“Das Glockenbüchlein”: An Exploration of Roy Hamlin Johnson’s *Carillon Book for the Liturgical Year*, its genesis, music, and relation to J.S. Bach’s *Orgelbüchlein*

Completed with support of a 2016 Ronald Barnes Memorial Scholarship

Premise

- *A Carillon Book for the Liturgical Year*
  - R.H. Johnson
  - Composed between 1968 and 1986
  - 41 settings of liturgical hymn tunes
- This investigation:
  - Bipartite:
    - Part I: An overview of the work, its genesis, its music
    - Part II: The relationship between the *CBLY* and J.S. Bach's *Orgelbüchlein*

Roy Hamlin Johnson: Biographical Sketch

- b. 1929, Beckley, WV
- Educated at the Eastman School of Music
  - Studied Piano under Sandor Vas
- 1952: Fulbright Scholarship
  - Conservatoire de Paris, studying with Yves Nat and Georges Enesco
- 1954: Joined Piano Faculty at KU
  - Introduced to the carillon by Barnes

Roy Hamlin Johnson: Biographical Sketch

- 1956: First carillon compostion (*Summer Fanfares*)
- 1961: DMA (Eastman)
- 1965: Accepted a piano teaching position at UMCP

Intro to the *Carillon Book for the Liturgical Year*

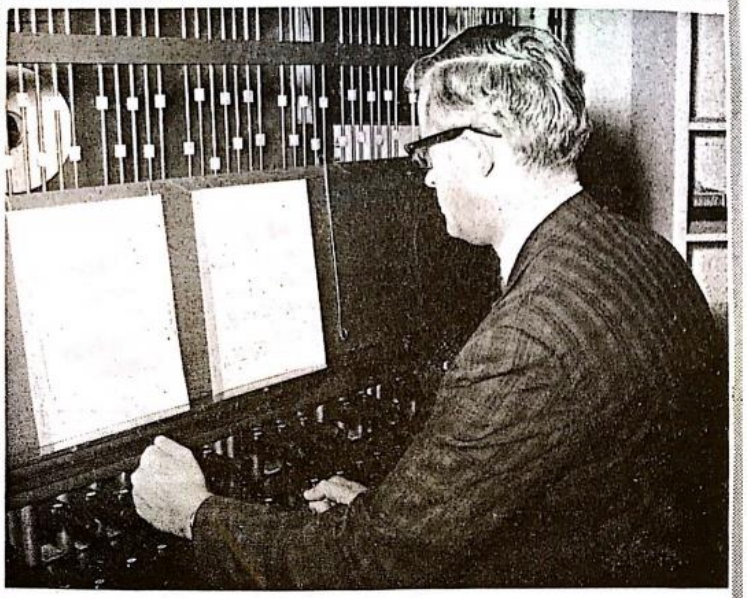
- 7 parts
  - Originally planned for 10 parts:
    - **Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Passiontide, Easter**, Rogation, Ascension, and Whitsunday, **General Use**
    - *Those in **bold** were realized*
- Of varying length and difficulty

CBLY: Compositional Process

- Begun in June 1968
  - First piece composed: Helmsley (I.4)
- Parts I (Advent) and II (Christmas) composed between 1 June and 12 July 1968
  - Parts I – V completed by 1969
  - Parts VI and VII composed in 1986

Early parts

- I – V
  - Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Passiontide
  - Composed 1968-1969
  - Published 1969 (I), 1970 (II, III), 1973 (IV, V)
- Supported by/dedicated to several influential institutions and individuals
  - Pt. II: UMCP CAPA, dedicated R. Barnes
  - Pt. III – V: The American Foundation
    - Pt. III, V: Dedicated to M. Myhre
    - Pt. IV: Dedicated to Mrs. Curtis Bok



Crowds Hear World Premiere

Christmas Eve, the story of Christmas, a first performance or "World Premiere" of the entirety of the music was presented this Christmas Eve at the Singing Tower. This music was written under a grant from the Creative Arts Board of the University of Maryland by Roy Hamlin Johnson, a noted composer and musician, and played by Milford Myhre. (above photo).

Roy Hamlin Johnson received a grant from the Creative and Performing Arts Board at the University of Maryland for the composition of a Carillon Book for the Liturgical Year, a project which will be continued during 1969 with the aid of the American Foundation.

Johnson was born July 7, 1929 in Beckley, West Virginia, and was educated in the public schools of Fayetteville, West Virginia and Mason College of Charlotte, West Va., where he studied piano and composition with Walter Bricht. He entered piano class of Sandor Vas at Eastman School of Music in 1946 and was awarded a Bachelor of Music degree and the Performers Certificate in piano in 1949. In 1951 he received his Master of Music degree and the Artists Diploma in Piano. During 1952-53 he studied at the Paris Conservatory with Yves Nat.

Johnson became official pianist of the Rochester Philharmonic and in 1954 accepted a position on the piano faculty at the University of Kansas, a position he retained for 11 years. During this period he performed widely as a pianist and made broadcasts with the Oklahoma City Symphony, Dallas Symphony, New York City, Washington, D. C. and began composing for the carillon. His compositions include "Summer Fanfares," "Jubilant Carol," "Sonata" and "Te deum laudamus." His compositions for instruments other than the carillon include a Concerto for Oboe and Strings and many piano pieces.

John M. Hartley, an English instructor at Culver Military Academy, was narrator for both the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day programs which were very well attended. The readings were another first for the Singing Tower programs and were very impressive.

