Last changed: 21 June 2025

Church Cantatas BWV 188

Form: Sinfonia - Aria (T) - Recit (B) - Aria (A) - Recit (S) - Chorale.

Several cantatas in Bach's "Picander cycle" continue Bach's recent tendency in Cycle III to adapt movements from earlier instrumental works for introductory sinfonias (among these works are BWV 188, 156, 174). The cantata libretto is in chiastic form. Bach often used chiastic (x-shaped/ symmetrical) forms, in which center movements (where the mirror image begins) provide the crux of the matter. There antithetical elements meet or are paradoxically inverted (formal inversion reflects an aspect of reversal or turning in the text). .

Introduction & updates at melvinunger.com.

NBA I/25; bwv BC A154
21. S. after Trinity (BWV 109, 38, 98, 188)
*Ephesians 6:10–17 (The armor of the Christian)
*John 4:461–54 (Christ heals the son of a royal official)
Librettist: Picander (Christian Friedrich Henrici)
FP: probably 17 October 1728 (Leipzig: St. Nicholas).
This cantata is from Bach's Leipzig Cantata Cycle IV (the "Picander Cycle"). See note for details.

J.S. Bach

Cantata No. 188

Ich habe meine Zuversicht

Trusting God in distress and tribulation

The autograph score of the cantata was dismembered into 14 fragments , now in 10 different locations (see note at no. 4 for more). The original set of parts is lost as are the first 248 measures of the first movement. However, the opening movement can be reconstructed since it is clear that it is based on the tumultuous final movement of a lost concerto that survives in the form of two arrangements for harpsichord—BWV 1052 (an autograph by J. S. Bach) and 1052a (a set of parts by C.P.E. Bach). Similarly, the first two movements of the original concerto appear as arrangements with organ in Cantata 146. In both cantatas, Bach arranged the solo part of the concerto model for obbligato organ, adding 2 oboes and *taille*. For more details, see *Johann Sebastian Bach. The Sacred Vocal Music Complete Edition. Cantatas* (Stuttgart: Carus Verlag, 2017), vol. 15, pp. 583–584. (Pieter Dirksen, translated by David Kosviner).

Instrumentation:
Ob I, II
Taille
Vln I, II
Vla
SATB
Organo Obbligato (see note)
Contino

1.(Sinfonia) *)

188/1.

Based on the 3rd movement of an earlier, nonextant concerto (NOT on the first movement as given here—see note.)

Evidently, the arranger had no knowledge of the existing autograph fragment and instead used the first movement of the harpsichord concerto BWV 1052. The autograph fragment shows that the movement is actually based on BWV 1052/3. A reconstruction by Pieter Dirksen is available from Carus Verlag.

1.

BWV 1052/3

Incorrect reconstruction. It should be like 1052/3.

D minor

Bach's aggressive sinfonia (as reconstructed for BWV 1052/3 appears inappropriate for the theme of the Gospel reading of the day. However, it does fit the Epistle reading, which describes the armor of the Christian.

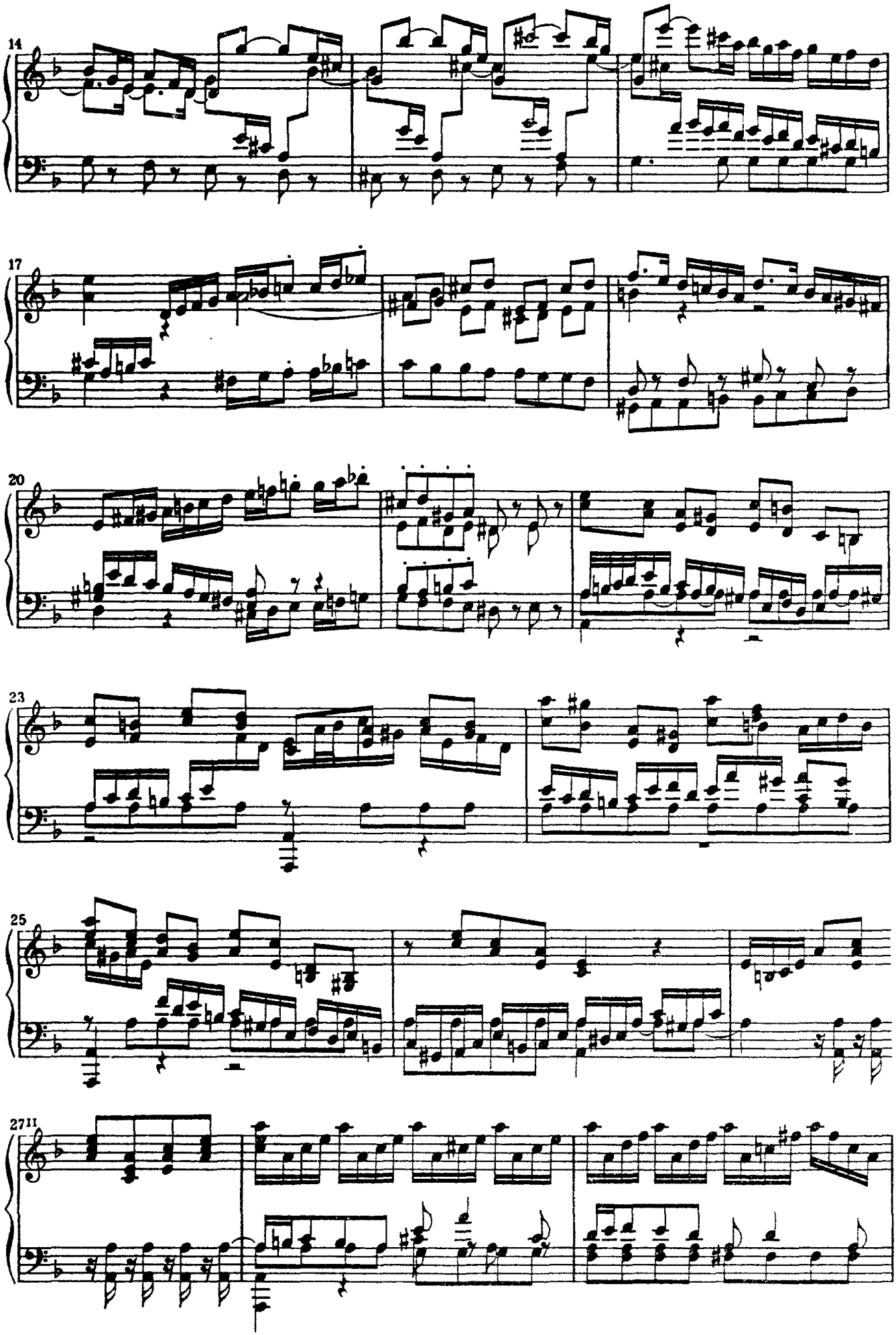
4

7

9

11

*) Sinfonia aus Kantate Nr. 146 Vgl. die Vorbemerkungen zu Jahrg. 37 der Bachausgabe, auch bezüglich des Recitativs auf S. 26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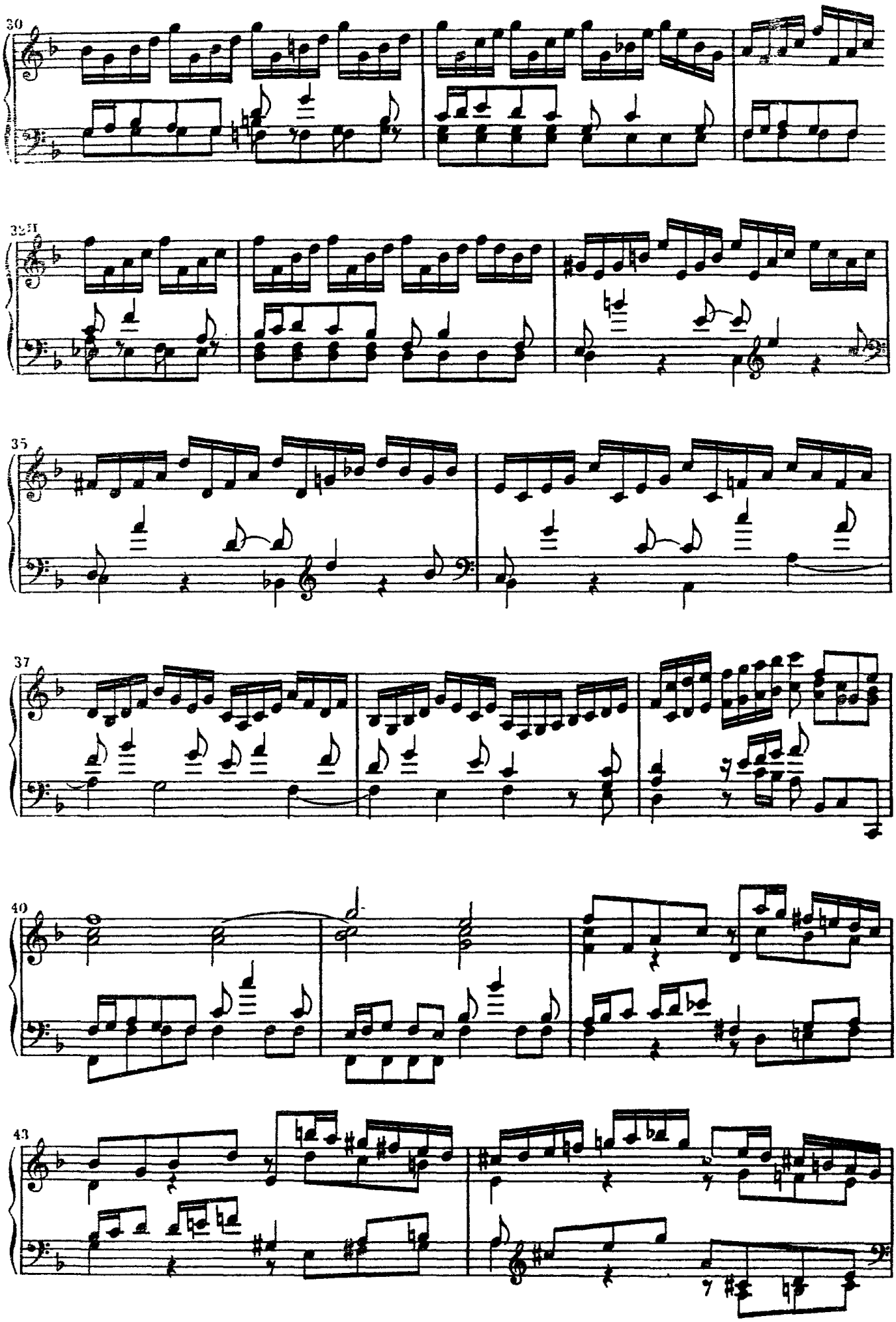
17
20
23
25
27II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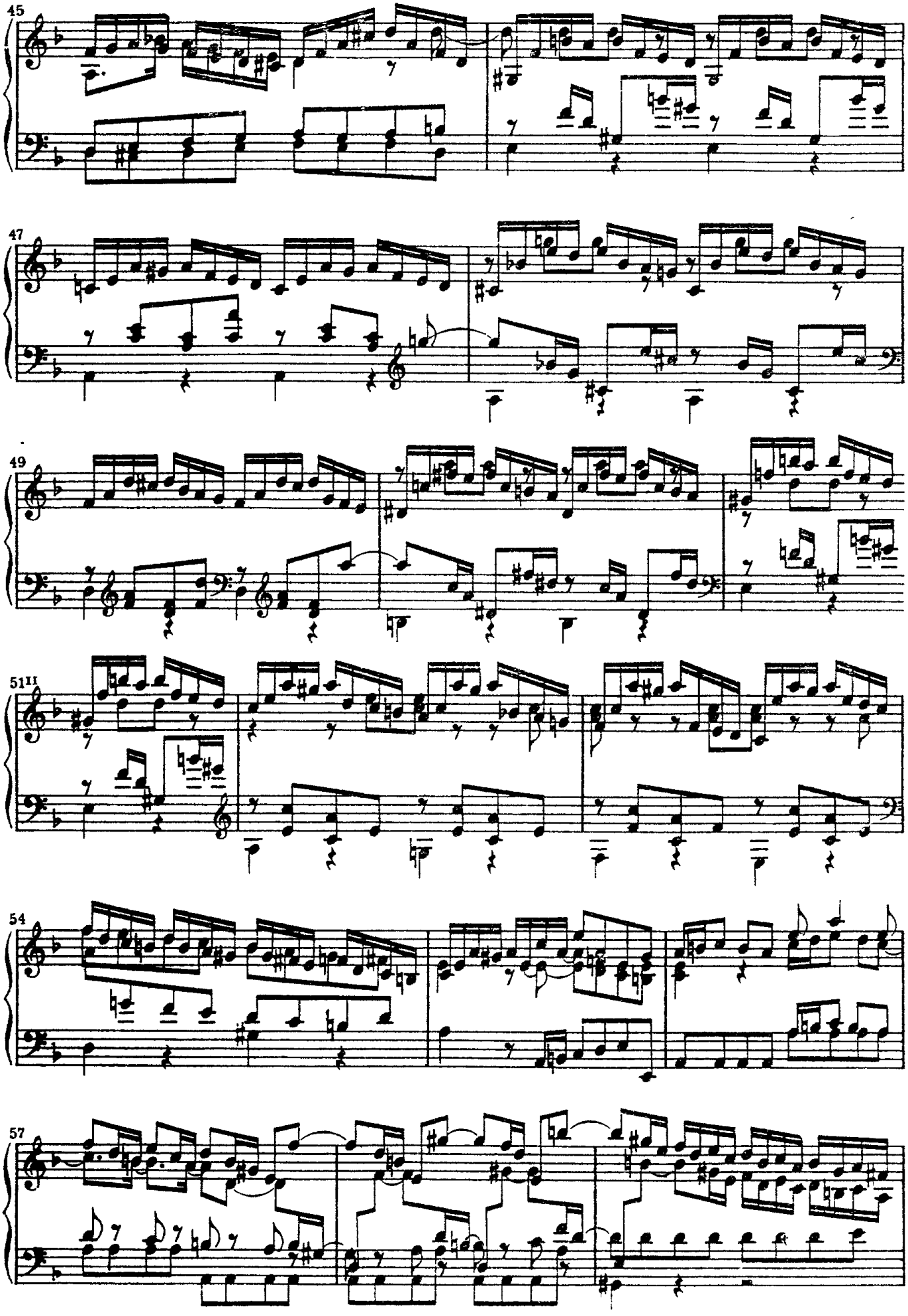
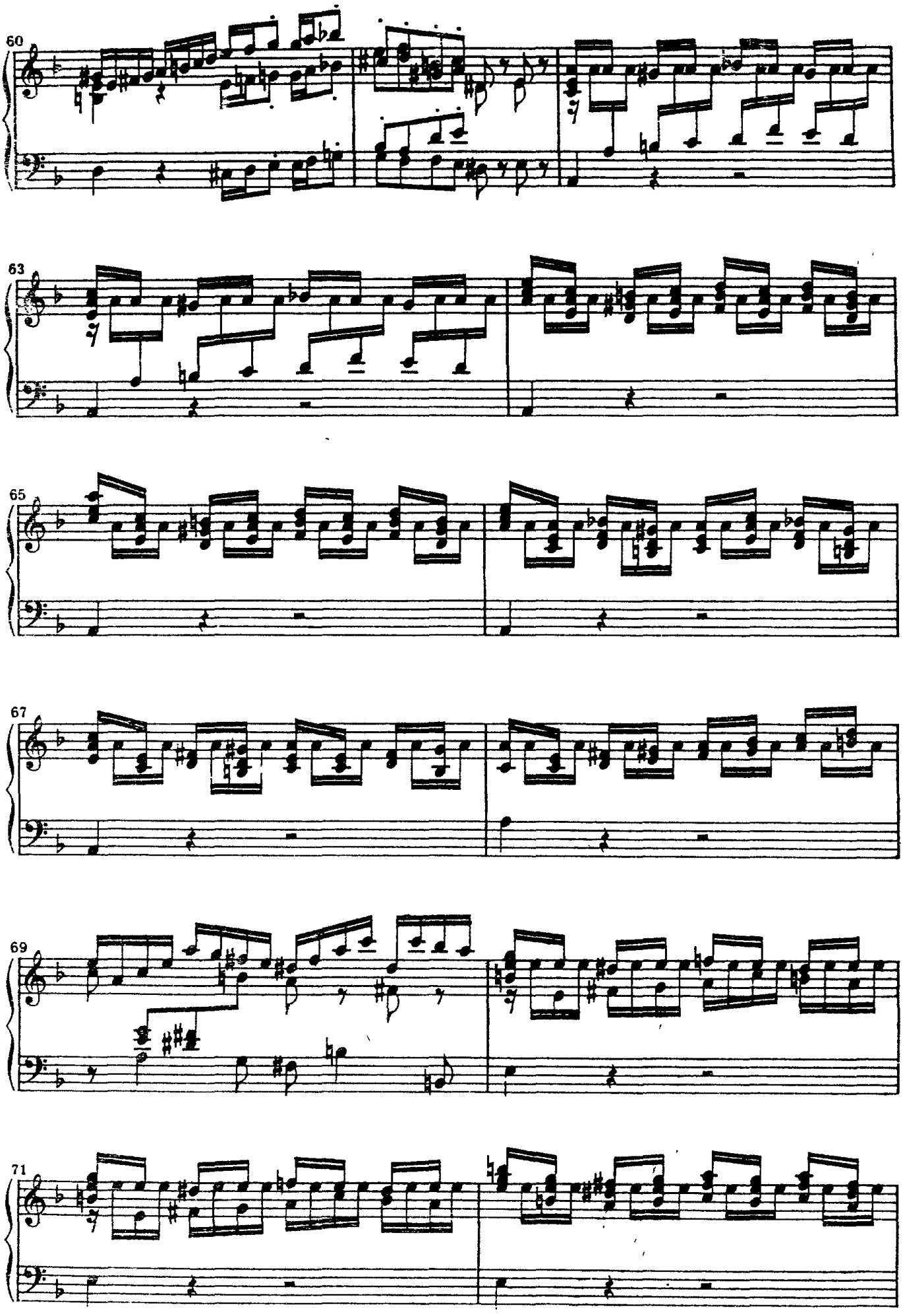

