THE MATTHEW HOLMES CONSORTS

(The Cambridge Consort Books c.1588 - ?1597)

Matthew Holmes was responsible for compiling the largest body of surviving English lute, bandora and cittern music, together with music for 'consort-of-six'. His interest in consort music seems to have begun around 1588 when he became precentor and a singing man at Christ Church, Oxford, and associated with another singing man, Richard Reade, whose interest in the form led him to compose numerous pieces. (Lyle Nordstrom, *Journal of the Lute Society of America*, 1972)

The expression 'consort-of-six' as used here refers to that special grouping of instruments (treble viol or violin, flute or recorder, bass viol, lute, cittern and bandora) which was a favourite of Queen Elizabeth I and is represented by four major sources: printed publications by Thomas Morley (The First Booke of Consort Lessons, 1599 & 1611) and Philip Rosseter (Lessons for Consort, 1609) and manuscript collections: The Walsingham Consorts *c.*1588 and The Matthew Holmes Consorts *c.*1588 – ?1597 (often known as 'The Cambridge Consort Books').

The term 'Consort' originally denoted any music whereby different families of instruments come together in a group, but in the 20th century a non-historical distinction was made between 'whole' consorts of like instruments and 'broken' consorts' of different families.

Holmes' consort music was written out in the following manuscripts which are in the possession of Cambridge University Library:

Dd.3.18 Mainly lute duet trebles and consort lute parts.
Dd.14.24 Cittern solos and consort parts.
Dd.5.20 Bass consort parts and an inserted section of lyra viol tablature and music for division viol, including a number of divisions on consort lesson bass parts, including 'James's Galliard' and Dowland's 'Lachrimae')
Dd.5.21 Mainly recorder consort parts but with two pages of parts for 'treble violan'. (the smallest size of violin used at the time), mistakenly copied by Holmes into his recorder book.
The main 'treble violan' book and the bandora book**,** which we can assume would have originally existed**,** are not extant.
The Matthew Holmes consort books are, nevertheless, one of the richest sources of Elizabethan consort music, particularly by virtue of having the largest number of fine lute parts to accompany consorts in this and other collections, such as Thomas Morley's *The First Booke of Consort Lessons* (1599 & 1611) for which the lute book is missing. The set is also interesting in that treble violan (treble violin) and recorder are specified rather than the more usual treble viol and flute.

For a fuller introduction and list of sources for the individual pieces, see the introduction in the Score.

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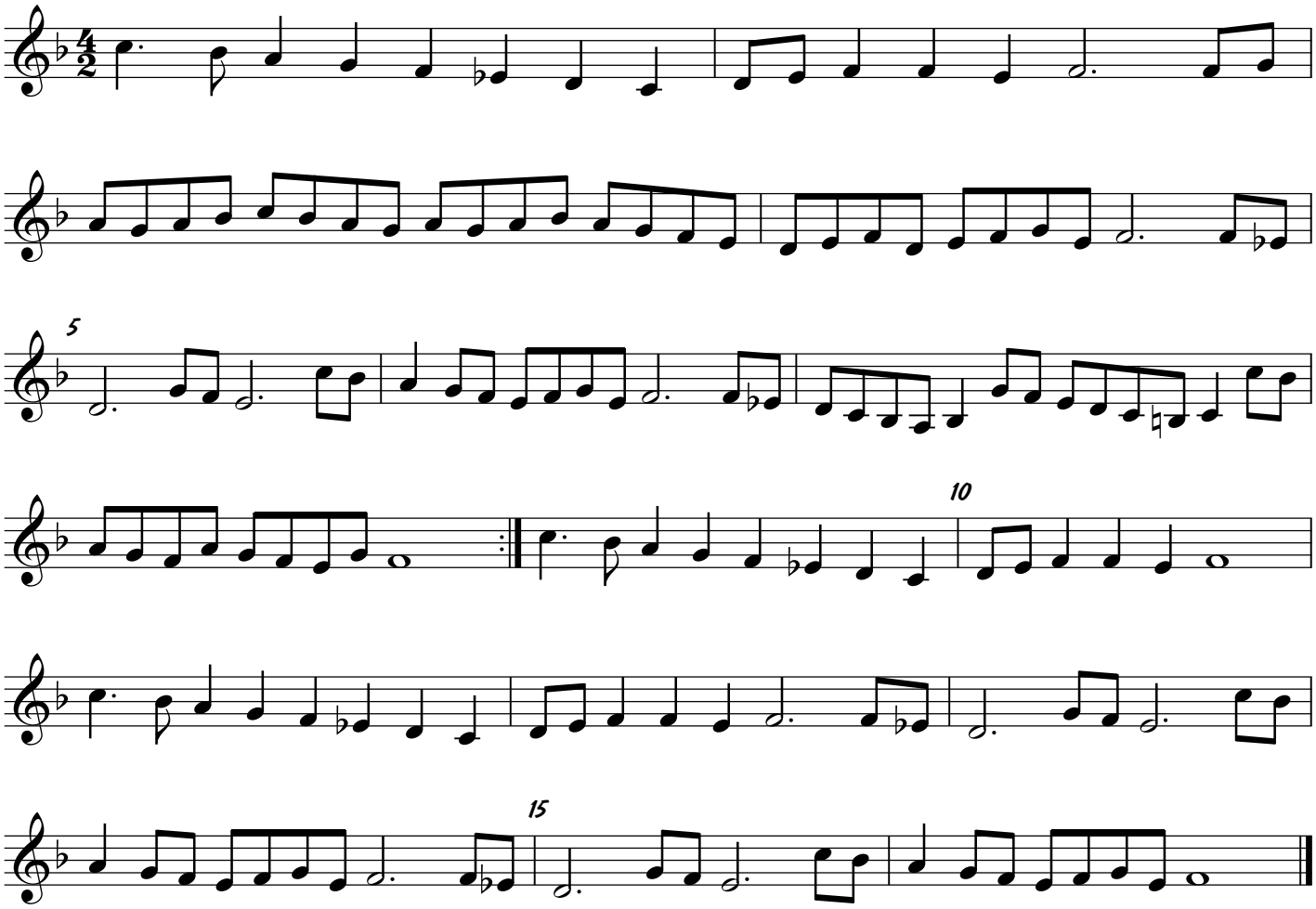
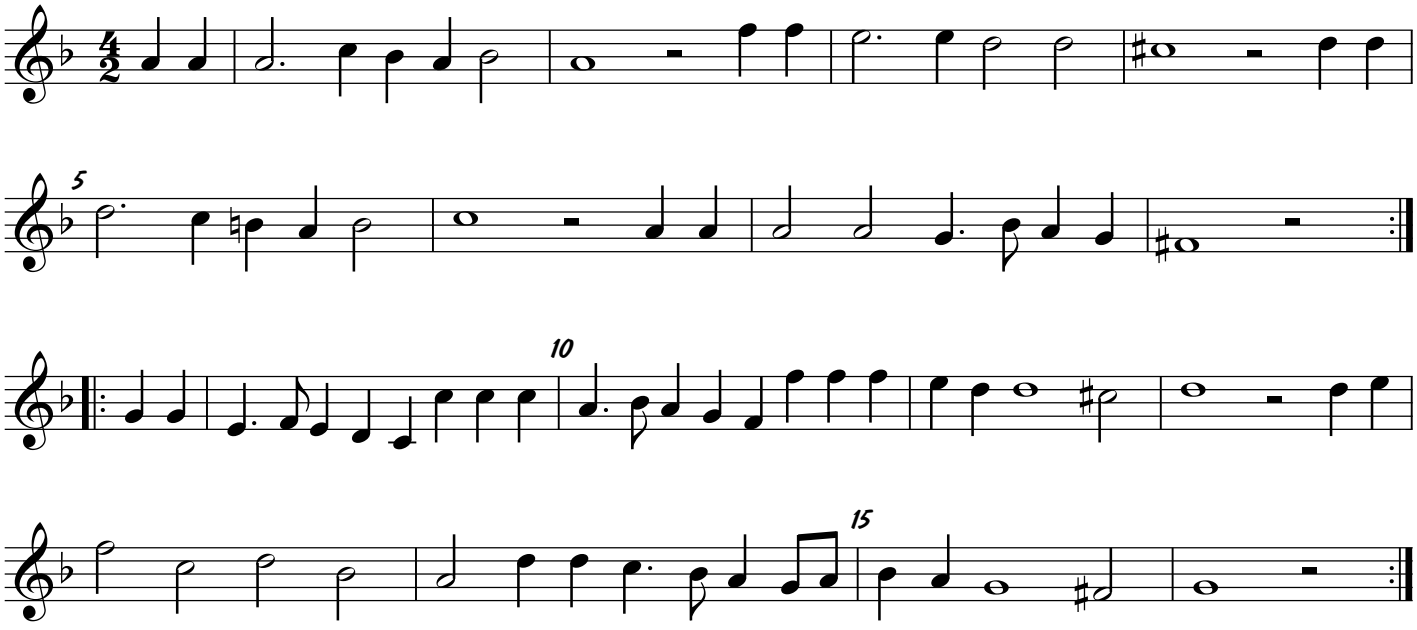
1. The French kings maske

