First Book
of

PARTIMENTI

Preludes, Fugues, Rondeaus, and Puzzles
Twenty-four in total through all key signatures six flats to five sharps

composed by
NICOLA SARACENI CANZANO

This book is dedicated to all who love early music, but especially to my very dear friend Nathan, who had very first sight of all of these partimenti, and spotted countless errata, contributed dozens of helpful comments and suggestions, and gave this music its first test drive.

PREFACE

To some it might seem extremely odd to publish a book of 18th-century-style partimenti in the 21st century, but, to me at least, there are a large number of reasons for doing so. Firstly, as an early musician, I take the composition of this kind of music very seriously, and these partimenti were undertaken primarily as a method of exploring a few things I was interested in as a historically-informed composer. Secondly, they were written to provide new exercises for myself in improvisation, and to evaluate my own conceptions and habits in this capacity. Thirdly, some of them were written as teaching materials for elementary fugue-writing and historical improvisation. I can only very humbly hope that they will be of some use to others as well.

I cannot say whether or not the music contained here will satisfy you more than other partimenti, but I can say that I have made an effort to make the pieces self-contained and well-wrought in their own right without disturbing what I believe to be the spirit of good partimento. I have therefore endeavored to make them short, inviting, robust yet flexible. Above all, they should please the ear and stimulate one's imagination, even if realized by a beginner: there is no reason that partimenti should not be exquisitely composed, no matter how miniature their character.

While keyboard instructors could easily coopt this book as a pedagogical tool, what this book is *not* is a textbook or partimento method by itself. The pieces are not expressly elementary, nor are they graded in difficulty in any way. Likewise, I have not included any realizations of my own, because, as I have said, I do not intend to present a method, nor do I wish to provide what may be misconstrued as "solutions" — something I think misses the point of this music. For these reasons this book will likely see more fruitful use by those musicians and scholars who have had some experience with partimento. That said, I have striven to make the book accessible to anyone well-steeped enough in basso continuo and counterpoint. In this way, there should be something for everyone in these pages.

It is my sincere hope that this book can bring just a fraction of the joy to my friends and colleagues that they consistently have given me with their inspiring musicianship and scholarship.

ORGANIZATION AND PERFORMANCE

The organization of this book is by key. It progresses through twelve key signatures from six flats to five sharps, mostly one prelude and one fugue in each key. Rarely, a prelude is replaced by a rondeau, or a fugue is replaced by a musical riddle. The preludes and fugues grouped by key are not paired in any other way and the performer may play one prelude and transpose a different fugue afterward, for example, in performance. The fugues are written such that the subject is denoted by symbol after the bass enters. In the vast majority of cases, the entrance notes are not given and are left to the performer to intuit. As I have said, these pieces are meant to be as compact as possible: many of the fugues do not contain episodes[1] before the bass entrance, which of course may be added by the performer if they so desire. Many of the preludes can be played *all'inventio*, and in general one should look in all of the pieces for as much imitation as possible. Very often the performer need invent only as much as they wish, the clues to the rest being supplied elsewhere on the page.

At the back of the book there are a few auxiliary pages meant to be helpful to the performer. The first is a way to package sequences that are common in baroque- and classical-era music, and the second amounts to a mnemonic for transposing at sight via clef. While I have arrived at these myself, surely they cannot be entirely original, and I beg forgiveness for reinventing the wheel. It seemed appropriate to supply these in their current form, especially because this book is intended as a resource and not an attempt at a contribution to music theory or musicology whatsoever.

Regarding continuo figures, there are a few things to say. The first is that the very experienced reader may disregard them if they wish. I am not so arrogant to presume that the way I have figured this music is the best or the only way to do so, but I would still urge anyone reading through it to be diligent about working out my intentions in order to more completely understand the work before turning it on its head. The common sense and good taste of the performer is assumed throughout. A lack of figures usually, but not always, denotes a root position chord, and especially in these places the performer may take liberty with the harmony. Straight lines that follow figures to other figures designate resolutions of dissonance. Slightly diagonal lines mean that the figures they originate from represent right-hand harmonies that do not change over that period. This does not necessarily mean that one should not restrike said harmony or add passing harmonies, as it may mean in Couperin, for example. Lastly, a parenthetical figure is either cautionary or optional, and slashes across the figure 5 are sometimes cautionary. The *doppia cadenza* is abbreviated often as "*d.c.*".

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[1] This is not to say that they are *missing*!

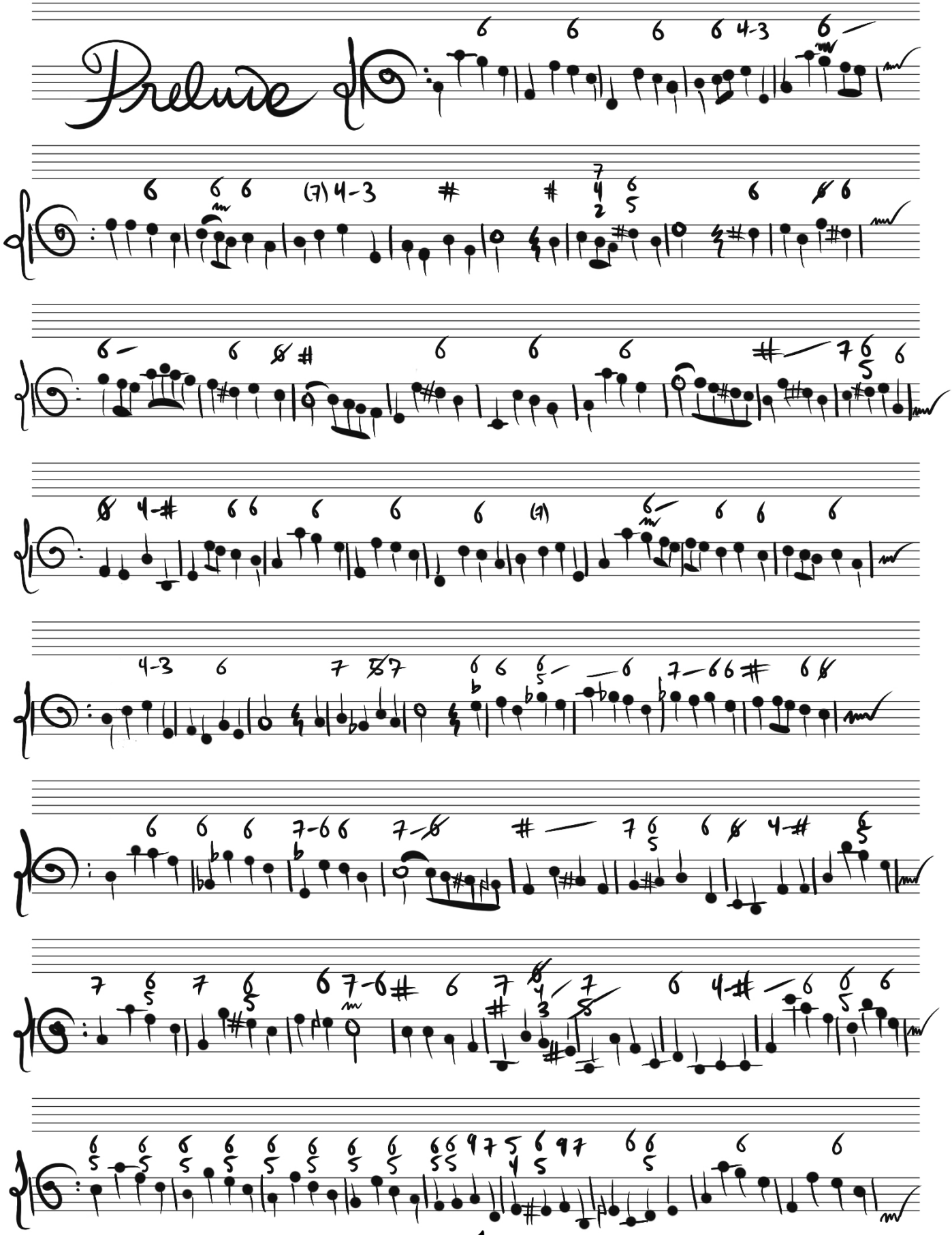
CONTENTS

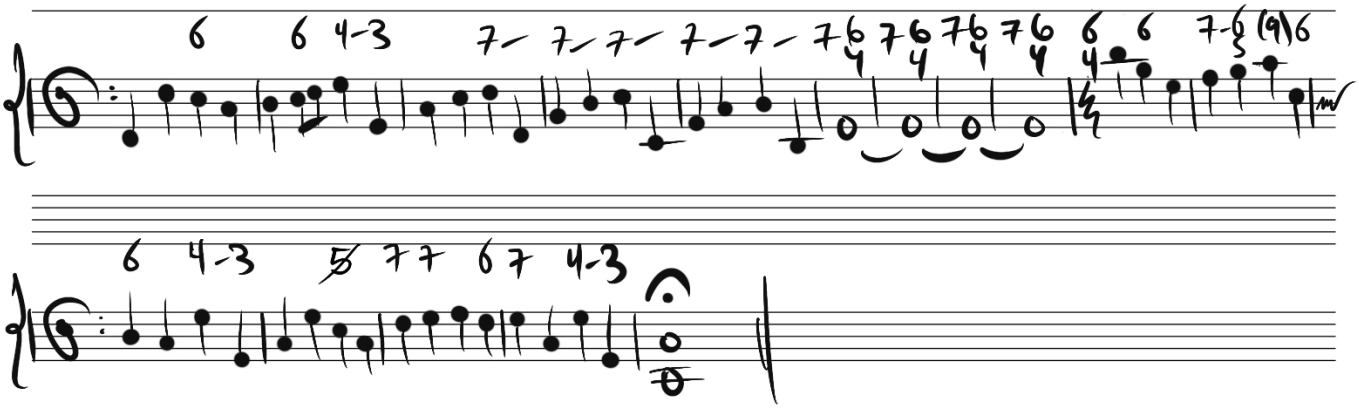
I. Prelude in C major 1
II. Fugue in C major 3
III. Prelude in D major 4
IV. Fugue in D major 5
V. Rondeau in e minor 7
VI. Fugue in e minor 8
VII. Prelude in E-flat major 9
VIII. Fugue in E-flat major 10
IX. Prelude in F major 11
X. Fugue in F major 13
XI. Prelude in g minor 14
XII. Fugue in g minor 17
XIII. Prelude in G-flat major 18
XIV. Fugue in G-flat major 20
XV. Prelude in A-flat major 21
XVI. Fugue in A-flat major 22
XVII. Prelude in b-flat minor 24
XVIII. Fugue in b-flat minor 25
XIX. Prelude in A major 27
XX. Puzzle in A major 28
XXI. Rondeau in B major 29
XXII. Puzzle in B major 30
XXIII. Rondeau in c-sharp minor 31
XXIV. Fugue in c-sharp minor 32

Sequences 34
Clefs 35

I.

