‘Forlorn Hope’: tracing the dynamics of composer-performer collaboration

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Powerpoint slides accompanying the presentation given at the Performance Studies Network International Conference, Faculty of Music, University of Cambridge, 14 July 2011.

Introduction

The project

Artistic aims

- Sustain a composer-performer collaboration over a period of approximately three years
- Create a series of new compositions by the composer written for and with the performer
- Use a variety of different instruments from the guitar family
- Use a variety of different ensemble contexts and additional ‘guest’ performers
- Produce a commercial CD of the works

Research questions

- How do the processes of a composer-performer collaboration evolve over a sustained period of time and across several contrasting artistic projects?
- How are the individual musical personalities of composer and performer shaped in the processes of collaboration?
- How is creativity distributed between composer and performer?
- How do our cultural tools (including notated score and instrument) exert an influence on the creative process and the collaborative relationship?

Compositional characteristics

- Use of new tuning systems and new instrumental techniques
- Exploration of performer ‘virtuosities’
- Use of performer improvisations to generate compositional material
- Use of ‘malleable’ musical structures that allow an enhanced level of performer freedom and choice in their presentation and realisation.

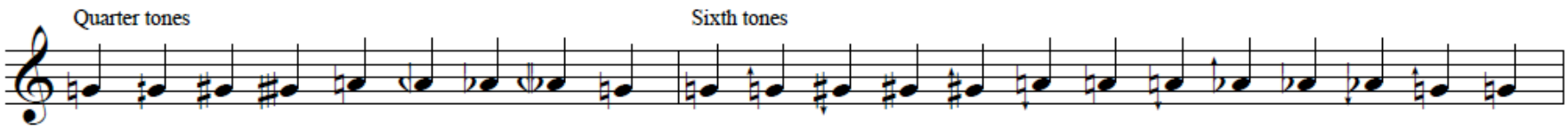
Timetable to date

- June 2010, Malmö: development of tuning systems
- September 2010, London: transcription of John Dowland's *Forlorn Hope Fancy*
- April 2011, St Neots: composition of three of the seven 'partes' of the first piece, *Forlorn Hope*
- June 2011, Malmö: rehearsal of the *Galliard* 'parte'; coding of the video material from June 2010
- July 2011, London: rehearsal of all three completed 'partes'
- July 2011, Cambridge: Performance Studies Network Conference
- Summer 2011: completion of *Forlorn Hope*
- Autumn 2011/Spring 2012: premiere of *Forlorn Hope*

