Canons of the Musical Offering

Leipzig 1747

by

Johann Sebastian Bach

1685–1750

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Alberto Gomez Gomez

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Index to Bach's Musical Offering Canons

1. Crab Canon (SS recorders in F minor) ..... p. 1
1. Crab Canon (AT recorders in G minor) ..... p. 2
1. Crab Canon (TB recorders in D minor) ..... p. 3
2. Unison Canon for two Violins ..... p. 4
3. Acompanied Two-part Mirror Canon ..... p. 5
4. Augmented Two-part Mirror Canon ..... p. 6
4. Augmented Two-part Mirror Canon (SAT recorders) ..... p. 8
4. Augmented Two-part Mirror Canon (T rec. and pno.) ..... p. 10
5. Modulating Canon at the 5th Above (ATB recorders) ..... p. 12
5. Modulating Canon at the 5th Above (ATB saxophones) ..... p. 14
6. Canonic Fugue at the 5th Above (Original) ..... p. 16
6. Canonic Fugue at the 5th Above (Flute part) ..... p. 19
6. Canonic Fugue at the 5th Above (Violin part) ..... p. 20
6. Canonic Fugue at the 5th Above (Bass part) ..... p. 21
6. Canonic Fugue at the 5th Above (Flute and keyboard in D minor) ..... p. 22
6. Canonic Fugue at the 5th Above (Flute part in D minor) ..... p. 25
6. Canonic Fugue at the 5th Above (Violin part in D minor) ..... p. 26
6. Canonic Fugue at the 5th Above (Bass part in D minor) ..... p. 27
6. Canonic Fugue at the 5th Above (Keyboard minus Flute in D minor) ..... p. 28
6. Canonic Fugue at the 5th Above (A recorder and keyboard) ..... p. 30
6. Canonic Fugue at the 5th Above (Tenor recorder and keyboard) ..... p. 33
6. Canonic Fugue at the 5th Above (Keyboard minus A recorder) ..... p. 36
6. Canonic Fugue at the 5th Above (Keyboard minus T recorder) ..... p. 38
7. Endless Canon on the Royal Theme ..... p. 41
8. Endless Double Mirror Canon ..... p. 42
8. Endless Double Mirror Canon (SST or SSS recorders) ..... p. 44
9. Two-part Riddle Canon ..... p. 46
10. Four-part Riddle Canon ..... p. 47

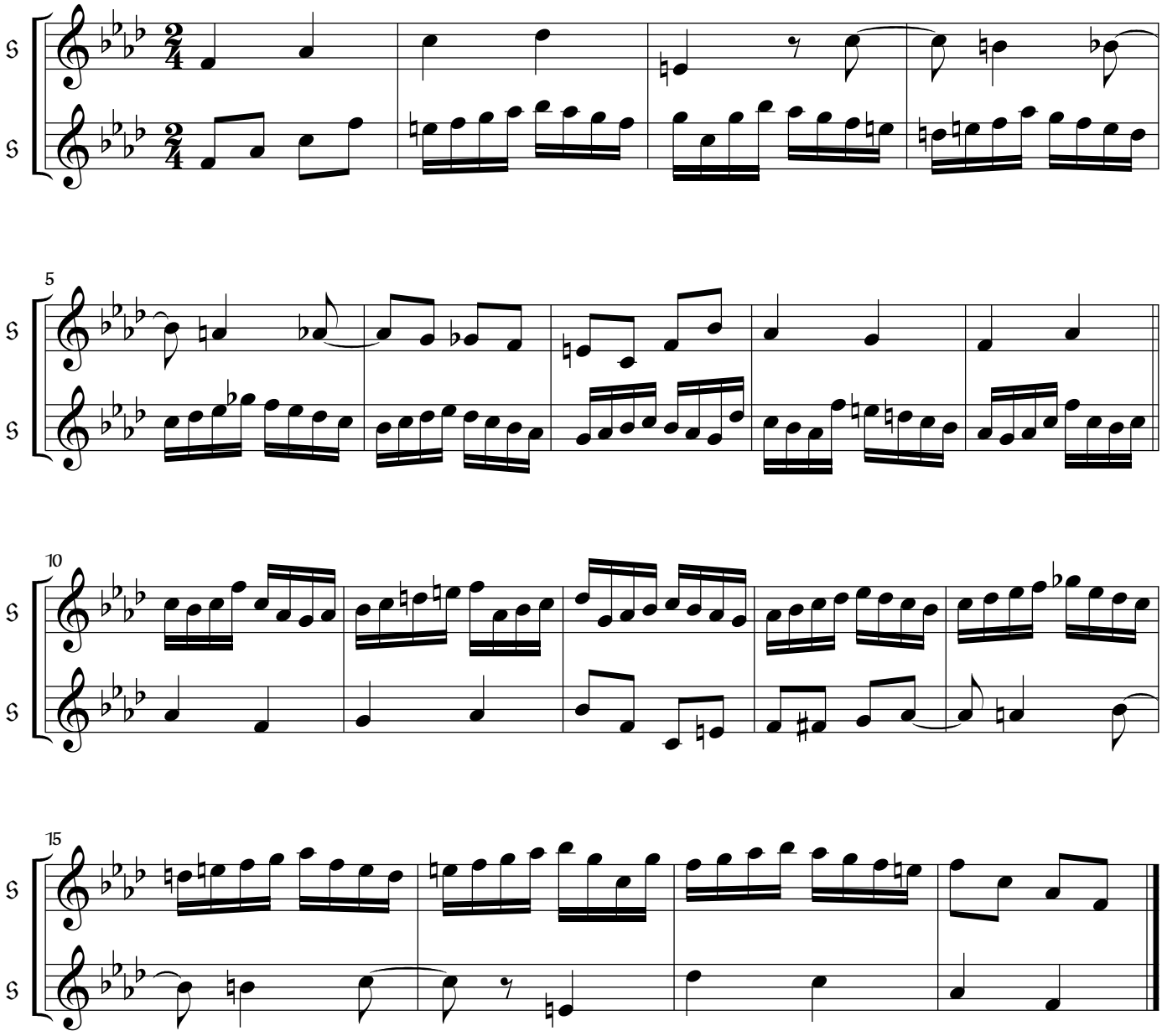
1. Crab Canon

Canon a 2 Cancrizans

In the first of the canons which Bach presented to King Frederick the Great of Prussia, the second voice is made to play the royal theme backwards, in a crablike manner.

SS recorder arrangement in F minor (original in C minor)

J. S. Bach



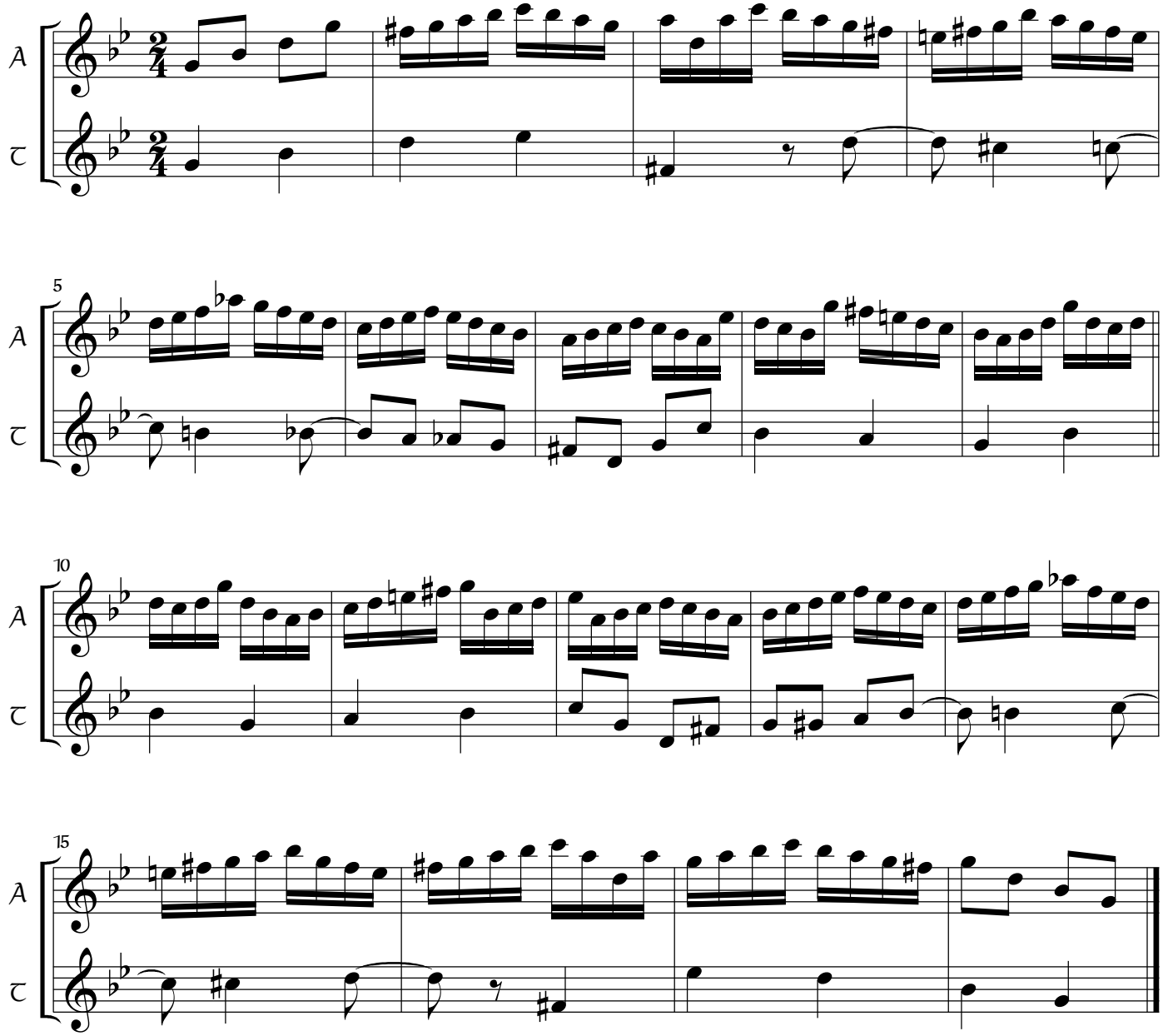
1. Crab Canon

Canon a 2 Cancrizans

In the first of the canons which Bach presented to King Frederick the Great of Prussia, the second voice is made to play the royal theme backwards, in a crablike manner.

G minor arrangement for keyboard or AT recorders
(also AT saxophones or SA flutes reading
their top part on the oposite page)

J. S. Bach



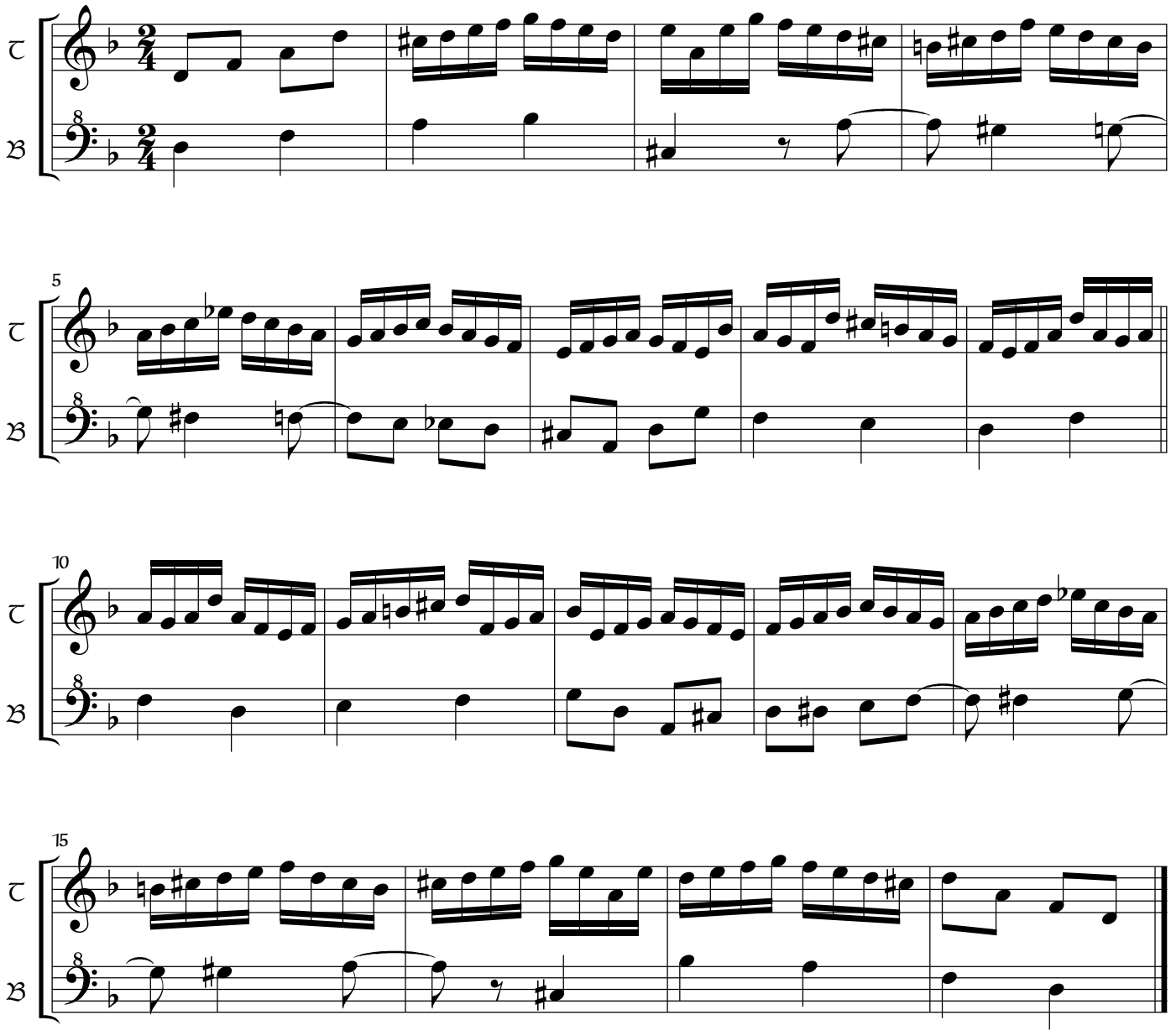
1. Crab Canon

Canon a 2 Cancrizans

In the first of the canons which Bach presented to King Frederick the Great of Prussia, the second voice is made to play the royal theme backwards, in a crablike manner.

D minor arrangement for keyboard or TB recorders
(notice that the tenor part here can be used to play
the previous page alto part in descant fingering)

J. S. Bach

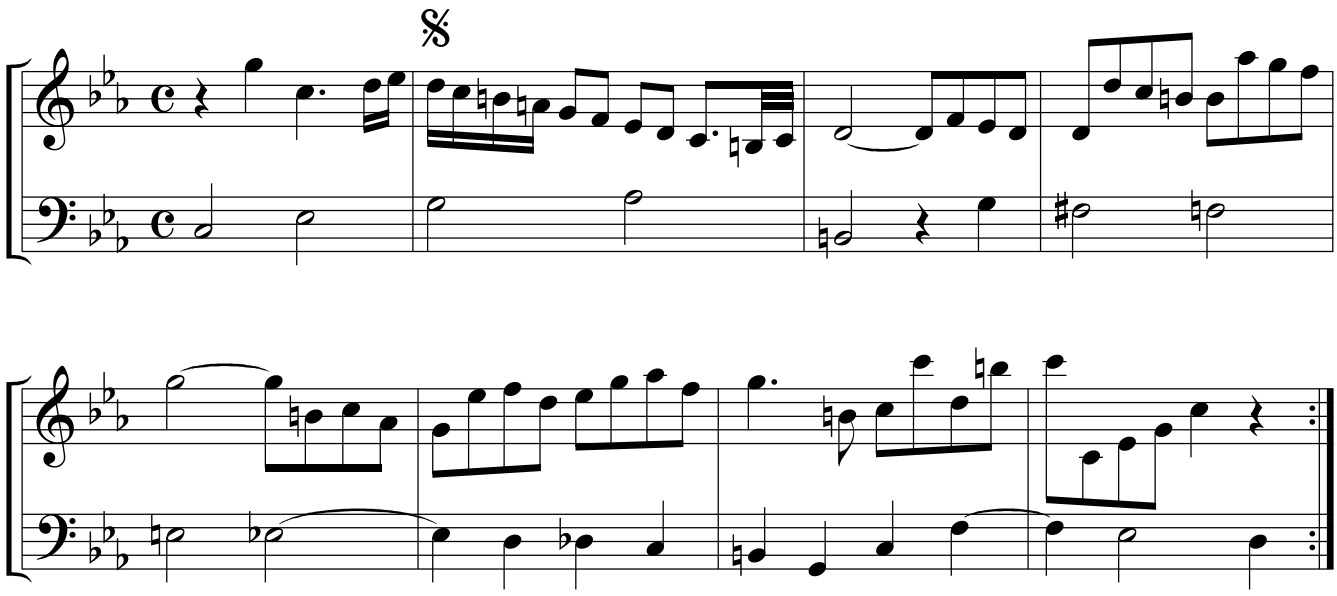


2. Unison Canon for 2 Violins

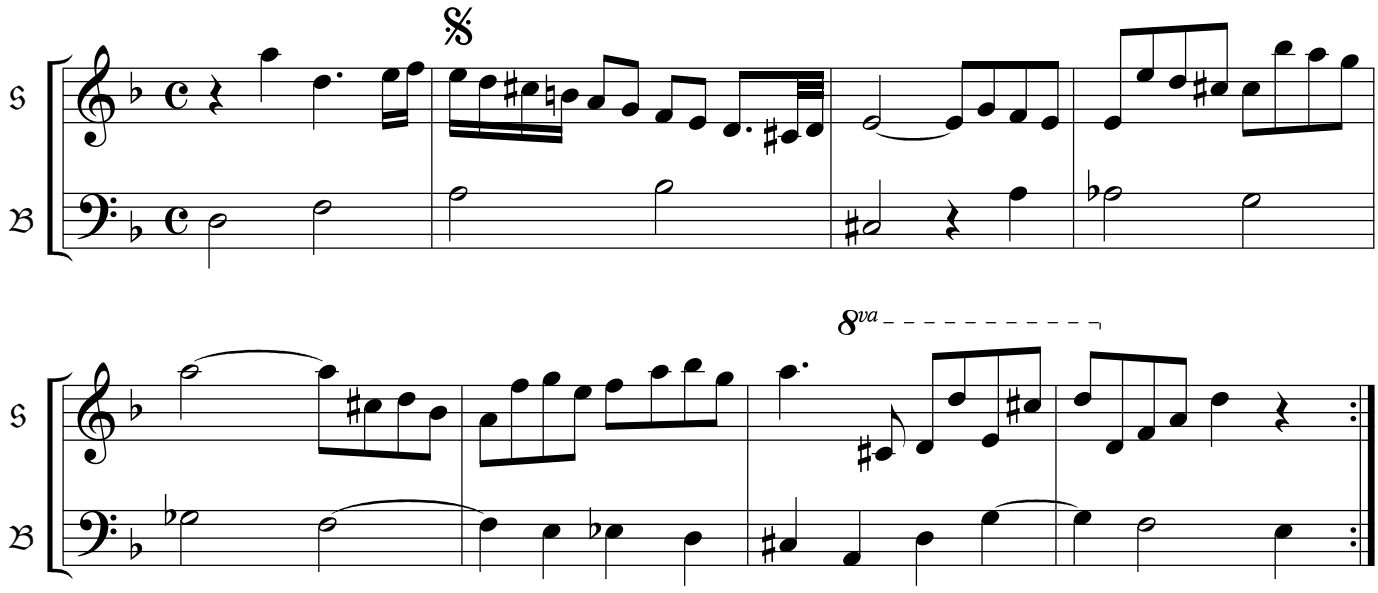
Canon a 2 Violini in Unisono

Two violins play this unison canon while the royal theme sounds as an independent melody below them.

J. S. Bach



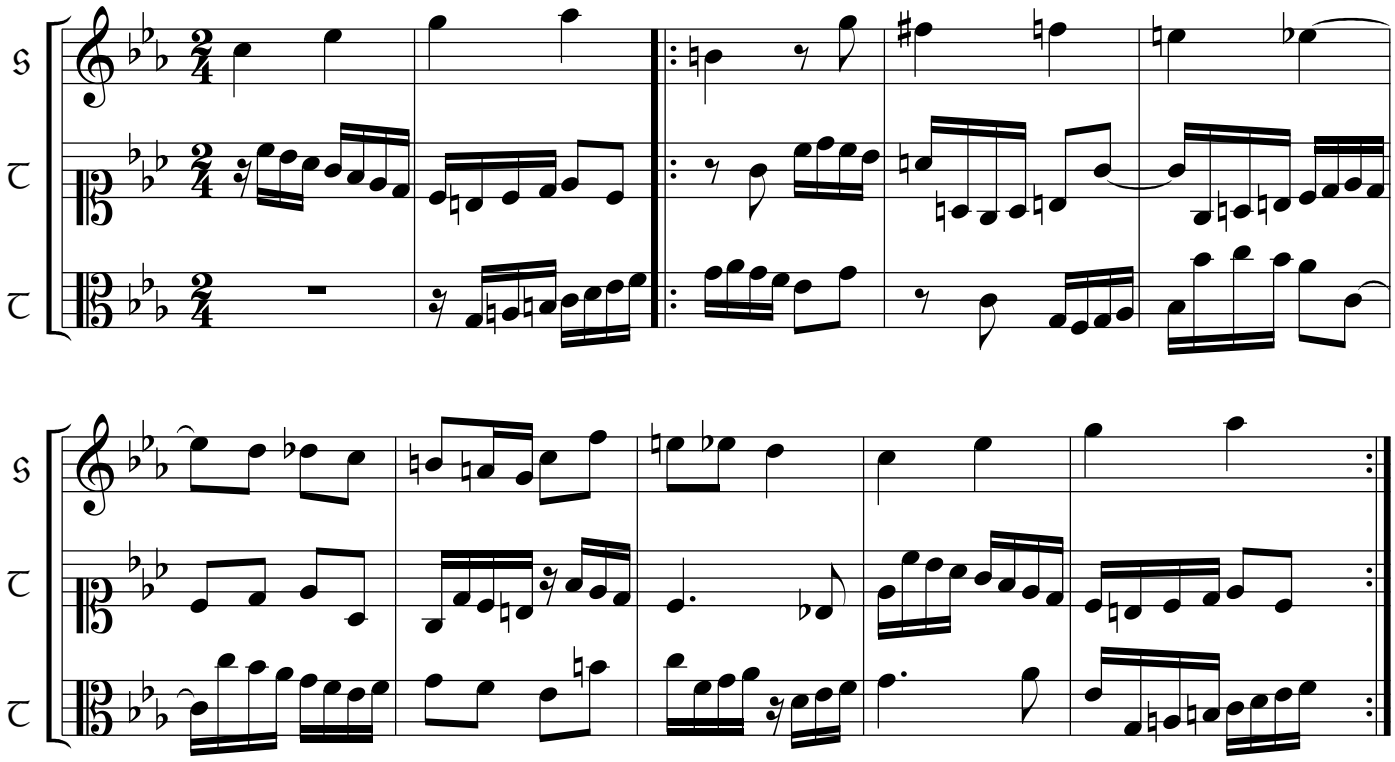
Simplified SSB recorders
or T recorder and keyboard



