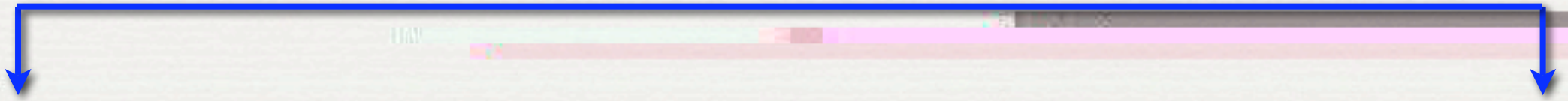# Melody and Counterpoint

Chopin: Etude Op. 10, No. 3 in E Major

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- The melody outlines a symmetrical arch from E at the beginning to E at the end.

Chopin: Etude Op. 10, No. 3 in E Major

- In bars 1 - 2 these notes are heard as primary, with neighbor figures decorating but not fundamentally altering the stepwise ascent.

- Note that the extended tones F# and G# occur on the second beat and are tied over to the following downbeat, creating a syncopation.

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- In bar 2, the G# neighbor tone on the first beat anticipates the longer G# on the second beat.
- We expect the same thing to happen in bar 3
  - Instead a leap to C# takes place
  - This shifts the expected A natural to the downbeat of bar 4.

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- Because the A is followed by a G#, we might expect to continue the stepwise downwards motion to an F#.
- This motion is interrupted by a descending leap to D#
  - The descending fourth balances the ascending fourth in bar 3
  - The F# arrives on the second beat—and is tied over the barline just like the F# in bar 1, and the G# in bar 2

Chopin: Etude Op. 10, No. 3 in E Major

Chopin: Etude Op. 10, No. 3 in E Major

B   E   F#   G#   G#   F#   E

- The melody outlines the tonic triad, beginning with a B upbeat, then moving in stepwise motion up to G# and back down to E again.

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- The melody outlines the tonic triad, beginning with a B upbeat, then moving in stepwise motion up to G# and back down to E again.

- However, between the first and second G#s the stepwise continuity is disrupted by both syncopation and by leaps, which helps to intensify the need for the melody to resolve.

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Chopin: Etude Op. 10, No. 3 in E Major
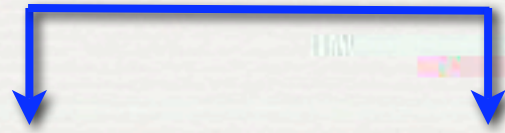
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  - Bar 3

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- We can distinguish two structural levels in a melody

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  - The *surface level*, which is the melody as heard, note for note

- In bar 1, the leap to E♭ and descent to D♭ suggest that downward motion will follow

Beethoven: Quartet Op. 59 No. 1: III

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- The opening of the melody forms a perfect fifth with the viola
- The E♭ and D♭ are heard as dissonant against that fifth
- The F♮ on the second beat is dissonant against the fifth in the voice and 'cello.
- Finally the E♮ is consonant with the harmony.

Dissonances set up in bar 1 are resolved in bar 2

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    - The D$^\flat$ resolves to C
    - The E$^\natural$ resolves to F

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- Two distinct melodic strands are formed in bar 2, both converging on A$^\flat$:

  - An upper line descending by step
  - A lower line ascending by step

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  - Upper voice
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An initial leap of a fifth from D# to A# is balanced by subsequent motion in the opposite direction.

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- However, the A# is decorated by neighboring, passing, and chordal skip tones before returning to A# in bar 2.

- When a tone like A# remains active in its context, even though other tones may intervene, that tone is said to be *prolonged*.
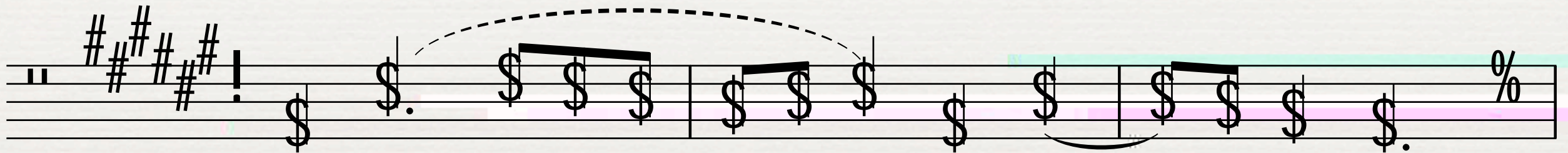
- When a tone like A# remains active in its context, even though other tones may intervene, that tone is said to be *prolonged*.

