Philipp Lamprecht

Instrumental pieces based on Ariosti

Modo facile di suonare il Sistro

Giovanni Battista Ariosti



Photographer: Joachim Bergauer

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Preface

Time and again, libraries and archives reveal manuscripts such as sheet music or other old documents that turn out to be treasures. This is the case with Giovanni Battista Ariosti's 1686 xylophone method book, *Modo facile di suonare il sistro, nomato il timpano*, (printed in Bologna). In this context, *sistro* refers to a percussion instrument that uses various pitches. Some examples of this instrument have been preserved from 17th-century Italy: xylophones, or as they were called back then in German, "Strohfiedeln" (literally: straw fiddles).

In a nutshell: Ariosti wrote down only the melody of each piece. Many of them are quite short. They are meant to be *facile*, easy. I have added a bass line and one or more additional parts to most of the songs, dances, and instrumental pieces. This allows for playing in duos, trios, and so on. Additional percussion parts make it possible to play with even more musicians.

Performance practice: To keep things interesting while playing and listening, feel free to switch between playing passages softly or loudly. For example, the repetition of a section can be played much softer than the (louder) first time. Besides the pitches already notated, you are welcome to add trills and tremolos, known as ornaments. In the 17th century, embellishments like these were quite common.

Order: The pieces vary in difficulty. I more or less stayed with the order of the 1686 original. You are welcome to browse and choose the pieces that suit you best. To be fully transparent: I have not transcribed all the pieces, but most of them (32 out of 35). The pieces added in later editions of the *Modo facile* are also missing.

Ariosti for everyone! The pieces can be played by other instruments as well, for example, flute, violin, accordion, hammered dulcimer, trumpet, clarinet, etc., and I encourage you to do so. Likewise, the percussion instruments can be exchanged freely. My recommendation is to keep the arrangement of parts from high to low, meaning that higher-sounding instruments should be in the upper parts and lower-sounding ones in the lower parts.

Who was Giovanni Battista Ariosti? Unfortunately, we don't know much about him. He was born in Bologna in 1668, belonged to the Servite Order (a Catholic mendicant order), and went by the name Frate Odoardo. While there, it seems he devoted himself to music and to teaching music.

Munich, August 2025
Philipp Lamprecht

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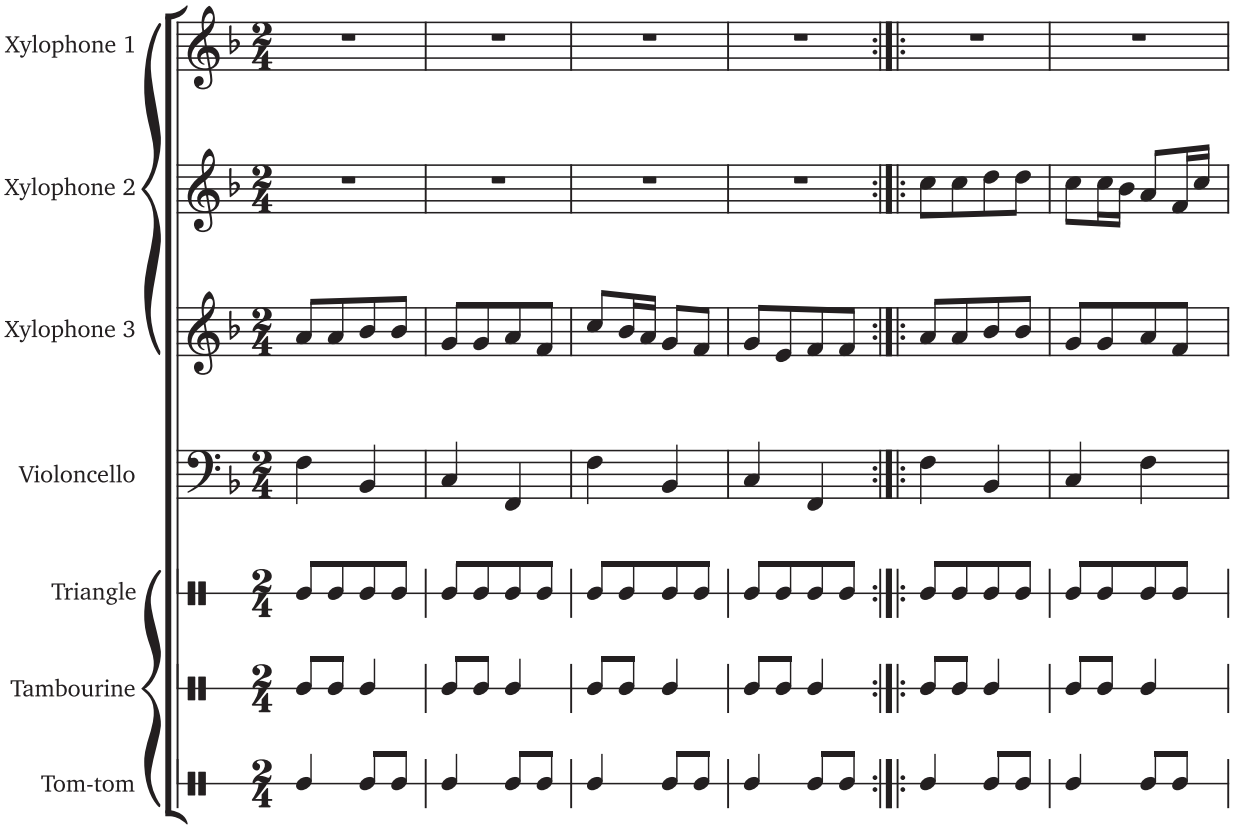
Bergamasco



In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century music, **Bergamasco** (or **Bergamasca**) refers to a dance and a catchy melody built on a repeated bass pattern. The image shows the Venetian city wall of Bergamo.



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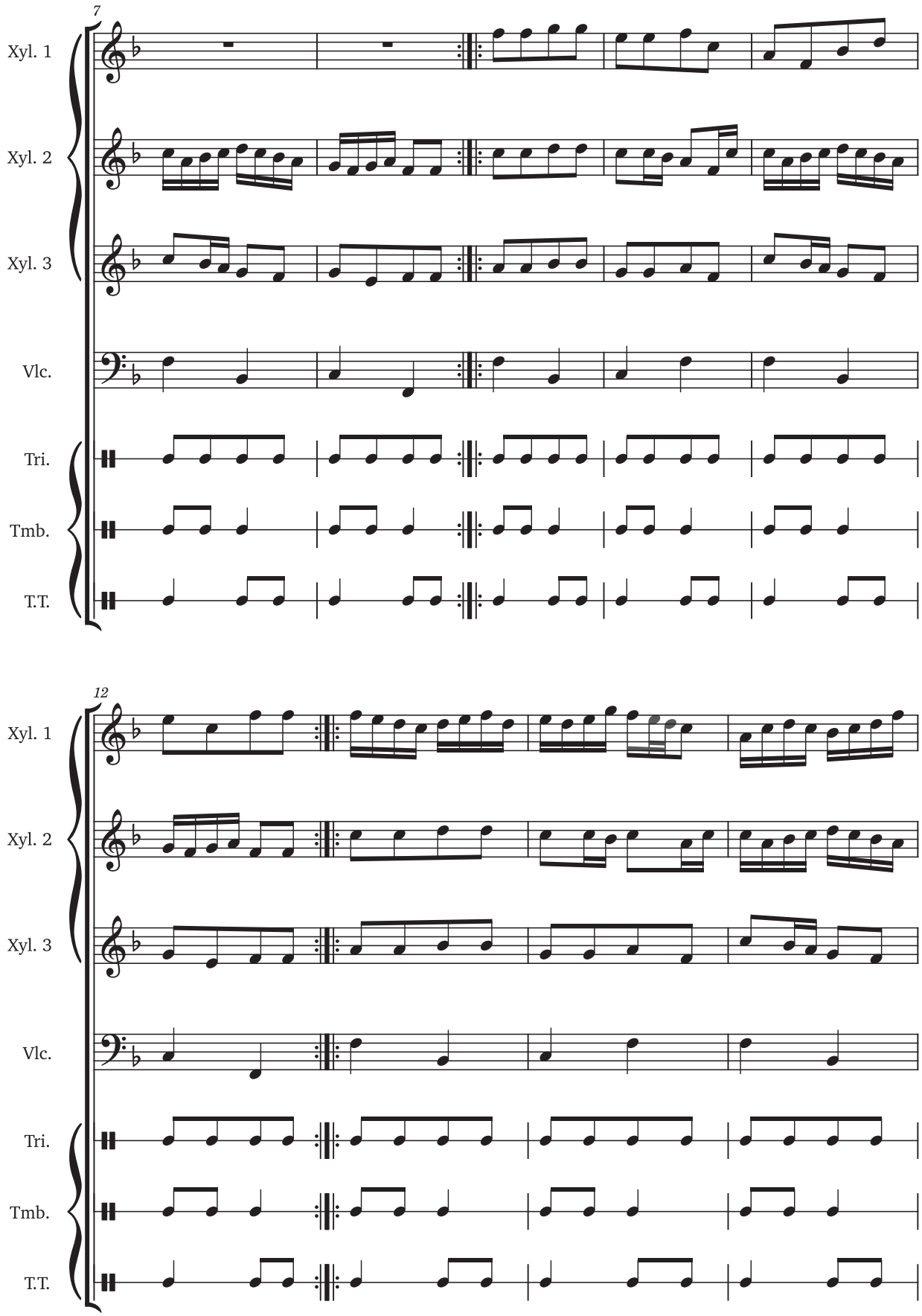

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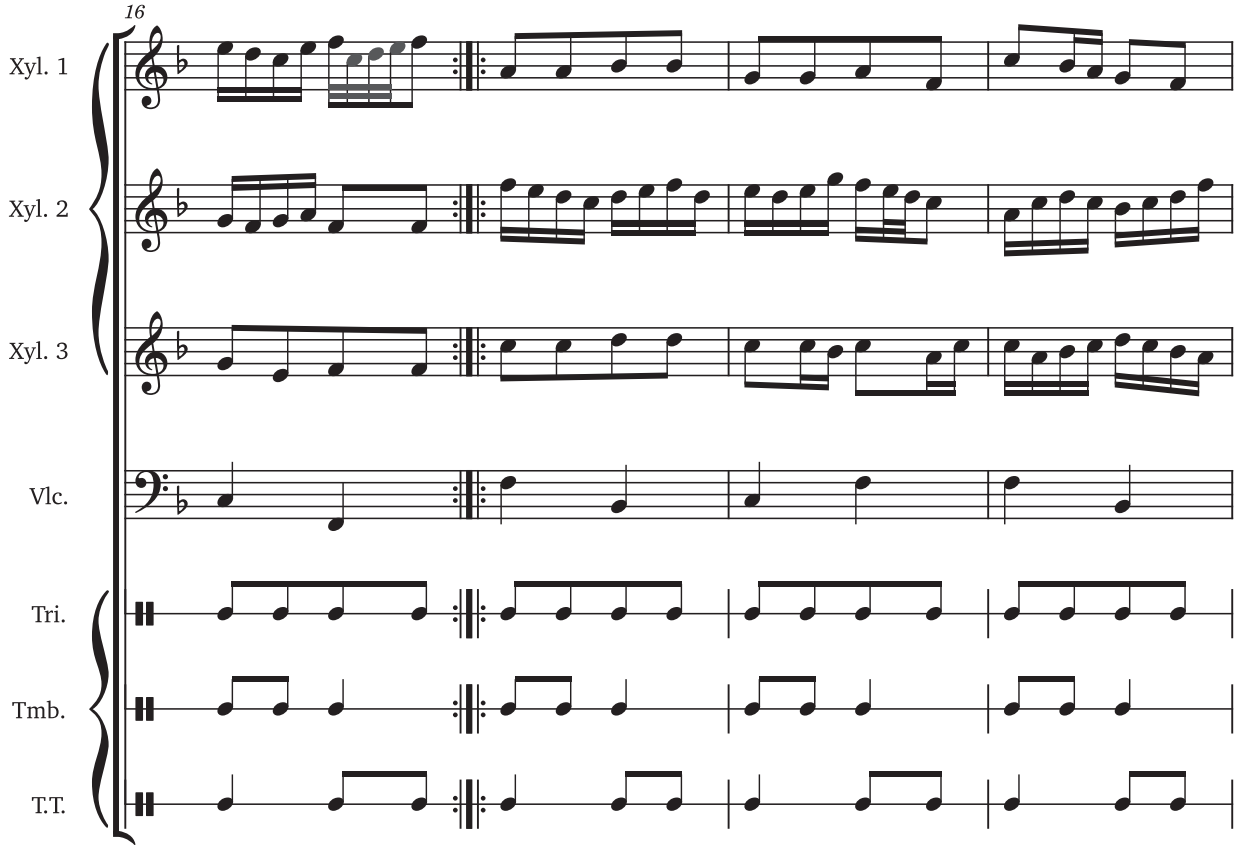

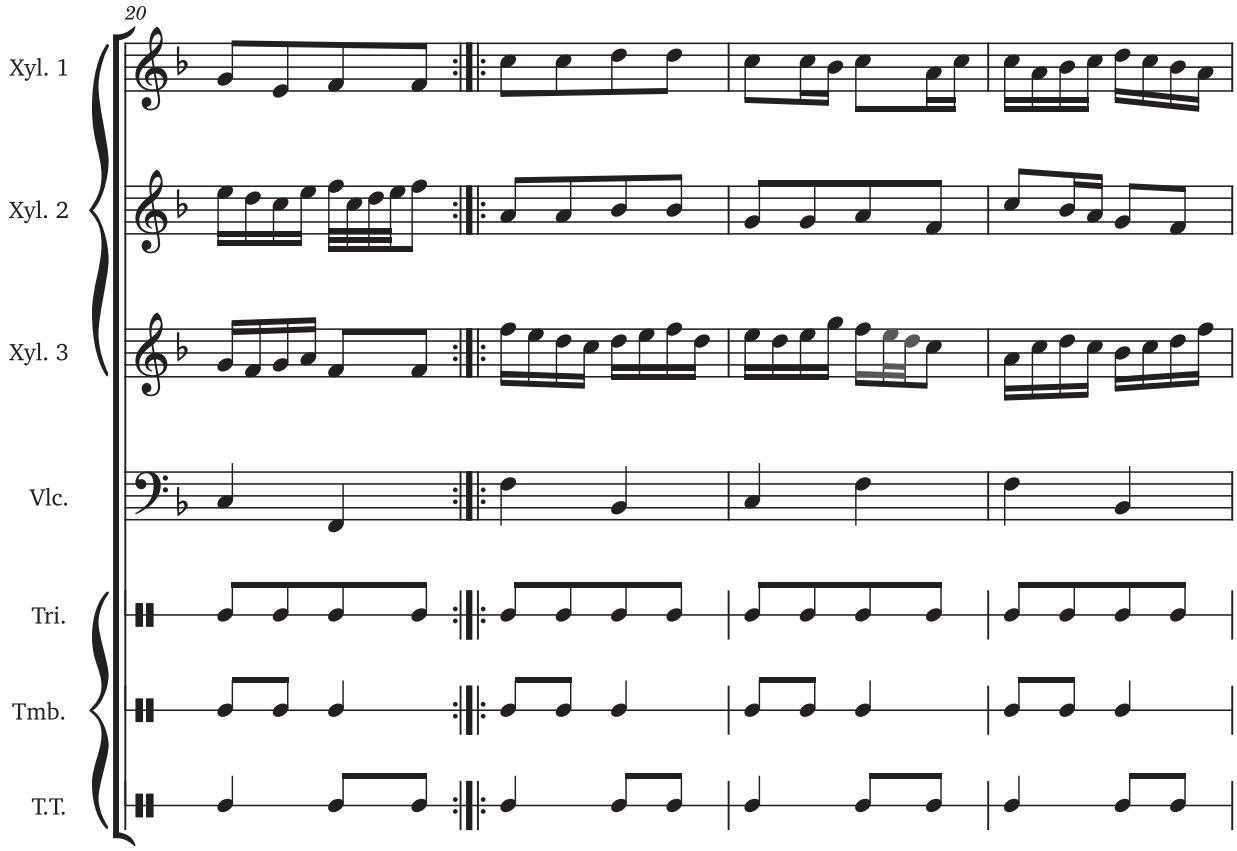

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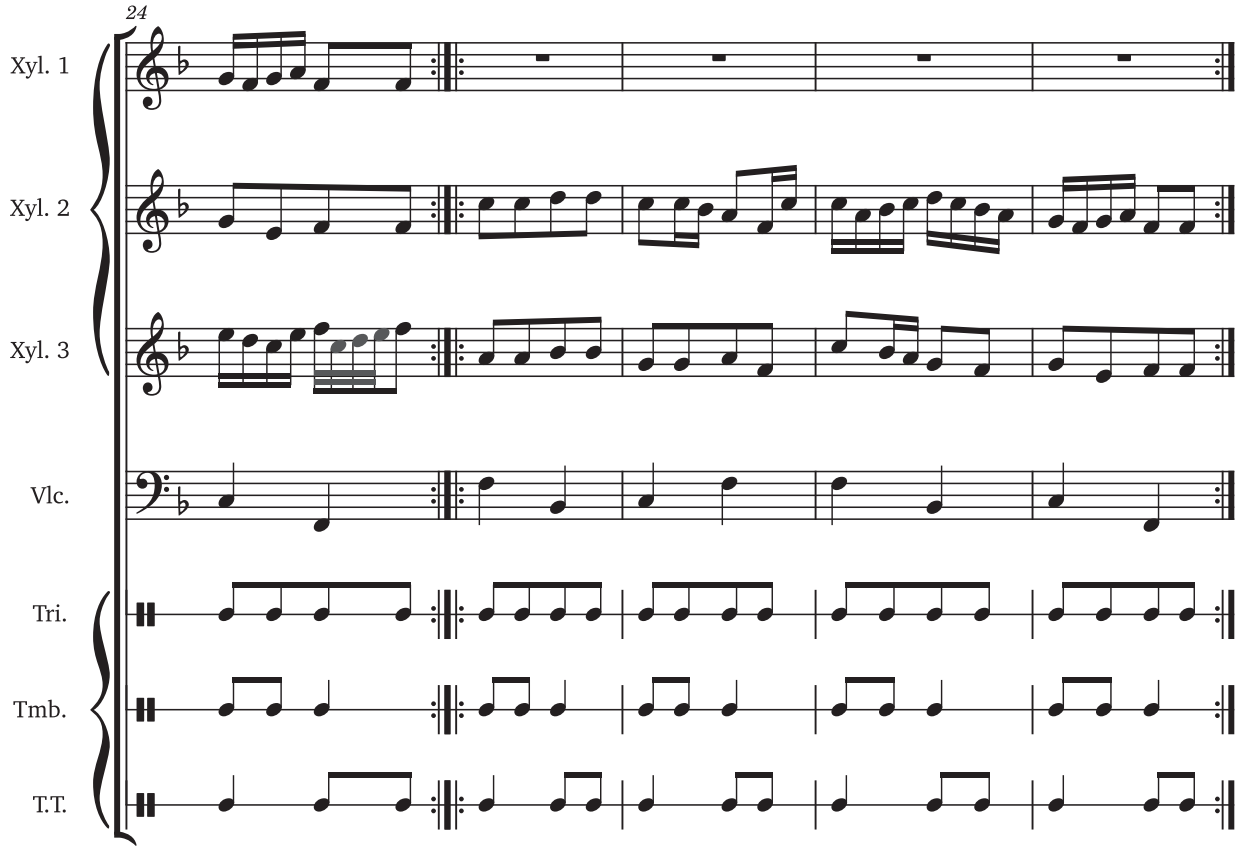

