ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: THIRTY-TWO TRANSCRIPTIONS FOR PIANO OF ORGAN CHORALES OF J.S. BACH

John Joseph Mortensen, Doctor of Musical Arts, 1995

Dissertation directed by: Anne Koscielny, Professor of Piano, Department of Music

Thirty-two new piano transcriptions of selected Bach organ chorales comprise this dissertation. Examples of the various types of the organ chorale are included. Seven pieces from the recently-discovered Neumeister Collection have also been transcribed.

Each transcription is accompanied by a commentary which includes the text and translation of the German Reformation hymn upon which the piece is based, a discussion of the music itself and its relationship to the hymn text, and a description of the specific method used in transcribing the piece for piano.

The transcriptions themselves cover a range of technical difficulties, from pieces intended for the student to compositions for public performance. Furthermore, some are arranged for piano duet, duo, and in one case, for two pianos, eight hands.

The method of transcription varies from an attempt to approximate the organ sound to an approach in which creating a new, thoroughly

pianistic timbre is the goal. In some cases significant portions of Bach's originals have been arranged in order to accommodate the piano and its sound.

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THIRTY-TWO TRANSCRIPTIONS FOR PIANO OF ORGAN CHORALES OF J.S. BACH

by

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PREFACE

The origins of the organ chorale can be traced to Jan Peter Sweelinck's development of partitas or variations on hymn tunes around 1600. Ironically, these compositions served not in the church service (the Dutch Reformed Church employed unaccompanied singing only) but as concert pieces intended for the daily organ recitals in the churches of Amsterdam (Williams, 1972, p. 11). Only when adopted by the Lutheran organists did such pieces begin to appear in the church service itself.

Bach's own order of service at Leipzig in 1723 included eight separate occasions for organ music, of which at least two required organ chorales either singly or in sets (Williams, 1972, p. 9).

The function of the chorale seems to have been regarded as three-fold: to establish tonality for the singing which was to follow; to inform the congregation of the tune; and to inspire the worshippers.

Broad and absolute statements about the architectural forms of Bach's organ chorales are difficult to make with accuracy; classification of the forms has been the topic of gentlemanly disagreement among scholars (Tusler, 1956, p. 99). Nevertheless, certain general trends can be observed.

The terms "organ chorale" and "chorale prelude", though often used interchangeably, actually delineate two classifications of pieces. "Organ chorale" refers to all those pieces composed on the Reformation hymn tune, whereas the "chorale prelude" is a certain species within the larger family of organ chorales. (These terms are sometimes used loosely and interchangeably, resulting in confusion.) What distinguishes the

chorale prelude is that it uses the chorale tune in its entirety, whether conjunctly or disjunctly, as opposed to other types of the organ chorale, such as the chorale fugue, which may be constructed from only an opening motif of the hymn tune. (Even here we must admit exceptions, such as *In dir ist Freude,* BWV 615, universally included among the chorale preludes but composed like a chorale fantasia, using a short motif like the chorale fugue, but employing free rather than fugal treatment.)

The chorale prelude itself may be based on one of several procedures:

1. The hymn tune may be placed in the soprano voice of the organ, while the other voices provide accompaniment, usually of greater interest than simple homophony, and often contrapuntal without distracting from the primacy of the chorale tune.

2. The hymn tune in the soprano may be ornamented to the extent that the tune might or might not be immediately and obviously recognizable as a hymn.

3. The hymn may be placed in any of the four voices, but usually in long note values, and often the phrases are separated from one another by several measures, so that the other voices provide all the musical material between phrases of the hymn.

4. The hymn tune may be treated as the subject of a canon, appearing in all voices. This device is occasionally combined with the procedure described in example three above, so that all voices rehearse the hymn tune, but it appears as a cantus firmus in one specific voice in longer note values, and with widely separated phrases.

Four additional forms related to the chorale prelude exist.

1. The chorale fugue is constructed from a fragment of the hymn which acts as the fugue subject. Because the subject does not generally encompass the entire hymn tune, the chorale fugue is not considered to be a chorale prelude in the strict sense.

2. The fantasia, similar to the fugue, is likewise developed from a melodic fragment, but in freer form, not following the strictures of fugal composition.

3. The motet chorale, in which each phrase of the hymn serves as a point of imitation, is not unlike the Renaissance motet. However, the hymn tune is sometimes superimposed over the motet structure, producing a hybrid that might be more properly categorized among the chorale preludes.

4. The chorale variations or chorale partitas present a declamatory and (usually) homophonically harmonized hymn and then proceed with several variations which, individually, bear resemblance to the fantasia style previously mentioned. (Keller, 1967, p. 176)

Many of the organ chorales do not fall readily into the above categories; some, such as the motet described above, seem to fit into two classifications at once; others begin as, for example, a melody chorale and subsequently break into fantasia form. The salient point here is that some effort at typology, even if imperfect, must be undertaken so that the styles and structures of the various organ chorales can be discussed with a measure of clarity.

That the music of Bach has been the subject of countless transcriptions is appropriate in that the composer himself was an

industrious transcriber of his own music and that of others. His "Schübler" chorale preludes are arrangements of cantata movements; his Concerto for Four Harpsichords (BWV 1065) is a transcription of Vivaldi's Concerto for Four Violins and String Orchestra, Op. 3 no. 10, and most of Bach's other keyboard concerti are arrangements of either his own earlier work or of others' work. At times Bach adapted the piece for new instrumentation but maintained all the original notes; occasionally he altered or augmented the harmony and counterpoint. (Williams, Vol. II, 1980, p. 103)

These activities foreshadowed those of the nineteenth century insofar as transcriptions continued to flourish, and composers re-worked their own and other composers' material. However, the centrality of the piano in musical life and the rise of the bourgeois music audience created a new impetus (and, it must be added, a new market) for transcribers.

That the piano occupied an important place in the social life (and in the drawing room) of the middle-class European family meant that any piece of music, whether orchestral, chamber or choral, could be introduced into the home by means of the transcription for piano. In this arena Franz Liszt was the pre-eminent figure; his arrangements of symphonies, songs, chamber works, fantasies, and paraphrases, are legion. And as the so-called "Bach Revival" was also under way led by Felix Mendelssohn, Liszt re-introduced in piano transcription several of the forgotten organ works of Bach.

The influence of Liszt as general trend-setter was great. For this reason, among the number of great pianists who followed his generation can be found several who imitated their mentor in transcribing Bach's

music for the piano.

Carl Tausig, the young and tempestuous student of Liszt, prepared an organ toccata and fugue of Bach for piano that at one time was the fashionable piece for beginning any recital.

Alexander Siloti, another Liszt student and the cousin of Rachmaninoff, was likely the busiest of the Bach-transcribers. His projects included organ pieces, cello suites, violin works, and even a prelude from the Well-Tempered Clavier with a new melodic line appended.

Ferruccio Busoni is known today more for his Bach transcriptions than his original compositions, and even his legendary playing, confined now to one scratchy and faint recording, is eclipsed by his two sets of chorale prelude arrangements. Though used mainly for concert performance, Busoni also intended that these works should serve a pedagogical purpose; that is, to introduce students to the subtleties of Bach.

The late twentieth century has seen some diminishment of the Bach transcription and of transcriptions in general. The recording industry may be partially responsible for this; it is no longer necessary to play an unfamiliar work on an instrument to gain its acquaintance. Perhaps of even more influence has been the advent of musicology as a standardized field of study, with its emphasis on original instruments, performance practice, and urtext editions. Nevertheless, some piano transcriptions of Bach have survived, most notably Busoni's arrangement of the violin Chaconne in d minor. Many of these, such as the two-piano arrangements by H.C. Stuart Duncan, serve the student rather than the concert artist; Duncan's settings are deliberately manageable by less

confident fingers. Still, a pianist occasionally will be found to transcribe an organ piece for concert use. Harold Bauer, Isidor Phillip, and Wilhelm Kempff all made contributions of this kind.

This edition resulted from a personal interest in Bach transcriptions for piano. Having performed many and listened to many more, the writer has attempted to make a contribution of his own, with the goal that he and others may add new transcriptions to recital programs.

In addition, as a teacher of piano, the writer believes that certain organ pieces of Bach, if arranged for the student, could serve well as teaching pieces. Furthermore, such teaching material, if transcribed in duet or duo form, may prove useful in the instruction of ensemble playing. For this reason several transcriptions in this collection were prepared especially for student duo and duet use.

The writer encountered the following questions in undertaking transcriptions: Shall the goal be to retain or to transform? That is, does one wish to approximate the sound of the organ on the piano, or to create an altogether different sound? Secondly, How faithful should one be to the original score? In other words, what changes to Bach's notes are desirable or permissible? Finally, How should the organ's pedal notes find accommodation on the piano keyboard?

The great strength of the organ lies in its rows of stops, each providing a separate tone color, and all available to sound jointly and severally. Additionally, because the organ sound does not fade after the initial attack but continues indefinitely, and the piano sound begins to die immediately upon inception and lacks the tonal variation of the organ,

the transference of music from the organ to the piano can become problematic. The piano may claim, however, the tonal richness of the damper pedal and the ability to vary the volume of individual notes.

Whereas the organist may simply select an appropriate stop for the *cantus firmus*, the pianist must achieve the same result through projection. Therefore one task of the transcriber is to provide a pianistic layout such that the *cantus firmus* can be voiced successfully.

Obstacles to this ease of voicing include passages in which the *cantus firmus* is closely surrounded by other notes and situations wherein the hand is awkwardly employed. When it became necessary to decide between retaining the original configuration of the notes and providing a reasonable manner of voicing the chorale tune, the latter was chosen. At times a redistribution of notes from one hand to the other was undertaken. Under more complicated circumstances passages were transposed up or down an octave or even rewriten altogether.

In certain instances the solution lay in allowing the pianist's right hand to act alone in voicing the *cantus firmus* by transfering all other notes to the left. Naturally, this was not always possible, but at times provided a ready and effective resolution, as in *Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein* (see Figure 1). Although the left hand part then becomes much more involved, and is clearly not ideal for a small hand, in the writer's opinion the benefit of clear voicing would seem to outweigh any perceived accompanimental complications. It is also possible to roll the larger stretches in the left hand. This, of course, would represent a significant departure from organ performance practice.

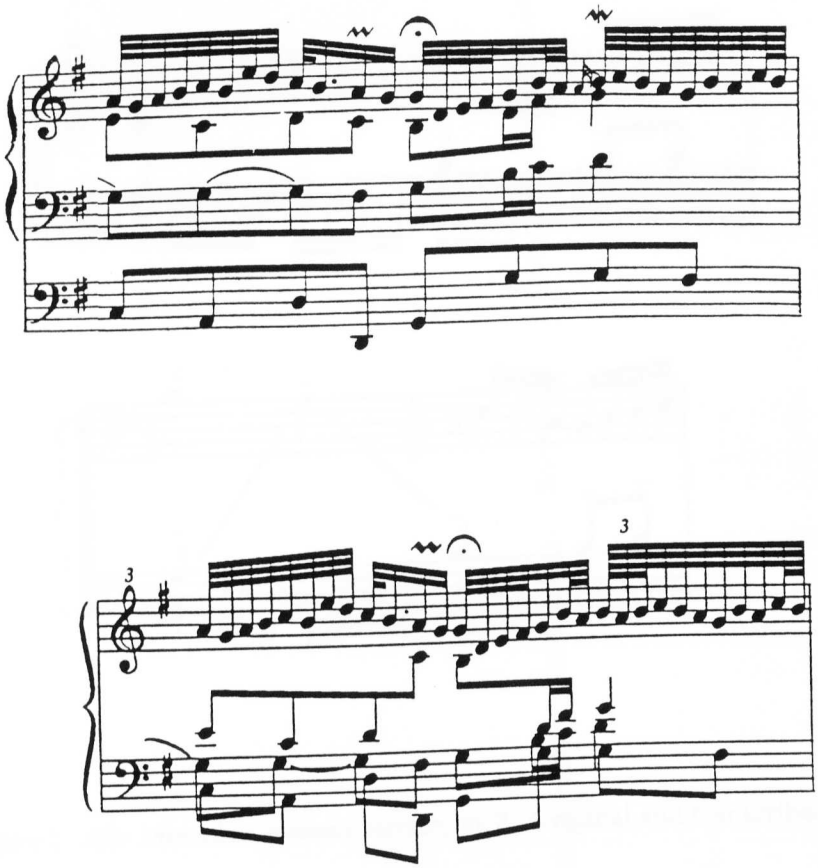


Figure 1. *Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein,* m. 3. Original and transcribed form.

An example of passing the *cantus* from one hand to the other may be observed in *Alle Menschen müssen sterben,* wherein the tune is placed in the hand with the least accompanimental figuration at the time (See Figure 2).

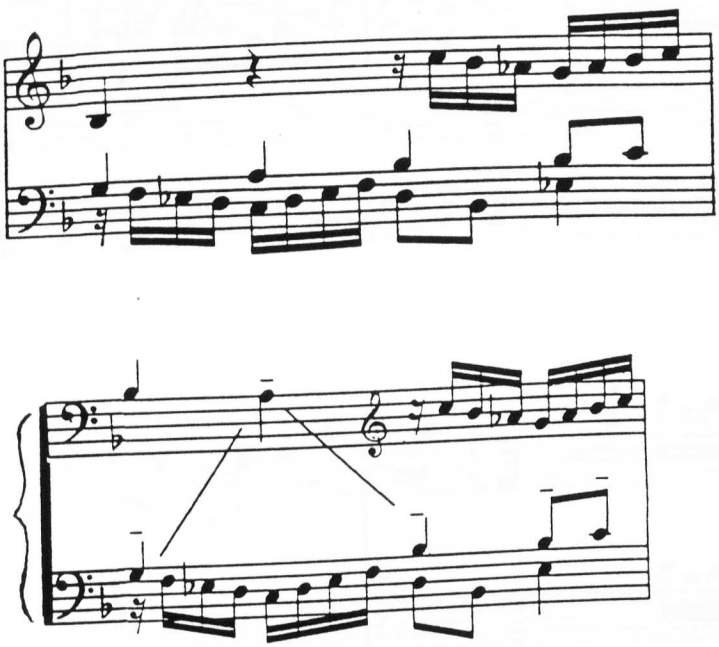


Figure 2. *Alle Menschen müssen sterben*, m. 2. Original and transcribed form.

Another solution, possible only in an ensemble setting, is the separation of the hymn tune from the surrounding figuration by means of placing the tune in a different instrument. This effectively eliminates any technical complications in clearly marking the melody (See Figure 3).

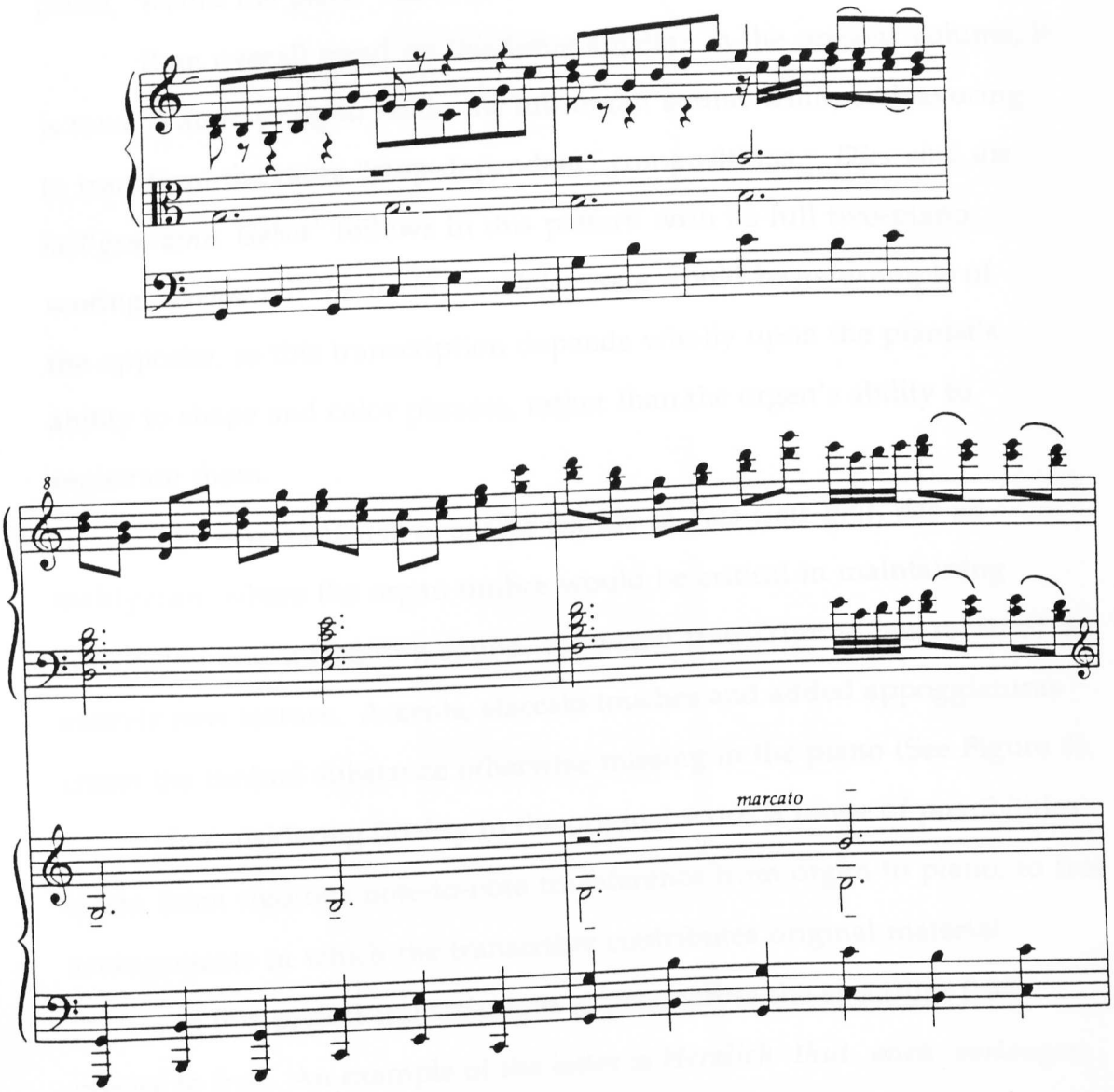


Figure 3. *Dies sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot'*, mm. 8-9. Original and transcribed form.

Notes of the *cantus firmus* were usually indicated with *tenuto* markings throughout this volume.

Often it was necessary to consider exactly how dependent upon

organ timbre the original composition might be. If transferred to the piano, would the piece "survive" ?

If an overall trend on this issue appears in the present volume, it is toward attempting to retain the full organ sound while endeavoring to transform the more "stop-dependent" compositions. *Dies sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot'* follows in this pattern with its full two-piano scoring. *Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein* would be an example of the opposite, as this transcription depends wholly upon the pianist's ability to shape and color phrases, rather than the organ's ability to registrate them.

In a few measures of sparse texture in *Was Gott thut, das ist wohlgetan*, where the organ timbre would be critical in maintaining convincing and interesting sound, the piano transcription has received an entirely new texture. Accents, staccato touches and added appoggiaturas create the timbral substance otherwise missing in the piano (See Figure 4).

In considering fidelity to the original score, a range of possibilities exists, from rigorous note-to-note transference from organ to piano, to free arrangements in which the transcriber contributes original material.

In this project transcriptions appear across the spectrum from precise to free. An example of the latter is *Herzlich thut mich verlangen*, in which the ending has been rewritten and extended (See Figure 5).

In general, however, the guiding factor in deciding exactly what sort of treatment an individual piece was to receive is as follows: when the original composition seemed to rely heavily upon a full organ sound, the writer sought to approximate that texture by including octave doublings and added chordal tones. On the other hand, when the original

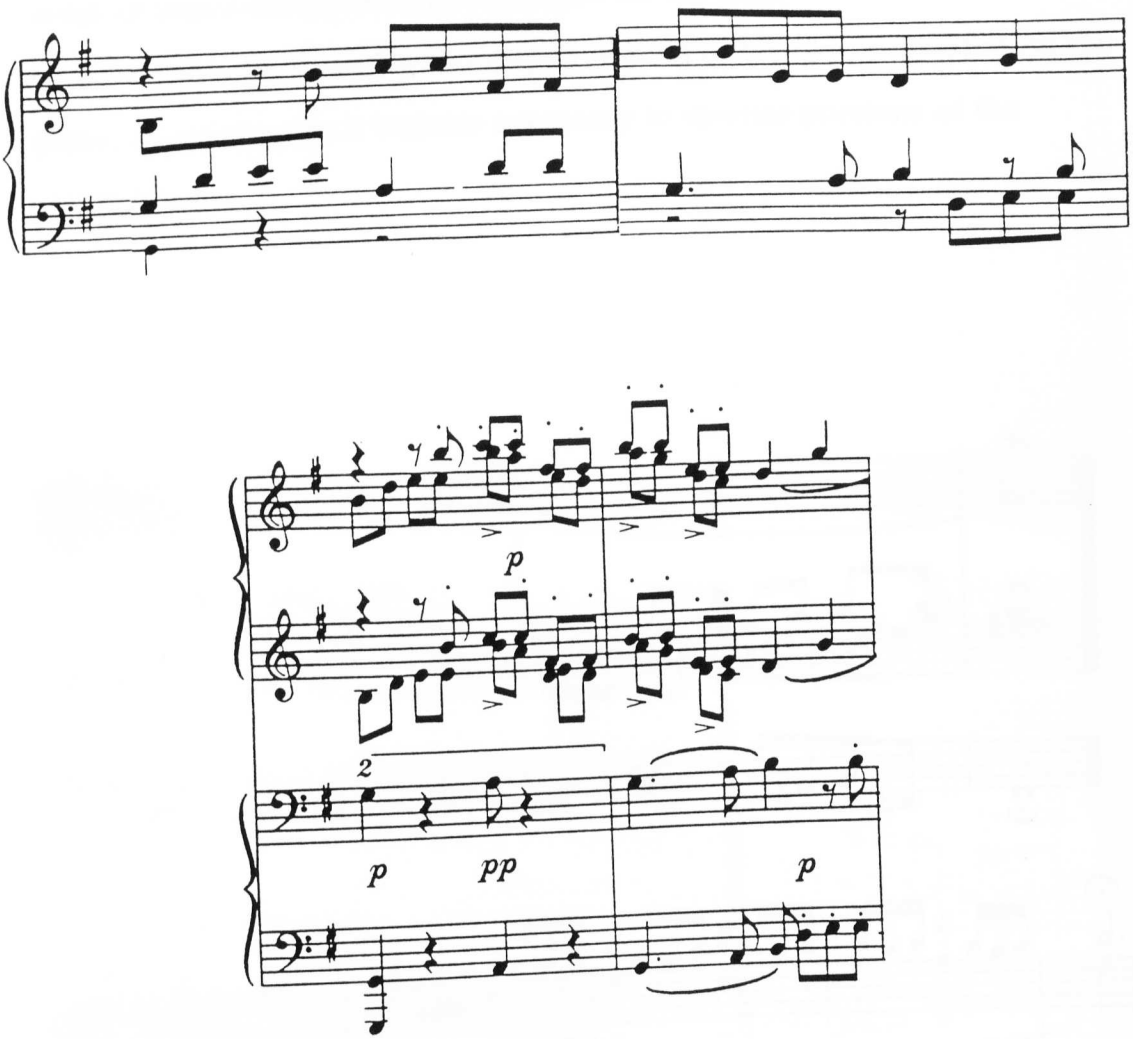


Figure 4. *Was Gott thut, das ist wohlgetan,* mm. 13-14. Original and transcribed form.

seemed to center around a more subtle and understated variety of organ stops, the approach was to "replace" those organ timbres with pianistic articulations and phrasings, with the goal of providing a new textural integrity appropriate to the piano.

Yet one more consideration is the method in which the pedal notes of organ music shall be managed on the piano keyboard. Often the organ's notes were simply too widely spaced to be accommodated on the piano, in which case it became necessary to rewrite portions of the composition.

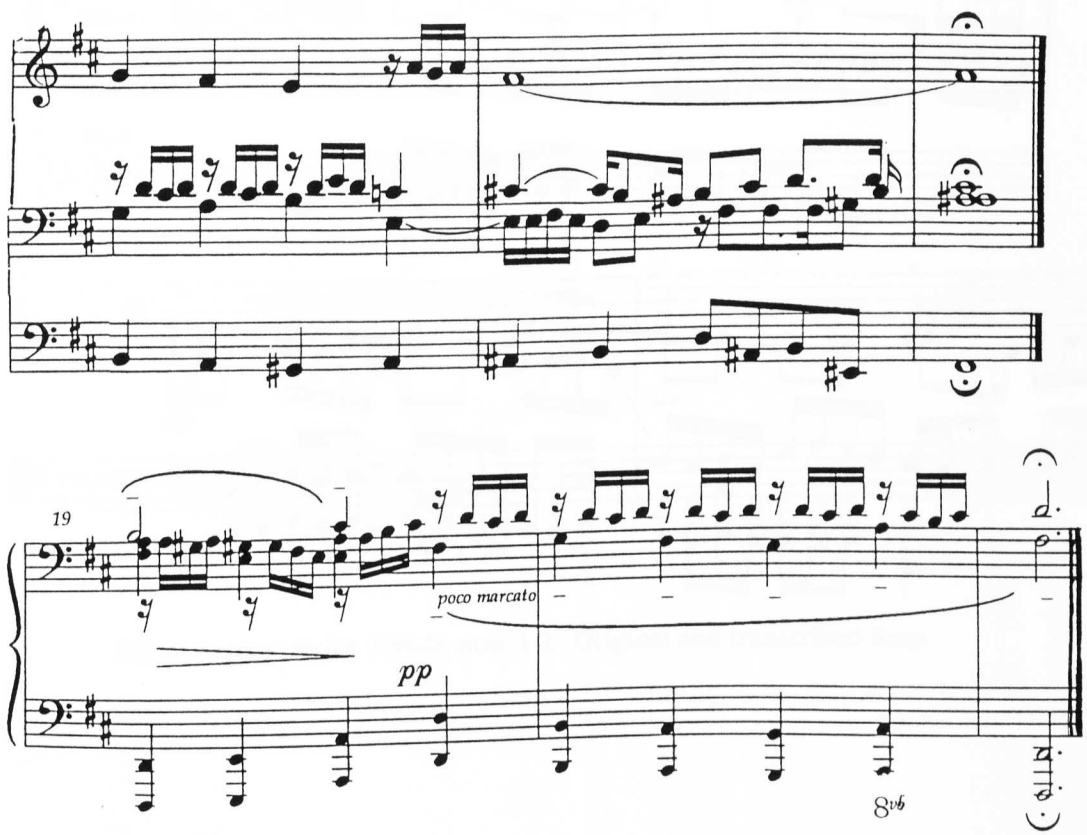


Figure 5. *Herzlich thut mich verlangen,* ending. Original and transcribed form.

Redistributing notes was also a common practice. When the writer wished to double the bass at the octave in *Jesu, meine Freude* (BWV 610), most of the tenor's notes were assigned to the right hand (See figure 6).

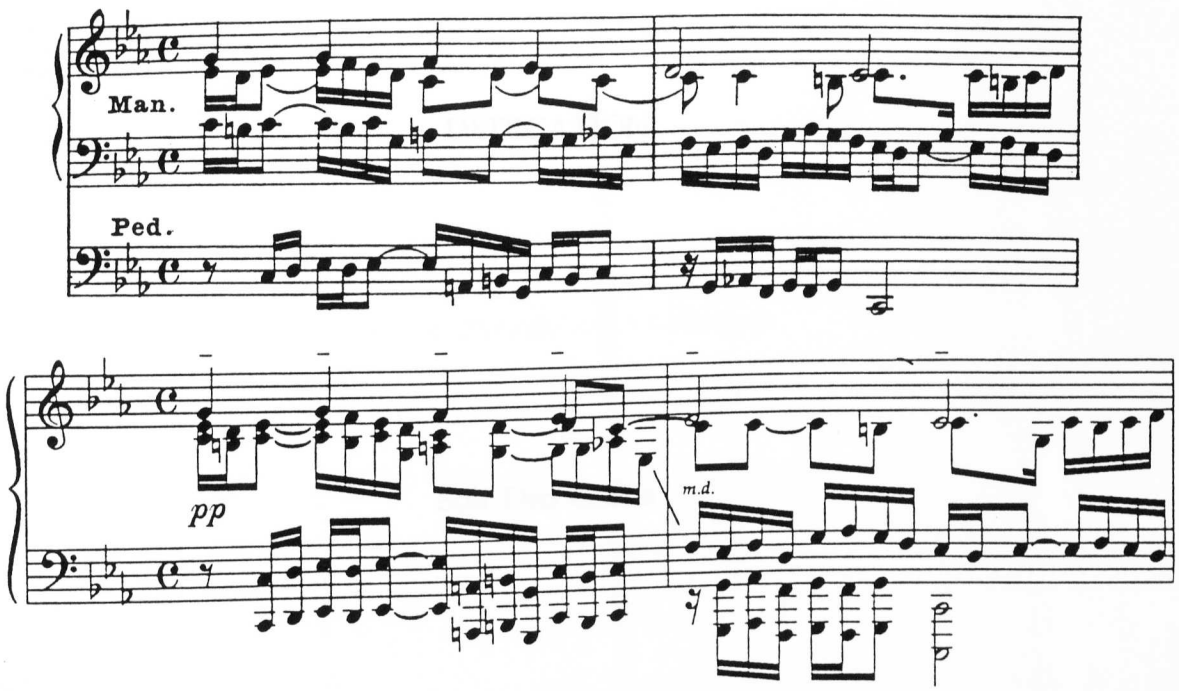


Figure 6. *Jesu, meine Freude,* mm. 1-2. Original and transcribed form.

This volume of transcriptions is presented not in the presumption that any of Bach's works are in need of improvement, but with the hope that these great compositions might receive a wider hearing, and that pianists and their listeners might be enriched.

DEDICATION

Soli Deo Gloria

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author gratefully acknowledges

Jesus Christ for having mercy

and Linda Mortensen for having patience.

Ach, Gott und Herr

BWV 714

A specimen from the Neumeister chorales, *Ach Gott* is, among other things, an interesting study in chorale prelude form. The first section seems to be thematically unrelated to the chorale melody except perhaps by the most vague and tenuous associations, which are elaborated below. The opening proceeds in strict four-part writing coupled with rhythmic conservatism, until the eighteenth measure, wherein the voices begin moving in quicker rhythmic divisions of quarters. In measure 37 the composer reaches a cadence on the parallel major, thus concluding the first section.

As the second part begins, the cantus firmus entrances are marked in the sources, and these indications are carried over into the modern Yale University Press edition, making the discovery of chorale melody entrances a simple matter indeed. These marked entrances are clear evidence that the second section functions as a small phrase chorale within the larger structure of the whole piece. Furthermore, each entrance in the soprano is followed one measure later by an imitative entrance in the tenor, creating a setting of the cantus in canon at the octave (with the exception of measures 52 through 55, where the canon appears at the ninth, although in altered and imperfect form due to harmonic constraints).

The relationship between the first section of the piece and the chorale melody may lie in the occasional use of brief canon, or at least of imitation, in measures 25 through 29. Whether or not this is intentional on the part of the composer is a matter of conjecture.

Interestingly, the second section was later published as a composition unto itself, without the accompanying introduction. This is one reason that the Neumeister chorales are widely regarded as authentic works of Bach.

As a transcription, *Ach Gott* has been arranged in the form of a duet. Preponderances of notes have been avoided because this transcription is intended for use by beginning students. This chorale prelude offers the students instruction on several issues. First, rehearsal skills and cooperation must be developed if any duet piece is to be played successfully. Second, the beginning pianists have the opportunity to experience ensemble playing and the necessity of strict rhythm that accompanies it. Additionally, the students may gain an understanding of voicing and balance for the projection of the cantus firmus entrances. Finally, the experience of witnessing Bach's compositional craft should prove valuable; playing firsthand such devices as canon, imitation, and exemplary voice-leading may nurture the best possible musical sensibilities in the students.

The text and translation of the chorale melody are included below.

Ach, Gott un Herr,
wie gross und schwer
sind mein' begangne Sünden!
Da ist Niemand,
der helfen kann,
in dieser Welt zu finden.

(Johann Major, Martin Rutilius, 1613)

Ah, God and Lord,

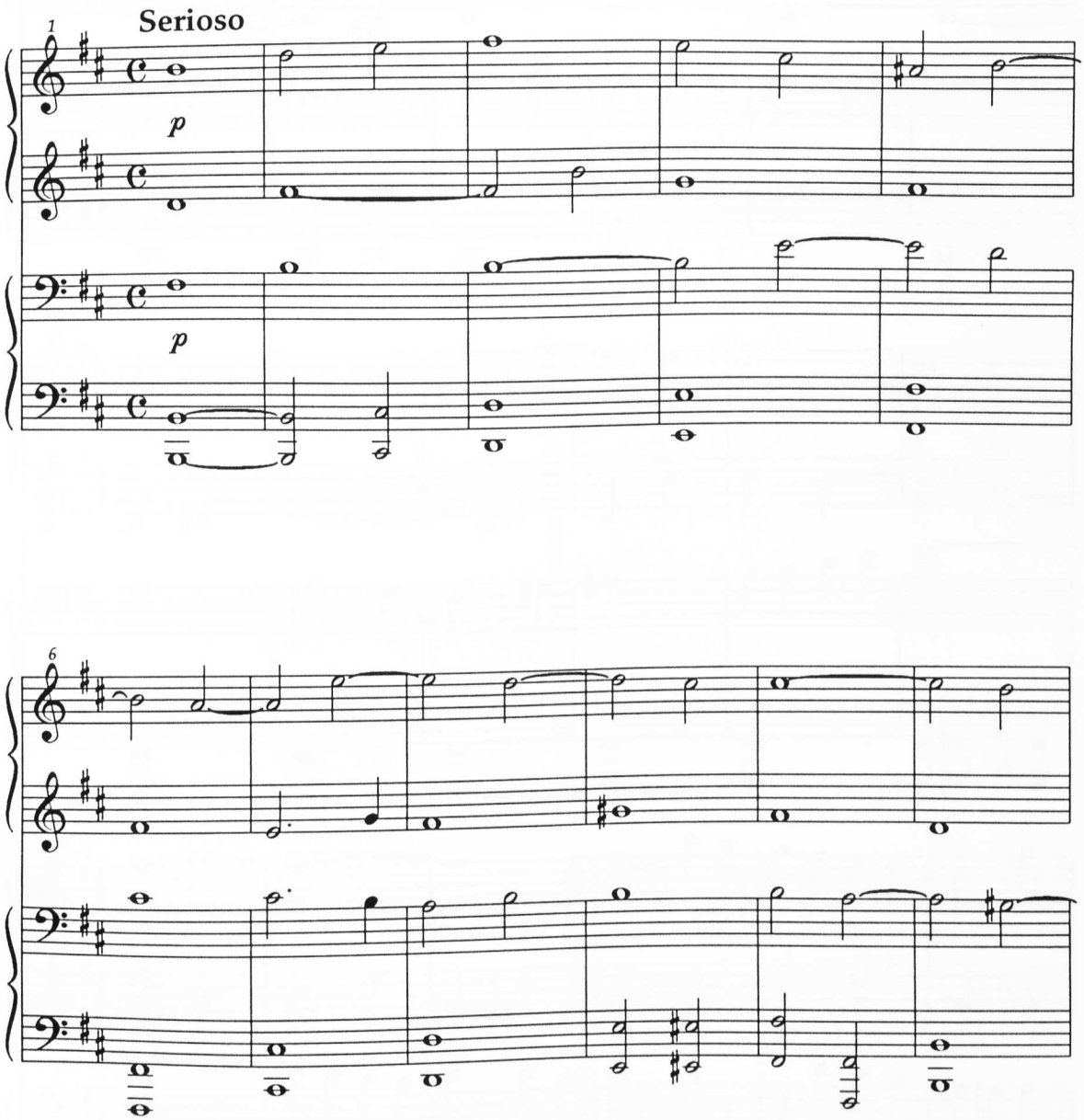
How great and heavy
Are my sins!
There is no one to be found
In this whole world
Who can help.

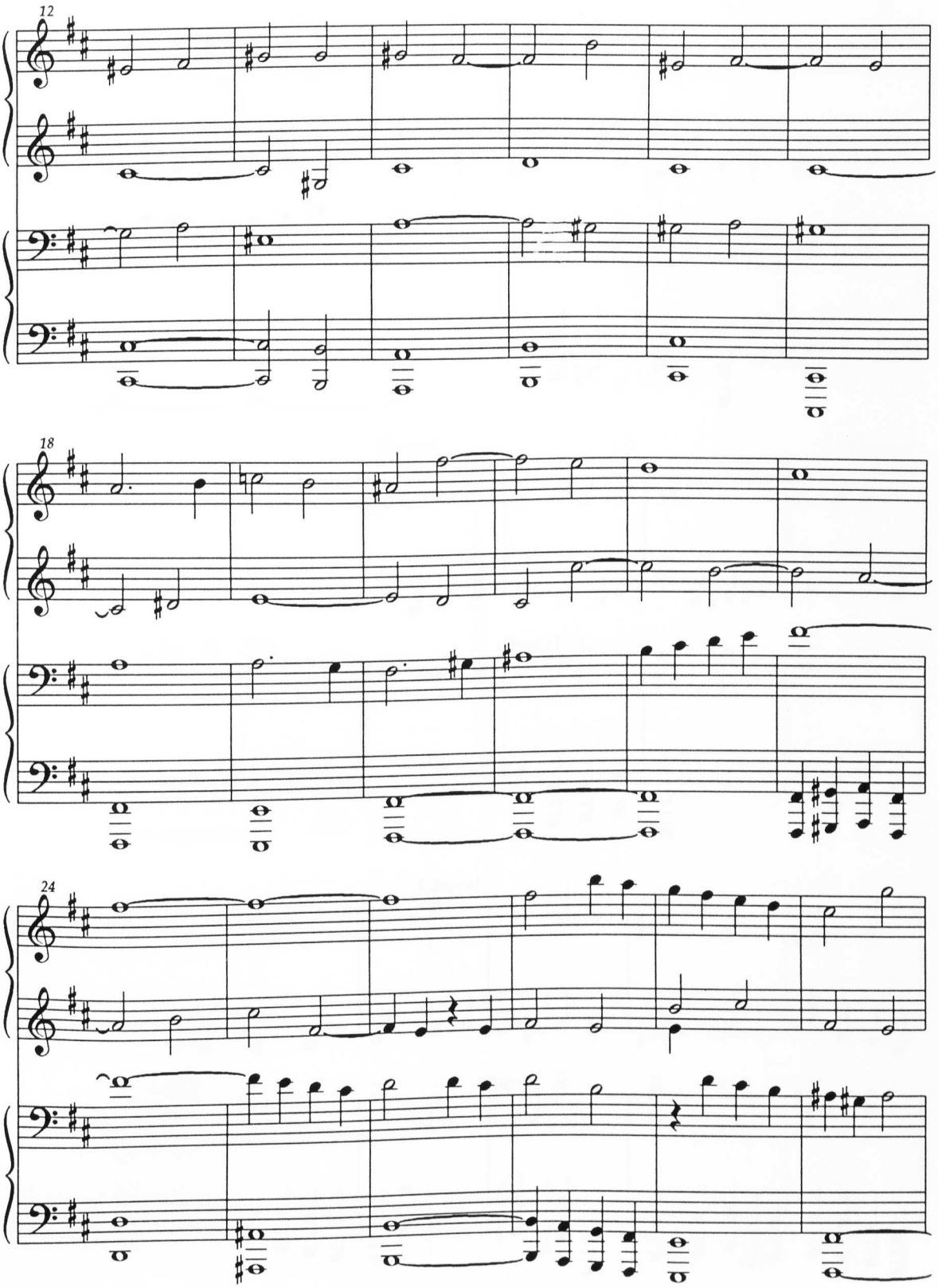
(Translation: John Mortensen)

*German texts in this edition are taken from Bach, J.S. *Chorale Collection*. Elvera Wonderlich, ed. New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, 1948, unless otherwise noted.

Ach, Gott und Herr

Ah, God and Lord

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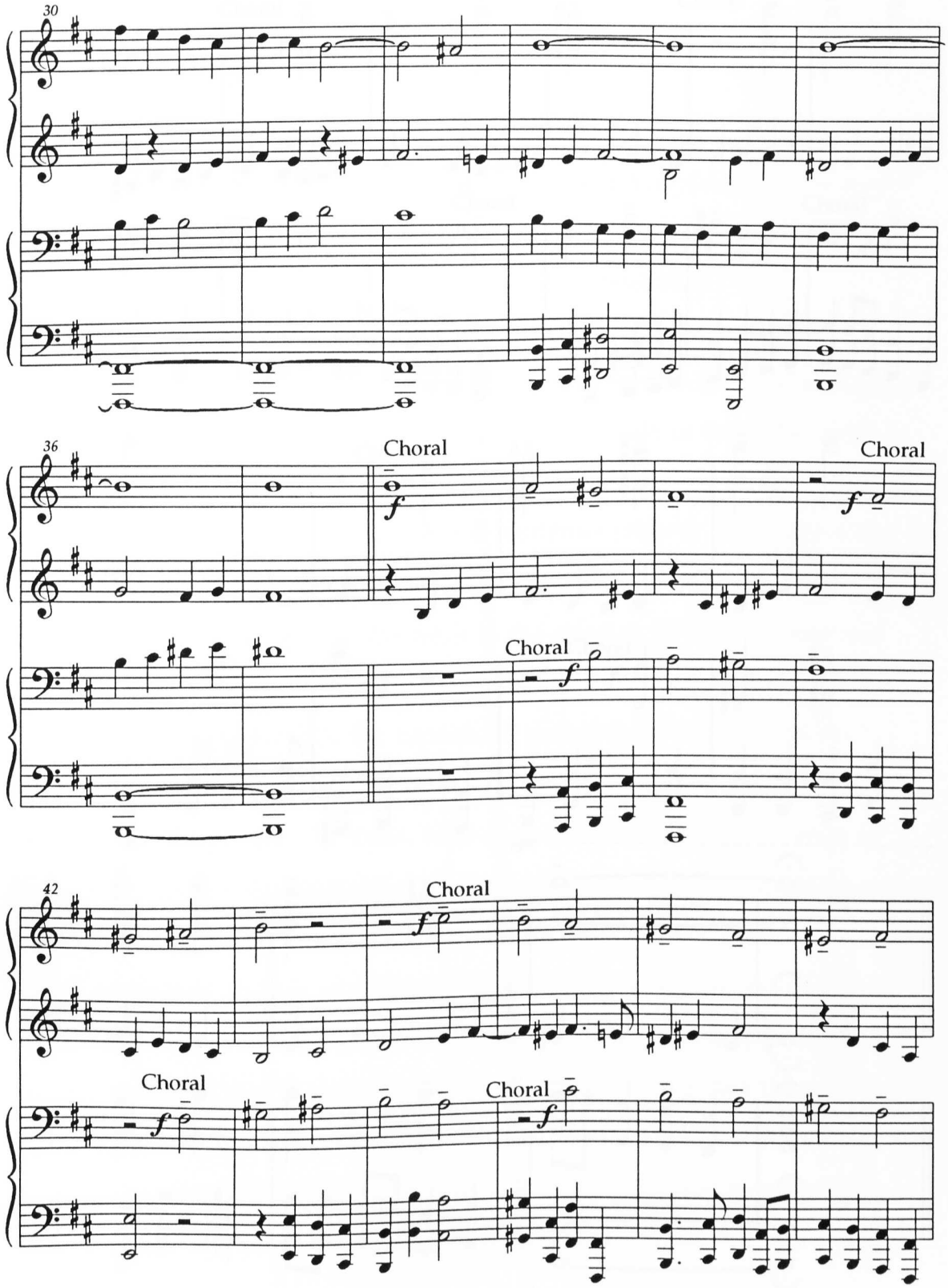
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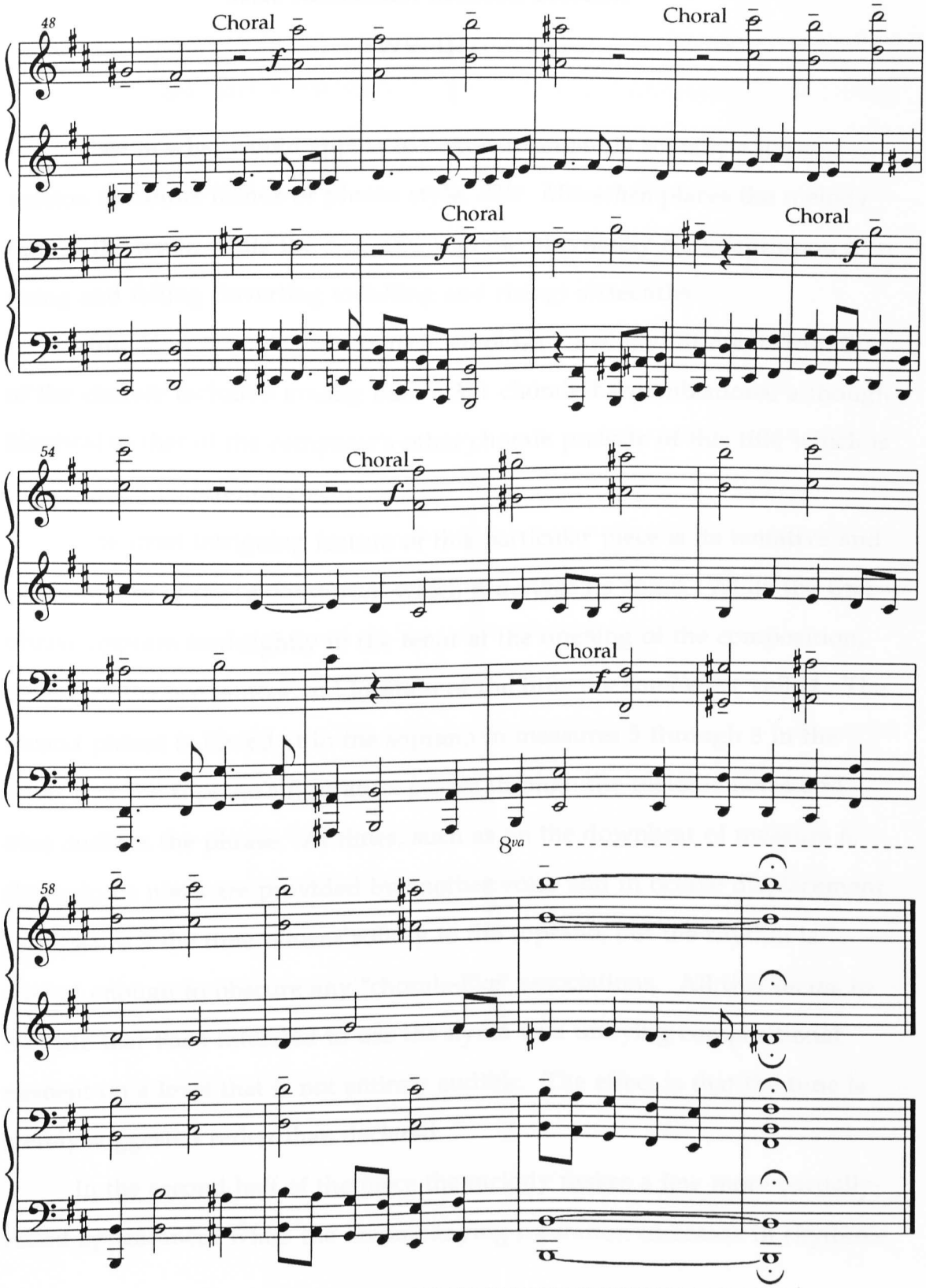
48
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54
Choral
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Choral
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8va
58

Alle Menschen müssen sterben

BWV 1117

Cast in what would appear to be free form but is actually a loose version of cantus firmus or phrase style, *Alle Menschen* places the melody first in the tenor, while the bass and soprano alternately comment upon it in rising and falling (inverting to falling and rising) sixteenths.

Alle Menschen müssen sterben employs a melody different from that of the chorale included among Bach's 371 chorale harmonizations, although identical to that of the composer's other chorale prelude of this title which is found in the *Orgelbüchlein.*

The most intriguing feature of this particular piece is its tentative and shadowy use of the melody from which it derives its name. While the first phrase appears forthrightly in the tenor at the opening of the composition, thereafter the occurances and location of the tune are somewhat veiled. The second phrase is hinted at in the soprano in measures 5 through 8 in the sense that the soprano's figuration passes through the melodic notes and thus outlines the phrase. At times, such as on the downbeat of measure 6, the melodic notes are provided by another voice and in octave displacement. In measure 9 the tune returns solidly to the soprano, but the rhythm is altered enough to obscure any "chorale-like" associations. All this seems to indicate that Bach intended to use the hymn as a unifying compositional element on a level that is not entirely audible. The effect is that the tune is merely suggested rather than declared.

In the second half of the piece the melody makes a few more partially-veiled appearances while the accompanying figuration increases in rhythmic

energy. This leads to an *adagio* coda in which a chorale-like tune is expressed, which seems to bear little relation to the *Alle Menschen* melody.

In the first half of the piece the primary alterations undertaken during the transcription process are those of redistribution between the hands, simply for the sake of ease of execution. However, as the running sixteenths begin in measure 13 octaves were added to the bass, and the sixteenth-note anacrusis of each measure was marked with staccato indications.

As previously mentioned, *Alle Menschen* passes from its first to its second section while the rhythmic activity doubles. In order to express and amplify this augmentation of energy the idea of *increase* was implemented wherever possible. Measure 17 is indicated to be played with pedal. In measure 19 the right hand melody moves up an octave and receives extra chordal support beneath, while the right hand's off-beat notes are changed to chords. The bass passagework in the twentieth measure finds added emphasis with extra lower octaves on each primary beat, while the right hand chords are filled out. The right hand's flourish in measure 21 is moved up an octave and then doubled in the left hand a tenth below. This writer used similar techniques through measure 24. In the *adagio* conclusion, the largest possible sonority was sought through extra bass notes, expanded chords, and *fortissimo* dynamics.

This transcription is of considerable difficulty due to rapid passagework and complex accompanimental figurations.

The text and translation are quoted below.

Alle Menschen müssen sterben,
alles Fleisch ist gleich wie Heu;

was da lebet, muss verderben,
soll es anders werden neu.

Dieser Leib der muss verwesen,
wenn es anders soll genesen
zu der grossen Herrlichkeit,
die den Frommen ist bereit'.

(J.G. Albinus, 1652)

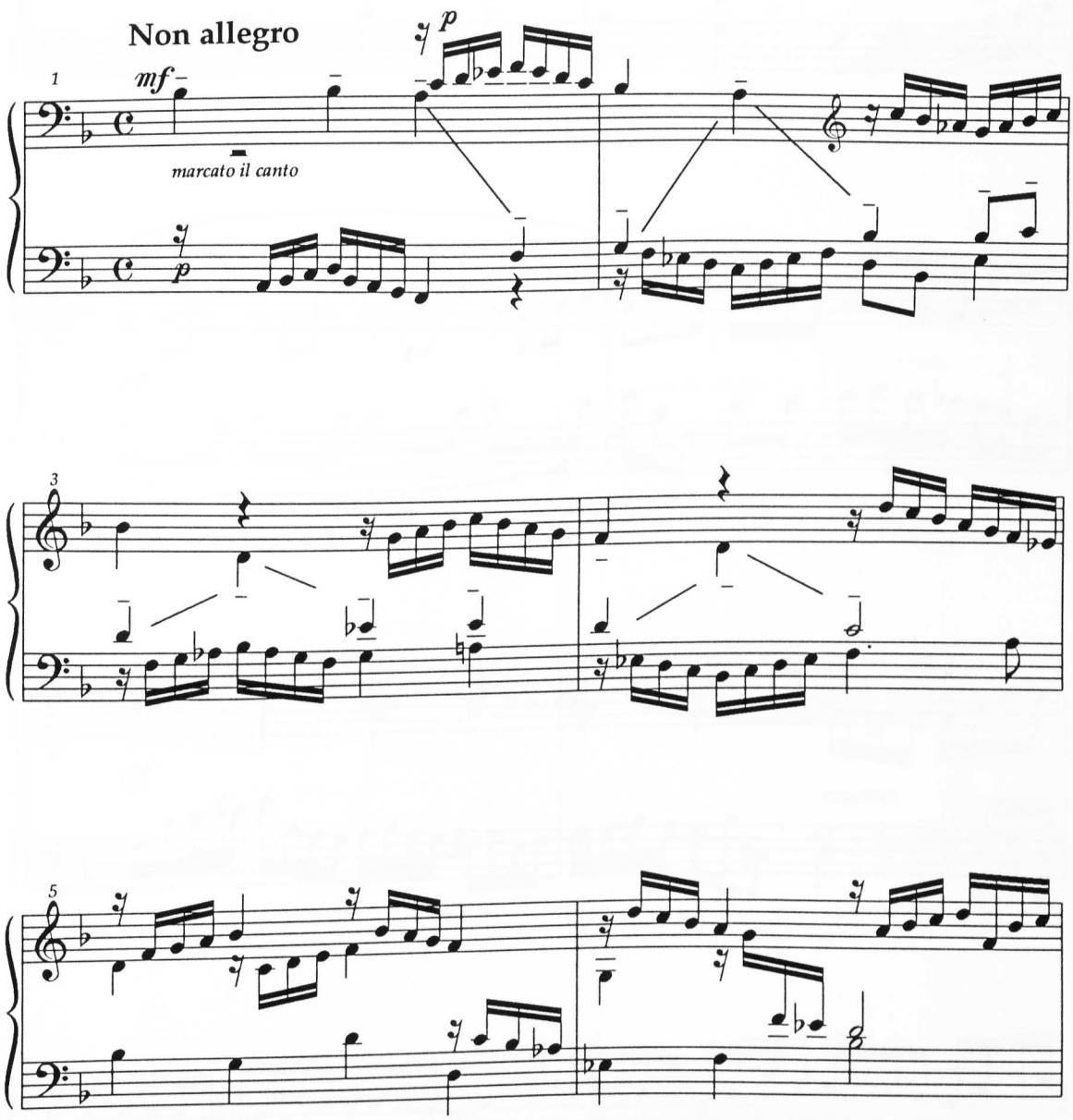
All mankind must die,
All flesh is as grass;
What lives must perish,
if it is to become something new.

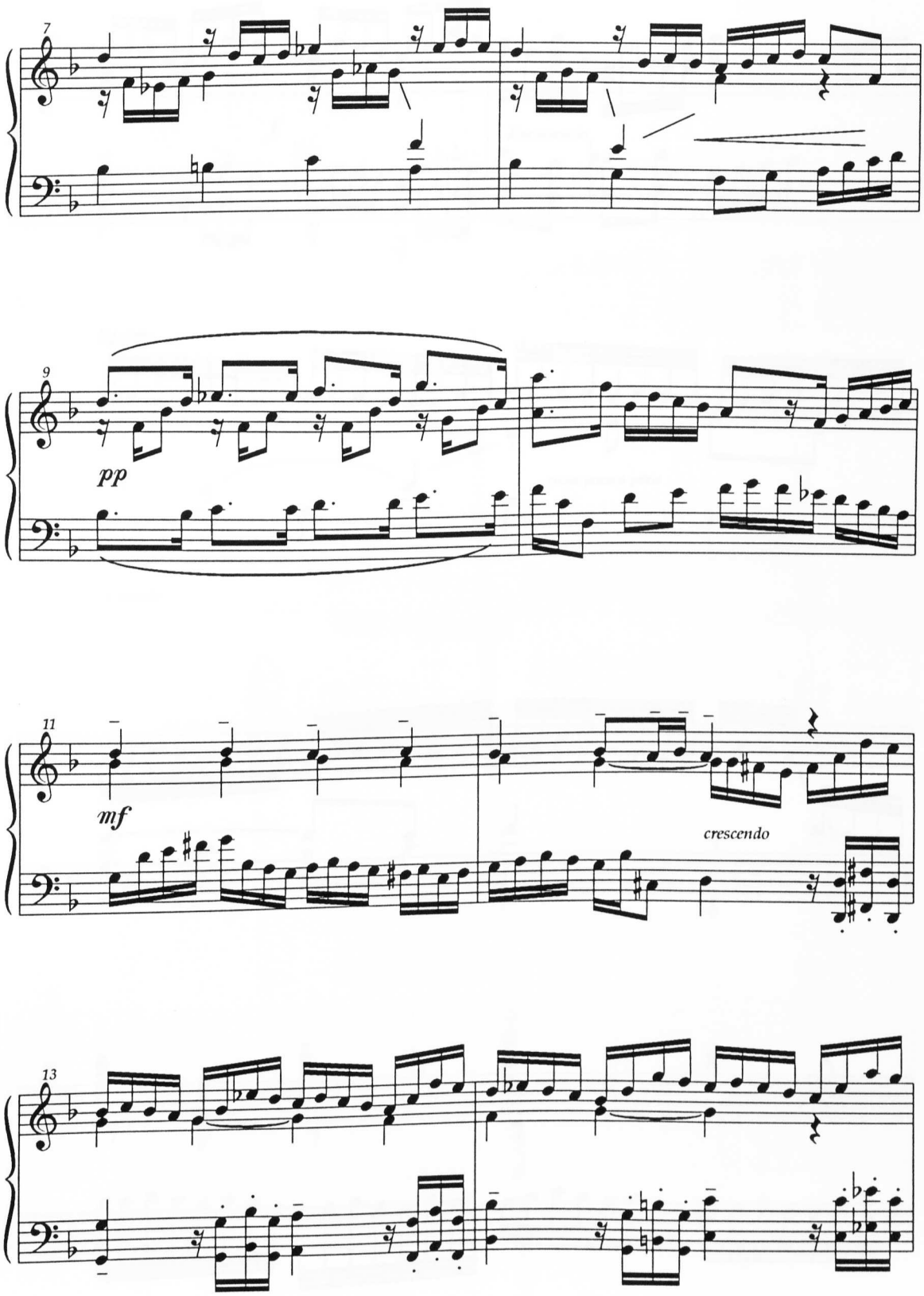
This body must wither away,
if it is to attain
to the great splendour
which is prepared for the righteous.

(Translation: Peter Williams)

Alle Menschen müssen sterben

All Mankind Must Perish

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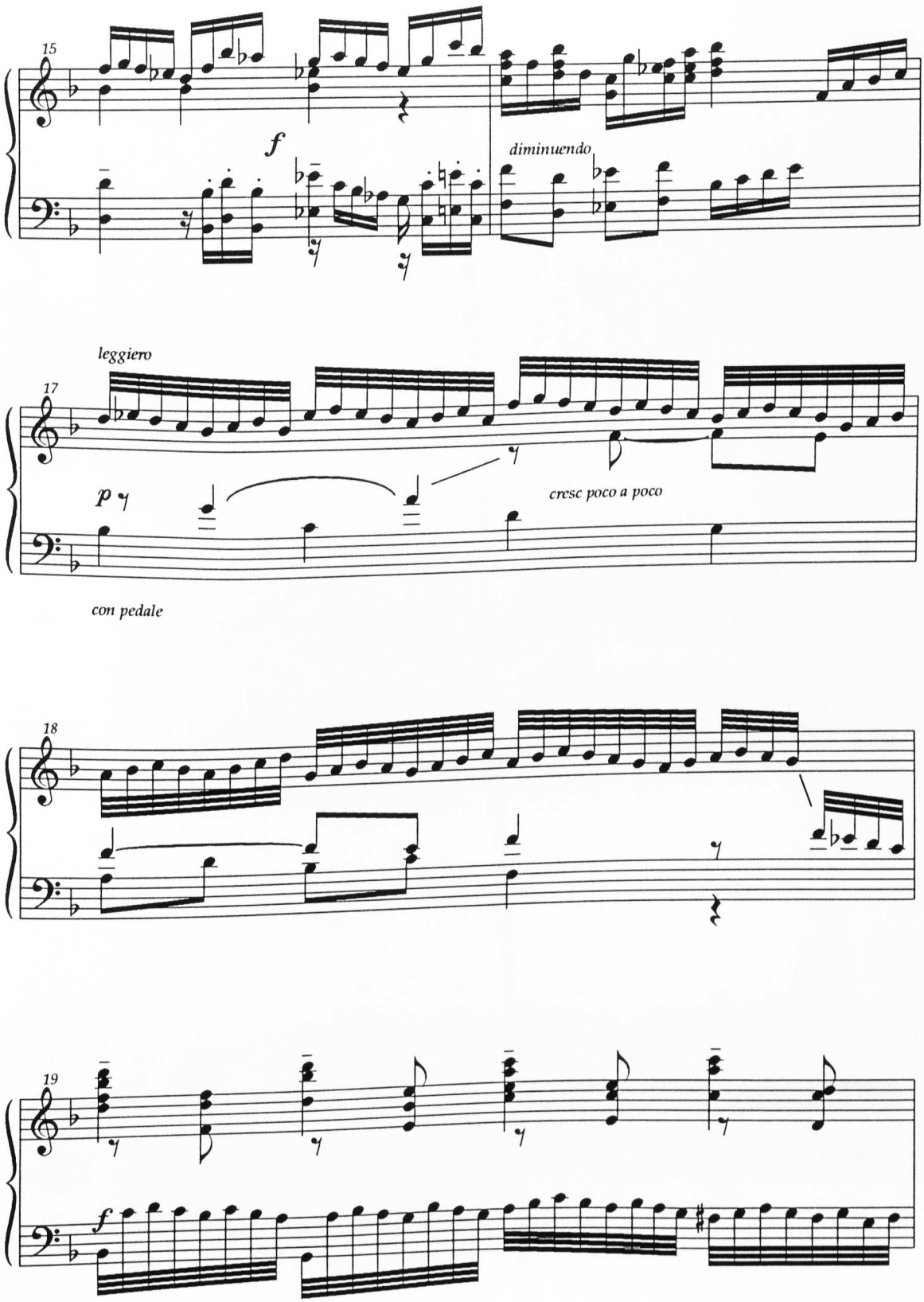
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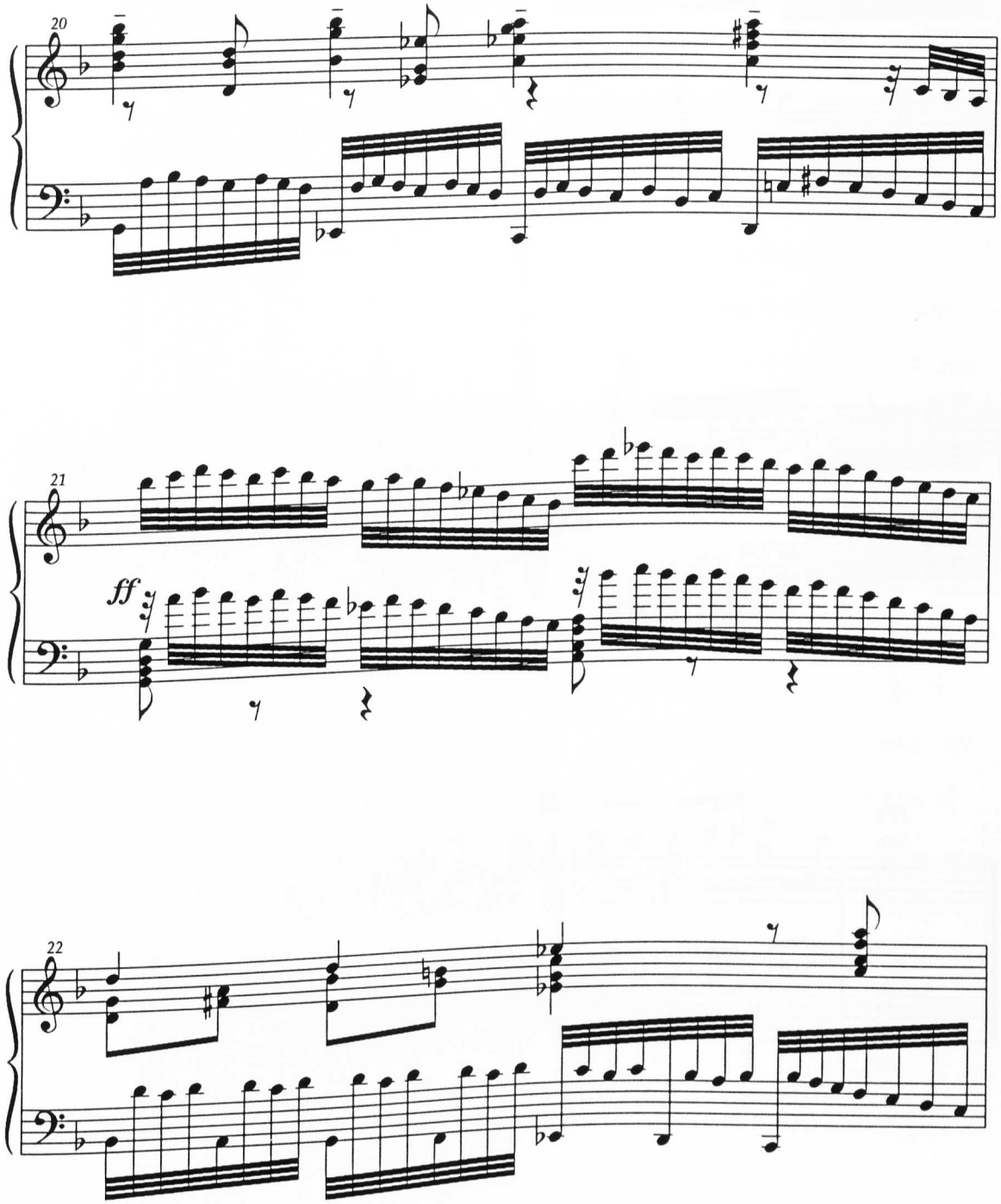
con pedale
18
19
f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ff
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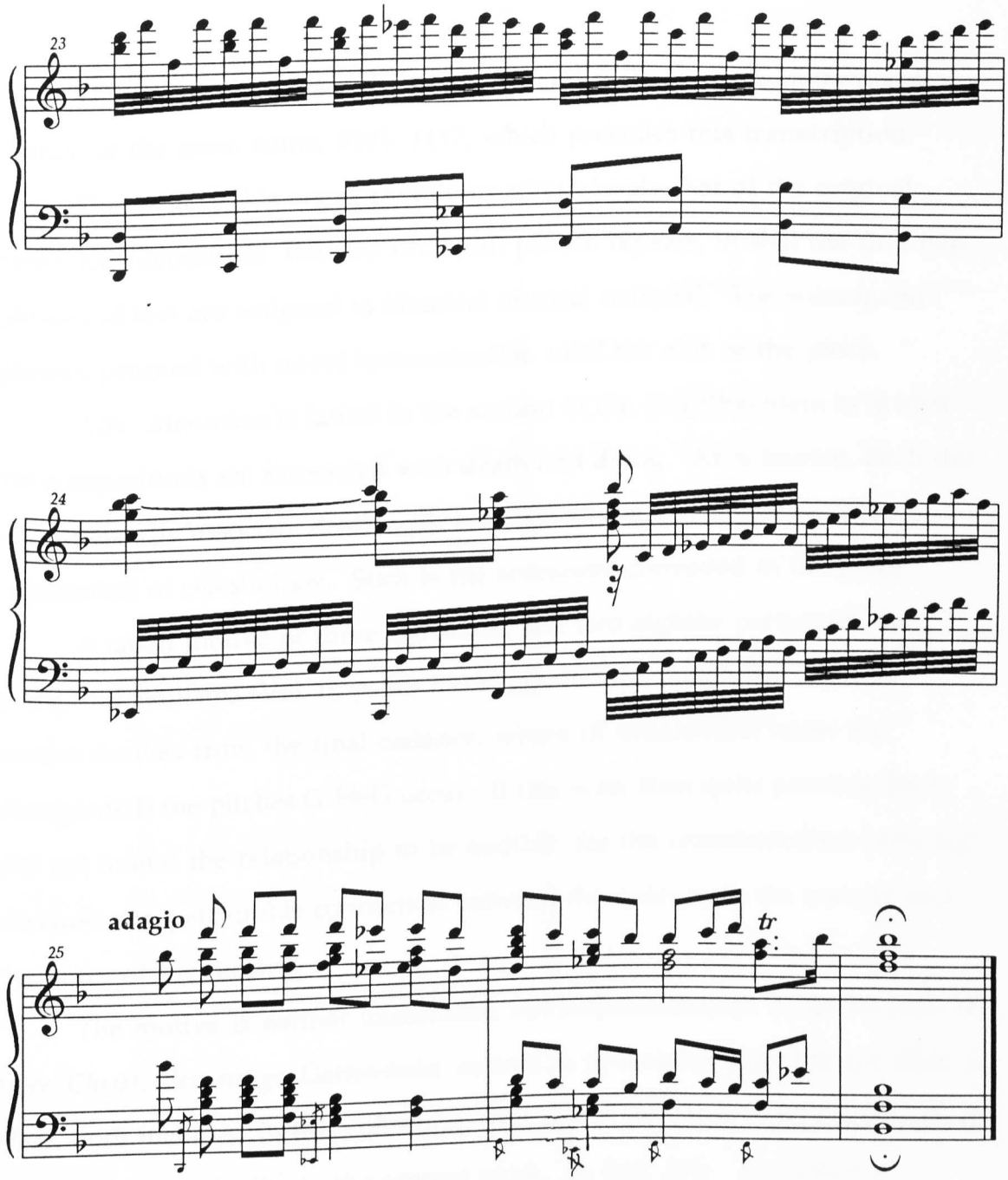

23
24
adagio
25
tr

Alle Menschen müssen sterben

BWV 643

This composition uses the same text and melody as the other organ chorale of the same name, BWV 1117, which precedes this transcription.

The form of this organ chorale matches closely that of the original hymn harmonization: the first (musical) phrase repeats, in that the first two phrases of text are assigned to identical musical material. The subsequent phrases proceed with novel harmonization until the end of the piece.

Alle Menschen is found in the section of the *Orgelbüchlein* in which the compositions are associated with death and dying. As is known, Bach did not necessarily associate death with lugubriousness, but rather with the expectation of celestial joy. Such is the sentiment conveyed in the piece.

A small motive of three sixteenths and two eighths permeates the piece, and Williams (Vol. II, p. 98) has suggested the possibility that this motive derives from the final cadence, where (if ornamental notes are disregarded) the pitches G-F#-G occur. If this is so, then quite possibly Bach did not intend the relationship to be audible, for the ornamentation certainly obscures any perceptible connection between the cadence in the melody and the notes of the motive.

The motive is neither uncommon nor unprecedented; it can be seen in *Herr Christ, der ein'ge Gottes-Sohn* as well as in *Herzlich Lieb hab ich dich, o Herr*, both included in this collection. But use in previous compositions does not preclude originality in the present work. In fact, *Alle menschen* is regarded by Spitta (Vol. I p. 590), Schweitzer (1905, p. 350), and others as one of Bach's finest examples of the organ chorale.

Some of the richness of *Alle Menschen* can be attributed to the liberal use of thirds and sixths in the harmonization. A pleasing effect is also produced by the undecorated melody proceeding over an intricate accompaniment. The composer creates an antiphonal relationship between the bass and the middle voices; while the bass recites the motive, the alto and tenor respond in rhythmic unison with each other.

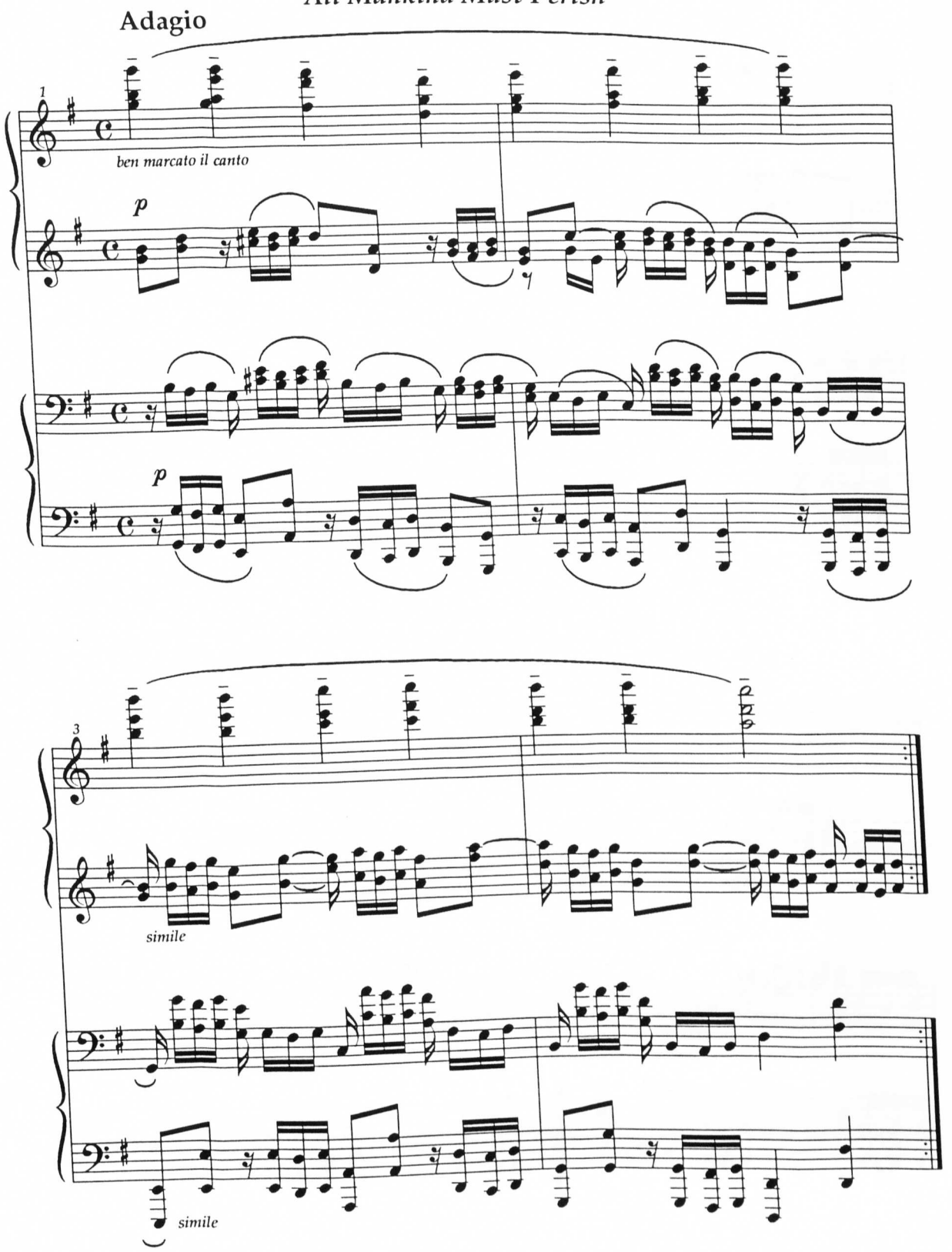
This writer has arranged *Alle Menschen* as a piano duet. Its difficulties are not great, although the texture is quite full. The three upper voices have all been placed in the *primo* part, and soprano, alto, and tenor sound an octave higher than originally written. Furthermore, the cantus firmus in the soprano has been doubled with an additional octave above. Chord tones have been placed within the soprano's octaves to fill out harmonies. The *secondo* plays the bass doubled in octaves along with (in most instances) an added third above. Additionally, the second pianist also executes the alto and tenor at original pitch. Thus the texture is rather rich, and emphasis is laid upon the melody and the conversational nature of the alto and tenor with the bass.

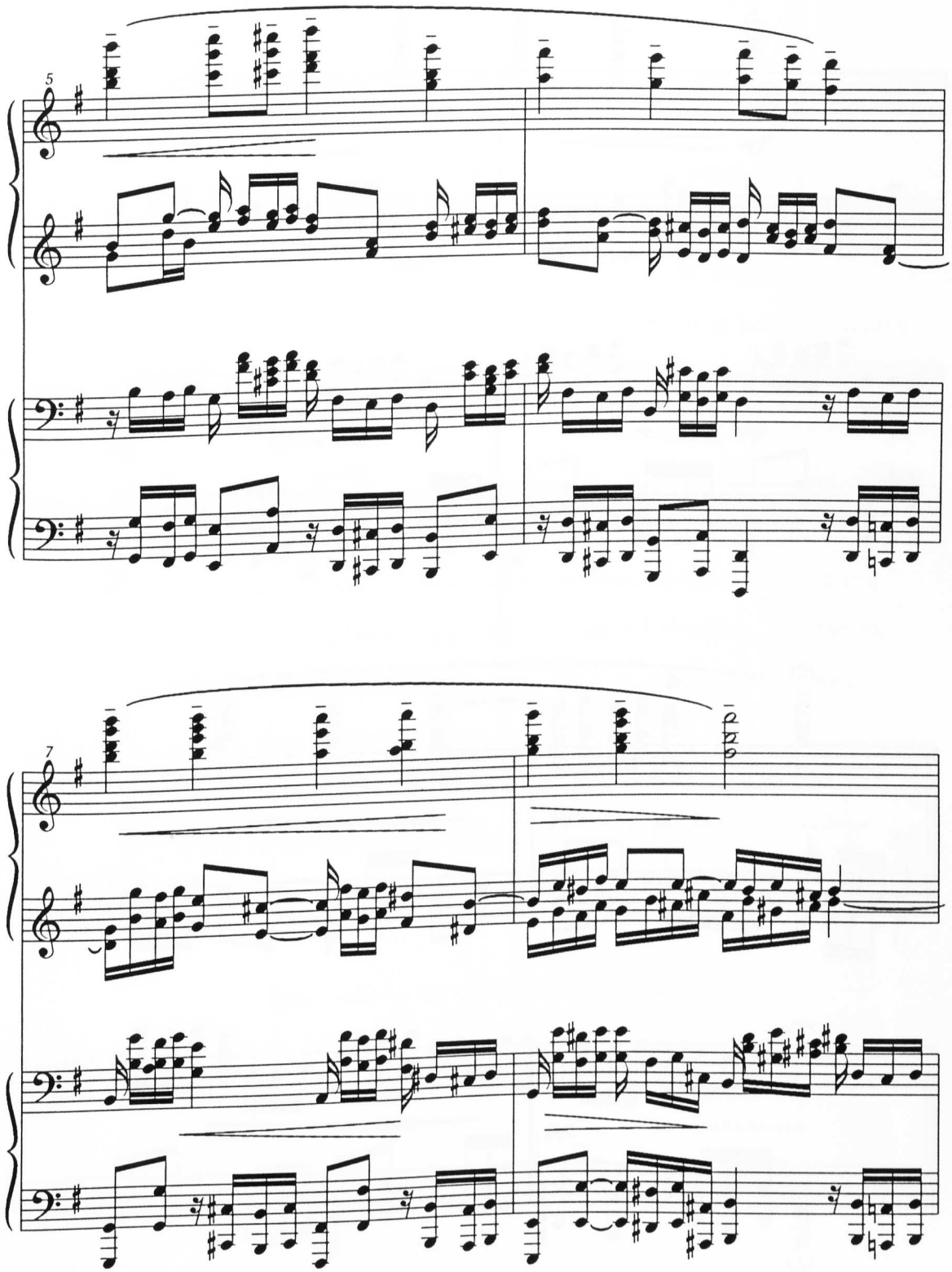
The level of difficulty is appropriate for advanced students, for although the tempo is slow, the texture is thick.

The secondo part should be especially restrained in dynamics, as it could otherwise obscure the melody.

Alle Menschen müssen sterben

All Mankind Must Perish

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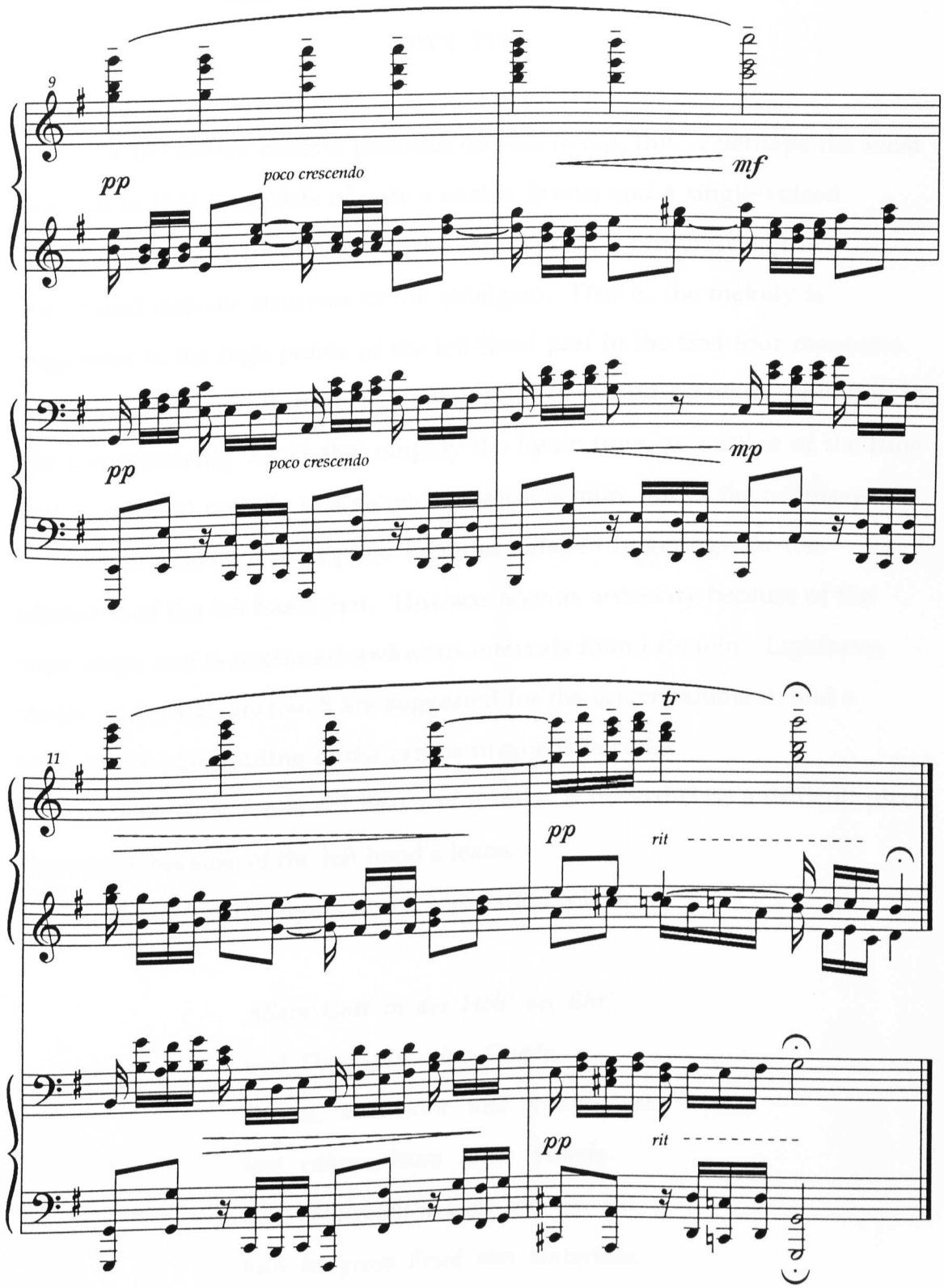

9
pp
poco crescendo
mf
pp
poco crescendo
mp
11
tr
pp
rit
pp
rit

Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr'

BWV 711

Of the eleven chorale preludes on this hymn, this is perhaps the most unusual in that it consists of only a cantus firmus and a single-voiced counterpoint. The first phrase of the cantus finds a precursor in the compound melodic structure of the obbligato. That is, the melody is suggested in the high points of the left-hand part in the first four measures. While it is common in Bach's chorale preludes to find points of imitation in the accompanying voices that employ the hymn tune, an outline of the tune in a compound melody in a secondary voice is more out of the ordinary.

This writer's transcription includes detailed fingerings for the execution of the left hand part. This was seen as necessary because of the wide skips and (sometimes) awkward intervals found therein. Lightness, clarity, and a *staccato* touch are suggested for the accompaniment, and a forthright *legato* reading of the cantus firmus is in order.

Allein Gott, while not heavy of texture, is nevertheless a difficult piece to perform because of the left hand's leaps.

The text of the hymn and a translation follow.

Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr'
und Dank für seine Gnade,
darum, dass nun und nimmermehr
uns rühren kann keine Schade.
Ein Wohlgefall'n Gott an uns hat,
nun ist gross Fried ohn Unterlass,

all Fehd hat nun ein Ende.

(N. Decius, 1522)

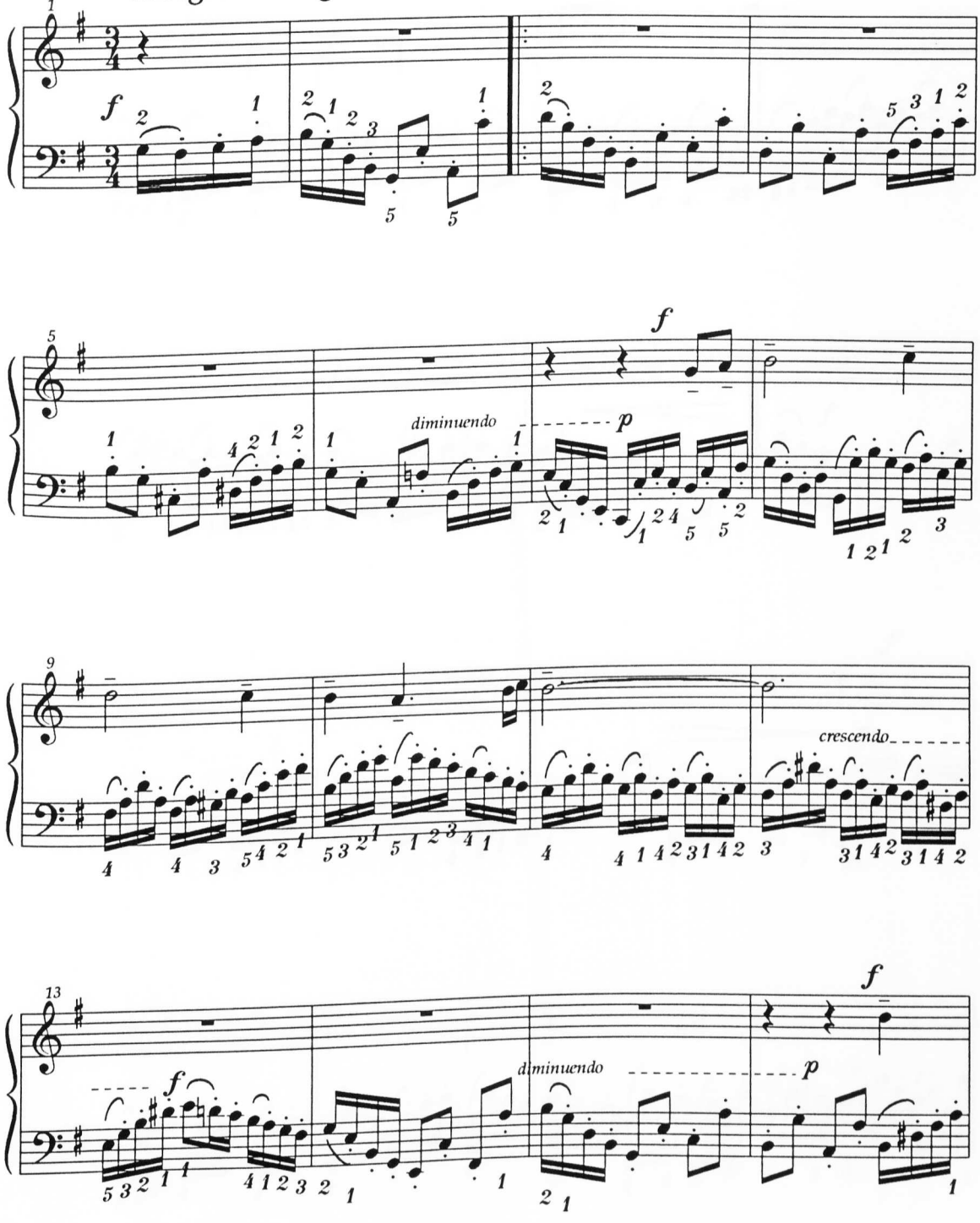
Alone to God on high be honor
And thanks for his grace,
Since that now and for ever
No harm can touch us.
God is well pleased with us;
Now is great peace without intermission,
All strife is now at an end.