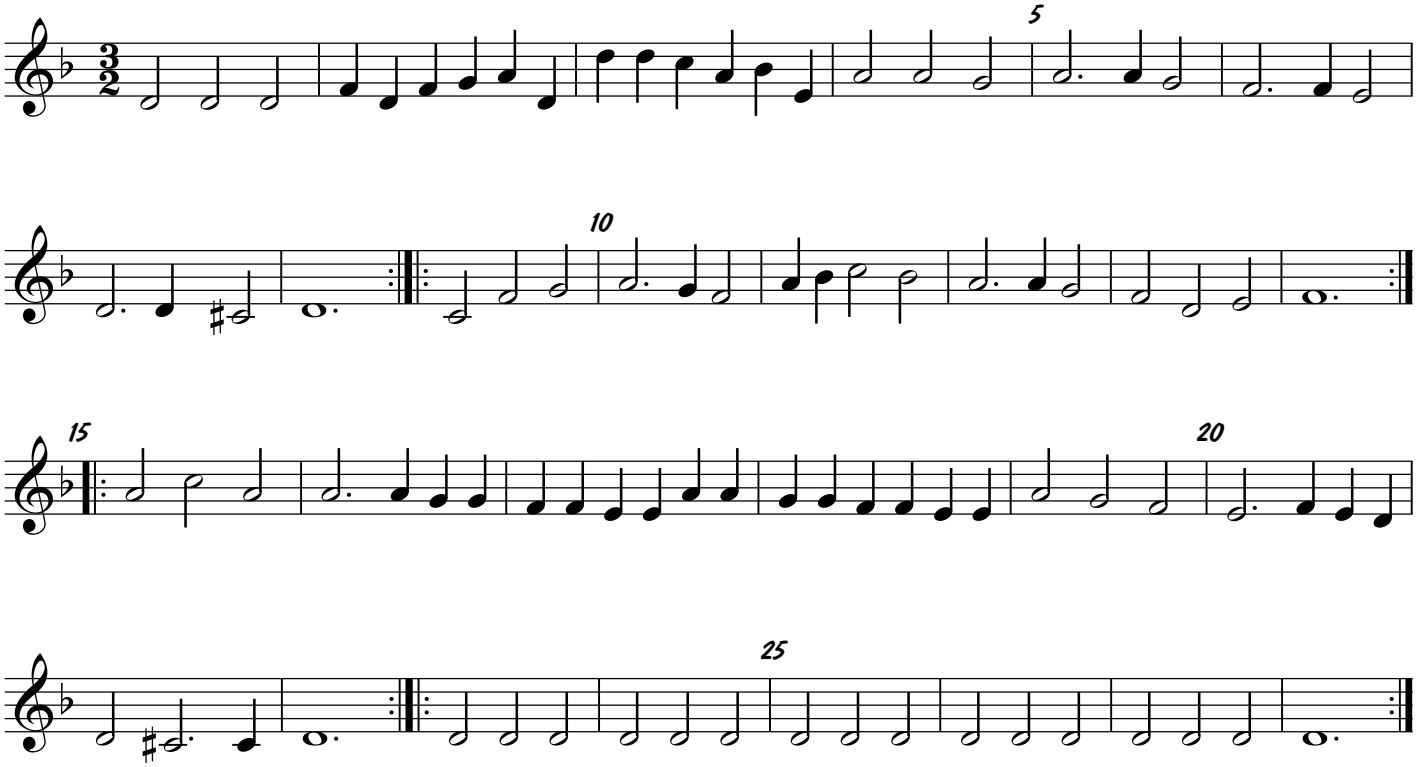


2. Alfonsoes paven

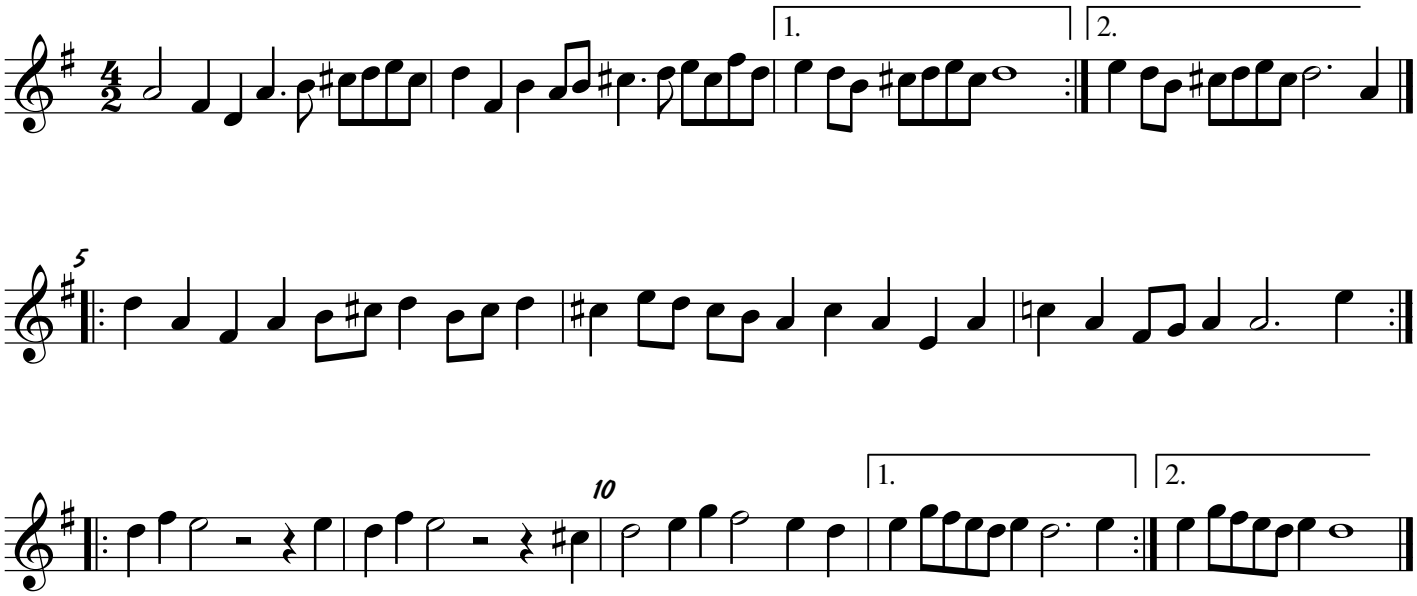
? Augustine Bassano or Alfonso Ferrabosco II



