WILHELM FRIEDEMANN

B a c h

1710—1784

COMPLETE WORKS FOR ORGAN

EDITED BY

E. POWER BIGGS

MUSIC PRESS, Inc.
130 W. 56TH STREET, NEW YORK

Complete $2.75

WILHELM FRIEDEMANN BACH

Three fugues and seven chorale preludes for organ seem a small output for the long life of a musician who, after his father's death, was generally recognized as Germany's foremost organist. Surprise and regret over this were expressed even in the latter part of Friedemann's lifetime, and for as long after his death as anyone remembered his wonderful playing. Schubart, the writer on the aesthetics of music, who heard him play in Berlin, wrote his impressions in almost ecstatic terms, and said that his organ pieces were as rare and precious as gold.

To account for this, one must recall that Friedemann lived in an age when music was breaking away rapidly from the older forms. This development was accelerated by a great increase, from about the 1730's on, in the class of amateur musicians, for whom composers had to provide quantities of easier music suited to their abilities. It was to this public that Friedemann sought to appeal in 1742, when he announced a series of six harpsichord sonatas. The first one, in D-major, he engraved himself. This sonata has been called one of the most remarkable before Beethoven. Technically it is not difficult; but the content is so rich, especially in the slow movement, that it requires more skill in interpretation than the average amateur had the ability or patience to bestow upon it. It was called "too difficult," and the response of the public was so slight that the remaining sonatas of this group were not published, circulating only in manuscript copies that were of no profit to the composer.

In 1748 Friedemann made another attempt, and published a sonata in E-flat — not from the earlier group—and though it is easier than the one in D, and makes some concessions to the prevailing style, by this time opinion had hardened in the belief that his music was difficult, and the public turned to other composers, including his brother, Carl Philipp Emmanuel, whose sonatas, easier and somewhat superficial, were better adapted to its demands.

Thus the son upon whom John Sebastian Bach had lavished his utmost care and built his greatest hopes became discouraged and embittered by his failure to win the recognition he felt he deserved. After resigning in 1764 the organist's position which he held in Halle for nearly 20 years, he again tried to win the public's favor with a series of 12 Polonaises, a form recently come into vogue; but, delicate and charming though they are, these pieces met no encouragement.

With his harpsichord sonatas meeting this fate, how could Friedemann hope to fare better with organ compositions? In this field also, the old forms that his father had handled in the grand manner rapidly disintegrated, as can be seen, for instance, in the organ works of Hässler, in which a conventional prettiness replaces dignity and grandeur. If the later organists could not or would not play Friedemann's organ pieces, what incentive was there for him to publish them, or even to write them down? On the rare occasions when he gave organ recitals he did not require manuscripts of his own works and often improvised so brilliantly that poems were written to celebrate him.

His last years were clouded with poverty and illness. The gossip of his having taken to drink is a fabrication. Now, after more than a century and a half, a greater understanding of the types of music of which Friedemann Bach inherited the purest traditions from his father, and to which he added significant and original developments, is gradually resulting in rescuing this eminent musician from totally undeserved oblivion.

GEORGE BENSON WESTON
Cambridge, Mass., April 1947

SOURCES OF THIS MUSIC

The organ works of Wilhelm Friedemann Bach published in this edition are derived from the following sources: the G minor and F-major Fugues from a manuscript copy of 1794 in the possession of the undersigned; the C-minor Fugue from a collection of miscellaneous organ pieces published about a century ago in Leipzig, entitled *Caecilia* by its editor C. F. Becker, who notes that the work was taken from a Berlin edition of 1770. The seven chorale preludes are printed from a copy made in 1902 by the undersigned from a manuscript then in Koenigsberg.

The C-minor Fugue, at times attributed to both of Friedemann's youngest half-brothers—J. C. F. Bach (1732-1795) and J. C. Bach (1735-1782)—seems definitely to be by Friedemann. In style it is remote from the music of either of the half-brothers. It first appeared in a collection of vocal and instrumental pieces by various composers assembled by Friedemann's younger brother, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714-1788), and published in Hamburg in 1770 under the title *Musikalisches Vielerley* (Musical Miscellany).

When it was reprinted in Leipzig in Becker's collection, *Caecilia,* its source was indicated, under the last measures of the fugue, as a Berlin edition of the same year as the Hamburg volume. Some time after Becker, Volckmar included it in the third volume of his *Orgel-Album* (Peters edition No. 383c) as the work of Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach, the *Bückeburg Bach* (1732-1795); and it has been recently reprinted in this country as by Johann Christian Bach (1735-1782), the youngest son of John Sebastian, usually called the *London Bach.*

One would have thought the publication of the C-minor fugue by C. P. E. Bach would have settled the question. This, however, is not the case. In fact, Carl Philipp Emanuel himself is responsible for the muddle. Neither in the index nor on the opening page of this fugue in the *Musikalisches Vielerley* is the name of its composer noted. It follows another composition by J. C. F. Bach, which seems to have induced Volckmar to ascribe it to the latter; but, all through the ancient volume, wherever two works by the same composer follow each other, there is invariably the note: *vom eben demselben* (by the very same).

As for C. P. E. Bach's reason for conspicuously omitting the composer's name, conjectures can be of little value. The coolness which is known to have developed between the brothers might be noted; but if C. P. E. Bach had suppressed the work as well as its author, he would have sacrificed the best composition in his whole collection.

The attribution of the fugue to the gifted Johann Christian Bach does not seem supported by sufficient evidence. The late Charles Sanford Terry, in his excellent book on Johann Christian, makes no mention of any works by him for the organ; and the style of the fugue is definitely remote from that of the youngest Bach.

G. B. W.

WILHELM FRIEDMANN

Bach

1710—1784

COMPLETE WORKS FOR ORGAN

Three Fugues and Seven Choral Preludes

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E. POWER BIGGS

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FUGUE IN G MINOR

WILHELM FRIEDMANN BACH

Edited by E. POWER BIGGS

(Moderato)

MANUALS

PEDAL

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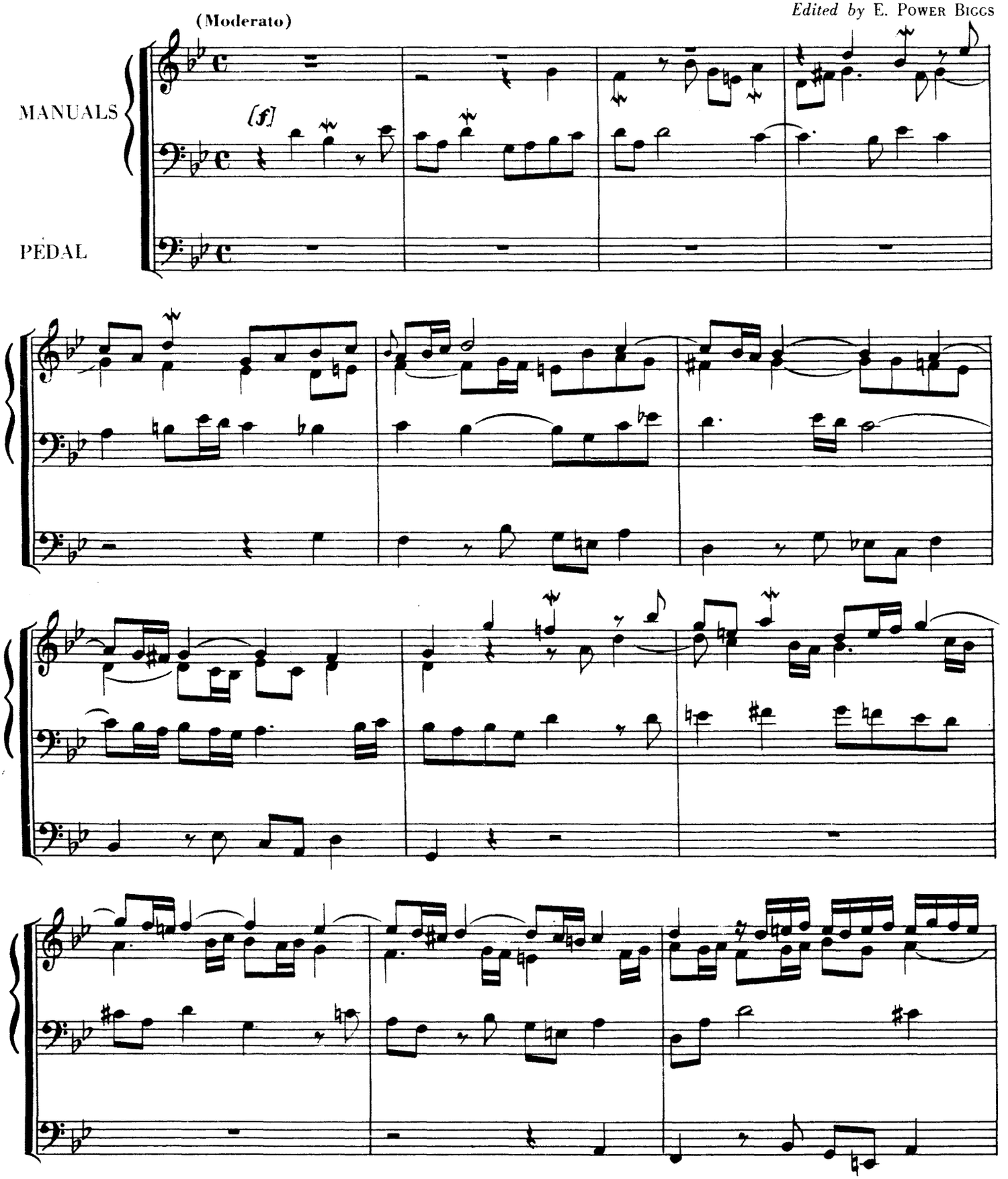

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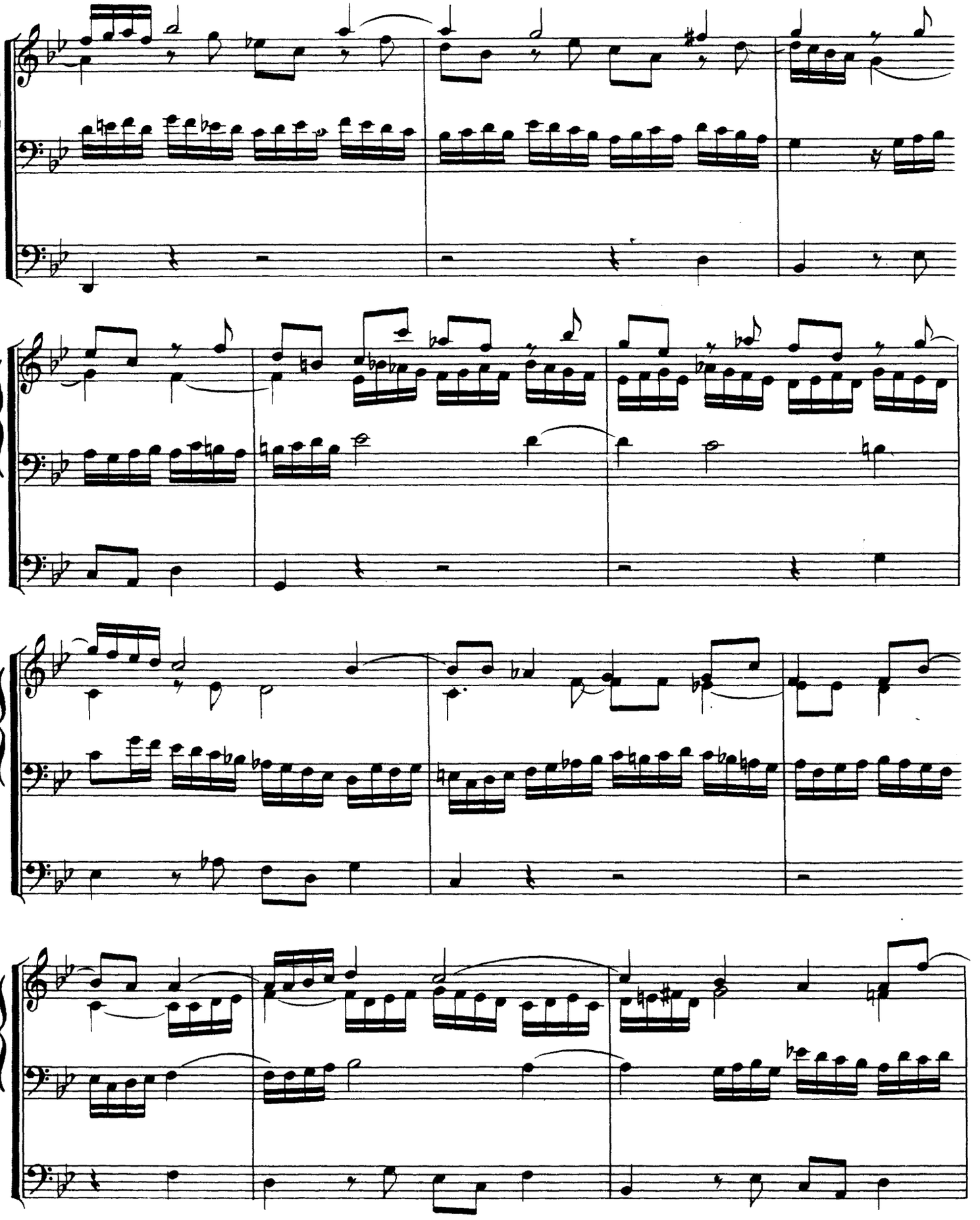

