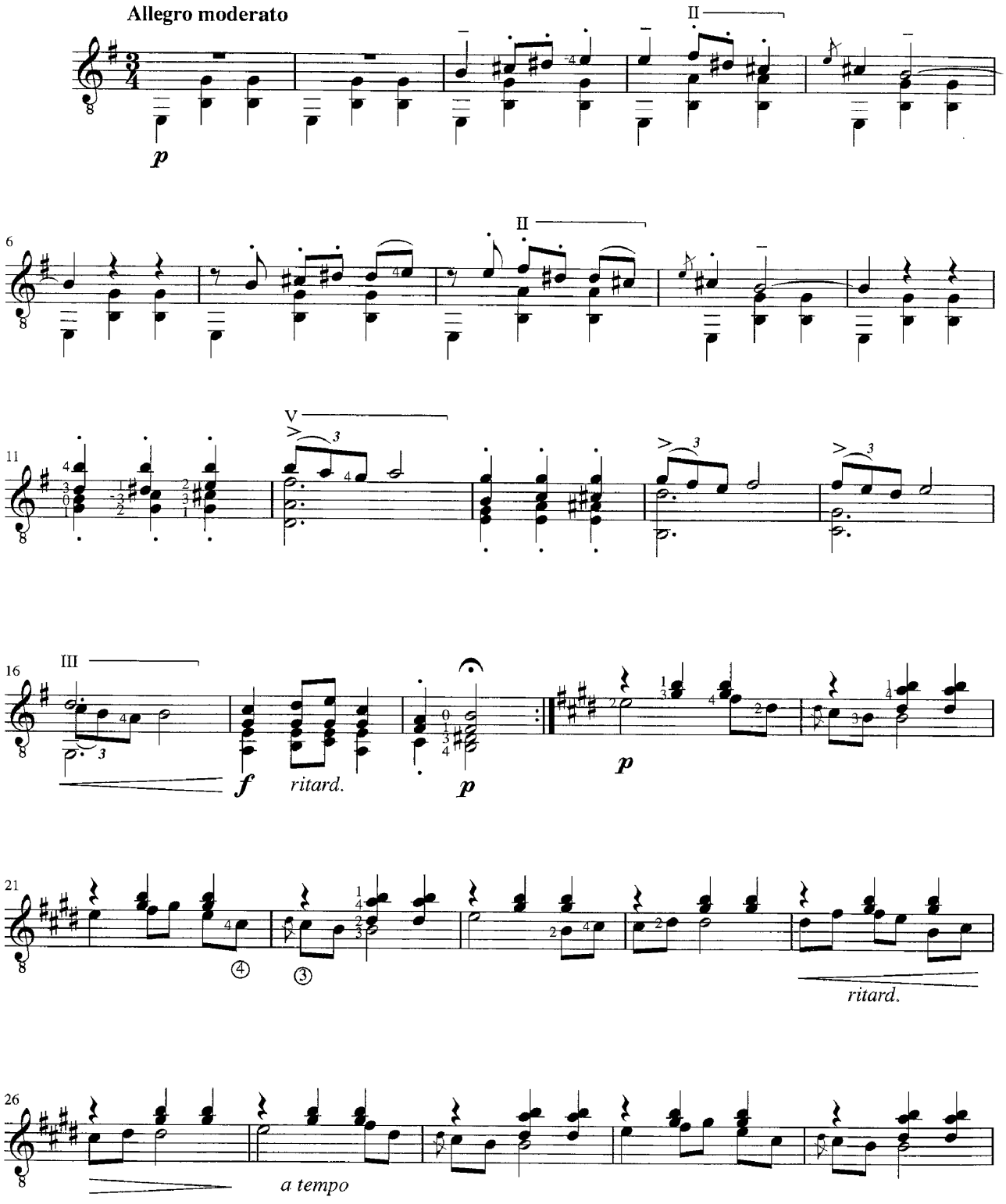
Waltz

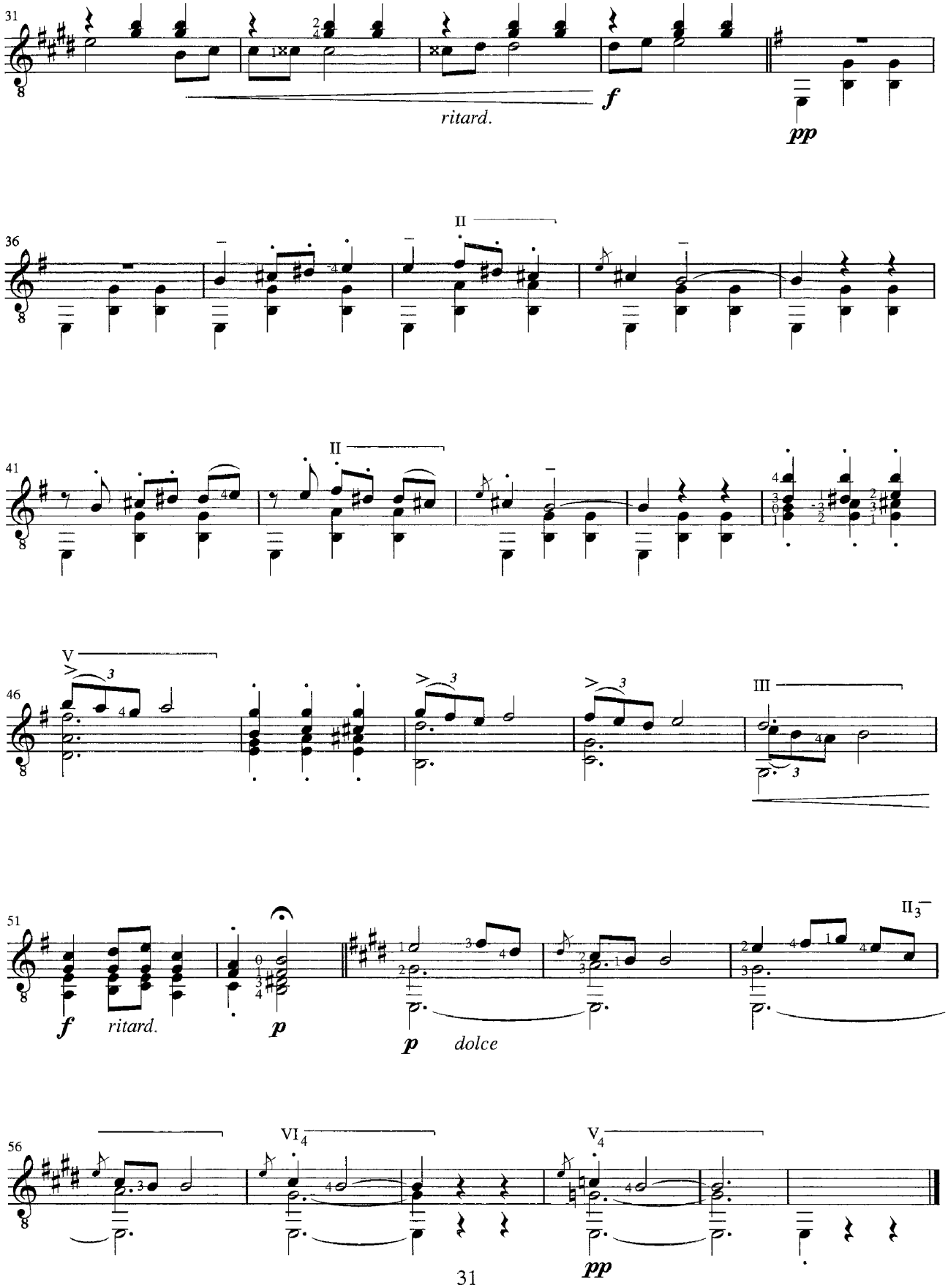
Op. 12, No. 2

Transcribed for guitar
by Richard Yates

Edvard Grieg
(1843-1907)

Allegro moderato




31
ritard.
f
pp
36
II
41
II
46
V
III
51
f
ritard.
p
p
dolce
II 3
56
VI 4
V 4
pp

Elegy
Op. 47, No. 7

Poco andante
Original key: B minor
Published: 1888 in Lyric Pieces, Book IV

"The realm of harmony has always been my dream-world, and the relation between my sense of harmony and Norwegian folk music has always been an enigma to me. I have found that the obscure depth in our folk melodies has its foundation in their undreamt-of harmonic possibilities. In my arrangements... I have tried to give expression to my sense of the hidden harmonies in our folk tunes. In so doing I have been rather especially fascinated by the chromatic lines in the harmonic texture."
- Edvard Grieg, 1900, in a letter to Henry Theophilus Finck

Composers from Northern countries seem to have a special affinity for somber moods. It is popular, if entirely speculative, to attribute this to long and dark winters or the bleak landscape. Regardless of its validity or origin, it is certain that Grieg fits the perceived pattern. This Elegy begins with a plaintive, almost wistful, melody but soon leads to a darker and more heart-stricken expression of grief.

Measure 1: This transcription requires that the sixth string be tuned down to a D. This is quite unusual for a piece in the key of A minor, especially in that the low D note never occurs in the whole piece! The reason for it is, rather, to enable the (still difficult) left-hand stretches that you will encounter further on in measure 31.

One of Grieg's most common expressive indications is *la melodia ben tenuto*. Adhering to this prescription accounts for the fingering in the first 16 measures. Relish the rich, singing quality that you can obtain throughout this section. Playing the melody separately, or singing it yourself, can greatly aid in connecting and shaping it when then adding back the accompaniment.

Measure 17: The mood changes here and through the next twelve measures. The technical difficulty also increases. The texture becomes three separate voices that can be presented clearly. The three note figure in the middle voice calls for particular attention. This chromatic descending figure has been a compositional device to express grief for hundreds of years. Another Northern composer, John Dowland, was using it often in the sixteenth century.

Measures 17-28: In the original, the bass note also has the third above it throughout this passage. While thirds above a bass note are common on the piano, in part because there is almost always a finger available to play it, on the guitar it both greatly complicates fingering and often makes a muddy sound. As you can see in the transcription, simply eliminating this note gives space and clarity to the three part texture. In all instances the note was present in other voices.

Although the texture is more dense, and the fingering a little crowded, it is straightforward once you are familiar with the pattern. As often occurs in Grieg's music the four measure phrase is repeated exactly at a different pitch - here a second higher. For the guitar, unlike the piano, this means that the exact fingering can be used so I have written it out only once.

Measure 31: The crux of the matter arrives in the stretch at the second beat. Keep in mind that the 4 finger acts as a guide finger and that, because the placement is so high on the fingerboard, the size of the stretch is not as great as it appears. In absolute distance it is significantly less than the stretch from the sixth string F to the first string A. As always, slow and relaxed practice of the shift helps greatly. If it is absolutely necessary to change this passage, try simply omitting the C natural on the sixth string.

Measures 33-38: The solo line winds its way back to the main theme. It is another excellent opportunity to show off the ways in which the guitar is superior to the piano by using vibrato, glissandi, and the infinite shadings of these that allow the guitar to sing in continuous nuances rather than to mechanically produce unchangeable notes.

Measure 38: The fermata is on the third eighth note, not the last one. Think of the last eighth as more a part of the next measure than of this one.

Measure 56: *Morendo* means 'dying away'.

Measure 58: The final chord is all in natural harmonics. The lowest E is played at the seventh fret of the fifth string; the top three are played at the twelfth fret with the 4 finger. If this stretch cannot be made reliably, it is quite acceptable to arpeggiate this chord as needed.