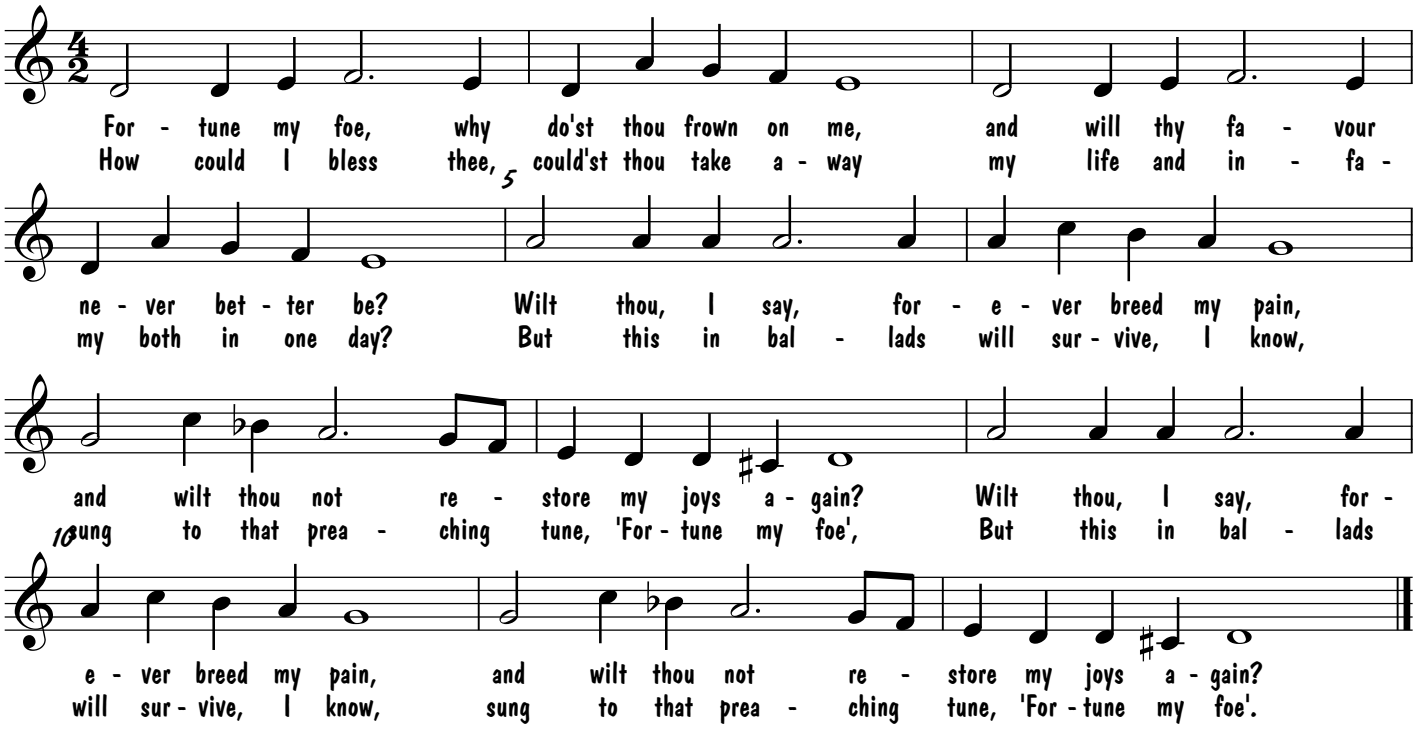
3. La Bergera galliarde



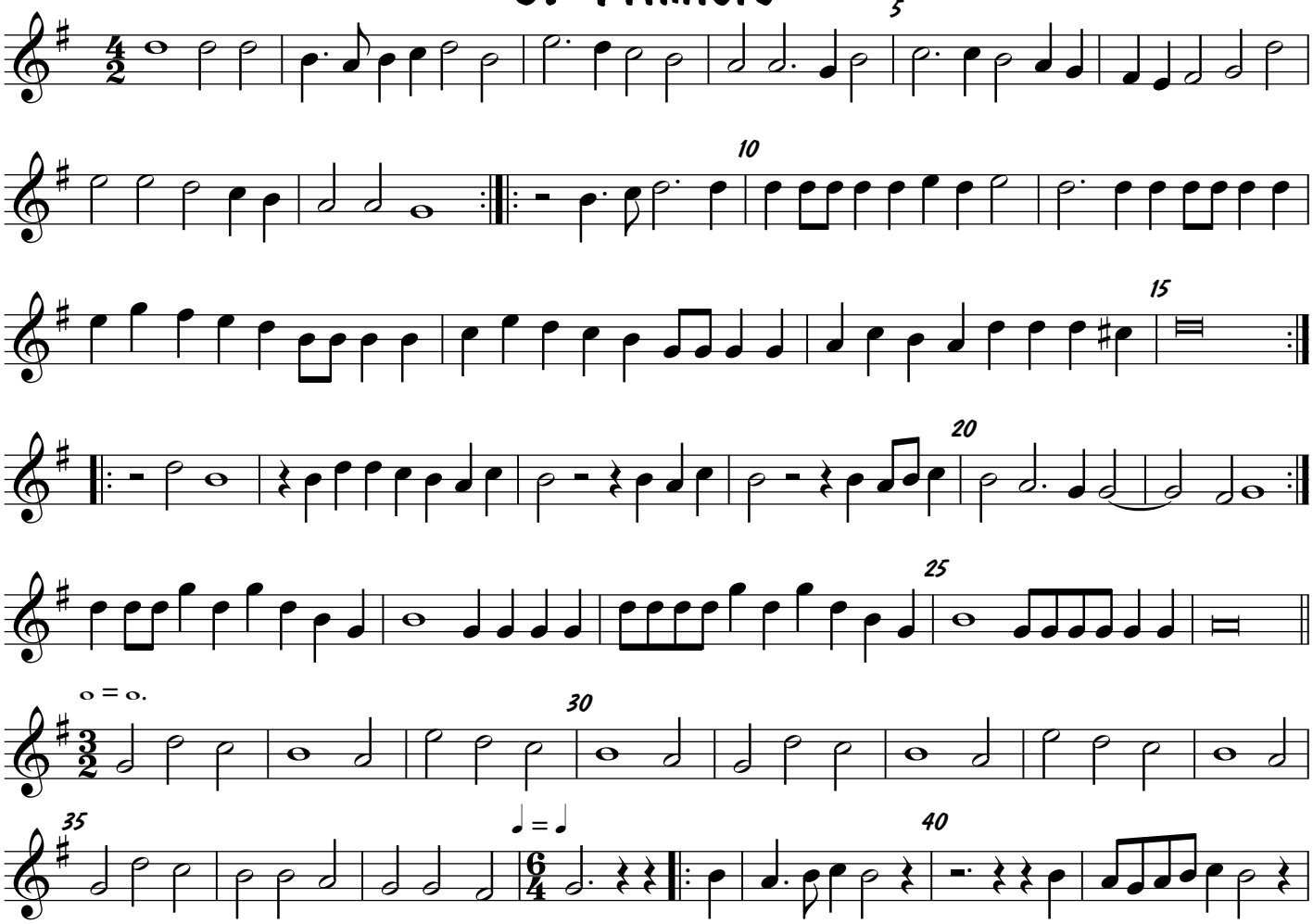
4. Nightingale

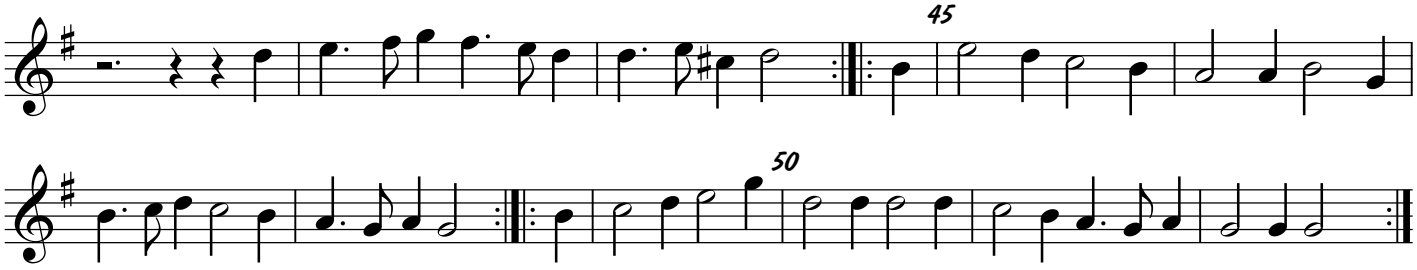


5. Complainte or Fortune (Fortune my foe)

