Last changed: 8 December 2025.

Bach Cantatas BWV 175

Introduction & updates at melvinunger.com.

Pastoral Cantata re: Jesus as Good Shepherd.

Form: Recit (T) - Aria (A) - Recit (T) - Aria (T) - Recit (alto/bass) - Aria (B) - Chorale.
The cantata 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).

NBA I/14; BC A89
3. Day of Pentecost (BWV 184, 175)
*Acts 8:14–17 (Baptism of Holy Ghost comes to believers in Samaria)
*John 10:1–11 (Jesus identifies himself as the true shepherd)
Librettist: Christiane Mariane von Ziegler (see note).
(Text greatly modified by someone: J. S. Bach?) For a comparison of the two versions, see Martin Petzoldt, "Bach-Kommentar" 2:1042–1045.
FP: 22 May 1725 Leipzig (St. Nicholas)

J.S. Bach

Cantata No. 175

Er rufet seinen Schafen mit Namen

For Alfred Dürr's description of the relationship between Gospel reading and cantata libretto, see note.

175/1. **(Recitativo.)** (♩ = 60.) •Shepherd calls sheep by name & leads them: John 10:3 (175/1).

Tenore.

Instrumentation:
Tromba I, II (Rare; usually 1 or 3 with timpani).
Recorder I, II, III
Vln I, II
Vla
Violoncello piccolo (see 2 notes)
SATB
Continuo, Organo

Note: Upper strings do not play until no. 5.

Tenor acts first as Evangelist (narrator) with a text from the Gospel reading; the recorders suggest a pastoral setting.

Er ru-fet sei-nen Scha-fen mit Namen und

Rec I, II, III

p Fauxbourdon voicing...

Note: Shepherds reportedly slept in the open doorway of an enclosure where multiple flocks were kept at night. In the morning, shepherds called out their individual flocks.

For biblical background, see note.

G major G7

von Ziegler 1728: "aus"

3

füh - ret sie hin - aus.

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

C major D7 G major G major

Aria. (Larghetto ♩. = 68.)

Modified da capo form

•Yearning for shepherd and green pasture (175/2).

175/2.

Rec I, II, III

1.

Recorders and the 12/8 siciliano rhythm were traditionally associated with shepherds and pastoral texts. The alto voice is often the voice of faith. See Martin Petzoldt, *Bach-Kommentar* 2:110.

mf Ritornello is related to the vocal line, a prayer for the Shepherd to lead. Fauxfourdon style.

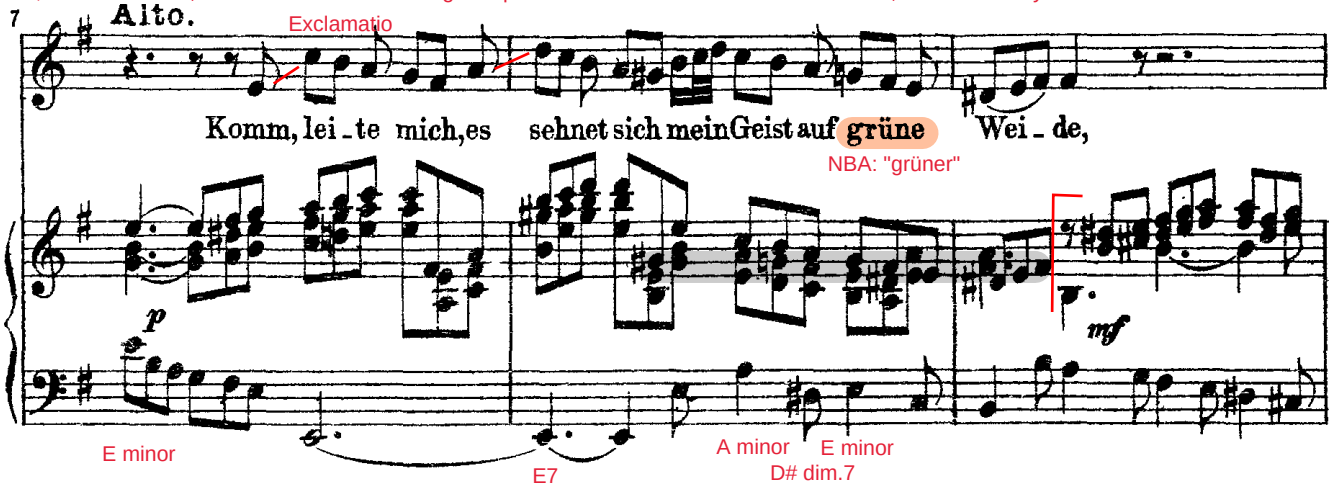
E minor (Concerning the significance of E minor, see note.) E minor

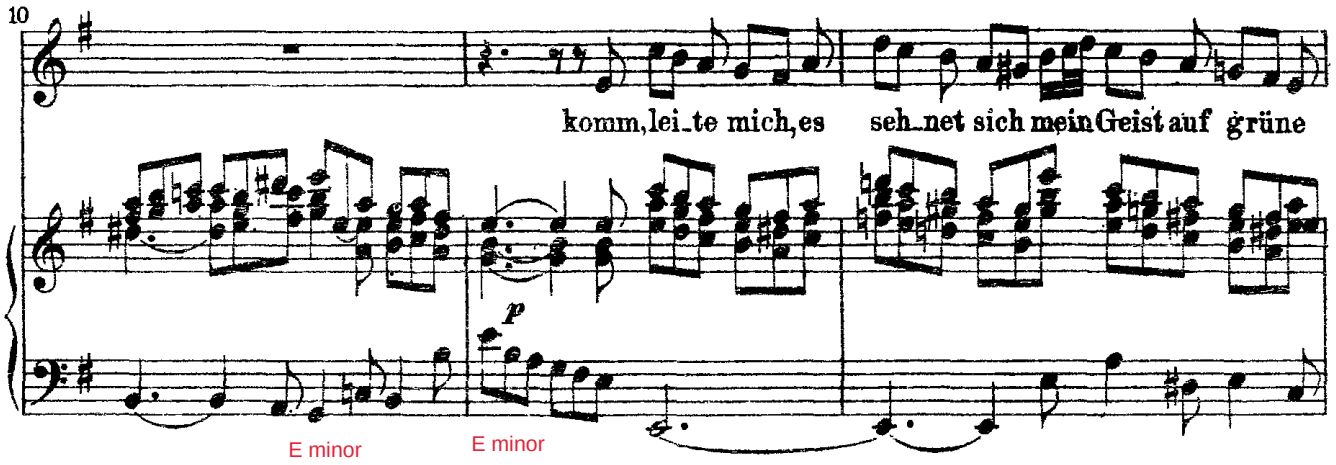
4

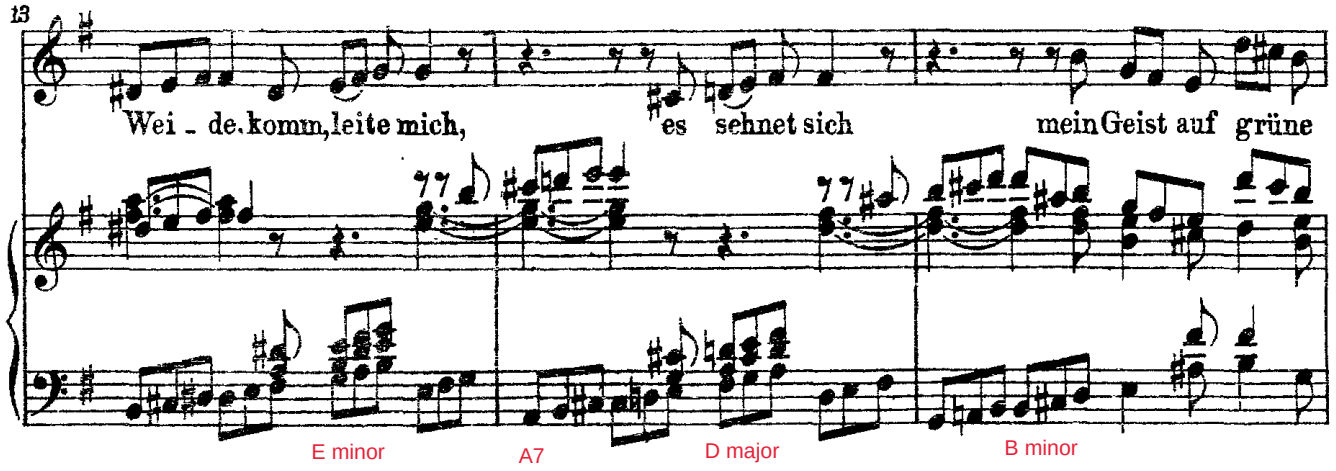
For biblical background, see note.