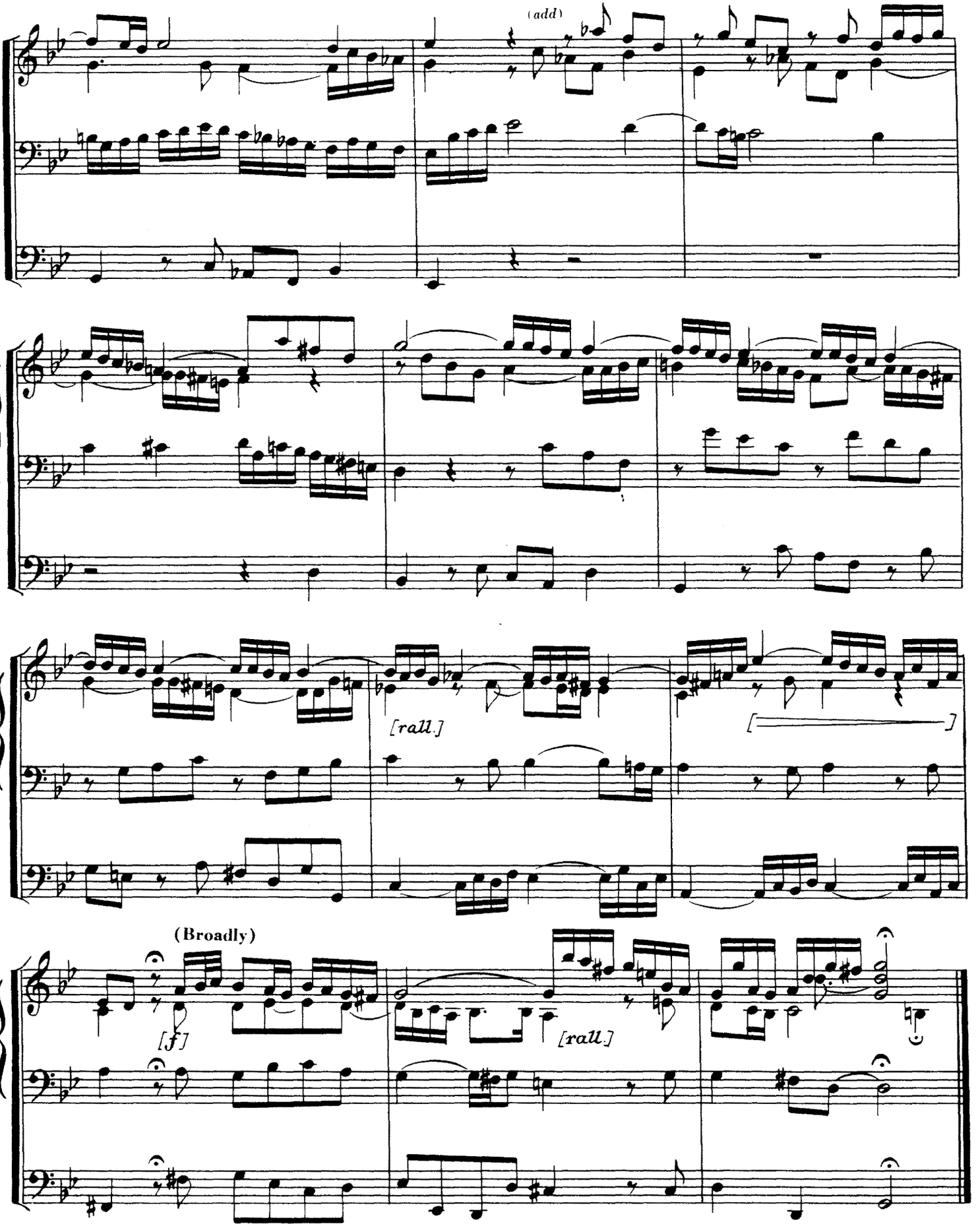
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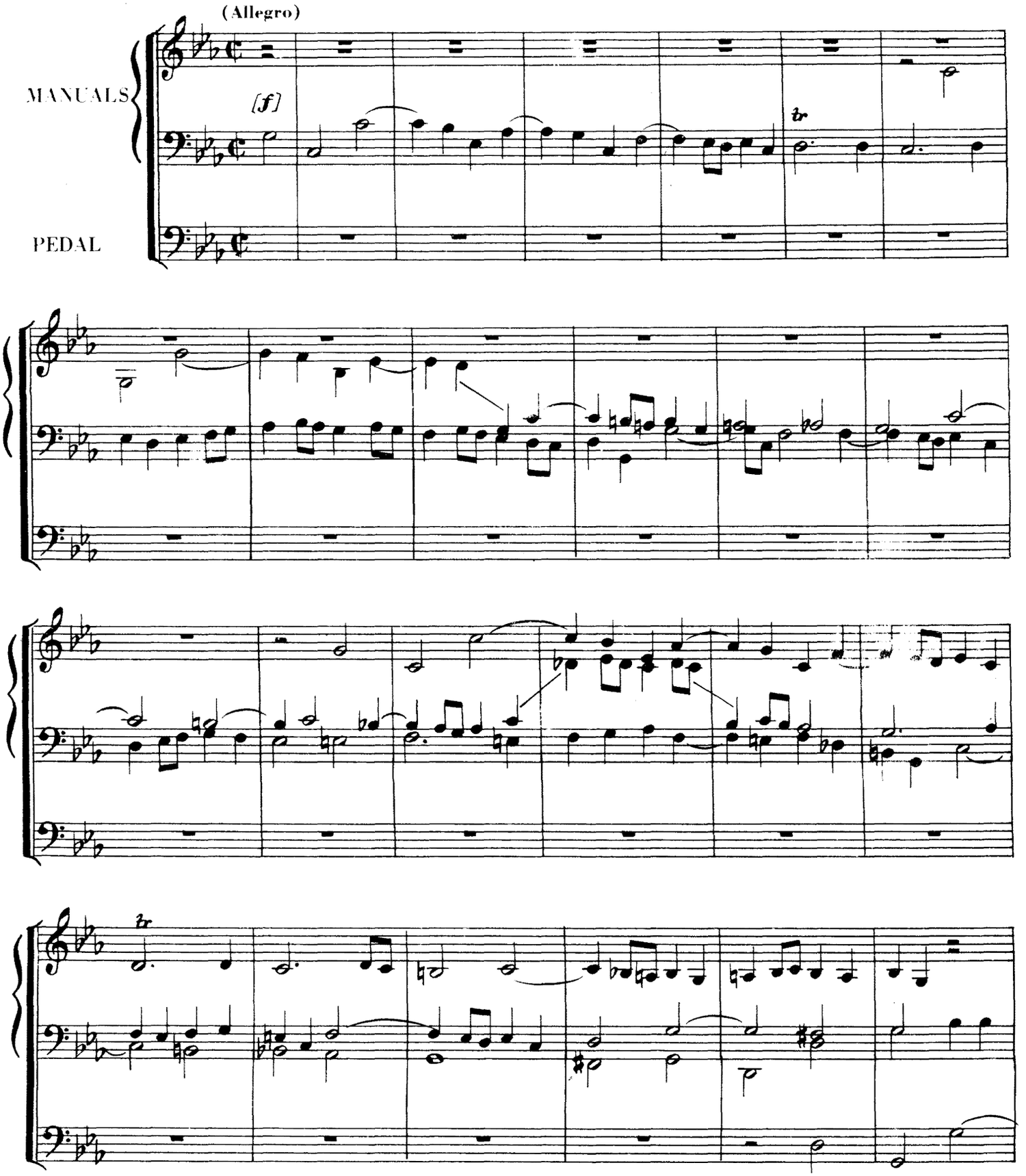
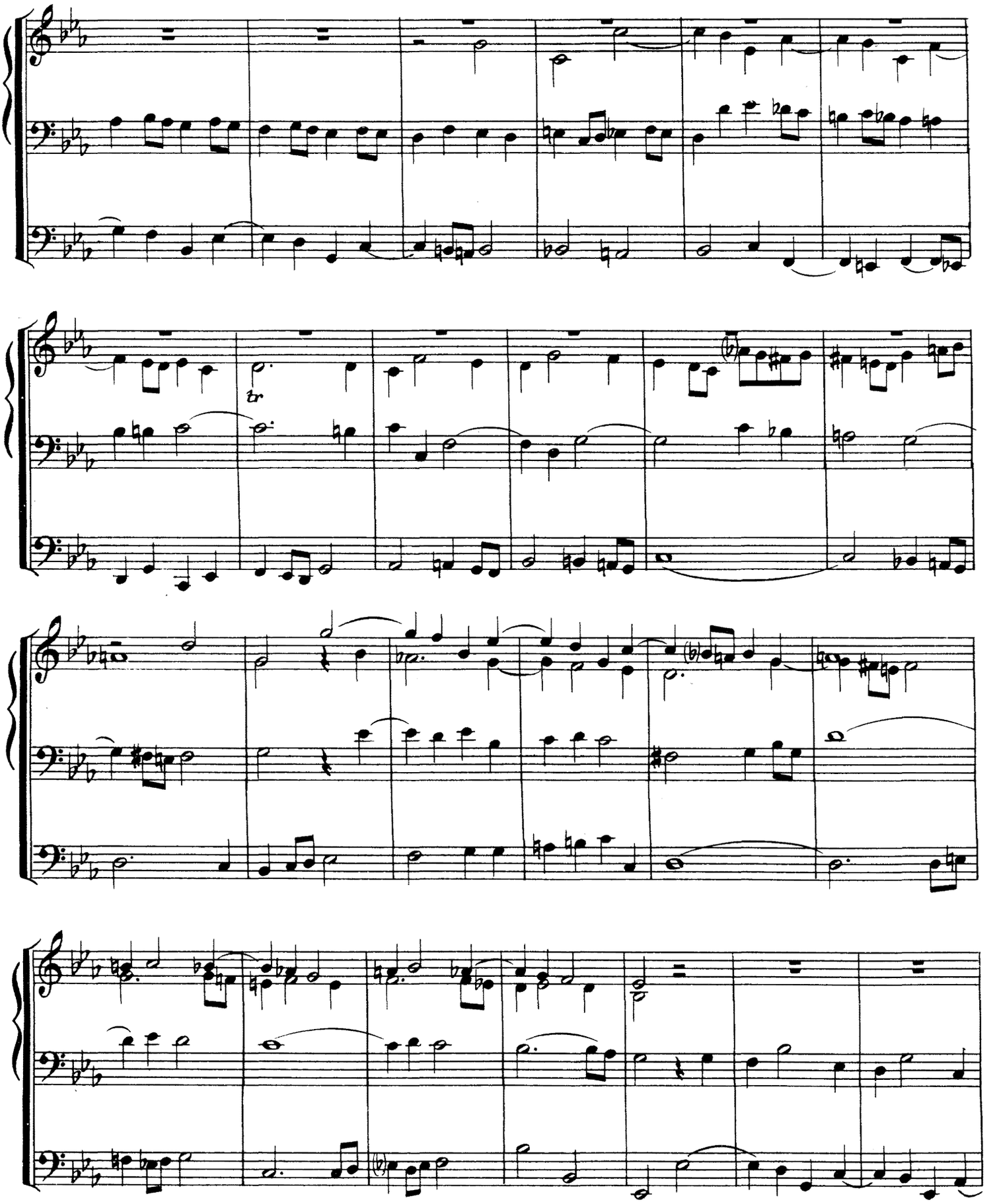
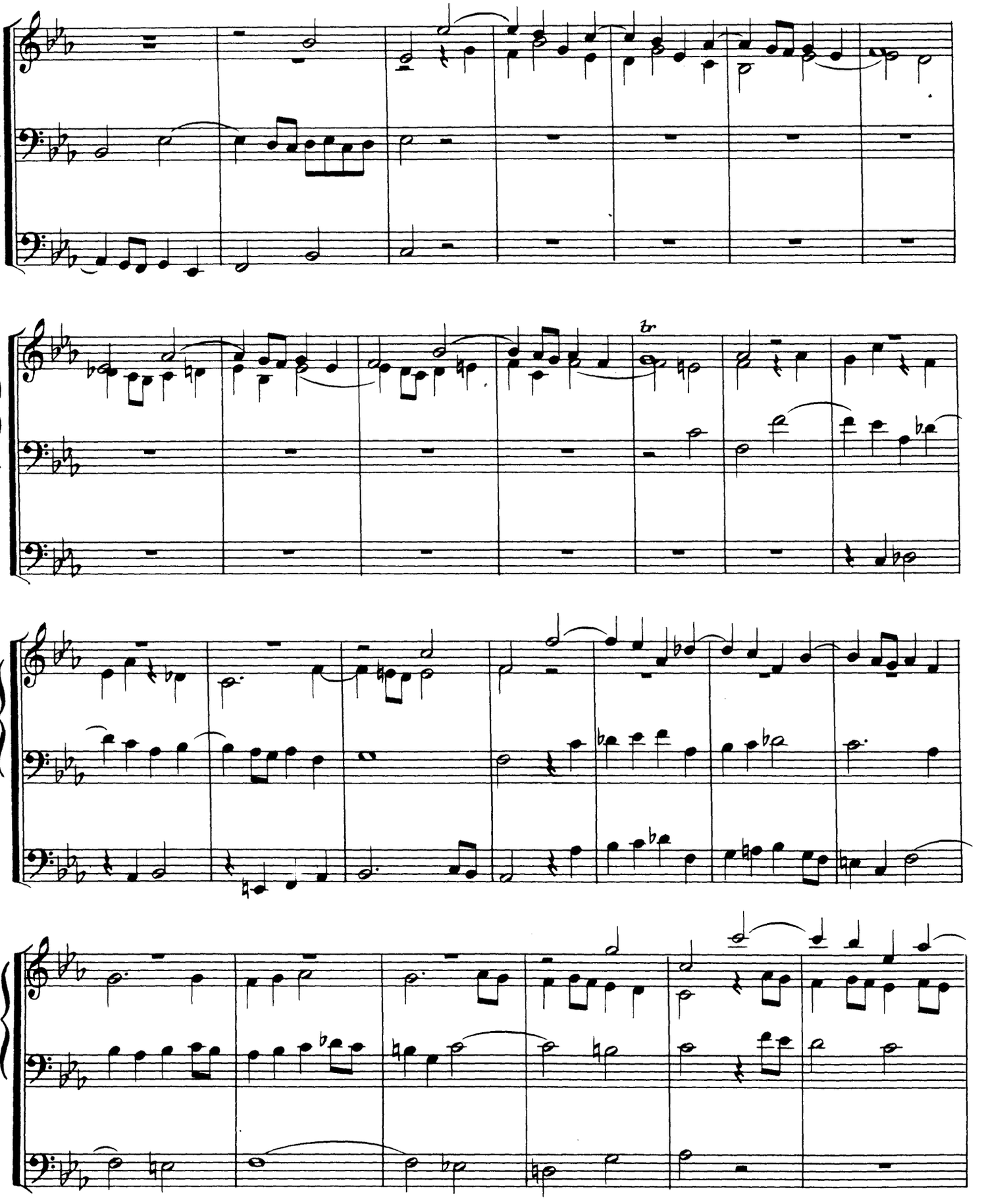
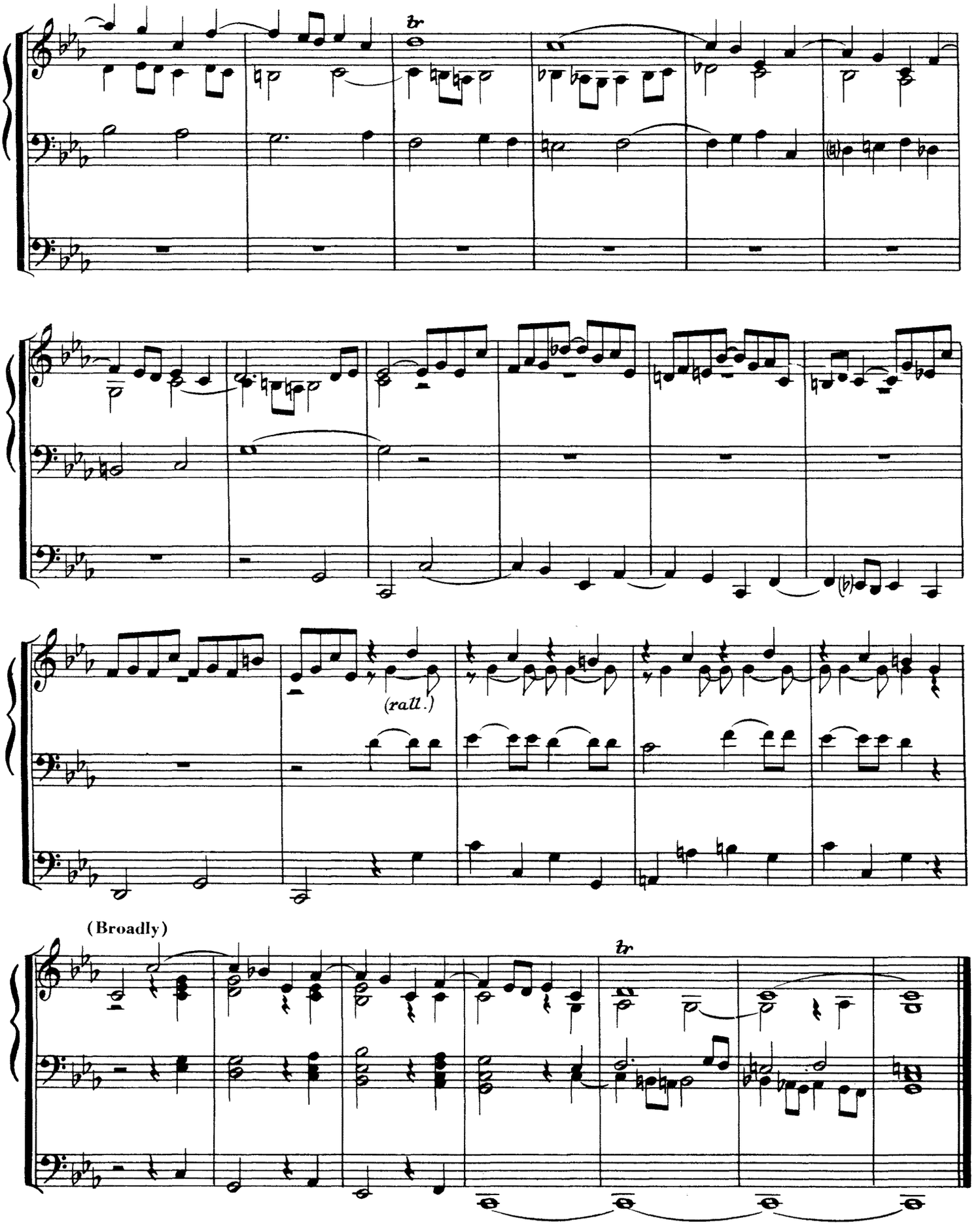
FUGUE IN C MINOR





