FULL SCORE

THREE BACH CHORALES

by

J. S. Bach

Transcribed and Arranged by

Steven L. Rosenhaus

Concert String Orchestra Series

INSTRUMENTATION

2-Full Score

8-1st Violin

8-2nd Violin

5-Viola

5-Cello

5- Double bass

Duration: Approx. 4 minutes.
Grade: 2 ½ (Medium-Easy)

Complete Printed Set (w/2 scores) $60.00
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ABOUT THE COMPOSER

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) was a composer, organist, and church music director in Germany. During his lifetime he was primarily known as an organist; today he is considered a master of counterpoint and the epitome of Baroque music. He was a prolific composer who composed not only for organ and other keyboards — his most famous keyboard work is the two-volume collection of preludes and fugues called *The Well-Tempered Clavier* – but also composed works for orchestra (the six "Brandenburg" concertos, for example), many cantatas, passions, and other large vocal works, and a variety of chamber works.

There are more than 300 chorales harmonized by Bach; many were used in works like the *St. Matthew Passion* and the cantatas. He may have done others for practice or to have available for future works. Most were harmonized in four lines (corresponding to Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass voices in a church choir), but some were done in figured-bass, in which the melody line and bass line only are given along with numbers and other symbols to indicate the inner voices. The second chorale found here, *Kein Stüdlein geht dahin*,is in fact one of the latter and filled in by the arranger.

PROGRAM NOTES

The melodies of the *Three Bach Chorales* were not actually composed by Johann Sebastian Bach. Most if not all were in current usage in the Lutheran church; in turn these and the other several hundred tunes came from a variety of sources within and outside the church. It is what Bach *did* with these tunes, harmonizing them in clear, even simple ways that are astounding when performed or heard.

The titles in the original German and most common English versions are: I. *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden / O Sacred Head Now Wounded*; II. *Kein Stündlein geht dahin / No Brief Hour Vanishes*; and III. *Alles is an Gottes Segen / Everything is in God's Blessing*.

The text of the first chorale is a translation by Paul Gerdardt (1607-1676) of a medieval Latin poem. The tune, originally written by Hans Leo Hassler (1564-1612), was later adapted to fit Gerhardt's text.

Bach in turn arranged the tune to use in the *St. Matthew Passion*, as well as in the *Christmas Oratorio* and a cantata. It is interesting to note that in the 20th century singer/songwriter Paul Simon used the tune, mostly as harmonized by Bach, as the basis for his song *American Tune*.

The composer of the second chorale melody is unknown, but the earliest appearance of the tune was in 1698. In 1736, Breitkopf published it as part of a collection of 954 tunes harmonized by Bach with figured bass (melody line, bass line, and numbers and other symbols to indicate the harmonies). The harmonizaiton here is by the arranger, following Bach's figured bass notations.

The melody of the last chorale is by Johann Löhner (1645-1705), as adapted with the current text for the *Harmonischer Lieder-Schatz* (1738). It was later harmonized by J.S. Bach, although it is unclear whether it was for a specific larger work.

CONDUCTOR NOTES

Bach did not provide any tempo indications or dynamics. Conductors are free to adhere to or change any of these as they see fit. Bowings are sparingly provided when clarification is necessary; otherwise it is safe to assume that strong beats are to be played down bow and weak ones up bow.

These chorales were chosen to help ensembles develop intonation and strengthen ear training abilities overall.

Performing chorales, with their clear-cut harmonic progressions, helps to develop attention to cadences and creating a long line.

