Specters of Bach: Hauntology in the Music of Sofia Gubaidulina

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Photo: Young Pioneer Camp, Russia
Rebecca Bathory, *Soviet Ghosts* (2013)

1. The Terror and Its Aftermath

If the Nazi Holocaust exterminated the Other, the Soviet terror was suicidal.

—Alexander Etkind, *Warped Mourning: Stories of the Undead in the Land of the Unburied* (2013)

Composers of the Thaw

- Alfred Schnittke (1934–1998) Concerto Grosso No. 1 (1977)
- Sofia Gubaidulina (b. 1931)
- Arvo Pärt (b. 1935)
- Edison Denisov (1929–1996)
- Valentin Silvestrov (b. 1937)
- Sergey Slonimsky (1932–2020)
- Boris Tishchenko (1939–2010)

Polystylism represents a way of being—of becoming—in the world, a means for sifting, sorting, filtering, and organizing contemporary sonic spaces.

—Peter J. Schmelz, *Sonic Overload: Alfred Schnittke, Valentin Silvestrov, and Polystylism in the Late USSR* (2021)

2. Hauntology

It is necessary to introduce haunting into the very construction of a concept.

—Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (1994)

Hauntology in Music Studies

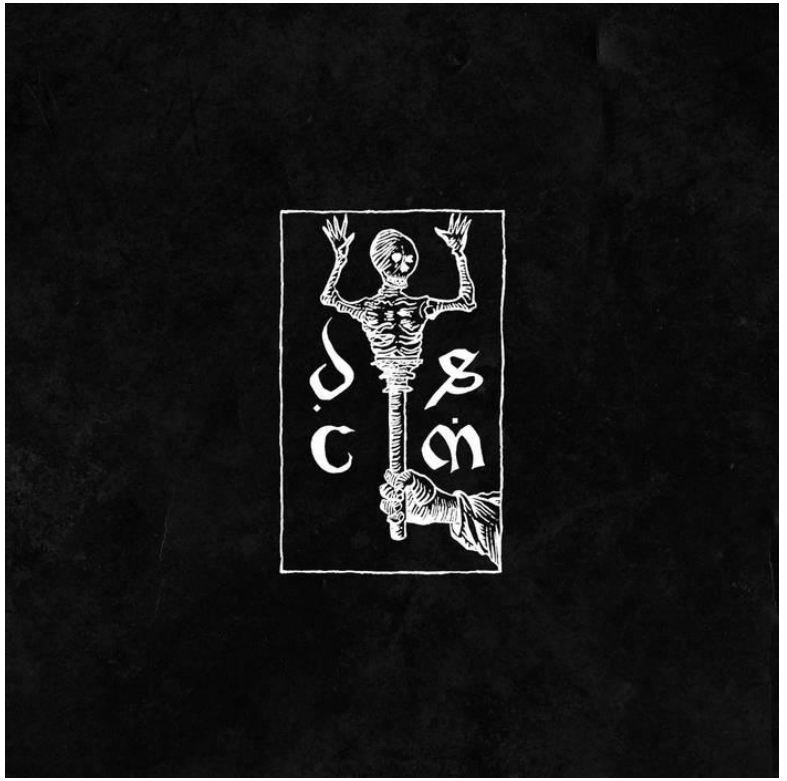
- Isabella Van Elferen, *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny* (2012)
- Edward Venn, "Thomas Adès and the Spectres of *Brahms*" (2015); "Findings, Keepings and Borrowings: Uncanny Intertextuality in Thomas Adès's *Powder Her Face*" (2021)
- Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (2014)

In hauntological music there is an implicit acknowledgement that the hopes created by postwar electronics or by the euphoric dance music of the 1990s have evaporated—not only has the future not arrived, it no longer seems possible.

—Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (2014)

Burial, “Archangel” (2007)

Dead Space Chamber Music, “The Grail Carol” (2022)



Hauntology in Music

- Distorted timbres
- Disintegrating quotations
- Disrupted temporality

3. Sofia Gubaidulina (b. 1931)

Sofia Gubaidulina: Sources

- Michael Kurtz, *Sofia Gubaidulina: A Biography* (2001/2007)
- Sofia Gubaidulina and Vera Lukomsky, “My Desire Is Always to Rebel, to Swim Against the Stream!” (*Perspectives of New Music*, 1998)
- Sofia Gubaidulina and Vera Lukomsky, “The Eucharist in My Fantasy” (*Tempo*, 1998)
- Sofia Gubaidulina and Vera Lukomsky, “Hearing the Subconscious” (*Tempo*, 1999)