45
47
49
51II
54
57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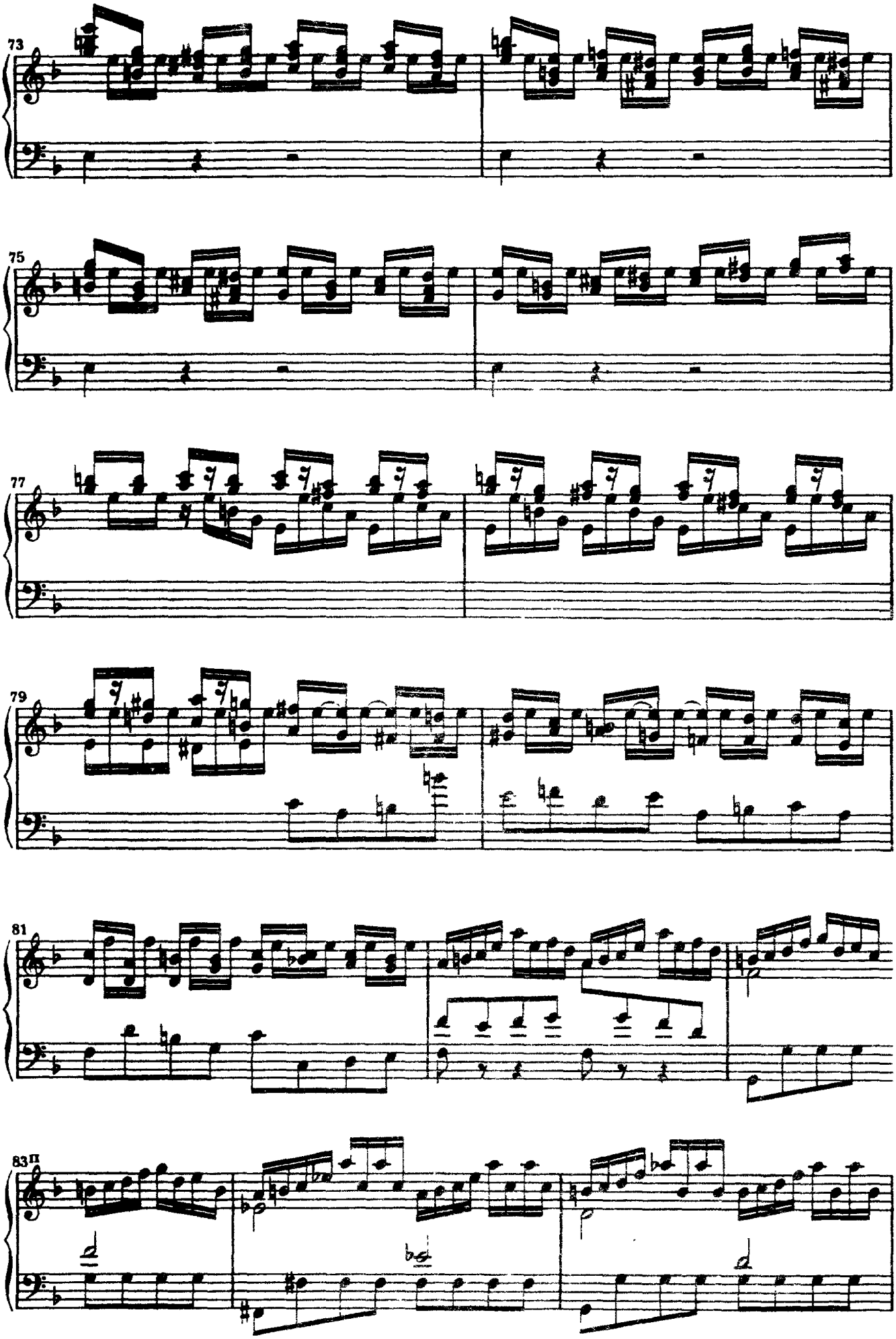
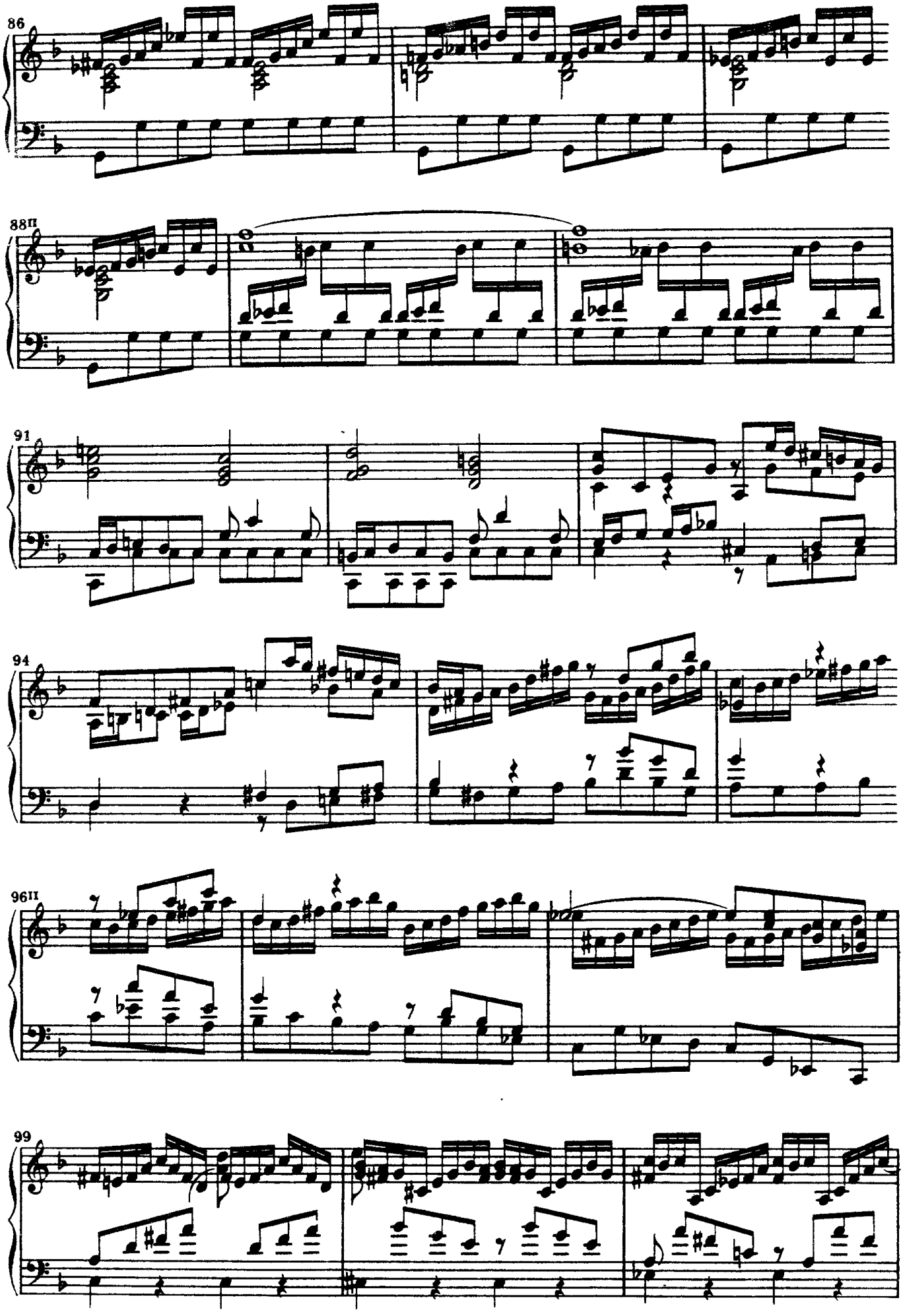
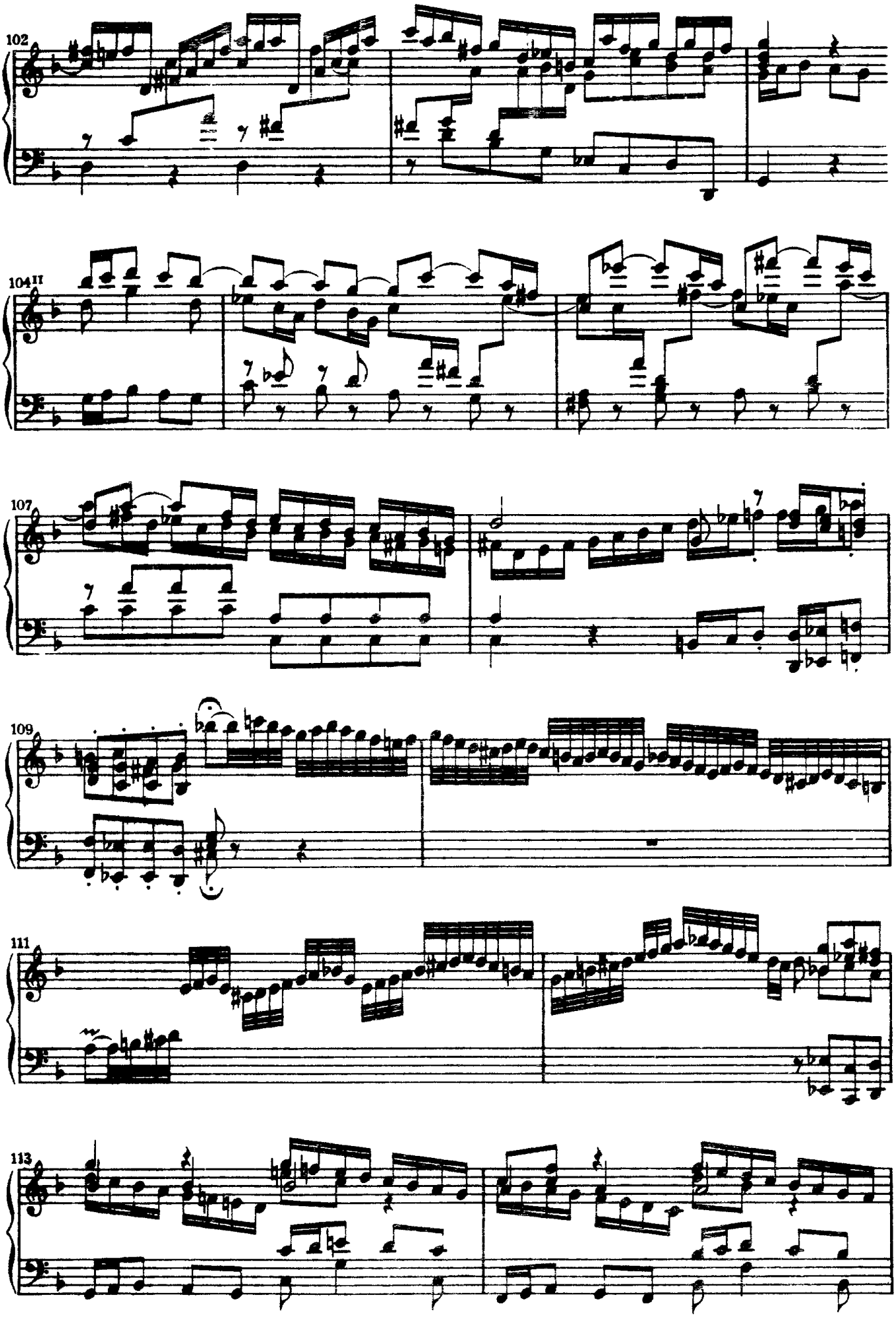
63
65
67
69
71