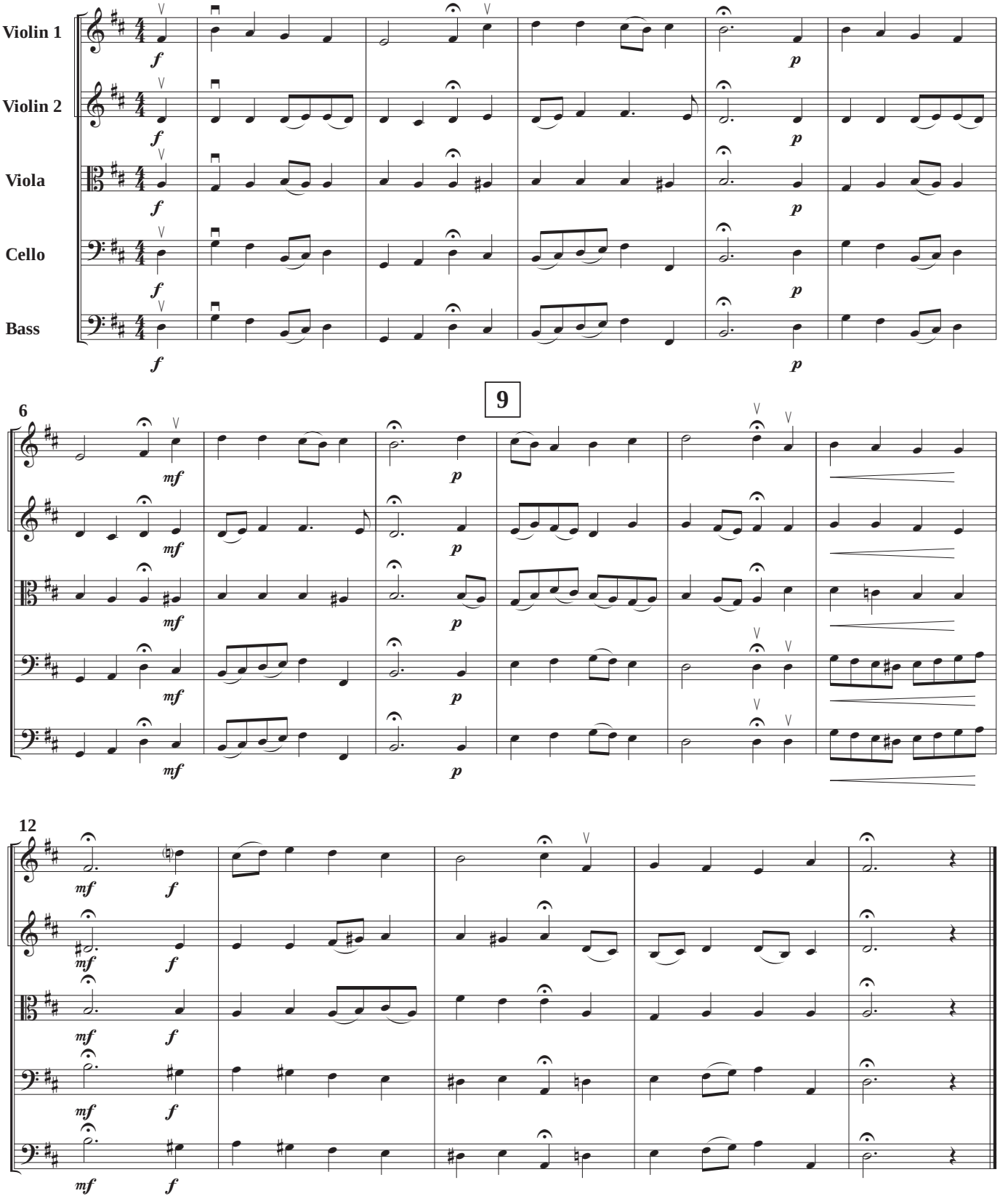
Chorales are also good for helping ensembles with balance and blending and, of course, tone quality. For variety and playing challenges, play the chorales without fermatas, or completely *pizzicato*.

