Bass Lines and Harmonic Structure

The nature of the lowest voice and its relationship to harmonic structure

Three Fundamental Classes

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- Tonic (T) class

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- Tonic (T) class
- Intermediate (int) or “predominant” class
- Dominant (D) class

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- I - I6

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Tonic (T) Class

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- I - vii6 - I6
  - Adds a passing chord between I and I6, connecting the root and third of the tonic

Intermediate (int) Class

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- IV - ii6 - V

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- I - vi - IV

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- I - vi - IV
  - The vi acts both as a prolongation of T and a bridge into the int chord as well

Chord and *Harmony*

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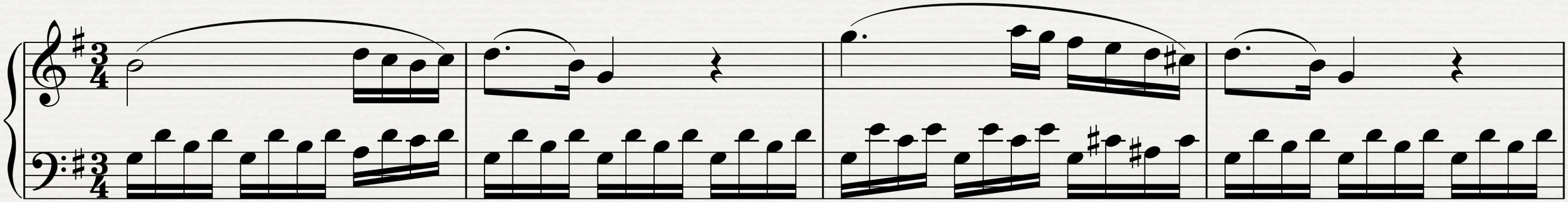
  - The *chord* is the actual labelled harmonic event
  - The *harmony* is the overall function of that harmonic event, viewed either singly but more often together with other chords as a larger unit

Mozart: Sonata K. 545, II



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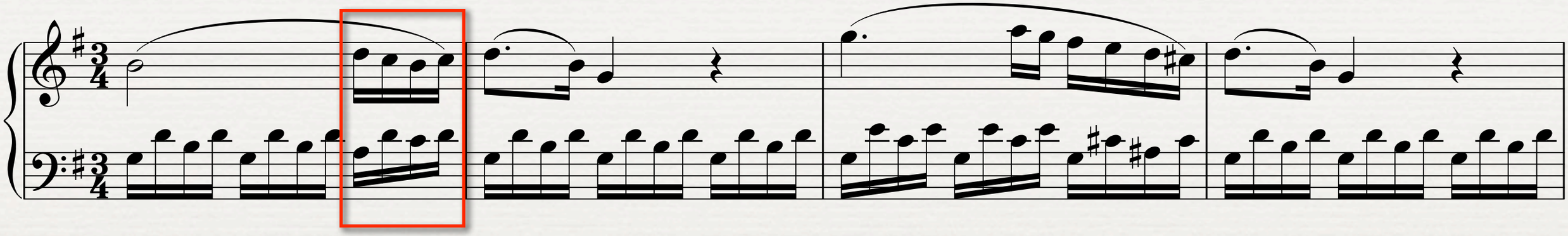

- The V43 on the third beat provides harmonic variety, but it also serves to *prolong* the initial tonic harmony

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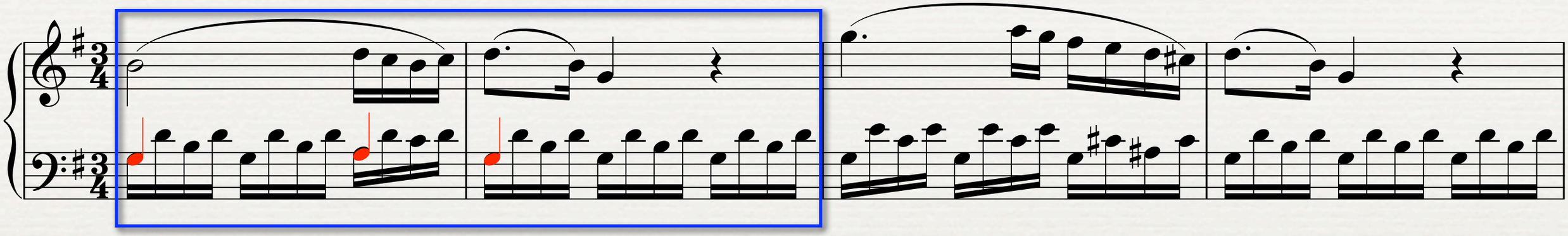

- The V43 on the third beat provides harmonic variety, but it also serves to *prolong* the initial tonic harmony
- The bass line in the first two measures outlines an upper neighbor tone

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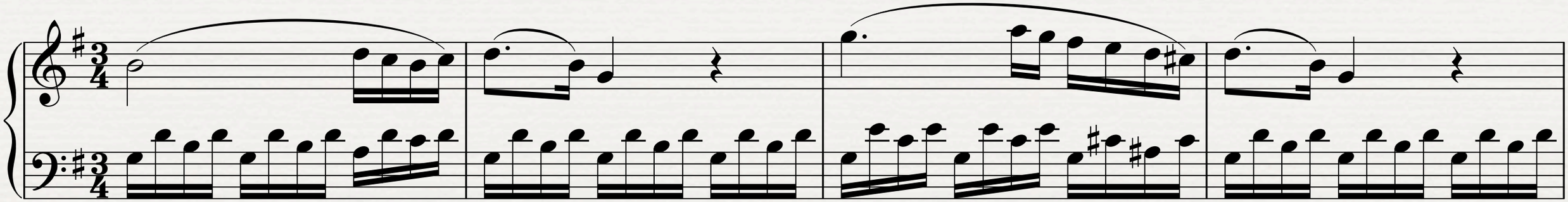

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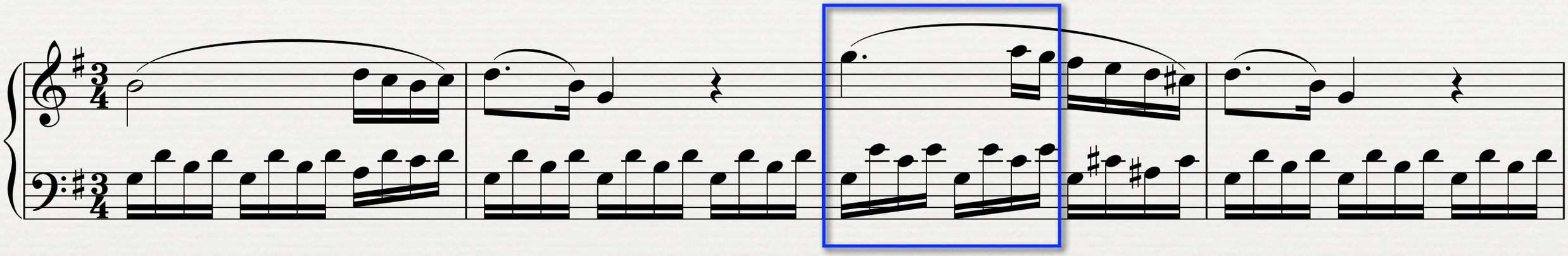

- The 6-4 chord in bar three is a *neighboring* 6-4, an embellishment which serves to prolong the tonic

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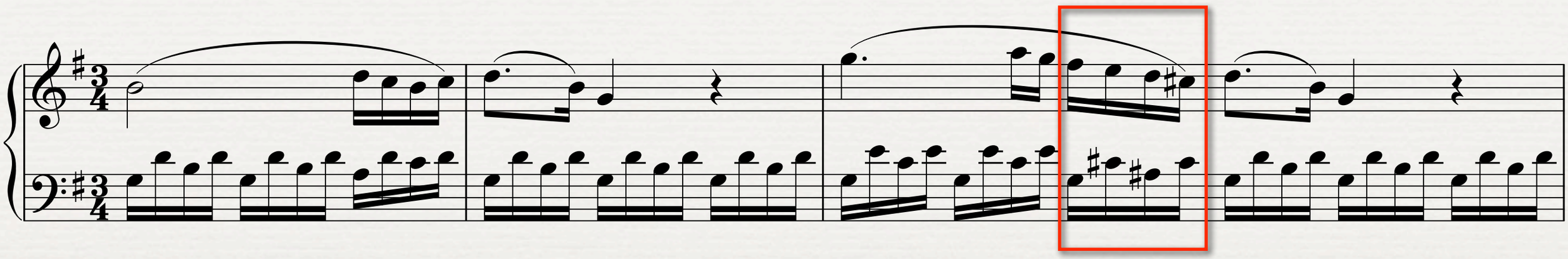

- The 6-4 chord in bar three is a *neighboring* 6-4, an embellishment which serves to prolong the tonic
- The common-tone diminished seventh chord on the third beat is also an embellishment, creating *incomplete neighbor chords* (*contrapuntal chords*)

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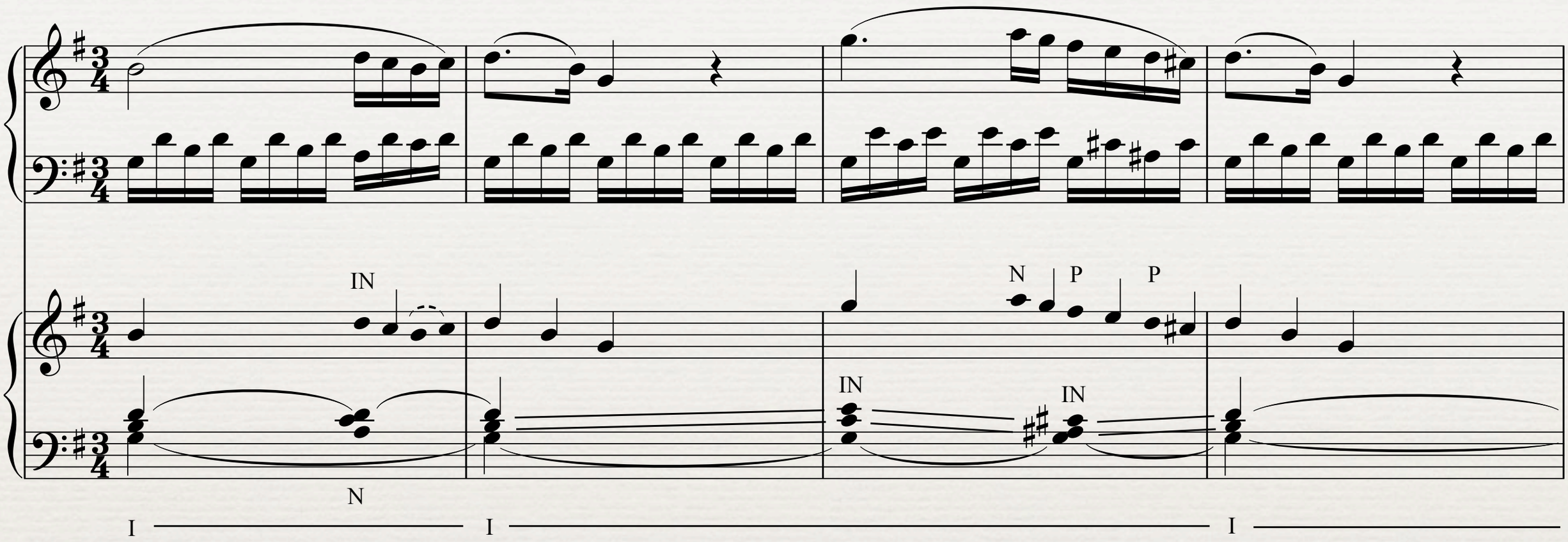

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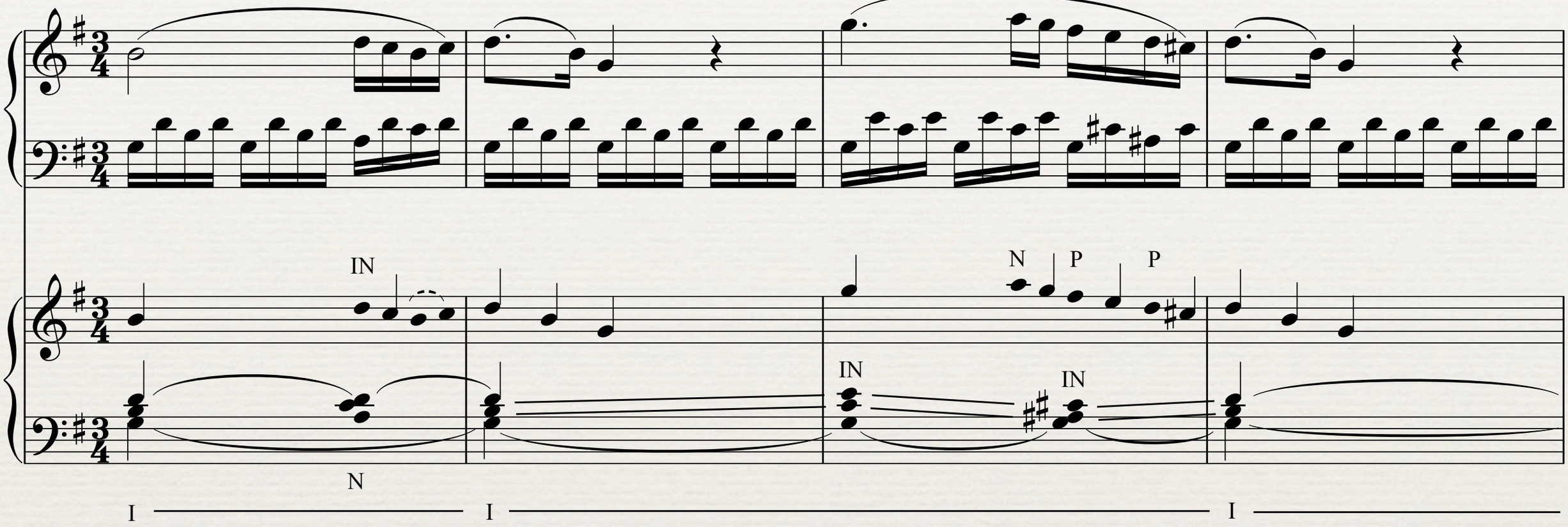

- The reduced analysis here shows the neighboring functions of the V43, IV64, and common-tone diminished chords

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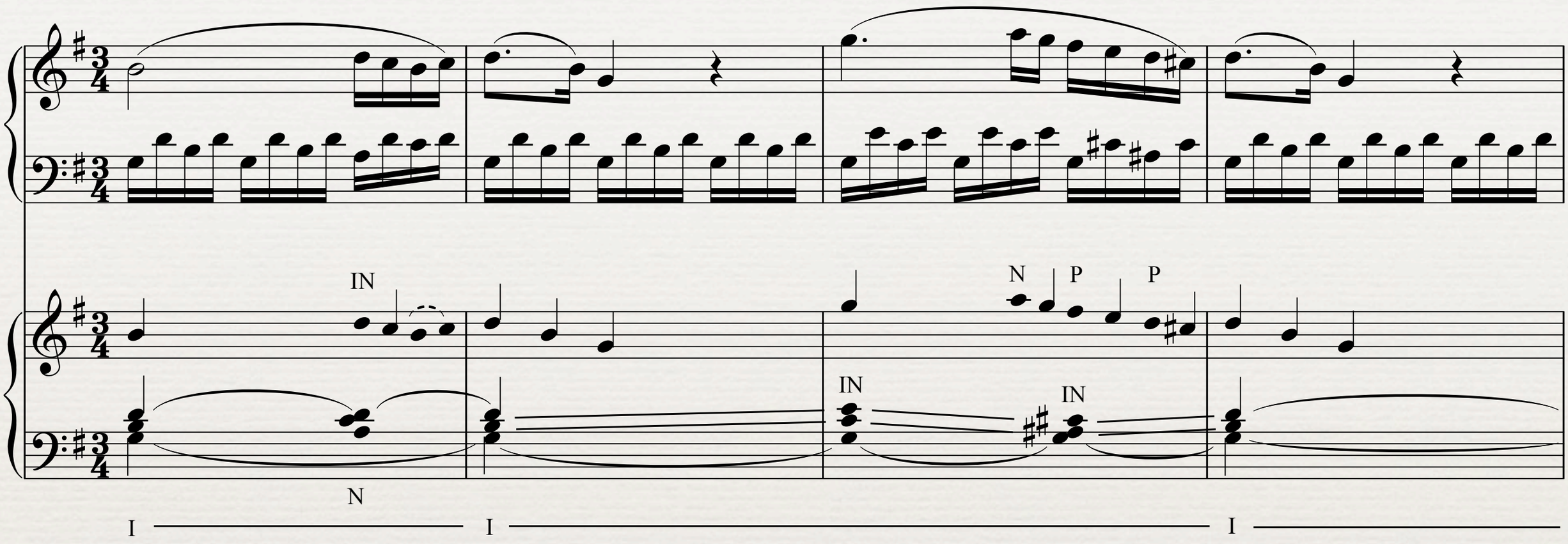

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- The reduction also analyzes the melody, using stems to show primary tones and identifying embellishments

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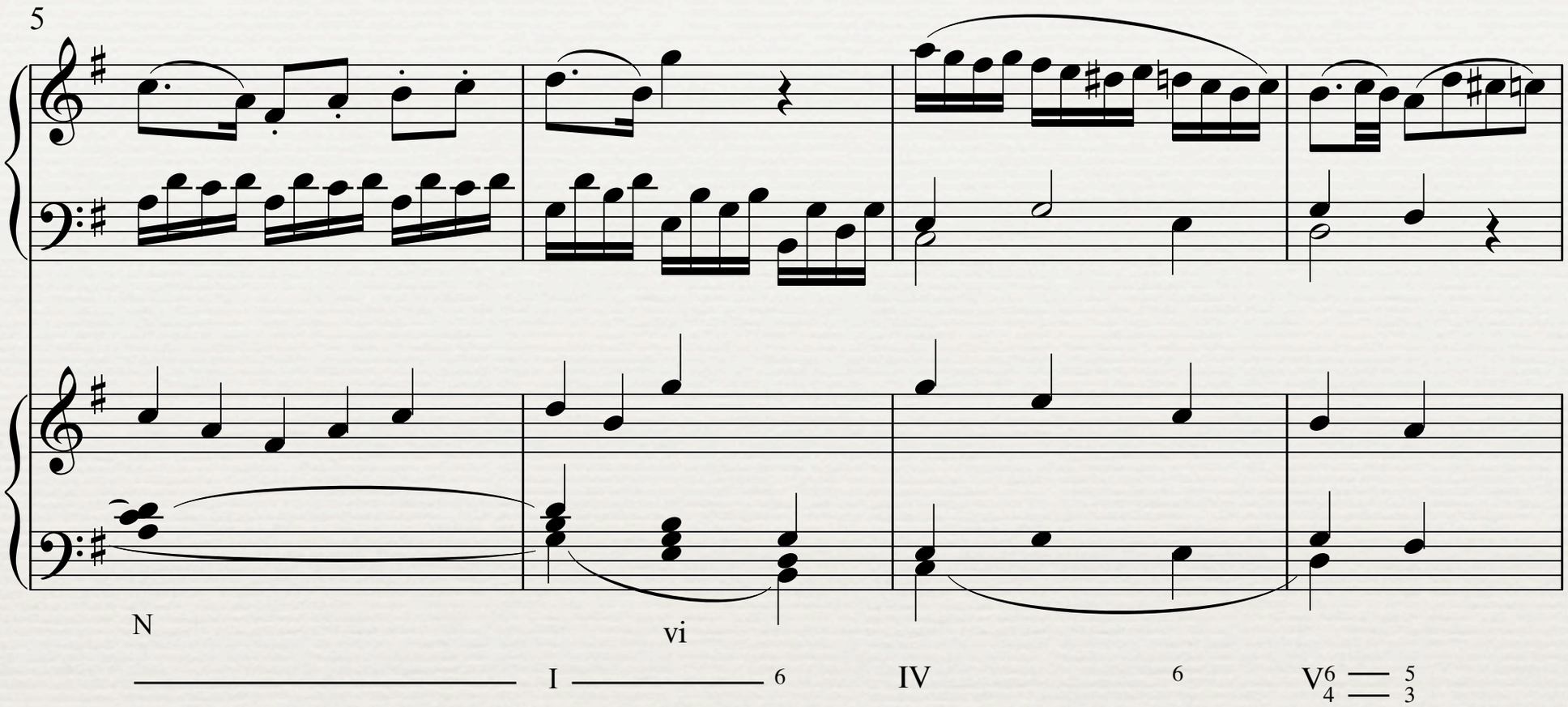

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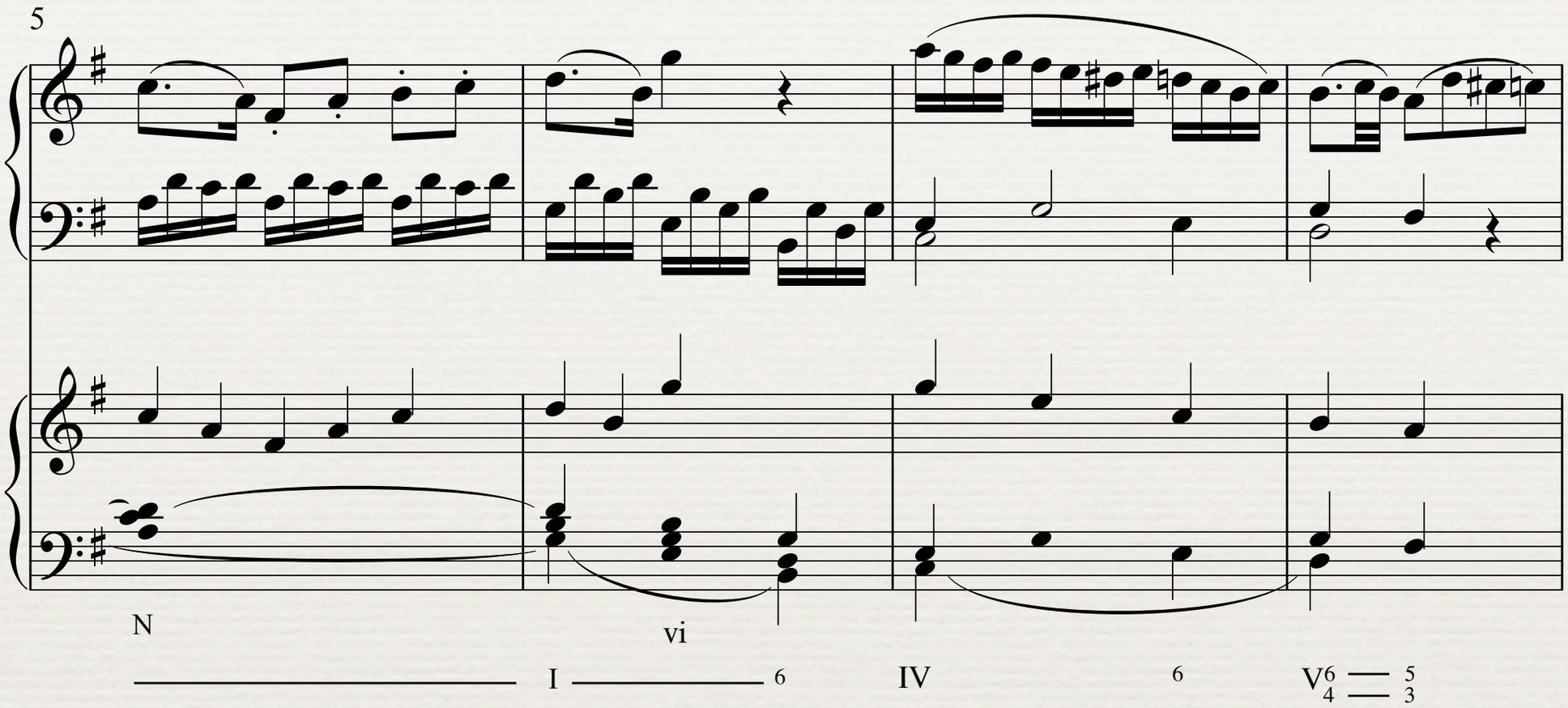

- Bars 5-6 display a continuation of the tonic prolongation

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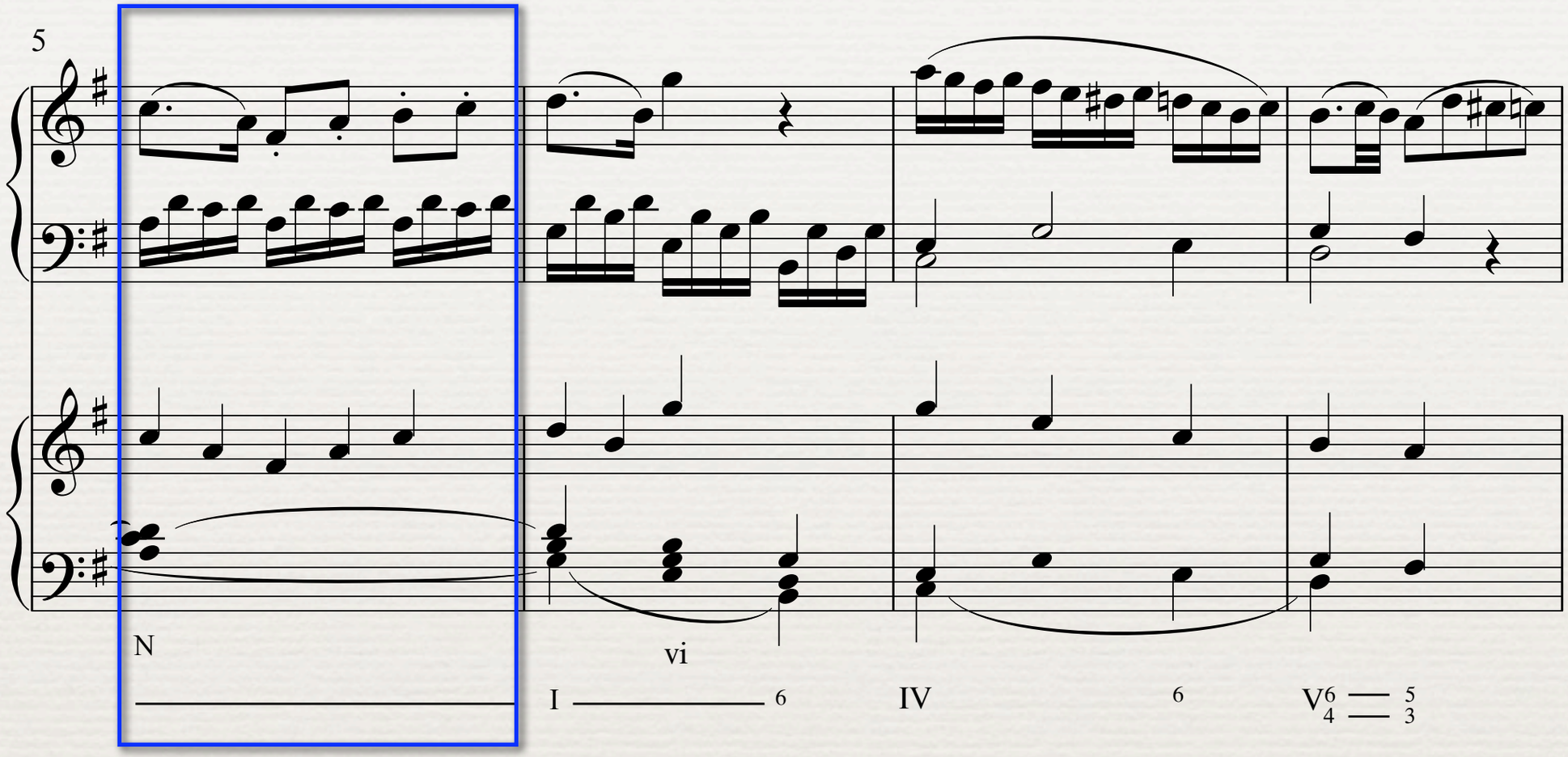

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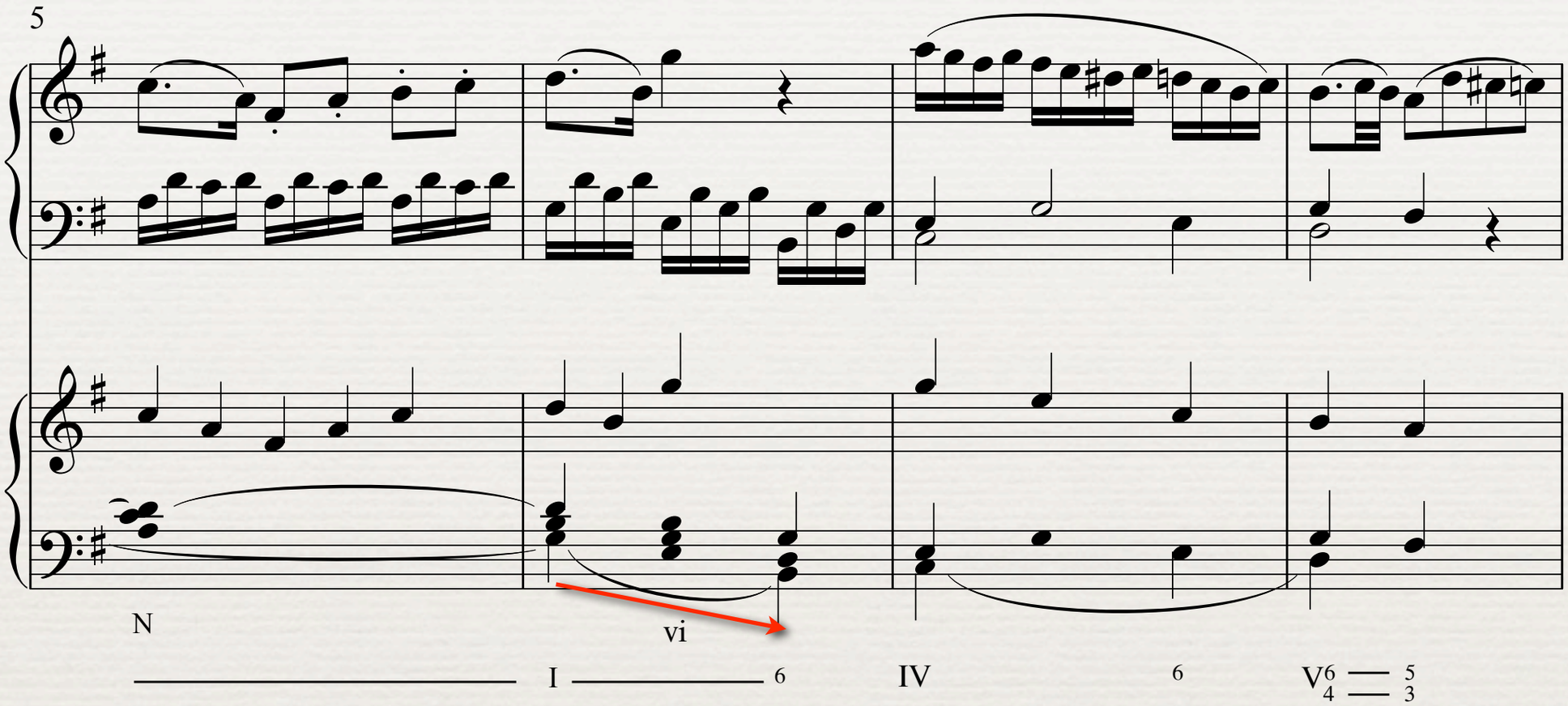

- Bars 5-6 display a continuation of the tonic prolongation
- The neighboring V43 is repeated in bar 5
- In bar 6, a motion from I through vi moves to I6—this is essentially the same motion as if moving upwards from I to I6.

