J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 111

Form: Chorus/Fantasia - Aria (B) - Recit (A) - Duet (A/T) - Recit (S) - Chorale.
The underlying chorale appears to have been one of Bach's favorities (see note).

Introduction & updates at melvinunger.com.

NBA I/6; BC A36
3. S. after Epiphany (BWV 73, 111, 72, 156)
*Romans 12:16–21 (Overcoming evil with good)
*Matthew 8:1–13 (Jesus heals a leper; the centurion from Capernaum comes to Jesus)
Librettist: Unknown
FP: 21 January 1725
(Leipzig: St. Nicholas) This cantata belongs to his chorale cantata cycle (see note).

The alla breve meter & large-scale formal repetitions produce an underlying steadiness and uniformity (enlivened by pervasive use of the figura corta), which reflect the affirmation of the text (more in note).

The cantata's point of departure derives from the day's Gospel reading, in which Jesus agrees to heal. The focus is not on the miracle themselves, however, but on whether they align with God's will: "A leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, 'Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.' And he stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, 'I will…' … [And] a centurion came forward to him, beseeching him and saying, 'Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, in terrible distress.' And he said to him, 'I will come and heal him.'" Submitting to God's will appears to have been an important life principle for Bach (see notes).

J.S. Bach

Cantata No. 111

111/1. Was mein Gott will, das gscheh allzeit

Nº 1. Coro.

(Tempo ordinario ♩ = 88.)

(Chorale Verse 1) (See also 72/5, 144/6.)
●God's will trusted & accepted, building on him (111/1).

Instrumentation:
Ob I, II
Vln I, II
Vla
SATB
Continuo

Ritornello (thematically independent with prominent figura corta—see note)

1. "Al - les" (See BWV 72/1.) Al - les Oboes & upper strings in concerto-like exchange...

A minor — Sequential bass — D7

4 (123) mf

G major — G7 — C major — C7 — F major — E7

7 (126) Vln I & continuo enter with figura corta theme (in parallel 3rds).

A minor — A minor

10 (129) f

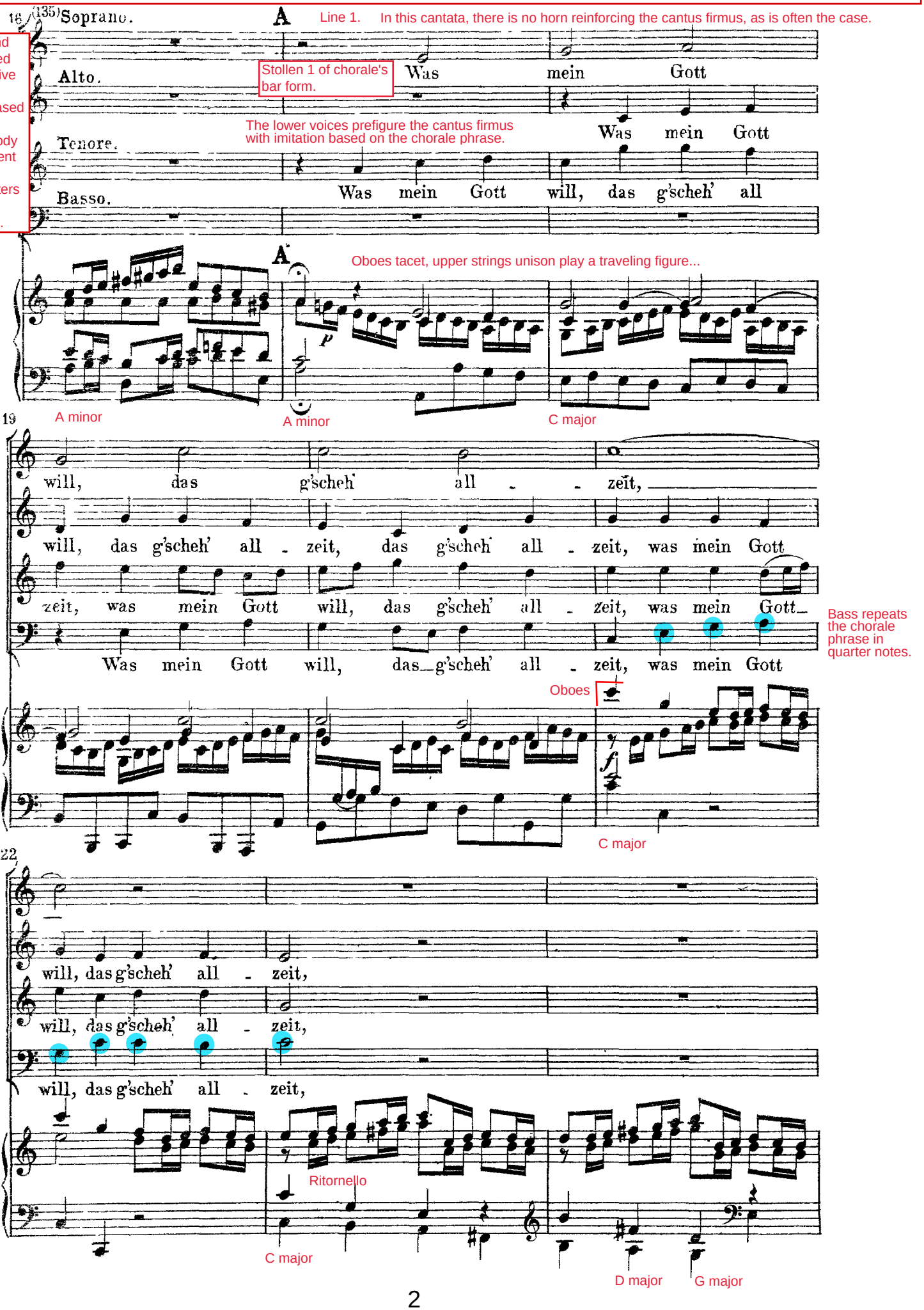
E7 — F major — G7 — C major — A7 — D minor — G7

13 (132)

C major — E7 — A minor

The librettist for the following Sunday (28 January 1725) chose a chorale that employed the same melody—the 12-stanza chorale "Ich hab in Gottes Herz und Sinn," of 1647 by Paul Gerhardt (1607–1676). Whether this duplication was intentional or whether it would have struck composer and congregation as unusual is unclear.

BWV 111 and 92 (performed on consecutive Sundays in 1725) are based on the same chorale melody but on different texts (and in different meters in their first movements).



Line 1. In this cantata, there is no horn reinforcing the cantus firmus, as is often the case.

Stollen 1 of chorale's bar form.

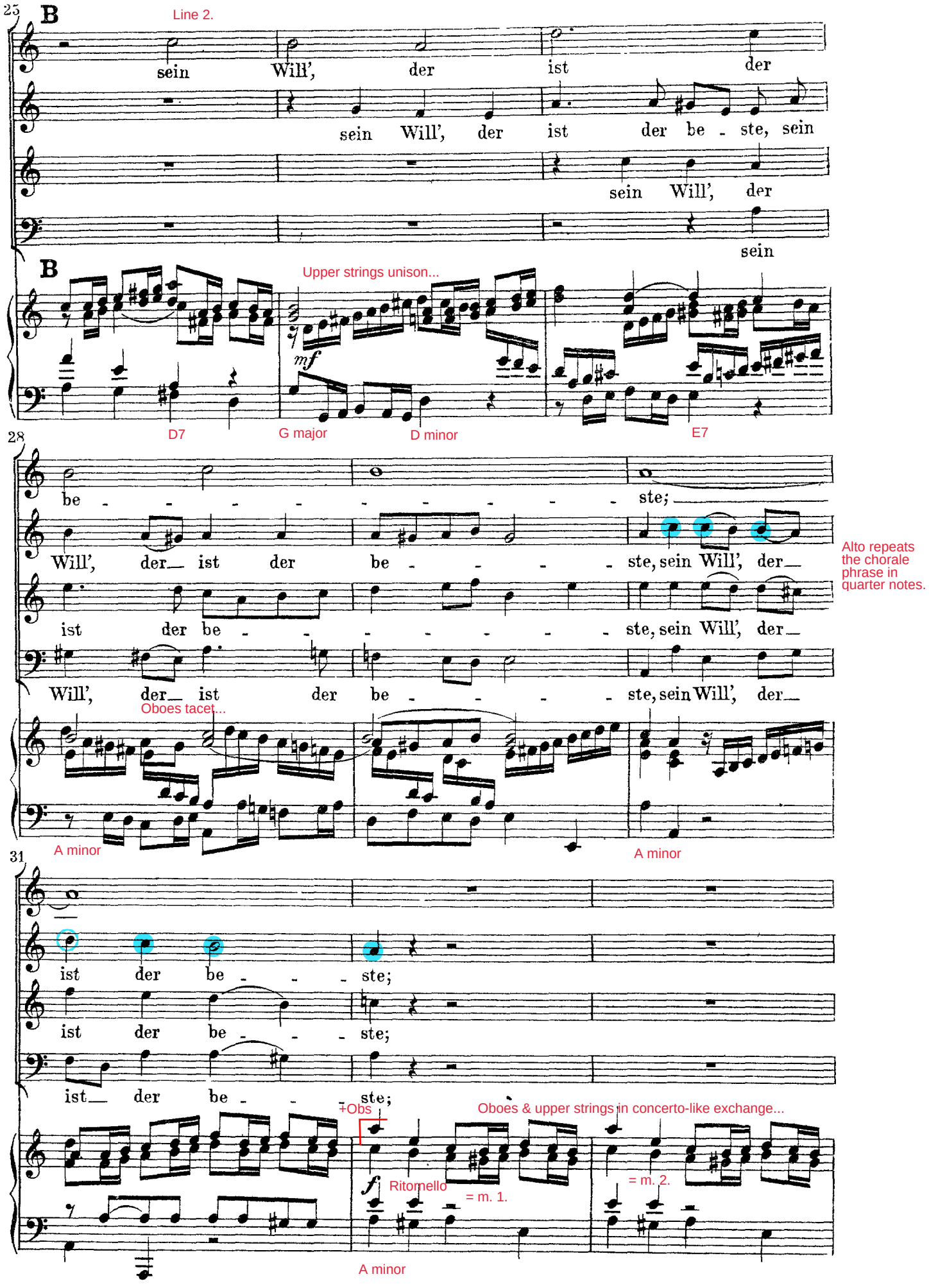
The lower voices prefigure the cantus firmus with imitation based on the chorale phrase.

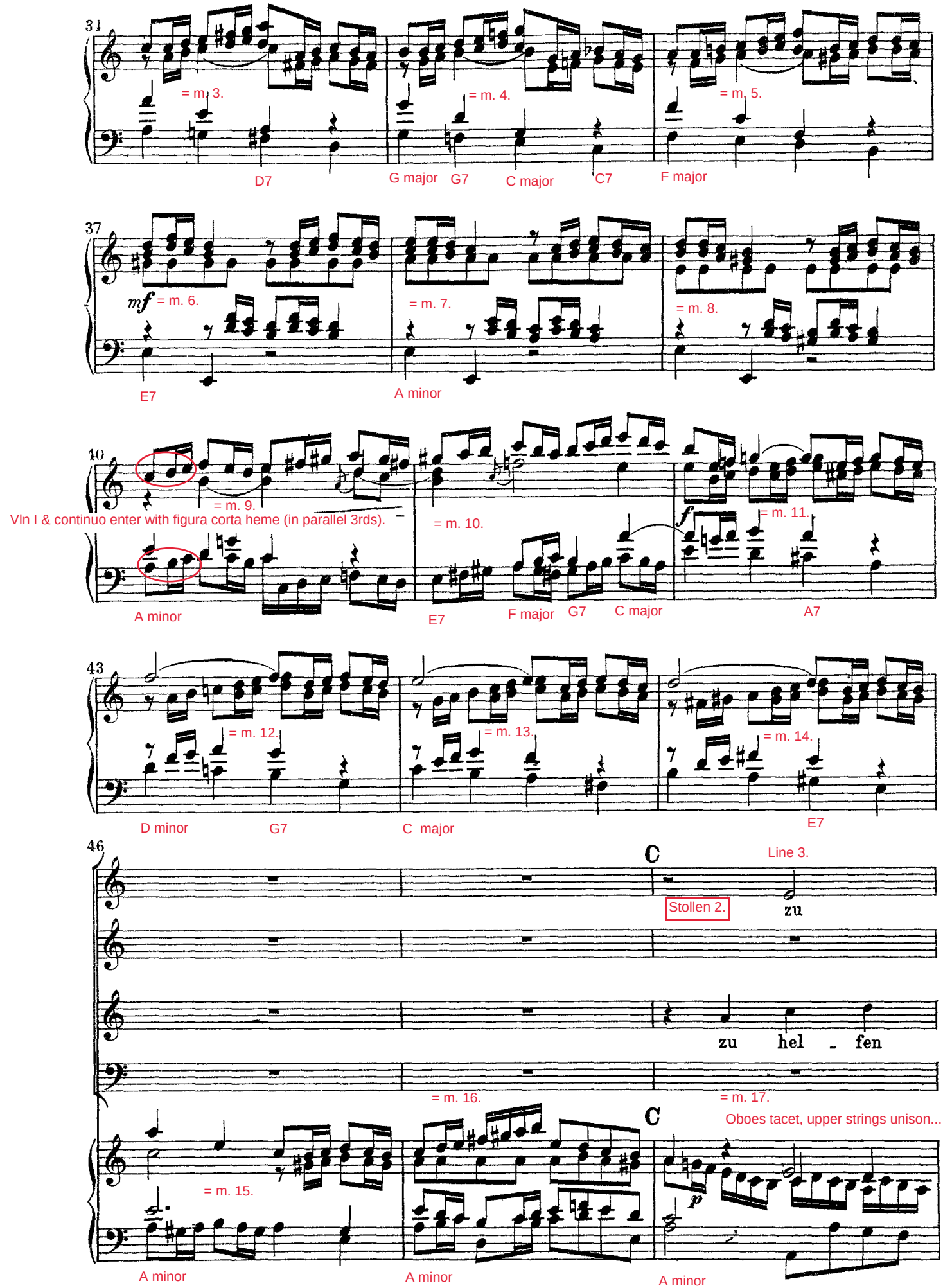
Oboes tacet, upper strings unison play a traveling figure...