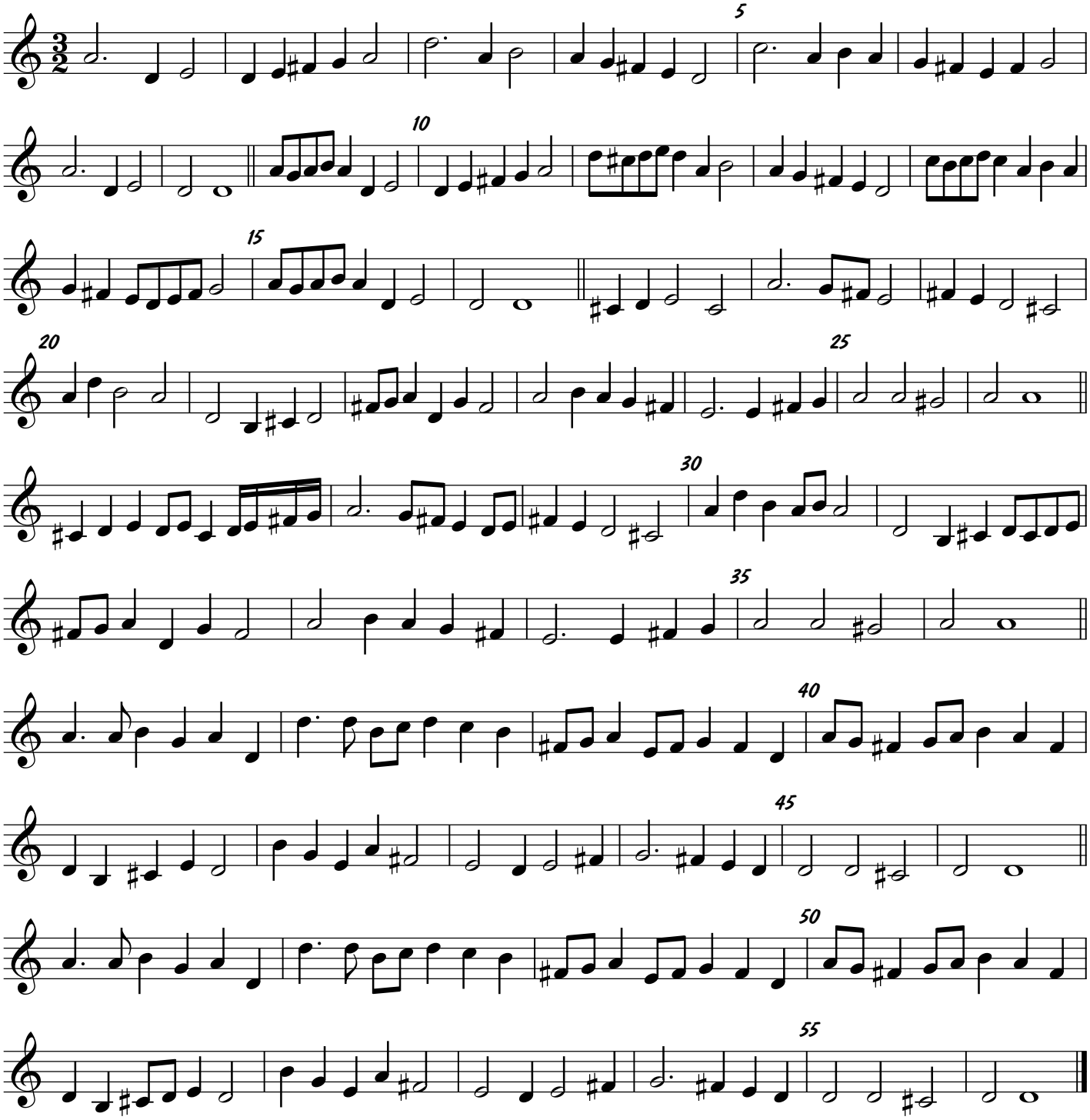


6. Primiero

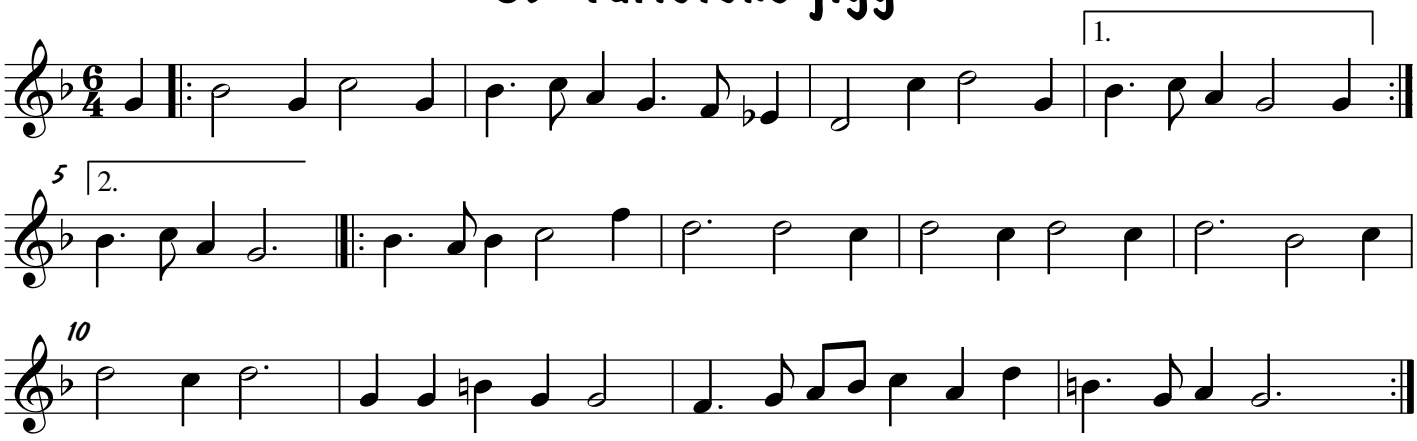




7. Duncombs galliarde

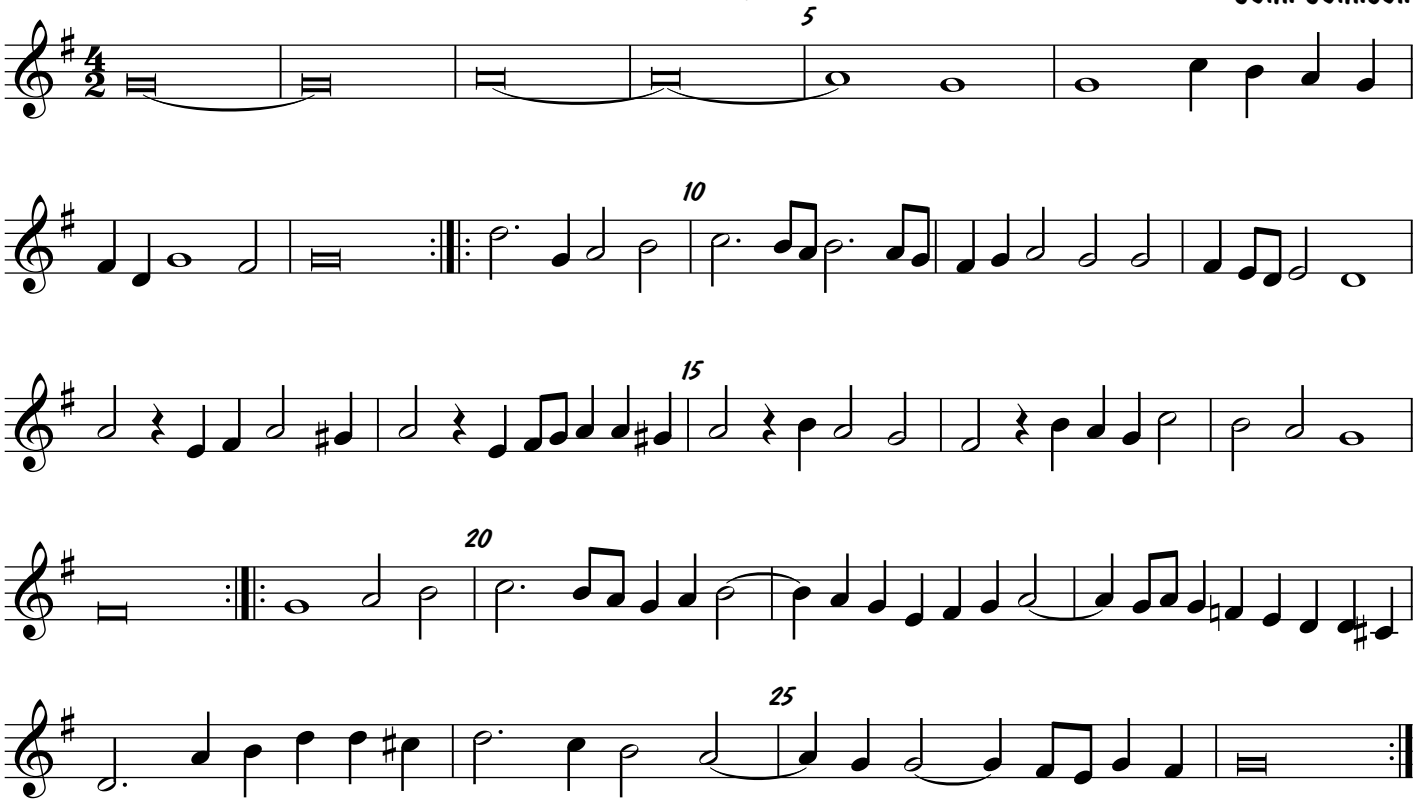


8. Tarletons jigg



9. Long paven

