Playing Classical Literature on the 7-String Guitar

by Chris Buzzelli

One of the great advantages in playing classical literature on the seven-string guitar lies in the performance of music that was originally intended for another instrument. The added range allows the guitarist to play many bass notes at the exact pitch, or at least in the same register, as in the original version. Nowhere is this more advantageous than in the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. Although Bach never wrote anything for the modern guitar, much of his music has become standard repertoire for guitarists.

The *Lute Suite*, BWV 995, is usually played in the key of A minor and is greatly enhanced by the addition of the low A string. Likewise with the *Prelude, Fugue and Allegro*, BWV 998, the added low string allows the guitarist to play many bass notes in their original register. Even the frequently played "Prelude", BWV 999, benefits from the added low string. Most guitarists play that piece in the key of D minor, with the note E in the bass in bar 23. In fact, the bass note there should be an F, but that would be impossible to play, along with the upper part, on a standard six-string guitar. The added low string allows seven-string players to make that correction.

The piece included here is the "Prelude" from Bach's *Cello Suite No. 1*. This piece is also a standard in the classic guitar repertoire, but it is usually played in the key of D major. Here the piece is presented in A major, much closer in register to the original cello key (G major). Very little "transcribing" needed to be done. The melody lines are generally a step above where they would be played on a cello. I did add some bass notes to make the piece sound more idiomatic to the guitar. The entire suite works very well on seven-string guitar with relatively little revision. I encourage you to try this entire piece, or any other piece that suits you, on the seven-string.

Performance Notes:

To minimize ledger lines, some notes are written with an (8) beside them. Those notes should be played an octave lower than written.

The slurs have been added by the arranger. In general, the melody line should be played very legato.

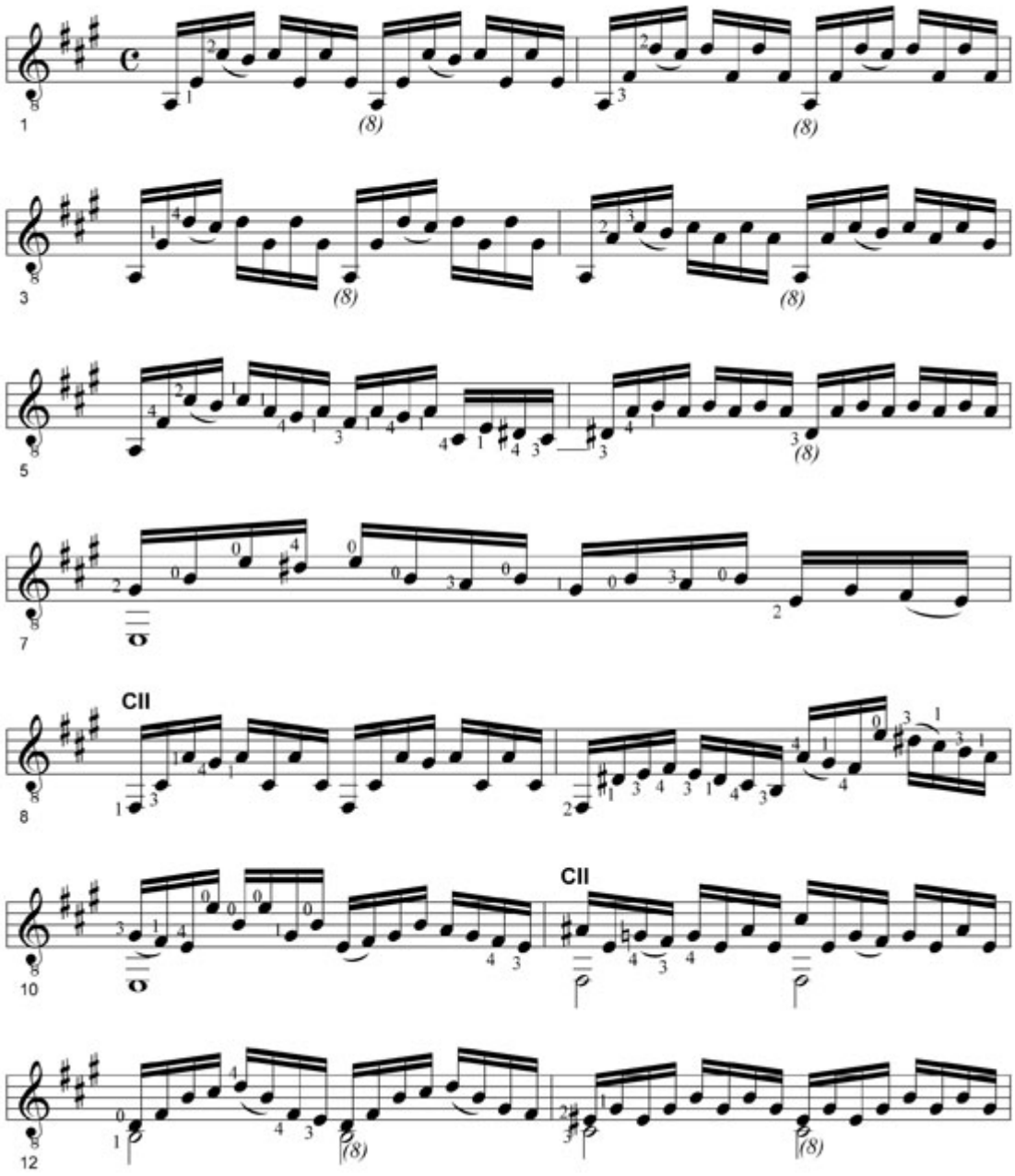
I've included some fingering suggestions that I think work well, but you should also experiment with your own fingerings.