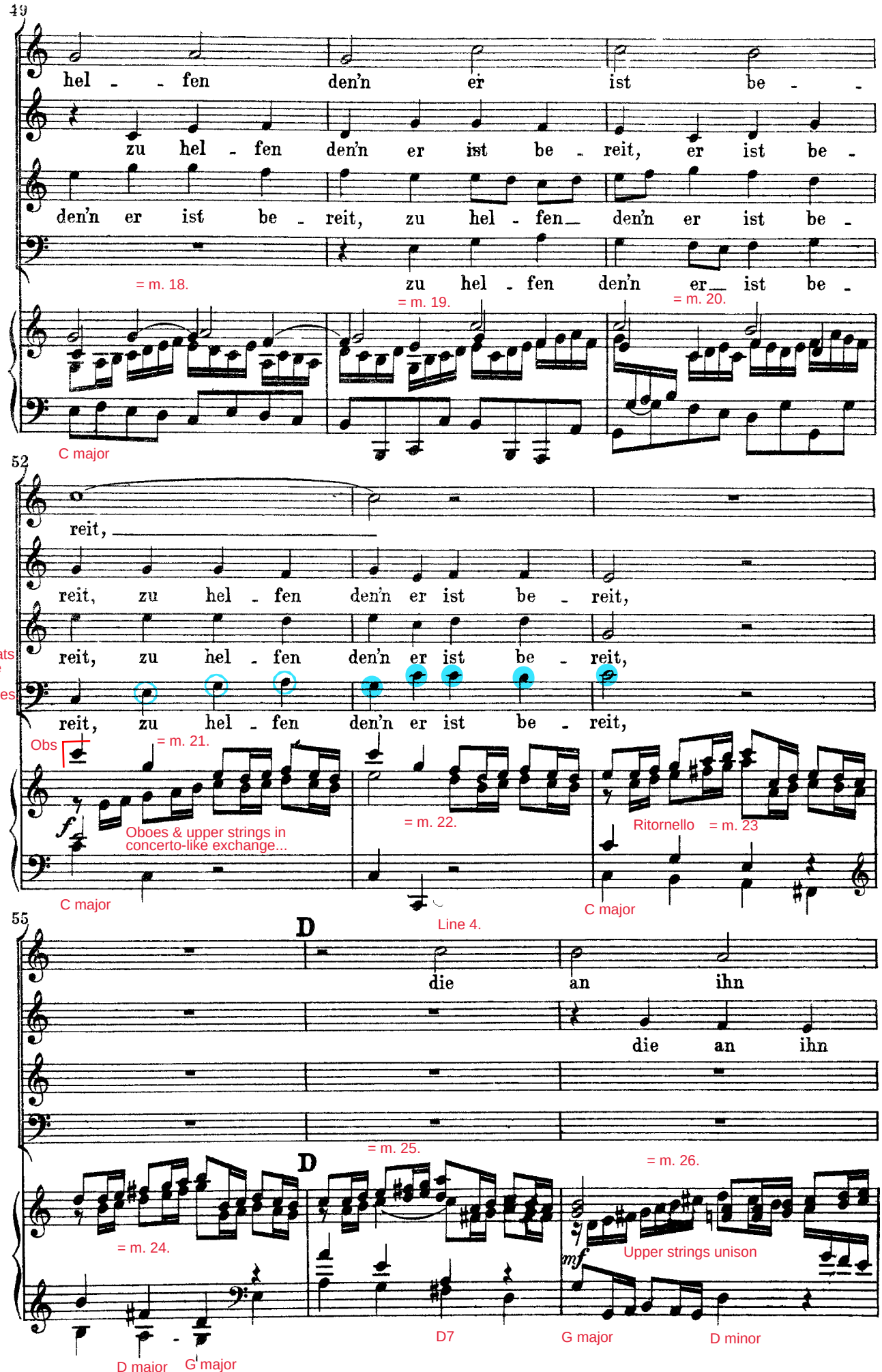
Bass repeats the chorale phrase in quarter notes.

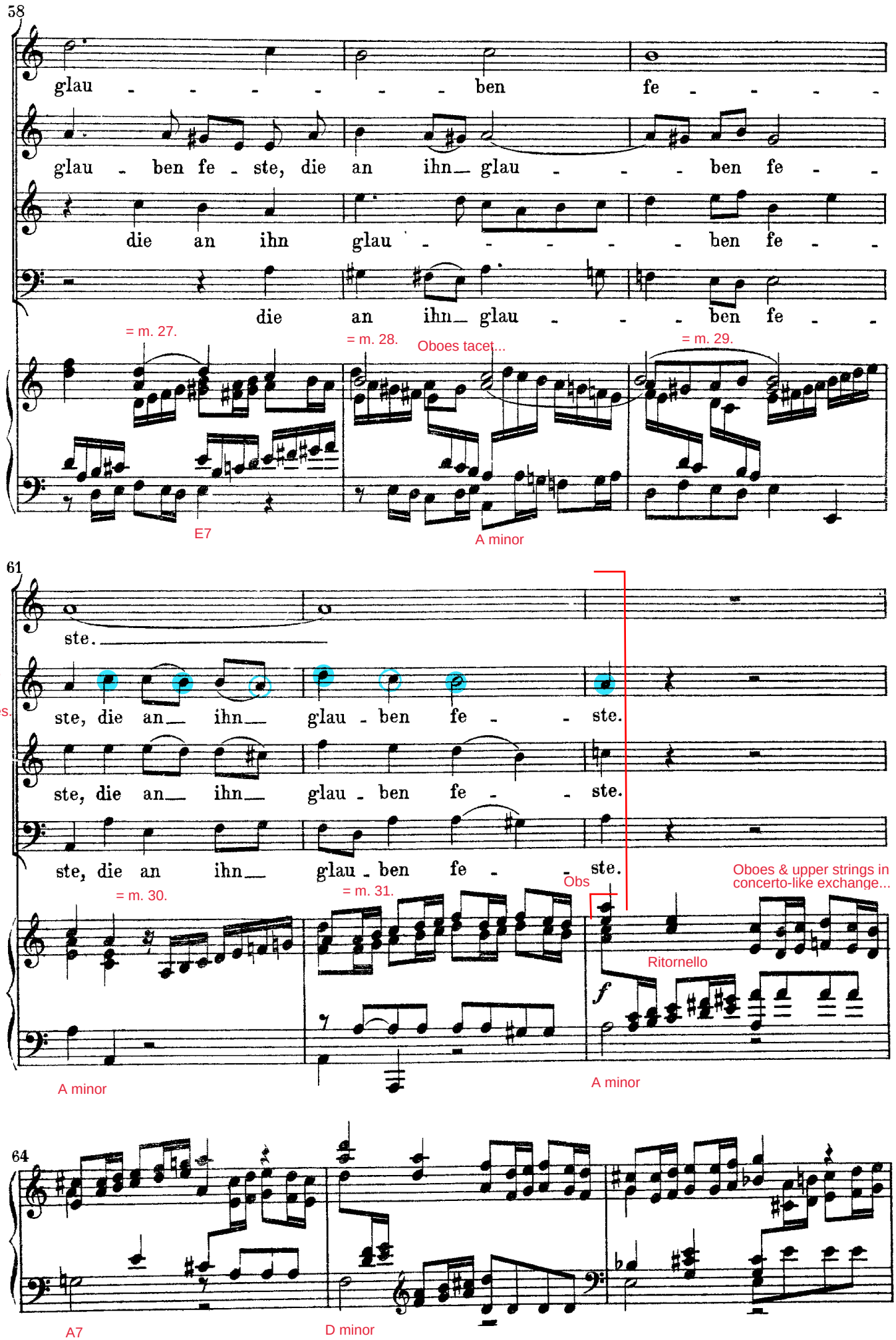
Oboes

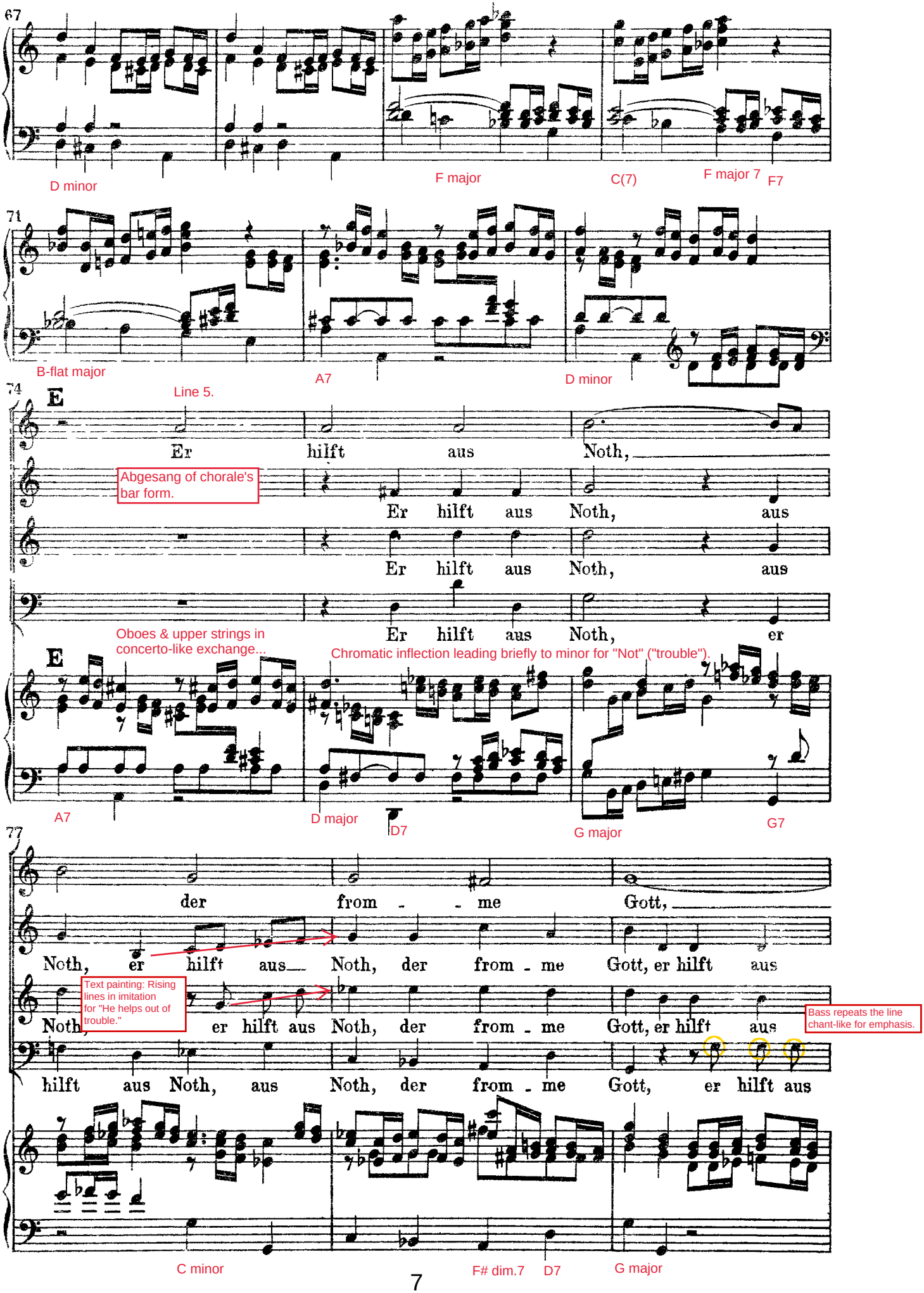
Ritornello


25
B
Line 2.
sein Will', der ist der
sein Will', der ist der be - ste, sein
sein Will', der
sein
B
Upper strings unison...
mf
D7
G major
D minor
E7
28
be - - - - - - - - - - ste;
Will', der ist der be - - - - ste, sein Will', der
ist der be - - - - - - - - ste, sein Will', der
Will', der ist der be - - - - ste, sein Will', der
Alto repeats the chorale phrase in quarter notes.
Oboes tacet...
A minor
A minor
31
ist der be - - - ste;
ist der be - - - ste;
ist der be - - - ste;
+Obs
Oboes & upper strings in concerto-like exchange...
f
Ritornello
= m. 1.
= m. 2.
A minor

