

Tilman Hoppstock

Bach's lute works
from the guitarist's view



Vol. 1

Suites BWV 995 / 996

Comment by Gustav Leonhardt

Dear Mr. Hoppstock,

I read your text on Bach's music for lute with great interest. I wish your publication all the success it deserves and hope that numerous guitarists will occupy themselves with the content of this meticulously written book. With admiration for your accomplished effort and best wishes,

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gustav Leonhardt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gustav Leonhardt
Amsterdam, 2nd April 2009

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Appoggiaturas (passing notes) with falling thirds

In all Baroque instructive textbooks, the possibility of filling the space between falling thirds or sequences of thirds with appoggiaturas is frequently mentioned. Passing notes can also be inserted between individual thirds for a more expressive character. The execution of the rhythmical insertion depends on the context of the melody notes. In his book "Bach Interpretation" (5, p. 438), Paul Badura-Skoda illustrates a wonderful example of Bach's fantasy and flexibility with the aid of two versions of the well-known Invention BWV 772:

Invention C major BWV 772 (early version):

The image shows the early version of the Invention BWV 772 in C major. It features a sequence of falling thirds in the right hand, with appoggiaturas (passing notes) inserted between them. The left hand provides a simple harmonic accompaniment.

Invention C major BWV 772a (last version):

The image shows the last version of the Invention BWV 772a in C major. It features a sequence of falling thirds in the right hand, with appoggiaturas and triplets inserted between them. The left hand provides a simple harmonic accompaniment.

Bar 23 in the intabulated version of the Sarabande from the Suite BWV 997 displays a similar variant:

(copy by Kirnberger + Agricola):

The image shows the Sarabande from Suite BWV 997, as copied by Kirnberger and Agricola. It features a sequence of falling thirds in the right hand, with appoggiaturas inserted between them. The left hand provides a simple harmonic accompaniment.

(Intabulation by Weyrauch):

The image shows the Sarabande from Suite BWV 997, as intabulated by Weyrauch. It features a sequence of falling thirds in the right hand, with appoggiaturas and triplets inserted between them. The left hand provides a simple harmonic accompaniment.

In bar 91 of the Gavotte en Rondeaux from the Suite BWV 1006a, the composer notates instead of a simple version...

The image shows bar 91 of the Gavotte en Rondeaux from Suite BWV 1006a. It features a sequence of falling thirds in the right hand, with appoggiaturas and triplets inserted between them. The left hand provides a simple harmonic accompaniment.

...a 'tripletisation' of the thirds:

The bars 1 to 8 (i.e. the rondo theme) – occasionally slightly varied – appear a total of six times. There is no reason why a little imagination would be out of place here.

Gavotte en Rondeaux from BWV 1006a, bar 3 (autograph):

The image shows bar 3 of the Gavotte en Rondeaux from Suite BWV 1006a, as written in the autograph. It features a sequence of falling thirds in the right hand, with appoggiaturas inserted between them. The left hand provides a simple harmonic accompaniment.

Possible variants:

The image shows three possible variants of bar 3 of the Gavotte en Rondeaux from Suite BWV 1006a. Each variant features a sequence of falling thirds in the right hand, with appoggiaturas and triplets inserted between them. The left hand provides a simple harmonic accompaniment.

1

Prélude - Linear Structure

HARMONIC FIELDS

A minor

chords: a E a E A

(D minor)

A minor

3 d A d E

5

additional tension because of change between E major and E minor

SEQUENCE FIELD

E major/E minor

E major/E minor

5 a E e H E a

9

instrument through greater attention to the damping of the bass notes. As an exercise, I recommend imagining the movement at double the speed. If the bass notes are sung in accompaniment, the pulse-like structure of the movement becomes clear; emphases on the relevant first beats of the bar are more perceptible, above all if there is a delayed bass note in the lower octave on the second crotchet beat of a bar (bars 7, 9, 10, 12-14, 16-19, 21 and 22). The prolongation of the note (see above example, bars 10 and 12) would in contrast weaken the principle beat of the bar.

I do however not advocate that all bass notes notated as a crotchet should actually be played dogmatically short: there is also a certain degree of tolerance (perhaps up to a quaver value, dependent on the underlying tempo). The damping of the bass notes should be performed more in the manner of a fade-out.

This method of notation is in no way instrument-specific in Bach's music. It would however be interesting to speculate whether he would have notated this movement differently for organ, as in this case the abrupt damping of the bass notes would be extremely conspicuous and perhaps even distracting. I also think that the pulsating element of heavy/light beats would not be particularly reconcilable with the somewhat static tone of the organ. Let us therefore imagine that the composer had in this case actually notated the pedal points as long sustained notes and also "extended" all the notes of chords to produce a completely different tonal quality more suited to the tonal qualities of the instrument. The following musical example (bars 1-14) of a fictive version for organ presents us with the Prélude as an expansive monumental tonal architecture in which the harmonic cosmos somewhat eclipses the gestural aspect of the versions for cello or lute:

4

I am entirely convinced that Bach has always attempted to provide a guideline for the interpretation of his works through the notation of note values and rests. In the case of the introduction to the Prélude, this undoubtedly gives rise to interesting opportunities for discussion generating a variety of opinions.

