Forty Bach Chorales

Johann Sebastian Bach

Arranged by Peter Billam

for keyboard

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Forty Bach Chorales

It is the chorales, not his trademark fugues, that lie at the heart of Bach's technique. Wolff refers to Bach's *collection of 370 four-part chorales that charted the course for tonal harmony.* Donald Francis Tovey observes: *Counterpoint, the art defined by Sir Frederick Gore Ouseley as that of 'combining melodies'. . . This definition is not quite complete. Classical couterpoint is the conveying of a mass of harmony by means of a combination of melodies. Thus the three melodies combined by Wagner in the Meistersinger prelude do not make classical couterpoint, for they require a mass of accompanying harmony to explain them.*

Forkel recounts, in Ernest Newman's translation: *Bach began teaching composition not with dry counterpoint that led nowhere, as was the way with other music teachers of his time ; . . . He went immediately to pure four-part thorough-bass, laying much stress on the setting-out of the voices, since in this way the conception of the pure progression of the harmony was made most intelligible. From there he went to the chorale. In these exercises he himself set the original bass, and made his pupils add only the alto and the tenor. Gradually he let them make the bass also. Everywhere he insisted not only on the utmost purity of the harmony in itself, but also on naturalness of progression and a melodic flow of all the separate voices.*

Bach, in other words, based his technique at the frontier between voice-leading and harmony; on how voice-leading should be done so as to create harmony. The importance of this approach is that it is not limited to Bach's voice-leading rules, or harmonic style.

The forty chorales offered here transcribed for keyboard are a small selection from the 388 Bach has left us. The selection is arbitrary, determined largely by easy page-layout when in alphabetical order, and biased towards the grander settings and the stand-alone chorales independent of cantatas. The words are mostly omitted for space reasons, though they do determine many details of melodic gesture or harmonic movement. The words can be found at www.uvm.edu/~classics/faculty/bach

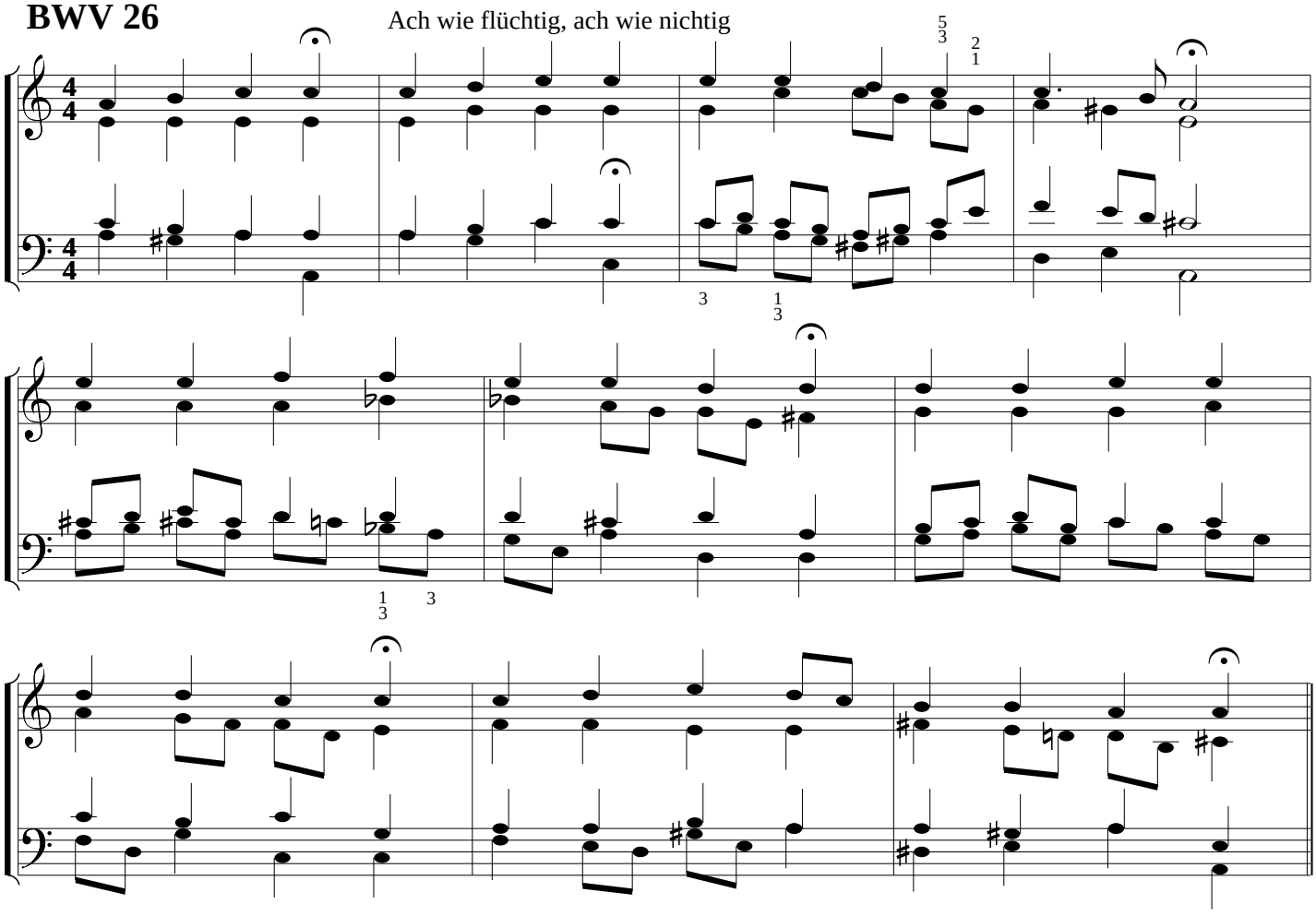
Musically there is so much of interest here; the chromaticism of *Es ist genug* will reappear in Berg's violin concerto, the extravagant voice-crossings in *Christum wir sollen loben schon*, the two-and-a-half-bar phrases of *Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele* and the five-bar phrases of *Uns ist ein Kindlein heut geborn*, the lovely tune and fluent bass-line of *Sollt ich meinem Gott nicht singen*, and much else.

These pieces can be used for a variety of musicianship exercises, such as keyboard sight-reading practice, singing one voice and playing the other three, transposed sight-reading, and so on. For this reason, apart from the easily-printable *pdf* format, these pieces are also available in *muscript* format so that you can generate, for example, midi versions for dictation, or soprano-bass-only versions for voice-leading practice, etc.

BWV 26	Ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig	4
BWV 262	Alle menschen müssen sterben	4
BWV 104	Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr	5
BWV 4	Christ lag in Todesbänden	5
BWV 274	Christe, der du bist Tag und Licht	6
BWV 121	Christum wir sollen loben schon	6
BWV 288	Das alte Jahr vergangen ist	7
BWV 18	Durch Adams Fall ist ganz verderbt	7
BWV 303	Ein Feste Burg ist unser Gott	8
BWV 43	Ermuntre dich, mein schwacher Geist	8
BWV 145	Erschienen ist der herrlich Tag	9
BWV 306	Erstanden ist der heilige Christ	9
BWV 155	Es ist das Heil uns kommen her	10
BWV 310	Es wird schier die letzte Tag herkommen	10
BWV 60	Es ist genug	11
BWV 32	Freu dich sehr, o meine Seele	12
BWV 315	Gib dich zufrieden und sei stille	12
BWV 318	Gottes Sohn ist Kommen	13
BWV 330	Herr, ich habe misgehandelt	13
BWV 371	Kyrie, Gott Vater in Ewigkeit	14
BWV 228	Lobt den Herren, denn er ist sehr freundlich	16
BWV 376	Lobt Gott, ihr Christen allzugleich	16
BWV 245	Machs mit mir, Gott, nach deiner Güt	17
BWV 378	Mein Augen schließ ich jetzt	17
BWV 382	Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin	18
BWV 386	Nun danket alle Gott	18
BWV 387	Nun freut euch, Gottes Kinder all	19
BWV 307	Nun freut euch, lieben Christen gemein	19
BWV 62	Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland	19
BWV 390	Nun lob, mein Seel, den Herren	20
BWV 396	Nun sich der Tag geendet hat	21
BWV 400	O Herzensangst, o Bangigkeit und Zagen	21
BWV 402	O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde groß	22
BWV 394	O Welt, ich muß dich lassen	23
BWV 180	Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele	23
BWV 413	Sollt ich meinem Gott nicht singen	24
BWV 414	Uns ist ein Kindlein heut geborn	25
BWV 248	Von Himmel hoch da komm ich her	25
BWV 437	Wir glauben all an einen Gott	26
BWV 178	Wo Gott der Herr nicht bei uns hält	27

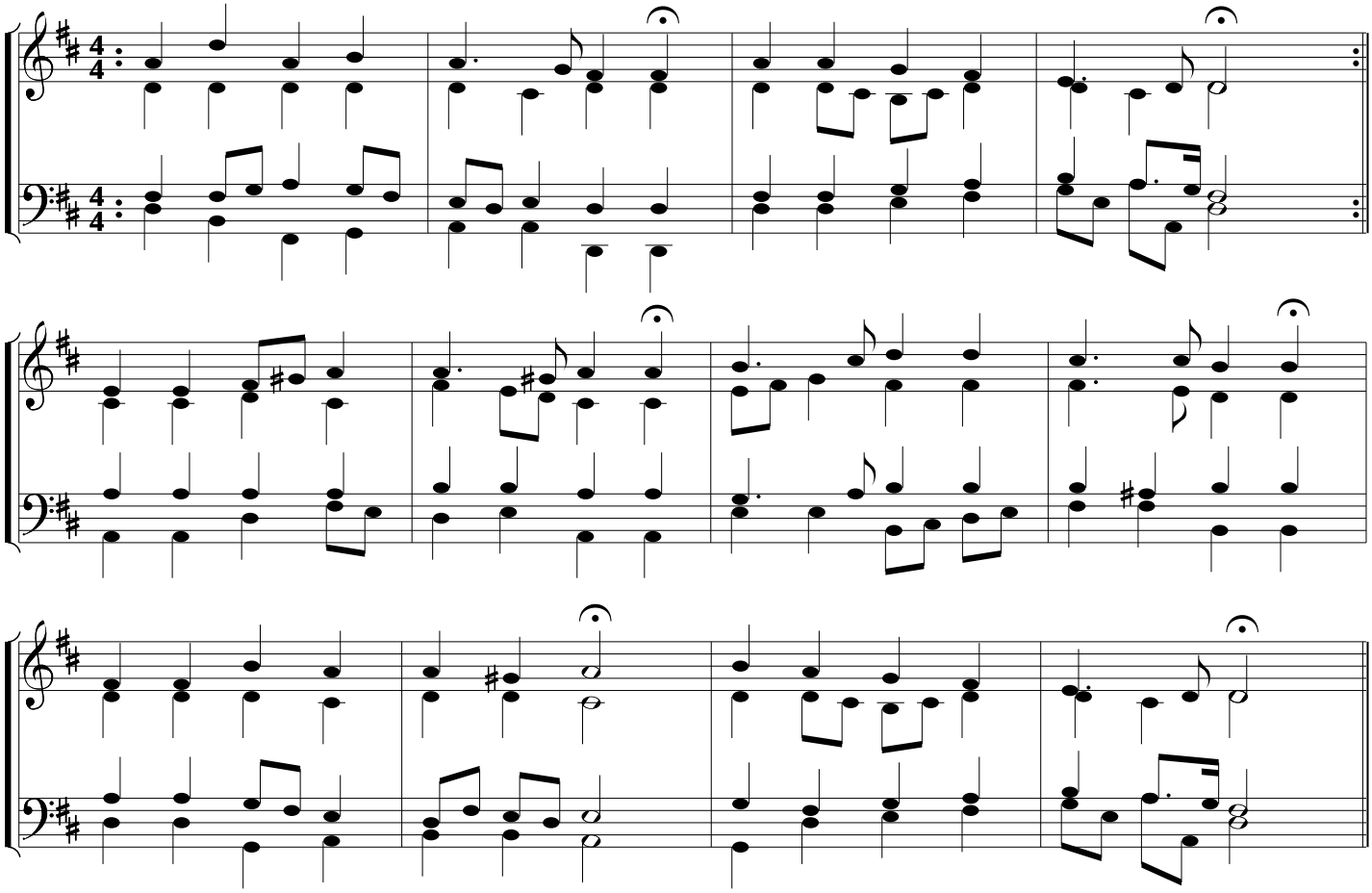
BWV 26

Ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig



BWV 262

Alle menschen müssen sterben



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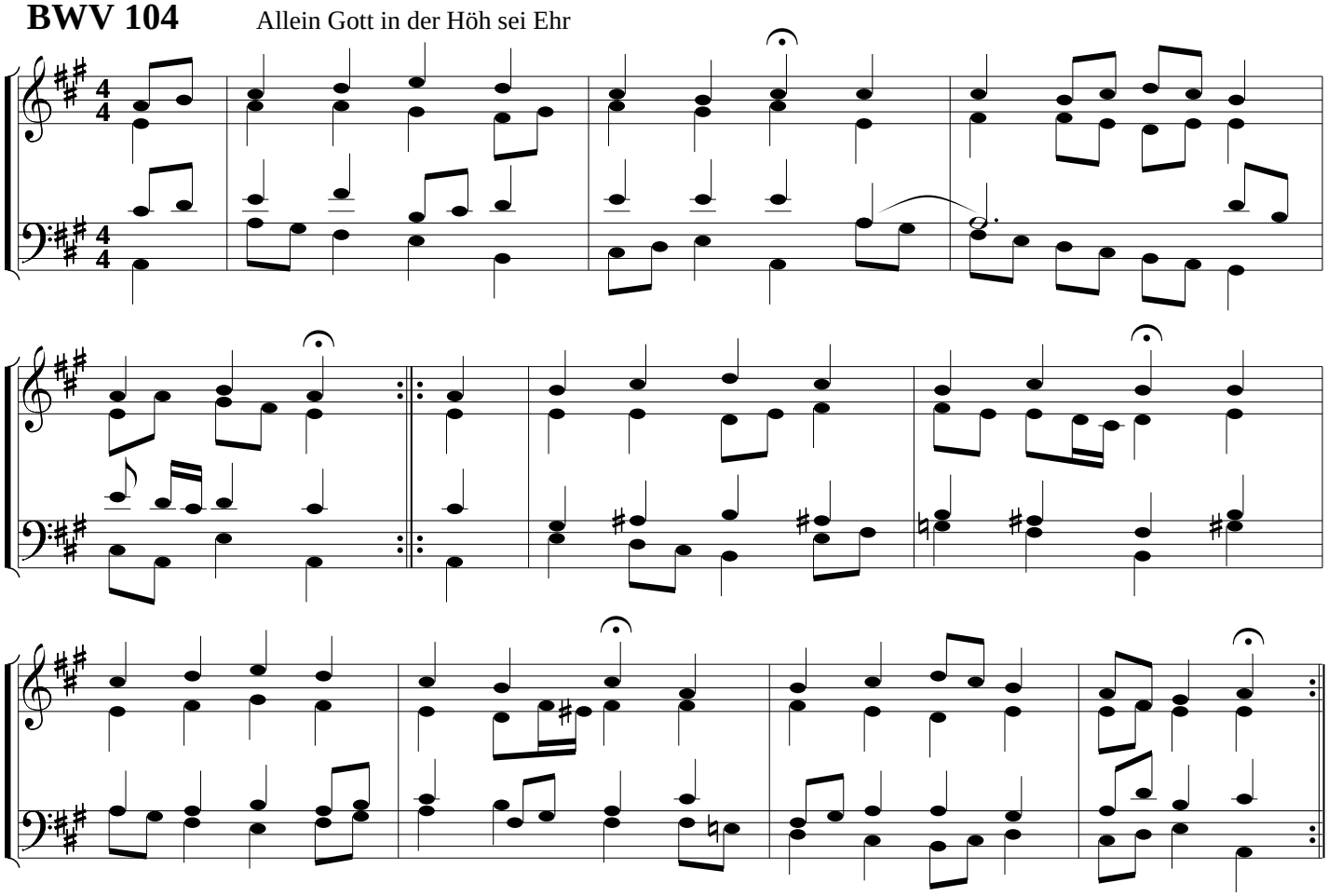
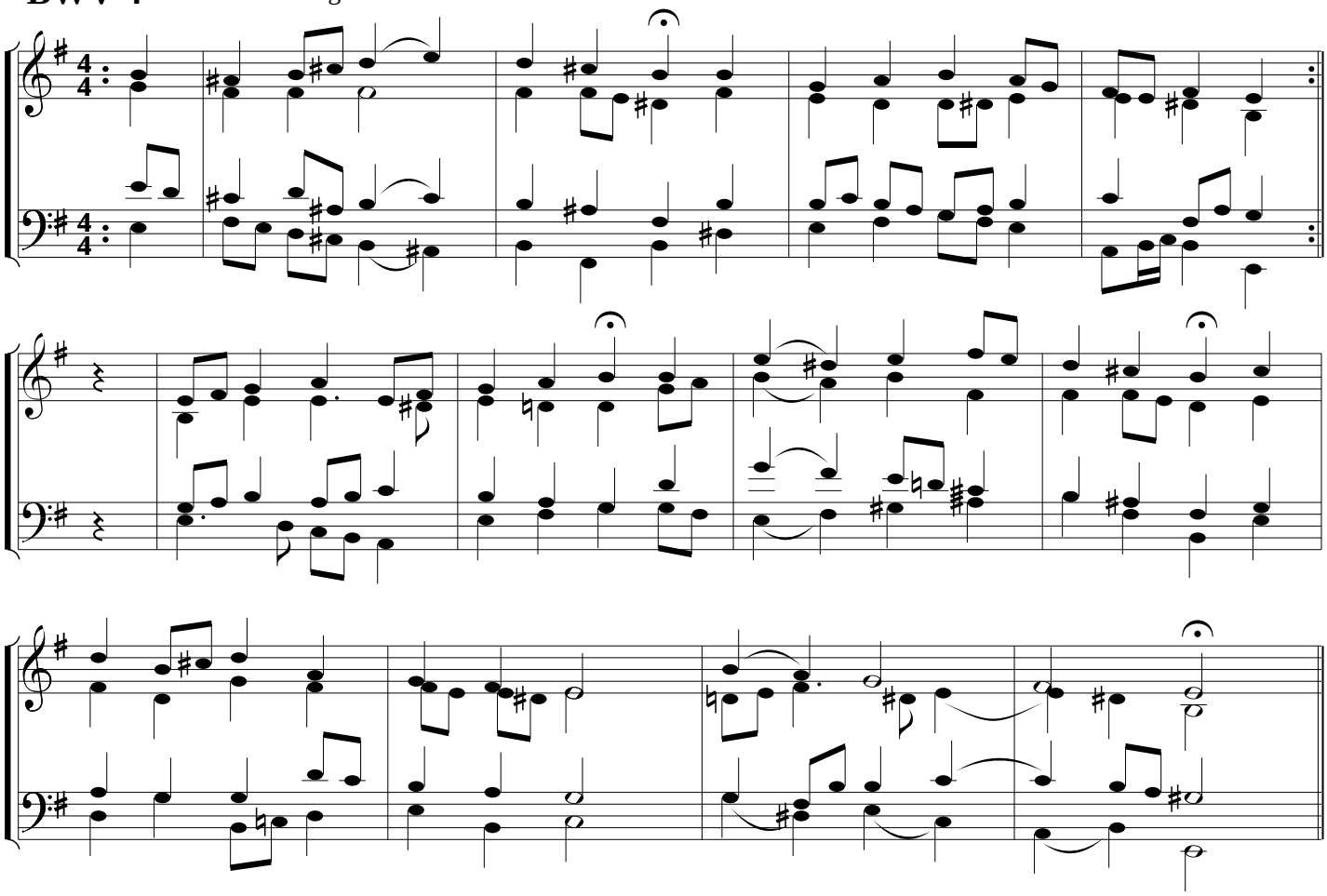
BWV 104

Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr



BWV 4

Christ lag in Todesbänden



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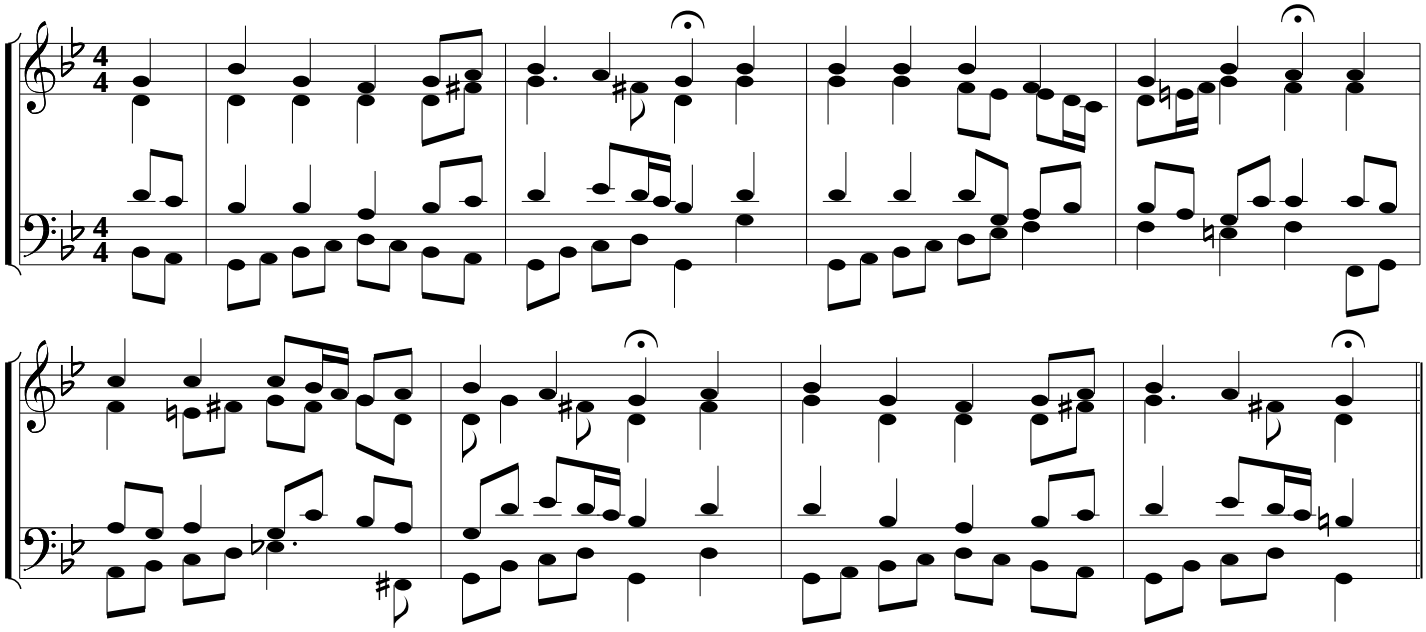
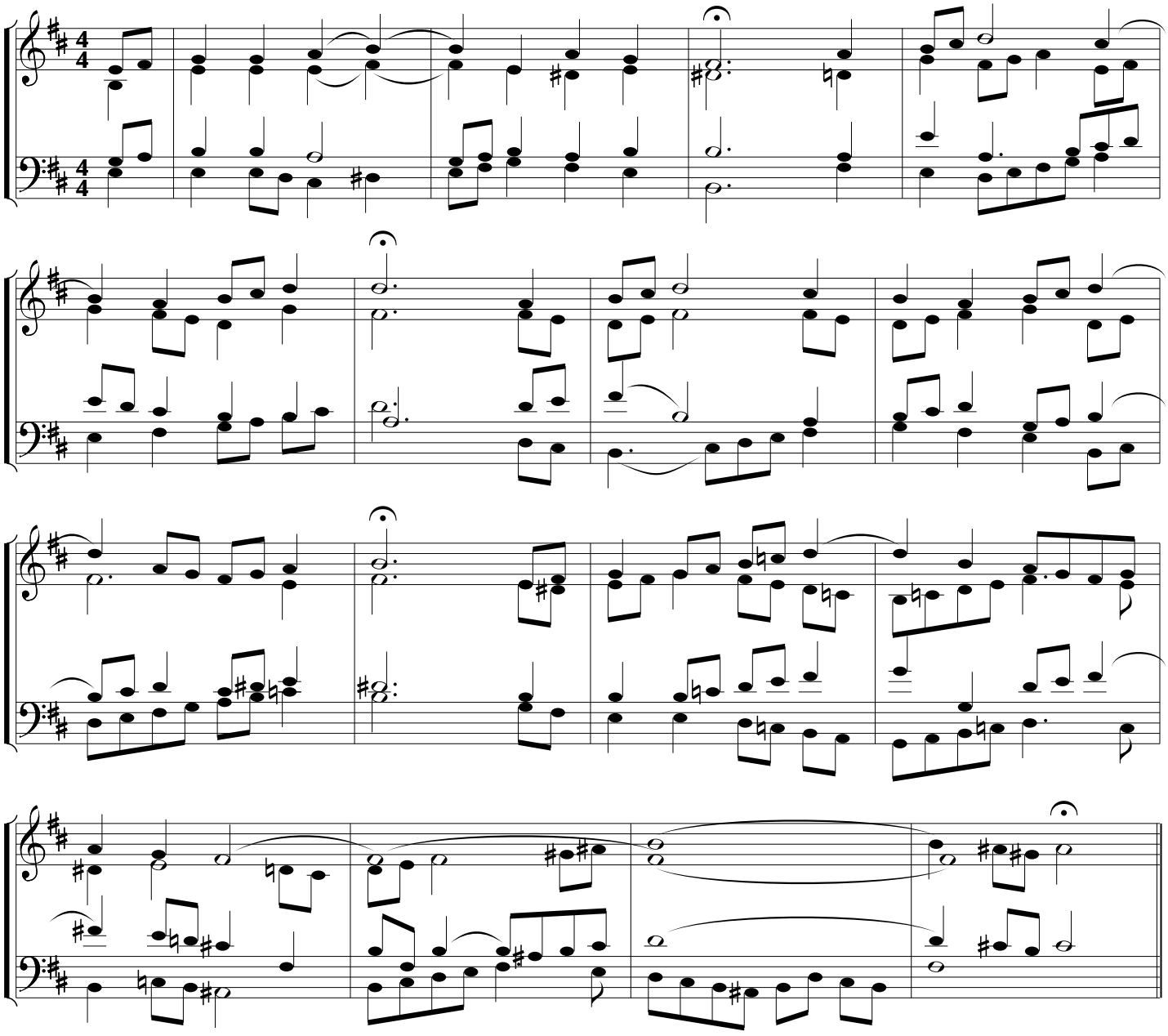
BWV 274 Christe, der du bist Tag und Licht



BWV 121 Christum wir sollen loben schon



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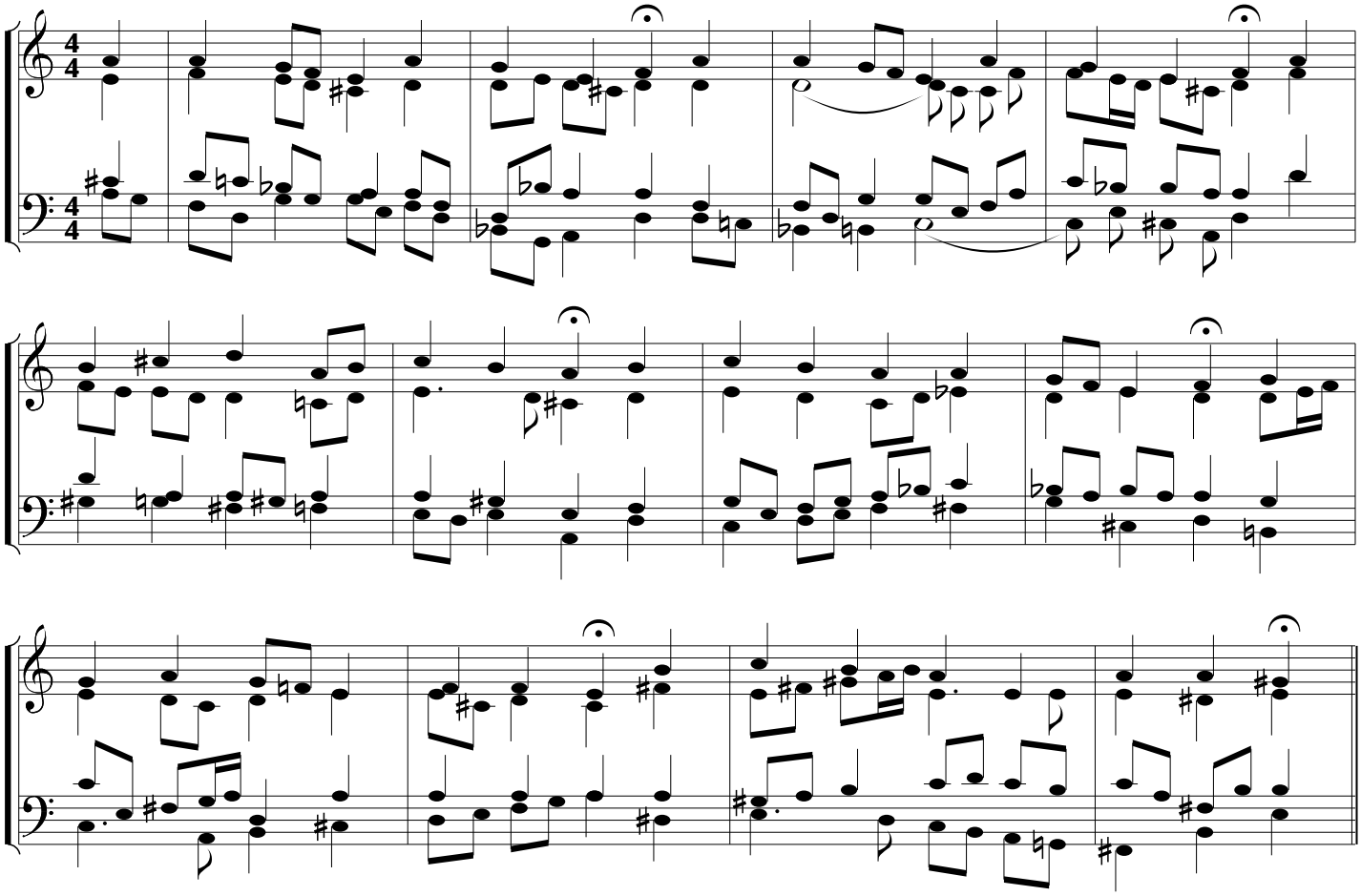
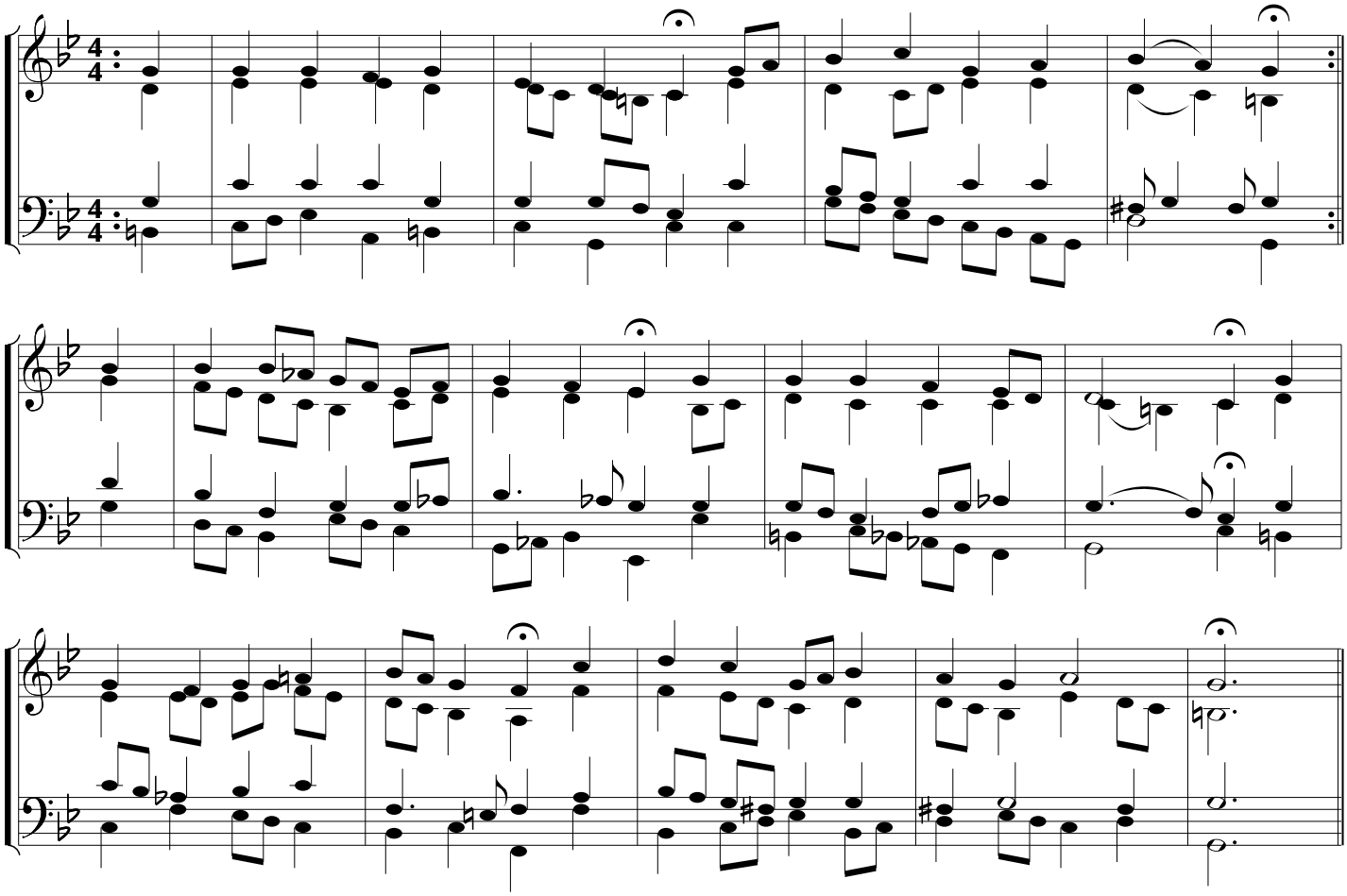
BWV 288

Das alte Jahr vergangen ist



BWV 18

Durch Adams Fall ist ganz verderbt



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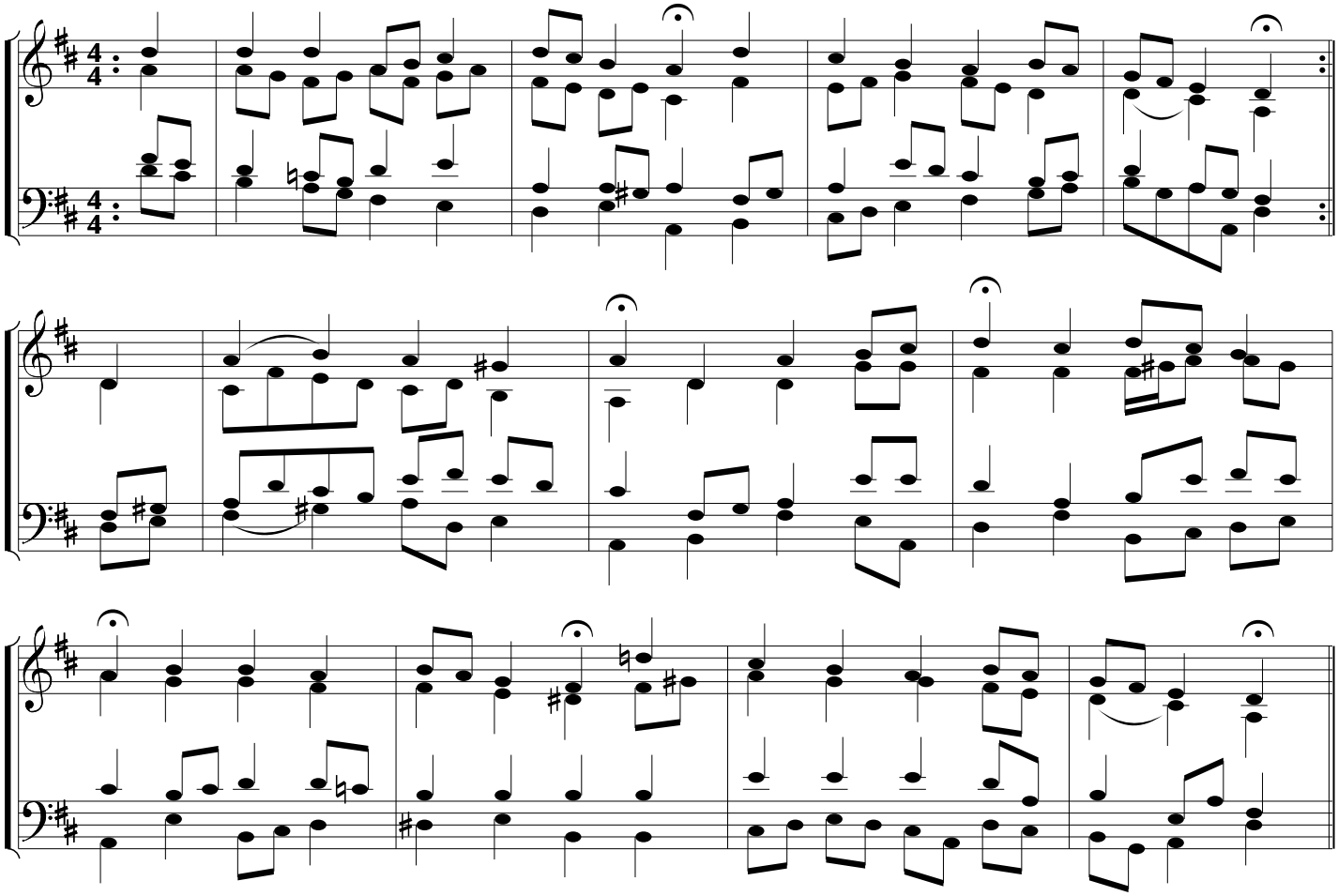
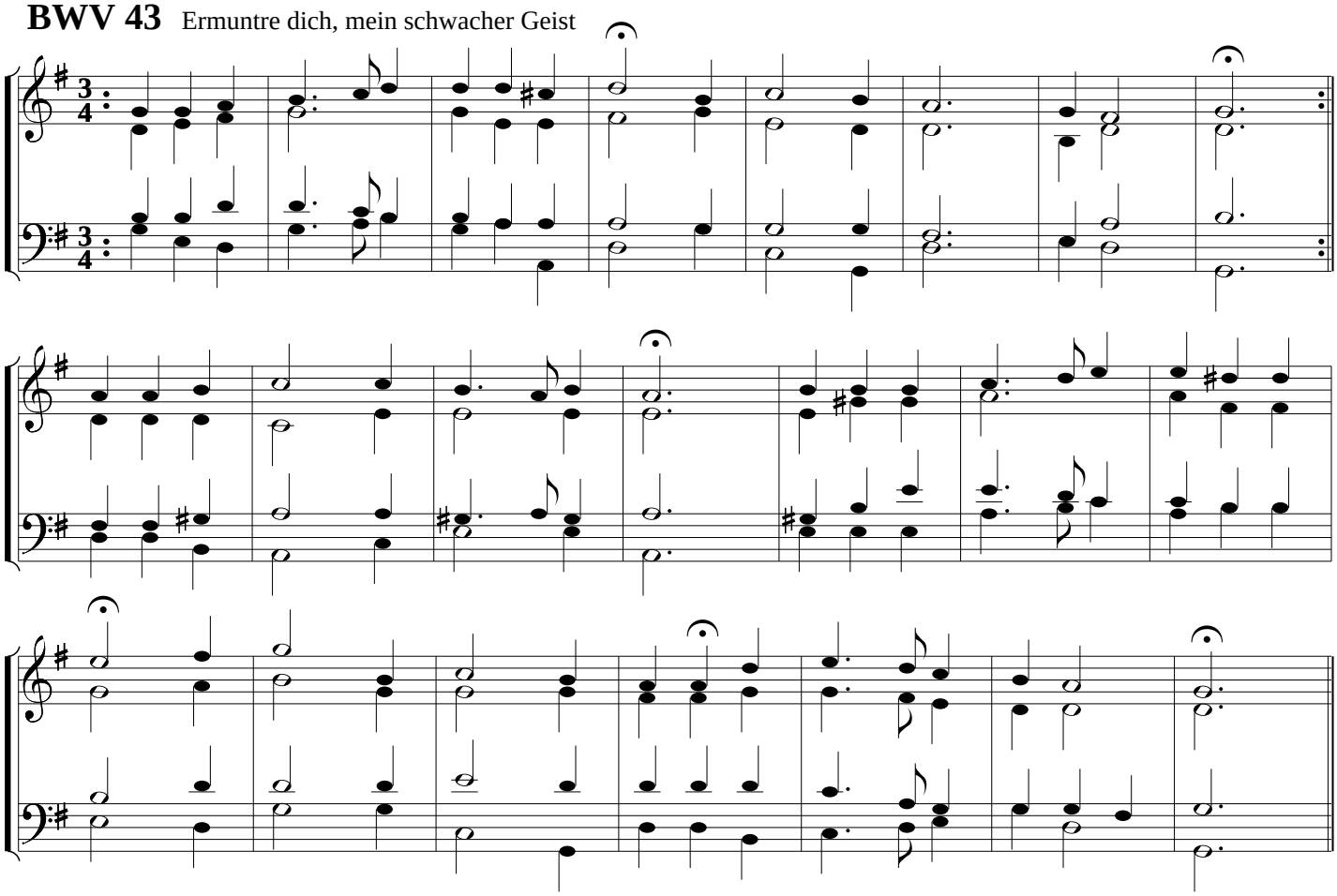
BWV 303 Ein Feste Burg ist unser Gott