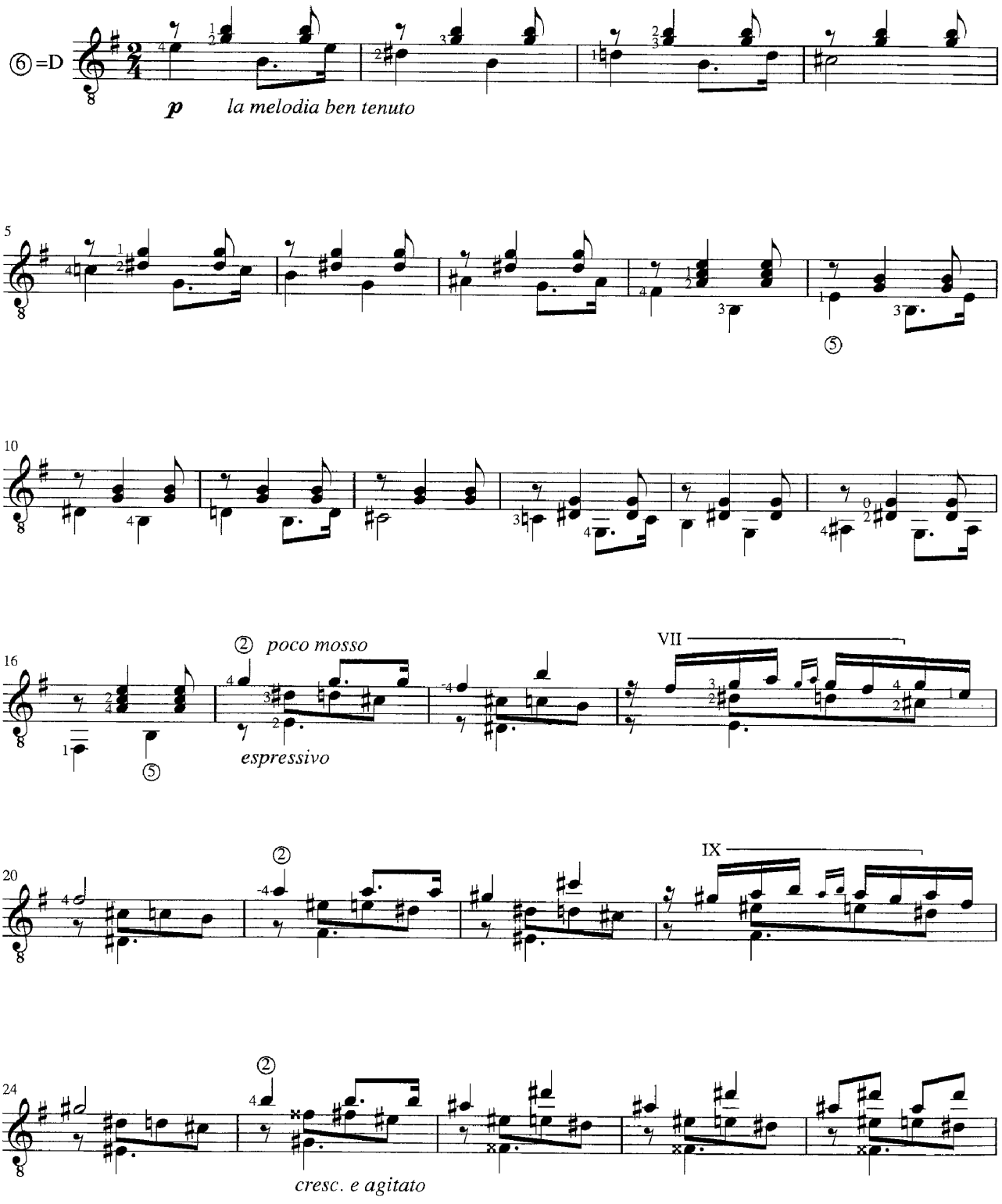
Elegy

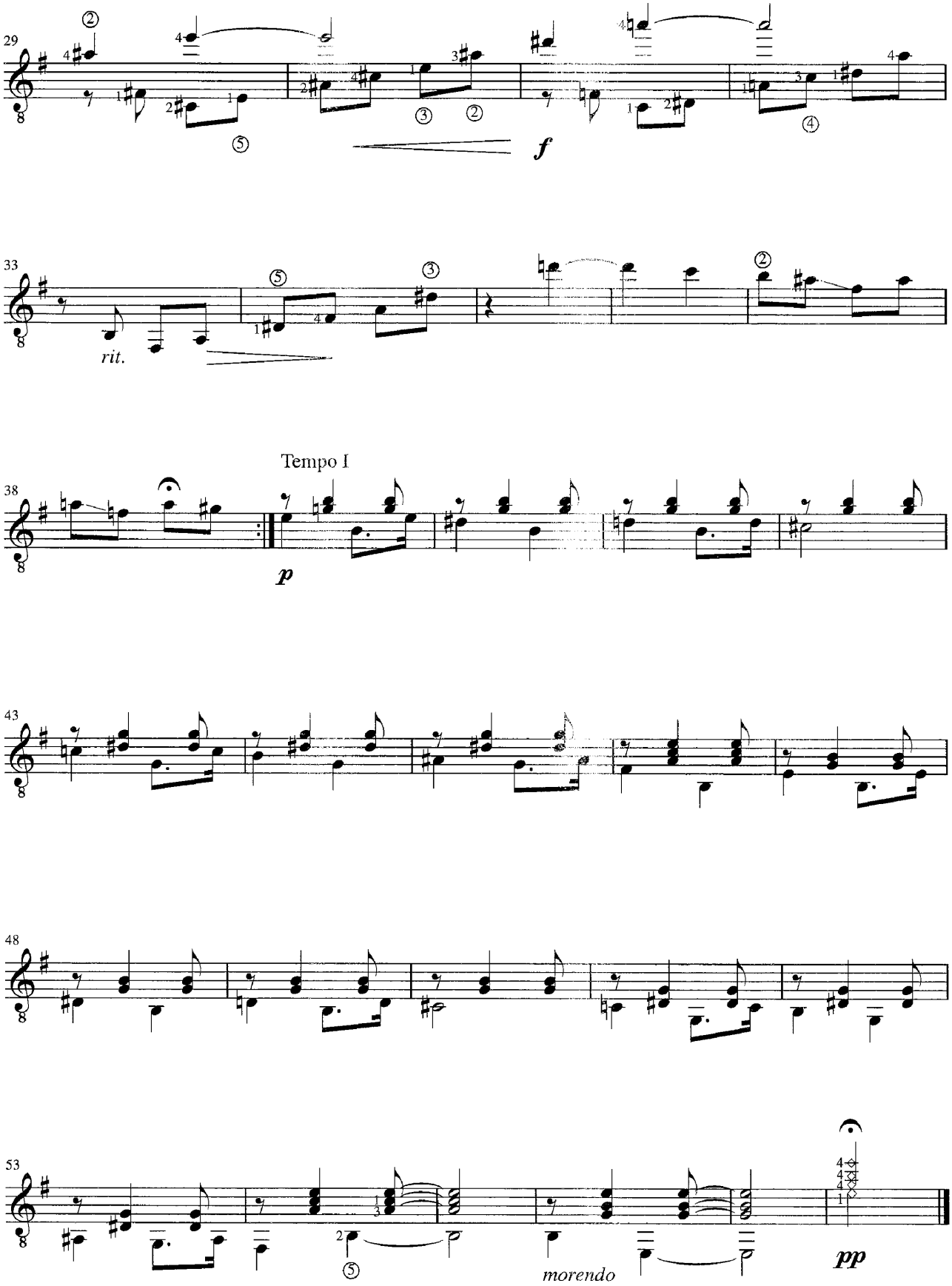
Op. 47, No. 7

Transcribed for guitar
by Richard Yates

Edvard Grieg
(1843-1907)

Poco Andante




29
f
33
rit.
Tempo I
38
p
43
48
53
morendo
pp

Remembrances
Op. 71, No. 7

Tempo di valse
Original key: E flat major
Published: 1901 in Lyric Pieces, Book X

"Artists like Bach and Beethoven erected churches and temples on the heights. I only wanted... to build dwellings for men in which they might feel happy and at home."
- Edvard Grieg

The ten books of Lyric Pieces were composed over a period of more than thirty years - nearly the whole span of Edvard Grieg's productive lifetime. Writing within the constraints of a small scale and moderate technical difficulty he created an astonishing variety of musical gems. The first piece of the first book is the Arietta, Op. 12, No. 1 - a sweet and simple piece in 2/4 time and the key of E flat major. It has an unusual ending that repeats only the very first measure, ends on the mediant, and leaves the listener suspended in expectation of the phrase continuing, as if to draw one on to the rich panorama of all the Lyric Pieces yet to come.

As the nineteenth century ended, in ill health and with just a few productive years left, Grieg resolved to turn his attention to longer musical forms. He knew that to do so he must firmly bring to a conclusion the extraordinary string of music that had endeared him to pianists of all abilities around the world. The very last selection in the final book of Lyric Pieces is Remembrances. The melody is exactly the same as the one in that early Arietta, but transformed into 3/4 time as a waltz. As the title suggests, Grieg is looking back over the previous thirty years and making a bookend to contain the ten volumes. There is a profound poignancy to this graceful and unassuming waltz when heard in this context. The unusual ending, which offered promises in the Arietta, here paradoxically conveys a satisfied and nostalgic finality. If this piece is made part of a recital program and you have set the context through program notes, introductory remarks and/or your performance, then following it immediately with something else might ruin the magic. Perhaps it would be most effective as a final encore whereby you communicate your message much as Grieg did.

Measure 1: The characteristic dance lilt of the waltz must be clear in the performance. The first note, with its fermata, calls the dancers' attention.

Measure 5: The melody note B on the last beat cannot be held over as shown. A clear sense of the bass line going from the F natural to the E in measure 6 helps cover this gap. Also helping is that the melody proceeds by progressively shortening the notes making an acceleration effect. Not holding over the note is consistent with this organization of the phrase.

Measure 24: the barré sign with the small 'h' indicates a hinge barré. Here it means to use only the base of the extended 1 finger to stop the A at the end of the measure so that the sixth fret barré starting measure 25 may be easily placed.

Measures 24-25: As if to show how his exquisite sense of harmony has developed over thirty years, Grieg rather miraculously modulates to a remote key. In the original score, E flat major modulated to D major, or five steps up the circle of fifths. In the guitar version, which starts in the key of A major, this would be a modulation to G sharp major. The key signature would have seven sharps and one double sharp! Although the novelty of this is certainly attractive, I have elected instead to head seven steps in the other direction around the circle of fifths to arrive at the equivalent key of A flat major. Note that, in either key, although it is unfamiliar reading for many guitarists, the eight bars exactly repeat the fingering of the opening eight, simply shifted one fret down.

The guitar is certainly an instrument that favors a few keys over others. The large majority of its music, perhaps more so than for other instruments, is in these few keys. Indeed, except for D minor and, rarely, F major, composers of guitar music have substantially avoided all of the flat keys. This has left a gap in our repertoire that is occupied for pianists by such giants as Chopin and Grieg, and has left many guitarists isolated from the marvels of Romantic Period harmony. Perhaps pieces such as Remembrance can in a small way help overcome this unfortunate aversion.

Measure 32-33: Another modulation, this time, in the original, to the key of B flat major. For the transcription, this means the relatively comfortable territory of E major. Note that the last note of measure 32, an A flat, is tied to its enharmonic equivalent of G sharp. Again the same fingering pattern occurs for eight measures.

Measure 48: Be sure to silence the bass strings during this delicate ascent to the original theme in the starting key.

The original piano score has a left-hand part that is almost universal in waltzes: each measure has a bass note on the first beat and two, identical, middle voice chords on the second and third beats. In making this transcription I found that this pattern could not be carried out consistently on the guitar. I chose instead to use a bass line that ascends through three notes. This pattern can be followed consistently through the entire piece and, I think, gives a coherence and verisimilitude to the transcription, as well as making it slightly easier without sacrificing any of the harmonic language. Looking back on the transcription I see that some players may want to restore the texture to something closer to the original. You can do this simply by playing the second and third beat bass notes together on the two beats.

