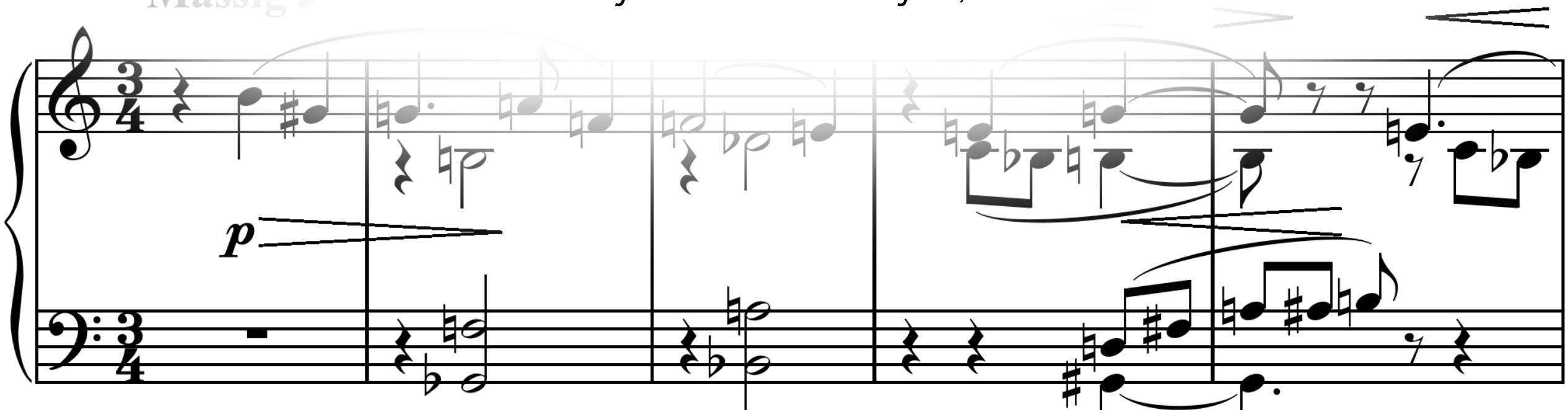
Chapter 3: Introduction to Triads and Seventh Chords

