Schenker's late theory in overview

Heinrich Schenker : *Der freie Satz* (1935)

Part III of *Neue musikalische Theorien und Phantasien,* the others being his *Harmony* (1906) and his *Counterpoint*. "Der freie Satz" is translated into English as "Free Composition", though a more traditional translation would be "Free Counterpoint".

Heinrich Schenker : ***Der freie Satz*** **(1935)**

Schenker outlines a hypothesis that the structure of great tonal compositions is governed by an *Ursatz*, a paradigmatic "background" framework of contrapuntal voices, that successively generates elaborations in "middleground" and "foreground".

Heinrich Schenker : ***Der freie Satz*** **(1935)**

The *Ursatz* (usually translated “fundamental structure”) combines an upper-voice *Urlinie* (“fundamental line”) and a bass *Bassbrechung* (“bass arpeggiation”, I-V-I, regarded both harmonically, as chords on tonic and dominant, and melodically, as an arpeggiation of the tonic triad). It can take three main forms, all with stepwise descents in the upper voice, from the third, fifth and eighth degrees of the scale respectively (these are also constituent notes of the tonic triad).

Heinrich Schenker : ***Der freie Satz*** **(1935)**

In the following examples, taken from his first chapter dealing with the middleground, Schenker systematically shows the various possibilities for elaborating each of these three patterns at the first middleground level (i.e. the level closest to the background).

FREE COMPOSITION

(Der freie Satz)

Volume III of New Musical Theories and Fantasies

HEINRICH SCHENKER

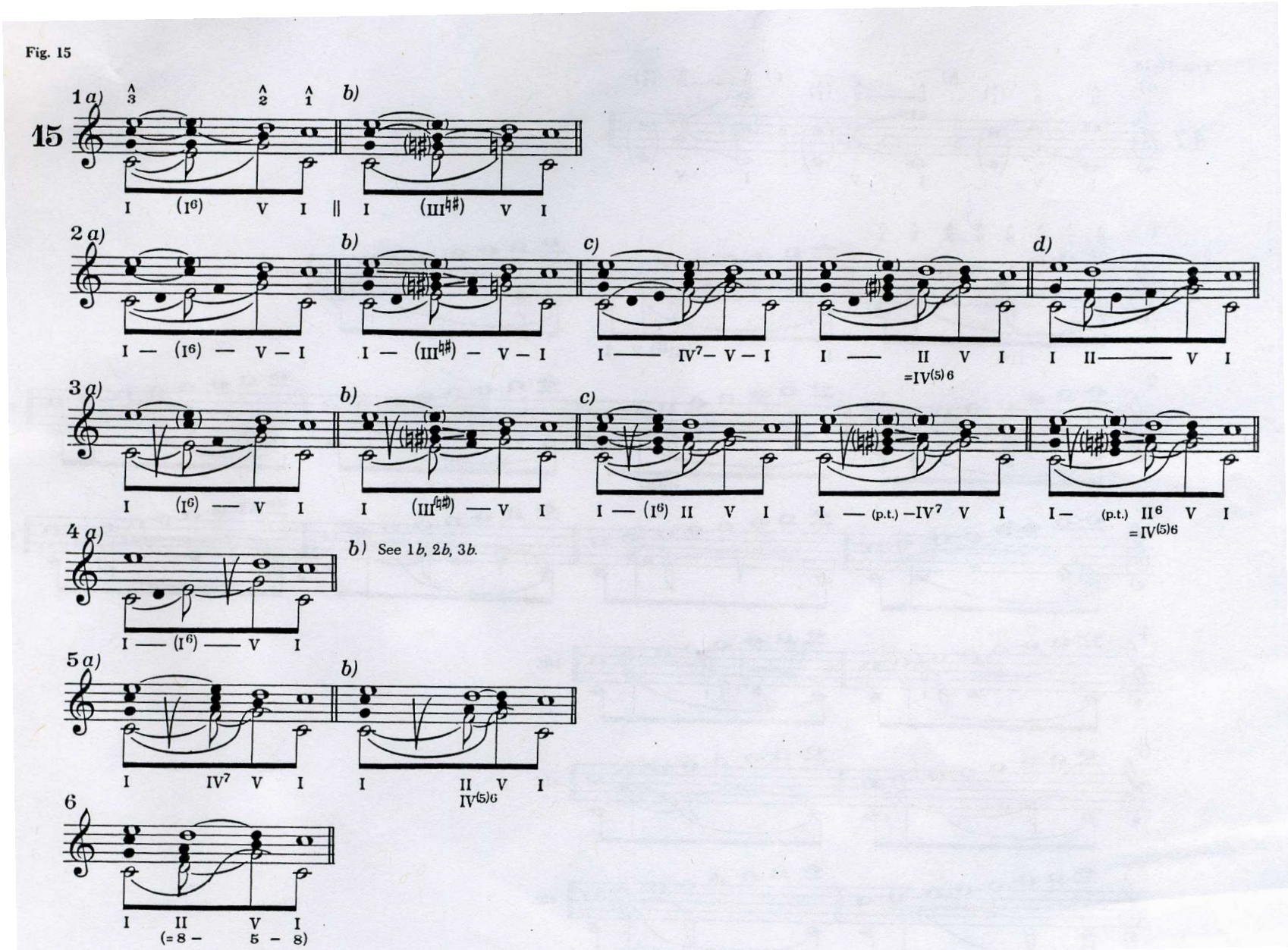
Supplement: Musical Examples

Semper idem
sed non
eodem modo

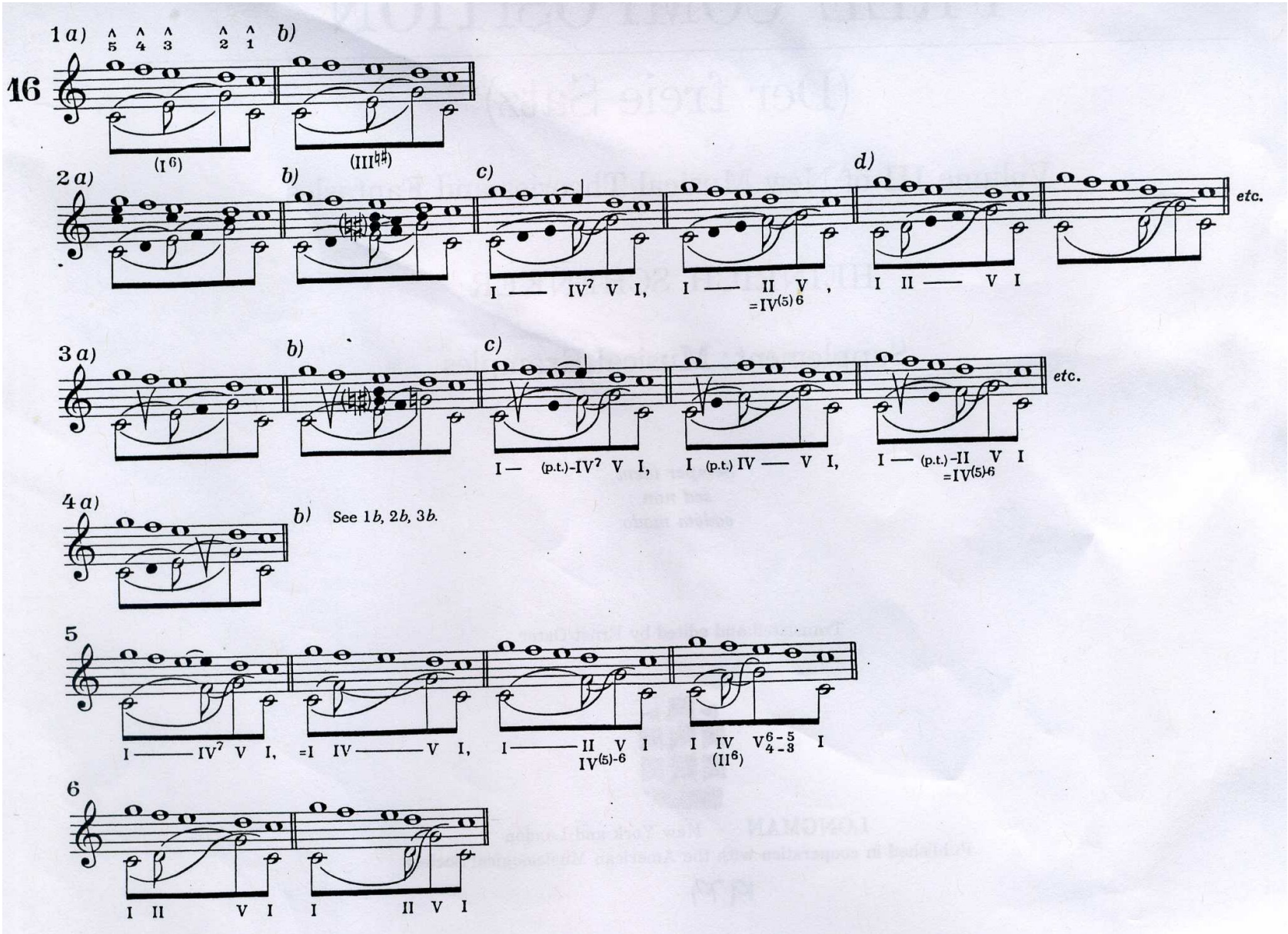
Translated and edited by Ernst Oster

LONGMAN New York and London
Published in cooperation with the American Musicological Society
1979

