Last changed: 4 November 2026. ur Early Easter Cantata BWV 31

Introduction and updates at melvinunger.com.

Form: Sonata/Sinfonia - Chorus - Recit (B) - Aria (B) - RECIT (T) - Aria (T) - Recit (S) - Aria/Chorale (S) - Chorale
This is a chiastic form. For the significance of chiastic form for Bach, see note at movement 5.
Bach composed this work after his promotion in Weimar to "Konzertmeister," which required providing a church cantata every four weeks. For background, including Vivaldi's influence on Bach during Bach's Weimar years, see side note.

NBA I/9; BC A55a/b
Easter Sunday (BWV 4, 31, 249)
*1 Corinthians 5:6–8 (Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed)
*Mark 16:1–8 (The resurrection of Christ)
Librettist: Salomo Franck (see notes)
FP: 21 April 1715 (Weimar Palace Chapel)
Performed again in Leipzig 9 April 1724 (St. Nicholas in the morning and St. Thomas at afternoon Verspers), after the St. John Passion on Good Friday. Also 1731.
In Weimar, it was notated in Tief Kammerton, where A = ca. 390, so notated in E-flat major.

J.S. Bach

Cantata No. 31

For additional notes on the cantata's literary theme, see side note.

Der Himmel lacht, Die Erde jubilieret

In contrast to the earnest beginning of Cantata 4, BWV 31 begins directly with the full joy of Easter. The full orchestration reinforces the mood of celebration, encompassing 3 choirs of instruments: trumpets and timpani, double reeds (in 5 parts!), strings (with divided violas, likewise in 5 parts) with continuo. A unison fanfare-like theme (very much like Vivaldi) leads into a second, more figurative one; next the two are combined and, at the end, the opening sections reappear in reverse order (also something Vivaldi does). It ends with the unison, Vivaldi-like theme. The movement is a kind of free concerto.

Instrumentation (changed in later versions, though details are unclear. See Dürr/Jones, 269):
Tromba I, II, III
Timpani
Ob I, ad lib. Ob. d'amore
Ob II, or ob. d'amore ad. lib.
Taille ad lib.
Bassono ad lib.
Vln I, II
Vla I, II
Cello in ripieno
SSATB
Continuo

1/1, **1. Sonata**
Allegro

Trba. I, II, III
Timp.
Ob. I, II, III
Taille, Fag.
Viol. I, II
Va. I, II, Vc. I, II
Continuo

tutti

Figura corta (see note)

Despite the full, festive orchestration, the music is given a light character with 6/8 meter.

C major (The work was conceived in Weimar in Chorton (see note). The prevalence of C major in the work is significant (see note).

Theme 1: Fanfare theme (Intrada) is like a wakeup call, its rising theme perhaps a representation of resurrection. All instruments in unison, like Vivaldi.

4

For more about intrada themes, see note.

C major

The interplay inherent in concerto style suggests the comprehensive involvement in celebrating Easter, as referenced in the libretto of the opening choral movement: heaven and earth rejoice.

7 Ob., Viol.

Theme 2: Trumpets lead; the theme's busy, animated character suggesting excitement.

Trp I

Trp II

Trp III

C major

10 Trb.

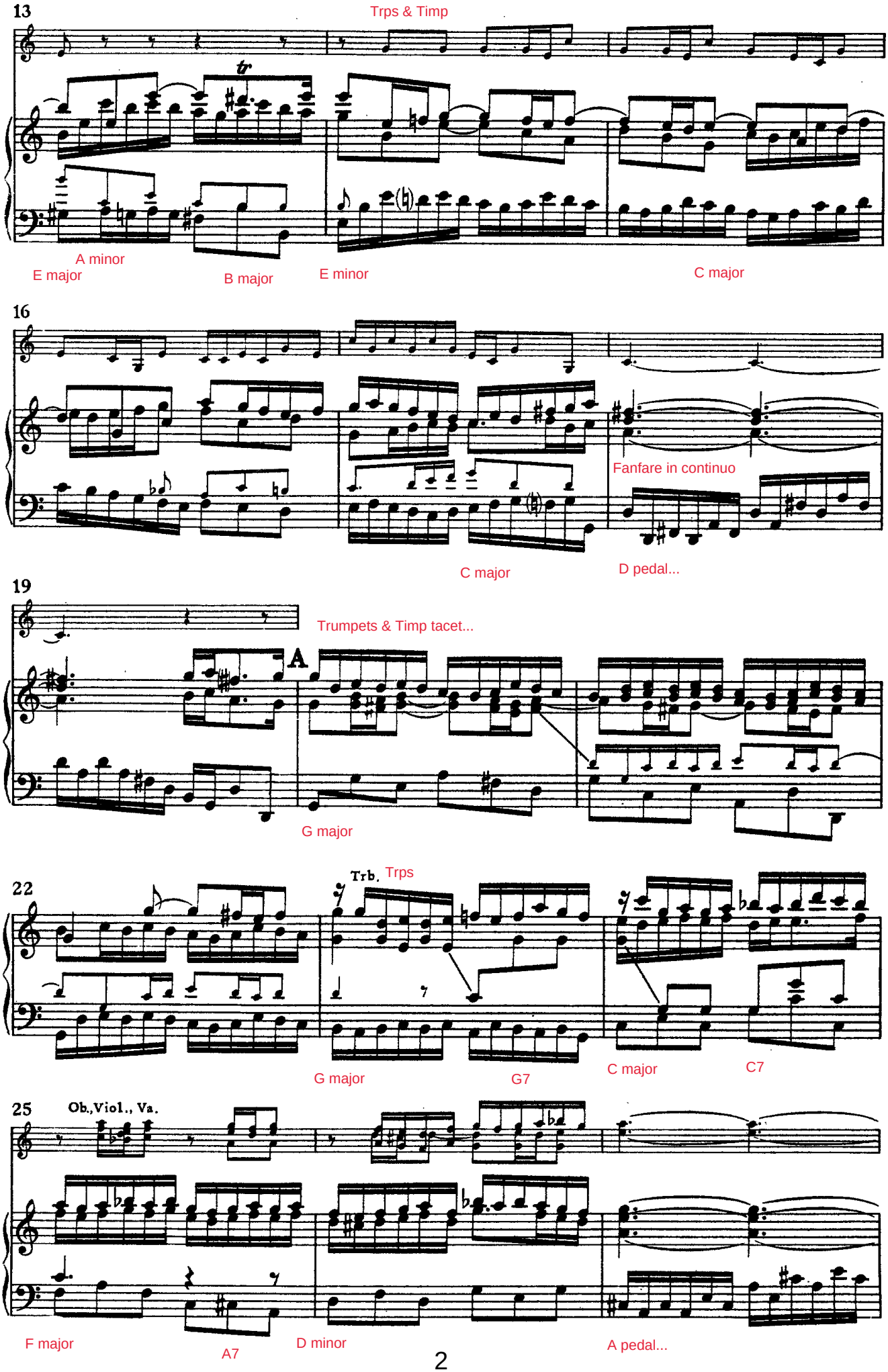
16th-note theme passed to oboes and violins.

Two themes are combined.

Ob., Viol.

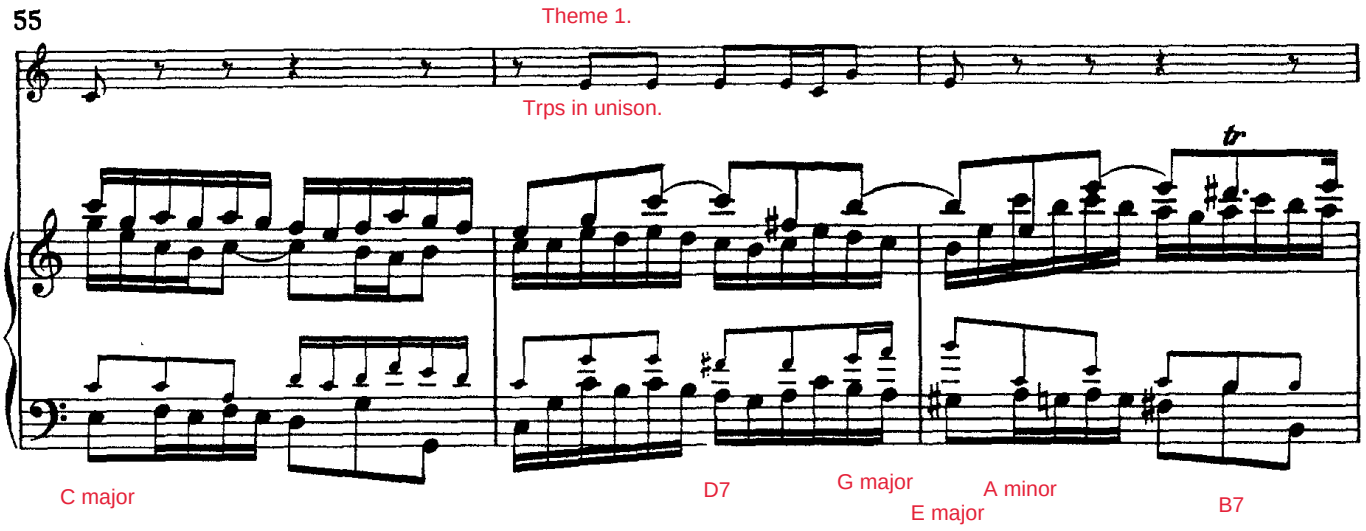
C major

C major

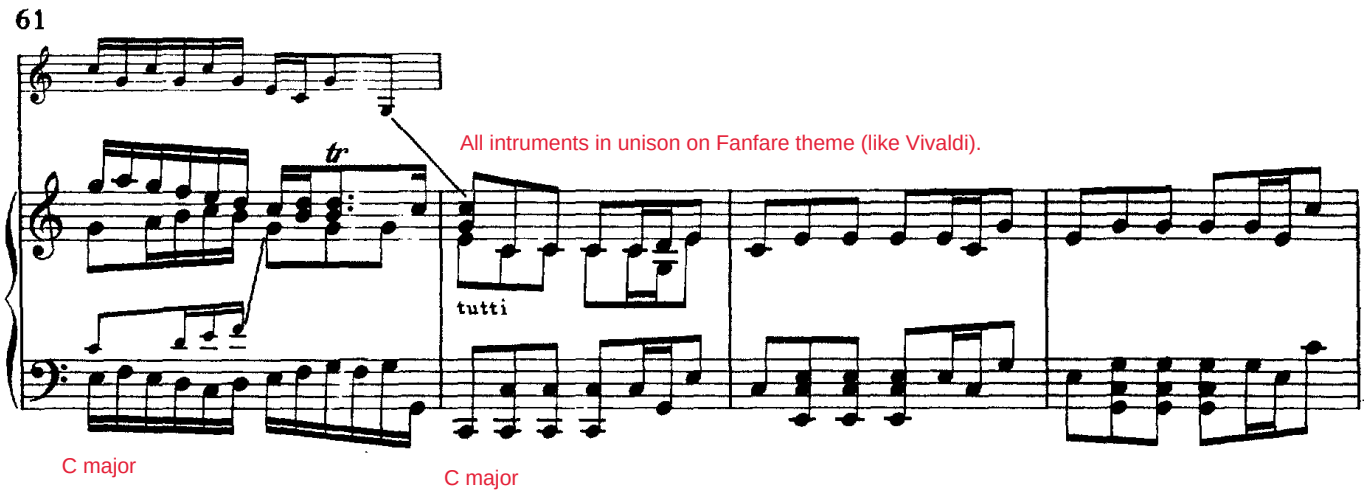

13
Trps & Timp
A minor
E major
B major
E minor
C major
16
Fanfare in continuo
C major
D pedal...
19
Trumpets & Timp tacet...
A
G major
22
Trb.
Trps
G major
G7
C major
C7
25
Ob.,Viol., Va.
F major
A7
D minor
A pedal...

