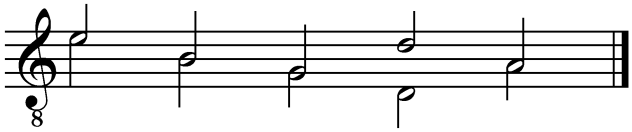
THE FALSE CONSONANCES OF MUSICK
BY NICOLA MATTEIS
SELECTED EXAMPLES

William F. Long

Introduction

Nicola Matteis was a 17th century violinist and guitarist who settled in London in 1672. His text, *THE FALSE CONSONANCES OF MUSIC OR INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PLAYING A TRUE BASSE UPON THE GUITARRE…* teaches how to realize a figured bass on the instrument now known as the "baroque guitar." It was published in Italian in 1680 and in English two years later.

The baroque guitar is in appearance similar to the modern classical guitar (see Watteau's sketch on the title page) but is rather smaller with 9 or 10 strings arranged pair-wise into 5 "courses." The tuning of the baroque guitar is similar to that of the classical guitar—give or take the occasional octave. The lowest two courses of the baroque guitar are tuned an octave higher than on the classical guitar, a so-called "re-entrant tuning" reminiscent of that of the ukelele. Sometimes one of the strings of one or both of these lowest courses was tuned down an octave. The tuning Matteis used is shown below, but his instructions should work for any of the common tuning variants.



Classical guitarists are accustomed to using mensural notation, all the notes being placed on a treble staff, sounding an octave lower than notated. But in folk and popular music tablature notation is common. Tablature tells the guitarist which strings to pluck and which frets to stop. Sometimes tablature includes additional information about note duration, slurs, and special effects. Tablature inevitably produces ambiguities, but so does mensural notation. In popular music publications nowadays, the two are often combined to give a clearer idea of the execution of the music.

In Matteis' time, tablature was the rule for solo music on fretted instruments. Continuo players, however, had to learn to read a figured bass from mensural notation and to supply appropriate chords. Matteis bridged the gap between solo performance and accompaniment by showing the figured bass *and* the corresponding accompaniment in tablature format. Of special interest is *THE SECOND PART* of Matteis' book since it provides many practical examples of figured bass realization in various time signatures, styles and keys.

The following pages consist mainly of examples selected from *THE SECOND PART*. In them I've rendered Matteis' tablature into modern form with the help of Finale notation software.

The tablature symbols will be familiar to modern guitarists with a few exceptions:

1. The five strings are represented by the five lines on the TAB staff. The highest course, the E string or strings, is represented by the top line, the B string course is represented by the 2nd line down, and so forth.
2. Consistent with 17th century practice, the fret positions are indicated by letters, ***a*** being an open string, ***b*** a string stopped at the 1st fret, ***c*** a string stopped at the 2nd fret, etc. The letter ***j*** is omitted since it wasn't used in the 17th century.
3. Up and down arrows ↑ ↓ below the tab staff indicate the direction of a strummed chord. A down arrow ↓ means to strum toward the floor. In mensural notation this would correspond to an arpeggio going *upward.* An up arrow ↑ means to strum away from the floor, a *downward* arpeggio in mensural notation. Note, then, that "up" and "down" are different for the right and left hands. Go figure. And it's even worse if you take into account the re-entrant tunings and octave doublings in the courses.
4. A right parenthesis **)** after a note means a trill on that note. In Matteis' realizations this is invariably a cadential trill, and should start from the upper note.
5. Ordinarily, tablature notation tells when a note starts, but it is left to the performer to decide how long to hold the note. A right slash / behind a note, however, indicates that that note is to be sustained, though it gives no idea how long the note should be sustained.

Above the tablature notation I've placed a "mensuralized" version of the tablature calculated by Finale. There is no attempt to work out the voice leading in this version, and the notes won't sound exactly like the notation looks because of the re-entrant tuning. Nonetheless, it makes it easy to see how Matteis' realized the figures, and a classical guitarist playing the baroque guitar from this version will pretty much get the music right.

When I'm quoting Matteis' original text I'll use a *calligraphy font* reminiscent of the typeface Matteis used. Curiously, Matteis' English translation includes a good deal of Italian, especially with musical examples. I have presented Matteis' text just as I found it, orthographic eccentricities and all. My own contributions are in the Times font.

Occasional notes have been changed to correct obvious errors. These are indicated with square brackets, [ ].

William F. Long

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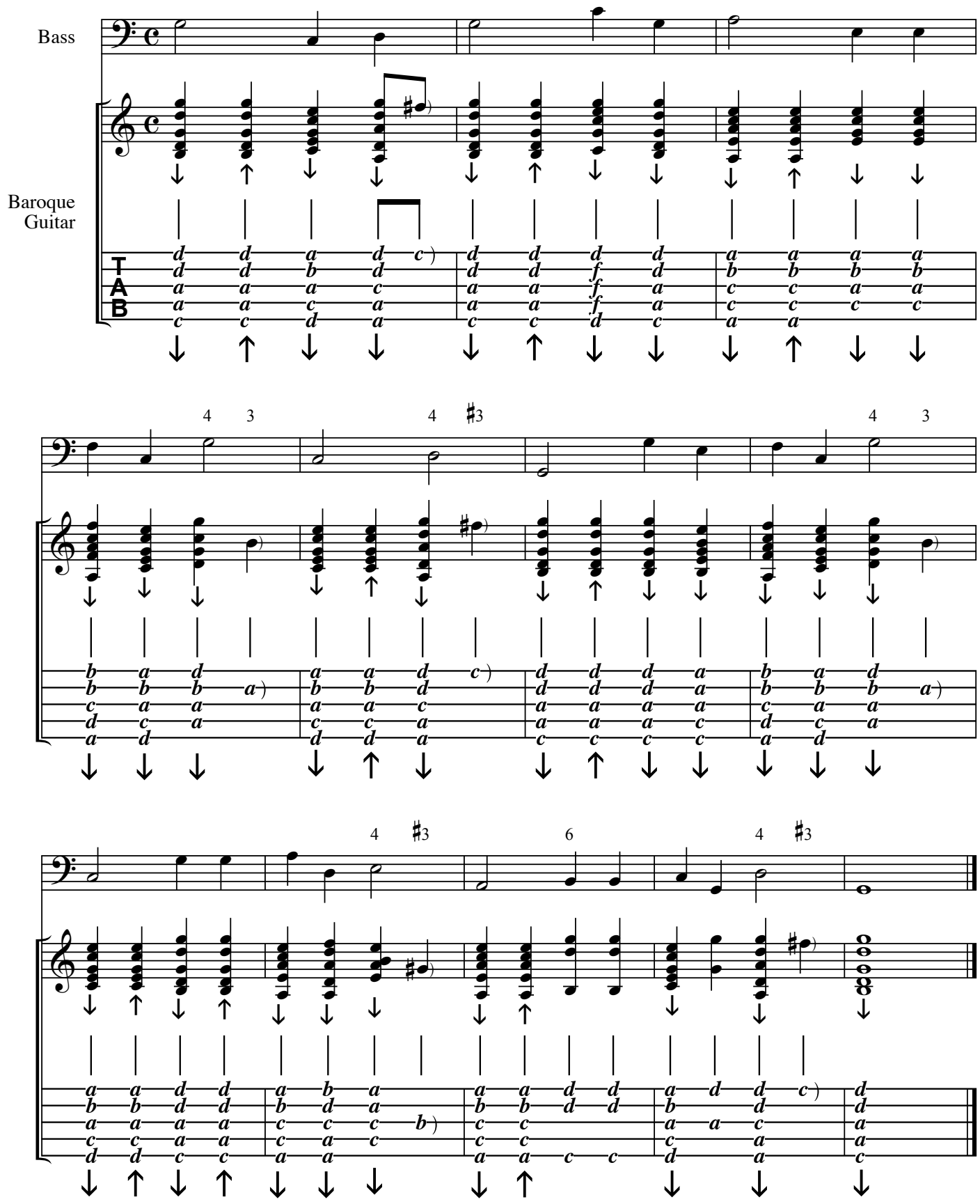
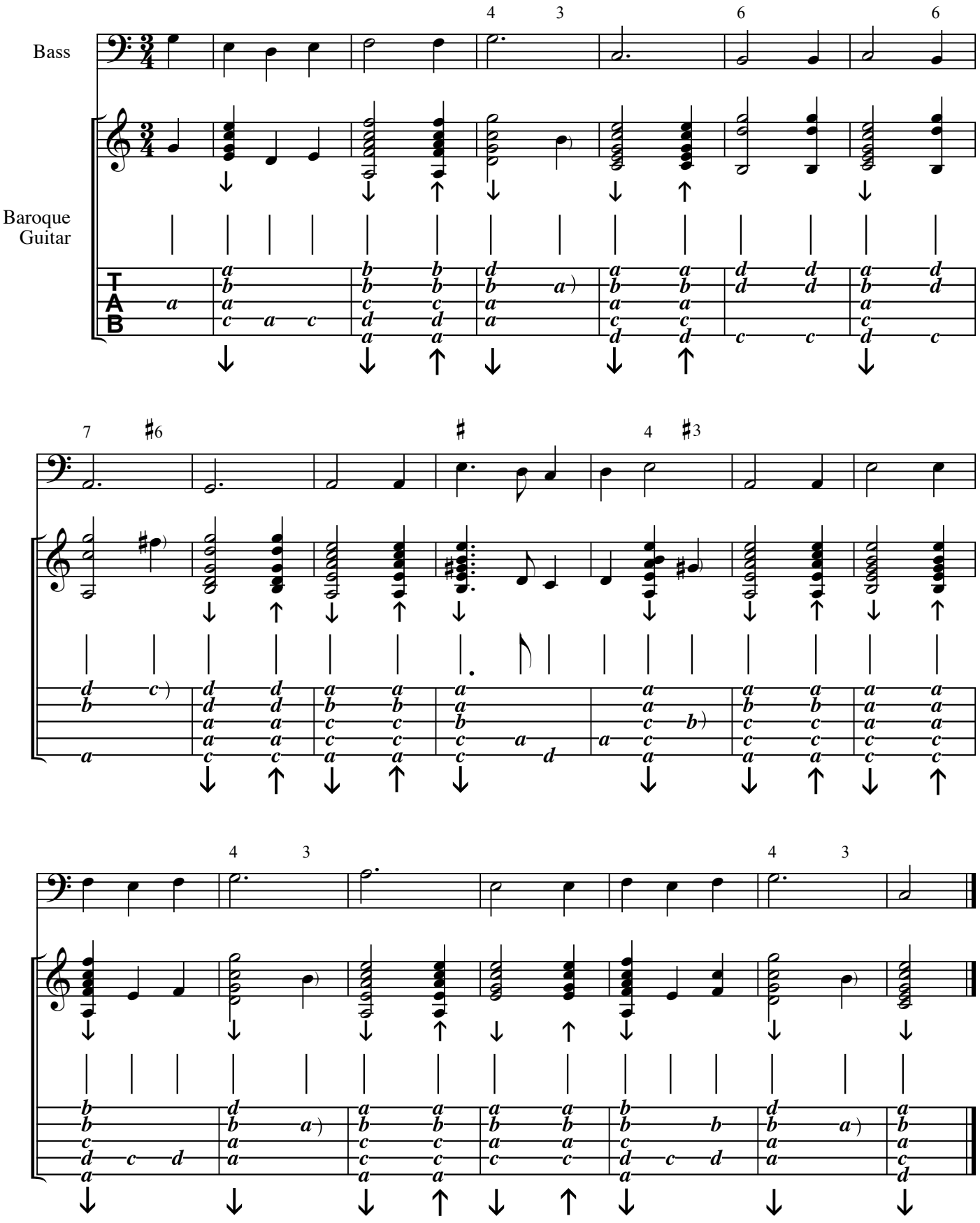
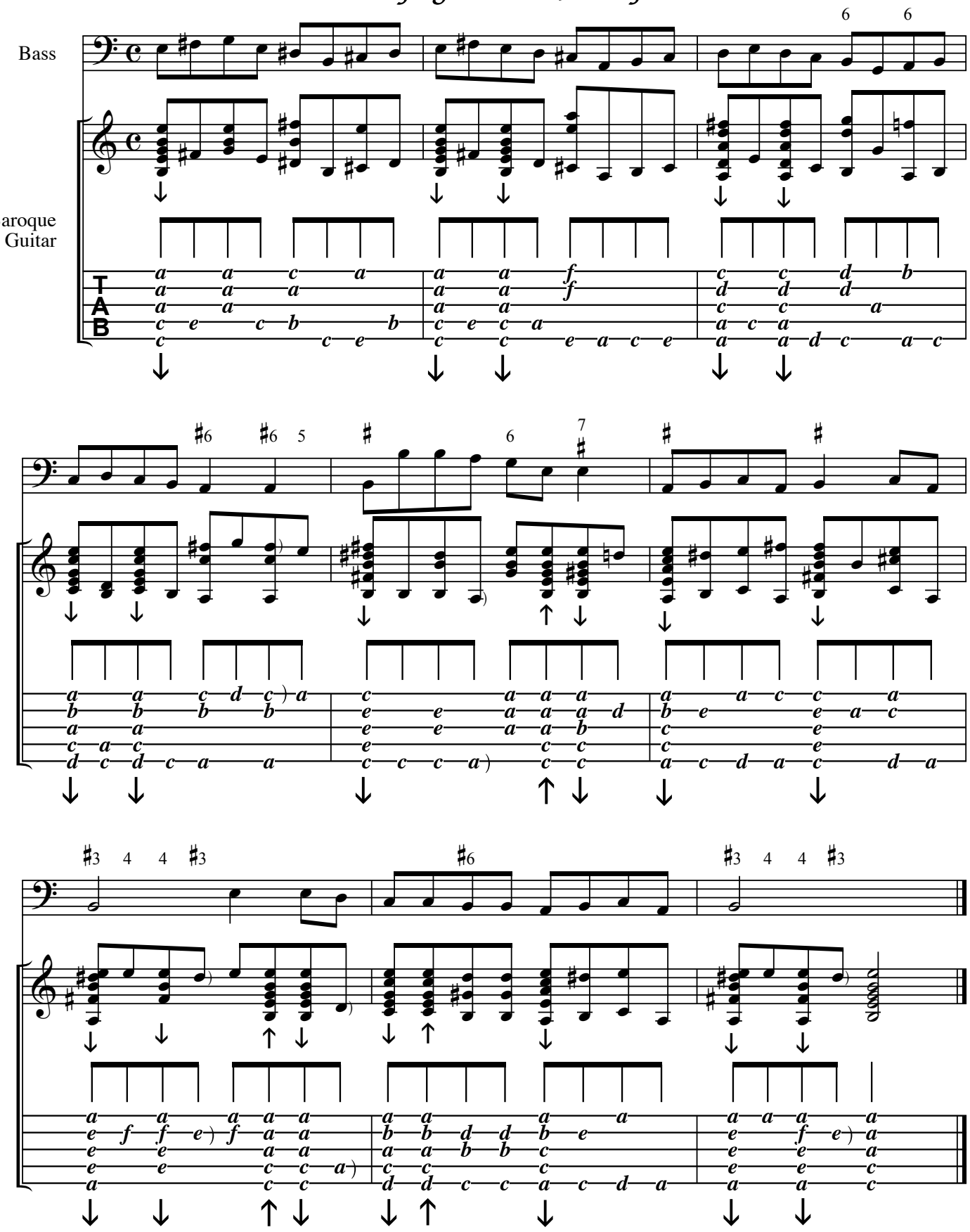
Esempio Facile



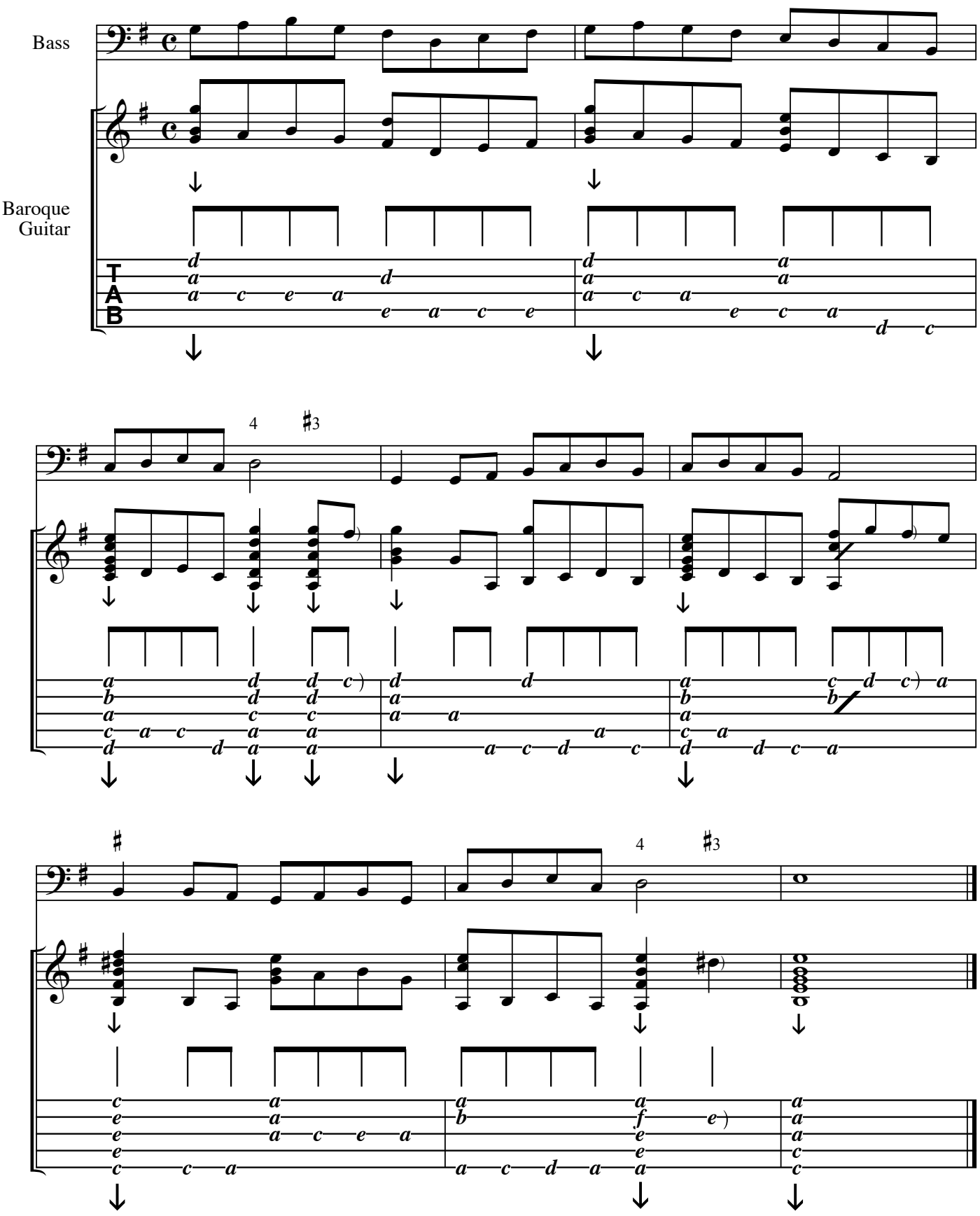
Altro modo facile in tripla.



