STANDARD HARMONY
In Four Parts
A set of Harmony Exercise for SMMS/RSAMD

Tom David Wilson

Set 15

Bach Chorales c)

Student Name……...

8 x ½ hour Lessons.

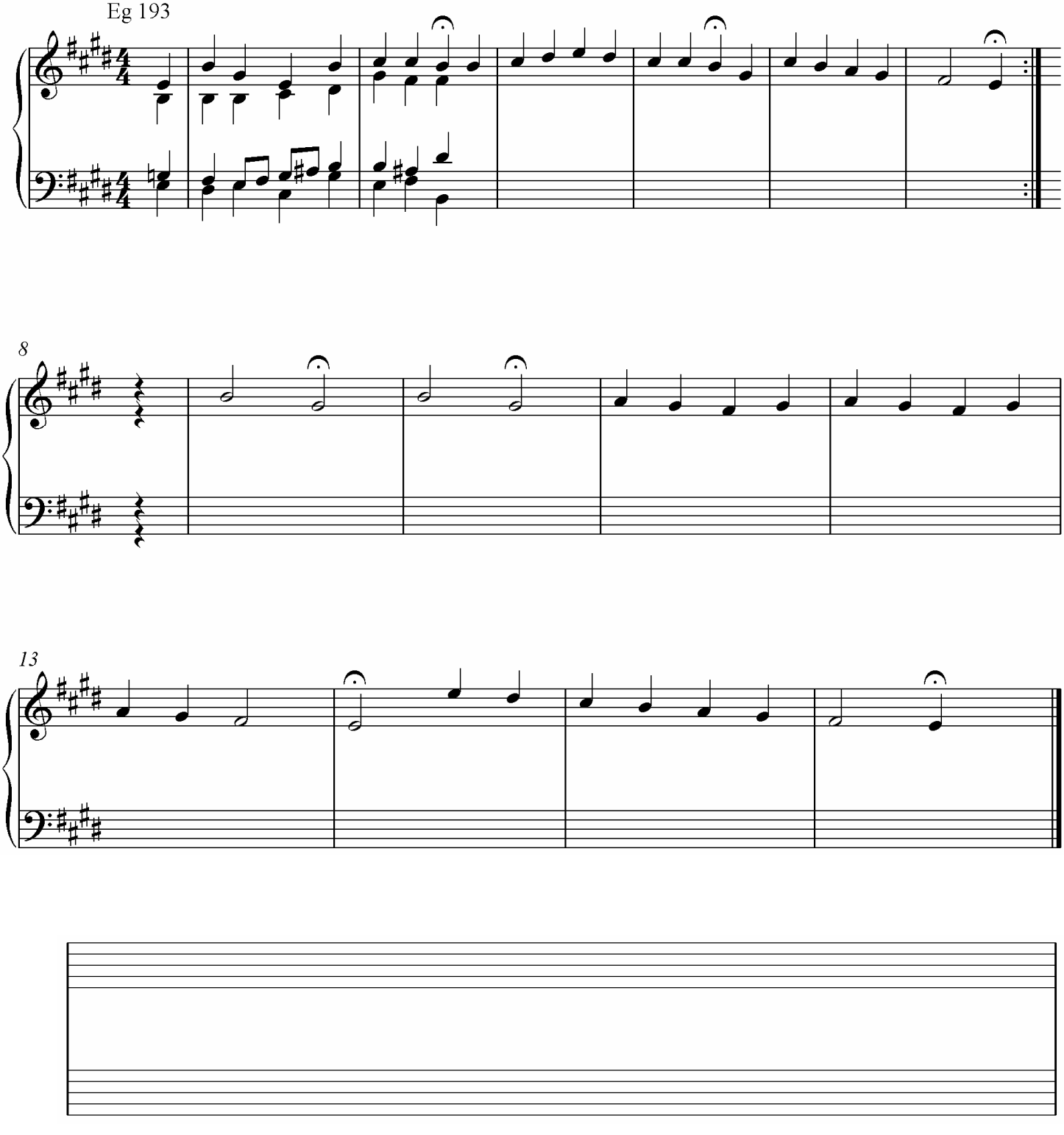
Date for completion of Set……

The following eight Chorale melodies for harmonisation are amongst the more challenging for the student. You will benefit from some research into their origins, context and alternative harmonisations by Bach and in some cases, Mendelssohn. Each Chorale is referenced by its German title and Riemenschneider number. Make sure you figure each chord and make a note of the date on which you complete each exercise.

Riem.No.278 Wie schon leuchtet der Morgenstern

The difficulties in this Chorale are with the two single bar phrases after the repeat, the repetitious sixth phrase and the descending scale of the seventh. See if you can discover Mendelssohn's alternative harmonisation.