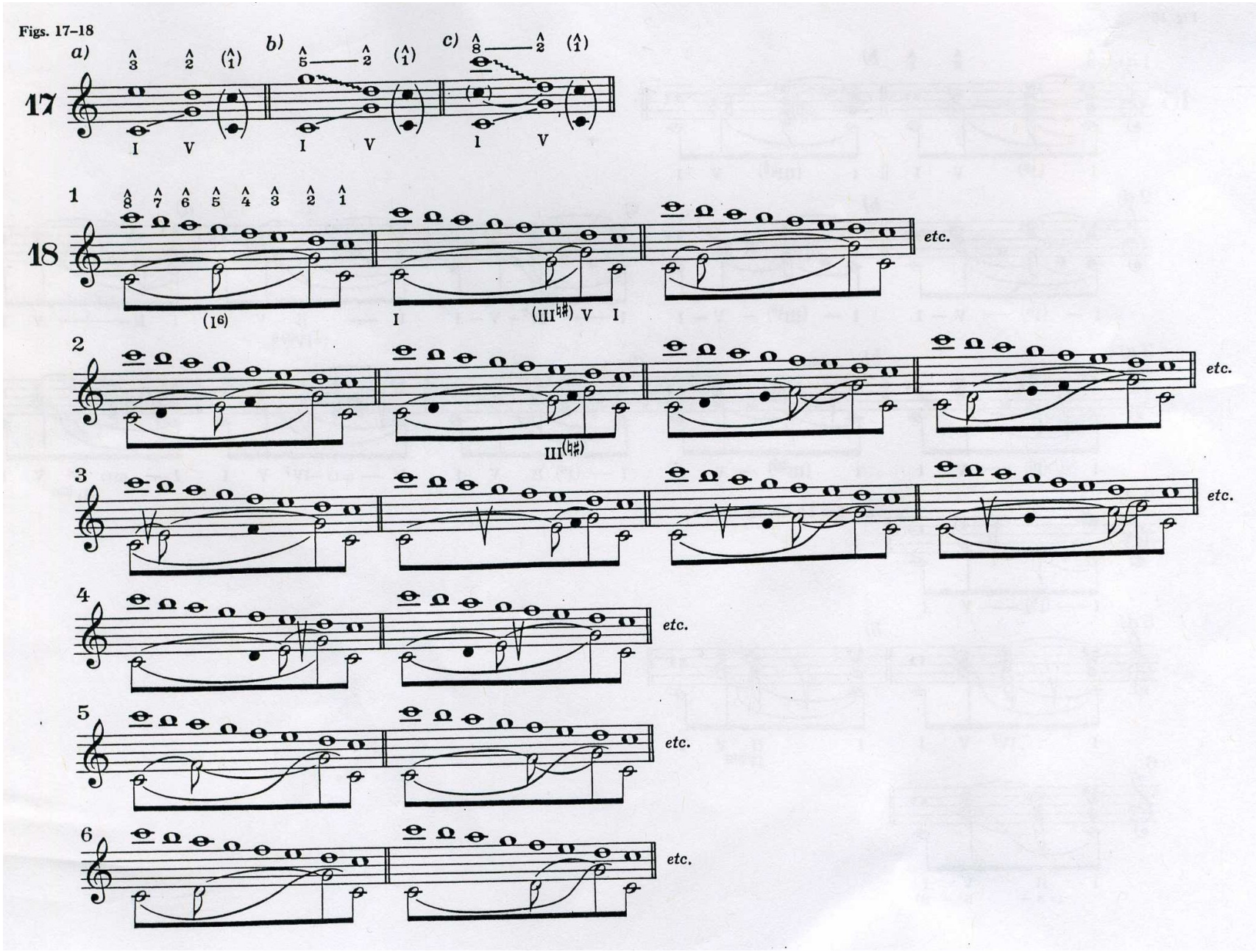
Possible elaborations of the 3-2-1 *Urlinie* at the first level



Possible elaborations of the 5-4-3-2-1 *Urlinie* at the first level

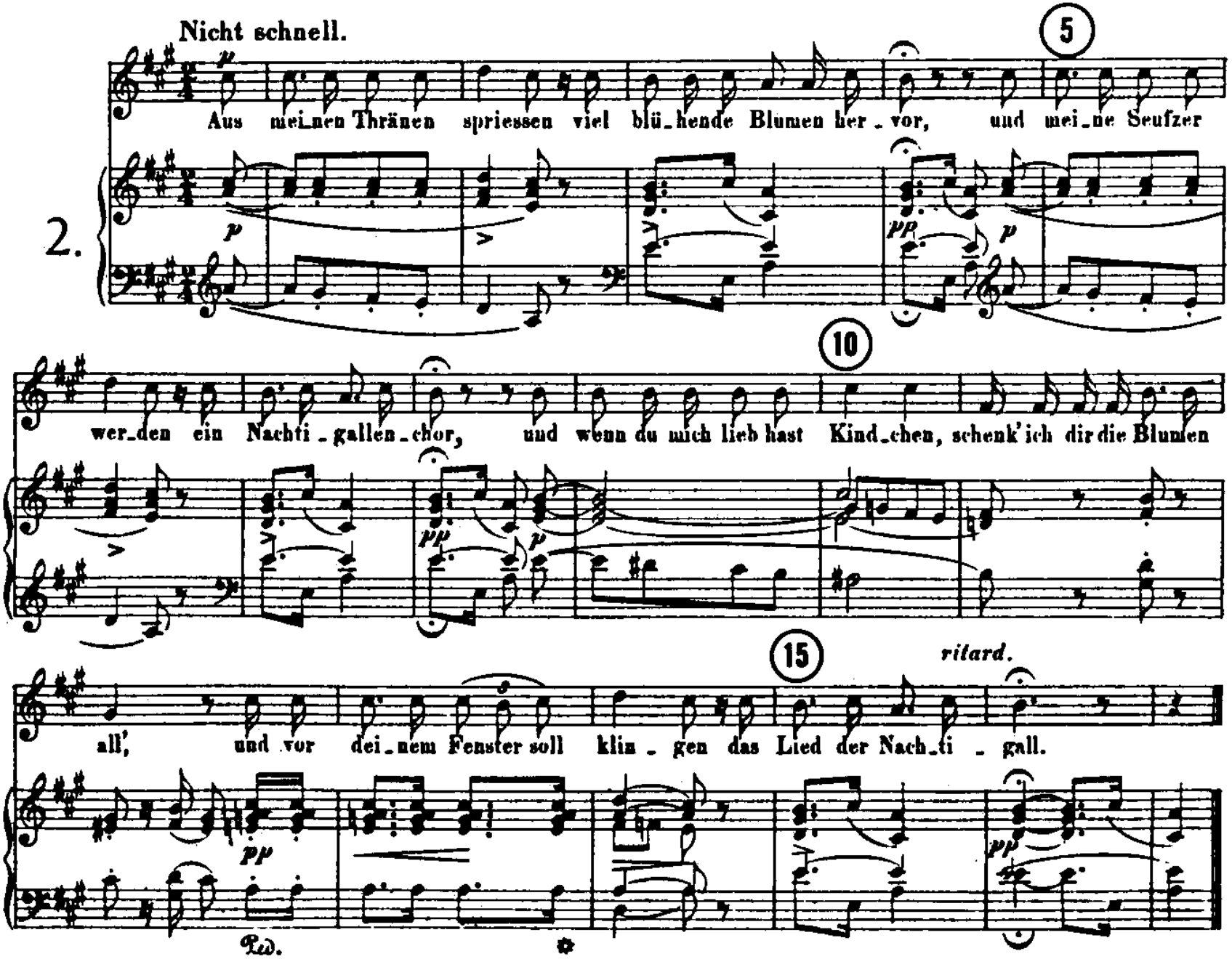


Possible elaborations of the 8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 *Urlinie* at the first level



Heinrich Schenker : ***Der freie Satz*** **(1935)**

The supplementary volume with the extensive music examples has no comprehensive analyses. The fullest example illustrates three levels of the second song of Schumann's cycle, *Dichterliebe*. It was chosen by Allen Forte for his article introducing Schenker's theory.