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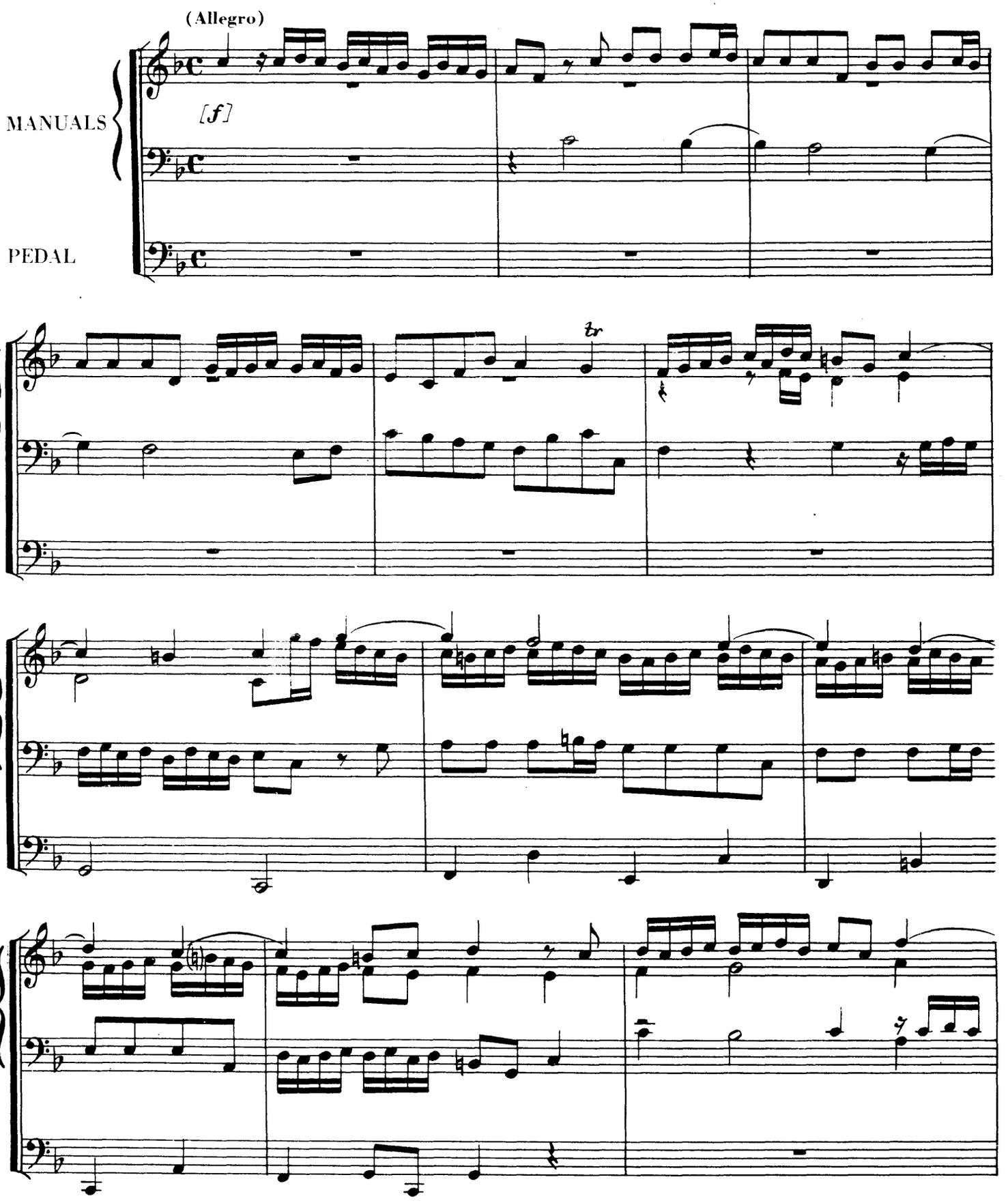
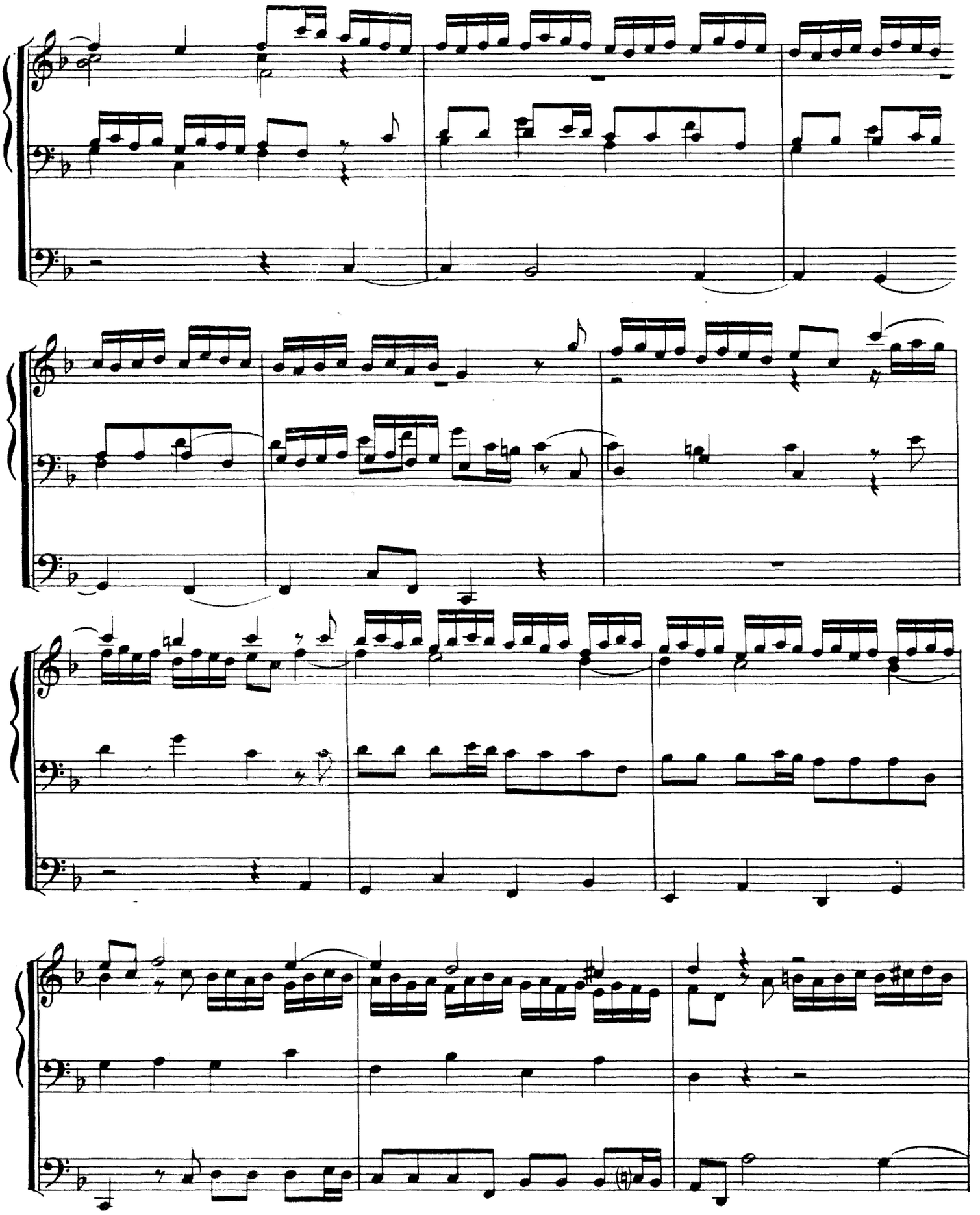
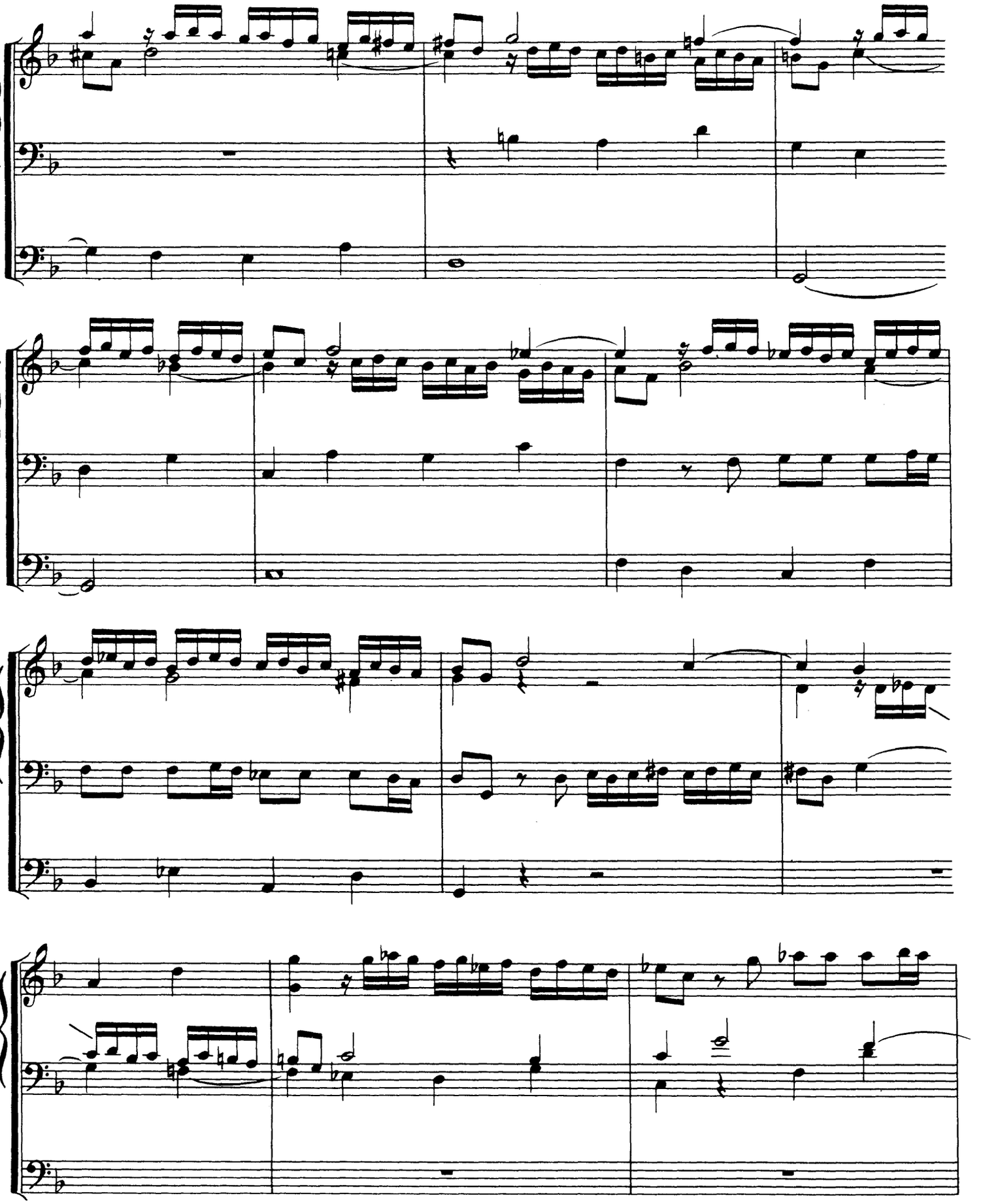
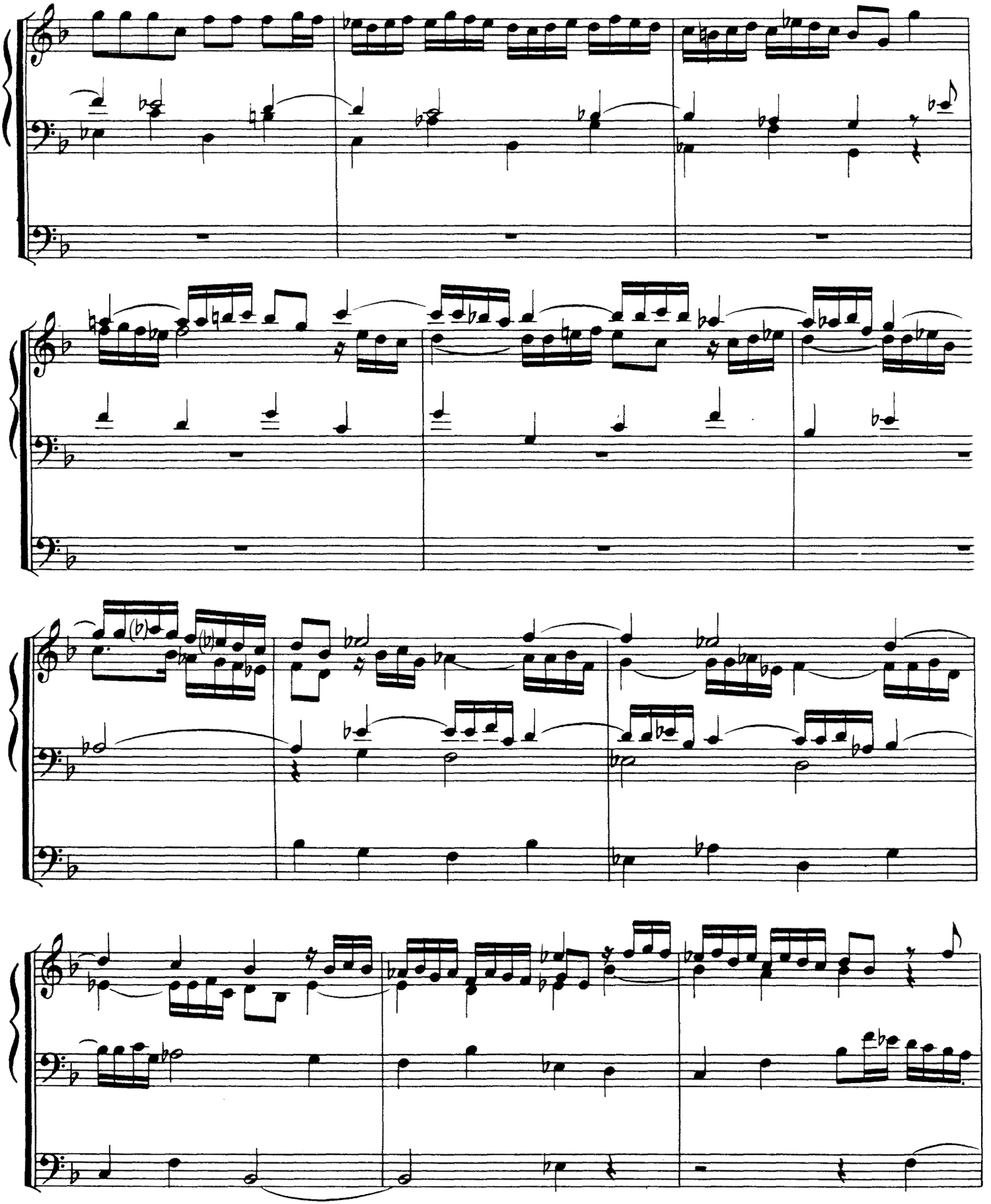
(Broadly)