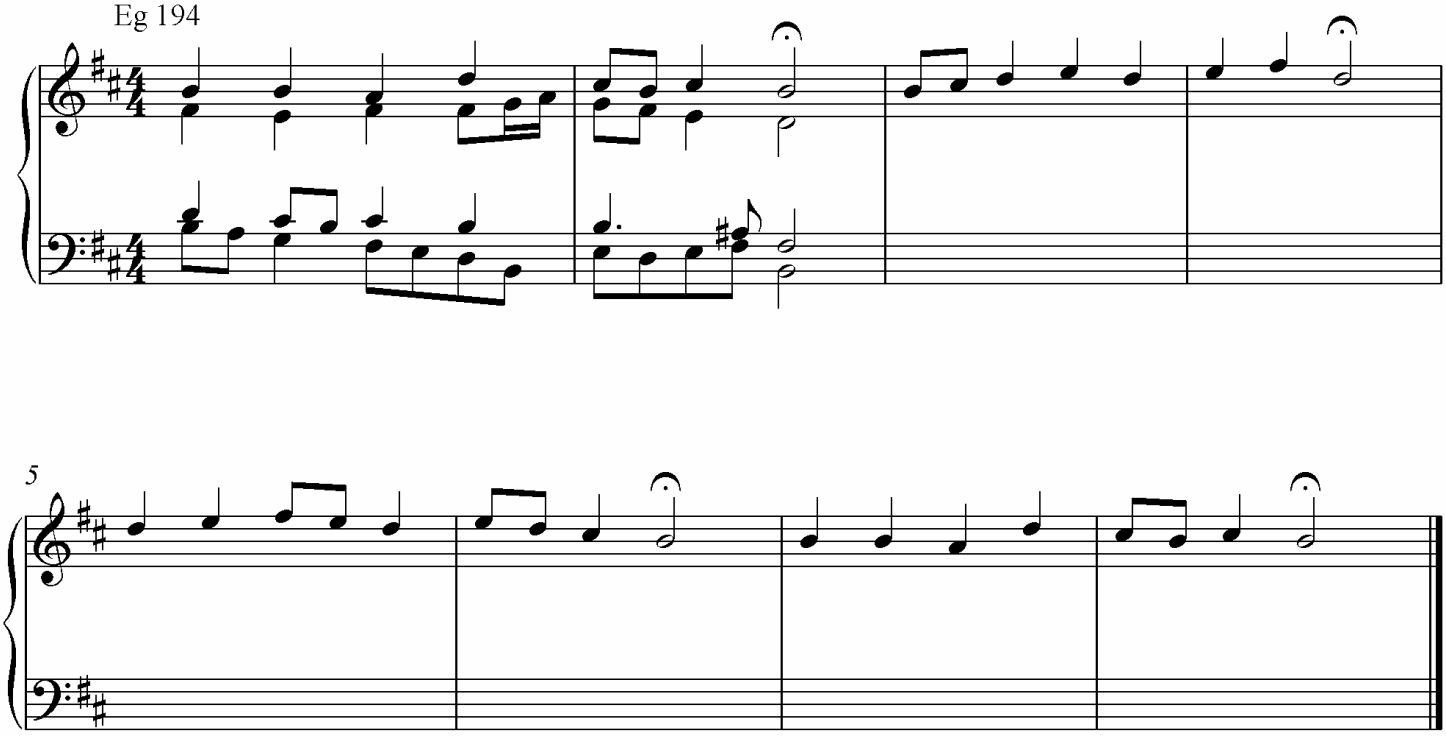
Eg 193

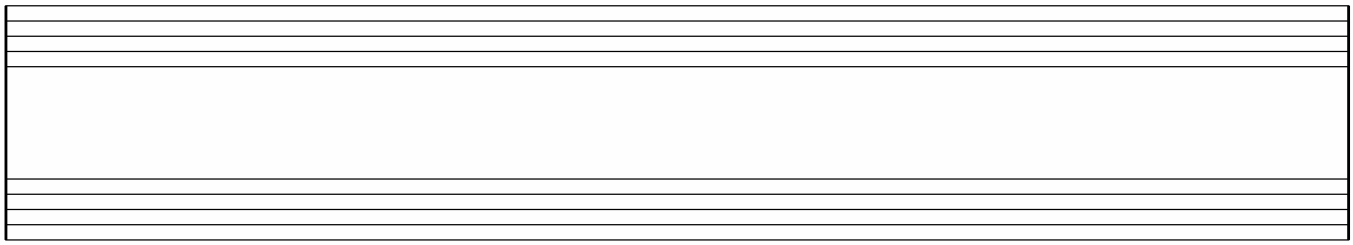


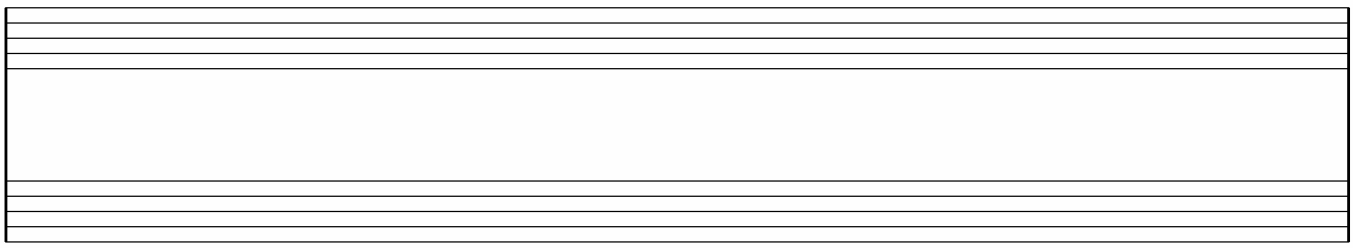
Riem.No.28 Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland

The modal nature of this Chorale Melody is a good indicator of its ancient roots. It is in B minor but the A naturals in the tune are difficult to handle. It is used by Bach to close Cantata 36, “Schwingt freudig euch empor”.