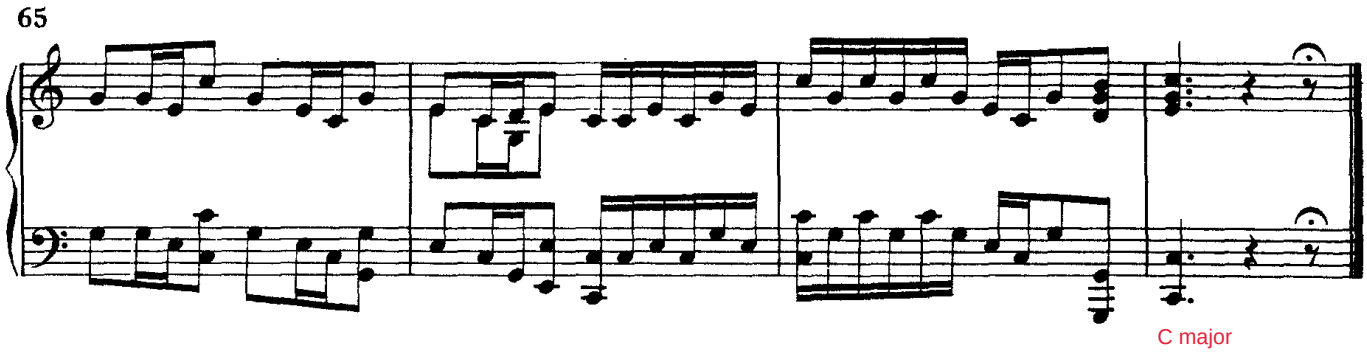

28
Trps & Timp tacet...
Ob., Viol.
tr
D minor
D7
G major
G7
31
Trb.
Trb.
Viol., Va.
C major
E7
E pedal...
Trb.
34
tr
B
A minor
A minor
37
Trb.
A minor
A minor
40
A minor
B7


Trb.
43
E major
A minor
A7
C# dim.7
A7
46
Trps & Timp tacet...
D minor
D7
G minor
D minor
G7
C major
Ob.,Viol.,Va.
Trb. Trp I: Theme 2
49
C
C7
F major
C major
The 2 themes appear in reverse order.
52
Trb.
Ob.,Viol.
+Trp II
+Trp III
C major
C major
C major


55
Theme 1.
Trps in unison.
tr
C major
D7
G major
E major
A minor
B7


58
E minor
(G7)
C major
F major
G7


61
All intruments in unison on Fanfare theme (like Vivaldi).
tr
tutti
C major
C major


65
C major

The mood continues in the opening chorus, where Bach adds a vocal choir in 5 parts to the full orchestra. The opening words are set fugally. After some intervening material, the opening music reappears for “Der Schöpfer lebt” (“the Creator lives”). The tempo slows abruptly at “He who chose the grave for his rest...”), then returns to allegro at “The most holy One cannot experience decay.” At the close, the instruments repeat the initial phrase (without voices) to round out the structure.

2. Coro

●Resurrection of Christ: Heaven and earth rejoice (31/2).

Permutation Fugue Subject Part B

31/2.

Allegro

Rhyme Scheme: ABABCC

Musical Form (bar form with reprise but relatively independent sections like a motet):
A (mm. 1–21, text lines 1 & 2). Permutation fugue with free polyphony at end
A (mm. 22–42, text lines 3 & 4). Fugue section repeated
B (mm. 42–50, text lines 5 & 6). Adagio, mostly homophonic
C (mm. 51–63, text line 6). Allegro, canonic texture
A' (mm. 63–71). Reprise of mm. 1–8.
The instrumental parts are partly independent but do not lead in the vocal sections.
See Dürr/Jones 269–70.

Soprano I

Der Him - mel lacht, die Er - -
the earth

Permutation Fugue Subject Part A

Text painting: Melisma for "laugh."

No opening ritornello.

Soprano II

Der Him - mel lacht, der Him - mel lacht,
The heavens re - joice, the heavens re - joice,

Alto

Der Him - mel lacht,
The heavens re - joice,

Five-part choral writing is unusual in Bach's cantatas.

Tenore

Der Him - mel lacht,
The heavens re - joice,

Basso

Der Him - mel lacht,
The heavens re - joice,

For biblical background, see note.

Allegro

Trba. I, II, III, Timp.
Ob. I, II, III, Taille, Fag.
Viol. I, II, Va. I, II
Vc. I, II, Continuo

tutti

Continuo

C major

D7 G major

3

- de ju - bi - lie - - - - - - - - ret, der Him - mel lacht,
is filled with glad - - - - - - - - ness, the heavens re - joice,

die Er - - de ju - bi - lie - ret, der Him - mel lacht, die Er - - de ju - bi -
the earth is filled with gladness, the heavens re - joice, the earth is filled with

der Him - mel lacht,
the heavens re - joice,

der Him - mel lacht,
the heavens re - joice,

der Him - mel lacht,
the heavens re - joice,

Tutti

(A7) D minor

C major

D7


6
Permutation Fugue Subject Part C
der Him - mel lacht, die Er - de ju - bi - lie - ret, der Him - mel lacht, der Him - mel
the heavens re - joice, the earth is filled with gladness, the heavens rejoice, the heavens re -
lie - ret, der Him - mel lacht, der Him - mel
glad - ness, the heavens rejoice, the heavens re -
die Er - de ju - bi - lie - ret, der Him - mel lacht, der Him - mel
the earth is filled with glad - ness, the heavens rejoice, the heavens re -
der Him - mel lacht,
the heavens re - joice,
der Him - mel lacht,
the heavens re - joice,
Trb.
(Ob., Fag., Viol., Va. col Coro)
Tutti
G major
G7
A7
D minor
C major
9
A
lacht,
joice,
lacht,
joice,
lacht,
joice,
+Vla II, Taille ad lib.
+Vla I, Ob III ad lib.
der Him - mel
the heavens re -
der Him - mel lacht, die Er - de ju - bi - lie - ret, der Him - mel
the heavens re - joice, the earth is filled with gladness, the heavens re -
die Er - de ju - bi - lie - ret, der Him - mel
the earth is filled with glad - ness, the heavens re -
A
Instruments double...
Trps & Timp
Va.
C major
G major
G7
(A7)
D minor
D minor
C major

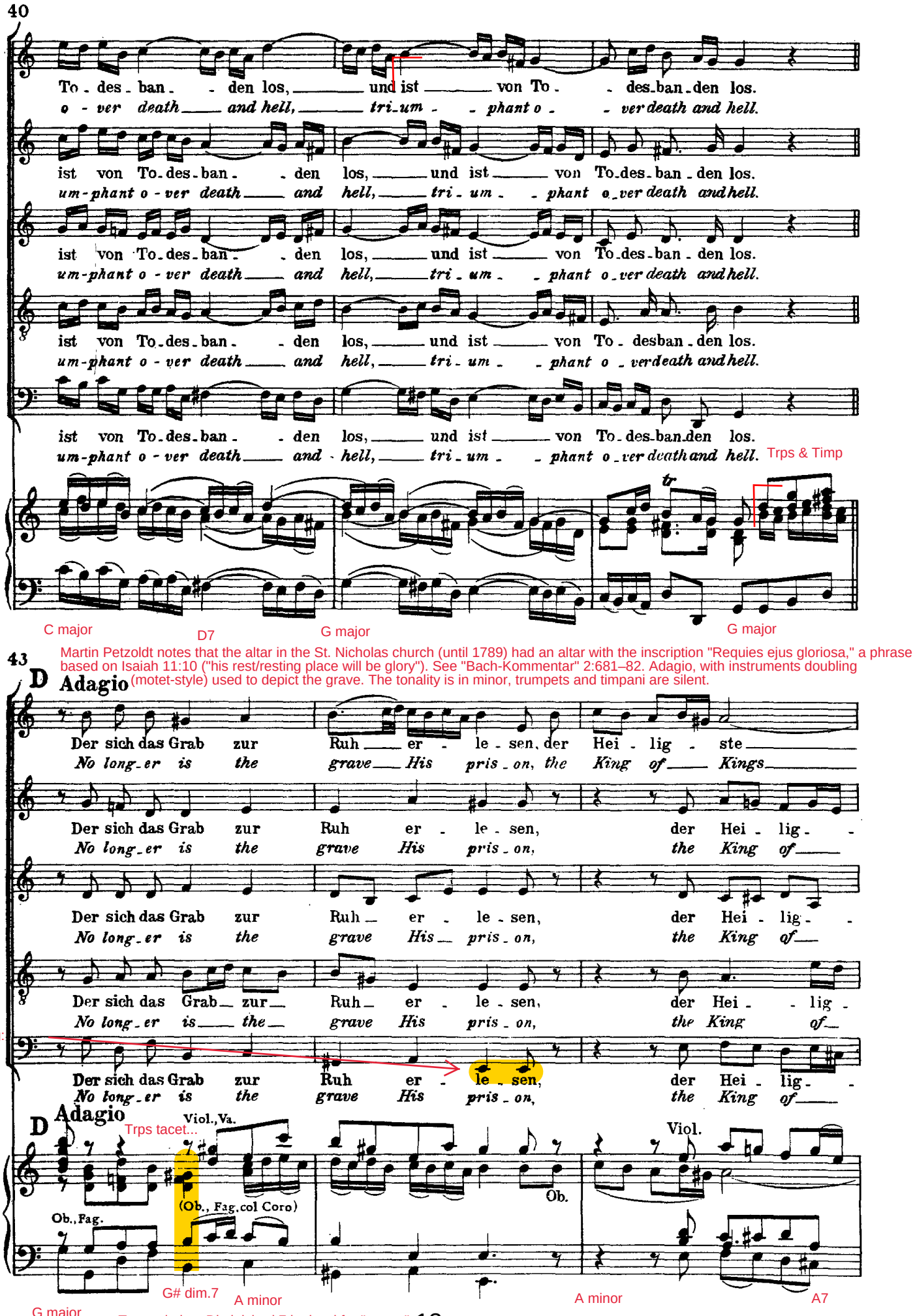

12
+Vln II, Ob II ad lib.
der Him - mel lacht, die Er -
the heavens re - joice, the earth
lacht, die Er - de ju - bi - lie -
joice, the earth is filled with glad -
lacht, der Him - mel lacht,
joice, the heavens re - joice,
lacht, die Er - de ju - bi - lie - ret, der Him - mel lacht, die Er - de
joice, the earth is filled with glad - ness, the heavens re - joice, the earth is
(Va. col Tenore)
C major
D7
G major
G7
A7
D minor
15
15.
+Vln I, Ob I ad lib.
der Him - mel lacht, die Er -
the heavens re - joice, the earth
- de ju - bi - lie - ret, der Him - mel lacht, die Er - de ju - bi - lie -
is filled with gladness, the heavens re - joice, the earth is filled with glad -
- ret, der Him - mel lacht, der Him - mel lacht, der Him - mel
- ness, the heavens re - joice, the heavens re - joice, the heavens re -
der Him - mel lacht,
the heavens re - joice,
ju - bi - lie - ret, der Him - mel lacht, der Him - mel lacht, der Him - mel
filled with glad - ness, the heavens re - joice, the heavens re - joice, the heavens re -
Trps tacet...
C major
C major
E7
D7
G major


17
Text phrase 2 (free polyphony).
- de ju - bi - lie - - - - - - - - ret und was sie trägt in ih - - rem Schoß,
is filled with glad - - - - - - - - ness, and all cre - a - tion shouts for joy,
- - - - ret, die Er - - - de - ju - bi - lie - ret und was sie trägt in ih - - rem
- - - - ness, the earth is filled with gladness, and all cre - a - tion shouts for
lacht, die Er - - de ju - bi - lie - - - - ret und was sie trägt in ih - - rem
joice, the earth is filled with glad - - - - ness, and all cre - a - tion shouts for
die Er - de ju - bi - lie - - - - ret und was sie trägt in ih - - rem
the earth is filled with glad - - - - ness, and all cre - a - tion shouts for
lacht, die Er - de ju - - bi - - lie - - - - ret und was sie trägt in ih - - rem
joice, the earth is filled with glad - - - - ness, and all cre - a - tion shouts for
(Va. coll' Alto)
A minor
D7
G major
G7
C major
D7
20
Text painting: 4 lower voices set homorhythmically against S1 to depict what the earth "carries in her bosom," perhaps a reference to Christ in the grave.
B
Fugue repeats with text lines 3 & 4 (mm. 1–21 = mm. 22–42).
und was sie trägt in ih - rem Schoß; der Schöp - fer lebt,
and all cre - a - - - tion shouts for joy. The Sav - iour lives,
Schoß, und was sie trägt in ih - rem Schoß; der Schöp - fer lebt,
joy, and all cre - a - tion shouts for joy. The Sav - iour lives,
Schoß, und was sie trägt in ih - rem Schoß; der Schöp - fer lebt,
joy, and all cre - a - tion shouts for joy. The Sav - iour lives,
Schoß, und was sie trägt in ih - rem Schoß; der Schöp - fer lebt,
joy, and all cre - a - tion shouts for joy. The Sav - iour lives,
Schoß, und was sie trägt in ih - rem Schoß; der Schöp - fer lebt,
joy, and all cre - a - tion shouts for joy. The Sav - iour lives,
tr
Trps
Trb.
B
tutti
G major
G major
C major