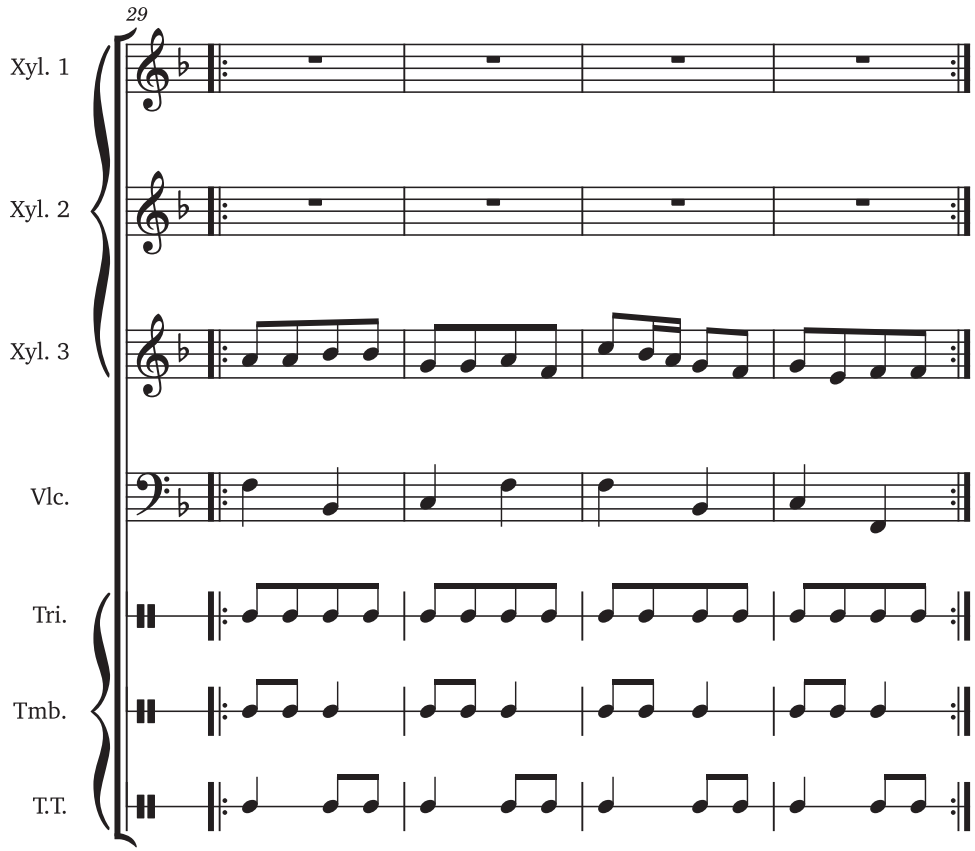

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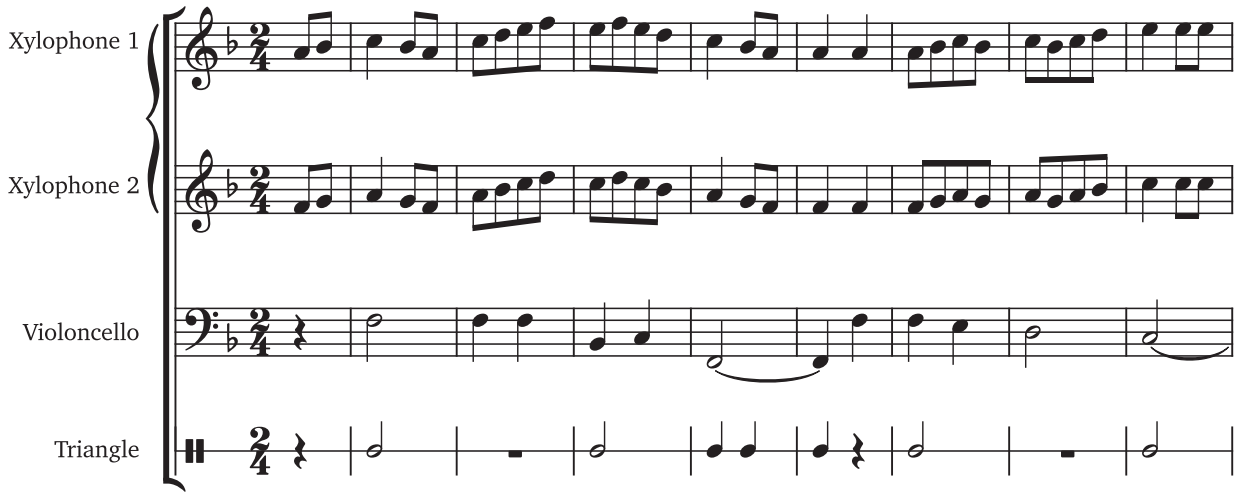
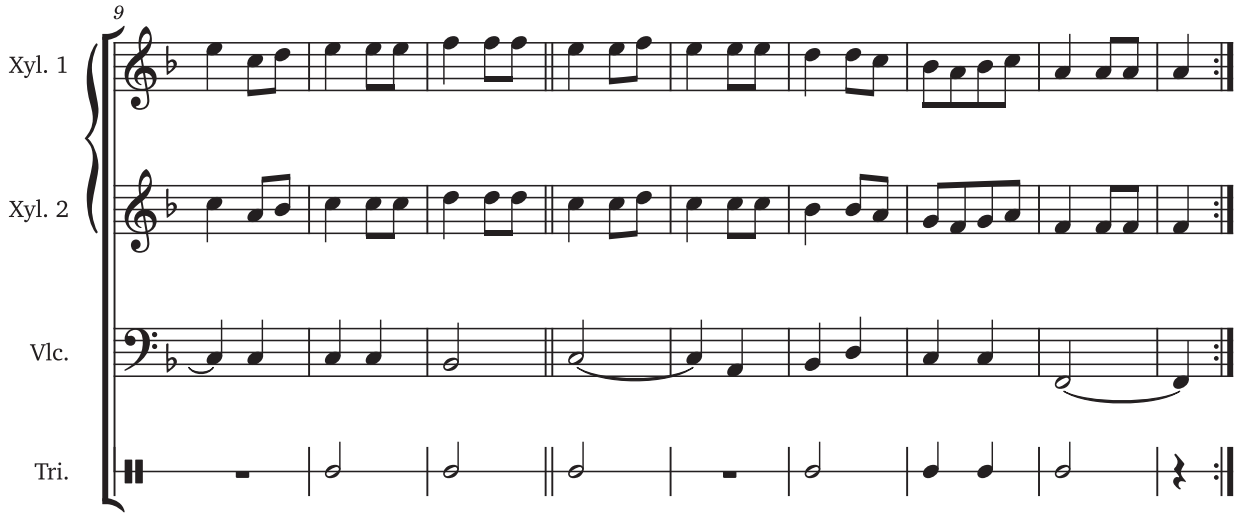
Ruggiero



Ruggiero (also **Ruggero**) is a knight in **Ludovico Ariosto**'s epic *Orlando furioso* (first edition 1516). He is often portrayed as a hero and is linked with the heroine Bradamante.

The so-called **Ruggiero bass** is a formula widely used in sixteenth and seventeenth century music.





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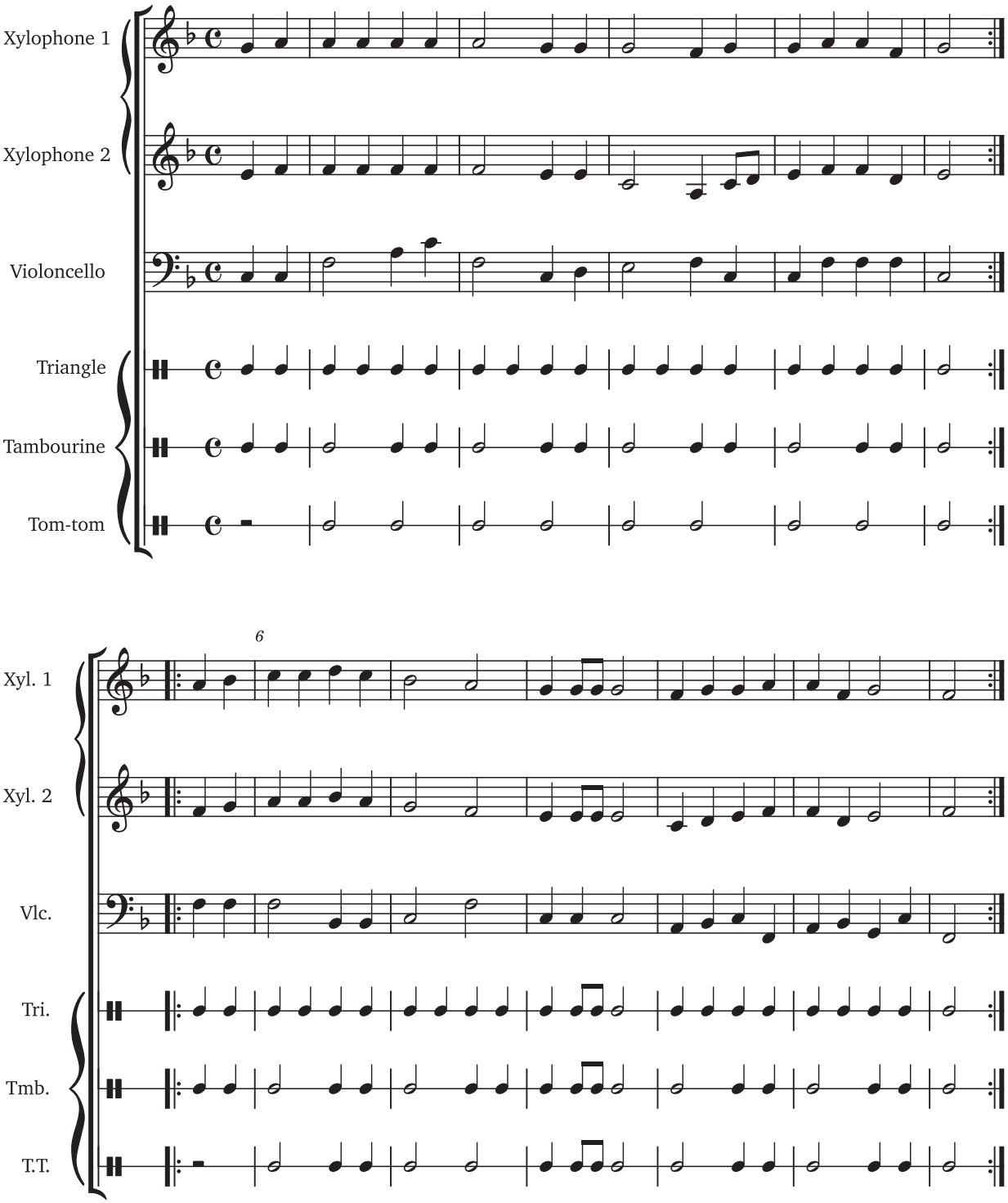
Carascena

The **Carascena** was a well-known melody in the seventeenth century. It was written down not only by Giovanni Battista Ariosti but also by other composers. Interestingly, it also appears in combination with a sacred text in the collection *Corona di sacre canzoni o laude spirituali* from 1689.



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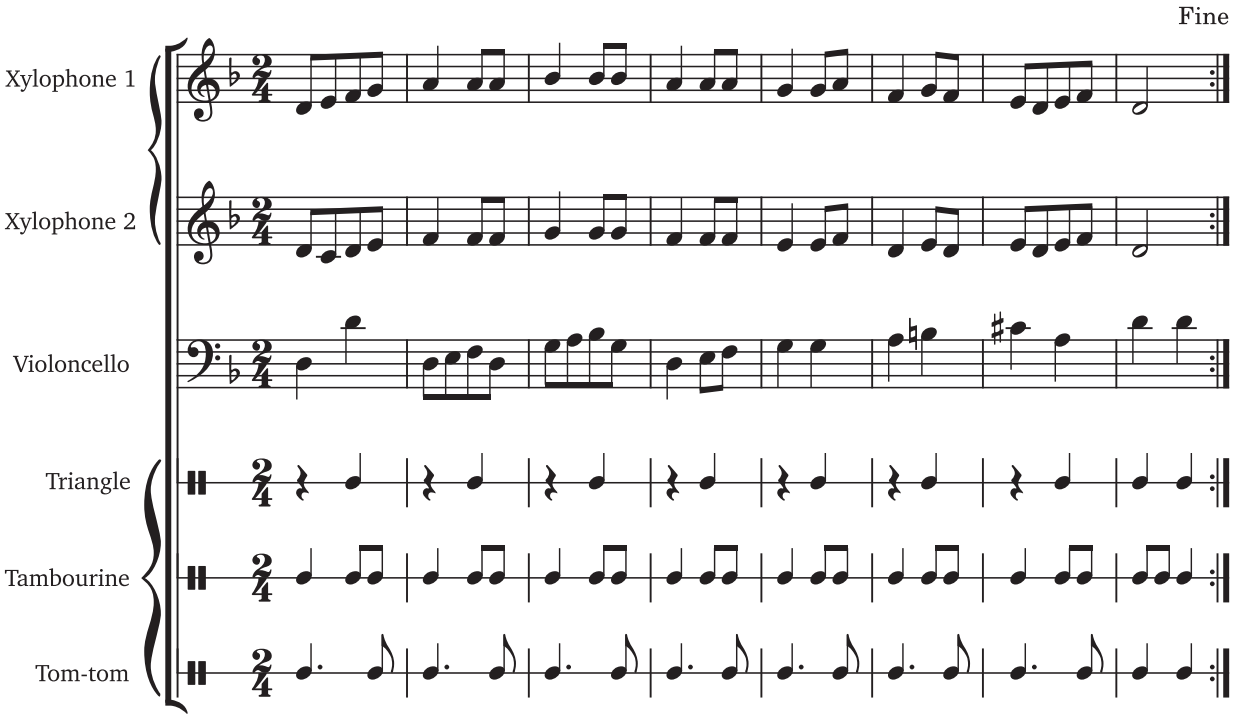
Aria di Mantova



The **Aria di Mantova** was widespread in the seventeenth century. It is attributed to **Giuseppino del Biado** and originally carried a text celebrating spring. The aria frequently served as the basis for instrumental variations or improvisations. Ariosti, too, makes use of this well-known model. The historical city view shows Mantua at the time when such melodies were created – a cultural centre rich in music, art and courtly life.



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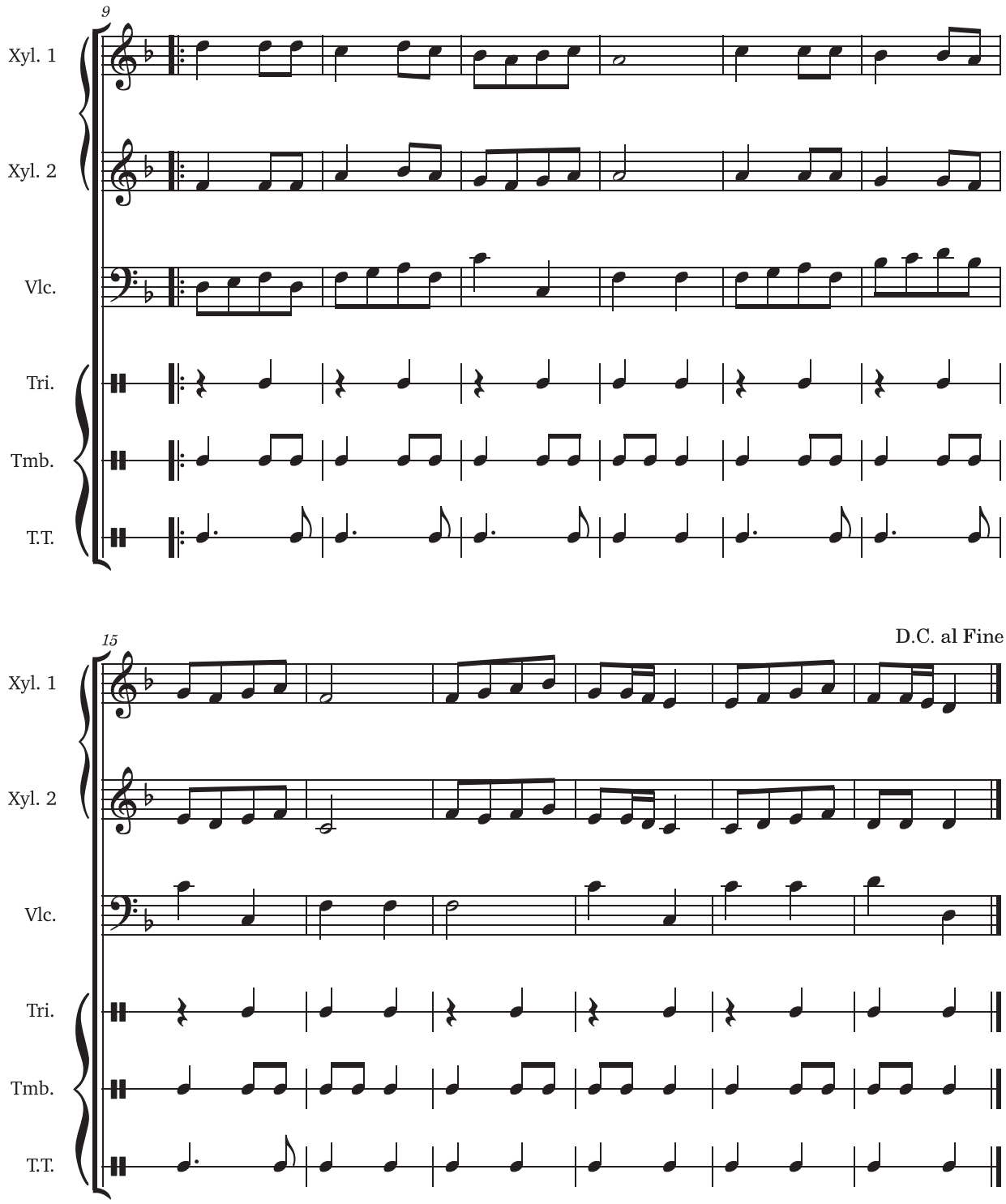

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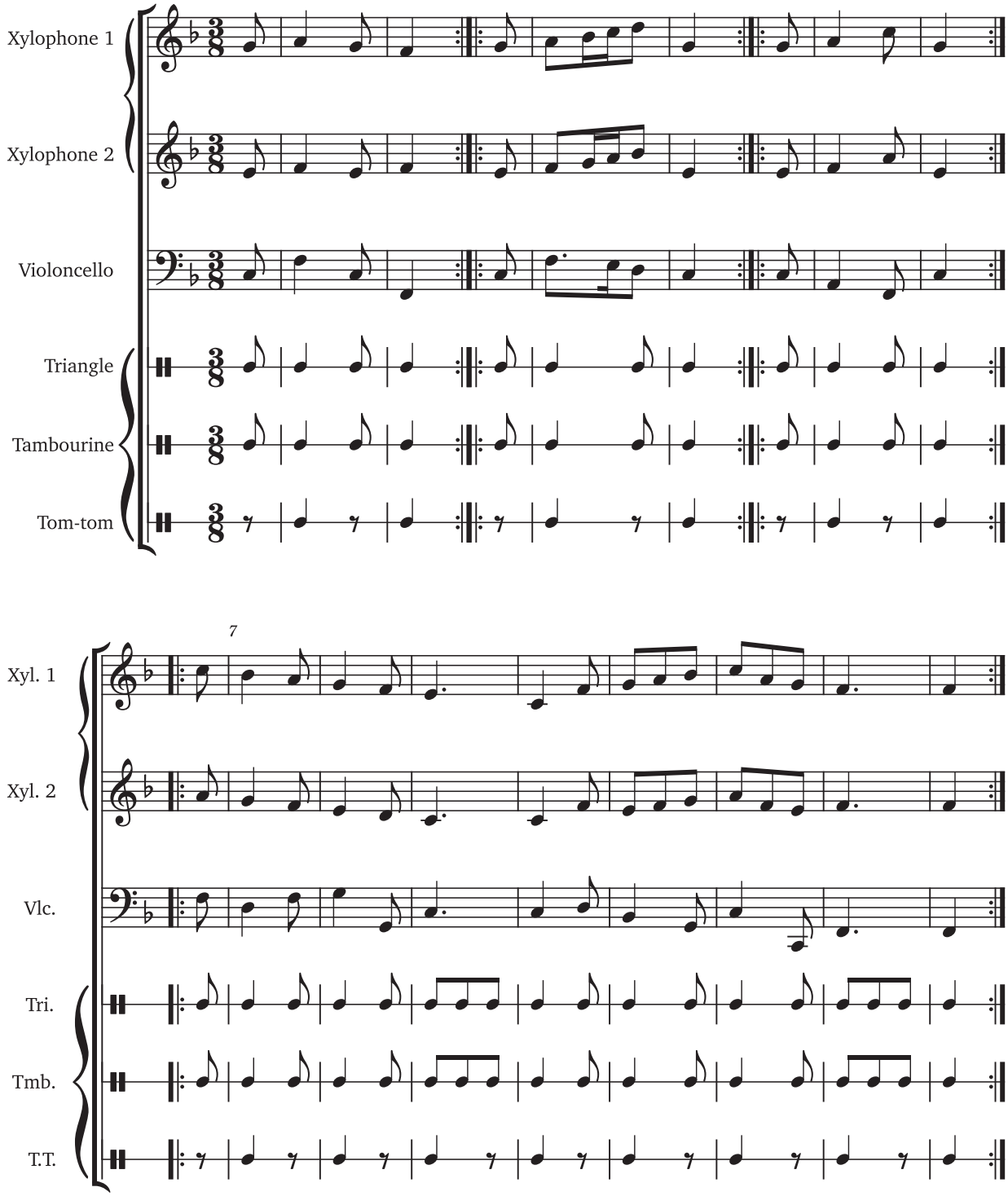
Zenzigola