Eg 194



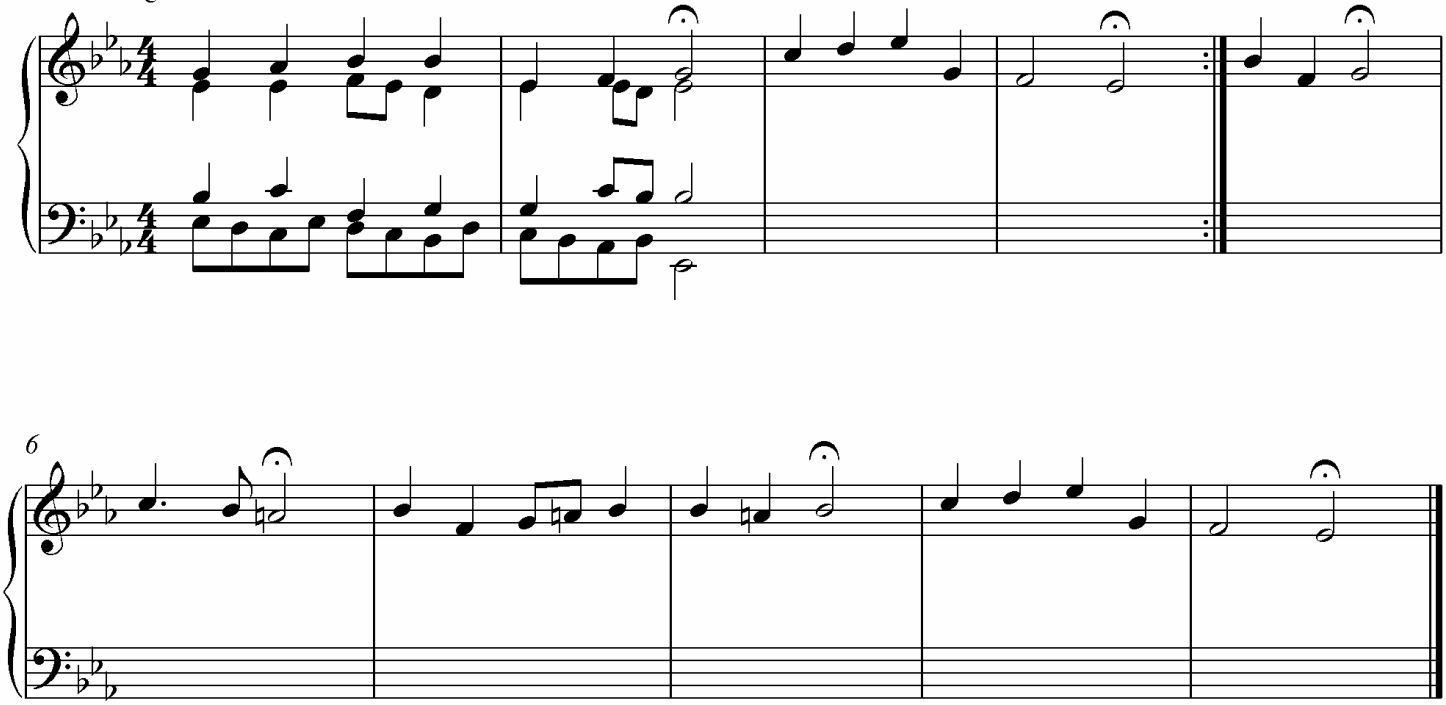


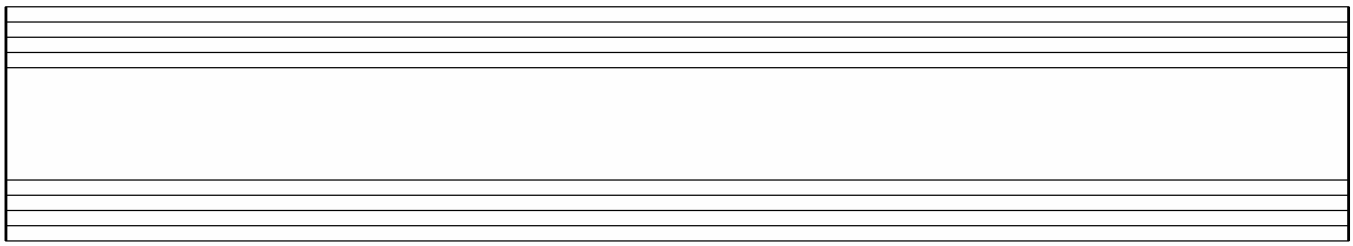


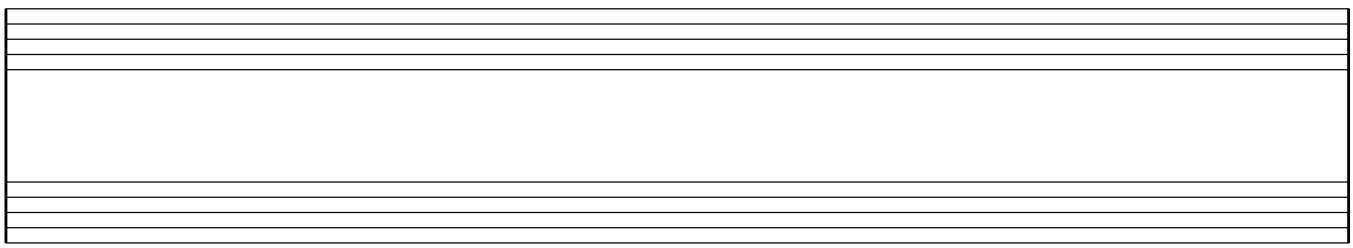
Riem.No.38 Straf’ mich nicht in deinem Zorn

This Chorale closes Cantata 115, “Mache dich, mein Geist, bereit”. The “Walking Bass” of the incipit should continue throughout (excepting the cadences) which can be difficult.