Early parts

- Cohesive
  - Composed in a relatively short span of time
  - Similar size of collections (3-9 pieces per part) and style
- All cantus firmi can be found in the *Hymnal 1940*
  - Including tunes found in very few other hymnals, such as CHARTRES, GEVAERT, HOLY GHOST
  - Illustrating the early tie to Ron Barnes/National Cathedral
- All completed by the time of a 1969 Guggenheim Fellowship Application
  - Unfortunately unsuccessful; likely the reason that the work's development was paused for 15+ more years

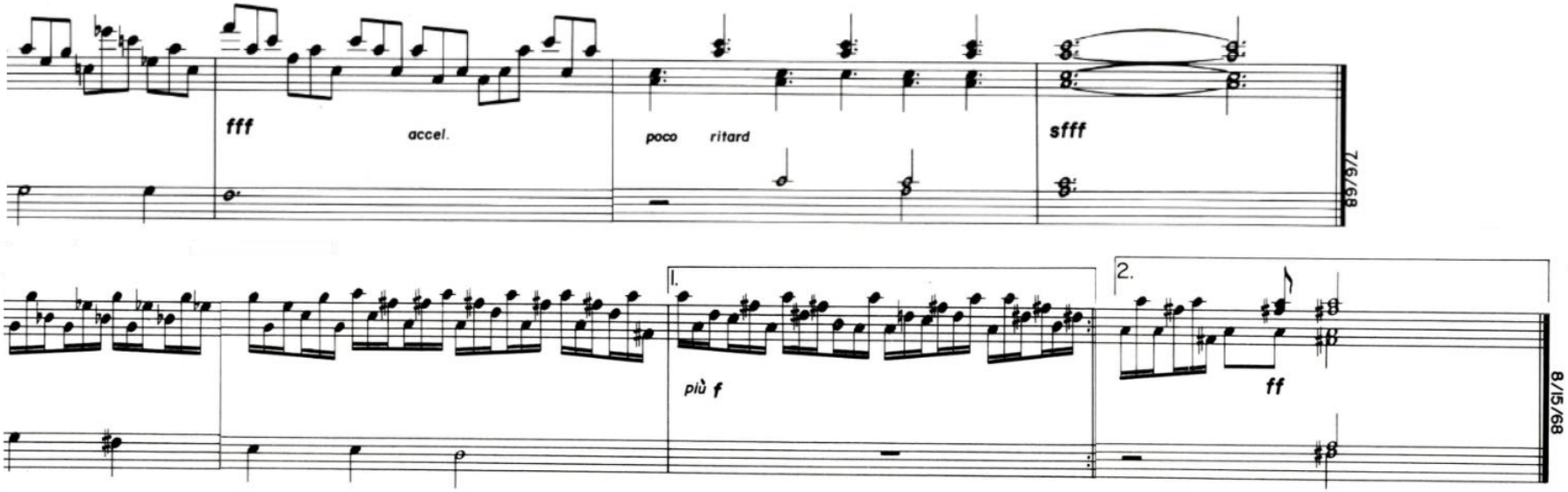
Later parts

- Parts VI (Easter) and VII (General Use)
- Composed 1986
- Part VI contains only two pieces, “St Albinus” and “Victimae paschali laudes”
  - “St Albinus” with the dedication “*In Memoriam Edward Bok*”
  - Victimae paschali laudes supported by UMCP CAPA
- Part VII is the largest of the work
  - 12 pieces
  - Supported by Church of St. John the Evangelist/SSJE, Cambridge, MA for S. S. Warner’s retirement

Compositional observations

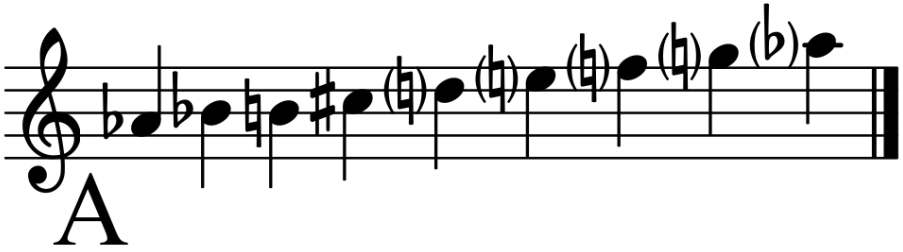
- Johnson prioritizes the use of musical language that plays to the strengths of bells
- For instance, the “residual cadence”
  - An attempt to minimize dissonance in a root position major harmony
  - “Sleepers, Wake”, “Rosa Mystica”, “Cradle Song”, “In Dulci Jubilo III”, “Salzburg”