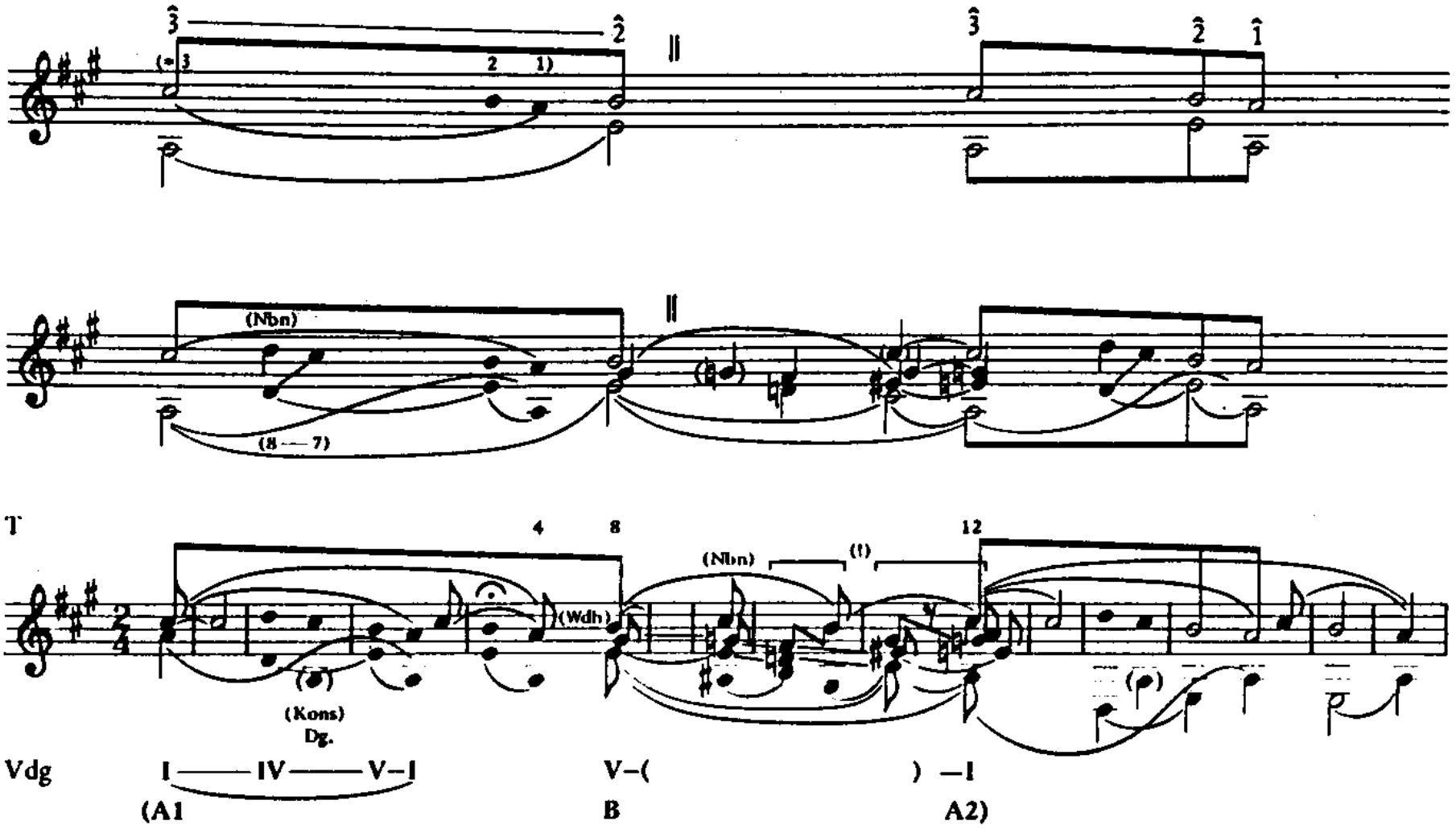

Nicht schnell.
2.
Aus mei_nen Thränen spriessen viel blü_hende Blumen her_vor, und mei_ne Seufzer
wer_den ein Nachti_gallen_chor, und wenn du mich lieb hast Kind_chen, schenk' ich dir die Blumen
all', und vor dei_nem Fenster soll klin_gen das Lied der Nach_ti_gall.
ritard.
Ped.

Arthur Komar, "The Music of *Dichterliebe*: The Whole and its Parts", in Arthur Komar, ed., *Robert Schumann: Dichterliebe*, Norton Critical Scores, London: Chappell, 1971, pp. 63-94 (p. 71)

"The song is remarkable in several respects:

1) the note B is left unresolved in the voice part at the ends of phrases 1, 2, and 4;
2) the middle of the song contains an unusual harmonic progression: E major – B minor – C# major – A major7 – D major – A major; and
3) while the melodic 'recapitulation' occurs at the beginning of phrase 4, the harmony at that point tonicizes D major, rather than A major."

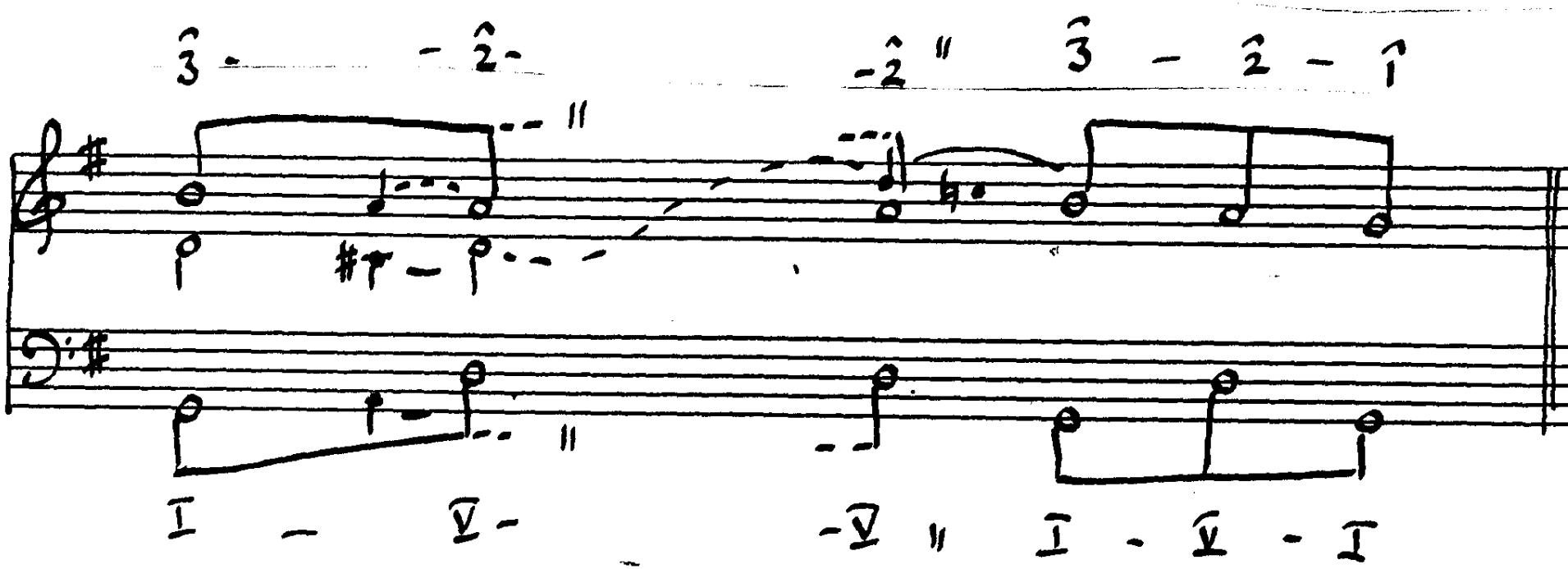
Heinrich Schenker, *Der freie Satz* (2nd revised ed., 1956, appendix, fig. 22b, p. 8)



