COUNTERPOINT IN THE GOLDBERG VARIATIONS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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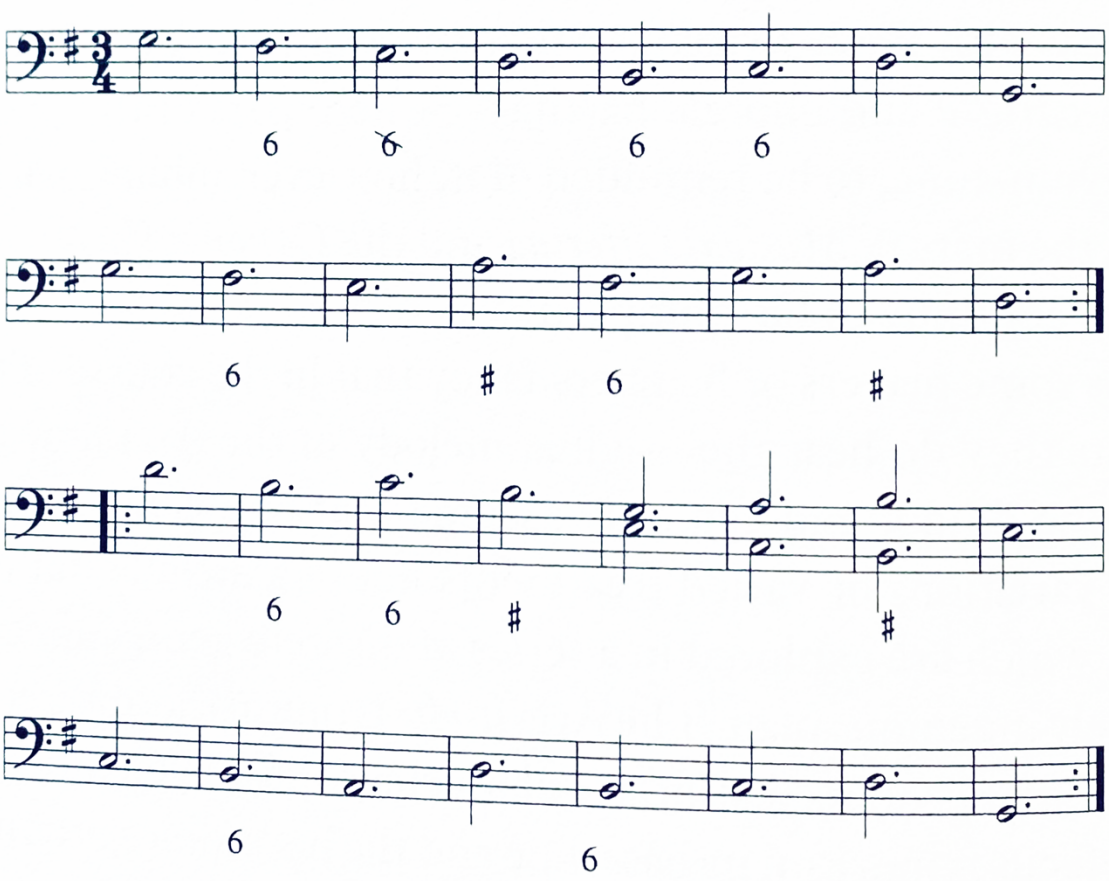