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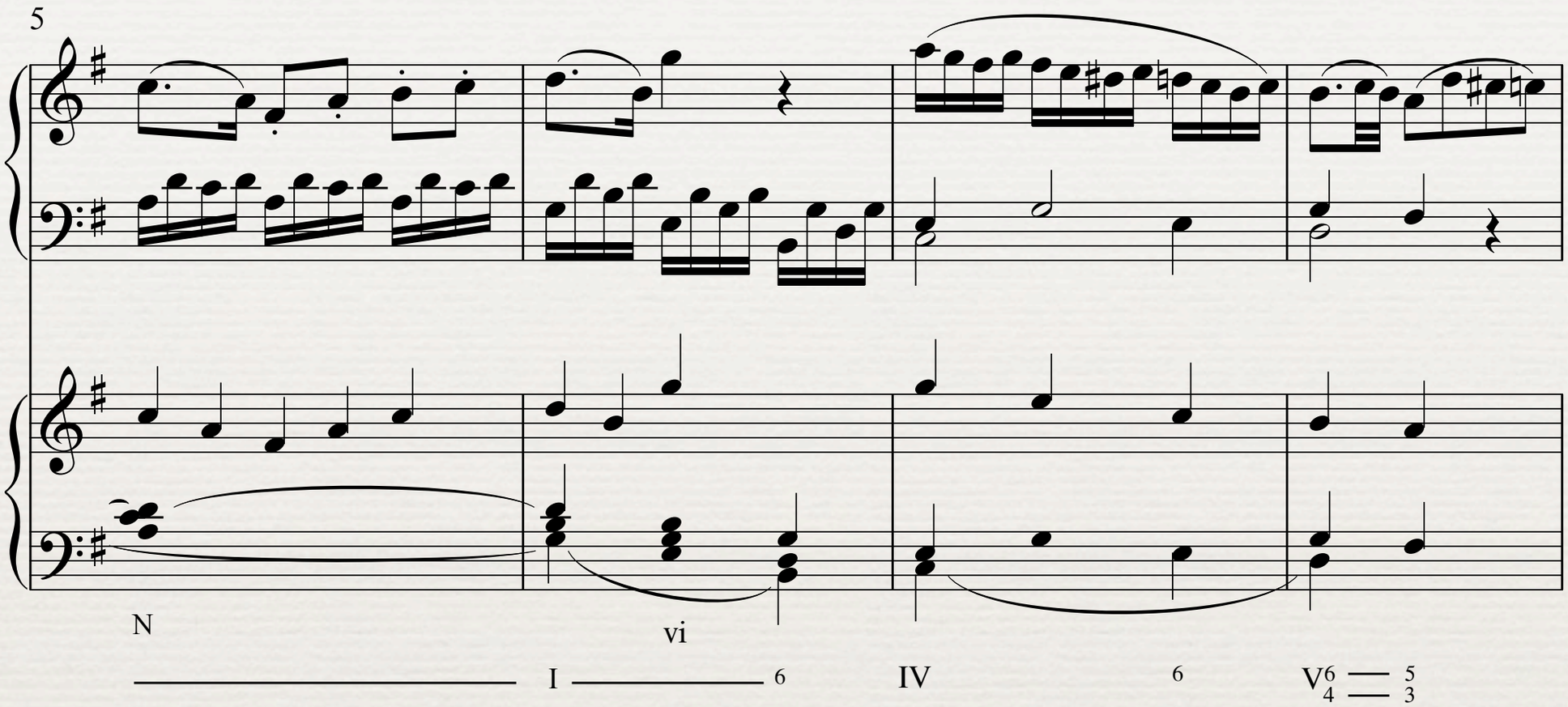

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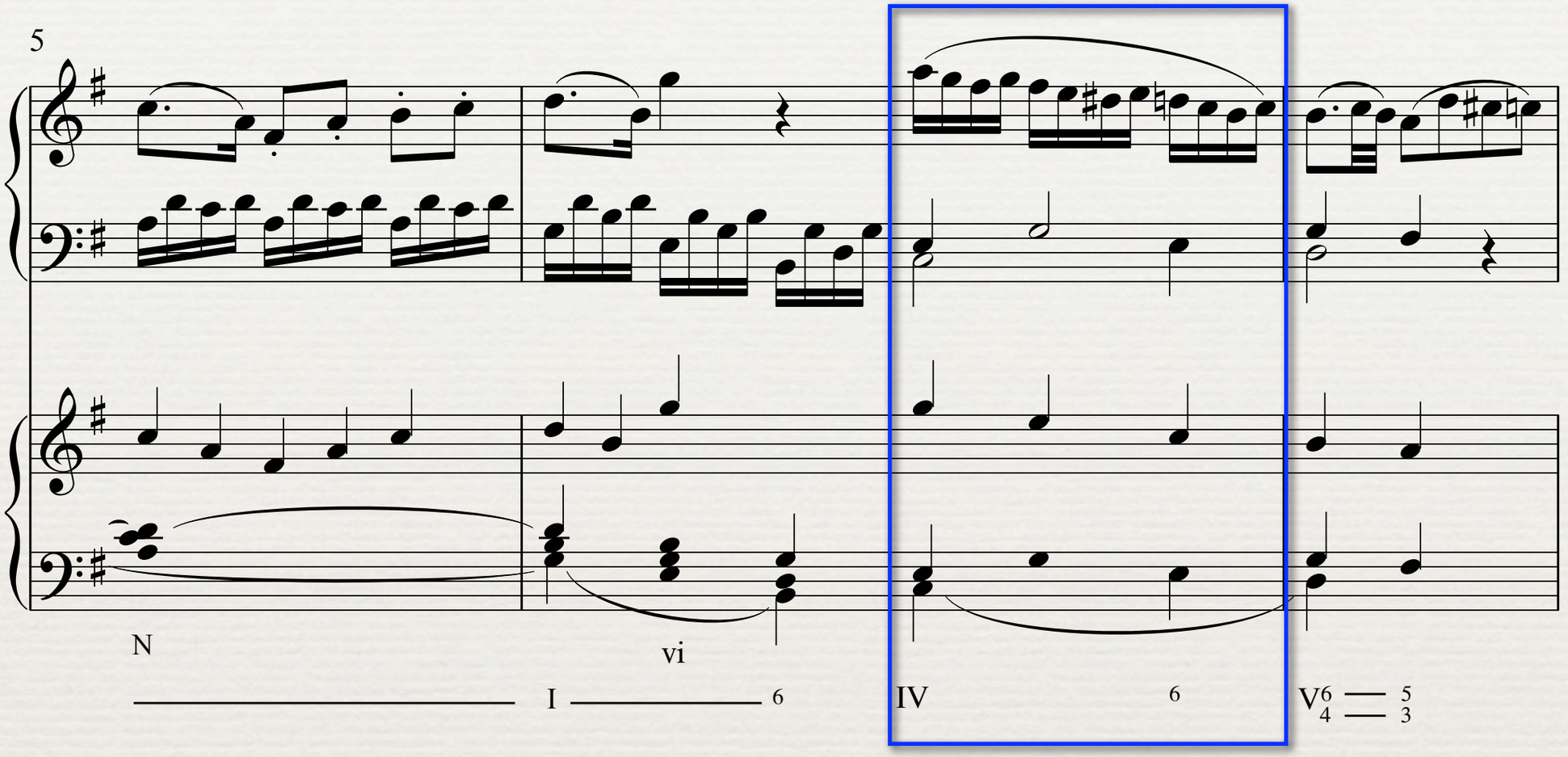

- Bar *7* is *intermediate* harmony—a "predominant" function leading us to the

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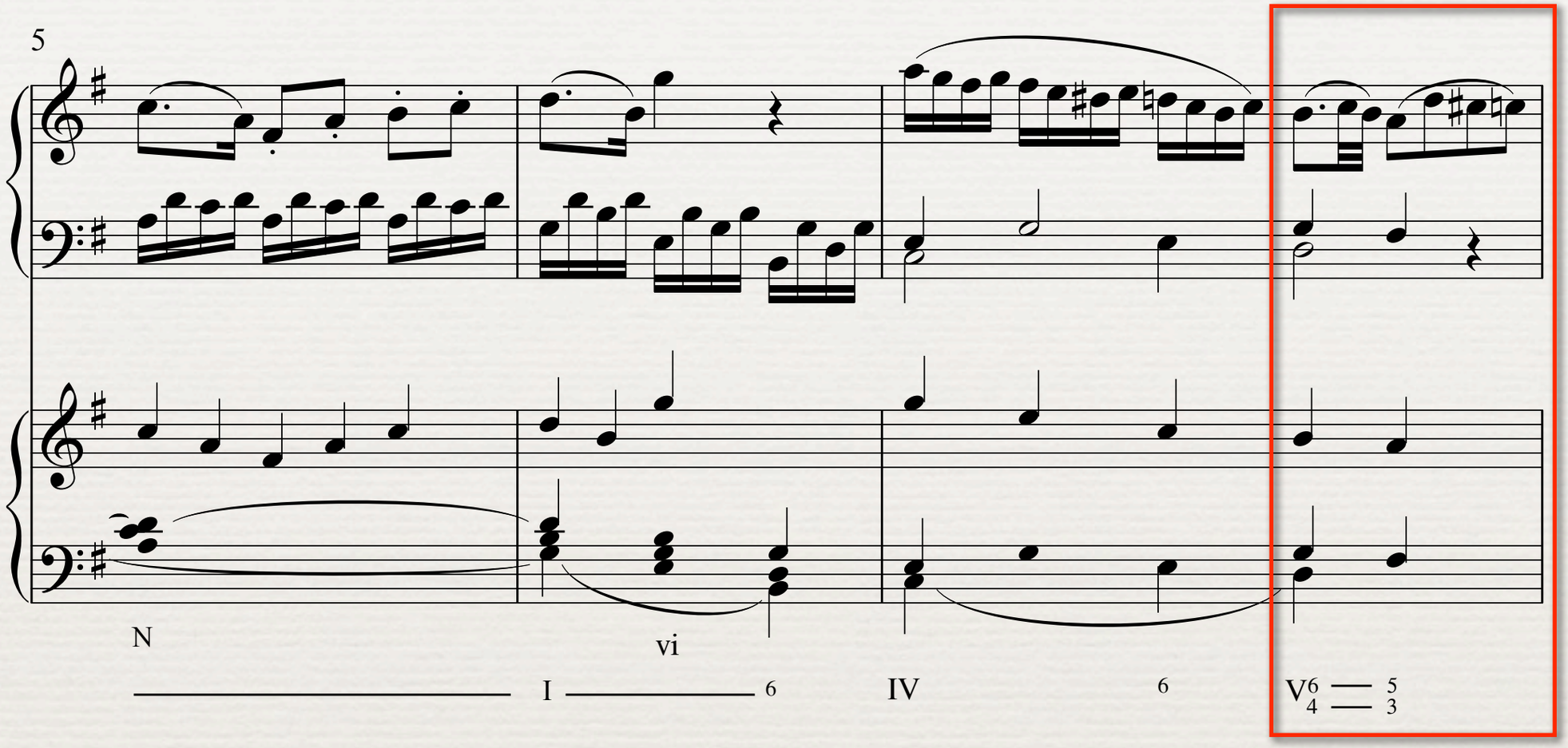

- Bar *7* is *intermediate* harmony—a "predominant" function leading us to the
- half-cadence in bar 8 and the *dominant* harmony

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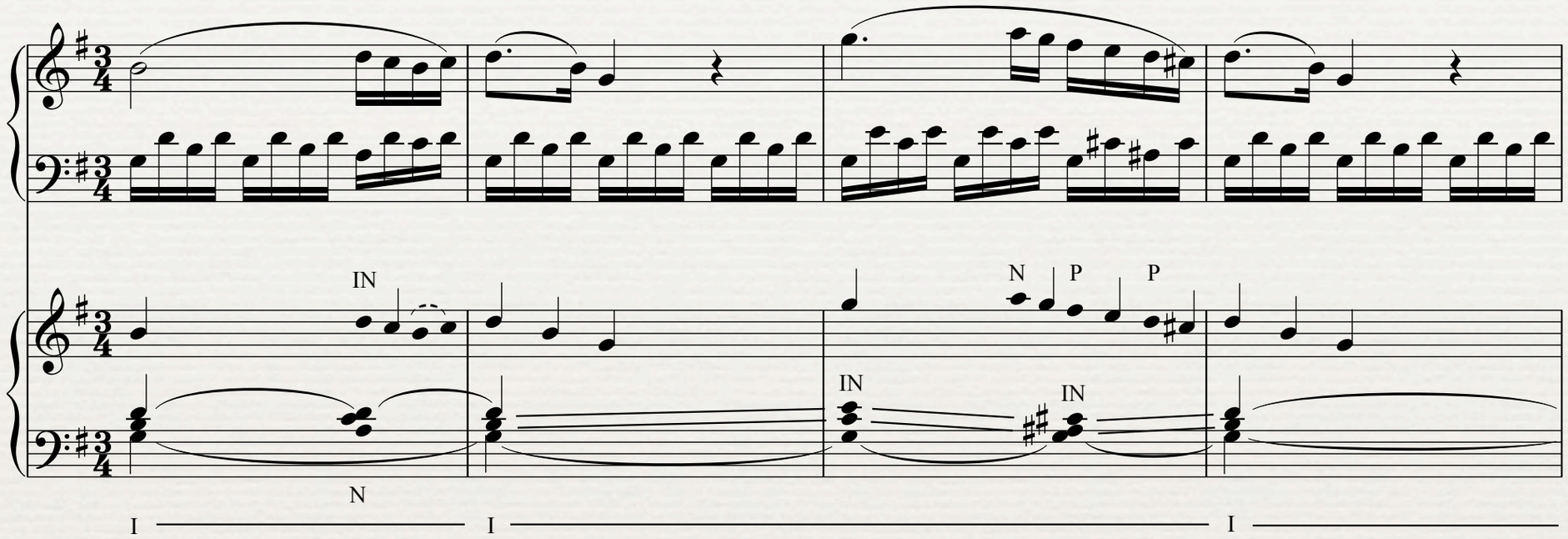
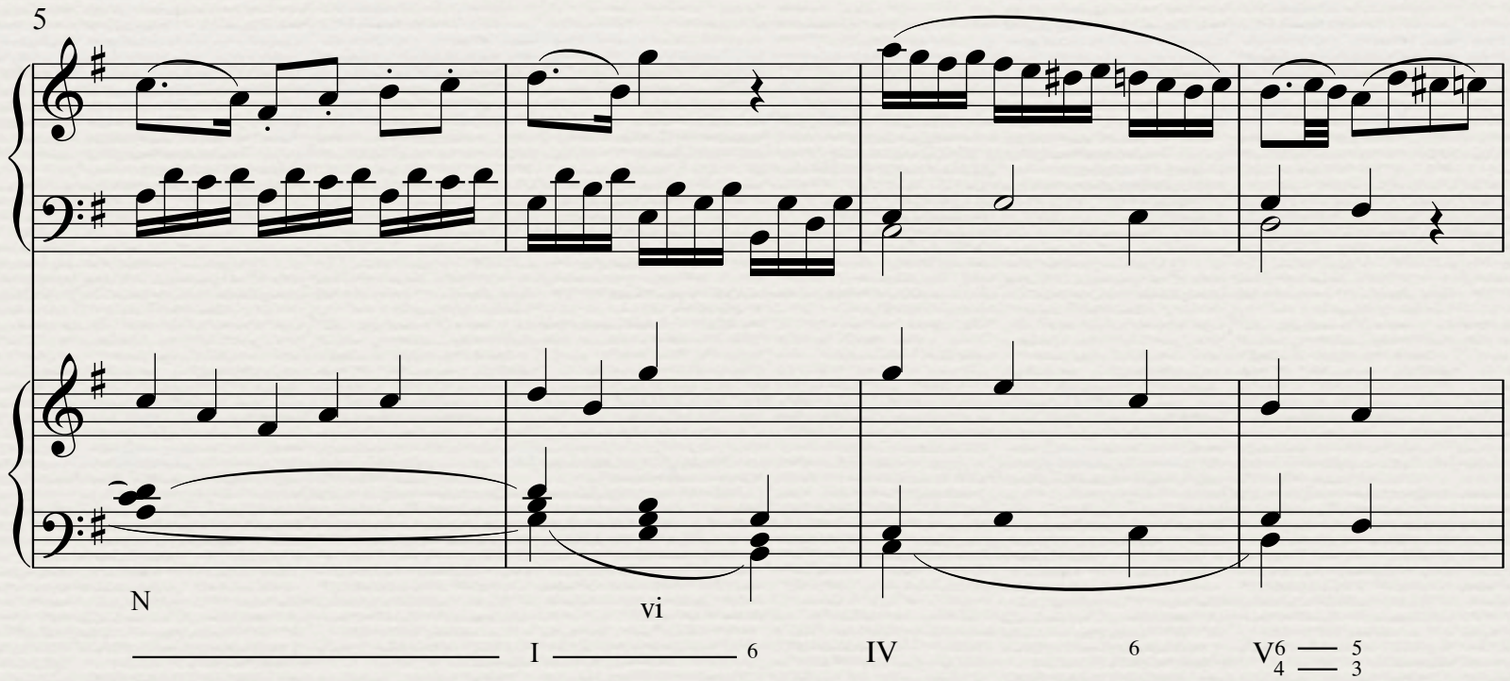
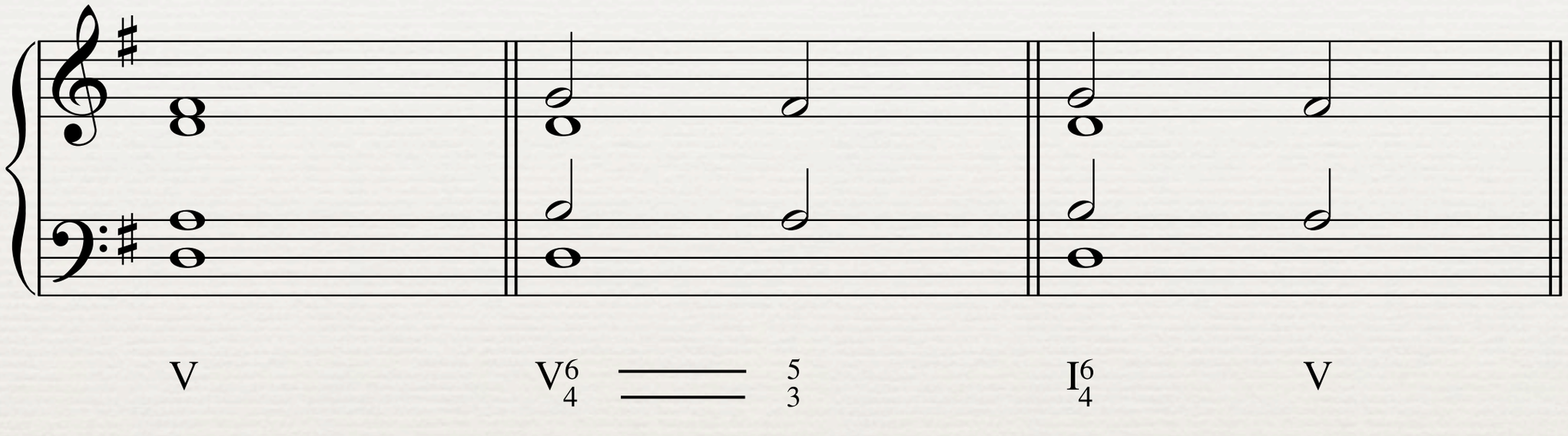




A Reminder



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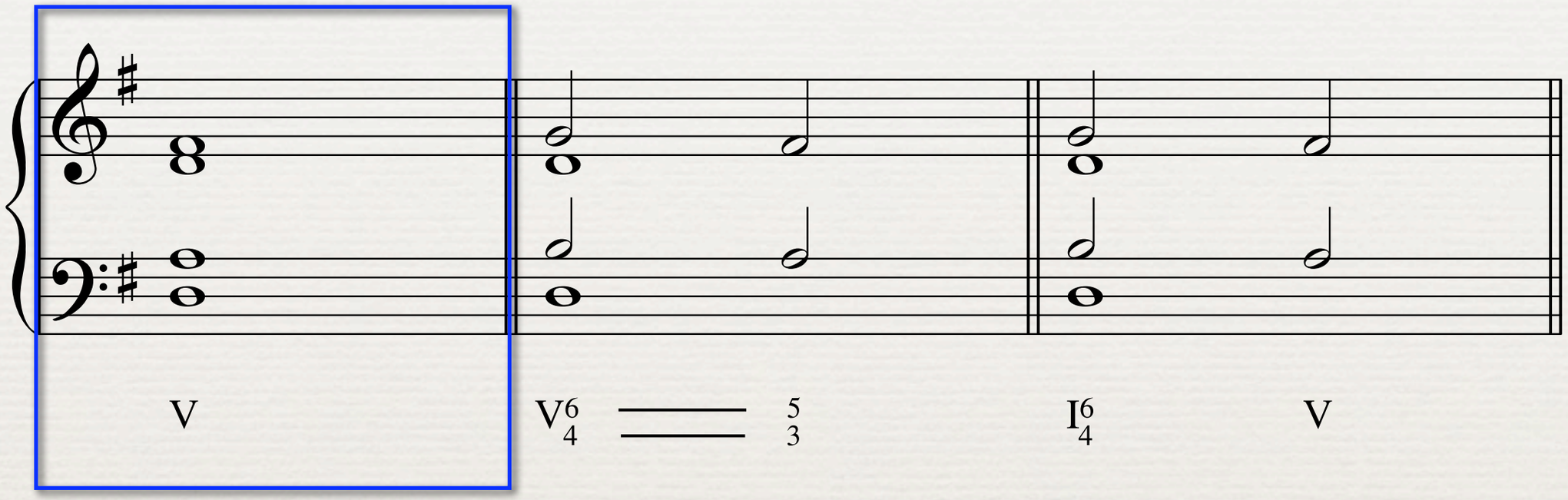

- The cadential six-four is really an intensified dominant

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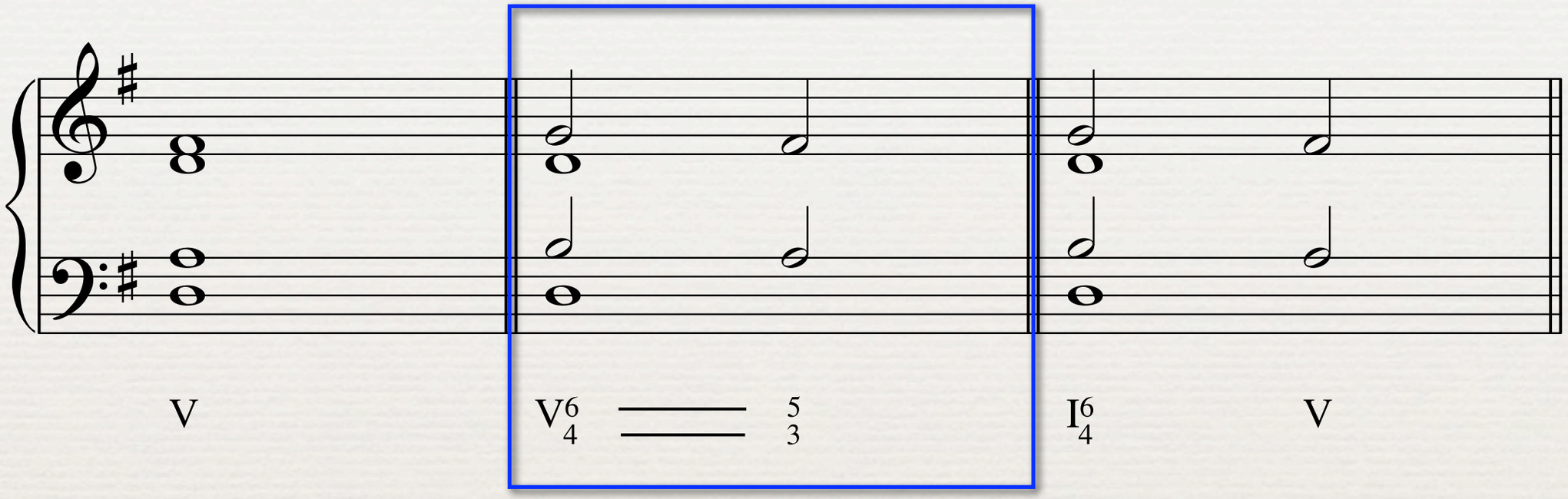

