

J. S. Bach's Chorales: Reconstructing Eighteenth-Century German Figured-Bass Pedagogy in Light of a New Source

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Summary

Figured-Bass Chorales (harmony)

Fugue (counterpoint)

*Bach's Figured-Bass
Chorale Pedagogy:*

Stage 1: Texture

Stage 2: Harmony

Choralbuch Style

Choralgesang Style

Types 1, 2, & 4.1

Types 3 & 4.2

Types A & B

Types C & D

Free Composition
(non-chorale based)

general characteristics
of each type of realization

more triadic	more dissonant figures
more consonant	more suspensions
more disjunct	more conjunct
more homophonic	faster values (non-CT's)
more diatonic	more chromatic
vertically oriented	horizontally oriented
half note pulse	quarter note pulse
often improvised	usually written out
for congregational accompaniment where only chorale is sung	for concerted music where each voice is sung

C. P. E. Bach: "In composition [J. S. Bach] started his pupils right in with what was practical, and omitted all the *dry species* of counterpoint that were given by Fux and others. His pupils had to begin their studies by learning pure four-part thoroughbass. From this he went to chorales; first he added the basses to them himself, and they had to invent the alto and tenor [Stage 1]. Then he taught them to devise the basses [note the plural] themselves [Stage 2]. He particularly insisted on the writing out of the thoroughbass in parts [*Aussetzen der Stimmen im Generalbasse*]. [Presumably later,] In teaching fugues, he began with two-part ones, and so on. / The realization of a thoroughbass and the introduction to chorales are without doubt the best method of studying composition, as far as harmony is concerned" (*New Bach Reader*, 399).

Outline

- ➔ Part I: J. S. Bach's Pedagogy and *Choralbuch* vs. *Choralgesang* Styles
 - Ex. 1: Two Stages in Bach's Pedagogy
 - Exx. 2–3: The *Choralbuch* vs. *Choralgesang* Styles of Realization

- ➔ Part II: Adding Inner Voices and Ornamentation (Stage 1)
 - Ex. 4: Five Types of Texture
 - Exx. 5–9: Examples of Textural Variation

- ➔ Part III: Composing New Basslines (Stage 2a)
 - Exx. 10–11: Types of Harmony and Basslines
 - Ex. 12: Various Kittel Harmonizations

- ➔ Part IV: Adding Figures and Middle Voices (Stage 2b)
 - Exx. 13–17: David Kellner's Advice for Unfigured Basses
 - Exx. 18–19: Multiple-Bass Chorales by Kittel and Kirnberger

→ Part I: J. S. Bach's Pedagogy and *Choralbuch* vs. *Choralgesang* Styles

Example 1: Overview of J. S. Bach's Two-Stage Pedagogical Method and Source Types

	STAGE 1	STAGE 2
STUDENT RECEIVES	Chorale, Bassline, and Figures	Chorale only
STUDENT PROVIDES	Inner voices and Ornamentation	Bassline, Figures, and Inner voices
PEDAGOGICAL FOCUS	Texture	Harmony & Two-Voice Counterpoint
TYPES OF SOURCES	Single-Bass Sources	Multiple-Bass Sources
BACH STUDENTS	<u>Dresden School (Sibley Choralbuch)</u> C. H. Gräbner (1705?–1769) W. F. Bach (1710–1784) G. A. Homilius (1714–1785)	J. C. Kittel (1732–1809) J. P. Kirnberger (1721–1783)
MUSICIANS OUTSIDE BACH CIRCLE WHO ILLUMINATE THIS STAGE	M. J. F. Wiedeburg (1720–1800) J. C. Knecht (1752–1817) J. G. Werner (1777–1822)	J. D. Heinichen (1683–1729) David Kellner (1670–1748)

Example 2a: *Nun laßt uns Gott dem Herren* from the *Sibley Choralbuch* (anon. ms., likely Dresden, c. 1740)

Tune Source: Selnecker's *Christliche Psalmen* (Leipzig, 1587)

Choralbuch

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Nun laßt uns Gott, dem Herr - en, Dank - sag - en und ihm ehr - - en

5 [6] 4 # 6 # 6 7 7 #

11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

Von weg - en sein - er Gab - en, Die wir emp - fang - en hab - en.

6 6 # # 5 6 6 4

"Now let us give thanks to the Lord and honor him on account of his gifts which we have received."

