HOW TO LEARN A PIECE (SONG) ON THE CLASSICAL GUITAR, Part 9

By Douglas Niedt

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*Estimated minimum time to read this article and listen to the audio clips: 20 minutes.

In Part 1, we laid the groundwork for learning a new song:

1. We set up our practice space.
2. We learned to choose reliable editions of the piece we are going to learn.
3. We learned that it is essential to listen to dozens of recordings and watch dozens of videos to hear the big picture as we learn a new piece.
4. We learned that it is important to study and analyze our score(s).

In Part 2:

1. We learned how to make a game plan for practicing our piece.
2. We learned why it is so vital NEVER to practice mistakes and the neuroscience behind it.
3. We learned practice strategies to master small elements, including "The 10 Levels of Misery," which ensures we don't practice mistakes.

In Part 3:

1. We learned where to start practicing in a new piece.
2. We learned that it is vital to master small elements first.
3. We learned the two most fundamental practice tools—The Feedback Loop and S-L-O-W Practice.

In Part 4, we learned how to use the "Slam on the Brakes" and "STOP—Then Go" practice strategies to:

1. Correct errors
2. Improve technical control
3. Reduce tension
4. Improve memorization

In Part 5, we learned how to practice with the right alone to:

1. Apply planting or double-check the precision of your planting technique
2. Correct or improve the balance between the melody, bass, and accompaniment
3. Apply or improve string damping

4. Master passages with difficult string crossings

In Part 6, we learned how to practice with the left hand alone to learn, improve, and master:

1. The "lag behind" technique
2. How to lift fingers to avoid string squeaks
3. Left-hand finger preparation
4. Synchronization of left-hand finger movements

In Part 7, we learned more on how to practice with the left hand alone to learn, improve, and master:

1. Shifts
2. Pre-planting the left-hand fingers
3. Collapsing (hyperextending) the tip of the first finger going into and out of a bar chord
4. Difficult chord changes without tiring, injuring, or "locking up" the left hand by practicing with light finger pressure

In Part 8, we began learning how to practice with Altered Rhythms. We learned the benefits and six specific strategies:

1. How to practice the most common altered rhythms: dotted rhythms
2. How to lengthen a particular note within each beat to alter the rhythm
3. How to use extended pauses in altered rhythms to reduce tension in the hands
4. How to lengthen a particular beat in each measure to alter the rhythm
5. How to insert a very long pause (fermata) and play the following notes as grace notes to alter the rhythm
6. How to change the accents to alter the rhythm

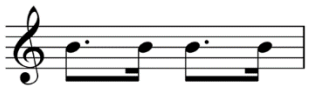
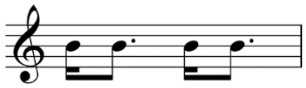
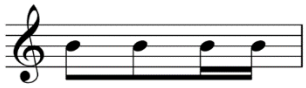
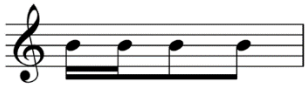
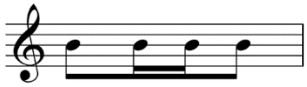
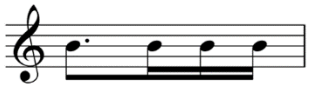
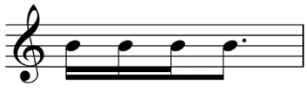
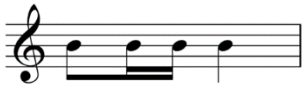
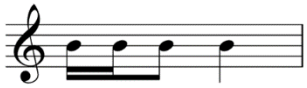
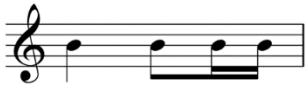
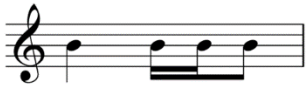
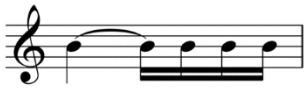
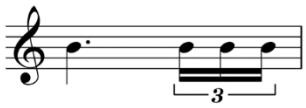
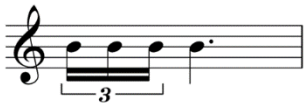
PRACTICING IN ALTERED RHYTHMS, Part 2

MORE Altered Rhythm Patterns

Here are two handy-dandy charts compiled by piano pedagogue Graham Fitch of altered rhythm patterns you can apply to your pieces. The first chart is an "Altered Rhythms Chart for Divisions of 2." Use these rhythms on a passage where the notes are in groups of 2, 4, 8, or 16. Example #171:

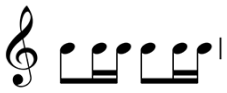
ALTERED RHYTHMS CHART FOR DIVISIONS OF 2

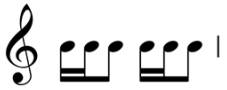
Use these rhythms on a passage where the notes are in groups of 2, 4, 8, or 16.

Altered Rhythm #1

Altered Rhythm #2

Altered Rhythm #3

Altered Rhythm #4

Altered Rhythm #5

Altered Rhythm #6

Altered Rhythm #7

Altered Rhythm #8

Altered Rhythm #9

Altered Rhythm #10

Altered Rhythm #11

Altered Rhythm #12

Altered Rhythm #13

Altered Rhythm #14

This second chart is an "Altered Rhythms Chart for Divisions of 3." Use these rhythms on a passage where the notes are in groups of 3, 6, or 12. Example #172:

ALTERED RHYTHMS CHART FOR DIVISIONS OF 3

Use these rhythms on a passage where the notes are in groups of 3, 6, or 12.

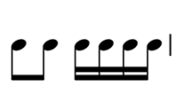
Altered Rhythm #1 

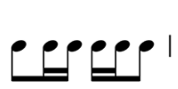
Altered Rhythm #2 

Altered Rhythm #3

Altered Rhythm #4

Altered Rhythm #5

Altered Rhythm #6

Altered Rhythm #7

Altered Rhythm #8

I find it easier to practice a passage with these patterns if I write down the passage with each altered rhythm. Please note:

1. You don't need an expensive notation program to do this. Instead, write the passage out with pencil and paper, the old-fashioned quick and easy way!
2. Plus, if you write the passages out on paper, you don't need to figure out and write in the meter (3/4, 9/4, 13/8, etc.) as I did in this technique tip. Instead, write the rhythmic values only (quarter notes, 8th notes, dotted 8th notes, 16th notes, etc.).
3. Include any slurs (hammer-ons and pull-offs)
4. Finally, be sure to write in the left AND RIGHT-HAND fingerings so that you practice them correctly.

TRY IT OUT!

1. **Play or listen to some of the examples below to understand the process.**
2. **Then, apply some of these patterns to a passage from a piece you already know or are learning.**
3. **Play the original rhythm first. Then practice an altered rhythm for a few minutes. Then return to the original rhythm. You can alternate back and forth randomly. Experiment with how much to practice the altered rhythm and how much to play the original rhythm.**

4. **Use other tools in conjunction with altered rhythms. For instance, practicing with the right hand alone can be very helpful. I highly recommend using a metronome occasionally. It will help you to judge the precision of your rhythms.**
5. **If you have trouble playing an altered rhythm precisely, break down the passage into smaller units. Then, put it back together.**

ALTERED RHYTHMS—DIVISIONS OF 2

How to Apply Altered Rhythms in Divisions of 2 to a Scale

It is easiest to apply these altered rhythms to scales, so my examples will start there. But remember, except for the simplest altered rhythms, you will find it easier to practice if you write down the scale in the rhythm of each altered pattern.

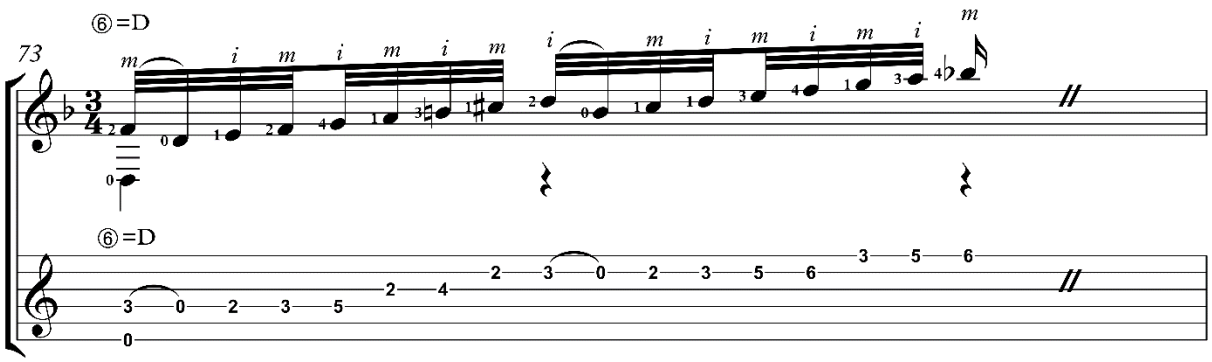
1. You don't need an expensive notation program to do this. Instead, write the passage out with pencil and paper, the old-fashioned quick and easy way!
2. Plus, if you write the passages out on paper, you don't need to figure out and write in the meter (3/4, 9/4, 13/8, etc.) as I did in this technique tip. Instead, write the rhythmic values only (quarter notes, 8^{th} notes, dotted 8^{th} notes, 16^{th} notes, etc.).
3. Include any slurs (hammer-ons and pull-offs)
4. Finally, be sure to write in the left AND RIGHT-HAND fingerings so that you practice them correctly.

A Scale from the Bach *Chaconne*

Here is a scale from measure 72 of the *Chaconne* from *Partita No. 2 for Violin without Accompaniment*, BWV 1004 by J.S. Bach. This is the original rhythm. Example #173:

Example #173.

"Chaconne" from *Partita No. 2 for Violin Without Accompaniment*, BWV 1004 (J.S. Bach), measure 73.
Original Rhythm



Listen to me play the scale with the original rhythms. Audio Clip #43.

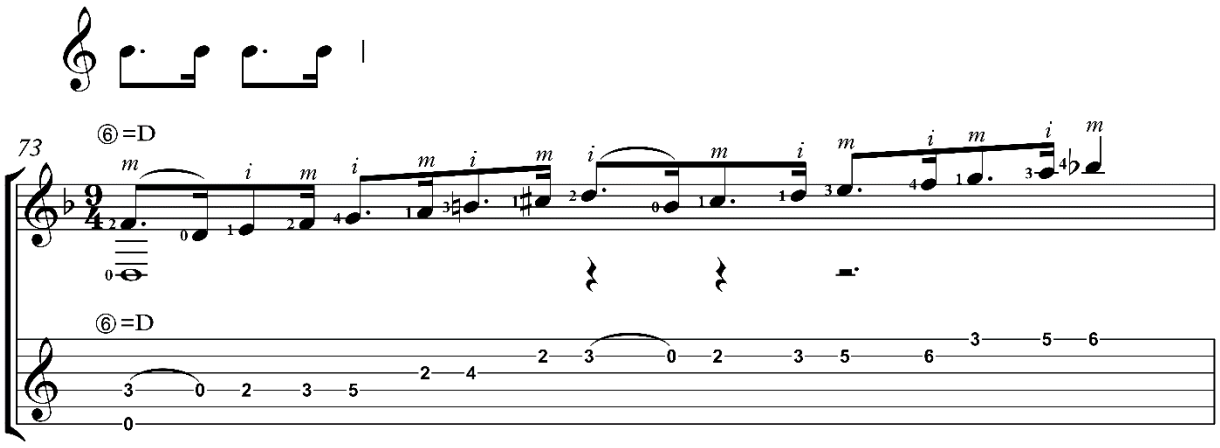
Following is the same scale notated in each of the altered rhythms from the "Altered Rhythms Chart for Divisions of 2." After each example, you can play the audio file to hear what it sounds like.

Let's get started! Here is altered rhythm #1 followed by rhythms #2 through #14.

The first altered rhythm is the first of the [two basic dotted rhythms (long-short) we learned in Part 1](). Example #174:

Example #174.

"Chaconne" from *Partita No. 2 for Violin Without Accompaniment,* BWV 1004 (J.S. Bach), measure 73. Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #1

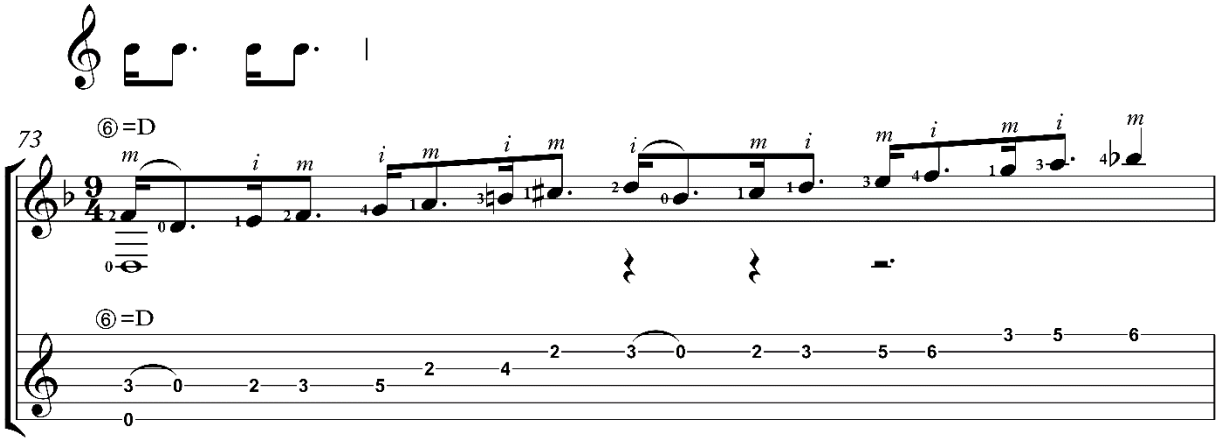


[Listen to me play the scale with altered rhythm #1. This is the first of the two basic dotted rhythms we learned in Part 1. Audio Clip #44.]()

The next example is the second of the two basic dotted rhythms (short-long) we learned in part 1. Example #175:

Example #175.

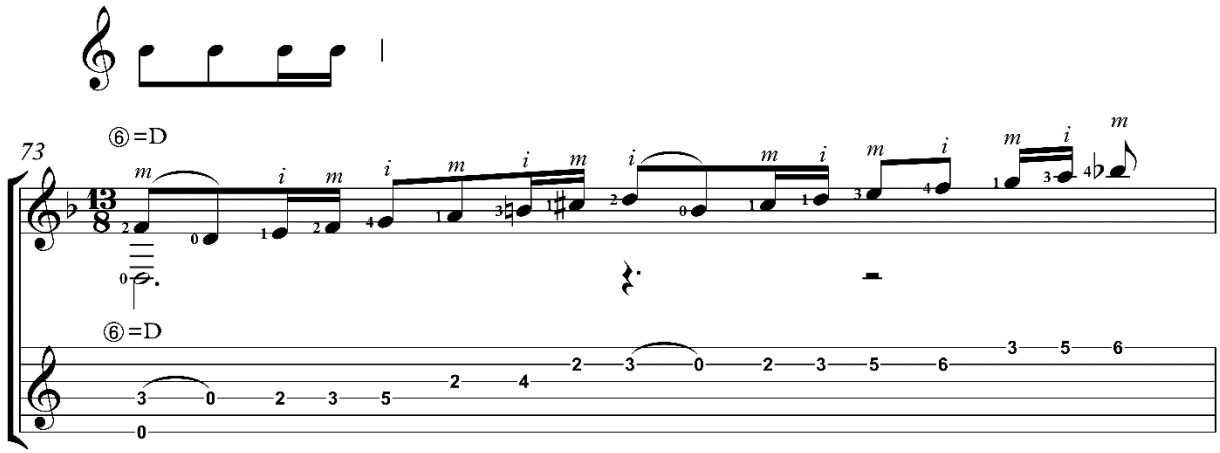
"Chaconne" from *Partita No. 2 for Violin Without Accompaniment,* BWV 1004 (J.S. Bach), measure 73. Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #2



Listen to me play the scale with altered rhythm #2. This is the second of the two basic dotted rhythms (short-long) we learned in Part 1. Audio Clip #45.

Example #176.