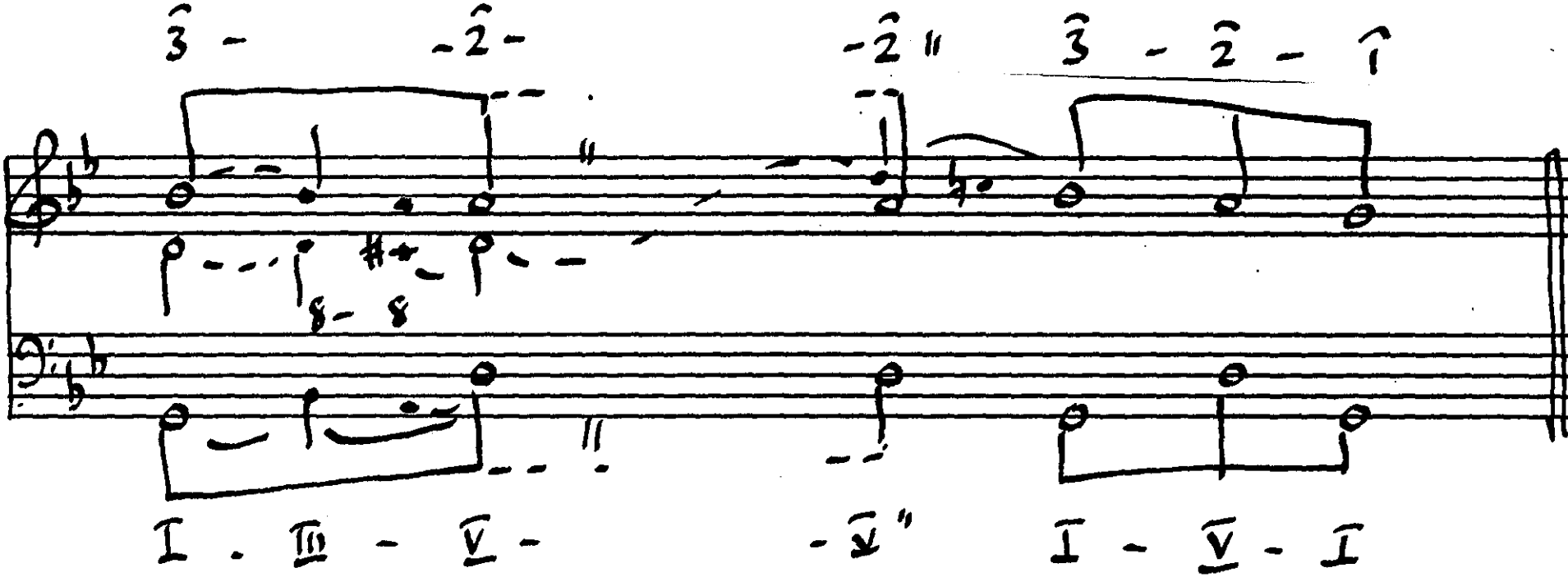
Schenker's Conception of Interruption

- Schenker came to regard the *interruption* structure he finds in the Schumann song as basic to the generation of form, and to sonata form in particular. It is the most powerful middleground elaboration of the *Ursatz* in its capacity to generate form.
- The following models show how it typically functions.