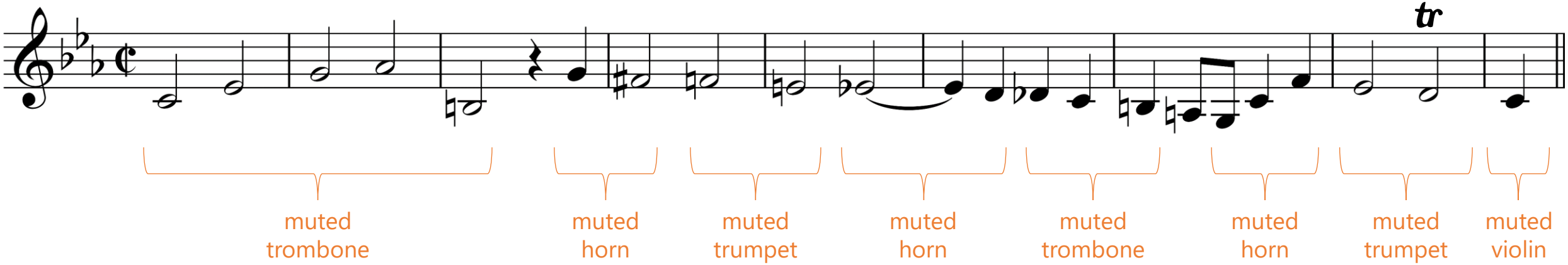
Sofia Gubaidulina: Analyses

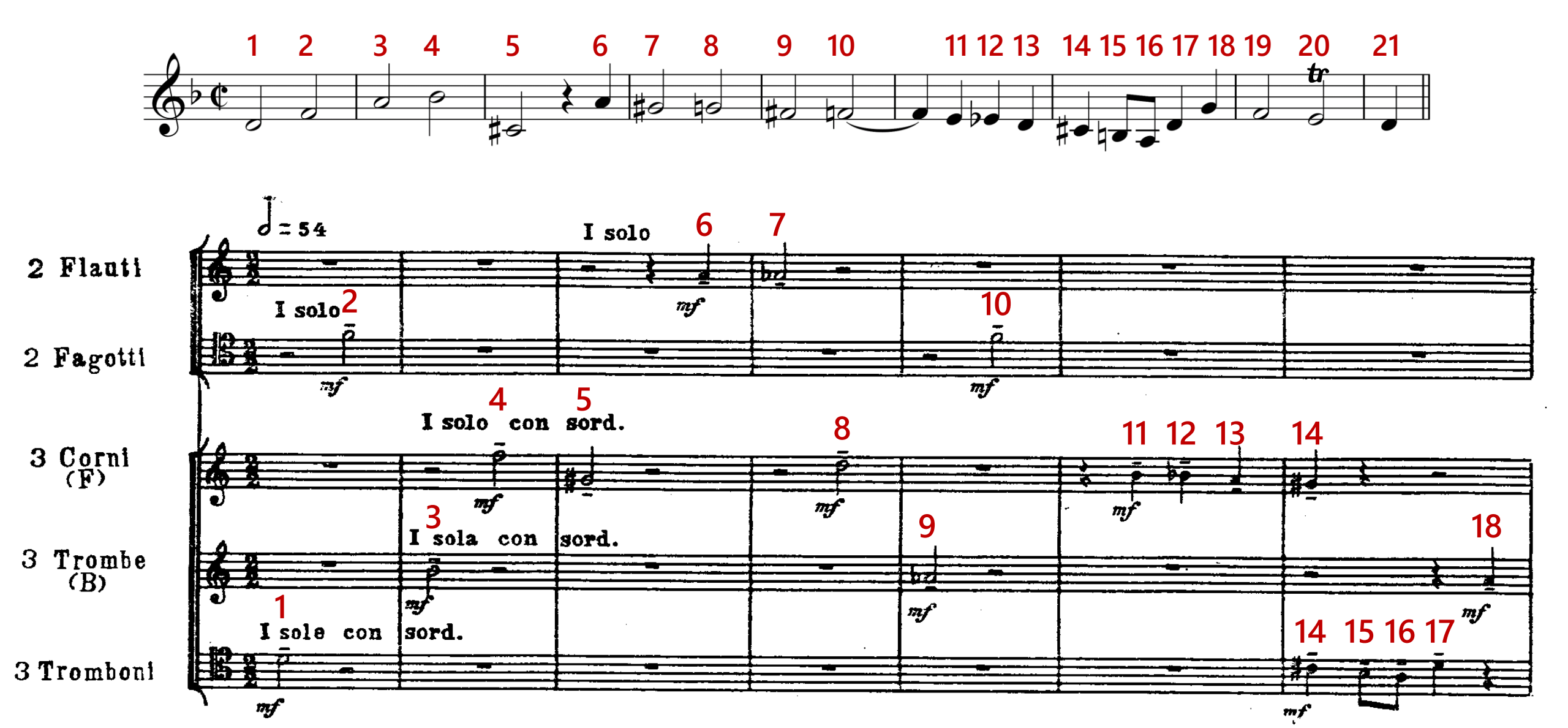
- Peter J. Schmelz, *Such Freedom, If Only Musical* (2009)
- Ivana Medić, “Gubaidulina, Misunderstood” (2012)
- Philip A. Ewell, “The Parameter Complex in the Music of Sofia Gubaidulina” (2013)
- Aleksandra Drozzina, “Schnittke, Gubaidulina, and Pärt: Religion and Spirituality During the Late Thaw and Early Perestroika” (2020)
- Noah Kahrs, “Consonance, Dissonance, and Formal Proportions in Two Works by Sofia Gubaidulina” (2020)