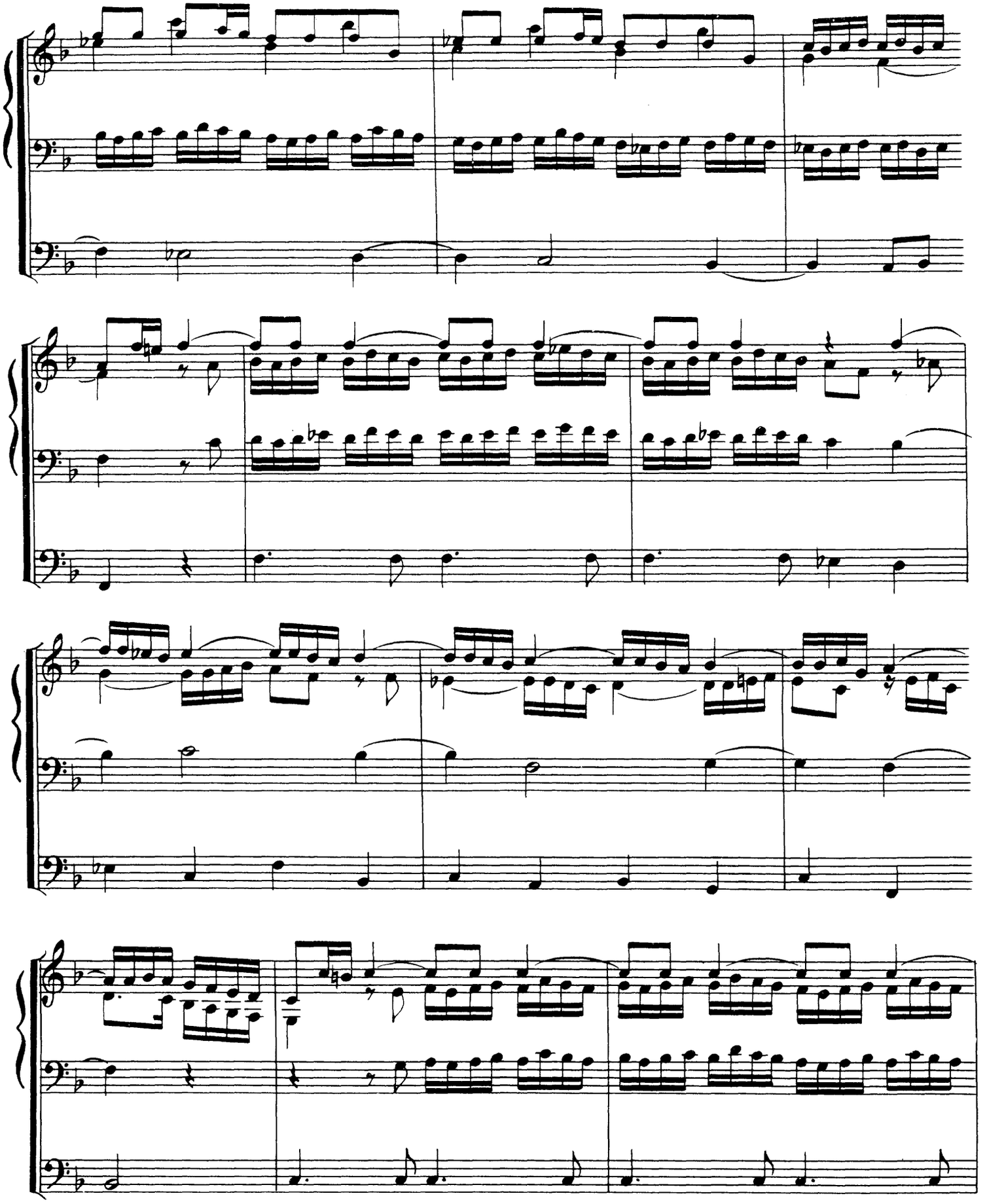
FUGUE IN F MAJOR

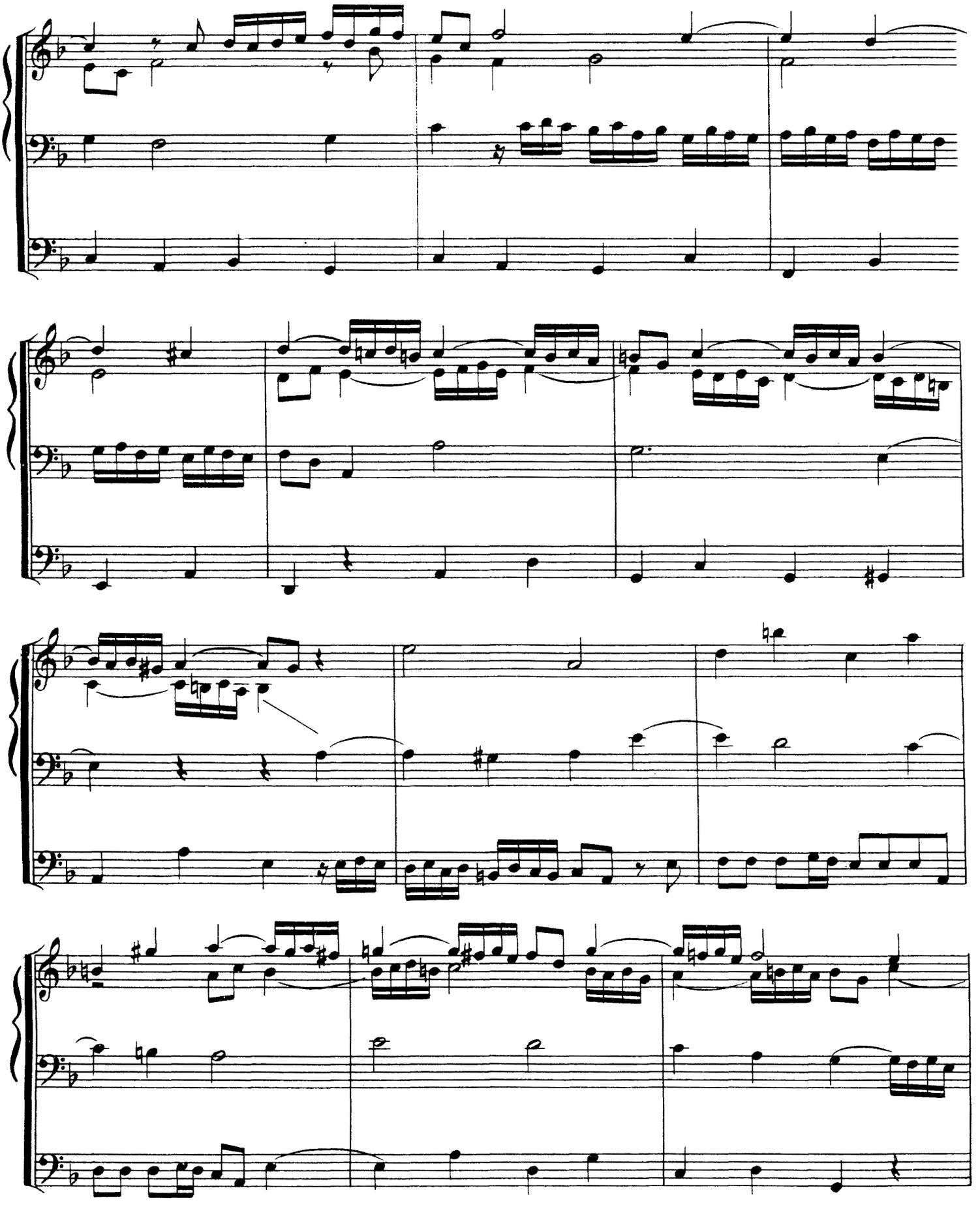


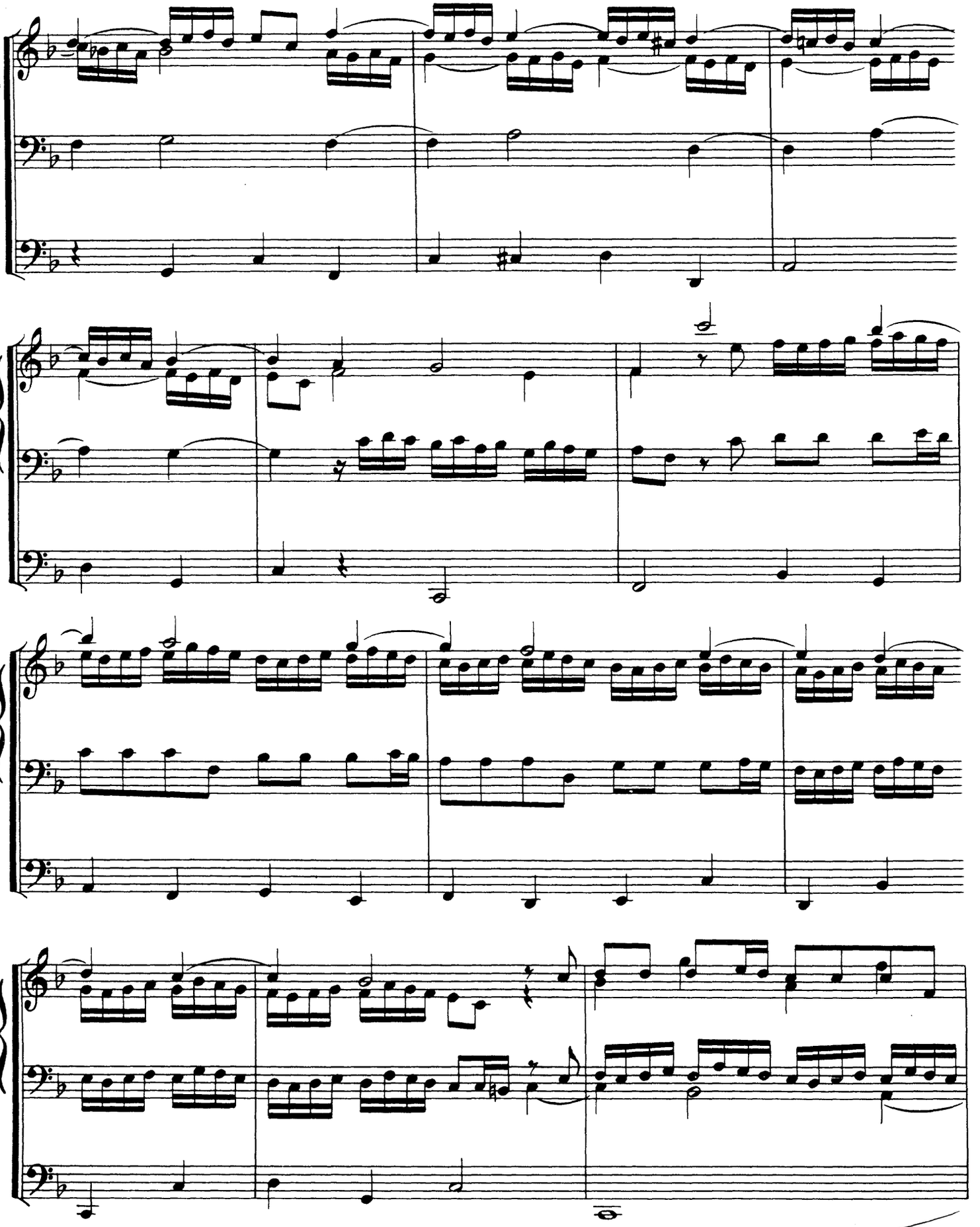


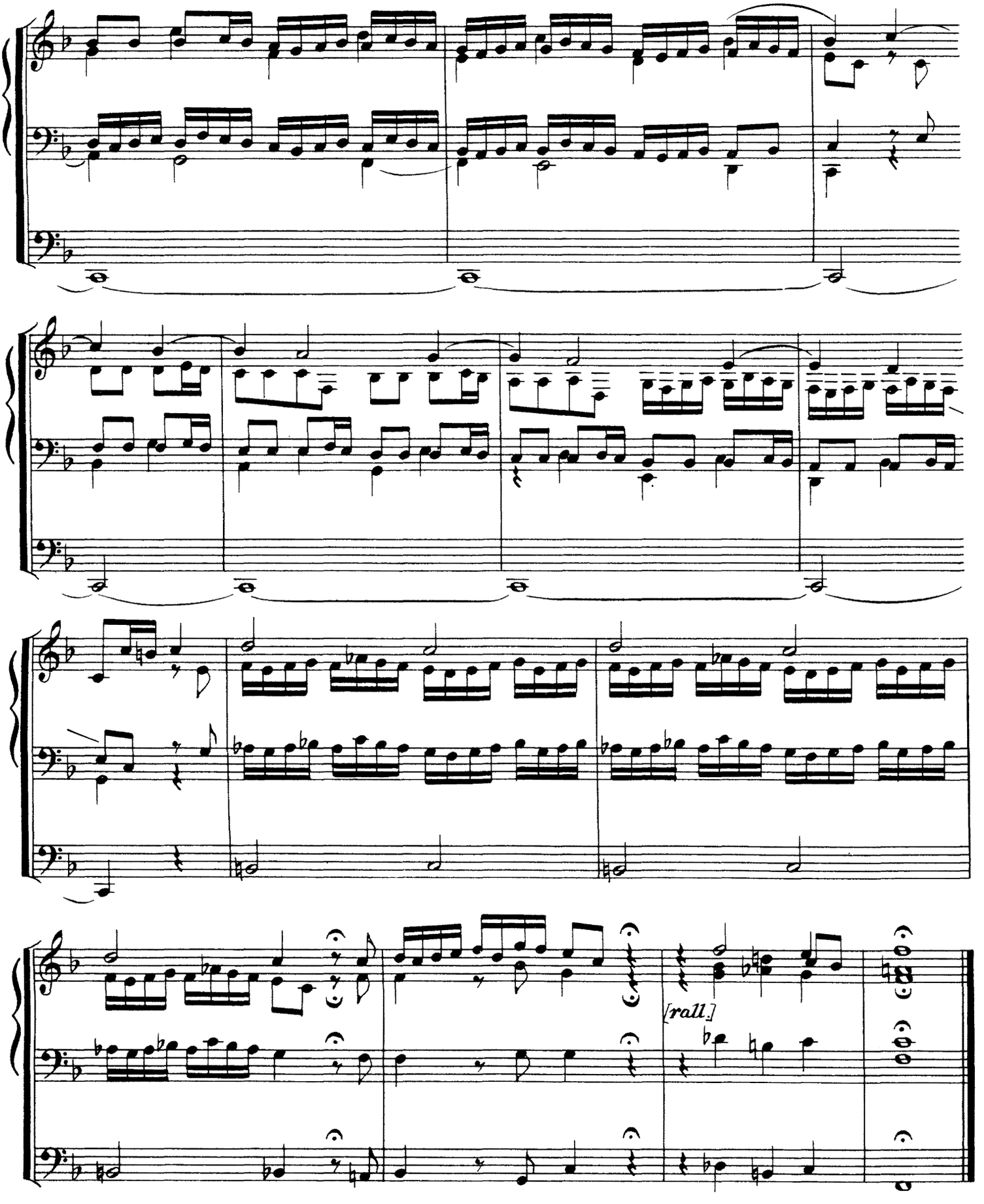








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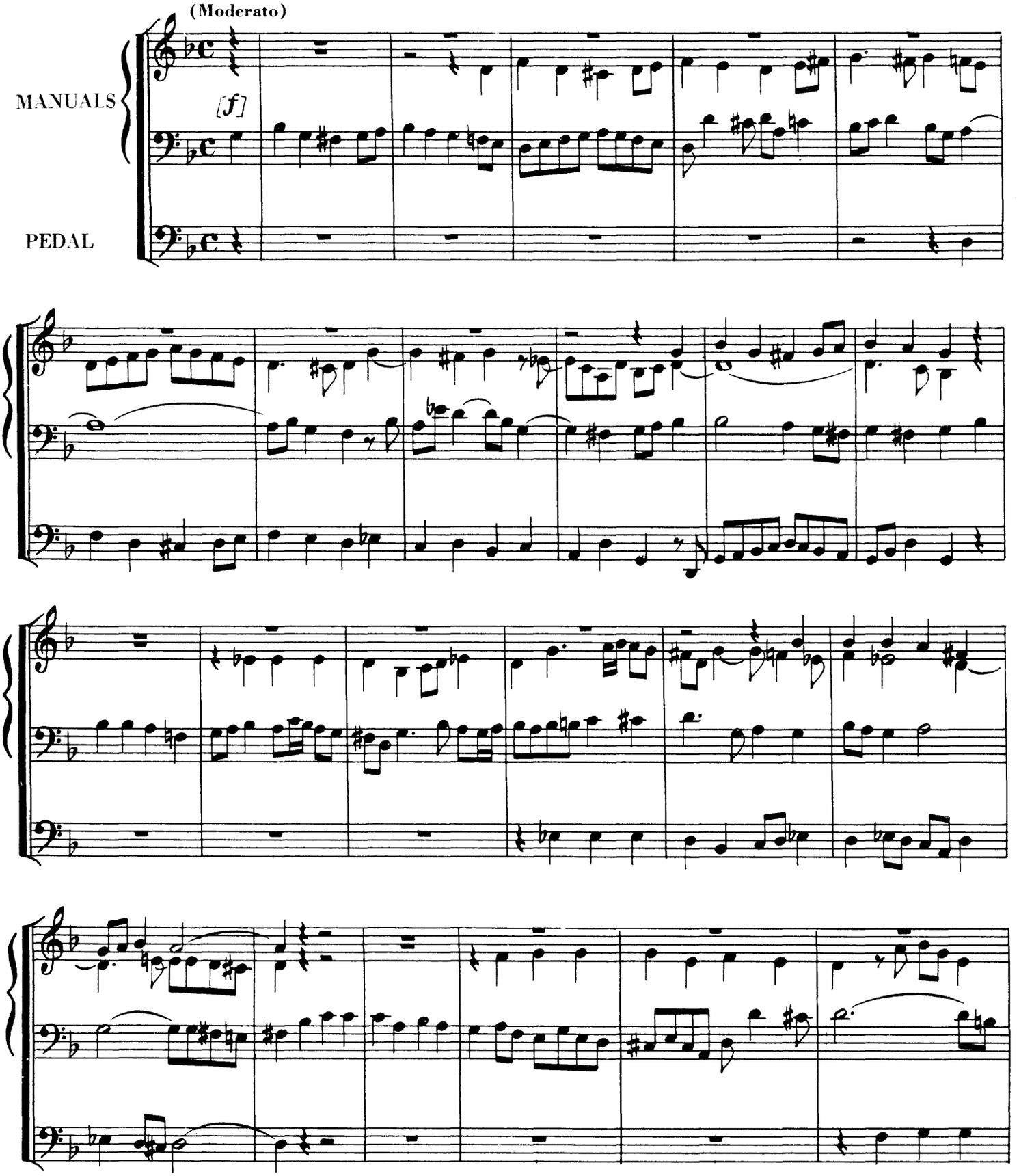
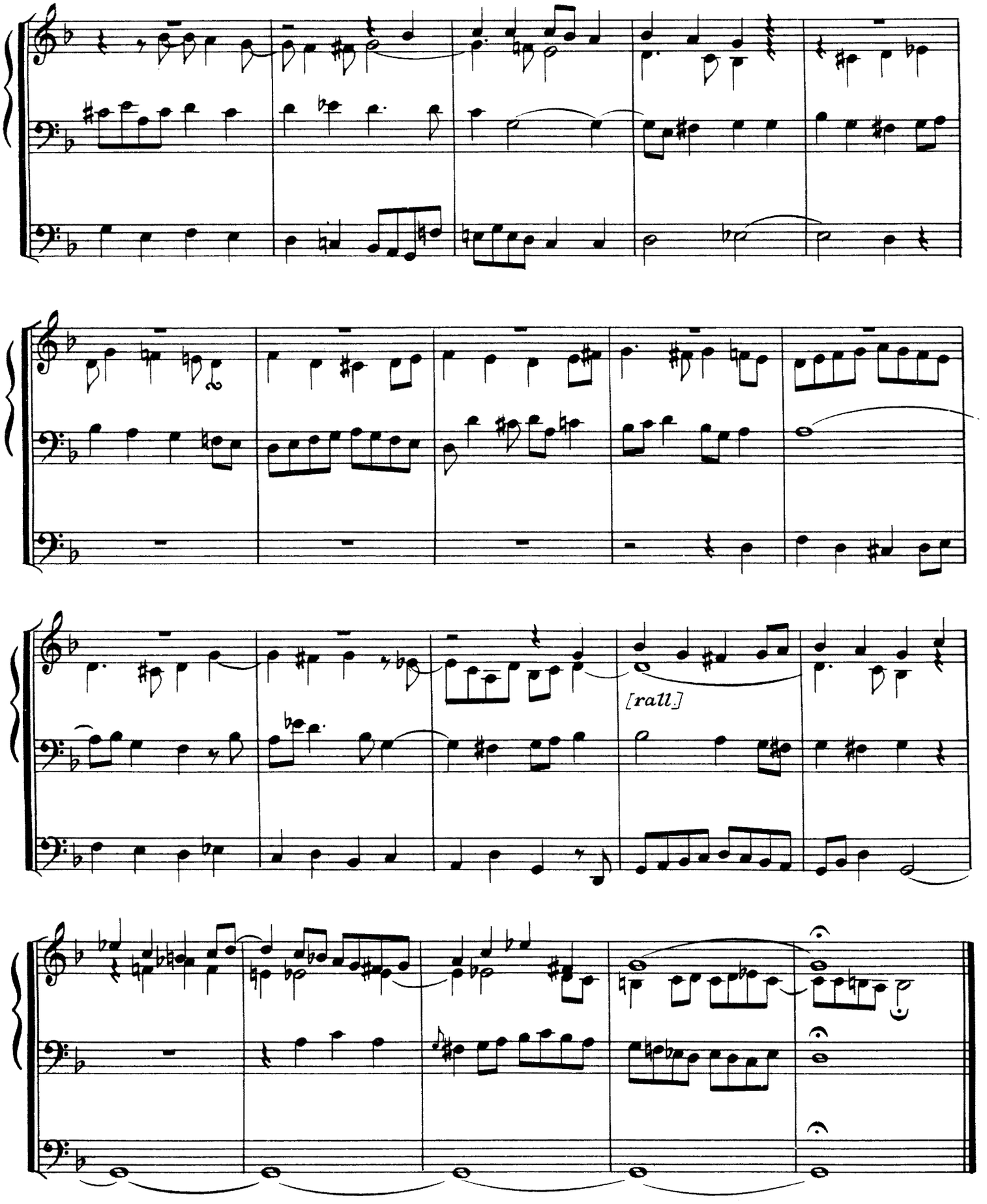
O CHRIST, WHO ART THE LIGHT OF DAY

(CHRISTE, DER DU BIST TAG UND LICHT)

(Moderato)

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WE THANK YOU, LORD JESUS
(WIR DANKEN DIR, HERR JESU CHRIST)