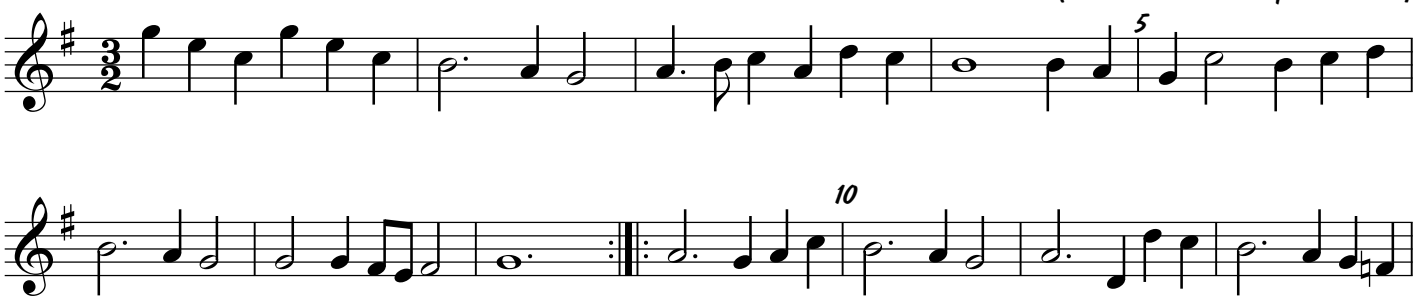
John Johnson

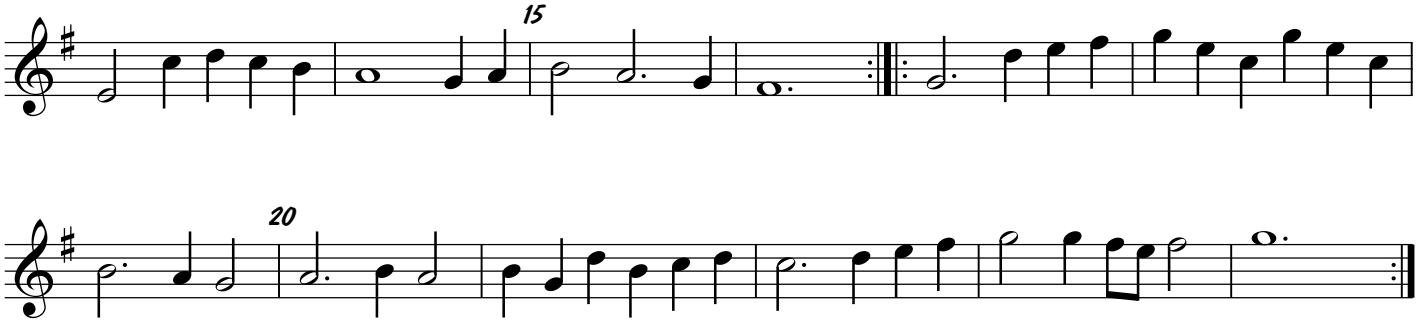


10. Dowlands round Battell galliarde

John Dowland

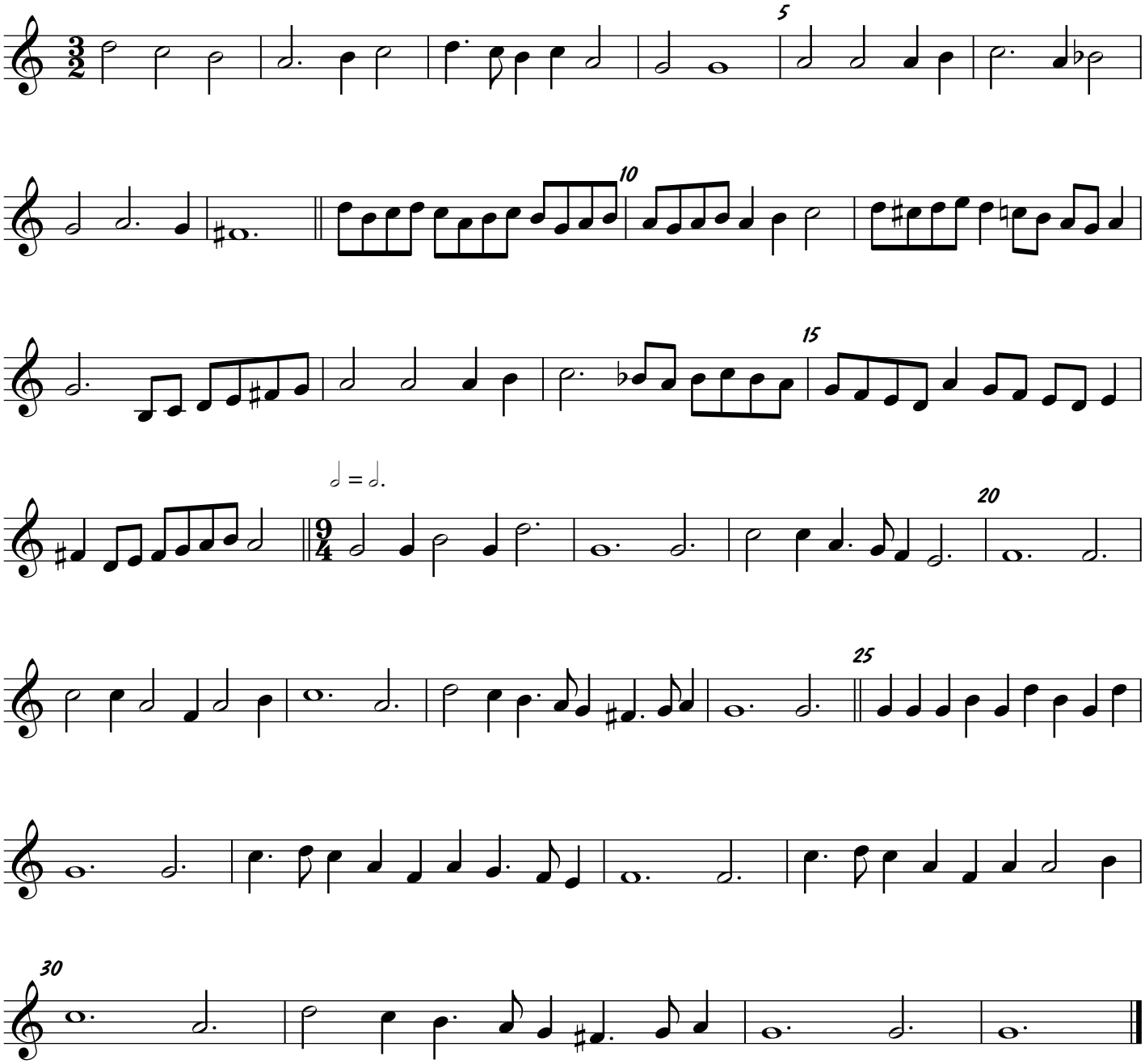
(Treble reconstructed by Ian Harwood)