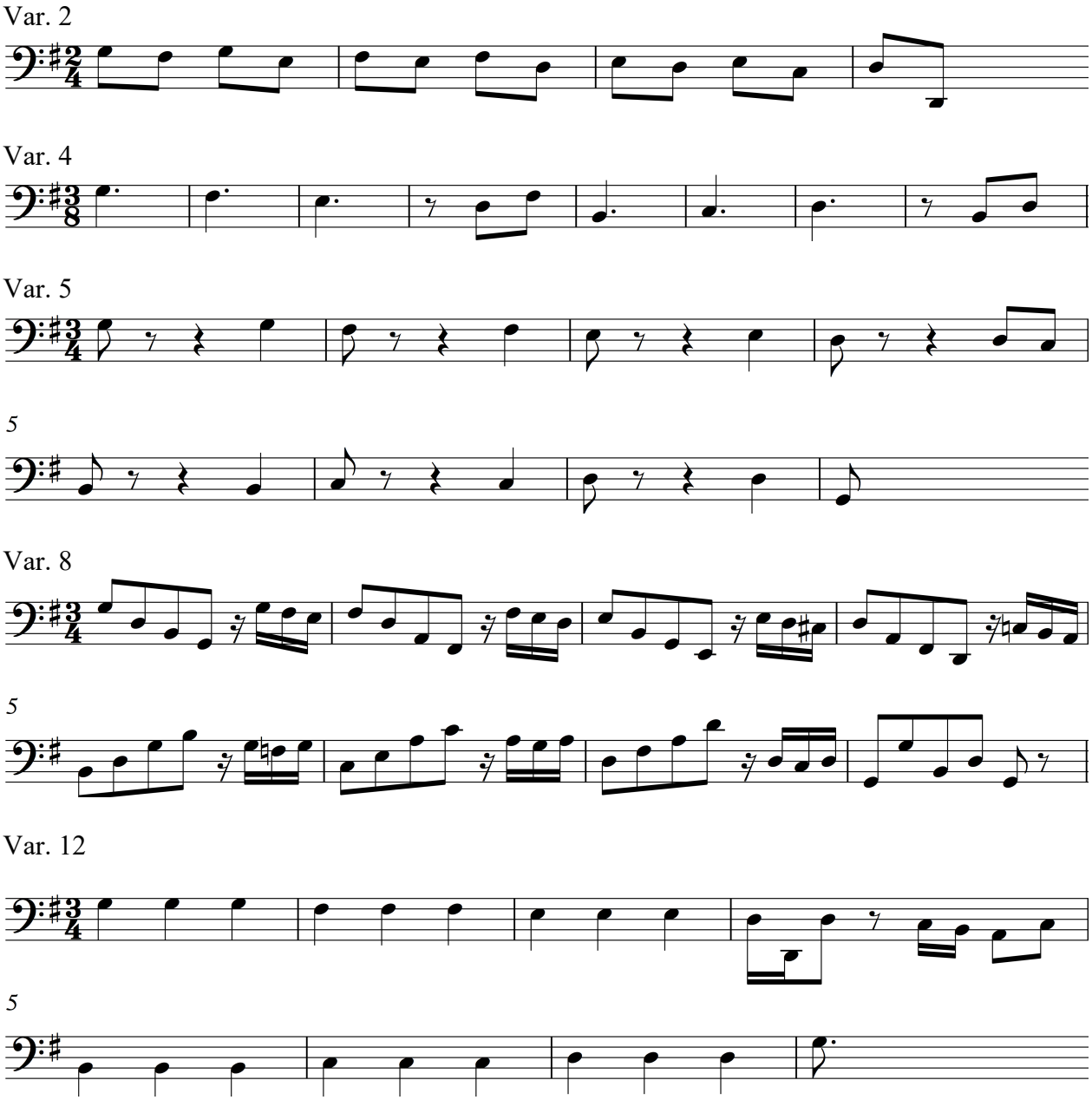
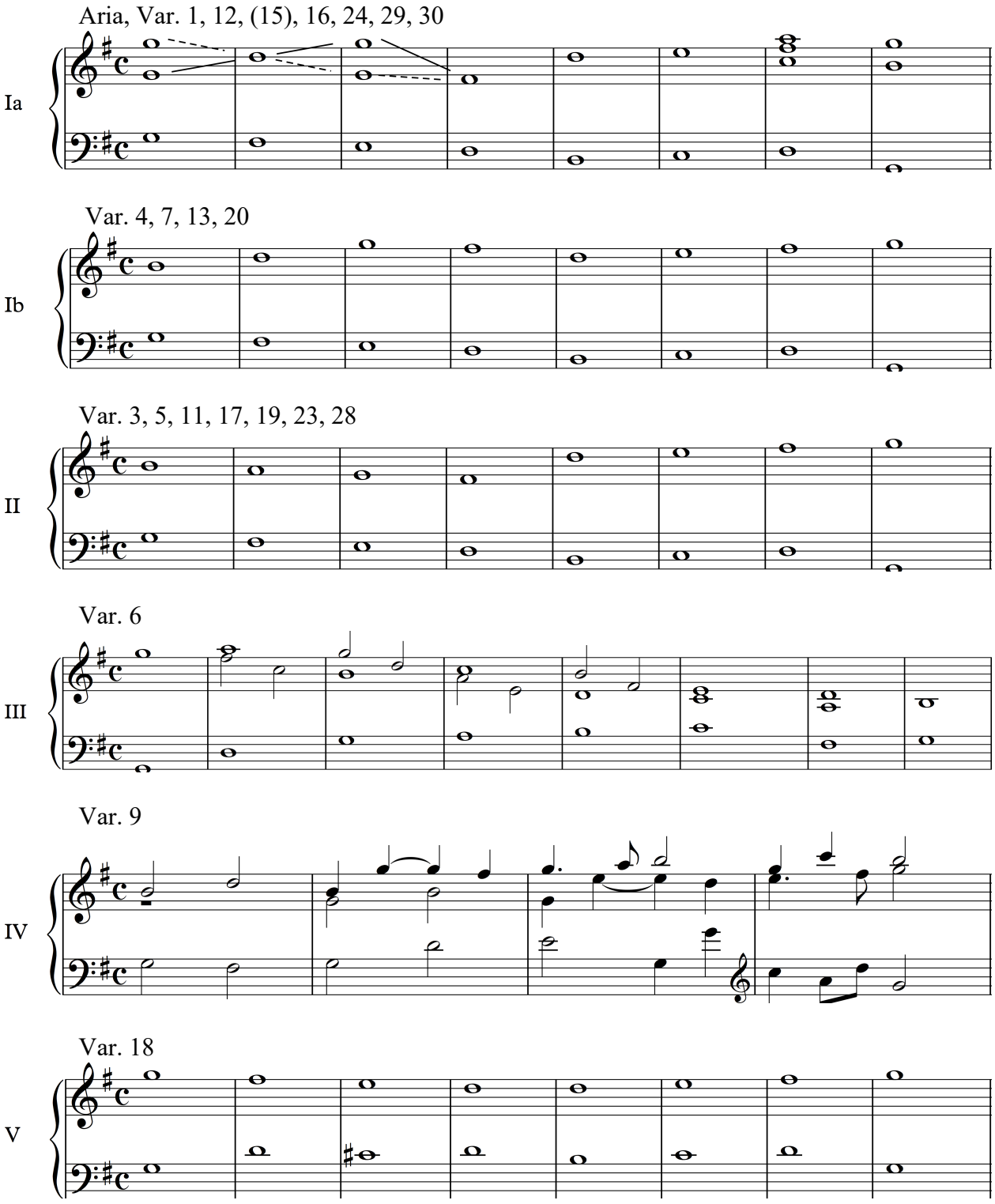
Example 1. Fundamental bass of the Goldberg Variations, showing alternatives in second half (Reproduced from Williams 2001, p. 36)