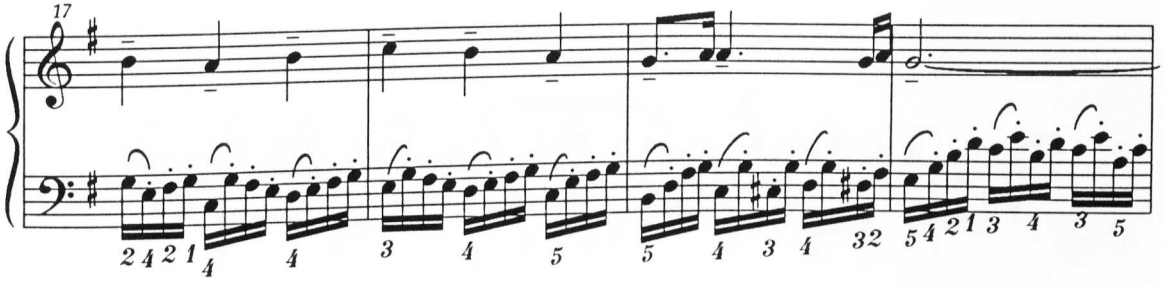
(Translation: Peter Williams)

Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr

To God Alone on High Be Honor

Allegro e energico

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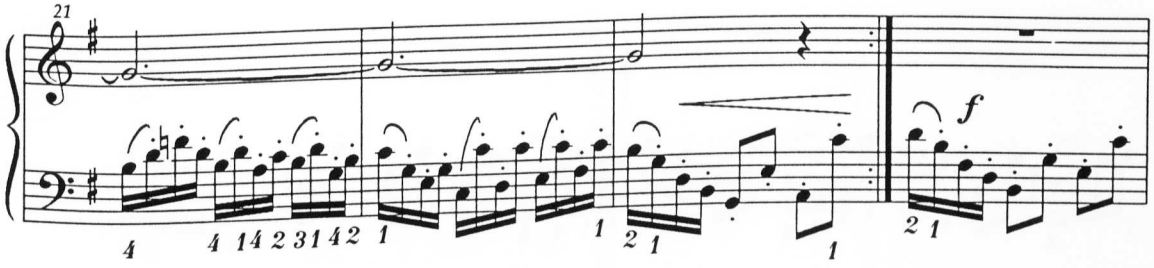
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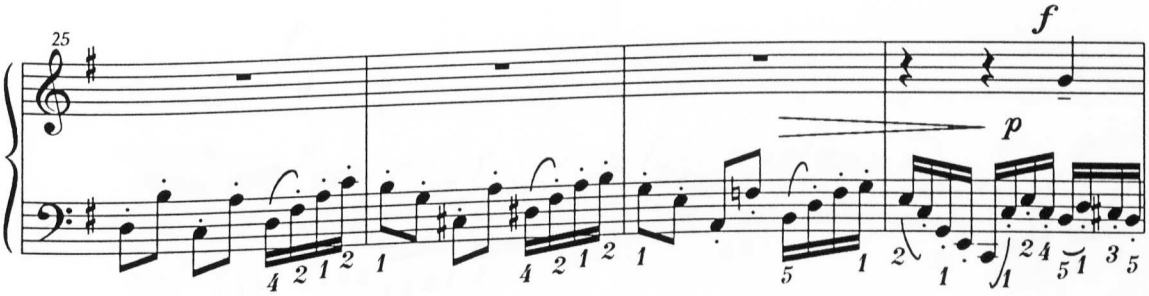
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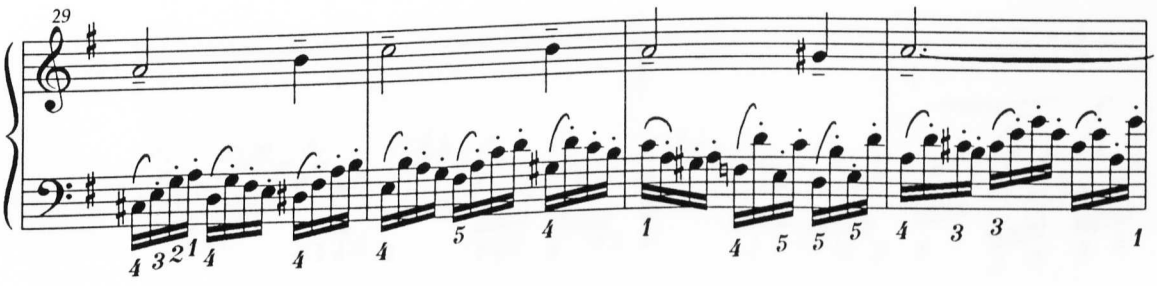
p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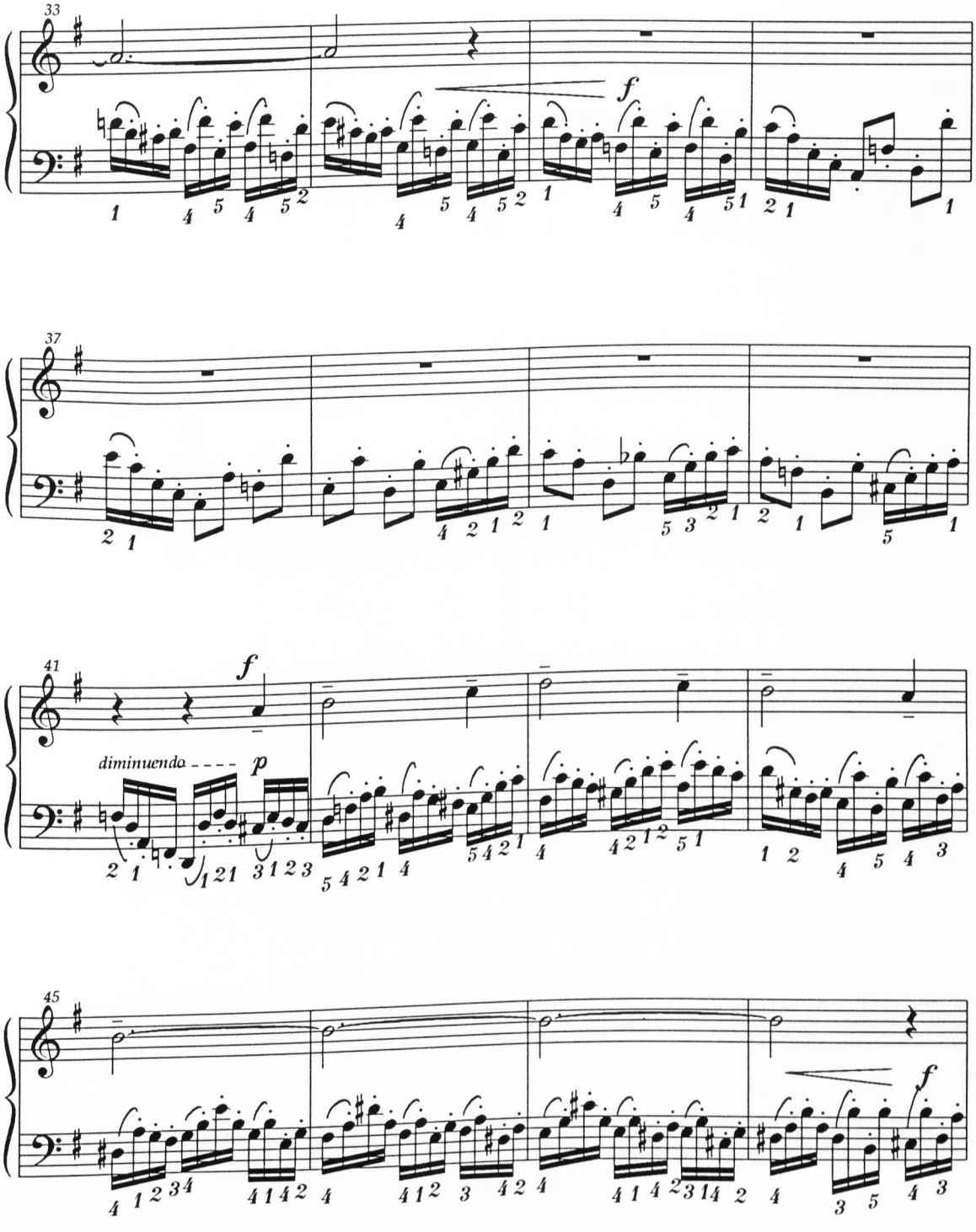
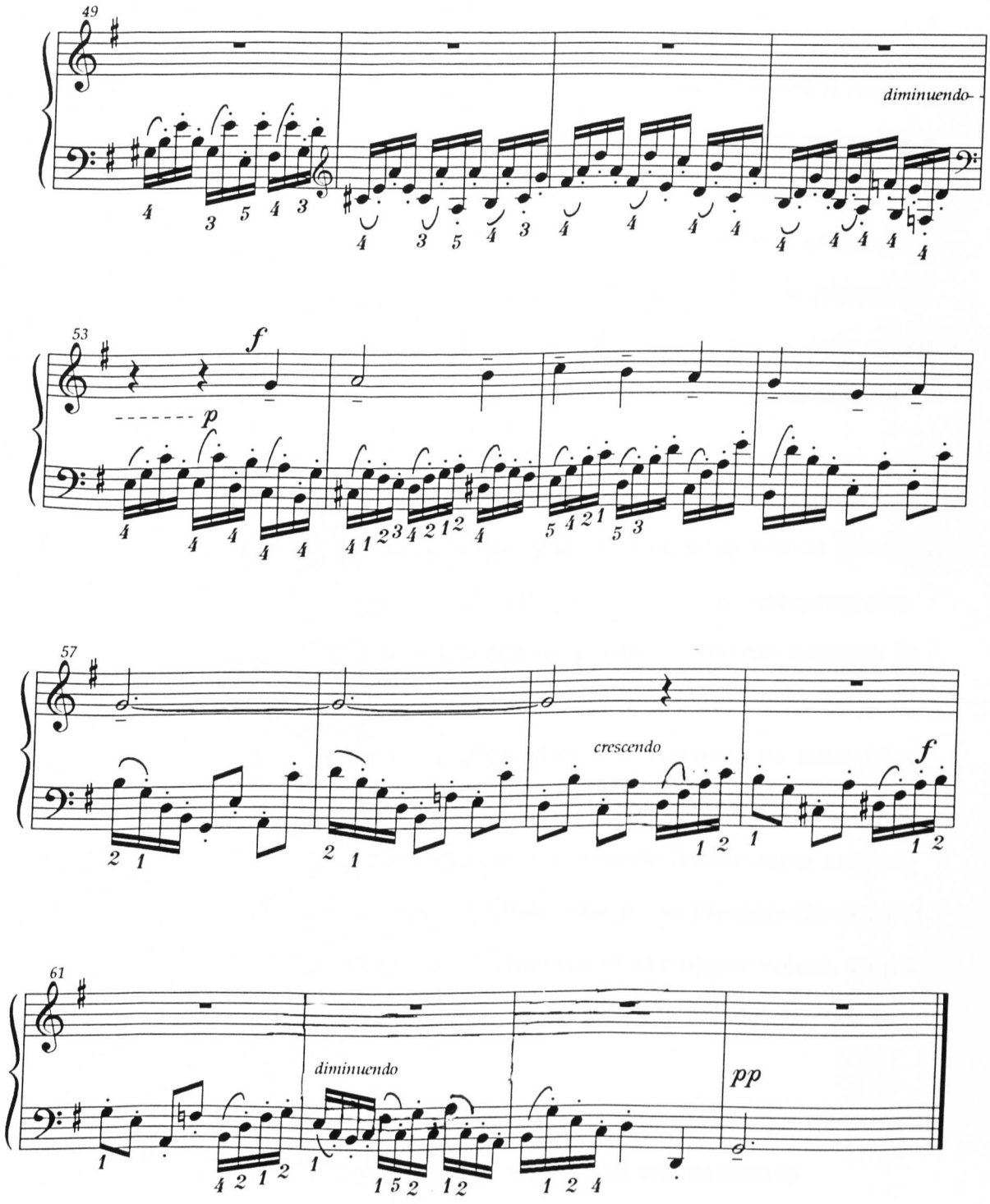

33
f
37
41
f
diminuendo
p
45
f


49
diminuendo
53
f
p
57
crescendo
f
61
diminuendo
pp

Fugue on *Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr'*

BWV 716

This cantus firmus was apparently favored by Bach; he set it no fewer than eleven times, the most of any hymn tune. This is a three-voice fugue on *Allein Gott*, placed in an unassuming texture of long notes which gradually give way to the only slightly greater rhythmic activity of quarters.

The first subject is, not surprisingly, derived from the first phrase of the hymn, and enters in the soprano. The alto provides what is very nearly a real answer except for one note, the G in measure 10. No episode stands between the entrance of the upper voices and that of the bass.

An unobtrusive second subject begins to percolate in the alto in measure 28, where the first quarter notes appear. This subject finds its origins in the second phrase of the hymn tune, although Bach now interprets the rhythmic values at twice the speed of the first phrase; hence the quarters in place of half-notes. The second subject is certainly less literal in its derivation; rather than a note-for-note translation, it seems to be more of a general allusion to the overall melodic contour of the second phrase of the hymn tune. As the soprano undertakes to expostulate on the same subject, the bass rests until its next entrance, at which time it too presents the second subject, but now in longer note values, twice that of the upper voices, so that the occurance of an exposition of the second subject may not be obvious to the listener.

At measure 70 the bass presents not only the first subject but the second as well, in what may be considered a true instance of cantus firmus technique. This illustrates the difficulty of making precise categorizations of

the organ chorales, in that a true cantus firmus presentation does not "belong" in a chorale fugue.

The upper voices continue their development of the second subject until the end of the piece, except for the soprano's brief restatement of the first theme eight measures from the end.

Allein Gott has been prepared as a piano duet suitable for intermediate students. The difficulties have been deliberately minimized, with no more than one note in each hand at a time (with the exception of the final chord) and certain passages with only one part for each performer. At times the bass line is doubled at the octave. Several clef changes are found in both parts due to the wide tessitura of the voices. Hence a freedom of movement at the piano (and a sense of cooperation) should be developed in the students. Few accidentals beset the piece, and rhythmic challenges are limited to tied notes and an occasional simple syncopation.

The text and translation appear below:

Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr'
und Dank für seine Gnade,
darum, dass nun und nimmermehr
uns rühren kann kein Schade.
Ein Wohlgefall'n Gott an uns hat,
nun ist gross Fried ohn Unterlass,
all Fehd hat nun ein Ende.

(N. Decius, 1522)

To God alone on high be glory

And thanks for his grace,

Which, now and evermore

Shall keep us from all harm.

God takes pleasure in us,

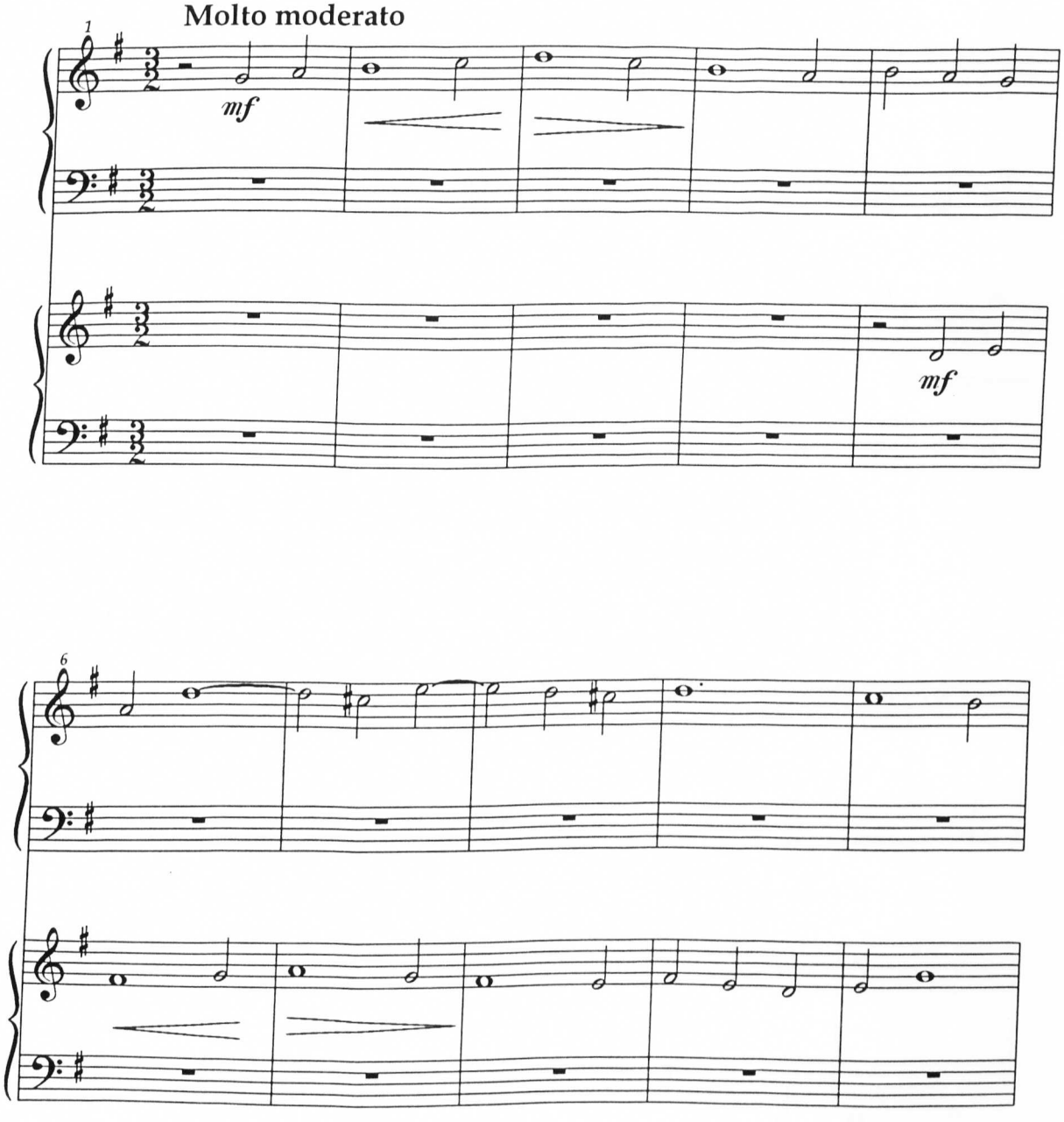
And now we have peace without limit,

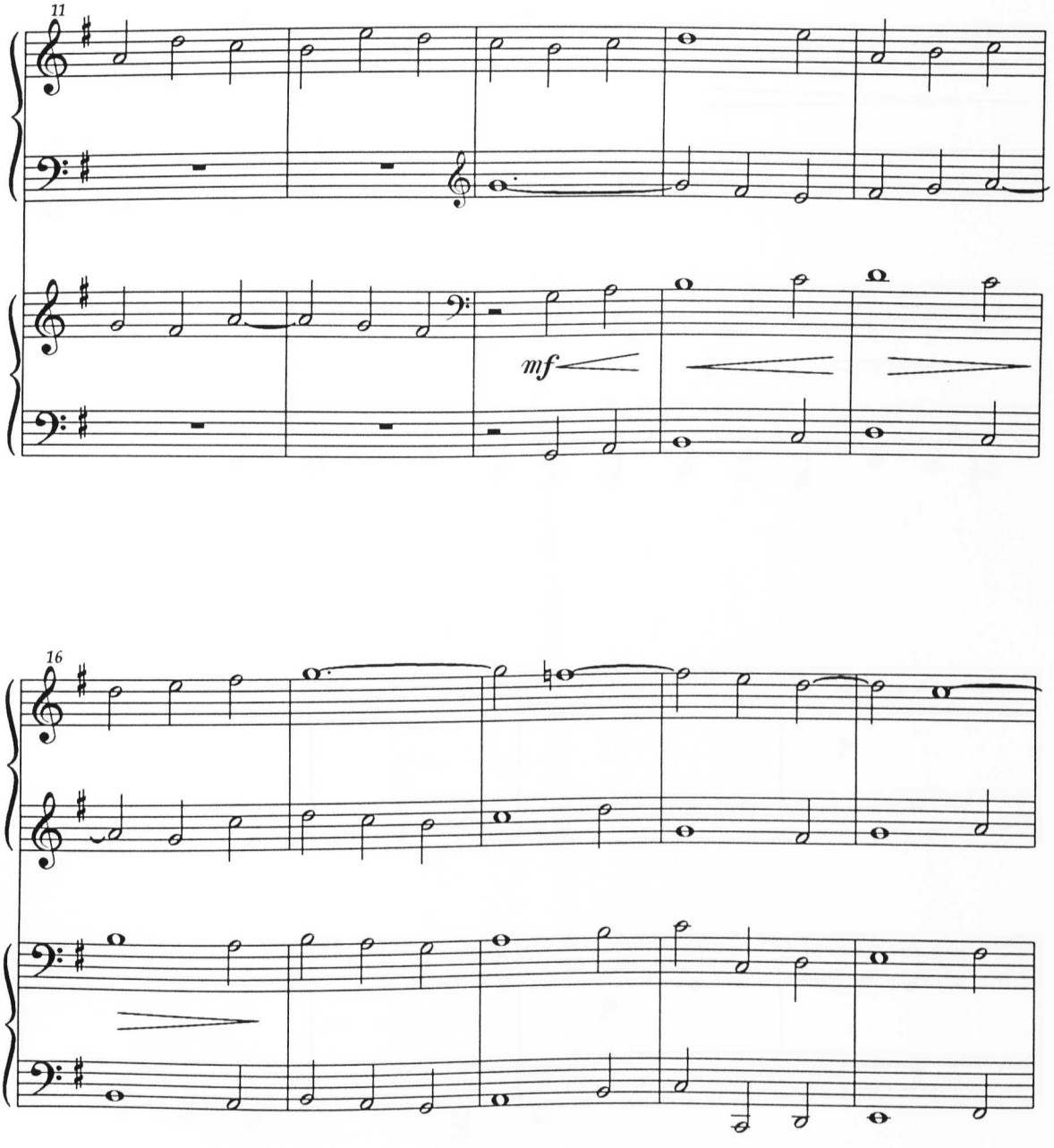
All conflict is now at an end.

(Translation: John Mortensen)

Fugue on Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr

To God Alone on High be Honor

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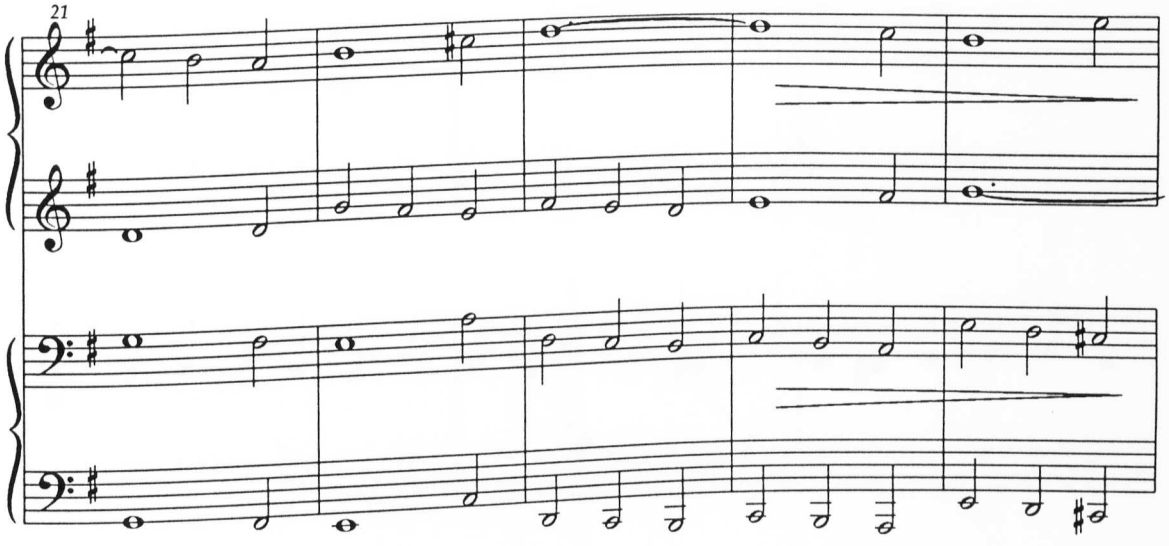
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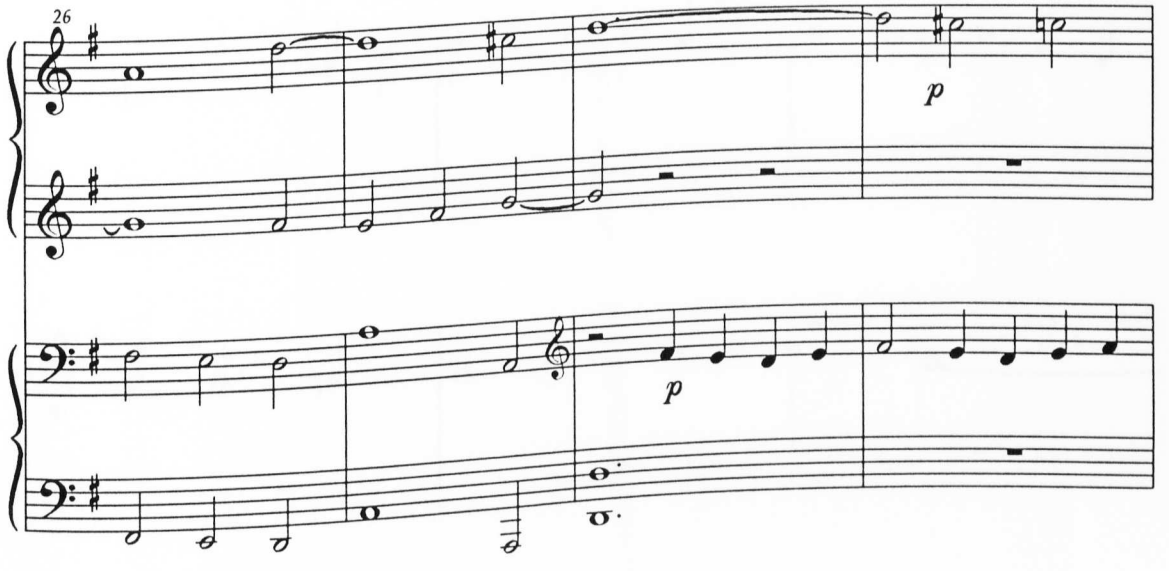
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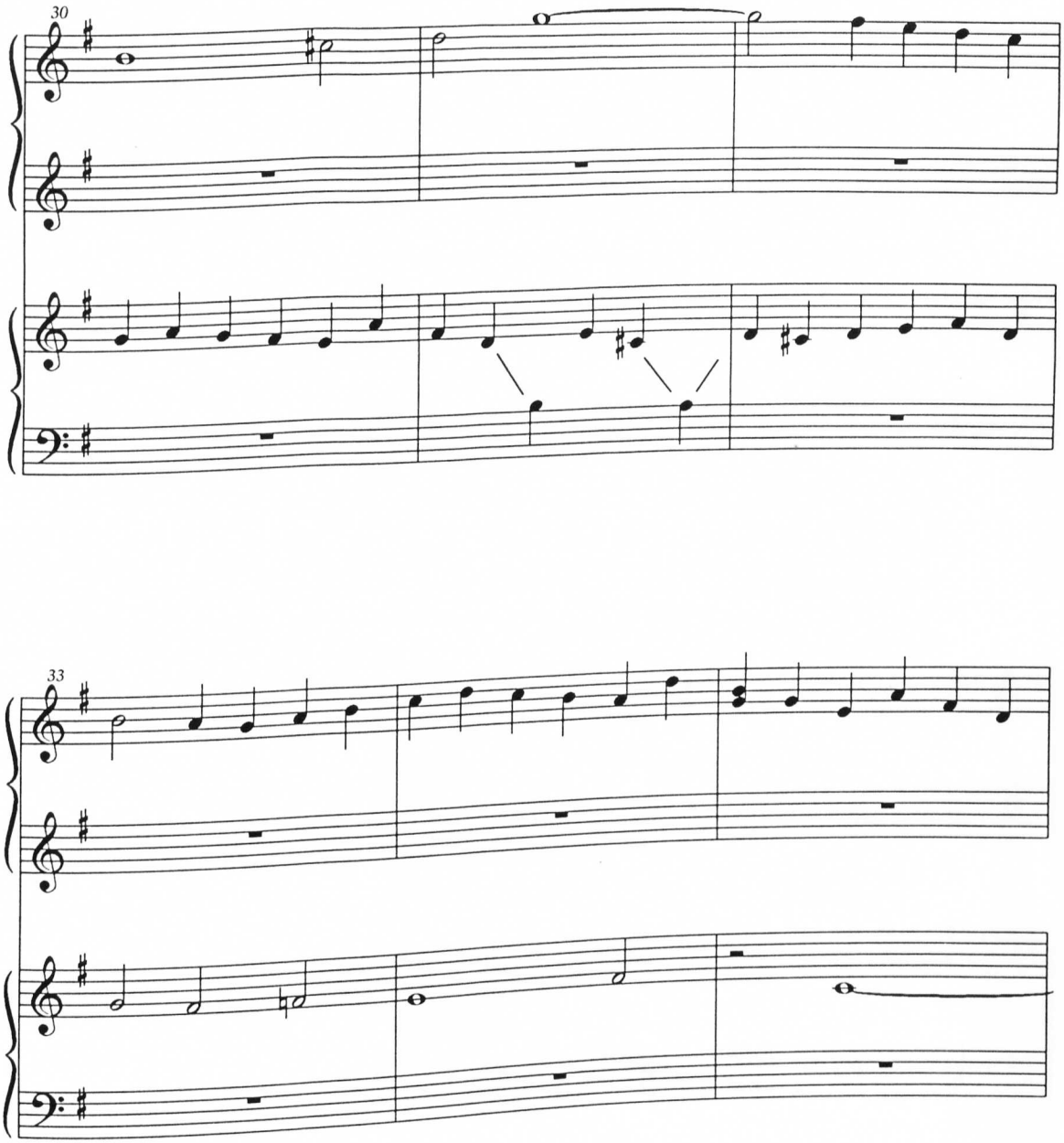
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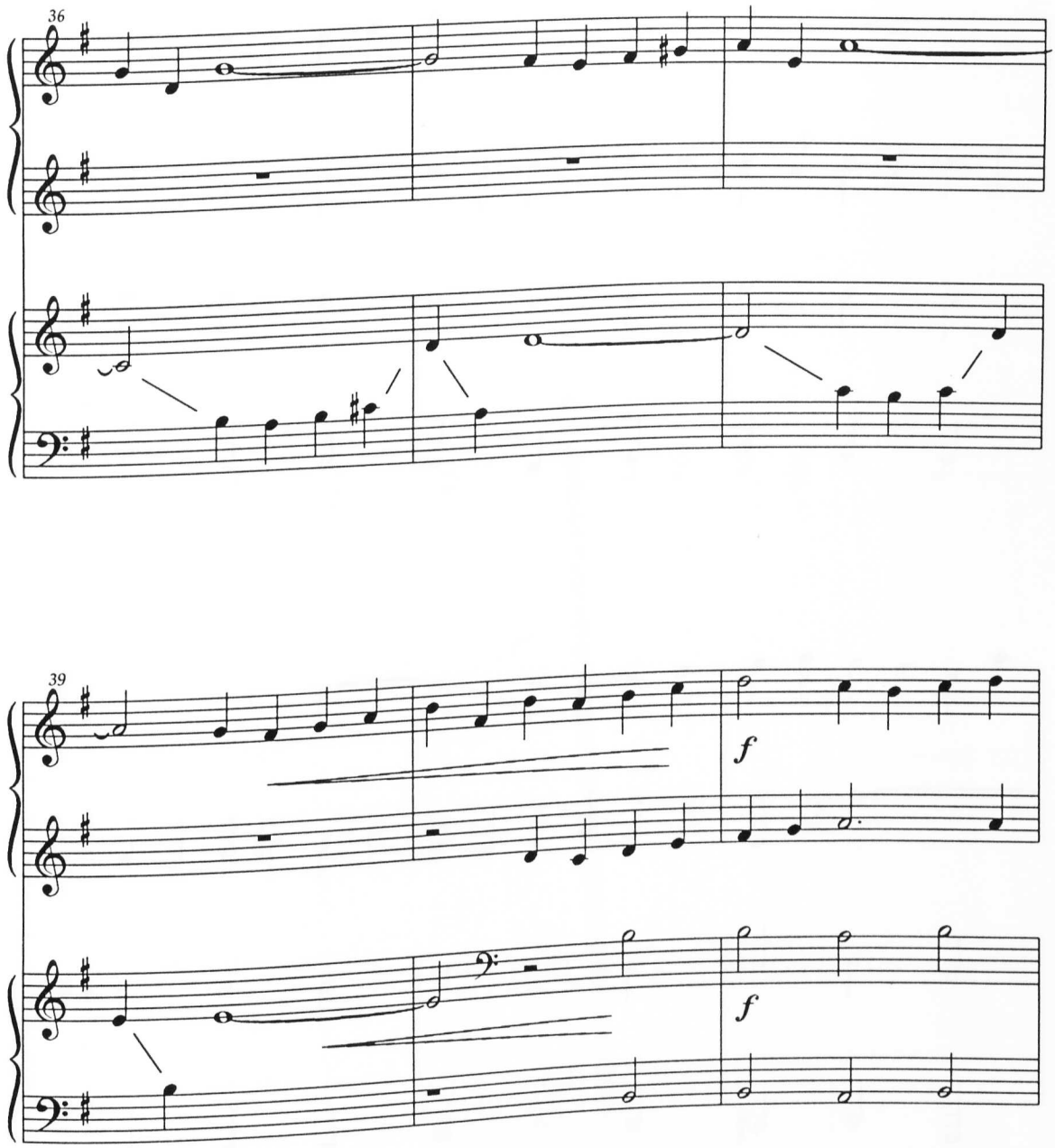
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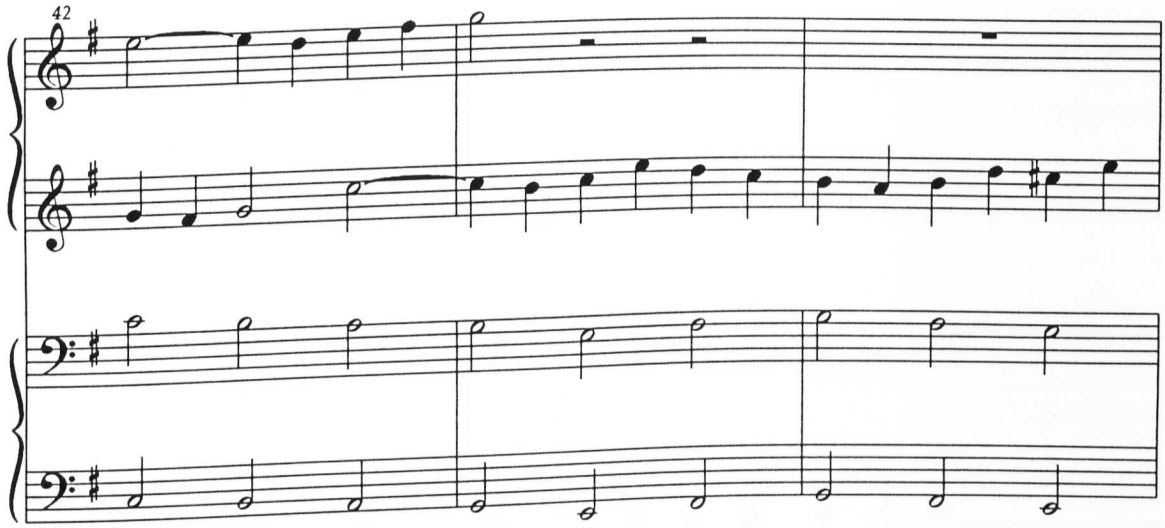
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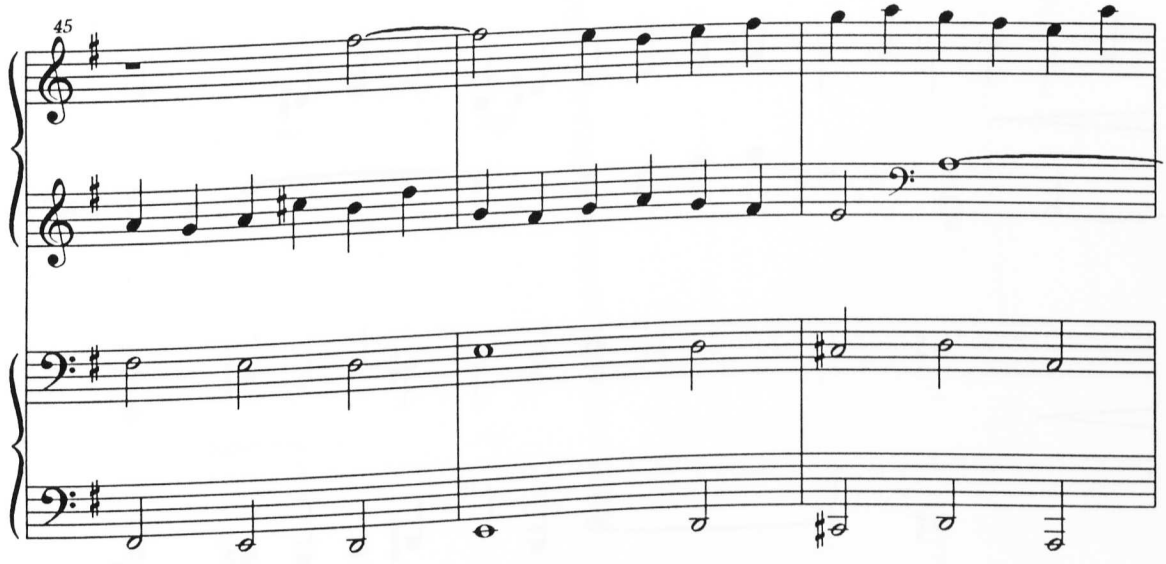
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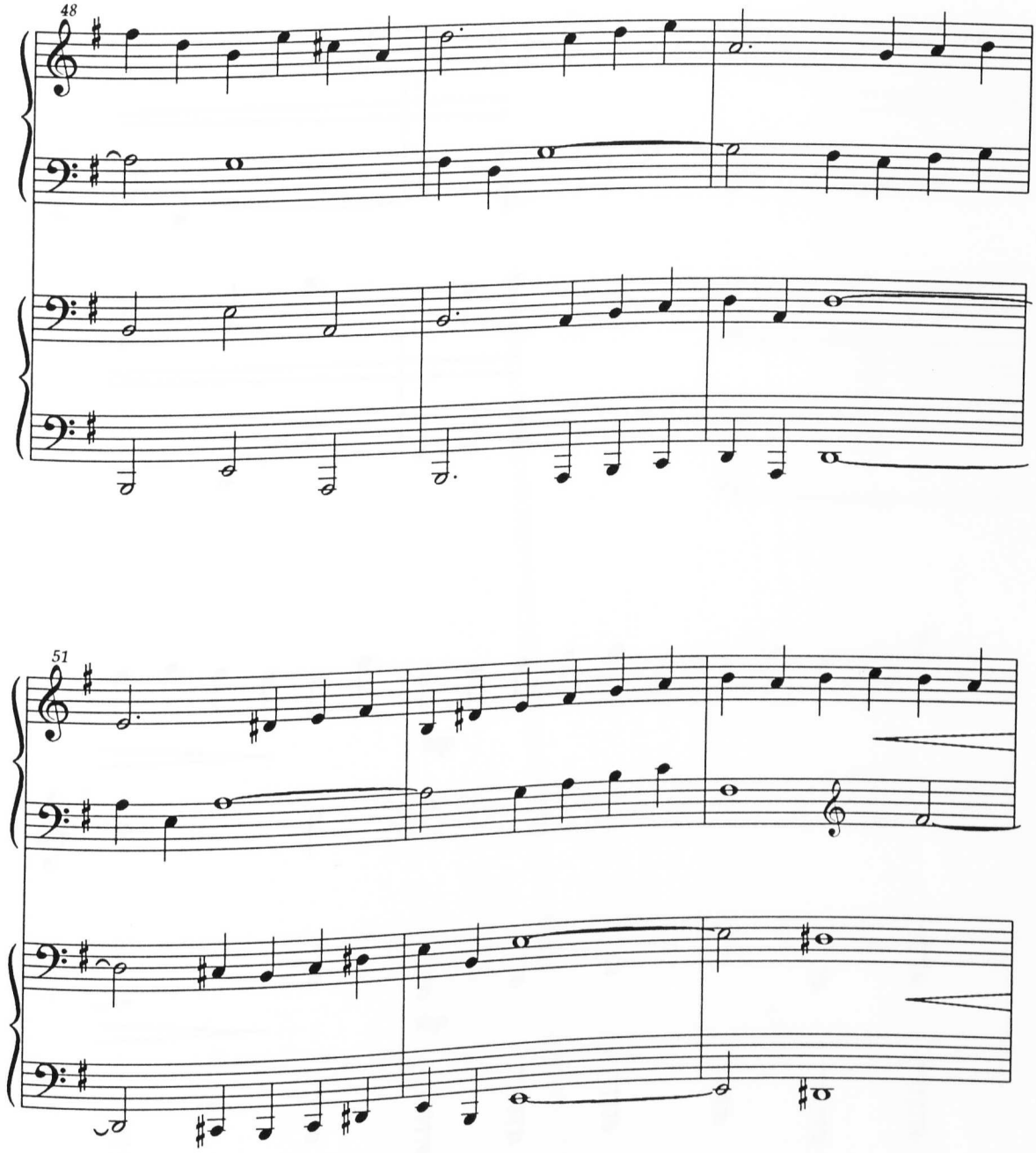
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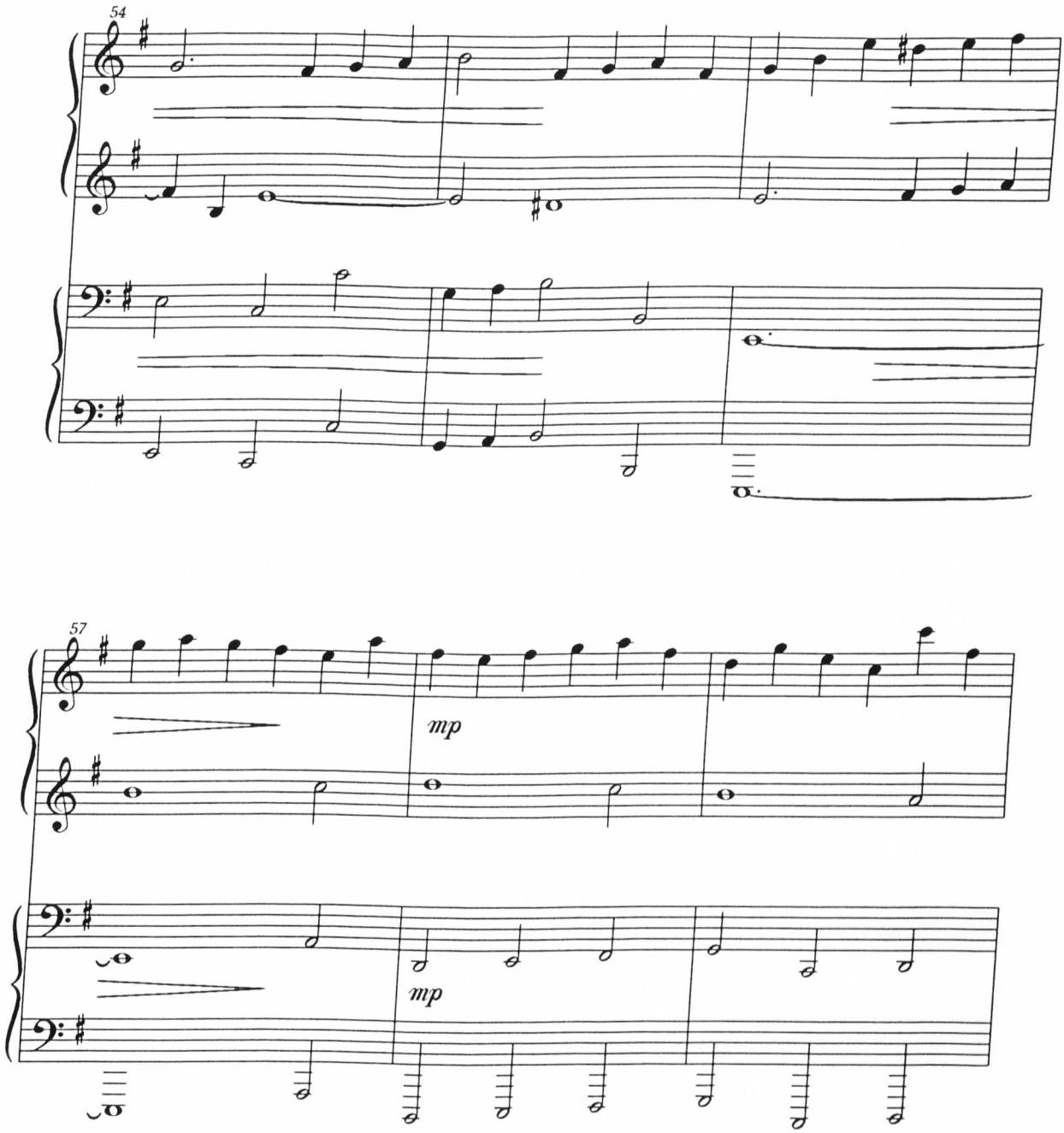
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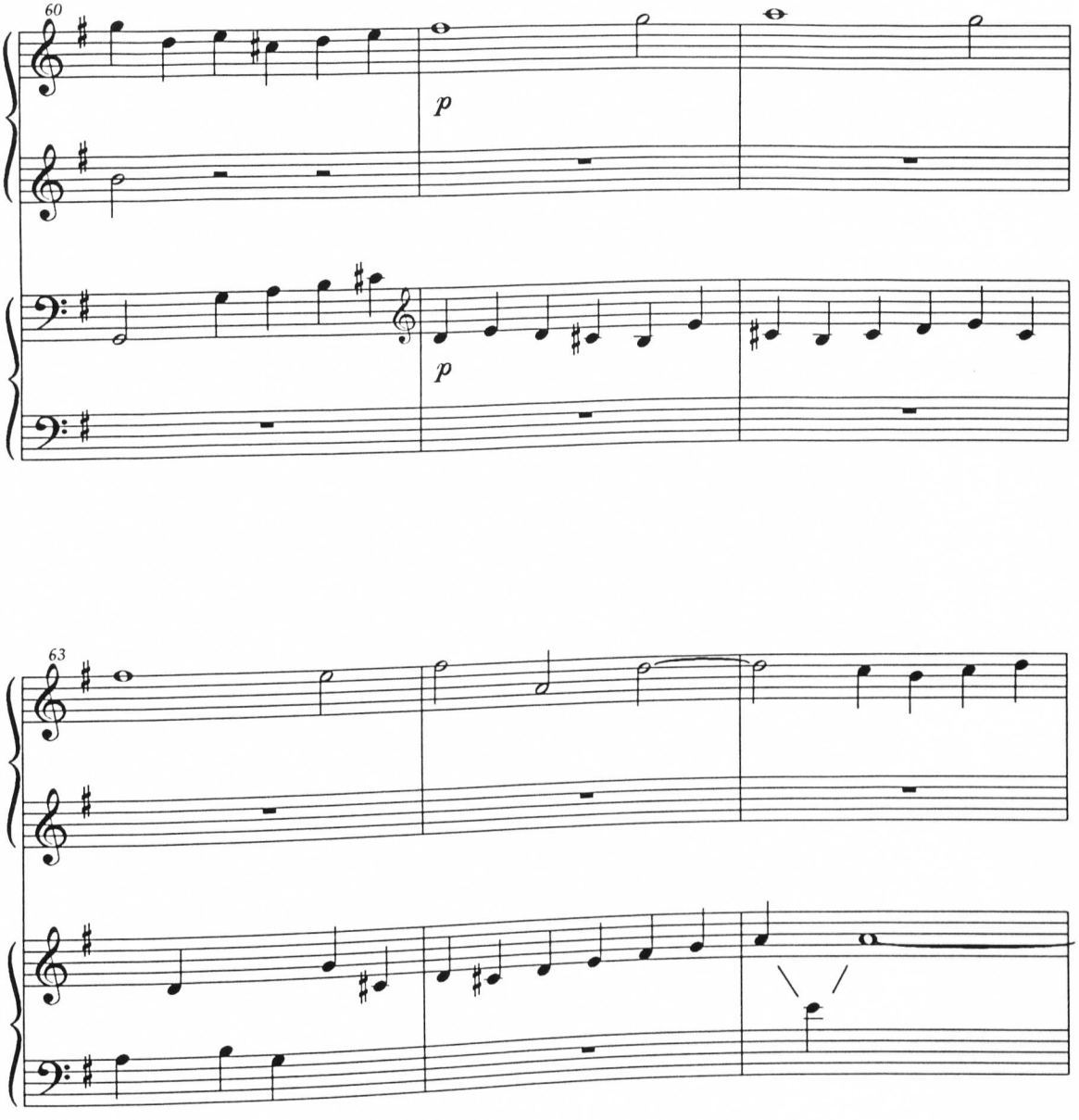
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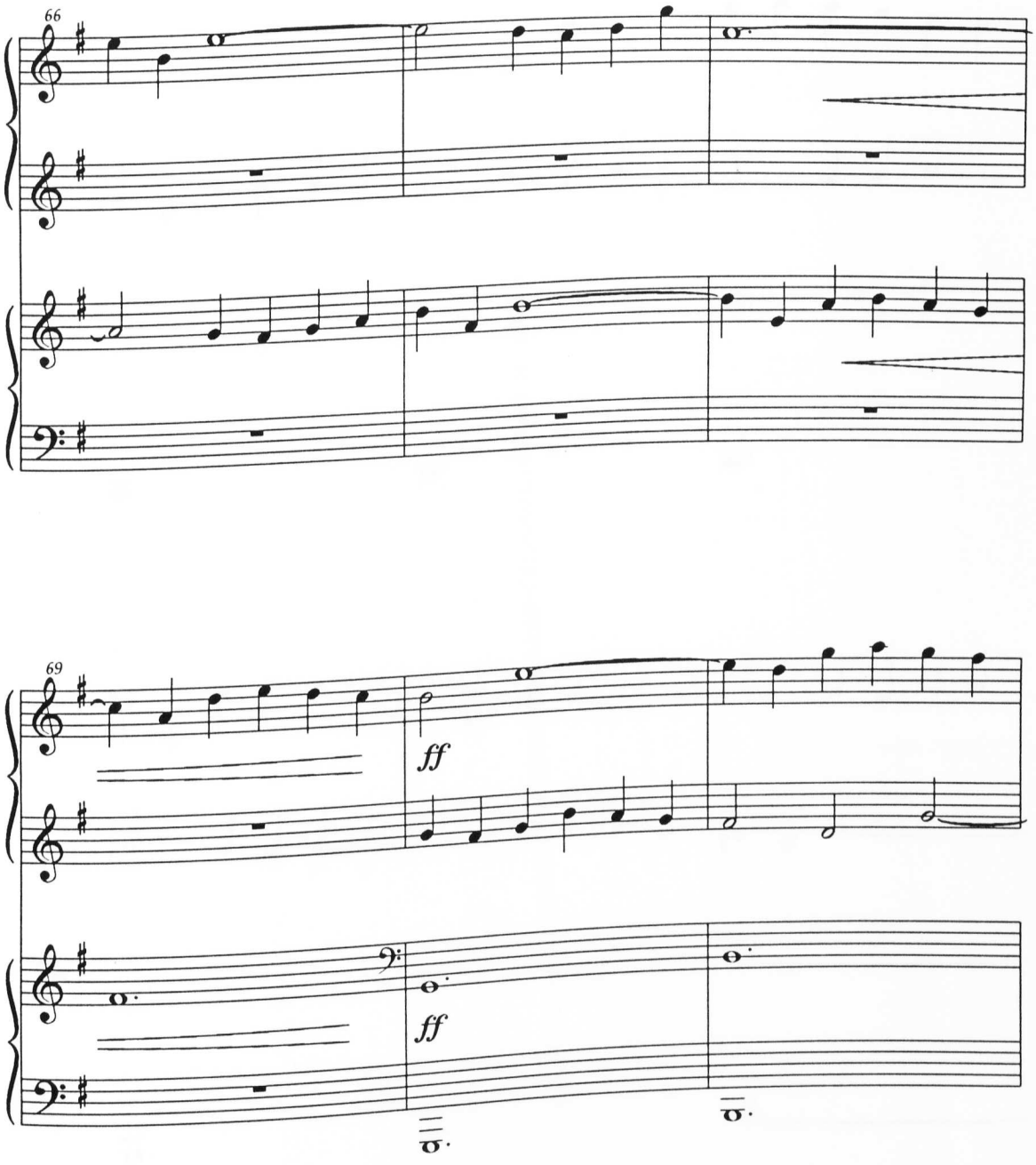
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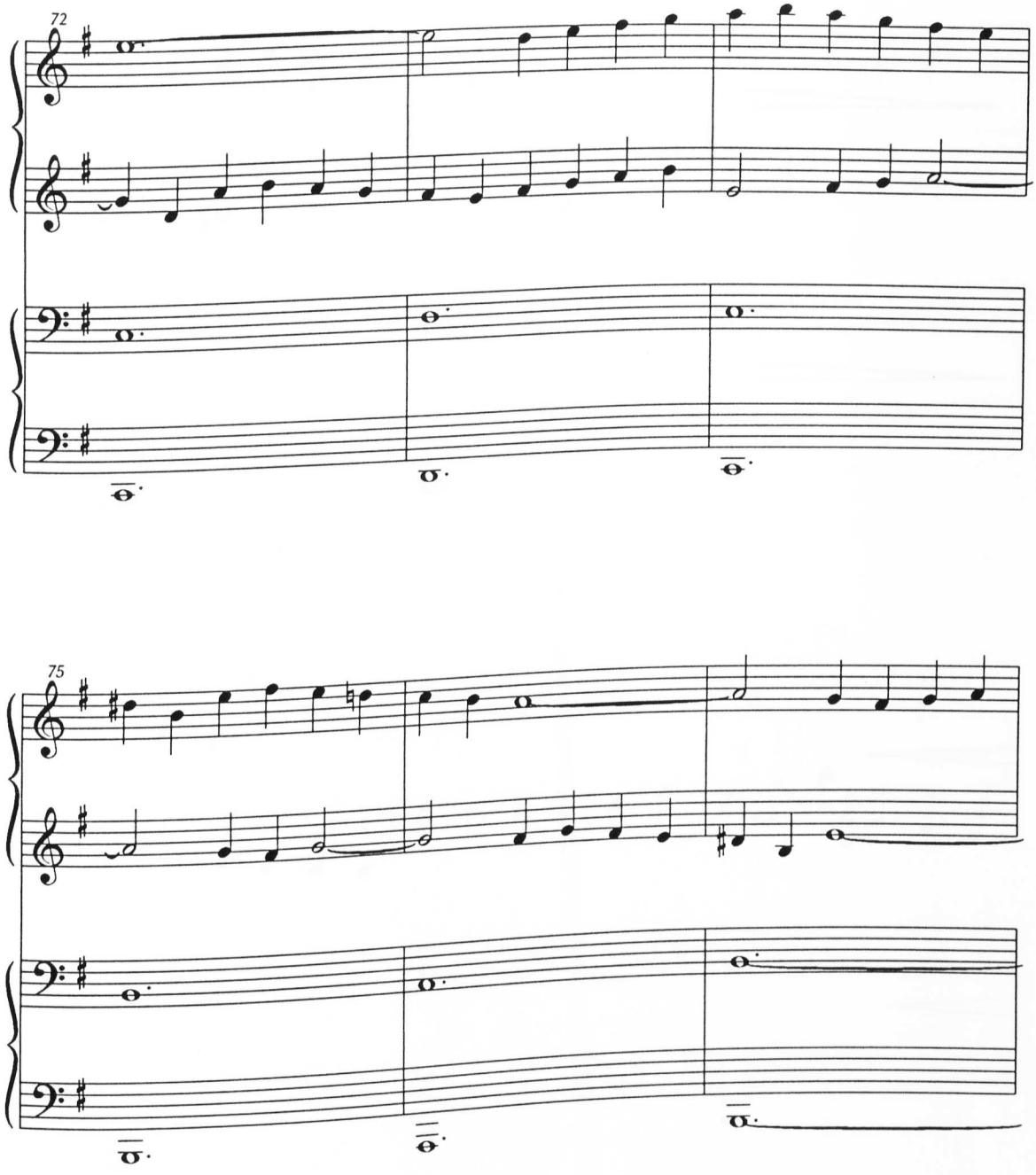
ff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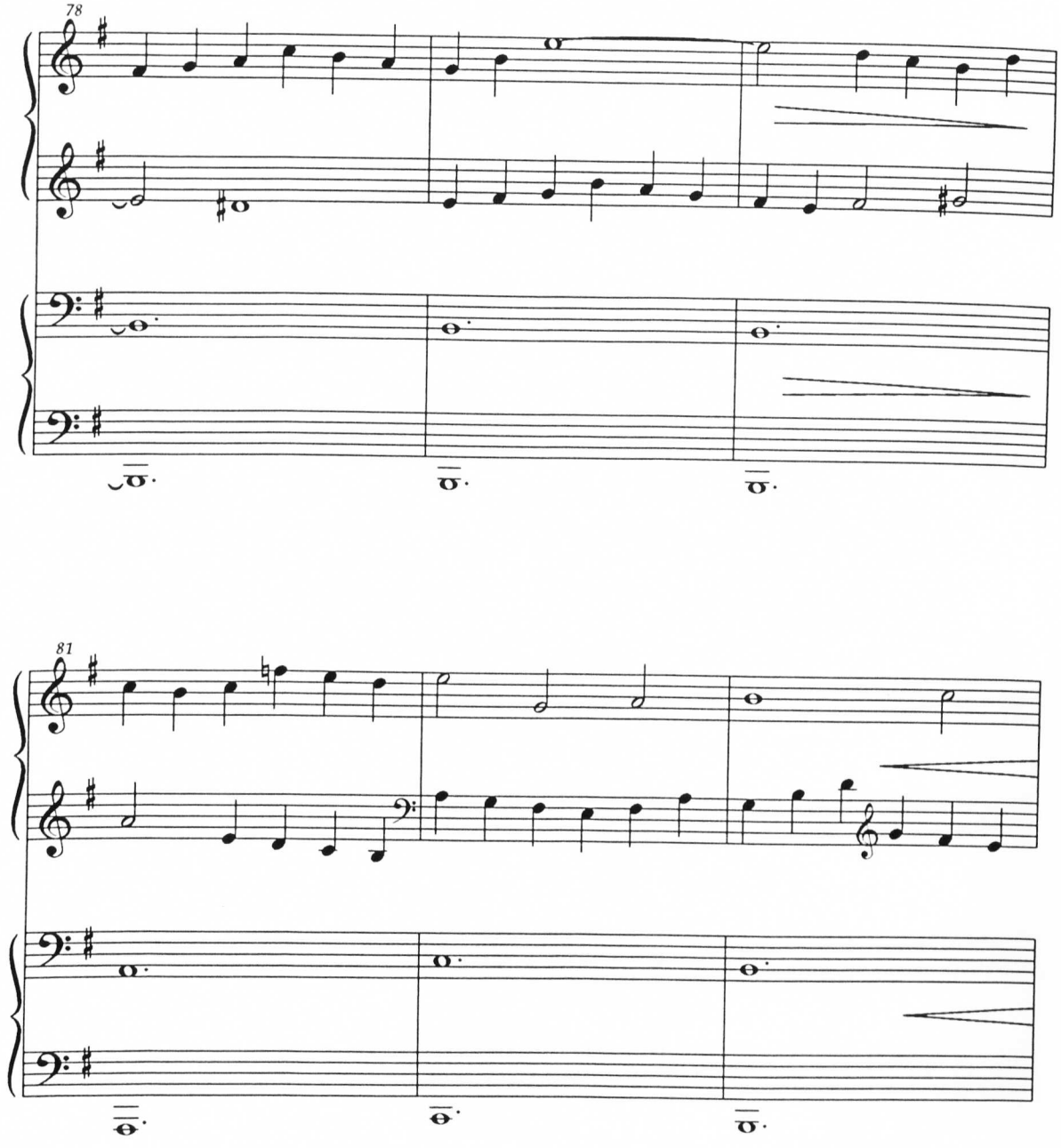
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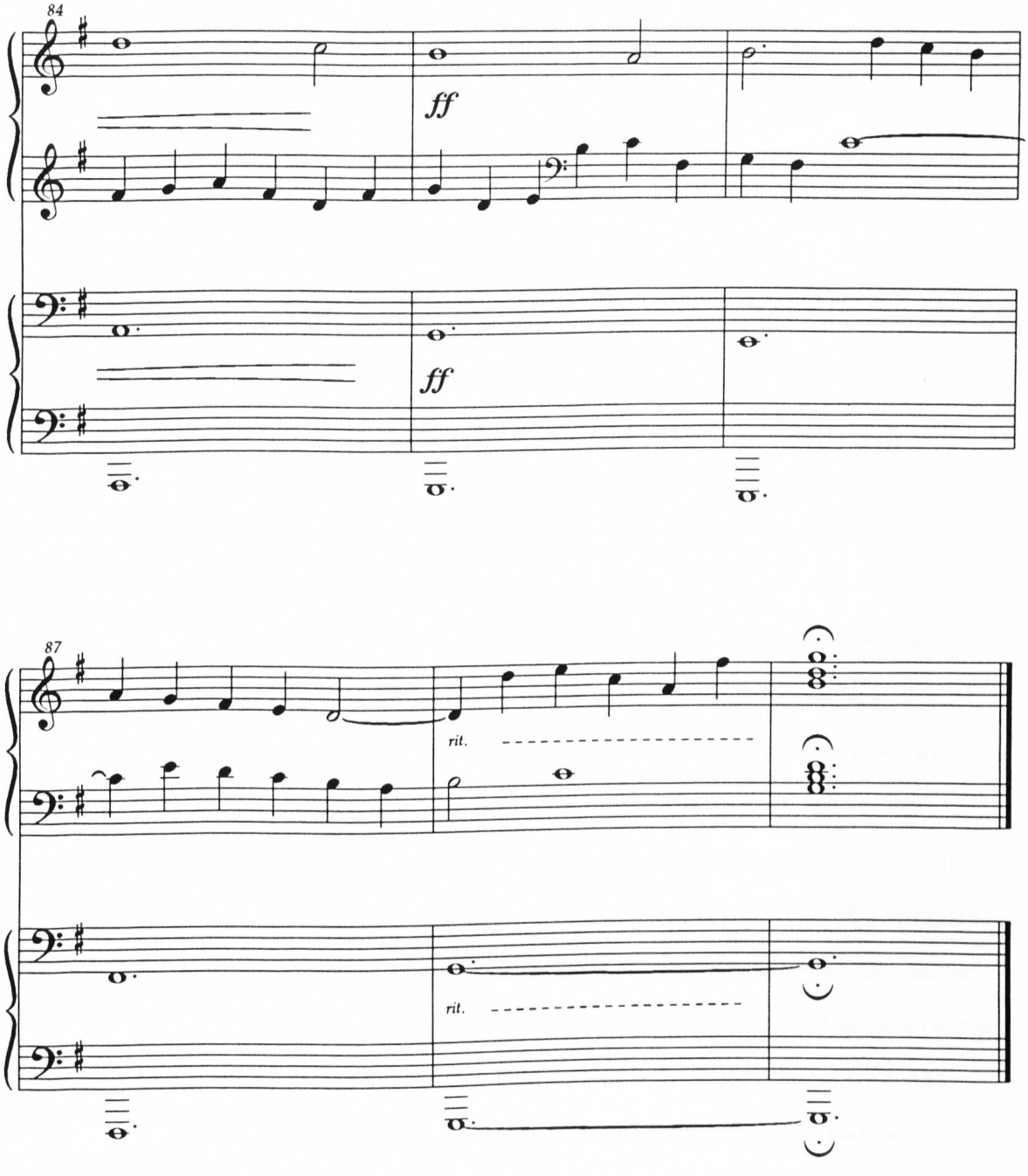

84
ff
ff
87
rit.
rit.

Allein zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ

BWV 1100

A three-voice phrase chorale from the Neumeister Collection, *Allein zu dir* presents an active accompanimental figure in the introduction. The figure is comprised of a sixteenth rest followed by four stepwise sixteenths. After the first appearance of the figure the rest is replaced with the last note of the previous instance of the aforementioned figure, thereby creating forward momentum.

While many organ chorales begin with a point of imitation, here the first voice acts alone for a full two and a half measures before the second voice begins imitation. In this case the imitaton is at the fifth, and rhythmically displaced by half a measure-- that is, the first voice appears immmediately after the second beat of the measure, while the imitating voice begins just after the fourth beat of its measure.

The cantus is found in the soprano voice, and the episodes between phrases are so short that one might suggest that the form approaches that of the melody chorale rather than the cantus firmus style. Nevertheless, an instance of an entire measure of rest (such as measures 14 and 26) in the soprano would be difficult to reconcile with the form of the melody chorale.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Bach's treatment of the melody is its rhythmic displacement; his own four-part harmonizations of the same tune begin on the anacrusis and place the G on the downbeat of the following measure. In the the present work, the first C has been lengthened to a half-note and placed on the downbeat. Thus the entire first phrase is half a measure "off". Oddly, the second phrase has been "repaired" so as to match the metrical outline of the original, but the succeeding phrases to the end of

the piece return to the altered form of the opening phrase. One possible interpretation of this practice is that Bach simply needed to alter the rhythmic placement of the notes to match a certain harmonic rhythm which he favored for the piece.

Whatever the case, such a situation might illustrate that even in the early organ chorales Bach regarded compositional considerations as of higher importance than perfunctory ones: the composer may have been more interested in producing music of thorough integrity than in making it easy for the congregation to hear the cantus firmus in its most accessible form.

The vigorous activity of the accompaniment has been mentioned. In the second half of the piece a new motive appears in the secondary voices, also displaying agogic vitality. While the alto presents a new idea characterized by repeated notes, the bass punctuates each beat with descending eighth notes. These figures, traded between the two lower voices, permeate measures 15 through 19. From measure 20 through the end of the piece assorted new motives show up in the accompaniment, culminating in a return to the original figure at meaure 24.

Because of the interesting qualities of the lower two voices, they have received some consideration in the transcription of *Allein zu dir*. The opening passagework is divided between the hands for the facilitation of execution. The aforementioned repeated notes have been marked *staccato* in order to emphasize their rhythmic insistance, and the concurrent eighth notes in the bass appear as *staccato* octaves. Both accompanimental parts are indicated *piano* and *leggiero* at that point.

The trill in the upper voice in measure 5 should also be mentioned. It does not appear in the manuscript, which was very likely a copyist's error. It

seems entirely appropriate that a trill should occur at that point, particularly since an ornament is indicated at the matching location for the lower voice.

The transcription is of some difficulty in that the right hand is responsible for two separate voices and the tempo is rapid.

Allein zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ,
mein Hoffnung steht auf Erden.
Ich weiß, daß du mein Tröster bist,
kein Trost mag mir sonst werden.
Von Anbeginn ist Nichts erkor'n,
auf Erden ist kein Mensch gebor'n,
der mir aus Nöthen helfen kann;
ich ruf' dich an,
zu dem ich mein Vertrauen han.

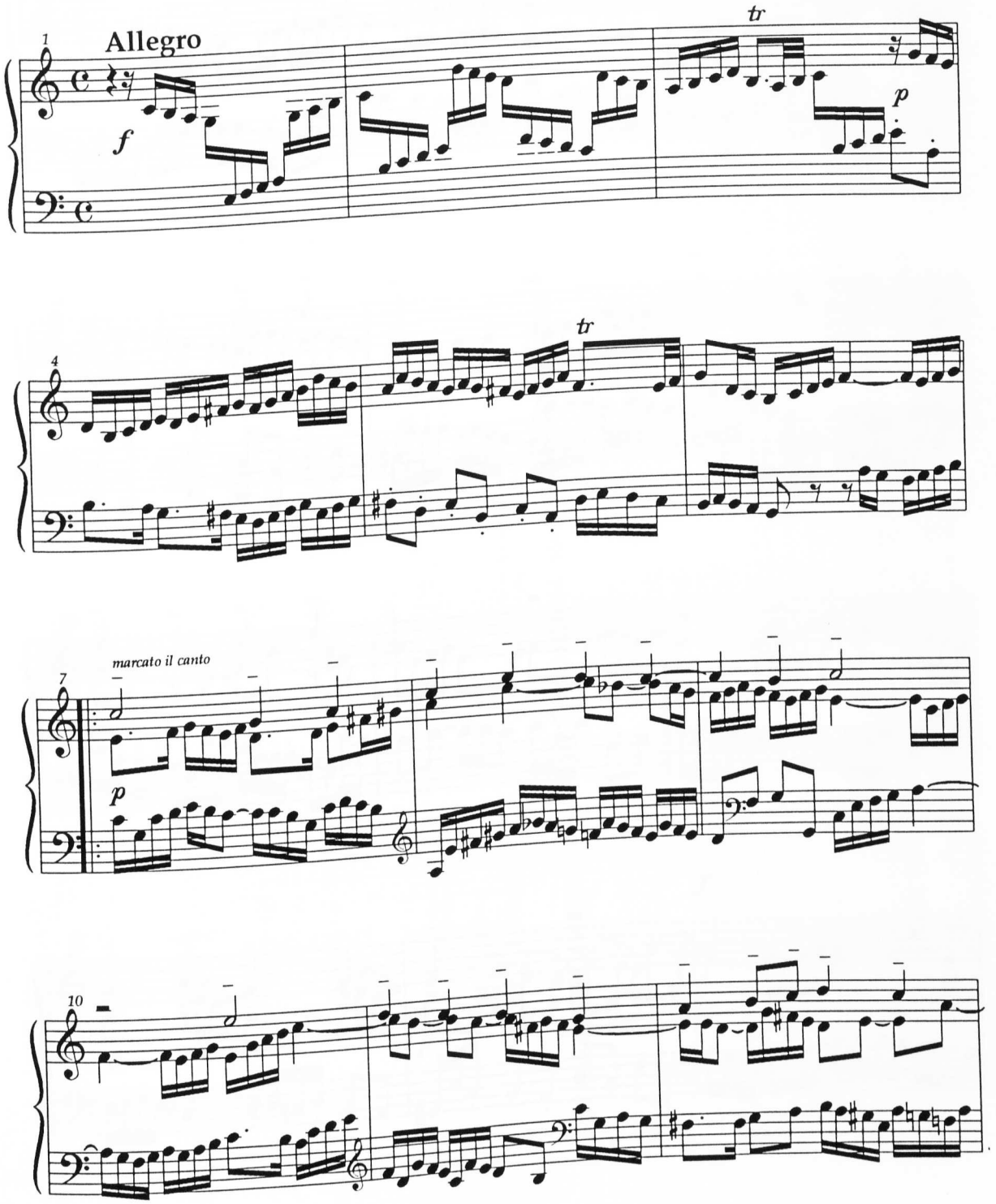
(Anonymous)

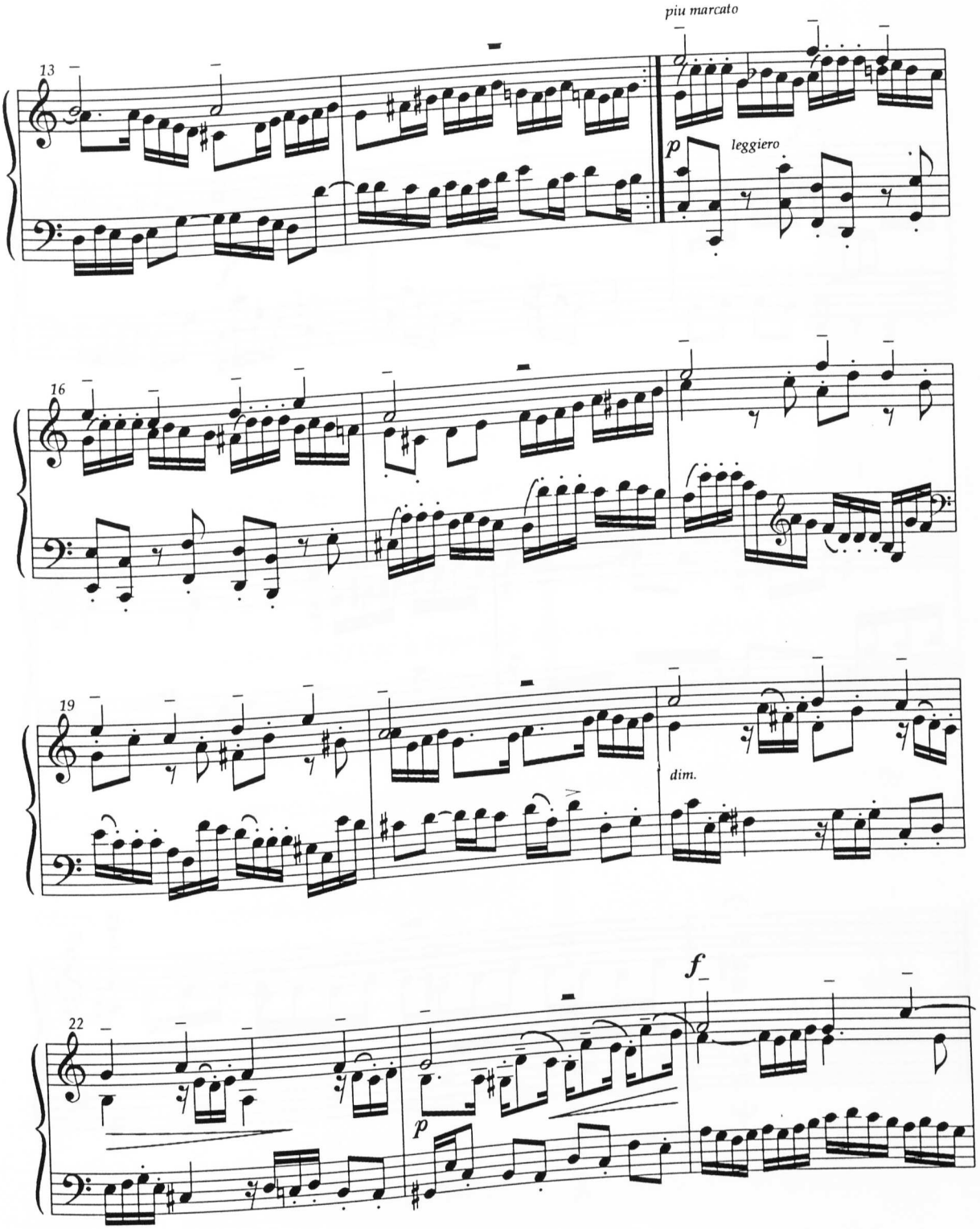
In Thee alone Lord Jesus Christ
I place my firm reliance.
With Thee my Hope and Trust and Guide
I bid the world defiance.
On earth has there been born no man,
no mortal found since time began,
who in my need can succor me.
I cry to Thee,
that Thou my Help and Comfort be.

(Translation: Henry S. Drinker)

Allein zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ

To Thee Alone




piu marcato
13
p
leggiero
16
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dim.
22
f
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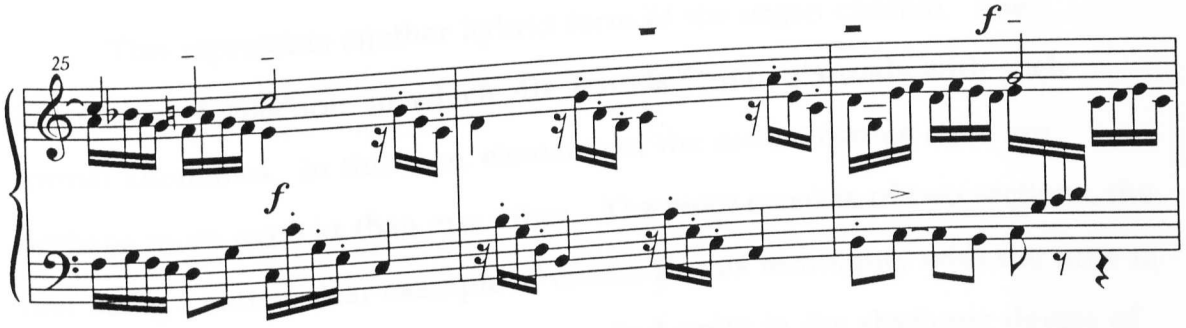
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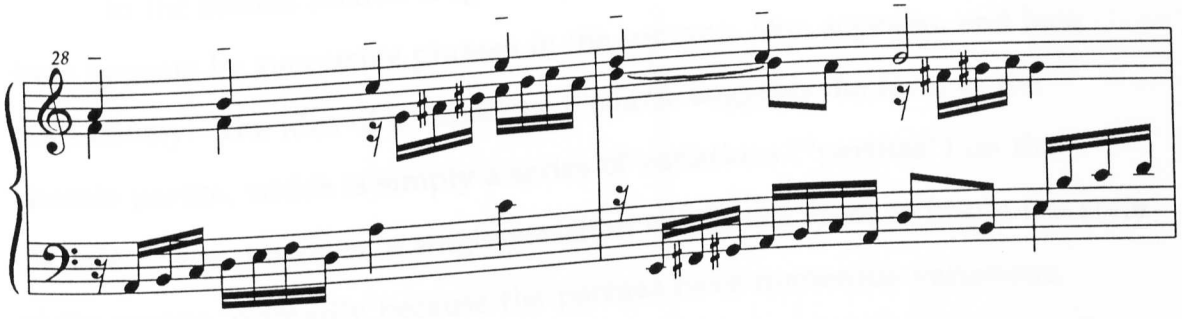
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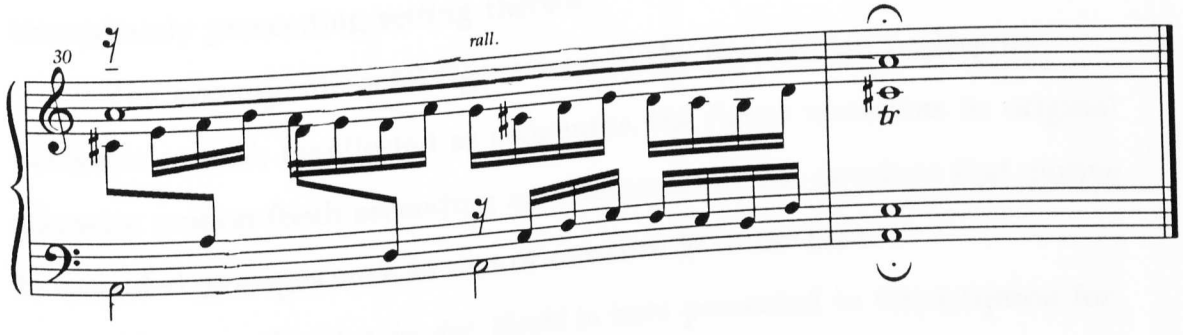
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Als Jesus Christus in der Nacht

BWV 1108

This represents another hybrid form of the organ chorale. The Neumeister Collection, in which *Als Jesus* is found, abounds with such formal anomalies. In this case, elements of the cantus firmus style are perhaps more evident than any other.. The piece consists of two sections, the first being a rather clear example of cantus firmus technique, with the tune in the soprano. The accompanying voices find unity in the rhythmic device of an eighth rest followed by three stepwise eighth notes.

In the second section (beginning at measure 25), titled *Variatio*, the tune appears by successive phrases in the soprano, alto, soprano, and bass respectively. The idea of a variation of course suggests the form of the chorale partita, which is simply a series of variations ("partitas") on the chorale. Here, however, a single variation would not seem to imply the style of the partita, primarily because the partitas have numerous variations. Furthermore, the partita features variations on the original chorale. In the case of *Als Jesus*, the variation is not on the original cantus firmus but on the immediately preceeding setting thereof.

The accompanimental figure seen in the first section undergoes variation as well; manifested as sixteenths, the figure maintains its original stepwise motion (both ascending and descending) but develops that motive in extended passages such as that of measure 34 in the bass.

Als Jesus Christus in der Nacht is here presented in transcription for piano, four hands. The level of difficulty is appropriate for intermediate or advanced students. In all appearances of the cantus firmus, in both the

opening and the *Variatio*, the tune is doubled at the octave. The soprano and alto are doubled upward, the bass downward. During the alto's presentation of the tune in the *Variatio* the soprano part is of necessity placed an ocatve higher than originally written in order to make room for the alto.

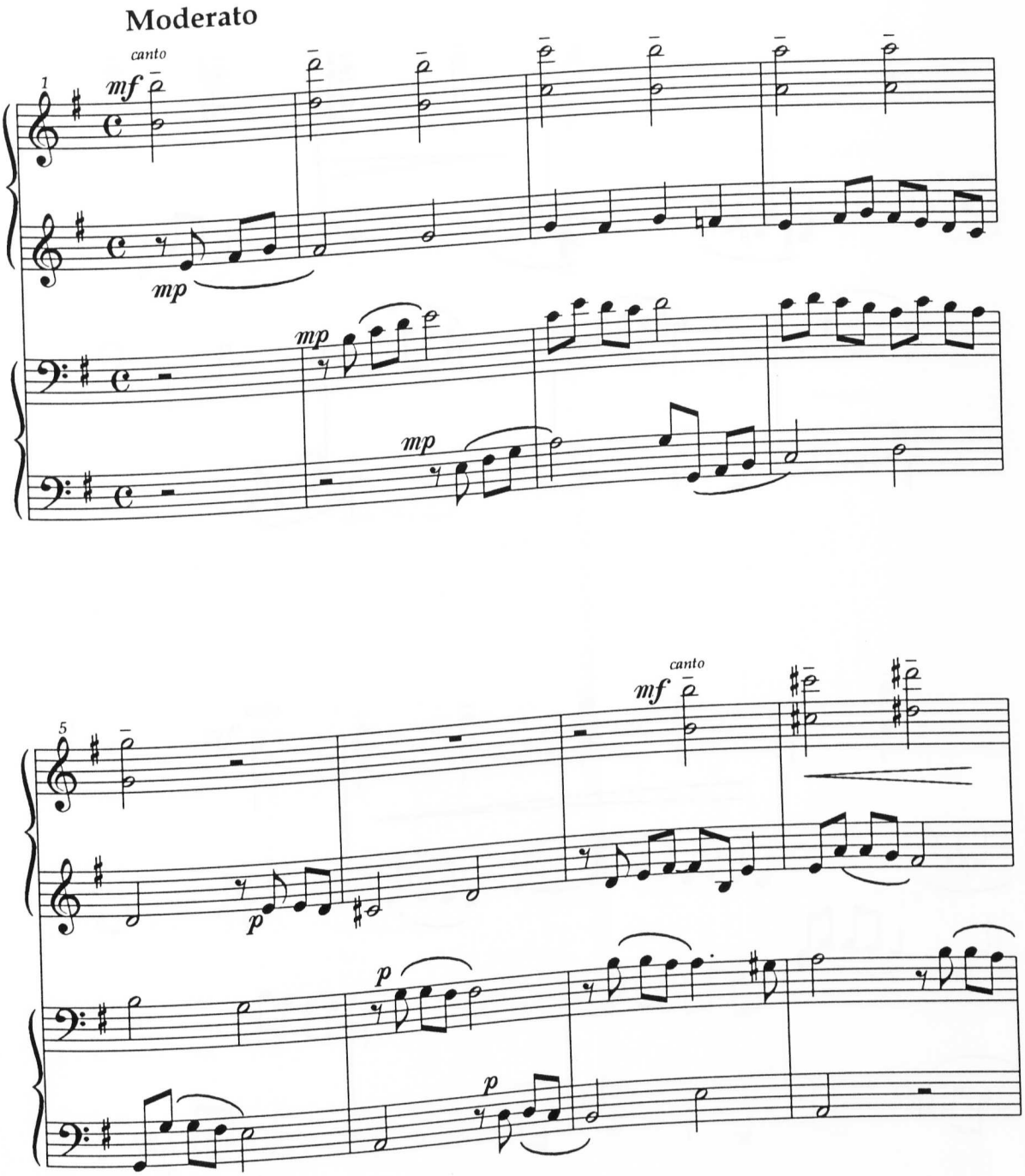
The text and translation are included below.