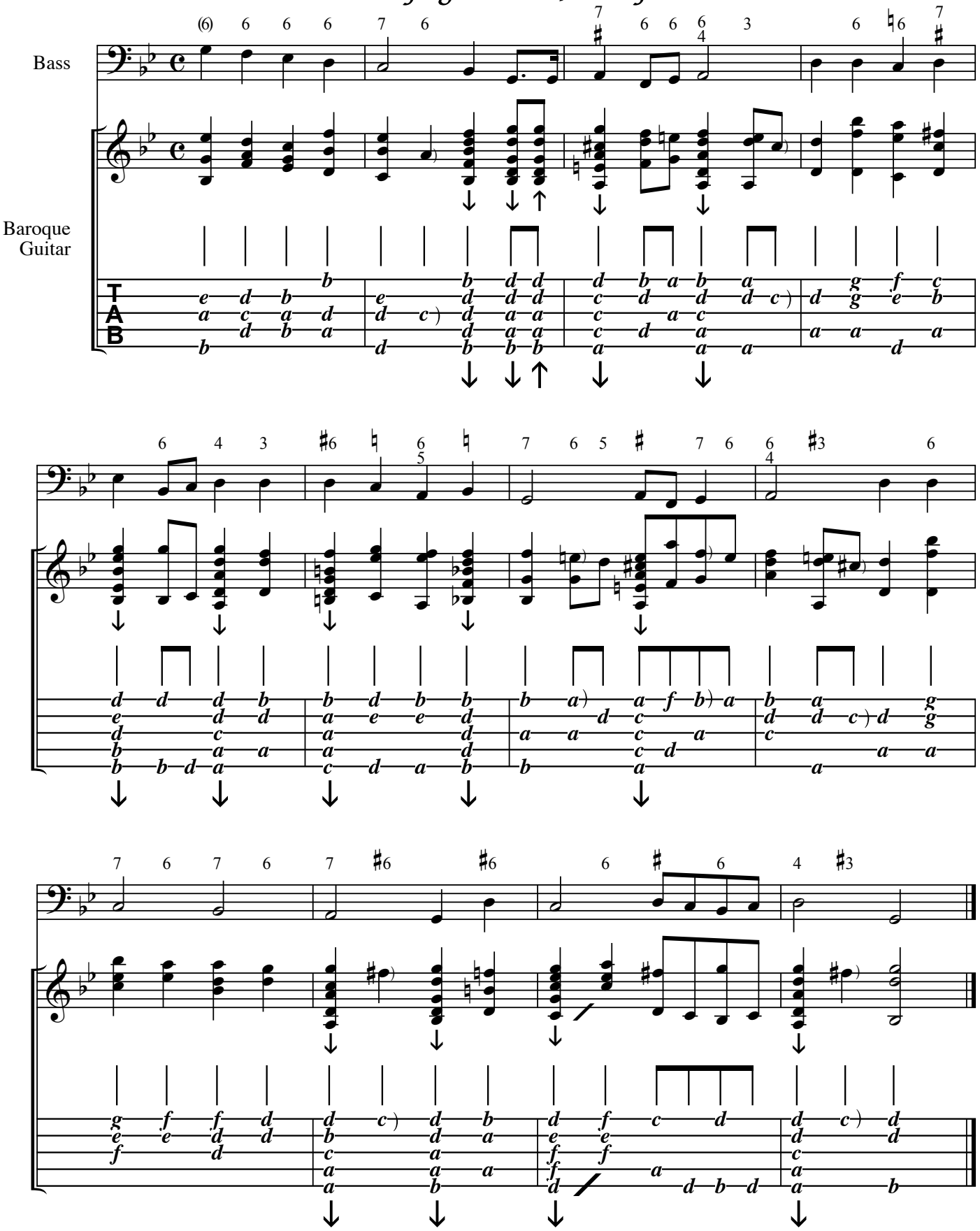
Ordinariamente quando il basso camina di crome à deue dar l'accompagnamento, esempio.



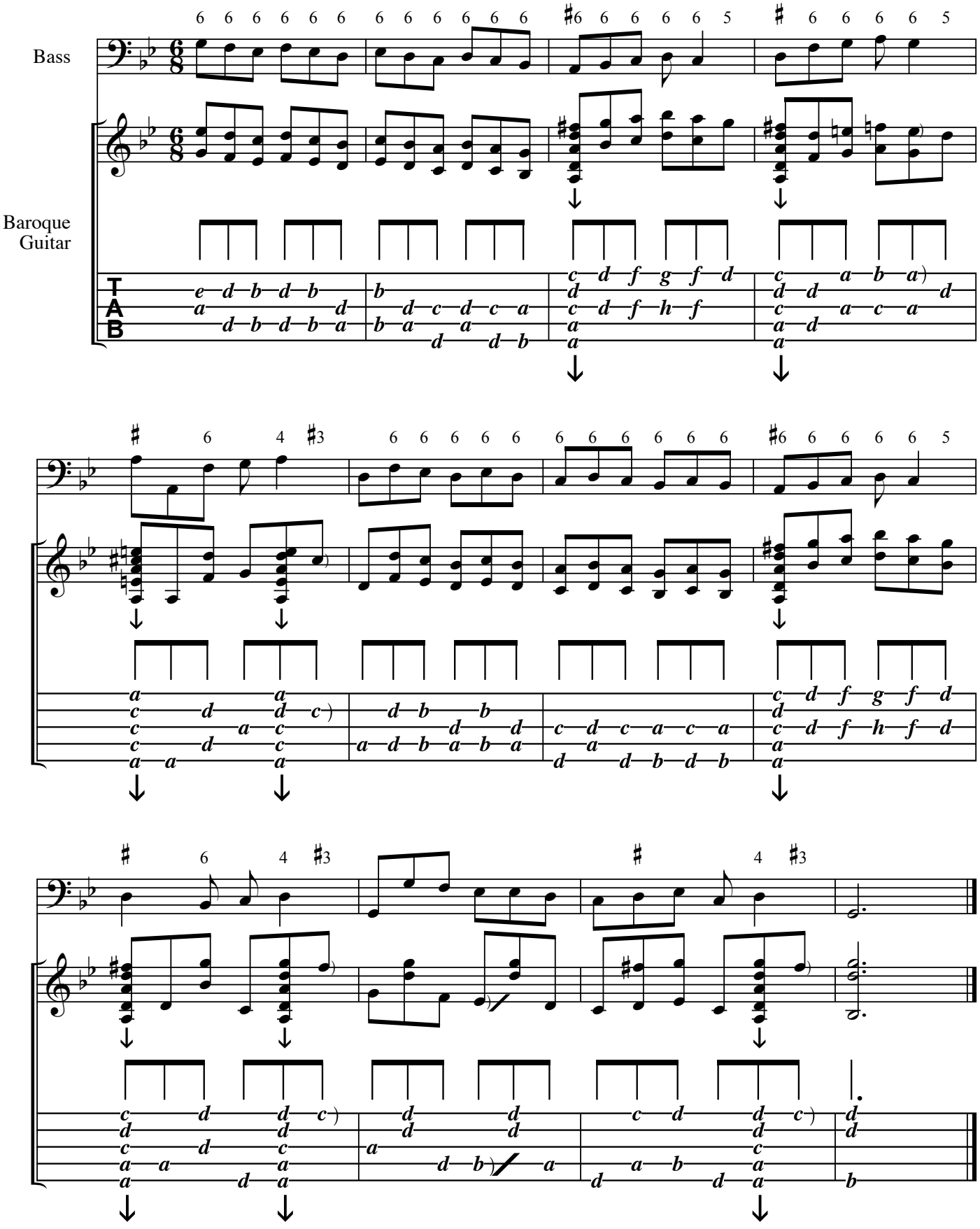
Quando il basso cominasse assai ueloce, no è necessario dar l'accompagnamento tanto souante ma solo all prima delle quattro.



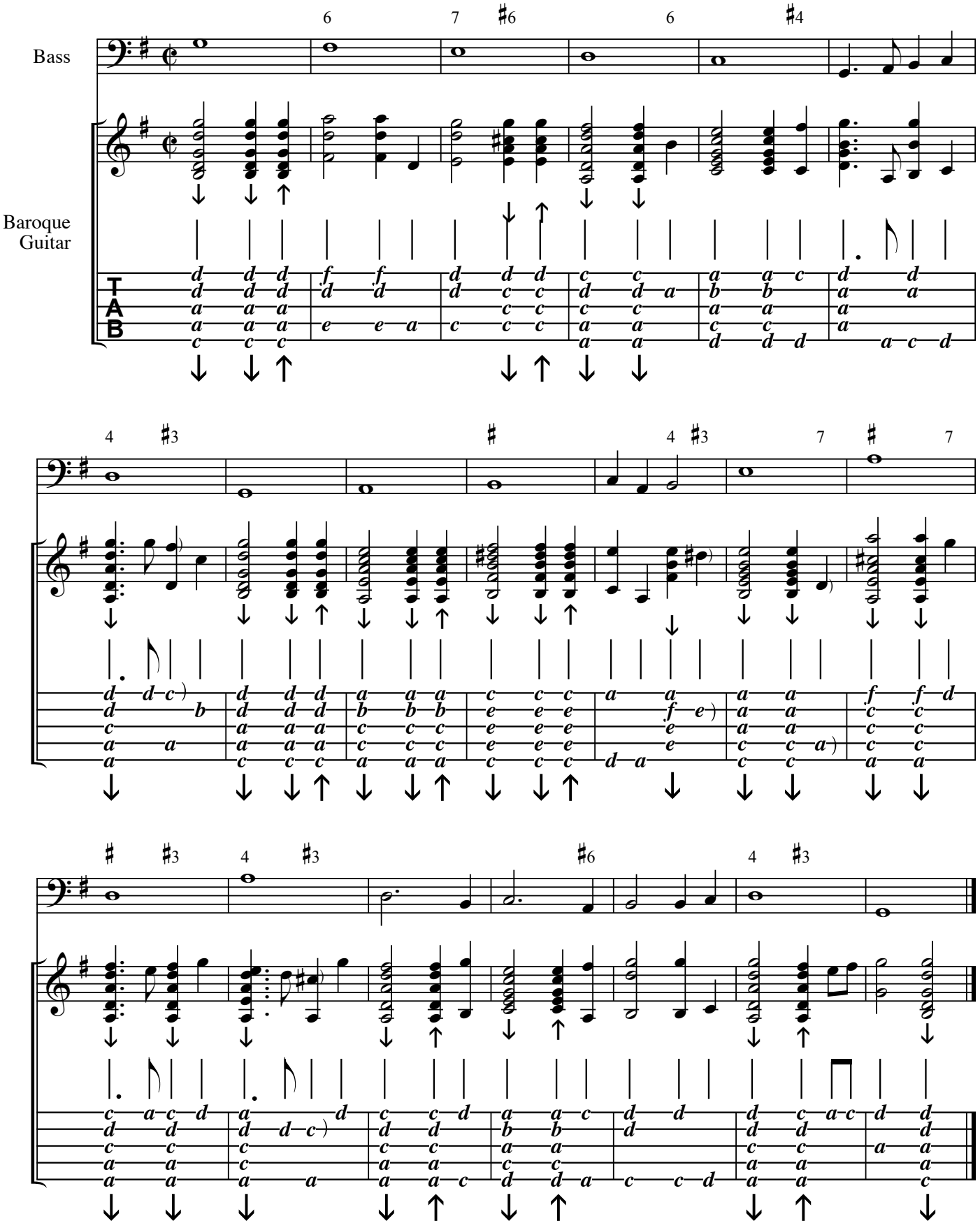
Le seste che cqamínano più adagio, è necessario darci tutti di accompagnamenti, Esempio.



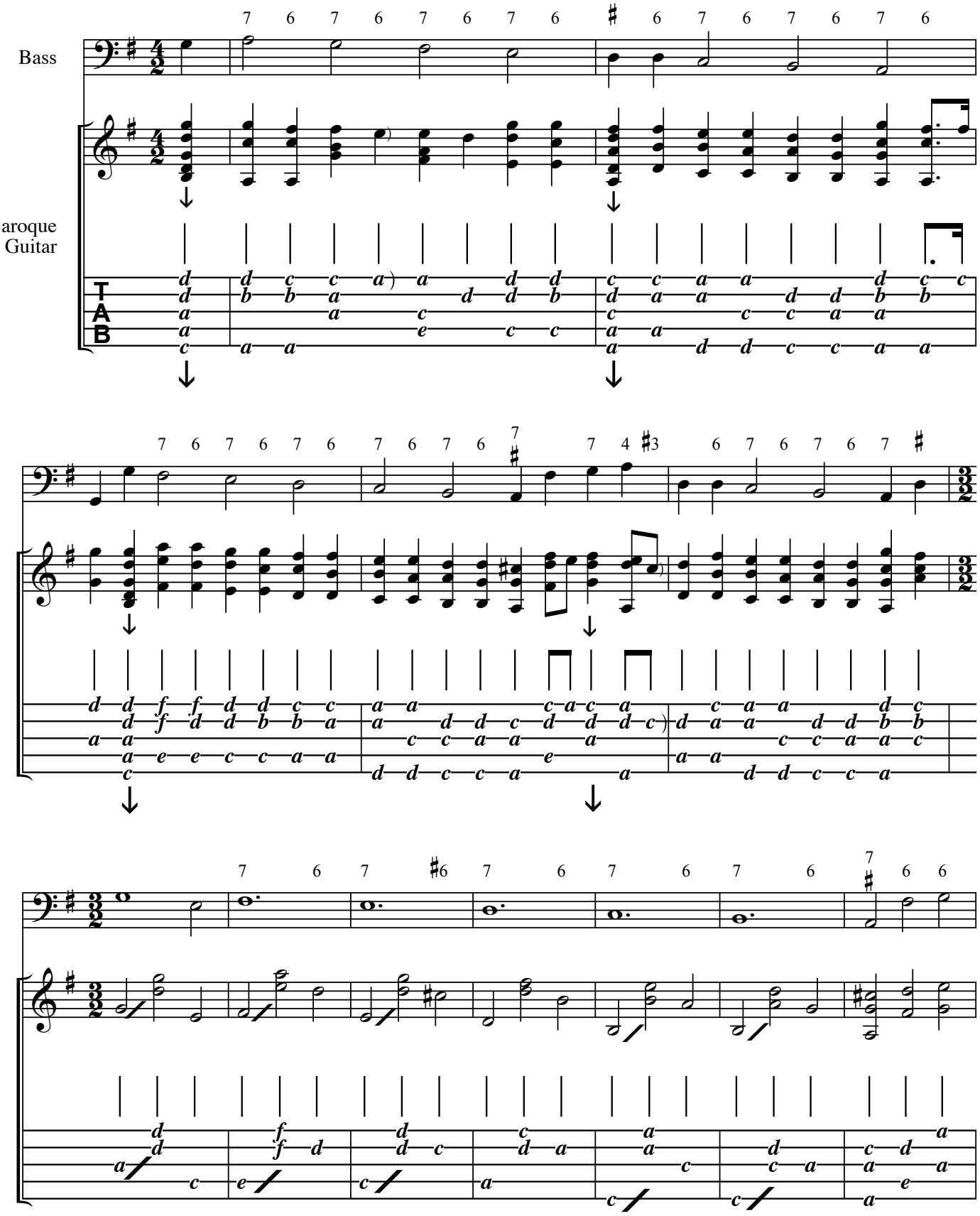
Caminar di feste nelle compositioni sono assai gradeuole all' udito,
Esempio.

