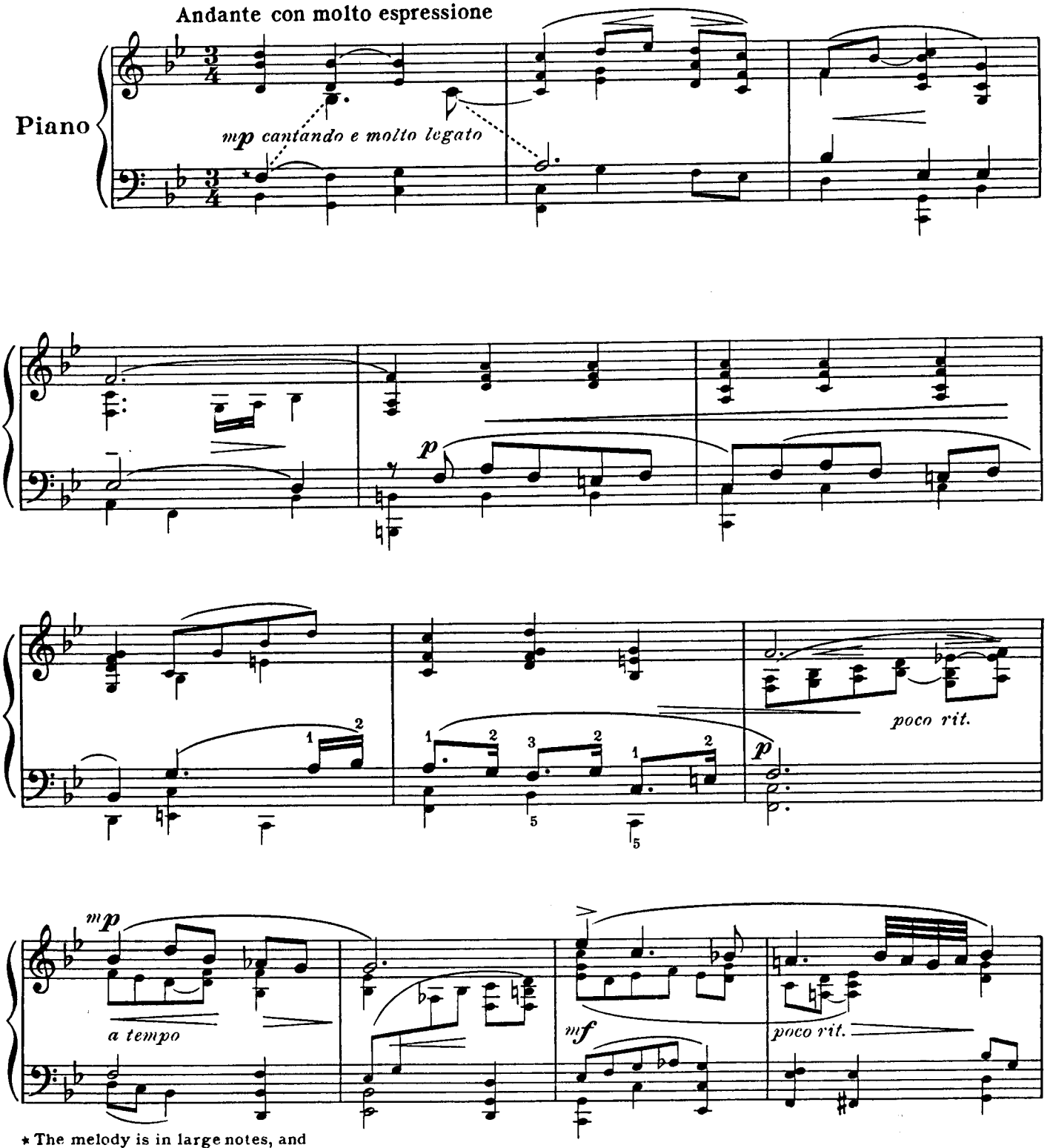
If Thou Art Near

"Bist du bei Mir"

Johann Sebastian Bach

Transcribed for piano by
Elinor Remick Warren



* The melody is in large notes, and must be brought out at all times.