Example 2b: J. S. Bach's setting of *Nun laßt uns Gott dem Herren* from Cantata BWV 165, *O heiliges Geist und Wasserbad*

Original Key: G major. Text replaced for comparison with 2a.

Choralgesang

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

S. [Nun laßt uns Gott, dem. Herr - en, Dank - sag - en und ihm ehr - en Von weg - en sein - er Gab - en, Die wir emp - fang - en hab - en.]

A. [Nun laßt uns Gott, dem. Herr - en, Dank - sag - en und ihm ehr - en Von weg - en sein - er Gab - en, Die wir emp - fang - en hab - en.]

T. [Nun laßt uns Gott, dem. Herr - en, Dank - sag - en und ihm ehr - en Von weg - en sein - er Gab - en, Die wir emp - fang - en hab - en.]

B. [Nun laßt uns Gott, dem. Herr - en, Dank - sag - en und ihm ehr - en Von weg - en sein - er Gab - en, Die wir emp - fang - en hab - en.]

[Continuo doubles bass, but includes no figures]

Example 3a: *Erhalt' uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort* from the *Sibley Choralbuch* (anon. ms., likely Dresden, c. 1740)

Tune Source: *Geistliche Lieder auff's new gebessert* (Wittenberg, 1543)

Choralbuch

"Keep us, Lord, by your Word, and control the murderous rage of the Pope and the Turks, who want to cast down Jesus Christ, your son, from his throne."

Example 3b: J. S. Bach's setting of *Erhalt' uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort* from Cantata BWV 6 (also set in BWV 126)

Original text: *Beweis' dein' Macht, Herr Jesu Christ*. Text replaced for comparison with 3a.

Choralgesang

➔ Part II: Adding Inner Voices and Ornamentation (Stage 1)

Example 4: Five textures for realizing a figured-bass chorale from Knecht (1795-98), Werner (1805), and Wiedeburg (1765-75)

T E X T U R E					
TYPE	1	2	3	4	5
NAME	CLOSE STYLE	SPREAD STYLE	ORNAMENTED STYLE	FULL-VOICED STYLE	UNISON STYLE
NUMBER OF VOICES	Four	Four	Four or Five	Between Five and Nine	One
EXAMPLES IN THIS HANDOUT	Ex. 5a	Ex. 5b	Exx. 6, 7, 8	Exx. 5c, 9	none
DESCRIPTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Homorhythmic with upper three voices in close position - Wide gap between bass and tenor - Older method, for beginners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simple rhythms in opening position - Tenor is lower than in the close style - Harder because left hand and pedal are now independent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More active rhythm; still in open position - All voices may be ornamented, even the soprano - Bach's chorales from the cantatas belong to this type 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Usually parallel 5ths and 8ves are allowed in the middle voices if the outer voices move in good counterpoint - Avoid thirds in the left hand (too thick) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Single voice doubled in three or four octaves with pedal - Used in congregational singing for variety
		KNECHT'S SUBTYPES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3.1: Ornamented bass & varied harm. - 3.2: Ornamented A, T, and B - 3.3: All voices ornamented (also chorale in soprano) - 3.4: Contrapuntal, canonic, or fugal ornamentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4.1a: Thick chordal texture; middle voices may have parallel 5ths and 8ves - 4.1b: Variation: Hold chords half value, always sustaining the soprano - 4.2: Five or six independent ornamented voices without parallels 	

Example 5: Three styles of realizing *Nun laßt uns Gott dem Herren*, from Knecht's *Orgelschule* (Leipzig, 1795–98)

a) Type 1: Close Style (3:20)

b) Type 2: Spread Style (3:36)

[alto and tenor near-exact inversion of those in 5a]

c) Type 4.1a: Full-voiced Style with Parallels (3:75)

[parallel fifths and octaves]

Example 6: Type 3.1: Varied bass (and harmony) using *Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier*, from Knecht's *Orgelschule* (Leipzig, 1795–98, 3:83)

Example 7: Type 3.2: Varied middle voices and bass using *Nun danket alle Gott*, from Knecht's *Orgelschule* (Leipzig, 1795–98)

a) (3:87–88)

b) (3:88–89)

c) (3:89–90)

Example 8: Type 3.3: All voices ornamented, from Knecht's *Orgelschule* (Leipzig, 1795–98)

a) *O heil'ger Geist,kehr bei uns ein* [*Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern*] (3:93–94)

Einfache Melodie zum Singen. 2 3 4 5 [etc.]