Residual cadence



Compositional observations

- Johnson believed that the dominant-tonic relationship that undergirds tonal harmony is not highly suited to bells
- As a result, he developed his own language, drawing heavily from the octatonic scale
    - An alternating pattern of either tone-semitone or semitone-tone
  - Used widely by 20th century composers, esp. Messiaen
  - Illustration from “Puer Nobis” follows
  - Also widely incorporates parallel fifths, esp. in chant tunes, such as “Veni emmanuel”, “Conditor alme”, “Divinum mysterium”, and “Verbum supernum”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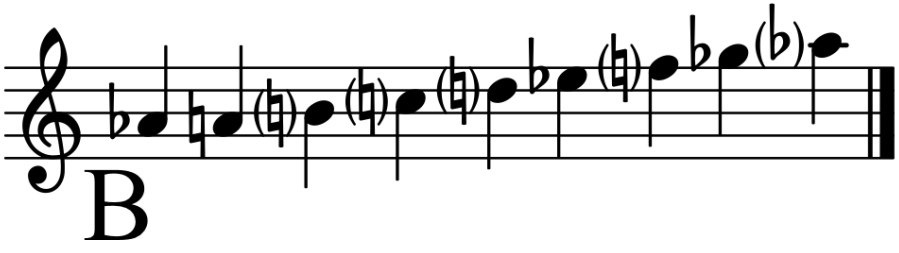
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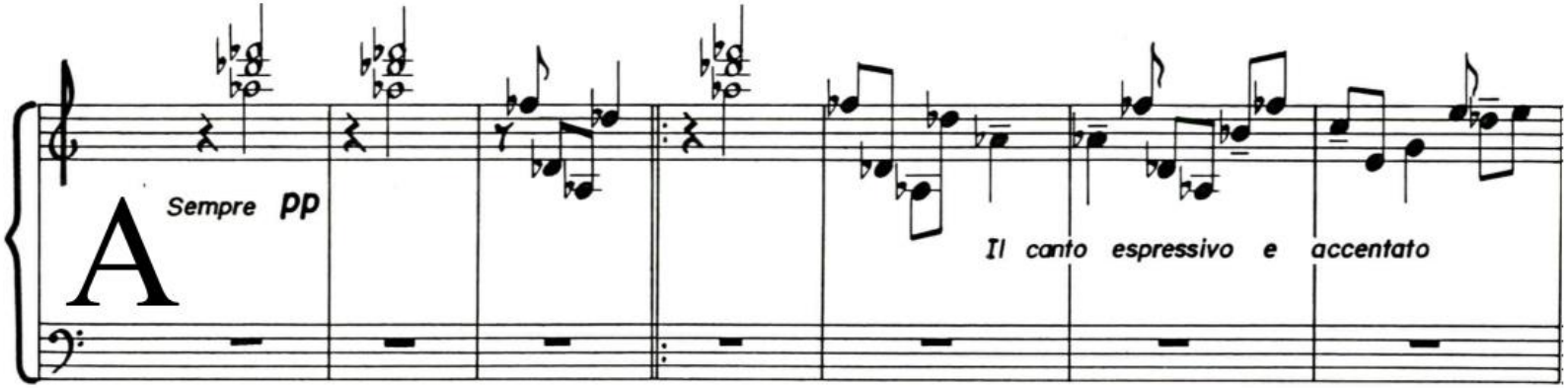
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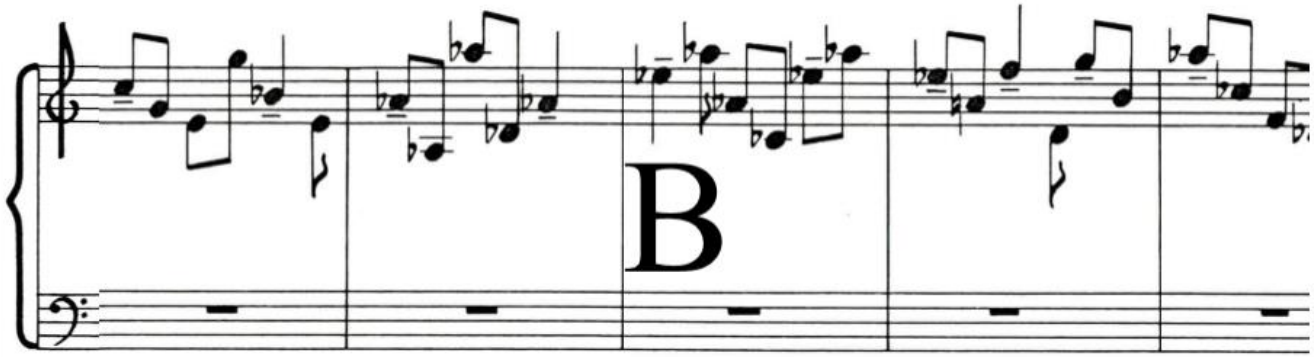
Sempre pp
Il canto espressivo e accentato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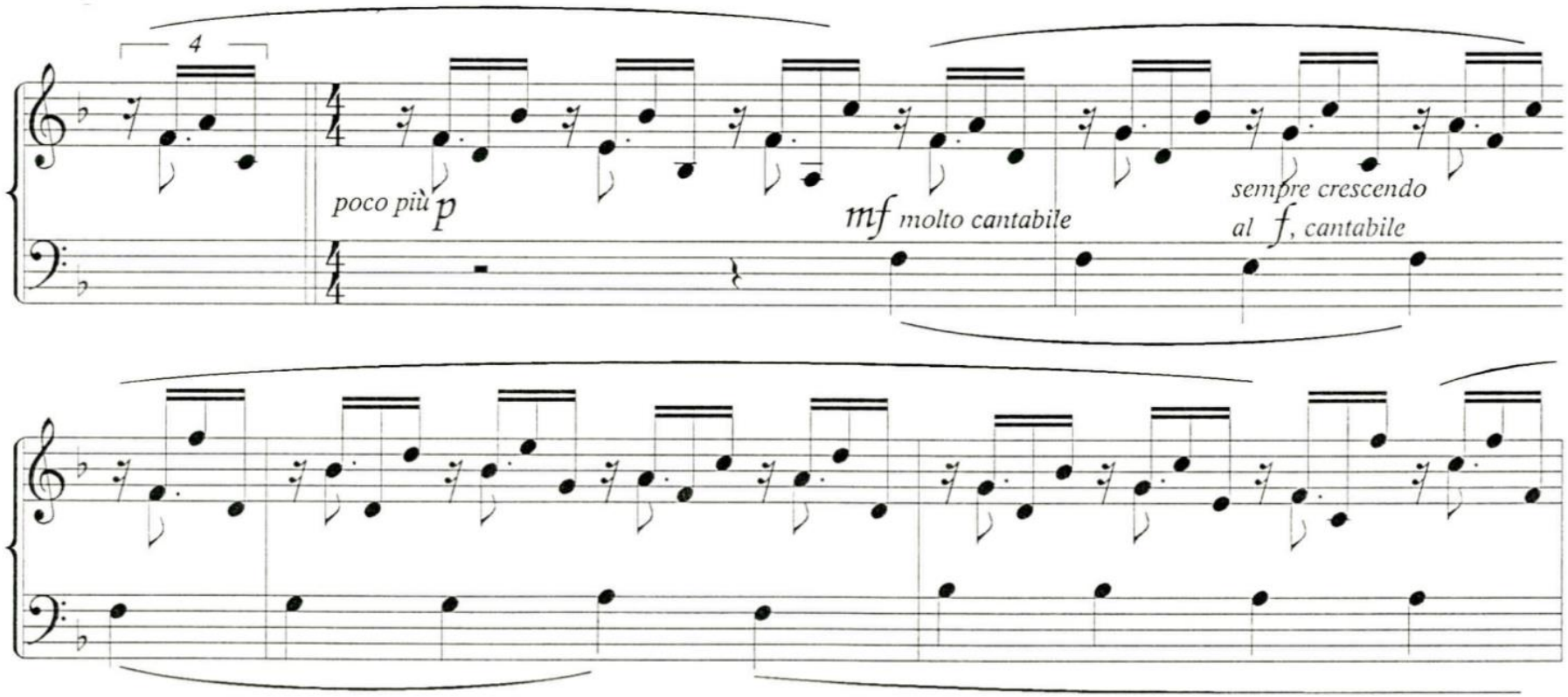
Compositional observations

- Johnson believed that the dominant-tonic relationship that undergirds tonal harmony is not highly suited to bells
- This new harmonic language is so pervasive in the work that virtually none of the 41 pieces in the work are composed in a tonal idiom
  - *Is this true?*
  - Some pieces appear to be tonal, right? (E.g., “Tallis’ Canon”)