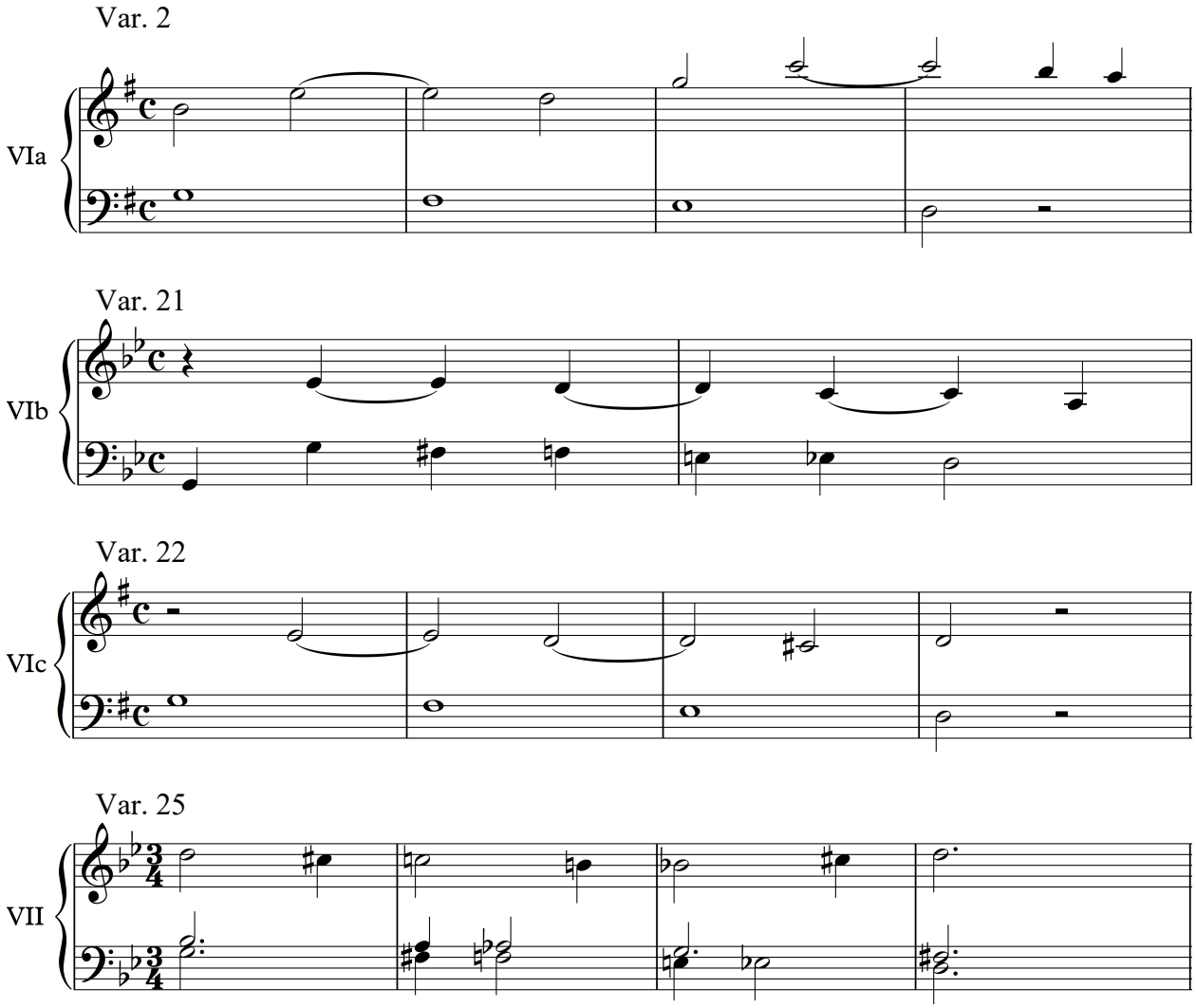
Example 2. Goldberg Variations—Opening bass line (selected variations)