4. *Offertorium* (1980/1986)

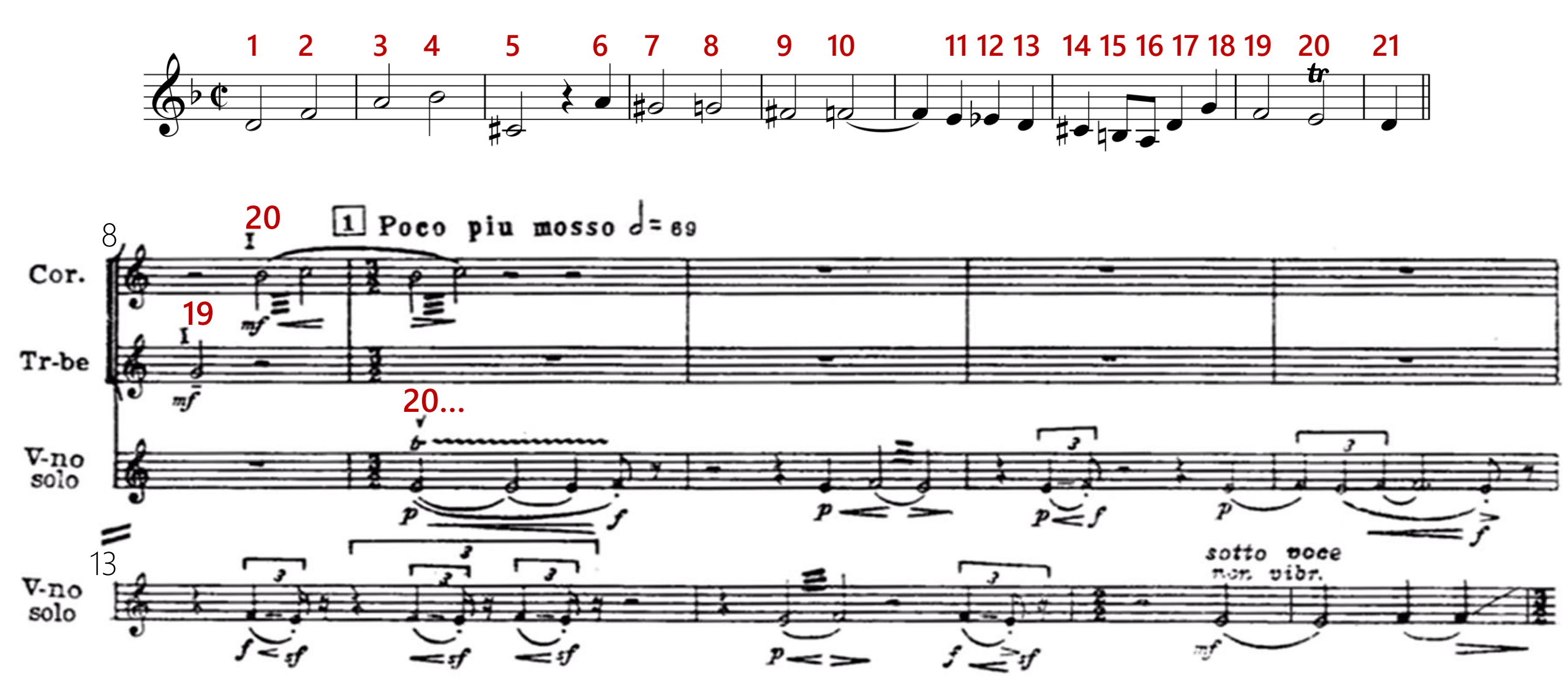
Orch. Anton Webern (1935)