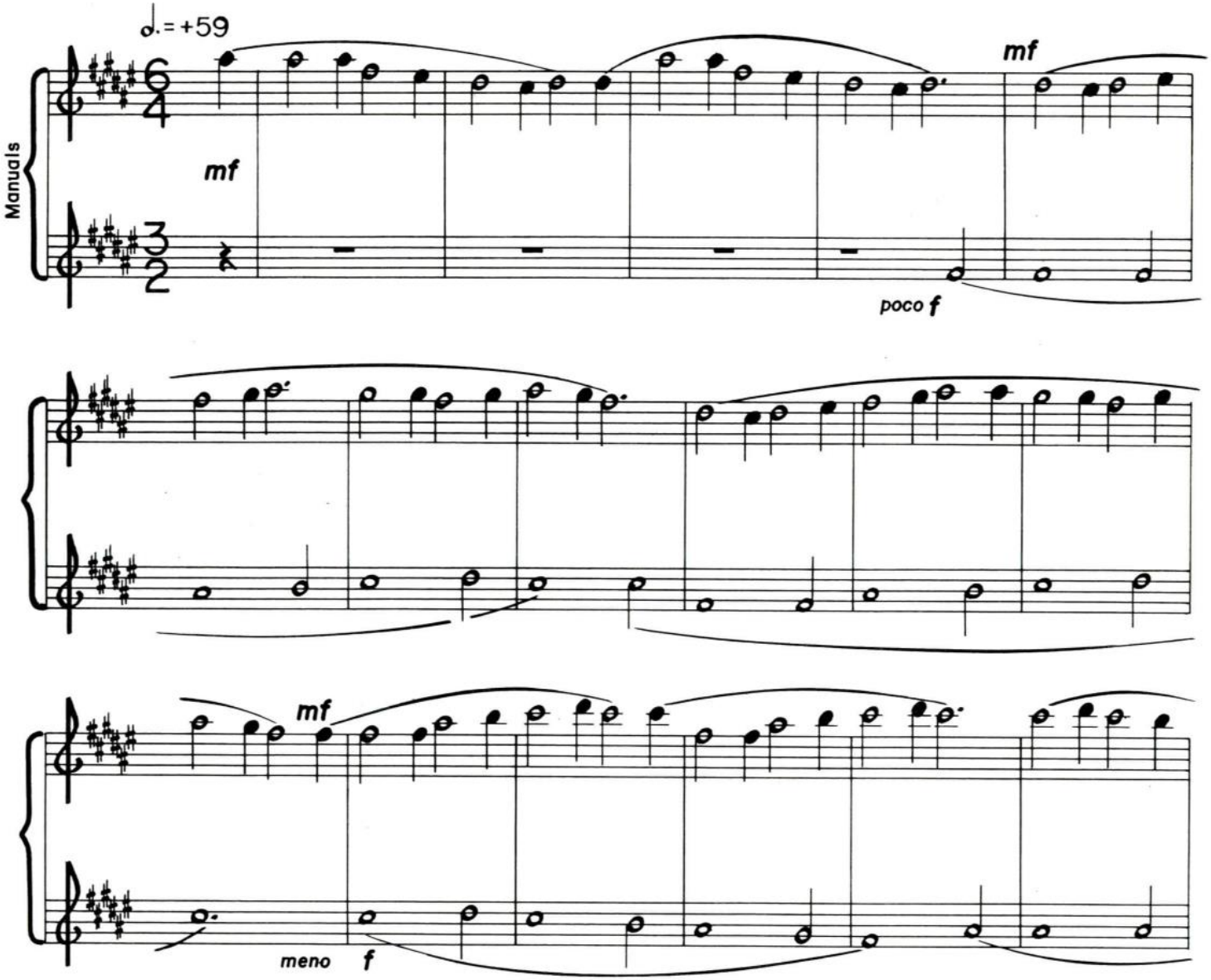
Canon

- Very prevalent in this work
  - 12 of the 41 pieces employ a canonic technique to some degree
  - Uncommon trait, given the relative paucity of imitative counterpoint in 20th century music
- Use of the technique runs the gamut
  - Examples:

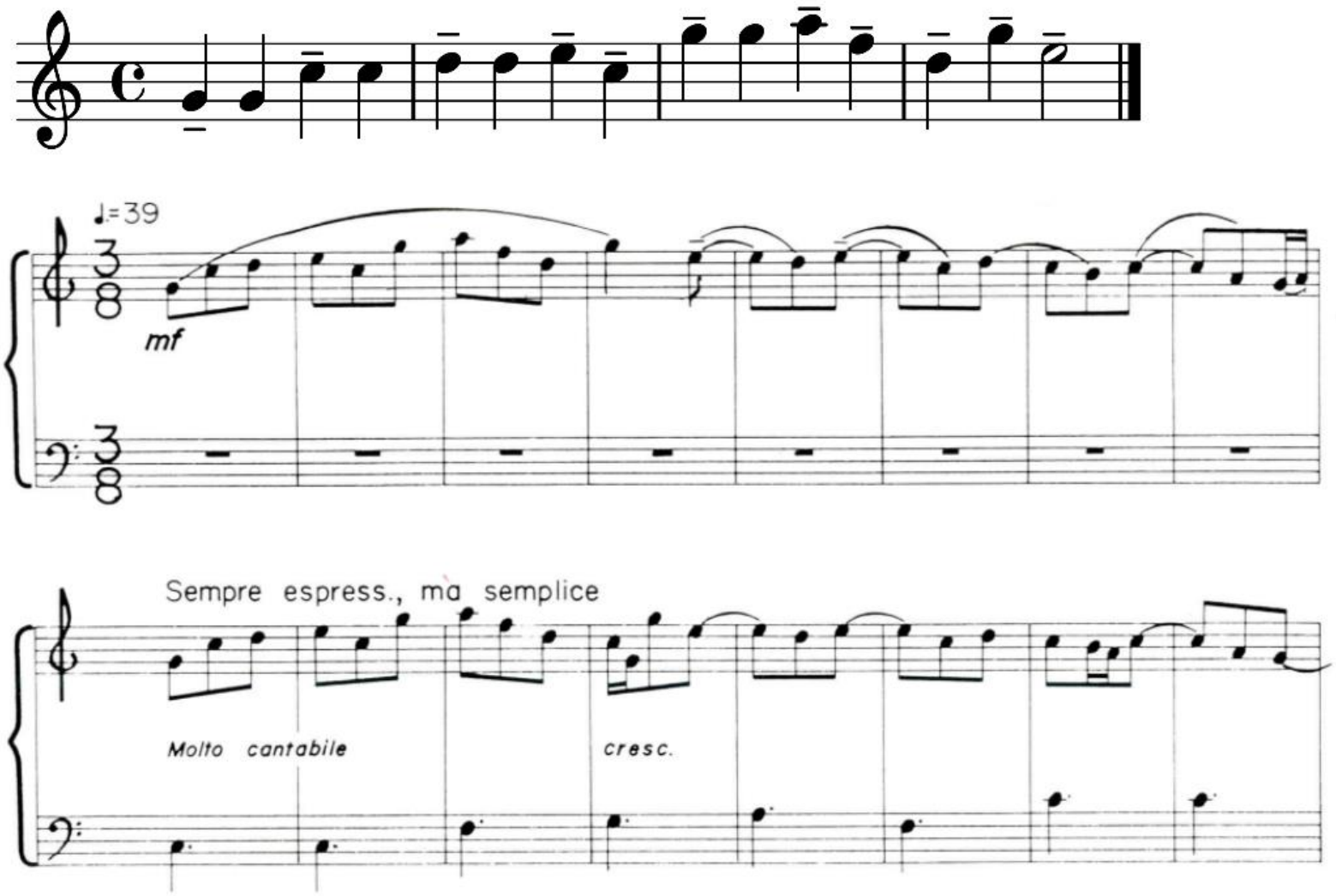
A strict, straightforward canon: Tallis' Canon



