

**Fantatising about the past:  
A baroque violinist's guide to improvising  
fantasias**

**Nina Kümin**

**PhD**

**University of York**

**Arts and Creative Technologies**

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## Abstract

### **Fantatising about the past: A baroque violinist's guide to improvising fantasias**

The fantasia gained prominence during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. While frequently explored as a compositional form, Kollmann argued that the 'greatest players' 'extemporised' fantasias,<sup>1</sup> and Rousseau stressed that a fantasy 'differs from the rest only that it is invented in its execution and that it has no longer existence as soon as it is finished'.<sup>2</sup> In modern performance, improvised baroque fantasias are largely restricted to keyboardists; on other instruments these are extremely rare.<sup>3</sup> There are only a few practical guides to baroque improvisation, such as by Mortensen and Dolan, and these largely focus on the keyboard, providing an overview.<sup>4</sup> Choosing instead to spotlight on the violin and seeking to help bridge the gap between scholarly literature and practical improvisation, this study draws on historical sources, practice, analysis and contemporary pedagogical literature to expand our historical knowledge of the improvised fantasia and provide practical guidance for recreating improvised examples today. This thesis is accompanied by two concerts including fantasias by Telemann, Matteis senior and Matteis junior alongside stylistic compositions and improvisations by the author. This practical element presents the findings of this research, provides insights into the process and demonstrates the feasibility of the suggested approach.

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<sup>1</sup> Augustus F. C. Kollmann, *An essay on musical harmony* (London: J. Dale, 1796), 121. And Johann Mattheson, *Der Vollkommene Capellmeister* (Hamburg 1739).

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The complete dictionary of music. Consisting of a copious explanation of all words necessary to a true knowledge and understanding of music* (London: J. Murray, 1779), 166.

<sup>3</sup> John J. Mortensen, 'Improv Planet,' *Patreon*, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://www.patreon.com/ImprovPlanet>. And David Dolan, 'Teaching Classical Improvisation,' *David Dolan Piano Classical Improvisation*, accessed September 15, 2020, <http://www.david-dolan.com/teaching-classical-improvisation/>. And John J. Mortensen, 'cedarvillemusic,' YouTube channel, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCq0sDKI15IW8Fek6OqBhZ3w>.

<sup>4</sup> John J. Mortensen, *The Pianist's Guide to Historic Improvisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). And Mortensen, 'Improv Planet.' And Dolan, 'Teaching Classical Improvisation.' See also Steve Larson, "'Integrated music Learning" and Improvisation: Teaching Musicianship and Theory Through "Menus, Maps, and Models,"' *College Music Symposium* 35 (1995): 76-90. And Bálint Karosi, 'Schemata and Rhetoric: Improvising the Chorale Prelude in the Eighteenth-Century Lutheran Tradition,' (PhD dissertation, Yale School of Music, 2014). And Austin Gross, 'The Improvisation of Figuration Preludes,' *Journal of Music theory Pedagogy* 27 (2013), 20. And Paul Collins, *The Stylus Phantasticus and Free Keyboard Music of the North German Baroque* (Oxford: Routledge, 2017), 30.



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## List of Accompanying Material

Two recitals are included as part of my submission to exemplify the practicality of the methods discussed in this thesis as well as several short video clips. Full video recordings of these have been included as mp4 files and alternatively can be accessed as YouTube videos. The titles of each file, corresponding YouTube video and relevant chapter (where appropriate) are listed below:



## **Recital videos:**

Recital 1: Telemann's fantasy. The genius behind the music

Recital 1: Kümin, Nina. 'Nina Kümin Recital 1 NCEM 9th December 2022.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' May 30, 2023. Accessed May 30, 2023.  
<https://youtu.be/RmFFScuDtAk>.

Recital 2: A baroque fantasy. Form and freedom in Matteis

Recital 2: Kümin, Nina. 'Nina Kümin Recital 2 NCEM 14th May 2023.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' May 30, 2023. Accessed May 30, 2023.  
<https://youtu.be/-q4-tHQIPAc>.

## **Short video examples:**

### Chapter 5.3.1: Harmonising improvisation through handshapes

#### 5.3.1 Basic Handshapes

Kümin, Nina. 'Basic Handshapes.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' September 25, 2021. Accessed September 25, 2021.  
<https://youtu.be/XUtlidvUA00>.

#### 5.3.1 Harmonised Prelude-Style Fantasia

Kümin, Nina. 'Harmonised Prelude-style Fantasia.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' September 25, 2021. Accessed September 25, 2021.  
<https://youtu.be/jCWI-TOGqqA>.

#### 5.3.1 Matteis Alia Fantasia Style Improvisation

Kümin, Nina. 'Matteis Alia Fantasia Style Improvisation.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' September 25, 2021. Accessed September 25, 2021.  
<https://youtu.be/mUw0Srd1bFk>.

### 5.3.1 One handshape anywhere on the violin, minor root position

Kümin, Nina. 'One handshape anywhere on the violin, minor root position.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' September 25, 2021. Accessed September 25, 2021. <https://youtu.be/diOHKcZ48ck>.

### 5.3.1 Sequence across strings keeping the handshape

Kümin, Nina. 'Sequence across strings keeping the handshape.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' September 25, 2021. Accessed September 25, 2021. <https://youtu.be/00JQBZqB6Hc>.

## Chapter 5.4: 'Creativity is intelligence having fun'! Playing with improvisation

### 5.4 Zooming around: Artistic travels through time

Kümin, Nina and Amy Rodger. "'Zooming around": Artistic travels through time.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' November 27, 2020. Accessed February 8, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mxg1Lp8eO-0&t=777s>.

### 5.4 Bassline Bingo

Kümin, Nina. 'Bassline Bingo.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' March 15, 2023. Accessed March 15, 2023. <https://youtu.be/14MzheLGX94>.

### 5.4 Cannon Canons

Kümin, Nina. 'Cannon Canons.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin – Improvising Violinist.' March 15, 2023. Accessed March 15, 2023. <https://youtu.be/eDQ7bSKXkLg>.

### 5.4 Emoji Top Trumps

Kümin, Nina. 'Emoji Top Trumps.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' March 15, 2023. Accessed March 15, 2023. <https://youtu.be/iVzcGyrwO-4>.

#### 5.4 Happy Harmonies

Kümin, Nina. 'Happy Harmonies.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' March 15, 2023. Accessed March 15, 2023.

<https://youtu.be/qklc7UuSwh8>.

#### 5.4 NEMN Conference Performance

Kümin, Nina. 'NEMN Conference Performance.' YouTube Video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' June 28, 2023. Accessed June 28, 2023. <https://youtu.be/-ydBhTxtODI>.

#### 5.4 Somewhere over the rainbow

Kümin, Nina. 'Somewhere over the rainbow.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' March 15, 2023. Accessed March 15, 2023.

<https://youtu.be/XALbAeh1qsQ>.

#### 5.4 Card of The Day

Kümin, Nina. 'Card of the Day.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' March 15, 2023. Accessed March 15, 2023.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93DsDURHPnU>.

## Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as references.

## Introduction: ‘A plaine and easie introduction’<sup>5</sup>

Fantatising about the past as a historically-informed performer of baroque music is inescapable. A practice which relies heavily on the writings of early modern diarists, musicians and scholars for justification, it is surprising that the frequent advocacy of large-scale improvisation in these sources has not yet established itself in common current practice. Although, as Gooley remarks, since the growth in jazz studies in the 1990s, ‘improvisation has made a significant comeback in classical music concerts, education, and scholarship,’<sup>6</sup> this is only in certain types of improvisation, mainly small-scale such as ornamentation, and is largely limited to keyboardists. In addition, the discipline as a whole is still largely concerned with ‘experimental collective improvisation ... rooted in progressive black jazz styles’ as demonstrated by the content of the journal *Critical Studies in Improvisation*.<sup>7</sup>

Authors such as Dolan and Mortensen have produced very brief overviews on improvising keyboard fantasias but much more researched detail is necessary in order to achieve stylistic improvisations and further research is necessary for melody instrumentalists.<sup>8</sup> Larson, Karosi and Gross have published keyboard guides on how to improvise baroque preludes.<sup>9</sup> Aside from preluding, there is a general lack of detailed, well-researched literature on the practicalities of achieving baroque improvisation for melody instruments in general, including for the violin. This is perhaps unsurprising given the common view that historical evidence is ‘sparse [and] fragmented,’<sup>10</sup> but by considering a wide variety of sources together, a clearer picture of the improvised baroque fantasia can be built. I consult sources from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries including treatises, letters, biographies, dictionaries, literature and art as well as written-out compositions. By also including practice-led research, I go beyond the general tradition of improvisation literature which,

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas Morley, *A plaine and easie introduction to practicall Musicke* (London: Peter Short, 1597).

<sup>6</sup> Dana Gooley, *Fantasies of Improvisation: Free Playing in Nineteenth-Century Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>8</sup> John J. Mortensen, *The Pianist’s Guide to Historic Improvisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). And John J. Mortensen, ‘Improv Planet,’ *Patreon*, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://www.patreon.com/ImprovPlanet>. And David Dolan, ‘Teaching Classical Improvisation,’ *David Dolan Piano Classical Improvisation*, accessed September 15, 2020, <http://www.david-dolan.com/teaching-classical-improvisation/>.

<sup>9</sup> Steve Larson, “‘Integrated music Learning’ and Improvisation: Teaching Musicianship and Theory Through ‘Menus, Maps, and Models,’” *College Music Symposium* 35 (1995): 76-90. And Bálint Karosi, ‘Schemata and Rhetoric: Improvising the Chorale Prelude in the Eighteenth-Century Lutheran Tradition,’ (PhD dissertation, Yale School of Music, 2014). And Austin Gross, ‘The Improvisation of Figuration Preludes,’ *Journal of Music theory Pedagogy* 27 (2013), 20.

<sup>10</sup> Brian Barton, *Improvisation: Towards a Maturing Understanding of its Importance to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century musician* (Self-published, 2020), 8.

as Gooley notes, tends towards providing ‘reflected images of improvisation found in published works’.<sup>11</sup>

The classical music market values novelty in a ‘saturated and competitive field of professionals’ and aims to appear ‘more hip’, opening up possibilities for improvisation.<sup>12</sup> In performance practice, while ornamentation in all its small-scale forms is considered an essential part of historically-informed performance (HIP), this is often pre-prepared by performers in advance of concerts or recordings and performers rarely tackle larger scale improvisations such as preludes, variations, cadenzas, dances, fugues and fantasias.<sup>13</sup> The long-standing, surviving tradition of organ improvisation is an exception to this. Thierry Escaich, for example, is developing this tradition by improvising, on the organ, symphonies on themes suggested by audience members.<sup>14</sup> As such, a large proportion of the literature on improvisation in the baroque is centred around keyboard players and this is especially true of literature dealing with the fantasia.<sup>15</sup> Keyboard improvisers such as Dolan, Mortensen and Levin are applying this scholarship to performance.<sup>16</sup> Violinists Davide Monti and Andrew Manze also often include moments of improvisation in their performances but large-scale improvisations are still uncommon.<sup>17</sup> As a survey of contemporary definitions of the fantasia from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries will ascertain, improvisation was highly desirable. Indeed, it was often considered essential especially for the performance of a fantasia and not just for keyboardists.

Combining research into primary and secondary literature alongside practice-led research into the performance, composition and improvisation of baroque fantasias, this project seeks to undertake the necessary research and practice to deepen our understanding of the genre. The results of this research are used to provide a guide for melody instruments with a particular focus on

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<sup>11</sup> Gooley, *Fantasies of Improvisation*, 8.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-4.

<sup>13</sup> Robin Moore, ‘The Decline of Improvisation in Western Art Music: An Interpretation of Change,’ *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 23, no. 1 (June 1992): 61-84.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Paul Collins, *The Stylus Phantasticus and Free Keyboard Music of the North German Baroque* (Oxford: Routledge, 2017), 30.

<sup>16</sup> Gooley, *Fantasies of Improvisation*, 1.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* And Davide Monti, ‘Live@East Cork Early Music Festival 2019: “Baroque Polska Improvisation,”’ YouTube video, 9:48, posted by ‘Brú - New Early Music,’ October 17, 2019, accessed February 9, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aM8kcZOYbhY>. And Davide Monti, ‘Manifesto,’ *Helicon*, January 31, 2019, accessed 9 February, 2021, <https://helicon.it/en/>. And Andrew Stewart, ‘Classical Music: Fiddling with the Rules,’ *Independent*, April 30, 1998, accessed February 9, 2021. <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/classical-music-fiddling-with-the-rules-1162167.html>. And Fred Child and Melissa Block, ‘Violinist Mixes Improv Into Baroque Sonata,’ *npr*, December 4, 2003, accessed February 9, 2021. <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1532767&t=1612869339461>. And Andrew Manze, interviewed by the BBC, ‘Baroque: Making It Up,’ *BBC*, 13:00, February 23, 1996, accessed February 9, 2021. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p033k405>.

the violin, giving practical advice on how to improvise fantasias in a baroque style and the practicality of this is demonstrated in example performances (see accompanying material). As a new avenue of research, this thesis follows a selective approach, suggesting a broadly applicable methodology for historical improvisation. Rather than seeking to survey or provide answers for how baroque fantasias were improvised over a whole time period, or in a certain national style, which would be beyond the scope of this project, this thesis instead includes detailed analysis of a few select key case studies and therefore provides specific guidance to imitate, in improvisation, violin fantasias by the three most prolific composers of baroque fantasias for the violin (Georg Philipp Telemann, Nicola Matteis junior and Nicola Matteis senior). This provides a way in for violinists today. Although containing advice specifically for the violin and how to improvise in the individual fantasia styles of these three composers, it nevertheless contains many elements that can be applied to other melody instrumentalists, including, in particular, the information provided in the theoretical chapters (chapter 1, 2 and 3). Indeed, the application of this successful methodology in further research would add to our growing understanding of the improvised baroque fantasia and historical improvisation as a whole. The remainder of this introduction is split into two halves. To begin, the following section considers key theoretical concepts, introducing historical definitions of the fantasia and modern understandings of improvisation. The second half introduces practical considerations through discussion of the methodology employed in this thesis.

### 0.1.1 Defining the fantasia: beyond ‘an ordinary piece’<sup>18</sup>

Several scholars have sought to define the fantasia, without much success because of the lack of cohesion in the style. They therefore tend to resort to metaphors or descriptions of the compositional process rather than the actual musical product. Ratner, for example, suggests that ‘the fantasia style is recognised by one or more of the following features – elaborate figuration, shifting harmonies, chromatic conjunct bass lines, sudden contrasts, full textures or disembodied melodic figures.... [with] a sense of improvisation and loose structural links between figures and phrases’.<sup>19</sup> Moyer, similarly, defines it as ‘an improvised or improvisatory piece’.<sup>20</sup> In order to

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<sup>18</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The complete dictionary of music. Consisting of a copious explanation of all words necessary to a true knowledge and understanding of music* (London, 1779), 166.

<sup>19</sup> Leonard G. Ratner, *Classic music: Expression, form, and style* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1980), 24. And Matthew Head, ‘Fantasia and sensibility,’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, ed. Danuta Mirka (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 259.

<sup>20</sup> Birgitte Moyer, ‘Ombra and Fantasia in Late Eighteenth-Century Theory and Practice,’ in *Convention in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Music: Essays in Honour of Leonard Ratner*, ed. Wye J. Allanbrook, Janet M. Levy and William P. Mahrt (New York: Pendragon Press, 1992), 283.

understand baroque conceptions of the fantasia as a musical form and create a more precise picture, I turned to primary sources from 1535–1876. Treatises from this period were primarily published as teaching materials for skilled amateurs. The frequent absence of instructions for improvised fantasias in these can therefore be put down to the fact that this type of playing was the domain of the highly skilled professional virtuosi; as Kollmann remarked, they were performed by ‘the greatest players’.<sup>21</sup> Quantz professes that he would not ‘pretend ... to prescribe rules for those musicians who have acquired general approbation either in composition or in performance’, clearly addressing his treatise to students.<sup>22</sup> Definitions, nevertheless, appear in many. In fact, this collection of treatises from 1535–1876 is made up mainly of dictionary definitions; these can therefore be associated with the fantasia as a style rather than linked to specific compositions. They are advantageous in that they also cover the improvised fantasia and therefore provide a link between the composed “examples” we can analyse and contemporary conceptions of improvisatory performance practice. Due to differing spellings of fantasia throughout Europe: ‘fantasia’ (It.) ‘fantasie’ (Ger.), ‘fancy’ (Eng.) and ‘fancie’ (Eng.), I included all of these terms in my search as well as related words such as ‘fantast’, ‘fantasieren’ (Ger.), ‘fantastique’ (Fr.), ‘fantasticamente’ (It.) and ‘fantastico’ (It.).

From these definitions, it is clear that the musical fantasia was widely recognised as a free form without standardised structures or rules. They are full of words related to this concept of freedom, such as: ‘liberty’<sup>23</sup>, ‘free’<sup>24</sup> and ‘unrestrained’.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, many mention fantasias in relation to affects, including the words: ‘pleasure’<sup>26</sup>, ‘passion’<sup>27</sup> and ‘fire’.<sup>28</sup> Many mention the improvisatory feel and several name this as a defining feature of a fantasia, including Rousseau and Kollmann.<sup>29</sup> Some later definitions (such as by John Wall Callcott) link it to the caprice, perhaps

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<sup>21</sup> Augustus Frederic Christopher Kollmann, *An essay on musical harmony, according to the nature of that science and the principles of the greatest musical authors* (London: J. Dale, 1796), 122.

<sup>22</sup> Johann Joachim Quantz, *On Playing the Flute* [1752], 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. and trans. Edward R. Reilly (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1985), 7-8.

<sup>23</sup> Morley, *A plaine and easie introduction*, 206. And J. Brotherton, *A short explication of such foreign words, as are made use of in musick books* (London: Brotherton, 1724), 30. And Sébastien de Brossard, *A musical dictionary: containing a full explanation of all the terms made use of in the historical, theoretical, and practical parts of music* (London, 1769), 198. And John Hoyle, *Dictionarium musica, being a complete dictionary: or, treasury of music* (London, 1770), 32.

<sup>24</sup> A. Kircher, *Musurgia Universalis* (Rome: Ludovico Grignani, 1650). And Rousseau, *The Complete Dictionary*, 386. And Kollmann, *An essay*, 120. And Hoyle, *Dictionarium*, 32.

<sup>25</sup> Kircher, *Musurgia Universalis*.

<sup>26</sup> Luis de Milán, *Libro de música de vihuela de mano El Maestro* (Valencia: F. Dfaz Romano, 1535).

<sup>27</sup> Marin Mersenne, *Harmonie Universelle* (Paris, 1636), II, S. 164. And Brossard, *A musical dictionary*, 144.

<sup>28</sup> Kollmann, *An essay*, 122.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* And Rousseau, *The complete dictionary*, 166.

drawing on the references to displays of virtuosity mentioned in earlier definitions.<sup>30</sup> Mattheson writes that a fantasia is in a 'capricious style'.<sup>31</sup> Rousseau differentiates a fantasia from a caprice through positing that the fundamental nature of a fantasia is that it is improvised whereas a caprice is composed.<sup>32</sup> It is likened by Rousseau to the Recherche and Boutade which he also describes as being in an improvisatory style.<sup>33</sup>

Many describe the form in a similar way to Stainer and Barrett who write that form is 'subservient to fancy'.<sup>34</sup> The verb 'fantasieren' in German was understood to mean 'to improvise' by Stainer and Barrett.<sup>35</sup> For others such as Kollmann, the improvised fantasia was the domain of 'the greatest players' and Mattheson notes that while some were improvised, many were written down too.<sup>36</sup> Kollmann argues that such composed fantasias are for study only as 'free fancy can only be imitated, but not truly represented' in notation.<sup>37</sup> Early definitions (such as by Simpson) focus on the viol consort fantasia and therefore present a slightly different picture.<sup>38</sup> Their freedom originates in the lack of words and the common features are described as counterpoint and division.<sup>39</sup> Kircher interestingly remarks that the fantasia style is best suited to instruments. In many of the other definitions this is implied, for instance in Brotherton's and Hoyle's references to sonatas carrying the same name.<sup>40</sup> De Brossard mentions that hymns to saints can be called fantasias although later remarks that the composer is free because of the lack of words.<sup>41</sup>

The art of improvising fantasias, therefore, expanded on the practice of preluding to create full pieces: pieces which did not just serve as an introduction to a composed piece but stood alone. They borrowed the improvisatory exploration of a key from preludes, the technical virtuosity from caprices, the forms from dances and fugues, and the thematic development from variations. They required the musician to be both performer and composer in the moment, individual but also adhering to the styles of the day. The improvised fantasia thus stretches the limits of the musician's fantasy but also practicality. It challenges improvisers to use their imagination to surprise and

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<sup>30</sup> John Wall Callcott, *Explanation of the notes, Marks, Words, &c, Used in Music by I. W. Callcott* (London: printed for the author, 1792), 56.

<sup>31</sup> John Arnold, *The Compleat Psalmodist* (London: R. Brown, 1753), 39.

<sup>32</sup> Rousseau, *The complete dictionary*, 166.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> John Stainer and William Alexander Barrett ed, *A Dictionary of Musical Terms* (London: Novello, 1876), 164.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Kollmann, *An essay*, 122. And Johann Mattheson, *Der Vollkommene Capellmeister* (Hamburg, 1739).

<sup>37</sup> Kollmann, *An essay*, 122.

<sup>38</sup> Christopher Simpson, *A Compendium of Practical Musick* (London: William Godbid, 1667). And Christopher Simpson, *The Division Viol* (London: William Godbid, 1659).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Kircher, *Musurgia Universalis*. And Brotherton, *A short explication*, 30. And Hoyle, *Dictionarium musica*, 32.

<sup>41</sup> Brossard, *A musical dictionary*, 198.



maintain the listeners' attention, creatively meeting and subverting audience expectations. In addition, these creative ideas have to be structured into a well-formed piece which is actually technically playable in the moment without prior practice. This results in infinite variety which is both incredibly exciting and daunting for the modern performer. Improvised fantasias display technical and creative virtuosity and therefore would make for very exciting listening and performing experiences.

### 0.1.2 A note on "improvisation"

While these definitions shed light on historical conceptions of the fantasia, it is also important to consider understandings of improvisation. Gooley posits that the term improvisation only became the standardised musical term in the later nineteenth century from literary discourse.<sup>42</sup> He suggests the term "free playing" as an alternative to bypass the idealisation of the term improvisation.<sup>43</sup> There has also been a debate in recent times about whether this should be called present-time composition, as suggested by Bern.<sup>44</sup> The main argument reads that improvisation has to rely heavily on pre-existing musical works to differentiate it from composition. Baroque treatises use varying expressions such as: 'ad-lib', 'executed when composed' or 'extemporising', for instance.<sup>45</sup> For continuity, however, I have chosen to use the word improvisation throughout this study to signify the direct execution of an idea. This makes for easier access for current readers, for whom this definition of improvisation is in standard linguistic practice across disciplines. There is also always improvisation in performance to some extent.<sup>46</sup> Each form of improvisation can be categorised into a form too, for example, a prelude or fantasia. Historical improvisation, therefore, uses the skills of present-time composition to create a new work but within the boundaries of period compositions, drawing heavily on conventional musical features and forms. The music is composed in the present moment but so heavily influenced by other notated compositions that it is therefore more accurate to describe it as improvisation rather than present-time composition or free playing (for further discussion of this see chapter 1).

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<sup>42</sup> Gooley, *Fantasies of Improvisation*, 6.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>44</sup> Alan Bern, 'The OMA improvisation project,' *Other music academy*, accessed February 8, 2021. <https://improv.othermusicacademy.eu/>.

<sup>45</sup> Mattheson, *Der Vollkommene Capellmeister*. And Kollmann, *An essay*, 122. And Rousseau, *The complete dictionary*, 166.

<sup>46</sup> Barton, *Improvisation*, 8.

Within this larger definition, some scholars suggest further categorisation. For Nettl and many other scholars, improvisation is most closely linked to jazz and therefore considered to be moments of spontaneous composition inspired by a particular notated musical work.<sup>47</sup> This is most obviously apparent in the use of jazz standards as the starting point for their improvisations, often using rhythms or motives from the head. Jazz scholarship and popular literature has dubbed improvisation without this inspiration from a written work, “free improvisation”.<sup>48</sup> Barton splits jazz improvisation into three types, ‘paraphrase improvisation’ (ornamentation), ‘formulaic improvisation’ (built from several small ideas) and ‘motivic improvisation’ (built from one idea).<sup>49</sup> The baroque fantasia involved both paraphrase and formulaic improvisation as musicians draw from a bank of stylistic devices but might also improvise each section around a single motive. Dolan, one of the few writers on classical improvisation, suggested a division of classical improvisation into two approaches, one which creates a whole new piece (rare in current performance) and another which acts as a creative interpretation of a written work (always present in performance).<sup>50</sup> Improvised fantasias would belong to the first of these categories.<sup>51</sup> This kind of improvisation differs from that which is currently integral to Western classical concert performing, going beyond the surface level ornamentation which is added by performers in the form of dynamics, short flourishes or articulation changes, as this does not change the identity of the piece itself, whereas larger scale improvisation, such as that of fantasias, calls for the performer to create a new piece.<sup>52</sup>

The practice of improvisation is perhaps longest standing in organists, a practice which is continued, if less frequently, today such as by William Porter, Hans Davidson, Douglas Lowry and Rudolf Lutz, to name a few. Despite Ray Chen’s remark that classical musicians ‘cannot improvise’, there are some exceptions to this including Gabriela Montero, Robert Levin, Eric Barnhill and William Goldstein.<sup>53</sup> Montero improvises on themes either from the audience or works she has just performed.<sup>54</sup> Levin and Montero argue that more variety and spontaneity is needed in classical performances to keep the discipline attractive to audiences, for which, improvisation is the perfect

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<sup>47</sup> Bruno Nettl, ‘Improvisation’.

<sup>48</sup> Brodie West and Evan Cartwright, ‘How to play out of tune,’ (conference paper, Aesthetics of Imperfection, Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society, Oct 5, 2019).

<sup>49</sup> Barton, ‘Improvisation,’ 15.

<sup>50</sup> David Dolan, ‘The Classical Style,’ *Classical Piano* (November/ December, 1996): 13-14.

<sup>51</sup> Barton, ‘Improvisation,’ 6.

<sup>52</sup> Cesar Villavicencio, ‘The Discourse of Free Improvisation; A Rhetorical Perspective on Free Improvised Music,’ (PhD thesis, University of East Anglia, 2008), 40.

<sup>53</sup> Albert Chang and Ray Chen, ‘Albert Chang & Ray Chen violin jam session (feat. Lily) [improvising and viewer’s song request],’ YouTube video, 35:13, posted by ‘Nozull,’ March 1, 2019, accessed February 9, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rPxl7Da4k4>.

<sup>54</sup> Barton, ‘Improvisation,’ 11. And Gabriela Montero, ‘Top Tracks,’ YouTube playlist, posted by ‘GabrielaMontero TV,’ February 9, 2021, accessed February 9, 2021, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RA2350BskXw&list=PL52pls-NImG7iqgj\\_FPmrMh8WqSaRLlIM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RA2350BskXw&list=PL52pls-NImG7iqgj_FPmrMh8WqSaRLlIM).

solution.<sup>55</sup> For Smith and Dean, improvised music is ‘concerned with processes rather than products’ and thus breaks with the permanence associated with the musical work.<sup>56</sup> In a similar vein, Haynes notes, in reference to free improvisation, that it is often viewed as an ‘outlaw’ because it goes against the values of the nineteenth-century musical work.<sup>57</sup>

A brief survey of current literature that puts forward pedagogical approaches to improvisation will demonstrate the tendency for an approach based in music theory. These often provide exercises which address scales and then harmony. Finally, set patterns or schemata are suggested to address different styles of improvisation. Smith’s method for learning to improvise accompaniments to lead sheets and improvisation in the right hand on the piano starts with exercises based on the whole tone scale, then adding chords and finally set patterns which she has transposed into all keys.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, Wong’s approach begins with pentatonic improvisation, moves on to harmonisation and then gives guidance for different styles (such as country and western style, 12 bar blues, ‘middle east music’ and ‘oriental music’), again focused on the piano.<sup>59</sup> Barton’s method for classical piano improvisation begins with melodic imitation before moving onto harmonic progressions.<sup>60</sup> Sarath covers for keyboardists what he terms ‘trans-stylistic’ improvisation, including classical, world and jazz improvisation based on theory.<sup>61</sup> Chung and Thurmond provide melodic pattern exercises as well as harmonic schemata for classical improvisation, taking examples from written music such as by Bach, Mozart and Scarlatti, again for pianists. They also cover medieval modes and jazz.<sup>62</sup> Likewise, Chastek’s guide for classical pianists provides melodic exercises but requires them to be used first for sight-reading, then transposition, harmonisation and improvisation, introducing new chords in each chapter.<sup>63</sup> These are all useful summaries and starting points but they lack the specificity required for stylistic improvisation.

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<sup>55</sup> Daniel Delgado, ‘Lost Art,’ *Harvard Magazine*, May 1, 2000, accessed February 9, 2021, <https://harvardmagazine.com/2000/05/lost-art.html>. And Barton on Gabriela Montero in Barton, ‘Improvisation,’ 65.

<sup>56</sup> Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). And Villavicencio, ‘The Discourse of Free Improvisation,’ 20. And Hazel Smith and Roger Dean, *Improvisation, Hypermedia and the Arts since 1945* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997), 25.

<sup>57</sup> Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum*. And Bruce Haynes, *The End of Early Music: a period performer’s history of music for the twenty-first century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 6.

<sup>58</sup> Gail Smith, *Mel Bay’s Complete Improvisation, Fills and Chord Progression Book* (Essex: Mel Bay Music Ltd, 1994).

<sup>59</sup> Yoke Wong, *Definitive Piano Improvisation Course* (CA: Harmony and Melody Studio, Inc., 2007).

<sup>60</sup> Barton, ‘Improvisation,’ 49.

<sup>61</sup> Edward Sarath, *Music Theory Through Improvisation: A new Approach to Musicianship Training* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>62</sup> Brian Chung and Dennis Thurmond, *Improvisation at the Piano: A Systematic Approach for the Classically Trained Pianist* (Harrow: Alfred Publishing Inc., 2007).

<sup>63</sup> Wilfred Knox Chastek, *Keyboard Skills* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1967).

Callahan's theory of improvisation, however, uses the classical rhetorical categories of *dispositio*, *elaboratio* and *decoratio*, arguing that at a structural, harmonic and ornamented level, automated musical schemata are key.<sup>64</sup> This process occurs through assimilation and execution.<sup>65</sup> Gjerdingen's identification of eighteenth-century compositional schemata reflects this idea of stock musical ideas (see 0.2.1 for further discussion of Gjerdingen's method).<sup>66</sup> As musicians were often composers, performers and improvisers, it is not unlikely that an assimilation of standardised forms and techniques influenced creative decisions. While Gjerdingen's schemata act as a very basic outline at a harmonic level, it is possible to identify schemata at all of Callahan's levels. Similarly, Bellotti names three improvisation processes: imitation, *memoria* and *actio*.<sup>67</sup> Porter also uses rhetorical language to understand improvisation but describes the decisions in improvisation about what to play as being 'decided by the player, influenced by the instrument, improvisational method, knowledge of performance practice, and, significantly, knowledge of repertoire itself,'<sup>68</sup> emphasising the active role of the instrument. The physicality of decision-making in improvisation is evident in German baroque music theory which references hand shapes or grips, 'Griffe'.<sup>69</sup> Karosi argues that 'historical improvisation bridges the gap between the two extremes of classical music education: music theory curriculum, which can be overly analytical and removed from real music-making, and, at the other extreme, performance education, which can emphasise technical athleticism at the expense of musical understanding'.<sup>70</sup> Larson also advocates an 'integrated' musical learning.<sup>71</sup> Particularly convincing explanations of improvisation using rhetorical principles are those that also note the improvised nature of everyday conversation and the standard formulations and patterns at all levels: typical structures, intonations and slang. Larson suggests different schemata, namely 'menus, maps, and models'.<sup>72</sup> Maps provide tonal progressions, menus list the chords for decorating these and models are the resulting pathways but Larson again insists that internalisation is essential.<sup>73</sup> These methods seek to combine a theoretical understanding with practical improvisation. While useful concepts, as improvisation requires direct results, more accessible methods are needed to translate these theories into practice. Through practice-led research, I

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<sup>64</sup> Michael Callahan, 'Techniques of Keyboard Improvisation in the German Baroque' (PhD. Dissertation, University of Rochester, 2010).

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>66</sup> Robert Gjerdingen, *Music in the galant style* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>67</sup> Bellotti in Karosi, 'Schemata and Rhetoric,' 8.

<sup>68</sup> William Porter, 'Reconstructing 17th-century North German Improvisational Practice,' *GoArt Research Reports* 2 (2000): 28.

<sup>69</sup> Gross, 'The Improvisation of Figuration Preludes,' 20.

<sup>70</sup> Karosi, 'Schemata and Rhetoric,' 79-80.

<sup>71</sup> Larson, 'Integrated music Learning,' 76-90.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

examine the effectiveness of these methods in my own practice and suggest alternatives and additions (see chapter 5).

Writing about musical experience is not without its challenges, as Monson remarks, ‘translating musical experience and insight into written or spoken word is one of the most fundamental frustrations of musical scholarship’.<sup>74</sup> Borgo notes that improvisation’s functional nature is often ignored and a typical western education values knowing over doing.<sup>75</sup> Historical improvisation requires both knowing and doing and interestingly the transition from one to another.<sup>76</sup> As Villavicencio notes, learning to improvise can be frustrating and can feel similar to learning a new instrument.<sup>77</sup> The high technical standards expected of western classical musicians can make this a difficult obstacle to overcome.<sup>78</sup> This project seeks to address this through discussions of my own experiences and further research into improvisation pedagogy.

Including improvisation more widely in classical music performance would revolutionise approaches to the classical canon with all its baggage, allow for individuality and original expression in a way notated performance can never achieve, act as an equaliser on many levels by giving every performer a voice and provide audiences with exciting, truly live performance experiences. Improvisation is flexible, adaptable to context, possibilities and changing ideologies, and unique to the present experience, undoubtedly valuable in the current climate.<sup>79</sup> It would respond to Ngwe’s call for music and performance which allows for ‘experimentation, voices to be heard and new stories to unfold’.<sup>80</sup> If live performances are to respond to the technical perfection offered by recordings, it is surely through originality and spontaneity, qualities which improvisation provides in abundance. Historically inspired improvisation provides the first steps towards this goal by using recognisable musical traits and a similar sonic aesthetic that concert audiences already enjoy, making improvisation accessible. Learning improvisation, even just for experimentation, can help performers to think in a more critical and informed way about their repertoire and performance decisions, improve their awareness of their relationship with their instrument, heighten their awareness in group playing and build confidence.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Ingrid Monson, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 74.

<sup>75</sup> Borgo, *Sync or swarm*, 34, 9, 170.

<sup>76</sup> For further discussion on improvisation as action rather than product see: Philip Alperson, ‘On Musical Improvisation,’ *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43, no. 1 (1984): 17-29.

<sup>77</sup> Villavicencio, ‘The Discourse of Free Improvisation,’ 224.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

<sup>79</sup> Uchenne Ngwe, ‘Curating Diversity in European Classical Music Performance,’ (lecture, *Music Department Seminar Series*, University of York, York, January 27, 2021).

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Keith Sawyer, ‘Improvisation and teaching,’ *Critical Studies in Improvisation* 3, no. 2 (2007): 1-4.

## 0.2 Methodology

### 0.2.1 From explicit to tacit: A dual approach

Moving from a theoretical to practical standpoint, this project required methodologies that would reveal both what improvisers need to know and how to use this information to improvise stylistically. Therefore, throughout, I have used a combination of methodologies and research practices from different disciplines to address each research area, bringing these together to form a larger unique methodology specific to this endeavour. These approaches were all rooted in practice-led research, using literature reviews and my own experiences to influence experimentation. The broad areas covered include historical and philosophical enquiry, music and educational psychology, musical analysis, play theory, pastiche composition, historically-informed performance practice and, of course, improvisation. In order to form research questions, to find out what it is we need to know to be able to improvise a baroque fantasia, it is first necessary to investigate how people improvise: which processes occur, what kind of knowledge is needed.

To discuss this process, I use the following terms:

**Embedded Knowledge** Knowledge of processes that are largely unconscious, built through practice and repetition.<sup>82</sup> Explicit knowledge that has passed to tacit knowledge, from conscious thinking to automation. This can be deliberate through specific practice exercises, for instance, or unintentional through other activities such as performing, reading or composing. It is locked in processes and often likened to culture or routines, it therefore feels natural.<sup>83</sup> By embedding knowledge about improvisation, the process can feel routine and draw on elements from musical cultures. By acknowledging embedded knowledge, we accept that improvisation, while an individual activity, does not exist in a vacuum, that knowledge and practice is built through embedded systems (culturally, socially and musically). In the case of historical improvisation, we seek to actively encourage this beyond the current embedded norms in order to produce stylistic sounds.

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<sup>82</sup> See Paul R. Gamble and John Blackwell, *Knowledge management: A state of the art guide* (London: Kogan Pages, 2001). See also Christina Guillaumier, Ruth Slater, and Peter Argondizza, 'Recontextualised learning through embedded creativity: Developing a module that applies historically informed performance practice to Baroque music,' in *Creative teaching for creative learning in higher music education*, ed. Christina Guillaumier, Ruth Slater, and Peter Argondizza (London: Routledge, 2016), 186-197.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

Embodied Knowledge	Knowledge that ‘resides in the body, but [is] also... gained through the body’. <sup>84</sup>
Tacit Knowledge	Knowledge that is intuitive. It is built through experiences and can be increased through embedding explicit knowledge. <sup>85</sup>
Explicit Knowledge	Codified knowledge that can be consciously accessed. Thoughts in this vein are of facts and figures, information in its abstract form. <sup>86</sup>
Webs of Knowledge	The complex connections between thoughts themselves and thoughts and actions that need to be built between individual nuggets of explicit knowledge as well as their physical embodiment to allow for the creation of ideas and execution of activities. <sup>87</sup>

I began with practice-led research, picking up my violin and simply attempting to improvise a baroque fantasia. This unsurprisingly resulted in complete paralysis. To improvise in new styles, performers require new “webs of knowledge”.<sup>88</sup> These can be broadly categorised into two sections: explicit and tacit knowledge. Improvisation is essentially composition in the moment without time for editing. This means that performers need to have both the knowledge of pastiche composers (explicit) and the execution of performers (tacit knowledge). As such, I was left with two key questions that addressed explicit and tacit knowledge. From an explicit perspective, which musical schemata would be historically stylistic (encompassing structure, harmony, tonality, melody and rhythm)? This then raised the question of how to increase tacit knowledge to be able to execute these explicit elements (covering technical possibilities as well as confidence and intuition). Thus, the methodology for this thesis is centred around those findings from my first practice-led research experiments in this area. Here, I explain in more detail the origins and justifications for my use of analytical, play and compositional methodologies.

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<sup>84</sup> Mimi Sodhi ‘Embodied Knowing: An Experiential, Contextual, and Reflective Process,’ (conference paper, Adult Education Research Conference, St Louis, MO, 2008).

And S. Nagatomo, ‘An Eastern concept of the body: Yuasa’s body scheme,’ in *Giving the body its due*, ed. M. Sheets-Johnstone (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), xi, 233.

<sup>85</sup> M. Polanyi, *The tacit dimension* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966).

<sup>86</sup> John Seely Brown and Paul Duguid, ‘Organizing knowledge,’ *California management review* 40, no. 3 (1998): 90-111.

<sup>87</sup> See Jennifer Louise Cohen, ‘Playing with time: The creative embodiment of knowledge in the performance of baroque flute music,’ (PhD Thesis, University of York, 2018), 189, 121-136.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

To begin, addressing explicit knowledge questions through investigating historical treatises and writings for general observations and context reveals answers to what improvisers need to know. More specificity is needed, however, and therefore, in addition, I analyse solo violin fantasias by the most prolific composers to create lists of specific musical schemata. These were Georg Philipp Telemann, Nicola Matteis senior and Nicola Matteis junior. As the baroque composers with the by far largest output of fantasias for the violin, their works provided ideal case studies which allowed for research into the specificities of violin fantasias, as opposed to analysis of those for keyboardists such as by C.P.E. Bach. To find a methodology for this musical analysis, I turned to Gjerdingen's influential work on schemata. Gjerdingen suggests that musical styles can be condensed into a series of 'stock musical phrases', schemata.<sup>89</sup> These can refer to any aspect of the musical features but his particular analysis revealed several figurations between melody and bass which occur often in music of the late eighteenth century. He labelled these: the *Romanesca*, *Prinner*, *Fonte*, *Do-Re-Mi*, *Monte*, *Meyer*, *Quiescenza*, *Ponte*, *Fenaroli*, *Sol-Fa-Mi* and *Indugio*.<sup>90</sup> These, however, are very much geared towards keyboardists or harmony instruments. This form of analysis has the advantage of identifying stock features that can be repeated and developed to help achieve stylistic results. Similarly, Mirka has identified schemata in Mozart's piano cadenzas.<sup>91</sup> For melody instruments, harmony needs to be addressed in a different way; as a violinist, I found Gjerdingen's schemata fascinating but inapplicable. To think in those terms is not always possible on the violin because of technical restrictions of numbers of fingers and the tuning intervals of strings. While the idea of stock features was appealing, alternative schemata are necessary for melody instrumentalists as well as to account more specifically for seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century styles. This formed the basis for my analysis, seeking schemata that would be useful for melody instrumentalists from baroque compositions. In addition, the specificities of each genre require additional schemata and I have found through my experiments that schemata are needed for all aspects of musical composition. Music is made up of more than just harmony and therefore composers and improvisers need other guidance in addition to Gjerdingen's harmonic schemata, covering elements of structure, melody and rhythm as well. Each of these areas are addressed and I use a similar methodological approach

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<sup>89</sup> Robert Gjerdingen, *Music in the Galant Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 11, 6.

<sup>90</sup> See *Ibid.*, 28, 46, 62, 77, 90, 112, 181, 198, 225, 253, 273. The *Romanesca* involves descending voice leading in the melody on scale degrees 3, 2, 1, 7, 6, 5, each matched with these scale degrees in the bass: 1, 5, 6, 3, 4, 1. The *Prinner* melody scale degrees are: 6, 5, 4, 3, matched with 4, 3, 2, 1 in the bass. For the *Fonte*, the melody takes 6, 5, 4, 3 with 7, 7 and 1 on the final degree in the bass. *Do-Re-Mi* involves 1, 2, 3 in the melody and 1, 7, 1 in the bass. The *Monte* uses 3, 5, 4, 3 in the melody and 1, 7, 1 in the bass. The *Meyer* employs 4, 3 at the top and 7, 1 in the bass or 1, 7 in the melody with 1, 2 underneath. For the *Quiescenza*, 1, 6, 7, 1 is accompanied by 1. The *Ponte* includes 2, 4, 3 over 5. The *Fenaroli* is formed of 4, 3, 7, 1 in the melody and 7, 3 in the bass. The *Sol-Fa-Mi* uses 5, 4 with 1, 2 in the bass and then 4, 3 in the melody and 7, 1 in the bass. The *Indugio* involves 2, 4, 6 in the melody and 4, 5 in the bass.

<sup>91</sup> Danuta Mirka, 'The cadence of Mozart's cadenzas,' *The Journal of Musicology* 22, no.2 (2005): 303-4.



to Gjerdingen by centring this research on analysis. These schemata, therefore, form the explicit knowledge that improvisers need to build their webs of knowledge.

This knowledge by itself, however, will not produce a fantasia. I, therefore, needed a methodology to embed this information and make it possible in improvisation. For this, I found the embodied learning movement to be a valuable source of initial inspiration. As described by Merleau-Ponty, this viewpoint posits that 'rather than a mind and a body, man is a mind with a body', and therefore that the two are not separate entities but instead work together to foster our understanding of the world.<sup>92</sup> He argues that learning any new skill or habit requires 'motor grasping of a motor significance'.<sup>93</sup> Stolz argues that this process creates 'its own form of unique knowledge'.<sup>94</sup> For Dreyfus, once an expert, 'our everyday dealing with things and people switches over from the planning and goal directedness' to 'a spontaneous response to the demands of the whole situation.'<sup>95</sup> Stolz argues that it is a matter of intention, that, taking a dancer as an example, their 'movements are governed by intention, but this intention does not lay down the position of the limbs as objective locations'; there is more at play here, intersecting between the body and the mind, the explicit and tacit knowledge.<sup>96</sup> To internalise explicit information, therefore, we need to find a way to build tacit webs of knowledge.