- The cadential six-four is really an intensified dominant
- Therefore, the notation which analyzes it as a dominant with non-chord tones resolving to chord tones is more descriptive than

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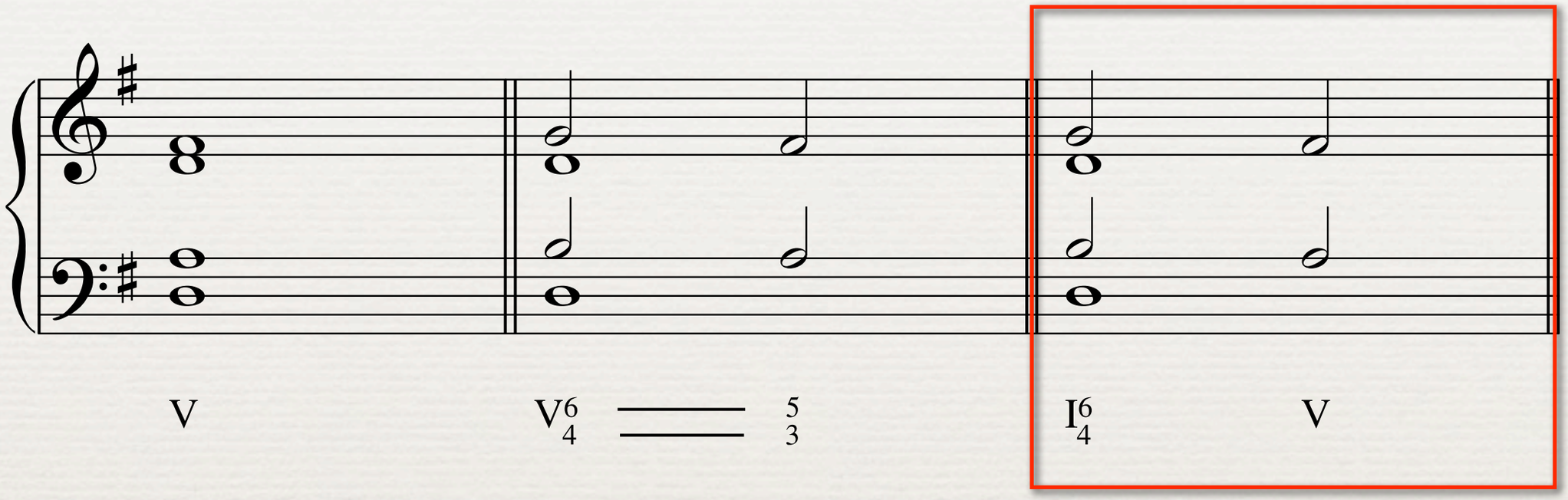
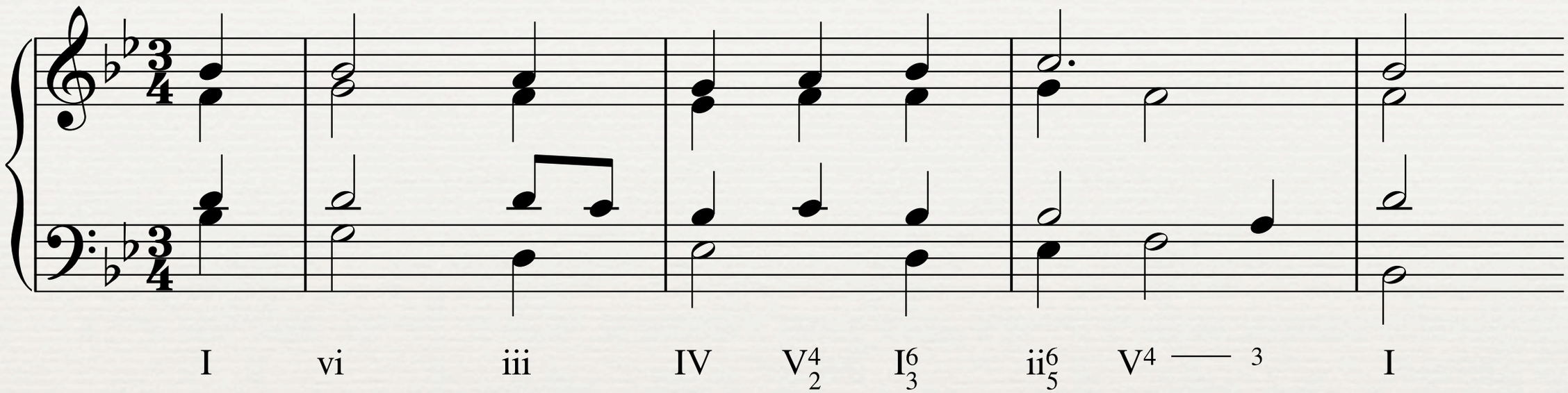


- The cadential six-four is really an intensified dominant
- Therefore, the notation which analyzes it as a dominant with non-chord tones resolving to chord tones is more descriptive than
- the more logically-correct notation

Bach: “Wach’ auf, mein Herz”



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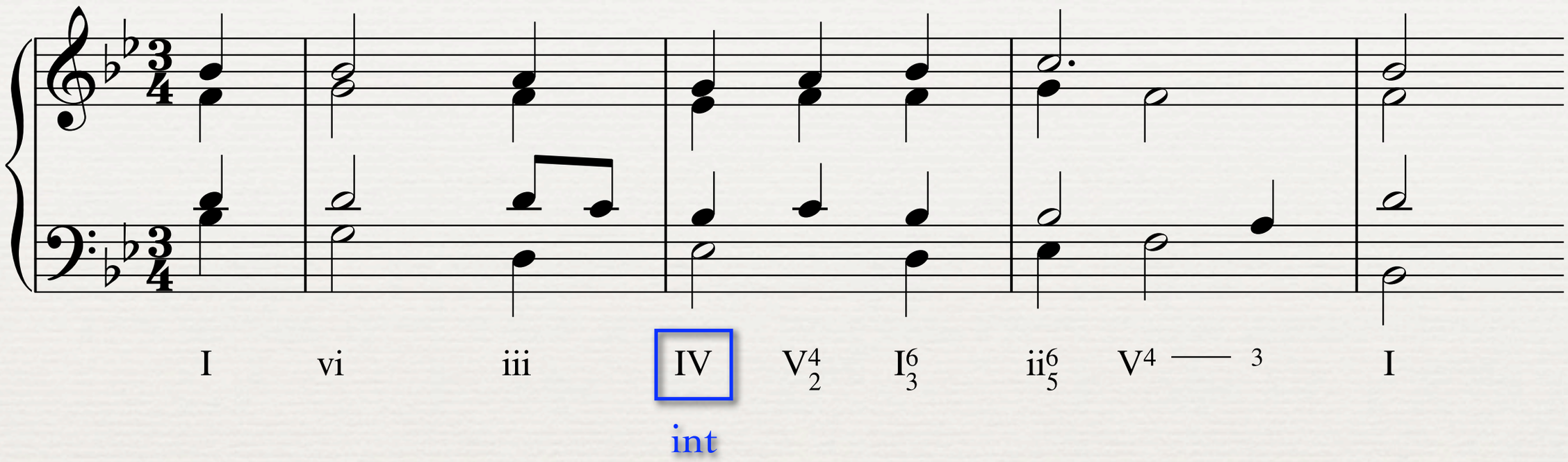

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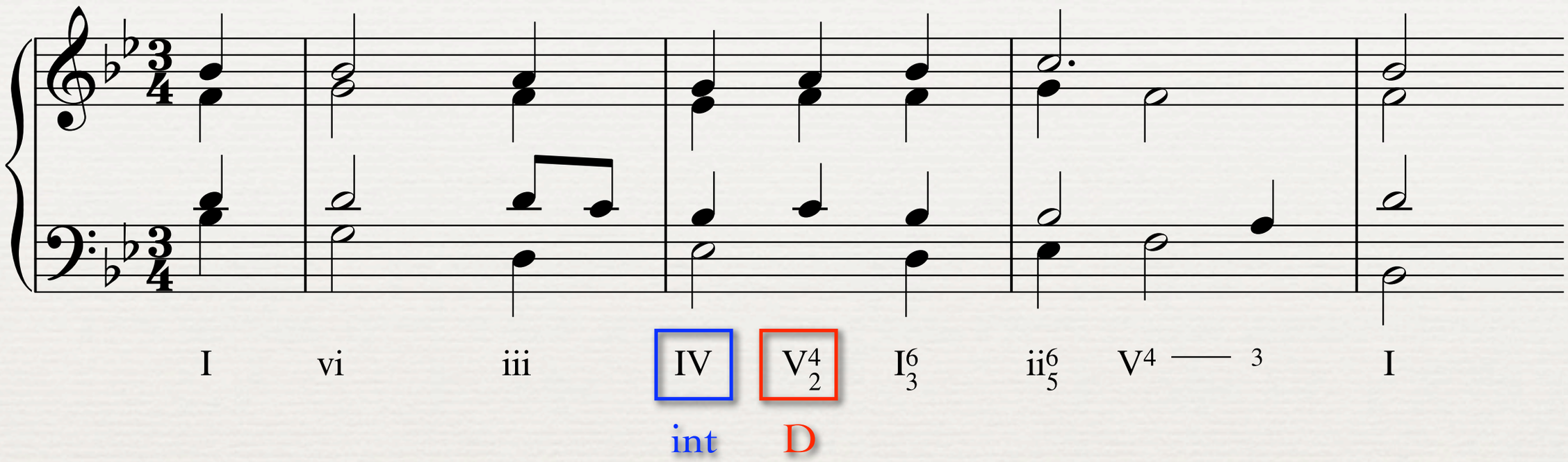

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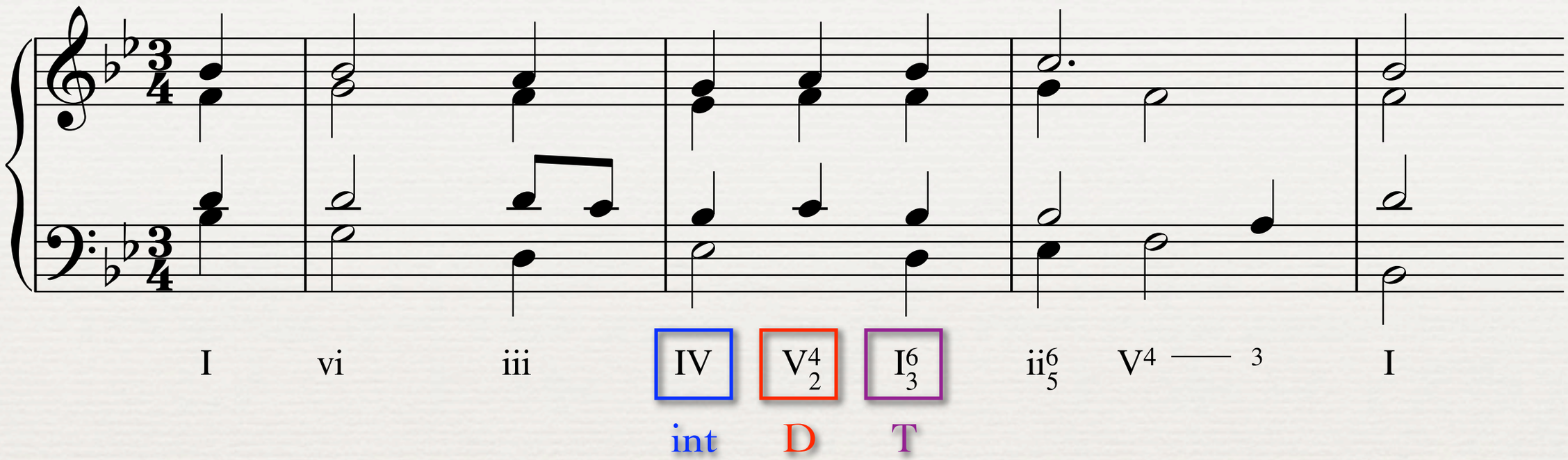

- At first glance, one might think that the IV in bar 2 is the *intermediate*, or predominant, chord
  - It is followed by a dominant
  - The dominant then resolves to a tonic.

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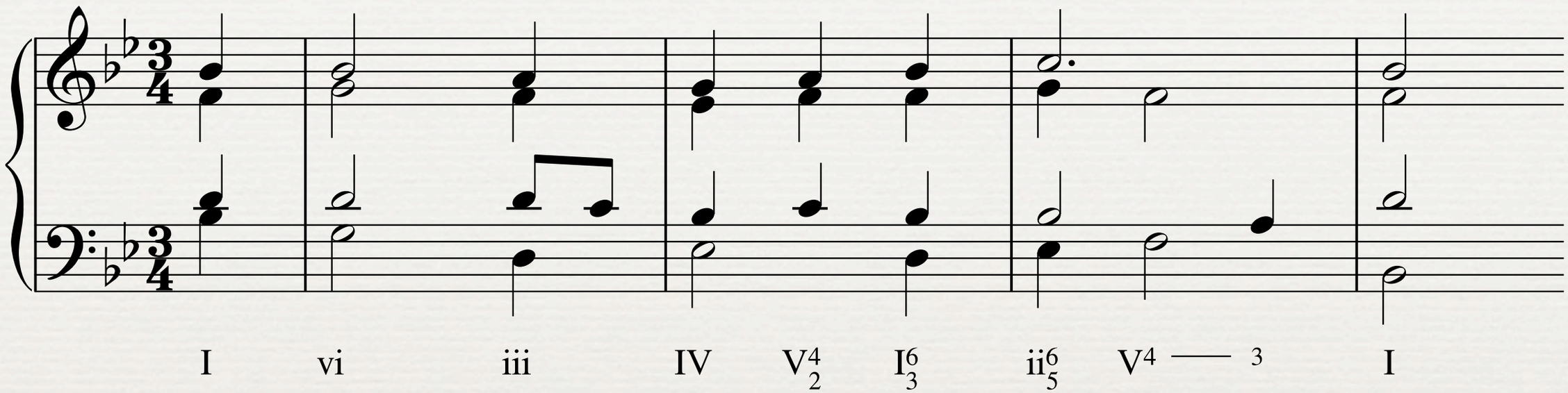

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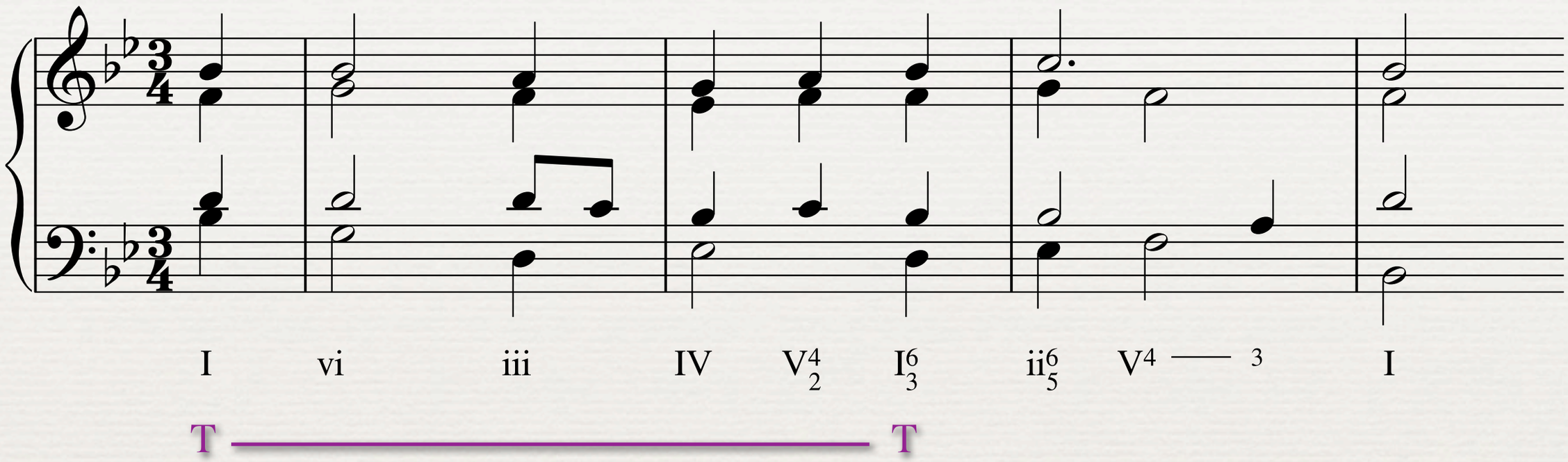

- However, the opening tonic is actually *prolonged* over two measures, extending from the upbeat to the third beat of measure 2

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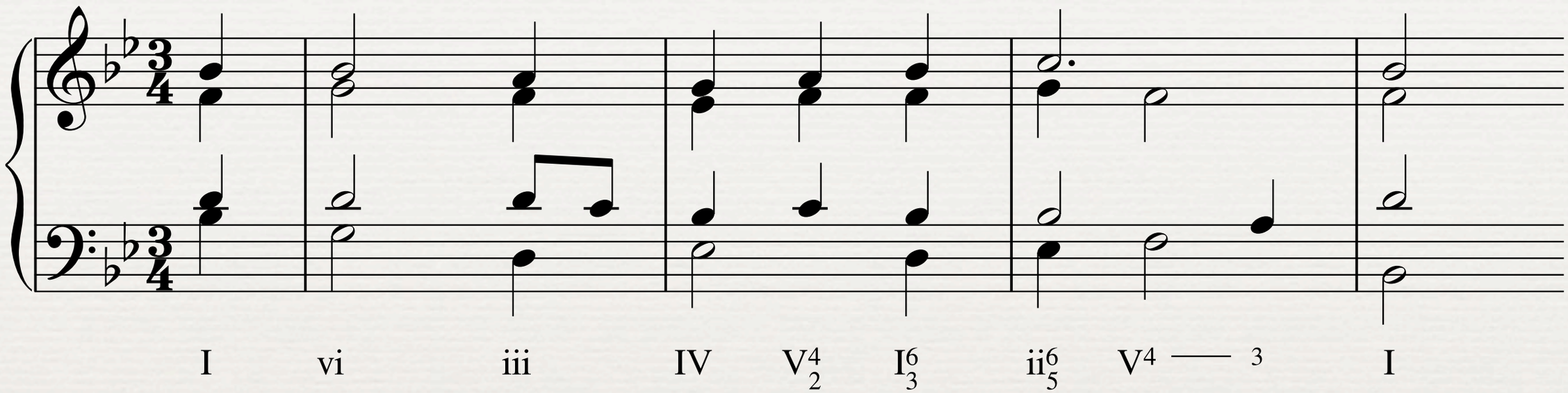

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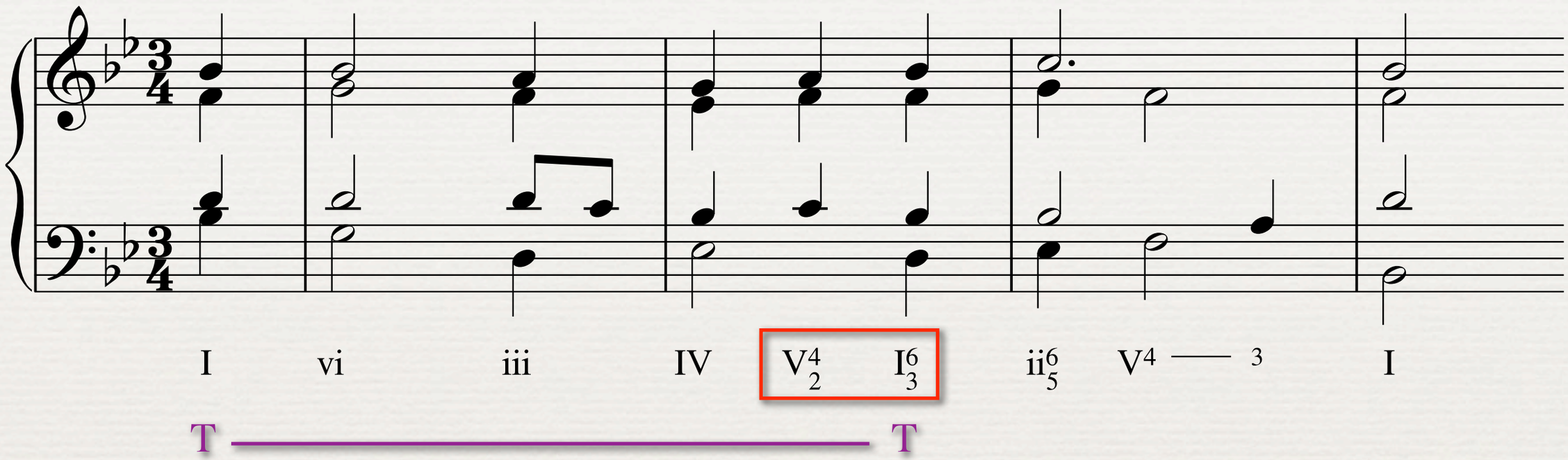

- What appears at first to be a cadence in bar 2 is an *evaded* cadence (or an *implied*) cadence, a technique used specifically to extend ideas—i.e., it's a prolongation technique.

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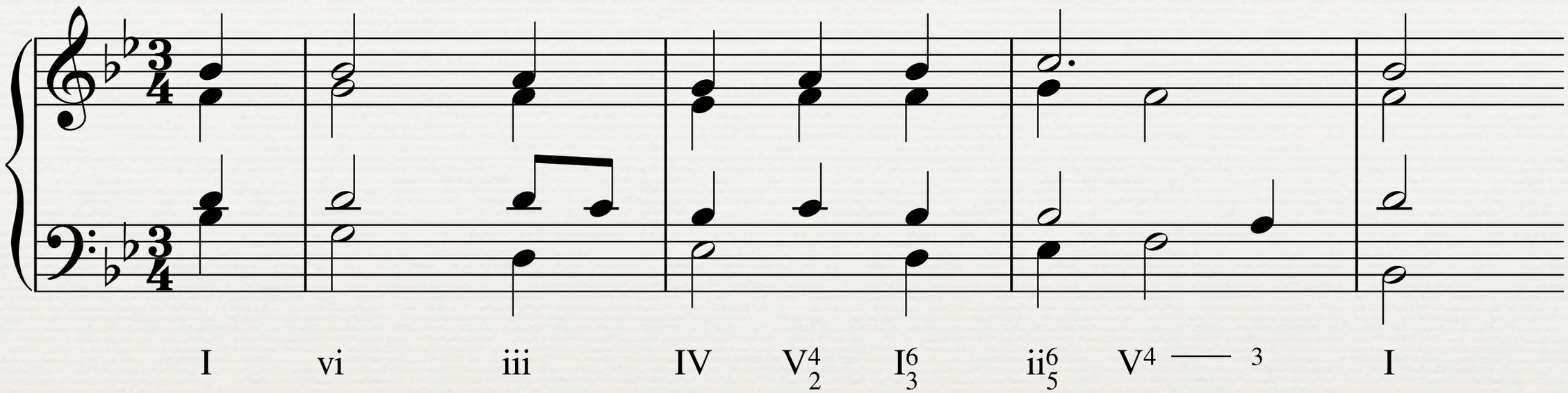

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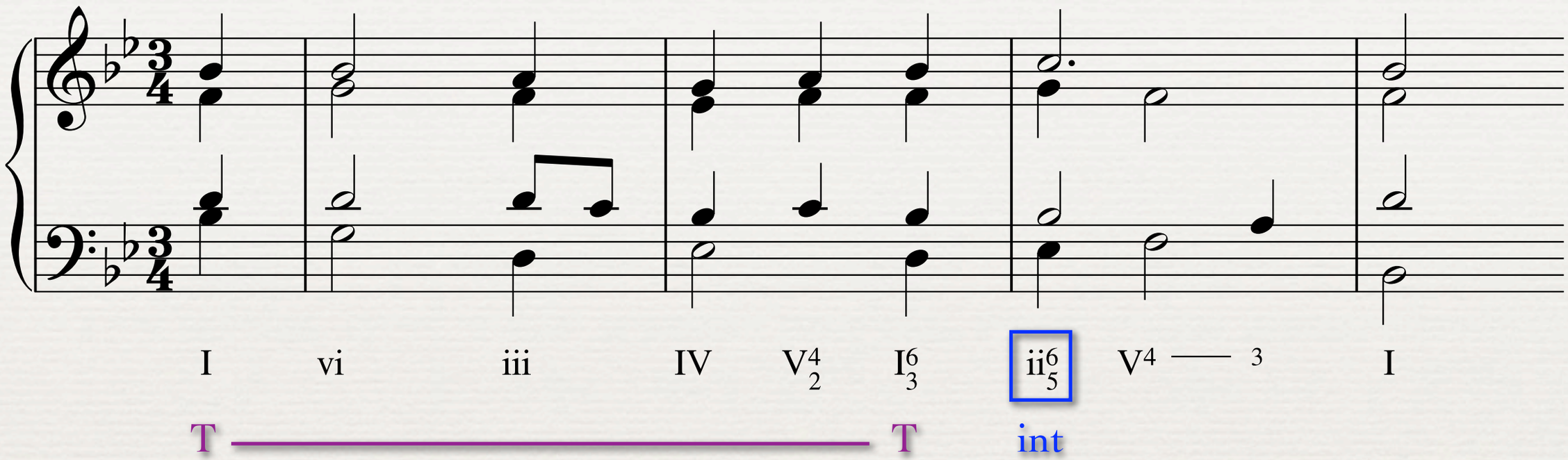

- Therefore, the intermediate chord is found on the downbeat of bar 3

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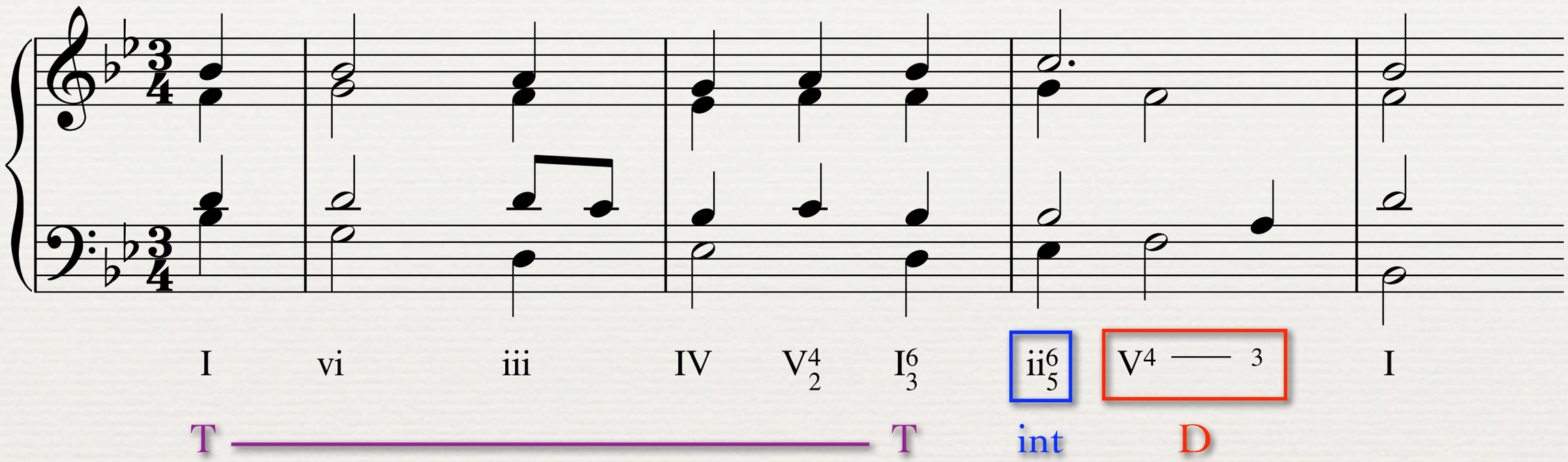

