"Tam Lin"

by Roger Landes

"Tam Lin" is a common session tune I recorded on my CD ***Dragon Reels***. It is normally played in A or D minor (Aeolian mode). I first heard it played in B minor about 10 years ago by uilleann piper Kieran O'Hare. For this version I came up with my own approach to the "B" part, adding a few G#s to put it in Dorian and reinforce the B Dorian relationship to A Major. I never really cared for the "B" part in the usual session setting of this tune so I took the liberty of almost rewriting it! Not common practice by any means but I think I'll squeak by with it this time, especially if you like my emendations.

So, as in my previous columns, I transcribed each tune three ways:

1st setting - bare bones melody. 2nd with some ornamentation (see my column in the February/March 2005 Mandolin Sessions for an explanation of these ornaments). I've transcribed this one without repeats to allow showing how each repeat might be ornamented differently; 3rd is an even more ornate setting, utilizing many or most of the ornaments that I use on the mandolin.

Here are the ornaments in the 2nd and 3rd settings of the tune:

2nd setting bars 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9: two note muted triplets; bar 10: two note descending string crossing triplet; bar 11: three note muted descending triplet; bar 12: three note ascending triplet; bar 13: two note string ascending crossing triplet; bar 14: 2-two note descending string crossing triplets; bar 15: muted triplet two notes, string crossing triplet descending; bar 16: three note descending triplet, three note ascending string crossing triplet; bar 17: two note muted triplet; bar 18: three note descending triplet; bar 19: two note muted triplet; bar 20: 2-three note ascending triplets; bar 21: two note muted triplet; bar 23: three note muted descending triplet; bar 24: two note muted triplet; bar 25: three note descending triplet, two note muted triplet; bar 26: three note descending and ascending triplets; bar 27: three note descending string crossing triplet, crann; bar 29: two note muted triplet bars 30 & 31: three note descending triplets; bar 32: two note muted triplet.

3rd setting. A-Part: bar 1: long roll on back of beat; bar 2: muted triplet two notes; bar 3 muted triplet two notes; bar 4: triplet three notes; bar 5: triplet three notes; bar 6: string crossing triplet; bar 7: muted triplet two notes; bar 8: muted triplet two notes; bar 9: triplet three notes. B-Part: bar 10: muted triplet two notes; bar 11: triplet three notes; bar 12: muted triplet two notes; bar 14: muted triplet two notes; bar 15 muted triplet three notes; bar 16: 2-muted triplets three notes; bar 17: muted triplet three notes, muted triplet two notes.

Play through the first, unornamented transcription a few times (at least 5-6) to become familiar with the shape of the tune. Be sure to keep to our agreed upon picking pattern for reels: Down-Up-Down-Up. Playing the tune without ornaments is a good way to practice this pattern. Do this until it is second nature and becomes your "default setting" for reels. Remember that the feel for Irish reels tends toward making the 1st and 3rd notes on every beat slightly longer than the 2nd and 4th notes. Since the 2nd and 4th notes are all played with upstrokes (and the 1st and 3rd notes all with downstrokes) in this setting, you can easily achieve this by delaying your upstrokes to a very small degree.

In the 2nd setting, I've not used repeat signs to that I could show how the A and B parts of the tune might be ornamented differently when repeated. In bar 10 we have a "two note descending string crossing triplet." Since this requires picking the A string with a downstroke and the D string with an upstroke this might be a little tricky the first few tunes you do it. If so, don't worry, we'll cover this challenge in my next column.