BWV 43 Ermuntre dich, mein schwacher Geist



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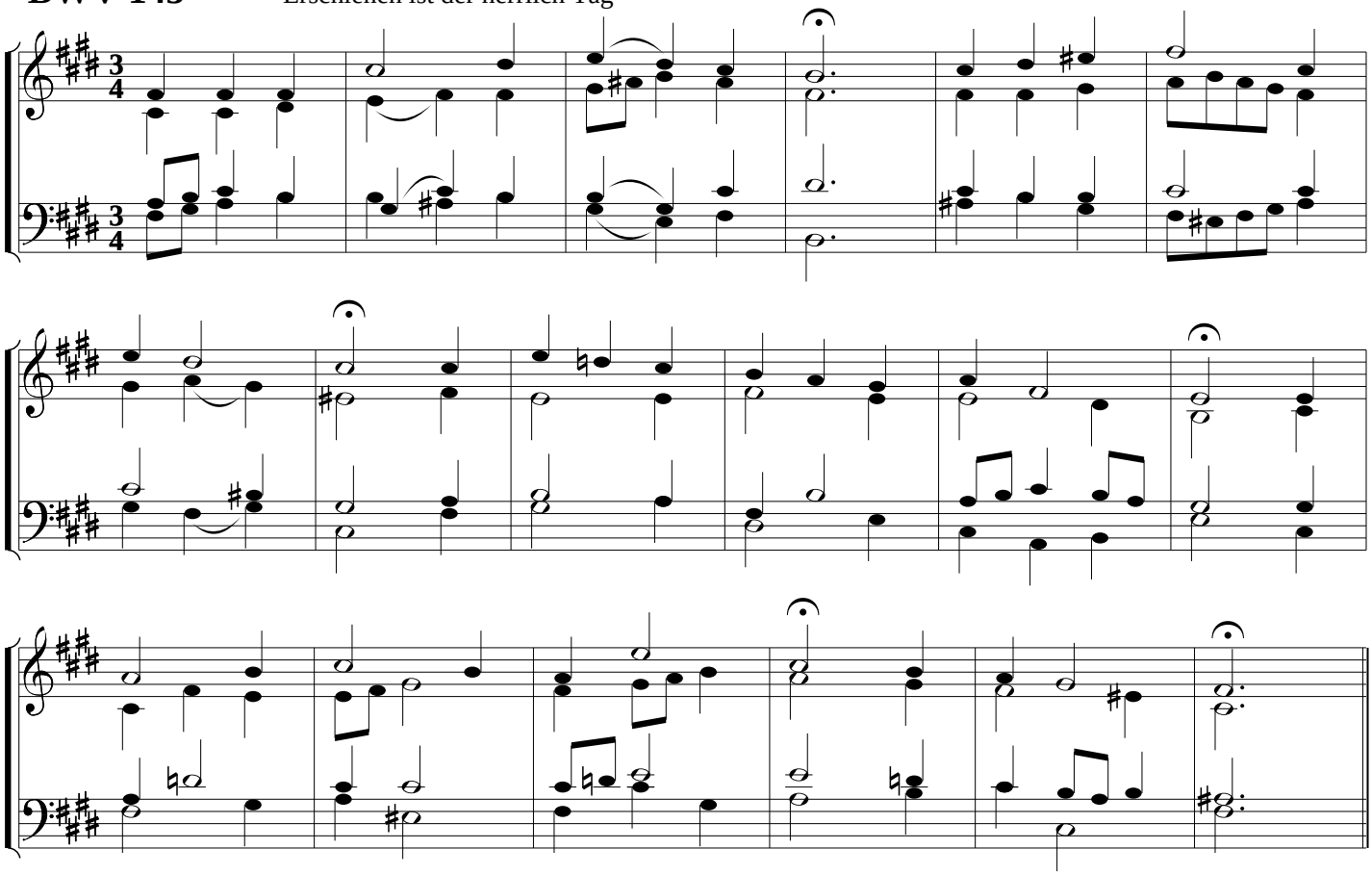
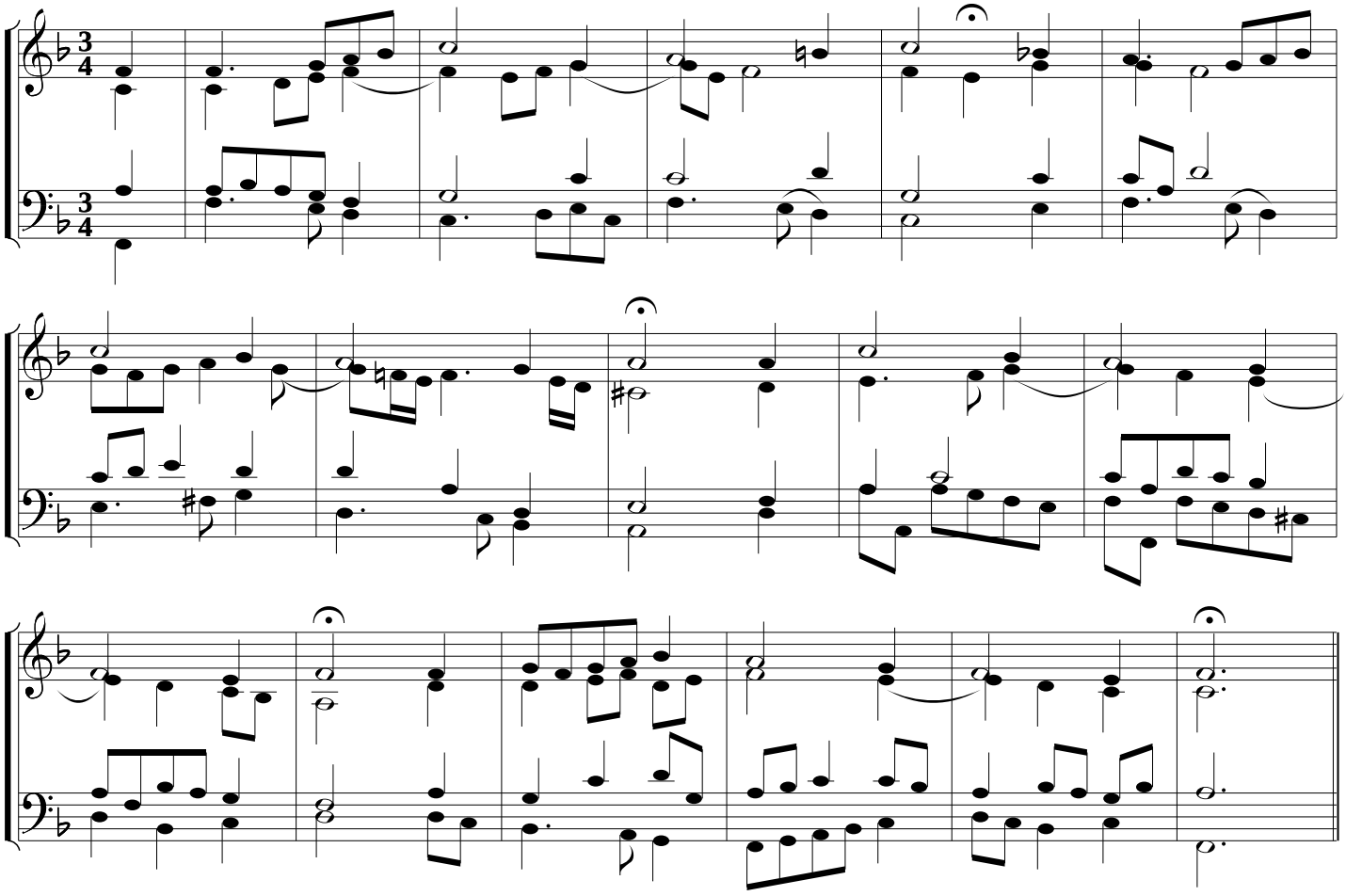
BWV 145

Erschienen ist der herrlich Tag



BWV 306

Erstanden ist der heilige Christ



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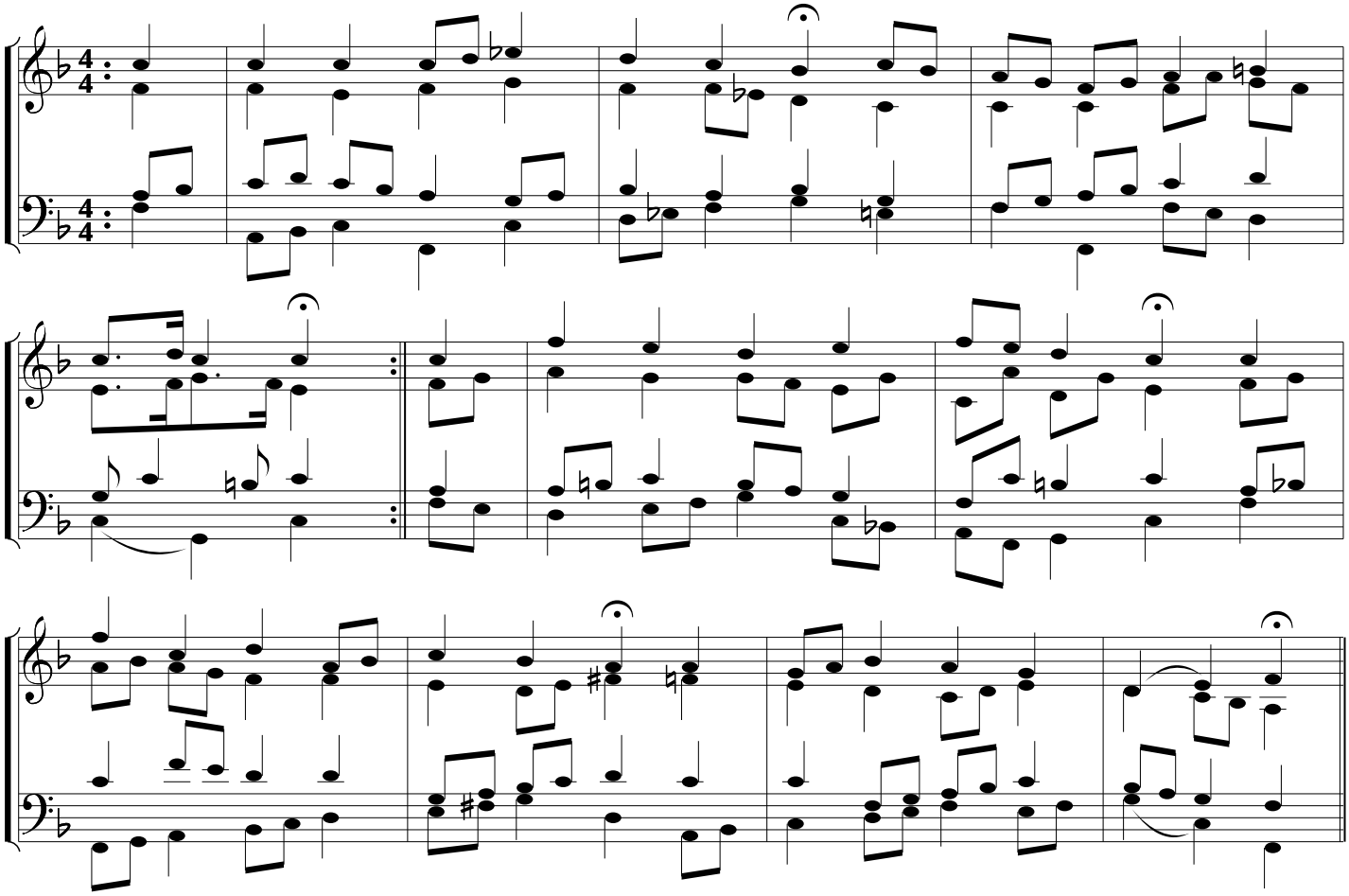
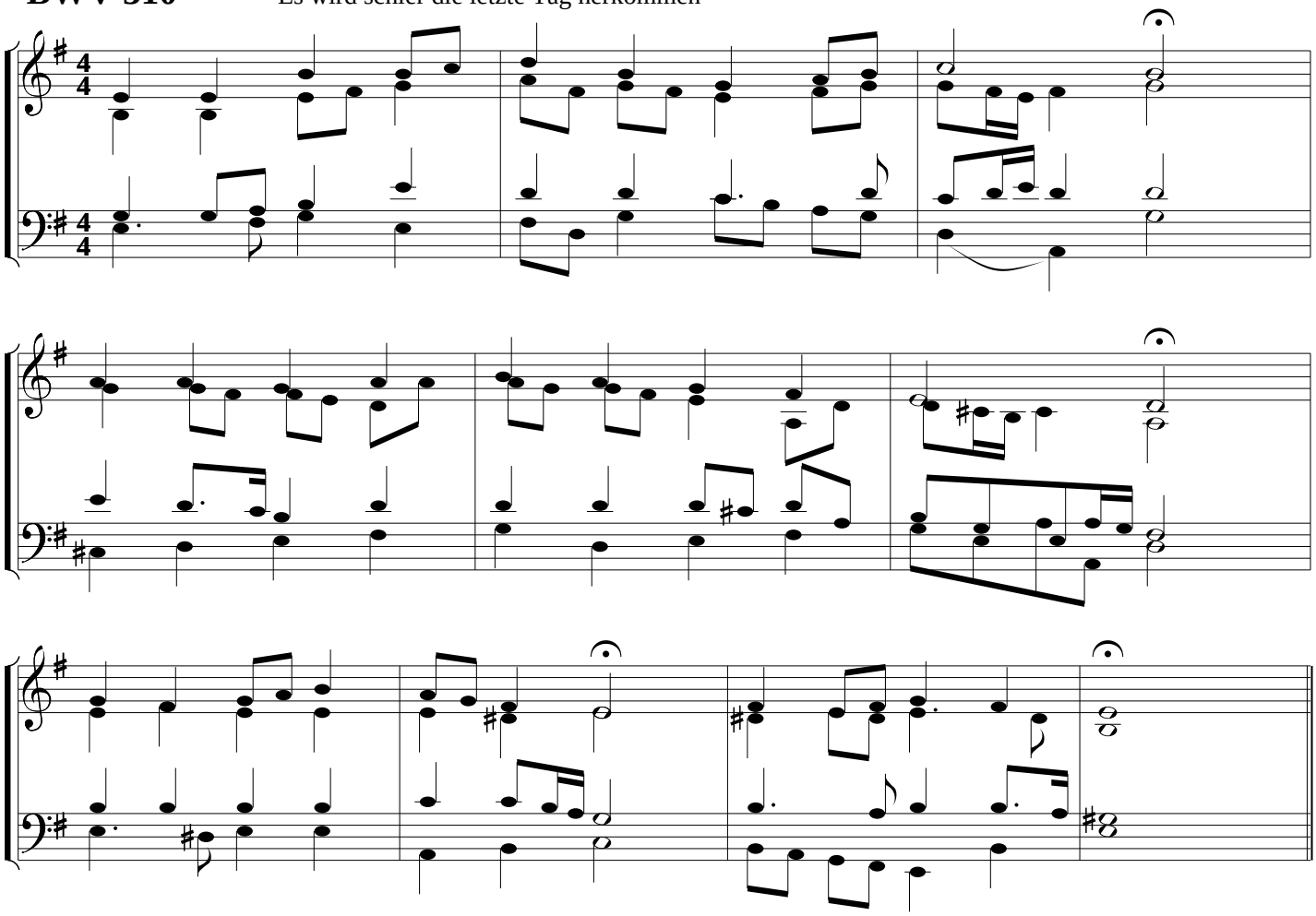
BWV 155

Es ist das Heil uns kommen her



BWV 310

Es wird schier die letzte Tag herkommen



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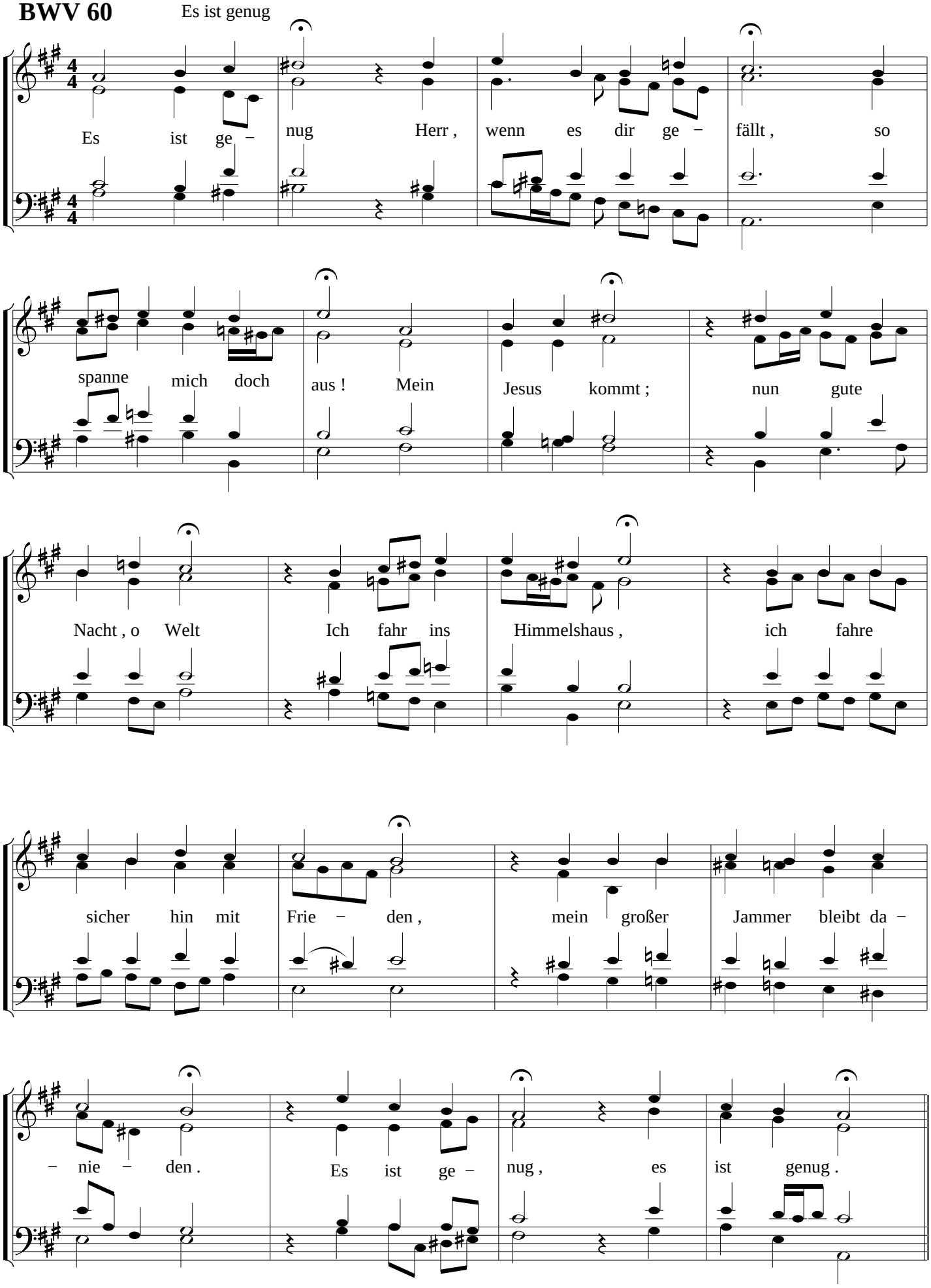
BWV 60 Es ist genug