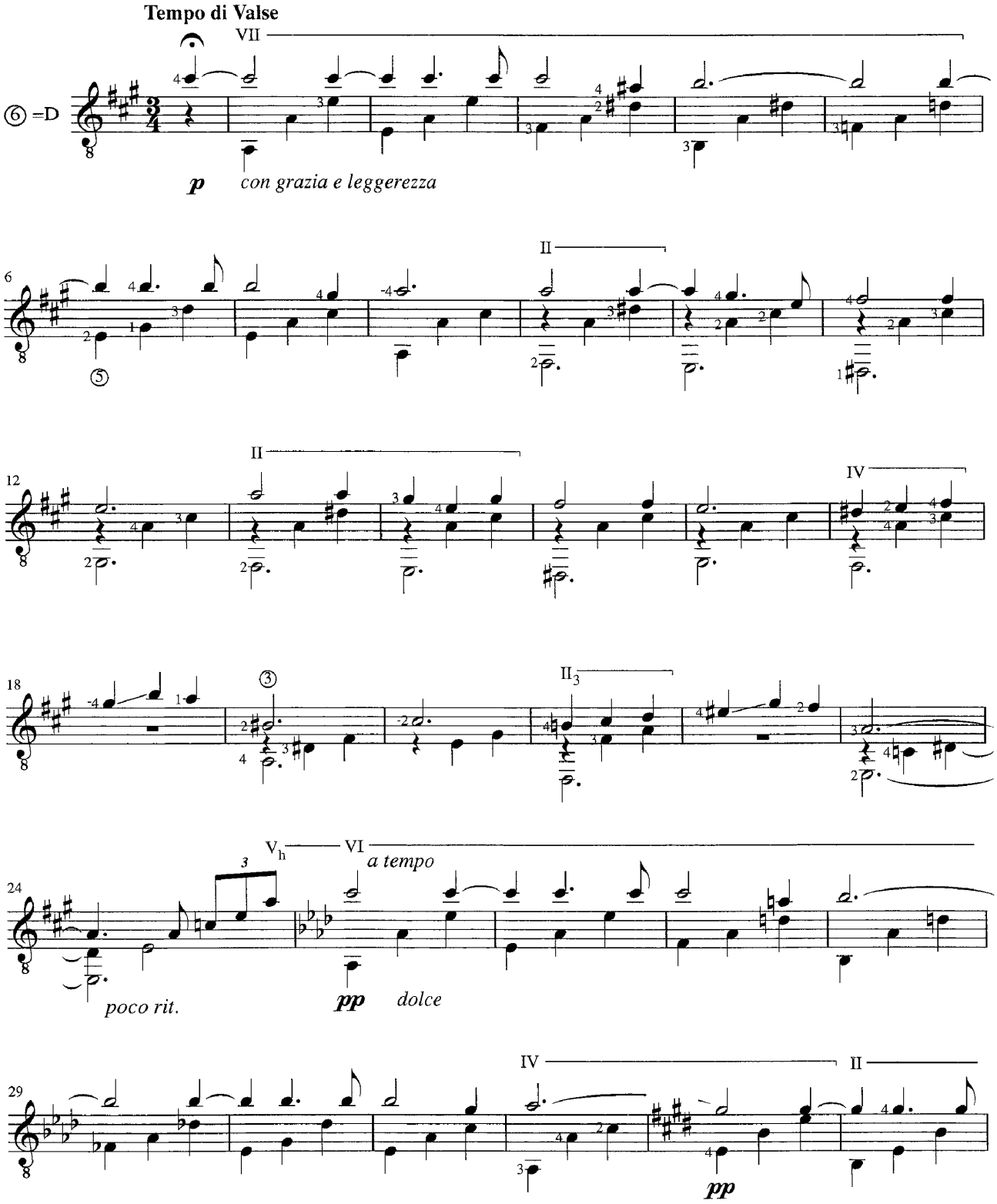
Remembrances

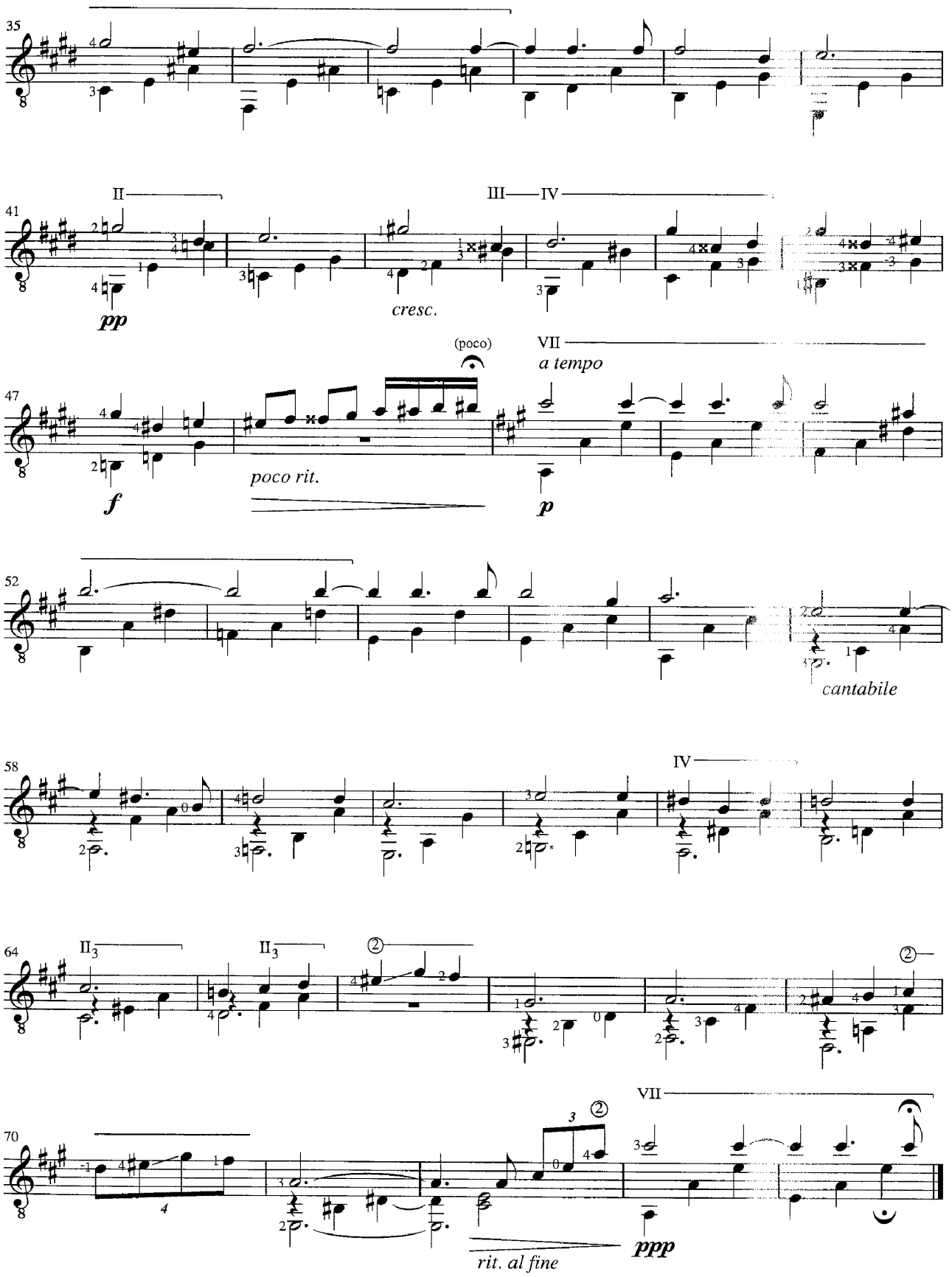
Op. 71, No. 7

Transcribed for guitar
by Richard Yates

Edvard Grieg
(1843-1907)

Tempo di Valse




35
II
III
IV
41
pp
cresc.
(poco)
VII
a tempo
47
f
poco rit.
p
52
cantabile
58
IV
64
II3
II3
70
VII
3
ppp
rit. al fine

Evening in the Mountains

Op. 68, No. 4

Andante espressivo
Original key: E minor
Published: 1899 in Lyric Pieces, Book IX

"In the heart of this matchless amphitheater of nature, surrounded by the most sublime and majestic scenery in Norway, Grieg placed his grand piano and his writing desk. Here he sat, like an Orpheus reborn, and played in his mountain fastness, among the wild animals and the rocks."
- Harald Herresthal, Norwegian State Academy of Music

An Evening in the Mountains is a remarkable composition that draws its inspiration from both the landscape of Norway and the folk melodies of its people.

Measure 1: The first half is a single line that imitates the lur, a wooden trumpet-like instrument used by Norwegian herders. It begins with a solitary note that echoes across the valley. Playing this note as a harmonic on the sixth string, seventh fret, allows it to sound for as long as possible before the sixth string must again be used in measure six. If you can devise a way of continuing the note through measure eight as shown, or of surreptitiously restriking it, do so. In any event, the nervous, staccato line beneath it must be much softer.

Measure 9: The next 38 measures are an extended single line solo. The challenge of its spareness is more than matched by the abundance of opportunities for phrasing, articulation and the depthless nuances of which the classical guitar is uniquely capable. This page of music cannot be played plainly; it must be infused with vigor in the performance. The marking *Andante espressivo*, and the character of the line call for much use of rubato. Grieg has written more than the usual number of expression marks to help the player, but these provide only a general outline. The details remain to be filled in through the performer's individual, impassioned expression - the essence of Romantic art.

Measure 47: In the second half the melody repeats exactly, but now with accompaniment. Grieg later arranged Evening in the Mountains for oboe, horn and strings. He was very pleased with the performance when the sensibility of the second half closely matched that of the solo oboe in the first. This is a good clue to preparing the piece for performance. Once familiar with the second half, the player can imagine the accompaniment during the first half.

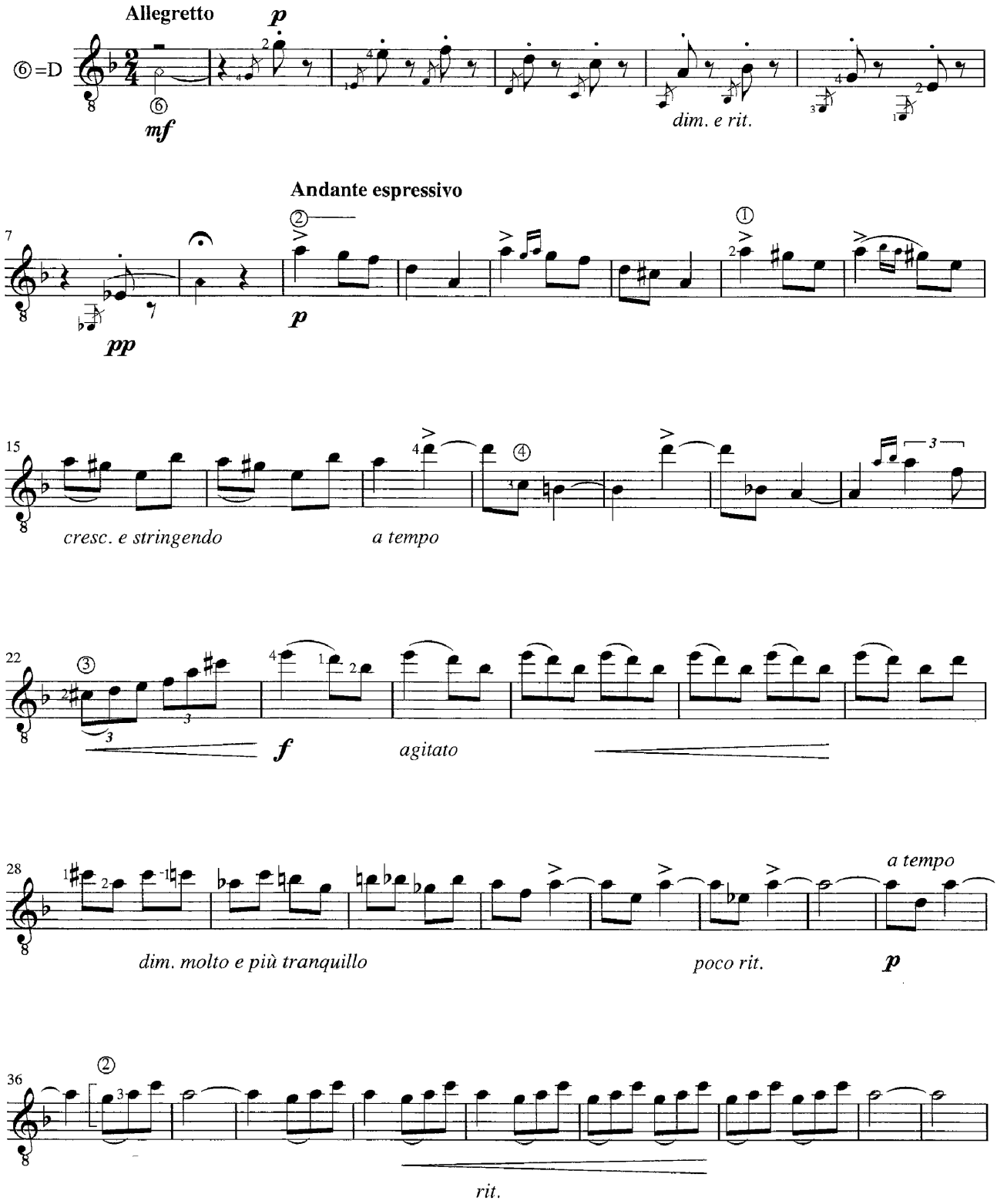
Measure 52: The grace notes cannot be easily played on the beat with the bass. A reasonable compromise is to play them before the beat and then move down to the partial barré on the second beat.

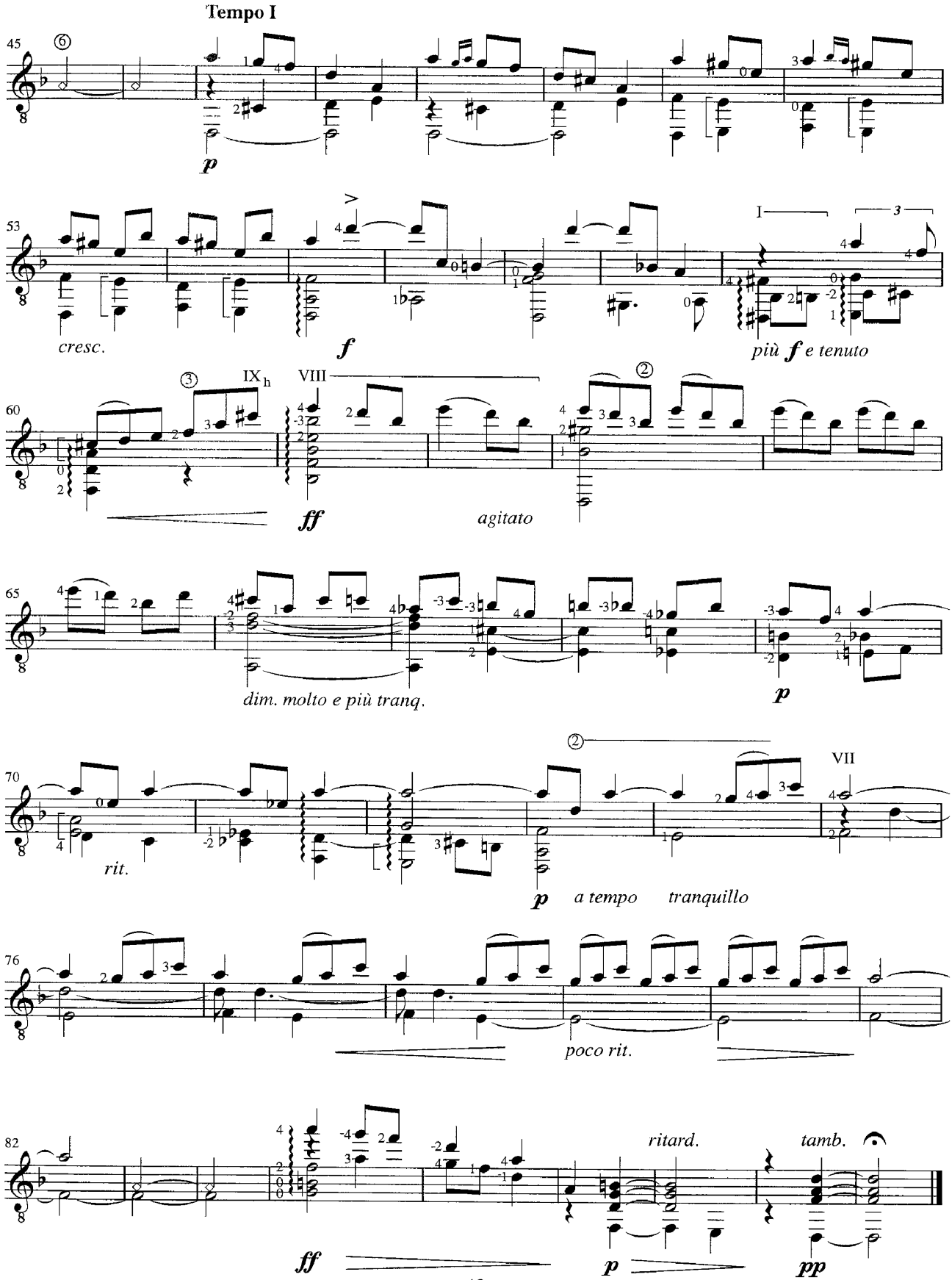
Evening in the Mountains

Op. 68, No. 4

Transcribed for guitar
by Richard Yates

Edvard Grieg
(1843-1907)




Tempo I
45
⑥
p
53
cresc.
f
I
3
più f e tenuto
60
③
IX h
VIII
②
ff
agitato
65
dim. molto e più tranq.
p
70
②
VII
rit.
p
a tempo
tranquillo
76
poco rit.
82
ff
ritard.
p
tamb.
pp

Melancholy
Op. 47, No. 5

Largo
Original key: G minor
Published: 1888 in Lyric Pieces, Book IV

"Every other day I decide not to compose another note because I am less and less satisfied with myself. When one has to struggle for technique as I do - and, strange to say, with greater and greater intensity - the delivery finally becomes so difficult that it drains all of one's strength. Just recently I have come to see more clearly than ever before what I lack."
- Edvard Grieg in a letter to Matthison-Hansen, December 20, 1882.

Throughout his life Grieg was subject to periods of doubt and dejection in part due to his chronic ill-health. Occasionally these moods found direct expression in the Lyric Pieces such as the bleak Melancholy, Op. 47, No. 5.