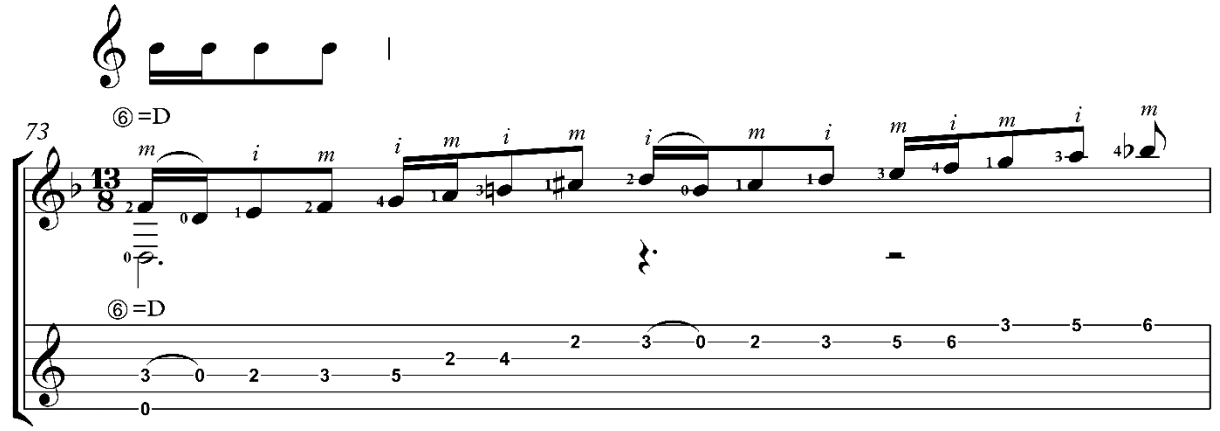
"Chaconne" from *Partita No. 2 for Violin Without Accompaniment*, BWV 1004 (J.S. Bach), measure 73. Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #3



Listen to me play the scale with altered rhythm #3. Audio Clip #46.

Example #177.

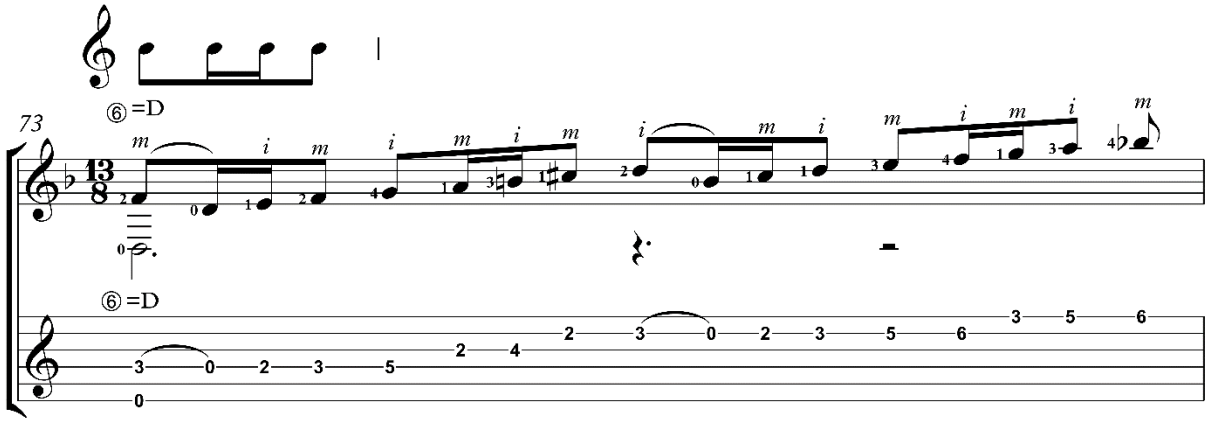
"Chaconne" from *Partita No. 2 for Violin Without Accompaniment*, BWV 1004 (J.S. Bach), measure 73. Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #4



Listen to me play the scale with altered rhythm #4. Audio Clip #47.

Example #178.

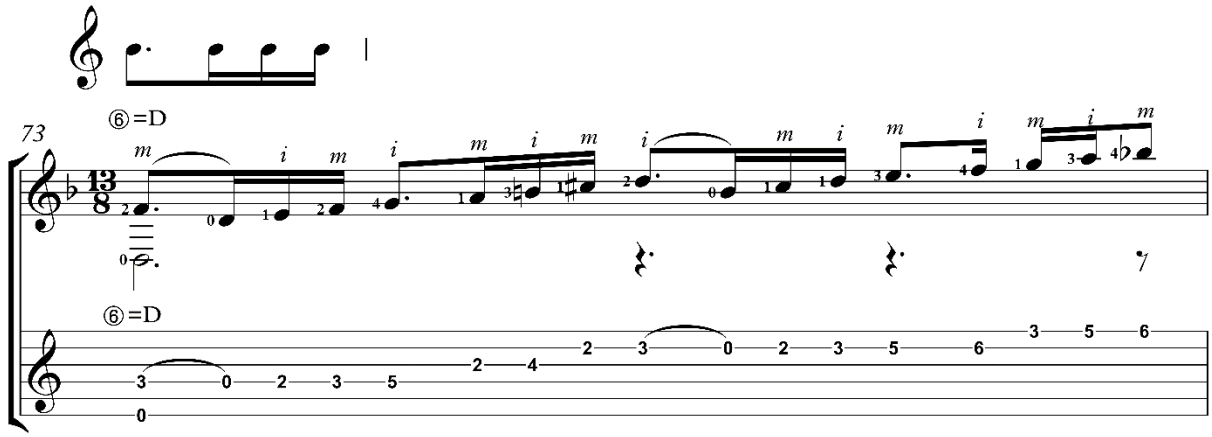
"Chaconne" from *Partita No. 2 for Violin Without Accompaniment*, BWV 1004 (J.S. Bach), measure 73.
Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #5



Listen to me play the scale with altered rhythm #5. Audio Clip #48.

Example #179.

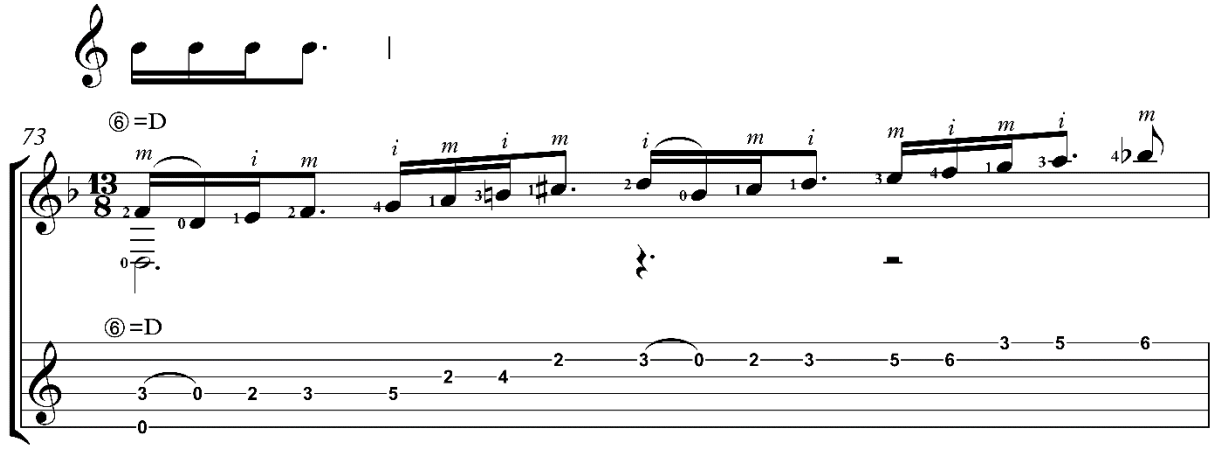
"Chaconne" from *Partita No. 2 for Violin Without Accompaniment*, BWV 1004 (J.S. Bach), measure 73.
Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #6



Listen to me play the scale with altered rhythm #6. Audio Clip #49.

Example #180.

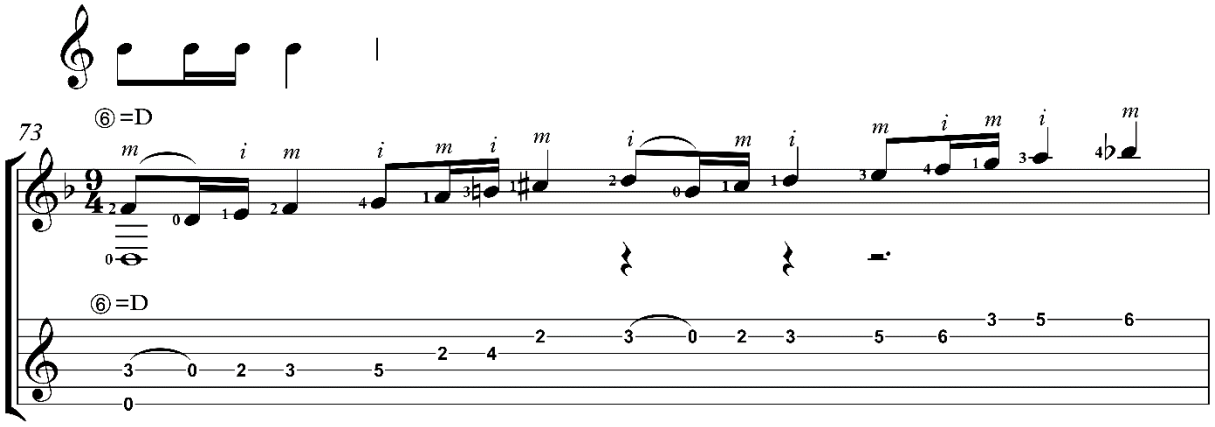
"Chaconne" from *Partita No. 2 for Violin Without Accompaniment,* BWV 1004 (J.S. Bach), measure 73. Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #7



Listen to me play the scale with altered rhythm #7. Audio Clip #50.

Example #181.

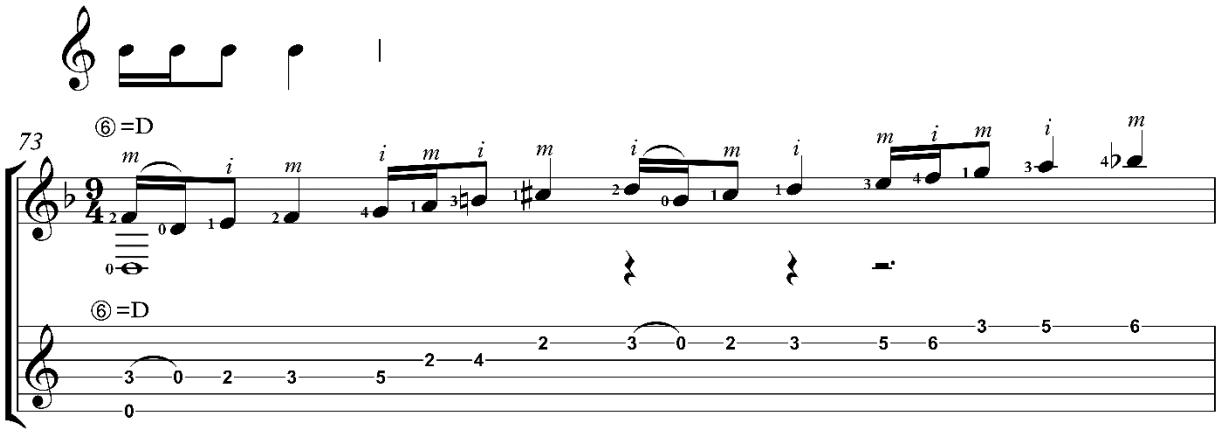
"Chaconne" from *Partita No. 2 for Violin Without Accompaniment,* BWV 1004 (J.S. Bach), measure 73. Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #8



Listen to me play the scale with altered rhythm #8. Audio Clip #51.

Example #182.

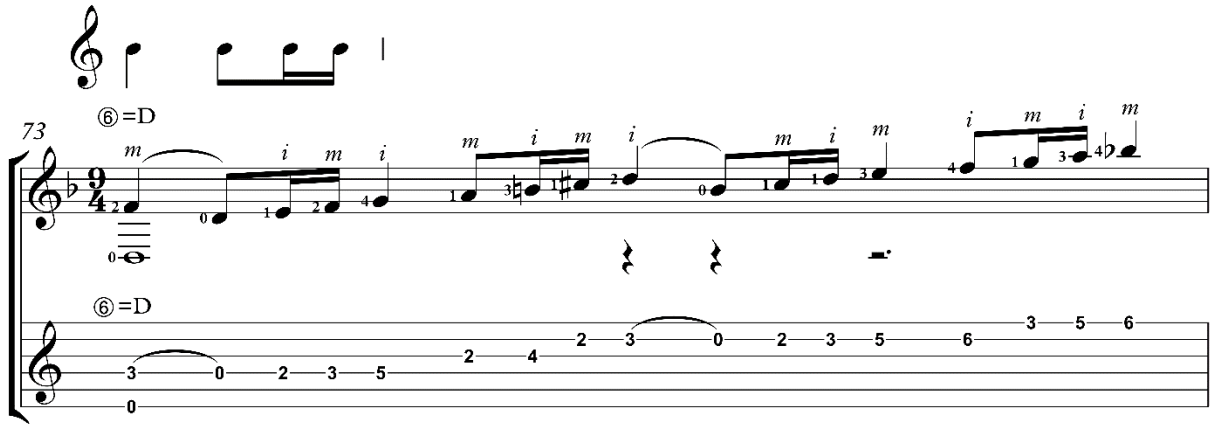
"Chaconne" from *Partita No. 2 for Violin Without Accompaniment,* BWV 1004 (J.S. Bach), measure 73.
Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #9



Listen to me play the scale with altered rhythm #9. Audio Clip #52.

Example #183.

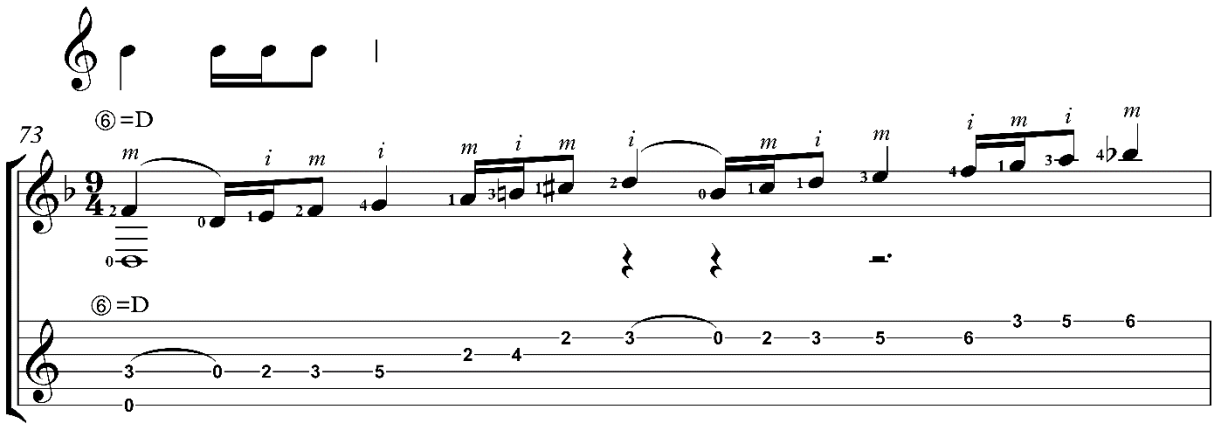
"Chaconne" from *Partita No. 2 for Violin Without Accompaniment,* BWV 1004 (J.S. Bach), measure 73.
Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #10



Listen to me play the scale with altered rhythm #10. Audio Clip #53.

Example #184.

