

## 2. Style: When in Rome...

### General notes on style

Once you have learned to execute basic realizations on your instrument, the vast world of correct style opens up to you. Below are some of the basics for harpists:

Be attentive to the sound that you are producing. The modern ideal of a rich, mellow tone and even articulation was not necessarily the Baroque ideal. Bartolomeo Jovernardi (c.1600-1668), an Italian harpist and theorist living in Spain, suggested in his *Tratado de la musica* (Madrid, 1634) that Italian harpists might have played with nails for a certain sound,<sup>14</sup> whereas the Welsh players used the fleshy tip of the finger. Also, string material was not always gut. Metal and horsehair were also used. Experiment with using nails or playing close to the board for a different tone quality. Also, performing scholars approach the harp with weighted articulation, stressing every other note of a scale with a lift on the notes in between. Approach your continuo accompaniment in a similar manner, and place fuller chords on strong beats and thinner chords on weak beats.

Your continuo realization should be organic. Change your realization to complement the ensemble. For example, when working with a bowed bass instrument, use fuller right hand chords with less emphasis on the bass line. Experiment with giving the bass line exclusively to the bowed bass instrument. The rich sound of the viola da gamba, cello and bass viol provides a tremendous amount of support to any harmonization. When working with a lute, place more emphasis on the deep bass notes that are not available on the lute. Double the bass line if you are working on a triple harp. Complement the

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<sup>14</sup> Mara Galassi, "The arpa a tre registri in seventeenth century Rome," in *Historical Harps*, ed. Heidrun Rosenzweig (Dornach, Switzerland: Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, 1991), 65.

harpichord by providing a wide range of timbres and dynamics. The organ will benefit from a clear, articulate bass line and quick, light ornamentation. When you are serving as the only continuo player, the complete bass line must be intact. Harmonize as desired above this. **Tasto solo**, playing only the bass note with no harmonization, is effective for fugal entries. Experiment in this situation with playing in the alto or tenor range.<sup>15</sup>

By placing more space, at least an octave, between the bass line and your accompanying right hand chords you create a light, clear sound. Move the accompanying chords closer to the bass line to create a more mellow sound. In order to project a soft chord in a large space, thin the chord or lower its register. Experiment with transposing the bass line up or down an octave to suit the acoustics of the hall or to accommodate more accidentals in the case of a multi-row harp. Note that playing the bass line down an octave was common practice for the seventeenth century lutenist, and German lutenists extended this practice into the eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup>

Don't arpeggiate early! Place the bass note of the chord *on* the beat. If there is one thing you remember from this manual, let it be this. Do not arpeggiate the chord before the beat.

### **National style**

Italians used a falling seventh in final, perfect cadences in the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.

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<sup>15</sup> Nigel North, *Continuo Playing on the Lute, Archlute and Theorbo: A comprehensive guide for performers* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), 68.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.



Figure 26. Perfect cadence with a falling seventh

Alessandro Scarlatti's (1660-1725) use of the falling seventh in his final cadences in the seventeenth century was exceptional.<sup>17</sup> The final chord in Italian music is often major, even for compositions written in a minor key. Italian music is not usually figured thoroughly, so you will be expected to add this figure to your music. Also, "In seventeenth-century Italy the song books recommended lute, theorbo, chitarrone, harpsichord, spinet or harp but never viola da gamba or cello in addition to the harmonic instrument..."<sup>18</sup> Theorbo or harp with organ makes a beautiful combination for early seventeenth century Italian music. Eighteenth century Italian music may benefit from a *tasto solo* approach, or even doubling the bass line.

Italian Baroque music tends to be lively and passionate. The popular **corrente** in Italy is a quick, but lilting, composition in simple triple meter. The triple meter Italian **sarabanda** is even livelier. This dance is related to the risqué Spanish zarabanda, which was banned from Spain in 1583,<sup>19</sup> and boldly contrasts the stately French sarabande.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>19</sup> *Harvard Dictionary*, s.v. "Sarabande," by Bruce Gustafson.