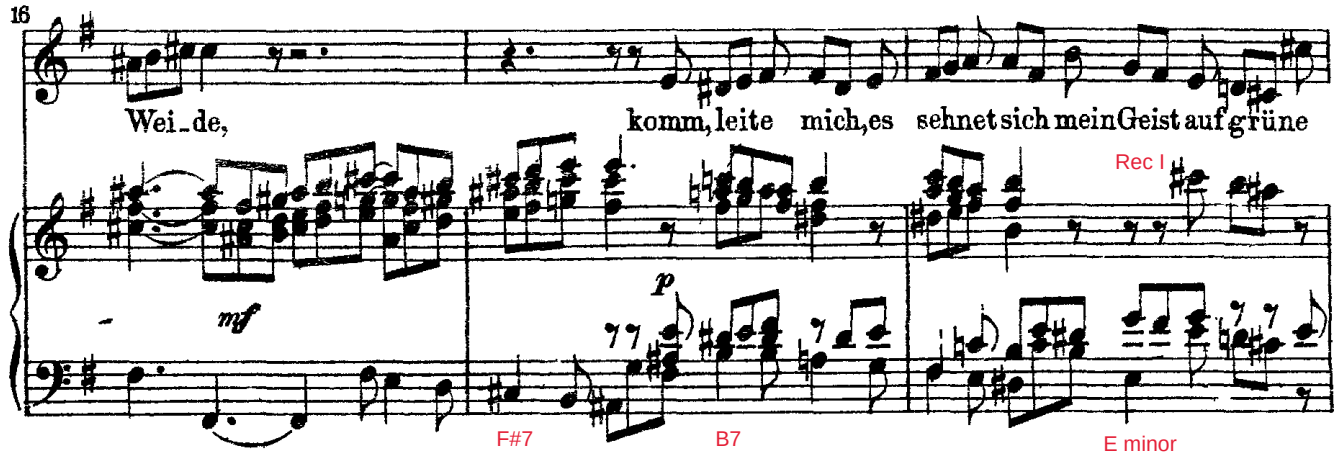
E major A minor A minor B7 E minor

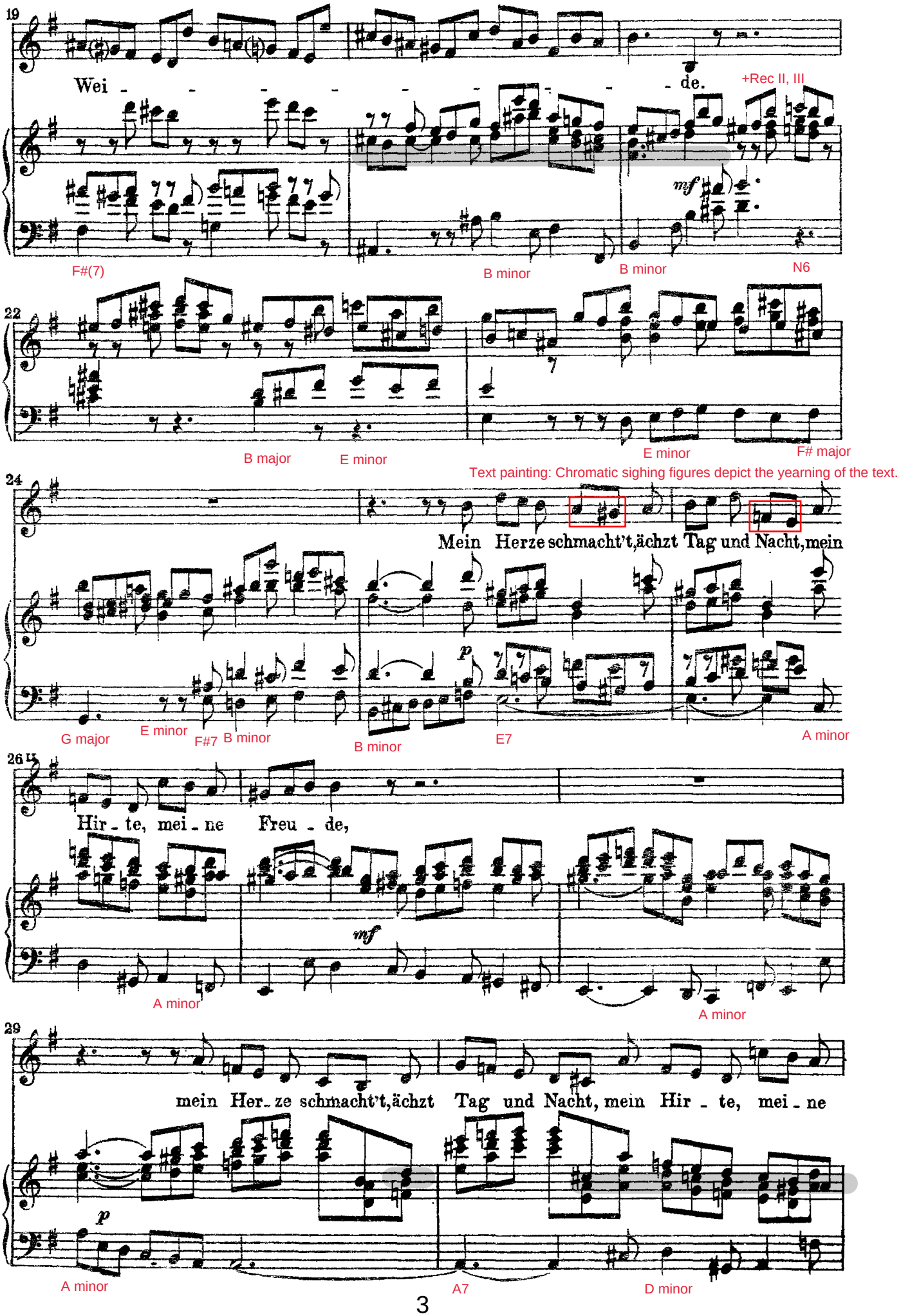
Text painting: Scalar figues in 12/8 meter depict the desired leading of the Good Shepherd, while chromaticism and exclamatory leaps in melancholic minor keys depict the yearning for green pasture. The text alludes to the Gospel reading and, more specifically, to Psalm 23:1–3: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul…