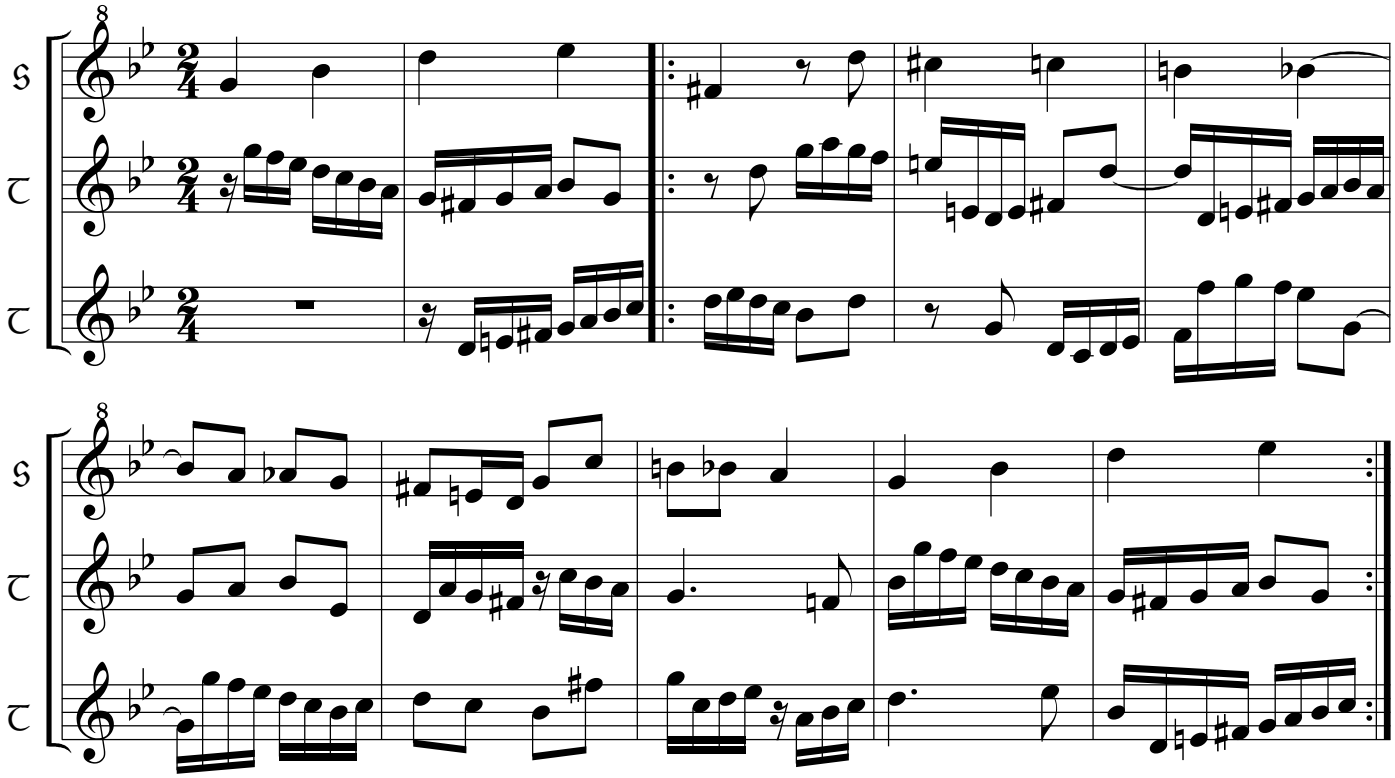
3. Two-part Mirror Canon

Canon a 2 per Motum Contrarium

J. S. Bach



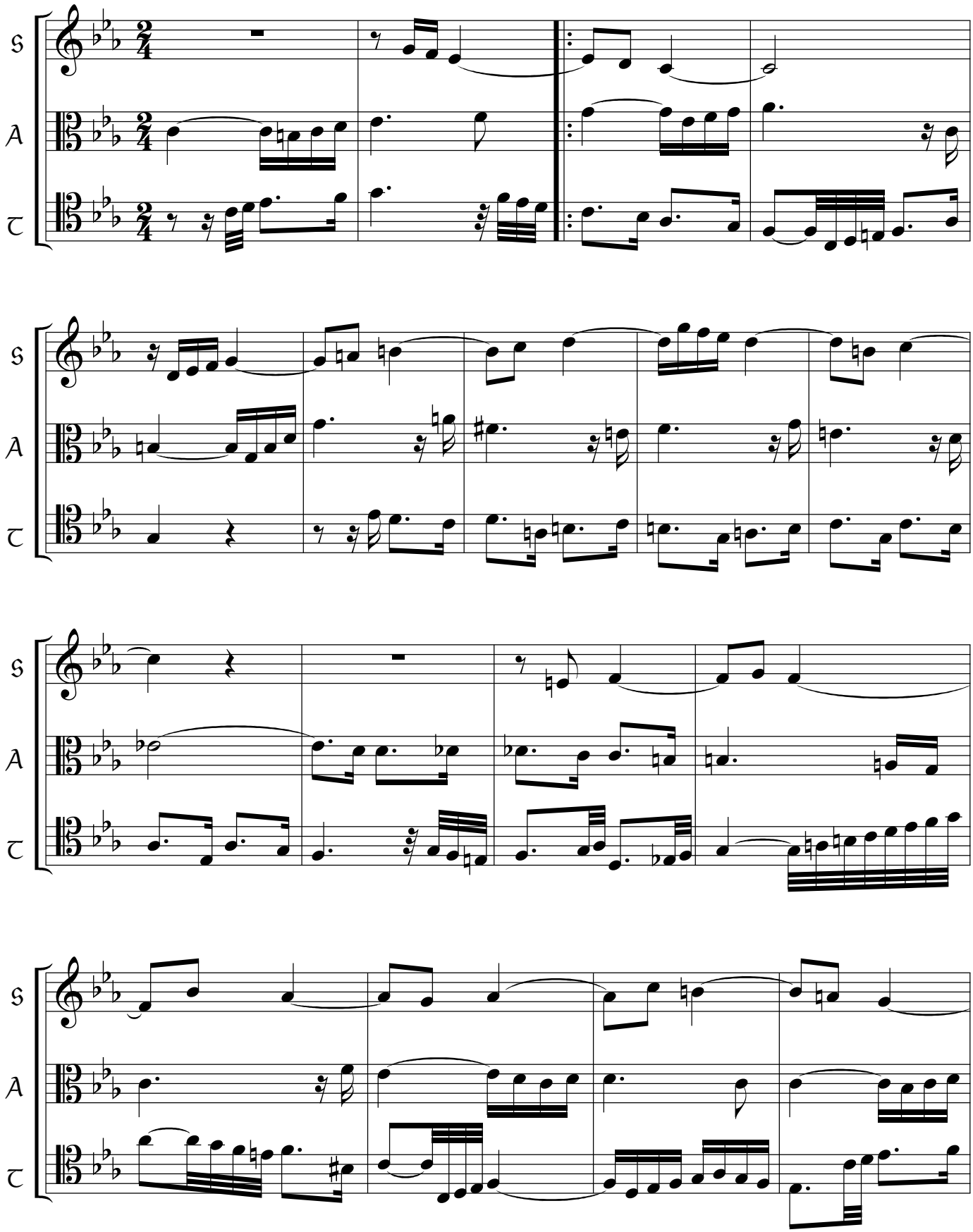
STT recorders or saxophones

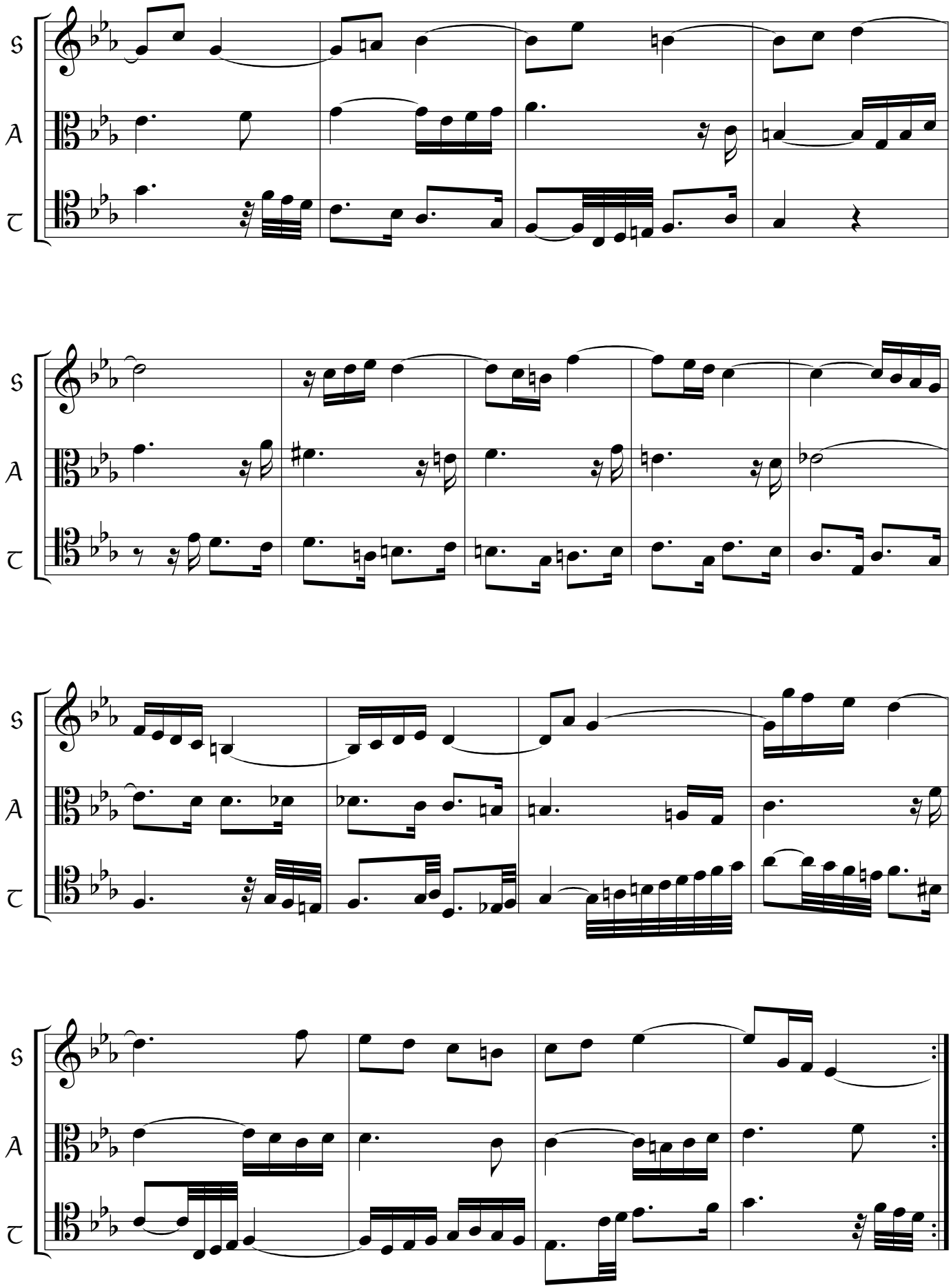


4. Augmented Two-part Mirror Canon

Canon a 2 per augmentationem contrario motu

J. S. Bach

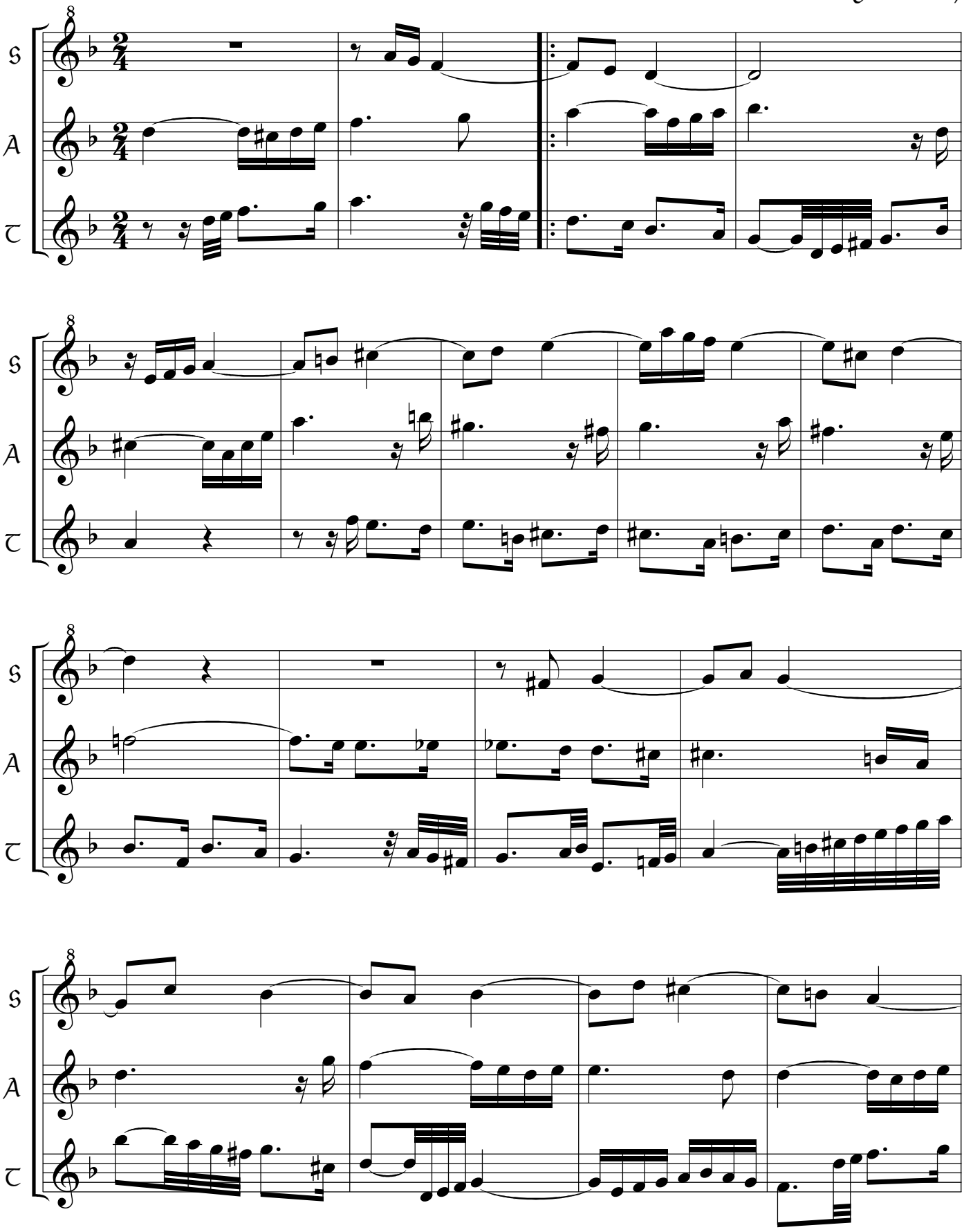


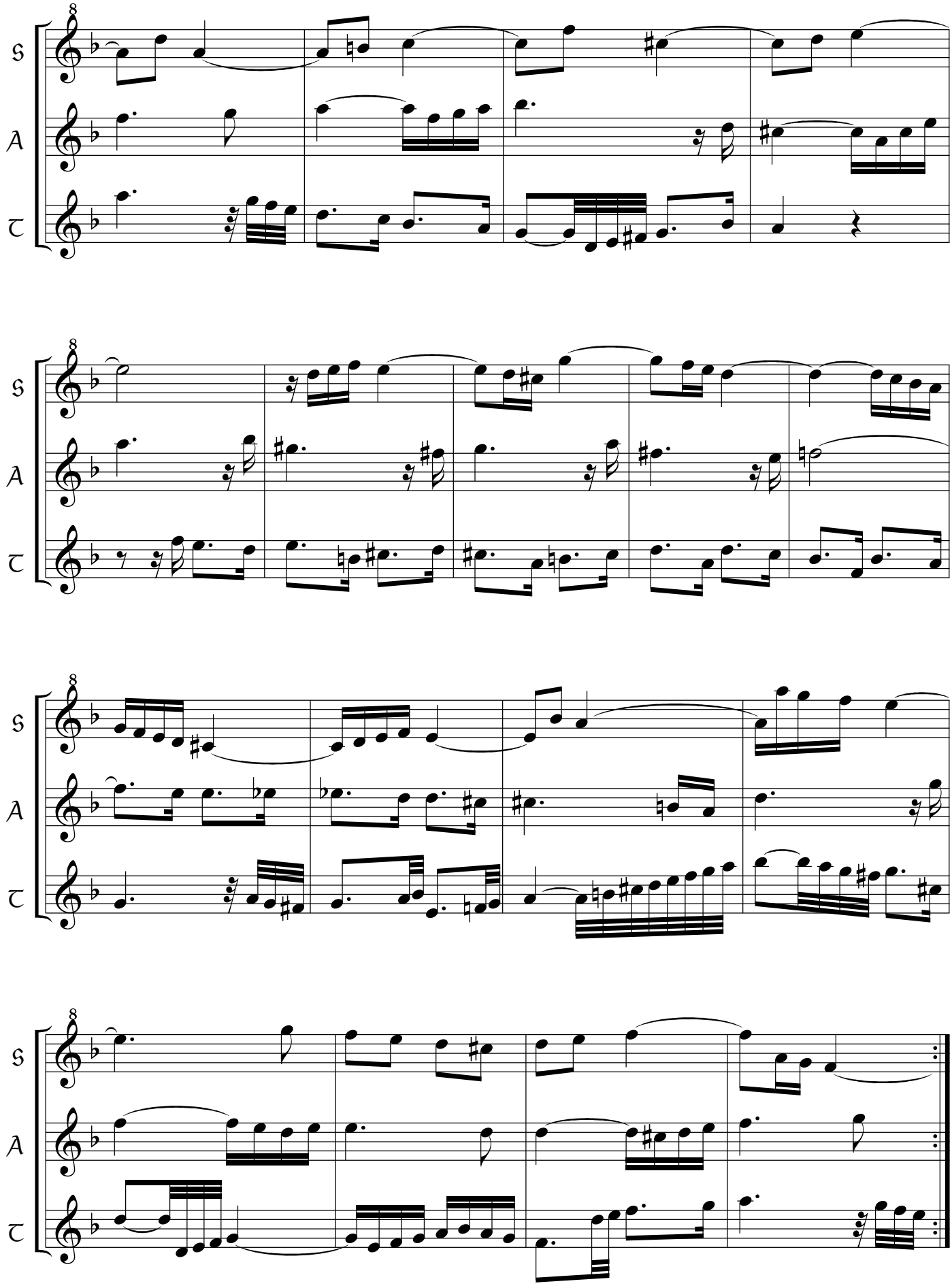

S
A
T

4. Augmented Two-part Mirror Canon

SAT recorders

J. S. Bach




S
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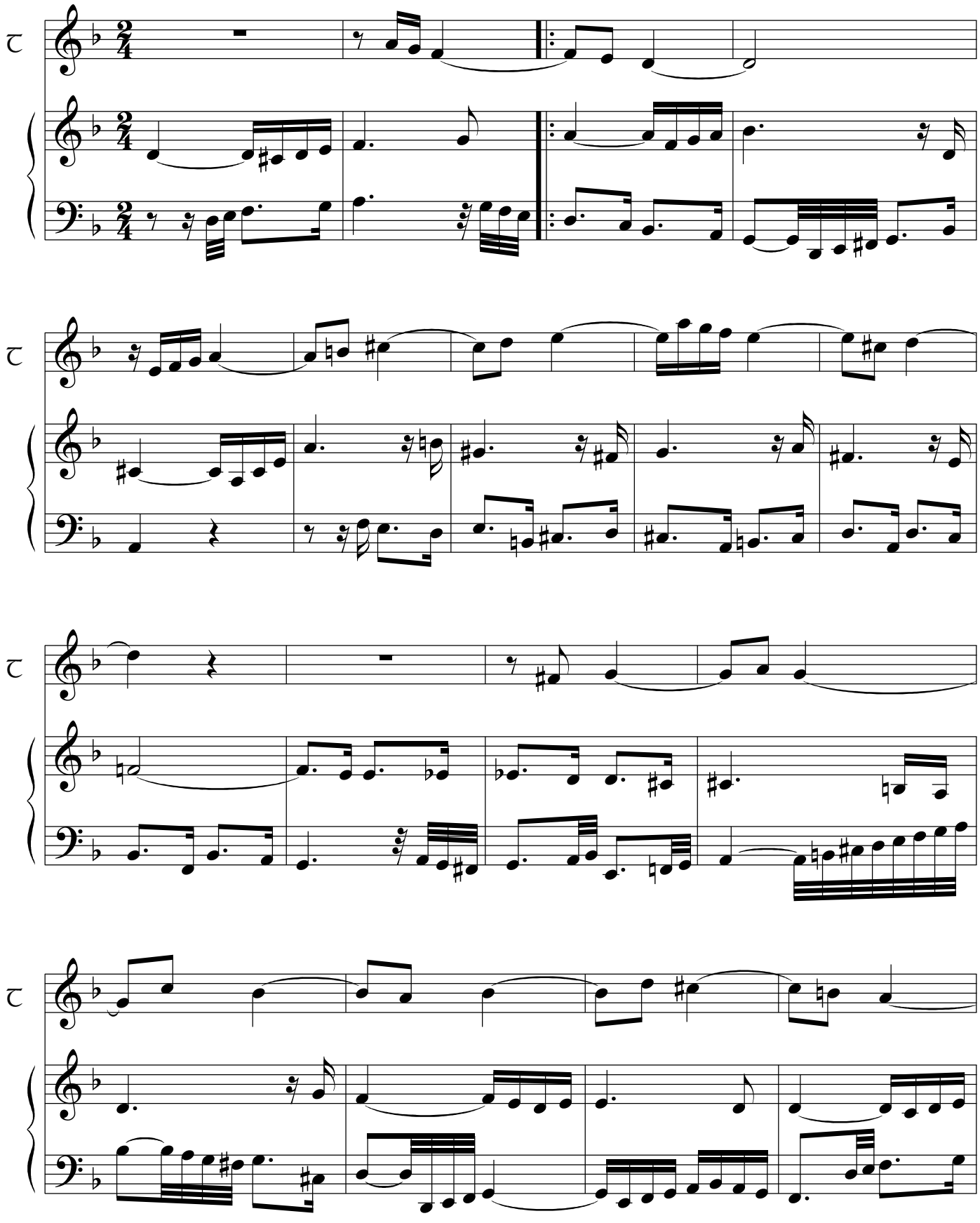
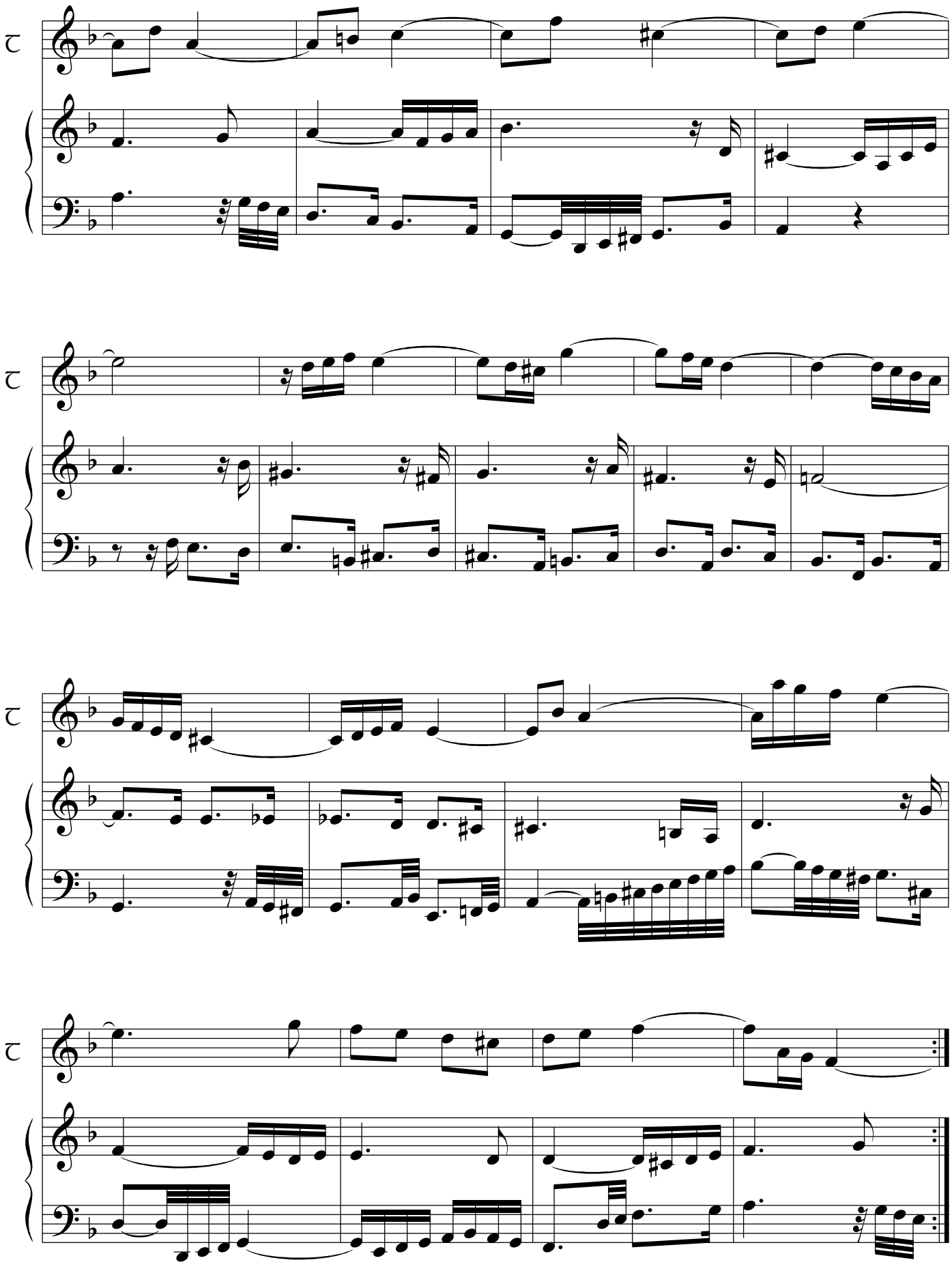
T