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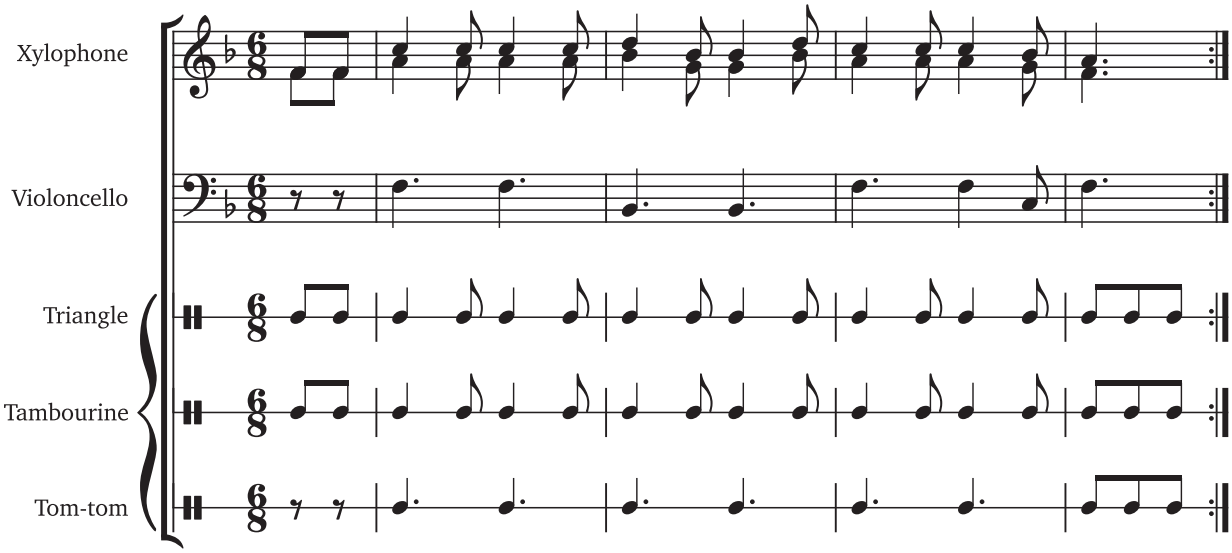
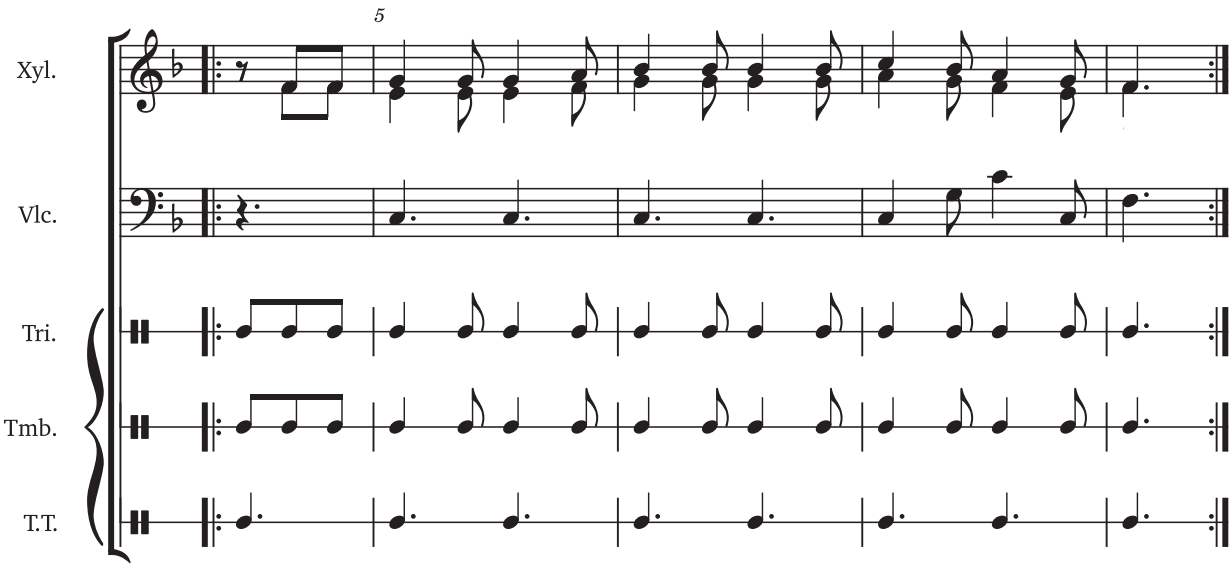
Quattro Fantolini



The woodcut *La Gigue* by **Gustave Doré** and **P. J. J. Ryckebusch** depicts a courtly dance scene in which rhythm and movement are reflected precisely in the dancers' posture and gestures.





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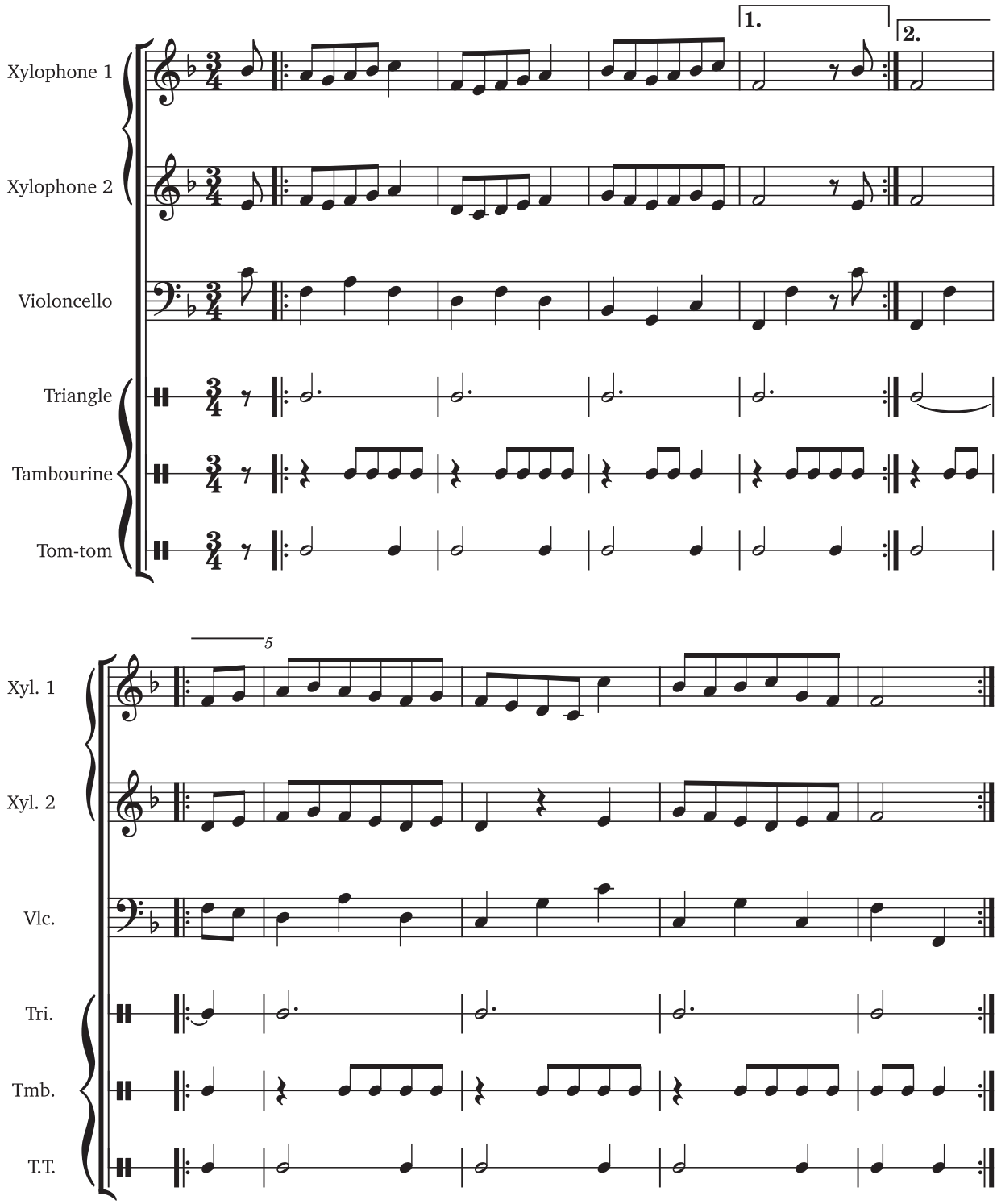
Paesana

Paesana is a short, two-part piece. The title itself hints at a rural connection: *Paesena* is the derivative of *paese* (Italian for "country" or "village") – thus rural or from the countryside.



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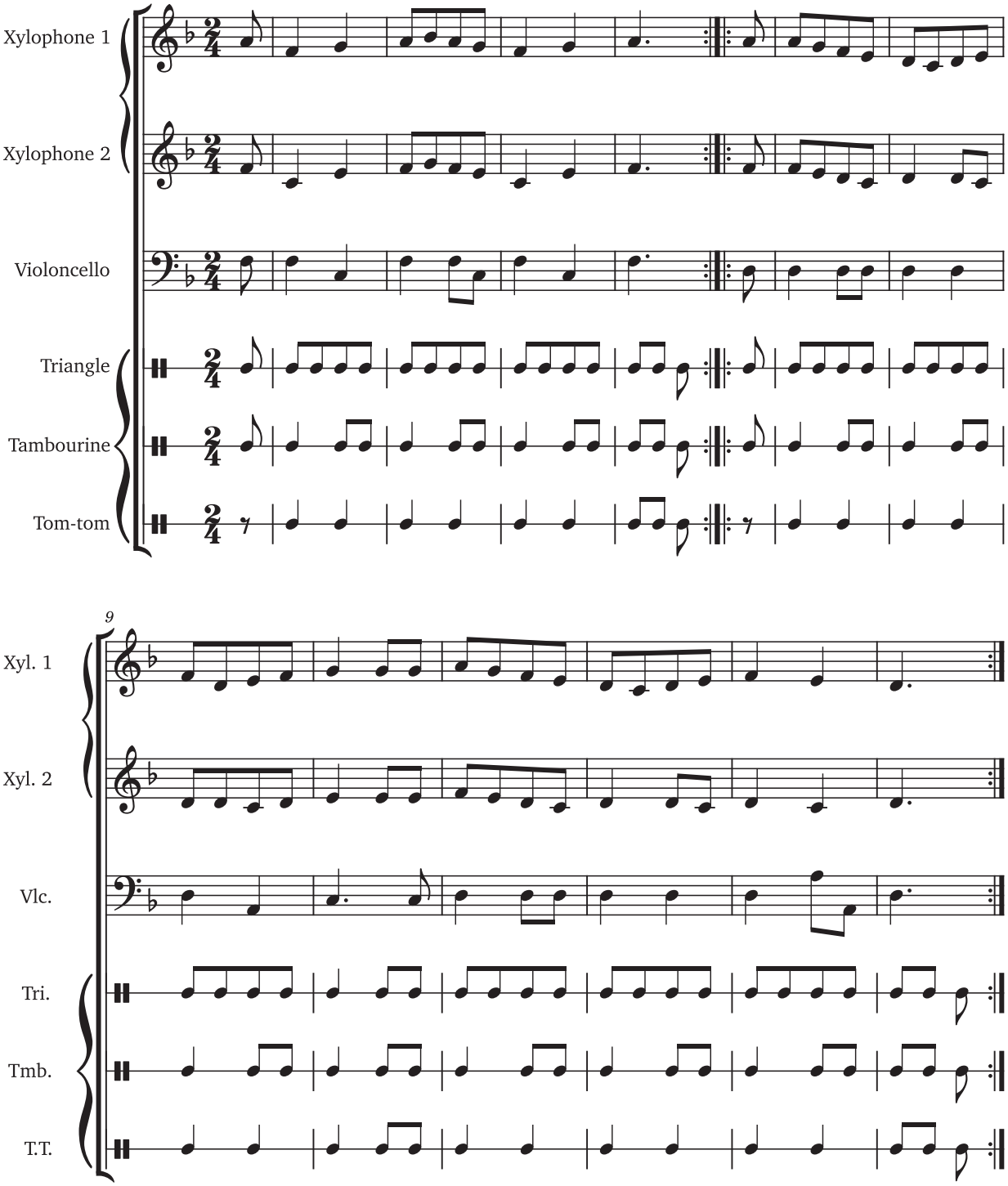
Borrea

The title **Borrea** (also **Borea**) is an Italianised spelling of the French *Bourrée*, a lively dance in duple metre with an upbeat. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the *Bourrée* was common in both courtly and popular contexts. Its characteristics include distinct rhythmic structures, short phrases, and a clear sense of motion.



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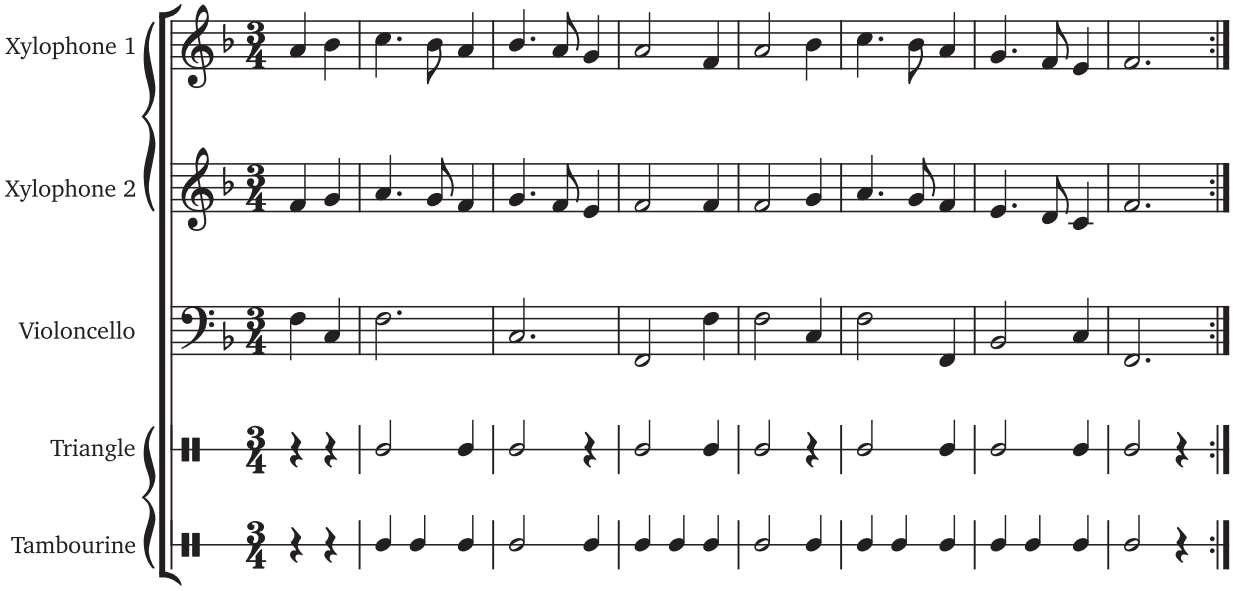
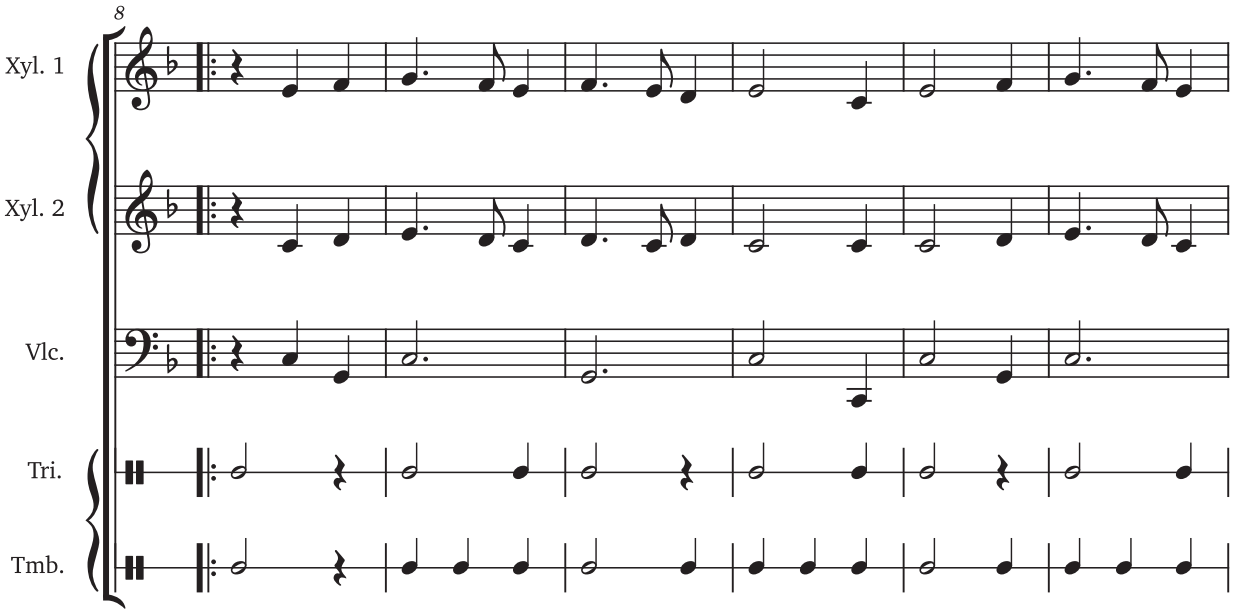
Speranza

The title **Speranza** means "hope". In Christian faith, to which Ariosti dedicated his life, hope particularly refers to salvation and the life after death. This piece also appears in another source with a sacred text set to it.





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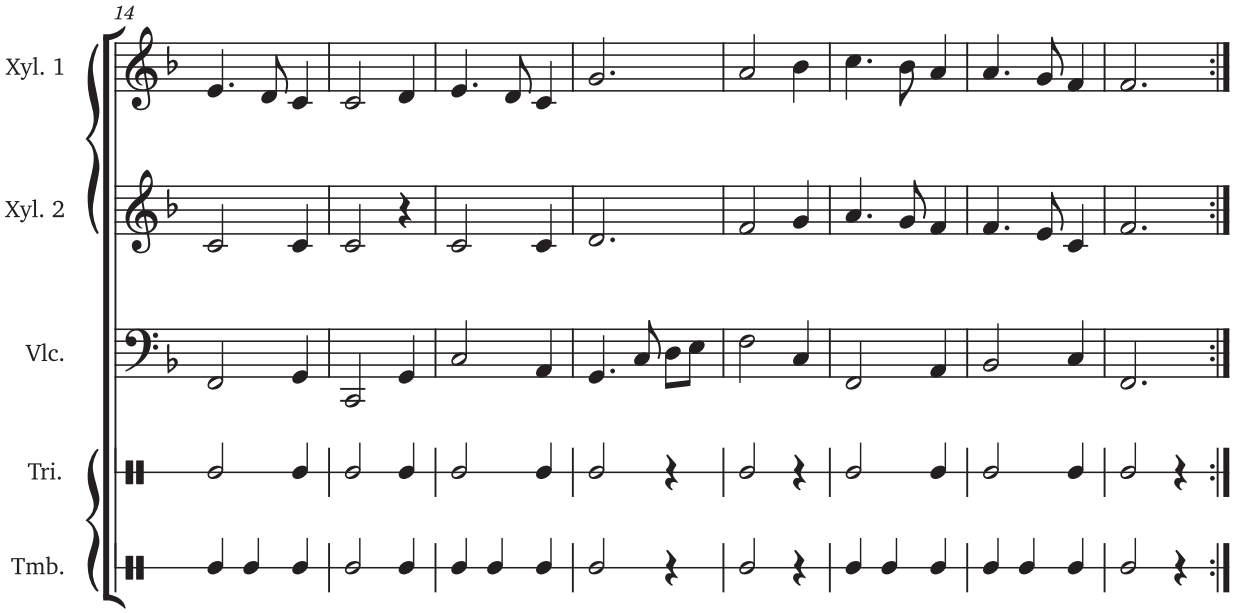