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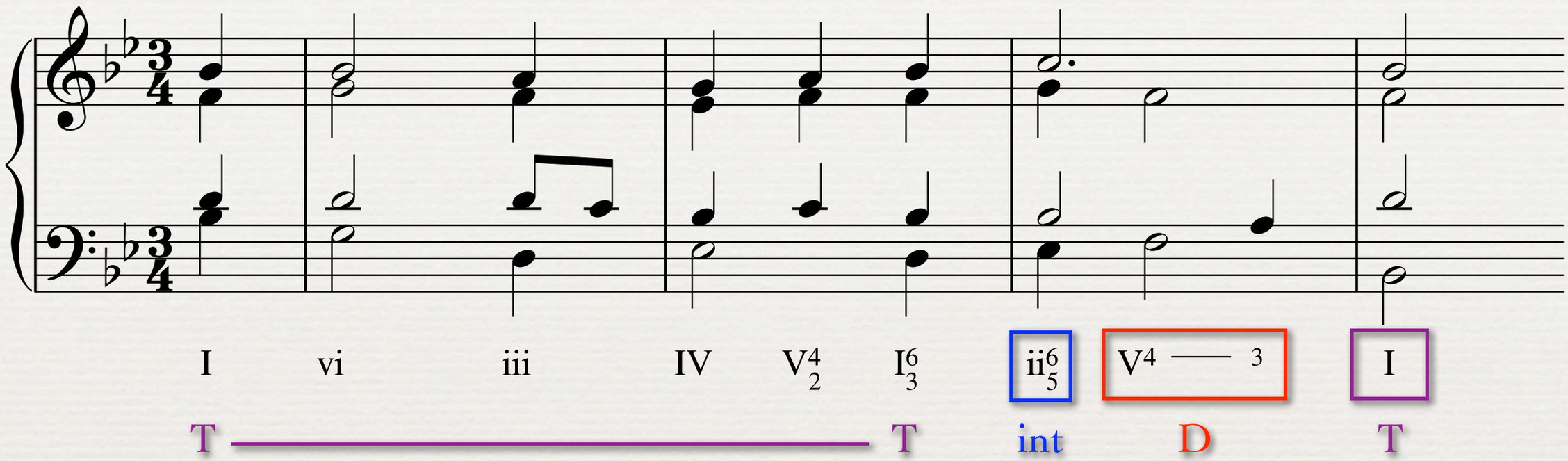

- Therefore, the intermediate chord is found on the downbeat of bar 3
  - It leads to a prolonged dominant on beat 2
  - And the final tonic on the downbeat of bar 4

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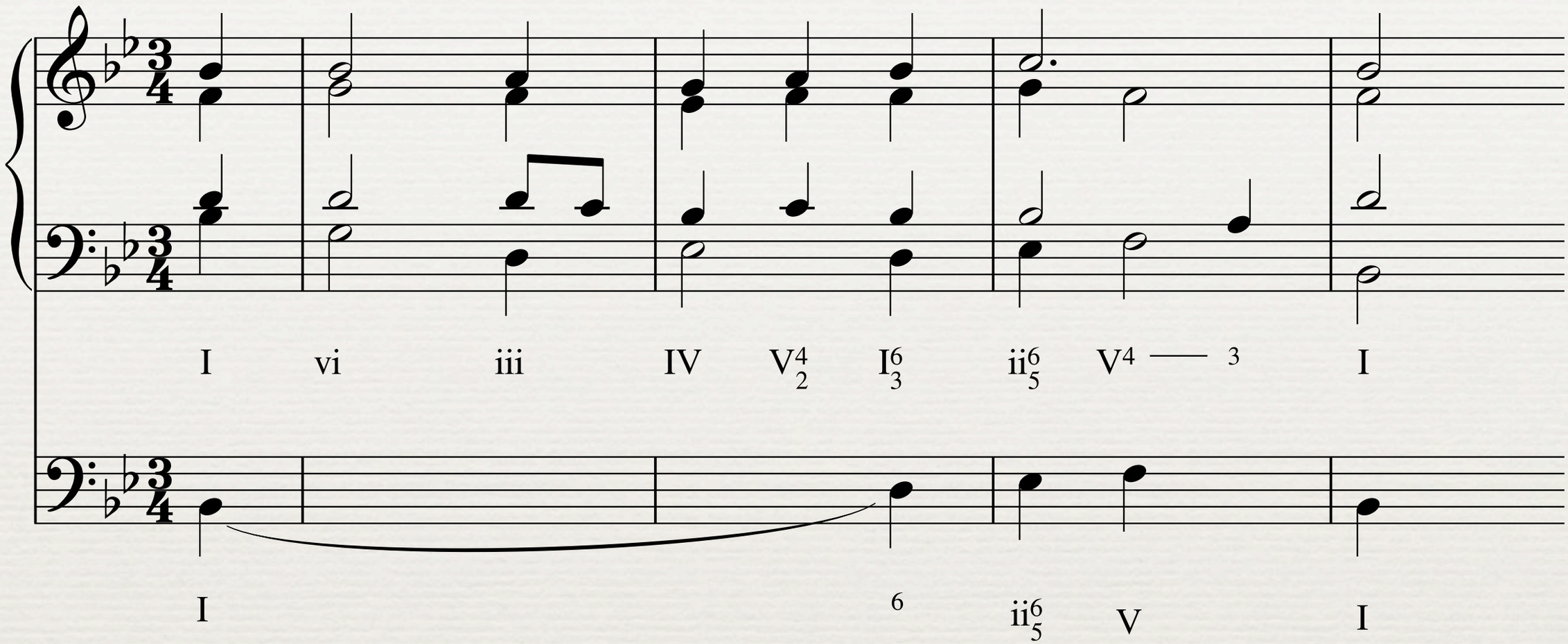

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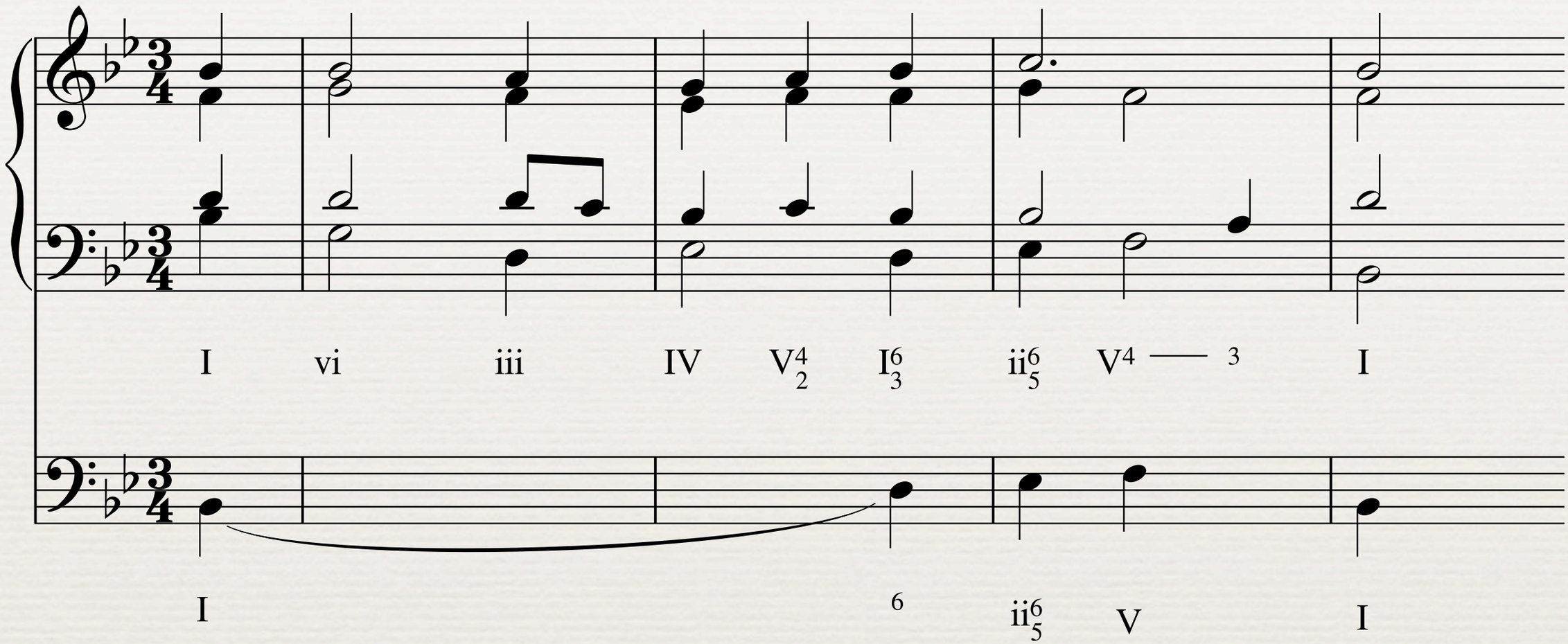
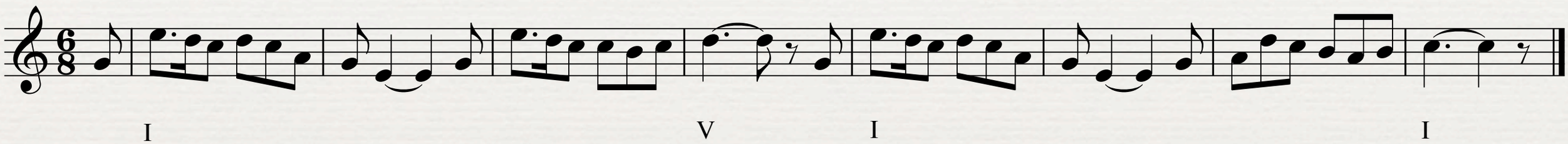


- The reduced version of the bass line helps make the components clear.

Dominant Class



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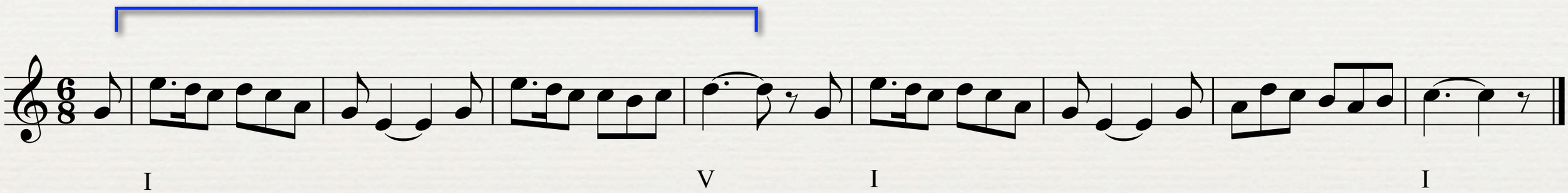
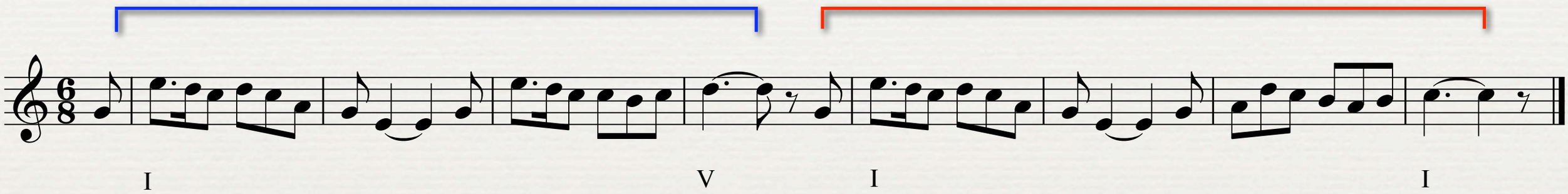


- The half-cadence at the end of the antecedent requires a resolution

Dominant Class



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- However, the beginning of the consequent doesn't provide the resolution

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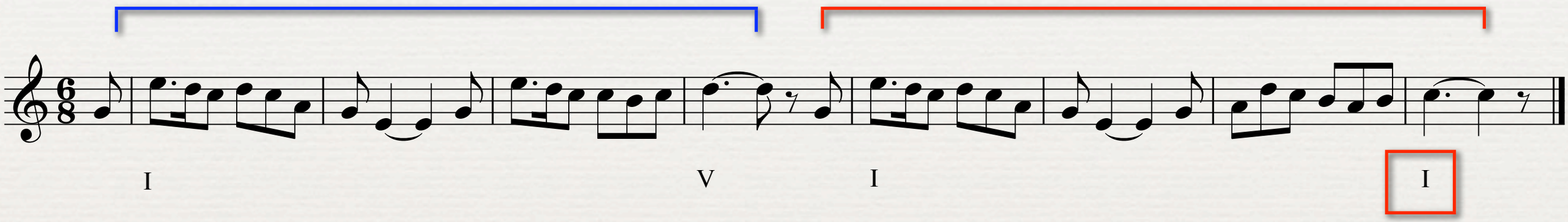
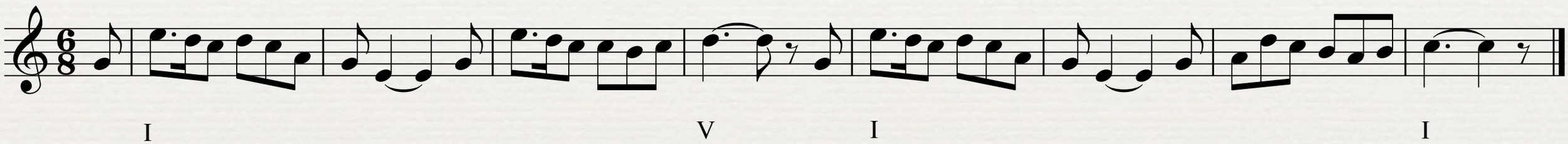


- The half-cadence at the end of the antecedent requires a resolution
- However, the beginning of the consequent doesn't provide the resolution
- The end of the consequent is the true resolution

Dominant Class



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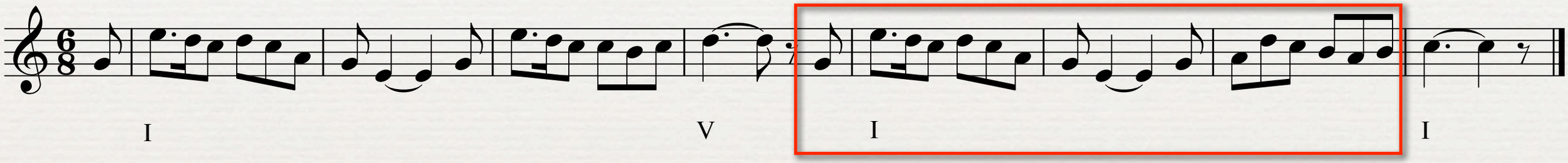
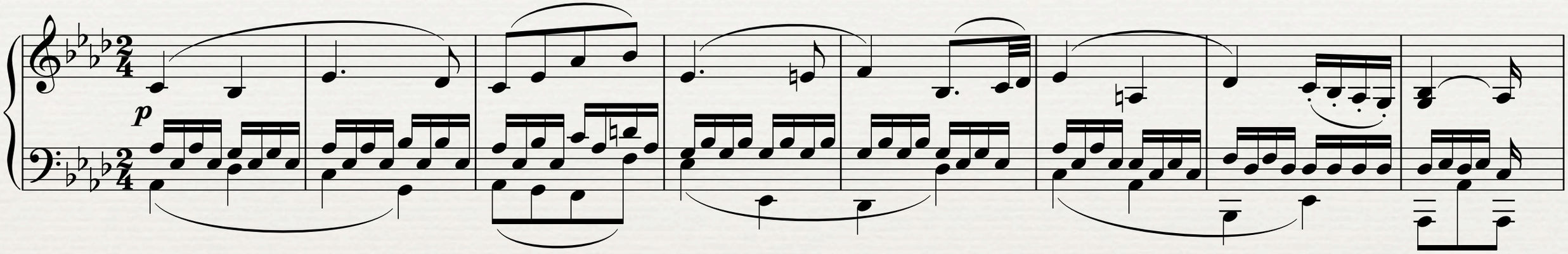
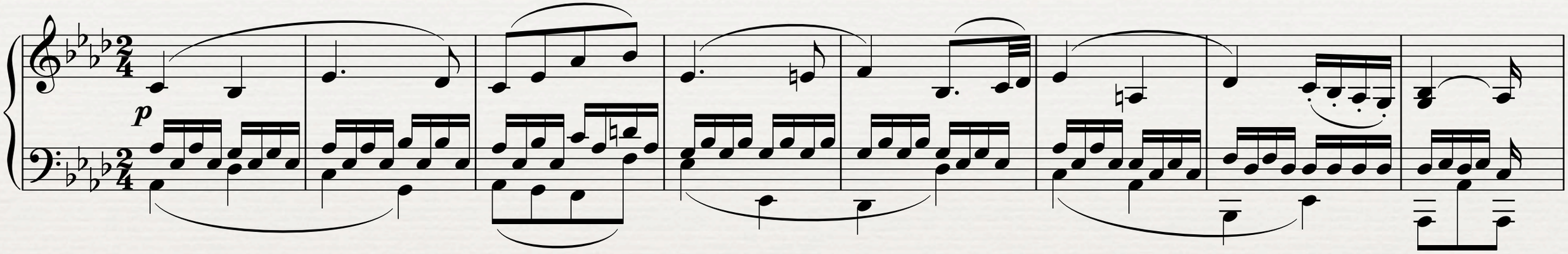


- We tend to hear the end of the antecedent, and the beginning of the consequent, as an *interruption* before the dominant finally achieves full closure

Beethoven: Sonata Op. 13, II

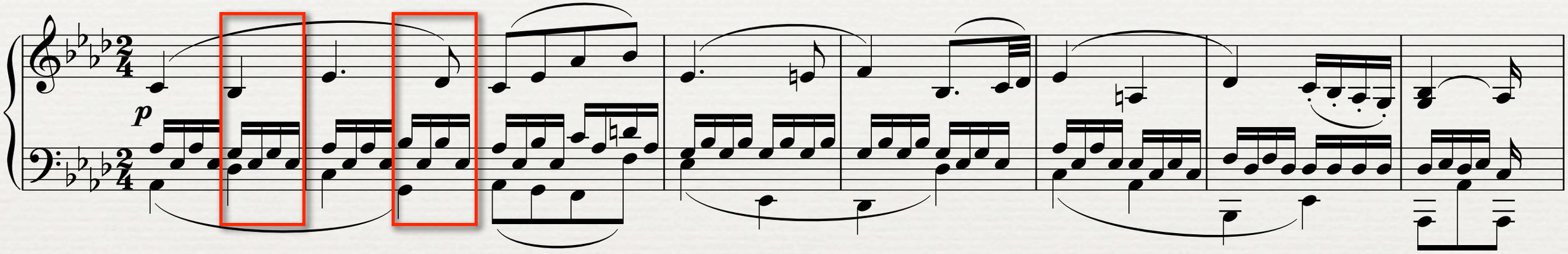


Beethoven: Sonata Op. 13, II



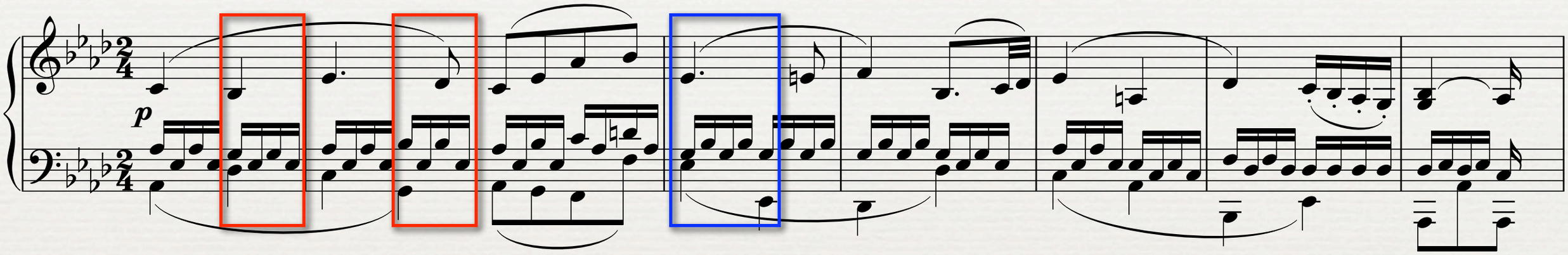
- Different uses of dominant chords

Beethoven: Sonata Op. 13, II



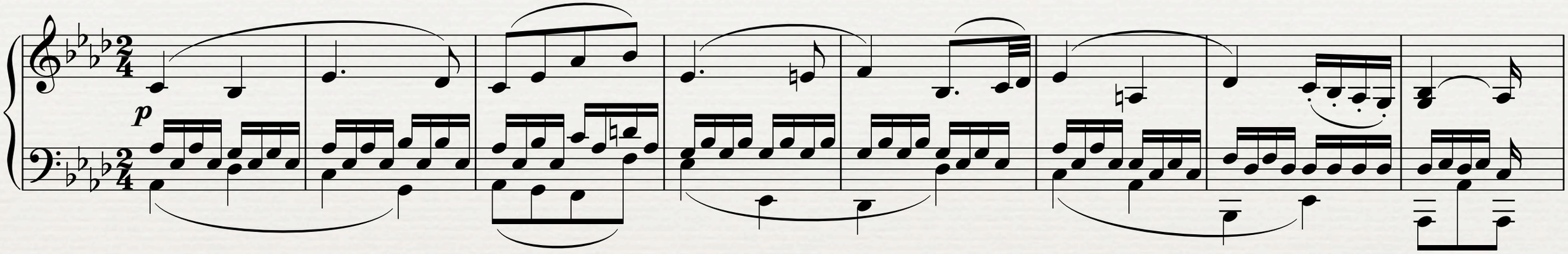
- Different uses of dominant chords
  - Dominants in bars 1 and 2 act as incomplete neighbors

Beethoven: Sonata Op. 13, II



- Different uses of dominant chords
  - Dominants in bars 1 and 2 act as incomplete neighbors
  - In bar 4, the V is in root position and articulates a half cadence

Beethoven: Sonata Op. 13, II



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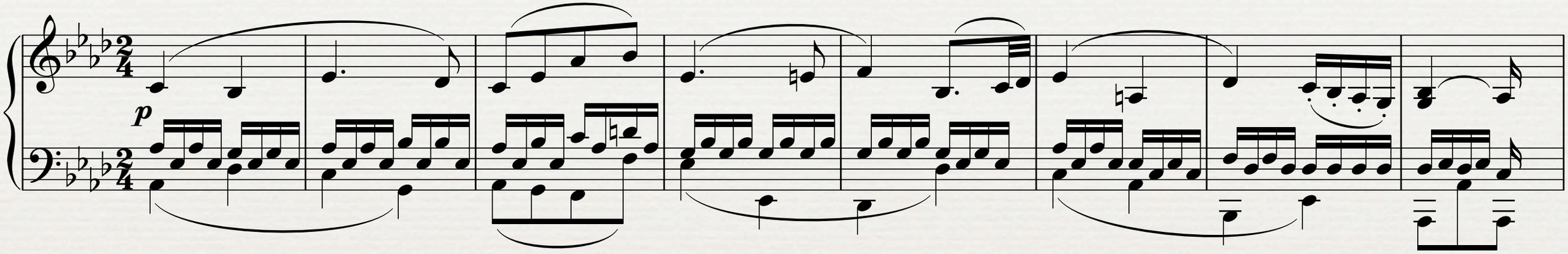

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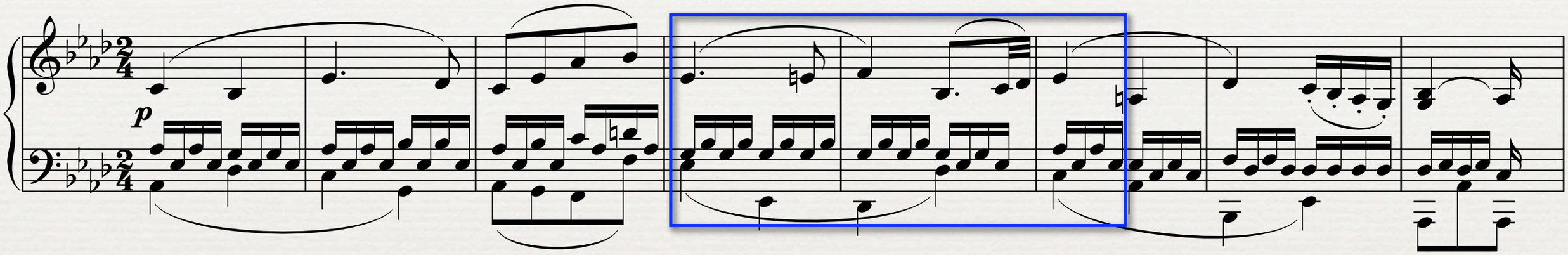
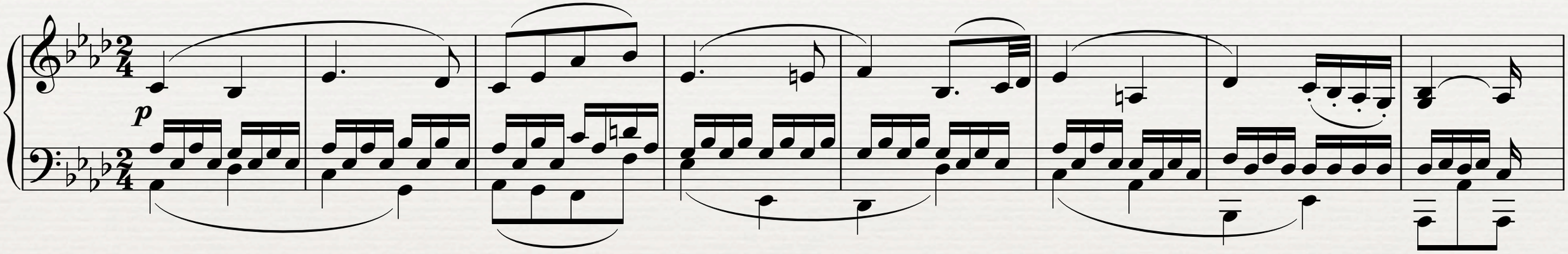


- Different uses of dominant chords
  - The V in bar 4 resolves through V42 to I6—therefore the dominant persists through bar 5 as well

Beethoven: Sonata Op. 13, II



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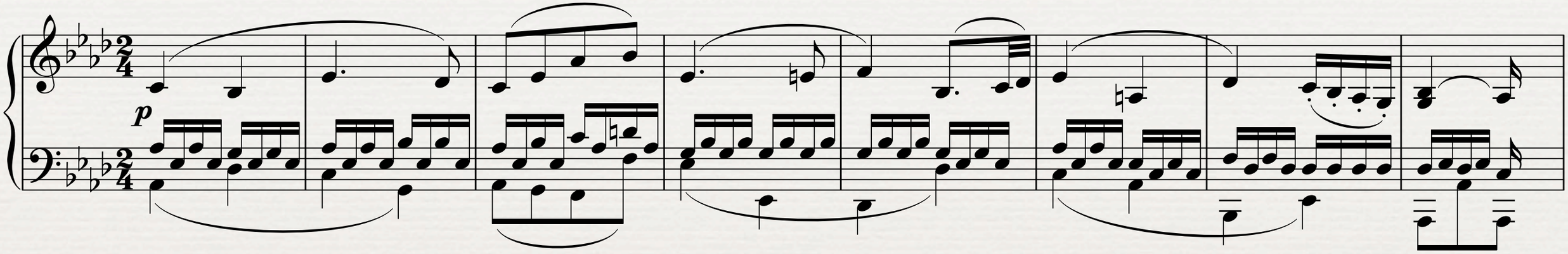