Meanwhile, the French preferred the common perfect cadence, especially in the eighteenth century:



Figure 27. Perfect cadence

They also preferred a minor final chord for compositions written in a minor key. Ornaments are accurately notated in French Baroque music, which tends to be sweet and somewhat restrained. The French courante dance was generally contrapuntal, somewhat solemn and in 3/2 time. The simple triple meter sarabande was also generally slow and expressive in France, and the second beat was accented. Note that by the time Bénigne de Bacilly (c.1625-1690) published his *Remarques curieuses sur l'art de bien chanter* (Paris, 1668), the harp was no longer used as a continuo instrument in France.<sup>20</sup> Frederick Neumann provides excellent information, albeit opinionated, on French dance tempos and ornamentation in his *Performance Practices of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (New York, 1993).

The English used the perfect cadence throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Composers Nicholas Lanier (1588-1666) and Henry Lawes (1596-1662) concluded their works in the Italian style with a major chord, while John Blow

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<sup>20</sup> Bénigne de Bacilly, *A Commentary on The Art of Proper Singing*, trans. and ed. by Austin B. Caswell (Netherlands: The Institute of Mediæval Music, Ltd., 1968), 11.

(1649-1708) concluded his works in the French style with a minor chord.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, the English interest in Italian style, particularly the Italian madrigal, waned during the Restoration period, and was replaced by a fascination with French style.<sup>22</sup> Both the English corrente and saraband dances were influenced by the French style, but the dances were played at a quick, Italian tempo.

Italian style dominated Germany until the eighteenth century. But like the French, Germans accurately notated ornamentation in Baroque music. Germans also followed the French sarabande concept. Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's (1714-1788) treatise *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen* (Berlin, 1753) has been translated into English and makes an excellent reference for later German Baroque style, as well as for the later Baroque style of many other countries, including Austria, Scandinavia and Russia.

The Baroque **style galant**, or the closely related **Empfindsamkeit** in Germany, crossed over national boundaries. This style of playing emphasized elegant ornamentation, particularly favoring the double dot, and a light, homophonic texture. Although filled with emotion, style galant compositions avoided confronting the deeper passions addressed in Italian Baroque music for example. A diverse group of composers were influenced by style galant, including Italy's Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) and Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-1736), the Iberian peninsula's Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757), Northern Germany's Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767) and C.P.E. Bach and even to some extent Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791). "For all its facile

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<sup>21</sup> North, 44.

<sup>22</sup> Donington, 102-3.

aspects, it was galant music which achieved the crucial transition between baroque music and classical music.”<sup>23</sup>

### **Ornamentation**

Ornamentation is tricky business. When you first begin to play continuo, you are so absorbed in realizing the chords that the idea of adding notes for elegance seems ludicrous! At some point however you notice that the lutenist segues from one section to the next with an effortless “ditty.” Maybe the harpsichordist adds a trill or a grace note to imitate the singer. The gamba player even seems to be swinging the rhythm. And upon closer examination, the singer is not recreating exactly what’s on the page. How does one ornament on the harp?

Just as you develop a repertoire of cadences and harmonic progressions that are familiar to you, you also need to develop a repertoire of ornaments that suit you and your playing style. Ornaments are used in Baroque music to express grace, virtuosity and personal style. They are not always indicated in the score, but are most certainly expected of the player. Although ornaments are primarily the responsibility of the soloist, discreet accompanists use ornamentation to enhance the solo line. But what is appropriate? The amount of ornamentation that was considered elegant and appropriate varied throughout the Baroque era. Begin by using ornamentation sparingly at first, and then increase the ornamentation as you become more comfortable. Study scores with detailed ornament indications, and then experiment with a more improvisational style. The paragraphs below represent the tip of the proverbial ornamentation iceberg.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 109.

What about the lutenist's effortless "ditty"? Let's begin with Fray Tomás de Santa María's (d. 1570) *Arte de tañer fantasia* (Valladolid, 1565). The objective of the treatise is to teach the improvisation of fantasias. Santa María provides an outstanding chart of "ditties" that might be used to ornament cadences and the like in Baroque music.