Eg 195



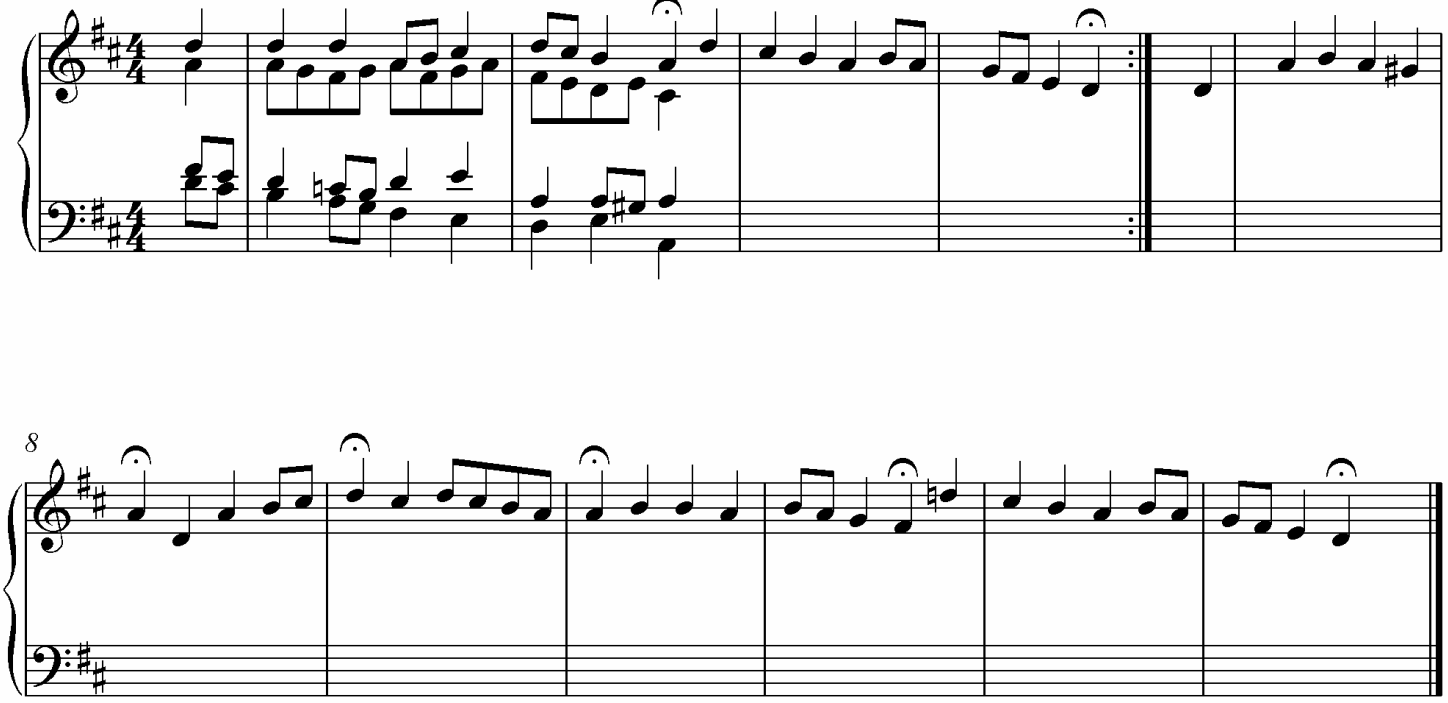




Riem.No.250 Ein’ feste Burg ist unser Gott

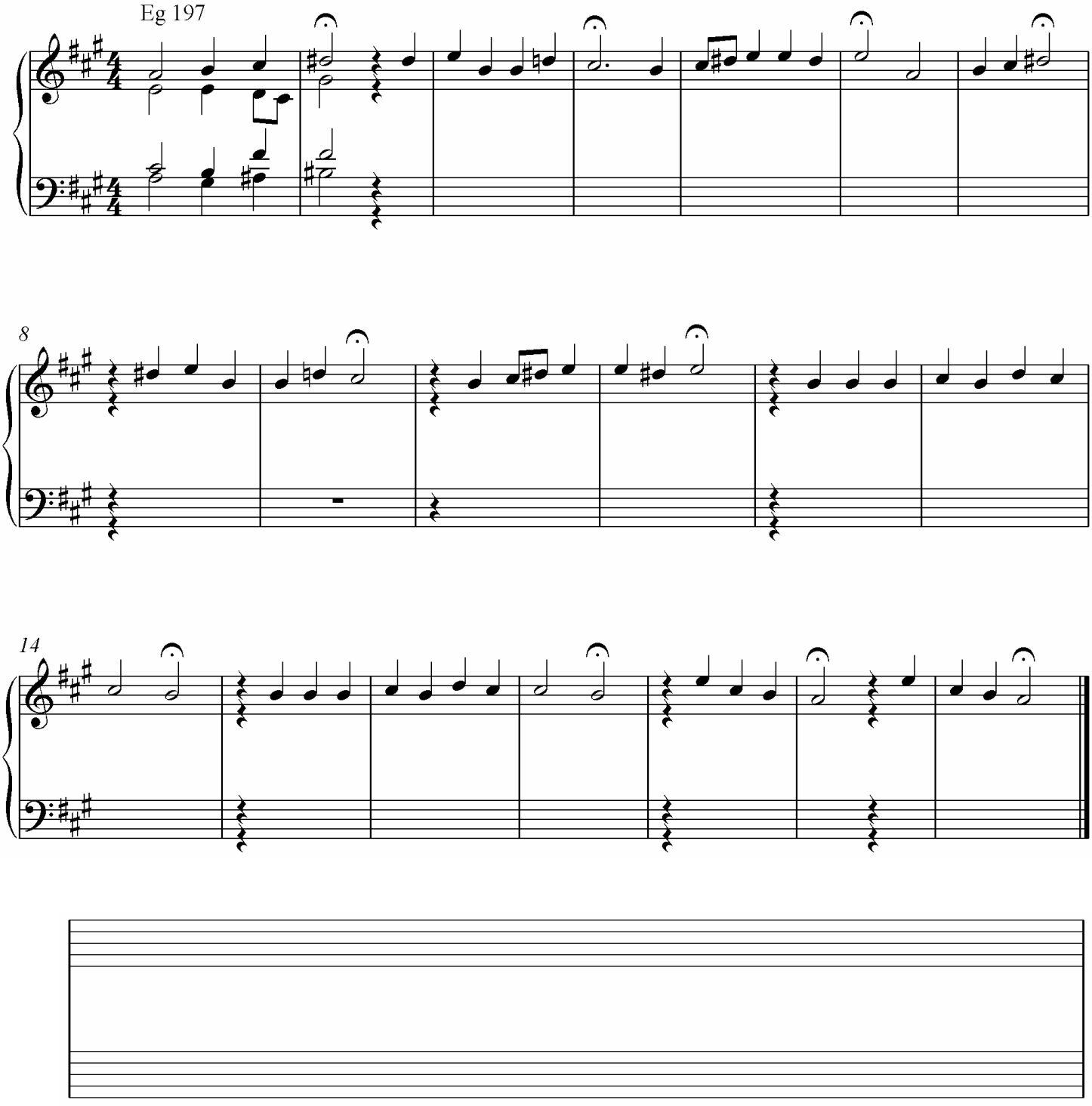
This famous Chorale appears in Cantata 80 but this version of the tune is from a lost composition by Bach. The asymmetric phrasing in the second half is interesting and you will need to think carefully about your modulations.

Eg 196



Riem.No.216 Es ist genug; so nimm, Herr