Prelude

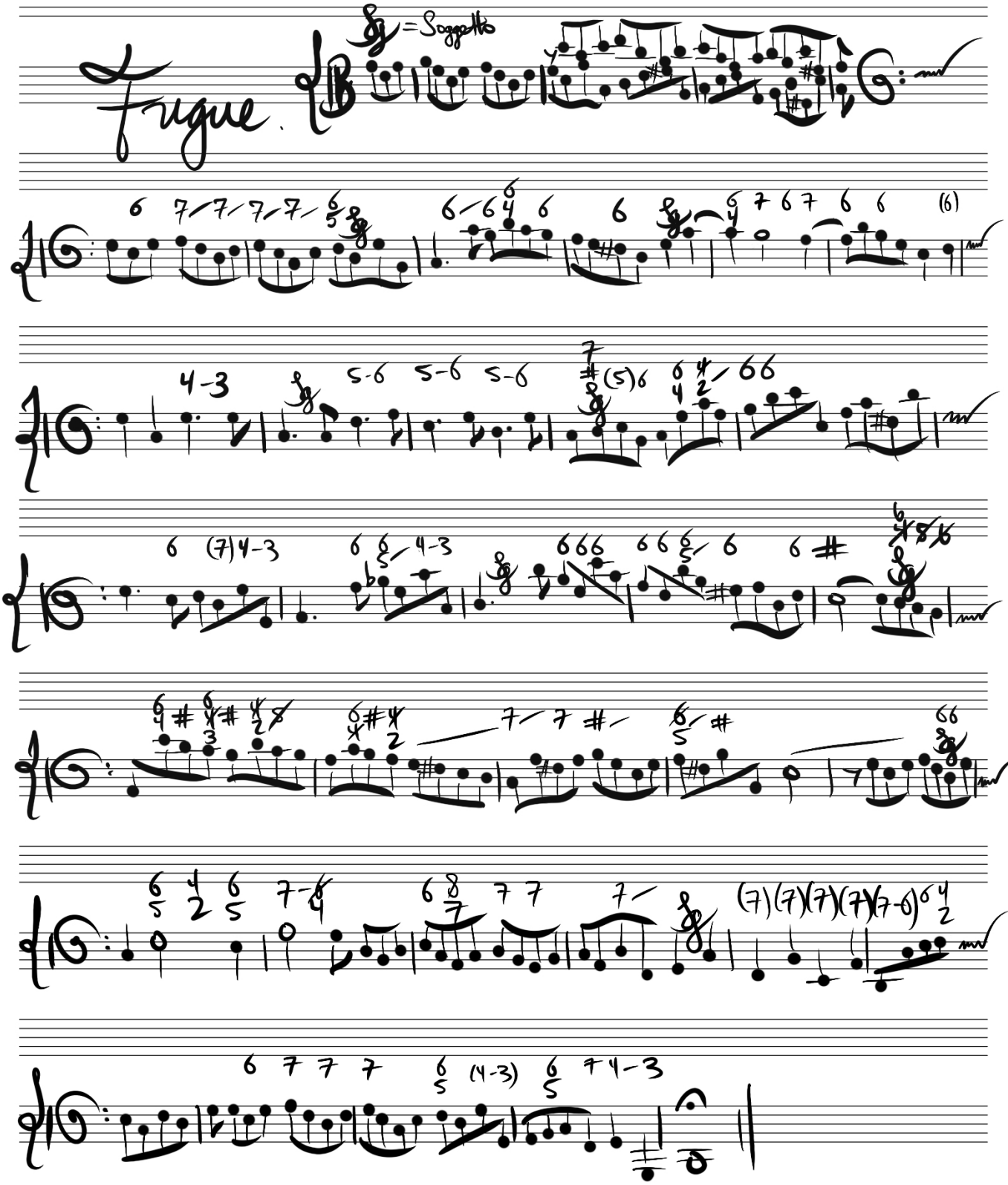


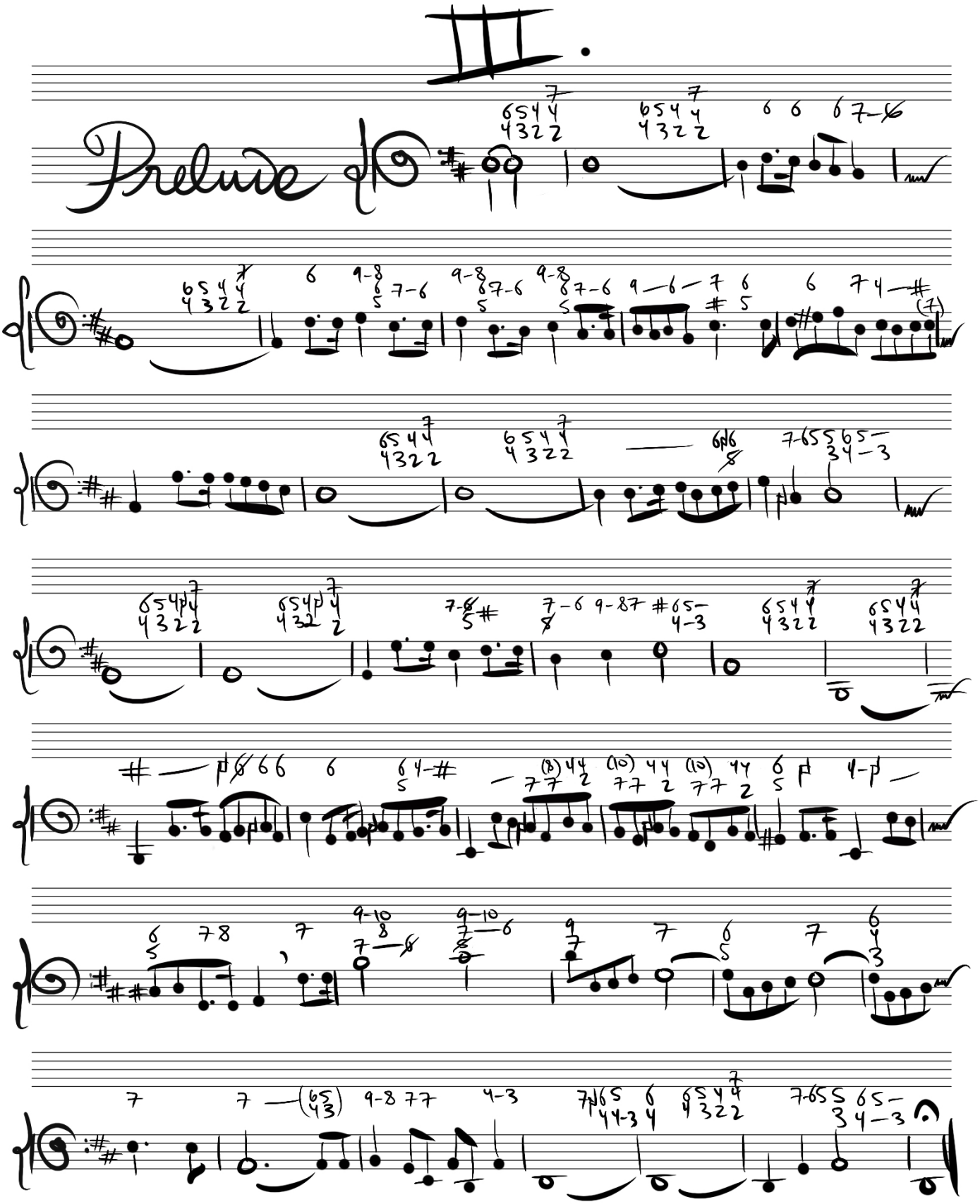

6 6 4-3 7- 7- 7- 7- 7- 7 6/4 7 6/4 7 6/4 7 6/4 6/4 6 7-6/5 (9)6
mf

6 4-3 5/7 7 6 7 4-3

II.

Fugue.

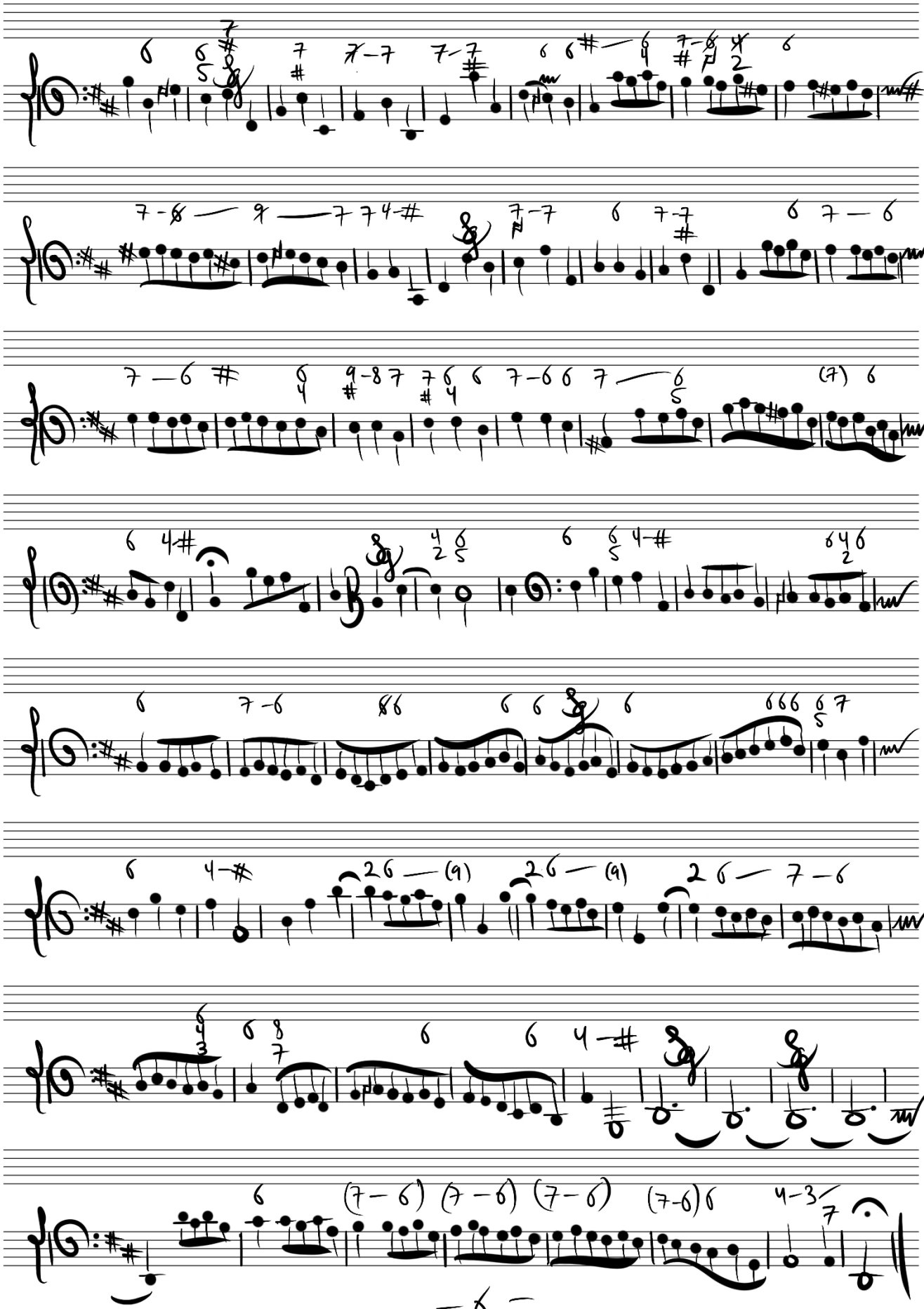



III.
Prelude

II.

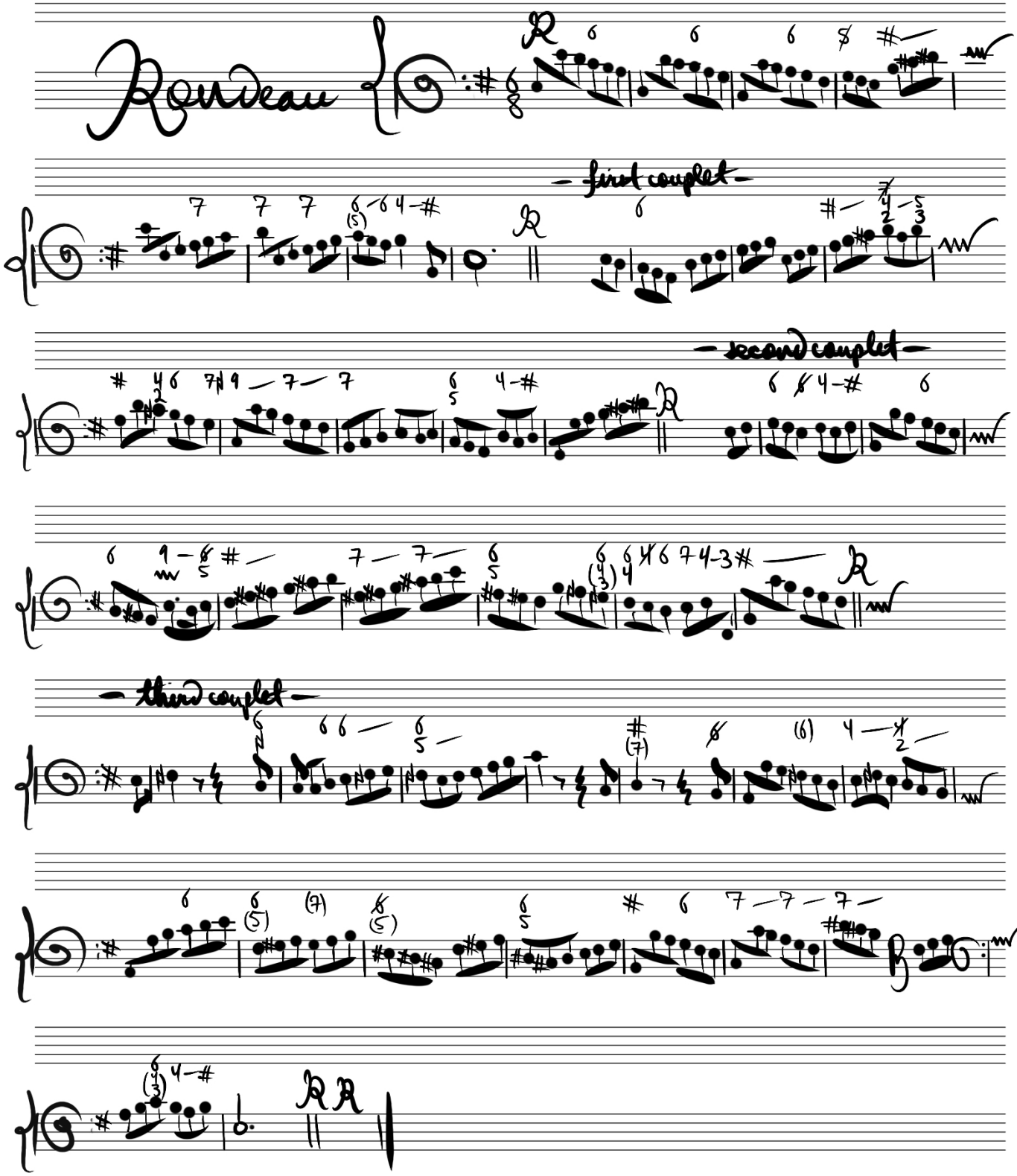
Fugue.

(notes inégales)



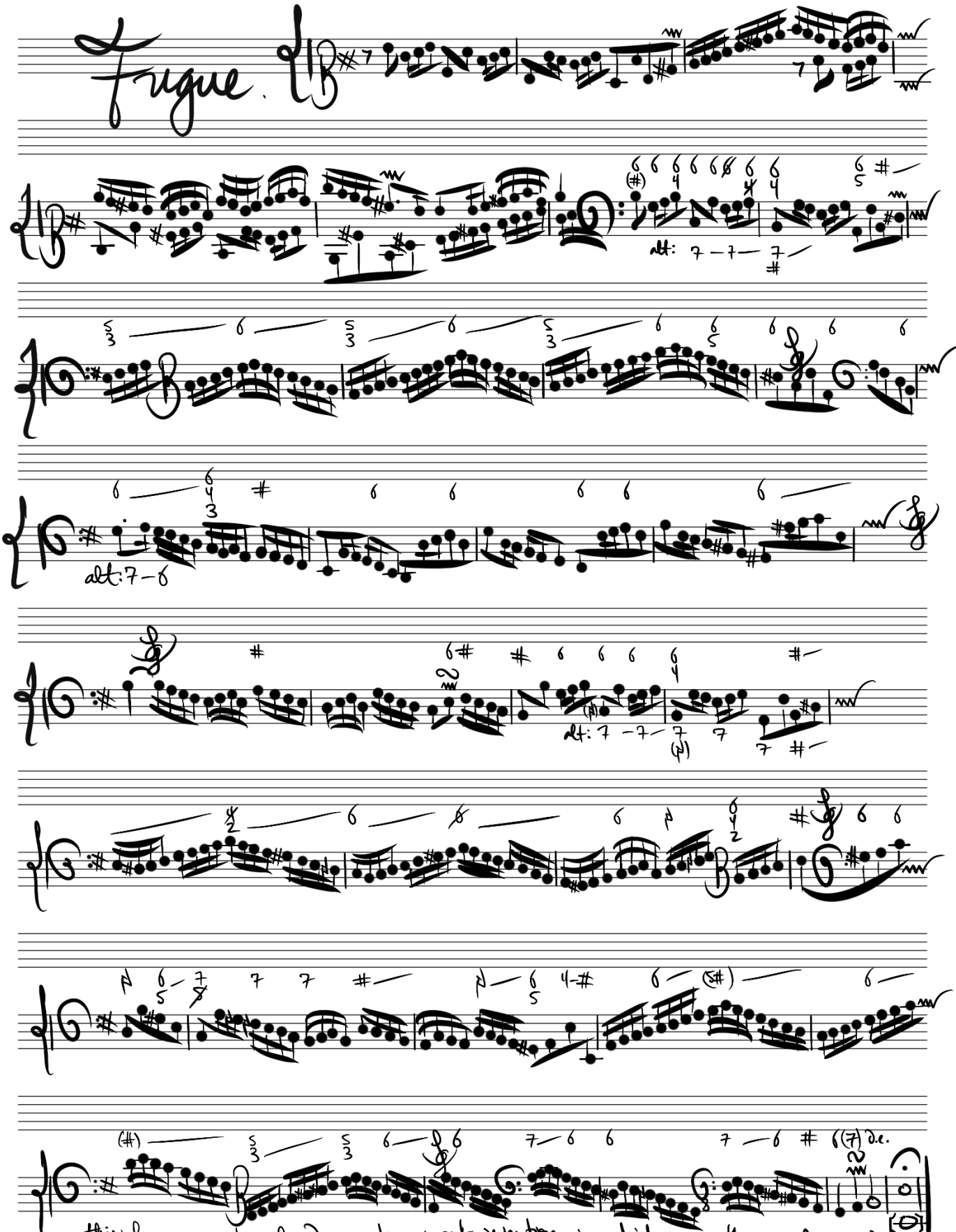
I.