The image displays a series of musical staves for a lute. The notation is in a single system, with each staff representing a different melodic line. The first staff is labeled "Unison" and shows a sequence of notes with a fermata over the final note. The subsequent staves are labeled with ascending intervals: (b) Ascending 2nd, (c) Ascending 3rd, and (d) Ascending 4th. Each staff contains a sequence of notes, with a fermata over the final note of each sequence. The notation is in a single system, with each staff representing a different melodic line. The first staff is labeled "Unison" and shows a sequence of notes with a fermata over the final note. The subsequent staves are labeled with ascending intervals: (b) Ascending 2nd, (c) Ascending 3rd, and (d) Ascending 4th. Each staff contains a sequence of notes, with a fermata over the final note of each sequence.

(e) Ascending 5th

Exercise (e) consists of four staves of music. Each staff contains an ascending eighth-note scale. The first staff starts on middle C (C4) and ends on G4. The second staff starts on D4 and ends on A4. The third staff starts on E4 and ends on B4. The fourth staff starts on F4 and ends on C5. Each staff has a slur over the entire line of notes.

(f) Ascending 6th

Exercise (f) consists of one staff of music. It contains an ascending eighth-note scale starting on middle C (C4) and ending on F5. The staff has a slur over the entire line of notes.

(g) Ascending 7th

Exercise (g) consists of one staff of music. It contains an ascending eighth-note scale starting on middle C (C4) and ending on G5. The staff has a slur over the entire line of notes.

(h) Ascending Octave

Exercise (h) consists of one staff of music. It contains an ascending eighth-note scale starting on middle C (C4) and ending on C5. The staff has a slur over the entire line of notes.

(a) Descending 2nd

Exercise (a) consists of two staves of music. The first staff starts on G4 and ends on E4. The second staff starts on D4 and ends on B3. Each staff has a slur over the entire line of notes.

(b) Descending 3rd

Exercise (b) consists of one staff of music. It contains a descending eighth-note scale starting on G4 and ending on E3. The staff has a slur over the entire line of notes.



(c) Descending 4th

(d) Descending 5th

(e) Descending 6th

(f) Descending 7th

[59v.] (g) Descending Octave

Figure 28. A chart of glosas from Santa María's *Libro llamado el arte de tañer fantasia*.  
 Reprinted, by permission, from Almonte C. Howell Jr. and Warren E. Hultberg's

translation of *The Art of Playing the Fantasia*, trans., vol. 1 (Pittsburgh: Latin American Literary Review Press, 1991), 158-162.<sup>24</sup>

Begin by providing simple passing notes between intervals and experiment with more complex figures as you become more comfortable. Cadences and suspensions are excellent opportunities for ornamentation, so long as they do not interfere with the solo line.

What about the harpsichord trills and graces? The question for any trill is: does the execution begin on the note indicated or the upper neighbor? And the question for any grace note: is it executed before or on the beat? Santa María indicates that a trill, or a reiterated quiebros, typically begins on the note indicated, but “a current usage that one should note well because of its great artistry,” is to begin the trill on the upper auxiliary, which is then played before the beat.<sup>25</sup> Either way, the main note occurs on the beat. Santa María also indicates that the redoble, a simple ornament, should be played on the beat when the ornament begins on the note indicated.<sup>26</sup> French Baroque ornamentation makes extensive use of grace notes, most of which are clearly indicated in the score. The placement of these graces varies according to the composer. Germany’s C.P.E. Bach writes that trills begin on the beat with the upper neighbor.<sup>27</sup> Ornaments such as the appoggiatura,<sup>28</sup> turn,<sup>29</sup> and mordent<sup>30</sup> occur on the beat, taking time away from the note

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<sup>24</sup> Fray Thomas de Sancta Maria, *The Art of Playing the Fantasia*, trans. Almonte C. Howell Jr. and Warren E. Hultberg, vol. 1 (Pittsburgh: Latin American Literary Review Press, 1991), 158-162.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, trans. and ed. William J. Mitchell (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1949), 100.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

following the ornament, rather than the note preceding. In England, the practice of beginning trills on the upper neighbor began c. 1630.<sup>31</sup>

In Italy, the performer was expected to insert a variety ornaments in an improvised fashion. Italian performers commonly used an accelerating trill on a single pitch.