J. S. Bach, *The Musical Offering* (1747)

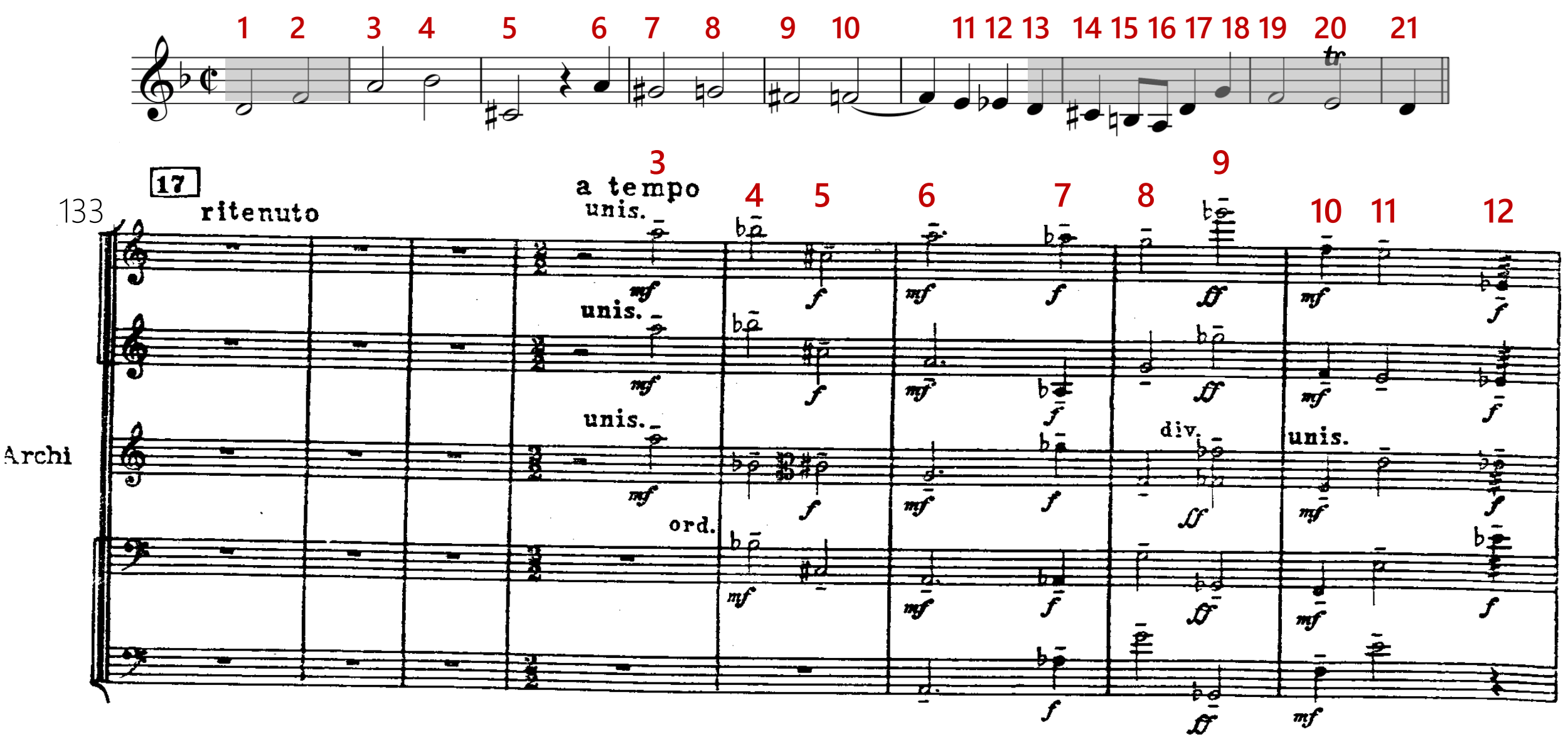




Sofia Gubaidulina: *Offertorium* (1980/1986)



Sofia Gubaidulina: *Offertorium* (1980/1986)



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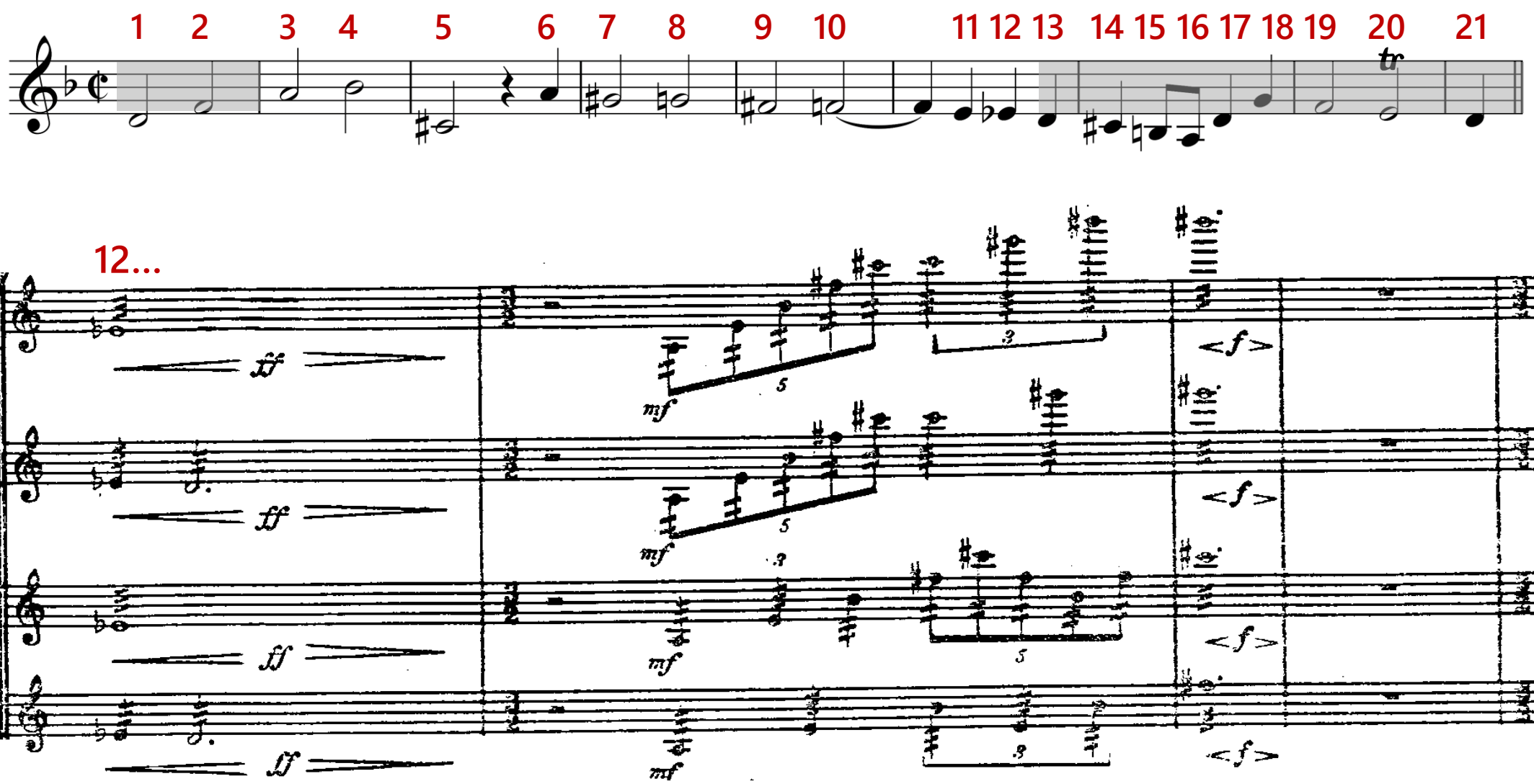

