Modality as the Negative Image of Tonality in Fauré's Piano Trio, op. 120

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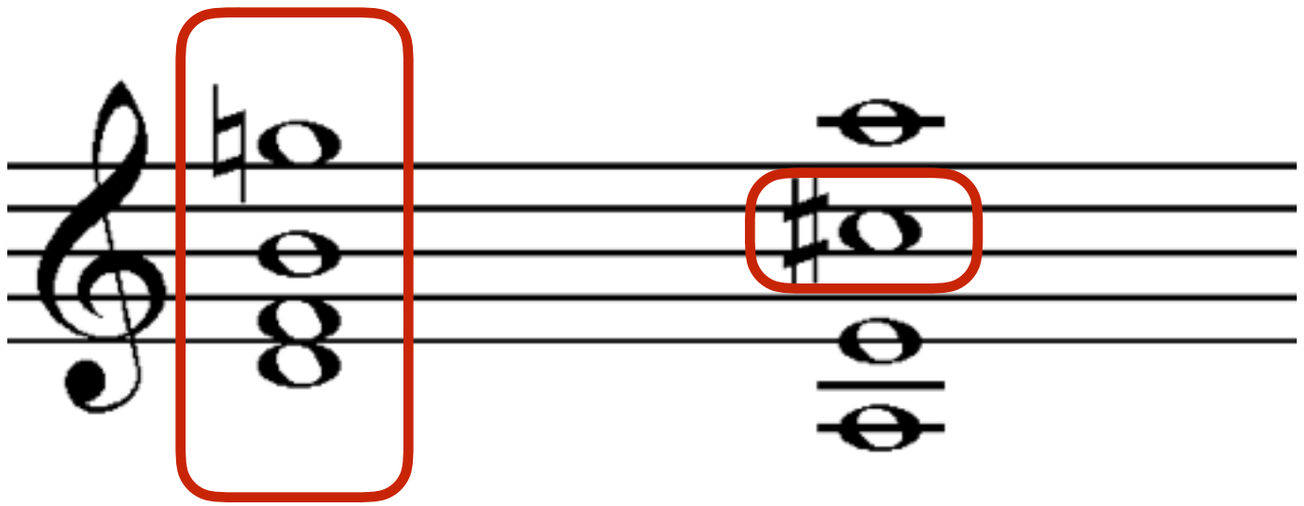
SMT 2018

"Sa cadence bien connue… du domaine Grégorien"

His well-known cadence… from the Gregorian domain

Non-diatonic

Inverted seventh chord



Chromatic alteration

G^{4}_{3} $A\,^{5}_{\#3}$

Charles Koechlin, *Gabriel Fauré* (1927), 160.

e.g., Gervais 1971, Gonnard 2000.

“Gregorian harmony”

“Ecclesiastical tonality”

“Plainchant tonality”

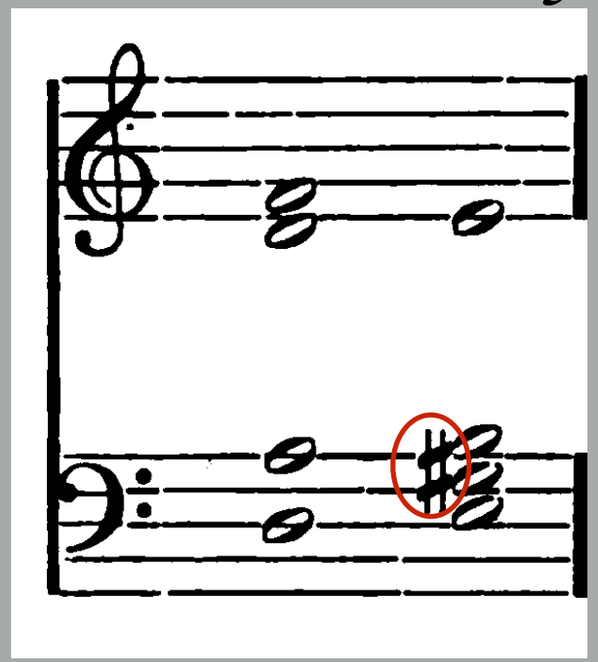
Louis Niedermeyer (1802–1861)

Two basic rules of "plainchant tonality"

1. Use of "the pitches proper to each mode"

No raised leading tones or other chromatic alterations:

"Une harmonie bâtarde"
A bastard harmony



Niedermeyer et d'Ortigue, *Traité*, 64.

2. Consonant triads only

No harmonic or contrapuntal dissonances

Three implict aspects of Niedermeyer's plainchant tonality

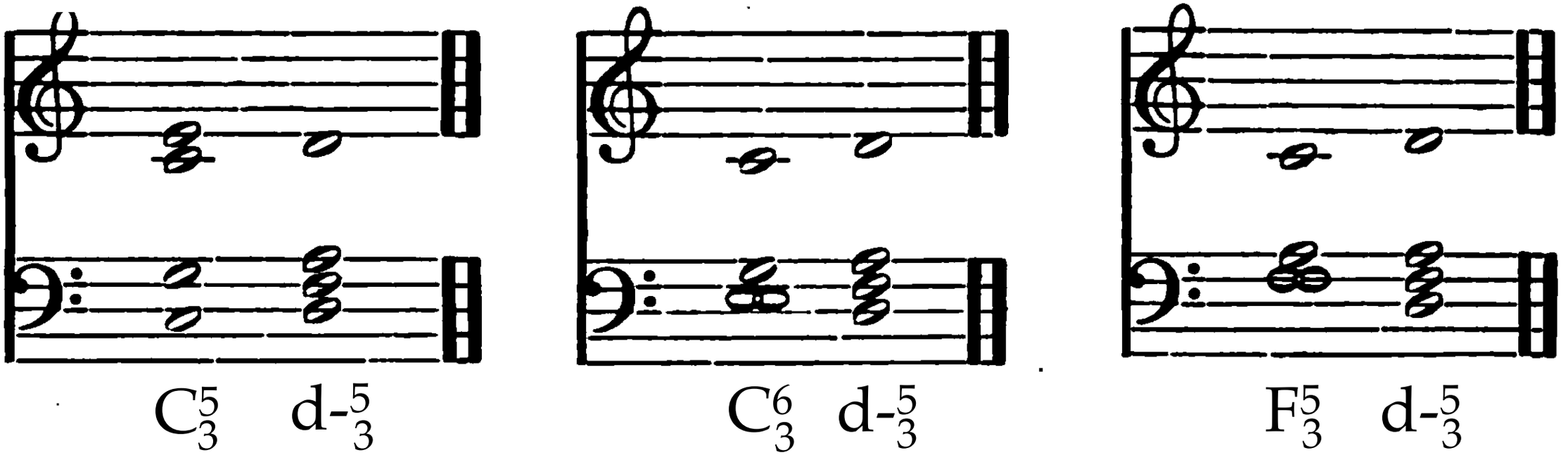
1. The reconceptualization of cadence.