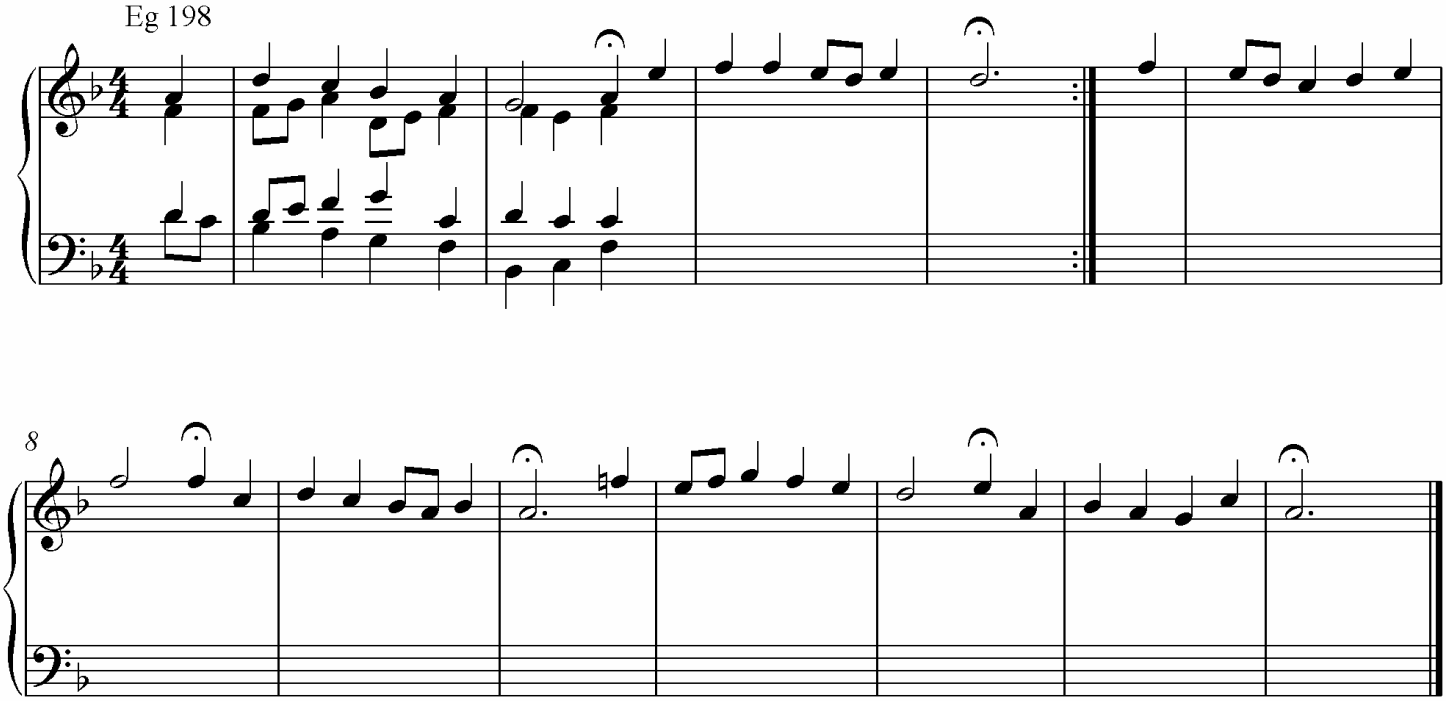
This Chorale closes Cantata 60, “O Ewigkeit, du Donnerwort”. It is quoted by Berg in his Violin Concerto. See if you can find out why Berg chose this particular Chorale. It presents a particular challenge for the harmoniser because of the tri-tone interval in the tune and the subtle repetitions of its phrases. Bach harmonised each phrase differently, see if you can do the same.