Figure 29. Trillo

Caccini refers to this ornament as a **trillo**, whereas Caccini calls the modern interpretation of a trill (alternating between two notes) a **gruppo**.<sup>32</sup> The gruppo begins on the main note until about 1650, when this ornament begins on the upper neighbor.<sup>33</sup>



Figure 30. Gruppo

When executing a trillo on the harp, remember to change fingers with each repeated note in order to keep your hand malleable.

Both the right and left hands can provide ornamentation, but ornament the bass line sparingly. Extensive use of trills and graces should be reserved for solo music. Do consider ornamentation when the bass line has a solo moment. Be prepared to react to the ornamentation suggested by the soloist. Because of the harp's natural sustain, avoid ornaments such as the **acciaccatura**, at least to start. The acciaccatura was used in the

<sup>31</sup> North, 94.

<sup>32</sup> Caccini, 24.

<sup>33</sup> North, 94.

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when accompanying recitative. It consisted of playing an unprepared, unresolved nonharmonic tone with a harmonic tone. While keyboard players can deftly control the duration of this nonharmonic tone, the result on harp is a bit of cacophony.

So why is the gamba player swinging the rhythm? **Note inégales** was a French Baroque rhythmic style that was used throughout Europe. It was considered to be a very stylish way of playing. Basically, two quarter notes written on the page would be altered to sound like a dotted quarter and an eighth. Two eighth notes become a dotted eighth and one sixteenth note. Occasionally, the rhythm desired was more of a triplet lilt or lurer than a sixteenth note snap or couler,<sup>34</sup> or the dotted rhythm was reversed entirely. Widely regarded as a graceful execution of the written music, notes inégales was expected of a performer without specific instructions, just as modern day jazz players swing their rhythms. The French overture is an excellent example of a form that should be played inégales without any indication in the written score. Santa María utilized note inégales for contrapuntal passages, divisions, and fantasias,<sup>35</sup> but C.P.E Bach found this execution undesirable.<sup>36</sup>

As for the singer not recreating exactly what is printed on the page, improvised ornaments were expected from the soloist, especially in Italy. Instrumentalists drew their ornamentation from the vocal repertoire. Choose those ornaments that are idiomatic for your instrument and playing style. Caccini discusses solo vocal ornamentation at length in his *Nuove Musiche*:

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<sup>34</sup> Donington, 453-4.

<sup>35</sup> Sancta Maria, 119.

<sup>36</sup> Bach, 157.

The image displays six staves of musical notation, each featuring various ornaments and techniques. The first staff is a single line of music with a '1' above it. The second staff has '1' and '2' above it. The third staff has '2' and '1' above it. The fourth staff is divided into sections labeled '2 Trillo', '1', '1 Trillo', 'Ribattuta di gola', and '1'. The fifth staff is divided into sections labeled 'Cascata scempia', '1', and '2 Cascata doppia'. The sixth staff is divided into sections labeled 'Cascata per ricorre il fiato' and 'Altra cascata simile'.

Figure 31. A sample from Caccini's *Le Nuove Musiche*<sup>37</sup>

You must understand the fundamental structure of a piece before applying any ornaments. Basic rhythm and harmony are ultimately more important than ornamentation. A simple, accurate realization will be more appreciated than an overly, inappropriately ornamented attempt. Study the solo music of the composer you are playing, understand the style of the period and region, and remember that you are accompanying a soloist. Try

<sup>37</sup> Giulio Caccini, *Le Nuove Musiche* (Florence: Marescotti, 1602; reprint, New York: Performers' Facsimiles, 1987), 10.

to use a variety of ornaments in your playing. Also, remember that arpeggiation is an ornament. Do not routinely arpeggiate chords without justification.

### **Suggested Readings:**

- Bach, Carl Philipp Emanuel. *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*. Translated and edited by William J. Mitchell. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1949.
- Caccini, Giulio. *Le Nuove Musiche*. Recent Researches in the Music of the Baroque Era, trans. and ed. H. Wiley Hitchcock, vol. 9. Madison: A-R Editions, Inc., 2000.
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