Rondeau



VI.

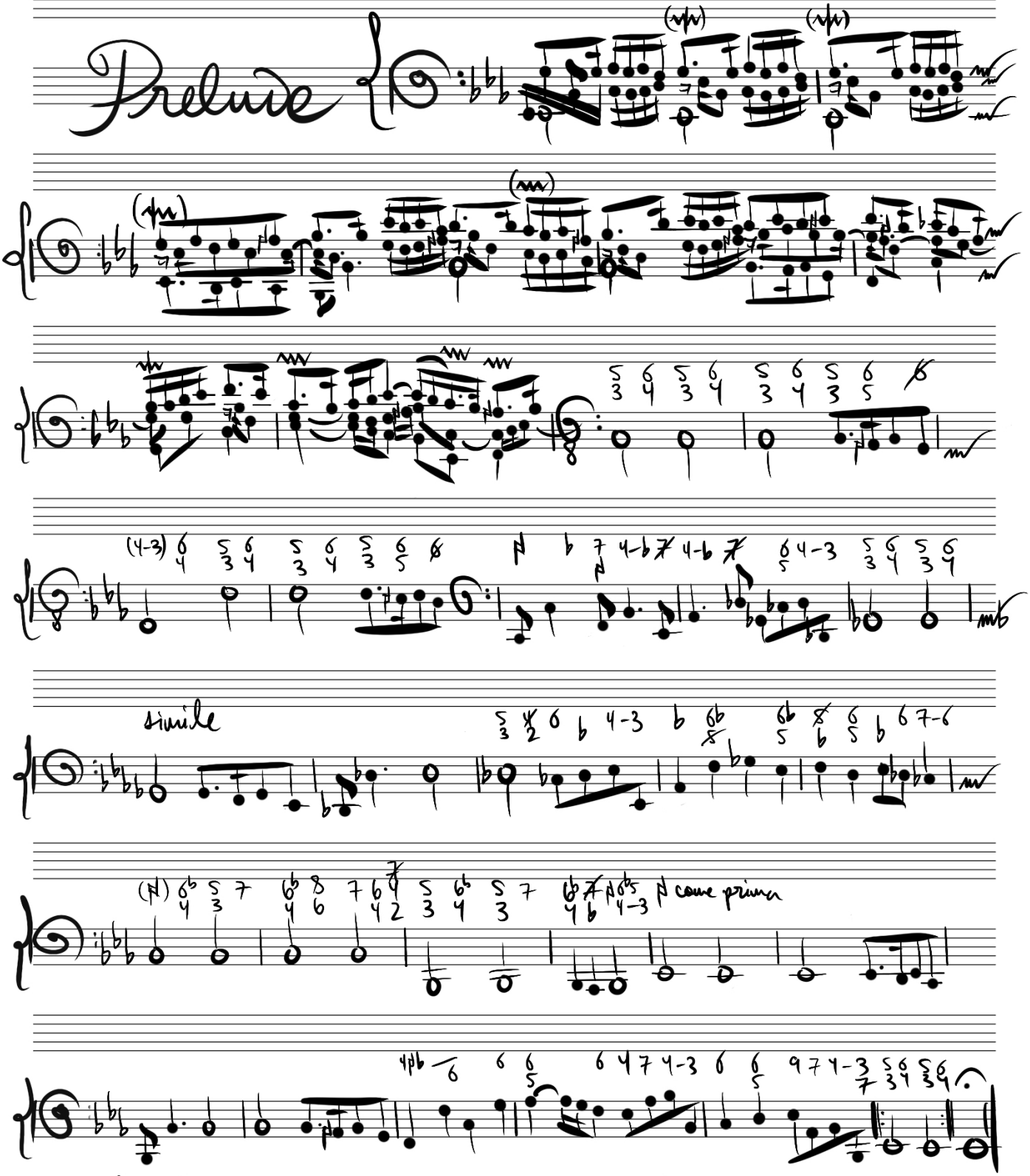
Fugue.



this fugue may be played as a two-part invention, in which case the reader need supply very little material, but the passing dissonances are not always given.

VIII.

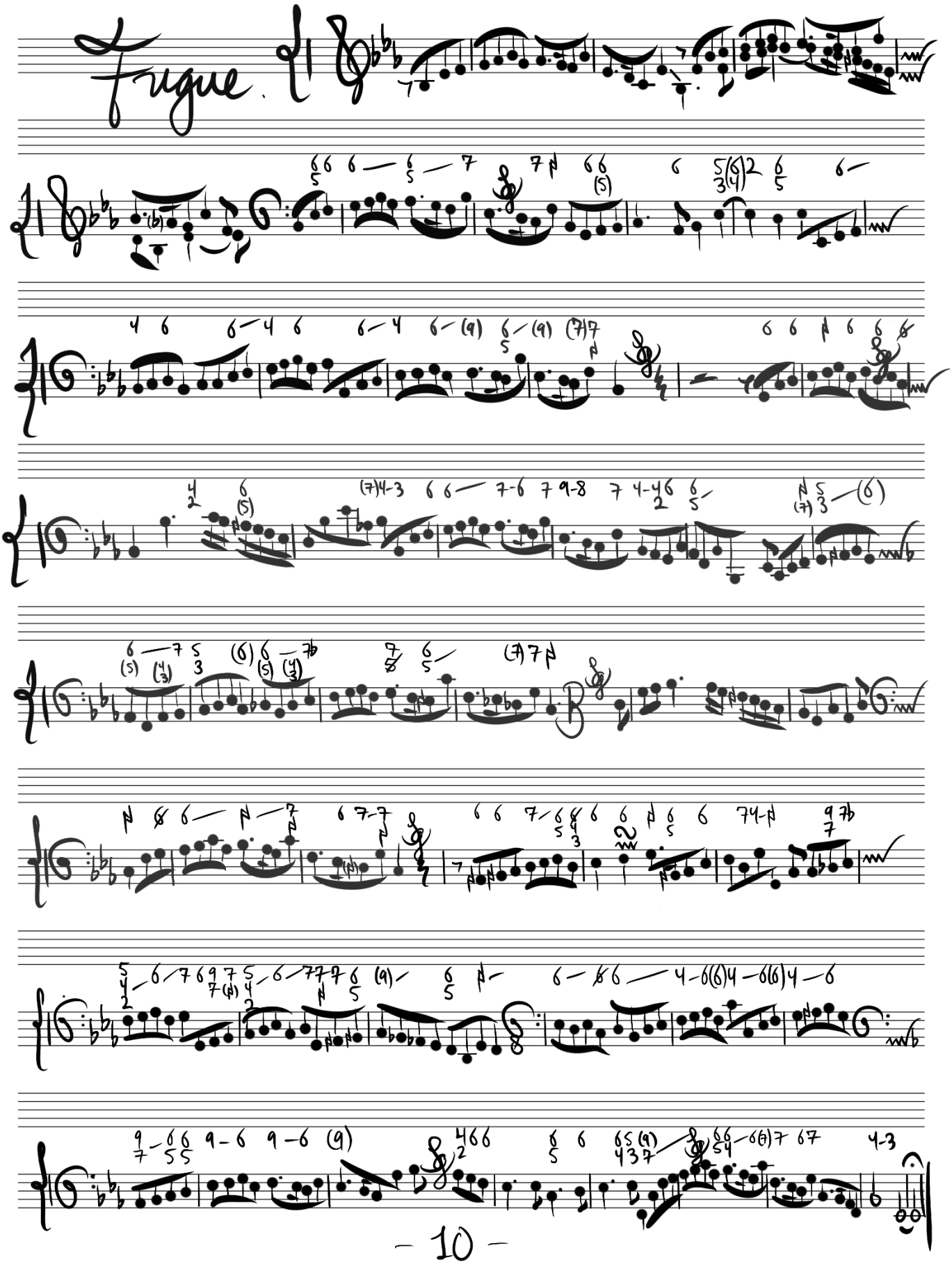
Prelude



for those who do not wish to retune their instruments to render E♭- and A♭-minor palatable, this prelude may be used as a transposition exercise: see the appendix for a helpful method.

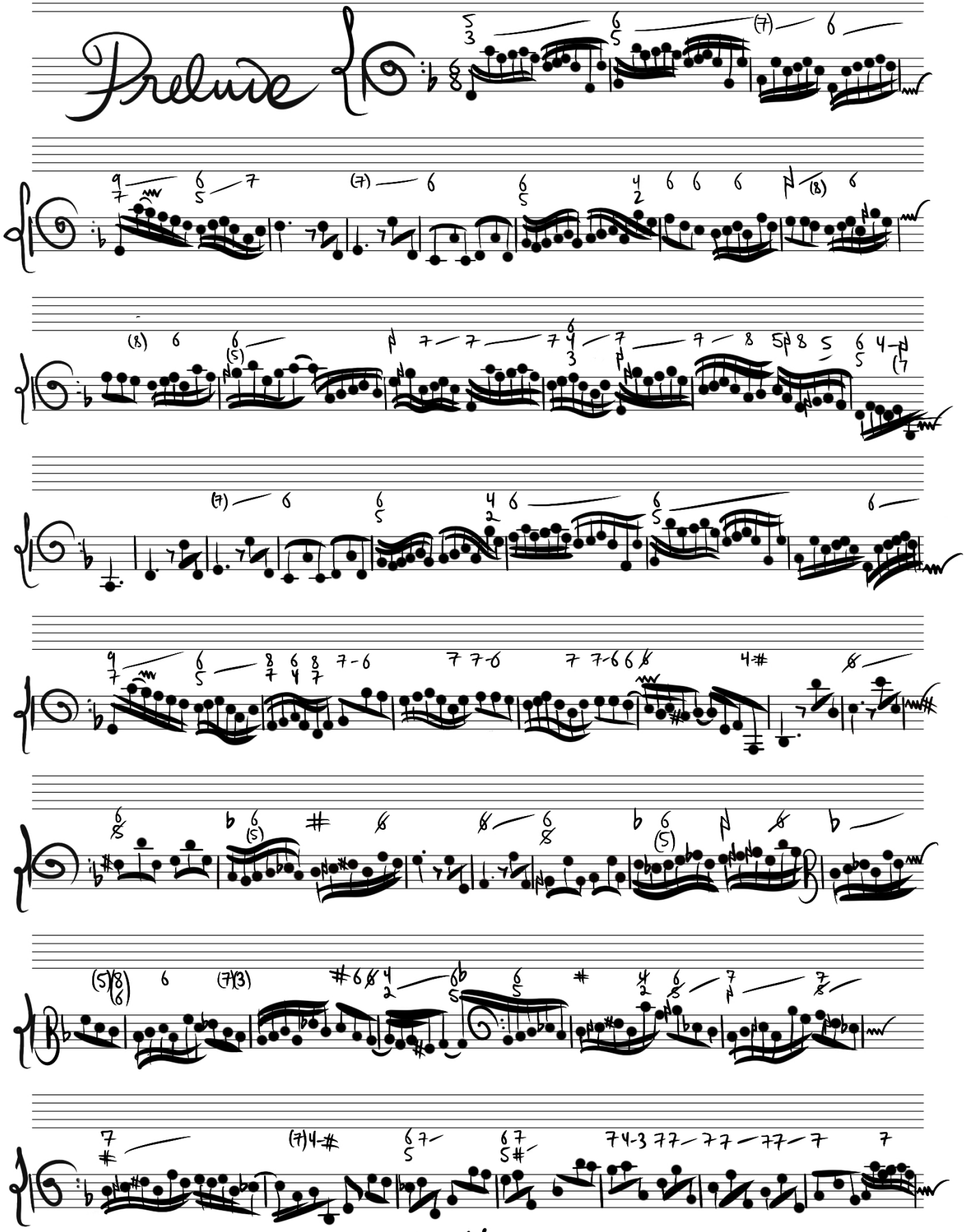
VIII.

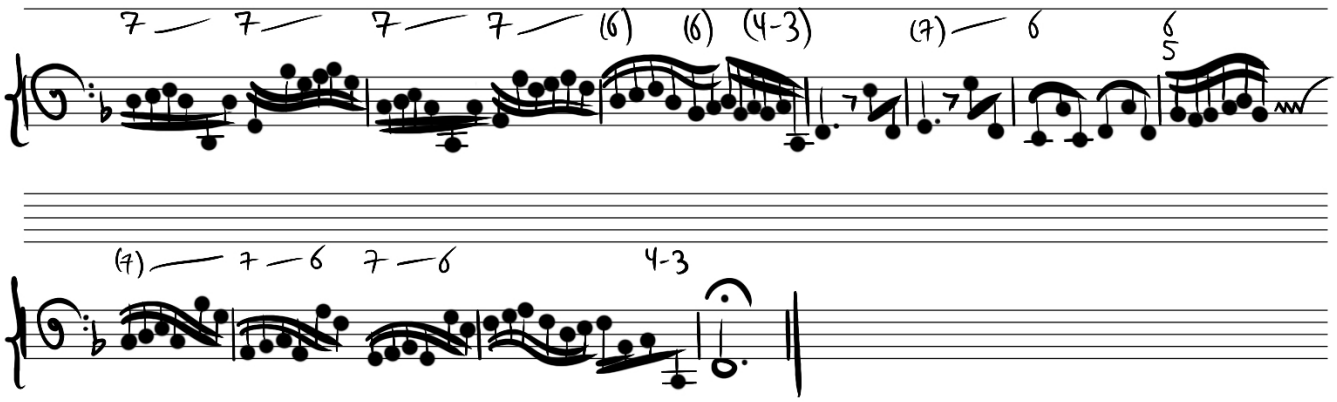
Fugue.



IX.