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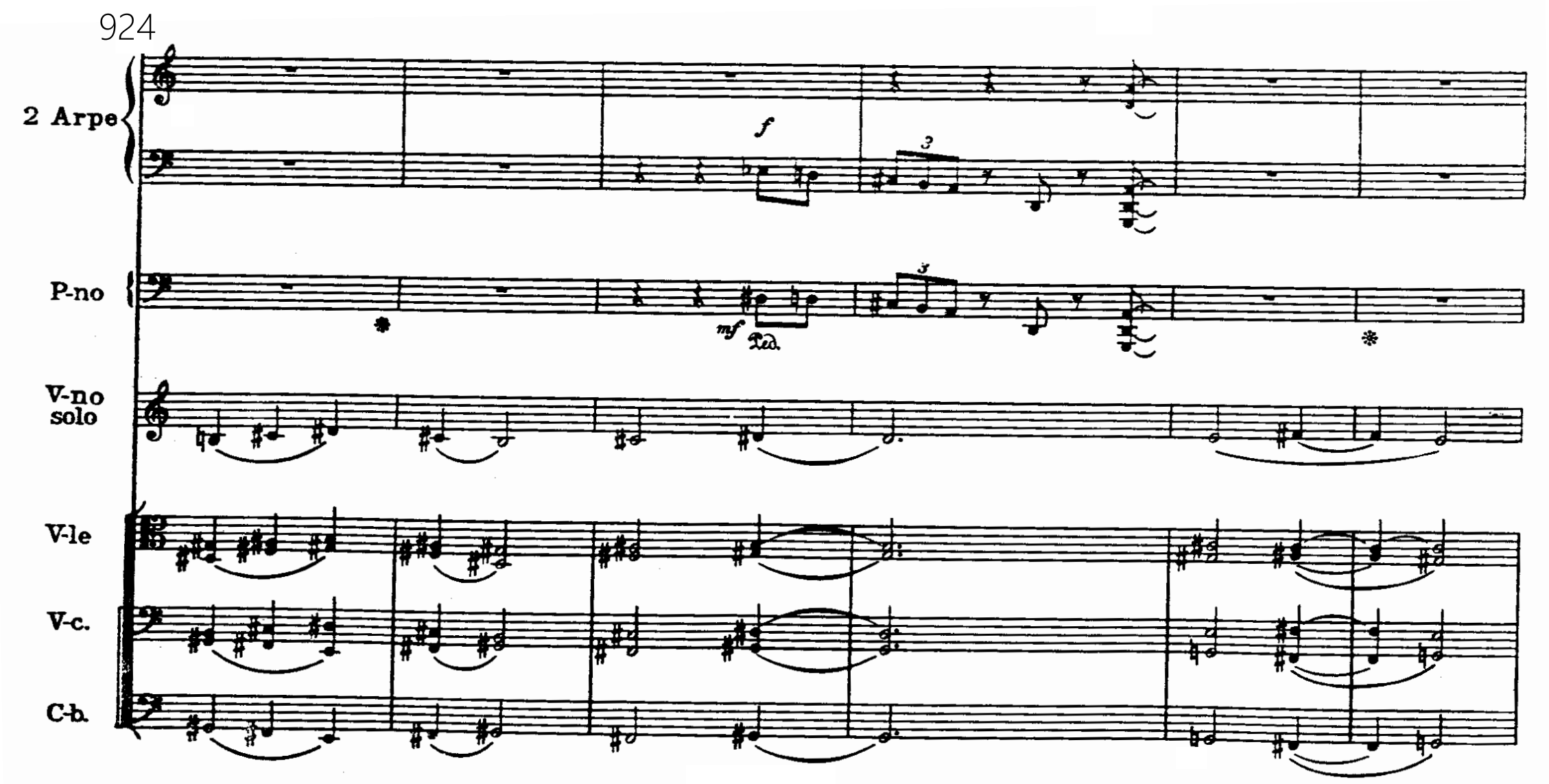