Example 3. Goldberg Variations—Contrapuntal models for mm. 1–8
Not included: Var. 8, 10, 14, 26, 27

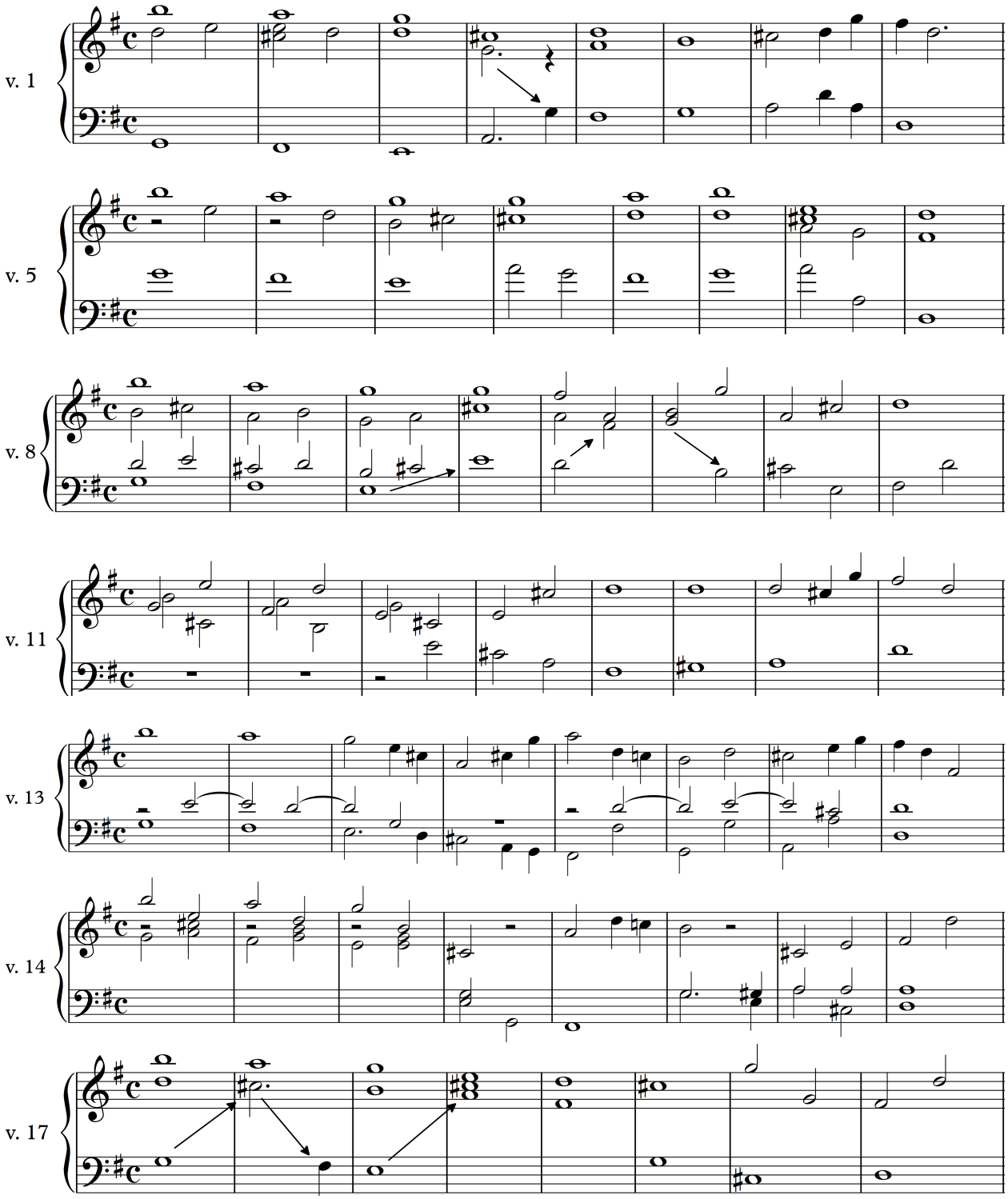


Example 3, continued. Contrapuntal models (mm. 1–4 only)

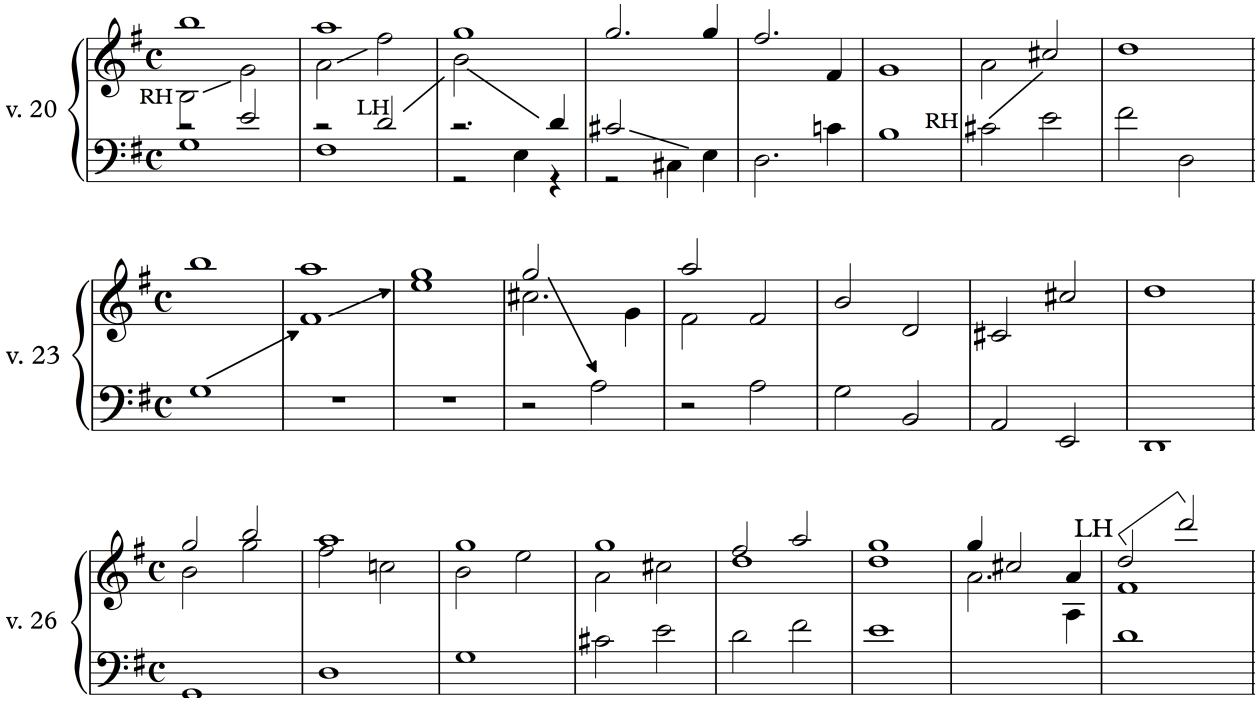


Example 4. Goldberg Variations—Contrapuntal models for measures 9-16

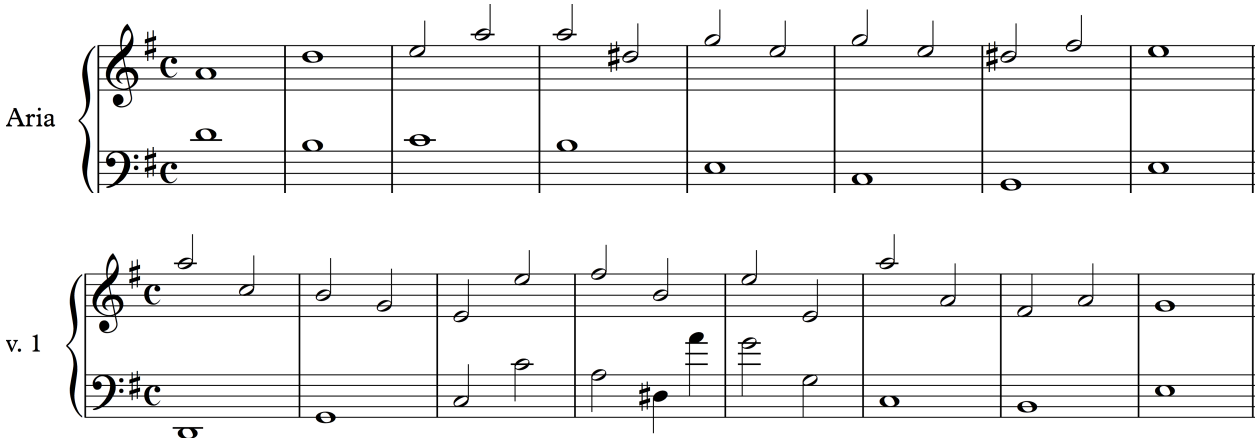
(Note: Most of the variations shown here are of the “toccata” type, with hand-crossing.)