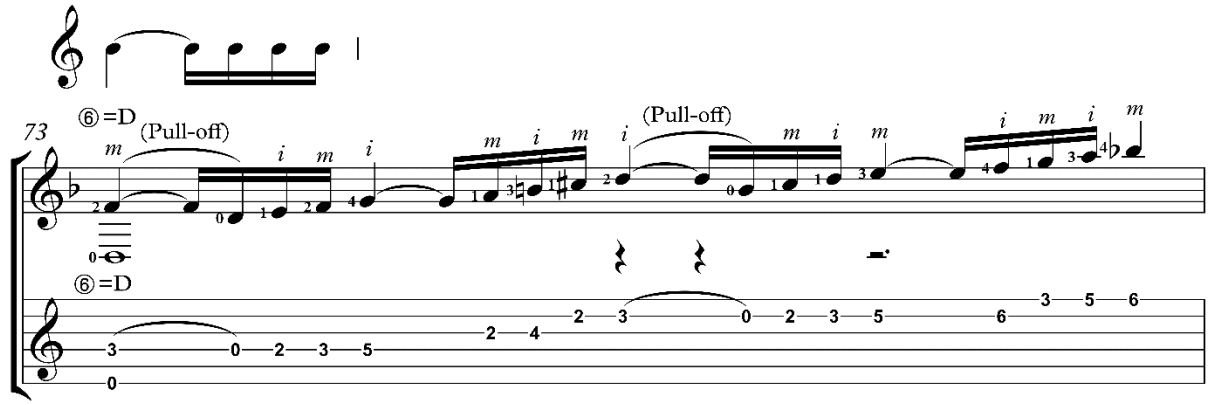
"Chaconne" from *Partita No. 2 for Violin Without Accompaniment,* BWV 1004 (J.S. Bach), measure 73.
Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #11



Listen to me play the scale with altered rhythm #11. Audio Clip #54.

Example #185.

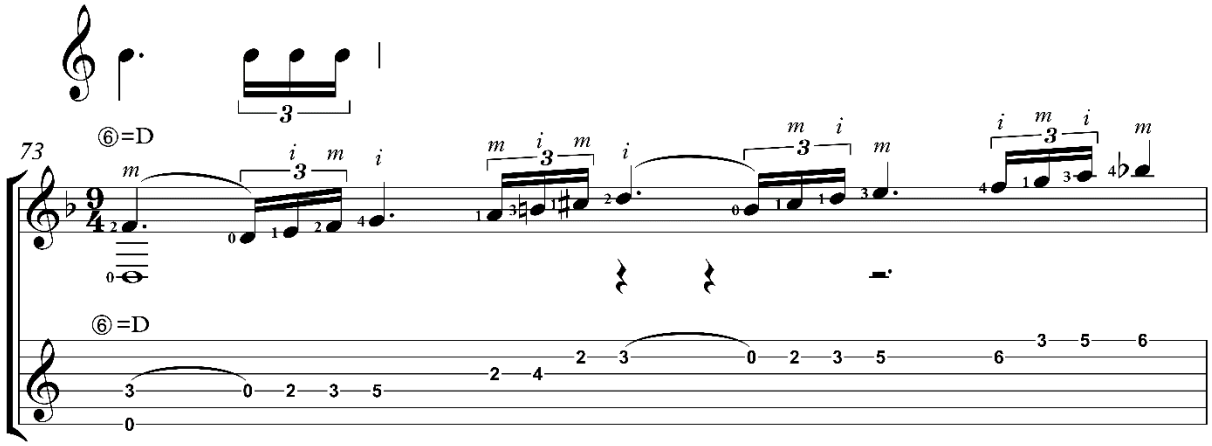
"Chaconne" from *Partita No. 2 for Violin Without Accompaniment,* BWV 1004 (J.S. Bach), measure 73.
Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #12



Listen to me play the scale with altered rhythm #12. Audio Clip #55.

Example #186.

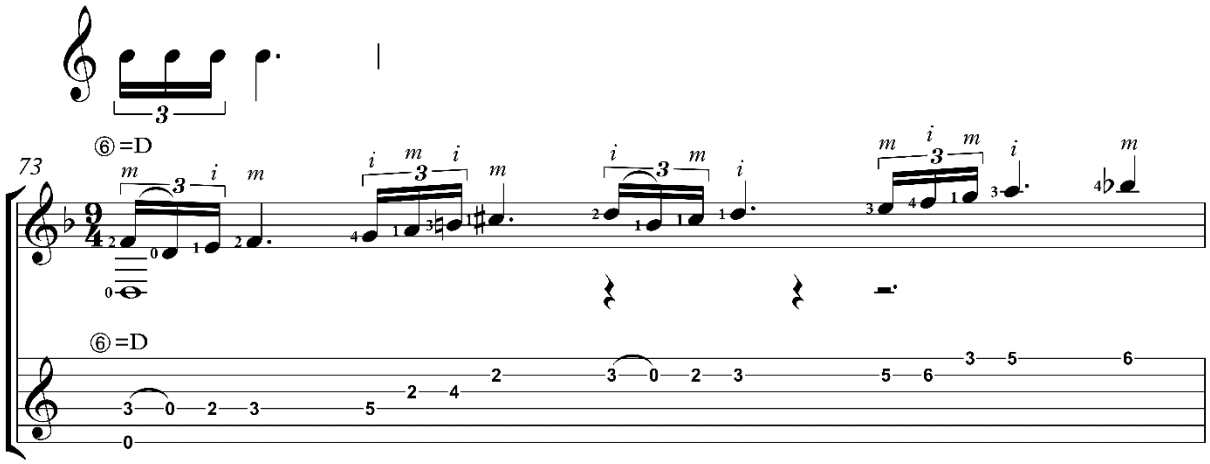
"Chaconne" from *Partita No. 2 for Violin Without Accompaniment,* BWV 1004 (J.S. Bach), measure 73. Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #13



Listen to me play the scale with altered rhythm #13. Audio Clip #56.

Example #187.

"Chaconne" from *Partita No. 2 for Violin Without Accompaniment,* BWV 1004 (J.S. Bach), measure 73. Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #14



Listen to me play the scale with altered rhythm #14. Audio Clip #57.

How to Apply Altered Rhythms in Divisions of 2 to a Passage from a Piece (not a scale)

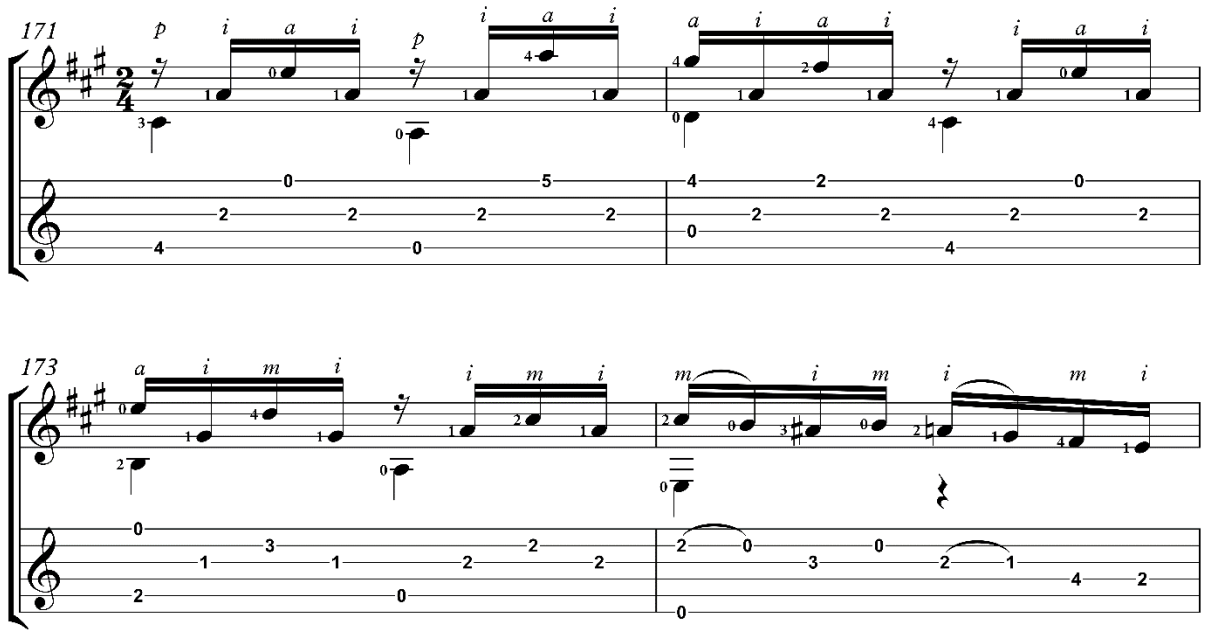
It is more complicated to apply altered rhythms to non-scale passages. Therefore, I highly recommend writing out the passage in the altered rhythms you wish to practice as I have done here. Remember:

1. You don't need an expensive notation program to do this. Instead, write the passage out with pencil and paper, the old-fashioned quick and easy way!
2. Plus, if you write the passages out on paper, you don't need to figure out and write in the meter (3/4, 9/4, 13/8, etc.) as I did in this technique tip. Instead, write the rhythmic values only (quarter notes, 8th notes, dotted 8th notes, 16th notes, etc.).
3. Include any slurs (hammer-ons and pull-offs)
4. Finally, be sure to write in the left AND RIGHT-HAND fingerings so that you practice them correctly.

A Passage from *Variations on a Theme by Handel* by Mauro Giuliani

Here are measures 171-174 from Mauro Giuliani's *Variations on a Theme by Handel*. These are the original rhythms. Example #188:

Example #188.

"Variations on a Theme by Handel" (Mauro Giuliani), measures 171-174.
Original Rhythms

Listen to me play the passage with the original rhythms. Audio Clip #58.

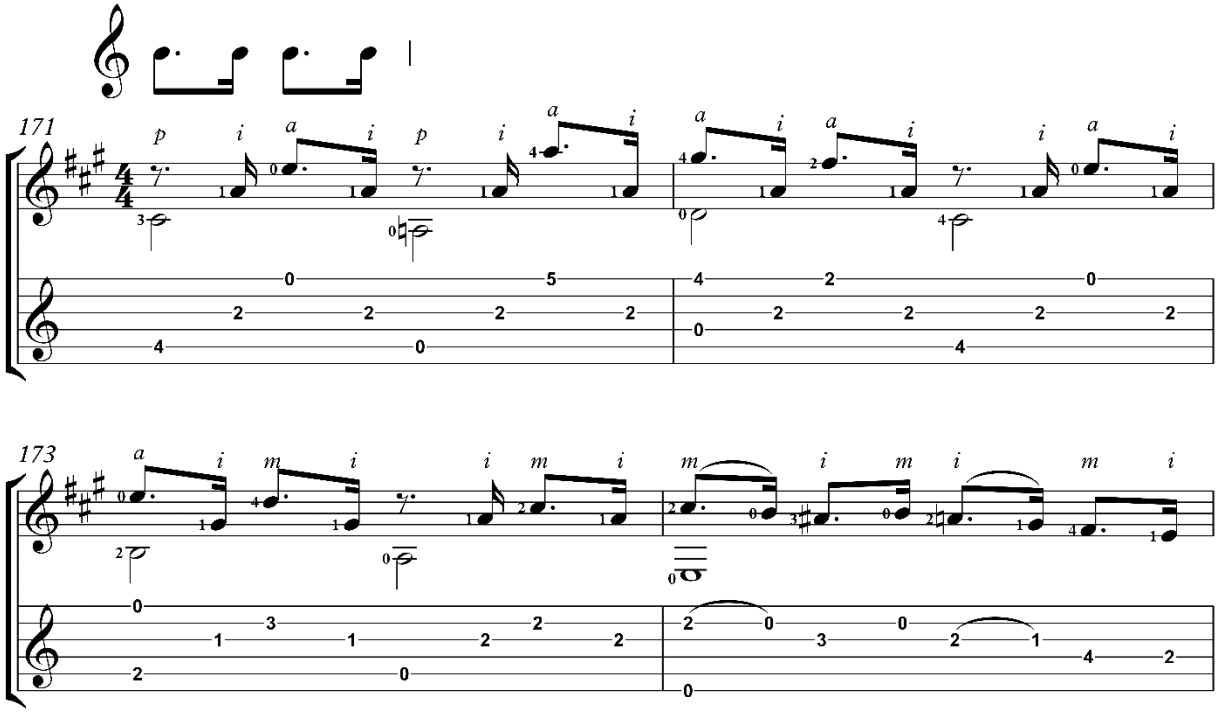
Following is the same passage notated in each of the altered rhythms from the "Altered Rhythms Chart for Divisions of 2." After each example, you can play the audio file to hear what it sounds like.

Let's get started! Here is altered rhythm #1 followed by altered rhythms #2 through 14.

The first altered rhythm is the first of the two basic dotted rhythms (long-short) we learned in Part 1. Example #189:

Example #189.

"Variations on a Theme by Handel" (Mauro Giuliani), measures 171-174.
Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #1

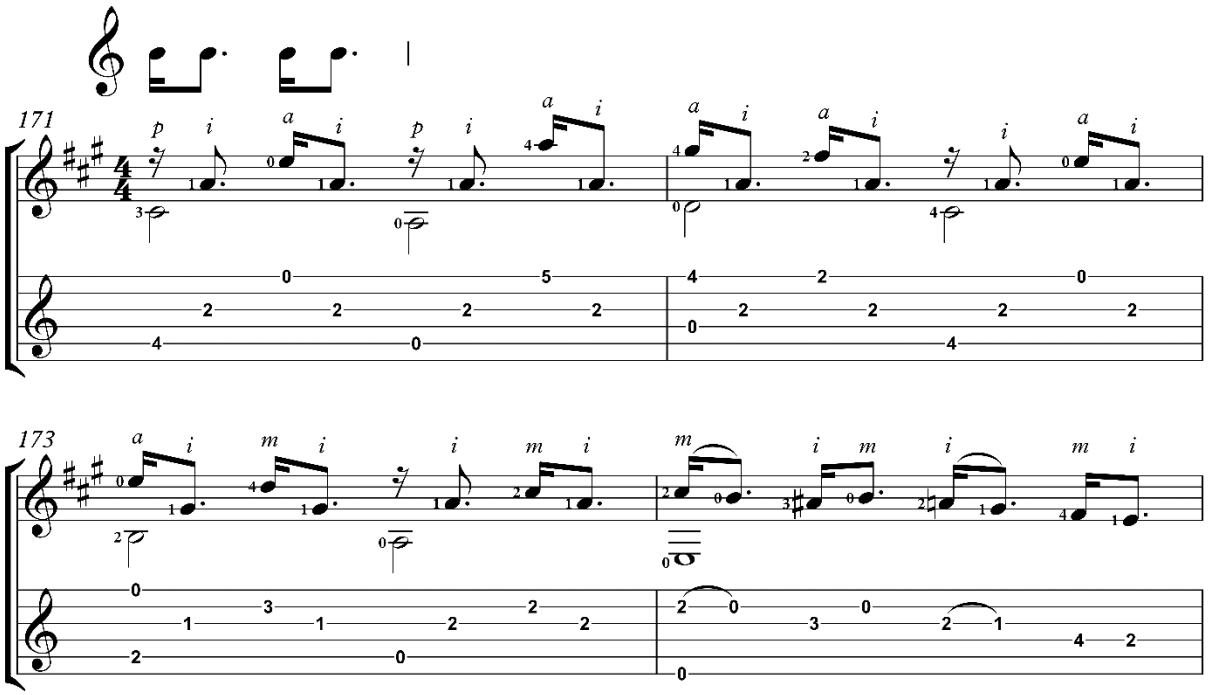


Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm #1. This is the first of the two basic dotted rhythms we learned in Part 1. Audio Clip #59.

The next example is the second of the two basic dotted rhythms (short-long) we learned in part 1.
Example #190:

Example #190.