For this, I have investigated play theory and embedded knowledge. This research showed the usefulness of games that encourage the embedding of tacit knowledge through combining explicit knowledge and its physical expression. As such, I have created a series of games and compositions which demonstrate possible ways to move explicit knowledge, such as the lists of schemata, to the tacit arena. This methodology allowed me to not only build my own skills but research the process further from an insider's perspective, using play to investigate how improvisers make decisions and therefore what useful exercises might be. Improvisation is essentially imagination realised. Indeed, the only way to improvise is through the imagination as we 'can imagine what [we] ha[ve] not seen, can conceptualise something from another person's narration and [provide a] description of what [we ourselves have] never directly experienced', and this is

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<sup>92</sup> M. Merleau-Ponty, *The world of perception* [1948], trans. Davis, Trans (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 43. And Stolz, Steven A, 'Embodied Learning, Educational Philosophy and Theory,' *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 47, no. 5 (2015): 479.

<sup>93</sup> Merleau-Ponty in Stolz, 'Embodied Learning,' 483.

<sup>94</sup> Stolz, 'Embodied Learning,' 165, 483.

<sup>95</sup> H. Dreyfus, 'Intelligence without representation—Merleau-Ponty's critique of mental representation,' *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 1 (2002a): 367–383. And H. Dreyfus, 'Refocusing the question: Can there be skilful coping without propositional representations or brain representations?' *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 1 (2002b): 413–425.

<sup>96</sup> Stolz, 'Embodied learning', 484.

precisely what we need to achieve in improvisation.<sup>97</sup> To quote Vygotsky, ‘imagination operates not freely, but directed by someone else’s experience, as if according to someone else’s instructions’.<sup>98</sup> Such games, therefore, help to direct the musician’s imagination by including elements of explicit knowledge in bite size chunks and by providing some frameworks. In order to access the affects that baroque musicians saw as the purpose of music, play provides a way in, ‘all forms of creative imagination include affective elements’.<sup>99</sup> Play provides a way to make sense of the explicit knowledge, to stimulate meaning making (which Connery defines as ‘the construction of knowledge into understanding with others within and across a variety of contexts and codes’).<sup>100</sup> In play, ‘emotion, meaning, and cognitive symbols are synthesised’ and as Vygotsky noted, ‘no accurate cognition of reality is possible without a certain element of imagination’.<sup>101</sup> He also argues that creatives are products of their time and this is reflected in their artwork.

For musicians to be able to be a product not only of our time but of a time gone by, additional steps are needed in order to enrich our webs of knowledge with this historical explicit information.<sup>102</sup> It is through games that this knowledge can pass from explicit to tacit, giving the improviser the options they need. Connery summarises Vygotsky’s approach as suggesting that ‘affective and intellectual knowledge subsist at various locations along a continuum of consciousness, subject to movement from one state of realisation to another’; this is precisely what we are trying to achieve through games for improvisation.<sup>103</sup> In play we can experiment, be different, as Vygotsky remarked, ‘a head taller’.<sup>104</sup> Piaget also agreed that ‘play serves an integrating and cementing function’ and Gadamer posited that play was an effective way to create collaboratively.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> M. Cathrene Connery, Vera John-Steiner, and Ana Marjanovic-Shane, eds., *Vygotsky and creativity: A cultural-historical approach to play, meaning making, and the arts* Vol. 5 (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 6. And L.S. Vygotsky, ‘Imagination and creativity in childhood,’ *Journal of Russian and Eastern European Psychology* 42, no. 1 (1930/ 2004): 17.

<sup>98</sup> Vygotsky, ‘Imagination and creativity,’ 17. And Elena Bodrova, Carrie Germeroth, and Deborah J. Leong, ‘Play and self-regulation: lessons from Vygotsky,’ *American journal of play* 6, no. 1 (2013): 113.

<sup>99</sup> Vygotsky, ‘Imagination and creativity,’ 19.

<sup>100</sup> Connery, *Vygotsky and creativity*, 12.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 12, 13. And L.S. Vygotsky, ‘Imagination and its development in childhood,’ trans. N. Minick, in R. W. Rieber and A. S. Carton eds. *The collected works of L.S. Vygotsky vol. 1* (New York: Plenum Press, 1987), 349.

<sup>102</sup> Vygotsky in Connery, *Vygotsky and creativity*, 13.

<sup>103</sup> Connery, *Vygotsky and creativity*, 22.

<sup>104</sup> L.S. Vygotsky, *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 102.

<sup>105</sup> J. Piaget, *Play, dreams and imitation in childhood* (New York: Norton, 1962). And Robert S. Fink, ‘Role of imaginative play in cognitive development,’ *Psychological Reports* 39, no. 3 (1976): 896. And H. G. Gadamer, ‘Die Aktualität des Schönen. Kunst als Spiel, Symbol und Fest,’ in J. C. B. Mohr ed. *Gesammelte Werke 8: Ästhetik und Poetik 1: Kunst als Aussage* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999a), 34-143. And H. G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Continuum, 2004). And Anna Reetta Suorsa, ‘Knowledge creation and play—a phenomenological approach,’ *Journal of Documentation* 17, no. 3 (2015): 505-525.

Another way to embed this knowledge is through pastiche composition. This methodology allows for experimentation through trial and error. As Vygotsky and Connery noted, children do not imitate everything but what is beyond them in order to foster their development. Similarly, imitating a compositional style that is beyond our current knowledge or improvisatory capabilities will increase our knowledge and improvisation skills.<sup>106</sup> Improvisation, producing new music each time, is, in a sense, always beyond us. Each performance is an exploration and experiment and thus requires a slightly different psychology, contrary to that commonly adopted by classical performing musicians. Endeavours towards any kind of perfection produce anxiety in all performance but in improvisation the traditional musical understandings of perfection are unattainable and indeed unwanted.<sup>107</sup> As such, in improvisation pedagogical literature, many writers suggest that the improviser needs to learn to “let go”.<sup>108</sup> This phrase I find to be unhelpful as the improviser is not really letting go of anything, they are simply trusting their embodied and embedded webs of tacit knowledge to inform their decisions and produce results. If anything, they are more in control of the situation as subconsciously much more information can be sifted through quickly; this automisation leaves space for higher-order structural planning or decision-making.<sup>109</sup> Values and assumptions about music-making need to be altered but not let go of. The improviser trusts in their tacit knowledge. Only through trusting this can we attempt to create that which is beyond us, trusting that our knowledge will be appropriately applied to new settings. Improvisation, therefore, rather than “letting go” involves “turning inward”.

The explicit knowledge needed to improvise a fantasia in a baroque style is therefore included here along with suggestions for transforming this into tacit knowledge, a dual approach. Historical improvisation is a series of informed decisions that arise from the explicit and tacit consequences and options of stylistic knowledge, some consciously made, while others are automated. The methodology for this research is consequently based on the principle of decision matrices. These are notated realisations of the many decisions improvisers have to make and show how these are connected. Based on historical, philosophical, analytical, play, psychological, compositional and performative research methods, these seek to reveal and present the explicit answers necessary to inform intuitive immediate tacit decision-making (see chapter 1 for examples and further discussion on decision matrices).

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<sup>106</sup> Connery, *Vygotsky and creativity*, 32.

<sup>107</sup> Anna Reetta Suorsa, ‘Knowledge creation and play—a phenomenological approach,’ *Journal of Documentation* 17, no. 3 (2015): 505-525.

<sup>108</sup> Barry Green, *The Inner Game of Music* (London: Pan Books, 1987).

<sup>109</sup> F. Pachet, ‘Musical Virtuosity and Creativity,’ in *Computers and Creativity*, eds. J. McCormack and M. d’Inverno (Berlin: Springer, 2012), 119-120.

## 0.2.2 Towards an understanding and performance of improvised fantasias

In order to improvise a stylistic baroque fantasia in practice, it is necessary to understand theoretically: first, what improvisation is; second, how the practice of musical improvisation has changed over time; and third, how a fantasia was perceived from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Following this, practice-led research, informed by these findings, provides specific features to draw on in improvisation alongside guidance on how to apply these in practice and performance. Addressing the following research questions, therefore, this thesis deals first with the nature of improvisation in chapter 1, asking: how can we define improvisation and more specifically the improvisation involved in a baroque fantasia? What changes in mindset does improvisation require from classical musicians? What explicit and tacit knowledge processes are involved in improvisation? How is this knowledge realised? Then, chapter 2 surveys the history of classical improvisation and its role in performance practice today. Honing in on the fantasia, chapter 3 asks: when were fantasias performed and when were they improvised? Who played and improvised fantasias? How did they change musically throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries? Chapter 4 contains analysis of composed example fantasias by Telemann and Matteis senior and junior, analysing fantasias specifically for the violin but also investigating Telemann's flute and gamba solo fantasias to provide insights with broader relevance for melody instrumentalists. As part of my practice-led research process, I have also composed some example fantasias in the style of different composers which are discussed here. These allowed me to first become more familiar with the style in an environment without the time pressure of instantaneous composition which improvisation demands and demonstrate the feasibility of the musical guidance I give for stylistic improvisation. This chapter also addresses the musical characteristics that are common in fantasias as well as the other genres or styles that they draw from. Approaching the improvised fantasia from a more practical angle, chapter 5 reviews pedagogical literature on teaching improvisation and evaluates practice strategies, exercises and experiences mentioned in this literature but also from my own experience and proposes the use of games as a valuable research tool. What are the technical considerations behind creating certain affects? How can performers come to terms with the freedom offered by improvised fantasias? Which practice strategies are effective? Finally, chapter 6 discusses the application of this knowledge to live performance, using the two accompanying recitals for this thesis as case studies and questioning: how can musicians effectively programme improvised fantasias into concerts? These recitals are included as mp4 files in the accompanying material and as YouTube links for easy access throughout this thesis. In order to make the results of this research accessible to performers and to ease the application of this research into performance, a distilled list of instructions for current performers is included in chapter 5. A more

detailed guide is also included in the appendix (see appendix 3), presenting the research of each chapter in the most accessible “pull-out” form.

The two accompanying recitals are based around the most prolific composers of baroque violin fantasias. The first concert takes Telemann’s fantasias as a case study and the second those by Matteis senior and junior. They both present related compositions from the time and composed example fantasias and variations by the author which reflect each stylistic tendency, as well as fully improvised fantasias to give insight into the pedagogical process suggested in the thesis. They also demonstrate some of the games and pedagogical tools I suggest in chapter 5.

Historically-informed performance (HIP), and indeed arguably all musical performance, is the application of knowledge into practice. As Cook remarked, HIP ‘is based on an iterative method in which knowledge flows in both directions between musicologists and performers. Not only is this an example of performance as research: HIP may be said to have established beyond doubt the viability and the value of performance as research.’<sup>110</sup> The act of thinking critically about playing a musical instrument and playing a musical instrument with critical thought are therefore valuable forms of research. In historical improvisation, especially, however, practice combines knowledge of stylistic features, harmonic progressions and melodic development but also practical skill in muscle memory and technique. For any research with intended practical implications, practice-led research and research-led practice are essential,<sup>111</sup> and this project is no exception. I use these terms in accordance with Candy who describes practice-led research as practice which leads to research insights while practice-based research refers to the artwork as research itself. As improvised performances in a baroque style transmit knowledge and have the potential to create new knowledge these can be a form of practice-based research, while the process of improvising to discover more about the practice is practice-led research.<sup>112</sup> Both are therefore necessary for this topic, as Smith argues, these two forms of research are ‘interwoven in an iterative cyclic web’.<sup>113</sup> Both research and performance can be deemed creative activities. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, for instance, defines research as: ‘creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of humanity, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications.’<sup>114</sup> Referring

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<sup>110</sup> Nicholas Cook, ‘Performing Research: Some Institutional Perspectives,’ in *Artistic practice as research in music: Theory, criticism, practice*, ed. Mine Dogantan-Dack (London: Routledge, 2016), 15.

<sup>111</sup> Hazel Smith ed. *Practice-led research, research-led practice in the creative arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 2.

<sup>112</sup> L. Candy, *Practice-based Research: A Guide, Creativity and Cognition Studios Report 2006-V1.0* (Sydney: Creativity and Cognition Studios, University of Technology online, 2006), accessed July 5, 2023. <http://www.creativityandcognition.com>.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Cook, ‘Performing Research,’ 15.

to performance, Cook argues that ‘nobody is in greater denial of the creativity of performance than performers’.<sup>115</sup> In addition, Bolt suggests that ‘a very specific sort of knowing, a knowing that arises through handling materials in practice’ arises from this kind of research and it is this knowing that is necessary to make the practice of historical improvisation possible, accessible and communicable.<sup>116</sup>

Any knowledge gained through research, I experimented with in practice and similarly, my practice raised many more questions which then influenced my research. Applying advice from treatises into improvisation, for instance, required a great deal of experimentation during practice to realise their demands, becoming a form of research itself. This aligns with Haseman’s assessment that practitioners ‘tend to “dive in”, to commence practising to see what emerges’.<sup>117</sup> Referring to Monson again, the inevitable problem with musicology is that it endeavours to convert sounds into words, and as such, something will always be lost in translation.<sup>118</sup> It has been extensively argued that exact reconstructions are not possible but that HIP’s defining characteristic is its reinvention, application and adaptation of historical conventions and ideologies into current sonic aesthetics. Practice-led research, therefore, provided the ideal framework for this investigation. Throughout this process, I kept a practice diary, recording my experiments, thought processes and reflections and made several recordings, some of small, planned projects but others just of practice or short exercises. This informed my practice-led research and formed the basis for my practical guidance.<sup>119</sup>

Previous literature on classical improvisation has primarily focused on keyboard playing, scholarship on the historical fantasia has concentrated on the viol consort and the field of baroque performance practice has been dominated by research on the performance of notated compositions. This project provides an original contribution by offering new insights into contemporary conceptions of the solo instrumental fantasia, including a practical guide for melody instrumentalists which is focused on the violin. This thesis describes how to improvise a stylistic fantasia and presents example performances which exhibit the results of this research and demonstrate the practicality of the suggested approach. The format used acts as a model for future practice-led research into other types of historical improvisation for melody instruments,

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<sup>115</sup> Smith, *Practice-led Research*, 2.

<sup>116</sup> E. Barrett and B. Bolt eds, *Practice as Research: Context, Method, Knowledge* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 29.

<sup>117</sup> B. Haseman, ‘A manifesto for performative research,’ *Media International Australia Incorporating Culture and Policy* 118, no. 1 (2006): 100.

<sup>118</sup> Monson, *Saying Something*, 74.

<sup>119</sup> For examples of autoethnographic writing see: Elisabeth Le Guin, *Boccherini’s Body: An essay in carnal musicology* (California: University of California Press, 2005). And Stephen Cottrell, *Professional music-making in London: Ethnography and experience* (London: Routledge, 2017). And Brydie-Leigh Bartleet, ‘Behind the baton: Exploring autoethnographic writing in a musical context,’ *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 38, no. 6 (2009): 713-733.

encouraging an increase in the inclusion of improvisation in classical music performance in the future.

# Chapter 1: Improvisation: A beautifully human art

## 1.1. Improvisation in theory

In order to understand and perform baroque improvisation, it is first necessary to investigate the nature of improvisation itself. As a large and contentious topic, rather than seek to provide a comprehensive study, this chapter surveys some of the larger questions surrounding the nature of improvisation which have greater relevance to historical solo improvisation, presenting summaries of recent scholarship and subjective reflections from my own experience. The present understanding and status of classical improvisation is such that any discussion or practice must first deal with both theory and practicality, defining for performers themselves, audiences or scholars exactly what it is they are trying to achieve. Without the standards and living traditions of jazz improvisation, classical improvisation is yet to redefine itself for the modern era. Lingering ideas of the work concept have dominated scholarship on improvisation, resulting in a large discussion as to its value, purpose and, in fact, what it means to improvise at all.<sup>120</sup> Addressing this lack of clarity and cohesion and contributing particularly from the angle of classical improvisation, this chapter thus necessarily begins by discussing improvisation in theory: defining my usage of the term, considering its status as an art and how improvisation changes the work concept. Following this, in the second half, the practicalities of improvisation, such as common processes, its reception and criticism, its value to research, the role of recordings and rehearsals as well as wellbeing and health benefits are put forward and debated.

### 1.1.1 'Passion and imagination are in league against reason': Improvising a definition<sup>121</sup>

*The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* defines improvisation as 'the creation of a musical work or the final form of a musical work, as it is being performed'.<sup>122</sup> This, however, could arguably be used to describe all music when it is accepted that a musical score does not constitute the music as a whole. In fact, this definition implies that composed works are complete in notation, reminiscent of the work concept. Such a viewpoint would render performance obsolete. Music is

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<sup>120</sup> Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

<sup>121</sup> William Rosky, 'Imagination in the English Renaissance: Psychology and Poetic,' *Studies in the Renaissance* 5 (1958): 63.

<sup>122</sup> Bruno Nettl et al., 'Improvisation,' *Grove Music Online*, 2001, accessed August 10, 2021. <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000013738>.



primarily a sonic experience, however, and therefore this cannot be the case. In addition, no form of notation can ever fully represent a sound and therefore no score can ever be the music; it is a partial representation which aids the realisation in performance.<sup>123</sup>

There has been a debate in recent times about whether improvisation which goes beyond ornamenting a notated work should be called present time composition, as suggested by Bern.<sup>124</sup> The main argument holds that to be called improvisation, the product would have to result largely from pre-existing musical works, for example, the addition of ornamentation or divisions on a written-out theme; otherwise, the product is essentially spontaneous composition. Sawyer, therefore, describes improvisation as ‘playing something that is not written in the score’.<sup>125</sup> I am of the opinion that no improvisation (and indeed music) can be wholly without inspiration from previous musical works, whether notated or otherwise, and certainly historically-informed improvisation cannot escape this because of the use of schemata and musical tropes in order to be stylistic. As Alperson and Brown remark, even to go against a musical style in improvisation, a great amount of knowledge of that style is necessary.<sup>126</sup> In addition, to quote Alperson again, although ‘improvisation encourages the impression that something is being created out of nothing’, ‘even the freest improviser ... improvises against some sort of musical context’.<sup>127</sup> Each performer relies on their own individual webs of knowledge to inform decision-making, formed of tacit and explicit knowledge which is gathered throughout an individual's lifetime.<sup>128</sup> These webs are also informed by enculturation, an implicit sense of what is expected or appropriate for each circumstance.<sup>129</sup>

I find Landau's description of large-scale improvisation as a series of novel links particularly compelling. Similarly, Schön understands improvisation to be ‘varying, combining, and recombining a set of figures within the schema which bounds and gives coherence to the performance’.<sup>130</sup> While, as

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<sup>123</sup> Barthold Kuijken, *The notation is not the music: reflections on early music practice and performance* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013).

<sup>124</sup> Alan Bern, ‘The OMA improvisation project,’ *Other music academy*, 2020, accessed August 10, 2021, <http://oma.othermusicacademy.eu/improv/index.html>.

<sup>125</sup> Keith Sawyer, ‘Improvisation and teaching,’ *Critical Studies in Improvisation* 3, no. 2 (2007): 1.

<sup>126</sup> Philip A. Alperson, ‘On Musical Improvisation,’ *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43, no. 1 (1984): 22. And Lee B. Brown, ‘“Feeling My Way”: Jazz Improvisation and Its Vicissitudes – A Plea for Imperfection,’ *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 58, no. 2, *Improvisation in the Arts* (2000): 14.

<sup>127</sup> Alperson, ‘On Musical Improvisation,’ 21-22.

<sup>128</sup> See introduction 0.2.1 *Methodology* for further discussion of the use of the term “webs of knowledge”. See also Jennifer Louise Cohen, ‘Playing with Time: The Creative Embodiment of Knowledge in the Performance of Baroque Flute Music,’ (PhD Thesis, University of York, 2018), 189, 121-136.

<sup>129</sup> Mike J. Kohfeld et al., ‘Teaching and learning improvisation: Culture-specific cases of a cross-cultural musical act,’ in *Expanding the Space for Improvisation Pedagogy in Music*, ed Guro Gravem Johansen et al. (New York: Routledge, 2019), 17-32.

<sup>130</sup> Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 55.

noted above, schema and tropes abound in improvisation, the creativity in improvisation arises from this linking process.<sup>131</sup> I would argue that there is creativity in the technical realisation of these decisions too; without the hours of practice, improvisers have to spontaneously invent ways to achieve the desired result. For instance, a large shift on the violin might be planned with hours of practice through several earlier positions or hand shapes, whereas, in improvisation the violinist does not have time for this and so has to find a creative way to still achieve the note, perhaps a slide. Ferro notes how the act of improvising is actually used by all artists to choose each idea.<sup>132</sup> Moore suggests that historically-informed improvisation can never include innovations, yet as Bailey argued, improvisation is only ever accidentally experimental and, certainly within classical improvisation, the aim was to creatively fulfil expectations rather than shock in any way.<sup>133</sup> This is, therefore, arguably not a point of significance. Thus, all improvisation is both ‘the creation of a musical work...as it is being performed’ and an elaboration of previous musical works.<sup>134</sup>

Likewise, all performance involves elements of improvisation, it is simply the extent which differs.<sup>135</sup> Barton splits jazz improvisation into three types: ‘paraphrase improvisation’, ‘formulaic improvisation’ and ‘motivic improvisation’.<sup>136</sup> These are all based on the points of inspiration: a theme, several fragments or a single fragment. For classical improvisation, Dolan suggested a division of improvisation into two approaches, one which creates a whole new piece and another which acts as a creative interpretation of a written work.<sup>137</sup> This I find to be the most useful distinction for baroque improvisation and the fantasia especially. The improvisation of fantasias sits within the first of these categories, representing a different kind of improvisation which goes beyond the surface level ornamentation commonly added by Western classical performers today. This ornamentation includes adding or changing dynamics, articulation or short flourishes which do not change the identity of the piece itself. Larger-scale improvisation, however, calls for the performer to create a new piece, such as a fantasia.<sup>138</sup> Historically-informed performance has seen a rise

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>132</sup> Alberto Ferro, ‘“Composed improvisations’ for piano solo”: A closer look into different contemporary improvisational approaches,’ (masters dissertation, Washington State University, 2015), 3.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 76, 78.

<sup>134</sup> Nettl, ‘Improvisation.’

<sup>135</sup> Brian Barton, ‘Improvisation: Its Importance to the 21st Century Musician,’ *Academia EDU*, 2012, accessed August 10, 2021, 8,

[https://www.academia.edu/7370528/Improvisation\\_Its\\_Importance\\_to\\_the\\_20th\\_Century\\_Musician?email\\_work\\_card=title](https://www.academia.edu/7370528/Improvisation_Its_Importance_to_the_20th_Century_Musician?email_work_card=title).

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>137</sup> David Dolan, ‘The Classical Style,’ *Classical Piano*, November/ December, 1996, 13-14.

<sup>138</sup> Cesar Villavicencio, ‘The Discourse of Free Improvisation: A Rhetorical Perspective on Free Improvised Music,’ (PhD dissertation, University of East Anglia, 2008), 40. And Barton, ‘Improvisation,’ 6.

particularly in increased creative interpretations of a work through the addition of ornamentation but to improvise whole new pieces remains uncommon.<sup>139</sup>

### 1.1.2 The work as performance?

Grazzini argues that improvisation should only be viewed as a performance.<sup>140</sup> Such philosophies see the work as residing in the performance as opposed to a score, such as in writing by Scruton.<sup>141</sup> Alperson likewise argues that a musical score does not constitute music, that it only exists in performance.<sup>142</sup> This argument I find convincing, as discussed above, the score cannot fully constitute the music. As primarily a performer and improviser, I must acknowledge an inevitable bias in this respect. Performer and improviser voices should, nevertheless, be heard in this debate; as forms of music too, a purely textual and compositional approach cannot provide an accurate review of the situation. In considering these aspects, I, therefore, use my experience as a scholar and composer but also as a performer and improviser. In addition, approaching this without a *Werktreue* mindset (one which sees the score as prescriptive and fixed, with the performer's role as solely interpreter rather than creator),<sup>143</sup> I see no issue with a work of art existing only fleetingly and without the possibility of replicability. For others such as Hamilton, Hagberg, Davies and Osipovich, a performance is not a work but a 'performance event'.<sup>144</sup>

To me, however, Hamilton, Hagberg, Davies and Osipovich's view places the work somewhere in the ether which is not particularly helpful; a performance would, therefore, only be a representation of a work rather than a completion of a work.<sup>145</sup> Yet, sound is surely needed to complete a musical work. The work could potentially "exist" in an incomplete form in the ether but only comes fully into being in a performance. Musical activity is essentially a human one, one of

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<sup>139</sup> Robin Moore, 'The Decline of Improvisation in Western Art Music: An Interpretation of Change,' *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 23, no. 1 (June 1992): 61-84.

<sup>140</sup> Stephen C. Grazzini, 'Reconstructing the improvised keyboard prelude of the French Baroque,' (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2014).

<sup>141</sup> Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). And David Davies, *Art as Performance* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004). And Andy Hamilton, 'The Art of Improvisation and the Aesthetics of Imperfection,' *British Journal of Aesthetics* 40, no. 1 (2000): 169.

<sup>142</sup> Alperson, 'On Musical Improvisation.'

<sup>143</sup> Lydia Goehr, *The imaginary museum of musical works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>144</sup> Hamilton, 'The Art of Improvisation.' And Garry L. Hagberg, 'On Representing Jazz: An Art Form in Need of Understanding,' *Philosophy and Literature* 26 (2002): 188-90. And David Osipovich, 'What is a Theatrical Performance?' *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 64, no. 4 (2006): 461-70. And Davies, *Art as Performance*.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

experience and a work floating in the ether can achieve neither of these things.<sup>146</sup> The performers always play some part in completing a work; they are always, therefore, partly co-composers, a fate composers have to accept when they do not perform their own works. Brown's philosophy of art rests on its replicability and therefore does not consider fully improvised performances a work.<sup>147</sup> Arguably, however, it is impossible to ever completely replicate an art of any description as a human and when it is considered that the work cannot exist fully in the ether, it would be counterintuitive for it to be possible in any case. It requires completion by others and these completions will all be different. If all interpretations were the same (as in listening to a recording repeatedly, for example), the work would still have been only completed once in that moment, a listener is simply reliving that particular completion of the work. In addition, it is human difference that creates art, to ignore this by calling for robotic repeatability is to go against the nature of art itself. If art is viewed as functional, however, then improvisation is considered by many to be an art.<sup>148</sup>

### 1.1.3 Functional artistry

Brown has sought to break down the aesthetic that beauty elevates art over functionality.<sup>149</sup> Let us not forget that music, especially baroque music, originated as entertainment. That is not to say that it cannot make people think or persuade listeners of an aim, but that it is unlikely to do either of those things if it does not engage the listener and therefore entertain. Music is functional artistry. It serves a purpose by filling time, altering moods or triggering change yet is nevertheless essentially a form of entertaining communication. That music is both functional and an "Art", is therefore integral to its nature. Canonne highlights the opposition which can often be observed between 'improvisation as a process and improvisation as product'.<sup>150</sup> For Smith and Dean, the process defines improvisation which thus breaks with the permanence associated with the musical work.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> See Christopher Small, *Musicking: The meanings of performing and listening* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1998).

<sup>147</sup> Brown, 'Feeling My Way,' 115. And Lee B. Brown, 'Musical Works, Improvisation and the Principle of Continuity,' *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (1996): 353–69.

<sup>148</sup> Aili Bresnahan, 'Improvisation in the Arts,' *Philosophy Compass* 10, no. 9 (2015): 578.

<sup>149</sup> Marion Brown quoted in Eric Porter, *What is this thing called jazz: African American musicians as artists, critics, and activists* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 251.

<sup>150</sup> Clément Canonne, 'Rehearsing Free Improvisation? An Ethnographic Study of Free Improvisers at Work,' *Music Theory Online* 24, no.4 (2018). Accessed July 19, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.30535/mto.24.4.1>. See also R. A. MacDonald, G. B. Wilson and D. Miell, 'Improvisation as a creative process within contemporary music,' in *Musical Imaginations: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Creativity, Performance and Perception*, ed. D. J. Hargreaves, D. Miell and R. A. R. Macdonald (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 247.

<sup>151</sup> Goehr, *The imaginary museum*. And Villavicencio, 'The Discourse of Free Improvisation,' 20. Roger Dean and Hazel Smith, *Improvisation Hypermedia and the Arts since 1945* (London: Routledge, 2013), 25.

Dahlhaus notes the commonality of viewing it as an activity, while Hereder uses the term 'energetic art'.<sup>152</sup> Alperson suggests that improvisation 'can refer to a kind of act...[or] product'.<sup>153</sup> Interestingly, he argues that composition actually also always contains some element of performance, 'even if just imaginary', arguing that composers usually "hear" the music they write in their heads and therefore "perform" it.<sup>154</sup> I see improvisation as both a process and product, I do not see the necessity of the two being mutually exclusive, the product is simply part of the process, they are one and the same thing and that is what makes it so exciting. While with other art forms we may only see one or the other, the process or product, both are nevertheless integral to the art; it is impossible to have one without the other.

An over emphasis on product becomes problematic in a crowded marketplace of classical favourites; as Alperson remarks, 'the musical product of the improviser usually, if not always, falls short of the architectonic (and especially polyphonic) possibilities of conventional Western music'.<sup>155</sup> In response to this he suggests that 'the relevant critical standards for musical improvisations should derive, not from what has been composed or from what has been performed, but rather from what has proven to be possible within the demands and constraints of improvisatory musical activity'.<sup>156</sup> As Ferro writes, the difficulty with marketing improvisation is that the ticket buyers can only 'believe' that they will enjoy what they hear rather than the usual certainty that comes with regular performances of pieces from the canon.<sup>157</sup> Nunn sees this as providing 'a level of excitement, involvement and challenge to the audience listener that is unique, at least in degree' and Bradlyn argues that improvisation 'succeeds as music only to the extent that listening achieves equal status with playing'.<sup>158</sup> The idea that an improvised work can somehow never measure up to a performance of a notated composition reveals the embedded nature of the work concept in musical criticism over spontaneity and originality. Similarly, Ferro argues that the range of technical possibilities for an improviser is smaller than that for notated compositions.<sup>159</sup>

In my own experience, however, I have often found that I have been able to execute more difficult musical ideas in improvisation spontaneously which would have taken hours of practice if

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<sup>152</sup> Carl Dalhaus, *Aesthetics of Music*, trans. William W. Austin (Cambridge, 1982), 9-11. And Alperson, 'On Musical Improvisation,' 27.

<sup>153</sup> Alperson, 'On Musical Improvisation,' 17.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-23.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>157</sup> Ferro, 'Composed improvisations,' 4.

<sup>158</sup> Tom Nunn, *Wisdom of the impulse: On the nature of musical free improvisation* (San Francisco: The Author, 1998), 93. And Mark Bradlyn, 'Figure, ground and field, gesture and texture: A gestalt strategy for group improvisation,' *The Improviser* 9 (1991): 15.

<sup>159</sup> Ferro, 'Composed improvisations,' 4.

found in a notated work. Similarly, recognised virtuosic jazz improvisers in bebop, to quote Pachet, play 'intricate phrases at such a speed that even the transcription of their solos from recording is a challenging task'.<sup>160</sup> He argues that this is possible due to high levels of automatisation of the process; it would be impossible to consciously decide to play each of the notes in real time. This is supported by the fact that computers can also produce similar sounding improvisations through automation. Perhaps it is the decision to rely on embedded tacit knowledge that allows for the instant production of difficult technical ideas. In performing notated music, performers are largely using conscious decision-making, seeking to problem solve through interpreting another's music. This is therefore a slower conscious process.

When pattern recognition can be used, this process can be sped up. Pattern recognition involves spotting commonly occurring sequences or schemata, which are abundant in baroque music.<sup>161</sup> Splitting up a piece into schemata can make its performance much easier. This categorisation can rapidly increase the speed of realisation as knowledge of how to play these schemata in other contexts can be applied to the current situation. For instance, a violinist might be able to apply a well-practised fingering on different strings or in a different position to fit the situation of this schemata, therefore enabling a quicker and more accurate realisation than a violinist who has to work out a fingering in the moment for each note. As another example, others may be able to reduce the amount of time needed to read the music as they are more reliably able to predict what will occur next seeing a broad shape and predicting it to be a certain common pattern of notes, giving more time to produce the realisation. In sight-reading music of a particular style or genre, musicians who are familiar with the conventions are therefore able to accurately reproduce the notation faster than others. In improvisation, technically difficult passages are chosen because they fit embedded pattern knowledge and therefore can be performed successfully immediately. Musicians can draw on their pattern recognition from playing notated music to inform their improvisations, choosing from a bank of internalised schemata to play stylistically and to accurately realise these ideas in the moment.

It ought also to be remembered that, as Ferro states, technical difficulty does not itself 'enhance' the 'meaning of a composition'.<sup>162</sup> Brown suggests that a critic is born when their expectations are not met.<sup>163</sup> As such, it is important that listeners of improvisation have appropriate expectations, not to hear lower quality music, simply different. As we change what we expect from

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<sup>160</sup> F. Pachet, 'Musical Virtuosity and Creativity,' in *Computers and Creativity*, eds. J. McCormack and M. d'Inverno (Berlin: Springer, 2012), 119-120.

<sup>161</sup> Thomas Wolf, 'A cognitive model of musical sight-reading,' *Journal of psycholinguistic research* 5, no. 2 (1976): 143-171.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>163</sup> Marion Brown quoted in Porter, *What is this thing called jazz*, 251.

pop music than from opera, or from African drumming or minimalism, each music requires a different set of listening criteria and improvisation should not be an exception. Rather than viewed as a lesser form of notated classical music, for instance, it should have its own place. In the absence of current established criteria, writers often comment on the communication and cohesion of an ensemble, no matter the genre of improvisation. The fleeting quality of improvisation can lead to increased focus from the audience and musicians; they only have this one opportunity to hear the music.<sup>164</sup>

#### 1.1.4 Structured Listening

Listeners tend to think structurally, even in improvisations; there is a tendency to search for pre-determinacy and a purposeful structure.<sup>165</sup> The idea of a work of art by accident is in opposition to the values of *werktreue*. Yet, in improvisation, the performer is also the composer and therefore it could be argued that improvisation actually obeys a *werktreue* mindset: what could be truer to the work than performing it yourself? The same process occurs as composition, just in less time. This is then in opposition to a romantic notion of art that emphasises reflection, revision and struggle. Experienced improvisers, however, have spent hours learning their craft, judging their performances and seeking solutions. This concept of art is, therefore, arguably still present in improvisation; reflective processes are practised before the performance to be employed almost instantaneously in improvisation. The idea of creating a work that is tangible and lasting is clearly in opposition with improvisation. Gould argues that the advent of instrumental music and its continued cultural prominence over the laity's singing has created the impression that music must be difficult to understand and compose, purposefully reasoned into being.<sup>166</sup> While this is one kind of musicking, it is certainly not the only way; again, it simply has different aims and criteria. The extent to which these are met, or not, defines the success of the work, measuring up one kind of musicking against another's criteria. Failing against such criteria does not rescind that music's status as an art; it simply calls for recognition as a different kind of art. The way we think about music as necessarily structured has determined many debates about the extent to which an improvisation has an organised or spontaneous structure. In reality, any structural analysis is retrospective, looks at the

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<sup>164</sup> Bresnahan, 'Improvisation in the Arts,' 579.

<sup>165</sup> Ken Haslam, 'Glenn Gould: on Improvisation. November 1966 radio programme,' YouTube video, posted by 'Bruce Cross,' July 22, 2019, accessed August 9, 2021, [https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=VuPSNsrlhtw&ab\\_channel=BruceCross](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=VuPSNsrlhtw&ab_channel=BruceCross).

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

final product and often does not pay any regard to the intention or consider the artwork as fleeting; it relies on a sense of permanency and repeatability.<sup>167</sup>

This makes it difficult for improvisations that cannot be revisited at length unless recorded, and then, much of the essence of the music is lost. Gould argues that improvisations are full of ‘a heavy overlay of sentimentality’ to ‘conceal by dramatic initiatives the lack of carefully worked out developmental ideas’, again revealing this mindset and judging improvisation on compositional terms.<sup>168</sup> Rather controversially, he concludes by arguing that improvisation’s ‘most important function’ is to provide a ‘remarkably humbling experience to the jaded sophisticate’.<sup>169</sup> Goodman and McFee’s philosophies of art allow for improvisation as despite the fact that they see the work as residing in a structure, this structure does not have to be notated, just that it could in principle be written down.<sup>170</sup> Borgo counters the idea that improvisation is not structured by stressing that improvisation is ‘not formless music making but form-making music’.<sup>171</sup> A structure will always be observable in improvisation if the listener is looking for one. Improvisers can therefore consider this in their performance.

### 1.1.5 Process and processing

MacDonald summarises the key activities in improvisation into the following words: ‘mirroring, matching, empathic improvising and reflection, grounding, holding and containing, dialoguing, modelling [and] accompanying’.<sup>172</sup> Austin and Bruscia’s offerings in this regard offer similar but slightly different features, including: mediation between the conscious and unconscious, absorption in the present experience and improvisation’s reliance on a symbolic language.<sup>173</sup> Kernfeld’s list of jazz improvisational techniques is as follows: paraphrase improvisation, use of well-known motives, formulaic improvisation, motivic improvisation and modal improvisation (or any combination of the

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> See Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 1976), 177-91 and 211-13. And Graham McFee, *The Philosophical Aesthetics of Dance: Identity, Performance and Understanding* (Hampshire: Dance Books Ltd., 2011). And Graham McFee, *Understanding Dance* (London: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>171</sup> David Borgo, ‘Negotiating Freedom: Values and Practices in Contemporary Improvised Music,’ *Black Music Research Journal* 22, no. 2 (2002): 167.

<sup>172</sup> Raymond A. R. MacDonald and Graeme B. Wilson, ‘Musical improvisation and health: a review,’ *Psychology of Well-being* 4, no. 1 (2014): 4-5.

<sup>173</sup> D. S. Austin, ‘The role of improvised music in psychodynamic music therapy with adults,’ *Music Therapy* 14, no. 1 (1996): 29–43. And K. E. Bruscia, ‘A survey of treatment procedures in improvisational music therapy,’ *Psychology of Music* 16, no. 1 (1988): 10–24.



above).<sup>174</sup> For Maldonato, there are three parts in improvisation: a field, time and action.<sup>175</sup> Corbett argues that improvisation is 'a compromise between order and disorder... a negotiation between codes and their pleasurable dismantling'.<sup>176</sup> Improvisers themselves usually describe their improvisations using emotional language.<sup>177</sup>

Indeed, the idea of freedom is often associated with improvisation, characterising many perceptions of jazz.<sup>178</sup> Williams, however, suggests that 'free improvisation is not an action resulting from freedom' but 'an action directed towards freedom'.<sup>179</sup> This concept of freedom is not always positive, however, as critics, particularly of free improvisation, view the musical output of the freedom from stylistic conventions as producing a 'musical mayhem'.<sup>180</sup> For others, free improvisation represents a rebellion against capitalism and 'the appropriation and exploitation of African-American musical styles'.<sup>181</sup> The introduction of stylistic constraints can actually free the performer to be more creative as a certain number of key decisions are removed from the brain activity, freeing up space.<sup>182</sup> Couldry sees free improvisation as 'a hybrid of both classical and jazz traditions'.<sup>183</sup> In group improvisation, Pressing argues that it is the use of 'referents' ('formal schema') that 'facilitat[e] the generation and editing of improvised behaviours on an intermediary scale'.<sup>184</sup> It is interesting to consider the position of improvising musicians because, as Cannone notes, 'the positioning of the musicians has a direct impact on what each improviser will actually hear'.<sup>185</sup> During performance, and indeed improvisation, the musician also acts as their own audience; self-judgement has a large effect on the events which follow.<sup>186</sup> Improvisation is, therefore, a complex and highly individualised activity.

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<sup>174</sup> Barry Kernfeld, 'Improvisation,' in *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz 2nd ed.*, ed. by Barry Kernfeld (New York: Grove's Dictionaries Inc., 2002), 315-22.

<sup>175</sup> Mauro Maldonato, 'Improvisation: The astonishing bridge to our inner music,' *World Futures* (2017): 14.

<sup>176</sup> John Corbett, 'Ephemera underscored: Writing around free improvisation,' in *Jazz among the discourses*, ed., Krin Gabbard (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995), 237.

<sup>177</sup> MacDonald, 'Musical improvisation and health,' 11.

<sup>178</sup> Borgo, 'Negotiating freedom,' 165.

<sup>179</sup> Davey Williams, 'Towards a philosophy of improvisation,' *The Improviser* 4 (1984): 32.

<sup>180</sup> Borgo, 'Negotiating freedom,' 166.

<sup>181</sup> See LeRoi Jones, *Blues people: Negro music in white America* (New York: William Morrow, 1963). Frank Kofsky, *Black nationalism and the revolution in music* (New York: Pathfinder, 1970). Valerie Wilmer, *As serious as your life: The story of the new jazz* (London: Allison and Busby, 1977). And Karlton E. Hester, *The melodic and polyrhythmic development of John Coltrane's spontaneous composition in a racist society* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 1997). Jacques Attali, *Noise: The political economy of music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985). And Edwin Prévost, *No sound is innocent* (Wiltshire, England: Antony Row, 1995).

<sup>182</sup> Ferro, 'Composed improvisations,' 12.

<sup>183</sup> Nick Couldry, 'Turning the musical table: Improvisation in Britain, 1965-1990,' *Rubberneck* 19 (1995): 7.

<sup>184</sup> Jeff Pressing, 'Cognitive Processors in Improvisation,' in *Cognitive Processes in the Perception of Art*, ed. W. Ray Crozier and Anthony J. Chapman (Elsevier, 1984), 246.

<sup>185</sup> Canonne, 'Rehearsing Free Improvisation?'

<sup>186</sup> Villavicencio, 'The Discourse of Free Improvisation,' 20.

### 1.1.6 A balancing act: From idea to execution

Whilst aspects of each of these definitions of improvisation ring true for my experience of baroque improvisation, none seemed to entirely capture the experience. I have turned to my own practice, therefore, in order to come to a more satisfying overall definition. To reach this, it is necessary to go behind and beyond the sonic product to the mental process. Through experimentation with baroque improvisation it became clear, as argued by Monti, that a balance needs to be achieved between rational thinking and emotional intuition to create fluent improvisations.<sup>187</sup> This aligns with the dual minds theory, that processing takes place in two ways: at an automatic and subconscious level and consciously controlled.<sup>188</sup> Evans and Over attribute these to implicit and explicit cognitive systems.<sup>189</sup> The explicit form of processing is very slow, as shown in table 1.<sup>190</sup> In all improvisation, the musician must use Guilford's convergent and divergent thinking, both generating many possible options and then choosing appropriately from these. At each level of improvisation, there are many such decisions which must be based on declarative (explicit such as facts) and non-declarative (skills-based) memory, meaning that if all of these processes are conscious and controlled improvisation would become impossible.<sup>191</sup> There is a really small amount of time between the improviser conceiving an idea and then having to execute it. Too much emphasis on rational thought, therefore, slows the process down as this involves a heavy editing process in this small window of time, meaning that improvisations are often interspersed with stumbles as improvisers struggle to produce ideas in an even shortened time-frame. In addition, this editing can produce self-doubt which can in turn also slow down the process further as decisions are harder to reach, taking longer and therefore reducing the time improvisers have to translate this idea into a physical response. Improvisations in this vein become stunted, lack a sense of flow (fluency) and the indecision can cause fingers to stiffen or at worst freeze, making it very difficult to continue the improvisation and creating an audible sense of panic or mistakes. As an improviser, this kind of improvisation feels constrained, can be stressful and is largely unrewarding.

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<sup>187</sup> Helicon Project, 'Musical Improvisation, within a Historical Multidisciplinary approach, Helicon – Huddersfield, 2021,' YouTube video, posted by 'HELICONA Project,' March 18, 2021, accessed February 2, 2022, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6uOsexk\\_00](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6uOsexk_00).

<sup>188</sup> Keith Frankish. 'Dual-process and dual-system theories of reasoning.' *Philosophy Compass* 5, no. 10 (2010): 914.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid. 919-920. And Jonathan St. B. T. Evans and David E. Over, *Rationality and Reasoning* (Hove: Psychology Press, 1996).

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Joy Paul Guilford, *The nature of human intelligence* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967). And Robert Wilkins, Simon Cross, Ian Megson, and David Meredith, eds., *Oxford handbook of medical sciences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 832-833.