THREE BACH CHORALES

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
Transcribed and arranged by Steven L. Rosenhaus

I. O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden

Moderato ♩ = ca. 84



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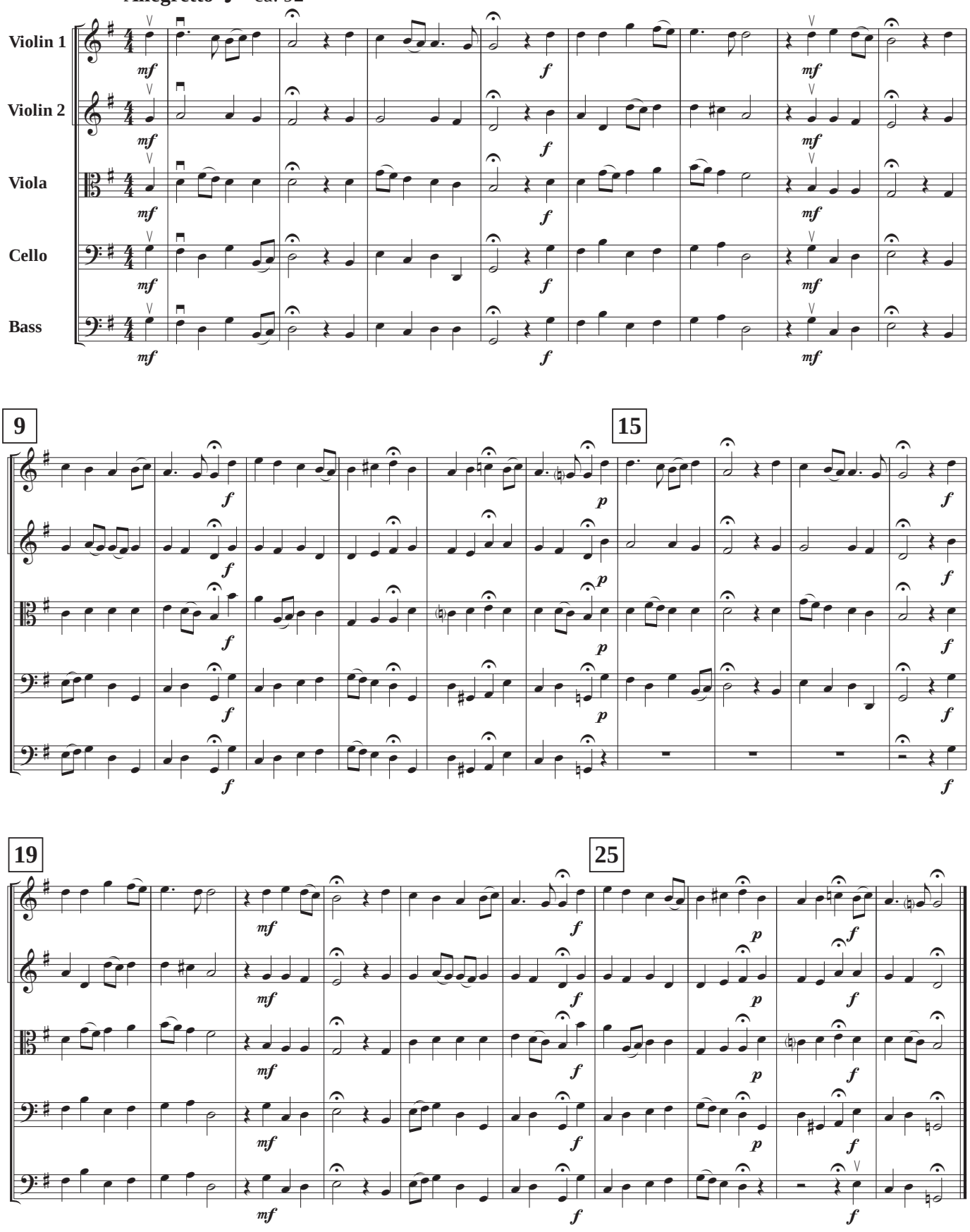
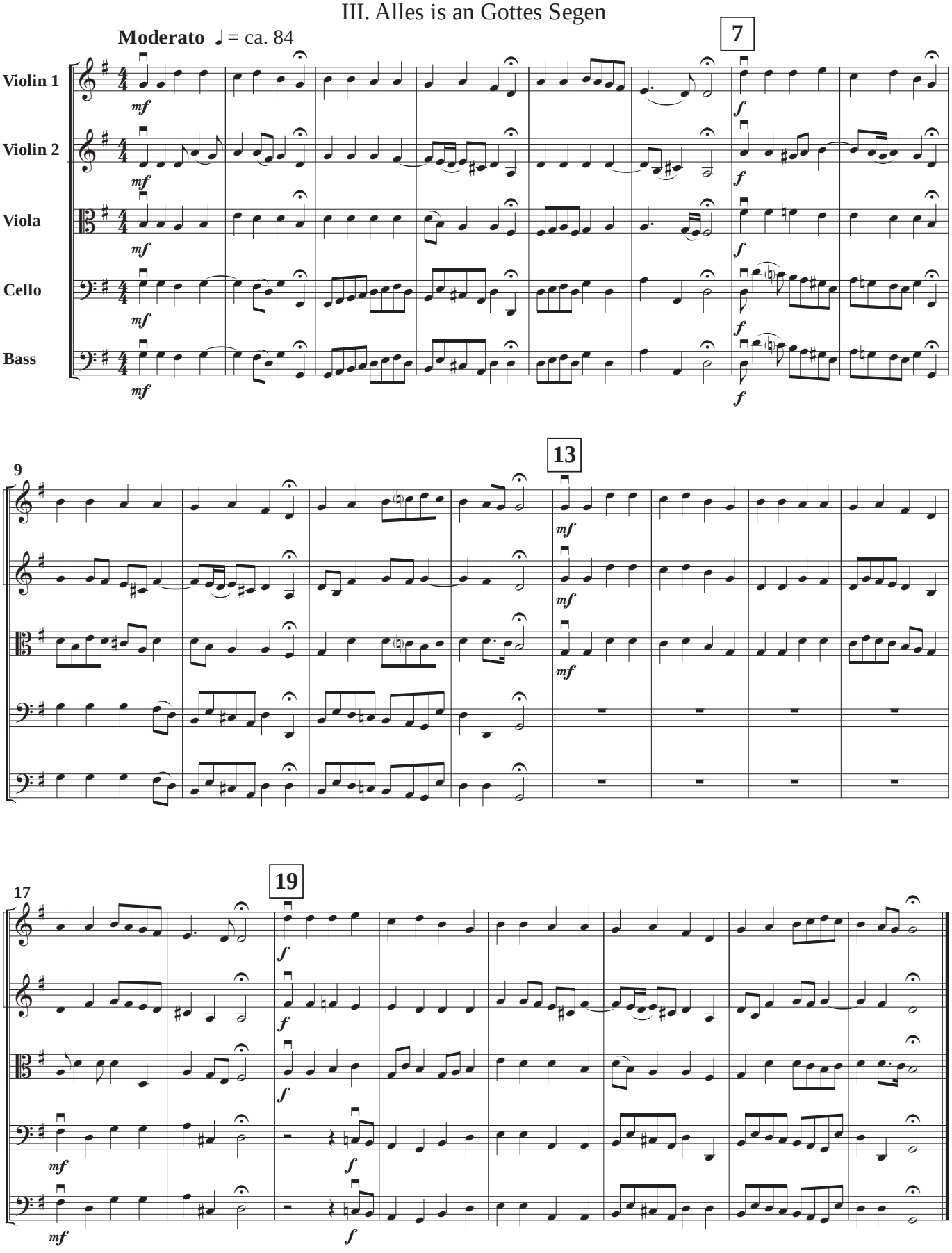
II. Kein Stüdlein geht dahin

Allegretto ♩ = ca. 92



III. Alles is an Gottes Segen



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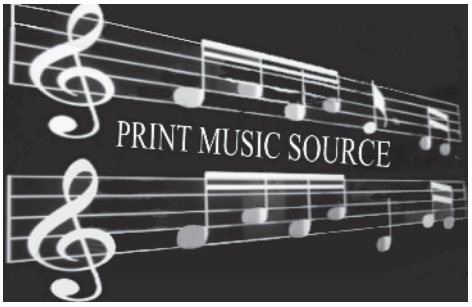
THEMES LIKE WE'VE HEARD THIS BEFORE
Steven L. Rosenhaus

THREE BACH CHORALES
J.S. Bach/Steven L. Rosenhaus



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