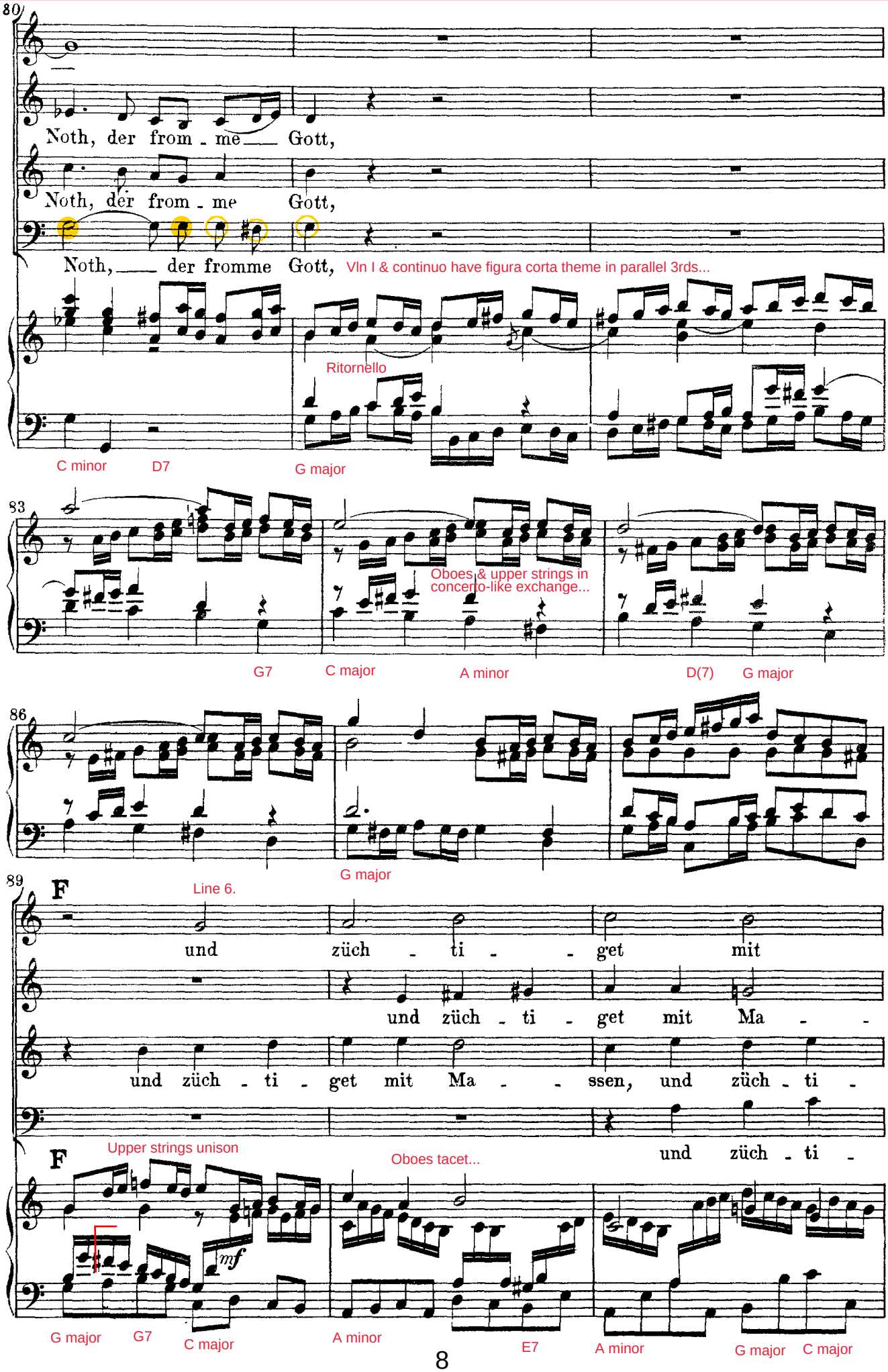

31
= m. 3.
= m. 4.
= m. 5.
D7
G major
G7
C major
C7
F major
37
mf
= m. 6.
= m. 7.
= m. 8.
E7
A minor
10
= m. 9.
= m. 10.
= m. 11.
Vln I & continuo enter with figura corta heme (in parallel 3rds).
A minor
E7
F major
G7
C major
A7
43
= m. 12.
= m. 13.
= m. 14.
D minor
G7
C major
E7
46
C
Line 3.
Stollen 2.
zu
zu hel - fen
= m. 16.
= m. 17.
= m. 15.
C
Oboes tacet, upper strings unison...
A minor
A minor
A minor


49
hel - - fen den'n er ist be - -
zu hel - fen den'n er ist be - reit, er ist be -
den'n er ist be - reit, zu hel - fen den'n er ist be -
zu hel - fen den'n er ist be -
= m. 18.
= m. 19.
= m. 20.
C major
52
reit,
reit, zu hel - fen den'n er ist be - reit,
reit, zu hel - fen den'n er ist be - reit,
reit, zu hel - fen den'n er ist be - reit,
Bass repeats the chorale phrase in quarter notes
Obs
= m. 21.
= m. 22.
Ritornello
= m. 23
Oboes & upper strings in concerto-like exchange...
C major
C major
55
D
die an ihn
die an ihn
= m. 24.
= m. 25.
= m. 26.
D
Upper strings unison
D major
G major
D7
G major
D minor
Line 4.


58
glau - - - - - - ben fe - - - -
glau - ben fe - ste, die an ihn_ glau - - - ben fe - -
die an ihn glau - - - - - ben fe - -
die an ihn_ glau - - - ben fe - -
= m. 27.
= m. 28.
Oboes tacet...
= m. 29.
E7
A minor
61
ste.
ste, die an_ ihn_ glau - ben fe - - ste.
ste, die an_ ihn_ glau - ben fe - - ste.
ste, die an ihn_ glau - ben fe - - ste.
Alto repeats the chorale phrase in quarter notes.
= m. 30.
= m. 31.
Obs
Oboes & upper strings in concerto-like exchange...
Ritornello
f
A minor
A minor
64
A7
D minor


67
D minor
F major
C(7)
F major 7
F7
71
B-flat major
A7
D minor
74
E
Line 5.
Er hilft aus Noth,
Abgesang of chorale's bar form.
Er hilft aus Noth, aus
Er hilft aus Noth, aus
Er hilft aus Noth, er
Oboes & upper strings in concerto-like exchange...
Chromatic inflection leading briefly to minor for "Not" ("trouble").
A7
D major
D7
G major
G7
77
der from - me Gott,
Noth, er hilft aus Noth, der from - me Gott, er hilft aus
Text painting: Rising lines in imitation for "He helps out of trouble."
Noth, er hilft aus Noth, der from - me Gott, er hilft aus
Bass repeats the line chant-like for emphasis.
hilft aus Noth, aus Noth, der from - me Gott, er hilft aus
C minor
F# dim.7
D7
G major

Martin Petzoldt suggests the special treatment of this line, together with the attention given to the quoted chorale line in the following movement point to Psalm 46:1: God is our refuge (Luther 1545: Zuversicht) and strength, a very present help in trouble (Luther 1545: Nöten). See *Bach Kommentar* 2:477–478,



The text alludes to Jeremiah 30:11" For I am with you to save you, says the Lord; I will make a full end of all the nations among whom I scattered you, but of you I will not make a full end. I will chasten you in just measure (Luther 1545: züchtigen…mit Maßen), and I will by no means leave you unpunished. (Also Jeremiah 4:27, 5:10, 5:18, 46:28, Ezekiel 20:17.) For this text phrase Bach animates the polyphony with rhythms that depart from the measured rhythm, apparently to reference the words, "chasten with measure" ("i.e., "chasten with moderation").

92

92.

Chromatic inflection for "chastises with measure."

Ma - - - - - ssen:

ssen, und züch - ti - get mit Ma - - - - - - - - -

get mit Ma - - - - - - - - - - - -

get mit Ma - - ssen, mit Ma - - - - - - -

Obs.

Oboes and upper streings in concerto-like exchange...

D7 D# dim,7 E minor

95

ssen:

ssen:

ssen:

Oboes and continuo in parallel 3rds...

f Ritornello

E minor E minor

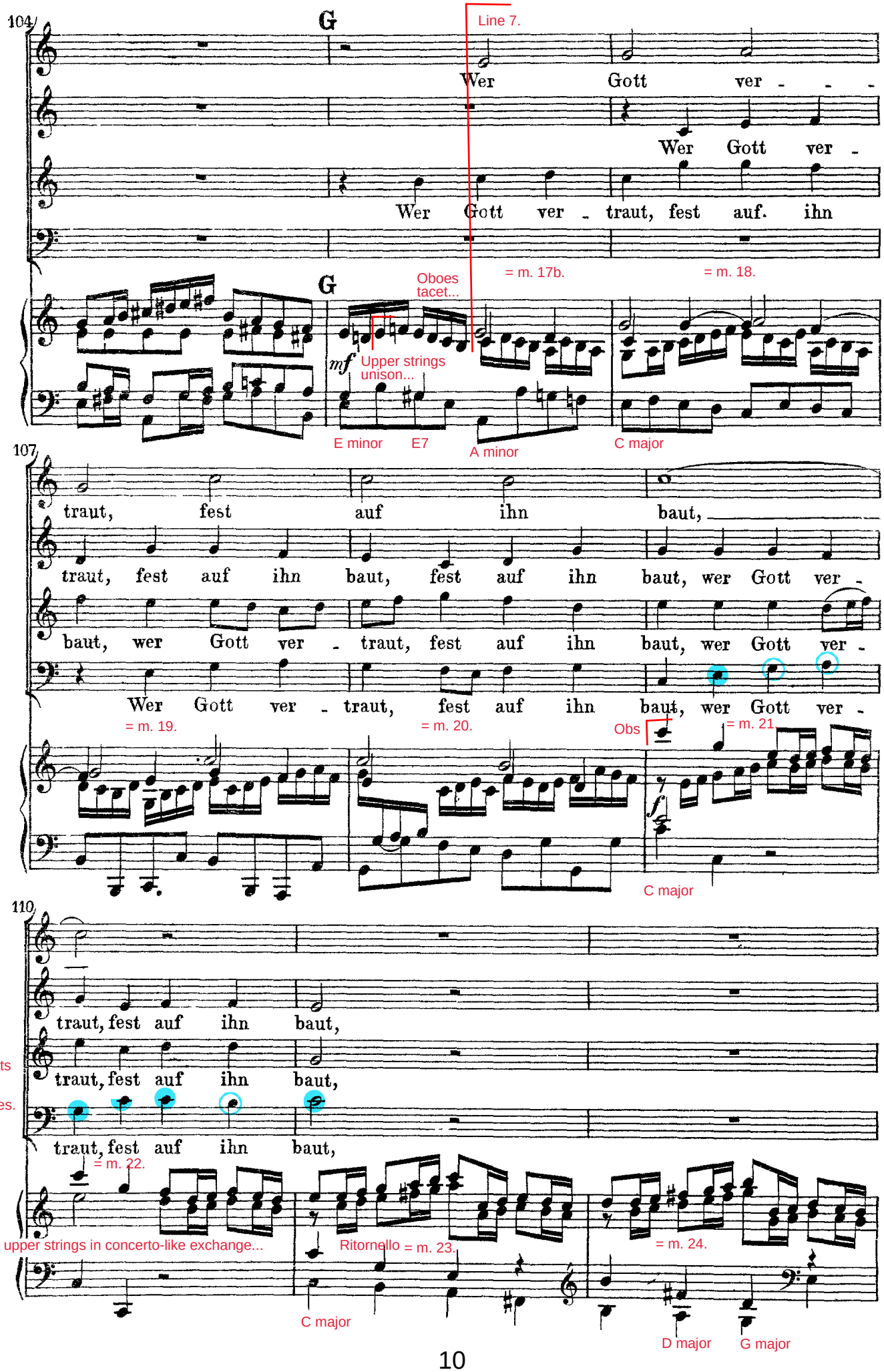
98

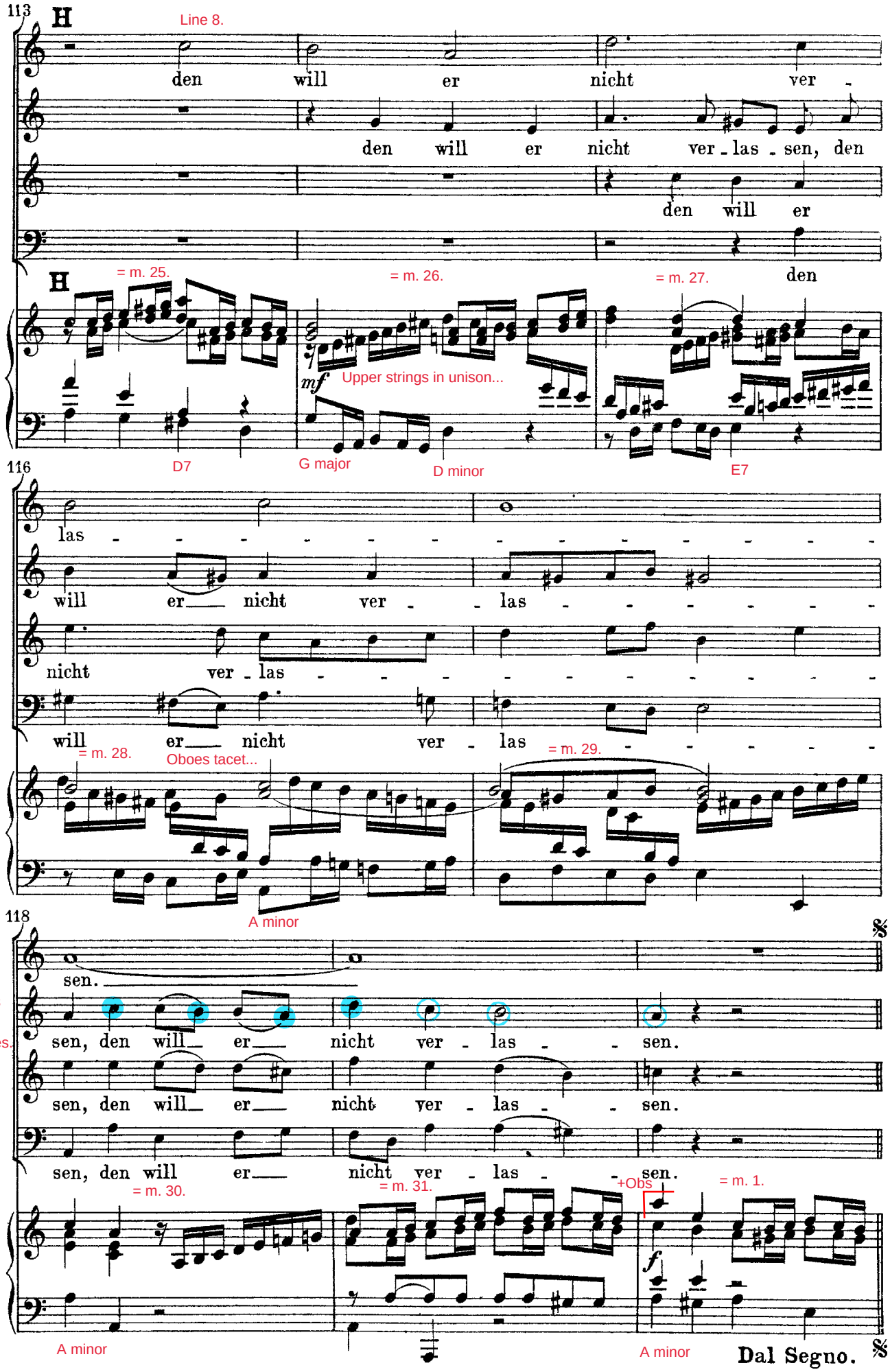
Oboes & upper strings in concerto-like exchange...