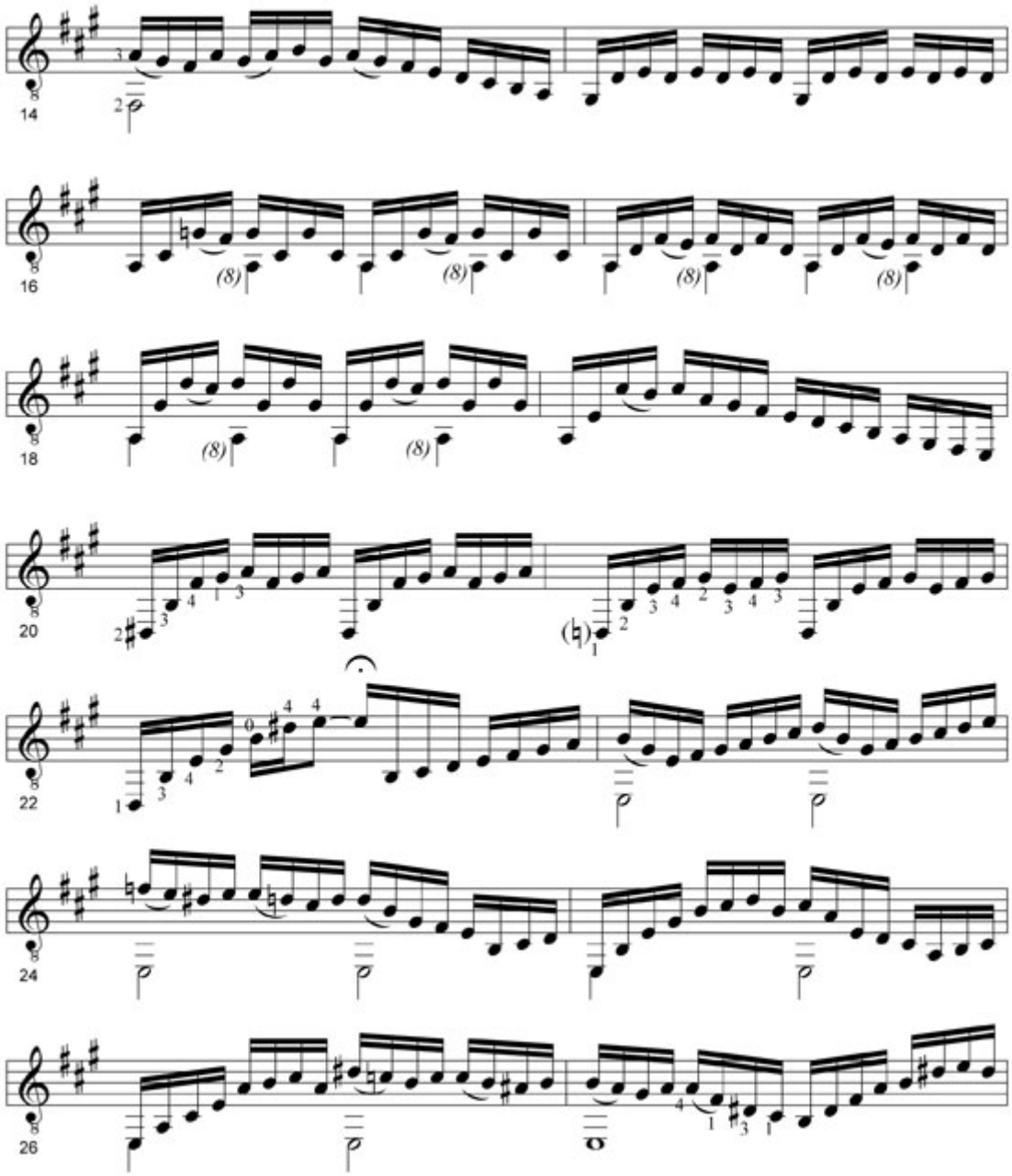
Cello Suite No. 1

I. Prelude

arr. by Chris Buzzelli

J.S. Bach