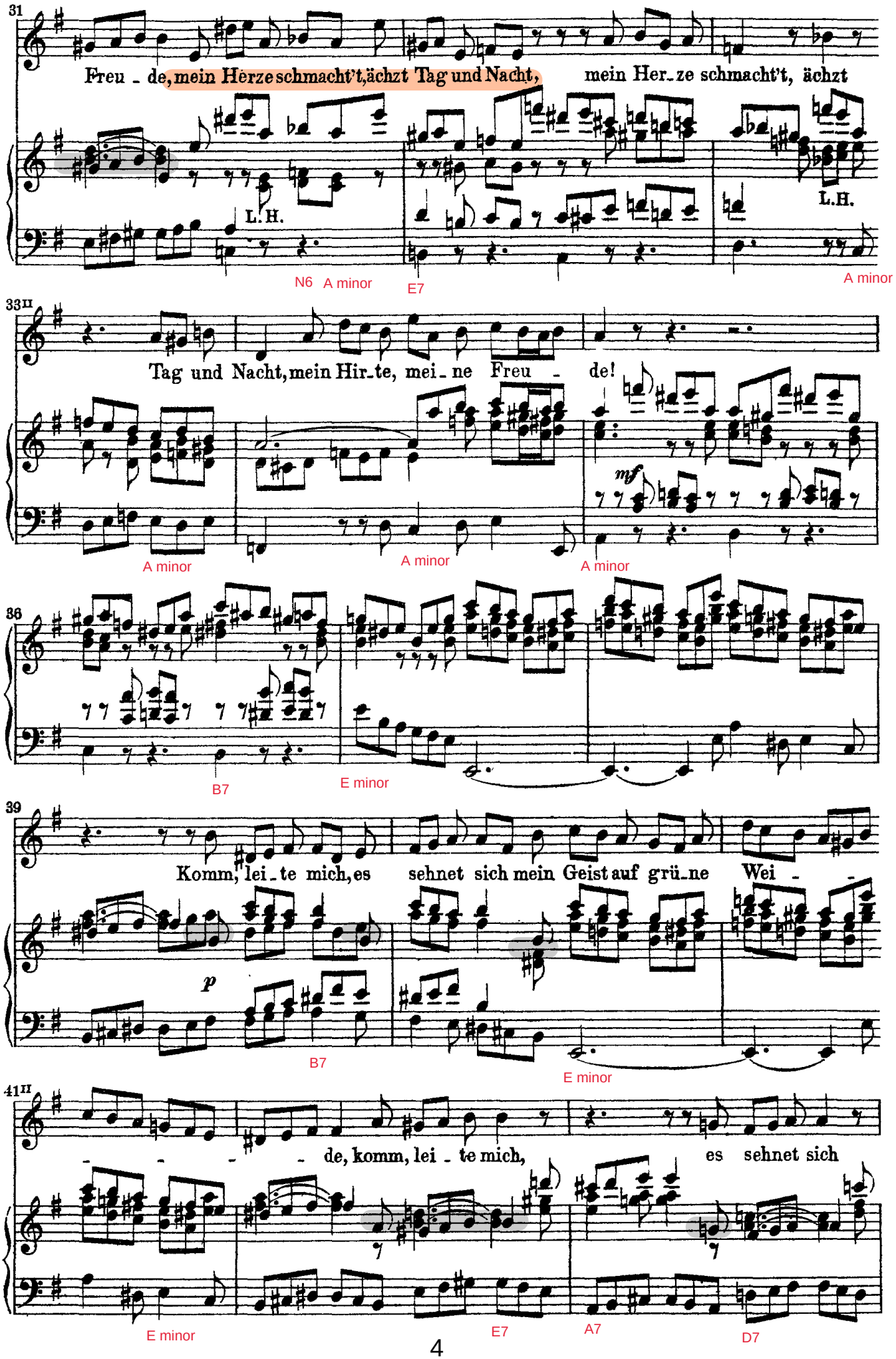


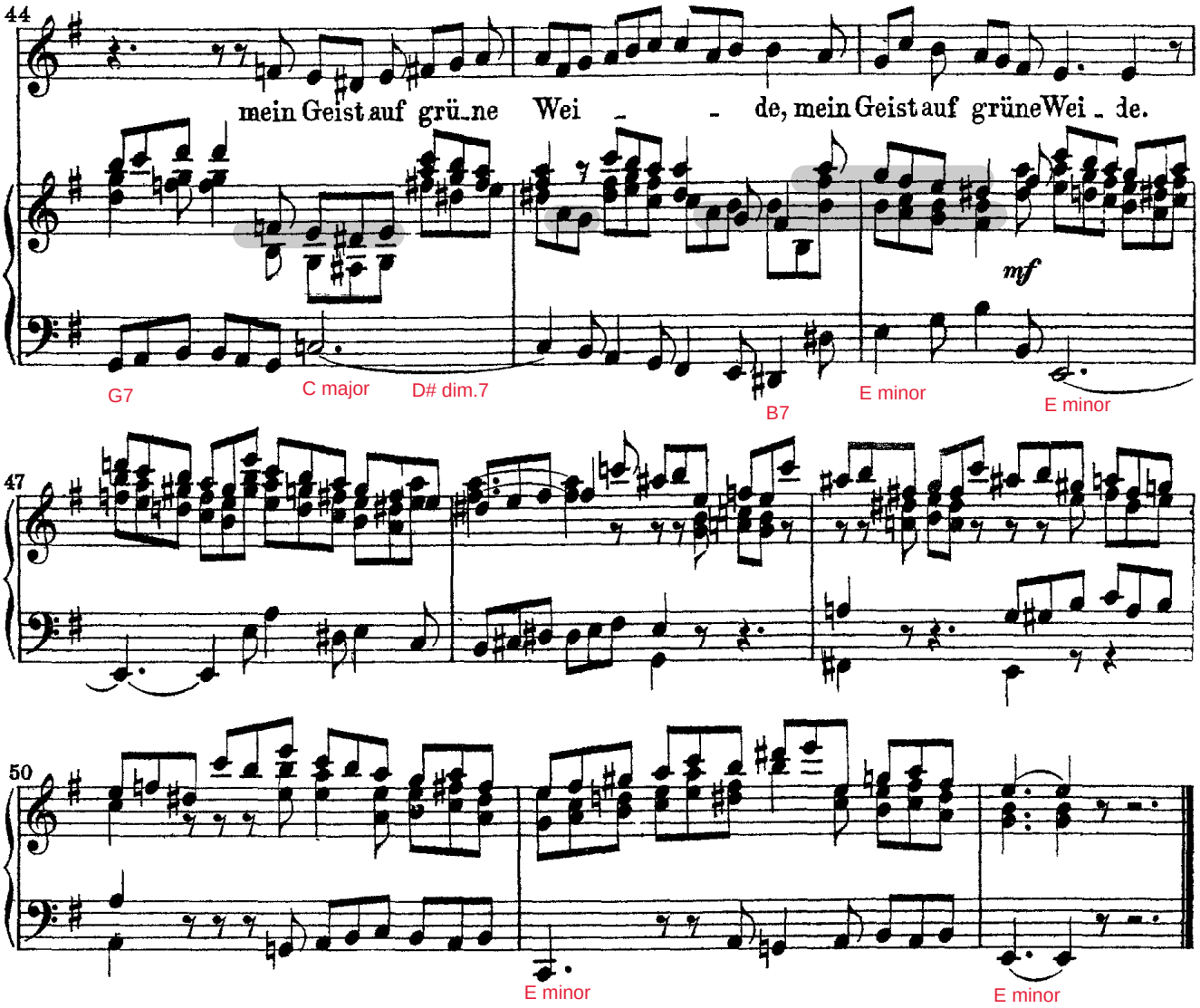





19
Wei - - - - - - - - - - de.
+Rec II, III
mf
F#(7)
B minor
B minor
N6
22
B major
E minor
E minor
F# major
Text painting: Chromatic sighing figures depict the yearning of the text.
24
Mein Herze schmacht't,ächzt Tag und Nacht,mein
p
G major
E minor
F#7
B minor
B minor
E7
A minor
26
Hir - te, mei - ne Freu - de,
mf
A minor
A minor
29
mein Her - ze schmacht't,ächzt Tag und Nacht, mein Hir - te, mei - ne
p
A minor
A7
D minor

Chromaticism with sighing figures for "My heart pines, groans day and night..."





Recitativo.

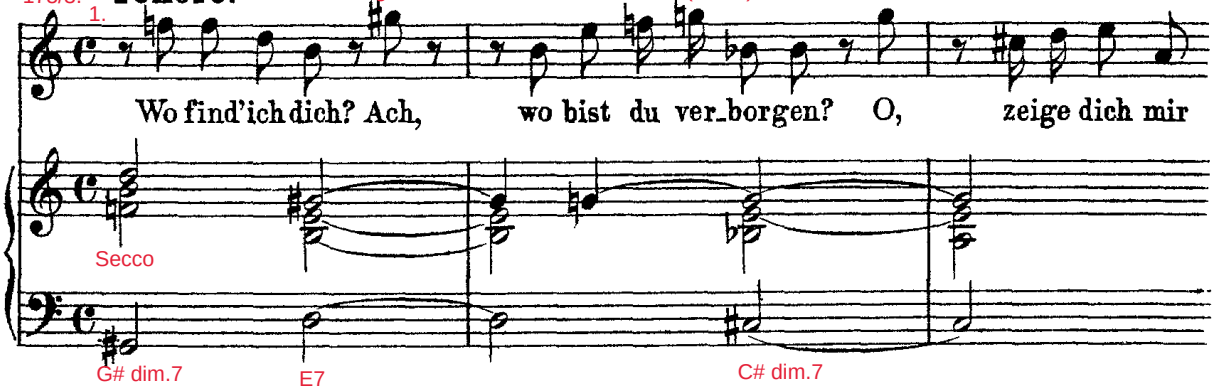
Tenore.

175/3. 1.

The text alludes to such biblical passages as Song of Solomon 3:1: Upon my bed by night I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but found him not; I called him, but he gave no answer. See also Job 23:3.

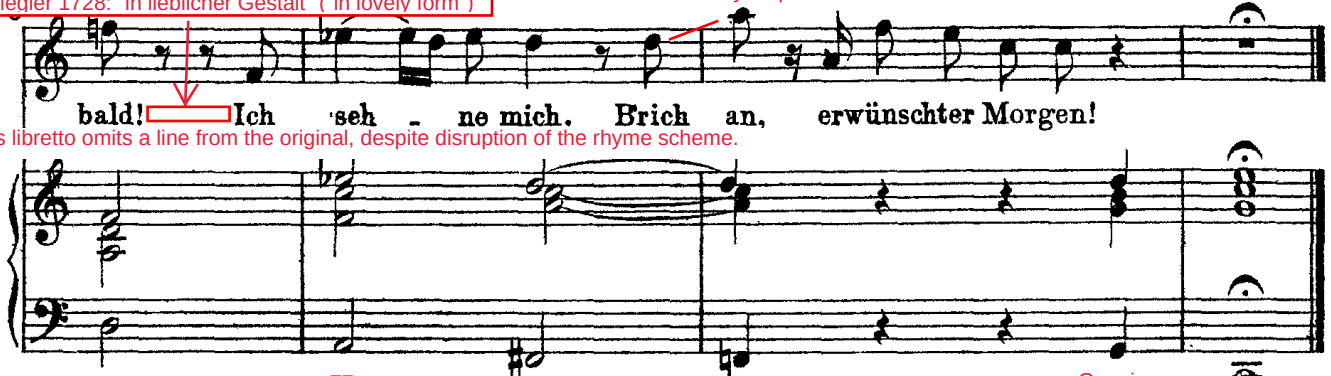
- Yearning for God: Where do I find thee? (175/3).

For biblical background, see note.



Von Ziegler 1728: "in lieblicher Gestalt" ("in lovely form")

Exclamatory leap



Bach's libretto omits a line from the original, despite disruption of the rhyme scheme.

C major (the key of the following movement).

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). Here the believer recognizes and turns to the call of the Good Shepherd. Alfred Dürr writes, "This movement is a parody of the aria 'Dein Name gleich der Sonnen geh' from the secular cantata BWV 173a, though the substantial differences between the verse schemes of the two texts led to numerous compositional alterations; evidently Bach's intention of resorting to parody had not been discussed with the poet in advance." See Dürr/Jones, p. 370.

175/4. **Aria.**

(Poco allegro ♩ = 72.)

(Parody of a birthday cantata for Prince Leopold in Cöthen, BWV 173a/7, which was in A major and had only 4 lines of text. See note for more.)

●Jesus recognized as true shepherd (175/4).

Violoncello piccolo (see note at no. 1)

1.

Editorial realization

mf

C major (For the significance of C, see note.)

The bourée-like rhythm reinforces the sentiment of joyful anticipation.

Lines 1–2 (Stollen 1 of bar form).
Von Ziegler 1728: "Mir ist, als seh ich dich schon"

Form (Rhyme: ABABCDCD)
Ritornello (mm. 1-8) CM
Lines 1-2 (9-32) CM-GM
Rit (32-40) GM-CM
Lines 3-4 (41-64) CM-GM
Rit (64-72) GM
Lines 5-6 (72-93) GM-Am
Rit (93-97) Am
Lines 7-8 (97-126) Am-CM
Rit (126-130) CM

Bach sets the text in a kind of bar form (aab), in which the music for lines 1–2 is essentially repeated for lines 3–4). Ritornellos separate the couplets. Each couplet repeats the first line of text—almost like a "motto" of a "Divisenarie" (though the music does not repeat for the restatement of the text.

nore

Es dün - ket

5.

p

For biblical background, see note.

C# dim.7 D minor G(7) C major C major

10

mich, ich seh dich kom - men,

mf

C# dim.7 D minor G(7)

15

es dün - ket mich, ich seh' dich

p

C major C major

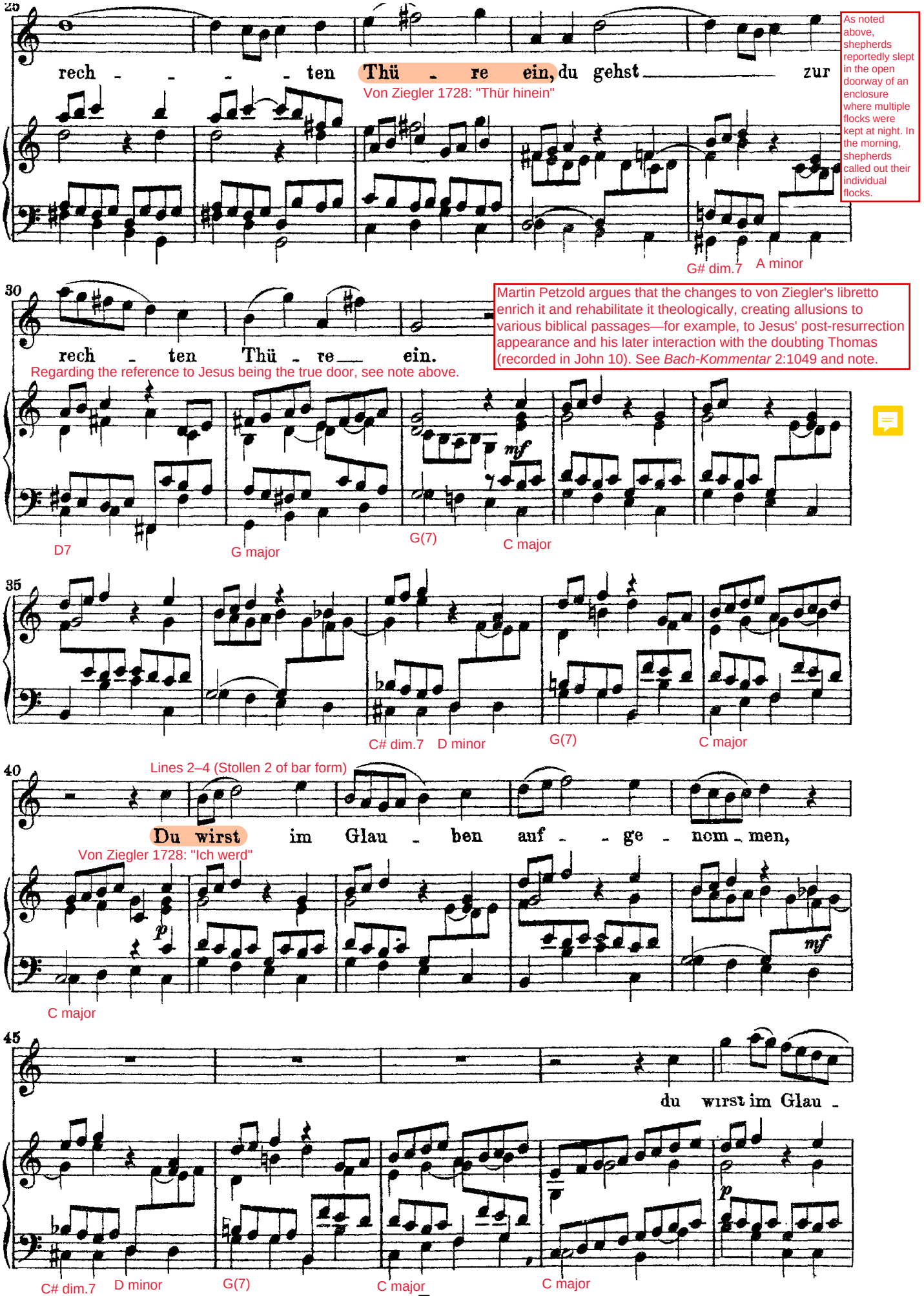
20

kom - men, du gehst zur

D major G major G major

The text alludes to the day's Gospel reading, in which Jesus says, "He who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man