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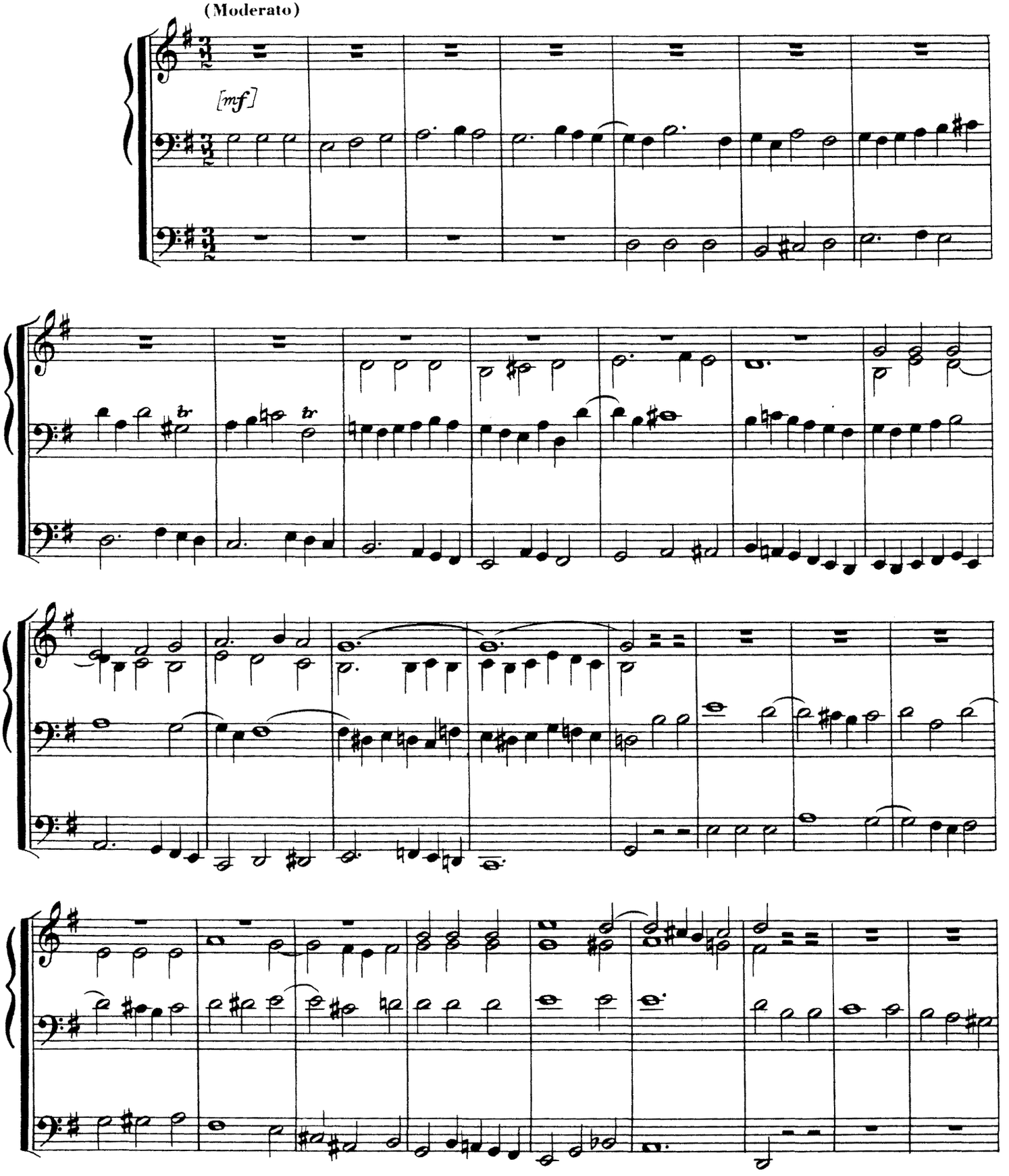
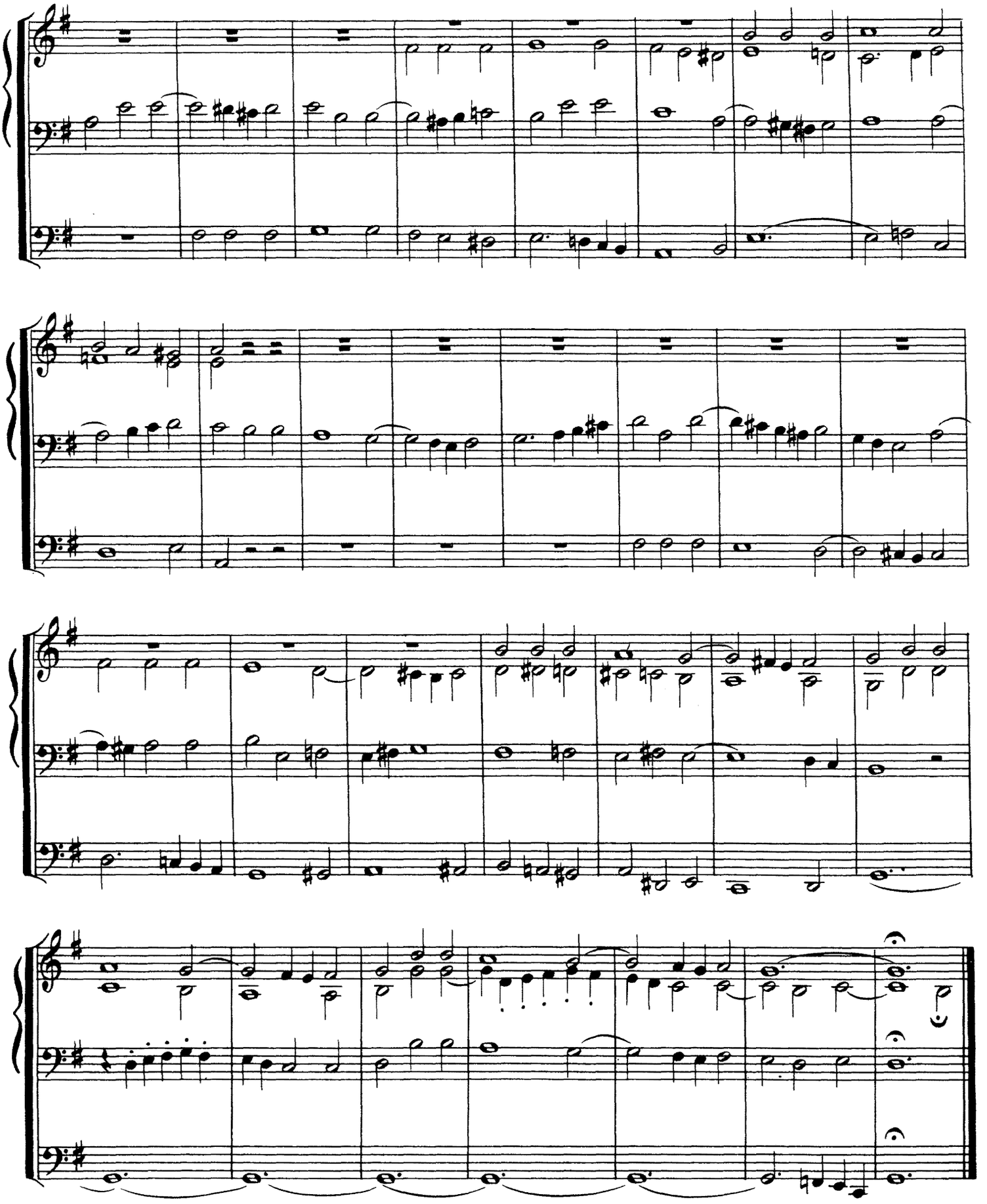
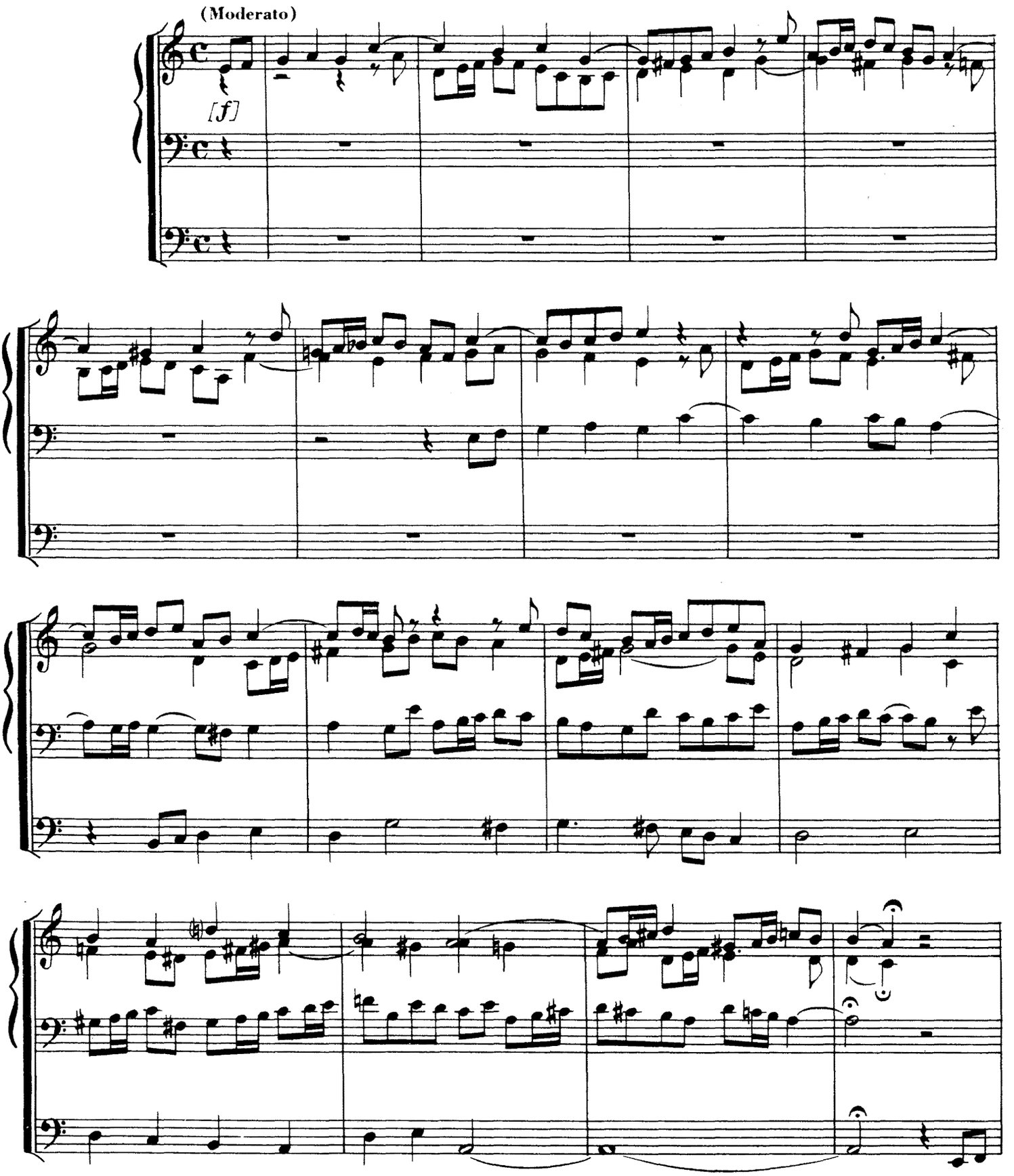
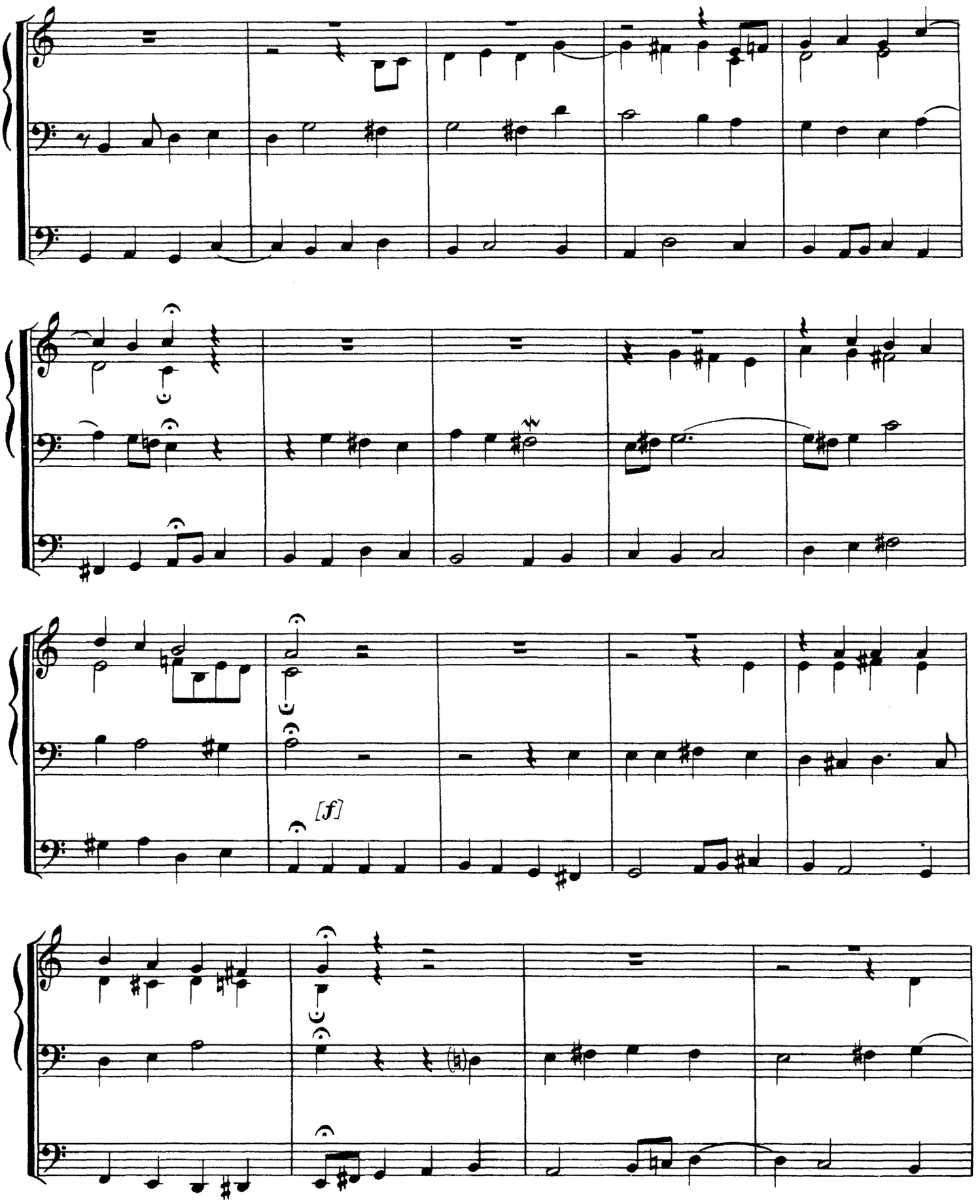




WHAT GOD RESOLVES WILL COME ABOUT
(WAS MEIN GOTT WILL)