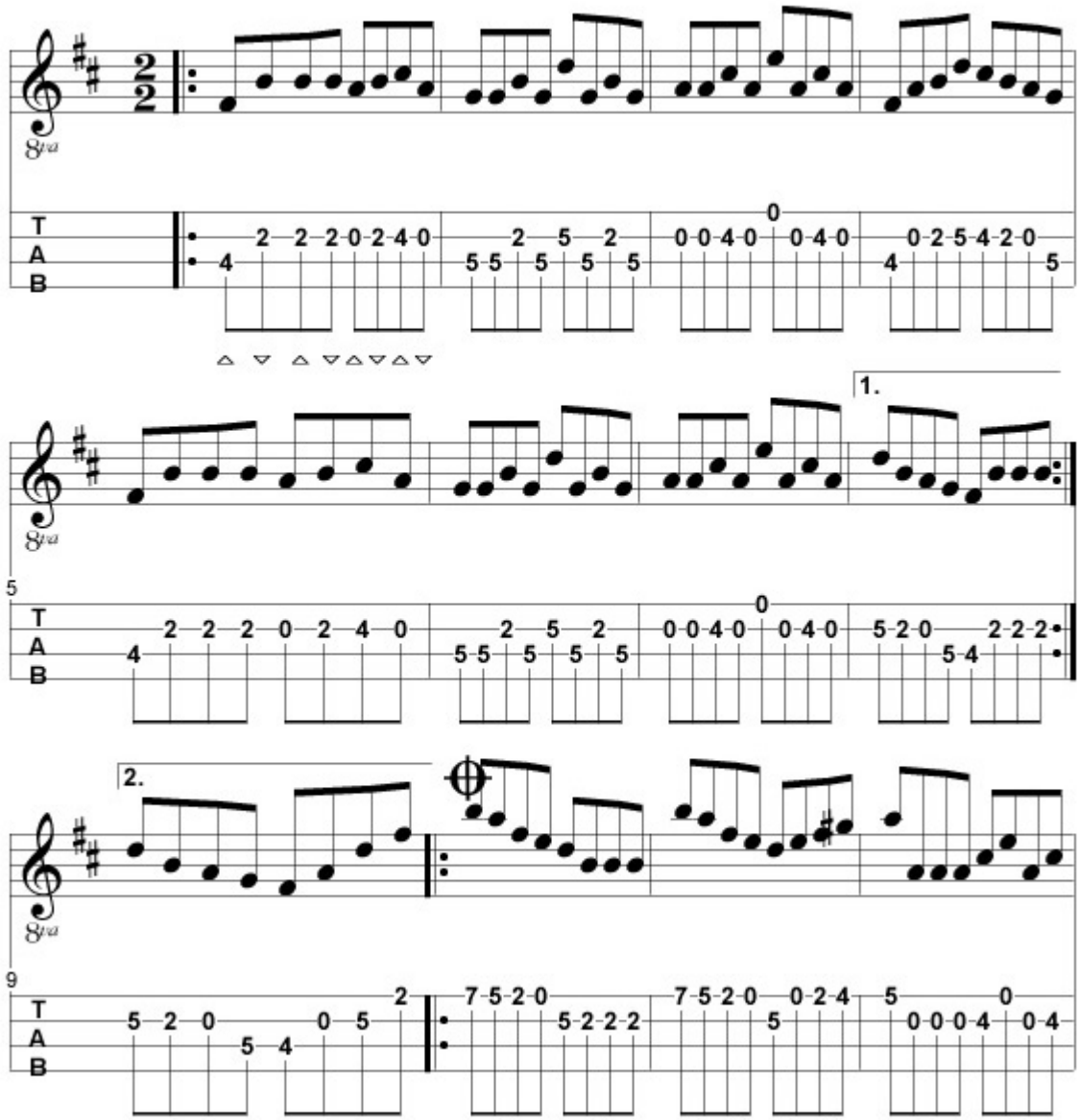
In bar 12 there is a three note ascending triplet - notice that I've fingered the A on the D string 7th fret. This is to allow it to be phrased more smoothly than it could be with a string change to the open A string. In bar 13 there is a new picking pattern for a triplet that I have not discussed in any previous column. This is a two note ascending string crossing triplet. Notice that the 1st and 2nd notes, which are on the D and A strings, are both played with a downstroke. This might be a bit weird at first but it allows for smoothness and speed. Try it! In bar 14 the same type of string crossing triplet as in bar 10. Jumping ahead to the B part, in bar 27 there is a crann. Refer to my earlier columns about this ornament, which comes from the uilleann pipes.