4. Augmented Two-part Mirror Canon

T recorder and keyboard

J. S. Bach

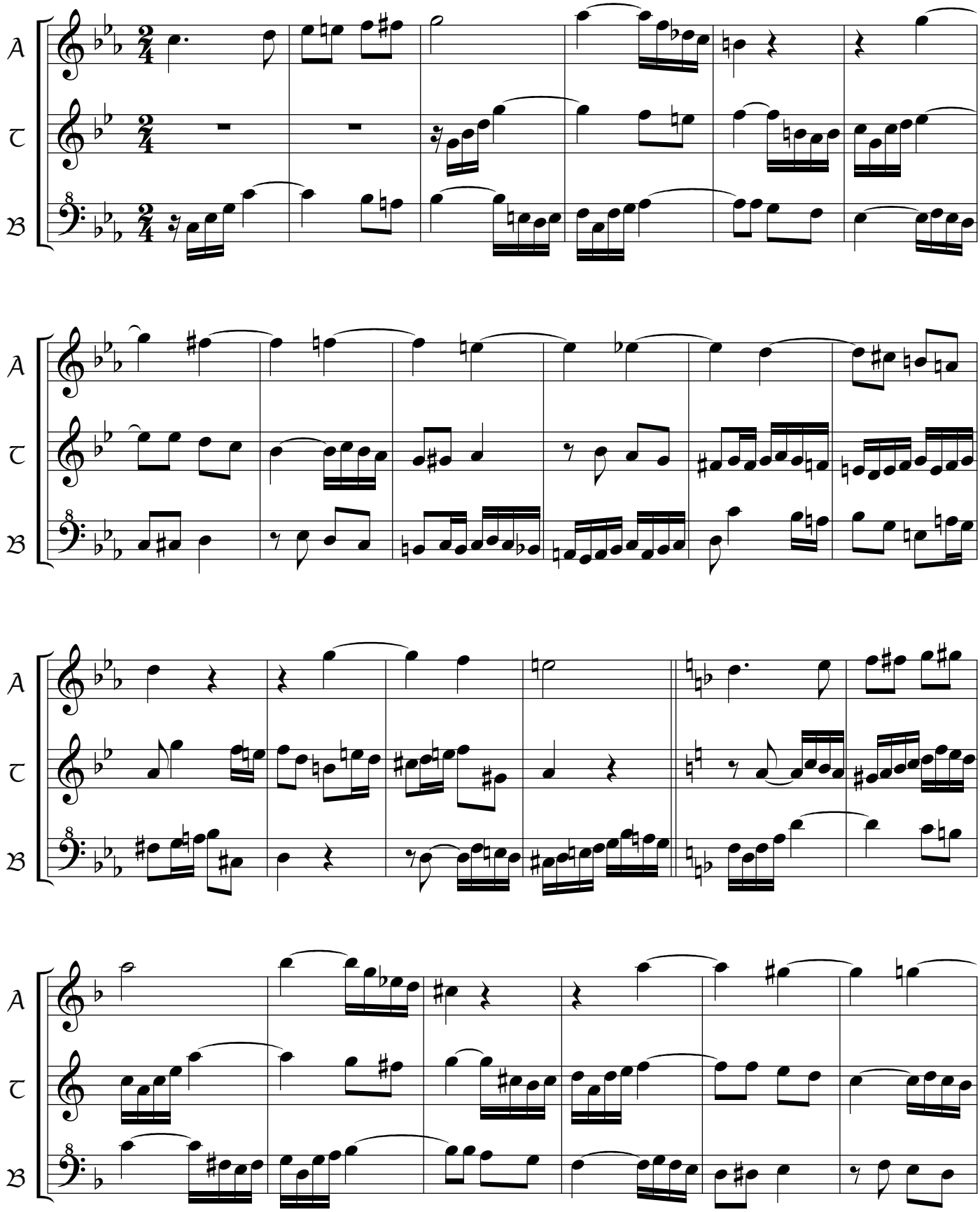


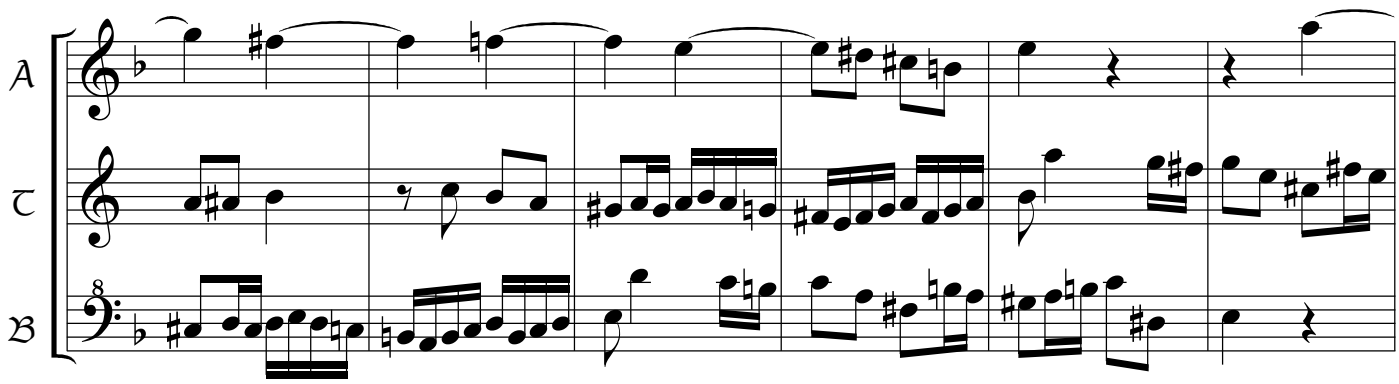


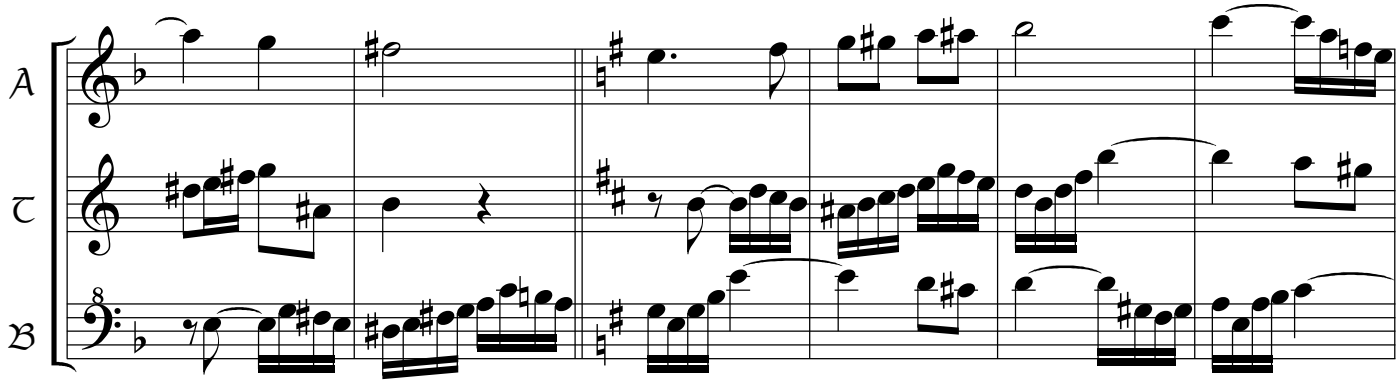
5. Modulating Canon at the Fifth Above

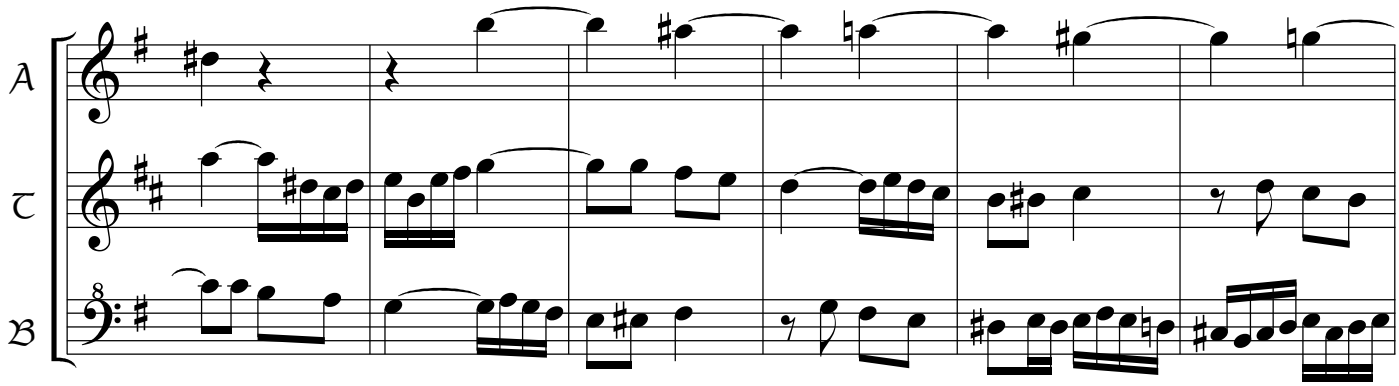
'May the pitch of this canon ever rise, and may the king's fortunes do likewise.'

J. S. Bach

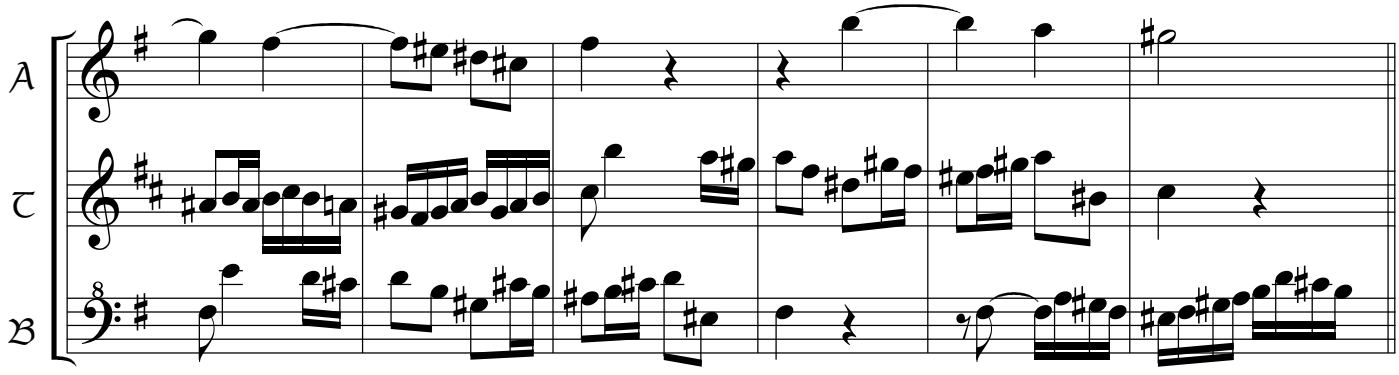








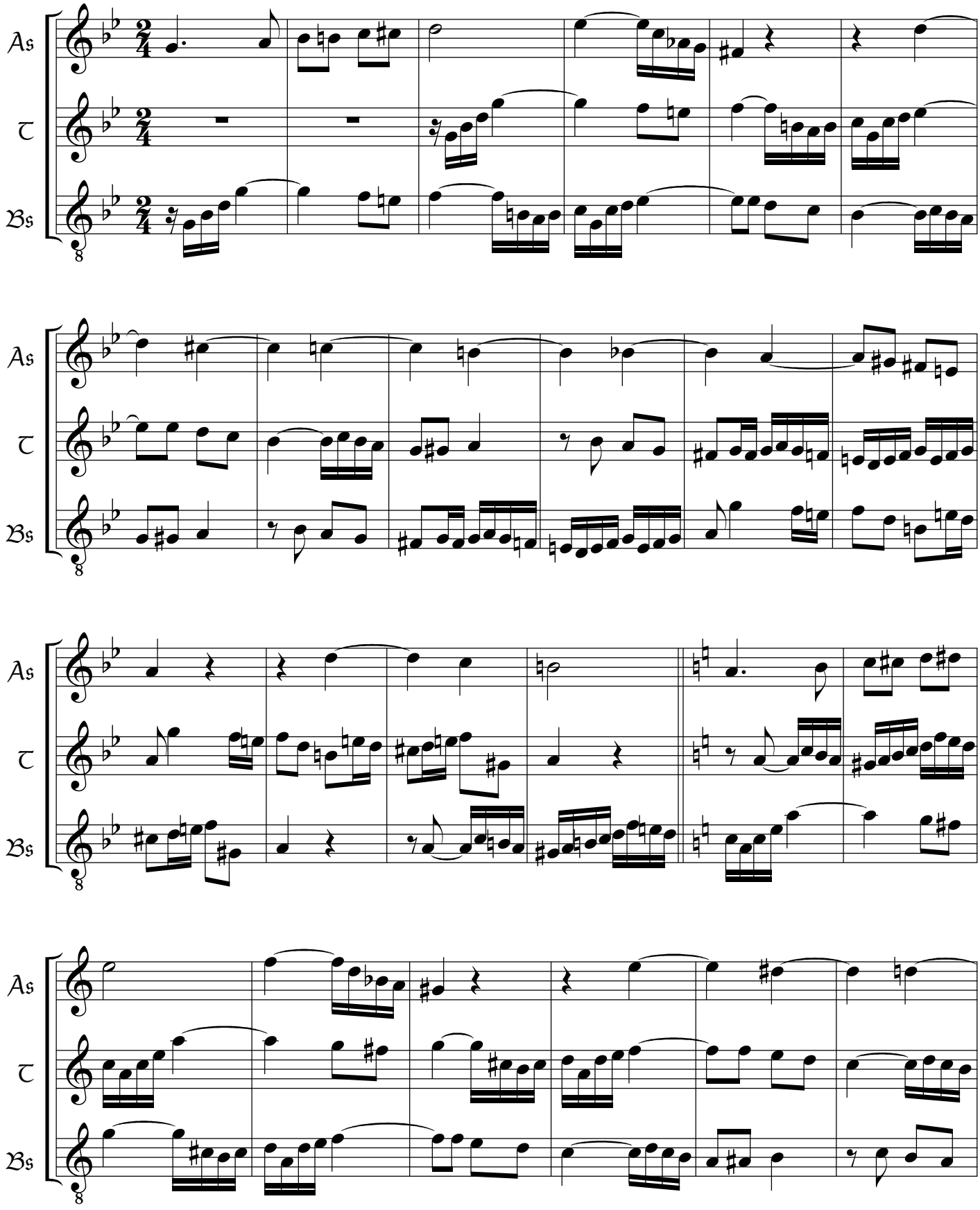
Go on rising a tone on each repeat

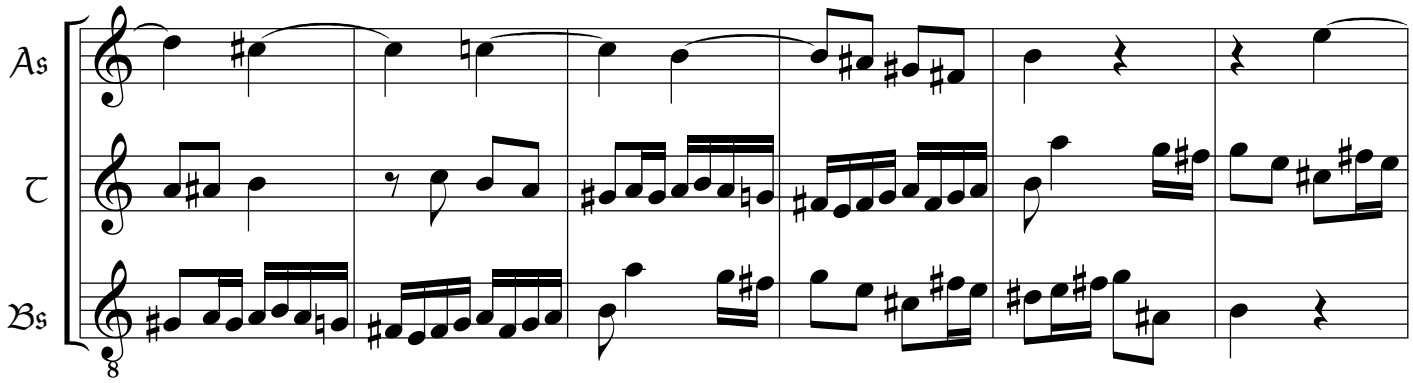


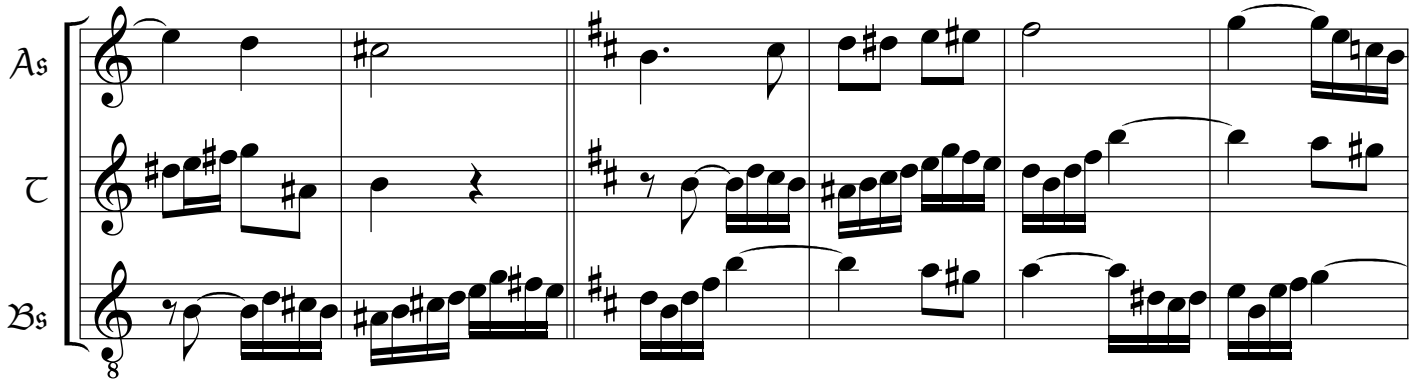
5. Modulating Canon at the Fifth Above

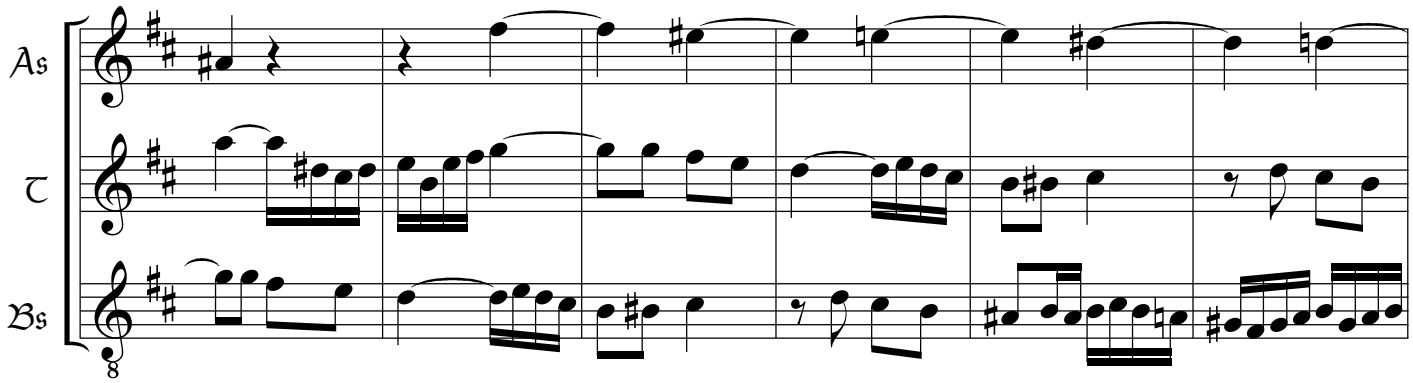
'May the pitch of this canon ever rise, and may the king's fortunes do likewise.'