23
der Höch - ste tri - um - phie - - - - - - ret, der Schöpfer
to glo - ry He as - cend - - - - - eth, the Sav-iour
der Schöpfer lebt, der Höch - ste tri - um - phieret, der Schöpfer
the Sav-iour lives, to glo - ry He as - cend - eth, the Saviour
der Schöpfer
the Saviour
der Schöpfer
the Saviour
der Schöpfer
the Saviour
Tutti
tr
C major
D7
G major
G major
A7
D minor
G7
C major
26
lebt, der Schöp - fer lebt, der Höch - ste tri - um -
lives, the Sav - iour lives, to glo - ry He as -
lebt, der Höch - ste tri - um - phie - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
lives, to glo - ry He as - cend - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
lebt, der Höch - ste tri - um - phie - - - - - -
lives, to glo - ry He as - cend - - - - -
lebt,
lives,
lebt,
lives,
C major
D7
G major
A7
D minor
G7


29
C
phie-ret, der Schöpfer lebt, der Schöp-fer lebt,
cend-eth, the Sav-iour lives, the Sav-iour lives,
ret, der Schöpfer lebt, der Schöp-fer lebt,
eth, the Sav-iour lives, the Sav-iour lives,
ret, der Schöpfer lebt, der Schöpfer lebt,
eth, the Sav-iour lives, the Sav-iour lives,
+Vla II, Taille ad lib.
der Schöpfer lebt,
the Sav-iour lives,
der Schöpfer lebt,
the Saviour lives,
der Höch-
to glo-
der Schöpfer lebt,
the Sav-iour lives,
der Höch-ste tri-um-phie-
to glo-ry He as-cend-
Tutti
C
C major
C major
D major
G major
(A7)
D minor
32
+Vln II, Ob II ad lib.
der Schöpfer lebt,
the Saviour lives,
+Vla I, Ob III ad lib.
der Schöp-fer lebt,
the Sav-iour lives,
der Höch-ste tri-um-
to glo-ry He as-
ste tri-um-phieret, der Schöp-fer lebt, der Schöp-fer lebt,
ry He as-cend-eth, the Sav-iour lives, the Sav-iour lives,
ret, der Schöp-fer lebt, der Höchste tri-um-phie-ret, der Schöpfer
eth, the Sav-iour lives, to glo-ry He as-cend-eth, the Saviour
Trps & Timp
tr
Trps & Timp tacet...
(Va. col Tenore)
G major
C major
C major
D major
G major
A7


12
35
+Vln I, Ob I ad lib.
37.
der Schöp-fer lebt,
the Sav-iour lives,
der Höch- - ste tri-um-phieret, der Schöp-fer lebt, der Höch- - ste tri-um-
to glo- - ry He as-cendeth, the Sav-iour lives, to glo- - ry He as-
phie- - - - - - - ret, der Schöp-fer lebt, der Schöp-fer lebt,
cend- - - - - - - eth, the Sav-iour lives, the Sav-iour lives,
der Schöp-fer lebt,
the Sav-iour lives,
lebt, der Höch-ste tri-um-phie- ret, der Schöp-fer lebt, der Schöpfer lebt,
lives, to glo-ry He as-cend- eth, the Sav-iour lives, the Sav-iour lives,
Trps & Timp
Trps & Timp tacet...
D minor
G7
C major
C major
(D7)
37
Text line 4.
der Höch- - ste tri-um-phie- - - - - - ret und ist von
to glo- - ry He as-cend- - - - - - eth, triumphant
phie- - - - - - - ret, der Höch- - ste tri-um-phieret und
cend- - - - - - - eth, to glo- - ry He as-cendeth, tri-
der Schöp-fer lebt, der Höch- - ste tri-um-phie- - - ret und
the Sav-iour lives, to glo- - ry He as-cend- - - eth, tri-
der Höch-ste tri-um-phie- - - ret und
to glo-ry He as-cend- - - eth, tri-
der Schöp-fer lebt, der Höch-ste tri- - um-phie- - - ret und
the Sav-iour lives, to glo-ry He as-cend- - - eth, tri-
(Va. coll' Alto)
E7
A minor
D7
G major
G7


40
To - des - ban - den los, und ist von To - des - ban - den los.
o - ver death and hell, tri - um - phant o - ver death and hell.
ist von To - des - ban - den los, und ist von To - des - ban - den los.
um - phant o - ver death and hell, tri - um - phant o - ver death and hell.
ist von To - des - ban - den los, und ist von To - des - ban - den los.
um - phant o - ver death and hell, tri - um - phant o - ver death and hell.
ist von To - des - ban - den los, und ist von To - des - ban - den los.
um - phant o - ver death and hell, tri - um - phant o - ver death and hell.
Trps & Timp
tr
C major
D7
G major
G major
43
D
Adagio
Martin Petzoldt notes that the altar in the St. Nicholas church (until 1789) had an altar with the inscription "Requies ejus gloriosa," a phrase based on Isaiah 11:10 ("his rest/resting place will be glory"). See "Bach-Kommentar" 2:681–82. Adagio, with instruments doubling (motet-style) used to depict the grave. The tonality is in minor, trumpets and timpani are silent.
Soprano leads with an arioso-like line.
Der sich das Grab zur Ruh er - le - sen, der Hei - lig - ste
No long - er is the grave His pris - on, the King of Kings
Der sich das Grab zur Ruh er - le - sen, der Hei - lig -
No long - er is the grave His pris - on, the King of
Der sich das Grab zur Ruh er - le - sen, der Hei - lig -
No long - er is the grave His pris - on, the King of
Der sich das Grab zur Ruh er - le - sen, der Hei - lig -
No long - er is the grave His pris - on, the King of
Text painting: Descending bass line to depict Christ choosing to rest in the grave. (For literal translation of the text, see Unger, "Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts.")
D
Adagio
Trps tacet...
Viol., Va.
Viol.
Ob.
Ob., Fag.
(Ob., Fag. col Coro)
G major
G# dim.7
A minor
A minor
A7
Text painting: Diminished 7th chord for "grave."

Allusion to Psalm 16:10 "[O Lord,] thou dost not give me up to Sheol, or let thy godly one see the Pit (KJV: "neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption"; Luther 1545: "daß dein Heiliger verwese"), to which Peter refers in his Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:31): "[David] foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption."



D minor

D minor

For the significance of D minor, see side note.



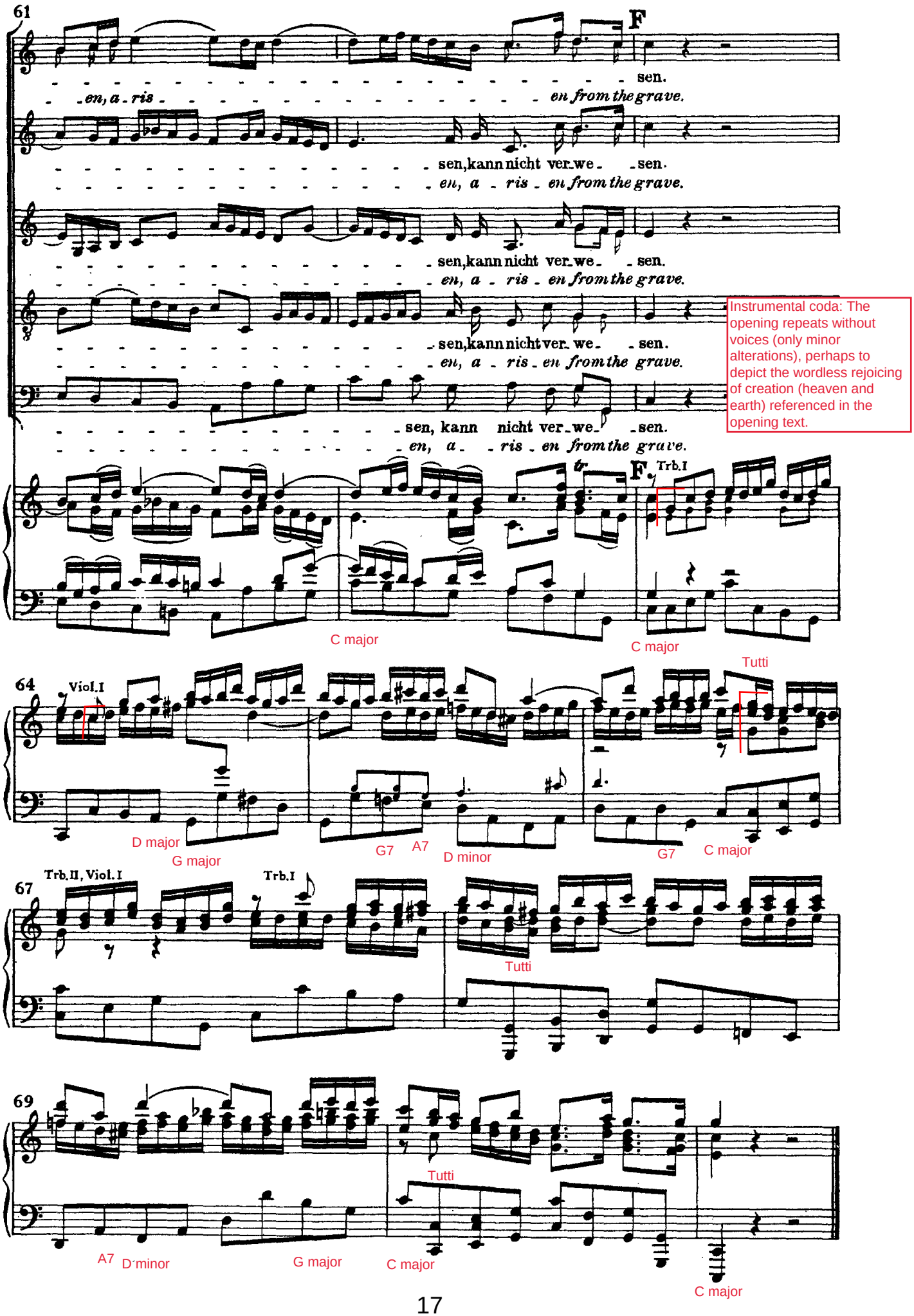
D minor G major C major

Bach expounds repeats the last line of text, repeating it in an allegro fugato, instruments doubling. The opposition to the natural process of decay (as referenced in the text) is depicted with accents opposed to the meter: syncopated accents on beats 2 and 4. The fast tempo suggests life in opposition to the natural decomposition of death. The order of entries is downward, until the last, extended statement in the top voice.