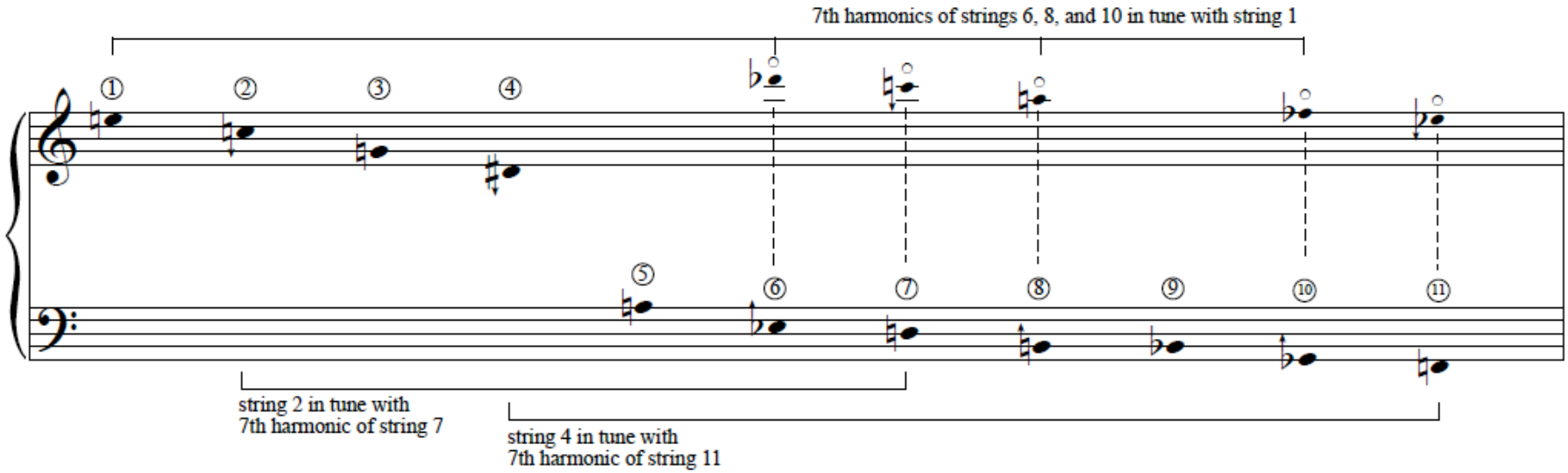
Stage 1: Inventing an instrument

New tuning systems for the 11-string alto guitar

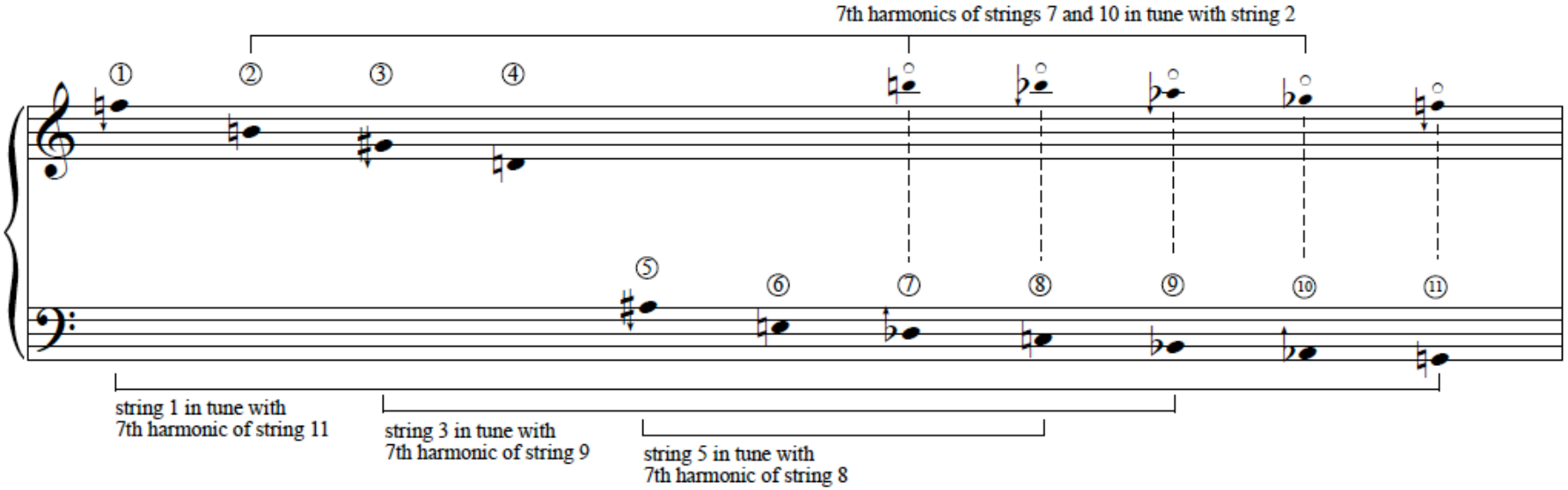
Microtone notation



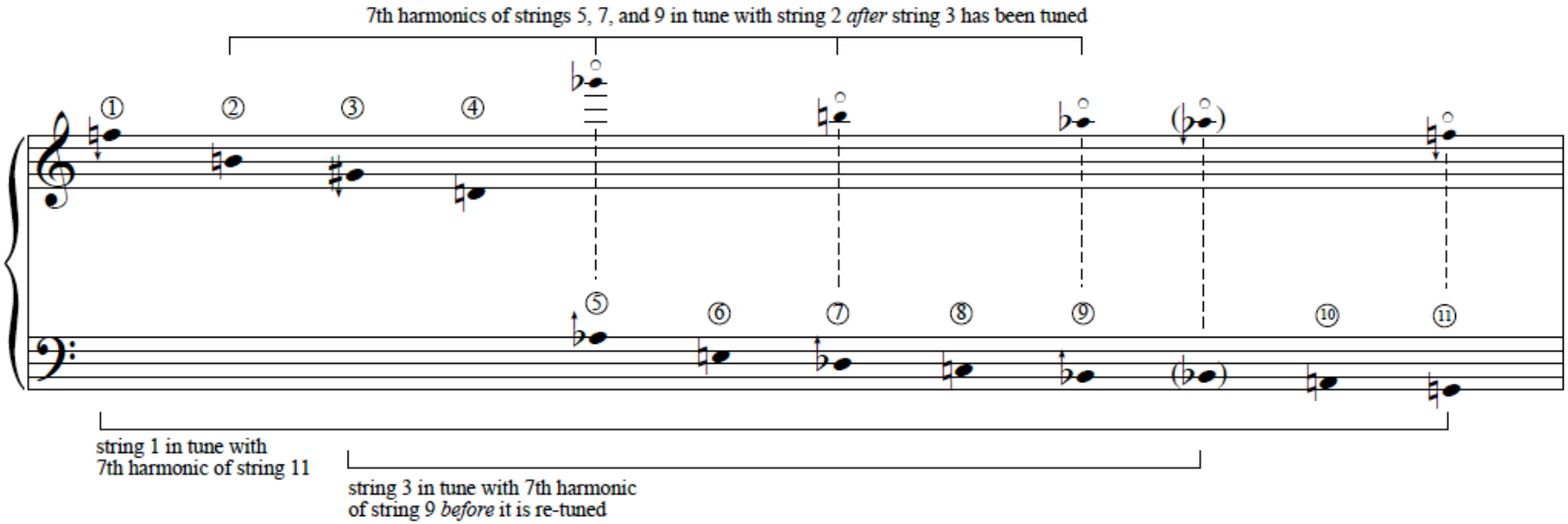
Tuning system 1



Tuning system 2



Tuning system 2 (alteration)