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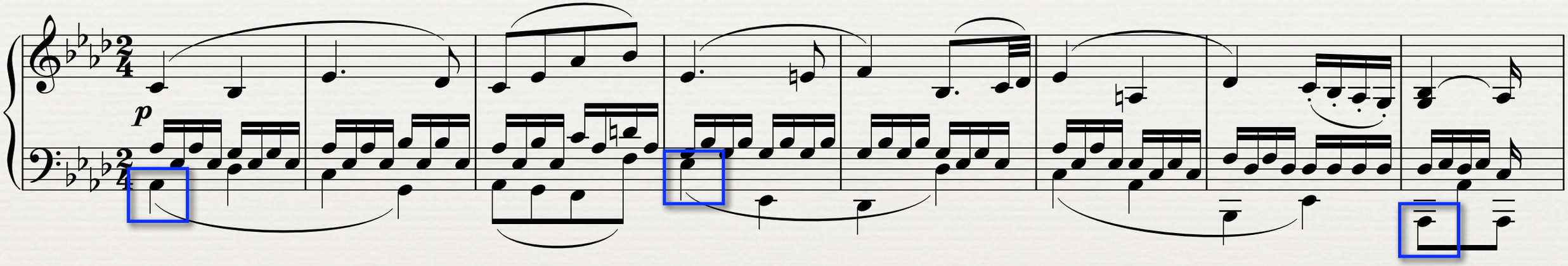
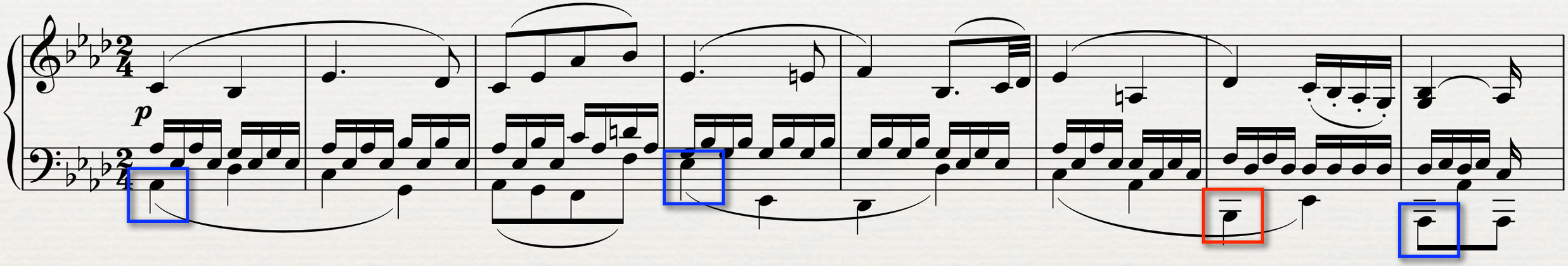
Beethoven: Sonata Op. 13, II



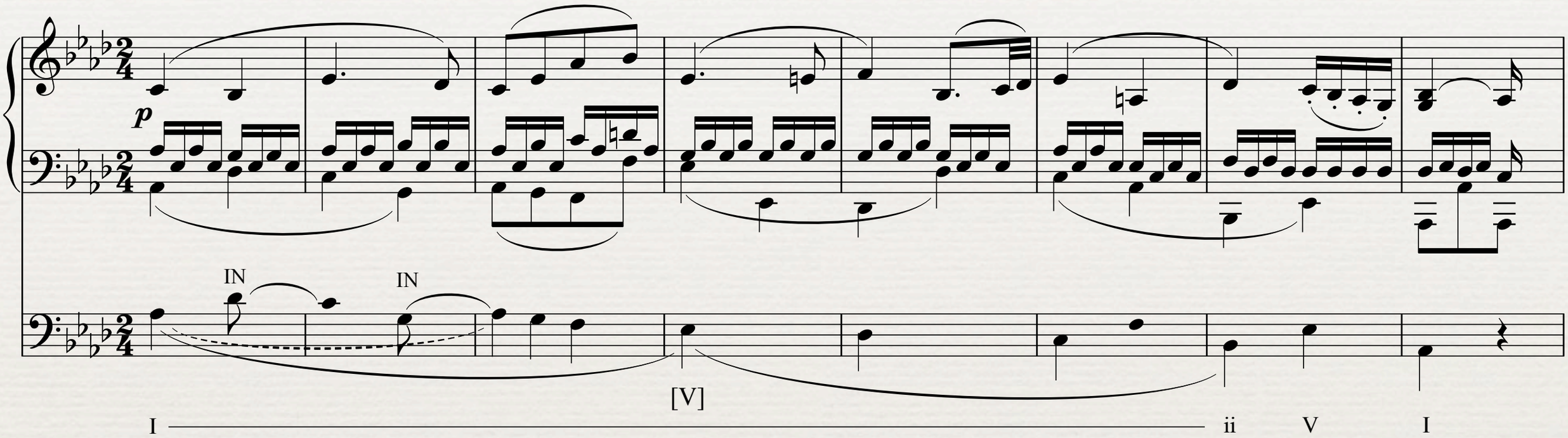
- Different uses of dominant chords
  - The V in bar *4* also acts so as to *divide* an overall bass motion from I to I

Beethoven: Sonata Op. 13, II

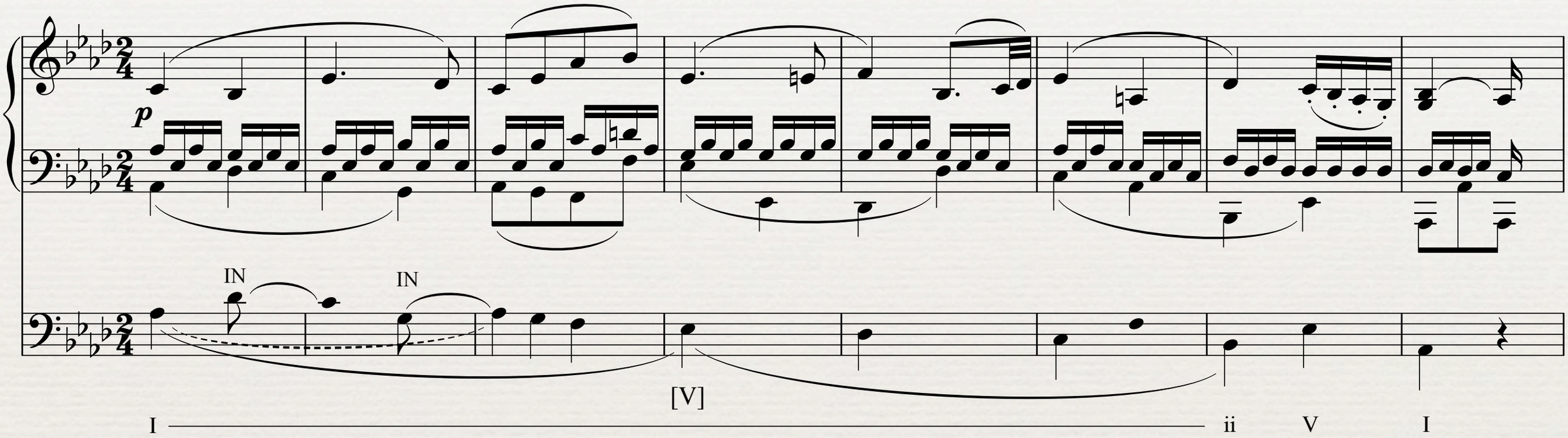


- Different uses of dominant chords
  - The V in bar *4* also acts so as to *divide* an overall bass motion from I to I
  - And also acts to prepare the long-term motion to the ii in bar *7*

Beethoven: Sonata Op. 13, II



Beethoven: Sonata Op. 13, II



- A “dividing dominant” is indicated in the analysis with a bracketed [V]

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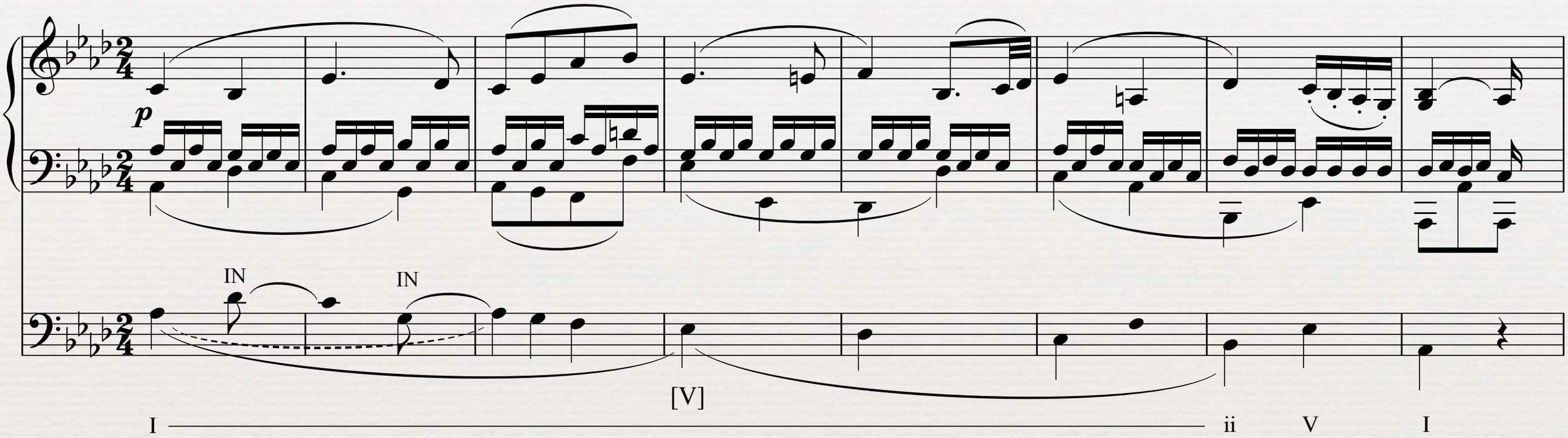

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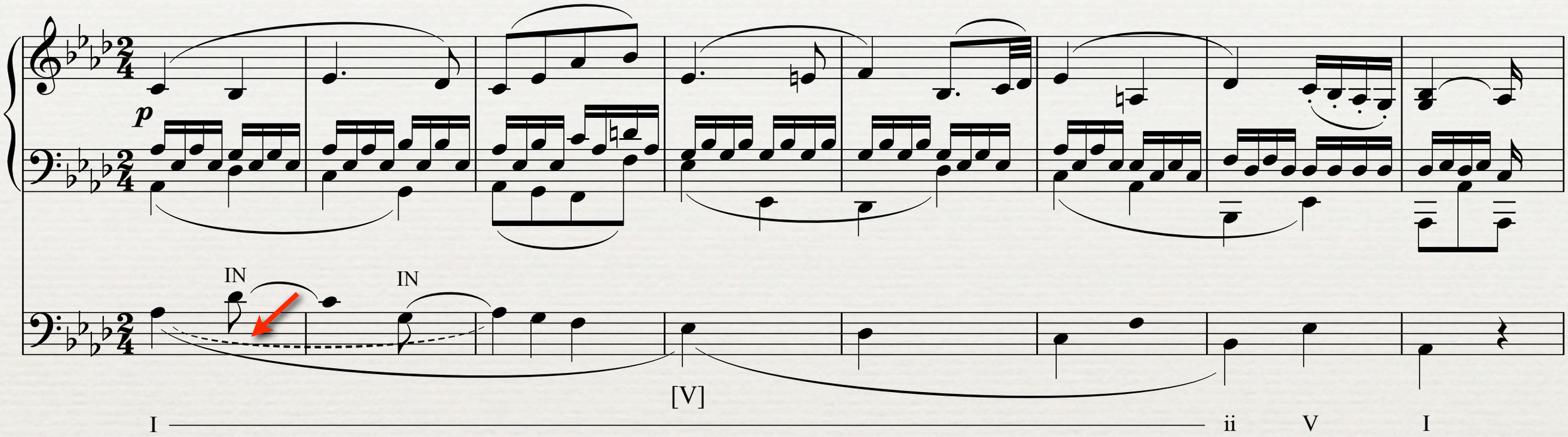
- Note important features:

Beethoven: Sonata Op. 13, II



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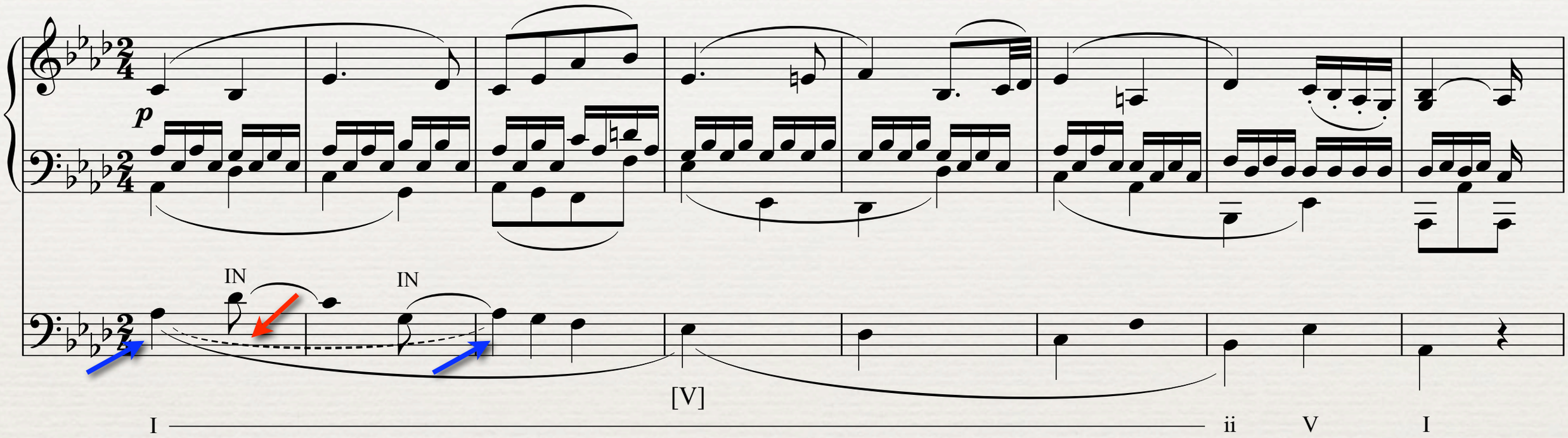

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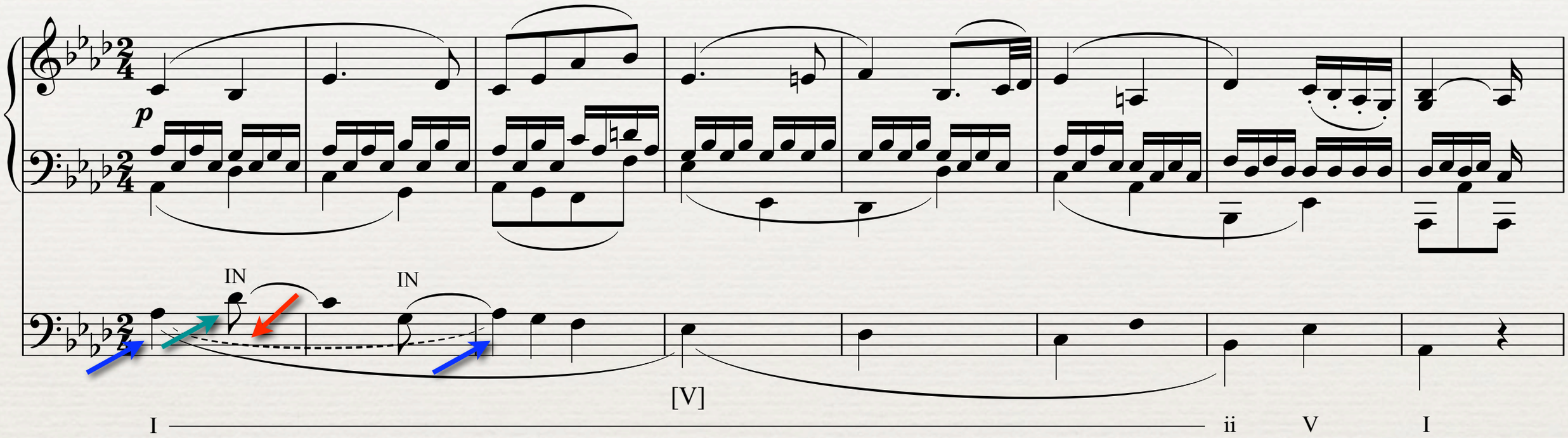

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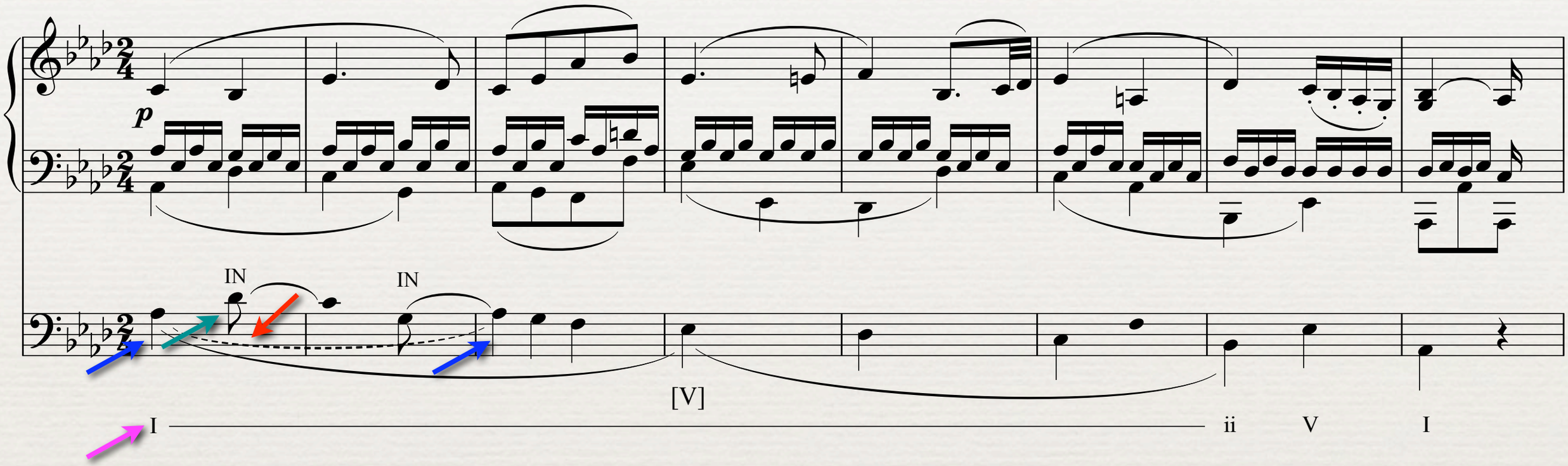
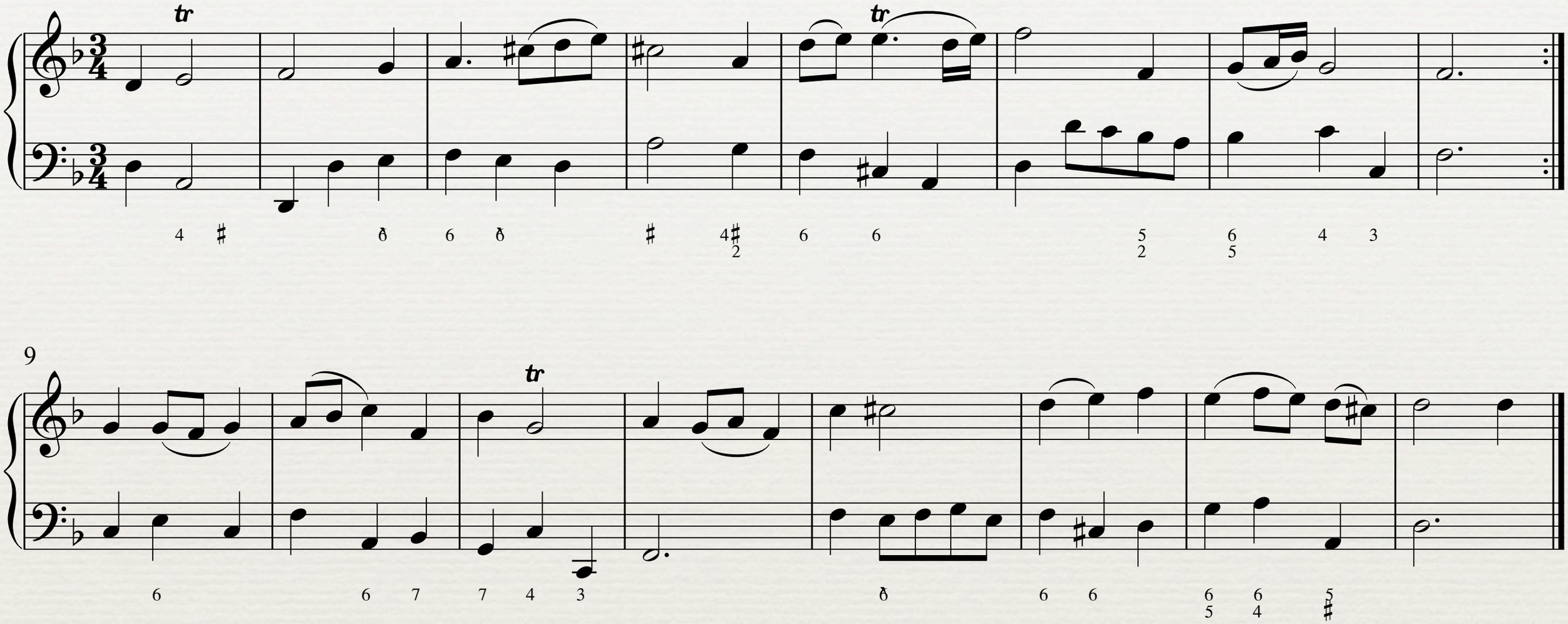


- A "dividing dominant" is indicated in the analysis with a bracketed [V]
- Note important features:
  - The dotted slur (indicated a prolongation)
  - Stems indicating the primary bass line notes
  - Flags indicating neighbor tones
  - Large-scale tonic prolongation

Bach: Chorale “Ihr Gestirn, ihr hohen Lüfte”



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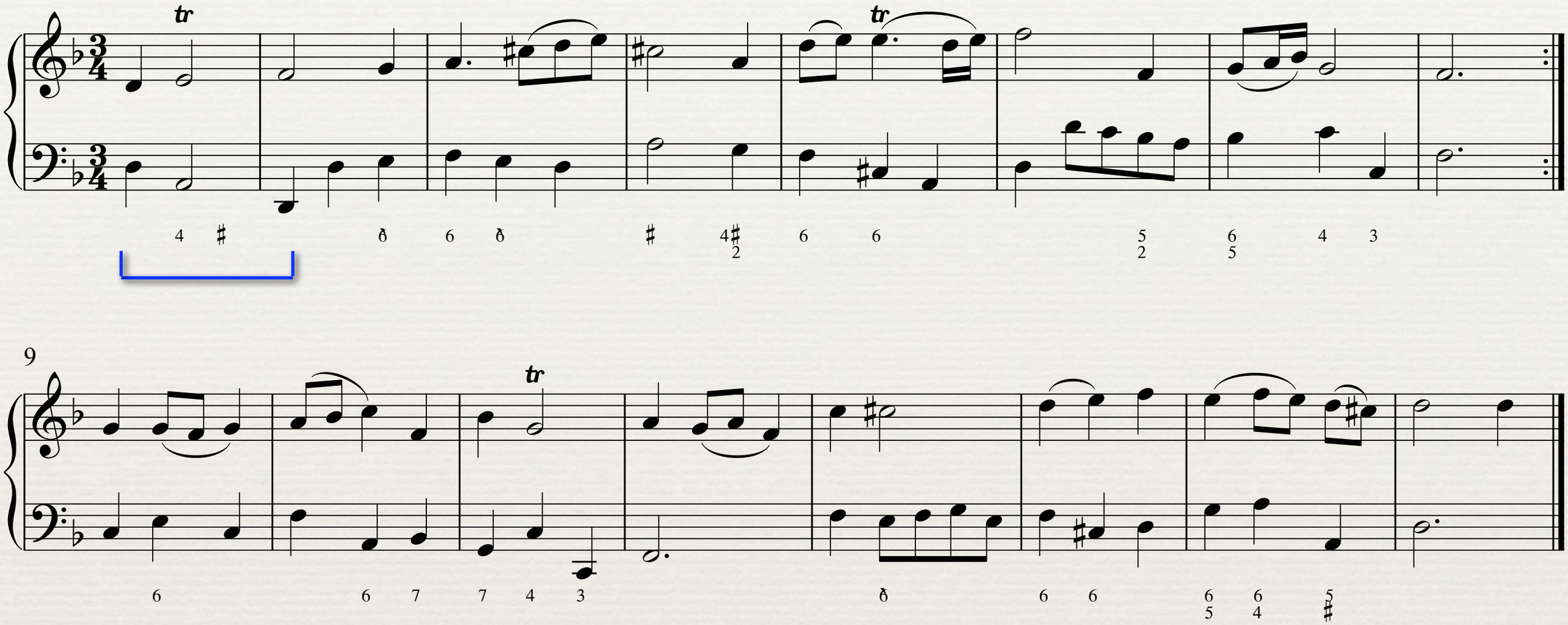

- Two root-position tonic chords are connected by a dominant chord in root position—octave leap subdivided by a fifth

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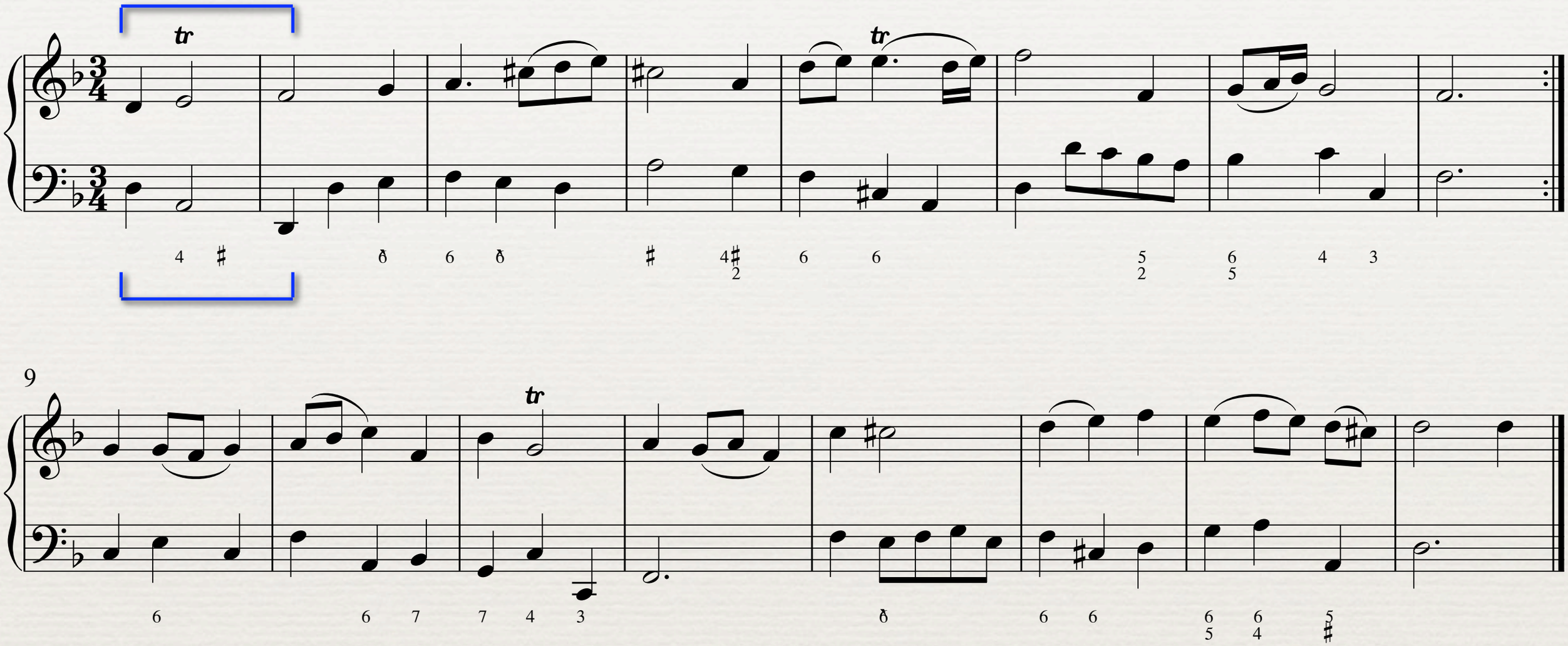

- Two root-position tonic chords are connected by a dominant chord in root position—octave leap subdivided by a fifth
- Soprano moves from ^1 to ^3; thus the tonic triad is fully outlined in both voices.