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**Table 1: Features commonly ascribed to the two systems**

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	<b>System 1</b>	<b>System 2</b>
Processes	Fast Automatic Nonconscious or preconscious Low effort, high capacity Heuristic	Slow Controlled Conscious High effort, low capacity Analytic
Attitudes	Associative Implicit Cultural stereotypes Slow acquisition and change Fast access	Rule-based Explicit Personal beliefs Fast acquisition and change Slow access
Content	Actual Concrete Contextualised Domain-specific	Hypothetical Abstract Decontextualised Domain-general
Architecture	A set of systems, modular Parallel Does not use working memory	A single system Serial Uses working memory
Evolution	Evolutionarily old Shared with animals Nonverbal	Evolutionarily recent Unique to humans Language involving
Variation	Serves genetic goals ('short leash' control) Independent of general intelligence Little variation across cultures and individuals Relatively unresponsive to verbal instruction	Serves individual goals ('long-leash' control) Linked to general intelligence Variable across cultures and individuals Responsive to verbal instruction

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Table 1: Table taken from Evans and Over's research on dual-system processing. In improvisation a balance is needed between both forms.<sup>192</sup>

In improvisations which favour emotional intuition, however, the improviser has the maximum amount of time between the idea and production and therefore fluency is increased. This is also a useful technique for beginner improvisers and can be very freeing for experienced improvisers and allow them to discover new schemata. We all improvise in speech daily. As Littlewood remarks, 'when we use language, we are constantly having to create new higher-level plans at the level of ideas, meanings and conversational strategies. The effective execution of these plans depends on a high degree of automaticity at the lower levels,' the same applies to musical improvisation'.<sup>193</sup> This automisation is necessary to allow a response in time. John Mortensen supports this by arguing that 'to improvise you have to have a vocabulary'.<sup>194</sup>

Intuition is informed by webs of knowledge and so the larger and more varied the webs of knowledge the more options the improviser has, although these webs can also restrict options as improvisers will avoid certain combinations due to prior experience and the enculturated

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<sup>192</sup> Evans and Over in Frankish. 'Dual-process,' 920. See also Evans and Over, *Rationality and Reasoning*.

<sup>193</sup> Littlewood 1992, 42. Quoted in: Robert Harris and David McNamara eds., *Overseas students in higher education: Issues in teaching and learning* (London: Routledge, 2002), 152.

<sup>194</sup> John Mortensen, 'How to Fake Anything On Stage,' (Lecture for *HPI Colloquium*, online, April 6, 2022).

expectations of certain genres built into their webs of knowledge.<sup>195</sup> This approach is similar to Csíkszentmihályi's notion of "letting go", or as I term it, "turning inward".<sup>196</sup> This is a much more freeing and calm experience for the improviser. However, in this scenario, improvisations can lack structure or a sense of constant tempo and stylistic accuracy can be lost. Of course, the speed of improvisations can also play a factor. For instance, very fast improvisations have to rely much more on intuition because all of the limited time is needed to be able to physically produce the idea. In contrast, extremely slow improvisations can become compositions, as there is plenty of time for an idea and several edits before the result is heard.

Cohen defines intuition as 'the pre-reflective engine of our subattention, and ... an omnipresent factor in expressive decision-making'.<sup>197</sup> To quote David G. Myers, as 'the mushrooming mountain of evidence plainly indicates, we have two minds... One is above the surface, in our moment-to-moment awareness; the other is below, operating the autopilot that guides us through most of life'.<sup>198</sup> This intuition is by no means uninformed, however, is instead reliant on constant learning from experiences, both explicitly and tacitly, using embodied, actional, relational and situational knowledge.<sup>199</sup> We use the four Es of cognition to process information: embodied, embedded, extended and enactive, and the development of tacit knowledge also relies on information from each of these.<sup>200</sup> Researchers such as Agor, Betsch, Harper and Klein support this argument as does John Rink's term 'informed intuition' and David Myers' 'acquired intuition'.<sup>201</sup> Cohen asserts that 'intuition can be defined as the pre-reflective accessing and manifestation of knowledge that has been embodied over time and become embedded in our subattention'.<sup>202</sup> This can be equally applied to improvisation. While Carl Seashore argues that 'one must have been intensely conscious of technique... must have isolated element after element for intensive study... before control of these can become so automatic as to drop into the background of consciousness', I would argue that in the case of improvisation, this move to background consciousness does not require isolation.<sup>203</sup> Instead, through every improvisation and indeed practice of notated music, the

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<sup>195</sup> See Cohen, 'Playing with time,' 189, 121-136.

<sup>196</sup> Csíkszentmihályi, *Flow*.

<sup>197</sup> Cohen, 'Playing with time,' 86.

<sup>198</sup> David Myers, *Intuition: Its powers and perils* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 51.

<sup>199</sup> Cohen, 'Playing with time,' 141.

<sup>200</sup> Gastelum Melina and Jesús M. Siqueiros. '4E Cognition Group.' *4E Cognition Group*. 2022. Accessed July 18, 2022. <https://4ecognitiongroup.wordpress.com/research/>. And Carney, James. 'Thinking avant la lettre: A Review of 4E Cognition.' *Evolutionary studies in imaginative culture* vol. 4,1 (2020): 77-90. And Mark Rowlands, *The New Science of the Mind: From Extended Mind to Embodied Phenomenology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010).

<sup>201</sup> See Cohen, 'Playing with time,' 104.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Carl Seashore, *The Psychology of Musical Talent* (Boston: Silver, Burdett and Company, 1919), 259.

improviser learns schema, picks up ideas and practices technique, all of which increase their webs of knowledge tacitly without specific isolated focus. Isolating elements such as through games can be a useful learning tool, certainly, but, in improvisation, elements are hardly ever isolated as the musician is in control of all the different elements of music-making. Flow, as an altered state of consciousness pioneered by Csíkszentmihályi, can be described in improvisation as a period of almost total reliance on tacit decision-making (intuition).<sup>204</sup> This is much harder to achieve in improvisations that require intensive structural planning and calculations such as fugues and faster sections. In my own experience, I most often achieve flow when improvising a prelude in free time. This would match with Dietrich's explanation that flow must involve 'temporary suppression of the analytical... capacities of the explicit system'.<sup>205</sup> Improvisation is more often characterised by a harmonious balance between explicit and tacit decision-making. A slightly different version of flow (absorption) can be achieved though in more structurally complex improvisations through a period of intense conscious decision-making uninterrupted by insecurities or outside elements.<sup>206</sup> The improviser is then also truly in the moment, decisions come easily and it is a rewarding process. This lack of self-criticism aligns with Bloom and Skutnick-Henley's research that shows self-confidence and self-trust to be necessary for flow.<sup>207</sup> Hodgkinson even argues that intuition is the 'antecedent of creativity'.<sup>208</sup> Improvisers utilise both conscious thinking and intuition, using these to create ideas and then produce these in the moment. The presence or differences in the experience of flow in improvisation due to the necessity of maintaining a balance of constant conscious and subconscious decision-making, while beyond the scope of this thesis, would form valuable further research topics.

Improvisation is, therefore, the direct execution of the individual's idea. Some rational thought and advance editing can take place while the improviser briefly puts their playing into "autopilot", relying entirely on their intuition, in order to prepare the start of a new section or change of affect or set up a difficult passage. Rests and moments of silence can also be used for editing. The exact nature of direct execution, therefore, is flexible, intending to signify the shortest amount of editing possible. Indeed, all music-making involves a certain level of editing, whether conscious or subconscious. An improvisation becomes a composition when the improviser feels the

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<sup>204</sup> Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Performance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>205</sup> Arne Dietrich, 'Neurocognitive Mechanisms Underlying the Experience of Flow,' *Consciousness and Cognition* 13, no. 4 (2004): 746.

<sup>206</sup> See Sarah Sinnamon, *Achieving peak performance in music: Psychological strategies for optimal flow* (New York: Routledge, 2020).

<sup>207</sup> Arvid Bloom and Paula Skutnick-Henley. 'Facilitating Flow Experiences among Musicians.' *American Music Teacher* 54, no. 5 (April/ May 2005): 25-26.

<sup>208</sup> Hodgkinson, Gerard, Janice Langan-Fox and Eugene Sadler-Smith. 'Intuition: A Fundamental Bridging Construct in the Behavioural Sciences'. *British Journal of Psychology* 99, no. 1 (2008): 19.

luxury of time for editing. This will be different for each improviser, depending on their levels of technical fluency on their instruments and level of experience with improvisation, as well as different styles of music, some of which require more editing by nature than others. Improvised baroque dance music, for instance, requires stricter adherence to tempo and rhythms than an unmeasured prelude.

This concept also applies to speech. In the flow of improvised conversation, there can be little time for editing and therefore responses are more accurate representations of the initial reaction and idea. This is not the case for pre-prepared speeches which are heavily edited beforehand. By nature, improvisations can only exist in the moment. Recordings capture the sonic results of this moment but not the experience. Recordings do not change the nature of improvisation, rather they reproduce a small fragment of the moment. Listening to a recording of improvisation is still listening to the direct execution of a thought (at the time) and thus the listener still hears part of an improvisation. Just as a photograph only shows part of one moment, so a recording archives a small part of the improvisation experience. The improvisation existed in full in its moment of creation; after this, it exists as a memory. Parts of it can be relived but not to the same extent.

Within the current musical climate, commercialisation and recordings produce several significant restrictions for improvisers which run contrary to improvisation's dual nature, emphasising technical perfection and producing a permanent product. Villavicencio describes this nature as essentially postmodern in musical circles because of its abstraction from the accepted values of the classical canon and concert expectations, a rebellion against conventional roles and forms.<sup>209</sup> Difficulties arise when recording improvisation; many scholars have remarked on what is lost.<sup>210</sup> On the other hand, Martin Davidson of Eminem Records canvassed for the increase in recordings of improvisation as it 'has more need and more right to be recorded than anything else' because of its fleeting nature.<sup>211</sup> Royalties still largely go to composers.<sup>212</sup> I would argue that recordings of any musical event lose something and yet they are an enjoyable substitute and certainly reach wider audiences. Recordings of improvisation should therefore be viewed in the same way, as useful promotional tools and records but not a substitute for "the real thing".

An idea in musical improvisation is usually a sound. For instance, singing 'happy birth- ...', the sound "day" can usually be "heard" before any sound is physically produced. This exemplifies the

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<sup>209</sup> Villavicencio, 'The Discourse of Free Improvisation,' 21. And Borgo, *Sync or Swarm*, 87. And Smith and Dean, *Improvisation Hypermedia and the Arts*, 21.

<sup>210</sup> See Nunn, *Wisdom of the impulse*, 154. And Cornelius Cardew, 'Towards an ethic of improvisation,' in *Treatise Handbook* (London: Peters, 1971), xvii.

<sup>211</sup> Martin Davidson, 'On recording improvisation,' *The Wire* 9 (November, 1984): 23.

<sup>212</sup> Borgo, 'Negotiating freedom,' 180.

idea process for improvisers, who while playing one note “hear” in their heads a possible note to follow. In the direct execution of this idea, this sound becomes the next note. The accuracy of this step depends on the improviser's ability but the intent is there to produce a particular sound. Intentions can range from larger-scale, such as in early free improvisation in which conscious decisions were made to avoid certain sounds, to smaller-scale at the level of individual notes.<sup>213</sup> Literature has focused on group intention, investigating creation and communication in these contexts.<sup>214</sup> In individual improvisation, however, this becomes a much more private matter. Fidlon’s research on intention in solo jazz improvisation indicates that inexperienced improvisers rely on specific intentions such as note selection, while more advanced improvisers did not describe this selection process. He also found that for advanced musicians the selection process was largely subconscious as they could also perform dual tasks.<sup>215</sup> Whether this intent is specifically articulated or not, it must exist. The more embedded the improviser’s webs of knowledge, the less specific the intentions appear on the surface. The same decision process occurs, however, such as imagining a sound to play next, for instance. This is simply at a lower level of processing over which larger intentions, decisions or processing is occurring.<sup>216</sup>

Occasionally, even experienced improvisers will produce a note they were not expecting. This is usually due to embedded technical or musical intuition which over-rules rational thought. This is then the direct execution of an embedded instinct, an embedded “thought”. The skill of improvisation involves seemingly seamlessly incorporating this into the musical phrase, sometimes, this can involve a brief switch to autopilot while imagining a successful way to achieve this. Alternatively, it can be used to prompt new ideas, perhaps signally the start of a new section or motif. In this case, the improviser continues as before (see my suggested emergency toolkit for repair in improvisation in chapter 5.3.2). Improvisers grow to appreciate these movements; free improviser Elliott Schwartz, for instance, remarked that:

I've developed an attachment — almost an esthetic preference — for accidents, unplanned occurrences, the opportunity to unravel a knot in real-time-performance situations... The fun of improvisation (or of composition) lies in the contradictory tugs between those two — the excitement of seeing where a randomly arrived at idea (or an unwanted accident) will lead, how my instincts and preferences cope with the input the real world (or "fate") gives

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<sup>213</sup> Larry Austin in Barney Childs, Christopher Hobbs, Larry Austin, Eddie Prevost, Keith Rowe, Derek Bailey, Harold Budd, et al. ‘Forum: Improvisation.’ *Perspectives of New Music* 21, no. 1/2 (1982): 27-33.

<sup>214</sup> Louise Goupil et al., ‘Emergent shared intentions support coordination during collective musical improvisations,’ *Cognitive Science* 45, no. 1 (2001): 1-39.

<sup>215</sup> James Daniel Fidlon, ‘Cognitive dimensions of instrumental jazz improvisation,’ (PhD Dissertation, University of Texas, 2011).

<sup>216</sup> See Cohen, ‘Playing with Time’ (PhD Thesis, University of York, 2018), 189, 121-136.

me, and the satisfaction of knowing that any material - well, almost any - can be shaped to a degree that will accommodate my preferences.<sup>217</sup>

In both scenarios, however, the idea is still executed as directly as possible as the improviser does not have the luxury of time. If time has to be found, the improviser has to switch to autopilot and is therefore multitasking. If the idea is not a sound, it is usually a physicality. This might take the form of a fingering as a violinist, for example thinking, "I could play a second finger on the A string". Occasionally, it may be a harmonic or stylistic idea, such as: "I could modulate to G minor".

Composition, therefore, is the intended future execution of a musical thought. Compared to improvisation, the composer has a lot of time to edit ideas. Improvisation may be used during the composition process to help stimulate the creation of new ideas but these are then edited or carefully considered for future execution in performance, as soon as they are thought about with the luxury of time, changed or notated, they become compositions and instructions for performers rather than improvisations. A performance is the direct execution of another's musical thoughts. These thoughts are executed in the moment but they have been edited and are not the performer's ideas. Improvisation can also occur in performance as performers have original ideas that have not been edited with the luxury of time, for instance, fluctuations in tempo, dynamics and character. These are the direct executions of thoughts but these thoughts are interpretations, they are in response to another's musical thoughts, presenting these ideas differently rather than changing the nature of the ideas. This kind of improvisation is therefore the direct execution of an individual's interpretative thoughts. Adding ornamentation does change the nature of the ideas as the sounds are changed and, therefore, this kind of improvisation is the direct execution of an individual's musical thoughts. These moments are usually brief, however, which differentiates it from larger-scale improvisations. The improvisation of baroque fantasias discussed throughout this thesis, therefore, is the continued direct execution of the individual's musical thoughts. The word musical, here, refers to the creation of notes as opposed to a performer's interpretative improvisational potential.

In conclusion, it would seem that improvisation hinges on the decisions made. The extent to which a piece is improvised depends on the number of these made before a performance. Canonne remarks that, 'free improvisation has often been presented as an improvisational practice in which musicians try to reduce to a strict minimum the decisions made before performance'.<sup>218</sup> This varies, of course, by style. Improvisation as a whole is, thus, the spontaneous creation (as opposed to recollection) of music in performance through the direct execution of musical ideas, using

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<sup>217</sup> Elliott Schwatz in Childs, 'Forum: Improvisation,' 70.

<sup>218</sup> Canonne, 'Rehearsing Free Improvisation?'



spontaneous decision-making and linking. This can be very small scale in the form of added dynamics, mid-range in fragments such as ornamentation or large scale when the improvisation creates a whole new work. These all draw on other traditions: no improvisation is ever completely new as our decisions are based on enculturated knowledge; yet the decisions are made spontaneously in the moment which classifies the musicking as improvisation. Contemporary treatises of the baroque tend to use the term 'extemporising'.<sup>219</sup> It can be considered an art when the work concept is revised to understand the necessity of performance for full completion of a musical work and is both functional and entertaining. It is a complex activity with many options and it is the individual decisions and negotiations of these that define it. Specific criteria are needed to appreciate improvisation on its own terms, just like any other musical style, and structures can be retrospectively or actively imposed.

### 1.1.7 Dreaming up the past with improvisation? A musical perspective on early modern fantasy

This understanding of improvisation has really exciting applications for historical and musicological research. If improvisation is stylistic and the direct execution of the individual's musical thoughts, then it follows that improvising stylistically today provides us with the closest view of the early modern musical imagination. Compositions represent heavily edited versions of original ideas, the products writers and artists choose to publish are often very far removed from the original ideas themselves. These are useful and valuable in revealing the priorities and pressures of the time but in only using these to examine the early modern imagination, we lose touch with the original imagined idea. Stylistic improvisation allows us to glimpse the ideas before their editing and therefore could also be used as a comparison tool to better understand the exact forms of these priorities and pressures from an artistic standpoint. Recent scholarship has evidenced a rising interest in early modern perceptions of imagination and fantasy. Its presence in religious practices, entertainment and escapism, shaped perceptions of the world, displaying and influencing contemporary views. Classen's recent 2020 publication, for instance, surveys mediaeval and early modern portrayals, taking examples largely from literature and art but he acknowledges the gap in musical research on this topic.<sup>220</sup> Fantasy and imagination seem often to be used interchangeably. Fulwood's translation of Grataroli's *Castet of Memorie* (1573), for example, describes 'Fantasie (or imagination)' as the

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<sup>219</sup> For example, see Augustus Frederic Christopher Kollmann, *An essay on musical harmony, according to the nature of that science and the principles of the greatest musical authors* (London: J. Dale, 1796), 122.

<sup>220</sup> Albrecht Classen, ed. *Imagination and Fantasy in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time: Projections, Dreams, Monsters, and Illusions*, Vol. 24 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2020).

primary brain faculty and Pierre de la Primaudaye in *The Second Part of the French Academie* (1594) explains that he uses ‘these two names Fantasie and Imagination indifferently’, they are viewed as ‘the same facultie and vertue of the soule’.<sup>221</sup> A lot of crossover can be found between descriptions of fantasy and its uses across the arts. These include associations of creativity and freedom but also fear. Beginning with plays and masques, for example, in the chorus of Henry V part III, the players say they will ‘play with your fancies’, meaning they hope to excite the audiences’ imagination, while the creativity and inventiveness of Yorick is celebrated by Hamlet who describes him as ‘a fellow of...most excellent fancy’.<sup>222</sup> In Jonson’s *The Vision of Delight*, there is a character called Phant’sie who is introduced by the character Night, linking the word with dreams, freedom, imagination and music.

Breake, Phant’sie, from the cave of cloud/  
and spread thy purple wings/... And though it be a  
walking dreame;/ Yet let it like an odour rise/  
The Quire to all the Sences here,/ And fall like  
sleep upon their eies,/ or musick in their eare.<sup>223</sup>

The associations of creativity and imagination continue in the use of fantasy to describe dreams but this use often has negative connotations; advice centres around controlling fantasy. Writers are fearful of the unknown imagined creatures, anxious about what their imagination in the unedited state of dream might produce. Macrobius’ *In Somnium Scipionis* of 1584 classified dreams and was very influential and well known.<sup>224</sup> ‘Phantasma’ is described as occurring during the apparition dream stage: the ‘first cloud of sleep’ when one ‘thinks he is still fully awake and imagines he sees spectres rushing at him...differing from natural creatures in size and shape, and hosts of diverse things, either delightful or disturbing’.<sup>225</sup> Burton describes fantasy occurring during sleep: ‘this faculty is free and many times [one will] conceive strange, stipend, absurd shapes’, linking this to fevered dreams of illness.<sup>226</sup> Lemnius viewed ‘phantasticall imaginations’ as resulting from ‘the fumes of choler, ascending to the brain’.<sup>227</sup> Jonson’s *Fairy Queen* describes the character Phantastes as ‘mad or foolish seemd’, stressing the anxiety about fantasy influencing perceptions of reality.<sup>228</sup> It

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<sup>221</sup> See Guglielmo Grataroli, *Castet of Memorie*, trans. Fulwood (London, 1573). And Pierre de la Primaudaye, *The Second Part of the French Academie* (London, 1594), 155-157. In Rossky, ‘Imagination in the English Renaissance,’ 50.

<sup>222</sup> William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, ed. Terence Spencer (London: Penguin Books, 2004), III.chorus.7. And William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Terence Spencer (London: Penguin Books, 2004), (Penguin Books, 2004), V.i.182.

<sup>223</sup> Benjamin Jonson, *The Sad Shepherd, The Fall of Mortimer, Masques and Entertainments*, ed. C. H. Hereford, Percy Simpson and Evelyn Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941).

<sup>224</sup> Macrobius, *In Somnium Scipionis* (Paris, 1585), 285.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. A. H. Bullen, 3 vols. (London: Bell & Sons, 1926), 182.

<sup>227</sup> Lemnius, fol. 132v in Stephen Batman, *Batman vppon Bartholome* (London, 1582), Bk. IV, chap. 10.

<sup>228</sup> Spenser, *Fairy Queen*, ii.ix.52.7 In William Rossky, ‘Imagination in the English Renaissance’, 49.

therefore appears that there was a lot of anxiety about the proper use of fantasy, drawing distinctions between good and bad imagination and those heeding the false impressions given by fantasy were considered 'disordered' or ill; Puttenham writes, 'even so is the phantasticall part of man (if it be not disordered) a representer of the best, most comely and bewtiful images of appearance of things to the soule'.<sup>229</sup>

As Rossky puts it, 'passion and imagination are in league against reason' and it is the receivers' duty to rectify this.<sup>230</sup> This has interesting links to the improviser's need to balance reason and intuition. For Bundy, this difference distinguished 'phantastici' from those who used it well.<sup>231</sup> Puttenham describes this as 'not only nothing disorderly or confused with any monstrous imaginations or conceits, but very formal'.<sup>232</sup> To be a 'phantasticall man' could be an insult, meaning 'lightheaded', distinguishing between controlled and uncontrolled fantasies.<sup>233</sup> Wright explained that 'whatsoever we understand, passeth by the gates of our imagination', demonstrating the importance of fantasy.<sup>234</sup> This understanding is echoed in Davies' worries about fantasy as a 'false spy'.<sup>235</sup> The use of fancy to indicate 'flamboyance' or 'showiness', as we might associate with a musical caprice, was also common, as in Hamlet when Polonius says, 'Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,/ But not expressed in fancy'.<sup>236</sup>

Jordan, in *The walks of Islington*, described music and poetry as 'twins of Fancy'.<sup>237</sup> Rossky writes, 'in the Elizabethan psychology, the images of imagination are idly capricious, fleeting and inconstant, purposeless and insubstantial, succeeding each other, without control or order, in a restless procession'.<sup>238</sup> Whim and inclination by the poet were to be restrained. This could be said to be equally true of the musical improvised fantasia. Most significantly, however, it is through fancy that for Davies 'all marvellous Inventions' and 'all Artes and Sciences' arise, but the emphasis is on 'a good imagination' and, therefore, these must 'consist in figure, correspondence, harmonie, and

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<sup>229</sup> George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. Edward Arber (London: A. Constable, 1906 [1590]), 35.

<sup>230</sup> Rossky, 'Imagination in the English Renaissance,' *Studies in the Renaissance* 5 (1958): 63.

<sup>231</sup> Murray W. Bundy, 'Fracastoro and the Imagination,' in *Renaissance Studies in Honor of Hardin Craig*, ed. Baldwin Maxwell et al., (Stanford University Press, 1941), 47.

<sup>232</sup> George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, 34.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Minde in Generall* (London 1604), 51. In William Rossky, 'Imagination in the English Renaissance,' 51.

<sup>235</sup> Davies in Ibid., 52.

<sup>236</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, I.iii.71, And David and Ben Crystal, 'Letter F,' *Shakespeareswords*, 2020, accessed April 27, 2021, <https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/Glossary.aspx?letter=f>.

<sup>237</sup> Jordan *The walks of Islington*, sig. A3r. In Lynn Hulse, "'Musick & Poetry, Mixed": Thomas Jordan's Manuscript Collection,' *Early Music* 24/1 (1996): 13.

<sup>238</sup> William Rossky, 'Imagination in the English Renaissance,' 60.

proportion'.<sup>239</sup> As North explained, 'no one man is [the] absolute inventor of art, but commonly takes up and adds to the inventions of predecessors'.<sup>240</sup> As well as the dual use of fantasy in nomenclature, these associations can all be found in descriptions of the early modern improvised fantasia. Using this understanding of the early modern artistic imagination, mentions of the improvised musical fantasia in treatises and early modern writings, along with contemporary composed fantasias, the modern performer can build a scaffold from which to apply their creativity and directly execute their musical thoughts to create convincing historical improvisations. Stylistically improvising a baroque fantasia, therefore, provides the closest link to the early modern musical imagination.

## 1.2 Improvisation in practice

### 1.2.1 Decisions, decisions...The brain behind improvisation

Having covered improvisation in theory and its potential application in historical research, we can now move to consider it in practice. The process of improvisation can essentially be distilled into a series of quick-fire conscious and subconscious decisions.<sup>241</sup> These decisions are made almost instantly, informed by tacit knowledge webs which are built through research, practice and learning.<sup>242</sup> Without sufficient tacit knowledge webs for a decision, the improviser is left in a panic: making the decisions takes too long and therefore causes stumbles or pauses in the resulting improvisation. The larger these webs of knowledge, the more intricate the improvisations can become as more decisions can be automated into the subconscious area; a conscious decision triggers a whole host of subconscious decisions which need to be made before a sound can be produced. For instance, which note to play will be influenced by knowledge such as stylistic choices but also practical or physical choices.<sup>243</sup> Having decided on the note, there are then a multitude of other decisions that need to be made including which finger to use, which part of the bow to start in, how much bow to use, what character to assume and where to place the bow between the bridge and the fingerboard. All of these decisions rely on their own interconnected webs of knowledge.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> John Davies, *The Complete Works of John Davies of Hereford*, ed. Rev. A. B. Grosart (Edinburgh, 1878), I, 6. And Juan Huarte Navarro, *Examen de Ingenios*, tr. R. C. Esquire (London, 1594), 103.

<sup>240</sup> Roger North, *The Excellent Art of Voluntary* (ca. 1695) in *Roger North on Music*, ed. John Wilson (London: Novello, 1959), 141.

<sup>241</sup> Jeff Pressing, 'Improvisation: methods and models,' in *Generative processes in music*, ed. John Sloboda (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 129-178.

<sup>242</sup> See Cohen, 'Playing with Time,' 189, 121-135.

<sup>243</sup> Burrows, Jared B., 'Musical archetypes and collective consciousness: Cognitive distribution and free improvisation,' *Critical Studies in Improvisation/Études critiques en improvisation* 1, no. 1 (2004): 6.

<sup>244</sup> See Cohen, 'Playing with Time,' (PhD Thesis, University of York, 2018), 189, 121-136.

This is the purpose of practice in improvisation: to build these webs so that more decisions can be automated, creating more varied and fluent improvisations.<sup>245</sup> Due to the instantaneous nature of improvisation, the conscious decisions are always a step ahead of the product: the fewer necessary conscious decisions, the further ahead the improviser can think, moving from micro-planning and execution to macro structures.

This kind of thinking using knowledge webs relies on pattern recognition. Improvisation is largely reliant on pattern recognition to speed up the tacit and explicit decision-making and technical production. Moens defines this as the ‘classifying [of] data (patterns) based on either a priori knowledge that is acquired by human experts or on knowledge automatically learned from data’.<sup>246</sup> Research has shown this to be the case with chess, which structurally challenging improvisations can be compared to (see chapter 5.4 for a contrapuntal improvisation game based on chess).<sup>247</sup> The subconscious can only decide which finger to use based on a collection of previous experiences which revealed that given similar patterns of movement, what has come before and what may come after, certain fingerings would be easier and more in tune.<sup>248</sup> This is the same process that a performer uses to decide which fingering to use for a particular passage in a notated composition, the difference being that a performer has time to try out several options whereas improvisers have to make an informed decision there and then. The more of a certain pattern an improviser has played, seen or heard, the more developed their pattern recognition is in their appropriate webs of knowledge. It will then be easier and quicker for this decision to be made subconsciously. Improvisation, therefore, involves a balance of both tacit and explicit knowledge. Both of these kinds of knowledge are integral to the decision-making process as well as the physical execution, informed by the four Es of cognition.<sup>249</sup> Each decision, therefore, is backed by a **decision matrix** such as the one shown in figure 1.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Roger E. Beaty, ‘The neuroscience of musical improvisation,’ *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews* 51 (2015): 109.

<sup>246</sup> Marie-Francine Moens, *Information Extraction: Algorithms and Prospects in a Retrieval Context* (The Netherlands: Springer, 2006), 65.

<sup>247</sup> Daniel Kahneman and Gary Klein, ‘Conditions for Intuitive Expertise: A Failure to Disagree,’ *American Psychologist* 64, no. 6 (September 2009): 515. And Thomas A. Stewart, ‘How to Think with Your Gut: How the Geniuses behind the Osbournes, the Mini, Federal Express, and Starbucks Followed Their Instincts and Reached Success,’ *Business 2.0* (November 2002): 1.

<sup>248</sup> Bertrand Denzler and Jean-Luc Guionnet, ed., *The practice of musical improvisation: Dialogues with contemporary musical improvisers* (Bloomsbury: Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2020), 131-146.

<sup>249</sup> Gastelum Melina and Jesús M. Siqueiros. ‘4E Cognition Group.’ *4E Cognition Group*. 2022. Accessed July 18, 2022. <https://4ecognitiongroup.wordpress.com/research/>. And Carney, James. ‘Thinking avant la lettre: A Review of 4E Cognition.’ *Evolutionary studies in imaginative culture* vol. 4,1 (2020): 77-90. And Mark Rowlands, *The New Science of the Mind: From Extended Mind to Embodied Phenomenology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010).

<sup>250</sup> For discussion of the principles of decision matrices see John Nicholls, ‘The MCC decision matrix: a tool for applying strategic logic to everyday activity,’ *Management decision* 33, no. 6 (1995): 4-11.

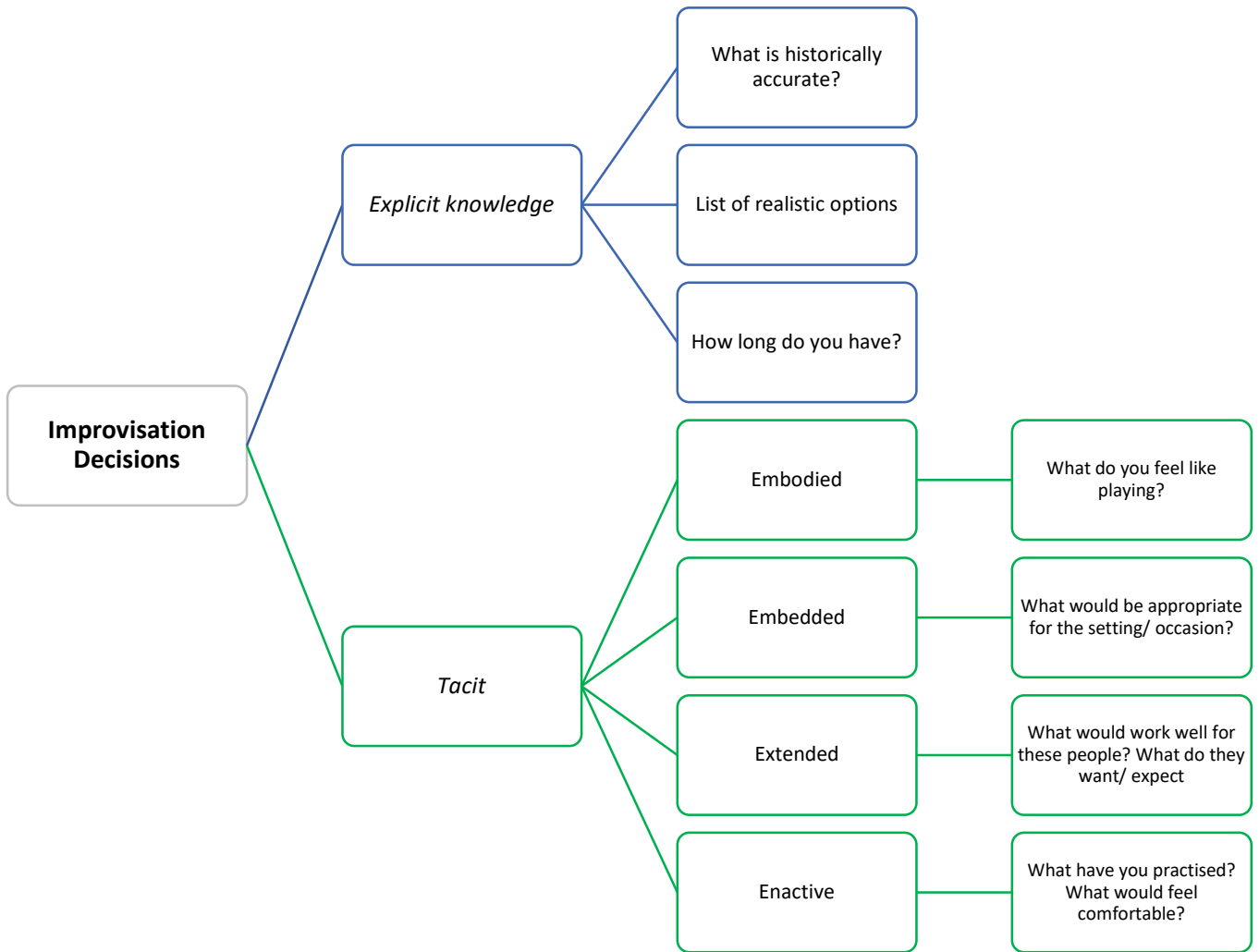


Figure 1: An example improvisation decision matrix.

If, for instance, the above decision matrix (figure 1) is employed before starting to decide which kind of piece to play and the result is to improvise a fantasia, this may trigger the following decisions:

1. How many sections will it have?
2. Will you take inspiration from Telemann, Matteis (senior or junior), mix these or create your own style?
3. Which key will you start in?
4. What note will you start with?
5. Which character will you start with?
6. Which ideas might be effective for a first phrase?

Each of these decisions then has to be processed through a decision matrix again (such as the example in figure 1) using webs of knowledge to come to a decision, which in turn will trigger more decisions, moving from the macro to micro levels. These decisions form **question subwebs**. Some example question subwebs following the decision to improvise a fantasia may be as follows:

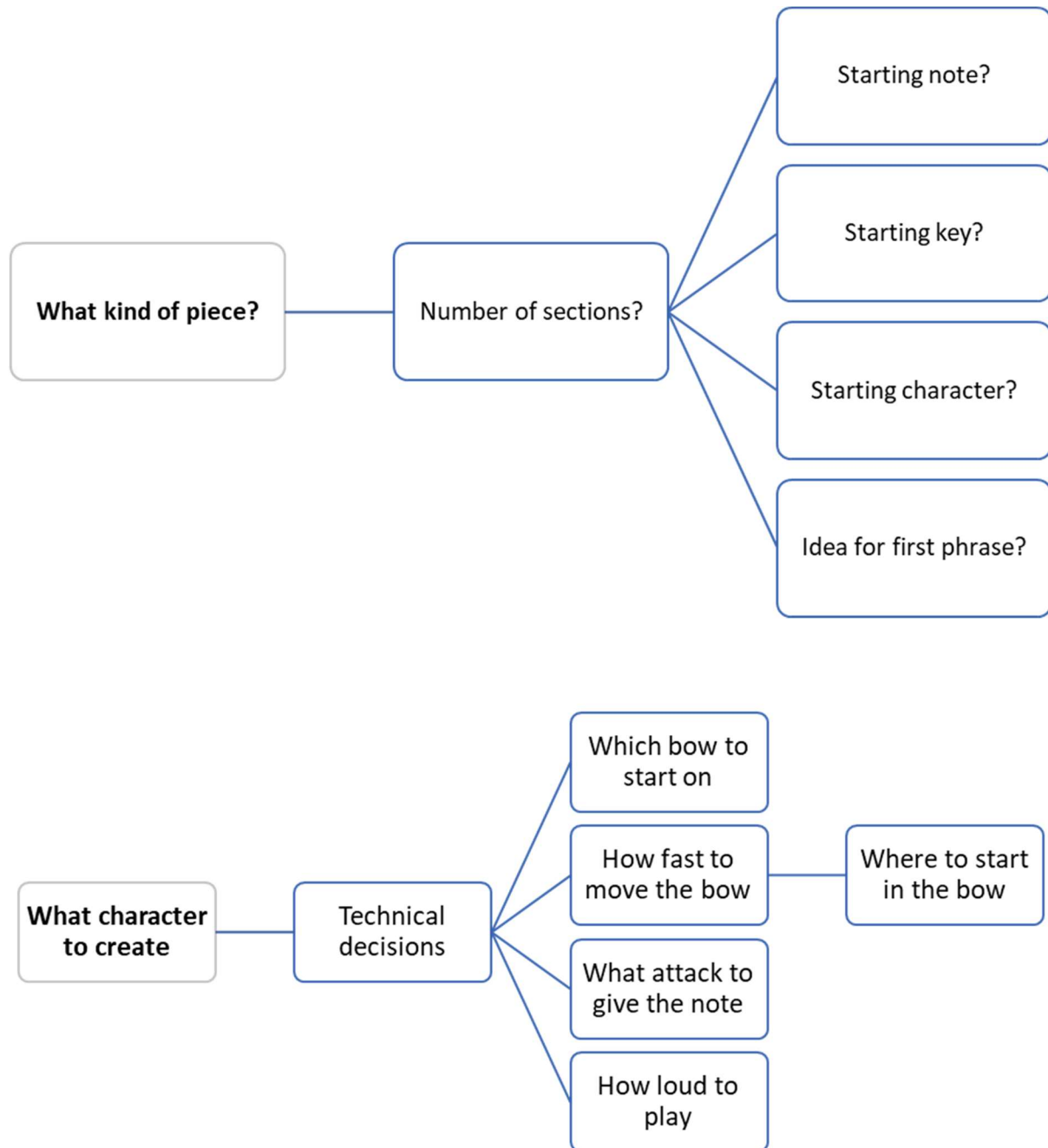


Figure 2: Two example question subwebs for deciding which kind of piece to play. Each of these questions triggers the decision matrix and then in turn more question subwebs at an ever increasingly micro level.

The more advanced an improviser is, the more these decisions will be made subconsciously.<sup>251</sup> As the conscious mind has to already move on to making the next macro decision, these decisions at a micro question subweb level need to be internalised. In addition, the upcoming decisions are influenced by the results of question subweb decisions and therefore the results are needed as quickly as possible. For instance, where you end in the bow has a bearing on the possibilities for what can happen next.<sup>252</sup> Essentially, each question uses webs of knowledge to come to a decision through the decision matrix. This decision then triggers webs of knowledge which then trigger question subwebs which again pass through the decision matrix and continue round the cycle as shown in figure 3.

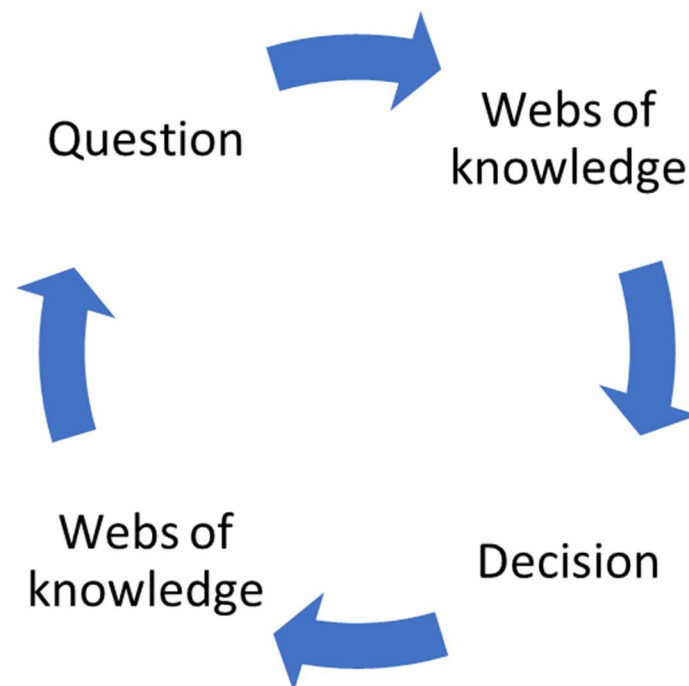


Figure 3: The cycle of improvisation decision-making.

As an improviser progresses further through an improvisation, development decisions come to the forefront. These might include planning modulations, *fortspinnung* of material (developing thematic motives) or repair and reorientation if somewhere along the question subwebs, decisions were made which have not produced the desired macro outcome, such as an unexpected note. This higher-order thinking requires certain micro processes to be internalised such as the production of individual notes. Indecision results in slips or trips which are based on incomplete or lacking webs of knowledge or those whose pattern recognition is less well developed. As knowledge is transferable

<sup>251</sup> Beaty, 'The neuroscience of musical improvisation,' 109.

<sup>252</sup> Denzler and Guionnet, ed., *The practice of musical improvisation*, 131-146. And K. Z. De Ridder, 'A systematic approach to bowing and its application in violin playing,' (PhD dissertation, University of Tasmania, 2020).



between webs of knowledge through pattern recognition, practising something in one key means it can be applied with less effort to a new key or speed.

The first few chapters of this thesis are intended to provide the explicit knowledge you need to start to build your own individual webs of knowledge. The exercises from chapter 5 are suggestions to enable the expansion of these webs using this explicit knowledge, exercises which aim to build tacit knowledge which can be embodied, embedded, extended and enacted. For knowledge to move from the explicit to tacit spheres, Cohen suggests that practice must be embodied (see figure 4).<sup>253</sup> The use of games, therefore, aids this embodiment.

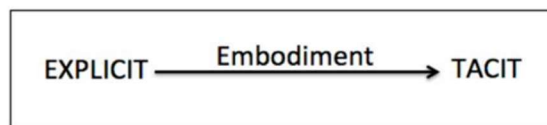


Figure 4: Diagram from Cohen’s thesis describing the need for embodiment to move knowledge from the explicit to tacit realm.<sup>254</sup>

Each person’s web will be unique and this is what results in the individuality we hear in improvisation. Considerations at all times which feature in question subwebs are:

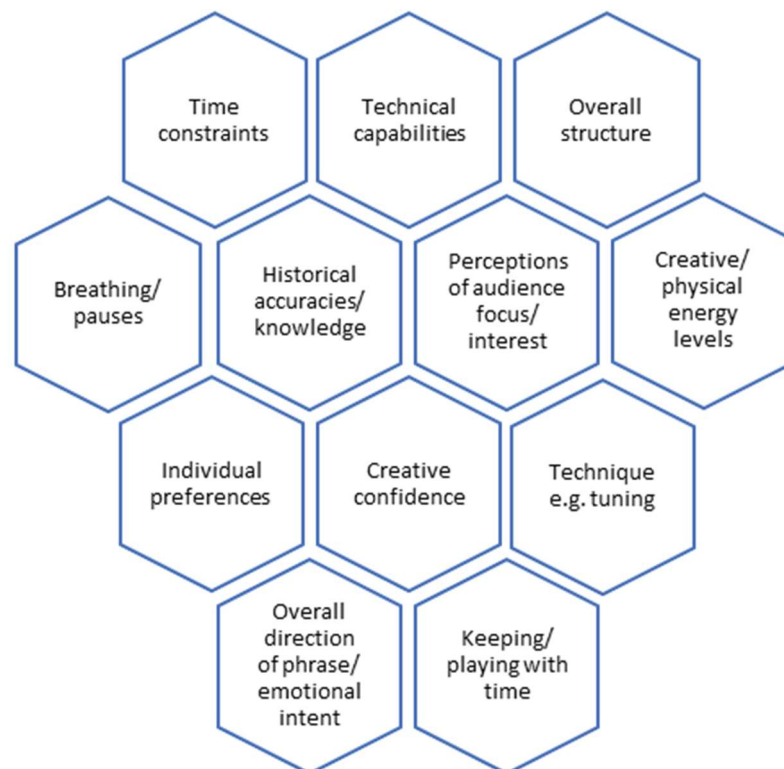


Figure 5: Considerations which occur often in question subwebs.

<sup>253</sup> Jennifer Louise Cohen, ‘Playing with Time: The Creative Embodiment of Knowledge in the Performance of Baroque Flute Music,’ (PhD Thesis, University of York, 2018), 140.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

Thus, webs of knowledge (formed of tacit and explicit knowledge) are used to come to answers to the decision matrix and are improved through developed pattern recognition and increased internalisation.<sup>255</sup> At this stage, the improviser has perhaps produced one note. The decision on what to play next is based on reactions of the improviser and the perceived reactions of others.<sup>256</sup> These are demonstrated at a basic level as an example in figure 6.