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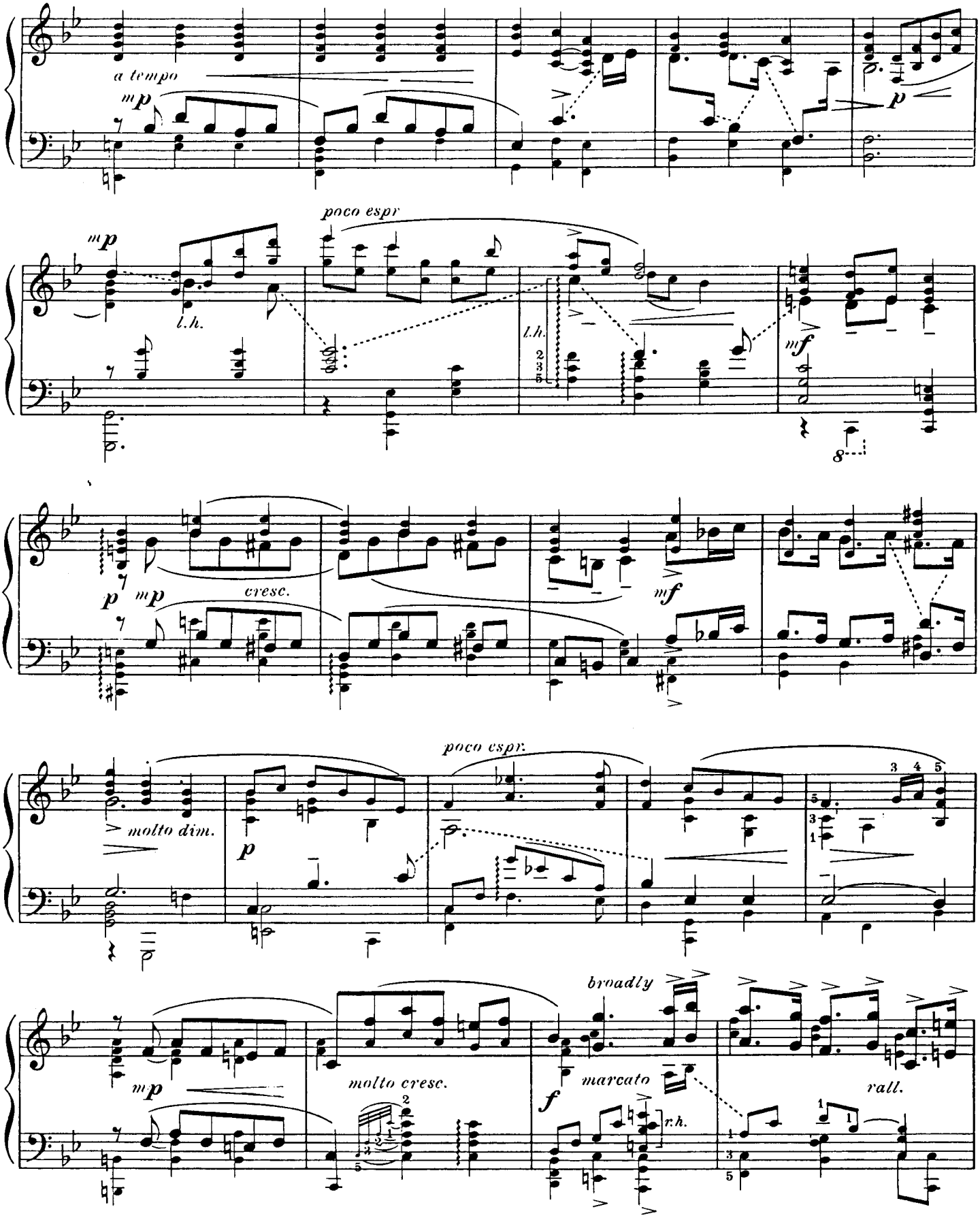
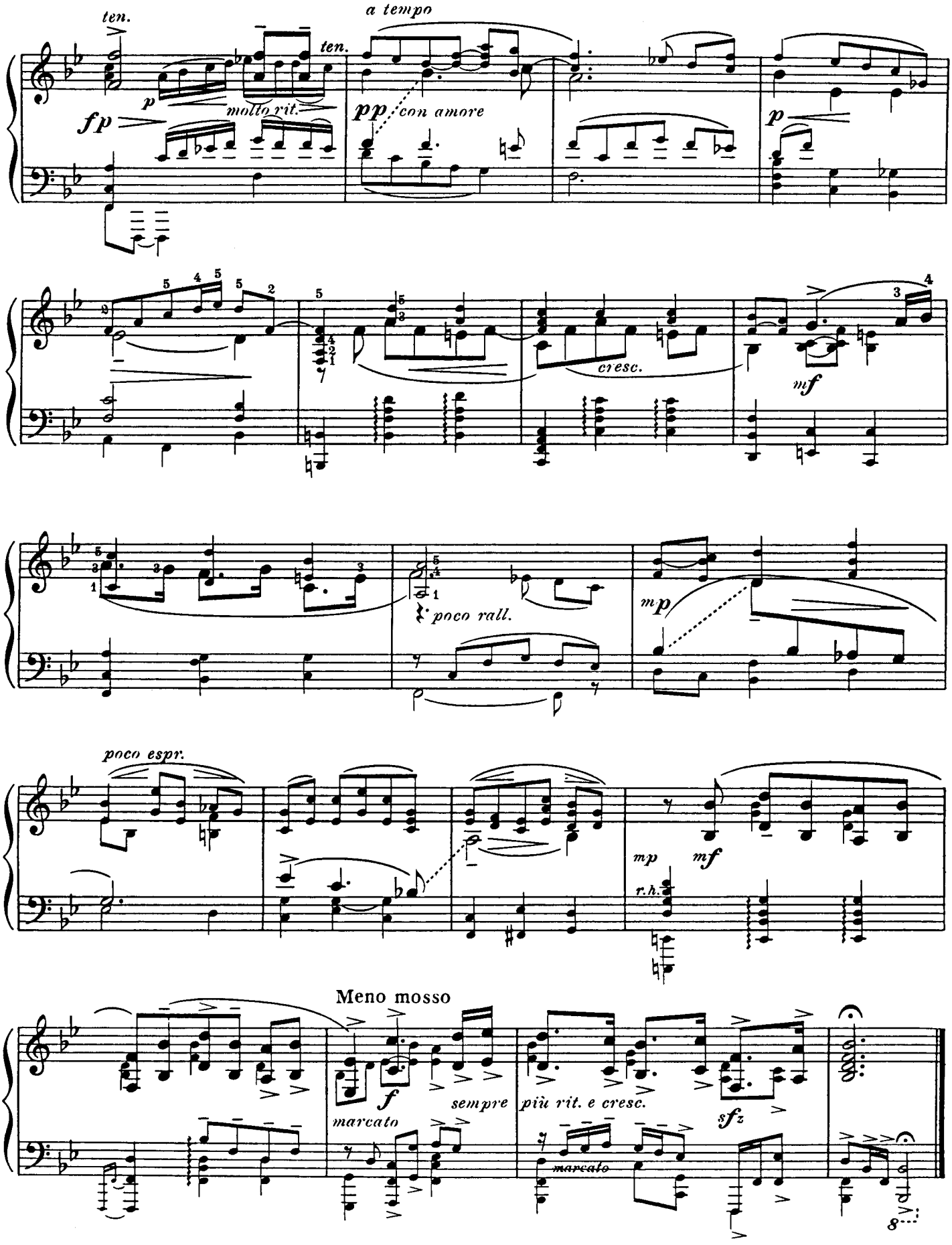