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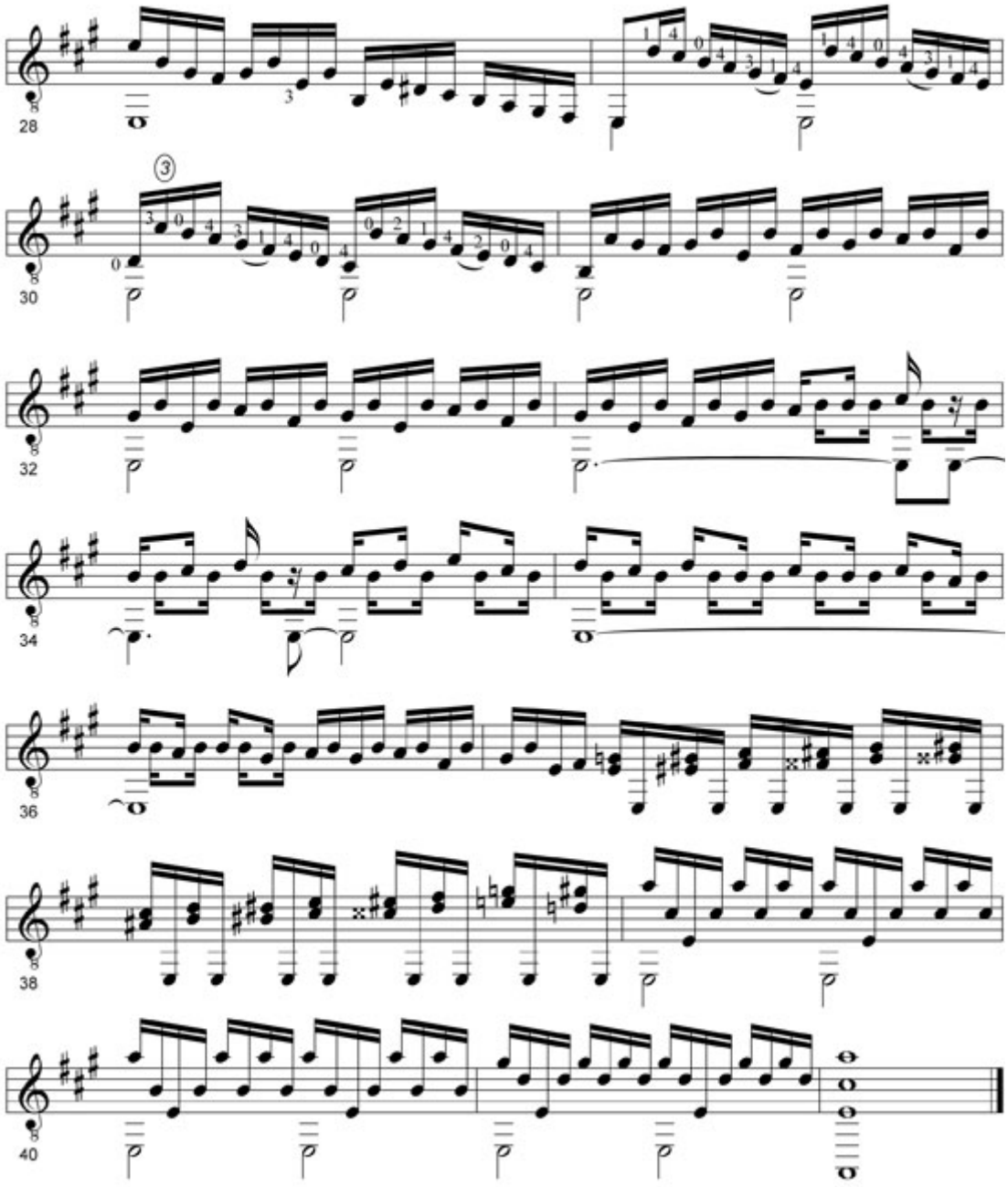
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