- The extra stemming and the broken slur indicates this *melodic prolongation*.

Bach Fugue in F Major (WTC I)

$\frac{3}{8}$

Bach Fugue in F Major (WTC I)

UN

$\frac{3}{8}$

LN
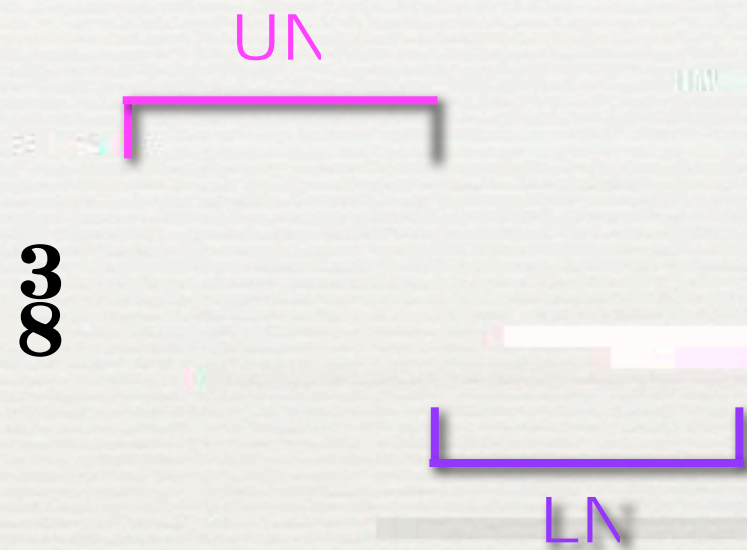
- The first part circles around C, decorated by upper and lower neighbor figures.

Bach Fugue in F Major (WTC I)

$\begin{smallmatrix}3\\8\end{smallmatrix}$

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  - That motion reaches ^4 on the downbeat of bar 3
  - Another set of neighbor figures reaches ^3 on the downbeat of bar 4.

Bach Fugue in F Major (WTC I)

$\frac{3}{8}$

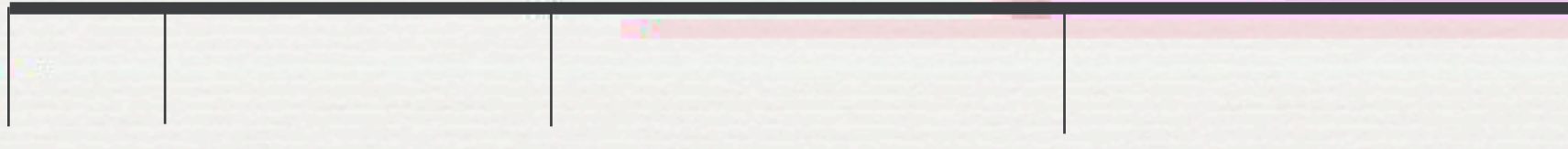# Bach Fugue in F Major (WTC I)

$\begin{matrix}3\\8\end{matrix}$

- The motion from E to B♭ creates the interval of a diminished fifth (the notes that begin and end motions are typically more noticeable than the intervening tones.)

Bach Fugue in F Major (WTC I)

- The motion from E to B$^\flat$ creates the interval of a diminished fifth

Bach Fugue in F Major (WTC I)

N

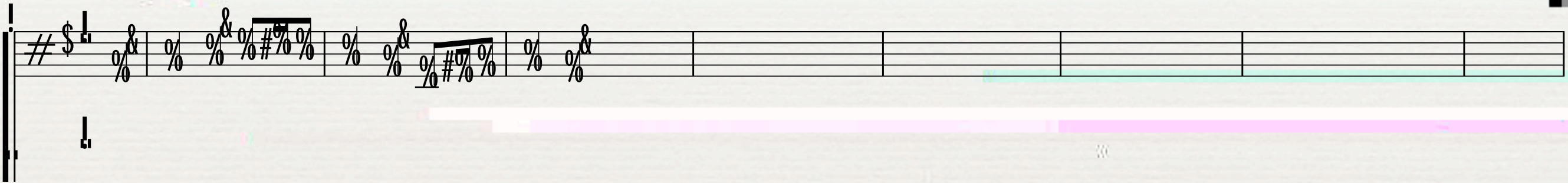# Bach Fugue in F Major (WTC I)