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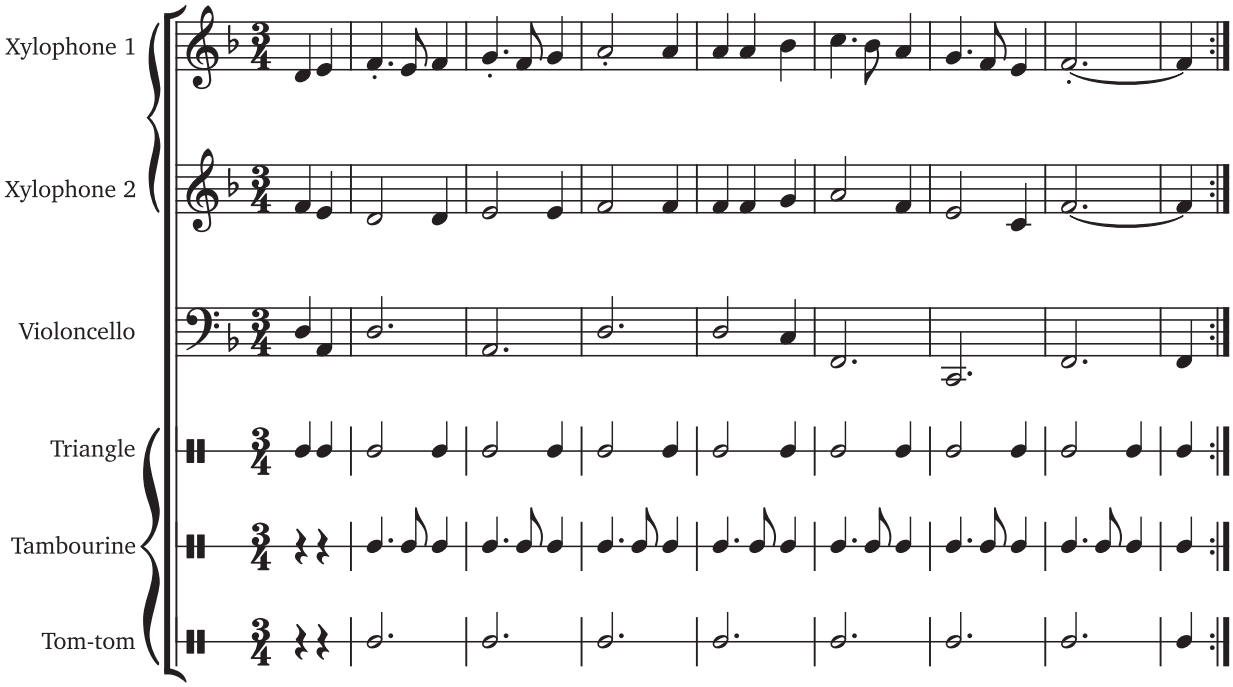
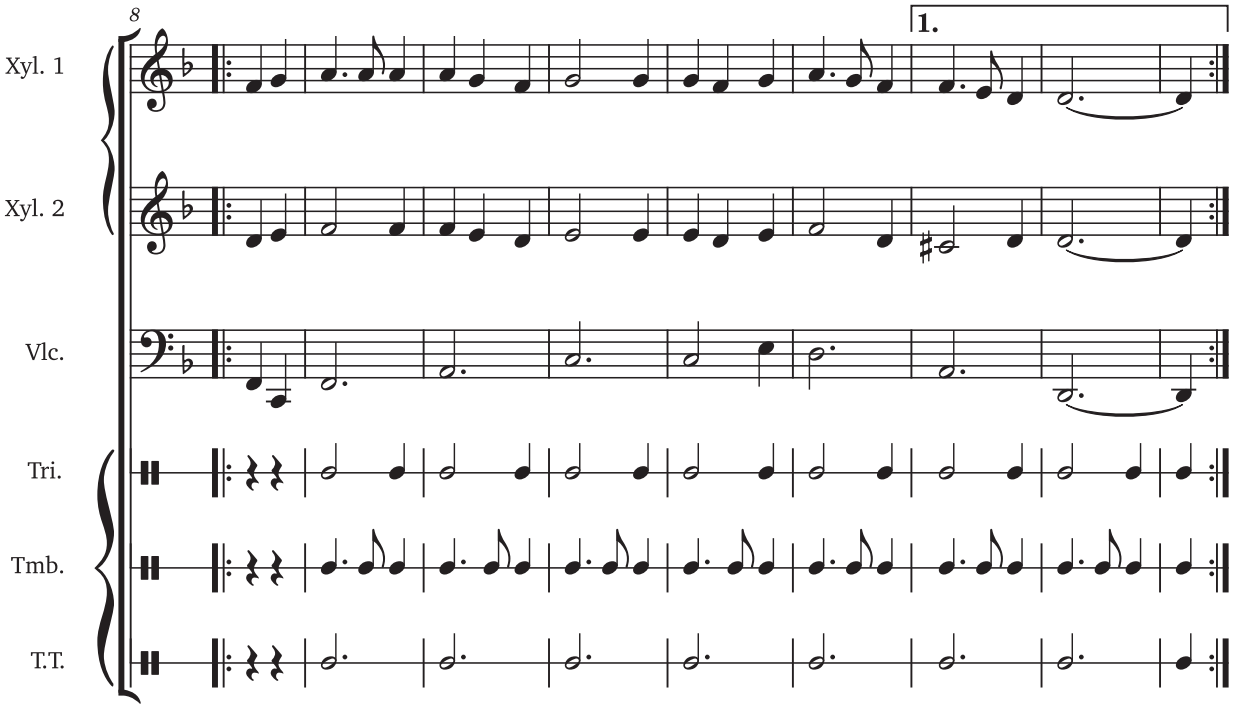
Spagnoletto

The **Spagnoletto** was very well known during the Baroque period. It was taken up by many composers and varied in many ways.





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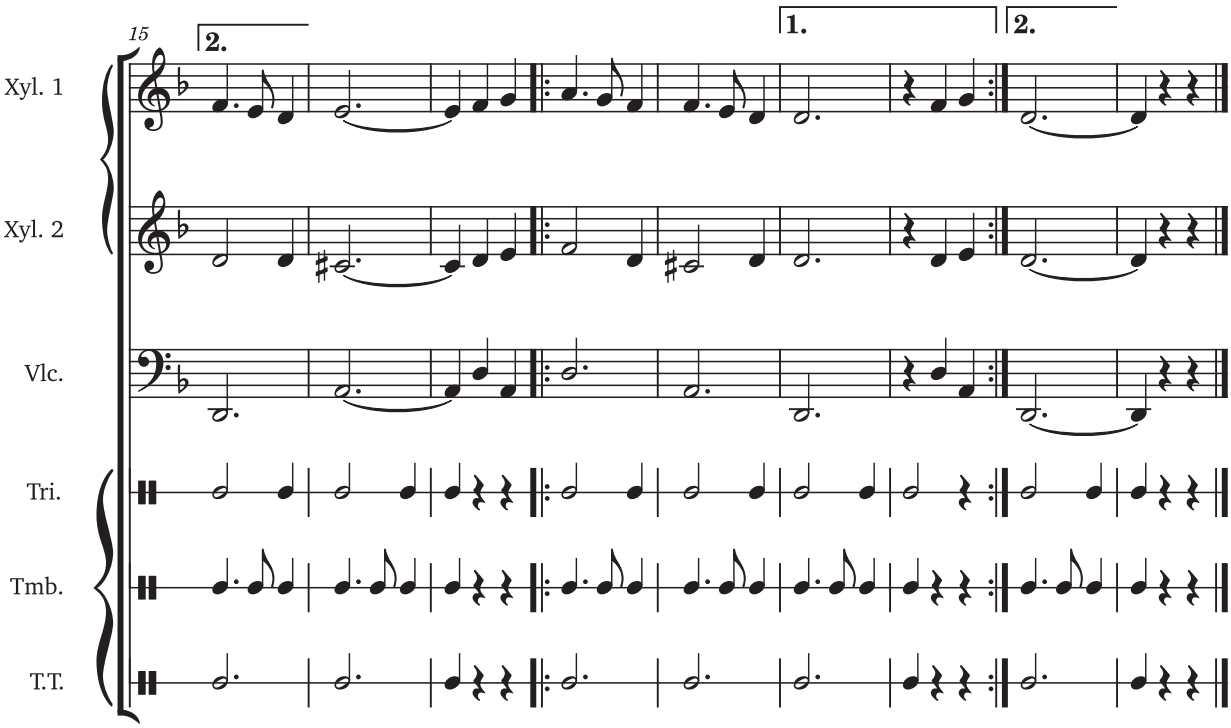
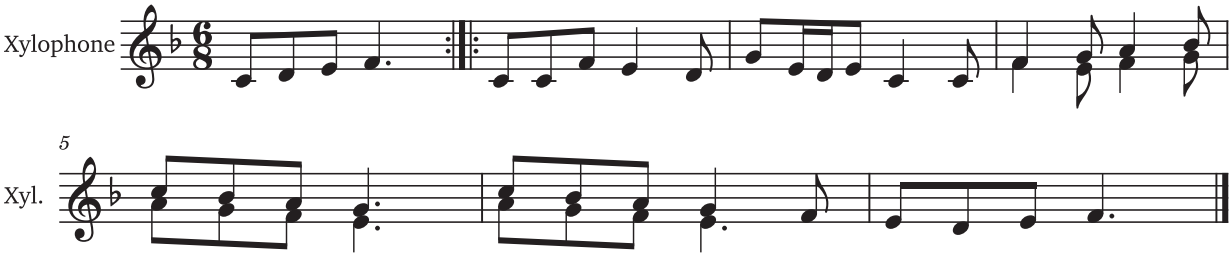


Grillo



The title **Grillo** – "the cricket" – evokes the chirping of a cricket, and with it warm summer days. Baroque music was often inspired by sounds from nature such as birdsong or weather phenomena.



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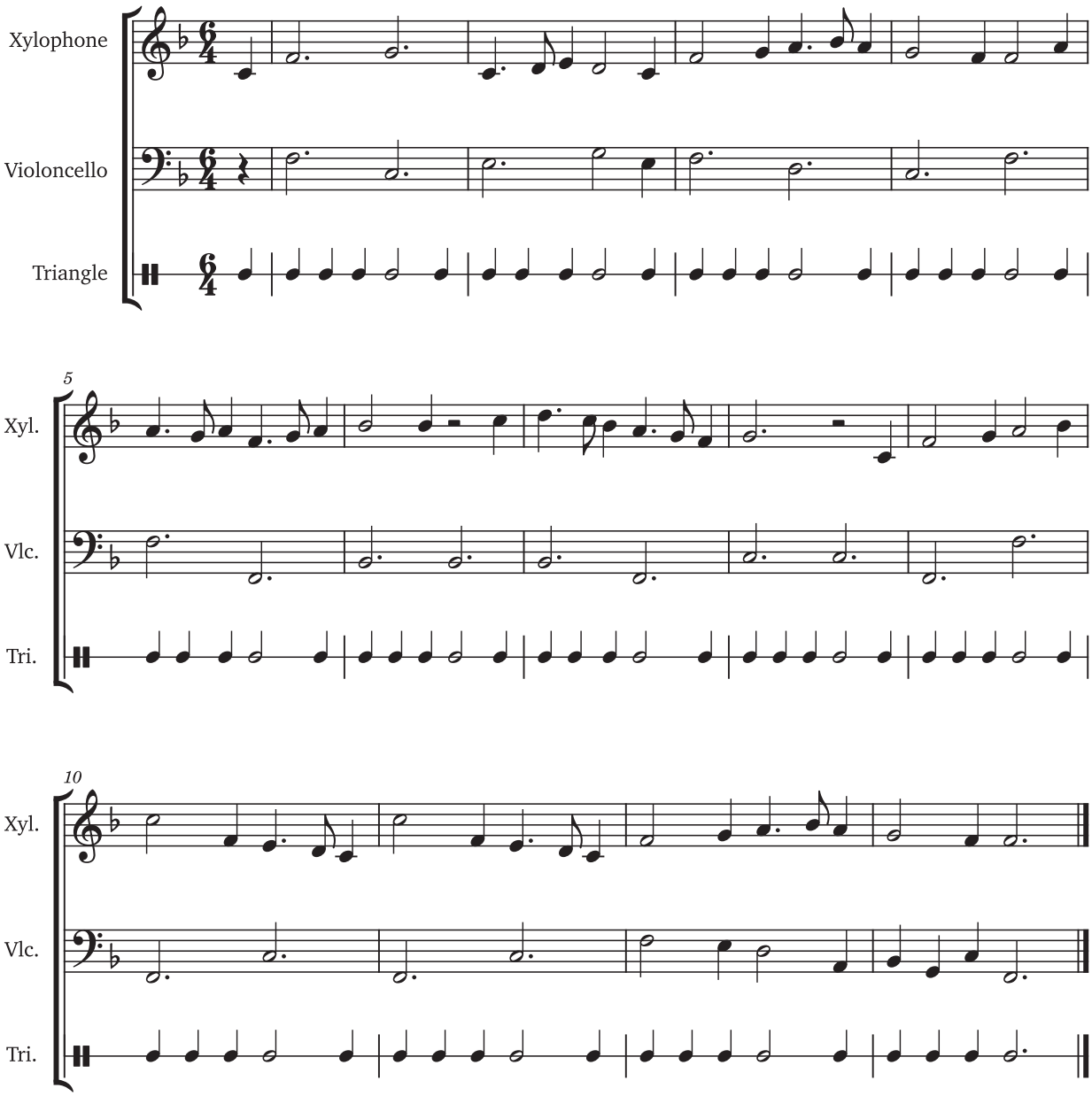
Cochina



Cochina is Italian for "little pig". Interestingly, this piece also appears in another source with a sacred text set to it, namely in the *Corona di sacre canzoni o laude spirituali* from 1689.



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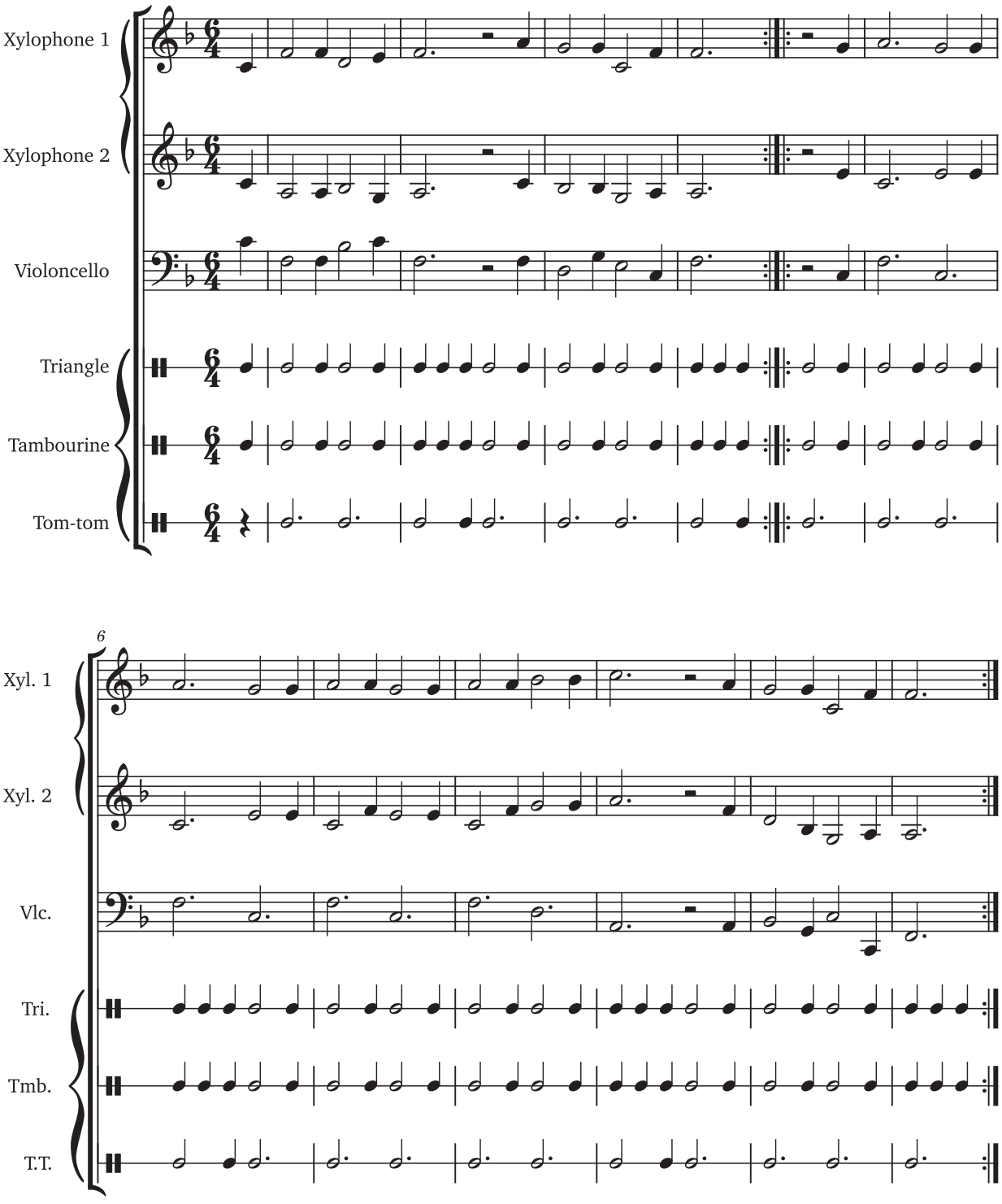
O Bacco

O Bacco celebrates the wine god Bacchus as a symbol of Baroque *joie de vivre*. It is quite possible that, in Ariosti's time, there was a text sung to this melody that would have been widely known.





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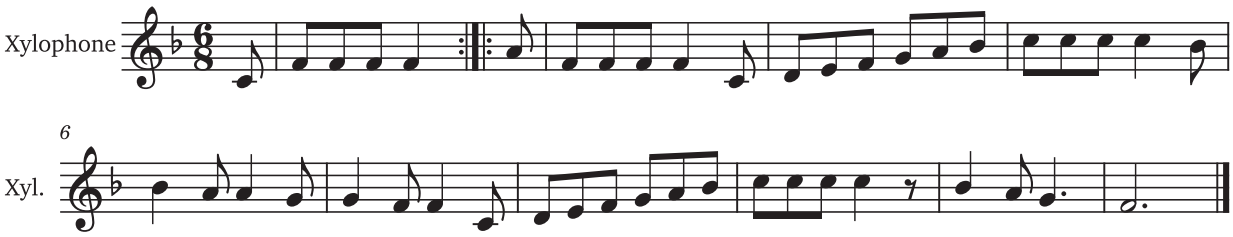
Toccata a Tromba 1

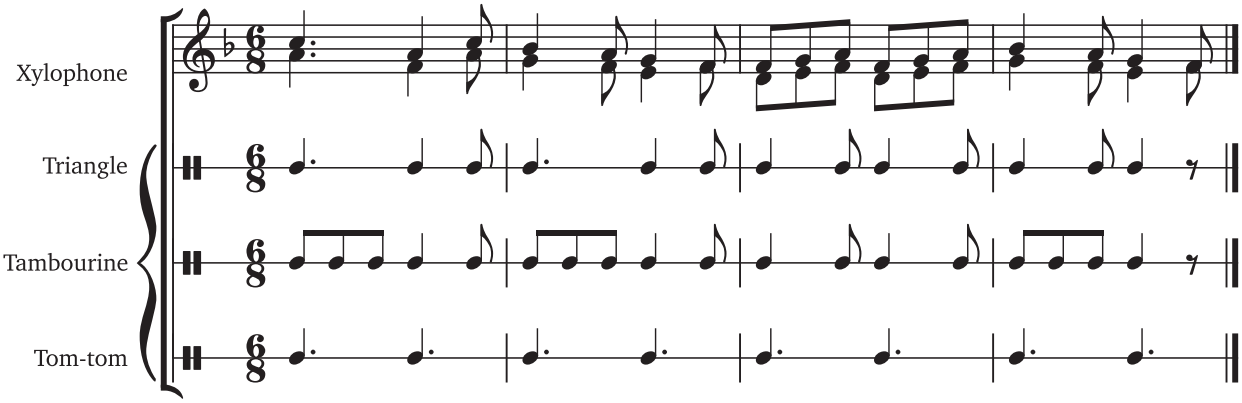
The title **Toccata a Tromba** is only found in Ariosti's *Modo facile*. It is one of several pieces intended to sound fanfare-like. The designation *a Tromba* indicates the association of a trumpet.



La Lepre



La Lepre means "The hare". It is unclear what connection Ariosti intended with this title – perhaps he was inspired by the hare's swift movements.