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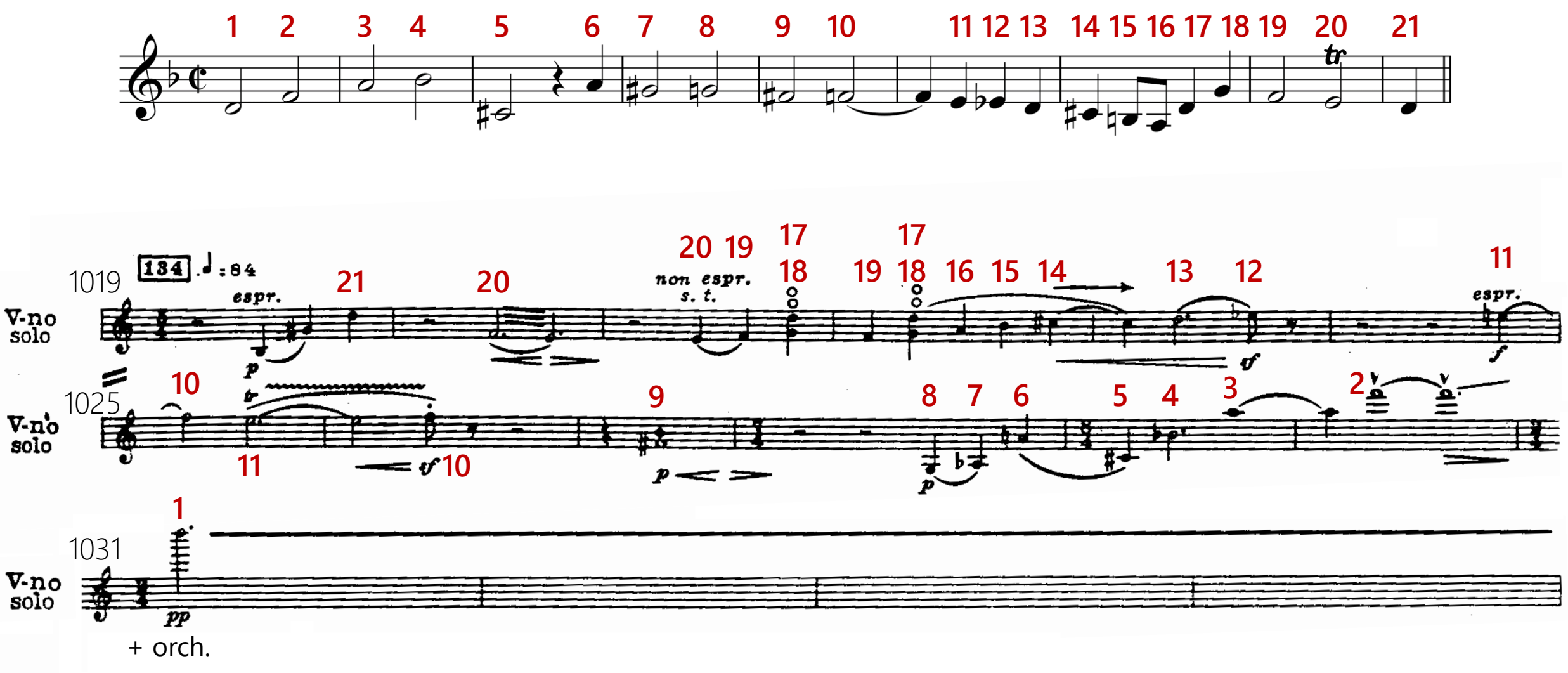

Sofia Gubaidulina: *Offertorium* (1980/1986)

5. *Reflections on the Theme BACH* (2002)

The concluding chorale thus represents a moment of **historical and stylistic reconciliation** among [distinct musical materials] and **between Bach and Gubaidulina**.

—Joseph Straus, "Historical and Stylistic Reconciliation in Sofia Gubaidulina's *Reflections on the Theme BACH*" (2021)

J. S. Bach, *The Art of the Fugue* (1742–50), No. 20

231

countersubject

BACH

subject

Die Originalausgabe schliesst sieben Takte früher beim Zeichen 𝔉. Dagegen bringt das Autograph noch obige Verbindung der drei verschiedenen Themen, bricht dann mitten auf der Seite ab, und schliesst mit der nachstehenden, von C. Ph. E. Bach hinzugefügten Bemerkung:

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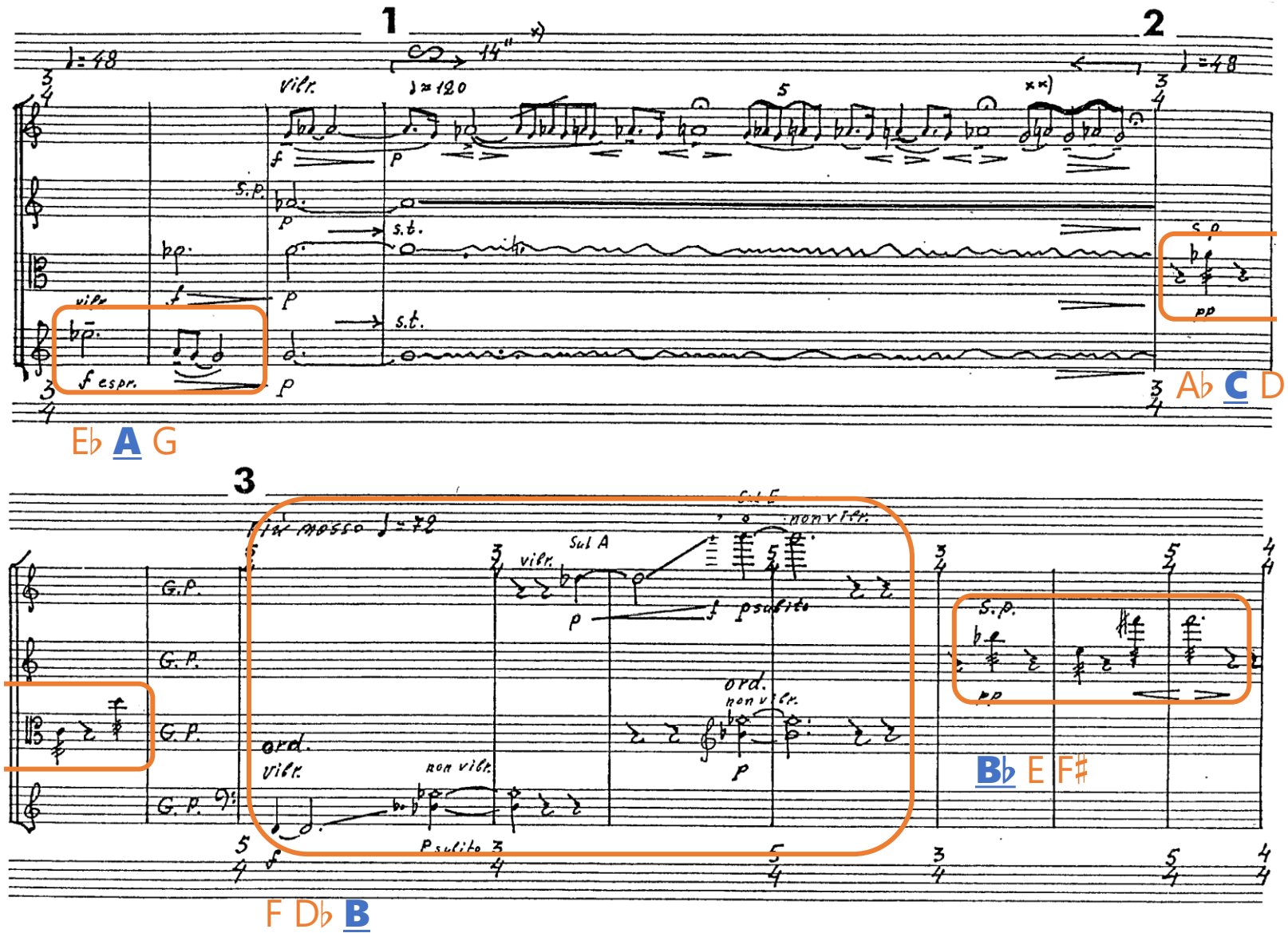
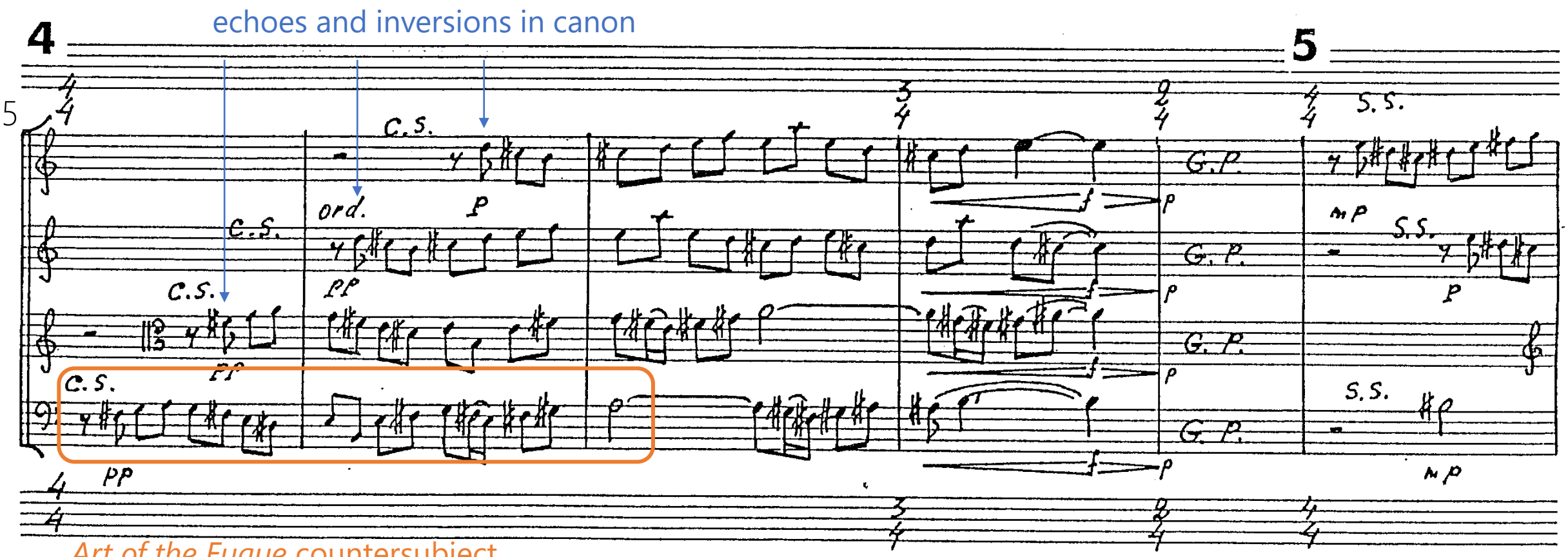


