Last changed: 26 November 2025. (Double Choir Fragment.) 50

Introduction & updates at melvinunger.com.

(Single movement; perhaps fragment of longer work)
NBA I/30; BC A194
Perhaps St. Michael's Day: Sept. 29 (BWV 130, 19, 149, 50)
*Revelation 12:7–12 (The archangel Michael battles with the dragon, Satan)
*Matthew 18:1–11 (The kingdom of heaven belongs to children; their angels behold the face of God)
Librettist: Unknown. Perhaps an adaptation of an earlier work.
FP: Time of composition and first performance are unknown. See side notes for background.

Form (one movement): Permutation fugue of subject (A) and 3 countersubjects (BCD), each 7 mm. long in 2 sections for double choir, each 68 measures long. The counterpoint is often homophonically thickened.

A Fugue (8 permutations) + Epilogue (antiphonal, imitative): 68 mm.
A' Fugue (7 permutations) + Epilogue (antiphonal, imitative): 68 mm.

This work may have originated as the first movement of a much longer work. It survives only in copies and its unusual features have led to speculation that it was not written by Bach. For an extensive quotation about this work's origins and authorship from "The Cantatas of J.S. Bach" by Alfred Dürr, revised and translated by Richard Jones, see 2 attached comments below.

*Regarding the oboe ranges in this work, see Joshua Rifkin, "Siegesjubel und Satzfehler: zum Problem von 'Nun ist das Heil und die Kraft' (BWV 50)," "Bach-Jahrbuch" 2000, 85.

J. S. Bach
Cantata No. 50
Nun ist das Heil

For a summary of views on the issues related to this work, see notes.

For further information on the issues raise by the source material, see notes.

ExtensiveInstrumentation:
Tromba I, II, III
Timp
Ob I, II, III*
Vln I, II
Vla
SATB/SATB
Continuo, Organo

50/1. ●Victory of Christ's kingdom over the dragon (Satan): Revelation 12:10 (modified somewhat) (50/1).

1. (Rev. XII. 10.)

TREBLE I. (Allegro maestoso.)
ALTO I.
TENOR I. 8ve lower.
BASS I.
1st CHORUS.

Permutation Fugue

Ascending order of entries: B1-T1-A1-S1.

A (7 mm. long)

For the significance of the number 7 in the bible, especially in the book of Revelation, from which this text is taken, see side note.

pesante

hemiola

Nun ist das Heil und die Kraft und das Reich und die Macht un - sers Got - tes sel

TREBLE II.
ALTO II.
TENOR II. 8ve lower.
BASS II.
2nd CHORUS.

The fugue subject, A, emphasizes the substantives (Heil, Kraft, Reich, Gottes = salvation, power, kingdom, God's) in a triadically ascending line on quarter notes in militant rhythm, returning 3 times to the initial tonic, as if to depict the firmness and reach of God's authority and omnipotence. Compare Petzoldt, *Bach-Kommentar* 3:280.

The double choir texture underscores the scope of the triumphant celebration after the heavenly victory.
The instruments sometimes double the voice parts, sometimes play independent material in concertante manner. Joshua Rifkin notes that such instrumental writing is unusual for Bach, offering it as as one of the reasons to suppose this piece is not by J. S. Bach. See "Siegesjubel and Satzfehler: zum Problem von 'Nun ist das Heil und die Kraft' (BWV 50)," Bach-Jahrbuch 2000, 82–83.
Chromatic harmonies and deceptive cadences are used to depict Satan's constant accusations, as referenced in the text.

For biblical background, see note.