Prelude

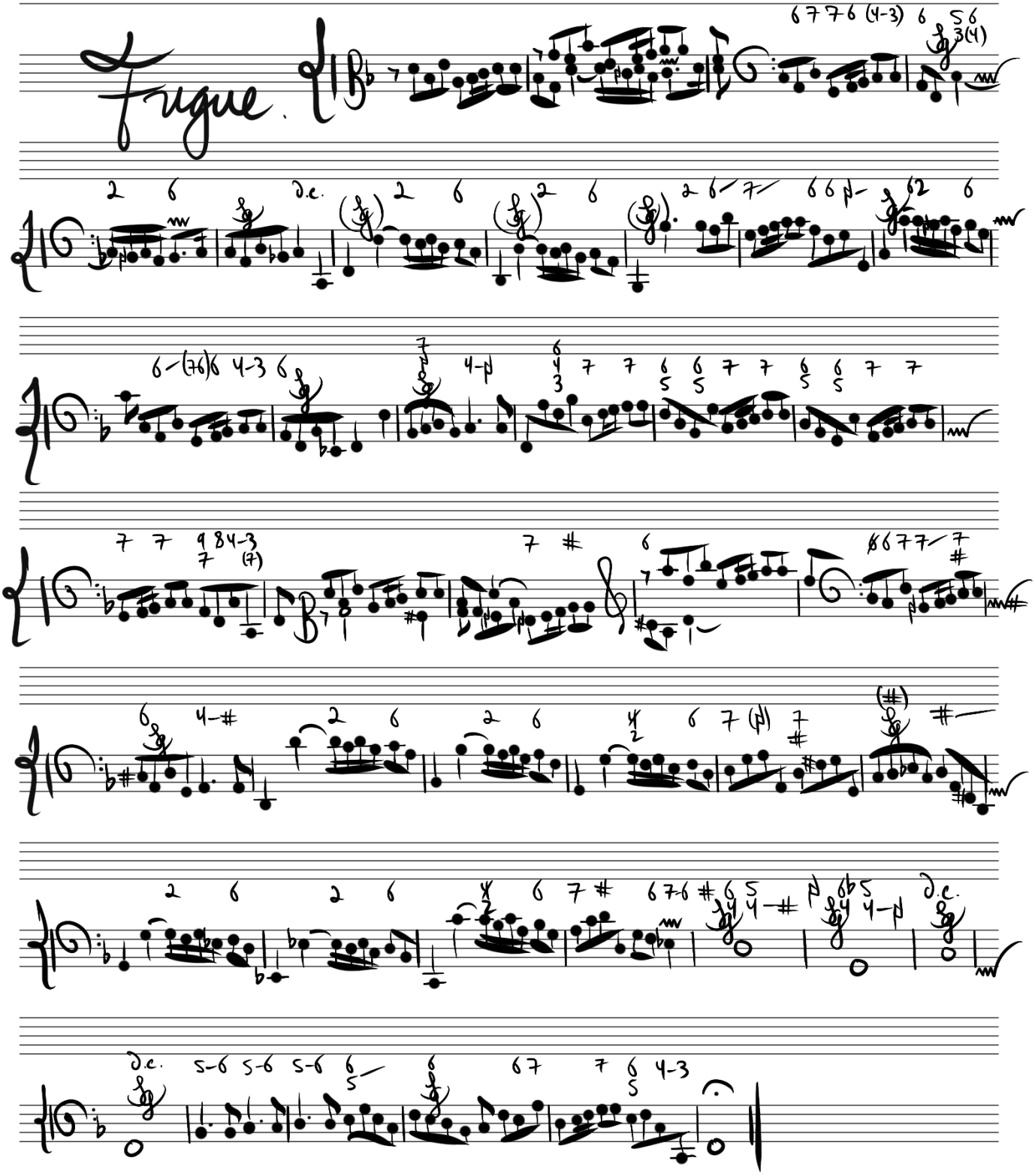



7 7 7 7 (6) (6) (4-3) (7) 6 6/5

(7) 7 6 7 6 4-3

X.

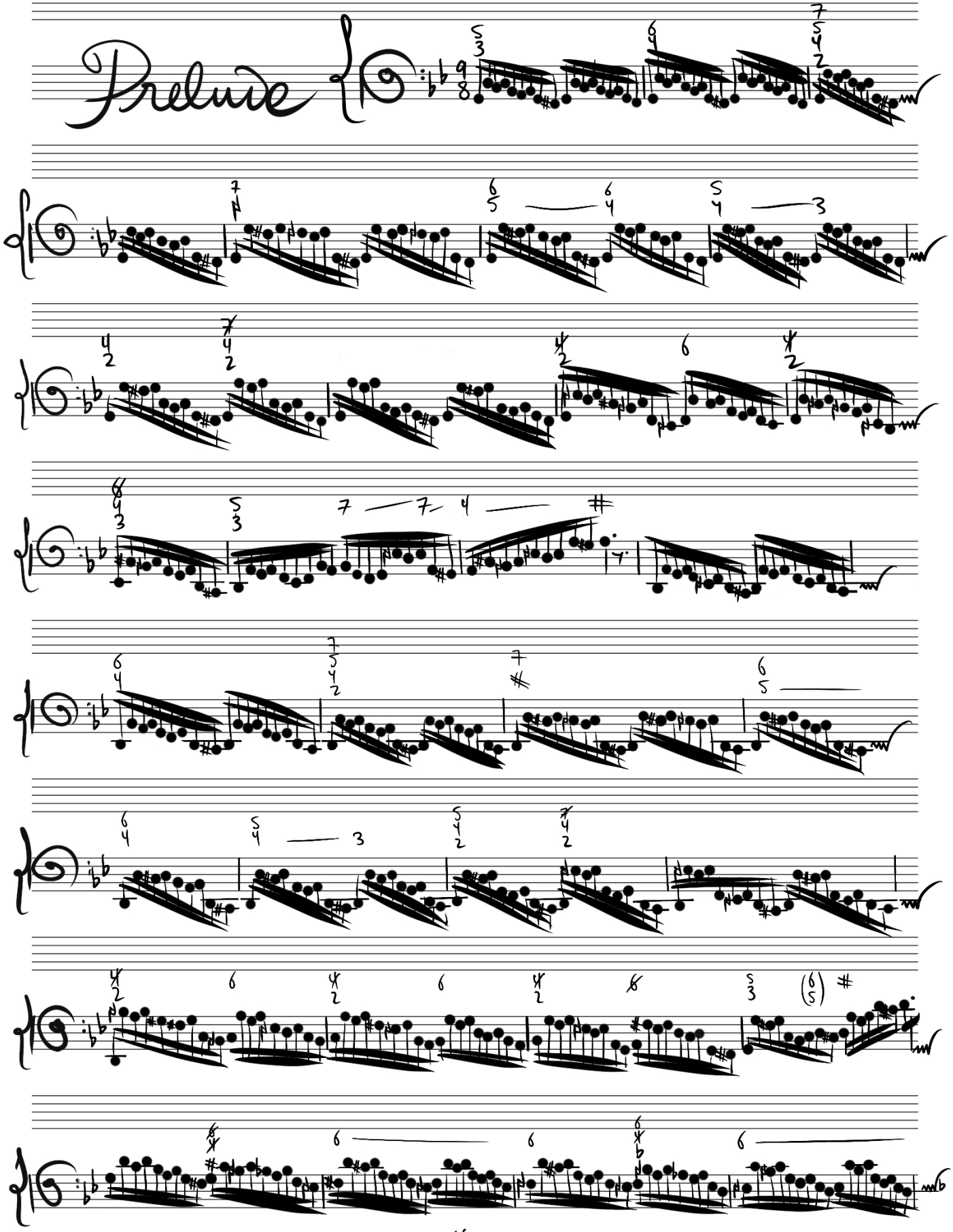
Fugue.

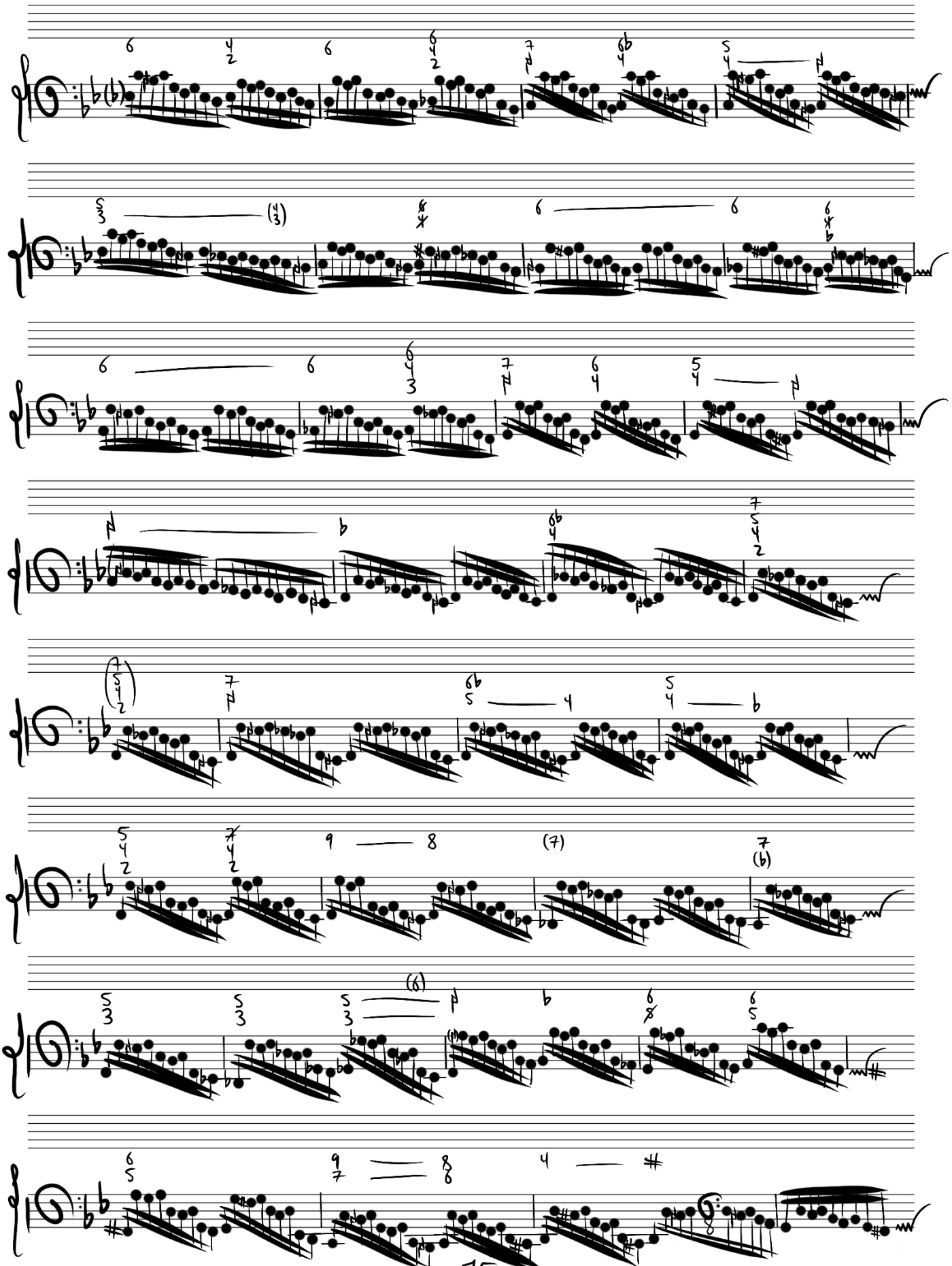


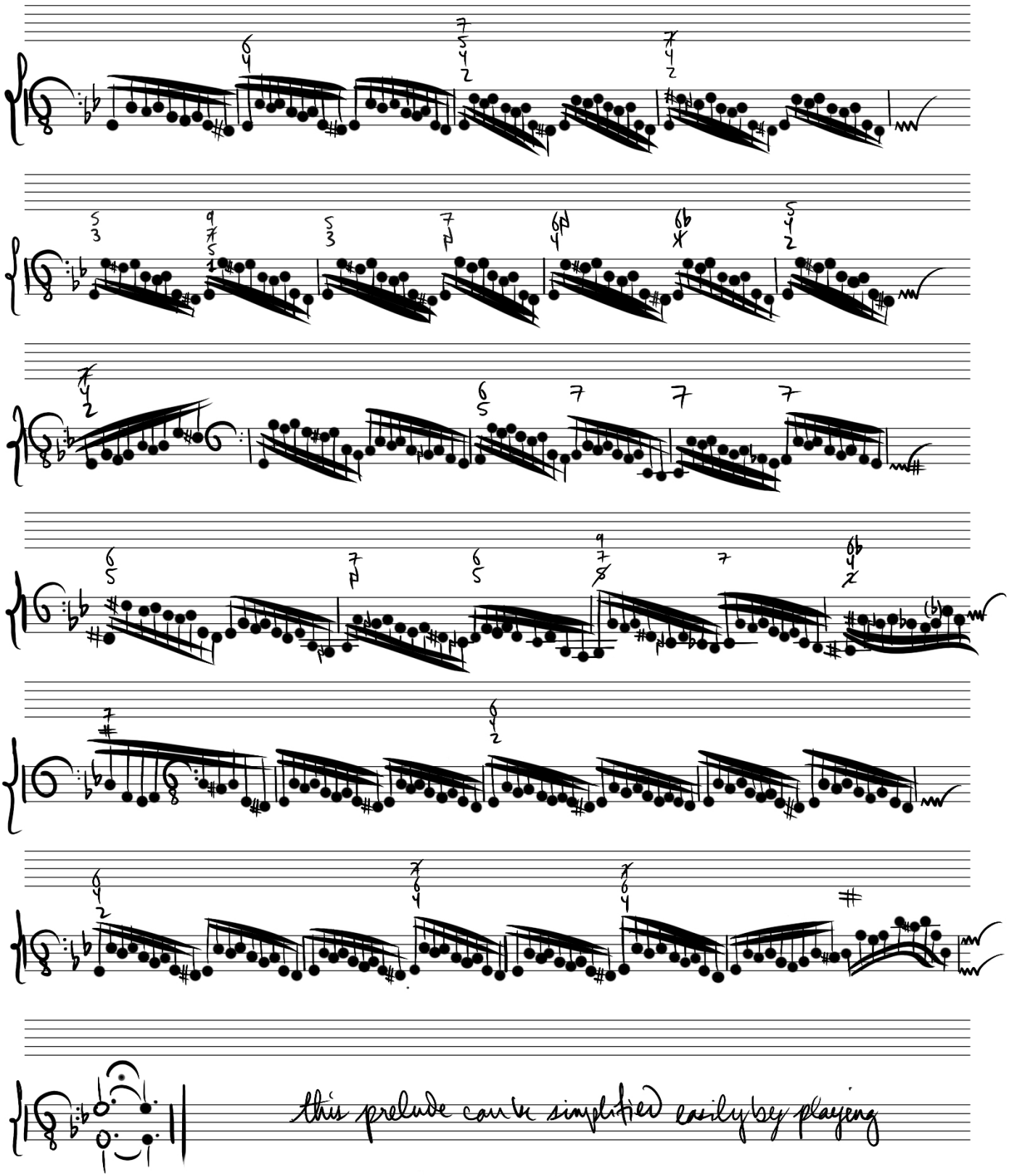
this fugue is particularly useful for practicing stretto and as a first foray into 5-voice realizations (it may equally well be played in 2, 3, or 4 voices). Resist, if you can, putting the subject in every single measure...!

XI.