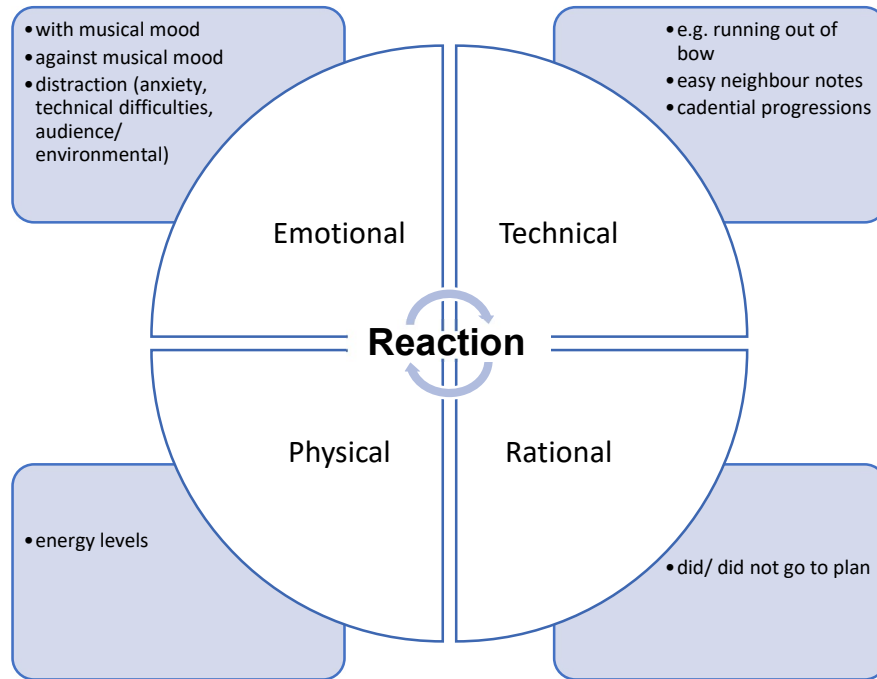


Figure 6: Diagram showing the reactions that influence what to improvise next.

The decision matrix and question subwebs informed by webs of knowledge are then employed again based on the resulting reactions. We also have webs of knowledge related to our reactions and we use these to evaluate against explicit and tacit knowledge criteria and then creatively adjust our next decisions. Guiding question prompts are then formed to put back into the decision matrix, resulting in the next decisions. The reaction process, therefore, involves evaluation and then the improviser questions how this can be achieved, creating a **reaction matrix** (see figure 7). The resulting information is then put back into the decision matrix once again.

<sup>255</sup> See Cohen, 'Playing with Time,' 189, 121-136.

<sup>256</sup> Michele Biasutti and Luigi Frezza, 'Dimensions of music improvisation, *Creativity Research Journal* 21, no. 2-3 (2009): 232-242.

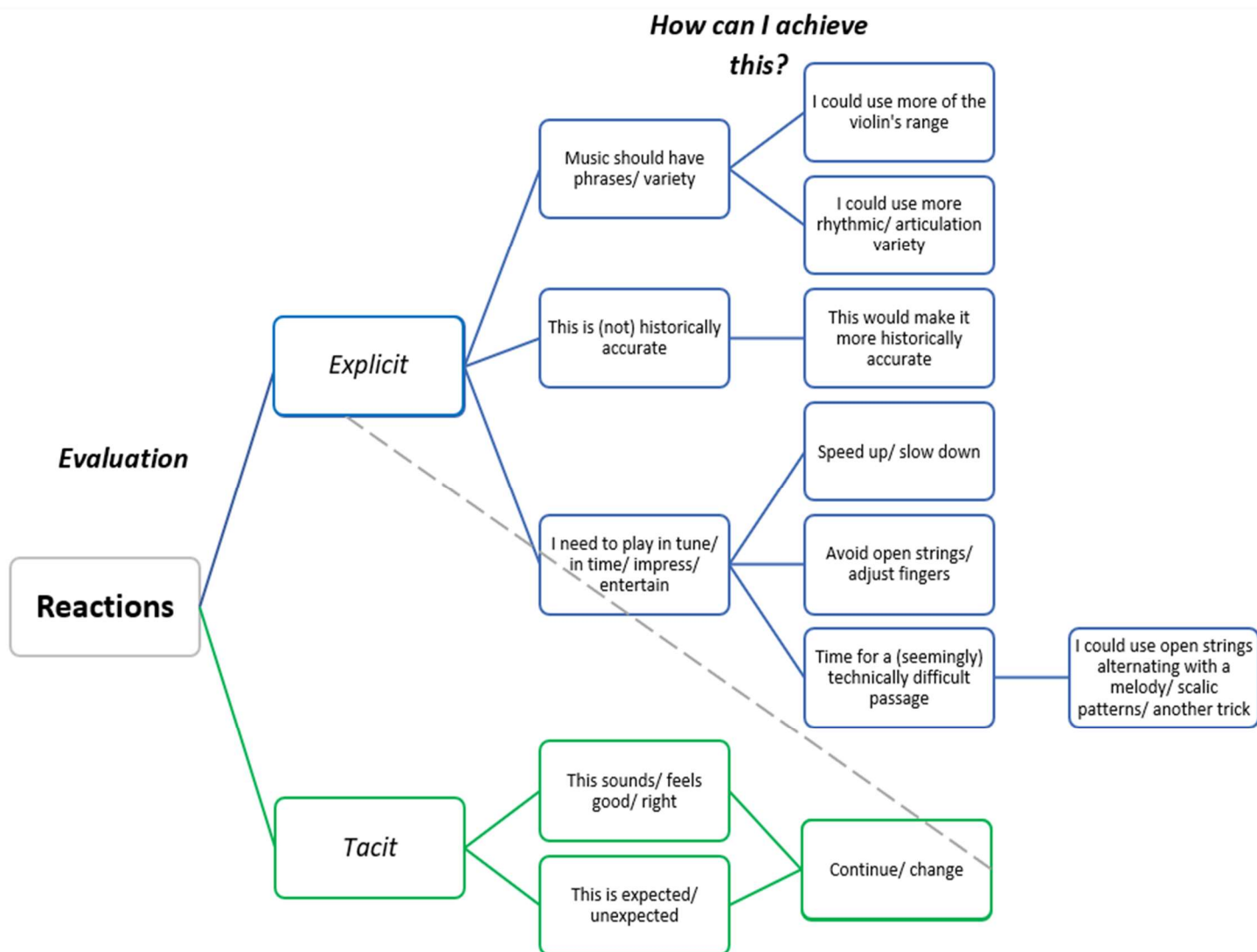


Figure 7: An example reaction matrix for improvisation. The dotted line shows that explicit reactions also rely on continuing or changing each process.

Many improvisers refer to aspects “feeling right”.<sup>257</sup> This is based on webs of tacit and explicit knowledge and a positive evaluation. If something does not feel right, improvisers often use explicit conscious decisions, although if frequently experienced, this knowledge may become internalised and as such become part of webs of knowledge with adequate pattern recognition and therefore happen on a subconscious level. For each improviser, their webs of knowledge differ and therefore the exact details of what is consciously and subconsciously decided will vary.<sup>258</sup>

<sup>257</sup> For numerous references to this see Paul F. Berliner, *Thinking in jazz: The infinite art of improvisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

<sup>258</sup> Tatsuya Daikoku, ‘Musical creativity and depth of implicit knowledge: spectral and temporal individualities in improvisation.’ *Frontiers in computational neuroscience* 12, no.89 (2018): 1-27.

When faced with the decision of what to play next, an improviser has the following four macro possibilities:

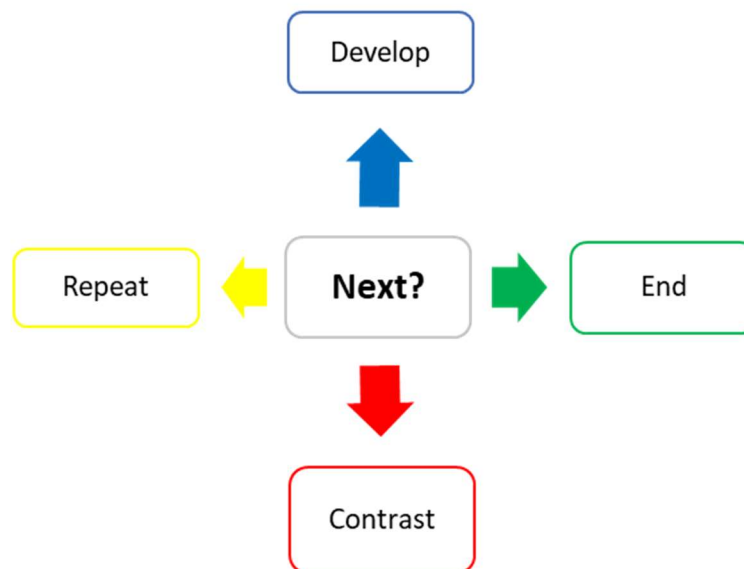


Figure 8: Diagram showing the four macro possibilities an improviser has to continue.

When the resulting decision is to end the improvisation as a whole, macro decisions decrease and the improviser can focus on increasingly micro level decisions if necessary to end comfortably. The decisions end with the improvisation but the reaction matrix follows, contributing, along with its results from the improvisation itself (whether conscious or subconscious), to the improviser's webs of knowledge, increasing them and their pattern recognition to improve future improvisations.

In conclusion, this rather elaborate decision-making process produces the effortless sounding improvisations through very high levels of internalisation and automation which are achieved through practice and performing experiences. Completely fluent improvisations are rare, indeed, if an improviser is always intending to create something new, there will always be a gap of sorts in their webs of knowledge and therefore slight slips or hesitations are an integral part of improvisation. Very skilled improvisers are able to cover these so that audiences are unaware, creating an illusion of intention. To "let go", however, as is so often advised by improvisation manuals, improvisers have to "turn inward" to trust their internalised webs of knowledge and decision-making. Without giving up some decisions to automation, the improviser will freeze because of either the impossibility of consciously making each of these decisions, or due to indecision resulting from gaps in their webs of knowledge. It is therefore not so much about letting

go, but about building trust in one's subconscious decision-making. This is why improvisation can seem daunting to those who do not believe they possess these webs of knowledge. We all already have these through performance and composition: at a first stage, trust needs to be built to access and use these in a slightly different way. Then, these webs and trust can be expanded in a specifically improvisation-oriented way to achieve more complex and longer improvisations. Musicians, therefore, all have the ability to improvise and largely already have the skills; increasing trust in a safe and playful way allows improvisers to access this knowledge and to increase it.

### 1.2.2 Practically perfect? Celebrating an aesthetics of imperfection

Perhaps improvisation is therefore also defined by its 'aesthetics of surprise' or 'aesthetics of imperfection'?<sup>259</sup> Improvisation highlights the creator: 'the person creating the music is identified with the music'.<sup>260</sup> Each improviser develops a personal style.<sup>261</sup> It is a constant negotiation between 'complexity and comprehensibility, control and noncontrol, constancy and unpredictability', 'accuracy and inaccuracy; rationality and irrationality; completeness and incompleteness'.<sup>262</sup> It is widely regarded amongst jazz musicians that one of the most important skills for an improviser is to be able to turn so-called "wrong" notes into exciting features.<sup>263</sup> Yet, as Gail Smith remarks, 'the greatest mistake that a pianist can make is to be afraid to make a mistake'.<sup>264</sup> Anna Bull has extended this fear to the entire classical music system, calling this a social aesthetic of "getting it right".<sup>265</sup> She sees the 'pedagogy of correction' as reinforcing this aesthetic and producing the reason for the small demographic of participating people.<sup>266</sup> She argues that this needs to change and therefore musicians should stop 'following the rules'.<sup>267</sup> Indeed, improvisation places the audience in a position of creative authority; the improviser can and often does alter their performance based on an audience reaction.<sup>268</sup> Borgo presents the idea that improvisation could

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<sup>259</sup> Maldonato, 'Improvisation: The astonishing bridge,' 2. And Hamilton, 'The Art of Improvisation.'

<sup>260</sup> Bryars quoted in Derek Bailey, *Improvisation, its nature and practice in music* (London: The British Library National Sound Archive, 1992), 115.

<sup>261</sup> Nunn, *Wisdom of the impulse*, 58.

<sup>262</sup> Borgo, 'Negotiating freedom,' 182. And Maldonato, 'Improvisation: The astonishing bridge,' 11.

<sup>263</sup> Barton, 'Improvisation,' 10. And Hamilton, 'The Art of Improvisation.' And Brian Chung and Dennis Thurmond, *Improvisation at the Piano: A Systematic Approach for the Classically Trained Pianist* (Harrow: Alfred Publishing Inc., 2007).

<sup>264</sup> Gail Smith in Barton, 'Improvisation,' 36.

<sup>265</sup> Anna Bull, 'El Sistema as a Bourgeois Social Project: Class, Gender, and Victorian Values,' *Action, Criticism and Theory for Music Education* 15, no. 1 (2016): 120-153.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>268</sup> Villavicencio, 'The Discourse of Free Improvisation,' 11.

even 'eliminate the distance between artist, audience and work'.<sup>269</sup> During the baroque, performance was audience-centred unlike the artist-centred performance of today.<sup>270</sup> In my own experiences, improvisations in which I was concerned with "getting it right" were always less enjoyable for me as a performer and less successful.

Borgo writes, 'perhaps what is most often missed... in critical discussion of improvisation music is its functional quality'.<sup>271</sup> Typically, current Western education distinguishes between but values knowing over doing.<sup>272</sup> Historical improvisation is a practice which necessarily requires both, the musician must both know the stylistic conventions and be able to carry out the technical manifestations of these. Villavicencio describes learning free improvisation as similar to learning a new instrument because it requires the musician to change their relationship with their instrument and their 'aesthetic self-criticism'.<sup>273</sup> As a technically proficient musician, it can be easy to become frustrated by improvisation to begin with because the performer naturally has high expectations and values which subscribe to the aesthetics from their usual classical performance.<sup>274</sup> To reference Sparshott's argument, our conceptions of art and artists are derived from the essential criticism of the arts as a performance, criticising solely the end product of something which is made.<sup>275</sup> In jazz, Francis Sparshott notes that:

When the musician improvises, we make allowances for fluffs, interruptions, squawks, and all sorts of distracting concomitants that we assume to be no part of the performance. But we also allow for his forgetting what he was doing, trying to do two things at once, changing his mind about where he is going, starting more hares than he can chase at once, picking up where he thought he had left off but resuming what was not quite there in the first place, discovering and pursuing tendencies in what he has done that would have taken a rather different form if he had thought of them at the time, and so on.<sup>276</sup>

Hamilton also recognises the 'aesthetics of imperfection' which accompany improvisation, having interviewed many jazz musicians for whom the real skill of improvisation is the transformation of "wrong" notes into the most original and exciting part of the performance.<sup>277</sup> Few

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<sup>269</sup> David Borgo, *Sync or Swarm: Improvising Music in a Complex Age* (New York: A&C Black, 2005), 87.

<sup>270</sup> Judy Tarling, *The weapons of rhetoric* (St Albans: Corda Music, 2004), 40.

<sup>271</sup> Borgo, *Sync or Swarm*, 34.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 and 170.

<sup>273</sup> Villavicencio, 'The Discourse of Free Improvisation,' 224.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

<sup>275</sup> See Francis Sparshott, *The Theory of the Arts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 10 and chapter 2.

<sup>276</sup> Sparshott, *The Theory of the Arts*, 225.

<sup>277</sup> Hamilton, 'The Art of Improvisation.'

would disagree that listening to free improvisation requires a 'different way of listening'.<sup>278</sup> The expectations of listeners, however, are created by the conventions of a musical style and for historical improvisation, these conventions are not only very much present but act as the primary guiding principle for musical ideas. As such, a suspension of the belief that only composers worshipped throughout history can write music is necessary for historical improvisation along with an acceptance of the ability of a performer to take on the authority of a composer. This change is one of cultural value and of social understanding, not of the music produced and thus requires a change in attitudes towards performance rather than a change in listening. It does, however, certainly require a different approach to playing.

### 1.2.3 Rehearsals: Preparing to be unprepared

In order to increase the standard of the product with whatever criteria each individual chooses to name, improvisers rehearse. In his study of three current Parisian improvisation ensembles, Canonne identified three key purposes of rehearsals: firstly, to allow musicians to become familiar with each others' playing styles; secondly, to facilitate the development of the group's identity; and finally, to provide space for players to work through individual differences.<sup>279</sup> Exercises include simulating performance settings by continuing regardless, recording and listening back to excerpts, and Borgo's "handicapping" (a deliberate reduction in the number of possibilities available for a certain element of performance, for example range or mood).<sup>280</sup> The emphasis is usually on taking risks and experimenting with different approaches. ONCEIM, for instance, once improvised for three hours without stopping during rehearsals.<sup>281</sup> Canonne draws on Helmut Lachenmann's definition of composition to explain this, that 'creating a free improvisation group is like building a new instrument'; the rehearsals provide the space to 'learn to play it'.<sup>282</sup> Alperson notes that, for individual jazz musicians, rehearsals start as a time to learn 'the language' of the genre, they listen to and copy respected improvisers to absorb this.<sup>283</sup> This language is comprised of rules, for instance of harmony, and are learnt either explicitly through music theory or implicitly through practice.<sup>284</sup> Ferro argues that the primary purpose of improvisation practice is to 'increas[e] and enric[h] the

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<sup>278</sup> Vilavicencio, 'The Discourse of Free Improvisation,' 22.

<sup>279</sup> Canonne, 'Rehearsing Free Improvisation?'

<sup>280</sup> David Borgo, 'Negotiating Freedom,' 174.

<sup>281</sup> Canonne, 'Rehearsing Free Improvisation'.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid. See also Helmut Lachenmann, *Écrits et Entretiens* (Geneva: Contrechamps, 2009), 134.

<sup>283</sup> Alperson, 'On Musical Improvisation,' 22.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

vocabulary of musical ideas that... result in a wider range of choices available to the artist during the creative process'.<sup>285</sup> Rehearsal is therefore about experimentation and constant evaluation, just as in the rehearsal of notated music.

Improvisation practice arguably occurs whenever musical activity (whether active or passive) takes place. Just as improvisation relies on explicit and tacit knowledge, practice can be explicit or tacit. Improvisers subconsciously pick up stylistic elements, develop their pattern recognition and take inspiration from just listening to music. Through playing notated pieces, technique is developed. Explicit improvisation practice includes finding many solutions to the same creative stimulus. For instance, exercises on the Helicon course for renaissance and baroque improvisation include finding as many interesting ways to fill intervals as possible, as advised in the division treatises of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>286</sup> Similarly, improvising over ground basses develops harmonic understanding. Free improvisation, on the other hand, practices using tacit knowledge. Improvisation practice rather than focusing on replicability, instead aims to develop creative possibility. The aim of these exercises is not to use these individual solutions in performance but to create larger webs of knowledge from which to draw on and helps to move knowledge from explicit to tacit spheres. Practice can also be a safe space to develop self confidence and trust in tacit skills. By trying out scenarios, improvisers build their abilities to deal with the unexpected and their belief that they will also be able to in performance.

For classical musicians, particularly, learning to trust their tacit knowledge (often phrased by researchers as “letting go” but really more of a “movement inwards”) can also take practice. Reshaping psychology to judge in constructive ways, rather than aggressive perfectionism which many classical performers experience, also takes time. An often-used technique to initially quiet this criticism is to begin by improvising on a different instrument, their instrument in an unusual position or even an object such as a chair, for example.<sup>287</sup> This removes preconceived notions of technical expectations and instead allows the improviser to experiment and explore — the first necessary step towards improvisation. Through these early stages, many of the skills can be developed so that the process yields more satisfying results for the improviser once they apply these to their instrument. We all live our lives improvising and therefore arguably all our experiences (particularly speech) are actually also forms of practice. Once it is understood that improvisation is built on webs of knowledge, the idea of practice no longer seems alien or in opposition to the craft. The aim is simply different. Rather than reduction towards a perceived perfect solution, the aim is instead expansion towards increasing possibilities. Even in improvisation practice, the aim is exploration rather than

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<sup>285</sup> Ferro, ‘Composed improvisations,’ 2.

<sup>286</sup> Helicon Project, ‘Musical Improvisation’.

<sup>287</sup> This was an exercise used on the Helicon International Summer School of Improvisation 2022.



perfection. Increased technical ability and execution of ideas naturally accompany this even though they are not the focus.

#### 1.2.4 The benefits of improvisation

Rejecting the western classical aesthetics of perfection and focusing on the process, improvisation has many advantages. From a scientific perspective, improvisation can be ‘a powerful means to express oneself and communicate with others, facilitating self-actualisation and deeper connections with peers’.<sup>288</sup> Landau notes that there has been an increase in the advocacy of creativity in recent years amongst music educators as this ‘is an effective way to gain skill at an instrument, develop divergent thinking ability, enhance communication and trust between musicians, and facilitate self-actualisation’.<sup>289</sup> It can also improve understandings of musical structure, listening awareness and actually increase motivation.<sup>290</sup> The enjoyable “flow state” often mentioned in relation to improvisation, has been linked to ‘widespread deactivations in the prefrontal cortex’ and studies monitoring improvisers have found this to be the case, revealing that higher levels of improvisational freedom are accompanied by decreased activation.<sup>291</sup> This deactivation is key in allowing the spontaneous result: this drastically reduces the processing and decision time, therefore, making the output appear spontaneous.<sup>292</sup> It also reduces the anxiety about failure which is beneficial for improvisation and an increased state of flow has been correlated to increased creativity and attached personal significance in improvisations.<sup>293</sup> This is reflected in improvisers’ own accounts of the experience such as in MacDonald and Wilson’s study whose participants explained that they tried not to think during their improvisations.<sup>294</sup> There is a sense of lack of agency in the comments of some improvising jazz musicians. Keith Jarrett, for instance, remarked that in contrast to performing notating music (during which he felt he had ‘to make it happen’), when improvising, he had ‘to be able to let it happen’.<sup>295</sup> Maldonato sums this up by arguing that ‘truly improvising

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<sup>288</sup> Andrew T. Landau and Charles J. Limb, ‘The neuroscience of improvisation,’ *Music Educators Journal* 103, no. 3 (2017): 27.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-29.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, 28. See also Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, ‘Happiness and Creativity,’ *The Futurist* 31, no. 5 (1997): S8. And Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Performance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>292</sup> Landau, ‘The neuroscience of improvisation,’ 28.

<sup>293</sup> Michal Harel Goldbert and Rafael Malach, ‘When the brain loses its self: Prefrontal inactivation during sensorimotor processing,’ *Neuron* 50, no. 2 (2006): 329-39. And Landau, ‘The neuroscience of improvisation,’ 30.

<sup>294</sup> R. A. MacDonald and G. B. Wilson, ‘Constructions of jazz: How Jazz musicians present their collaborative musical practice,’ *Musicae Scientiae* 10, no. 1 (2006): 64.

<sup>295</sup> Keith Jarrett in Ferro, ‘Composed improvisations,’ vii.

requires refusing the sovereignty of the self: briefly, it is being in a flow'.<sup>296</sup> In my own experience, however, I find that I experience this sense of flow as a period of easeful fluency rather than a complete immersion in subconscious experience, as historical improvisation requires strict adherence to a style and therefore explicit regulation and decision-making is often necessary. Perhaps experiences vary depending on the styles of improvisation and level of experience the improviser has: again, this would form an interesting avenue for further research.

Alongside this deactivation, studies comparing improvised and memorised performance have demonstrated an increased 'functional connectivity with other motor areas during improvisation'.<sup>297</sup> They have also noticed a potential significant response from the medial frontal cortex 'in coordinating the production of a cohesive musical narrative during improvisation' and that different areas of the brain are activated when playing alone compared to with a group.<sup>298</sup> The activation of the rostral prefrontal cortex (rPFC) during improvisation also supports the notion that 'expressing oneself through improvisation is intrinsically rewarding'.<sup>299</sup> Landau concludes that the inclusion of more creative activities like improvisation in music pedagogy is supported by neuroscientific research.<sup>300</sup> It has also been shown to increase confidence and a sense of achievement.<sup>301</sup> In fact, an increasing number of studies are demonstrating the improvement on wellbeing that improvisation can produce through increasing self-esteem, confidence and awareness.<sup>302</sup> The context of music therapy has revealed benefits for those with neurological damage, autism, client-therapist relationships and mental health conditions as well as generally

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<sup>296</sup> Maldonato, 'Improvisation: The astonishing bridge,' 14.

<sup>297</sup> Landau, 'The neuroscience of improvisation,' 28.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> See R. A. MacDonald, G. Kreutz and L. Mitchell, *Music, Health, and Wellbeing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). And H. Kamioka et al., 'Effectiveness of music therapy: a summary of systematic reviews based on randomized controlled trials of music interventions,' *Patient Preference and Adherence* 8 (2014): 727–754. And A. Oldfield, *Interactive Music Therapy - A Positive Approach: Music Therapy at a Child Development Centre* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2006). And M. Pavlicevic and G. Ansdell, *Community Music Therapy* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2004). And M. Pothoulaki, R. A. R. MacDonald and P. Flowers, 'An interpretative phenomenological analysis of an improvisational music therapy program for cancer patients,' *Journal of Music Therapy* 49, no. 1 (2012): 45–67. And E. Ruud, *Music Therapy: A Perspective from the Humanities* (Barcelona: Barcelona Publishers, 2010). And H. P. Solli, "'Shut Up and play!' improvisational Use of popular music for a Man with schizophrenia,' *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy* 17, no. 1 (2008): 67–77. And W. L. Magee, 'A comparison between the Use of songs and improvisation in music therapy with adults living with acquired and chronic illness,' *Australian Journal of Music Therapy* 18 (2007): 20–38.

reducing stress and anxiety including for cancer patients.<sup>303</sup> It is also increasingly used in community music settings.<sup>304</sup>

To improvise, therefore, can be beneficial for wellbeing and health in addition to being entertaining for audiences and fun for performers. This can only be the case, however, when the aesthetics of perfection which dominate the performance of notated compositions are removed or at least reduced in improvisers' mindsets. To reach peak performance, improvisers need to feel comfortable and confident with their instrument and their chosen style, for which more pedagogical guidance grounded in practical experience, particularly for classical improvisation, is needed and is a current research and practice gap which this thesis aims to address. Defined throughout as the direct execution of an idea, improvisation is thus a beautifully human art. Despite the significant proportion of secondary improvisation literature discussed here from the perspective of free improvisation or jazz, classical music also had a thriving improvisatory scene and one which is gradually being revived today as part of the HIP movement, which the following chapter surveys.

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<sup>303</sup> MacDonald and Wilson, 'Musical improvisation and health,' 1-18. And G. Trondalen and L. O. Bonde, 'Music therapy: models and interventions' in *Music, Health, and Wellbeing*, ed. Raymond MacDonald and Gunter Kreutz (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 40-64. And Pothoulaki et al., 'An interpretative phenomenological analysis'. For other similar studies see: K. Aigen, 'Verticality and containment in song and improvisation: an application of schema theory to Nordoff-Robbins music therapy,' *Journal of Music Therapy* 46, no. 3 (2009): 238-267. Pavlicevic and Ansdell, *Music Therapy in Context*. And Y. Albornoz, 'The effects of group improvisational music therapy on depression in adolescents and adults with substance abuse: a randomized controlled trial,' *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy* 20, no. 3 (2011): 208-224. S. J. Burns, M. S. Harbuz, F. Hucklebridge and L. Bunt, 'A pilot study into the therapeutic effects of music therapy at a cancer help center,' *Alternative Therapies in Health & Medicine* 7, no. 1 (2001): 48-56. N. A. Hartley, 'On a personal note: a music therapist's reflections on working with those who are living with a terminal illness,' *Journal of Palliative Care* 17, no. 3 (2000): 135-141. And J. M. Erkkilä et al., 'Individual music therapy for depression: randomised controlled trial,' *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 199, no. 2 (2011):132-139. C. Gold et al., 'Individual music therapy for mental health care clients with Low therapy motivation: multicentre randomised controlled trial,' *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* 82, no. 5 (2013): 319-331. And M. Pavlicevic, *Music Therapy in Context: Music, Meaning and Relationship* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1997). And M. Geretsegger, U. Holck and C. Gold, 'Randomised controlled trial of improvisational music therapy's effectiveness for children with autism spectrum disorders (TIME-A): study protocol,' *BMC Pediatrics* 12, no. 2 (2012). And J. Kim, T. Wigram and C. Gold, 'The effects of improvisational music therapy on joint attention behaviors in autistic children: a randomized controlled study,' *Journal of Autism & Developmental Disorders* 38, no. 9 (2008): 1758-1766. And J. Kim, T. Wigram and C. Gold, 'The effects of improvisational music therapy on joint attention behaviors in autistic children: a randomized controlled study,' *Journal of Autism & Developmental Disorders* 38, no. 9 (2008): 1758-1766. And J. Kim, T. Wigram and C. Gold, 'Emotional, motivational and interpersonal responsiveness of children with autism in improvisational music therapy,' *Autism* 13, no. 4 (2009): 389-409. D. J. Rickson, 'Instructional and improvisational models of music therapy with adolescents who have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD): a comparison of the effects on motor impulsivity,' *Journal of Music Therapy* 43, no. 1 (2006): 39-62. And K. Simpson and D. Keen, 'Music interventions for children with autism: narrative review of the literature,' *Journal of Autism & Developmental Disorders* 41, no. 11 (2011): 1507-1514. R. W. Justice, 'Music therapy interventions for people with eating disorders in an inpatient setting,' *Music Therapy Perspectives* 12, no.2 (1994): 104-110.

<sup>304</sup> Pavlicevic and Ansdell, *Community Music Therapy*.

## Chapter 2: Historical improvisation: Origins, evolution and revival

### 2.1 Classical improvisation in the past

Before focusing on the improvised baroque fantasia, it is first necessary to gain context through a bird's eye view of the historical practice of improvisation more generally within musical performance to understand contemporary conceptions and potential modern reactions. While this is a huge topic and still requires further research, the following discussion provides an initial overview. The lack of clarity and cohesion in current definitions and understandings of improvisation and the relative absence of improvisation in today's classical concerts do not reflect the traditions of centuries gone by. Having built a case for the benefits of improvisation and its status as an art, the task of justifying improvisation's place in classical performance remains, to which end, I turn now to historical sources. Improvisation can be traced back to classical Greece and continued to play a prominent role in classical music into the nineteenth century. Writing about improvisation has always proved challenging and, in improvisation, the issue of good taste can be observed in discussions throughout history, yet the value placed on improvisation is also clear and its role in musical practice firmly established. As such, this chapter is again in two parts, discussing the past and then the present of classical improvisation, first tracing it from its origins in human utterances to its decline in the nineteenth century before considering its recent partial revival as part of the historically-informed performance movement. This second part highlights current performers, performances and courses which are all seeking to re-establish improvisation at the centre of musical practice in line with these historical findings and to which this thesis also seeks to contribute.

#### 2.1.1 Chasing the "outlaw": Classical improvisation through the ages

Having considered various perspectives on what it means to improvise, we can turn to historical examples. Elusive and evading longevity by nature, any study of historical improvisation must deal with fragmentary evidence, largely second-hand accounts of improvised concerts and notated compositions. In addition, writing about musical experience is not without its challenges; as Monson remarks, the translation of sonic experience to text will always result in frustrating loss.<sup>305</sup> During the baroque, improvisation was integral to music performance, yet as Haynes notes, 'no one bothered to write what would already have been understood' (a subject dealt with comprehensively in

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<sup>305</sup> Ingrid Monson, *Saying something: Jazz improvisation and interaction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 74.

Kuijken's often cited book *The notation is not the music*).<sup>306</sup> This is not, however, unique to baroque music; referring to Goehr's influential text, the work is never identical to the score.<sup>307</sup> It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that treatises do not always discuss improvisation and that those references which survive are often cursory.

While a rough picture can be built from analysing historical sources, it is only through practical experimentation that we can attempt to fill these gaps. Despite the existence of sources, it has only been over the past decade that scholarly interest in classical improvisation has begun to establish itself and literature on jazz still retains the most significant proportion of improvisation literature.<sup>308</sup> Susan McClary argues that improvisation has taken so long to appear in scholarly research because 'history is presented as orderly, settled, and unproblematic', words which definitely cannot be used to describe improvisation.<sup>309</sup> Haynes notes that free improvisation is often viewed as an 'outlaw' because it goes against the values of the nineteenth-century musical work.<sup>310</sup> Yet, Ferand, a well-respected authority on classical improvisation, argues that it is the impetus to improvise that has shaped music throughout history.<sup>311</sup> Further research into improvisation is therefore important beyond itself, also contributing to more informed understandings of many other areas of music to which this thesis seeks to contribute. Surveying the happily increasing body of literature on historical improvisation, this chapter searches for and follows the "outlaw" throughout history.

### 2.1.2 An ancient art: Improvisation until the late sixteenth century

It is often argued that the first "musical" utterances must have been improvised. Alperson posits that performances as far back as classical Greece were improvised.<sup>312</sup> Musical improvisation also played a role in church music, it is argued from at least the fourth century.<sup>313</sup> Moving beyond this, there is substantial literature on the improvised prelude throughout history, including guides for

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<sup>306</sup> Bruce Haynes, *The end of early music: A period performer's history of music for the twenty-first century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 106. And Barthold Kuijken, *The notation is not the music: reflections on early music practice and performance* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013).

<sup>307</sup> Lydia Goehr, *The imaginary museum of musical works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 2-3.

<sup>308</sup> Gabriel Solis and Bruno Nettl eds. *Musical improvisation: Art, education, and society* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

<sup>309</sup> Susan McClary, *Feminine endings: Music, gender, and sexuality* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 28.

<sup>310</sup> Goehr, *The imaginary museum*. And Haynes, *The end of early music*, 6.

<sup>311</sup> Ernst T. Ferand, 'Improvisation in Nine Centuries of Western Music: An Anthology With an Historical Introduction,' in *Anthology of Music*, ed. K.G. Geller (Köln: Arno Volk Verlag, 1961), 5.

<sup>312</sup> Philip Alperson, 'On Musical Improvisation,' *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43, no. 1 (1984): 17.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

improvisation for the modern musician. Bania traces the improvised prelude back to its origins in mediaeval times, consulting treatises, writing and composed pieces up to the eighteenth century.<sup>314</sup> A particularly early reference to the improvised prelude can be found in Gottfried von Strassburg's poem *Tristan* (c. 1210) which describes a harpist's playing as containing 'melodies and his improvisation, his strangely crafted preludes'.<sup>315</sup> Polk writes that professional German musicians in the late middle ages learnt, worked and transmitted their knowledge largely without written sources. He cites the lack of music notation in iconography to substantiate this, even when playing for dancing notation is never shown. Dance melodies were often altered to fit each dance style and length and therefore notation was not only surplus but arguably could be a hindrance.<sup>316</sup> In addition, Erasmus reflected on his time in England and noted that performers went beyond the notation.<sup>317</sup> Already in 1477, Tinctoris' treatise *Liber de arte contrapuncti* describes improvised counterpoint.<sup>318</sup> During the renaissance, an early form of improvisation was the *faburden* style, originating in England and involving improvising additional parts around a tenor by singing alternately in 3rds and 4ths or 6ths and 5ths.<sup>319</sup> Wakefield's *Second Shepherd's Play* references characters' abilities in *faburden*.<sup>320</sup> Jacob Tick taught schoolboys to improvise harmony in this way.<sup>321</sup> In addition to this, canons were improvised using a *cantus firmus*.<sup>322</sup> Italian dances such as the *bassadanza* and *saltarello* are early examples of places for instrumental improvisation.<sup>323</sup>

By the sixteenth century, the term 'flourish' was used in England to denote a short improvised instrumental piece. These included performances at court, in the army or fanfares. Shakespeare's plays, for example, often ask for a flourish in the stage directions, such as in *Richard II* (Act I, scene 3).<sup>324</sup> Purcell also called for a recorder flourish in his *Theodosius* and for all instruments in *Dioclesian*.<sup>325</sup> North describes a flourish as 'flourishing upon a key, with which masters take a liberty upon all instruments at the entrance of a consort', noticing similar features to a prelude with

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<sup>314</sup> Maria Bania, 'The Improvisation of Preludes on Melody Instruments in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century,' *The consort* 70 (2014): 67-92. See also Paul Bracken, 'Accompanying *trobador* and *trouvère* song,' *The Consort* 69 (2013): 3-19.

<sup>315</sup> Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2007), vol 1, 222. Quoted in Bania, 'The Improvisation of Preludes,' 1.

<sup>316</sup> Keith Polk, *German instrumental music of the late Middle Ages – Players, patrons and performance practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 164.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>318</sup> Kyle Schick, 'Improvisation: Performer as Co-composer,' *Musical Offerings* 2, no. 3 (2012): 27.

<sup>319</sup> Hannah M. Rinehart, "'Musical Fury": Impressing Through Expressing in Baroque Improvisation,' (lecture for *Stevens Student Center*, Cedarville University, OH, April 20, 2016), 5.

<sup>320</sup> Schick, 'Improvisation,' 28.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>324</sup> Bania, 'The Improvisation of Preludes,' 12.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*

‘what elegance and variation the fancy suggests or capacity admit’ and ‘with perpetual variety of fancy’.<sup>326</sup> Bania argues that Francesco Canova of Milan was in fact improvising a prelude in Pontus de Tyard’s description from 1555: Canova ‘as if tuning his strings, sat on the end of a table, seeking out a fantasia’.<sup>327</sup> This certainly demonstrates the substantial cross-over between the two genres, the lack of consistent nomenclature and the difficulty in drawing exact distinctions between the two. Similarly, Corrette and Bordet use the word ‘caprice’ to denote a prelude.<sup>328</sup>

### 2.1.3 Dividing and conquering the bass: The seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries

Diminutions were improvised to create fast passage work out of slower melodic lines; as Dickey explains, it involved “‘dividing” the long notes of an unornamented melodic line into many smaller ones’.<sup>329</sup> This practice was not universally admired, however, as composer Josquin des Prez was quoted to have complained about musicians adding such diminutions to his works, arguing that ‘if I had wanted them, I would have written them myself’.<sup>330</sup> Manuals for this appear in abundance during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries although it is important to remember that musicians at the time learnt this skill aurally.<sup>331</sup> Freillon-Poncein’s wind treatise exemplifies this in his text as well as in numerous written examples. He also states that they should ideally be improvised (‘played variously according to your fancy’) and can modulate extensively.<sup>332</sup> Caccini’s preface to

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<sup>326</sup> Roger North, *An Essay of Musickall Ayre* (1715) quoted in John Wilson ed., *Roger North on Music* (London, Novello, 1959), 143.

<sup>327</sup> Bania, ‘The Improvisation of Preludes,’ 67-92.

<sup>328</sup> Toussaint Bordet, *Méthode raisonnée Pour apprendre la musique* (Paris, 1765), 16. And Michel Corrette, *Méthode pour apprendre aisément à jouer de la Flute traversiere* (Paris: Boivin, 1740), 45.

<sup>329</sup> Howard Mayer Brown, *Embellishing sixteenth-century music Vol. 1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), vii. And Bruce Dickey, ‘Ornamentation in Early Seventeenth-Century Italian Music,’ in *A Performer’s Guide to Seventeenth-Century Music*, ed. Stewart Carter (New York : Schirmer Books, 1997), 247.

<sup>330</sup> Josquin des Prez quoted in Brown, *Embellishing sixteenth-century music*, 75.

<sup>331</sup> Daniel Stighäll, ‘A Study in Early Improvisation: The Use of Renaissance Improvisation to Bridge the Written and Unwritten Practices in Modern Music Education,’ (BA dissertation, Musikhögskolan, Piteå, 2007), 14. For other sources on early improvisatory practices see: Konrad Paumann, *Fundamentum...* from the Buxheimer organ book (Nürnberg, ca 1450). And Silvestro Gnassi, *Opera intitolata Fontegara* (Venice, 1535). And Diego Ortiz, *Tratado de glosas sobre clausulas...* (Rome, 1553). And Girolamo Dalla Casa, *Il vero modo di diminuir* (Venice, 1584). And Giovanni Bassano, *Ricercare, Passaggi et Cadentie/ Motetti, madrigali et canzoni francese* (Venice, 1585/ 1591). And Ricardo Rognioni, *Passaggi per potersi essercitare nel diminuire* (Venice, 1592). And Giovanni Luca Conforto, *Breve et facile maniera d’essercitarsi (...) a far passaggi* (Rome, 1593). And Giovanni Battista Bovicelli, *Regole, passaggi di musica, madrigali e motetti passeggiati* (Venice, 1594). And Valerio Bona, *Essempi delli passaggi consonanze et dissonanze* (Milan, 1596). And Aurelio Virgiliano, *Il dolcimelo* (Manuscript, ca 1590-1600). And Giovanni Battista Spadi, *Libro de passaggi ascendenti et descendenti* (Venice, 1609). And Antonio Brunelli, *Varii exercitii* (Florence, 1614). And Francesco Rognioni, *Selva de varii apssaggi* (Milan, 1620).

<sup>332</sup> Jean Pierre Freillon-Poncein, *La Veritable Manière d’apprendre à jouer en perfection du haut-Bois, de la Flute et du Flageolet* (Paris, Jacques Collombat, 1700), 28.

*Nuove Musiche* gives the reason for publication as to curb the excessive amount of ornamentation commonly added by performers.<sup>333</sup>

### 2.1.3.1 Preluding

Hotteterre dedicated a whole treatise to preluding, *L'art de préluder sur la flute traversière*, stressing the improvisational freedom and providing examples which follow these standard practices, some fast and others slow.<sup>334</sup> He classes both notated and improvised forms as preludes but calls the improvised prelude 'the true prelude'.<sup>335</sup> Improvised preludes would occasionally also include themes from the following notated works.<sup>336</sup> For example, Corrette advises starting with a few bars from a notated piece before improvising the rest.<sup>337</sup> He also provides a guide for violinists with sixteen example preludes, largely formed of arpeggios and disjunct motion.<sup>338</sup> This tendency towards French instructions is reflective of the general output.<sup>339</sup> Granom provides a German example which interestingly also uses 'the fancy of the performer' as a guiding feature.<sup>340</sup> The word 'fancy' was therefore commonly used in reference to the compositional imagination of the performer. Niedt uses the terms preludes and fancies together, by arguing that, for proper tuning to be achieved, the orchestral leader 'must not allow anyone to play preludes or other fancies as he pleases, or the instruments may be put out of tune again if the performance does not begin immediately', even going so far as to describe them as 'very unpleasant to listen to'.<sup>341</sup> J. S. Bach provides harmonisation suggestions for a descending scale, a commonly used preluding technique.<sup>342</sup>

Bania's investigation of improvised melody instrument preludes reveals that treatises support the practice of improvised vocal preludes too.<sup>343</sup> She was able to find many flute sources, specifically. Analysis of composed examples showed the tendency for establishing the tonality

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<sup>333</sup> Giulio Caccini, *Le Nuove Musiche* (Firenze: li Here di Giorgio Marescotti, 1602).

<sup>334</sup> Jacques Martin Hotteterre, *L'art de préluder sur la flute traversière* (Paris: L'Auteur, 1719), cover.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>337</sup> Michel Corrette, *L'art de se perfectionner dans le violon* (Paris: Corrette, 1782), 45.

<sup>338</sup> Corrette, *L'art de se perfectionner dans le violon*, 10-11.

<sup>339</sup> Bania, 'The Improvisation of Preludes,' 7.

<sup>340</sup> Lewis Christian Austin Granom, *Plain and Easy Instructions for Playing on the German Flute* (London: T Bennet, 1770), 17.

<sup>341</sup> Friedrich Erhardt Niedt, *Musicalische Handleitung zur Variation* (Hamburg: Benjamin Schillern, 1706), 102.

<sup>342</sup> Bania, 'The Improvisation of Preludes,' 21. And see J.S. Bach, *Clavier Bûchlein* (Manuscript: Wilhelm Friedemann Bach copyist, 1720).

<sup>343</sup> Bania, 'The improvisation of preludes,' 1. And see Michel Pignolet de Montéclair, *Nouvelle méthode pour apprendre la musique* (Paris: Foucault, 1709). And Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The complete dictionary of music. Consisting of a copious explanation of all words necessary to a true knowledge and understanding of music* (London, 1779), 389.



before a fugue and featuring arpeggiated chordal sequences. She describes them as having ‘the feel of an improvised piece’.<sup>344</sup> This phrase is commonly used but not especially helpful because of its lack of specificity. Perhaps what scholars are actually describing is a lack of repetition. When improvising, it is difficult to repeat passages which lasted longer than a couple of bars accurately and therefore improvised music contains very little exact repetition. Motives are developed and sequences achieved but whole phrases, never mind whole sections, cannot be repeated, an otherwise common feature of notated baroque music. Speaking of her experiences of applying her research into practising, performance and university teaching, Bania explains that she noticed an increased ‘harmonic awareness’, ‘musical inventiveness’, ‘technical facility’ and ‘creativity’ and that students ‘deepen their familiarity with the instrument’ when improvising preludes.<sup>345</sup> She recommends that modern performers include improvised preludes in their practice to achieve ‘more personal and varied approach[es] to performance’.<sup>346</sup> Türk likens the improvised prelude to a Lutheran sermon which ‘relied heavily on the congregations’ knowledge of rhetorical patterns and schemes’ and gives the organ fantasies by Dietrich Buxtehude as examples.<sup>347</sup> This crossover in terminology is common due to inconsistent contemporary nomenclature.<sup>348</sup> I argue that improvising fantasias can be similarly effective. Improvised preludes were certainly part of a baroque performer’s practice and performance.