J. S. Bach

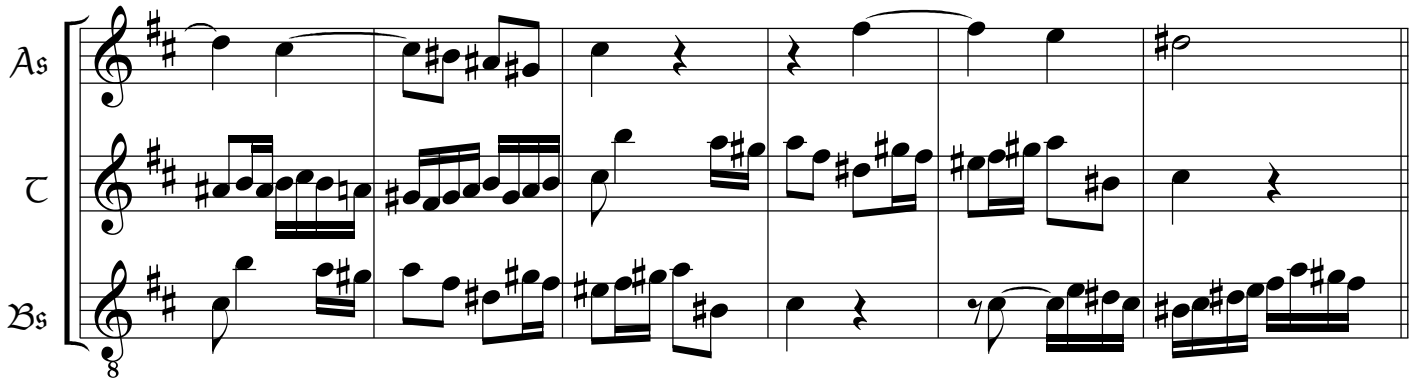








Go on rising a tone on each repeat



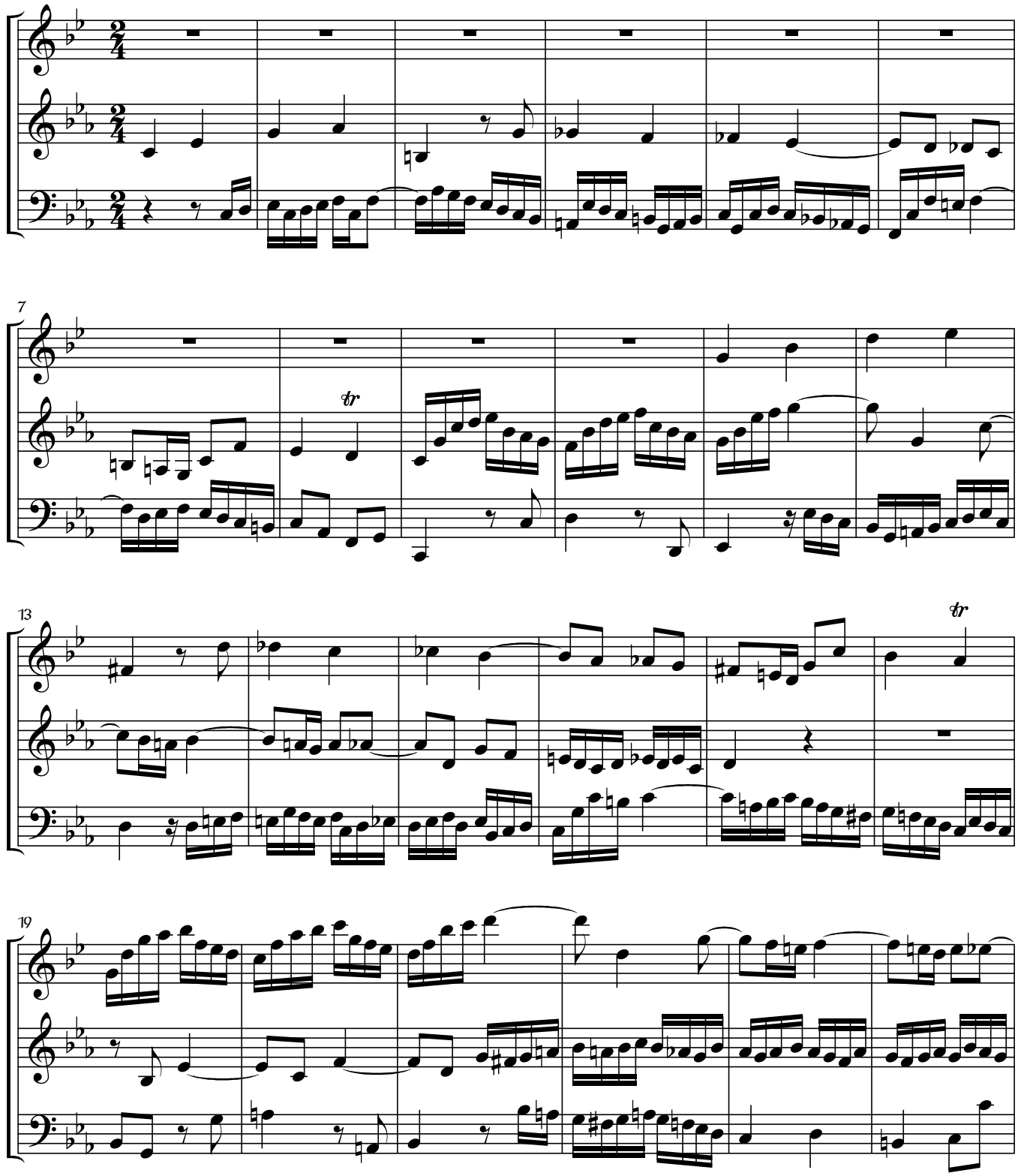
6. Canonic Fugue at the Fifth Above

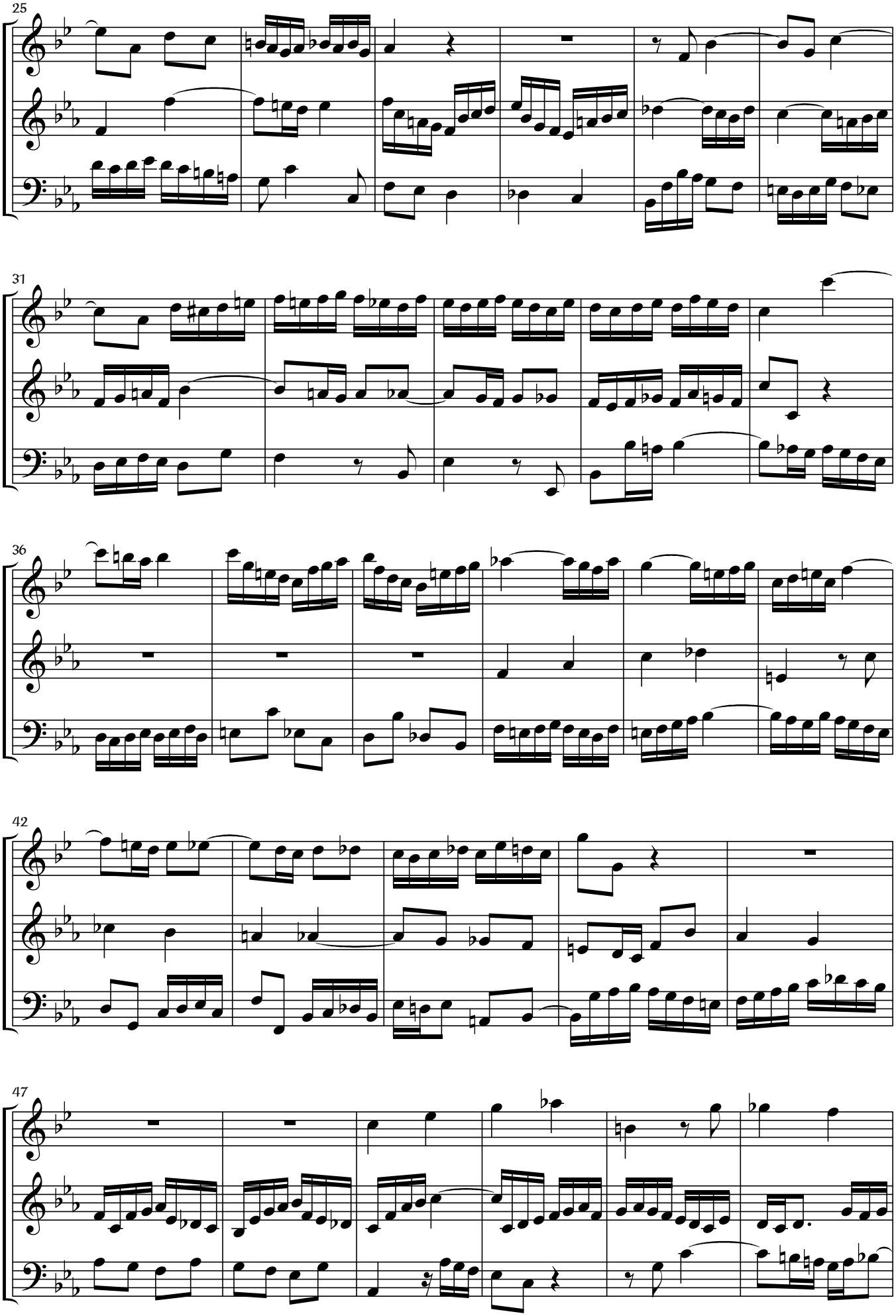
Fuga Canonica in Epidiapente

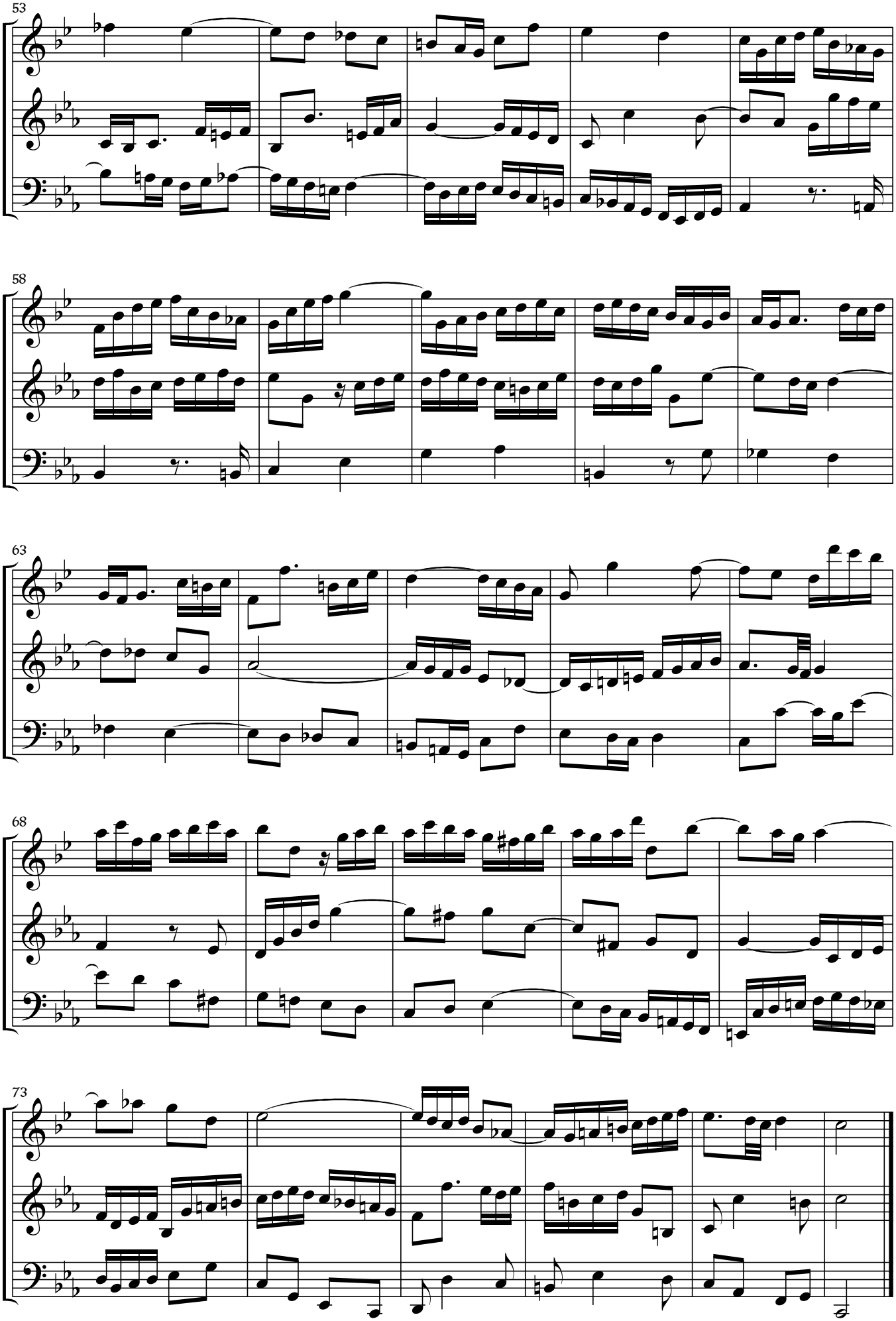
The Canonic Fugue is a strict canon, in which the highest voice exactly transposes the middle voice up a perfect fifth, while the lowest voice moves independently.

Original version

J. S. Bach



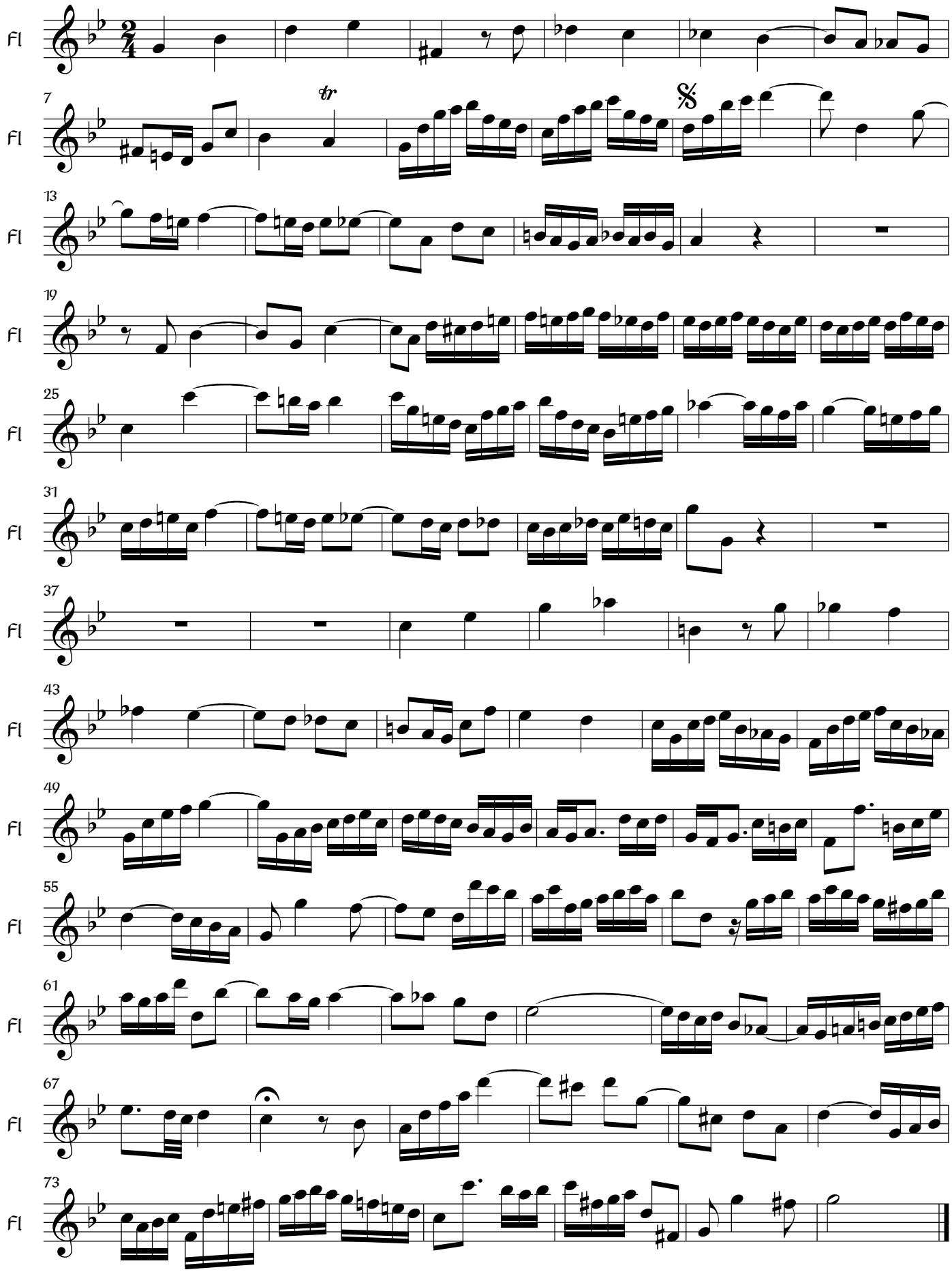

25
Fl
Vln
B
31
Fl
Vln
B
36
Fl
Vln
B
42
Fl
Vln
B
47
Fl
Vln
B


53
Fl
Vln
B
58
Fl
Vln
B
63
Fl
Vln
B
68
Fl
Vln
B
73
Fl
Vln
B

6. Canonic Fugue at the Fifth Above

Original flute part (or alto recorder)

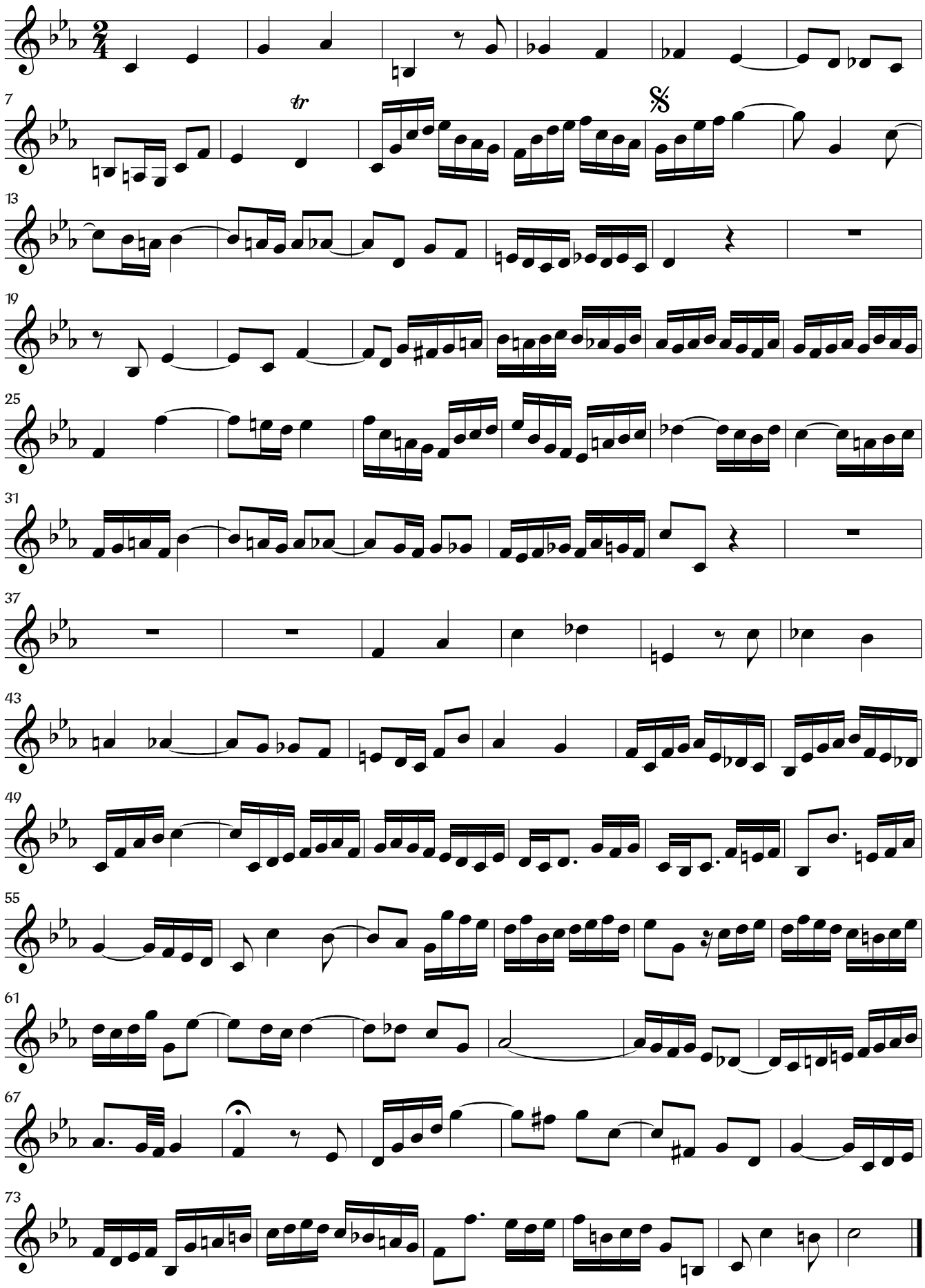
J. S. Bach



6. Canonic Fugue at the Fifth Above

Original violin part

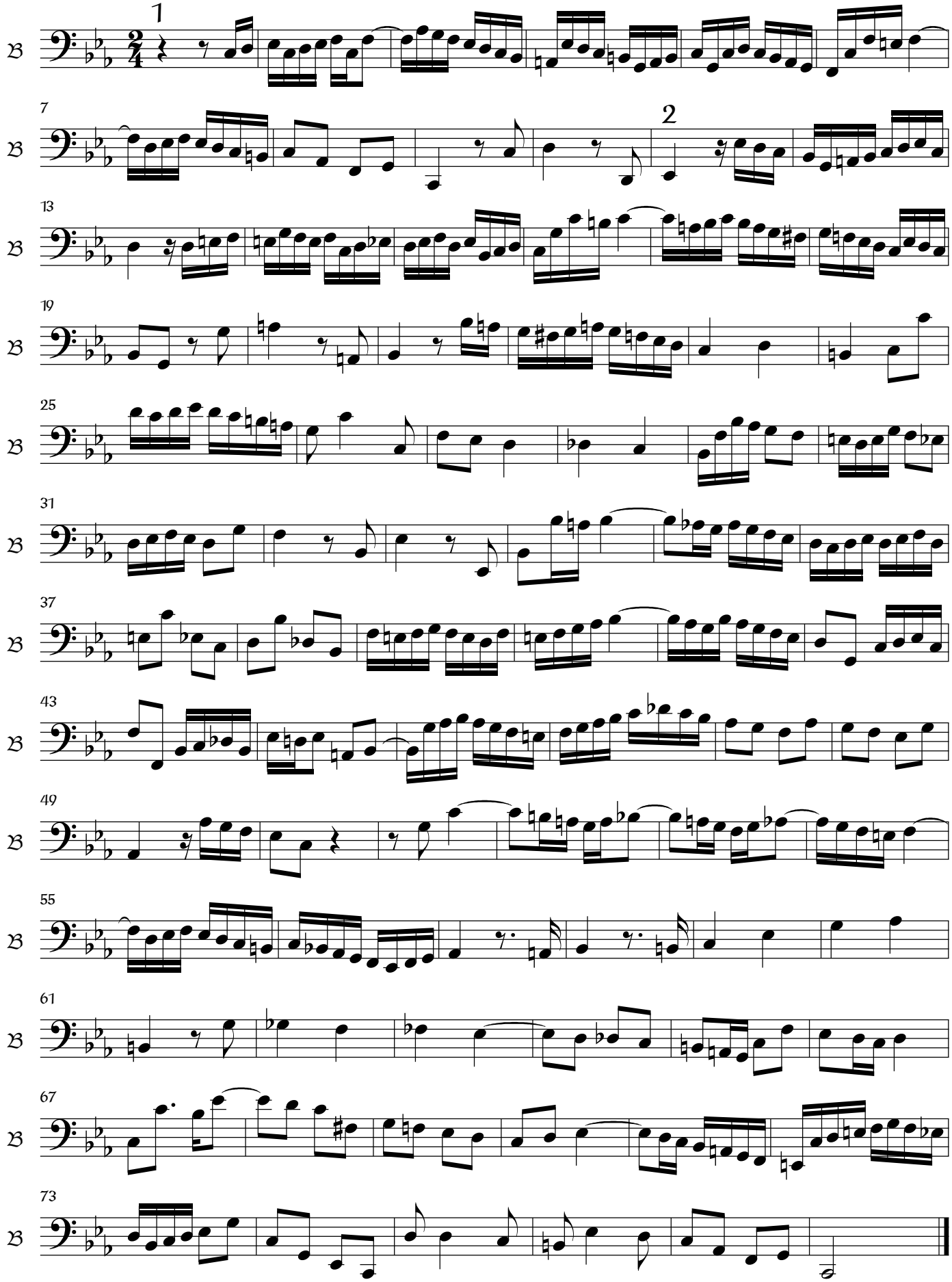
J. S. Bach



6. Canonic Fugue at the Fifth Above

Original thorough bass part

J. S. Bach



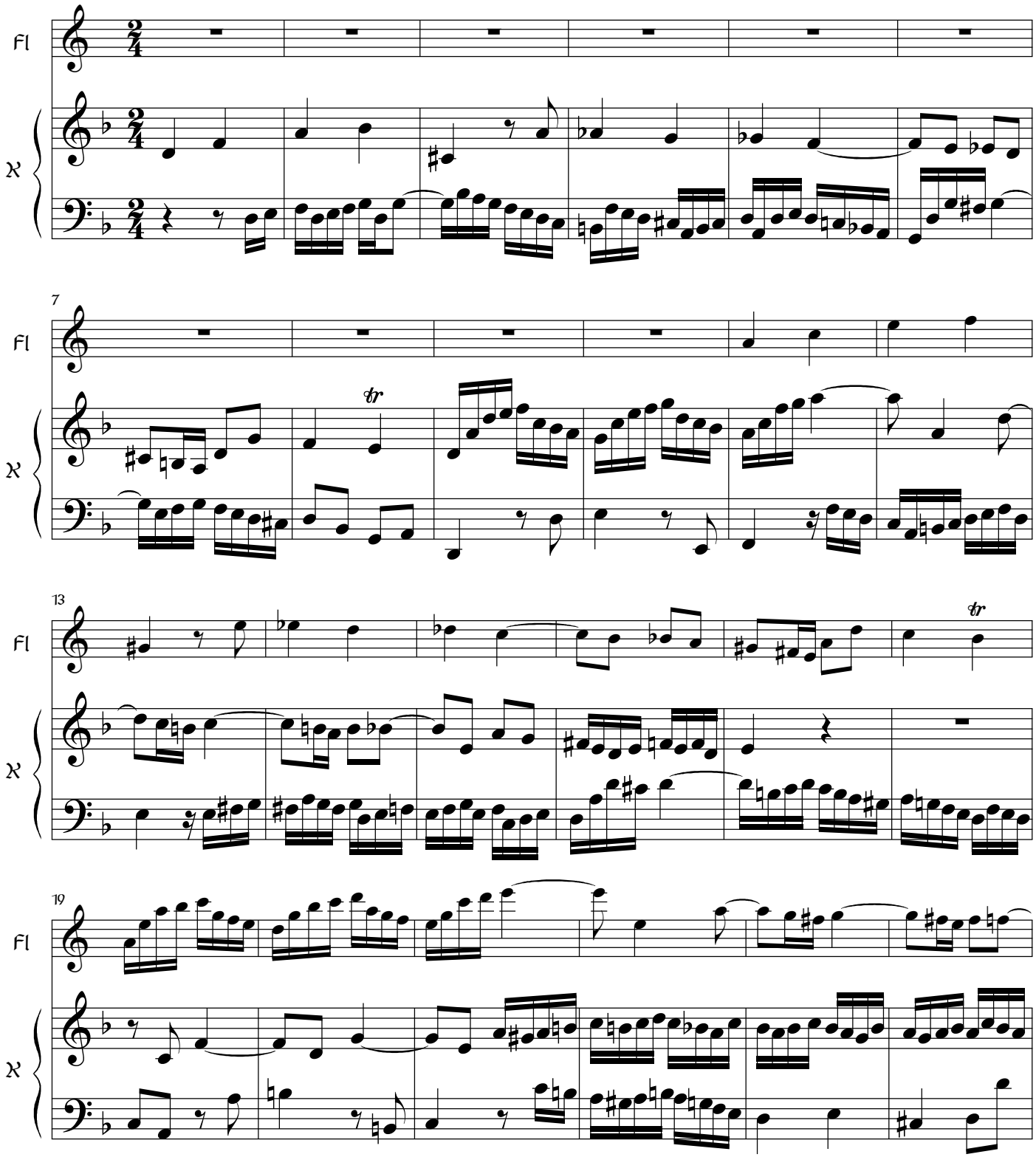
6. Canonic Fugue at the Fifth Above

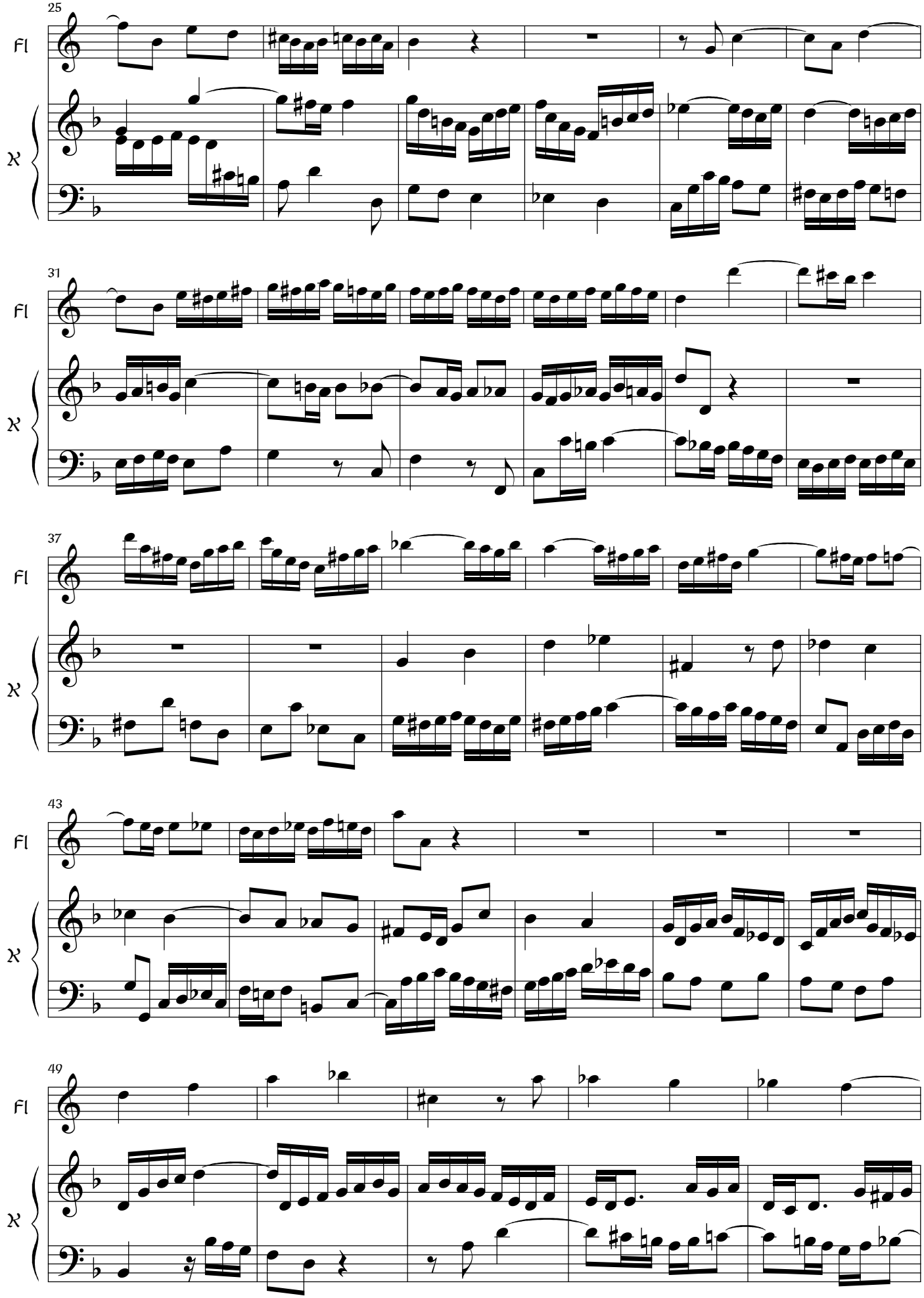
Fuga Canonica in Epidiapente

The Canonic Fugue is a strict canon, in which the highest voice exactly transposes the middle voice up a perfect fifth, while the lowest voice moves independently.

