

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 152 Form: Sinfonia - Aria (B) - Recit (B) - Aria (S) - Recit (B) - Duet (S/B).

The cantata is a "dialogue cantata (particularly evident in the final movement where the voices are identified as "Soul" and "Jesus." The overall disposition of the 5 vocal movements is symmetrical.

Introduction & updates at melvinunger.com.

NBA I/3; BC A18

1. S. after Christmas (BWV 152, 122, 28)

*Galatians 4:1-7 (Through Christ we come of age and are free from the law)

*Luke 2:33-40 (Simeon and Hanna prophesy of Christ)

Librettist: Salomon Franck (see notes).

FP: 30 December 1714 (Weimar court chapel)

Note: The work has been handed down in

two keys because of pitch variability

at the time. It is now usually notated

in G minor/B-flat major (see notes).

Chamber Cantata with unusual instrumentation but no chorus or chorale



Cantata No. 152 Tritt auf die Glaubensbahn

Concerto
(Adagio)

Note: Bach made a few changes to the text (highlighted below). Petzoldt argues that they serve to clarify the theology (even at the expense of poetic quality) as do Bach's amendments in the librettos by Mariane von Ziegler. See *Bach Kommentar* 2:255.

Martin Petzoldt outlines the symmetrical structure:

4. S. aria. Cornerstone of faith
5. B. recit. Anger of the world at the Son of God
3. B. recit. Fall/resurrection of Israel through the Savior
6. S/B duet. Savior, teach me faith
2. B. aria. Man, step out on the path of faith
1. Sinfonia. Character of going and discipleship
No chorale!

Petzoldt argues that nos. 2, 3, and 5 are written from the perspective of Simeon's *Nunc dimittis* (which immediately precedes the Gospel reading of the day). See *Bach Kommentar* 2:255.



Unusual Instrumentation

(see note):

Recorder

Oboe

Vla d'amore

Vla da gamba

Soprano

Bass

Continuo



152/1. 1.

E minor

3.

E minor Superimposed 3/4

4. 5. 1) O B A

Allegro ma non presto.

Permutation Fugue

The descending 5-note scale forms the motive of no. 2. Thus the fugue may represent Christian discipleship ("Nachfolge"). See note.

10. iv6 Phrygian cadence V E minor 2) Rec A

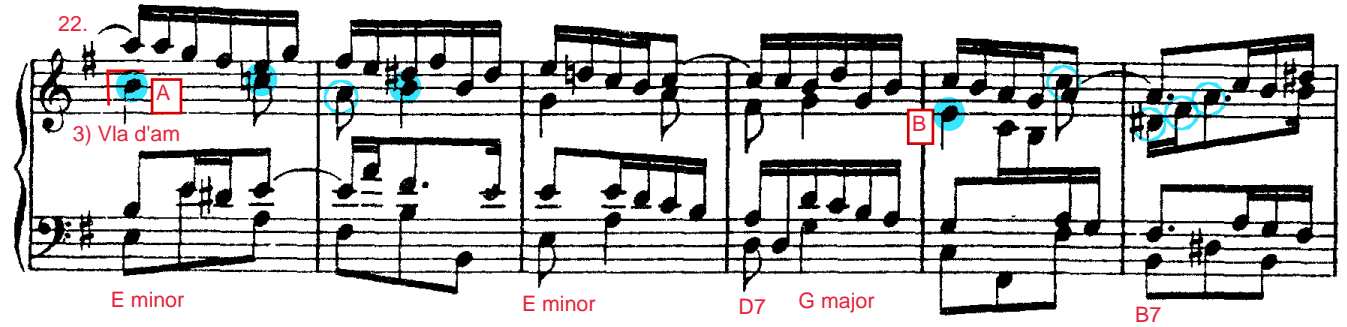
The fugue subject resembles the contemporaneous one in the Prelude and Fugue in A major for organ, BWV 536.