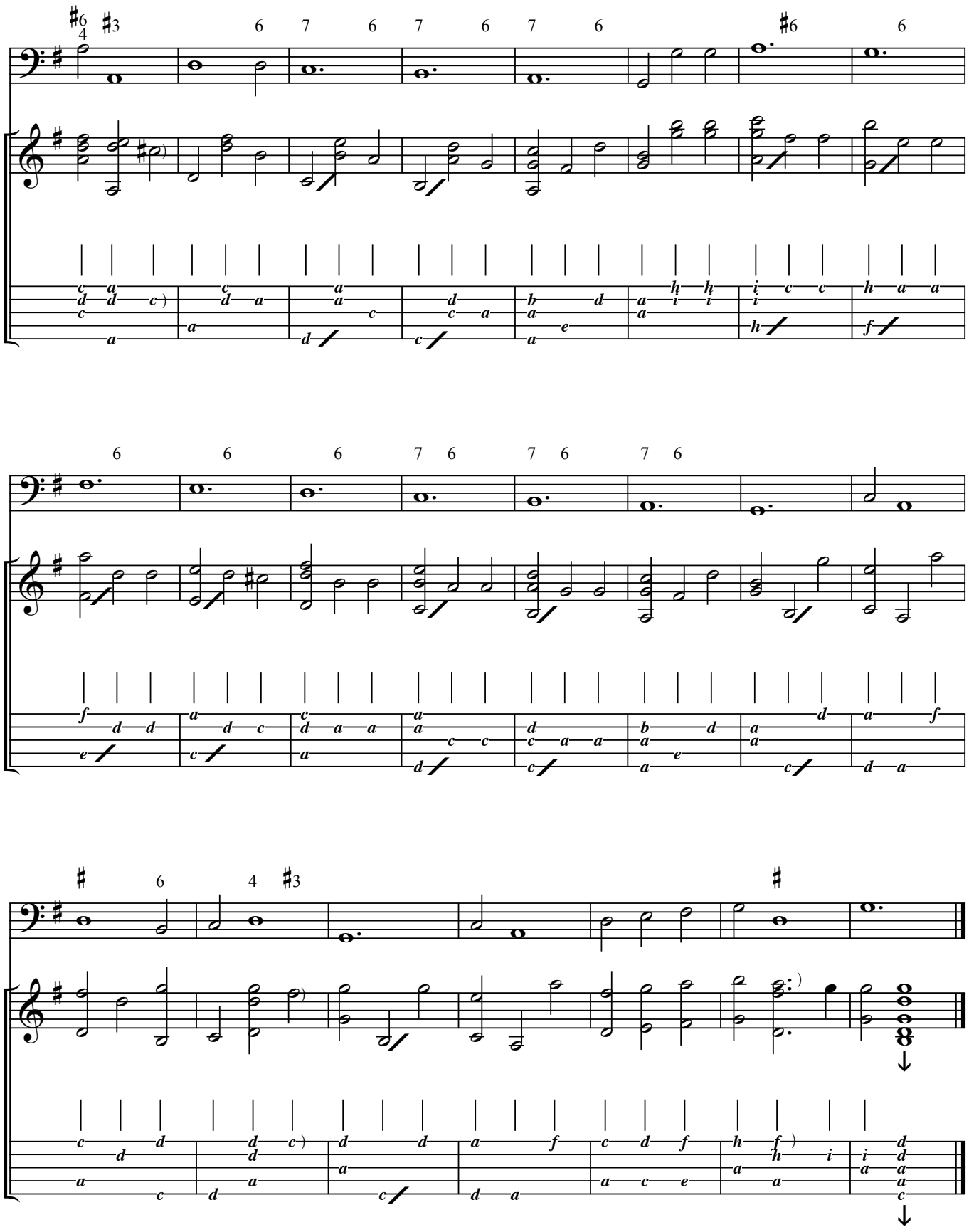


Quando trouate delle note d'una battuta l'una quanti colpi douete dare.
Esempio.



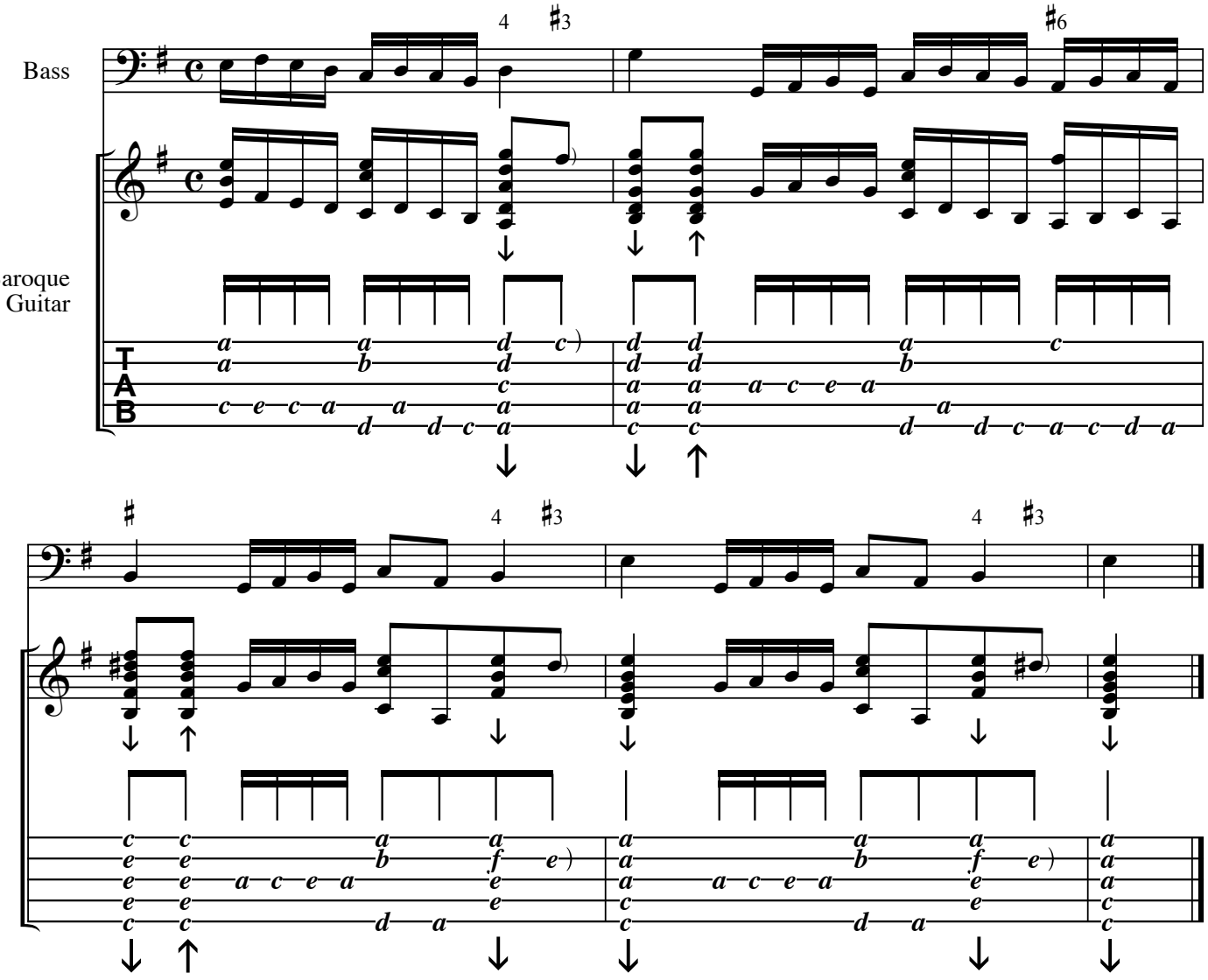
Molte settime, è seste un dopo l'altro, sono assaie gradeuole all' udito.



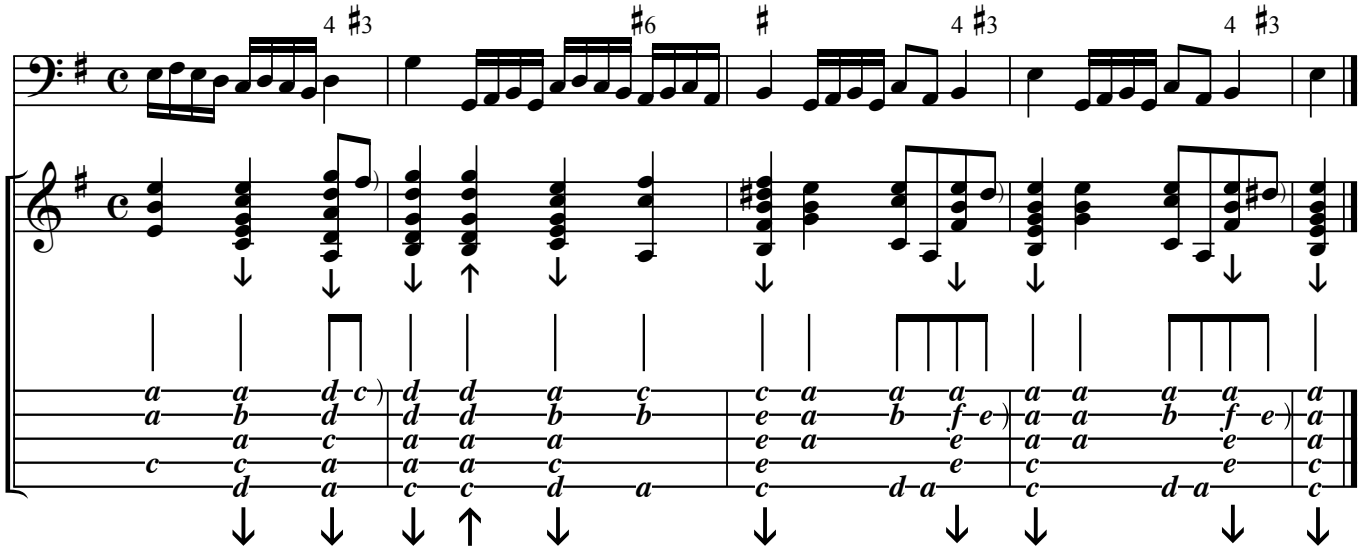


Nicola Matteis—The False Consonances of Music, page 37-38

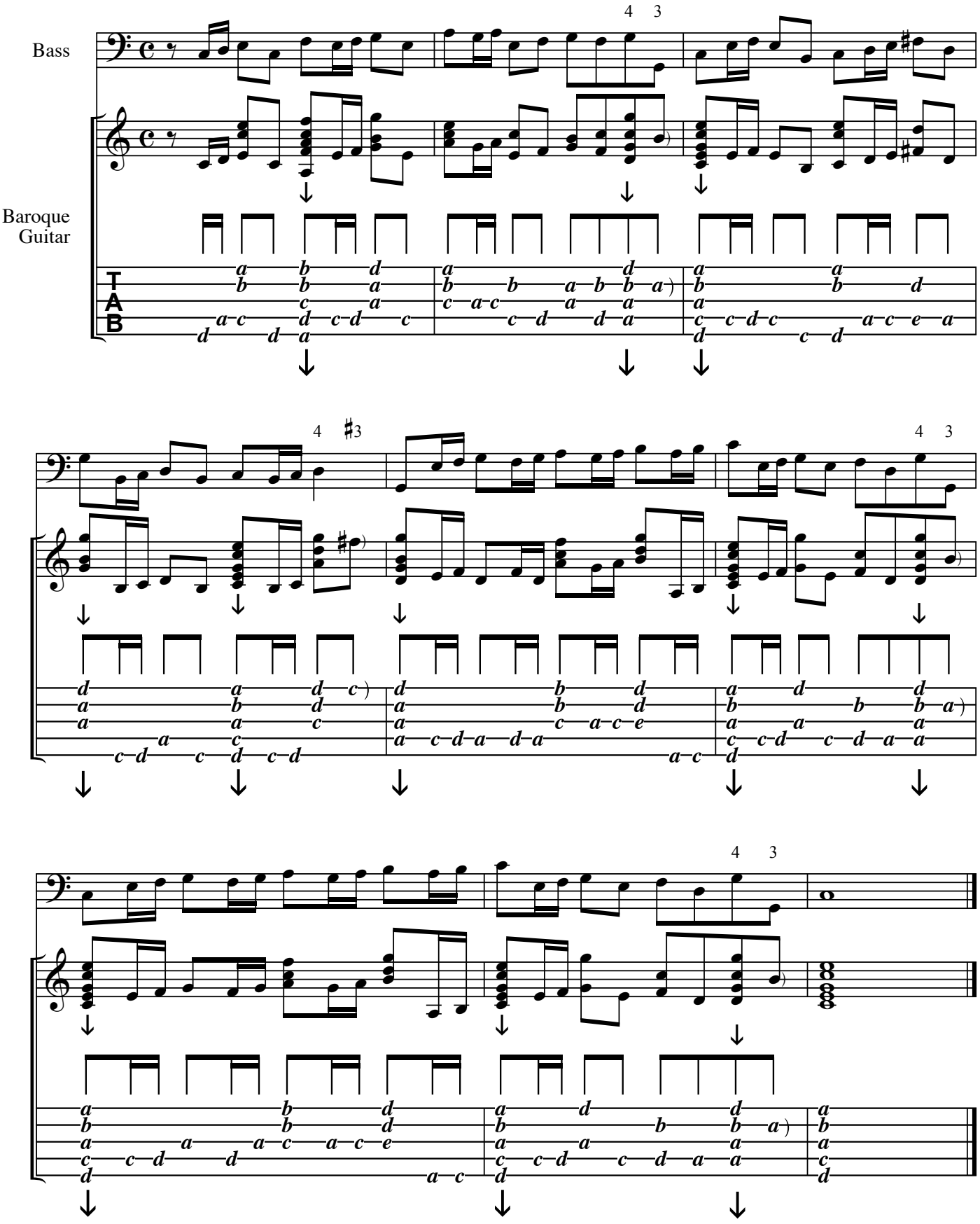
Le semicrome come uadino toccate, esempio

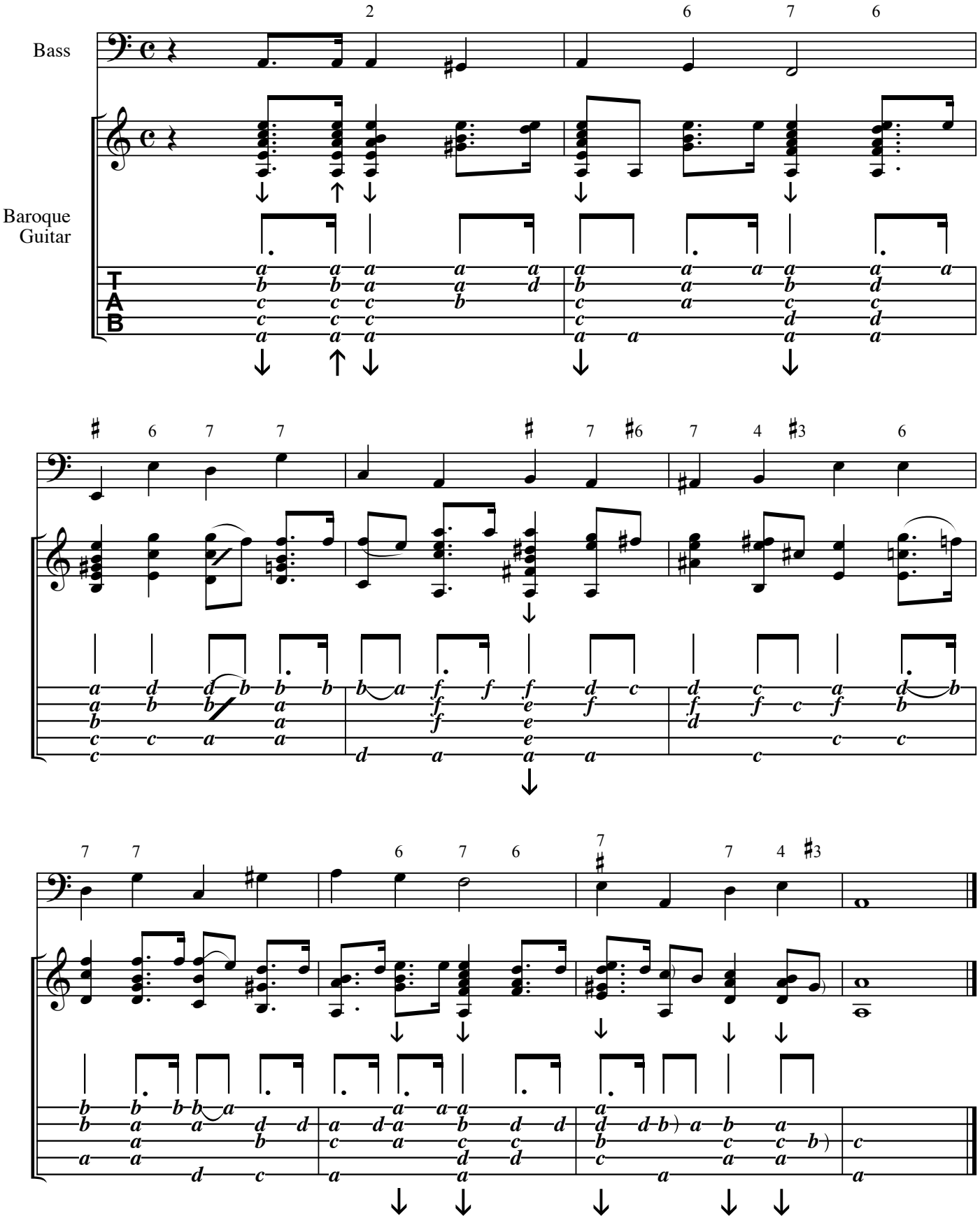


Se andassero tanto presto, che la mano non potesse arriuare all' ora si deue toccar la prima della quattro cosi.



Quando il basso camina di questa maniera in che luoco si deue dar l'accompagnamento, Esempio.