2. The active avoidance of common-practice progressions.

3. The avoidance or neutralization of tendency tones.

1. The reconceptualization of cadence.

Niedermeyer's Dorian cadences



C^5_3 d-$^5_3$ C^6_3 d-$^5_3$ F^5_3 d-$^5_3$

Niedermeyer et d'Ortigue, *Traité*, 47.

Niedermeyerian cadence:

- not an interval succession (*à la* Zarlino)
- not a key-defining harmonic progression (*à la* Rameau)
- a progression that closes upon tonal center

2. The active avoidance of common-practice progressions

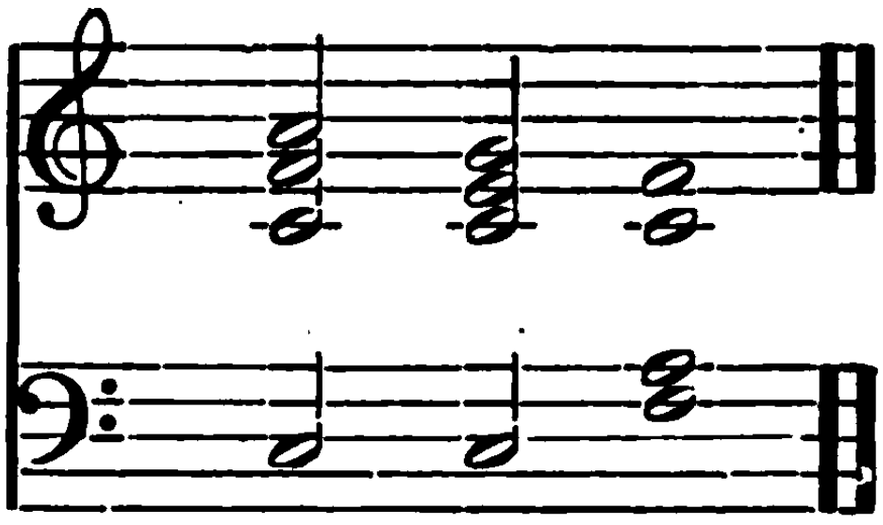
"il existe une incompatibilité radicale [entre la tonalité du plainchant et la tonalité moderne], comme notre théorie le démontre à chaque page."

"there exists a radical incompatibility [between plainchant tonality and modern tonality], as our theory demonstrates on every page."

Niedermeyer et d'Ortigue, *Traité,* 14.

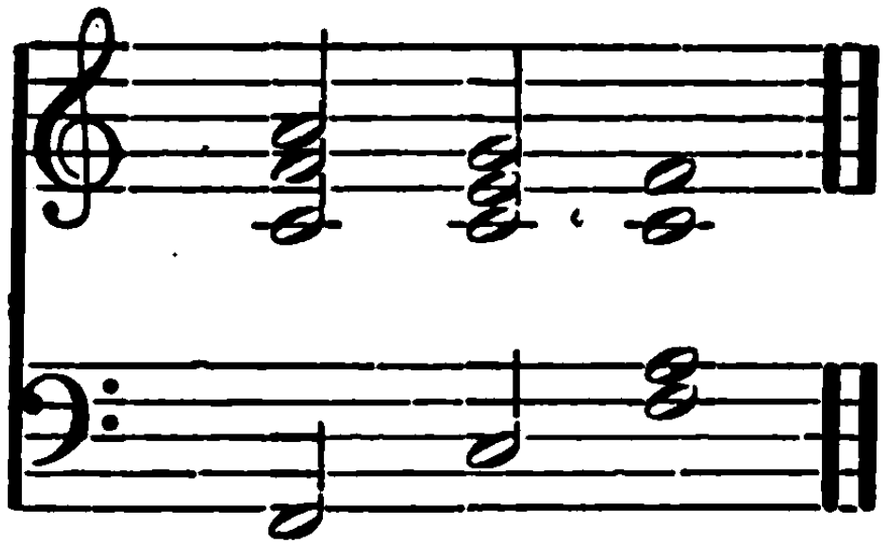
2. The active avoidance of common-practice progressions