(Allegro maestoso.)
PIANO.
f e pesante

D major

E major

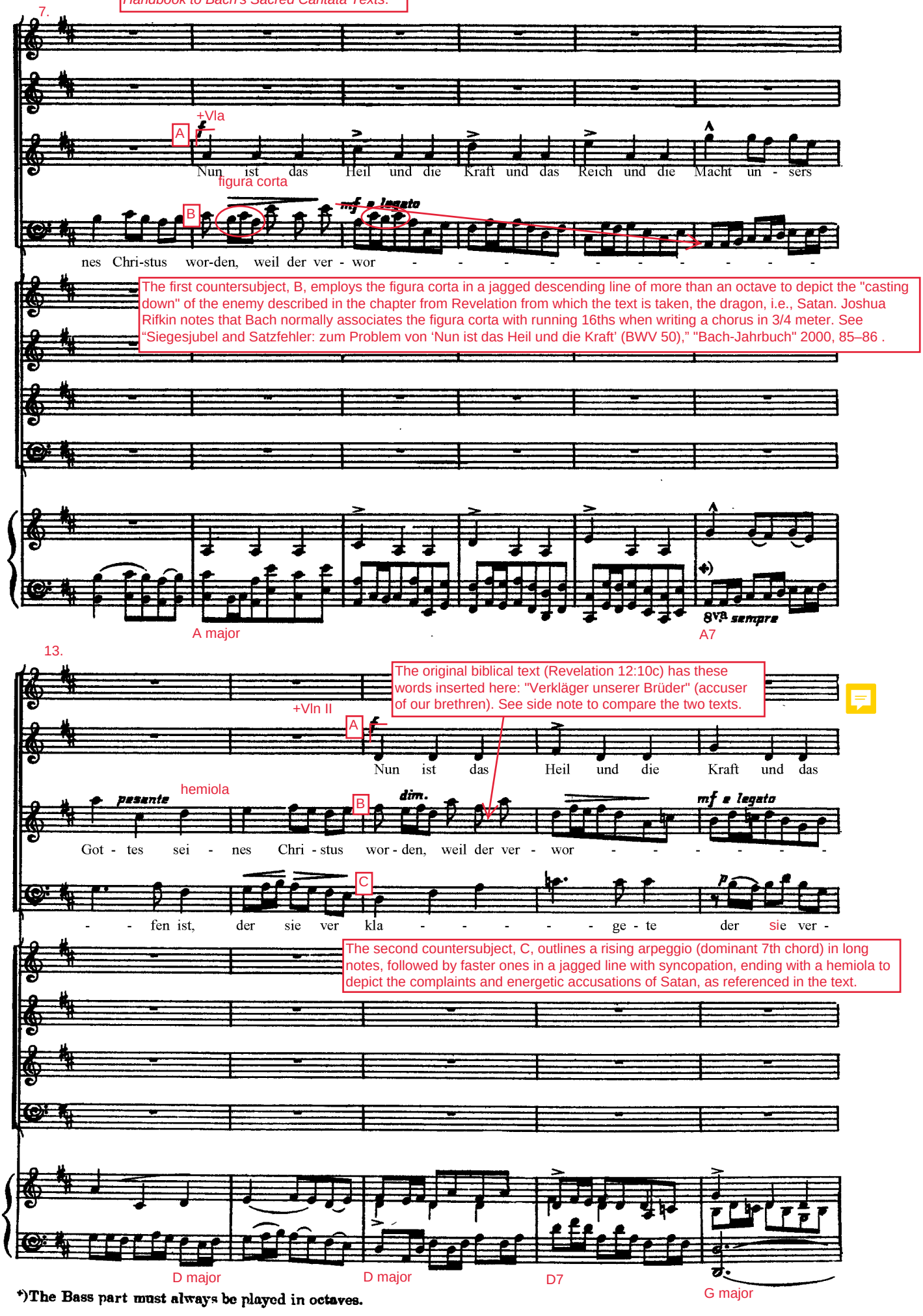
A major

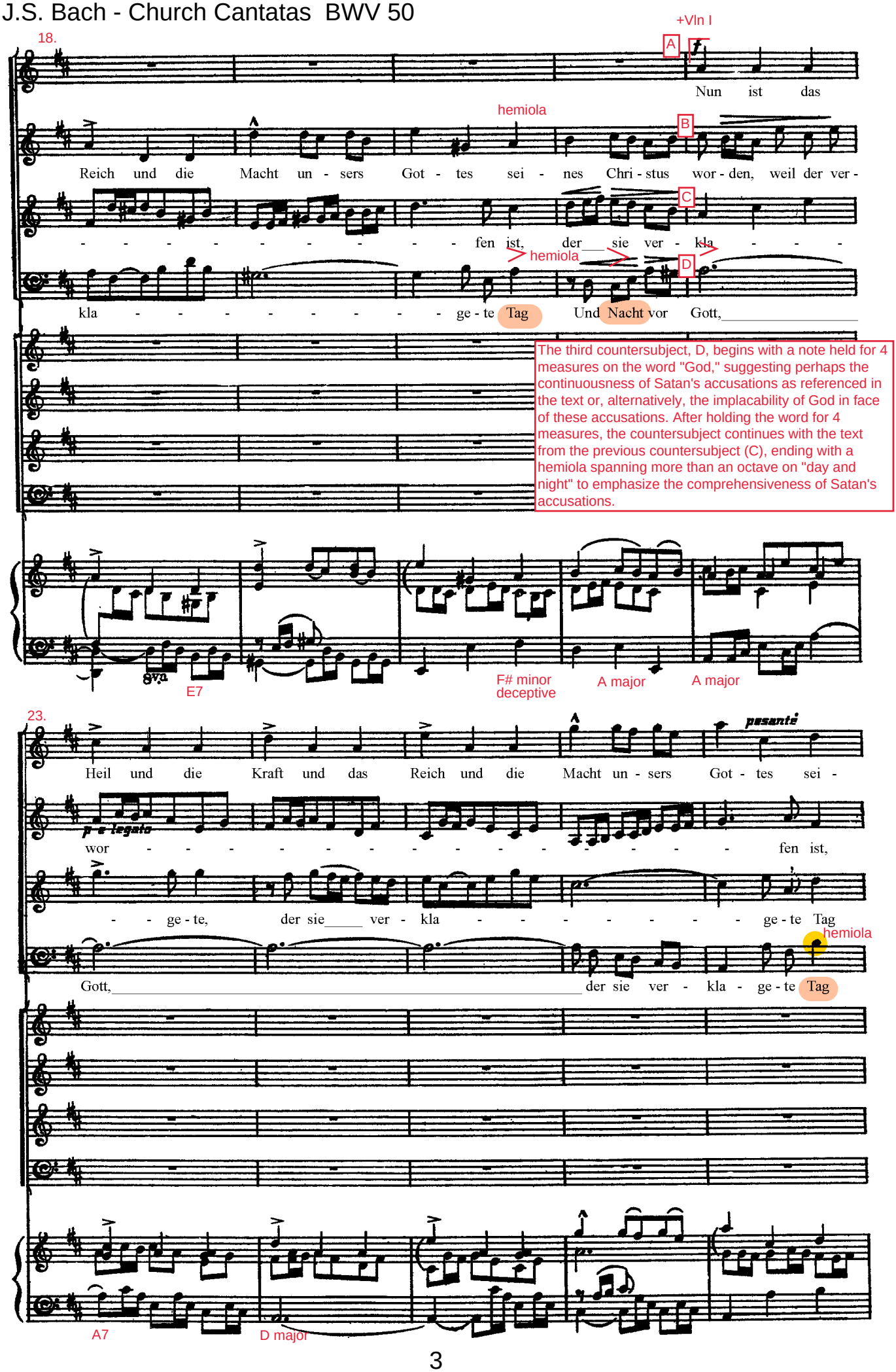
Figura corta

"...bestehet aus drey geschwinden Noten, deren eine allein so lang ist, als die übrigen beyde"
Johann Gottfried Walther "Musicalisches Lexicon..." [Leipzig, 1732]
{"...consists of 3 fast notes, of which one has the same value as the other two taken together."}

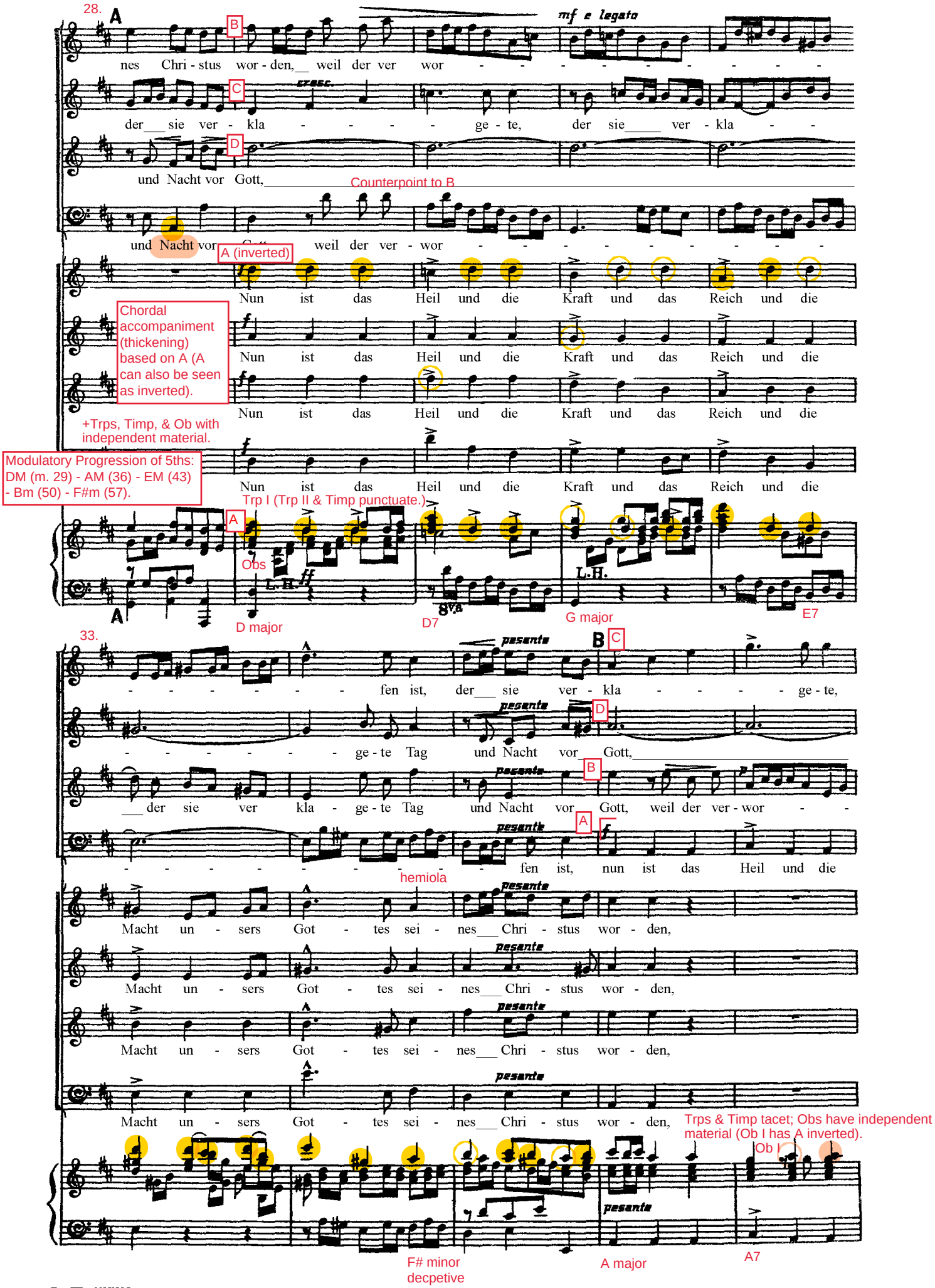
The figura corta was defined as an ornament by W.C. Printz in 1689 and by Johann Gottfried Walther in his lexicon of 1732. "Figura corta consists of three fast notes, one of which by itself is as long as the other ones." (Johann Walther, Lexikon, 1732. p. 244, translated). It could be long-short-short or short-short-long. Albert Schweitzer interpreted it as a "joy motive." See Albert Schweitzer, J. S. Bach, trans. Ernest Newman (Boston: Bruce Humphries Pub., 1962), vol. 2, pp. 65–66. Bach's second cantata cycle (the chorale cantata cycle) has pervasive use of figura corta for joyous texts.