Flute and keyboard arrangement (raised a major second)

J. S. Bach




25
Fl
𝄞
31
Fl
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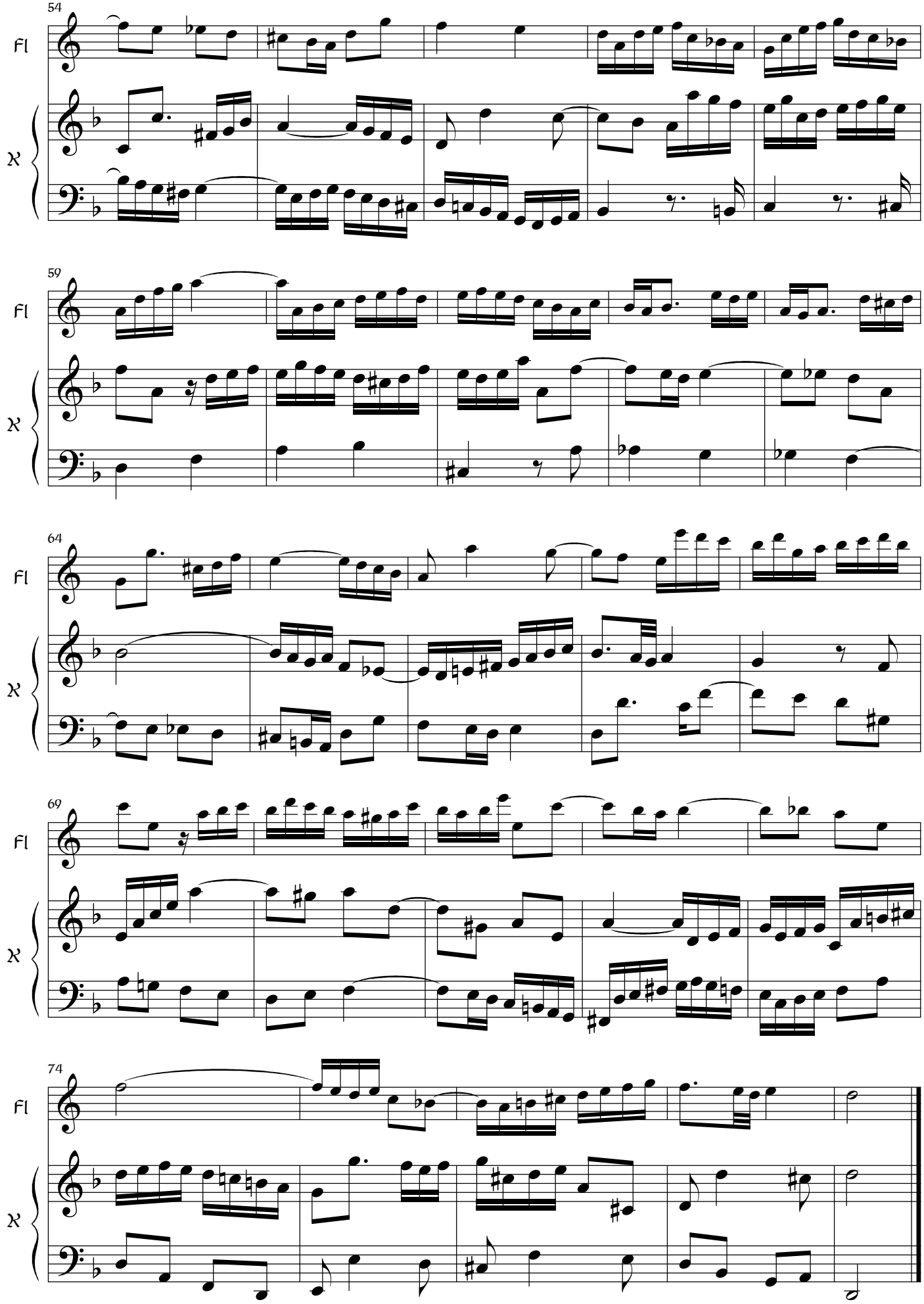
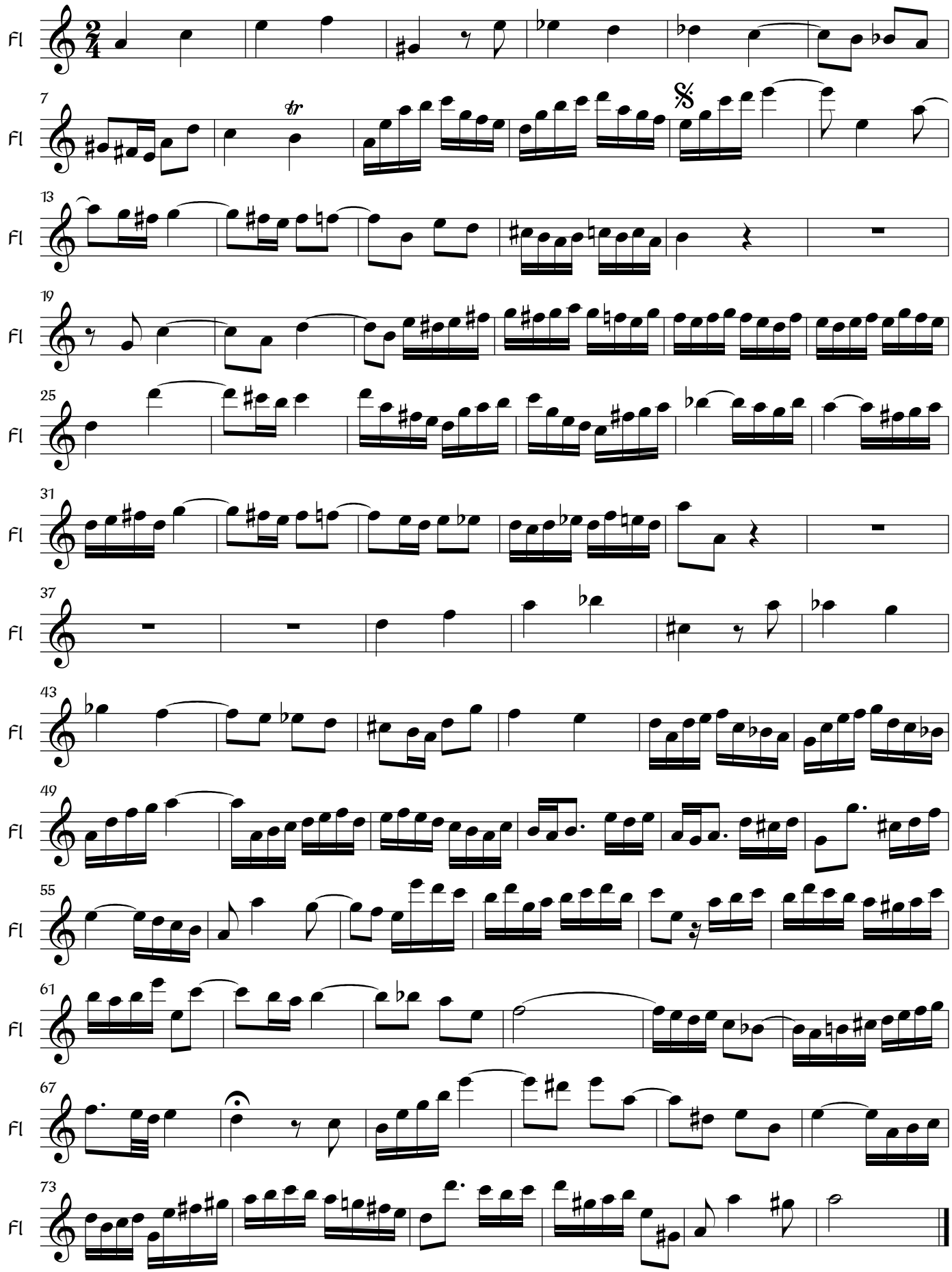
37
Fl
𝄞
43
Fl
𝄞
49
Fl
𝄞


54
Fl
59
Fl
64
Fl
69
Fl
74
Fl

6. Canonic Fugue at the Fifth Above

Flute part (pitch raised a major 2nd)

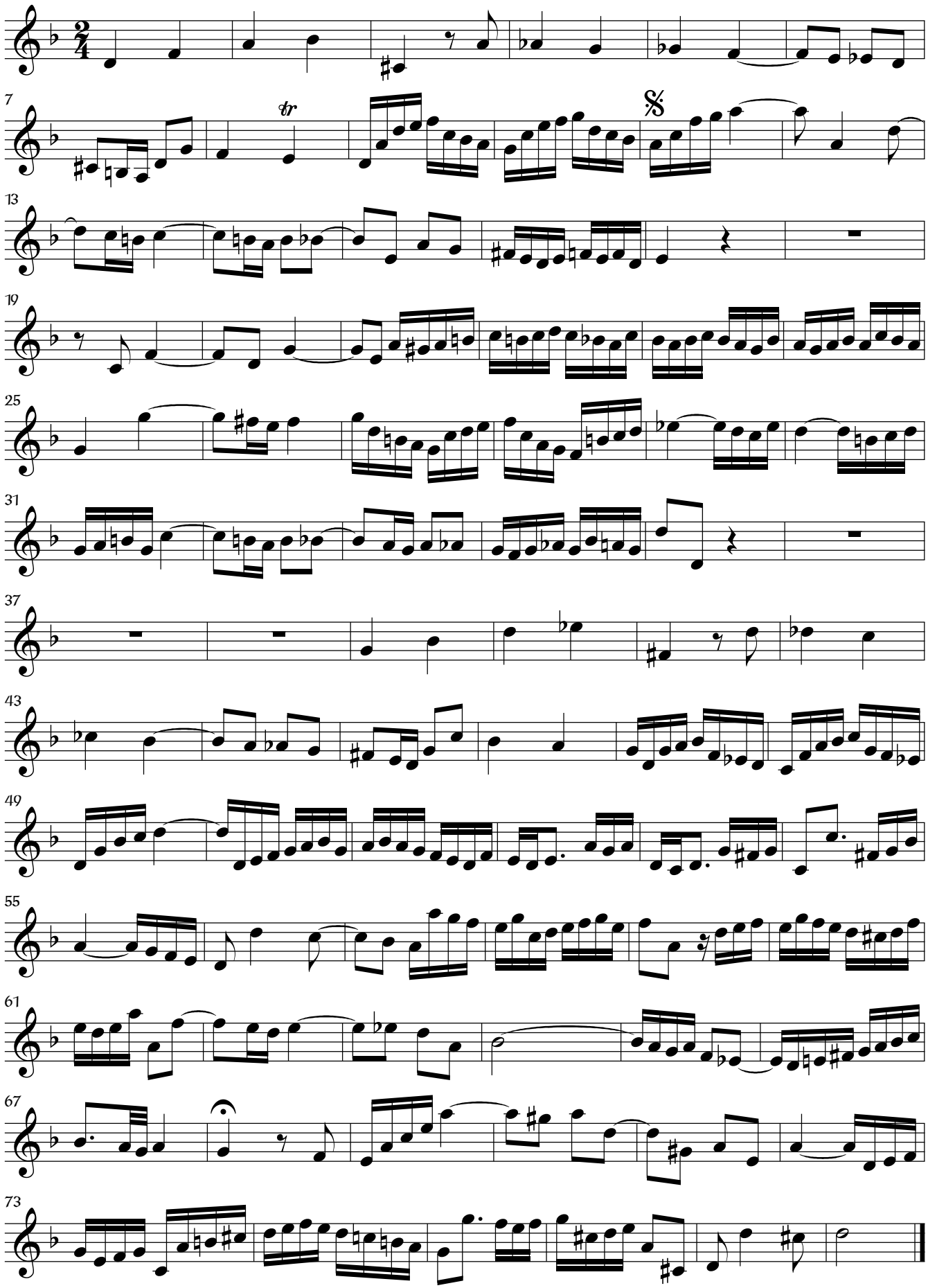
J. S. Bach



6. Canonic Fugue at the Fifth Above

Violin part (pitch raised a major 2nd)

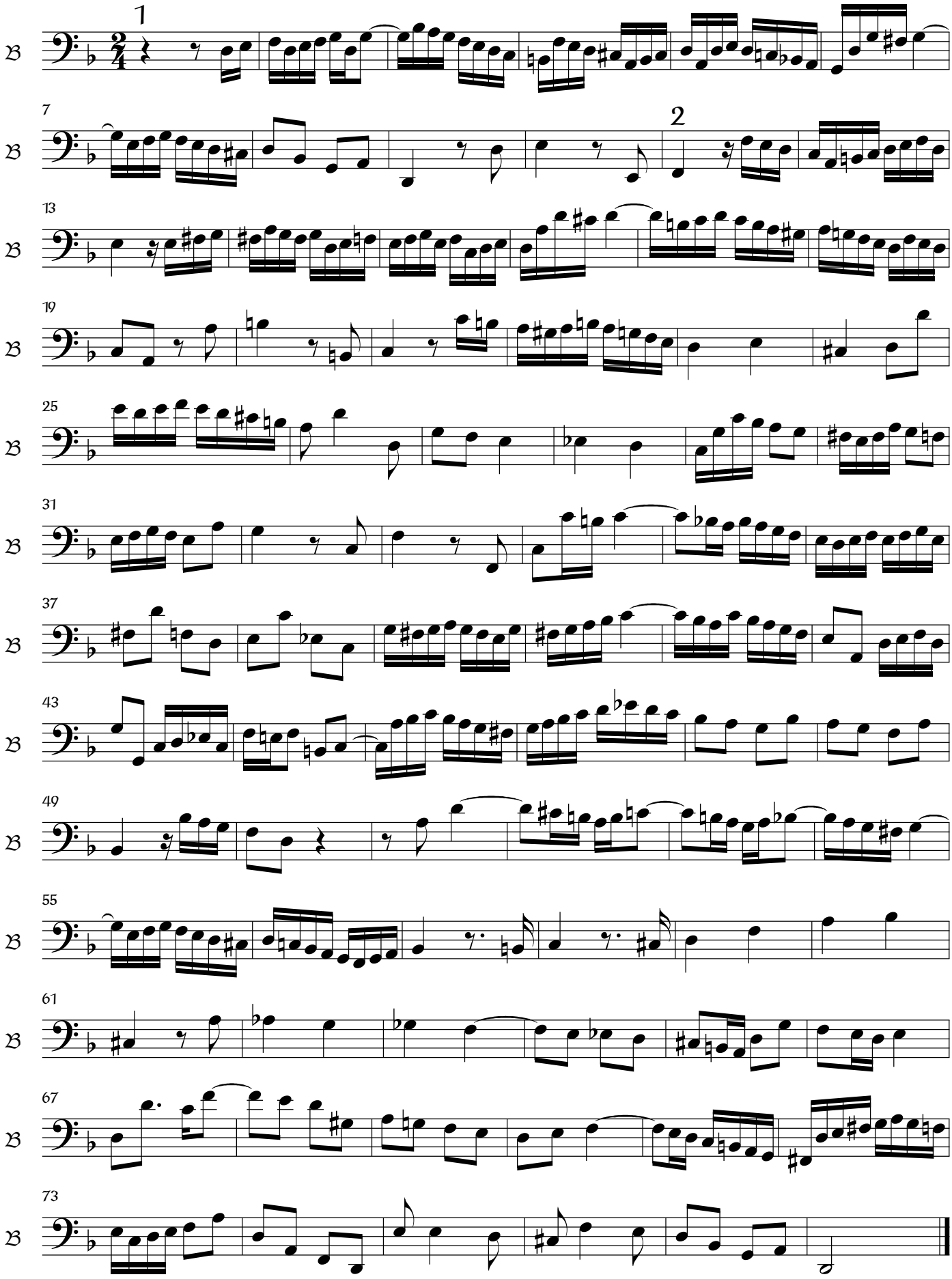
J. S. Bach



6. Canonic Fugue at the Fifth Above

Thorough bass part (pitch raised a major 2nd)

J. S. Bach

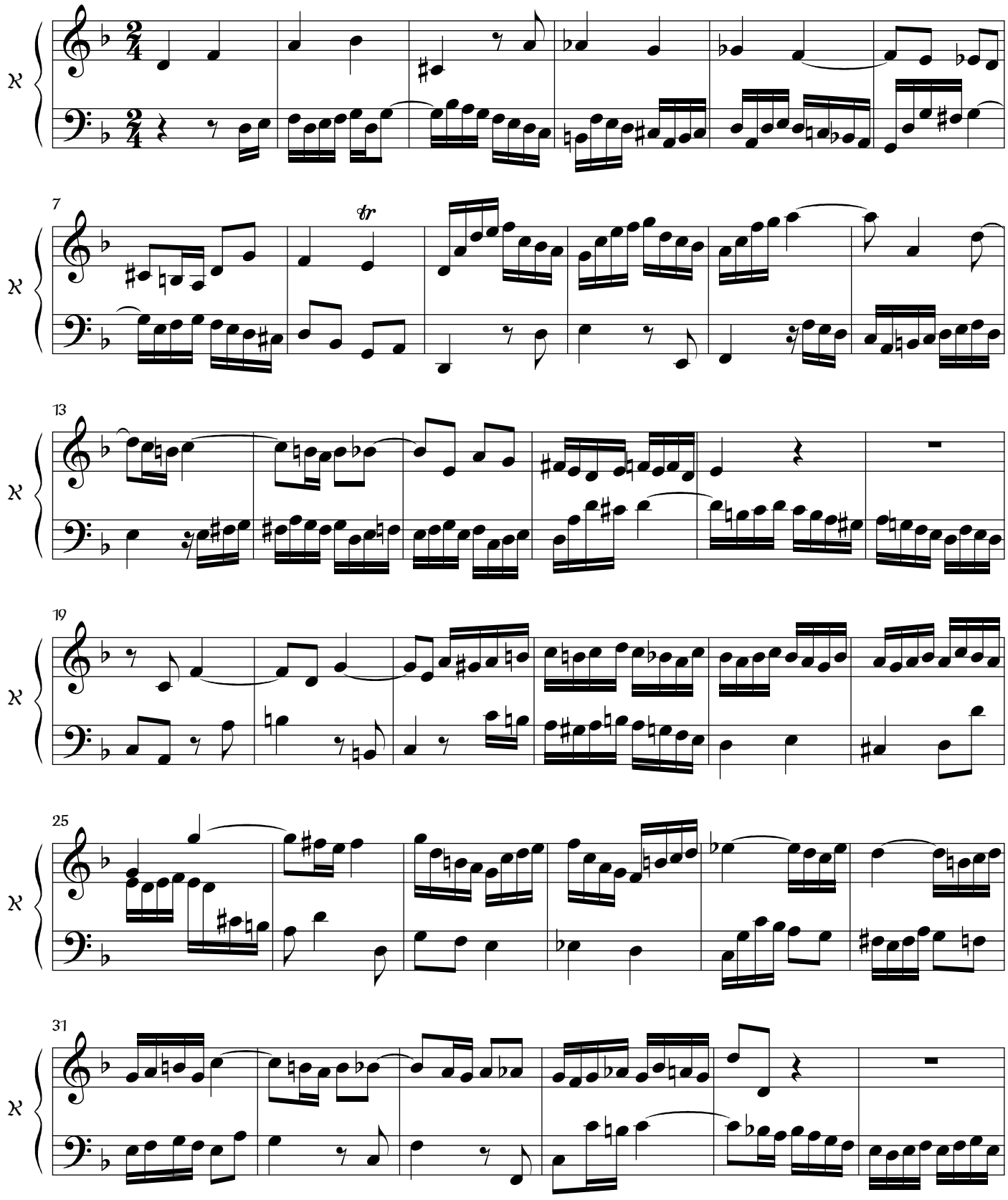


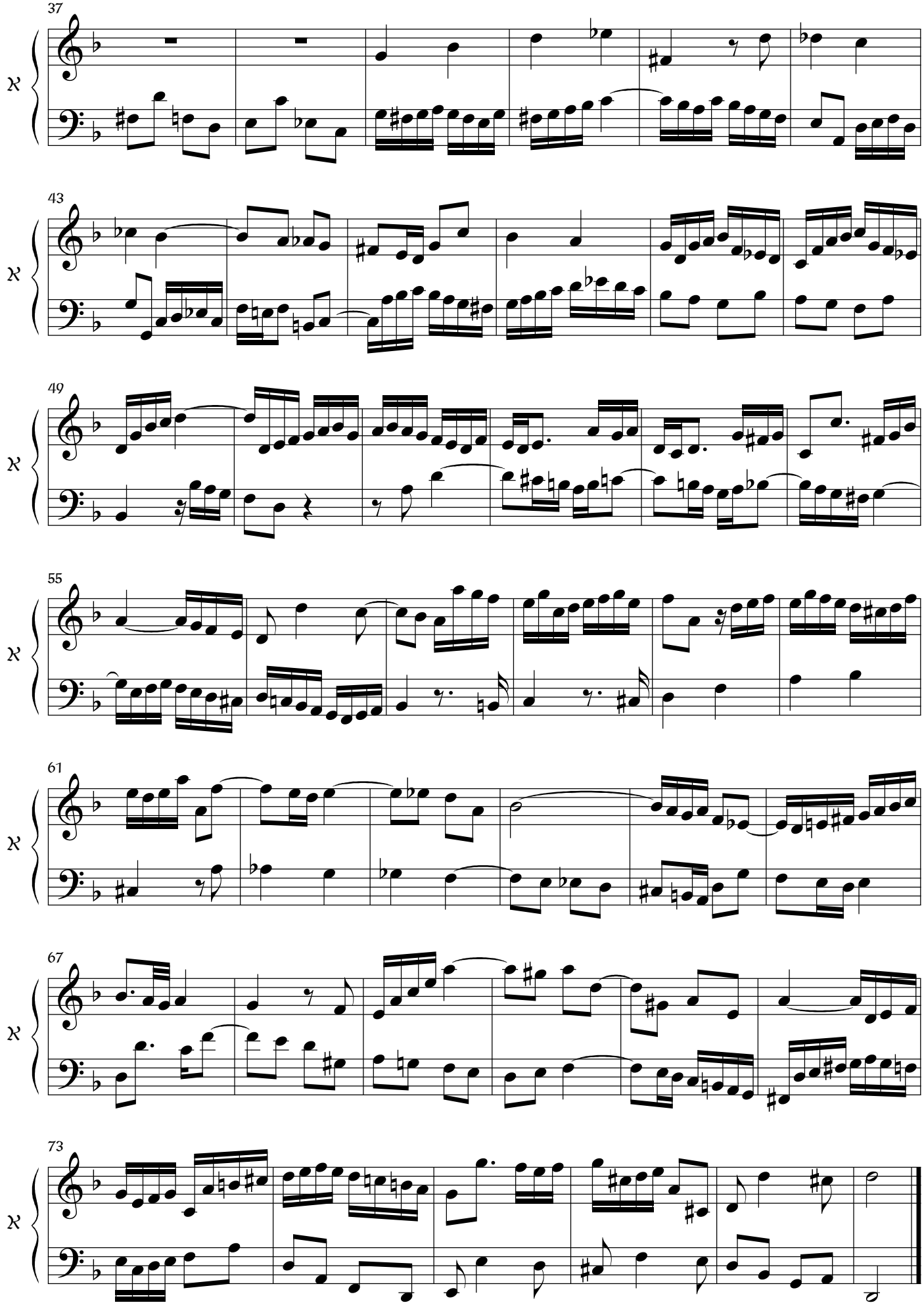
6. Canonic Fugue at the Fifth Above

Fuga Canonica in Epidiapente

Keyboard minus flute part
(pitch raised a major second)