Avoid



6
4

Use



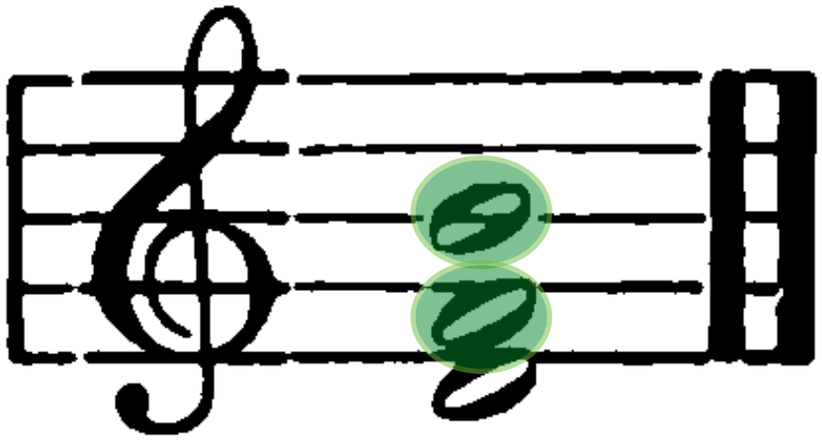
5
3

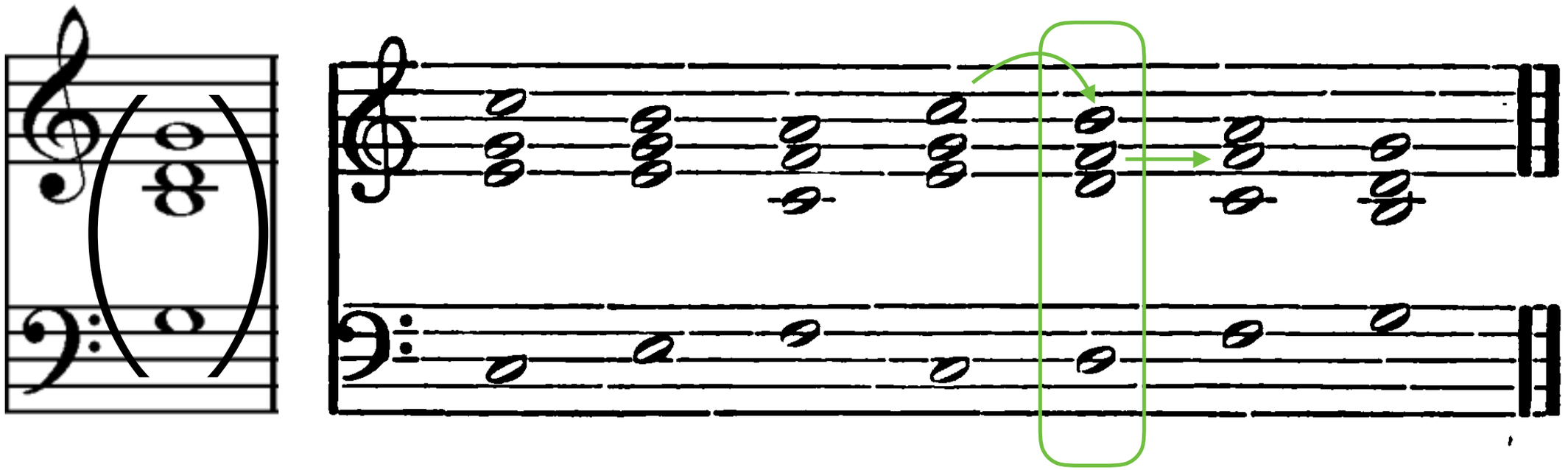
« des cadences [deviennent] mélodiquement identiques aux cadences de notre mode majeur. »

"the cadences of this mode become melodically identical with those common to our major keys."

Niedermeyer et d'Ortigue, *Traité*, 69.

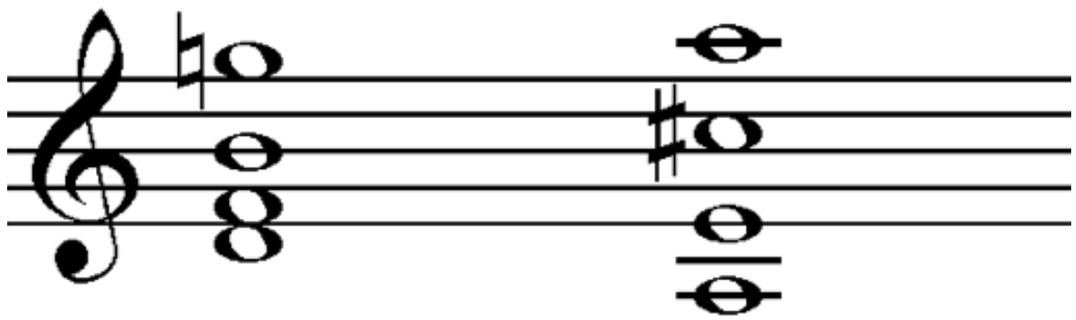
3. The avoidance or neutralization of tendency tones.





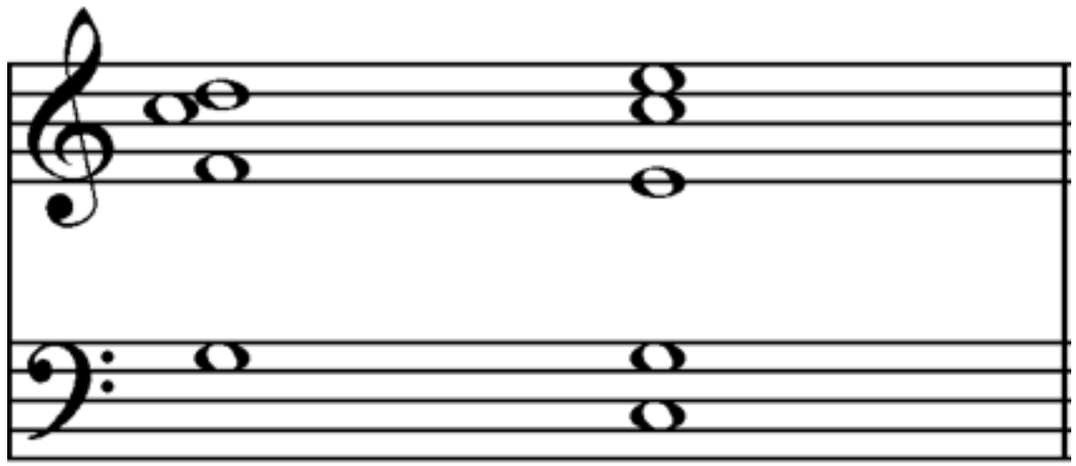
“Modality” as the negative image of tonality

Returning to Koechlin's "Gregorian" cadence



G^{4}_{3} $A\,{}^{5}_{\#3}$

« la sensible abaissée à sol bécarre dans le ton de la mineur. »
"the leading-tone lowered to G-natural in the key of A minor."



$V^{7}_{5}_{4}$

« la sensible supprimée dans le mode majeur »
"the suppression of the leading tone in the major mode"

Koechlin, *Gabriel Fauré* (1927), 158–161.

Gabriel Fauré, *Piano Trio*, op. 120, ii.

1

Andantino

mezzo p

mezzo p

Andantino. ♩ = 60

mezzo p

7

cresc.

f

dim.