Prelude



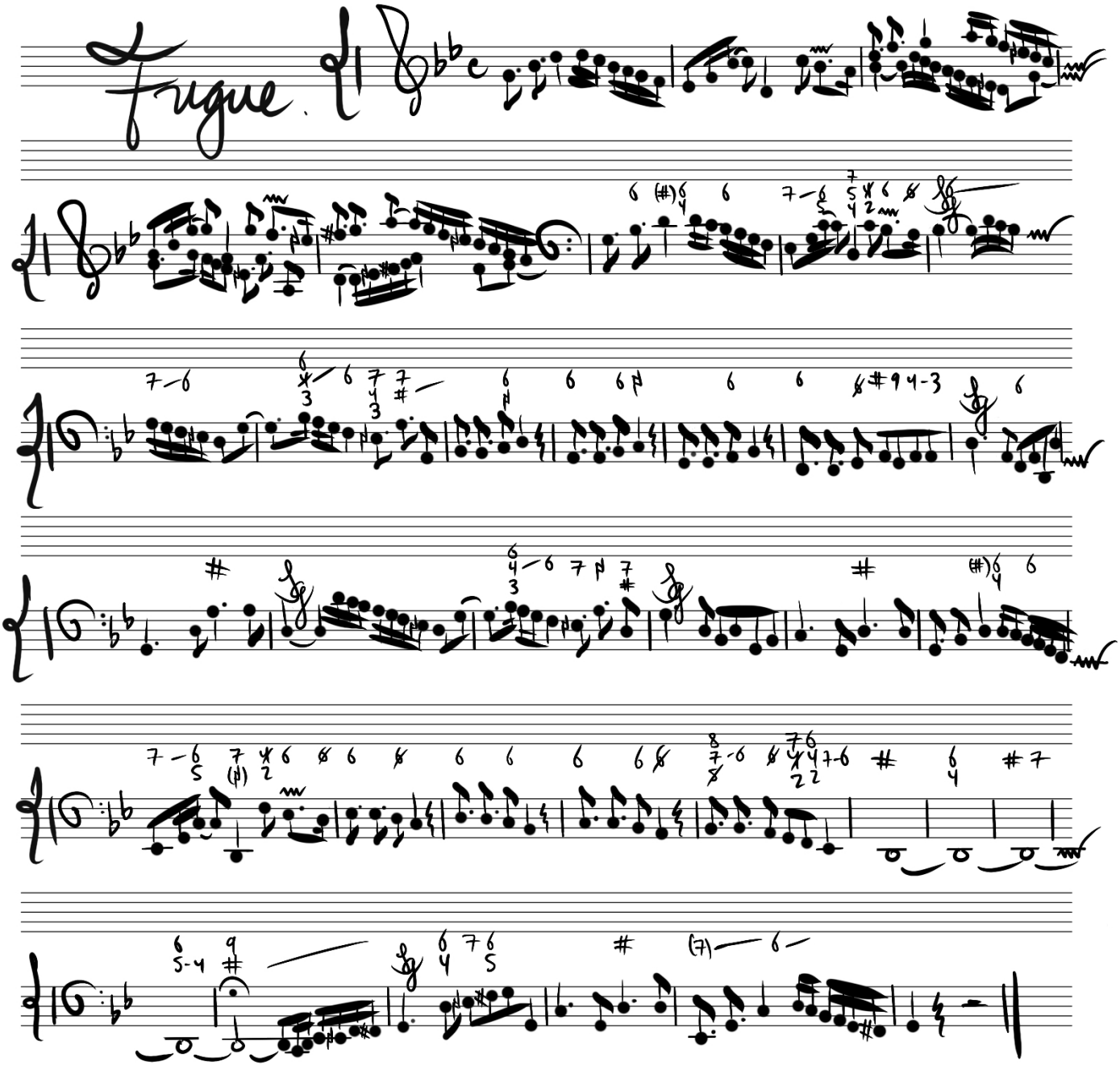




otherwise, one may put the written material in the rh. and play the harmonies with the left, or, as always, be free to invent one's own figurations.

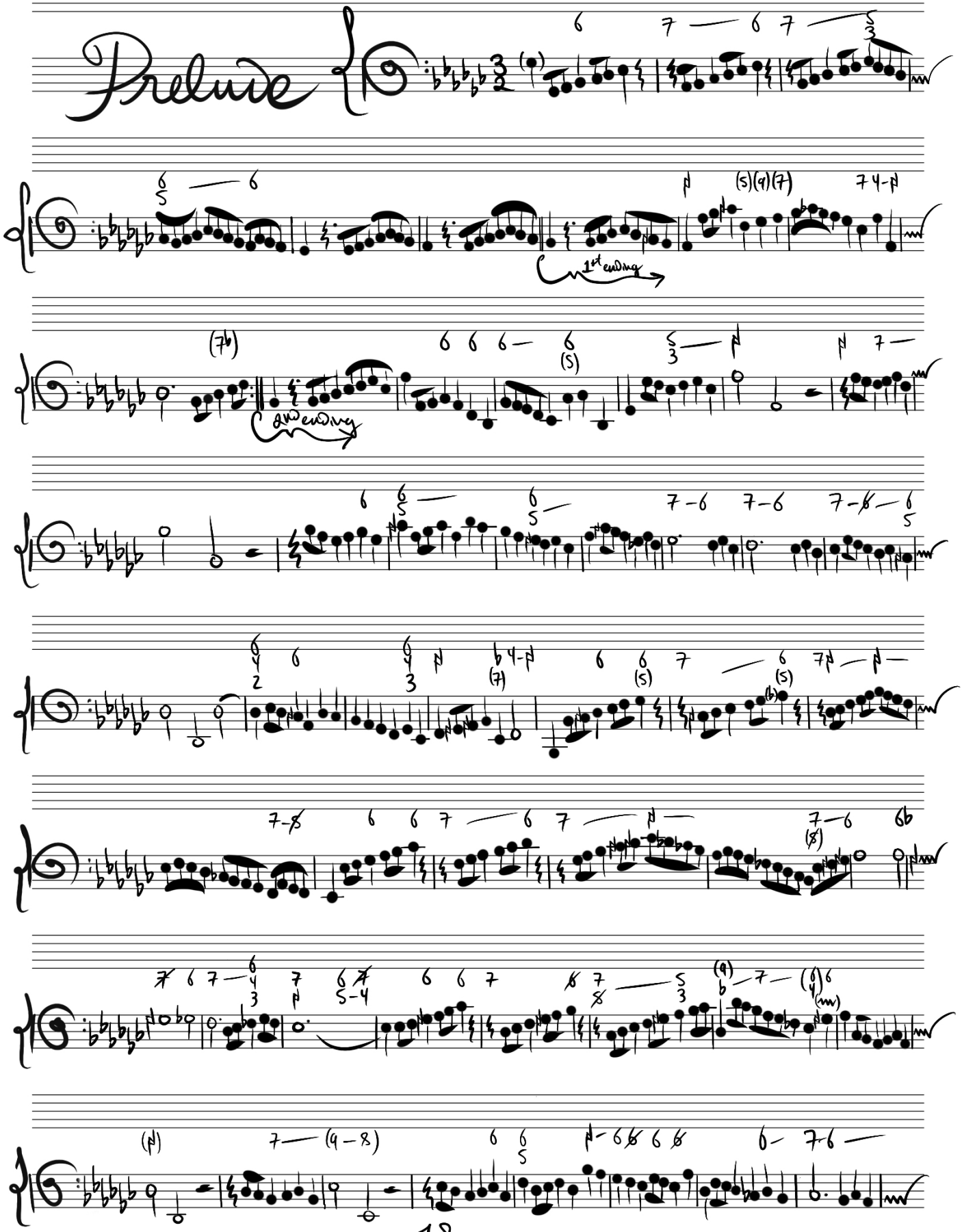
XII.

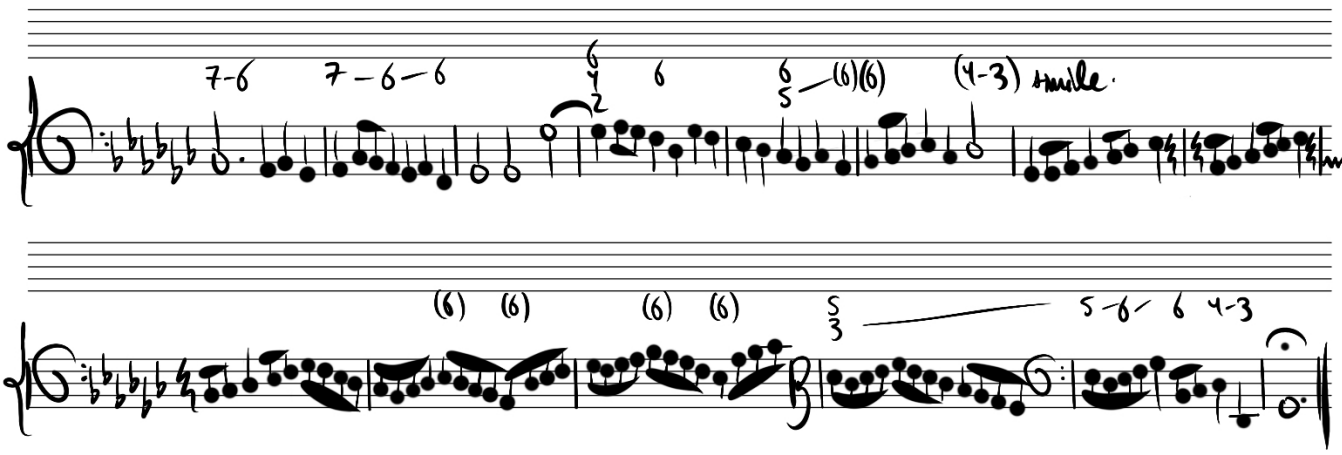
Fugue.



XIII.

Prelude

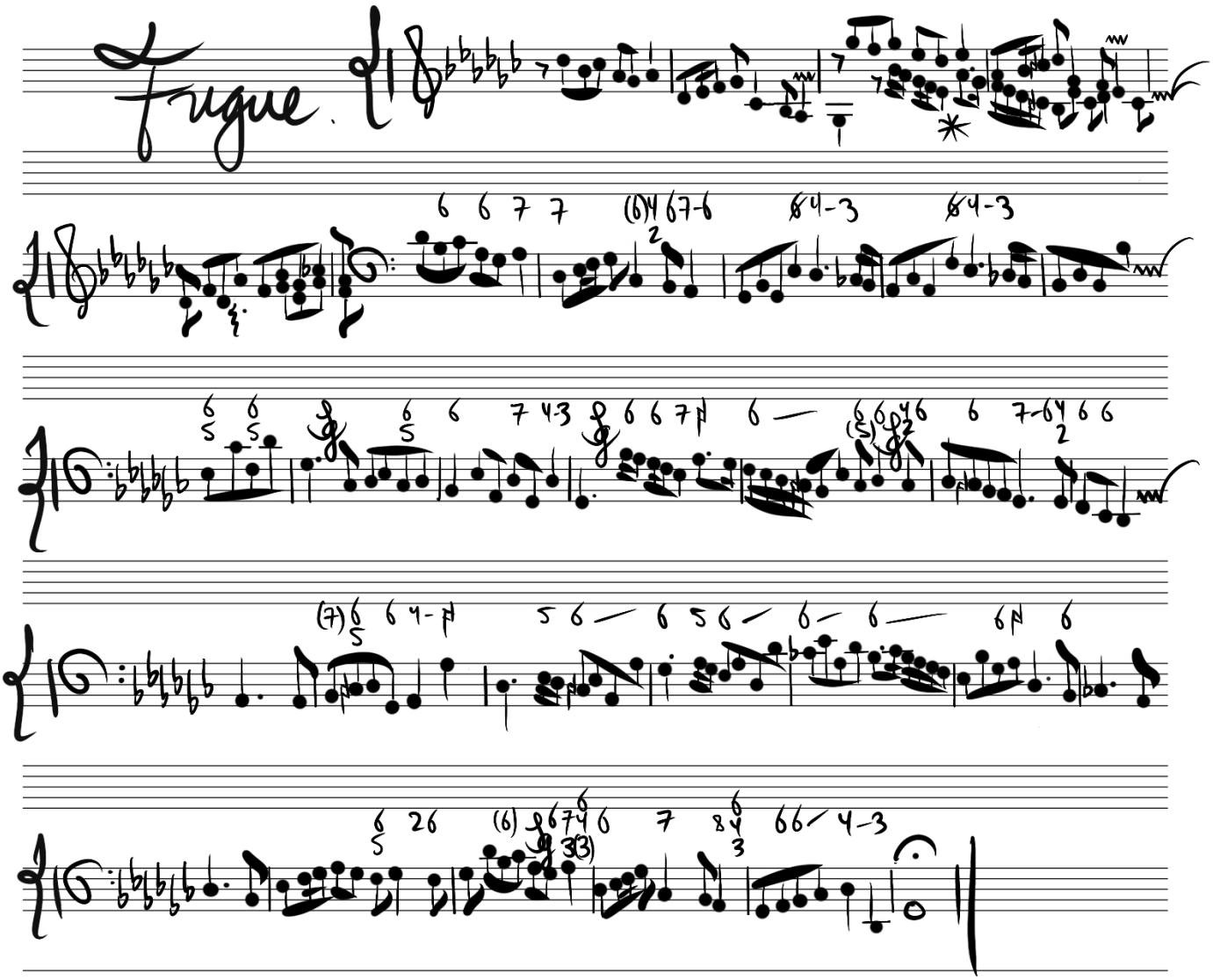



7-6
7-6-6
6 4 2
6
6 5
(6)(6)
(4-3) smile.

(6) (6)
(6) (6)
5 3
5-6 6 4-3

XIV.

Fugue.