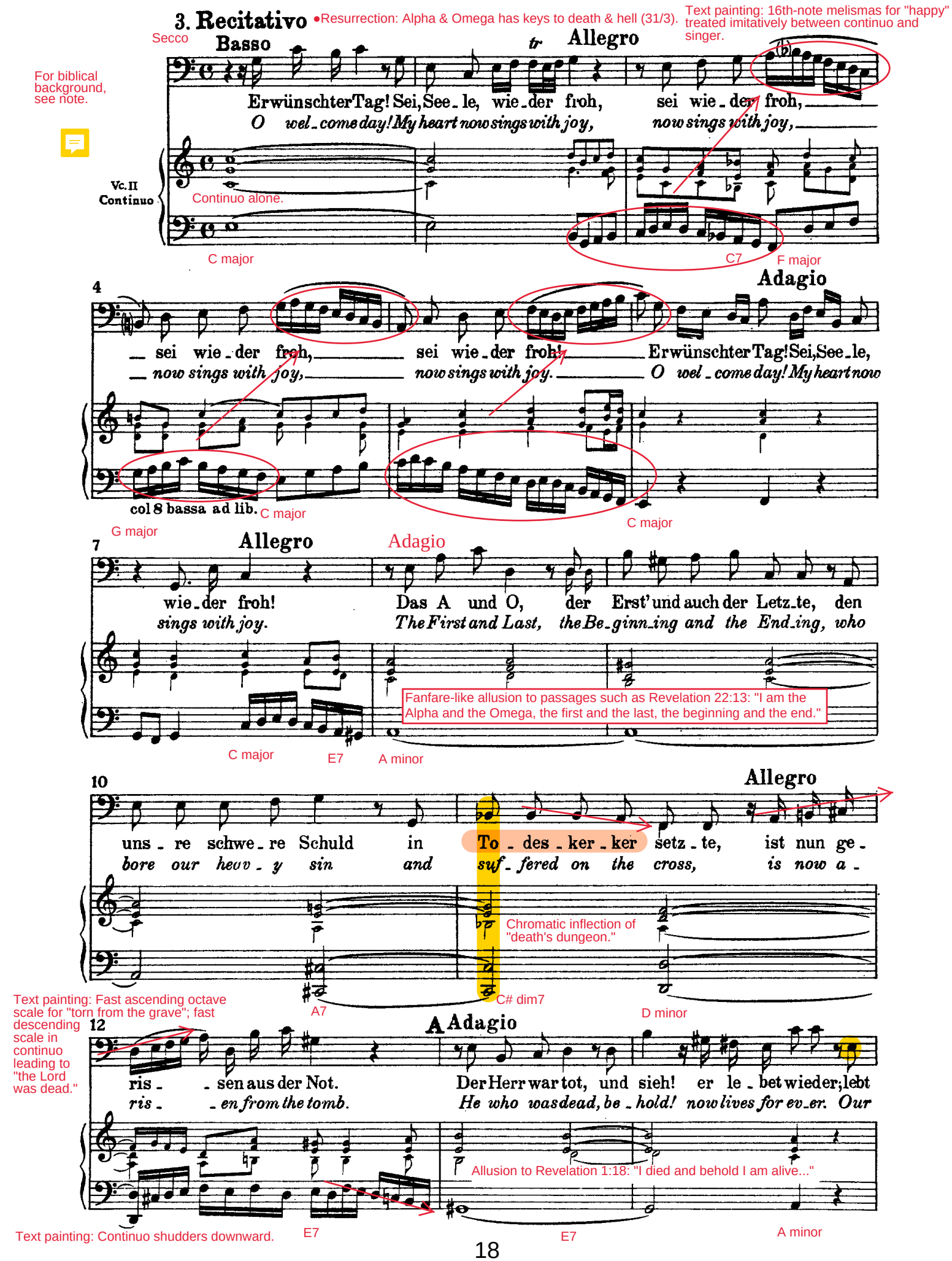


After 5 entries (in descending order), the soprano enters a final time with an extended statement.

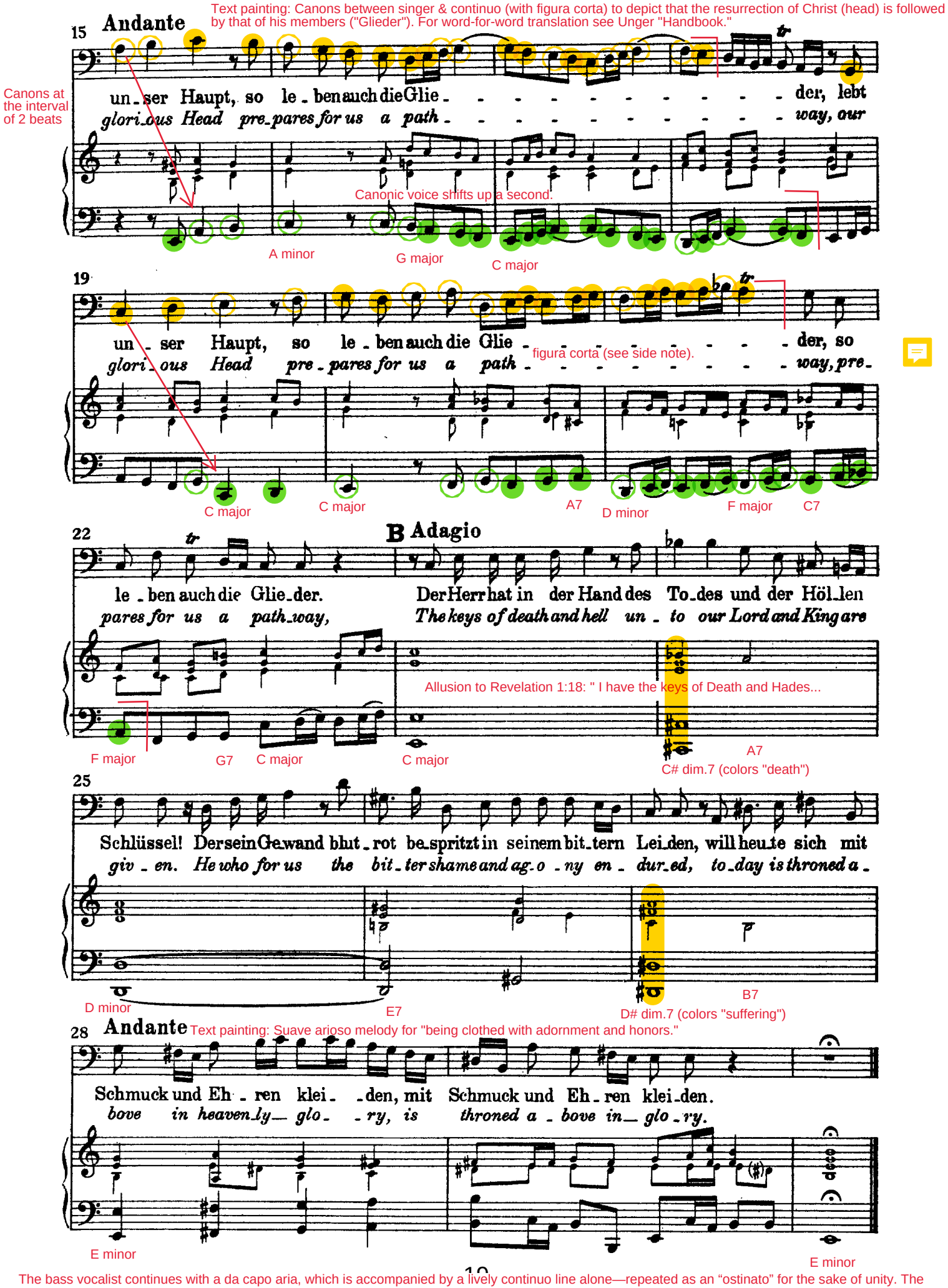



61
F
sen.
en, a - ris - en from the grave.
sen, kann nicht ver - we - sen.
en, a - ris - en from the grave.
sen, kann nicht ver - we - sen.
en, a - ris - en from the grave.
sen, kann nicht ver - we - sen.
en, a - ris - en from the grave.
sen, kann nicht ver - we - sen.
en, a - ris - en from the grave.
Instrumental coda: The opening repeats without voices (only minor alterations), perhaps to depict the wordless rejoicing of creation (heaven and earth) referenced in the opening text.
F
Trb.I
C major
C major
64
Viol.I
Tutti
D major
G major
G7
A7
D minor
G7
C major
67
Trb.II, Viol.I
Trb.I
Tutti
69
Tutti
A7
D minor
G major
C major
C major

The alternation of fast and slow tempos continues in the lengthy and imaginative (even operatic) recitative for bass, reflecting the antithetical concepts expressed in the text (continuo recitative with arioso sections, typical Bach's Weimar cantatas). Allusion to Revelation 1:8, 11, 17–18, 22:13, Colossians 1:18, etc.

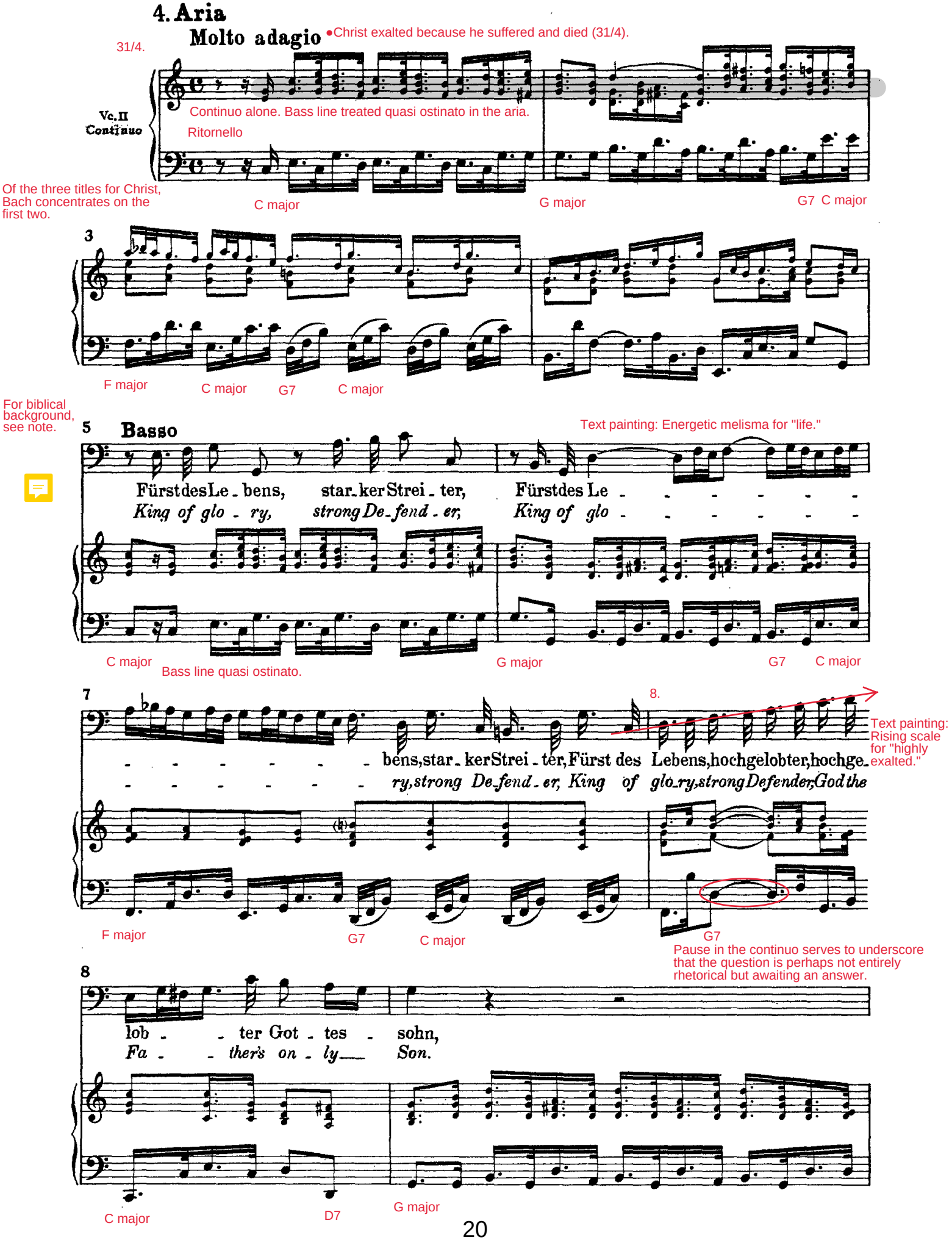


J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 31

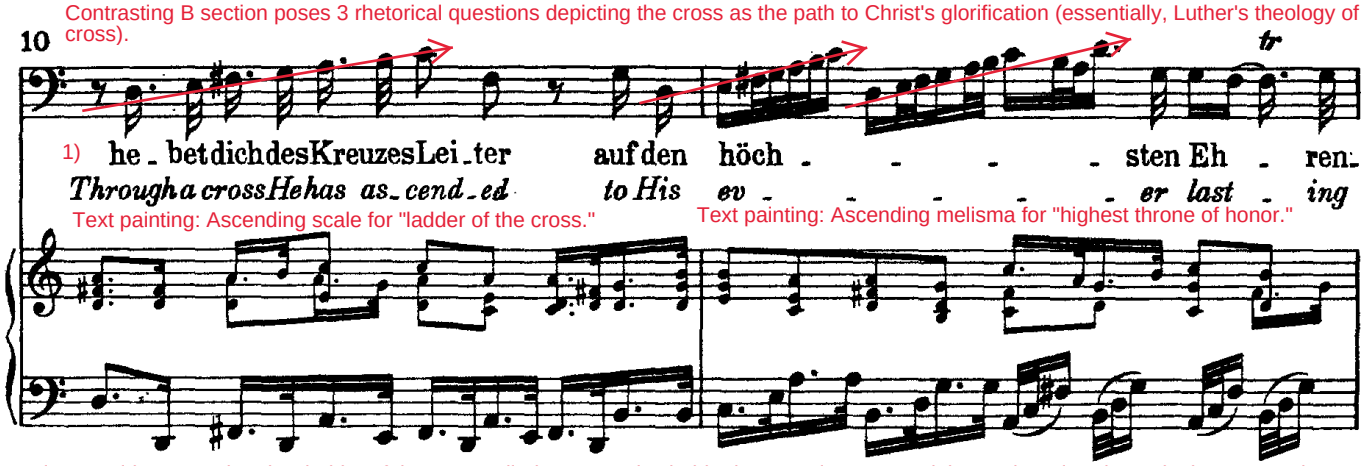


The bass vocalist continues with a da capo aria, which is accompanied by a lively continuo line alone—repeated as an “ostinato” for the sake of unity. The

rhetorical significance of the aggressive dotted rhythm played by the instrumental bass may be inferred; while Bach used it in the St. Matthew Passion to signify the action of scourging (by the soldiers, here it depicts the triumph of a princely warrior. The very presence of recitatives and arias in this work makes it more “modern” than Cantata 4, composed some seven or eight years earlier. The style seems operatic in its exaggeration.