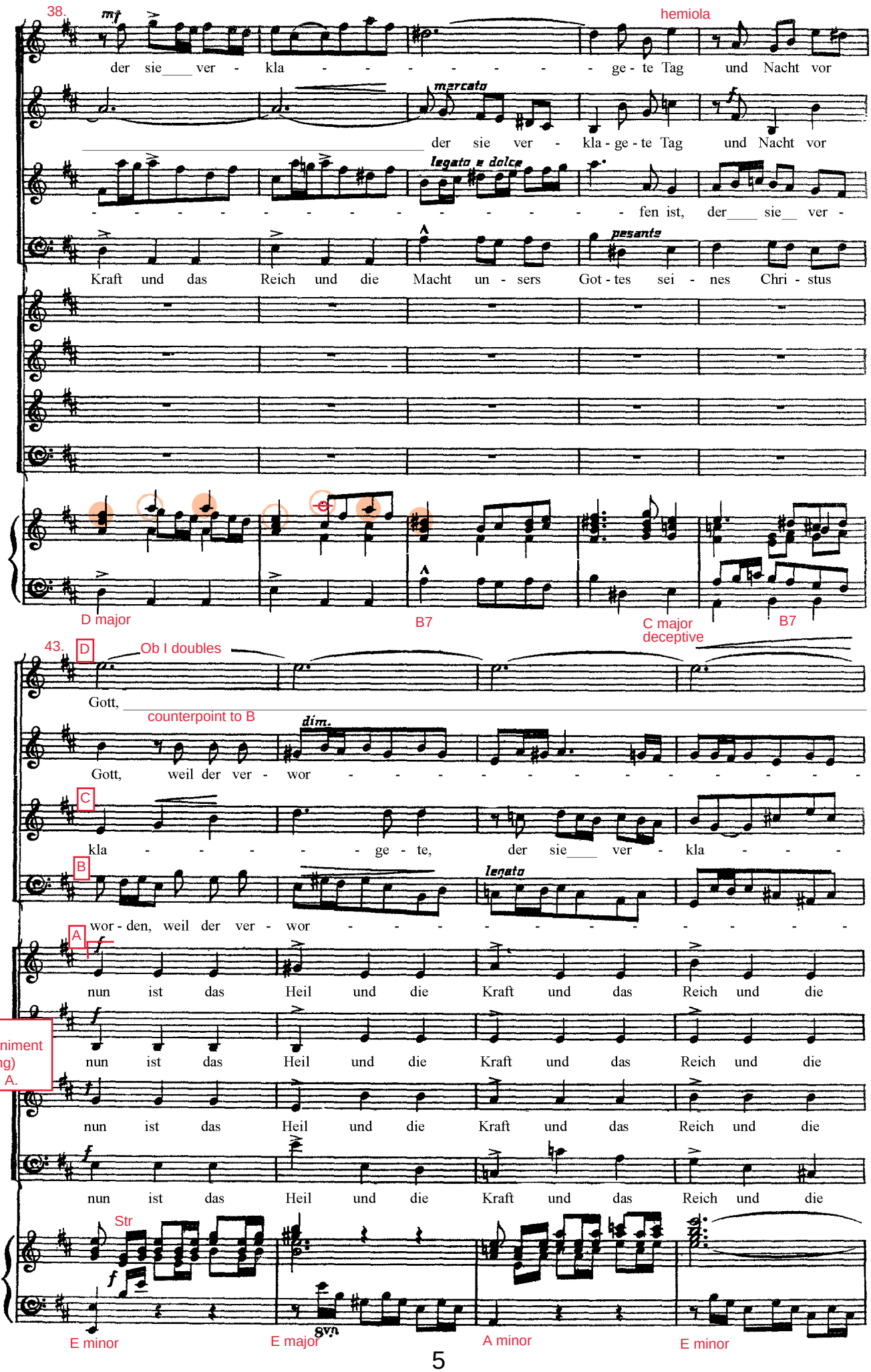
J.S. Bach - For word-for-word translations, see Unger, *Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts*.

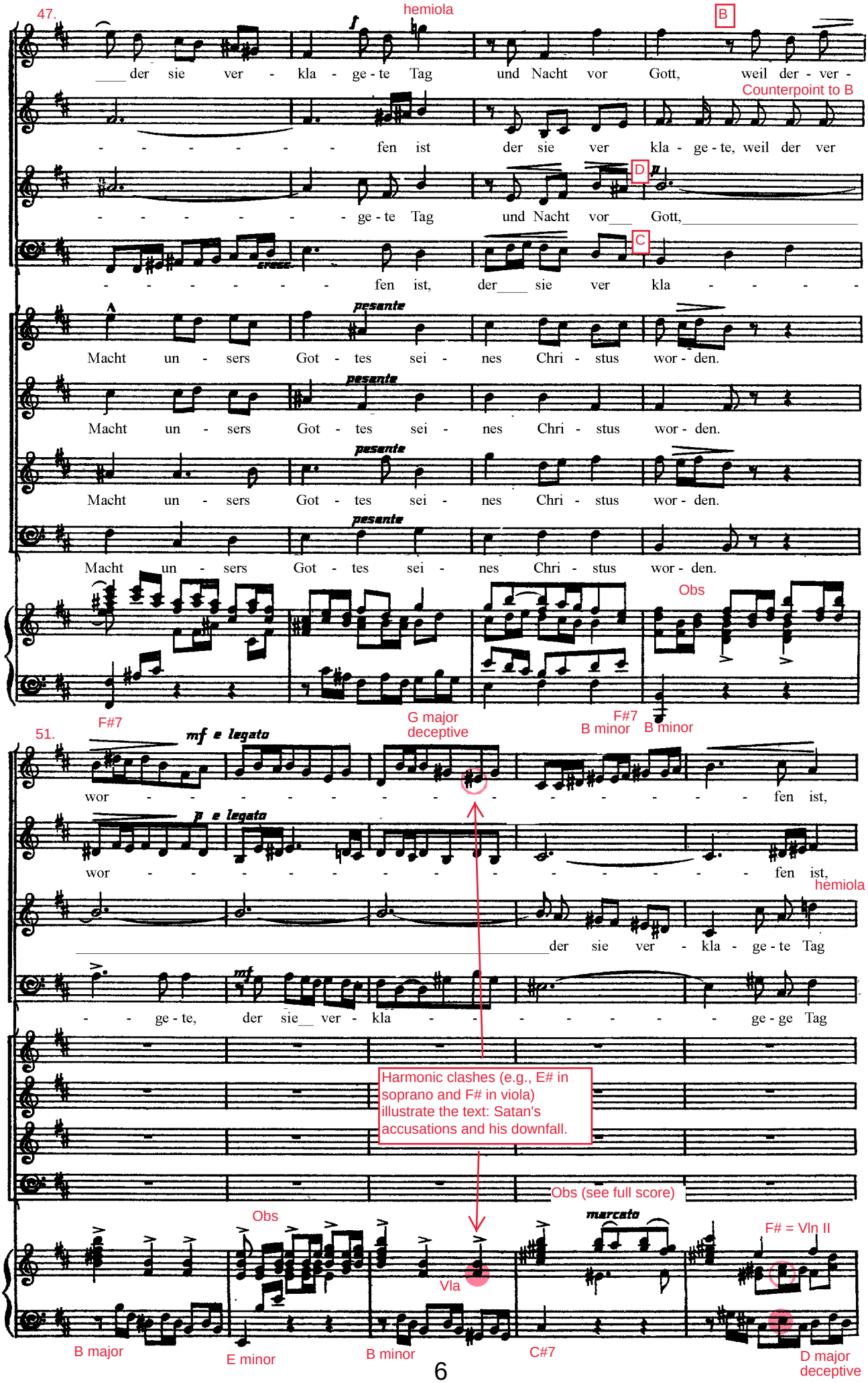



18.
+Vln I
A
B
C
D
Nun ist das
Reich und die Macht un - sers Got - tes sei - nes Chri - stus wor - den, weil der ver -
- - - - - - - - - fen ist, der sie ver - kla - - -
hemiola
hemiola
kla - - - - - - - - - ge - te Tag Und Nacht vor Gott,
The third countersubject, D, begins with a note held for 4 measures on the word "God," suggesting perhaps the continuousness of Satan's accusations as referenced in the text or, alternatively, the implacability of God in face of these accusations. After holding the word for 4 measures, the countersubject continues with the text from the previous countersubject (C), ending with a hemiola spanning more than an octave on "day and night" to emphasize the comprehensiveness of Satan's accusations.
8va
E7
F# minor deceptive
A major
A major
23.
pesante
Heil und die Kraft und das Reich und die Macht un - sers Got - tes sei -
p e legato
wor - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - fen ist,
- - ge - te, der sie ver - kla - - - - - - - ge - te Tag
hemiola
Gott, der sie ver - kla - ge - te Tag
A7
D major