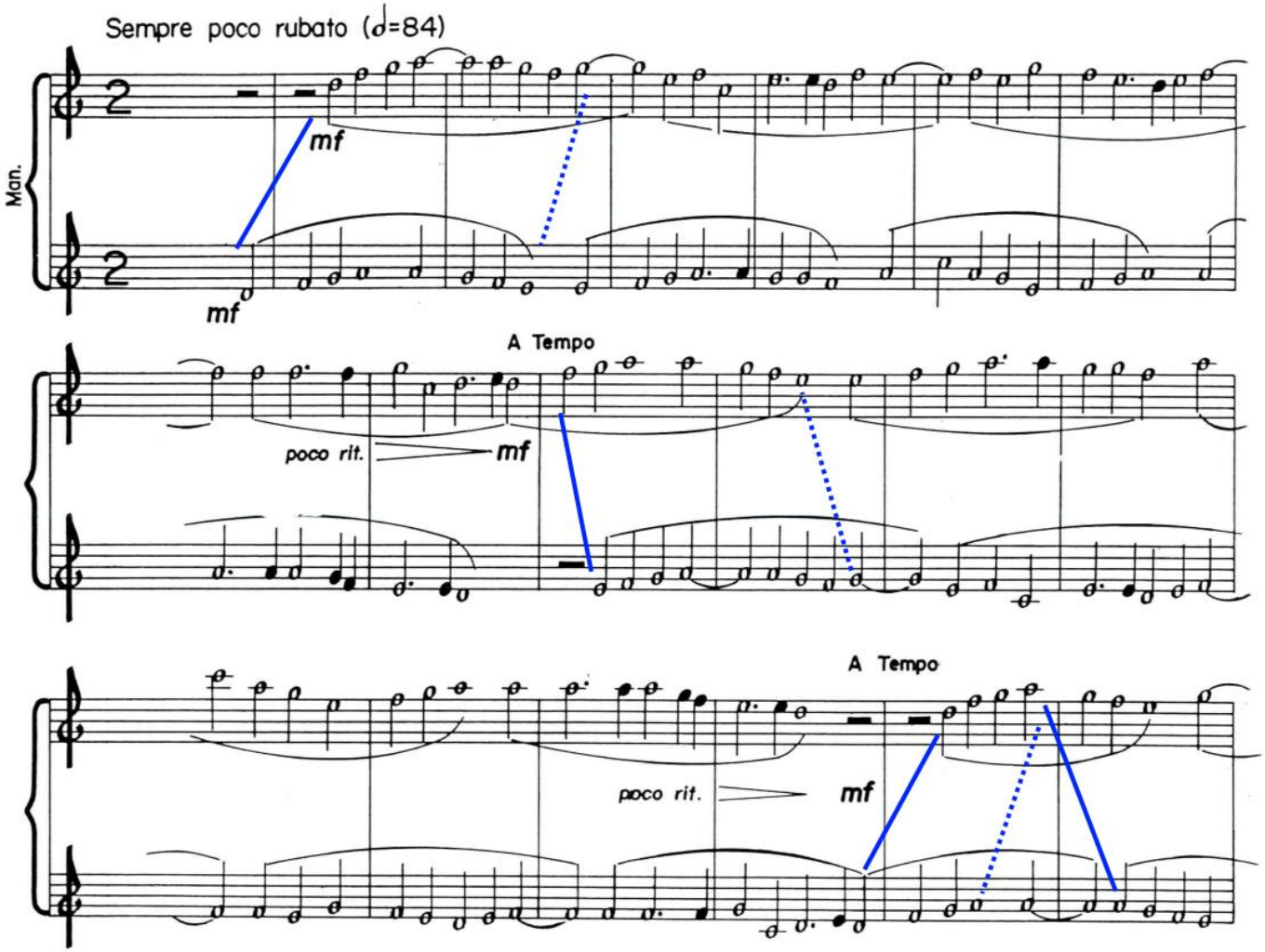
Use of augmentation:
In Dulci Jubilo I



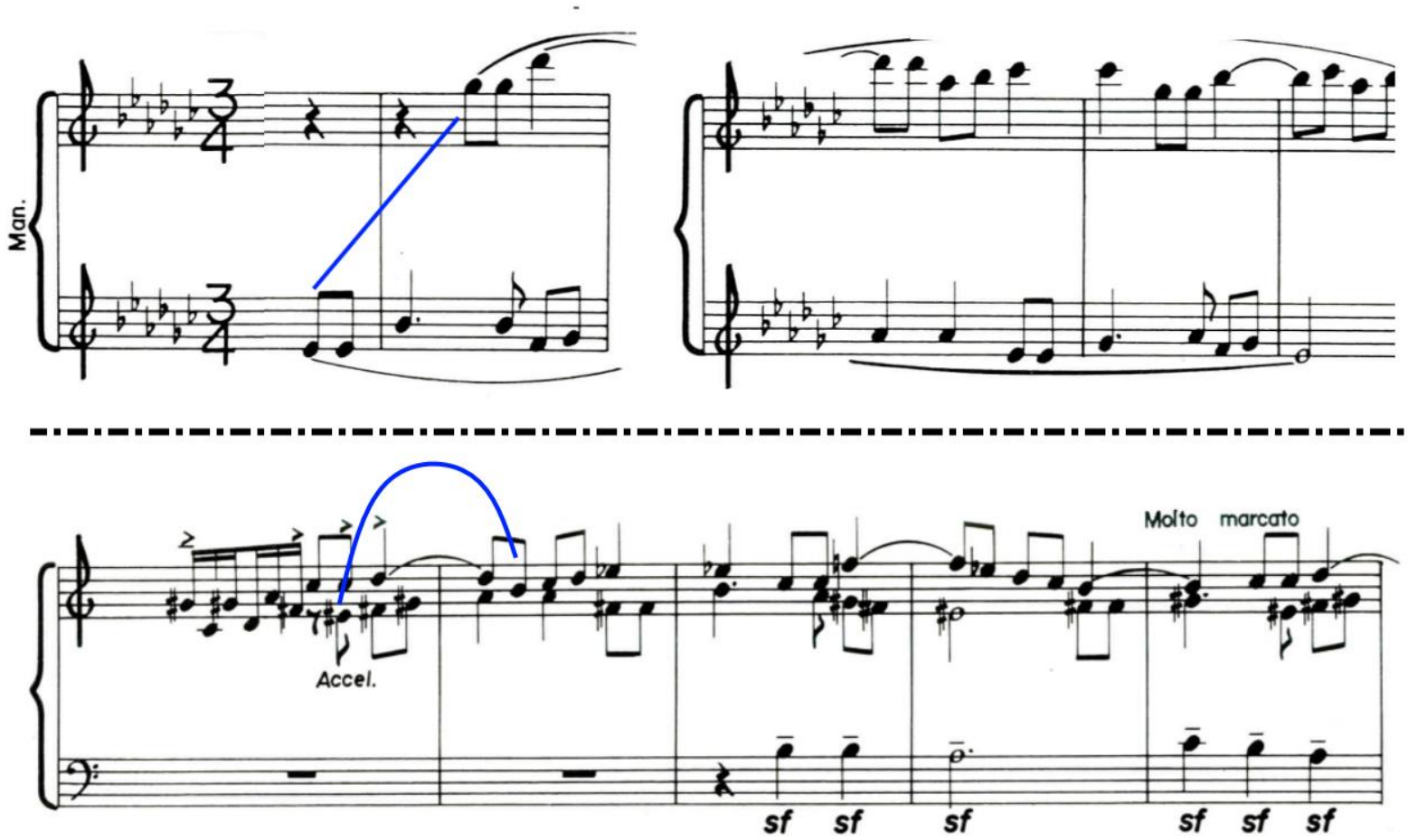