73
75
77
79
81
83II


86
88II
91
94
96II
99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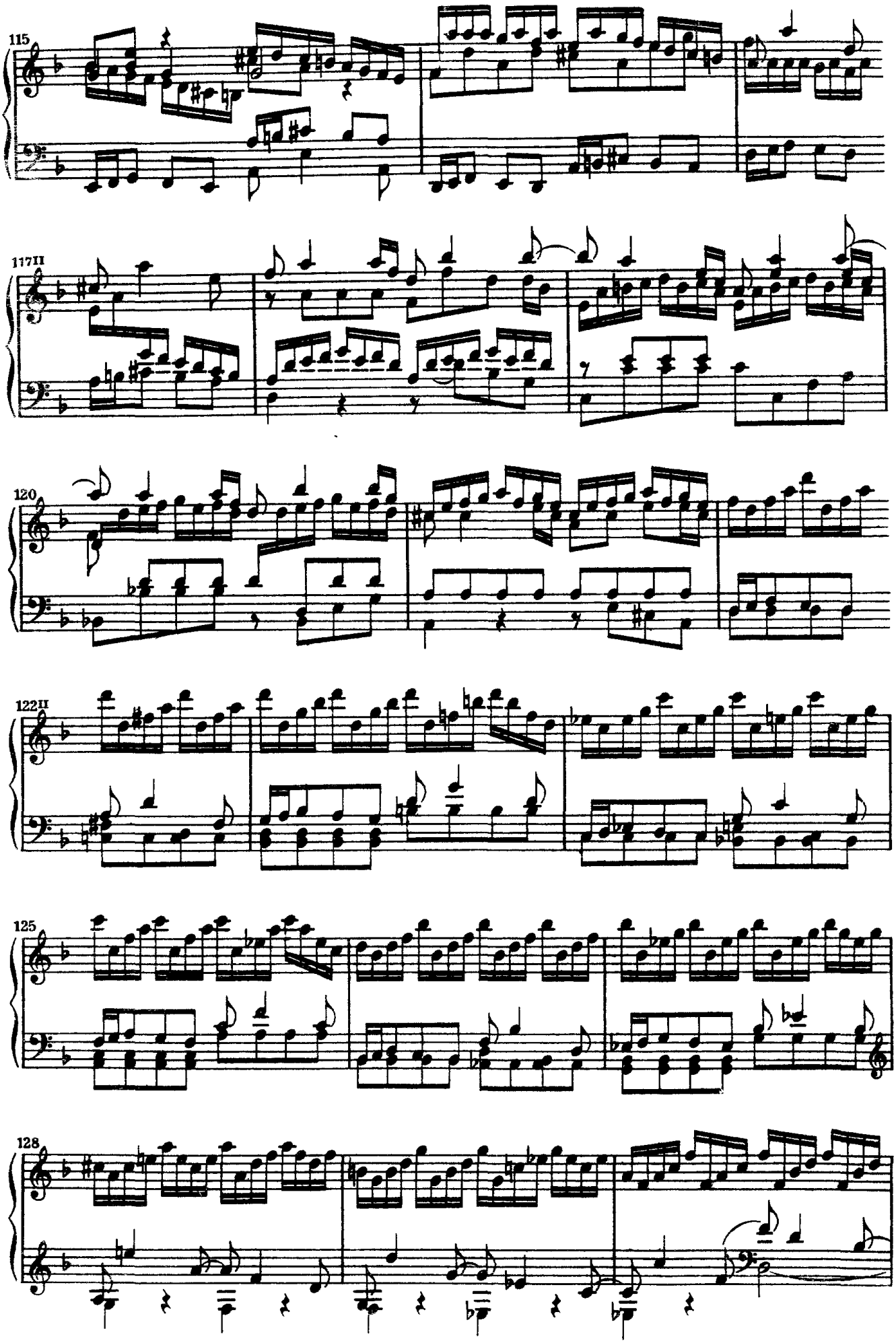
104II
107
109
111
113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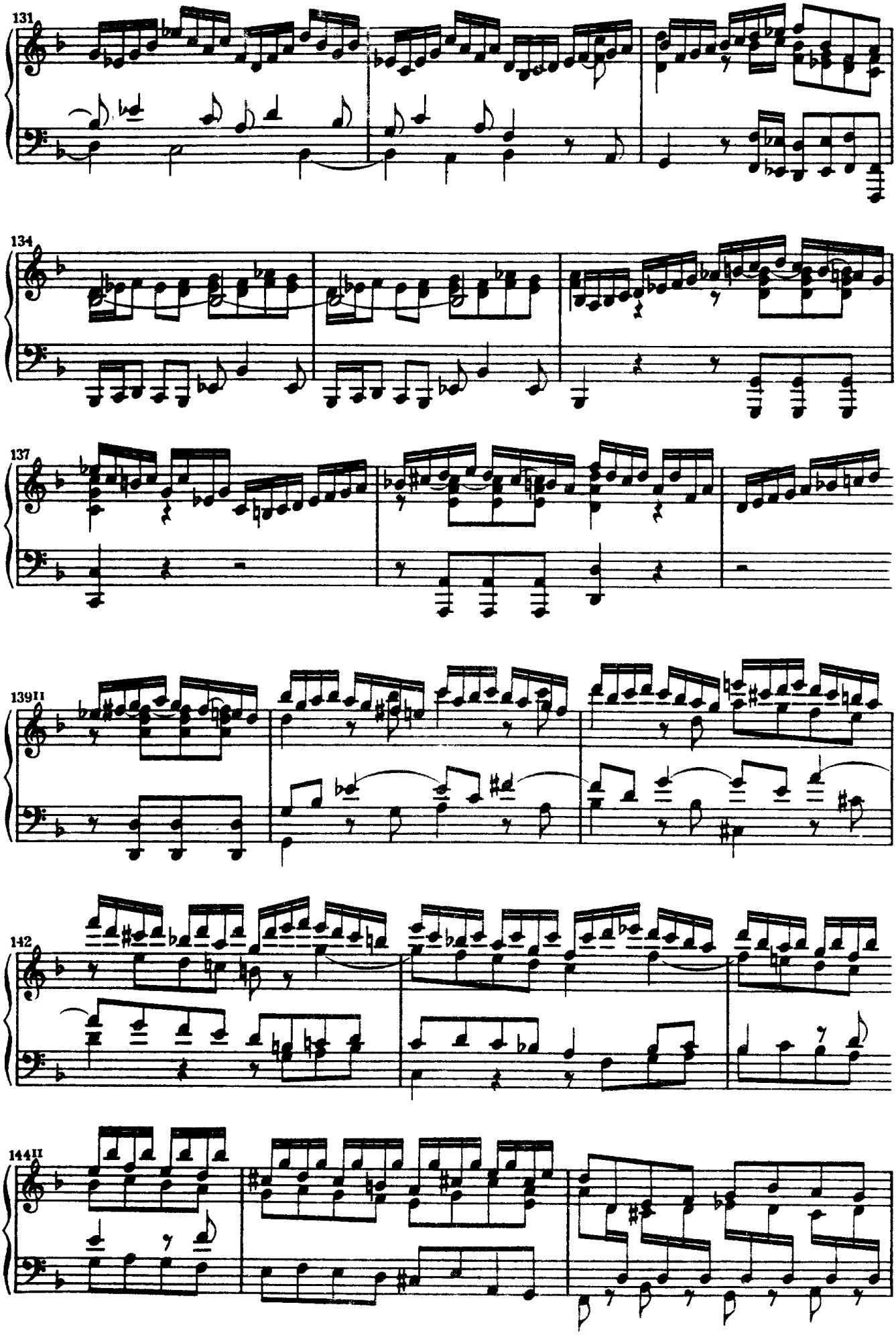
117II
120
122II
125
128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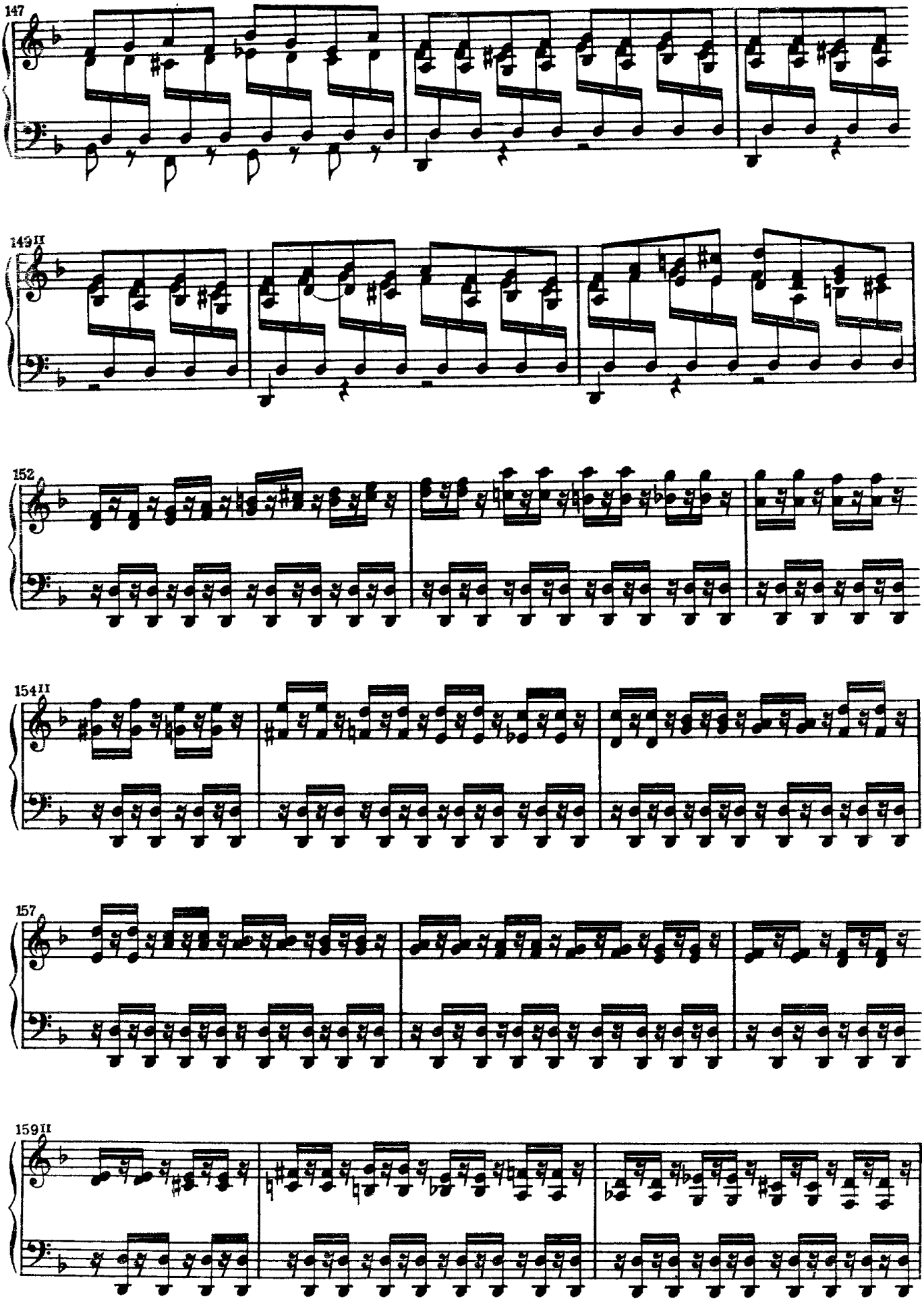
134
137
139II
142
144II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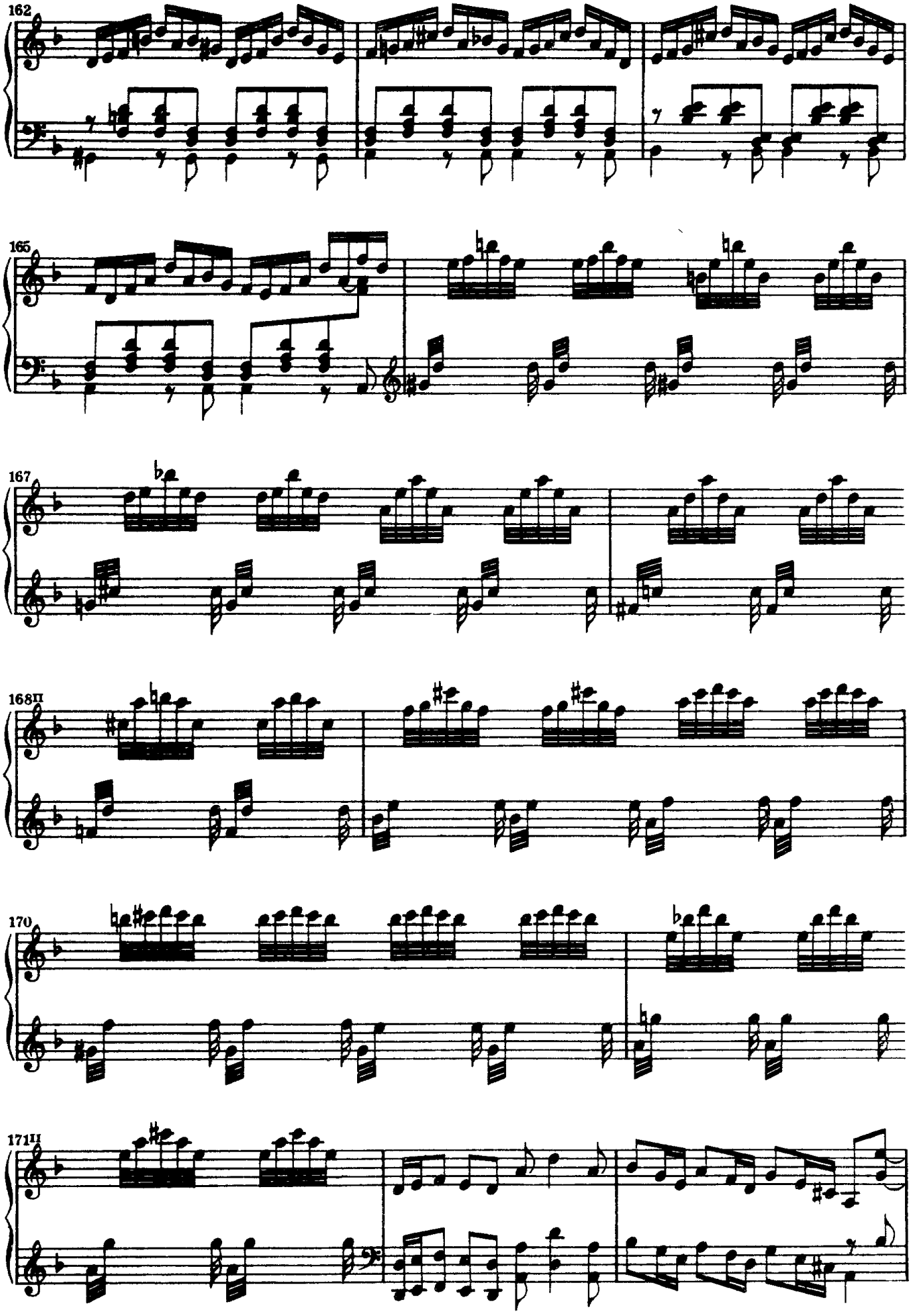
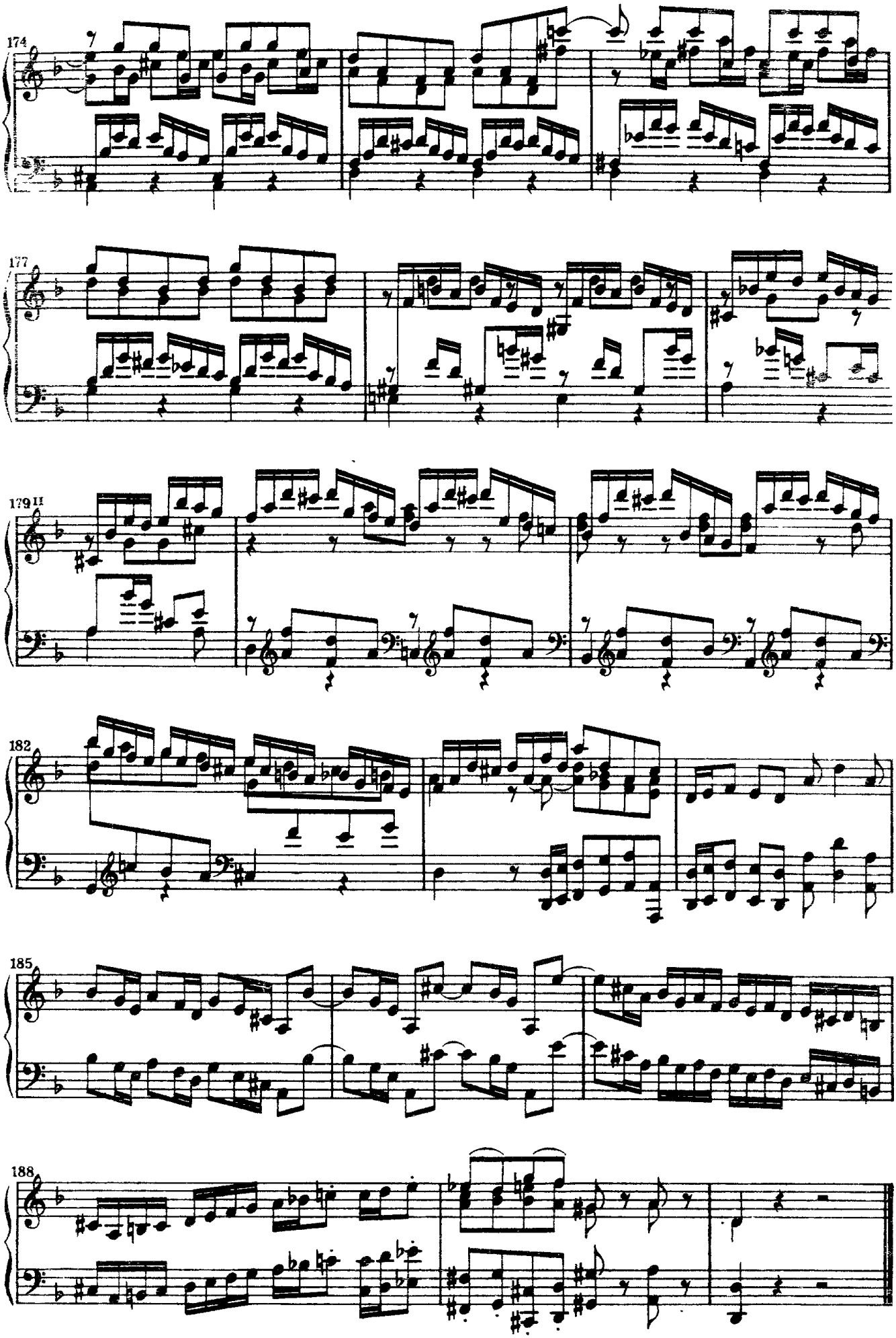
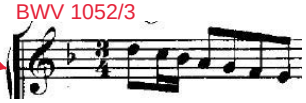
149II
152
154II
157
159II


162
165
167
168II
170
171III


174
177
179 II
182
185
188

The A section of the da capo aria (with its repeat) comprises 9/10 of the movement's length. It opens with the same rhythm and meter as the first movement (same as BWV 1052/3); see also 810/4.

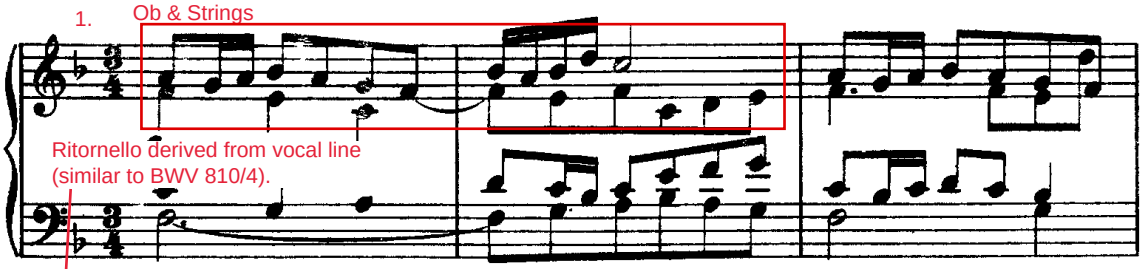
BWV 1052/3



188/2. **2. Aria** •God is my confidence when all around me fails (188/2).

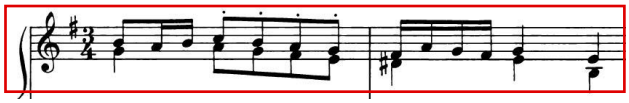
Martin Petzoldt argues that the text of no. 2 is based on Psalm 62 (Petzoldt *Bach-Kommentar* 1:606). See Psalm 62:5–7: "For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my deliverance and my honor; my mighty rock, my refuge (Luther 1545: Zuversicht) is in God."

1. Ob & Strings



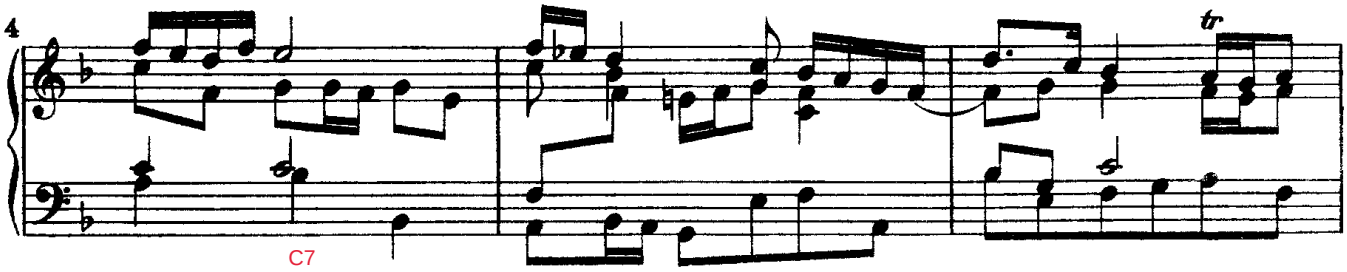
Ritornello derived from vocal line (similar to BWV 810/4).

F major (for the significance of F major, see note).



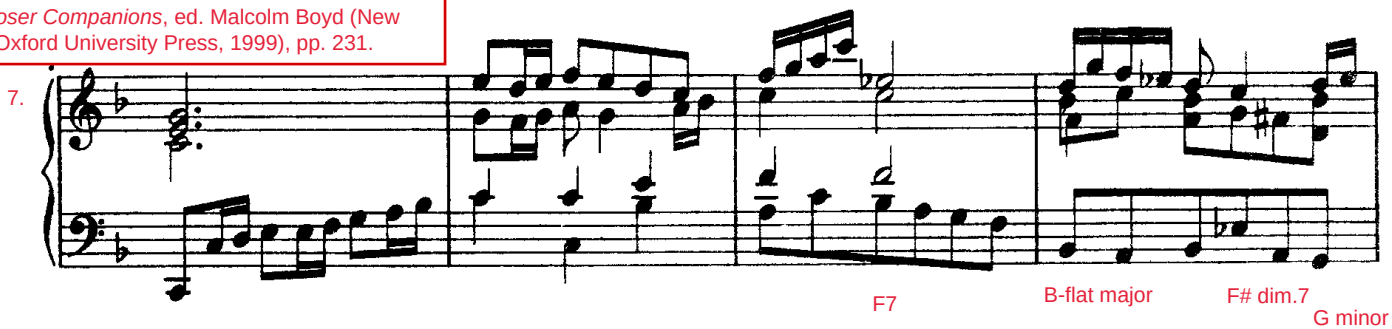
Sarabande from English Suite 5 (BWV 810/4).

Form (Rhyme: AABCCB)
Ritornello (mm. 1-14) FM
A. Lines 1-3 (2x: 15-36) FM-CM
Ritornello (36-42) CM
Lines 1-3 (2x: 43-68) CM-FM
Ritornello (69-82) FM [Fine]
B. Lines 4-6 (2x: 83-100) Dm
da capo

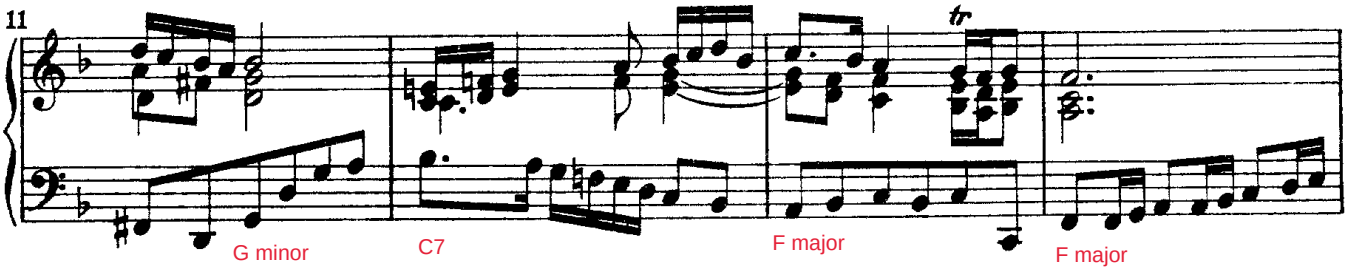


C7 F7 B-flat major C7 F major

Of this movement David Schulenberg writes, "Its character falls somewhere between that of a polonaise and a sarabande." See *J. S. Bach. Oxford Composer Companions*, ed. Malcolm Boyd (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 231.



F7 B-flat major F# dim.7 G minor



G minor C7 F major F major

Bach takes a poem in iambic meter and sets it in triple time, resulting in 2 successive accents (the second accent anticipated with a charming syncopation).

A. Section, Lines 1–3 (2x, with line 3 emphasizing the words "ruhet" ("rests") and "feste" ("securely"). The confident (child-like) assertion of faith is expressed with a simple melody (doubled by oboe) and largely syllabic declamation embellished with occasional figura corta.