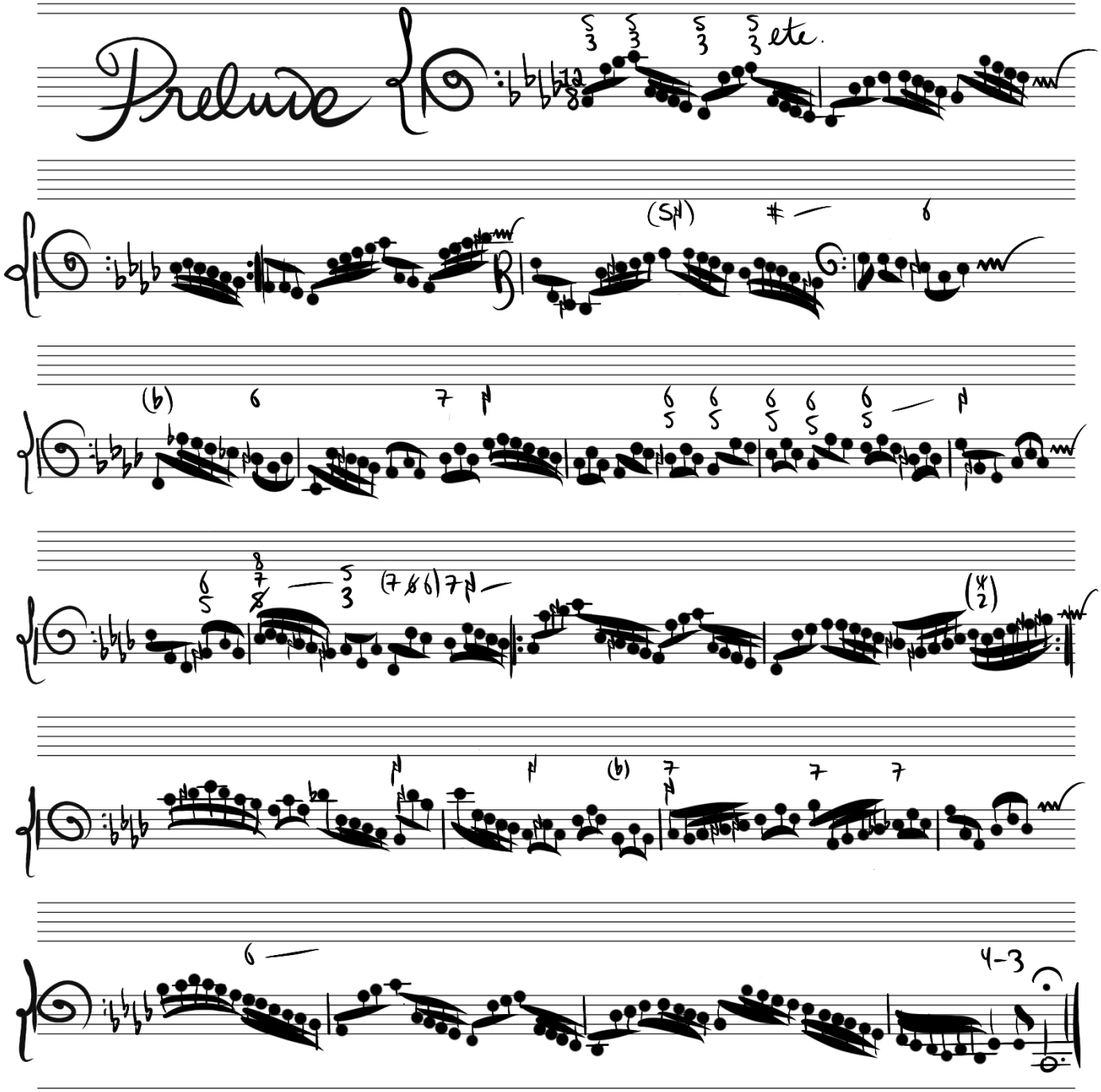


* what I perceive as an elegant rhythm and contour in this countersubject makes it worth the price tag of the passing 7 and open 5. For those who would take me to court over it, try this instead:

incorporating this yourself should be straightforward, but this is the price tag for disliking my countersubject!!

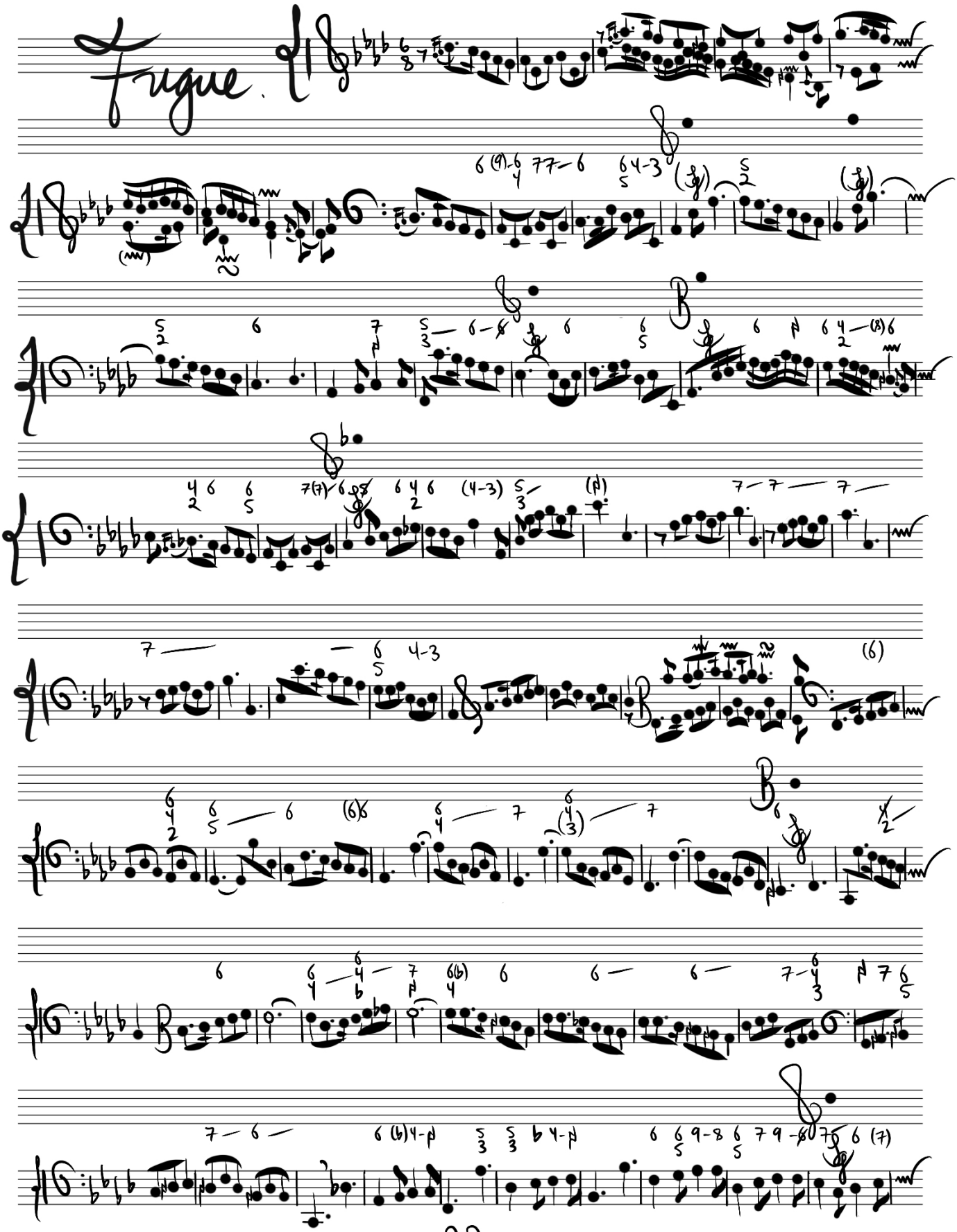
XV.

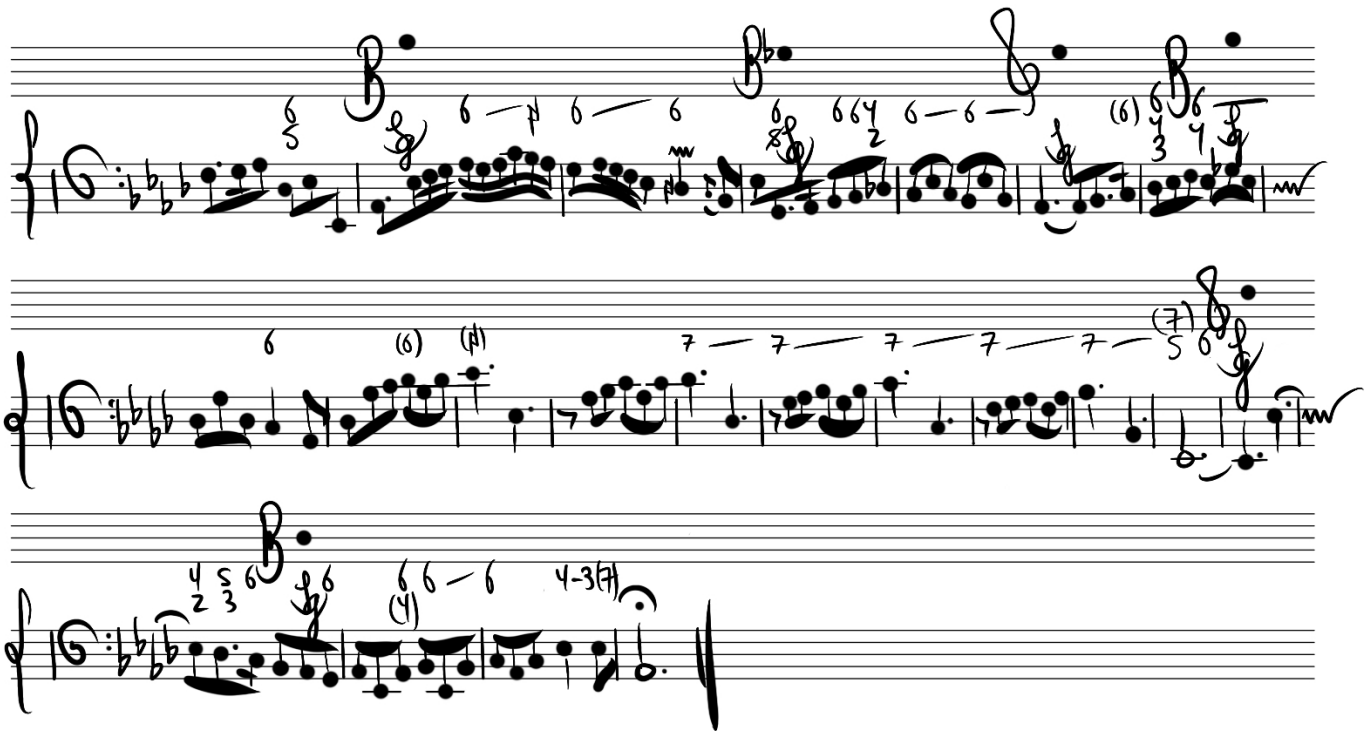
Prelude



XVI.

Fugue.

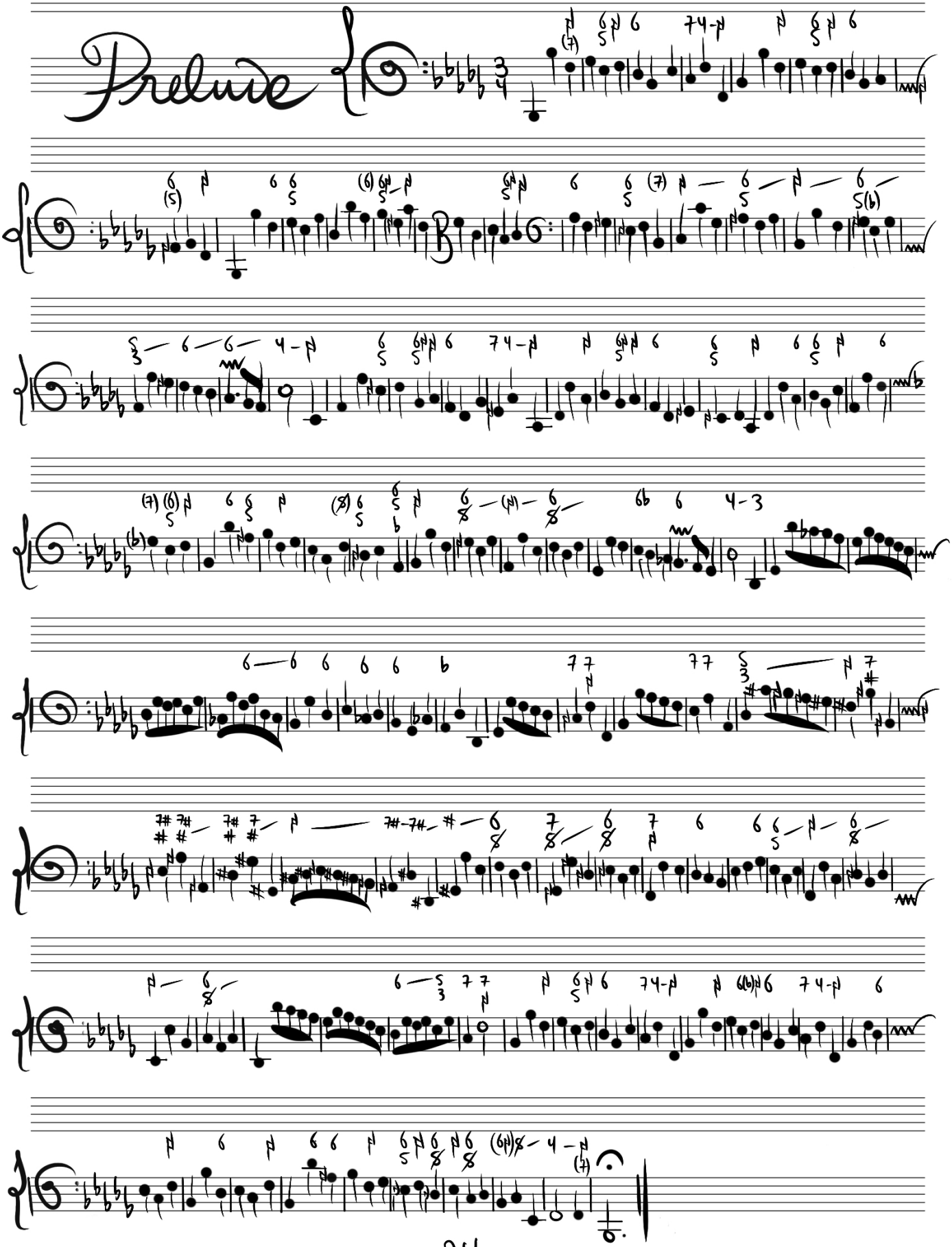




In this fugue I have given the notes for the entrances above the soggetto symbol (𝄞), due to the many diatonic possibilities of this scalar fugue subject. The clefs may be your guide to which voice to place the entrances in, but they may often be adjusted as you see fit. Lastly there are many more possibilities for stretto (with recta, inversus, or both) not written explicitly here. It is worthwhile to explore these yourself.