Interruption structure in the major

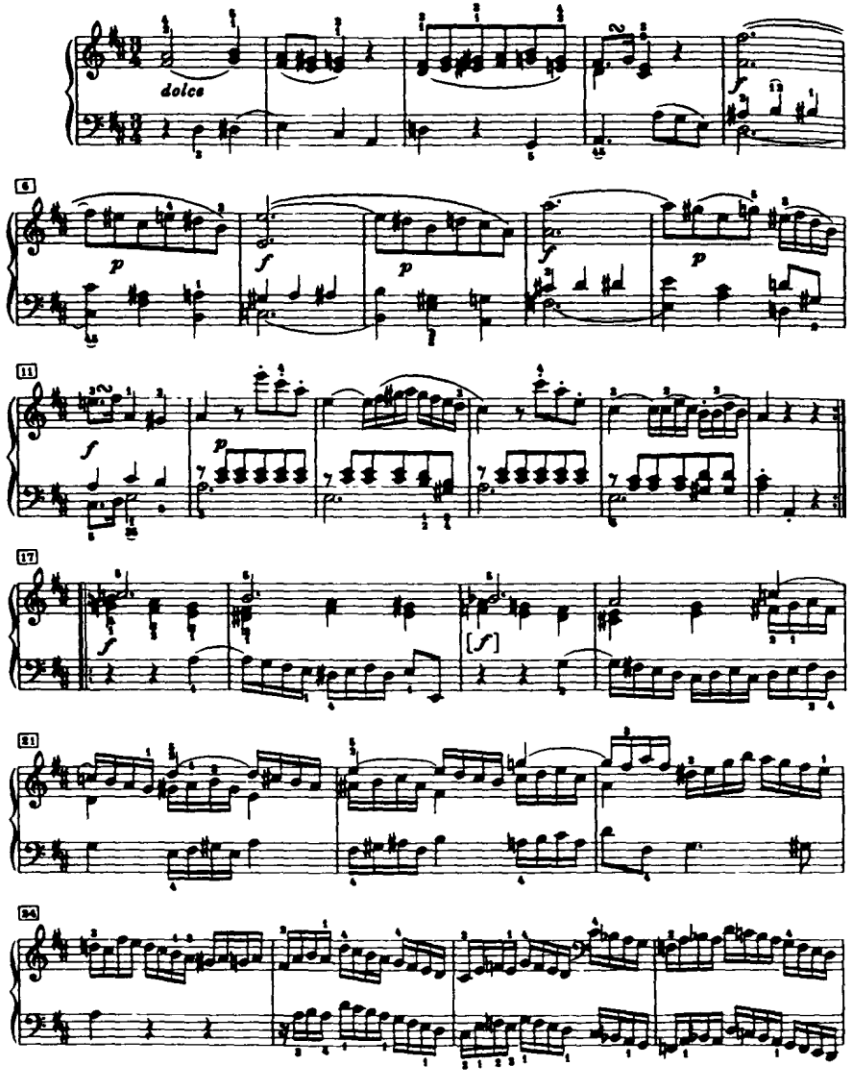


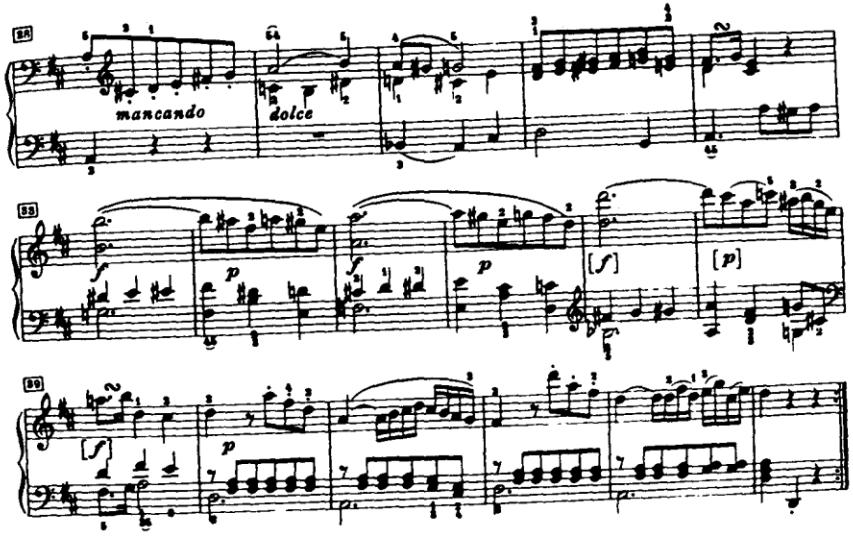
Interruption structure in the minor



Case study: Mozart Minuet K255

Mozart Minuet K355

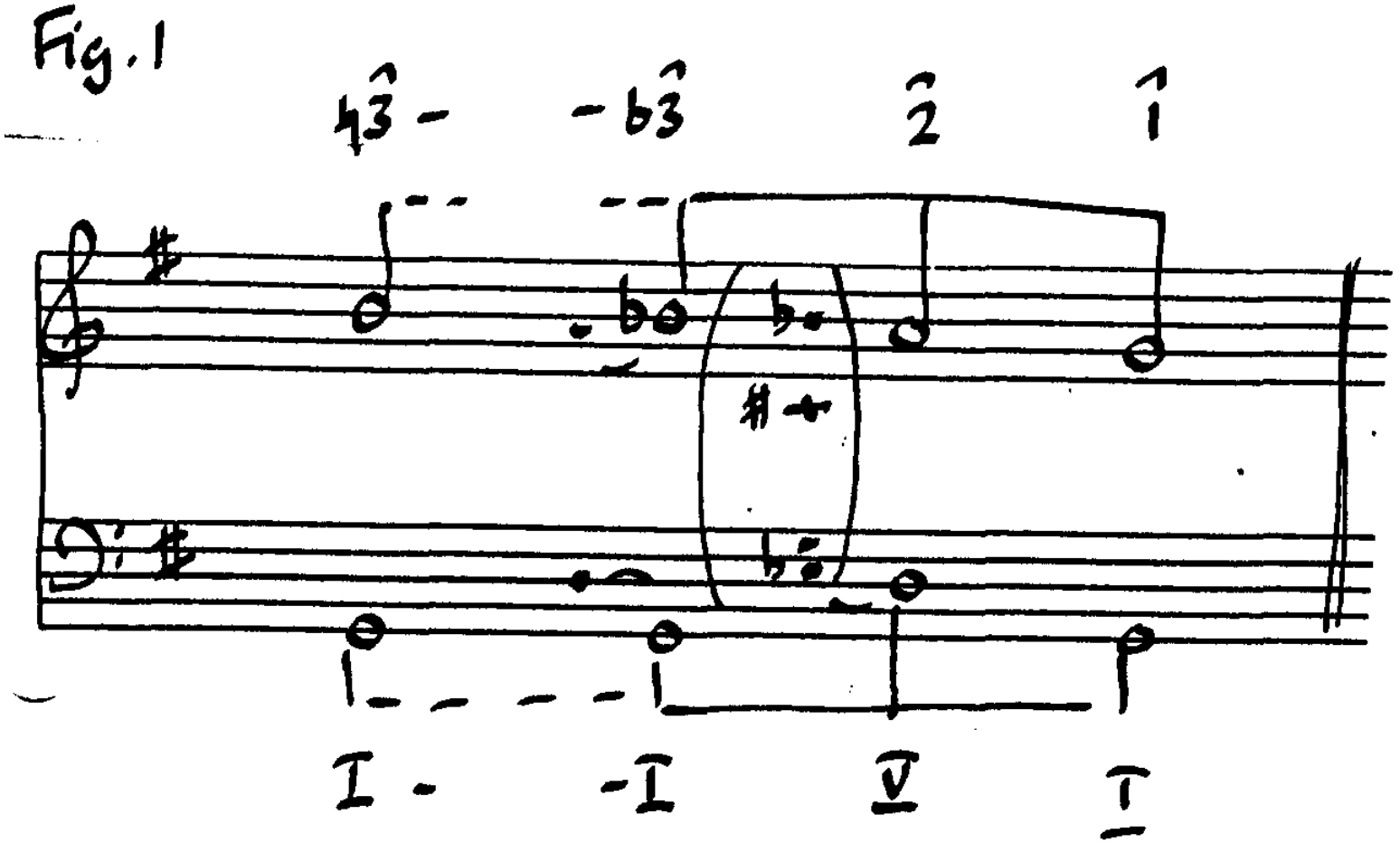




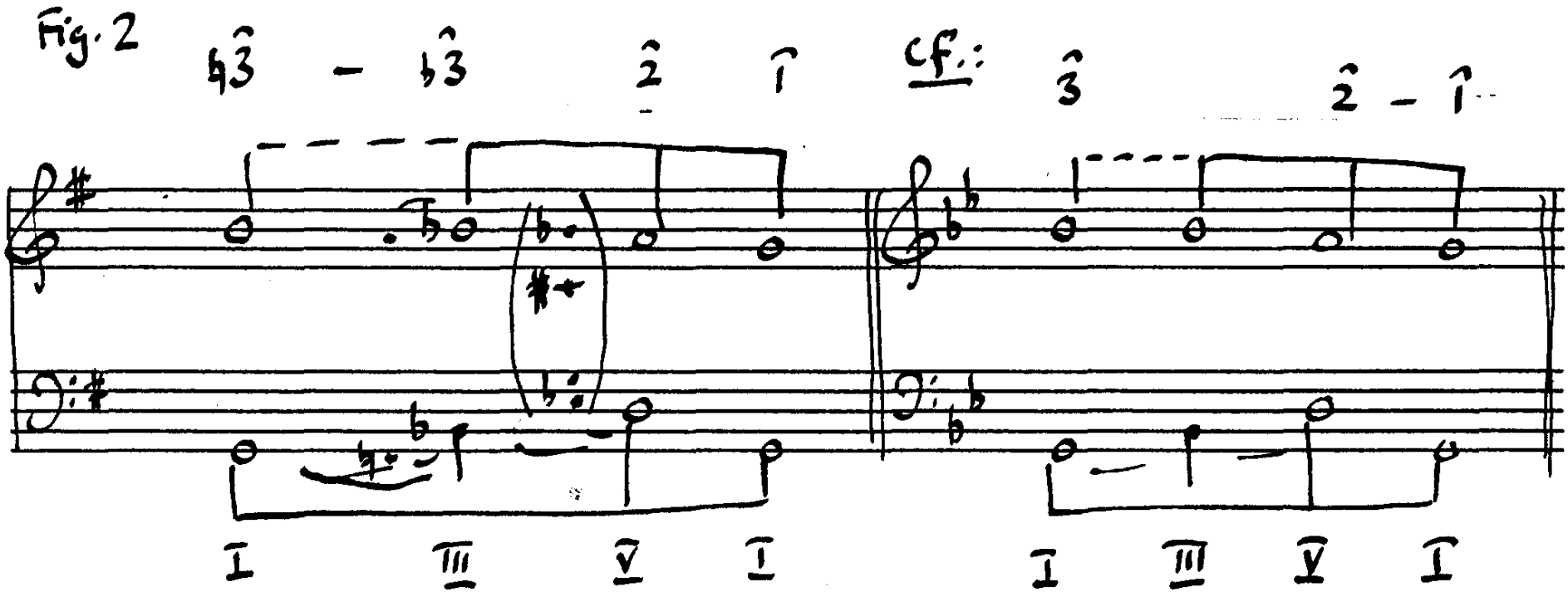
"Mixture" (i.e. mixture of major and minor mode) as another essential form-generating technique

"Mixture" is Schenker's concept for explaining the relationship known in German theory since Hugo Riemann (1880s) as the "third relationship" (*Terzverwandtschaft*).