Sofia Gubaidulina: *Reflections on the Theme BACH* (2002)



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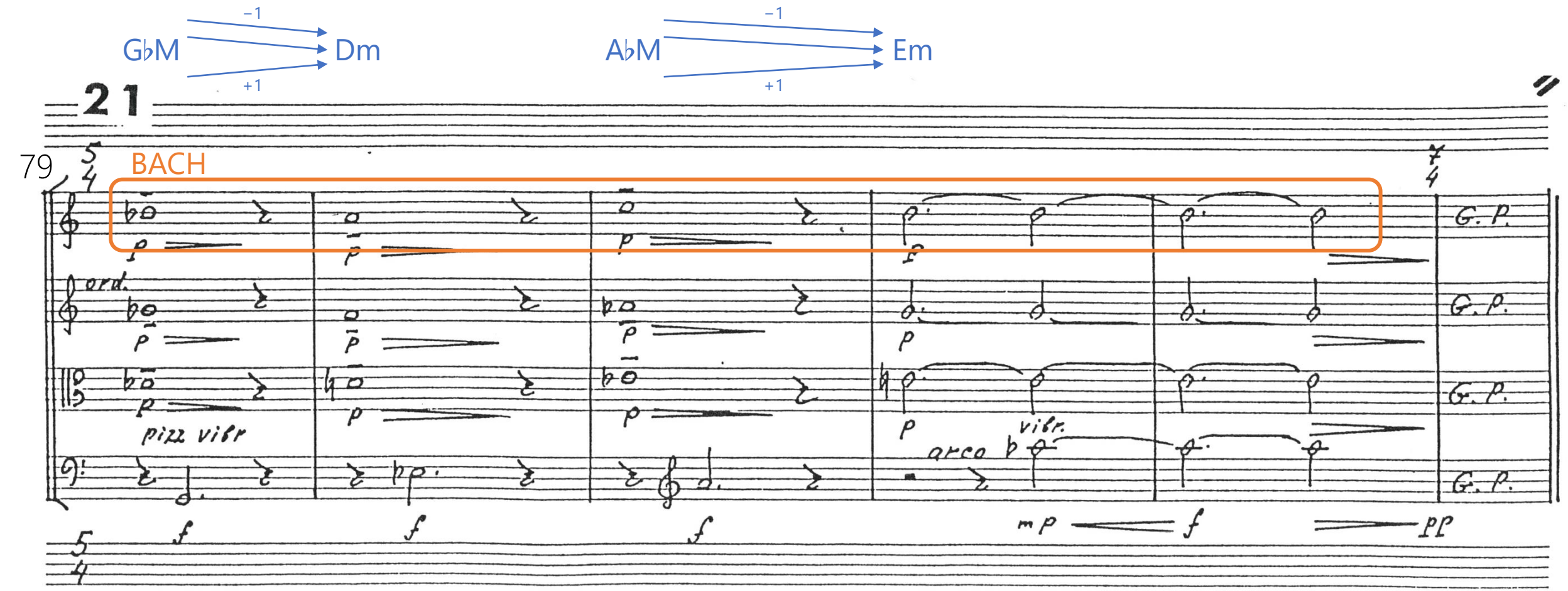

Sofia Gubaidulina: *Reflections on the Theme BACH* (2002)

Conclusion

“We were taught to learn from pain,” said Teresa Schneidewind, 33, the head of Lützen’s museum. “We care for our memorials, because they allow us to learn from the mistakes of past generations.”

—Anatoly Kurmanaev, Christopher F. Schuetze, and Ekaterina Bodyagina, “‘Learn from Pain’: Why Germany Protects Soviet War Memorials,” *New York Times*, April 28, 2023

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