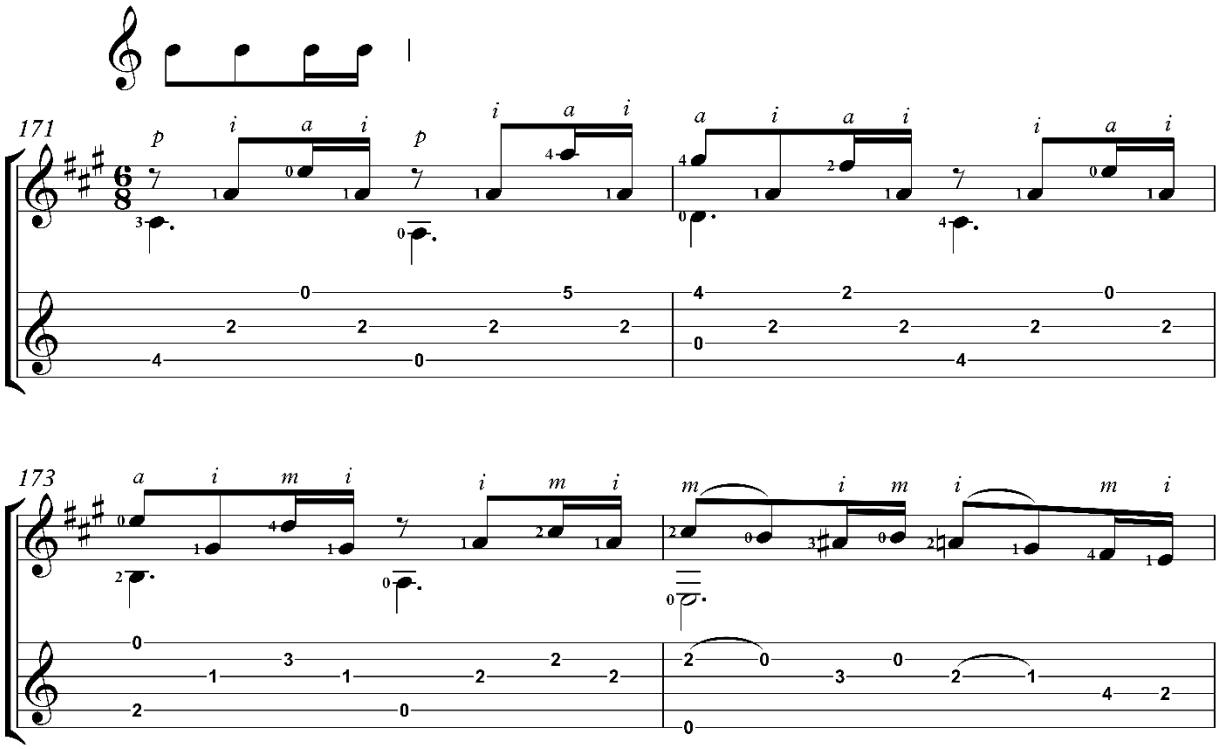
"Variations on a Theme by Handel" (Mauro Giuliani), measures 171-174.
Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #2



Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm #2. This is the second of the two basic dotted rhythms (short-long) we learned in Part 1. Audio Clip #60.

Example #191.

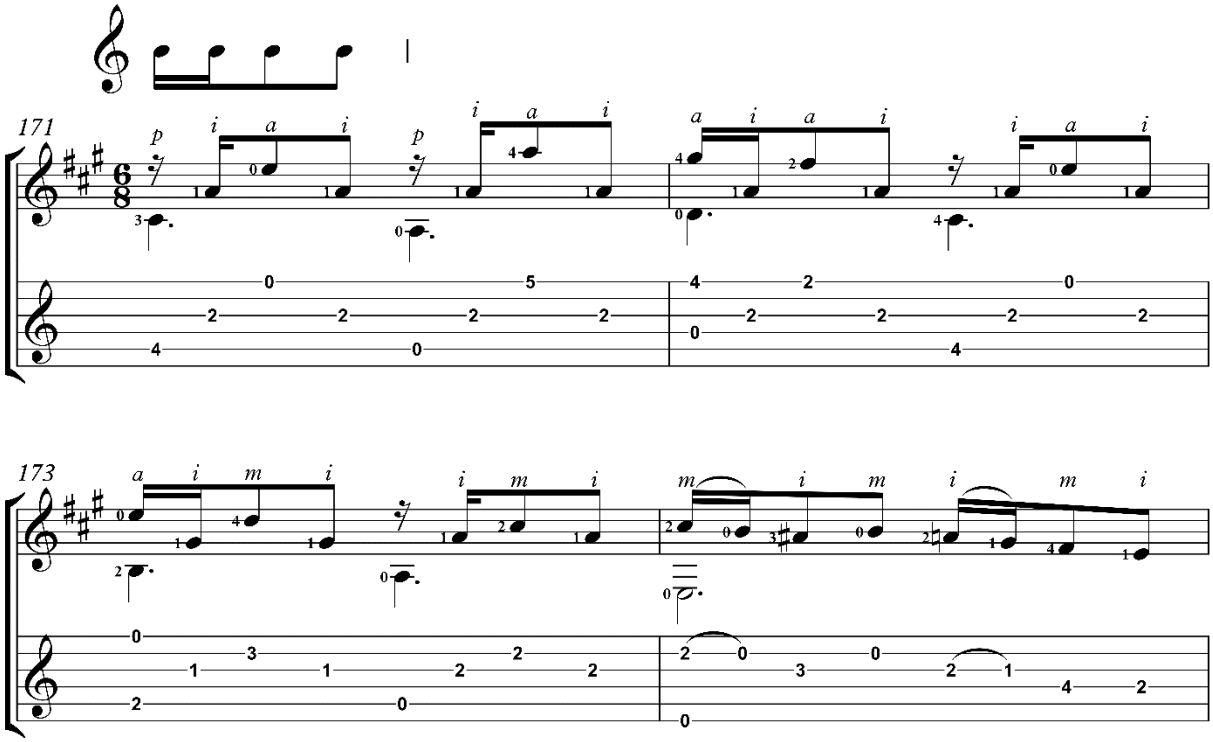
"Variations on a Theme by Handel" (Mauro Giuliani), measures 171-174.
Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #3



Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm #3. Audio Clip #61.

Example #192.

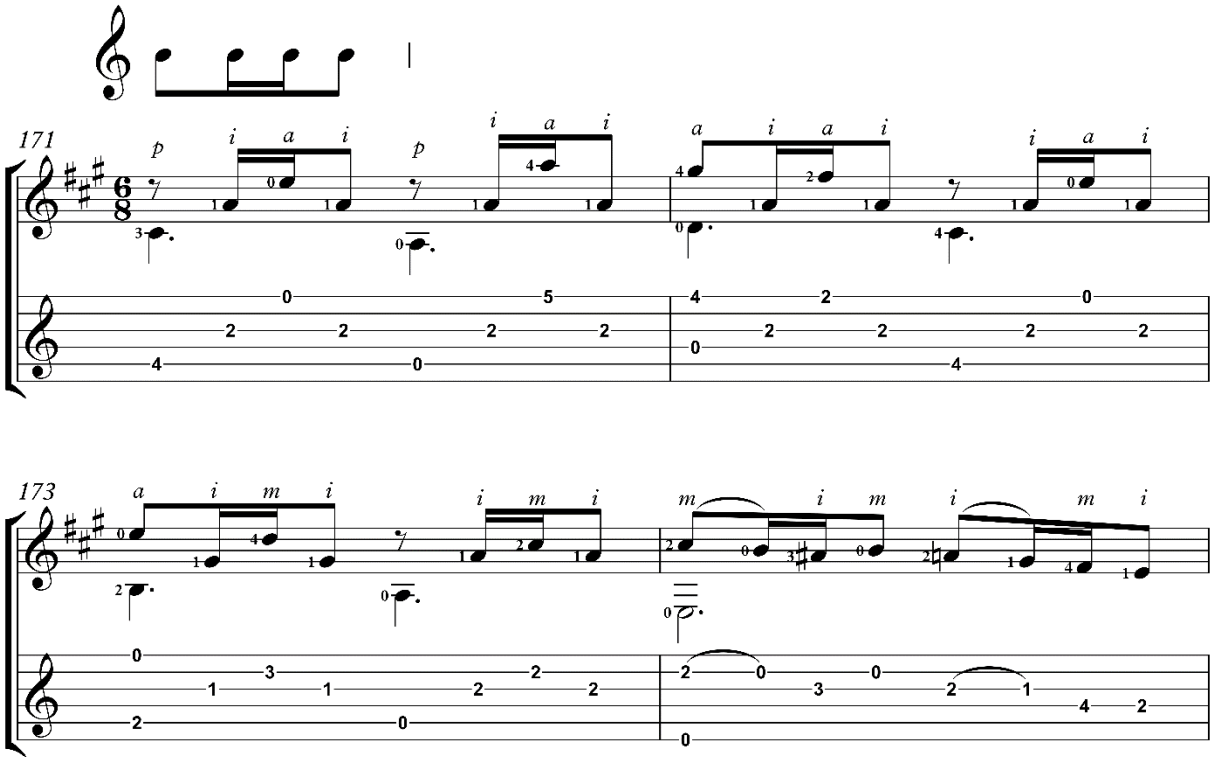
"Variations on a Theme by Handel" (Mauro Giuliani), measures 171-174.
Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #4



Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm #4. Audio Clip #62.

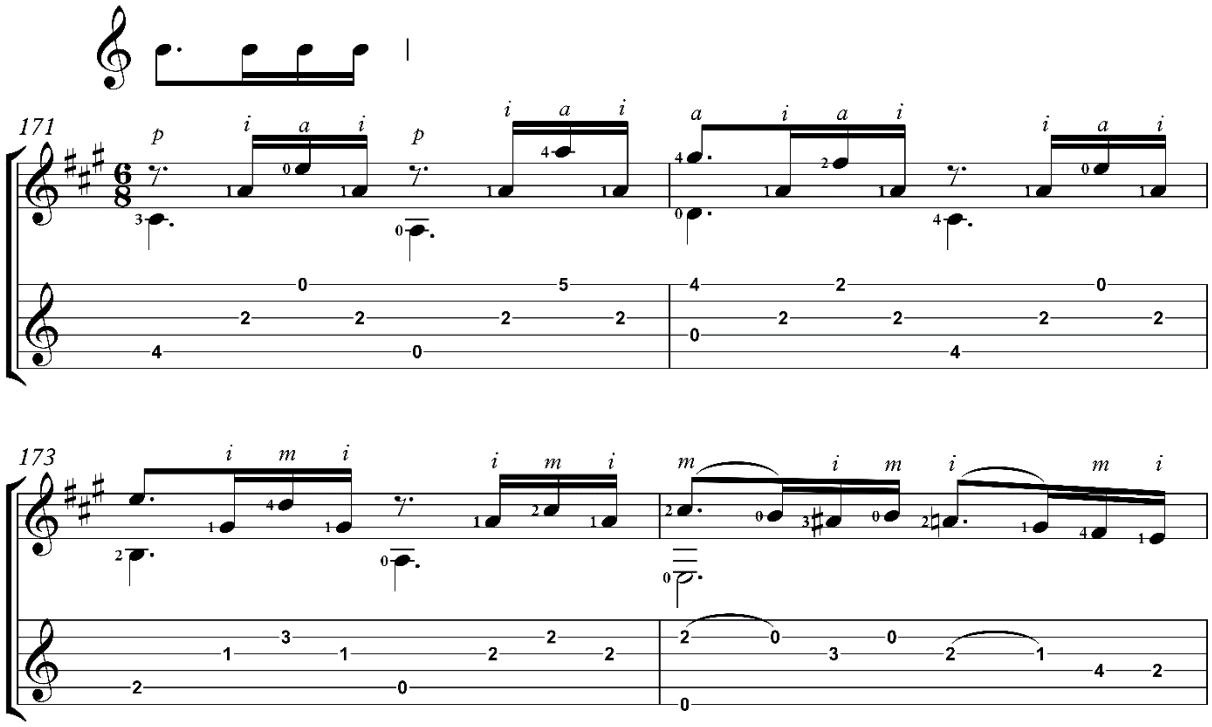
Example #193.

"Variations on a Theme by Handel" (Mauro Giuliani), measures 171-174.
Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #5

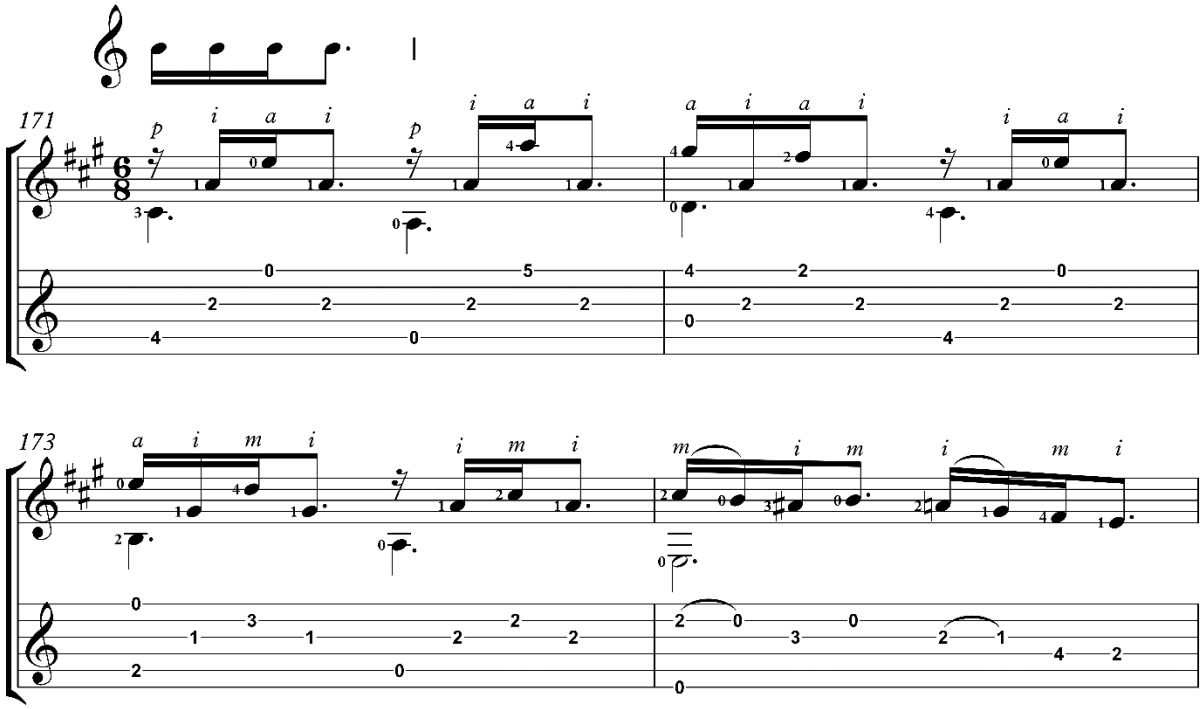


Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm #5. Audio Clip #63.

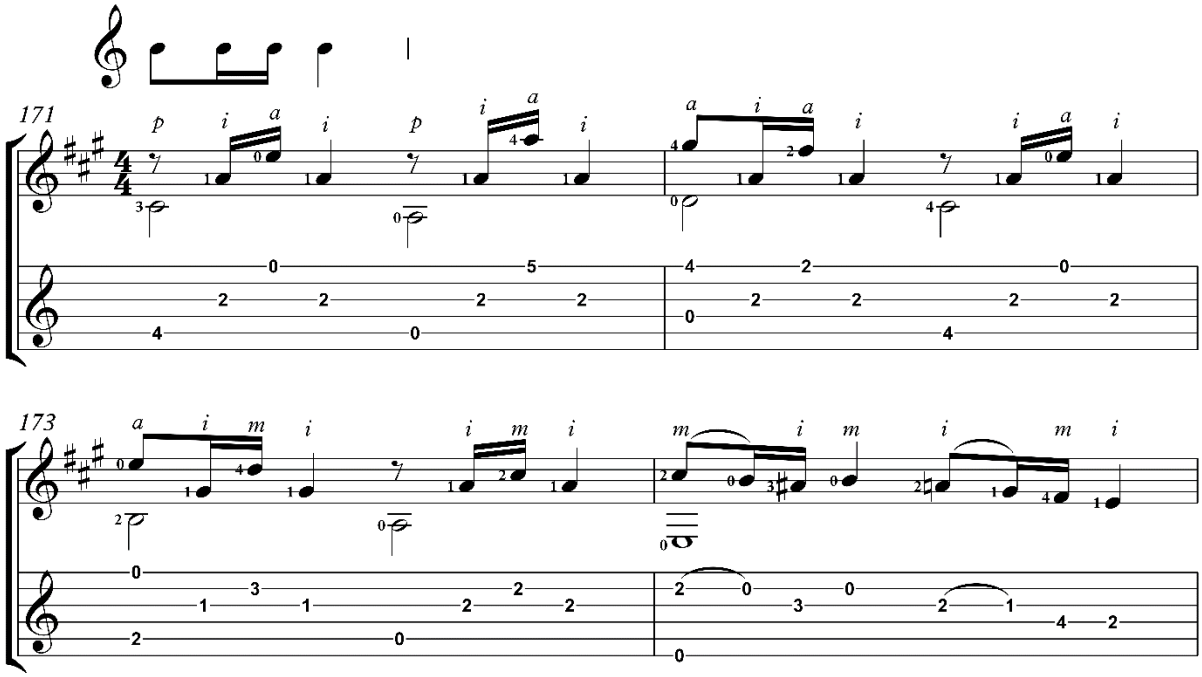
Example #194.