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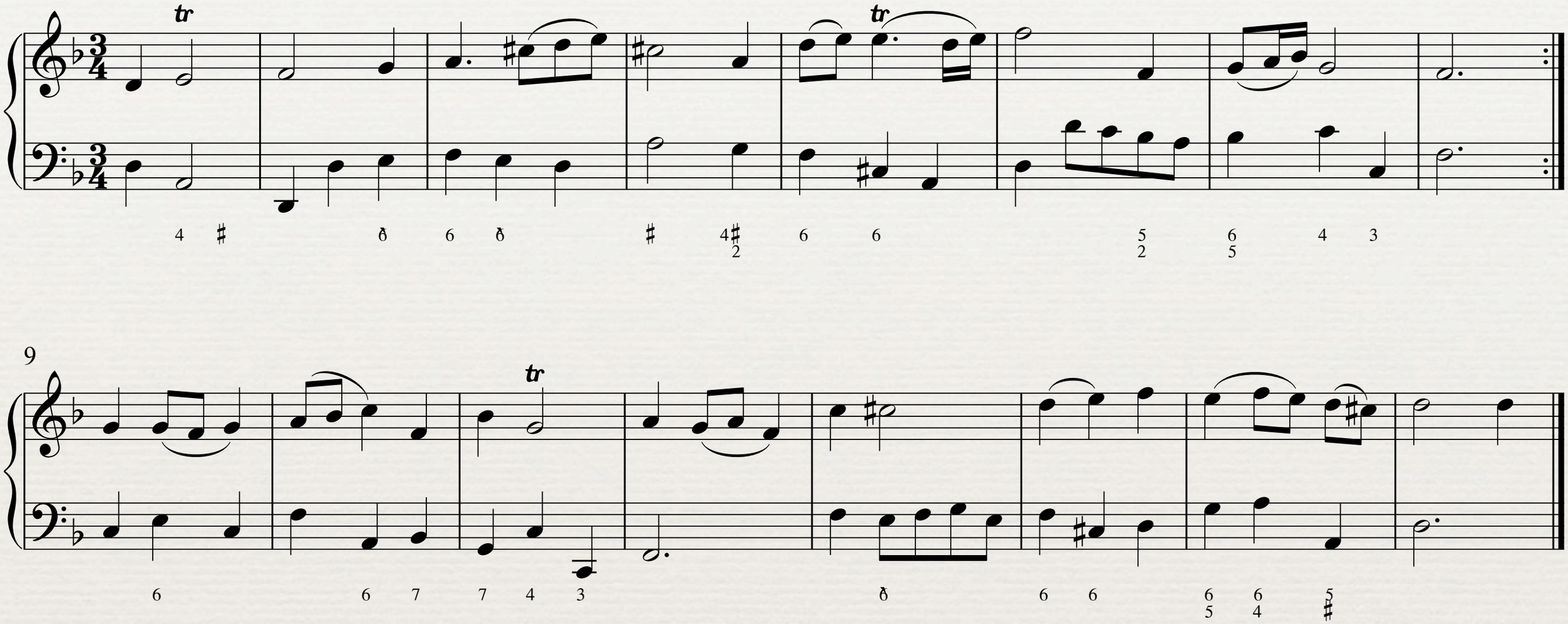

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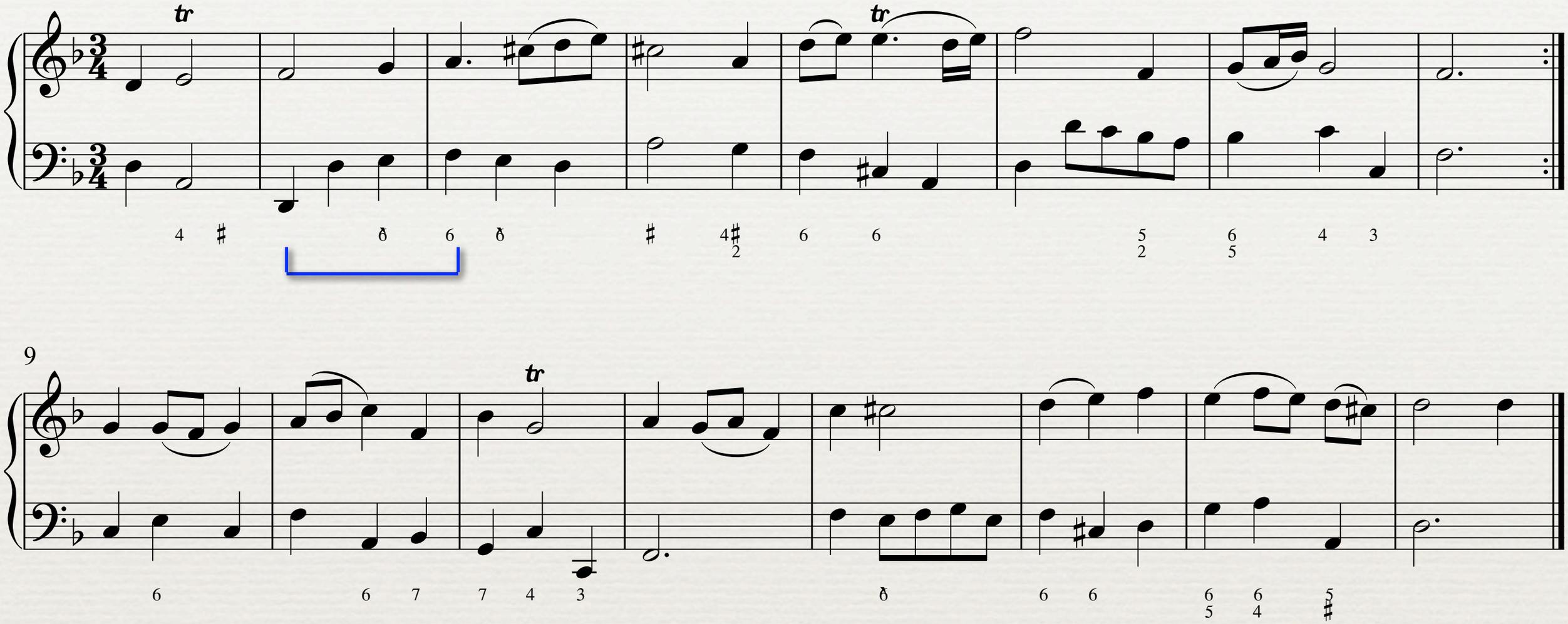

- Register transfer back to original octave; motion from I to I6 via a passing vii6.

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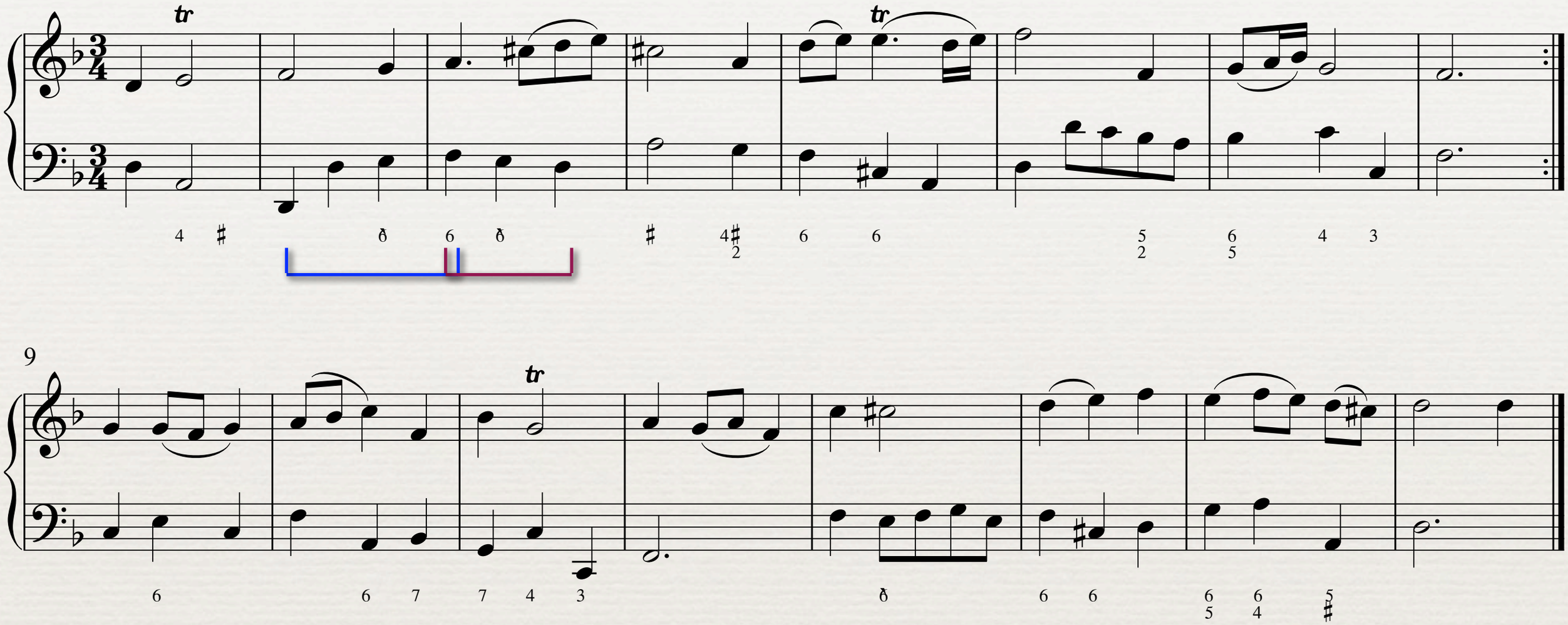

- Register transfer back to original octave; motion from I to I6 via a passing vii6.
- Return to root-position tonic by means of a V43.

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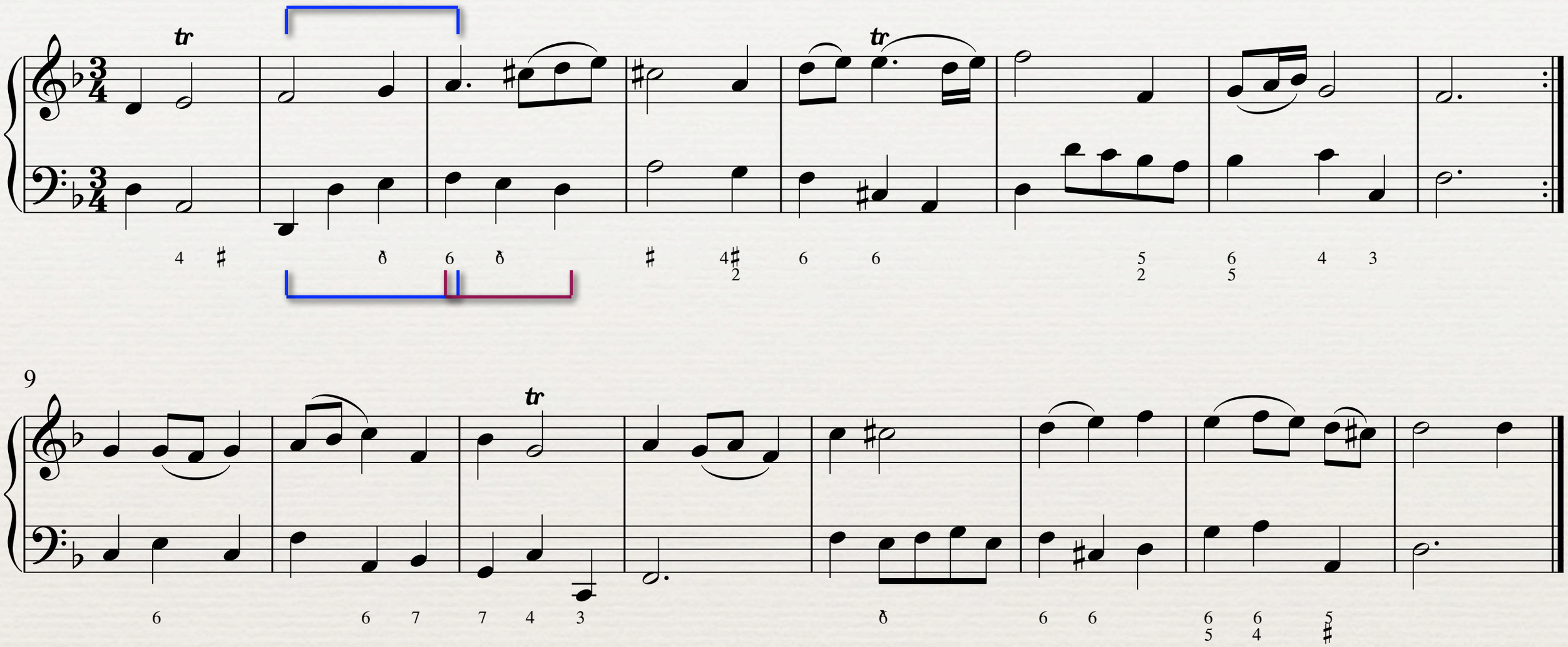
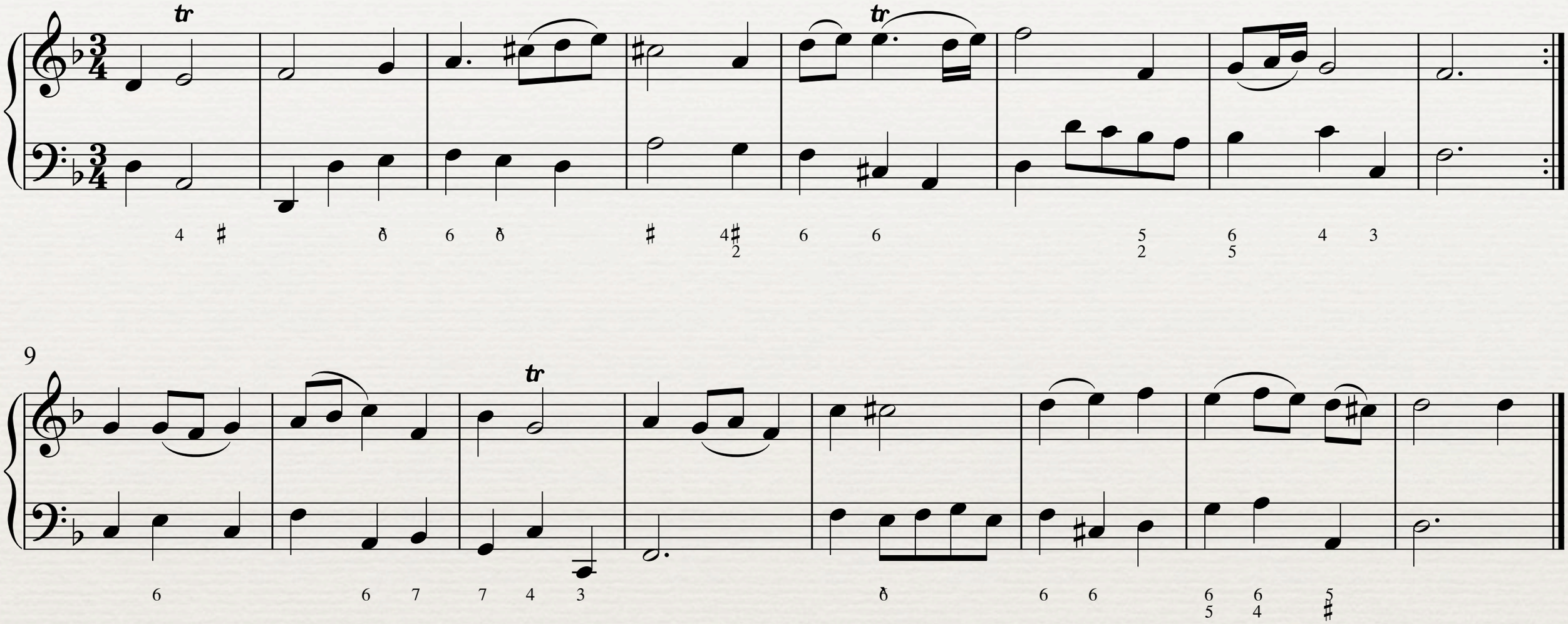


- Register transfer back to original octave; motion from I to I6 via a passing vii6.
- Return to root-position tonic by means of a V43.
- Motion from ^3 to ^6 of the tonic triad

Bach: Chorale “Ihr Gestirn, ihr hohen Lüfte”



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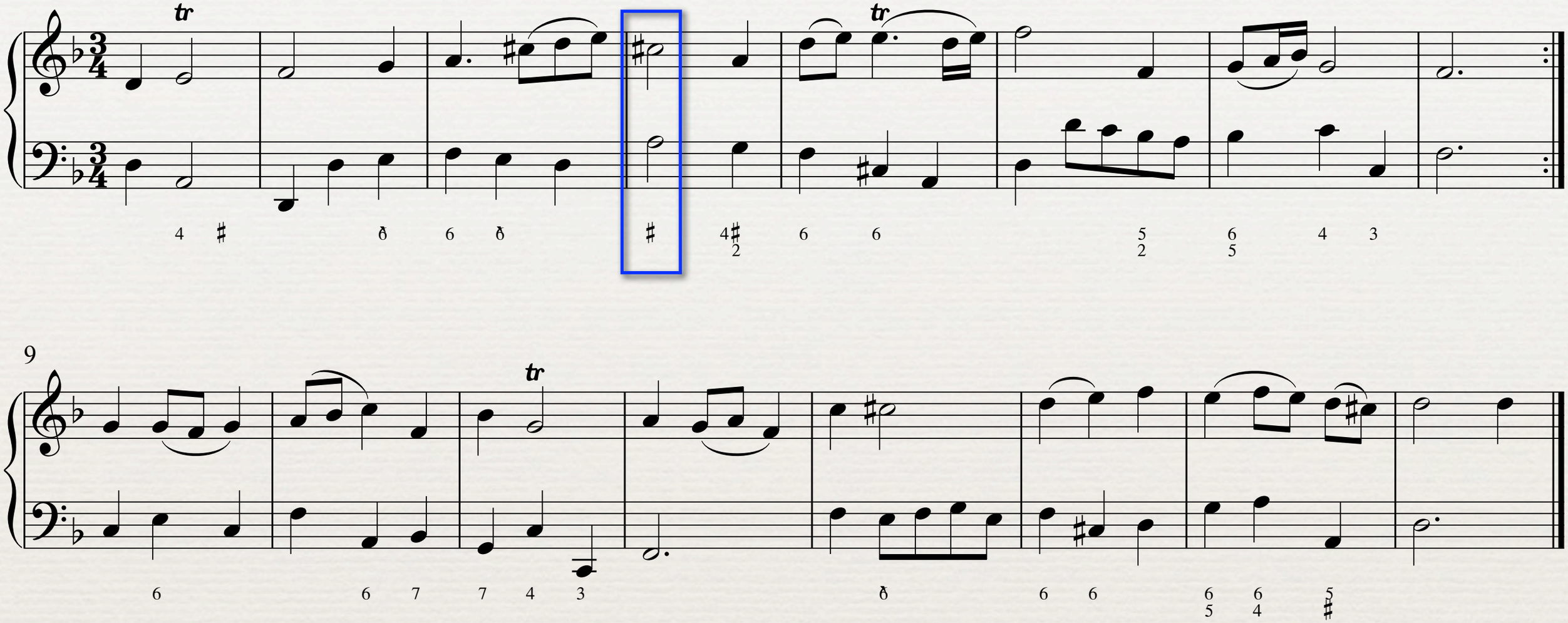

- Arrival at a dominant chord at bar 4, however the chord is not entirely stable

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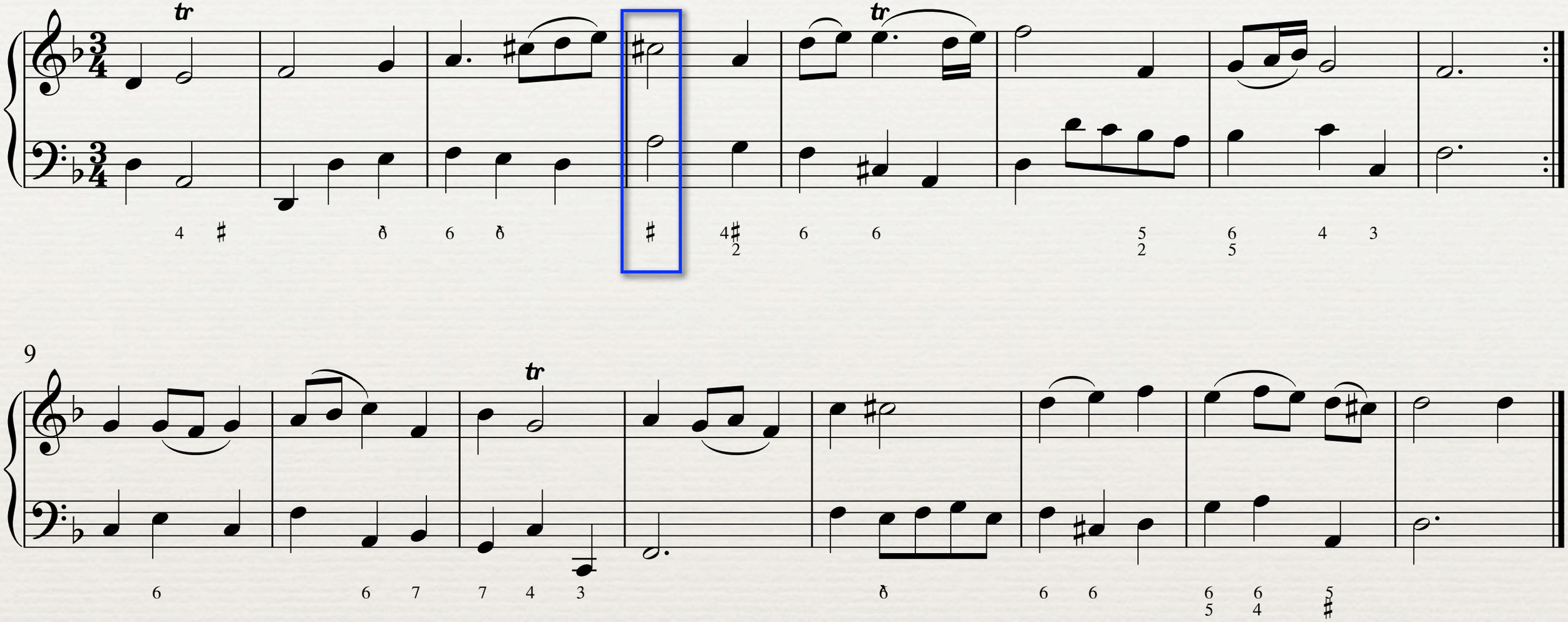

- Arrival at a dominant chord at bar 4, however the chord is not entirely stable
  - The soprano note is the leading tone

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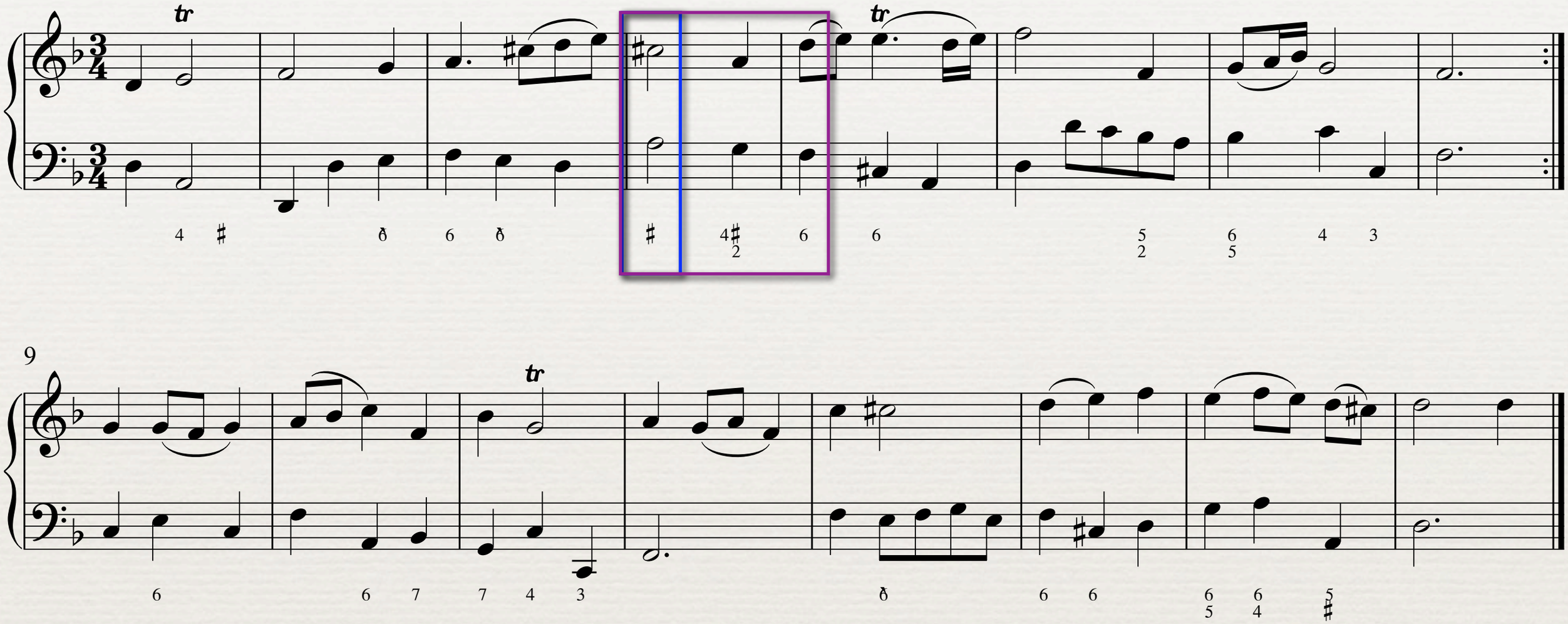