E minor B minor B minor

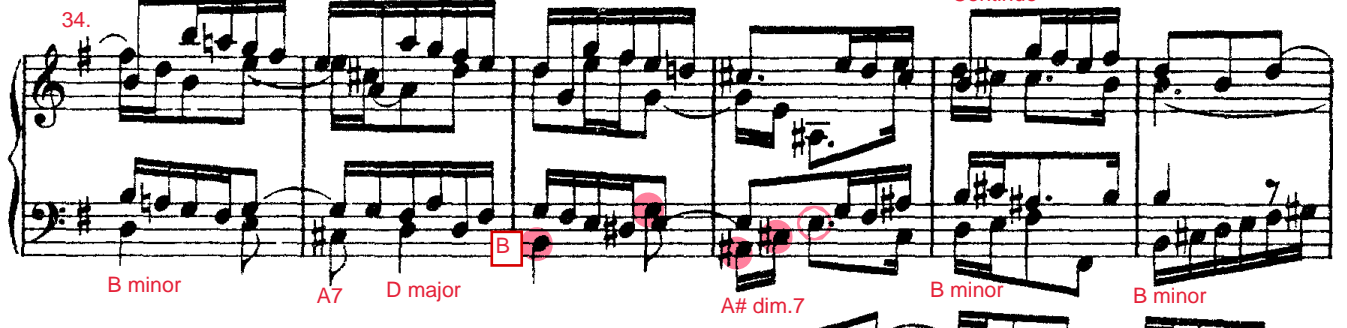
16. B

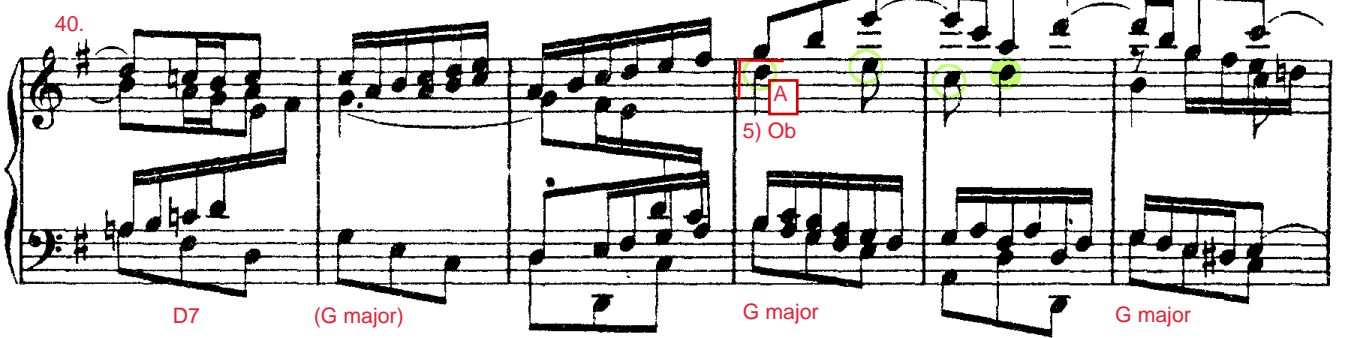
A7 D major G major F#7 B minor B7


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22. 
3) Vla d'am
E minor E minor D7 G major B7

28. 
E minor E minor B minor 4) Vla da gamba Continuo

34. 
B minor A7 D major A# dim.7 B minor B minor

40. 
D7 (G major) G major G major

46. 
B major E minor D7 G major G major D major

52. 
6) Rec
D major F# major B minor

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58. *A7* *D major* *D major* *G major*

64. 7) *Vla d'am* *G major* *G major* *B major* *E minor* *D7*

70. 8) *Ob* *G major* *F#7* *B minor*

No bass (similar to an organ piece, when the pedals are silent).

76. *(B minor)* *A7* *D major* *F#7* *B minor* *B minor*

82. *D7* *G major* *(B7)* *E minor* *(G7)* *(C major)* *E minor*

88. *E minor* *E minor* 9) *Vla da gamba* (8va up), *Continuo*

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94. *Rec*
E minor D major G major B7 E minor

100. *A* *B*
E minor E minor G major C major B7

106. *p*
E minor E minor E minor

111. *pp*
B7 B pedal... *tr* E minor B7 E minor

115. *mf* *hemiola* *11) Rec* *A* *B*
B7 E minor E major E7

120. *Stretto* *12) Ob (8va up)* *A* *B*
A minor

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125. *mf*

A minor E minor E minor D7

131. 13) Rec

G major B7 E minor E minor

137. hemiola

D7 G major B7 E minor E minor

Aria.