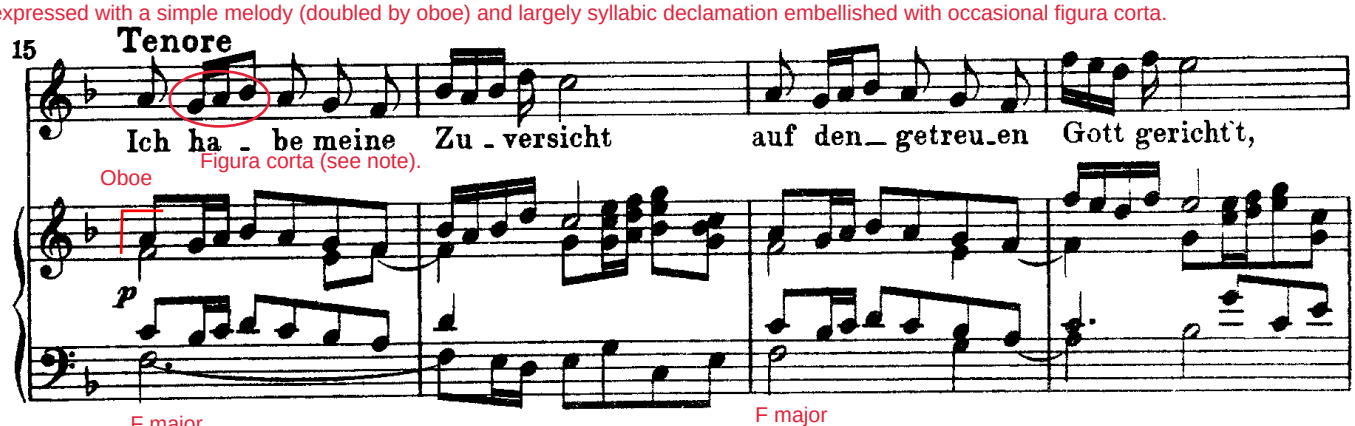
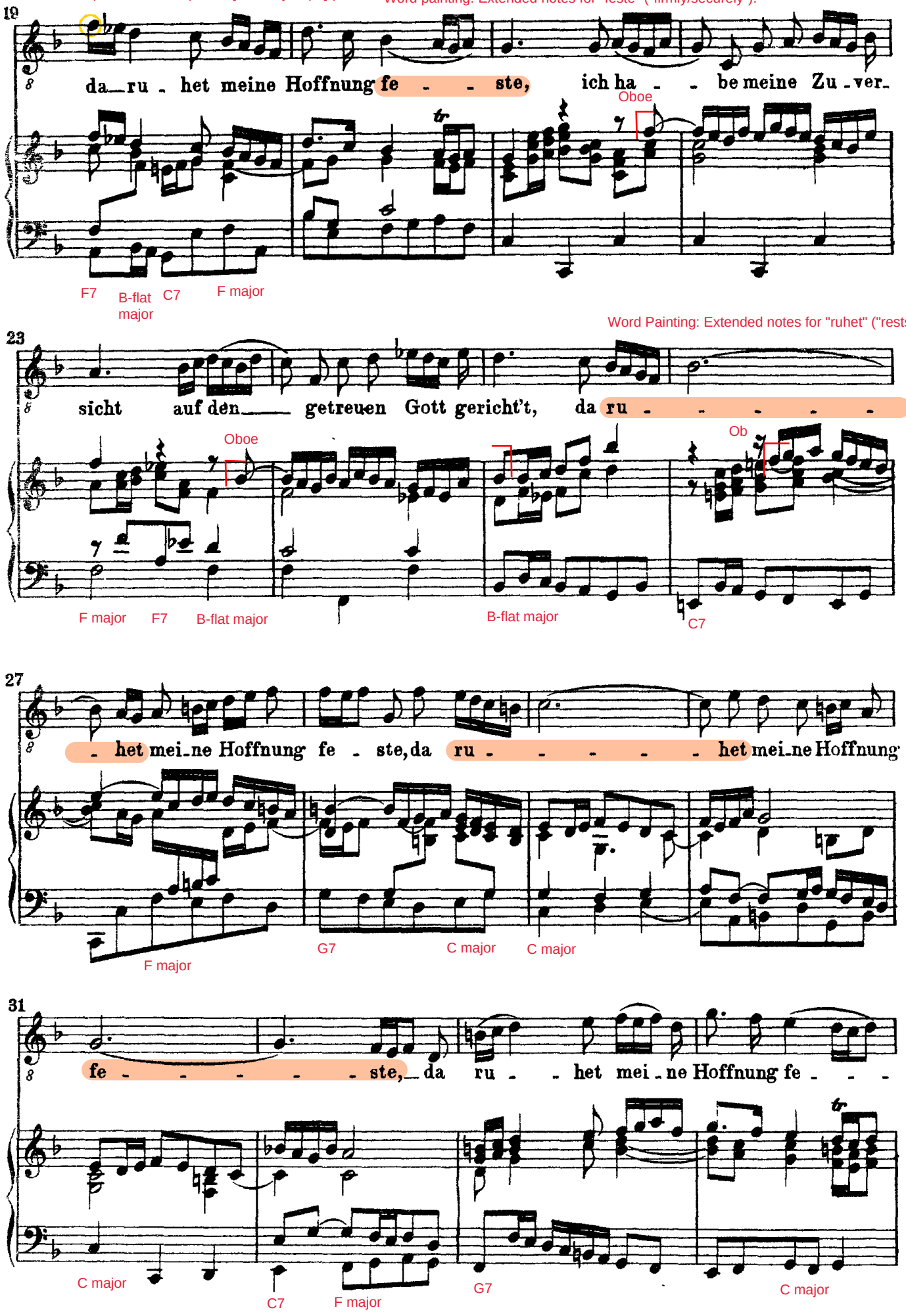


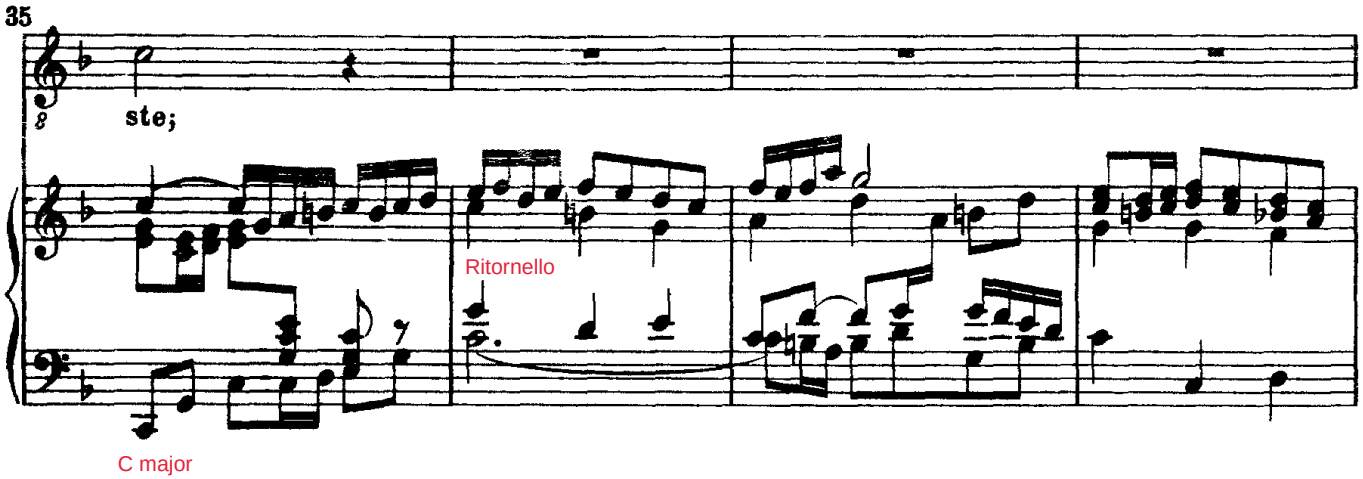
Figura corta (see note).

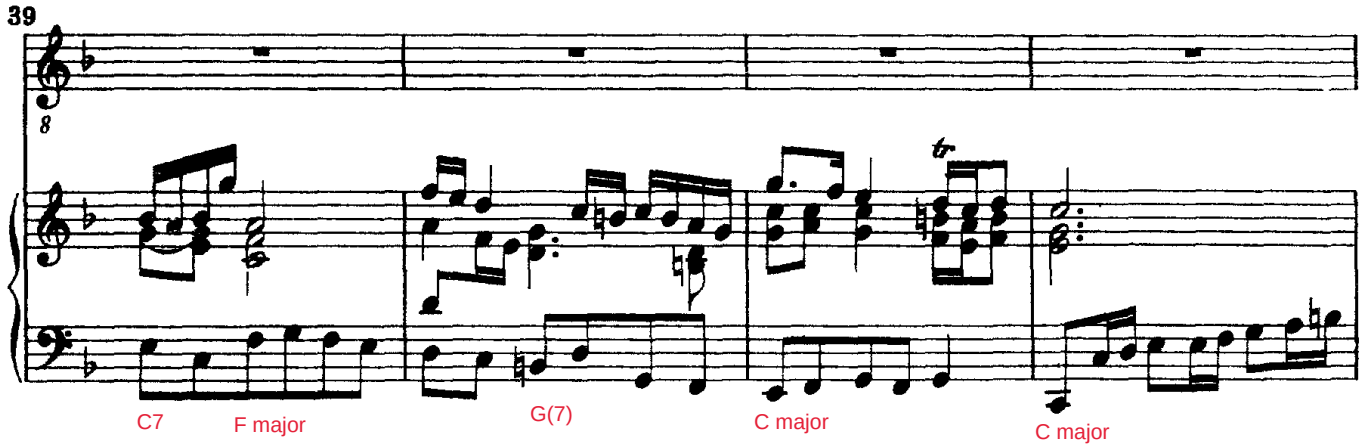
F major F major

Musical emphasis on "da" ("there [rests my hope]").

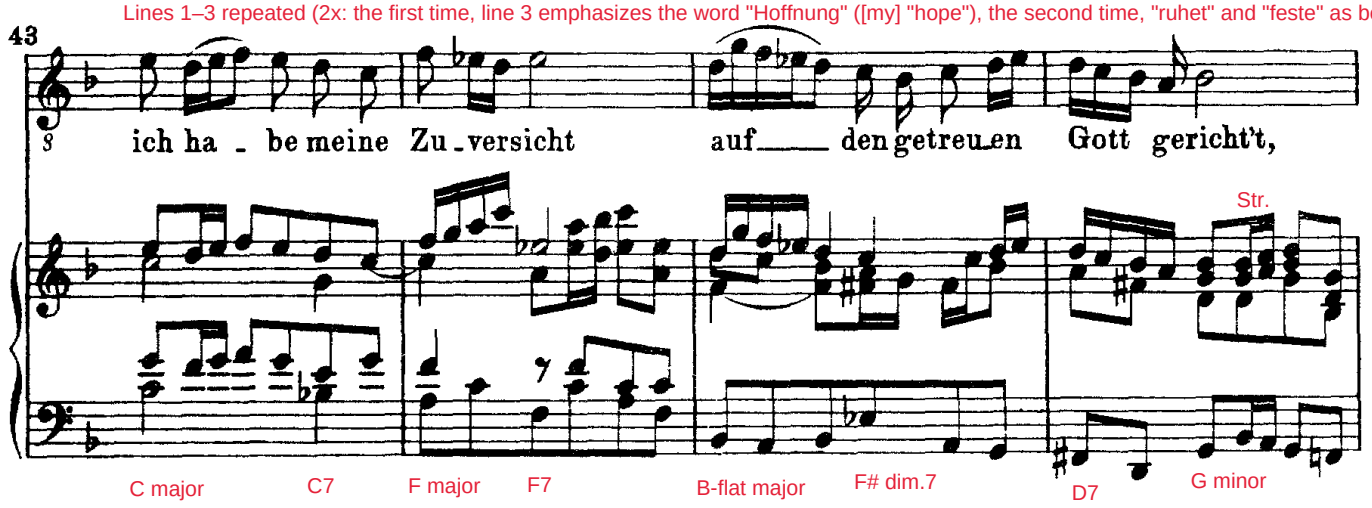
Word painting: Extended notes for "feste" ("firmly/securely").

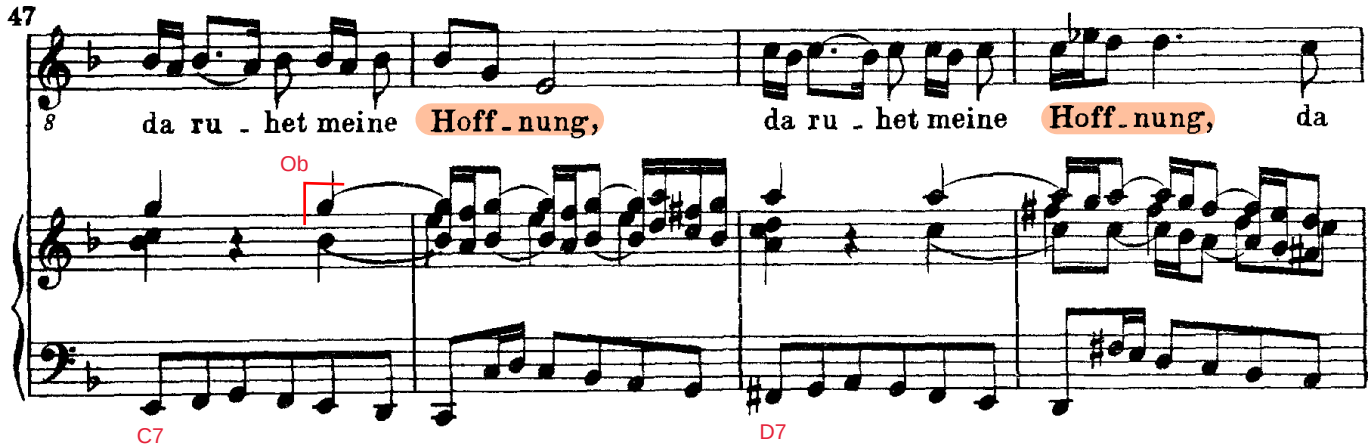


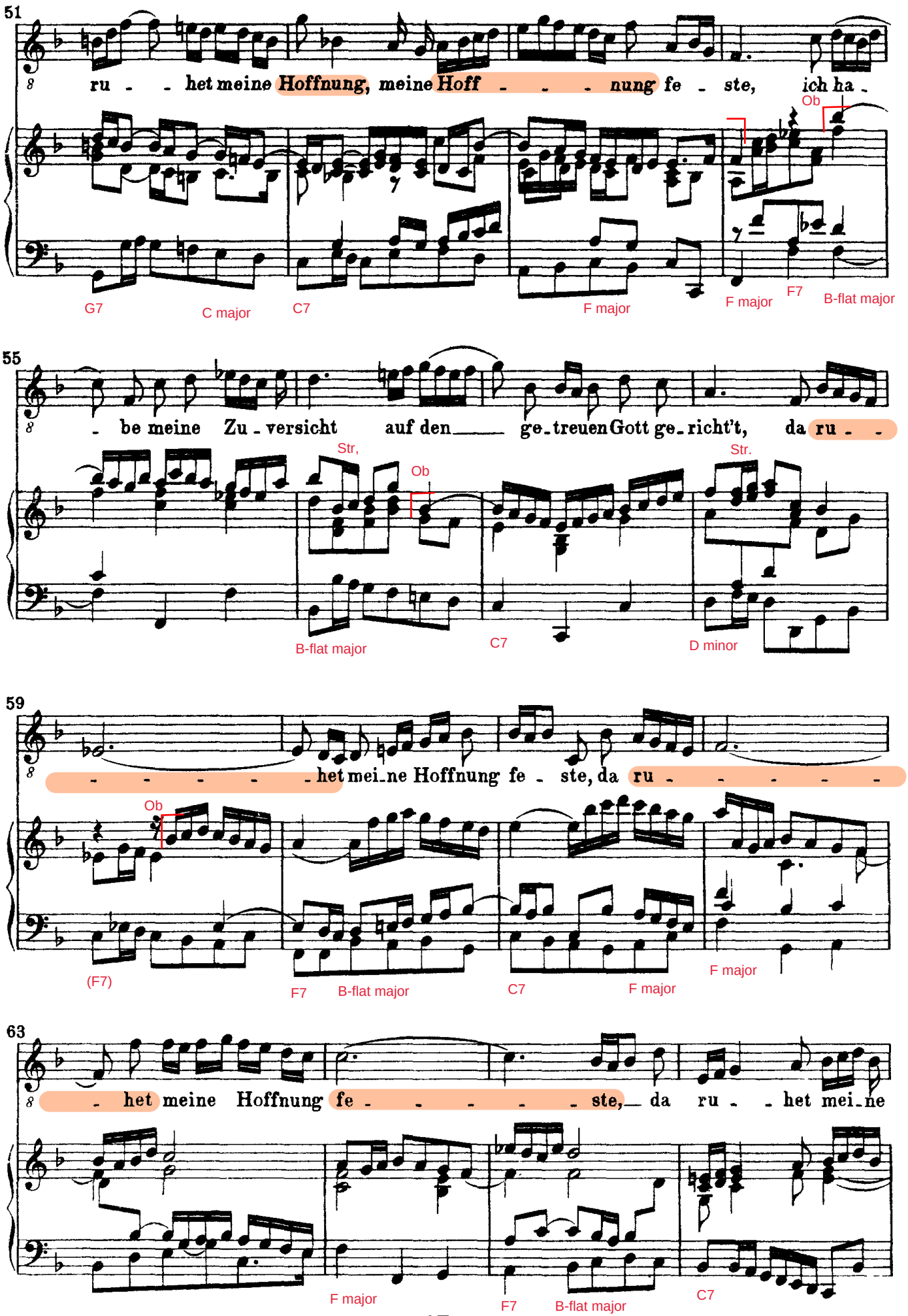


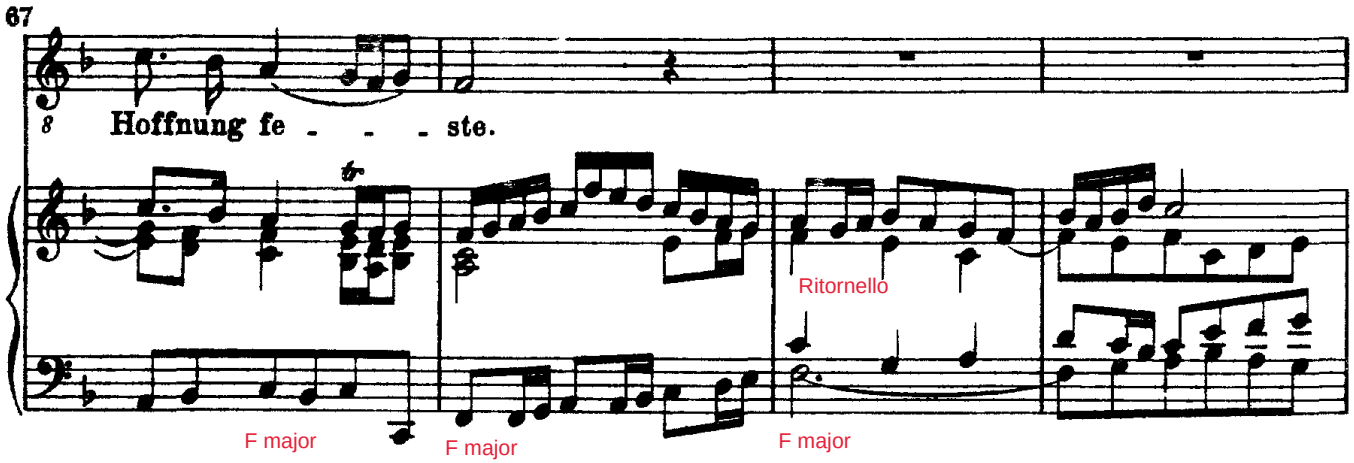


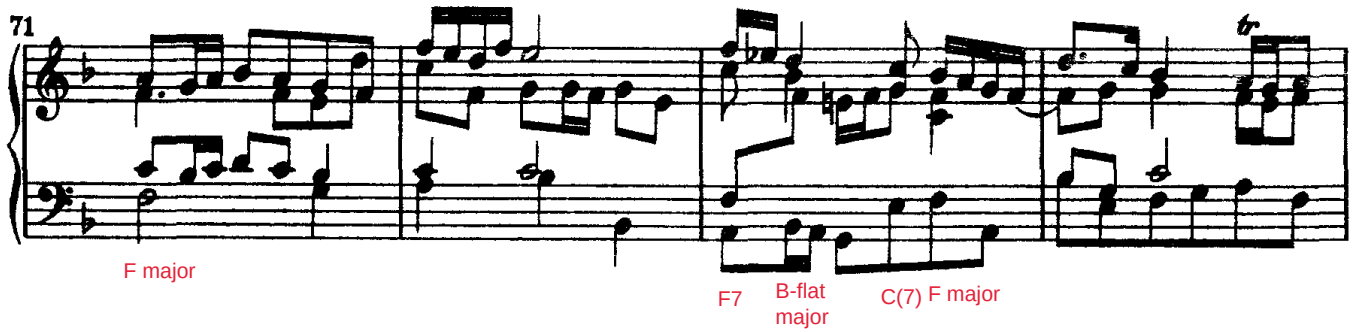
Lines 1–3 repeated (2x: the first time, line 3 emphasizes the word "Hoffnung" ([my] "hope"), the second time, "ruhet" and "feste" as before.