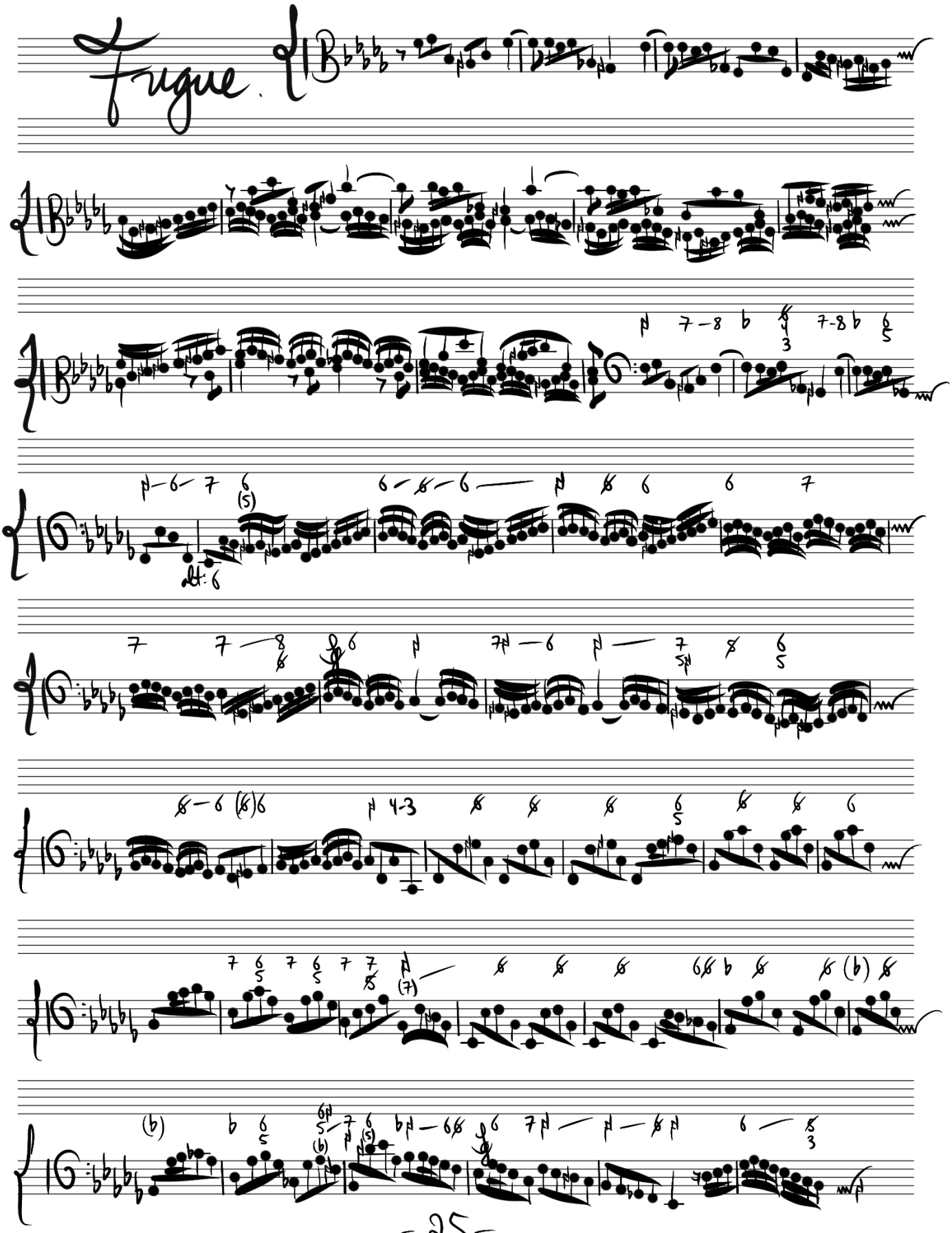
XVIII.

Prelude



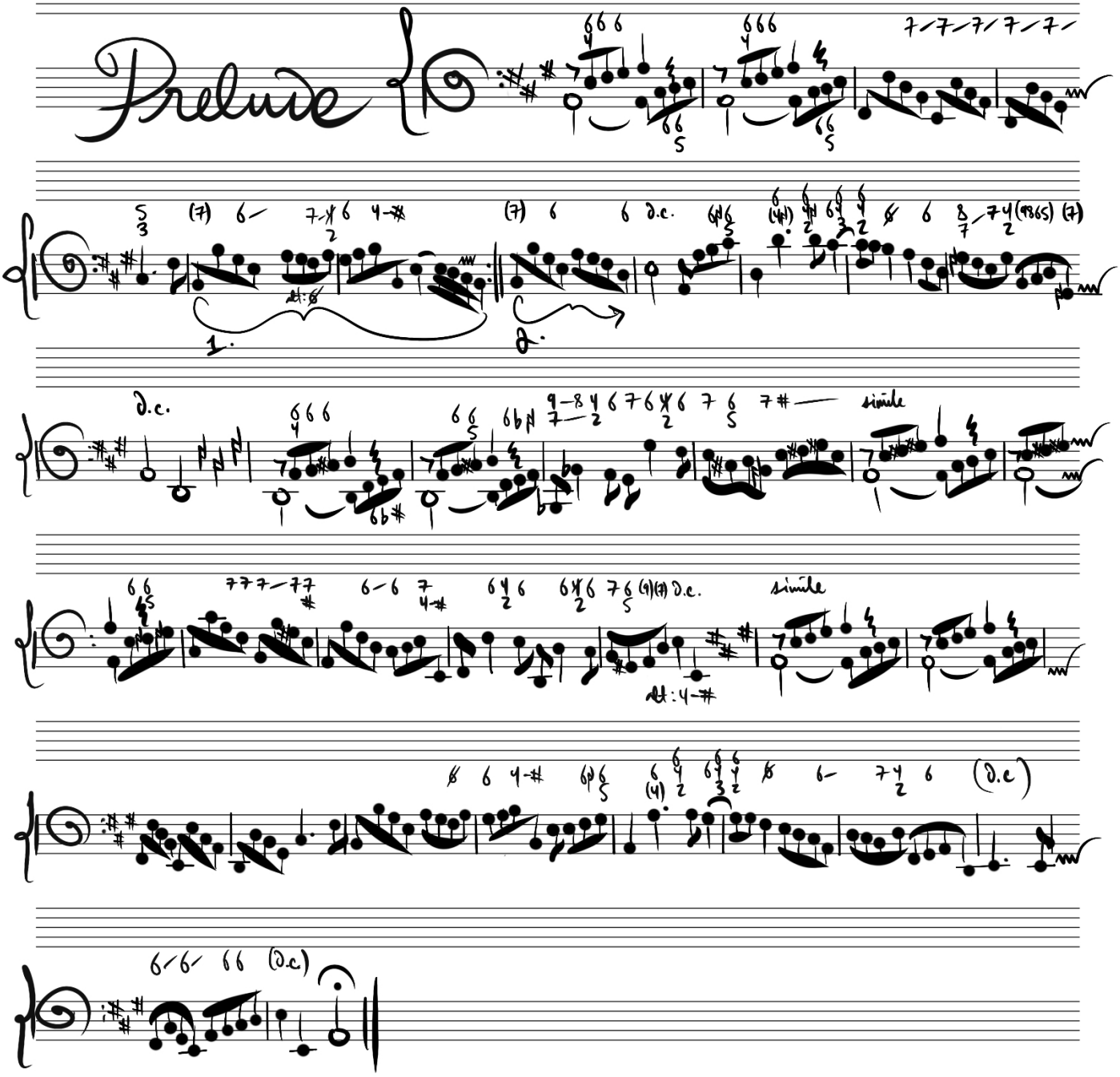
XVIII.

Fugue.



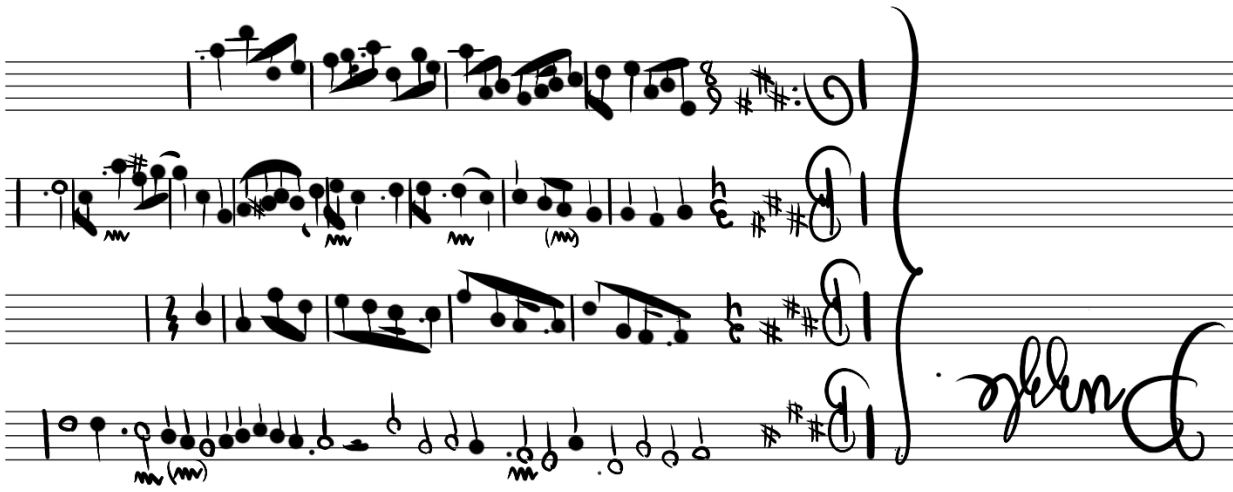
XIX.

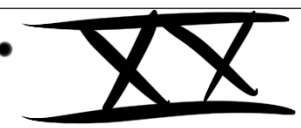
Prelude



this prelude might be best realized at a moderate tempo and with more-or-less constant sixteenth motion.

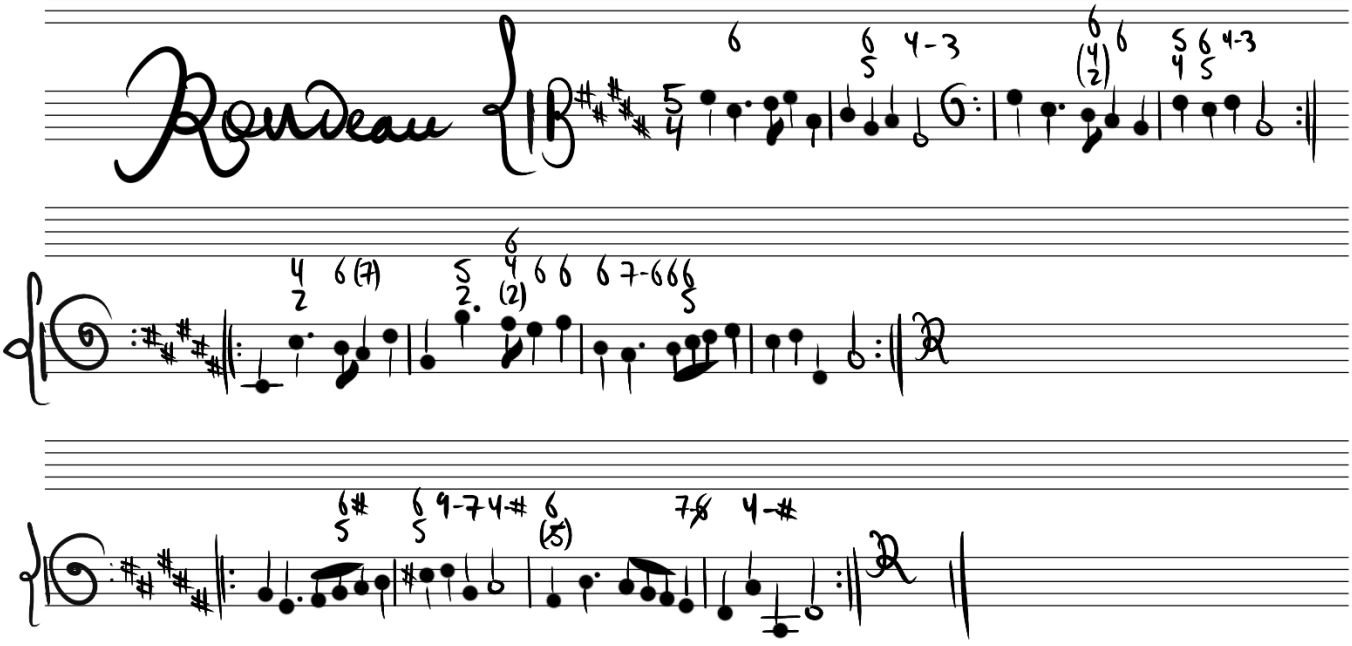
Hint: what are you thinking, if not about stretching and shrinking?





XXI.

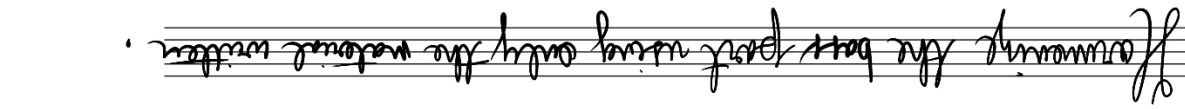
Rondeau

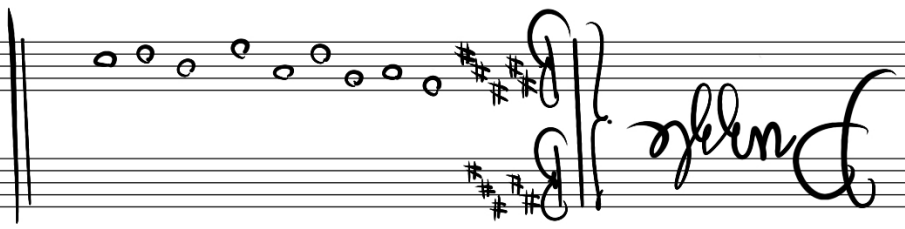


the reader is encouraged to add a couplet of their own to the two given here.

Hint: Advice from Missy Elliot:

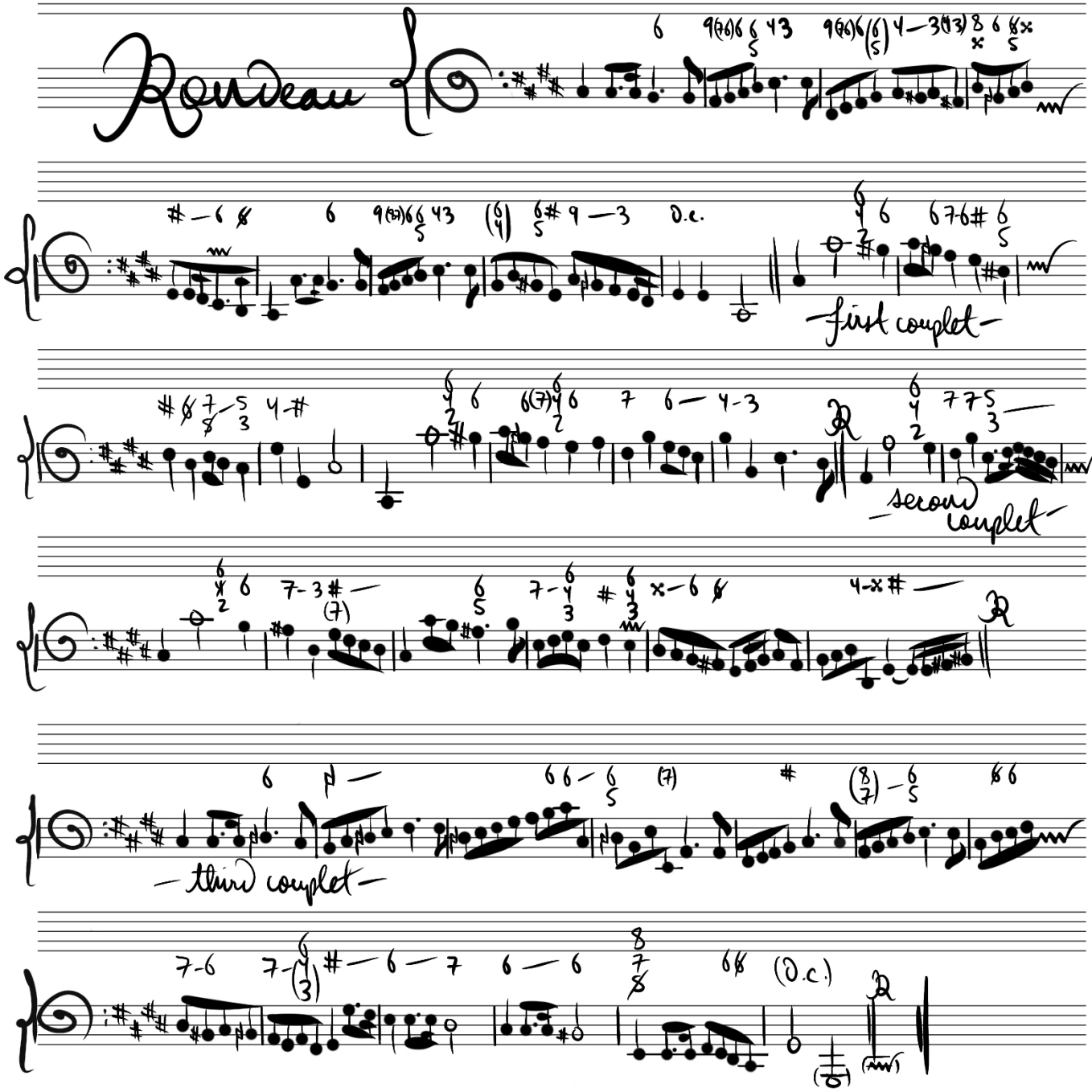
Is it worth it? Let me work it.
I put my thing down, flip it and reverse it.