MUS 112

January 29 - February 2, 2017

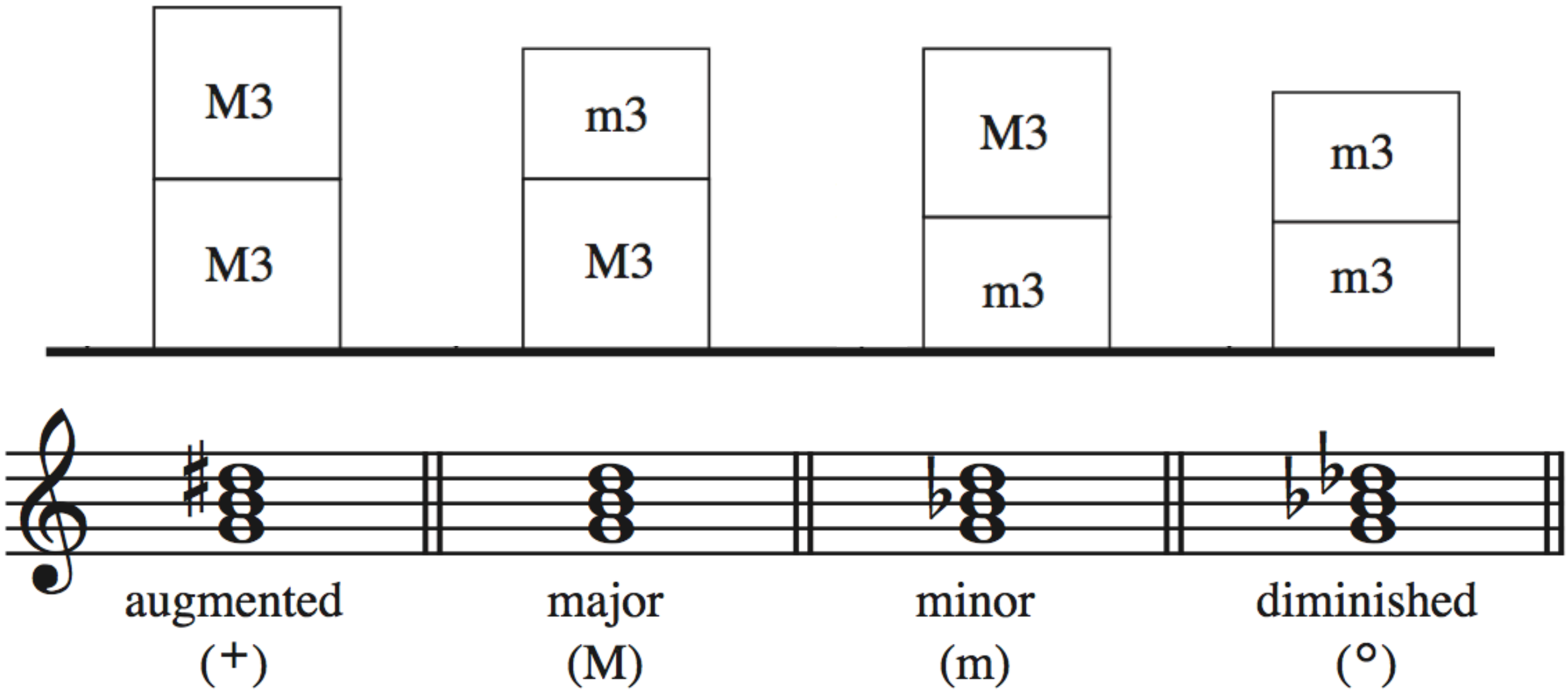


Introduction

- Chords are the basic vocabulary of tonal harmony

Triads

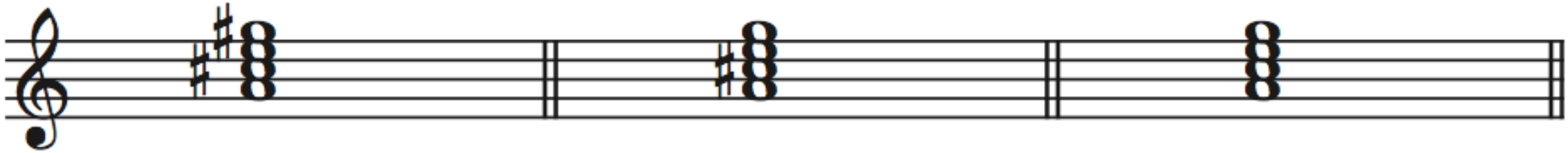
- We will be building chords by stacking 3rds
  - Because tonal harmony is **tertian** (meaning built of 3rds)
- The fundamental tertian sonority is the **triad.**
- **Triad** is a three note chord
  - Triads in tonal harmony consist of a 5^{th} divided by a third note to create two stacked thirds.
- There are four possible triads that can result from stacking major 3rds and/or minor 3rds.



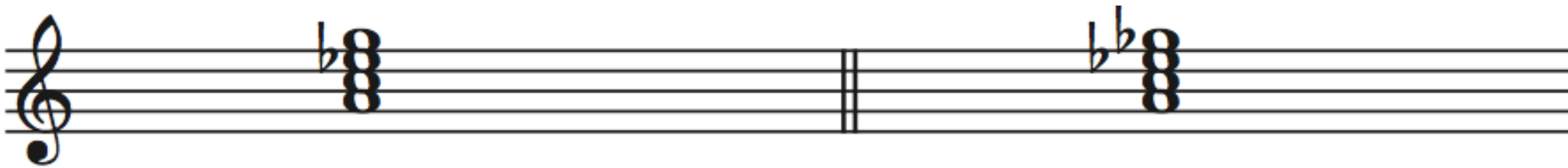
Each member of the triad has a name: the root, the third, or the fifth

Seventh Chords

- Let's extend a tertian triad by adding another 3rd on top of the 5th of the triad
  - We get a four-note chord.
- chords of this sort are called **seventh chords** because the interval between this added note and the root is some kind of 7th.
    - Major, minor, diminished, or augmented
- As you can imagine, there are many, many kinds of seventh chords. We will only need to know the five most common ones.