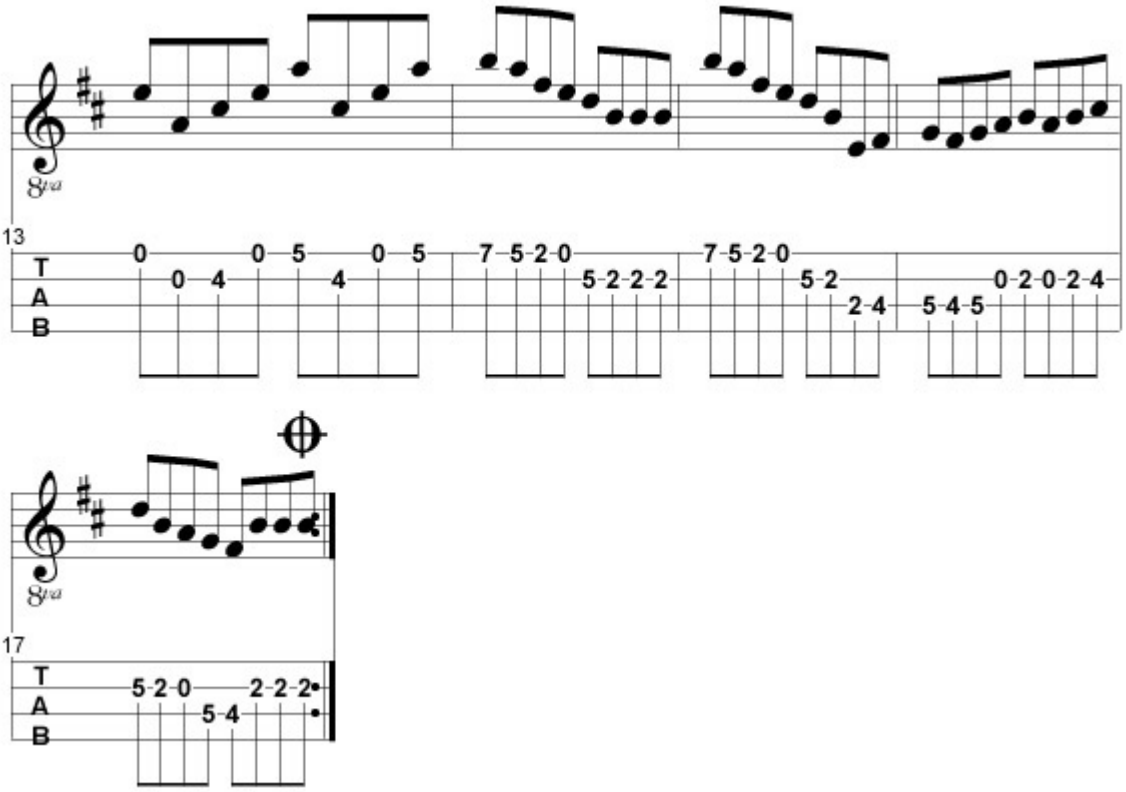
Keep in mind that in Irish traditional music ornaments are usually not melodic sequences so much as rhythmic events. I think of them as rhythmic gestures- that are used over and over in myriad ways within many different types of tunes.

As with our previous tunes "**Bush on the Hill**," "**Peter Street**," "**Tom Billy's Jig**," and "**Gallagher's Frolics**," please **don't** play this tunes only as written, and don't use all of these ornaments in a single repetition of the tune. I've condensed the many possibilities into one time through the tune and would make a point of playing each of these ornaments at least once over, say, three repetitions of each tune, but never all of them in one repetition.