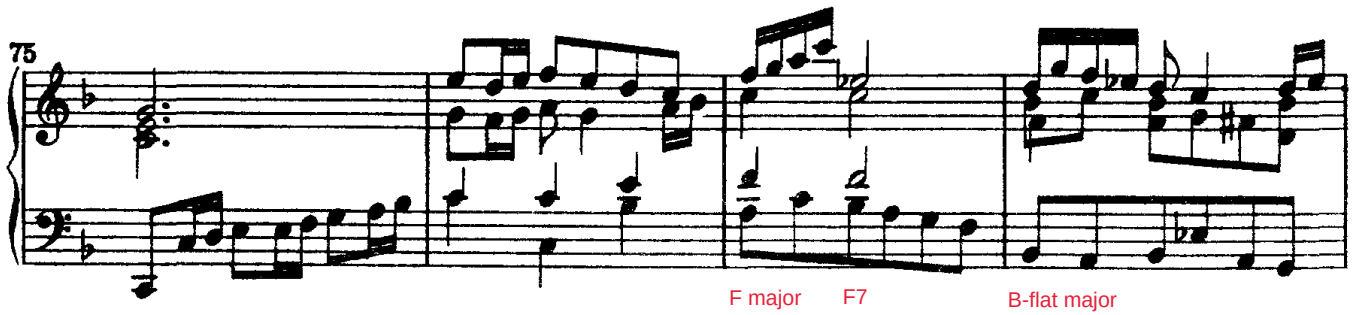


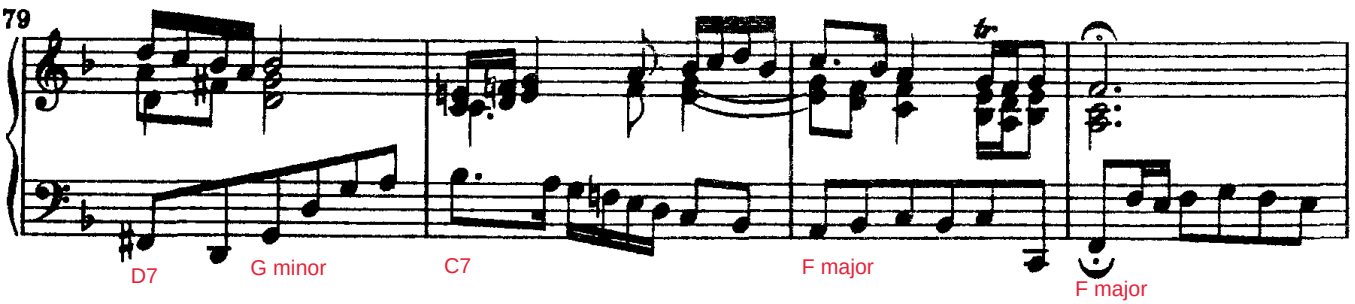



51
ru - - het meine Hoffnung, meine Hoff - - - nung fe - ste, ich ha -
Ob
G7
C major
C7
F major
F major
F7
B-flat major
55
- be meine Zu - versicht auf den ___ ge - treuen Gott ge - richt't, da ru - -
Str,
Ob
Str.
B-flat major
C7
D minor
59
- - - - - het mei - ne Hoffnung fe - ste, da ru - - - - -
Ob
(F7)
F7
B-flat major
C7
F major
F major
63
- het meine Hoffnung fe - - - - - ste, da ru - - het mei - ne
F major
F7
B-flat major
C7

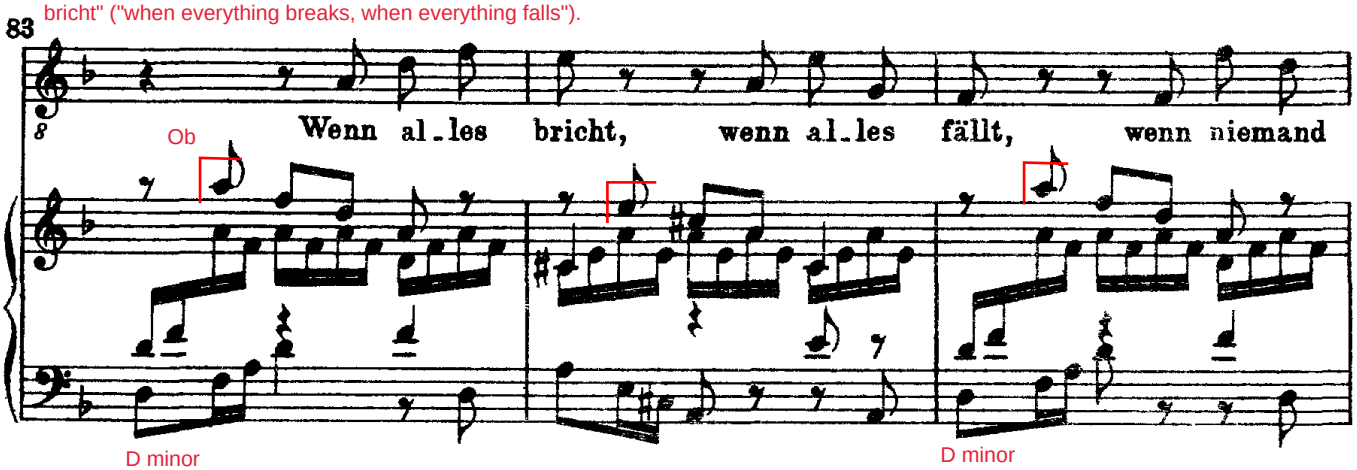


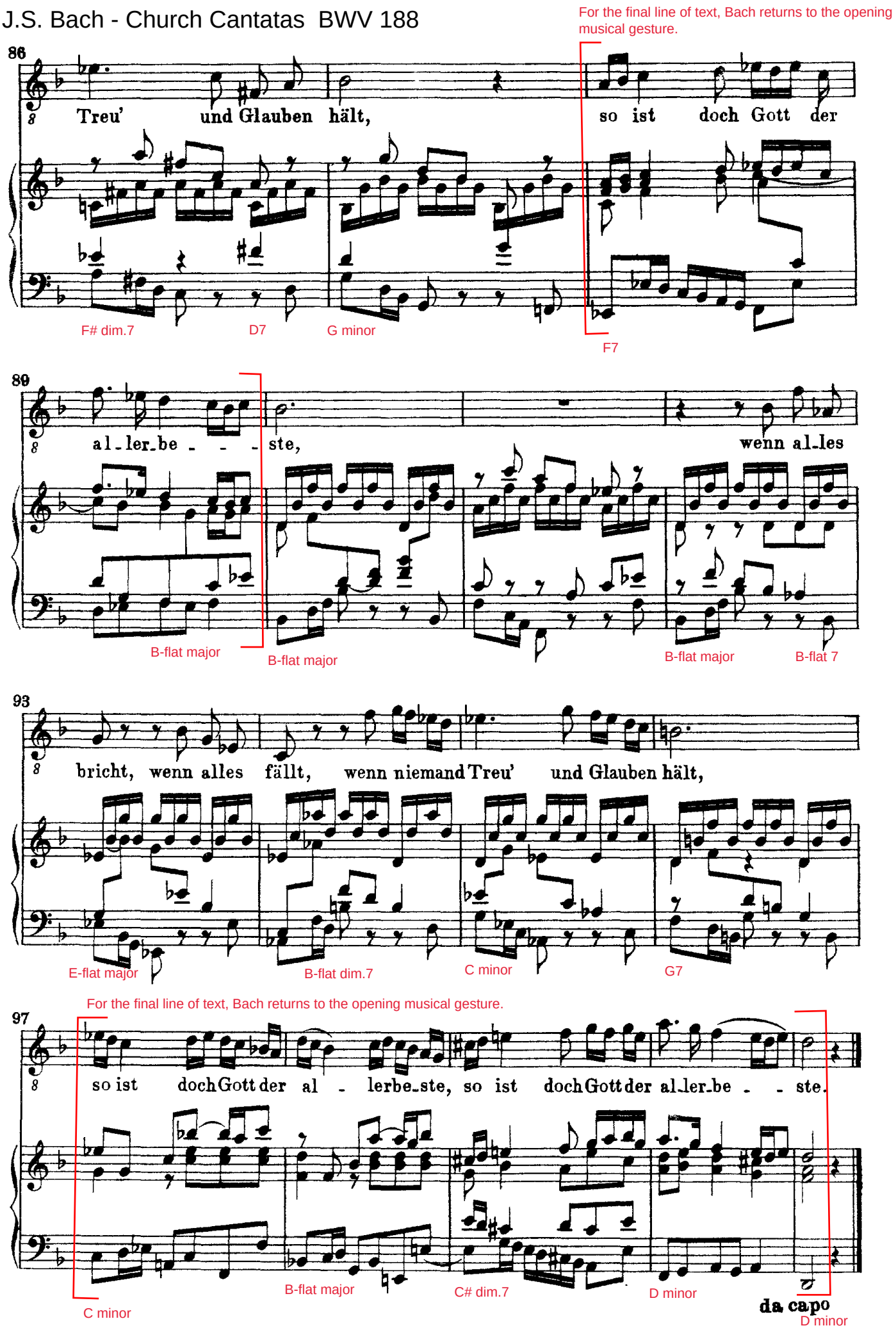






B Section, Lines 4–6 (2x). Text painting: Unison broken chords of 16th notes by the strings and descending 8th-note oboe arpeggios for "wenn alles bricht" ("when everything breaks, when everything falls").




For the final line of text, Bach returns to the opening musical gesture.
86
Treu' und Glauben hält, so ist doch Gott der
F# dim.7
D7
G minor
F7
89
al-ler-be - - - ste, wenn al-les
B-flat major
B-flat major
B-flat major
B-flat 7
93
bricht, wenn alles fällt, wenn niemand Treu' und Glauben hält,
E-flat major
B-flat dim.7
C minor
G7
For the final line of text, Bach returns to the opening musical gesture.
97
so ist doch Gott der al - lerbe-ste, so ist doch Gott der al-ler-be - - ste.
C minor
B-flat major
C# dim.7
D minor
da capo
D minor

The bass voice is often the voice of authority; here it may be heard as the voice of the centurion in the Gospel reading.

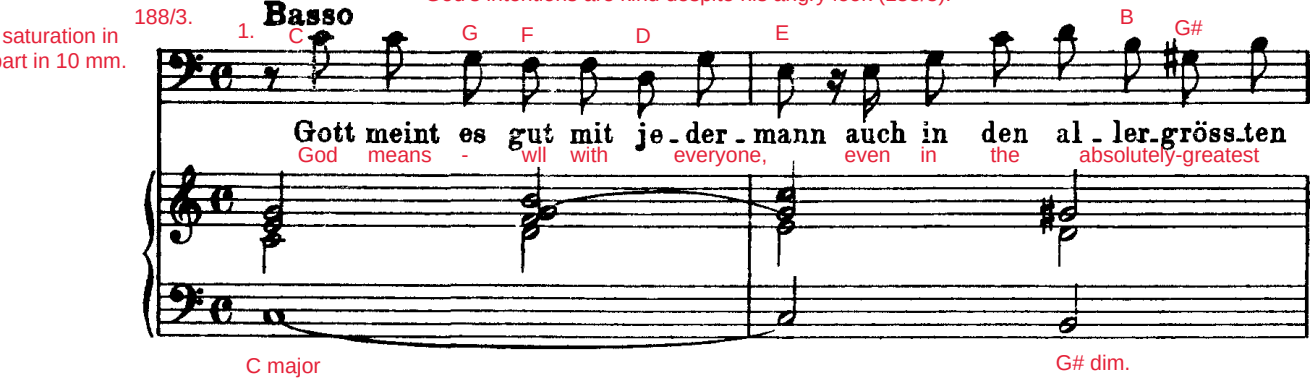
3. Recitativo

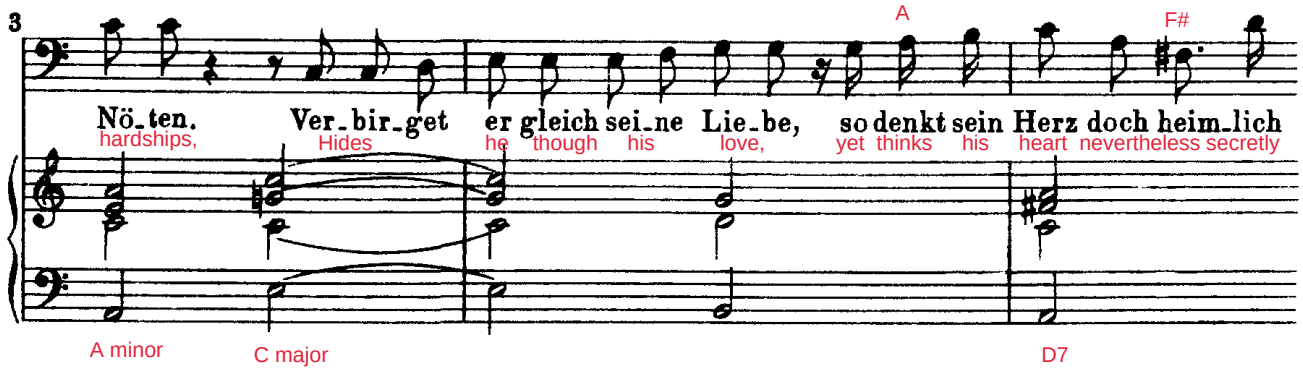
●God's intentions are kind despite his angry look (188/3).

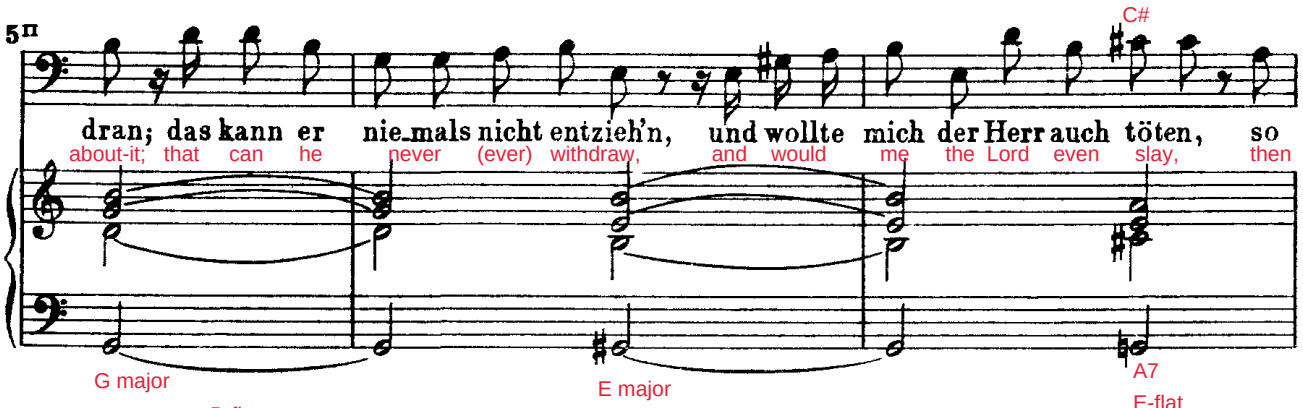
188/3.

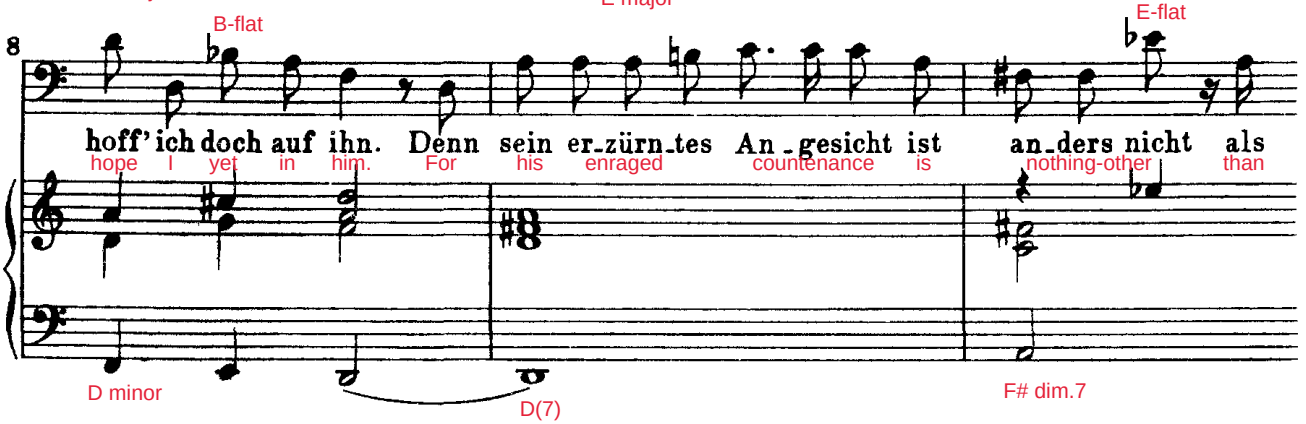
Basso

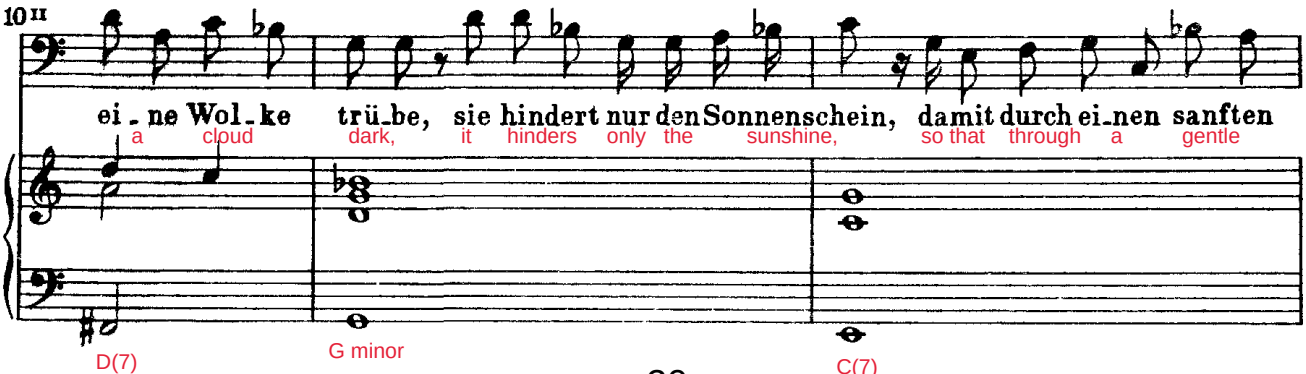
Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 10 mm.