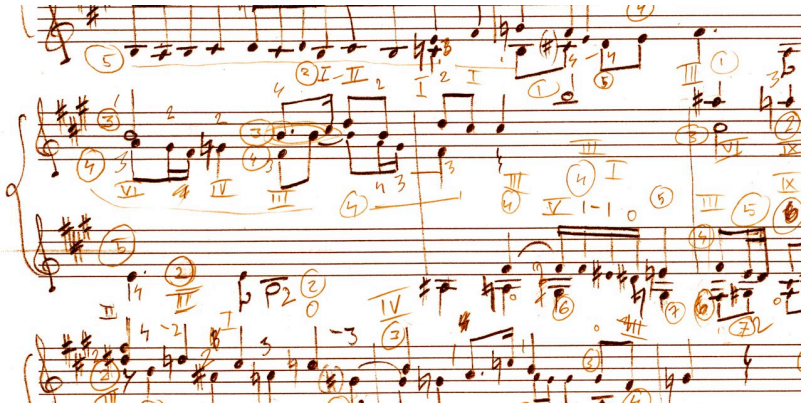
Stage 2: Testing the instrument

Workshops in Malmö,
June 2010

Five video clips

- To see the five video clips from the collaborative workshop in Malmö in June 2010 visit: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZuT4334WnRk or search for “David Gorton - Stefan Östersjö: composer-performer collaboration”

