Developmental Devices

Imitation is the sincerest form of eighteenth-century contrapuntal technique.

One of the major differences between the first and second halves of the 18th century is the texture. The first half, the Baroque half, was heavy on the polyphonic. The second half, the Classical half, was more homophonic.

This handout briefly discusses the different kinds of **Developmental Devices** that show up a lot in contrapuntal compositions of late the Baroque, such as **Invention** and **Fugue**.

First let's quickly remember what a **Motive** is. A motive can be variable in length, from a couple beats to multiple measures. It forms the basis of two-part contrapuntal works like inventions, and is developed and spun out over the course of the piece. Usually, there is a **Countermotive** that is used more or less consistently against the motive.

1. **Sequence** is an immediate (or nearly so) replication of the motive in the same voice but at a new pitch level.

2. **Imitation** bears a certain resemblance to repetition and sequence, but they're not the same. Imitation takes that musical idea and moves it to a different voice. It also usually happens in quick succession so the listener notices.

3. **Fragmentation** is, as you might expect, a technique that chops up the motive into smaller, but still recognizable, pieces.

4. **Augmentation** takes the motive and elongates the note values, usually by doubling them.

5. **Diminution** does the opposite. It shortens them, usually by half.

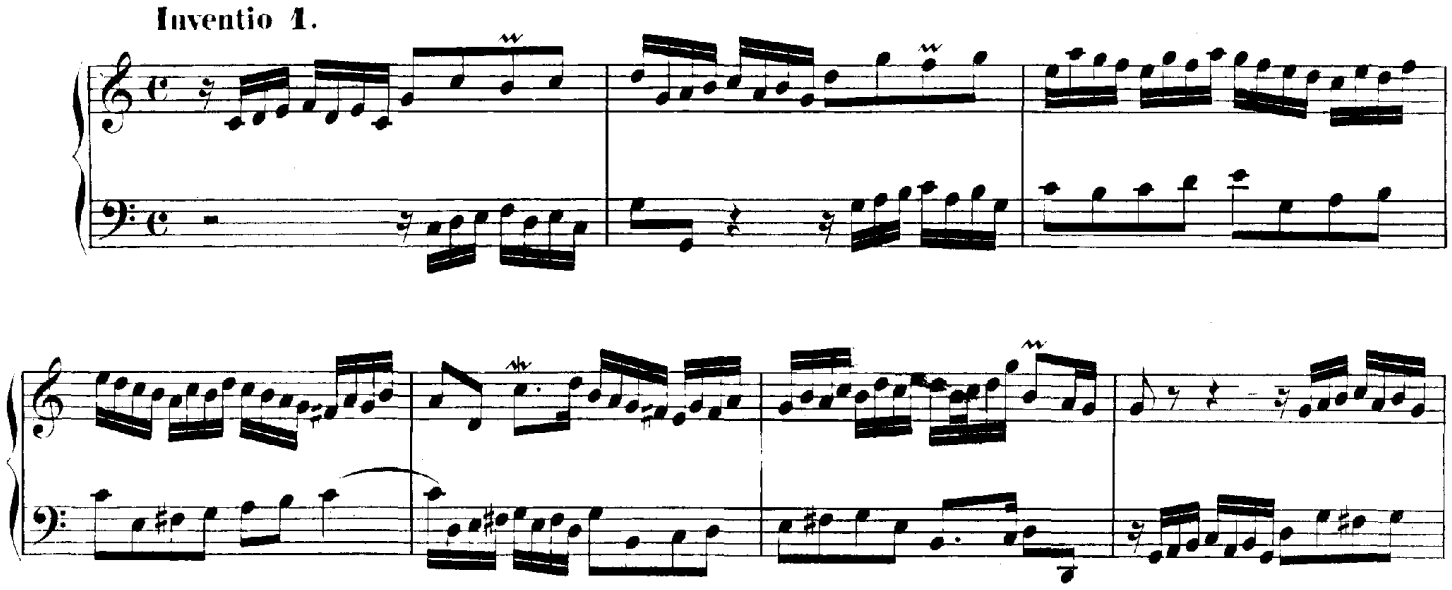
6. **Melodic Inversion** replaces the motive with its mirror image, such that all upward intervals in the original motive instead go downward by the same amount, and the original downward intervals go upward.