Measure 5: The original piano score shows the bass line as three separate voices with the first two notes carrying through the entire measure. With so much less space available on the single guitar staff it was expedient to use the increasingly common notation for guitar that you see in the fifth measure. The ties with no notes at their terminal ends indicate that the notes should be allowed to sound through the measure.

The tenuto mark with an accent strongly suggests the use of a wide vibrato. The contour and rhythm of the short phrases are reminiscent of sobbing.

Measure 9: The mood intensifies as the melody repeats with short, quick runs up to the held note which is ornamented with tremulous upper mordent.

Measure 13: Five measures of chromatic ascent and a slight acceleration convey a sense of increasing hope following the despair.

Measure 17: A sunnier mood breaks out with the E flat major chord.

Measure 19-20: The G minor tonality in the second beat of measure 19, and the desperate, rising, diminished seventh arpeggio in measure 20 show that the hope was futile and will be dashed with the return of the opening theme.

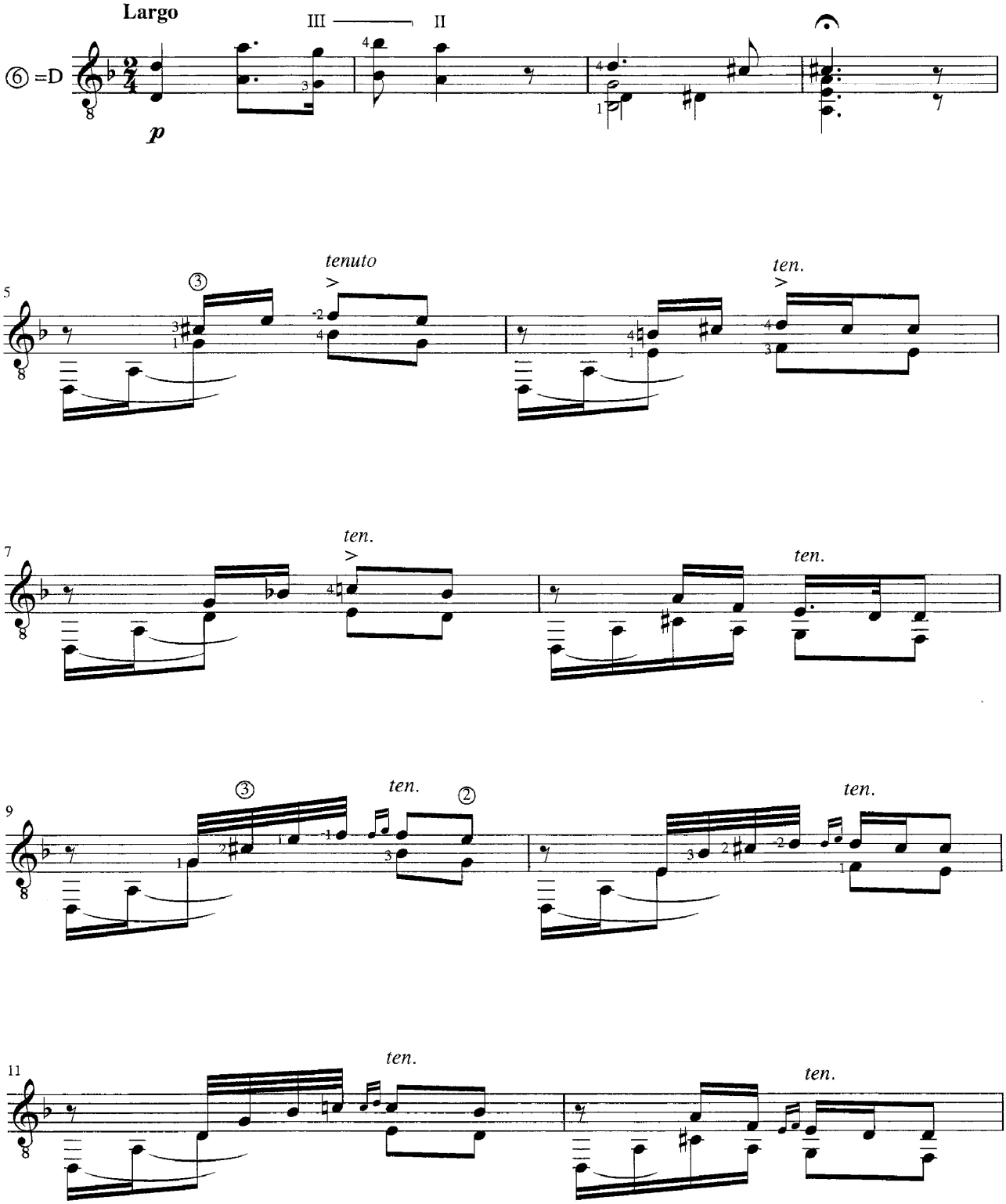
While not a piece to program as a finale, it would fit quite effectively within a set of other, more uplifting ones.

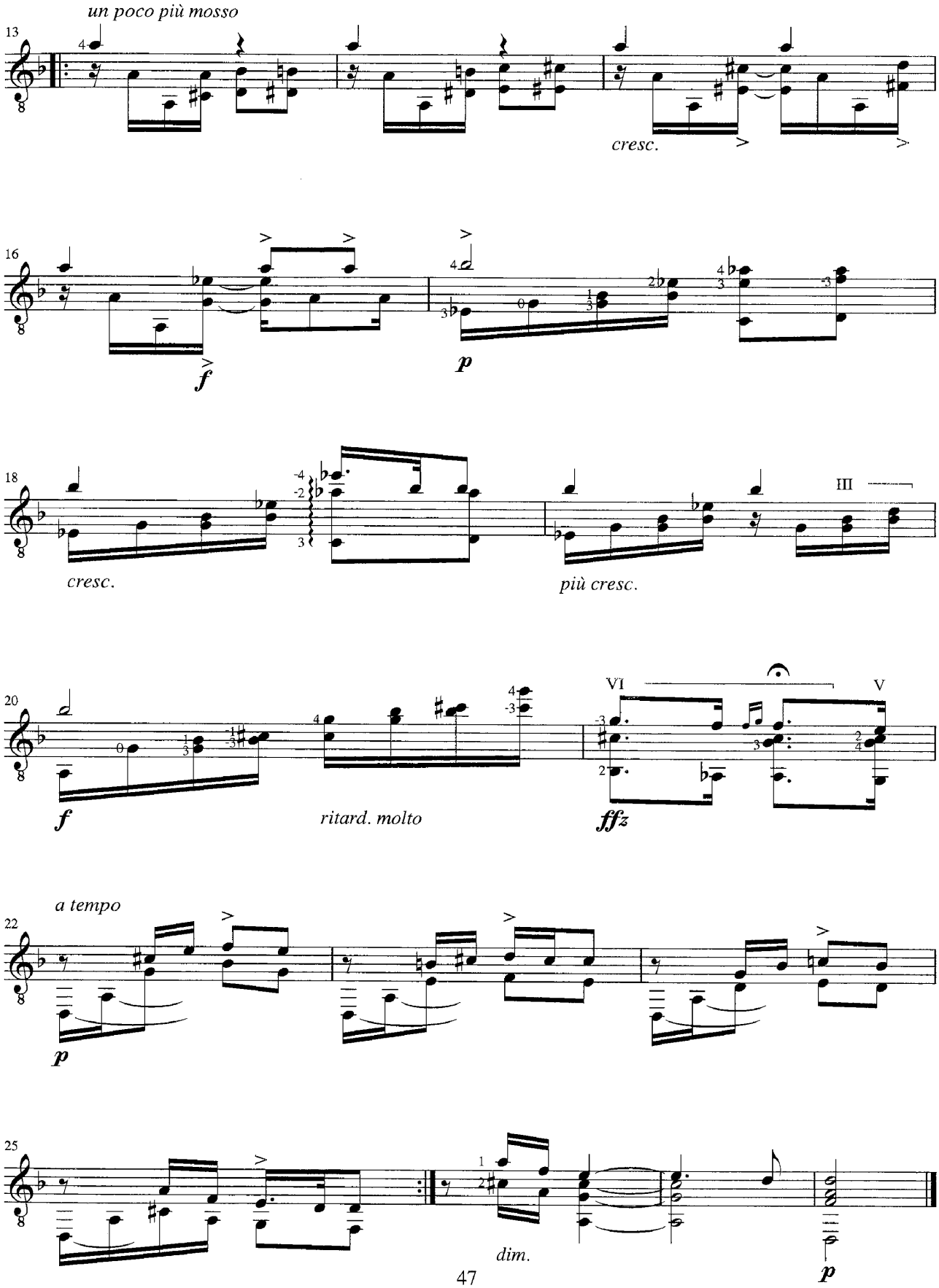
Melancholy

Op. 47, No. 5

Transcribed for guitar
by Richard Yates

Edvard Grieg
(1843-1907)




un poco più mosso
cresc.
f
p
cresc.
più cresc.
III
f
ritard. molto
VI
V
ffz
a tempo
p
dim.
p

Sarabande
Op. 40, No. 2

Andante espressivo
Original key: G major
Published: 1885 in the Holberg Suite

"Once in a while it really is a good exercise to conceal one's own individuality."
- Edvard Grieg, 1884, writing about the Holberg Suite.

In December of 1884 the city of Bergen planned a celebration of the bicentennial of the birth of the Norwegian poet and playwright, Ludvig Holberg (1684-1754) who was almost an exact contemporary of J.S. Bach. Grieg was eager to accept the challenge and produced a remarkable work. Although Grieg took on some aspects of the Baroque style, he was not entirely successful in concealing his own. Firmly based on the French dance suite and rococo style, the suite is imbued with subtle touches of 19th Century harmony and Griegian lyricism. The Holberg Suite was originally written for piano, but is now perhaps better known in the version for strings that Grieg wrote some years later. The transcription here is based on the piano version.

The second dance of the suite, a Sarabande, evokes a remarkable mood of stately confidence and serenity that is unlike anything else that Grieg wrote. The technical difficulty of the Sarabande lies in the left-hand stretches and placement. The slow tempo helps with this but it also can be a liability if it lags so much that phrasing is hindered. Many sarabandes present this puzzle and part of the solution is recognizing and expressing its unique accent pattern. Although written in the 3/4 time that is commonly associated with a waltz, the sarabande receives a slight accent on the second beat of many, or even most, measures. There is often a sense of landing on the first beat of the measure and then taking a whole beat to actually reach a resting point.

Measures 13-14: the inner voice melody must project clearly and with measure 14 sounding like an echo.

Measure 20: The fingering on the chord that is the fourth eighth note is unusual but surprisingly easy with the use of the 3 finger as a guide finger on the third string (here and in the next measure.)

Measure 25: The jump of the 2 finger from the first string to the fifth is awkward. This finger was chosen for the melody note A so that the 3 finger could remain on the bass note G for the full beat.

Measure 30: This stretch in a high position across all six strings is not as hard as it might be because the presentation of the hand to the fingerboard remains essentially the same - the 1 finger shifts only one string and the 3 and 4 fingers guide the way up to the high position.