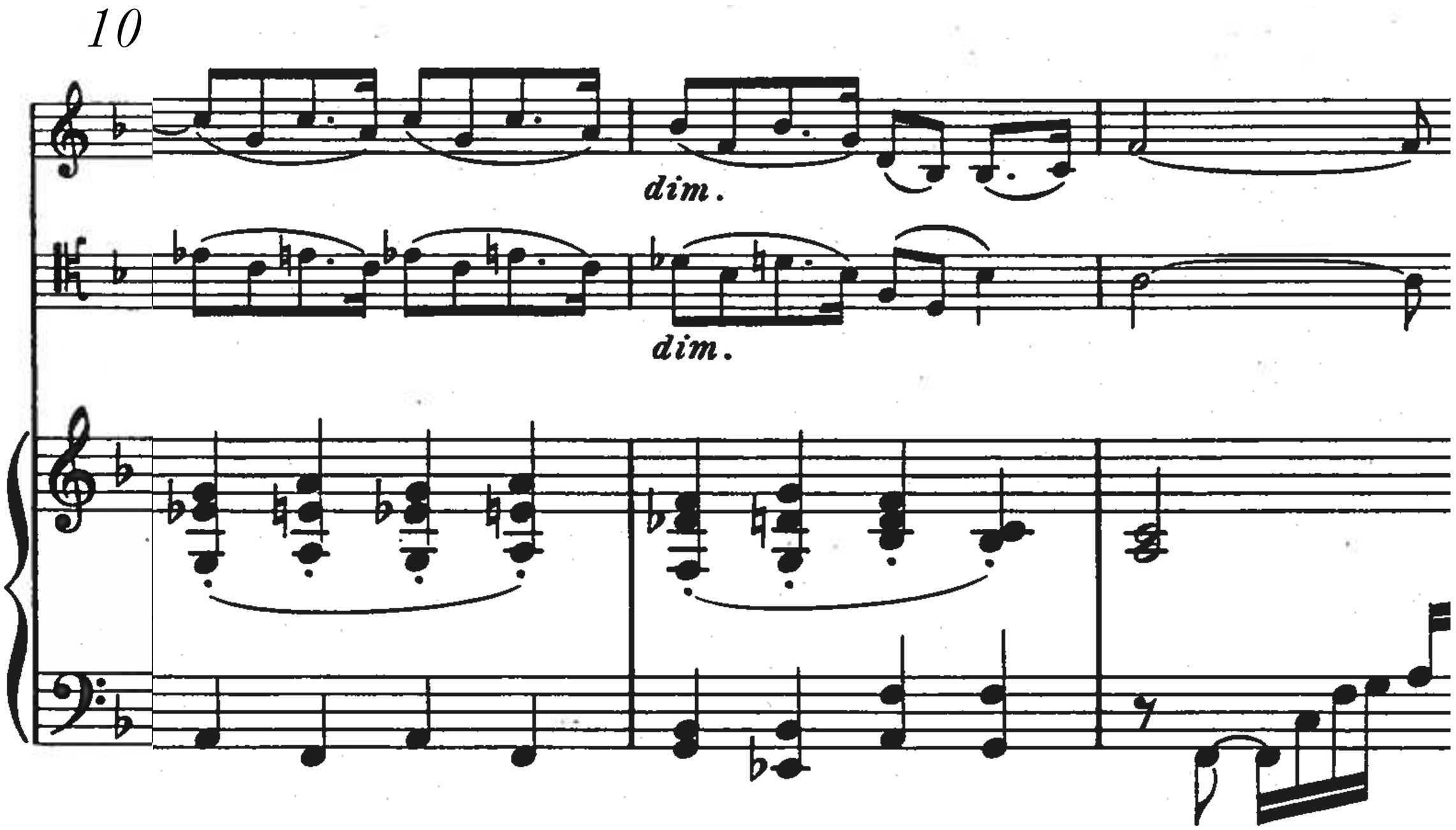
f′

dim.

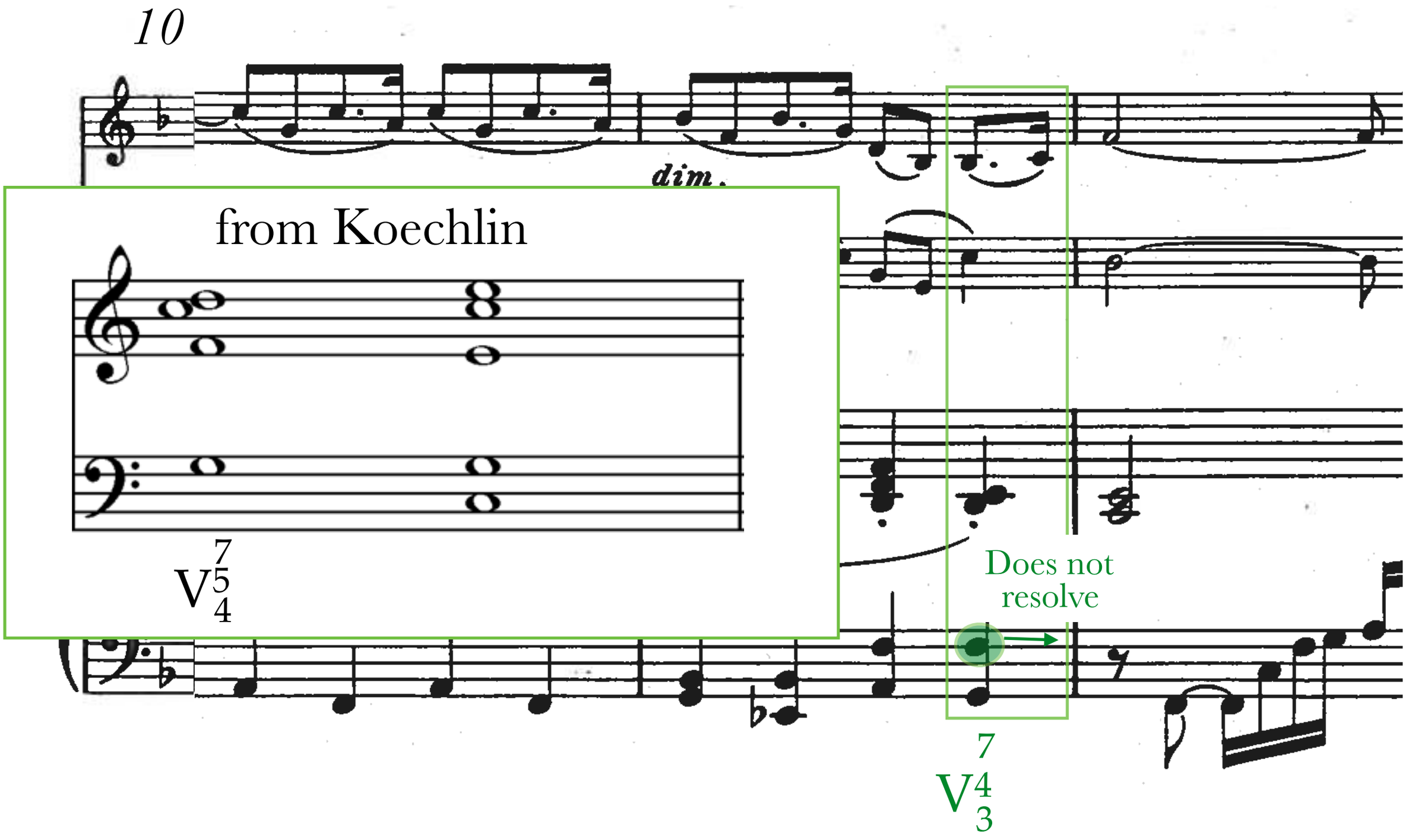
cresc.