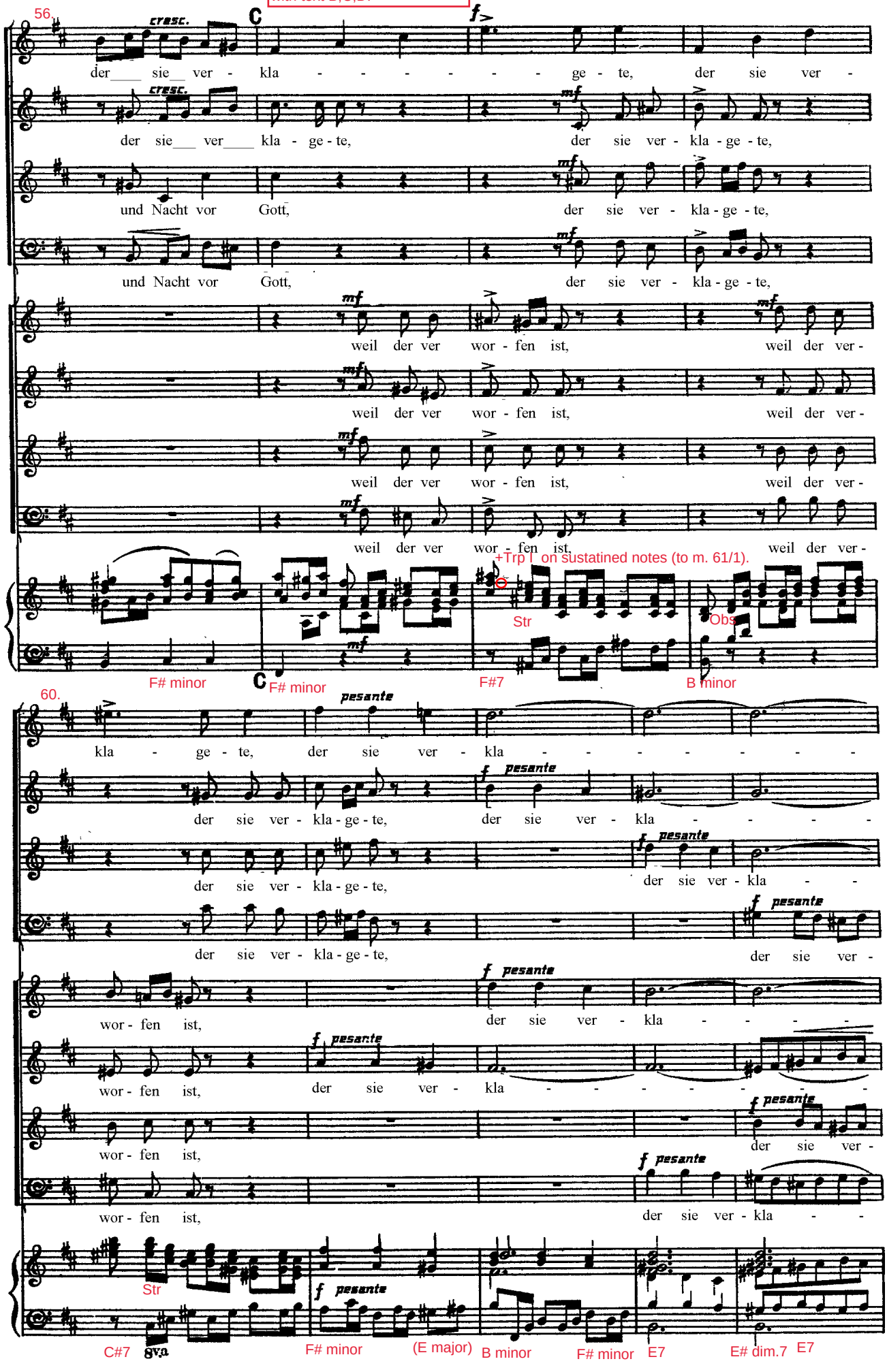
J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 50