N

- This creates what is in effect two voices, perceived within a single line of music.
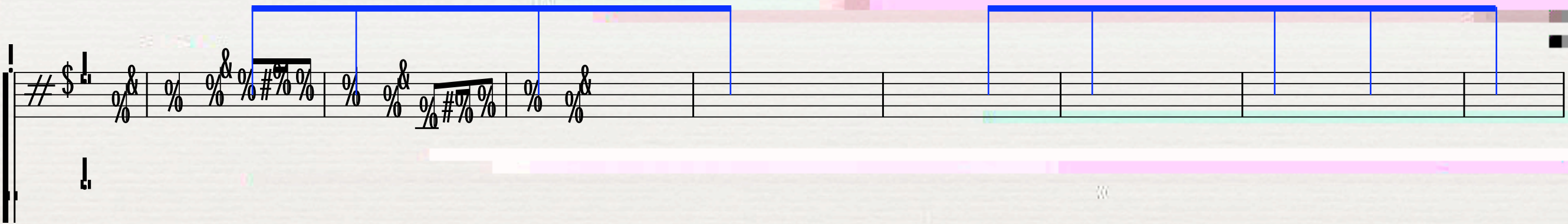
Bach Fugue in F Major (WTC I)

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- A melody which articulates two or more distinct voices is called a *polyphonic melody*.

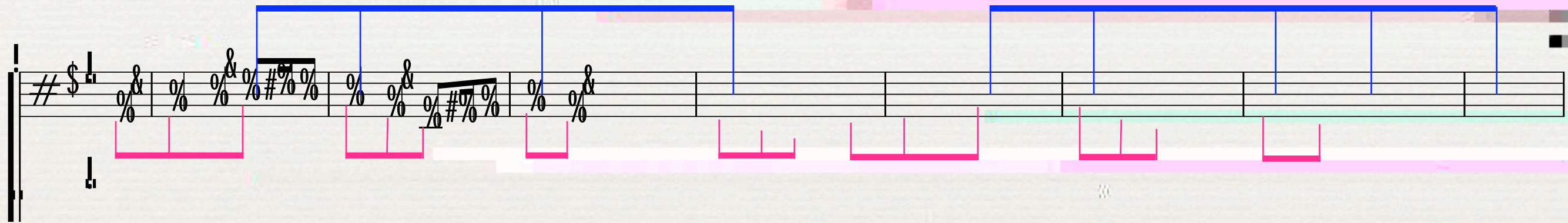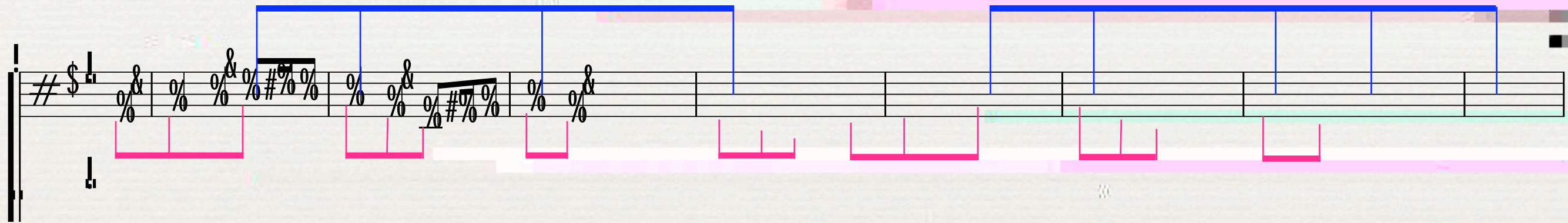- The climax tone A (embellished with an upper neighbor) initiates a stepwise top-voice descent.
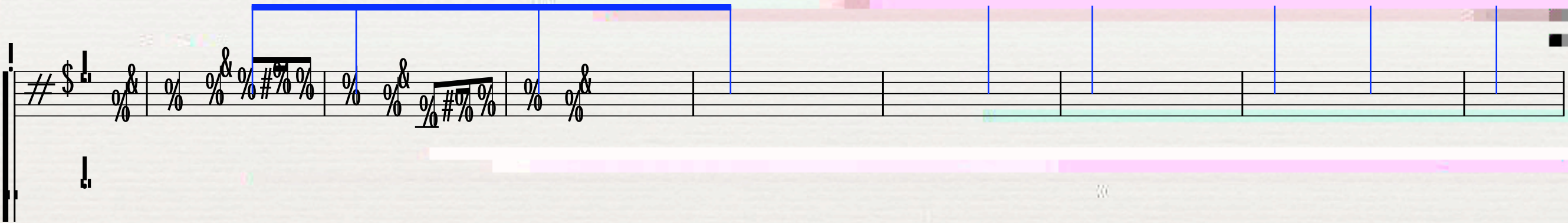
Greensleeves

- The climax tone A (embellished with an upper neighbor) initiates a stepwise top-voice descent.