J. S. Bach




37
43
49
55
61
67
73

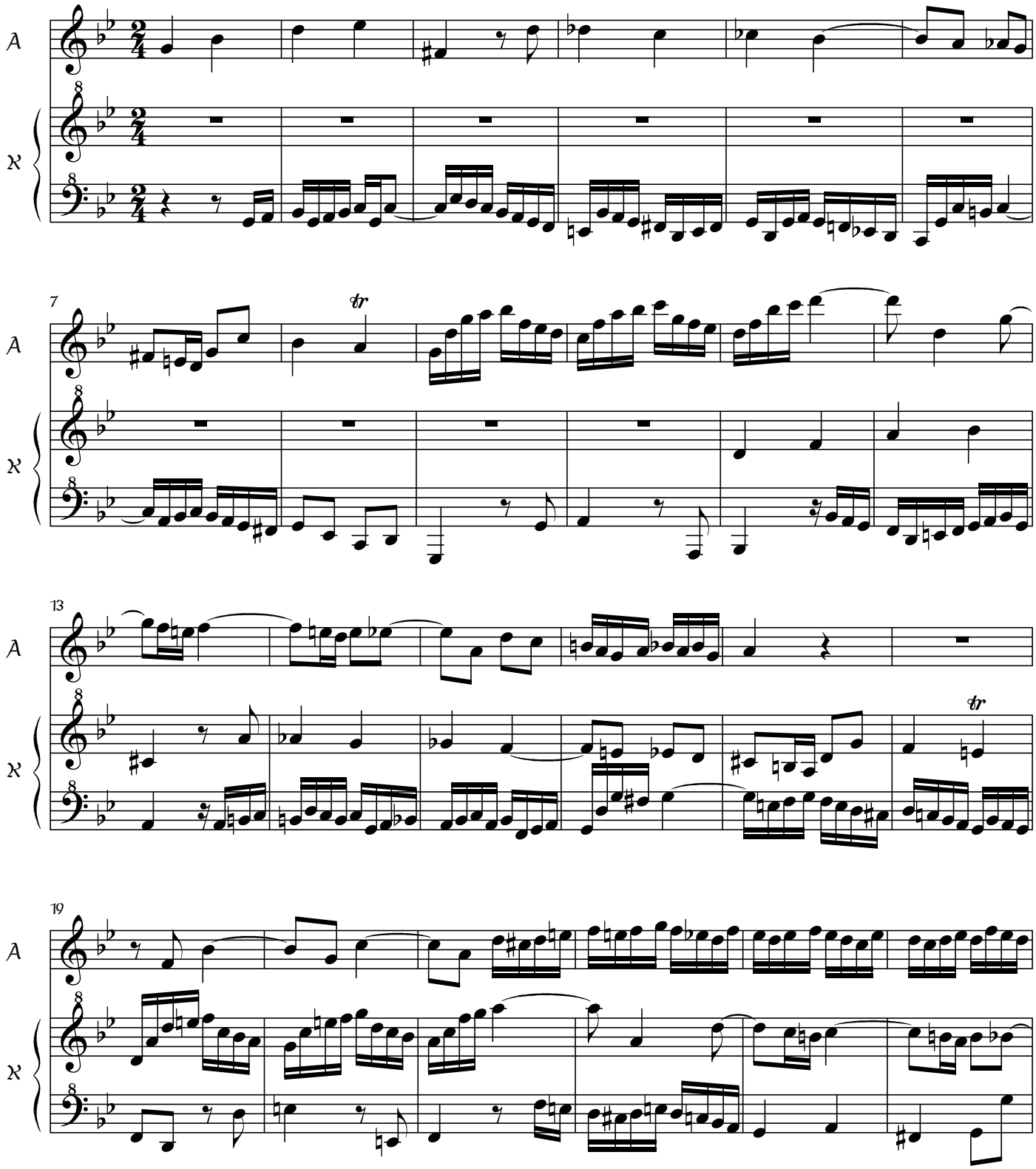
6. Canonic Fugue at the Fifth Above

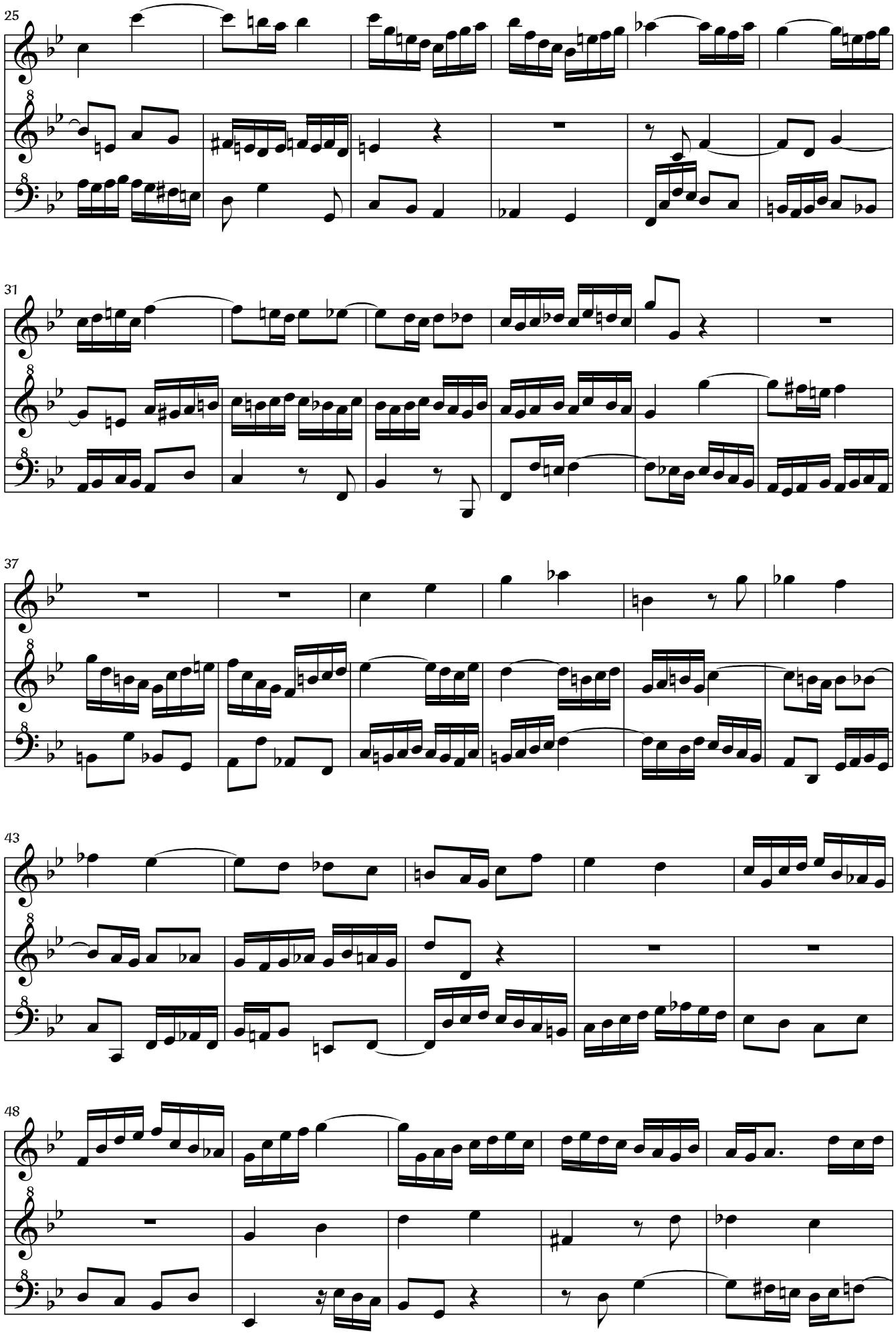
Fuga Canonica in Epidiapente

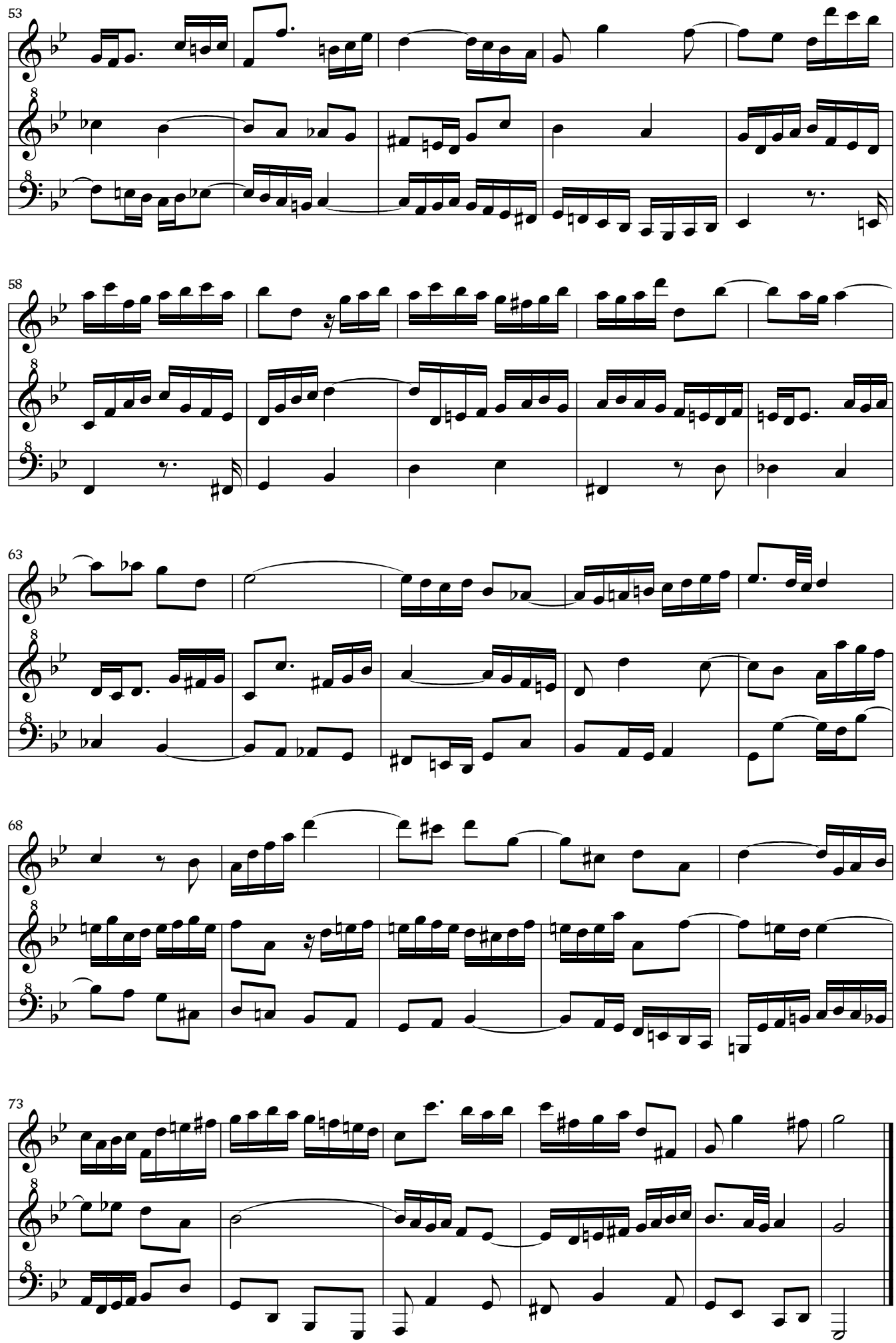
The Canonic Fugue is a strict canon, in which the highest voice exactly transposes the middle voice up a perfect fifth, while the lowest voice moves independently.

Alto recorder and keyboard

J. S. Bach




25
A
31
A
37
A
43
A
48
A


53
A
58
63
68
73

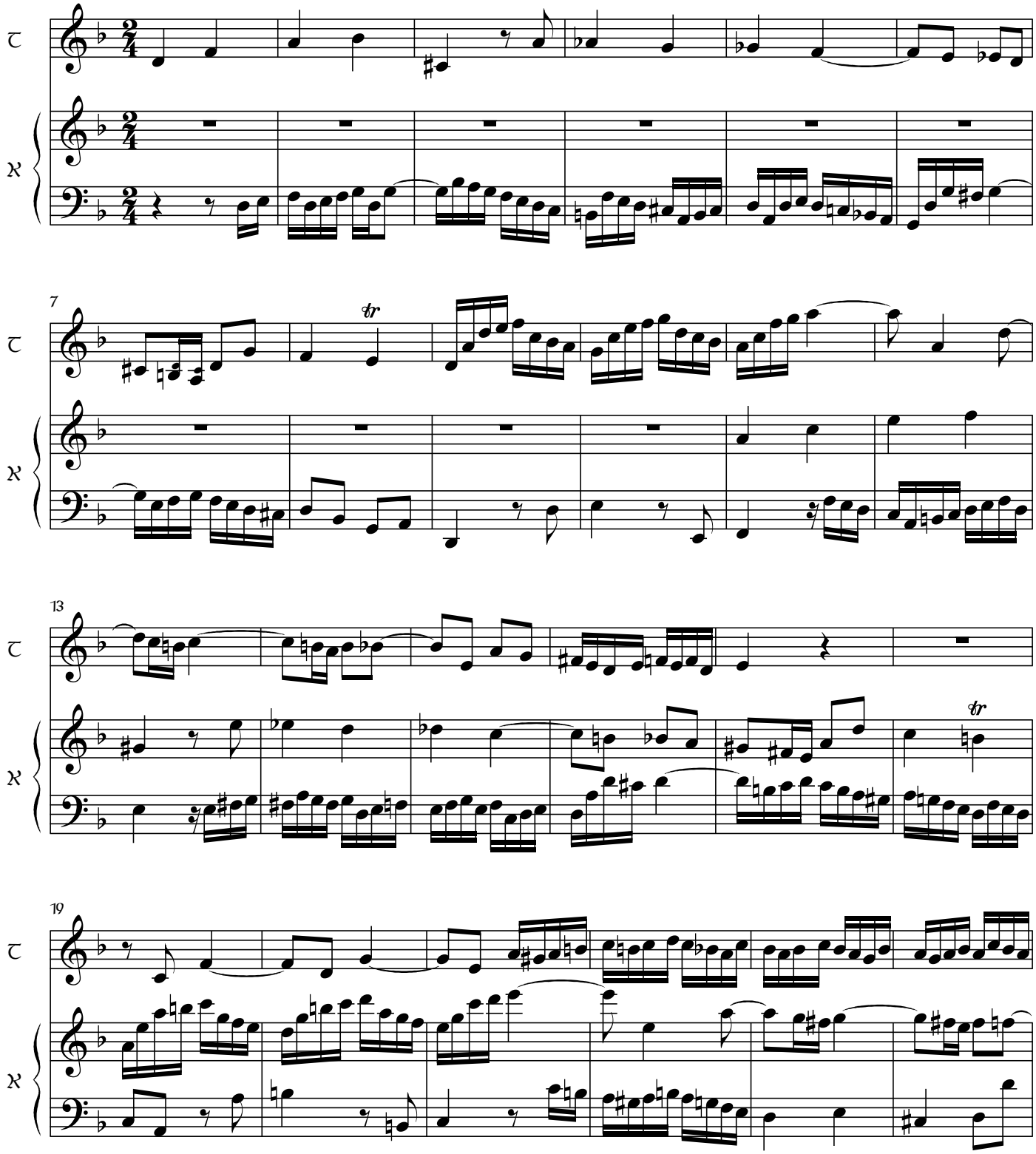
6. Canonic Fugue at the Fifth Above

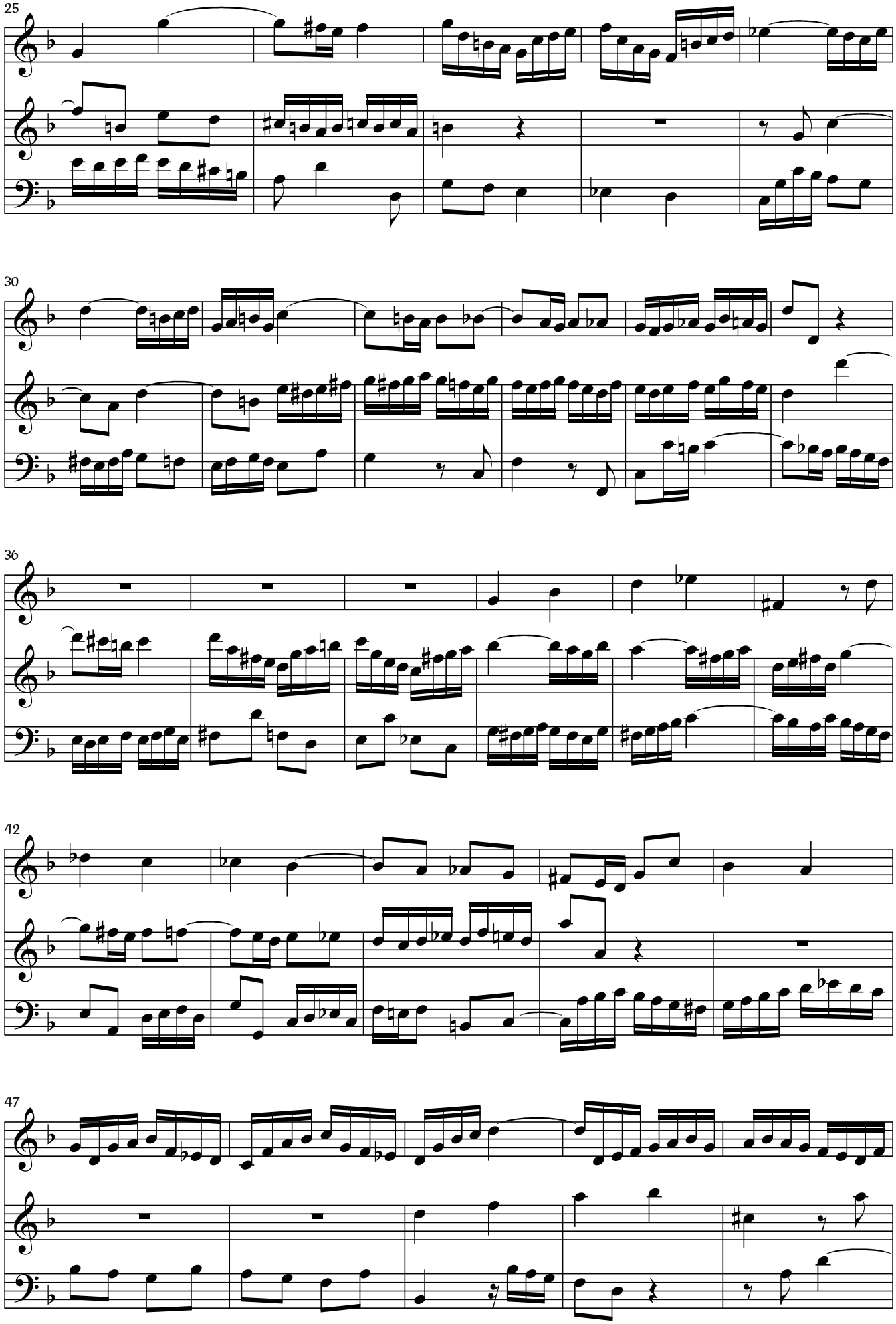
Fuga Canonica in Epidiapente

The Canonic Fugue is a strict canon, in which the highest voice exactly transposes the middle voice up a perfect fifth, while the lowest voice moves independently.

Tenor recorder and keyboard

J. S. Bach

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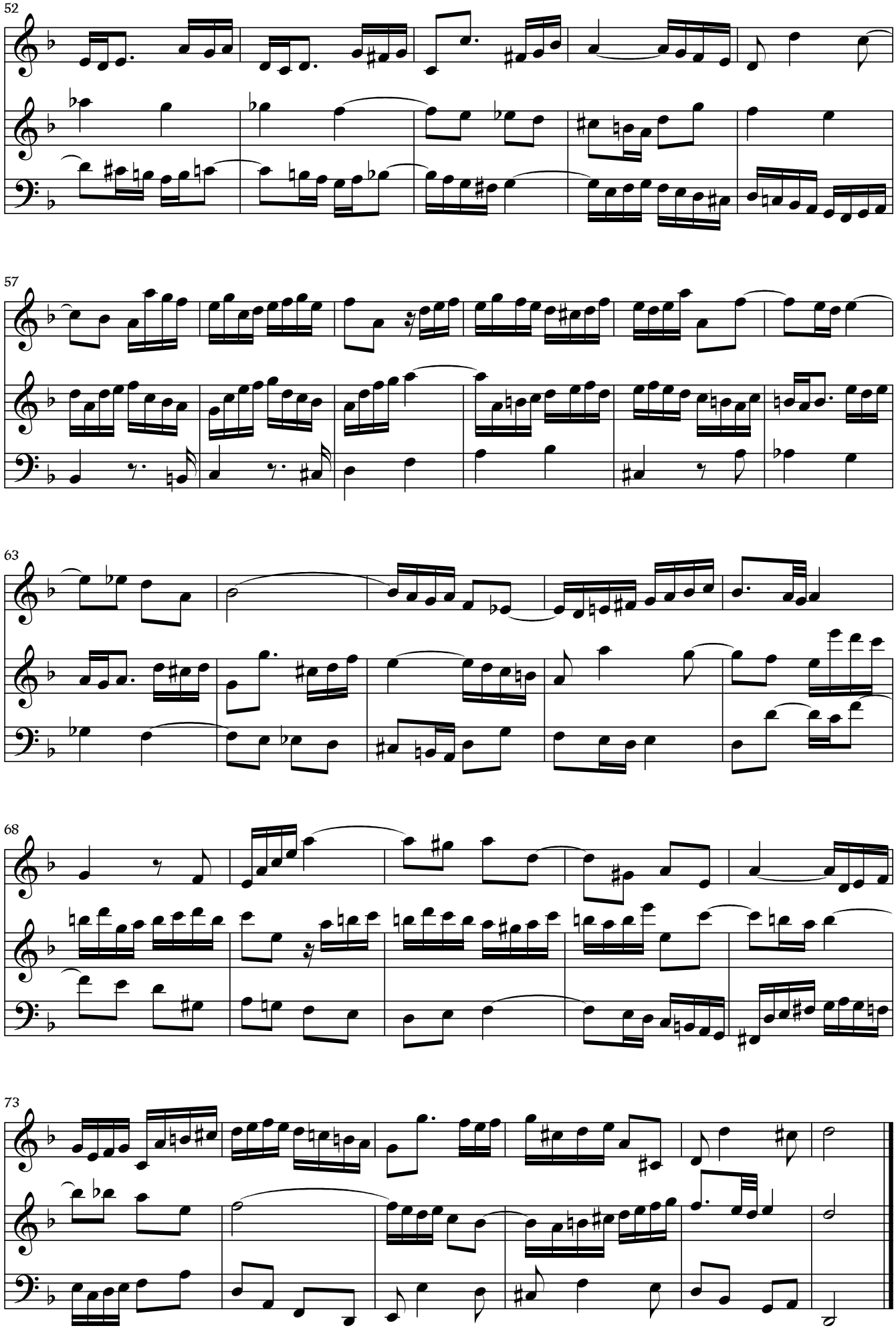
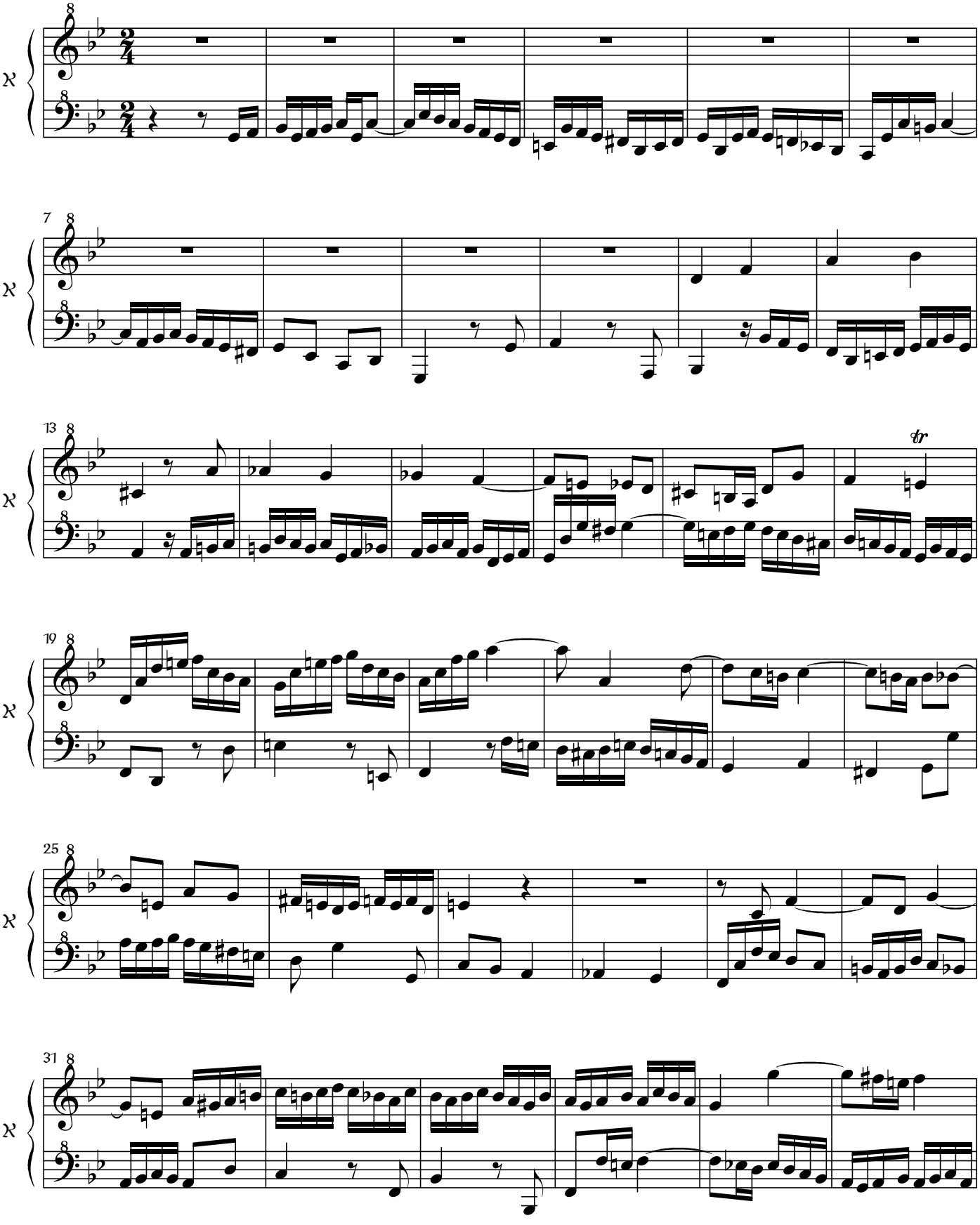