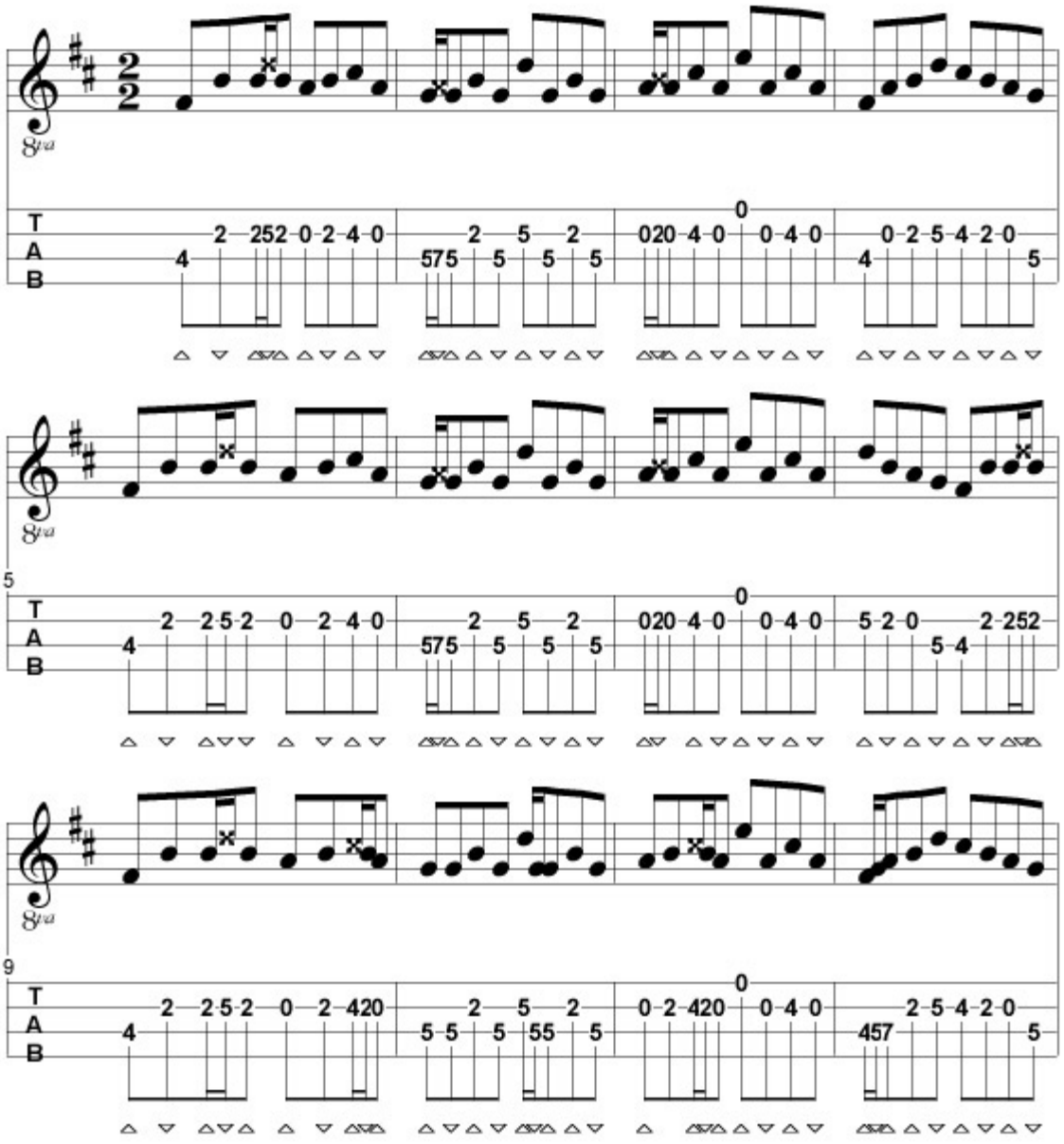
Enjoy!