- If each arpeggiation which embellishes the principal melodic notes were played as a block chord, the lower notes would be heard as inner tones, or voices, of the chord.
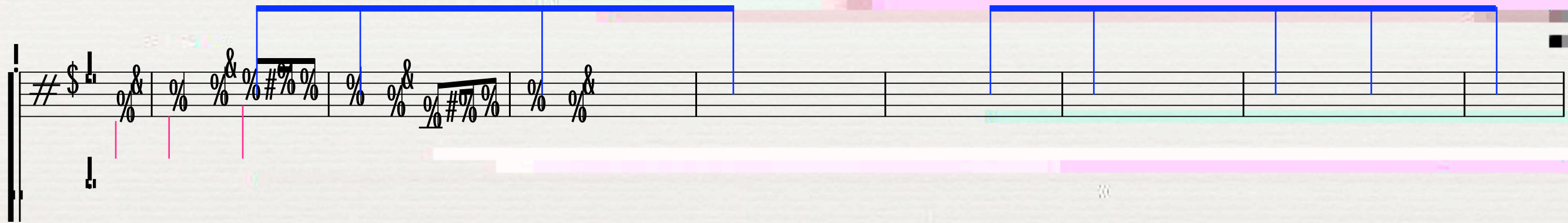
Greensleeves

Greensleeves

- In bar 7 the tone F is not followed by E (in the framework descent), but by the leading C# on beat 2.
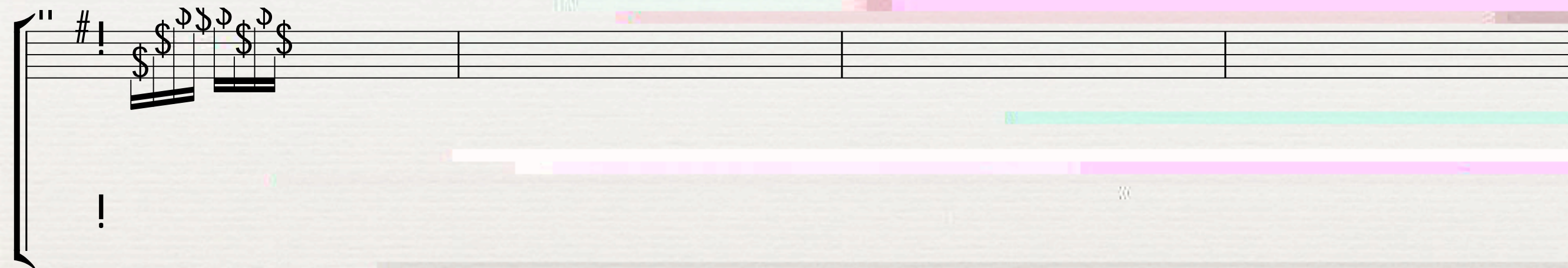
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- The effect of melodic fluency is so strong that Schenker regarded the leading tone in contexts such as this a *substitute* for scale degree ^2, which would, if actually present, produce a completely stepwise descending line.

- Parentheses, as in bar 7, are used by Schenkerian analysts to indicate "implied" or "suggested" tones.

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- A single line, written for solo 'cello, here unites different voices that are widely separated.

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- A single line, written for solo 'cello, here unites different voices that are widely separated.
- Melodic partitions of this type occur frequently—especially in music for solo instruments, where a single line may outline two, three, or more independent polyphonic lines.

Counterpoint and Melody

- Analyzing melodies for their structure isn't all that easy
- Schenker's own studies led him to realize that the classic study of species counterpoint was a superb tool for melodic analysis
  - Many melodies will, in fact, reduce down to lines that tend to resemble the lines of strict species counterpoint
  - Thus we can look at *some* melodies, at least, as being elaborations on simpler contrapuntal structures.