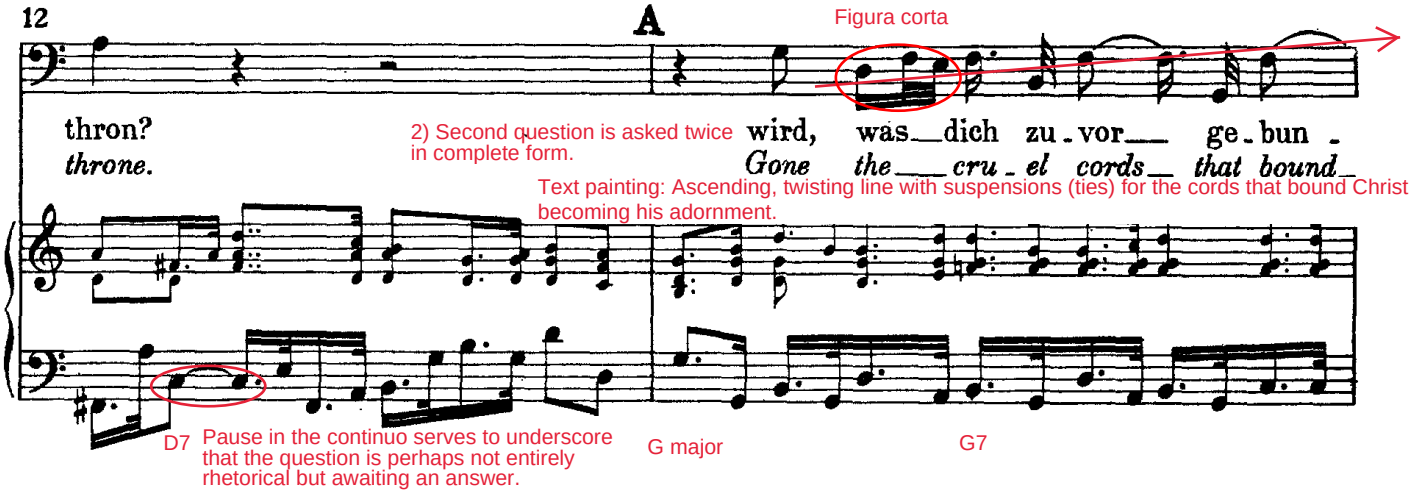
Contrasting B section poses 3 rhetorical questions depicting the cross as the path to Christ's glorification (essentially, Luther's theology of the cross).



Text painting: Ascending scale for "ladder of the cross."

Text painting: Ascending melisma for "highest throne of honor."

Martin Petzoldt argues that the "ladder of the cross" alludes to Jacob's ladder in Genesis 28:12 and that Luther already made that connection. Furthermore, Petzoldt notes that the theologian Johann Olearius interpreted the stone that Jacob used as a pillow as pointing to Christ, the cornerstone of the church. See *Bach-Kommentar* 2:684.



Text painting: Ascending, twisting line with suspensions (ties) for the cords that bound Christ becoming his adornment.

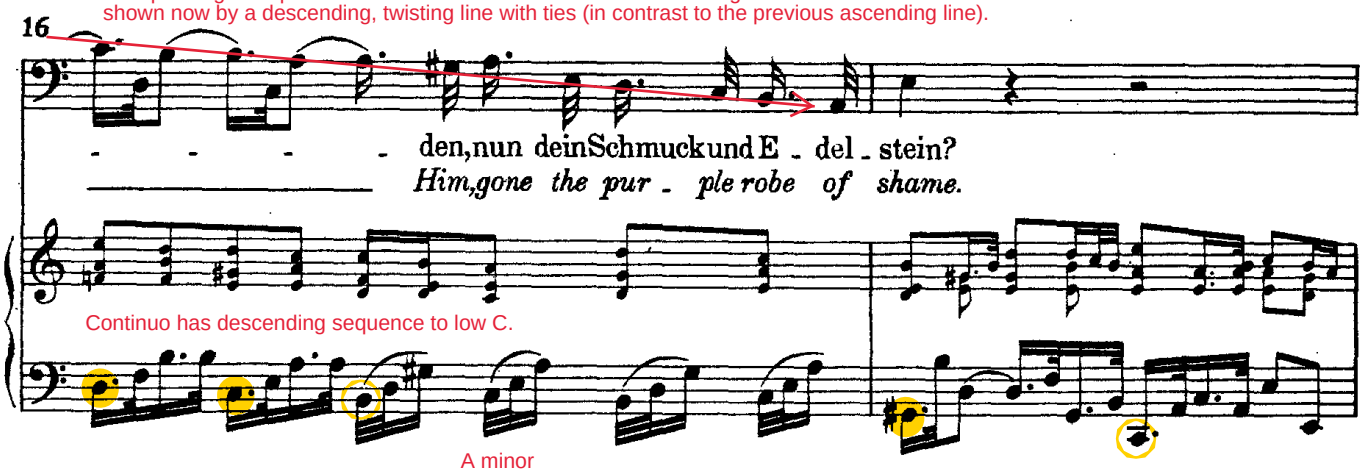
D7 Pause in the continuo serves to underscore that the question is perhaps not entirely rhetorical but awaiting an answer.

G major G7



(C major) E7 A minor B7 E major

Text painting: The paradox of the cords that bound Christ becoming his adornment shown now by a descending, twisting line with ties (in contrast to the previous ascending line).



Continuo has descending sequence to low C.

A minor


Text painting: Descending arpeggio for "wounds of purple."
18
3) müs-sen dei-ne Pur-pur-wun-den dei-ner Klar-heit Strah-len
Now the crown of thorns that pierced Him is be-come a di-a-
A minor
C7
F major
G7
For Johann Mattheson's view of the significance of F major, see side note.
20
sein, dei-ner Klar-heit Strah-len sein?
dem, is be-come a di-a-dem.
Petzoldt notes the connection to 2 Corinthians 3:18: "We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another..." (See Bach-Kommentar 2:684.)
C major
D7
G major
G7
C major
22
F major
C major
G7
C major
24 B
A Section returns, modified to stay in C major.
Fürst des Le-bens, star-ker Strei-ter, Fürst des Le-
King of glo-ry, strong De-fend-er, King of glo-
C major
C7
F major



Pause in the continuo serves to underscore that the question is perhaps not entirely rhetorical but awaiting an answer.





Set syllabically for the most part, the tenor recitative highlights the words “flieht” (“flees”) and “eilend” (“speedily”) with melismas as the thought turns to the response of the individual believer, with textual references to John 15 (“I am the vine, ye are the branches...”), and the “stone” and “burial cloths” of Christ’s grave (used metaphorically).

5. Recitativo

•Resurrected with Christ: We flee sin and bear fruit (31/5).

Secco



This is the central (pivot) movement in a chiastic form (see note at 31/1). Here antithetical concepts of death and life meet. It is also marks the center pair of recitative/aria movements, which are framed by 2 choruses.

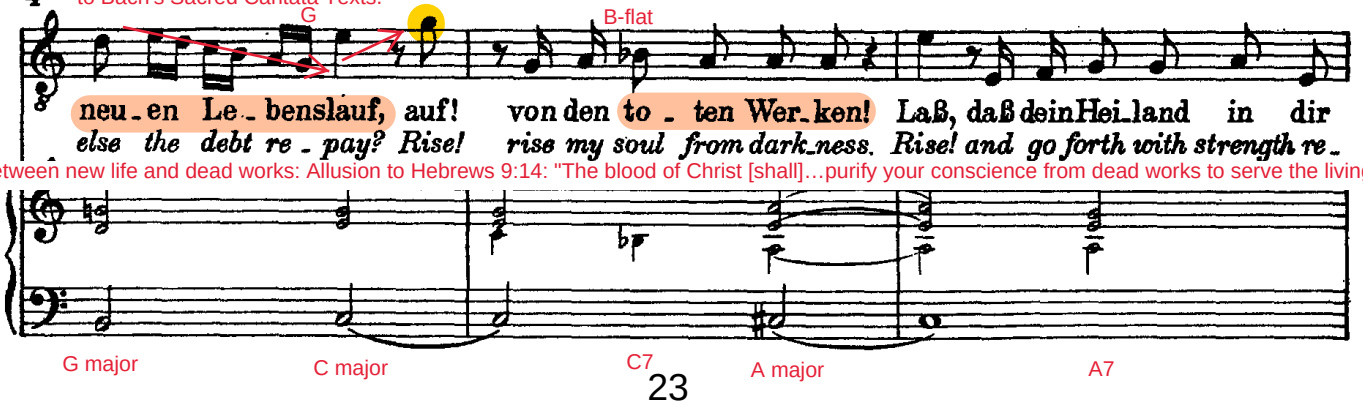
For the significance of chiastic form for Bach, see side note.

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 10 mm.; Text painting: rising line for rising with Christ; falling lines for fleeing the grave.

Continuo alone.

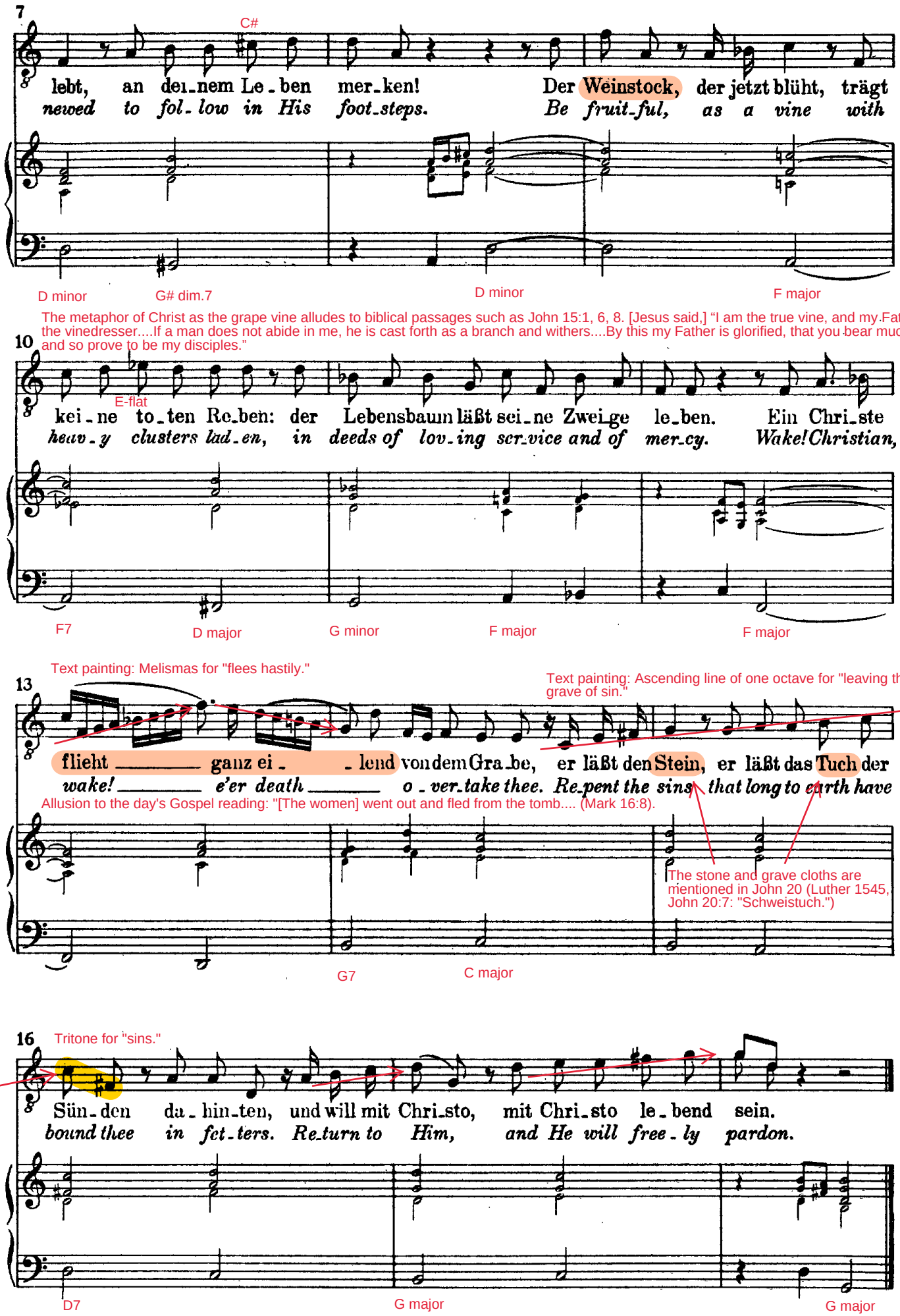
Allusion to biblical passages such as Colossian–2:12, 3:1, Romans 6:1–5, 12, Hebrews 9:14.