Bass
Baroque Guitar
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A
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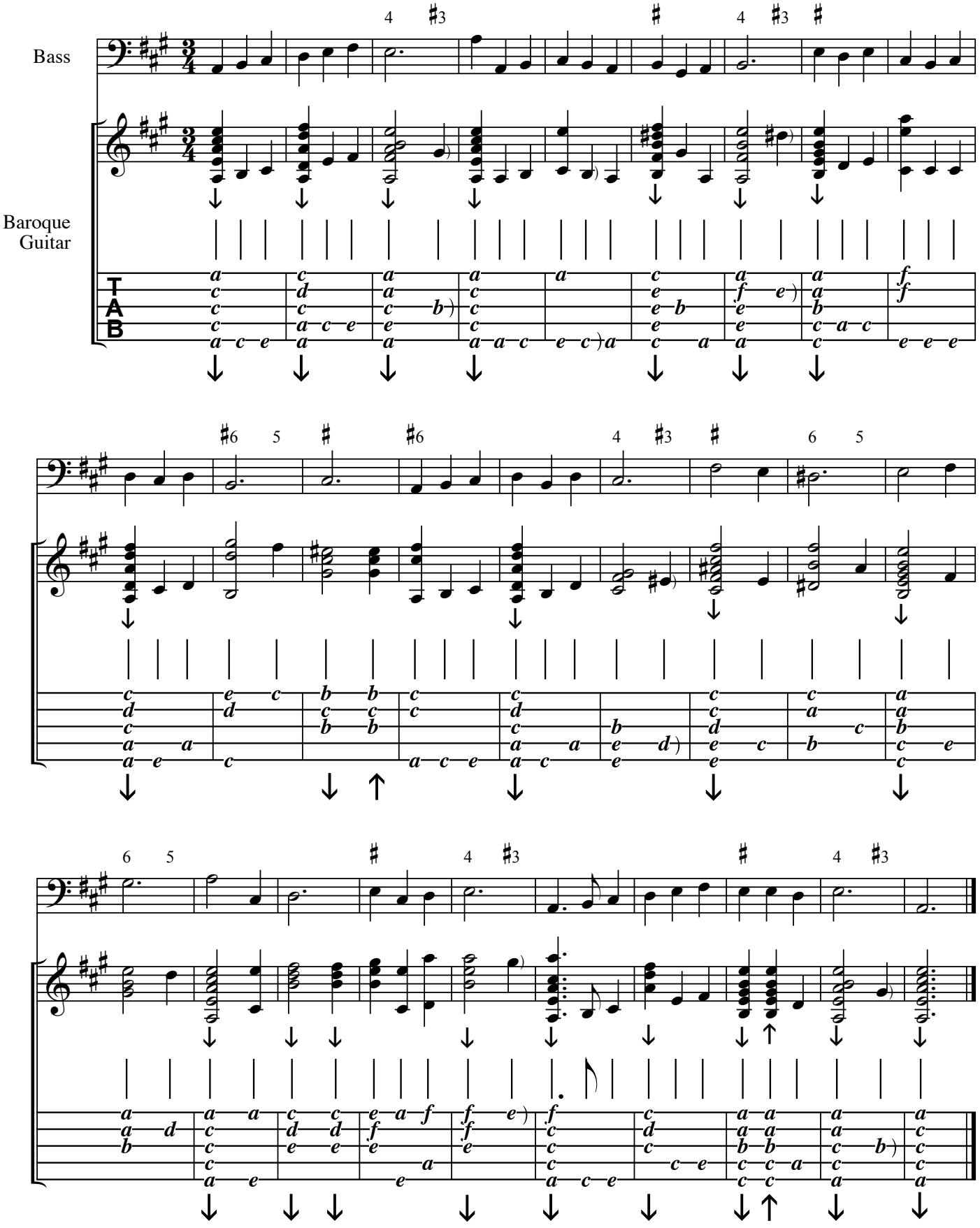
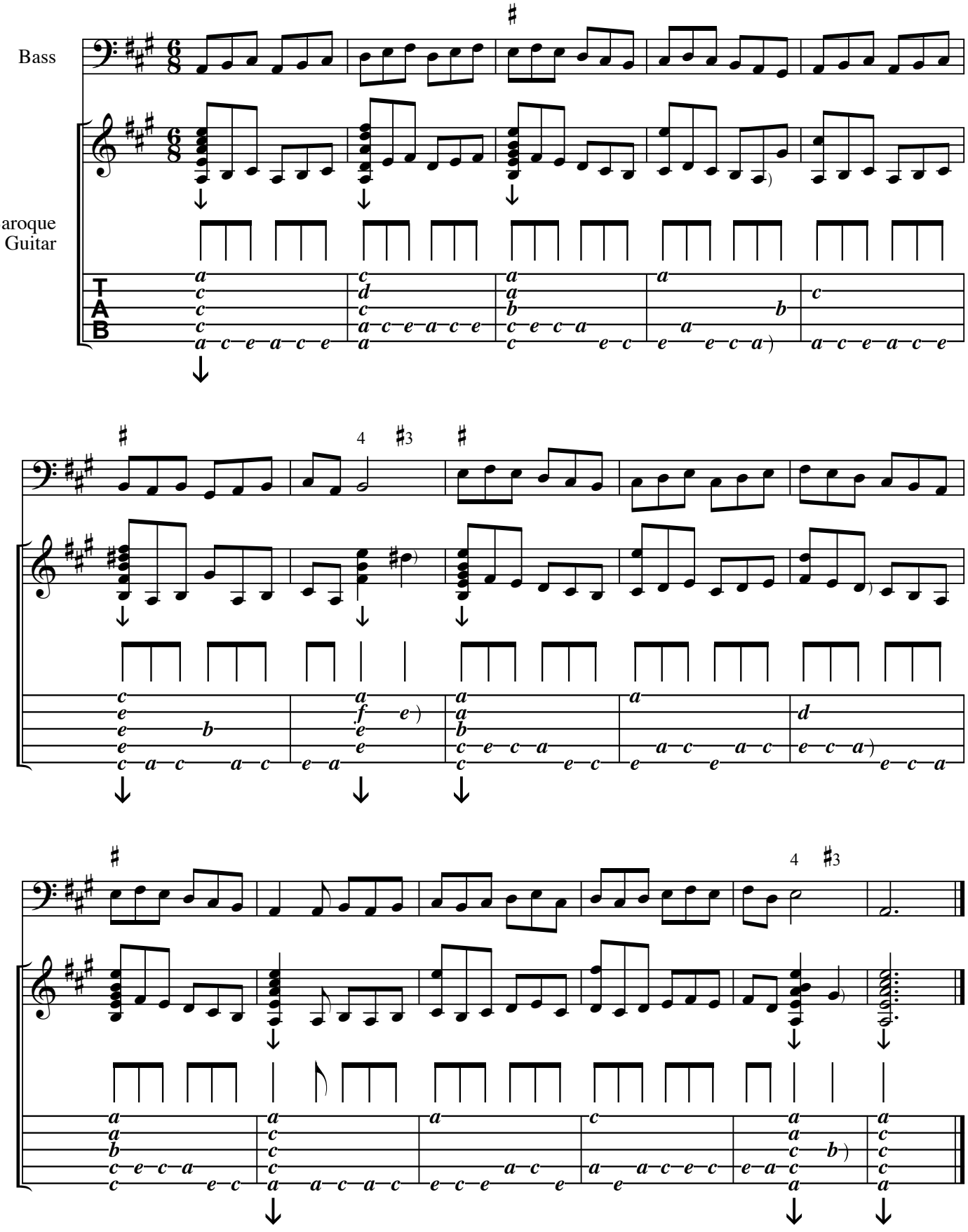
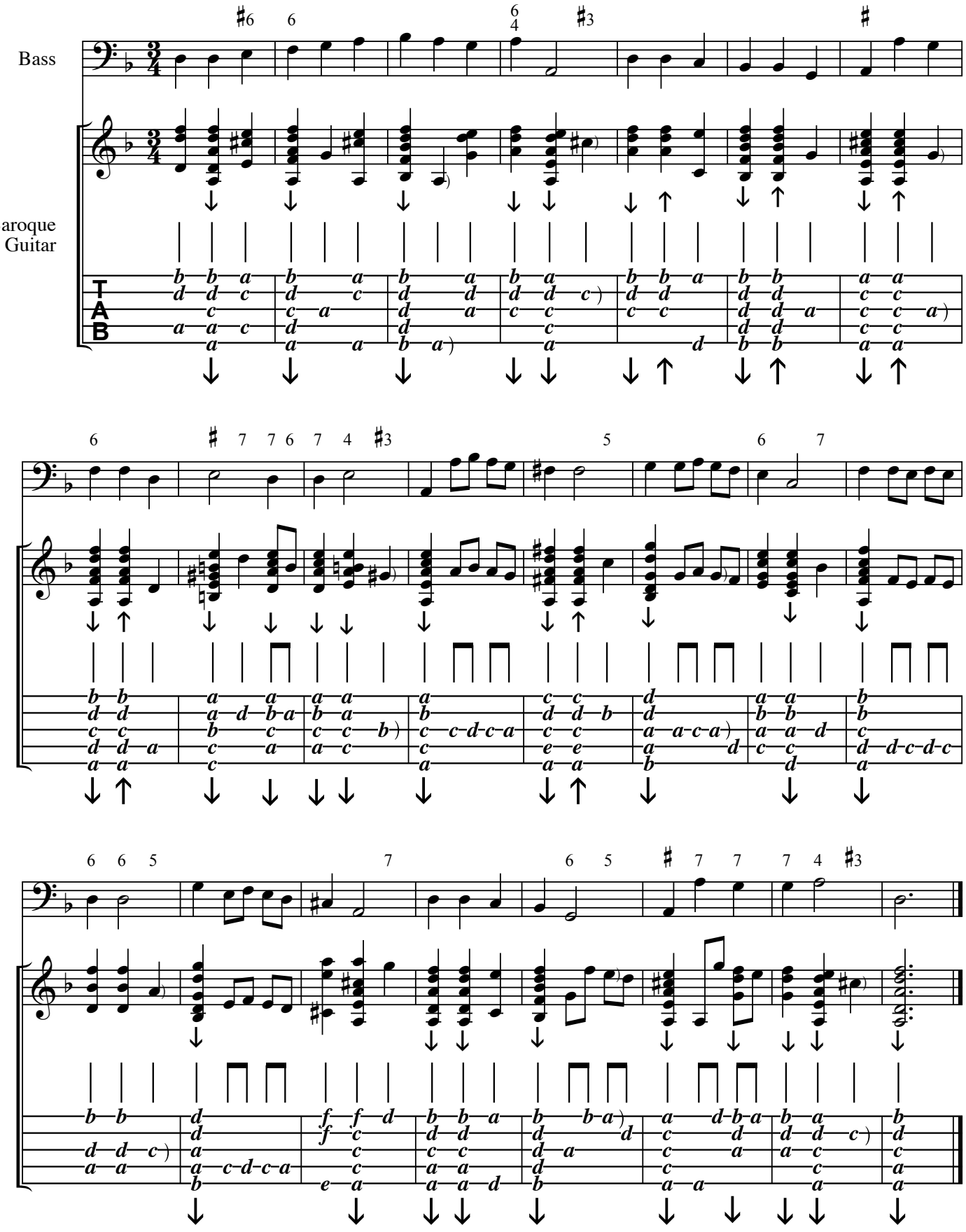
Quando il basso camina còsi, in che luoco uadi dato l'accompagnamento, esempio.



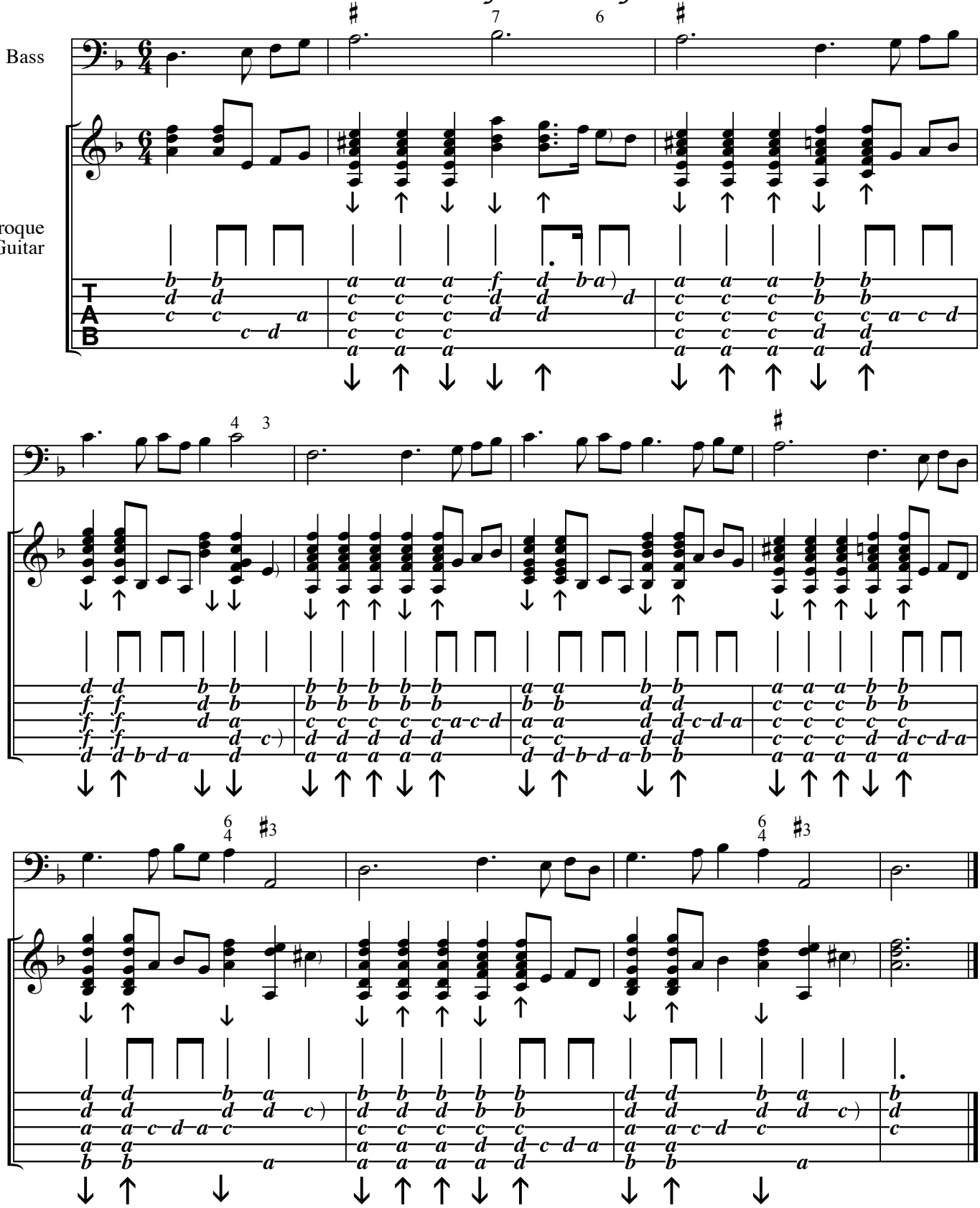
Quando il basso camina ueloce, in che luoco uadi data l'accompagnamento, esempio.



Per accompagnar la tripla con buona maniera, Esempio.

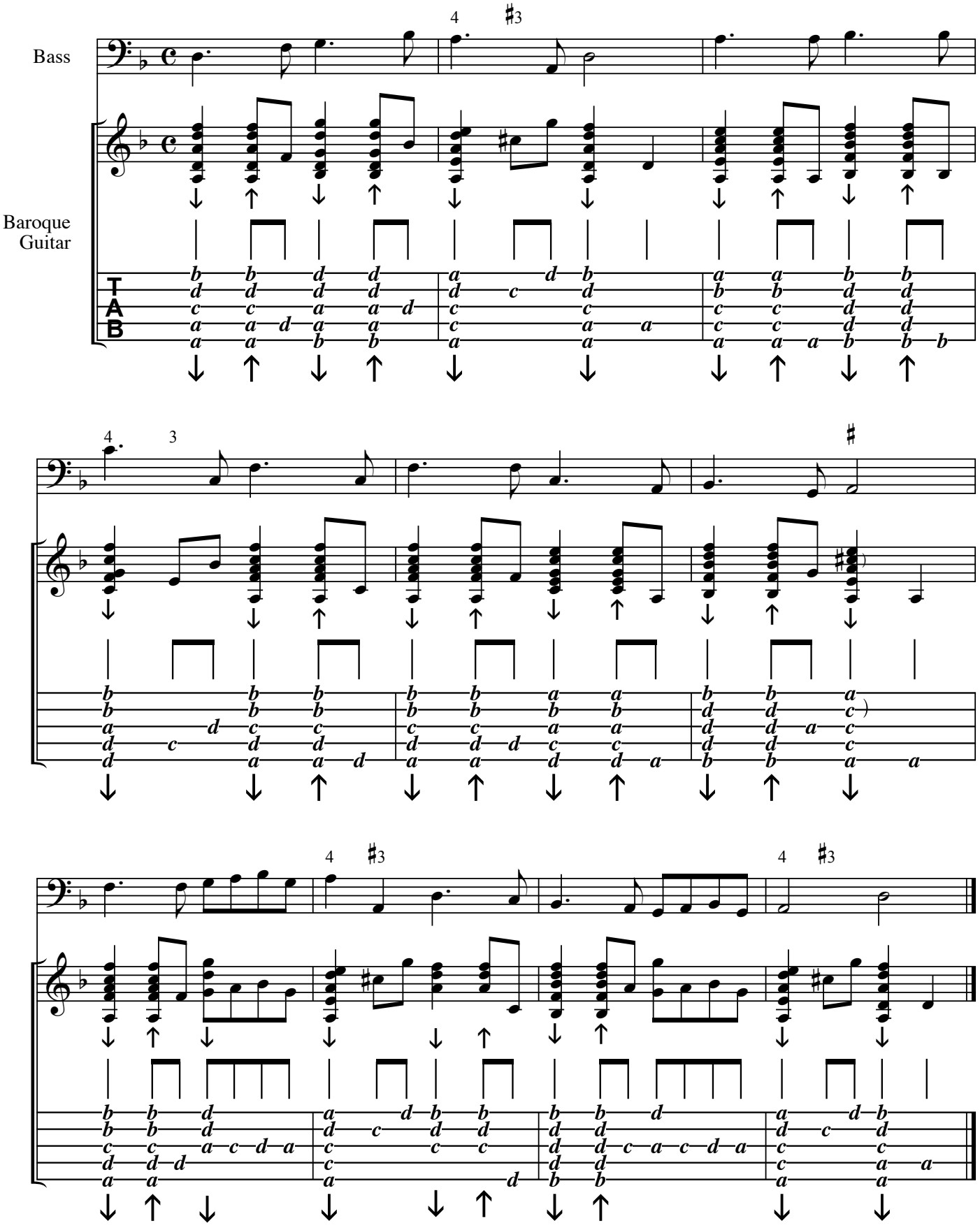


Quando si troua nella tripla una nota, còn un punto in questa forma, come si deue fare Esempio.