Stage 3: Transcribing Dowland

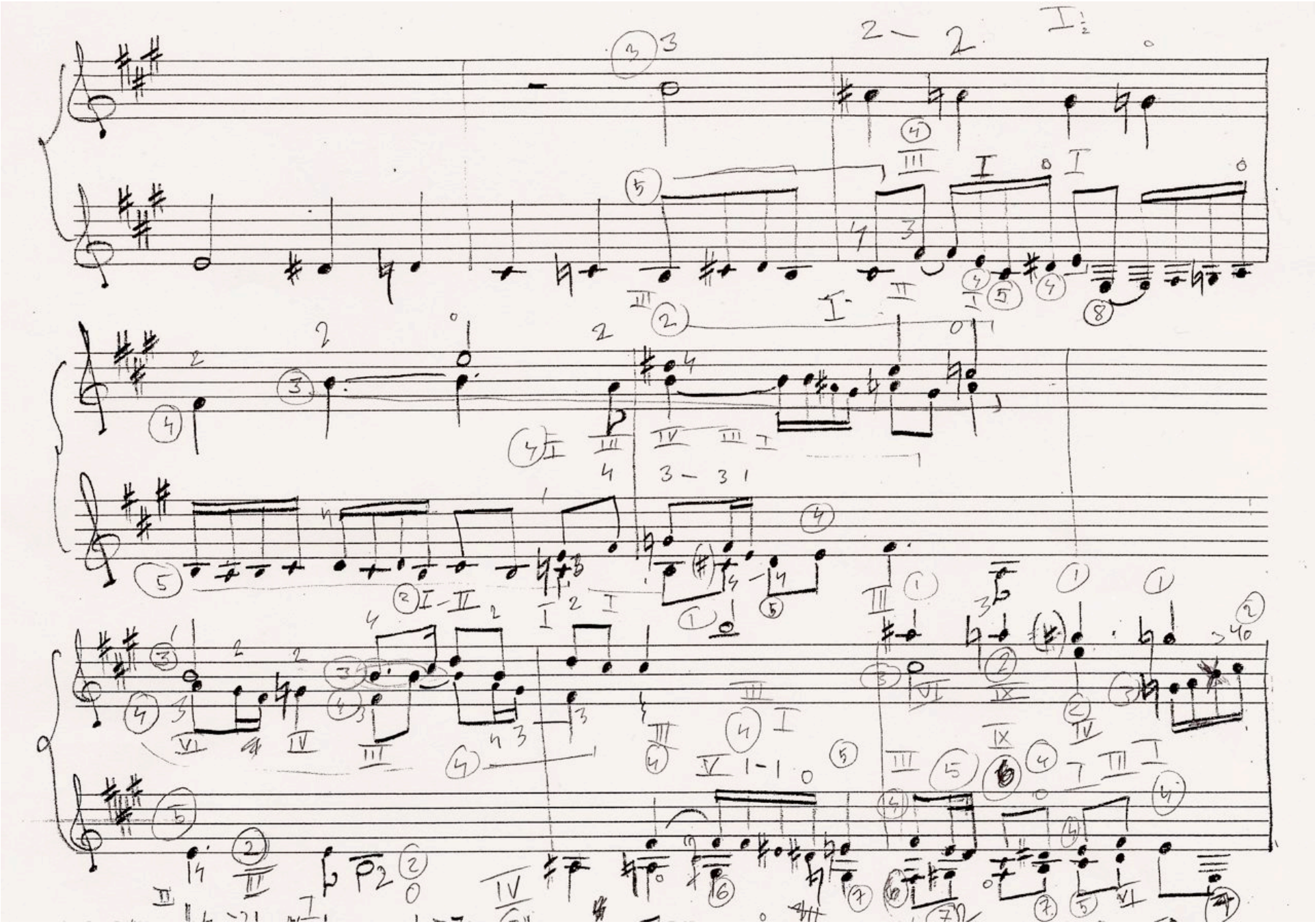


Workshops in London, September 2010: transcribing Dowland's *Forlorn Hope Fancy* for the 11-string alto guitar in tuning system 1

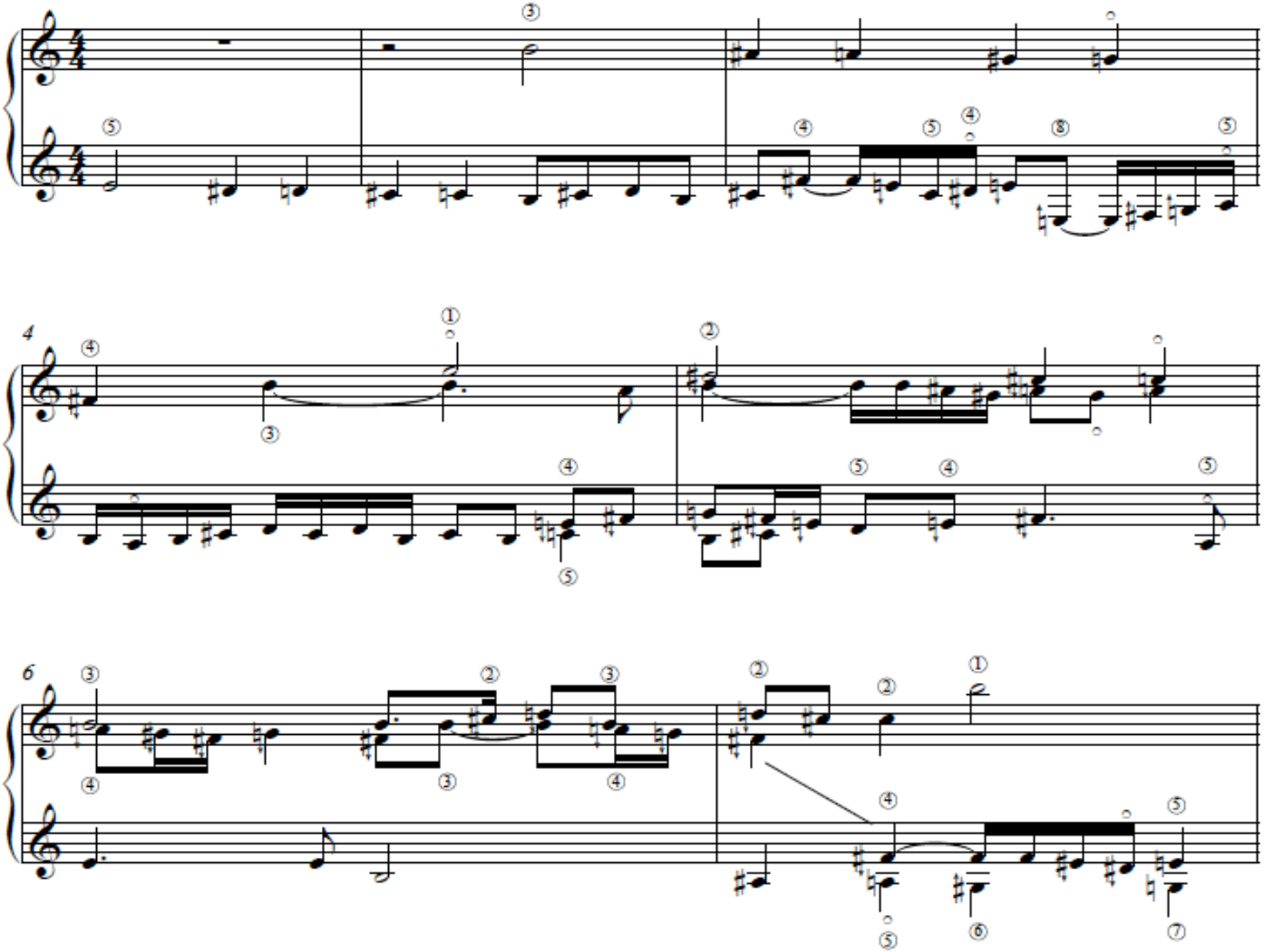
Principles for transcription

- The tonal structures of the Dowland original should always remain recognisable, even while sounding ‘out of tune’
- These tonal structures should sound as if they are coming ‘in and out of focus’
- There should be a propensity of ‘out of focus’ moments, so that the ‘in focus’ moments are rare
- The most idiomatic solutions should be prioritised.