f

Gabriel Fauré, *Piano Trio,* op. 120, ii., mm. 10–12

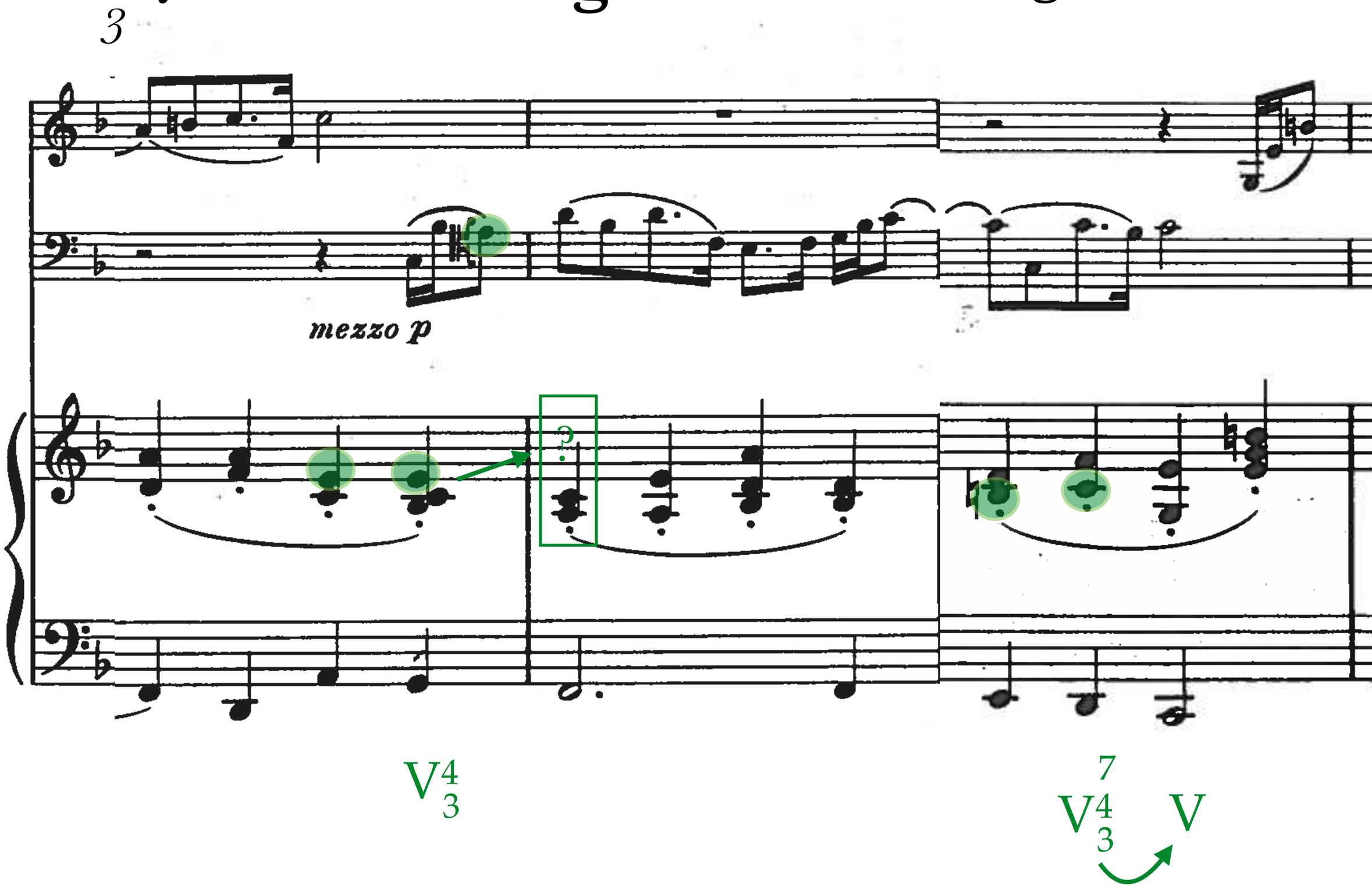


Leading-tone aversion



More leading-tone aversion

Only instance of dominant with leading tone



Scale degree $\hat{7}$

1

Andantino

mezzo p

mezzo p

Andantino. ♩ = 60

mezzo p

7

cresc.