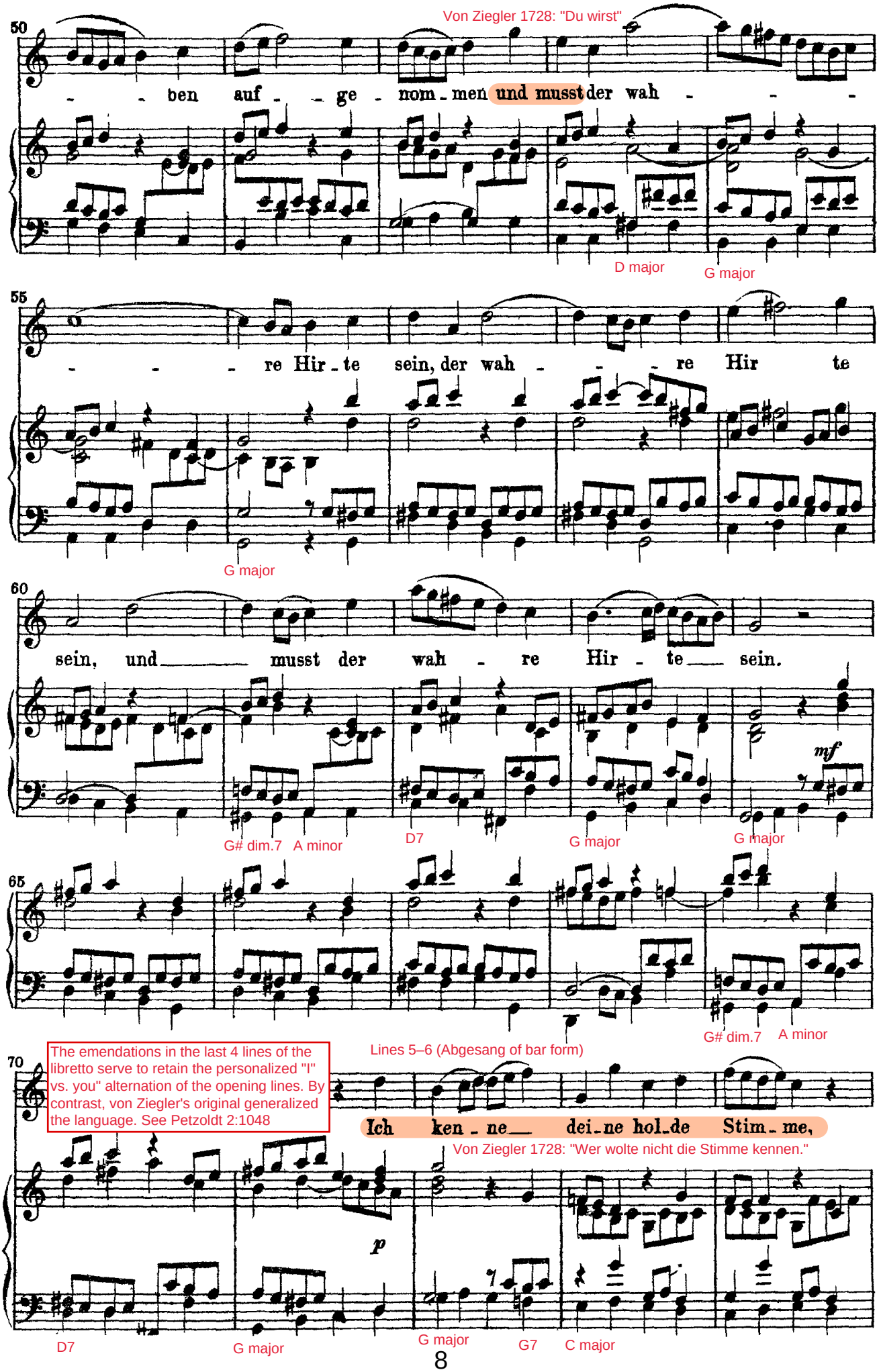
is a thief and a robber; but he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens; the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out…He goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow…I am the good shepherd."

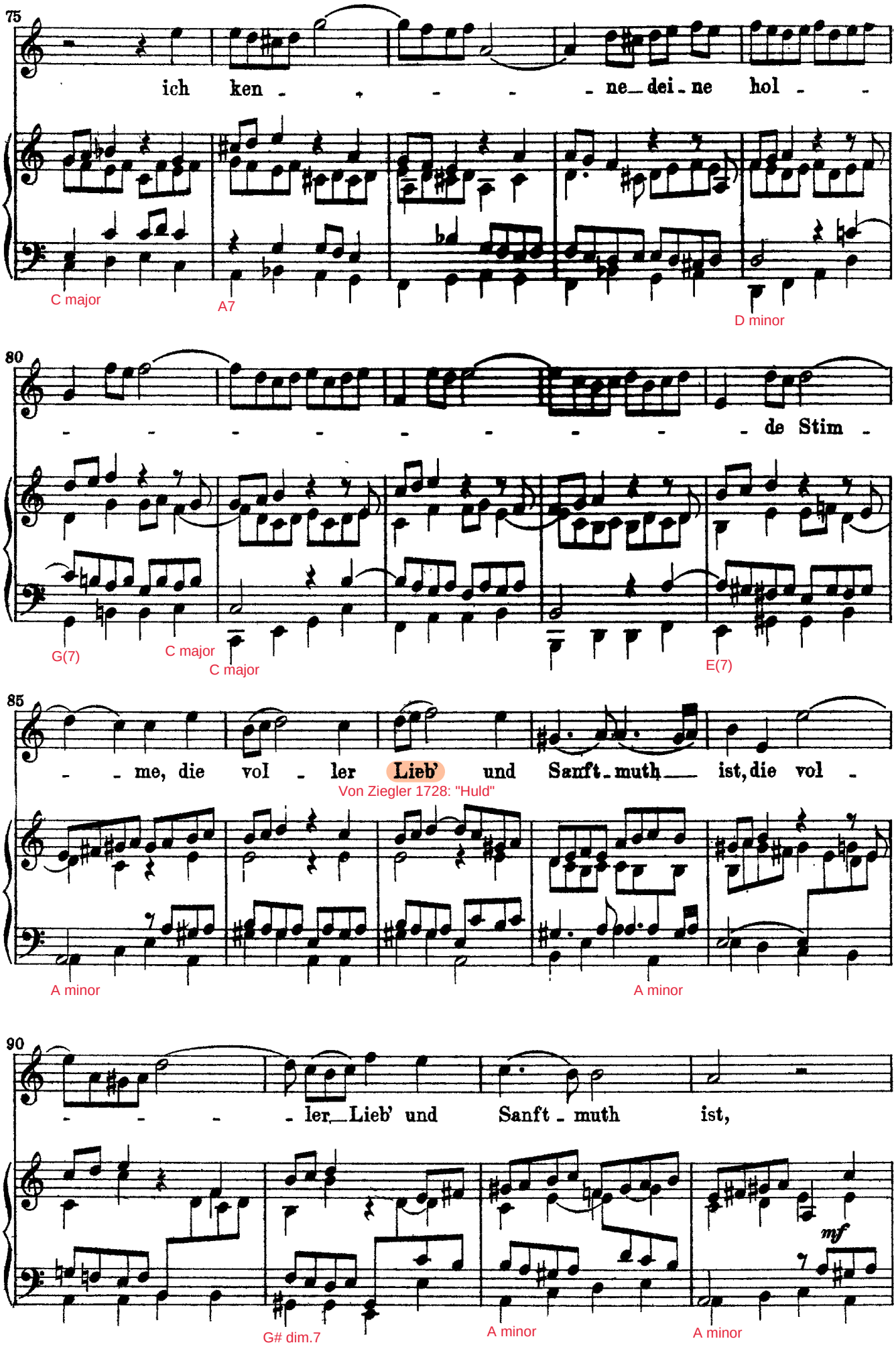


As noted above, shepherds reportedly slept in the open doorway of an enclosure where multiple flocks were kept at night. In the morning, shepherds called out their individual flocks.