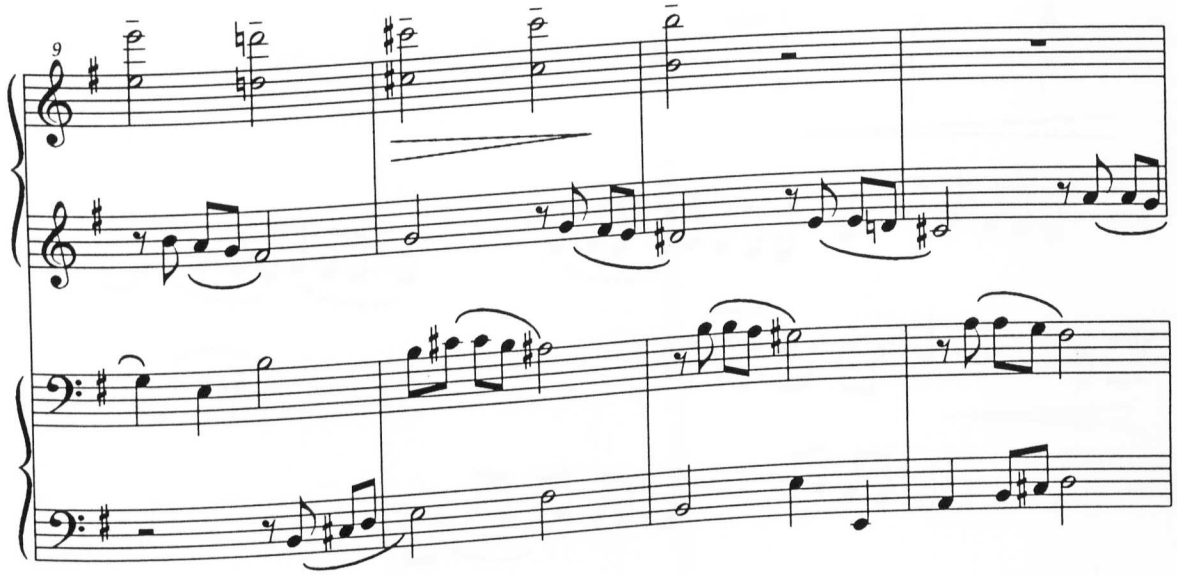
Als Jesus Christus in der Nacht,
darin erward verrathen,
auf unser Heil war ganz bedacht,
dasselb' uns zu erstaten.
(Johann Heerman, 1636)

That night when Jesus Christ our Lord
By His disciple was betray'd,
To us on earth He gave his Word
That expiation would be made.
(Translation: Elvera Wonderlich)

Als Jesus Christus in der Nacht

The Night That Jesus Christ Was Betrayed

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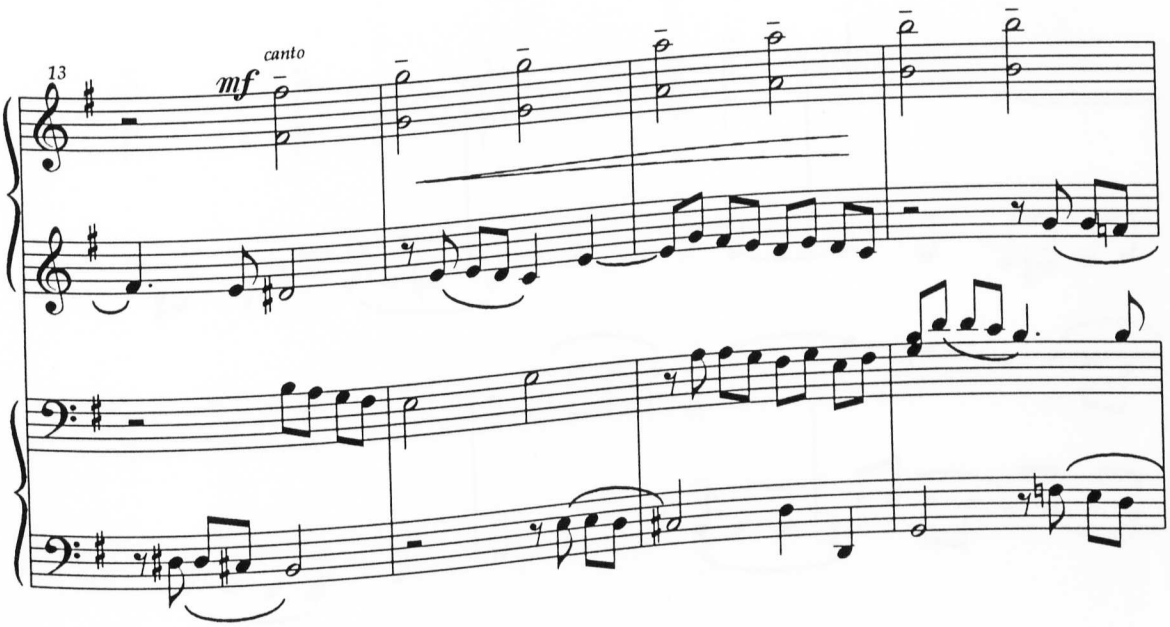
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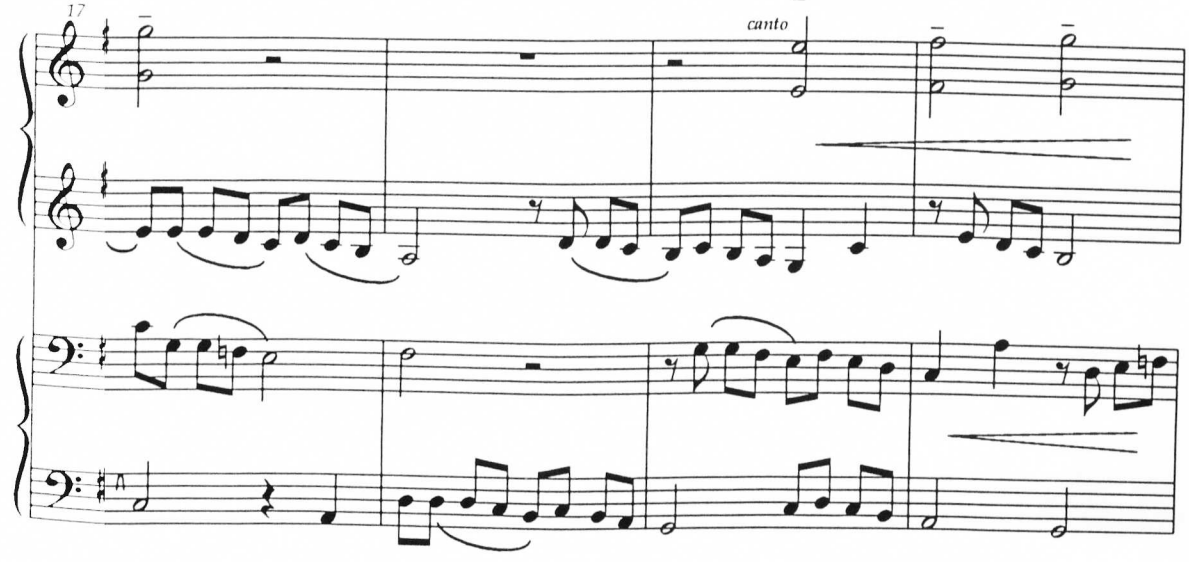
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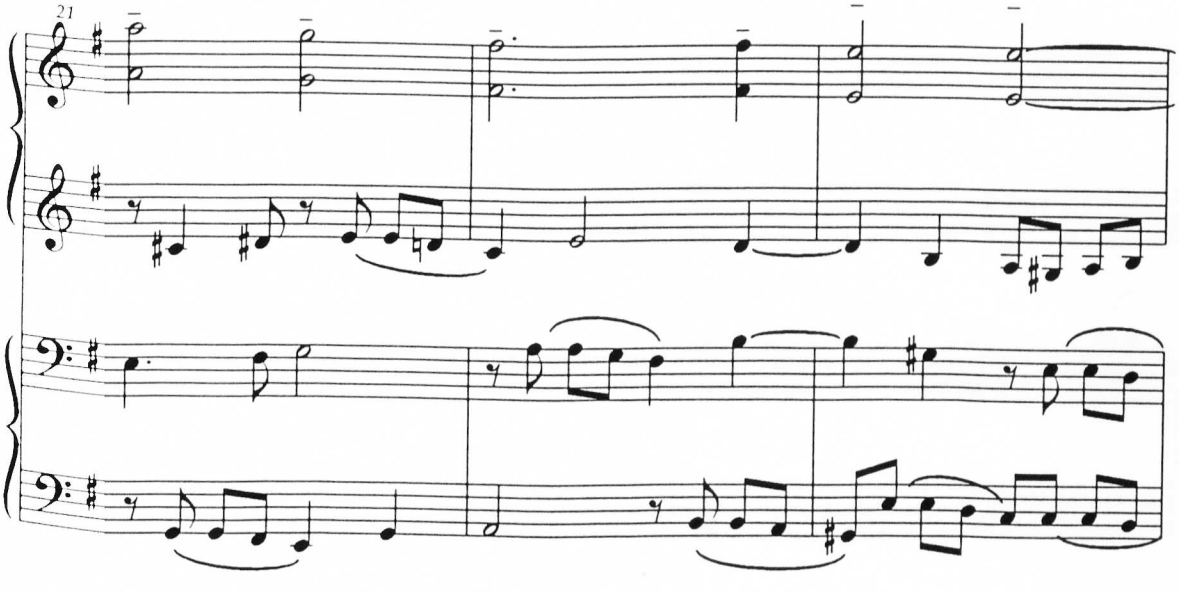
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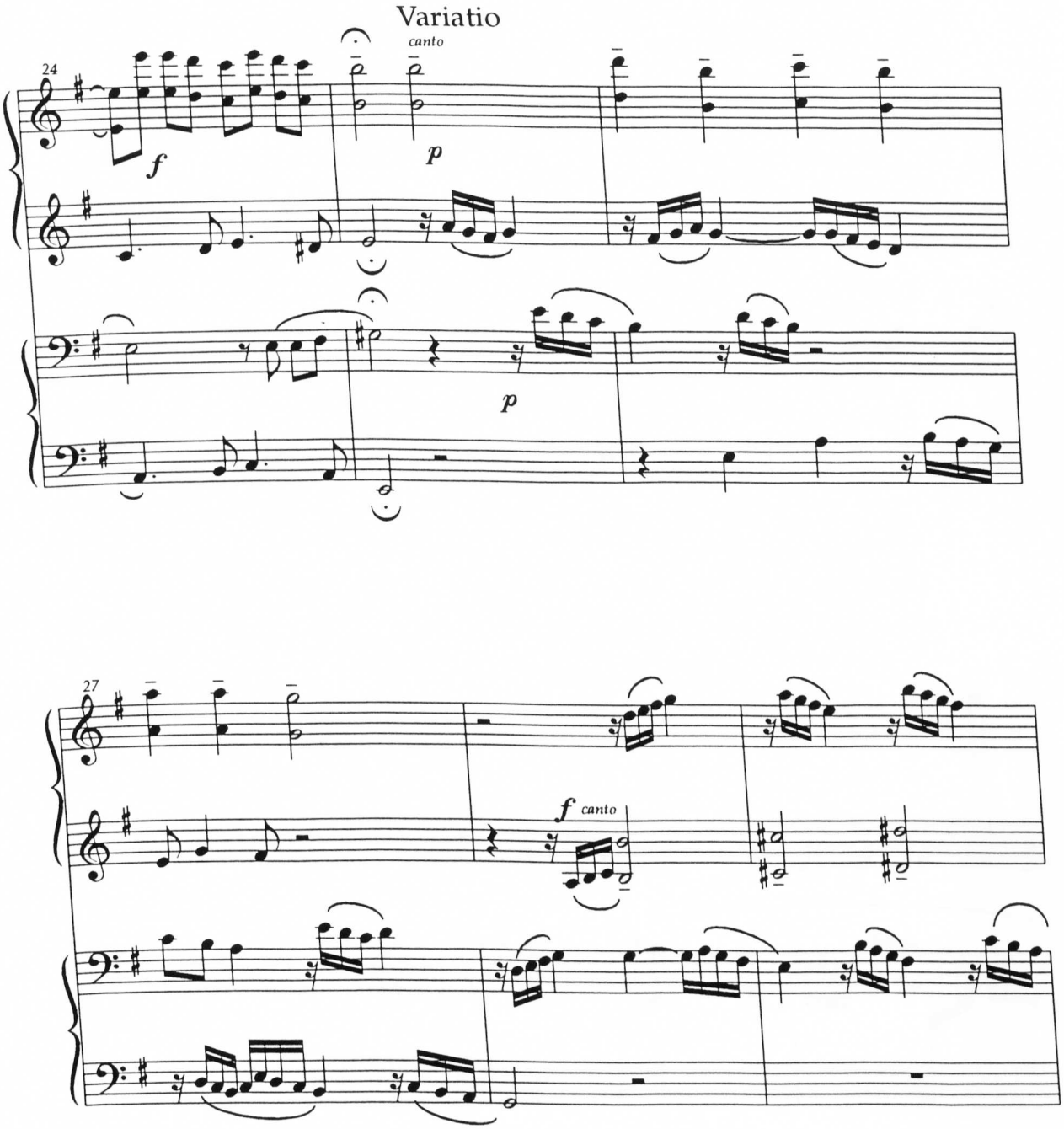
Variatio
canto
24
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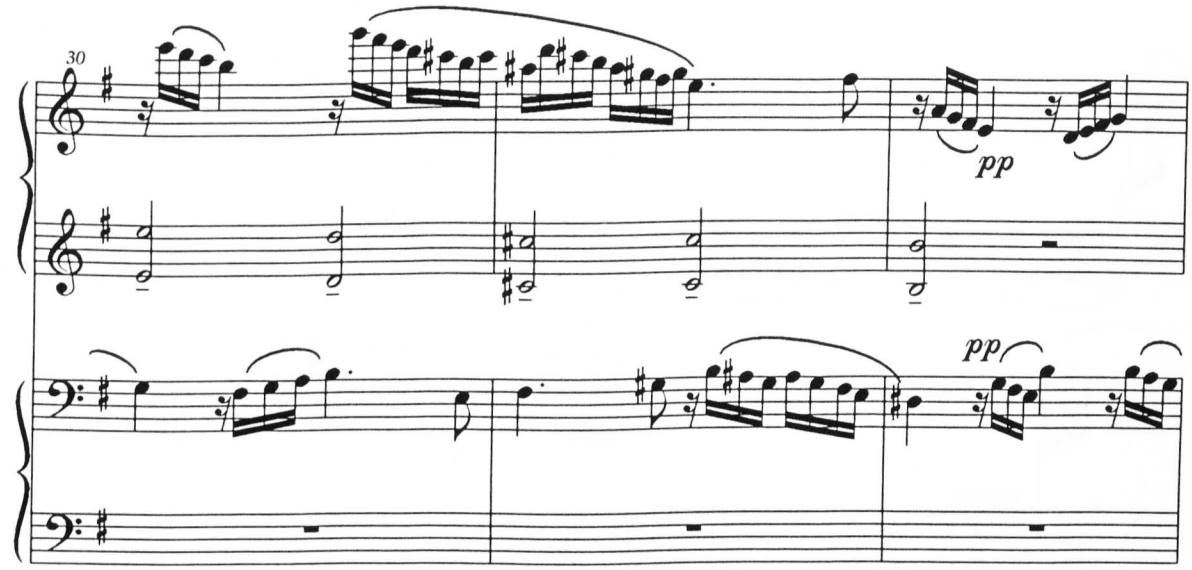
p
27
f canto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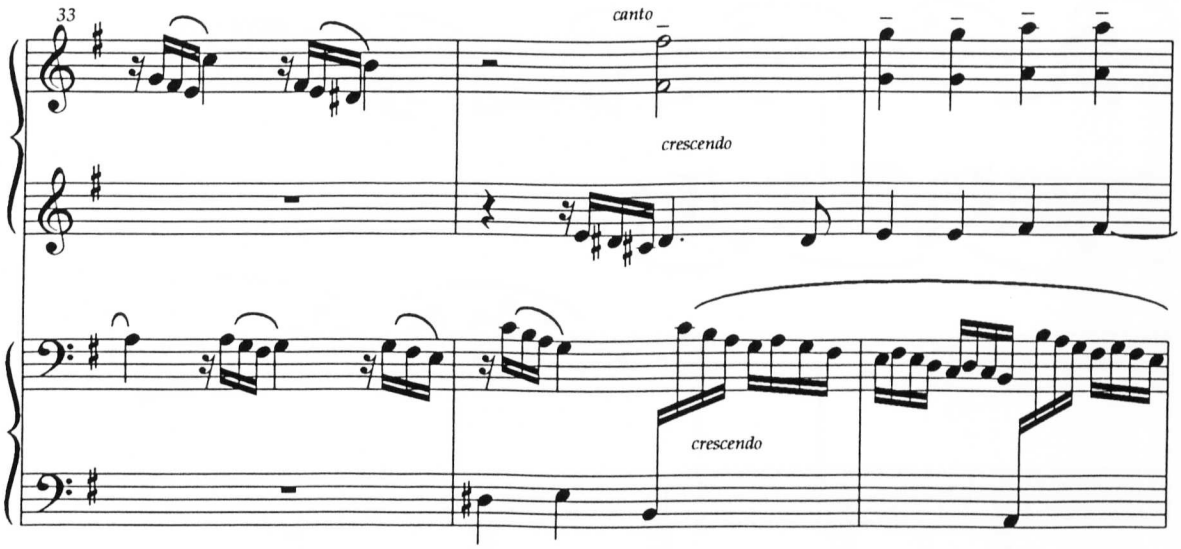
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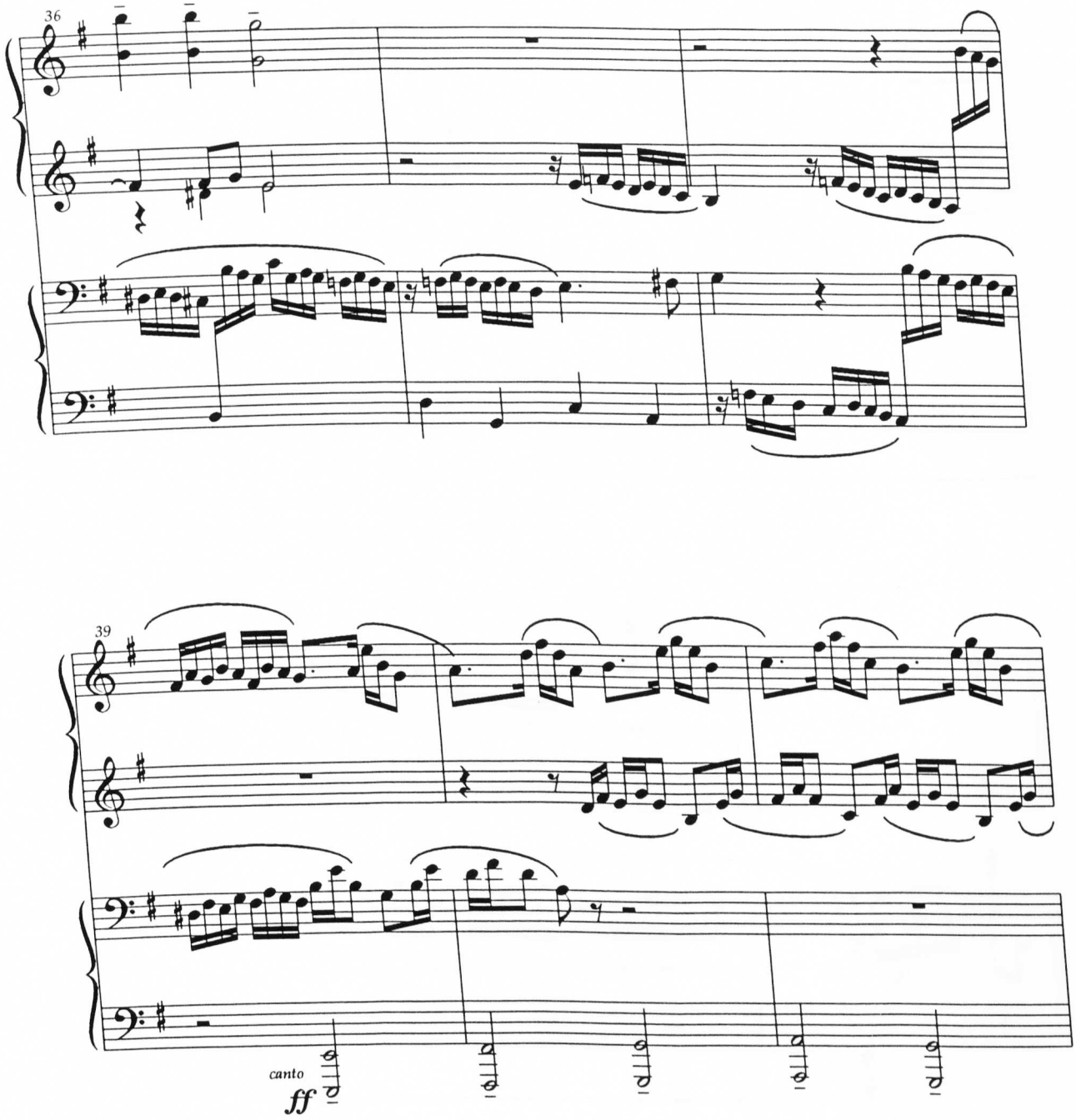
crescendo
crescendo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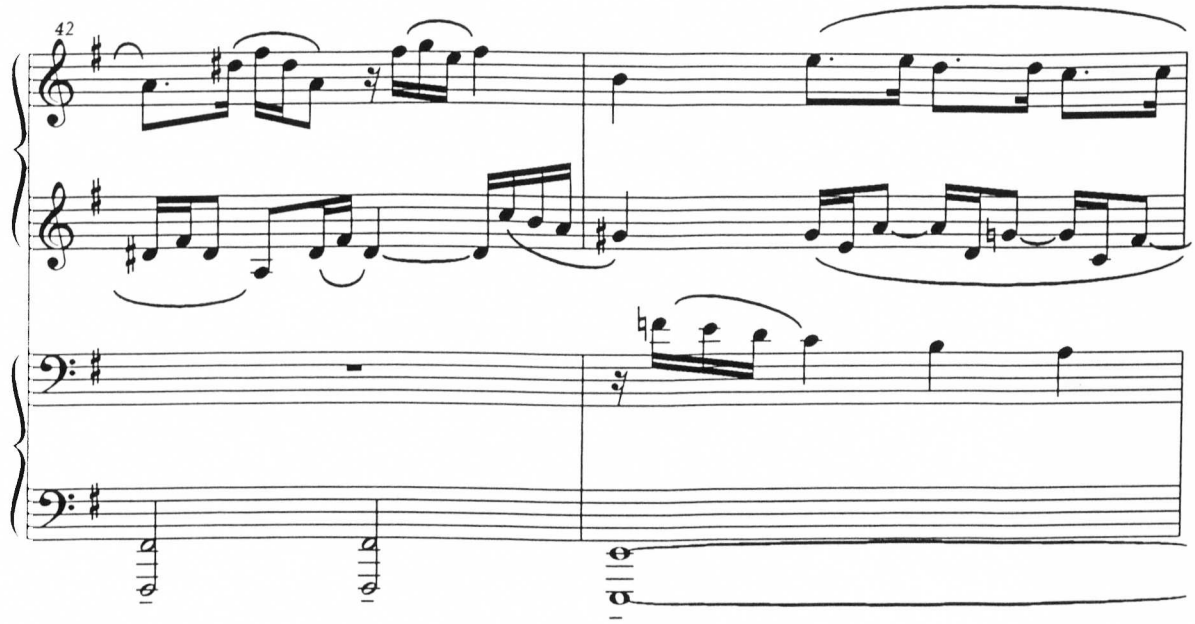
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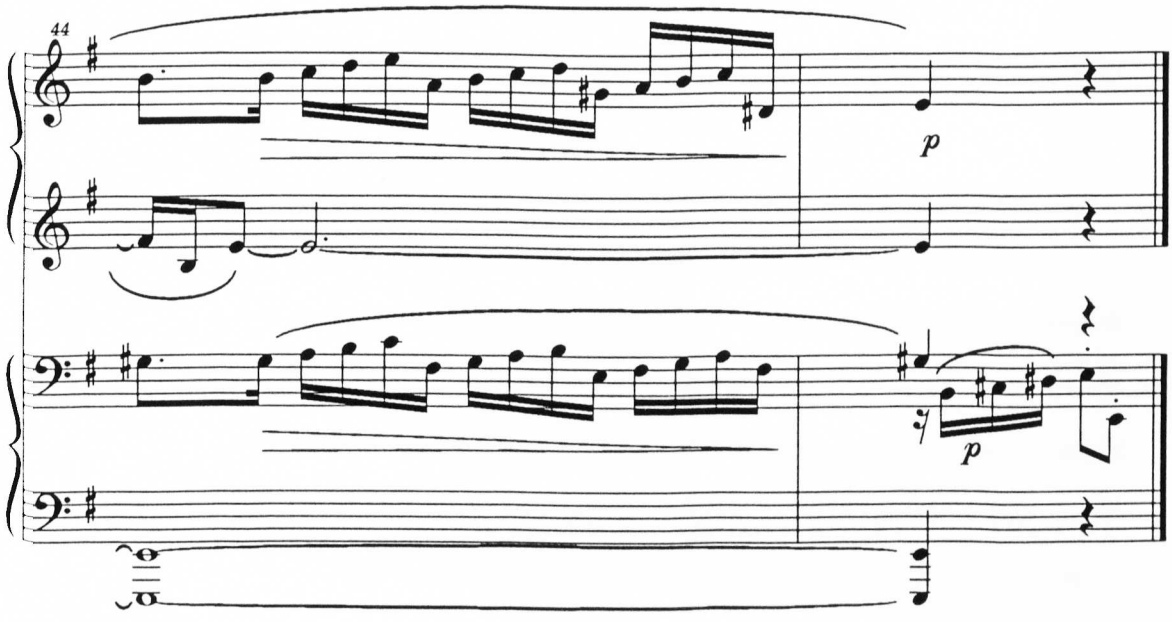
44
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Christ, unser Herr, zum Jordan kam

BWV 684

The key signature implies a Dorian treatment, and in fact the cantus firmus is modal, containing no A-flats and five A-naturals. While at times the harmony seems to gravitate toward G minor or major (the cantus cadences on G three times) nevertheless C is maintained as the tonal center of the piece, and its close on a G major chord is clearly understood to be on, and not in, the dominant.

The text relates the narrative of Christ's baptism in the Jordan, and the perpetual sixteenth notes can be regarded as symbolic of the literal water as well as the symbolic flood which will "drown the bitterness of death".

The opening eighth note figure in the upper parts has elicited some speculation as to its symbolic significance. Williams (1980, p. 216) has suggested that the figure forms the sign of the cross. Another possibility is that descent into death (as symbolized by baptism) and subsequent resurrection is being pictured by the large leap down and the still larger skip upward.

An interesting and attractive feature of the piece is the periodic punctuation with sequences, the first of which appears in the fourth measure. The descending bass (another symbol?) of the passacaglia forms the harmonic underpinning of the dropping 7-6 pattern.

The main alterations undertaken in this transcription are instances of transposing material up or down an octave for the sake of facility. For example, in measure 8 the sixteenth-notes in the bass are too far from the tenor, but the left hand must negotiate both. The first fives sixteenths of the

measure were therefore moved up one octave.

The level of difficulty is fairly high.

Christ, unser Herr, zum Jordan kam
nach seines Vaters Willen,
von Sanct Johann die Taufe nahm,
sein Werk und Amt zu 'rfüllen,
Da wollt er stiften uns ein Bad,
zu waschen uns von Sünden,
ersäufen auch den bittern Tod
durch sein selbst Blut und Wunden;
es galt ein neues Leben.

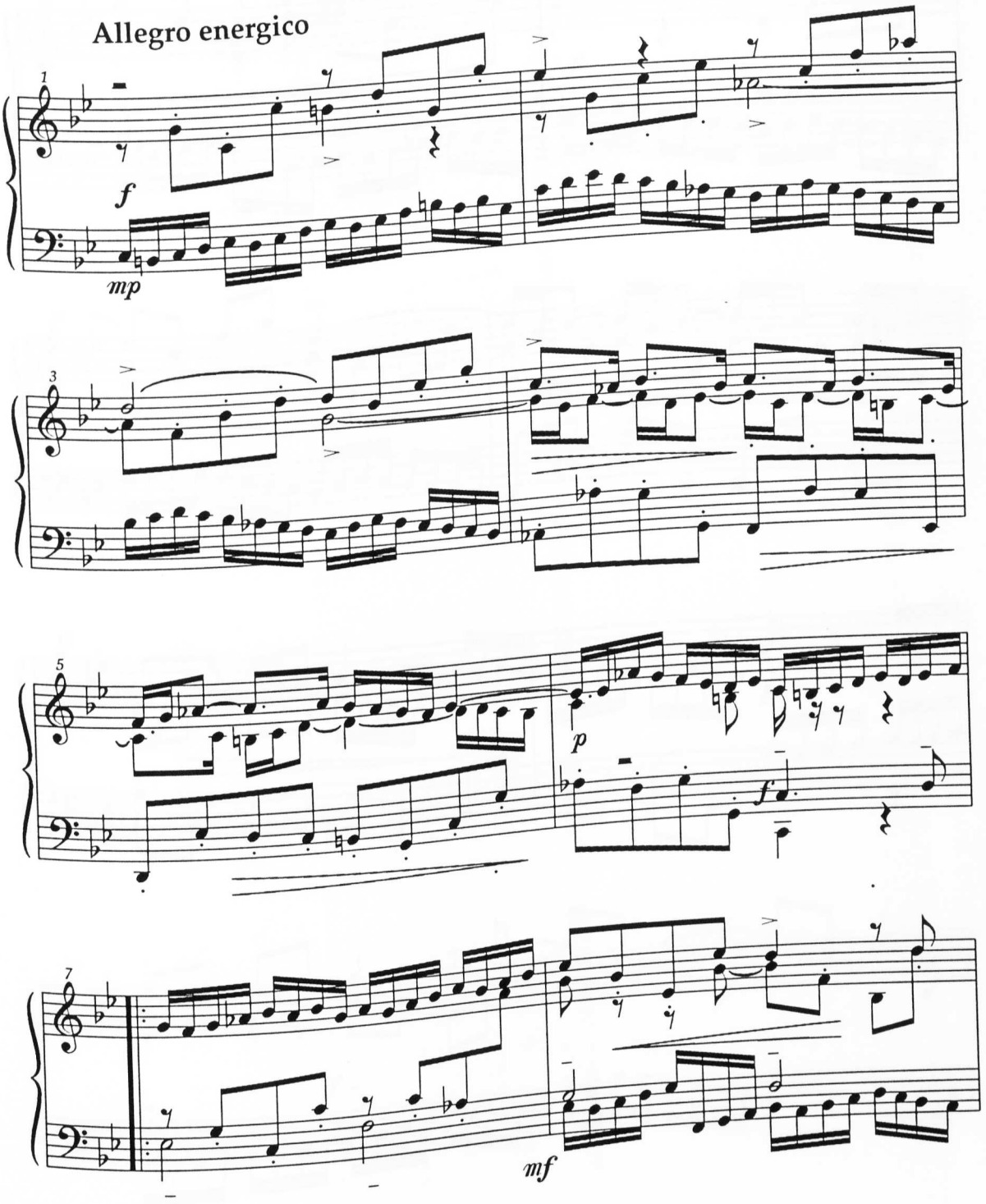
(Martin Luther, 1541)

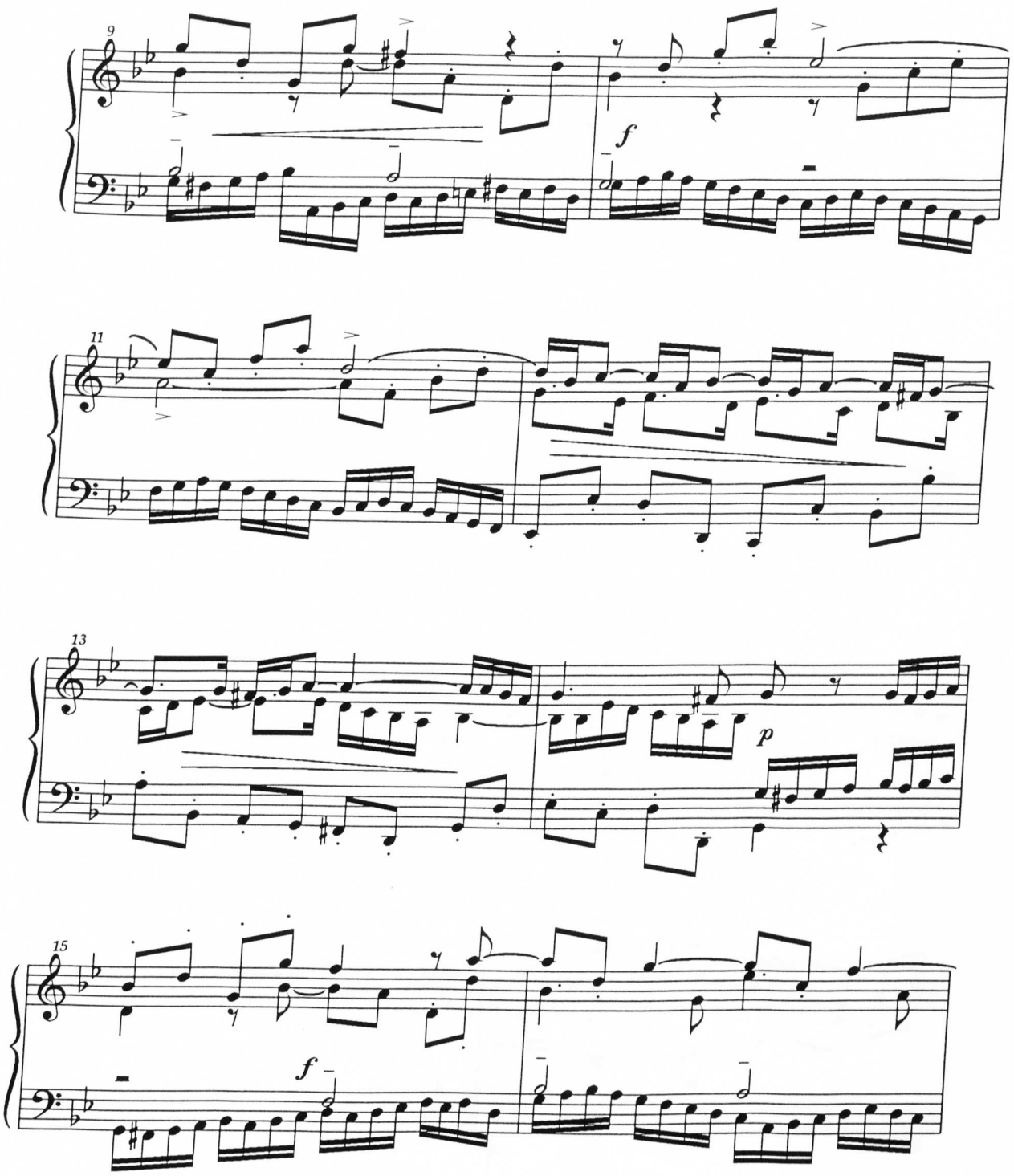
Christ our Lord came to the Jordan
According to His Father's will,
And was baptized by John the Baptist
His Work and Duty to fulfill.
There He instituted for us the Water
To wash away our sins
And to drown the bitterness of death
Through his own blood and wounds;
It was worth a new life.

(Translation: John Mortensen)

Christ, unser Herr

Christ Our Lord

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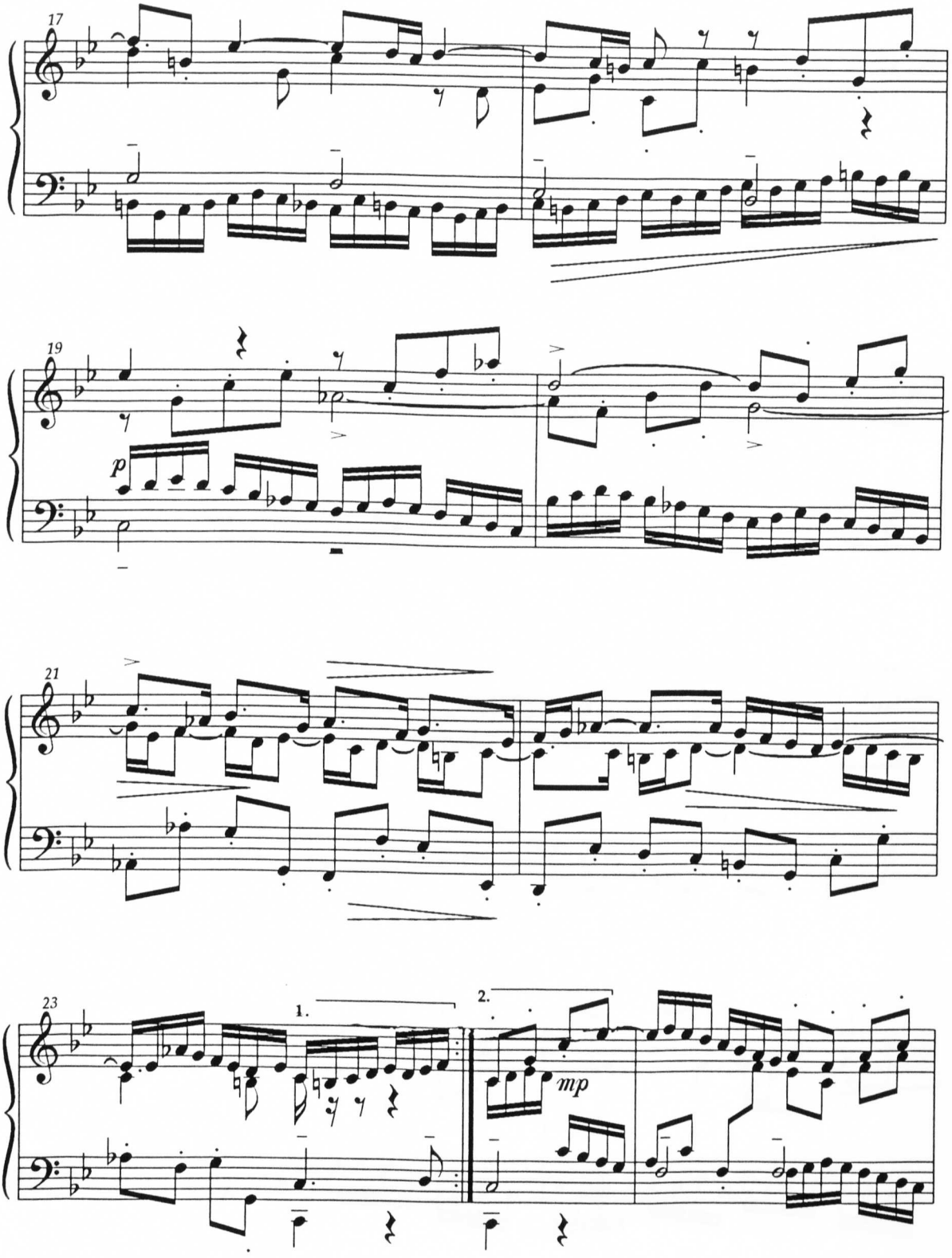
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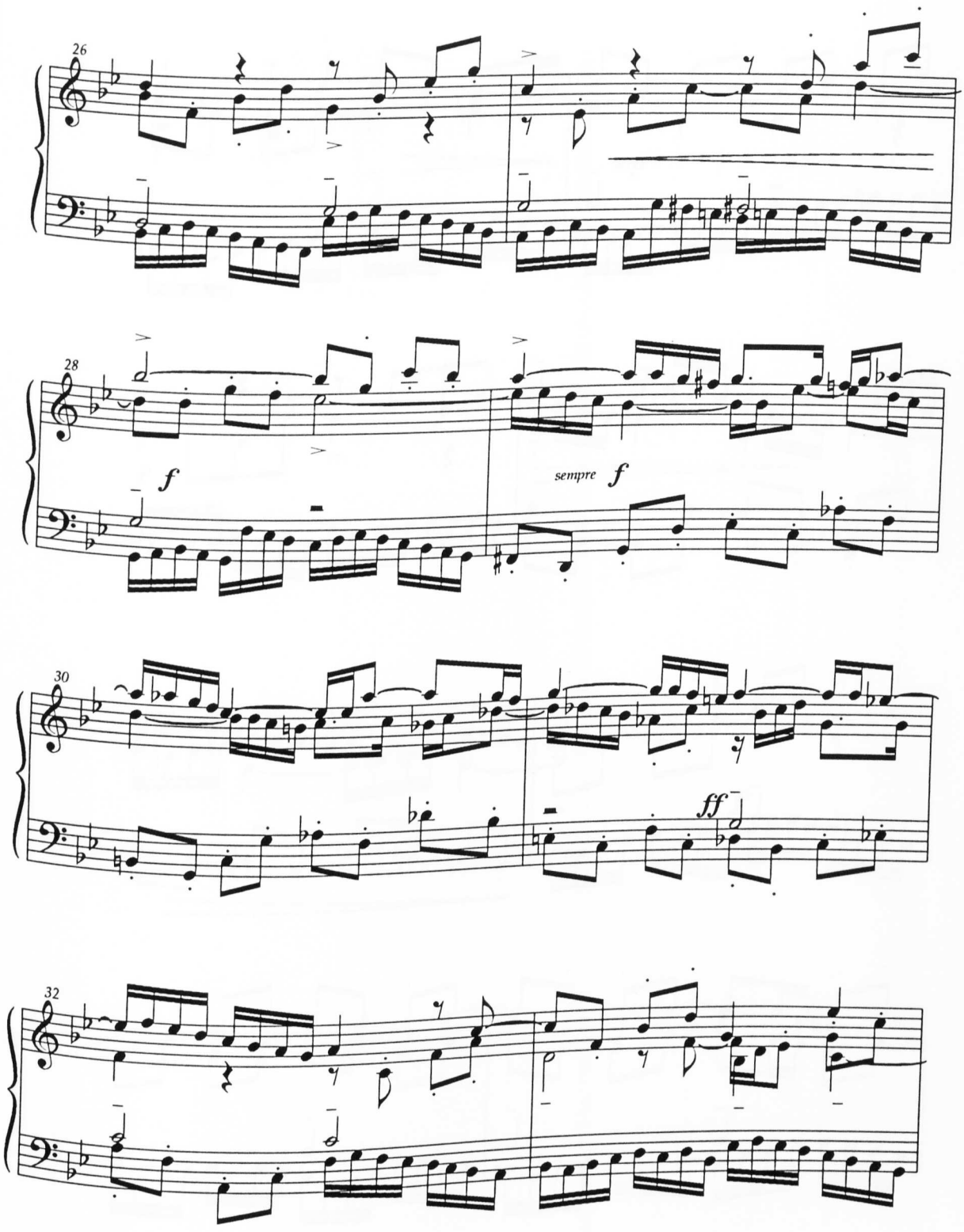
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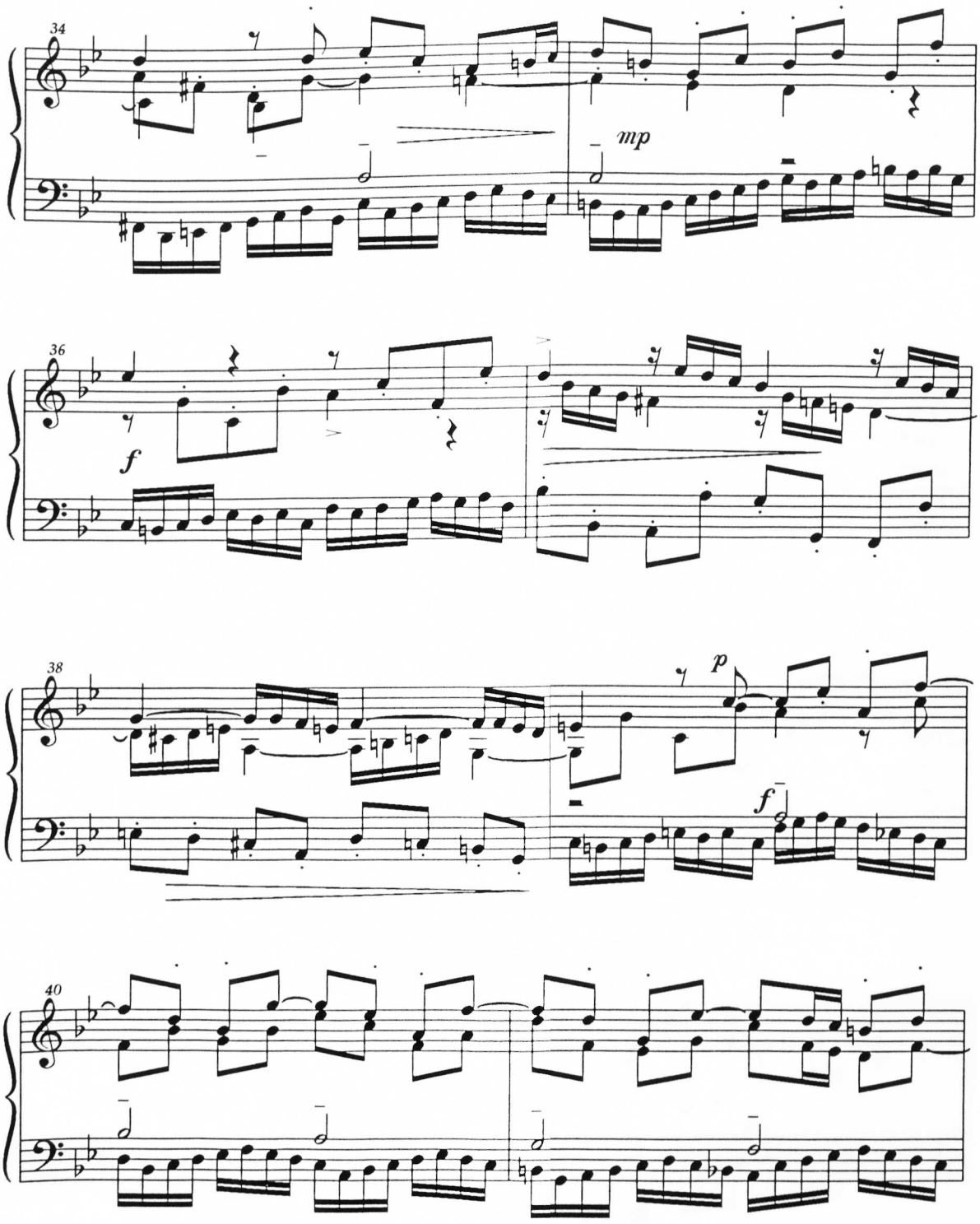
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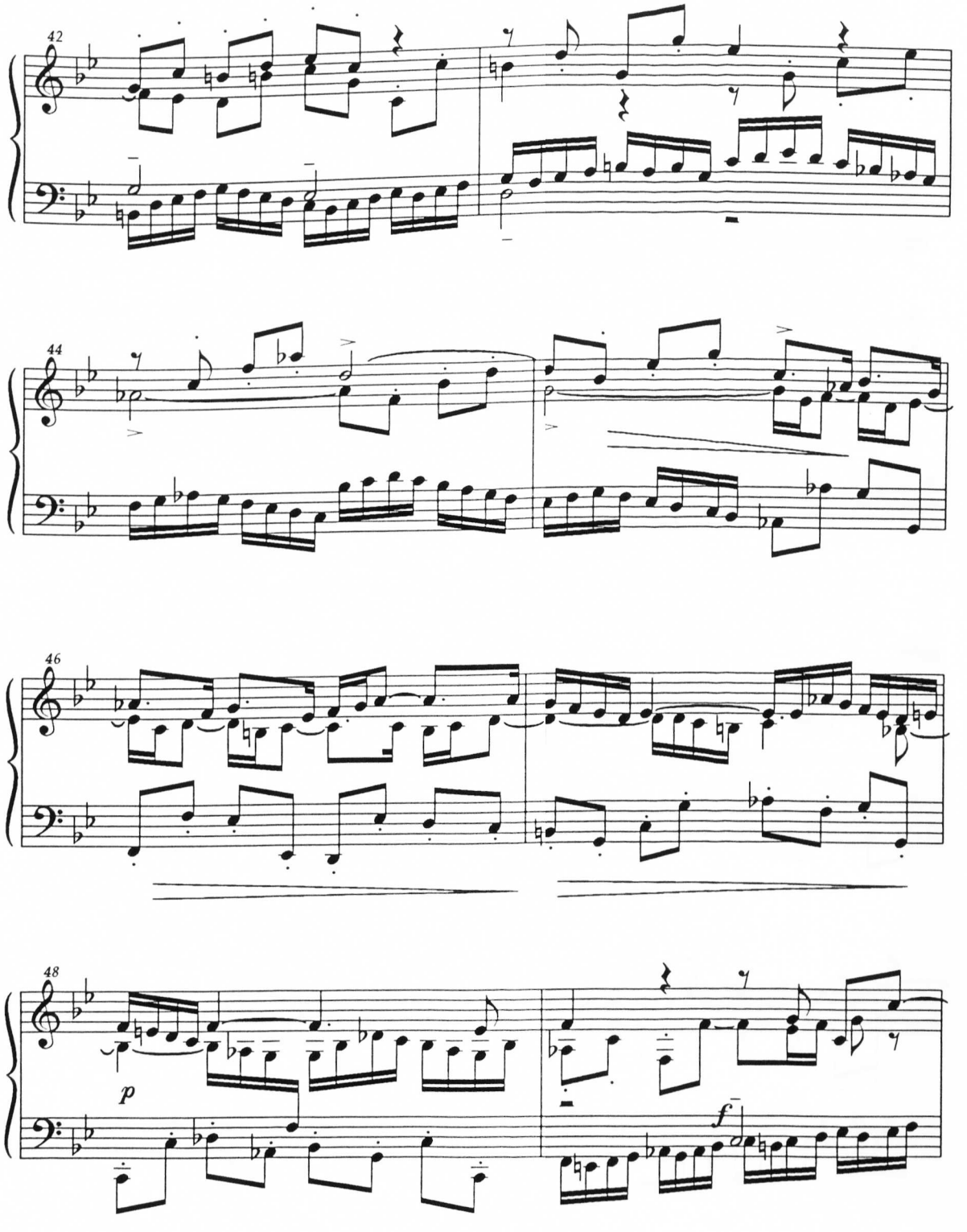
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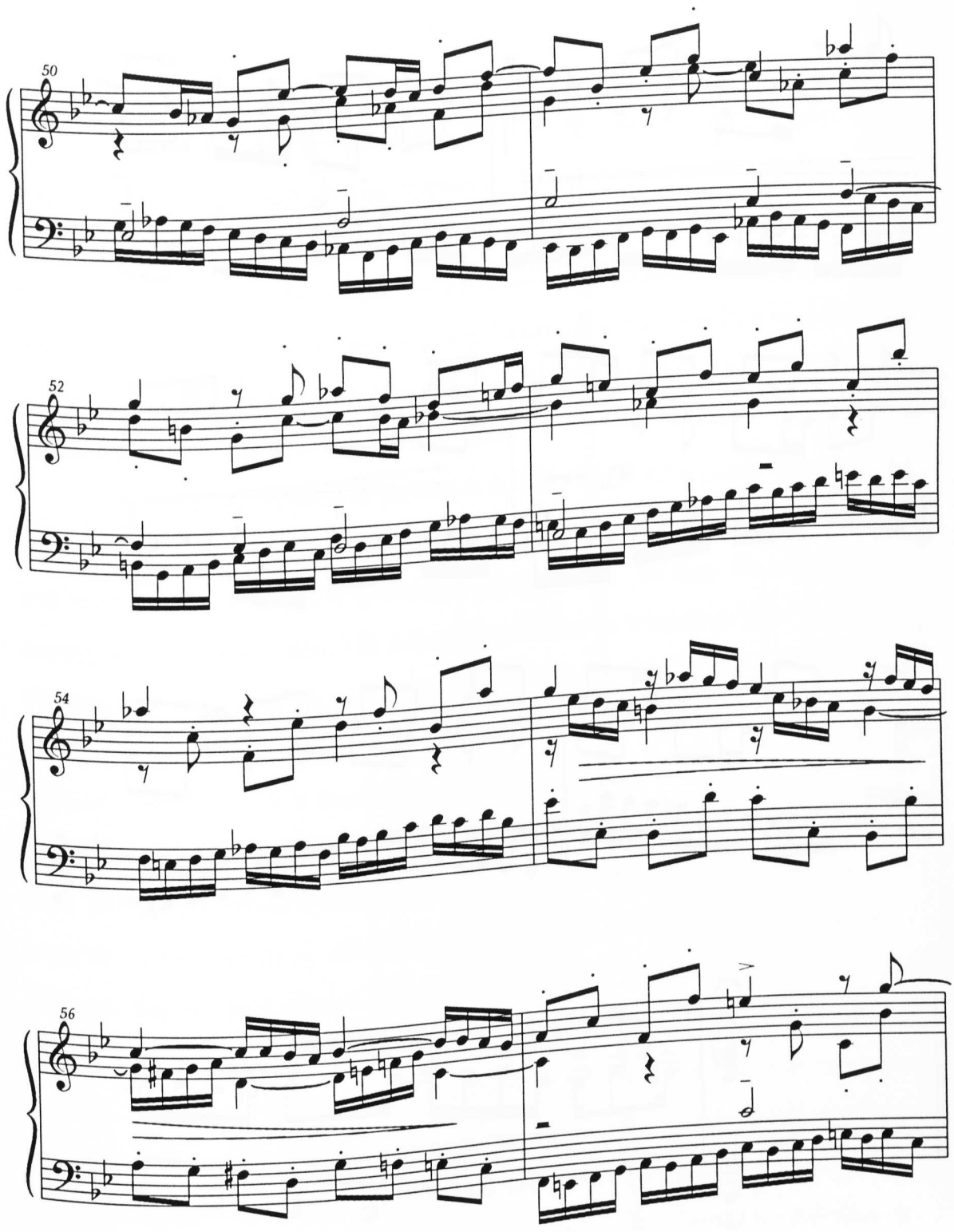
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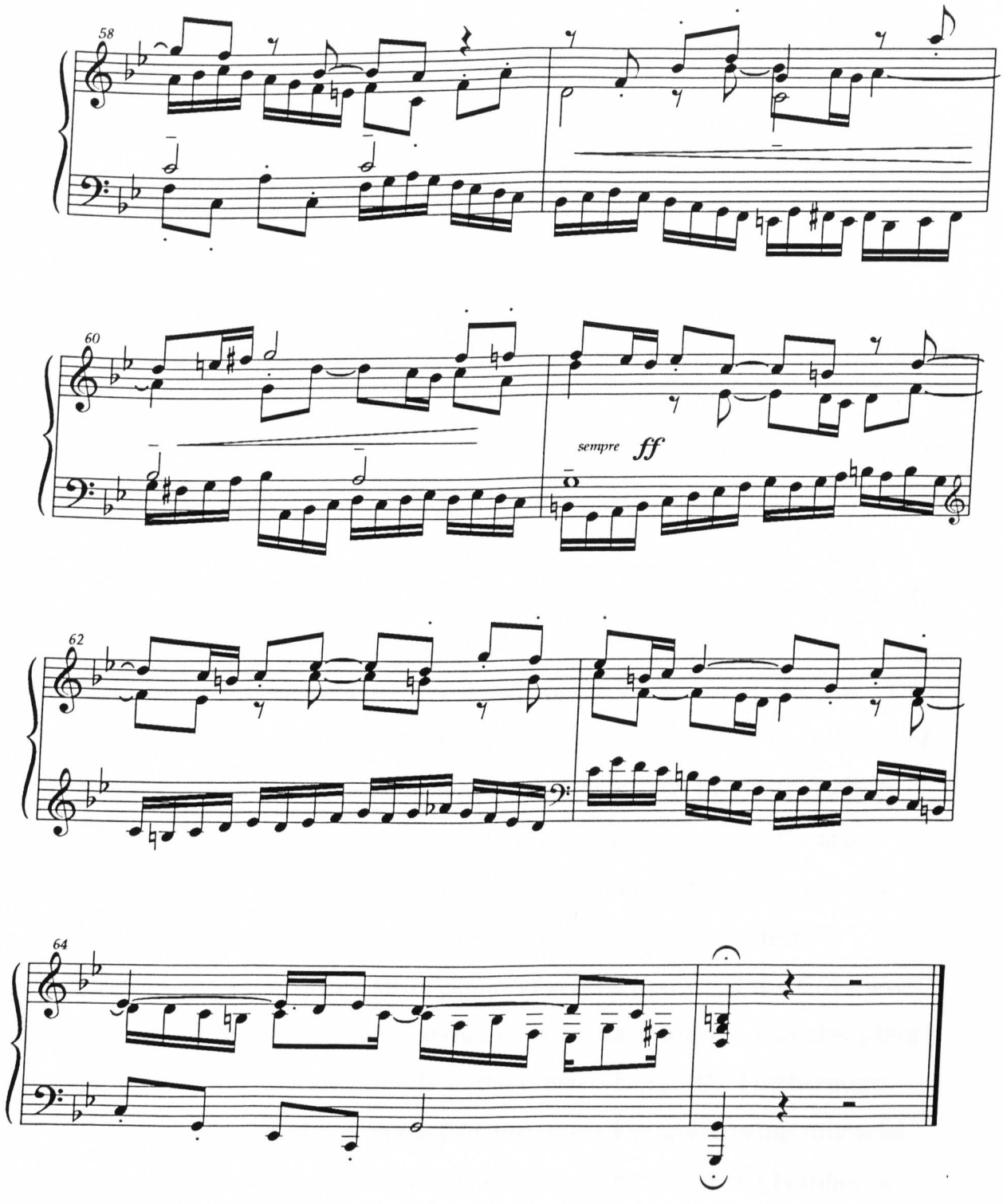
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64

Dies sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot'

BWV 678

Dies sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot' is cast in the form of a cantus firmus chorale with each phrase appearing in canon at the octave, the two canonic entrances separated by as little as one measure and as much as three. This is due, of course, to the difference in melodic contour of the various phrases; in order that the phrase might harmonize with itself, a certain point of imitation must be selected, and those particular points will naturally differ inasmuch as the phrases themselves differ.

Ironically, however, the cantus is not the focus of musical attention in this composition, due to its melodically static character amid highly animated and thematically significant counterpointing voices. In fact, the extreme variety amongst the voices led Albert Schweitzer to comment that "each of the separate parts goes its own way, without regard for the others. This musical disorder represents the moral state of the world before the law. Then the law is revealed. It is represented by a majestic canon upon the melody of the chorale, running through the whole movement" (Schweitzer, 1905, p. 346). While Schweitzer's analysis is certainly intriguing, one might take exception to his thesis in that the variety of rhythmic and melodic activity amongst the voices does not really produce a chaotic musical effect. Nevertheless, the view of the strict canon as representative of the Covenant of Sinai is compelling. Another instance of symbolism may be that this piece appears as the tenth chorale prelude in the *Clavierübung III*. Furthermore, the idea is suggested of Moses as the Old Testament Lawgiver being followed and superseded (in the form of two canonic voices) by Christ the Fulfiller of

the Law. Most significantly, however, is the pun implied: "canon" and "law" are synonyms.

The declamatory demeanor of the text is reflected in the opening measures of the chorale, where quarter notes outline the dominant triad over a dominant pedal point. Following this event rhythmic diminution begins and continues unabated until the end of the piece.

The following arrangement of *Dies sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot'* represents a more fundamental transformation of Bach's original. The scoring for two pianos introduces the element of ensemble, as well as the sense of dialogue created by duo-pianists. The transcription was undertaken with the fullest possible piano sonority in mind-- and hence a literal transference of notes from organ to piano is often less a consideration than the building of rich sound.

In transcribed form, these opening notes are not only doubled at the octave but also filled in with the implied dominant triadic tones in order that the greatest possible sonority might be produced. Similarly, the thematic idea appearing in measure 5 (in sixteenths and eighths) is augmented by the filling out of the third below the original notes.

Measure 6 features the alteration of registration for the sixteenth notes in the second half of the bar, mainly for the purpose of providing some coloristic distinction from the middle-register chords in piano I. These sixteenths are then doubled a sixth below, resulting in a sort of amplification of the passage. This is appropriate in that the running sixteenths (as opposed to the sixteenth-eighth combination) act as an important thematic element throughout the remainder of the composition, functioning as a counterpoint both to the sixteenth-eighth combination and to itself.

The first appearance of the cantus firmus transpires midway through measure 7. Placed entirely in the right hand of the second piano, the first chorale phrase makes a self-effacing debut; and while its next occurance (in Measure 19) is somewhat highlighted, the cantus does not, on the whole, provide most of the musical interest. Rather, it serves as a compositional starting point. Part of the real craft of the piece is demonstrated by the fact that Bach has employed a rather uneventful chorale melody, placed it in academically correct canon, and then built a truly vigorous and lively piece around it.

At measure 13 this writer introduced a texture change that is not implied in the original. The bass, which heretofore had appeared in octaves, reduces itself to staccato single notes, and the doublings of upper voices cease. The dynamics diminish significantly. This was done partly because textural and dynamic shifts are interesting in themselves, but also in order to allow the following crescendo to be as long and gradual as possible. Throughout the crescendo slight increases in sonority and rhythmic intensity accumulate. For example, the rolled chords in measures 13 and 15 emphasize the downbeats of those bars, and expand in activity in the following two measures, where further subdivisions of the beat are pointed out. Measure 18 witnesses a return of octave-doubling in the bass along with fuller chords in the tenor. Passagework gains reinforcement a third below, and the cantus firmus appears again, this time in octaves, with each piano reciting one of the voices. The cumulative effect of all this building-up is seen in measure 29 as the pianos cadence decisively in the relative minor, following which the texture and dynamics are thinned out as gradually as they were augmented.

A few embellishments should be mentioned. The first pianist's left

hand must cross the right in measure 40 to play a quick figuration that is reiterated in the second piano in the following two measures. This manner of drawing on the staccato brilliance of the piano's treble register is reminiscent of Rachmaninoff's own devices in his transcription of three movements of Bach's Partita in E for solo violin. The great Russian understood, no doubt, that the violin's particular strengths-- variable timbre and dynamics on a single note, and that note's indefinate duration-- are the piano's particular weaknesses. Hence, he made no attempt to imitate the sound of the violin in his transcription. Instead, the unique resources of the piano were applied; he added extra voices, drawing upon the polyphonic capabilitites of his instrument. Implied chords were filled in, sometimes by harmonies that Bach would recognize, sometimes not. The result was a truly pianistic work in the sense that the piano had no need to sound like anything other than a piano.

The form of Bach's original *Dies sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot'* has been somewhat altered for the purpose of this transcription. Whereas the organ piece was written for ecclesiastical use, the purpose of the transcription is concert performance. The organ chorale first developed as a prelude to the singing of the hymn on which the organ piece was based. Hence, it is not uncommon for an organ chorale to end on the dominant in preparation for congregational singing to begin on the tonic-- a perfectly natural arrangement for the church, but rather unsatisfying in a concert situation where no congregational singing follows and the piece is then left unresolved on the dominant. Therefore, some formal restructuring of the piece was fitting not only so that the tonic could be reached, but also to provide an ending with drama appropriate to an energetic and virtuosic duo-piano work.

Hence the material from the middle of measure 56 to the end of the original piece was eliminated entirely. One and one-half measures of new material were composed by this writer, leading to a repeat of measures 55 through 56a, but upon repeat, transposed from B-flat to the tonic of C major. Following this, a long dominant pedal ensues (like that at the commencement of the work) over which the second thematic idea of running sixteenths reappears. Additionally, the cantus firmus is once again heard, but in rhythmic diminution, then in diminution together with melodic inversion. Finally, this writer composed a coda in which the opening declamatory imitation is brought back, so that a sense of completeness might be achieved.

The difficulty level of this piece is high, not only technically but in terms of ensemble as well.

The hymn text and a translation follow:

Dies sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot',
die uns gab unser Herre Gott
durch Mose, seinen Diener treu,
hoch auf dem Berg Sinai.
Kyrie eleis!

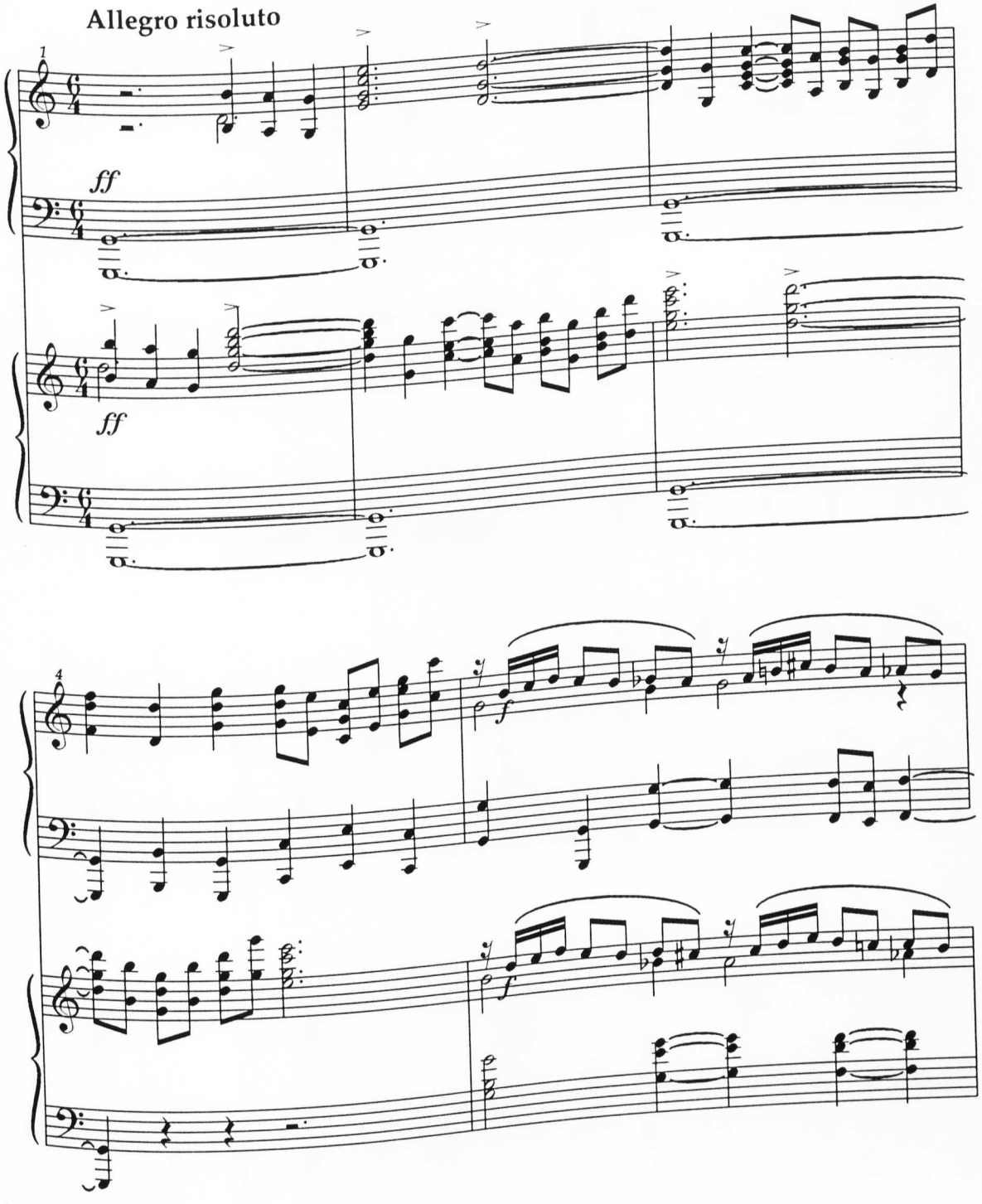
(Martin Luther, 1524)

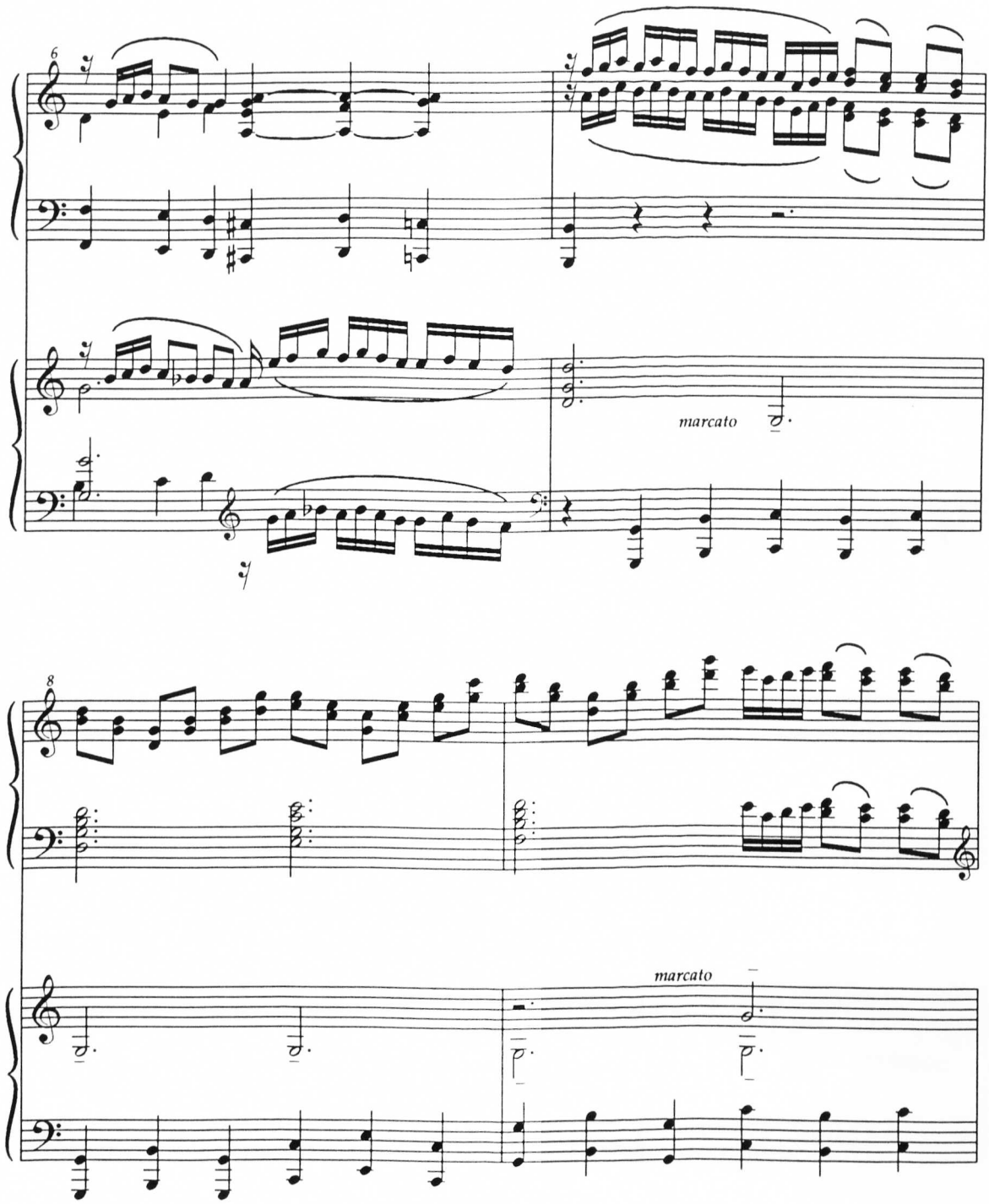
These are the holy Ten Commandments
That our Lord God gave us
Through Moses, His true servant,
High on Mount Sinai.
Lord have mercy!

(Translation: John Mortensen)

Dies sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot'