Type of chord:	major seventh	major-minor seventh	minor seventh
Symbol:	M7	Mm7	m7
Construction:	major triad major 7th	major triad minor 7th	minor triad minor 7th



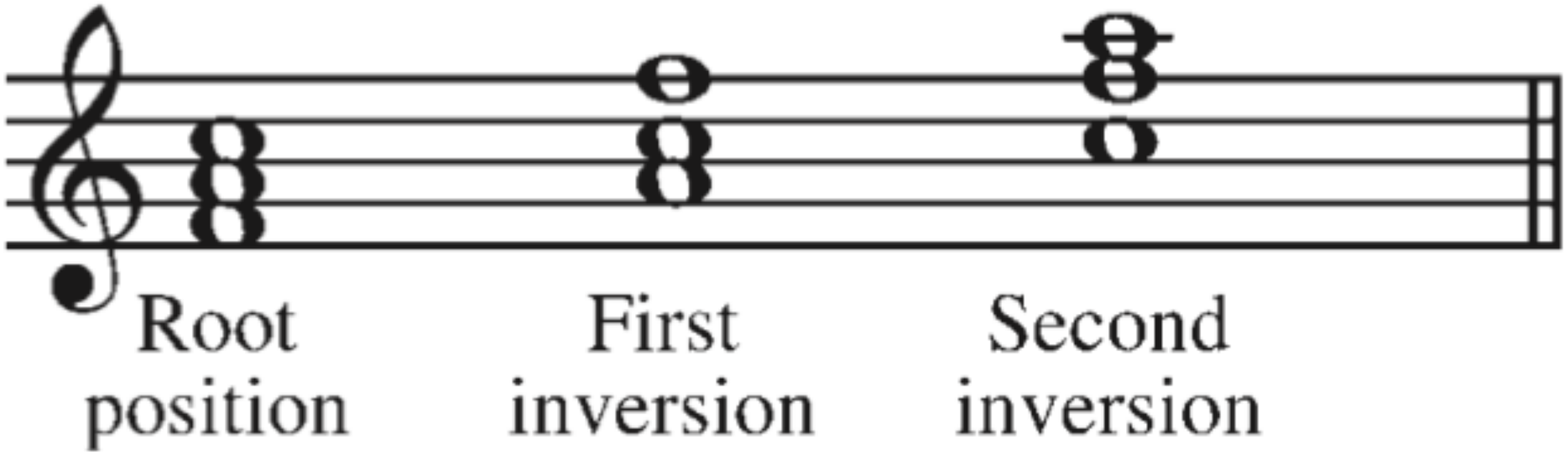
Type of chord:	half-diminished seventh	(fully) diminished seventh
Symbol:	ø7	°7
Construction:	diminished triad minor 7th	diminished triad diminished 7th

- *Quick note: We won't be doing any writing or composing with seventh chords for quite awhile, so they won't be referenced much in the text until Chapter 13*
  - *However, we will still need to know them for analyzing music.*