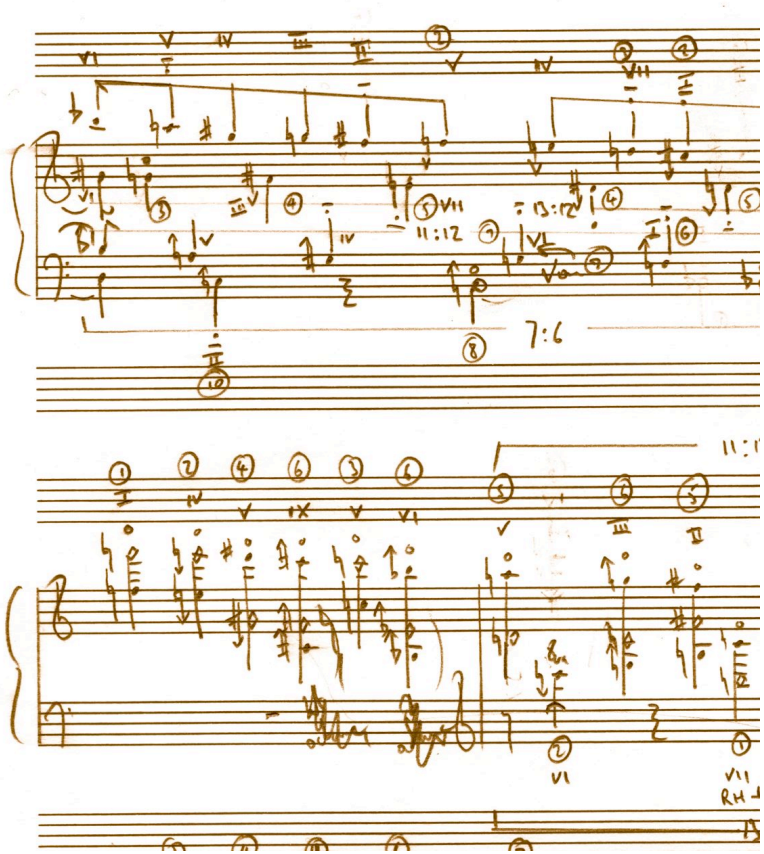
Notation of new string and fret information onto the score



Re-notation with new sounding pitches



Stage 4: Recomposing Dowland



Forlorn Hope for 11-string alto guitar and optional improvising lap-top performer