These are the Holy Ten Commandments

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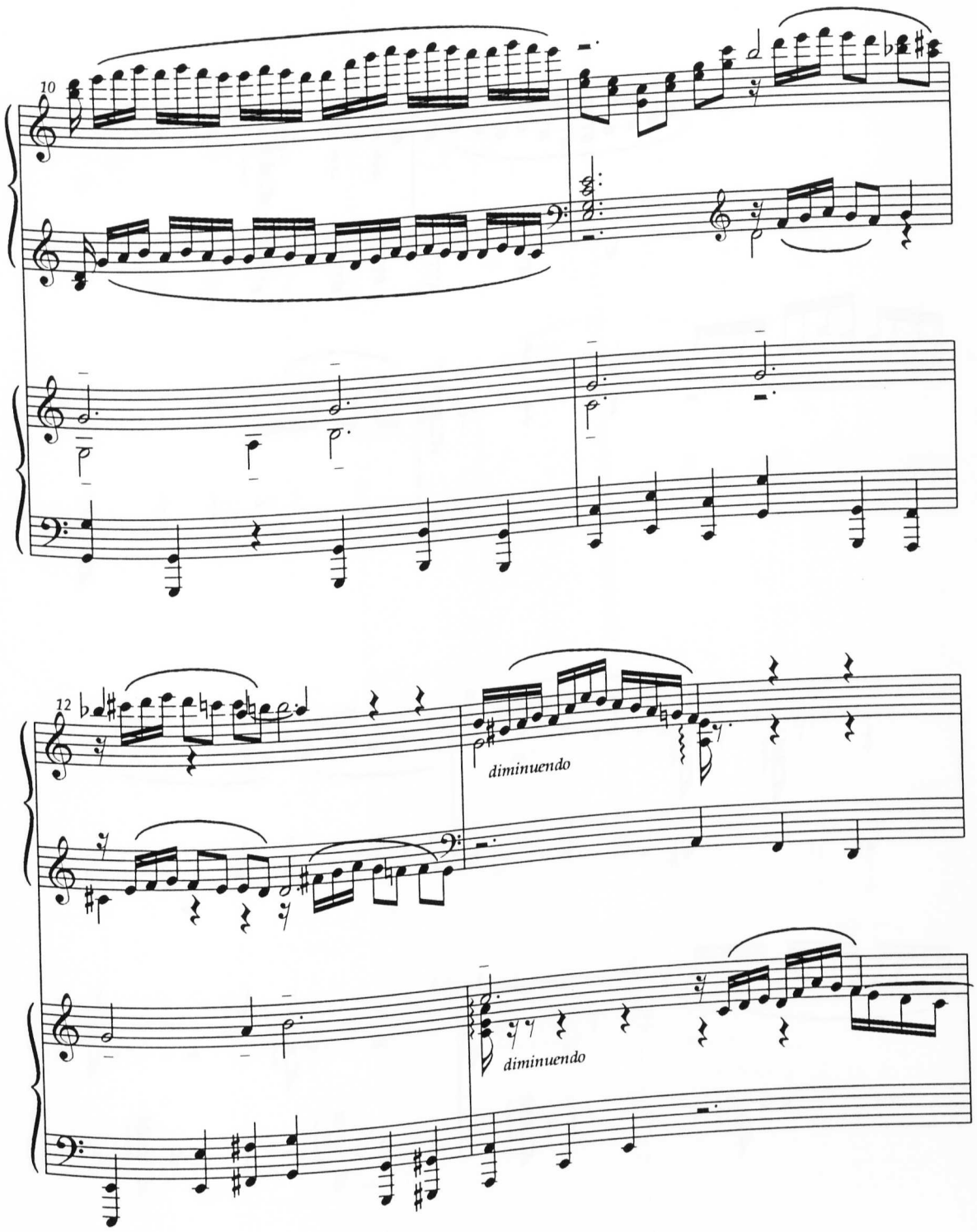
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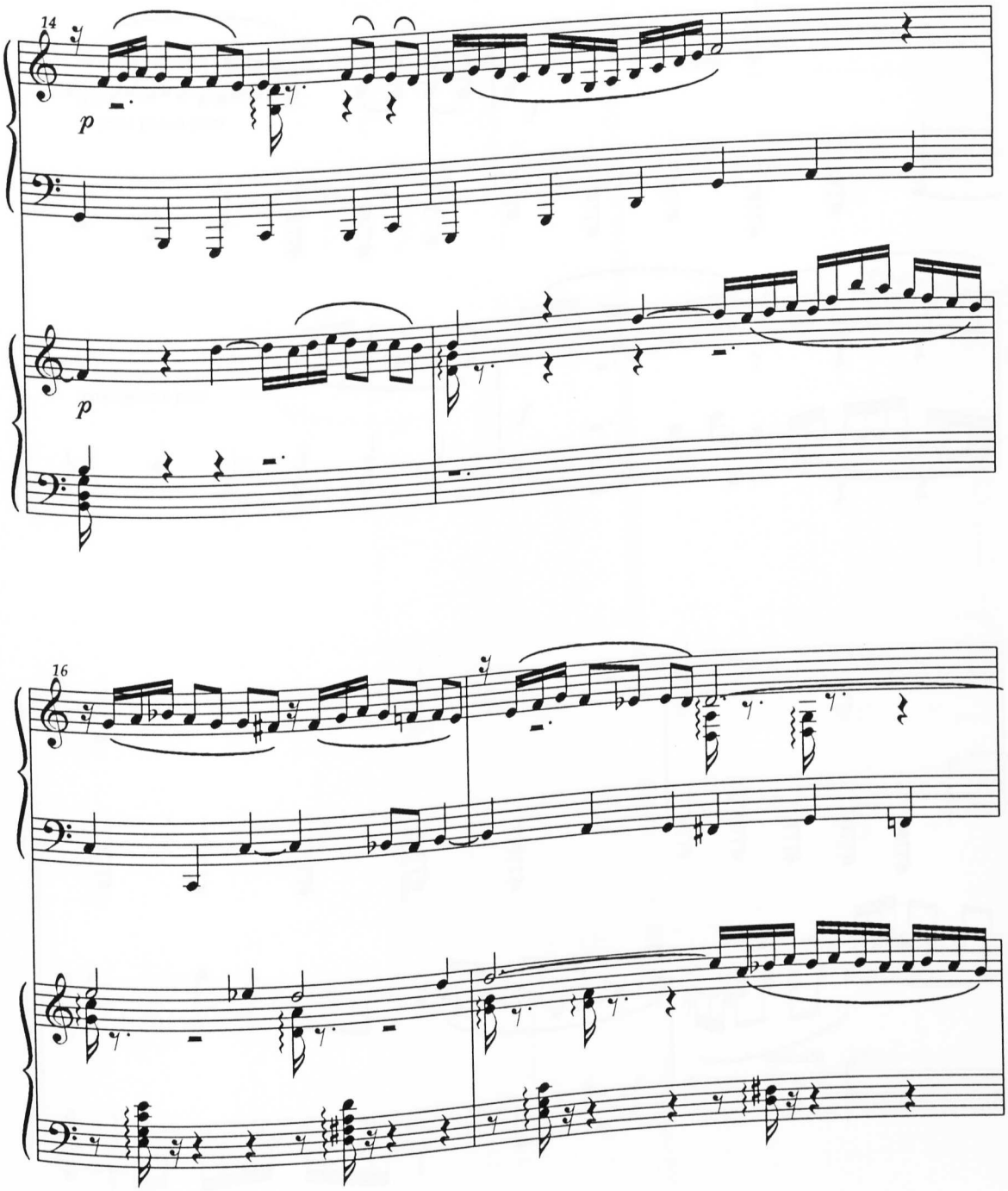
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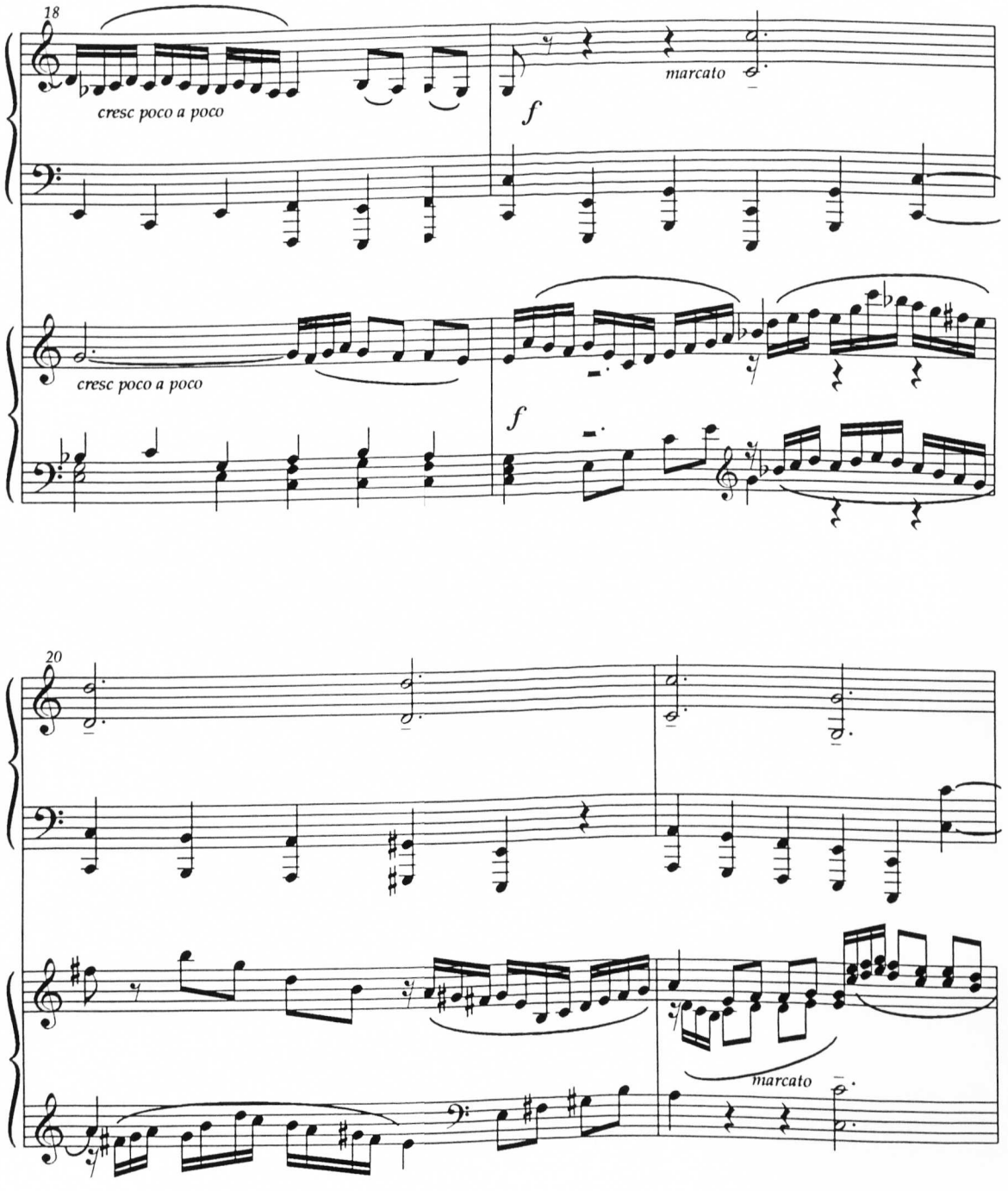
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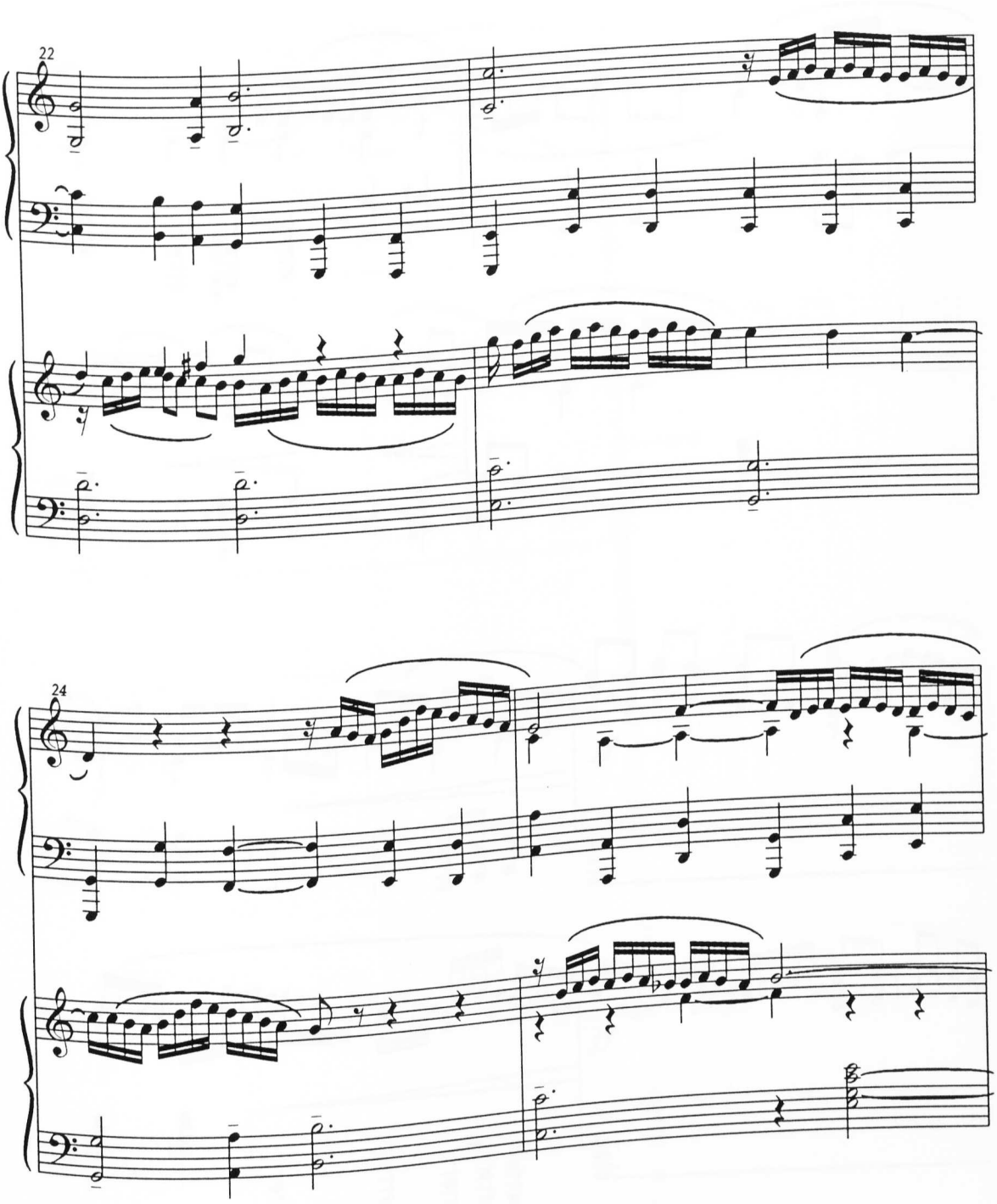
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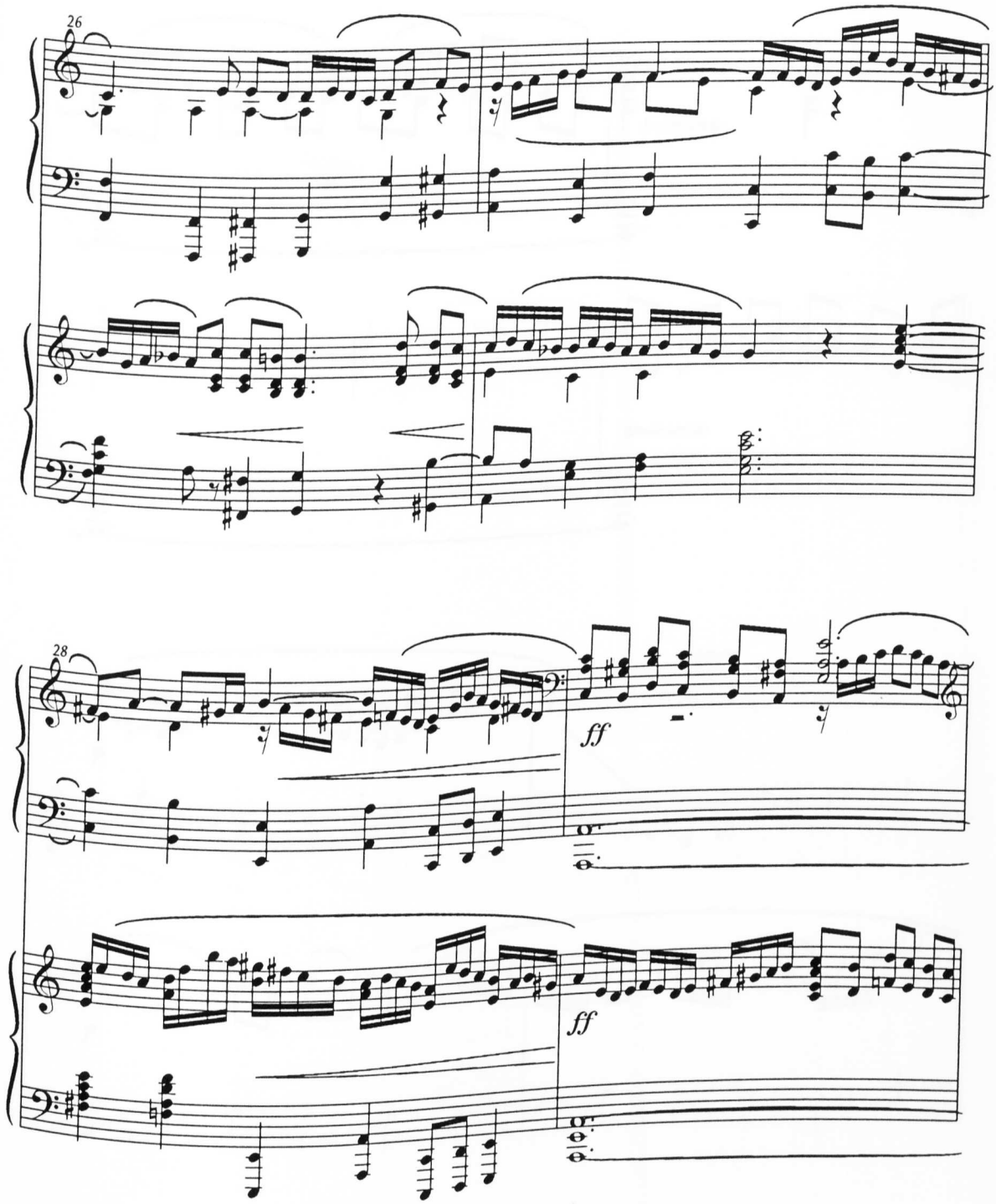
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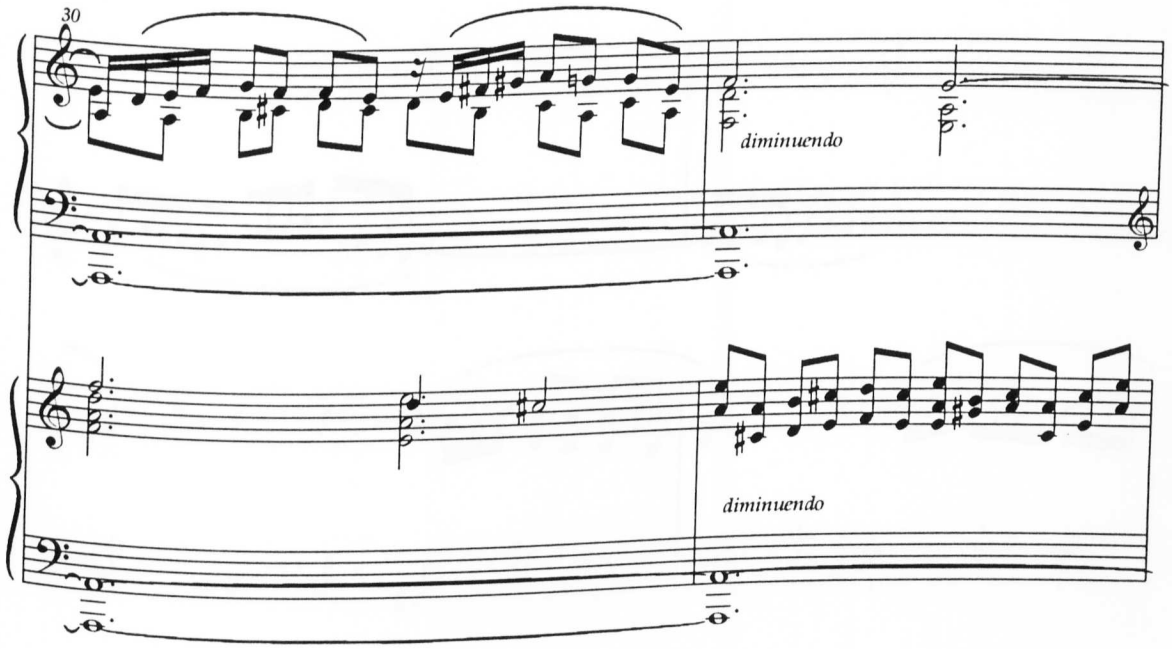
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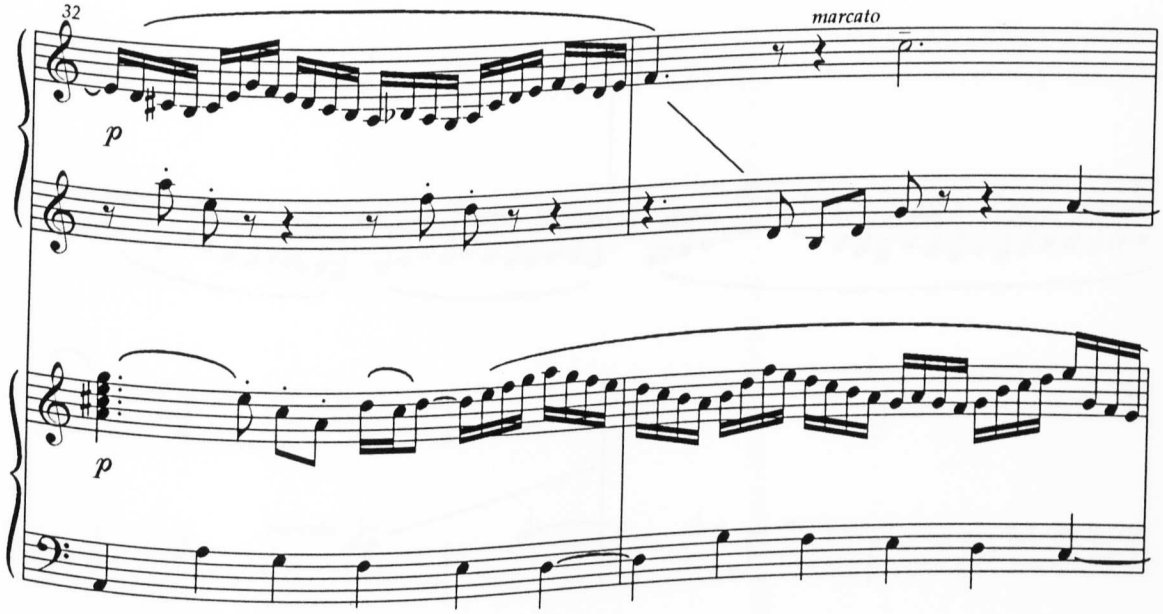
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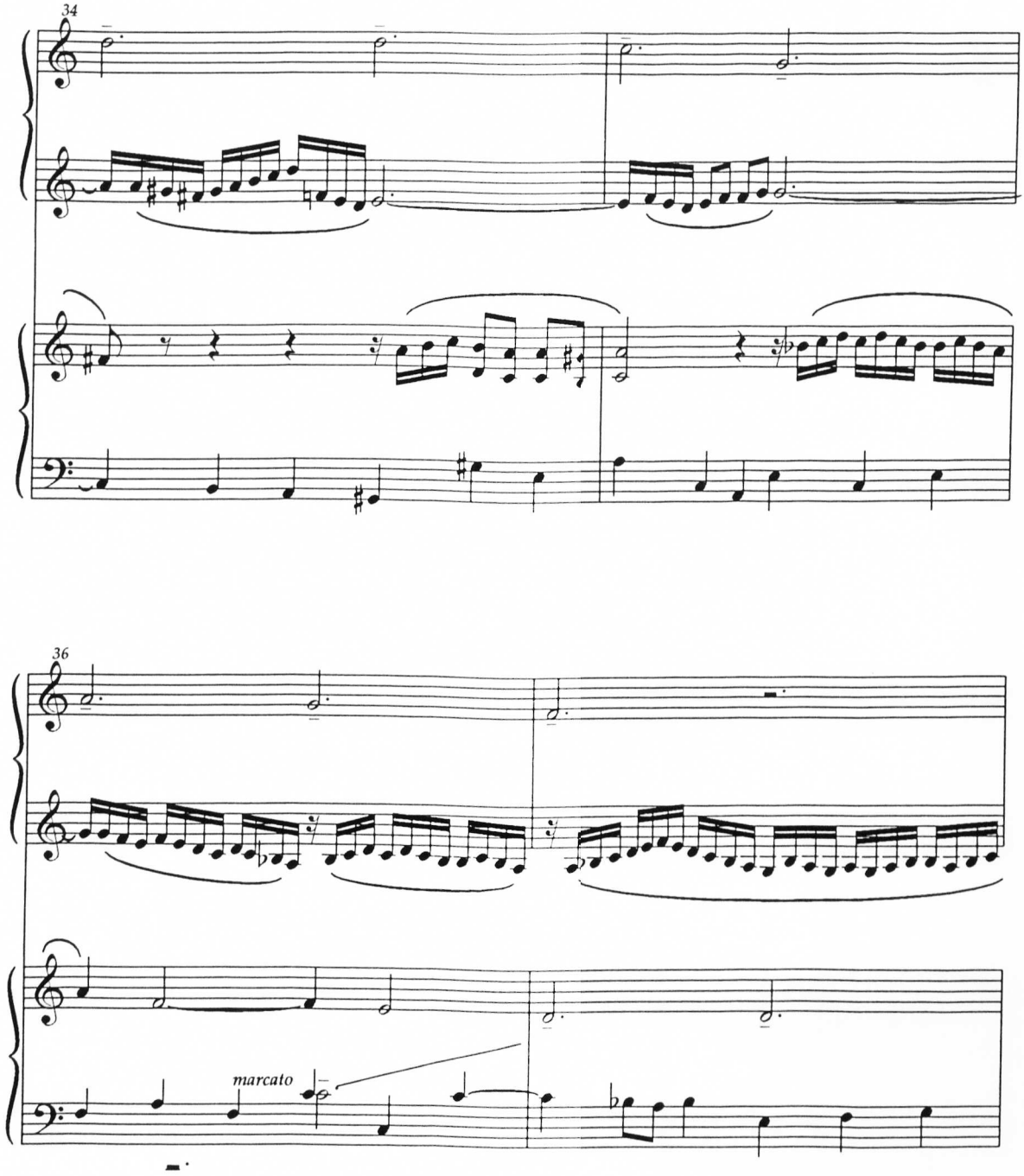
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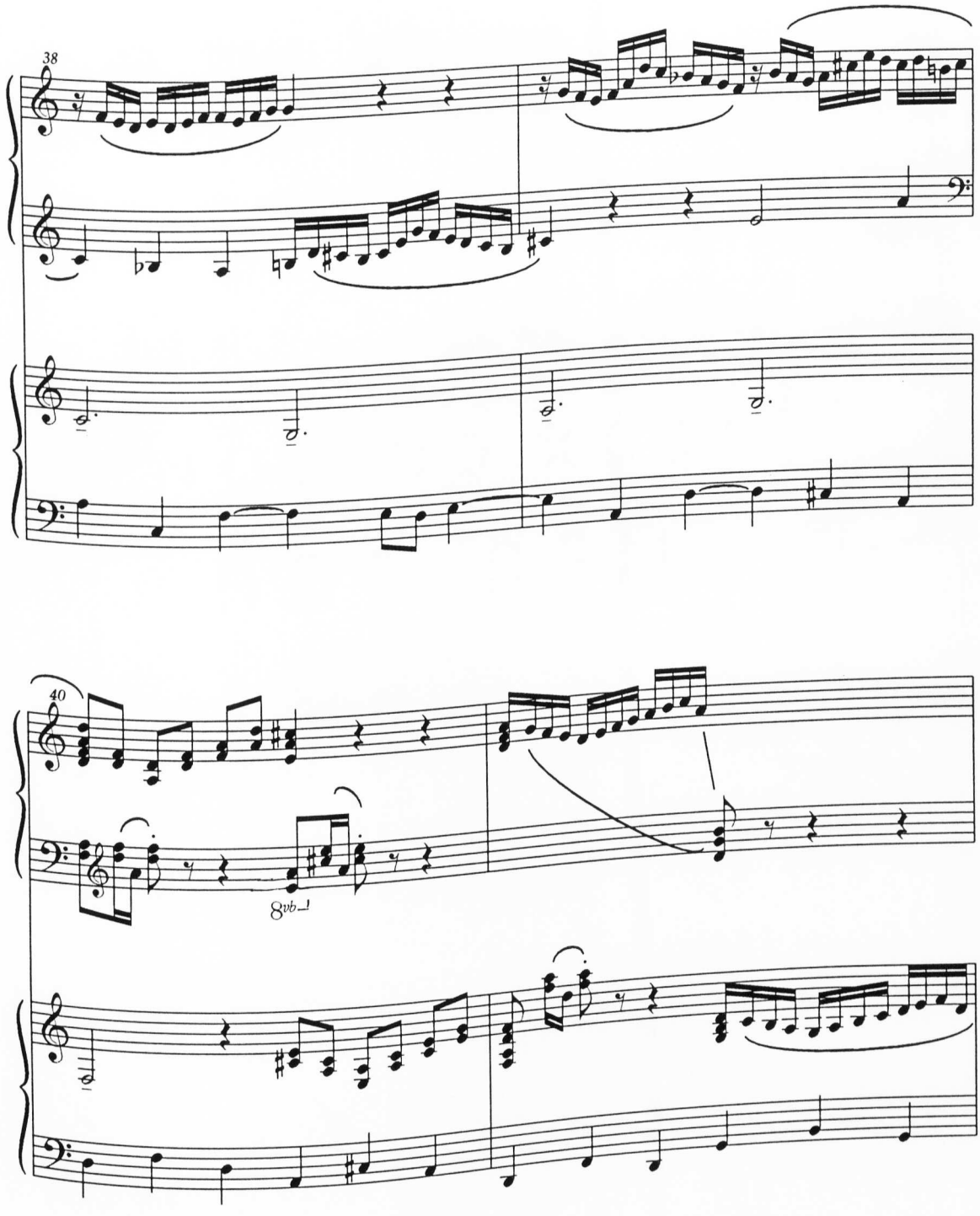
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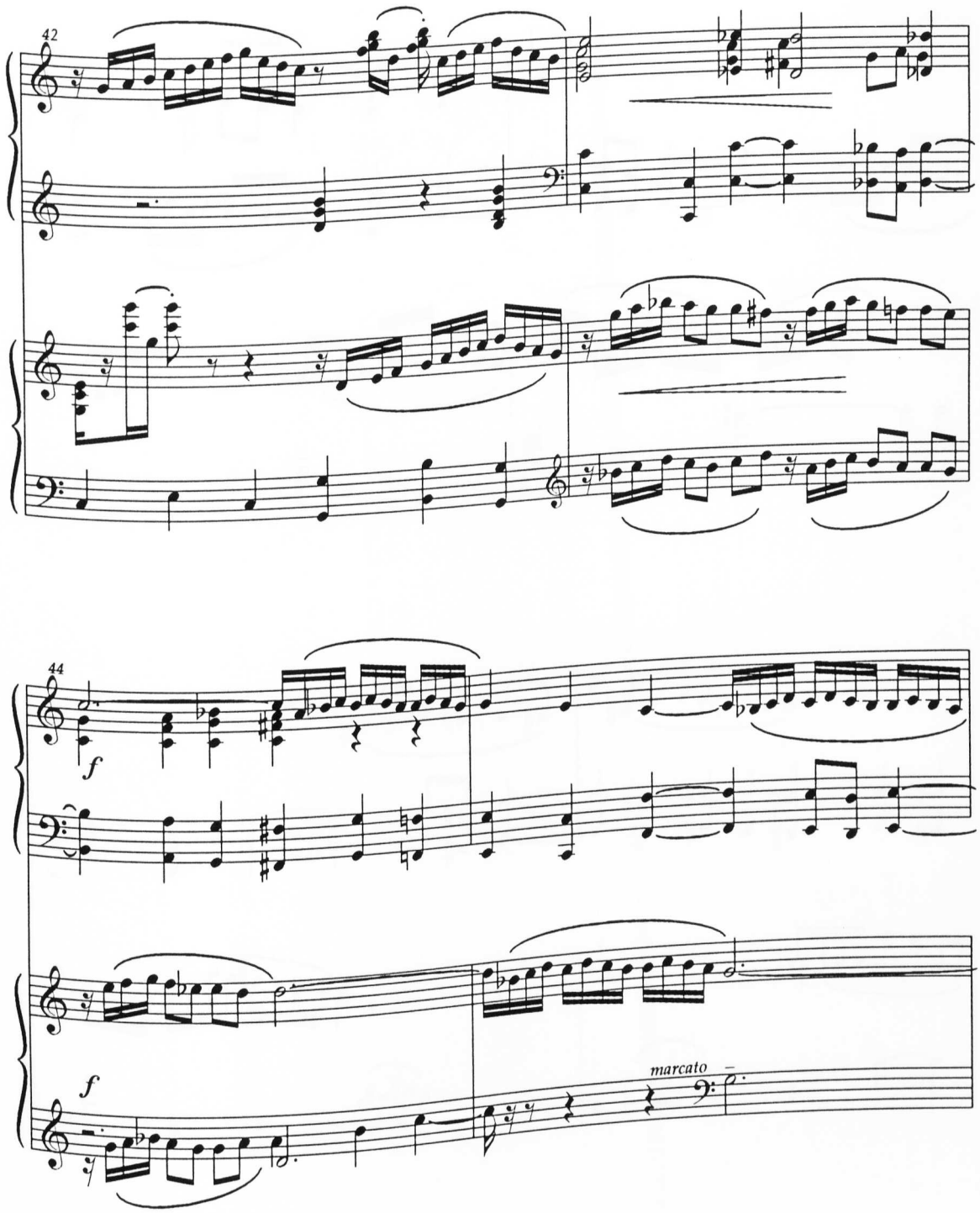
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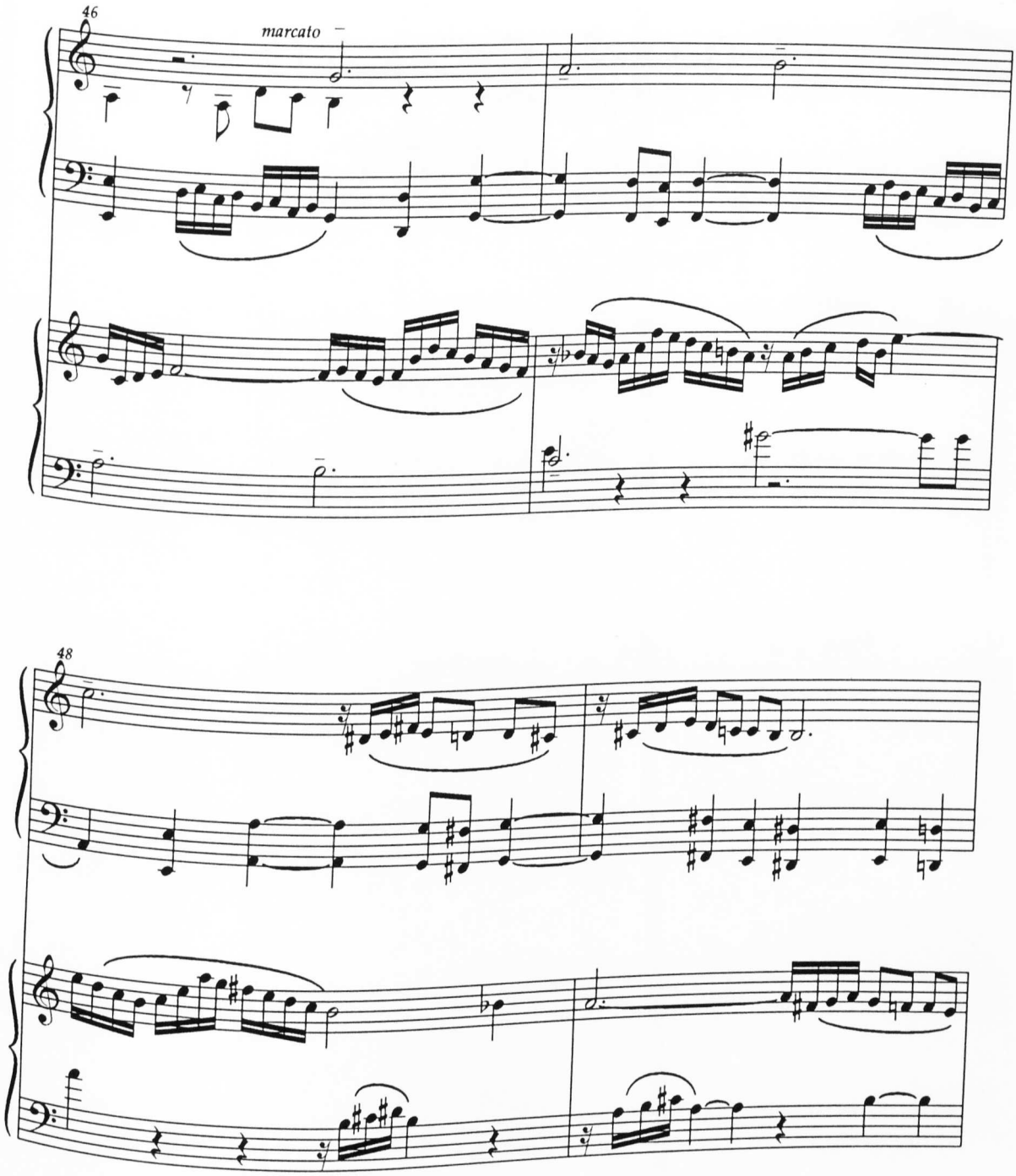
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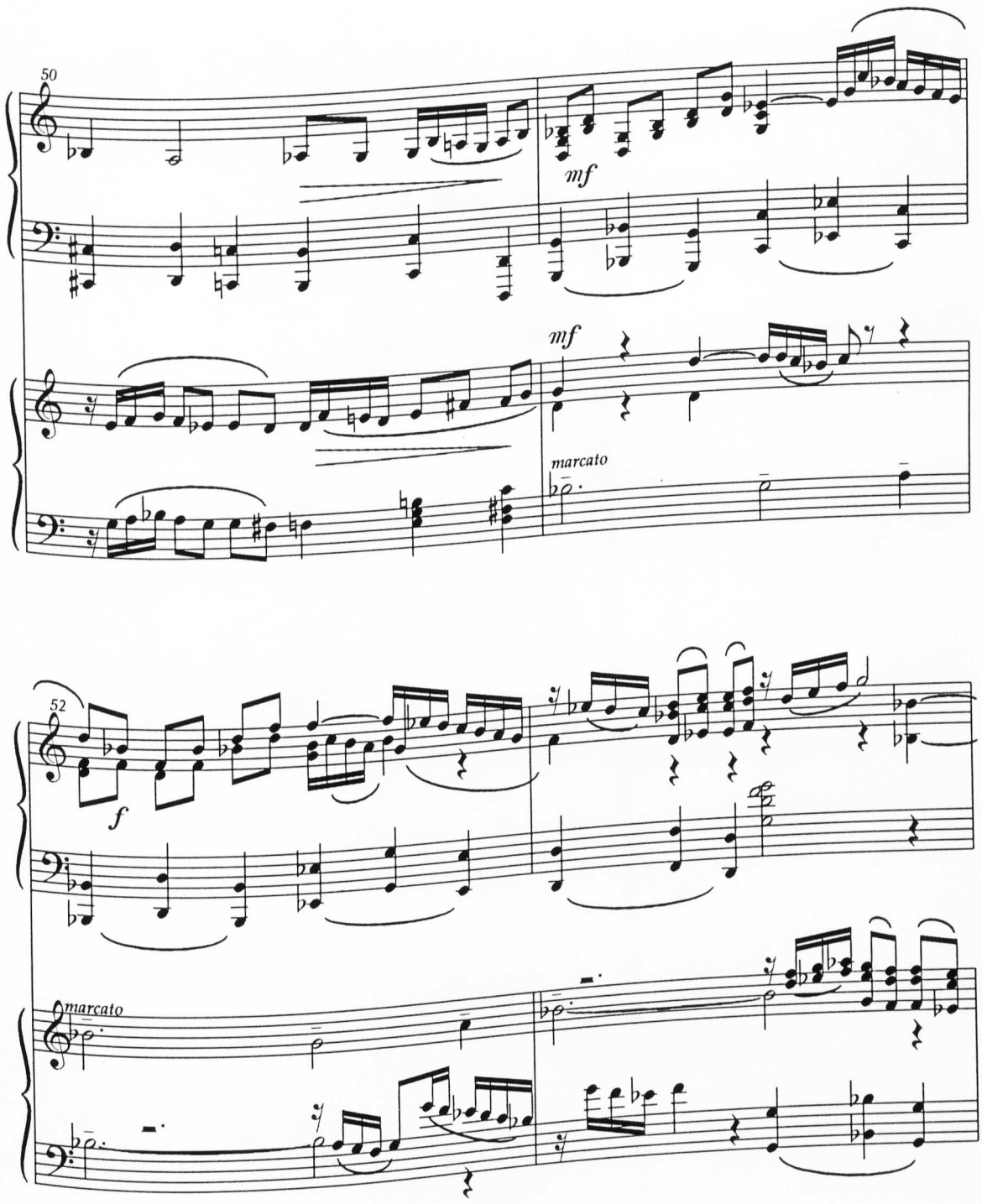
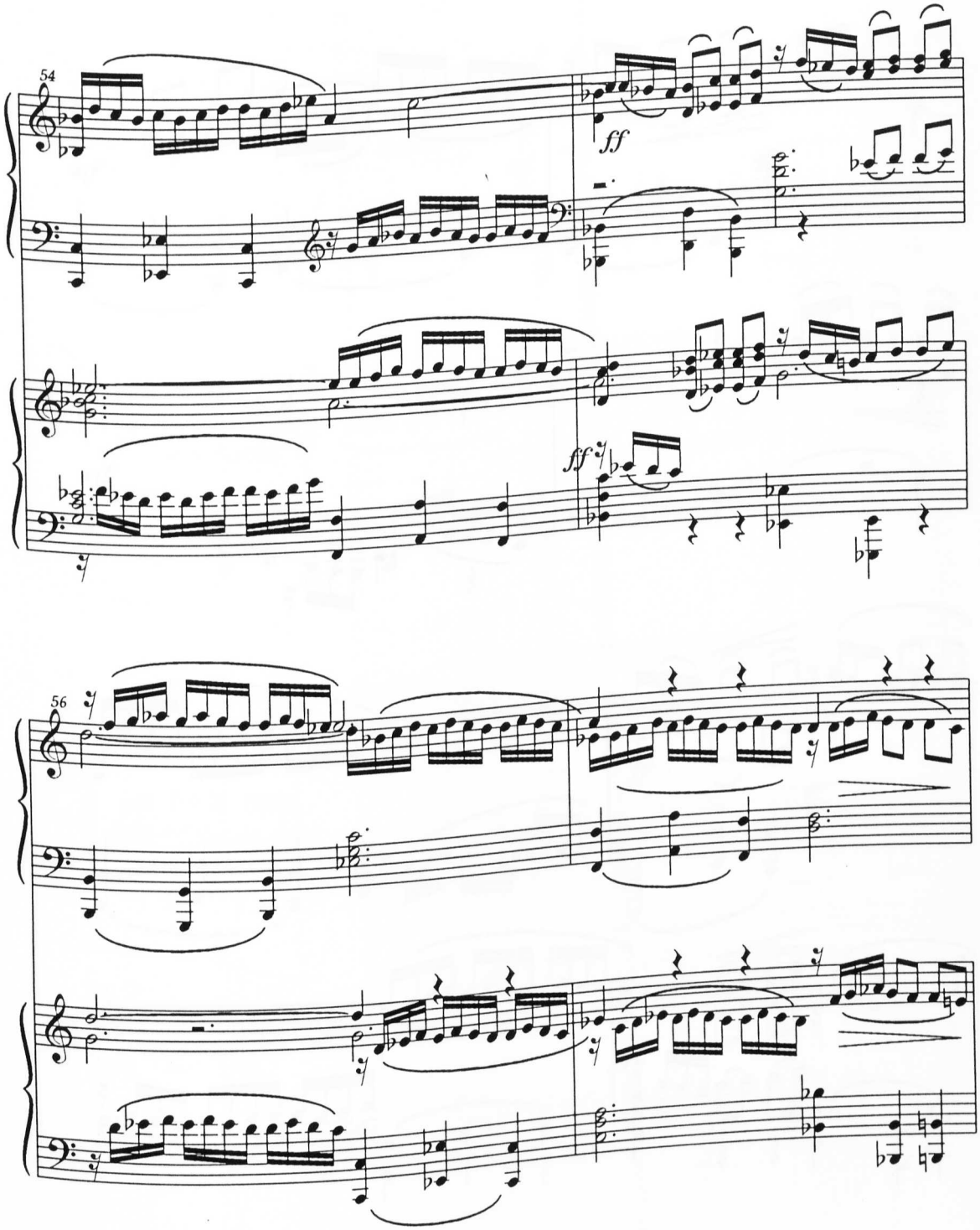
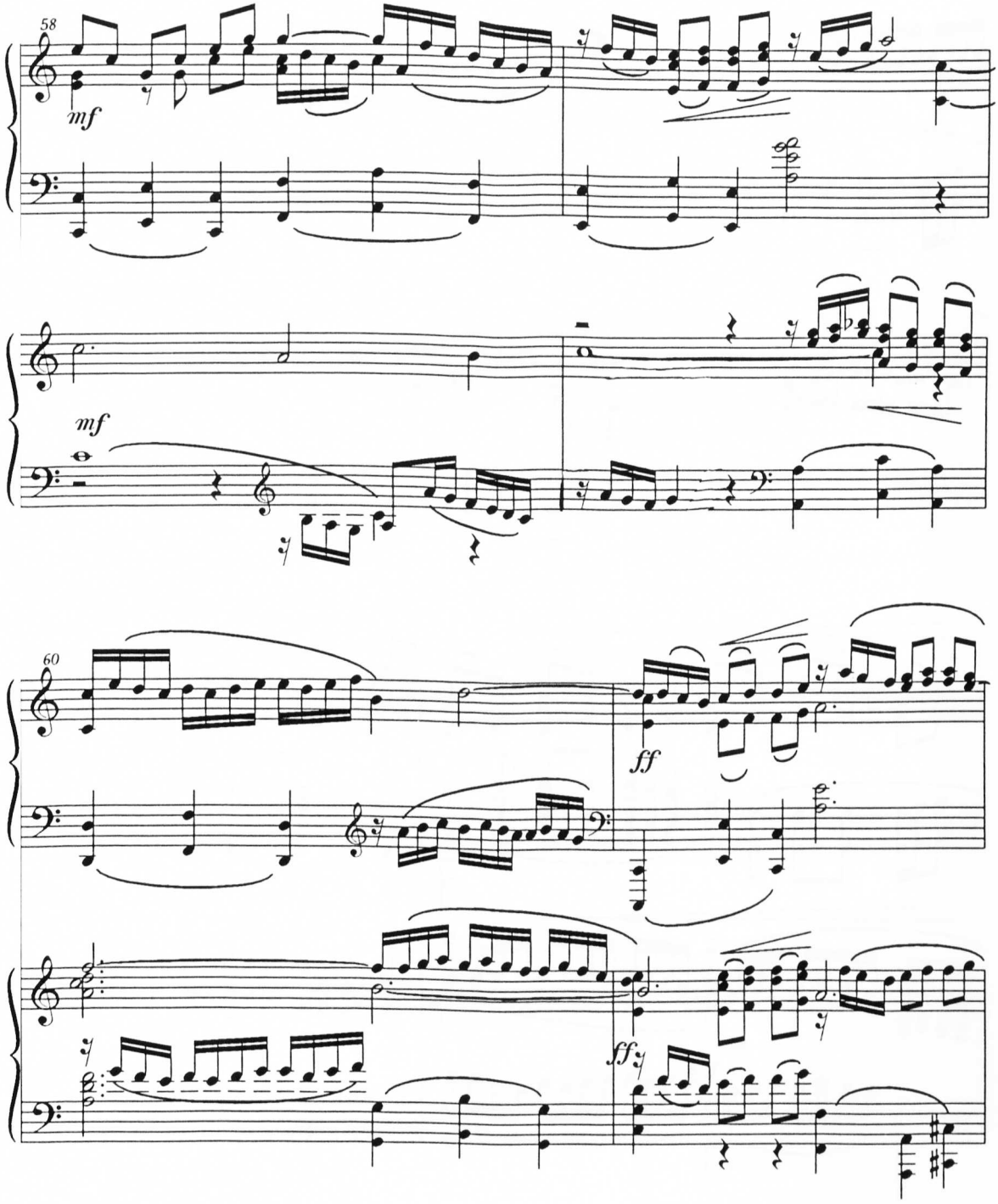
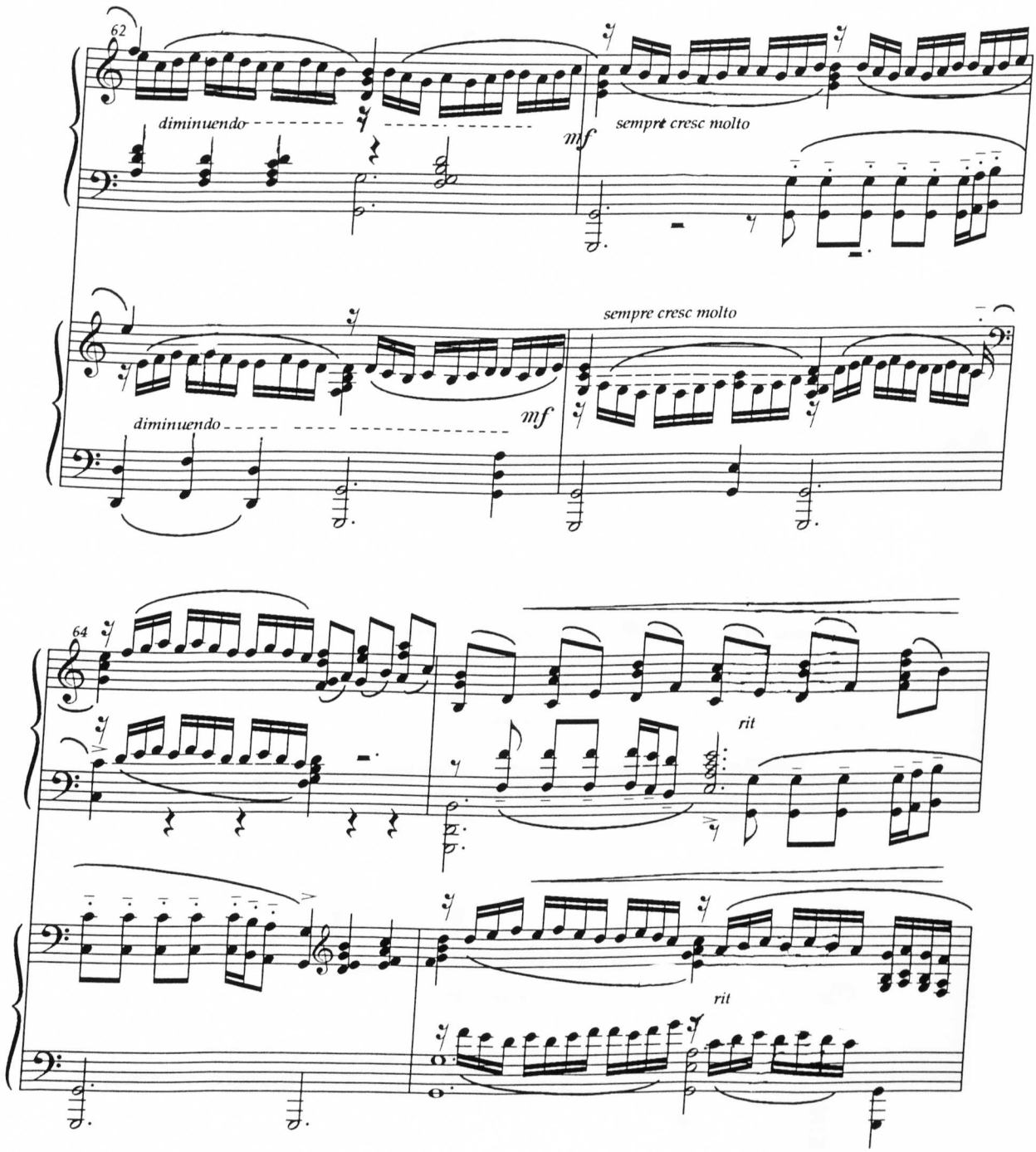
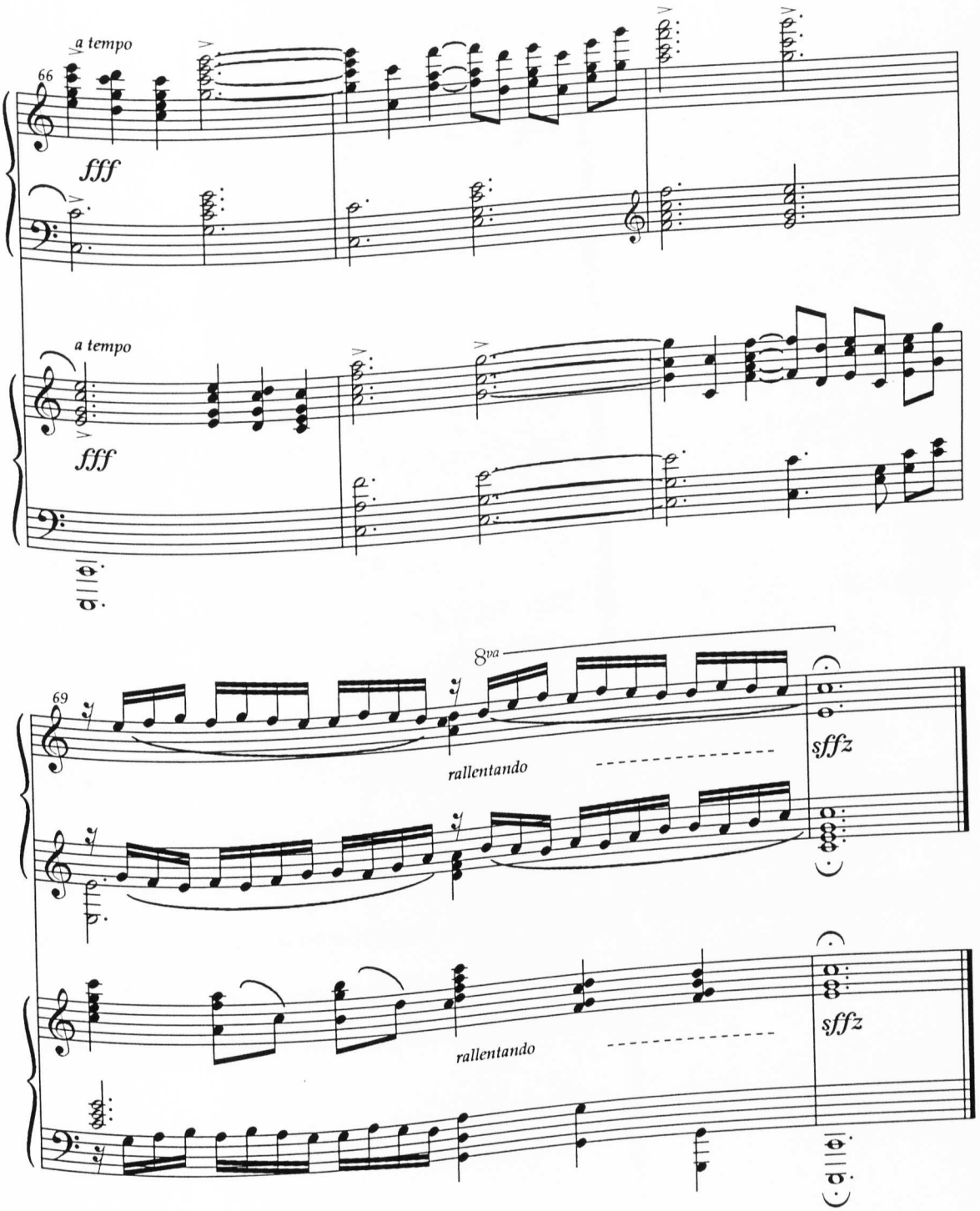
marcato
48


50
mf
mf
marcato
52
f
marcato


54
ff
ff
56


58
mf
mf
60
ff
ff


62
diminuendo
mf
sempre cresc molto
sempre cresc molto
diminuendo
mf
64
rit
rit


a tempo
66
fff
a tempo
fff
8va
69
rallentando
sffz
rallentando
sffz

Fughetta on *Dies sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot'*

BWV 679

The fughetta derives its subject from the cantus firmus *Dies sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot*, but the tune has undergone significant alteration in order to be fit for fugal treatment. The general idea of the original tune-- repeated notes followed by stepwise motion upward-- is preserved in the fugal version, although the phrase has been lengthened and certain embellishing chordal leaps added.

The subject recalls its textual reference; Bach causes the tune to last for ten beats before the answer appears in the voice above, a reference to the Ten Commandments which the text celebrates. This is the case with each subsequent entry: ten beats long.

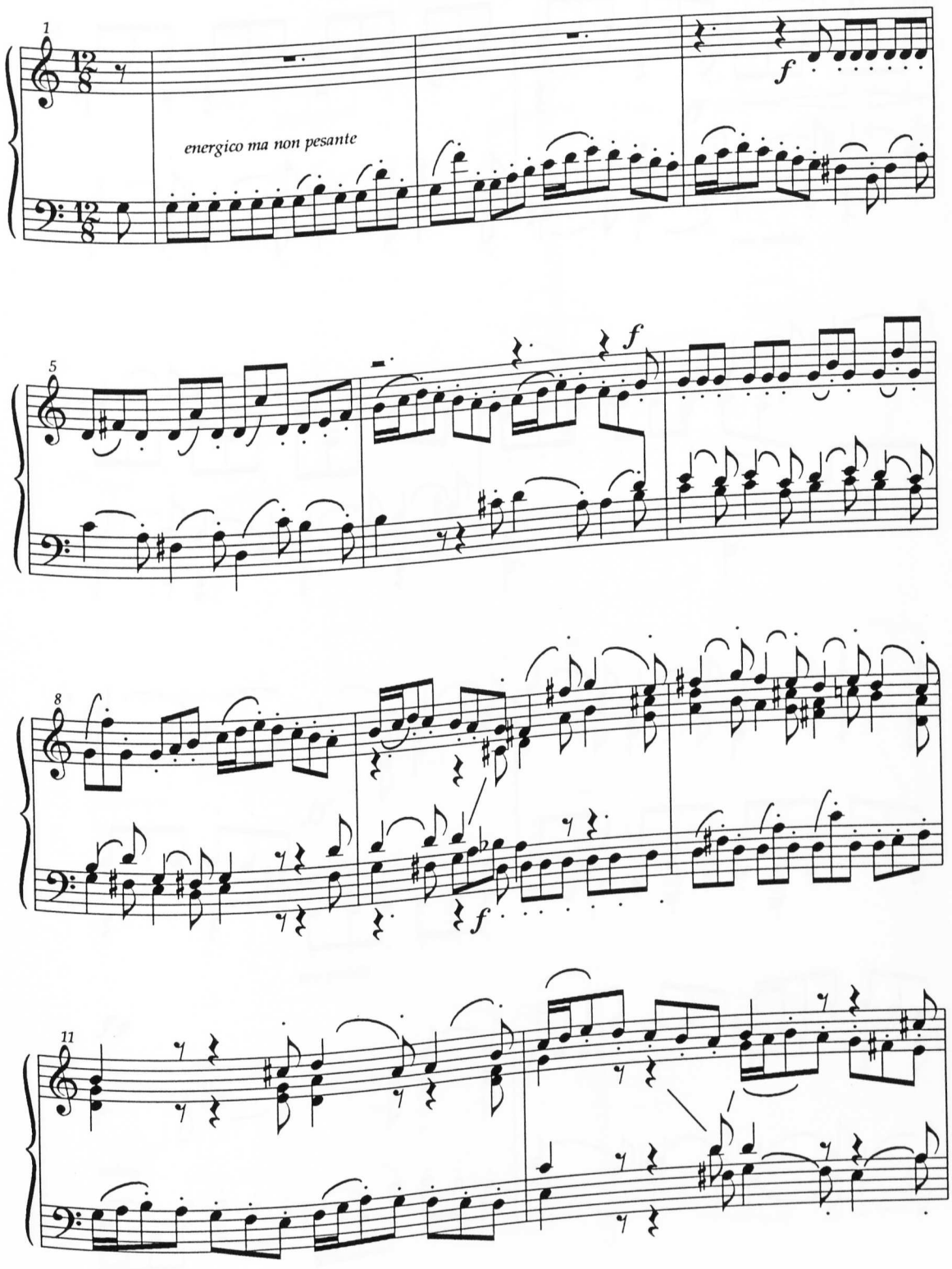
This composition makes great use of both the *perpetuum mobile* of the theme's repeated notes as well as the quarter-eighth pattern inherent in twelve-eight time. Later in the composition the latent sixteenths of the subject receive some development, adding velocity to the musical fabric.

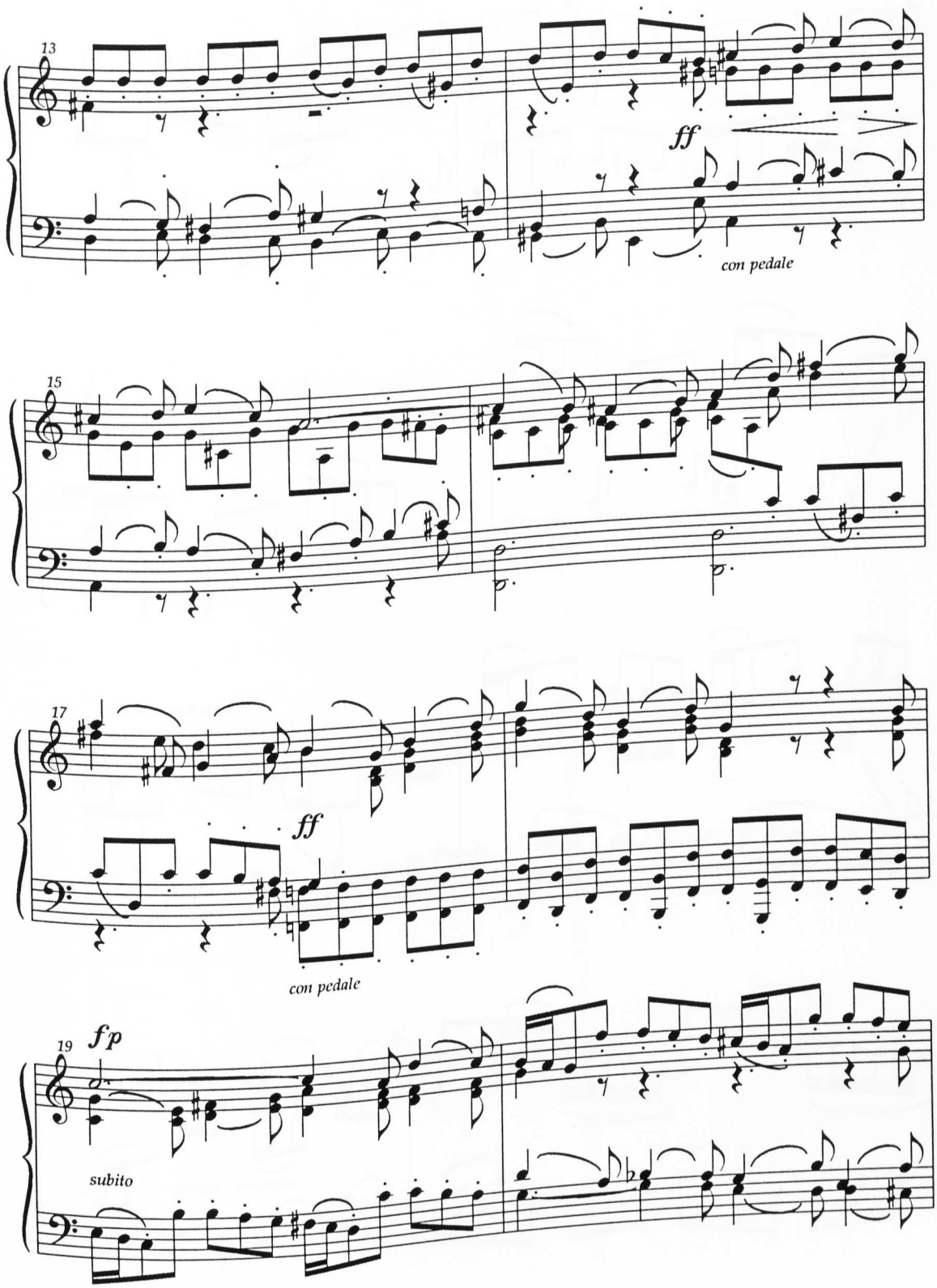
In transcription much articulation has been suggested, most especially that the subject be treated with an energetic and light staccato touch. Two appearances of the cantus firmus, in the bass, have been placed in octaves.

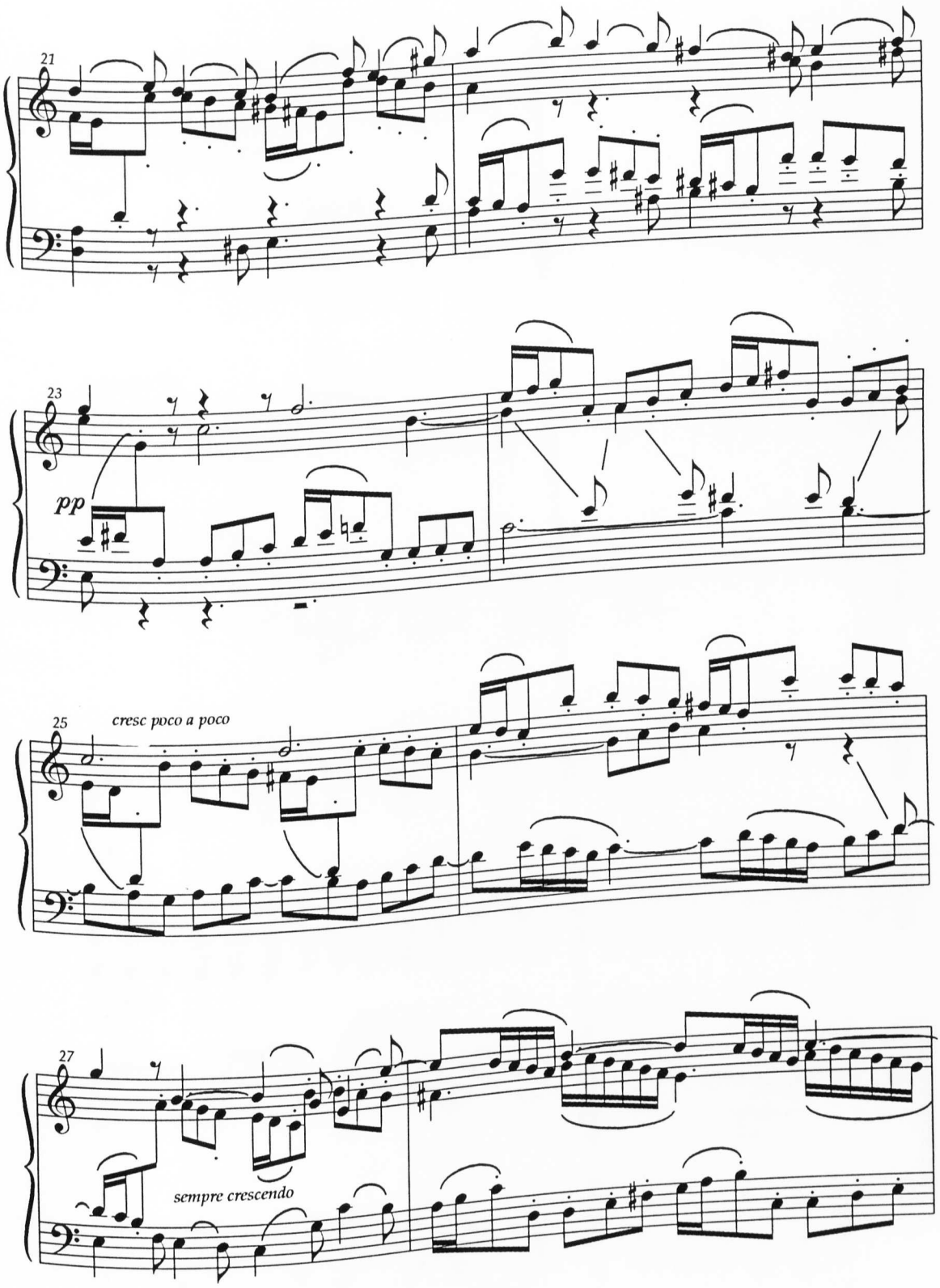
The text and translation may be found in this volume with the two-piano arrangement of *Dies sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot'*.

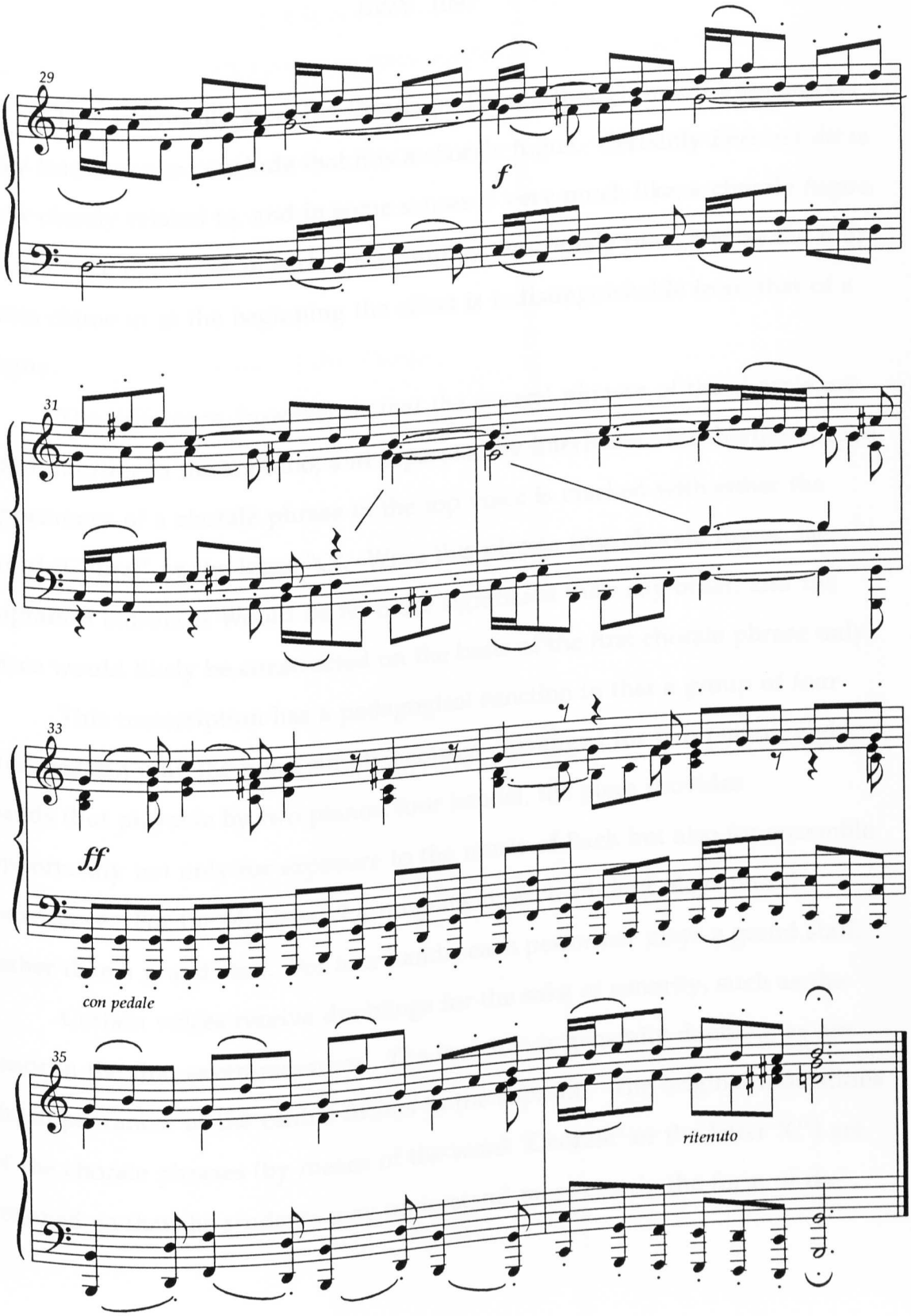
Fughetta on "Dies sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot'

These are the Holy Ten Commandments




13
ff
con pedale
15
17
ff
con pedale
19
fp
subito


21
23
pp
25
cresc poco a poco
27
sempre crescendo


29
f
31
33
ff
con pedale
35
ritenuto

Ehre sei dir, Christe, der du leidest Not

BWV 1097

This is actually a cantus firmus prelude, although initial impressions may lead some to conclude that it is a chorale fugue. Certainly *Ehre sei dir* is very closely related to, and in some senses is very much like, a chorale fugue. Most of the entrances in each voice employ the chorale tune, and as the four parts chime in at the beginning the effect is indistinguishable from that of a fugue.

The difference, however, is that the several phrases of the chorale are used in order in the soprano, and separated by interludes. Furthermore, each appearance of a chorale phrase in the top voice is marked with either the word "Choral" or the letter "C". Were this piece a true chorale fugue, the soprano's entrances would be no more significant than any other, and the piece would likely be constructed on the basis of the first chorale phrase only.

This transcription has a pedagogical function in that a group of four students can play the piece simultaneously. Arranged for two pianos, eight hands (but playable by two pianos, four hands), the piece provides opportunity not only for exposure to the music of Bach but also for ensemble experience. For the eight-hand arrangement, each student plays one clef rather than a grand staff. For four hands, each performer plays a grand staff.

Certain voices receive doublings for the sake of sonority, such as the tenor in the first seven measures. The bass line is generally doubled, as are the appearances of the cantus firmus in the soprano. The original indications of the chorale phrases (by means of the word "Chorale" or the letter "C") are retained so that the students may understand more clearly the form of the

piece.

Advanced technique is not necessary for the performance of the piece, and the octaves which appear in some voices can be divided between the hands of the performer. An ability to negotiate tied rhythms in necessary. Above all, the student will need solid skills in counting. While none of the rhythms is unduly complex, the presence of four student performers could easily result in chaos if strict and accurate counting is not maintained.

Ehre sei dir, Christe,
der du littest Not
an dem Stamm des Kreuzes
für uns den bittern Tod,
und herrschest mit dem Vater in Ewigkeit,
hilf uns armen Sündern zu der Seligkeit.
Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison.

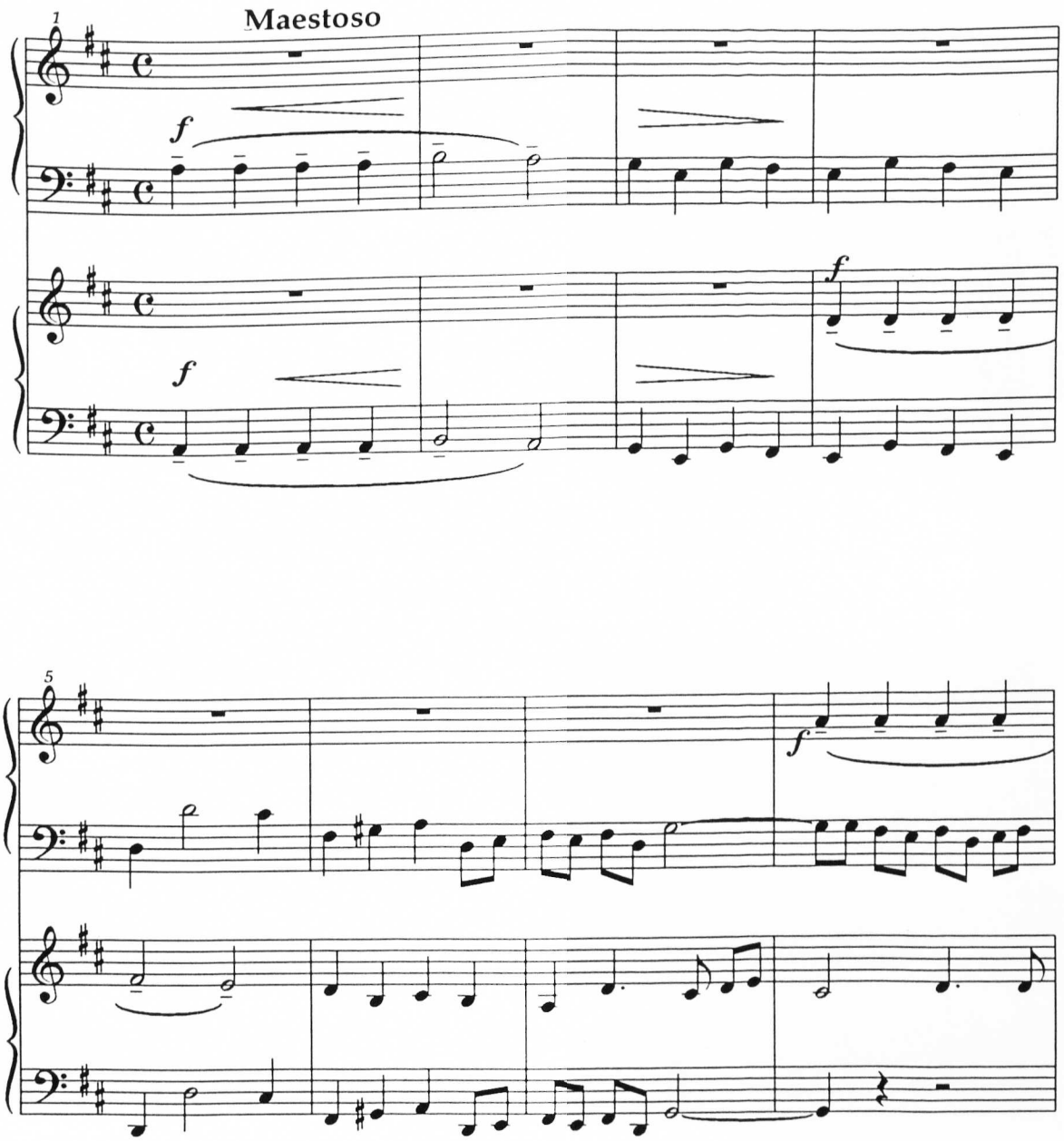
(Anonymous)

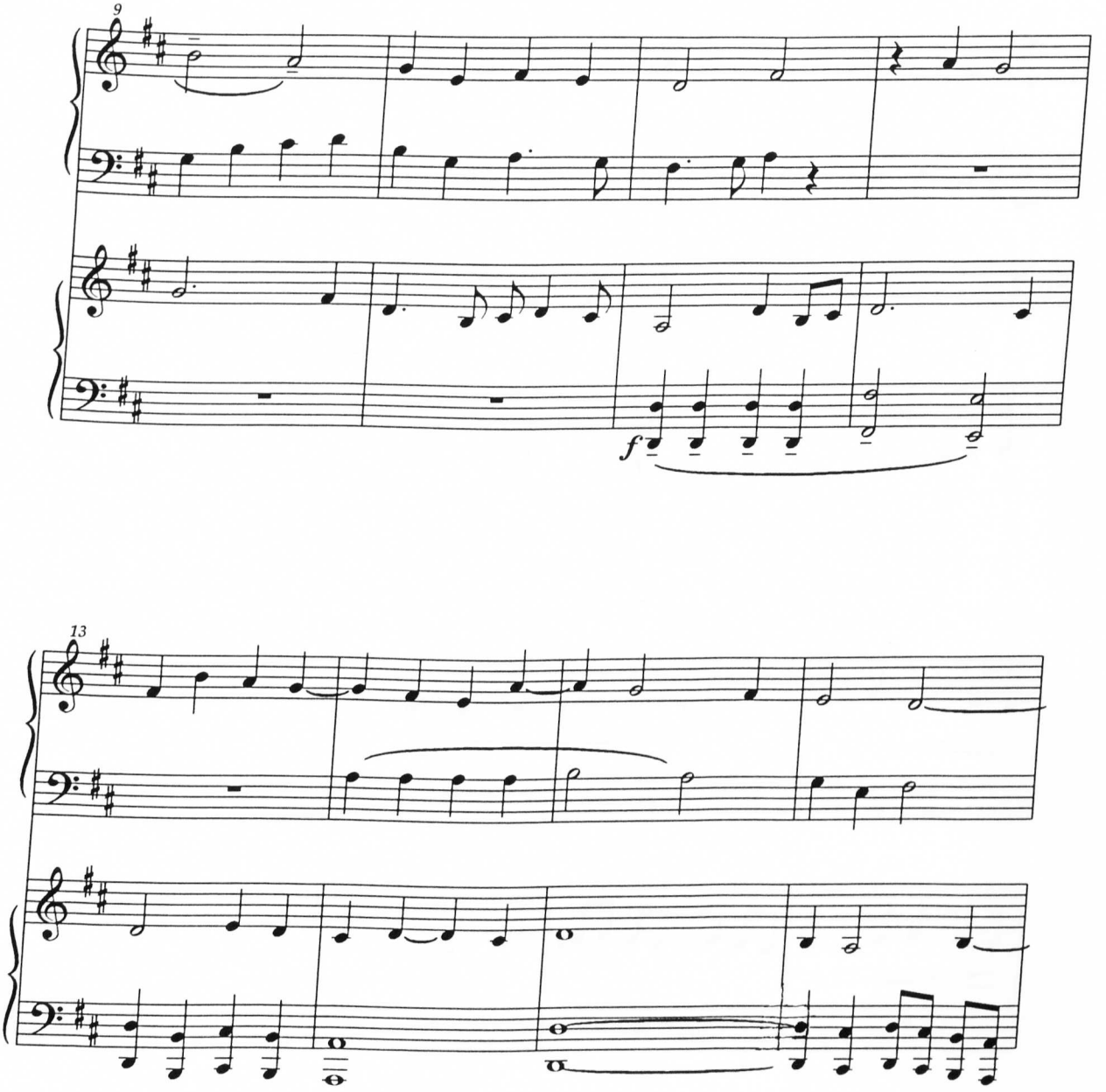
Honor be to you, Christ,
Who suffered the necessity
Of the cross
And tasted death for us,
And who rules with the Father in eternity;
Help us poor sinners to blessedness.
Lord have mercy. Christ have mercy.

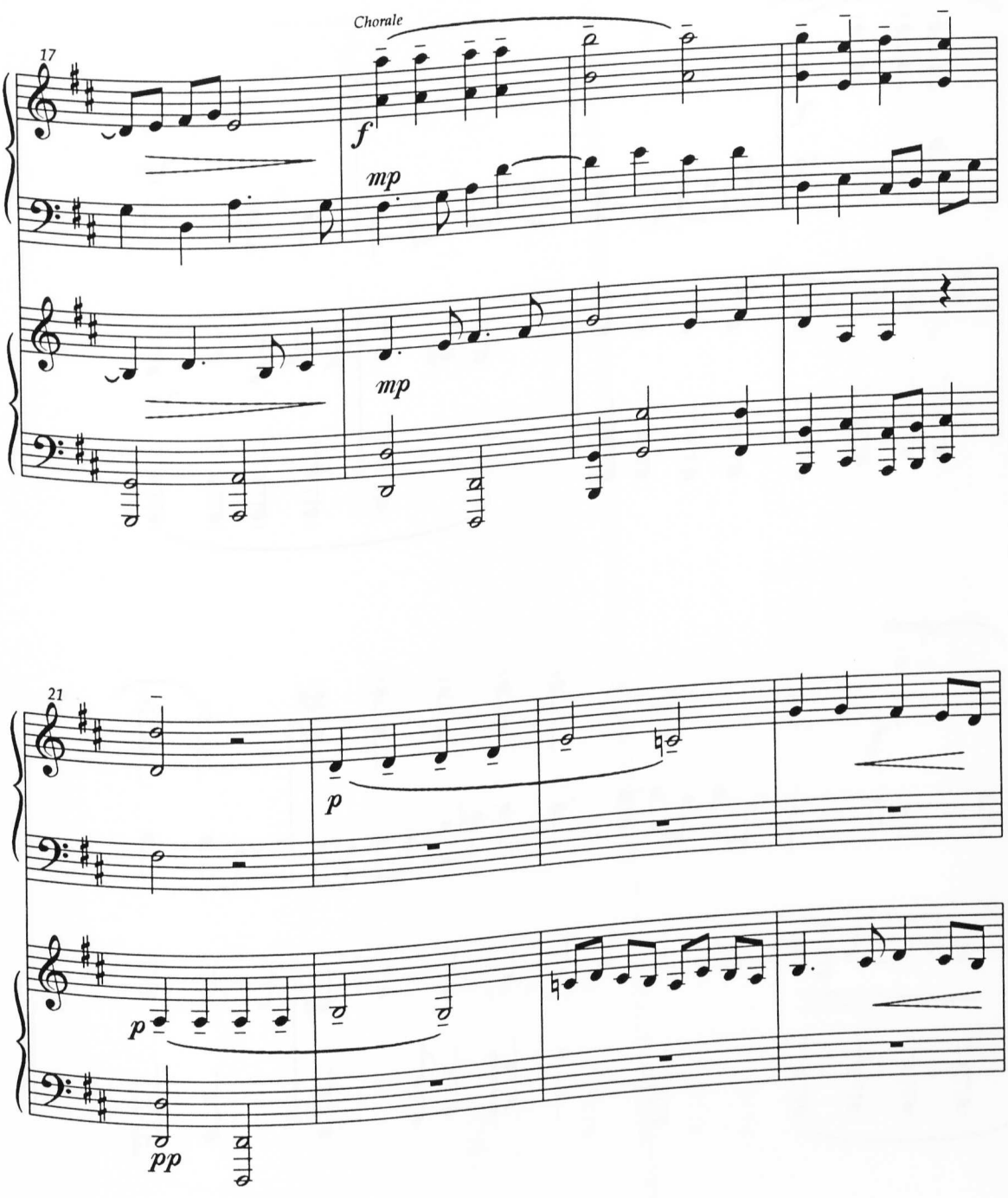
(Translation: John Mortensen)

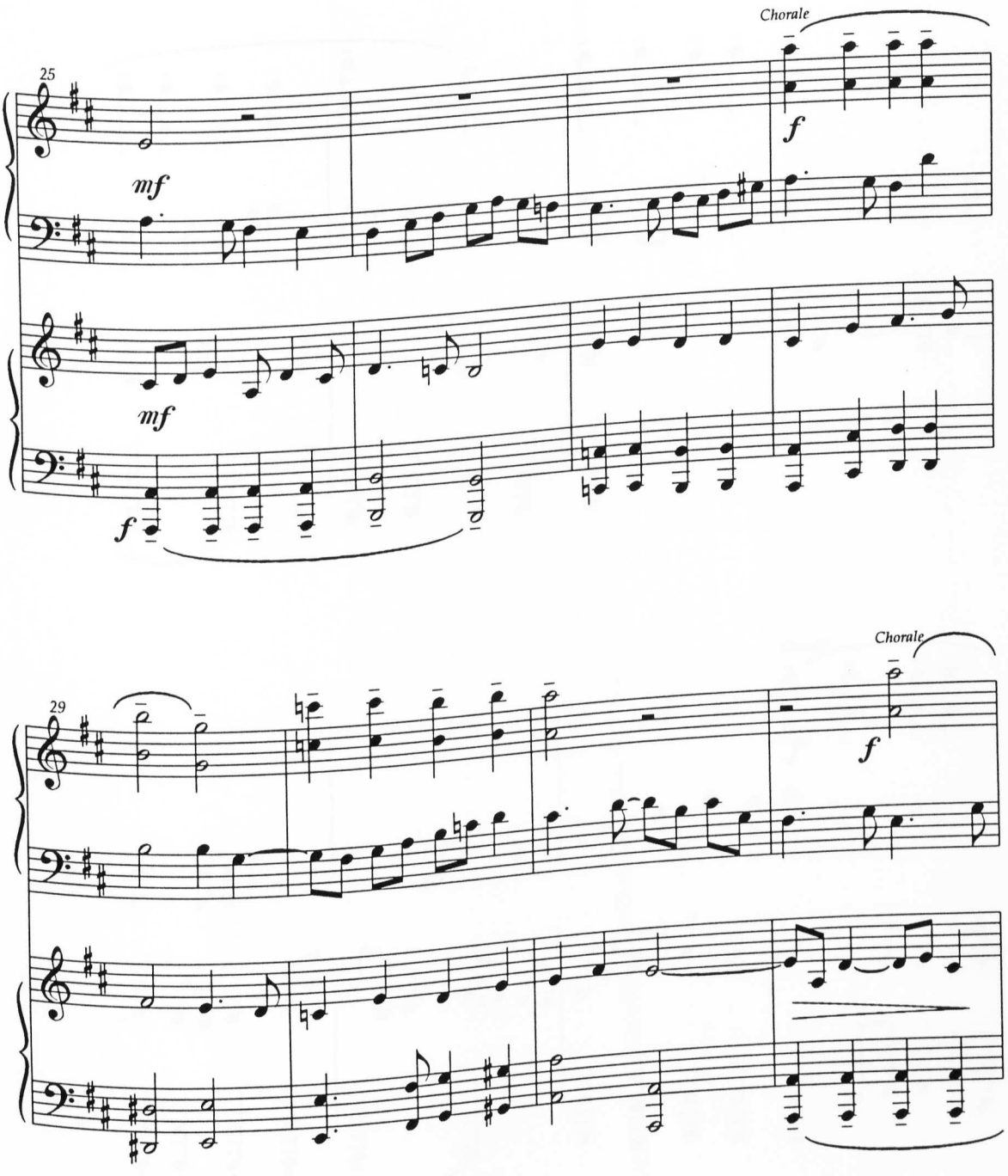
Ehre sei dir, Christe

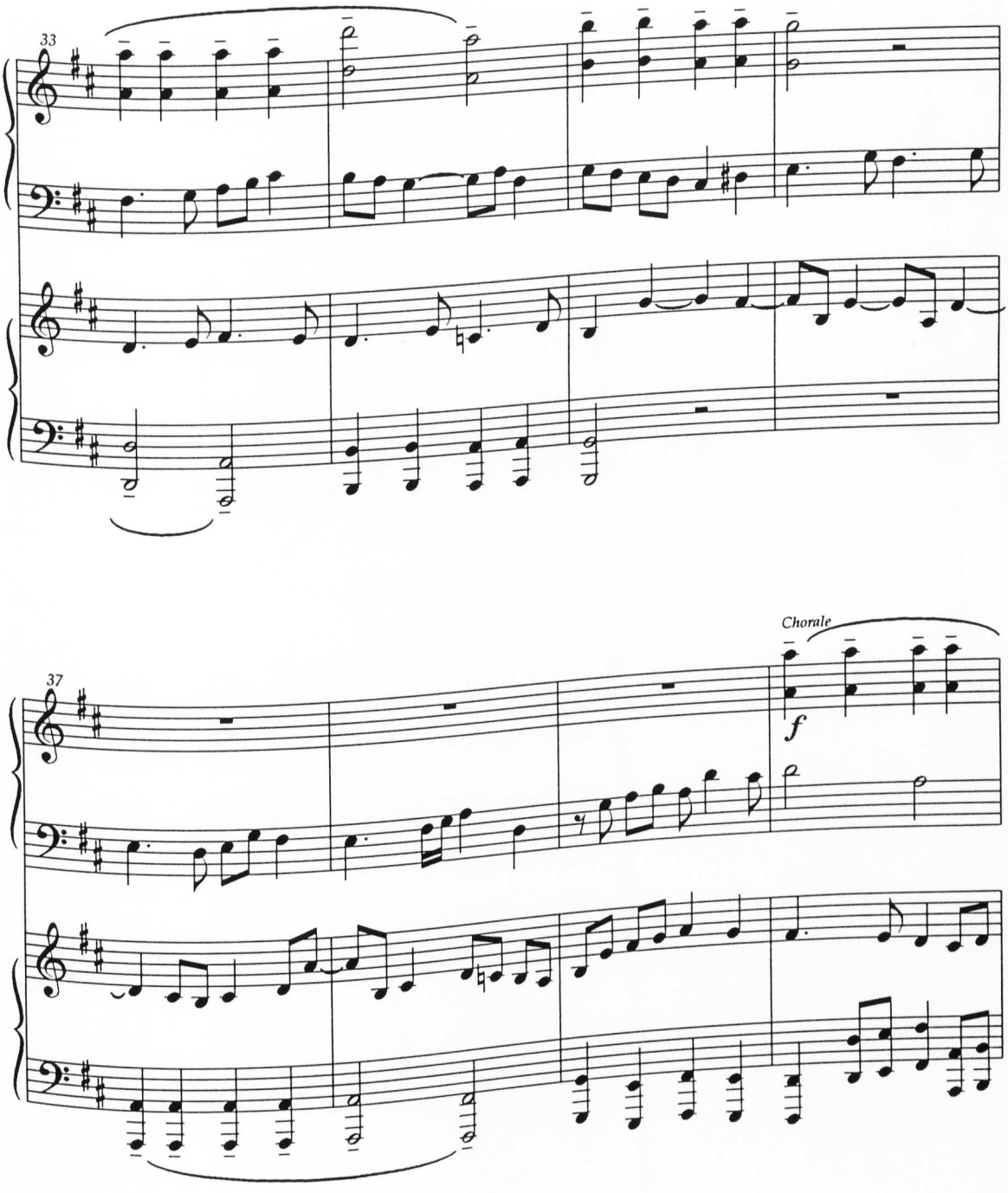
Honor be to You, Christ

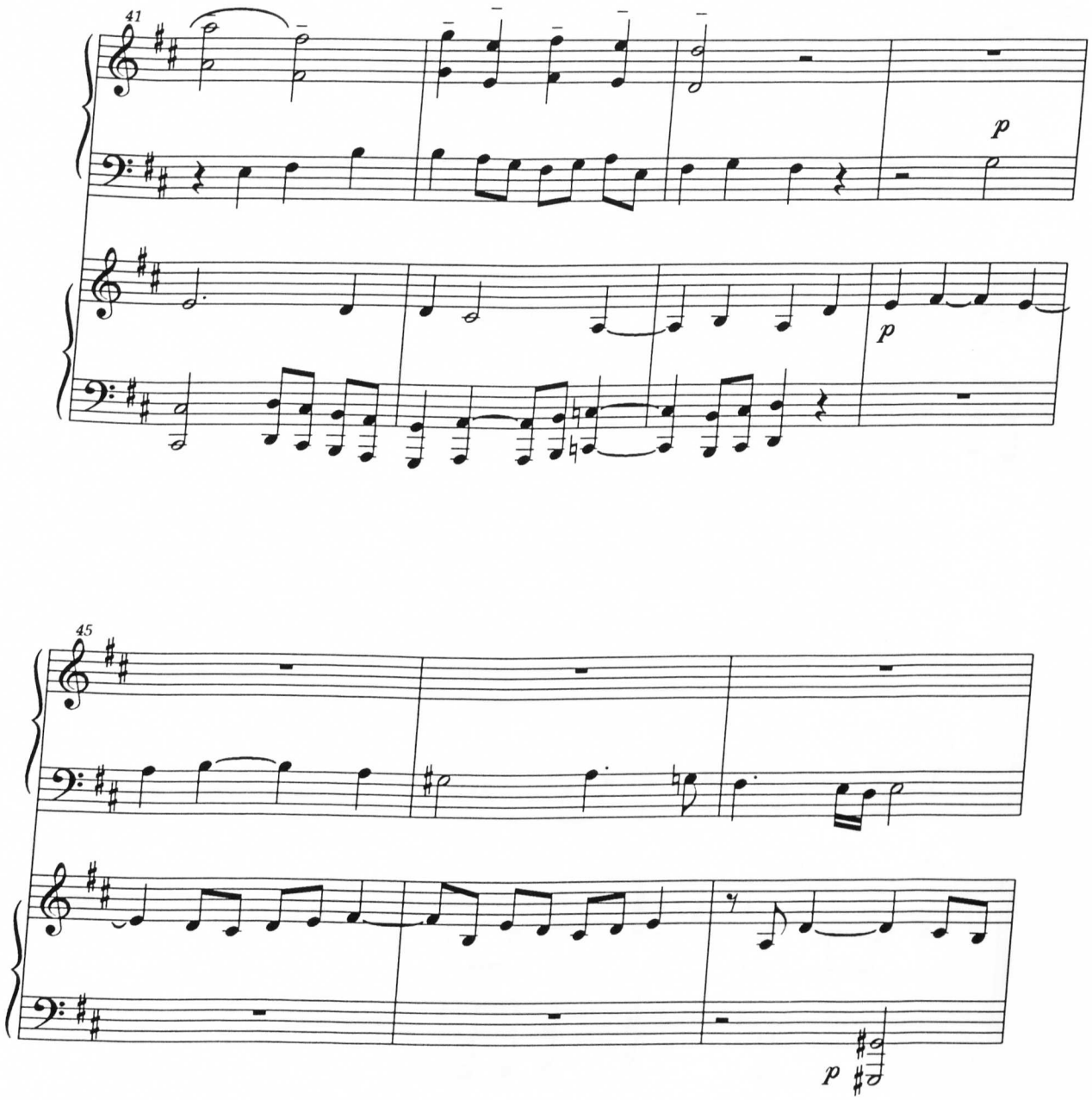


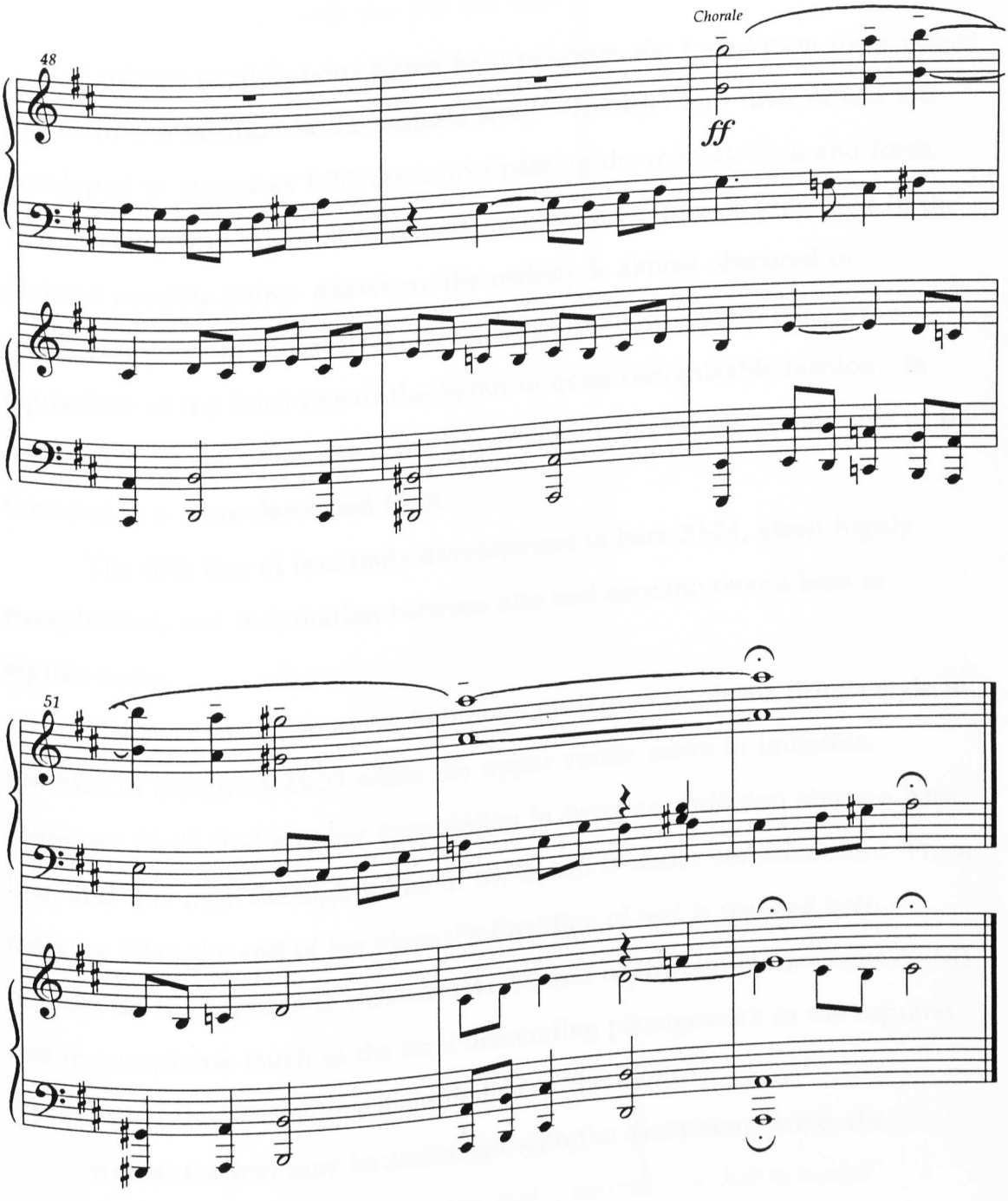

9
f
13


Chorale
17
f
mp
mp
21
p
p
pp


Chorale
25
mf
f
mf
f
Chorale
29
f


33
37
Chorale
f


41
p
p
45
p


Chorale
48
ff
51

Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott

BWV 720

Luther's most famous hymn here provides the foundation for a rather free-form composition in the fantasia style. The first four lines of text are developed in measures 1-20, the voices passing the melody back and forth. This development is not done strictly. At times the tune is presented in the plainest possible attire; elsewhere the melody is almost obscured in ornamentation. In measure 11, for example, the lower voice recites the equivalent of the third line of the hymn in quite recognizable fashion. In measure 3, on the other hand, the upper voice contains the second line of the tune but in a more decorated form.

The fifth line of text finds development in bars 20-24, albeit highly paraphrased, and in imitation between alto and soprano over a bass in eighth-notes.

The next two lines of the hymn are presented in cantus firmus style in the bass in measures 25-33 while the upper voices move in imitation. Measures 35-39 find another formulation in two-part imitation above a bass line, and this time the eighth line of the hymn is under consideration. From measure 39 to the end of the piece the final line of text is realized both literally (in the soprano in measures 41-44, and in the alto in measures 50-54) and in paraphrase (such as the final descending passagework in the soprano, representing the descending melodic line of the hymn).