Martin Petzoldt notes that this recitative, like 31/3, alludes to various biblical passages. For a word-for-wordl translation, see Unger, "Handbook to Bach's Sacred Cantata Texts."

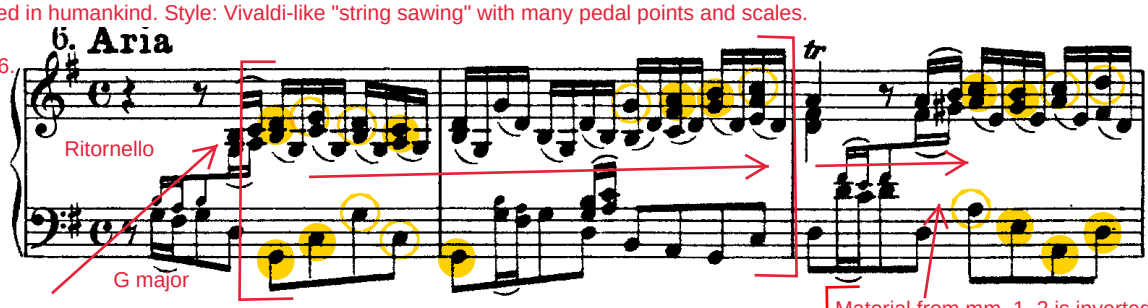


Antithesis between new life and dead works: Allusion to Hebrews 9:14: "The blood of Christ [shall]…purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God."

For biblical background, see note.


7
C#
lebt, an dei-nem Le-ben mer-ken! Der Weinstock, der jetzt blüht, trägt
newed to fol-low in His foot-steps. Be fruit-ful, as a vine with
D minor
G# dim.7
D minor
F major
The metaphor of Christ as the grape vine alludes to biblical passages such as John 15:1, 6, 8. [Jesus said,] "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser....If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers....By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples."
10
E-flat
kei-ne to-ten Re-ben: der Lebensbaum läßt sei-ne Zwei-ge le-ben. Ein Chri-ste
heav-y clusters lad-en, in deeds of lov-ing ser-vice and of mer-cy. Wake! Christian,
F7
D major
G minor
F major
F major
Text painting: Melismas for "flees hastily."
13
Text painting: Ascending line of one octave for "leaving the grave of sin."
flieht ganz ei- lend von dem Gra-be, er läßt den Stein, er läßt das Tuch der
wake! e'er death o-ver-take thee. Re-pent the sins that long to earth have
Allusion to the day's Gospel reading: "[The women] went out and fled from the tomb.... (Mark 16:8).
The stone and grave cloths are mentioned in John 20 (Luther 1545, John 20:7: "Schweistuch.")
G7
C major
16
Tritone for "sins."
Sün-den da-hin-ten, und will mit Chri-sto, mit Chri-sto le-bend sein.
bound thee in fet-ters. Re-turn to Him, and He will free-ly pardon.
D7
G major
G major

After 3 movements accompanied by continuo alone, the strings (in 5 parts) join the tenor in an aria. Aspects of symmetry and inversion (e.g., material in the first two mm. is freely inverted in the following two, and the overall structure of this 2-part aria reveals symmetrical correspondences) perhaps symbolize the textual idea of the divine image reflected in humankind. Style: Vivaldi-like "string sawing" with many pedal points and scales.



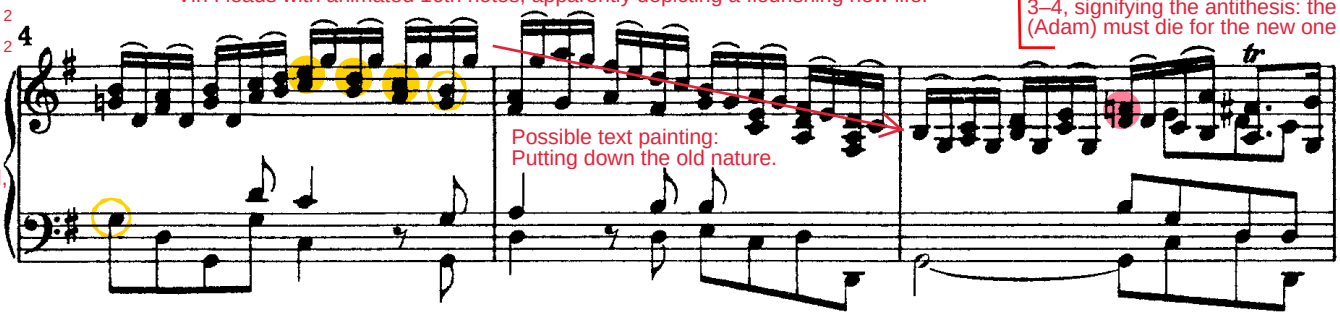
●Spiritual resurrection after death: old life vs. new life in Christ (31/6).

Rhyme Scheme
AAB-CCB
Bach sets each 3-line unit twice.

Form:
Rit
Lines 1-3 x 2
Rit
Lines 4-6 x 2
Rit

VIn I leads with animated 16th notes, apparently depicting a flourishing new life."

Material from mm. 1–2 is inverted in mm. 3–4, signifying the antithesis: the old man (Adam) must die for the new one to live.



For biblical background, see note.

Possible text painting:
Putting down the old nature.

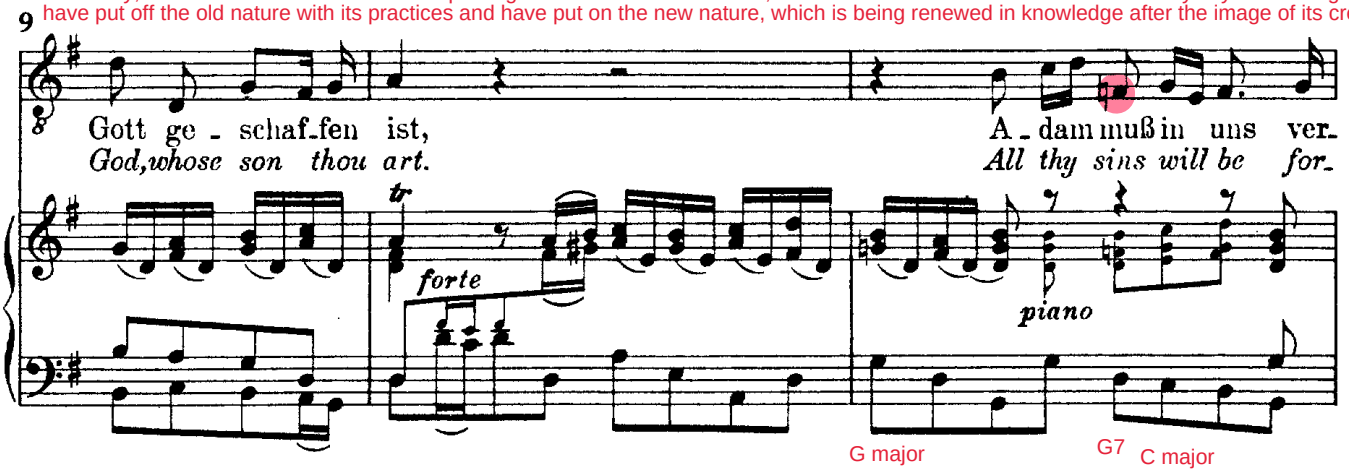
Martin Petzoldt argues that "soll der neue Mensch genesen" is an allusion to Jacob's speech after wrestling with God: "I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved" (Luther 1545: "meine Seele ist genesen." (Genesis 32:30). See "Bach-Kommentar 2:685.



F natural inflects the line (the old Adam must die).

G major

Generally, the sentiment alludes to biblical passages such as Colossians 3:5, 9–10: "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you…seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator."

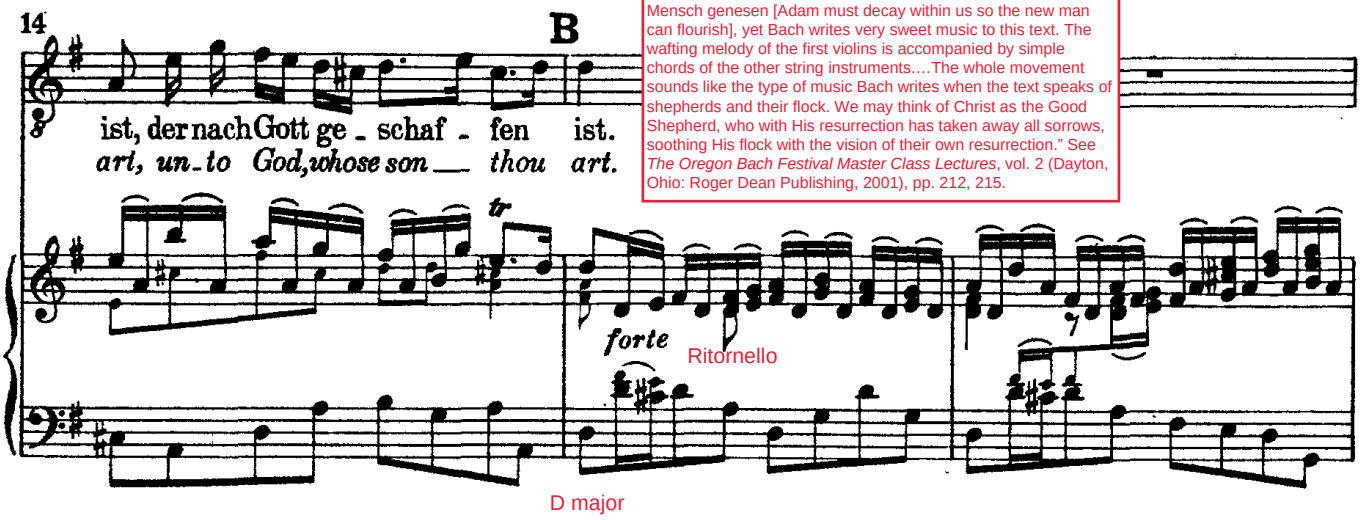


G major G7 C major



C major A7 D major

Helmuth Rilling writes, “The text seems to convey a rather harsh commandment Adam muß in uns verwesen, soll der neue Mensch genesen [Adam must decay within us so the new man can flourish], yet Bach writes very sweet music to this text. The wafting melody of the first violins is accompanied by simple chords of the other string instruments.…The whole movement sounds like the type of music Bach writes when the text speaks of shepherds and their flock. We may think of Christ as the Good Shepherd, who with His resurrection has taken away all sorrows, soothing His flock with the vision of their own resurrection.” See *The Oregon Bach Festival Master Class Lectures*, vol. 2 (Dayton, Ohio: Roger Dean Publishing, 2001), pp. 212, 215.