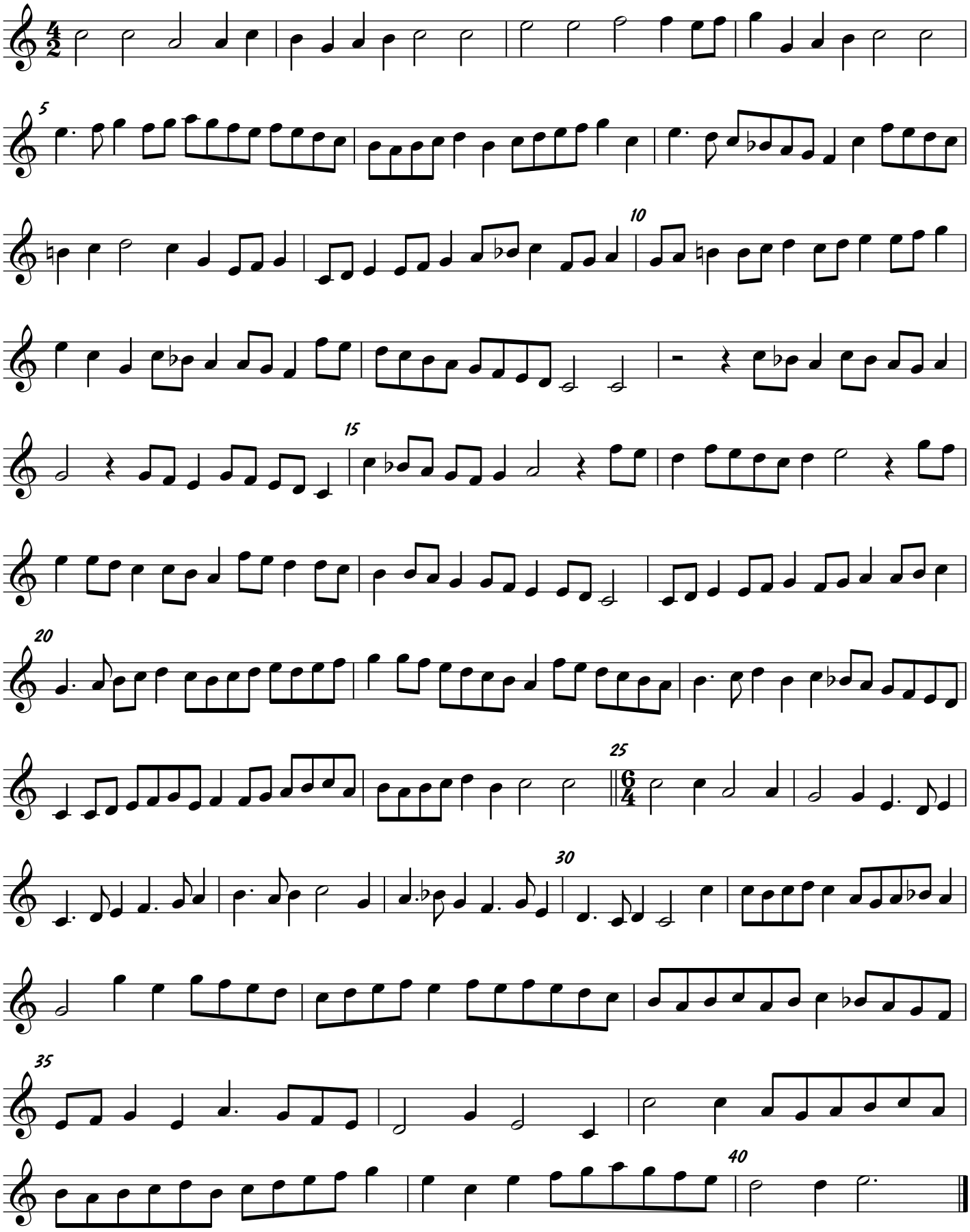
11. Katherine Darcies galliarde

John Dowland



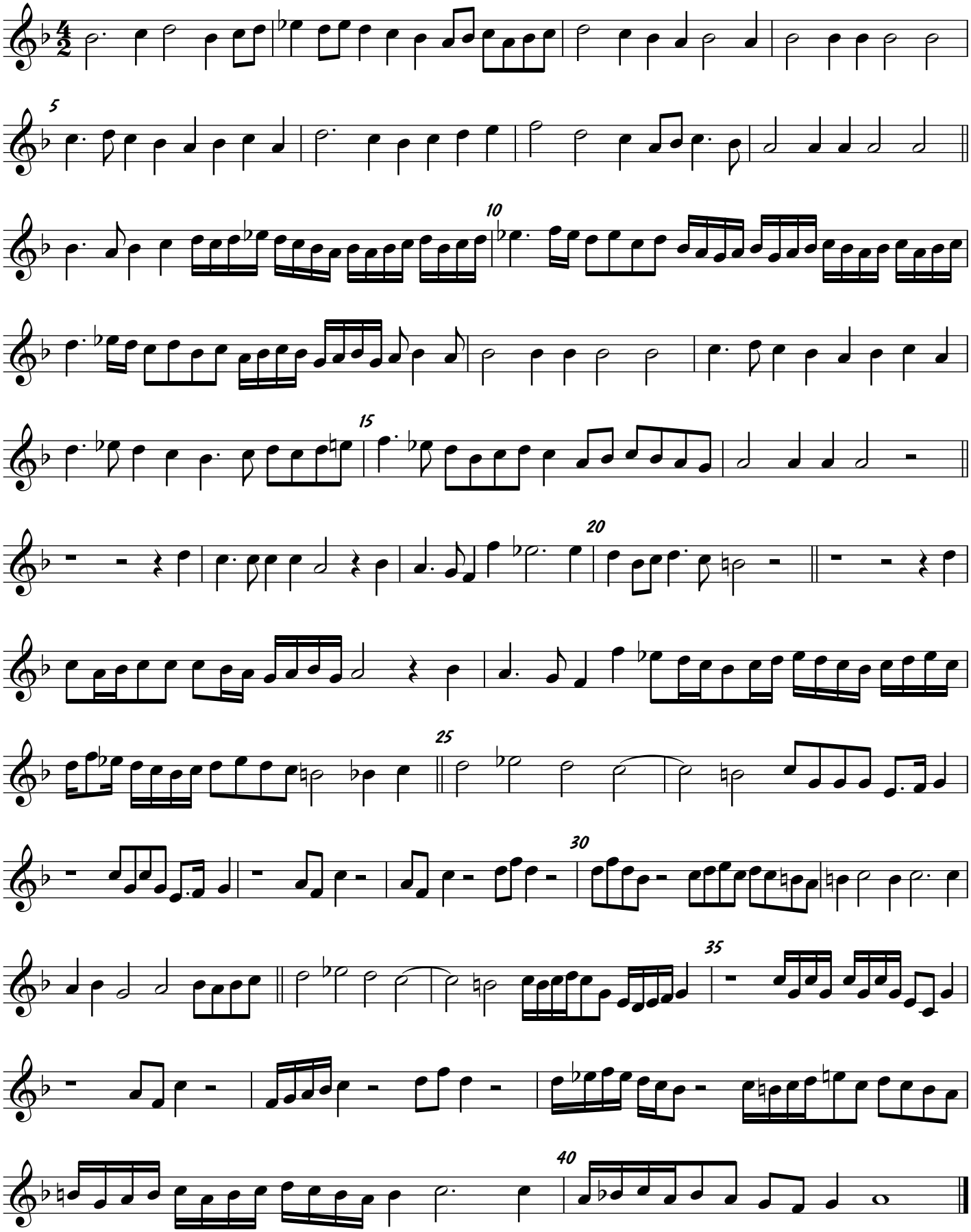
12. The Jewes Daunce

Richard Nicholson
(Treble reconstructed by Warwick Edwards)



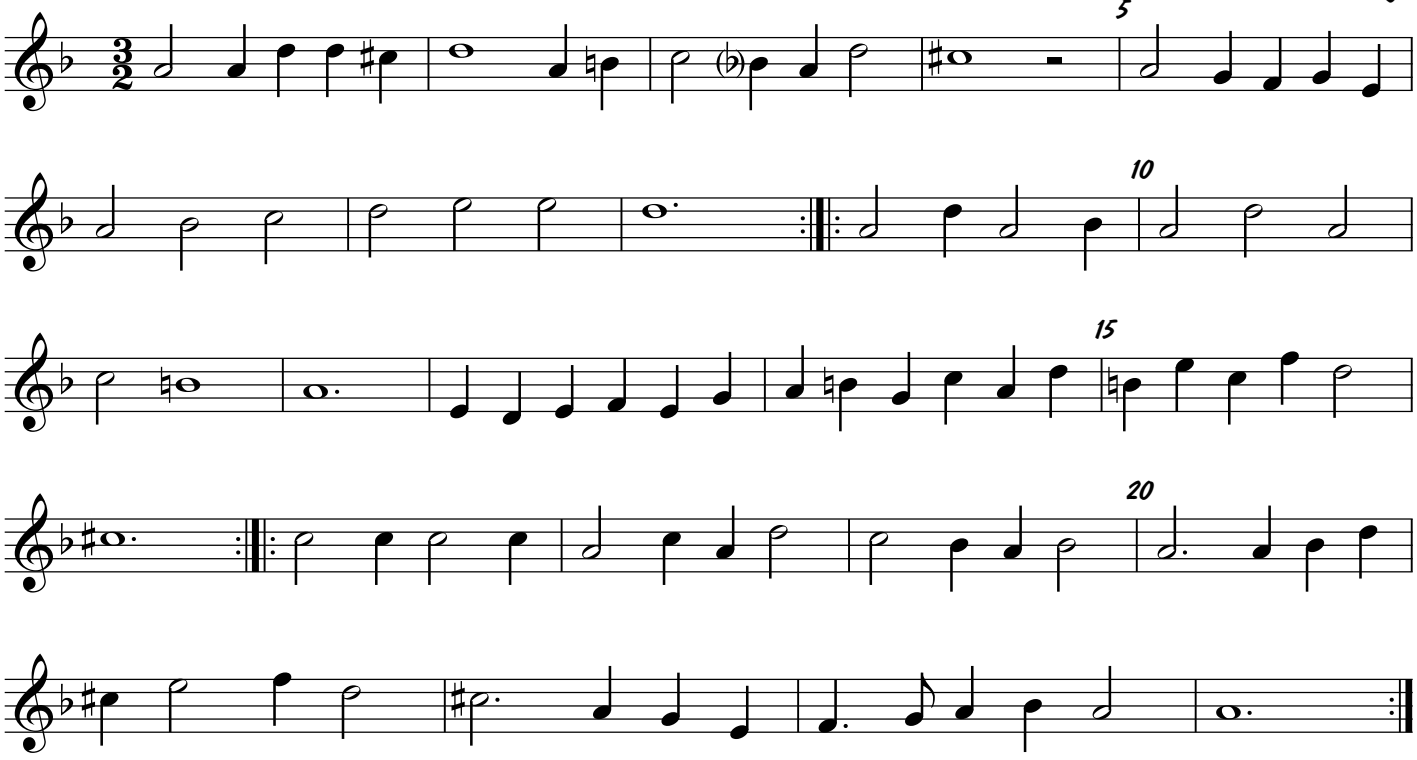
13. De la Tromba paven

(Richard Allison)

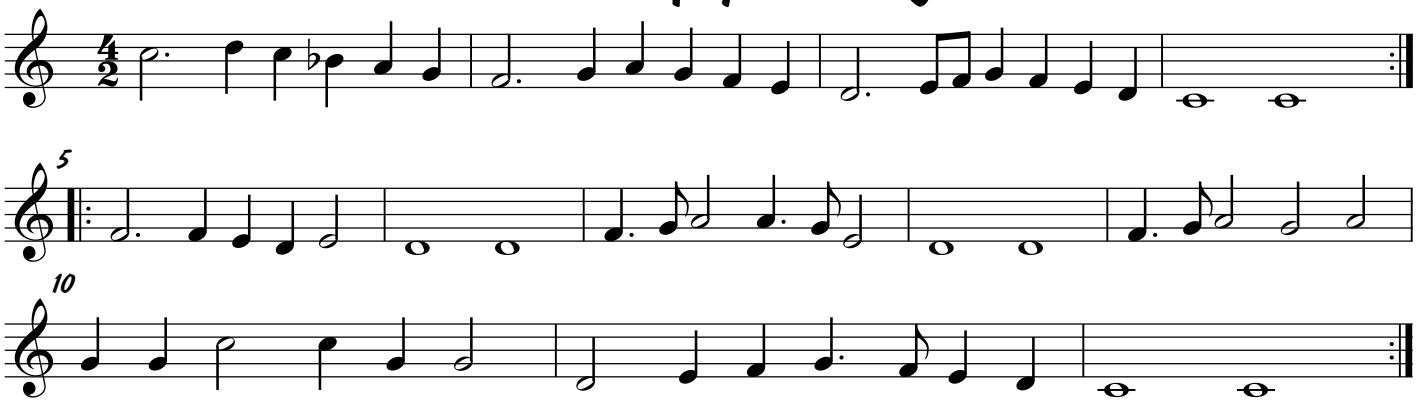


14. James Galliarde

(James Harding)