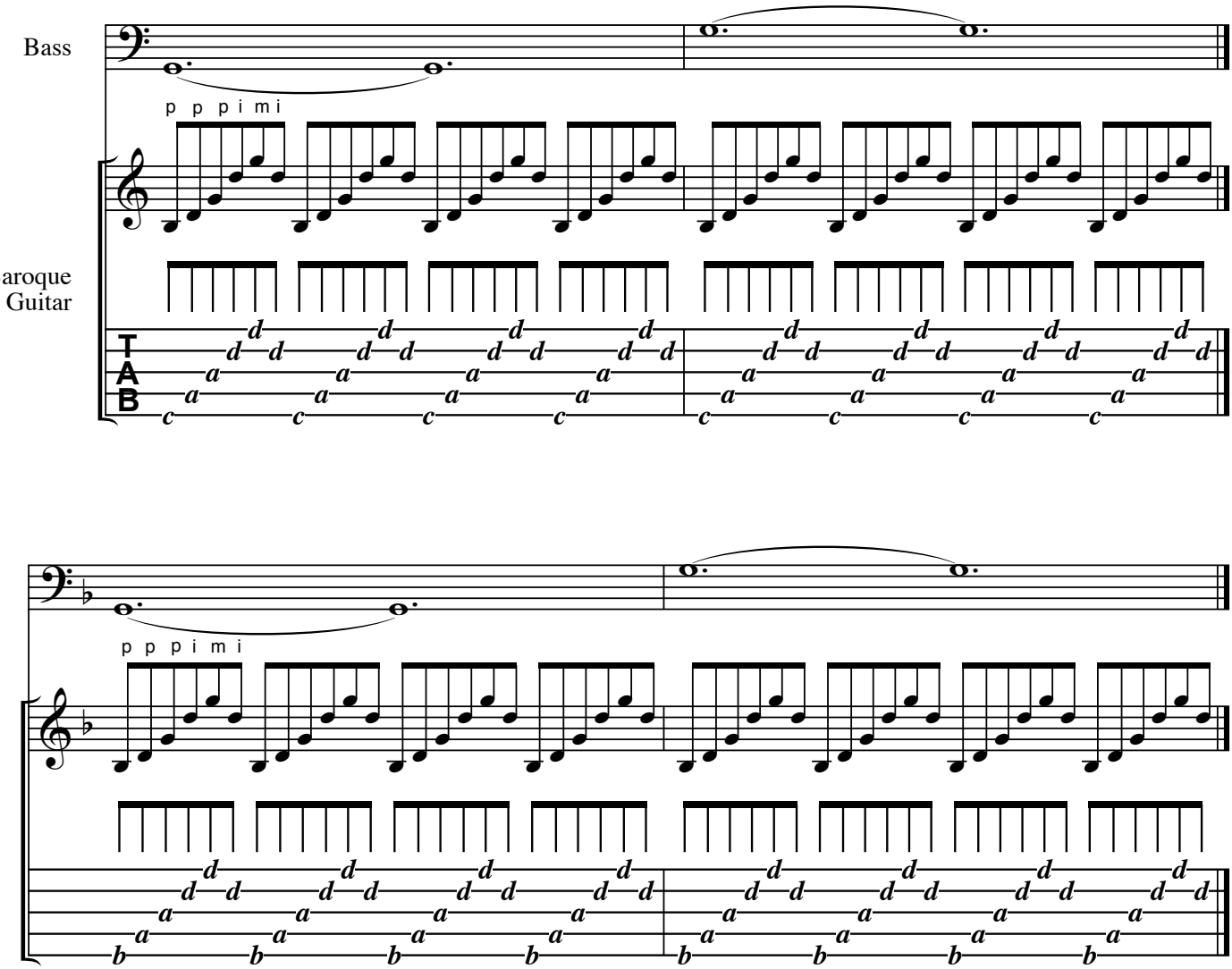


si d'a quella raschiata al punto quando il basso un adagio; che se andasse presto è necessario

In tempo binario all nota, con il punto, è bene dalle uolta à darci una battería, cosi quando pero uadi adagio.



When you meet with long notes ether a measure or two it is very necessary to pinch ye notes as thus



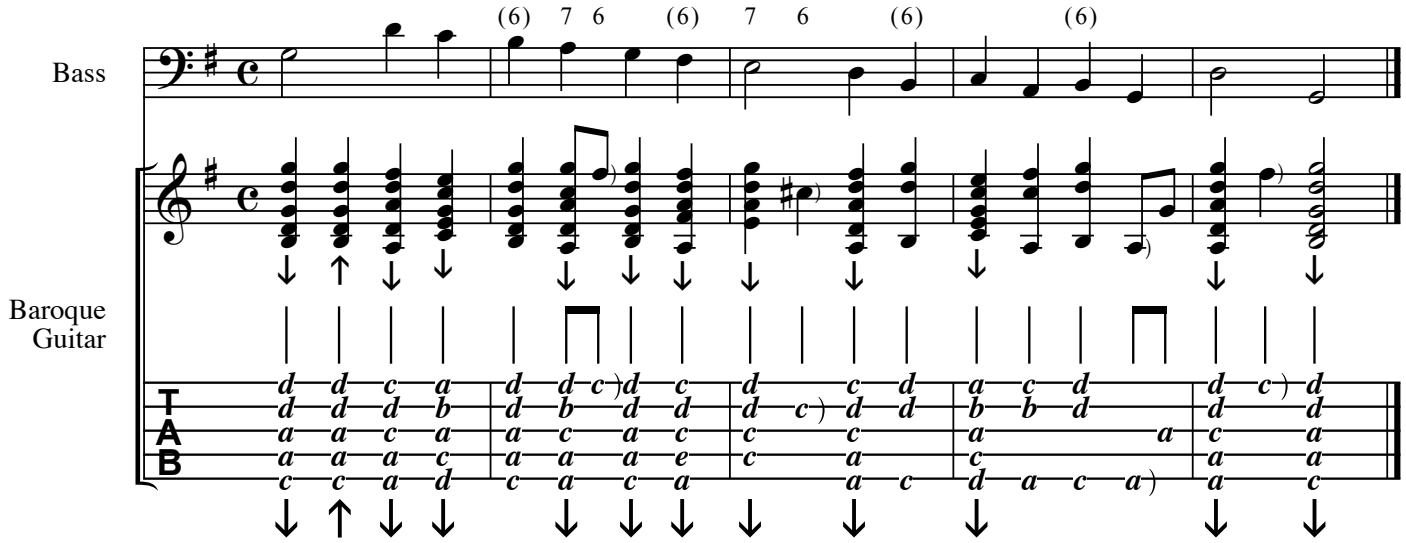
The more quicker and the more clearer you play the better it will sett your tune of and so in all the notes of Musick you may stop any note you please with your left hand the right pinching the said strings...

The first second and third strings must be pincht with your Thum and the fourth with your fore finger and the fifth with your middle finger pinching out the full time of your note.

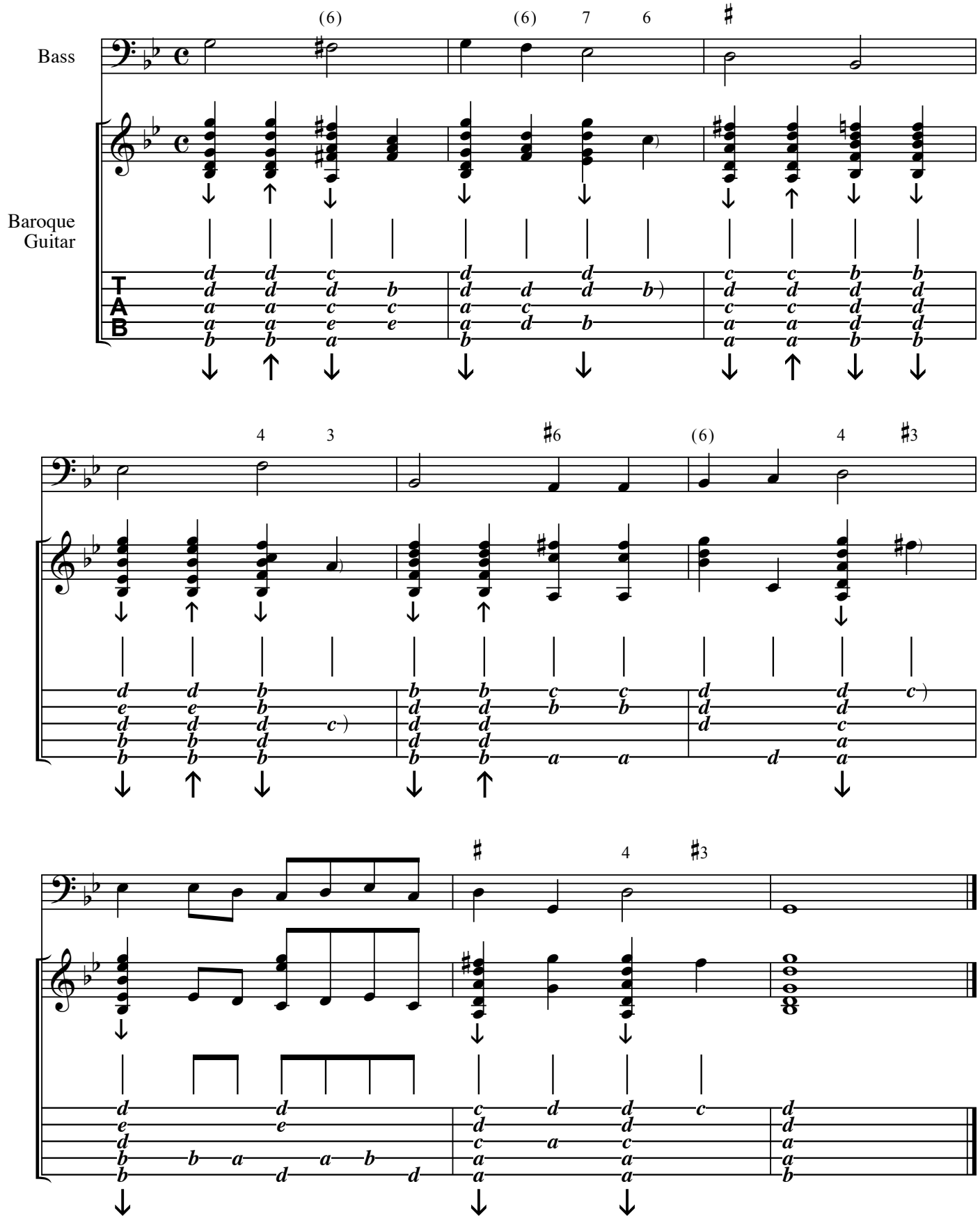
That you may learn easily and perfectly, I have sett down a little example upon euery Key of Musick that you may know in what place the naturall Six ought to be given the aforesaid Sixt being markt with a Star

Here, the "aforesaid Sixt" is actually indicated below by a (6) instead of by a star.

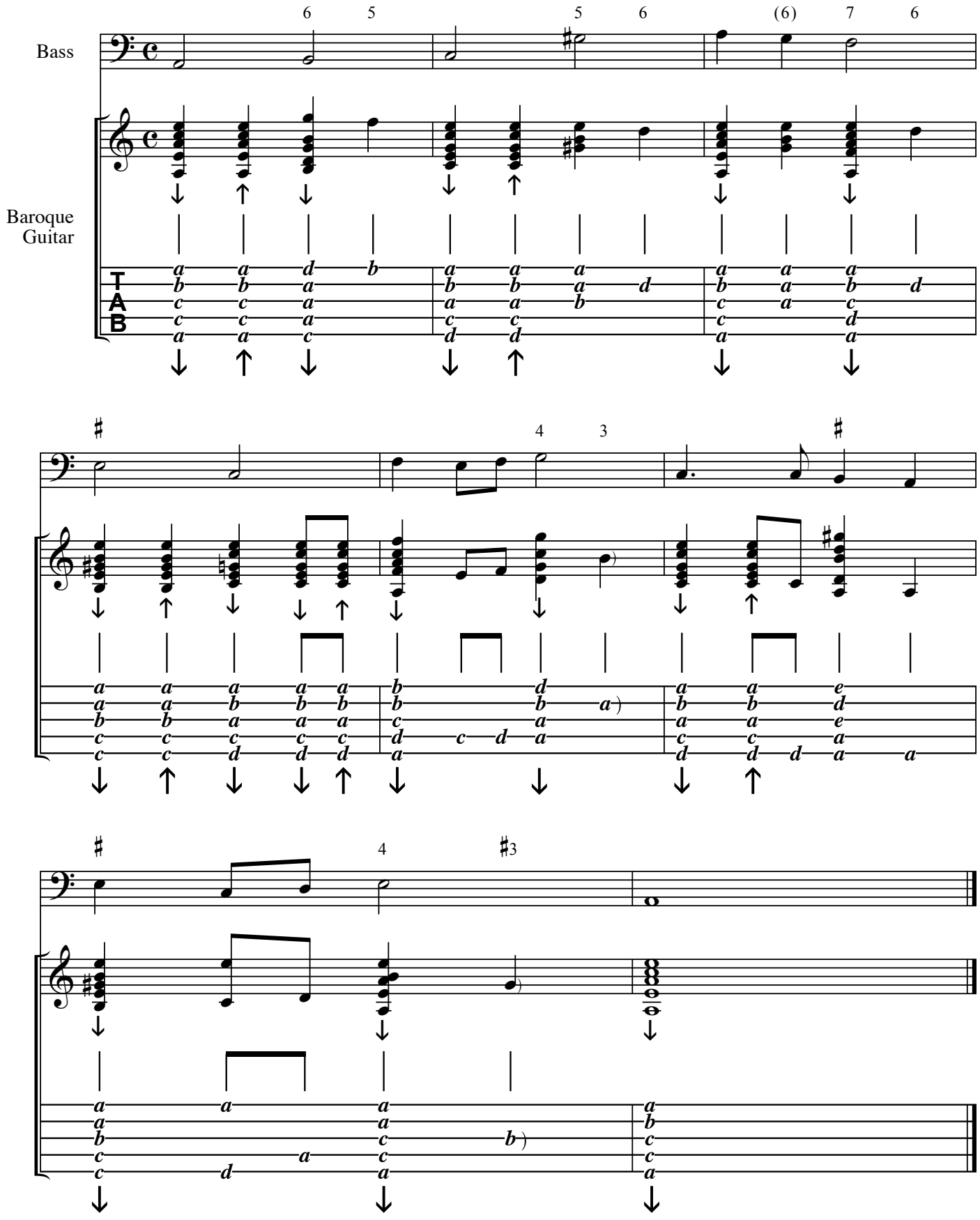
This example is very convenient upon any Instrument to play ye thorough basse in good order



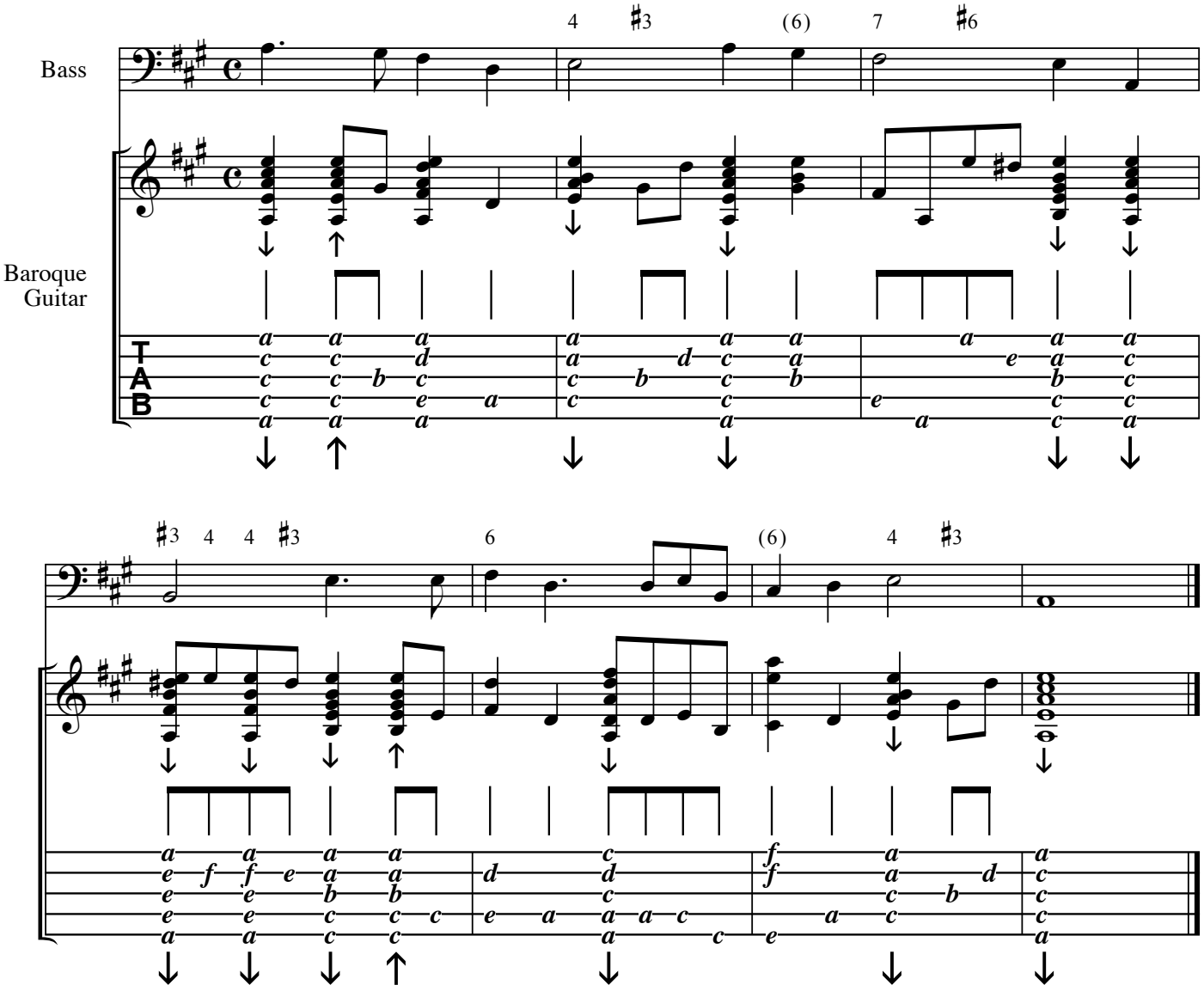
In G.terza minore.