E7 A minor D7

101

G major B7 E minor


104
G
Line 7.
Wer Gott ver - - -
Wer Gott ver -
Wer Gott ver - traut, fest auf. ihn
G
Oboes tacet...
= m. 17b.
= m. 18.
mf
Upper strings unison...
E minor
E7
A minor
C major
107
traut, fest auf ihn baut,
traut, fest auf ihn baut, fest auf ihn baut, wer Gott ver -
baut, wer Gott ver - traut, fest auf ihn baut, wer Gott ver -
Wer Gott ver - traut, fest auf ihn baut, wer Gott ver -
= m. 19.
= m. 20.
Obs
= m. 21.
f
C major
110
traut, fest auf ihn baut,
traut, fest auf ihn baut,
traut, fest auf ihn baut,
Bass repeats the chorale phrase in quarter notes.
= m. 22.
Oboes & upper strings in concerto-like exchange...
Ritornello = m. 23.
= m. 24.
C major
D major
G major


113
H
Line 8.
den will er nicht ver -
den will er nicht ver - las - sen, den
den will er
H
= m. 25.
= m. 26.
= m. 27.
den
mf
Upper strings in unison...
D7
G major
D minor
E7
116
las - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
will er nicht ver - las - - - - - -
nicht ver - las - - - - - - - - - -
will er nicht ver - las - - - - - -
= m. 28.
Oboes tacet...
= m. 29.
A minor
118
sen.
sen, den will er nicht ver - las - sen.
sen, den will er nicht ver - las - sen.
sen, den will er nicht ver - las - sen.
= m. 30.
= m. 31.
+Obs
= m. 1.
A minor
A minor
Dal Segno.
Alto repeats the chorale phrase in quarter notes.

No. 2 is a continuo aria for bass singer (with quasi-ostinato bass characterized by a halting rhythm), with the first line of the chorale paraphrased twice in the vocal line, each time with one text phrase taken verbatim from the hymn.

No. 2. Aria.

(Based on Chorale Verse 2) ●Fear not but trust God; no one can stop his plans! (111/2).

111/2.

(Moderato ♩ = 88.) 1.

Form (Rhyme: AABCCB)
Ritornello (mm. 1-4) Em
Lines 1-3 (5-15) Am-Bm
Rit (15-18) Bm-DM
Lines 4-6 (19-27) DM-BM
Rit (37-41) BM-Em
Lines 1-3 (41-51) Em
Rit (52-55) Em

Plus continuo interludes that modulate?? check??

Ritornello derived from vocal line.

5-beat phrase.

Continuo alone...

E minor D7 G major D# dim.7

4 Basso.

The resolute, "chopped" ostinato-like line emphasizes the word "not" in the exhortation not to be frightened.

Ent - set - ze dich, mein Herze; nicht, ent - set - ze dich, mein

Be-frightened - , my heart, not,

5-beat phrases ending with high notes for emphasis.
Singer and continuo in imitative duet..

B7 E minor E minor D major G major

(Ent - set - ze) dich, mein Her - ze, nicht, ent - set - ze dich

7

Herze, nicht, mein Herze, nicht, ent - setze dich, mein Herze, nicht, Gott

God

Chorale lines 1 & 2, with text of line 1 almost verbatim (Chorale: "Gott ist dein Trost und Zuversicht").

mein Her - ze D# dim.7 B7 E minor D major G major

nicht, mein Her - ze nicht, ent - set - ze mein Her - ze nicht, ent-set-ze dich mein

10

ist dein Trost und Zu - ver - sicht und dei - ner

is thy consolation and confidence and thy

Continuo now without breaks for verbatim chorale text (reference to hope and refuge).

D major A# dim.7

Her - ze nicht, mein Her - ze nicht, mein Her - ze nicht, mein D major ent - set - ze dich mein Her - ze

Herz

13

See - - - - - - - le Le - ben.

sou's life.

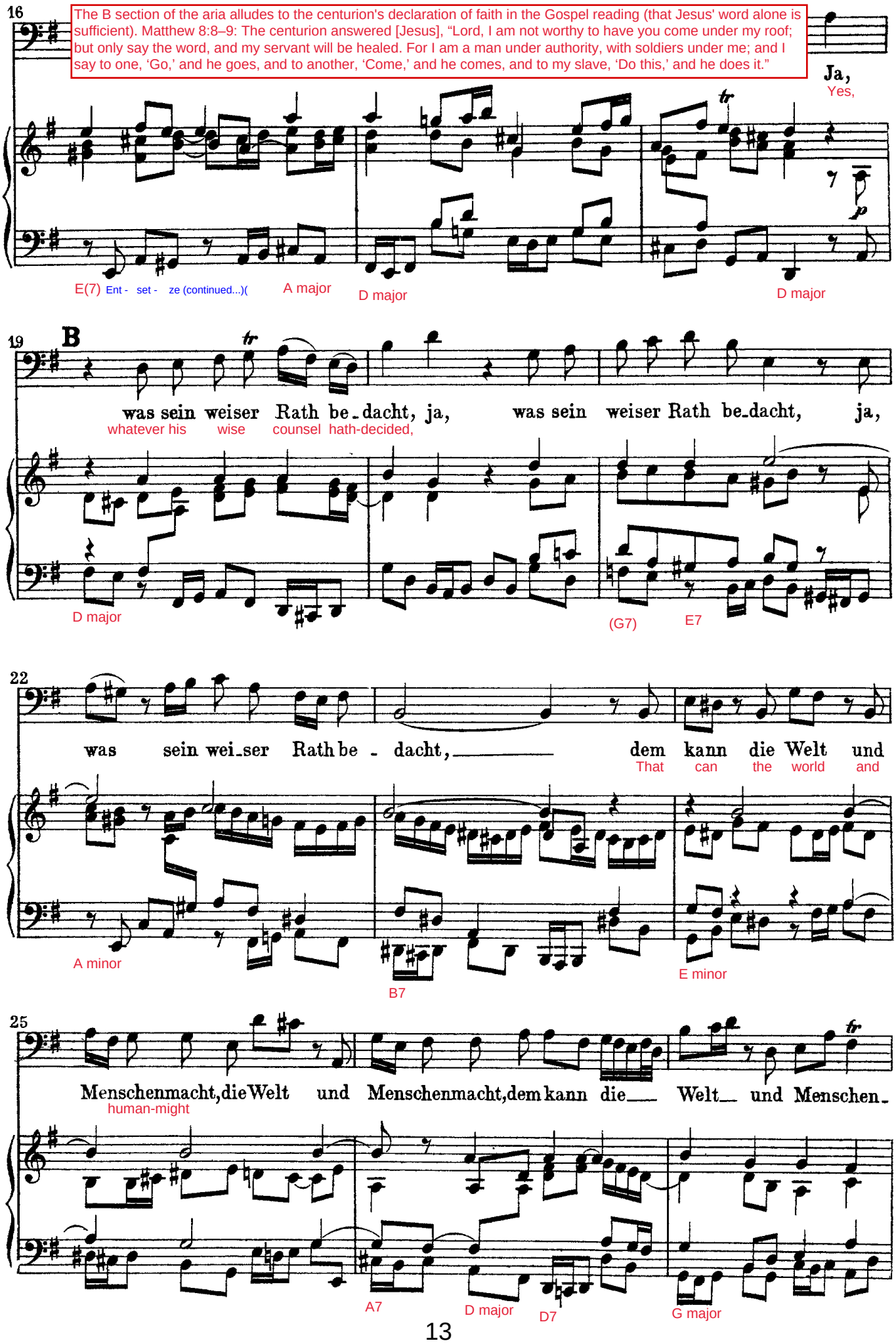
"Seele Leben" is given a rhythmically animated melisma.

ent - set - ze dich mein Her - ze B minor dich mein Her - ze

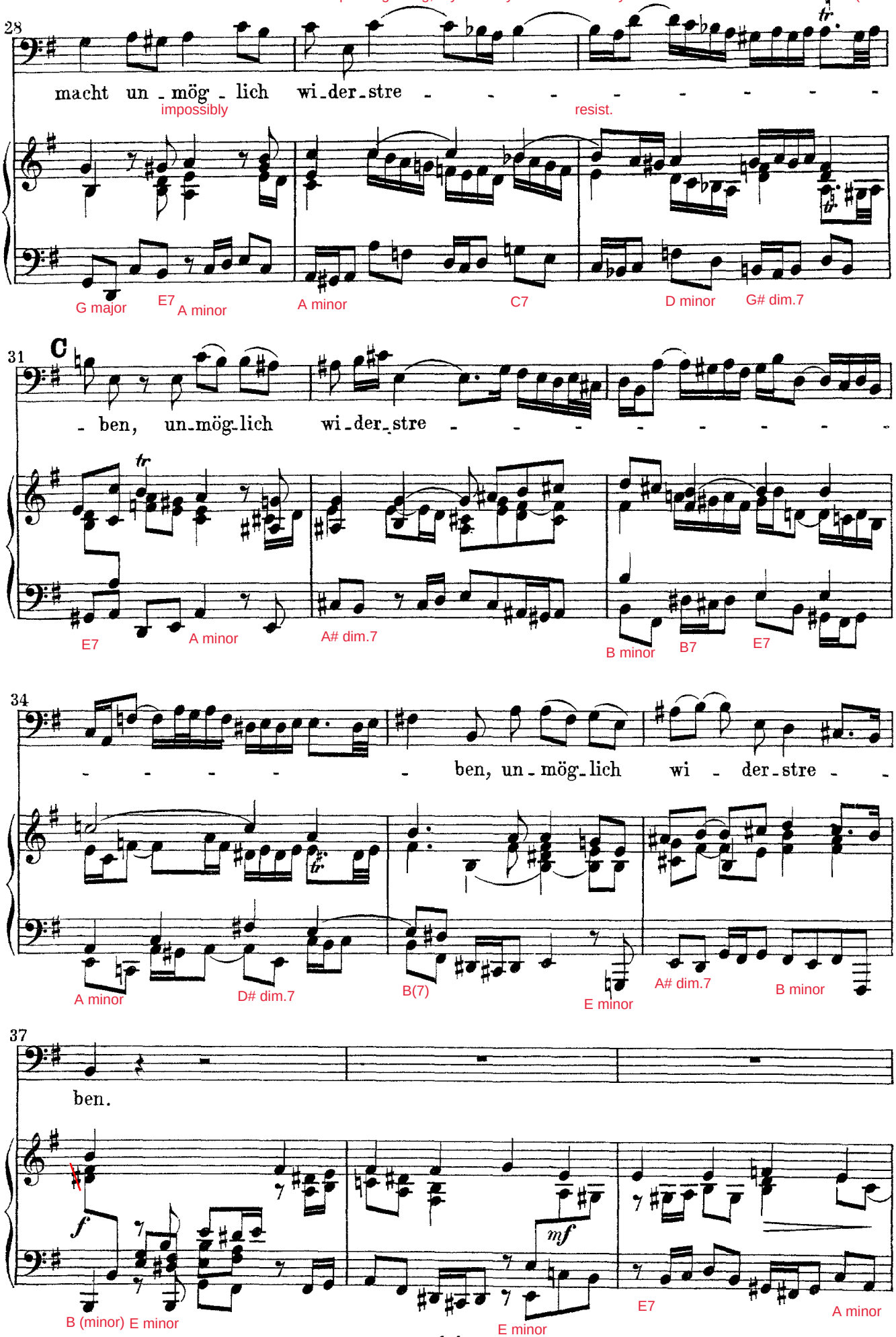
ent - set - ze dich, ent - set - ze

F# major

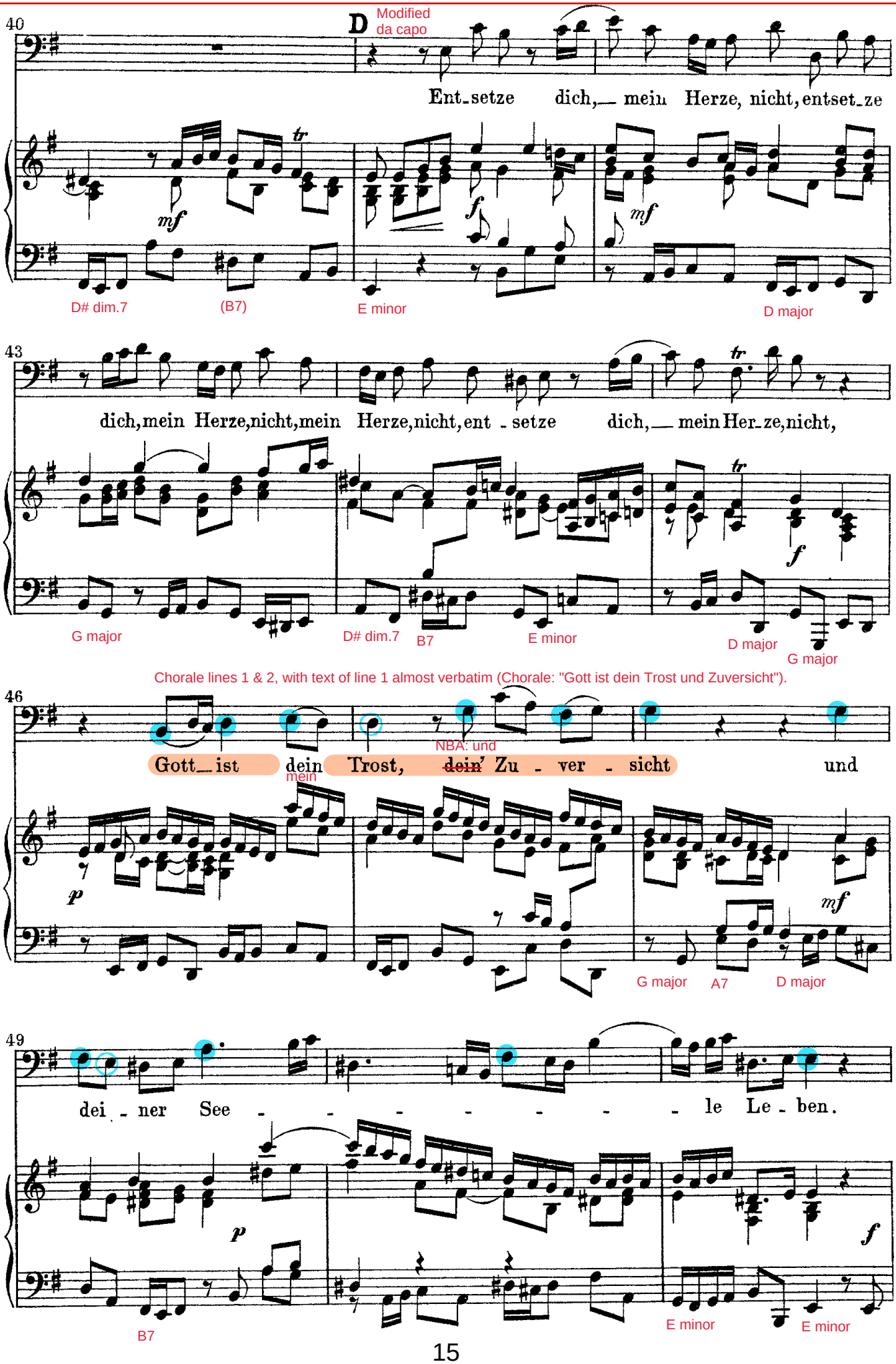
Martin Petzoldt suggests the attention given to the quoted chorale line together with the special treatment given to the first phrase of the Abgesang (line 5) in the preceding movement point to Psalm 46:1: God is our refuge (Luther 1545: Zuversicht) and strength, a very present help in trouble (Luther 1545: Nöten"). See *Bach Kommentar* 2:477–478,