As the derivation of accomp./à 5: Stuttgart



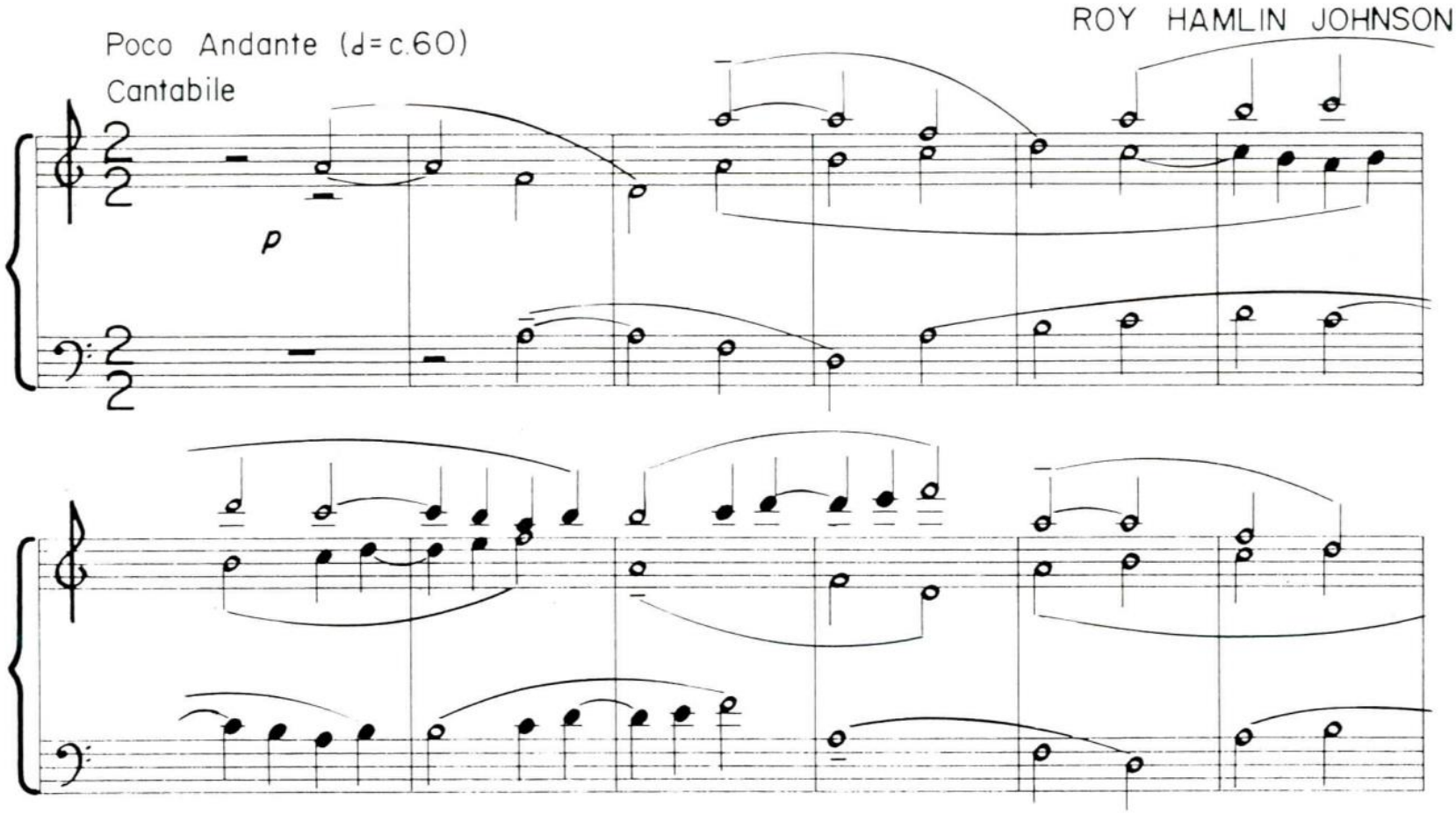
Use of a more fluid technique: Babylon's Streams