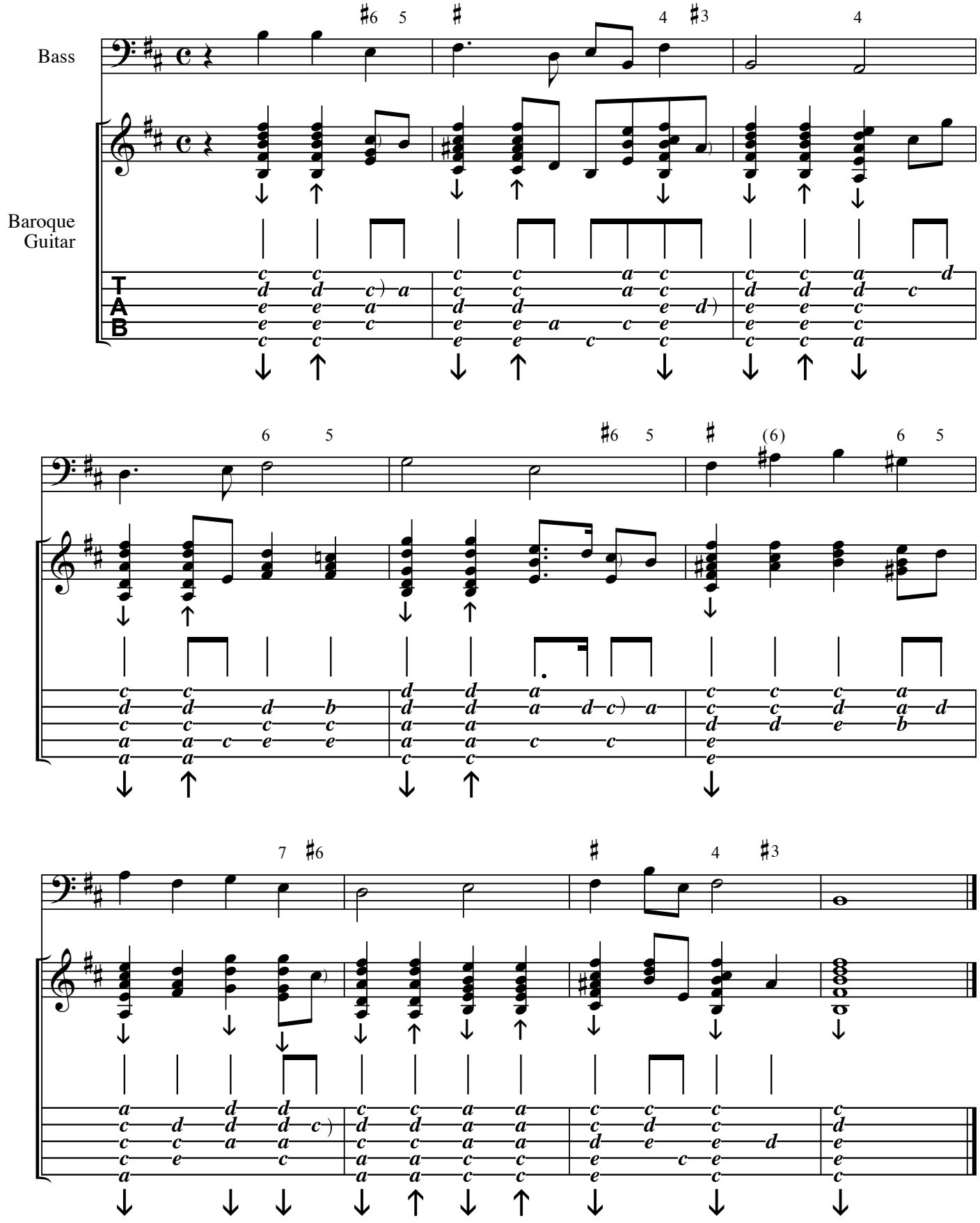
In A.terza minore.



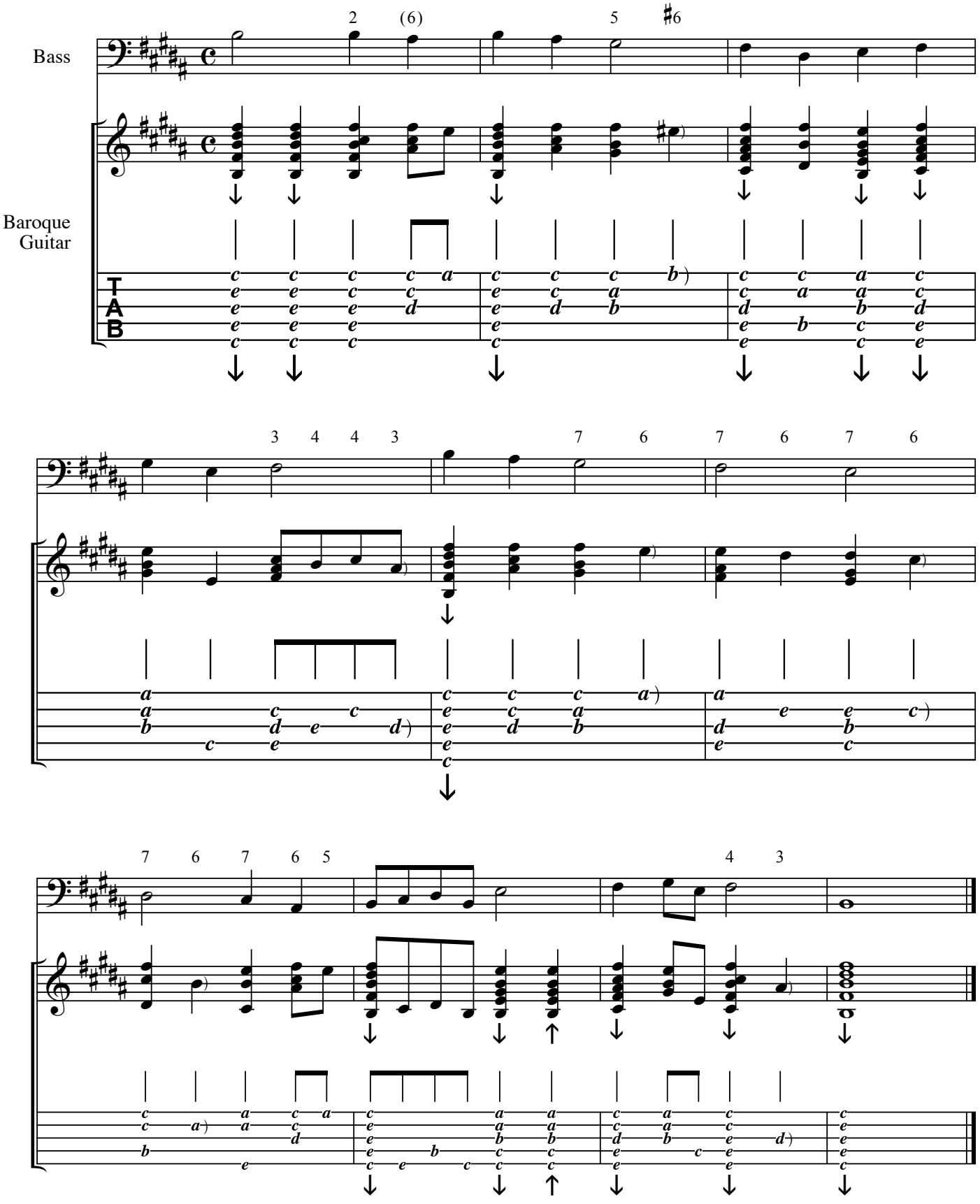
In A.terza maggiore.



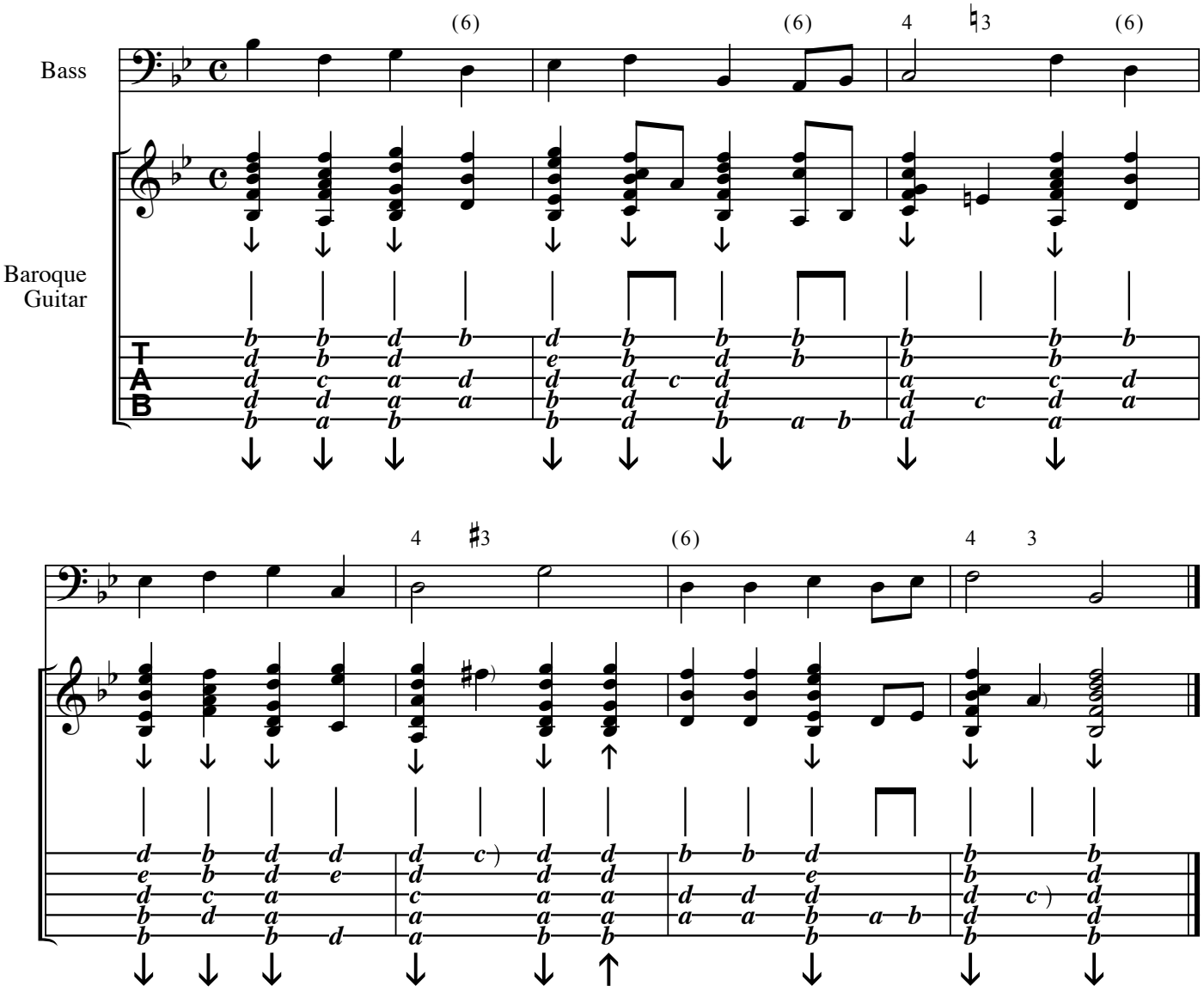
In B.terza minore.



In B.mi terza Maggiore

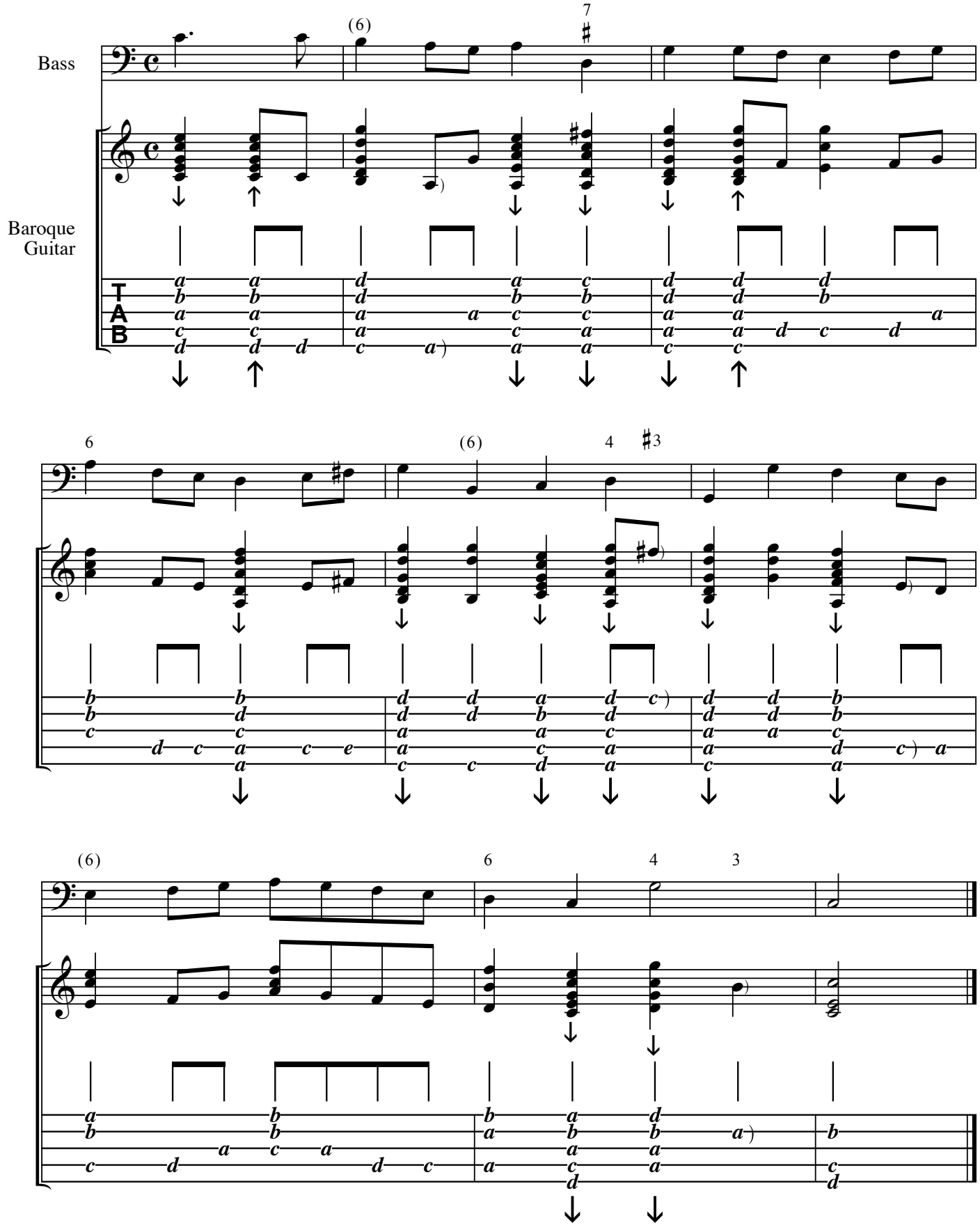


In B.fa terza Maggiore

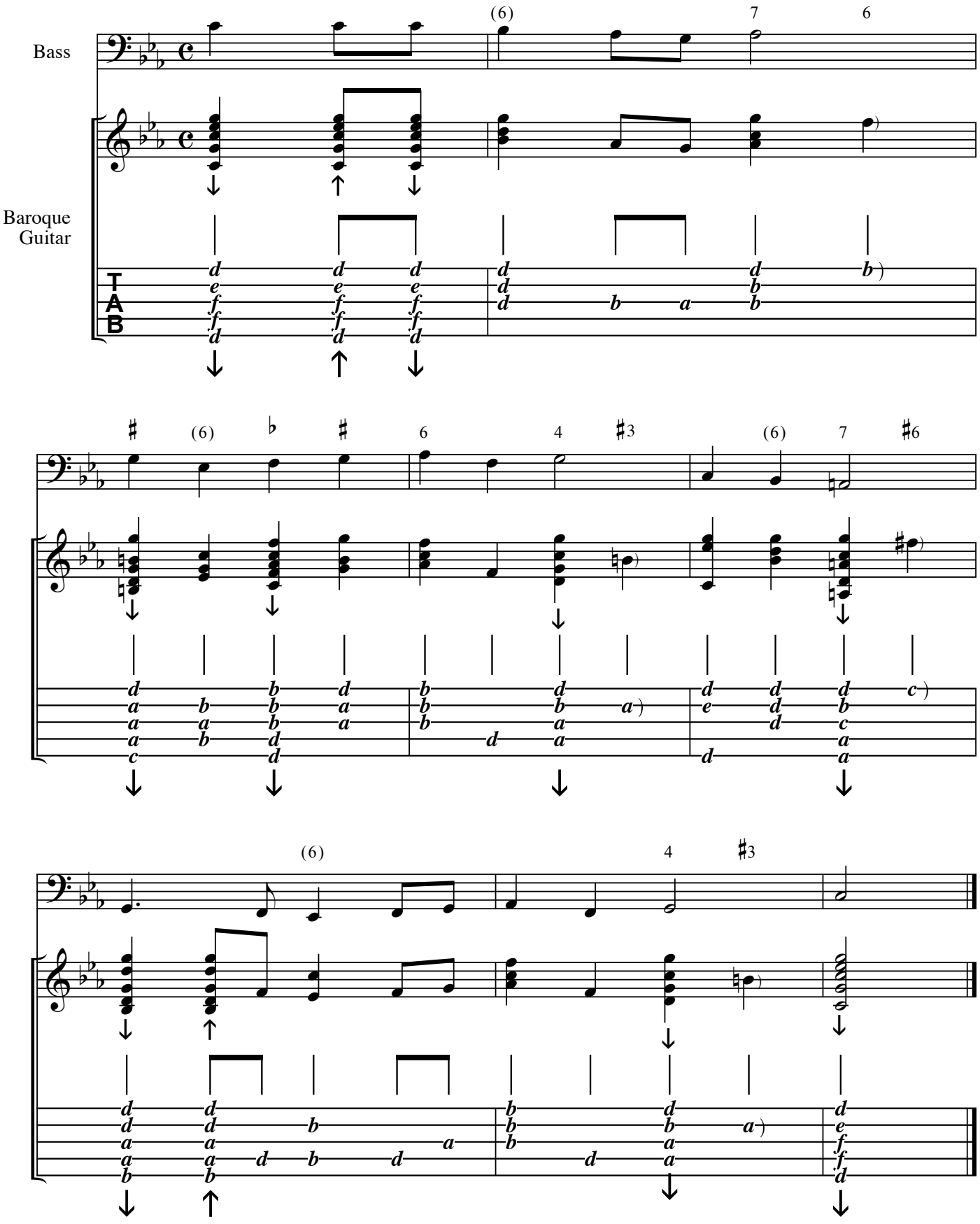


The 2nd note in measure 5 is an F in Matteis book.