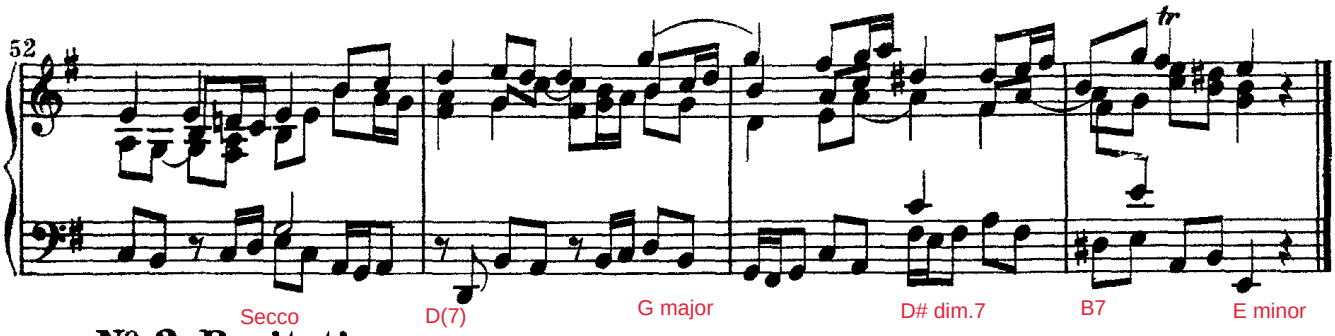

16
The B section of the aria alludes to the centurion's declaration of faith in the Gospel reading (that Jesus' word alone is sufficient). Matthew 8:8–9: The centurion answered [Jesus], “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”
Ja,
Yes,
E(7) Ent - set - ze (continued...)(A major D major D major
19
B
was sein weiser Rath be-dacht, ja, was sein weiser Rath be-dacht, ja,
whatever his wise counsel hath-decided,
D major (G7) E7
22
was sein wei-ser Rath be - dacht, dem kann die Welt und
That can the world and
A minor B7 E minor
25
Menschenmacht, die Welt und Menschenmacht, dem kann die Welt und Menschen-
human-might
A7 D major D7 G major

Word painting: Long, rhythmically and harmonically erratic melismas for "widerstreben" ("resist").



Martin Petzoldt suggests the language is reminiscent of Mark 16:6: The angel said to the women at the grave] “Do not be amazed (Luther 1545: Entsetzet euch nicht); you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen…” See *Bach Kommentar* 2:478.





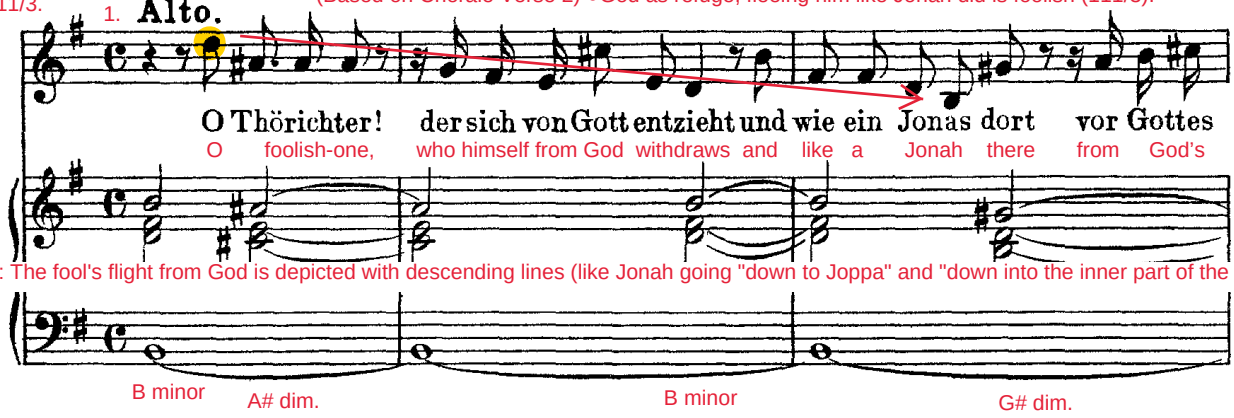
Nº 3. Recitativo.

111/3.

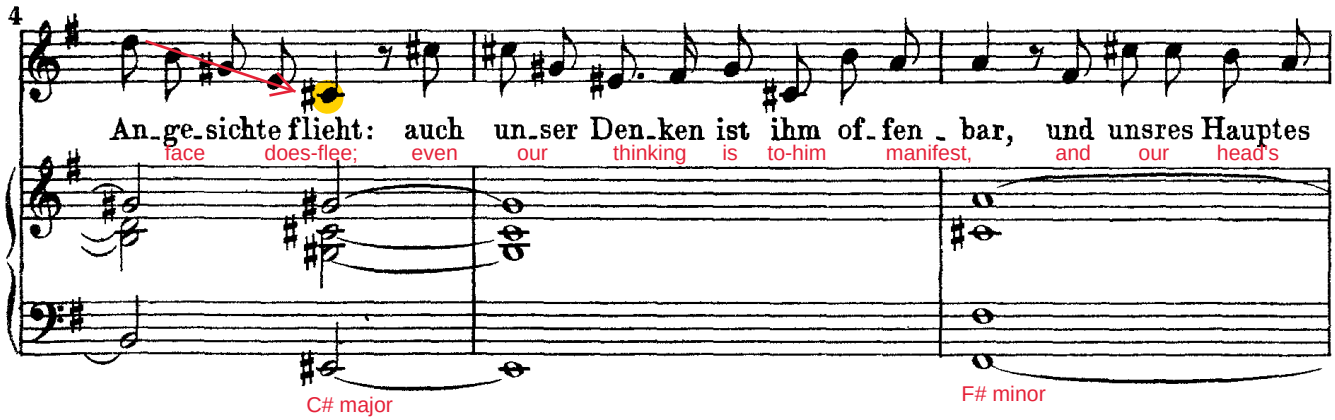
1. Alto.

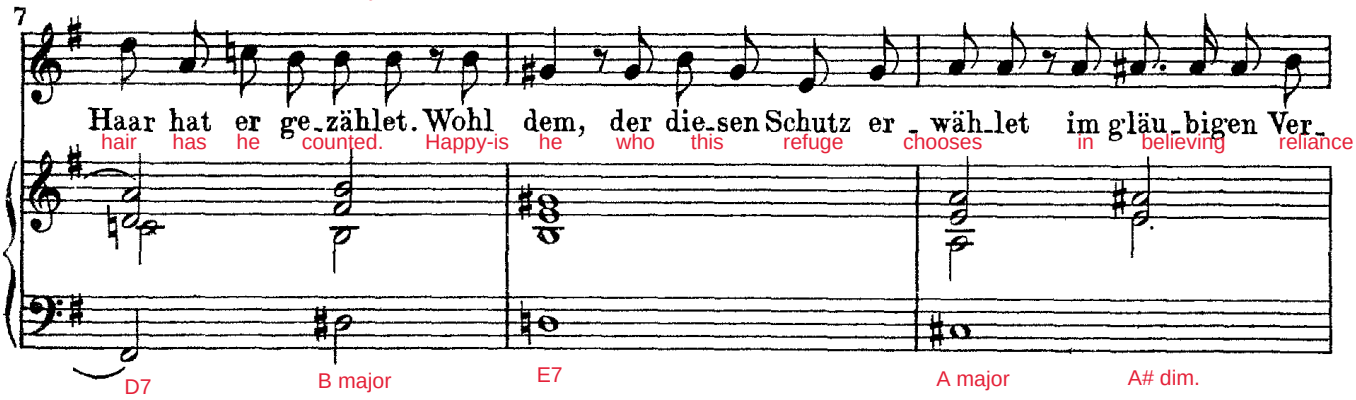
(Based on Chorale Verse 2) ●God as refuge; fleeing him like Jonah did is foolish (111/3).

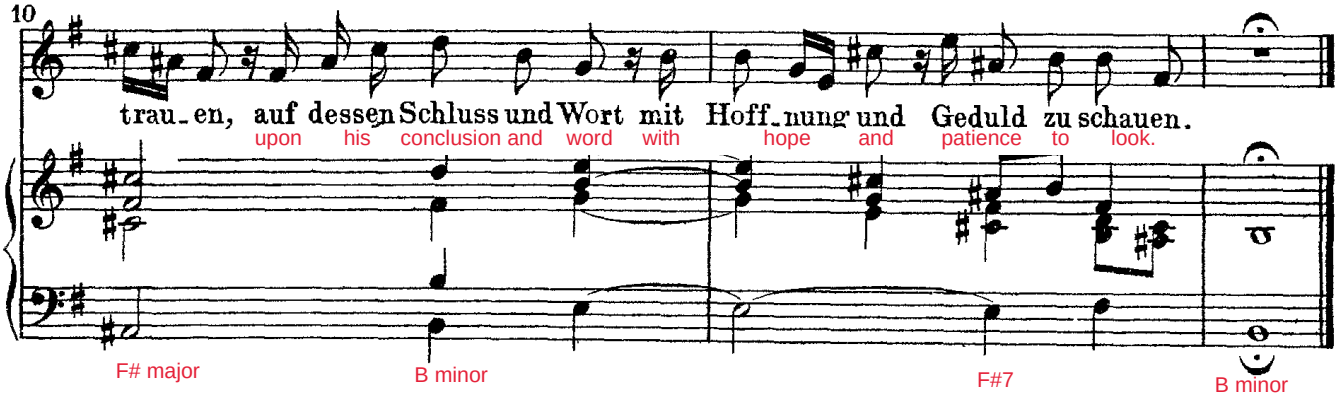
The recitative alludes to various biblical passages and themes (see note).



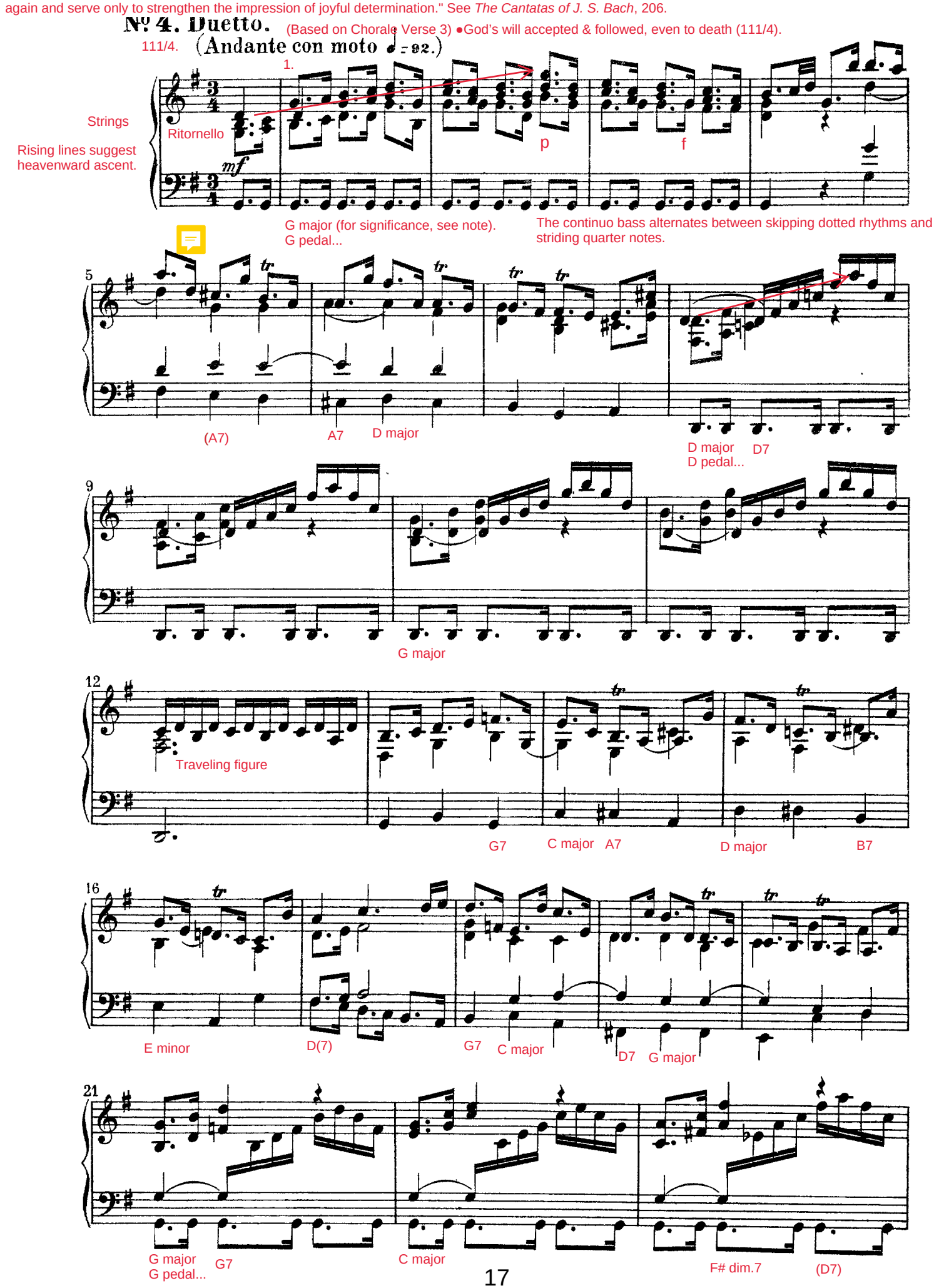
Text painting: The fool's flight from God is depicted with descending lines (like Jonah going "down to Joppa" and "down into the inner part of the ship").