So that the text may be associated with the discussion above, the former is quoted below:

Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott,
ein gute Wehr und Waffen.
Er hilft uns frei aus aller Not,
die uns jetzt hat betroffen.
Der alte böse Feind
mit Ernst ers jetzt meint;
gross Macht und viel List
sein grausam Rüstung ist,
auf Erd ist nicht seinsgleichen.

(Martin Luther, 1528)

A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;
Our helper He amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing.
For our ancient foe
Seeks to work us woe;
His power is great,
And armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

(Translation: Frederick Henry Lodge)*

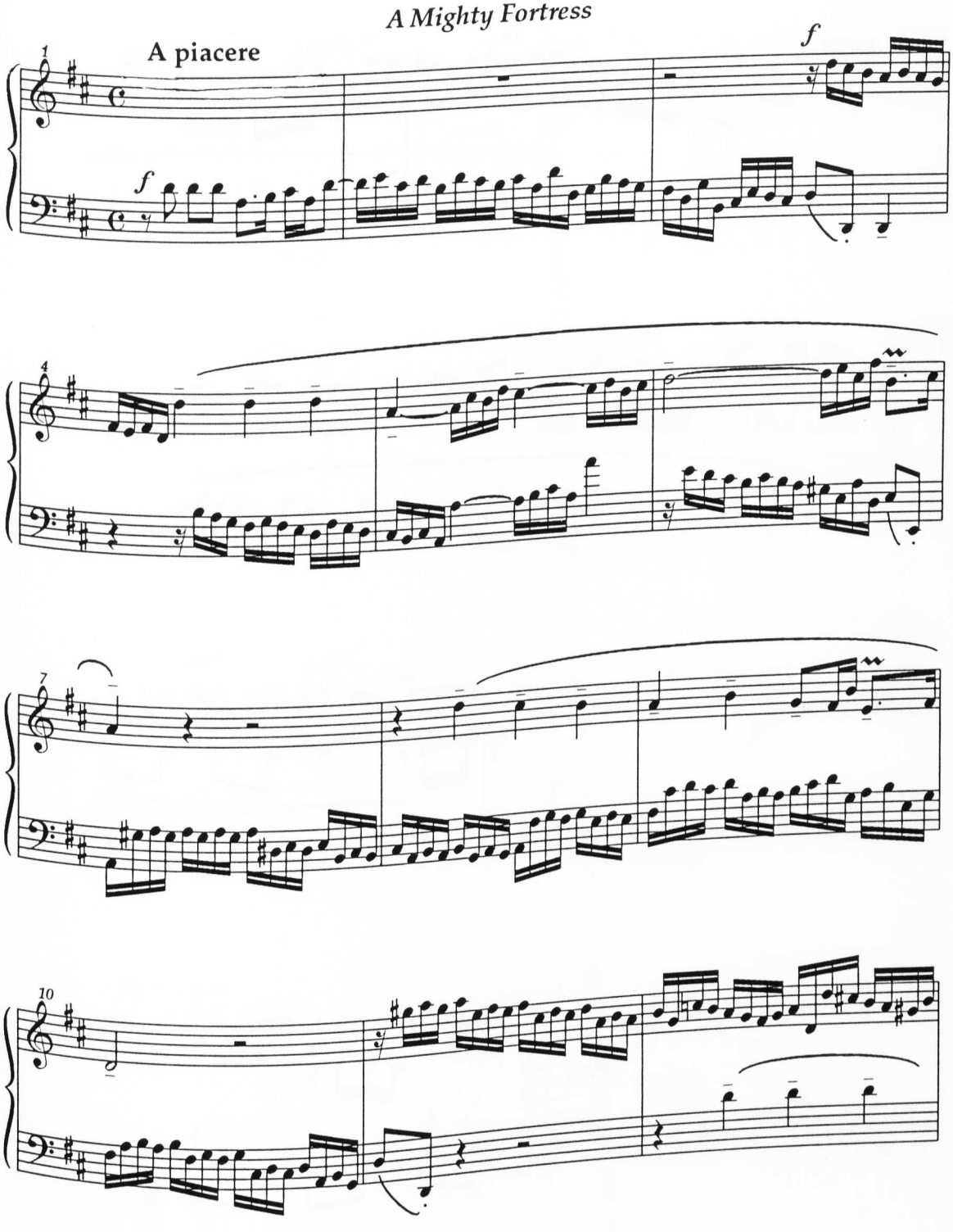
*Those translators not listed in the Bibliography are taken from Bach, J.S. *The 371 Chorales with English Texts and Twenty-three Instrumental Obbligatos*. Frank D. Mainous and Robert W. Ottman, eds. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966, unless otherwise indicated.

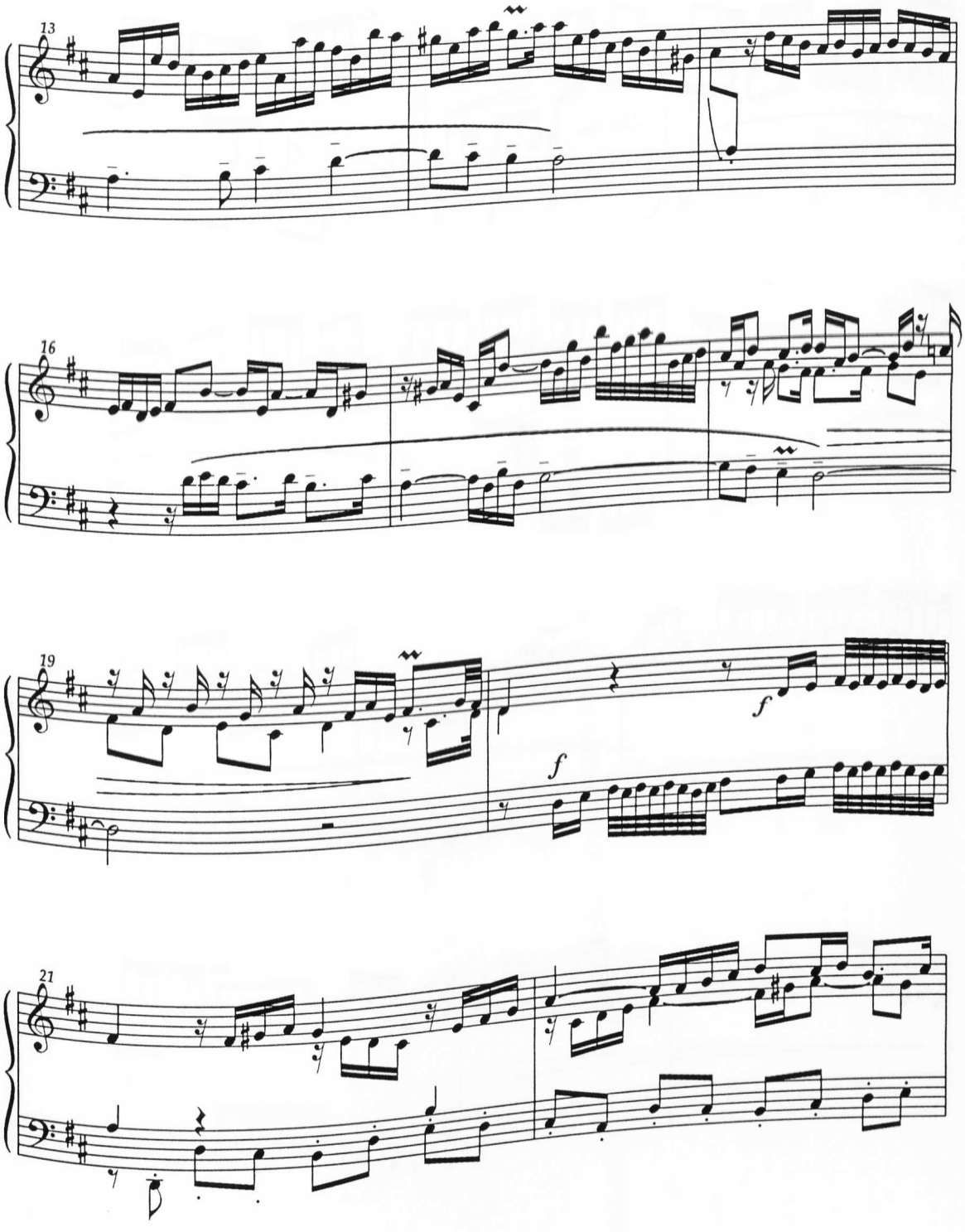
This writer selected a literal approach to the transcription of *Ein' feste Burg*. That is to say, the original notes and harmonies were maintained as closely as possible while an attempt was nevertheless made to adapt the piece to performance on the piano. Certain redistributions became necessary, such as in measure 27, where the two upper voices would not have been readily manageable in one hand. In one instance the alto's registration changed to a lower octave simply for the sake of facilitated execution. Some of the cantus firmus appearances in the bass, as well as the final pedal point, received doubling at the lower octave, as such a doubling most closely approximates the sonority of the organ pedals.

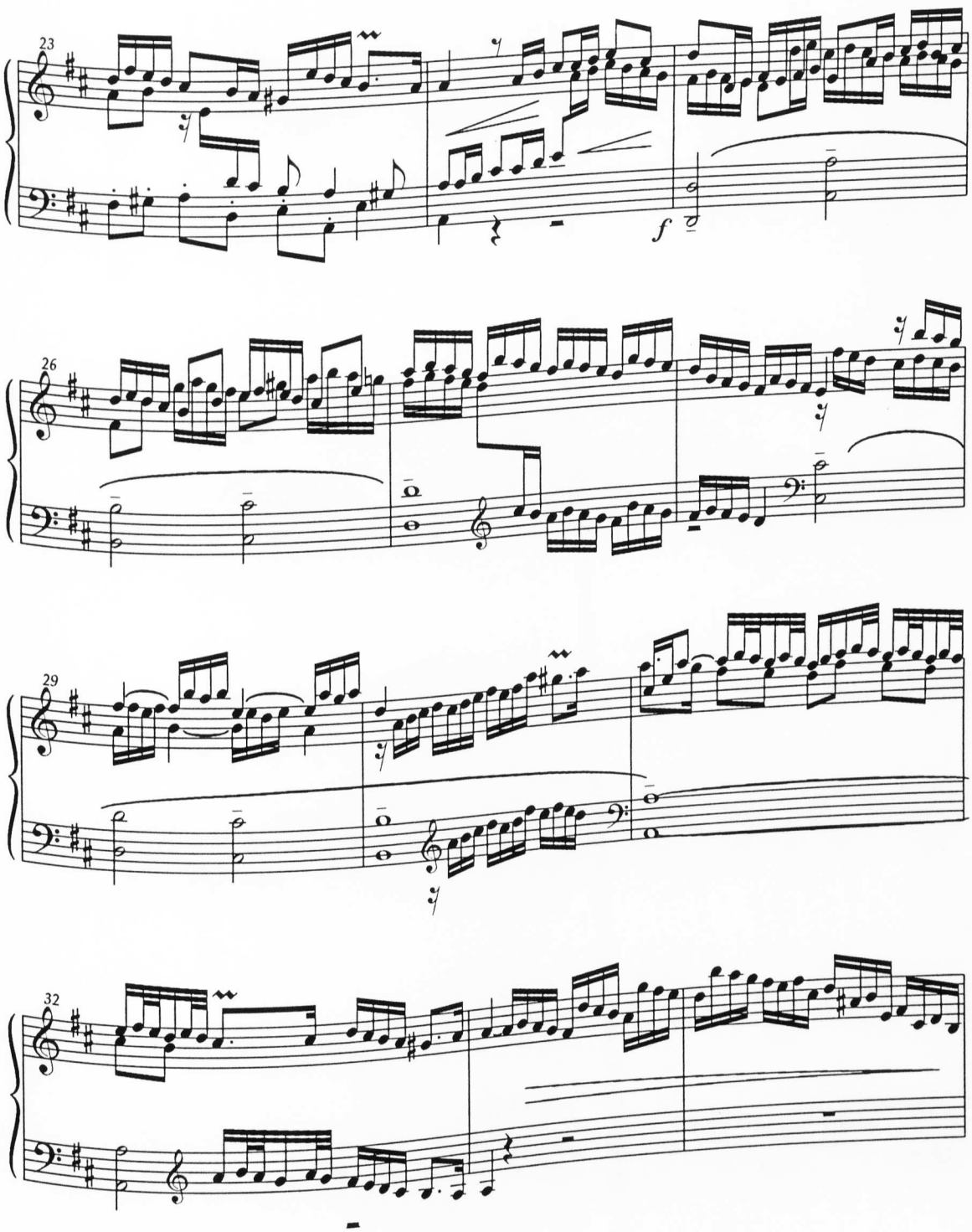
The difficulties are considerable in this piece.

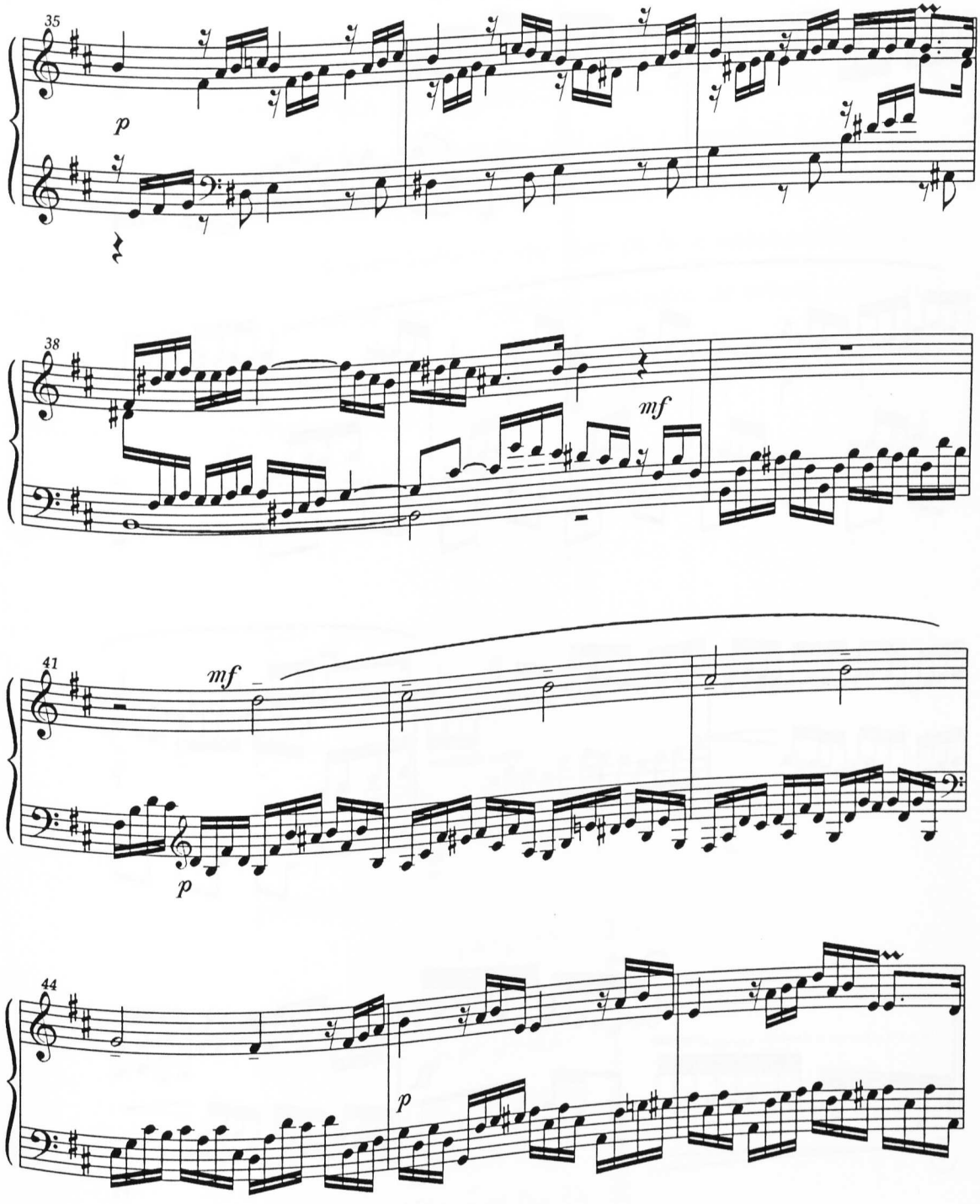
Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott

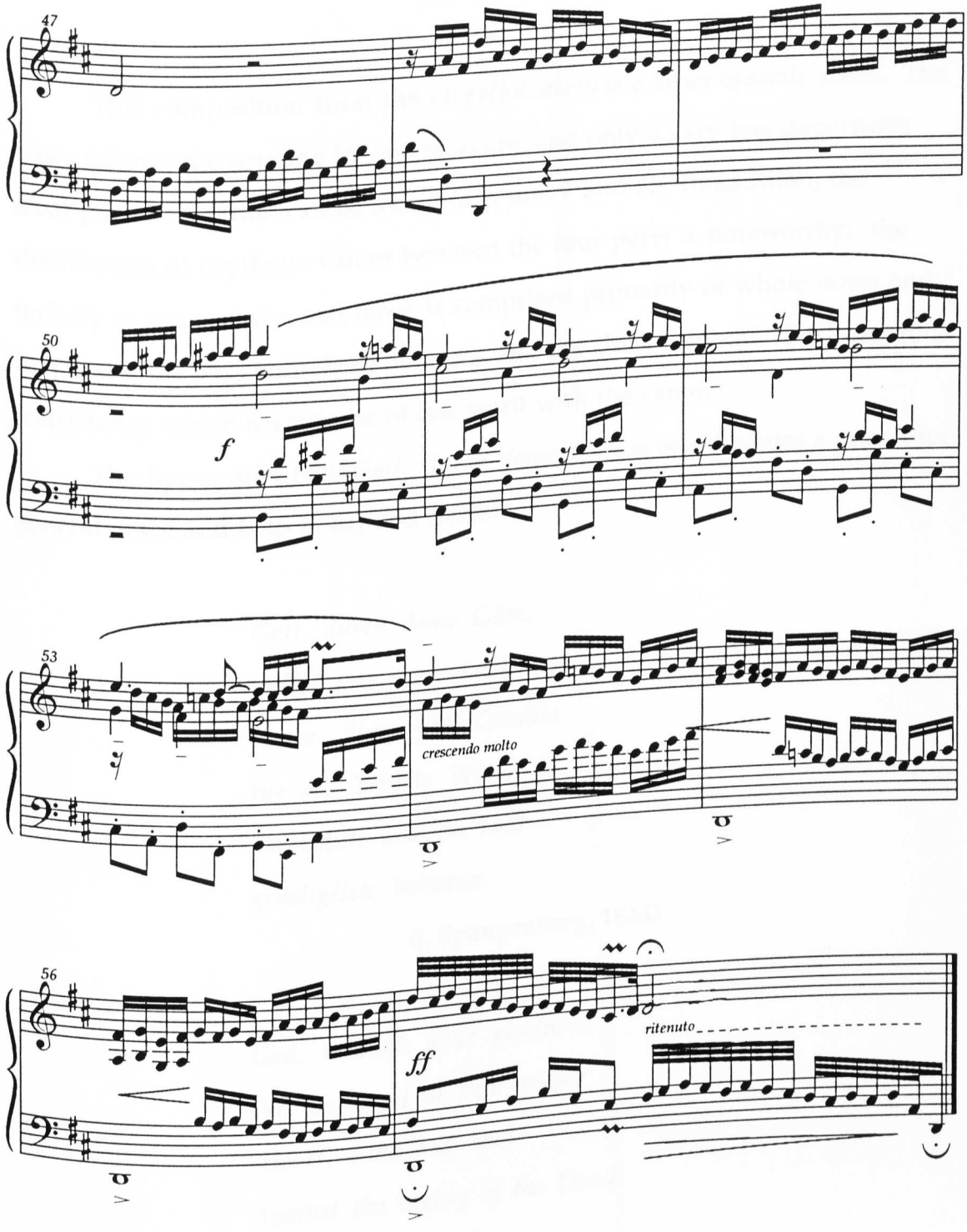
A Mighty Fortress




13
16
19
f
f
21


23
f
26
29
32


35
p
38
mf
41
mf
p
44
p


47
50
f
53
crescendo molto
56
ff
ritenuto

Gott, durch deine Güte

BWV 600

This composition from the *Orgelbüchlein* is a strict canonic piece. The tenor follows the soprano by one measure, and only a very few departures from pure imitatation can be found (e.g. mm 7 and 8). In addition, the distribution of rhythmic values between the four parts is noteworthy; the melody in the soprano and tenor is comprised primarily of whole notes and half notes, the bass entirely of quarters, and the alto of eighths. Such rigorous consistency would seem to be of one spirit with the canon.

The hymn on which *Gott, durch deine Güte* is based relates a prayer for general grace and help in life and death:

Gott, durch deine Güte,
wollst uns arme Leute
Herze, Sinn, und Gemüte
für des Teufels Wüten
am Leben und im Todt
gnädiglich behüten.

(J. Spangenberg, 1544)

God, through your goodness,
[We beg you] us poor people
-Heart, mind and soul-
Against the raging of the Devil
In life and in death

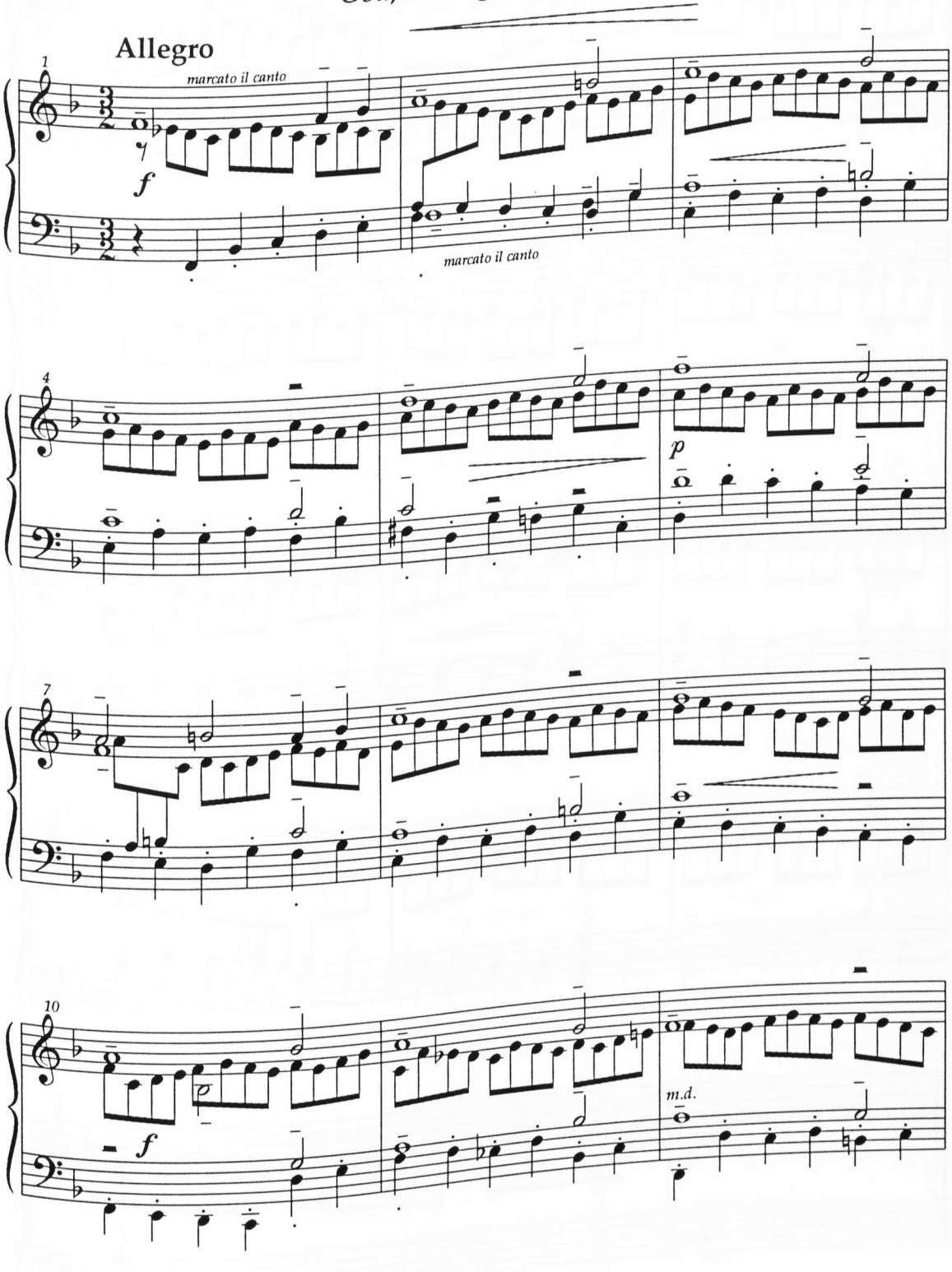
Graciously to preserve.

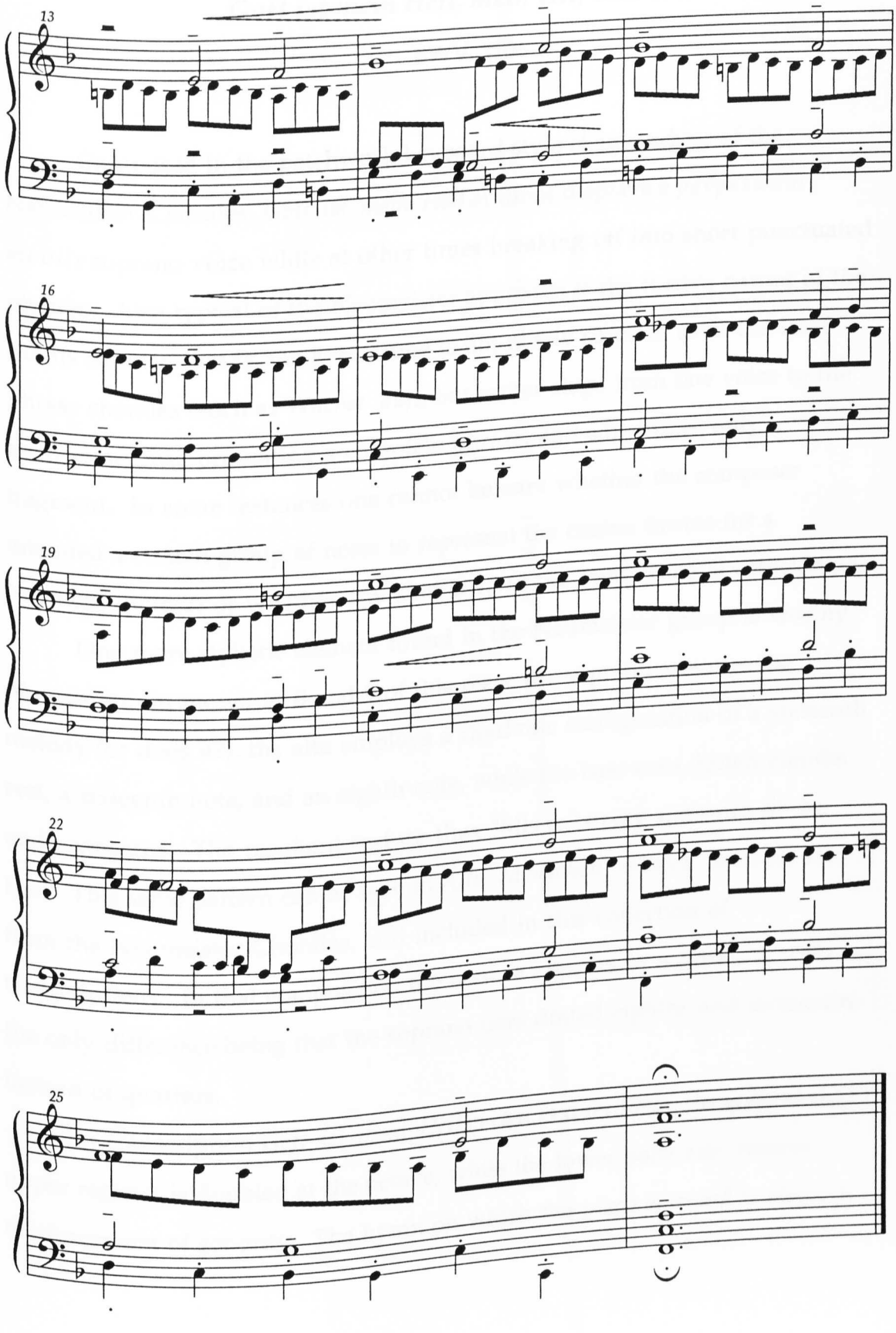
(Translation: Peter Williams)

In transcription the notes of the melody have been marked with *tenuto* indications. Naturally, the bass and alto should be dynamically reserved.

Gott, durch deine Güte

God, Through Your Goodness




13
16
19
22
25

Gott ist mein Heil, mein Hilf und Trost

BWV 1106

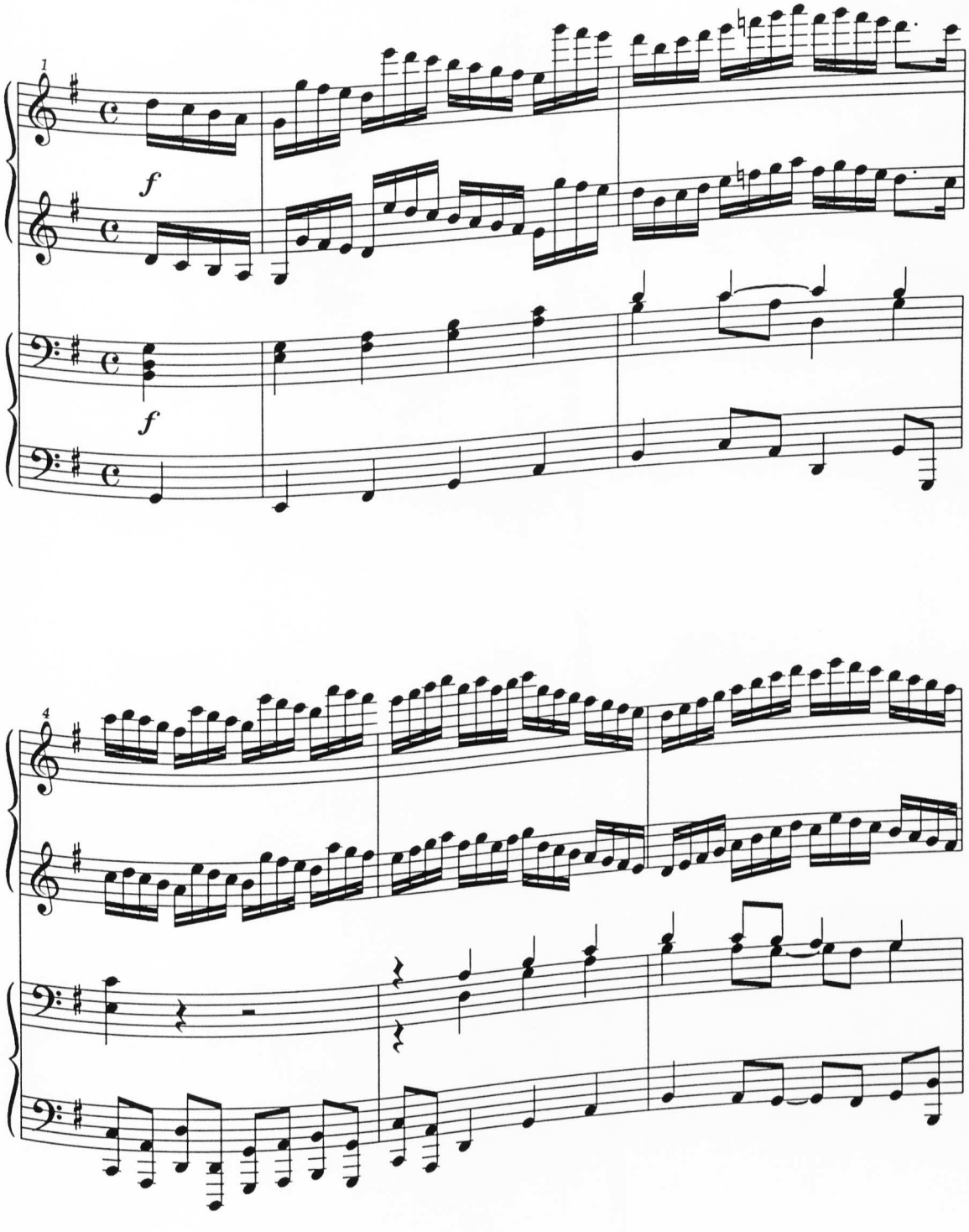
Composed in the patchwork keyboard style characteristic of the Neumeister Chorales, *Gott ist mein Heil* at times displays a *perpetuum mobile* soprano voice while at other times breaking off into short punctuated phrases. Also typical of the Neumeister approach is the furtive nature of the cantus firmus; that is, the hymn tune is not nearly so plain as in the later phrase chorales (such as *Wachet auf*), but rather skips from one voice to the next, sometimes presenting a complete phrase, and sometimes only a fragment. In some instances one cannot be sure whether the composer intended a certain group of notes to represent the cantus firmus (or a fragment thereof) or whether any similarity to the hymn tune is coincidental.

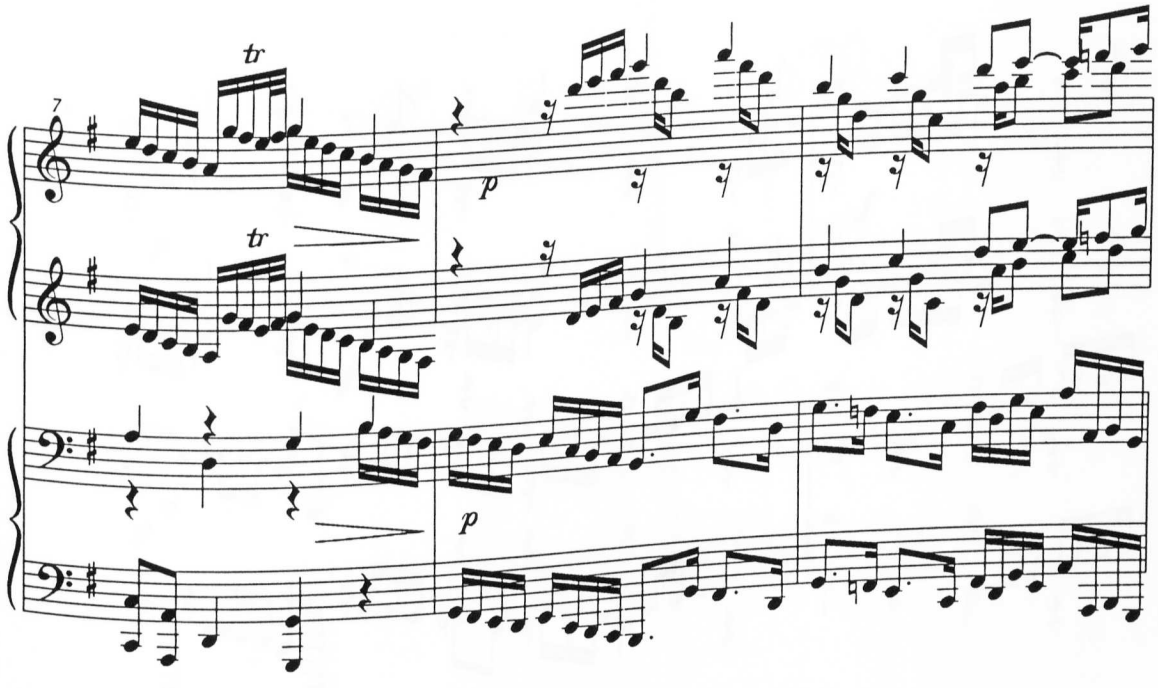
One more stylistic element found in the Neumeister group is worthy of mention: in measures 8 and 9 of this piece the soprano assumes the melody (or does it?), the alto employs a rhythmic configuration of a sixteenth rest, a sixteenth note, and an eighth note, while the bass uses dotted eighths and sixteenths. The resultant texture thus "fills in" every sixteenth of the beat. This same pattern can be seen in *Alle Menschen müssen sterben*, also from the Neumeister Chorales, and included in this collection of transcriptions. In that composition the texture appears in measure 9, with the only difference being that the soprano uses dotted eighths and sixteenths instead of quarters.

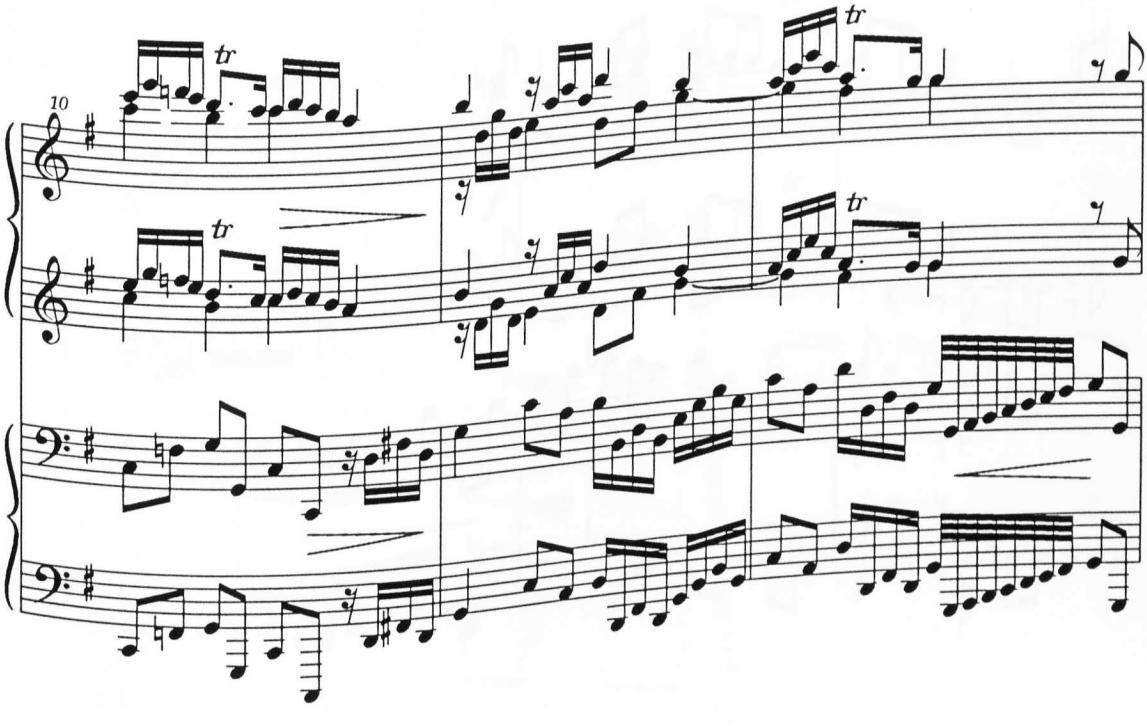
In transcription *Gott ist mein Heil* is cast is duet form. In general the upper register is doubled at the octave, while the lower parts also receive reinforcement of sonority. The hymn on which the piece is based is obscure.

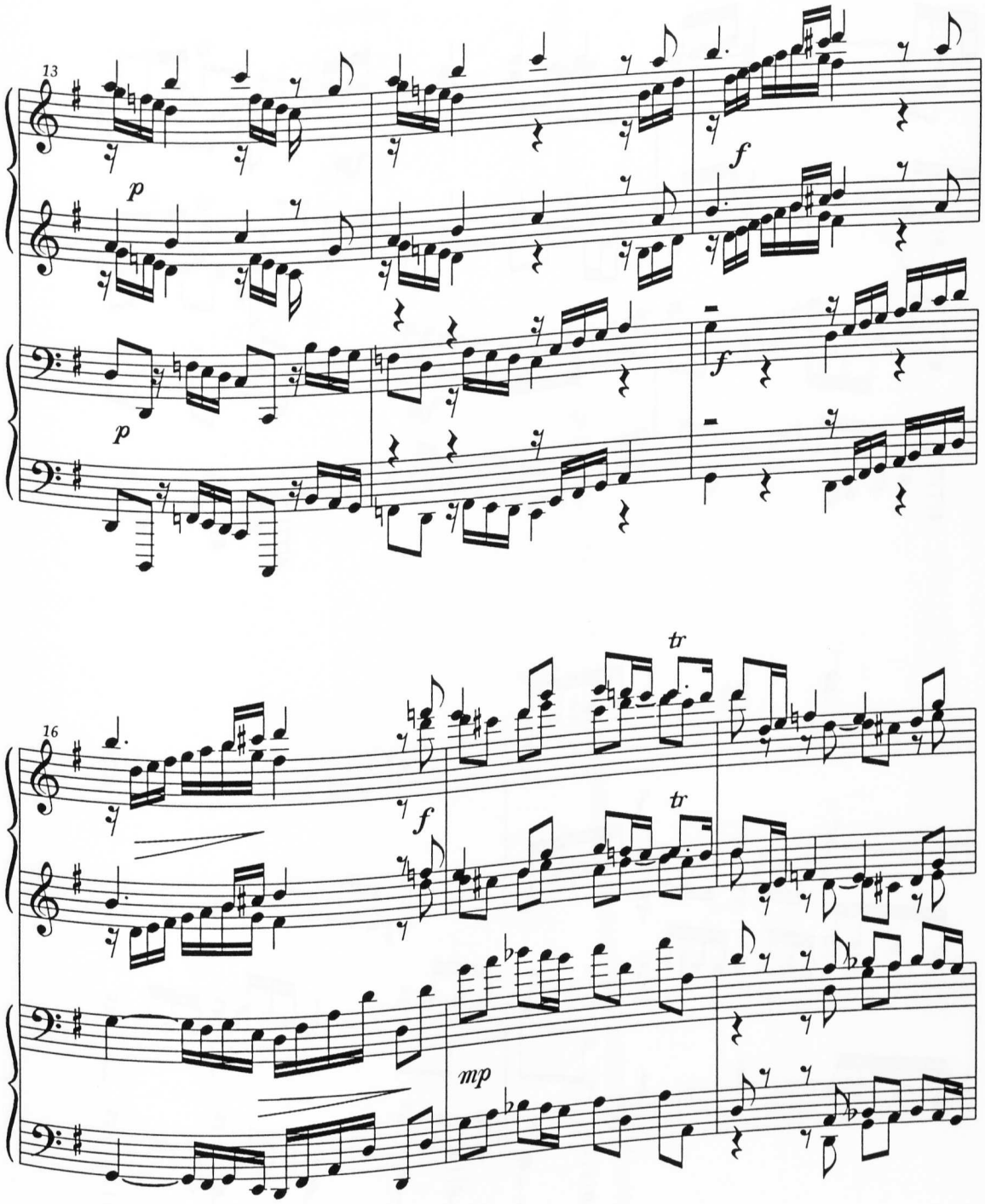
Gott ist mein Heil, mein Hilf und Trost

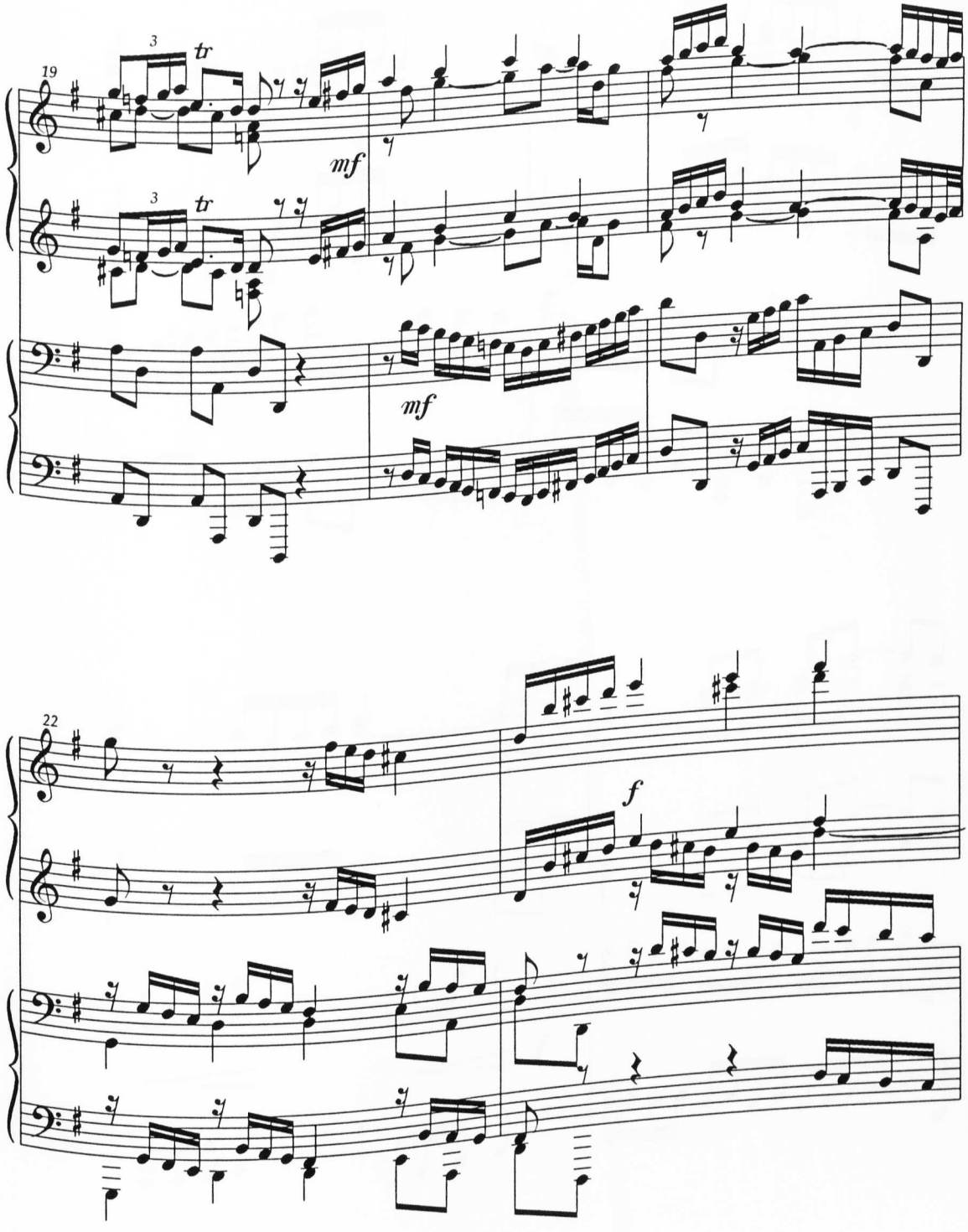
God is My Salvation, My Help and Comfort

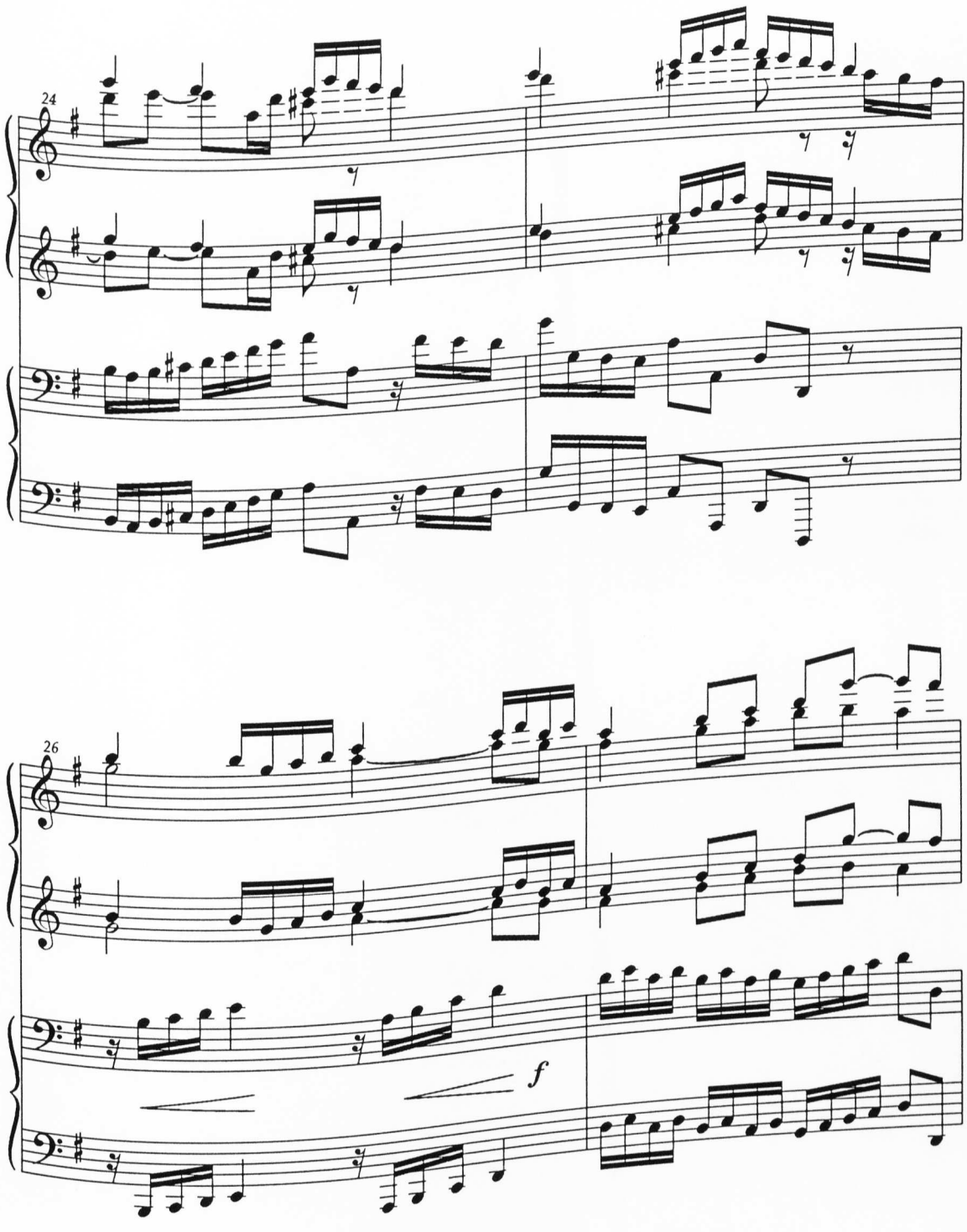


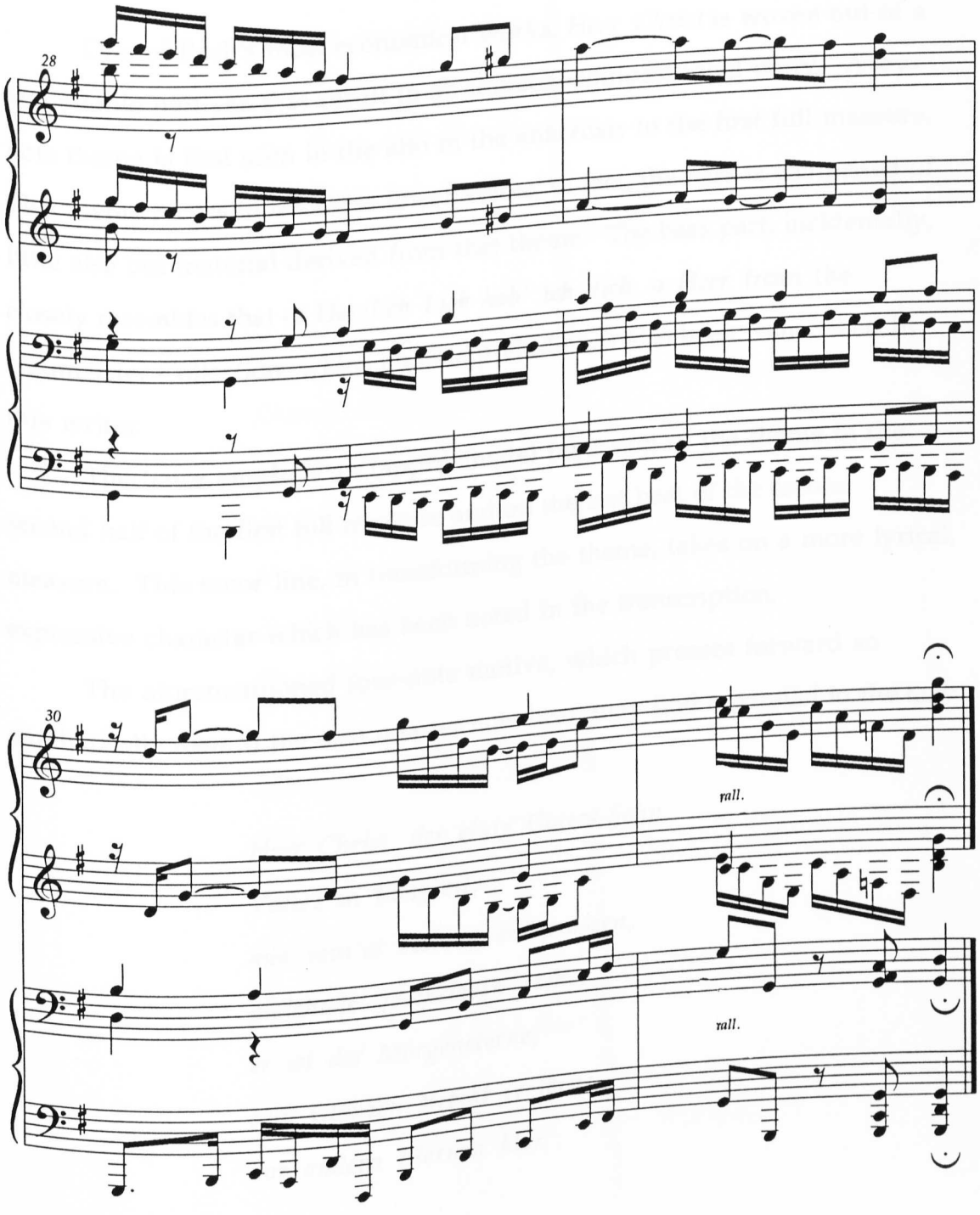

7
tr
tr
p
p


10
tr
tr
tr
tr


13
p
p
f
f
16
f
tr
tr
mp


19
3
tr
mf
3
tr
mf
22
f


24
26
f


28
30
rall.
rall.

Herr Christ, der ein'ge Gottes-Sohn

BWV 601

One of Bach's most economical works, *Herr Christ* is woven out of a few simple motives that result in an unusual compositional unity. A four-note theme is first seen in the alto in the anacrusis to the first full measure. This theme recurs in the three lower voices; in fact, the bass is comprised of little else but material derived from that theme. The bass part, incidentally, closely resembles that of *Herzlich Lieb hab' ich dich, o Herr* from the Neumeister Collection, which chorale prelude has also been transcribed by this writer.

The tenor employs an (approximate) inversion of the theme in the second half of the first full measure and on the last beat of the second measure. This tenor line, in transforming the theme, takes on a more lyrical, expressive character which has been noted in the transcription.

The aforementioned four-note motive, which presses forward so emphatically toward the next quarter note beat, may find a parallel in the text:

Herr Christ, der einig Gottes-Sohn
Vaters in Ewigkeit,
aus sein'm Herzen entsprossen,
gleichwie geschrieben steht,
er ist der Morgensterne,
sein Glänzen streckt er ferne
vor andern Sternen klar.

Ertöt uns durch deine Güte,
erweck uns durch dein Gnad.
Den alten Menschen kränke,
dass er neu leben mag,
und hie auf dieser Erden
den Sinn und alls Begehren
und Gedanken hab zu dir.

(E. Cruciger, 1524)

Lord Christ, the only Son of God,
Eternal Father,
Sprouting from his heart,
As it is written,
He is the morning star,
Stretching his rays to the distance,
Clear before the other stars.

Mortify us by your goodness,
Awaken us by your grace.
Vex the old Adam
That he may live anew,
And here on this earth
His mind and all [his] desires
And thought give to you.

(Translation: Peter Williams)

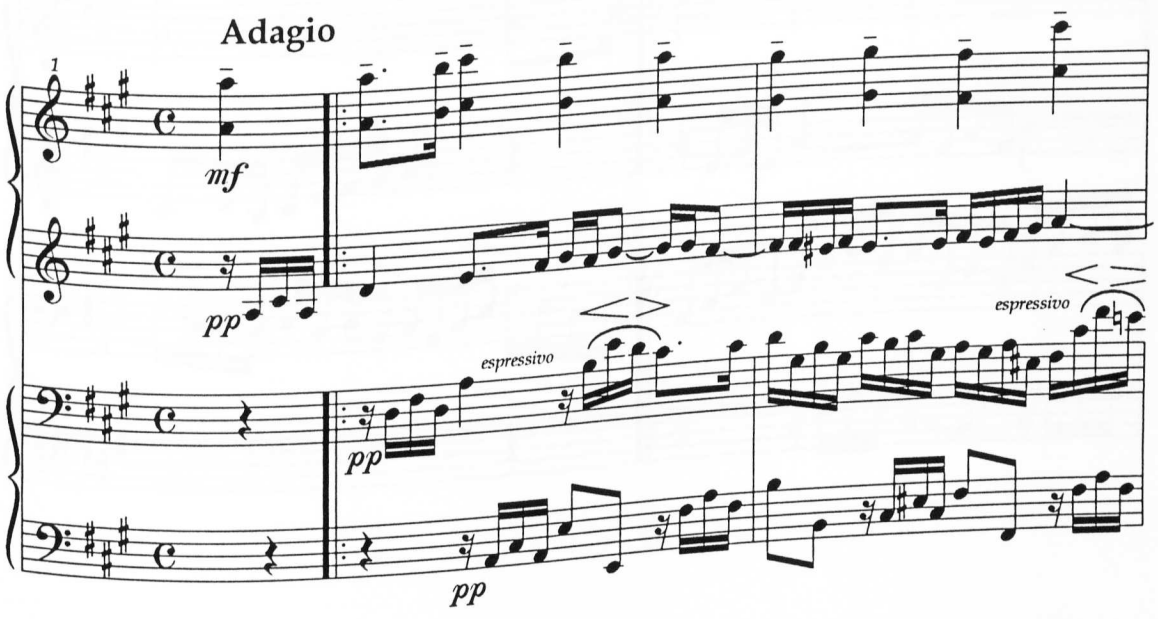
The word "entsprossen" ("sprouting") would seem to be reflected in the motive in that it (the motive) "sprouts" upward.

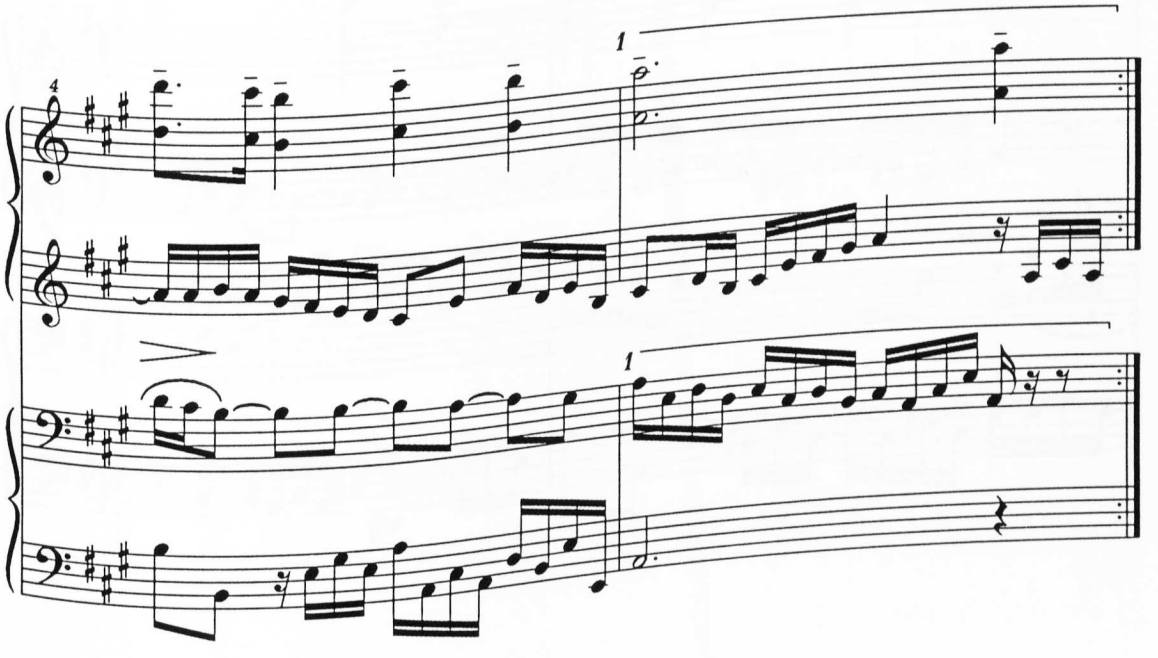
Arranged as a duet, the soprano and alto appear in the upper part, with tenor and bass in the lower. The soprano alone is doubled at the octave, the bass having been left in single notes. This was done becasue of the rhythmic activity of that part; adding a lower octave would have given it an overwhelming and distracting sonority.

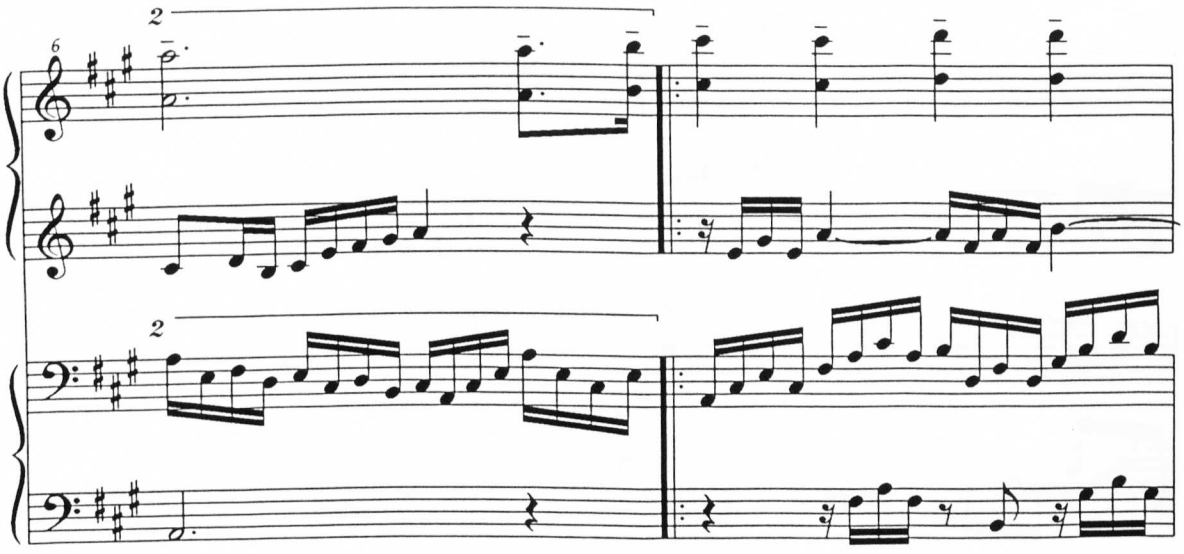
Herr Christ is within the technical reach of intermediate students.

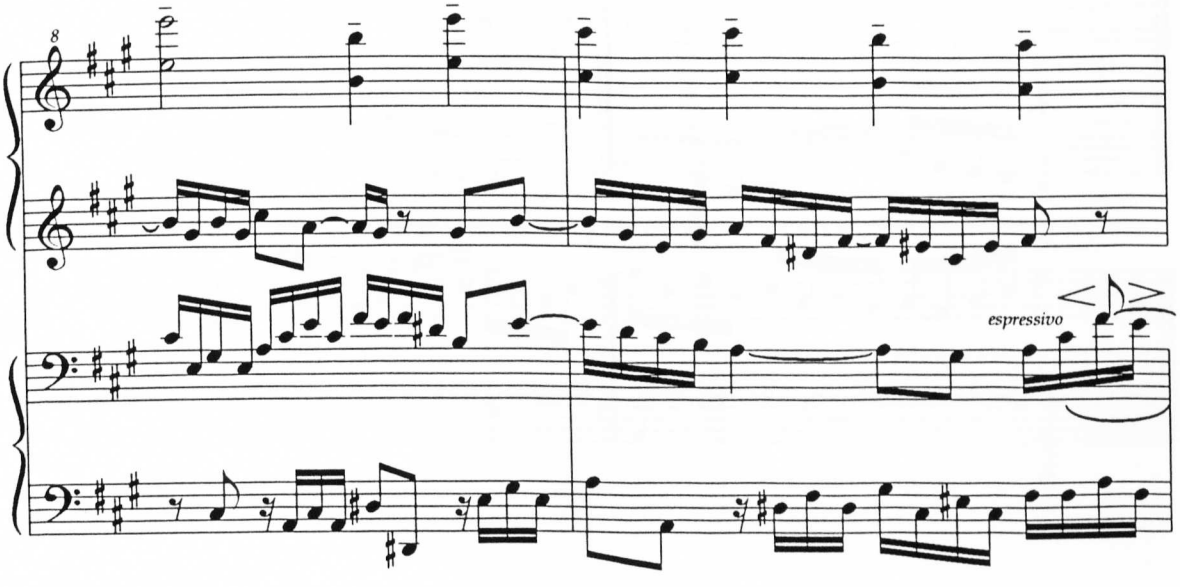
Herr Christ, der einge Gottes-Sohn

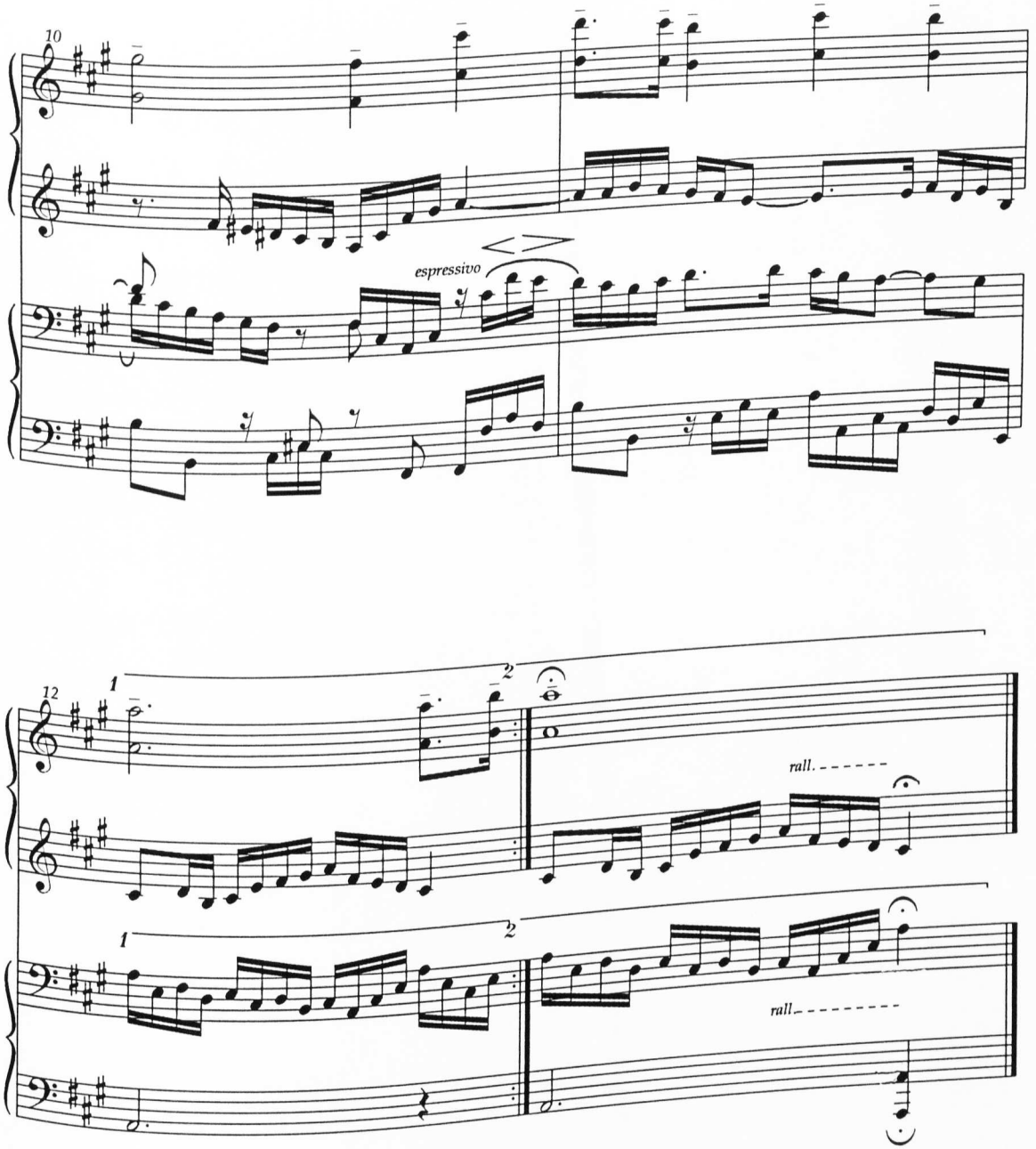
Lord Christ, the Only Son of God






2
6
2


8
espressivo


10
espressivo
12
1
2
rall.
rall

Herzlich lieb hab' ich dich, o Herr

BWV 1115

A bi-partite composition from the Neumeister Collection, *Herzlich lieb hab' ich dich, o Herr* combines a brief phrase chorale with a rather free-form fantasia. The first section opens with a rhythmically distinctive passage in the bass which continues throughout the first half of the piece. The cantus firmus, introduced in the third measure, receives a "running start" in the form of sixteenths and a trill. While the bass perpetuates the figure introduced earlier, the alto joins the texture, contributing short commentaries of three sixteenths leading to a quarter note. In this manner the first two lines of the hymn are presented. The repeat corresponds to that found in the hymn; the phrases heard twice in the organ chorale are the same as those sung twice in the hymn.

The fantasia is loosely composed; a change in time signature from common to twelve-eight marks the beginning of the section, although a return to four-four occurs only eight measures later. No single thematic or motivic idea seems to unify the section. In fact the unifying element is well-hidden. The remaining phrases of the hymn (those not presented in the first half of this piece) are present, but at times only implied rather than stated explicitly. The antiphonal stepwise event beginning in measure 16 would appear to be based on the phrase of the hymn in which close stepwise movement around the tonic is observed. At the time change (back to four-four) the soprano uses the melodic outline of the next hymn phrase, although the melody is elaborated beyond easy recognition. Interestingly, the next two phrases of the cantus firmus can be detected with facility; both appear in the soprano without significant alteration from the original form.

Once again the final phrase is "hidden" as were some of the earlier ones; only its last note, the half note C in the last measure, is obvious.

This writer has taken a number of liberties with this transcription, most especially in the fantasia section, although some aspects of the first half of the transcription should be mentioned. The opening figure has been divided between the hands so that the articulation might be realized as clearly as possible. Naturally, upon the entrance of the cantus firmus and the alto, the bass part will be the sole responsibility of the left hand. The notes of the chorale melody have been indicated by means of *tenuto* markings, as well as by the *forte* symbol at each cantus firmus entrance.

In the fantasia at measure 16, the antiphonal material is doubled at the octave below and marked *forte* initially and *piano* when the material is answered at the lower octave. Doublings at the third and sixth are frequent though the following measures, particularly in measure 21, wherein the sonority is augmented by the adding of extra notes. At measure 25 an implied circle-of-fifths relationship is stated outright by the adding of chords in the left hand.

The last three measures receive the addition of a bass pedal point which fills in the rests left by the left-hand chords.

The level of difficulty is high.

Herzlich lieb hab' ich dich, O Herr
ich bitte', wollst sein von mir nicht fern,
mit deiner Huld und Gnade.
Die ganz' Welt nicht erfreuet mich,

nach Himm'l und Erd' nicht frage ich,
wenn ich nur, Herr, dich habe.
Und wenn mir gleich mein Herz zerbricht,
so bist doch du mein' Zuversicht,
mein Heil und meines Herzens Trost,
der mich durch sein Blut hat erlöst,
Herr Jesu Christ!
Herr Jesu Christ, mein Gott und Herr!
in Schanden laß mich nimmermehr.

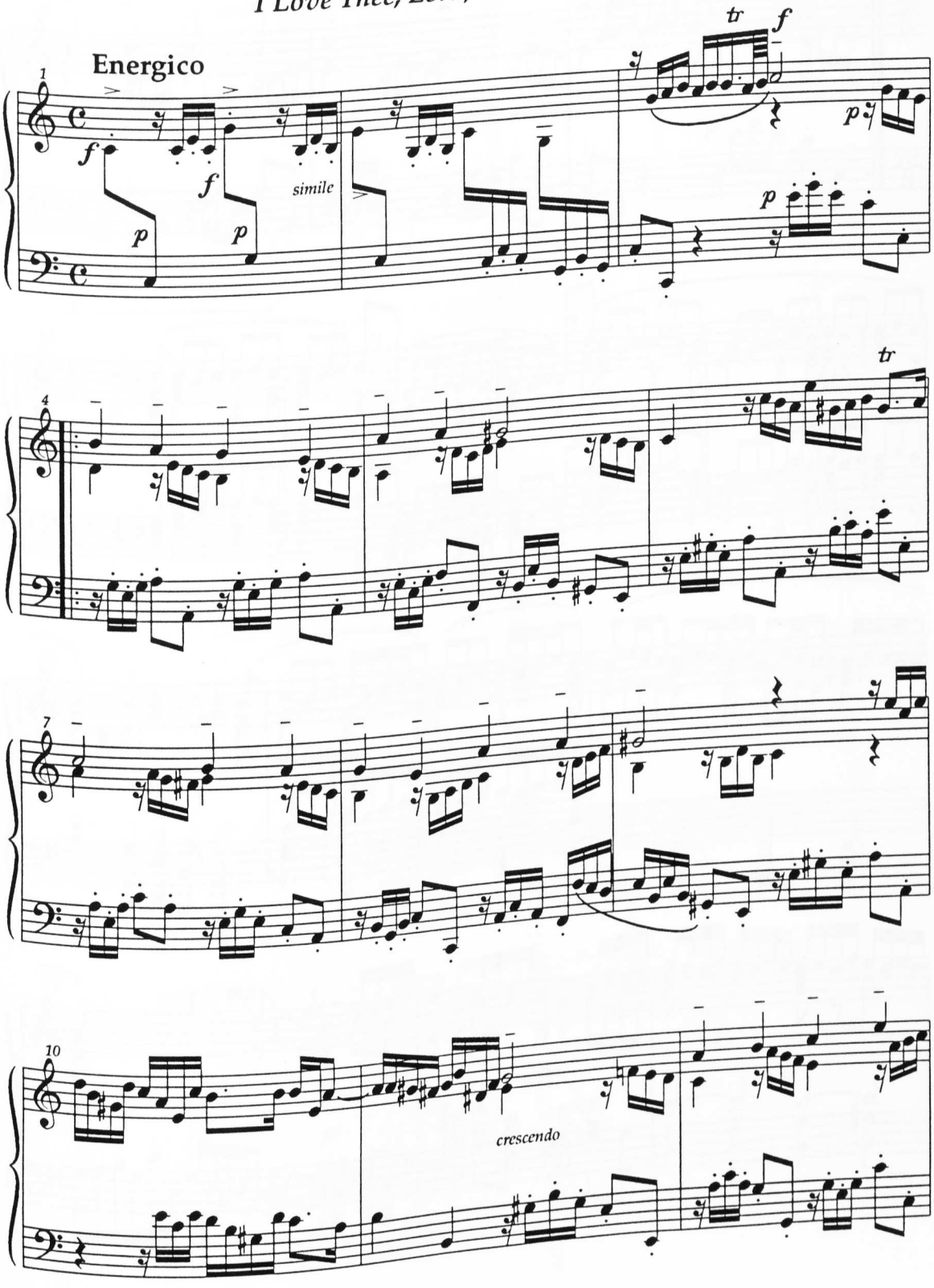
(Anonymous)

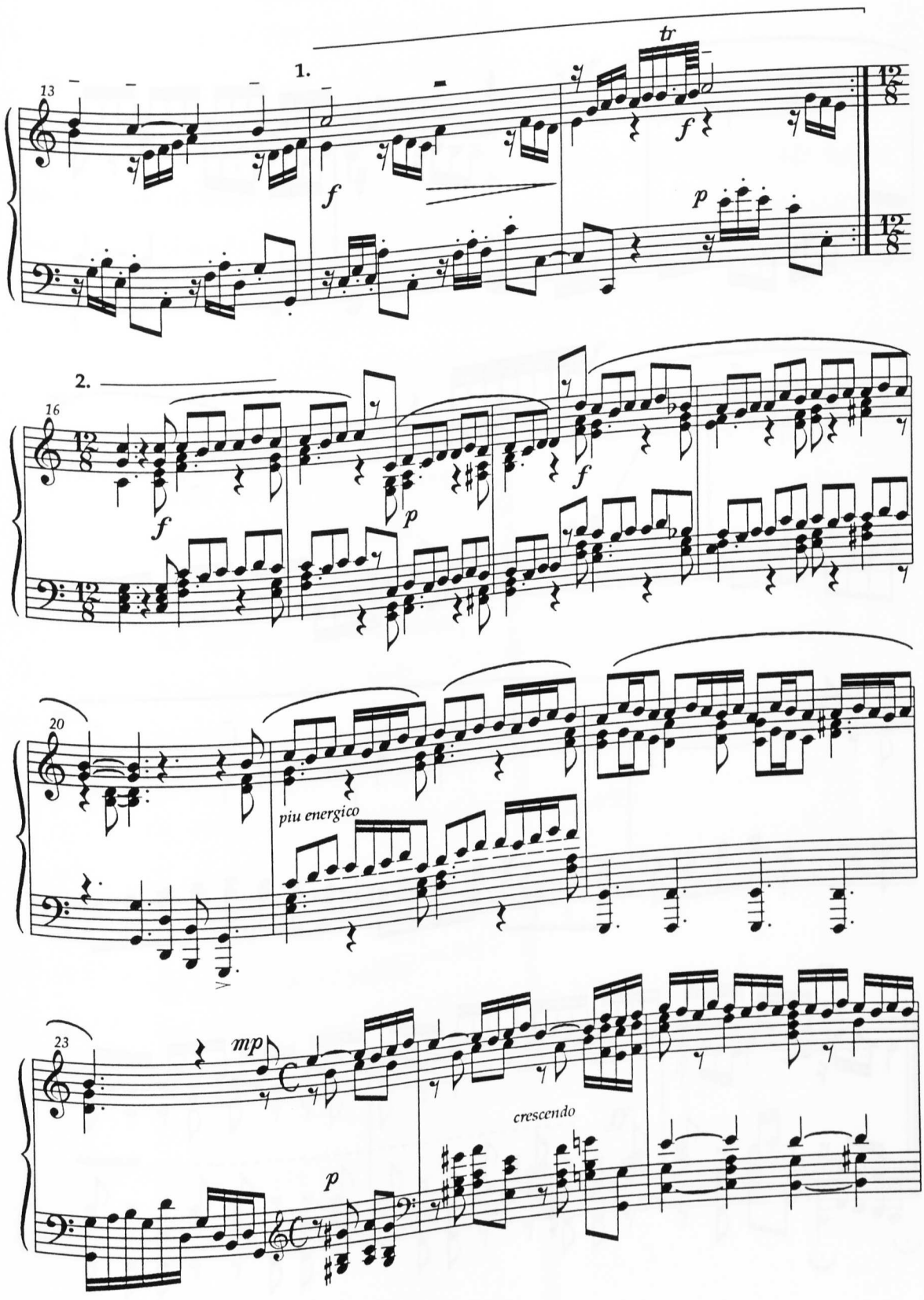
I love Thee, Lord, with all my heart,
and pray Thee, stay Thou not apart,
but help me, Lord, and bless me.
I ask for nothing here on earth,
the whole world seems of little worth,
if I, Lord, but possess Thee.
When grief is like to break my heart,
then Thou my firm reliance art,
my hope and comfort Thou wilt be,
Thou who wast crucified for me.
Lord Jesus Christ,
ask Thou the Father in Thy Name
that never I be brought to shame.

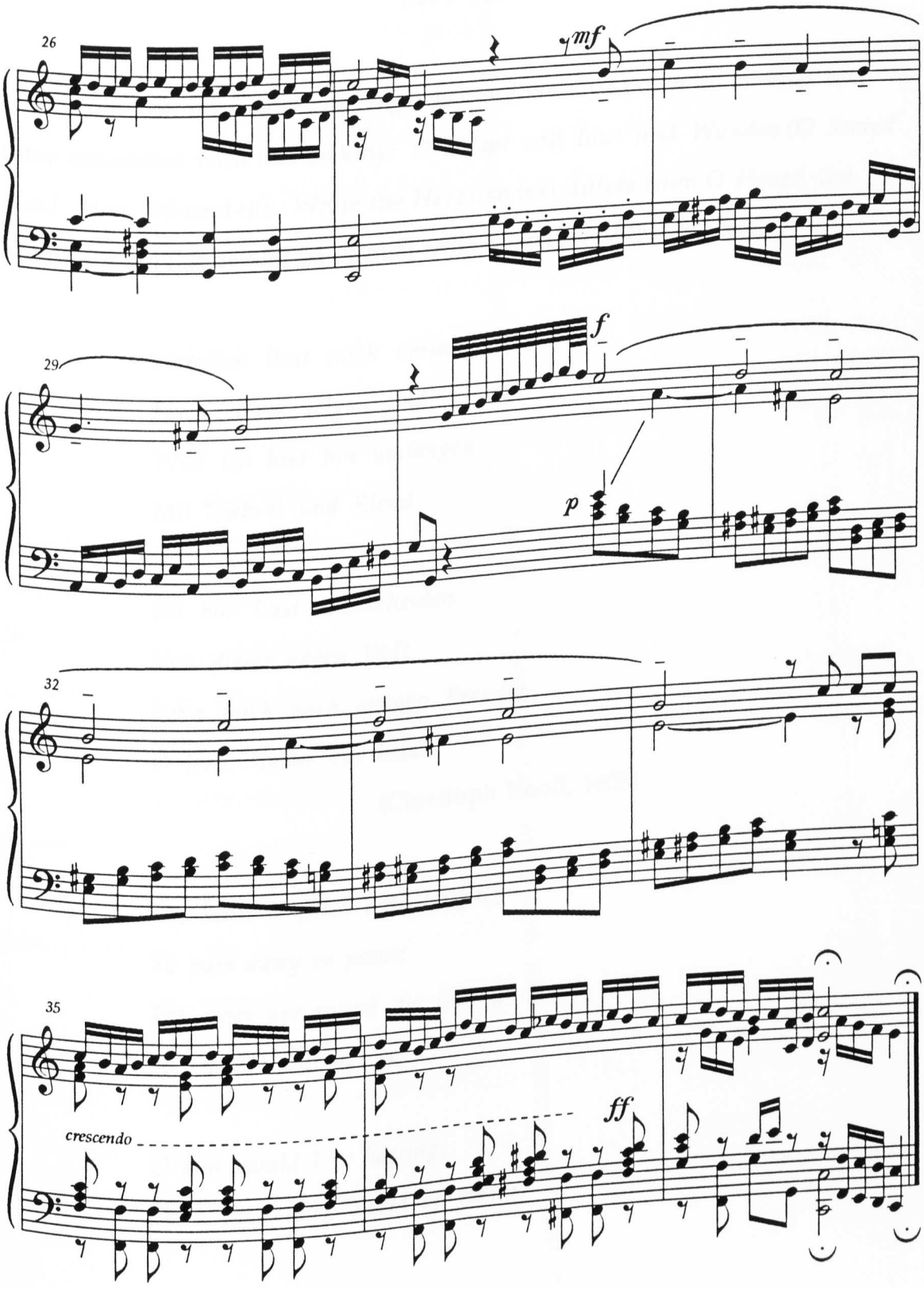
(Translation: Henry S. Drinker)

Herzlich Lieb hab' ich dich, O Herr

I Love Thee, Lord, with All My Heart




1.
13
tr
f
f
p
2.
16
f
f
p
20
piu energico
23
mp
p
crescendo


26
mf
29
f
p
32
35
crescendo
ff

Herzlich thut mich verlangen

BWV 727

Herzlich thut mich verlangen is more widely known by another text often associated with this melody: *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden* (*O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*). While the *Herzlich* text differs from *O Haupt*, the attitude is similar as will be evident from a reading of the text itself:

Herzlich thut mich verlangen
Nach einem selgen End,
Weil ich hier bin umfangen
Mit Trübsal und Elend.

Ich hab Lust abzuscheiden
Von dieser argen Welt,
Sehn mich nach ewigen Freuden,
O Jesu, komm nur bald!

(Christoph Knoll, 1605)

My heart is filled with longing
To pass away in peace;
For woes are round me thronging
And trials will not cease.

O fain would I be hasting,
From thee, dark world of gloom,

To gladness everlasting,

O Jesus! quickly come.

(Translation: Catherine Winkworth)

This is a melody chorale in that the hymn tune is placed in the soprano and remains predominant at all times, with no accompanimental interludes. While modest elaboration of the melodic line may be observed, the piece should not be categorized as an ornamental chorale; were that the case, the melody line would be nearly unrecognizable beneath the tangled overgrowth of figuration. In this instance, the hymn in clearly discernable.

For this piece an important issue is the handling of multiple voices in one hand when redistribution is not possible. In measure 6 the soprano has an ornament on beat 2 while the alto descends beneath. This was solved through a rapid finger substitution; immediately after the trill is played (with the third and second fingers) the second finger on *E* must substitute to the third finger, thus allowing the thumb and second finger to negotiate the alto part while the fourth and fifth fingers continue the soprano line.

For this transcription the original notes were taken as literally as possible, with no additions on the part of this writer, until the anacrusis to measure 11, where an increase in the emotional gravity of the chorale seemed to justify the use of octaves in the bass.