### 2.1.3.2 Improvisation in the church

The chorale was an important aspect of Lutheran worship and also featured improvisation.<sup>349</sup> Mattheson’s description of the audition requirements for organists at Hamburg Cathedral in the mid eighteenth century include requirements for an improvised chorale as well as an improvised prelude, fugue and ciacona on a given bass.<sup>350</sup> Türk also cites the necessity of an organist having the ability to play ‘a good and suitable prelude’ which ‘one is led to believe...has been composed beforehand’ as key.<sup>351</sup> There are treatise guides too for improvising a prelude, such as the later publication by C.P.E. Bach. He suggests beginning with a tonic pedal, adding a bass octave and a

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<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

<sup>345</sup> Bania, ‘The Improvisation of Preludes,’ 15.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid., 3. And Daniel Gottlob Türk, *Von den wichtigsten Pflichten eines Organisten* (Halle, 1787).

<sup>348</sup> John Caldwell, *English keyboard music before the nineteenth century* (New York: Dover Publications, 1985), 66.

<sup>349</sup> Bálint Karosi, ‘Schemata and Rhetoric: Improvising the Chorale Prelude in the Eighteenth-Century Lutheran Tradition,’ (PhD dissertation, Yale School of Music, 2014), 4.

<sup>350</sup> Johann Mattheson, *Grosse-Generalbassschule* (Hamburg: Johann Christoph Kießner, 1731). And Ibid.

<sup>351</sup> Türk, *Von den wichtigsten Pflichten eines Organisten*.

dominant pedal before returning to a final tonic pedal.<sup>352</sup> Türk suggests developing a melodic idea, then playing a chorale melody while continuing the melodic theme from the opening in the accompaniment, after which an interlude follows before the second line of the chorale. As a conclusion, he advises finishing with the main theme again, essentially creating a ritornello structure featuring chorale melodies.<sup>353</sup> Karosi emphasises the importance of augmentation, diminution and prolongation in these preludes because of the leading role of melodic development.<sup>354</sup> This advice is present more generally in eighteenth-century treatises which often also include models in varying keys and diminution exercises.<sup>355</sup>

### 2.1.3.3 Improvising short pieces

Bach, Handel, Sweelinck, Buxtehude and Frescobaldi were all famous public improvisers. Handel's organ concertos op. 4 and 7 leave whole movements 'ad lib'.<sup>356</sup> Bach's *Musical Offering* opens with a three-voice fugue (ricercare) which he describes as an apology, a better thought through composition of an improvisation he performed for Frederick the Great.<sup>357</sup> Gould, however, still views this composed version as 'rather disjointed and episodic, still lacking a firm sense of direction', justifying this by suggesting that he wanted to recapture the atmosphere of an improvisation rather than 'salvaging his reputation for contrapuntal extravaganzas'.<sup>358</sup> Of course, this opinion originates from a *werktreue* mindset; Gould does not value the excitement, variety and spontaneity of an improvisation but instead sees it as a forever doomed to fail attempt at composition. In contrast, Schick argues that 'neither the improvised nor the composed should be judged as having more or less musical or artistic worth on the basis of its origin'.<sup>359</sup> Improvising *partimenti*, a melody over or realisation of a figured bass, was one of the main ways musicians learnt to improvise, requiring technique, memory and creativity.<sup>360</sup> In my own experiences of attempting this, as a melody instrumentalist, I can attest to the difficulty of achieving this successfully without a fluent knowledge

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<sup>352</sup> CPE Bach in Austin Gross, 'The Improvisation of Figuration Preludes and the Enduring Value of Bach Family Pedagogy,' *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 27 (2013): 19.

<sup>353</sup> Türk, *Von den wichtigsten Pflichten eines Organisten*.

<sup>354</sup> Karosi, 'Schemata and Rhetoric,' 6.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>356</sup> Haynes, *The end of early music*, 206.

<sup>357</sup> Ken Haslam, 'Glenn Gould: on Improvisation. November 1966 radio programme,' YouTube video, posted by "Bruce Cross," July 22, 2019, accessed August 9, 2021, [https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=VuPSNsrIhtw&ab\\_channel=BruceCross](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=VuPSNsrIhtw&ab_channel=BruceCross).

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>359</sup> Schick, 'Improvisation,' 32.

<sup>360</sup> Roger Moseley, 'Mozart's Harlequinade: Musical Improvisation alla Commedia Dell 'arte,' *Common Knowledge* 17, no. 2 (2011): 341.

of figured bass; improvising over ground basses I found to be much easier as this only requires an initial understanding of the harmony which then constantly repeats. It also gives the performers the opportunity to be more experimental as, after a few rotations, the improviser no longer has to think so consciously about harmony changes. McCartney-Moore argues that Corelli's *La Folia* demonstrates his ability to improvise over a chord sequence and therefore it can be assumed that other violinists also did.<sup>361</sup>

Improvisation on accompaniment parts should be limited, according to Saint-Lambert, as 'it is no longer an Ensemble when everyone plays just for himself'.<sup>362</sup> The practice of improvising dissonances in accompaniment parts (mainly continuo) is mentioned by Delclair.<sup>363</sup> Da capo arias were fertile places for vocal improvisation during the baroque; florid ornamentation was expected at cadences and on the da capo.<sup>364</sup> Despite the attention paid to the affects in baroque composition and performance and therefore presumably also improvisation, as Gould remarks, 'music has the frustrating habit of proving in the end to have been about nothing in particular'.<sup>365</sup> So much baroque music, however, was inspired by dance and of course vocal music has the advantage of text setting for inspiration. Agazzari's opera required the whole orchestra to improvise over just basslines.<sup>366</sup> The popular musical forms originating in the baroque — toccata, prelude, ricercare, fantasia and intonazione — all grew out of improvisation and many have continued to be favourite forms of composers seeking to achieve a sense of improvisatory freedom.<sup>367</sup> The fantasia, to quote Gould, 'owed its nomadic disposition directly to the improvisatory habit'.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>361</sup> Alex McCartney-Moore, 'An exploration into the use of improvisation, harmonic substitution, text-setting, word-painting and time-signature implications in French recitative, 1680-1733,' *Academia EDU*, 2012, accessed August 10, 2021, 2, [https://www.academia.edu/1520642/An\\_exploration\\_into\\_the\\_use\\_of\\_improvisation\\_harmonic\\_substitution\\_text-setting\\_word-painting\\_and\\_time-signature\\_implications\\_in\\_French\\_recitative\\_1680-1733](https://www.academia.edu/1520642/An_exploration_into_the_use_of_improvisation_harmonic_substitution_text-setting_word-painting_and_time-signature_implications_in_French_recitative_1680-1733).

<sup>362</sup> M. De Saint-Lambert, *A New Treatise on Accompaniment: With the Harpsichord, the Organ, and with Other Instruments*, trans. John S. Powell (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1991 [Paris, 1707]).  
Denis Delclair, *Accompaniment on Theorbo and Harpsichord*, trans. Charlotte Mattax (Early Music Institute, 1991 [Paris, 1690]), 102-3.

<sup>363</sup> Delclair, *Accompaniment on Theorbo and Harpsichord*, 150.

<sup>364</sup> Schick, 'Improvisation,' 33.

<sup>365</sup> Haslam. 'Glenn Gould.'

<sup>366</sup> Gloria Rose, 'Agazzari and the improvising orchestra,' *Journal of the American musicological Society* 18, no. 3 (1965): 382-393.

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>368</sup> Haslam. 'Glenn Gould.'

## 2.1.4 ‘Some bizarre, exceptional relationship between the uterus and the mind’? Exploring early modern female improvisation and its place in music

Female improvising voices of the past are notably absent from early modern treatises and secondary literature on baroque musical improvisation. A closer inspection, however, reveals some direct mentions of female musical improvisation, in music and other arts, and an understanding that improvisation was a truly integral part of all kinds of music-making, amateur as well as professional, reveals many places and spaces for female improvisation, showing that improvisation was as much the domain of the musicking woman as the professional male. Early modern female improvisation, therefore, deserves investigation in its own right, not simply as a brief addition to discussions of male practice. Indeed, beyond music, improvisation was and still is a large aspect of daily life. Improvisation could occur at work or home, in arts such as dance, music and theatrical poetry or in conversation, whether with family or on the political world stage through regencies.

The nature of improvisation offered opportunities for increased freedom of choice regarding material, form, expression and, in music, emotional "affects". This was seen to be the primary purpose of music: to move the listener, to provoke an emotional response. These emotions were described as "affects" and there are many mentions in treatises such as by Rousseau, Charpentier, Mattheson and Rameau from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries that attempt to match musical devices such as key signatures, rhythms and intervals to each affect.<sup>369</sup> No consensus was reached however, except that achieving an emotional response was desired. The musical improviser, therefore, has the power to at least attempt to manipulate the audience's emotions and to do so through their own creative decisions. Unlike performing notated compositions in which the performer acts as a go-between to realise a composer's intentions, in improvisation, the performer is the creative agent, both simultaneously the composer and the performer. This gives the improviser a voice: a performance (whether domestic or professional) provides a platform on which to be heard and the freedom offered particularly by larger-scale forms of improvisation (such as dances, preludes, fugues and fantasias) allows for creativity and self-expression beyond that which is possible through non-improvised art. Improvised singing or poetry allows for the added clarity and power of words. Research into historical improvisation can, therefore, provide significant insight into the lives and thoughts of early modern women. While improvisation as a whole is gaining ground in musicological scholarship and historical literature has seen a rise in women's studies, women have been notably absent in musical improvisation surveys.

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<sup>369</sup> See Rousseau, *The complete dictionary*. Marc-Antoine Charpentier, *Règles des composition* (Paris, 1692). And Mattheson, *Grosse-Generalbassschule*. And Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Traite de l'harmonie reduites a ses principes naturels* (Paris, 1722).

Direct references to female improvisation can be found relating to professional women. In the realm of improvising poets, recent literary scholarship has been particularly good at collating these. For instance, Amaduzzi attempted to explain the talent of female improvising poet Corilla Olimpica in 1777:

I would have never have had an idea of extempore enthusiasm, if I had not witnessed the fine fire and heard the fine ardour of Corilla. Whether these virtues [be] common to all women poets, owing to the greater sensitivity of their nerves, the greater elasticity and delicacy of their constitution and to some bizarre, exceptional relationship between the uterus and the mind, I know not; but I do know well that she has always seemed to me superior in her flights, her ardour, her images and her ideas to all the male poets I have heard in competition with her, and alone.<sup>370</sup>

This leaves much to be desired but reveals one of the key professional improvisatory roles for women. While few today would argue that it is 'a bizarre and exceptional relationship between the uterus and the mind' that stimulates improvisation, this does reveal interesting narratives about the origins of creativity.<sup>371</sup> Writers struggle to find explanations for creativity, the (usually male) artist is often described as possessed or divinely inspired. It is perhaps an attempt to capture the fascinating relationship, balance and flexibility needed between rational thought and emotional intuition as well as creativity and technical virtuosity in improvisation; an over reliance on one or the other does not produce successful improvisations. The woman's power comes both from her mind and her uterus, from her intelligence and creativity. Or perhaps this is too generous a viewing as male descriptions refer to inventiveness and virtuosity without seeking to find physical explanation, undermining her talents and hours of practice and experience by putting the focus back on her body.<sup>372</sup>

Women are also recorded to have taken part in improvisation competitions such as between Teresa Bandettini and Fortunata Fantastici Sulgher in 1749.<sup>373</sup> Tigner's research on early modern Spanish theatre reveals that 'actresses often dressed, acted, and spoke as men, engaged in extemporaneous speech, [borrowed from the *commedia dell'arte* tradition from Italy] and female audiences responded loudly and insistently in the theatre'.<sup>374</sup> Kathleen McGill argues, 'whereas prior to the participation of women, male troupes generally performed simple farces, women performers,

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<sup>370</sup> Amaduzzi in a letter written 29th April 1777 to abbé Aurelio De' Giorgi Bertoin in Antonella Giordano, "'Donna il cui carne gli animi soggioga": Eighteenth-Century Italian Women Improvisers.' *Journal of Early Modern Studies* 7 (2018): 139.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

<sup>372</sup> Charles Burney, *A General History of Music from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period*, vol. 4 (London: Payne and Son, 1789).

<sup>373</sup> Giordano, 'Donna il cui carne gli animi soggioga,' 147.

<sup>374</sup> Amy L. Tigner, 'The Spanish Actress's Art: Improvisation, Transvestism, and Disruption in Tirso's *El vergonzoso en palacio*,' *Early Theatre* 15, no.1 (2012): 167-190.

according to the report of their contemporary audiences, demonstrated a facility for eloquent dialogue which surpassed that of the poets'.<sup>375</sup> 'The best-known instance of an improvised set-piece is Isabella Andreini's *La pazzia d'Isabella*, in which Isabella performs madness as a mixing of languages and the recovery from madness as linguistic eloquence. The scene also includes Isabella imitating the many commedia roles, particularly men's roles. This was performed in 1589 for the Florentine court for the marriage of Ferdinando I de' Medici and Christina of Lorraine.<sup>376</sup> Her improvisatory skill led to her being the star of her acting troupe, Maria de Medici in a letter referred to the group as 'the actress Isabella and her company'.<sup>377</sup> It was through *commedia dell'arte* that women were able to play larger roles and it is noteworthy that the development of the improvisatory tradition coincides with when women were introduced onto the stage, which McGill argues was also causative.<sup>378</sup> While publicising works was not widely available to women, making a living by improvising and demonstrating their talents orally was. Lead actresses were often paid more than their male counterparts, although they were usually required to be married to other performers in order to be able to perform.<sup>379</sup> Poetic and dramatic improvisation, however, was clearly an important female domain.

'Extempore poetic performances... were actually often accompanied by music' and actresses were expected to sing and dance; it is highly likely that these moments also included improvisation.<sup>380</sup> Indeed, dance scholars such as Hilton and Sparti argue that improvisation was also encouraged.<sup>381</sup> This could be small-scale such as ornamentation or larger-scale, as demonstrated by Pasch's 1707 description of a caprice as to 'dance extempore' which was 'the highest level of execution'.<sup>382</sup> Large-scale improvisation in dance, therefore, may have been most prominent in the professional settings but with dance playing a prominent role in courtly day-to-day life under Louis XIV or the organisation of dancing on village greens and in taverns, these would have provided opportunities for smaller-scale improvisation too.<sup>383</sup> Among Lully's innovations was the use of

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<sup>375</sup> Kathleen McGill in *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>377</sup> Kathleen McGill, 'Women and Performance: The Development of Improvisation by the Sixteenth-Century Commedia dell'Arte,' *Theatre Journal* 43, no.1 (1991): 59–69.

<sup>378</sup> Kathleen McGill in Tigner, 'The Spanish Actress's Art,' 168.

<sup>379</sup> Tigner, 'The Spanish Actress's Art,' 172.

<sup>380</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>381</sup> Wendy Hilton, *Dance of court and theatre* (New York: Dance Books, 1981), 291. And Barbara Sparti, *Dance, dancers and dance masters in Renaissance and Baroque Italy* (Bologna: Massimiliano Piretti Editore, 2015).

<sup>382</sup> Johann Pasch, *Beschreibung Wahrer Tanz-Kunst* (Michahelles, 1707), 84-85.

<sup>383</sup> Walter Salmen, 'Dances and dance music, c. 1300-1530' in *Music as concept and practice in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Reinhard Strohm and Bonnie J. Blackburn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 163.

professional female dancers on the stage in 1681 as well as professional female singers, providing opportunities for improvisation.<sup>384</sup>

Musical improvisation was another domain for professional, but also amateur, female improvisation. Professional musician Élisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre, for instance, 'had above all a talent for improvising and for playing fantasias extemporaneously', according to contemporary biographer Titon du Tillet (1732).<sup>385</sup> In addition, a letter from Dimurgo Lambardi (Florence) to Andrea Cioli, Florentine secretary of state (Rome) in 1662 reads as follows:

Their Highnesses heard with particular pleasure the praises that the Pope gave to Sig. Salvadori for his Judith, and he truly merited the honor that it pleased His Holiness to bestow on him. [~~Their Highnesses also say~~] I desire very much [~~Sig. Salvadori~~] that, if Your Illustrious Lordship should have occasion to be with the Pope and [should] find him unoccupied with serious business, you [~~would not refrain from~~] would take some favourable moment to disabuse His Holiness [of the idea] that the work was deliberately thought out, prepared, and performed in order to apply to the Barberini, because actually it was unexpected and improvised, and put together, one can say, in just a few hours.<sup>386</sup>

There would have been plenty of opportunity, therefore, for musical improvisation, at least in the form of ornamentation or cadenzas as was common musical practice for staged vocal works but even more so here, given the rushed nature of its performance.

In the preface to his opera *L'Euridice*, Caccini speaks of 'the new manner of passages and redoubled points, invented by me, which Vittoria Archilei, a singer of that excellence to which her resounding fame bears witness, has long employed in singing my works' (although a contemporary witness, Giustiniani, claimed it was Archilei herself who had 'almost originated the true method of singing for females').<sup>387</sup> Improvisation was also key for vocalists and nuns were often talented singers. For instance, a visitor to Cozzolani's religious order later wrote, 'the nuns of Santa Radegonda of Milan are gifted with such rare and exquisite talents in music that they are acknowledged to be the best singers of Italy. Among these sisters, Donna Chiara Margarita Cozzolani

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<sup>384</sup> Karin Pendle, ed. *Women & music: a history* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2001), 116.

<sup>385</sup> Stephen C. Grazzini, 'Reconstructing the improvised keyboard prelude of the French Baroque,' (PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 2014), 30. Citing: Évrard Titon du Tillet, *Le Parnasse François* (Paris: Coignard, 1732), 636.

<sup>386</sup> Draft of a letter (3 October 1626) from Dimurgo Lambardi (Florence) to Andrea Cioli, Florentine secretary of state (Rome) in Kelley Harness, *Echoes of Women's Voices: Music, Art, and Female Patronage in Early Modern Florence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 141.

<sup>387</sup> Pendle, *Women & music*, 102.

merits the highest praise, Chiara [“light, clear”] in name but even more so in merit, and Margarita for her unusual and excellent nobility of invention.’<sup>388</sup>

Some pictorial evidence of the bowed lira da braccio (which was usually used to accompany improvised songs) suggests that some of the professionals might have been women.<sup>389</sup> Lucia Caccini improvised her own accompaniment on the lute for the aria composed for her by her husband Giulio, as part of the *intermedi* that graced the celebration of the marriage of Ferdinand de’ Medici to Christina de Lorena in 1589.<sup>390</sup> Pendle notes that, the women in Duchess Margherita’s concerto performed in a particularly virtuosic style employing ‘numerous passaggi, trills, and cadenzas, which were probably improvised in rehearsal and then committed to memory’.<sup>391</sup> They were celebrated for their polyphonic sightreading, ability to play instruments too and their singing and dancing in court *balletti*.<sup>392</sup>

In France and England there were some women organists, who were often chosen for their improvisatory abilities, by the late eighteenth century, such as Elisabeth Lechanterie at the church of Saint-Jacques de la Boucherie in Paris.<sup>393</sup> There were a few female soloists in a church in Hamburg, as early as 1716.<sup>394</sup> Most of the concert life of eighteenth-century Vienna took place in salons, private homes, and musical instrument shops, surely places for displays of improvisation.<sup>395</sup> As a later example, Maddalena Lombardini, later Sirmen (1745–1785), was a ‘virtuoso violinist and the most famous composer trained in the Venetian conservatories’.<sup>396</sup> In London she performed her own violin concerti, was a member of the Italian opera orchestra, and even took leading roles as a singer in works by Pergolesi and Gluck.<sup>397</sup> Writer Burney mentions a violinist called Sarah Ottey who frequently played solos at concerts in London in 1721–22 and Faulkner’s journal of 1742 mentions a Miss Plunket playing solo violin pieces and concertos in a public concert.<sup>398</sup> Female improvisation, therefore, flourished during this period and aside from its role in art, there is yet much research to be done on improvisation in day-to-day life and its role in political manoeuvres and decisions.

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<sup>388</sup> Martin Buzacott, ‘Women of the baroque,’ *ABC*, August 31, 2020, accessed February 2, 2022, <https://www.abc.net.au/classic/read-and-watch/music-reads/female-composers-of-the-baroque/12612834>.

<sup>389</sup> Pendle, *Women & music*, 62.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>398</sup> The Strad, ‘Who were the early female violinists?’ *The Strad*, March 7, 2014, accessed February 2, 2022, <https://www.thestrad.com/who-were-the-early-female-violinists/6583.article>.



## 2.1.5 Between virtuosity and complexity: The late eighteenth century

### 2.1.5.1 Burney on improvisation

Charles Burney's writings provide a lot of insight into baroque improvisation. Throughout, he uses 'fancy' to describe imagination both in composers such as Montagnana, Sebastian Bach and William Friedeman Bach and performers including Paccierotti.<sup>399</sup> He describes Marchesi's voice as 'unbounded in fancy and embellishments', linking fancy with improvisation.<sup>400</sup> On Emanuel Bach he laments that his compositional style was too 'fantastical and recherché'.<sup>401</sup> He describes opera as providing 'fantastic illusions', referring to magic and 'everything marvellous' as 'it was necessary to exhaust all that human invention could furnish' to entertain a public 'whose taste for pleasure and the fine arts was indulged by every possible degree of refinement'.<sup>402</sup> To be full of fancy seems to have been a mark of respect as Burney's criticism of Mr. Wegerer's organ playing is rooted in his lack of 'remarkable ... fancy' while his description of the 'excellent' compositions by Hunber reveals them to have been 'frequently abounding with fancy and contrivance' and his praise of M. Schubart was that his playing was 'fancy rich'.<sup>403</sup> One particular report involves violinist Felice Giardini who was slapped in the face by an opera composer for adding more flourishes and embellishments as a ripieno player than was considered appropriate. Giardini himself describes this improvisatory process as giving 'loose to my fingers and fancy'.<sup>404</sup> Burney also reports his 'variations, extempore' which lasted for half an hour on a newly composed birthday minuet he found lying on a harpsichord.<sup>405</sup> He also claimed that 'no musician ever equalled' organist Marchand's 'extempore playing' but also praised Calviere's ability to improvise fugues on the organ on 'the most whimsical and difficult subjects'.<sup>406</sup> Organists were often required to improvise in auditions such as at St George's church in Hanover square which Handel oversaw (although not in person).<sup>407</sup> Singers Marchesi and Paccierotti were also praised for their improvised divisions and variations.<sup>408</sup> Singer

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<sup>399</sup> Burney, *A General History of Music*, 424, 531.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*, 531.

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*, 595.

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>403</sup> Charles Burney, *The present state of music in Germany, the Netherlands, and United Provinces. Or, the journal of a tour through those countries, undertaken to collect materials for a general history of music*, vo. 2 (London: T. Beckett, 1775), 277, 284, 108.

<sup>404</sup> Giardini in Burney, *A General History of Music*.

<sup>405</sup> Burney, *A general history*, 521-3.

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.*, 622, 623.

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.*, 264.

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*, 530, 511.

Gaetano Guadagni was described as improvising sung melodies without accompaniment.<sup>409</sup> For Burney, to improvise was, therefore, an asset and he often used language related to fantasy to describe this. The strong links between improvisation, imagination and virtuosity with fantasy and the fantasia genre can thus be clearly seen.

Burney also criticises improvisation on occasion, not for its existence but for its quality. This gives us insight into the values of eighteenth-century audiences. On Geminiani, Burney notes that 'his melody was even inferior, and there is frequently an irregularity in his measures and phraseology, and a confusion in the effect of the whole, from the too great business and dissimilitude of the several parts, which gives to each of his compositions the effect of a rhapsody or extemporaneous flight, rather than a polished and regular production'.<sup>410</sup> He also describes his third set of concertos from 1741 as 'so laboured, difficult, and fantastical, as never to be played, to my knowledge, in either public place or private concert'.<sup>411</sup> Burney also reports on Signor Hasse's 'extempore Toccata or Capriccio', remarking that 'his modulation [was] general, simple, his melody natural, his accompaniments free from confusion; and, leaving to so and pedants all that frights, astonishes, and perplexes, he lets no other arts be discoverable in his compositions, than those of pleasing the ear, and of satisfying the understanding'.<sup>412</sup> He reported Wagenseil's playing of capriccios on the harpsichord to be full of 'sufficient fire and fancy' but not very surprising.<sup>413</sup> Burney also mentions a child who could improvise verses at just five years old. Interestingly, he also reports that this was so difficult for him that a physician advised against the activity for fear 'it would destroy him'.<sup>414</sup> Improvisation was therefore viewed as challenging, and it was essential to do so in "good taste", despite the impossibility of finding universal definitions of this. It appears that there was a fine line between an improvisation that was virtuosic and impressive and one which was too complicated. This is perhaps unsurprising given that audiences could only hear an improvisation once and therefore had to understand and enjoy it on the first hearing.

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<sup>409</sup> Ibid., 496.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid., 645.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid., 642.

<sup>412</sup> Burney, *The present state of music in Germany*, 318.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid., 329.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid., 229.

### 2.1.5.2 'Note-murderers'<sup>415</sup>, 'whirligigs'<sup>416</sup> and 'harmoniousness'<sup>417</sup>

Young posits that the courts at Berlin, Mannheim, Dresden, Paris, Esterháza and Vienna were the leaders in European music-making in the late eighteenth century.<sup>418</sup> Public concerts, such as we experience today, were a rarity before the early nineteenth century.<sup>419</sup> Music functioned instead as impetus or background for another activity, for example dancing, socialising or eating.<sup>420</sup> As court posts were often hereditary, musicians passed knowledge down through experience and family wisdom, including improvisation skills.<sup>421</sup> Schubart proved his admiration for C.P.E. Bach by praising his fantasies for their creativity and claiming that no others were 'so rich in invention... inexhaustible in new modulations, so full of harmoniousness'.<sup>422</sup> Dülön, a student of C.P.E. Bach and respected improviser, remembered that in an audition to be C.P.E. Bach's student, he had to improvise on his flute.<sup>423</sup> He continued to improvise throughout his career including an unaccompanied flute fantasia lasting more than a quarter of an hour during a concert in 1791 in Vienna as well as variations on a theme from the audience.<sup>424</sup> While not always positively received, such as by Ditters von Dittersdorf who complained that they were 'endless' and full of 'whirligigs', a Count at the same concert seemed very taken with his performance, marvelling that a solo flute player could create the 'same effect as Mozart'.<sup>425</sup>

During the eighteenth century, it was common practice to preface a solo instrumental work with an improvised prelude.<sup>426</sup> Gooley argues that Mozart's public improvisations were successful because they were performed to a select audience who had a great deal of music knowledge needed to understand improvisation. As audiences widened in the following centuries this knowledge lapsed

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<sup>415</sup> Leopold Mozart quoted in Imogene Horsley, 'Improvisation,' in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* vol. 9, ed. George Grove and Stanley Sadie (London: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1980), 43.

<sup>416</sup> Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf, *Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf: Lebensbeschreibung seinem Sohne in die Feder diktiert* Vol. 22 (Regensburg: G. Bosse, 1940), 60-61.

<sup>417</sup> Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart, ed. *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst: hrsg. von Ludwig Schubart* Vol. 73 (Degen, 1806), 178-9.

<sup>418</sup> Robin Moore, 'The Decline of Improvisation in Western Art Music: An Interpretation of Change,' *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 23, no. 1 (June 1992): 67.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>422</sup> Schubart, ed. *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst*, 178-9.

<sup>423</sup> Leta E. Miller, 'C.P.E. Bach and Friedrich Ludwig Dülön: Composition and Improvisation in Late 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Germany,' *Early Music* 23, no. 1 (February 1995): 70-1.

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.*, 73. And Mary Sue Morrow, *Concert life in Haydn's Vienna: Aspects of a Developing Musical and Social Institution* (Pendragon Press, 1989), 275-6.

<sup>425</sup> Dittersdorf, *Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf*, 60-61.

<sup>426</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

and so too the environment for improvisation.<sup>427</sup> Brown argues that ornamentation was added to Mozart's later quartets.<sup>428</sup> Leopold Mozart in his *Violinschule* laments the elaborate ornamentation of Adagio cantables, calling such musicians 'note-murderers'.<sup>429</sup> According to Horsley, it was only in the late 1780s that scores began to contain complete written-in ornamentation such as in the works of Domenico Corri.<sup>430</sup> Handel and Scarlatti's improvisation challenges in Rome (1708), as well as Mozart and Clementi's in Vienna (1781) are well-known examples.<sup>431</sup> There were many ornamentation treatises as well as newspaper reports in the late eighteenth century.<sup>432</sup> Again, concern was expressed for those who went over the top but it was still valued highly as a skill.

### 2.1.6 Genius or charlatan? The nineteenth century

Moving into the nineteenth century, Spohr compared 'correct' playing as recreating the score while to achieve 'fine' playing, a performer needed to add ornamentation.<sup>433</sup> Brown even suggests that opera composers of Verdi's generation expected improvised cadenzas.<sup>434</sup> As Brown has noted, objections to ornamentation until the mid-nineteenth century were disagreements over taste rather than the addition itself.<sup>435</sup> Chorley confirms this by suffixing his criticism of certain habits of ornamentation by saying that they were 'facts which by no means imply that to apply and employ it at all are cardinal sins'.<sup>436</sup> In the nineteenth century, studies of prelude on the violin have also emerged.<sup>437</sup> Gooley's extensive work on violin improvisation in the nineteenth century reveals that apart from Pierre Baillot's treatise on prelude, the violin treatises of the time do not mention

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<sup>427</sup> Dana Gooley, 'Saving Improvisation,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Improvisation Studies vol. 2*, ed. George Lewis and Piekut Benjamin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>428</sup> Clive Brown, 'Embellishment, Ornamentation, and Improvisation,' in *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900*, ed. Clive Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 425.

<sup>429</sup> Leopold Mozart quoted in Horsley, 'Improvisation,' 43.

<sup>430</sup> Horsley, 'Improvisation,' 49.

<sup>431</sup> Mauro Maldonato, 'Improvisation: The Astonishing Bridge to Our Inner Music,' *World Futures* (2017): 4.

<sup>432</sup> For just some examples see: Anselm Bayly, *Practical Treatise on Singing and Playing with Just Expression and Real Elegance* (J. Ridley, 1771). And Domenico Corri. *Domenico Corri's Treatises on Singing: Domenico Corri's A select collection of the most admired songs, duetts, &c., volumes 1-3*. (London: Taylor & Francis, 1993). And Burney, *A General History of Music*. And Burney, *The present state of music in Germany*. And J.J.F. Dotzauer, *Méthode de violoncelle* (Mainz: Schott, c.1825). And *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (e.g. 1798-9 edition; some even provide transcriptions of ornamentation from performances).

<sup>433</sup> Louis Spohr, *Violinschule* (Vienna, 1832), 181.

<sup>434</sup> Brown, 'Embellishment,' 420.

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.*, 421, 423.

<sup>436</sup> Henry Fothergill Chorley, *Modern German music: recollections and criticisms. Vol. 2* (London: Smith, Elder, 1854), ii. 376-7.

<sup>437</sup> Dana Gooley, *Fantasies of improvisation: Free playing in nineteenth-century music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 7.

improvisation.<sup>438</sup> Even at this later stage, Gooley considers the word ‘fantasie’ (as well as ‘präludieren, extemporieren [and] auf dem Stegreif spielen’) to be semantic relatives, continuing the close relationship of improvisation to fantasy.<sup>439</sup> In fact, the term improvisation was not widely used until the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>440</sup> The term began to be applied with less specificity, often employed as praise for performances of notated music such as for violinist Goby Eberhardt, although his memoirs also reference actual improvisations.<sup>441</sup> The illusion of improvisation grew to be the marker of a great performance, largely due to Joachim.<sup>442</sup>

Grétry’s 1802 treatise on keyboard improvisation claims to be able to produce results even in a teenager in just three concentrated months.<sup>443</sup> This implies a demand and therefore that students wanted to learn improvisation and also that it was considered to be accessible, even to the young and relatively technically inexperienced. The reports that remain, however, are of professionals. Eberhardt, for instance, often improvised freely with pianist Fritz Steinhardt but this usually comprised ‘all manner of themes’ over a piano accompaniment.<sup>444</sup> Violinist Emile Sauret improvised similarly but also extemporised preludes and freer pieces.<sup>445</sup> These were, however, episodes of private musicking and Gooley has not found any evidence to suggest they improvised in public.<sup>446</sup> He argues there may have been more improvisation in France as De Bériot’s treatise gives examples of scalar basses which can be improvised over and Baillot’s treatise gives general rules on improvising.<sup>447</sup> Ernst was also famous for having improvised further variations to his composed Carnival variations, as reported in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (1845). Other sources seem to contradict this, however, suggesting instead that he simply improvised the order in which he played a selection of pre-composed variations. This report from a ‘close personal companion of Ernst’ might seem to be the more reliable option. It nevertheless shows the value placed on

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<sup>438</sup> Dana Gooley, ‘Violin Improvisation in the Early Nineteenth Century: Between Practice and Illusion,’ in *Exploring Virtuosity. Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst, Nineteenth-Century Musical Practices and Beyond*, ed. Christine Hoppe, Melanie von Goldbeck, Maiko Kawabata (New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 2018), 117-130.

<sup>439</sup> Ibid.

<sup>440</sup> Ibid.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid.

<sup>443</sup> A.E.M Grétry 1802 treatise on keyboard improvisation quoted in Gooley, ‘Saving improvisation’.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid. And see Goby Eberhardt, *Erinnerungen an bedeutende Männer unserer Epoche* (Lübeck: Quitzow, 1926), 35.

<sup>445</sup> Eberhardt, *Erinnerungen*, 67.

<sup>446</sup> Dana Gooley, ‘Violin Improvisation in the Early Nineteenth Century: Between Practice and Illusion,’ in *Exploring Virtuosity. Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst, Nineteenth-Century Musical Practices and Beyond*, ed. Christine Hoppe, Melanie von Goldbeck, Maiko Kawabata (New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 2018), 110.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid., 111.

improvisation as the audience reacted to these additional variations which it would seem were at least perceived to have been improvised with 'even greater applause'.<sup>448</sup>

Other reports of Ernst's improvisation include improvised variations on the theme from the *Rákócsy March* in 1839, although Gooley argues that Schumann largely built Ernst's improvisatory reputation, writing that improvisation was the 'most alluring of virtuoso gifts'.<sup>449</sup> Schumann himself improvised on Paganini caprices.<sup>450</sup> Paganini was famed for improvising variations, occasionally even more than thirty at once.<sup>451</sup> Franz Clement is said to have improvised for over half an hour on unaccompanied violin but also piano.<sup>452</sup> Another violinist Alexandre Boucher improvised capriccios as well as the customary set of variations and a cadenza using themes from the opera *Der Freischütz*.<sup>453</sup> Again, these were not always well-received, sometimes being described as 'trickery' or 'charlatanism'.<sup>454</sup> Bull's improvised embellishments, preludes, obligato lines to arias and variations were generally better received by the critics.<sup>455</sup> Perhaps a rather romantic self-description though, Bull wrote of an occasion when, 'several hundred persons, attracted by the sound of my instrument to this lonely place (inhabited by owls and robbers) aroused my musical fancy with wild applause [...]. I did not let myself be distracted and improvised until the golden rays of morning'.<sup>456</sup> Gooley notes, however, that these violinist improvisers were 'all perceived as eccentric or charlatans'; this was not the norm.<sup>457</sup> In the second half of the nineteenth century, pianists Ferdinan Hiller and Ignaz Moscheles carried on the improvisatory tradition despite its growing rarity.<sup>458</sup> Beethoven's improvisations were actually considered superior to his compositions by many of his contemporaries.<sup>459</sup> It seems that improvisation became a more private but potentially lengthy affair, gradually disappearing from the public eye.

Later masters of improvisation include 'Brahms, Paganini, Chopin, Clara and Robert Schumann, Mendelssohn, Hummel, Cramer, Ries, Spohr, Joachim, and Schubert' and published guides to improvisation can even be found in the nineteenth century such as by Czerny and

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<sup>448</sup> Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung 1845 in Ibid.

<sup>449</sup> Gooley, 'Violin improvisation,' 113, 117.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid.

<sup>456</sup> Bull quoted in Ibid.

<sup>457</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>458</sup> Dana Gooley, 'Saving Improvisation: Hummel and the Free Fantasia in the Early Nineteenth Century,' in *Oxford Handbooks Online*, ed. Alexander Rehding (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>459</sup> Gooley, 'Saving improvisation'.

Kalkbrenner.<sup>460</sup> Liszt's improvisation at the piano is well-known. He eventually reduced his improvisation to focus on performing composed works. He was taught improvisation by Czerny and argued that improvising 'establishes a more direct rapport between the public and the artist... it becomes a communal work'.<sup>461</sup> Borodin also described hearing him start with a notated piece but gradually morph it into an improvisation.<sup>462</sup> Mendelssohn on the other hand wrote that he was always dissatisfied with his improvisations and therefore thought it was 'nonsense to improvise in public'.<sup>463</sup> Chopin's improvisations are still renowned today but he switched from public to private in around 1831 to ensure he had an appreciative audience.<sup>464</sup> Barbetti posits that it was 'the increasing idealisation' of improvisation that 'no performer could hope to reach' that saw the decline in concert improvisation and its move to private venues.<sup>465</sup> It certainly became more of a romanticised concept than practical reality and with commercial concerts ruling repertoire choices, improvisation fell out of fashion. As Moore notes, the social status attributed to classical music appreciation and tendency to educate the public about a select canon has meant that concert music 'could meet the demands of the concert goers without being improvised'.<sup>466</sup>

From the late nineteenth century onwards, improvisation declined in classical music performance, only picking up again with the advent of jazz and in free classical compositions calling for some improvisation such as by Stockhausen. Improvisation also still plays a central role in certain Indian, Asian and African traditions.<sup>467</sup> The transition from prioritising entertainment value to considering accessibility to be an indicator of inferiority might also have played a role.<sup>468</sup> This viewpoint has gradually resulted in a divorce between composition and public support in classical

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<sup>460</sup> Moore, 'The Decline of Improvisation in Western Art Music,' 62-3. See Carl Czerny, *Systematische Anleitung zum Fantasieren auf dem Piano-forte: 200tes Werk* (Diabelli, 1829). And Friedrich Kalkbrenner, *Traité d'harmonie du pianiste: principes rationnels de la modulation pour apprendre à preluder et à improviser* (Paris, 1849). And Johann Nepomuk Hummel, *Méthode complète théorique et pratique pour le piano-forte* (Geneva: Minkoff, 1981 [1838]).

<sup>461</sup> Gooley, 'Saving Improvisation'. And Remy Stricker ed. *Franz Liszt: Artiste et société* (Paris: Flammarion, 1995), 125–126.

<sup>462</sup> Letter from Alexander Borodin to César Cui of 1877 quoted in *Ibid.*, 359.

<sup>463</sup> Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *Briefe aus den Jahren 1830 bis 1847*, ed. Paul Mendelssohn Bartholdy and Carl Mendelssohn Bartholdy (Leipzig: Hermann Mendelssohn, 1889), 214–215. Letter dated October 18, 1831.

<sup>464</sup> Gooley, 'Saving improvisation'.

<sup>465</sup> Megan Barbetti, 'Reviving the Ghost: A Method for Baroque Improvisation Modelled through Telemann's Twelve Fantasias for Flute without Bass (1727-1728),' (masters dissertation, The University of Western Australia, 2020), 1.

<sup>466</sup> Moore, 'The decline of improvisation,' 74-75.

<sup>467</sup> Alpers, 'On Musical Improvisation,' 17.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

music.<sup>469</sup> Ferro argues that ‘lines between genres are more blurred than in the past’; perhaps it is not too much of a stretch, therefore, to ask more classical musicians to improvise?<sup>470</sup>

## 2.2 Classical improvisation today

### 2.2.1 Current pedagogy

Despite the primacy of the improvisatory tradition in many of the centuries from which the western classical canon is now drawn, the training and experience of modern-day classical musicians in many cases does not include any improvisation. It is rooted instead in replicative performance of canon classics.<sup>471</sup> This specialisation does give historically-informed improvisers an advantage, however, as they are already almost exclusively familiar with historical styles on their instruments and as ‘music must be a familiar medium of expression if it is to be fully appreciated’, this familiarity for audiences is also useful.<sup>472</sup> Moore describes the current situation well as bringing ‘satisfaction’ through the endless repetition of the canon but argues that allowing for more creativity might step this up.<sup>473</sup> Fidom suggests that musicians are less anxious about improvising in a similar manner as postmodernism has ‘taught him that all he can devise may have been thought up before elsewhere’.<sup>474</sup> Although, as Ray Chen remarked, ‘the thing you should know about classical musicians is that we have good technique but we cannot improvise’ which reflects the lack of improvisation in standard classical practice, there are classical musicians who are experimenting with this.<sup>475</sup>

William Dongois offered a course in France in 2002 on improvising ornaments and improvises in concert himself in a free style and Erif teaches improvisation at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis.<sup>476</sup> Dongois’ course began by imitation and then encouraging creativity, starting with just an ascending second and gradually increasing the number of notes, lengths and rhythms players could choose from to ornament.<sup>477</sup> Dongois remarked on the difficulty of memorising all the many diminutions from the treatises, recommending instead that players simply memorise a few basic

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<sup>469</sup> Ibid., 76, 78.

<sup>470</sup> Alberto Ferro, ‘“Composed improvisations” for piano solo: A closer look into different contemporary improvisational approaches,’ (masters dissertation, Washington State University, 2015), iv.

<sup>471</sup> Thurston Dart, *The Interpretation of Music* (London: Hutchinson House, 1955), 163.

<sup>472</sup> Moore, ‘The decline of improvisation,’ 81.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid., 364.

<sup>475</sup> Ray Chen, ‘Albert Chang & Ray Chen violin jam session (feat. Lily) [improvising and viewer’s song request],’ YouTube video, posted by ‘Nozull,’ March 1, 2019, accessed August 10, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rPsxL7Da4k4>.

<sup>476</sup> Stighäll, *A study in early improvisation*, 7, 10, 64.

<sup>477</sup> Ibid., 11.



ones and then add their own embellishments.<sup>478</sup> Stighäll argues that this kind of course should be compulsory for ensemble training and that it can be used for all levels.<sup>479</sup> Interestingly, Dongois remarks that the patterns are relatively universal for western music and therefore similar approaches could be taken with other genres.<sup>480</sup>

The University of Chicago also provided a workshop in 2008 on historically inspired musical improvisation.<sup>481</sup> Davide Monti has set up the Helicon method which seeks to teach solo and group renaissance and baroque improvisation through multidisciplinary learning including fencing, dressage, *commedia dell'arte*, dance and rhetoric in short summer schools and weekend courses.<sup>482</sup> Having participated in one of these summer schools I can confidently assert the success of this method. I attended without any prior experience but the combination of arts gave me inspiration, confidence and a deeper historical knowledge while straightaway removing the fear of getting away from the page because of my unfamiliarity with everything. Musicians participate in this from around the world and the community of alumni is happily growing. While not yet common, improvising courses are therefore beginning to appear in conservatoire curriculums and hopefully the increasing number of period performers who improvise in concerts will raise interest and therefore demand for this to increase still further.

### 2.2.2 Improvisation in performance practice

Organ playing, for example, has kept improvisation at the forefront of practice but was also especially fruitful in the baroque period. Weckmeister in 1702 urged organists to improvise fugues to demonstrate their abilities.<sup>483</sup> J.S. Bach was a famous organ improviser who would often take a theme and improvise several different pieces using it.<sup>484</sup> Anton Bruckner was a later famous organ improviser who often took the Austrian national anthem and Handel's Hallelujah chorus as inspiration.<sup>485</sup> Organists have continued to improvise in these ways and on liturgical music, in offertories in France and in England at communion, in hymns and to bring the choir in, for whom the

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<sup>478</sup> William Dongois quoted in *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>479</sup> Stighäll, *A study in early improvisation*, 61, 62.

<sup>480</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>481</sup> Roger Moseley, 'Mozart's Harlequinade: Musical Improvisation alla Commedia Dell 'arte,' *Common Knowledge* 17, no. 2 (2011): 338.

<sup>482</sup> Davide Monti, 'Manifesto,' *Helicon*, January 31, 2019, accessed 9 February, 2021, <https://helicon.it/en/>.

<sup>483</sup> Andreas Weckmeister, *Harmonologia Musica* (1702). Quoted in Hans Fidom, 'Improvisation: the Emancipation of an Ancient Musical Skill,' *The Haarlem Essays / Celebrating Fifty International Organ Festivals* 14 (2014): 56.

<sup>484</sup> Fidom, 'Improvisation,' 357.

<sup>485</sup> *Ibid.*, 358.

practice of improvisation is perhaps the longest standing, if less frequent than previously. The first international organ improvisation competition was held in Haarlem in 1951.<sup>486</sup> Recent organ improvisers include William Porter, Hans Davidsson, Douglas Lowry, Naji Hakim, Pierre Cochereau, David Briggs, John Whiteley and Rudolf Lutz, to name a few.<sup>487</sup> The French school, particularly, has kept an active improvisation scene offering improvisation prizes. Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands present historically based improvisations such as fugues and counterpoint.