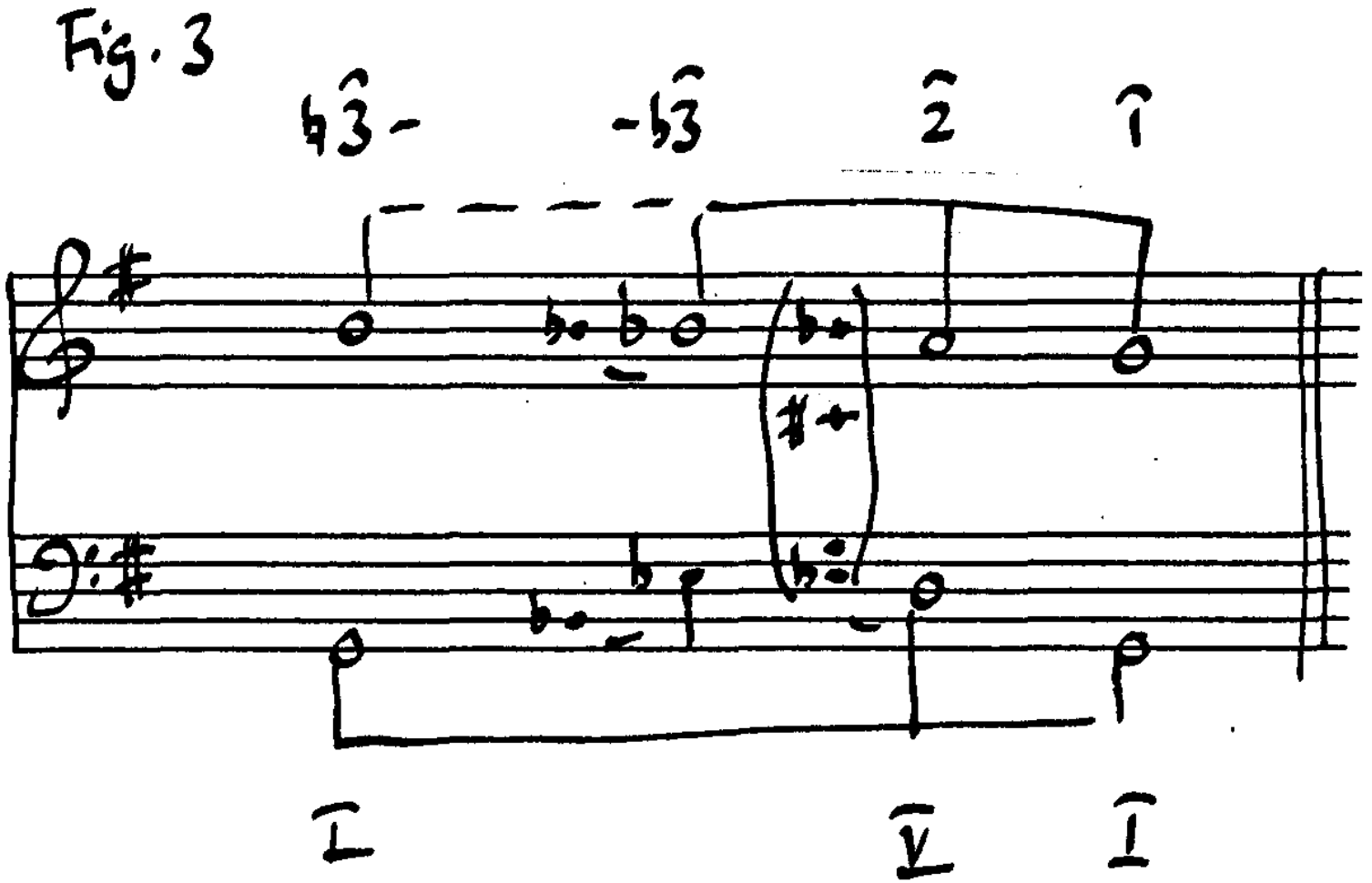
Mixture I



Mixture II

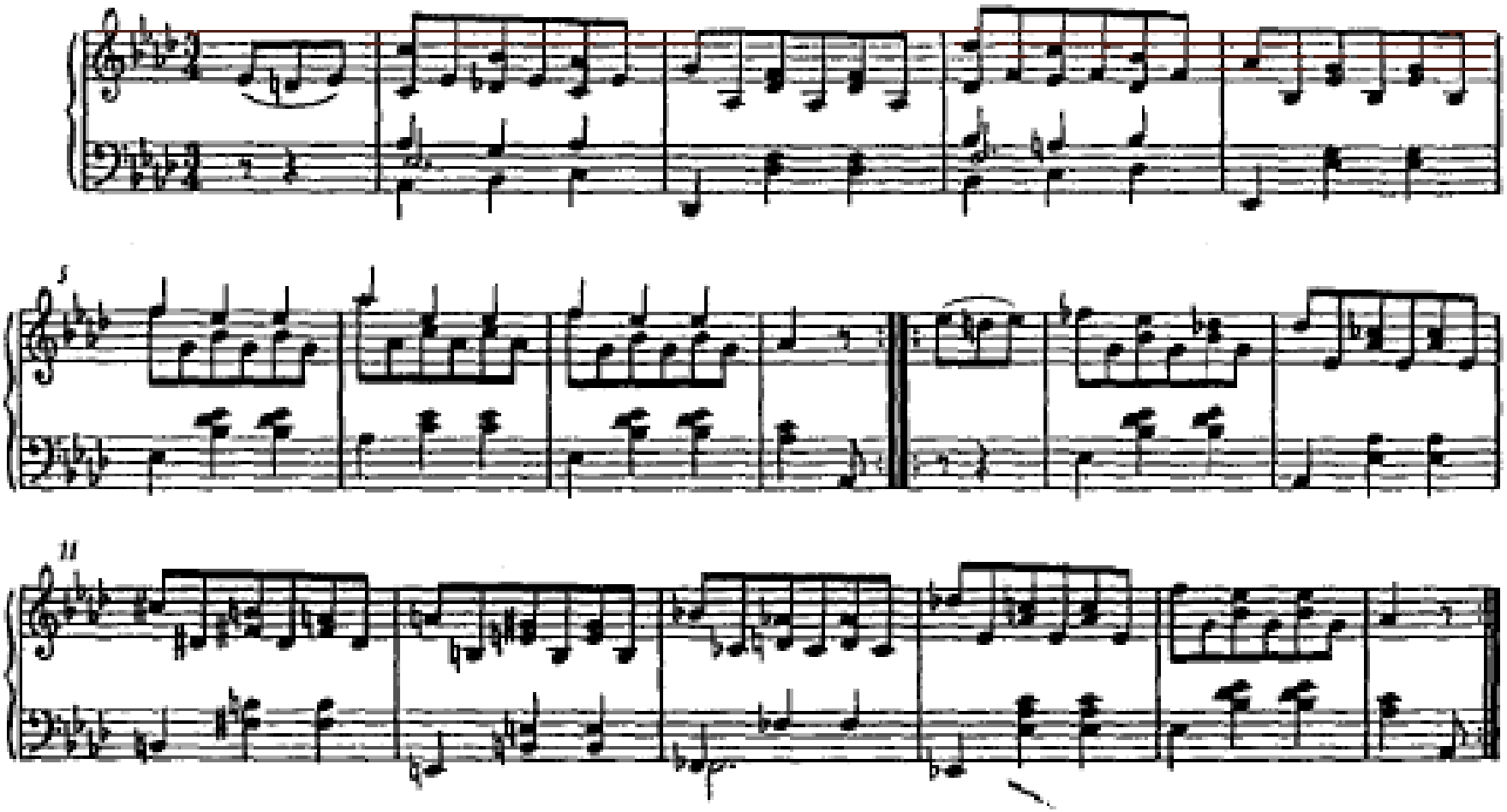


Mixture III



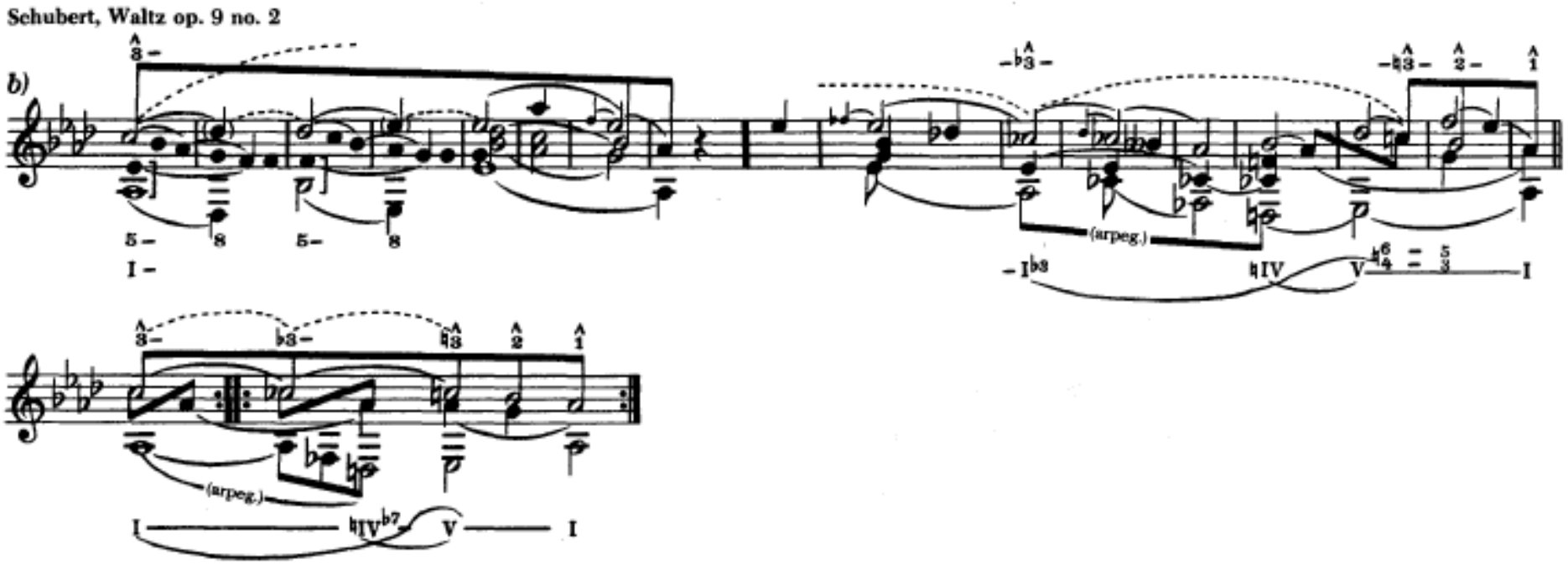
Case study: Schubert *Trauerwalzer* op. 9 no. 2

„Trauerwalzer“ *)



Schenker‘s graph of the waltz,
illustrating its use of mixture

NB: The text he used has a variant in the bass



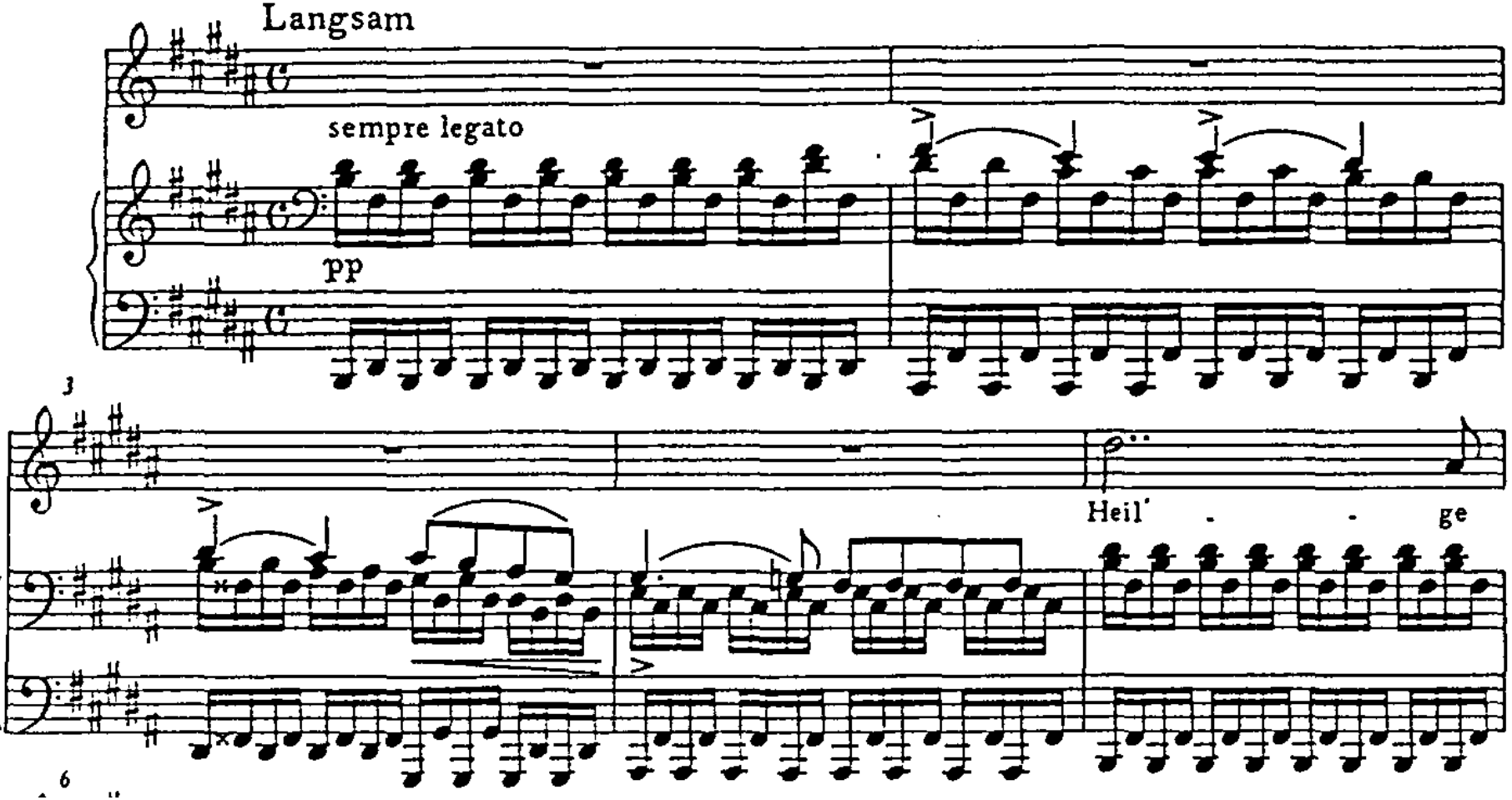
Case study: Schubert *Nacht und Träume* D827