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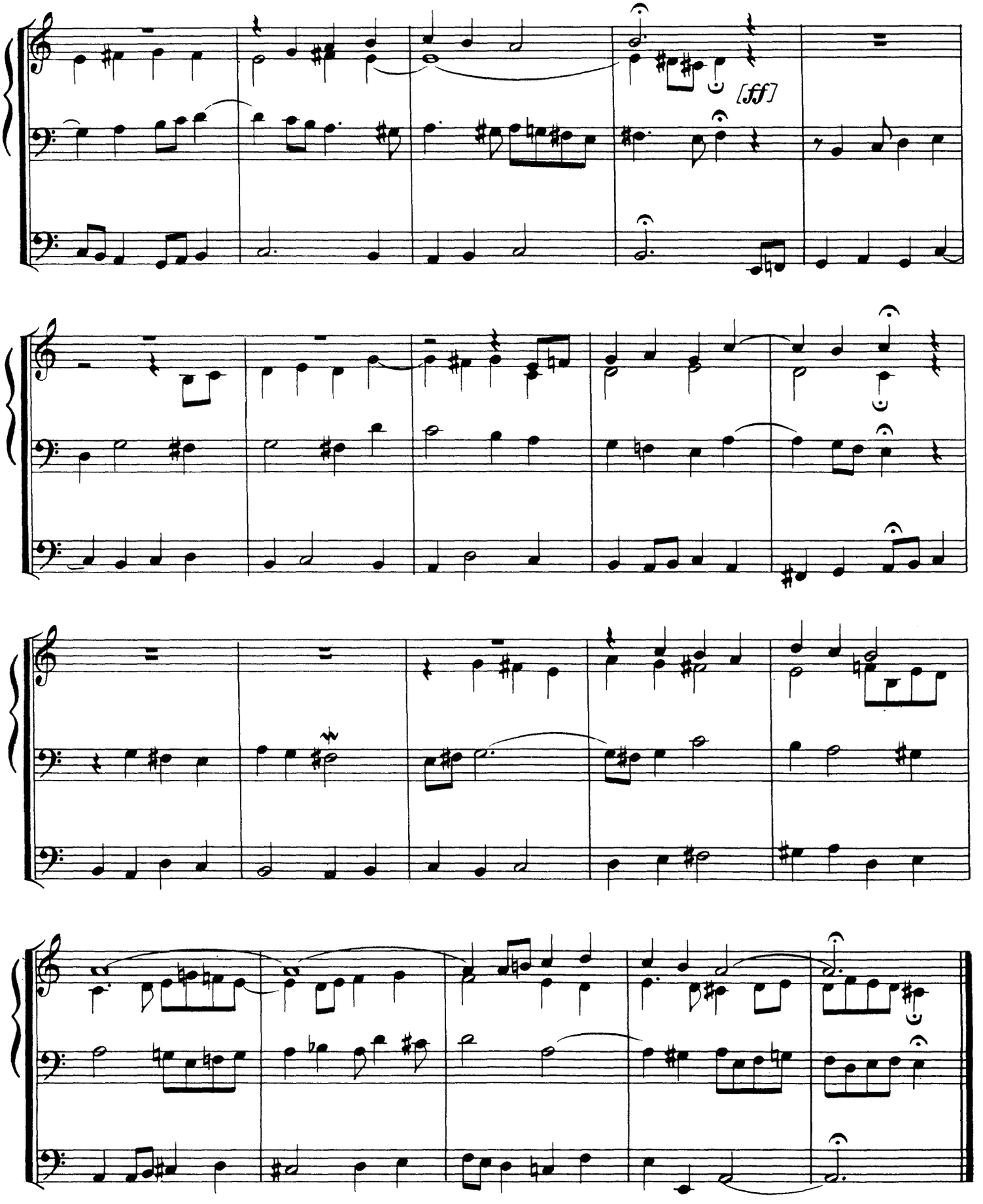
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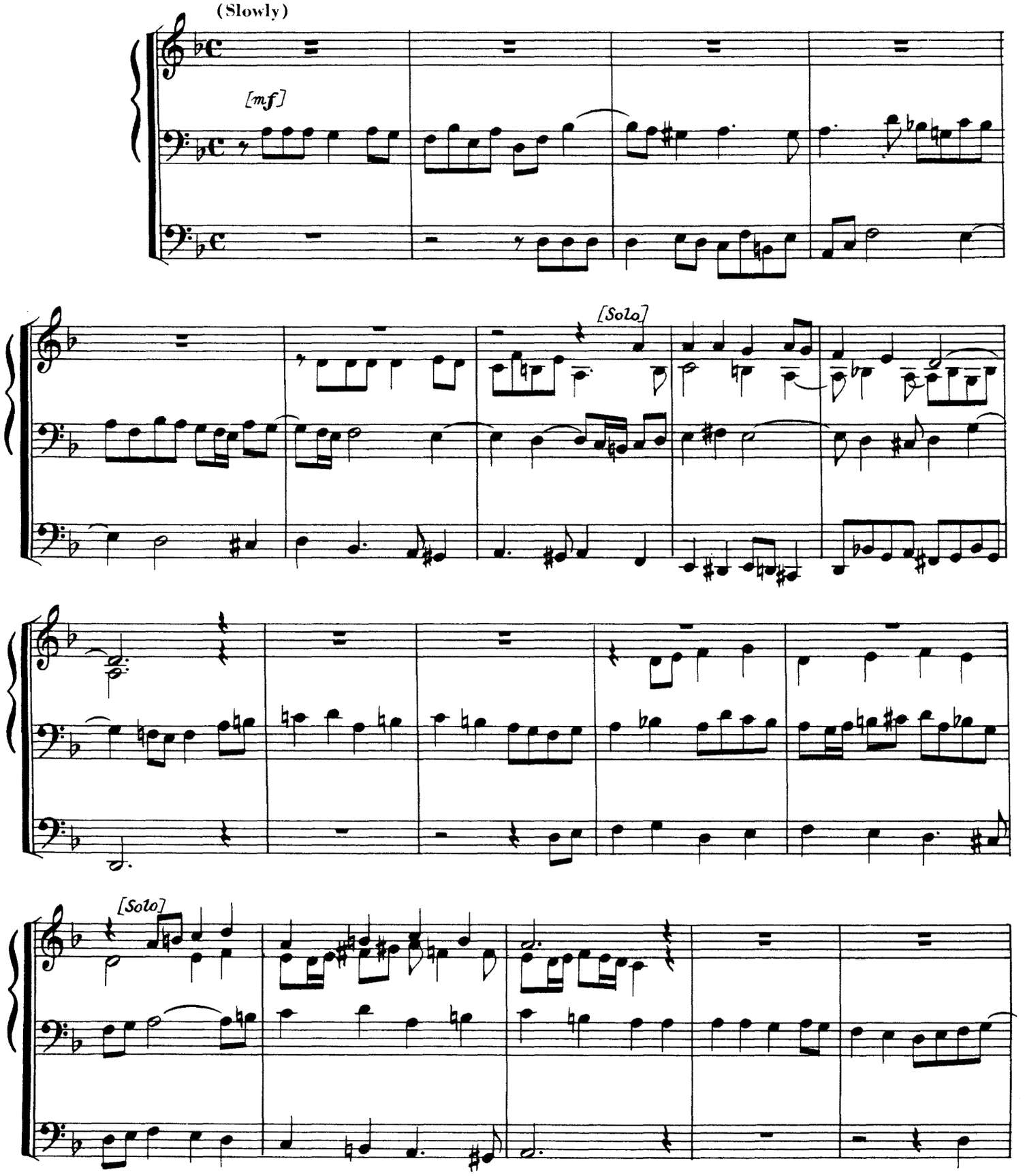
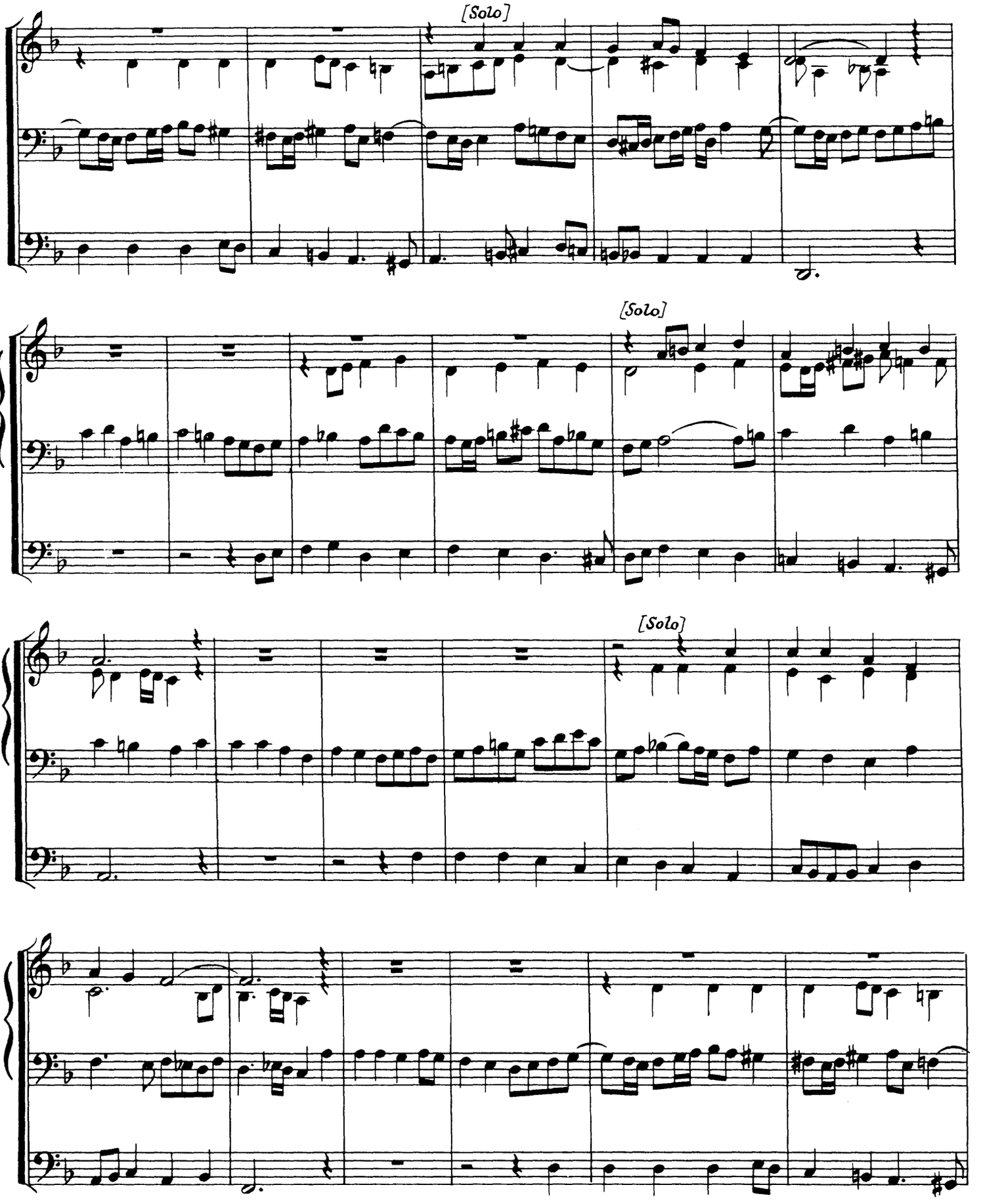
OLD ADAM'S FALL CORRUPTED ALL
(DURCH ADAMS FALL)