152/2. (Allegro moderato ♩ = 94.) •Cornerstone laid by God: don't stumble but believe! (152/2).

The descending 5-note scale is related to the fugue subject of no. 1.

1. Ob

Ritornello *mf*

E minor E minor E(7)

5.

A minor (D7) D7 G major D# dim.7

8. Cross figure

B(7) E minor N6 E minor

The metaphor of Christ as cornerstone (not identified until the following movement) is derived from various biblical passages (see note for the passages in question and Alfred Dürr's explanation of their relevance in the libretto).

This type of aria is called a "Devisenarie" (a term coined by Hugo Riemann) or "motto aria." After the ritornello, the singer presents the first phrase of the aria as a kind of motto. This is followed by a short instrumental bridge before the aria proper begins. The motto sets the tone (and the literary perspective) for the movement. Here the motto (a diatonic descending pattern related to the fugue subject of the opening movement) symbolizes the "Glaubensbahn" ("path of faith").



Basso.

Bass is often the voice of authority / vox Christi.

11.

Musical score for measures 11-13. The vocal line (Basso) is in the bass clef, and the piano accompaniment is in the grand staff. The lyrics are: "Tritt auf die Glaubens - bahn, / Walk on the path-of-faith". A red box highlights the descending diatonic pattern in the piano accompaniment. Chords are labeled as E minor and E7.

14.

Word painting: The "path of faith" is further depicted with scalar melismas.

Musical score for measures 14-16. The vocal line features a scalar melisma on the word "bahn". The piano accompaniment continues the descending pattern. Chords are labeled as A minor, B7, and E minor.

17.

Emphatic leaps for "God has set the stone."

Musical score for measures 17-20. The vocal line has emphatic leaps on the words "Gott hat den Stein". The piano accompaniment features a more active rhythmic pattern. Chords are labeled as E minor, E7, and A minor.

21.

Musical score for measures 21-24. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: "der Zi - on hält und trä - get, tritt auf die Glaubens...". The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern with a 7-measure rest. Chords are labeled as D7 and G major.

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25.

bahn, tritt auf die Glaubensbahn!

Ritornello
mf

G major G major

29.

Gott hat denSteinge - le - get,

p

G major E7 A minor

Word painting: Sustained notes interspersed with melismas for "träget" ("carry/bear up").

33.

der Zi.on hält und trä -

G7 C major 7

37.

get, Mensch, sto -

E7 A minor A7 D minor (G7) G7

Text painting: A "stumbling" melisma symbolizes the text: "Man do not stumble over that [stone]," a reference to 1 Peter 2:6-8: It stands in scripture: "Behold, I am

am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and he who believes in him will not be put to shame." To you therefore who believe, he is precious, but for those who do not believe, "The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner," and "A stone that will make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall"; for they stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. (Also Romans 9:33.)

41.

...sse dich nicht, Mensch,

C major (E7) A minor

44.

sto ...sse dich nicht d'ran!

Ritornello

A minor N6 A minor

mf

Quasi-da capo

47.

Tritt auf die Glaubens ...

G# dim.7 A minor A minor (D7)

p

50.

bahn, tritt auf die Glau-bens - bahn, ...

D7 G major

53. tritt auf die Glau - bens -

56. bahn. tritt auf die Glaubensbahn!

152/3. **Recitativo.** •Cornerstone laid in Israel for fall & rising of many (152/3).

1. Basso. B E F# G C A D#

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 8 mm.

Der Heiland ist ge - setzt in Is - ra - el zum Fall und Auferstehen! Der

The Savior has-been established in Israel for falling and rising! (This)

The text alludes to Simeon's prophetic words to Mary and Joseph in the Gospel reading (Luke 2:33-35: Simeon blessed them and said to Mary [Jesus'] mother, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed."

4. ed - le Stein ist sonder Schuld, wenn sich die bö - se Welt so hart an ihm verletzt, ja

noble stone is without fault, even-if - the wicked world so severely against it injures (itself), yes

7. ü - ber ihn zur Höl - len - fällt, weil sie boshafte an ihn

over it into hell - len - fällt, does-fall, because it spitefully against it

Text painting: Descending cascade for "falling down into hell."