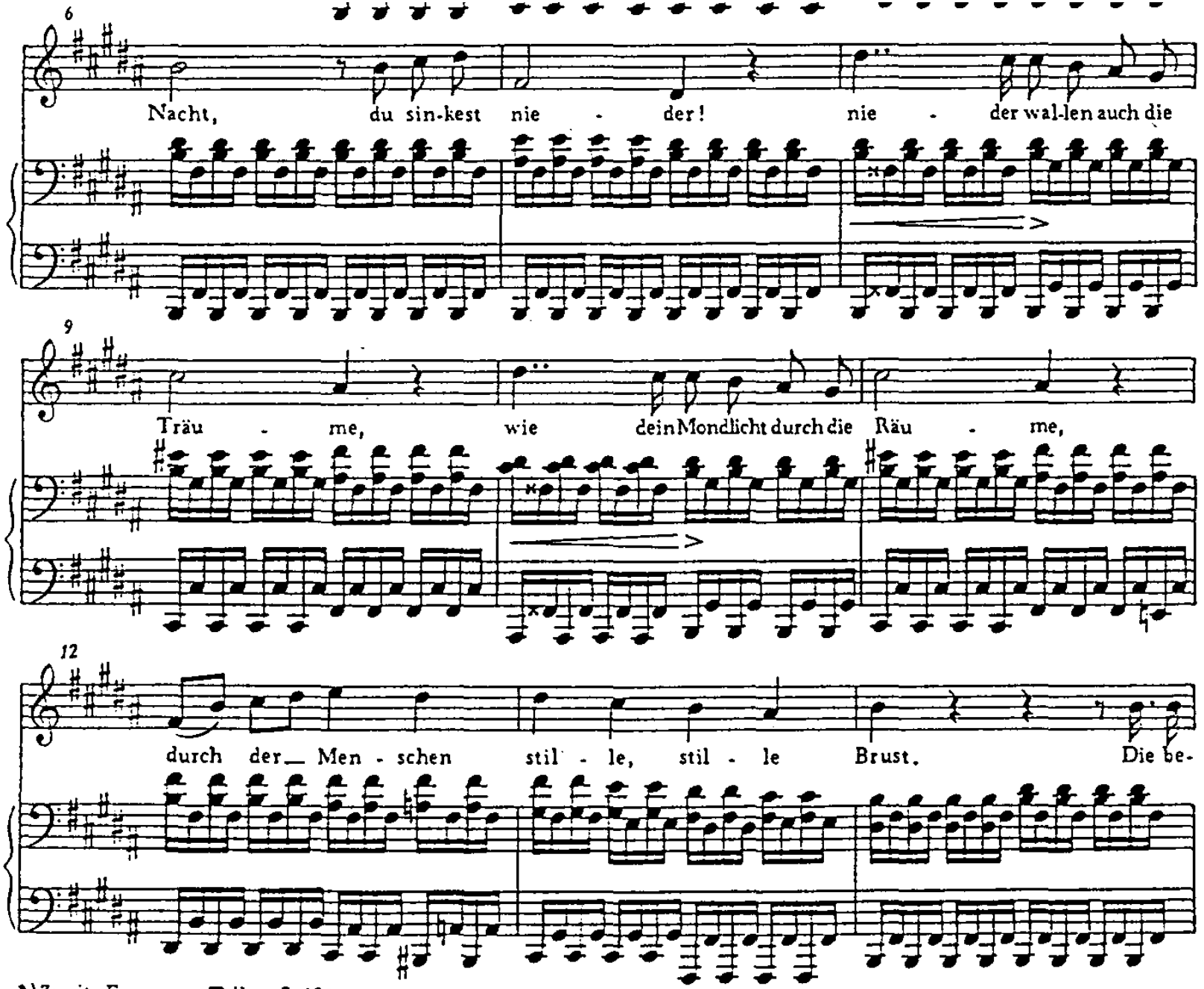
10. Nacht und Träume

Matthäus von Collin

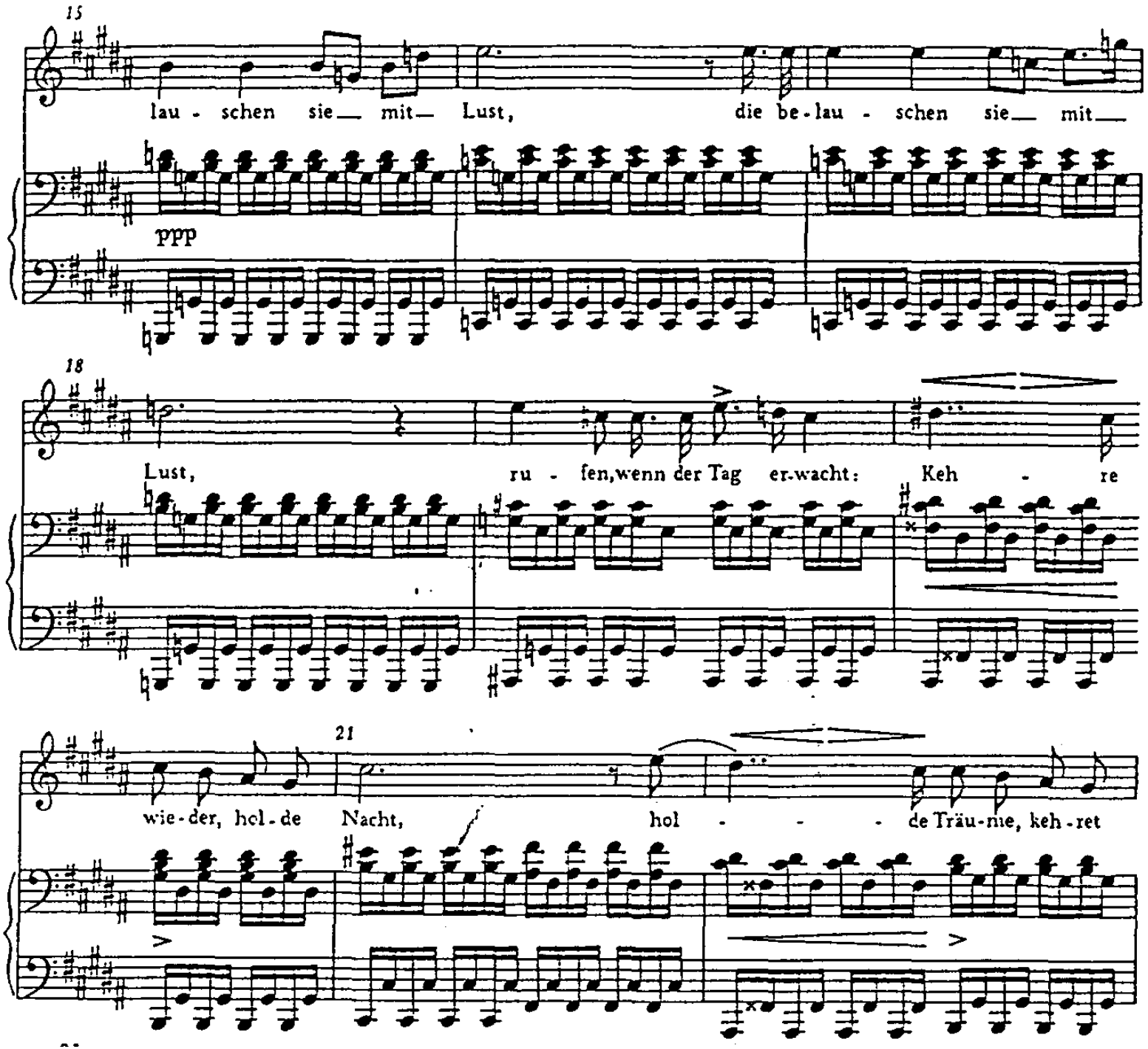
D 827

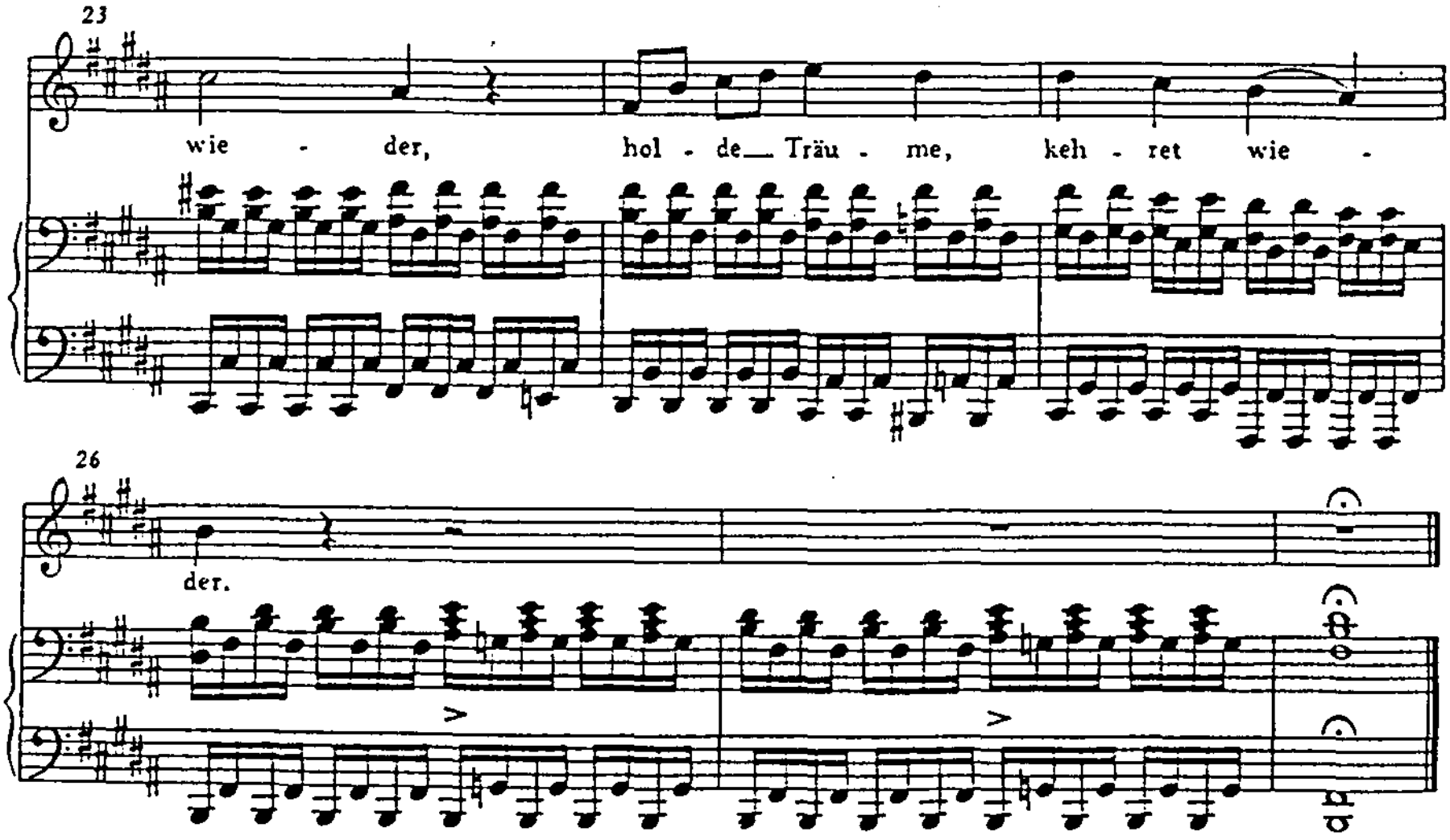
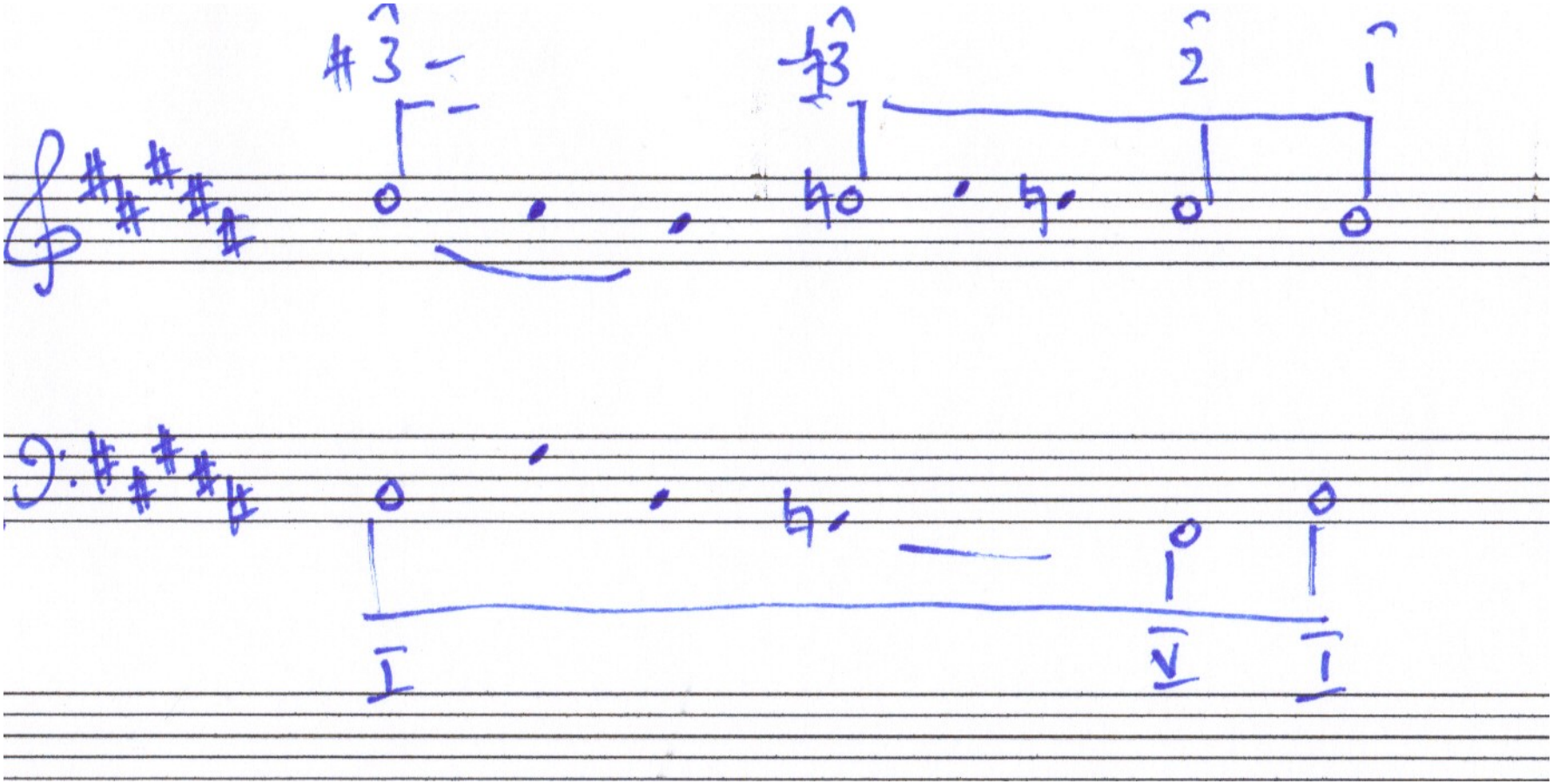
Erste Fassung *)





*) Zweite Fassung s. Teil a, S. 184.


15
lau - schen sie mit Lust, die be-lau - schen sie mit
ppp
18
Lust, ru - fen, wenn der Tag er-wacht: Keh - re
21
wie-der, hol-de Nacht, hol - - - de Träu-me, keh-ret


23
wie - der, hol - de Träu - me, keh - ret wie -
26
der.

Nacht und Träume, rough graph