f

f

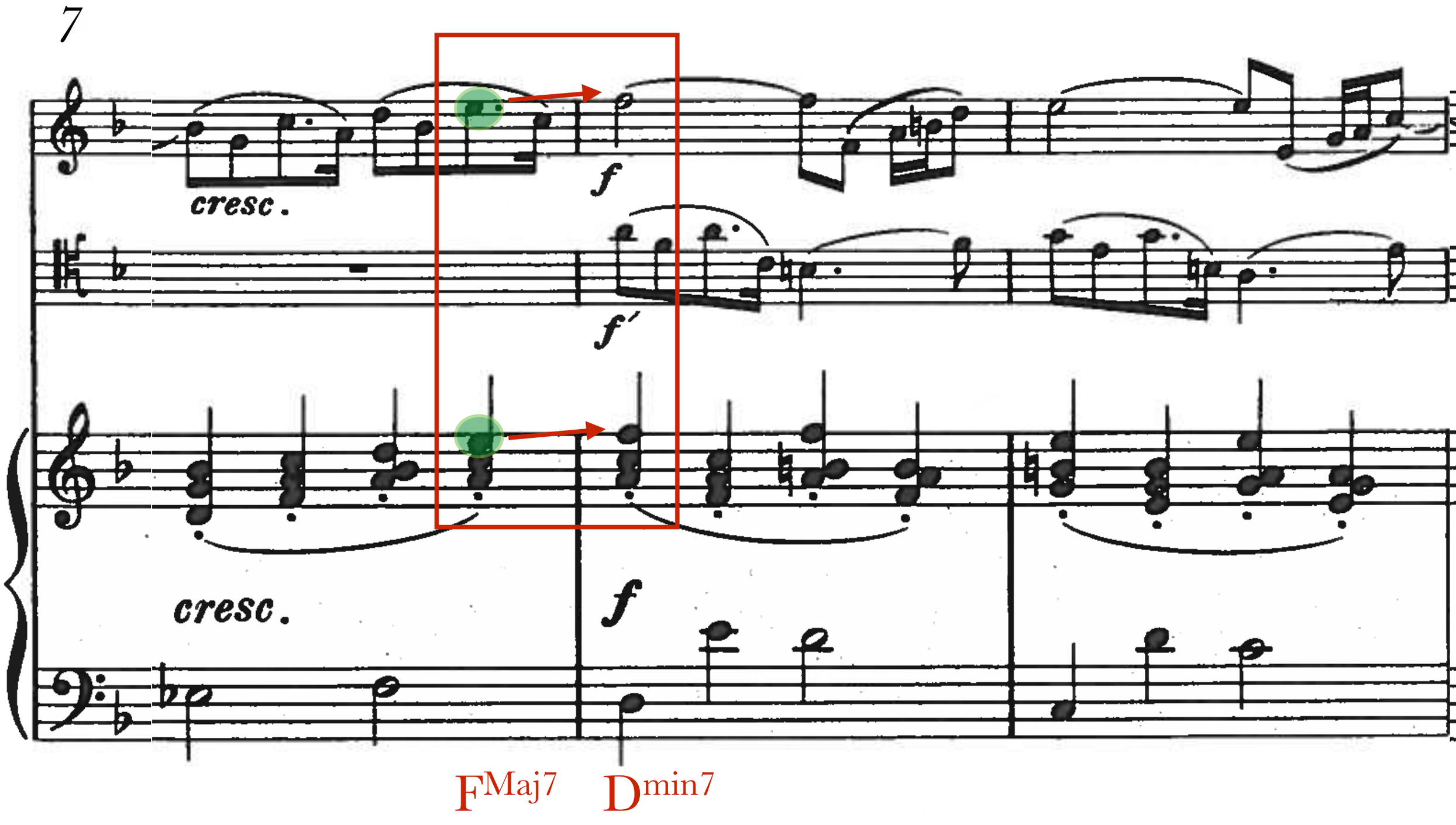
dim.

dim.

cresc.

f

Scale degree $\hat{7}$ rising to $\hat{8}$



F^{Maj7} D^{min7}

Scale degree $\hat{4}$

1

Andantino

mezzo p

mezzo p

Andantino. ♩ = 60

mezzo p

accompanimental background

7

cresc.

f

f'

dim.

dim.

cresc.

f

What about other tendency tones?

1

Andantino

mezzo p

mezzo p

Andantino. ♩ = 60

mezzo p

7

cresc.

f

dim.

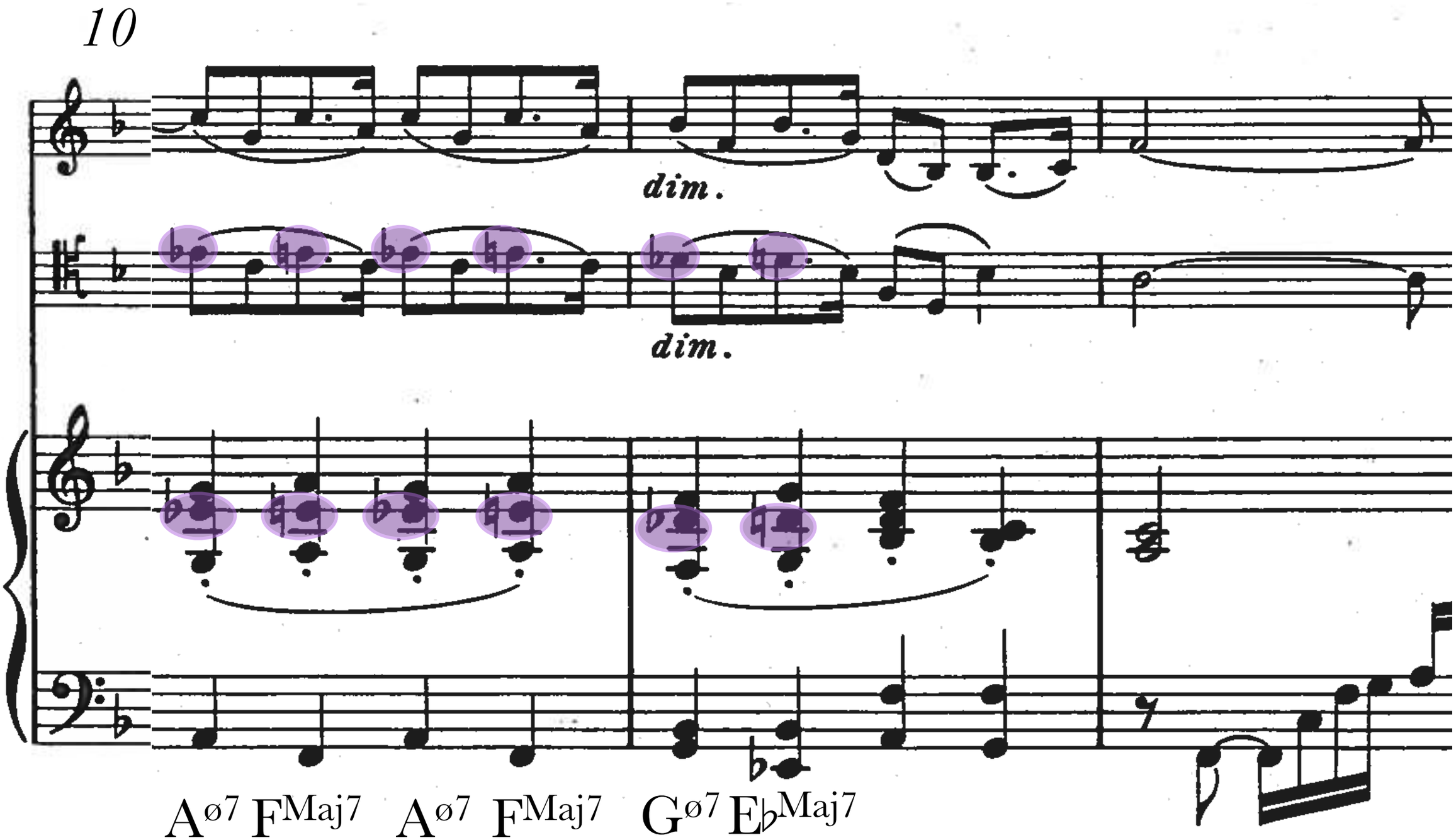
f'