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A motivic arioso ending (with figura corta—see note) differentiates the "blessed Christian" from the "evil world."

(Arioso $\text{♩} = 72$)

9. *tr*

ren net und Got tes Huld und Gna - de nicht er - kenne! Doch se -

runs and God's favor and grace (does) not acknowledge! But blessed

A minor

iv6 Phrygian cadence often used for questions.

Figura corta

12.

ist ein aus - er - wähl - ter Christ. der sei - nen Glau - bensgrund, der sei -

is an elect Christian, who his faith's foundation, who his

A minor D7 G major A7 D major E minor

Imitation between continuo and bass singer illustrates that "building on Christ the cornerstone" is done by imitation ("imitatio Christi").

Lehms original: "Glaubens=Bau" ("faith structure")

Lehms original: "gründet" ("founded")

Text painting:
Emphatic drop of a seventh for "basing one's faith on the cornerstone."
Bach changed text even though it impairs the rhyme.

15.

Glau - bensgrund auf die - sen Eckstein le - get, weil er da - durch Heil und Er - lösung

faith's foundation on this cornerstone lays, for he thereby Salvation and redemption

G major 19. G major G major

The repeated text is given a new melody with wide intervals for emphasis.

finds findet. Erlö - - sung fin - det, weil er da - durch Heil und Er - lö - sung. Heil

finds findet. Erlö - - sung fin - det, weil er da - durch Heil und Er - lö - sung. Heil

G major

22.

und Er - lö - - sung fin - det.

und Er - lö - - sung fin - det.

mf

G major G major G major

to 1 Peter 2:6-8: For this stands in scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious... To you therefore who believe... he is precious... but for those who do not believe... "a stone that will make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall."

Since the "stone" is a symbol for Christ, Bach emphasizes its "preciousness" with delicate instrumentation, the instruments interacting with the singer on an equal footing. As in the final duet, the soprano represents the Soul as mystic bride, who sings a love song to Jesus.

Aria. •Prayer: Precious stone, help me to find salvation in thee (152/4).

152/4. Adagio. (♩ = 52.)

1. Rec

Ritornello derived from vocal line.

Vla d'am

G major

tr

5.

G pedal...

G major

7.

G7 C major (D7) D7 G major

9. **Soprano.**

Stein. der ü - ber al - le Schätze, hilf, dass

Rec

Vla d'am

G major

Text painting: The long opening note suggests the permanence of the stone but also an amazed speechlessness that is released by the activity of the instruments.

Text painting: Ascending steps for "über alle" ("above all [treasures]").

12.

ich zu al - ler Zeit durch den Glauben auf dich se - tze mei - nen Grund der Selig -

G major -Rec A7 F# minor A7

Lehms original: "in dieser" ("in this")

Text painting: Ascending leap for "auf dich setze" ("upon thee set [my faith]).

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14. keit!

Rec

Ritornello

-Vla d'am

(tr)

D major

D major

17. Stein,

Vla d'am

D7

G major

19. der ü - ber al - le - Schätze, hilf, dass ich zu al - ler Zeit, hilf, dass

Rec

Vla d'am

G major

22. ich zu al - ler Zeit durch den Glauben auf dich se - tze mei - nen Grund der Se - lig.

E7

A minor

A minor

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Word painting: "Shivering" or "stumbling" ornament for "verletze" ("injure").

24. keit, und mich nicht an dir ver - let - ze, und mich nicht an dir ver - let - ze, Stein, —

-Rec
-Vla d'am

Rec

A minor B7 E minor F#7 B minor

der ü - ber al - le Schät - ze!

Text painting: Cascading envelope for "über alle Schätze" ("above all treasures").

Vla d'am

B minor B minor B pedal...

29. -Vla d'am

B7 E minor A# dim.7 (B minor)

31. Hilf, dass ich zu al - ler Zeit durch den Glau - ben auf dich set - ze mei - nen

-Rec

B minor N6 D7 G major

34. Grund der Selig - keit, hilf, dass ich zu al - ler Zeit durch den Glauben auf dich set - ze mei - nen

Rec

G major G major

36.

