

# Baroque Ornamentation in the German Style

In the eighteenth century it was the fashion to ornament a melody and many players were highly proficient at improvising embellishments, as Jazz players are today. National styles varied greatly and whilst the French generally added grace notes, trills and mordants and the Italians preferred to conjure up long, winding melismas (lots of notes under a slur) linking notes of the melody together, the Germans cultivated their own distinctive style.

The two main sources of information we have from the first half of the eighteenth century come from Telemann and Quantz. Telemann's *Methodical Sonatas (Sonate Methodiche)* have no explanatory text, but each of the twelve sonatas contains one movement in two versions; one simpler, the other quite florid. Quantz took up this idea in his book, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen*, (translated as *On Playing the Flute*), providing one Adagio movement in both plain and highly ornamented versions. However, this is supplemented by several charts and a beat-by-beat explanation of how to exchange one idea for another together with an in-depth description of each tiny nuance which should characterize certain motives.

The offerings of both Quantz and Telemann share several common features:

- many added notes, governed by the harmony
- much rhythmic interest
- detailed articulation, also governed by the harmony.

Quantz makes it quite clear that an understanding of the harmony at any given moment is absolutely essential, so his sonatas, like all others of this period are always written out with the flute and continuo parts together. The figured bass is a convenient code indicating the harmony.

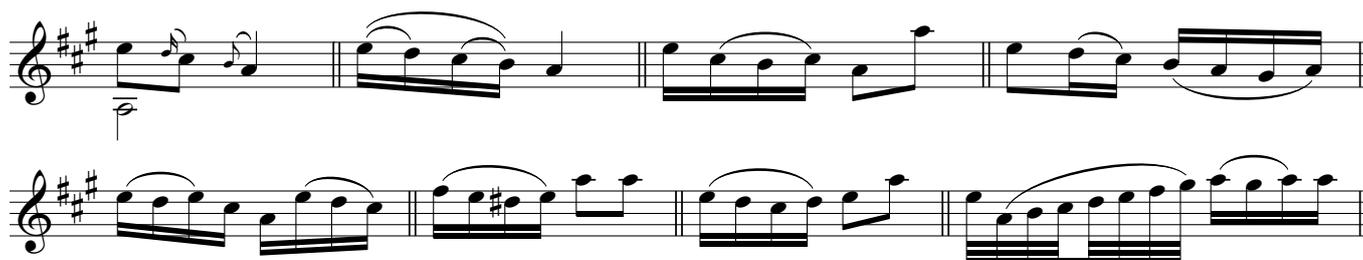
The added decorations may contain any notes of the accompanying chord (ex.1 bar 2), so, for example, an E in the melody above a chord of A major can be ornamented with a C# or an A or any combination of A, C# and E, taking care not to dwell too long at key points in unison or bare fifths with the bass. These extra harmony notes may be tongued or slurred.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for an A major chord in G major, 2/4 time. Each system consists of a treble staff and a bass staff. The first system shows a treble staff with a whole note chord (A major) followed by a melodic line with ornaments (C# and A) and a triplet. The second system shows a treble staff with a melodic line with ornaments and a triplet, and a bass staff with a whole note chord (A major).

Ex.1 suggestions for ornamenting an A major chord with consonant harmony notes.

Passing notes add a welcome touch of spice but must be prepared and properly resolved: that is, a note outside the harmony must lead to an adjacent note of the chord. So to this A major chord a D may be added and it would naturally fall a step to the C# below it. B might be added but would either fall to the A or rise to the C#. Usually these dissonant notes have just occurred in the previous chord and are simply repeated, clashing with the new harmony but melting away to a consonant note.

Passing notes are always slurred from a harmony note or onto one; that way their resolution is smooth. The grace notes can be performed as appoggiaturas taking half the length of the note (or less) or as unaccented passing notes placed before the beat.



Ex. 2 Introducing slurred passing notes over A major chord.