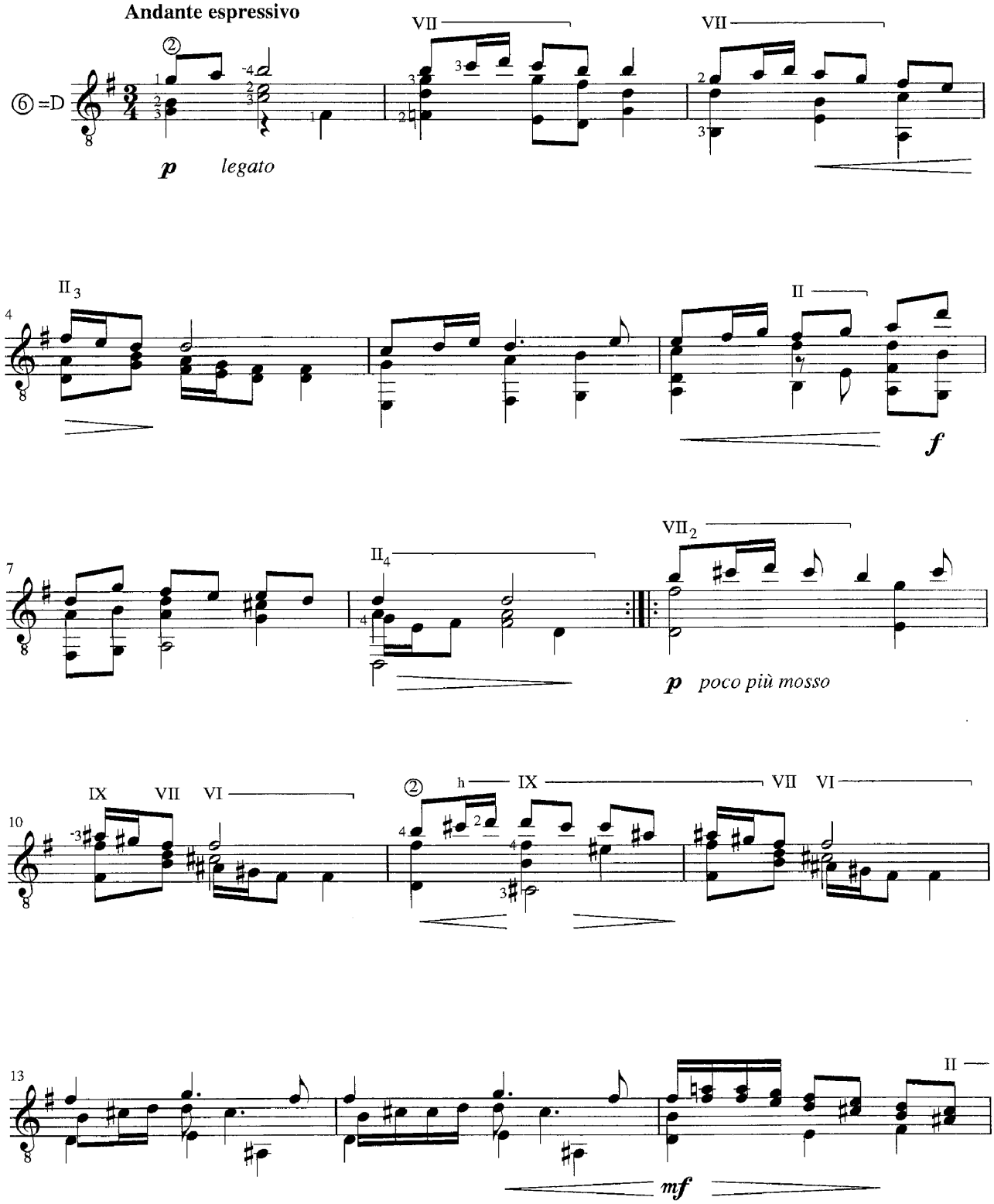
Sarabande

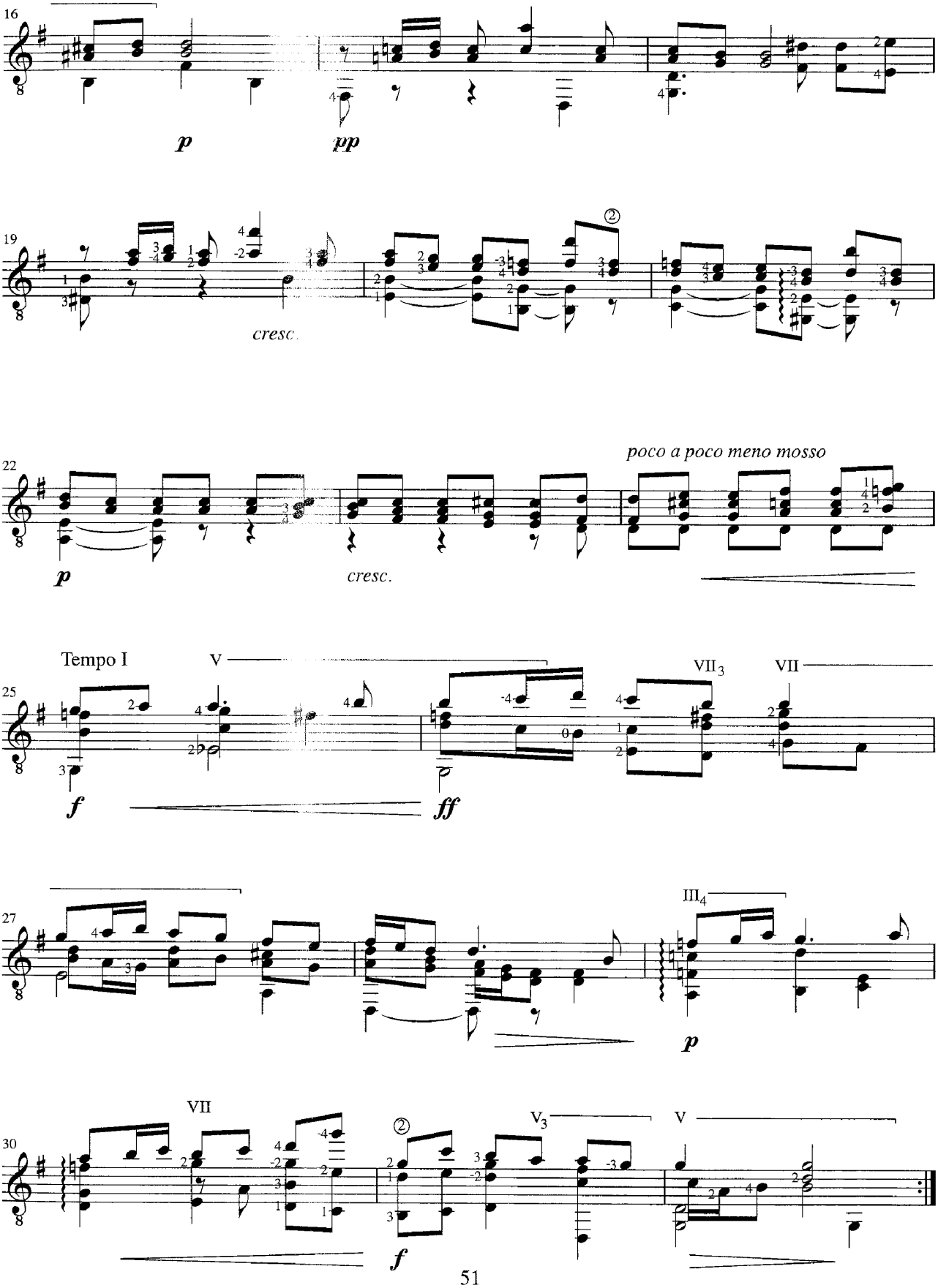
Op. 40, No. 2

Transcribed for guitar
by Richard Yates

Edvard Grieg
(1843-1907)

Andante espressivo




16
p
pp
19
cresc.
②
22
poco a poco meno mosso
p
cresc.
Tempo I
V
25
f
ff
VII3
VII
27
III4
p
VII
30
②
f
V3
V

Secret

Op. 57, No. 4

Andante espressivo
Original key: A minor
Published: 1893 in Lyric Pieces, Book VI

"He was an innovative harmonist and became a model for many European composers. The secret behind Grieg's world fame lay in his ability to create new piano music that could be played by amateurs in homes all over the world."
- Harald Herresthal

In the year 1893, Grieg and his wife Nina traveled extensively in Europe and Edvard conducted the orchestras of Leipzig and Berlin in performances of his music. They were then invited on a tour of Southern Europe and stayed for a time on the French Riviera. There Grieg began to compose again. The result, Lyric Pieces, Book VI reflects his change in surroundings from the wilds of Norway to the refined urban settings of the cognoscenti. The music is less Scandinavian and more cosmopolitan.

The opening of Secret, Op. 57, No. 4 is fully in the mainstream of what has been called 'salon music', that is, music of a simple, agreeable, frequently sentimental character that was popular at the turn of the century. Grieg, however, soon explores more experimental territory in the middle section.

It is a mystery as to what the 'secret' is. Many of Grieg's Lyric Pieces have descriptive names such as this; some simply suggest a mood, but others seem to have a more specific, yet elusive, reference. One secret from the beginning is the key of the piece. Grieg coyly delays a clear statement of this until measure ten, and even there it emerges only from a deceptive appoggiatura.

Little thinning of the texture was needed in making this transcription. Throughout most of the piece the melody, whether in the treble or the bass, is in octaves - a common piano idiom that usually is simply reduced to a single line on the guitar. Exceptions to this procedure in this collection are Watchman's Song and Lullaby.

Measure 1: The opening phrases should be played with a very free rhythm. They are very declamatory rather than melodic.

Measure 2: Throughout the piece there are places where the fingering supports an elegant and flowing melody at the expense of the full duration of some bass or middle voice notes. In this measure, for instance, it is much more effective to play the first E note on the second string using the 4 finger, rather than on the open first string, even though it means cutting short the G note.

Measure 10: The note A in the melody is most easily played by simply laying down the 1 finger into a small barré position.

Measure 11-17: The music breaks into one of Grieg's rare examples of counterpoint only to merge into a dramatic and strikingly atonal display. Here is certainly the most difficult section yet encountered in this collection. The cascading arpeggios require rather large left-hand shifts. I have taken care to try all of the possible fingerings before settling on these. I think that they do the most to productively employ guide fingers and efficient finger movements. Memorizing this passage, and practicing each shift very slowly and attentively are essential.

Measure 26: The guide finger sign (-) on the high D means to place the 2 finger on the second string at the beginning of the measure. This allows a secure shift up the neck. The same reasoning applies to the 4 finger on the high B.

Measure 30: Here is another of Grieg's welcome single line passages that encourage you to display all that is unique in the guitar's sound. Notice that the notes reaching up are reminiscent of the opening phrases but, after the preceding storm, are here starker and more intense.

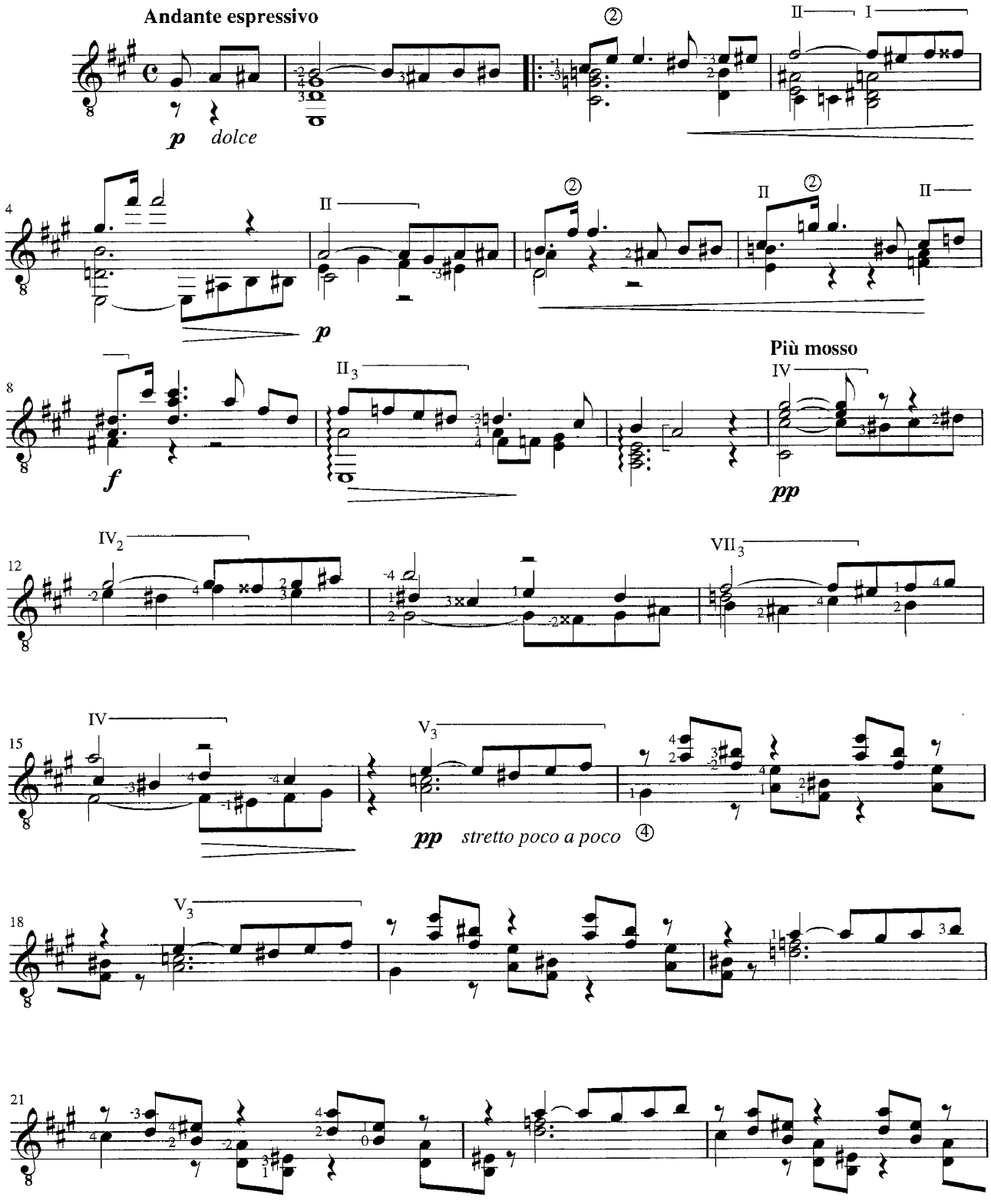
Secret

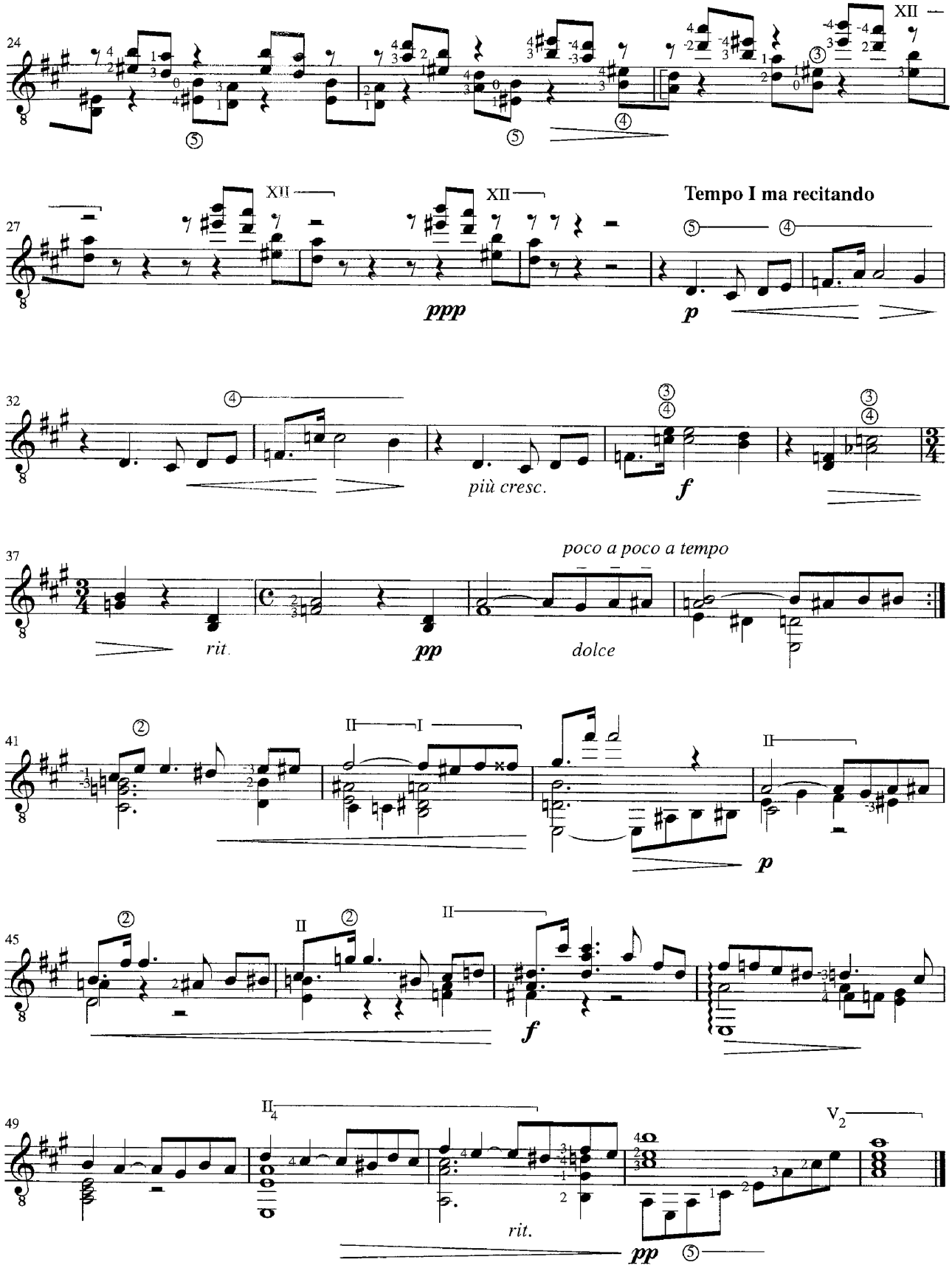
Op. 57, No. 4

Transcribed for guitar
by Richard Yates

Edvard Grie
(1843-190

Andante espressivo




24
XII
27
XII
XII
Tempo I ma recitando
ppp
p
32
più cresc.
f
37
poco a poco a tempo
rit.
pp
dolce
41
II
I
II
p
45
II
II
II
f
49
II
V
rit.
pp