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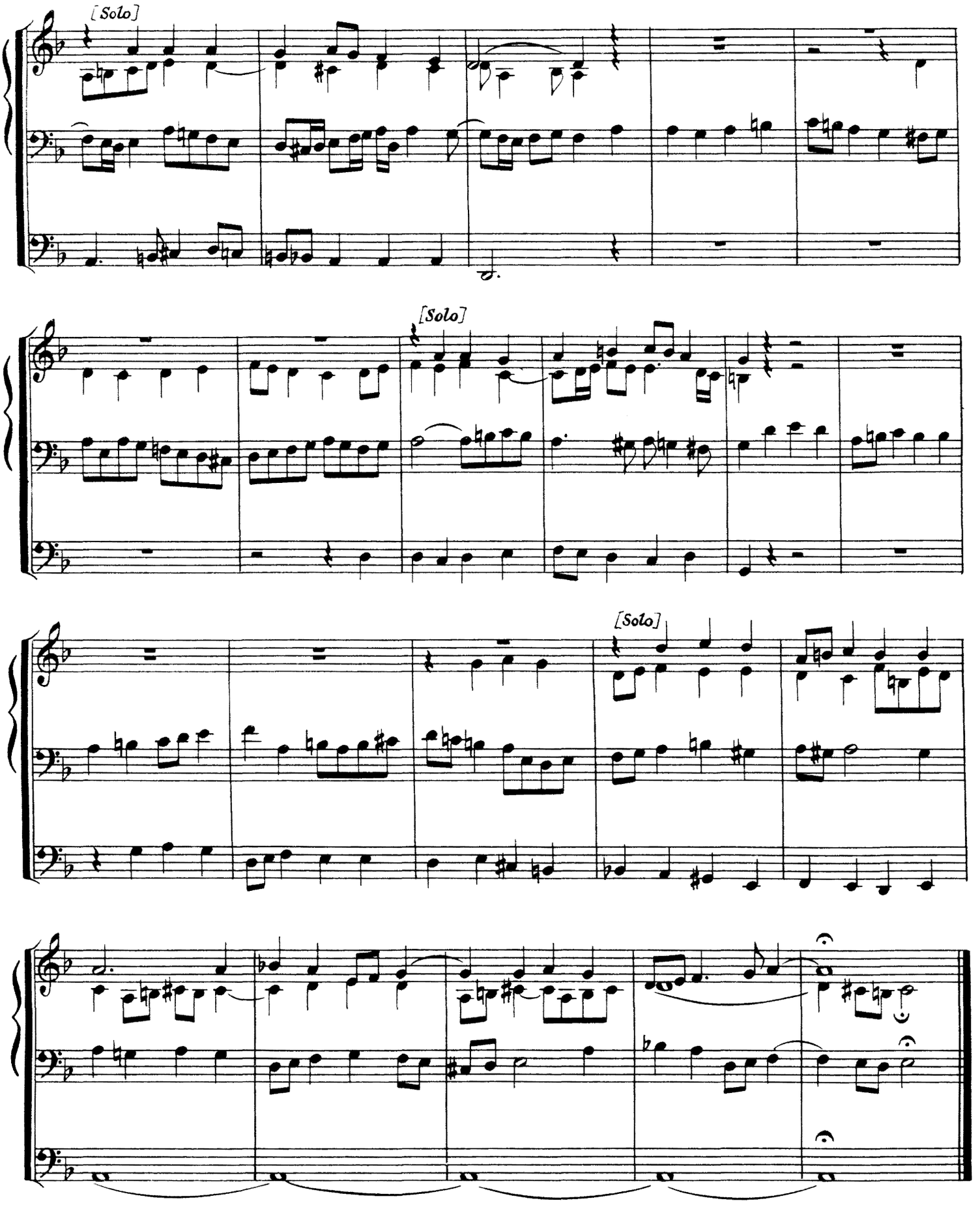
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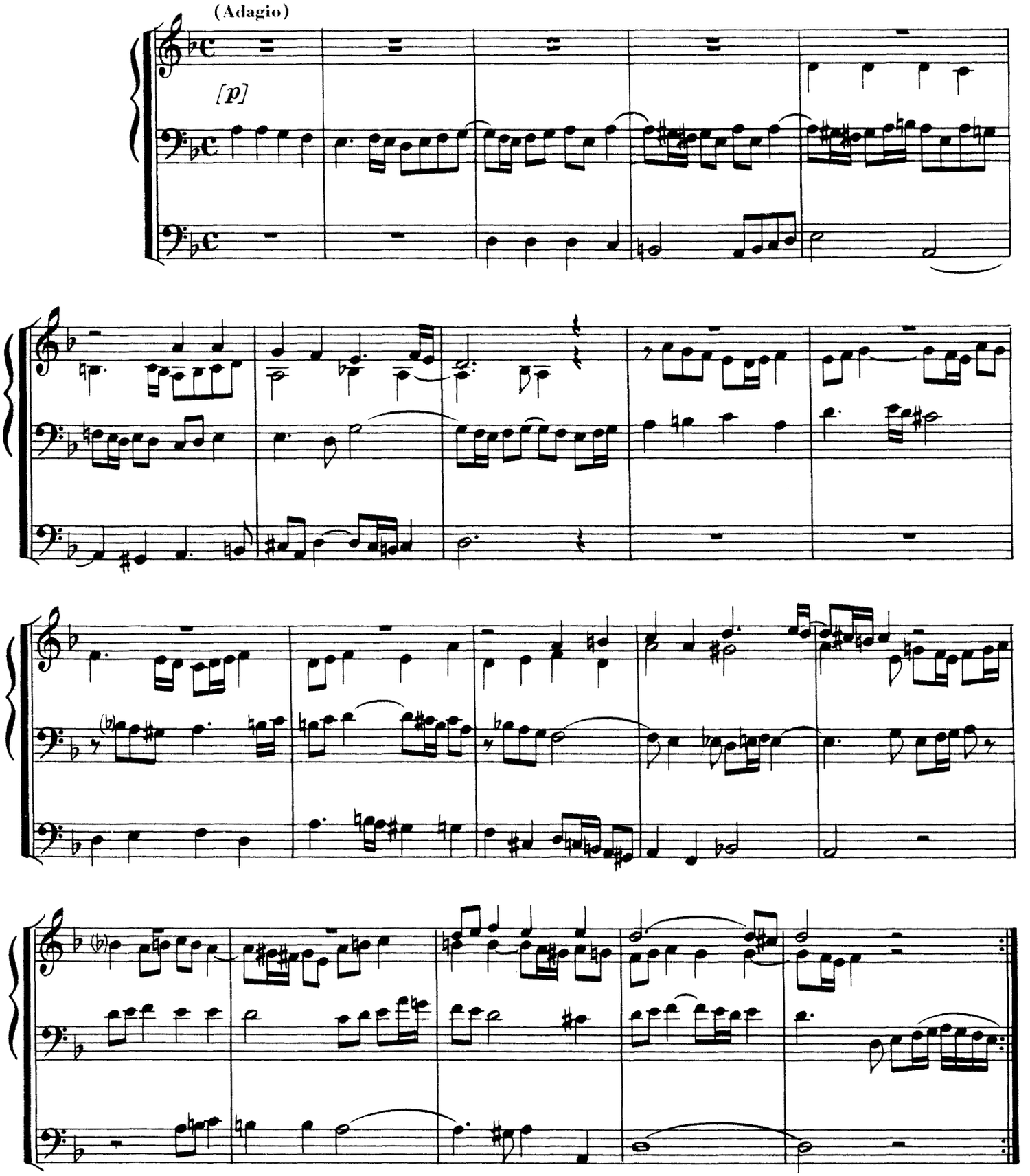
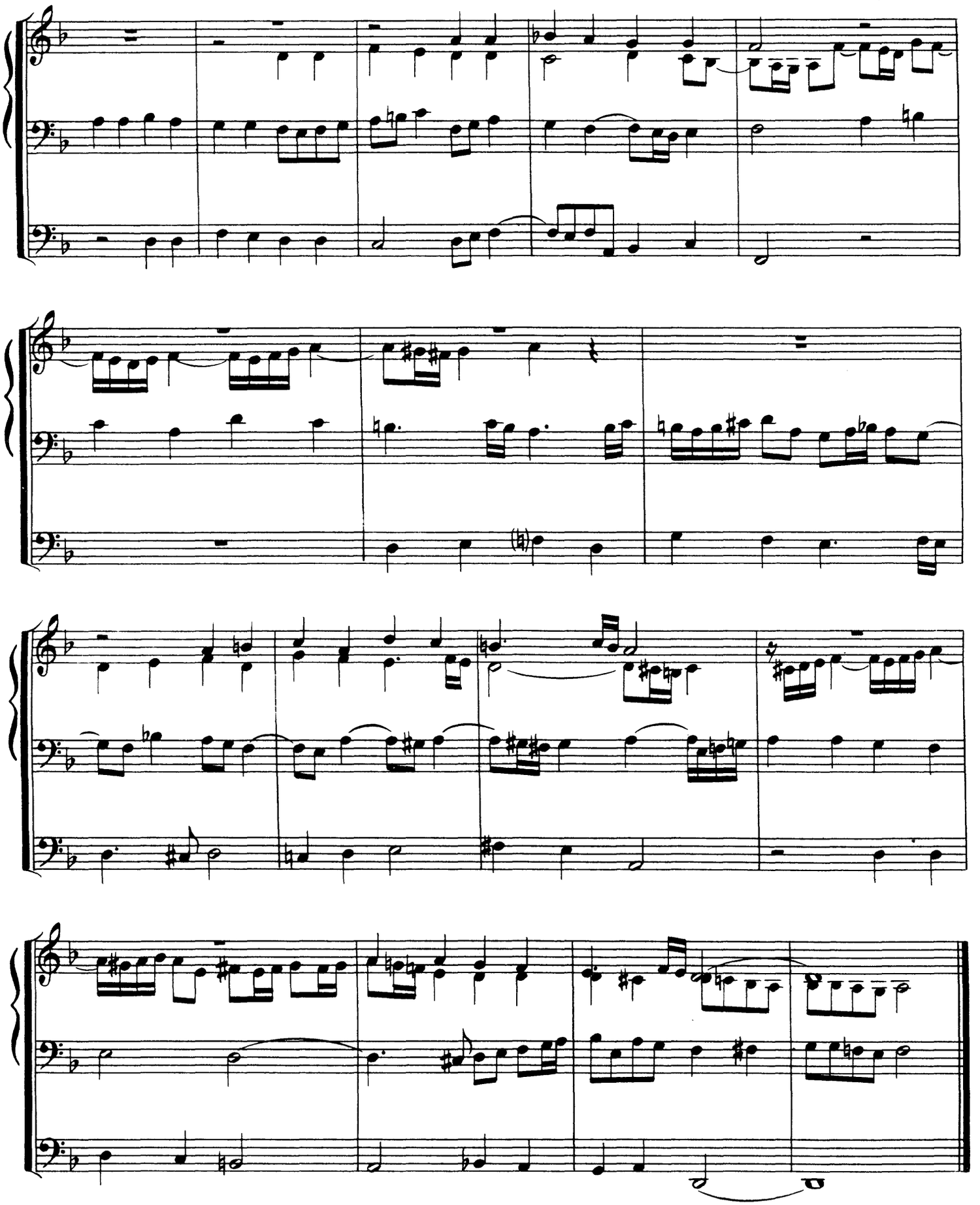
JESUS, DEAREST MASTER
(JESU, MEINE FREUDE)