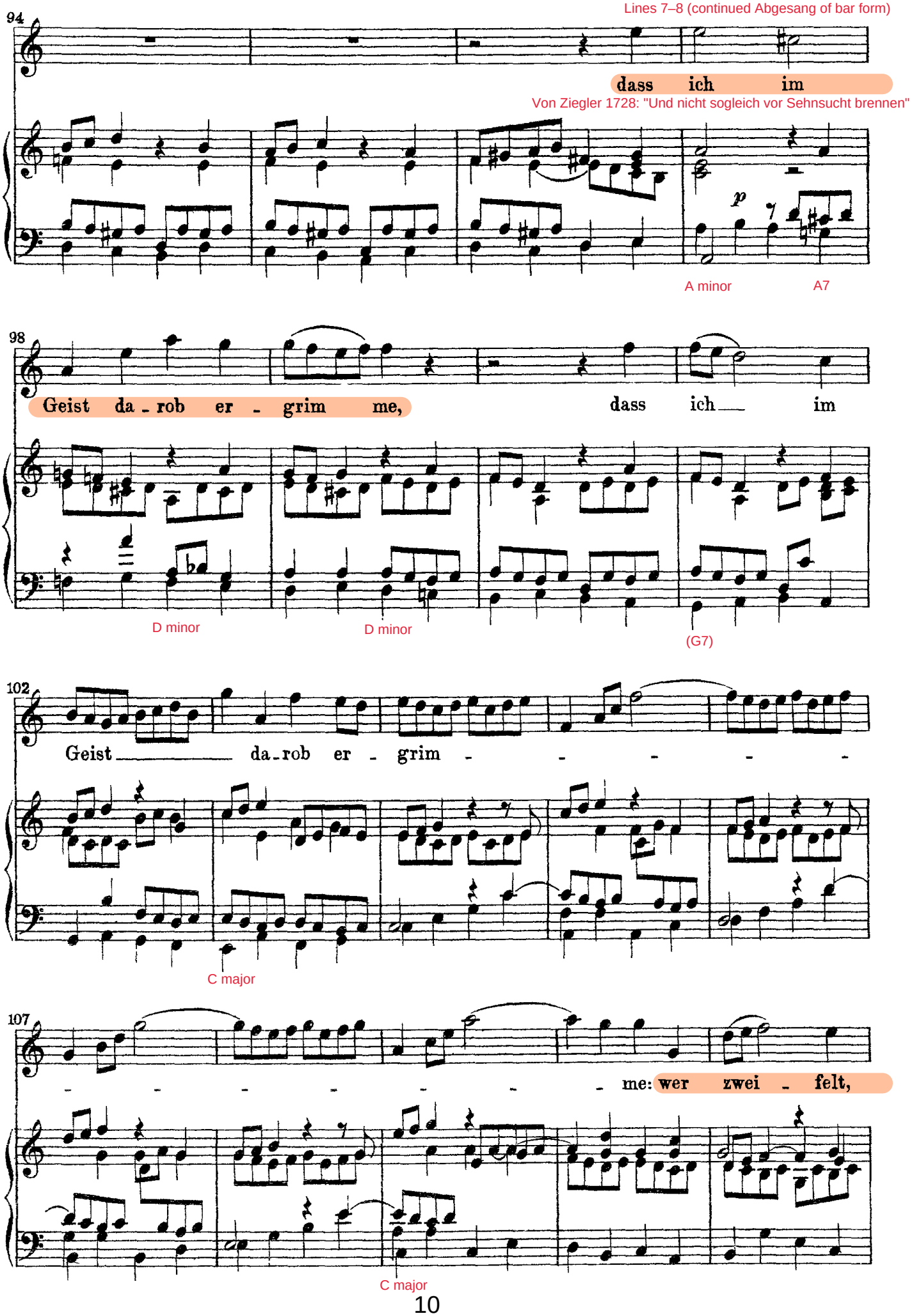
Martin Petzold argues that the changes to von Ziegler's libretto enrich it and rehabilitate it theologically, creating allusions to various biblical passages—for example, to Jesus' post-resurrection appearance and his later interaction with the doubting Thomas (recorded in John 10). See *Bach-Kommentar* 2:1049 and note.

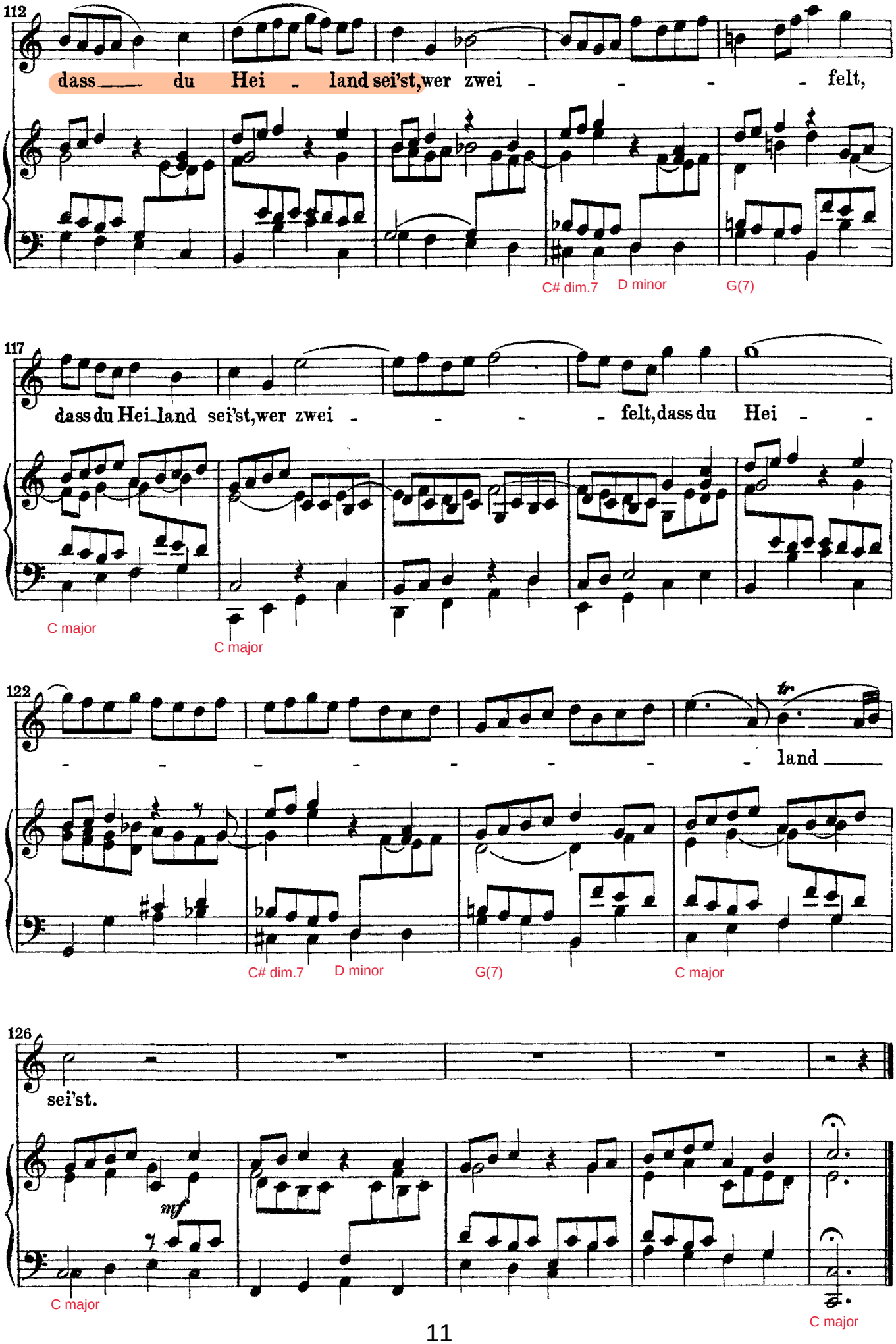
Regarding the reference to Jesus being the true door, see note above.


Von Ziegler 1728: "Du wirst"
50
- - ben auf - - ge - nom - men und musst der wah - - - -
D major
G major
55
- - - re Hir - te sein, der wah - - - re Hir te
G major
60
sein, und musst der wah - re Hir - te sein.
mf
G# dim.7
A minor
D7
G major
G major
65
G# dim.7
A minor
Lines 5–6 (Abgesang of bar form)
70
The emendations in the last 4 lines of the libretto serve to retain the personalized "I" vs. you" alternation of the opening lines. By contrast, von Ziegler's original generalized the language. See Petzoldt 2:1048
Ich ken - ne dei - ne hol - de Stim - me,
Von Ziegler 1728: "Wer wolte nicht die Stimme kennen."
p
D7
G major
G major
G7
C major


75
ich ken - - - - - ne dei - ne hol - -
C major
A7
D minor
80
- - - - - - - - - de Stim -
G(7)
C major
C major
E(7)
85
- - me, die vol - ler Lieb' und Sanft - muth ist, die vol -
Von Ziegler 1728: "Huld"
A minor
A minor
90
- - - - ler Lieb' und Sanft - muth ist,
mf
G# dim.7
A minor
A minor

Lines 7–8 (continued Abgesang of bar form)




112
dass du Hei - land sei'st, wer zwei - - - - felt,
C# dim.7
D minor
G(7)
117
dass du Hei_land sei'st, wer zwei - - - - felt, dass du Hei - -
C major
C major
122
- - - - - - - - land
C# dim.7
D minor
G(7)
C major
126
sei'st.
mf
C major
C major

The fifth movement combines a dictum (scripture) set as a secco recitative for alto, commentary set as and accompanied recitative for bass, and further commentary set as arioso for bass.

Secco

Recitativo.

175/5. 1. **Alto.** •Jesus' words not understood by reason: John 10:6 (175/5).

While the alto is often voice of faith, here it acts as Evangelist/ narrator. Bass is often the voice of authority (e.g., minister).

Sie ver_nah_men a_ber nicht, was es war, das er zu

Von Ziegler 1728: "nichts"

For biblical background, see note.

E major E7 A minor

Basso.

3

ih_nen ge_sa_get hat_te. Ach ja!_ Wir Menschen sind oft_mals den

Von Ziegler 1728: seynd gar offt"

p Strings

The text appears to allude to Psalm 38:13: But I am like a deaf man, I do not hear…

(This is the only movement o use the whole string complement.)

B7 E minor F# major

Von Ziegler 1728: "nicht kan erreichen, Was sein geheilgter Mund gesagt."

5

Tauben zu ver_gleichen: wenn die ver_blen_de_te Vernunft nicht weiss, was er ge_

F#7 B minor E#7 C# major

For a discussion of reason ("Vernunft") in Bach's cantatas, see See Eric Chafe, *Tonal Allegory in the Vocal Music of J. S. Bach* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 225–26, 239—244.

Animated strings stress the importance of Jesus' words. The text is repeated for emphasis: "When Jesus speaks with thee, that it is done for thy salvation."