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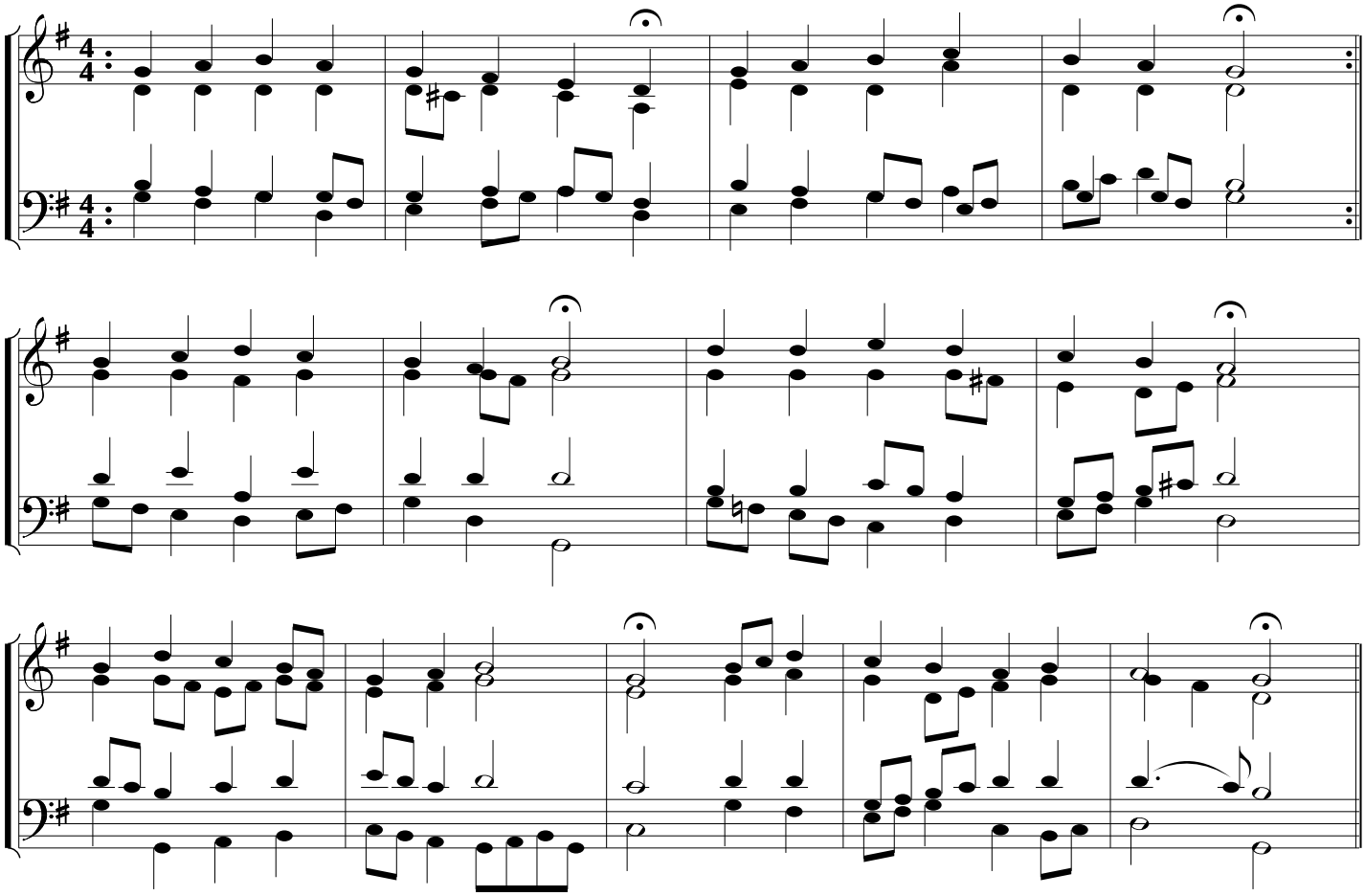
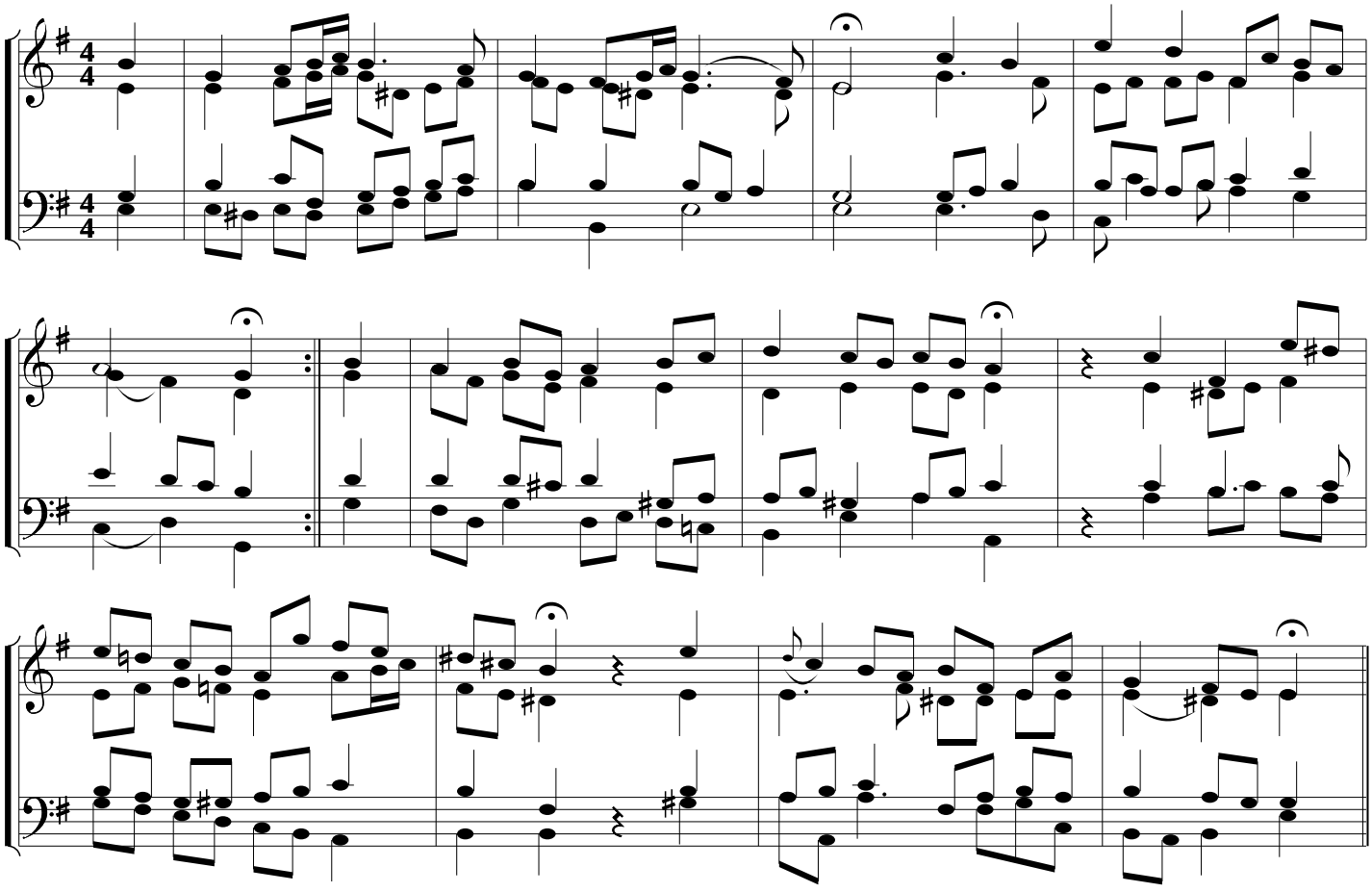
BWV 32 Freu dich sehr, o meine Seele



BWV 315 Gib dich zufrieden und sei stille



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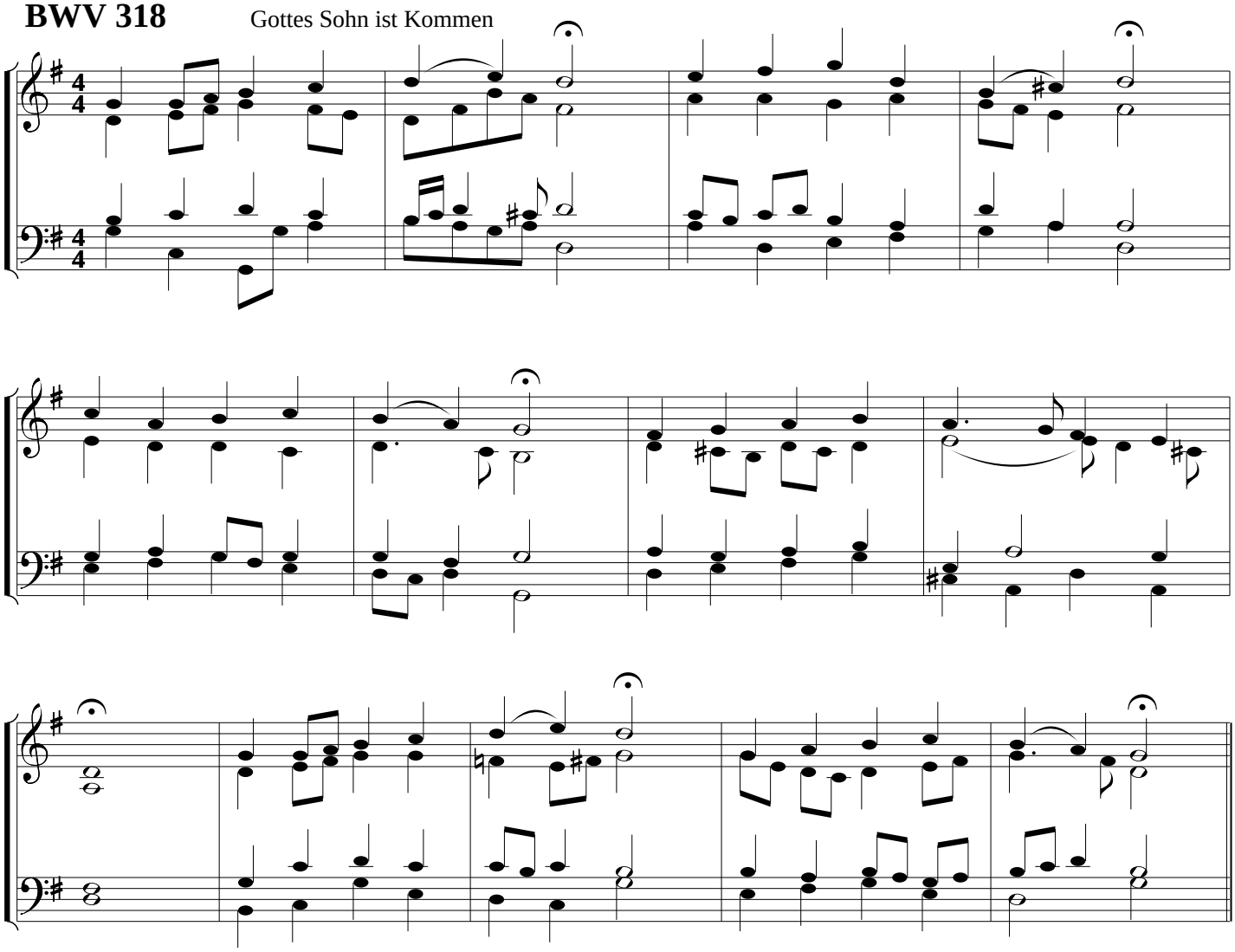
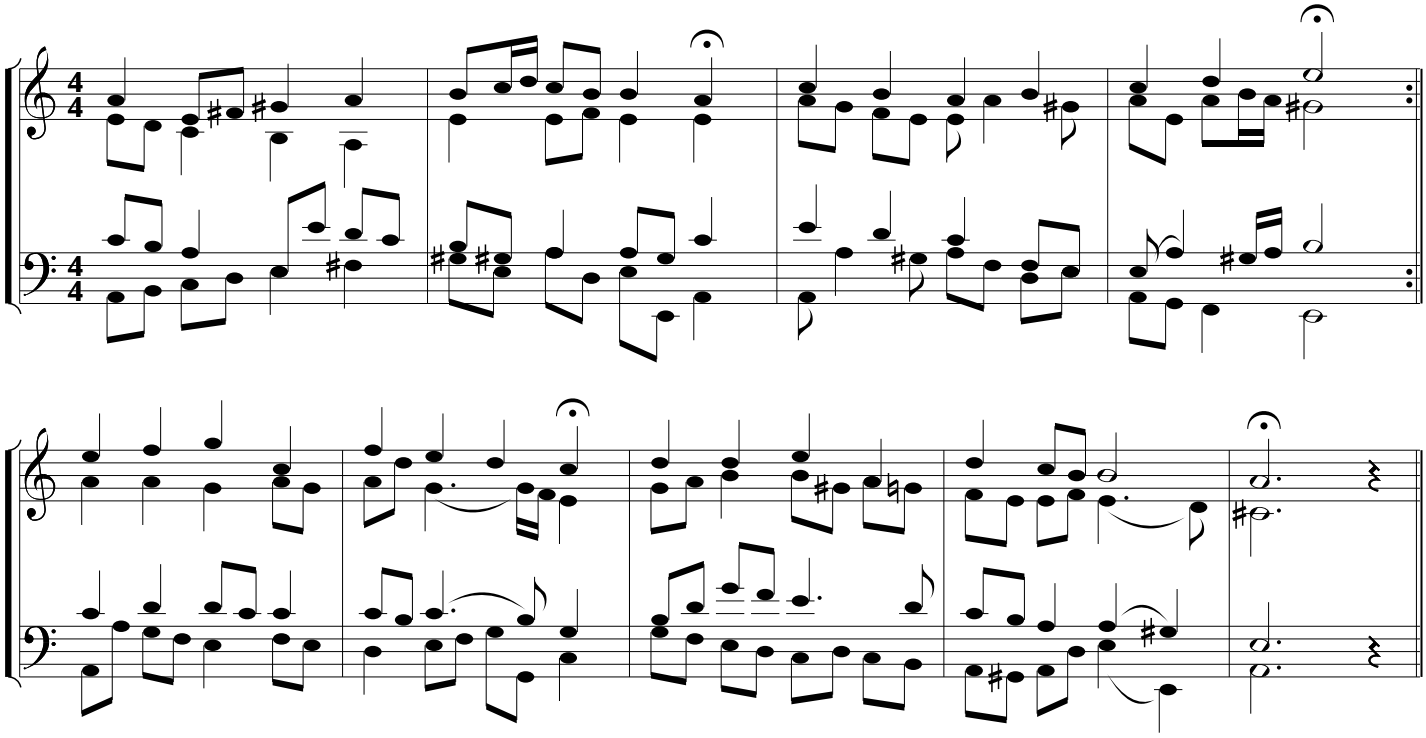
BWV 318