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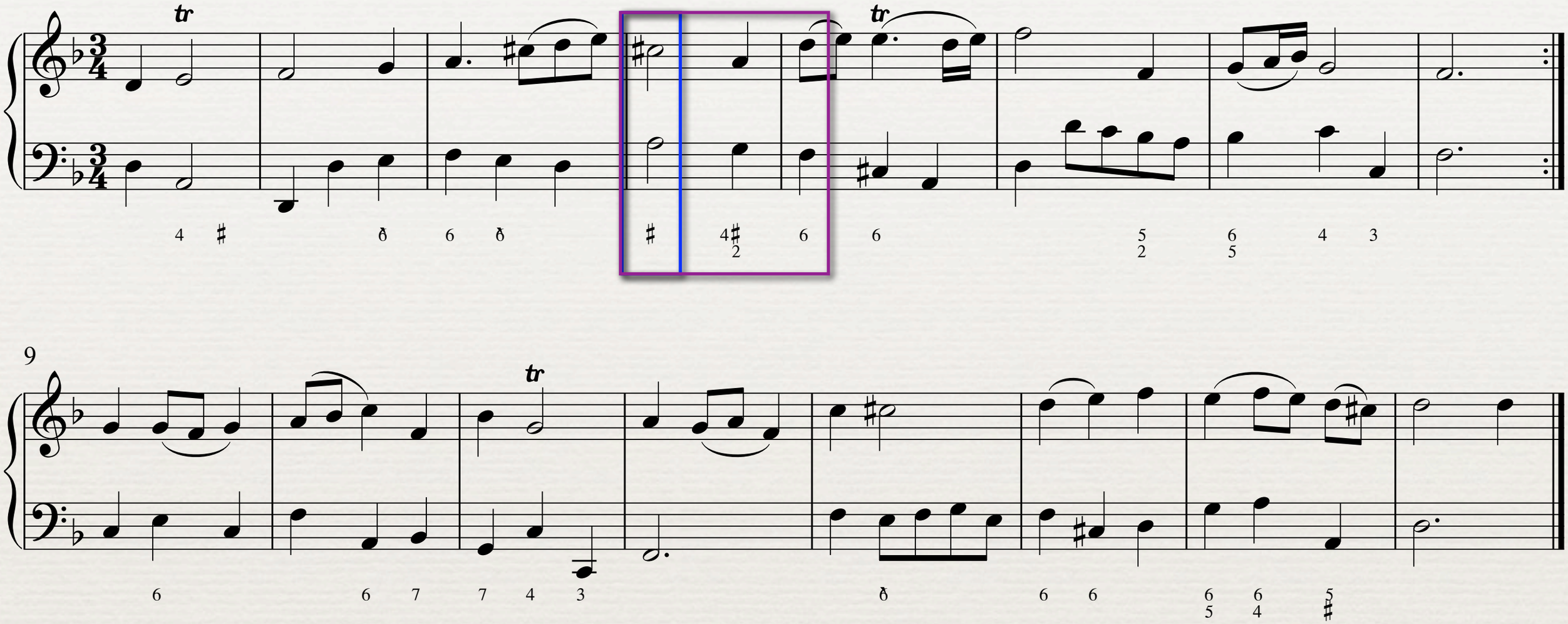
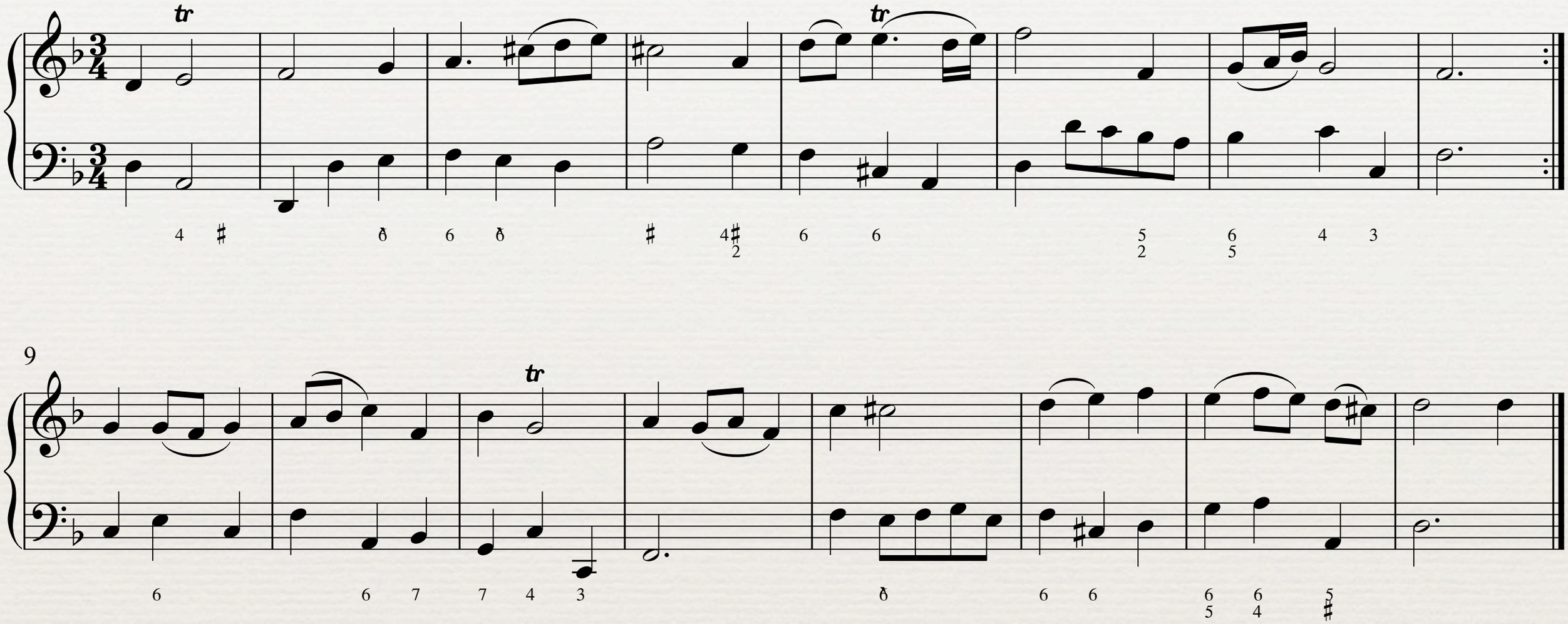


- Arrival at a dominant chord at bar 4, however the chord is not entirely stable
  - The soprano note is the leading tone
  - Bass moves back through V42 to I63
- Thus this is a “dividing” dominant

Bach: Chorale “Ihr Gestirn, ihr hohen Lüfte”



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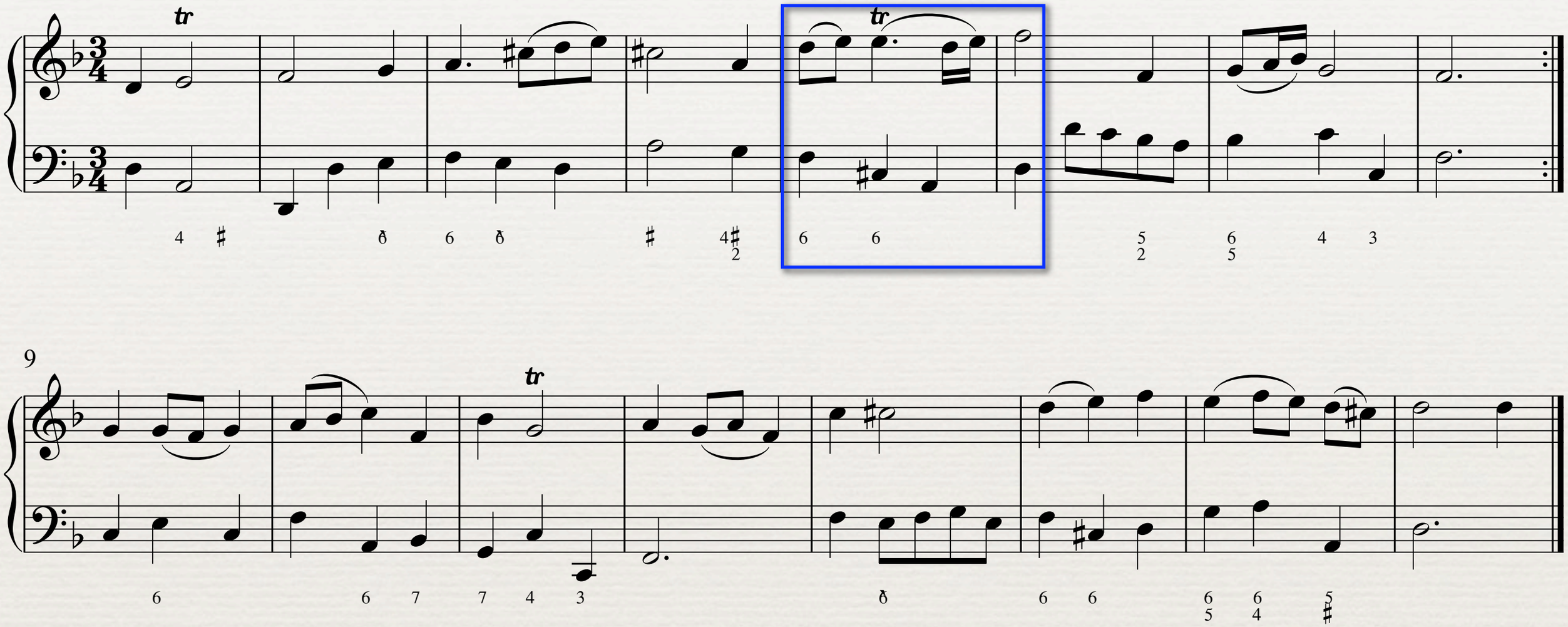
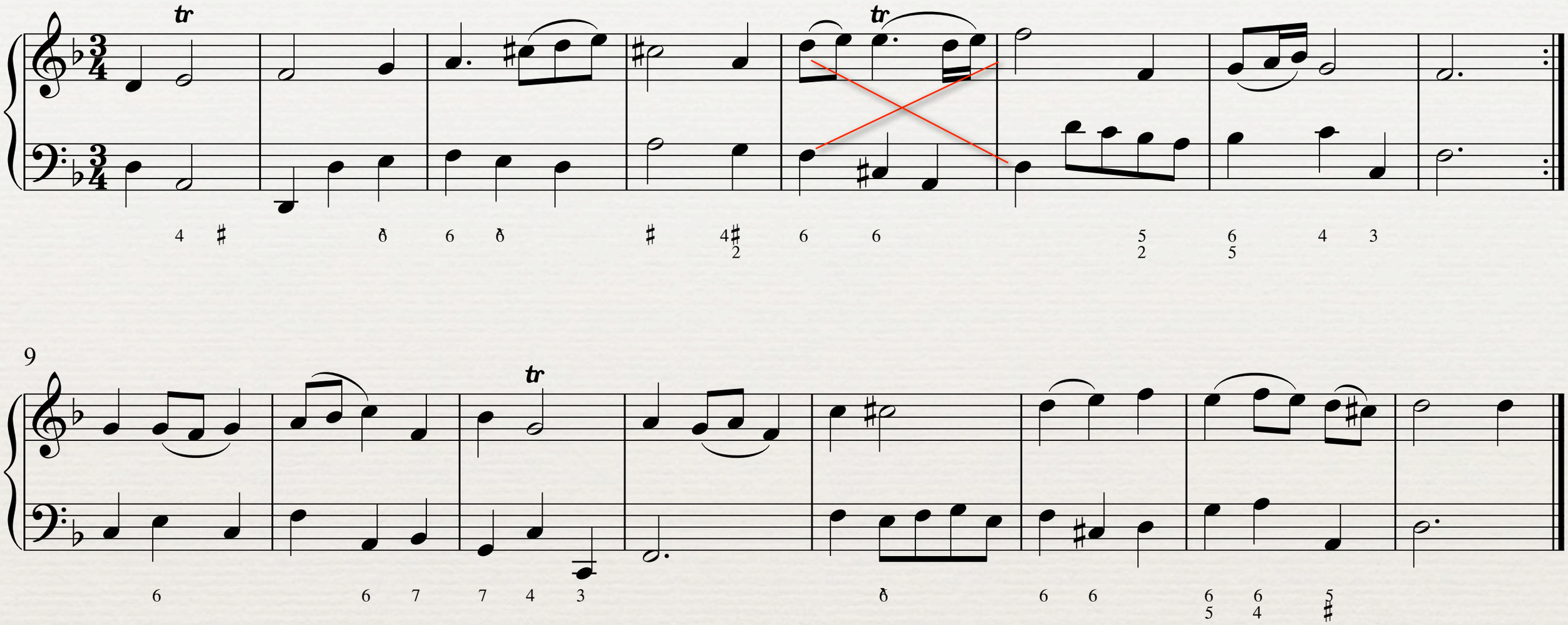


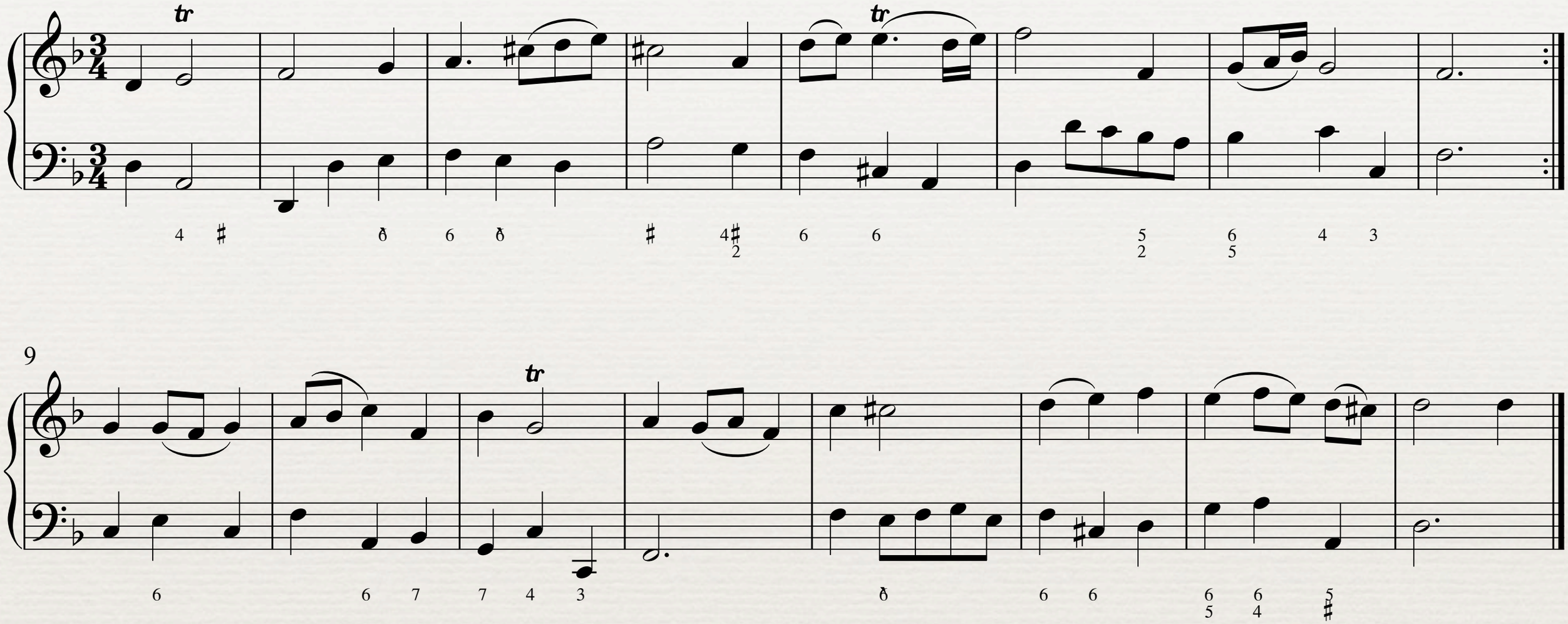
- Return to I; notice the combination of stepwise motion and leaps in the bass.

Bach: Chorale “Ihr Gestirn, ihr hohen Lüfte”



- Return to I; notice the combination of stepwise motion and leaps in the bass.
- There is a *voice exchange* between the outer voices in this motion from I6 to I

Bach: Chorale “Ihr Gestirn, ihr hohen Lüfte”



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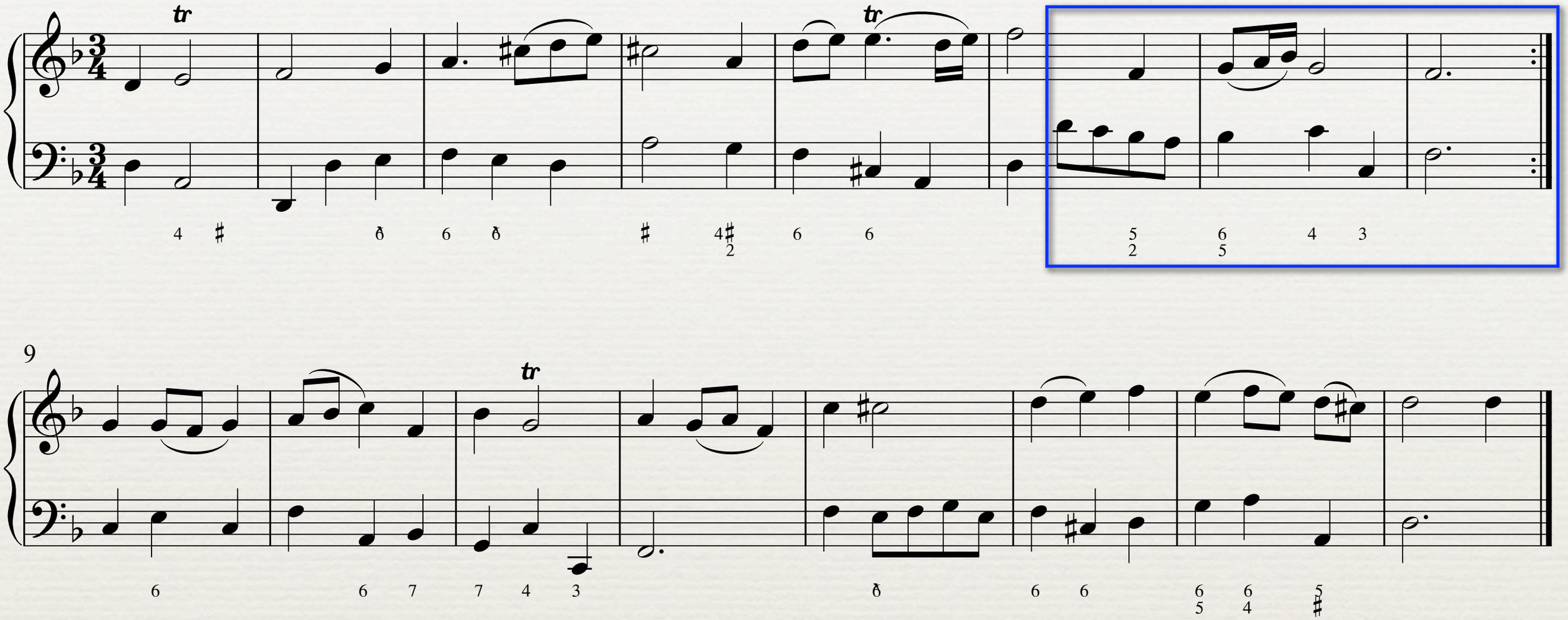
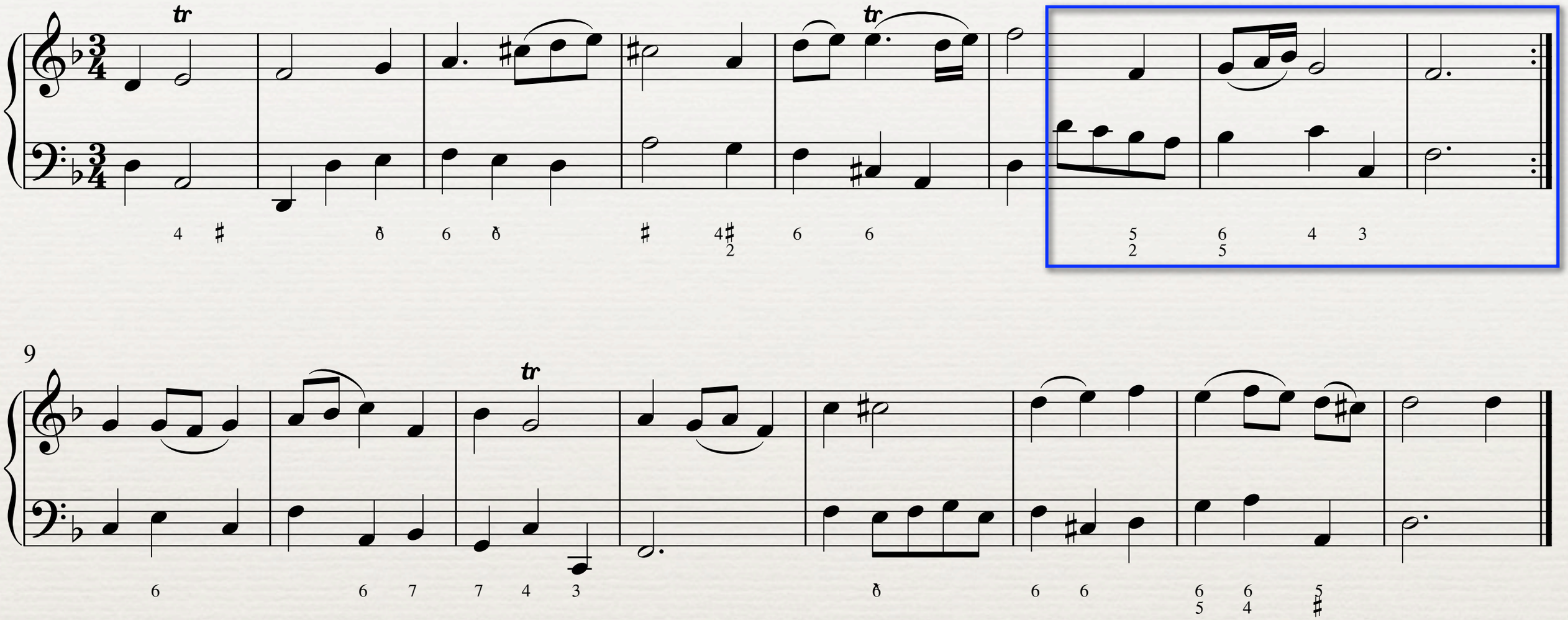


- Modulation to III.

Bach: Chorale “Ihr Gestirn, ihr hohen Lüfte”



- Modulation to III.
  - F is established as a key area in its own right

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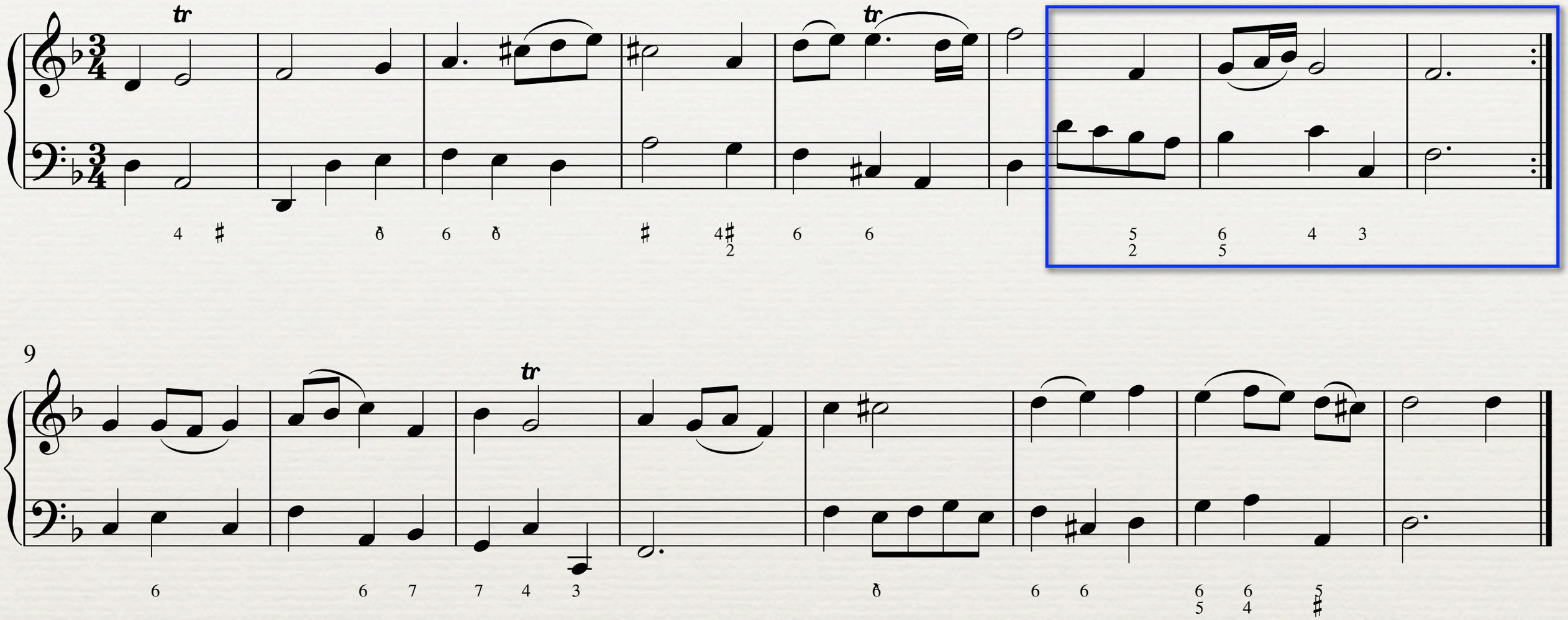

- Modulation to III.
  - F is established as a key area in its own right
  - The ‘f’ in the soprano serves as the melodic goal of the phrase, and also initiates a new melodic ascent in the next phrase

Modulation

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- Although in a modulation the piece does "change key", as a rule it is the very tension created by the key change—and the eventual return to the original tonic—which makes modulation useful in musical structure.

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- Therefore, the new key is both a new tonic, and still retains whatever secondary quality in the old key (i.e., if you modulate to V in a major key, the V is a new key, but still acts like the dominant in the original key.)

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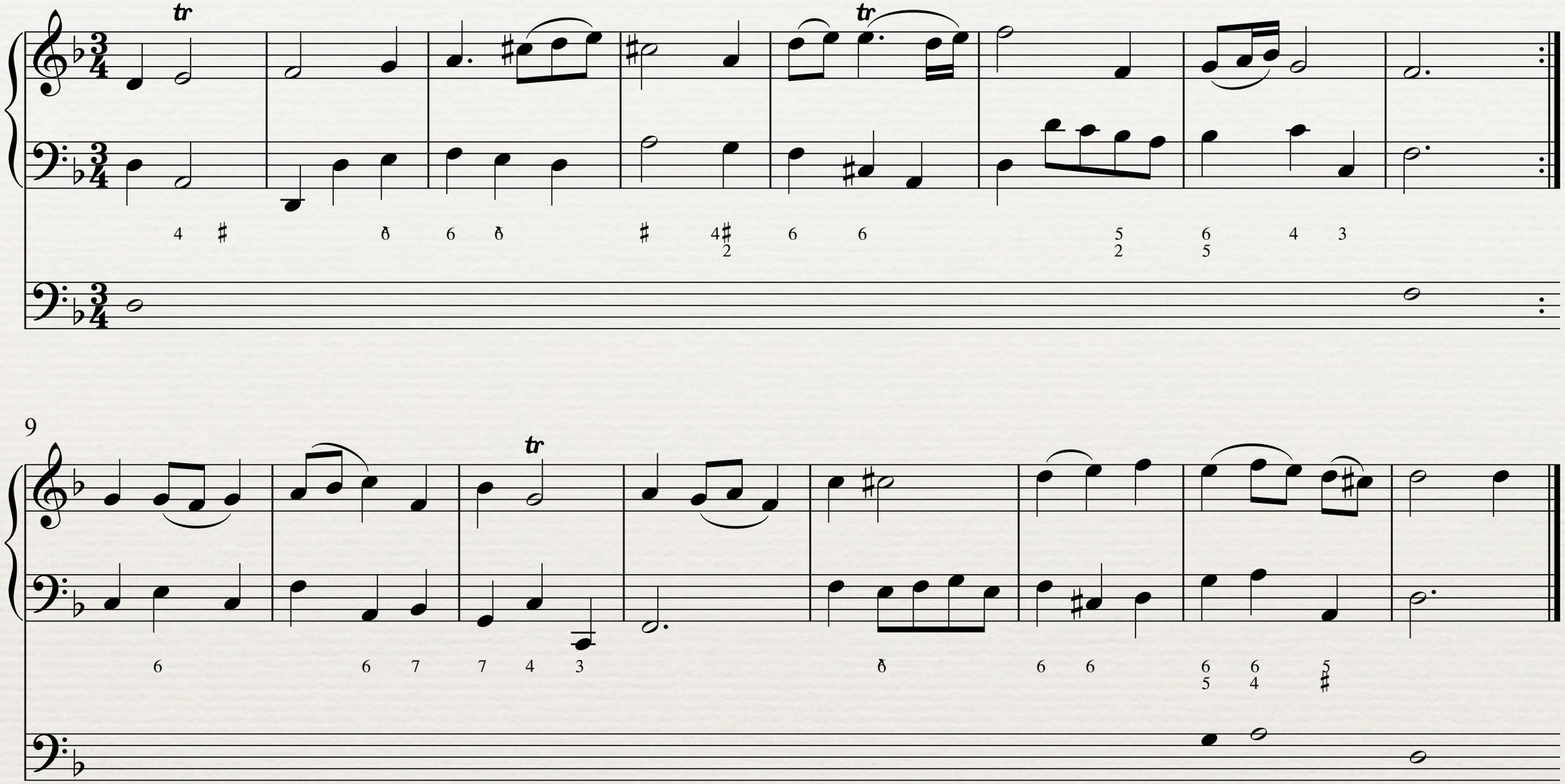
- Therefore, the new key is both a new tonic, and still retains whatever secondary quality in the old key (i.e., if you modulate to V in a major key, the V is a new key, but still acts like the dominant in the original key.)
- Because of that, Schenker referred to modulation as motion to an "illusory key."