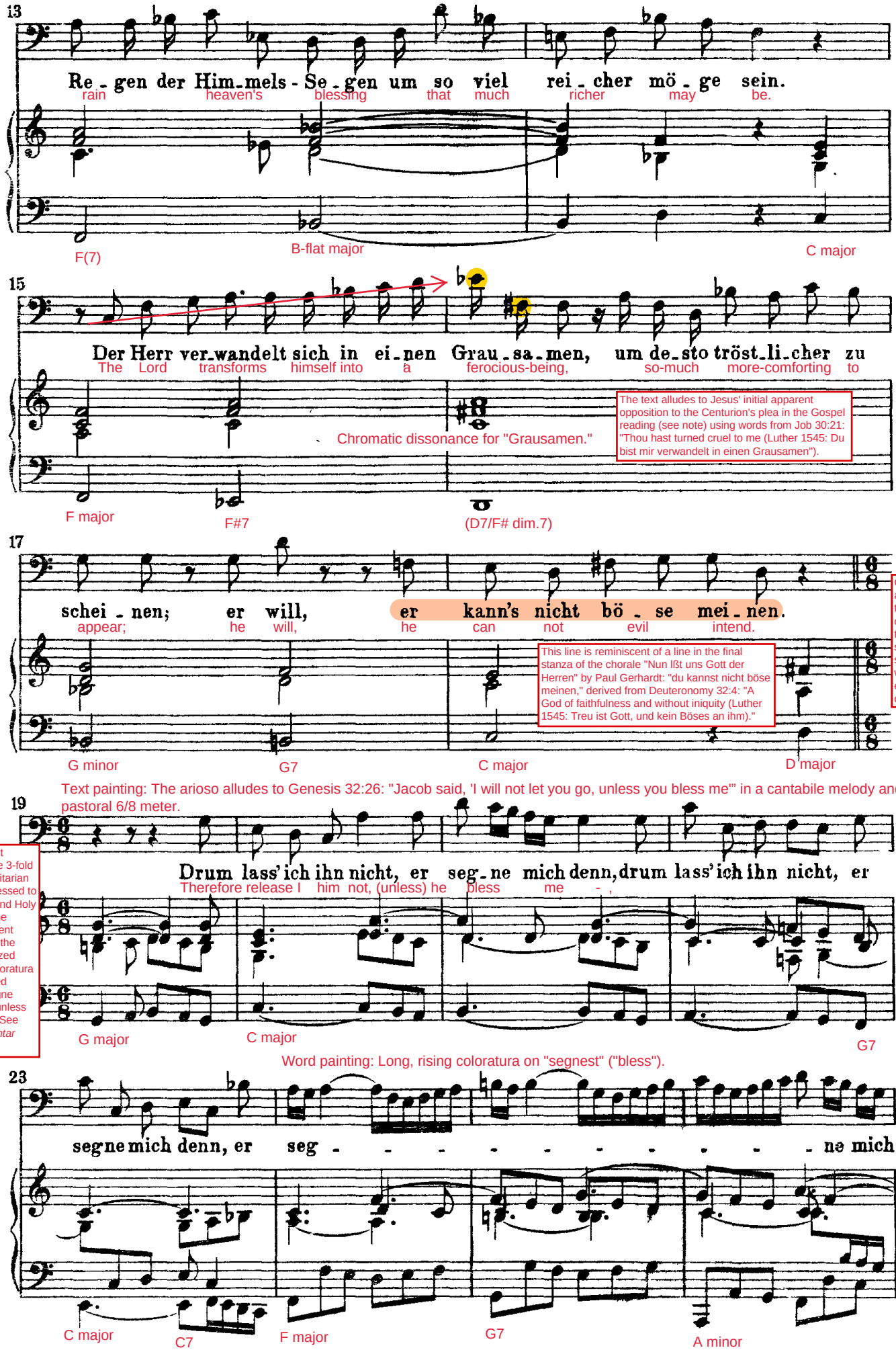




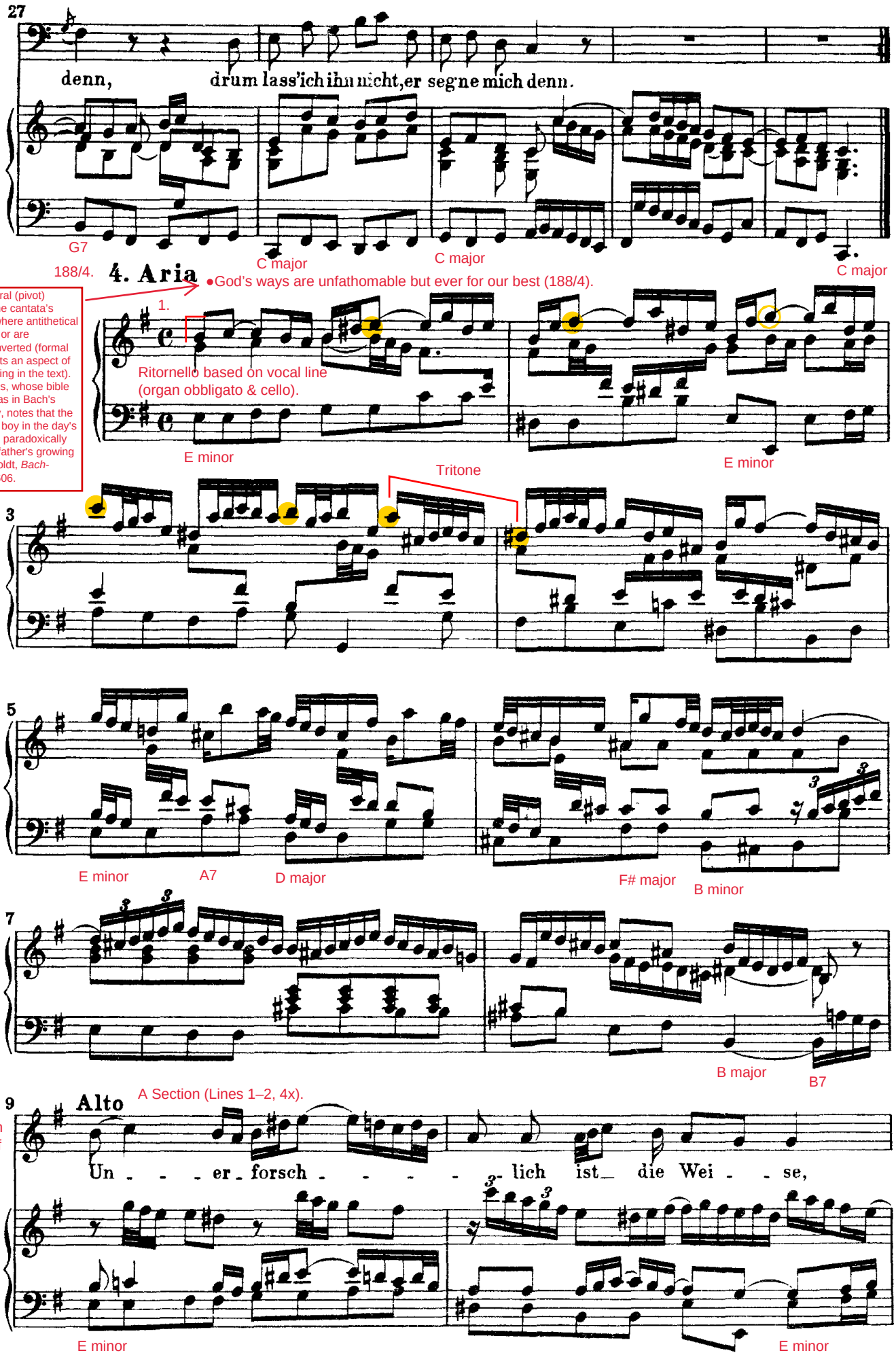







13
Re - gen der Him - mels - Se - gen um so viel rei - cher mö - ge sein.
rain heaven's blessing that much richer may be.
F(7)
B-flat major
C major
15
Der Herr ver - wandelt sich in ei - nen Grau - sa - men, um de - sto tröst - li - cher zu
The Lord transforms himself into a ferocious-being, so-much more-comforting to
Chromatic dissonance for "Grausamen."
The text alludes to Jesus' initial apparent opposition to the Centurion's plea in the Gospel reading (see note) using words from Job 30:21: "Thou hast turned cruel to me (Luther 1545: Du bist mir verwandelt in einen Grausamen").
F major
F#7
(D7/F# dim.7)
17
schei - nen; er will, er kann's nicht bö - se mei - nen.
appear; he will, he can not evil intend.
This line is reminiscent of a line in the final stanza of the chorale "Nun lßt uns Gott der Herren" by Paul Gerhardt: "du kannst nicht böse meinen," derived from Deuteronomy 32:4: "A God of faithfulness and without iniquity (Luther 1545: Treu ist Gott, und kein Böses an ihm)."
Compare the arioso ending of this movement's counterpart in the cantata's symmetrical structure (no. 5), which also employs biblical quotation..
G minor
G7
C major
D major
Text painting: The arioso alludes to Genesis 32:26: "Jacob said, 'I will not let you go, unless you bless me'" in a cantabile melody and pastoral 6/8 meter.
19
Drum lass' ich ihn nicht, er seg - ne mich denn, drum lass' ich ihn nicht, er
Therefore release I him not, (unless) he bless me -
Martin Petzoldt argues that the 3-fold request is Trinitarian (i.e., it is addressed to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost), with the middle statement (addressed to the Son) emphasized with a long coloratura on the repeated phrase "er segne mich denn" ("unless he bless me." See *Bach-Kommentar* 1:607.
G major
C major
G7
Word painting: Long, rising coloratura on "segnest" ("bless").
23
seg ne mich denn, er seg - - - - - - - - - - ne mich
C major
C7
F major
G7
A minor

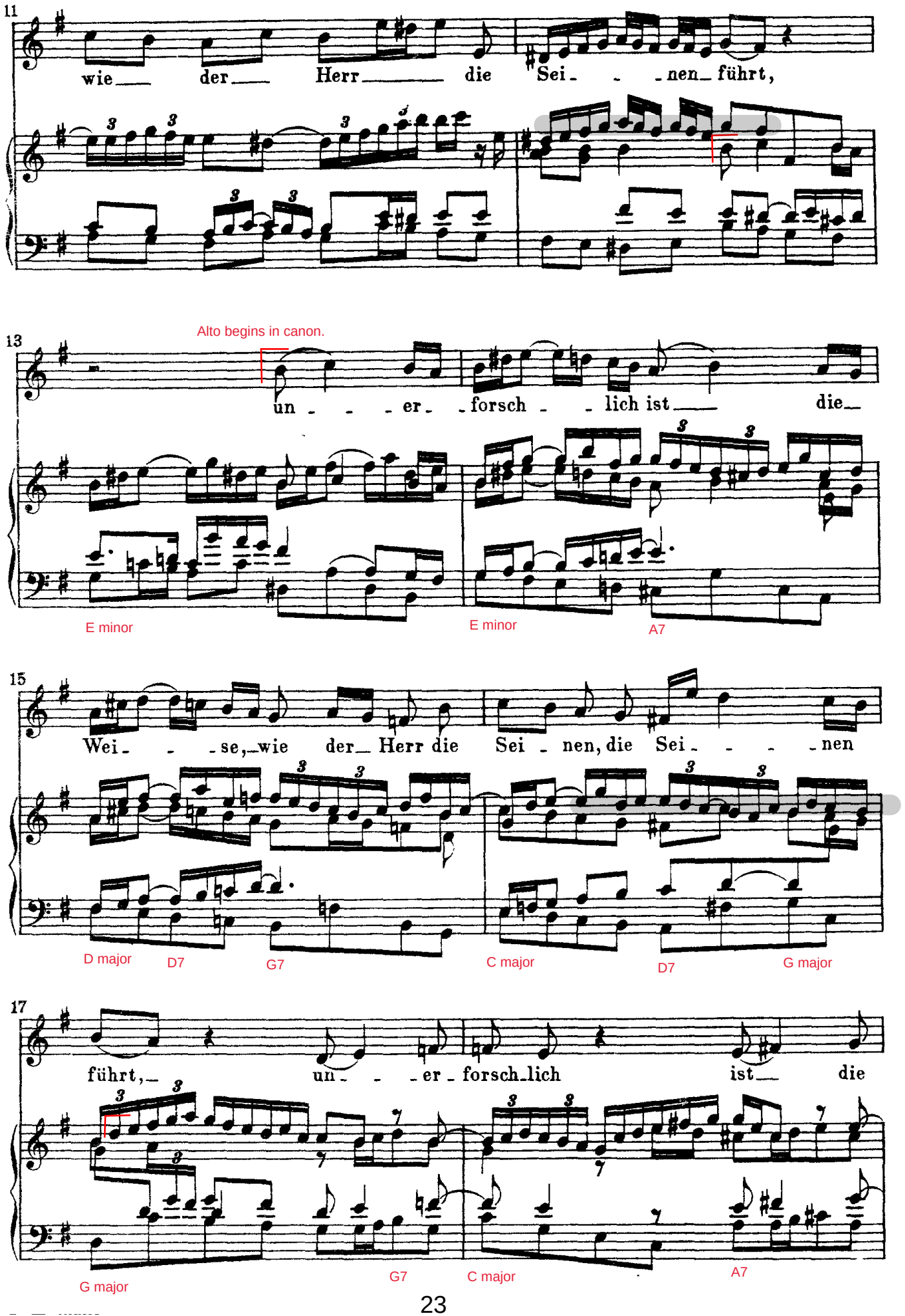
J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 188

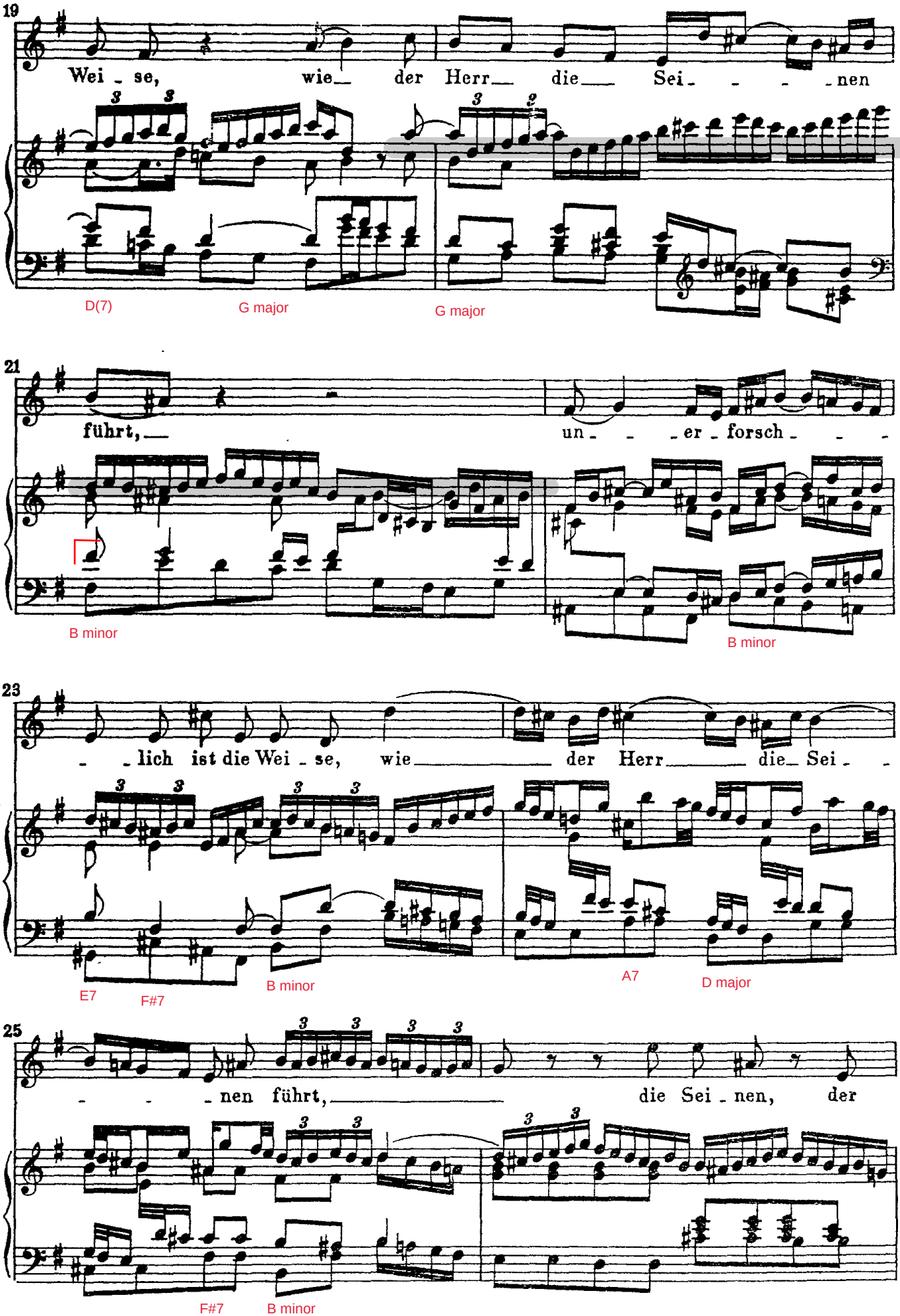


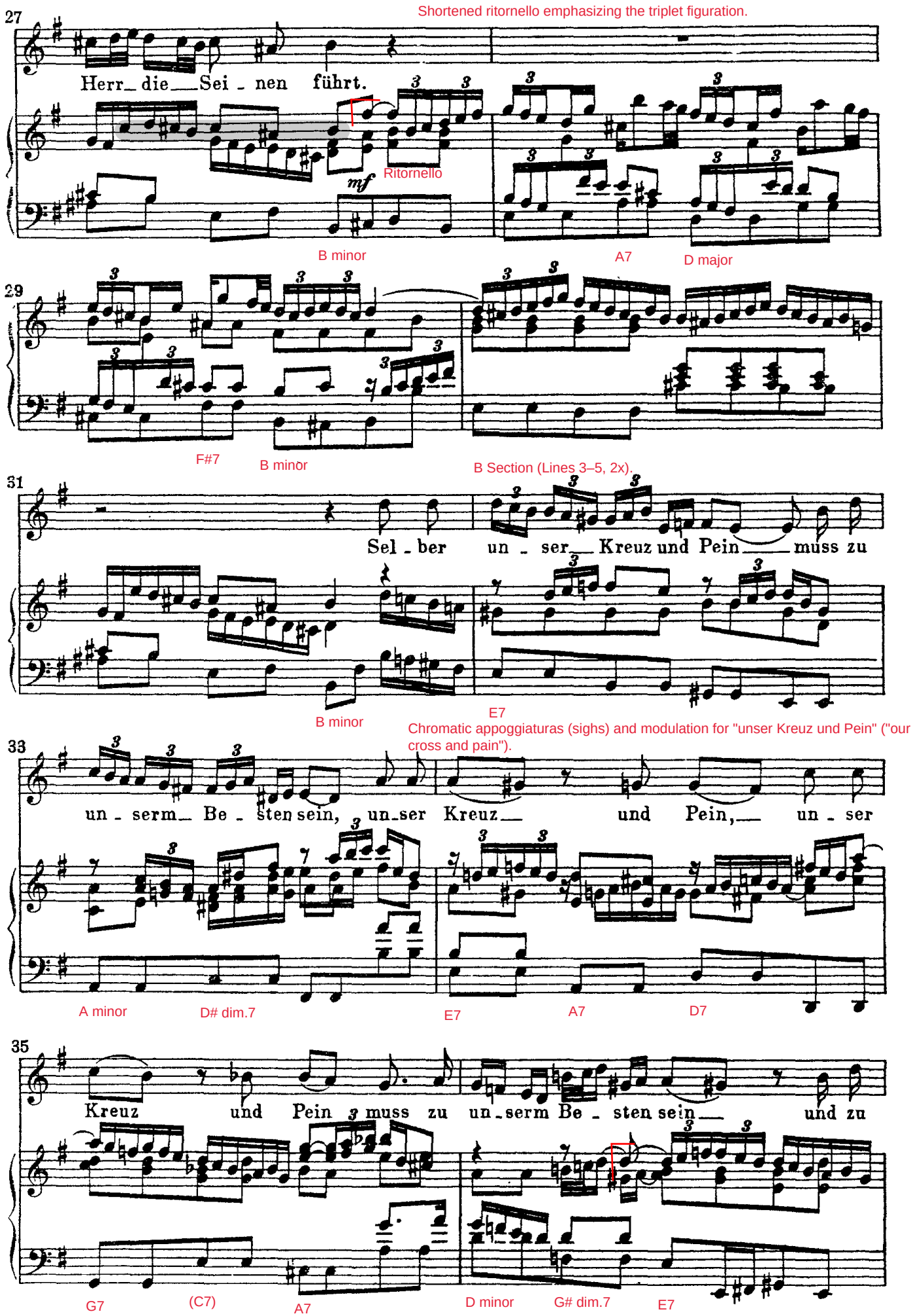
This is the central (pivot) movement in the cantata's chiastic form, where antithetical elements meet or are paradoxically inverted (formal inversion reflects an aspect of reversal or turning in the text). Johann Olearius, whose bible commentary was in Bach's personal library, notes that the sickness of the boy in the day's Gospel reading paradoxically resulted in the father's growing faith. See Petzoldt, *Bach-Kommentar* 1:606.