"Variations on a Theme by Handel" (Mauro Giuliani), measures 171-174.
Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #6

Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm #6. Audio Clip #64.

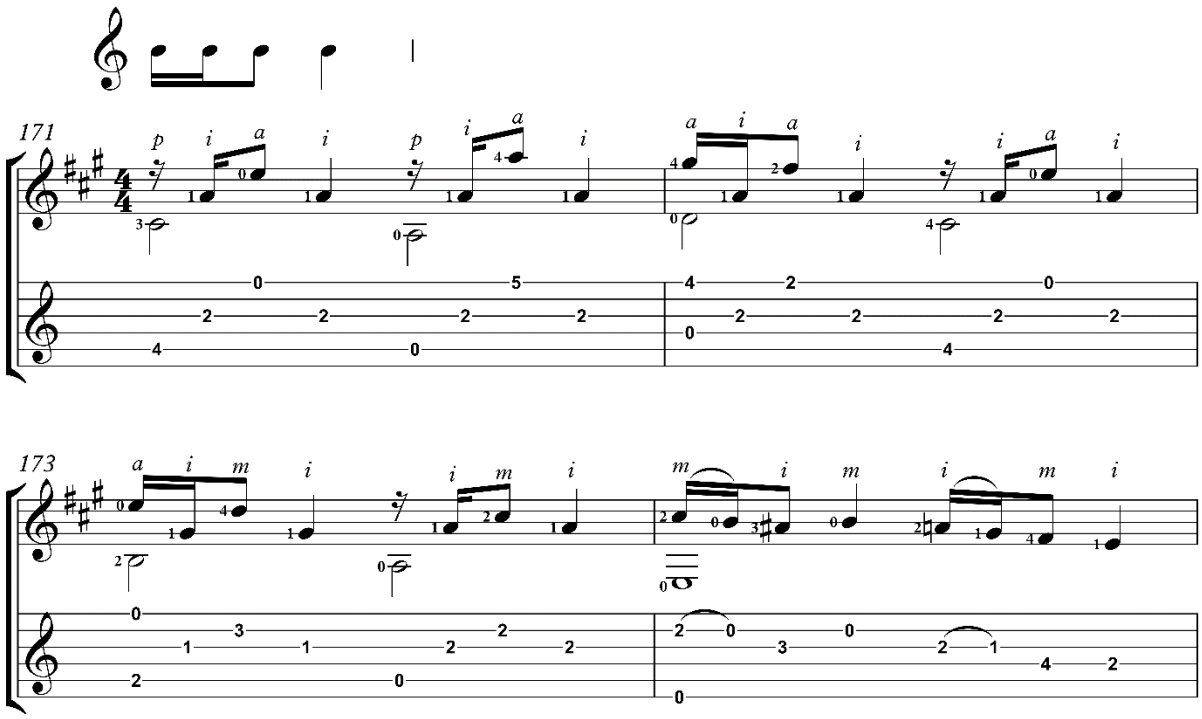
Example #195.

"Variations on a Theme by Handel" (Mauro Giuliani), measures 171-174.
Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #7

Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm #7. Audio Clip #65.

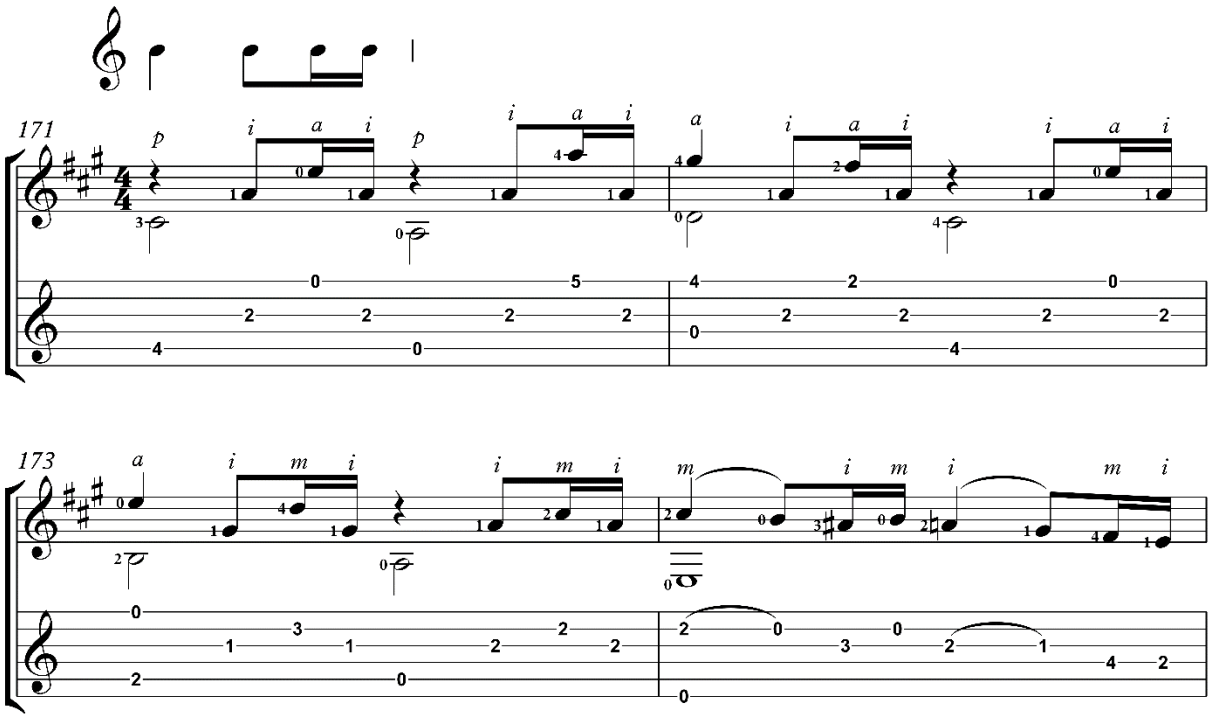
Example #196.

"Variations on a Theme by Handel" (Mauro Giuliani), measures 171-174.
Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #8

Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm #8. Audio Clip #66.

Example #197.

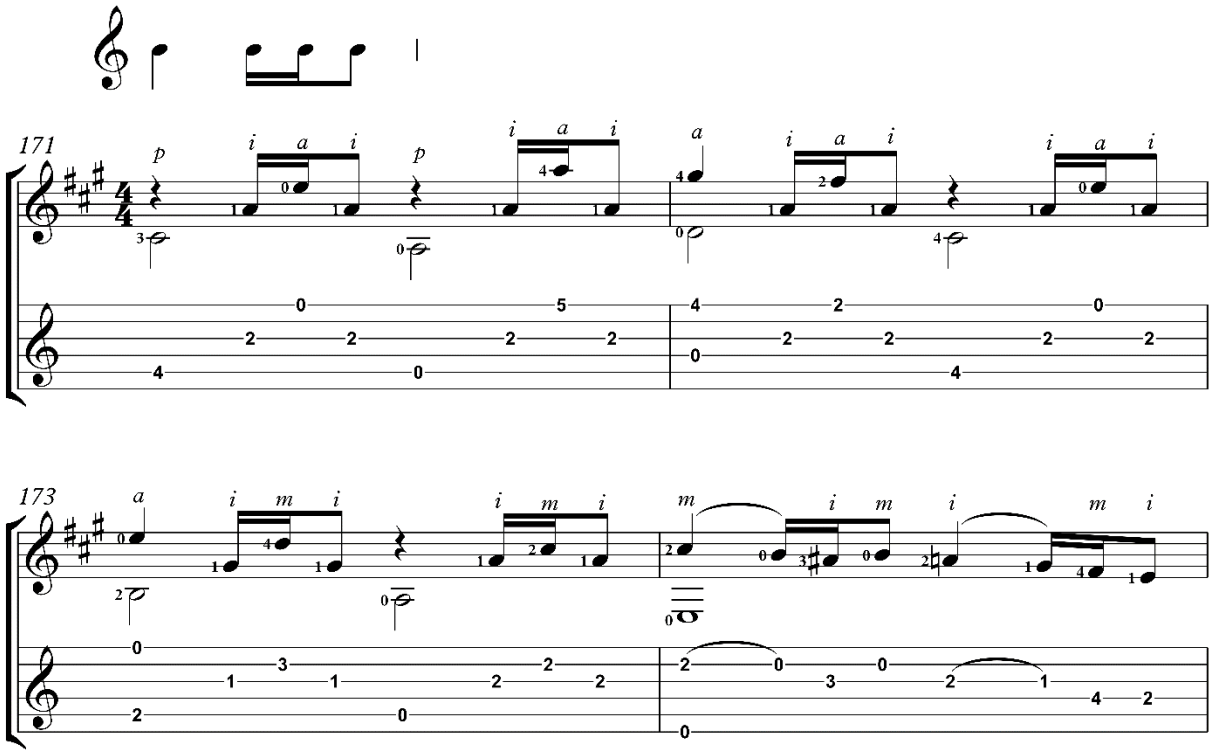
"Variations on a Theme by Handel" (Mauro Giuliani), measures 171-174.
Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #9

Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm #9. I use a metronome on this one. Audio Clip #67.

Example #198.

"Variations on a Theme by Handel" (Mauro Giuliani), measures 171-174.
Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #10

Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm #10. Audio Clip #68. I use a metronome on this one.

Example #199.

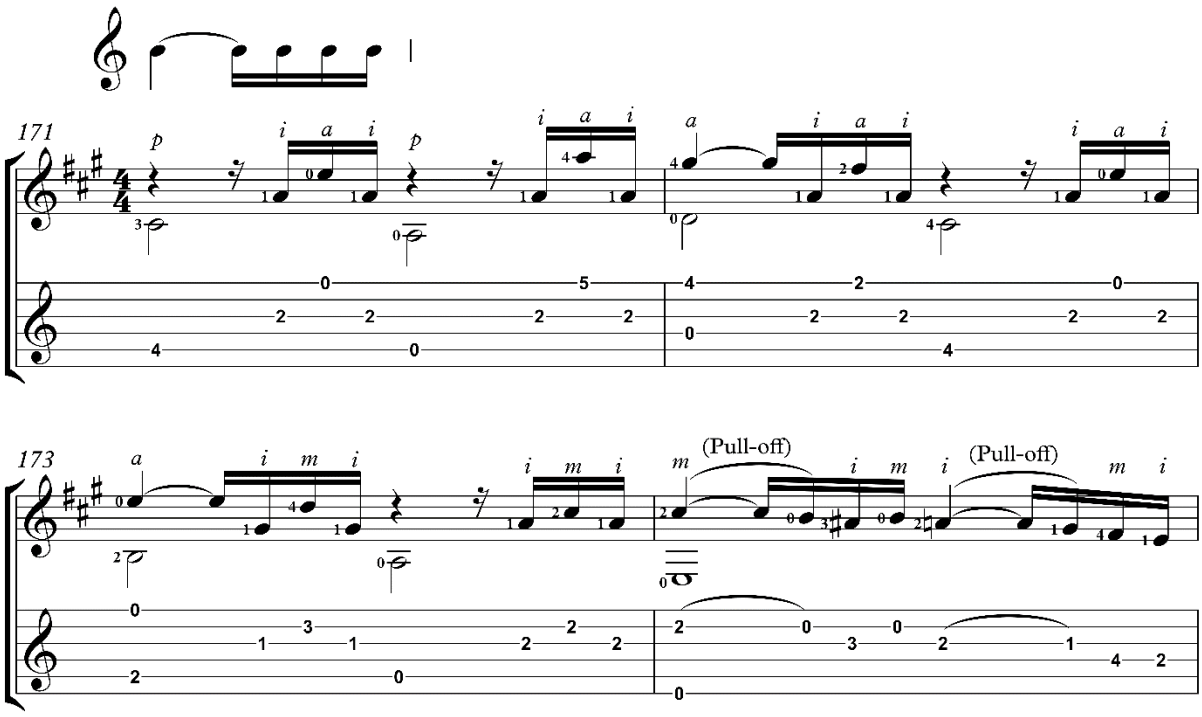
"Variations on a Theme by Handel" (Mauro Giuliani), measures 171-174.
Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #11



Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm #11. Audio Clip #69. I use a metronome on this one.

Example #200.

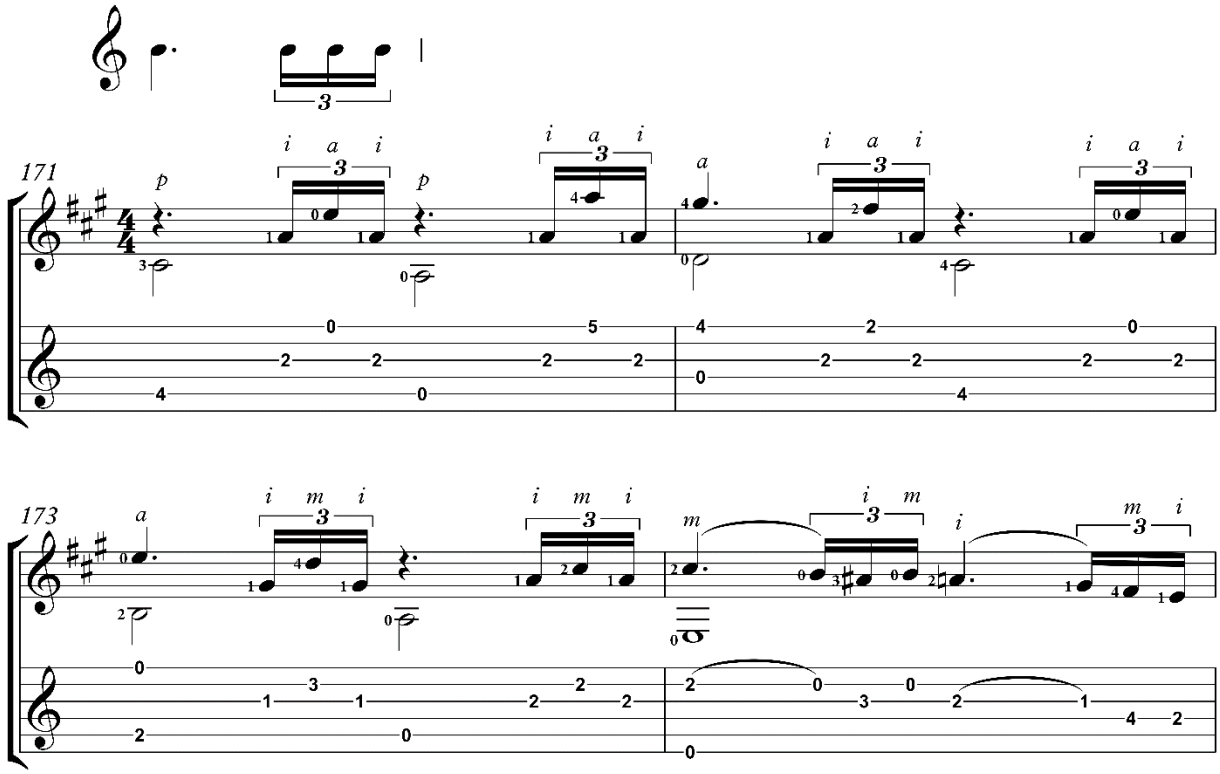
"Variations on a Theme by Handel" (Mauro Giuliani), measures 171-174.
Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #12



Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm #12. Audio Clip #70. I use a metronome on this one.

Example #201.