a tempo
mp
p
poco espr
mp
l.h.
l.h.
mf
8
p
mp
cresc.
mf
poco espr.
molto dim.
p
3 4 5
mp
molto cresc.
2
broadly
f
marcato
r.h.
rall.


ten.
a tempo
ten.
p
molto rit.
fp
pp
con amore
p
cresc.
mf
poco rall.
mp
poco espr.
mp
mf
r.h.
Meno mosso
f
marcato
sempre
più rit. e cresc.
sfz
marcato

This tender melody, *If Thou Art Near*, (*Bist du bei mir*) reflects an impression of the great Bach, of which we are perhaps not as aware as that side of his character which shines through his inspired church compositions or his expressive fugues.

While Bach was of a deeply religious nature (the bulk of his music being written for the church), he was a jolly, wholseome man, who loved his wife, his large family of children, and life in general. Far from being the stern gentleman with the severe white wig we meet in familiar portraits, Bach's expansive nature exemplified most of the enduring human virtues. He wrote a number of love songs for his wife, for he adored her with a tender regard that only his beautiful music could adequately express.

Thus we find today, after more than two hundred years, this tranquil but empassioned memento of his eternal devotion for his Anna Magdalena. This transcription for piano maintains, insofar as possible, the straightforwardness and warm simplicity that characterizes the original song.

Elinor Remick Warren [1939]

Warren transcribed Bach's famous air in 1939, the third year of her marriage to Z. Wayne Griffin. The composition was subsequently performed by Warren in concert, and by other pianists, notably Stewart Wille on his many tours as accompanist for Lawrence Tibbett. Following the death of Griffin, with whom she said she was "always in love," after a forty-five-year marriage, Warren began her piano practice with this composition each day, feeling that every time she played it her husband was close in spirit.

Virginia Bortin [1996]