7

…rioso ♩ = 66.)

sa_get hat_te. O Thörin! mer_ke doch, wenn Je_sus mit dir spricht, dass

Von Ziegler 1728: "Ihr Thoren, mercket doch, wann"

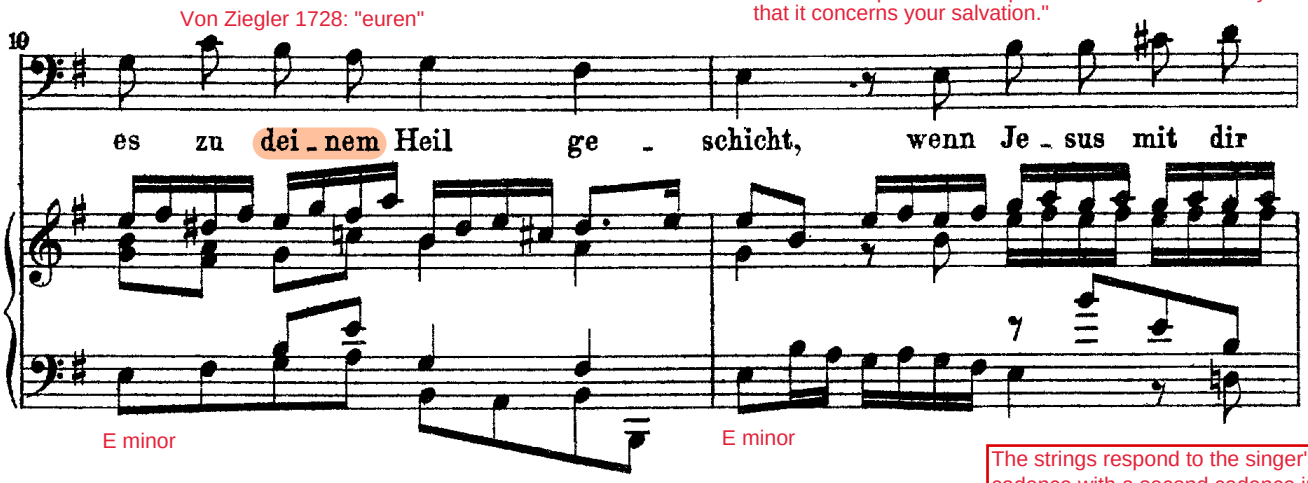
Von Ziegler 1728: "euch"

F# minor F# minor F#7 B minor B major B7

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 175

Von Ziegler 1728: "euren"

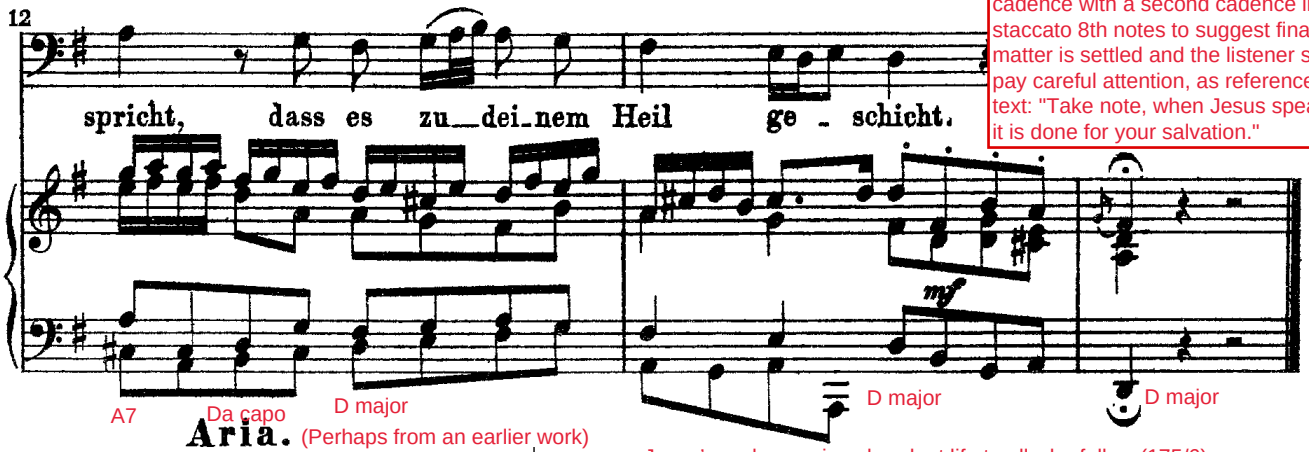
The text is repeated for emphasis: "When Jesus tells you that it concerns your salvation."



E minor

E minor

The strings respond to the singer's cadence with a second cadence in staccato 8th notes to suggest finality—the matter is settled and the listener should pay careful attention, as referenced in the text: "Take note, when Jesus speaks, that it is done for your salvation."



A7

Da capo

D major

D major

D major

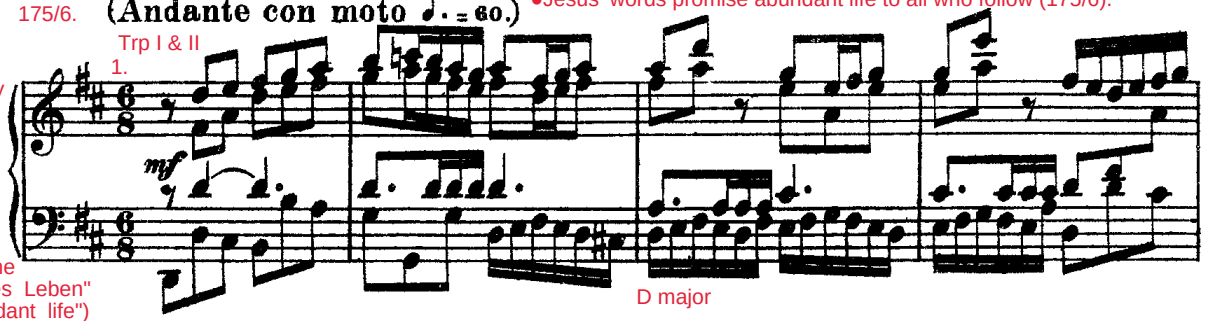
Aria. (Perhaps from an earlier work)

175/6. (Andante con moto ♩. = 80.)

•Jesus' words promise abundant life to all who follow (175/6).

Trp I & II

1.

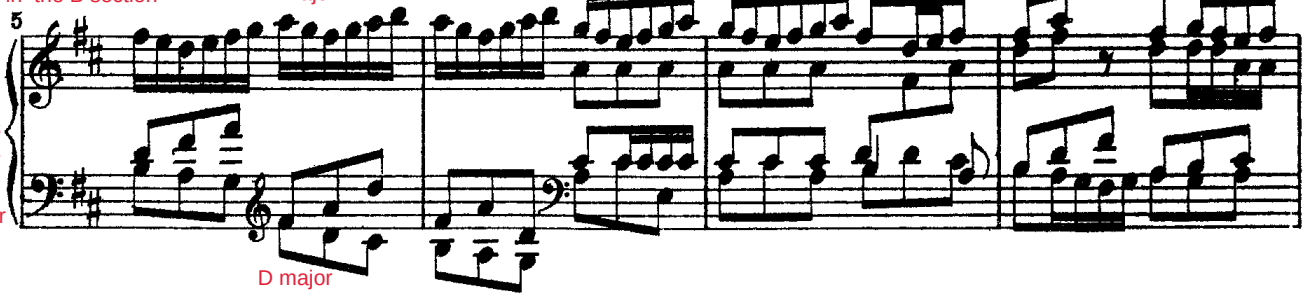


D major

D major

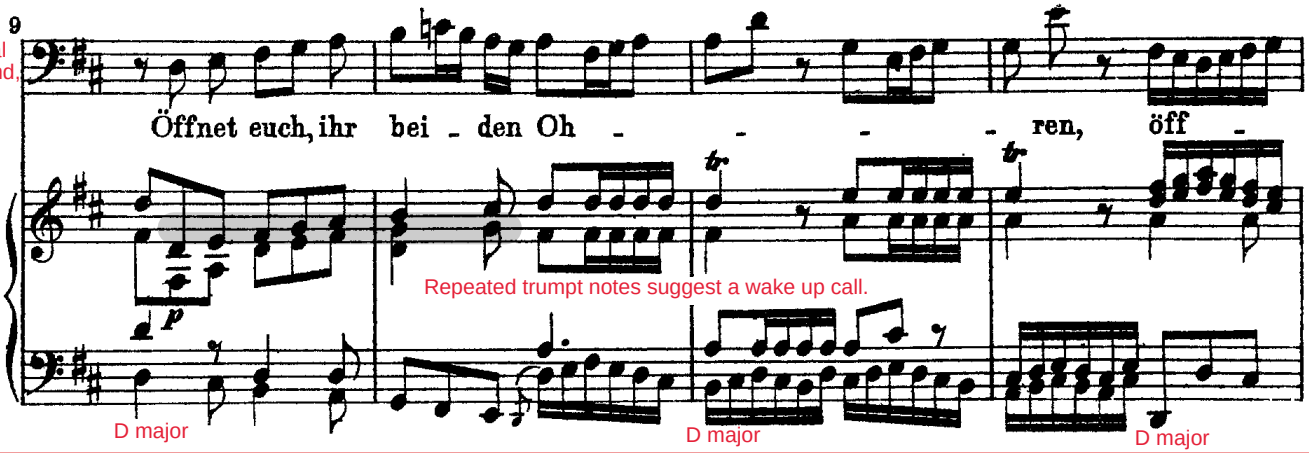
Within the context of a Messianic prophecy (see below), the two trumpets represent both a call to awake and Christ's victory over the devil and death, as referenced in the text. The lilting 6/8 meter suggests the "Gnade, Gnüge, volles Leben" ("grace, plenty, abundant life") mentioned in the B section (when the trumpets are silent).

Note: 2 trumpets is unusual. Bach normally used either 1 or 3 trumpets.



D major

For biblical background, see note.