Alto is often the voice of faith.

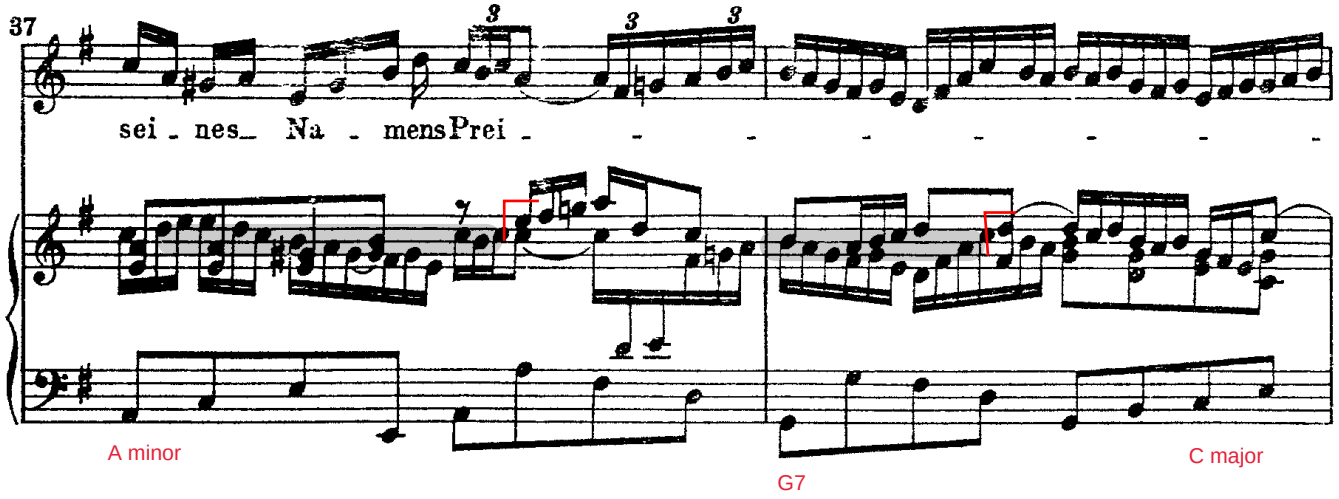
Erratic rhythms (which include syncopations and triplets) and a tortuous melody are used to depict the "unfathomable ways that God leads his people."

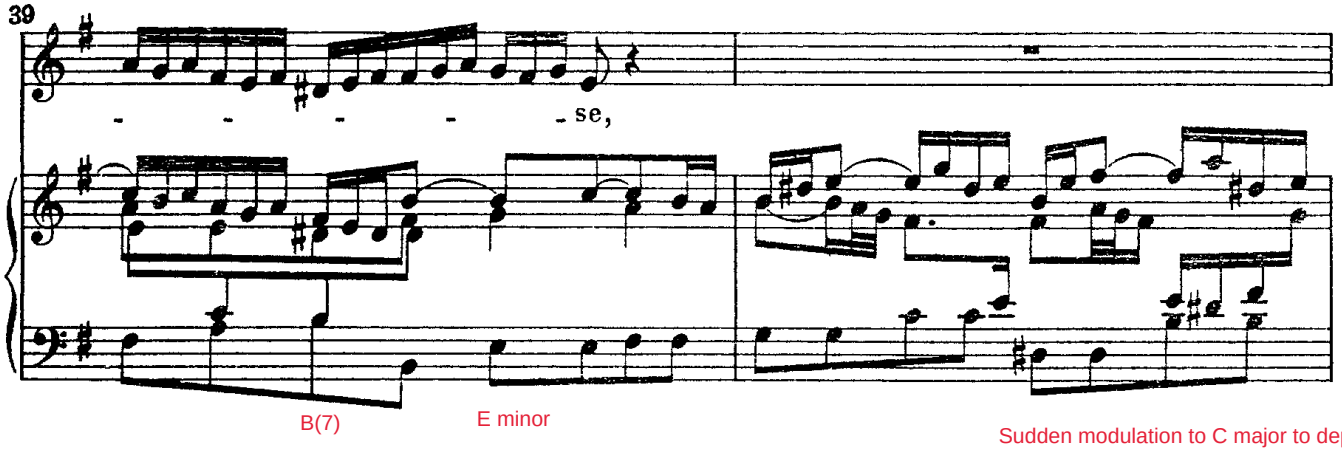

11
wie der Herr die Sei - nen führt,
13
Alto begins in canon.
un - er - forsch - lich ist die
E minor
E minor
A7
15
Wei - se, wie der Herr die Sei - nen, die Sei - nen
D major
D7
G7
C major
D7
G major
17
führt, un - er - forsch - lich ist die
G major
G7
C major
A7


19
Wei - se, wie der Herr die Sei - - - - nen
D(7)
G major
G major
21
führt, un - - - er - forsch - - -
B minor
B minor
23
- - lich ist die Wei - se, wie der Herr die Sei - -
E7
F#7
B minor
A7
D major
25
- - - nen führt, die Sei - nen, der
F#7
B minor

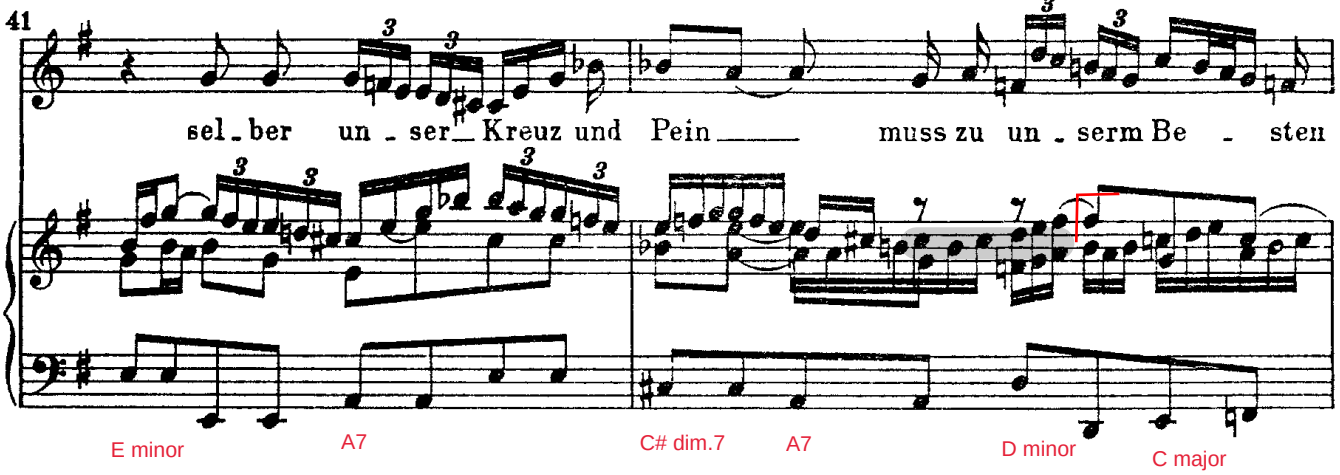

Shortened ritornello emphasizing the triplet figuration.
27
Herr_ die__Sei - nen führt.
mf
Ritornello
B minor
A7
D major
29
F#7
B minor
B Section (Lines 3–5, 2x).
31
Sel - ber un - ser__ Kreuz und Pein____ muss zu
B minor
E7
Chromatic appoggiaturas (sighs) and modulation for "unser Kreuz und Pein" ("our cross and pain").
33
un - serm_ Be - sten sein, un_ser Kreuz__ und Pein,__ un - ser
A minor
D# dim.7
E7
A7
D7
35
Kreuz und Pein muss zu un_serm Be - sten sein__ und zu
G7
(C7)
A7
D minor
G# dim.7
E7

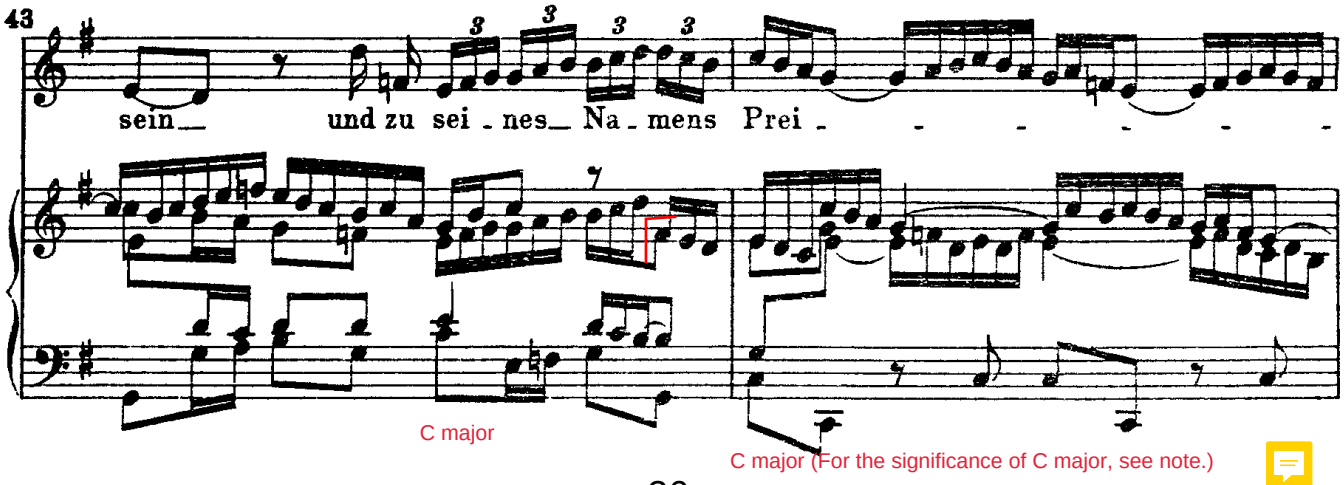
Word painting: Long melisma with triplet 16ths for "praise."

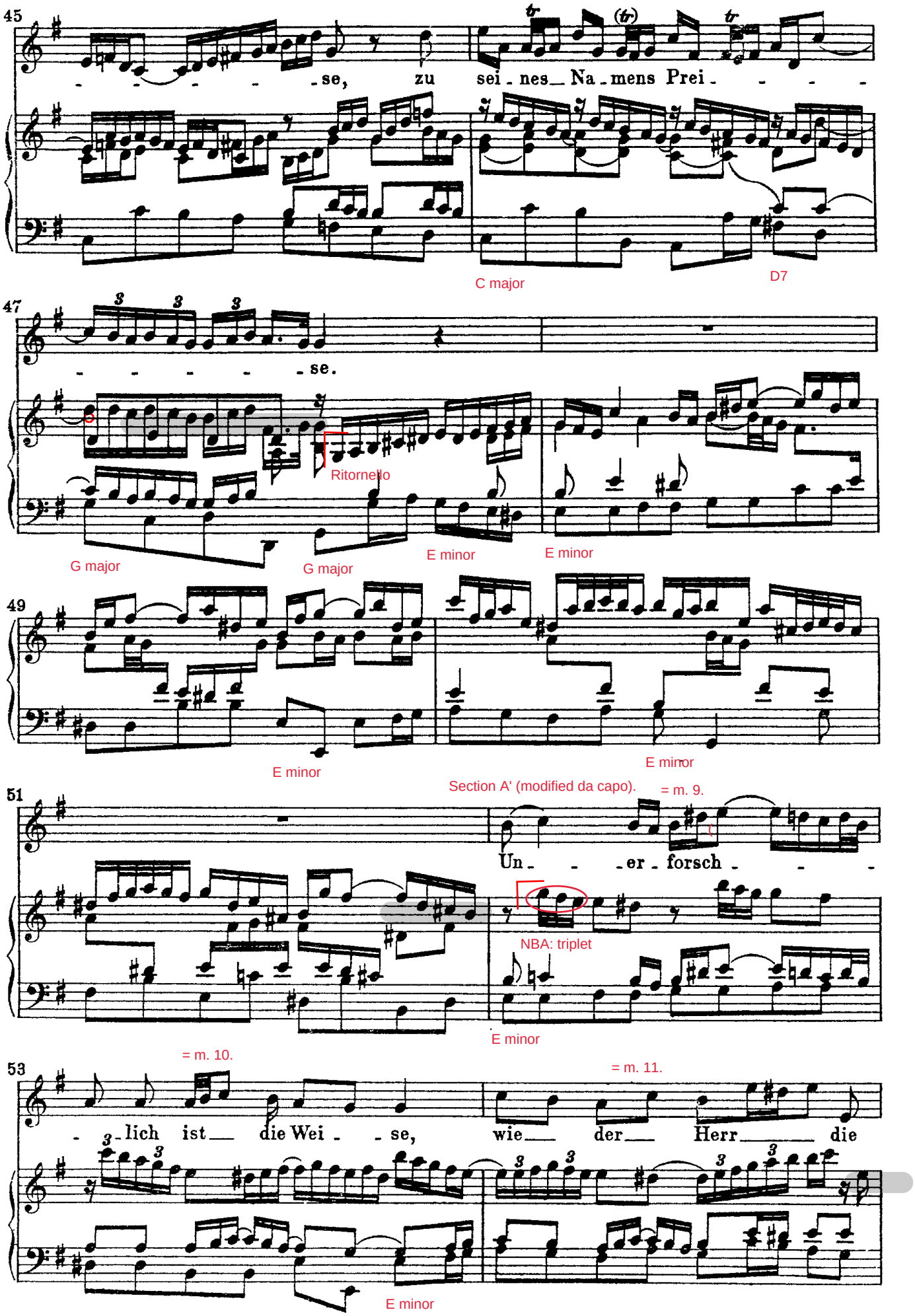


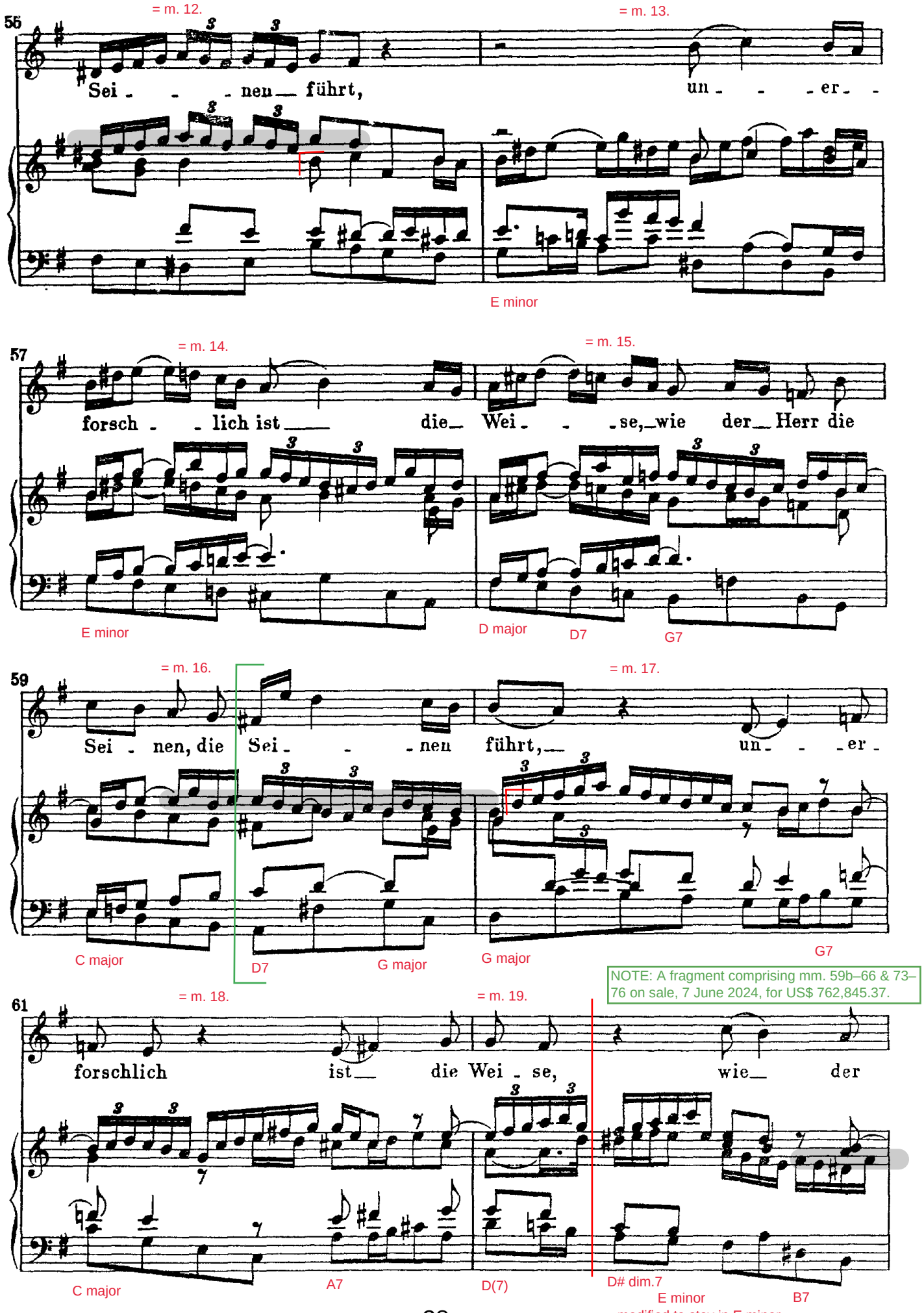


Sudden modulation to C major to depict the ultimate good of God's ways.