Gottes Sohn ist Kommen

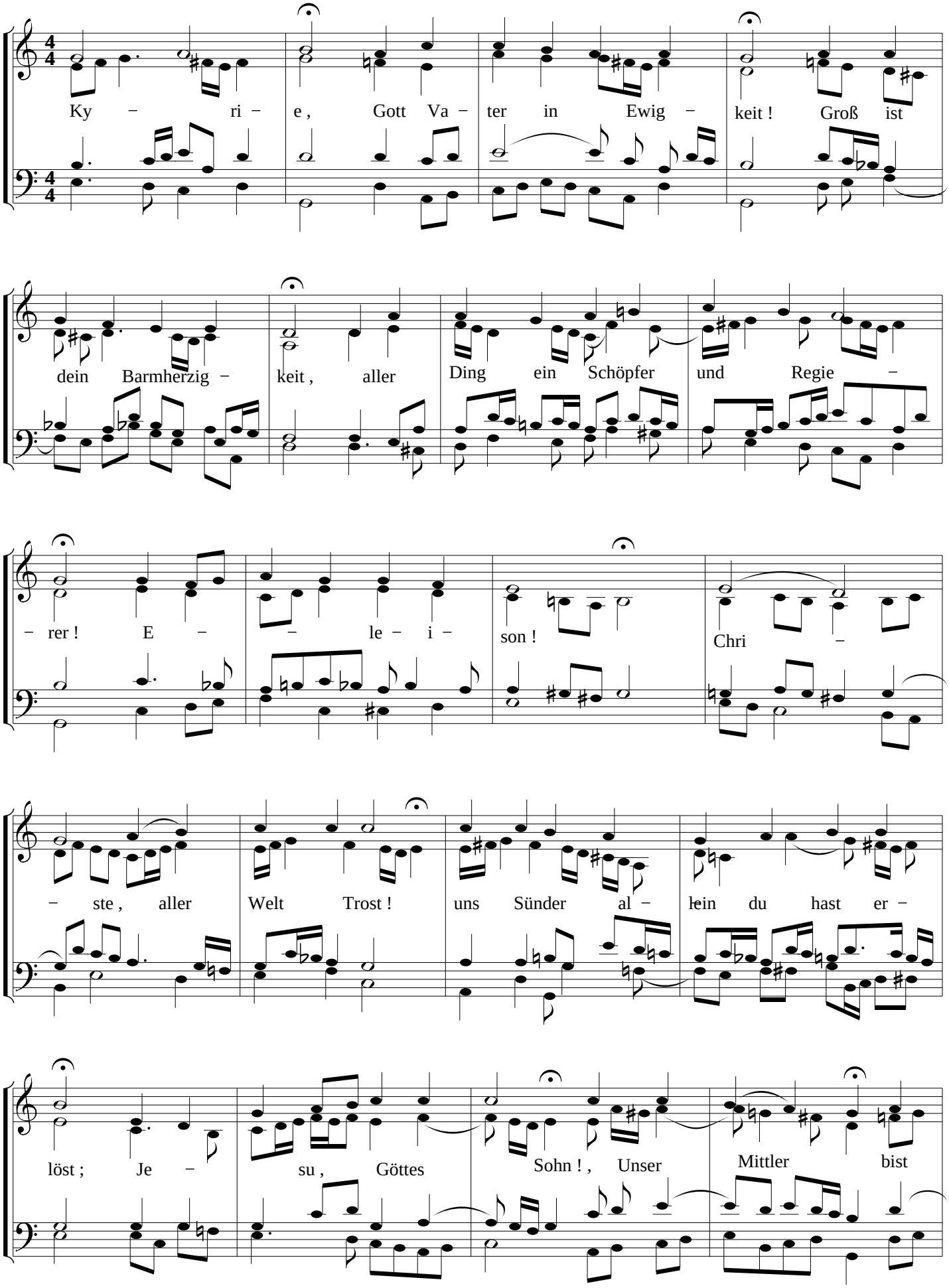


BWV 330

Herr, ich habe misgehandelt



BWV 371 Kyrie, Gott Vater in Ewigkeit



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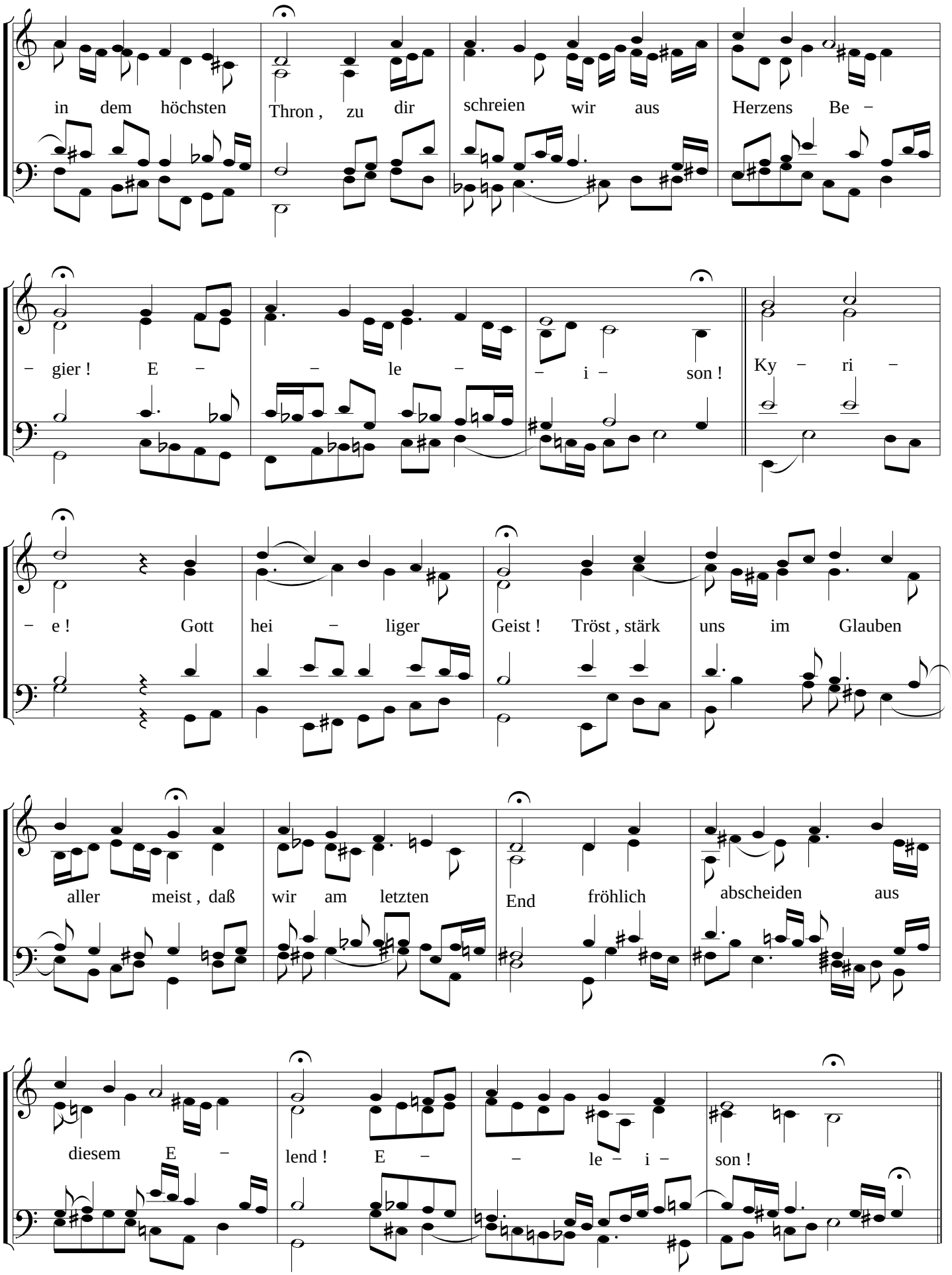
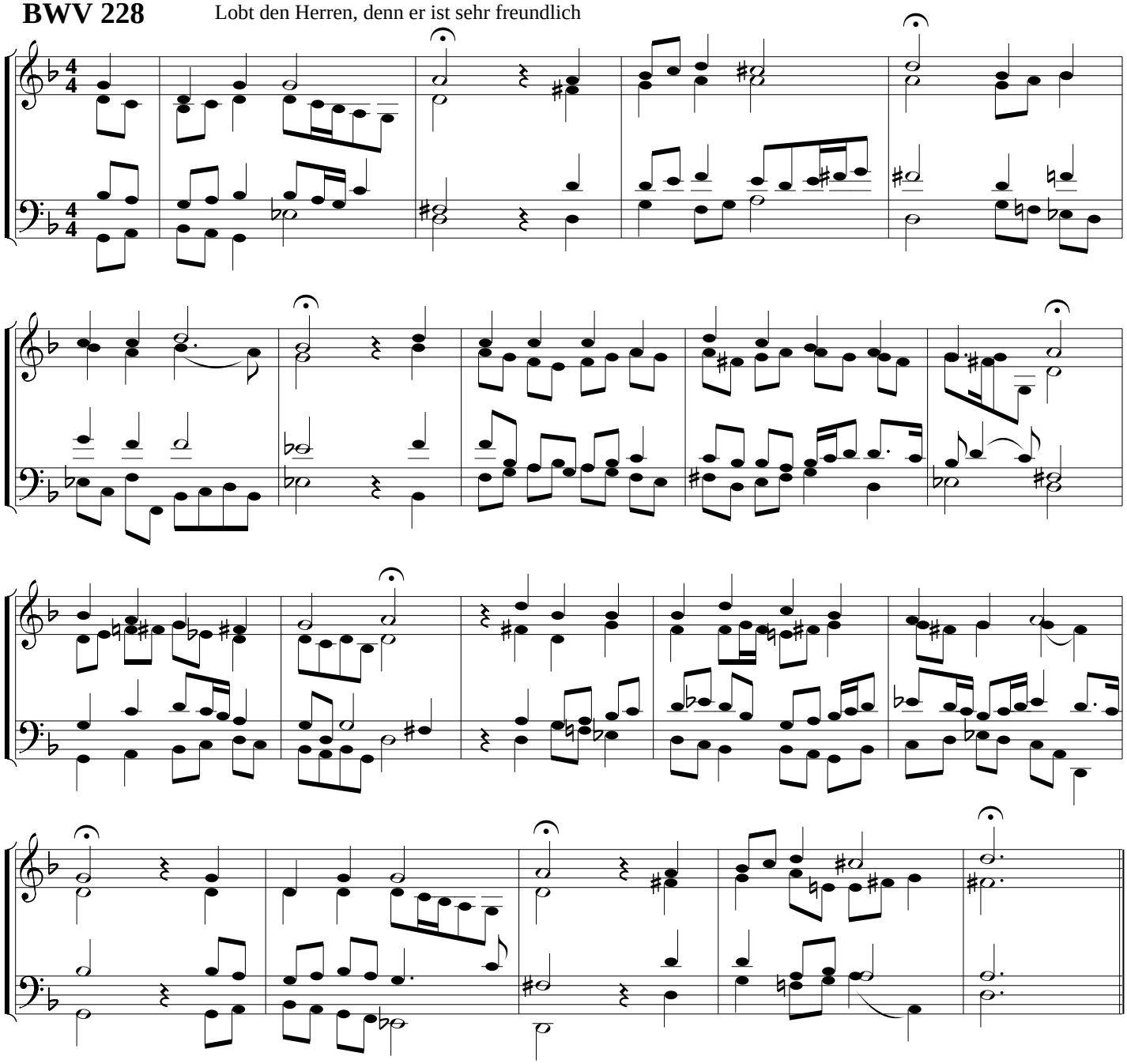

in dem höchsten Thron , zu dir schreien wir aus Herzens Be –
– gier ! E – – le – – i – son ! Ky – ri –
– e ! Gott hei – liger Geist ! Tröst , stärk uns im Glauben
aller meist , daß wir am letzten End fröhlich abscheiden aus
diesem E – lend ! E – – le – i – son !