Figurirte Melodie zum Orgelspielen.

b) *Allein Gott in der Höh sey Ehr* (3:95–96)

[Unadorned melody (not in original)] 2 3 4 5 [etc.]

Example 9: Type 4.2: Five or six independent voices, from Knecht's *Orgelschule* (Leipzig, 1795–98)

a) Five voices: *Ach bleib mit deiner Gnade* (3:79)

Fünfstimmig. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 [etc.]

Mit obligatem Pedal.

b) Six voices: *In allen meinen Thaten* (3:80)

Sechsstimmig. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 [etc.]

Mit obligatem Pedal.

➔ Part III: Composing New Basslines (Stage 2a)

Example 10: Kirnberger's Harmonic Types from *The Strict Art...* (1982 [1771–91], 284–85)

H A R M O N Y				
Kirnberger's Types	A	B	C	D
Description (all types include chord inversions)	Triads from only degrees 1, 4, and 5	Triads from all degrees	Degrees 1, 4, and 5 from neighboring keys (especially dominants)	Dominants from remote keys, enharmonic progressions, and sudden harmonic shifts

Example 11: Types of Basslines (after McCormick 2015, 23)

Diatonic vs. Chromatic (Bass itself)
Conjunct vs. Disjunct
Parallel vs. Contrary to the Chorale
Homorhythmic vs. Faster NCT's/Leaps
Bass Suspensions
Pedal Point
Imitative of Chorale or Inner Voices

Example 12: Kittel's Harmonizations of *Jesu meine Freude* from *Der Angehende Praktische Organist* (Erfurt 1808, 1/30–32)

Chorale:

① "lacking variety in harmony" [Type A; diatonic; homophonic]
 ② "richer in harmony" [Type C; diatonic; parallel; conjunct]
 ③ "good" [Type B; diatonic, parallel; conjunct]
 ④ "pure, yet forcedly chromatic" [Type C; chromatic, contrary]

⑤ "better chromaticism" [Type C; all voices chromatic; parallel; faster values]
 ⑥ "even better" [Type C; pedal point; imitative of A/T; chromatic figures]
 ⑦ "rich in harmony" [Type C; faster values; mixed motions; chromatic bass and fig.'s]

Ex. 12 (cont.)

Chorale: 

⑧ “natural bass”
[Type C; homophonic; disjunct]

⑨ “good bass”
[Type C; homophonic]

⑩ “more artful bass”
[Type C; chromatic bass]

⑪ “pure and chromatic bass”
[Type C; chromatic upper voices]

⑫ “a little too sharp”
[Type C; disjunct]



Fingerings and ornaments for examples 8-12:
 8: ♯, 6, 6, ♯, 5, 4, 6
 9: 6, ♯, 5, 4, 6
 10: 8, 7, ♯, 5, 6, 8, 6, 7, 6, ♯
 11: 6, 8, 4, 6, 6, ♯, 6, 8, 3, 3b, 6, 6, ♯
 12: 7, ♯, 6, 7, ♯

Chorale: 

⑬ “natural bass”
[Type B; disjunct]

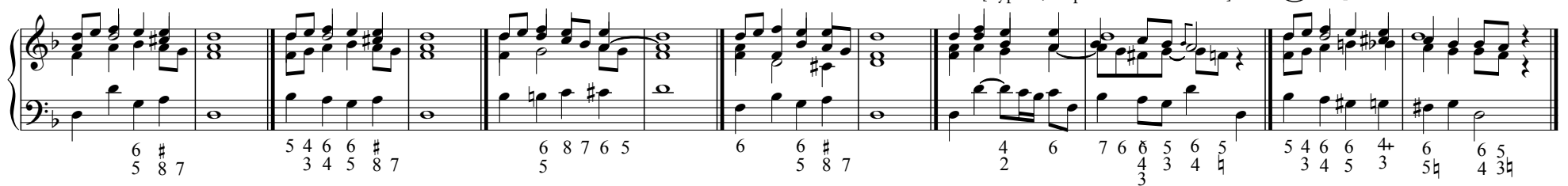
⑭ “beautiful”
[Type B; conjunct]

⑮ “too foreign to the chorale”
[Type C; chromatic]

⑯ “clever”
[Type B; homophonic]