"Tam Lin" - 1st Setting





"Tam Lin" - 2nd Setting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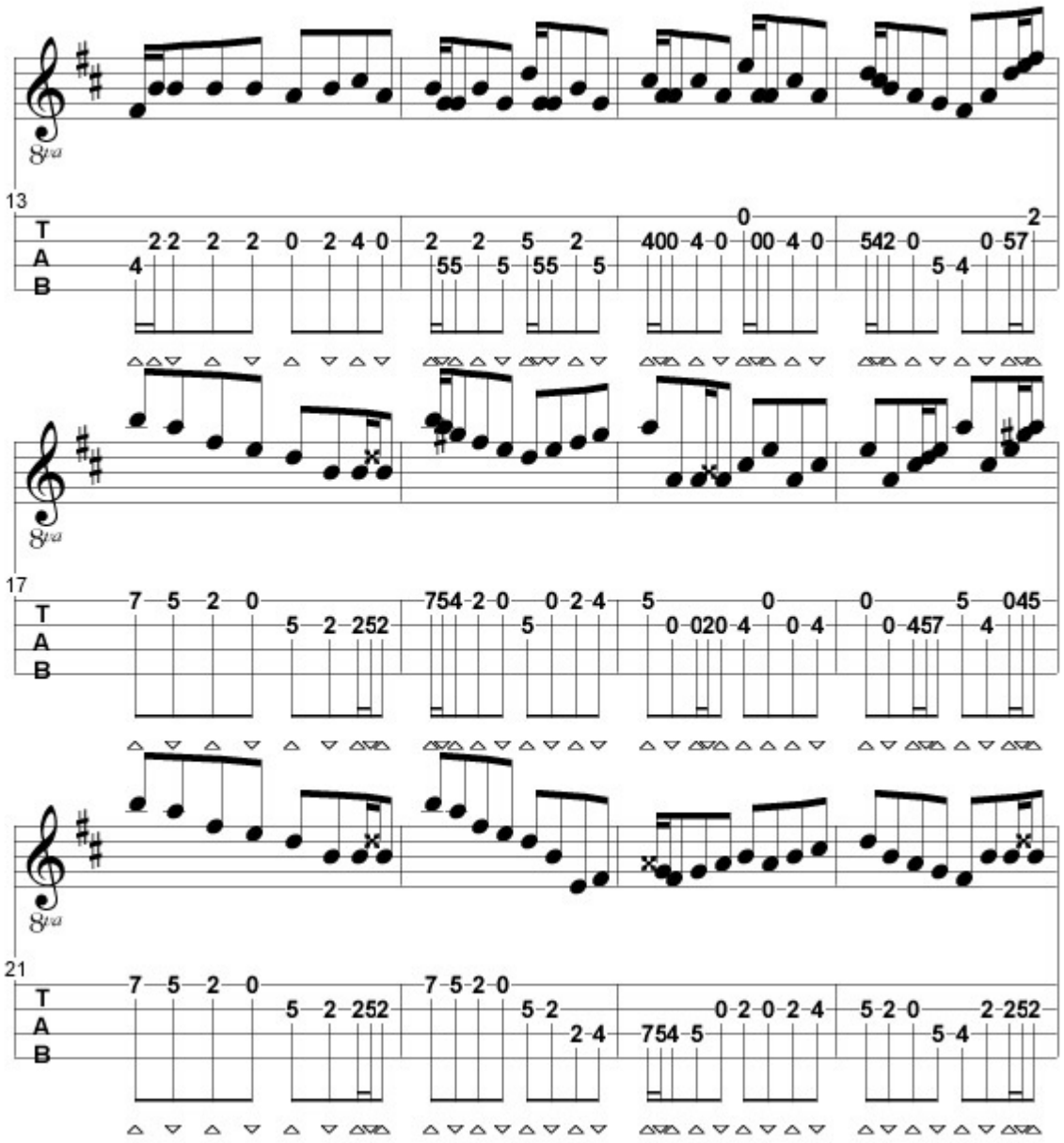
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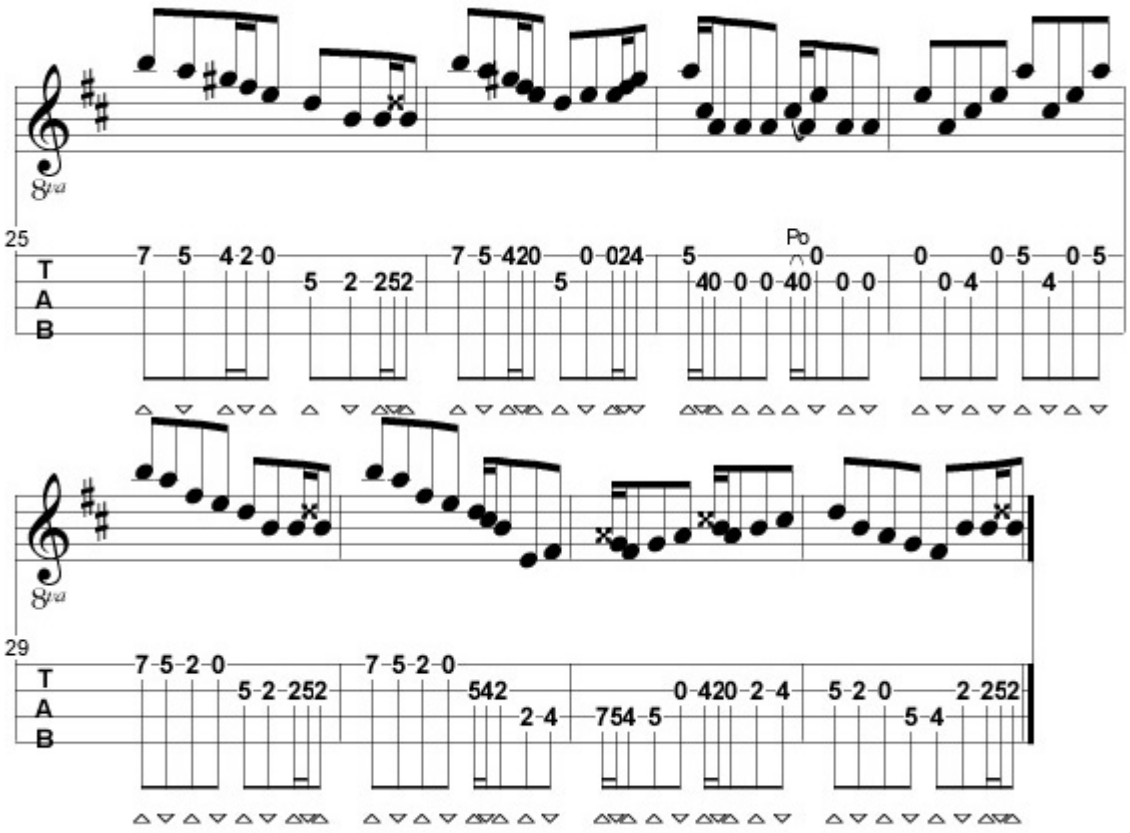