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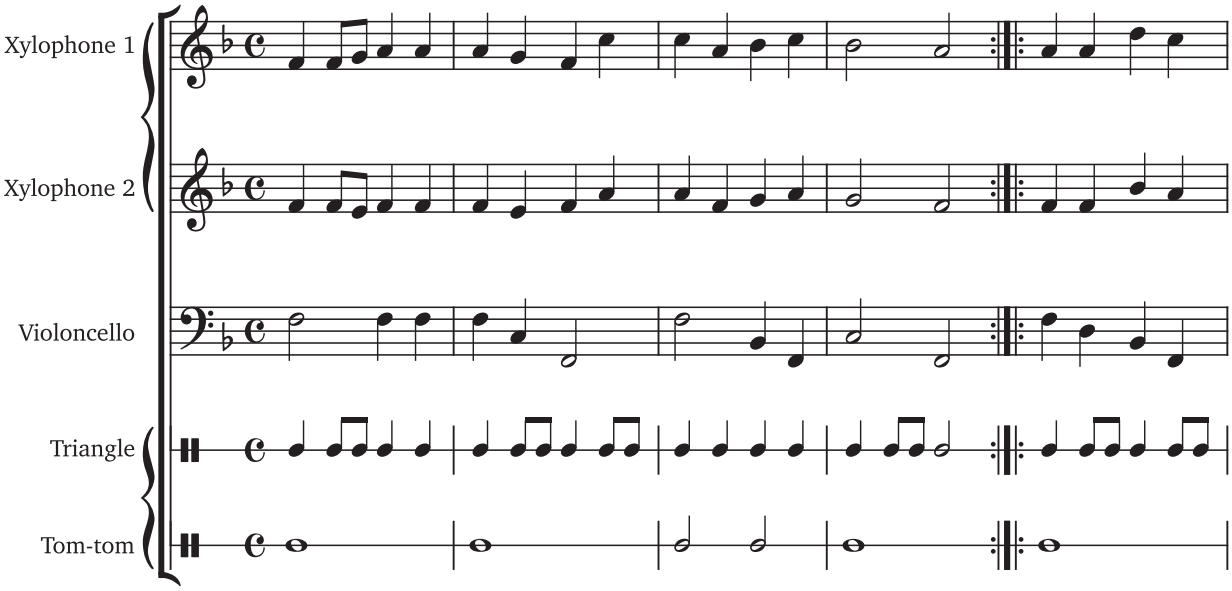
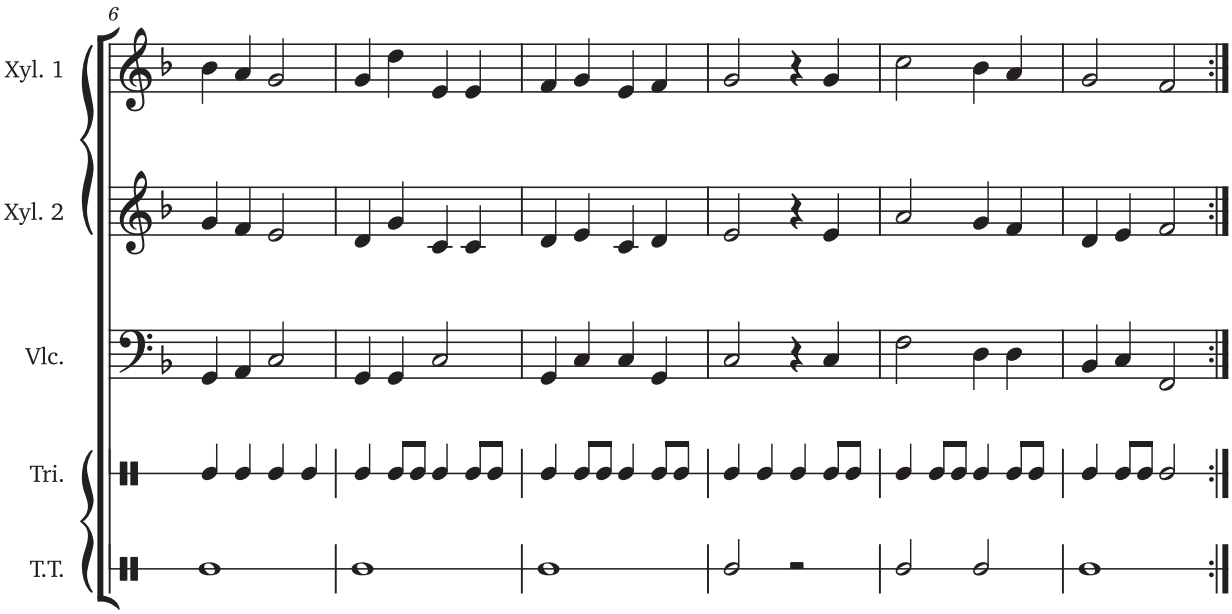
Cattarinino

Cattarinino might be a diminutive form of the name *Caterino*, a common Italian male form of Caterina.

We do not know to whom the title could refer.







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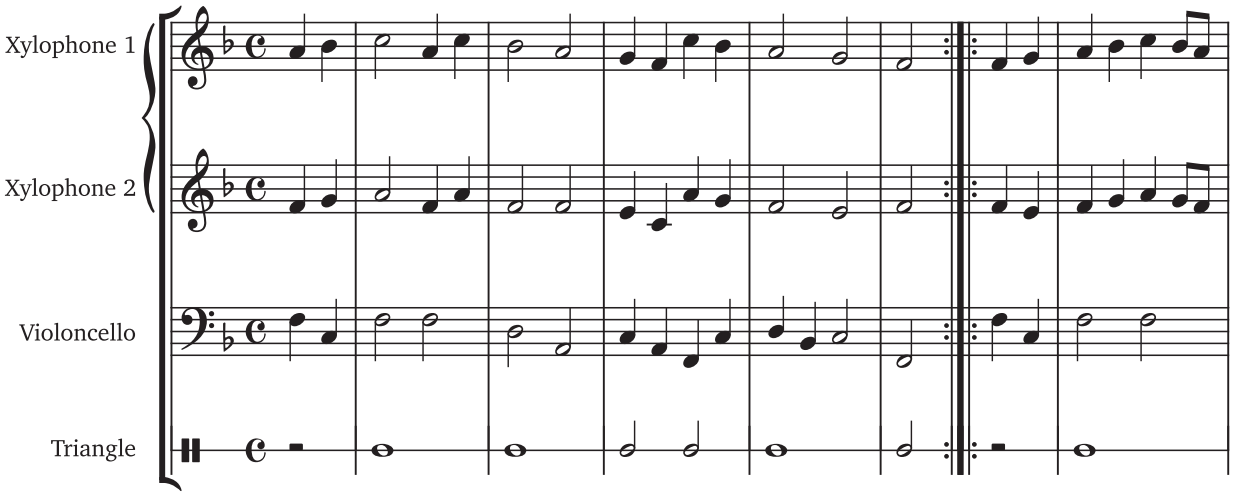
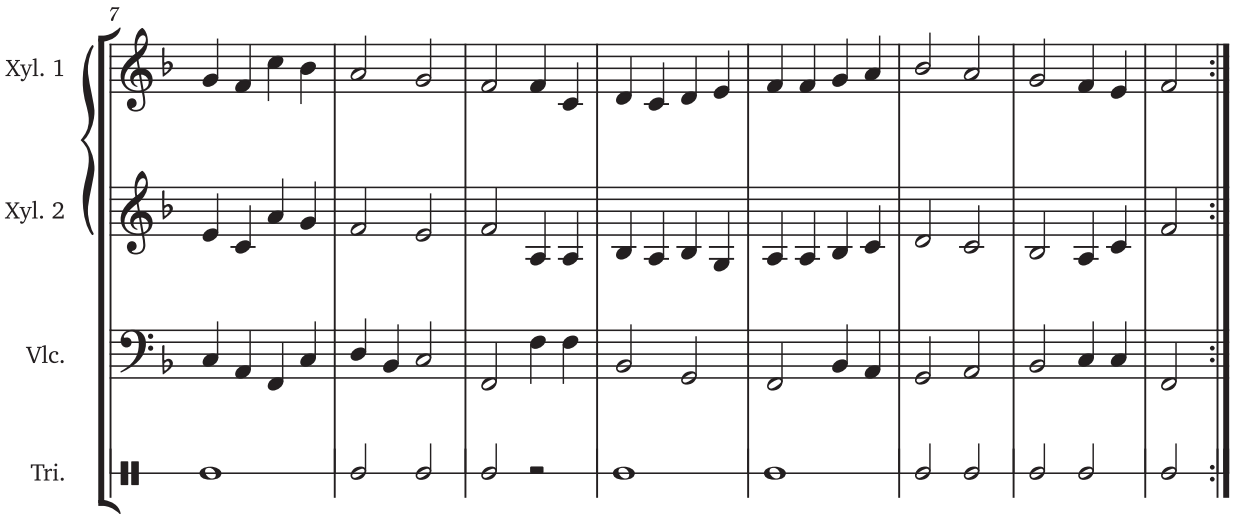
Girometta



The **Girometta** is a folk dance passed down in Italy. Historical sources describe it as a circle dance in which two dancers step forward.





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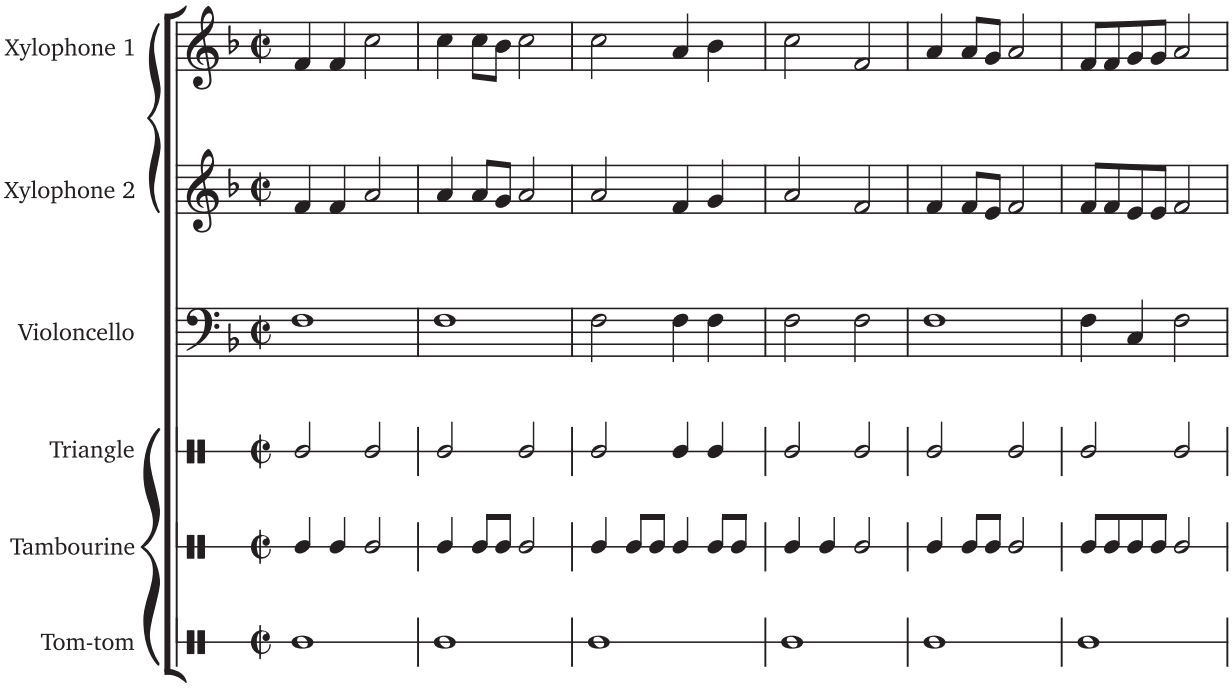
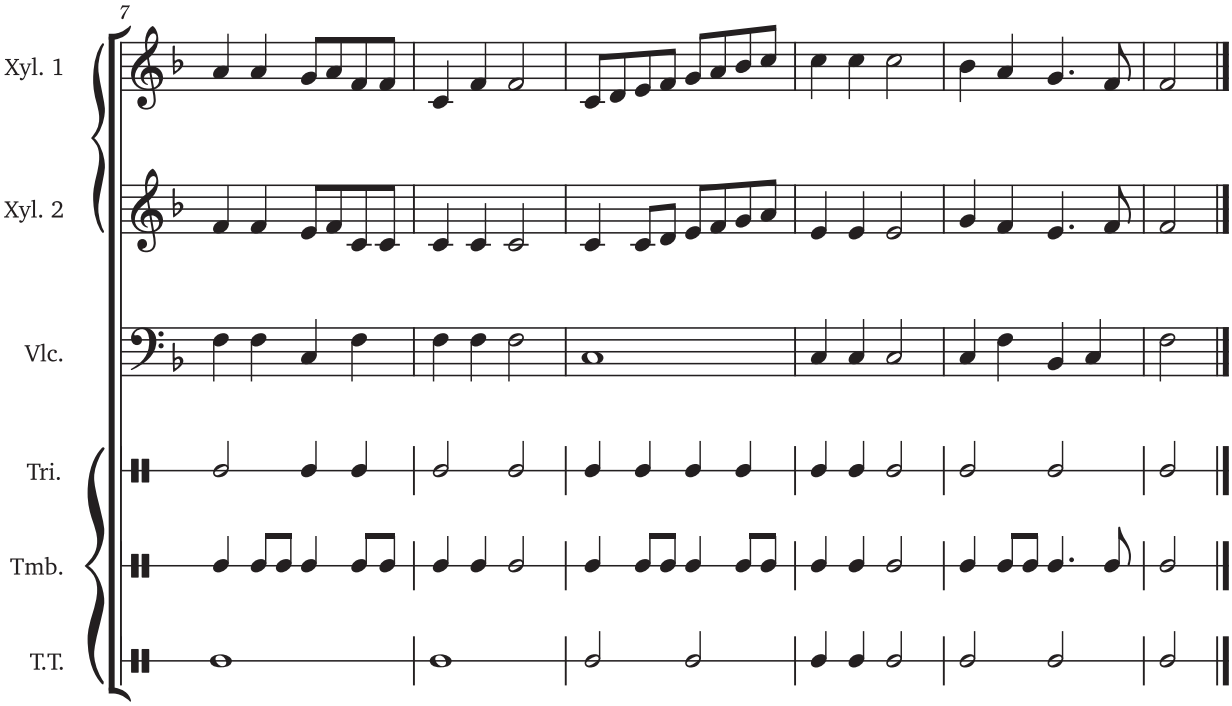
Toccata a Tromba 2







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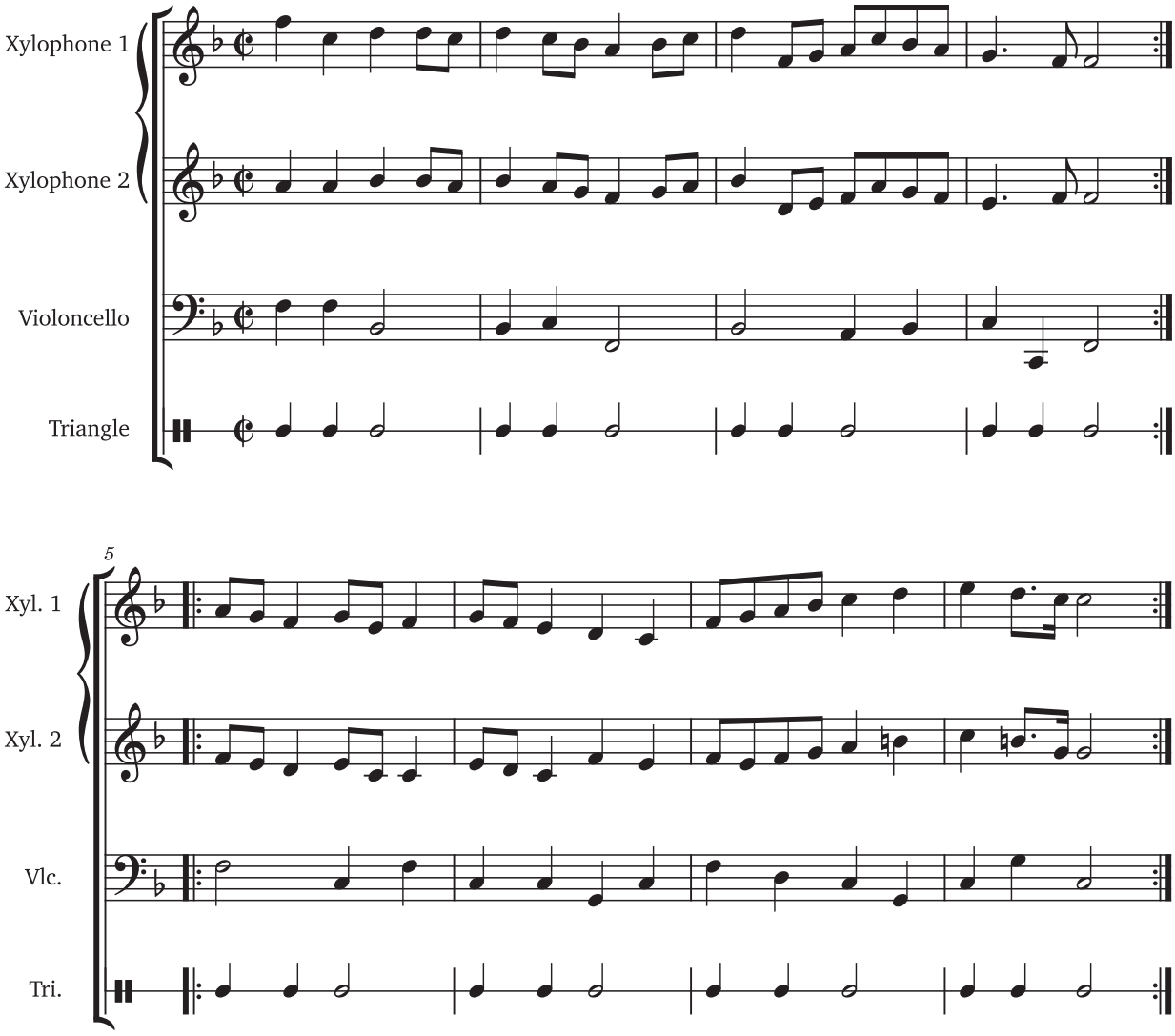
Mostarda



The title **Mostarda** refers to the northern Italian mustard sauce of the same name, made from candied fruit and mustard oil. It is known for its sweet-and-spicy flavour. Whether Ariosti chose the name deliberately to give his piece a "spicy" character remains uncertain – perhaps the music reflects the contrasts of this sauce.



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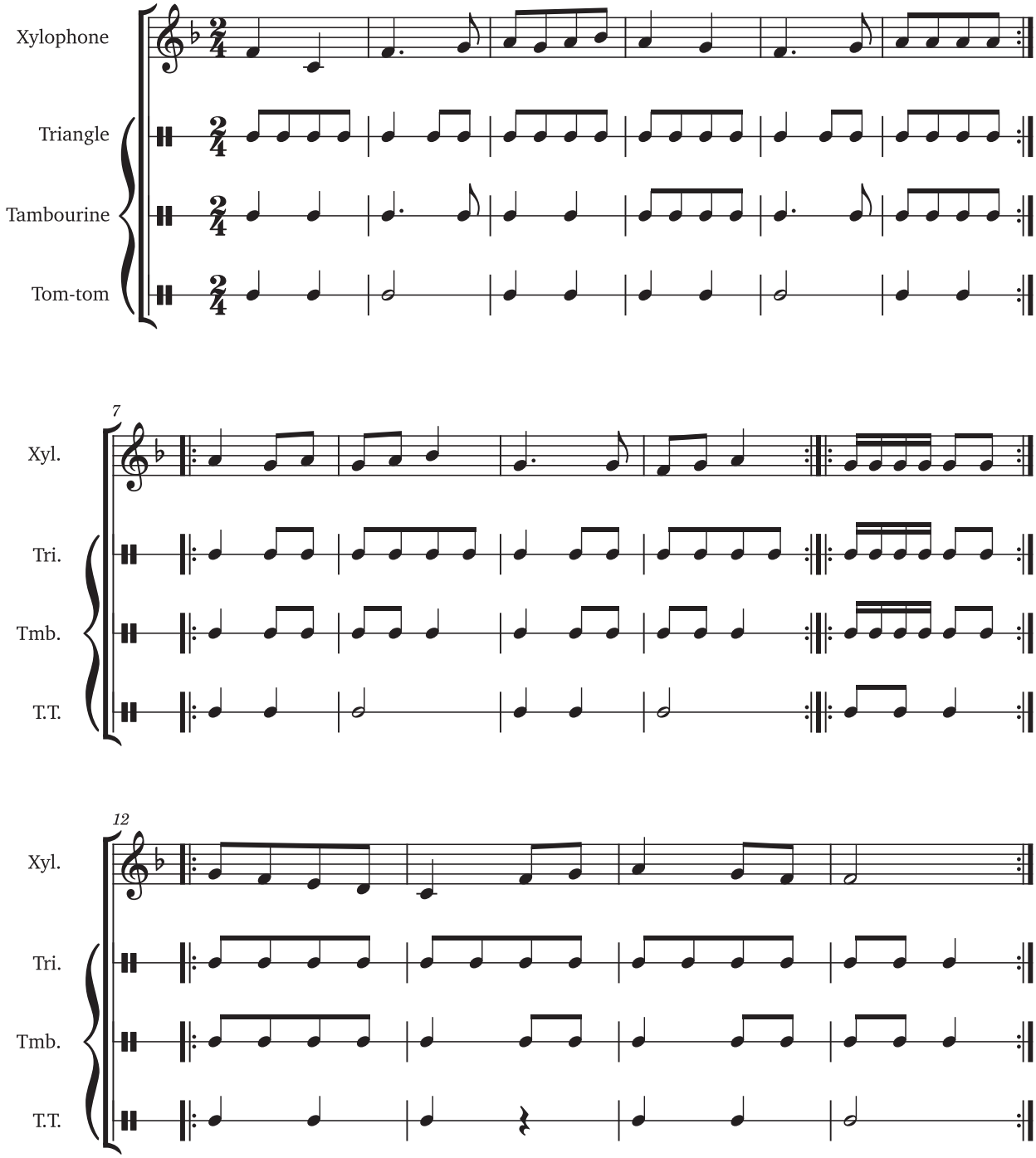
Tiruretta





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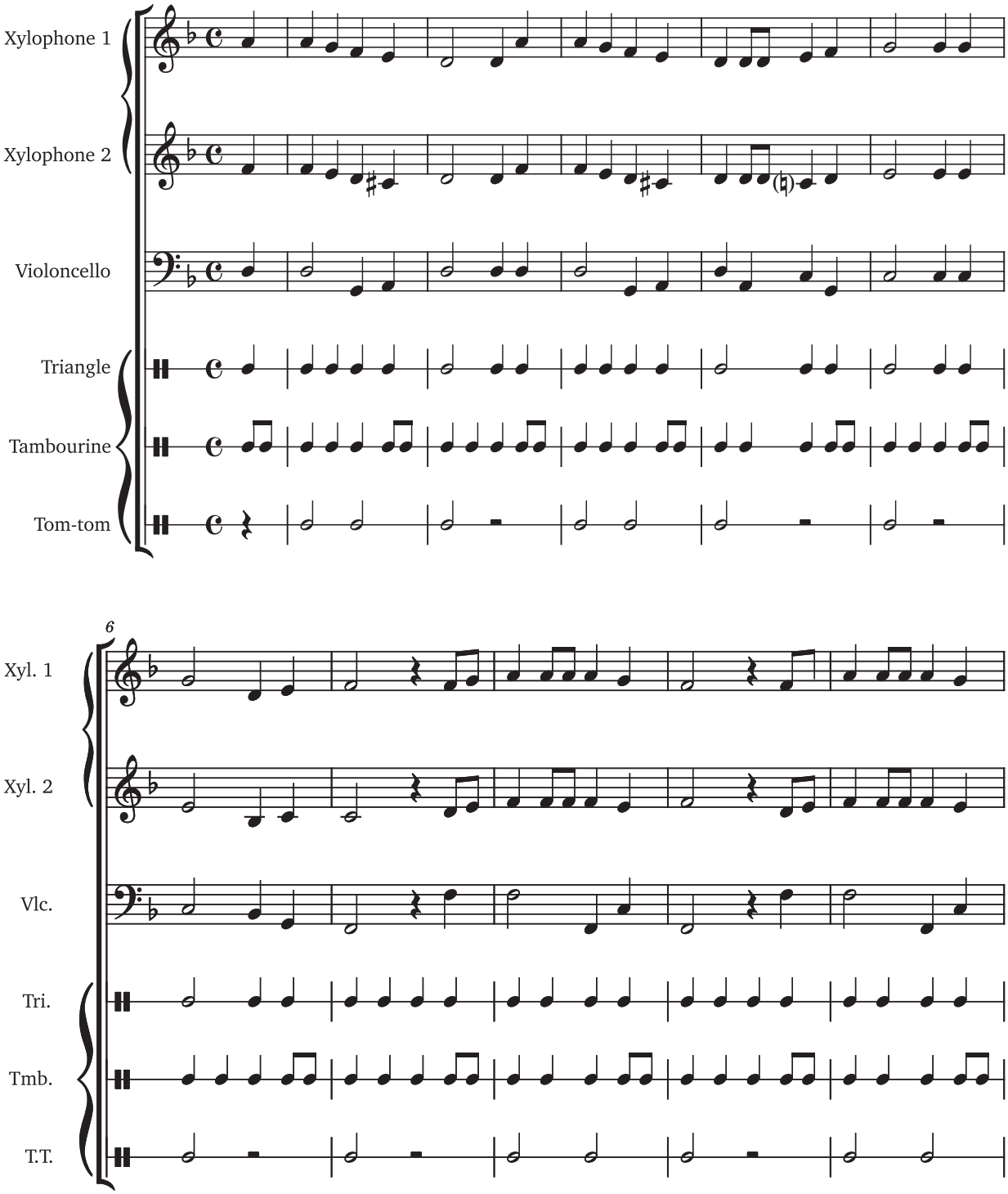
Chichirichì

Chichirichì is the call of a rooster in Italian. The sounds of animals attracted the interest of Baroque arts. Around the time of the publication of Ariosti's *Modo facile*, Dutch painter **Melchior d'Hondecoeter** created several paintings on the theme of *bird concerts*. This piece also exists with a text beginning *Ecco la bella Lisa* ("Behold the fair Lisa").