52
57
63
68
73

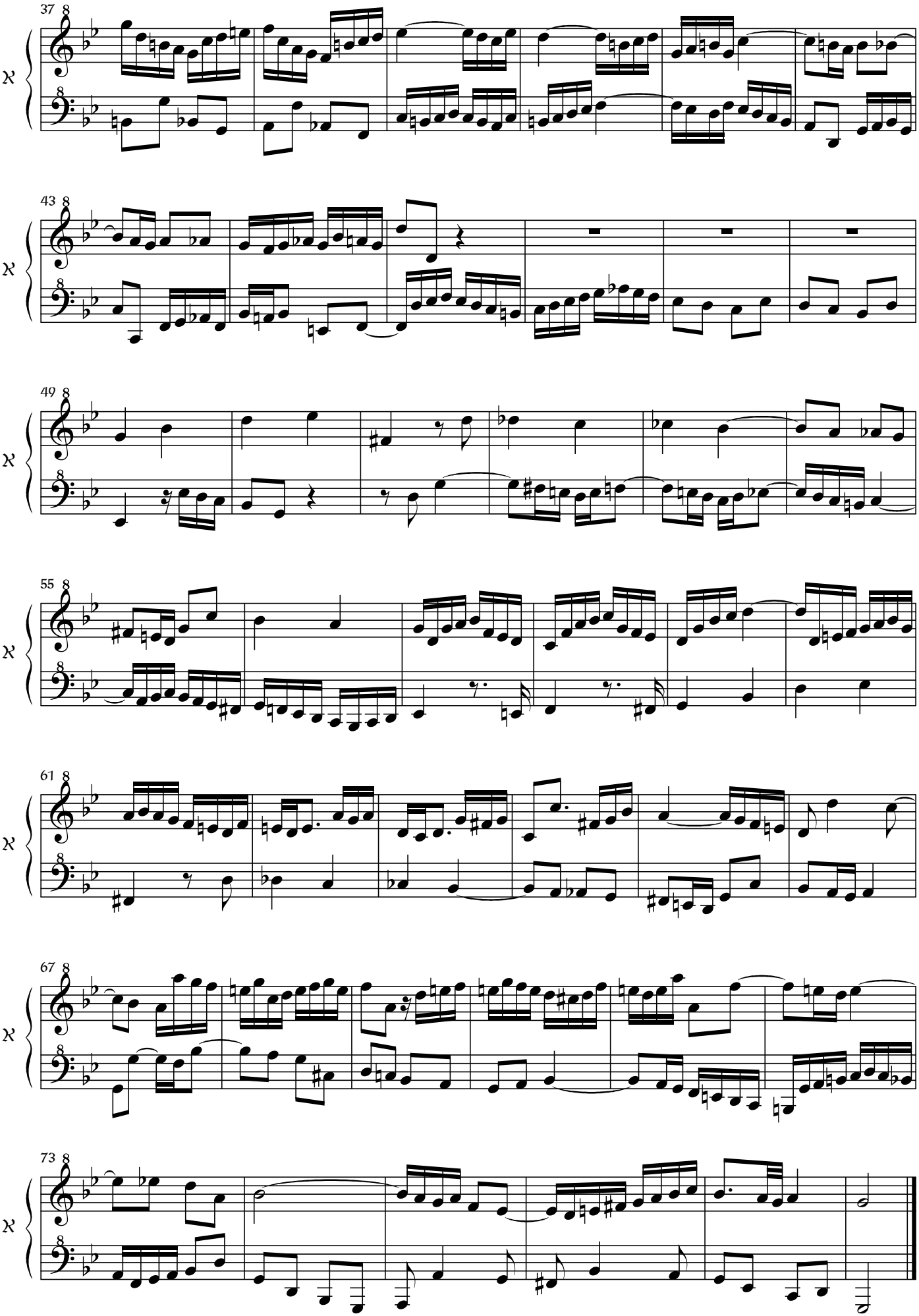
6. Canonic Fugue at the Fifth Above

Fuga Canonica in Epidiapente

Keyboard minus alto recorder part

J. S. Bach



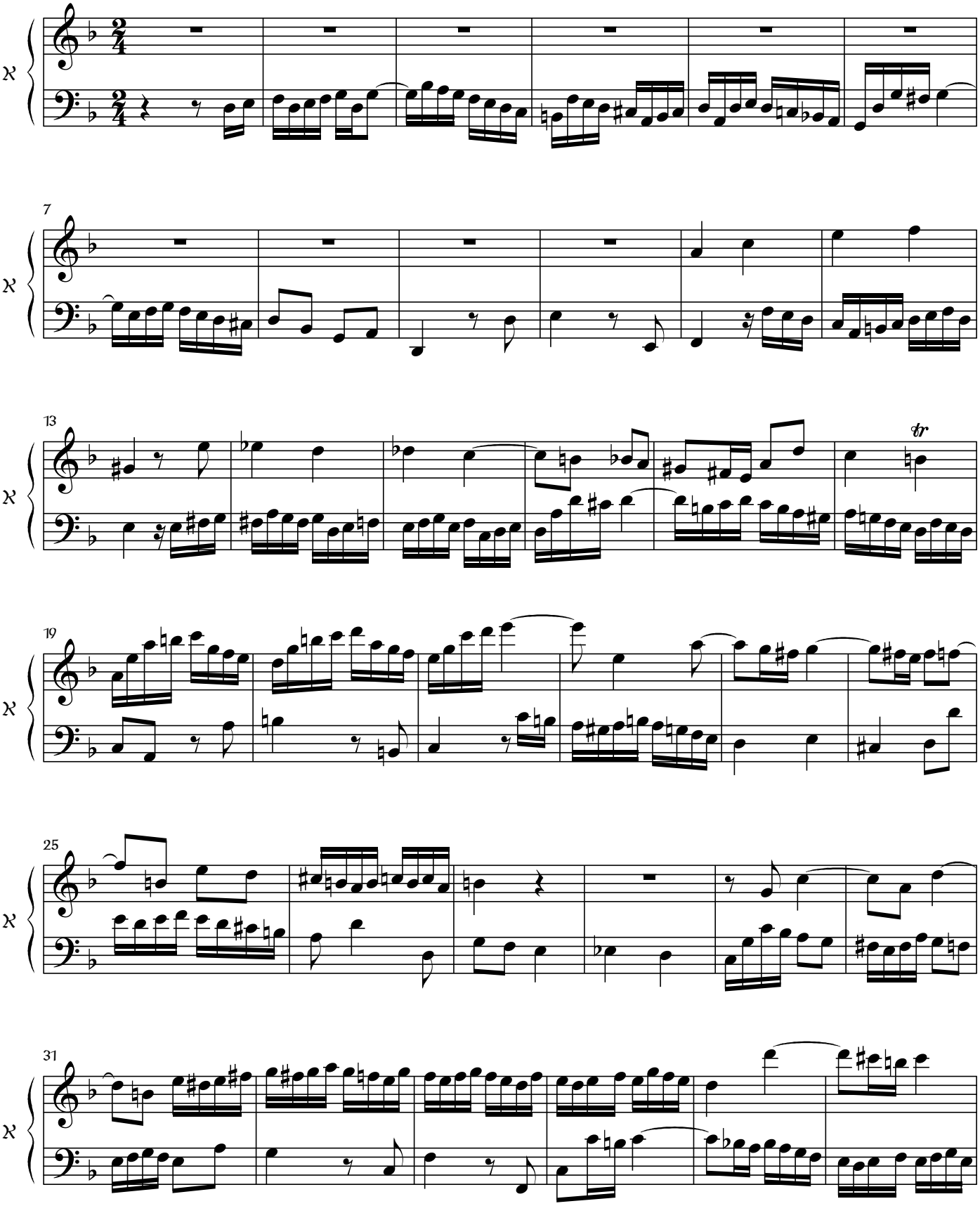

37
43
49
55
61
67
73

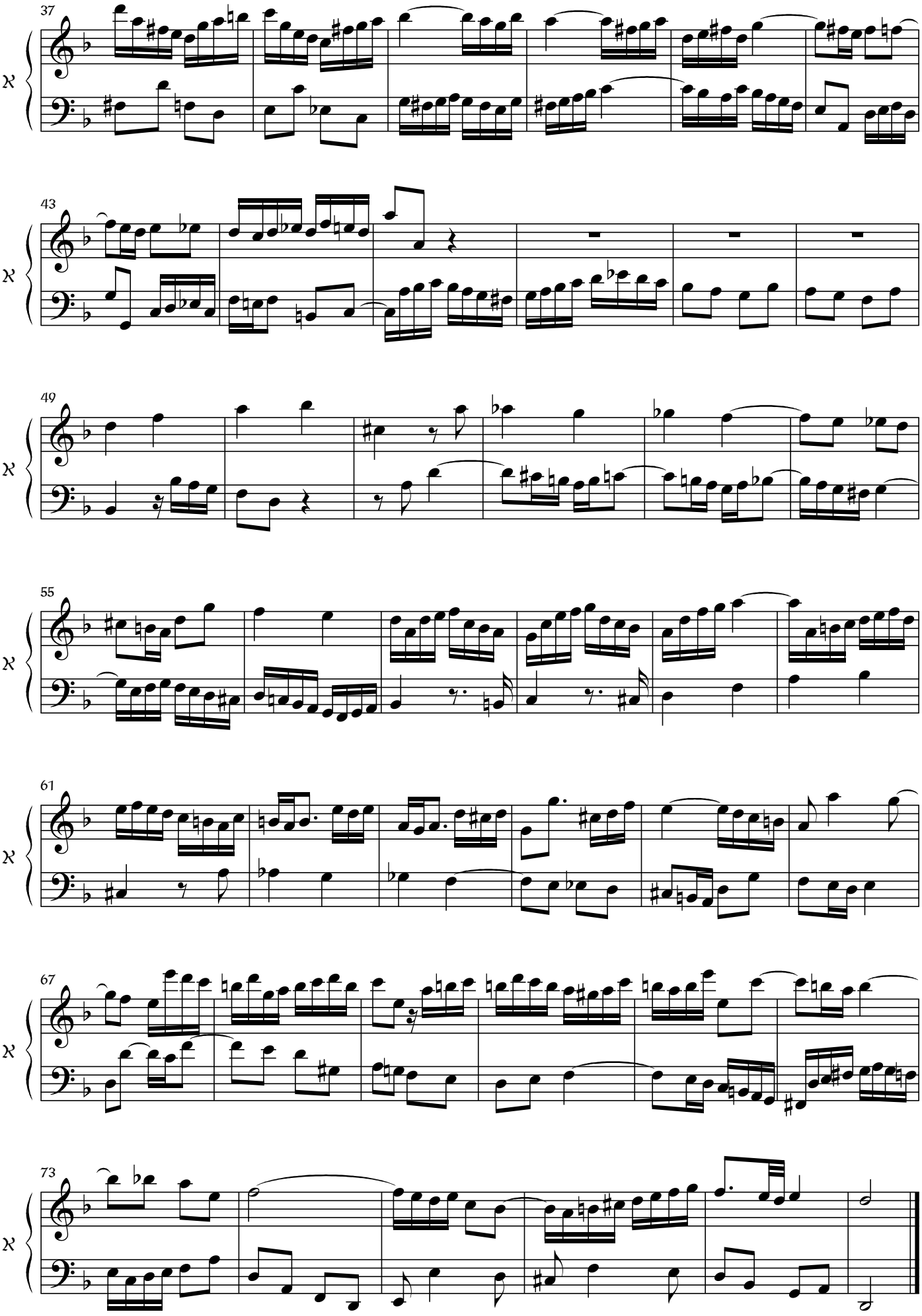
6. Canonic Fugue at the Fifth Above

Fuga Canonica in Epidiapente

Keyboard minus tenor recorder part

J. S. Bach




37
43
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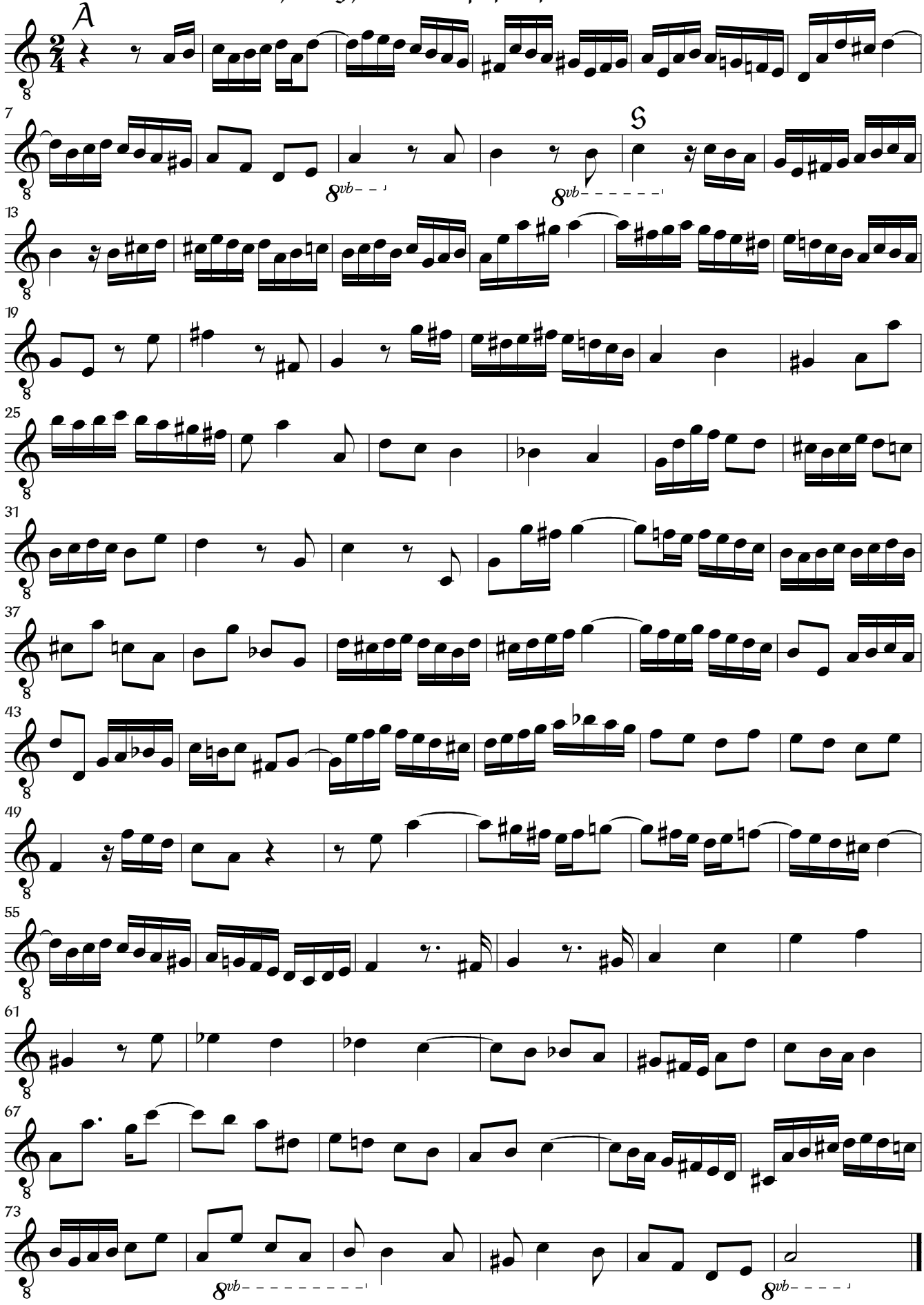
61
67
73

6. Canonic Fugue at the Fifth Above

Thorough Bass simplified for recorders

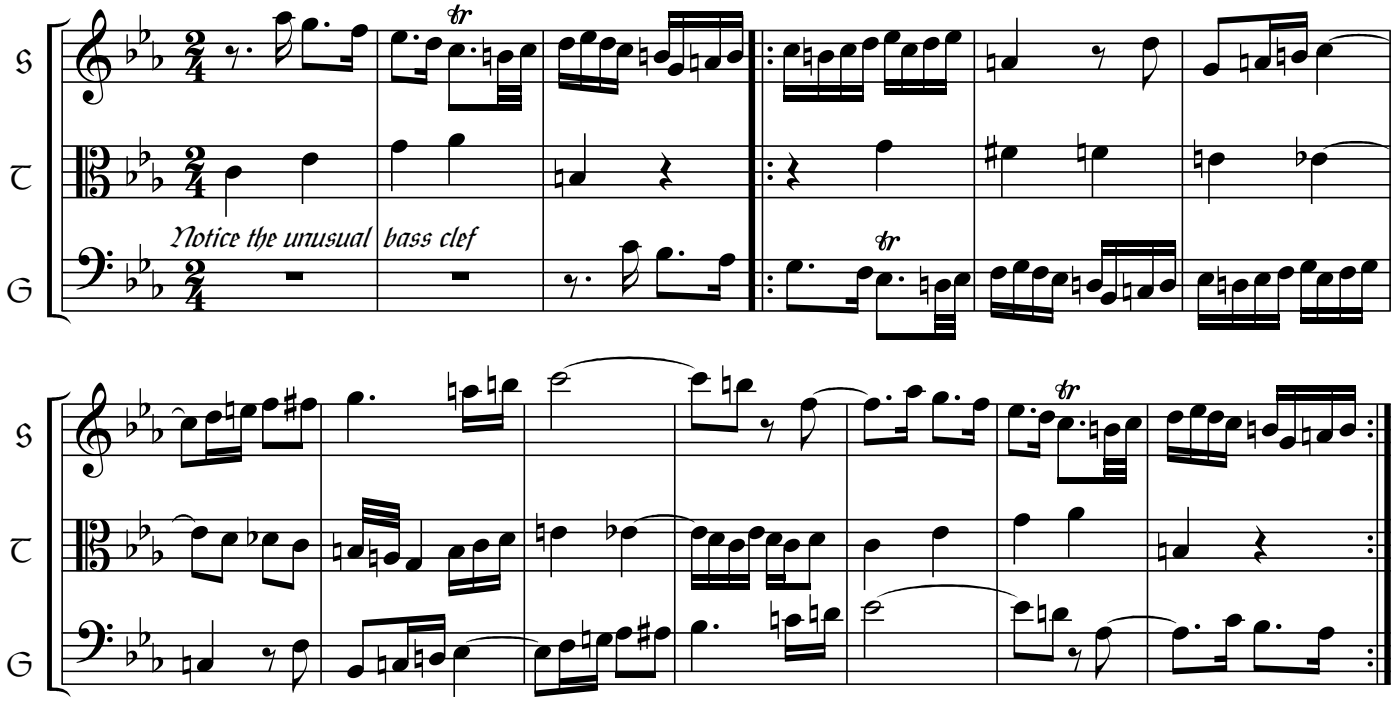
J. S. Bach



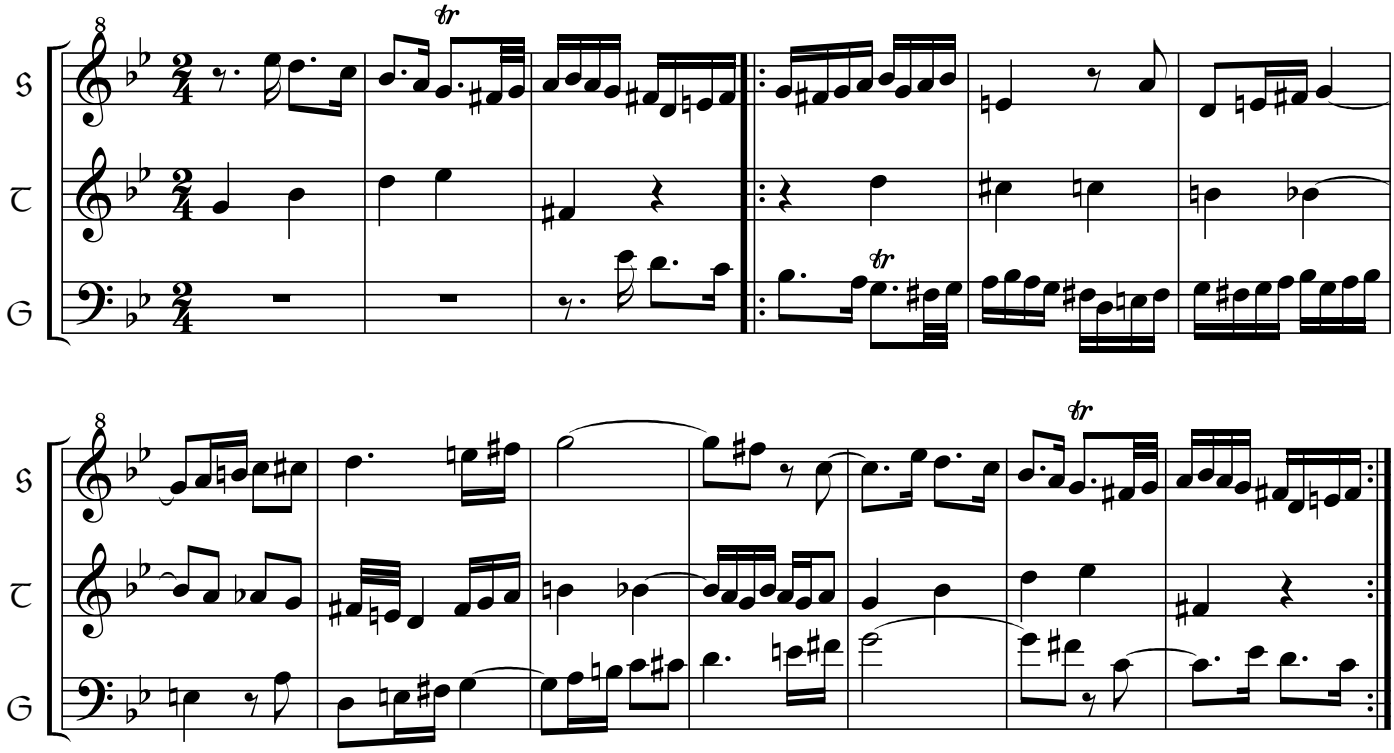
7. Endless Canon on the Royal Theme

Canon perpetuus super Thema Regium

J. S. Bach



STG recorders (or S recorder and keyboard)