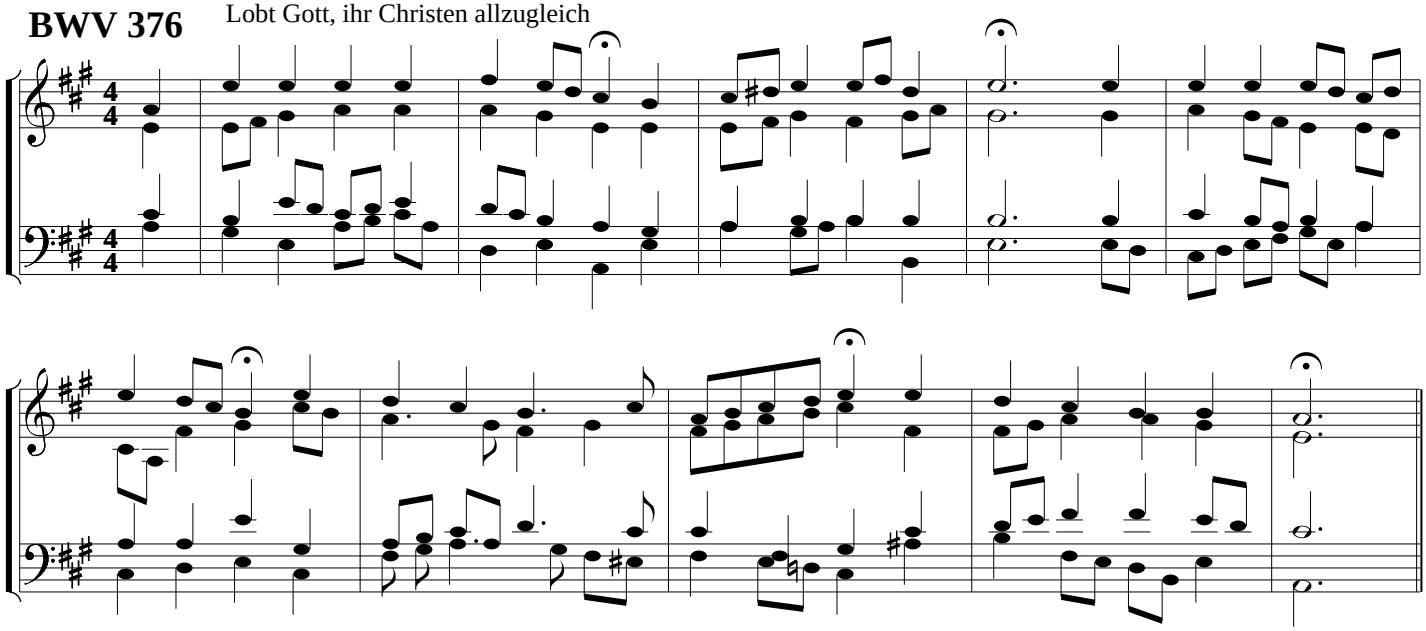
BWV 228

Lobt den Herren, denn er ist sehr freundlich



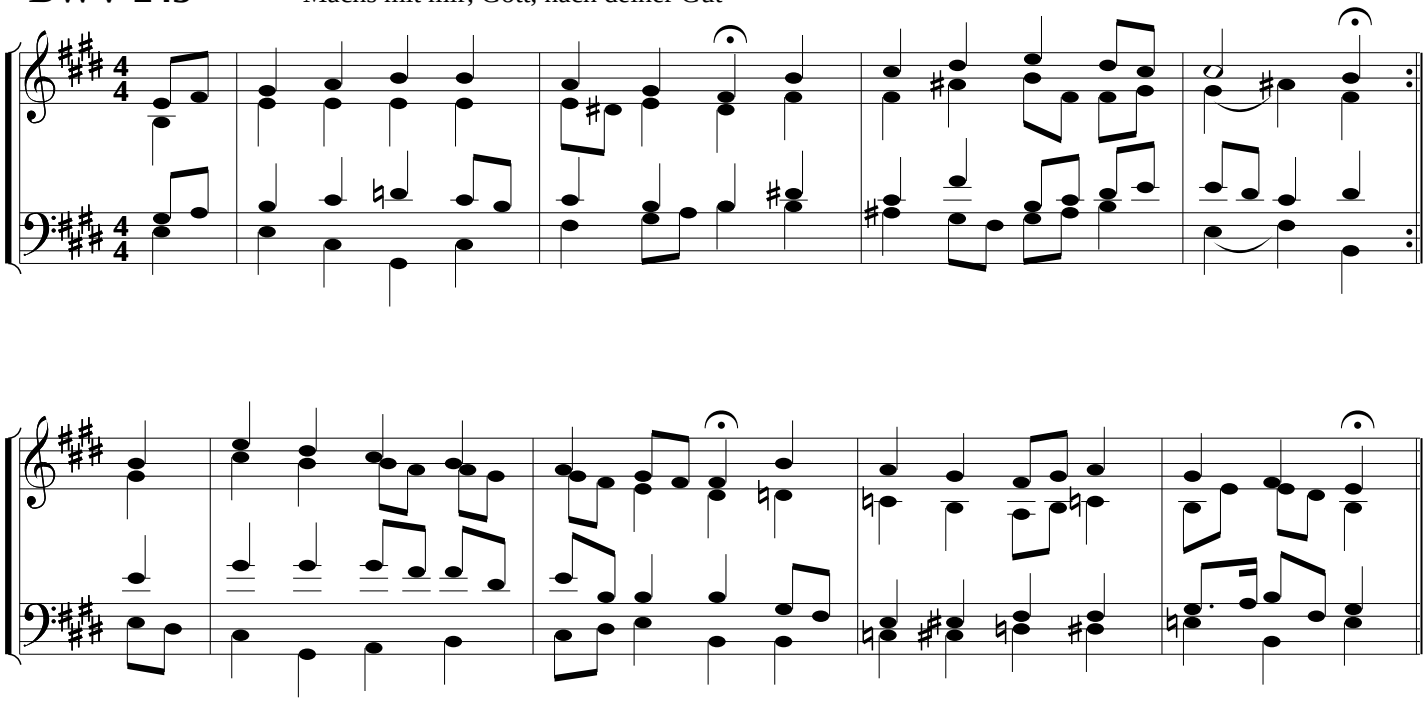
BWV 376

Lobt Gott, ihr Christen allzugleich



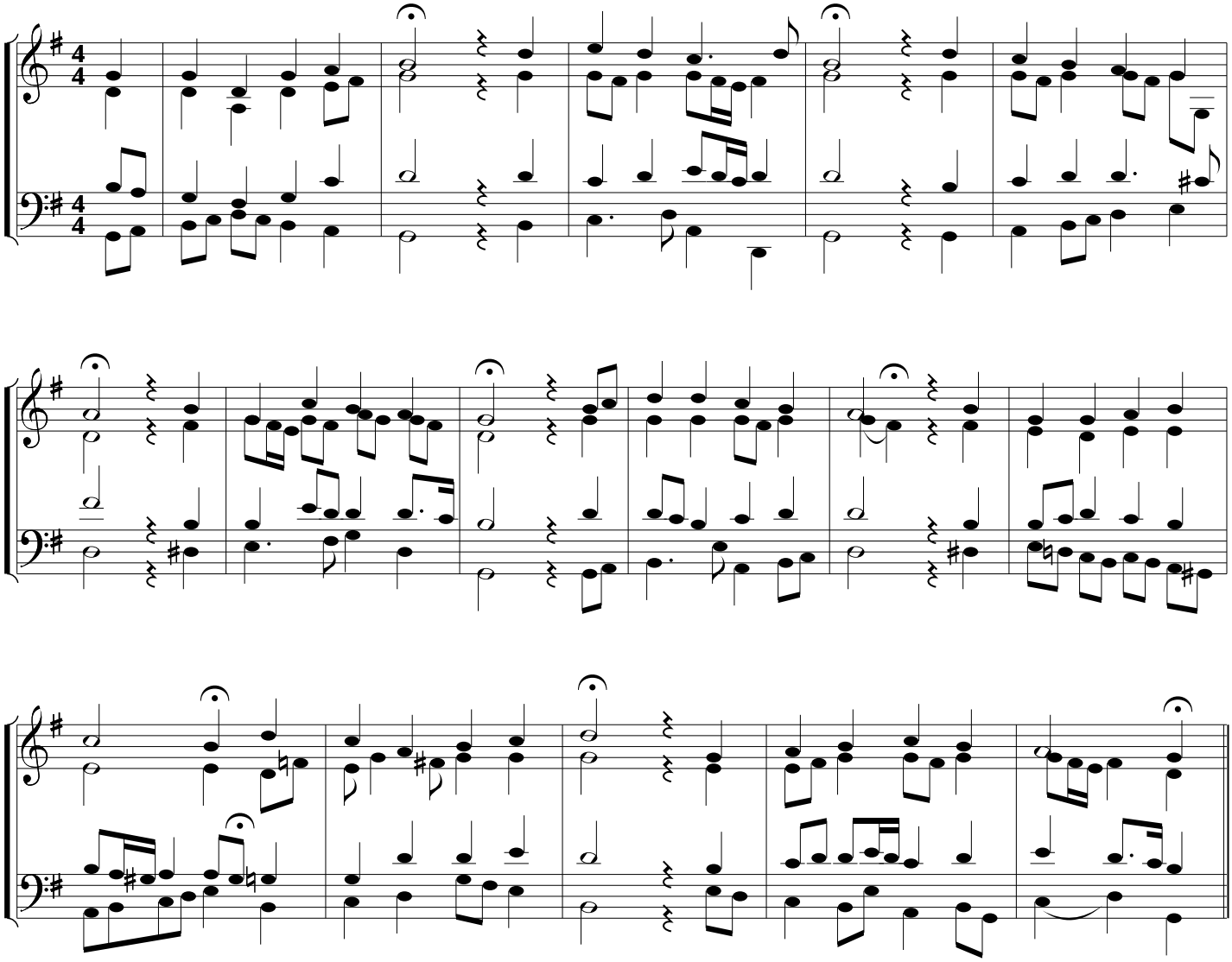
BWV 245

Machs mit mir, Gott, nach deiner Güt

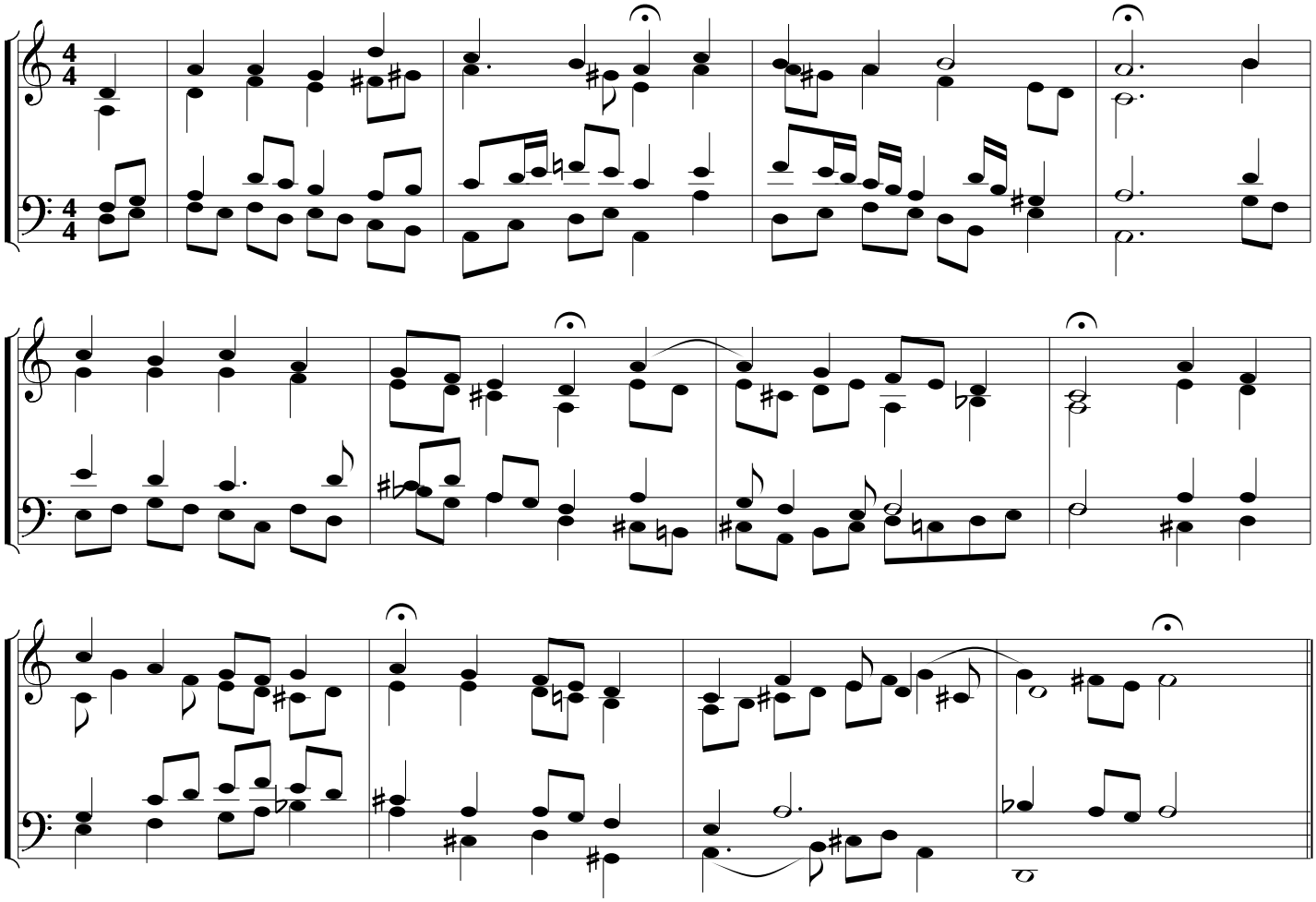


BWV 378

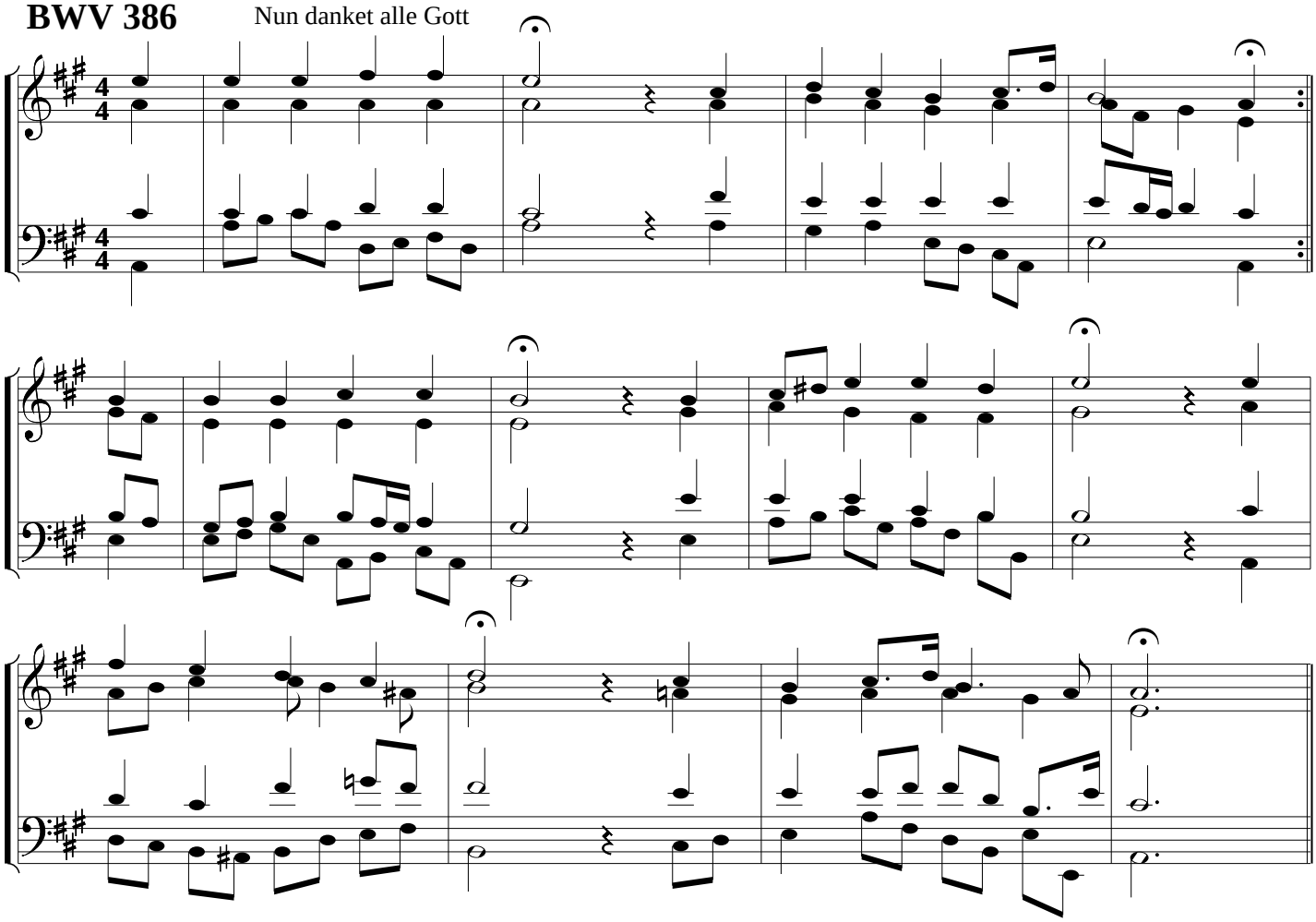
Mein Augen schließ ich jetzt



BWV 382 Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin



BWV 386 Nun danket alle Gott



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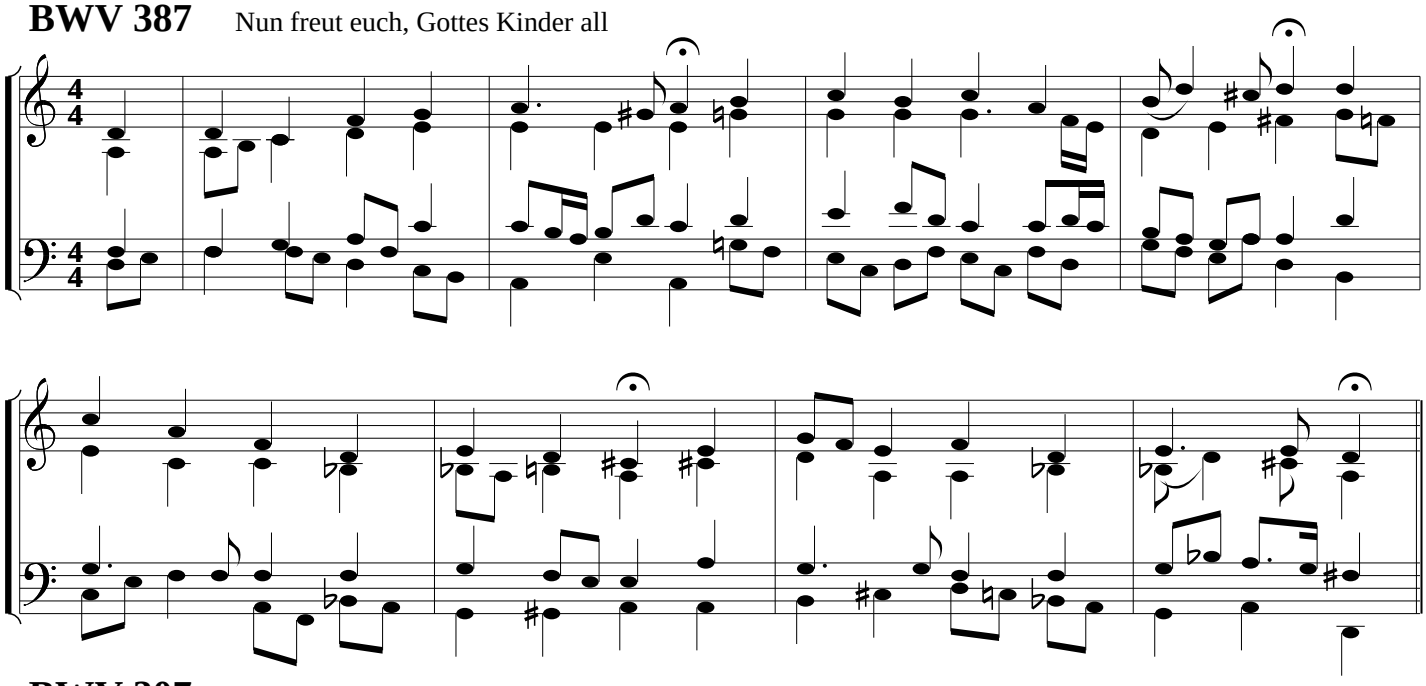
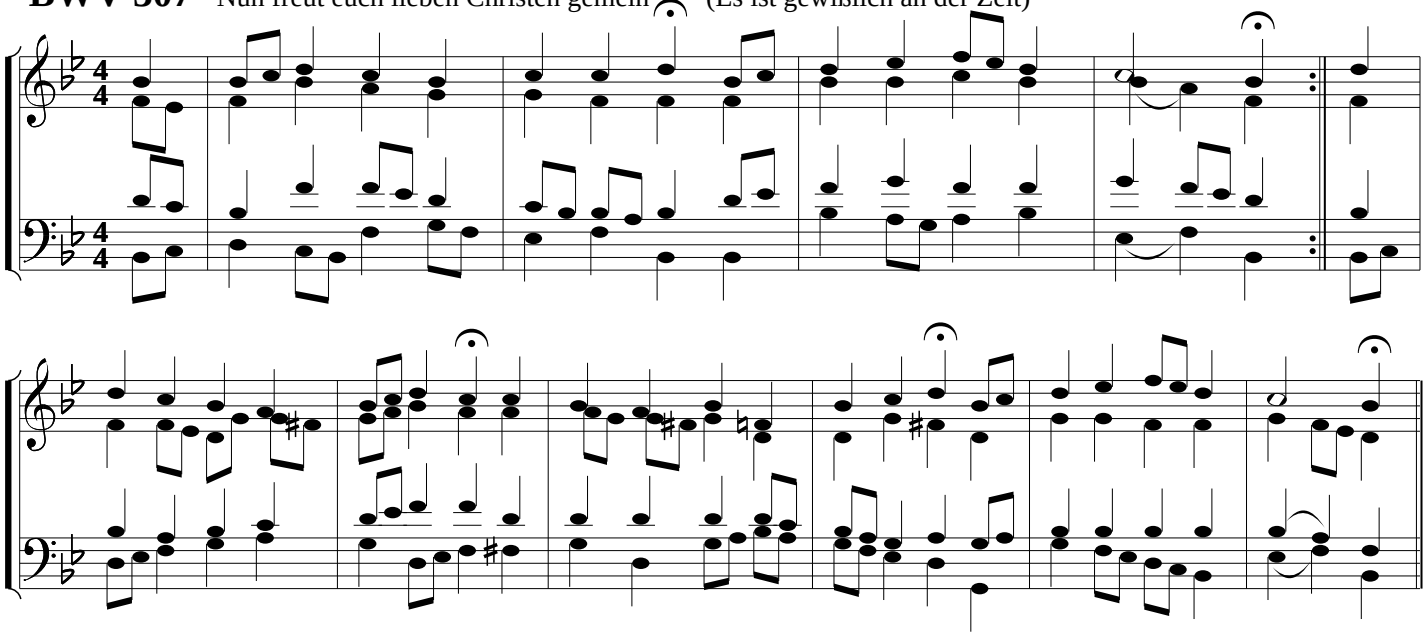
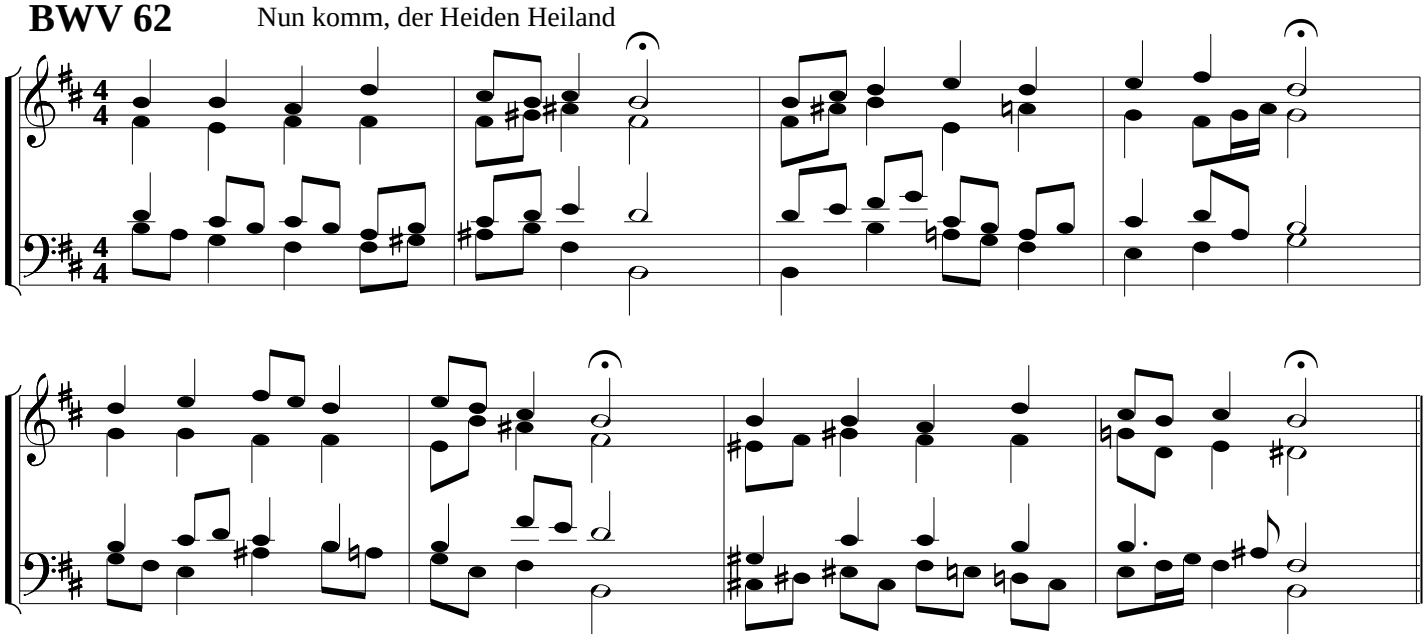
BWV 387 Nun freut euch, Gottes Kinder all



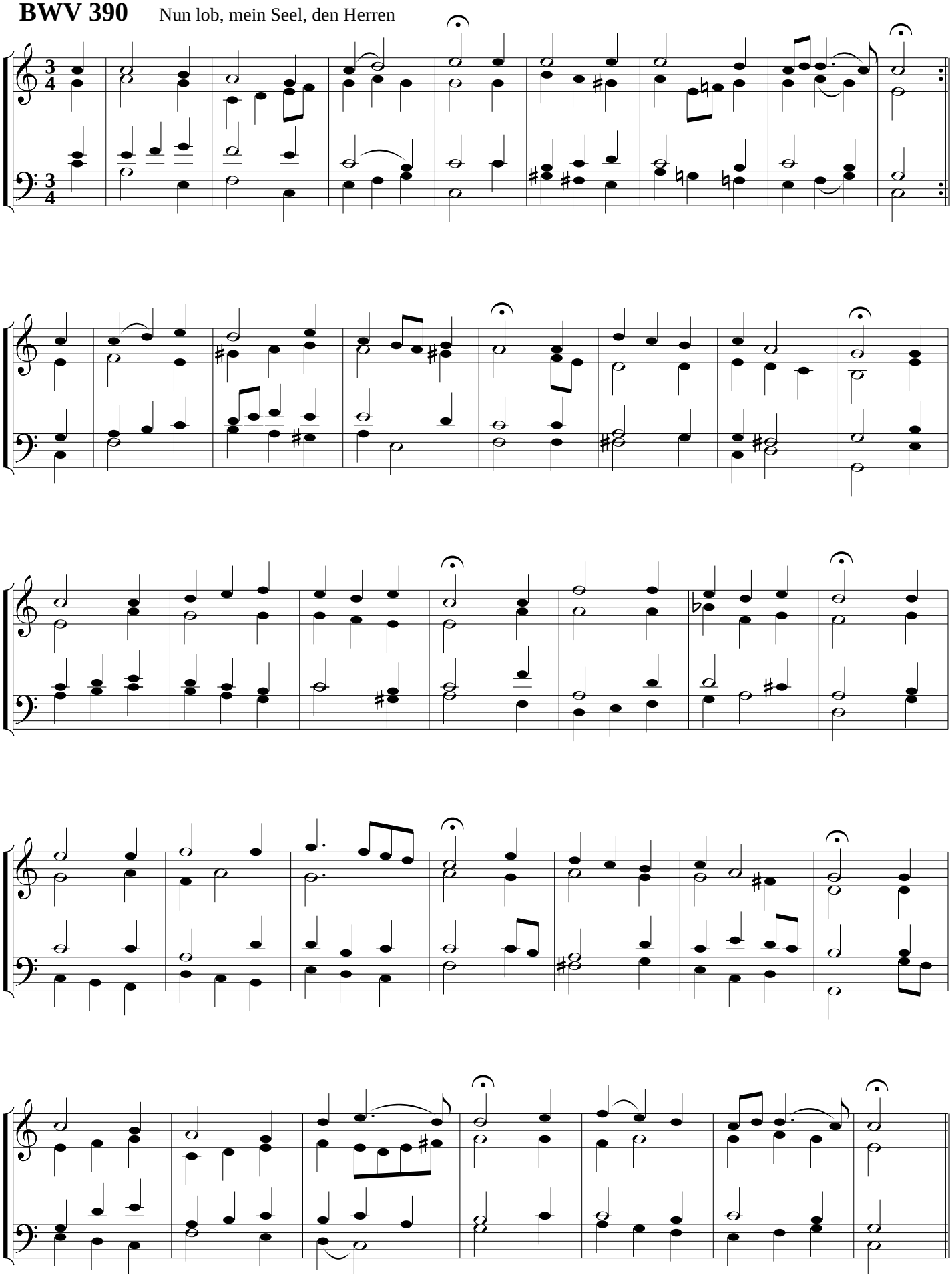
BWV 307 Nun freut euch lieben Christen gemein (Es ist gewißlich an der Zeit)