⑰ “harmonic”
[Type C; suspensions in all voices]

⑱ “chromatic”
[Type C; chromatic bass & tenor]



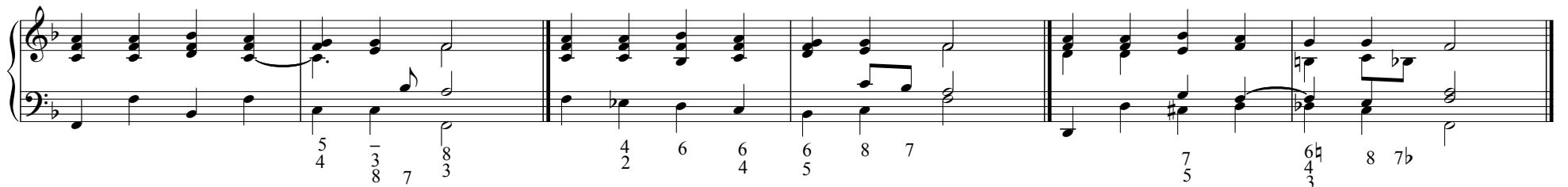
Fingerings and ornaments for examples 13-18:
 13: 6, ♯, 5, 8, 7
 14: 5, 4, 6, 6, ♯, 3, 4, 5, 8, 7
 15: 6, 8, 7, 6, 5
 16: 6, 6, ♯, 5, 8, 7
 17: 4, 6, 7, 6, 6, 5, 6, 5, 4, 3, 4, ♯
 18: 5, 4, 6, 6, 4+, 3, 4, 5, 3, 6, 5, 4, 3, ♯

Chorale: 

⑲ “natural bass” [Type A; homophonic; disjunct; alto susp.]

⑳ “pathetic bass” [Type C; conjunct]

㉑ “enharmonic bass” [Type D; conjunct]

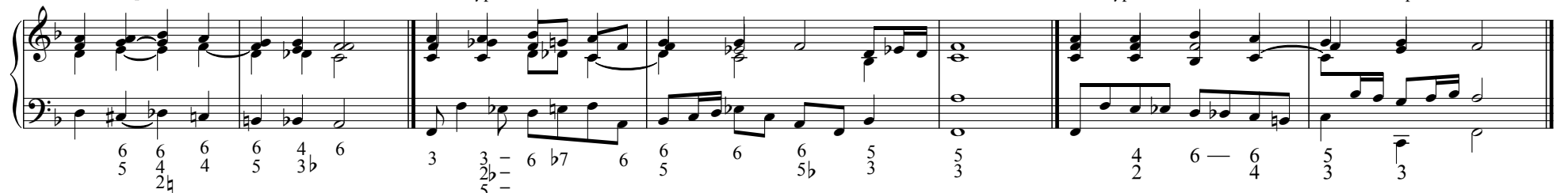


Fingerings and ornaments for examples 19-21:
 19: 5, 4, 3, 8, 7, 3
 20: 4, 2, 6, 6, 4, 6, 5, 8, 7
 21: 7, 5, 6, 4, 3, 8, 7b

㉒ “too chromatic and enharmonic”
[Type D]

㉓ “passage with suspensions” [*Gebundener Satz*]
[Type D; faster values; tenor chromaticism]

㉔ [no description by Kittel]
[Type D; chromatic bass; faster values; suspension]



Fingerings and ornaments for examples 22-24:
 22: 6, 6, 6, 6, 4, 6, 5, 4, 3b, 2, ♯
 23: 3, 3, 6, b7, 6, 6, 6, 6, 5b, 5, 3
 24: 4, 6, 6, 5, 3, 2, 6, 4, 3, 3

➔ Part IV: Adding Figures and Middle Voices (Stage 2b)

Example 14: Kellner's Figures for the Rule of the Octave from *Treulicher Unterricht* (2nd ed. 1737, 31)

Example 13: Types of Figures/Middle Voices

Diatonic vs. Chromatic
Homophonic vs. Faster non-CT's (N, P, ARP)
Suspensions
Imitative of the Chorale/Each Other

Hypothetical realization (after Rameau, *Traité de l'harmonie* (1722, 232):

Hypothetical realization:

Example 15: Kellner on Chord Inversion (2nd ed. 1737, 40)

Unprepared dissonance at (x) justified by inversion of voices in the Rule of the Octave without invoking the concept of a root (i.e., “inversion” for Kellner simply means “invertible counterpoint”).