Beyond the organ, Matthias Maute, an improvising recorder player, improvises whole movements and cadenzas. Maute himself has reflected on becoming nervous when improvising because it is so uncommon but nevertheless encourages performers to improvise.<sup>488</sup> Baroque violinist Andrew Manze is famous for his creative approach to the repertoire.<sup>489</sup> While as Stewart notes, for the previous generation of HIP musicians, improvisation may have been more difficult while still adjusting to the new instruments, this is no longer the case.<sup>490</sup> Manze suggests that perhaps the rules for improvisation were materialised because of a lack of order or perceived extreme liberality amongst performers.<sup>491</sup> Manze reported that he feels a historical duty to play differently in each performance.<sup>492</sup> Some critics have felt dissatisfied with his technical performance, expressing regret that he does not always get ‘necessarily the most beautiful sound out of the violin’.<sup>493</sup>

Reviewing Geoffrey Lancaster’s recording of Mozart’s keyboard sonatas KV330–332, during which he adds his own preludes, cadenzas and variations to the extent that ‘you fail utterly to recognise the music’, Ford argues that while ‘history informs his approach’, ‘occasionally... he goes too far’.<sup>494</sup> He does concede that such performances force listeners to think more deeply about the

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<sup>486</sup> Ibid., 260.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid., 361. For organ improvisers see: Glenn Osborne, ‘Organ Improvisers,’ *Organ Improvisation*, 2022, accessed February 9, 2022, <http://www.organimprovisation.com/organists/>.

<sup>488</sup> Matthias Maute in Haynes, *The end of early music*, 209.

<sup>489</sup> For example, see Manze’s Harmonia Mundi recording of Vivaldi’s concerto ‘La tempesta di Mare’: Andrew Manze, ‘Violin Concerto in Eb Major, RV 253 – “La Tempesta di Mare”: I. Presto,’ YouTube video, posted by “Andrew Manze- Topic,” March 29, 2020, accessed August 10, 2021, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6\\_A1eCwX-HQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_A1eCwX-HQ).

<sup>490</sup> Andrew Stewart, ‘Classical Music: Fiddling with the Rules. Andrew Stewart talks to Andrew Manze, a violinist putting the jazz back into baroque music,’ *Independent*, April 30, 1998, accessed August 8, 2021, <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/classical-music-fiddling-with-the-rules-1162167.html>.

<sup>491</sup> Ibid.

<sup>492</sup> Melissa Block and Fred Child, ‘Violinist mixes Improv Into Baroque Sonata,’ *All things considered NPR news*. December 4, 2003, accessed August 9, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1532767&t=1612869339461>.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid.

<sup>494</sup> Andrew Ford, ‘Wild Conjecture,’ Review of *Mozart Keyboard Sonatas KV330-332*, by Geoffrey Lancaster (CD). *Inside Story*, December 11, 2017, accessed August 9, 2021, <https://insidestory.org.au/wild-conjecture/>.

music, especially when the music is already so familiar to modern ears in a certain style.<sup>495</sup> This shows the real difficulty improvising classical musicians face in the current market as they are judged with the criteria of a performance of a notated work as well as facing ingrained concepts of the work as sacred and competing with recordings which present a technically flawless performance in established performance traditions.

Levin, who often improvises on piano in concert, argues that it is the standardisation and interchangeable nature of classical performances which make live concerts less attractive to audiences, insisting that as improvisation cannot be reproduced, it provides the perfect solution to increase audience numbers.<sup>496</sup> Pianist Montero often takes a theme from a work she has performed or requests one from the audience to improvise on and similarly advocates a widening of ‘the parameters of the concert’.<sup>497</sup> Dolan is another pianist who improvises regularly in the style of Mozart but has also attempted baroque forms.<sup>498</sup> I am personally involved in “High Wire Baroque”, an improvising baroque orchestra recently set up by a group of England-based baroque musicians wanting to experiment with improvisation, led by David Gordon. To date, we improvise as an ensemble on ground basses, over basslines, faburden and diminutions as well as the customary ornamentation of composed works and have recently showcased the results of this in London and at the 2022 Swaledale Festival.

Moseley sought to improvise a ‘musico-dramatic sketch’ based on the remaining sources for a *commedia dell’arte* pantomime for the 1783 Viennese Carnival season.<sup>499</sup> Taking a practice-based research approach, he argues that such ‘embodied experiences’ are important to find new ways of interpreting textual evidence, quoting Karlheinz Stierle who remarked that ‘fiction makes it possible actually to grasp the various modes of perceiving historical experience’.<sup>500</sup> He states that improvising is essentially concerned with musical communication and that learning improvisation can vastly

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<sup>495</sup> Ibid.

<sup>496</sup> Levin in Brian Barton, ‘Improvisation: Its Importance to the 21st Century Musician,’ *Academia EDU*, 2012, accessed August 10, 2021, 45, [https://www.academia.edu/7370528/Improvisation\\_Its\\_Importance\\_to\\_the\\_20th\\_Century\\_Musician?email\\_work\\_card=title](https://www.academia.edu/7370528/Improvisation_Its_Importance_to_the_20th_Century_Musician?email_work_card=title). And Robert Levin, ‘Improvising Mozart,’ *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 55, no. 2 (2002): 87-90.

<sup>497</sup> Barton, ‘Improvisation,’ 11. and see Gabriela Montero, ‘Bach Beyond: Beyond Bach,’ YouTube video, posted by “Carola Legde,” May 18, 2011, accessed August 10, 2021, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RA2350BskXw&list=PL52pls-NImG7iqqj\\_FPmrMh8WqSaRLlIM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RA2350BskXw&list=PL52pls-NImG7iqqj_FPmrMh8WqSaRLlIM). And Montero in Barton, ‘Improvisation,’ 65.

<sup>498</sup> David Dolan, ‘The Classical Style,’ *Classical Piano*, November/ December, 1996, 13-14. And David Dolan, ‘Teaching Classical Improvisation,’ *David Dolan Piano Classical Improvisation*, accessed September 15, 2020, <http://www.david-dolan.com/teaching-classical-improvisation/>.

<sup>499</sup> Moseley, ‘Mozart’s Harlequinade,’ 335.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid., 335-6. And Karlheinz Stierle quoted in Hans Robert Jauss ed., *Question and Answer: Forms of Dialogic Understanding*, trans. Michael Hays (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 26.

improve the latter.<sup>501</sup> I find his statement that ‘our best hopes of hearing the widest possible range of what music of the past has to tell us involves becoming as fluent as possible in its languages, dialects, and accents, not merely striving to recite its best-known extracts with what strikes our twenty-first century ears as perfect diction’ particularly compelling.<sup>502</sup> For practice, the musicians studied Gjerdingen’s eleven schemata which are based on voice leading.<sup>503</sup> They used opera buffa traits and the remaining first violinist part.<sup>504</sup> Interestingly, he notes how knowing they were getting it “wrong” meant they were freed from the preoccupation with getting it “right”.<sup>505</sup> On this experience, he notes that attempting similar projects with Mozart’s compositions could bring performers and audiences a lot of pleasure, they just need the courage to give it a go which I see as applying equally if not even more so to baroque music.<sup>506</sup>

### 2.2.2.1 Collaborations and fusions

Stighäll compares classical improvisation to folk music, arguing that there are also three stages of improvisation in folk music: ornamentation, minor deviations from notation and the larger-scale improvisation.<sup>507</sup> Indeed, fusions are becoming more common. For example, there has been a recent trend for jazz musicians to use popular classical pieces as standards. Django Reinhardt, Eddie South and Stéphane Grappelli produced a famous version of Bach’s double violin concerto, while the Steve Kuhn trio have tackled pieces such as Tchaikovsky’s *Swan Lake* and Chopin’s nocturnes.<sup>508</sup> Also, some early music ensembles have collaborated with jazz musicians to create hybrid tracks featuring improvisation.<sup>509</sup> This fusion has extended to multidisciplinary presentations too, including William

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<sup>501</sup> Ibid., 339.

<sup>502</sup> Ibid.

<sup>503</sup> Robert Gjerdingen, *Music in the galant style* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2007). And Moseley, ‘Mozart’s Harlequinade,’ 342.

<sup>504</sup> Moseley, ‘Mozart’s Harlequinade,’ 345.

<sup>505</sup> Ibid., 346.

<sup>506</sup> Ibid., 347.

<sup>507</sup> Stighäll, *A study in early improvisation*, 16, 19.

<sup>508</sup> Grappelli, Stéphane, ‘Reinhardt, Grappelli, Eddie South - Bach Double - Longer Version,’ YouTube video, posted by “2ndviolinist,” August 31, 2010, accessed August 9, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRjTeQ-sIM>. And Steve Kuhn, ‘Sreve [sic.] Kuhn/ Pavane For A Dead Princess (full album),’ YouTube video, posted by ‘Jin Choi,’ March 25, 2021, accessed August 9, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z7V2NVRtqis&t=2249s>.

<sup>509</sup> For examples, see collaborations by Perfect Houseplants and the Orlando Consort: Orlando Consort, ‘Extempore,’ YouTube playlist, posted by ‘Orlando Consort – Topic,’ November 25, 2020, accessed August 9, 2021, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3DwK7gaNN0&list=OLAK5uy\\_mG\\_SxL2AvCsezT0CV1QHmaoZoxA7yStxE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3DwK7gaNN0&list=OLAK5uy_mG_SxL2AvCsezT0CV1QHmaoZoxA7yStxE)

Goldstein's performances of improvised film music and joint improvisations with ballet dancers.<sup>510</sup>

While many composers use improvisation in the initial stages of creation, Eric Barnhill produces sheet music of piano suites which are based on his improvisations.<sup>511</sup>

From its early origins in spontaneous human utterance to its prominence in musical traditions of the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries and finding its feet again in modern jazz, improvisation evolved into an integral part of musicking. We are witnessing a revival of classical improvisation as part of the HIP movement but it is still a rarity because of the lack of tuition and exposure, both of which this thesis seeks to begin to address and calls for more research and performance in this and related areas. Honing in on the fantasia, the following chapter deals with the genre's history and spotlights on the experience of and rules set out for baroque improvised fantasias.

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<sup>510</sup> William Goldstein, 'William Goldstein,' YouTube channel, accessed August 10, 2021, [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVtHS-KennLO41y24znwD\\_A](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVtHS-KennLO41y24znwD_A).

<sup>511</sup> Barnhill in Barton, 'Improvisation,' 48.

## Chapter 3: The fantasia: ‘The most principall and chiefest kind of musicke’<sup>512</sup>

### 3.1 A brief history of the fantasia

Having now understood the benefits, status and place of improvisation in historical and current classical performance, we can turn to the specificities of the improvised fantasia. While improvisation’s prominence in classical music and presence in writing has changed over time, the practice certainly gave rise to a number of popular, successful and enduring genres and forms, both of composed and improvised music. One such example is the fantasia. In order to improvise a fantasia successfully, it is first important to be aware of its context, origins and development. Therefore, this chapter, in three parts, first examines the fantasia’s history before focusing on sets of rules written by Mattheson and Kollmann on how to successfully create a fantasia and finally speculates as to the environment and experience of baroque fantasias in performance. A select number of case studies are presented here to highlight the key changes and features.

#### 3.1.1 Beginnings: From classical Greece to the late sixteenth century

As established in the previous chapter, the fantasia developed from a long-standing tradition of improvisation. However, as Richards has remarked, scholarship has tended to ‘shy away from “informal” music’ such as improvised fantasias but that is happily changing.<sup>513</sup> There have been many more guides to prelude than fantasias though.<sup>514</sup> Mather and Lasocki have collected these to create *The Art of Preluding 1700–1830*.<sup>515</sup> That said, there has been a substantial amount of secondary literature on the viol consort fantasias of the sixteenth century.<sup>516</sup> Arnold records the first

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<sup>512</sup> Thomas Morley, *A plaine and easie introduction to practiccill Musicke* (London, 1597), 206.

<sup>513</sup> Annette Richards, *The free fantasia and the musical picturesque* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 17.

<sup>514</sup> Megan Barbetti, ‘Reviving the Ghost: A Method for Baroque Improvisation Modelled through Telemann’s Twelve Fantasias for Flute without Bass (1727-1728),’ (masters dissertation, The University of Western Australia, 2020), 12.

<sup>515</sup> Betty Bang Mather and David Lasocki, *The Art of Preluding 1700-1830* (New York: McGinnis and Marx Music Publishers, 1984). Citing: Jean-Pierre Freillon-Poncein, *La véritable manière d’apprendre à jouer en perfection du haut-bois, de la flûte et du flageolet* (Paris: Chez Jacques Collombat, 1700); Michel Corrette, *Méthode raisonnée pour apprendre aisément à jouer de la Flûtte Traversière* (Paris: L’auteur, 1740); Toussaint Bordet, *Méthode raisonnée pour apprendre la musique* (Paris: L’auteur, Bayle, 1755).

<sup>516</sup> Christopher D.S. Field, E. Eugene Helm and William Drabkin, ‘Fantasia,’ *Grove Music Online*, Jan 20, 2001, accessed Jan 26, 2021, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000040048>.

surviving written-out fantasy as Mr. Newman's "fansie" from the early sixteenth century.<sup>517</sup> Already by 1535, the fantasia was considered a free genre, one 'solely from the fantasy and skill of the author who created it'.<sup>518</sup> The term itself, from the Greek "phantasia" is frequently used alongside imagination; according to Aristotle, it was associated with dreams, for Plato it was 'a blend of perception and judgement', and Epicureans and the Stoics defined it as 'cognitive impression'.<sup>519</sup> In later uses, Longinus, for instance, in *On the Sublime* employs it to describe a writer's potential to recreate images in the receiver's imagination.<sup>520</sup> Links with the imagination continue into the references by Neoplatonists.<sup>521</sup>

Renowned lute and vihuela improvisers such as Luis de Milán and Francesco Canova da Milano used fantasia as a title for their works, stressing that this signified a 'play of imaginative invention'.<sup>522</sup> Bermudo and Santa María also describe it as a playing style — 'taner fantasia'.<sup>523</sup> Santa María's treatise of 1565 instructs the reader on how to play a fantasia, offering examples for three or four voices. The keyboard is suggested as an appropriate instrument but any instrument capable of playing all voices at once is deemed acceptable.<sup>524</sup> Christopher argues that in Germany and the Netherlands, it was considered similar to a prelude whereas in Spain they were viewed as good technical exercises and in England as opportunities for experimentation and discovery of 'what may be done upon a point', showing 'diversitie'.<sup>525</sup> A large body of fantasias in the early to mid-sixteenth century were composed for the vihuela de mano and these took centre stage in the vihuela's repertory.<sup>526</sup>

Griffiths proposes that their roots lie in improvisation, using the polythematic nature and stock musical features of Milán's forty-four fantasias as an example of this.<sup>527</sup> He traces their development throughout the sixteenth century (see compositions by Luis de Narváez, Alonso Mudarra, Enriquez de Valderrábano, Diego Pisador, Miguel de Fuenllana and Esteban Daza) and demonstrates the move towards more imitative styles.<sup>528</sup> Within these compositions, there is great

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<sup>517</sup> C. Arnold and M. Johnson, 'The English Fantasy Suite,' *PRMA* 85 (1955-6): 1.

<sup>518</sup> Luis de Milán, *Libro de música de vihuela de mano El Maestro* (Valencia: F. Dfaz Romano, 1535).

<sup>519</sup> Anne Sheppard, 'Phantasia,' *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Jan 12, 2021, accessed Jan 26, 2021, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/phantasia>.

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>522</sup> Hermann Finck (1556) in Christopher et al., 'Fantasia.'

<sup>523</sup> Bermudo and Santa María in *Ibid.*

<sup>524</sup> W.E. Hultberg, 'Sancta Maria's "Libro llamado Arte de tañer fantasia": a Critical Evaluation,' (PhD dissertation, University of Southern California, 1965), 16.

<sup>525</sup> Christopher et al., 'Fantasia.' And Morley 1597, 162 in Christopher et al., 'Fantasia.'

<sup>526</sup> J. Griffiths, 'The Vihuela Fantasia: a Comparative Study of Forms and Styles,' (PhD dissertation, Monash University, 1983), 6.

<sup>527</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi.

<sup>528</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi-xviii.

variety, however, already making the fantasia difficult to define.<sup>529</sup> Ward's definition, for instance, reads: 'a relatively free, monothematic or polythematic, more or less polyphonic, two or more voiced, sometimes highly ornamented or toccata-like music of greatly varying length occasionally based on borrowed music (parody) but more often newly invented'.<sup>530</sup> Many possibilities are listed here, already showing the diversity and freedom which became the hallmark of fantasias epitomised in romantic descriptions. Griffiths asserts that despite notated examples, the fantasia 'was essentially regarded as an improvisatory art', a 'spontaneous act'.<sup>531</sup> Fantasias can be found by Italian composers from the mid sixteenth-century.<sup>532</sup> Indeed, one of the audition requirements for organists at San Marco was a four-part improvised fantasia on a mass or motet theme.<sup>533</sup> Ortiz also notes in his *Trattado de glosas* that fantasias for viol and harpsichord were improvised, 'each plays it in his own style' but general characteristics include 'well-ordered chords', 'elegant passages' and 'some points of imitation'.<sup>534</sup> Field also argues that 'the ensemble fantasias of the mid-seventeenth century tend to shun severity and take on the melodiousness of the court air'.<sup>535</sup> The famous improviser Sweelinck's fantasias can be categorised into three main types, according to Field: the ostinato fantasia, the fugal and the 'Fantasia auff die Manier von ein Echo' which contains 'lighter more madrigalian counterpoint...succeeded by passages of echoed phrases'.<sup>536</sup>

### 3.1.2 The fantasy suite: The late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

Later in the sixteenth century, counterpoint was a key feature and the English fantasy suite became a popular format by the middle of the seventeenth century.<sup>537</sup> Although the term suite was not used at the time, it has been applied retrospectively by scholars as most accurately describing this kind of musical work in our current understanding of the term. Throughout the seventeenth century, fantasies became increasingly segmented into sections.<sup>538</sup> Arnold describes how lute and virginal players would 'combine a fantasy with dances in the same key', a connection which is continued

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<sup>529</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>530</sup> John Ward, 'The 'Vihuela de mano' and its Music (1536-1576),' (PhD dissertation, New York University, 1953), 210.

<sup>531</sup> Griffiths, 'The Vihuela Fantasia,' 8.

<sup>532</sup> A. Cohen, 'The "Fantasie" for Instrumental Ensemble in 17<sup>th</sup>-Century France,' *The Musical Quarterly* 4 (1962): 234.

<sup>533</sup> Field et al., 'Fantasia.'

<sup>534</sup> Ibid.

<sup>535</sup> Ibid.

<sup>536</sup> Ibid.

<sup>537</sup> Arnold, 'The English Fantasy Suite,' 1.

<sup>538</sup> Ibid., 3.



even in Telemann's fantasias published in the eighteenth century.<sup>539</sup> North writes that a fantasia was often included in a set, along with 'an aiery lesson of two straines, and a tripla by way of Galliard [sic.]' with the whole set remaining in one key.<sup>540</sup> In addition, North describes their popularity as resulting from their domestic setting, as 'many chose rather to fiddle at home', far from the 'profane theatres'.<sup>541</sup>

Playford notes how Charles I was particularly fond of the 'incomparable phantasies of Mr. Coperario' for organ.<sup>542</sup> Organ fantasias increased during James I's reign.<sup>543</sup> By then, the practice of improvising divisions over a ground was well established.<sup>544</sup> Lupo's six-part viol fantasias also include division writing.<sup>545</sup> Jenkins continued the practice of writing fantasias for viol consort, producing a large number. John Ward, however, wrote over 100 fantasias. These are technically difficult, beginning usually with a fugal section before featuring several other sections.<sup>546</sup> His later fantasias often include divisions; as Brookes remarks, they 'fused the dignified and skilfully contrived polyphony of the fantasia, the vitality of the dance, and the technical virtuosity of "division" playing'.<sup>547</sup> They feature contrasting sections, a characteristic observable in Purcell's fantasias and even Telemann's in the early eighteenth century, potentially drawing from the Italian *canzona* and English madrigal styles.<sup>548</sup> Byrd, Sweelinck, Farnaby, Ferrabosco, Orlando Gibbons, Tomkins and John Bull were also frequent writers of fantasias around the turn of the seventeenth century.<sup>549</sup> While Gibbons' fantasias are almost entirely contrapuntal, Byrd's draw on dance interludes.<sup>550</sup> Coprario also drew on dances in his two-violin fantasias, often including a galliard inspired section for contrast.<sup>551</sup>

Caldwell's research indicates that the terms "voluntary", "verse", "fancy" and "fantasia" were used interchangeably throughout, featuring fugal passages and 'occasionally' a more improvisatory style until the Restoration when the fantasia dropped out of keyboard repertoire.<sup>552</sup> Bertenshaw separates Jacobean madrigals into two types: 'the multisectional fantasy and the fugal

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<sup>539</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>540</sup> North in Ibid., 6.

<sup>541</sup> North describing 1625-1660 in Ibid., 4.

<sup>542</sup> Purcell in Ibid., 6.

<sup>543</sup> Arnold, 'The English Fantasy Suite,' 7.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>545</sup> Field et al., 'Fantasia.'

<sup>546</sup> V. Brookes, 'The four-part Fantasias of John Ward: one Composer or Two?' *Chelys* 26 (1998): 29-35.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid., 39, 41.

<sup>548</sup> R. Bellingham, 'Alfonso Ferrabosco II: the Art of the Fantasia,' *Chelys* 26 (1998): 15.

<sup>549</sup> J. Caldwell, *English Keyboard Music before the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Dover Publications, 1973). And Bellingham, 'Alfonso Ferrabosco II,' 1.

<sup>550</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>551</sup> C. Cunningham, 'Variety and Unity in the Fantasias of John Coprario,' *Chelys* 26 (1998): 75.

<sup>552</sup> Ibid.

fantasy', drawing on Meyer's assertion that the introduction of contrasting sections defines this period of development.<sup>553</sup> Morley's writing supports this innovation, calling for contrast: 'shew the verie uttermost of your varietie, and the more varietie you shew the better shal you please'.<sup>554</sup> Cohen argues that accompanying the general rise in popularity of improvised instrumental music in the middle of the century, organ fantasias increased 'from the practice of improvising polyphonic compositions on a given theme in the style of a vocal motet'.<sup>555</sup> Pinto illustrates this amalgamation of vocal and instrumental idioms in the fantasia: 'for composers on the verge of a purely instrumental style, [the fantasia] could not have been more opportune, since it gave them licence to merge usually incompatible dialects into an absolute language of greater potential resource'.<sup>556</sup>

The earliest fantasias in France were published in 1610.<sup>557</sup> Couperin's fantasias for viol can also be found in keyboard transcription.<sup>558</sup> Cohen's research demonstrates that most polyphonic fantasias in early seventeenth-century France were published in part books and therefore were expected to be performed by consorts but the prefaces indicate the possibility of keyboard interpretation too.<sup>559</sup> Kircher's *Musurgia Universalis* includes a fantasie by Antoine Du Cousu, revealing the significance of the genre and, indeed, consort fantasias dominated the French market for the first half of the century.<sup>560</sup> Composers in this genre included Eustache Du Caurroy, Claude Le Jeune, Charles Guillet, Valérien Gonet, Etienne Moulinié, Marin Marais, Pierre Gaultier, Michel Pignelot de Montéclair, Michel de Labarre, Louis Antoine Dornel and Nicolas Métru (who taught Lully). Cohen also argues that as manuscripts of Parisian 'fentesies de violle' exist, fantasias were also performed by consorts in private.<sup>561</sup> Partbooks were also collected by English households.<sup>562</sup> In a letter from North to Henry Loosemore, he reveals that playing a fantasia by Ward, 'stirs our bloud, and raises our spirits, with liveliness and activity, to satisfie both quickness of heart and hand'.<sup>563</sup> La Voye Mignot writes of a double fugue featuring in fantasias for organ, violin and viol in his 1656 *Traité de musique*.<sup>564</sup> Charles Guillet's dedication of his *Vingt-quatre Fantasies* to Charles de Fonseca states, 'you employed me at the time of prayers, which... inspired me to conceive these

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<sup>553</sup> Derry Bertenshaw, 'Madrigals and Madrigalian Fantasias: the Five-part Consort Music of John Coprario and Thomas Lupo,' *Chelys* 26 (1998): 26.

<sup>554</sup> Thomas Morley, *A plaine and easie introduction to practycall Musicke* (London, 1597), 172.

<sup>555</sup> Cohen, 'The "Fantasie" for Instrumental Ensemble,' 238.

<sup>556</sup> David Pinto in Cunningham, 'Variety and Unity in the Fantasias of John Coprario,' 74-75.

<sup>557</sup> Cohen, 'The "Fantasie" for Instrumental Ensemble,' 235.

<sup>558</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>559</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>560</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>561</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>562</sup> Field et al., 'Fantasia.'

<sup>563</sup> North letter MB ix no.25 from 1658 to Henry Loosemore in *Ibid.*

<sup>564</sup> La Voye Mignot *Traité de musique* 1656 in *Ibid.*

fantasies, which gave you such pleasure that, after having frequently heard some performed by myself and by your organist, you still remain unsatisfied. This is why...I have perpetuated them while the memory of them still remains with me'.<sup>565</sup> This, therefore, suggests that the improvisatory tradition was still very much alive.

The pedagogical purpose of fantasias is also made evident in Guillet's preface which describes his hope that they will 'provide some guidance for those who study music...so that they may come more easily to an understanding of the modes'.<sup>566</sup> René François described a lute player who used fantasias 'to test the strings and tunings' and Brossard similarly notes that fantasies and preludes played 'extemporaneously' seemed 'to try out or test if the keyboard is in good condition, if the instrument is in tune, if the strings are true'.<sup>567</sup> Cohen traces the fantasia's transition from polyphonic to 'a suite movement written in a dance style' through the seventeenth century in France as well as the move towards solo rather than consort writing.<sup>568</sup> Works by Jenkins, Young, Butler, Schmelzer and Becker include fantasias, many of which are extended divisions over ground bases.<sup>569</sup> Pachelbel's fantasias tend toward a more melodic character with 'toccata-like embellishment' rather than the previously popular fugal style.<sup>570</sup>

### 3.1.3 Parody and crossover: The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, so-called "parody fantasias" had grown in popularity, taking inspiration from another work.<sup>571</sup> The concept was not a new one. Palestrina's fantasias are a good earlier example of this, for instance his two fantasias on his madrigal *Vestiva I colli*. John Muncy's *Fantasia* number three from the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book deserves a mention here too as he uses programmatic titles: "faire wether", "lightning", "thunder", "calme wether" and "a cleare day", amongst others. Similarly Lawes' *Fantasia* in C minor from circa 1640 is based on his Psalm setting 'I am weary of my groaning', interestingly topical as it was for the court in the lead up to the English Civil War.<sup>572</sup> It is worth noting, however, that nomenclature was often inconsistent with form for fantasias in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.<sup>573</sup> In the eighteenth century, fantasias continued but also influenced the development of the caprice, boutade and bizarrerie in

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<sup>565</sup> Dedication from Charles Guillet's *Vingt-quatre Fantasies* in Ibid.

<sup>566</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>567</sup> René François's *Essai de merveilles de nature* and Brossard's *Dictionnaire de musique* in Ibid.

<sup>568</sup> Cohen, 'The "Fantasie" for Instrumental Ensemble,' 243.

<sup>569</sup> P. Evans, 'Seventeenth-century Chamber Music Manuscripts at Durham,' *ML* 36 (1955): 205-23.

<sup>570</sup> Field et al., 'Fantasia.'

<sup>571</sup> Ibid.

<sup>572</sup> Lawes 1640 *Fantasia* in C minor Consort Sets 1979, pp. 132-7; MB, xxi, no.4a; see Pinto 1995 in Ibid.

<sup>573</sup> Caldwell, *English Keyboard Music*, 66.

France.<sup>574</sup> They were often related to the *ricercar* and prelude.<sup>575</sup> Indeed, in Grassineu and Rousseau's dictionaries, the entries for *Ricercata* state that 'the Italians call it Fantasia Ricercata', leading Apel to describe the genre as 'a free variety of the strictly contrapuntal and learned *ricercare*'.<sup>576</sup> This can also be seen in De Brossard's *Dictionnaire de musique* and Stainer and Barrett's *Dictionary of musical Terms* where a *ricercar* is described as 'un espece de Prelude ou de fantaisie' and in Walther's *Musicalisches Lexicon* which defines it as 'ein Priludien-oder Fantaisie-Art'.<sup>577</sup> Mattheson and Mersenne also follow this trend.<sup>578</sup> Tillet describes Élizabeth Jacquet de la Guerre as having 'a marvellous talent for improvising preludes and fantasies', remarking that these sometimes lasted for half an hour.<sup>579</sup>

The eighteenth-century fantasia retained many of the previous conventions of freedom, virtuosity and harmonic exploration but were highly structurally organised, often using dance forms or prelude, variation or caprice characteristics.<sup>580</sup> While Telemann and Matteis senior and junior were the most prolific fantasia composers for the violin, there were isolated examples by others. These were often movements placed within a larger work. However, there is a *Fantasia in D major* by Biber with sections labelled: Sonata, Presto, Gigue, Variatio and Menuet. As such, it uses a similar structure to Telemann's fantasias (see chapter 4 for analysis) but is also notable because it is in scordatura (a-e'-a'-d"). Marais' output of fantasias for viola da gamba is large and therefore also worth discussing. These contain many of the same features I have identified in Telemann's fantasias (such as the inclusion of dance sections) but they are usually accompanied, also use ground basses, employ more but shorter sections, use occasional hemiolas and contain many thirds. His trio sonata fantasias take more after the renaissance viol consort fantasia, imitative in character. Another interesting take on the fantasy can be found in Rebel's ballet *La Fantaisie* of 1729. It contains a Grave, Chaconne, Loure, Tambourin and a further Chaconne. He also composed a ballet called

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<sup>574</sup> Cohen, 'The "Fantasie" for Instrumental Ensemble,' 243.

<sup>575</sup> R.S. Douglass, 'The Keyboard Ricercar in the Baroque Era,' (PhD Dissertation, North Texas State University, 1963). And H.H. Eggebrecht, 'Terminus 'Ricercar,' *AMW* 9 (1952): 137.

<sup>576</sup> James Grassineu and Rousseau dictionaries in Douglass, 'The Keyboard Ricercar,' 330-1. And Apel in Harvard Dictionary of Music 'Fantasia' in Eggebrecht, 'Terminus "Ricercar,"' 141.

<sup>577</sup> Sébastien de Brossard, *A musical dictionary: containing a full explanation of all the terms made use of in the historical, theoretical, and practical parts of music* (London, 1769). And John Stainer and William Alexander Barrett, eds. *A Dictionary of Musical Terms* (Novello, 1876). And Johann Gottfried Walther, *Musicalisches Lexicon* (1732).

<sup>578</sup> Mattheson and Mersenne in W. Kirkendale, 'Ciceronians versus Aristotelians on the Ricercar as Exordium, from Bembo to Bach,' *JAMS* 32 (1979): 5-6.

<sup>579</sup> Stephen C. Grazzini, 'Reconstructing the improvised keyboard prelude of the French Baroque,' (PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 2014), 30. Citing: Évrard Titon du Tillet, *Le Parnasse François* (Paris: Coignard, 1732), 636.

<sup>580</sup> Field et al. 'Fantasia'. And Peter Schleuning, *Die freie Fantasie: Ein Beitrag zur Erforschung der klassischen Klaviermusik* (Göppingen: A. Kümmerle, 1973).

*Caprice* in 1711. The links between dance and fantasy were also apparent in France by the early eighteenth century, therefore.

There are some discrepancies in nomenclature which describe improvised fantasies when the likelihood is these reports described an improvised cadenza. For instance, Johann Friedrich Armand von Uffenbach's description of Vivaldi's playing mentions that he 'played a solo accompaniment excellently, and at the conclusion he added a free fantasy which absolutely astounded me, for it is hardly possible that anyone has ever played, or ever will play, in such a fashion.'<sup>581</sup> The positioning of the improvisation here suggests a cadenza but again reinforces the associations of improvisation and fantasy in the baroque imagination. Anna Maria's part books for Vivaldi's concertos contain written-out cadenza ideas or the instruction 'segue la cadenza' without anything notated, suggesting that the implication was to improvise these (figure 9).



Figure 9: Page 125 of Anna Maria's part book of Vivaldi's music showing the phrase 'Segue la Cadenza'. Image sourced: IMSLP. 'Anna Maria's Part Book "Concerto del Sig. Antonia Vivaldi."' IMSLP. 2022. Accessed June 21, 2022. <https://s9.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/a/a5/IMSLP439055-PMLP714206-Correr.pdf>.

Ensemble fantasias were rare from the beginning of the eighteenth century but solo fantasias, especially keyboard fantasias, remained significant in Germany.<sup>582</sup> C.P.E. Bach's fantasias employed adventurous frequent modulations as encouraged in his relevant chapter of his *Versuch* with virtuosic scalic and arpeggiatic writing for the clavichord.<sup>583</sup> Burney described his manner while improvising as 'so animated and possessed, that he not only played but looked like one inspired'.<sup>584</sup> The practice of composing fantasias without barlines, such as several by C.P.E. Bach, is also a noteworthy development at this time.<sup>585</sup> Mozart's fantasias did not adopt this free style, feeling

<sup>581</sup> H.C. Robbins Landon, *Vivaldi: Voice of the Baroque* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 49.

<sup>582</sup> Ibid.

<sup>583</sup> C.P.E. Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen* (Berlin: Christian Friedrich Henning, 1753).

<sup>584</sup> Burney in Field, 'Fantasia.'

<sup>585</sup> Ibid.

more similar to a sonata movement. Handel, Mattheson and Telemann also used barlines in their fantasias, using other musical forms. Contrapuntal motion remained in fantasias by J.B. Bach, Muffat, J.C. Kittel and J.L. Krebs.<sup>586</sup> Many eighteenth-century fantasias included a rondo-like final section.<sup>587</sup>

Fantasias drew on other arts and contemporary philosophy too. The poet Gerstenberg added text based on Hamlet's "To be, or not to be" speech to C.P.E. Bach's *Fantasia* in C minor.<sup>588</sup> Kirnberger noted that 'several fantasias wander from one genre to another'.<sup>589</sup> Describing C.P.E. Bach's fantasias, Head argues that 'many are miniatures, not extended rhapsodies' with dance sections and technical study elements.<sup>590</sup> Wollenberg suggests that his fantasias are built on 'rational deceptions'.<sup>591</sup> C.P.E. Bach himself subtitled his arrangement of his F sharp minor Fantasia (H.300) with violin accompaniment, 'C.P.E. Bach's Empfindungen' which translates as 'C.P.E. Bach's Sentiments', reflecting the conception of 'the passions as enslaving and irrational' and the attempt in the arts to moralise sensibility as evidenced in Christian Wolff's writings of 1720.<sup>592</sup> The German "Empfindsamkeit", like the English sensibility, also denoted a musical style in which solo keyboard music, for instance by C.P.E. Bach, was characterised by 'fluctuating emotional intensity and rapid changes of affect', observable in his fantasias.<sup>593</sup> His writings on improvisation note how the freedom of a declamatory style line up with DuBos's 'natural signs of the passions' and mean that the improviser can 'move audaciously from one affect to another'.<sup>594</sup> Despite this, most of C.P.E. Bach's advice to the improviser is based on technical possibilities rather than discussions of emotion.<sup>595</sup> The discipline of aesthetics is full of such understandings of sensibility; Sulzer, for instance, defines it as 'the theory of indistinct knowledge and feelings' and Rousseau includes an article on expression and the mimetic power of music.<sup>596</sup> Head's examination implies a rhetoric for improvisation, similar to baroque understandings, drawing on pathos, concerned with moving the audience as described by Chambers' in 1728.<sup>597</sup> Similarly, Ratner explains the classical fantasia as a chance for composers to

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<sup>586</sup> Ibid.

<sup>587</sup> Ibid.

<sup>588</sup> Matthew Head, 'Fantasia and sensibility,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, ed. Danuta Mirka (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 260.

<sup>589</sup> Kirnberger, Sulzer 1771: 386. In Ibid.

<sup>590</sup> Head, 'Fantasia and sensibility,' 260.

<sup>591</sup> Wollenberg 2007 in Ibid., 261.

<sup>592</sup> Head, 'Fantasia and sensibility,' 265.

<sup>593</sup> Ibid., 268.

<sup>594</sup> C.P.E. Bach 1974: 153 And DuBos in Ibid., 269.

<sup>595</sup> See last chapter of C.P.E. Bach, *Versuch*.

<sup>596</sup> Sulzer 1771 and Rousseau *Dictionnaire* 1775: 333-34 in Head, 'Fantasia and sensibility.'

<sup>597</sup> Head 1995 in Head, 'Fantasia and sensibility,' 261. And Head, 'Fantasia and sensibility,' 266. And William Chambers, *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (London: W. Griffin, 1772), 2: 764.

provide 'a fresh twist and new vitality to the familiar clichés'.<sup>598</sup> Kollmann even termed a moment of rapid modulation as a "fancy period".<sup>599</sup>

Richards links the free fantasia with the musical picturesque.<sup>600</sup> In the late eighteenth century, artwork often depicts an ideal union of music and art alongside the appearance of an aesthetic for the picturesque (an encouragement of 'fragmentation and disruption, contrast and variety, and problematises the limits of form and conventional expectation').<sup>601</sup> She also notes a frequent union of music with garden aesthetics. Home, in his description of garden journeys as emotion, likens these to musical compositions.<sup>602</sup> Price also offered a similar comparison; the influence of garden aesthetics was very broad into the other decorative arts, as Chambers explained.<sup>603</sup> The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw a return to naturalness and wildness in garden design, in stark contrast to the formal symmetry preferred before.<sup>604</sup> This 'opposition between art and nature' also found its way into the fantasia's reception.<sup>605</sup> As Richards notes, 'both fantasy and picturesque share qualities of disruptiveness and surprise... as the "natural" garden mirrors the tension between improvisation and composition inherent in the fantasia'.<sup>606</sup> She also compares listening practices as they were 'concern[ed] with temporality' and 'a paradoxical tension between passionate sentiment and the potential ironical critique that is introduced by aesthetic distance'.<sup>607</sup> She notes that fantasias of this period often appear "free" but are in fact reliant on the sonata and rondo forms.<sup>608</sup> For Todorov, the literary fantastic occupies the space between dream or illusion and reality and is a temporary ephemeral moment.<sup>609</sup> This also links to the improvised fantasia. While Beethoven professed to have the ability to repeat his improvisations, this seems unlikely unless they were very formulaic.<sup>610</sup> Contemporary writers often 'liken the form to a sketch, a dream, or a cloud', whether improvised or composed.<sup>611</sup>

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<sup>598</sup> Ratner 1980, 314 in *Ibid.*

<sup>599</sup> Augustus Frederic Christopher Kollmann, *An Essay On Practical Musical Composition: According To The Nature Of That Science And The Principles Of The Greatest Musical Authors* (London: Kollmann, 1799), 171.

<sup>600</sup> Richards, *The Free Fantasia*, 1.

<sup>601</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>602</sup> Henry Home and Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism, 9th ed., 2 vols* (Edinburgh, 1817), 11, 272.

<sup>603</sup> Richards, *The Free Fantasia*, 8. And Chambers, *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening*.

<sup>604</sup> Richards, *The Free Fantasia*, 9.

<sup>605</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>606</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>607</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>608</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>609</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. Translated by Richard Howard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), 42, 89.

<sup>610</sup> Richards, *The Free Fantasia*, 16.

<sup>611</sup> Barbetti, 'Reviving the Ghost,' 5.

### 3.1.3.1 The fantasias of C.P.E. Bach

C.P.E. Bach's fantasias defined the fantasia style for most of the century, helping to form 'an aesthetic of the musical picturesque', according to Richards.<sup>612</sup> Burney described his performance of his fantasias as 'possessed'.<sup>613</sup> Cramer (editor of the *Magazin der Musik*) described Bach's improvisations as 'daring, unprecedented, and yet technically correct' and astounding.<sup>614</sup> C.P.E.'s printed fantasias were thought to exemplify how 'the great man' provoked 'general wonder' in his improvisations.<sup>615</sup> Bach himself explained his inclusion of two fantasias in print as resulting from persuasion that these would reveal 'welche Fantast ich war' (what a fantasist I was) to future generations.<sup>616</sup> Vogler also called Bach a fantast but as a derogatory term, meaning 'a deluded artist who misjudged the limits of fantasy', arguing that 'between simplicity and matter-of-factness, variety and confusion, between a high flight, original brushstrokes and fantasy, caricature, bizarre non-sense, i.e.: between musical imagination [*musikalischer Fantasie*] and a high fever, there is a world of difference'.<sup>617</sup> Similarly, Burney reports the criticism Bach received for fantasias which were 'long, difficult, fantastic and far-fetched'.<sup>618</sup> The issue of "good taste" was, therefore, still very much at play here. Bach himself described his fantasias as 'varied harmonic progressions which can be expressed in all manner of figuration and motives'.<sup>619</sup> Bach provided an example skeleton score and realisation to demonstrate this (see figure 10). Schenker argues that these demonstrate that they were characterised by order under the illusion of disorder.<sup>620</sup> Rosen also compares Bach's fantasias to a 'wanderer in a landscape'.<sup>621</sup>

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<sup>612</sup> Ibid.

<sup>613</sup> Charles Burney, *The present state of music in Germany 2nd ed., 2 vols* (London, 1775), II, 270-1.

<sup>614</sup> C.F. Cramer, 'Claviersonanten und freye Phantasien, nebst einigen Rondos fürs Fortepiano, für Kenner und Liebhaber, komponiert von Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, Fünfte Sammlung...', *Magazin der Musik* 2, no. 5 (5 August 1786), 871.

<sup>615</sup> *Hamburgischer unpartheyischer Correspondent*, 19 September 1783. In Ernst Suchalla ed., *Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach: Briefe und Dokumente, Kritische Gesamtausgabe 2 vols* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1994), II, 978.

<sup>616</sup> CPE Bach to Breitkopf (15 October 1782) in Ernst Suchalla ed., *Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach: Briefe und Dokumente, Kritische Gesamtausgabe 2 vols* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1994), II, 939. Translation based on Clark, *Letters*, 187.

<sup>617</sup> Charles Rosen, *The classical style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (London: Faber, 1972), 34. And G. J. Vogler, *Betrachtungen der Mannheimer Tonschule 4 vols* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1974 [Mannheim, 1780]), III, 158, 156.

<sup>618</sup> Burney, *The present state of music in Germany*, II 266.

<sup>619</sup> C.P.E. Bach, *Versuch*, II, 326.

<sup>620</sup> Heinrich Schenker, 'The Art of Improvisation,' in *Thirteen Essays from the Three Yearbooks Das Meisterwerk in der Musik by Heinrich Schenker: An Annotated Translation, 3 vols. in 2*, ed. Sylvan Kalib (PhD. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1973), II, 30.

<sup>621</sup> Rosen, *The classical style*, 40.



Von der freien Fantasie.