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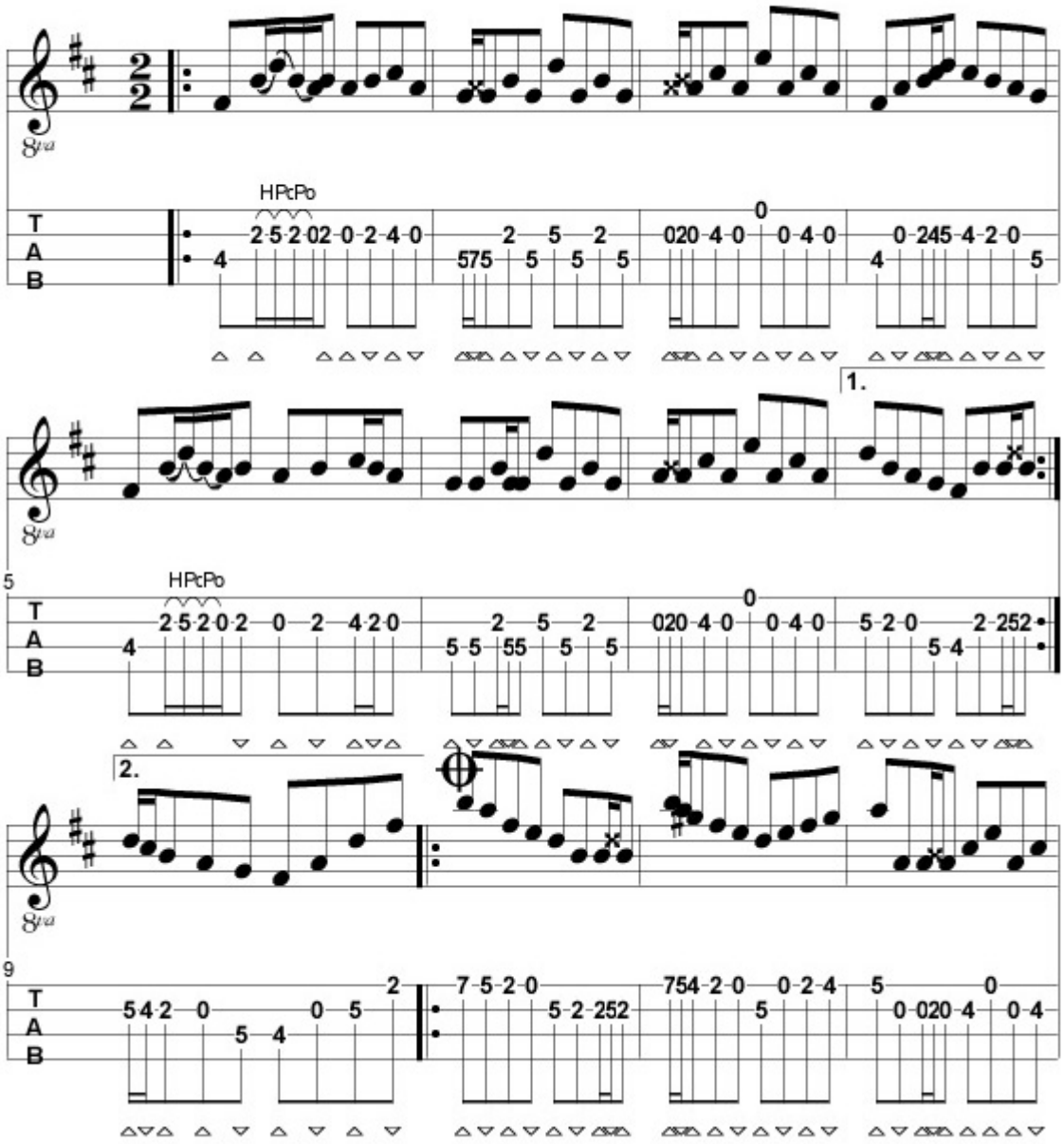
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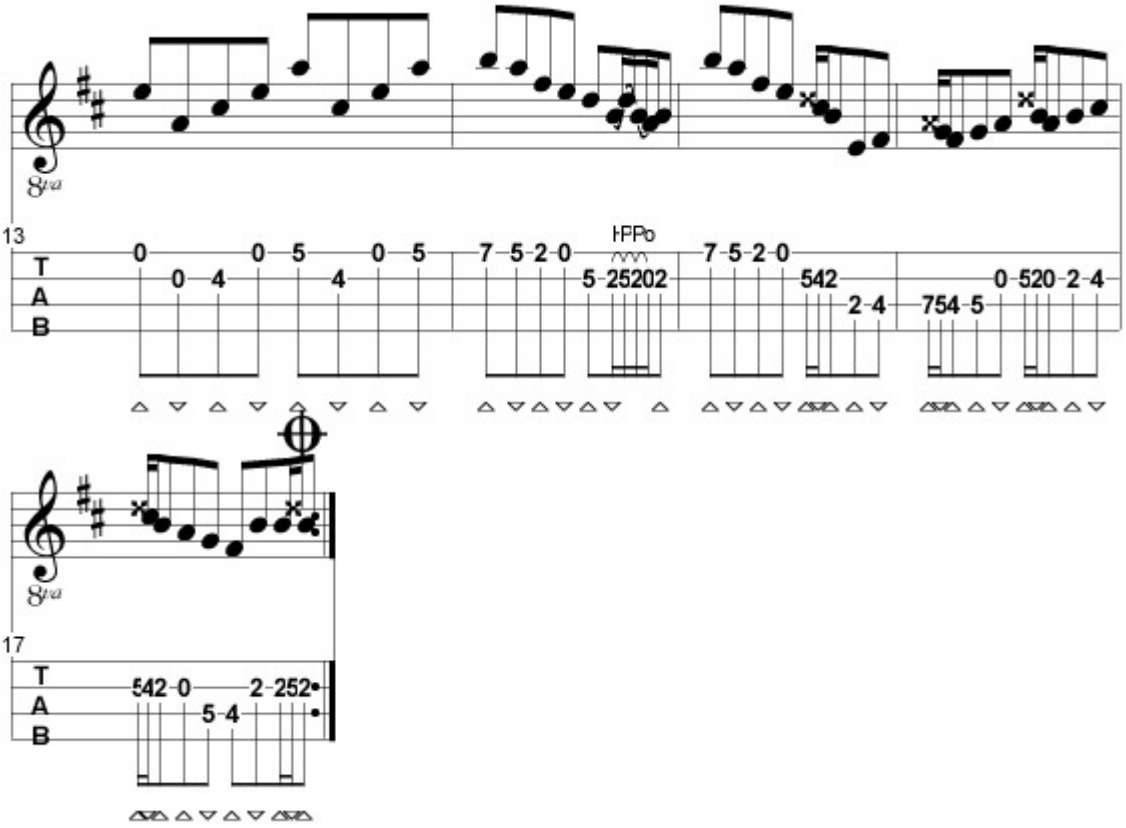
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