Example 17: Kellner's Tables of Available Dissonances (2nd ed. 1737, 96–97)

Example 16: Kellner's Tables of Signatures (2nd ed. 1737, 28)

The most common [abbreviated] signatures

#	$\frac{8}{5}$	6 - 5	$\frac{8}{3}$
b	$\frac{5}{8}$	$\frac{6}{5}$	3
2	$\frac{6}{4}$	$\frac{6-5}{4-3}$	8
$\frac{4}{2}$	6	6	$\frac{8}{3}$
$\frac{5}{2}$	2	6	$\frac{8}{b3}$
aug. 2nd	$\frac{6}{4+}$	aug. 6th	$\frac{4+}{3}$
$\frac{4}{3}$	6	$\frac{7}{6}$	3
4 - 3	$\frac{8}{5}$	7	$\frac{5}{3}$
4	$\frac{8}{5}$	7 - 6	3
4+	$\frac{6}{2}$	$\frac{7}{4}$	5
dim. 4th	$\frac{6}{6}$	9	$\frac{5}{3}$
5b	$\frac{6}{3}$	9 - 8	$\frac{5}{2}$
aug. 5th	$\frac{7}{2} \mid \frac{7}{3}$	9	5
5 - 6	$\frac{8}{3}$	$\frac{9}{6}$	3
		$\frac{9-8}{7-6}$	3

The required voices to be added

MAJOR KEYS				
	[TYPE OF BASS MOTION]			
BASS SCALE DEGREE	IN [STEPWISE] ASCENDING ONLY	IN [STEPWISE] DESCENDING ONLY	IN [STEPWISE] ASCENDING OR DESCENDING	THESE FIGURES DO NOT REFLECT [STEPWISE] ASCENDING OR DESCENDING MOTION [i.e. LEAPS]
$\hat{1}$	—	$\frac{2}{2} \mid \frac{5}{4} \mid \frac{6}{4}$	—	$\frac{5-}{43} \mid \frac{6-5}{4-3} \mid \frac{7}{4} \mid 7 \mid 9$
$\hat{2}$	—	—	$\frac{6}{4} \mid \frac{3}{3}$	7 9
$\hat{3}$	—	$\frac{6b[h]}{4} \mid \frac{2}{2}$	—	7 9
$\hat{4}$	5b*	4+	—	7 9
$\hat{5}$	—	—	—	$\frac{5-}{43} \mid \frac{6-5}{4-3} \mid \frac{7}{6} \mid \frac{7}{5} \frac{6}{4} \frac{5-}{43} \mid 7 \mid 9$
$\hat{6}$	—	$\frac{6}{4} \mid \frac{3}{3} \mid \frac{6}{4} \mid \frac{3}{3}$	—	7 9
$\hat{7}$	5b	$\frac{6}{b2[h]} \mid \frac{4}{3}$	—	7 9

MINOR KEYS				
	[TYPE OF BASS MOTION]			
BASS SCALE DEGREE	IN [STEPWISE] ASCENDING ONLY	IN [STEPWISE] DESCENDING ONLY	IN [STEPWISE] ASCENDING OR DESCENDING	THESE FIGURES DO NOT REFLECT [STEPWISE] ASCENDING OR DESCENDING MOTION [i.e. LEAPS]
$\hat{1}$	—	$\frac{5}{2} \mid \frac{5}{4} \mid \frac{6}{4}$	—	$\frac{5-}{43} \mid \frac{6-5}{4-3} \mid \frac{7}{4} \mid 7 \mid 9$
$\hat{2}$	$\frac{6}{5b}$	—	$\frac{6}{4} \mid \frac{3}{3}$	7 9
$\hat{3}$	—	—	—	aug. 5th 7 9
$\hat{4}$	$\frac{6*}{5b} \mid \text{dim. 7th*}$	$\frac{6}{4+} \mid \frac{6}{b3}$	—	7 9
$\hat{5}$	—	$\frac{6}{b2}$	—	$\frac{5-}{4\#} \mid \frac{6-5}{4-\#} \mid \frac{7}{6} \mid \frac{7}{5} \frac{6}{4} \frac{5-}{4\#} \mid 7 \mid 9$
$\hat{6}$	raised	7	$\frac{6}{5b}$	—
	lowered	—	aug. 2nd aug. 6th	$\frac{6}{4+} \mid \frac{3}{3}$
$\hat{7}$	raised	dim. 4th, 5b dim. 7th	—	—
	lowered	—	—	7

*When scale degree four in the bass is raised a semitone.