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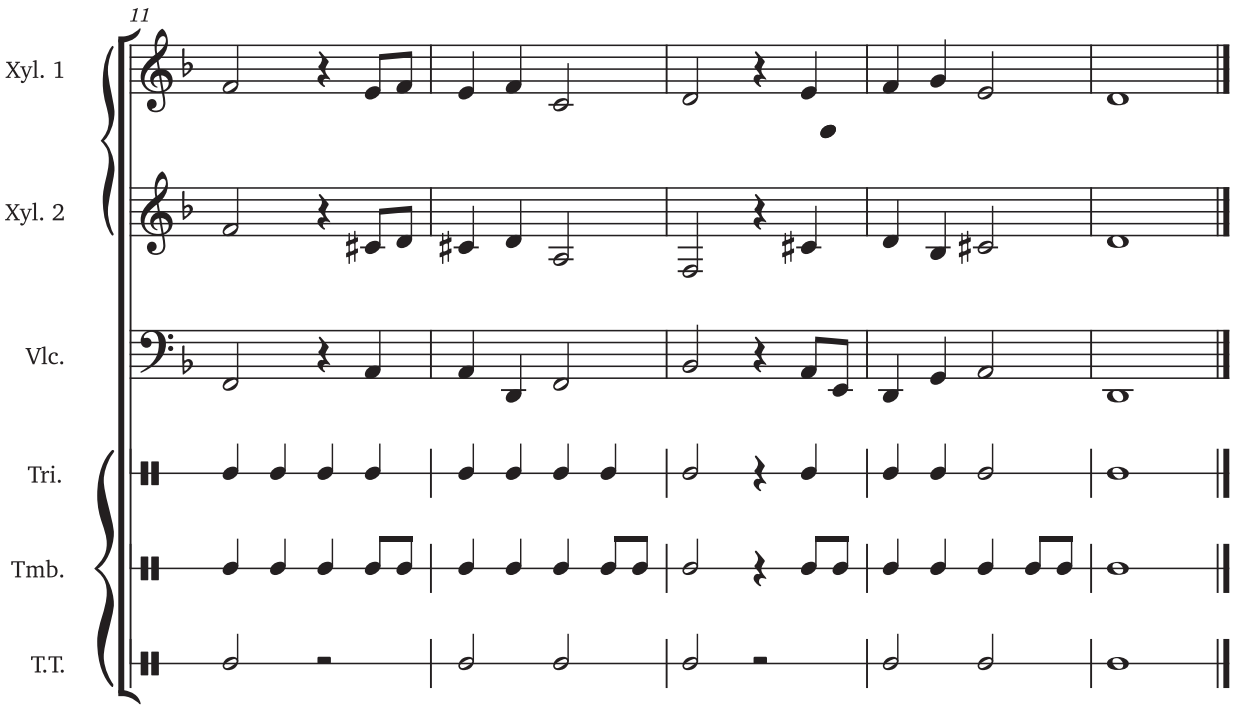



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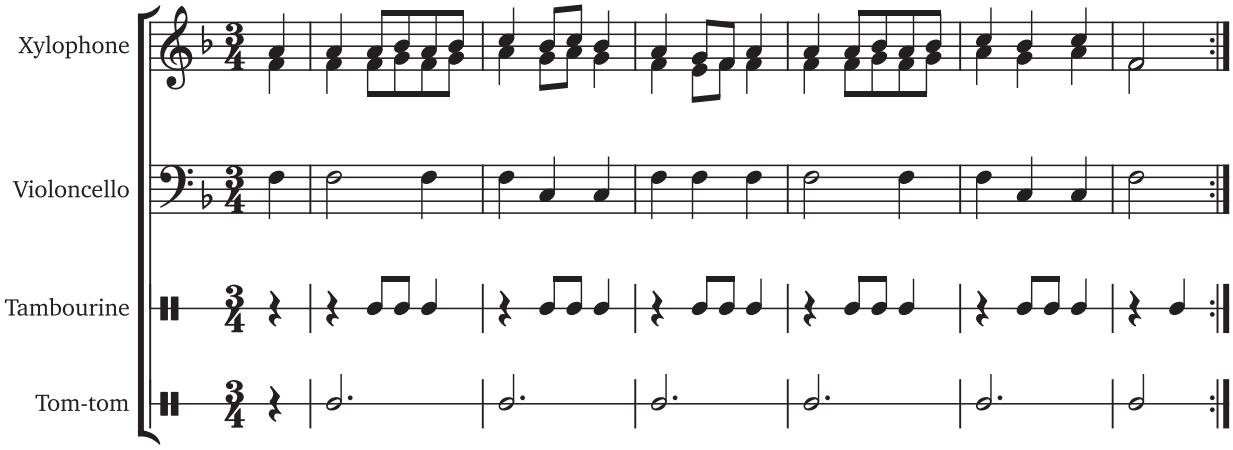
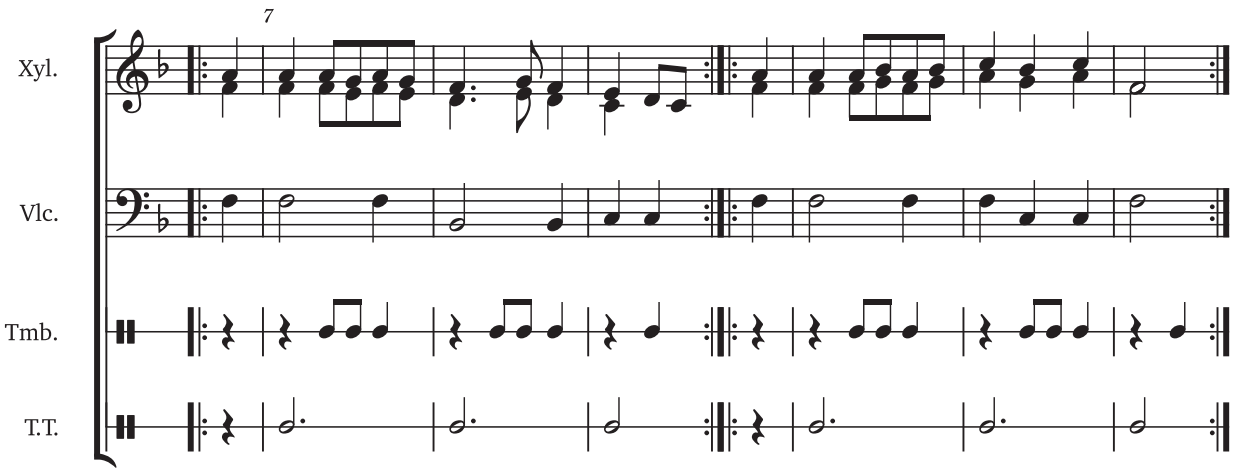
Minuetto



The **Minuetto** (the **menuet**) was a courtly dance in triple metre, highly favoured during the Baroque period. It started to develop around 1650 at the French courts, especially under **Louis XIV**, and quickly spread throughout Europe. As part of Baroque dance suites and social festivities, the menuet accompanied both court ceremonies and festive balls – an elegant triple metre that continues to symbolise refined dance tradition today.





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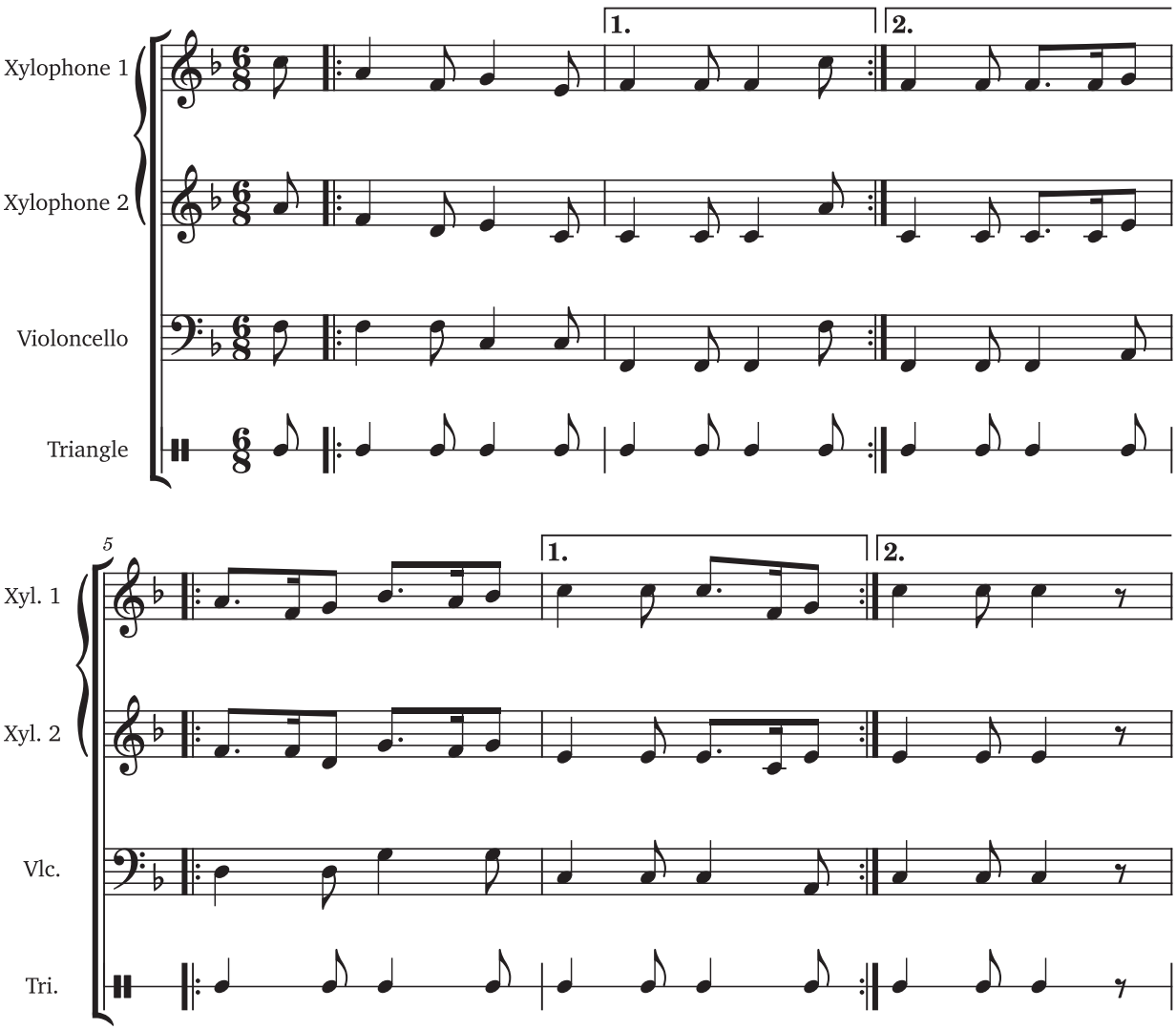
Forlana

The **Forlana** (also **Furlana, Friulana, Furlane**) is an Italian folk dance from the Friuli region. Its popularity brought it into courtly circles as well, especially in Baroque Venice. The dance is usually performed in 6/8 or 6/4 metre. Source evidence suggests that the Forlana bears **influences from Slavic musical traditions.**

It was known in France already around 1700, for example in operas by André Campra. **Johann Sebastian Bach** was also familiar with this dance.





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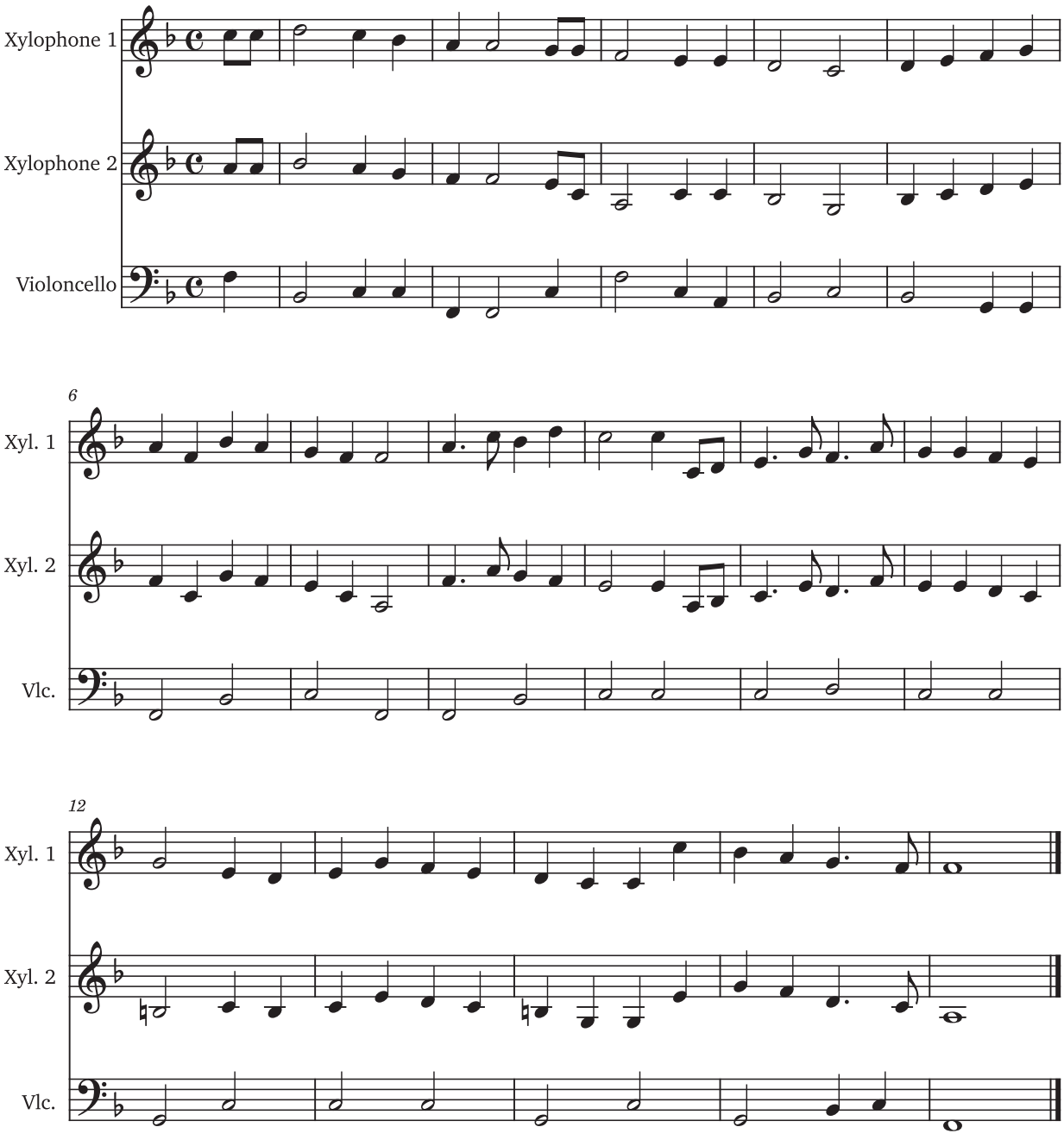
La mia Donna importuna





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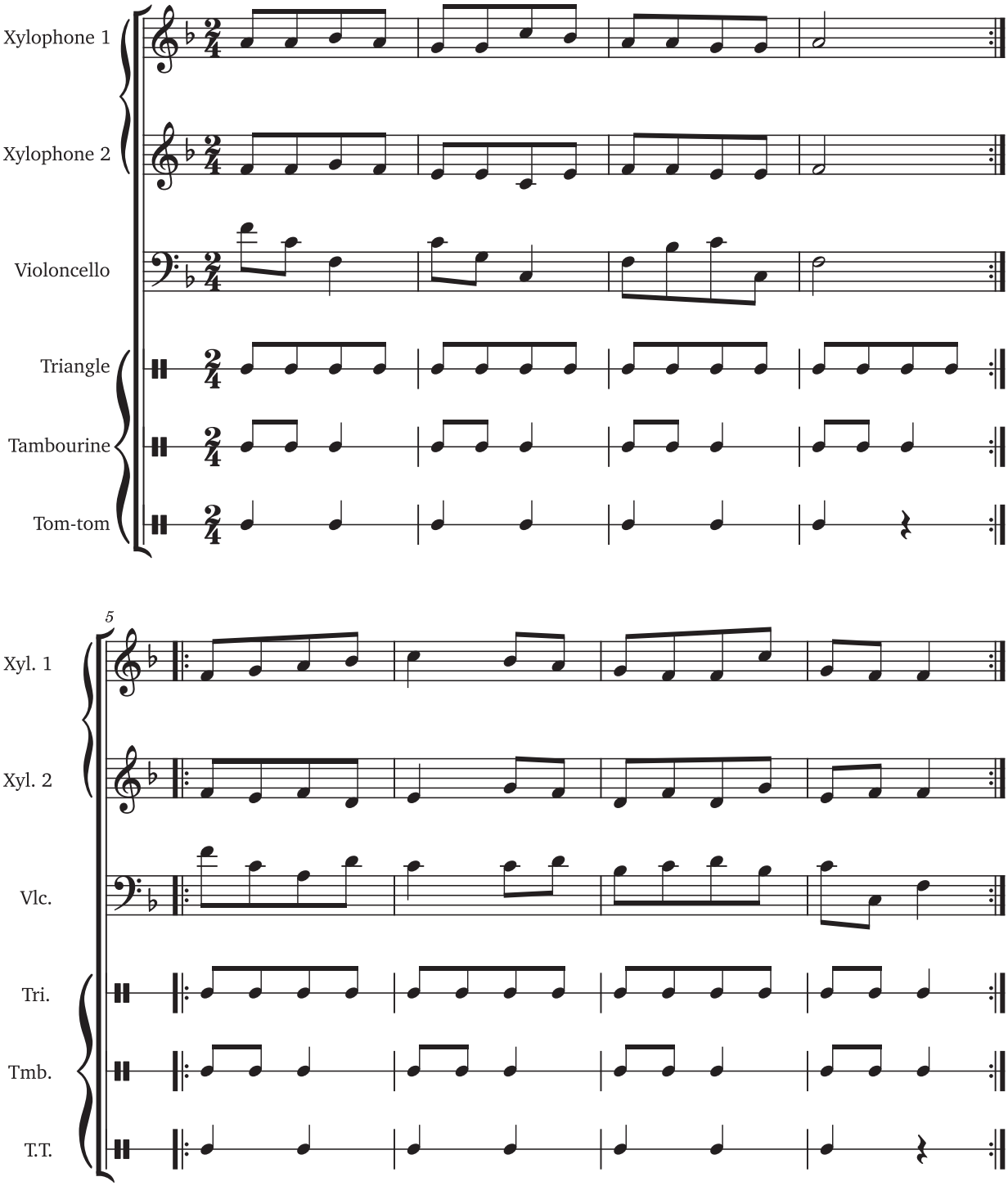
Toccata a Tromba 3