Final chord – initial chord?

Should the E major chord which is already included in 3/8 time be considered as the final chord of the introduction or the beginning of the next section? "*Mr. Authentic*" (I am borrowing this figure from Anner Bylsma's book "*Bach, the fencing master...*") would perhaps in this case tend towards the latter. According to the Baroque sense of taste, the so-called transition chords which frequently form both the culmination and beginning of the next section are customarily oriented towards the subsequent phrase. In the case of this Suite, it is hard to make a decision, as this type of chord divides not merely a single thought but also the complete half of a movement. According to this premise, it is advisable to give the principle beat slightly less accentuation, but to play it in the new tempo of the *Tres-Viste* section. This permits the retention of a certain degree of finality at the end of the introduction but also provides new momentum for the upbeat of the new section.

This fairly inconspicuous set of parallels is however not comparable with two passages in the Tres viste movement; what we see there is Bach at his most idiosyncratic. These two passages are structurally identical: bars 81/82 and 109/110. As they display such great similarity, we will focus exclusively on the bars 81/82. First of all, here is the version for cello, followed by its dissected polyphonic “translation”:

15 Cello, ab Takt 80:

↓

Cello, from bar 80 (dissected structure):

Here we can recognise that the foundations for bass line as the basis for the harmony had already been laid down in the version for cello. Now we will observe what Bach does with the version for lute and notice,...

(15) Lute, from bar 80 (original version):

...that the already existing bass structure in the cello version has been doubled here. This is extremely uncommon! Something quite different would perhaps have been anticipated from a comparison with other endings customarily utilised by Bach. Here are three fictitious examples:

16 From bar 80, fictive ending a):

From bar 80, fictive ending b):

From bar 80, fictive ending c):

Leopold Godowsky (1870-1938) pulls out all the stops of pianistic virtuosity in his version of the fugue. The second entry of the theme is already answered by a thematic counterpoint in stretto and Bach's original third entry (bars 21/22) is made to seem like a fourth voice due to the prior insertion of an additional entry (bars 15/16). The movement subsequently develops into a Neo-Romantic display of fireworks.

Leopold Godowsky, *Allegro espressivo (Tres viste)* from the *Suite BWV 1011*:

Fuga

Allegro espressivo (♩ = 44 - 48)

19

The musical score consists of five systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is two flats (B-flat major), and the time signature is 3/8. The tempo is marked 'Allegro espressivo' with a metronome marking of quarter note = 44-48. The score includes the following markings and annotations:

- Measure 19: *p*, *espressivo*, *Red.**
- Measure 20: *Red.**, *Red.**, *Red.**
- Measure 21: *Red.**, *Red.**, *Red.**
- Measure 22: *Red.**, *Red.**, *Red.**
- Measure 23: *Red.**, *Red.**, *Red.**
- Measure 24: *Red.**, *Red.**, *Red.**
- Measure 25: *Red.**, *Red.**, *Red.**

Other markings include *sempre p* in measure 21, *senza cresc.* in measure 22, and a fermata over the first measure of the fifth system.

9

Oratio Quindalinda Oratio Quindalinda

tun? *f* So geh hin-fort! Nie...! So geh hin - fort! Ich wei - che

//

11

Più Lento Vivace Molto Adagio

mf *f* *f* *f* *f*

mf *f* *f* *f* *f*

mf *f* *f* *f* *f*

mf *f* *f* *f* *f*

mf *f* *f* *f* *f*

Più Lento Molto Adagio

Oratio Quindalinda

nicht! *mf* So tu es doch... *p dolce* ach wüsst ich nur zu

Prologo - con la Suite 'a C⁶ da Gio. Sebast. Bach.

The image displays a handwritten musical score for BWV 996, titled "Prologo - con la Suite 'a C⁶ da Gio. Sebast. Bach." The score is written on multiple staves. The first staff is a treble clef with a common time signature (C). The second staff is a bass clef with a common time signature (C). The third staff is a treble clef with a common time signature (C). The fourth staff is a bass clef with a common time signature (C). The fifth staff is a treble clef with a common time signature (C). The sixth staff is a bass clef with a common time signature (C). The seventh staff is a treble clef with a common time signature (C). The eighth staff is a bass clef with a common time signature (C). The ninth staff is a treble clef with a common time signature (C). The tenth staff is a bass clef with a common time signature (C). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and clefs. The handwriting is in black ink on aged paper.