Shepherd Boy

Op. 54, No. 1

Andante espressivo
Original key: G minor
Published: 1891 in Lyric Pieces, Book V

"They are a special souvenir from last summer and a reminder of those unforgettable days in the Jotunheimen mountains. There is a bit of yourself and of the Norwegian nation in each of them, and I think I can actually follow your thoughts in them."
- Julius Röntgen, Grieg's friend and the dedicatee of Lyric Pieces, Book V.

The fifth book of Lyric Pieces is generally acclaimed as the finest of the set. Grieg had returned from the trip on which he met Gjendine (see Lullaby, Op. 66, No. 7 above), was in unusually good health and, in his words "like a new and better man...yes, ten years younger." The compositions from this time show a leap forward in his ability to combine bold imagination and innovation with subtlety and nuance.

Measure 1: The opening piece in the collection, Shepherd Boy, leads us up to the mountains from which Grieg received his inspiration and rejuvenation. The melodic augmented second between the D sharp and the C natural is a characteristic of many folk traditions.

Measure 12: The gently rolling 6/8 meter begins to come apart. This, and the subsequent similar measures are best conceived as a gradual and continuous acceleration through to the downbeat of the next measure rather than as they are literally counted in the notation. Note that the last note, B, can (and should) be tied across the bar line as shown by leaving the 2 finger down when shifting the barré from the third to the second fret.

Measures 15-20: The section is fingered exactly the same as the previous one, but two frets higher. This pattern continues upward until the barré is on the ninth fret. With this much practice, the B double-flat will not slow you at all!

Measures 21-26: The original uses the piano sustain pedal to let the initial bass note of each measure to sound through the measure. This is not possible on the guitar. The best solution is to shorten all of them as shown, even those where it is not necessary. This preserves the pattern of the similarity from measure to measure rather than erratically holding on to what can be played and cutting off what cannot.

Measure 29: The original theme returns, but here in a little three part canon that then eases, temporarily, into the mellow harmonies of the beginning of the piece.

Measures 39-50: A last, roaring cry gradually subsides to a low restlessness before finally returning to the sweetness that began the piece.

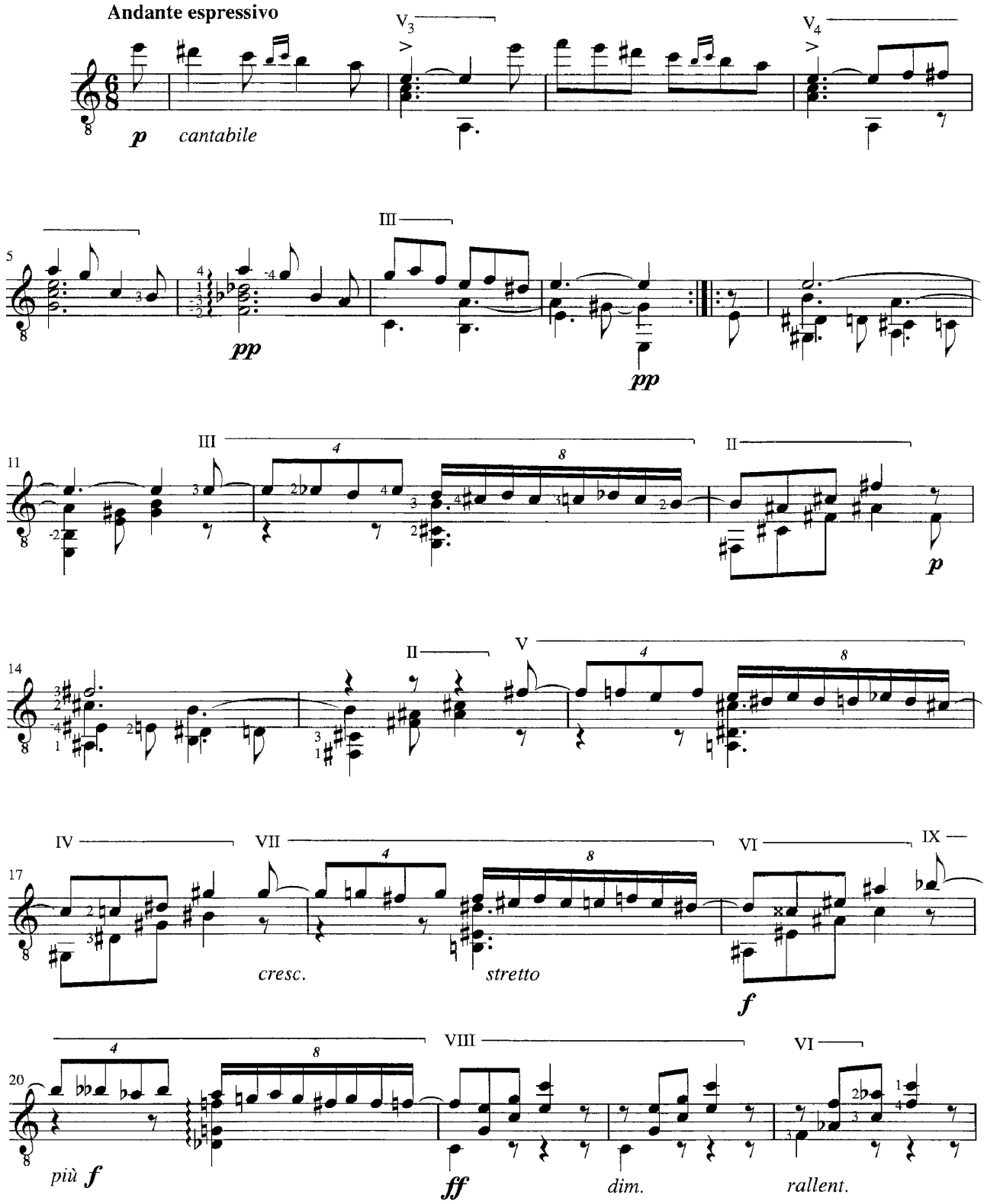
Shepherd Boy

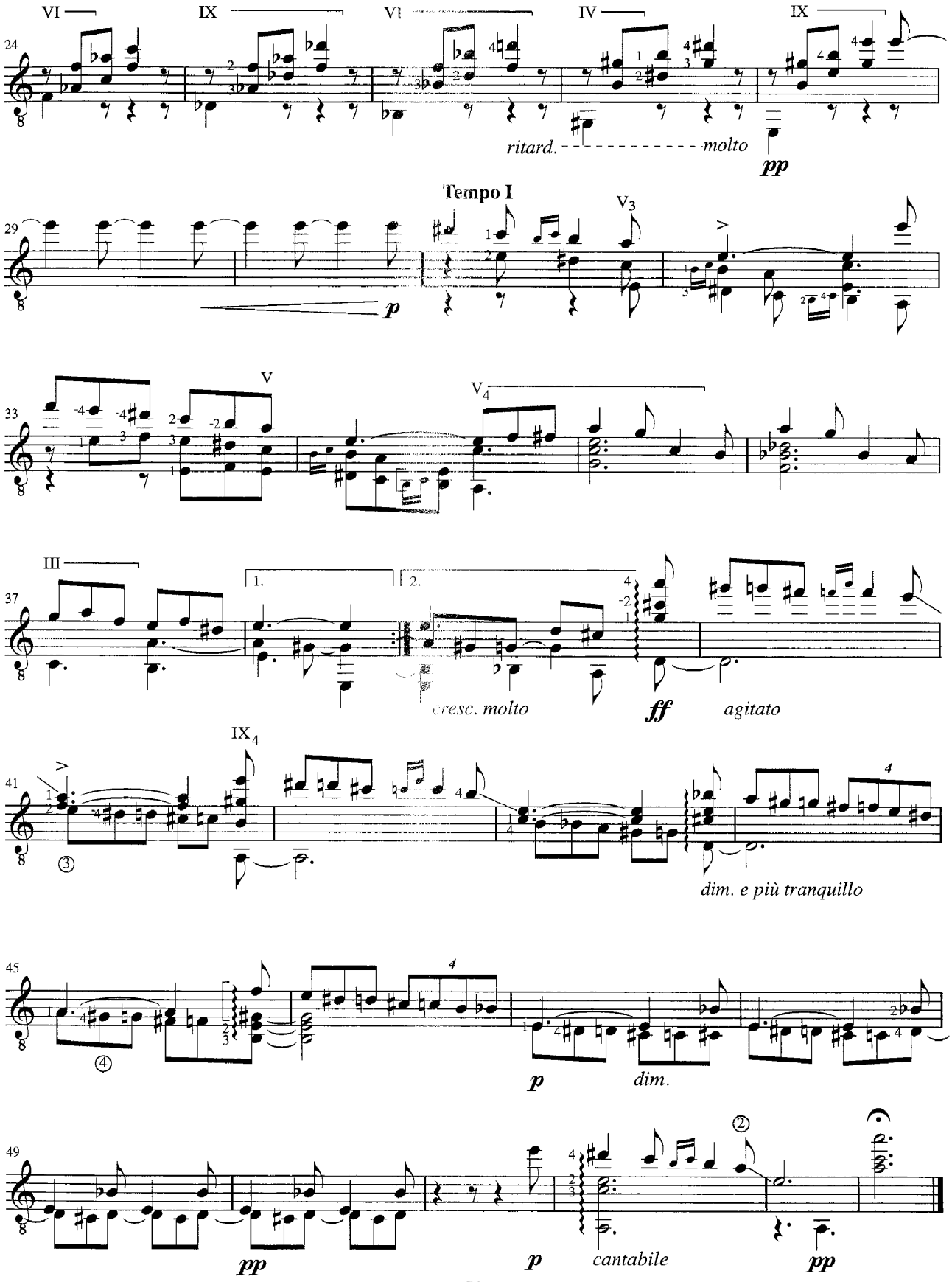
Op. 54, No. 1

Transcribed for guitar
by Richard Yates

Edvard Grieg
(1843-1907)

Andante espressivo




VI
IX
VI
IV
IX
24
ritard.
molto
pp
Tempo I
V3
29
p
V
V4
33
III
1.
2.
37
cresc. molto
ff
agitato
IX4
41
dim. e più tranquillo
45
p
dim.
49
pp
p
cantabile
pp

Gade
Op. 57, No. 2

Allegro grazioso
Original key: A major
Published: 1893 in Lyric Pieces, Book VI

"When we are young, friends are taken for granted. When we are old, we know what it means to have them."
-Edvard Grieg

Niels W. Gade (1817-90), was a Danish composer and conductor who made use of folk songs in his compositions. While he did not directly teach Grieg, he certainly was a strong influence as shown by the many references to him that Grieg made in his letters. For instance this from January, 1897:

"When I brought this [an orchestral version of In Autumn] to Copenhagen and showed it to Gade, he said, 'That's a goddam piece of junk, Grieg; go home and write something better.' So I went home - and with all due respect: wept... But do not conclude from this that I think I am not deeply indebted to Gade."

Grieg's relationship to Gade seems to have been intermittent and, at times, tense, but it lasted for many years until his death in 1890. Grieg wrote: "Sunday morning he was with us in the café, where he sat for a long time and chatted with us. He was in high spirits and seemed more animated than ever. That evening he died suddenly." Three years later Grieg wrote a wonderful tribute that he included in his sixth book of Lyric Pieces. In tone it seems to recall Gade on that last Sunday morning.

Measure 1: The octave harmonics on the twelfth fret of the sixth string nicely sustain the harmony in this high position. Place the 2 finger on the C sharp at the very start rather than trying to stab with it on the second beat.

Measures 5-6: The bass line in the original is here the same as measures 1 and 2. With the increased motion in the melody the bass can be thinned as shown in the transcription without losing any of the forward motion or harmony. Trying to retain all of the notes in this kind of setting often results in a texture that cannot be played with the legato grace that is needed.

Measure 9: The melody in the bass range is quite rich; play the chords lightly, and with the rests, so that the melody can sing through.

Measures 17-26: A complex section begins here. The texture is in three parts: a melody and a bass line that call and answer each other, and a chordal accompaniment in between them. Always be sure that the top and bottom lines get priority in the acoustic balance. There are several places where it is necessary to change fingering for the middle line or even to play the same notes consecutively in an entirely different position. Care is needed to make the middle line of consistent timbre and volume, although its subsidiary role aids in achieving this.

Measure 17: The first challenge is to pull out the melody on the third string even as the accompaniment is surrounding it on the fourth and second strings.