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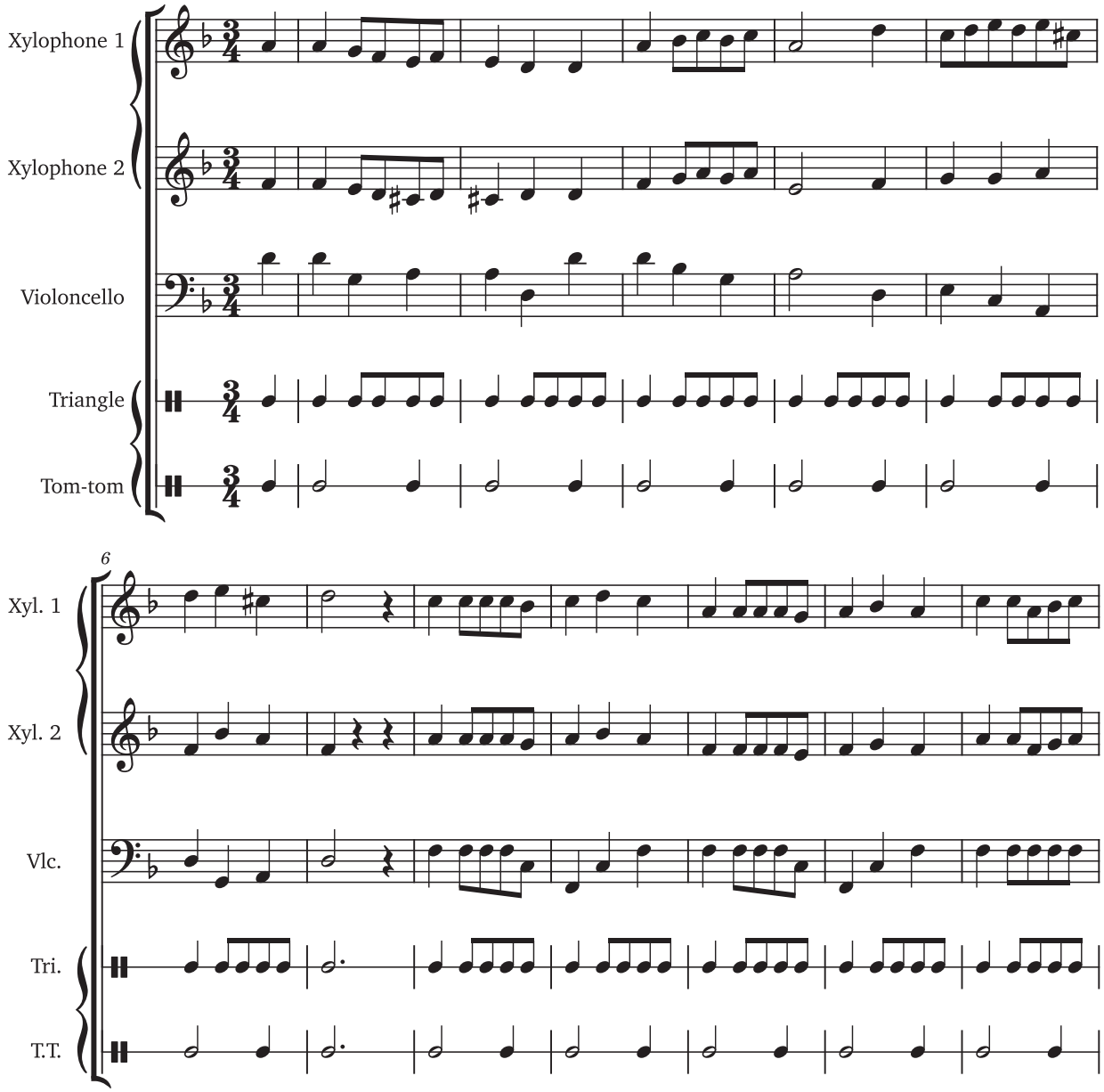
Corrente Piccarda



The **Corrente Piccarda** belongs to the family of *Corrente*, a fast Baroque dance in triple metre that was popular in Italy and France.

It is still unclear whether the French *Courante* or the Italian *Corrente* came first. The designation *Piccarda* refers to the Picardy region.



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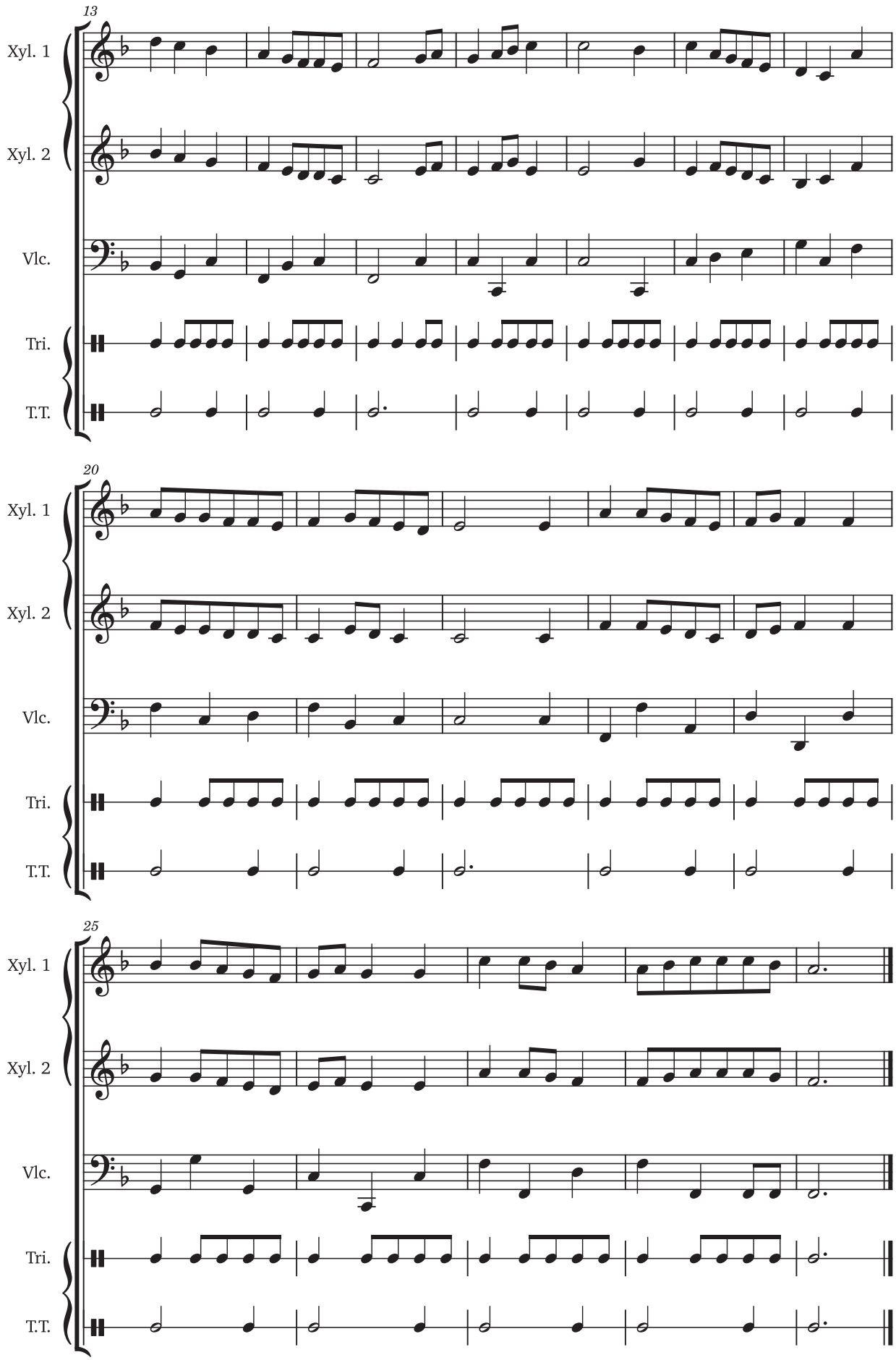

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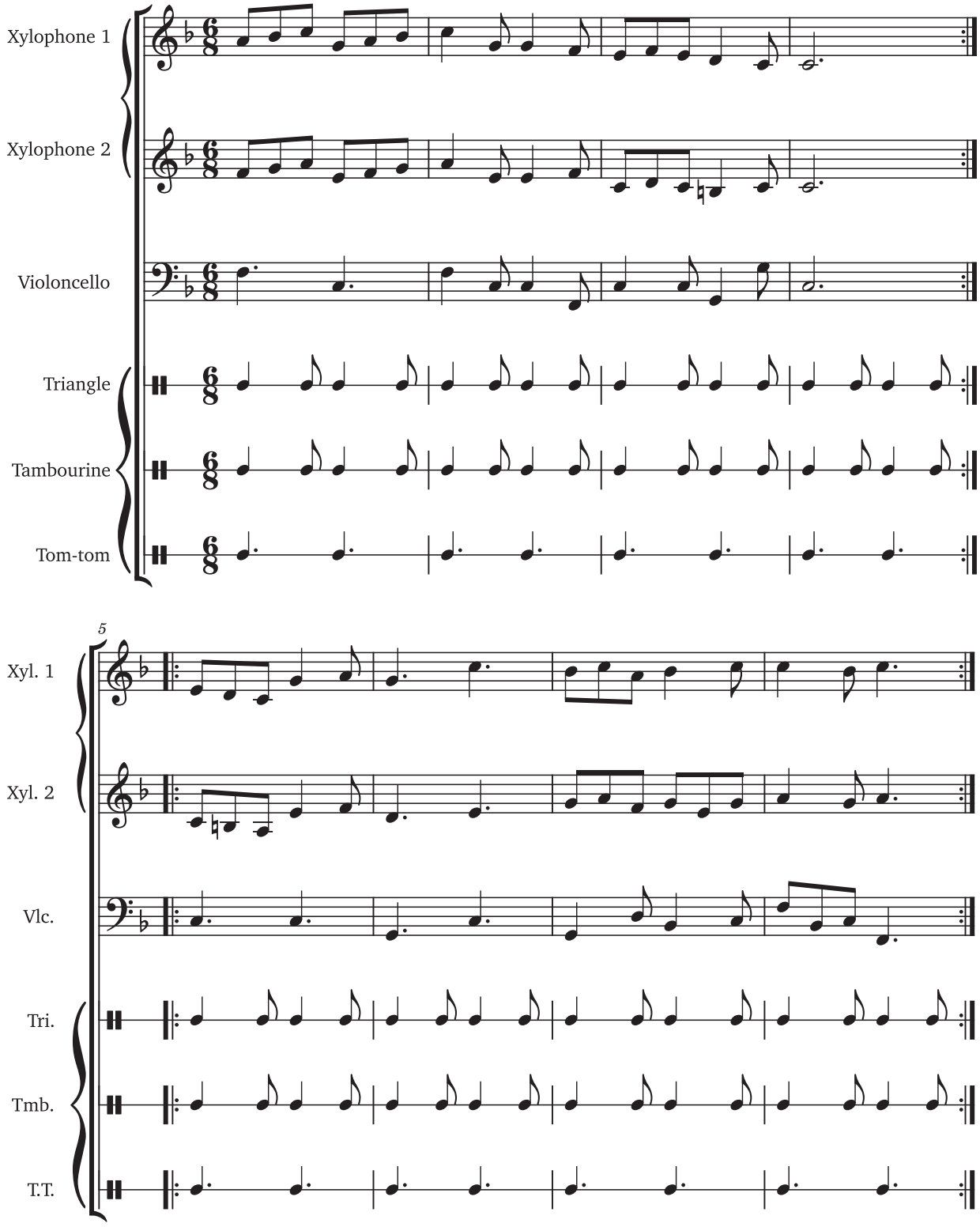
Tironcino



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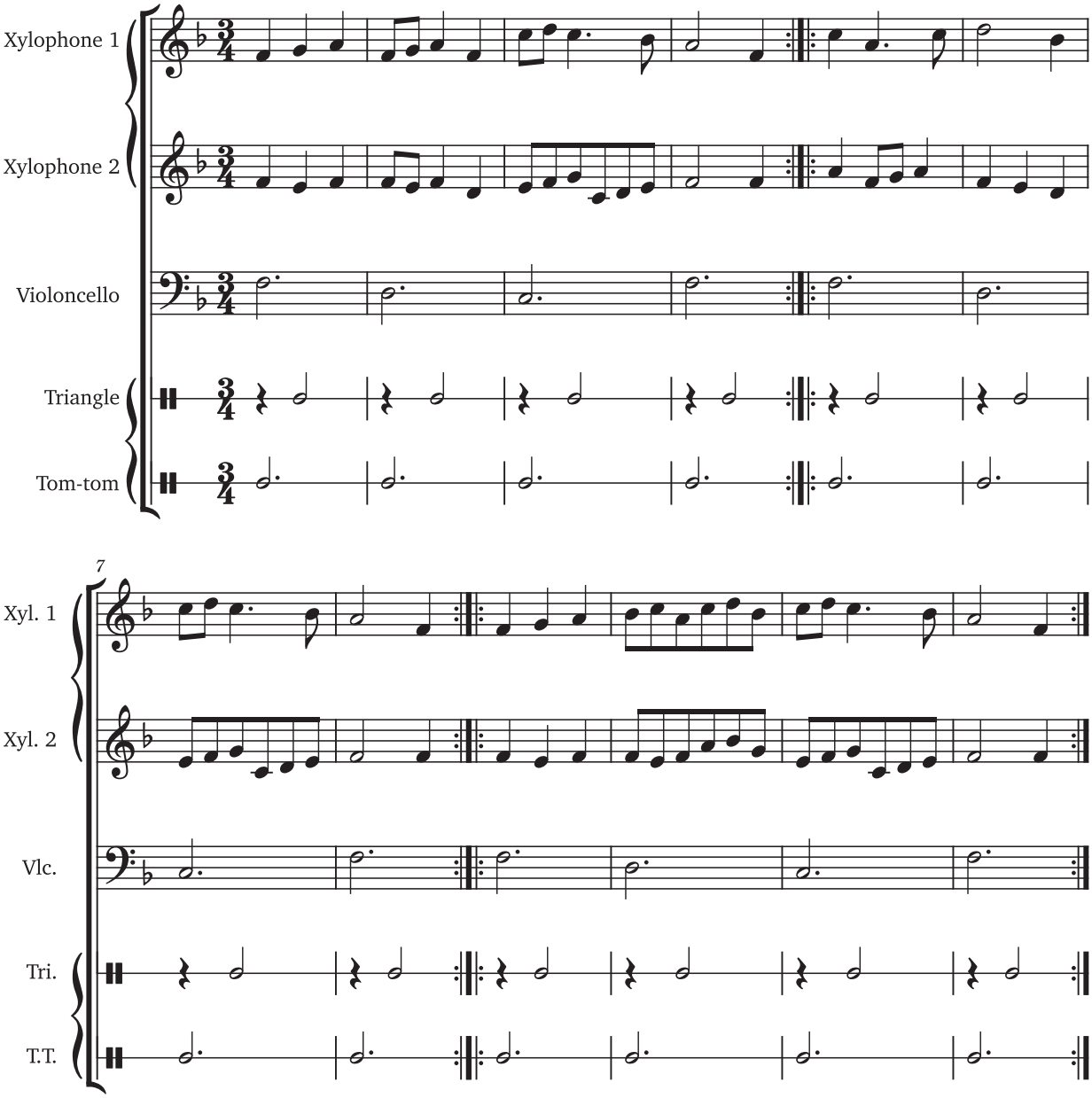
Chiecona

The **Chiecona**, Italian **Ciaconna**, French **Chaconne**, is a Spanish dance in 3/4 or 3/2 metre, usually with a repeating bass pattern. *Chaconnes* were very popular and were composed by nearly all Baroque composers.

There is a wealth of pieces that people still enjoy to perform and listen to today.





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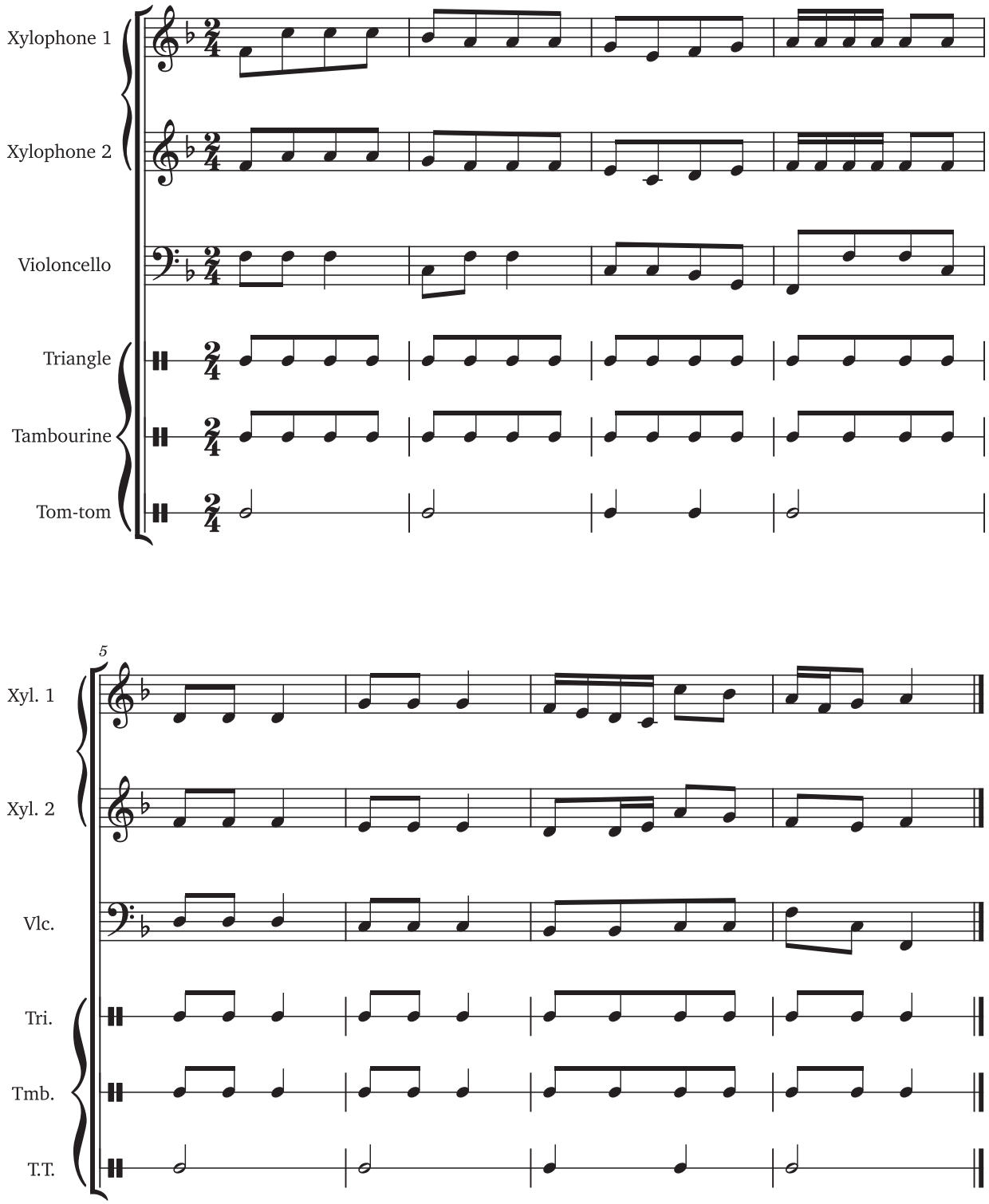
Mariettina