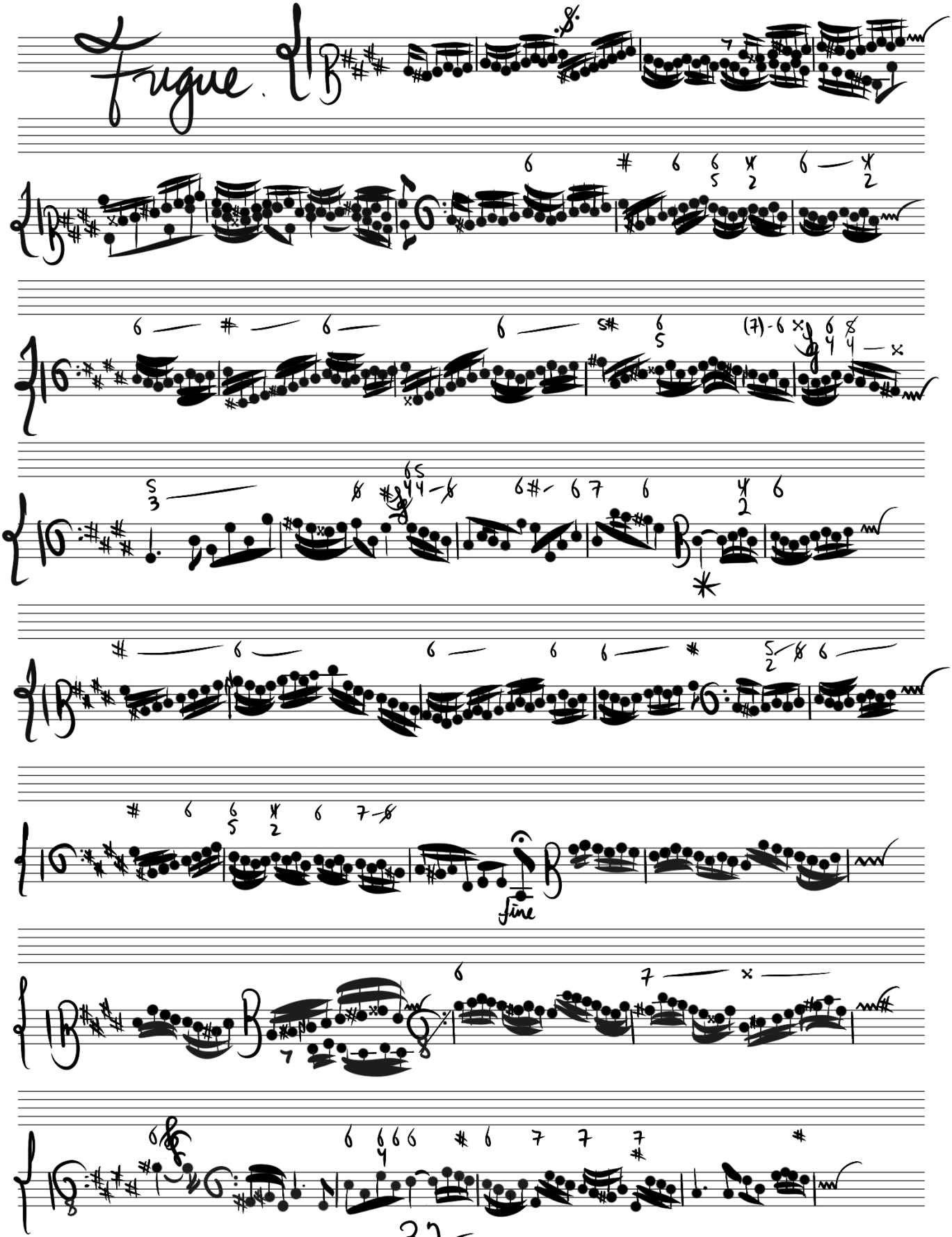
XXIII

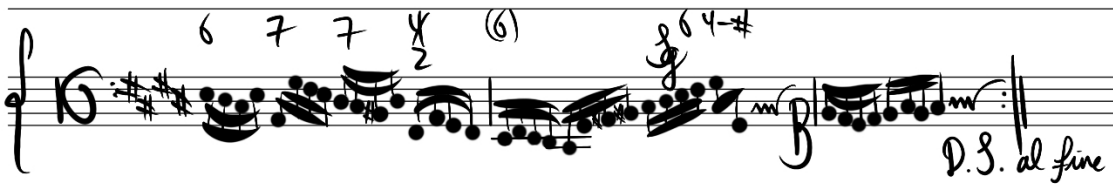
Rondeau



XXIV.

Fugue.

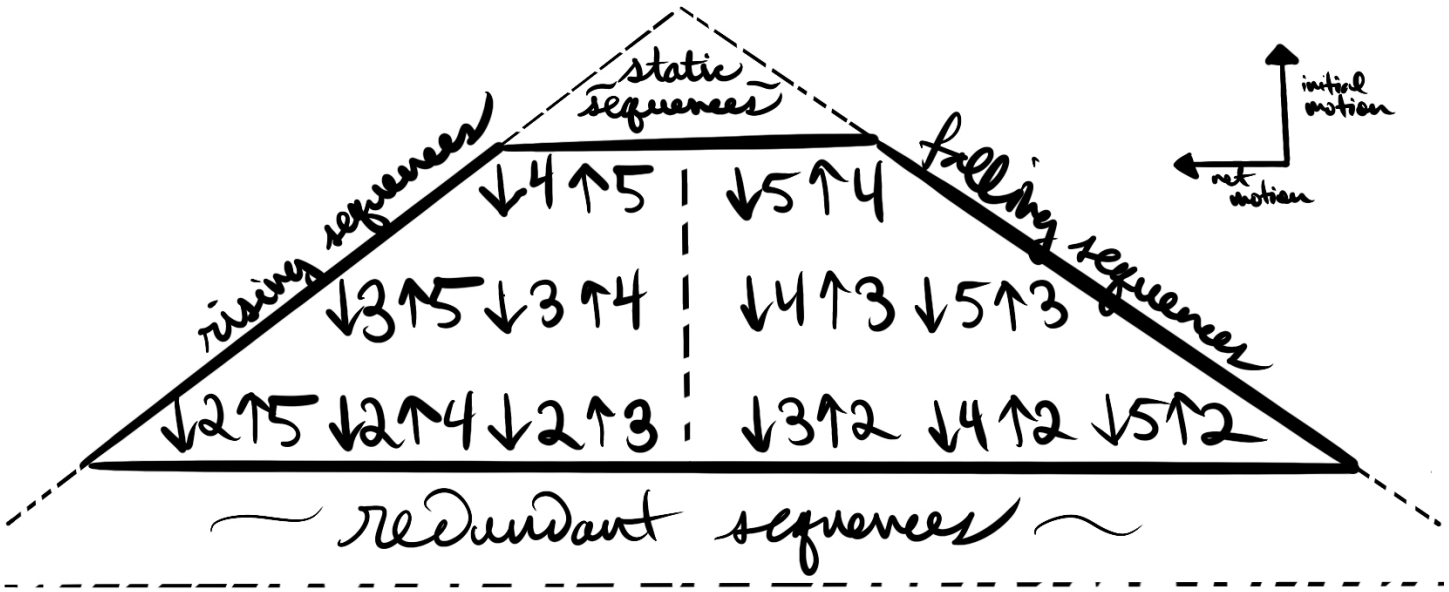




* the alto clef passage immediately following the asterisk may be played as a bass-, alto- or soprano-line.

Twelve Fundamental Sequences

A sequence is here defined as any periodic interval motion of the bass, but it suffices to limit ourselves to sequences with only two distinct intervals of opposite direction. Only two because more complex sequences are almost always reducible to a bipartite sequence like those enumerated below. No similarly directed intervals (e.g. ↓2↓3) need be counted in the present classification system because any such bass motion is either transpositionally equivalent to one of the form ↓x↑y, or it appears in the other parts that harmonize the sequence, and permuting the component voices will not change the fundamental harmonies, which can still be indexed by the bass motion. Not counting static (↑x↓x) sequences or transpositionally-equivalent sequences, there are fundamentally twelve, and they are shown below:

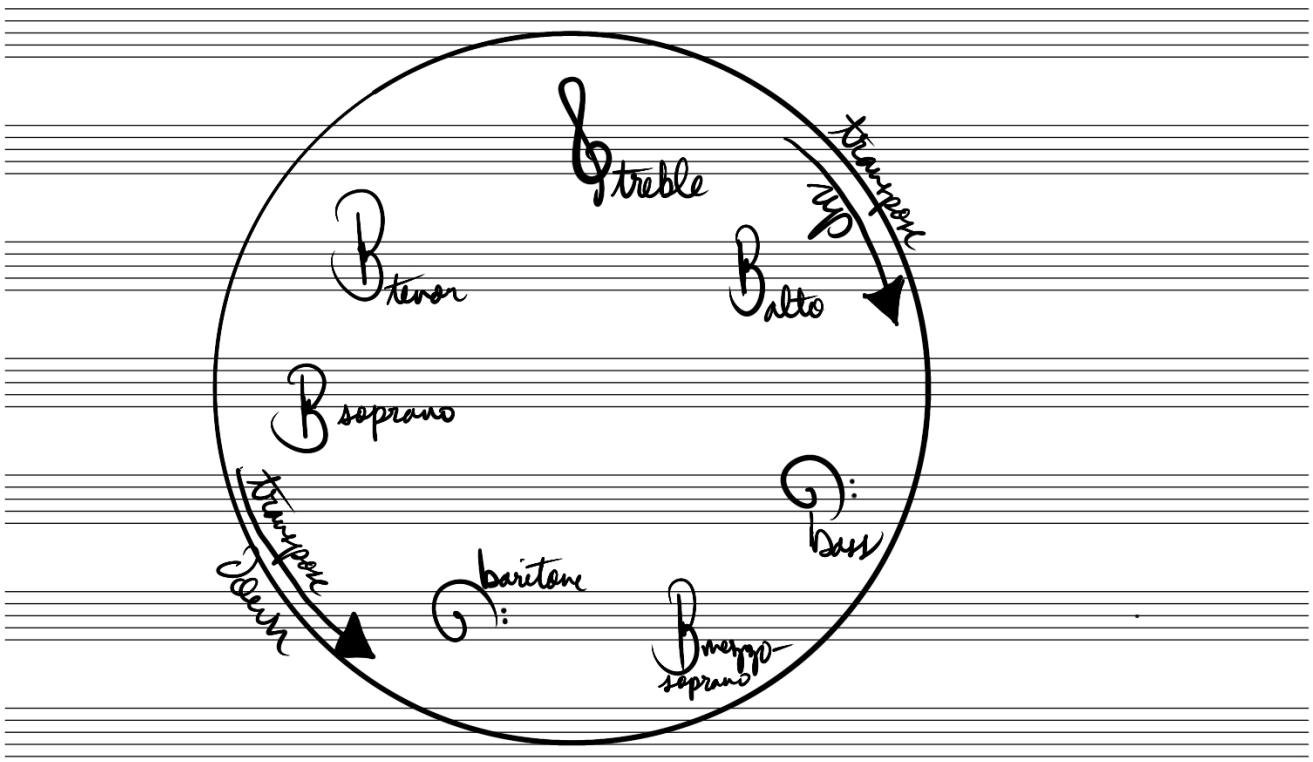
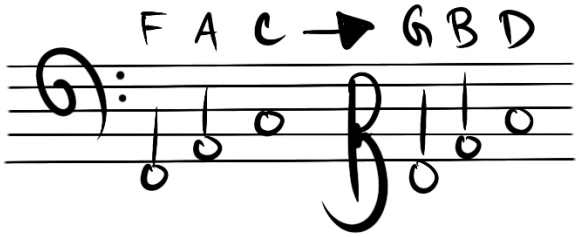


Of course, these bass-line patterns may be harmonized a number of ways, but are usually found, at least in the context of early European music, under a diatonic realization. This is especially true of the patterns in the middle columns which represent sequences whose net motion (interval difference between each iteration/period of the sequence) is stepwise; we can understand, then, the relative ubiquity of such diatonic harmonizations as a consequence of the "rule of the octave" upon which so much of baroque music is based. Many will recognize some of these harmonizations by other names, e.g. ↓5↑4 = "circle of fifths", or ↓4↑2 = "Pachelbel" and even ↓3↑4 = "rising 5-6".

I have found it profitable to explore the relationships between these sequences by replacing them with others when I encounter them. In so doing one can expand the practical and theoretical depth of their improvisatory toolkit. One finds, for example, that sequences with the same net motion (same column) are particularly straightforward to replace with one another. Sequences that share a component interval motion (same row), on the other hand, are usually more easily placed next to one another to nudge the net motion one way or another. What I have written here is barely the tip of the iceberg; entire books have been devoted to the topic of sequences.

Seven Fundamental Clefs

These seven clefs, four of which are a very much endangered species, are all one needs to be able to transpose at sight. No matter the interval of transposition, one need simply find the clef they are currently reading in on the circle below, and move about the circle according to the number of steps away the new key is. Imagine the new key signature (you may have to make a few ♯'s into ♯'s, etc.), and read in the clef you arrive at.



For example: to transpose up one step from bass clef, use the mezzo-soprano clef.