Grund der Se - - lig-keit, der Se - - lig-keit!

Rec

Vla d'am

Secco

G major

Recitativo.

•Foolishness of God is greater than wisdom of world (152/5).

Dal Segno.

152/5.

1. Basso.

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 7 mm.

Bass is often the voice of authority, e.g., the pastor.

Es är - gre sich die kluge Welt, dass Got - tes Sohn ver - lässt den

(Let offence/take - clever world, that God's son leaves (his)

D#

C

A

F#

G

B

E

E minor

A minor

For a discussion of faith versus reason in Lutheran Orthodoxy, see Eric Chafe, *Tonal Allegory in the Vocal Music of J. S. Bach* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), chapter 8; regarding BWV 152, see pp, 227–229.

The recitative draws on various biblical passages that contrast divine and human wisdom (see note).



3.

hohen Eh - renthron, dass er in Fleisch und Blut sich kleidet und in der Menschheit lei -

lofty throne-of-honor, that he in flesh and blood himself does-clothe and (as-a-member-of) humanity suffers

D# dim.7

B major

E minor

F#7

B minor

6.

- det! Die grösste Weis - heit die - ser Er - den muss

The greatest wisdom of-this earth must

E#

C#

G#

B minor

E7

A minor

Tortured melisma for mention of Christ's suffering.

Bass figure sets up the next sentence.

9.

vor des Höchsten Rath zur gröss - ten Thorheit werden! Was Gott beschlossen hat, kann die Ver -

before the Most-High's counsel (the) greatest foolishness become! What God has-ordained can - reason

G# dim.7

A minor

A minor

D# dim.7

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12. Lehms original: "nie" ("never")

nunft doch nicht er - grün - den: die blind - de Lei - te - rin ver - führt die

indeed not er - fathom; That blind guide misleads the

E minor Bass runs sets up the last sentence.

E7 C#7 Bach emphasizes the last line (which quotes Jesus) by setting it with a disjunct vocal line and wandering, chromatic harmonies, then repeating it almost identically, a tone higher.

14.

geistlich Blind - den, die blinde Lei - te - rin ver - führt die geistlich Blind - den.

spiritually blind.

B# dim.7 F# minor D# dim.7 C# dim.7 G minor G major

152/6 Duetto.

Alfred Dürr notes the unique form of the duet: "The dialogue text is divided up into separate passages, each of which takes the musical form of dialogue followed by canon. The introductory instrumental ritornello is also disintegrated into fragments, which are then combined, one by one, with the duet. At the end of the movement—and thus of the whole cantata—there is a reprise of the complete instrumental ritornello." See *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, translated by Richard Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 137.

Réc, Ob.,
Vla d'amore
unison

ite. (♩ = 50.)

mf

Ritornello derived from vocal line.

E minor D7 G major

4. Loure-like. See Meredith Little and Natalie Jenne, *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*, expanded ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), pp. 257, 303.

• Dialogue (Soul & Jesus): How must Jesus be received? (152/6).

G major

B7 A minor A minor D(7) G major

B7 E minor E minor E minor E minor

16. **Soprano.** (Seele)

Question/Plea No. 1 (relates to movement no. 5).

See note for more.

Basso.

Wie soll ich dich, Liebster der See-len, um-fas-sen. (Jesus.)

Bach may have chosen canonic structure because of the last exchange, in which the Soul expresses a desire to follow Jesus. (See note for more.)

Du musst dich ver-

Obbligato tacet.

Fine.
E minor

(D7) G major B7 E minor E minor

20.

Canon at 8va, 3-beat interval, S leads.

wie soll ich dich, Lieb-ster der See-len, um-fas-sen, wie-

leugnen und Al-les verlassen.

du musst dich ver-leugnen und Al-les ver-

E minor

23.

soll ich

dich, Liebster,

wie soll ich dich, Lieb-ster der

las-sen, du musst dich,

du musst dich ver-leugnen,

Cf. ritornello mm. 1–2.

Obbligato tacet.

E minor

E minor

B minor

A# dim.7

26.

Canon at 5th below, 3-beat interval, B leads.

See-len, um-fas-sen.