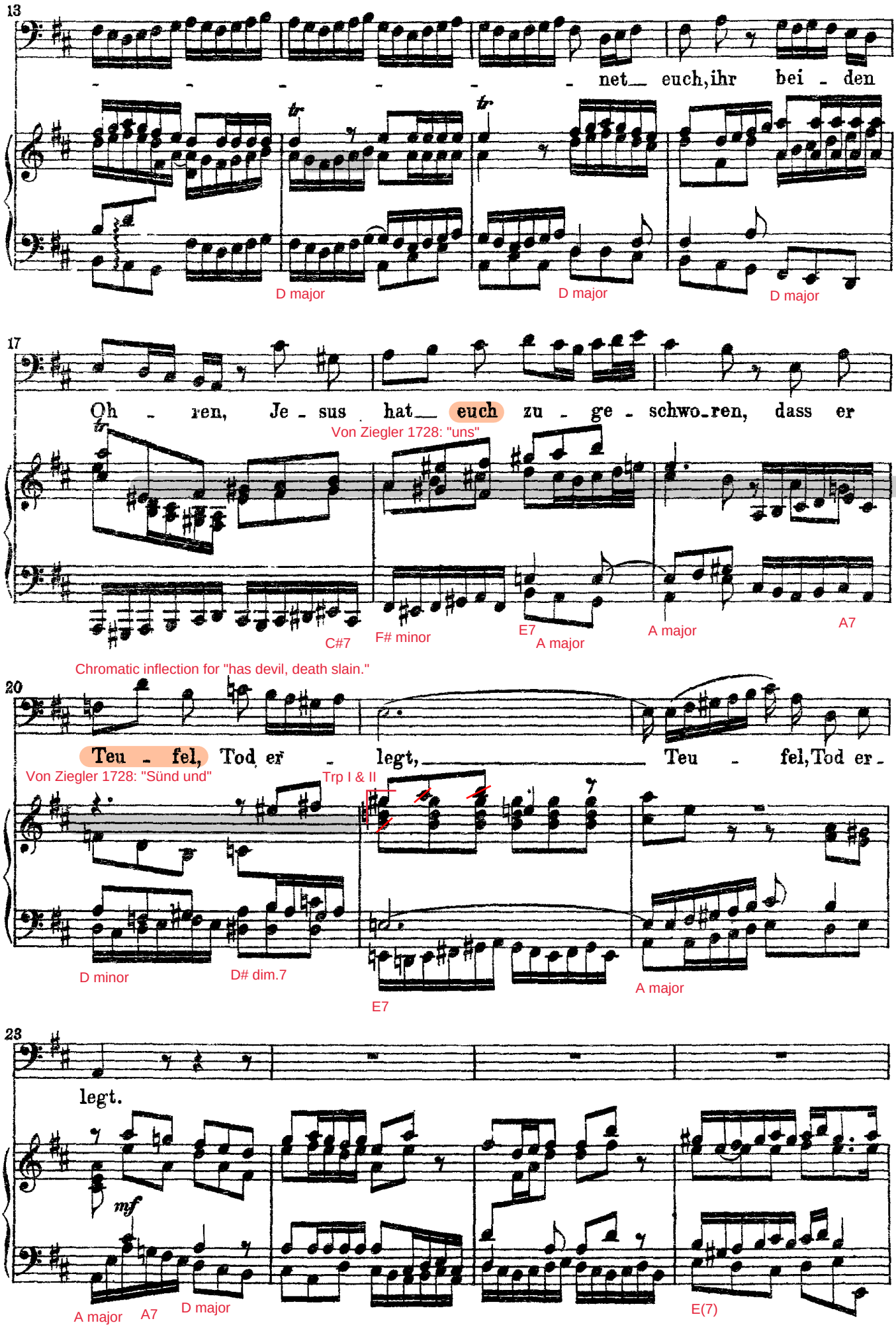
Repeated trumpt notes suggest a wake up call.

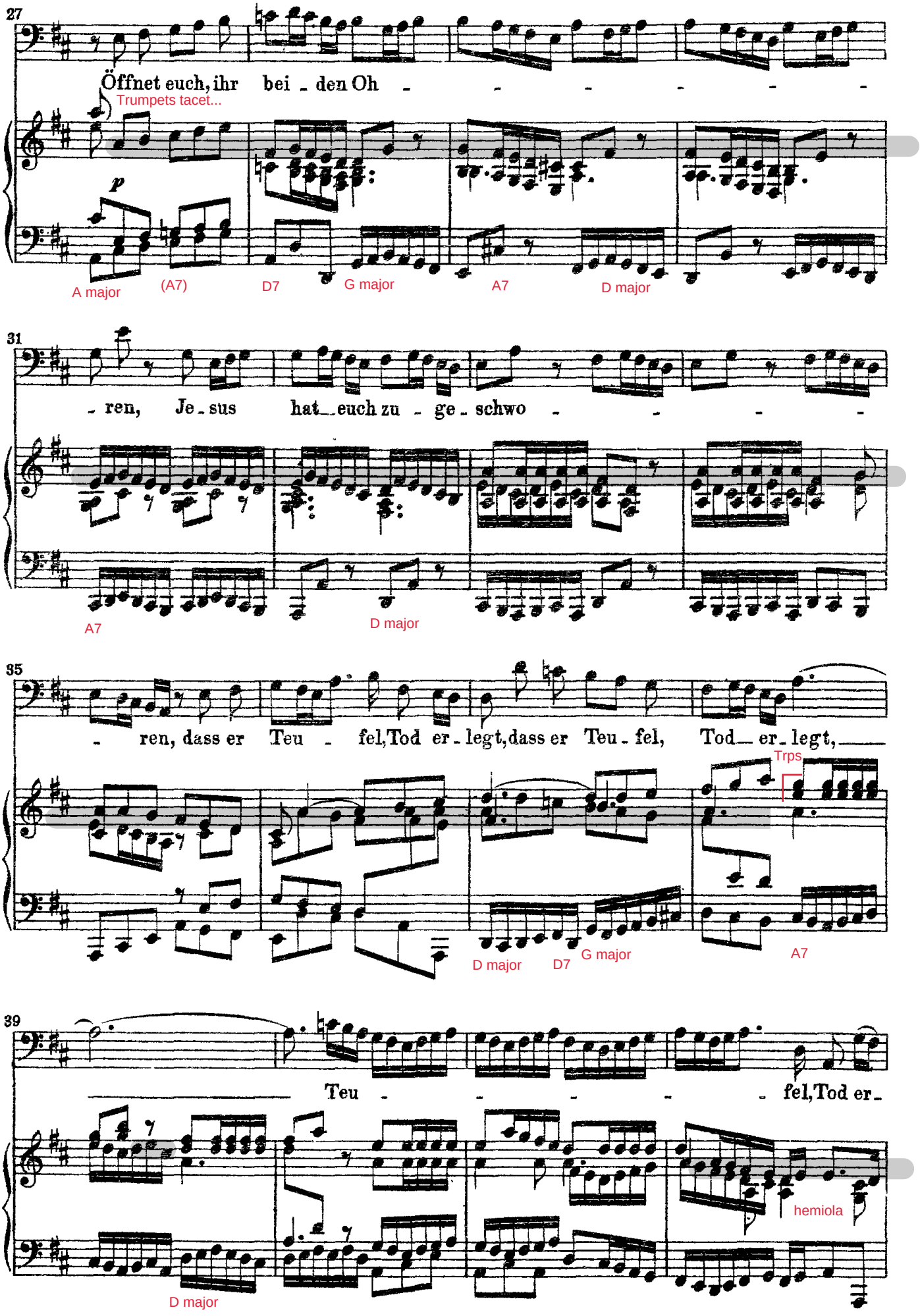
D major

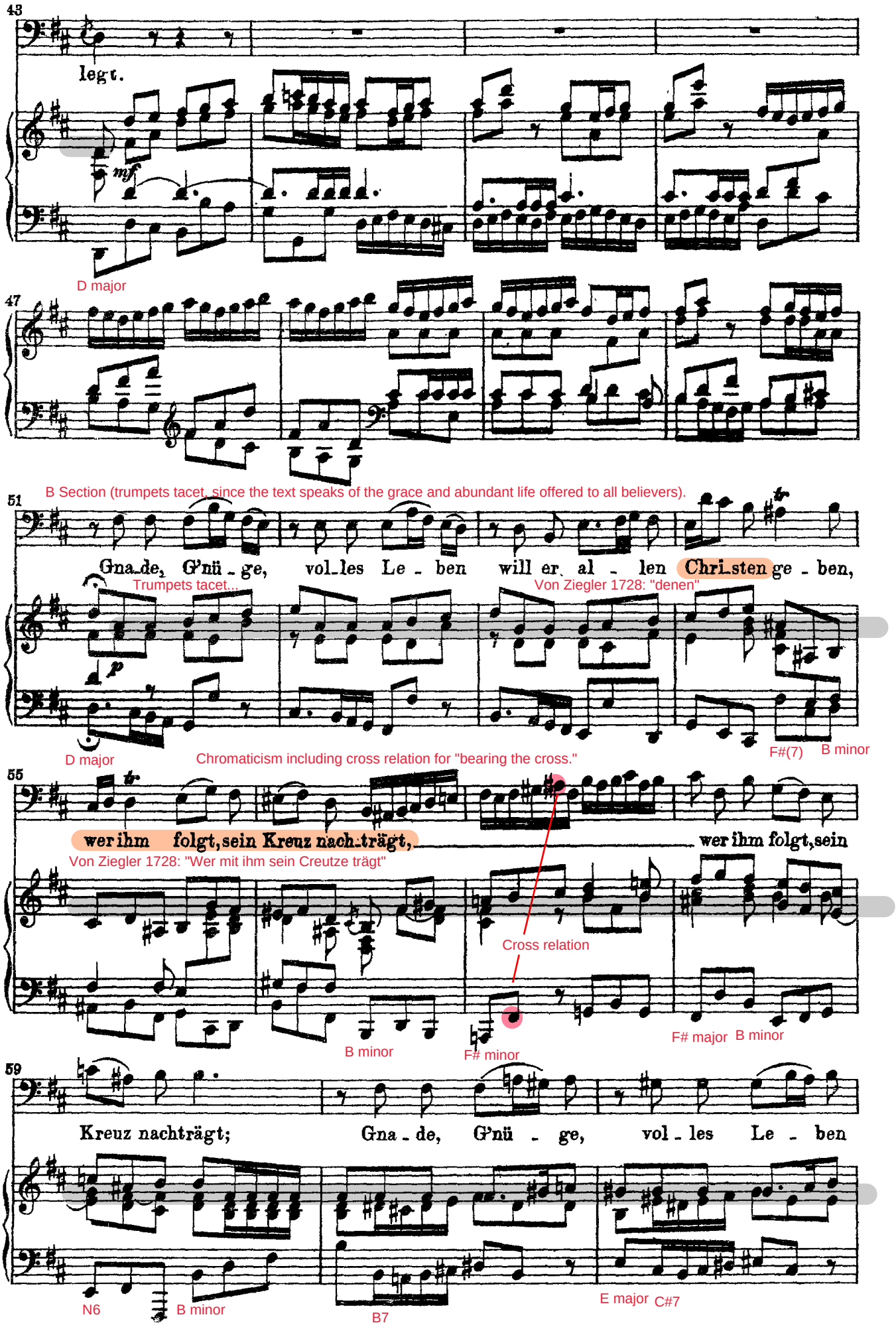
D major

D major

Martin Petzoldt notes that "opening the ears of the deaf" fulfills the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 35:5: Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. See *Bach-Kommentar* 2:1050.