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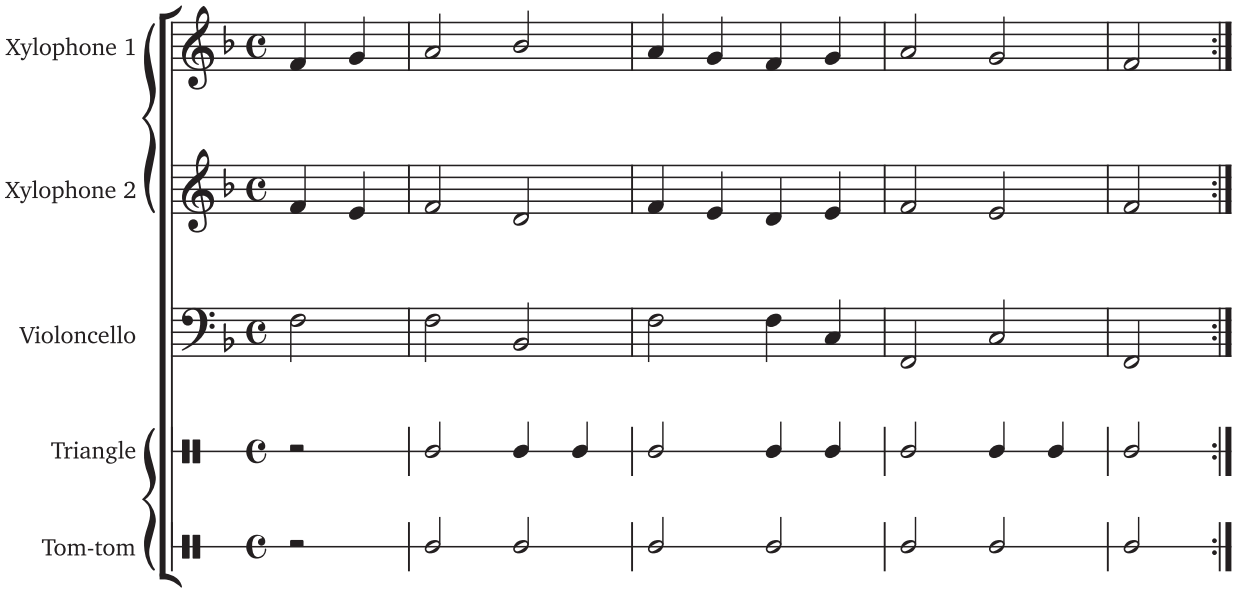
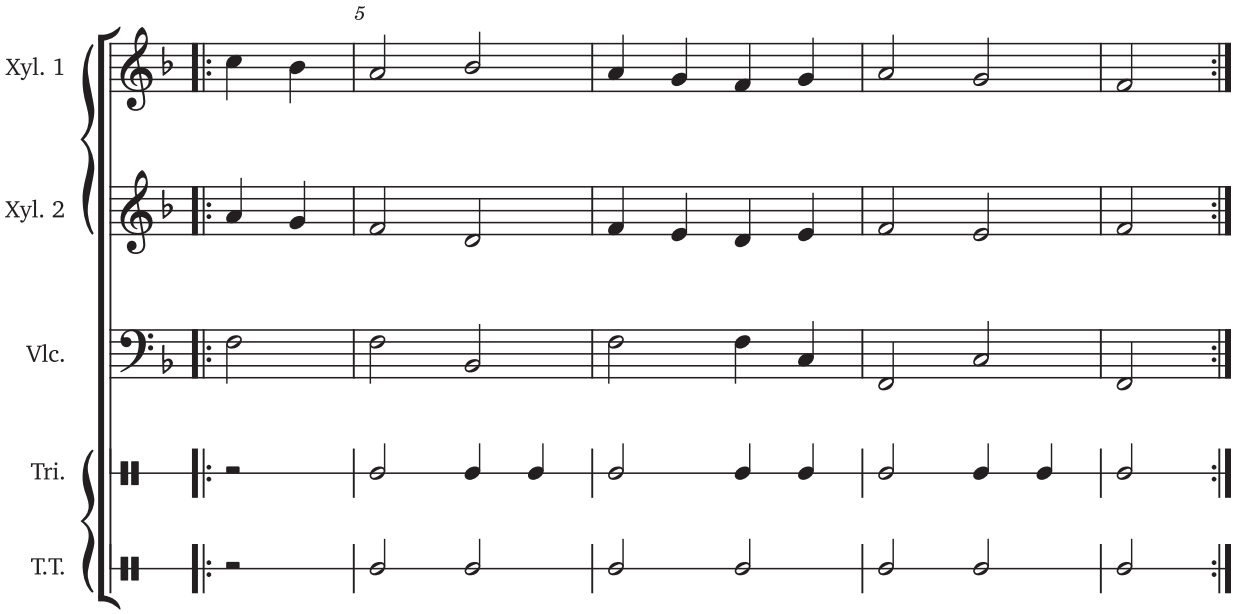
Vilan di Spagna



The **Vilan di Spagna** was a popular melody that many composers adopted.





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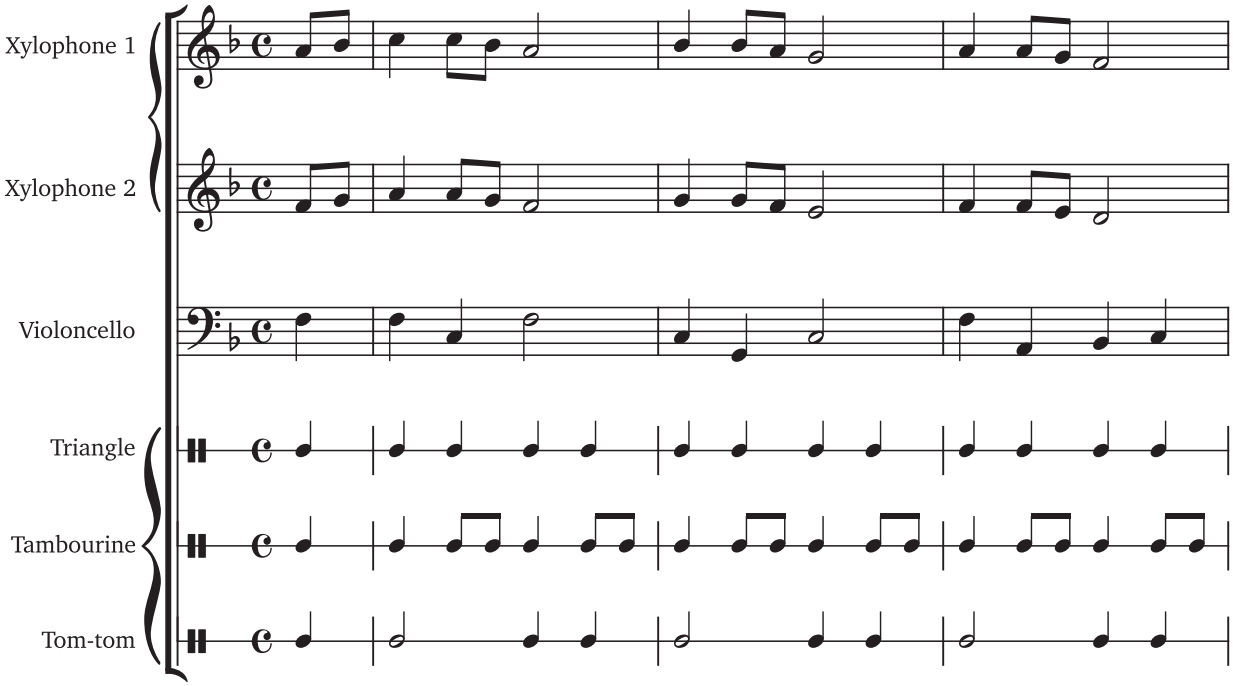
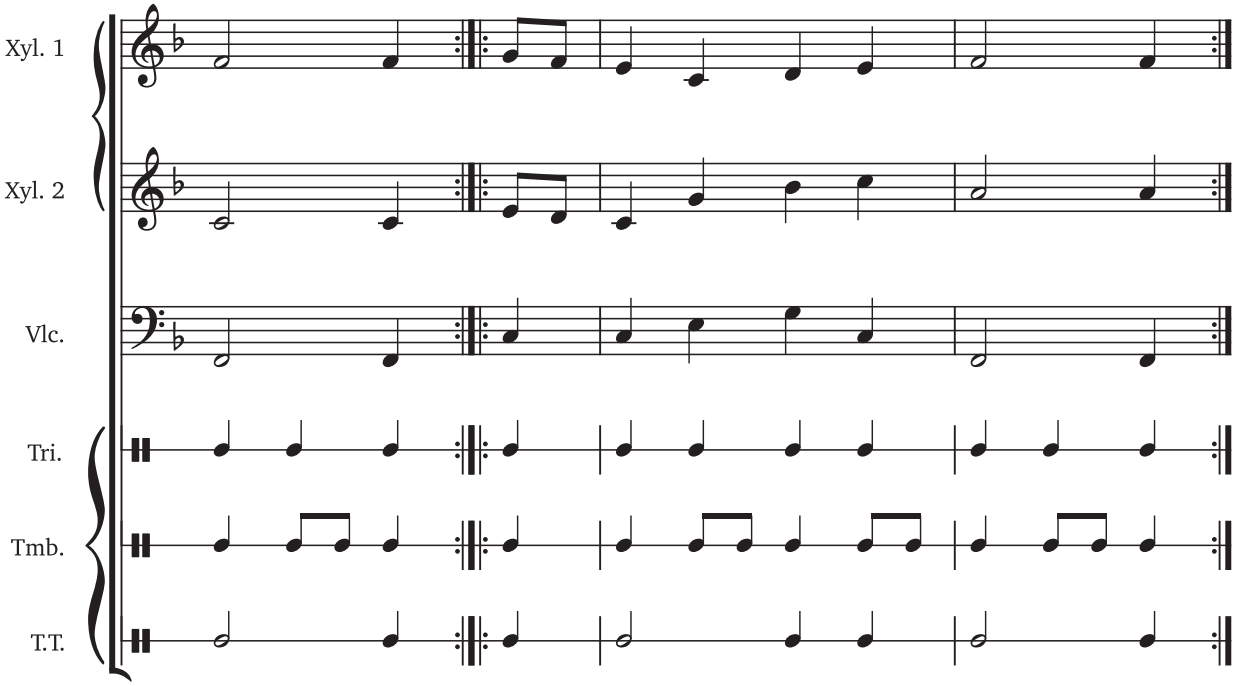
Inglesa







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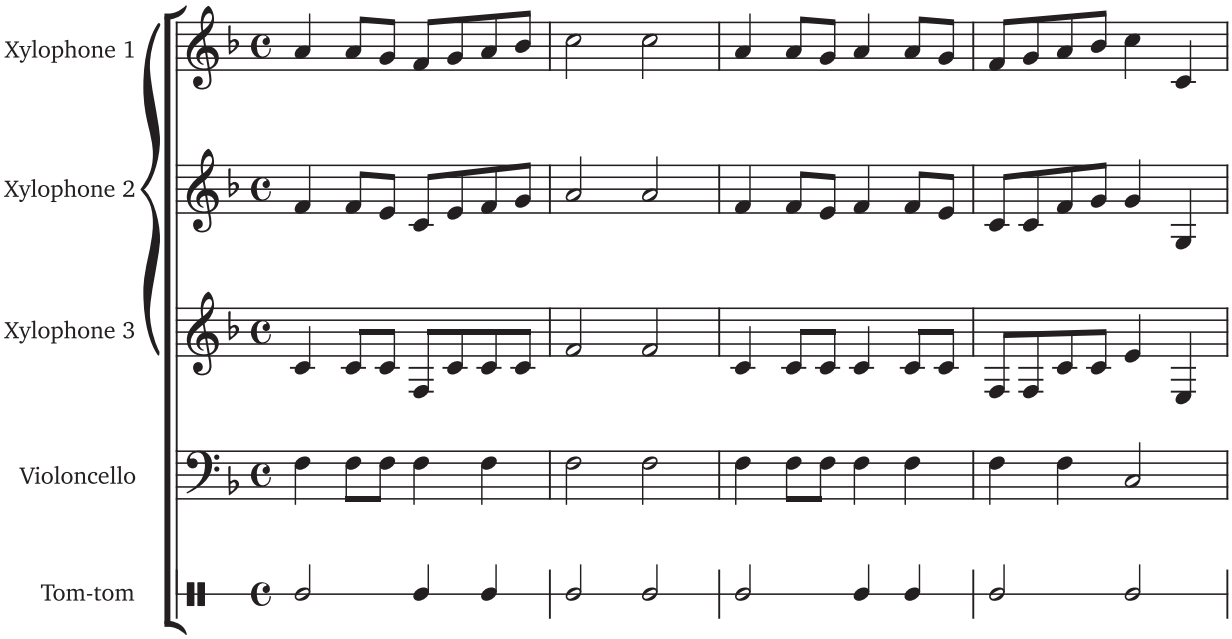
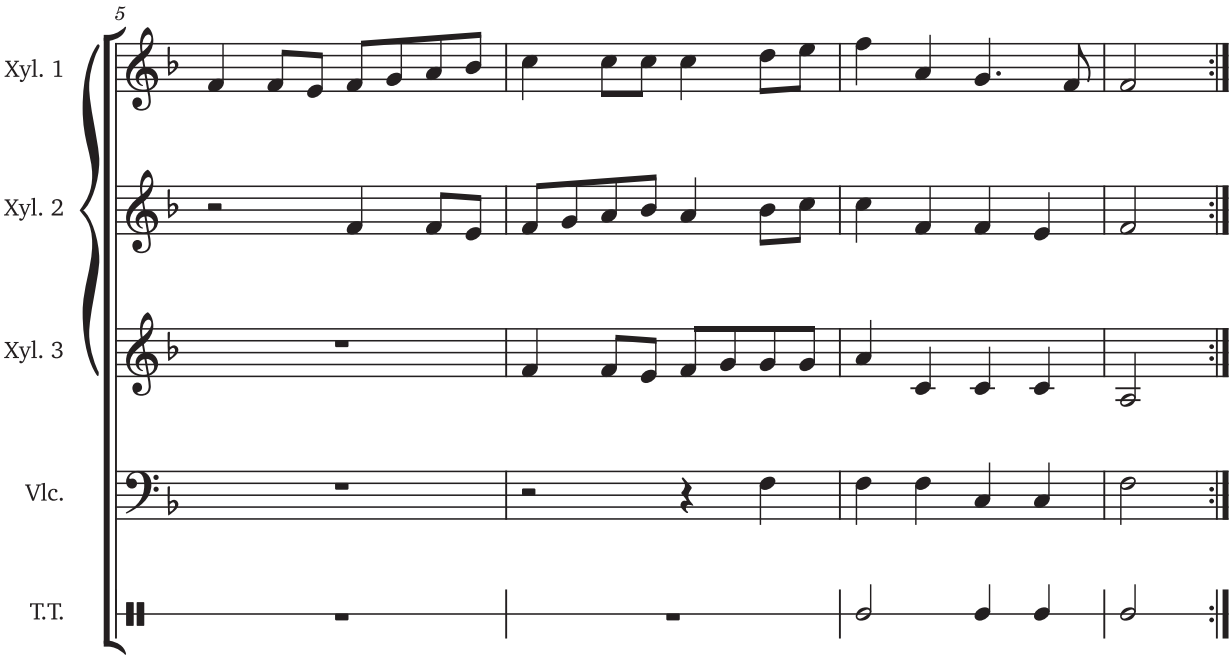
Toccata a Tromba 4







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About the author

Philipp Lamprecht is a singing percussionist, equally at home in early music and contemporary music. His solo projects are designed for both historical and modern instruments. With various chamber ensembles, in new music theatre projects using specially developed formats (Boccaccio's *Il Decamerone, Parzival today* etc.), and in demanding educational formats, Philipp Lamprecht explores the full range of contemporary creative musical culture.



Photographer: Franz Gleiß

Current projects include *I quattro fantolini*, a concert programme centred on the *Strohfiedel* (historical xylophone); the sung rendition of the *Nibelungenlied* (circa 1200; UNESCO World Heritage since 2009); and the *Nicodemus Passion* by the Monk of Salzburg (14th century; Duo Enßle-Lamprecht) which is likely the first German-language passion.

Philipp Lamprecht is co-founder of the ensembles Duo Anne-Suse Enßle & Philipp Lamprecht (Austria, Medieval & New Music), ensemble chromoson (Italy, New Music), and La Petite Écurie (Netherlands, historical oboe band).

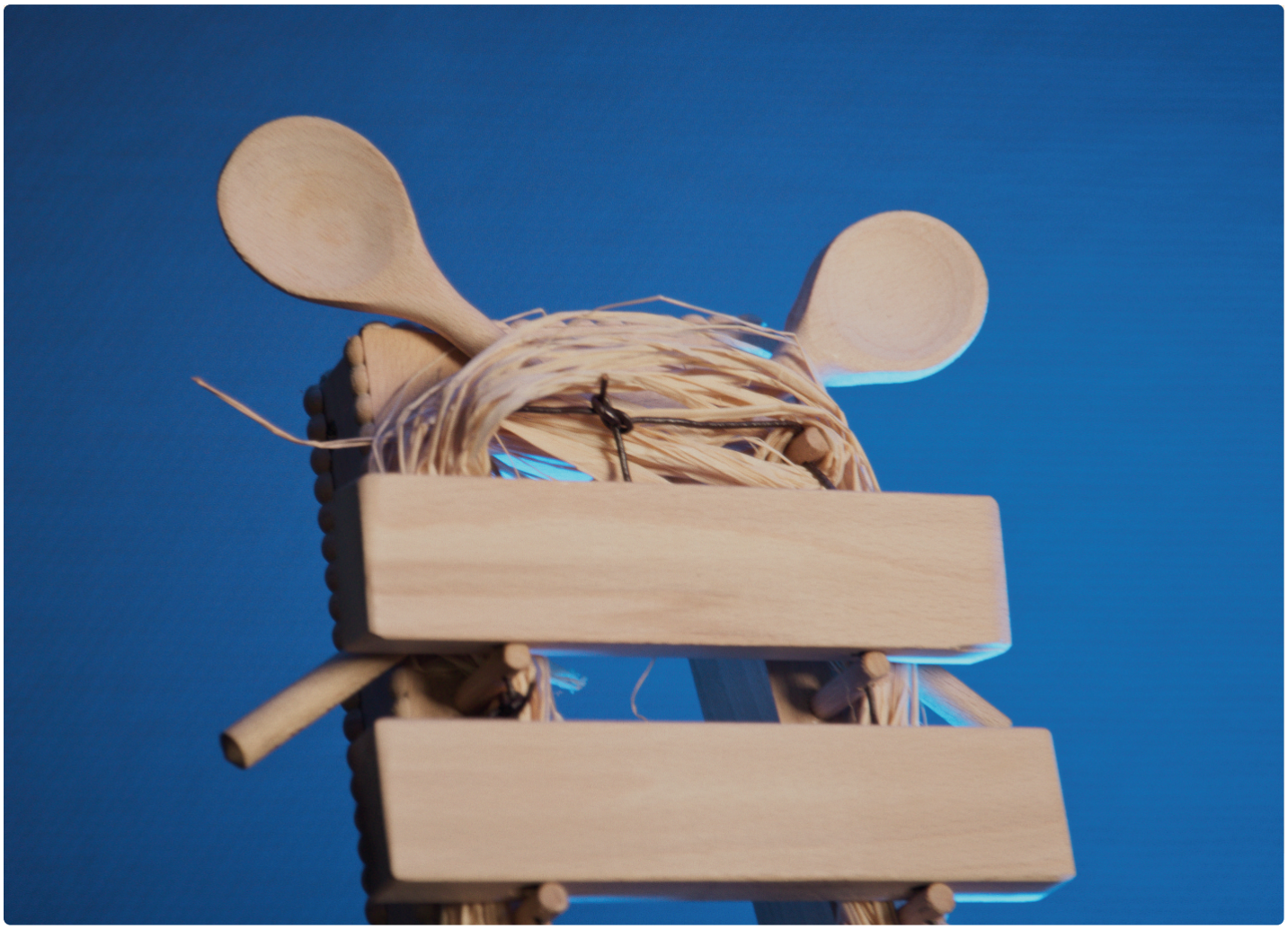
He initially studied classical percussion with Prof. Peter Sadlo at Mozarteum University Salzburg (Austria). Later, he specialised in contemporary music within the Academy of Ensemble Modern, followed by postgraduate studies with Prof. Reinhard Goebel (historical performance practice), and has since further developed his vocal skills with Gudrun Bär.

In 2019, the project *Johannespassion à trois* received an OPUS Klassik award as most innovative concert of the year. It was developed in collaboration with Benedikt Kristjánsson (tenor & concept), Elina Albach (harpsichord & organ) and Podium Esslingen (idea & organisation). This version also received special attention through a worldwide broadcast from the Thomaskirche in Leipzig on Good Friday 2020.

From 2015 to 2021, Philipp Lamprecht taught percussion at the University Mozarteum Salzburg. Since 2018, he has led the International Paul Hofhaymer Society in Salzburg.

Philipp's CDs are released with ARCANA (Outhere Music) and Audax Records.

www.philipplamprecht.com | www.enssle-lamprecht.com | www.chromoson.cc | www.hofhaymer-society.at | www.petite-ecurie.com



About this project

This OpenBook offers a new way to engage with the music of **Giovanni Battista Ariosti** (1668–1729). His collection *Modo facile di suonare il sistro, nomato il timpano* from 1686 is a rare testament to Baroque musical culture: short dances, songs, and instrumental pieces that connect courtly style and popular traditions.

This edition offers arrangements that can easily be played on different instruments and in various ensembles. In this way, the pieces can be appreciated not only as historical sources but also experienced practically – in teaching, in ensembles or simply when playing music in a group.

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