At atypical intervals: Chartes



Highly developed: Helmsley



Part II: The *CBLY* and the *Orgelbüchlein*

An Introduction to the *Orgelbüchlein*

- Collection of 46 organ chorales
  - Composed largely between 1713 and 1716, finished after 1726
  - Appropriate for use in liturgies of the Lutheran church year
  - Original manuscript ruled for 164 pieces
- A very old tradition (liturgical keyboard collecitons)
  - Dating to 14th c. Faenza Codex

An Introduction to the *Orgelbüchlein*

- Fairly homogenous content
  - Russell Stinson describes "*Orgelbüchlein*" style
    - Entire chorale stated once, sans interludes
    - 4 voice texture, with *obbligato* pedal part
    - Inner voice motives derived from CF
    - pedal either mirrors inner voices or has an independent, melodic line
  - This precludes other chorale type settings, such as chorale partita or chorale fughetta
  - Additional, larger works ended up in the final collection, though

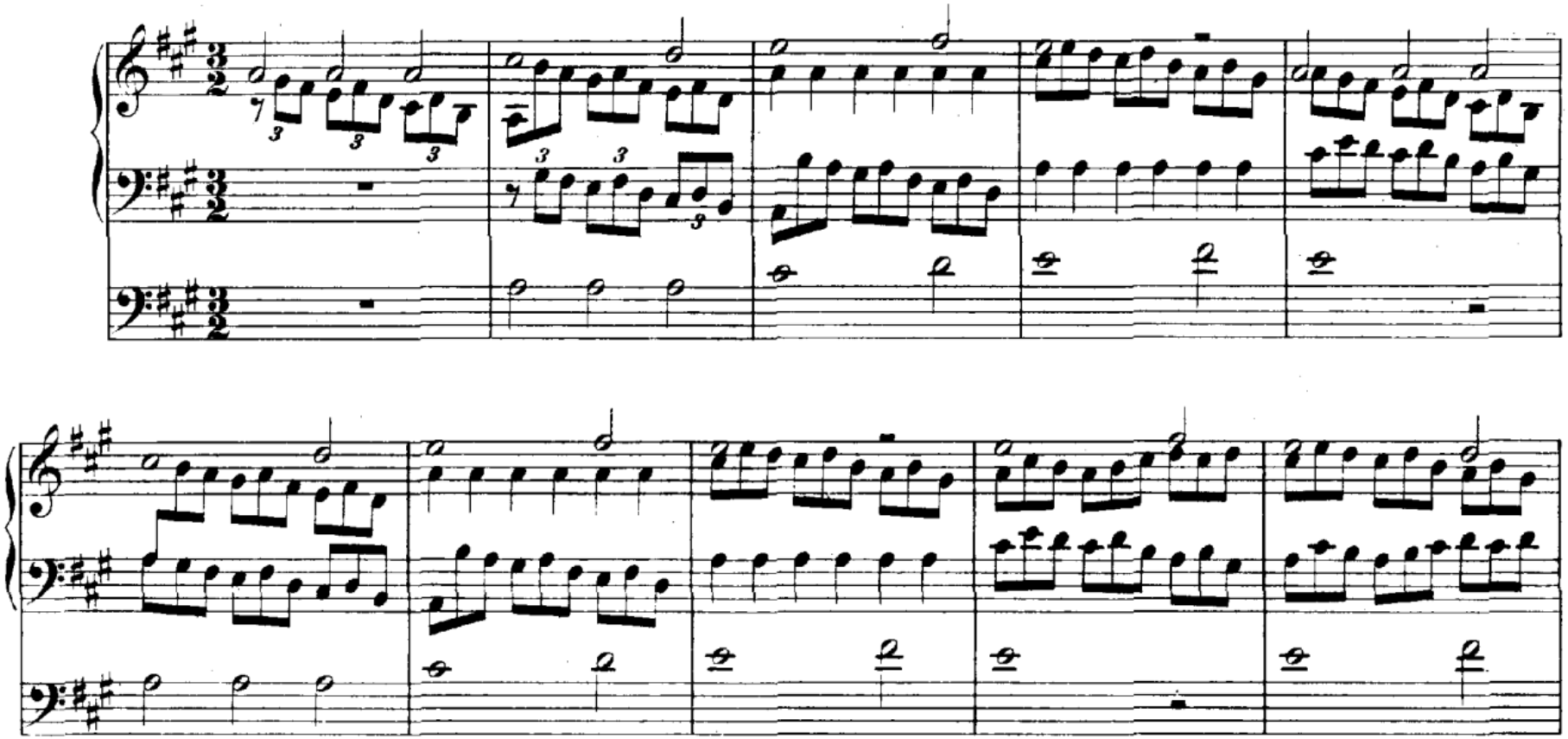
Artistic objectives of the *Orgelbüchlein*

- Per Stinson, “simultaneously a compositional treatise, a collection of liturgical organ music, an organ method, and a theological statement. These four identities are so closely intertwined that it is hard to know where one leaves off and another begins”
- Pedagogical, for both performers and composers
- Challenged the status quo of performance and of compositional use of the instrument
  - Esp. w/r/t *obbligato* pedal
  - Certain pieces, such as “Hilf Gott, das mir’s gelinge” (BWV 624) are surprisingly chromatic and dissonant

Use of canon in the *Orgelbüchlein*

- 9 of the 46 pieces are composed with a canonic technique
- Much more complex than predecessors
  - at more challenging intervals, incl. à 5
  - In Dulci Jubilo: the CF (soprano) is in canon with the pedal, and at the same time, the inner voices maintain their own canonic material:

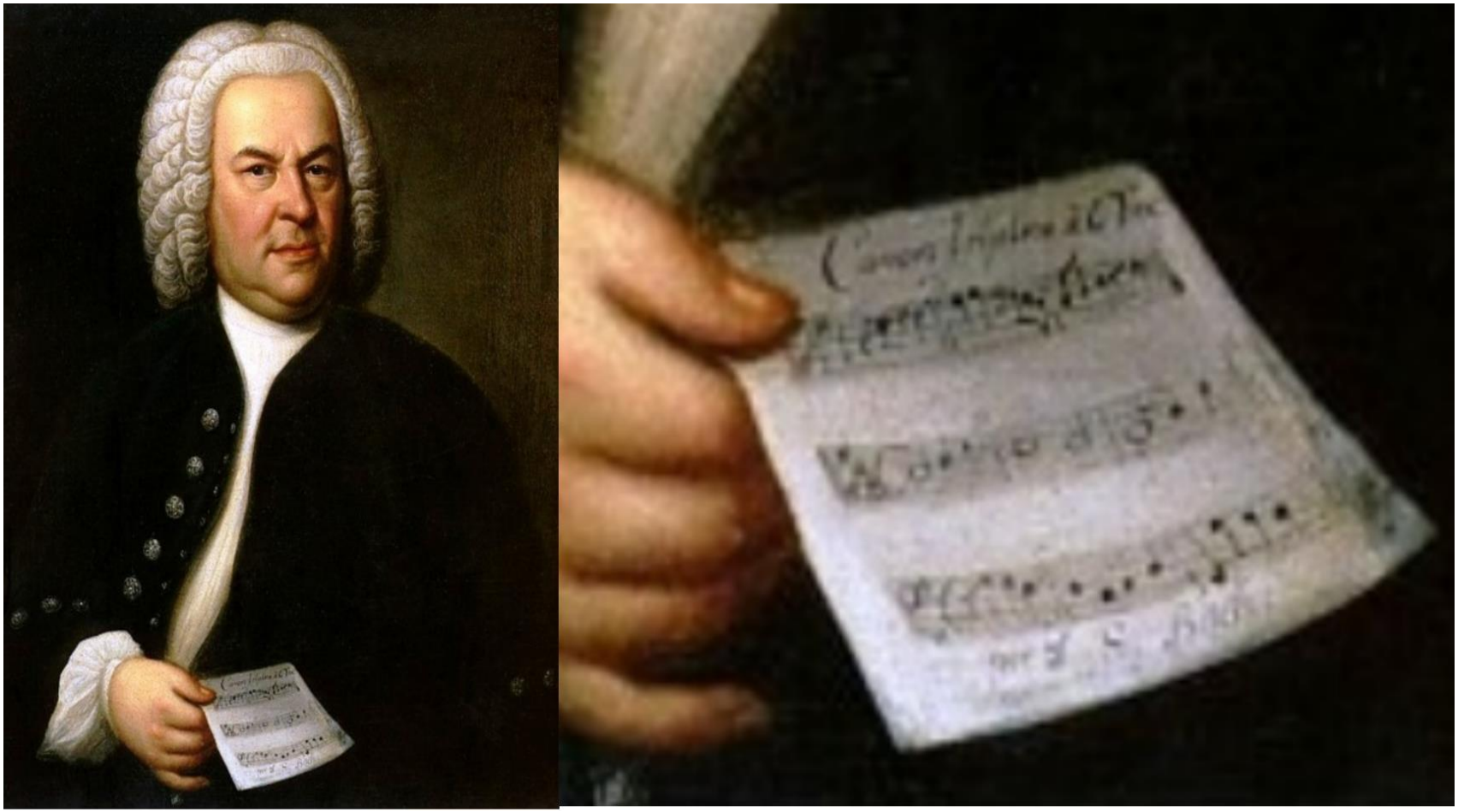
Use of canon in the *Orgelbüchlein*



Use of canon in the *Orgelbüchlein*

- Much more complex than predecessors
  - at more challenging intervals, incl. à 5
  - In Dulci Jubilo
- Importance of canon in the works of Bach
  - See the portrait of Bach by Haussmann (1746), incorporating a depiction of BWV 1076, a canon triplex in G

Use of canon in the *Orgelbüchlein*



Historical reception/importance of the *Orgelbüchlein*

- Embraced from the time of the early Romantic era to the present
  - Felix Mendelssohn introduced it to Fanny, F. Schubert, and C. Gounod
  - Reger and Busoni made piano transcriptions of the work
  - Widor was an advocate of the work, with his student Dupré playing the "O Mensch" at Widor's funeral at St. Sulpice; later, a student of Dupré's would play it at his own funeral
  - Second Viennese School used it widely, with Schönberg assigning similar projects to student Webern, resulting in (among other pieces) an Orgelbüchlein-esque" setting of "O Ewigkeit, du Donnerwort"
- *Vade mecum* of many an organ student
  - Although certainly not a graded organ textbook, the *Orgelbüchlein* has the capability of a practical primer with gradations of difficulty

Connection between CBLY and OBL

- Clear connections:
  - Large-scale litugurical collections
  - ***Use of canon***
    - 9 out of 46 in OBL, 12 of 41 in CBLY
  - Both challenged the status quo of how fully their instruments were employed
    - In this way, there is a pedagogical element intended not only for performers and composers, but also intended for Johnson's own peers
  - Historically evinced connection from Guggenheim Fellowship application

Who cares?

- As the *Orgelbüchlein*, the *CBLY* can be understood as an artistic statement that intended to show a better way forward
  - Insofar as performance and composition
- A masterwork *en miniature*
  - Stinson, speaking of the *Orgelbüchlein:* "[j]ust as the most intimate thoughts of a painter, as well as the depth of his technique, are often best observed in sketches and other small works, so the intensity of expression required in a short composition often shows the greatest dimension of a composer's technique and ingenuity."
- Pedagogical utility (see proposed grading in paper)
- A progressive work, but with an accessible element by virtue of its use of well known cantus firmi

Who cares?

- George Stauffer on the *Orgelbüchlein:*
  - "As Bach's Two-Part Inventions, Three-Part Sinfonias, and *Well-Tempered Clavier* are to pianists and harpsichordists, so the *Orgelbüchlein* is to organists: it is central to the educational process, a pedagogical *vade mecum* that no student or instructor can be without."
- Perhaps at some point in the future, the *CBLY* will occupy the same position for the carillon

Read the paper

- Suggested gradations/typologies
- Much more detail than presented here

Questions?