Inversion of Chords

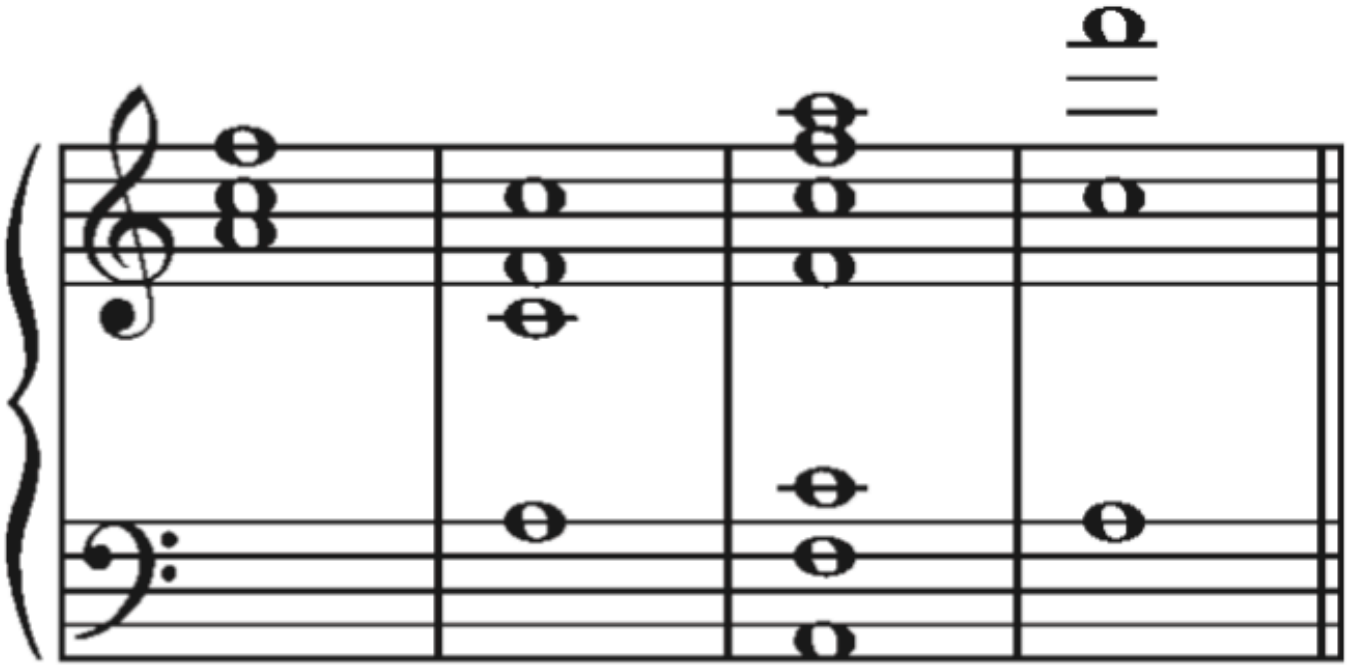
- Up to now, we have been notating all chords with the root as the lowest tone.
- However, any member of the chord can appear as the lowest
- There are three **bass positions:**
  - **Root position:** the root is the lowest tone
  - **First Inversion:** the third is the lowest tone
  - **Second Inversion:** the fifth is the lowest tone

F major chord (all sorts of ways)



Doubling

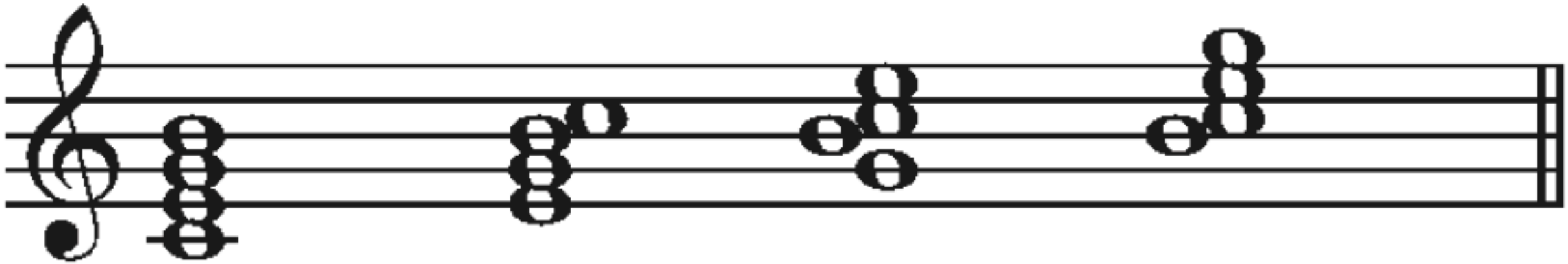
- Any notes of a triad can be duplicated, or **doubled**, in different octaves
- F major:



(All are in first inversion)

Inversion of Seventh Chords

- Since there is an additional note in seventh chords, there is an additional inversion.