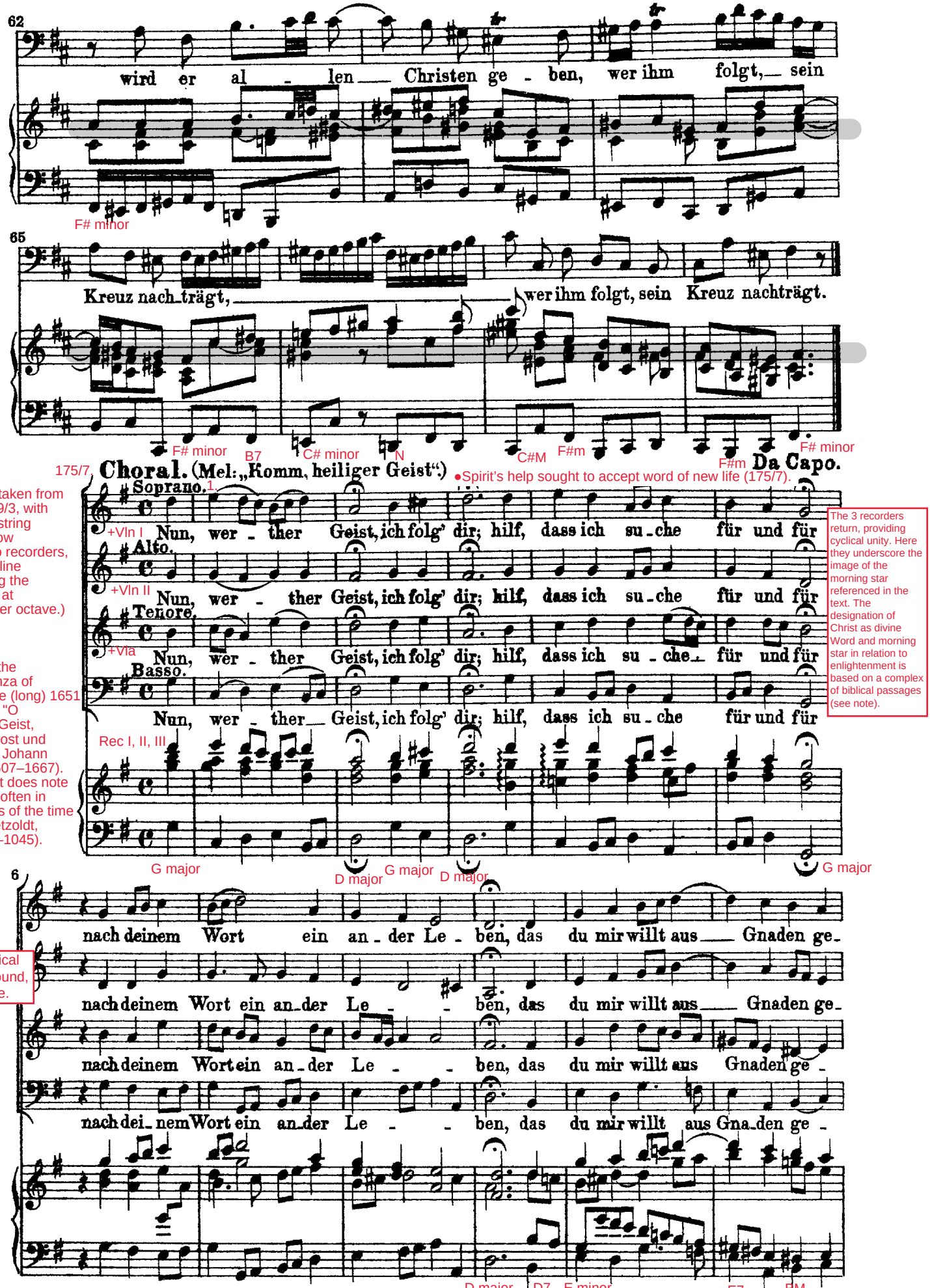

13
net euch, ihr bei - den
D major
D major
D major
17
Oh - ren, Je - sus hat euch zu - ge - schwo-ren, dass er
Von Ziegler 1728: "uns"
C#7
F# minor
E7
A major
A major
A7
Chromatic inflection for "has devil, death slain."
20
Teu - fel, Tod er - legt, Teu - fel, Tod er -
Von Ziegler 1728: "Sünd und"
Trp I & II
D minor
D# dim.7
E7
A major
23
legt.
mf
A major
A7
D major
E(7)


27
Öffnet euch, ihr bei - den Oh - - - - - -
Trumpets tacet...
p
A major
(A7)
D7
G major
A7
D major
31
- ren, Je - sus hat euch zu - ge - schwo - - - -
A7
D major
35
- ren, dass er Teu - fel, Tod er - legt, dass er Teu - fel, Tod er - legt,
Trps
D major
D7
G major
A7
39
Teu - - - - - fel, Tod er -
hemiola
D major



Allusions to biblical passages such as John 10:10 [Christ]: "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly (Luther 1545: volle Genüge haben sollen)";

John 10:11: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep"; Mark 8:34 "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Also Matthew 10:38, 16:24, Luke 9:23.)



(Music taken from BWV 59/3, with former string parts now given to recorders, the top line doubling the melody at the upper octave.)

This is the 9th stanza of 12 in the (long) 1651 chorale "O Gottes Geist, mein Trost und Rat" by Johann Rist (1607–1667). The text does note appear often in hymnals of the time (see Petzoldt, 2:1044–1045).

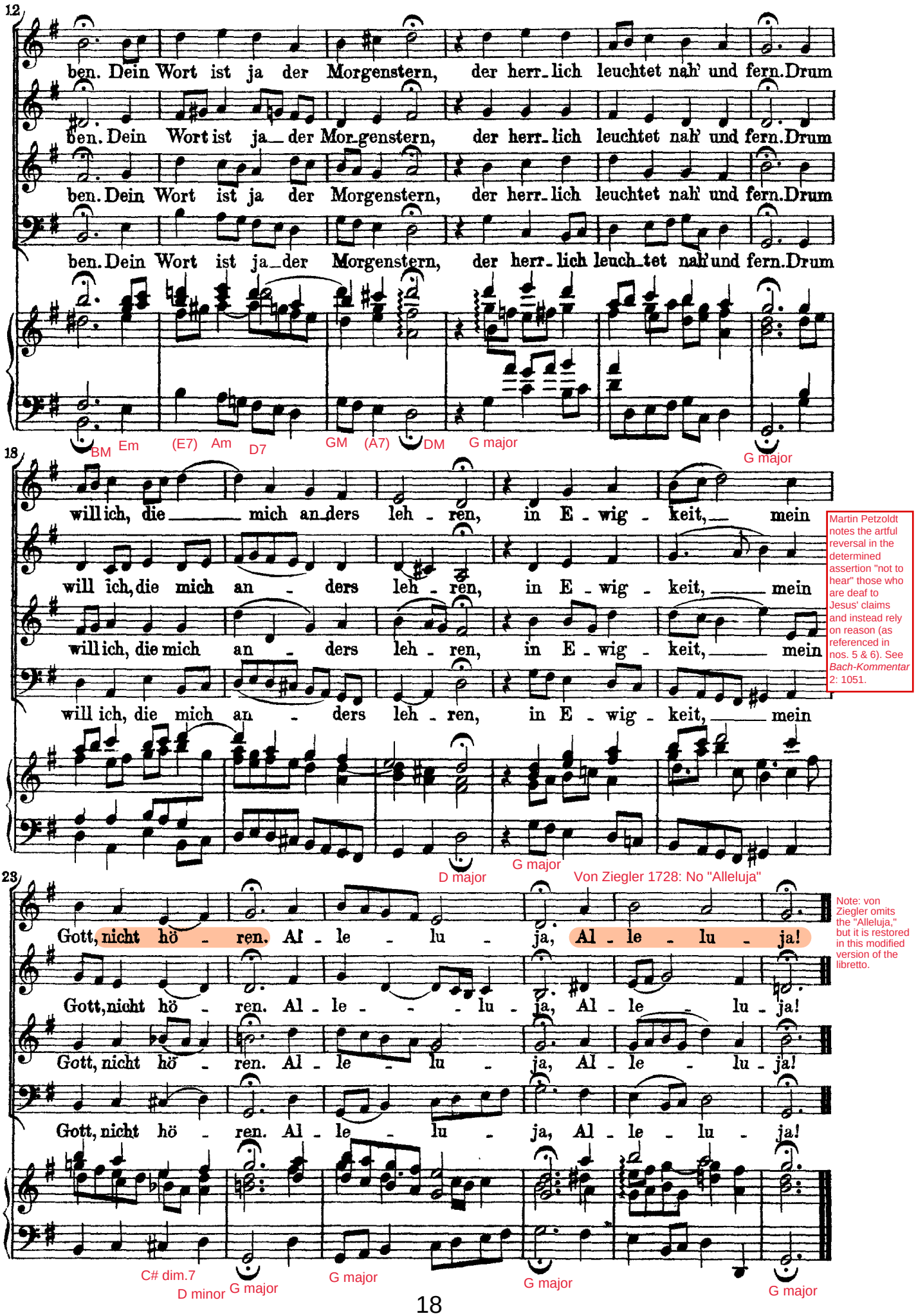
●Spirit's help sought to accept word of new life (175/7).

The 3 recorders return, providing cyclical unity. Here they underscore the image of the morning star referenced in the text. The designation of Christ as divine Word and morning star in relation to enlightenment is based on a complex of biblical passages (see note).

For biblical background, see note.

Alfred Dürr writes, "The concluding chorale—an arrangement of the melody Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herre Gott in seven-part texture—is drawn from an earlier Whit cantata, BWV 59, though the string parts are here replaced by recorders. This chorale, with its obbligato recorder parts, harks back to the opening pair

of movements and brings the music of this Whit feast-day to a splendid, full-textured conclusion." See *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, revised and translated by Richard Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 370–371.



Martin Petzoldt notes the artful reversal in the determined assertion "not to hear" those who are deaf to Jesus' claims and instead rely on reason (as referenced in nos. 5 & 6). See *Bach-Kommentar* 2: 1051.

Note: von Ziegler omits the "Alleluja," but it is restored in this modified version of the libretto.

Chromatic inflection for "nicht hören" (refusal to listen to those who teach otherwise).