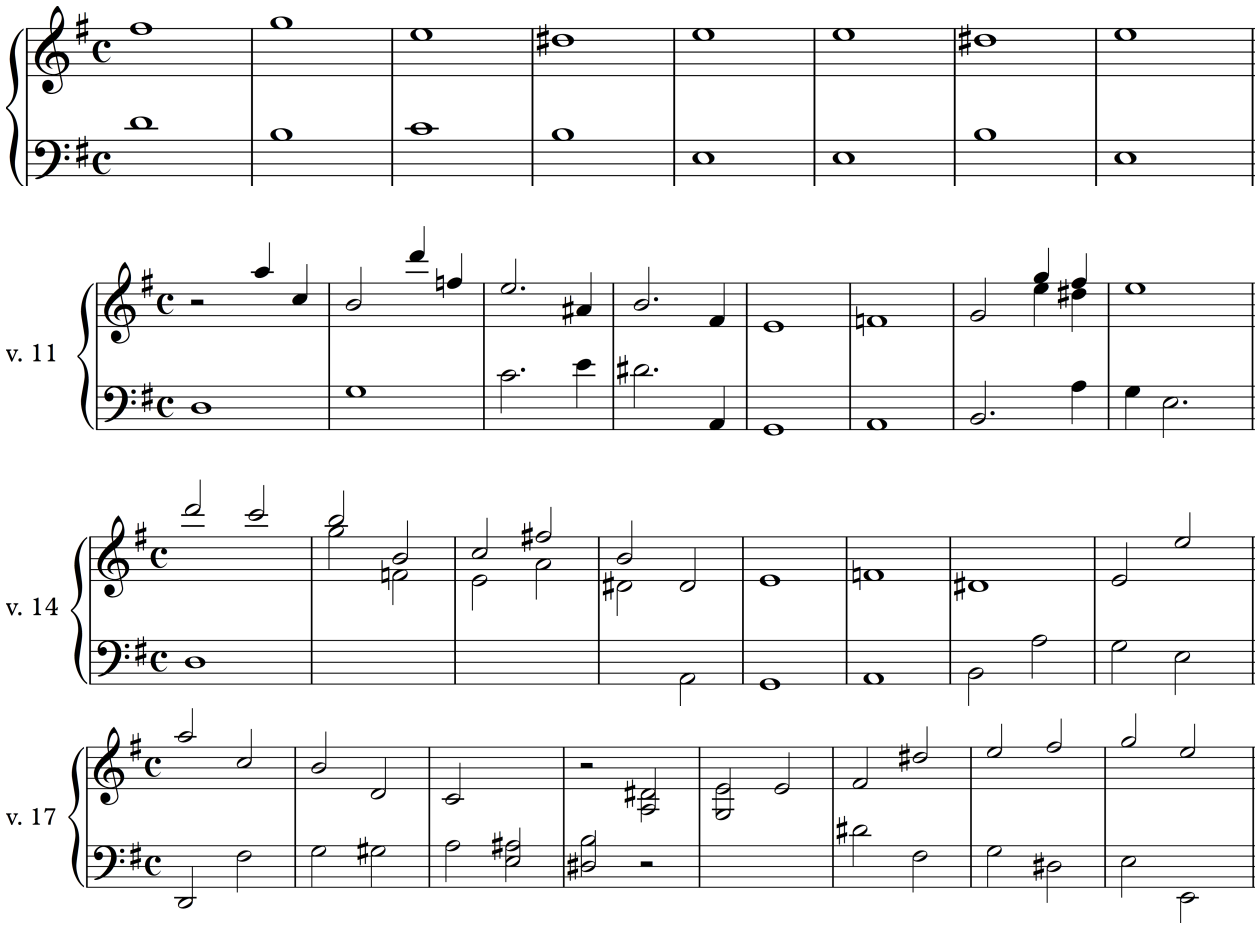
Example 4, continued—Contrapuntal models (mm. 9-16)