Root position

First inversion

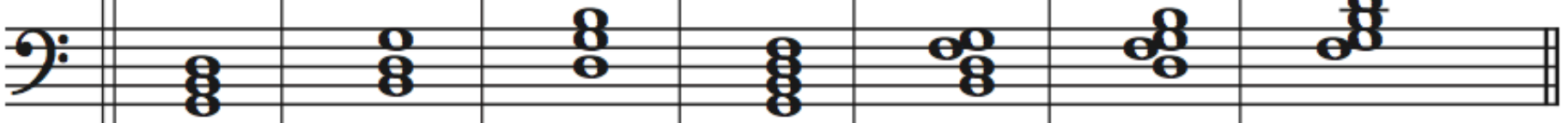
Second inversion

Third inversion

Figured Bass

- Figured Bass: as system derived in the Baroque era (ca. 1600-1750) to allow a keyboard player to realize chords from a single note base line.
  - The player would receive a part with a bass line and symbols by the notes that would indicate which harmonies to improvise over the bass line.
    - It was also the responsibility of the player to fit in stylistically.
  - The symbols basically show which intervals over the bass to play.
- We have adapted this system to show the bass position of chords.

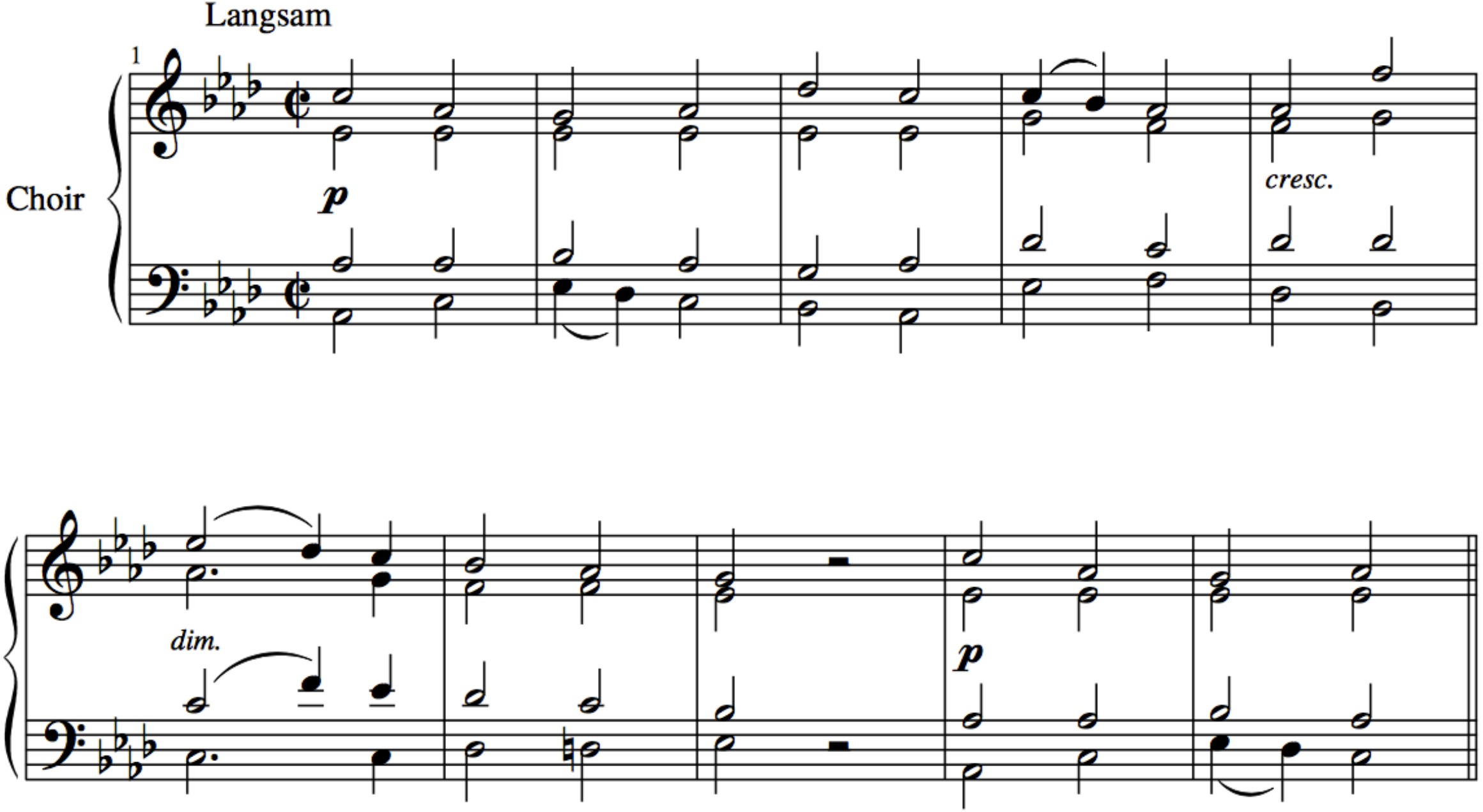
Figured Bass for a G Mm 7

Sonority desired							
Complete figured bass symbol	5 3	6 3	6 4	7 5 3	6 5 3	6 4 3	6 4 2
Symbol most often used		6	6 4	7	6 5	4 3	4 2
How to find the root	Bass note	6th above bass	4th above bass	Bass note	6th above bass	4th above bass	2nd above bass