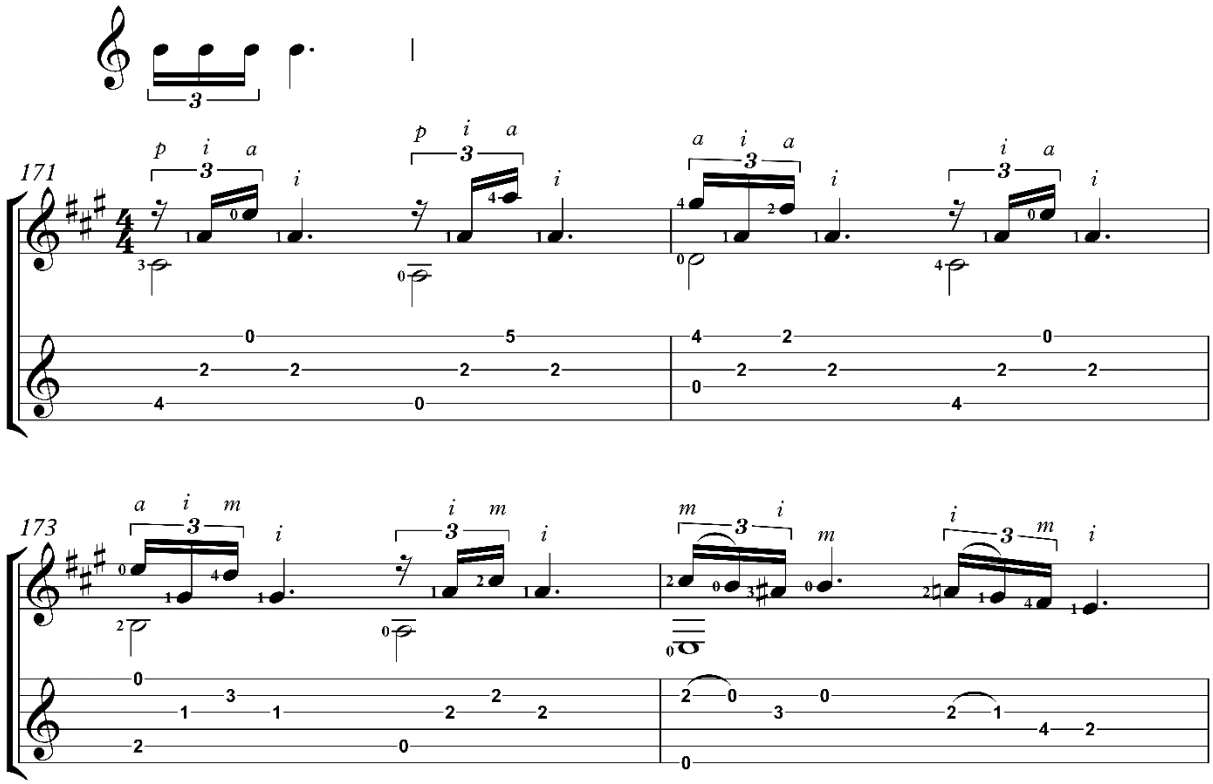
"Variations on a Theme by Handel" (Mauro Giuliani), measures 171-174.
Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #13



Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm #13. Audio Clip #71. I use a metronome on this one.

Example #202.

"Variations on a Theme by Handel" (Mauro Giuliani), measures 171-174.
Divisions of 2—Altered Rhythm #14



Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm #14. Audio Clip #72.

ALTERED RHYTHMS—DIVISIONS OF 3

How to Apply Altered Rhythms in Divisions of 3 to a Scale

It is easiest to apply altered rhythms to scales, so my examples will start there. But remember, except for the simplest altered rhythms, you will find it easier to practice if you write down the scale in the rhythm of each altered pattern. Please note:

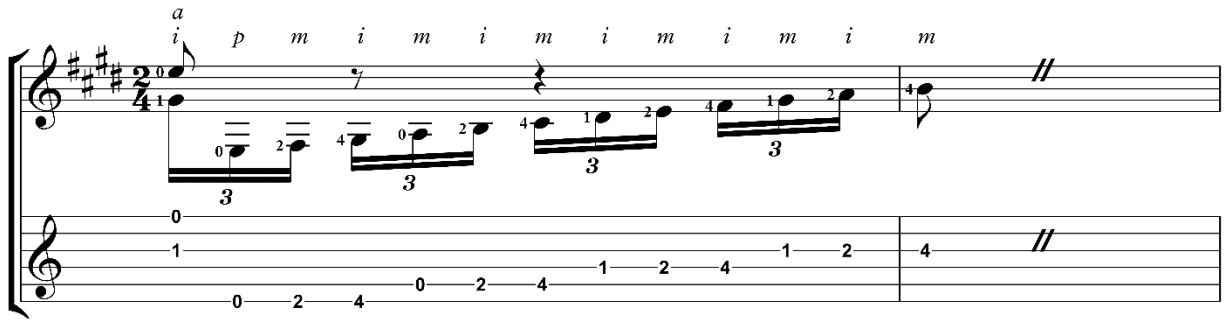
1. You don't need an expensive notation program to do this. Instead, write the passage out with pencil and paper, the old-fashioned quick and easy way!
2. Plus, if you write the passages out on paper, you don't need to figure out and write in the meter (3/4, 9/4, 13/8, etc.) as I did in this technique tip. Instead, write the rhythmic values only (quarter notes, 8th notes, dotted 8th notes, 16th notes, etc.).
3. Include any slurs (hammer-ons and pull-offs)
4. Finally, be sure to write in the left AND RIGHT-HAND fingerings so that you practice them correctly.

A Scale from *Introduction and Variations on a Theme by Mozart* by Fernando Sor

Here is a scale from the last seven measures of Fernando Sor's *Introduction and Variations on a Theme by Mozart*. Here is the scale in its original rhythm. Example #203:

Example 203.

"Introduction and Variations on a Theme by Mozart" op. 9 (Fernando Sor)
Original rhythms—seven measures from the end:



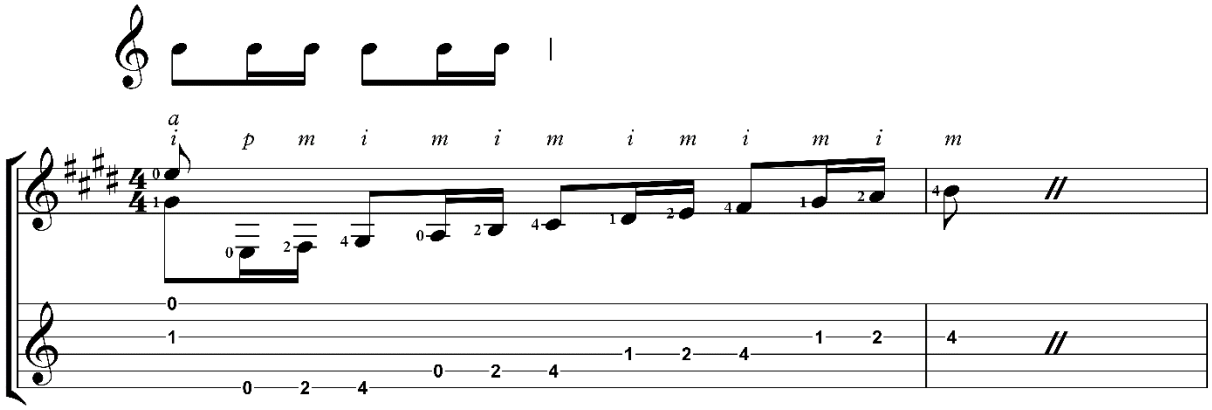
Listen to me play the passage with the original rhythms. Audio Clip #73.

Following is the same scale notated in each of the altered rhythms from the "Altered Rhythms Chart for **Divisions of 3**." After each example, you can play the audio file to hear what it sounds like.

Let's get started! Here is altered rhythm #1 followed by altered rhythms #2 through 8. Example #204:

Example #204.

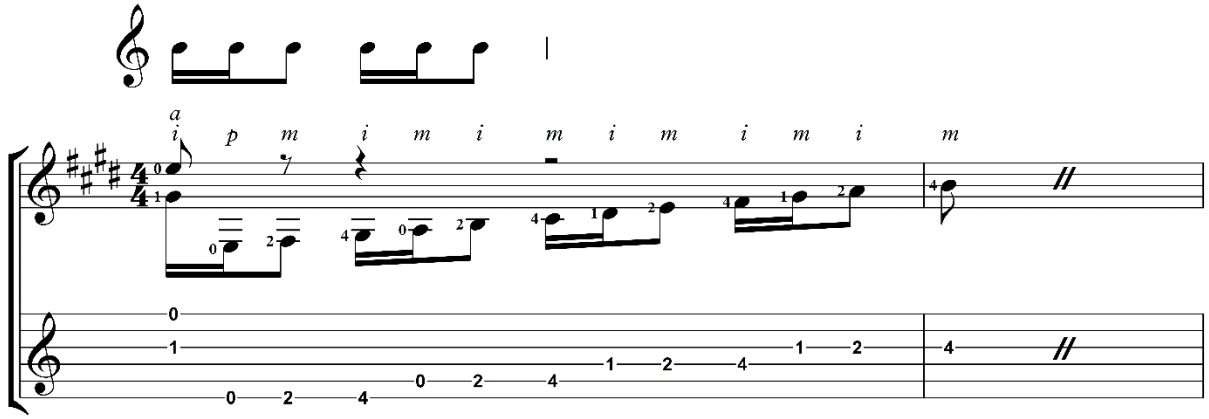
"Introduction and Variations on a Theme by Mozart" op. 9 (Fernando Sor)
Seven measures from the end
Divisions of 3—Altered Rhythm #1



Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm #1. Audio Clip #74.

Example #205.

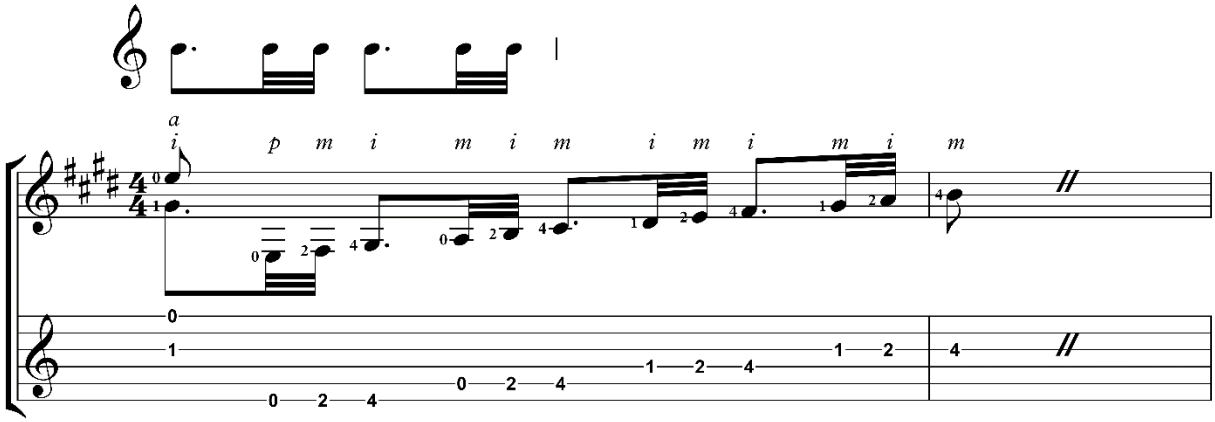
"Introduction and Variations on a Theme by Mozart" op. 9 (Fernando Sor)
Seven measures from the end
Divisions of 3—Altered Rhythm #2



Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm #2. Audio Clip #75.

Example #206.

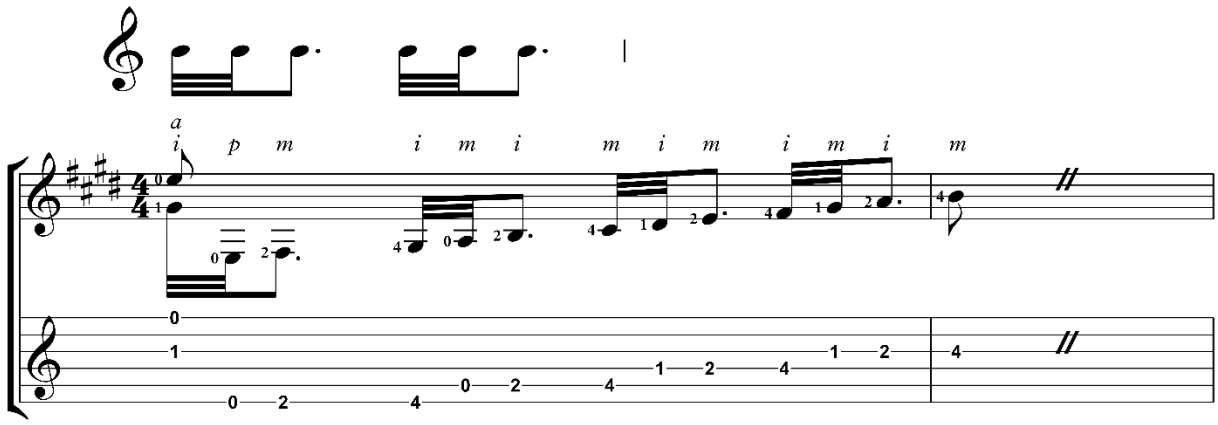
"Introduction and Variations on a Theme by Mozart" op. 9 (Fernando Sor)
Seven measures from the end
Divisions of 3—Altered Rhythm #3



Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm #3. Audio Clip #76.

Example #207.

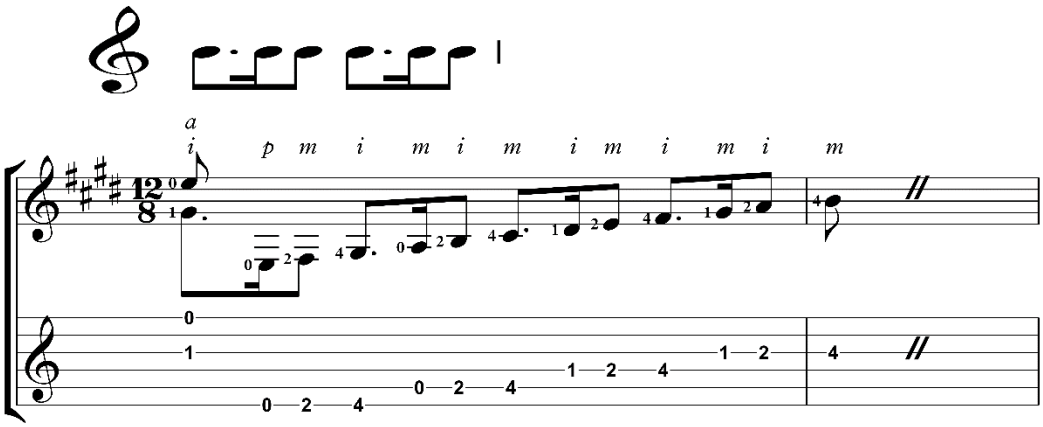
"Introduction and Variations on a Theme by Mozart" op. 9 (Fernando Sor)
Seven measures from the end
Divisions of 3—Altered Rhythm #4



Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm #4. Audio Clip #77.

Example #208.

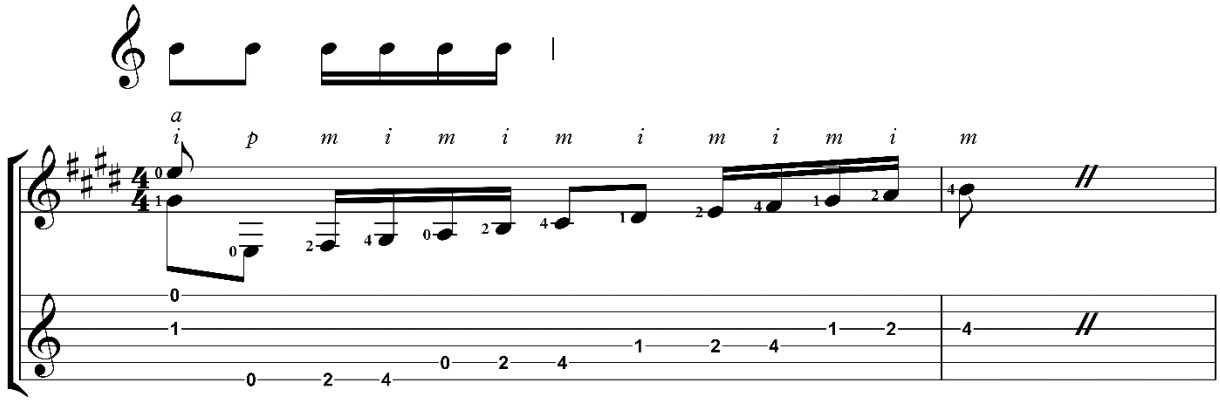
"Introduction and Variations on a Theme by Mozart" op. 9 (Fernando Sor)
Seven measures from the end
Divisions of 3—Altered Rhythm #5



Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm #6. Audio Clip #78.

Example #209.

