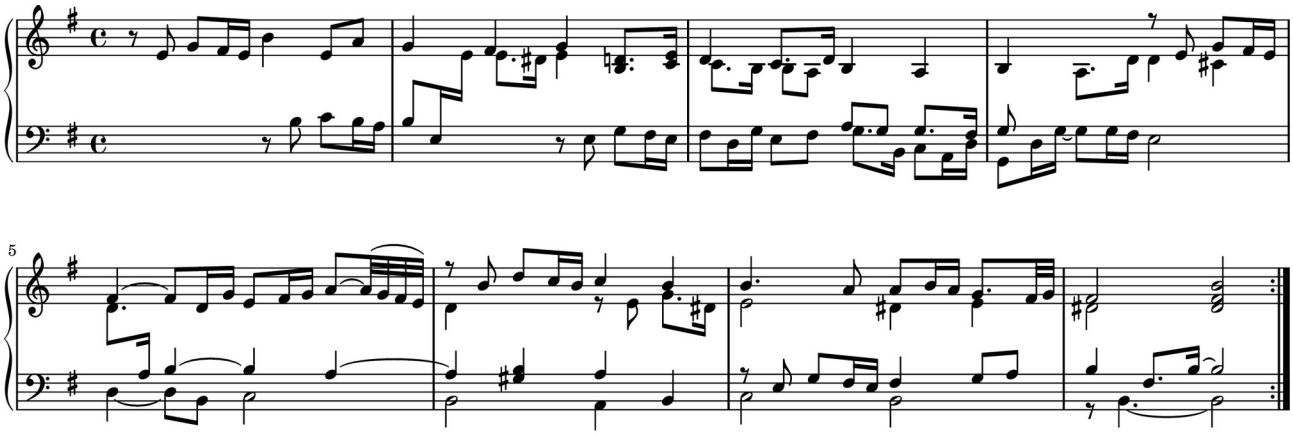
Playing Froberger's g-minor gigue
Richard D. Siegel, 2020 (http://rdsiegel.net)

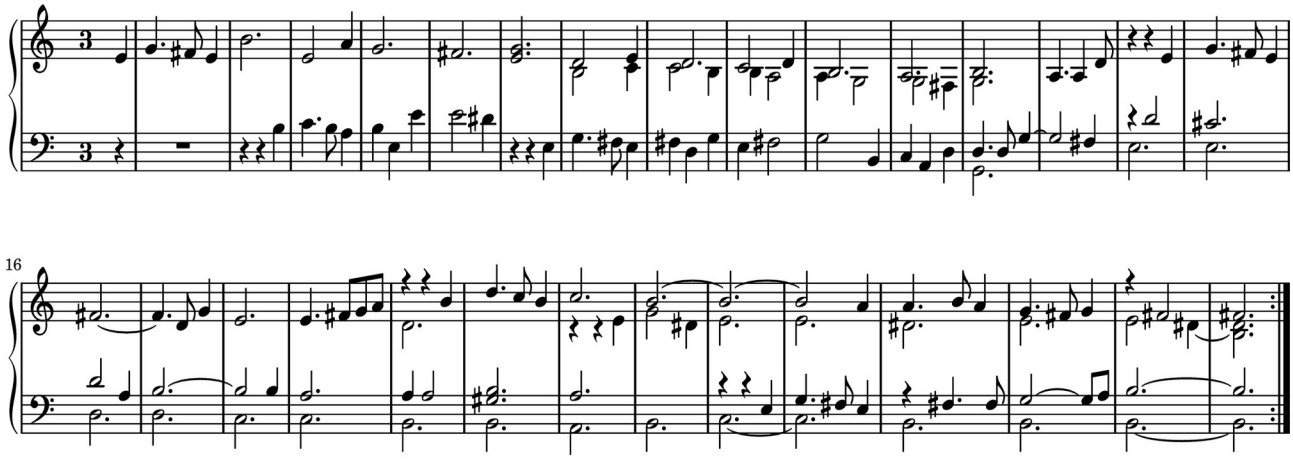
You maybe noticed that I didn’t play this gigue by Froberger the way it’s written. It’s written in Common time (or 4-4), instead of the usual 6-8 ternary time, but if it is played that way it won’t sound like a gigue at all. Actually, it is one of many pieces written this way, and it is likely that harpsichordists at the time would transform the binary into ternary rhythms.

This can be seen in a very convincing way in Froberger’s works.