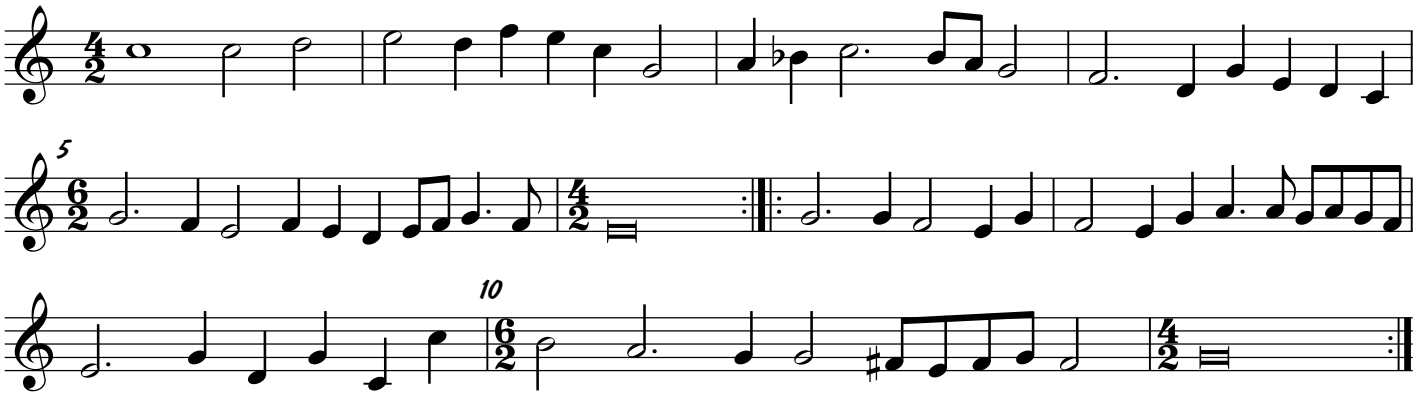


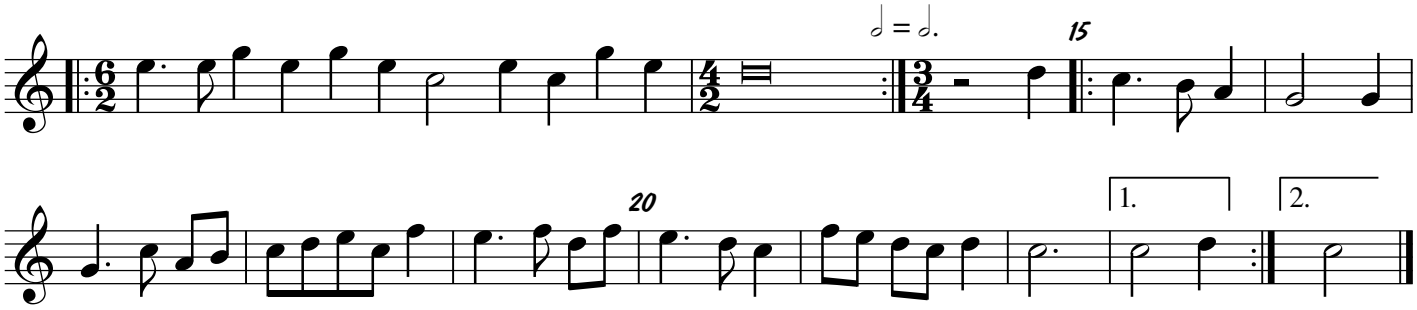
15. The Sprytes songe



16. Reades first paven

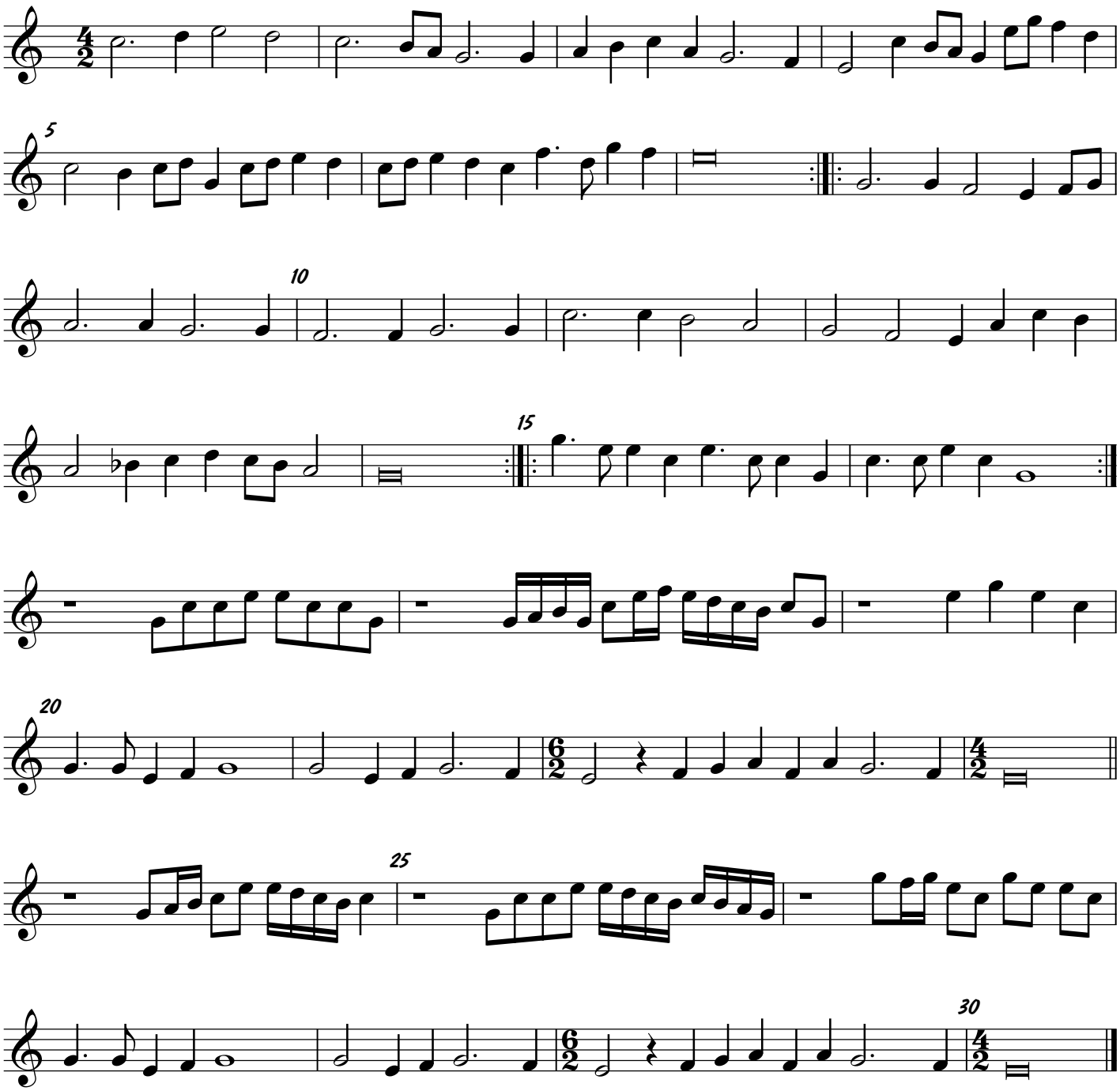
Richard Reade





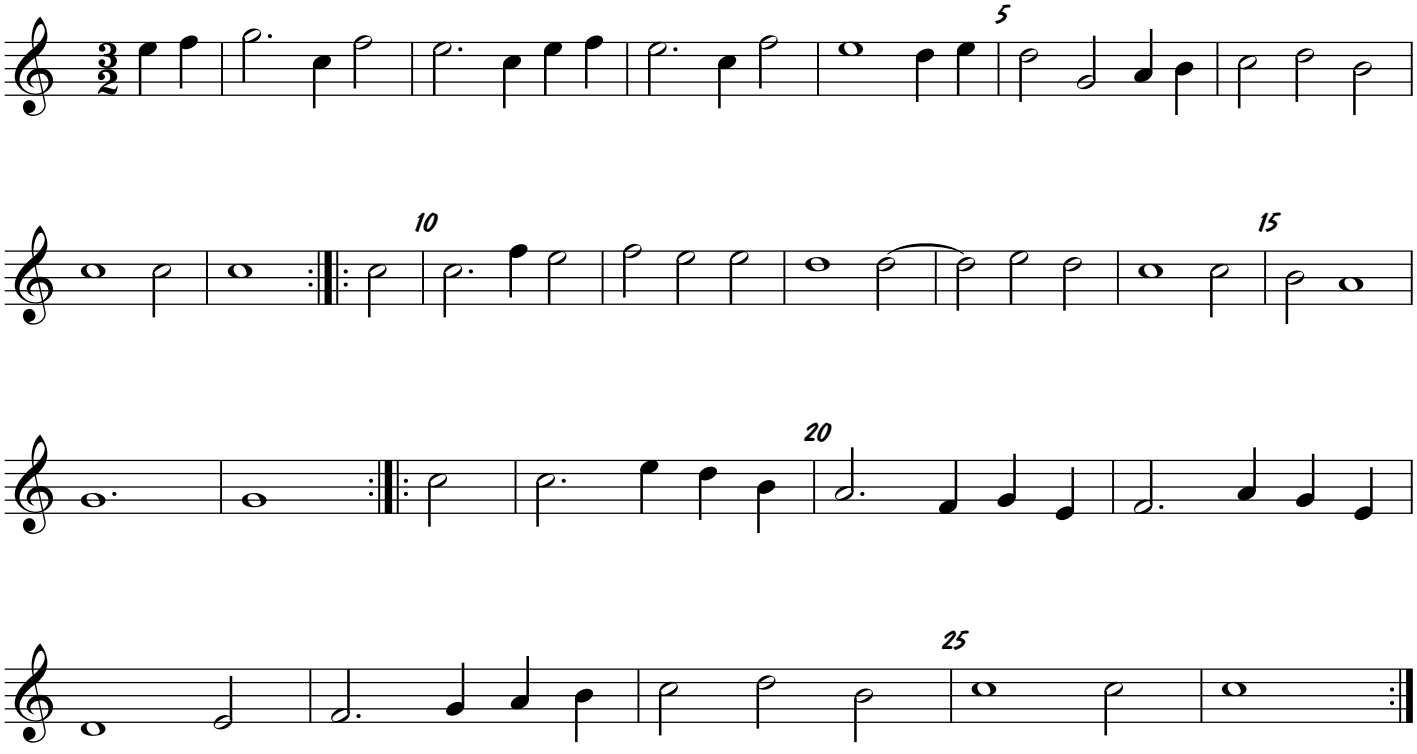
17. Reades second paven