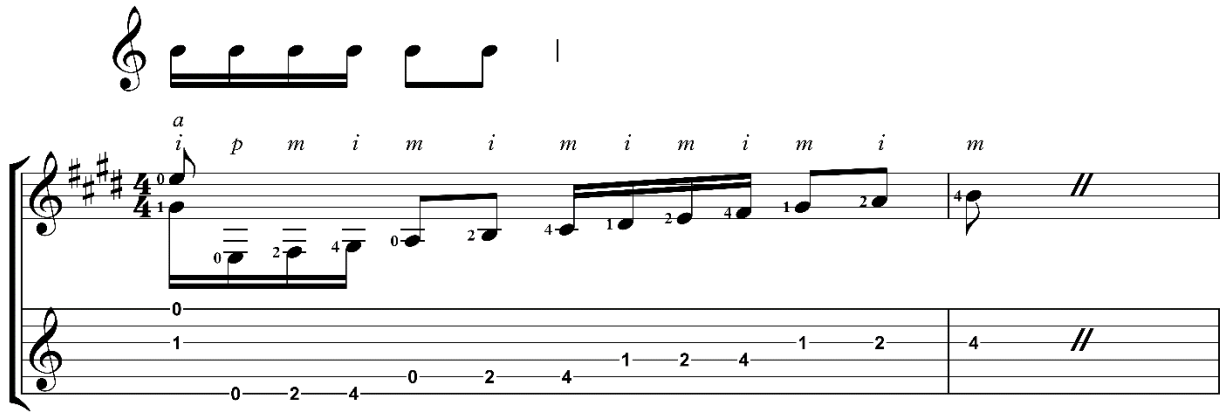
"Introduction and Variations on a Theme by Mozart" op. 9 (Fernando Sor)
Seven measures from the end
Divisions of 3—Altered Rhythm #6



Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm #6. Audio Clip #79.

Example #210.

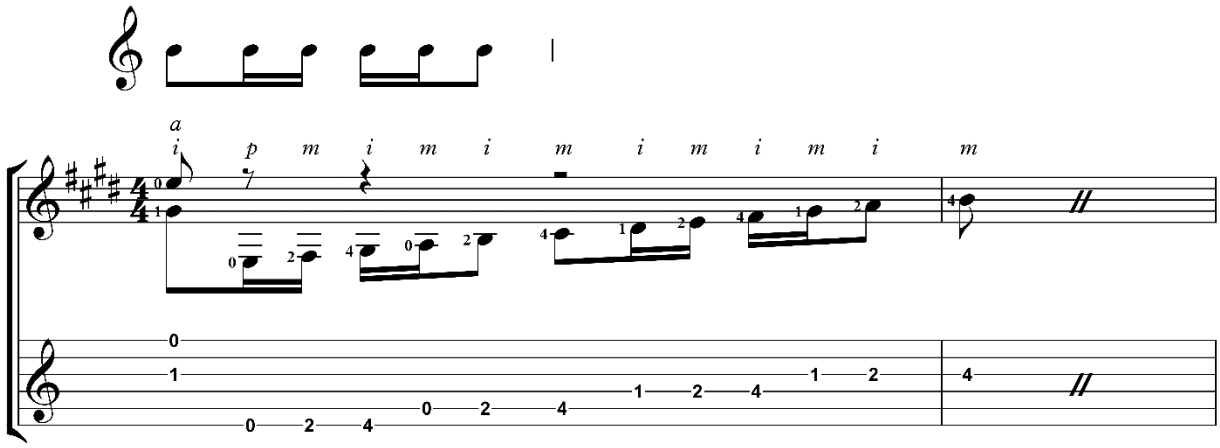
"Introduction and Variations on a Theme by Mozart" op. 9 (Fernando Sor)
Seven measures from the end
Divisions of 3—Altered Rhythm #7



Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm #7. Audio Clip #80.

Example #211.

"Introduction and Variations on a Theme by Mozart" op. 9 (Fernando Sor)
Seven measures from the end
Divisions of 3—Altered Rhythm #8



Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm #8. Audio Clip #81.

How to Apply Altered Rhythms in Divisions of 3 to a Passage from a Piece (not a scale)

It is more complicated to apply altered rhythms to non-scale passages. Therefore, I highly recommend writing out the passage in the altered rhythms you wish to practice as I have done here. Remember:

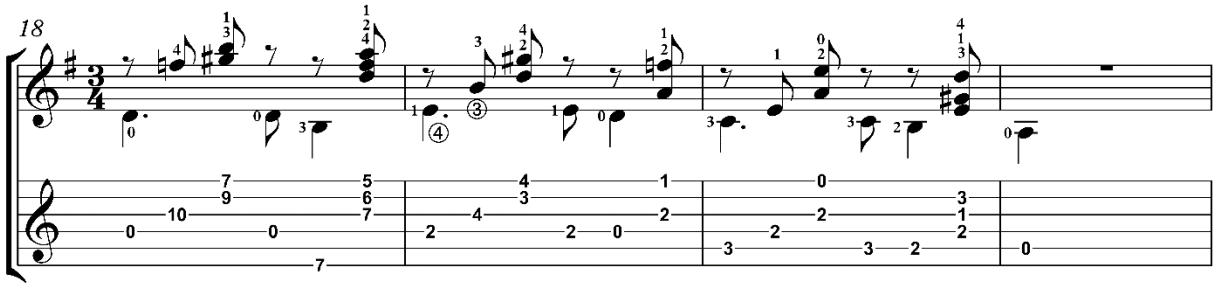
1. You don't need an expensive notation program to do this. Instead, write the passage out with pencil and paper, the old-fashioned quick and easy way!
2. Plus, if you write the passages out on paper, you don't need to figure out and write in the meter (3/4, 9/4, 13/8, etc.) as I have done in this technique tip. Instead, write the rhythmic values only (quarter notes, 8th notes, dotted 8th notes, 16th notes, etc.).
3. Include any slurs (hammer-ons and pull-offs)
4. Finally, be sure to write in the left AND RIGHT-HAND fingerings so that you practice them correctly.

A Passage from *Vals Venezolano No. 3* by Antonio Lauro

Here are measures 18-21 from Antonio Lauro's *Vals Venezolano No. 3*. Here are the original rhythms. Example #212:

Example 212.

"Vals Venezolano No. 3" (Antonio Lauro) m18-21. Fingering by Douglas Niedt
Original rhythms

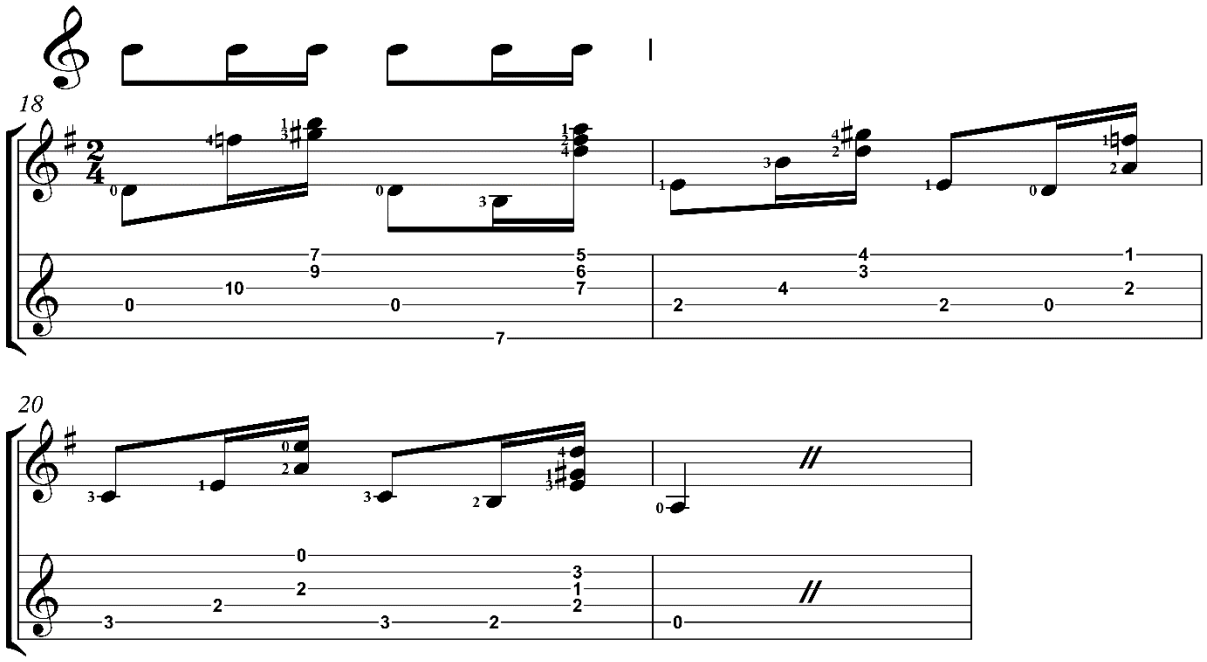


Listen to me play the passage in its original rhythm. Audio Clip #82.

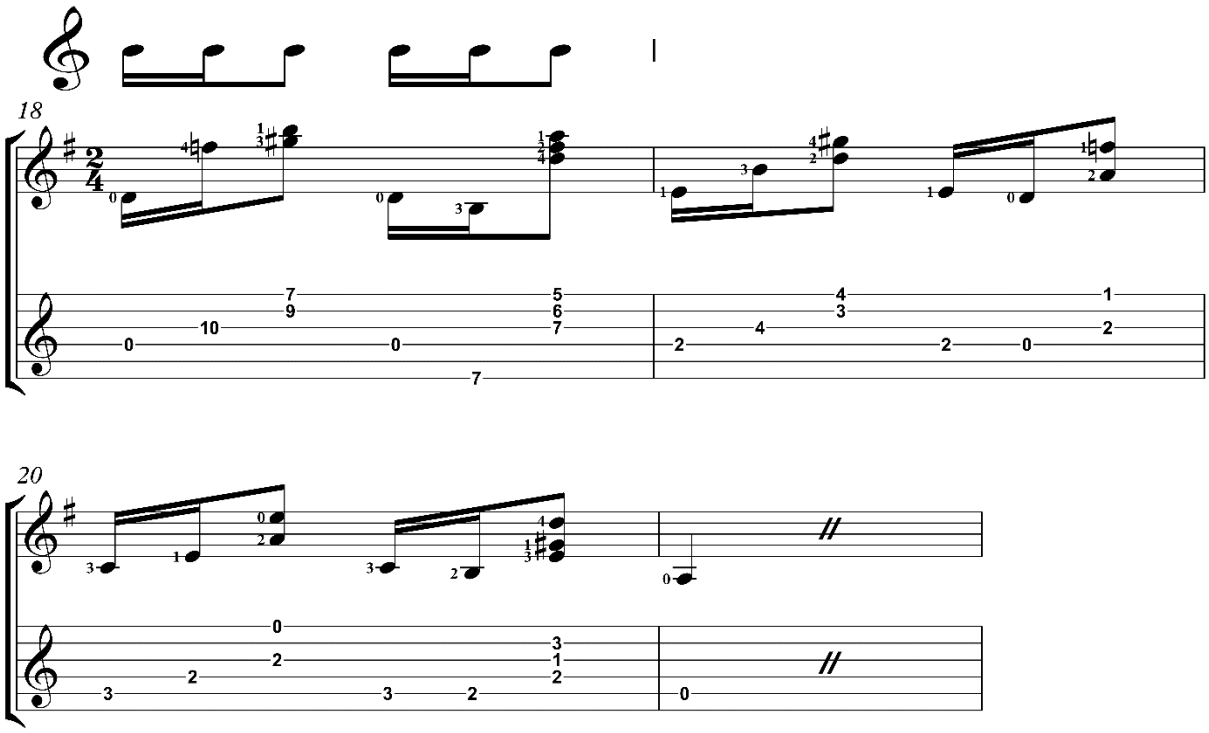
Following is the same passage notated in each of the altered rhythms from the "Altered Rhythms Chart for **Divisions of 3**." After each example, you can play the audio file to hear what it sounds like.

Let's get started! Here is altered rhythm #1 followed by altered rhythms #2 through #8. Example #213:

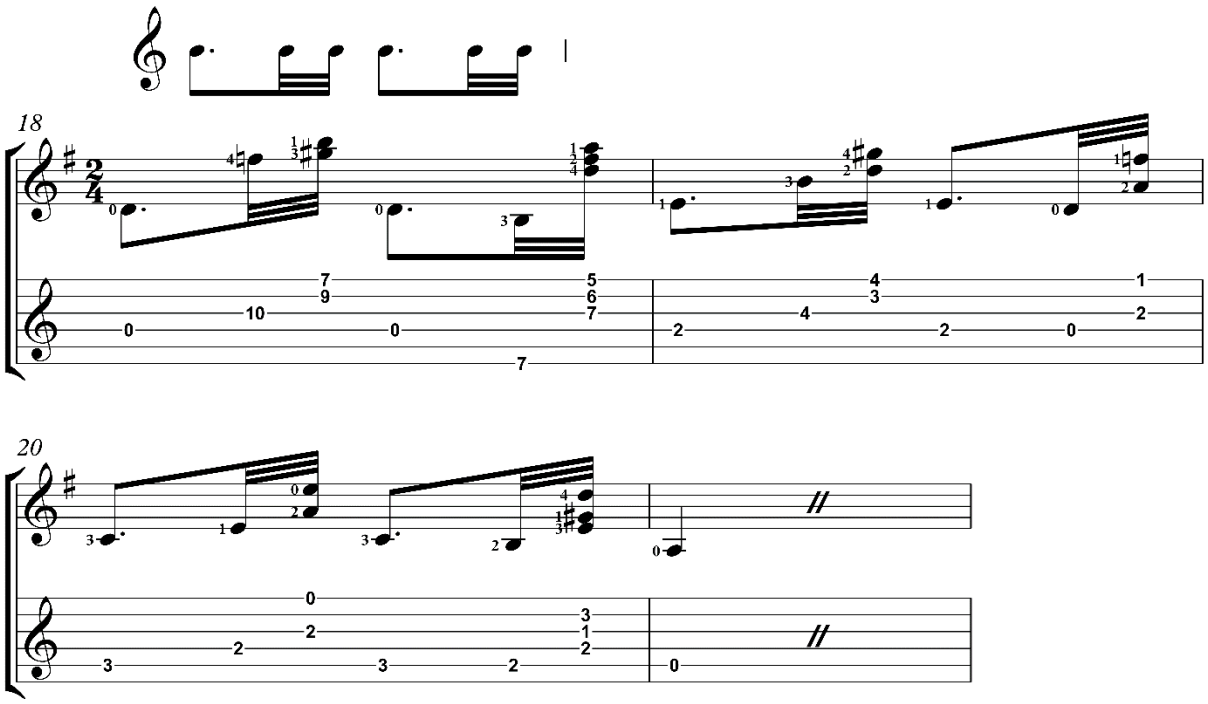
Example 213.

"Vals Venezolano No. 3" (Antonio Lauro) m18-21. Fingering by Douglas Niedt
Divisions of 3—Altered Rhythm #1

Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm 1. Audio Clip #83.

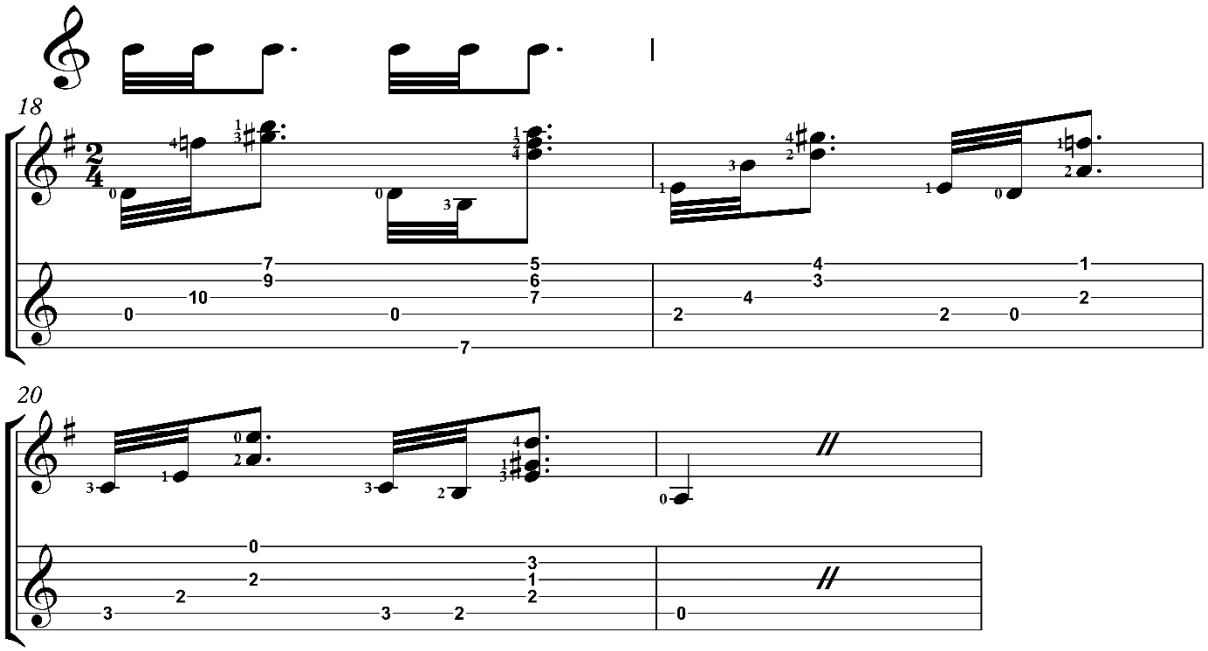
Example 214.