A typical feminine phrase-ending with a 4-3 harmony (dissonant 4th above the bass resolving to a consonant 3rd) might be notated with a grace note or written out in full. In his *Sonate Methodiche* Telemann provides an array of possibilities for decorating this common descending step, sometimes incorporating the 5th with the 4th (E and D in ex. 3 below) or a lower appoggiatura (B) or both.



Ex. 3 extracts transposed from Telemann *Sonate Methodiche*.

Play these through with the accompanying harmony. Note the slurring patterns and make any dissonant notes more expressive (ie. diminuendo to their following resolutions).

Telemann's ornaments are highly inventive and full of rhythmic variety, rarely repeating one new idea for more than half a bar. He introduces repeated notes, dotted rhythms, Lombardic rhythms (backwards dotted), triplets, faster notes, interspersed rests, syncopation as well as grace notes and trills and, more rarely, a whoosh of Italianate exuberance (upbeat to the middle of bar 7 in ex.4). This example from the lovely A major sonata gives the various versions for the opening thematic material and its reappearance in the dominant later in the movement.

## Adagio

bar 1

bar 7

Ex. 4 Telemann Sonata in A Major from *Sonate Methodiche*, bars 1-2 and 7-9

Note Telemann's delight in anticipating the anacrusis, giving a sense of continuity in the melody and a little more urgency in the syncopations. Counterbalancing this, he delays the entry of the very first note, holds it in suspension then cascades to the middle of the bar in a graceful, lilting line. Longer notes such as dotted crotchets (quarters) are drawn out by the addition of trill or turn figures (bar 1, 3rd beat and bar 8, 1st beat). Arpeggios enrich the melody by introducing all the notes of the chord (bar 1, 4th beat, bar 2, 1st beat and bar 7, 3rd beat). Auxiliary notes (passing notes between repeated harmony notes) add filigree around the bare intervals in bar 8.

By comparison, Quantz's *Adagio* is composed in a deliberately simple fashion, allowing huge scope for ornamentation. Example 5 presents Quantz's plain melodic line alongside his two ornamented versions, taken from the opening (bar 1) and the recapitulation (bar 21). Above this are four more lines concocted from the alternative suggestions in Quantz's ornamentation charts (*On Playing the Flute*, pages 136-161). This involves quite a bit of patchwork, so it is important to consider which ideas flow naturally into the next without preempting what is to come. He likens this way of learning to gathering pollen from many different flowers!

The nuances, which he described in a complicated string of abbreviations in the book, are indicated here with approximate dynamics, crescendos and diminuendos. The passing notes tend to be softer than the melody notes, creating light and shade in otherwise smooth lines.

Both Quantz and Telemann ornament their movements from start to finish, yet Quantz adds that that is not necessary and the player must judge what is appropriate. Most importantly, all embellishment should be performed in the character of the movement and that particular phrase: bold ornaments for a majestic, angry or impassioned work; soft, tender ornaments for a gentle piece.

substitute ideas from Quantz's ornamentation charts

The image displays a musical score for an Adagio movement. The top section consists of four staves of music, each with various ornaments and dynamics. The ornaments are labeled with letters and numbers: 10.a, 9.n, 24.k, 8.ll, 1.t, 8.dd, 22.b, 20.b, 9.h, 24.p, 8.h, 1.b, 8.bb, 22.d, 20.a, 9.d, 24.i, 8.l, 1.q, 22.g, 20.d, 9.g, 24.q, 8.f, 1.g, 22.k. Dynamics include *p*, *mf*, *f*, and *p f*. The bottom section is labeled 'Adagio' and 'Quantz' and features a 'Fig:' section with ornaments 26.c, 9.ll, 28.d, 8.i, 26.f, 8.aa, 26.e, 28.b, 20.c, 9.l, 24.o, 27.f, 1.s, 8.cc, and a trill (tr). Dynamics include *p*, *mp*, *f*, *p*, *f*, *p*, *f*, *p*, *p*, *mp*, *p*, *p*, *mf*, *p*, *f*, *p*, *f*, and *>*. The bottom staff shows a bass line with fingerings 6, 6, 6, 5, 6.