Bach: Chorale “Ihr Gestirn, ihr hohen Lüfte”



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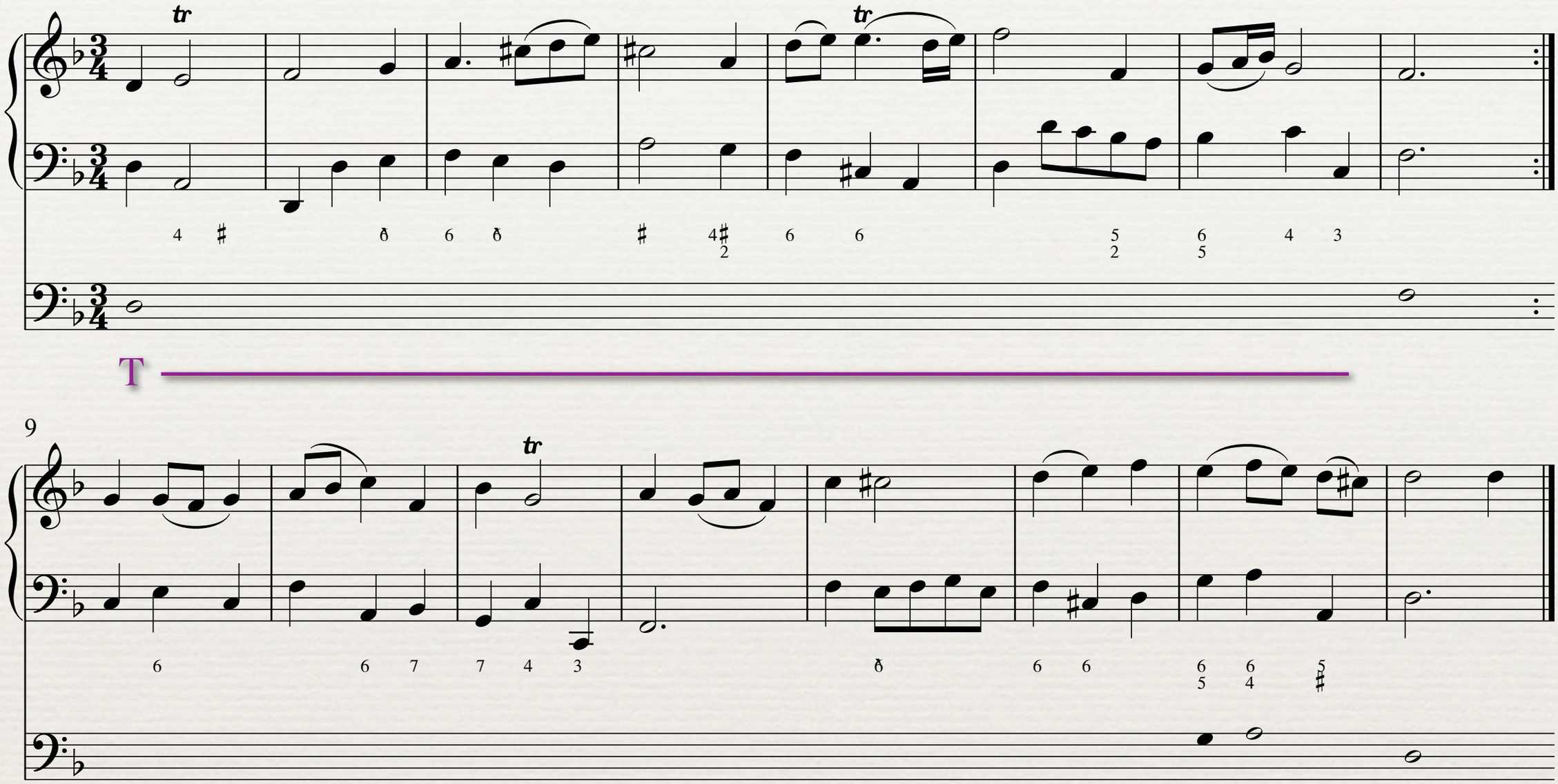
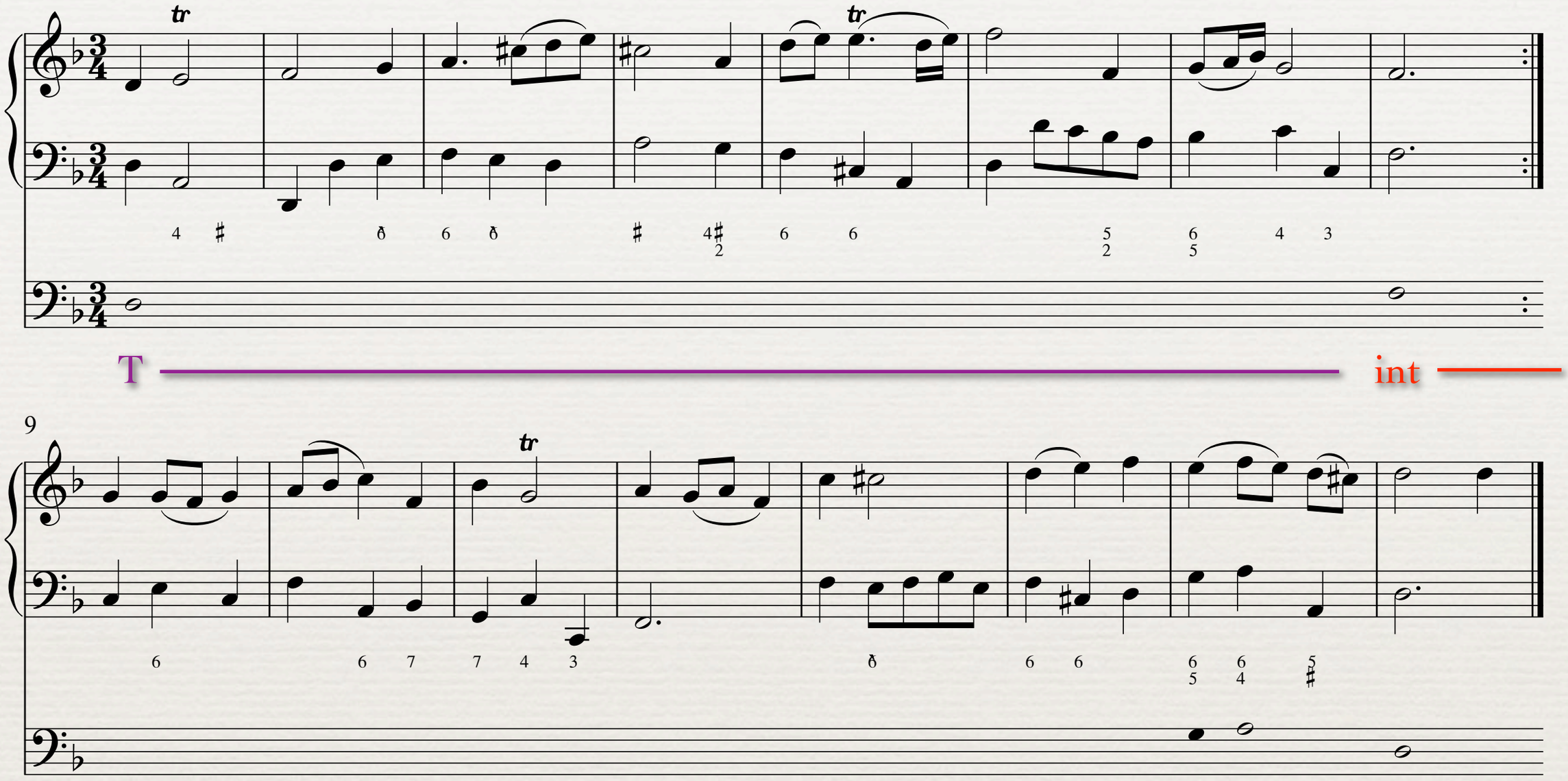


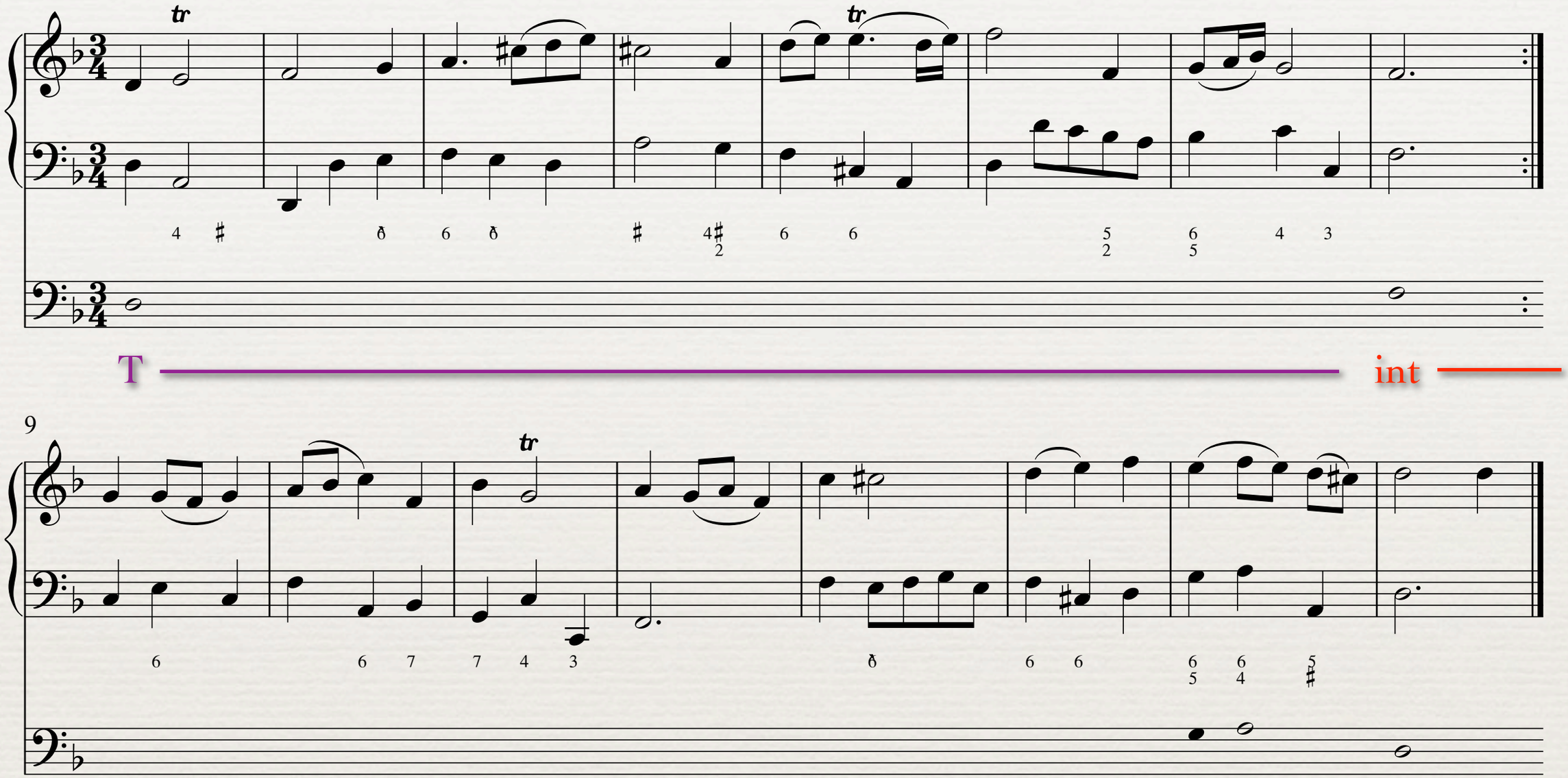
- Tonic prolonged to bar 8

Bach: Chorale “Ihr Gestirn, ihr hohen Lüfte”



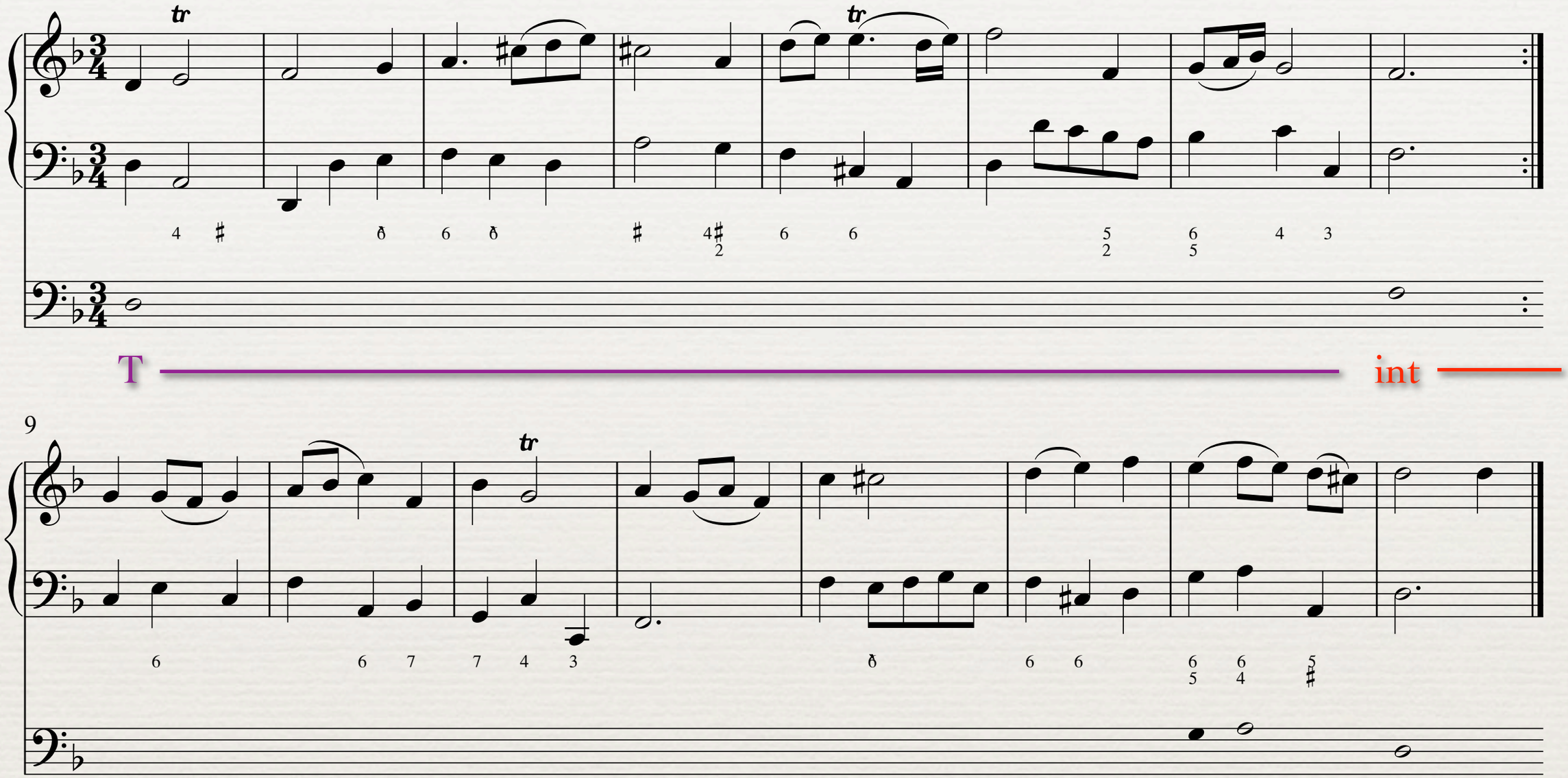
- Tonic prolonged to bar 8
- Int harmony from 8 - 15

Bach: Chorale “Ihr Gestirn, ihr hohen Lüfte”



- Tonic prolonged to bar 8
- Int harmony from 8 - 15
- D harmony at 15

Bach: Chorale “Ihr Gestirn, ihr hohen Lüfte”



- Tonic prolonged to bar 8
- Int harmony from 8 - 15
- D harmony at 15
- Final T harmony at 16

Imaginary Continuo

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- An *imaginary continuo* creates a harmonic representation of a composition, removing melodic and harmonic embellishment

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- An *imaginary continuo* creates a harmonic representation of a composition, removing melodic and harmonic embellishment
- Feel free to move between three and six voices

Imaginary Continuo

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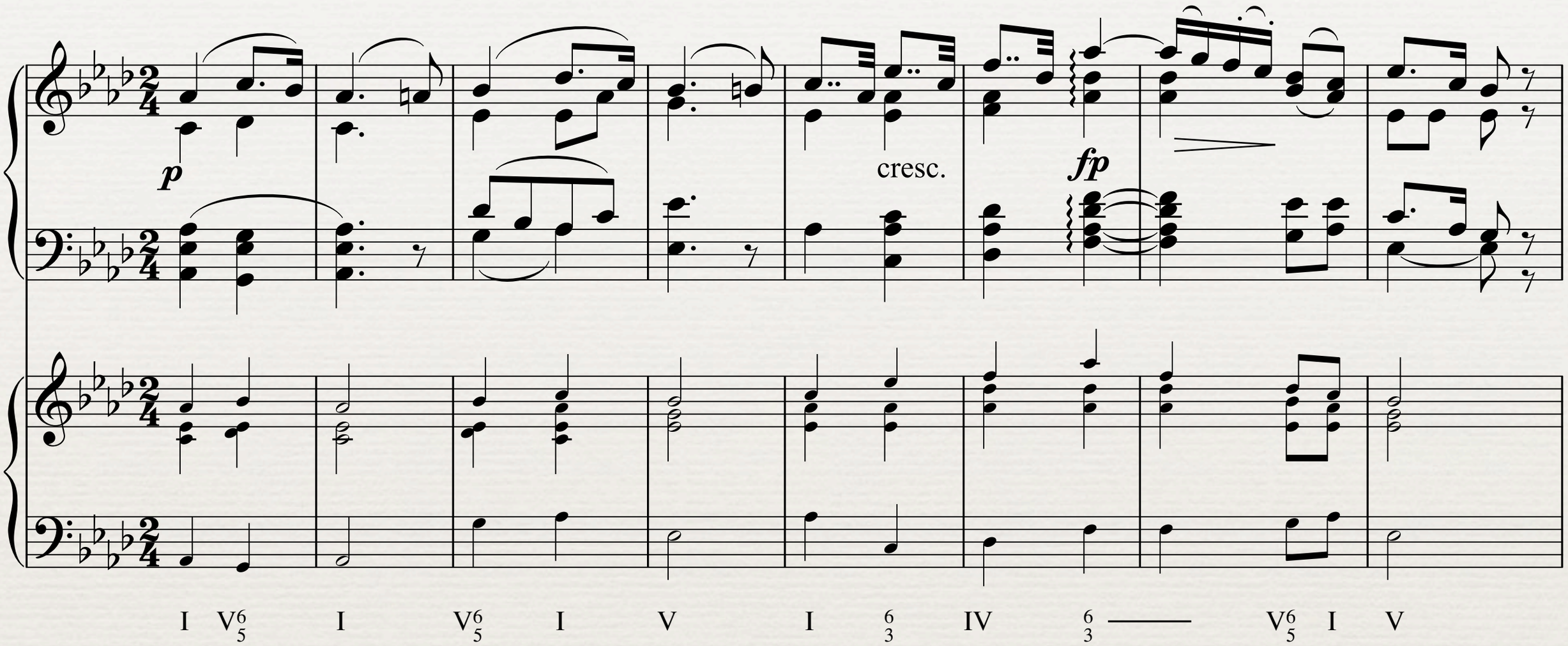
- Generally think of piano style—the RH plays complete chords, while the LH plays single bass notes

Beethoven: Sonata Op. 10 No. 1, II



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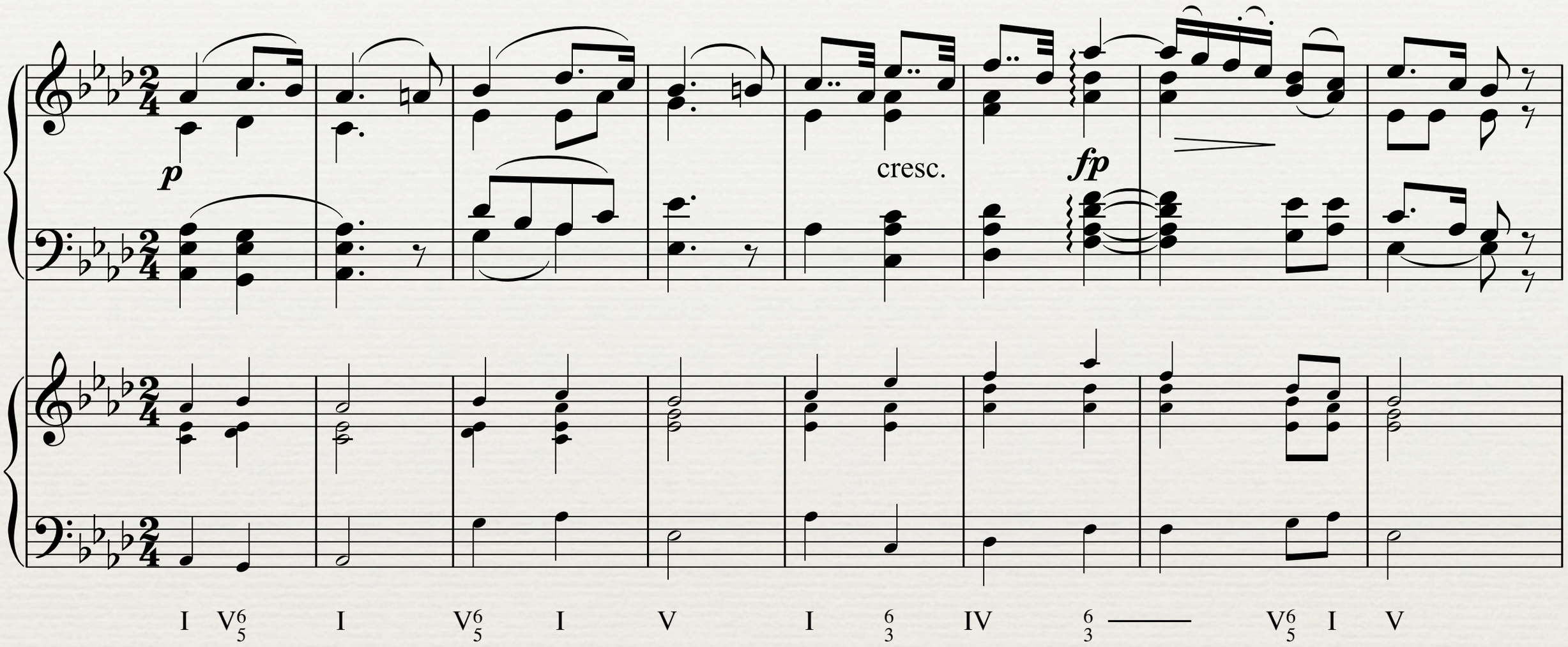

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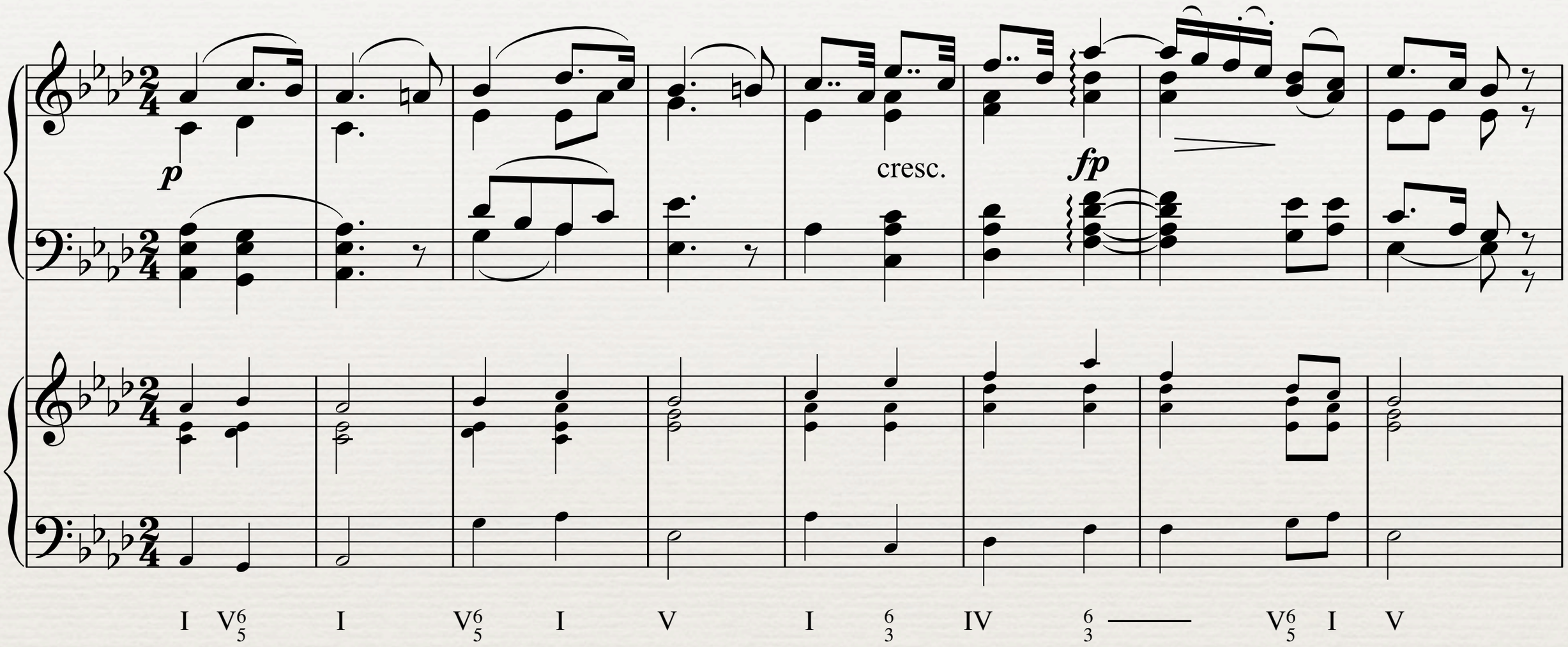

- The imaginary continuo follows the original pretty closely.
- Note: my version is a bit different from the text; I think their version in bars 6 & 7 was a bit too "convenient" and slightly misrepresented the music.