Canon

wie soll ich dich, Lieb-ster der See-len, um-

du musst dich ver-leug-nen und Al-les ver-las-sen, du

B minor

B7

E minor

29. *fas_sen, wie soll ich er_kennen das e_wige*
musst dich verleug_nen und Al_les ver_lassen!

E minor E minor

33. *Licht, wie soll ich er_ken_nen das*
Er_ken_nemich gläubig und är_gre dich nicht, er_ken_ne mich

D7 G major G major

Canon at 8va, 3-beat interval, S leads.

36. *e_wige Licht, wie soll ich er_ken_nen, wie*
gläu_big und är_gre dich nicht. er_kenn'mich, er_ken_ne mich

G major A major

Cf. ritornello mm. 3-4.

39. *soll ich er_kennen das e_wige Licht?*
gläubig, er_ken_ne mich gläubig und

D major D major

Obbligato tacet.

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42.

Canon at 5th below, 6-beat interval, S leads.

tr

Wie soll ich er_ken_nen das e_wi_ge Licht, wie
 är_gre dich nicht, er_ken_ne mich gläu_big, er_

D major D7 G major G major

45.

soll ich er_ken_nen das e_wi_ge Licht?
 ken_ne mich gläu_big und är_gre dich nicht, er_ken_ne_mich gläu_big und

G major

48.

Komm, leh_re mich, Heiland, die Er_de verschmähen,
 är_gre dich nicht! Komm,

Question/Plea No. 3 (relates to movement no. 3).
 Obbligato tacet.

G major E7 A minor B7 E minor

51.

Canon at 8va, 3-beat interval, S leads

komm, leh_re mich, Hei_land, die
 See_le, durch Lei_den zur Freu_de zu_ge_hen, komm, See_le, durch

E minor E7 A minor

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54.

Canon at 5th below, 3-beat interval, S leads.

Er - de verschmä - hen, komm, leh - re mich, Hei - land, die Er - de ver -
 Lei - den zur Freu - de - zu - ge - hen, komm, See - le, durch Lei - den zur

E7 A minor E major A minor A7 D minor D7

57.

schmähen, komm, Heiland. komm, Heiland, komm, leh - re mich,
 Freu - de zu ge - hen, komm, See - le, durch Lei - den zur

E minor G major B7 E major A minor C major E7 A minor

60.

Heiland, die Er - de ver - schmä - hen! Ach,
 Freu - de zu ge - hen, komm, See - le, durch Lei - den zur Freu - de zu ge - hen,.

Chromaticism colors the text.

Obbligato tacet.

G7 A major D minor G# dim.7 A minor

63.

Inverted canon at 5th below, 12-beat interval, S leads.

At the reference to crowning the believer after tribulation, Bach inverts the response. This corresponds to the solution required to solve the riddle canon, BWV 1077, inscribed "Christus coronabit Crucigeros" ("Christ crowns the cross-bearers").

zie - he mich, Lieb - ster, so folg' ich dir nach,
 dir schenk' ich die Kro - ne nach

Question/Plea No. 4 (relates to movement no. 2).

A minor A minor

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66.

Canon at 8va (adjusted first note), 3-beat interval, S leads.

ach, zie - he mich, Lieb - ster, so folg' ich dir nach, ach,
 Trüb - sal und Schmach, dir schenk' ich die Kro - ne nach Trüb - sal und

A minor D7 G major G major

Canon

69.

zie - he mich, Lieb - ster, so folg' ich dir nach, ach, ziehe mich, so folg' ich dir
 Schmach, dir schenk' ich die Kro - ne nach Trüb - sal und Schmach, nach Trüb - sal und

E7 A minor

72.

nach, ziehe mich, Liebster, so folg' ich - dir - nach, so folg'
 Schmach, dir schenk' ich die Kro - ne - nach Trüb - sal und Schmach, nach Trüb

Lehms original: "Leiden" ("suffering")

D7 G major E7 A major B7 E minor G# dim.7 F#7

75.

- ich dir nach, ach, zie - he mich, Lieb - ster, so folg' ich dir nach!
 - sal und Schmach, dir schenk' ich die Kro - ne nach Trüb - sal und Schmach!

Obbligato tacet.

E minor E minor D major B7 C major E minor E minor

mf

Dal Segno.