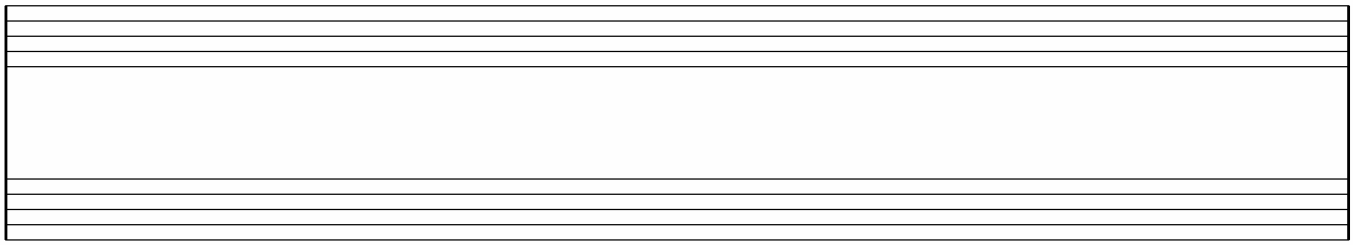


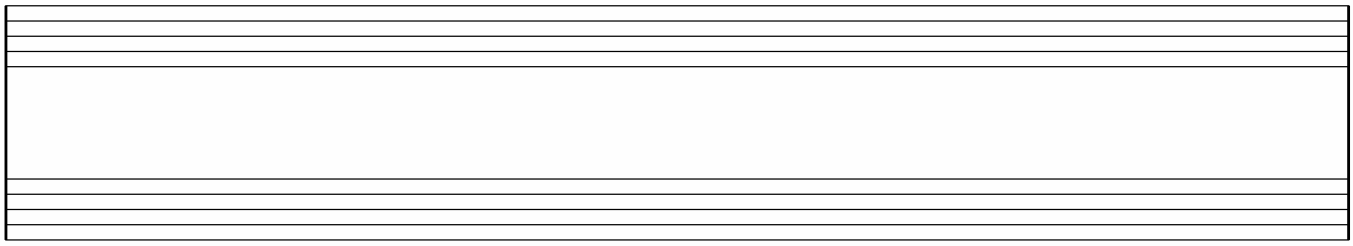
Riem.No.74 O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden

This Chorale is probably the most famous. In the Anglican tradition it has become the Easter Hymn "O Sacred Head, Sore Wounded" and because it was used by Bach several times with different harmonisations in his "St. Mathew Passion" it has become known as "The Passion Chorale". It was certainly a favourite Chorale Melody for Bach for he harmonised it at least eleven times, not all under the title "O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden". You would do well to compare his several different harmonisations and their contexts within (and out-with) the St. Mathew Passion.