dim.

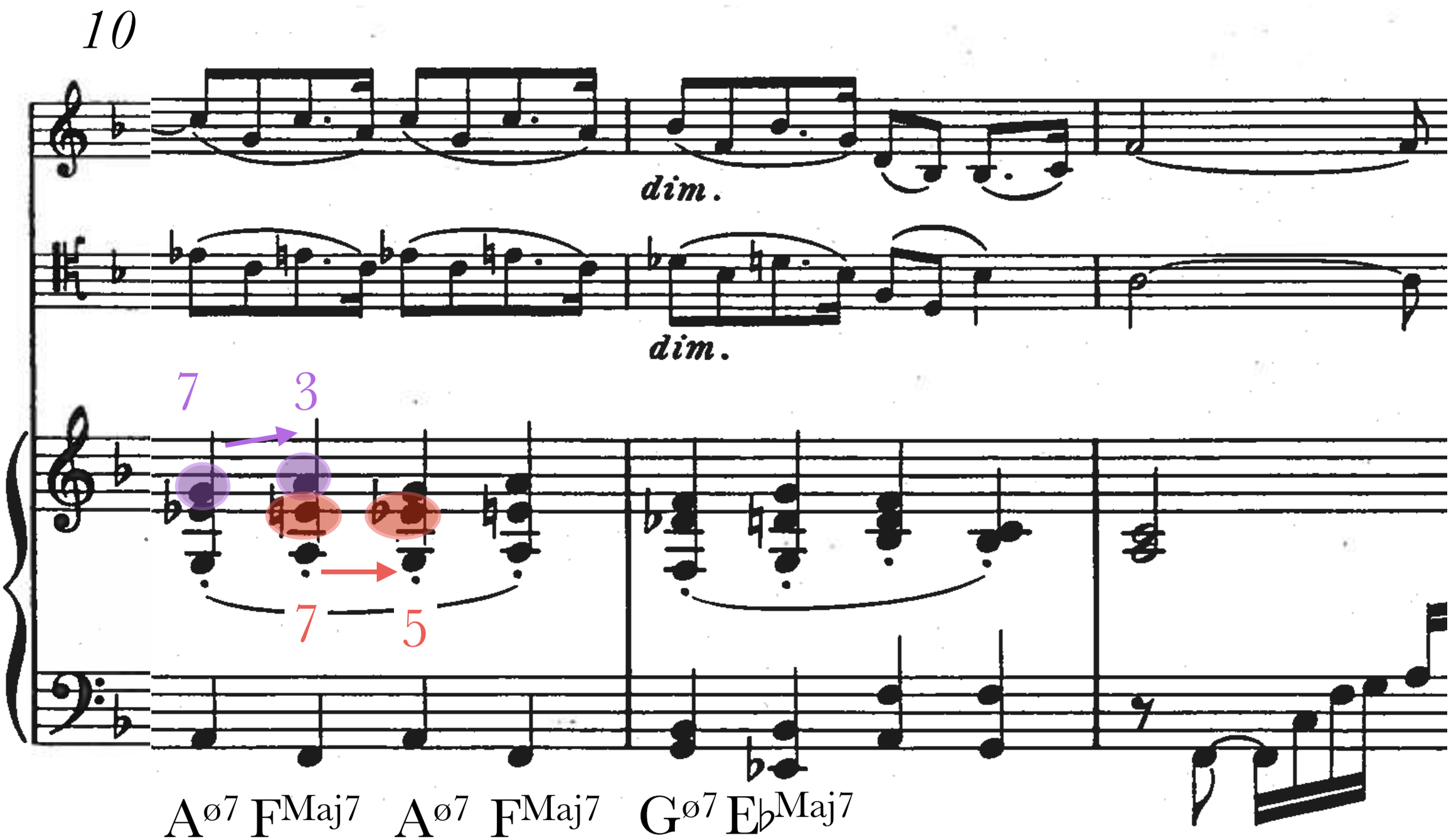
cresc.