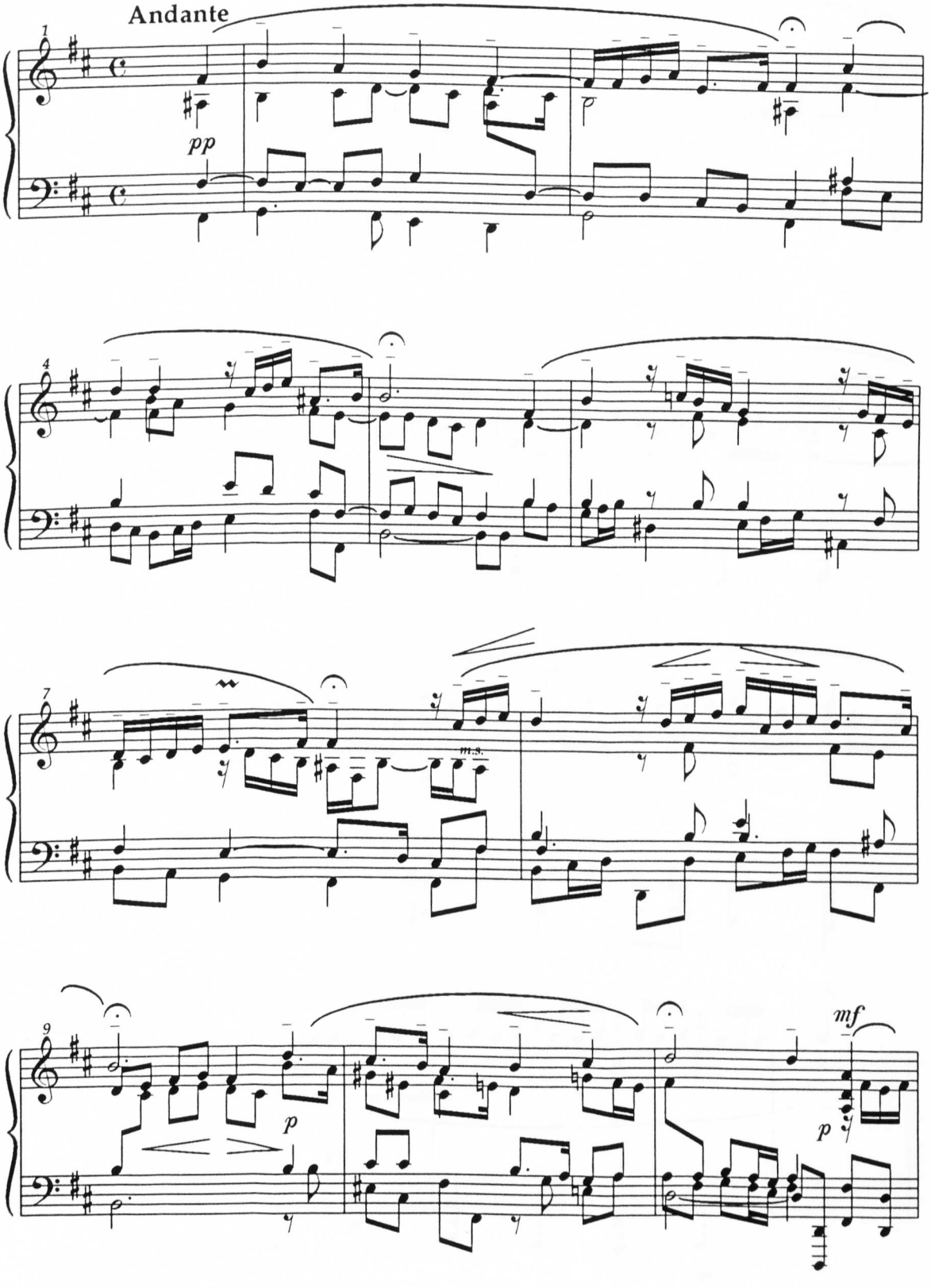
After the manner of Busoni a repeat of the final phrase was added, with a final full, rather than half, cadence. In Busoni's arrangement of *Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ*, the last line of the chorale is reiterated one octave lower than before, and with performance indications suggesting barely audible dynamics: *"piu obscura"*. This emphasis on the closing phrase was

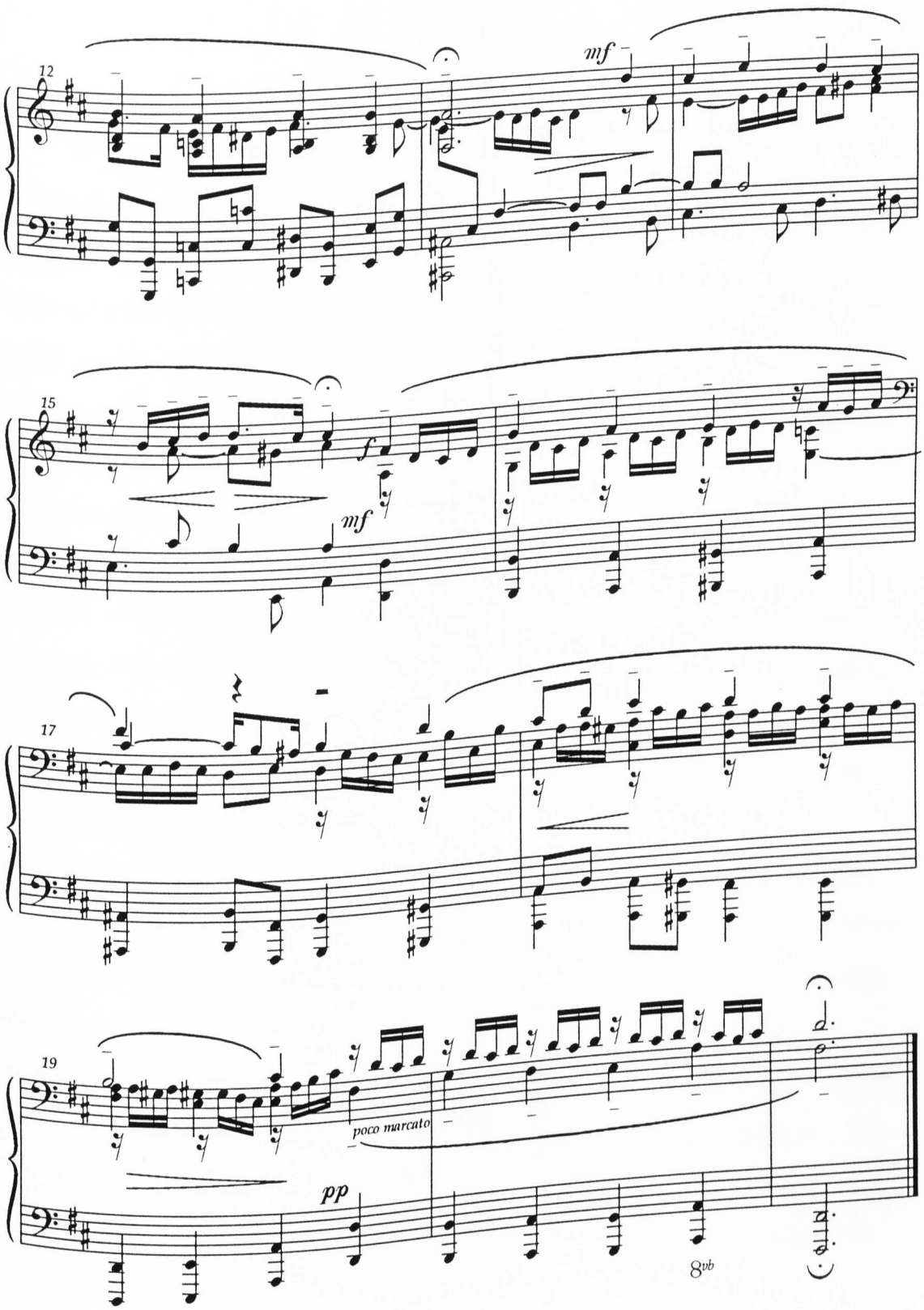
this writer's model in concluding *Herzlich thut mich verlangen,* but unlike Busoni, this writer placed the melody beneath the sixteenth-note figuration to take advantage of what is often called the "cello-like" sonority of that particular register on the piano.

Herzlich thut mich verlangen is of moderate difficulty, the challenges lying mainly in complex fingerings such as that mentioned in measure 6.

Herzlich thut mich verlangen

My Heart is Filled with Longing




12
mf
15
f
mf
17
19
poco marcato
pp
8vb

In dulci jubilo

BWV 608

In some respects Bach's method of notating *In dulci jubilo* creates certain difficulties. To begin with, the part which would normally be considered the bass is unplayable on the pedals, whereas the tenor part would seem quite suitable for such execution. Furthermore, the "bass" line does not really function properly in its expected harmonic capacity. Hence this writer's solution, confirmed by Williams (vol. II, p. 33) and Hull (p. 64), of lowering the "tenor" an octave and turning it into the bass would appear to be reasonable. The bass, then, becomes the tenor line.

Another notational question concerns the issue of rhythm. The division of the half-note into an eighth-note triplet would seem non-standard but nevertheless comprehensible. The use of two quarter notes for the same time value, however, is more problematic. Specifically, some doubt exists as to whether the quarters should be interpreted literally or as "matching" the triplet, with the first quarter equalling two eighths and the second equal to one.

Plausible arguments can be made for either approach. If the quarters are played strictly, the resulting cross-rhythm may seem inconsistent with the effect of compound time, especially since Bach so often invests such devices with symbolic meanings. In particular, it may not be unreasonable to perceive a "trinity of trinities" in the triple time further divided into smaller triplets, and this finds an association with the text: the words *Alpha es e O* attribute divinity to the Christ-child.

On the other hand, Bach could easily have indicated an intention to

play the quarters with the triplets, as in fact he did in measure 25 and elsewhere, by writing a quarter with an eighth, together with a triplet notation. One could further argue that the cross-rhythm is entirely fitting with the idea of rejoicing, the resultant agogic vigorousness being representative of exultation.

The text follows:

In dulci jubilo
nun singet und seid froh!
Unsers Herzens Wonne
liegt in praesipio,
und leuchtet als die Sonne
matris in gremio:
Alpha es e O, Alpha es e O.

(Anonymous, 15th century)

In sweet jubilation
Now sing and rejoice!
Our hearts' desire
Lies in a manger
And shines like the sun
At his mother's bosom:
You are Alpha and Omega.

(Translation: John Mortensen)

The formal construction of the piece is worthy of comment. The

cantus firmus is placed in both the soprano and what was called the tenor, but is now called the bass. These two appearances of the hymn tune function as a canon at the octave, with soprano leading the bass by one measure. The canon is fairly strict, with just a few small modifications for the sake of harmonic feasibility, such as in measures 22 and 23. The final phrase of the chorale tune is set with the two voices two measures apart. To have maintained a distance of one measure would have resulted in parallel ninths between soprano and bass, a tight spot out of which perhaps even Bach could not wriggle. As the soprano "finishes" first, it then resorts to figuration like that of the inner voices for the remainder of the piece. When the bass reaches the final note of the tune, it maintains a tonic pedal point thereon.

The matter of tonic pedal points is significant in *In dulci jubilo*. The composition spends many measures in both implied and literal pedal points on the tonic. This is of course due to the melodic outline of the cantus firmus. Since it appears in the bass, its many reiterations of the tonic A will naturally direct the harmony toward the tonic. Nevertheless, the composer offsets this harmonic stasis through the tireless *perpetuum mobile* of the alto and tenor; where movement of harmony has been taken away in the outer voices, movement of rhythm has been given back to the inner voices.

And the inner voices must be discussed as well. As the cantus firmus receives canonic treatment in soprano and bass, so the accompanimental triplets in alto and tenor are also cast in canon. They appear one measure apart, with the alto entering first, and the canon proceeds at the octave. The canon for the inner voices ends after 24 measures, however. Thereafter considerable rhythmic diversity enters those voices, including half notes.

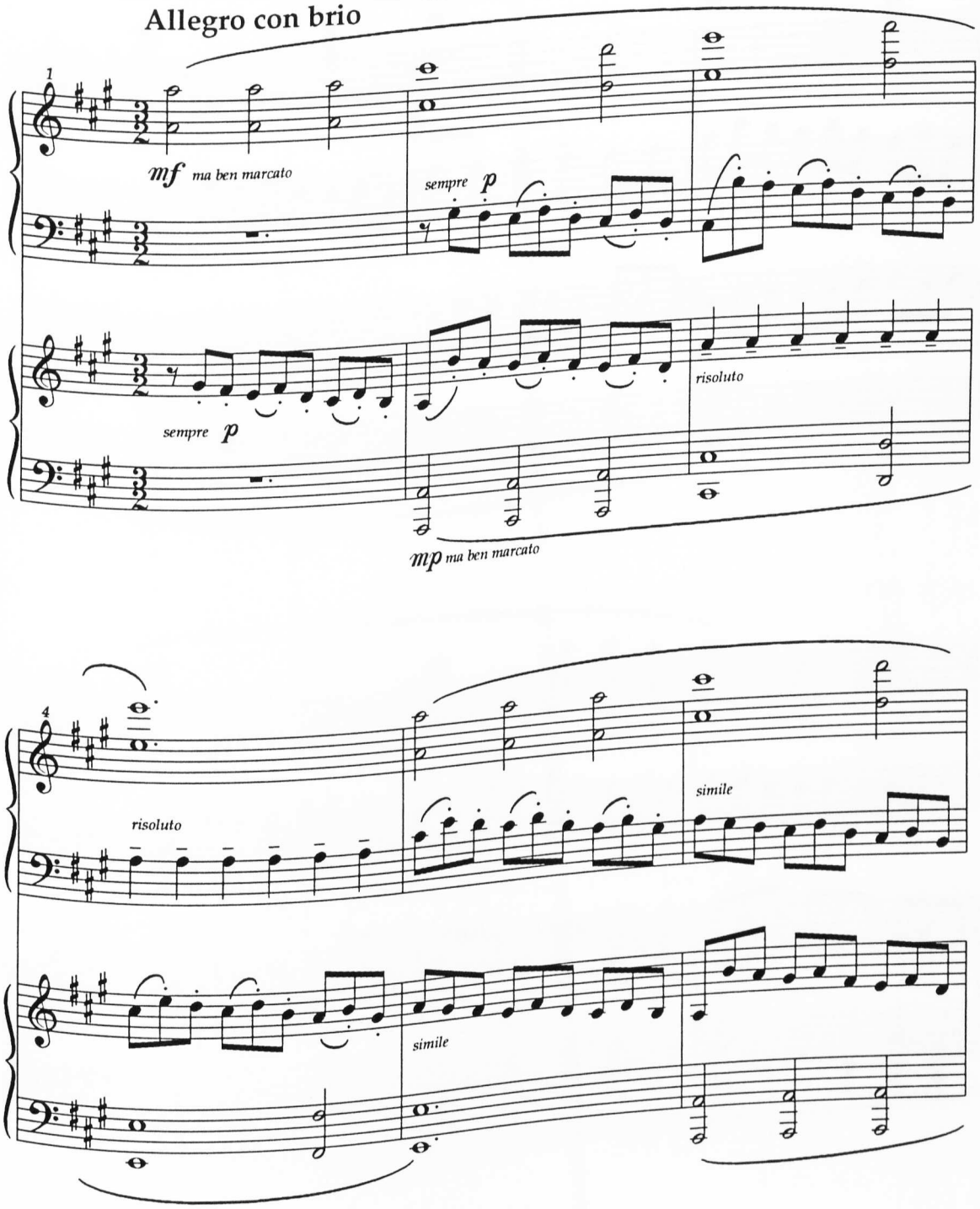
The transcription is in the form of a piano duo. The soprano and tenor

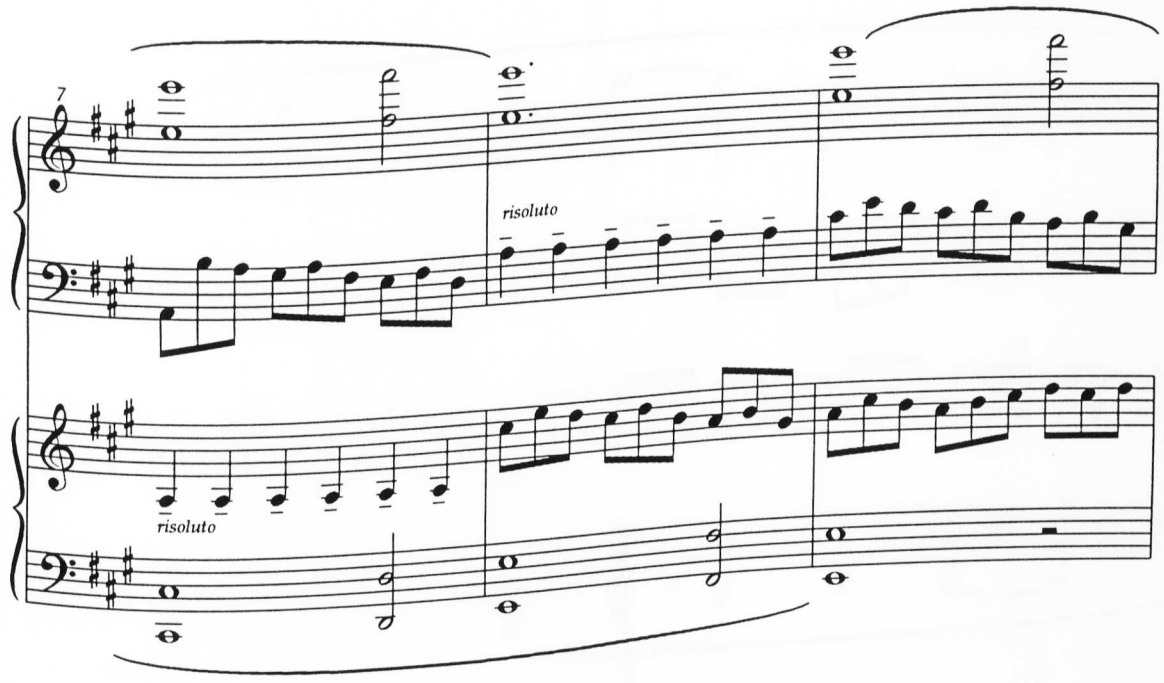
are given to the first piano, the alto and bass to the second. Thus each participates in both canons. The outer voices receive octave doubling since the cantus firmus should surely be of higher profile than the accompaniment. Some suggestions for articulation of the eighth-note triplets are included, but the problem of the quarter-note rhythm discussed above is left to the discretion of the performer. In the final measures some voices have been doubled at the third for additional richness of sonority.

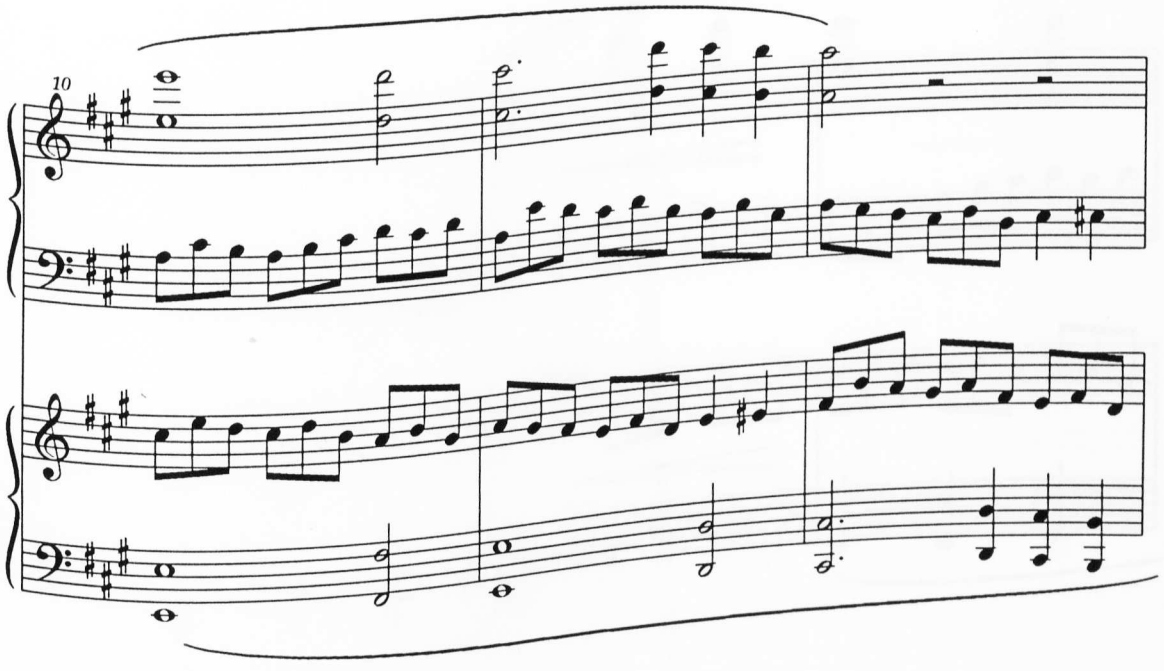
The transcription is of some difficulty, and care should be taken to keep the dynamics restrained and the demeanor *dolce*, as the title requires.

In dulci jubilo

In Sweet Jubilation




7
risoluto
risoluto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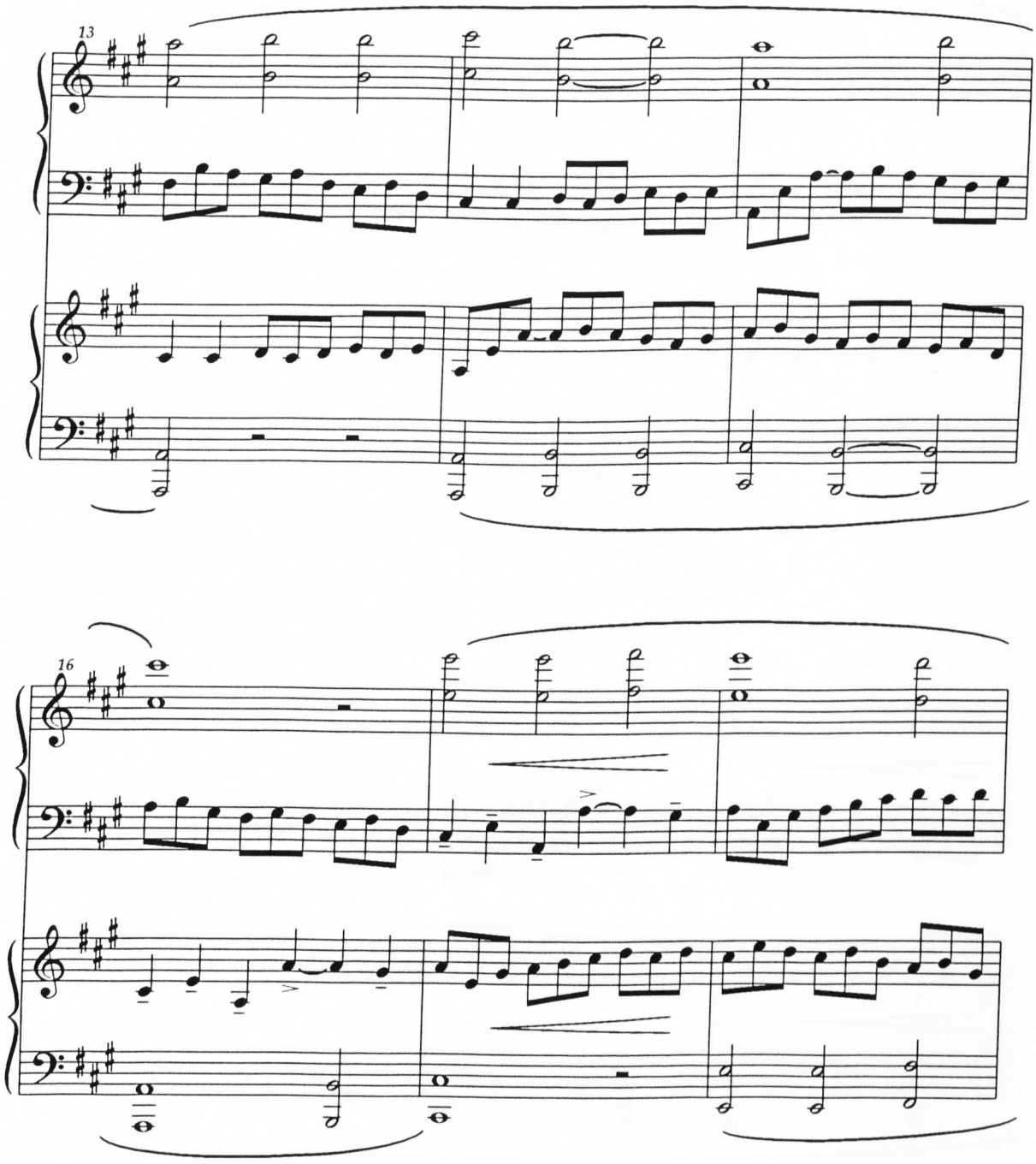
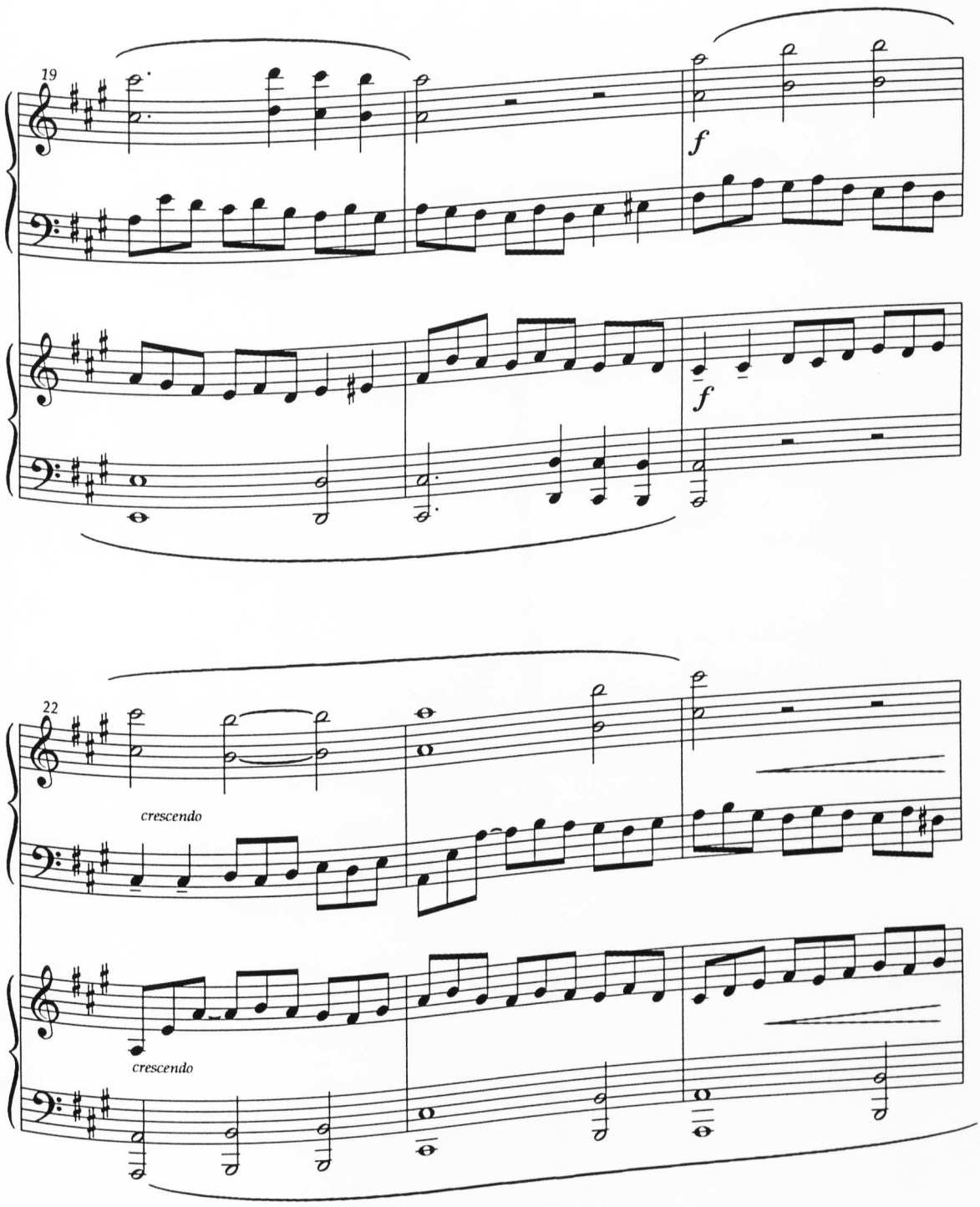
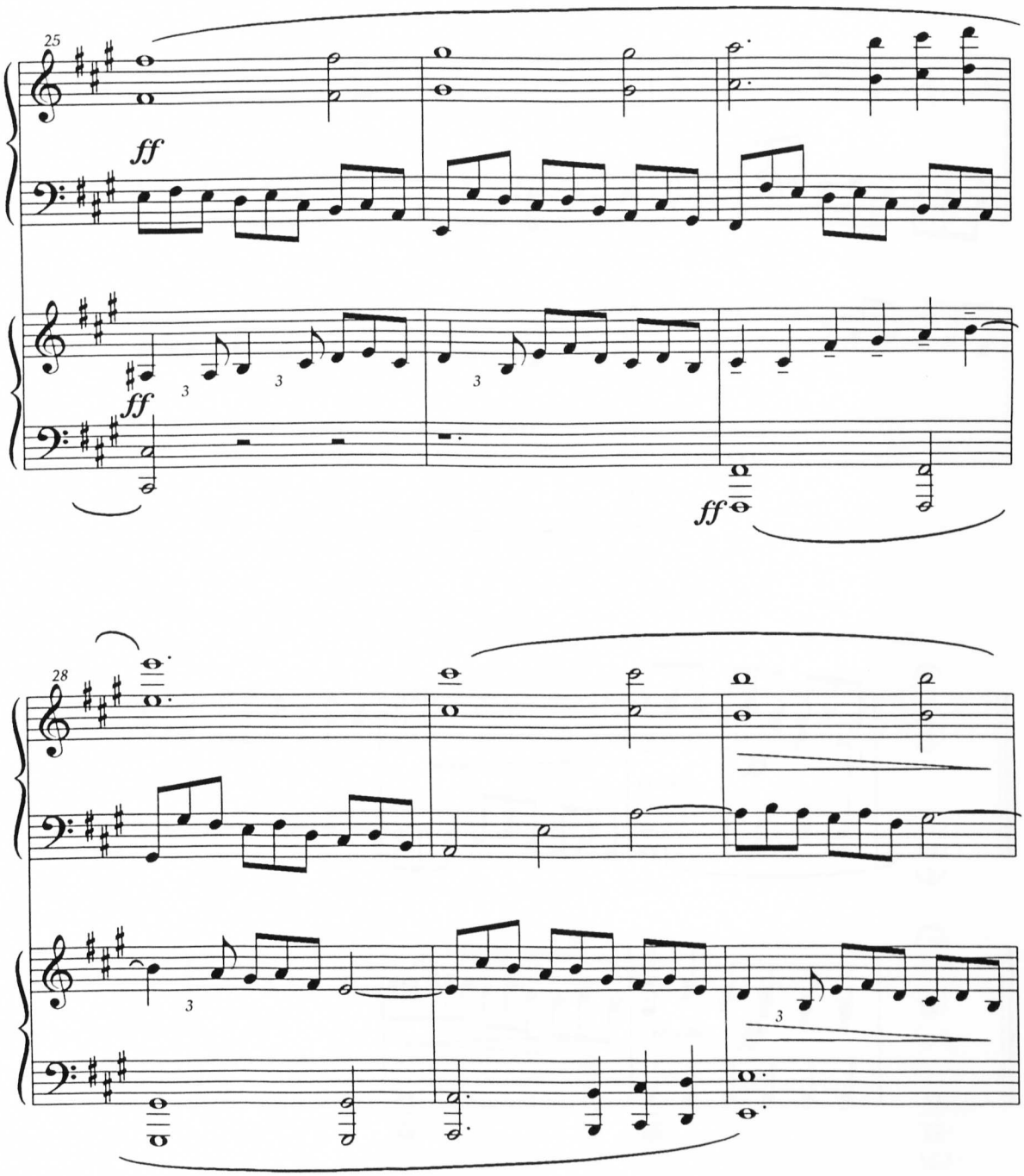
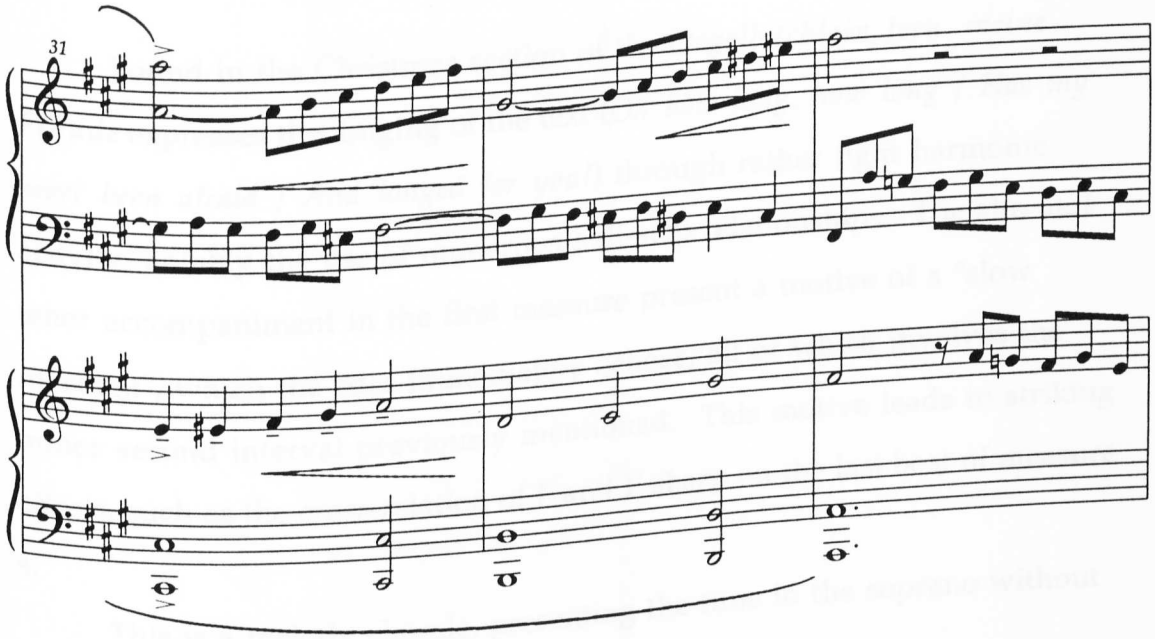

13
16


19
f
f
22
crescendo
crescendo


25
ff
ff
ff
28
3
3
3
3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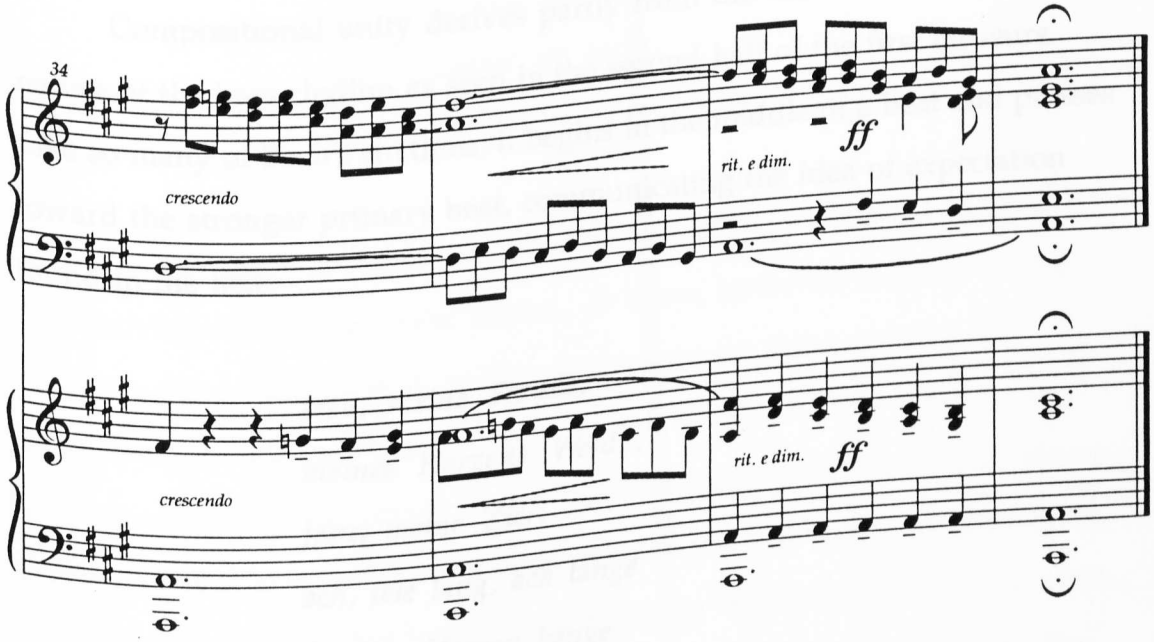

34
crescendo
rit. e dim.
ff
crescendo
rit. e dim.
ff

Jesu, meine Freude

BWV 610

Found in the Christmas section of the *Orgelbüchlein*, *Jesu meine Freude* expresses the longing of the text (*Oh how long, how long / Has my heart been afraid / And longed for you!*) through rather tight harmonic activity, notably the use of numerous half-step relationships. The alto and tenor accompaniment in the first measure present a motive of a "slow mordant", which the bass immediately echoes, all of which involves the minor second interval previously mentioned. This motive leads to striking effects, such as the cross-relation of F and F-sharp on the last beat of measure 4.

This is a melody chorale, presenting the tune in the soprano without interludes between phrases.

Compositional unity derives partly from the almost ostinato-like nature of the bass rhythm as seen in the second half of the first measure. Like so many of Bach's rhythms, it begins in the middle of a beat and presses toward the stronger primary beat, communicating the idea of expectation found in the text:

Jesu, meine Freude,
meines Herzens Weide,
Jesu, meine Zier:
ach, wie lang, ach lange
ist dem Herzen bange
und verlangt nach dir!

Gottes Lamm,

mein Bräutigam,

ausser dir soll mir auf Erden

nichts sonst Liebers werden.

(J. Franck, 1653)

Jesu, my joy,

Pasture of my heart,

Jesu, my jewel:

Oh how long, how long

Has my heart been afraid,

And longed for you!

Lamb of God,

My bridegroom,

Apart from you there shall be for me

Nothing dearer on earth.

(Translation: Peter Williams)

In transcription *Jesu meine Freude* was left in its original form save for the doubling of the bass at the octave. At times, however, the bass doubling was found to be impractical, as in measure 4 on the third and fourth semiquavers of the bar. At that point the left hand would be required to accommodate both the octave in the bass and the tenor a minor third above--nearly impossible for all but the most expansive hand. Thus the upper bass notes were deleted at that location, allowing the left hand to play open tenths.

Occasional large stretches between voices were solved by trading the

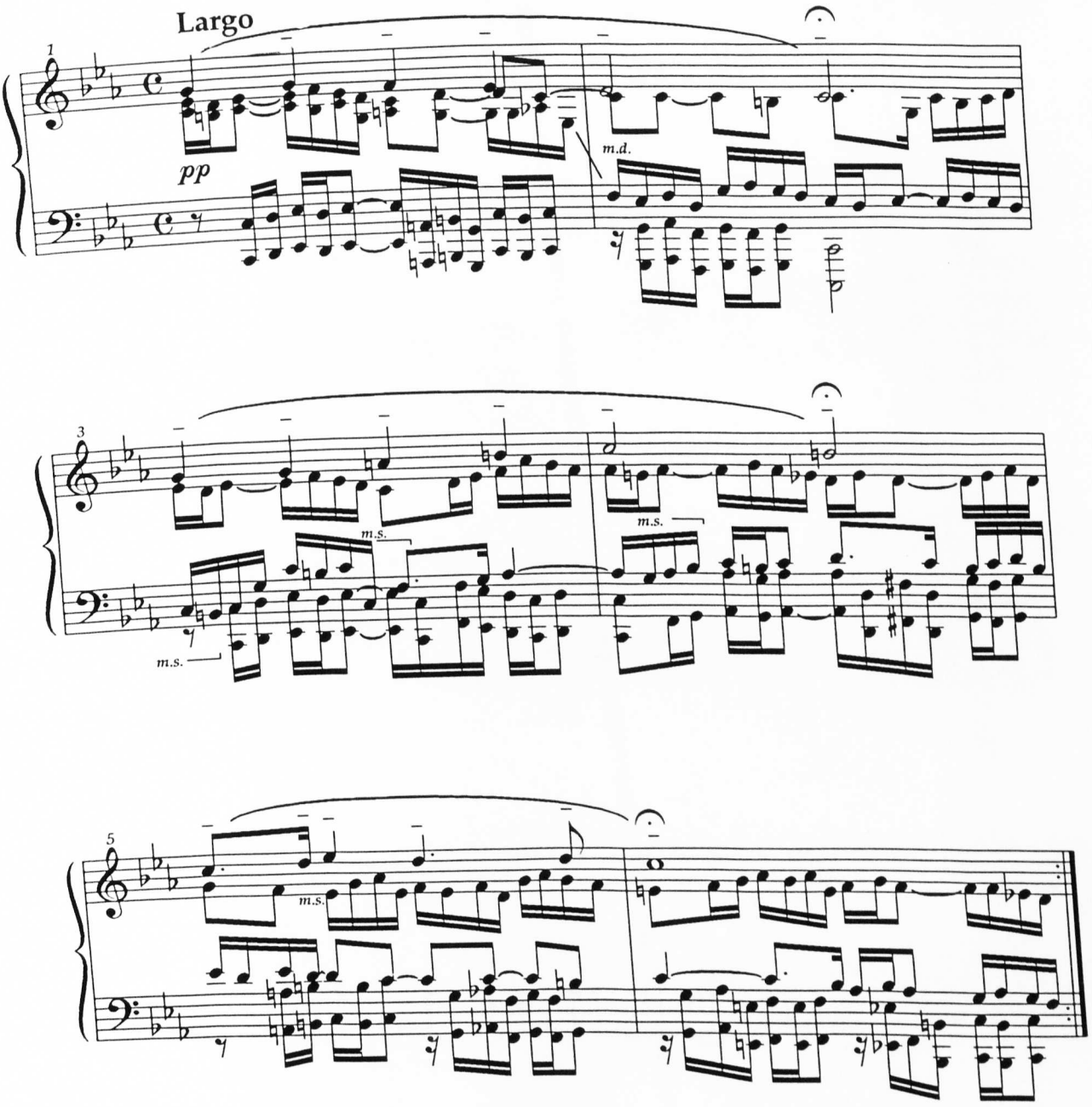
tenor back and forth from right to left hand. This is indicated in the manner of typesetting and should be clear to the performer.

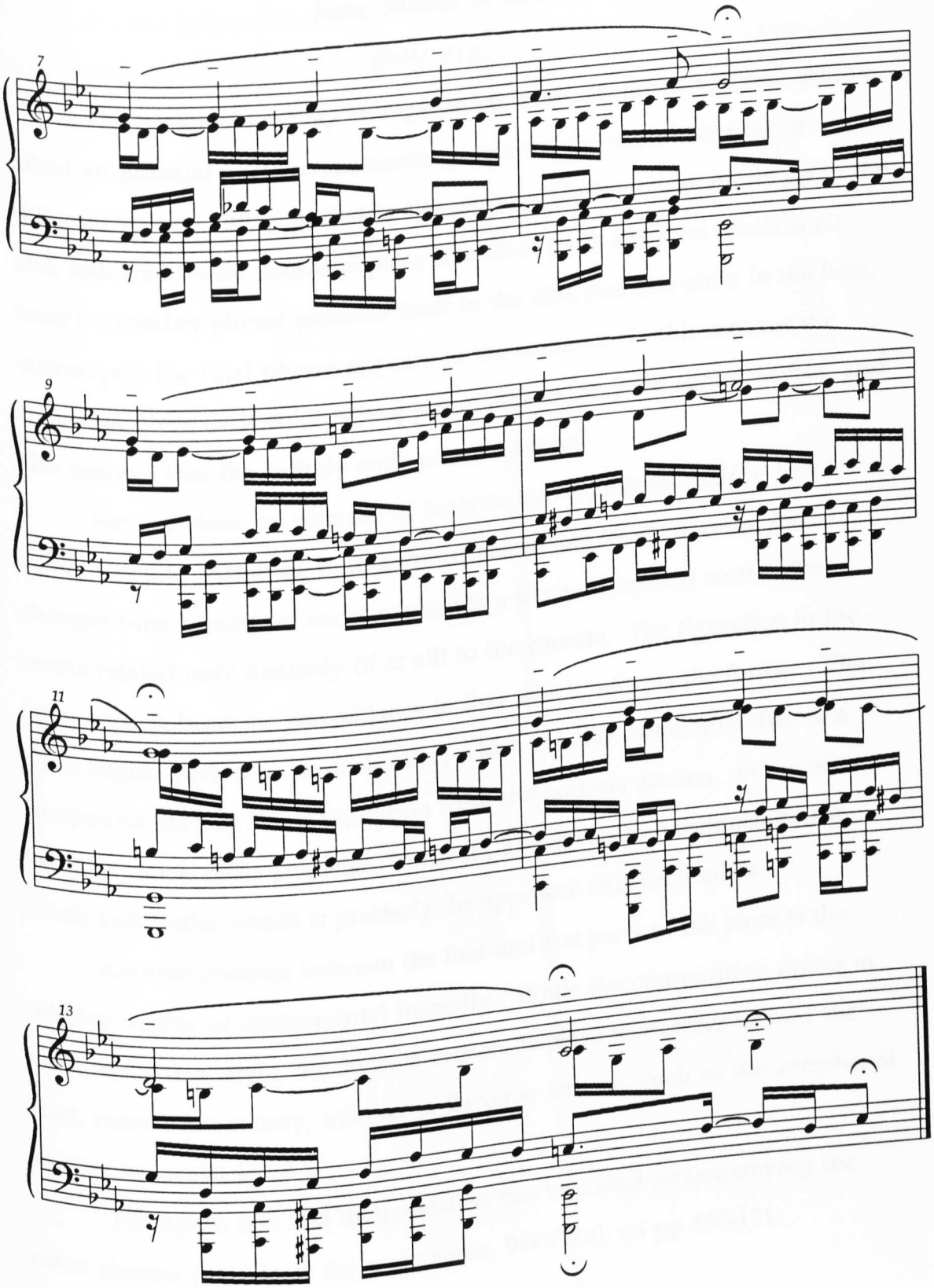
The transcription is of moderate difficulty, although the difficulty increases considerably for those lacking a large hand.

Naturally, the bass octaves must be played in a subdued manner so as not to overwhelm the chorale melody, which, for its part, should be projected plainly.

Jesu, meine Freude

Jesus, My Joy




7
9
11
13

Jesu, meine Freude

BWV 713

This composition may be regarded to some degree as a phrase chorale, albeit an unusual one; the successive phrases of the chorale appear in different voices. Entering first in the soprano, the tune next shows up in the alto, followed by the bass (the piece is in three parts and thus contains no tenor). Another phrase presents itself in the alto, and one more in the bass, whereupon the final phrase appears in the soprano. In this manner the composer gives each voice two opportunities to carry the cantus firmus, and also ensures that the melody ends where it began.

Nevertheless, an element of fantasia also manifests itself in *Jesu, meine Freude*. After the cantus firmus has recited its six phrases, Bach changes time signatures and commences a freely-composed section that seems related only distantly (if at all) to the chorale. The figuration in the latter section bears no resemblance to that which informs the former. The piece begins with a disjunct alto line, which contains some qualitites of a compound melody. The figuration from the fantasia section, on the other hand, is much more stepwise, "tuneful", and given to harmonization in thirds and sixths, which is precisely the approach that Bach takes.

Another contrast between the first and last parts of the piece is the relative degree of contrapuntal intensity. While the composition opens in strict imitatative style, the fantasia section displays tendencies toward the later, more declamatory, manner of Baroque writing, such as the antiphonal scoring in measures 73-77.

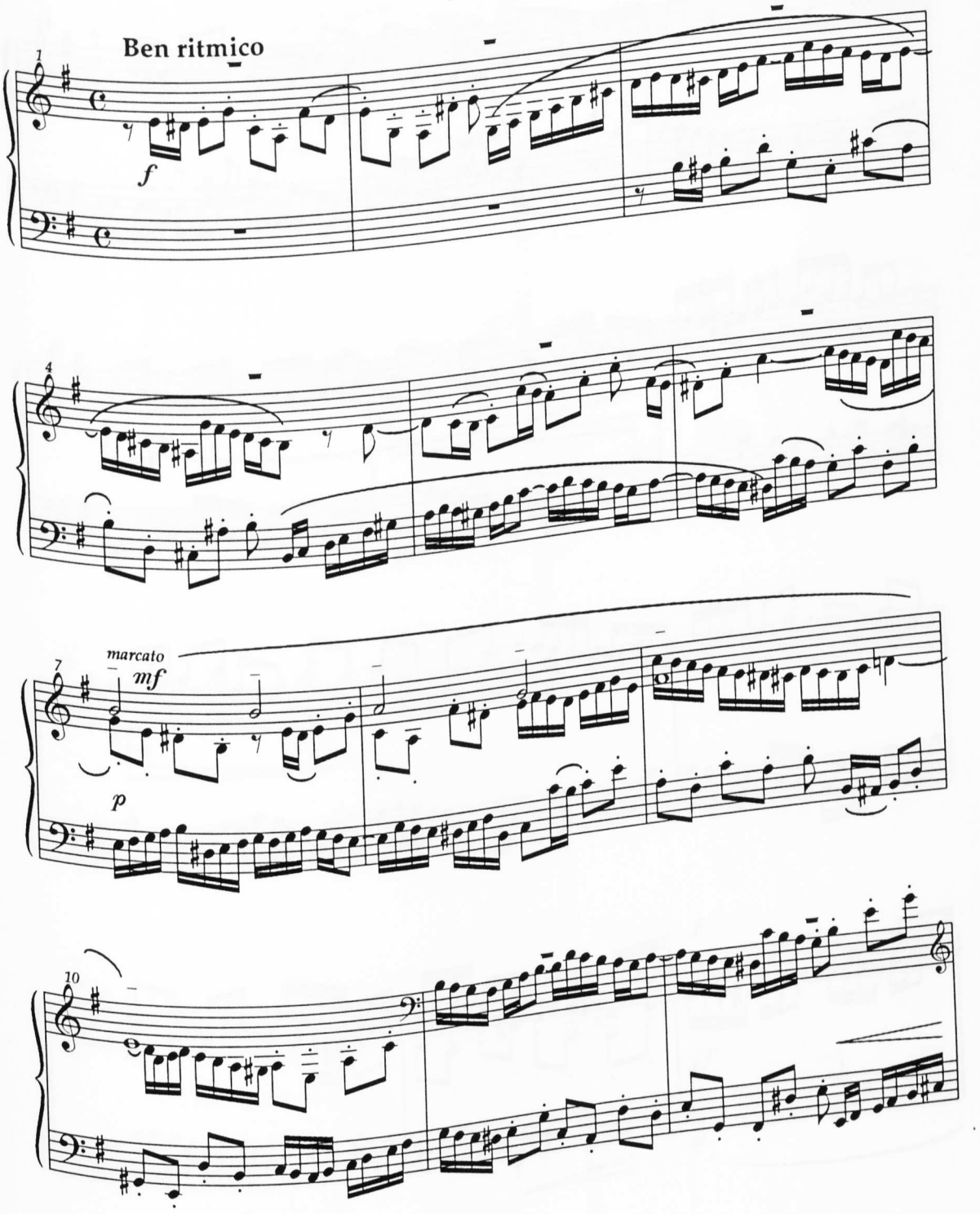
The hymn text and its translation can be found accompanying the other chorale prelude of the same name, BWV 610, on pp 150-151.

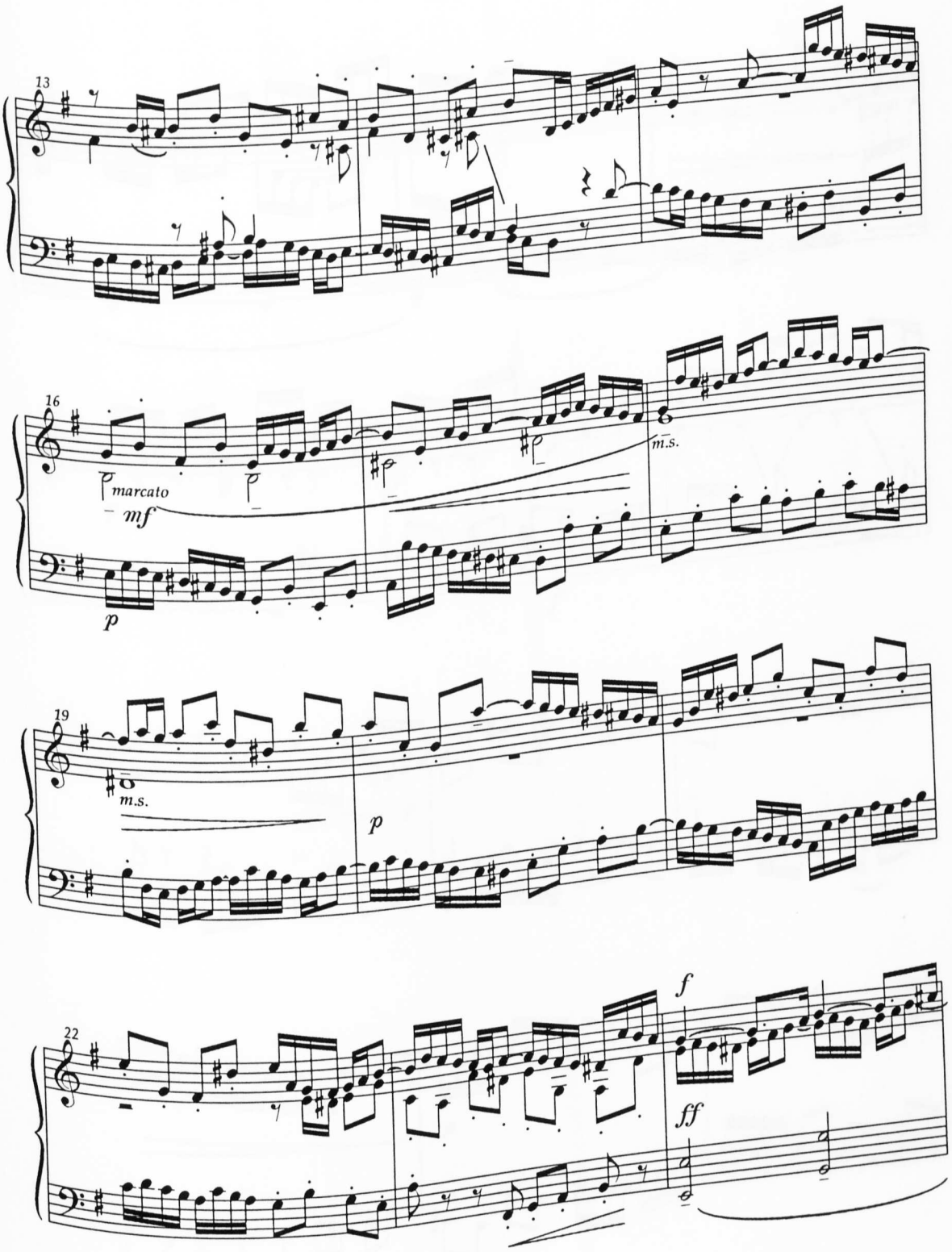
For the piano transcription of *Jesu, meine Freude* this writer has suggested certain elements of articulation and phrasing. Most noticeably, the opening motive features a distinct and forthright *staccato* treatment, although upon the entrance of the cantus firmus the accompaniment is to subdue itself. Some bass passages have been doubled in octaves, as an extra richness of sonority seemed appropriate.

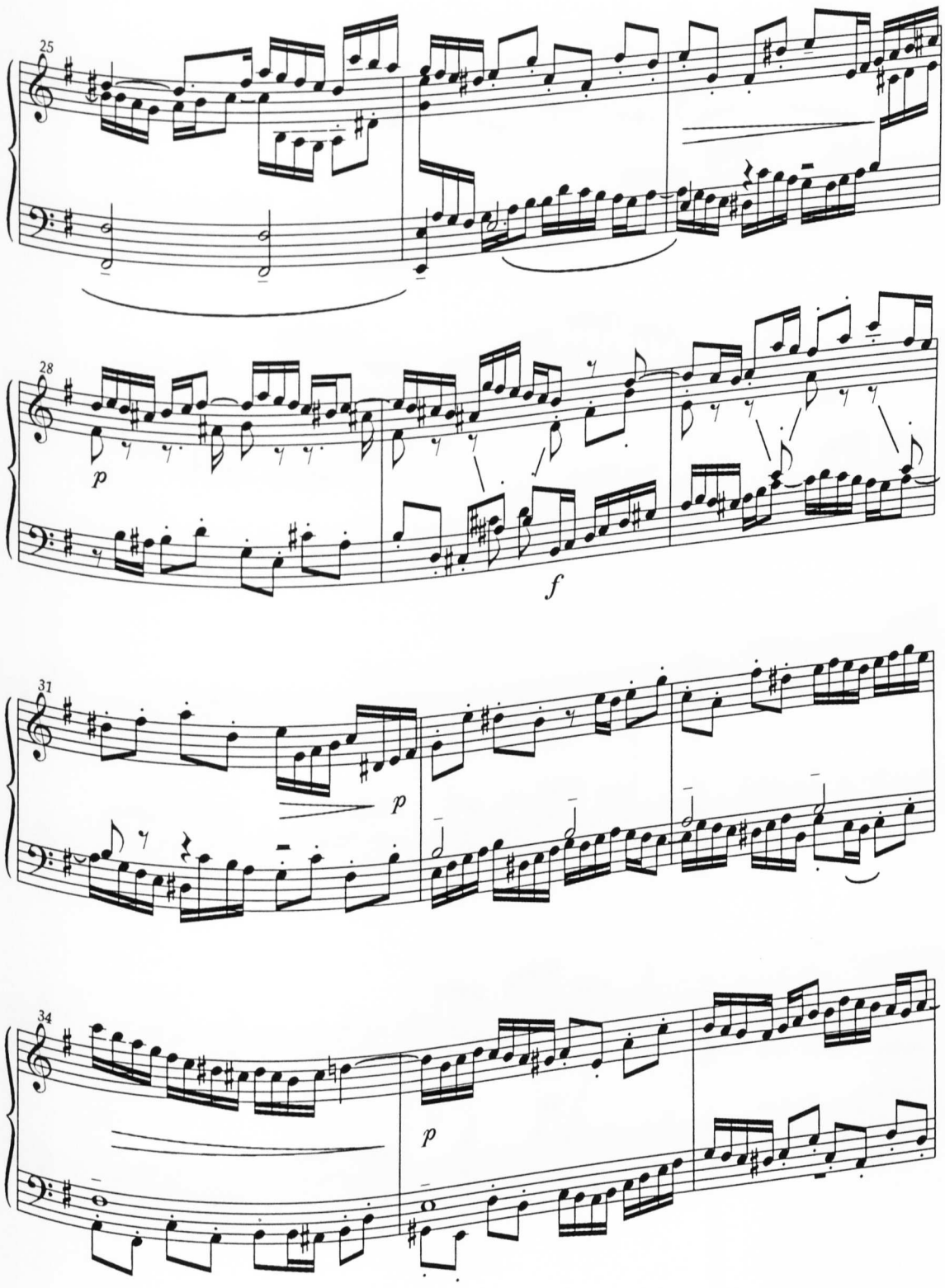
The composition is of considerable difficulty.

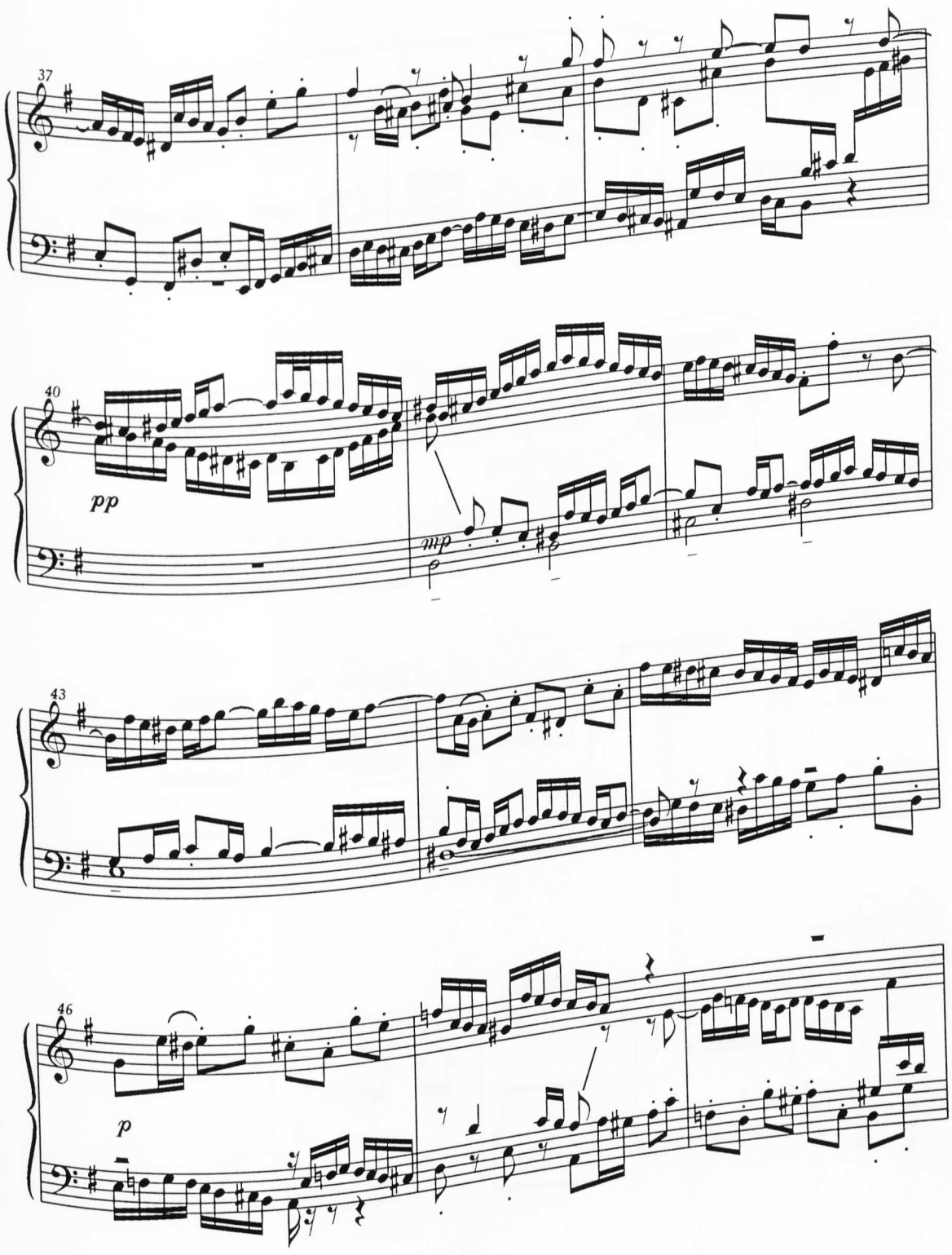
Jesu, meine Freude

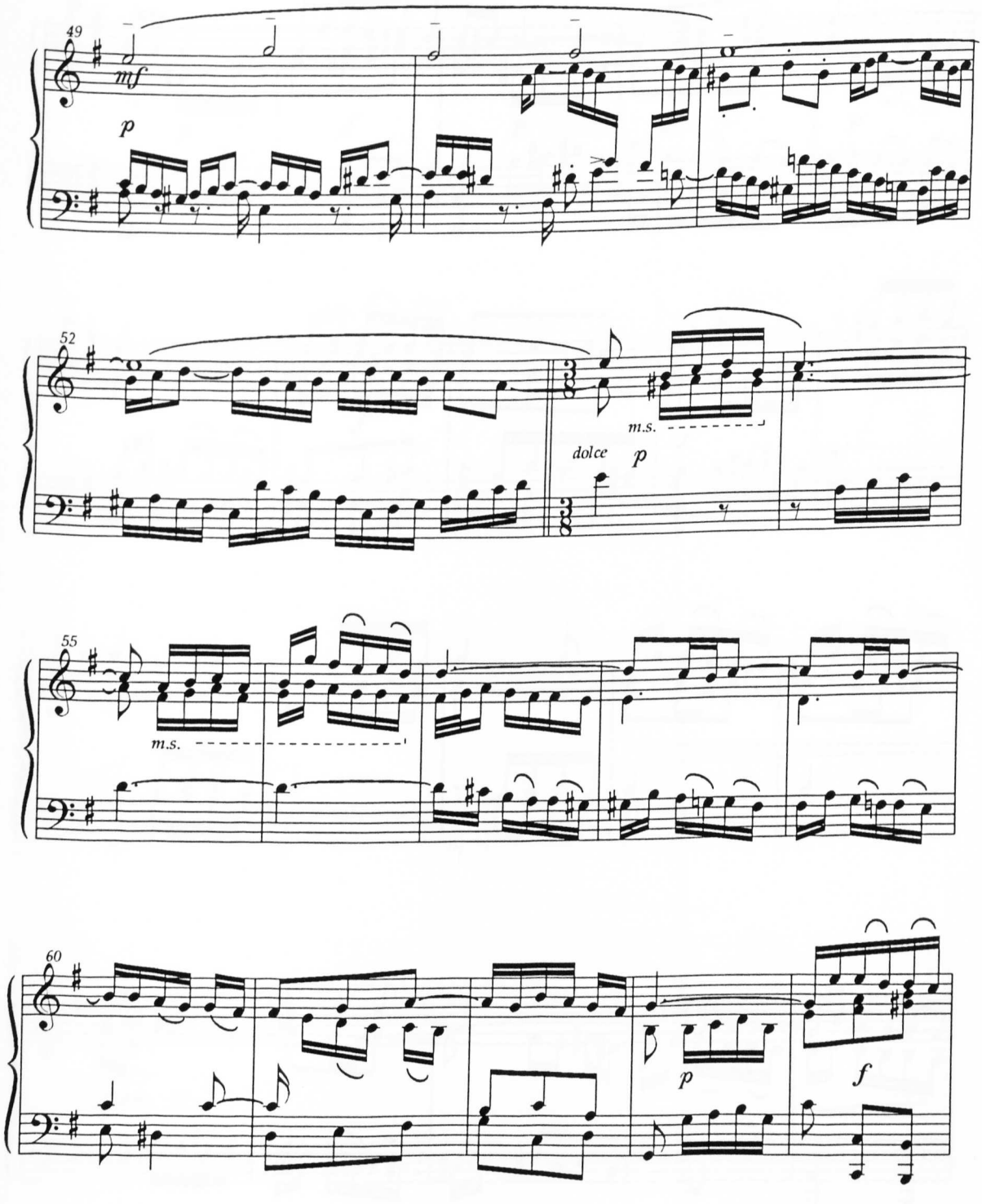
Jesus, My Joy

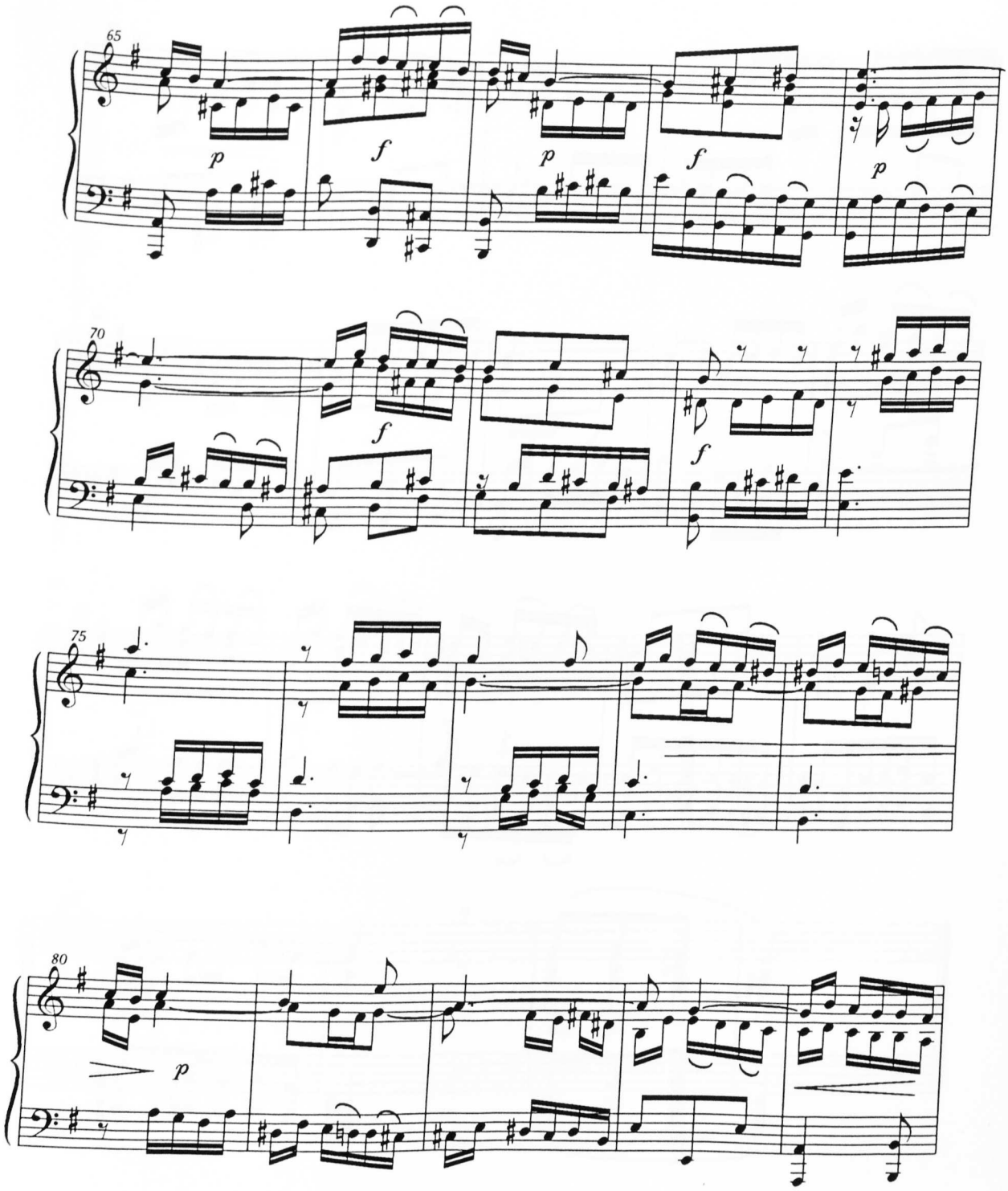


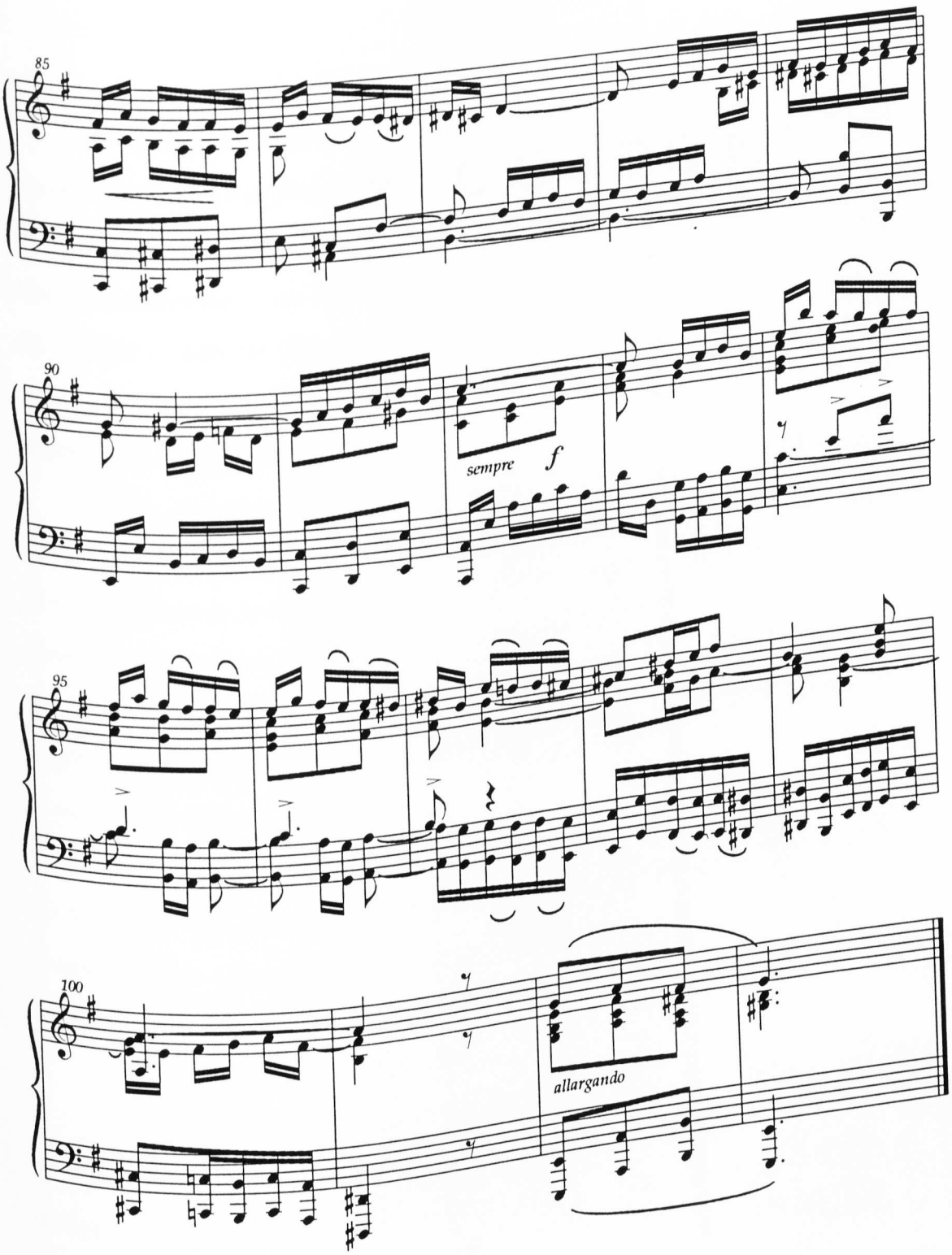

13
16
marcato
mf
m.s.
p
19
m.s.
p
22
f
ff


25
28
p
f
31
p
34
p


37
40
pp
mp
43
46
p


49
mf
p
52
m.s.
dolce
p
55
m.s.
60
p
f


65
p
f
p
f
p
70
f
f
75
80
p


85
90
sempre
f
95
100
allargando

Jesu, meines Lebens Leben

BWV 1107

Jesu, meines Lebens Leben is an unusual specimen of the cantus firmus variety in that the successive phrases are placed in different voices. Furthermore, the customary episodes between phrases vary from four and one half measures to no episode at all. Interestingly, the cantus appears in each voice except the alto. The phrase prior to the time signature change is set as a four-part chorale, with simple quarter notes decorated by means of eighth-note passing tones.

After changing to twelve-eight time, a point of imitation ensues, the theme of which would seem to be related to the hymn tune only tenuously, if at all. (The conspicuous descent of a fourth does not occur in the cantus, except perhaps if considered as an "outline-interval", that is, as the total intervallic distance covered during the course of a phrase.) In measure 17 the cantus reappears in the bass, this time in dotted quarters, and concludes the composition with its two phrases.

For the sake of clarity, most of the sixteenth notes in the first section of the piece have been marked *staccato*, contrasting thereby with the *legato* cantus firmus. Few doublings appear in the opening section; in measure 9, however, where in Bach's original the tenor drops out, are extra notes added.

The difficulty level of the piece is high.

The fermatas are intended to mark the ending of each phrases and should not be interpreted as long pauses, except immediately before the time change. The aforementioned "vocal" setting of the cantus firmus does receive considerable augmentation of sonority, with the bass doubled in

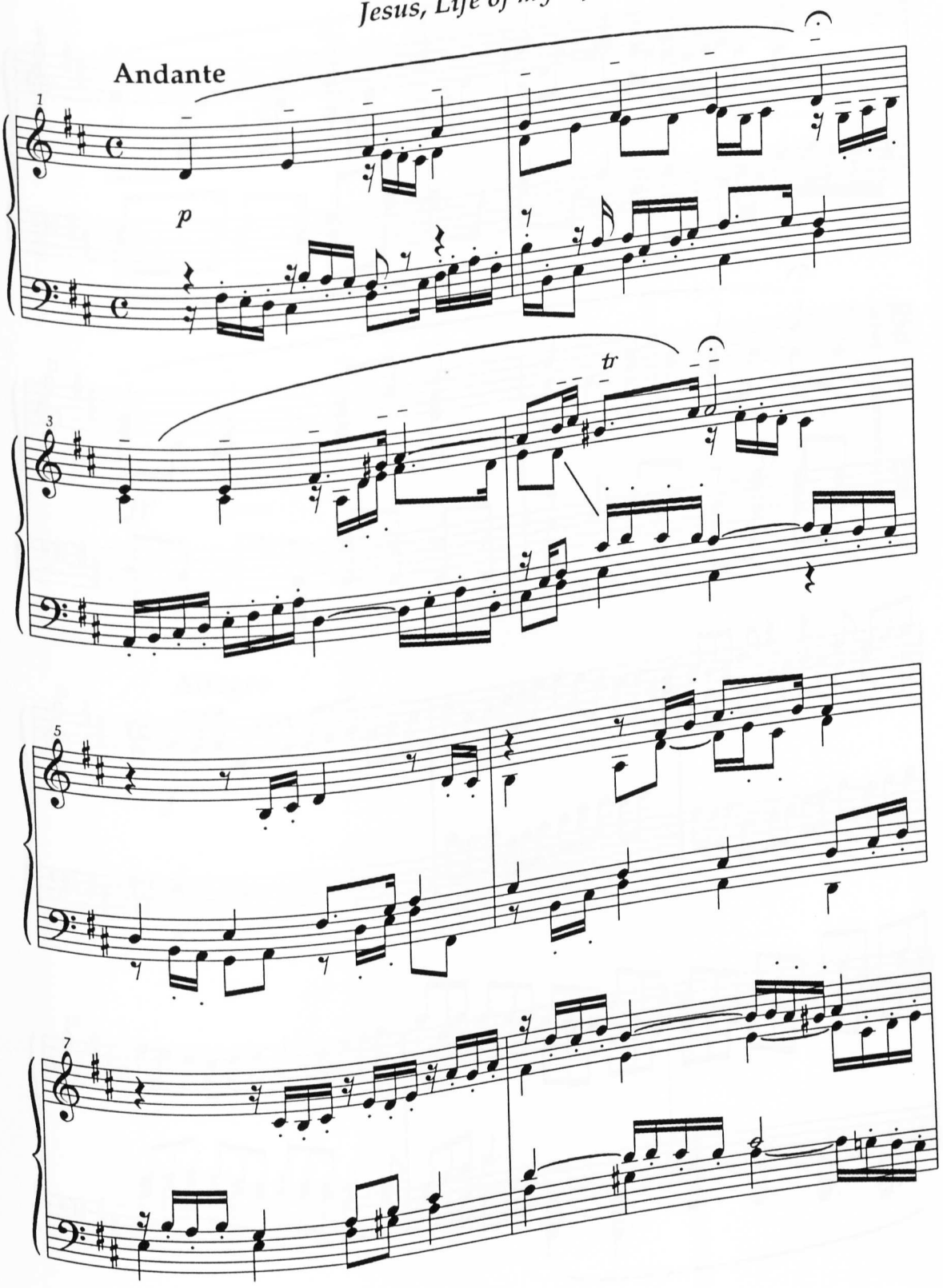
octaves and the chords filled out as much as possible. Similarly, the fughetta is altered, sometimes for sonority, sometimes for ease (or at least possibility) of execution. Where the bass recites its cantus firmus phrase, the two upper voices are too distant from each other and from the bass to be managed by two hands. Thus some notes in the lower voice are transposed upward so as to be played by the right hand. The cantus firmus, for its part, is placed in octaves.

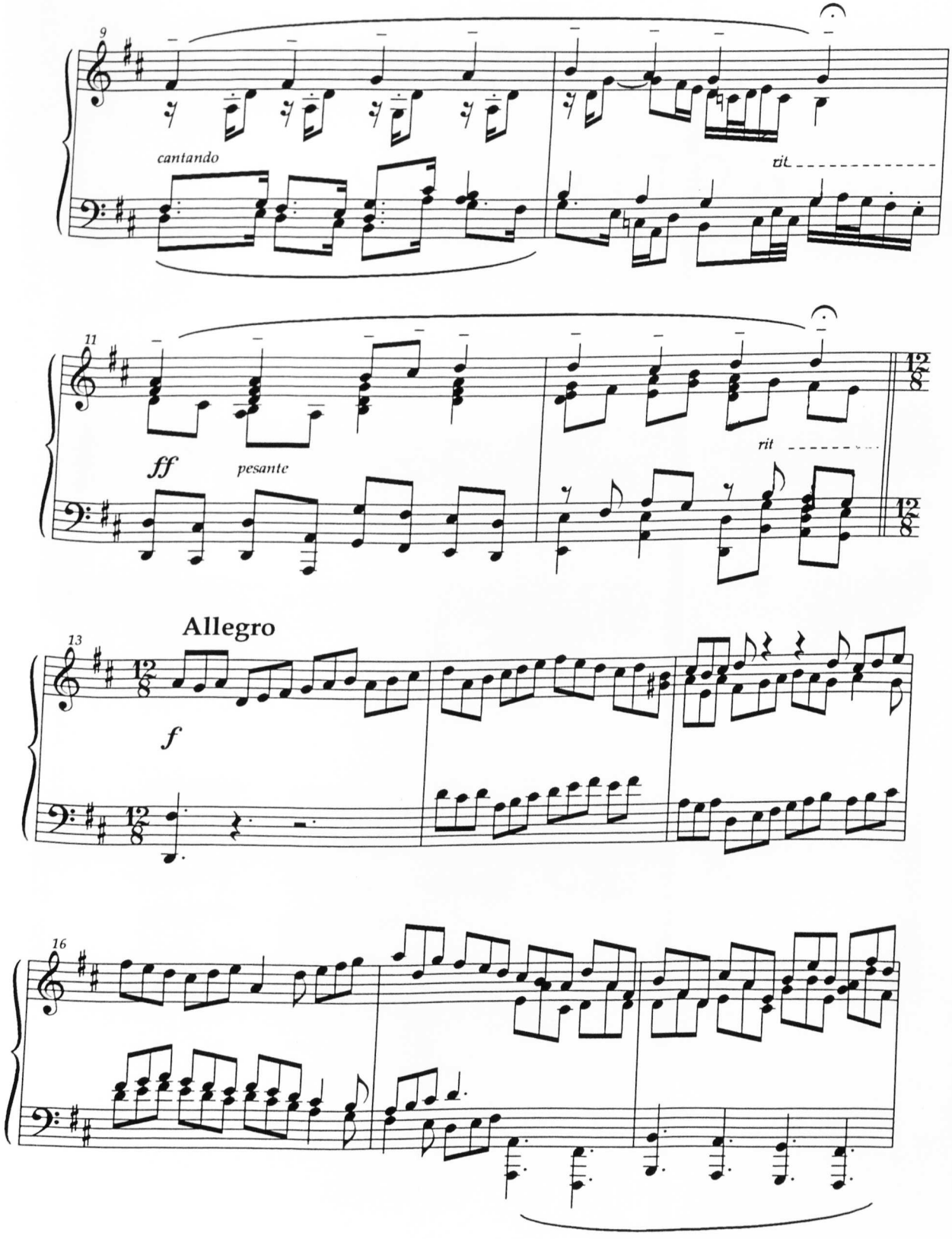
Jesu, meines Lebens Leben,
Jesu, meines Todes Tod,
der du dich für mich gegeben
in die tiefste Seelennot,
in das äußerste Verderben,
nur daß ich nicht möchte sterben:
Tausend, tausendmal sei dir,
liebster Jesu Dank dafür.
(Ernst Christoph Homburg, 1659)

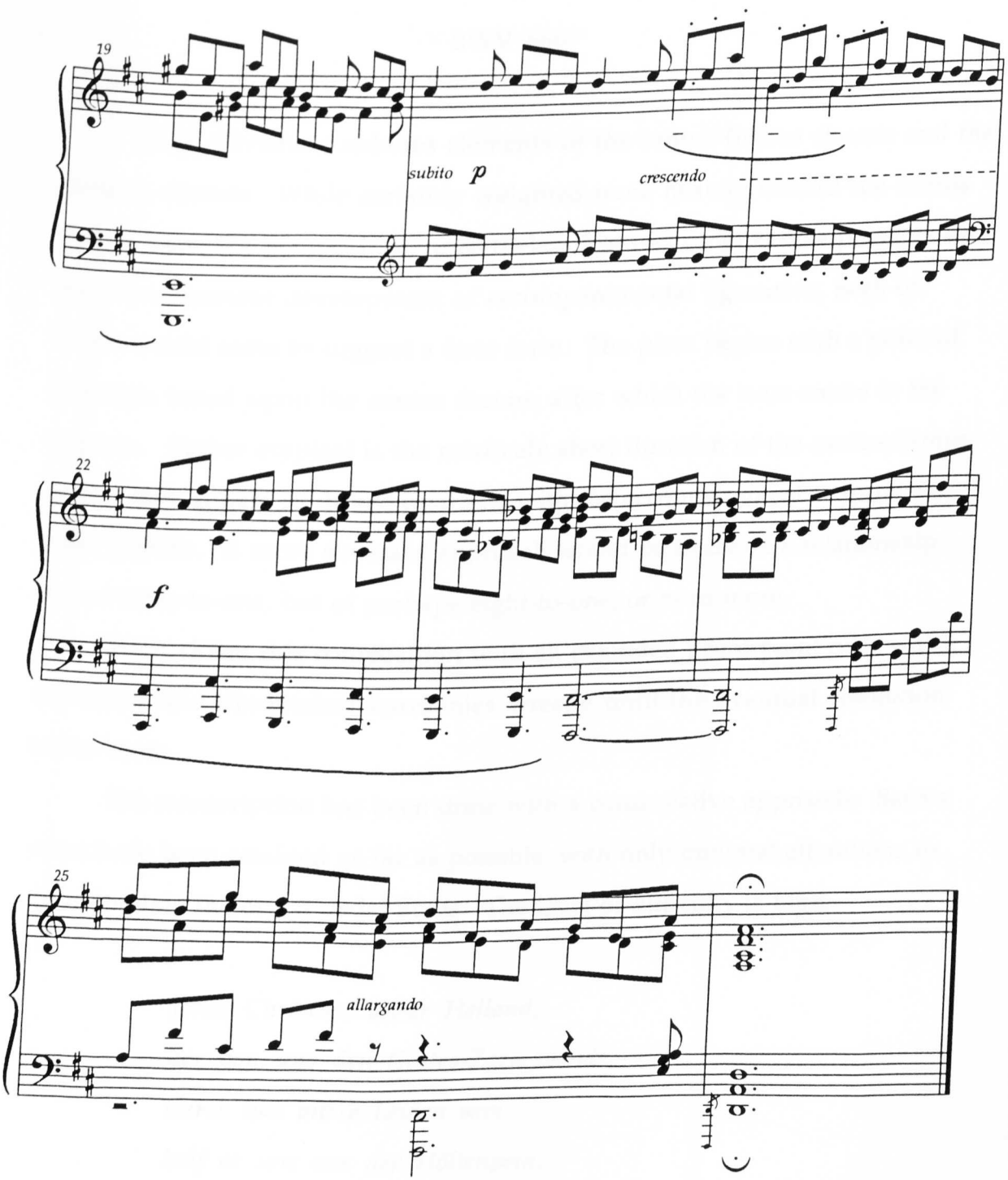
Jesus, Life of my life,
Jesus, Death of my death,
You have given yourself for me
In my soul's deepest anguish,
In the severest corruption,
Only that I may not perish:
A thousand, thousand times may you be
Thanked, beloved Jesus, for what you have done.
(Translation: John Mortensen)

Jesu, meines Lebens Leben

Jesus, Life of my Life




9
cantando
rit
11
ff
pesante
rit
Allegro
13
f
16


19
subito p
crescendo
22
f
25
allargando

Jesus Christus, unser Heiland

BWV 666

Jesus Christus combines elements of the cantus firmus chorale and the fantasia chorale. While certainly weighted more heavily toward the cantus firmus style, the composition nevertheless features cadenza-like passages as well as a constant development of accompanimental figuration, both of which would seem to suggest a freer form. The piece begins with a point of imitation based upon the cantus firmus, after which the tune enters in the soprano. Rather atypical is the relatively short duration of the cantus firmus notes; they appear as dotted quarters, with the accompaniment in groups of three eighths. A more standard approach would be to create a relationship not of three-to-one, but of perhaps eight-to-one, or even more.