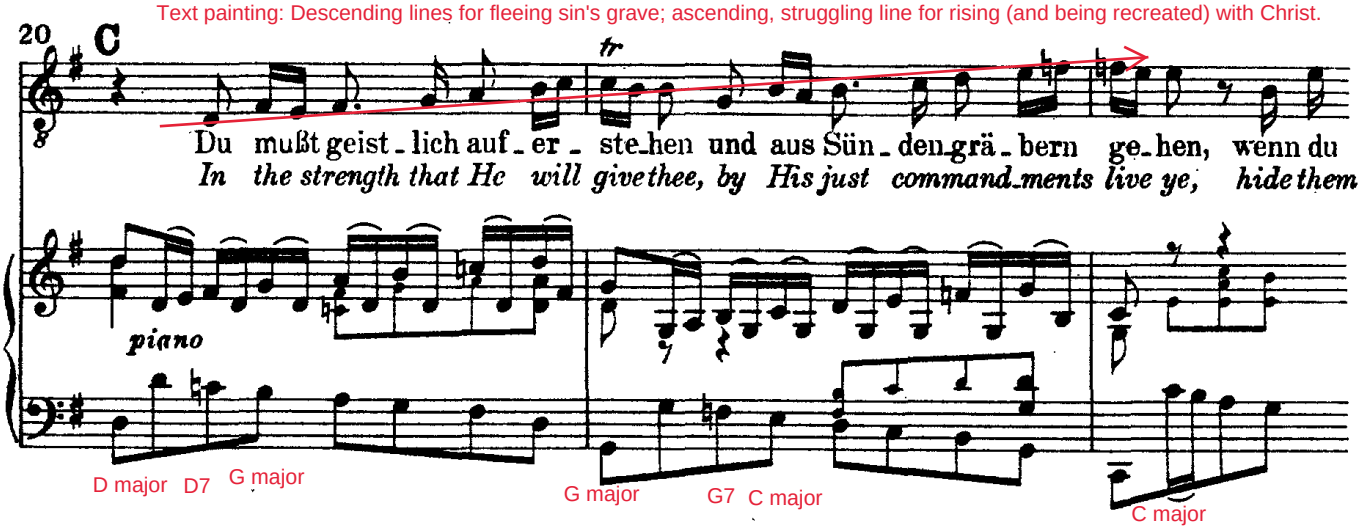


D major



A7

Text painting: Descending lines for fleeing sin's grave; ascending, struggling line for rising (and being recreated) with Christ.



D major D7 G major G major G7 C major C major

The sentiment alludes to biblical passages such as Romans 6:11: "So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."



B7 E minor E minor E minor


25
D
Du mußt geist - lich auf - er - ste - hen und aus
In the strength that He will give thee, by His
piano
E minor
D7
G major
27
Sün - den - grä - bern ge - hen, wenn du Chri - sti Gliedmaß bist, wenn du Chri - sti Glied -
just commandments live ye, hide them ev - er in thy heart, hide them ev - er in thy
G7 C major
C major
D7 G major
30
E
- maß, wenn du Chri - sti Glied - maß bist.
heart, hide them ev - er in thy heart.
Ritornello
forte
G major
G major
32
tr
35
tr
G major

In the soprano recitative, the soprano introduces the thought of the necessity for the believer to identify with Christ in his death and resurrection.

Secco

7. Recitativo

•Union with Christ in suffering and exaltation (31/7).

Soprano

Ascending line and diminished 7th chord for "the head pulling its limbs/members," i.e., Christ drawing believers.

The poetry changes to the first person perspective.

31/7.

Weil denn das Haupt sein Glied na_tür_lich nach sich zieht, so kann mich
From Christ, who is the Head and Found_er of our faith, no power on

For biblical background, see note.

Martin Petzoldt suggests that this text alludes to Jesus' words in John 12:32: "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." See "Bach-Kommentar" 2:686.

Vc. II
Continuo

Secco

Chromatic inflection for "pull" / "draw."

E minor

D# dim.7

Werner Neuman ("Johann Sebastian Bach Sämtliche Kantatentexte," 117), notes that the sentiment of the risen Christ as the head drawing his members occurs in the second stanza of the chorale "Jesus meine Zuversicht" (in the Abgesang of the chorale).

3

nichts von Je_su schei_den. Muß ich mit Chri_sto lei_den, so werd' ich auch, nach die_ser
earth shall e'er di_vide us. What_ev_er may be_tide us, if faith_ful we re_main and

The sentiment here alludes to biblical passages such as 2 Timothy 2:11–12: "The saying is sure: If we have died with him, we shall also live with him; if we endure, we shall also reign with him...." Also 1 Peter 4:13, Romans 8:17, etc.

Chromatic inflection for "suffer."

E minor

G# dim.7

6

Ascending line for "resurrected"

High note for "splendor"

Zeit, mit Chri_sto wie_der auf_er_ste_hen zur Ehr und Herr_lich_keit
stead_fast, we at the last shall see Him crown_ed in power and maj_es_ty

A minor

G major

C major

Changes to arioso: Continuo becomes animated to depict the resurrection life anticipated by the believer, with a rising arpeggiated figure. The singer imitates the bass to suggest the believer's resurrection follows that of Christ.

9

Deep descending line for "seeing God in my flesh"

und Gott in mei_nem Flei_sche se_hen.
where high in heaven He reigns in glo_ry.

Continuo finishes alone, as if to suggest that the singer's anticipation continues.

C major

C major

The soprano now sings a mystical aria of yearning for death. In contrast to the warm accompaniment of strings in the earlier tenor aria, this aria—with its

accompaniment of oboe d'amore, high vocal range, and textless chorale played by strings in low range—achieves an otherworldly, mystical tone (Dürr/Jones, 270). The chorale presumably represents congregational agreement. The words imagined by Bach's listeners might have been the title stanza, "Wenn mein Stündlein vorhanden ist" ("When my final hour is come") or, as Petzoldt suggests, the final stanza (the same one as the one sung in the next (final) movement.

8. Aria

●Yearning for death and light of heaven (31/8).

Rhyme Scheme of ABABAA allows for the bar form (Stollen-Abgesang) of the instrumental chorale.



Style: Lots of echo-like repetitions: oboe/oboe; soprano/oboe, with cello and violone pizzicato—for striking of death's hour. The descending eighth-note motive in the oboe: C-G-A-F is somewhat like the swinging of a clock's pendulum, the ringing of bells (though cast in the lilt of triple meter with hemiolas) or perhaps a clock's chime (e.g., the 4th quarter in one of the versions of Whittington chimes). Its descending cross-like shape is an approximate inversion of the figure ending no. 7.



The interval of a descending 4th inverts the continuo/bass figure of the previous movement.

See note regarding clocks.

13. Soprano

It seems significant that the "letzte Stunde" figure is cross-like, the phrase is reminiscent of 1 John 2:18: "Children, it is the last hour (Luther 1545: 'letzte stund'); and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come; therefore we know that it is the last hour." For the possible significance of C major and F major, see notes at 31/1 & 31/4.

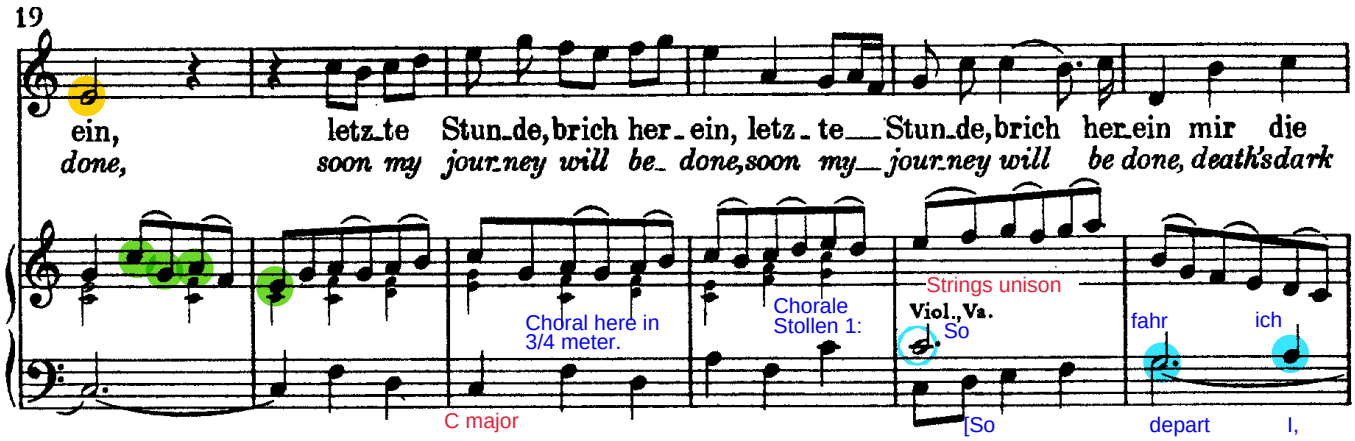
Cross figure

Lines 1 & 2 presented twice.



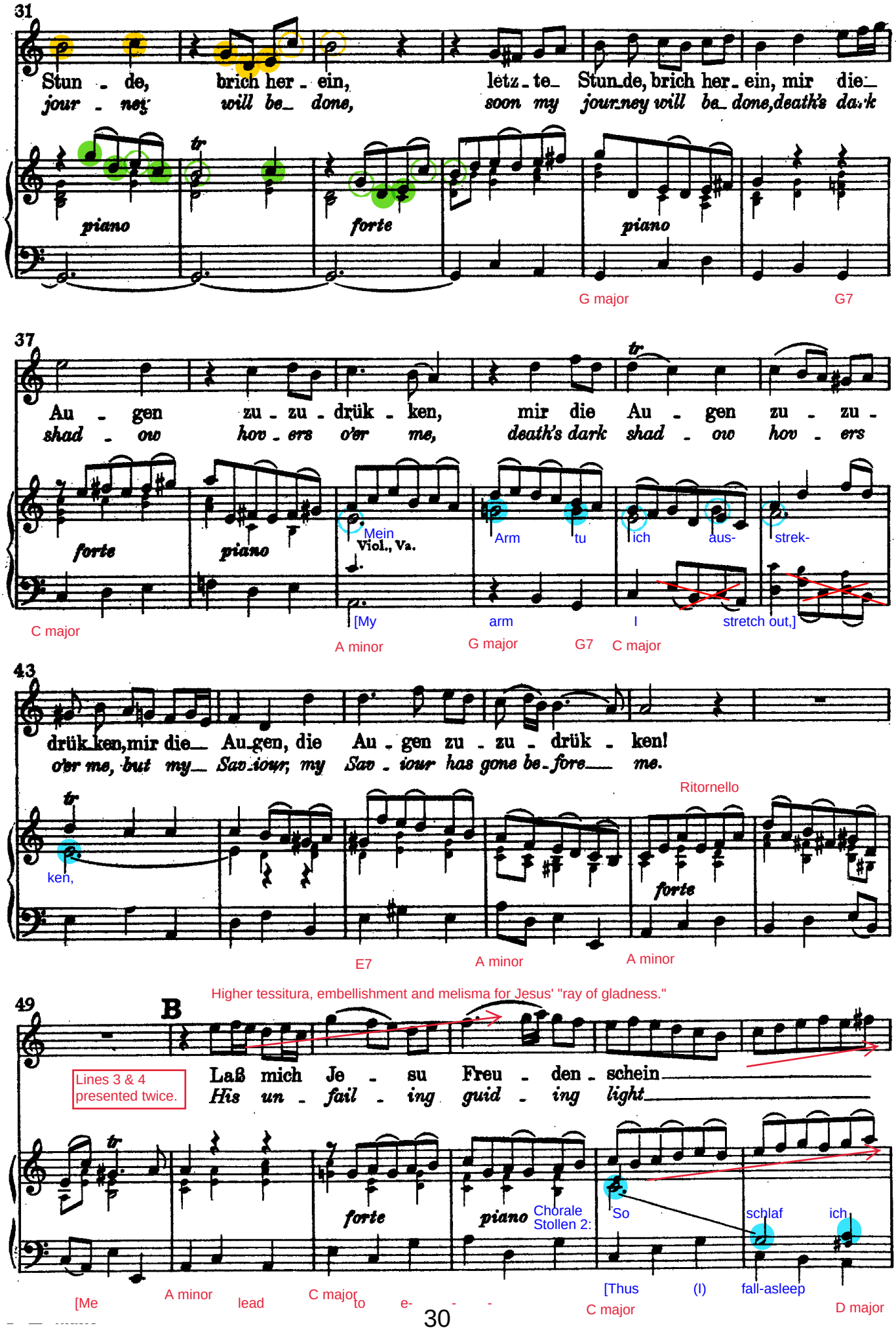
For biblical background, see note.