Example 18: Kittel's Multiple Bases for *Liebster Jesu wir sind hier* from *25 Chorale...* (ms., Erfurt, 1791)

Original Key: G# Major

① CHORALE (four phrases) ② ③ ④

more Choralbuch style ↑

MULTIPLE BASSES

↓ more Choralgesang style

1. [Type C; homophonic; diatonic] [Type A; homophonic; diatonic] [Type C; homophonic; diatonic] [Type B; homophonic; diatonic]
 6 6 6 4 3 6 6 6 4 3 6 6 4 # 6 6 6 4 3

2. [Type C; bass suspension] [Type B; diatonic; conjunct] [Type C; homophonic; diatonic] [Type B; diatonic; conjunct]
 8 2 6 6 6 6 5 6 6 4 3 6 6 6 6 4 # 6 6 5 6 6 5 8 7

3. [Type C; conjunct; chromatic] [Type C; conjunct; chromatic] [Type C; homophonic; diatonic] [Type C; bass suspension]
 6 6 8 7 6 5 5 6 3 4 6 4 6 4 6 4 3 4 6 6 6 7 4 3 6 4 3 - 6 4 3 8

4. [Type B; disjunct] [Type C] [Type C] [Type B; conjunct]
 6 6 6 4 3 4 6 6 6 4 3 5 4 6 6 6 6 4 # 6 5 5 6 6 8 7 8

5. [Type C; disjunct; upper suspensions] [Type C; disjunct; upper suspensions] [Type C; homophonic; diatonic; conjunct] [Type C; conjunct; upper suspensions]
 6 8 7 7 6 4 3 6 6 9 8 4 3 6 9 8 4 3 4 6 4 6 4 # 4 4 3 6 5 6 4 3 8

6. [Type B; faster values] [Type C; faster values; suspensions] [Type C; faster values; suspensions] [Type C; faster values; suspensions]
 5 6 6 4 3 6 6 5 4 5 6 4 3 8 8 6 4 4 3 5 7 4 6 6 5 6 7 6 4 3 8

7. [Type C; faster values; upper suspension] [Type B; faster values; conjunct] [Type C; faster values] [Type C; faster values]
 7 6 6 6 4 3 8 7 6 6 6 6 4 6 4 3 8 5 6 4 6 4 6 6 4 # 6 7 5 5 6 6 8 7

8. [Type C; faster values] [Type C; faster values; suspensions] [Type C; faster values] [Type C; faster values] (imitation)
 6 5 6 6 4 3 - 6 6 9 8 6 6 5 5 9 6 6 8 7 5 6 6 5 4 3 6 9 8 5 6 - 6 6 9 3 6 8 7

Example 19: Kirnberger's Multiple Basses (selection from 26 total) from *The Strict Art...* (1982 [1771–91], 300–5)

Ach Gott und Herr, wie gross und schwer sind mein be - gang - ne Sün - den

CHORALE:

1. "Natural" [Type C; disjunct]

2. "Greater variety" [Type C; disjunct]

3. "Foreign Dominants" [Type C; mostly conj.]

8. [Type C; conjunct; little chromaticism]

12. [Type C; conjunct; very chromatic]

14. "Parallel motion" [Type C]

16. "Contrary motion" [Type C]

17. [Type C; chromatic; contrary motion]

18. "Contrary motion" [Type C/D; very chromatic]

20. "Canonic Imitation"

24. [Type D; disjunct]

26. [Type D; conjunct]

more Choralbuch style

MULTIPLE BASSES

more Chordgesang style

Detailed description: The image shows a musical score for a chorale with 12 bass staves. The top staff is the vocal line with the lyrics 'Ach Gott und Herr, wie gross und schwer sind mein be - gang - ne Sün - den'. The bass staves are numbered 1, 2, 3, 8, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 24, and 26. Each staff is labeled with a description of its harmonic or motion type. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals. There are also some boxed numbers (2, 4, 6, 8) above the bass staves. On the right side, there are two vertical arrows pointing up and down, labeled 'more Choralbuch style' and 'more Chordgesang style' respectively, with a dashed line and the text 'MULTIPLE BASSES' in between.

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