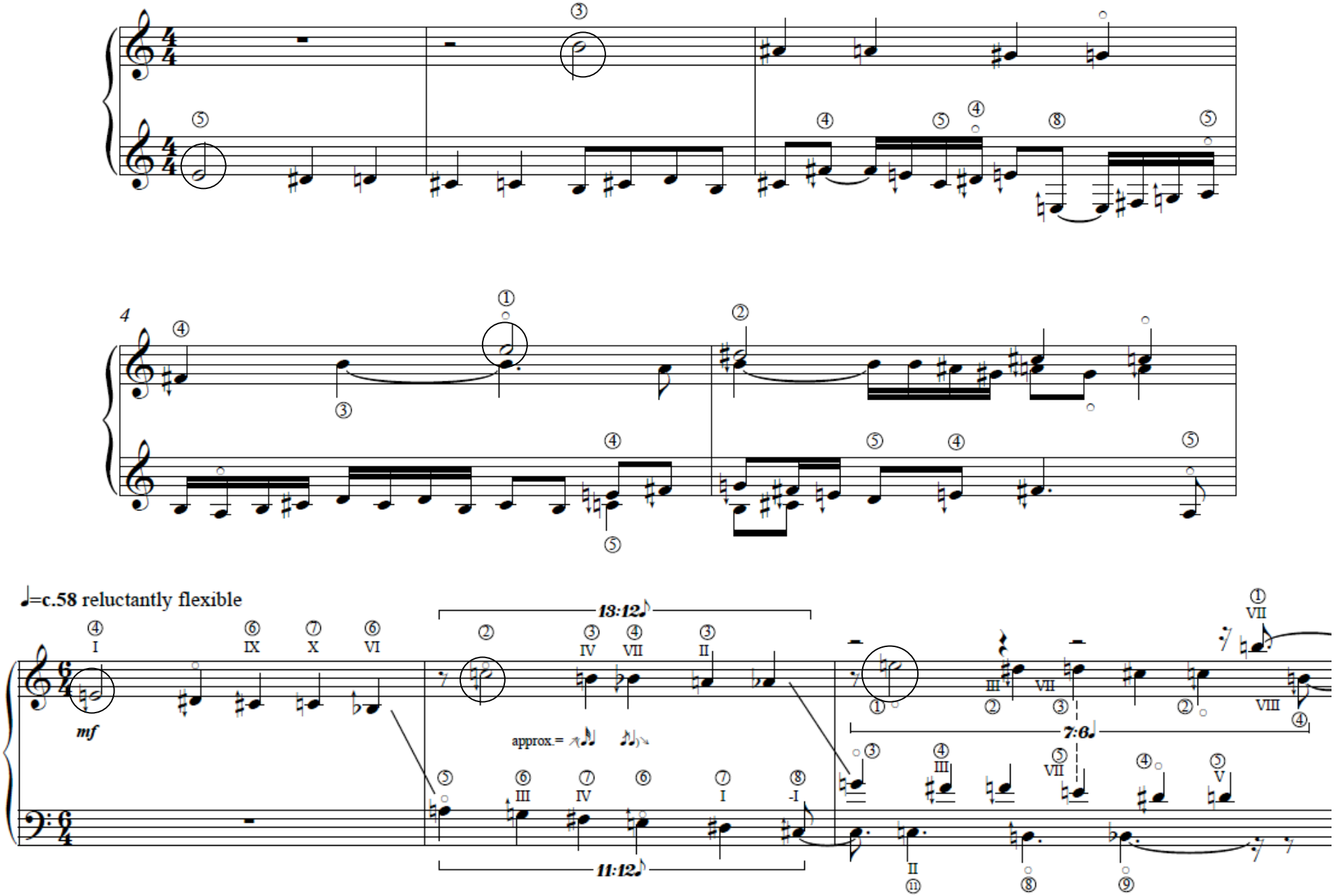
Overview of the piece

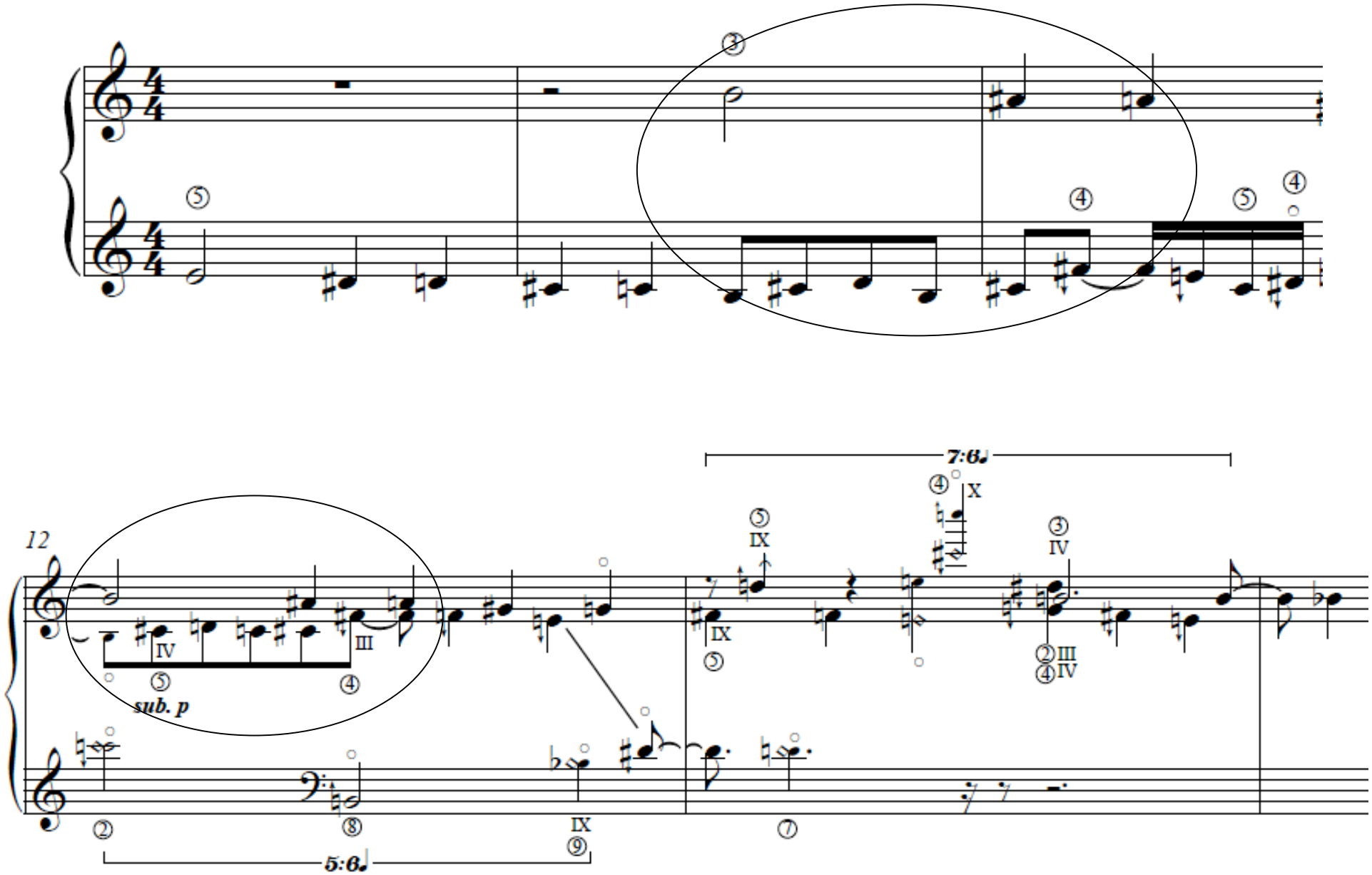
- Uses tuning system 1
- Lasts for approximately 15 minutes
- Consists of seven ‘partes’: four short *Fantasias* and three longer ‘partes’ - *Galliard*, *Pavan*, and *Almain*
- At the time of the presentation only the *Galliard* and two of the *Fantasias* had been completed
- The three longer ‘partes’ use material from the Transcription and from workshop improvisations