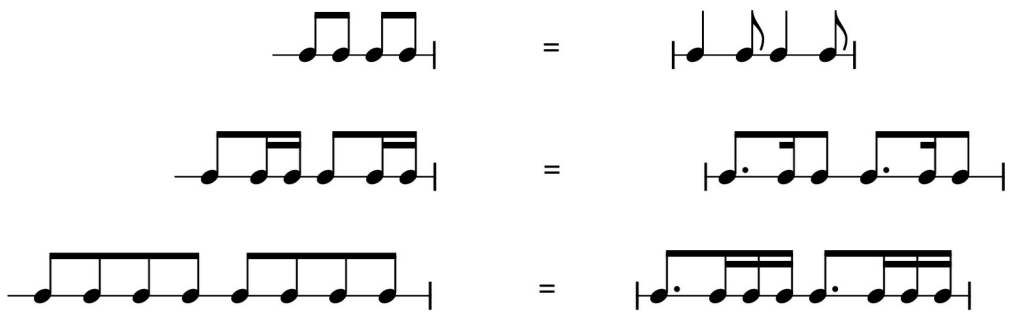
In his VII Suite, you see a gigue written in binary:



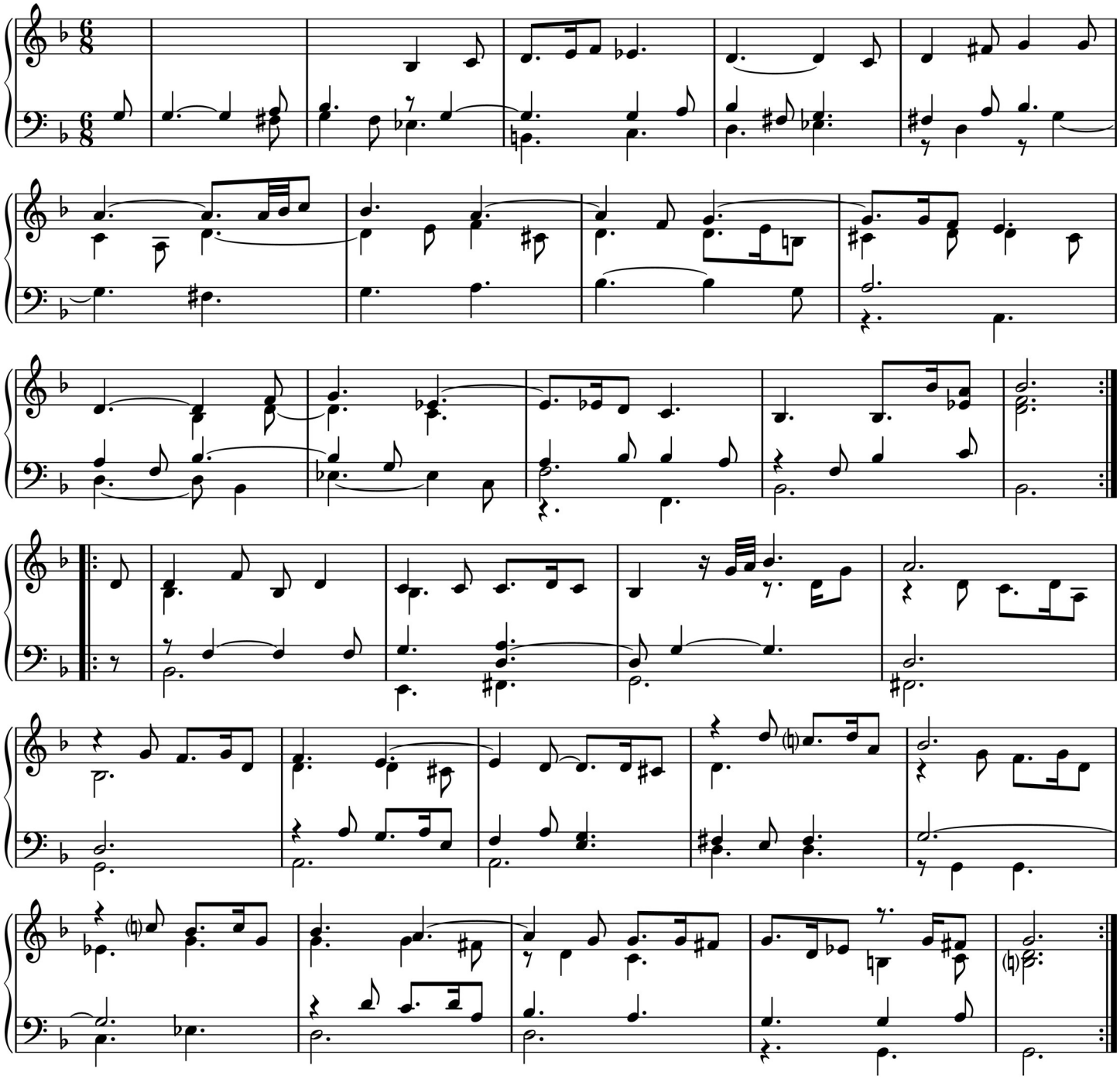
But in Suite XXIII, the same gigue is written out this way, in ternary:



How should one proceed in the gigue in g-minor? Here are a few possibilities for the rhythmic equivalents:



Here is one possible version of the g-minor gigue, the version I prefer to play, using those rhythms.



Froberger composed a number of gigues in both ways. You can also find examples from a later period. In J.S. Bach’s works there are two gigues, from the 1st French Suite in d-minor and from the 6th Partita in e-minor, that should be interpreted in this same way. Almost all harpsichordists today play both of those works using the gigue’s typical ternary rhythms.