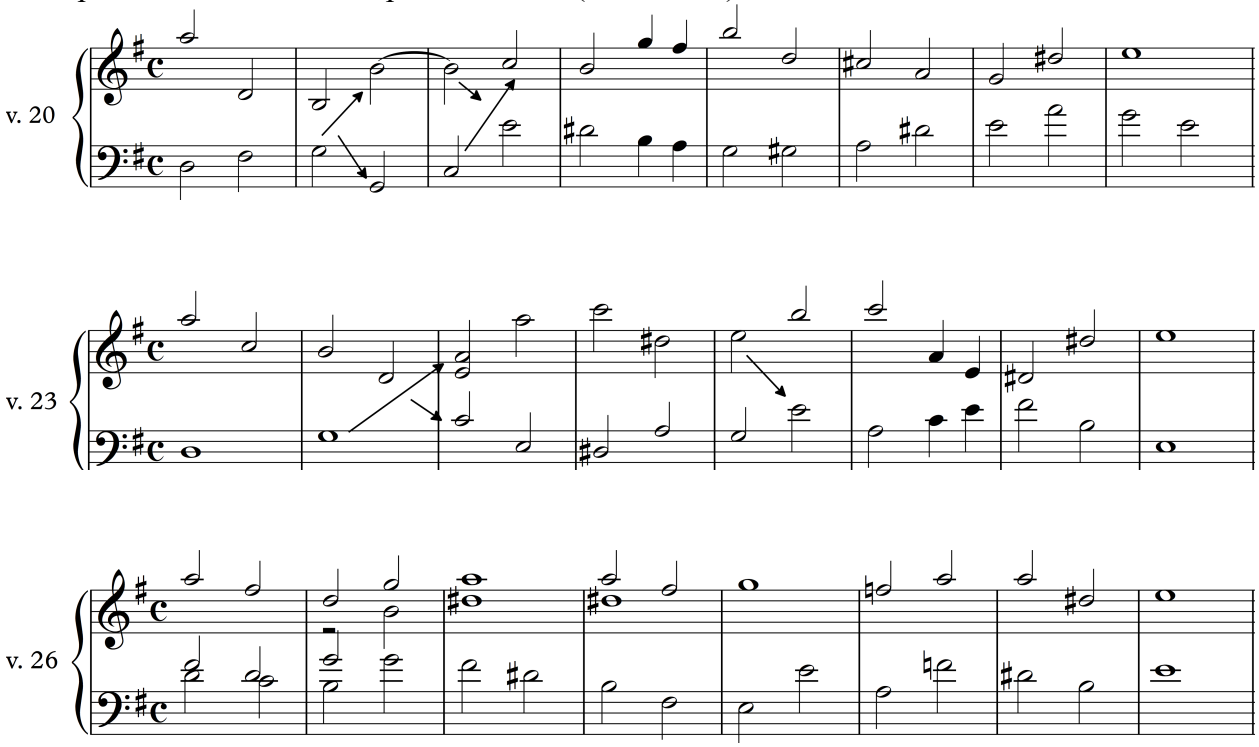
Example 5. Goldberg Variations—Contrapuntal models for measures 17-24