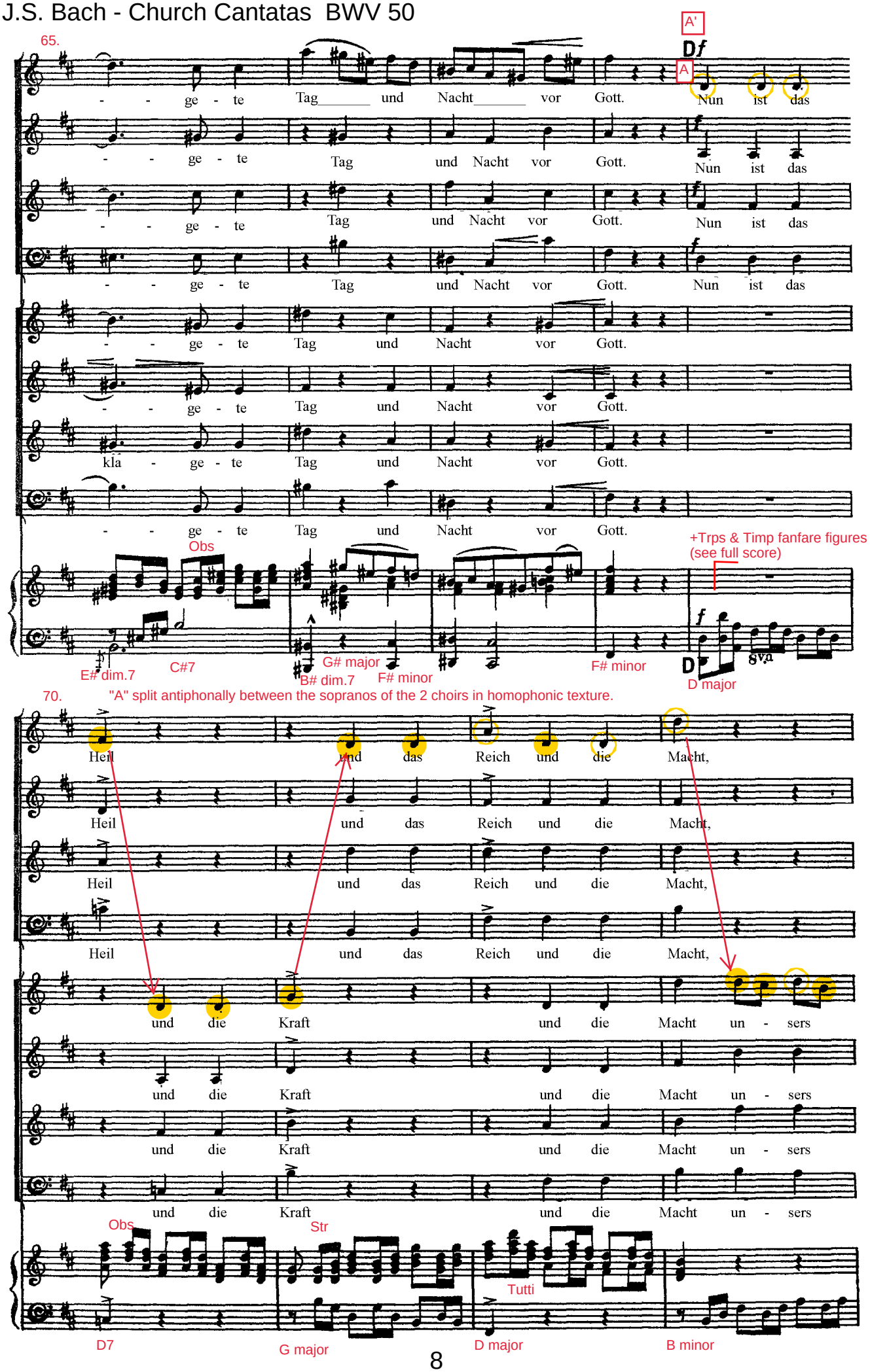


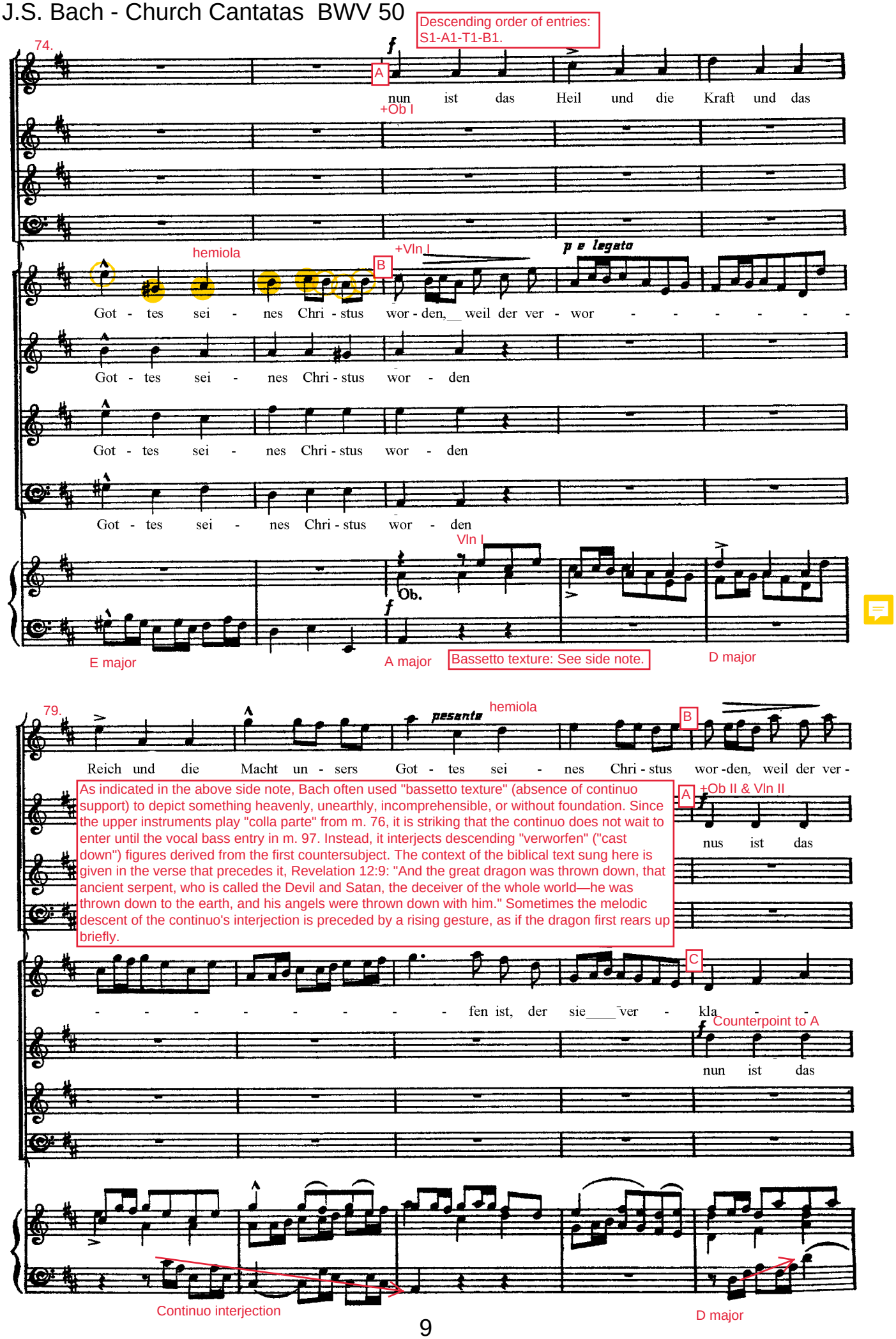

38.
mf
hemiola
der sie ver - kla - - - - - - - - ge - te Tag und Nacht vor
marcato
der sie ver - kla - ge - te Tag und Nacht vor
legato e dolce
- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - fen ist, der sie ver -
pesante
Kraft und das Reich und die Macht un - sers Got - tes sei - nes Chri - stus
D major
B7
C major
deceptive
B7
43.
D
Ob I doubles
Gott,
counterpoint to B
dim.
Gott, weil der ver - wor - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
C
kla - - - - - - ge - te, der sie ver - kla - - - -
B
legato
wor - den, weil der ver - wor - - - - - - - - - - - -
A
f
nun ist das Heil und die Kraft und das Reich und die
Chordal accompaniment (thickening) based on A.
nun ist das Heil und die Kraft und das Reich und die
nun ist das Heil und die Kraft und das Reich und die
nun ist das Heil und die Kraft und das Reich und die
Str
f
8va
E minor
E major
A minor
E minor


47.
hemiola
B
Counterpoint to B
D
C
pesante
Obs
F#7
G major
deceptive
F#7
B minor
B minor
51.
mf e legato
p e legato
hemiola
Harmonic clashes (e.g., E# in soprano and F# in viola) illustrate the text: Satan's accusations and his downfall.
Obs (see full score)
Obs
marcato
F# = Vln II
Vla
B major
E minor
B minor
C#7
D major
deceptive

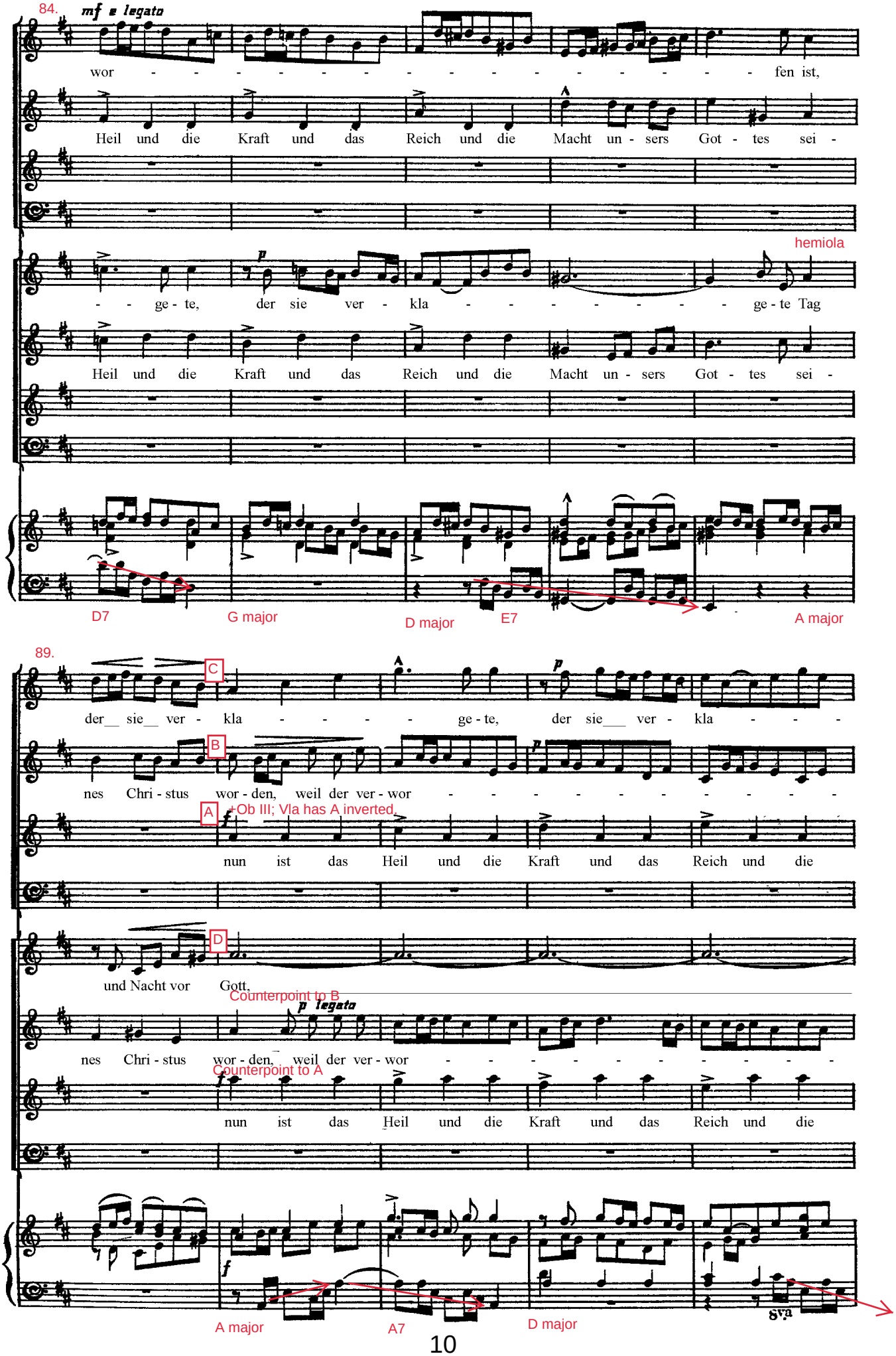
Epilogue: antiphonal, imitative with text B,C,D.