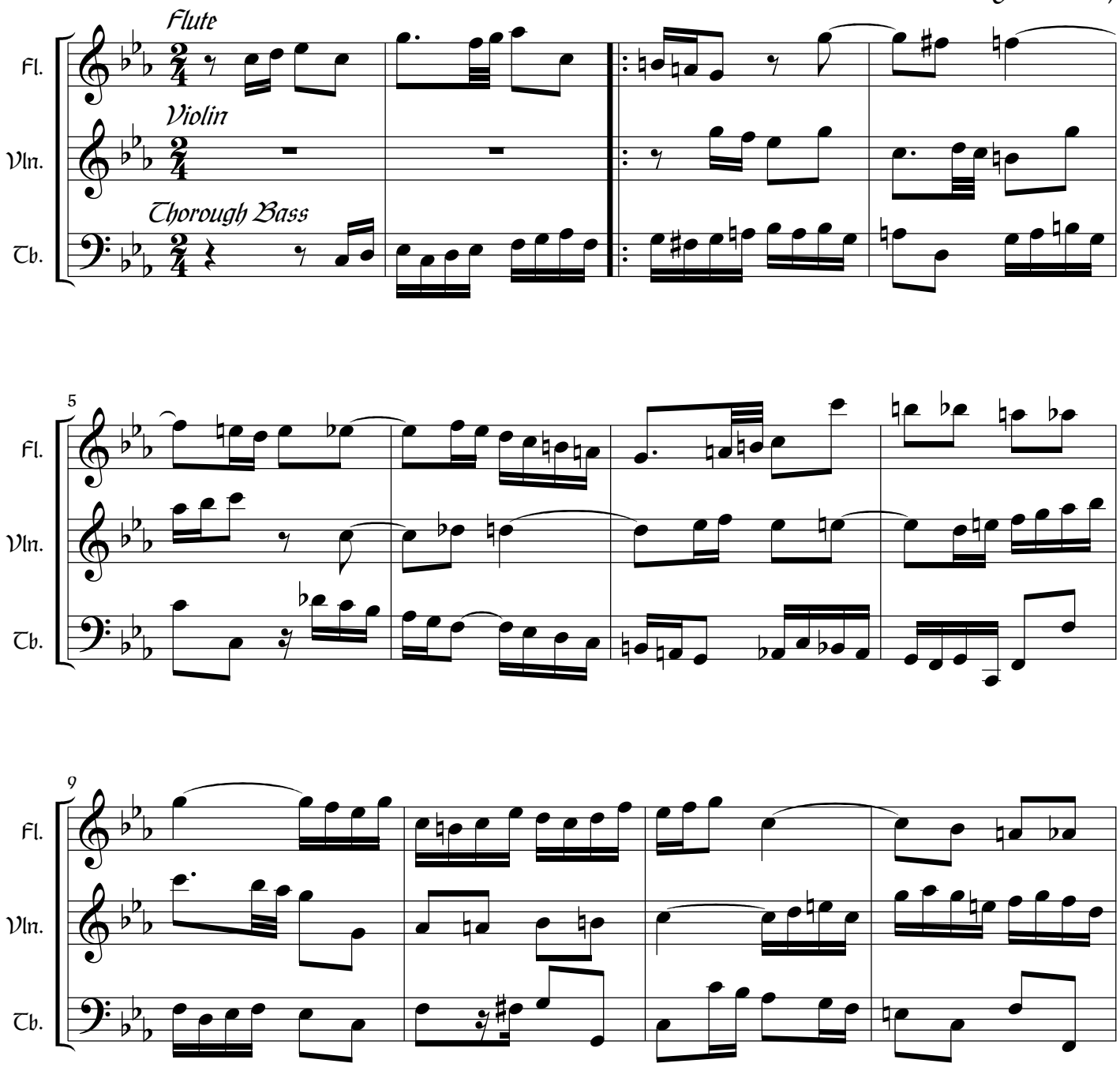
8. Endless Double Mirror Canon

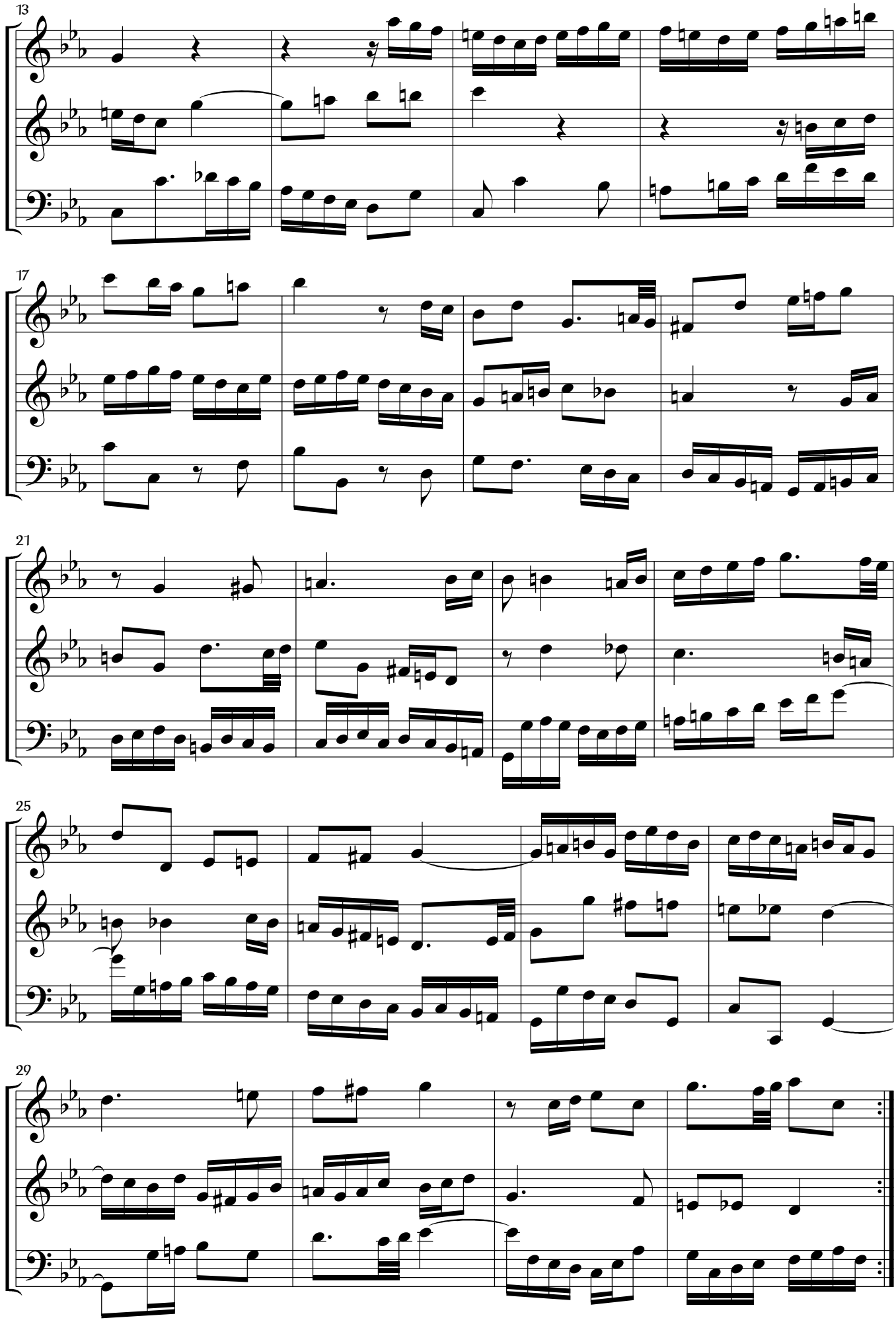
Canon perpetuus

Tecnically, this is not one, but two mirror canons inversion of each other, joined together by the canonic bridge passage in measures 14 through 18, while the lowest voice plays a free counterpoint all along.

Original version

J. S. Bach




13
Fl.
Vln.
Tb.
17
Fl.
Vln.
Tb.
21
Fl.
Vln.
Tb.
25
Fl.
Vln.
Tb.
29
Fl.
Vln.
Tb.

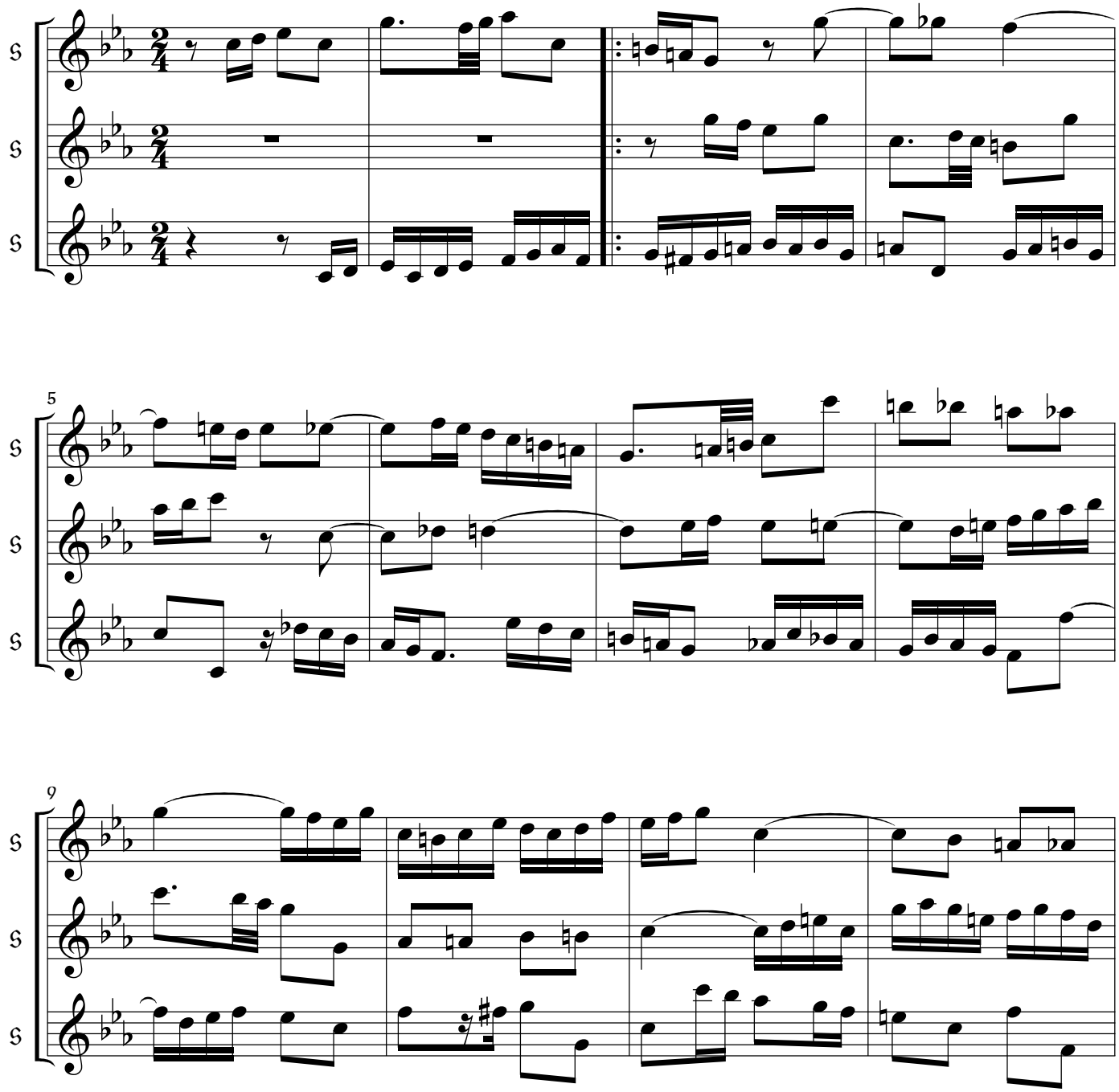
8. Endless Double Mirror Canon

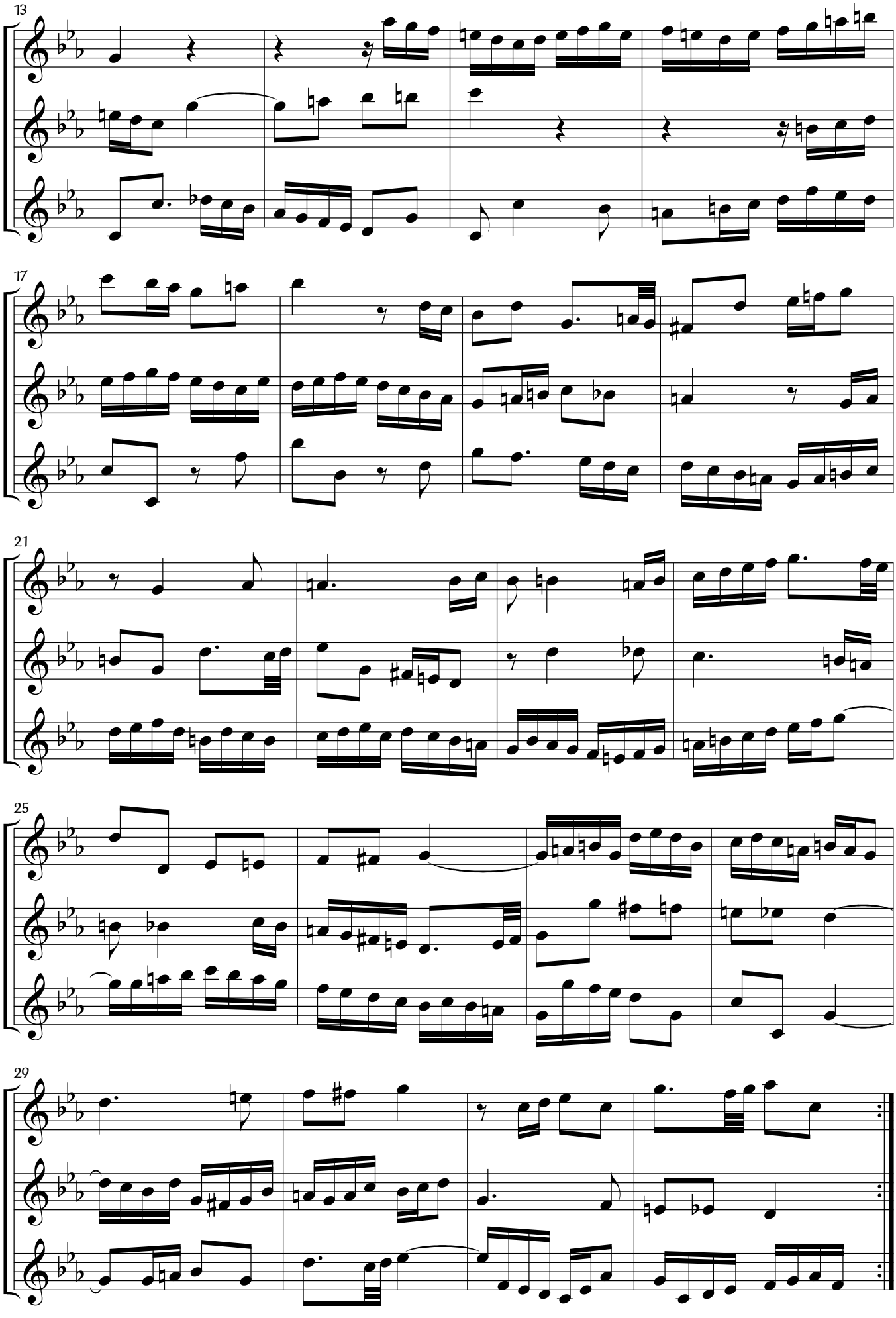
Canon perpetuus

Tecnically, this is not one, but two mirror canons inversion of each other, joined together by the canonic bridge passage in measures 14 through 18, while the lowest voice plays a free counterpoint all along.

Simplified SST or SSS recorders

J. S. Bach




13
17
21
25
29

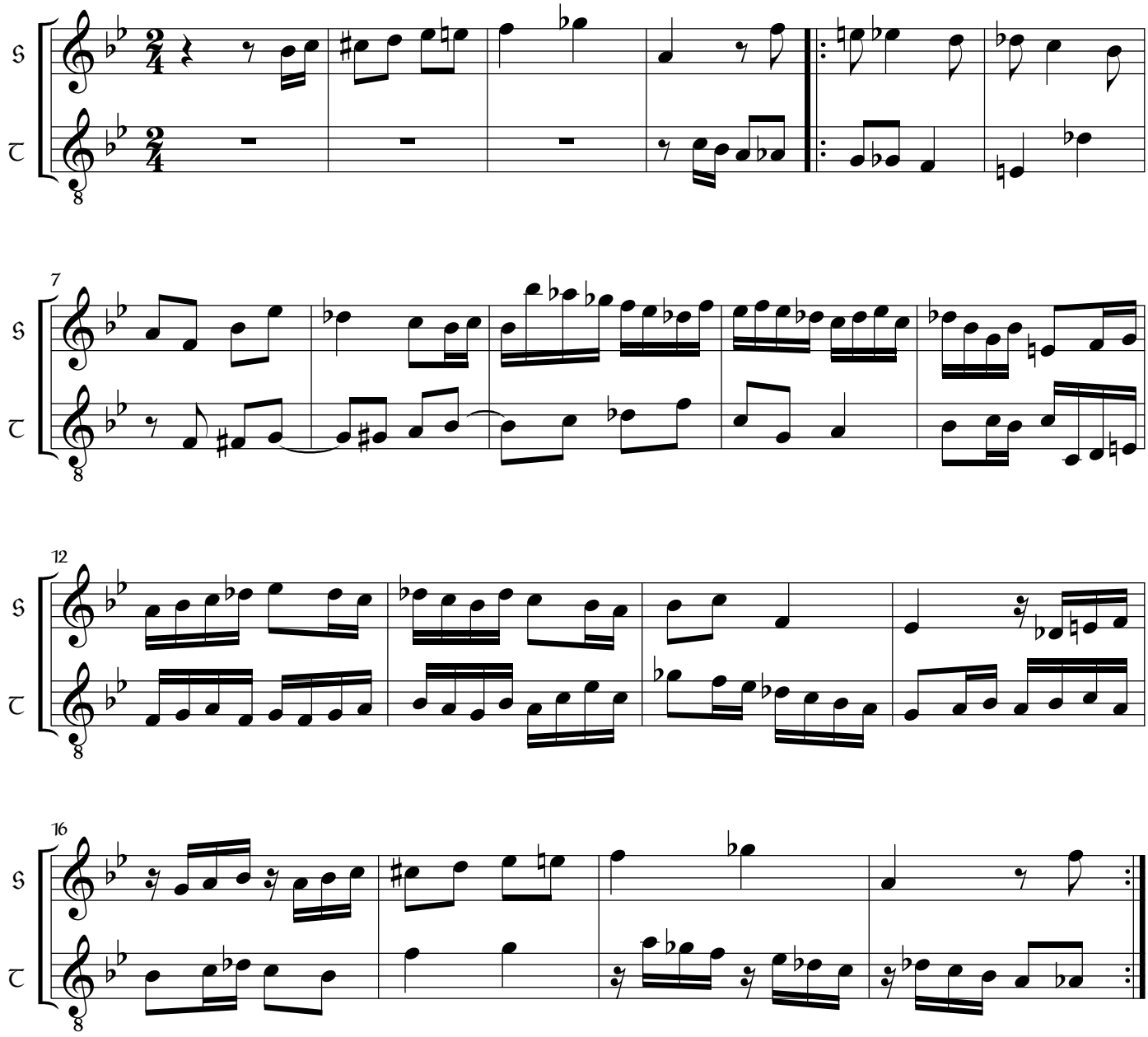
9. Two-part Riddle Canon

Canon a 2 Quaerendo invenietis

'You would hear a most beautiful art
should the follower know when to start.'

We know Bach intended this to be a mirror canon, but he intentionally told us to find out when the follower starts. I hope the following solution is satisfying enough.

J. S. Bach

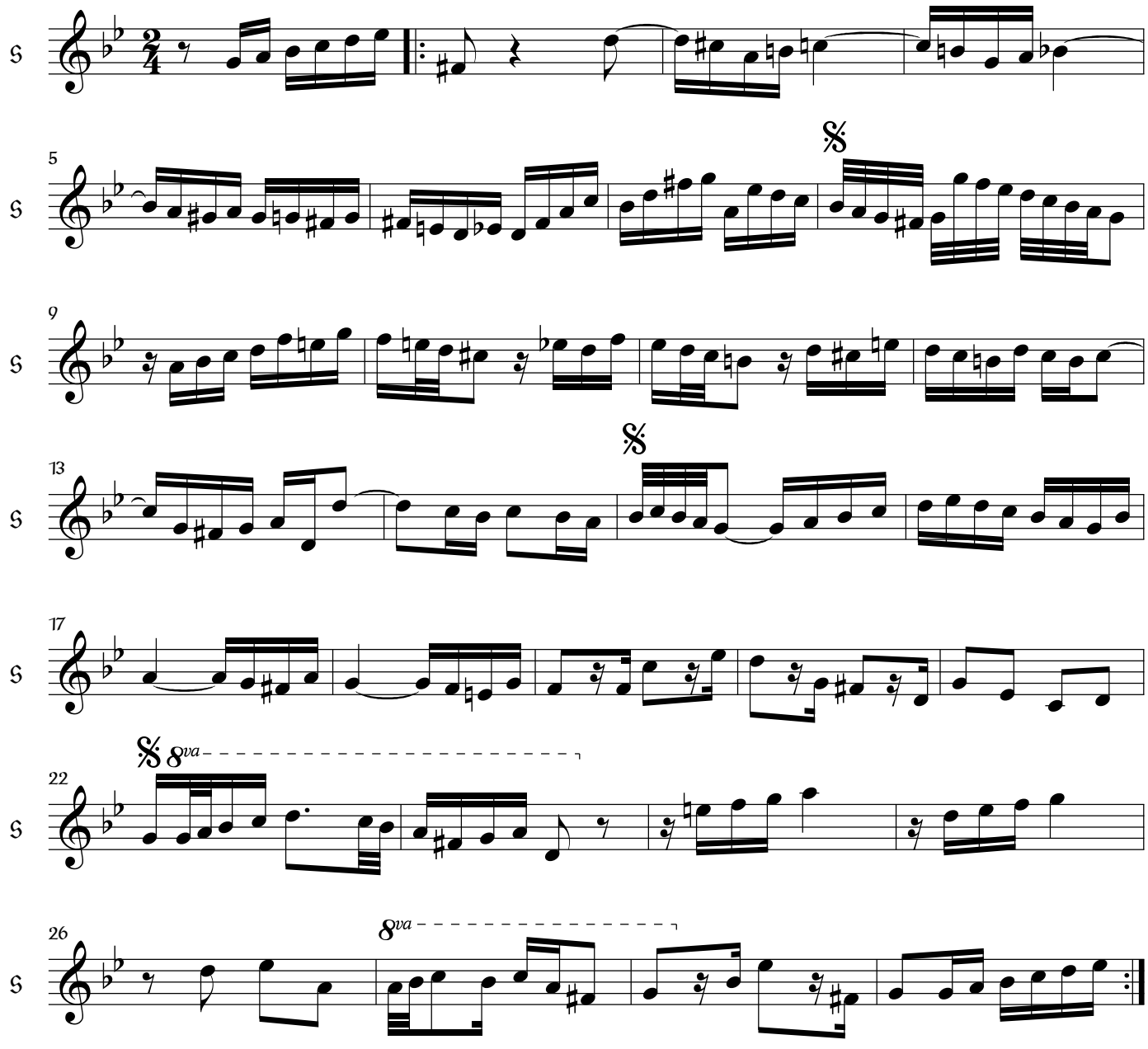


10. Four-part Riddle Canon.

Canon a 4 Quaerendo invenietis

'You would hear a most beautiful art
should the followers know when to start.'

Bach did not tell us when the followers of this canon should start, instead we are invited to figure it out by ourselves. The original version below is suitable for a set of SSST recorders, though some small fragments may be lowered by an octave.

Original version

J. S. Bach