Measure 23: The piano score uses, of course, two staves and the three part texture is quite clear. Placing all of these on the single guitar staff can make for some slight confusion as two of the lines must, of necessity, have stems in the same direction. I have included all of the necessary rests in each line to help sort this out.

Measures 27-30: The mood becomes more agitated so retaining the full bass line, in contrast to measure five, is fitting. Try to stop the bass note E from sounding longer than its indicated eighth note. This clarifies the texture and prepares to contrast with the next section.

Measures 31-39: These measures constitute a quite remarkable passage. The three part texture returns in a descending, chromatic spiral in which each of the lines moves down at different times through remote tonalities. Although the pattern is regular, even after it is memorized the shifting lines seem unpredictable.

Measures 46-48: Highlight the repeated figure with dynamic or tonal contrasts.

Measure 50: The opening returns briefly before proceeding to an extended coda.

Measure 64: Warm, lush harmonies almost apologize for the torturous twists harmonic twists of the middle section.

Measure 72-73: In the original, the bass arpeggio ascends through measure 73 but never reaches the alternating chords in the top line. In the transcription, the melody was transposed down an octave at measure 70, so the bass line must ascend through the top chords as you can see by a close examination of the score. It is possible, but not easy, to make this clear in performance. Although the dynamic is pianissimo, the shape is in the bass line, so make it stand out slightly.