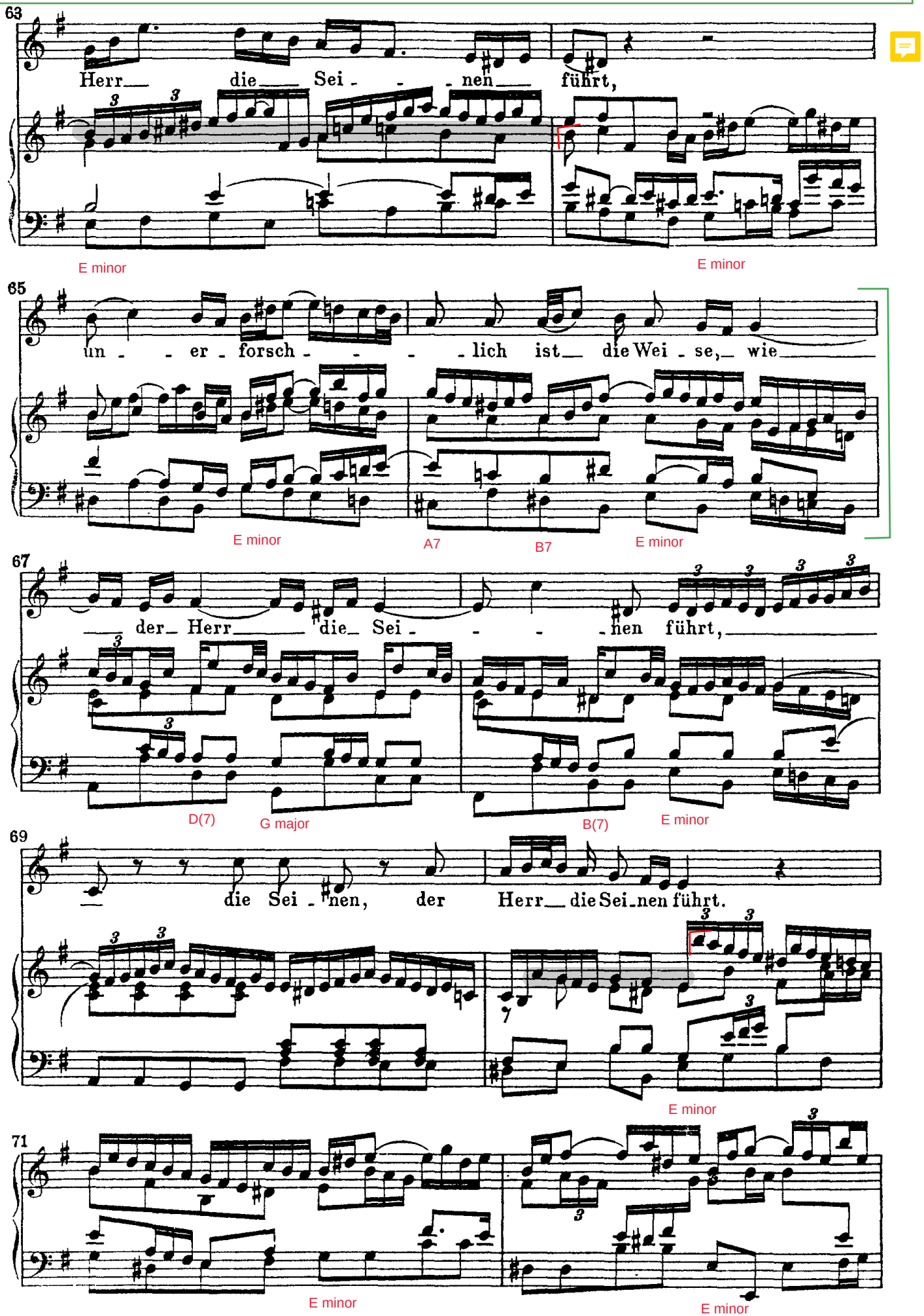


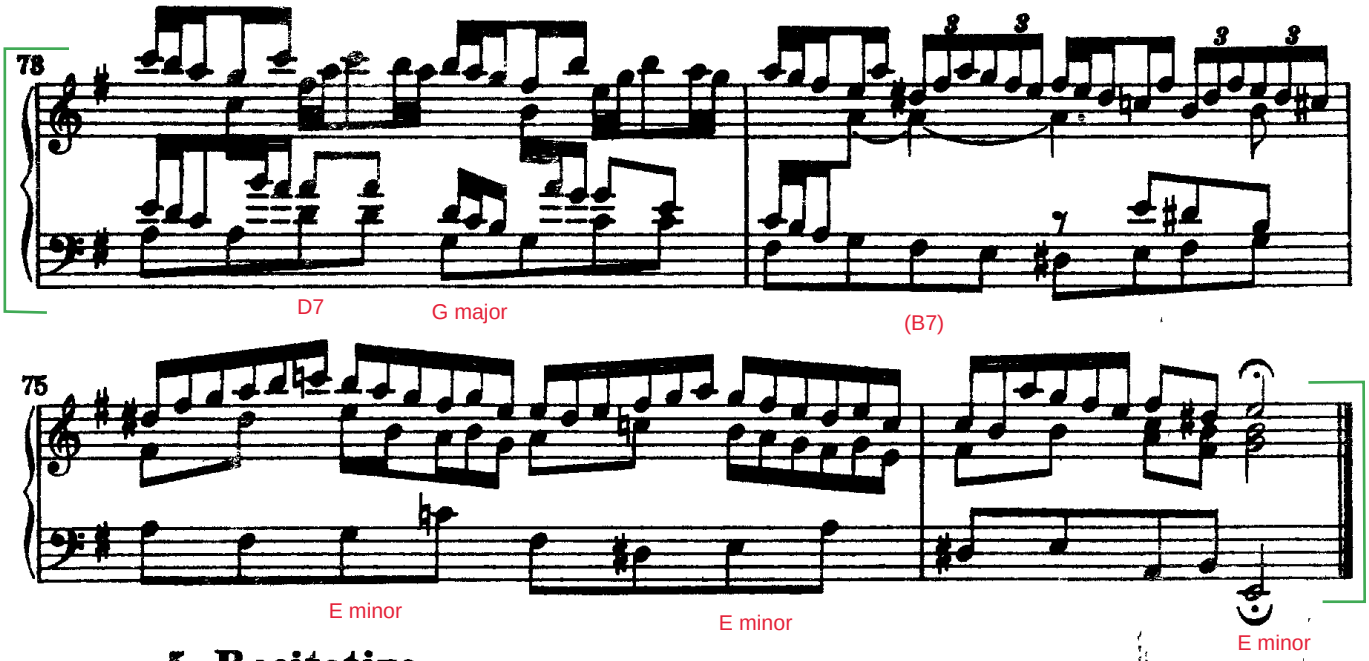



45
se, zu sei - nes Na - mens Prei - - - -
C major
D7
47
- - - - - se.
Ritornello
G major
G major
E minor
E minor
49
E minor
E minor
51
Section A' (modified da capo).
= m. 9.
Un - - - er - forsch - - - -
NBA: triplet
E minor
= m. 10.
53
= m. 11.
- lich ist die Wei - - se, wie der Herr die
E minor


= m. 12.
= m. 13.
56
Sei - - - nen führt, un - - - er -
E minor
= m. 14.
= m. 15.
57
forsch - - lich ist die Wei - - se, wie der Herr die
E minor
D major
D7
G7
= m. 16.
= m. 17.
59
Sei - nen, die Sei - - - nen führt, un - - - er -
C major
D7
G major
G major
G7
NOTE: A fragment comprising mm. 59b–66 & 73–76 on sale, 7 June 2024, for US$ 762,845.37.
= m. 18.
= m. 19.
61
forschlich ist die Wei - se, wie der
C major
A7
D(7)
D# dim.7
E minor
B7
modified to stay in E minor...

https://www.abebooks.com/servlet/BookDetailsPL?bi=31616180412&searchurl=ds%3D30%26kn%3DAutograph%2Bmusic%2Bmanuscript%253A%2Ba%2Bsection%2Bof%2Bthe%2Bcomposing%2Bscore%2Bof%26rollup%3Don%26sortby%3D17&cm_sp=snippet-_-srp0-_-image1 Accessed 7 June 2024.



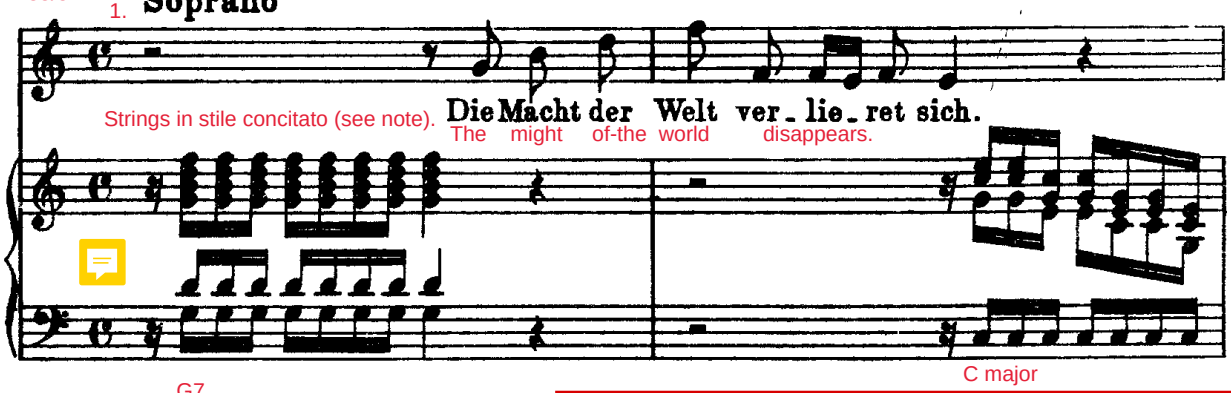


5. Recitativo

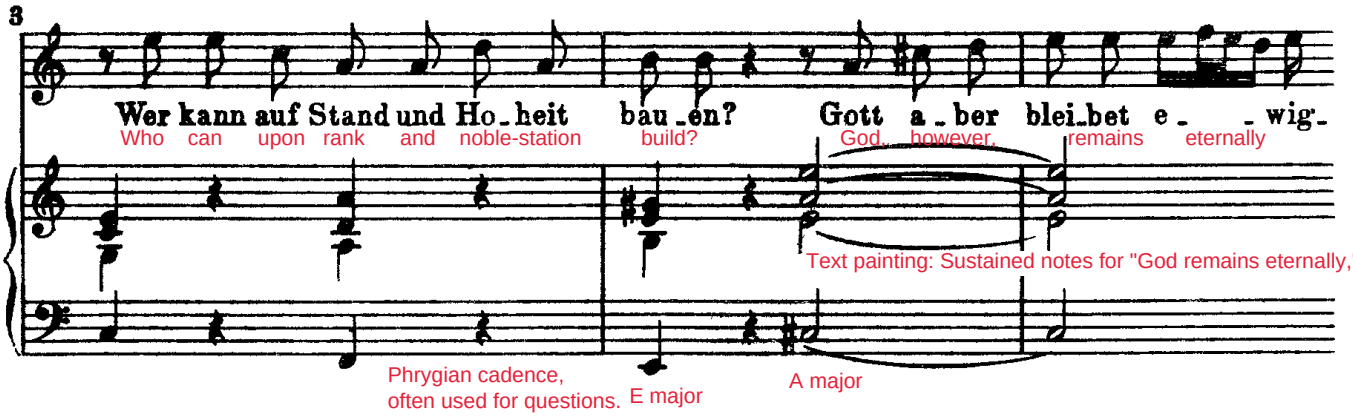
•Worldly power temporal but God is an eternal refuge (188/5).

188/5.

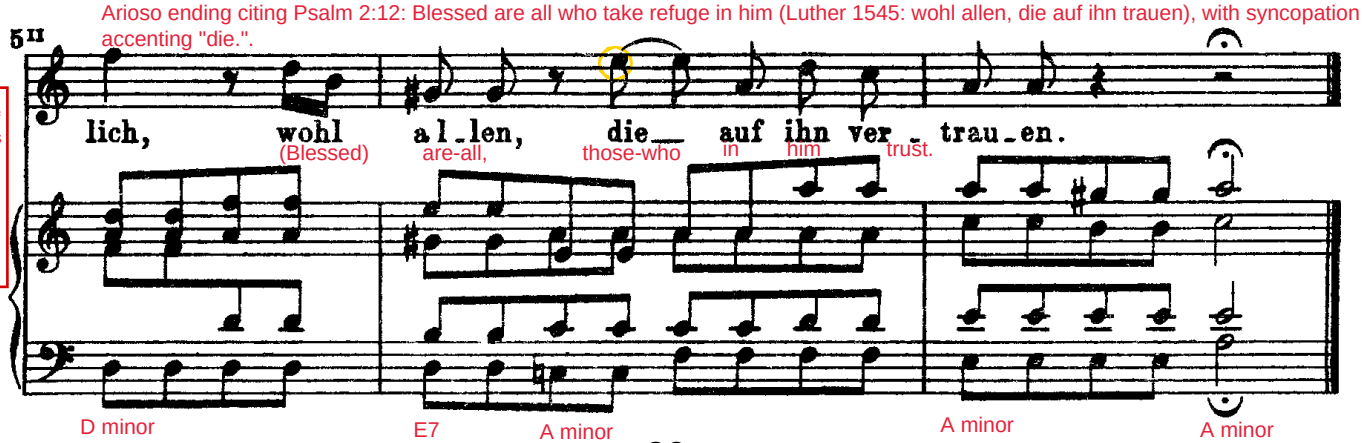
1. Soprano



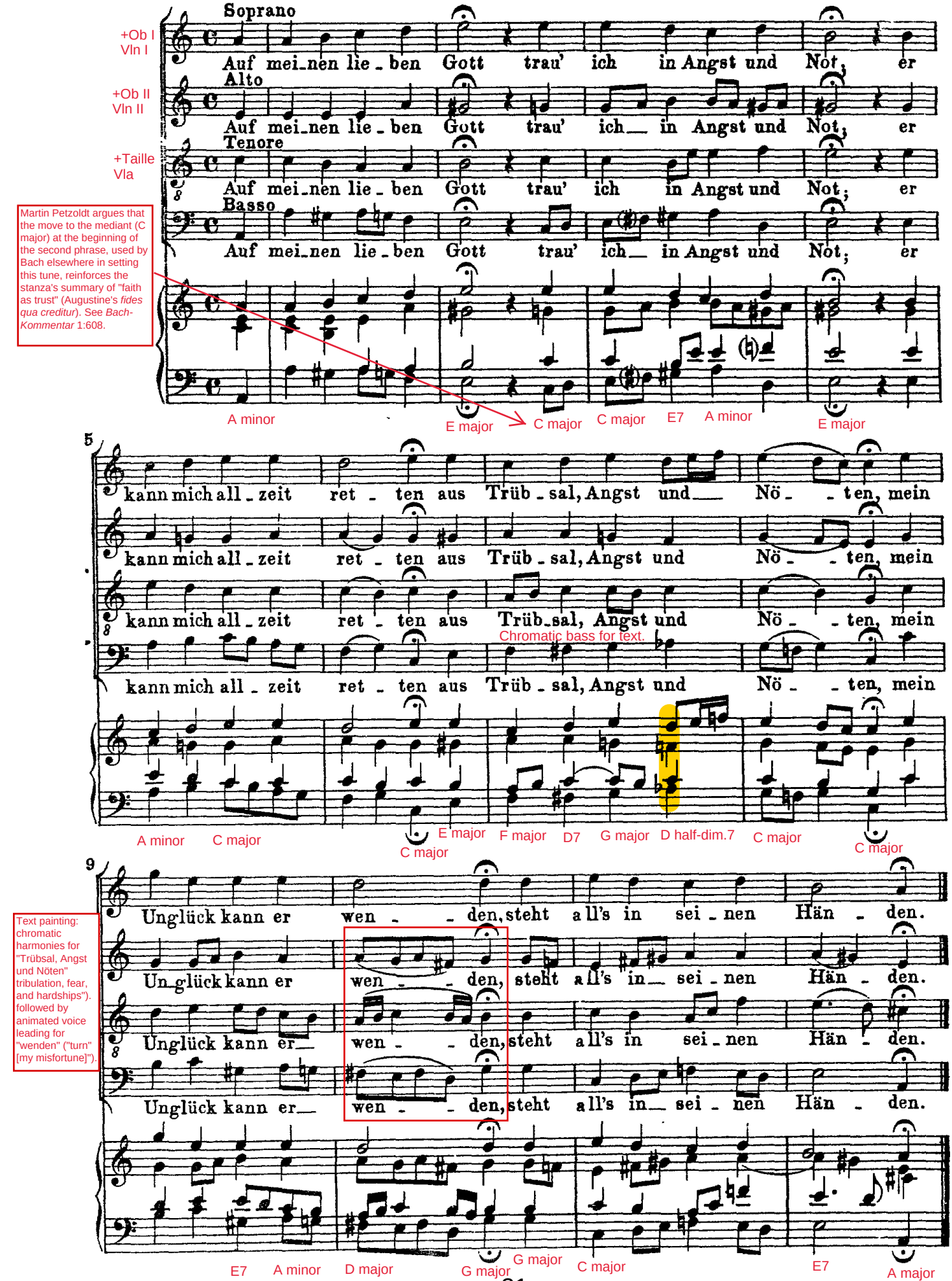
Biblical references: **Psalm 8:8:** But the Lord sits enthroned for ever (Luther 1545: Der Herr aber bleibt ewiglich); **Psalm 2:12:** Blessed are all who take refuge in him (Luther 1545: Wohl allen, die auf ihn trauen).



Arioso ending citing Psalm 2:12: Blessed are all who take refuge in him (Luther 1545: wohl allen, die auf ihn trauen), with syncopation accenting "die.".



Compare the arioso ending of this movement's counterpart in the cantata's symmetrical structure (no. 3), which also employs biblical quotation..

This is the first stanza of five in an anonymous hymn text (from before 1603). While Bach's autograph transmits the music without text, the stanza appears in Picander's printed libretto. It links to the foregoing with a catechismal response of trust in God.

188/6. **6. Choral** •Trusting God in fear & distress; he can deliver (188/6).