"Vals Venezolano No. 3" (Antonio Lauro) m18-21. Fingering by Douglas Niedt
Divisions of 3—Altered Rhythm #2

Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm 2. Audio Clip #84.

Example 215.

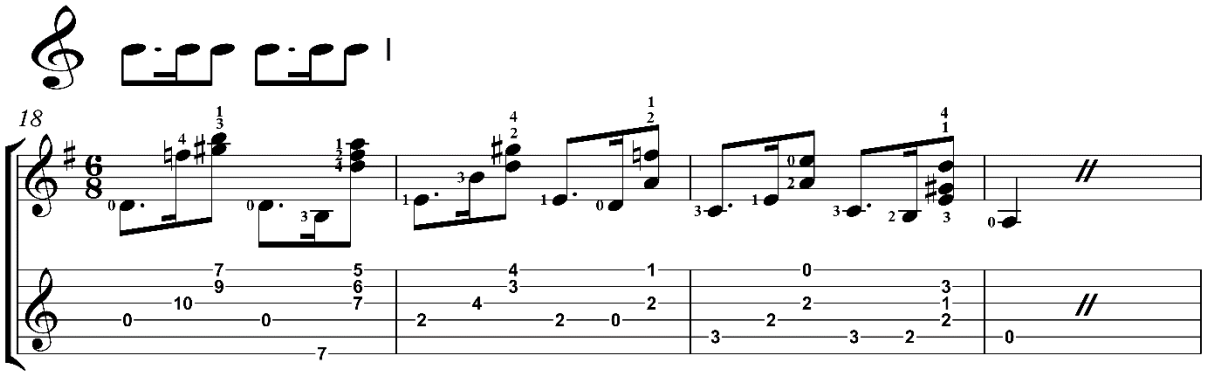
"Vals Venezolano No. 3" (Antonio Lauro) m18-21. Fingering by Douglas Niedt
Divisions of 3—Altered Rhythm #3

Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm 3. Audio Clip #85. I use a metronome on this one.

Example 216.

"Vals Venezolano No. 3" (Antonio Lauro) m18-21. Fingering by Douglas Niedt
Divisions of 3—Altered Rhythm #4

Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm 4. Audio Clip #86. I use a metronome on this one.

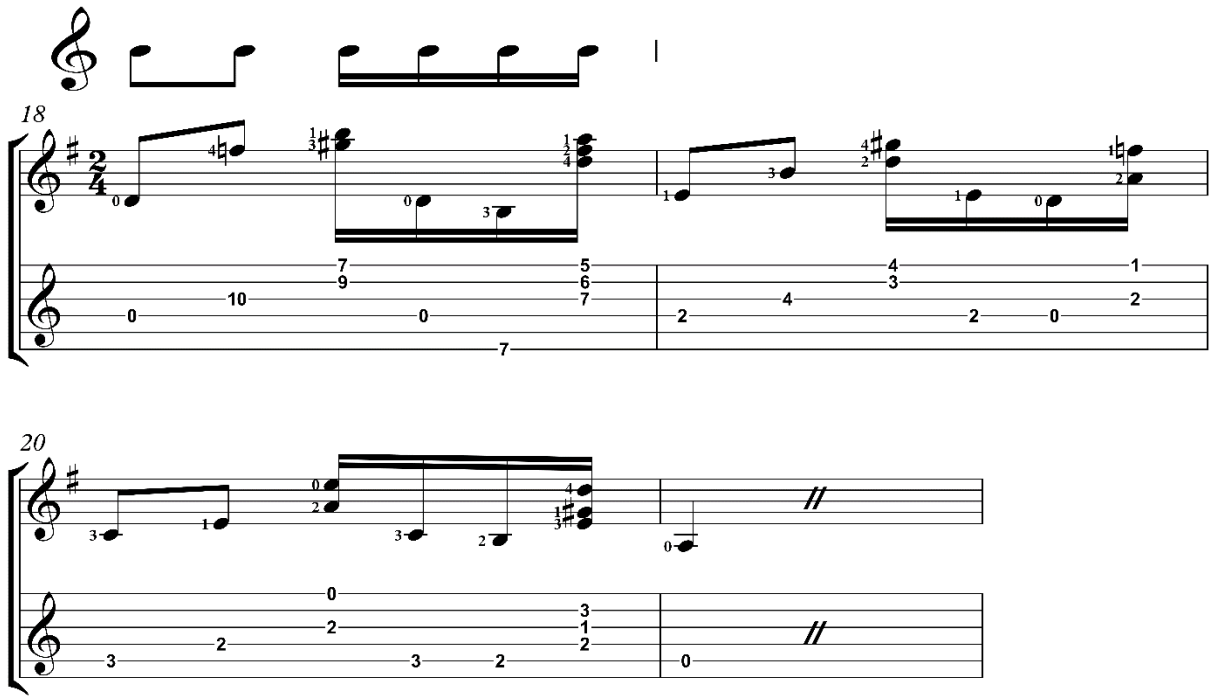
Example 217.

"Vals Venezolano No. 3" (Antonio Lauro) m18-21. Fingering by Douglas Niedt
Divisions of 3—Altered Rhythm #5

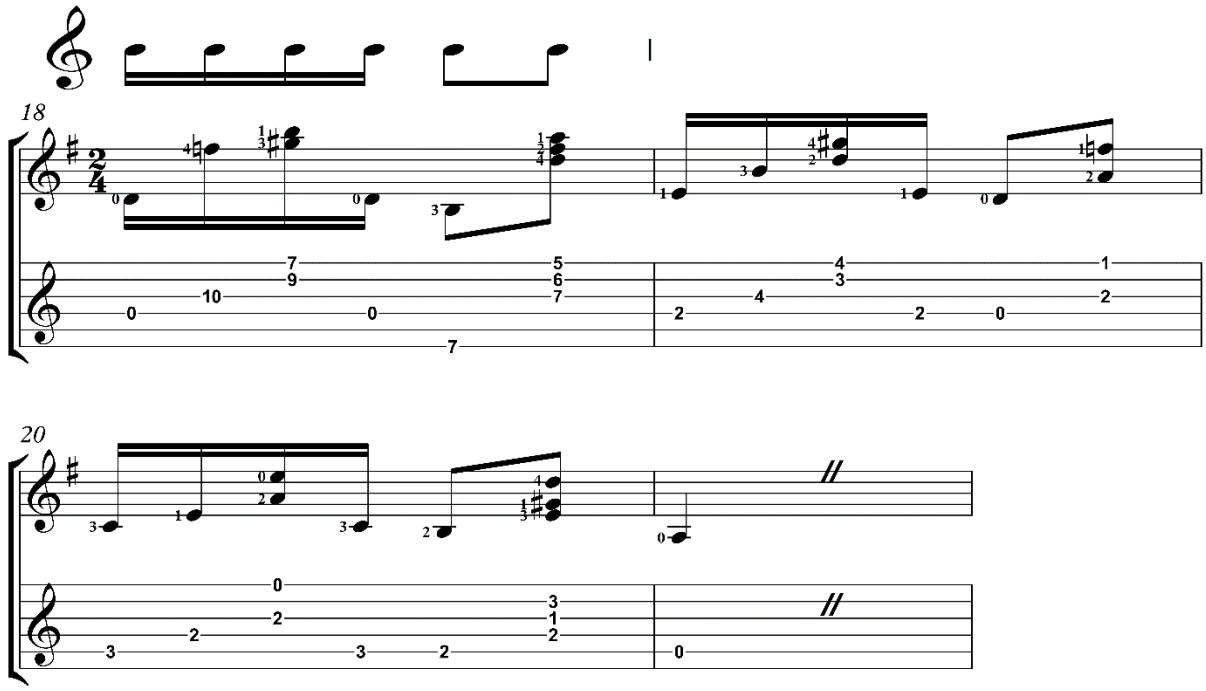


Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm 5. I use a metronome on this one. Audio Clip #87.

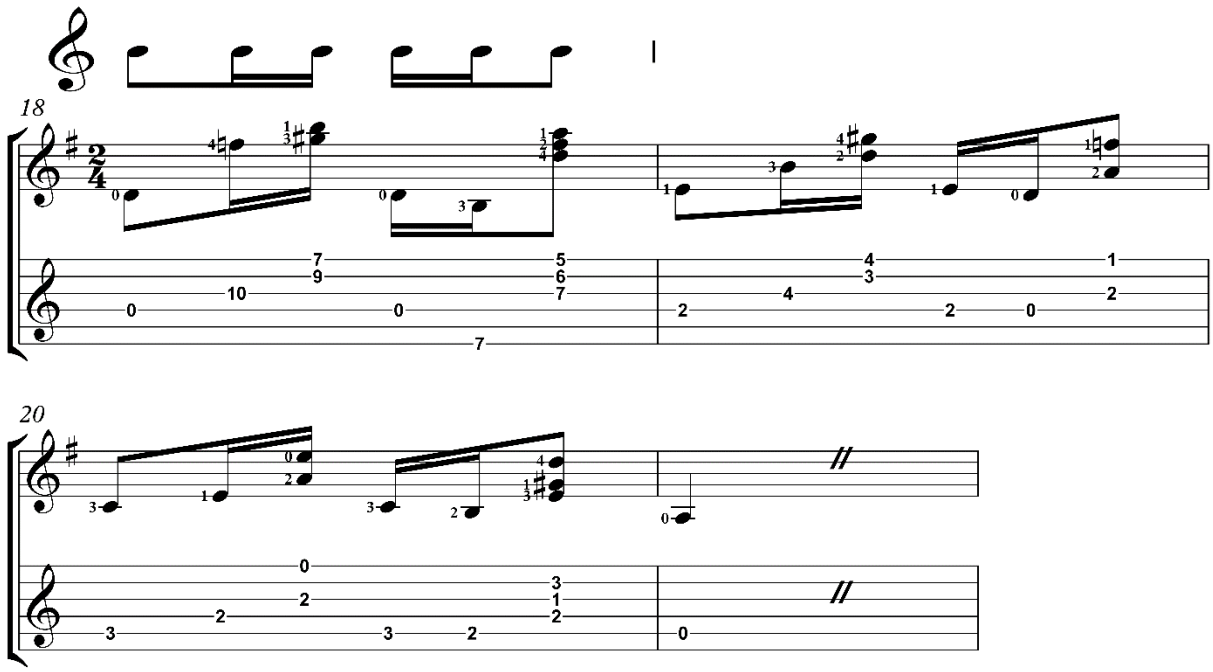
Example 218.

"Vals Venezolano No. 3" (Antonio Lauro) m18-21. Fingering by Douglas Niedt
Divisions of 3—Altered Rhythm #6

Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm 6. Audio Clip #88.

Example 219.

"Vals Venezolano No. 3" (Antonio Lauro) m18-21. Fingering by Douglas Niedt
Divisions of 3—Altered Rhythm #7

Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm 7. Audio Clip #89.

Example 220.

"Vals Venezolano No. 3" (Antonio Lauro) m18-21. Fingering by Douglas Niedt
Divisions of 3—Altered Rhythm #8

Listen to me play the passage with altered rhythm 8. Audio Clip #90. I use a metronome on this one.

The Downside of Practicing Altered Rhythms

The primary downside of practicing altered rhythms is doing it too much. You could practice so many rhythmic patterns that using this tool indiscriminately can waste a lot of valuable practice time. Yes, you will fill in your allotted practice time, but there is a point of diminishing returns. Again, there are so many ways to practice altered rhythms that one could easily spend several hours on a passage of four measures doing nothing else. That is overkill and unnecessary. I find it is fun to practice with altered rhythms, but remember that they won't fix everything, and you don't want to overuse this tool and neglect other valuable practice tools.

Some teachers say that spending too much time practicing altered rhythms can lend an overly formulaic, mechanical structure to the practice session. On the other hand, I find that playing a passage several times, once as written, then with some altered rhythms, again as written, then with another altered rhythm, etc., *keeps me more engaged* than if I practiced the passage ten times in the original version.

I recommend starting with the two basic dotted rhythms. Then, if you are not getting results, explore more patterns and practice those you find most challenging. You don't need to practice every possible rhythm. Be sure that the notes remain clean when you alter the rhythm and the altered rhythm is exact.

And never practice a passage with altered rhythms without listening critically. Hear it as a musical entity, so it doesn't feel like a mechanical exercise.

SUMMARY

Altered rhythm practice is great, but don't overdo it. Use it judiciously and combine it with other practice tools. You will find the benefits are fantastic. Practicing in altered rhythms really works. You will be amazed by the results in just one to two days.

Once again, from Part 1:

Build Good Muscle Memory and Dismantle Bad Muscle Memory to Construct New Neural Pathways

When we change the rhythm of a passage, we come to know it from a variety of different angles. As a result, the brain sees the patterns differently with each rhythmical variation. Therefore, it is easier to play faster, evenly, and more accurately when we return to the original.

Practicing altered rhythms seems to break up muscle memory; especially old, entrenched muscle memory that produces the same mistakes day after day, month after month, and year after year. On a piece you have been playing a long time, the pauses will break the momentum of old, faulty muscle memory that you can now replace with the correct movements. Remember our discussion on the importance of myelinating the correct neural pathways?

Improve Finger Preparation

The long notes in an altered rhythm help train the fingers on both hands to prepare for the following fast note or notes. A pause allows the fingers on both hands to hover above the next note or string, reinforcing the muscle memory needed to play that note.

Learn to Make Fast Finger Movements

Practicing with altered rhythms sharpens the reflexes. When you practice with altered rhythms, you prolong some notes but speed up other notes or groups of notes into a reflex, tricking your brain and body into playing fast without feeling like you are increasing the overall tempo. In other words, you may not have the skill to play all the notes in a scale fast, but an altered rhythm makes it possible for you to play some of the notes and the transitions from note to note *very* fast, almost as a reflex. If you change the rhythm again, you will learn to play other groups of notes and the transitions *very* fast. After practicing several rhythms, you will soon have the ability to play ALL the notes and transitions fast, and voila, you have a complete scale at a speed you thought you could never attain.

By treating groups of notes as reflexes, practicing in altered rhythms in some instances can improve the synchronization of the two hands.

Reduce Tension in the Hands

When we play fast notes, we use an explosion of energy. Over a few measures, tension can build in the hands and produce mistakes or slow the hands down. We can use the long notes in our altered rhythms as an opportunity to train the hands and fingers to release that energy, so they learn to stay relaxed through an entire passage.

Improve Slurs (hammer-ons and pull-offs)

We even apply the altered rhythms to any slurs in the passage. Practicing the altered rhythms with the slurs will help improve the clarity, rhythmic precision, and strength of your hammer-ons and pull-offs.

Correct Problems with Right-Hand Fingering

Accenting the notes in different patterns helps diagnose and correct problems with alternating the right-hand fingers or not using the intended right-hand fingering. Accenting a note increases your awareness of which right-hand finger is plucking that note. You will often catch yourself using an unintended finger, especially at a string cross or after a slur.

Maintain Focus and Engagement

Practicing with altered rhythms also keeps the brain engaged. For example, if you repeat a passage ten times, it is hard to maintain your focus 100% of the time. But if you play the passage once or twice in the original rhythm, change to an altered rhythm, go back to the original, change to a second altered rhythm, go back to the original, etc., your brain and hands must constantly readjust and think about what is happening. The procedure also forces you to listen more closely to each repetition.