Bach closes this composition with an extended pedal point over which dominant and diminished harmonies wrestle until the eventual resolution to the tonic.

The transcription has been done with a conservative approach; Bach's notes have been retained as far as possible, with only minimal alterations to accommodate the organ pedal notes. The level of difficulty is high.

Jesus Christus, unser Heiland,
der von uns den Gottes-Zorn wandt,
durch das bittre Leiden sein
half er uns aus der Höllenpein.

(Martin Luther, 1524)

Jesus Christ, our Savior,

Who turns the wrath of God from us,

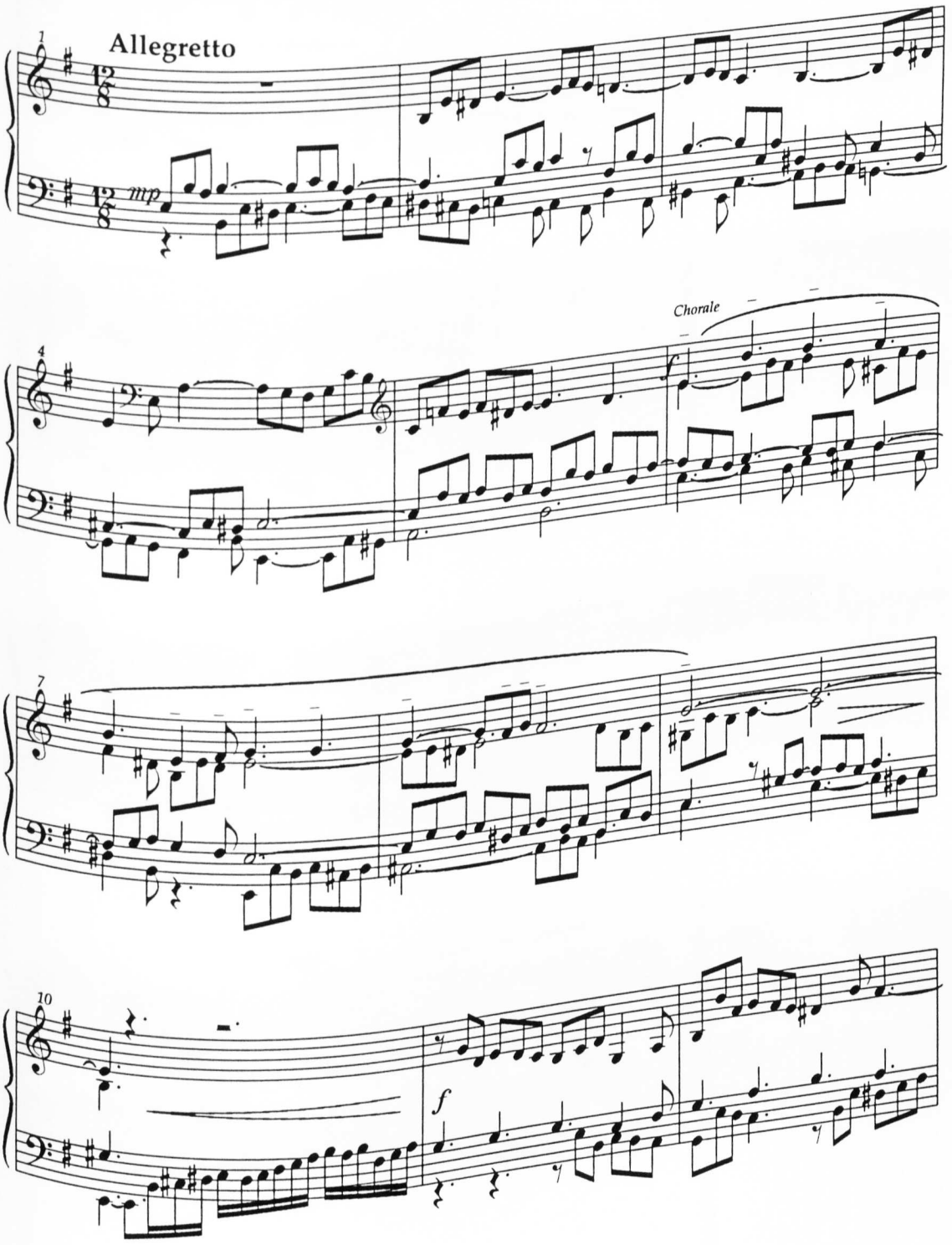
Through his bitter sufferings

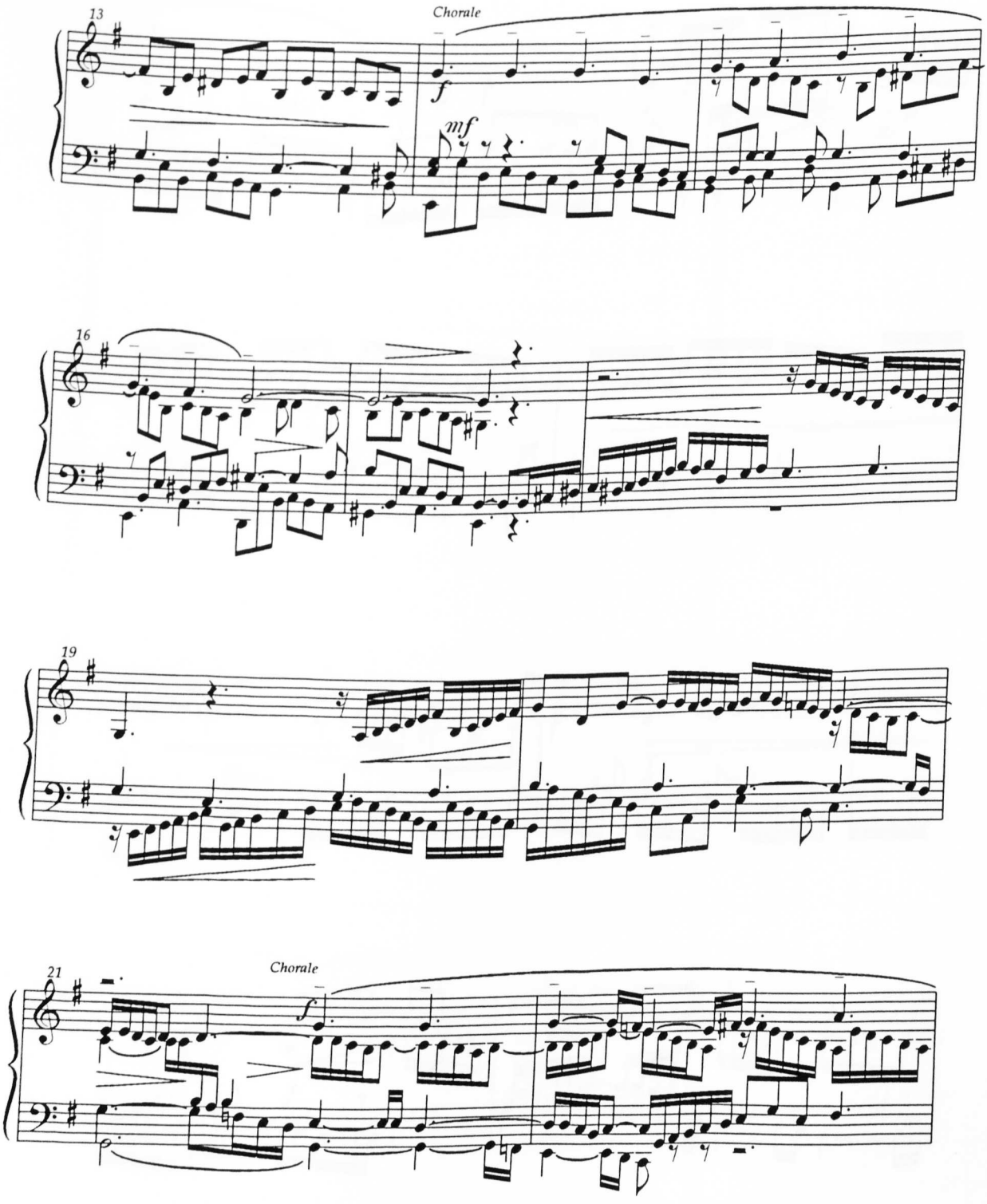
Has rescued us from the pains of Hell.

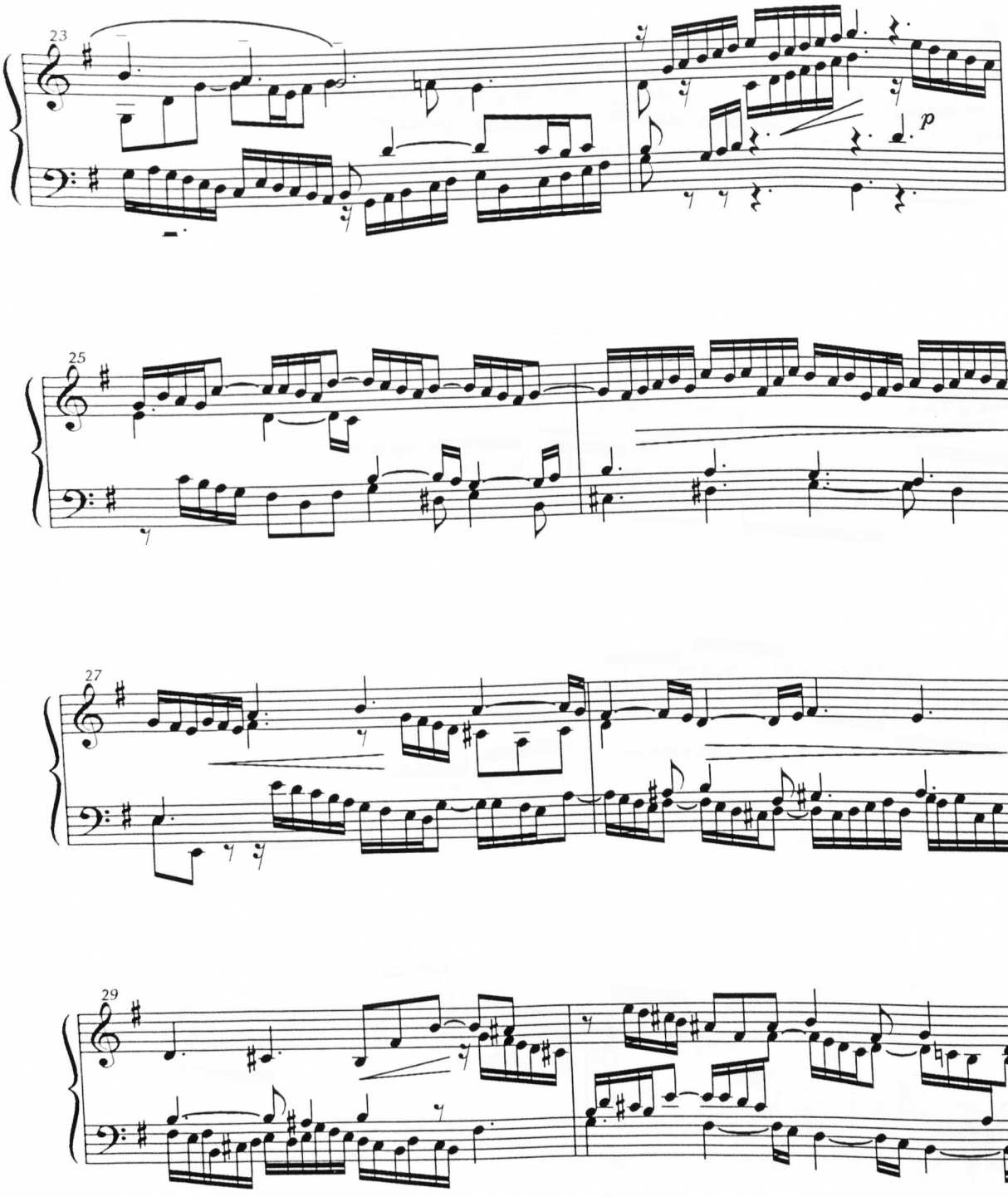
(Translation: John Mortensen)

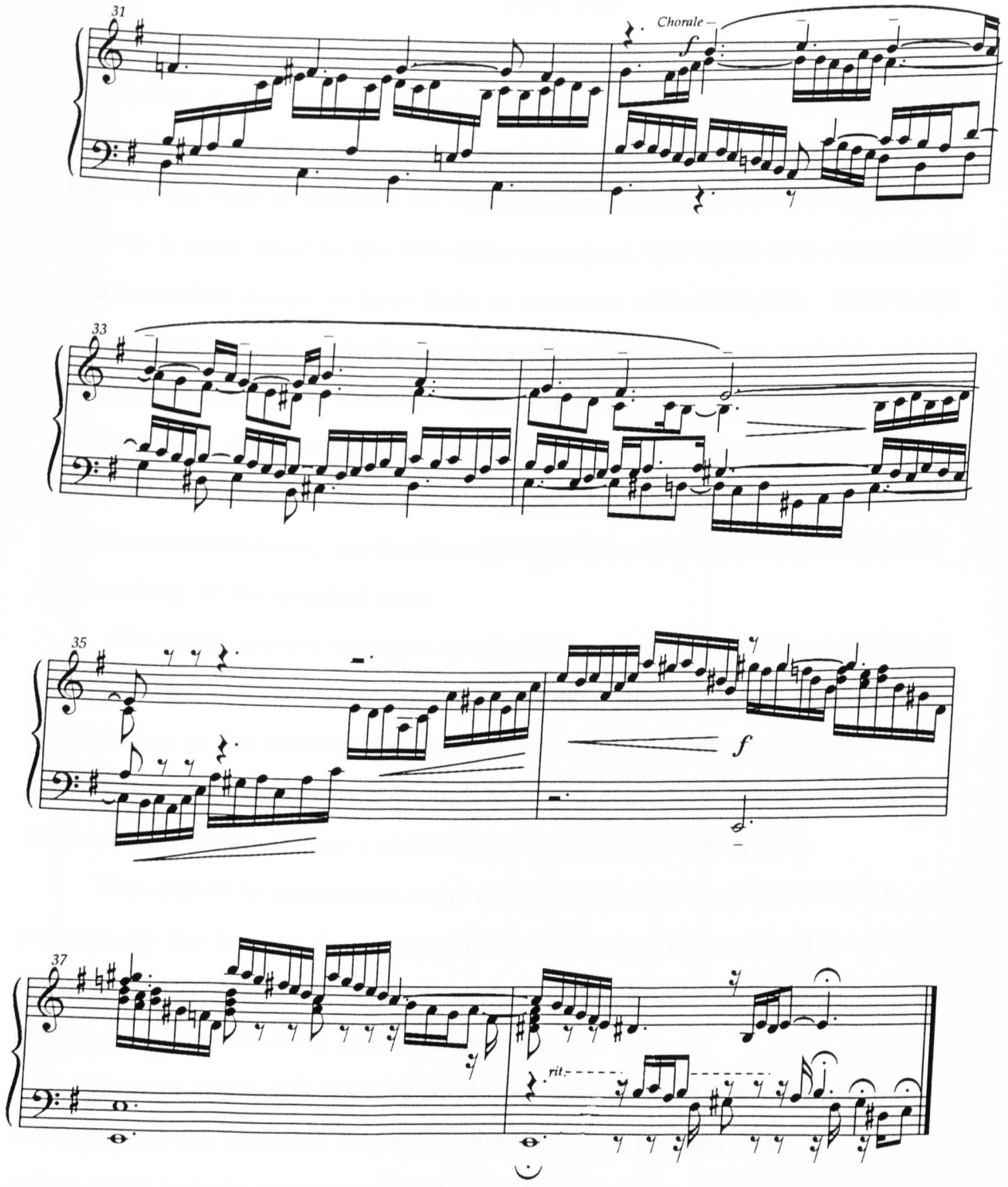
Jesus Christus, unser Heiland

Jesus Christ, our Savior




13
Chorale
f
mf
16
19
21
Chorale
f


23
p
25
27
29


31
Chorale
f
33
35
f
37
rit.

Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier

BWV 730

One of five compositions based on the chorale *Liebster Jesu*, this piece treats the cantus firmus in ornamental style. The recognizability of the florid form of the tune is uneven; the relationship between it and the original melody is quite clear in the first three measures, but in the sixth measure the ornamentation seems to have little in common with the hymn. That is, an ornamented melody typically employs the original notes on or near important beats, but in some instances in this piece, the original notes are nowhere near the ornamentation, either on important beats or elsewhere. Nevertheless, when the key of G, the phrase lengths, and the general melodic contour are considered, no doubt exists that this composition represents an out-working of the original tune.

No single motive emerges as a unifying element, whether rhythmic or melodic. However, a certain similarity can be observed among the rhythmic diminutions of the melody; the combinations of sixteenths and thirty-seconds are just homogenous enough to sound organized, while at the same time varied enough so that a strict thematic unity does not appear.

This stands in contrast to some of the practices of the *Orgelbüchlein*, particularly the kind of thoroughgoing thematic significance found in all the voices (see *Alle Menschen müssen sterben -- Orgelbüchlein* version-- included in this collection of transcriptions).

None of these observations imply any deficiency in this composition, however. On the contrary, it is an admirable piece. The gracefully ornamented melody expresses well the quiet, submissive sentiment of the

text; and certain harmonic effects, such as the accented passing tones in the bass in measure 3, are noteworthy.

Because of the simplicity and quietude inherent in *Liebster Jesu*, a transcriptional approach of simplicity seemed appropriate. Therefore, the most literal transfer of notes from organ to piano was undertaken. No voices received any doublings or other augmentations, with the exception of the bass in the final measure. For the most part the right hand plays the soprano and alto, with the other two voices in the left hand, although at times redistributions seemed efficacious. In addition, large stretches for both hands were unavoidable; the right hand must negotiate a tenth (which could be discreetly broken) in measure 8, while the left hand encounters an eleventh and a twelfth in measure 4. The latter situation may call for pedalling which allows the sustaining of the bass while the hand moves up to play the tenor line.

The piece is of moderate difficulty.

The text appears below:

Liebster Jesu, wer sind hier,
dich und dein Wort anzuhören;
lenke Sinnen und Begier
auf die süssen Himmelslehren,
dass die Herzen von der Erden
ganz dir gezogen werden.

(Tobias Clausnitzer, 1663)

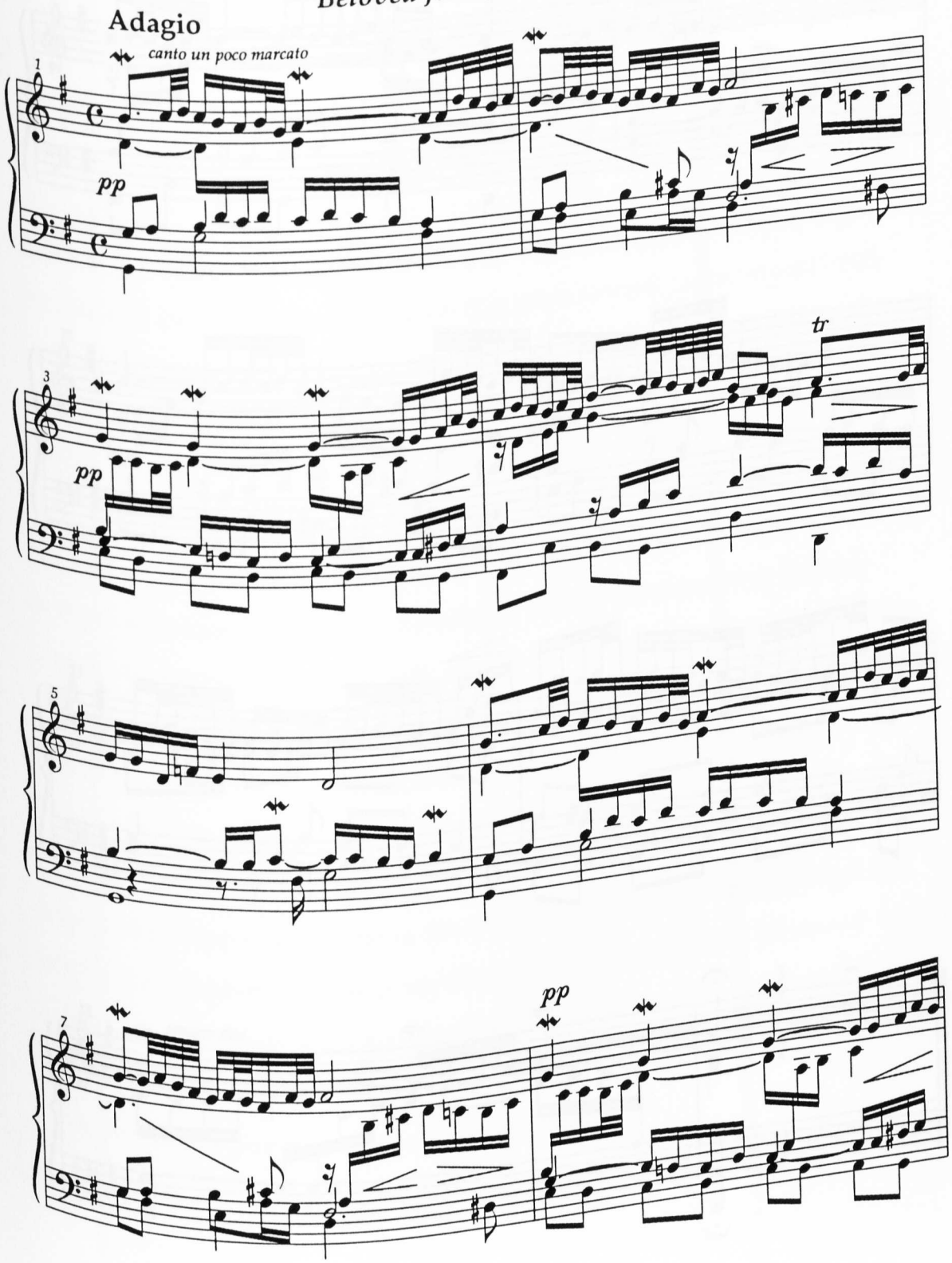
Blessed Jesus, at Thy word

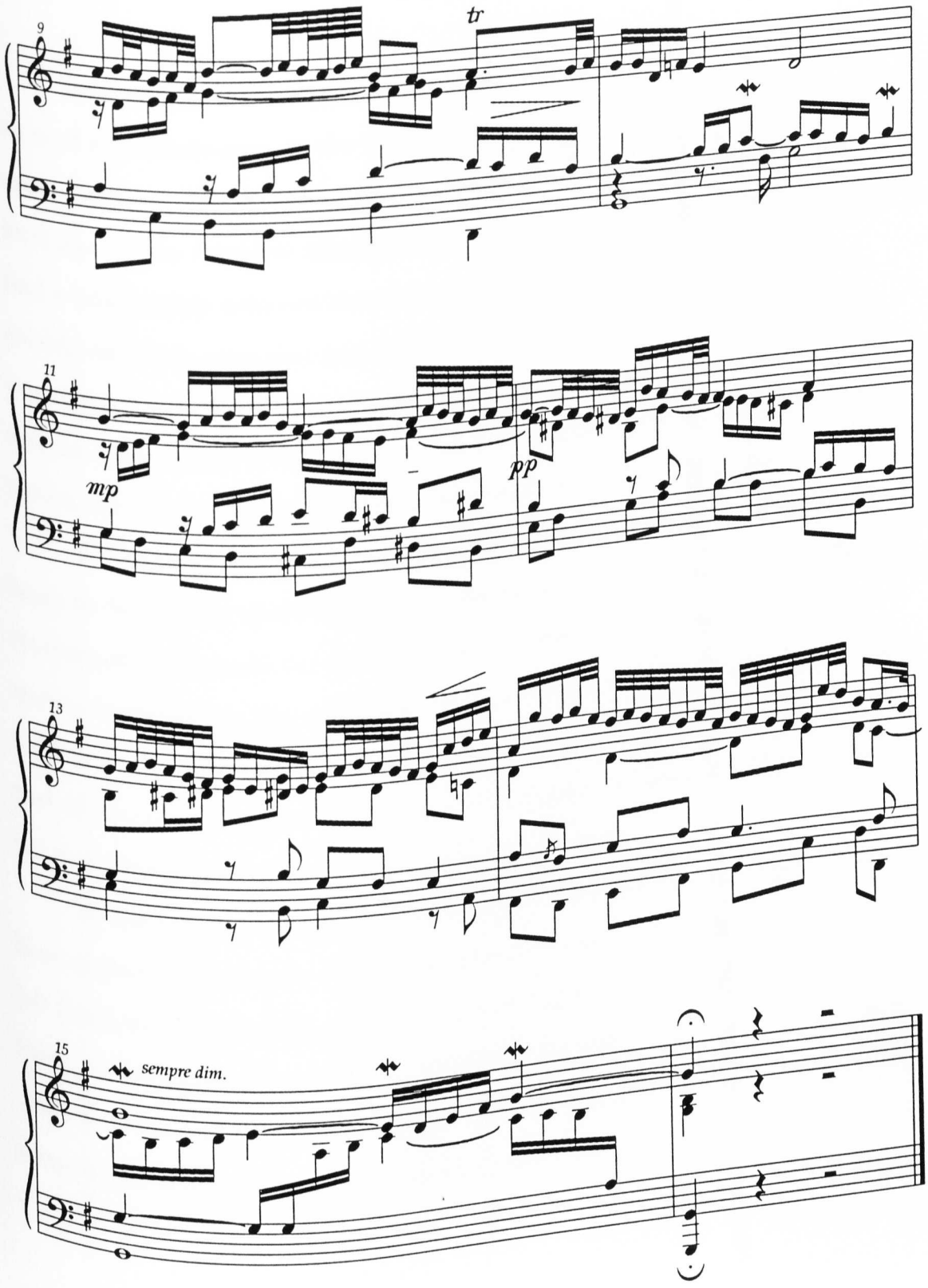
We are gathered all to hear Thee;
Let our hearts and souls be stirred
Now to seek and love and fear Thee;
By Thy teachings sweet and holy
Drawn from earth to love Thee solely.

(Translation: Catherine Winkworth)

Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier

Beloved Jesus, We are Here




9
tr
11
mp
pp
13
15
sempre dim.

Mach's mit mir, Gott, nach deiner Güt

BWV 957

Included in the Neumeister Collection, *Mach's mit mir* is cast in the form of an introduction to the chorale and an approximate quotation of that same chorale. The introduction of twenty-five measures seems to make little use of any thematic material from the hymn tune, although one could find a relationship between the ascending scale in the first phrase of the chorale and then state that any ascending passagework in the introduction was derived therefrom, and that any descending passages are inversions. It may be more useful to suggest that the introduction is of an improvisatory nature, serving as an elaborate flourish before the hymn quotation.

A few peculiarities may be noted in the hymn quotation. It seems to begin in the middle of the first phrase of the chorale melody, as well as being rhythmically displaced by half a measure. While the remaining phrases appear in something like full form, they too are two beats off from where the listener might expect to find them. Whether this is a deliberate device on the part of the composer or a compromise of necessity (in order to make cadences fall in a desired location) is not immediately apparent.

In the process of transcription for piano the first two measures have been divided between the hands for facilitated execution. Even though the left hand must play all these notes alone in measures 3 and 4, the use of both hands at the opening of the piece is intended to allow the performer to begin with an extra measure of confidence. Some notes were redistributed, such as those in the alto part found in measures 9 and 10.

This writer added some notes to the piece; certain chords in measure 15

were embellished as well as given indications to be rolled, playing the top note of the roll *staccato*. The sequence beginning on the third beat of measure 16 was also transformed. The right hand moved up one octave and doubled the soprano part an octave lower, while the third of each group of four sixteenths in the left hand received an "up-stem", becoming an independent voice. A *crescendo molto* appears in measure 18, followed immediately by a *subito piano*. In keeping with the attitude of the next *crescendo*, the left hand is amplified in octaves. A cadenza-like passage transpires in measures 21 and 22; this writer provided a pedal point in the bass and a few extra notes in the right hand as well. And as the melody ascends beginning in measure 23, the accompanying chords are indicated to be rolled and *staccato*, leaving the melody itself, played *legato* and *forte*, to stand out clearly. Finally, the chorale quotation at the end of the piece has received chordal reinforcement of the largest sonority, including non-harmonic tones not found in Bach's original.

The level of difficulty is high.

The text and translation appear below:

Mach s mit mir, Gott, nach deiner Güt',
hilf mir in meinem Leiden,
was ich dich bitt', versag' mir nicht,
wenn meine Seel' will scheiden;
so nimm sie, Herr, in deine Händ',
ist Alles gut, wenn gut das End'.

(Johann Schein, 1628)

Deal with me, Lord, according to your mercy,

Help me in my troubles.

Do not deny me my request,

For my soul shall soon depart.

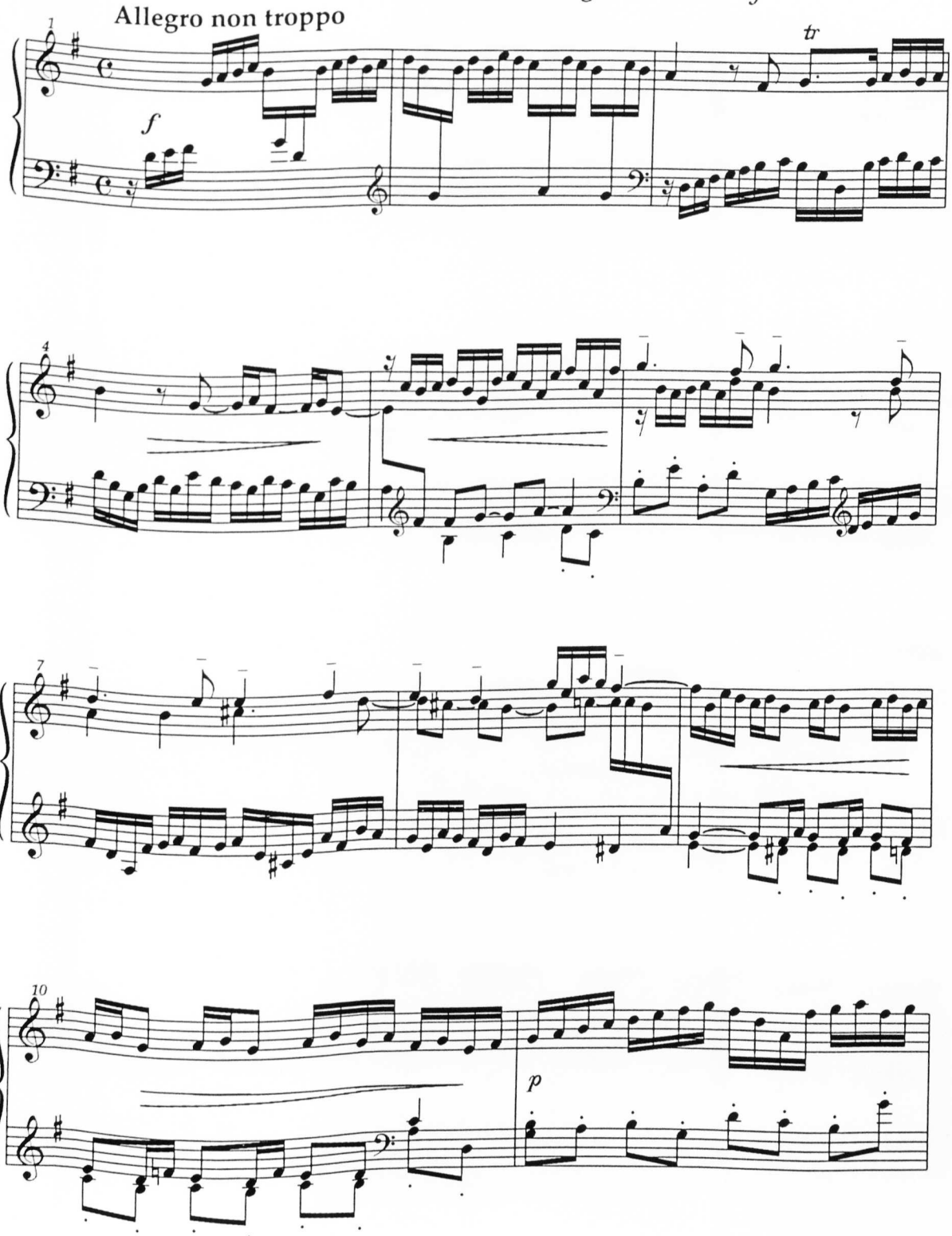
So take it then in your hands.

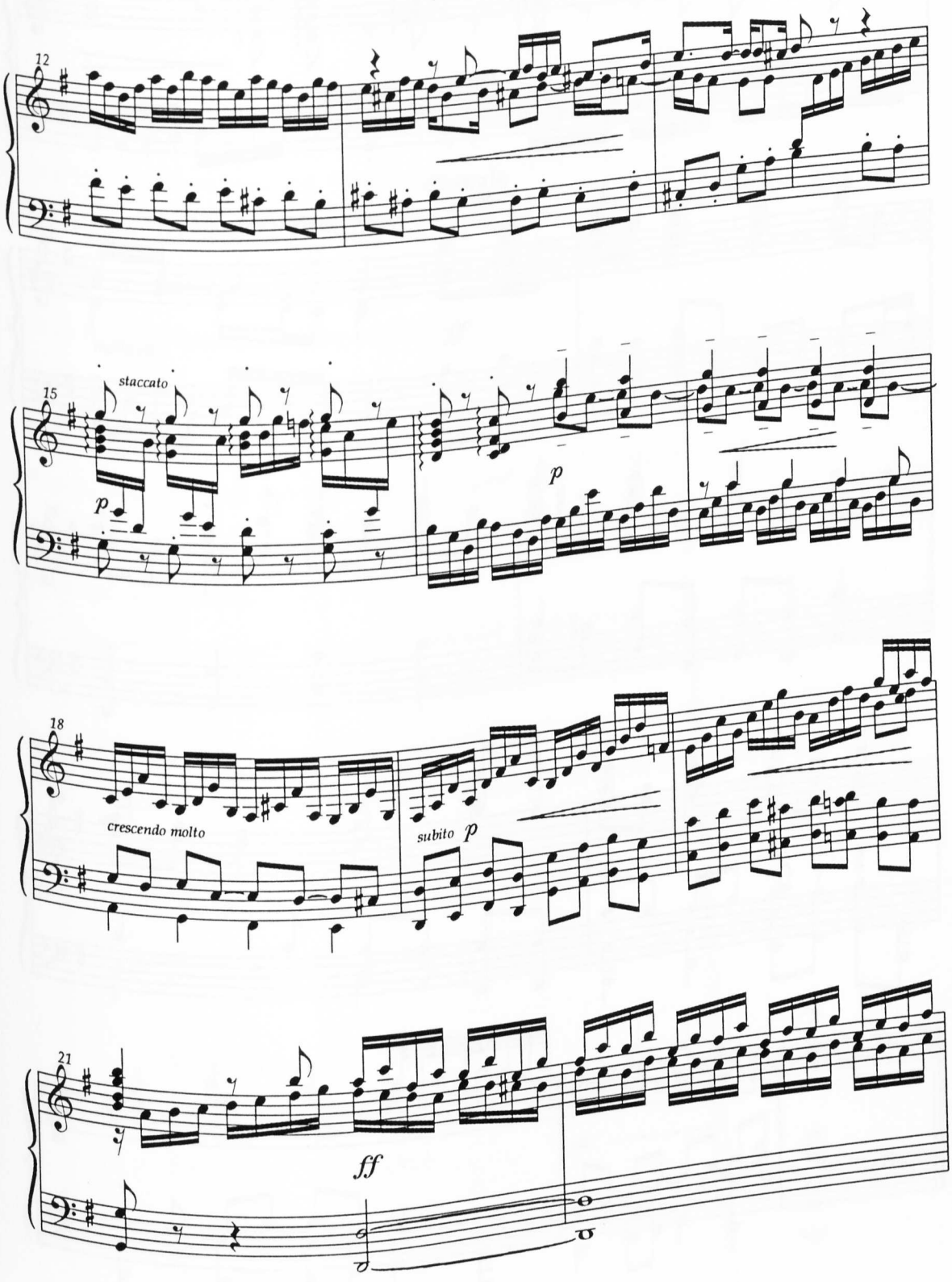
All is well when well it ends.

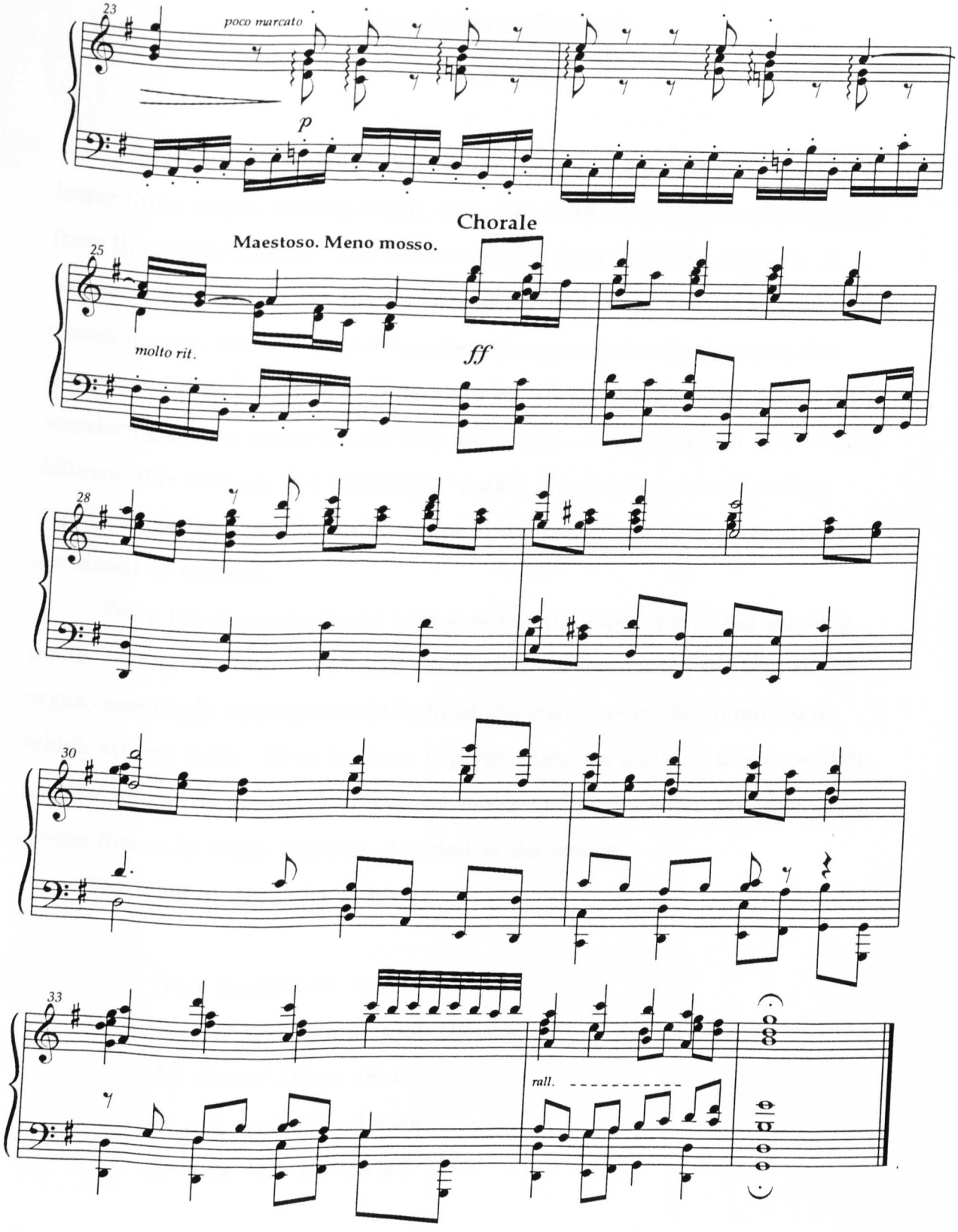
(Translation: John Mortensen)

Machs mit mir, Gott, nach deiner Güt

Deal with Me, Lord According to Your Mercy




12
15
staccato
p
p
18
crescendo molto
subito p
21
ff


23
poco marcato
p
Chorale
Maestoso. Meno mosso.
25
molto rit.
ff
28
30
33
rall.

Nun danket alle Gott

BWV 657

Bach's arrangement of this hymn begins in the imitative style, the lower three voices making fugal entrances with melodic material derived from the cantus firmus. The tune itself is reserved for the soprano. A harmonic surprise awaits the listener at the end of the second phrase of the cantus firmus: instead of the expected strong cadence on the tonic, the composer writes a deceptive cadence, after which the harmony does a bit of wandering before regaining its determination. A second point of imitation follows, this time on the dominant. Again, the harmony is other than expected; rather than the submediant at the end of the sixth phrase the dominant is written.

From the seventh phrase to the end of the piece the fullest possible piano writing has been employed for the sake of expressing the idea of full organ, seemingly appropriate in light of the character of the hymn itself, which affirms faith. Thus the bass is given quite naturally to octave writing, and the inner voices are reinforced by thirds and sixths when possible. The cantus firmus is, when feasible, doubled at the octave.

The level of difficulty is high.

Nun danket alle Gott
mit Herzen, Mund und Händen,
der Grosse Dinge thut
an uns und allen Enden;
der uns von Mutterleib

und Kindesbeinen an
unzählig viel zu gut
und noch jetzund getan.

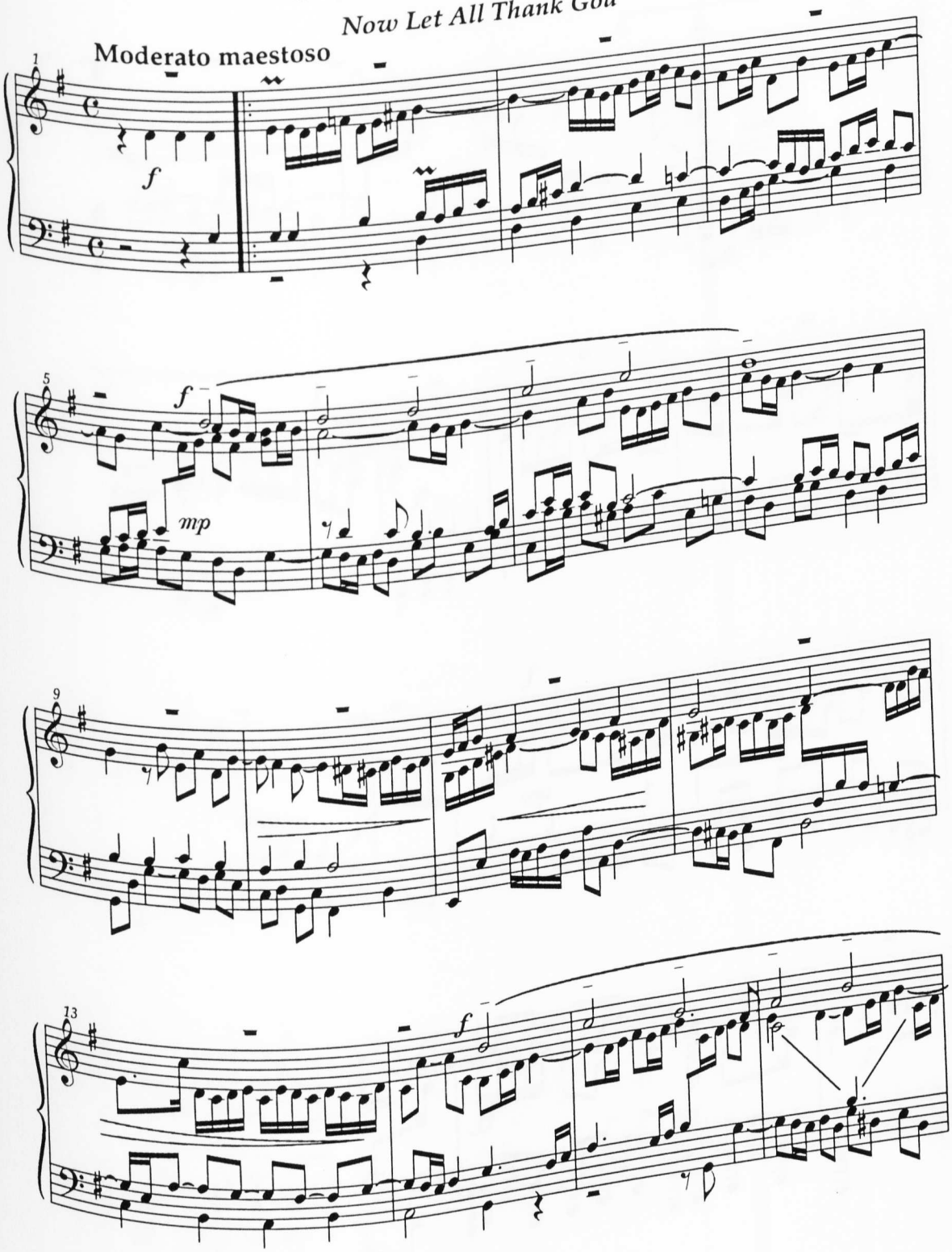
(Martin Rinkert, 1648)

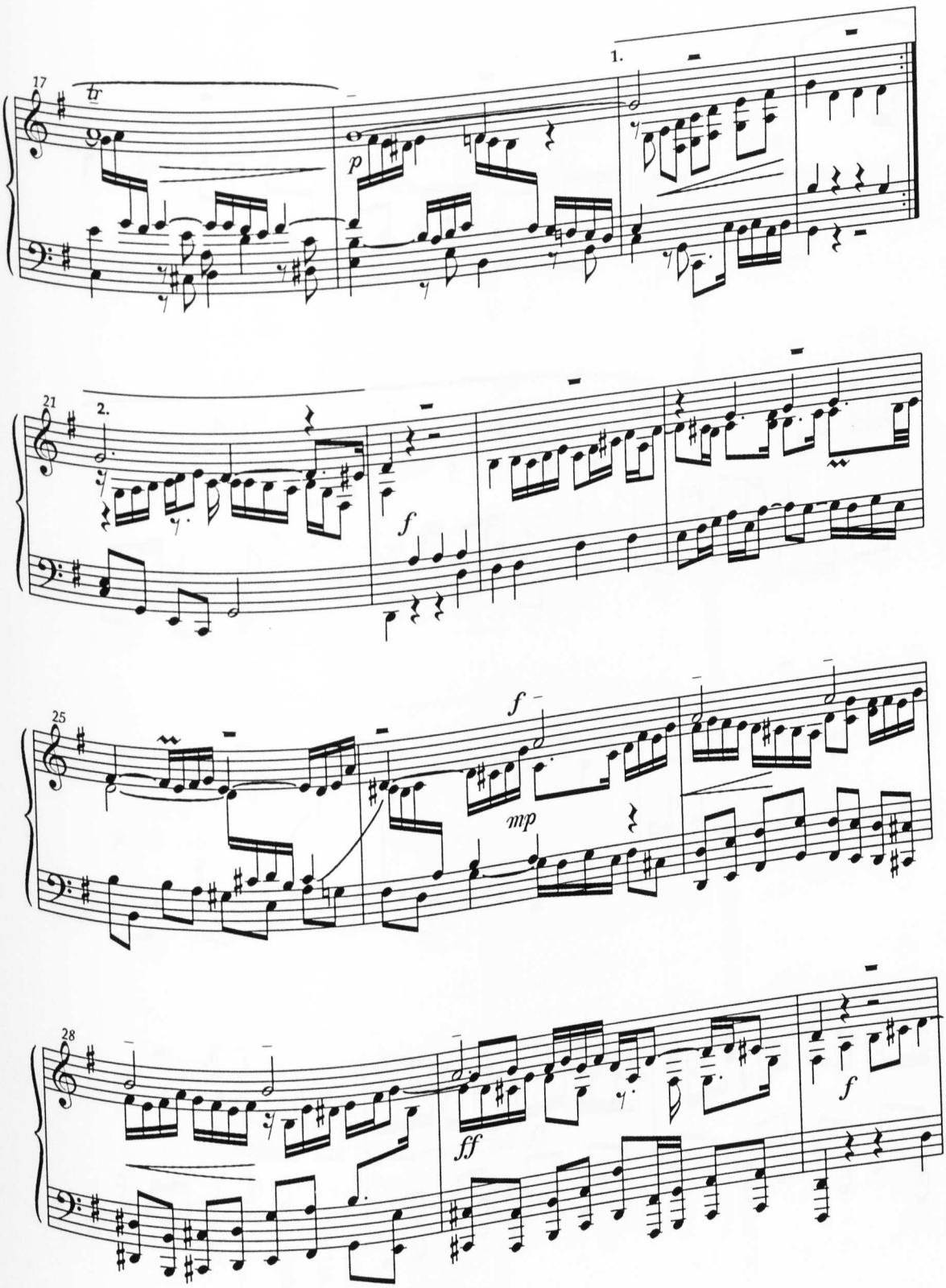
Now let all thank God
With heart, mouth, and hands,
Who has done great things
For us and for His purposes;
Who has from our infancy
And childhood onward
Numberless blessings given us
And still does so today.

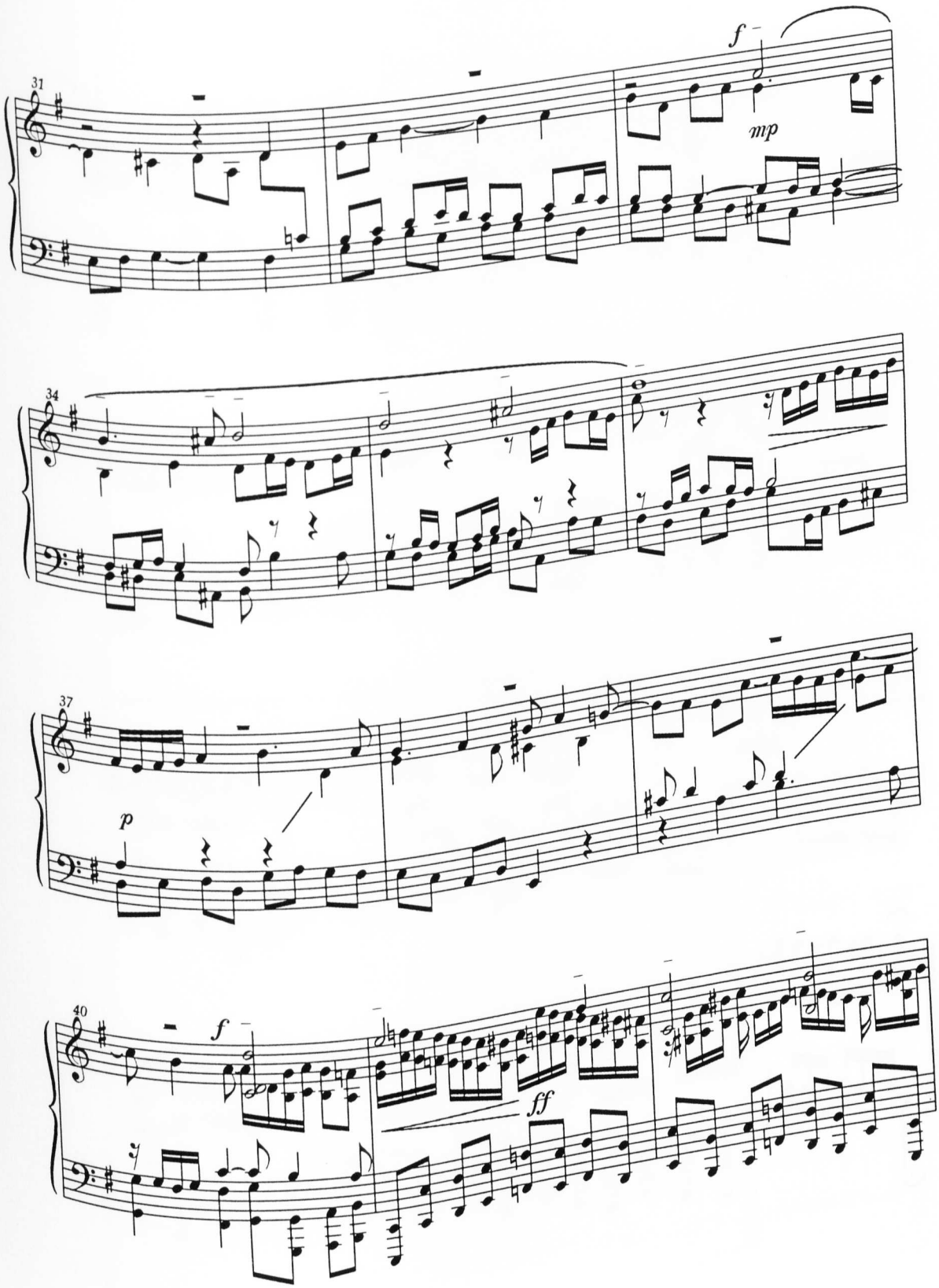
(Translation: John Mortensen)

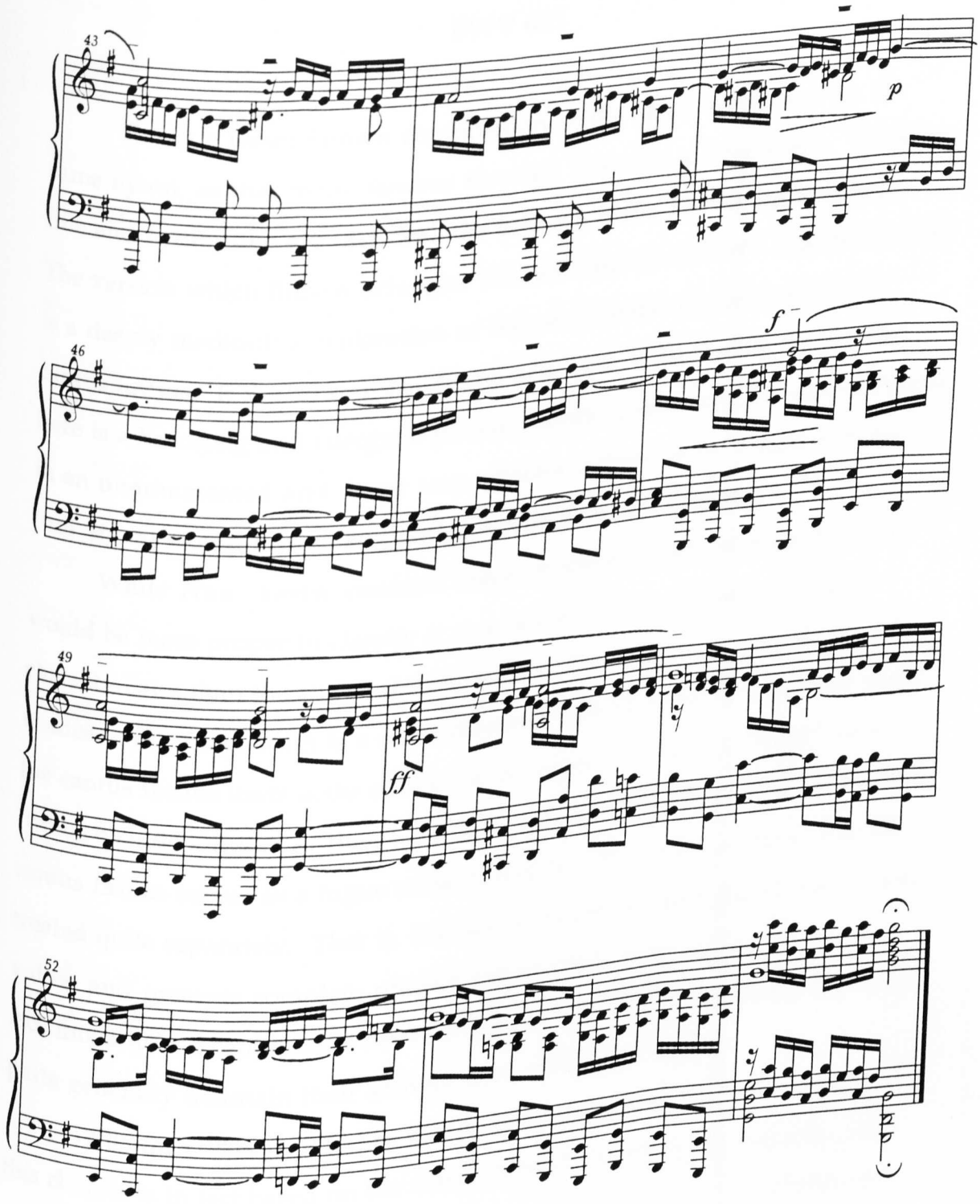
Nun danket alle Gott

Now Let All Thank God




17
tr
p
1.
21
2.
f
25
f
mp
28
ff
f


31
f
mp
34
37
p
40
f
ff


43
p
46
f
49
ff
52

Nun komm', der Heiden Heiland

BWV 661

This is a lesser-known composition of the same name, and on the same hymn, as that made famous through Busoni's arrangement. While the title and hymn tune are identical, the settings could not be more diverse. The version which Busoni arranged (known also by its BWV number of 659) is a deeply meditative exploration of the ornamental possibilities of the cantus firmus. It is also transcendently beautiful. The chorale transcribed here is a headlong and energetic phrase chorale, presenting the cantus firmus in an unornamented and direct way. Bach's indication of "Organo pleno" (full organ) would further suggest great sonority and intensity.

While *Nun komm'* contains many of the elements of fugal form, it would be more proper to classify it as a cantus firmus chorale with fugal characteristics than to call it a chorale fugue. The difference may be one of shades of meaning, but it is a real difference nevertheless: in a chorale fugue the cantus firmus itself is the subject of the fugue, while in a "fugal" cantus firmus chorale a figure or theme (or better still, *fragment*) derived from the cantus firmus serves as a fugue subject, and the true cantus firmus is usually treated quite separately. That is, the cantus firmus is normally in longer note values and presents complete phrases rather than short motives. Additionally, the cantus rests between phrases while the accompanying fugal parts generally maintain their activity with little or no pause.

Williams (1980, p. 155) has shown that the accompanimental figure of this chorale is in fact based on the cantus firmus. If one looks carefully, all the notes of the hymn tune can be discovered in the first four measures of

the accompaniment. This new motive is quite thoroughly different from its source, however, and the perpetual motion of eighth notes lends itself to energetic contrapuntal treatment.

The composer gave himself wide latitude in the introduction. A full twenty three measures are given over to the entrance and development of the three accompanying voices, and their treatment is fugal indeed. Until the cantus firmus enters, one could easily be forgiven for concluding that a fugue was in progress. Nor does Bach shy away from fugal devices: in measure 82 the cantus firmus occupies the bass, while the soprano recites an inverted form of the accompanimental motive as the tenor shows the original version of the same.

This writer has not added notes to Bach's original; the process of transcription involved rather the placing of the notes so that the piece might become playable on the piano.

In transcription this piece should be played at a fast tempo, and it may be advisable to interpret many portions as if one were playing a fugue. The vocal entrances in the introduction should be clearly marked. When the cantus firmus appears, the other voices should be kept quiet enough that the hymn tune is never lost to the ear.

From measure 86 to the end the left hand will need to break between its lower and upper notes; few pianists have the reach to play them simultaneously.

The level of difficulty is high.

Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland,

der Jungfrauen Kind erkannt,

dess sich wundert alle Welt,

Gott solch' Geburt ihm bestellt.

(Martin Luther, 1524)

Savior of the heathen, come,

Virgin's Son, make here Thy home;

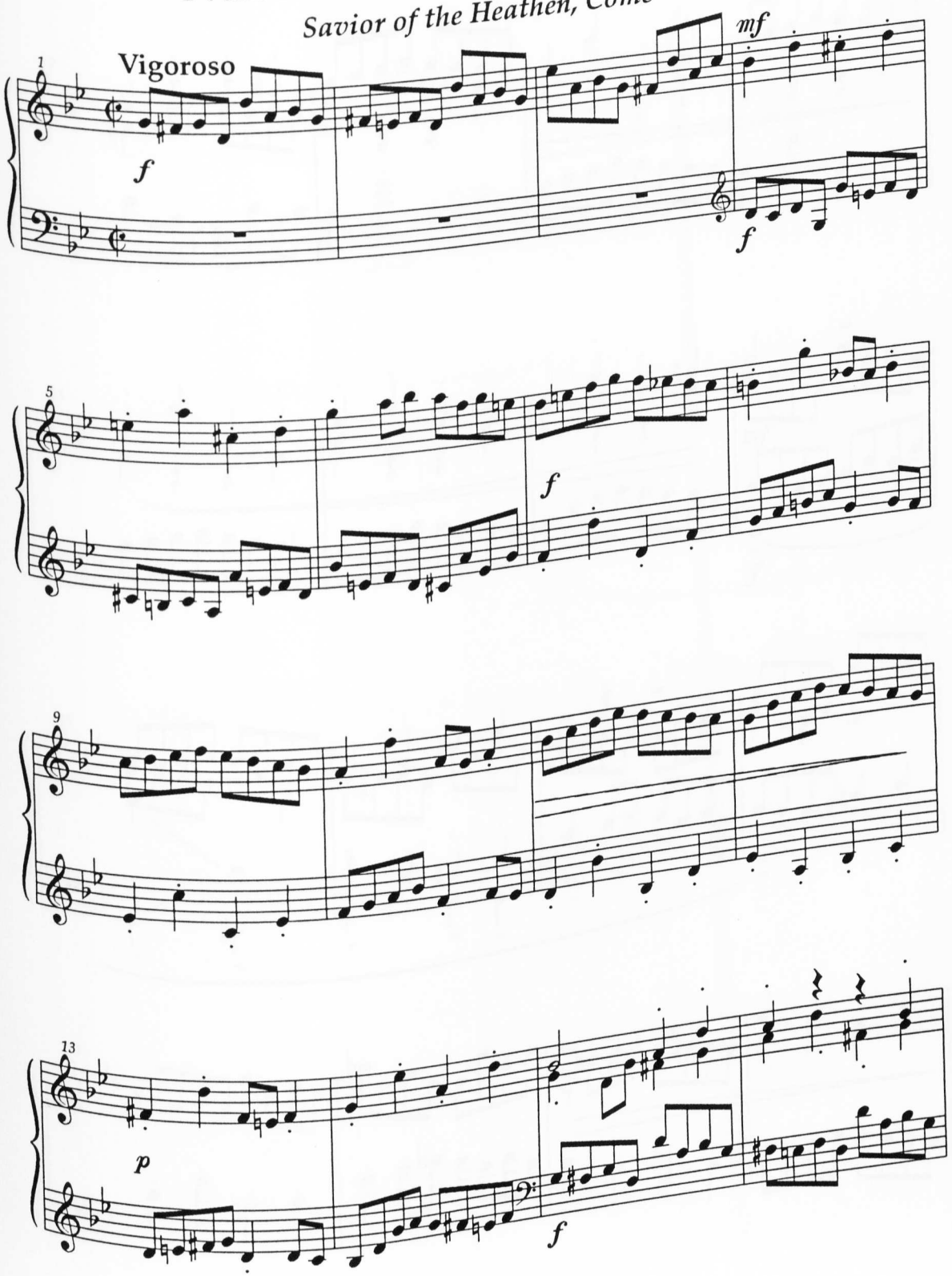
Wonder at it, heaven and earth,

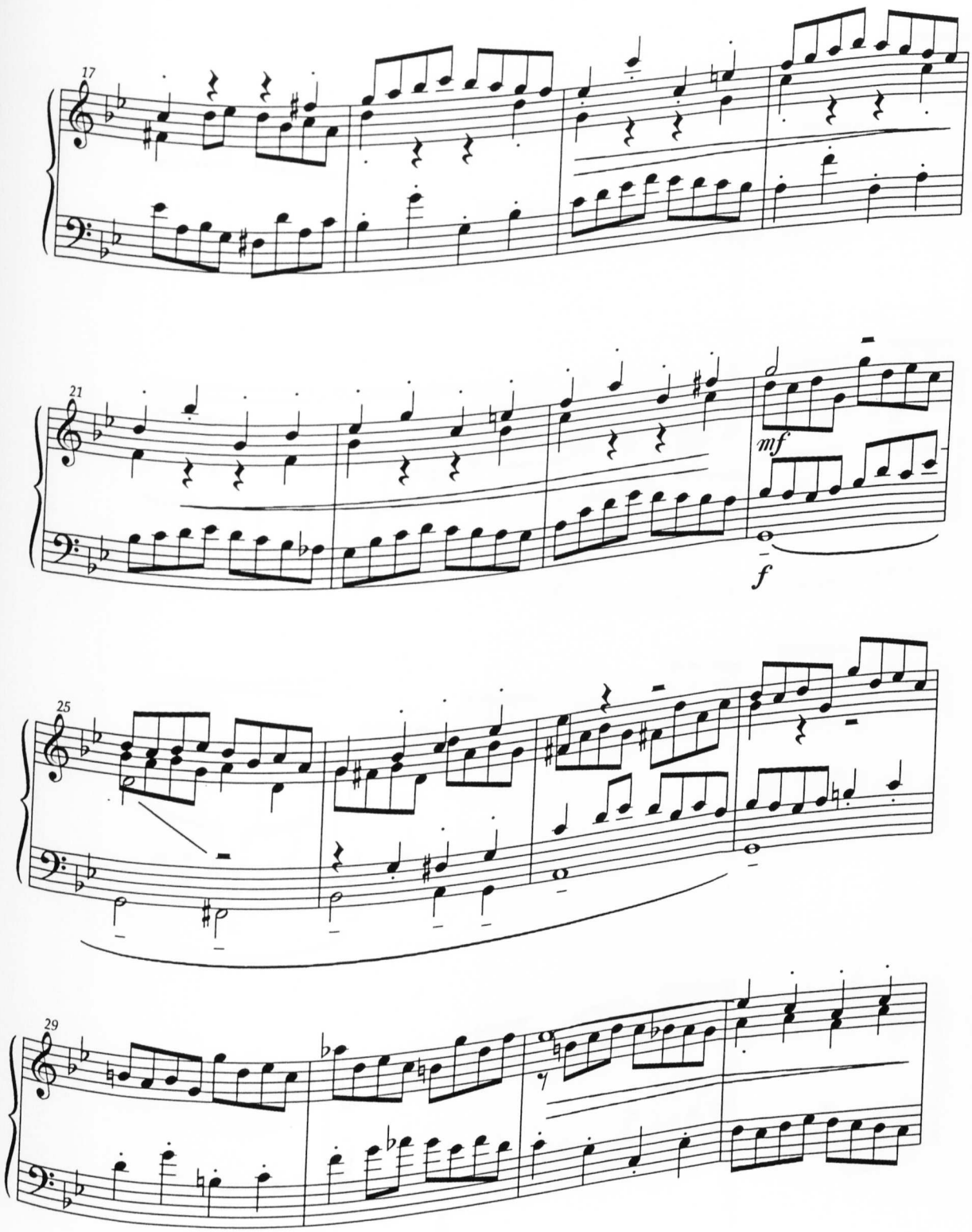
That the Lord should choose such a birth.

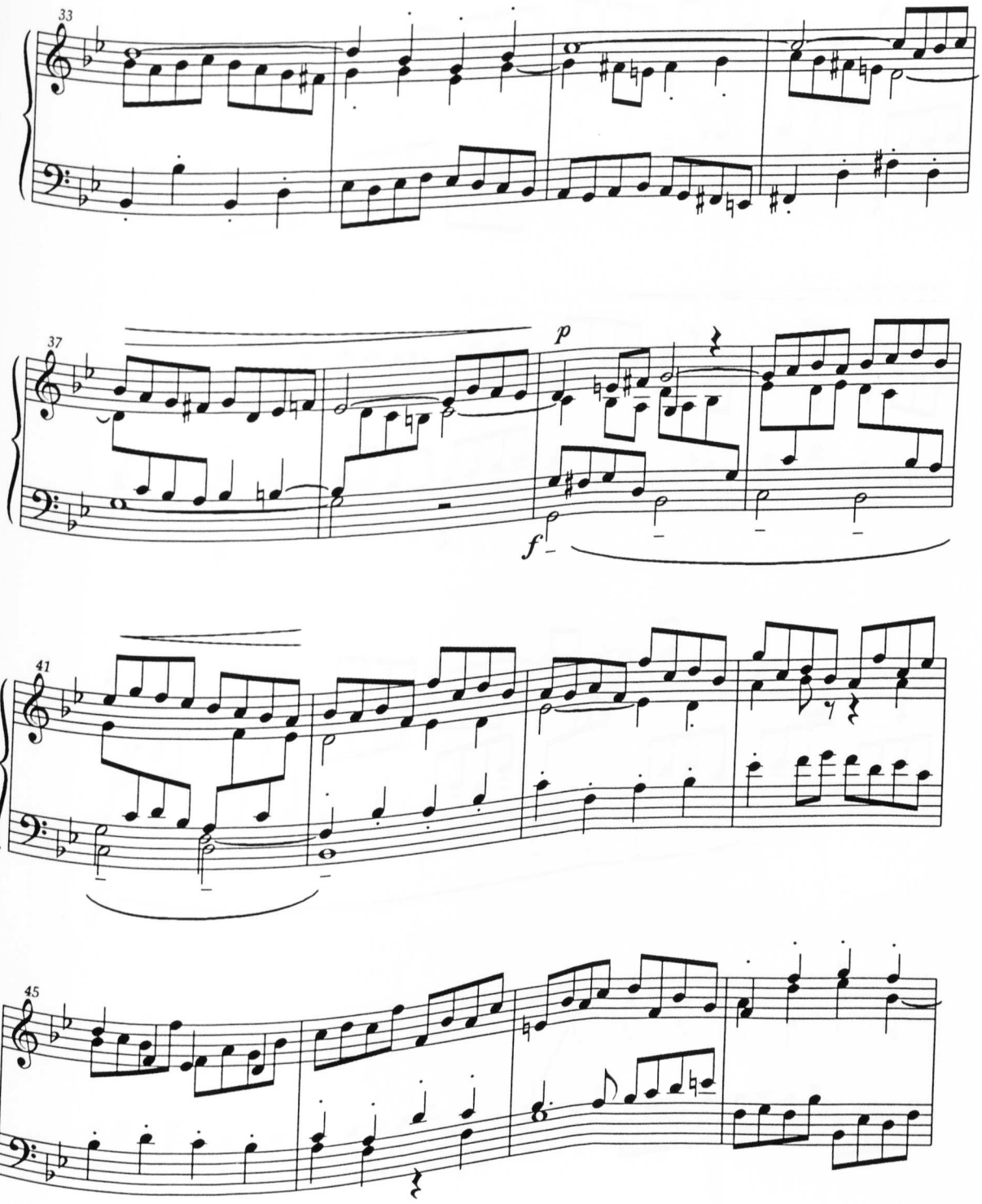
(Translation: Albert Riemenschneider)

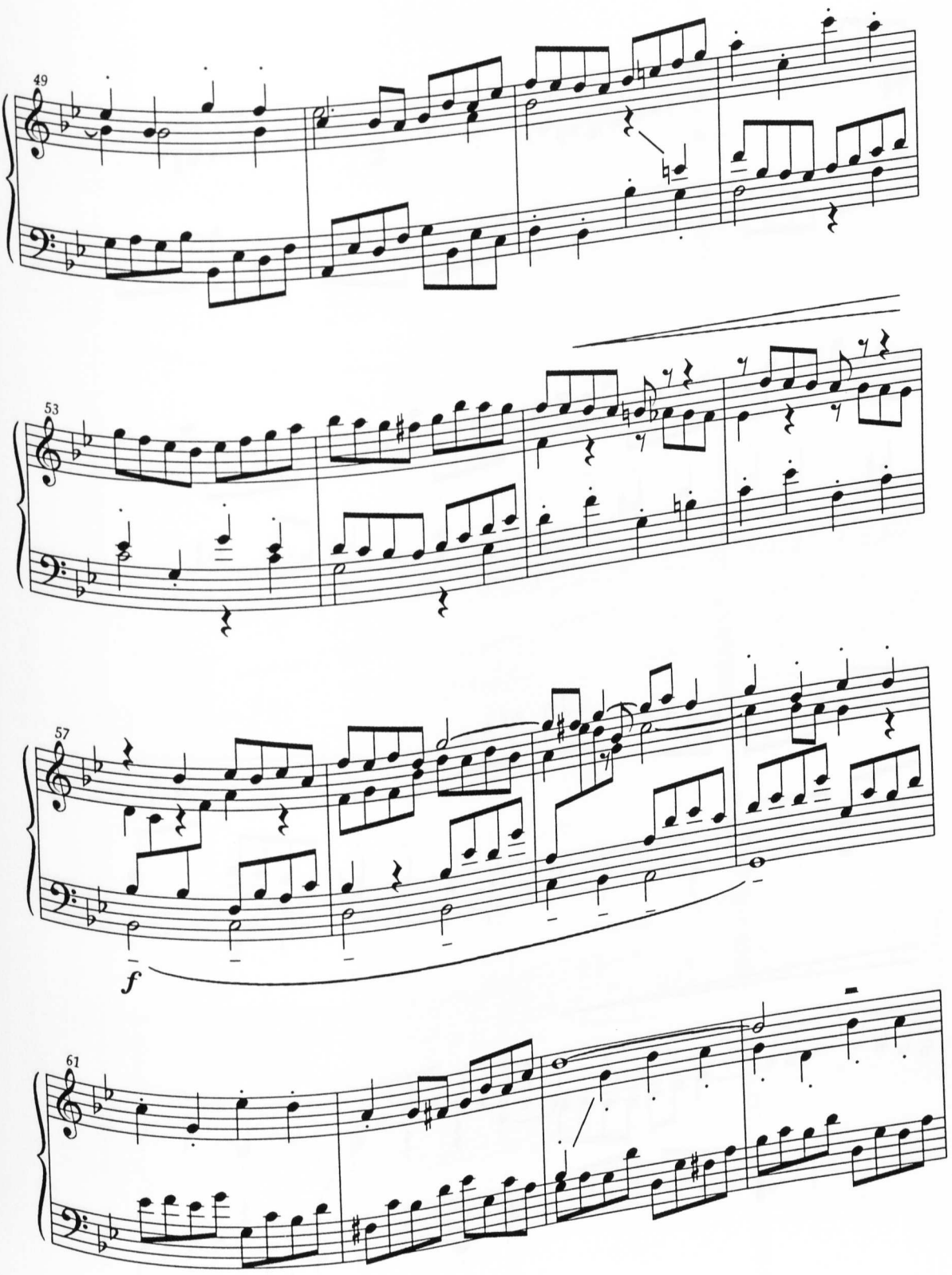
Nun komm' der Heiden Heiland

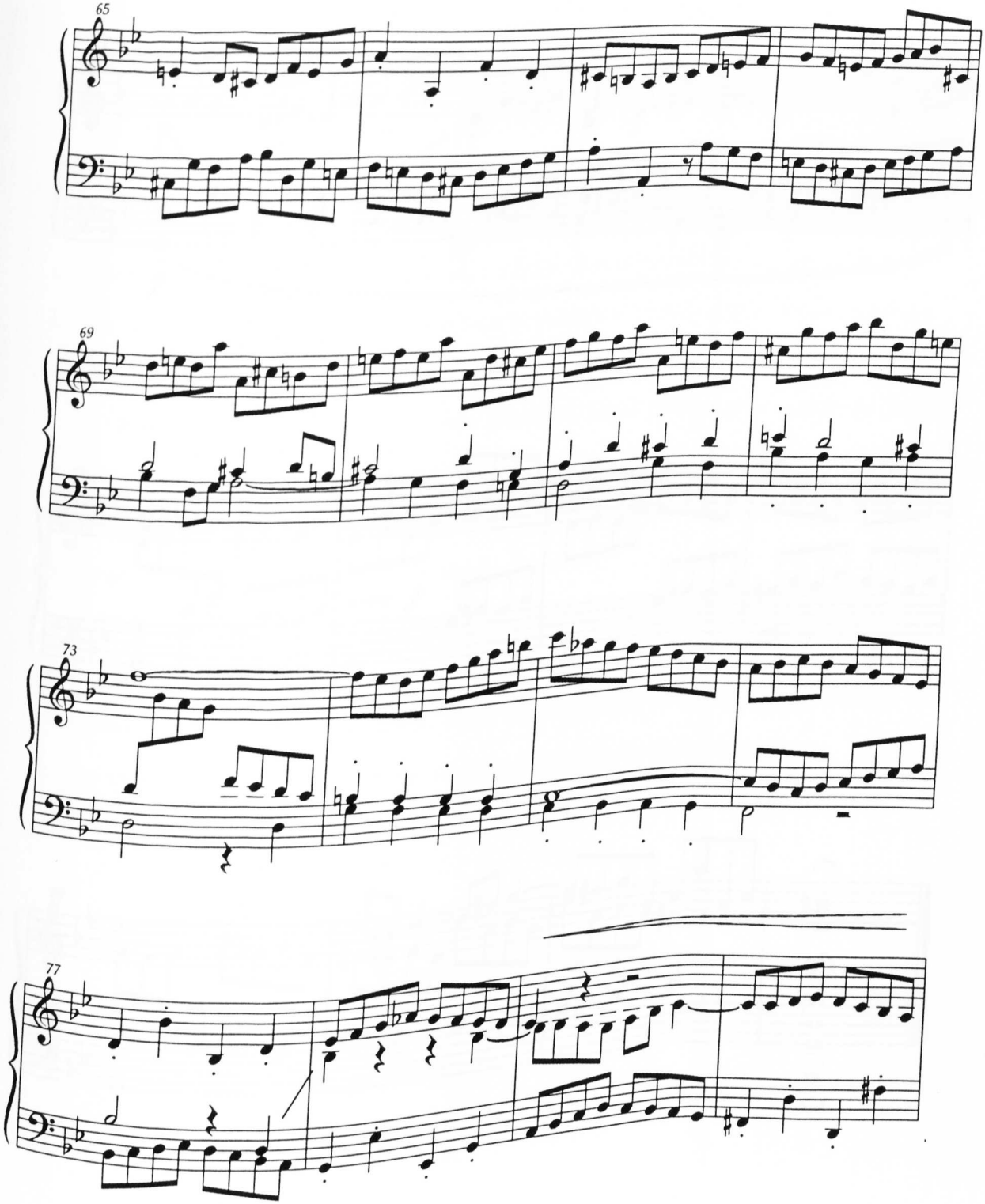
Savior of the Heathen, Come

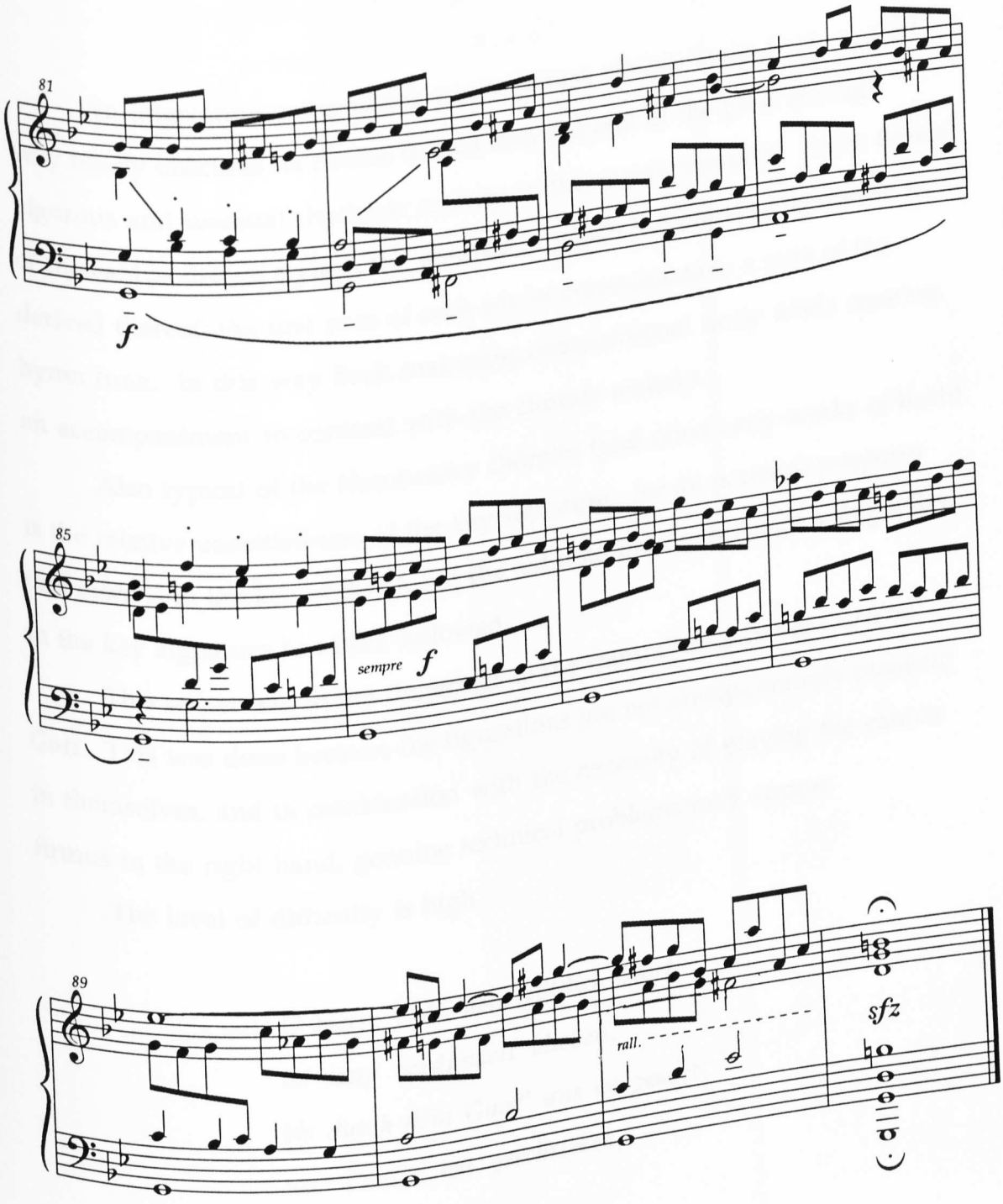



17
21
mf
f
25
29


33
37
p
f
41
45


49
53
57
f
61


65
69
73
77


81
f
85
sempre f
89
rall.
sfz

O Herre Gott, dein göttlich Wort

BWV 1110

An interesting composition in the phrase chorale style, *O Herre Gott* very nearly obscures its cantus firmus near the end of the piece through vigorous and unusual rhythmic activity in the accompaniment. More typical of the cantus firmus style is the manner in which the opening figuration is derived thereof; the first note of each triplet corresponds to a note of the hymn tune. In this way Bach maintains compositional unity while creating an accompaniment to contrast with the chorale melody.

Also typical of the Neumeister chorales (and other early works of Bach) is the relative unsettledness of the key signature; for all practical purposes this piece is in the key of B-flat, but the old notational practice of a single flat in the key signature has been followed.

This writer has added fingerings to the transcribed score of *O Herre Gott*. This was done because the figurations are not always entirely pianistic in themselves, and in combination with the necessity of playing the cantus firmus in the right hand, genuine technical problems may appear.

The level of difficulty is high.

O Herre Gott, dein göttlich Wort
ist lang verdunkelt blieben,
bis durch dein Gnad' uns ist gesagt,
was Paulus hat geschrieben,
und andere
Apostel mehr

aus dein'm göttlichen Munde:
Daß dank'n wir dir mit Fleiß, daß wir
erlebet hab'n die Stunde.