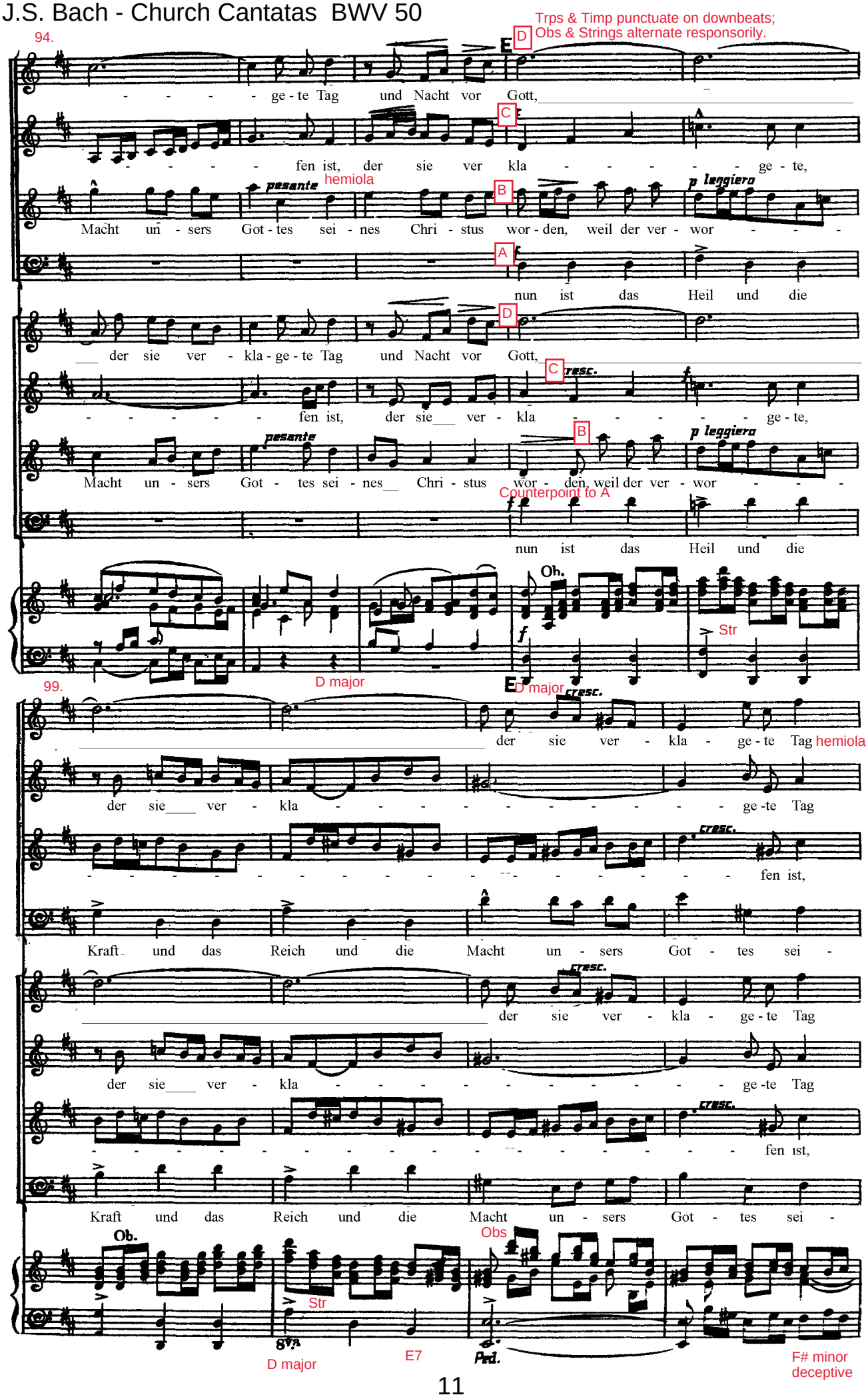


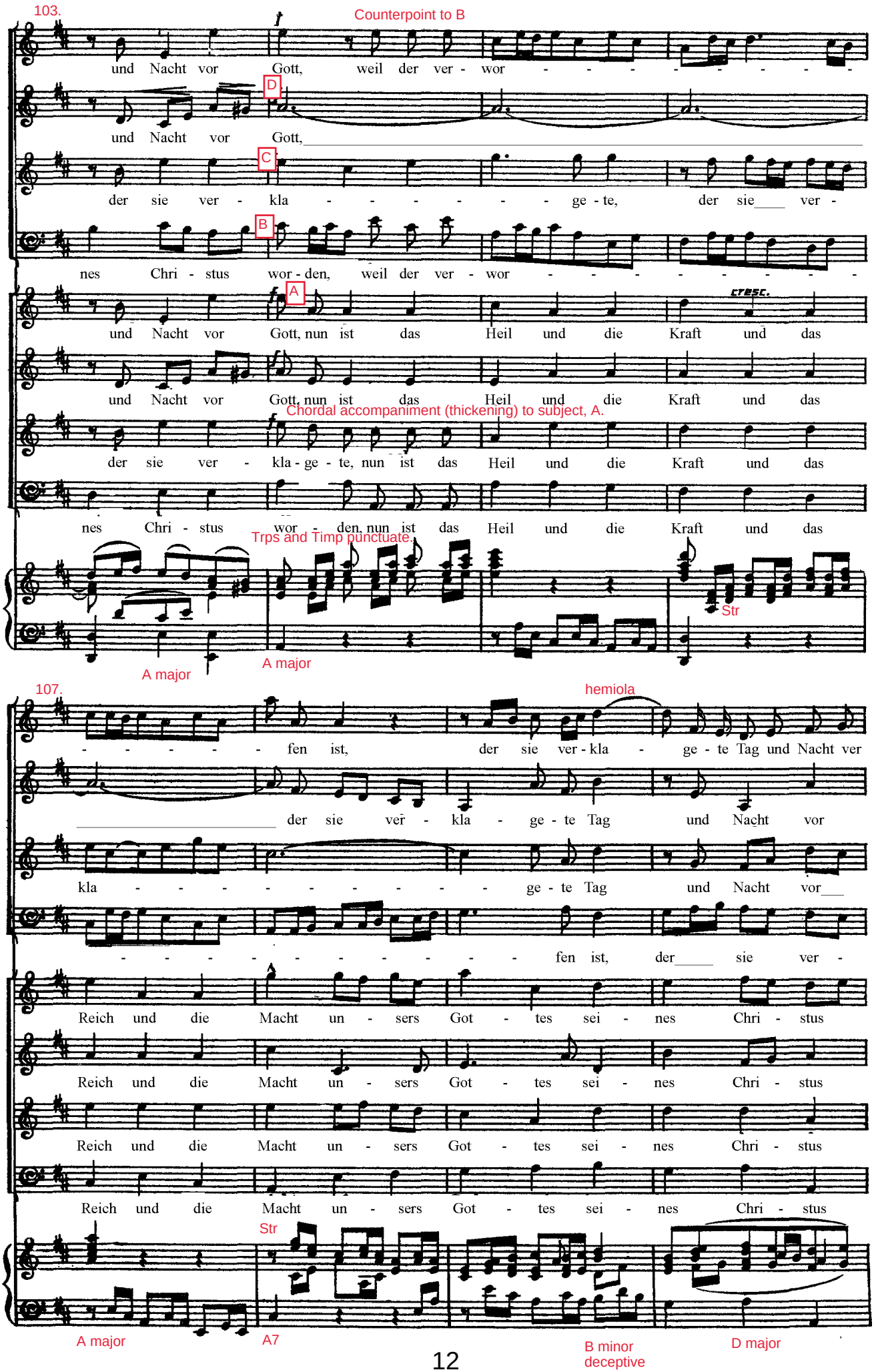

65.
A'
Df
A
- - ge - te Tag und Nacht vor Gott. Nun ist das
kla - ge - te Tag und Nacht vor Gott.
Obs
+Trps & Timp fanfare figures
(see full score)
E# dim.7
C#7
G# major
B# dim.7
F# minor
F# minor
8va
D major
70.
"A" split antiphonally between the sopranos of the 2 choirs in homophonic texture.
Heil und das Reich und die Macht,
und die Kraft und die Macht un - sers
Obs
Str
Tutti
D7
G major
D major
B minor