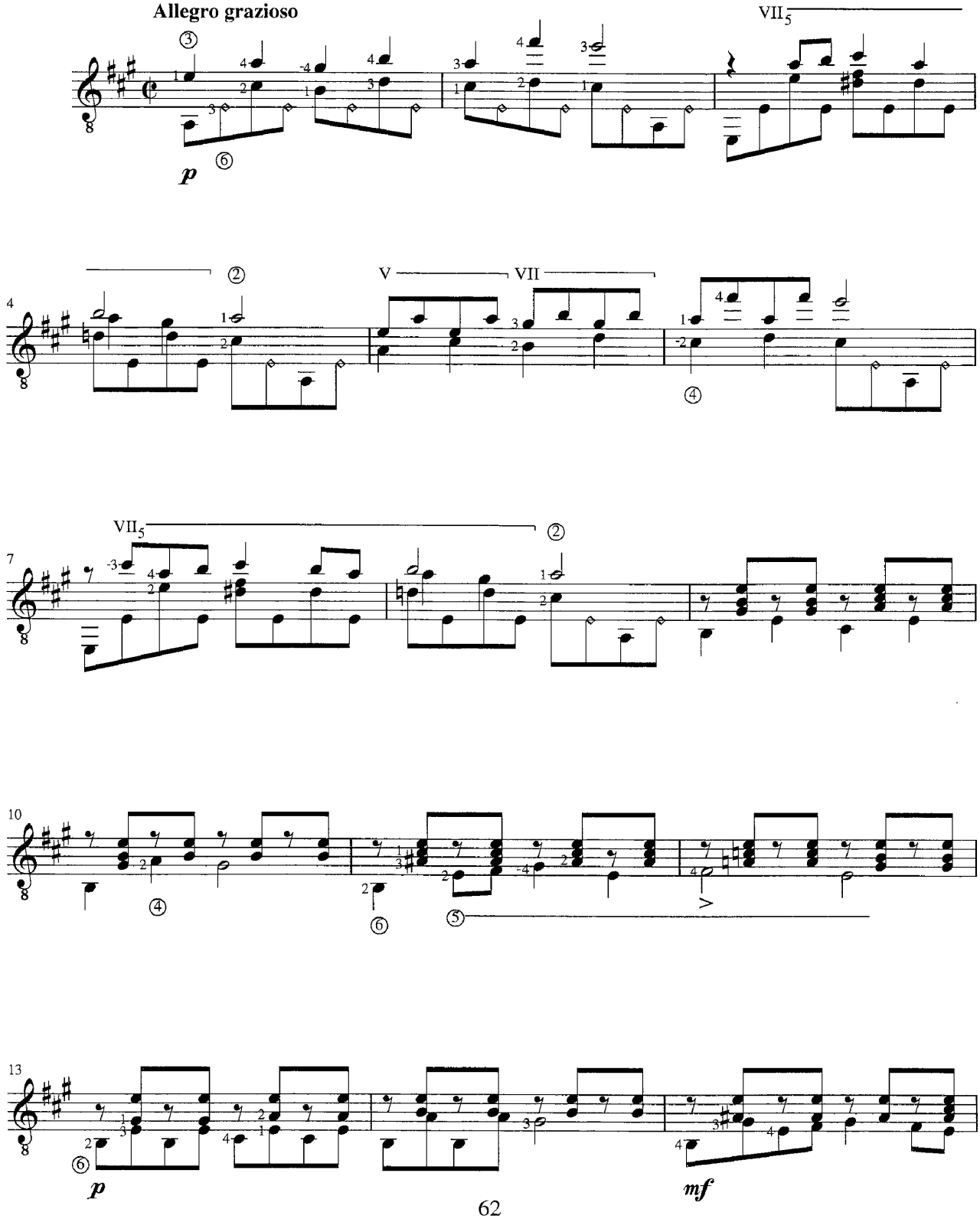
Gade

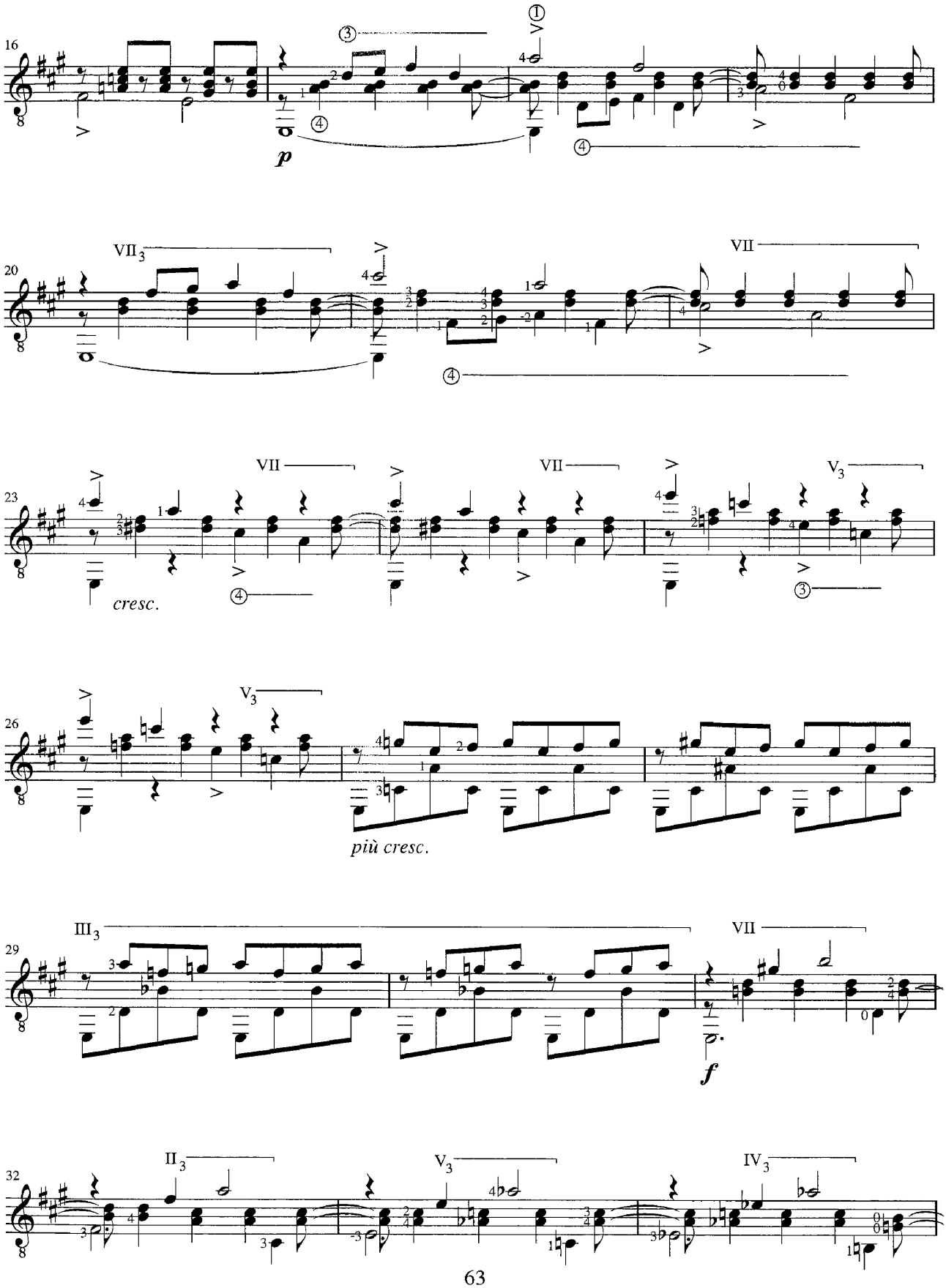
Op. 57, No. 2

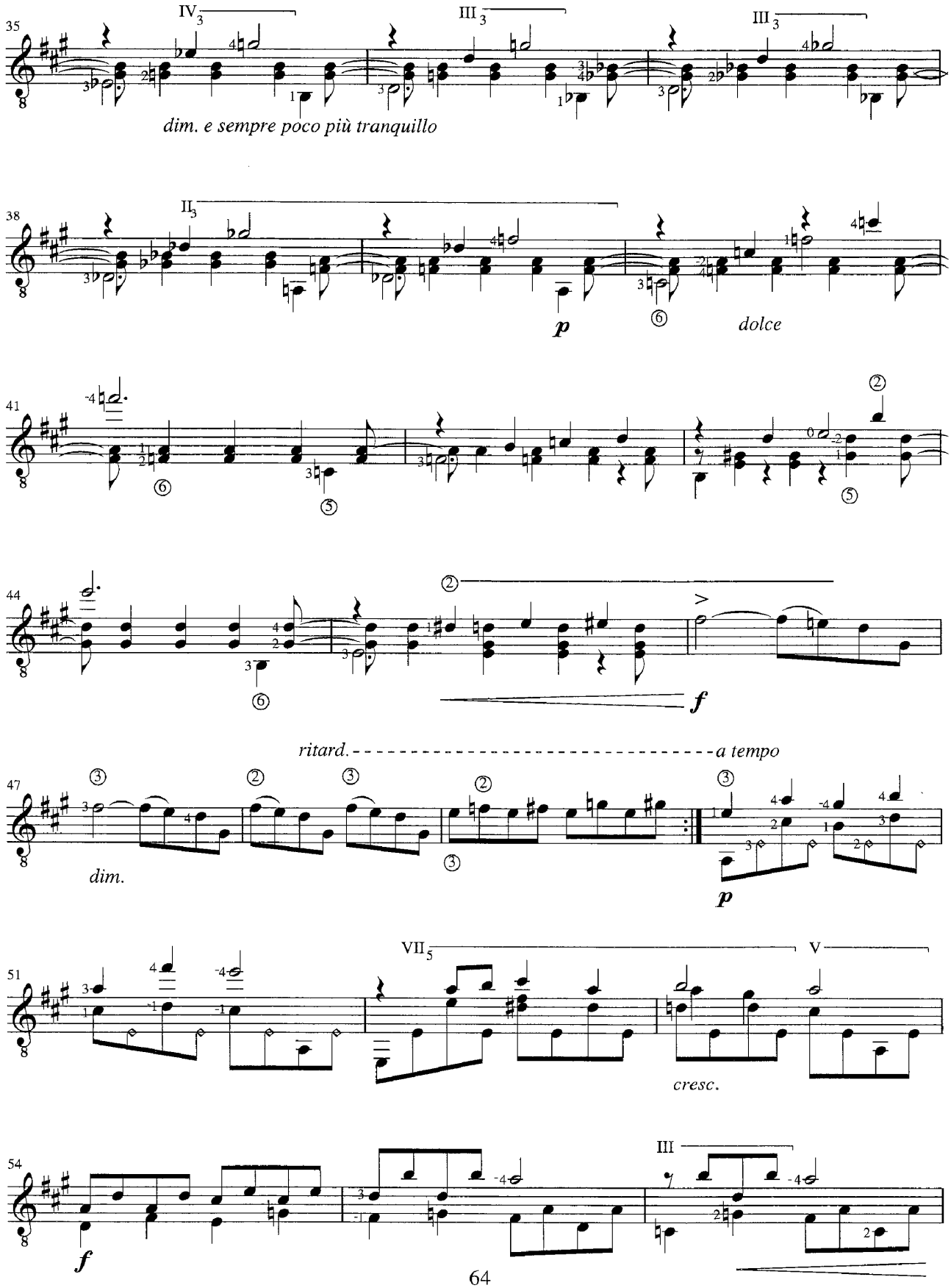
Transcribed for guitar
by Richard Yates

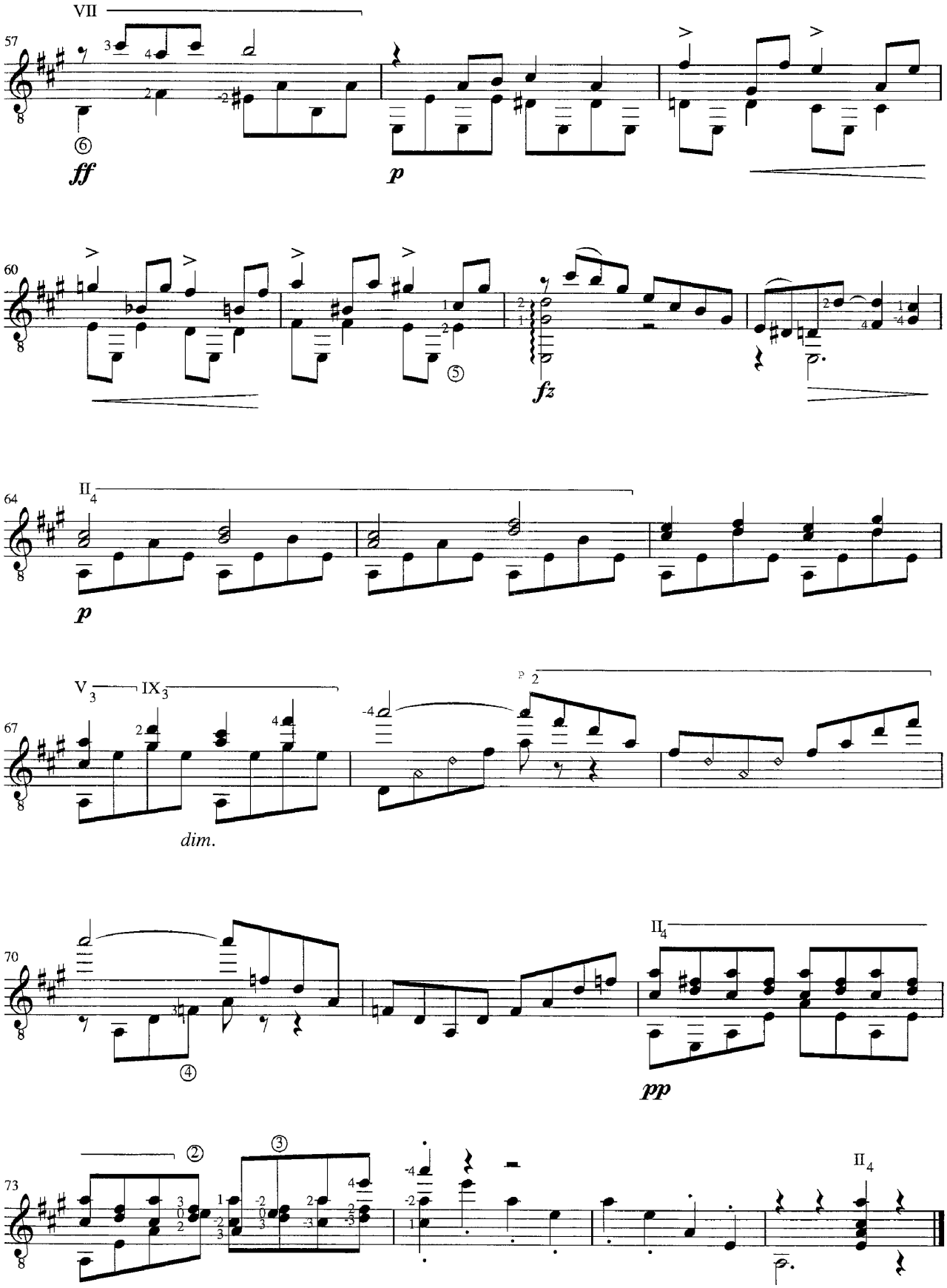
Edvard Grieg
(1843-1907)

Allegro grazioso




16
p
20
VII 3
VII
23
VII
VII
V 3
cresc.
26
V 3
più cresc.
29
III 3
VII
f
32
II 3
V 3
IV 3


35
IV 3
III 3
III 3
dim. e sempre poco più tranquillo
38
II 3
p
dolce
41
44
f
ritard.
a tempo
47
dim.
p
51
VII 5
V
cresc.
54
f
III


VII
57
⑥
ff
p
60
⑤
fz
64
II 4
p
V 3
IX 3
67
dim.
70
④
II 4
pp
73
②
③
II 4

Elves' Dance

Op. 12, No. 4

Molto allegro e sempre staccato
Original key: E minor
Published: 1867 in Lyric Pieces, Book I

"...Morning, Spring, Anitra's Dance, he dreams them at the doors of new stars."
- Carl Sandburg

While the first piece in this collection was one of the last ones that Grieg wrote, the final piece here was one of his first. Thus Grieg's compositional lifetime is bracketed, albeit in reverse order. Elves' Dance is light, witty and enthusiastic. It also makes the greatest demands on the guitarist's abilities, primarily because of the tempo. As they are almost universally inclined to do, pianists take the meaning of molto allegro to be 'as fast as possible'. Indeed, many of them can play this at simply incredible speed. Not only does this obscure details, distort phrasing, and strip away the wit and charm in a headlong pursuit of the final bar line, but it also simply is not necessary. The piece needs to be quick, but never at the expense of musicality.

The tempo does call for close attention to efficient fingerings. The ones in this transcription were determined only after an Internet discussion with several guitarists and editors that brought to light a large number of plausible alternatives. Transcriptions for guitar of keyboard music typically involve problems of left-hand fingering more than right. However, particularly in fast tempos, it is a good idea to carefully select right-hand fingerings. In Elves' Dance I have included a few of these that I have found to be useful.

Measure 1: Although the barré seems a long one it allows the smallest, and therefore the most efficient, movements of the left-hand fingers. The figure in block chords recurs throughout the piece. It is very tempting to make these loud, but they are marked pianissimo. They still can be firm and crisply articulated. For variety, if you can do so smoothly, you might for contrast play some of these with a thumb strum, but it must be very lightly done and probably using no nail.

Measure 13: The octaves are played in a lower position than in measure nine. This is in part to avoid large left-hand shifts, but also can be used to make a tonal contrast. Wherever possible turn necessity to a musical opportunity.

Measures 21-22: In the piano score these are the only measures marked with the sustain pedal. Allowing a bit more sustain here highlights the crisp staccato in the next measure.

Measures 34-42: One by one the elves spin out of sight.

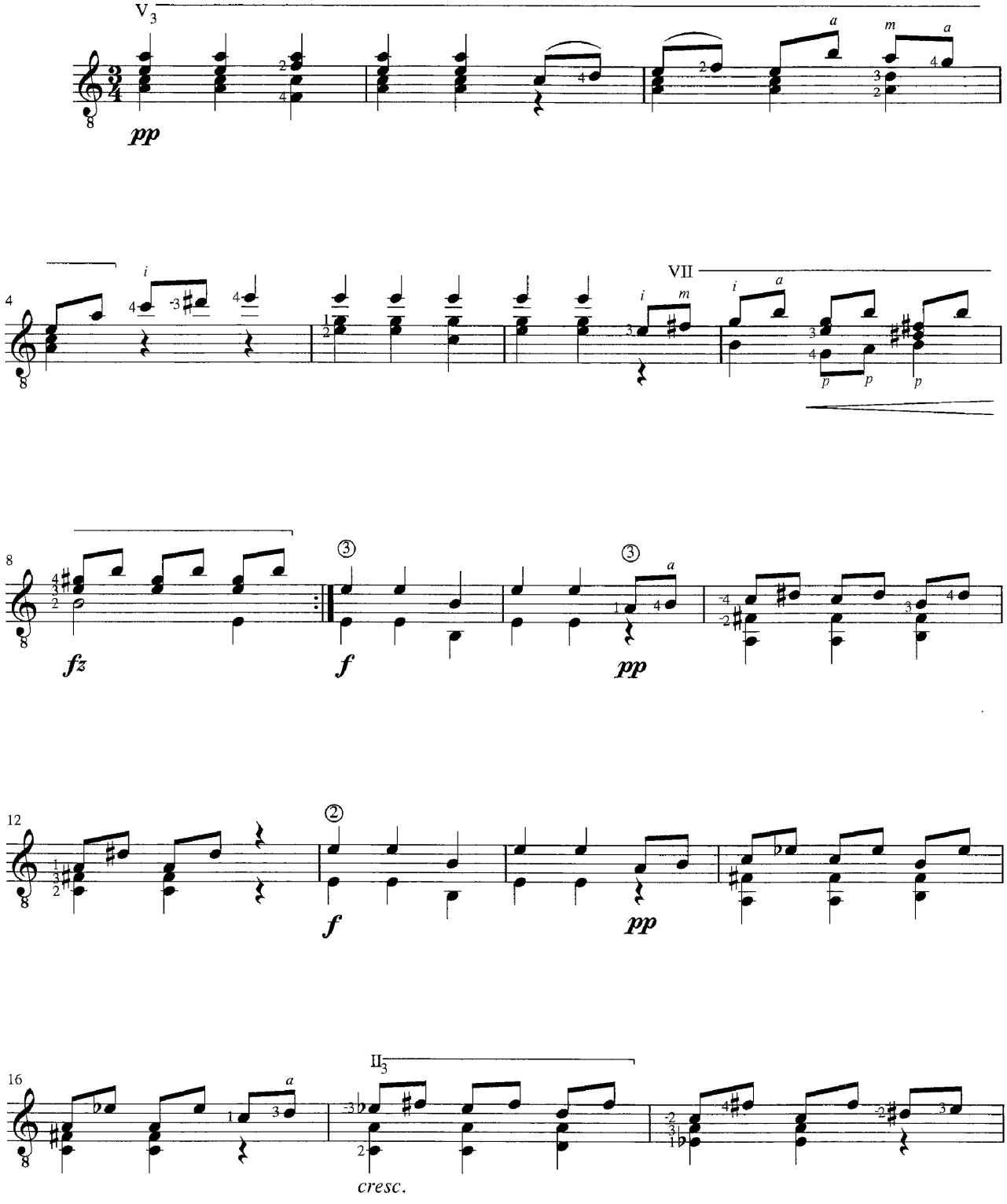
Elves' Dance

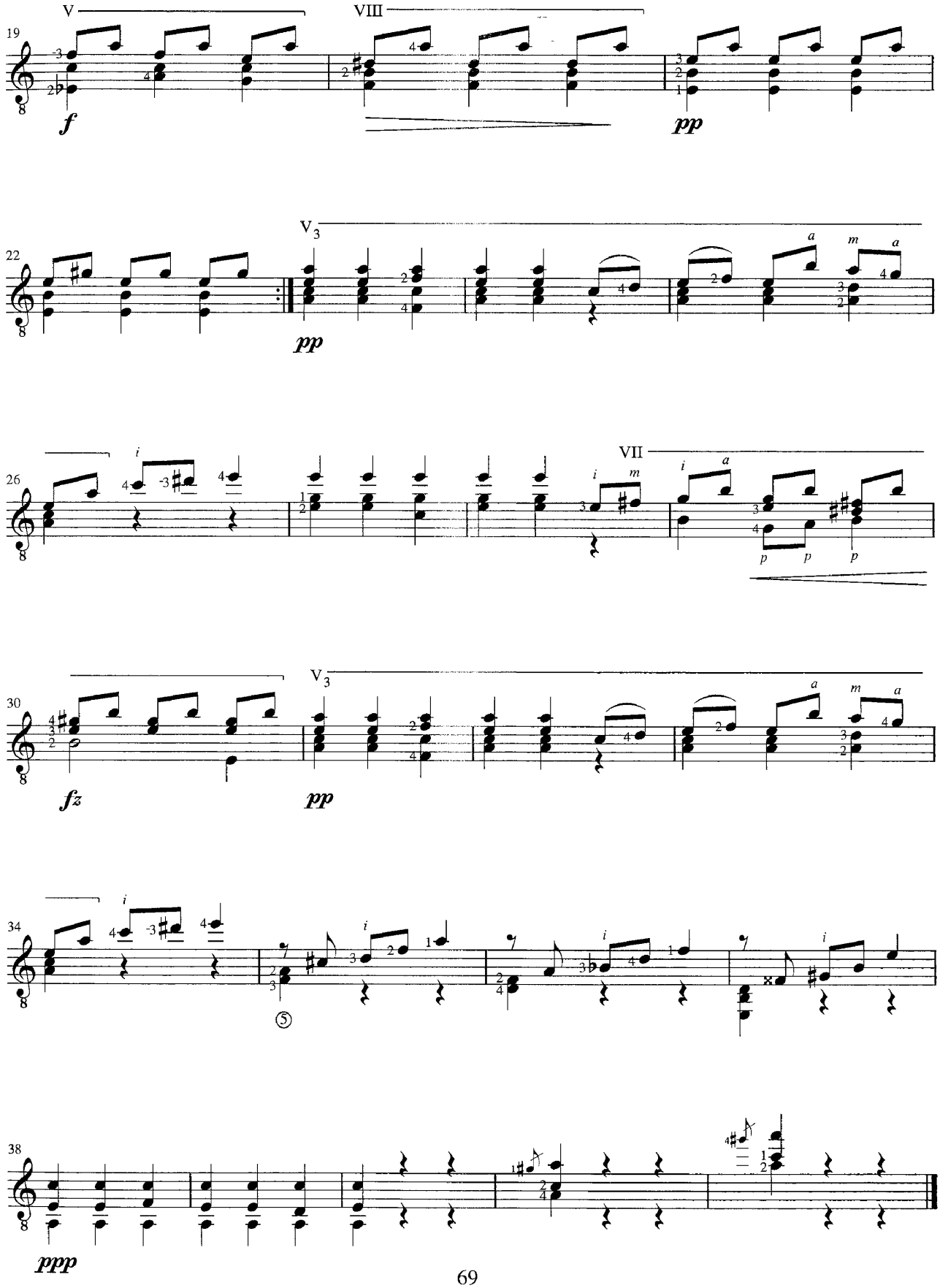
Op. 12, No. 4

Transcribed for guitar
by Richard Yates

Edvard Grieg
(1843-1907)

Molto allegro e sempre staccato




19
V
VIII
f
pp
22
V3
pp
26
VII
p
30
V3
fz
pp
34
⑤
38
ppp

Richard Yates

I began learning the guitar in part through a Mel Bay beginner's book more than 30 years ago at about age twelve. I did not begin formal lessons until I was fifteen when I studied with Joseph Mayes and then Peter Collona at the Bryn Mawr Conservatory of Music in Pennsylvania. After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania, I pursued graduate studies at the University of Oregon, and later completed a Master of Science degree at Western Oregon State College. I studied with John Doan at Willamette University for more than ten years. For the last five years I have written a series of articles in the Guitar Foundation of America's magazine *Soundboard* titled "The Transcriber's Art". These articles are devoted exclusively to the issues and problems associated with the transcription of music for the guitar.

I am always interested to hear from players who have questions, comments or suggestions about my transcriptions. You may contact me through my web site at www.yatesguitar.com.

Richard Yates
Salem, Oregon
December, 2001

EXCELLENCE IN MUSIC
MEL BAY
Since 1947