Richard Reade



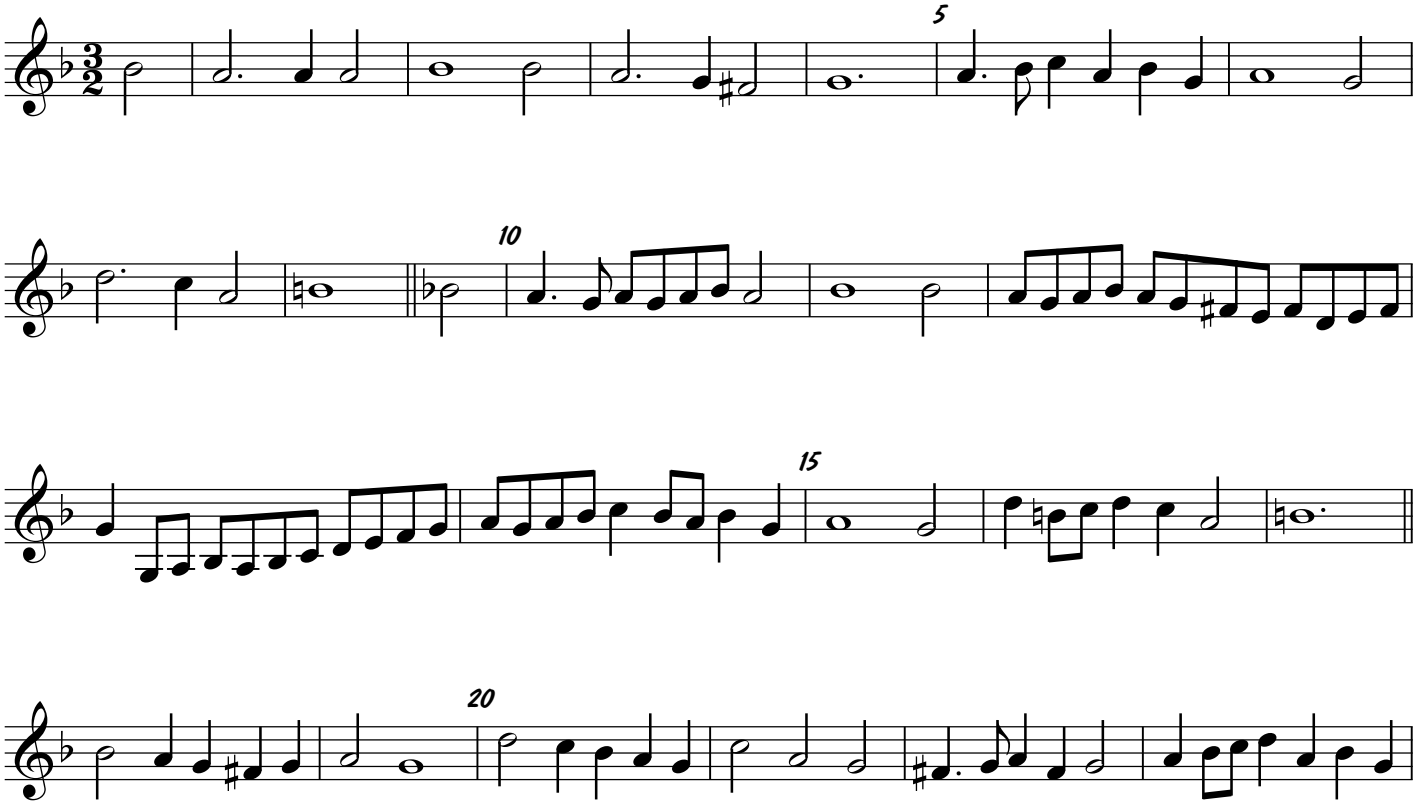
18. Reades galliarde

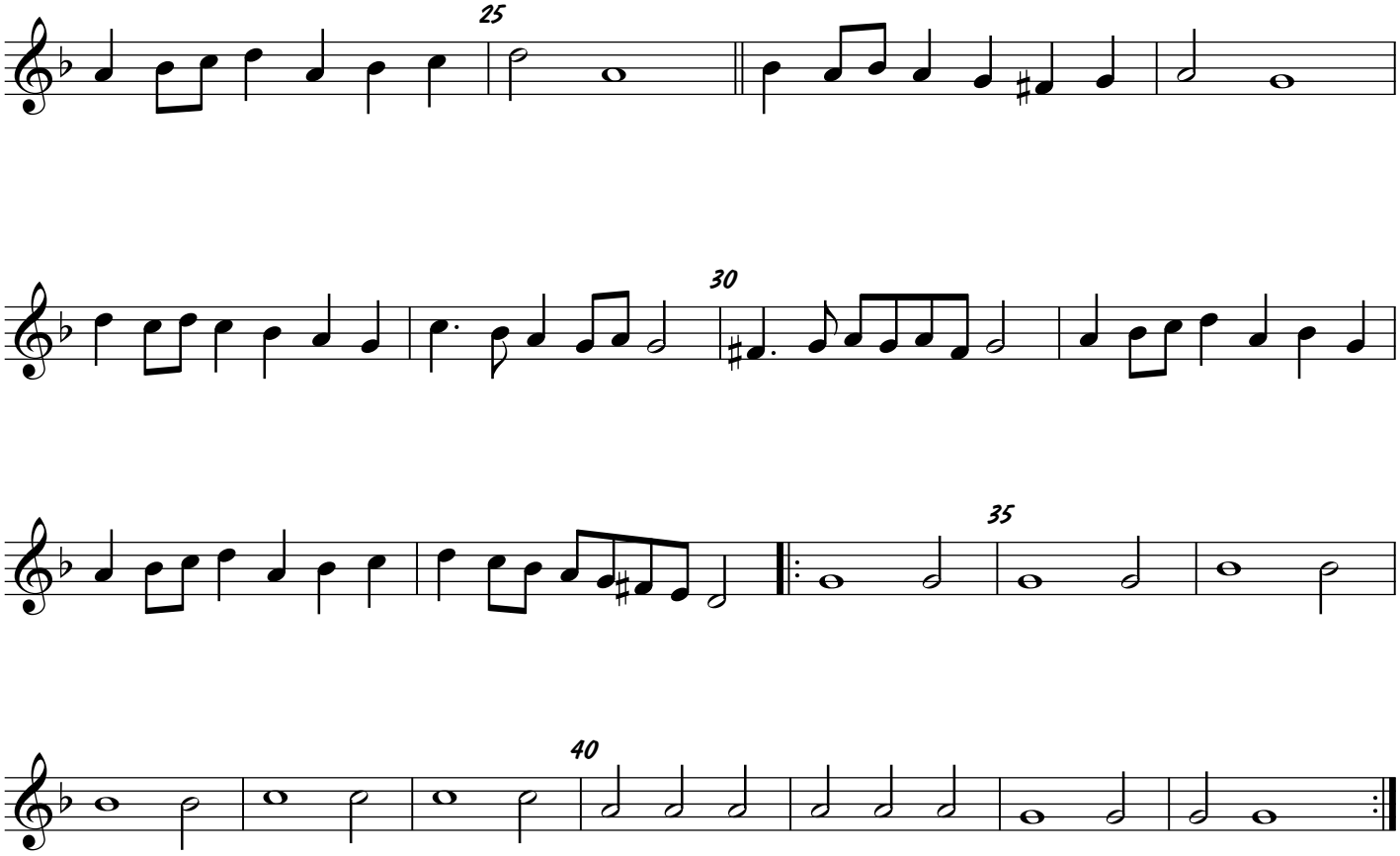
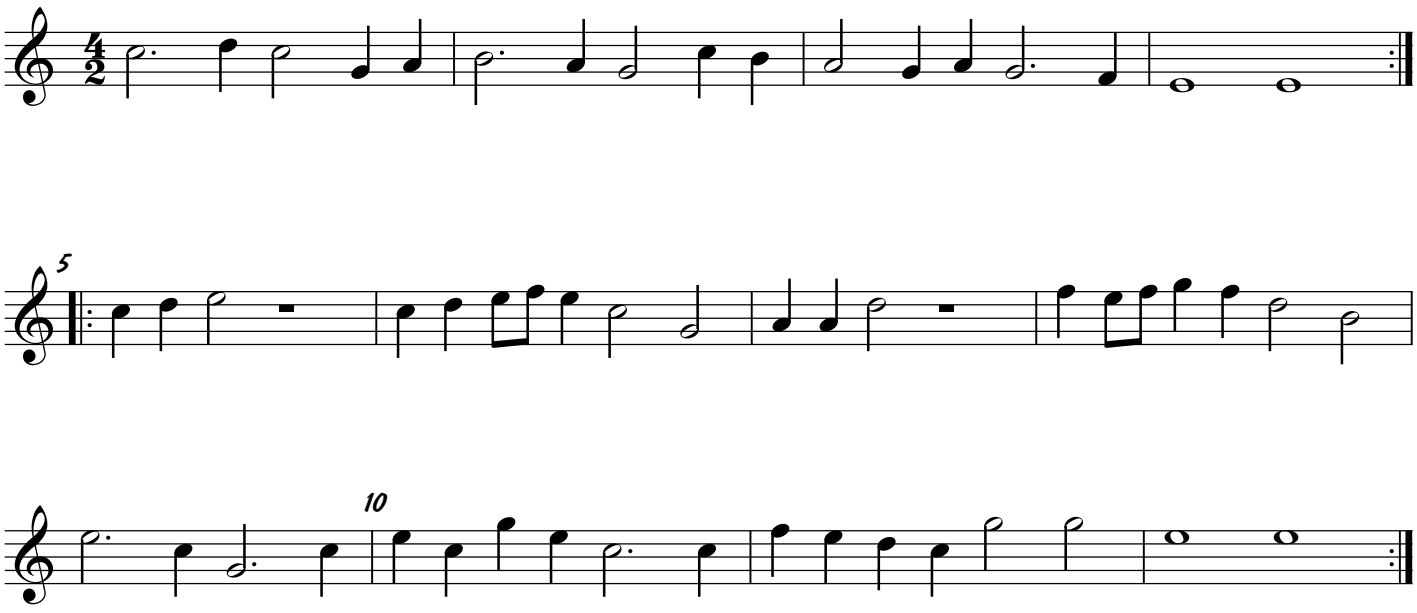
Richard Reade



19. Dowlands first galliarde

John Dowland





20. Nutmigs and ginger