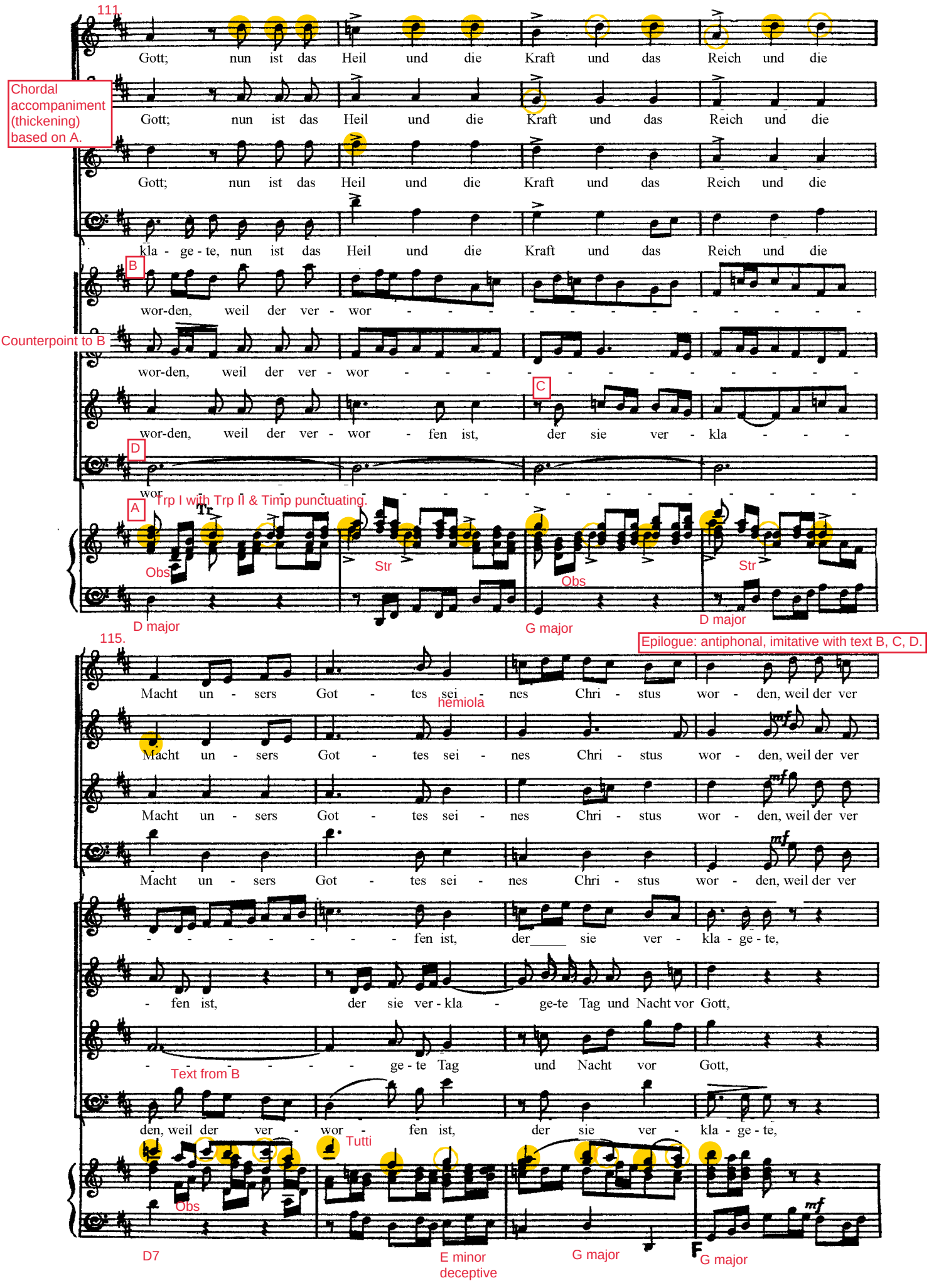
As indicated in the above side note, Bach often used "bassetto texture" (absence of continuo support) to depict something heavenly, unearthly, incomprehensible, or without foundation. Since the upper instruments play "colla parte" from m. 76, it is striking that the continuo does not wait to enter until the vocal bass entry in m. 97. Instead, it interjects descending "verworfen" ("cast down") figures derived from the first countersubject. The context of the biblical text sung here is given in the verse that precedes it, Revelation 12:9: "And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him." Sometimes the melodic descent of the continuo's interjection is preceded by a rising gesture, as if the dragon first rears up briefly.

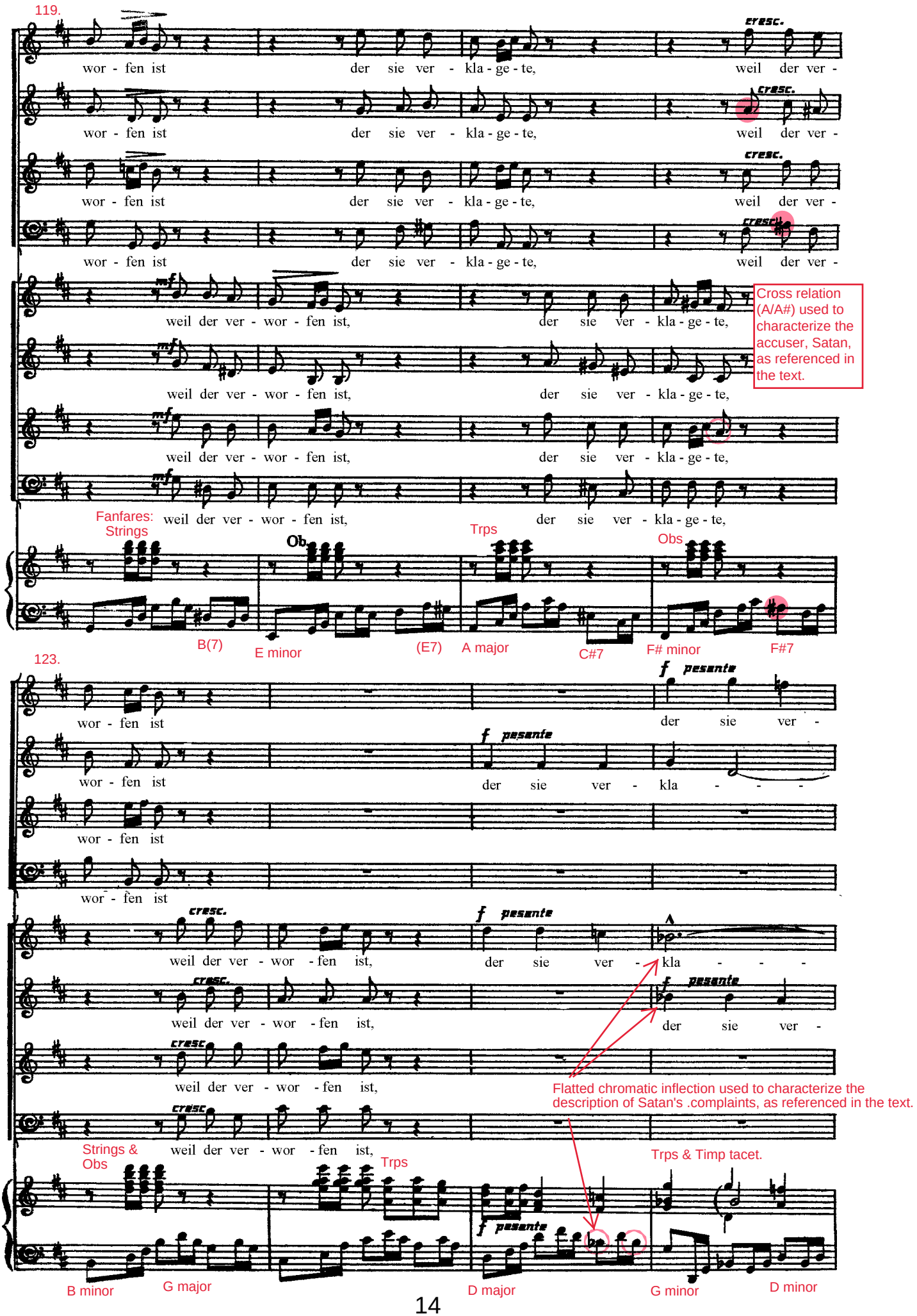

84.
mf e legato
wor - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - fen ist,
Heil und die Kraft und das Reich und die Macht un - sers Got - tes sei -
hemiola
- - ge - te, der sie ver - kla - - - - - - - - ge - te Tag
Heil und die Kraft und das Reich und die Macht un - sers Got - tes sei -
D7
G major
D major
E7
A major
89.
C
der sie ver - kla - - - - ge - te, der sie ver - kla - - - -
B
nes Chri - stus wor - den, weil der ver - wor - - - - - - - - - - - -
A
+Ob III; Vla has A inverted
nun ist das Heil und die Kraft und das Reich und die
D
und Nacht vor Gott,
Counterpoint to B
p legato
nes Chri - stus wor - den, weil der ver - wor - - - - - - - - - - - -
Counterpoint to A
nun ist das Heil und die Kraft und das Reich und die
A major
A7
D major
8va