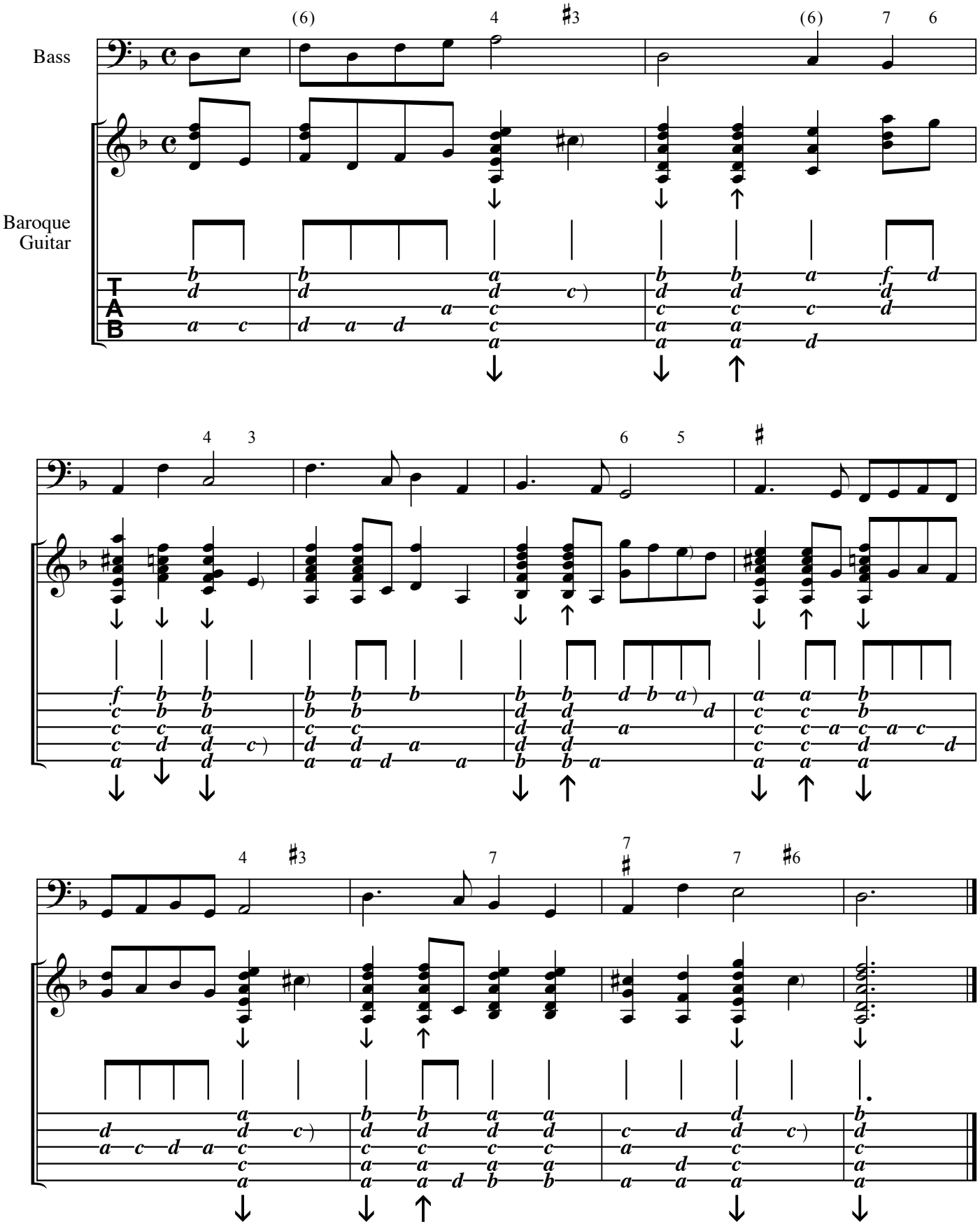
C.solfaut, terza Maggiore.



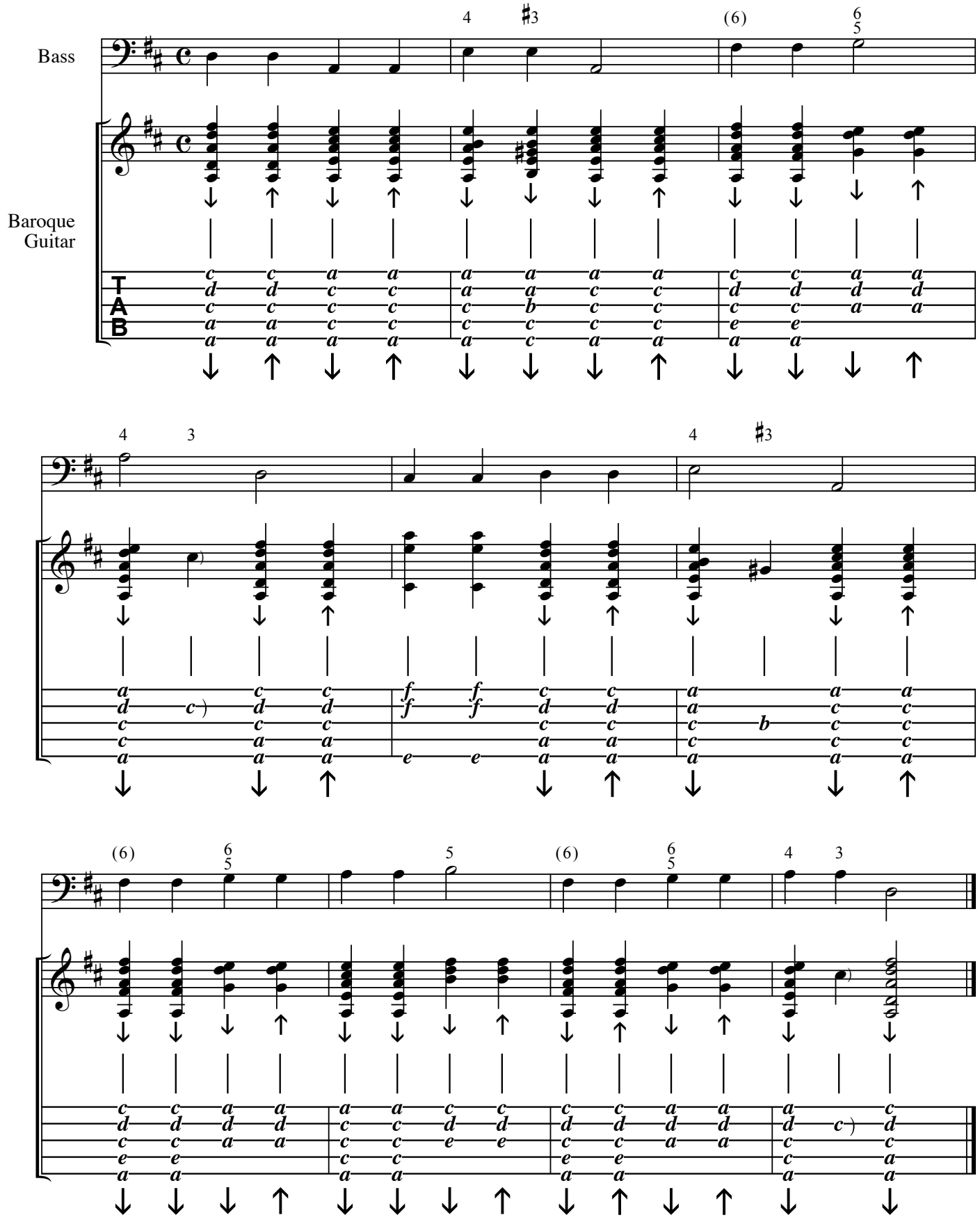
C.terza minore.



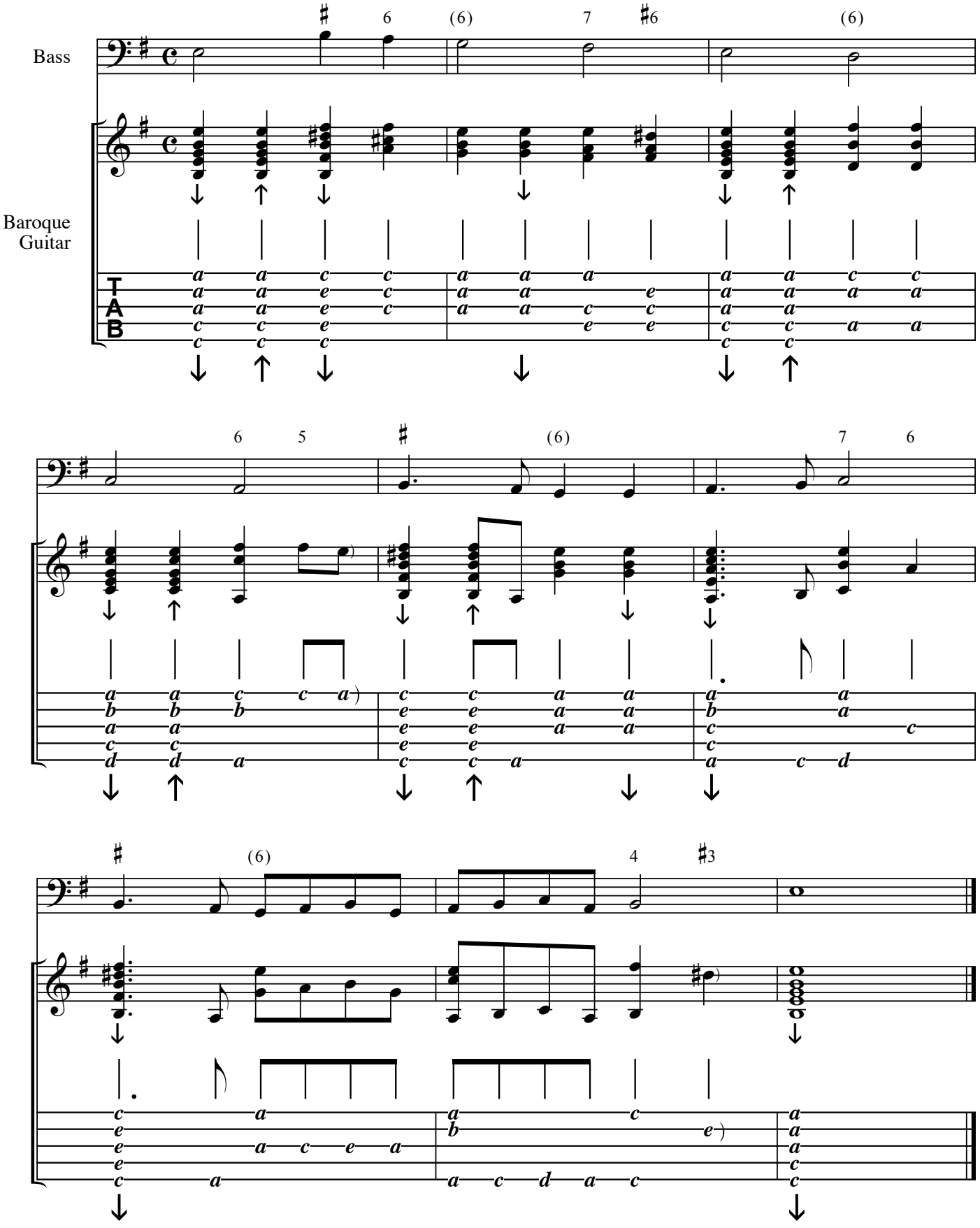
In D.lasolrè, terza minore.

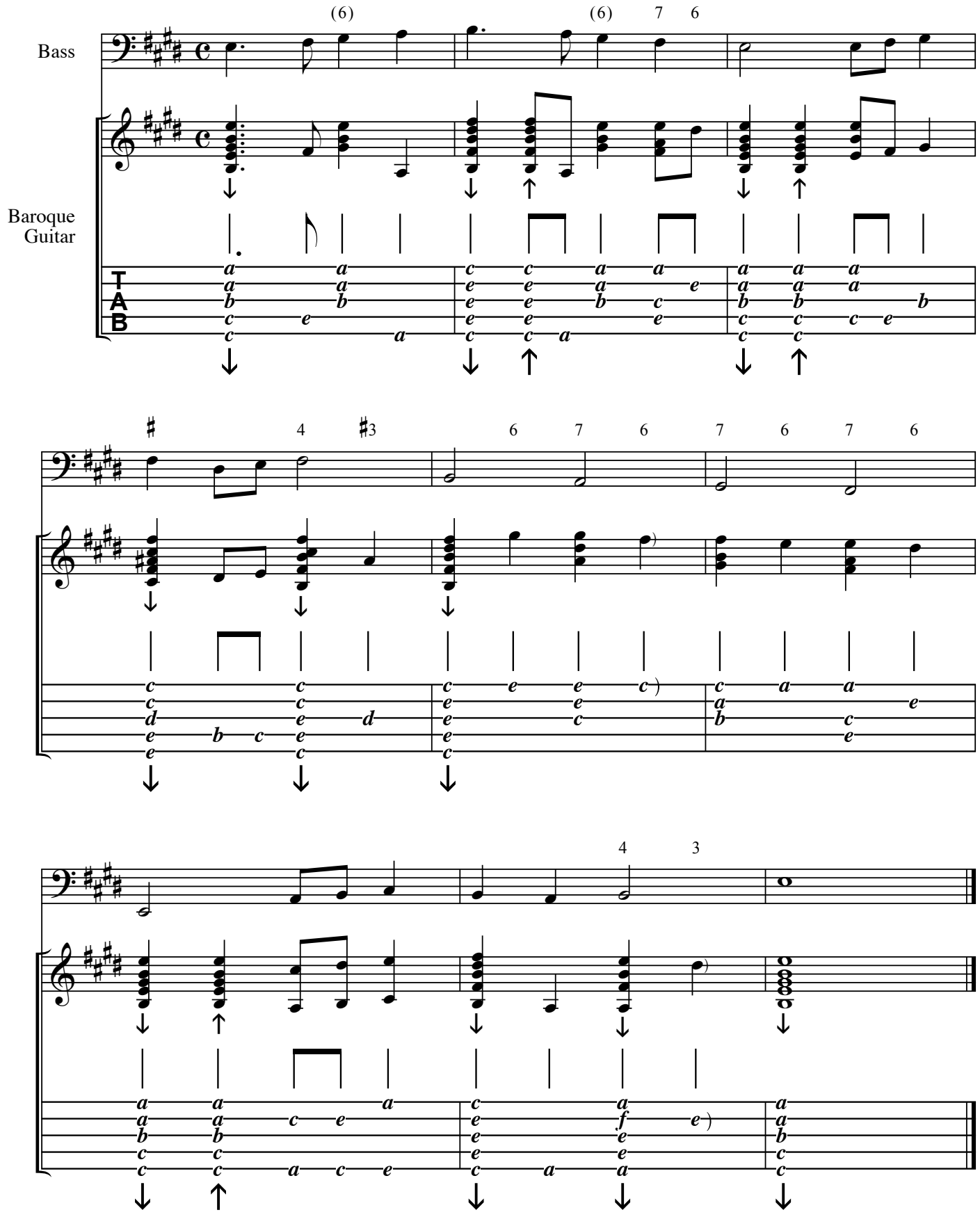


D lasolre terza Maggiore.