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*Allegro.* (1)

(2) (3) (4) (5)

(6) (7) (8) (9)

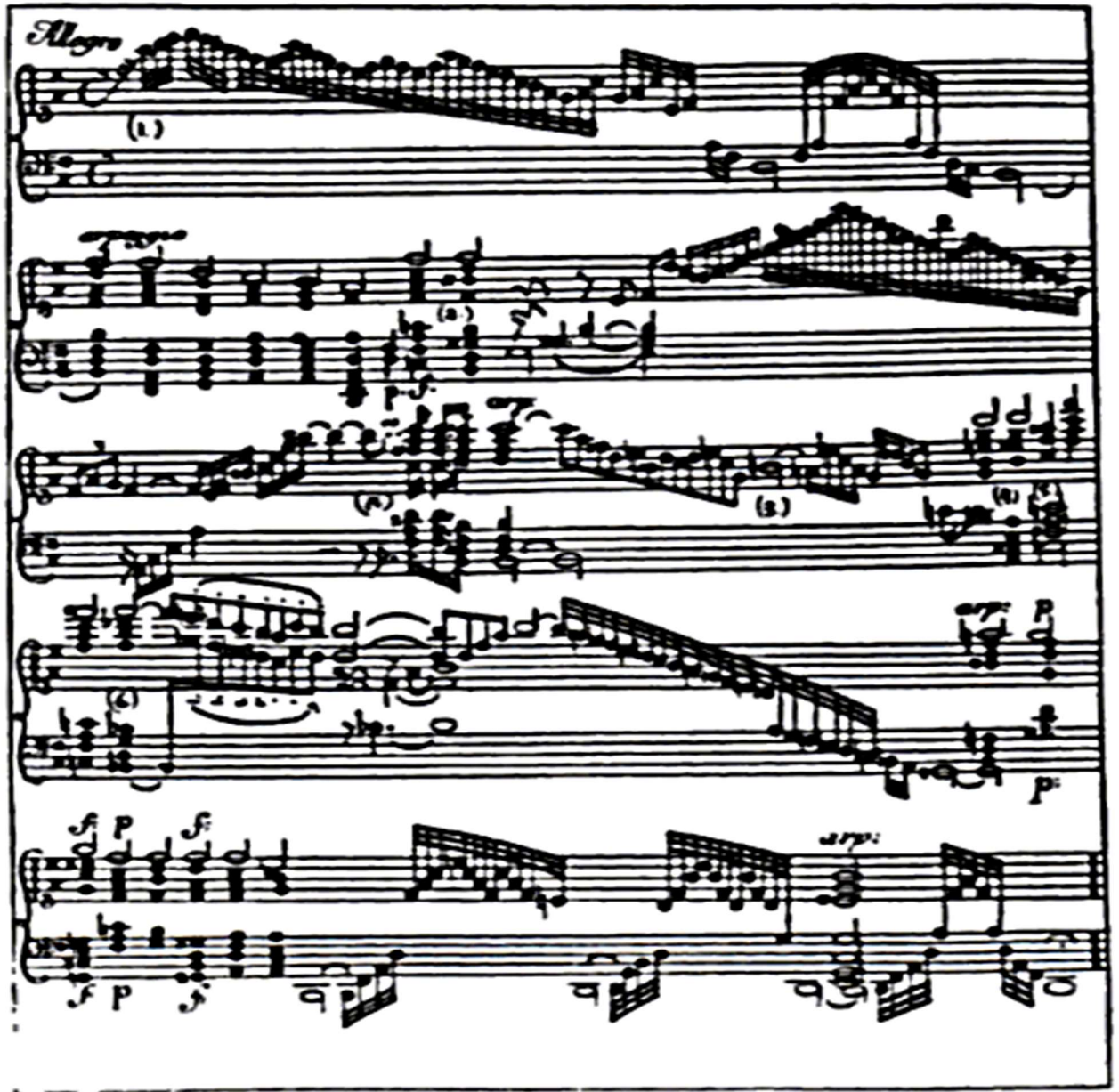


Figure 10: Images from C.P.E. Bach's *Versuch* showing first a skeleton score and then Bach's example realisation. Image sourced: Rosen, Charles. *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven*. London: Faber, 1972, 43.

Bach himself described the free fantasia as 'expressive not of memorised or plagiarised passages, but rather of true, musical creativeness', including a chapter on the subject.<sup>622</sup> While dealing with improvisation, the free fantasia fills the majority. He writes that, 'it is principally in improvisations or fantasias that the keyboardist can best master the feelings of his audience'.<sup>623</sup> On

<sup>622</sup> Bach, *Versuch*, 153.

<sup>623</sup> *Ibid.*

the fantasia's harmony, he notes that modulation can be extensive, even to 'all other keys' but that this is 'naturally curtailed when time demands the fantasia stay to a certain length' and so advises remaining closer to home when aiming to draw the fantasia to a close.<sup>624</sup> He encourages the use of 'rational deceptions', when it seems as though the fantasia will modulate to one key but in fact then goes on to settle in another.<sup>625</sup> The bassline, he writes, should resemble a scale.<sup>626</sup> Reichardt described a performance by Bach, writing that 'his soul appeared to be wholly absent, his eyes swam as if in a sweet dream... face and body suspended almost lifeless over the clavichord'.<sup>627</sup> This is a prime example of the beginnings of the romantic performance criticism that portrayed the performer as an agonised genius.

Bach defined a free fantasia as a piece that was 'unmeasured and modulates through more keys than would be customary'.<sup>628</sup> The free fantasia was usually notated without barlines or a regular tempo and meter and featured 'rhapsodic quick-changing effects, extravagant shifts of harmony and sudden changes of texture and dynamic level'.<sup>629</sup> Bonds describes it as an 'anti-genre' as it has 'no set expectations that the composer or listener can play with or against'.<sup>630</sup> The form of fantasias came from 'the experience of punctuation' and 'hierarchy rather than themes or harmony'.<sup>631</sup> As such, they could often be made up of 'little more than one thing after another', to quote Schulenberg.<sup>632</sup> Its principal purpose was to move the listener.<sup>633</sup> For Türk, rather than developing a single theme or small number of themes, a fantasia used a variety, following 'whim completely' without attempting to work out a specific plan.<sup>634</sup> Heusinger took this a step further by reporting that occasionally fantasias could even surprise the artists 'when its imagination flees the reins of understanding'.<sup>635</sup> Despite the seeming freedom, however, in reality they were 'an artfully

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<sup>624</sup> Ibid.

<sup>625</sup> Ibid.

<sup>626</sup> Ibid.

<sup>627</sup> J.F. Reichardt, 'Noch ein Bruchstück aus Johann Friedrich Reichardt's Autobiographie Sein erster Aufenthalt in Hamburg,' *AmZ* 16, no. 2 (1815), col. 28

<sup>628</sup> Bach, *Versuch*, ii, 325-6.

<sup>629</sup> Richards, *The Free Fantasia*, 17.

<sup>630</sup> Mark Evan Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric: Musical Form and the Metaphor of the Oration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 114-118.

<sup>631</sup> Ibid.

<sup>632</sup> David Schulenberg, *The Instrumental Music of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1984), 157.

<sup>633</sup> Rosen, *The classical style*, 19.

<sup>634</sup> D.G. Türk, *Klavierschule, oder, Anweisung zum Klavierspielen für Lehrer und Lernende* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1967 [Leipzig, 1789]), 395. Translation based on that by Raymond H. Hagg, *School of Clavier Playing, or, Instructions in Playing the Clavier for Teachers and Students* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 388.

<sup>635</sup> J. H.G. Heusinger, *Handbuch der Aesthetik*, 2 vols. (Gotha: Justus Perthes, 1797), I, 153. Cited in Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric*, 117.

constructed illusion'.<sup>636</sup> Koch defines a *bizarria* as 'a kind of fantasia in which the player abandons himself to his own mood', interestingly implying that a fantasia was more structured or controlled.<sup>637</sup> Similarly, Hoyle explained a *bizarro* as a 'fanciful kind of composition, sometimes strong, slow, soft, fast, etc. according to the fancy of the composer'.<sup>638</sup> Schultz, however, thought that 'good fantasias in purely instrumental music...[were] comprehensible to every educated ear'.<sup>639</sup> The fantasia had influence across other forms of music in sections improvisatory in character.<sup>640</sup> It was highly regarded at this time, Petri states that it is 'the highest degree of composition... where meditation and execution are directly bound up with one another'.<sup>641</sup>

### 3.1.4 An Illusion? The nineteenth century

Gooley's extensive study of the nineteenth-century fantasia provides interesting insights into the development of the genre beyond the baroque.<sup>642</sup> He notes how the fantasia was associated with 'the sensitive delicacy of the clavichord, the experience of solitude, the expression of intense melancholy, and the capricious or playing workings of interior psychological experience' and generally appeared as composed works for keyboardists.<sup>643</sup> His research shows that the lack of figured bass principles meant that development was freer, led by motives and wider modulations, demonstrating a good grasp of theory and technique rather than necessarily mapping an 'intense inward feeling' as the romanticised portrayals of improvisers often turned to.<sup>644</sup> Turning to visual sources, he argues that the century witnessed a transference of the visual conventions of improvisers to virtuosic solo performance, including 'the inspired countenance, the transported gaze, and energetic physical signs of mental labour'.<sup>645</sup> The tradition of parody fantasias can be seen in Mendelssohn's fantasias which draw on chorale melodies.

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<sup>636</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>637</sup> Heinrich Christoph Koch, 'Bizarrerie,' in *Musikalisches Lexicon* (Offenbach am Main, 1802), col. 259, s.v. "Bizarrerie".

<sup>638</sup> John A. Hoyle, *Complete Dictionary of Music* (London: H. D. Symonds, 1791).

<sup>639</sup> Schultz quoted by C.F. Cramer, 'Flora. Eine Sammlung Compositionen für das Clavier und den Gesang...', *Magazin der Musik* 2, no. 2 (22 June 1787), 1361, footnote.

<sup>640</sup> Edward Laufer, 'On the Fantasy,' *Intégral: The Journal of Applied Musical Thought* 2 (1988): 99-133.

<sup>641</sup> J.S. Petri, *Anleitung zur practischen Musik* (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1782), 266.

<sup>642</sup> Dana Gooley, *Fantasies of improvisation: Free playing in nineteenth-century music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1.

<sup>643</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>644</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>645</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

Even composed works began to be praised for being 'like an improvisation'.<sup>646</sup> Improvisation was still expected, especially from keyboardists during the early part of the century but the practice began to decline towards the end of the century due to the 'growing authority of the "work" concept' and 'emergent ideologies that opposed "free playing"', with the exception of Church musicians.<sup>647</sup> Conceptions of the practice moved from a display of the performer's authority to censure.<sup>648</sup> In 1817, Gerber lamented that sonatas, overtures and symphonies were beginning to take after fantasias, specifying those by Beethoven and his contemporaries because of their departures from conventions.<sup>649</sup> The title "quasi una fantasia" appears in notated compositions which Head argues 'hinted that the music was not consciously composed so much as self-generated in the composer's imagination'.<sup>650</sup> The romanticism of improvisation in literature around this time Gooley attributes to the decline in musical improvisation.<sup>651</sup> Indeed, the position of the improviser as outsider but in a positive light is clear from the portrayal of improvisers as 'shepherds, gypsies, troubadours [and] marketplace entertainers'.<sup>652</sup> Improvisers stood out as advocating freedom and spontaneity, which Gooley argues contrasted with the 'privilege of writing, reason, and masculinity'.<sup>653</sup>

Improvised poetry remained popular in Italy and even toured around Europe, often featuring guitar, violin or piano accompaniments.<sup>654</sup> Germaine de Staël's *Corinne* features an improvising poet as its protagonist and had wide-reaching influence in the portrayal of improvisers.<sup>655</sup> In Germany, to improvise was referred to as "fantasieren", "präludieren", "vom Stegreif spielen" and "extemporieren" while similarly in France, improvisers were actually frequently referred to as "préluder".<sup>656</sup> Schubart reported of his own improvisations that he 'fantasised with passionate creativity... I could play to myself in this fire — the principal trait of the musical genius — in such a way that everything around me faded, and I lived only in the music, which my imagination created'.<sup>657</sup>

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<sup>646</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>647</sup> Ibid., 2. And Lydia Goehr, *The imaginary museum of musical works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>648</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>649</sup> Head, 'Fantasia and sensibility,' 262.

<sup>650</sup> Ibid.

<sup>651</sup> Gooley, *Fantasies of Imagination*, 4.

<sup>652</sup> Ibid.

<sup>653</sup> Ibid.

<sup>654</sup> Ibid.

<sup>655</sup> Ibid.

<sup>656</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>657</sup> Richards, *The Free Fantasia*, 56. Citing C.F.D. Schubart, *Gesammelte Schriften und Schicksale 8 vols. In 4* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1973 [Stuttgart: Scheible, 1839]), I, 50.

Violinists are also recorded to have improvised fantasias. Alexandre Boucher often improvised a ‘virtuoso capriccio for solo violin’.<sup>658</sup> There was also an ‘unmatched fantasy’ which Boucher ‘improvised on the spot’ in response to a storm.<sup>659</sup> Bull also improvised free fantasias but on a theme given by the audience, drawing on the typical piano tradition.<sup>660</sup> Interestingly, he claimed his improvisatory inspiration from peasant fiddler Torgeir Augundson who taught him Norwegian folk songs and dances.<sup>661</sup> One of Bull’s improvisations in 1834 included ‘a piece that proceeded from dark chords to recitatives, to a self-accompanied melody, to a rushing allegro, and then a concluding Adagio in the major — a model that does not follow any of the prescriptions found in any of the treatises, but finds parallels in other kinds of music’.<sup>662</sup> In addition, violinist Franz Clement improvised a ‘completely free fantasia’ with pianist Johann Nepomuk Hummel (a well-known improviser of the time).<sup>663</sup> Hummel’s free fantasias ‘were valued for their capacity to bridge the gap between connoisseurs and diettantes, as well as the gap between public and private spheres’ and he regularly improvised to end each concert.<sup>664</sup> Interestingly, he wrote that he felt more comfortable improvising in front of a large crowd than playing a composition and often used melodies from French and German comic operas.<sup>665</sup> Once, however, he is reported to have incorporated church bells, which were ringing outside, into his improvisation.<sup>666</sup>

Audiences apparently broke into spontaneous applause each time a new theme was introduced in an improvisation, similar to the jazz tradition of applauding solos today.<sup>667</sup> General structures appear to have begun with a slow free introduction, then introduced a couple of themes before a fugue and final section.<sup>668</sup> By combining different styles, Hummel was able to reach a larger audience.<sup>669</sup> A free fantasia was often used to end concerts because, according to Gooley, it re-established ‘performer-audience intimacy’ which is absent or reduced in performances of notated

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<sup>658</sup> Gooley, ‘Violin improvisation,’ 114.

<sup>659</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>660</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>661</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>662</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>663</sup> Dana Gooley, ‘Violin Improvisation in the Early Nineteenth Century: Between Practice and Illusion,’ in *Exploring Virtuositities. Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst, Nineteenth-Century Musical Practices and Beyond*, ed. Christine Hoppe, Melanie von Goldbeck, Maiko Kawabata (New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 2018), 114.

<sup>664</sup> Dana Gooley, ‘Saving Improvisation: Hummel and the Free Fantasia in the Early Nineteenth Century,’ in *Oxford Handbooks Online*, ed. Alexander Rehding (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>665</sup> *Ibid.* And Johann Nepomuk Hummel, *Méthode complète théorique et pratique pour le piano-forte* (Geneva: Minkoff, 1981 [1838]), 468, particularly article 7 ‘De l’improvisation.’

<sup>666</sup> Gooley, ‘Saving improvisation’.

<sup>667</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>668</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>669</sup> *Ibid.*

compositions.<sup>670</sup> An 1824 article from *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* stated that ‘a chain of variations is not yet a fantasy; it merely adds to their number’, arguing that variations were for improvisers without the creativity to do anything else.<sup>671</sup> Czerny’s treatise on improvisation from 1829 gives guidelines on how to improvise a free fantasia.<sup>672</sup> He suggests different ways of treating melodic cells to create a ‘topoi-cantabile, march, polonaise [and] scherzando’ style, amongst others.<sup>673</sup> Critics lamented that improvised fantasias by the late 1820s had become ‘a succession of more or less difficult decorations’ rather than what was ‘once a free fantasy of the imagination, a truly spontaneous creation of the artist’.<sup>674</sup>

The fantasia, therefore, grew out of an improvisatory tradition, taking elements from preludes, dances, variations, diminutions and divisions to create pieces which could stand alone or preface others and which allowed performers to express their creativity with the fewest restraints. Certain narratives can be traced throughout, such as this relative compositional freedom and its relationship with improvisation. Many instruments improvised fantasias but most reports name viols as the most common instrument in the beginning. These were then overtaken by keyboardists, although singers and melody instruments are also recorded. Taking inspiration from other arts, dance and contemporary philosophy, the fantasia was also an opportunity for interdisciplinarity. While largely admired, writers complained occasionally that they thought some performers went too far. It is noteworthy, however, that their objections were rooted in issues of good taste rather than in the improvisatory practice or the genre characteristics themselves.

## 3.2 ‘The greatest players’<sup>675</sup>: Experiencing baroque fantasias

### 3.2.1 Social listening

Despite this greater knowledge of fantasias from the perspective of performers, writers and composers, there is still one more group to include. Listeners situate the music they hear within their assimilation of musical knowledge, built from prior listening experiences, conversations and reading. This is true of composers, performers and listeners. As North explained, ‘no one man is [the]

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<sup>670</sup> Ibid.

<sup>671</sup> Ibid. And ‘Etwas über freye Fantasien, nebst Rückblick auf Hummels, im Museum für Claviermusik... abgedruckten Fantasie,’ [*Wiener*] *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 8, no. 79 (2 October 1824): 314–315.

<sup>672</sup> Gooley, ‘Saving improvisation’. And Carl Czerny, *A Systematic Introduction to Improvisation on the Pianoforte (1829)*, ed. and trans. Alice L. Mitchell (New York and London: Longman, 1983).

<sup>673</sup> Gooley, ‘Saving improvisation’.

<sup>674</sup> ‘Nouvelles étrangères. Berlin, 29 mars,’ *Revue musicale, 1re série, tome III* vol. 3, no. 11 (April 1828), 262.

<sup>675</sup> Kollmann, *An Essay*, 122.

absolute inventor of art, but commonly takes up and adds to the inventions of predecessors'.<sup>676</sup> A piece is judged, therefore, on criteria which are of cultural capital at the time, in relation to similar works and are heavily influenced by the opinions of others. This is true of listening practices today. As Bull remarked, classical music is valued for its accuracy and the high levels of training needed for access. A 'pedagogy of correction' is necessary to produce this aesthetic, one which focuses on 'getting it right', and it is these aesthetic values, the association of classical music with respectability, which contributes to the inequalities within its cultural demographic.<sup>677</sup> Listening to a concert of classical music comes with a whole host of expectations, therefore; listeners expect extremely high levels of accuracy, a display of virtuosity and a respectability in the performers' choices of repertoire and dress. They expect an experience which will raise their cultural capital, one which demonstrates a certain level of wealth and prior knowledge. To be able to "appreciate" classical music, listeners draw on programme notes and reviews but also the accepted musical canon of works which have gained respectability. It is the socially accepted opinion that Bach, Mozart and Beethoven are great masters and ought to be revered or at least appreciated as such. They were all respected and celebrated improvisers in their own rights, however, and indeed improvisation has historically served, and continues to serve, a functional purpose in organ traditions.

To introduce improvisation into such an environment is challenging because the experience it affords runs contrary to such expectations. The performer steps outside their role as communicator of the great masters and instead seeks to portray their own musical ideas which do not already come with the baggage of respectability, instead actually posing a risk. This risk is extended to technicalities. While audiences expect a very high level of technical perfection and many hours of practice, improvisers act with spontaneity. Listeners cannot draw on knowledge of previous recordings or performances in order to judge the correctness of a performance or display their prior knowledge. There are no reviews, no programme notes, no accepted general opinions — the whole framework on which listeners base their judgement of a classical music performance falls away. In order to understand the experience of improvisation during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it is important to appreciate the different expectations of listeners and the differing notions of cultural capital. In writings about freely improvised music, critics tend to either describe the sounds employed, reflecting the wide range of extended techniques, sound sources and devices used, or provide extensive metaphors for their experience of the music.<sup>678</sup> The ethical implications of

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<sup>676</sup>John Wilson ed., *Roger North on Music* (London: Novello, 1959), 356-7.

<sup>677</sup>Anna Bull, 'El Sistema as a Bourgeois Social Project: Class, Gender, and Victorian Values,' *Action, Criticism and Theory for Music Education* 15, no. 1 (2016): 120-153.

<sup>678</sup>Cesar Villavicencio, 'The Discourse of Free Improvisation: A Rhetorical Perspective on Free Improvised Music,' (PhD dissertation, University of East Anglia, 2008), 76.



judging certain improvisations, individual expressions, as “better” than others is often left out of such reports.<sup>679</sup> Warburton has suggested that a comparison is made between ‘rough and ready “improvisation” and polished “improvised music” (or, if you prefer, “instant composition”)', the latter of which can then be sorted into ‘discrete stylistic subgenres’.<sup>680</sup> This was not the cultural situation of the baroque, however, when rehearsal time was limited, composers were usually also the performers and listeners were often socialising, eating or dancing while listening. Audiences valued creativity, entertainment and technical virtuosity but few criticise technical accuracy, presumably because of the constant influx of new music composed for specific occasions and heard usually only once, which would have made comparison difficult.

### 3.2.2 Improvised baroque ‘flights of fancy’<sup>681</sup>

The experience of listening to improvised music was highly valued by audiences during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For Morley it is ‘the most principall and chiefest kind of musicke’, in which ‘more art be shewn then in any other musicke’.<sup>682</sup> For Kollman, this kind of music is only possible ‘by the greatest players’ and such performances ‘are proofs of the knowledge, taste and genius of the performer’.<sup>683</sup> North similarly writes that improvisation requires ‘genius’ and a great deal of study.<sup>684</sup> He even ends the title of his treatise on this: ‘Concluding with Some Notes Concerning The Excellent Art of Voluntary’, ‘voluntary’ meaning improvisation as we would currently understand it here.<sup>685</sup> The ‘flights of fancy’ which North admires in Matteis senior’s improvisations, as well as his ‘rhapsody’ in which ‘one would have thought the man beside himself’, are also testament to the value of this practice.<sup>686</sup> If Huggett is correct in suggesting that some performances were notated by a scribe during the performance, this would be another indicator of the value of such practices.<sup>687</sup> Improvisation was simply part of the arsenal of the baroque performer; to add ornamentation, cadenzas, preludes and divisions was common practice, and so the mention of

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<sup>679</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>680</sup> Warburton in Ibid., 78.

<sup>681</sup> Michael Tilmouth, ‘Nicola Matteis,’ *The Musical Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (1960): 25. And J.F. Bridge, ‘Purcell’s Fantazias and Sonatas,’ *Proceedings of the Royal Musicological Association* 42<sup>nd</sup> Sess. (1915-16): 5.

<sup>682</sup> Morley, *A Plaine and Easie Introduction*, 206.

<sup>683</sup> Kollman, *An essay*, 122-3.

<sup>684</sup> John Wilson, *Roger North on Music*, 165.

<sup>685</sup> Ibid.

<sup>686</sup> Tilmouth, ‘Nicola Matteis,’ 25. And Bridge, ‘Purcell’s Fantazias and Sonatas,’ 5.

<sup>687</sup> Monica Huggett, ‘Baroque violinist Monica Huggett on the poetic harmonies within Matteis’ “Alia Fantasia,” *Strings Magazine*, May 4, 2018, accessed Jan 12, 2021, <https://stringsmagazine.com/baroque-violinist-monica-huggett-on-the-poetic-harmonies-within-matteis-alla-fantasia/>.

instances of improvised fantasias demonstrates that they were held in particular regard within the larger practice of improvisation. Contemporary audiences, therefore, placed cultural capital on spontaneous creativity and newness.

Geertz argues that Telemann's fantasias were played in domestic settings.<sup>688</sup> The intimate nature of unaccompanied works favours this but the competitions held between players would also have been the ideal site for such improvised fantasias. Mattheson, however, writes that while usually in theatres, this style is also 'heard in the church and in chambers'.<sup>689</sup> Karl Ditters von Dittersdorff described a concert on the 26<sup>th</sup> March 1791 which featured Friedrich Ludwig Dülön improvising a solo fantasy of 'over fifteen minutes long, and variations on a theme which he requested from the audience'. Von Dittersdorff complains that 'a few years ago' he had 'heard him perform his fantasias in which he tootled various flourishes and whirligigs (to speak like my bow-legged servant) and ended with variations'. He goes on to describe how:

His Excellency Count N N very graciously cut us short with these words: "Messieurs! You are both dictators in music; must you not confirm that music has now climbed to the highest summit? That someone like Mozart can sit down and fantasise at a harmonically rich fortepiano, that is no art; but that a flautist with his sterile instrument can achieve the same effect as Mozart (Oho! I thought), is that not astounding? What do you say, messieurs?"

"Oh yes, very astounding," I said, laughing rather loudly.<sup>690</sup>

Improvised fantasias were therefore often performed at private gatherings but to the great delight and appreciation of audiences. The values they placed on music (such as spontaneity, creativity and newness) meant that improvisation was admired. For performers today, the situation is rather different but this is perhaps unsurprising given the rarity of improvisation. Current favoured performances of notated compositions from the canon would not measure up to these baroque listening criteria. Through increasing the reach and exposure of improvisation but through the lens of stylistic historically-informed performances, audiences would have the opportunity to understand and appreciate the different values improvisation can bring to a performance but within the comforts of a style they are very familiar with through the constant repetition of favourites from the period.

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<sup>688</sup> Lois Kathryn Geertz, 'Telemann's Fantasias for solo Violin as precursors to the solo sonatas and partitas of J.S. Bach,' PhD lecture document (Oregon: University of Oregon, June 2014), 7.

<sup>689</sup> Mattheson in Kerala J. Snyder, *Dieterich Buxtehude: Organist in Lübeck* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2007), 252.

<sup>690</sup> Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf, *Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf: Lebensbeschreibung seinem Sohne in die Feder diktiert Vol. 22* (Regensburg: G. Bosse, 1940), 60-61.

### 3.3 “Proper and improper”<sup>691</sup>: Following the rules?

‘What a shame that there are no rules at hand concerning this art of fantasy’

Mattheson, *Der Vollkommene Capellmeister* 1739, §92

Having established the norm or the ideal, this by no means indicates that improvisers stuck to these. In fact, the existence of treatise instructions rather implies a need for consistency and a reigning in of creativity to fit contemporary ideals of good taste. A great deal can be learnt, however, from a reading of these rules. Despite Mattheson’s lament, he himself gives over some rules on the art and the current researcher has the advantage of being able to collate rules from sources spanning the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>692</sup> The most explicit rules on the art of fantasy can be found in Kollmann’s *An Essay on Musical Harmony* (1796) and Mattheson’s *Der Vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739) but smaller nuggets of information can be gleaned from dictionary and diary entries from the period. I have brought these together and separated them into themes for easy access and comparison for the modern performer. These sources combined provide guidance on structure, instrumentation, time, rhythm, tonality, harmony and character. Advice often stresses its improvisatory nature. This is emphasised by Kollmann, Rousseau, Stainer and Barrett and Walther.<sup>693</sup> Mersenne advises the improviser to ‘us[e] everything that comes to his mind’.<sup>694</sup> Kollmann suggests preliminary work before tackling the fantasia. He advises learning preludes from his *An Introduction to the Art of Preluding* first and reading part two from Emanuel Bach’s *Versuch*.<sup>695</sup> It can therefore be inferred that the spirit and style of preluding was linked to that for the fantasia. As often improvised or also improvisatory in feel, learning to play notated preludes would not only have introduced musicians to creative freedom but cemented an understanding of harmony.

#### 3.3.1 Structure

Beginning with structure, what is perhaps most common amongst early modern writings on the musical fantasia is the perception of freedom. Kircher describes it as ‘bound to nothing, neither to

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<sup>691</sup> Kollmann, *An Essay*.

<sup>692</sup> Johann Mattheson, *Der Vollkommene Capellmeister* (Hamburg, 1739), §92.

<sup>693</sup> Kollmann, *An Essay*, 122. And Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The complete dictionary of music. Consisting of a copious explanation of all words necessary to a true knowledge and understanding of music* (London, 1779), 166, 333. And John Stainer and William Alexander Barrett ed, *A Dictionary of Musical Terms* (London: Novello, 1876), 164.

<sup>694</sup> Marin Mersenne, *Harmonie Universelle* (Paris, 1636), II, S. 164. And Johann Gottfried Walther, *Musicalisches Lexicon* (1732), 239.

<sup>695</sup> Mattheson, *Der Vollkommene Capellmeister*, 120.

words nor to a melodic subject'.<sup>696</sup> Hoyle and Brotherton both state that the musician is 'not tied up to such strict rules' and similarly Mersenne writes that 'the composer is tied to nothing', while Brossard advises the musician to avoid 'confining himself to any rules, subjects, or passions'.<sup>697</sup> Walther also posits that a fantasia is 'without being tied to certain limits and nature of the act'.<sup>698</sup> The form is instead taken from 'the fantasy and skill of the author', 'subservient to fancy', the musician is free to 'taketh a point at his pleasure, and wresteth and turneth it as he list'.<sup>699</sup> Contrary to all this, Rousseau notes that a fantasia, in fact, 'may be a very regular piece'.<sup>700</sup> Kollmann explains that free fancies involve 'no fixed movement'.<sup>701</sup> He splits fantasias into two types: the free and the limited. 'Limited fancies' include preludes, cadences, variations, voluntaries and fugues.<sup>702</sup> Others name contrapuntal tendencies, such as Kircher who recognises counterpoint in conjunction with the fantasia and Mattheson who writes that a fantasia is 'without a formal theme and ostinato, without theme and subject that are worked out...now in one voice, now in many voices'.<sup>703</sup> These contrapuntal features are particularly recognisable in the renaissance viol consort fantasia. This is the type of fantasia discussed by Simpson who suggests that the musician 'imploy all his Art and Invention solely about the bringing in and carrying on of... Fugues'. He remarks that this fugue usually begins the fantasia before 'falling into Points of Division... but ending commonly in grave and harmonious Musick', it 'falls into some lighter Humour like a Madrigal'.<sup>704</sup>

### 3.3.2 Instrumentation

Moving onto instrumentation, the general consensus is for an instrumental piece; Morley notes that a fantasia can be 'for voices it is but seldom used' and Mersenne's description explains that the fantasia, 'without expressing the passion of any word', nevertheless creates affects.<sup>705</sup> The range of

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<sup>696</sup> A. Kircher, *Musurgia Universalis* (Rome: Ludovico Grignani, 1650). In Paul Collins, *The Stylus Phantasticus and Free Keyboard Music of the North German Baroque* (Routledge, 2017), 29.

<sup>697</sup> Hoyle, *Dictionarium musica*, 32. And J. Brotherton, *A short explication of such foreign words, as are made use of in musick books* (London: Brotherton, 1724), 30. And Mersenne, *Harmonie Universelle*, 206. And Sébastien de Brossard, *A musical dictionary*, 144.

<sup>698</sup> Walther, *Musicalisches Lexicon*, 239.

<sup>699</sup> Stainer and Barrett, *A Dictionary*, 164. And Milán, *Libro de música*. And Morley, *A plaine and easie introduction*, 206.

<sup>700</sup> Rousseau, *The complete dictionary of music*, 166.

<sup>701</sup> Kollmann, *An essay*, 121.

<sup>702</sup> *Ibid.*, 122-123.

<sup>703</sup> Kircher, *Musurgia Universalis*, 31. And Mattheson, *Der Vollkommene Capellmeister*, 253.

<sup>704</sup> Christopher Simpson, *A Compendium of Practical Musick* (London: William Godbid, 1667), 141. And Christopher Simpson, *The Division Viol* (London: William Godbid, 1659), 58.

<sup>705</sup> Kollmann, *An essay*, 121. And Rousseau, *The complete dictionary*, 166. And Kircher, *Musurgia Universalis*, 29. And Morley, *A plain and easie introduction*, 206. And Mersenne, *Harmonie Universelle*, 164.

instruments considered appropriate is large, from keyboard instruments such as the organ and harpsichord to string instruments including the violin, viola da gamba and lute.<sup>706</sup> Simpson's earlier contributions describe a viol consort as the most common instrumentation, although more broadly speaking, they could be simply for 'Instruments... of 6, 5, 4, and 3 parts'.<sup>707</sup> Rousseau and Mattheson suggest a solo instrument.<sup>708</sup>

### 3.3.3 Time and rhythm

Due to the often soloistic nature of the fantasia, writers describe the freedom possible in time and rhythm too. Kollmann writes that it can mainly be 'without measure' and that time signatures can change as frequently as the musician's fantasy permits.<sup>709</sup> Mattheson, similarly, notes a lack of 'actual observation of the measure'.<sup>710</sup> In terms of length, this is also free, Rousseau suggests continuing until 'he thinks it proper to finish'.<sup>711</sup> Freedom in rhythm, however, is encouraged to be balanced with contrast; Kollmann writes that 'a passage of one sort should be nearly balanced by one of another sort', while Morley encourages using 'quick motions, slow motions [but also] proportions'.<sup>712</sup>

### 3.3.4 Harmony and tonality

Discussions of harmony and tonality also advocate freedom. While Kollmann notes the necessity of fixing upon 'a certain key and mode', he also advises extensive modulation. This modulation, however, must be planned and adhere to compositional processes.<sup>713</sup> Similarly, Mattheson writes that it must 'often be led from one key into another completely contrary and distant'.<sup>714</sup> In his opinion, the fantasia could also end in any key, not necessarily that in which it began.<sup>715</sup> In complete contrast, Morley advises against modulation, instead preferring that the fantasia remain all in one

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<sup>706</sup> Kollmann, *An essay*, 121. And Mattheson in Collins, *The Stylus Phantasticus*, 29.

<sup>707</sup> Simpson, *A Compendium*, 141.

<sup>708</sup> Rousseau, *The complete dictionary*, 166, 333. And Mattheson in Collins, *The Stylus Phantasticus*, 29.

<sup>709</sup> Kollmann, *An essay*, 121.

<sup>710</sup> Mattheson, *Der Vollkommene Capellmeister*, 253.

<sup>711</sup> Rousseau, *The complete dictionary*, 333.

<sup>712</sup> Kollmann, *An essay*, 122. And Morley, *A plain and easie introduction*, 206.

<sup>713</sup> Kollmann, *An essay*, 122.

<sup>714</sup> Mattheson, *Der Vollkommene Capellmeister*, 253.

<sup>715</sup> *Ibid.*

key.<sup>716</sup> He instead encourages the use of ‘discords’ for dramatic effect.<sup>717</sup> Simpson, in a similar vein, suggests the use of chromatic notes for this purpose.<sup>718</sup> The other authors instead argue that the fantasia is an opportunity for the musician to demonstrate ‘a full command of harmony’, while Kircher notes its purpose was ‘to display genius and to teach the hidden design of harmony’, just as Rousseau writes that ‘the musician affects to search for, and gather, the principal strokes of harmony’.<sup>719</sup> They advise using ‘all kinds of otherwise unusual progressions’, ‘passing [through] the different chords of the mode, and even in going out sometimes’.<sup>720</sup> However, despite this freedom, ‘the rules of harmony must be observed even in the freest fancy’, according to Kollmann.<sup>721</sup>

### 3.3.5 Character

Many instructions refer to the ideal character for a fantasia. Its purpose was ‘to please, to overtake and to astonish’, according to Mattheson, and Arnold states that it should be full of ‘fancy or Humour’.<sup>722</sup> Again, there is a sense of compositional freedom. For Brotherton, it should include all the ‘freedom and liberty...that can reasonably be desir’d’, while for Brossard, the fantasia is an opportunity for ‘the composer [to] give loose to his fancy’ in which he can ‘use anything that comes into his head’.<sup>723</sup> For Stainer and Barrett, musicians should play ‘fantastically, in a grotesque manner’ and the style should be ‘as fancy directs’.<sup>724</sup> Likewise, Rousseau calls for ‘the style of fantasy, little united, filled with ideas, free from every constraint’.<sup>725</sup> In this manner, Mattheson also remarks that in regard to the fantasia, ‘nothing is so opposed as order and constraint’, writing that the style is ‘now swift, now hesitating’.<sup>726</sup> Kollmann, perhaps best expresses this sentiment by describing it as ‘like a series of thoughts in connection’.<sup>727</sup> Despite all this writing on freedom, some authors do advocate stylistic coherence, such as Kollmann himself who states that ‘it would be improper to pay no regard to any particular style at all, as to confine the fancy to one fixed style’, instead arguing that

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<sup>716</sup> Morley, *A plain and easie introduction*, 206.

<sup>717</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>718</sup> Simpson, *A Compendium*, 144.

<sup>719</sup> Kollmann, *An essay*, 122. And Kircher, *Musurgia Universalis*, 29. And Rousseau, *The complete dictionary*, 333.

<sup>720</sup> Mattheson, *Der Vollkommene Capellmeister*, 253. And Rousseau, *The complete dictionary*, 333.

<sup>721</sup> Kollmann, *An essay*, 120.

<sup>722</sup> Mattheson, *Der Vollkommene Capellmeister*, 253. And John Arnold, *The compleat psalmodist* (London: R. Brown, 1753), 39.

<sup>723</sup> Brotherton, *A short explication*, 30. And Brossard, *A musical dictionary*, 144.

<sup>724</sup> Stainer and Barrett, *A Dictionary*, 164.

<sup>725</sup> Rousseau, *The complete dictionary*, 386.

<sup>726</sup> Mattheson, *Der Vollkommene Capellmeister*, 253.

<sup>727</sup> Kollmann, *An essay*, 121.

the musician should begin and mostly remain in one style but that small changes are advisable.<sup>728</sup> Taking this a step further, Morley advises against changing the 'ayre'.<sup>729</sup> Indeed, Brotherton and Hoyle both describe the fantasia style as like an 'ayre' or 'air' and Walther understands a fantasia's impact as 'the effect of a good temperament'.<sup>730</sup> Callcott and Arnold liken it to the 'Capricious Style'.<sup>731</sup>

Writers felt the need to write rules which showcases the perceived prominence, accessibility and success of the improvised fantasia. These rules largely line up with the descriptions discussed earlier of performances and are evident in many composed examples, as the following chapter will discuss specifically in relation to violin fantasias.

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<sup>728</sup> Ibid.

<sup>729</sup> Morley, *A plaine and easie introduction*, 206.

<sup>730</sup> Brotherton, *A short explication*, 30. And Hoyle, *Dictionarium musica*, 32. And Walther, *Musicalisches Lexicon*, 239.

<sup>731</sup> John Wall Callcott, *Explanation of the notes, Marks, Words, &c, Used in Music by J.W. Callcott* (London, 1800), 56. And Arnold, *The compleat psalmodist*, 39.

## Chapter 4: Uncovering stylistic schemata: An analysis of composed fantasias

While written sources can provide insights into the experience, philosophy and aims of improvised music, the musical products and their sonic characteristics remain elusive. As such, the following chapters apply this theoretical knowledge to practice-led research and specifically to the violin. Analysing composed pieces as “examples” of typically improvisatory genres can help to bridge this gap; however, it must be kept in mind that the amount of time for reflection and editing that is allowed by the process of composition means that they are highly unlikely to be representative of improvised pieces. From these, some musical traits and characteristics that would have been in the improviser’s toolkit can be gathered. As Roger North noted, ‘this is exemplified in the game of chess... he hath most gambetts hath the advantage... so he that hath most musically passages drawne off from the musick of others and in most variety to be put together with extempory connection, is the best furnished for voluntary’.<sup>732</sup> However, the way in which they are linked together — which, to quote Kollmann, was ‘like a series of thoughts in connection’ — cannot be found in notated compositions.<sup>733</sup> They do, nevertheless, provide a necessary link between words and improvisation. As chapter 3 demonstrated, historical writings provide suggestions regarding the treatment of structure, instrumentation, time and rhythm, and harmony and tonality. This chapter reveals the treatment of these in practice, specifically for the violin, using fantasias by the prolific composers of this genre – Telemann, Matteis senior and Matteis junior – as case studies. By choosing to focus on these select examples, detailed guidance can be formed to aid stylistic improvisation in these individual styles, providing access to the improvised baroque fantasia for modern violinists. This approach, however, could be applied in further research to other instruments or composers to broaden our knowledge and revival of this practice.

### 4.1 Telemann

Perhaps currently the most widely known composer of fantasias in the eighteenth century, Telemann wrote collections of 12 each for solo violin, solo flute and solo viola da gamba: 36 overall. Due to their many similarities, I have chosen to analyse all of these in order to reveal broader themes which will have applicability for melody instrumentalists in general. These feel much less improvisatory than those by Matteis senior and junior, due to their strict forms and repetition,

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<sup>732</sup> Roger North, *An essay on musical ayre* [1715] (Canberra: Australian National University, 1977), 354.

<sup>733</sup> Augustus Frederic Christopher Kollmann, *An Essay On Practical Musical Composition: According To The Nature Of That Science And The Principles Of The Greatest Musical Authors* (London: Kollmann, 1799), 121.



although there are occasional Adagio moments — ‘improvisatory fragments’ which nod to the tradition of spontaneous composition.<sup>734</sup> While often discussed as good practice pieces for Bach’s solo works, technical virtuosity is displayed throughout to keep the impression of a bassline and melody.<sup>735</sup> Brown comments on the ‘almost encyclopaedic presentation’ of Telemann’s flute fantasias as they each take a different key’.<sup>736</sup> Despite the heavy dance influence, they are decidedly German in their treatment of ornamentation.<sup>737</sup> Geertz argues that they would have been most suitable for domestic playing, perhaps by experienced amateurs.<sup>738</sup> I used the earliest editions possible for my analysis to avoid picking up editorial additions from later editions. For Telemann’s violin fantasias, a manuscript remains which I used. For his gamba and flute fantasias I have worked from the first editions.<sup>739</sup> Despite the fact that these “flute” fantasias are attributed to the violin in this edition, Kuijken has convincingly argued for their status as Telemann’s flute fantasias.<sup>740</sup> These lengthy examples provide an introduction into the dance form inspired fantasia. In each fantasia, I looked at:

- Structure — length, repetition, contrast, dance forms and time signatures
- Harmony and tonality — keys, modulation, pedal points, chromaticism and double stops
- Melody and rhythm — range, intervals, motives and sequences

Choosing to look for these elements reflects the basic information needed to approach stylistic improvisation as well as a couple of specific features I noticed occurring often: the use of pedal notes and fragment repetition. Through this analysis, I discovered, primarily, that they are all very similar and so can easily be referred to as a style of fantasia. It is also, therefore, happily possible to compose or improvise similar fantasias by extracting and applying these similar features.

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<sup>734</sup> Rachel Brown, ‘Telemann Fantasias: a feat of ingenuity and inspiration,’ *The Flute Magazine* 27, no. 3 (2008): 35.

<sup>735</sup> Geertz, ‘Telemann’s Fantasias,’ lecture document.

<sup>736</sup> Brown, ‘Telemann Fantasias,’ 26.

<sup>737</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>738</sup> Geertz, ‘Telemann’s Fantasias,’ lecture document, 7.

<sup>739</sup> G.P. Telemann, *12 Sonaten für Violine und Basso continuo; 12 Fantasien für Violine* (manuscript, 1734), accessed March 3, 2021, <https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht/?PPN=PPN738088579>. And G.P. Telemann, *Fantasies pour la basse de viole* (Hamburg: G.P. Telemann), accessed March 3, 2021, [https://ks4.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/b/b1/IMSLP420308-PMLP677280-telemann\\_fantasias\\_para\\_gamba.pdf](https://ks4.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/b/b1/IMSLP420308-PMLP677280-telemann_fantasias_para_gamba.pdf). And G.P. Telemann, *12 Fantaisies à traversière sans basse* (Hamburg: G.P. Telemann, 1732), accessed March 3, 2021, [https://ks4.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/d/d9/IMSLP32138-PMLP54405-Telemann\\_12\\_Fantasias\\_for\\_Traversiere.pdf](https://ks4.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/d/d9/IMSLP32138-PMLP54405-Telemann_12_Fantasias_for_Traversiere.pdf).

<sup>740</sup> Barthold Kuijken, ‘Introduction to Telemann,’ *12 Fantasias for Flute TWV 40* (Monteux: Musica Rara, 1987), 2-13.

### 4.1.1 Structure

Telemann's fantasias often draw on dance forms for inspiration such as the corrente, sarabande, minuet, passepied, bourrée, gavotte and gigue, creating miniature suites following the typical slow, fast, slow, fast pattern. Some also borrow sonata characteristics such as movements in the style of an Aria, Grave, Andante, Siciliana or Toccata.<sup>741</sup> The gamba fantasias in particular include many sonata influences with sections in an Allegro, Adagio, Vivace, Andante, Presto, Largo, Grave, Scherzando, Dolce and Siciliana style.<sup>742</sup>

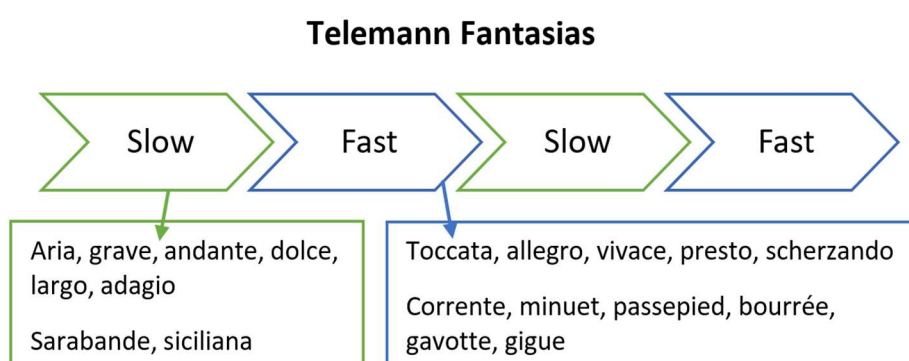


Figure 11: Diagram showing one typical structure for Telemann's fantasias and the titles used for slow and fast movements.

The fantasias vary from 62 (flute fantasia 1 – f.1) to 180 (violin fantasia 6 – v.6) bars in length (without repeats).<sup>743</sup> I chose not to include repeats in my assessment of length so that the result would reflect the number of bars of new content and also remain easier to compare across different movements and fantasias which do not always contain repeats (see figure 12 and table 2). Indeed, many repeats feature only in the dance style movements, acting therefore as a stylistic trope of dance music. The flute fantasias tend more towards the lower end of this length spectrum, such as f.1 which is 62 bars long and f.8 which is 72 bars, although there are some longer examples too including the 142 bars of f.10 and 125 in f.12. In contrast, the violin fantasias are almost all over 100 bars in length, the only exception to this being v.8 which is only 86 bars long. The longest violin

<sup>741</sup> Lois Kathryn Geertz, 'Telemann's Fantasias for solo Violin as precursors to the solo sonatas and partitas of J.S. Bach,' PhD lecture document (Oregon: University of Oregon, June 2014), 29.