Eg 198



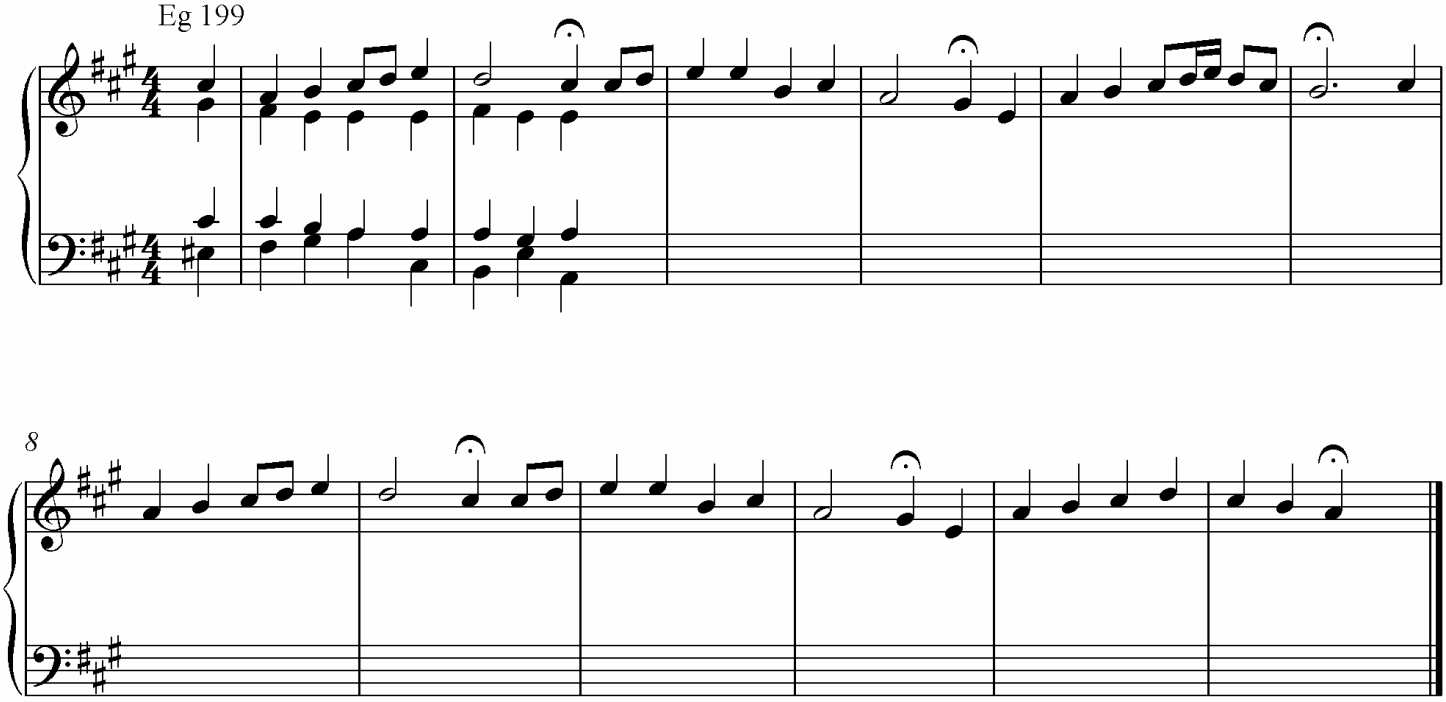


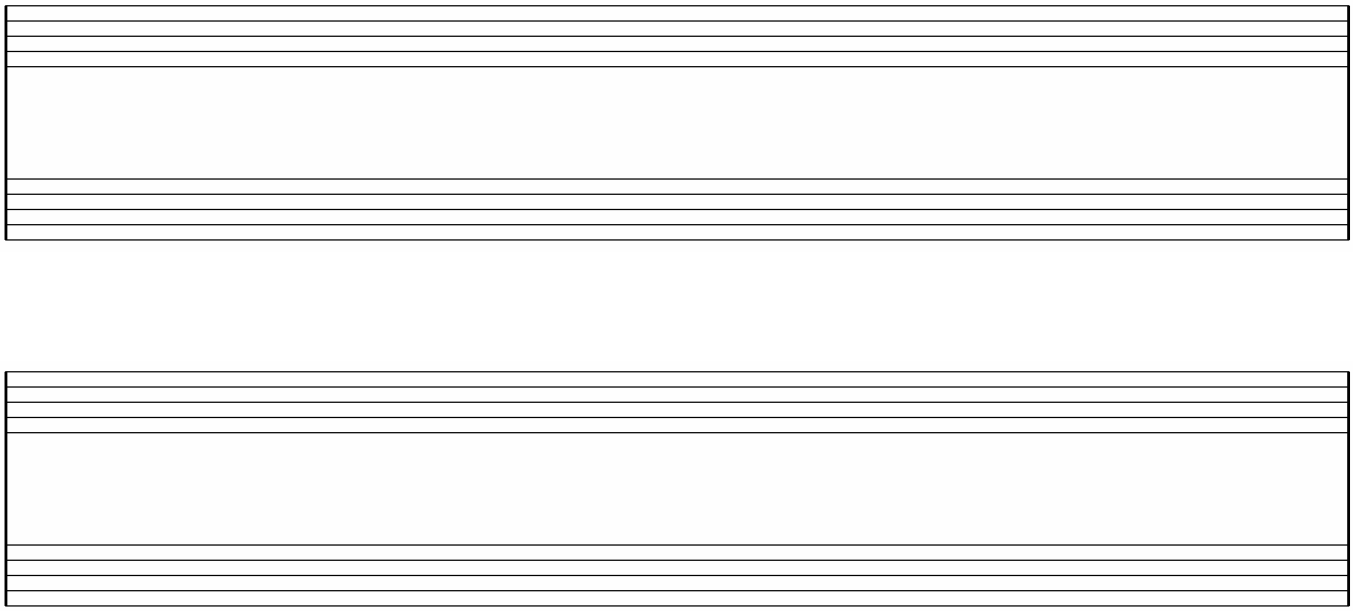


Riem.No.275 O Welt, sieh hier dein Leben

This Chorale is also used in the St. Mathew Passion. Bach's harmonisations are characterised by their gentle tonal fluidity. He harmonises the repeat differently.