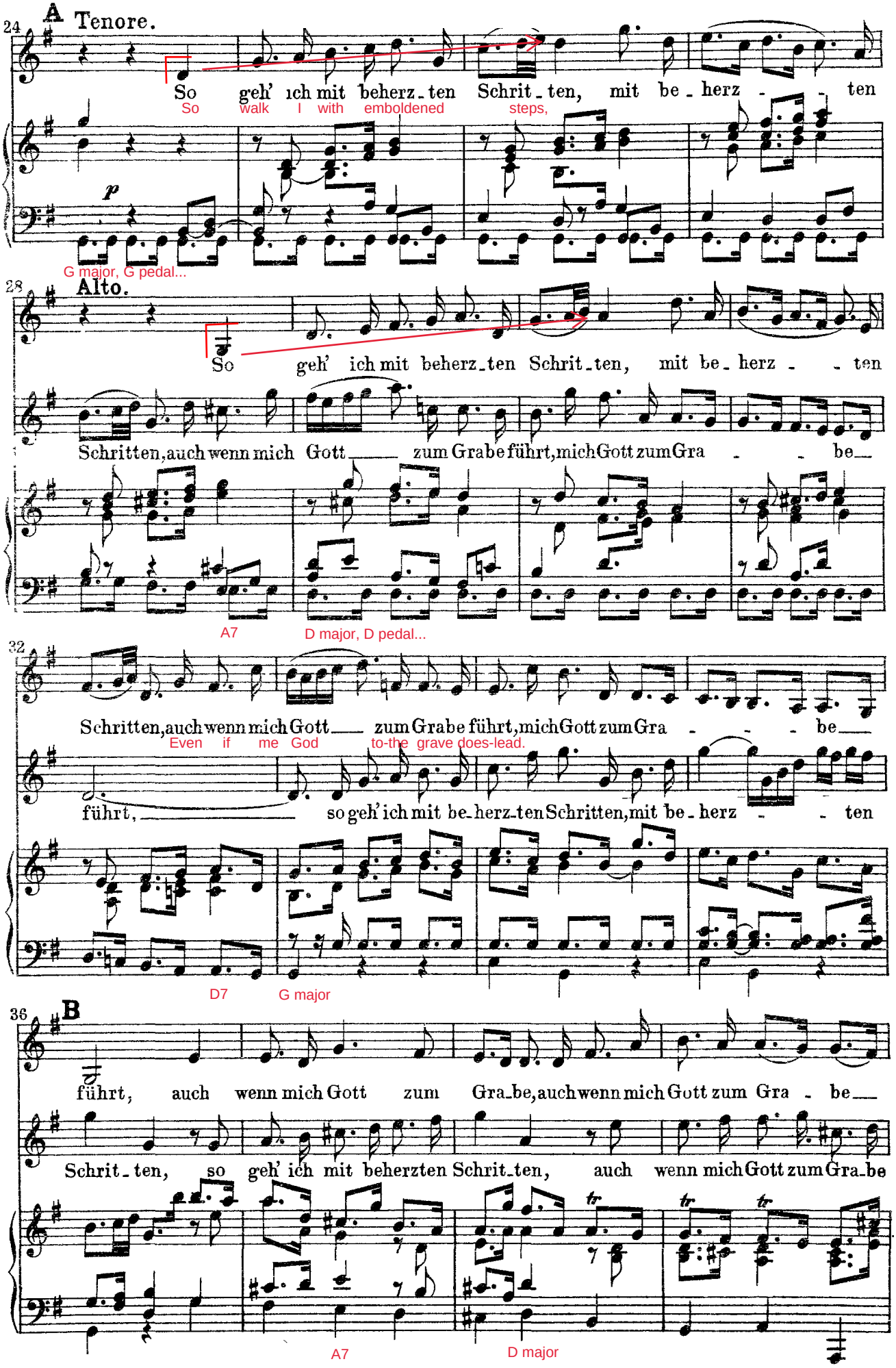


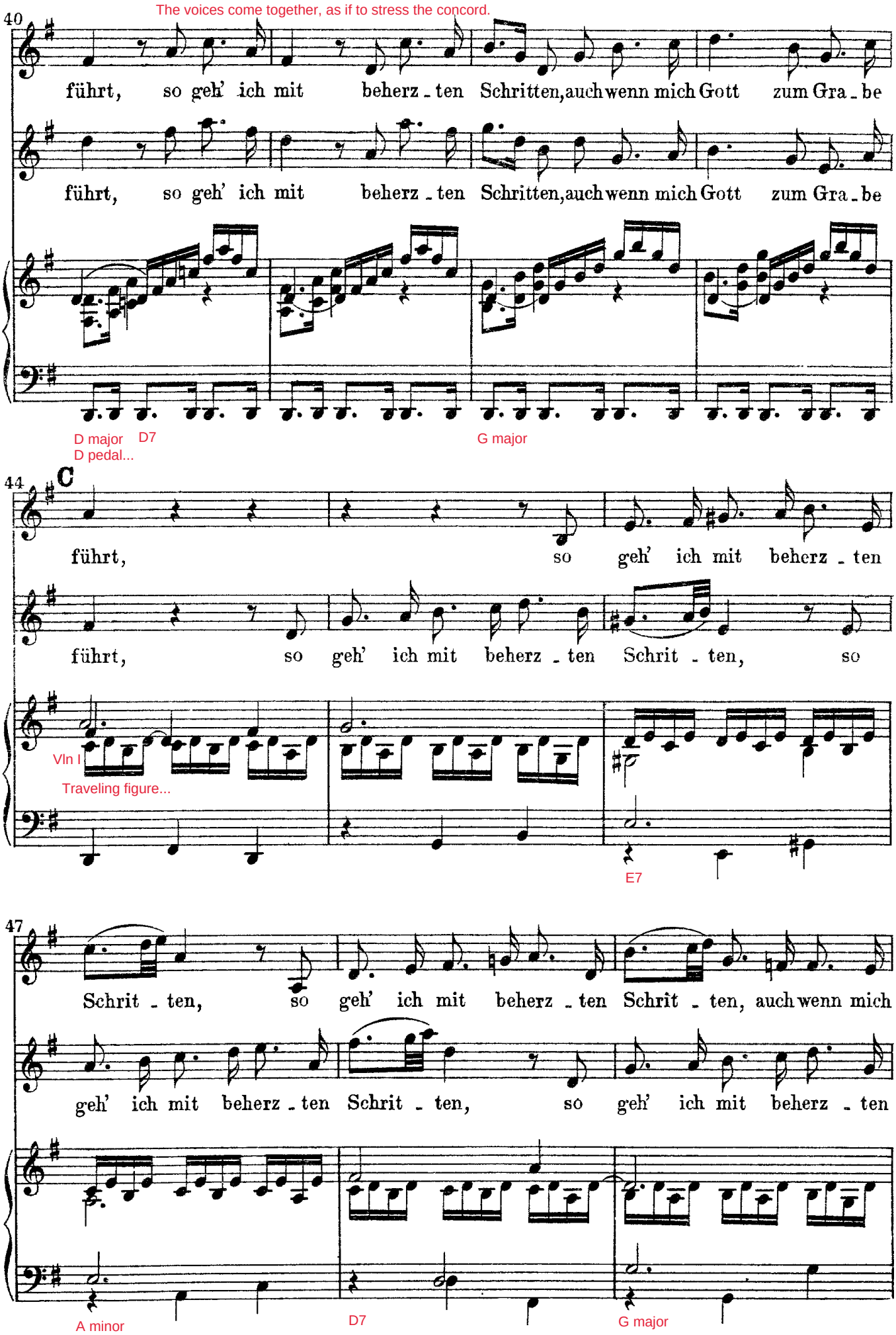


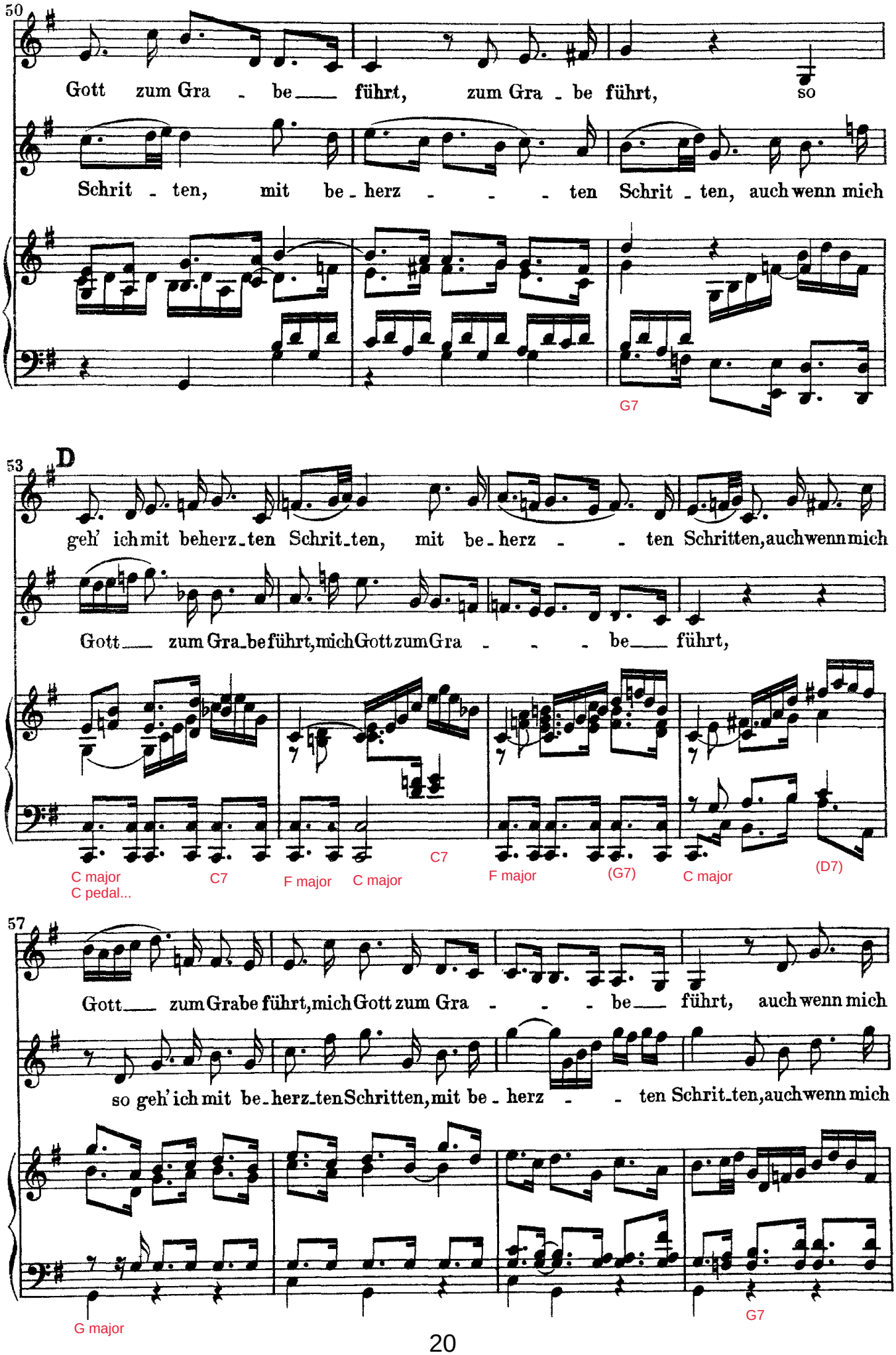
Alfred Dürr calls no. 4 "a sonorous, dancelike duet, whose extended string ritornello, with its dotted rhythms and calm continuo pedal-points, illustrates the 'spirited steps' of the text. Occasional harmonic overclouding on words such as 'zum Grabe' ('to the grave') or 'des Todes Bitterkeit' ('death's bitterness') are swiftly dissolved again and serve only to strengthen the impression of joyful determination." See *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, 206.