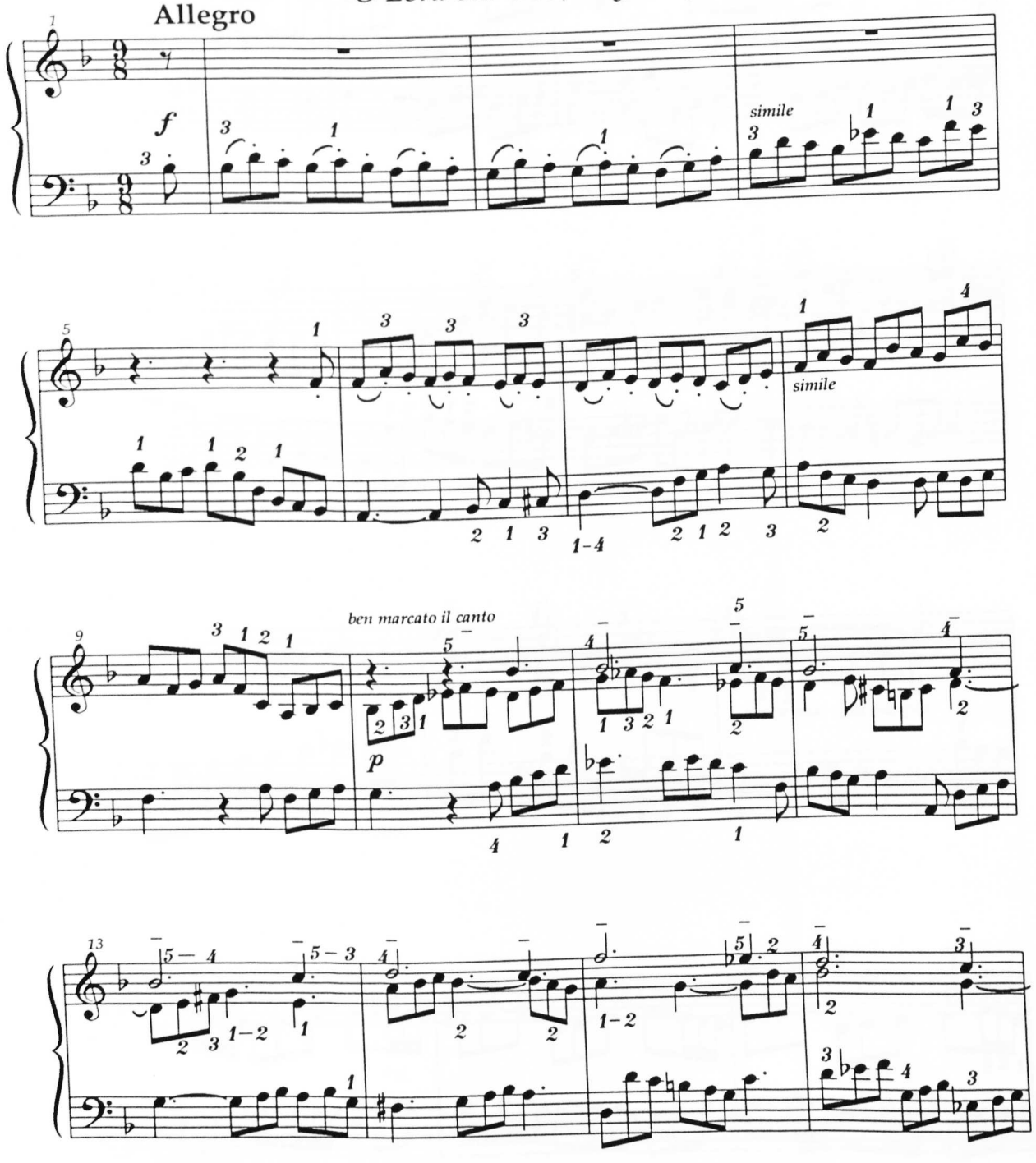
(Anonymous)

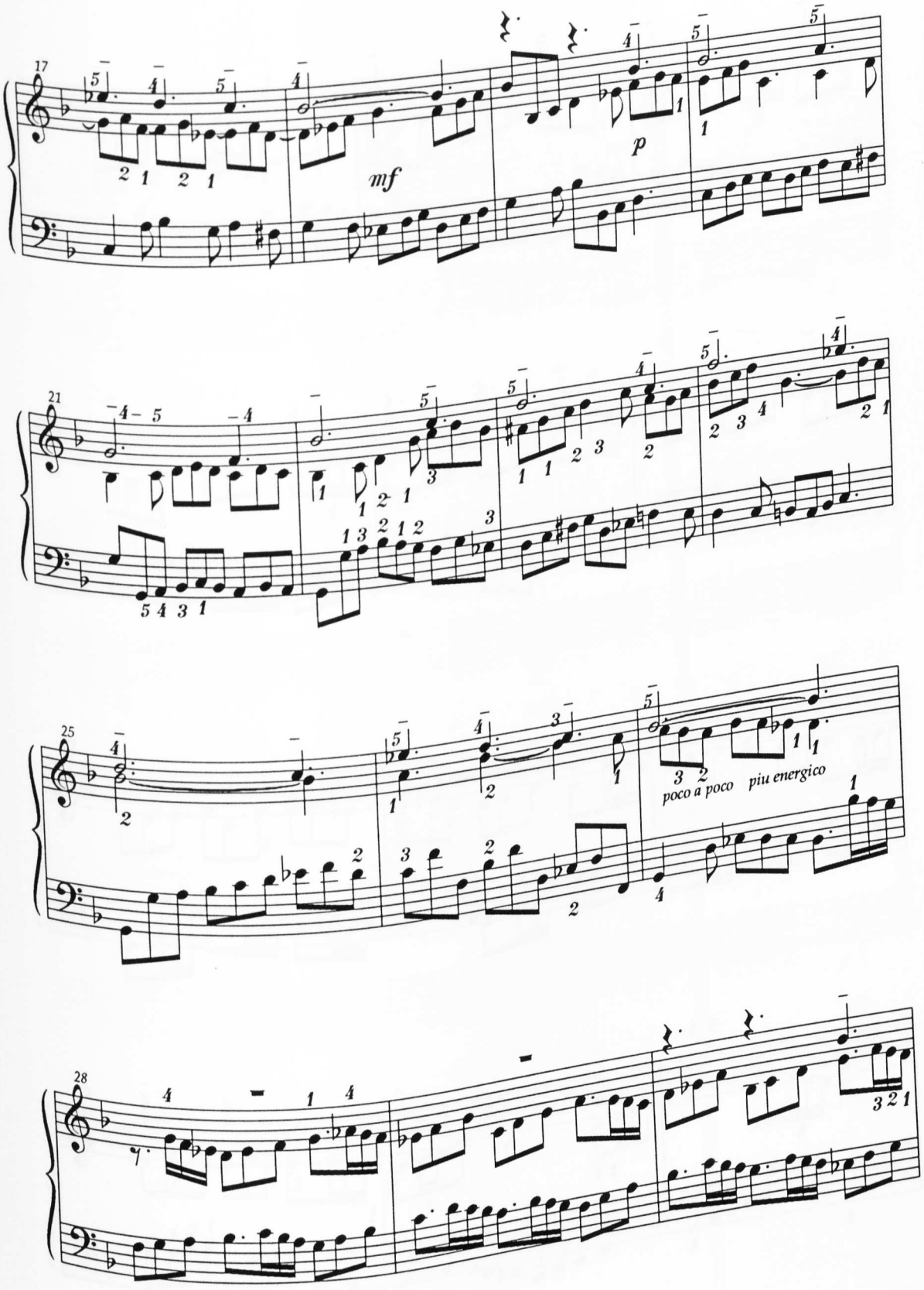
O Lord our God, Thy Holy Word
was long obscure and hidden
'til, by Thy Grace, what Thou hast said,
by Paul was clearly written,
and after Paul
Thy teachers all
Thy sayings well expounded,
so thank we Thee, Lord God, that we
may now not be confounded.

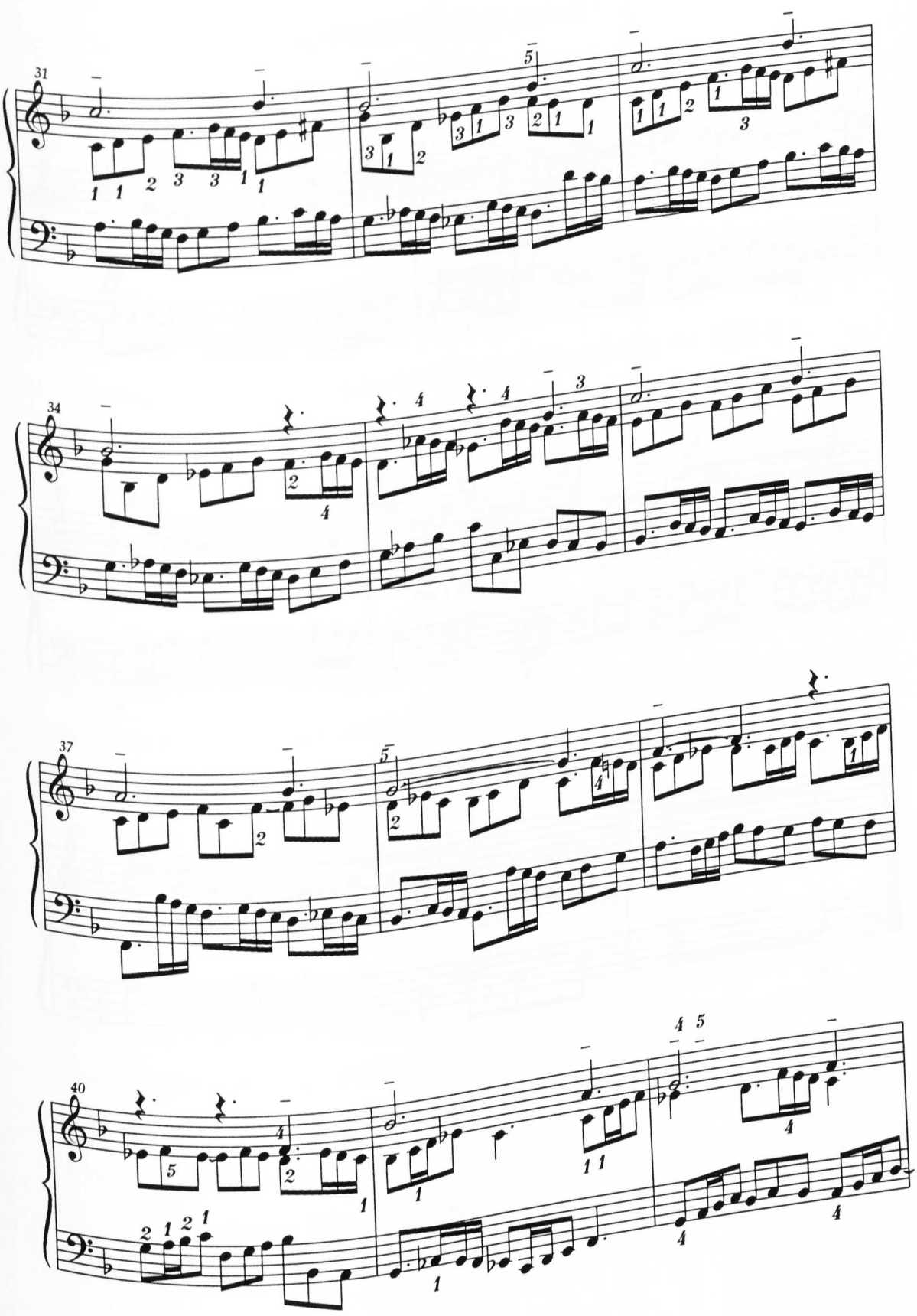
(Translation: Henry S. Drinker)

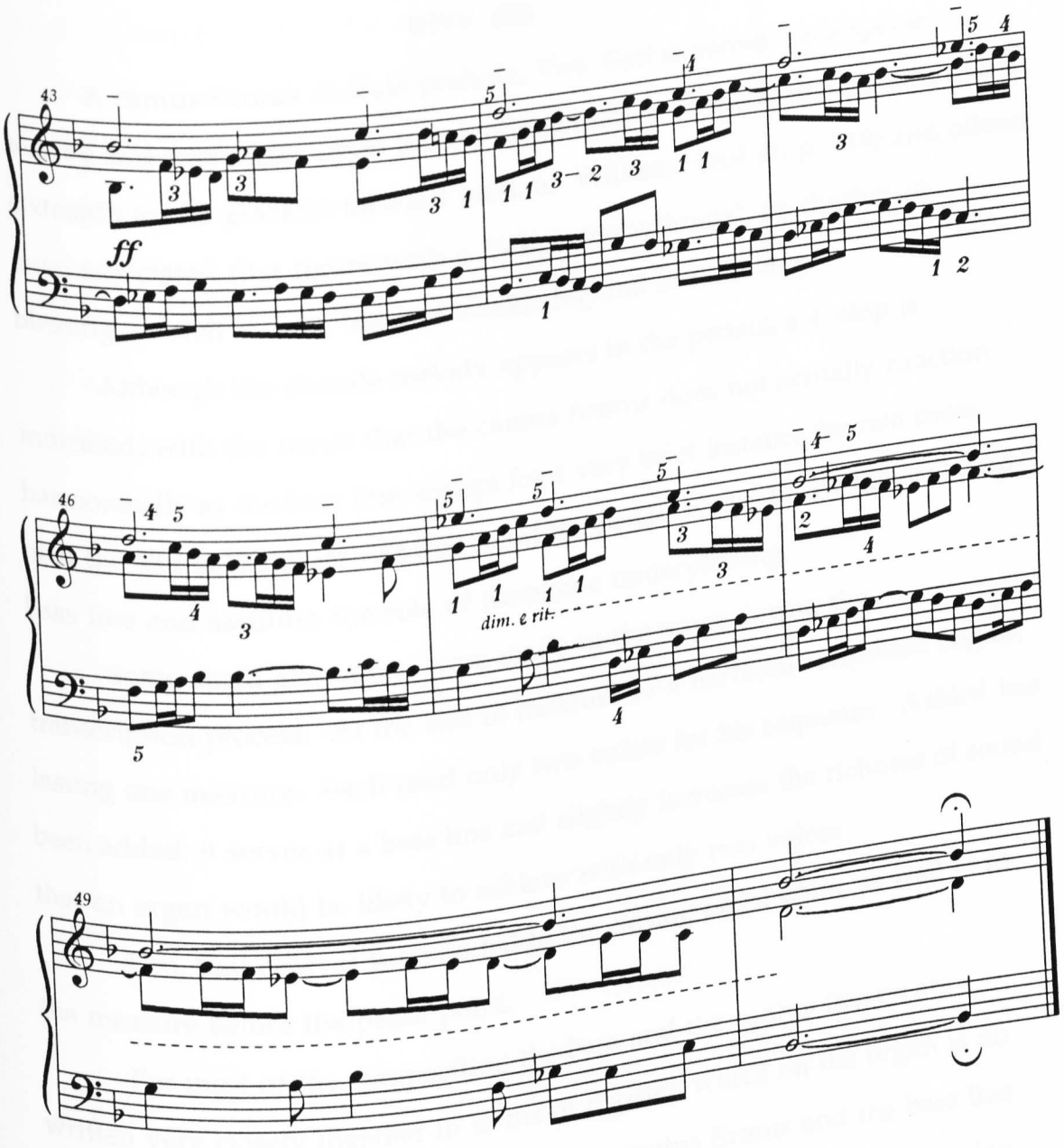
O Herre Gott, dein göttlich Wort

O Lord our God, Thy Holy Word




17
mf
p
21
25
poco a poco
piu energico
28


31
34
37
40


43
ff
46
dim. e rit.
49

Von Gott will ich nicht lassen

BWV 658

A cantus firmus chorale prelude, *Von Gott* is penned in a sparse texture and capitalizes upon the rhythmic motive of two thirty-seconds and a sixteenth for its graceful forward motion. Williams (vol. II, p. 149) and others have associated that figure with a "Seligkeitsrhythmus", or rhythm of blessing, as well as with ideas of awakening and of following.

Although the chorale melody appears in the pedals, a 4' stop is indicated, with the result that the cantus firmus does not actually function harmonically as the bass line, except for a very brief instance for two beats near the end of the piece. At that point the pedal crosses below the keyboard bass line and assumes the role of harmonic underpinning.

Some small alterations were made in the score during the transcription process. At the end of measure 17 a harmonic sequence begins, lasting one measure. Bach used only two voices for his sequence. A third has been added; it serves as a bass line and slightly increases the richness of sound that an organ would be likely to achieve with only two voices.

Also, bass octaves were added to the closing pedal point, as well as to the measure before the pedal point.

For most of the composition the bass and the cantus firmus are written very closely together in terms of register, which on the organ is no obstacle to clear playing. Furthermore, the cantus firmus and the bass line can be coupled to different registrations, solving any difficulties in playing the two voices distinctly.

In transcription for piano, however, the closeness of the two voices provides a challenge for the performer. Fortunately, the cantus firmus

usually lies where it can be conveniently played with the thumb of the left hand, an excellent digit (due to its strength) for bringing out a voice plastically. Combined with this approach, the other fingers of the left hand should negotiate the bass line with the utmost lightness and discretion, allowing the cantus firmus to ring above the bass with great clarity. While not as sonorous as a chorale melody that serves as a true bass line (and can thus be played in full octaves without fear of disrupting another voice), the cantus firmus in *Von Gott* may still attain an intense musical quality if handled properly.

The idea of following faithfully where God leads may be expressed in the rhythmic motive mentioned earlier; when the motive is recited in one voice, another often follows immediately after with the same motive. This may be observed in the second half of the second measure between bass and soprano as well as in the sequence discussed above.

The text of *Von Gott will ich nicht lassen* reads as follows:

Von Gott will ich nicht lassen,
denn er lässt nicht von mir,
führt mich durch alle Strassen,
da ich sonst irrte sehr.

Er reicht mir seine Hand;
den Abend und den Morgen
tut er mich wohl versorgen
wo ich auch sei im Land.
(Anonymous)

I shall not leave God,

For he shall not leave me,

Leading me through all ways,

Where otherwise I should err.

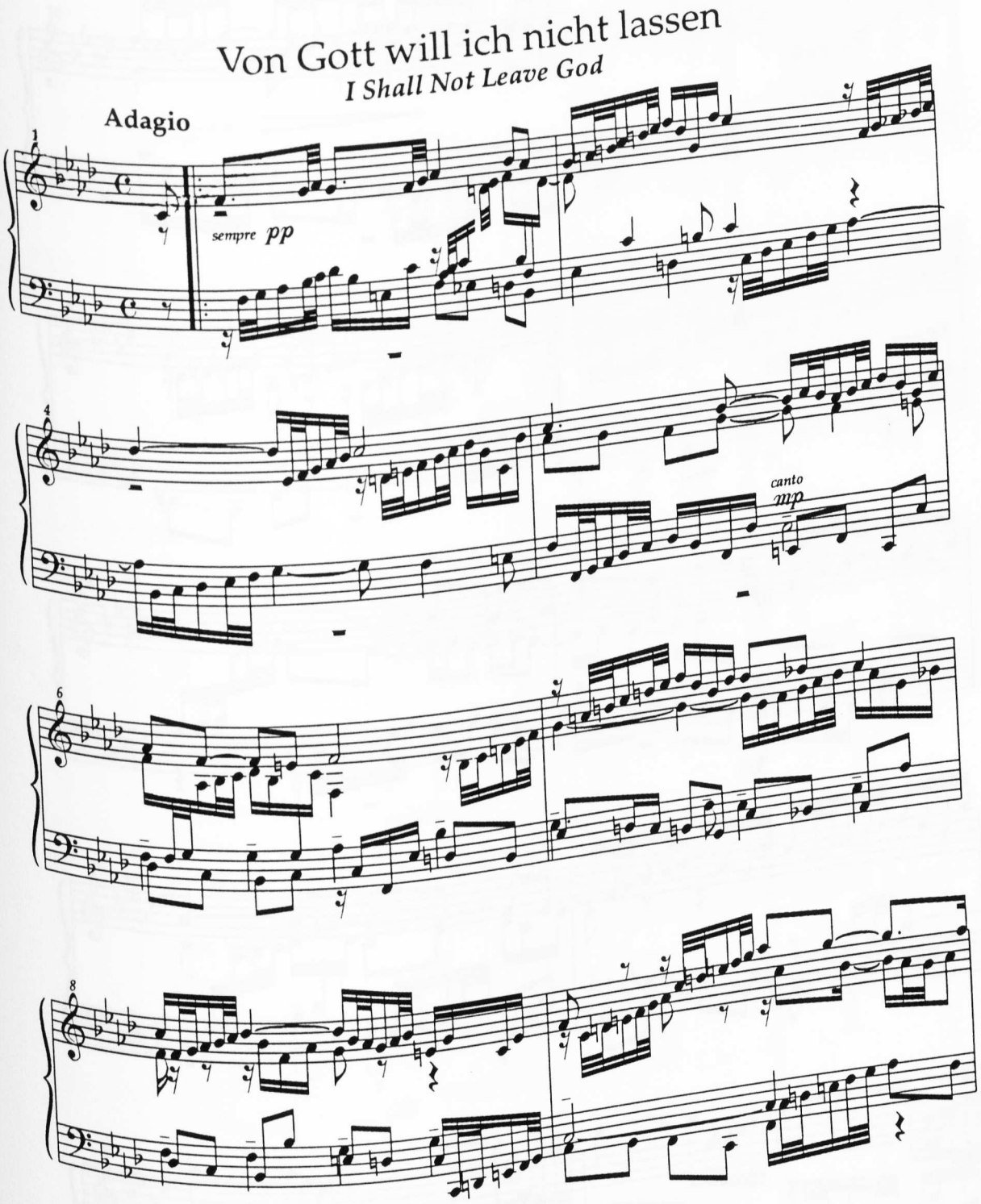
He reaches his hand to me

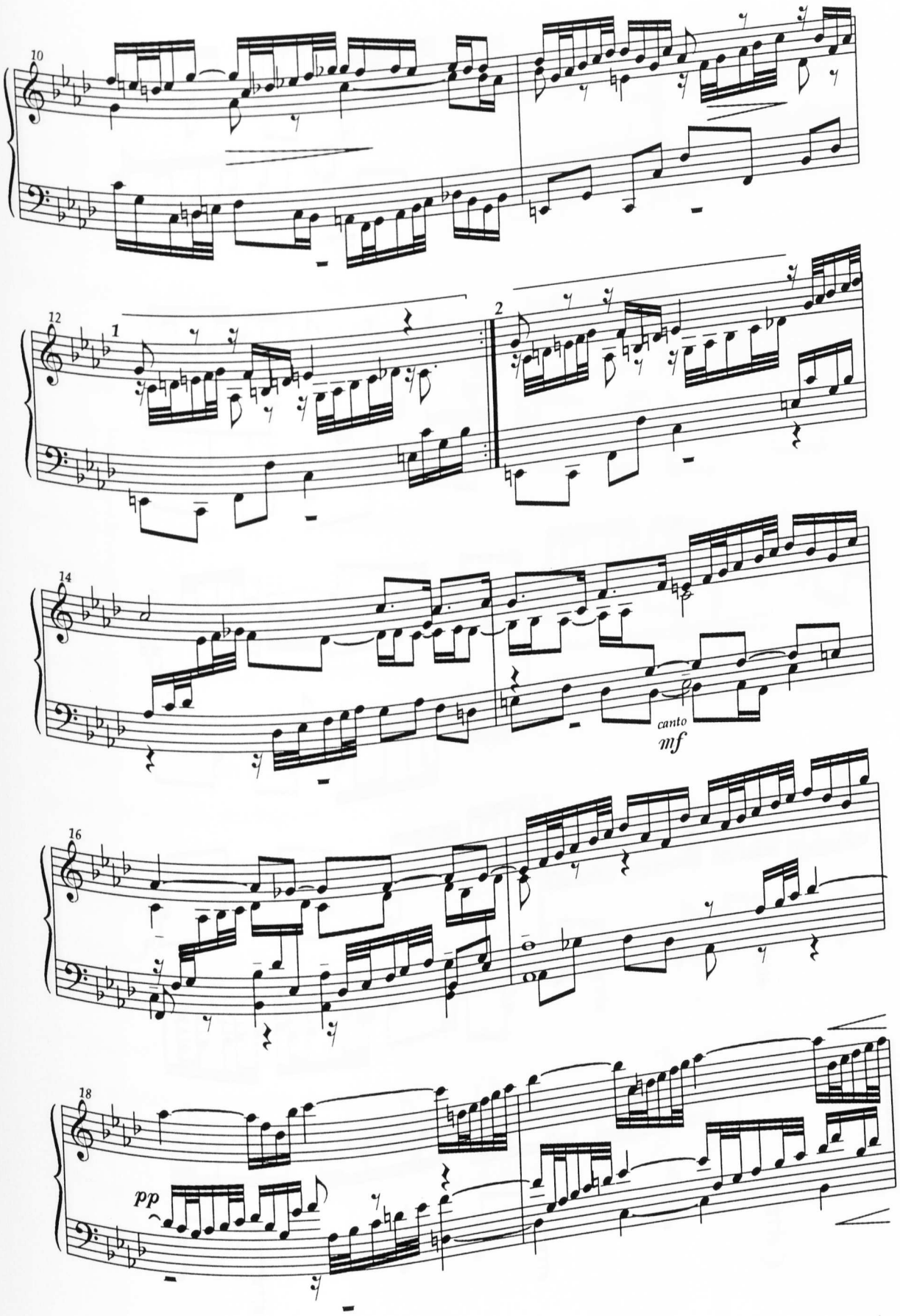
Evening and morning.

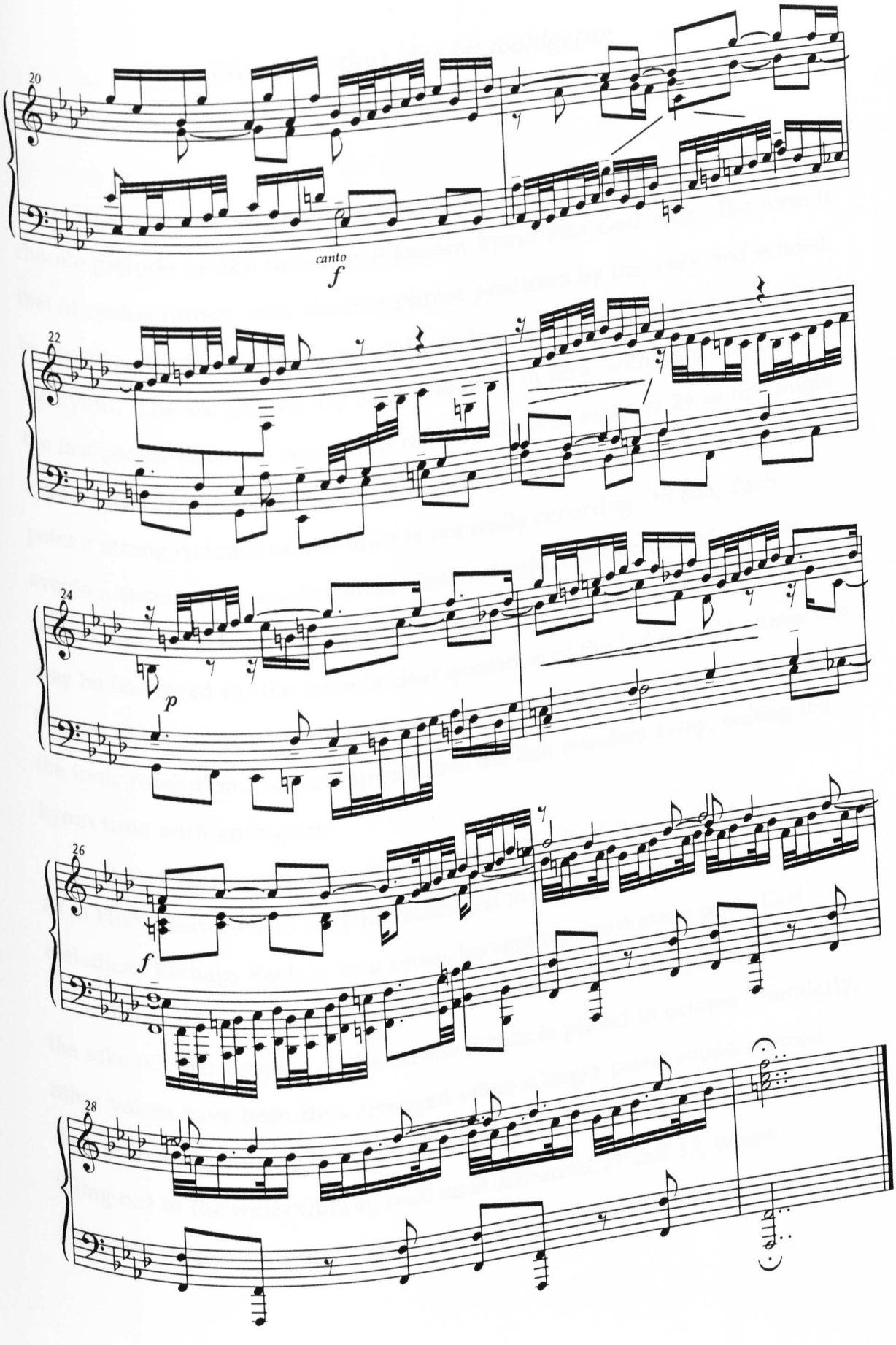
He takes care of me

Wherever I may be.

(Translation: John Mortensen)


Von Gott will ich nicht lassen
I Shall Not Leave God
Adagio
sempre pp
canto
mp


10
12
1
2
14
canto
mf
16
18
pp


20
canto
f
22
24
p
26
f
28

Was Gott thut, das ist wohlgetan

BWV 1116

This composition from the Neumeister Collection represents the only chorale prelude on the rather well-known hymn *Was Gott thut*. The form is that of cantus firmus, with the first phrase predicted by the tenor and echoed by the alto. Eventually (in measure 7) the bass also recites the first six notes of the hymn. The six phrases are duly presented in turn, with only one oddity: the last phrase does not resolve on the downbeat of measure 24 as one might expect. Rather, the soprano delays sounding G until measure 25, and at that point a strong cadence on the tonic is not really occurring. In fact, Bach avoids a strong cadence altogether. Interestingly, the unresolved soprano phrase finds an echo in the tenor. If the alto D on the last beat of measure 25 may be borrowed for the tenor, a clear quotation of the last chorale phrase can be seen in the tenor part through measure 26 and into measure 27. But again, the tonic resolution does not appear, but the line wanders away, ending the hymn tune with ambiguity.

A textual connection may exist here. The final line of the hymn ("And so to Him I leave it all") may be illustrated in the music by the unresolved melodies. Perhaps Bach is, in a sense, leaving the resolutions up to God.

Was Gott thut has been transcribed into the form of a piano duet. For the sake of clear projection, the cantus firmus is placed in octaves. Similarly, other voices have been thus arranged when a larger piano sound seemed desirable. Occasionally the texture, where thin in the original, received some filling-out in the transcription, such as at measures 11 and 12, where dissonant suspensions and *staccato* articulations seemed attractive and

appropriate. A pedal point appears in the bass at the end of the piece, along with a general augmenting of the sonority. The aforementioned tenor quotation of the last phrase of the cantus firmus is actually tripled at the octave and should be played accordingly.

The level of difficulty is moderate, although the first primo part in measures 30 and 31 provides a slighty greater challenge.

The full text and translation are included here.

Was Gott thut, das ist wohlgetan,
dabei will ich verbleiben.
Es mag mich auf die rauhe Bahn
Noth, Tod und Elend treiben:
so wird Gott mich ganz väterlich
in seinen Armen halten.
Drum lass ich ihn nur walten.

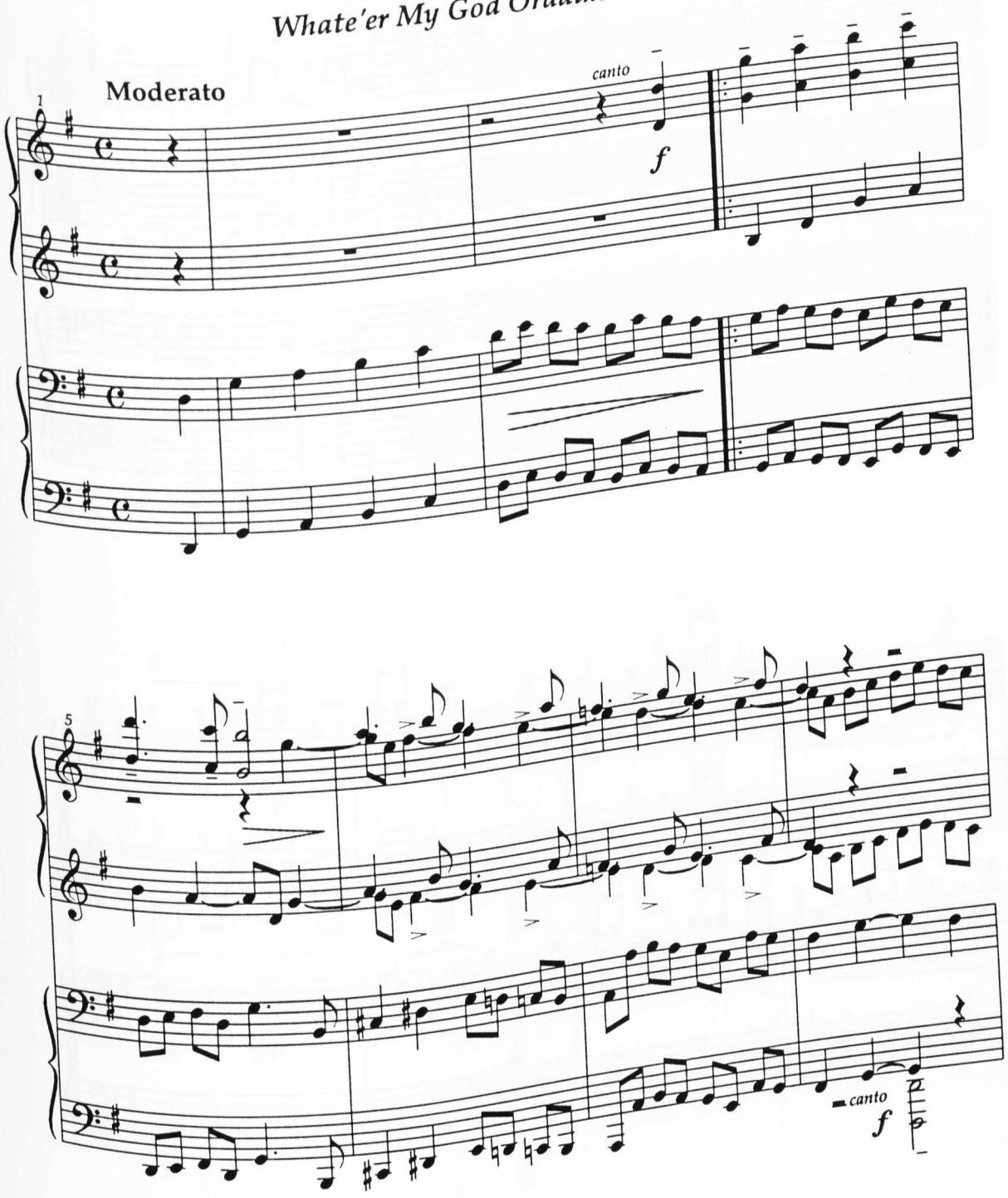
(Samuel Rodigast, 1675)

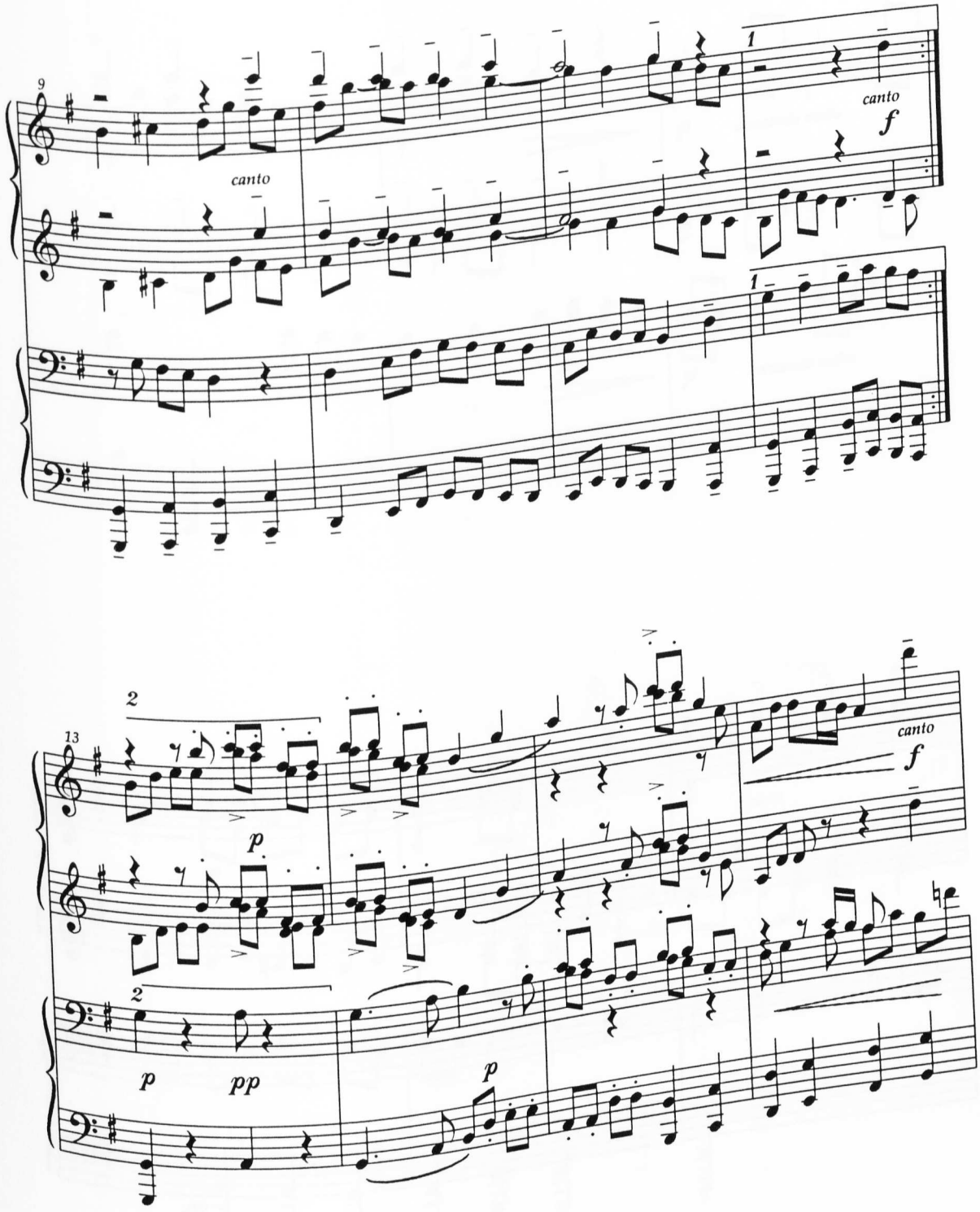
Whate'er my God ordains is right,
Here shall my stand be taken;
Though sorrow, need, or death be mine,
Yet am I not forsaken,
My Father's care is around me there,
He holds me that I shall not fall,
And so to Him I leave it all.

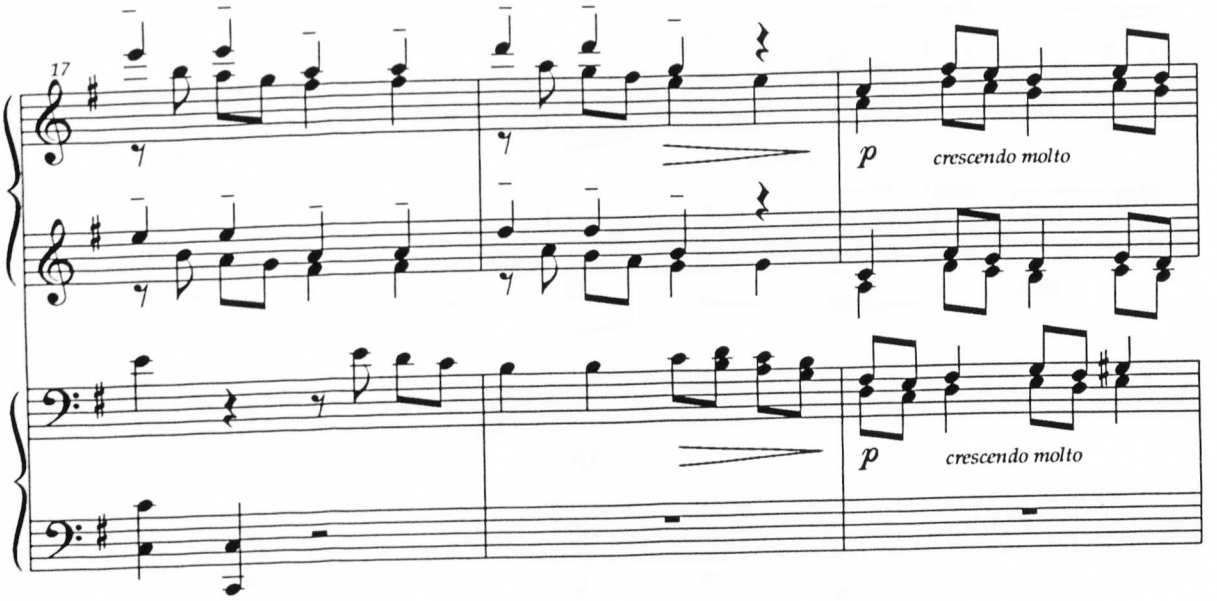
(Translation: Catherine Winkworth)

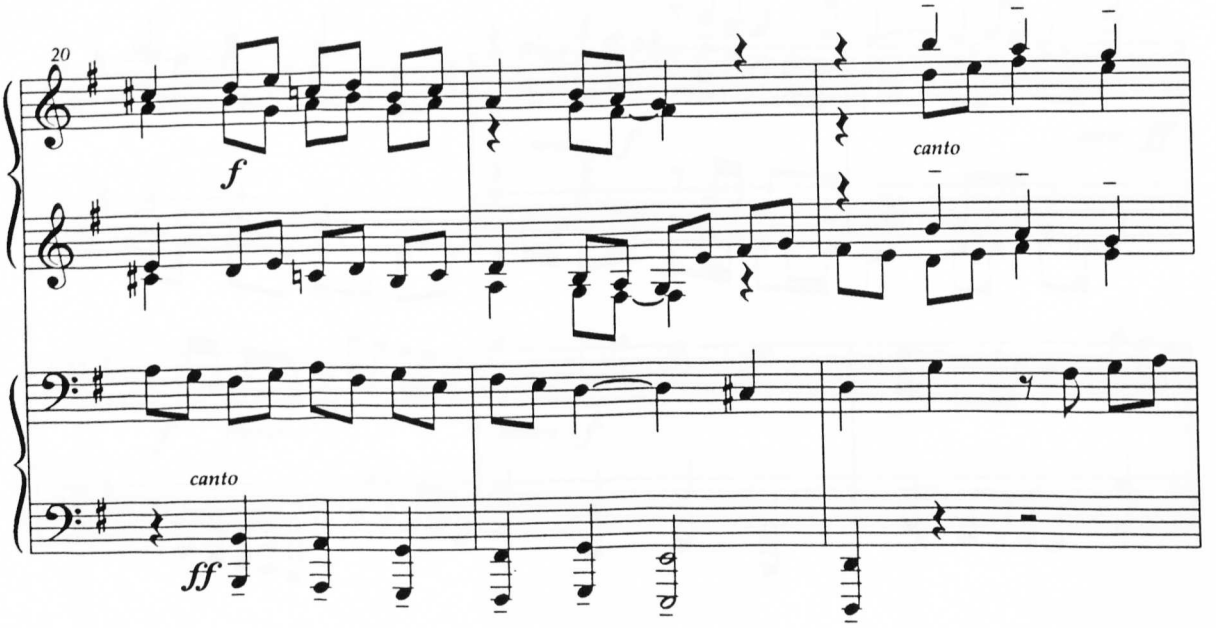
Was Gott thut, das ist wohlgetan

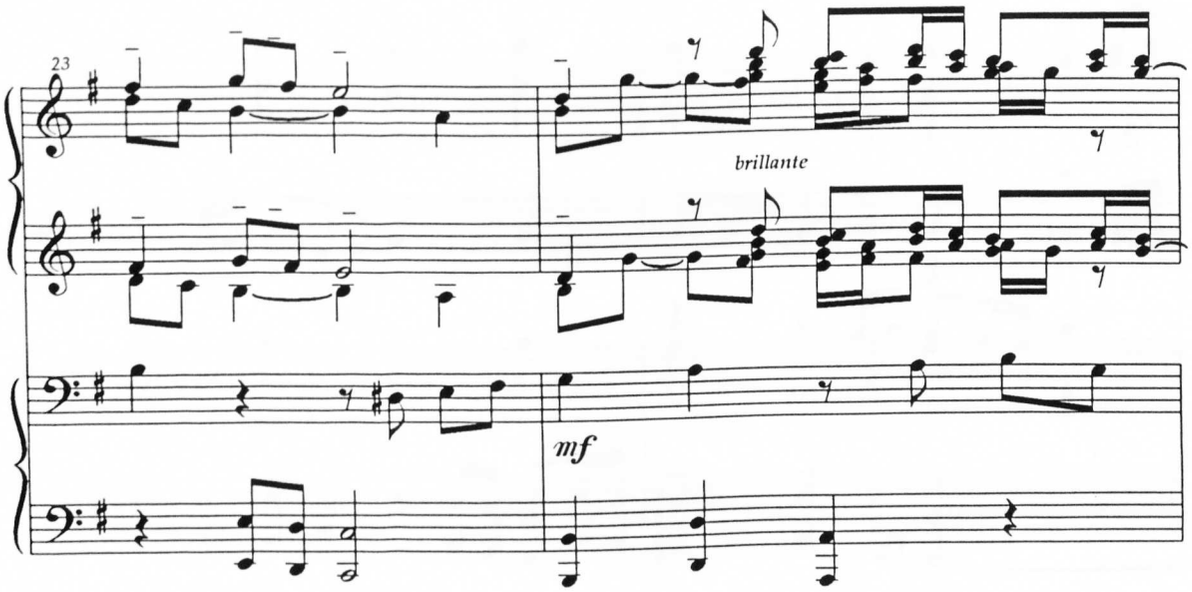
Whate'er My God Ordains is Right

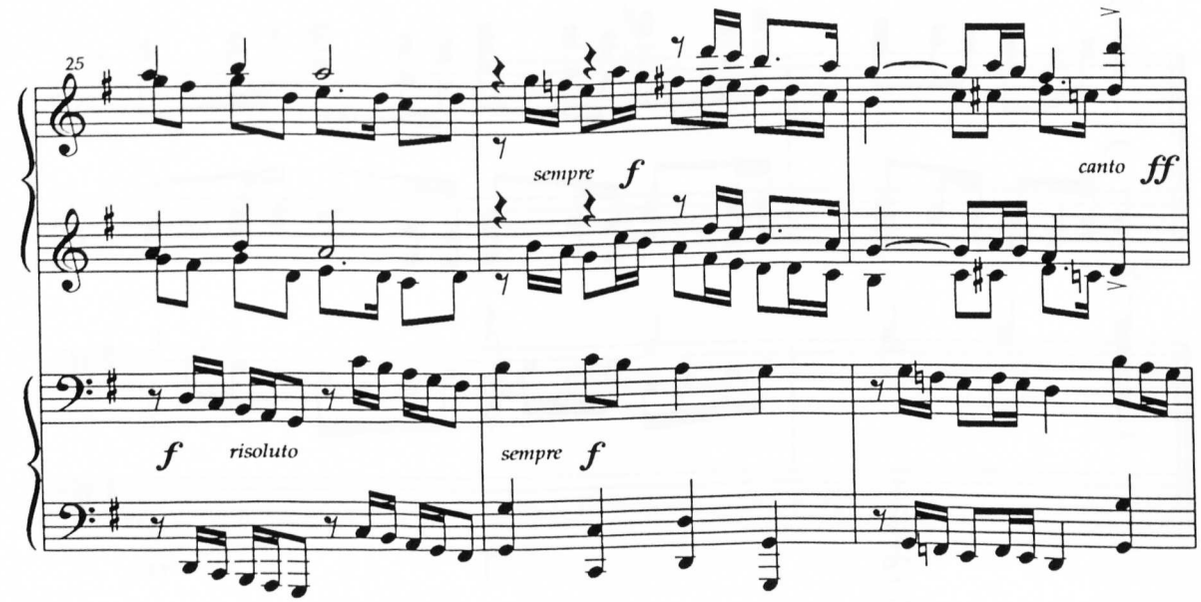


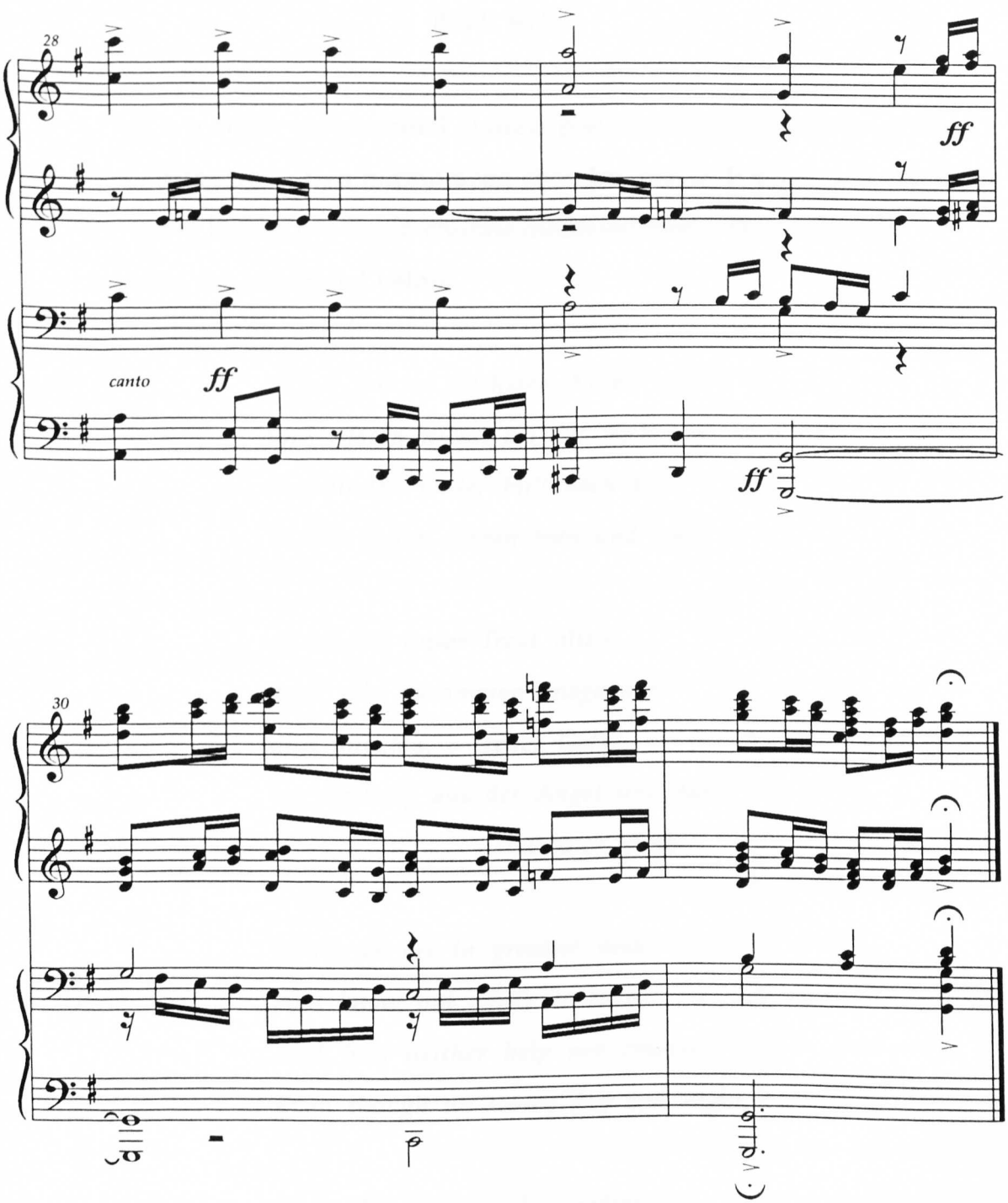

9
canto
1
canto
f
1
13
2
p
canto
f
2
p
pp
p


17
p
crescendo molto
p
crescendo molto


20
f
canto
canto
ff


23
brillante
mf


25
sempre f
canto ff
f risoluto
sempre f


28
ff
canto
ff
ff
30
8va

Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein

BWV 641

This is a richly ornamented chorale prelude from the *Orgelbüchlein.* Its melody appears in two harmonized chorales, one in F major and the other in G, the same key as the organ chorale discussed here. Their texts are identical, and are presented below:

Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein
und wissen nicht, wo aus noch ein,
und finden weder Hilf noch Rat,
ob wir gleich sorgen früh und spät,

so ist dies unser Trost allein,
dass wir zusammen insgemein
dich anrufen, o treuer Gott,
um Rettung aus der Angst und Not.

(P. Eber, 1560)

When we are in greatest need
And know not where to turn,
And find neither help nor counsel
Even though we worry day and night,

Then this is our sole comfort,
That we may together

Call upon you, O true God,

To rescue us from worry and need.

(Translation: John Mortensen)

In organ chorale form *Wenn wir* features a melody ornamented almost beyond recognition. The original melody, however, finds an echo of its first few notes in the accompanying parts of the organ piece. In measure 1 the tenor presents in diminution the opening notes of the hymn tune, which is answered in inversion in the bass in the latter half of the same measure. This thematic cell of four notes runs throughout the composition and occurs in all accompanimental voices in both proper form and inversion. Examples include the alto (in inversion) in measure 5, in the first half of the bar; the tenor concurrent with the previous example, but in original form; and the bass in the last beats of measure 3.

The ornaments employed include the mordant, the long mordant (used only in the final bar), and trills of various lengths. Most of the ornamentation, however, is written out in full as opposed to being represented by symbols.

So that the richness of the decorated melody might be fully expressed, the alto part has been placed in the left hand in certain parts of this transcription. This frees the right hand to execute the ornaments without the encumbrance of an additional voice. This results, however, in some wide stretches for the left hand. Because of the slow tempo necessary for the clear performance of the soprano elaborations, rolling or breaking the left-hand notes should not disturb the flow of the composition. These redistributions include the beginning of measure 3, where the left hand must negotiate a

tenth, measure 6, where a twelfth appears, and tenths in measures 7 and 8.

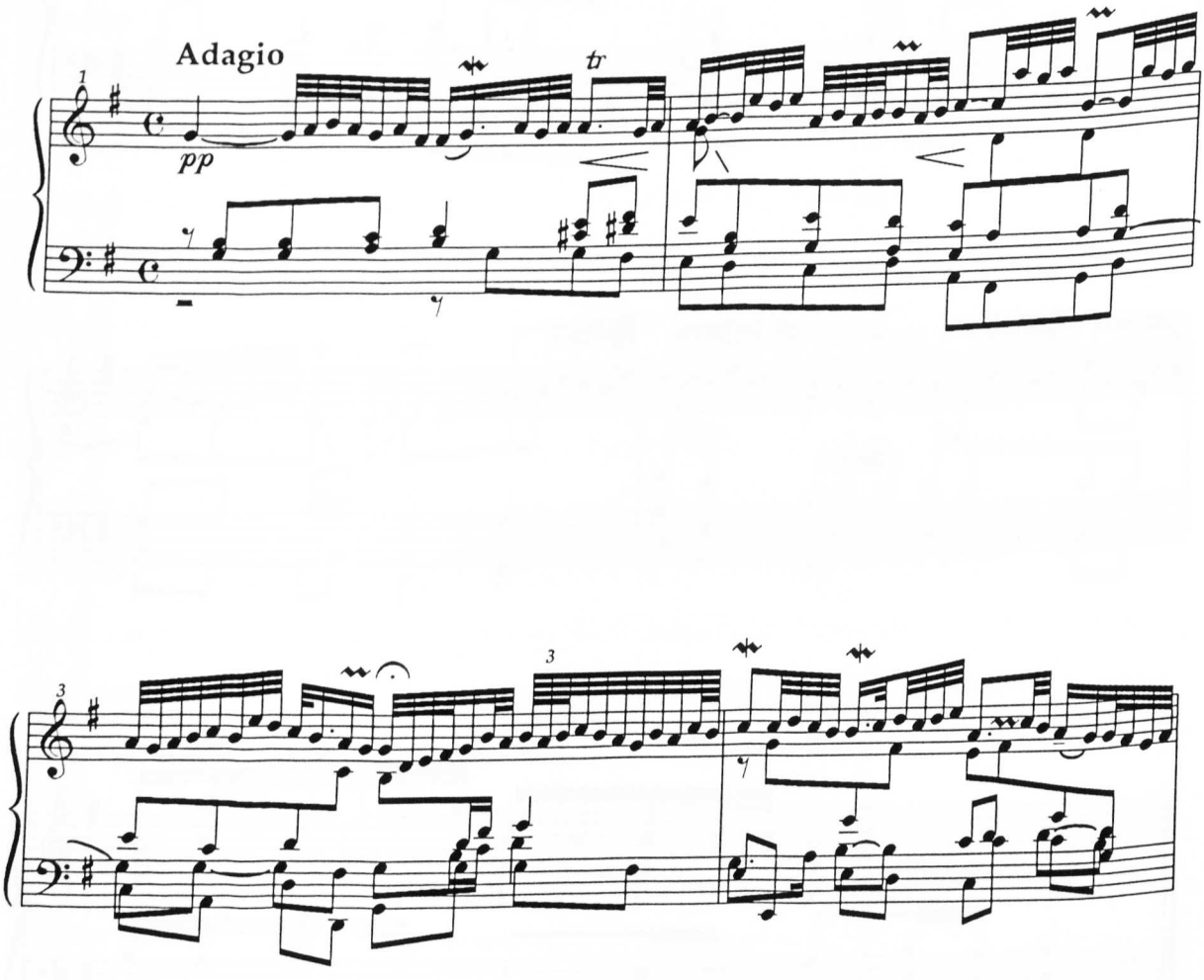
On the other hand, in one instance it actually seemed more practical to place all voices except the bass in the right hand. On the last half-beat of measure 5 the bass is a full twelfth below the tenor, the the upper three voices are within one octave of each other. Therefore those voices were all assigned to the right hand.

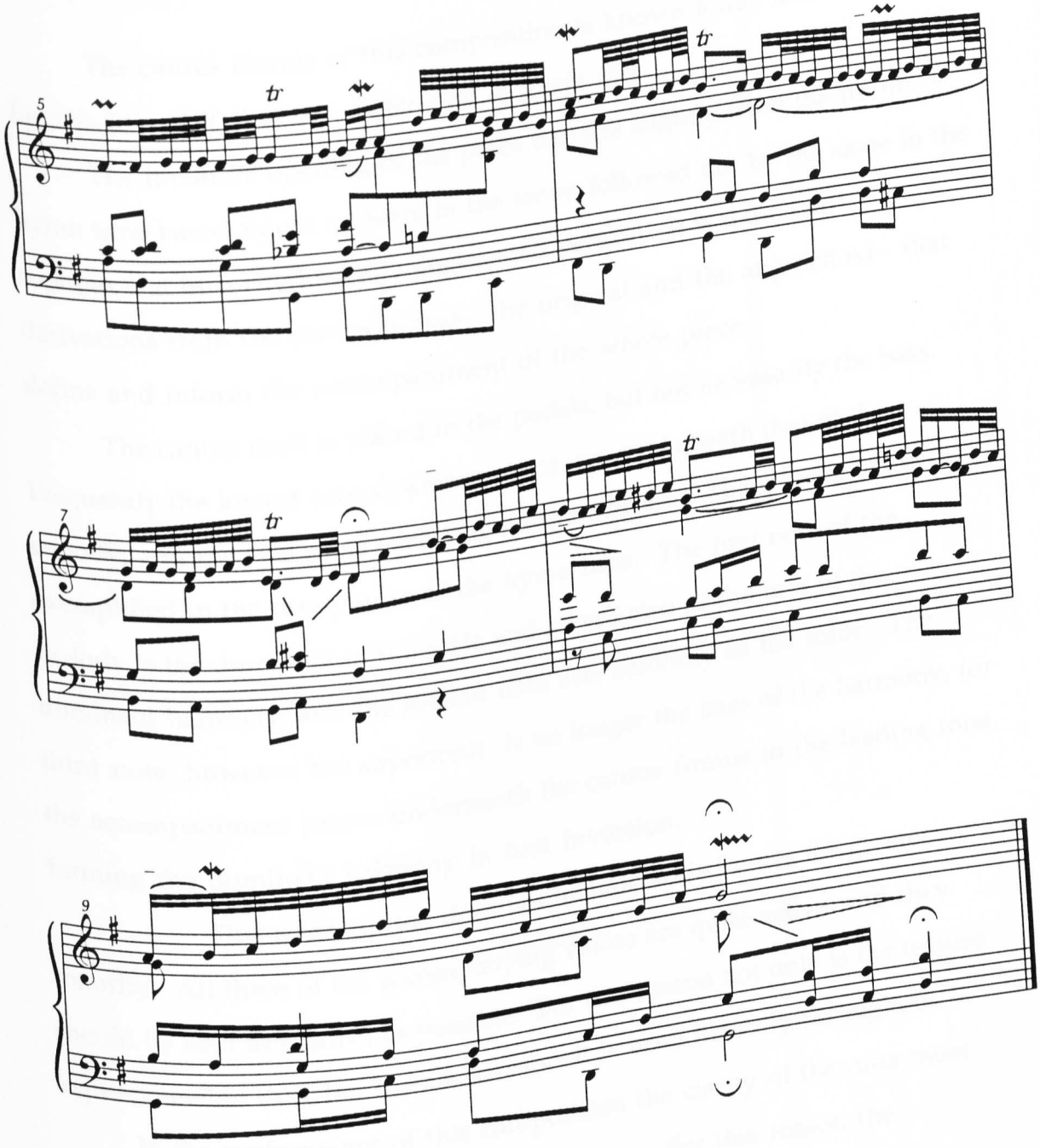
The level of difficulty is moderate, although great care must be taken to control voicing and sonority, and some left-hand reaches are large.

The melody should always predominate in a performance of this transcription, while at the same time an overall demeanor of humility, supplication, and confidence (as indicated in the text) must be evident in one's playing.

Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein

When we are in Greatest Need




5
tr
tr
tr
7
tr
tr
9

Wer nur den lieben Gott läßt walten

BWV 647

The cantus firmus of this composition is known today under the English title of *If thou but suffer God to guide thee.*

The imitative opening of the piece departs slightly from the norm: a hymn tune-based figure appears in the tenor, followed not by the same in the soprano, but by a rhythmically augmented version. It is these two derivations from the cantus firmus-- the original and the augmented-- that define and inform the accompaniment of the whole piece.

The cantus itself is placed in the pedals, but not necessarily the bass. Frequently the lowest accompanying voice crosses beneath that of the melody, and the two parts exchange harmonic roles. This phenomenon is exemplified in the first phrase of the hymn tune. The first note of the melody is the dominant of the scale and serves also as the root of the dominant harmony, and the second note acts similarly as the tonic. The third note, however, the supertonic, is no longer the bass of the harmony, for the accompaniment passes underneath the cantus firmus to the leading tone, forming the dominant harmony in first inversion.

This transcription does not include added notes for greater sonority. All three of the accompanying voices are quite active, and they should be kept as distinct as possible. For this reason not only is the texture kept somewhat thin, but the *staccato* touch is used liberally throughout.

In the performance of this composition the clarity of the tune must take precedence over harmonic considerations. For this reason the transcription includes *tenuto* markings on the notes of the cantus firmus,

even when they do not function as the bass line. *Wer nur den lieben Gott läßt walten* should be performed at an energetic tempo, with articulations clearly marked.

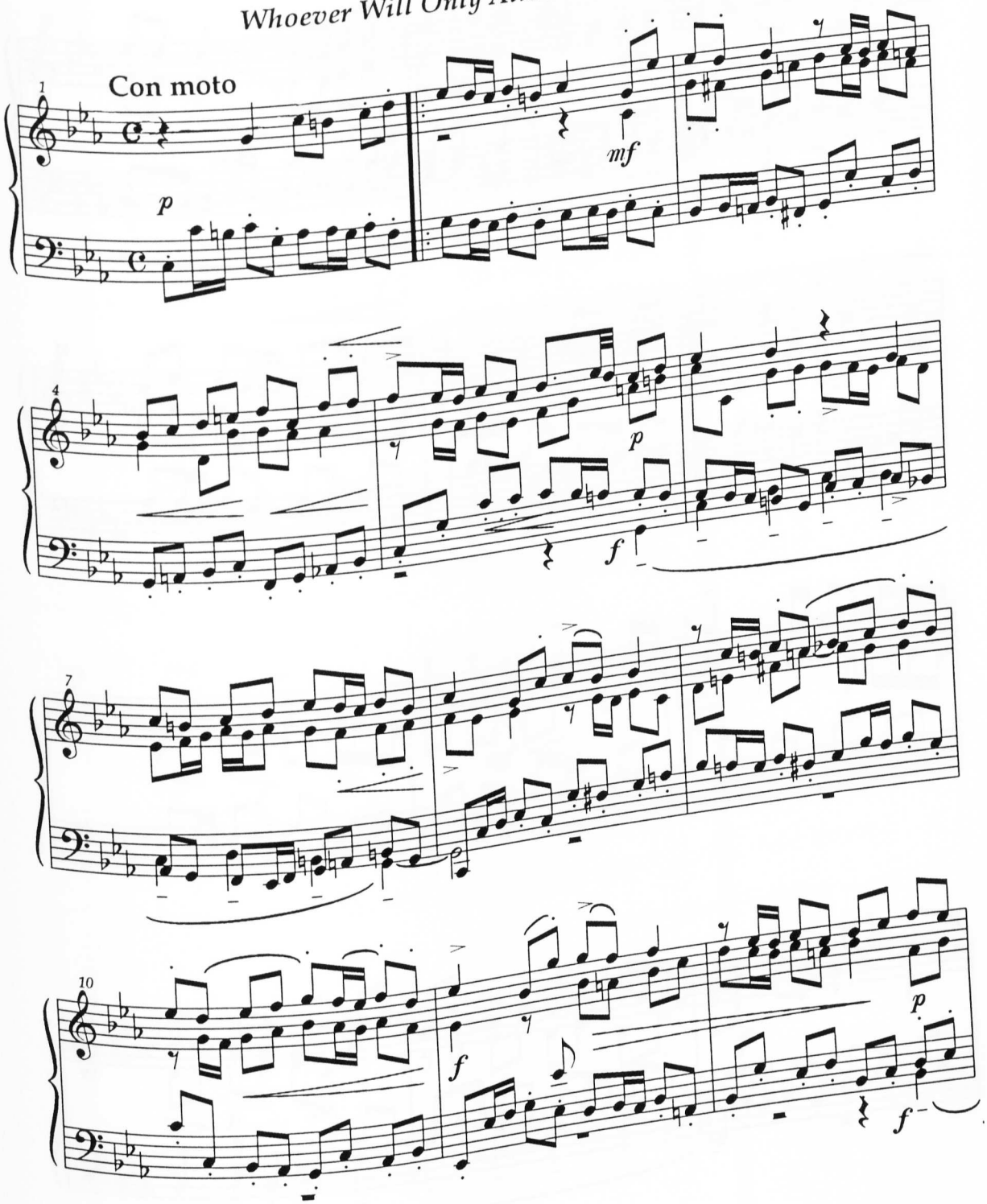
Because of the intricate four-part counterpoint, the level of difficulty is high.

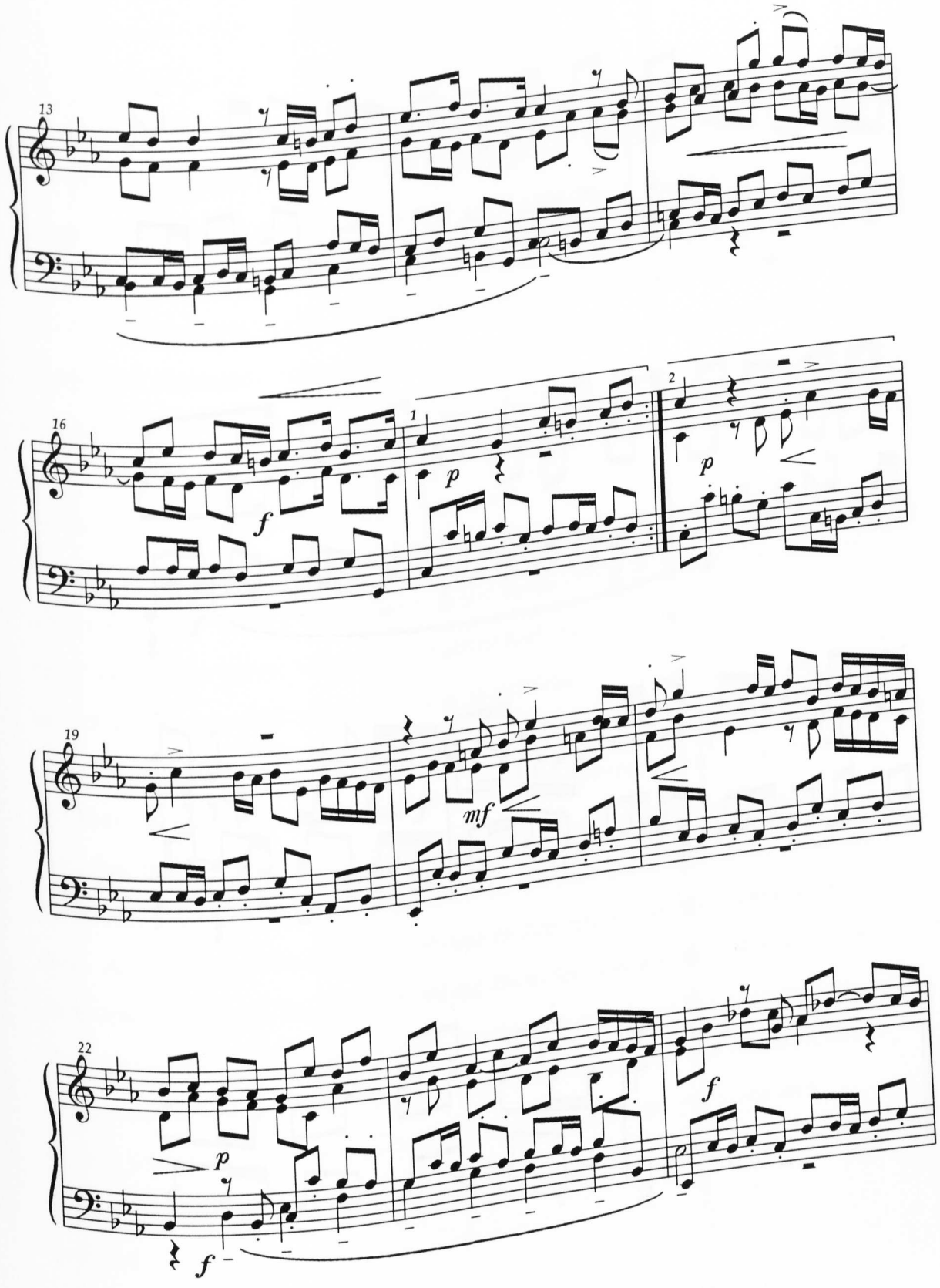
Wer nur den lieben Gott läßt walten
und hoffet auf in allezeit,
den wird er wunderbar erhalten
in allem Kreuz und Traurigkeit.
Wer Gott dem Allerhöchsten traut,
hat auf keinen Sand gebaut.
(Georg Neumark, 1641)

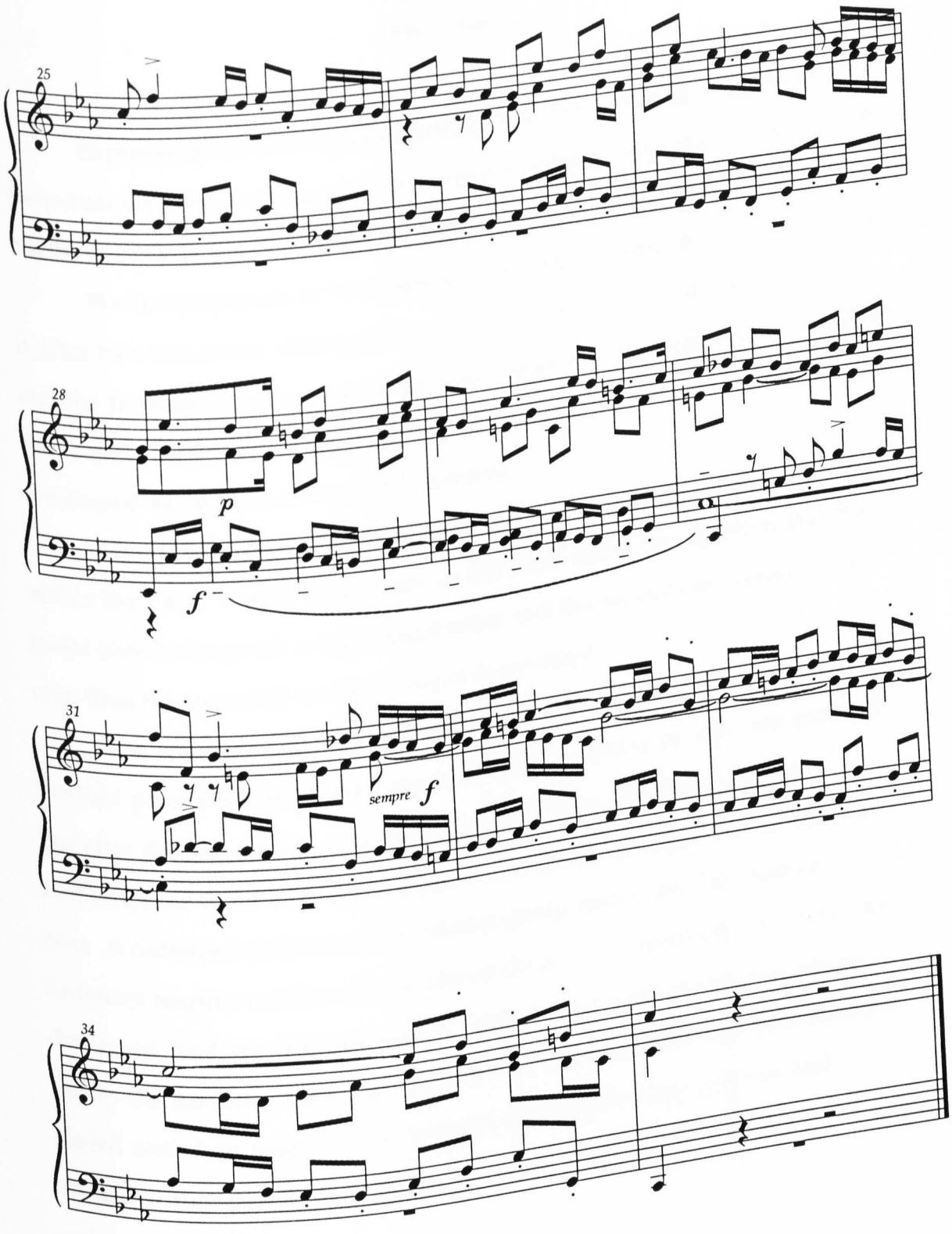
Whoever will only allow God to lead
And will hope in Him at all times
Shall receive wonderful help
In the midst of sufferings and sorrows.
Whoever trusts in Almighty God
Has not built upon sand.
(Translation: John Mortensen)

Wer nur den lieben Gott läßt walten

Whoever Will Only Allow God to Lead




13
16
f
1
p
2
p
19
mf
22
p
f
f


25
28
p
f
31
sempre f
34

Wo soll ich fliehen hin

BWV 646

Expressing the text's idea of fleeing, *Wo soll ich fliehen hin* includes perpetual sixteenth notes except at cadences, where a brief interruption of the rhythmic flow is permitted for the sake of harmonic emphasis.

The accompaniment commences with strict imitation but departs from it after two measures, although the patterns of both the sixteenths and eighths in those first two measures find reprisal in the figuration throughout the composition, particularly the leap in the eighth notes, which is later developed as compound melodic material.

While the cantus firmus appears in the pedal, it functions as the tenor, not as the bass. Bach's indications in the score show his intention that the pedal should be given a high registration and the secondary manual a low one; thus the expected order of voices is reversed.

The composer has ordered the cantus firmus phrases in pairs. That is, the first phrase is followed by the second after a pause of only one measure, but after the second phrase a larger delay of three measures appears. Similarly, the third and fourth phrases are closely grouped, as are the final two. A cadence introduces each phrase group (these are the interruptive cadences mentioned above) and places them in, respectively, the tonic, the dominant, and the relative major. During the course of the final phrase group the harmony makes its way back to the tonic, and the composition is closed with four measures of "typical" but nonetheless vigorous and attractive two-part counterpoint, finishing with another "interruptive" cadence.

In transcription a pianistic texture has been sought. The counterpoint is limited to Bach's three original voices, and articulations have been added. In certain instances a note of the cantus firmus is immediately followed by a note of the accompaniment. The pianist should use the accompanimental note to reinforce the cantus firmus note-- that is, after the cantus firmus note has been played, the accompanimental note should be played and held to allow the the cantus firmus to maintain a legato character. In measure 8 the accompanimental note has no staccato marking because it must be held in order to perpetuate the cantus firmus.

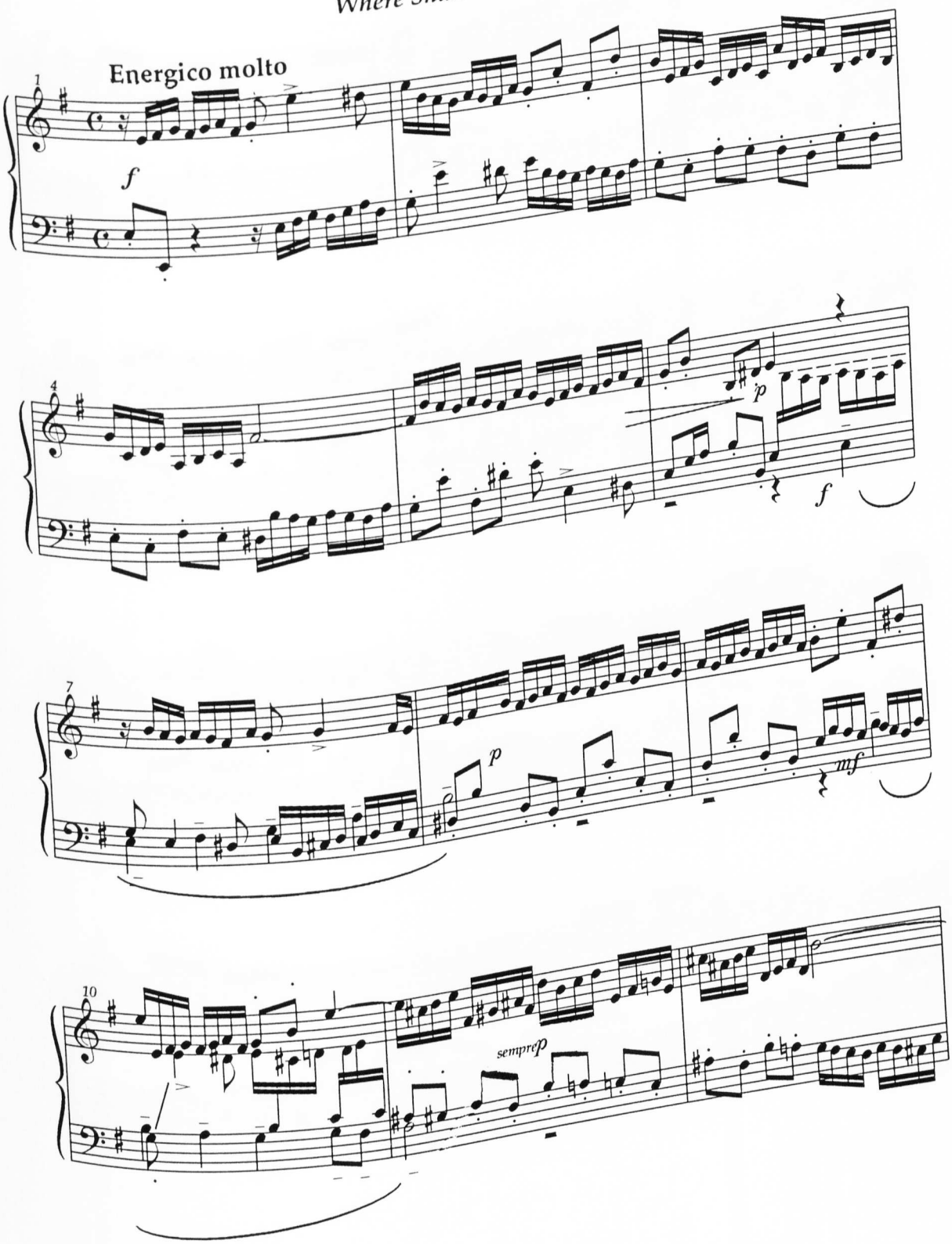
The difficulty level is comparable to the faster *Sinfonias*.

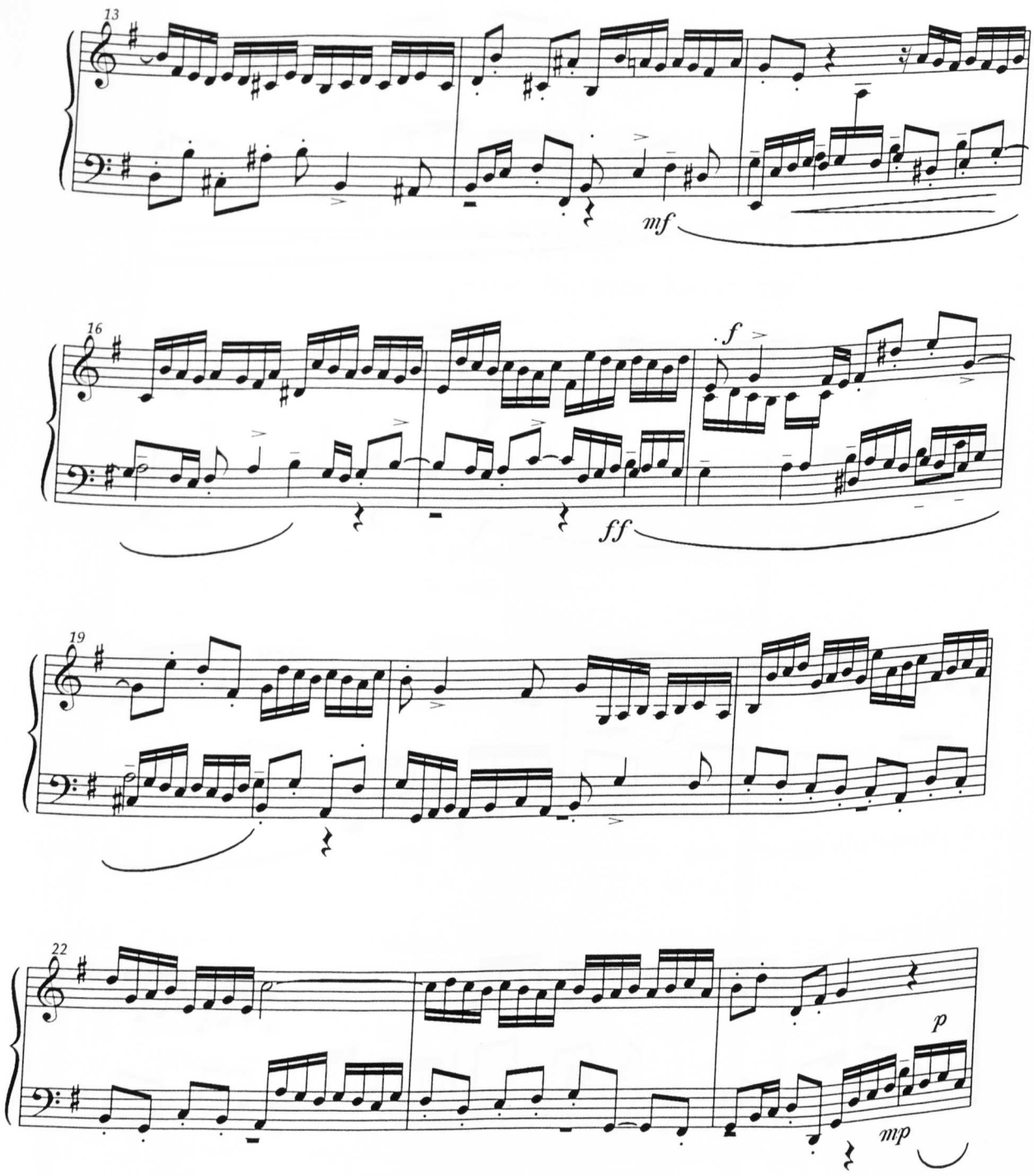
Wo soll ich fliehen hin,
weil ich beschweret bin,
mit vielen, größen Sünden?
Wo kenn ich Rettung finden?
Wenn alle Welt herkäme,
mein angst sie nicht wegnehme.
(Anonymous)

Where shall I flee away?
When I am distressed
With many great sins?
Where can I find deliverance?
Even though everyone comfort me,
My fear will not leave.
(Translation: John Mortensen)

Wo soll ich fliehen hin

Where Shall I Flee Away




13
mf
16
f
ff
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22
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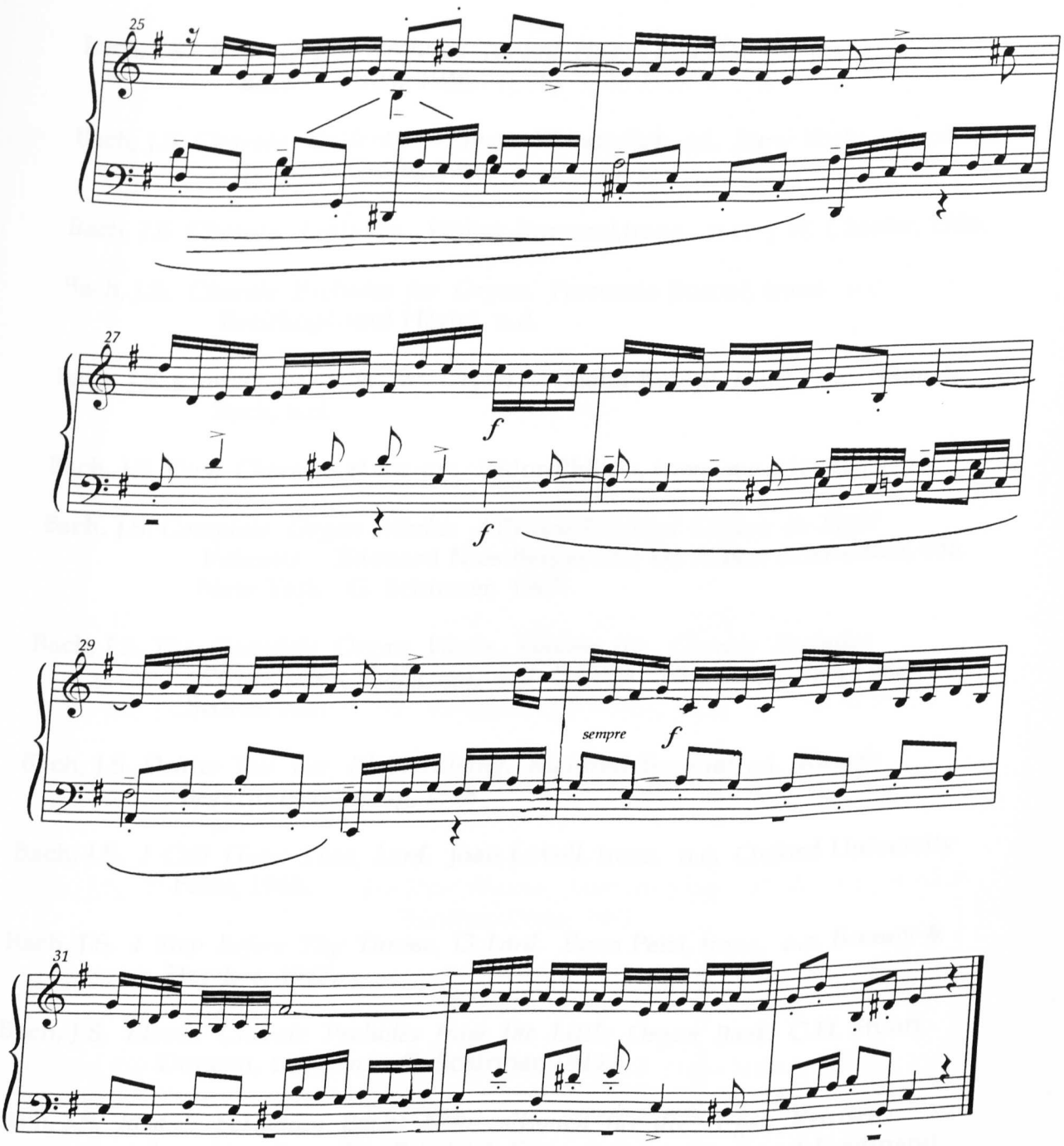
mp


25
27
f
f
29
sempre
f
31

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