Eg 199

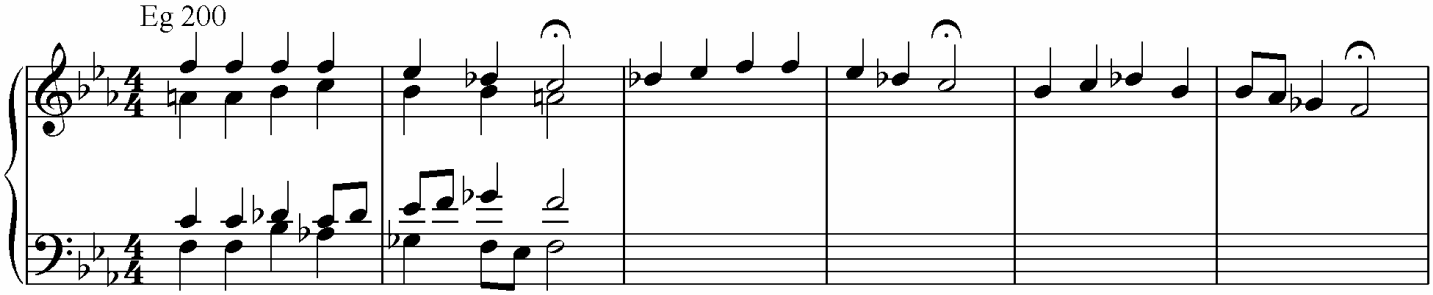


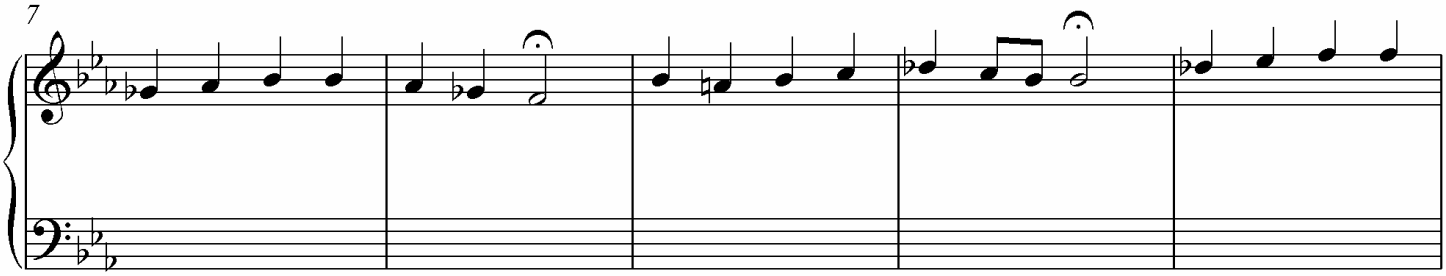


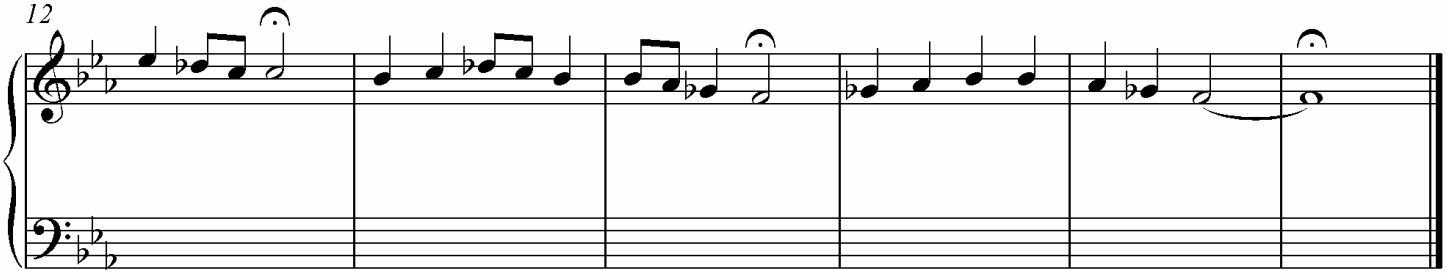
Riem.No.113 Christus, de runs selig macht

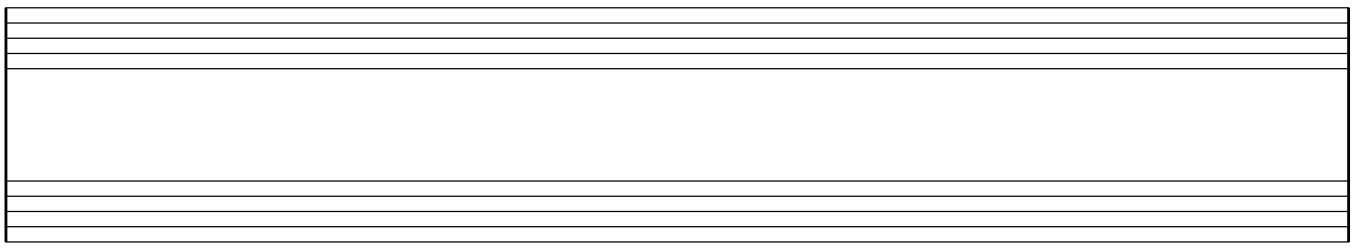
This Chorale is used in the St. John Passion and occurs at the point in the story just after the Crucifixion. It is therefore highly charged with reflective angst. The mode is difficult to spot from the key signature but it is, in fact, in B flat minor. The position and nature of the last cadence will also require careful thought.

Eg 200









You have now completed this course in Standard Harmony, consisting of 15 sets of progressive exercises of harmony in four parts. The hope is that you will have gained some insight into the way functional harmony and counterpoint work in great music and it has provided for you a foundation on which to base your further study.