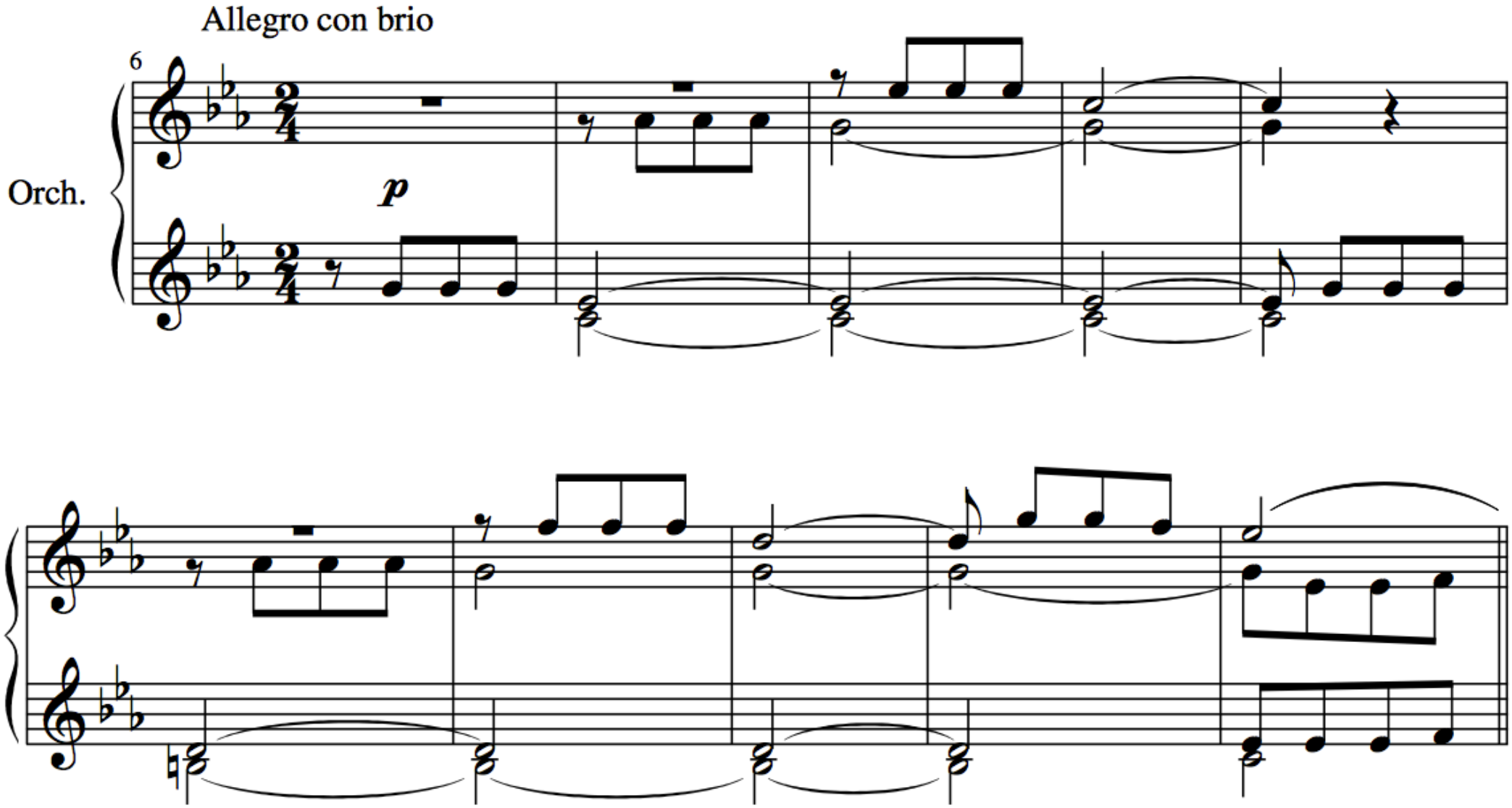
- This will be combined with Roman Numerals in Chapter 4

Bass position	Triad symbol	Seventh chord symbol
Root position	(none)	7
Root position	6	$\frac{6}{5}$
Second inversion	$\frac{6}{4}$	$\frac{4}{3}$
Third inversion	(none)	$\frac{4}{2}$ (or 2)

Bruckner: Tantum Ergo no. 4

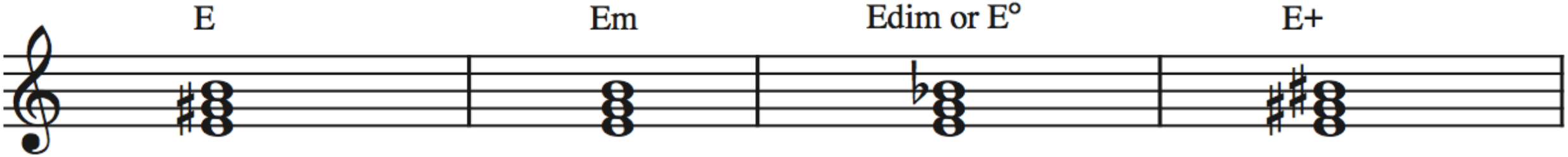


Beethoven, Symphony no. 5 in c minor, op. 67, mvt. 1, mm. 6-15



Lead Sheet Symbols

- There are nine basic lead-sheet symbols you need to know
  - Triads:
    - Major, minor, diminished, augmented
  - Seventh Chords:
    - Major 7th, Major-minor 7th (dominant), minor 7th, half-diminished 7th, (fully) diminished 7th.



Lead Sheet Symbols & Inversions

- To indicated an inversion with a lead sheet symbols, we write the lowest sounding note under the chord symbol (if it is not the root)
- For example, an Em chord with a G in the bass is in what inversion?
  - 1st Inversion
  - So we would write Em/G

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APRIL IN PARIS

— VERNON DUKE