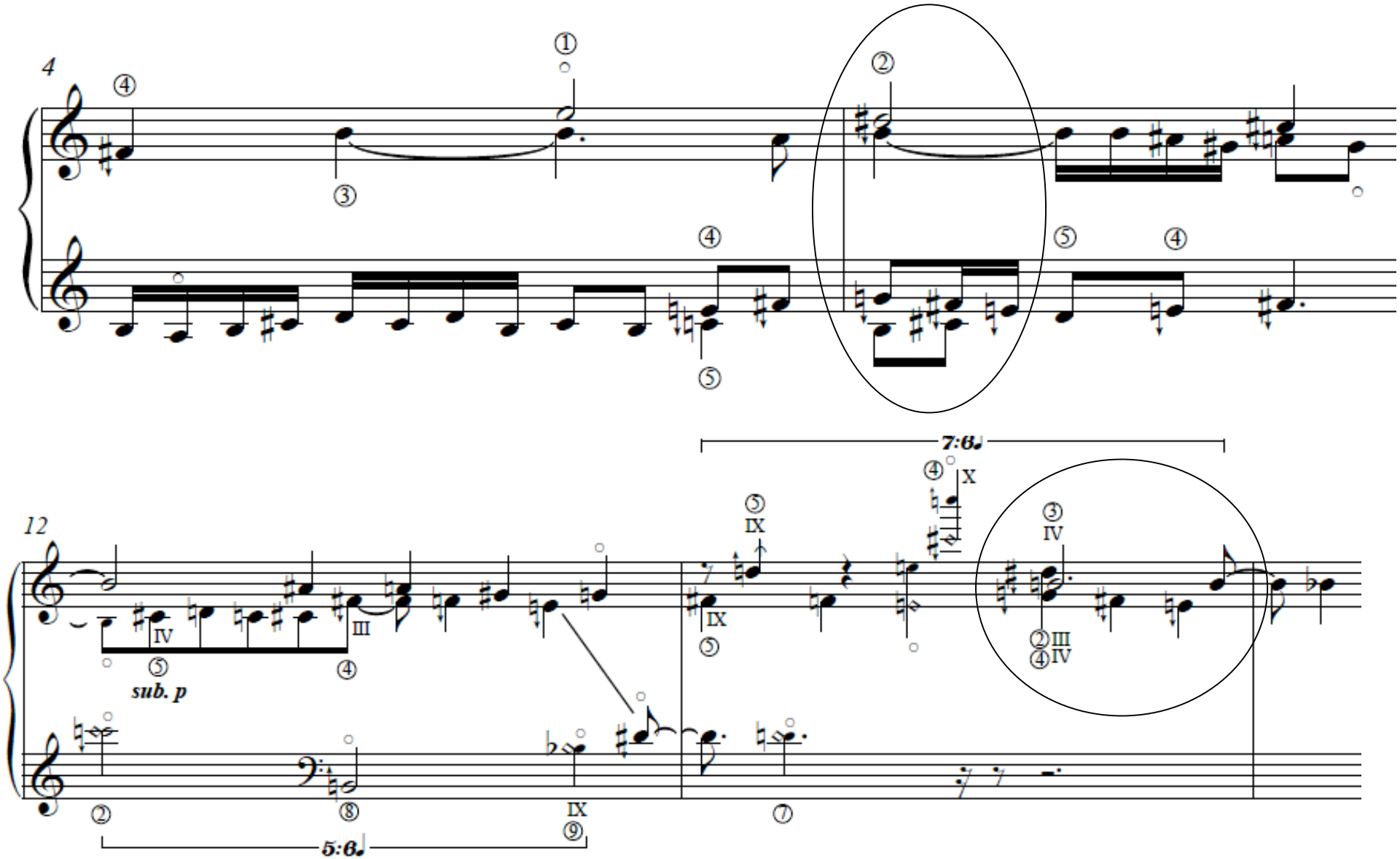
Characteristics of the larger ‘partes’