BWV 62 Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland

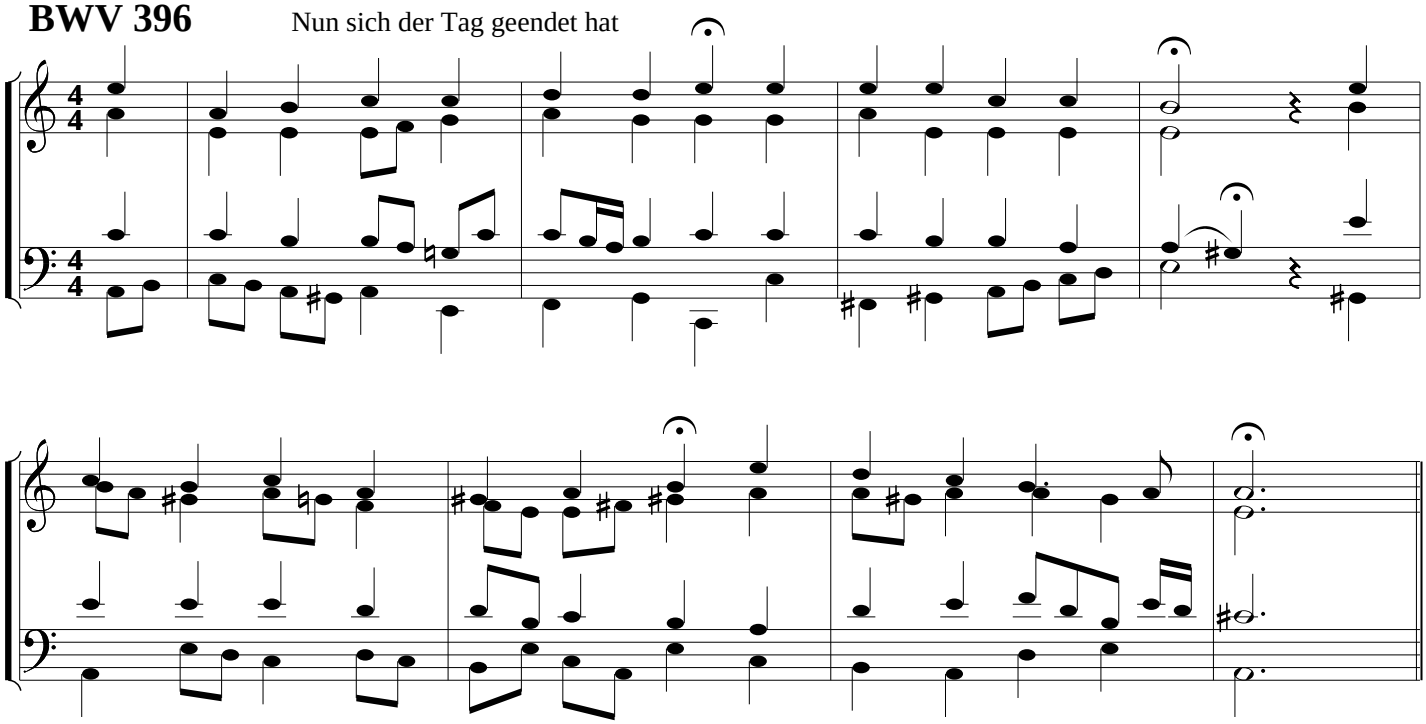


BWV 390 Nun lob, mein Seel, den Herren



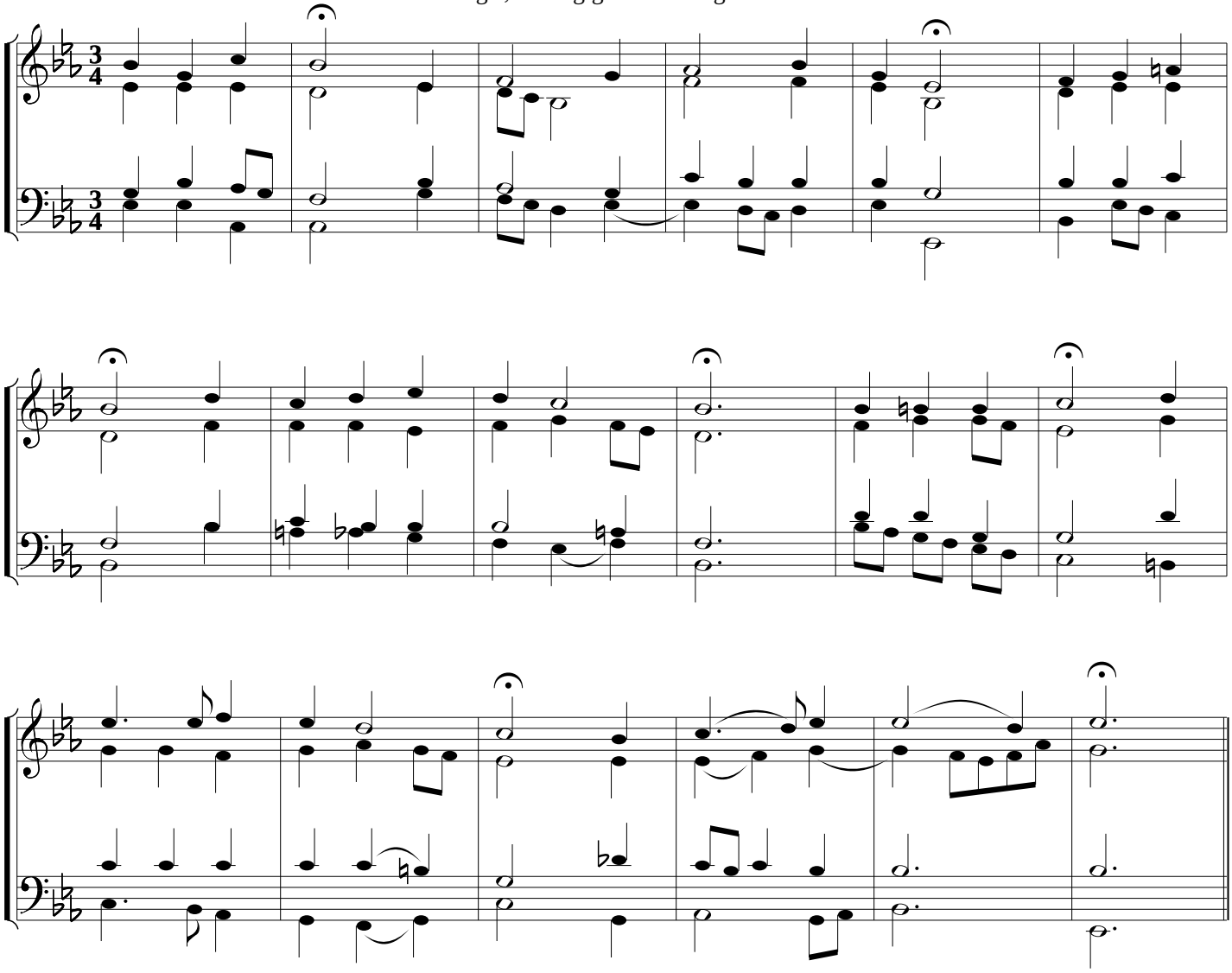
BWV 396

Nun sich der Tag geendet hat



BWV 400

O Herzensangst, o Bangigkeit und Zagen



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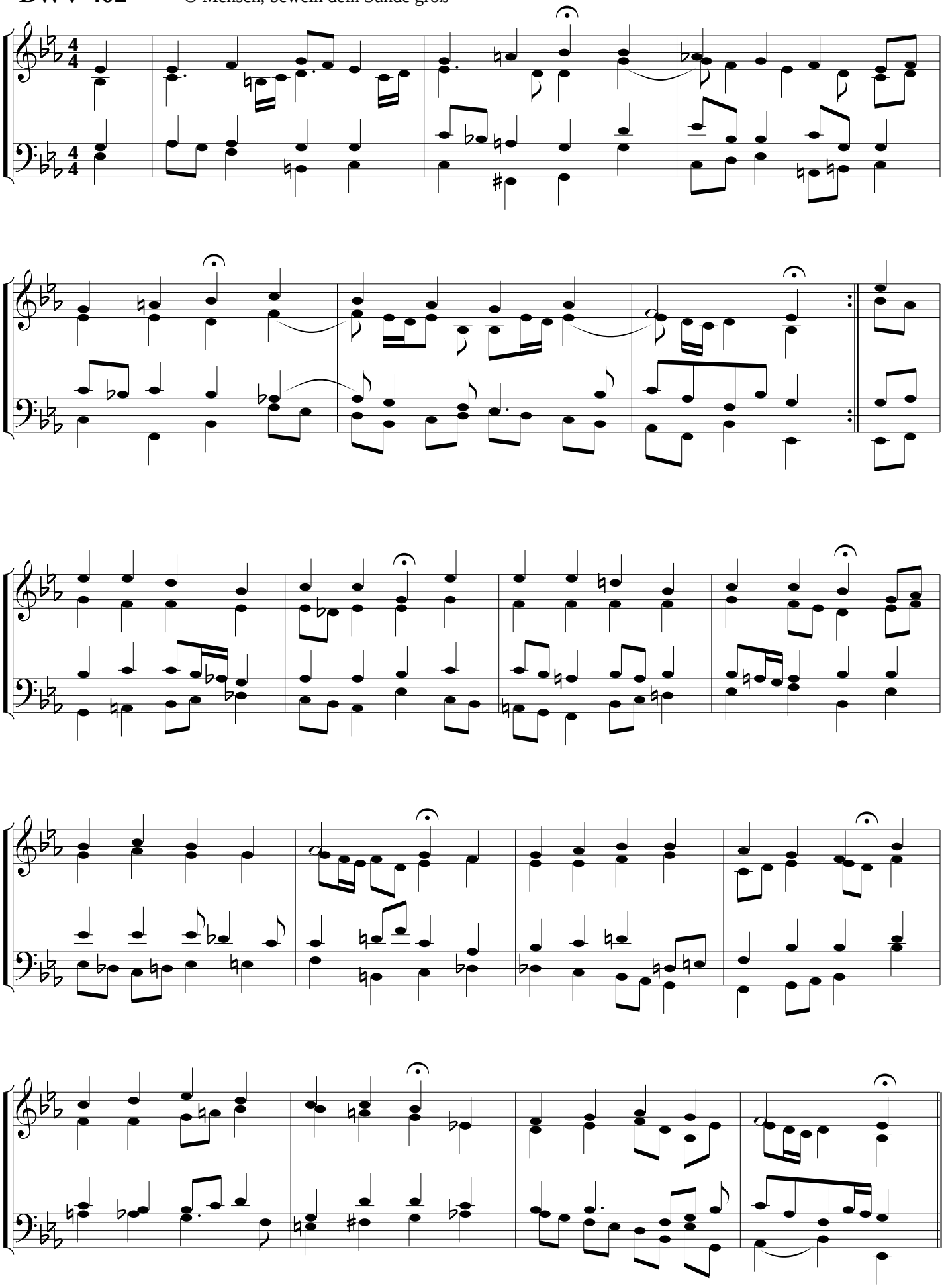
BWV 402 O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde groß



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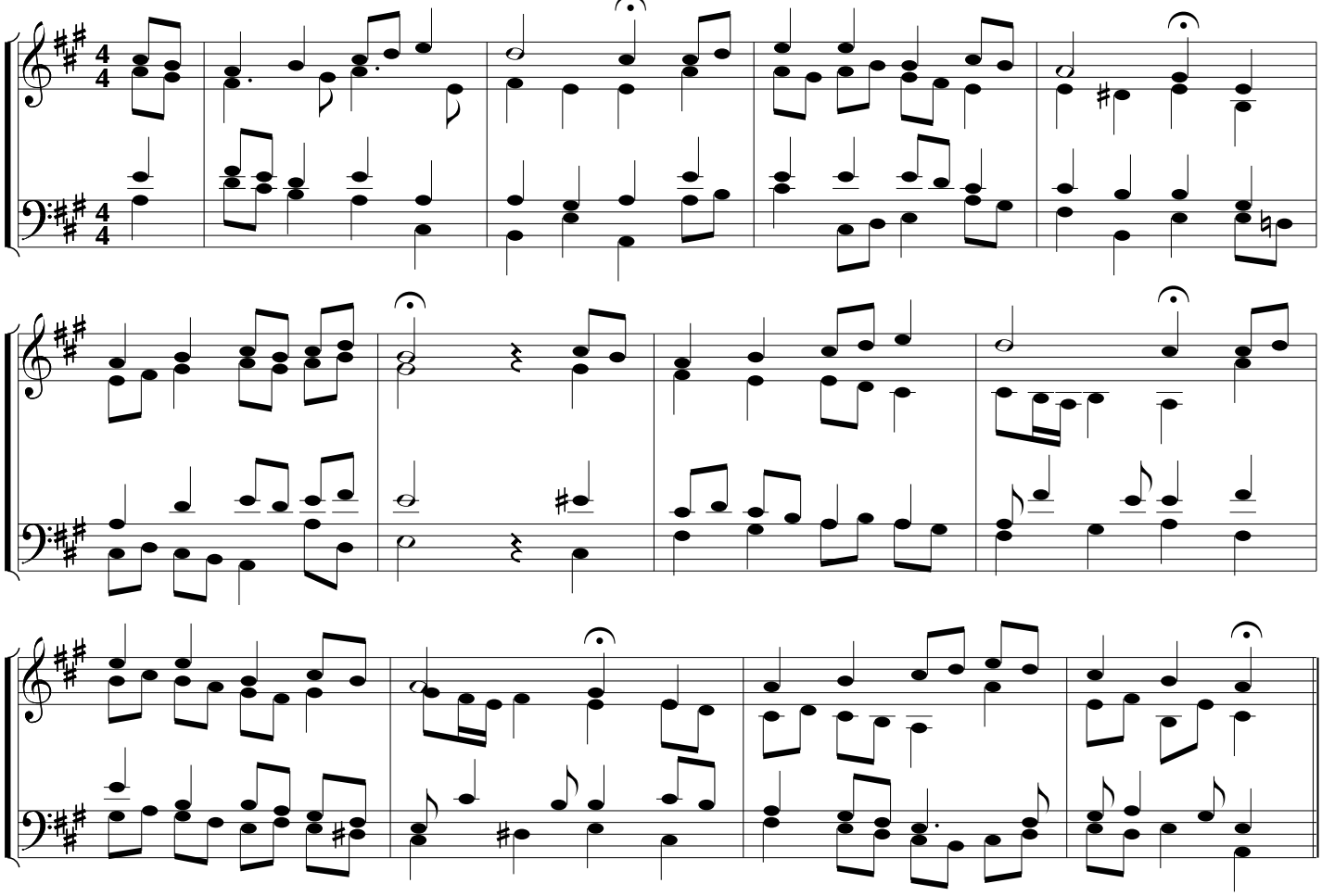
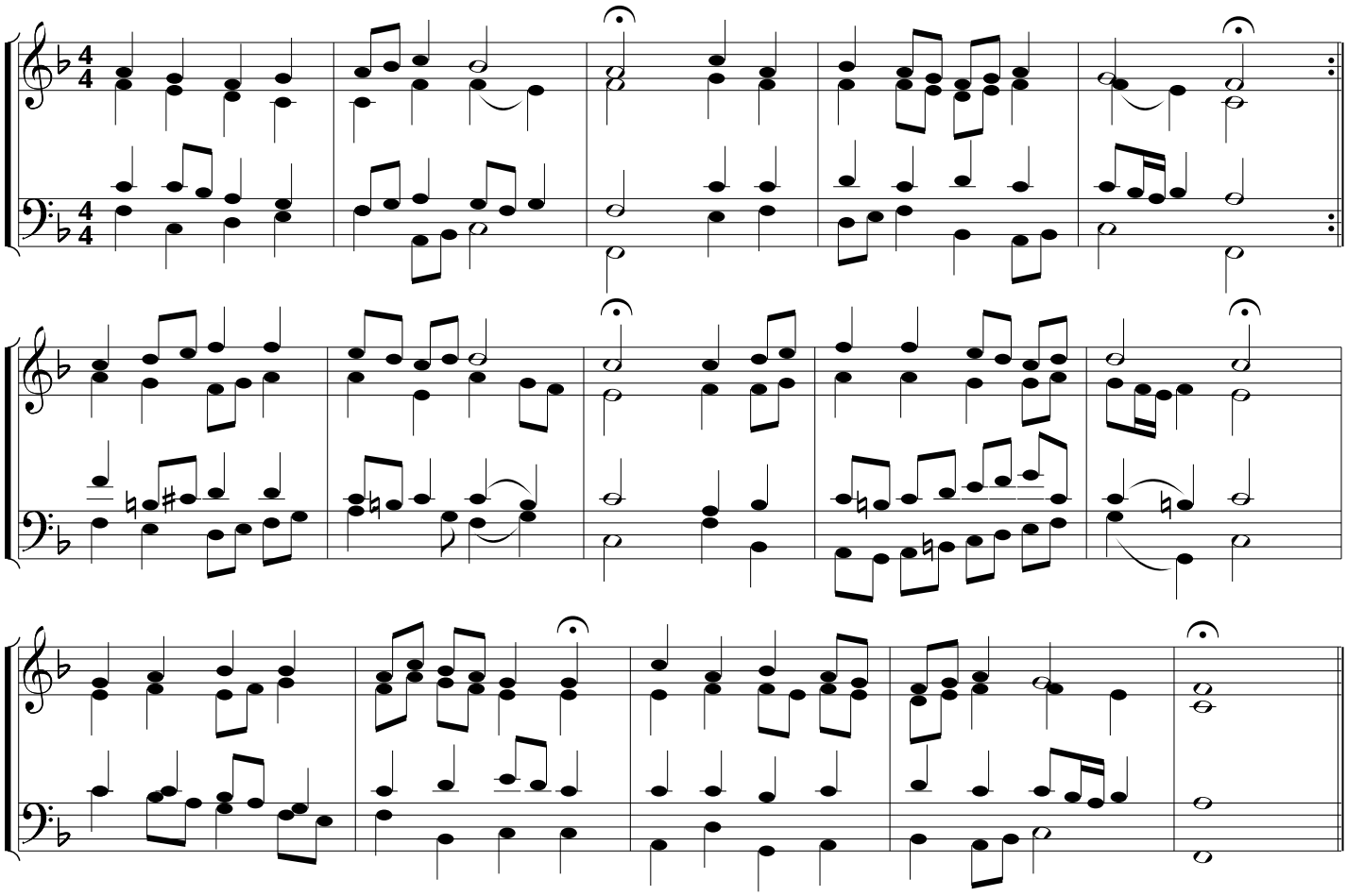
BWV 394

O Welt, ich muß dich lassen



BWV 180

Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele



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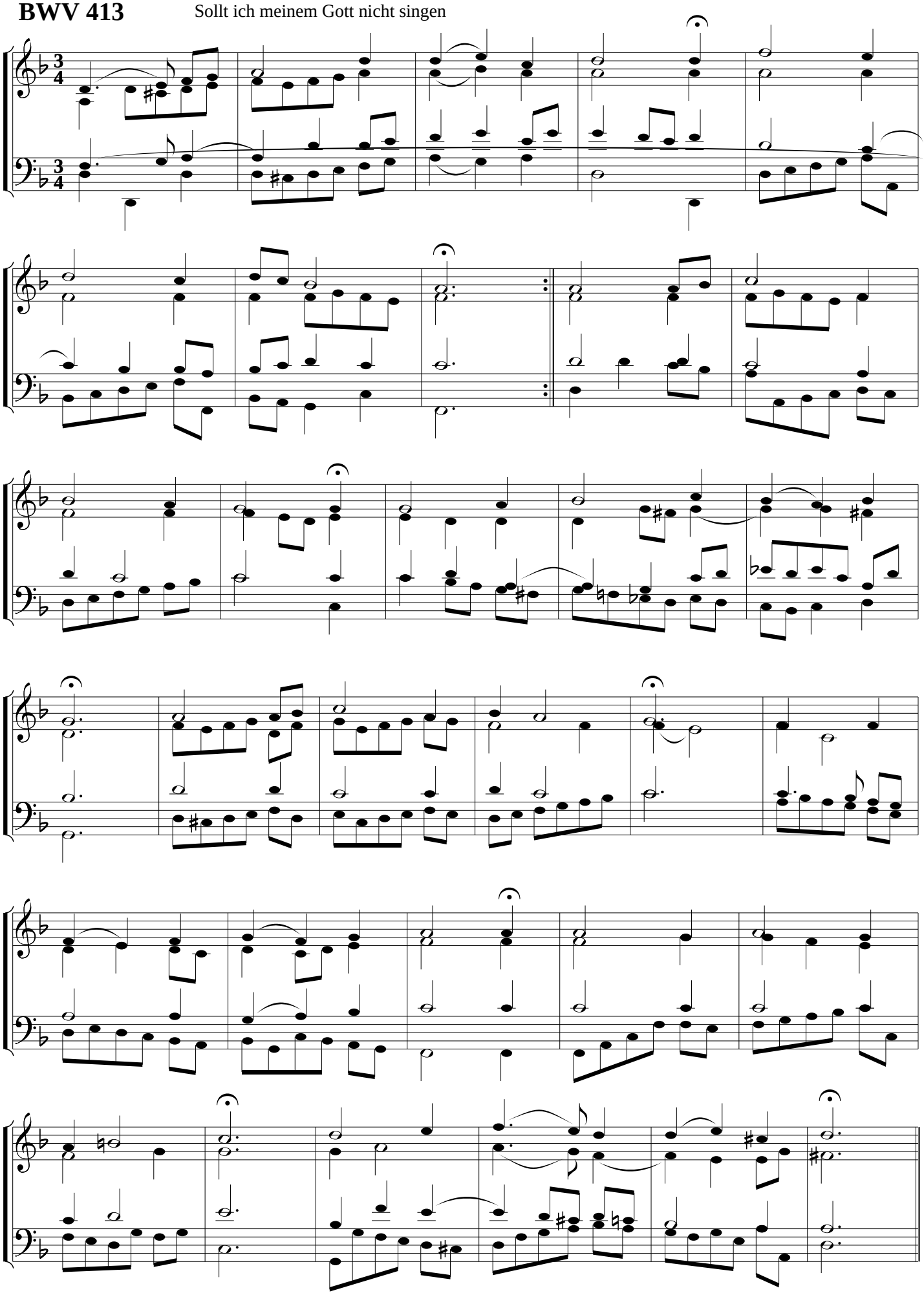
BWV 413