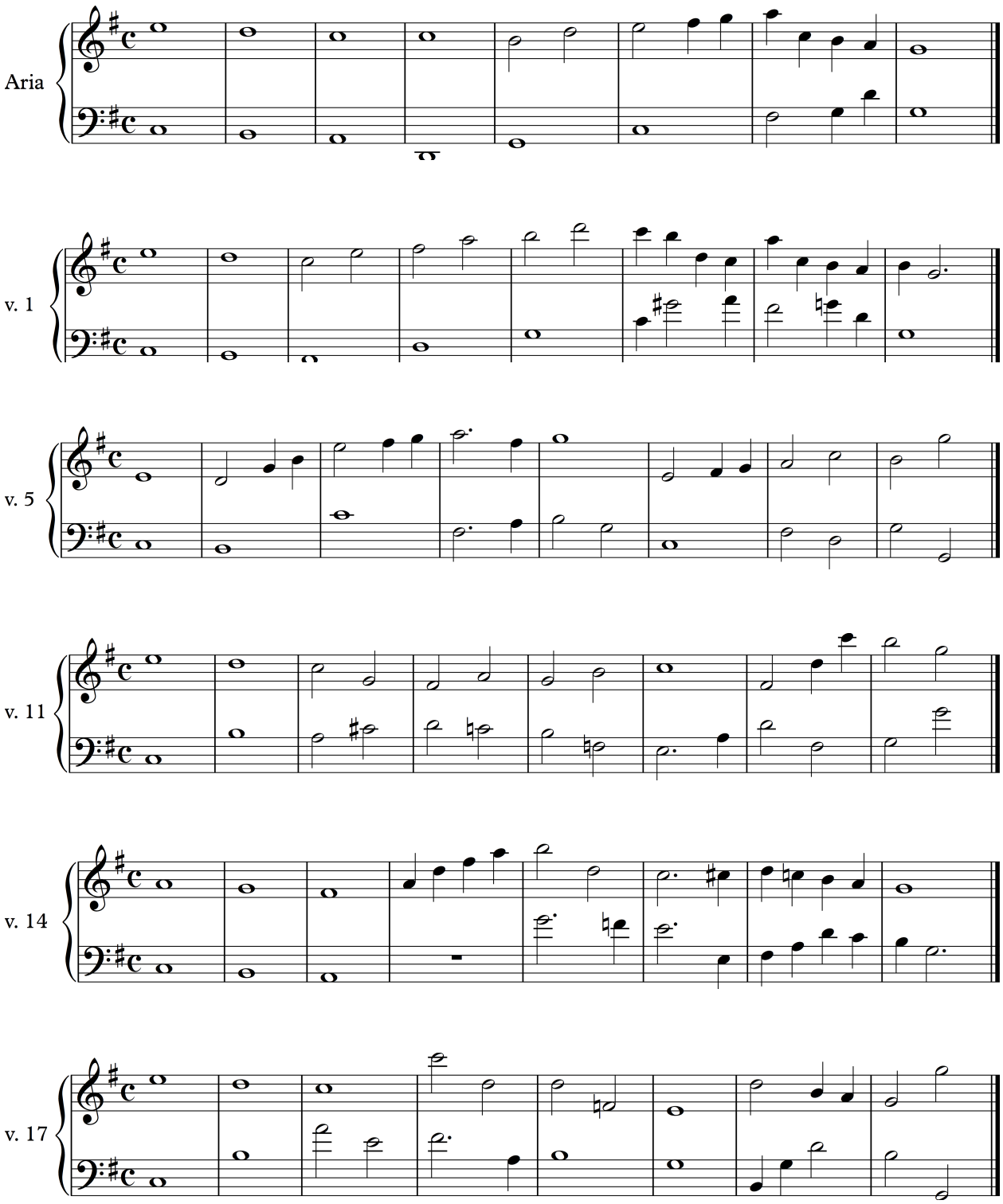
v. 4, 5, 7, 10, 13, 19



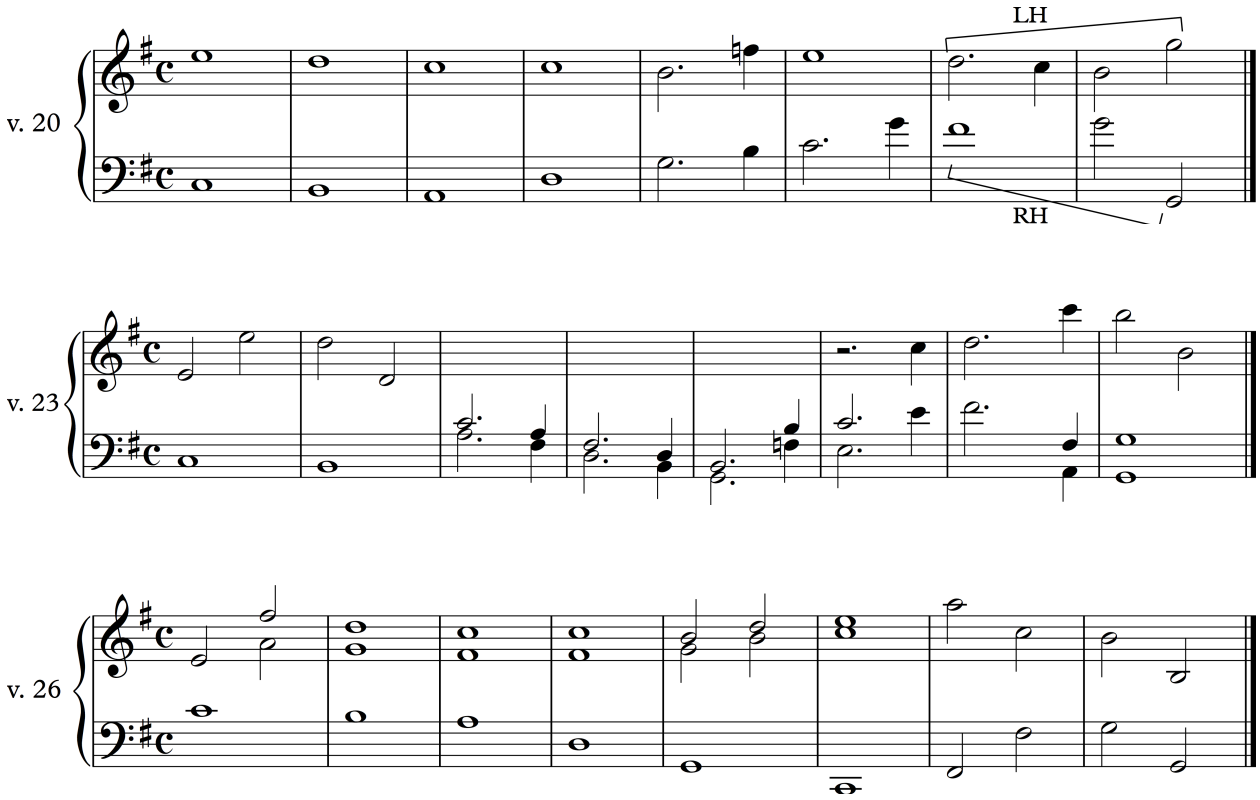
Example 5, continued. Contrapuntal models (mm. 17-24)



Example 6. Goldberg Variations—Contrapuntal models for measures 25-32



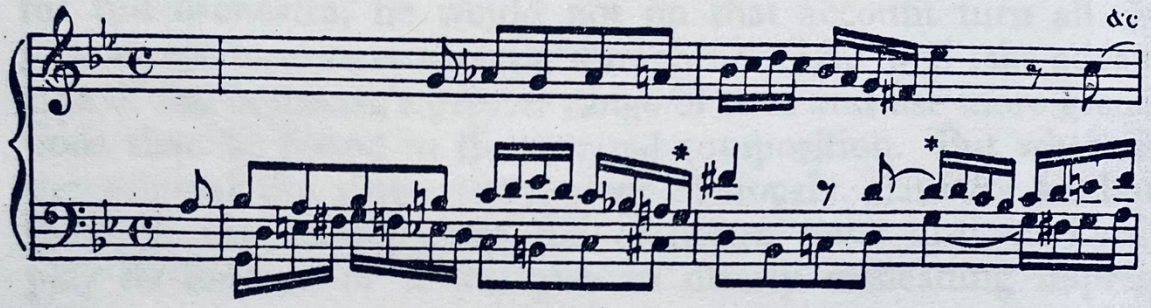
Example 6, continued. Contrapuntal models (mm. 25-32)



Example 7. Quotation from Tovey, "Bach: 'Goldberg Variations.'" in *Essays in Musical Analysis: Chamber Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), p. 30.

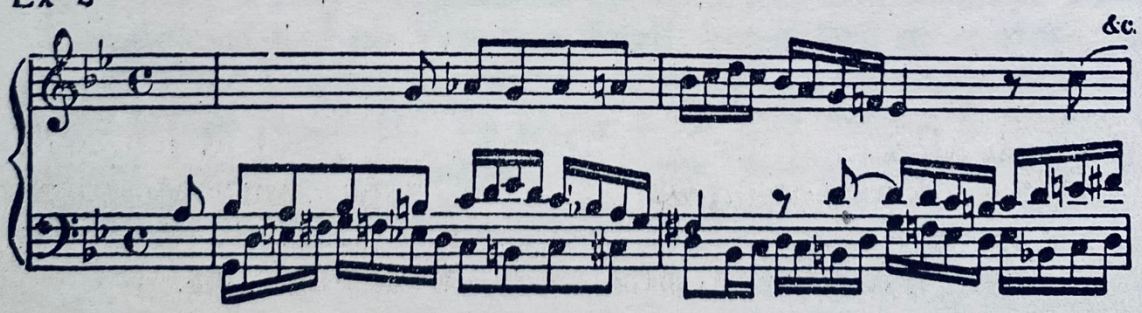
For example, the following passage in the twenty-first variation:

Ex. 1

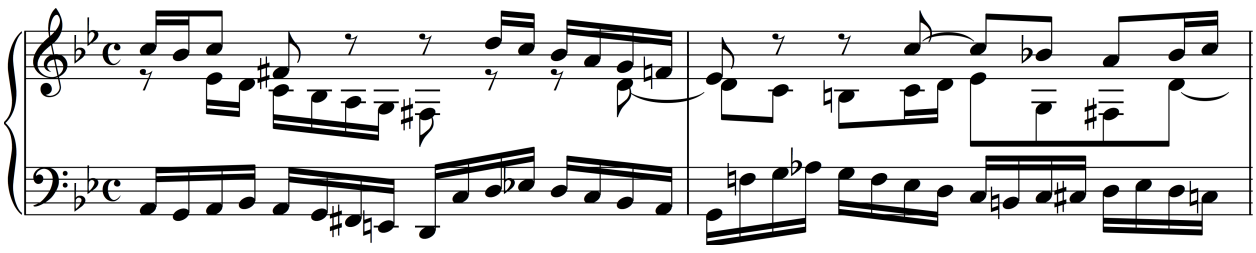


with its strange skips of 7ths at *, * and its still stranger harmony at the second of the two skips, may easily be mistaken by a prejudiced mind for a sacrifice of musical sense to the exigencies of a mechanical 'canon in the 7th'. How false such an idea really is may be seen from the fact that the passage could easily be altered, as follows:

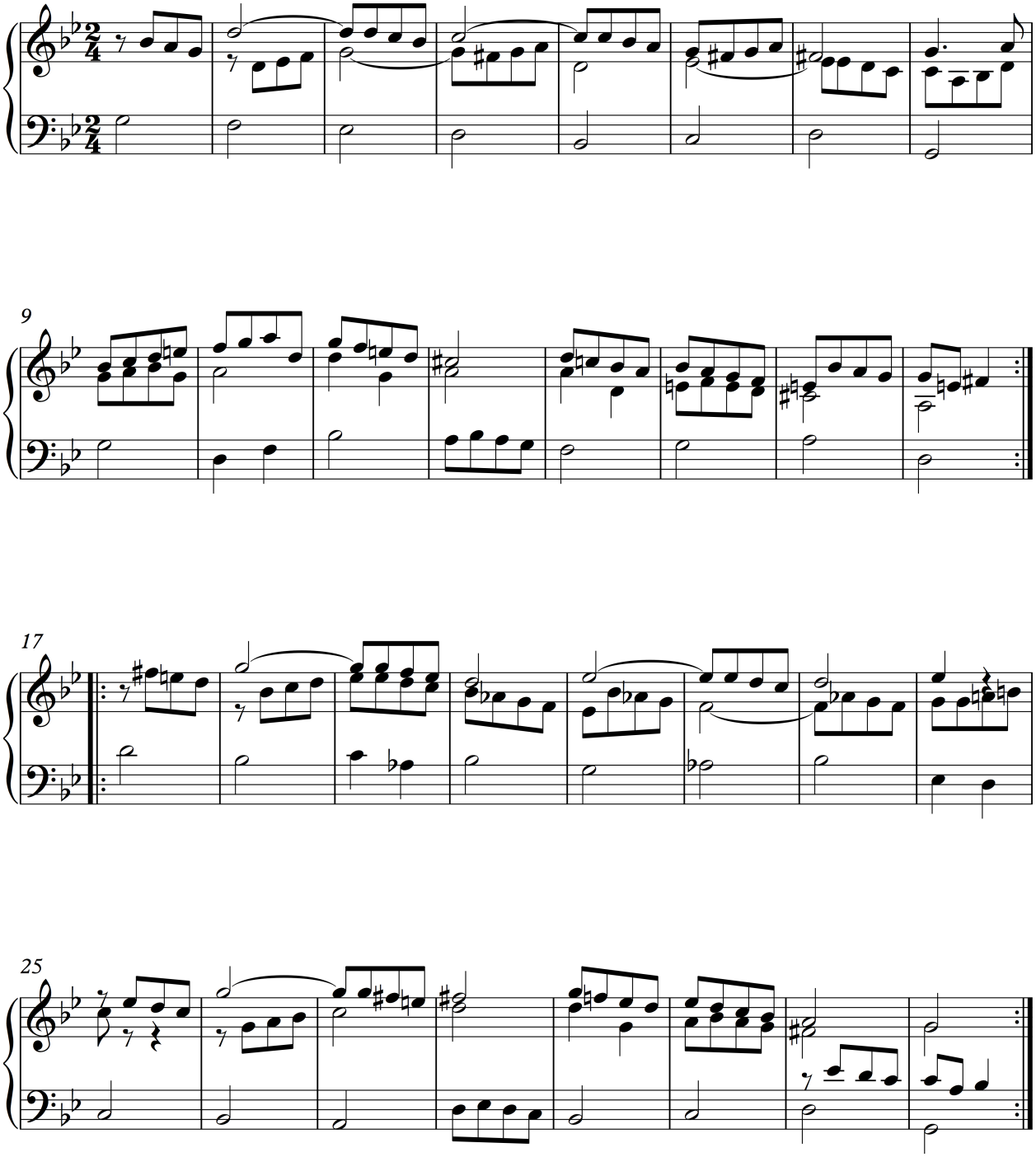
Ex 2



Compare Variation 21, mm. 14-15:



Example 8. Original variation on the Goldberg bass, by M. Anson-Cartwright



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