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  - All other intervals are consonant

Handel: Chaconne
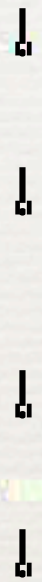
Handel: Chaconne

A harmonic reduction strips away the melodic ornamentation

Handel: Chaconne

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Second Species

- A counterpoint in half notes is set against whole notes in the cantus firmus
  - Octaves still begin and end
  - Other perfect intervals are found throughout
  - Consonant intervals are used
  - The only dissonances are passing tones, only on weak beats

Second Species

- Leaps are possible, as long as both tones are *consonant*—the familiar *consonant skip* (CS 0 familiar

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- Leaps are possible, as long as both tones are *consonant*—the familiar *consonant skip* (CS), sometimes also called a *chordal skip*.

- The leap in bar 4 is a *transfer of register*

- The leap in bar 7 is also a *melodic substitution*, in that direct stepwise motion (from A to G) would result in a parallel fifth.

- Opens with a *consonant skip* by a fourth

5   8   6   10

- Opens with a *consonant skip* by a fourth
- Moves from a sixth to a tenth (third)

5   8   6   P   10

- Opens with a *consonant skip* by a fourth
- Moves from a sixth to a tenth (third)
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Third Species

- Third species employs four quarters against the note, permitting faster embellishment and consonant or dissonant neighbor tones

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  - Bars 2-4: the d-d motion is a filled-in register change

  - Bars 8-9: by simplifying the third species into second species, we see how neighbor tones have prolonged tones—particularly the b in bar 9.

Fourth Species

- Fourth species introduces *suspensions* and/or *accented passing tones*—i.e., dissonances which do not occur on a weak beat

Musical staff example with figured bass annotations: 7 - 6, 4 - 3, 4 - 3, 7 - 6, 7 - 6, 7 - 6

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- Fourth species introduces *suspensions* and/or *accented passing tones*—i.e., dissonances which do not occur on a weak beat
  - The suspensions should be familiar from studies in Harmony
  - Note that the structural weight or significance of a tone does not necessary correspond with its metrical position: the resolution of the tone (the "main" tone) typically comes on a weak beat compared to the suspension proper.

Handel: Chaconne, Variation 9

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- Identify the melodic figurations

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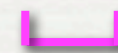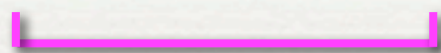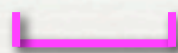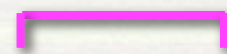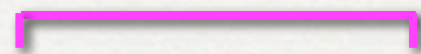
- Identify the melodic figurations
  - Neighbor tones

Handel: Chaconne, Variation 9
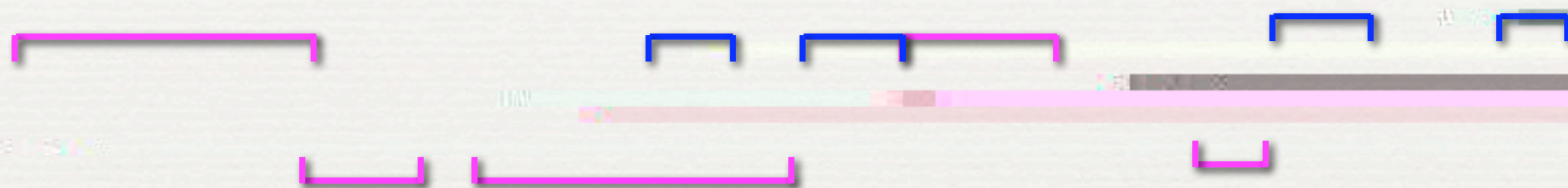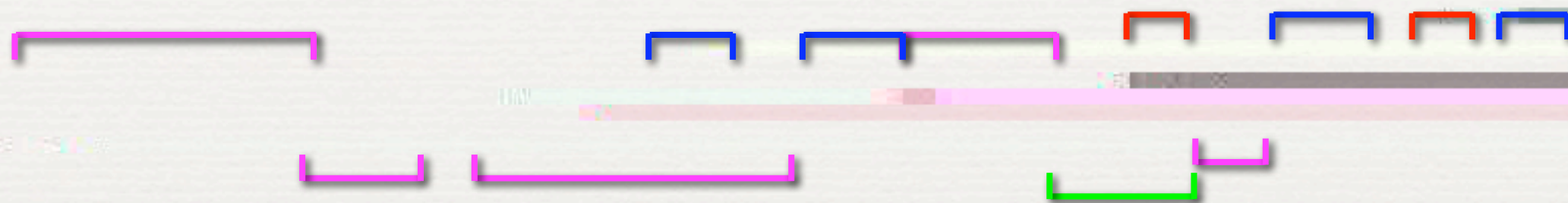
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Handel: Chaconne, Variation 9

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Identify the melodic figurations

- Neighbor tones
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- Passing tones
- Register transfer

- Identify the melodic figurations
  - Neighbor tones
  - Consonant skips
  - Passing tones
  - Register transfer
  - Repeated notes

- Reduce those out, and the piece is revealed as an example of fourth species.