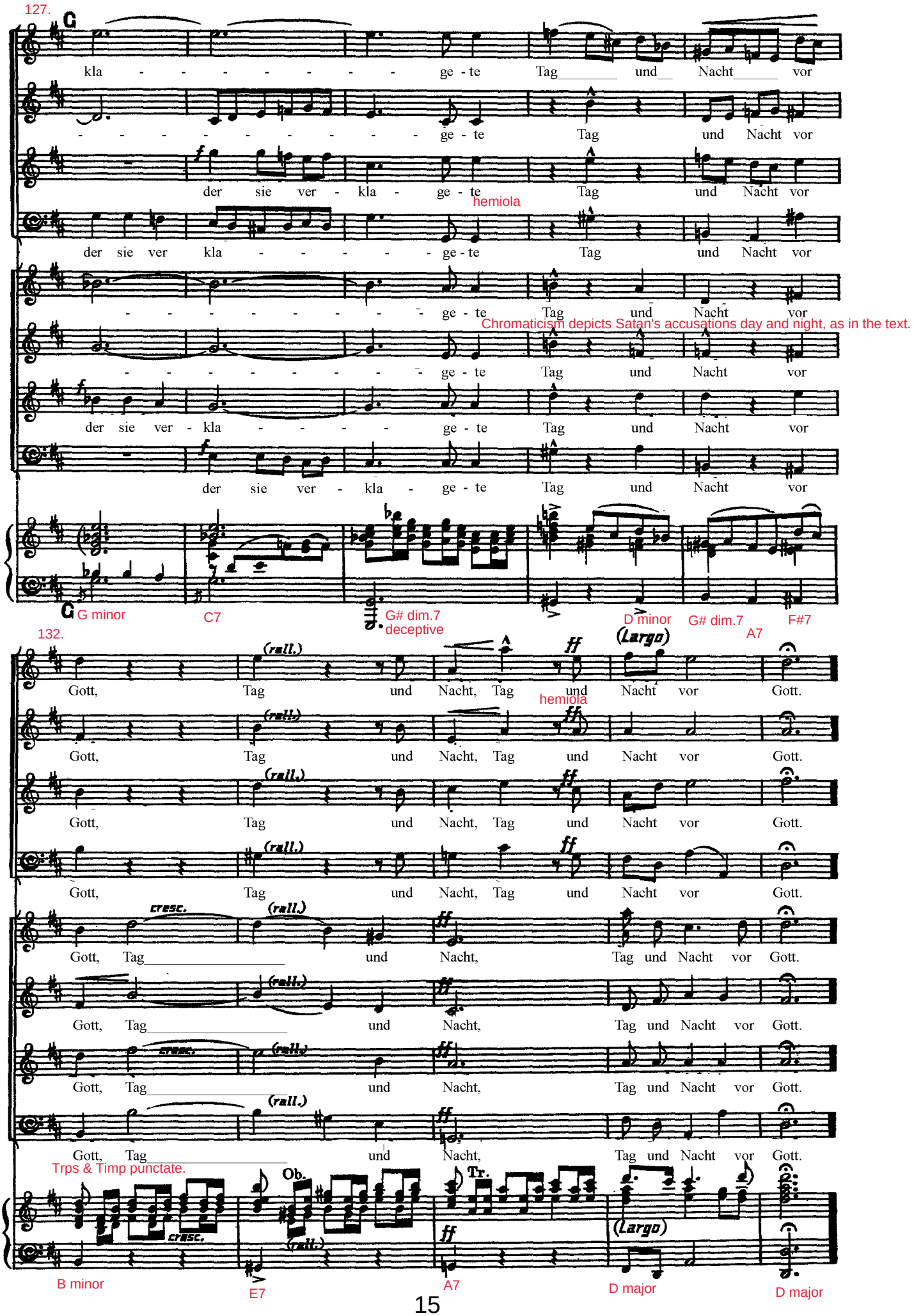

94.
Trps & Timp punctuate on downbeats;
Obs & Strings alternate responsorily.
D
E
C
B
A
ge - te Tag und Nacht vor Gott,
fen ist, der sie ver kla - - - - - ge - te,
pesante
hemiola
p leggiero
Macht un - sers Got - tes sei - nes Chri - stus wor - den, weil der ver - wor - - -
nun ist das Heil und die
der sie ver - kla - ge - te Tag und Nacht vor Gott,
fen ist, der sie ver - kla - - - - - ge - te,
cresc.
Macht un - sers Got - tes sei - nes Chri - stus wor - den, weil der ver - wor - - -
Counterpoint to A
nun ist das Heil und die
Oh.
Str
99.
D major
E
D major
der sie ver - kla - ge - te Tag
hemiola
der sie ver - kla - - - - - - - - - ge - te Tag
fen ist,
Kraft und das Reich und die Macht un - sers Got - tes sei -
der sie ver - kla - ge - te Tag
der sie ver - kla - - - - - - - - - ge - te Tag
fen ist,
Kraft und das Reich und die Macht un - sers Got - tes sei -
Ob.
Obs
Str
8va
D major
E7
Ped.
F# minor
deceptive


103.
Counterpoint to B
und Nacht vor Gott, weil der ver - wor - - - - - - - - -
D
und Nacht vor Gott,
C
der sie ver - kla - - - - - - ge - te, der sie ver -
B
nes Chri - stus wor - den, weil der ver - wor - - - - - - - -
A
cresc.
und Nacht vor Gott, nun ist das Heil und die Kraft und das
und Nacht vor Gott, nun ist das Heil und die Kraft und das
Chordal accompaniment (thickening) to subject, A.
der sie ver - kla - ge - te, nun ist das Heil und die Kraft und das
nes Chri - stus wor - den, nun ist das Heil und die Kraft und das
Trps and Timp punctuate.
Str
A major
A major
107.
hemiola
- - - - - fen ist, der sie ver - kla - ge - te Tag und Nacht ver
der sie ver - kla - ge - te Tag und Nacht vor
kla - - - - - - - - - - ge - te Tag und Nacht vor
- - - - - - - - - - fen ist, der sie ver -
Reich und die Macht un - sers Got - tes sei - nes Chri - stus
Reich und die Macht un - sers Got - tes sei - nes Chri - stus
Reich und die Macht un - sers Got - tes sei - nes Chri - stus
Reich und die Macht un - sers Got - tes sei - nes Chri - stus
Str
A major
A7
B minor
deceptive
D major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 50




119.
wor - fen ist der sie ver - kla - ge - te, weil der ver -
cresc.
weil der ver - wor - fen ist, der sie ver - kla - ge - te,
mf
Cross relation (A/A#) used to characterize the accuser, Satan, as referenced in the text.
Fanfares: Strings
Ob
Trps
Obs
B(7)
E minor
(E7)
A major
C#7
F# minor
F#7
123.
f pesante
der sie ver - kla - - -
Flatted chromatic inflection used to characterize the description of Satan's .complaints, as referenced in the text.
Strings & Obs
Trps
Trps & Timp tacet.
B minor
G major
D major
G minor
D minor


127.
kla - - - - - - - - ge - te Tag und Nacht vor
- - - - - - - - - - ge - te Tag und Nacht vor
der sie ver - kla - ge - te Tag und Nacht vor
hemiola
der sie ver kla - - - - - ge - te Tag und Nacht vor
- - - - - - - - - ge - te Tag und Nacht vor
Chromaticism depicts Satan's accusations day and night, as in the text.
- - - - - - - - - ge - te Tag und Nacht vor
der sie ver - kla - - - - ge - te Tag und Nacht vor
der sie ver - kla - ge - te Tag und Nacht vor
G G minor
C7
G# dim.7
deceptive
D minor
G# dim.7
A7
F#7
132.
Gott, Tag und Nacht, Tag und Nacht vor Gott.
(rall.)
(Largo)
hemiola
Gott, Tag und Nacht, Tag und Nacht vor Gott.
Gott, Tag und Nacht, Tag und Nacht vor Gott.
Gott, Tag und Nacht, Tag und Nacht vor Gott.
cresc.
Gott, Tag und Nacht, Tag und Nacht vor Gott.
Gott, Tag und Nacht, Tag und Nacht vor Gott.
Gott, Tag und Nacht, Tag und Nacht vor Gott.
Gott, Tag und Nacht, Tag und Nacht vor Gott.
Trps & Timp punctate.
Ob.
Tr.
B minor
E7
A7
D major
D major