Sollt ich meinem Gott nicht singen



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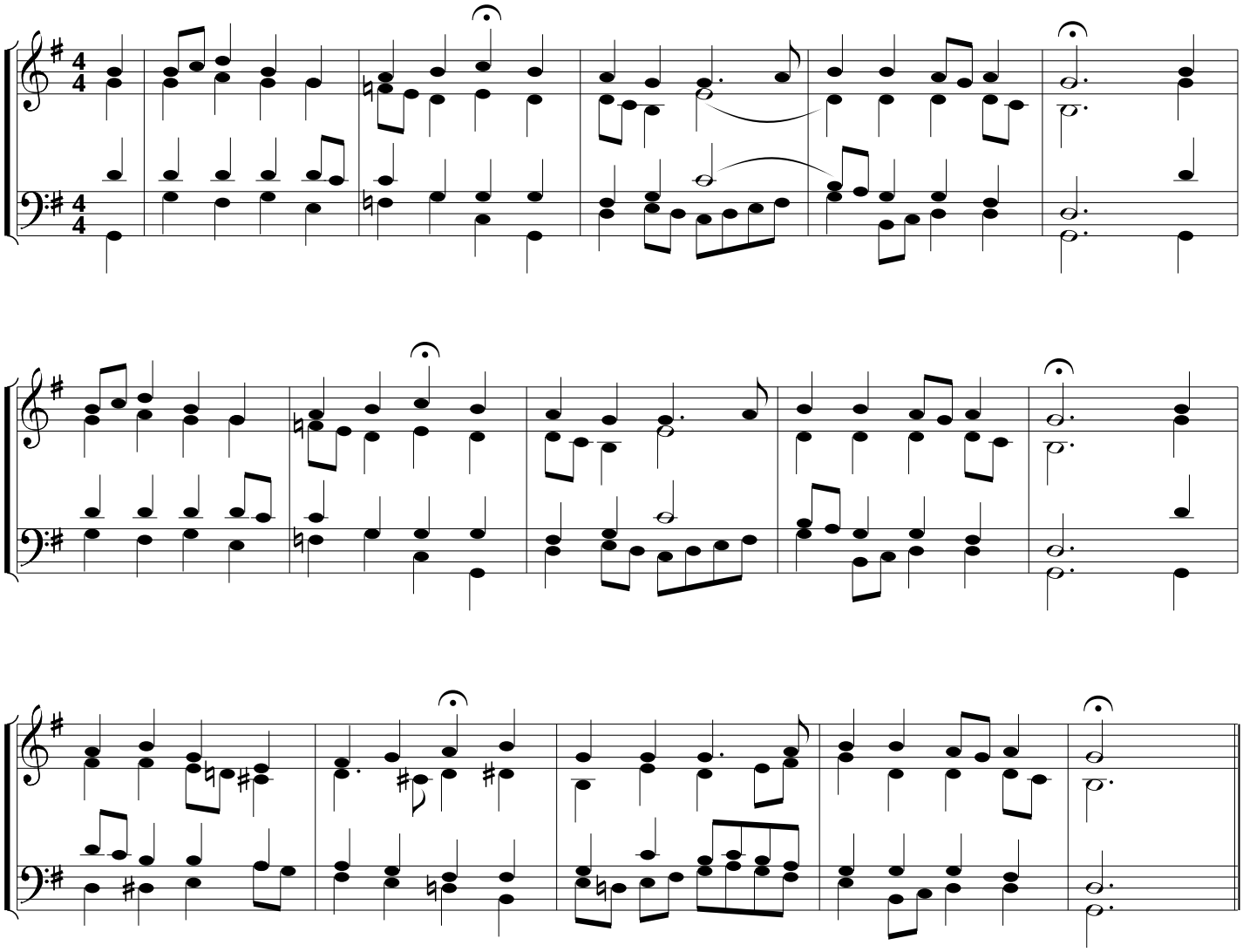
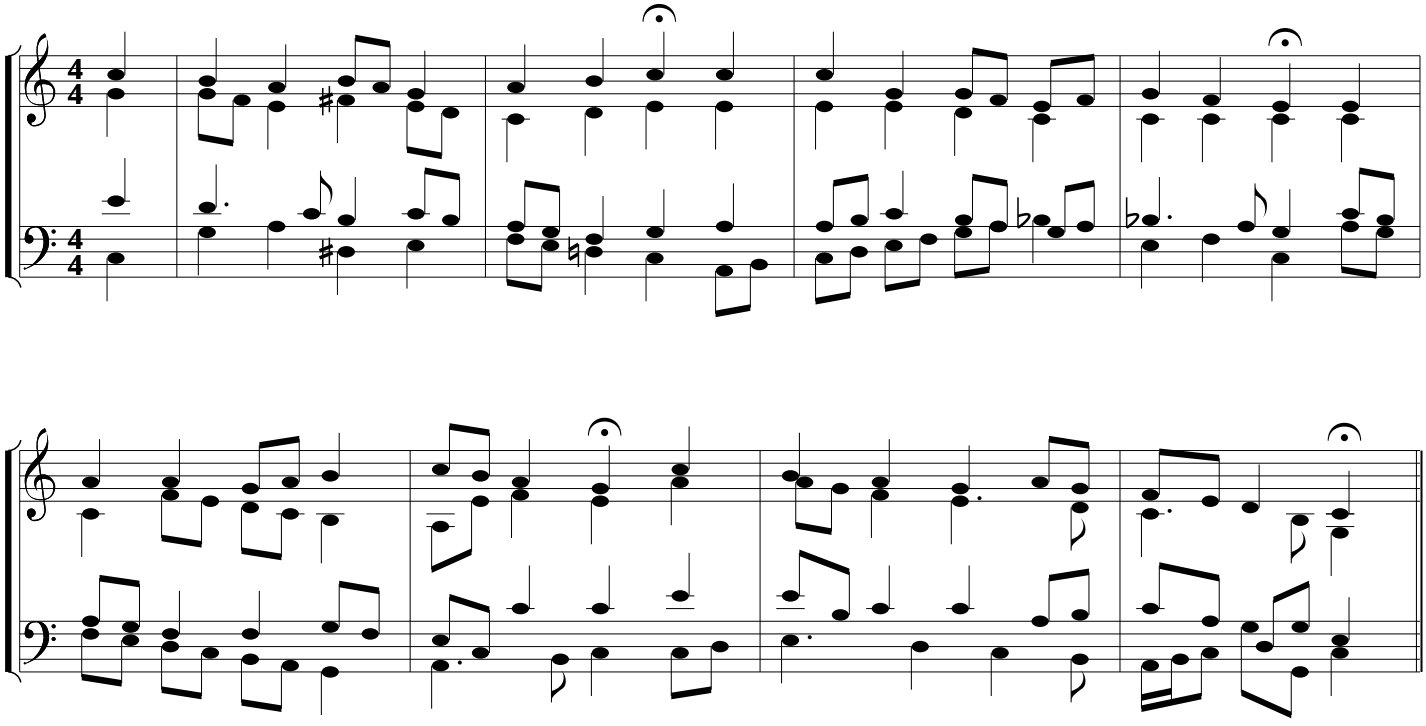
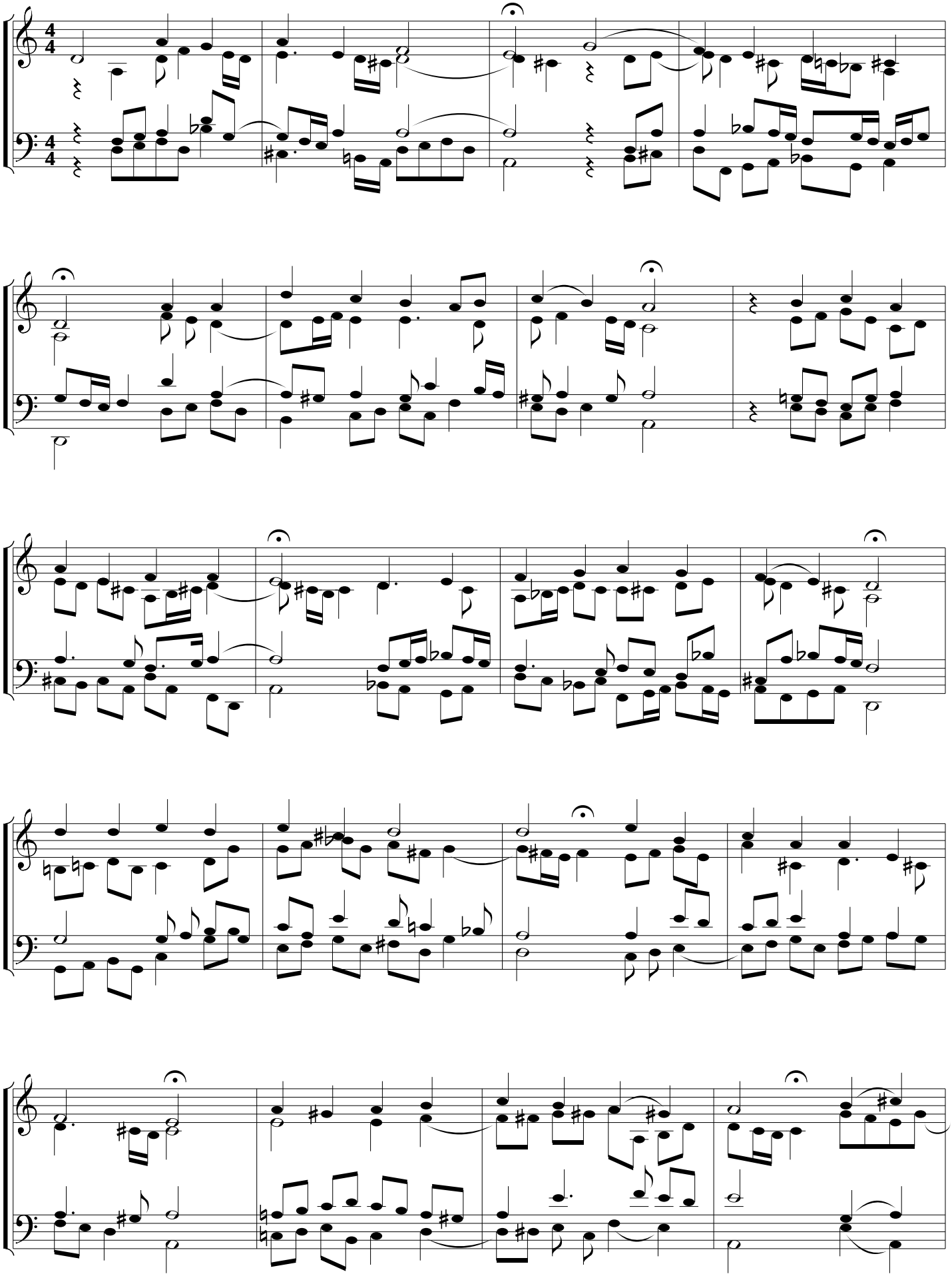
BWV 414 Uns ist ein Kindlein heut geborn



BWV 248 Von Himmel hoch da komm ich her



BWV 437 Wir glauben all an einen Gott



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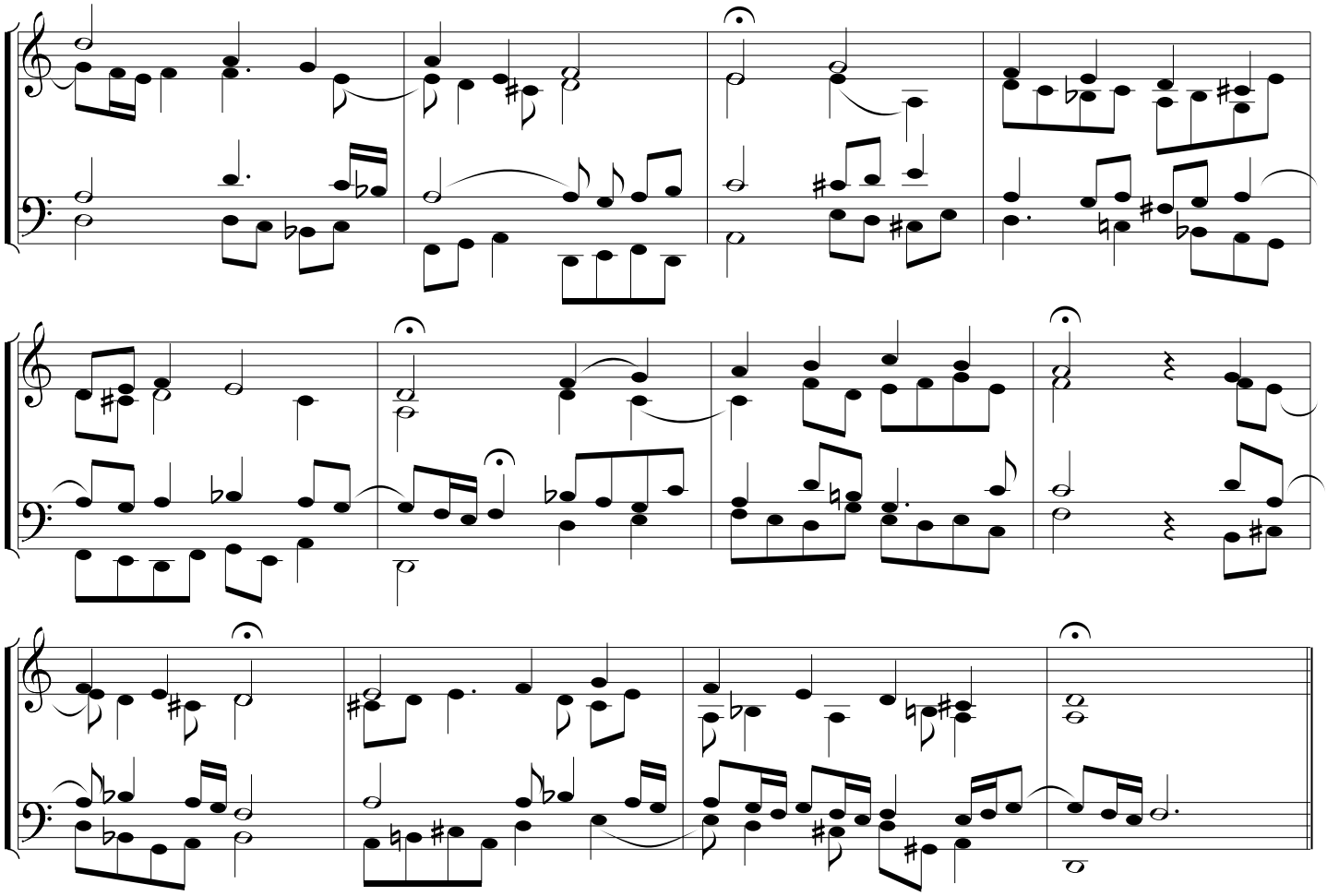
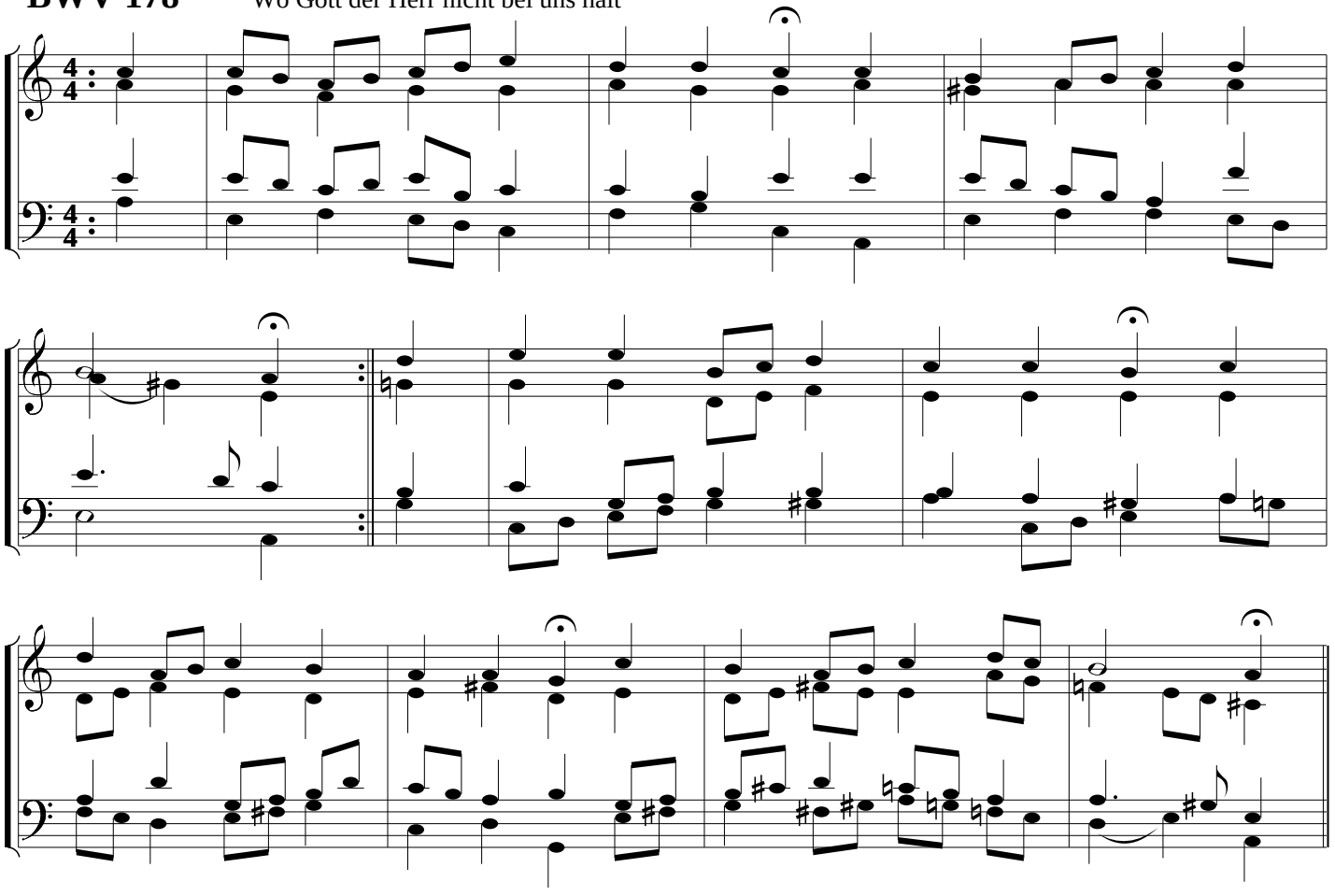


BWV 178 Wo Gott der Herr nicht bei uns hält



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Peter Billam was born in London in 1948, studied piano, and lived in Switzerland from 1973 to 1983, where he studied composition, classical guitar, flute and voice, worked as Musical Director of the *Théâtre Populaire Romand*, and as recording engineer, record producer and computer programmer. He moved to Tasmania in 1983, lectured in composition at the Conservatorium, conducted recorder ensembles and choirs, studied recorder, voice and harpsichord. He founded **www.pjb.com.au**, becoming the first composer to sell scores on-line, with on-line delivery, taking scores from Composer to Performer in one immediate step. *Www.pjb.com.au* offers a new approach to music publishing. These pieces are **written to be read, made to be played !**

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Arrangements include: By J. S. Bach: *Trio BWV 655*, piano and flute; *Vor deinen Thron BWV 668*, piano; *Fugue in F minor BWV 689*, SATB recorders; *Flute Sonata BWV 1031* transposed into G major for alto recorder and keyboard; *Flute Sonata BWV 1032* completed by Peter Billam for flute and keyboard, also in C major for alto recorder, and in G major for descant; *Ricercare a 3, from the Musikalisches Opfer* for keyboard; *Ricercare a 6*, for sSATBG recorders, or strings, or two keyboards; *Fuga Canonica in Epidiapente* for keyboard and melody instrument; from the *Art of Fugue*: *Contrapuncti 1* and *4* for keyboard, and *Contrapunctus 14* as completed by D. F. Tovey, for keyboard, or for SATB recorders, or for strings; *Passacaglia and Fugue in c* for piano four hands; *Chorales with Descant* for melody instrument and piano; *Cello Suites I*, *II* and *III* for flute or alto recorder, *Forty Chorales* for piano, *Der Geist hilft* for SATB-SATB recorders. By Johannes Brahms: *Fugue in Ab minor for organ*, for SATB recorders and gamba, in A minor; *Choralvorspiele for organ* with previous settings by Isaac, Bach, Praetorius, recorders. By Franz Schubert: *Four Songs*, voice and guitar; *Schubert Dances*, recorders and guitar, *Schubert Dances*, piano 4 hands. By G. F. Händel: *Concerto Grosso in A minor* op 6 no 4, harpsichord and recorders; *Recorder Sonata in Bb* no 5, in G for tenor recorder and keyboard. By other composers: *Claudio Monteverdi, Ecco Mormorar l'Onde*, SSATB recorders; *Twelve Italian Songs*, voice and guitar; *John Wilbye, Draw on sweet Night*, SSATTB recorders, and for flute choir; *Telemann, Twelve Flute Fantasias*, recorder; *John Carr, Divisions on an Italian Ground*, flute or recorder and guitar; *Fourteen Folk Dance Tunes*, recorder and guitar; *Easy Classical Pieces*, Bb trumpet and piano.

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