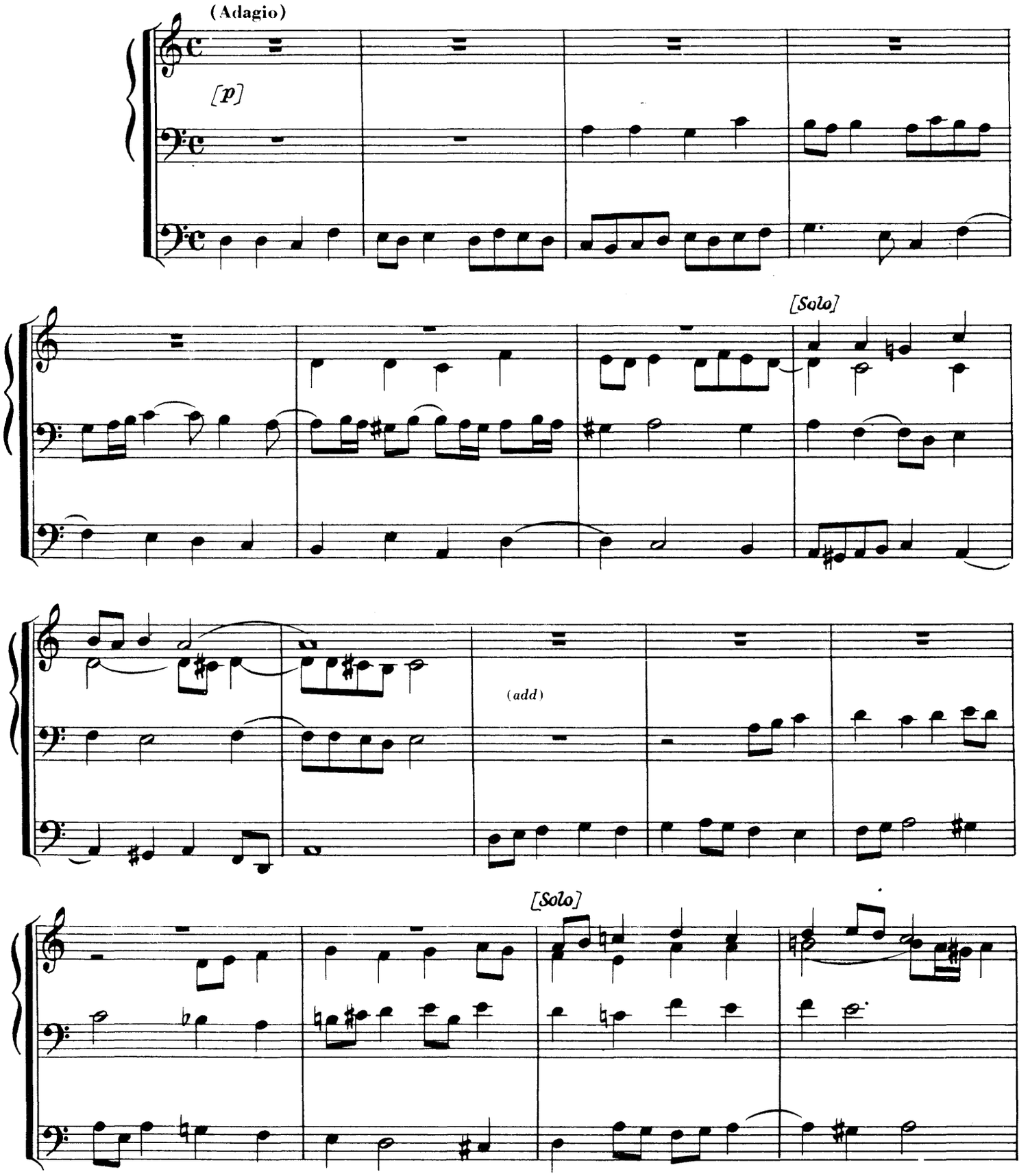


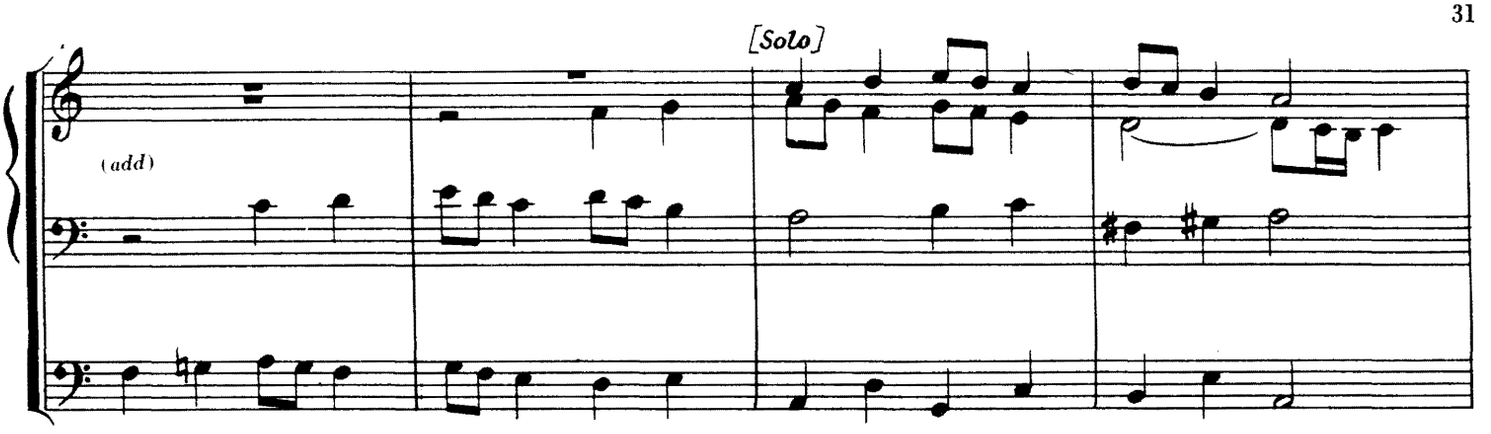
COME THOU SAVIOUR OF MANKIND

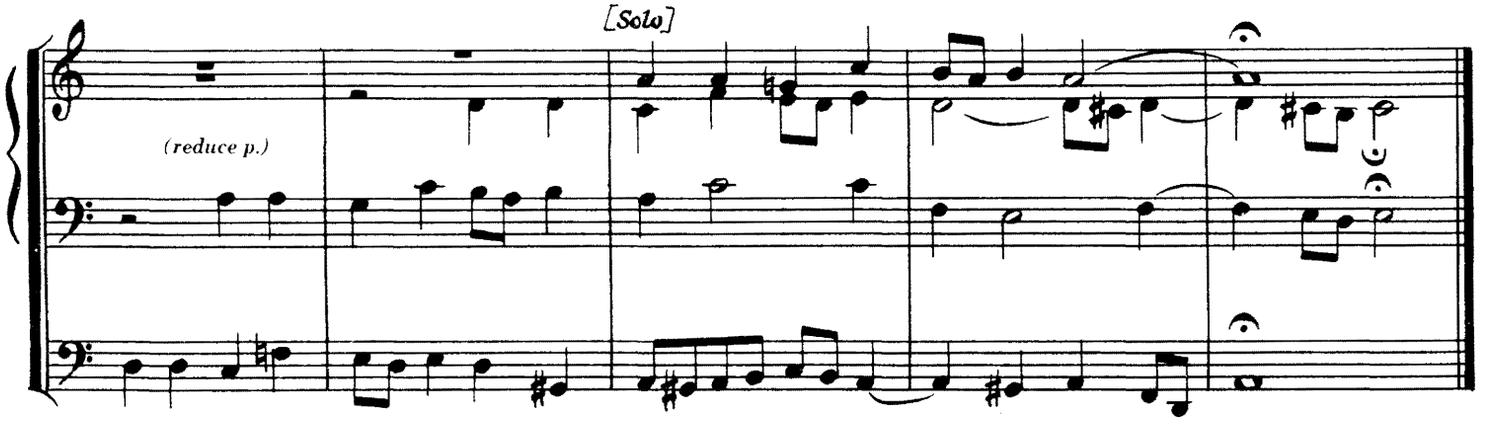
(NUN KOMMT, DER HEIDEN HEILAND)

FUGIRTE CHORALE

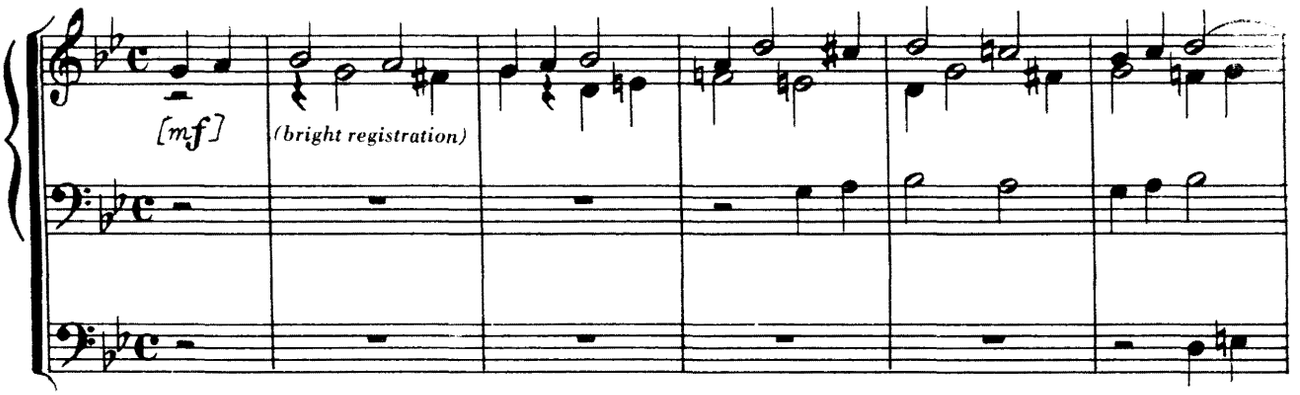
(Adagio)

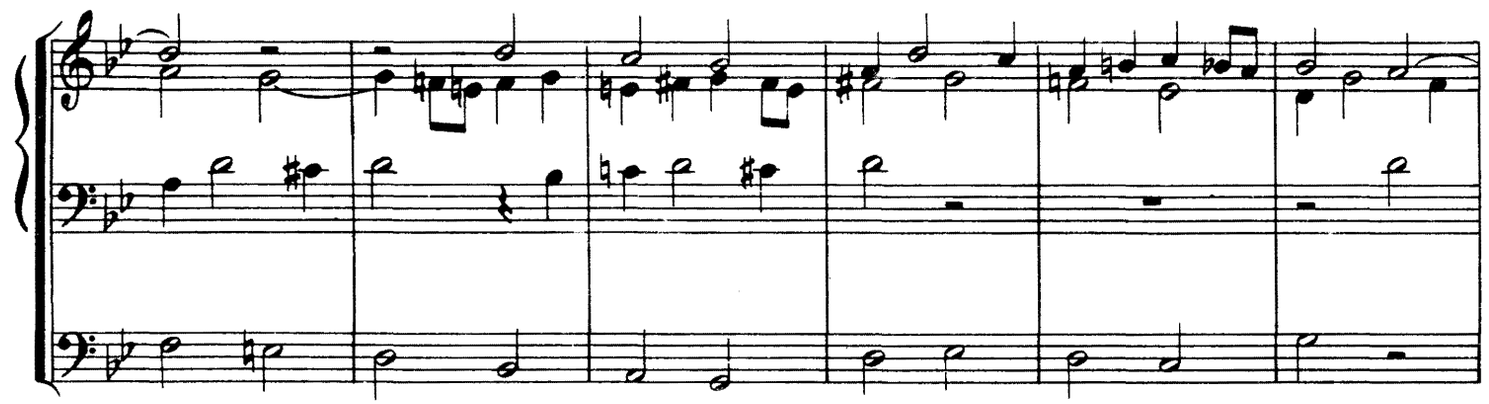


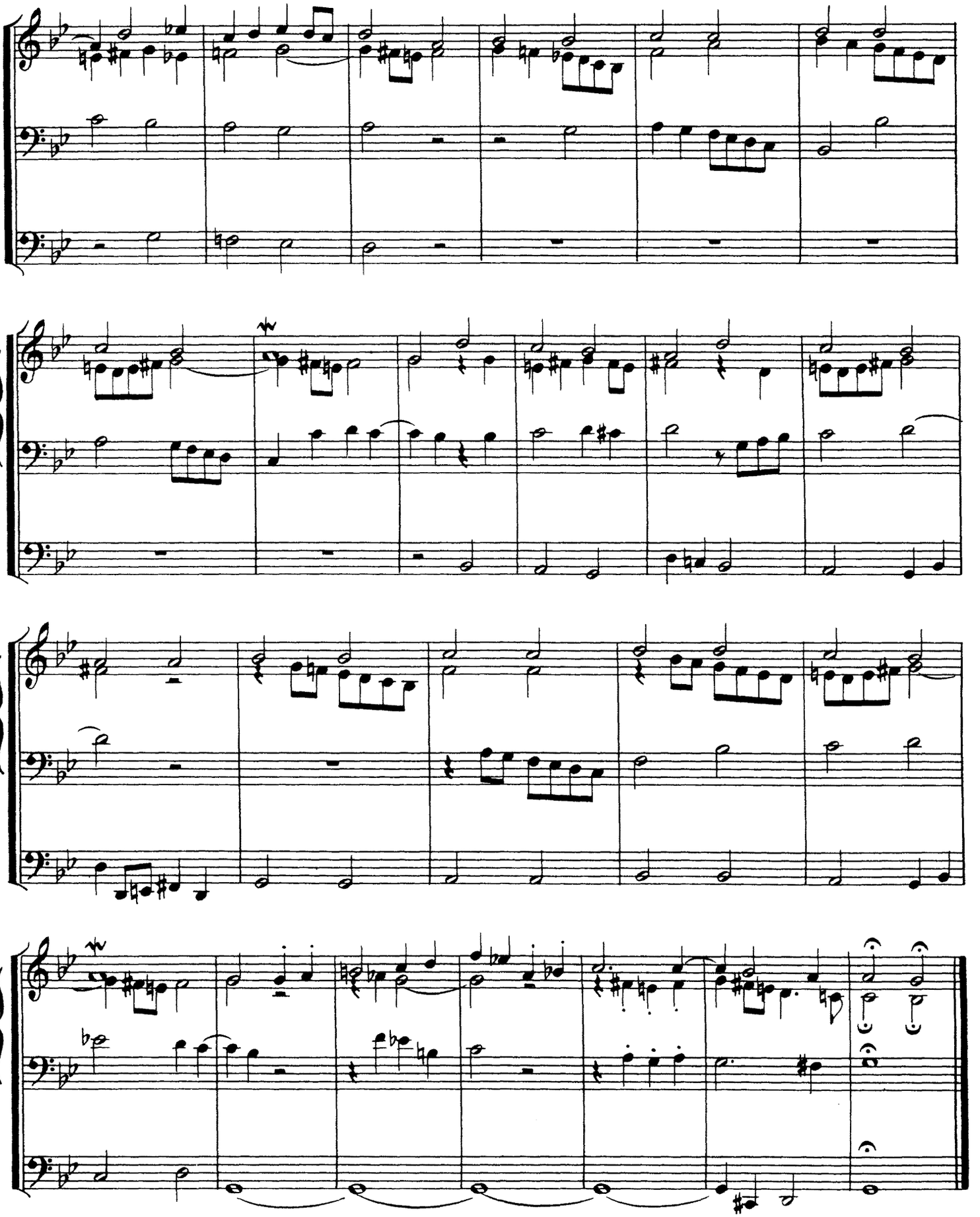




YE CHRISTIANS ALL
(WIR CHRISTEN LEUT!)







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