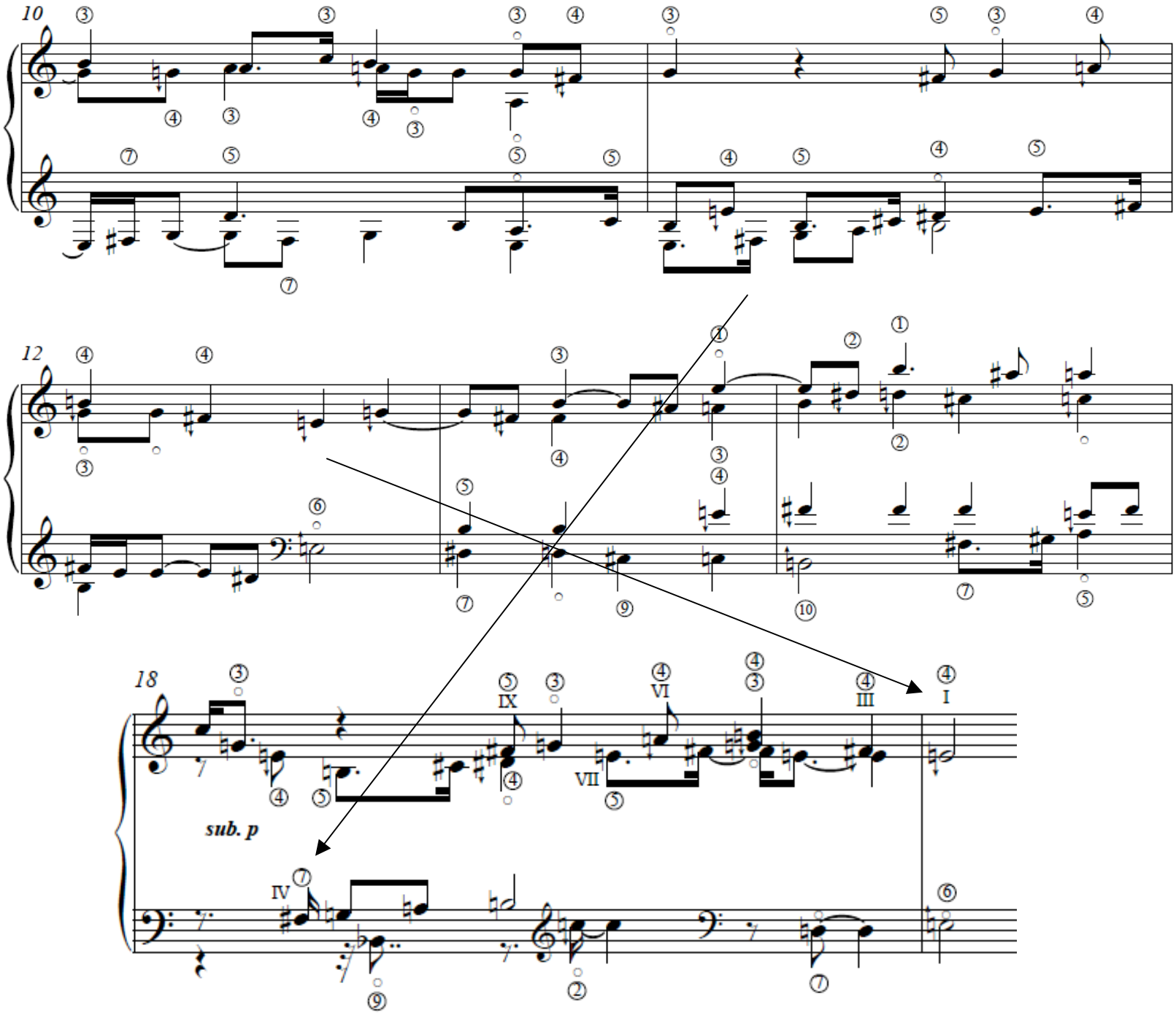
- Descending motion by increment, in canon (approximately bars 1 to 12 of the transcription) - Galliard
- Homophonic material (approximately bars 13 to 27 of the transcription) - Pavan
- Fast passagework (approximately bars 28 to the end of the transcription) - Almain

Similarities between the Transcription and the *Galliard* ‘parte’




12
sub. p
7:6
5:6


4
12
sub. p
7:6
5:6


10
12
18
sub. p
IV
IX
VI
VII
III
I

End of presentation

Further work will be published as the project progresses