

## Web Feature 12.1

### Motives in Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 3, 3rd movement

The third movement of J. S. Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 (the opening of which is shown in Web Example 12.1) illustrates how several types of motivic development may be used together to create a rich musical surface. From the pattern of imitation, it might appear that the motive consists of twelve sixteenth notes. Closer inspection, however, shows that the second set of six sixteenth notes is an inversion of the first, so one could alternatively label the *first* six sixteenth notes as the motive, followed immediately by its inversion (is it real or tonal?).

At the third measure, a sequence begins, and the nature of the material in the first violins at this point presents another interesting question; is the pattern of twelve sixteenth notes that begins in measure 3 the inversion of the six-sixteenth-note motive, followed by the original motive transposed—or is the *entire* twelve-sixteenth-note passage the inversion of the original twelve-sixteenth-note motive? Both interpretations are plausible, and in fact which one is chosen may depend on the tempo at which the movement is performed; at a faster tempo we are less likely to subdivide the twelve-note into two six-note motives.

This musical score is for a string ensemble, featuring Violins (Vln.), Violas (Vla.), and Violas/Celli (Vne. & Cem.). The score is written in 12/8 time and G major. It consists of nine staves, with the first three for Violins (I, II, III), the next three for Violas (I, II, III), and the final one for Violas and Celli. The music is divided into two measures. The first measure contains a complex melodic line for the Violins and a steady eighth-note accompaniment for the lower strings. The second measure continues the melodic development for the Violins and the accompaniment for the lower strings.

**Violins (Vln.)**  
I: Treble clef, G major, 12/8 time. Melodic line with eighth-note patterns.  
II: Treble clef, G major, 12/8 time. Melodic line with eighth-note patterns.  
III: Treble clef, G major, 12/8 time. Melodic line with eighth-note patterns.

**Violas (Vla.)**  
I: Alto clef, G major, 12/8 time. Accompaniment line with eighth notes.  
II: Alto clef, G major, 12/8 time. Accompaniment line with eighth notes.  
III: Alto clef, G major, 12/8 time. Accompaniment line with eighth notes.

**Vne. & Cem.**  
I: Bass clef, G major, 12/8 time. Accompaniment line with eighth notes.

The image displays a musical score for three staves, likely representing the first three parts of a three-part setting. The score is written in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a '3' above the staff, indicating a triplet. The first two staves are in treble clef, and the third is in bass clef. The music consists of continuous eighth-note patterns. The first staff has a more complex melodic line with some accidentals, while the second and third staves have simpler, more rhythmic patterns. The score is divided into two systems by a vertical bar line. The first system contains measures 1 and 2, and the second system contains measures 3 and 4. The key signature and time signature are consistent throughout.

Web Example 12.1. Bach, Brandenburg Concerto #3 (iii), measures 1–4.