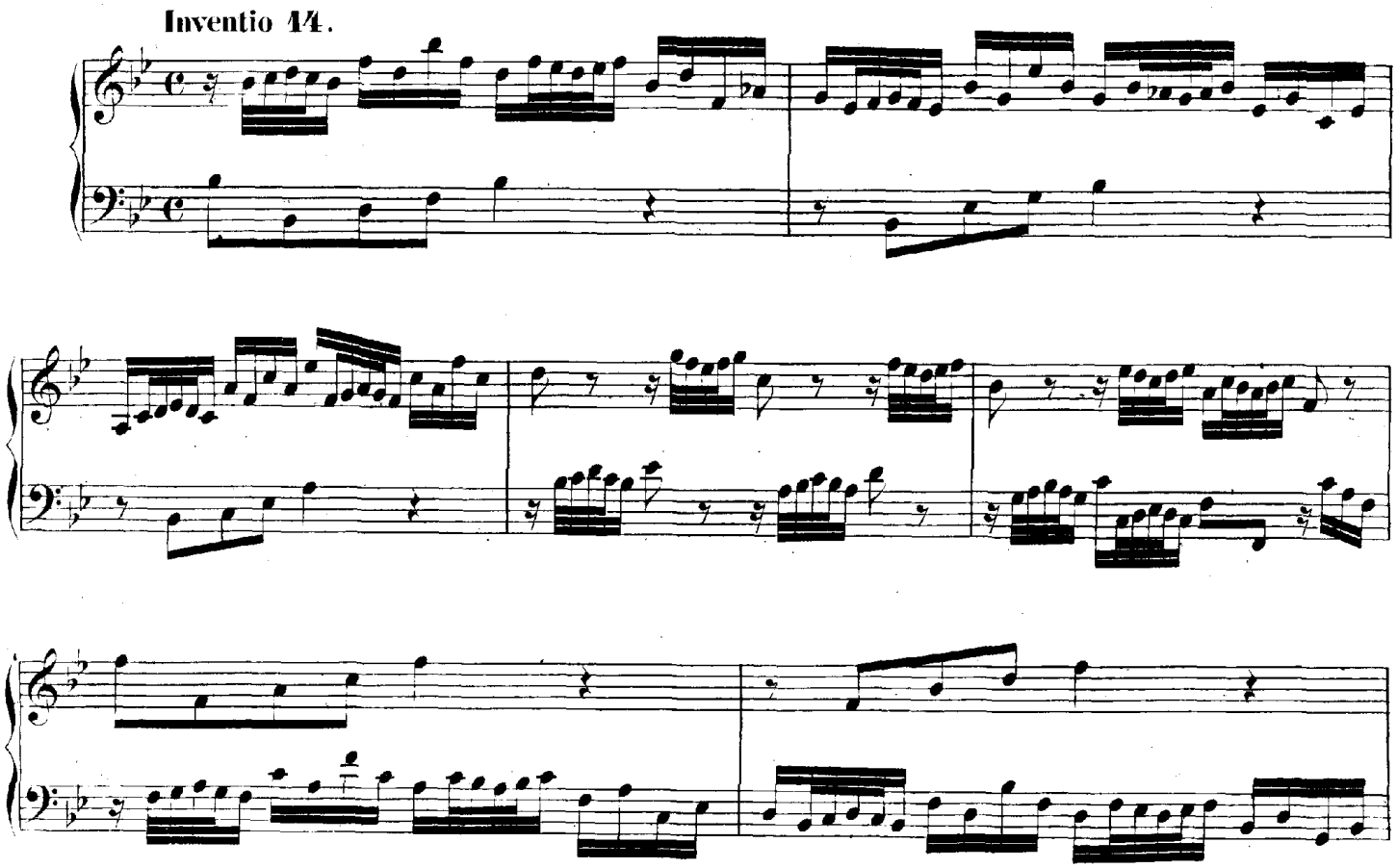
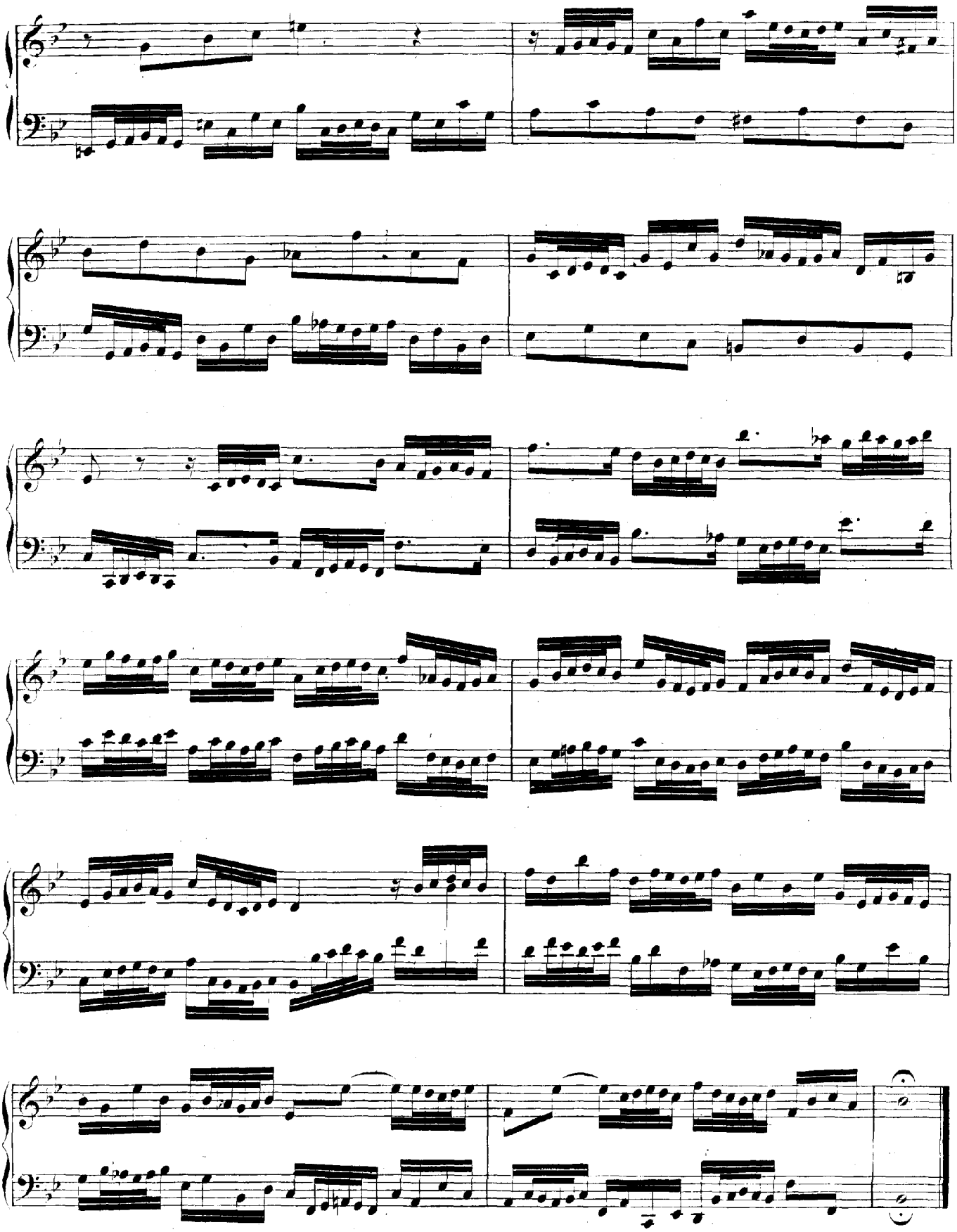
7. At first it might seem easy to confuse melodic inversion with **Invertible Counterpoint**. They both involve standing a motive on its head in a way. But invertible counterpoint switches the content of the upper and lower voices. Invertible counterpoint can be tricky to compose because each musical idea has to work as the upper voice and the lower voice and still follow all the principles.

ASSIGNMENT: INVENTION I

1. Examine the score as you listen to J. S. Bach's *Two-Part Invention No. 1*, BWV 772.
2. Identify with brackets and abbreviations all occurrences of following developmental devices in the first six measures:
   - motive (m), with sub-motives x and y, if applicable
   - countermotive (cm)
   - sequence (s)
   - imitation (im)
   - melodic inversion (mel inv)
   - fragment (fr)
   - augmentation (aug)

Some developmental devices may be used in combination (e.g., fragment in diminution)



ASSIGNMENT: INVENTION II

1. Examine the accompanying score as you listen to J. S. Bach's *Two-Part Invention No. 14*, BWV 785.
2. Provide a motivic/developmental-device analysis.
3. Locate one example of extended imitation between the two parts.
4. Locate an example of invertible counterpoint.
5. Provide an harmonic analysis of mm. 1–10.2.