Ex. 5 Extract from *Adagio* in Quantz, *Versuch*, (*On Playing the Flute*, p.169)

Unfortunately nowadays almost all our baroque repertoire is printed with the flute part separate from the bass: effectively it is like starting off on a journey without the map or on a treasure hunt without the clues. An extremely good ear, a quick sense of the harmonic direction, repeated hearing and a good memory are required to compensate but a score is really essential. Any of the facsimile reprints of baroque music will provide this.

I have been working on a new edition of Quantz sonatas, written for Frederick the Great and never before published, which I hope will set a new trend in printing flute and bass parts together. These are exhilarating, virtuosic works, yet many of the slow movements are relatively simple and cry out for ornamentation. Ideal pieces to try out Quantz's suggestions then!

Taking just the short opening two bar phrase from the Sonata in A major, no. 351, here are some suggestions for elaborating it at the recapitulation. Many of the ideas are interchangeable. Note how an understanding of the simple harmony is paramount: A major chord (tonic) followed by its dominant, E major, then subdominant, D major, followed by the dominant 7th, E7 leading to the tonic, A, with suspended 4-3 (D-C#). Any of the harmony notes may be used, interspersed with slurred passing notes in a wide variety of constantly changing rhythms and characterful articulation to match.

Grave mà cantabile

The image displays a musical score for a piano exercise, consisting of 12 staves of treble clef music and a grand staff at the bottom. The score is annotated with various ornaments and performance instructions. The first staff is marked "Grave mà cantabile". The score includes various ornaments such as trills (tr), grace notes (+), and triplets (3). The grand staff at the bottom is also marked "Grave mà cantabile" and "Quantz". The chord progression at the bottom of the grand staff is: I, Ic, V, IVb, Vb, V<sup>7</sup>, I.

Ex. 6 Suggestions for ornamentation of Quantz Sonata in A Major no. 351, 1st movement.

Play these suggestions through with the harmony (I find this easiest at the piano). Try performing each version in a bold, declamatory way, then in a more graceful, charming way and decide what the melody needs. Experiment with interchanging the ideas to create new possibilities. Memorize your favourite ornaments and play them whilst looking at the original plain melody. Then invent your own ornaments, inspired by Quantz and Telemann!

The Methodical Sonatas are published in a modern edition by Bärenreiter and in facsimile by Alamire and SPES. Edward Reilly's English translation of Quantz's book *On Playing the Flute* is published by Faber.

Two substantial volumes of Quantz flute sonatas will soon be published by Uppernote, available from my website ([www.rachelbrownflute.com](http://www.rachelbrownflute.com)) and flute shops. These sonatas were composed for the sole use of Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, and have never been published before. They contain much virtuosic, dramatic music alongside charming slow movements which are ideal for trying out all the suggestions found in this article! A more detailed description is already up on the website and, following publication, an in-depth performance guide to many aspects of interpretation, such as tempos, rhythmic alteration, articulation, ornamentation and cadenzas will also be available on-line.

The Urtext edition contains flute and figured bass parts together, a duplicate part for cello, a realised keyboard part by Terence Charlston and facsimile copies of the original manuscripts.

Following Telemann's example, the initial production is open to subscription. Subscribers will be listed in the publication, just as JS Bach is to be found among the many subscribers to Telemann's Paris Quartets! If you would like to support this worthy project please contact Rachel at [info@upernote.com](mailto:info@upernote.com) by September 17th.

For readers in the UK, the new edition will be launched at a lecture-recital to be held at the Royal College of Music, London, at 6pm on Friday 19th November 2010. Admission is free but by ticket, available from the RCM box office [www.boxoffice.rcm.ac.uk](http://www.boxoffice.rcm.ac.uk) or tel: 020 7591 4314.

Two cds of Quantz sonatas are available from Rachel's website, described in *Pan* as "a revelation".