f

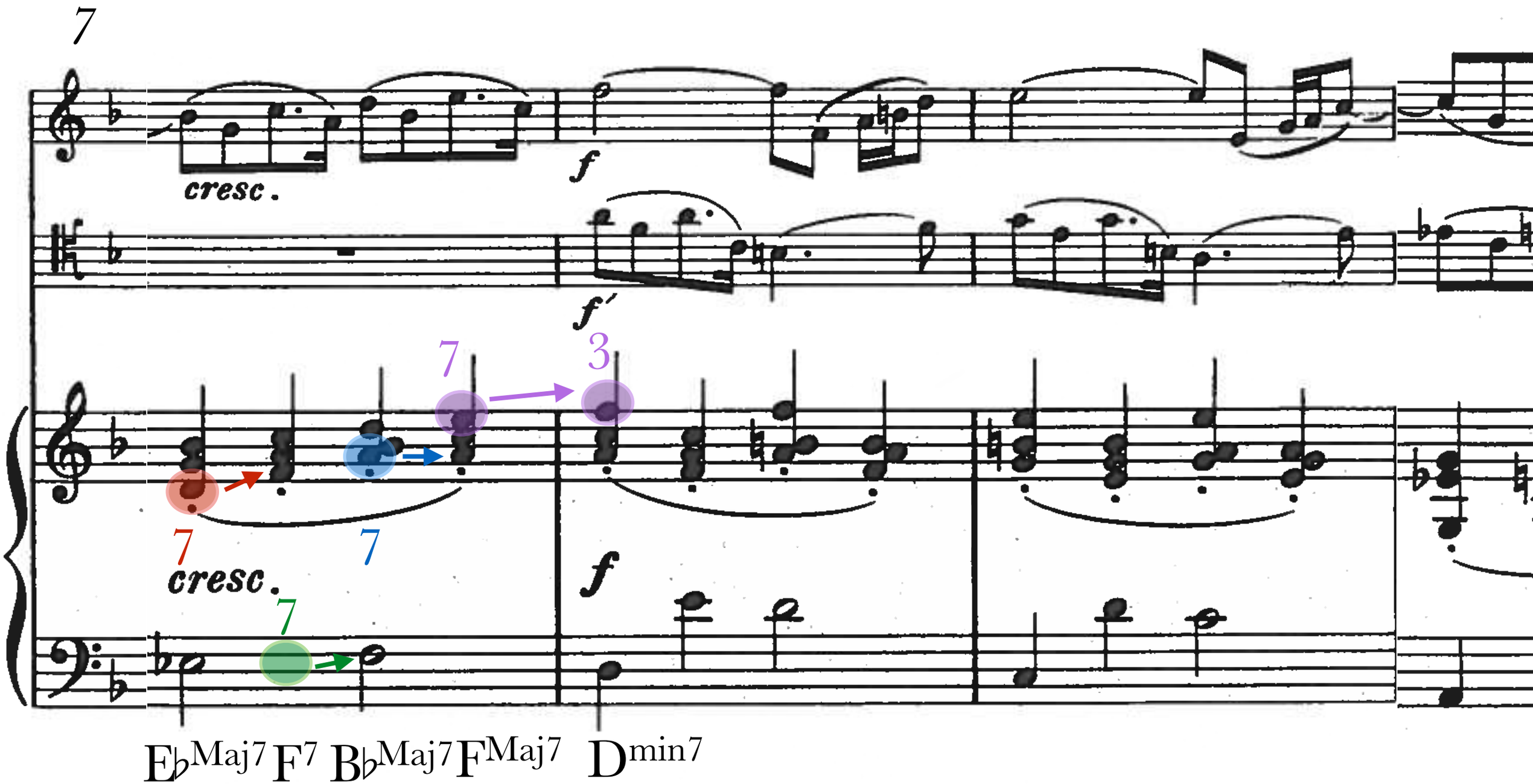
“Modal” chromaticism



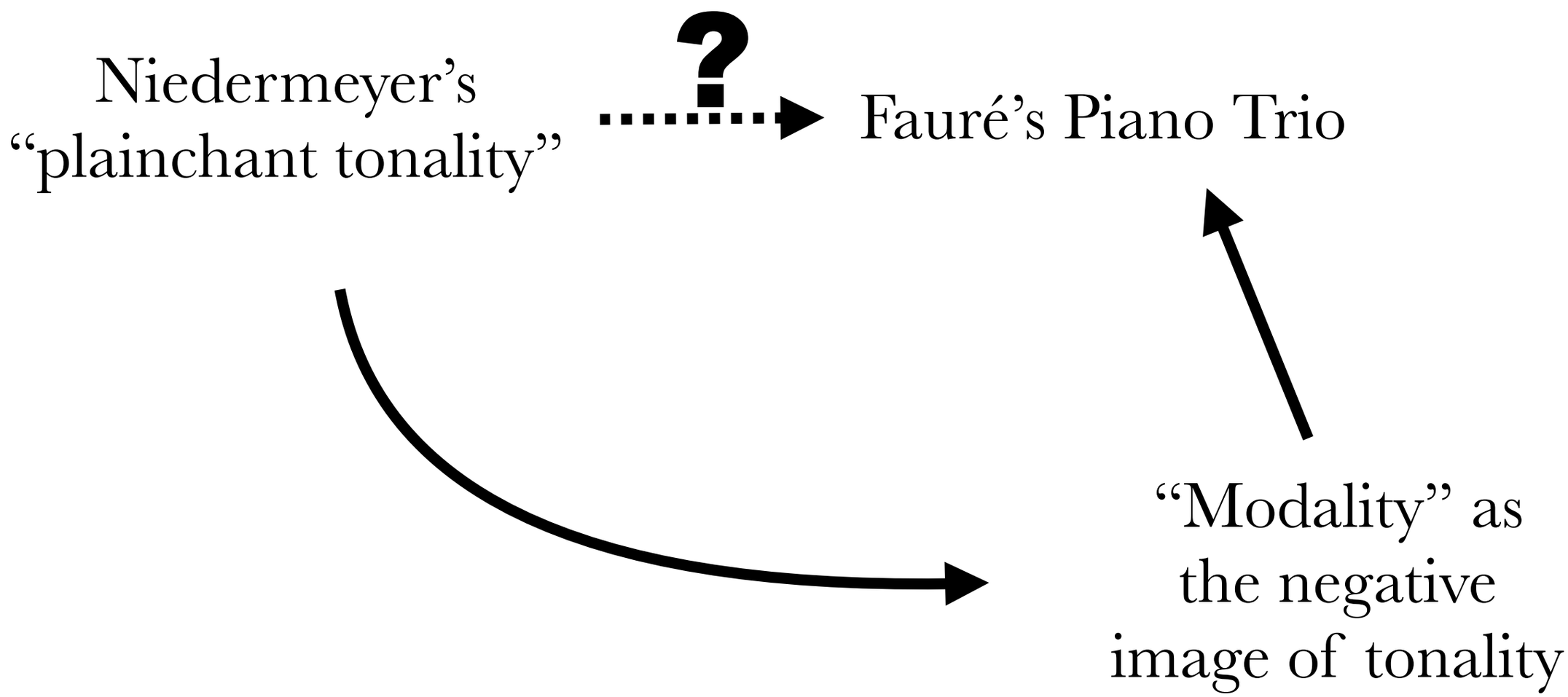
Non-resolution of seventh



Non-resolution of seventh



In conclusion…



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Thanks: Jon Wild, Marie-Ève Piché, Nathan Lam

Works cited

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