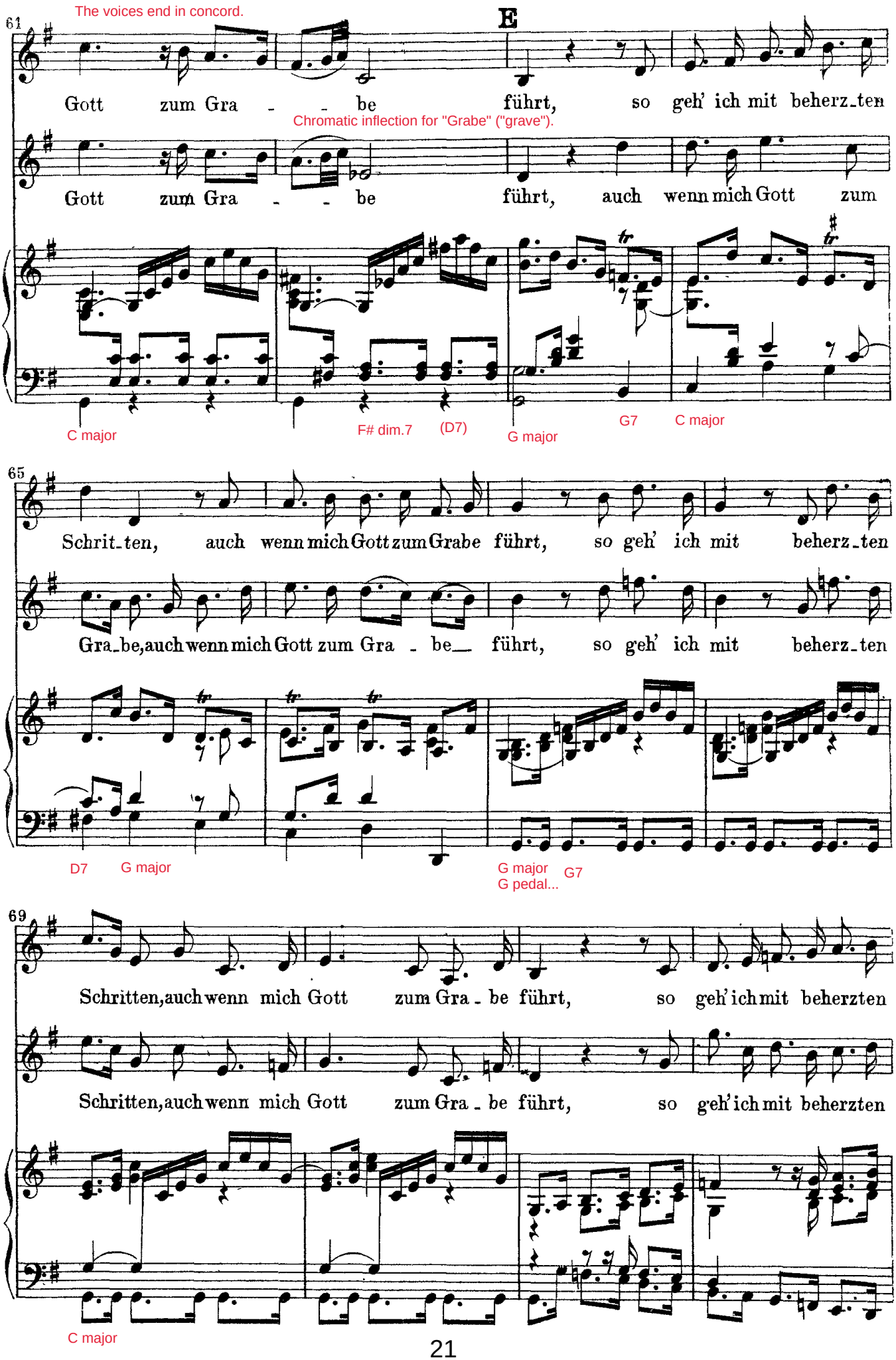


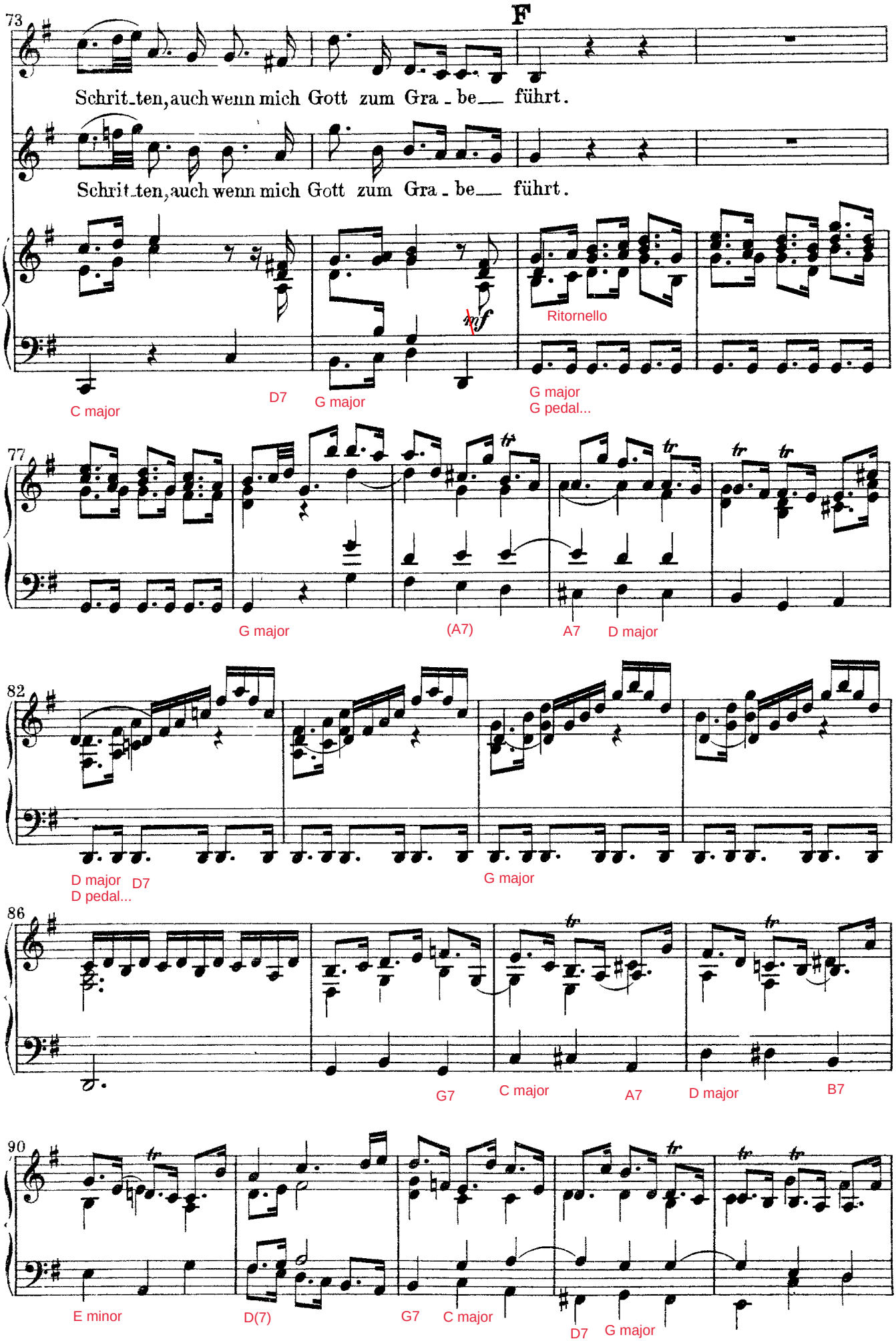
Bach employs a canonic duet to portray God leading the speaker, as referenced in the text. Rising lines suggest heavenward ascent.

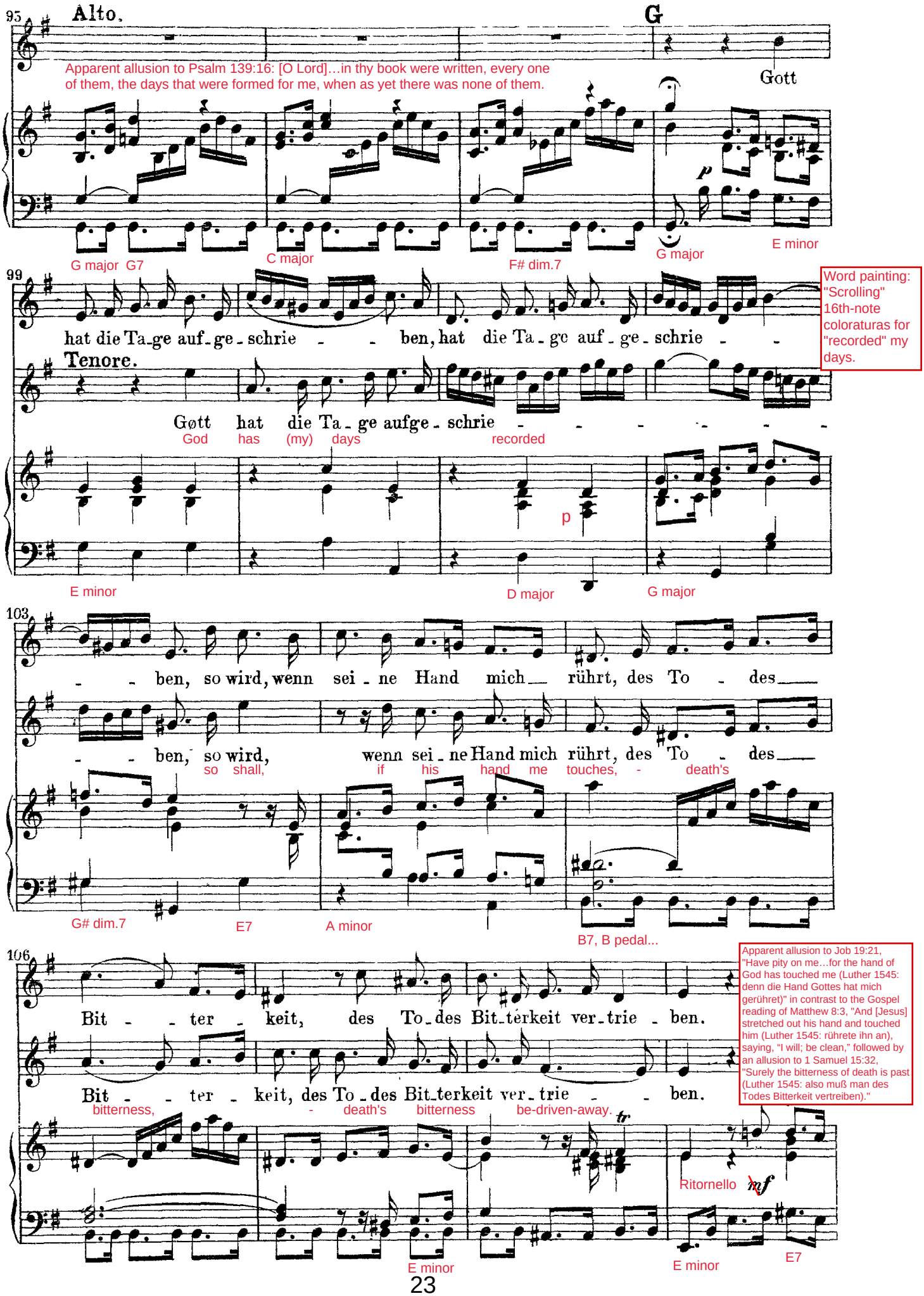


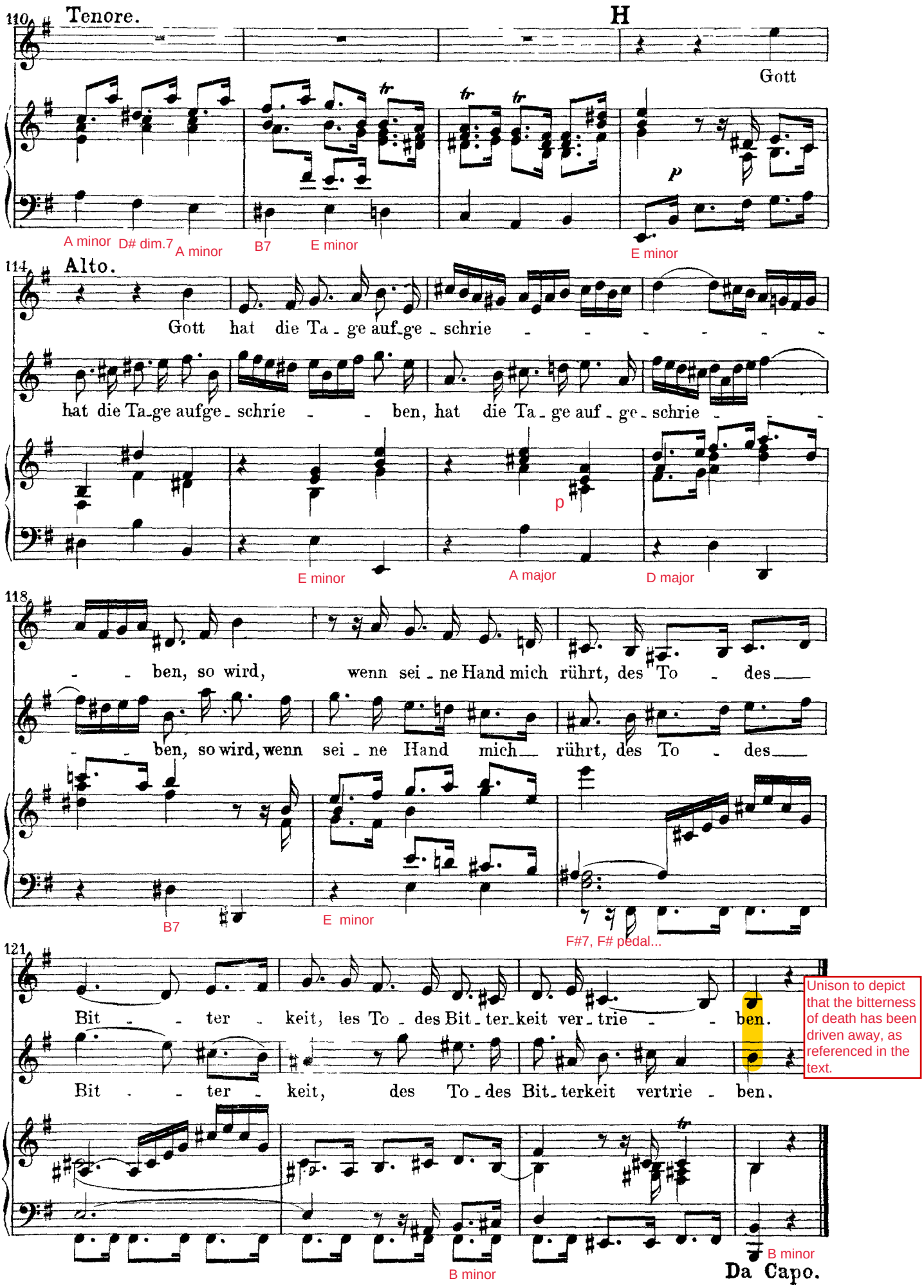

The voices come together, as if to stress the concord.
40
führt, so geh' ich mit beherz - ten Schritten, auch wenn mich Gott zum Gra - be
führt, so geh' ich mit beherz - ten Schritten, auch wenn mich Gott zum Gra - be
D major
D7
D pedal...
G major
44
C
führt, so geh' ich mit beherz - ten
führt, so geh' ich mit beherz - ten Schrit - ten, so
Vln I
Traveling figure...
E7
47
Schrit - ten, so geh' ich mit beherz - ten Schrit - ten, auch wenn mich
geh' ich mit beherz - ten Schrit - ten, so geh' ich mit beherz - ten
A minor
D7
G major