E.lami, terza minore




Bass
Baroque Guitar
T
A
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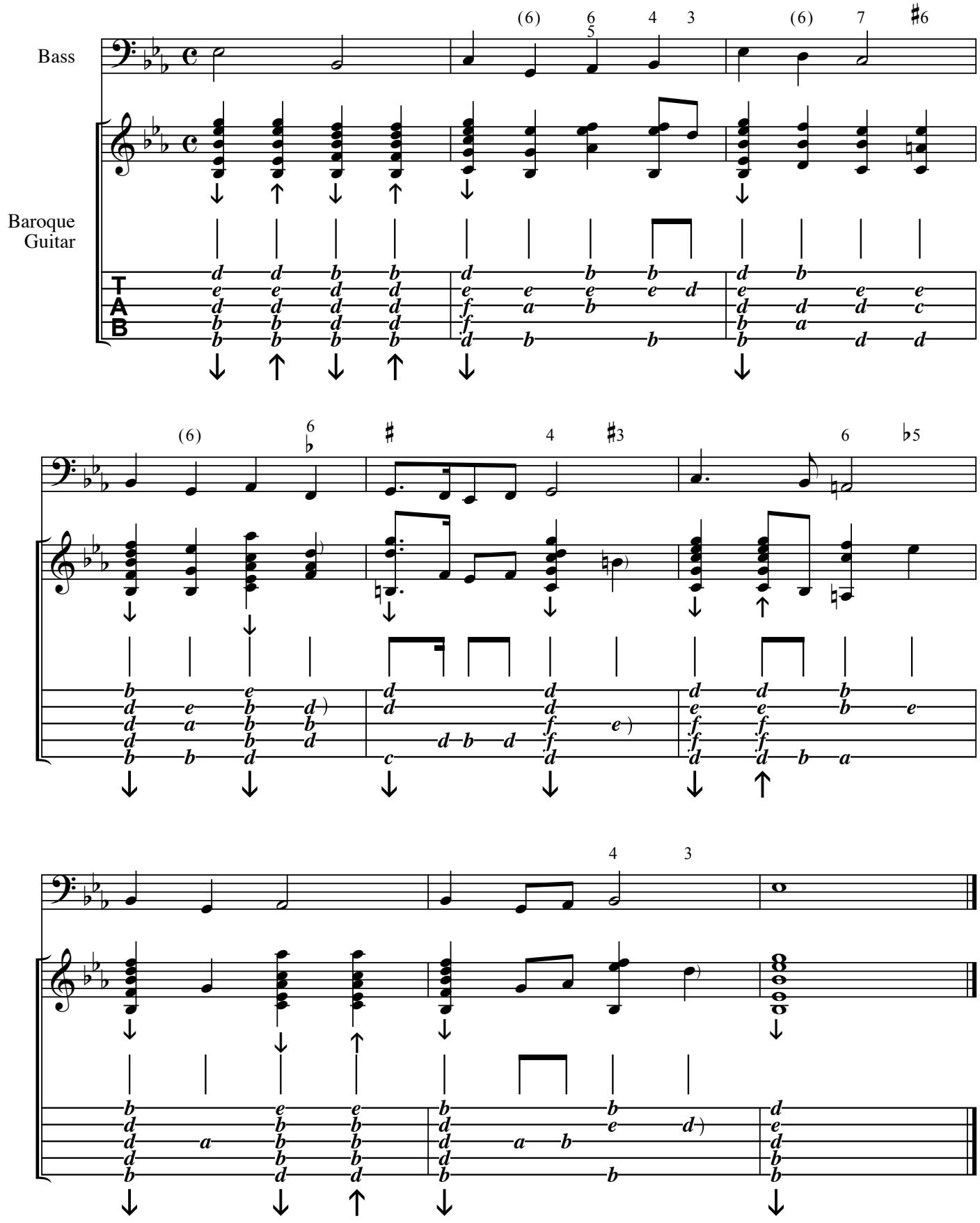
Bass
Baroque Guitar
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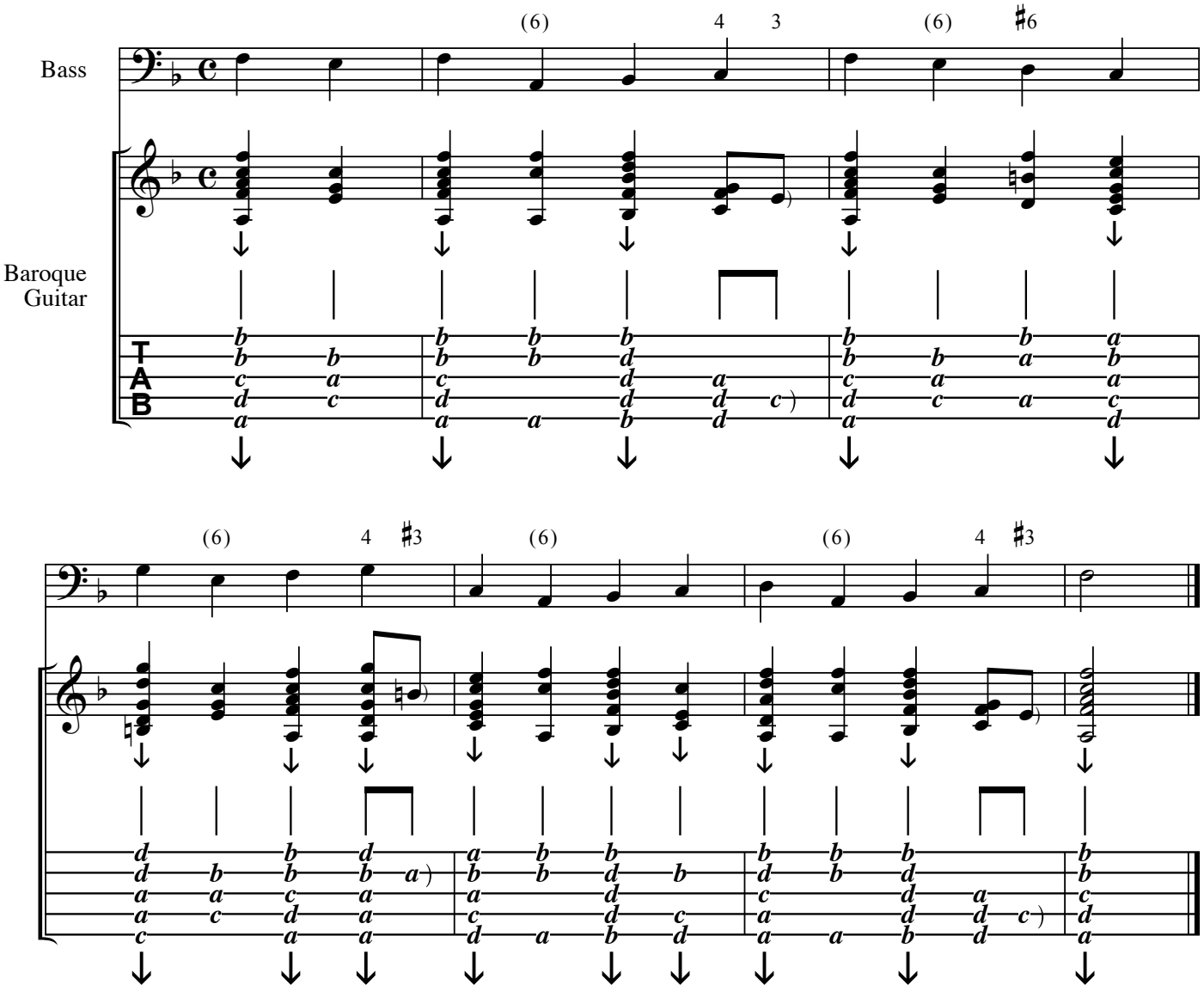
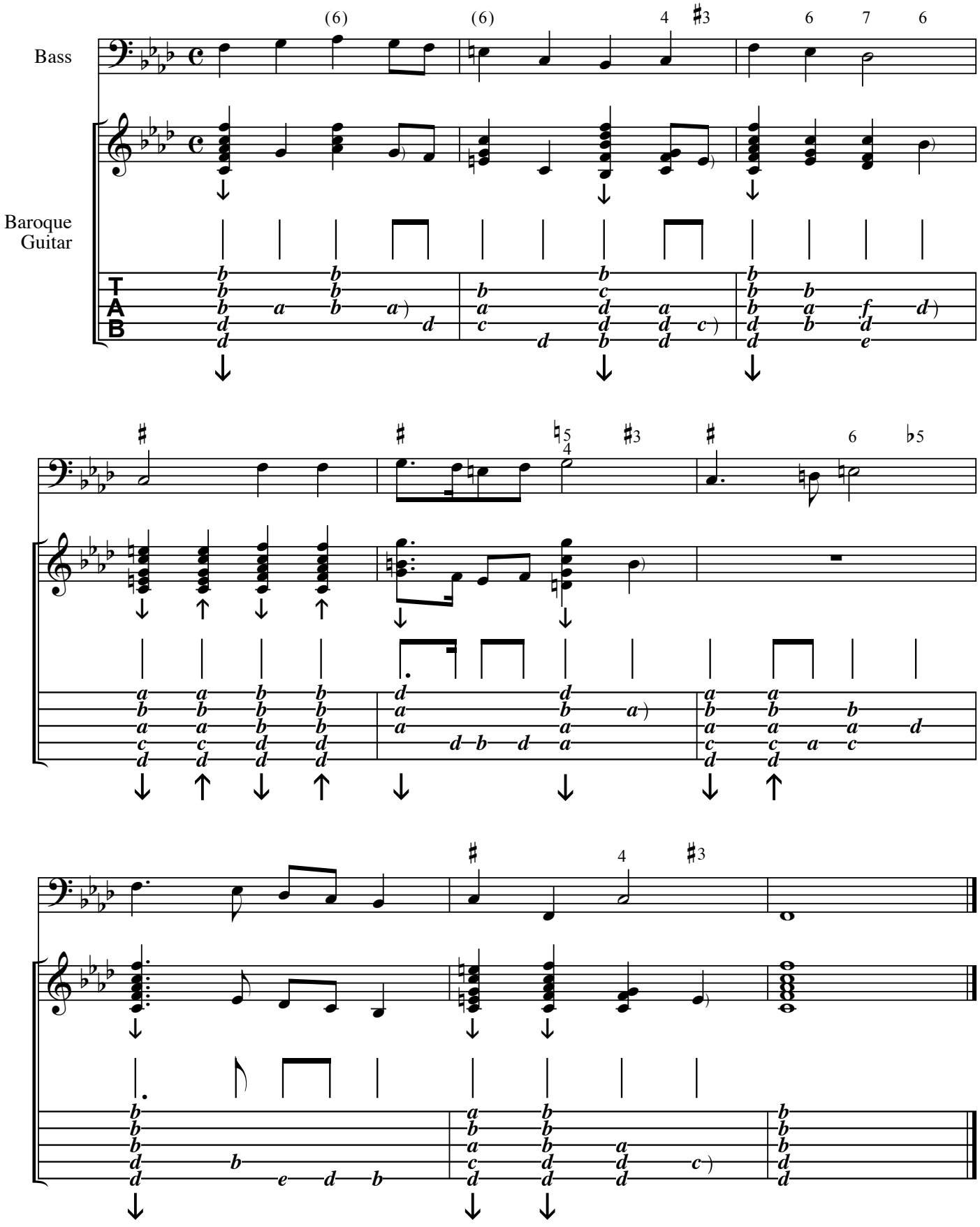
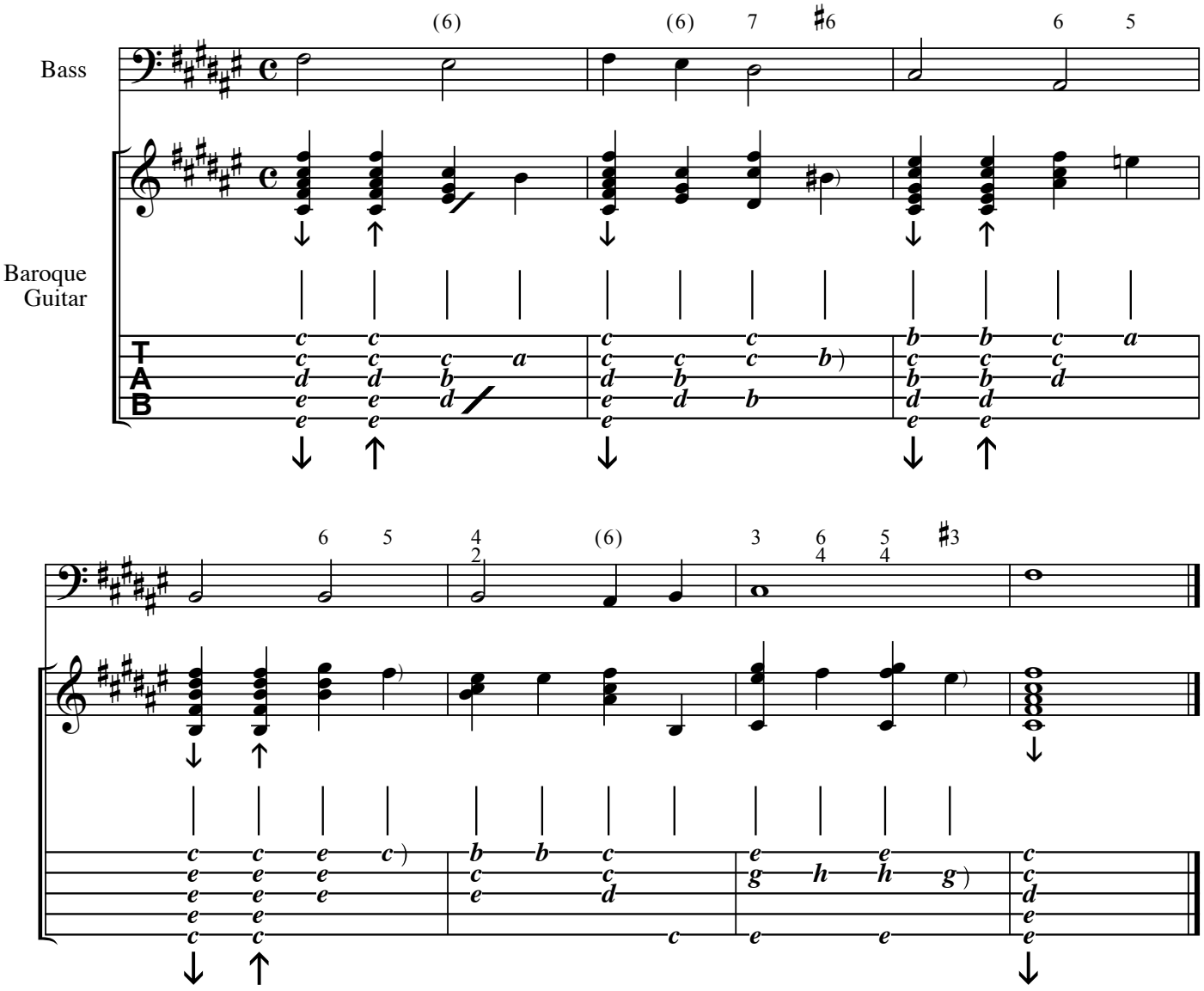
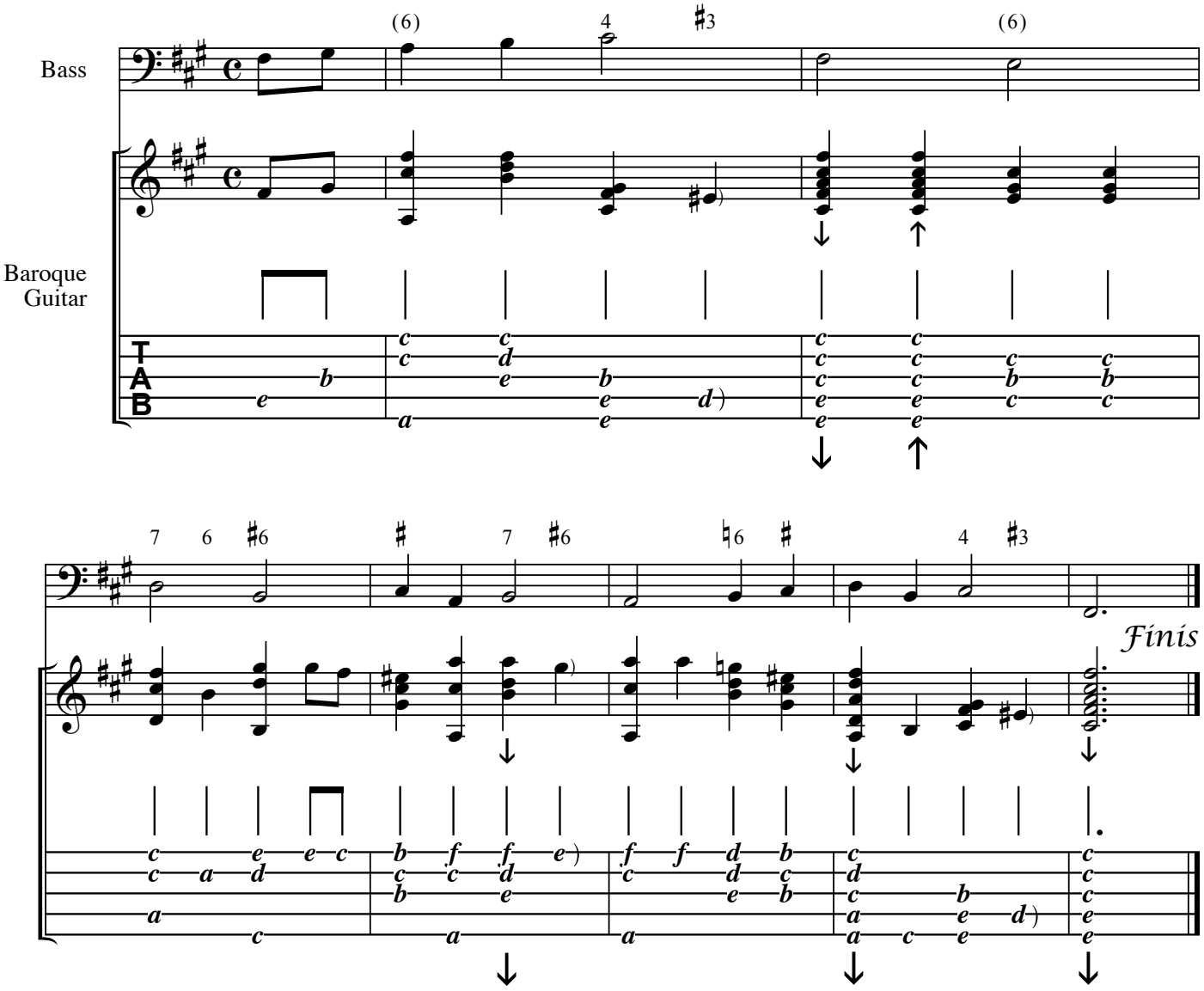
F.faut terza Maggiore



terza minore



F faut dieses à canto terza Maggiore



F faut dieses à canto terza Minore