Fifth Species

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  - The upper line shows a first-species setting of a cantus firmus, mostly at the 6th
  - The middle line shows a fourth-species rhythmic displacement
  - The lower line shows a third-species decoration of those rhythmically-displaces notes.

- Reducing out the repeated notes in the melody reveals a very first-species like melodic line.

Mozart: Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman K. 265
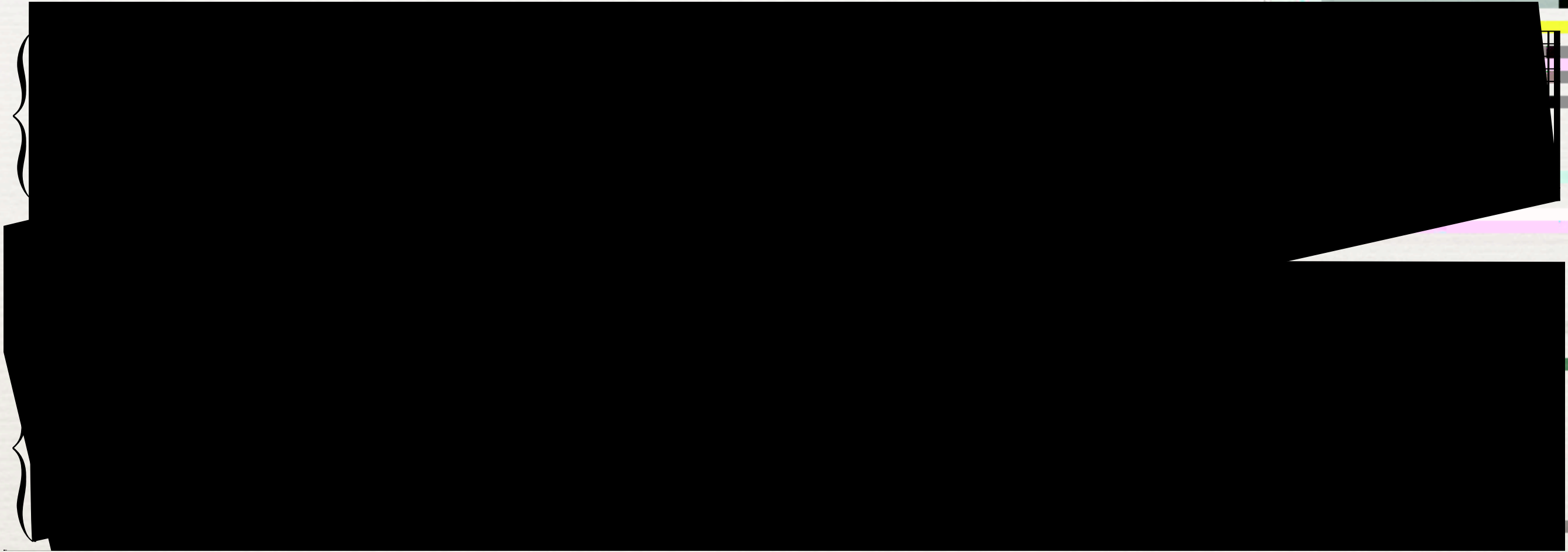
Examination of the LH part reveals a "two-part", contrapuntal texture.

Mozart: Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman K. 265

- The "tenor" of the LH displays a neighbor tone (prolonging) motion, matched in the RH melody

Mozart: Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman K. 265

- Completing the LH part, we note that the two-voice texture continues for two more measures, also providing a consonant skip

$\frac{2}{4}$

$\frac{2}{4}$

$\frac{2}{4}$

$\frac{2}{4}$

- Completing the LH part, we note that the two-voice texture continues for two more measures, also providing a consonant skip between bars 4 and 6 (with a passing tone filling in the skip)

Mozart: Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman K. 265

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- Dominant