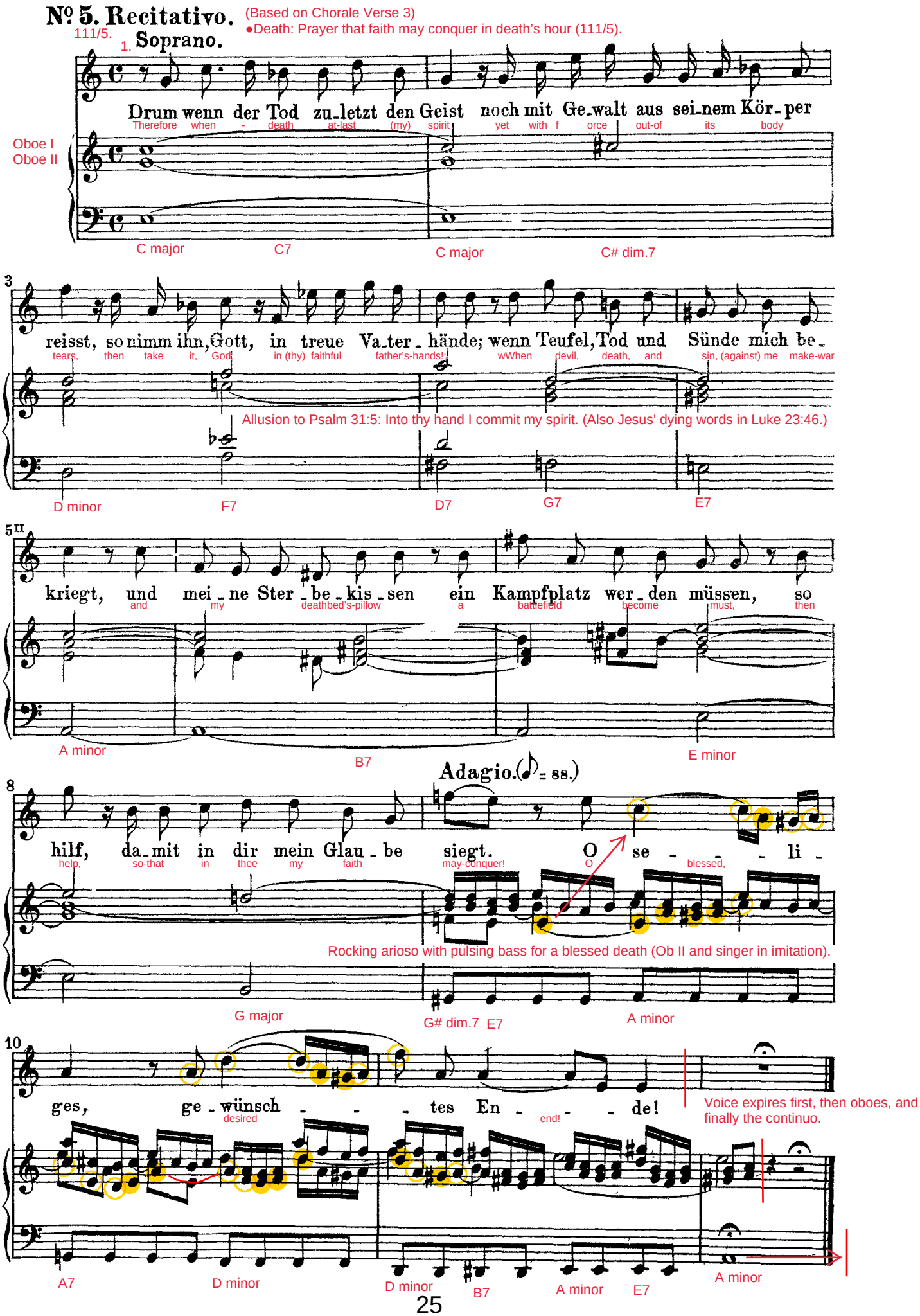

50
Gott zum Gra - be führt, zum Gra - be führt, so
Schrit - ten, mit be - herz - - - ten Schrit - ten, auch wenn mich
G7
53
D
geh' ich mit beherz - ten Schrit - ten, mit be - herz - - ten Schritten, auch wenn mich
Gott zum Gra - be führt, mich Gott zum Gra - - - be führt,
C major
C pedal...
C7
F major
C major
C7
F major
(G7)
C major
(D7)
57
Gott zum Grabe führt, mich Gott zum Gra - - - be führt, auch wenn mich
so geh' ich mit be - herz - ten Schritten, mit be - herz - - ten Schrit - ten, auch wenn mich
G major
G7

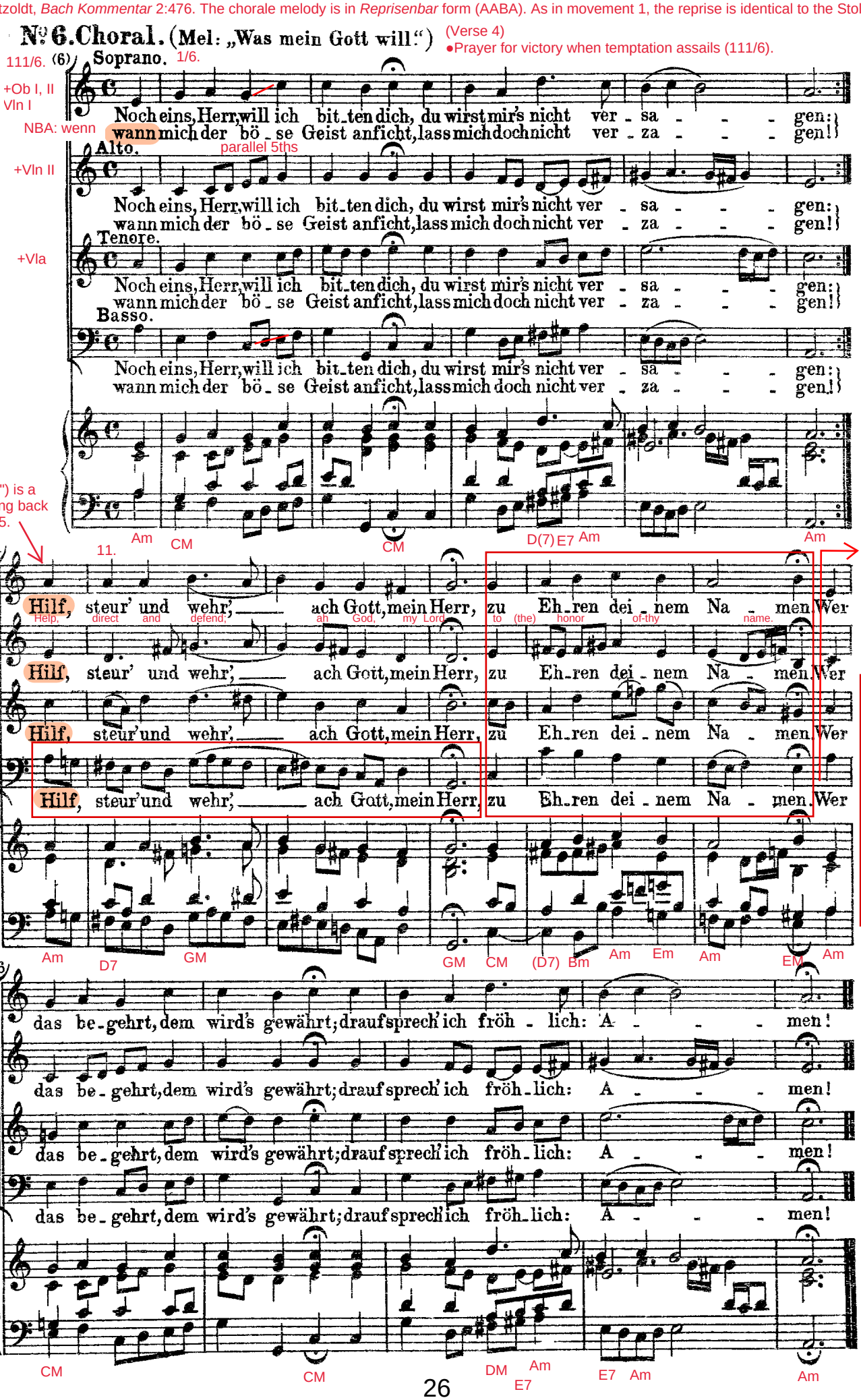

The voices end in concord.
61
E
Gott zum Gra - - be führt, so geh' ich mit beherz-ten
Chromatic inflection for "Grabe" ("grave").
Gott zum Gra - - be führt, auch wenn mich Gott zum
C major
F# dim.7
(D7)
G major
G7
C major
65
Schrit-ten, auch wenn mich Gott zum Grabe führt, so geh' ich mit beherz-ten
Gra-be, auch wenn mich Gott zum Gra - be führt, so geh' ich mit beherz-ten
D7
G major
G major
G pedal...
G7
69
Schritten, auch wenn mich Gott zum Gra - be führt, so geh' ich mit beherzten
Schritten, auch wenn mich Gott zum Gra - be führt, so geh' ich mit beherzten
C major


73
F
Schrit_ten, auch wenn mich Gott zum Gra_be__ führt.
Schrit_ten, auch wenn mich Gott zum Gra_be__ führt.
mf
Ritornello
C major
D7
G major
G major
G pedal...
77
G major
(A7)
A7
D major
82
D major
D pedal...
D7
G major
86
G7
C major
A7
D major
B7
90
E minor
D(7)
G7
C major
D7
G major


95
Alto.
G
Apparent allusion to Psalm 139:16: [O Lord]…in thy book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.
Gott
p
G major G7
C major
F# dim.7
G major
E minor
99
hat die Ta_ge auf_ge_schrie_ben, hat die Ta_ge auf_ge_schrie_
Word painting: "Scrolling" 16th-note coloraturas for "recorded" my days.
Tenore.
Gøtt hat die Ta_ge aufge_schrie_
God has (my) days recorded
p
E minor
D major
G major
103
_ben, so wird, wenn sei_ne Hand mich rührt, des To_des
_ben, so wird, wenn sei_ne Hand mich rührt, des To_des
so shall, if his hand me touches, death's
G# dim.7
E7
A minor
B7, B pedal...
106
Bit_ter_keit, des To_des Bit_terkeit ver_trie_ben.
Bit_ter_keit, des To_des Bit_terkeit ver_trie_ben.
bitterness, death's bitterness be-driven-away.
Apparent allusion to Job 19:21, "Have pity on me…for the hand of God has touched me (Luther 1545: denn die Hand Gottes hat mich gerühret)" in contrast to the Gospel reading of Matthew 8:3, "And [Jesus] stretched out his hand and touched him (Luther 1545: rührete ihn an), saying, "I will; be clean," followed by an allusion to 1 Samuel 15:32, "Surely the bitterness of death is past (Luther 1545: also muß man des Todes Bitterkeit vertreiben)."
Ritornello
mf
E minor
E minor
E7


110
Tenore.
H
Gott
A minor
D# dim.7
A minor
B7
E minor
E minor
114
Alto.
Gott hat die Ta - ge auf - ge - schrie - - - - - -
hat die Ta - ge aufge - schrie - - ben, hat die Ta - ge auf - ge - schrie - - -
p
E minor
A major
D major
118
- - ben, so wird, wenn sei - ne Hand mich rührt, des To - des
- - ben, so wird, wenn sei - ne Hand mich rührt, des To - des
B7
E minor
F#7, F# pedal...
121
Bit - - ter - keit, les To - des Bit - ter - keit ver - trie - - ben.
Bit - - ter - keit, des To - des Bit - terkeit vertrie - ben.
Unison to depict that the bitterness of death has been driven away, as referenced in the text.
B minor
B minor
Da Capo.


№ 5. Recitativo.
(Based on Chorale Verse 3)
●Death: Prayer that faith may conquer in death's hour (111/5).
111/5.
1. Soprano.
Drum wenn der Tod zu_letzt den Geist noch mit Ge_walt aus sei_nem Kör_per
Therefore when - death at-last (my) spirit yet with f orce out-of its body
Oboe I
Oboe II
C major
C7
C major
C# dim.7
reisst, so nimm ihn, Gott, in treue Va_ter_hände; wenn Teufel, Tod und Sünde mich be_
tears, then take it, God in (thy) faithful father's-hands! wWhen devil, death, and sin, (against) me make-war
Allusion to Psalm 31:5: Into thy hand I commit my spirit. (Also Jesus' dying words in Luke 23:46.)
D minor
F7
D7
G7
E7
kriegt, und mei_ne Ster_be_kis_sen ein Kampfplatz wer_den müssen, so
and my deathbed's-pillow a battlefield become must, then
A minor
B7
E minor
Adagio. (♪ = 88.)
hilf, da_mit in dir mein Glau_be siegt. O se - - - li -
help, so-that in thee my faith may-conquer! O blessed,
Rocking arioso with pulsing bass for a blessed death (Ob II and singer in imitation).
G major
G# dim.7
E7
A minor
ges, ge_wünsch - - - tes En - - - de!
desired end!
Voice expires first, then oboes, and finally the continuo.
A7
D minor
D minor
B7
A minor
E7
A minor

This is the fourth stanza of the chorale, which was added anonymously in 1555* to the1547 chorale by Margrave Albrecht of Brandenburg-Ansbach (1522–1557). See Martin Petzoldt, *Bach Kommentar* 2:476. The chorale melody is in *Reprisenbar* form (AABA). As in movement 1, the reprise is identical to the Stollen.

*Ulrich Leisinger gives the date as 1554.See *Johann Sebastian Bach. The Sacred Vocal Music Complete Edition. Cantatas* (Stuttgart: Carus Verlag, 2017), vol. 10, p. 426.