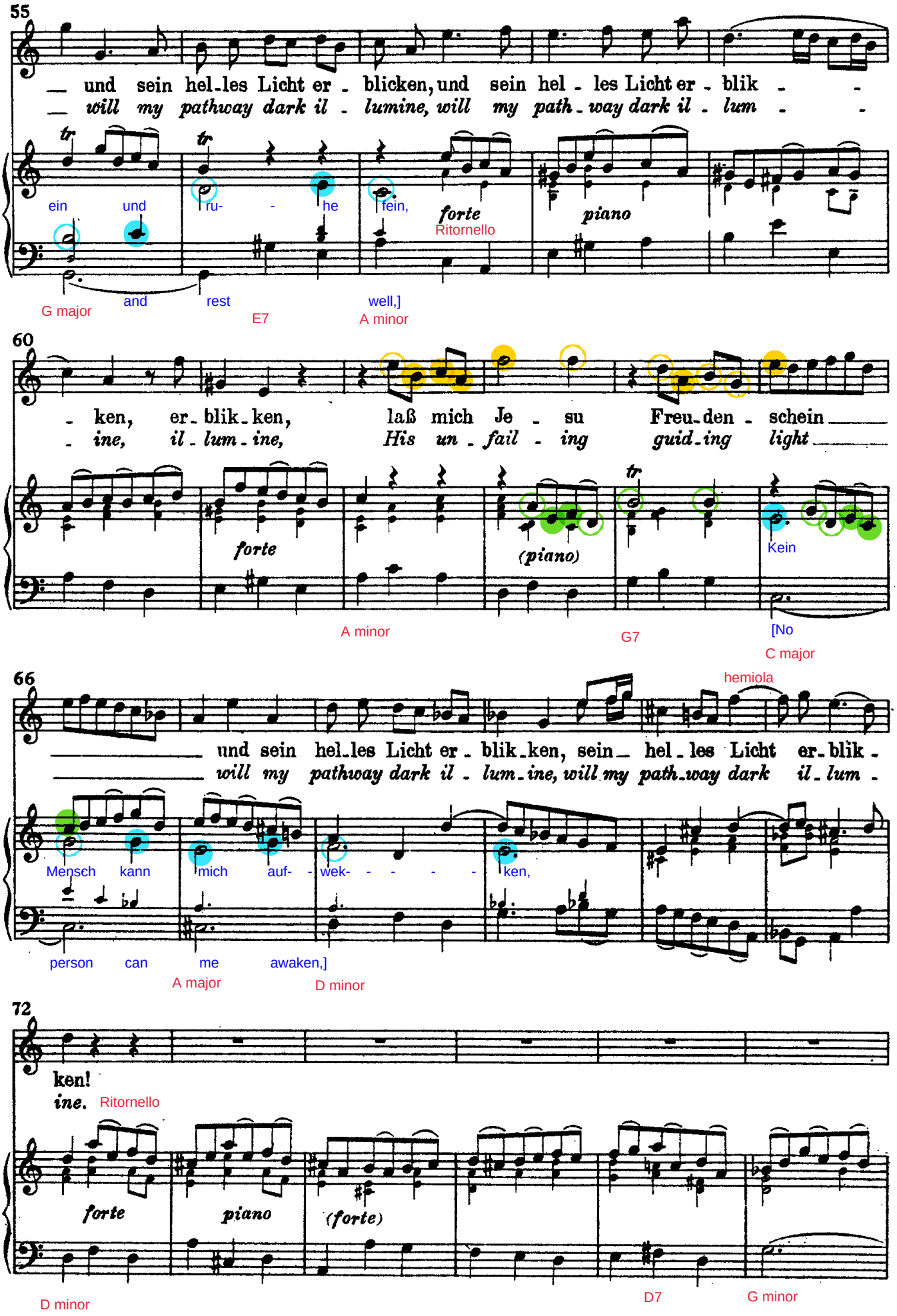
C major pedal (like a dominant for F major)...

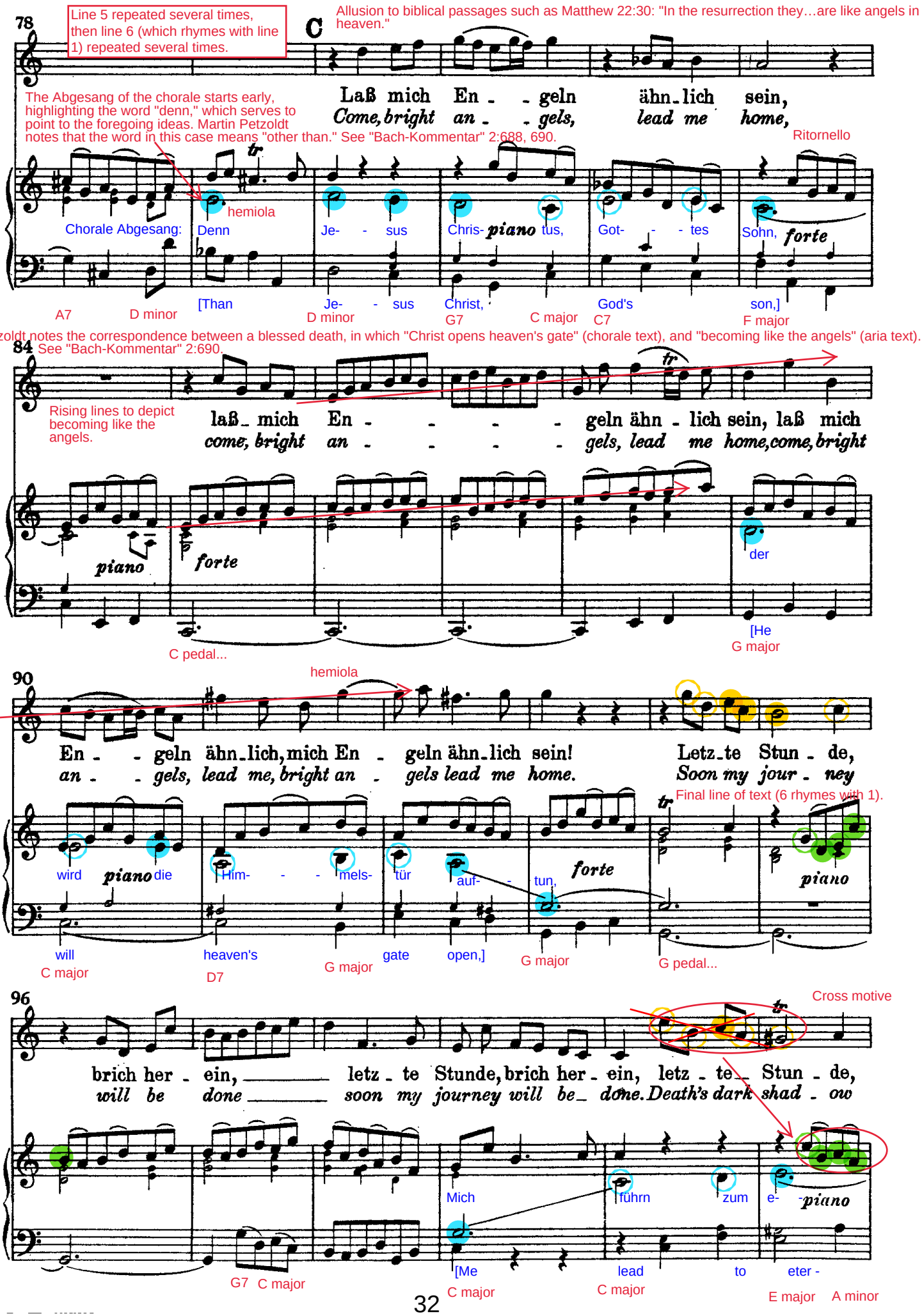


Martin Petzoldt suggests that consonances between the aria text and the chorale's last stanza (the one used to end the cantata) suggest that it is this same stanza that should be imagined here (more below). He argues that the biblical source for both texts (whose theme is to die blessedly) is the Nunc dimittis (Luke 2:29–30: "Now let thy servant depart in peace..." See Petzoldt, "Bach-Kommentar" 2:687–88.




31
Stun - de, brich her - ein, letz - te Stun - de, brich her - ein, mir die
jour - ney will be done, soon my jour - ney will be done, death's dark
piano
forte
piano
G major
G7
37
Au - gen zu - zu - drük - ken, mir die Au - gen zu - zu -
shad - ow hov - ers o'er me, death's dark shad - ow hov - ers
forte
piano
Mein
Viol., Va.
Arm tu ich aus- strek-
C major
[My
A minor
arm
G major
G7
I
C major
stretch out,]
43
drük - ken, mir die Au - gen, die Au - gen zu - zu - drük - ken!
o'er me, but my Sav - iour, my Sav - iour has gone be - fore me.
Ritornello
ken,
forte
E7
A minor
A minor
Higher tessitura, embellishment and melisma for Jesus' "ray of gladness."
49
B
Lines 3 & 4
presented twice.
Laß mich Je - su Freu - den - schein
His un - fail - ing guid - ing light
forte
piano
Chorale
Stollen 2:
So
schlaf
ich
[Me
A minor
lead
C major
to
e-
-
-
[Thus
(I)
fall-asleep
C major
D major


55
und sein hel-les Licht er-blicken, und sein hel-les Licht er-blik--
will my pathway dark il-lumine, will my path-way dark il-lum--
ein und ru- - he fein,
forte
Ritornello
piano
G major
and rest
E7
well,]
A minor
60
-ken, er-blik-ken, laß mich Je-su Freu-den-schein
-ine, il-lum-ine, His un-fail-ing guid-ing light
forte
(piano)
Kein
A minor
G7
[No
C major
66
hemiola
und sein hel-les Licht er-blik-ken, sein hel-les Licht er-blik-
will my pathway dark il-lum-ine, will my path-way dark il-lum-
Mensch kann mich auf- wek- - - - - ken,
person can me awaken,]
A major
D minor
72
ken!
ine.
Ritornello
forte
piano
(forte)
D minor
D7
G minor


78
Line 5 repeated several times, then line 6 (which rhymes with line 1) repeated several times.
C
Allusion to biblical passages such as Matthew 22:30: "In the resurrection they…are like angels in heaven."
Laß mich En - - geln ähn-lich sein,
Come, bright an - - gels, lead me home,
The Abgesang of the chorale starts early, highlighting the word "denn," which serves to point to the foregoing ideas. Martin Petzoldt notes that the word in this case means "other than." See "Bach-Kommentar" 2:688, 690.
Ritornello
Chorale Abgesang:
hemiola
Denn Je- - sus Chris- piano tus, Got- - - tes Sohn, forte
A7 D minor
[Than Je- - sus Christ, God's son,]
D minor G7 C major C7 F major
Martin Petzoldt notes the correspondence between a blessed death, in which "Christ opens heaven's gate" (chorale text), and "becoming like the angels" (aria text).
84
See "Bach-Kommentar" 2:690.
Rising lines to depict becoming like the angels.
laß- mich En - - - - geln ähn - lich sein, laß mich
come, bright an - - - - gels, lead me home, come, bright
piano forte
der
C pedal...
[He
G major
90
hemiola
En - - geln ähn-lich, mich En - geln ähn-lich sein!
an - - gels, lead me, bright an - gels lead me home.
Letz-te Stun - de,
Soon my jour - ney
Final line of text (6 rhymes with 1).
wird piano die Him- - - mels- tür auf- - tun, forte piano
will heaven's gate open,]
C major D7 G major G major G pedal...
96
Cross motive
brich her - ein, letz - te Stunde, brich her - ein, letz - te Stun - de,
will be done soon my journey will be done. Death's dark shad - ow
Mich führn zum e- piano
G7 C major
[Me lead to eter -
C major C major E major A minor

Petzoldt argues that the 5-fold repetition of the "letztze Stunde" figure occurring at just the point where the last stanza of the chorale has "eternal life" supports his contention that it was this stanza that Bach was implying with the instrumental citation. See "Bach-Kommentar" 2:688.



Having been prepared in the previous movement, the listeners now hear the chorale again, set in simple four-part harmony (an octave higher here) with "celestial" descant by trumpet and violin, depicting the transfigured soul (becoming like the angels as referenced in the previous movement). The chorale serves a catechismal function, even if the congretation did not sing along.



This is the fifth (supplementary) stanza to the 1560 chorale "Wenn mein Stündlein vorhanden ist" by Nilolaus Herman (1500–1561).



Text painting: Martin Petzoldt notes that "entrance to eternal life" is depicted with an animated web of voice-leading (especially in the bass) supporting the [normal] elongated soprano line, while the descant holds a note, then ascends to high C. See *Bach-Kommentar* 2:690.