<sup>742</sup> iClassical, 'Recently discovered Telemann Fantasias from Richard Boothby,' *iClassical*, July 24, 2018, accessed January 12, 2021, <https://iclassical.co.uk/recently-discovered-telemann-fantasias-from-richard-boothby/>. And recorded here: Richard Boothby, 'Telemann: Fantasias (12) for Viola da Gamba, TWV 40:26-37,' (Signum classics, 6<sup>th</sup> Jul 2018), CD.

<sup>743</sup> From this point on, I will term flute fantasia 1 f.1 and violin fantasia 6 v.6. This abbreviation system continues throughout this chapter: f. is used to denote a flute fantasia, v. refers to a violin fantasia and g. describes a gamba fantasia. The numbers which follow denote the number of fantasia.

fantasia is v.6 at 180 bars. The gamba fantasias hover around the 100 bars mark, varying much less in their length. G.12 is the shortest at 81 bars and g.3 the longest at 153 bars.

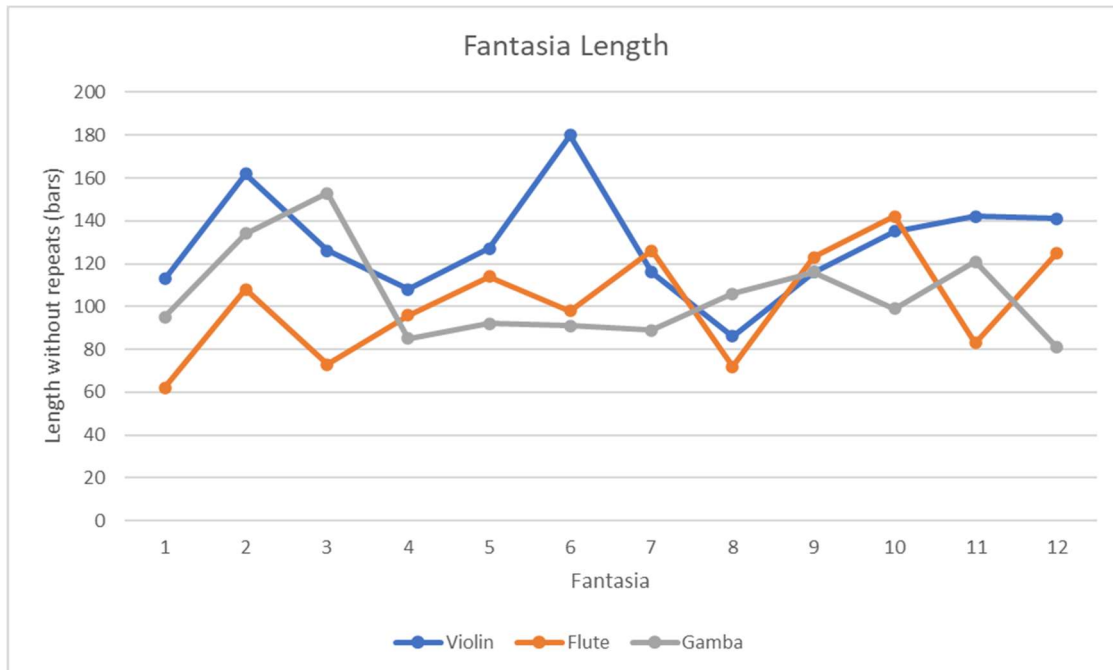


Figure 12: Chart displaying the lengths of each fantasia, showing the range to be between 62 to 180 bars but the majority are roughly 100 bars long.

Fantasia Number	Length in bars		
	Violin	Flute	Gamba
1	113	62	95
2	162	108	134
3	126	73	153
4	108	96	85
5	127	114	92
6	180	98	91
7	116	126	89
8	86	72	106
9	116	123	116
10	135	142	99
11	142	83	121
12	141	125	81

Table 2: Table showing the length of each fantasia without repeats. The shortest are highlighted in green and the longest in blue.

V.4 includes an Allegro which is in binary form with each section repeated. It is in 12/8 and its rhythmic content consists of running quavers and crotchets followed by a quaver (long, short rhythms). These are all common characteristics of a baroque gigue.<sup>744</sup>

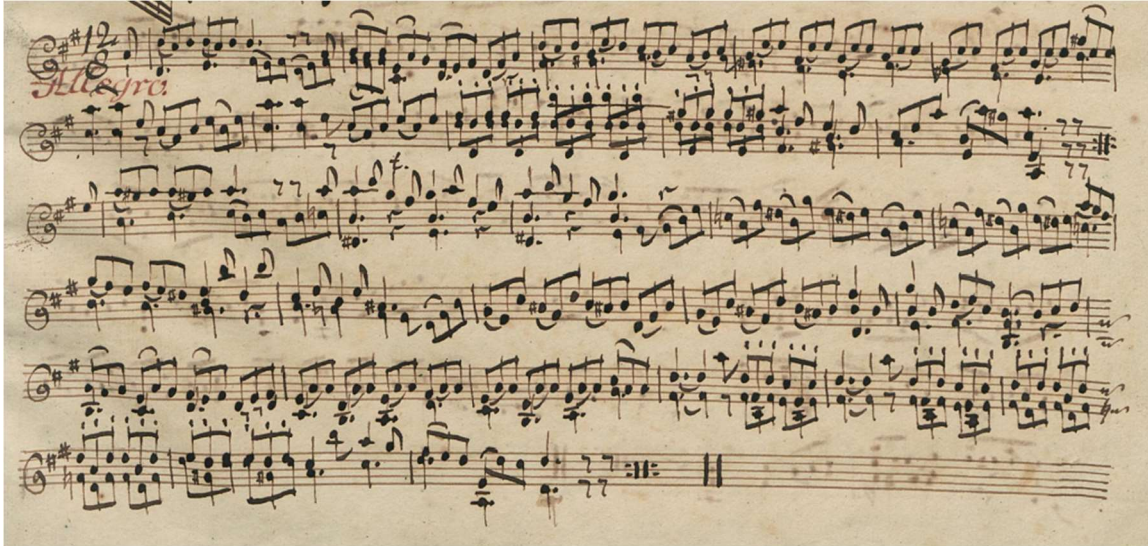


Figure 13: The Allegro from v.4 showing the use of gigue rhythms and a binary repeated structure.<sup>745</sup>

F.4 also contains a similar Allegro which is in a gigue style in binary form with repetition, conventional gigue rhythms and in 6/8, another common time signature for a gigue.<sup>746</sup>



Figure 14: The opening of the Allegro from f.4 showing gigue characteristics.<sup>747</sup>

<sup>744</sup> See Betty Bang Mather and Dean M. Karns, *Dance Rhythms of the French Baroque: A Handbook for performers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

<sup>745</sup> Image sourced: G.P. Telemann, *12 Sonaten für Violine und Basso continuo; 12 Fantasien für Violine* (manuscript, 1734), accessed March 3, 2021, <https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht/?PPN=PPN738088579>.

<sup>746</sup> Ibid.

<sup>747</sup> Image sourced: G.P. Telemann, *12 Fantaisies à traversière sans basse* (Hamburg: G.P. Telemann, 1732), accessed March 3, 2021, [https://ks4.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/d/d9/IMSLP32138-PMLP54405-Telemann\\_12\\_Fantasias\\_for\\_Traversiere.pdf](https://ks4.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/d/d9/IMSLP32138-PMLP54405-Telemann_12_Fantasias_for_Traversiere.pdf).



Another common dance form adopted across all three sets is the sarabande. V.1 and v. 6 are examples of this, both including a Grave which, in 3/2 with largely minim movement, reflects sarabande conventions (see figures 15 and 16).<sup>748</sup>



Figure 15: Grave from v.1 showing sarabande characteristics.<sup>749</sup>

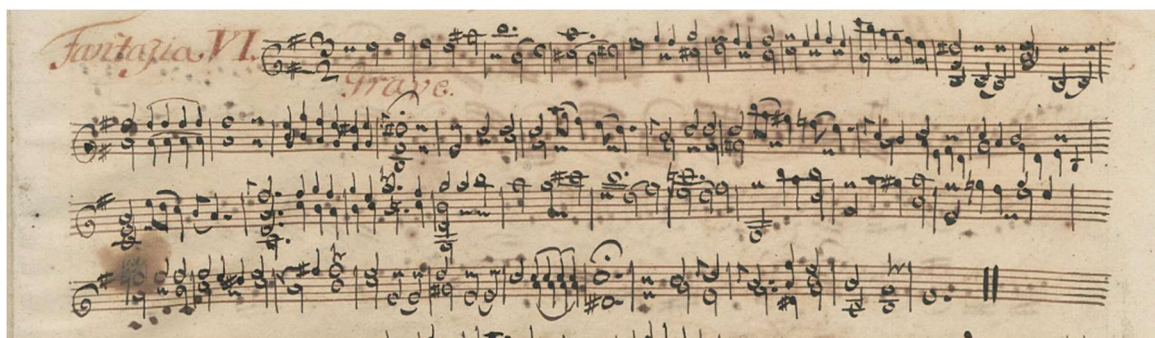


Figure 16: Grave from v.6 showing sarabande characteristics.<sup>750</sup>

Indeed, most fantasias containing dance sections included either a gigue or a sarabande. Telemann generally refrains from labelling these sections as such but the use of characteristics and conventions in rhythm, form and time signature which are the defining features of baroque dance music, clearly designates them as dance sections.<sup>751</sup> The exception to this is the Siciliana which Telemann often titles, such as for the third section of v.6.



Figure 17: The opening from the Siciliana in v.6 showing a rare example of a titled dance section.<sup>752</sup>

<sup>748</sup> Ibid.

<sup>749</sup> Image sourced: Telemann, *12 Sonaten für Violine und Basso continuo*, <https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht/?PPN=PPN738088579>.

<sup>750</sup> Ibid.

<sup>751</sup> Ibid.

<sup>752</sup> Ibid.

The inclusion of the obvious dance sections is common throughout. Of his gamba fantasias, 10 clearly include dance sections, while his flute and violin fantasias each include 8 (see figure 18).

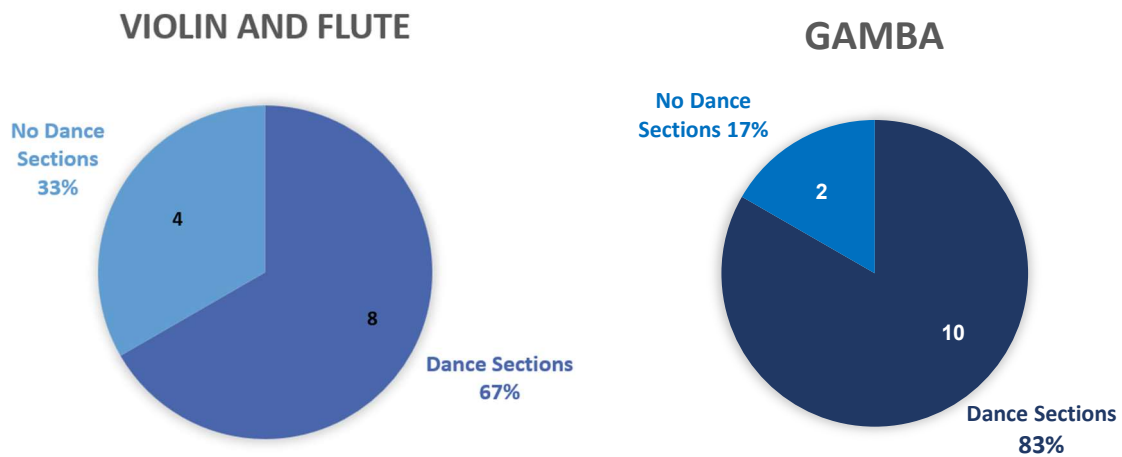


Figure 18: Charts showing the high proportion of dance sections across all the fantasias.

Telemann uses a range of time signatures to reflect the dance character or to contribute to the contrasting effects between sections. Common time signatures include: 2/4, 3/4, 4/4 and 3/2. He often also has a section in either 3/8, 6/8, 9/8 or 12/8. 2/2 is rarer, occurring only in v.12 and gamba fantasia 11 (g.11).

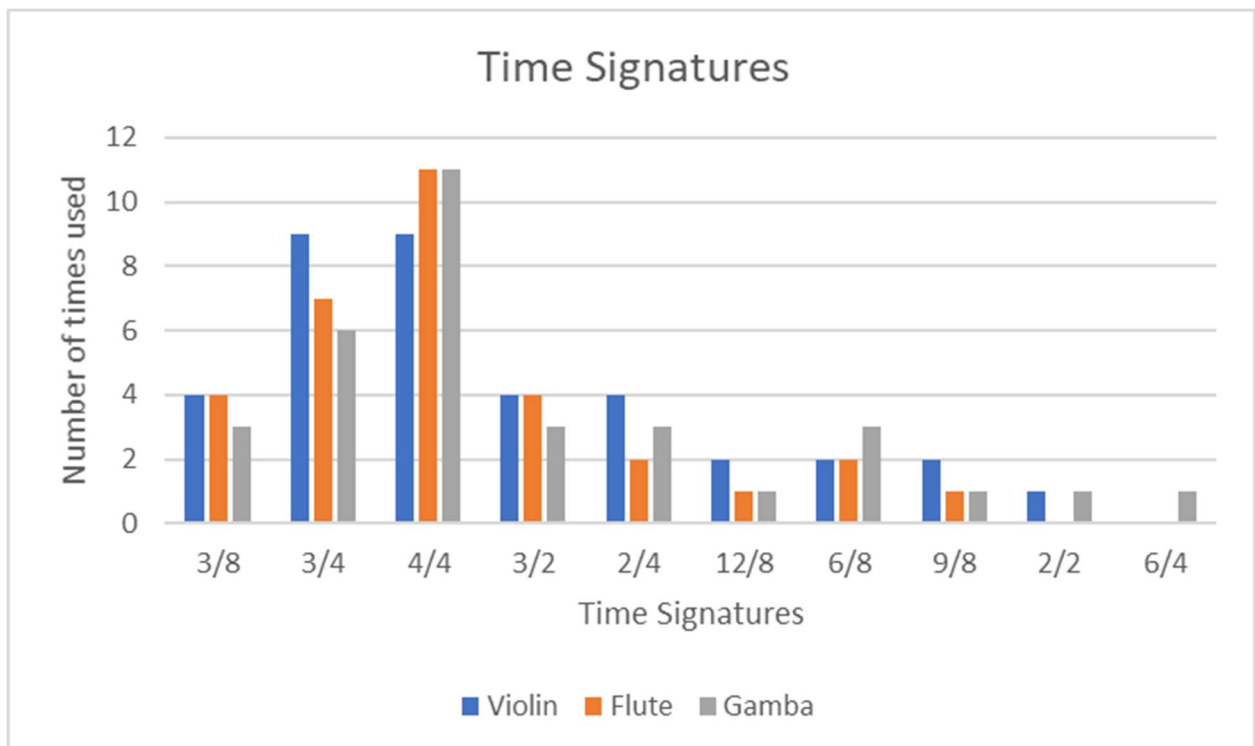


Figure 19: Chart showing the frequency with which each time signature is used, demonstrating that 4/4 and 3/4 are the most common.

A common feature across instruments is the use of contrasting sections within each fantasia to create different moods, demand different speeds and explore related keys. These often contrast directly with the neighbouring sections. For instance, a fast section is usually followed by a slow section. V.3, as an example of Telemann's use of contrast, includes an opening Adagio which is followed by a Presto and Grave before finishing with a Vivace. These sections are highly contrasting in speed but also time signature: while the Adagio and Presto are in common time, the Grave moves to 3/2 and the Vivace is in 3/8.



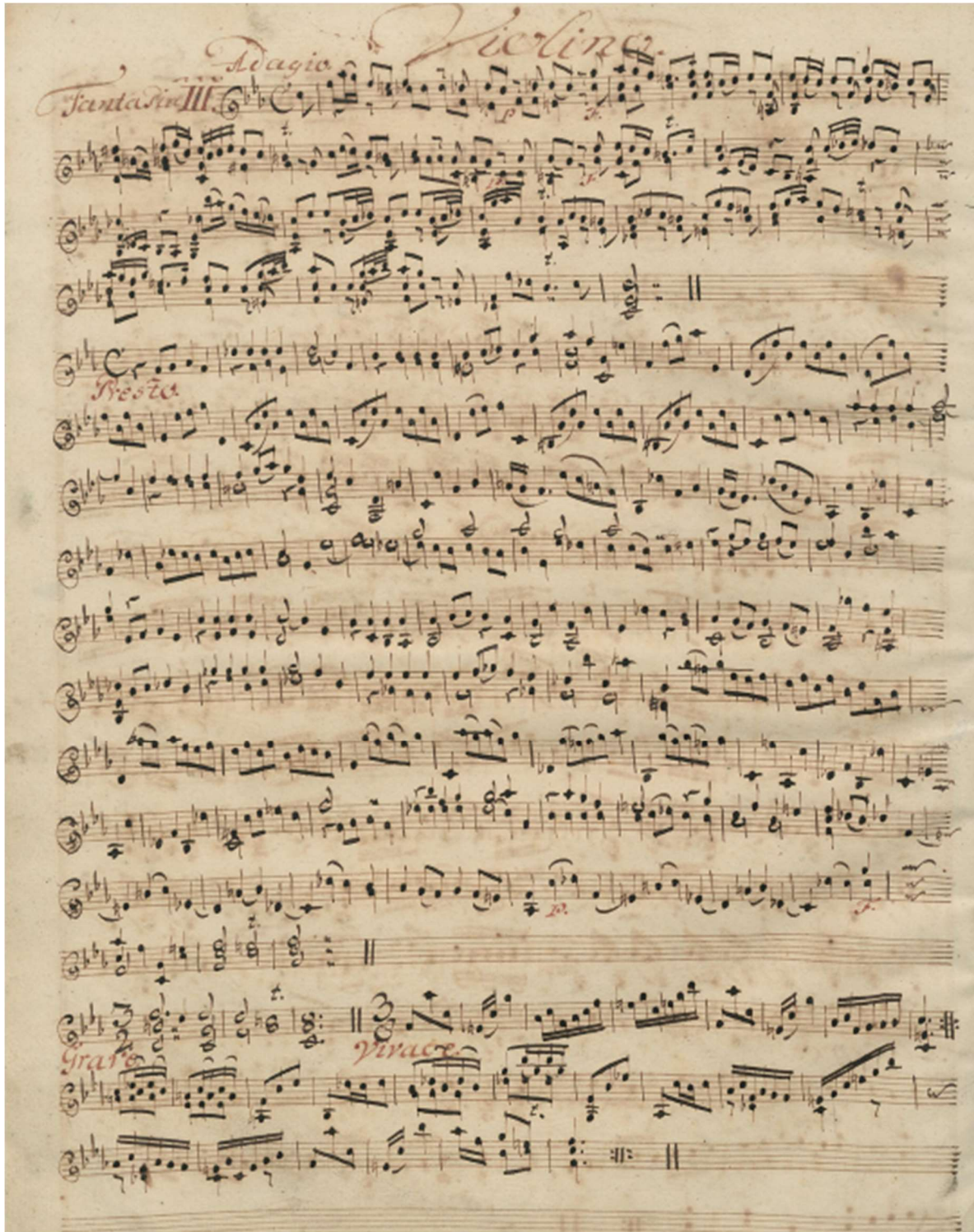


Figure 20: V.3 showing Telemann's use of contrasting sections.<sup>753</sup>

The use of contrast through tempo, character, key and time signature is also reflected on a smaller scale in his use of echoes. Occasionally, these are marked as forte and piano in red on the

<sup>753</sup> Image sourced: Telemann, *12 Sonaten für Violine und Basso continuo*, <https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht/?PPN=PPN738088579>.



1735 violin manuscript when a short phrase is repeated exactly (see figure 21) but this repetition occurs throughout all three instrumentations, though not always marked by dynamic variation.<sup>754</sup>



Figure 21: The opening of the Largo from v.1 showing the addition of red ink calling for dynamic contrast in moments of exact small motive repetition.<sup>755</sup>

Small scale repetition can be found in all his violin fantasias, in 8 of those for flute and 5 of those for gamba. The two prevailing common structural formats take three parts, either: fast, slow, fast or slow, fast, fast.

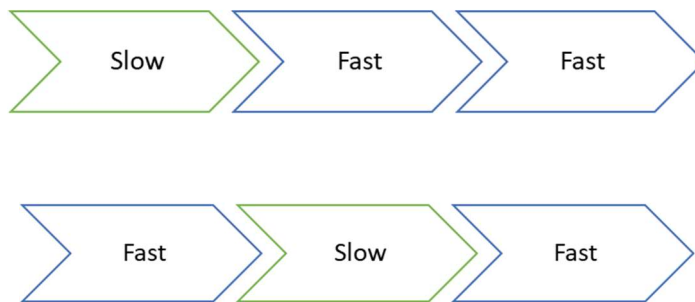


Figure 22: Diagrams showing the two most common structural formats. See figure 11 for common slow and fast movement titles.

Many violin and flute fantasias follow this second structure, while the gamba fantasias favour the first. F.4, for example, contains an Andante, Allegro and then Presto. Some contain four sections such as f.9 which begins with an Affettuoso before introducing an Allegro, Grave and Vivace. These sections vary in length from the Grave from v.3 which lasts just 3 bars, to much longer often fast sections such as the Presto in the same v.3 or the Presto in v.6. The smallest number of sections used is three, while f.12 presents seven. This is highly unusual though, with only three others (g.10, v.5 and f.5) taking six sections and two with five (g.1 and f.3), while the rest are formed of three or four. Figure 23 shows the proportion of each number of sections across all violin, flute and gamba fantasias.

<sup>754</sup> Telemann, *12 Sonaten für Violine und Basso continuo; 12 Fantasien für Violine*.

<sup>755</sup> Image sourced: Telemann, *12 Sonaten für Violine und Basso continuo*, <https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht/?PPN=PPN738088579>.

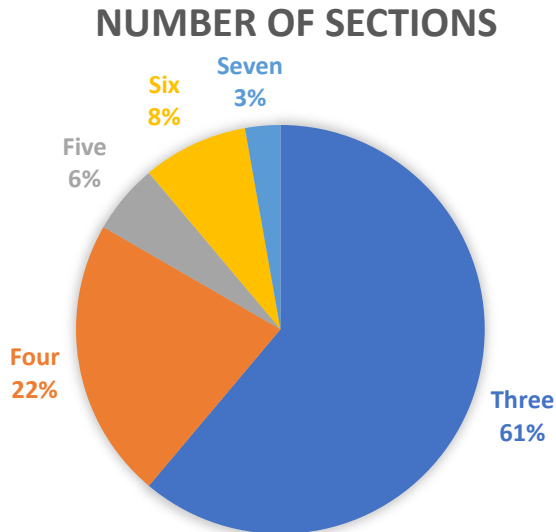


Figure 23: Percentages of each number of sections used by Telemann across his violin, flute and gamba fantasias.

#### 4.1.2 Harmony and tonality

The keys used are A, Bb, C, D, Eb, E, F and G majors and A, B, C, D, E, F, F# and G minors. Figures 24 and 25 present the keys used for each fantasia and demonstrate that, while D major was the most common key, occurring in 4 fantasias, within each instrument set, keys are not repeated, except the two instances of D major in the violin set. This selection of keys is unsurprising as these are all relatively comfortable for each instrument to play; introducing others would result in greater technical difficulties and these keys were not in common use.<sup>756</sup>

<sup>756</sup> Judy Tarling, *Baroque String Playing for ingenious learners, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* (Hertfordshire: Corda Music, 2013), 7.

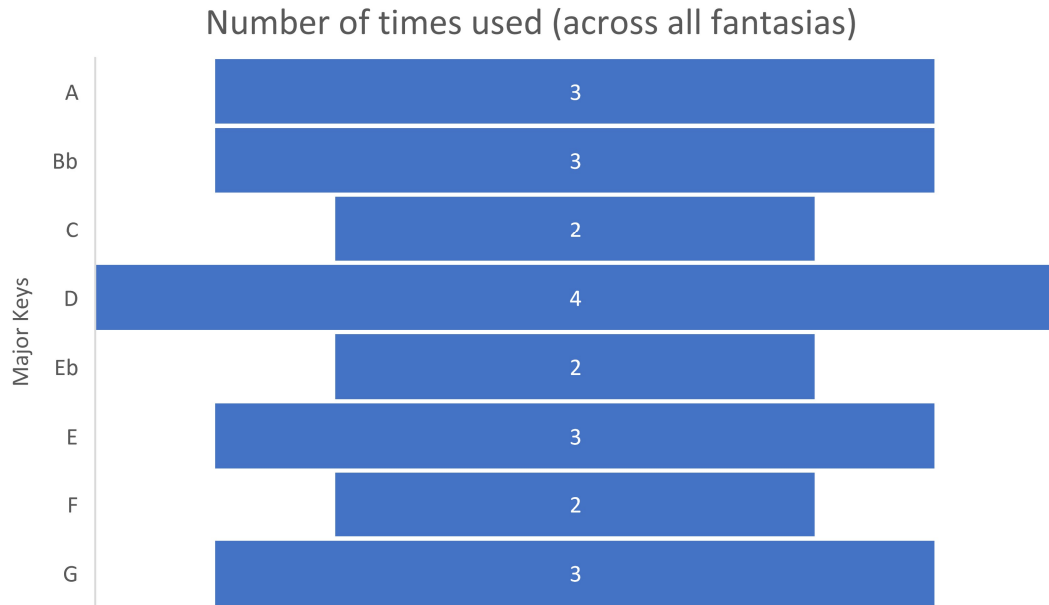


Figure 24: Chart showing the range of major keys used and that D major is the most commonly used major key.

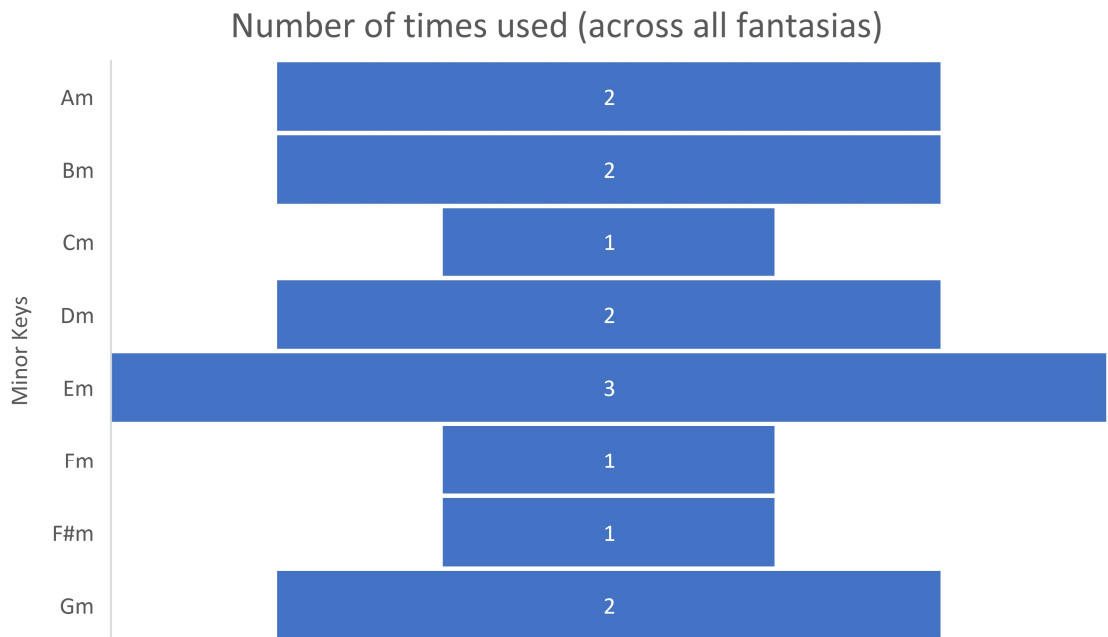


Figure 25: Chart showing the range of minor keys used, that these are generally used less than major keys and that E minor is the most commonly used minor key.

New sections often begin in a new but related key such as the Grave from v.1 which is in the relative minor (G minor) while the other sections are in Bb major. This change is normally to the relative major or minor. The fantasias always begin and end in the tonic key, however. If the tonic is minor, the fantasia occasionally ends in the tonic major such as the Presto from v.12 which ends the

otherwise A minor fantasia in A major. Figures 24 and 25 show the tonalities chosen for the whole piece but there are also additional short passing modulations within each fantasia. These often naturally occur through sequences, for instance. F.1 exhibits this well. In bars 7–9 of the opening Vivace, Telemann uses a rising sequence to move in passing to the dominant E major and similarly in bars 15–16 he uses a rising sequence to move through the relative minor of the upcoming key B minor to the subdominant D major (see figure 26).

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled 'f.1 Vivace'. It consists of four staves of music. Two annotations are present: a blue box highlights a sequence of notes in the second staff, with the text 'Use of sequence to move to E' to its right; a green box highlights a sequence of notes in the third staff, with the text 'Use of sequence to move through Bm to D' to its left.

Figure 26: Passage from f.1 Vivace showing the use of sequence to modulate in passing (rather than a structural modulation) to related keys. Here, Telemann modulates in bars 7–9 to E major and in bars 15–16 through B minor to D major.<sup>757</sup>

More substantial modulations are to the relative major or minor, dominant or the relative major or minor or dominant of the new key (see figure 27).

<sup>757</sup> Image sourced: Telemann, *12 Fantaisies à traversière sans basse*, [https://ks4.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/d/d9/IMSLP32138-PMLP54405-Telemann\\_12\\_Fantasias\\_for\\_Traversiere.pdf](https://ks4.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/d/d9/IMSLP32138-PMLP54405-Telemann_12_Fantasias_for_Traversiere.pdf).

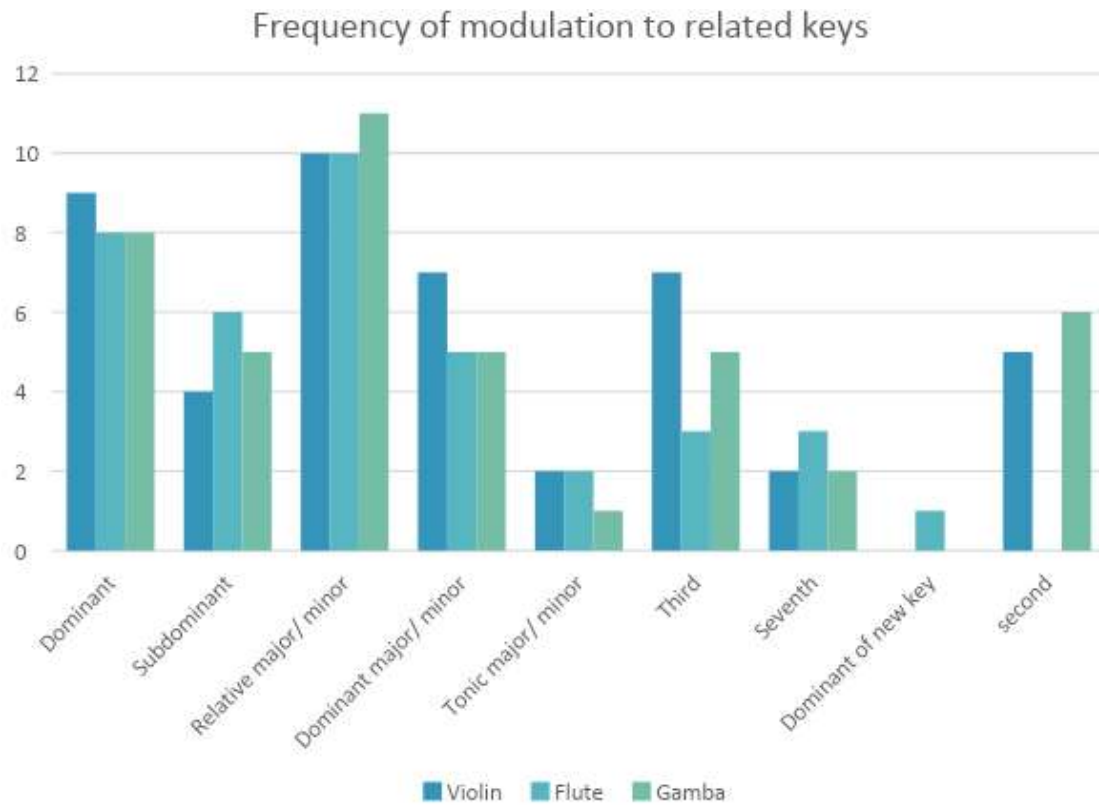


Figure 27: Chart showing the frequency of modulation to related keys (the third, seventh and second are all used as traditional related keys of the new key).

Figure 27 shows that modulating to the relative major or minor is the most common followed by the dominant. F.2 exemplifies this as it modulates in bars 76–79 to modulate to the dominant minor E minor. A particularly interesting example, this modulation is achieved through chromaticism (see figure 28).



Figure 28: F.2 Allegro showing the use of chromaticism to modulate to E minor in bars 76–79.<sup>758</sup>

Chromatic melodic lines are also a feature of several fantasias, including the Grave from v.1 (see figure 29).



Figure 29: Chromaticism in v.1 Grave.<sup>759</sup>

Telemann often includes short passages with a dominant or tonic pedal. As these are all melody instruments, these are usually repeated quavers or semiquavers on the structural beats, with a scalic or arpeggiated melody occurring in between. This gives the illusion of a bassline and of two voices, a technique which is used throughout the fantasias but perhaps most easily observed in the flute fantasias where double stops are not possible which figure 30 shows.

<sup>758</sup> Image sourced: Telemann, *12 Fantaisies à traversière sans basse*, [https://ks4.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/d/d9/IMSLP32138-PMLP54405-Telemann\\_12\\_Fantasias\\_for\\_Traversiere.pdf](https://ks4.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/d/d9/IMSLP32138-PMLP54405-Telemann_12_Fantasias_for_Traversiere.pdf).

<sup>759</sup> Image sourced: Telemann, *12 Sonaten für Violine und Basso continuo; 12 Fantasien für Violine*, <https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht/?PPN=PPN738088579>.





Figure 30: Use of tonic and dominant pedals in the Allegro from f.9.<sup>760</sup>

Telemann's extensive use of double stops and chords in the violin and gamba fantasias also help to clarify the harmony by providing a bassline such as in the Allegro from v.4, as well as occasionally providing an entirely different voice such as in the Allegro in v.3 (see figures 31 and 32). These double stops range from 2nds to 8ves, while chords are triple or quadruple stops for the violin and up to sextuple for the gamba which end the first section from g.2 and the Allegro from g.11.



Figure 31: Use of double stops in bars 3–5 of the v.4 Allegro as a bassline.<sup>761</sup>

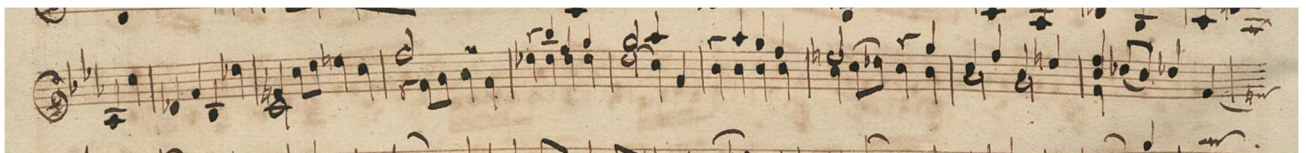


Figure 32: Use of double stops to create another musical voice in bars 65–70 of v.3 Presto.<sup>762</sup>

#### 4.1.3 Melody and rhythm

Melodies are built from short scalic passages and longer explorations of arpeggios. Figure 33 demonstrates this using v.12 as an example, highlighting the mix of scales and arpeggios.

<sup>760</sup> Image sourced: Telemann, *12 Fantaisies à traversière sans basse*, [https://ks4.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/d/d9/IMSLP32138-PMLP54405-Telemann\\_12\\_Fantaisies\\_for\\_Traversiere.pdf](https://ks4.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/d/d9/IMSLP32138-PMLP54405-Telemann_12_Fantaisies_for_Traversiere.pdf).

<sup>761</sup> Image Sourced: Telemann, *12 Sonaten für Violine und Basso continuo*, <https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht/?PPN=PPN738088579>

<sup>762</sup> Ibid.

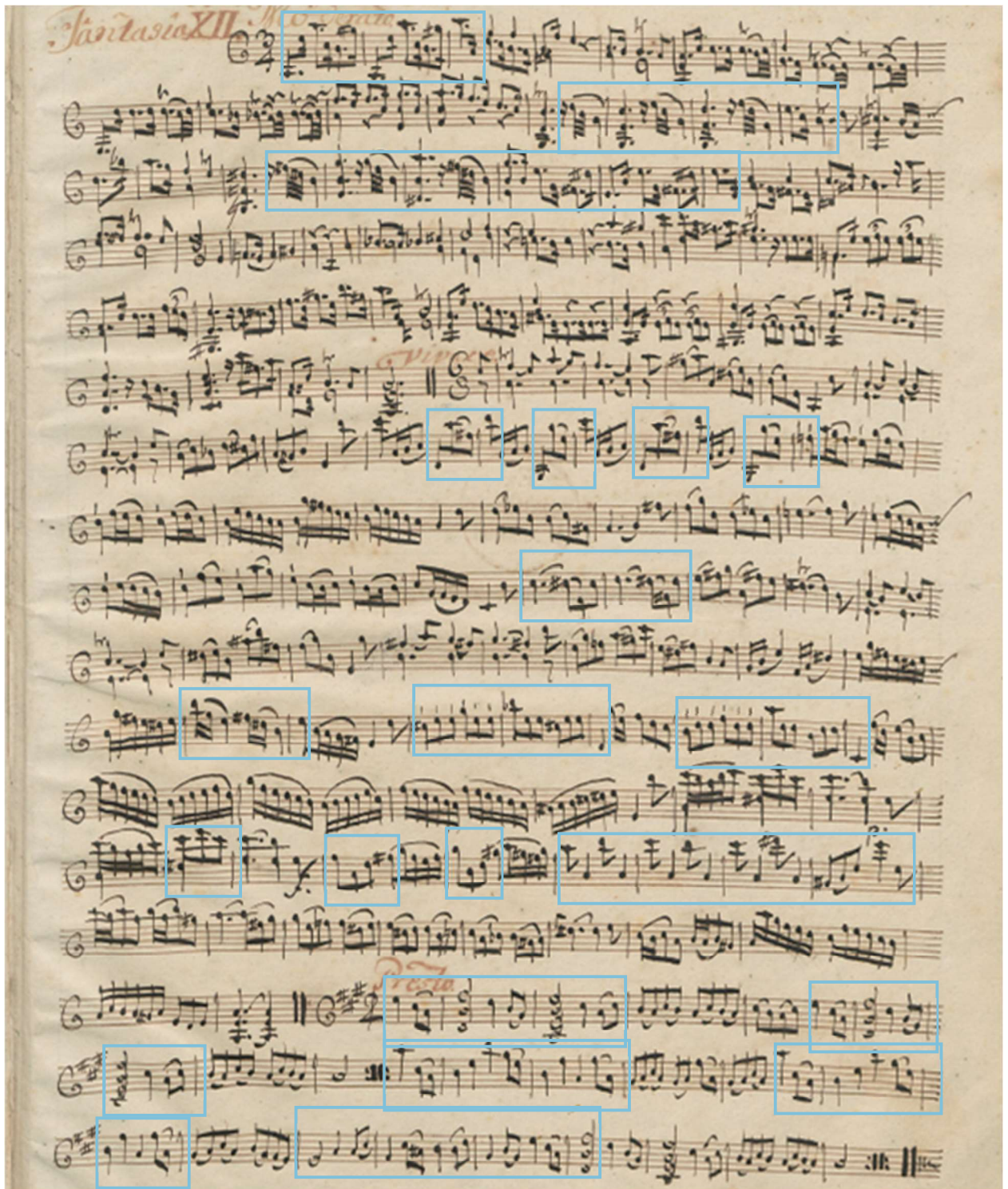


Figure 33: Analysis of v.12 demonstrating that melodies are made up of a mix of scales and arpeggios.<sup>763</sup> The boxes highlight clear arpeggios; the rest is largely made up of scalic movement.

<sup>763</sup> Ibid.



These include frequent large leaps, as was characteristic of baroque instrumental music, differentiating it from vocal music, and can be repetitive in nature. There are some examples of suspensions such as in v.3 (see figure 34), although these are rare. V.5 and g.8 contain interesting “walking basslines” in their slow sections (see figure 35) and g.7 and 9 have chromatic basslines (see figure 36).

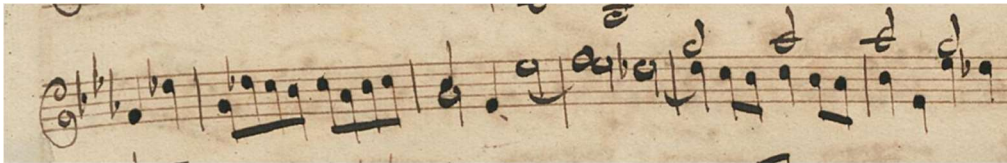


Figure 34: Use of suspensions in v.3 Presto in bars 29–32.<sup>764</sup>



V.5



G.8

Figure 35: Walking basslines from the openings of the v.5 Andante and g.8 Grave.<sup>765</sup>



G.7



G.9

Figure 36: Chromatic basslines in g.7 Vivace bars 3–6 and g.9 in bar 24 of the Presto.<sup>766</sup>

<sup>764</sup> Ibid.

<sup>765</sup> Ibid. And Telemann, *Fantasies pour la basse de violle*, [https://ks4.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/b/b1/IMSLP420308-PMLP677280-telemann\\_fantasias\\_para\\_gamba.pdf](https://ks4.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/b/b1/IMSLP420308-PMLP677280-telemann_fantasias_para_gamba.pdf).

<sup>766</sup> Telemann, *Fantasies pour la basse de violle*, [https://ks4.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/b/b1/IMSLP420308-PMLP677280-telemann\\_fantasias\\_para\\_gamba.pdf](https://ks4.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/b/b1/IMSLP420308-PMLP677280-telemann_fantasias_para_gamba.pdf).

Many fantasias include melodic fragments which move around the interval of a third: these include turn-like figures, escape notes and written-out mordents. These are particularly common in the gamba fantasias (see figure 37, g.1 and 2).

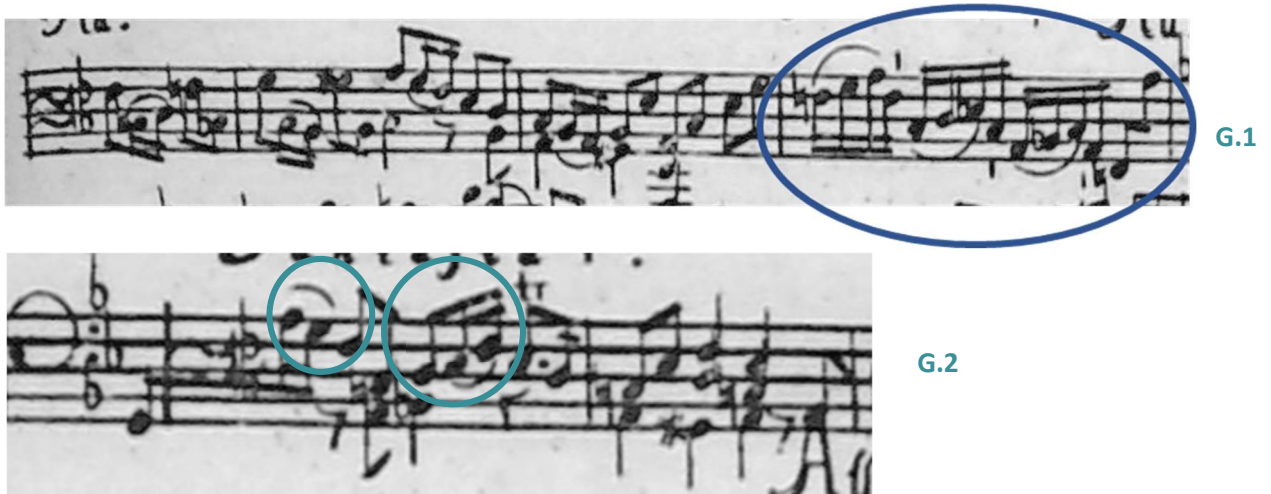


Figure 37: Melodic movement around the third in g.1 Allegro bar 6 and g.2 opening section, bar 4.<sup>767</sup>

G.6 has an interesting and unusual folk feel to its scherzando, employing drones (see figure 38).



Figure 38: Use of drones to create a folk feel in g.6 Scherzando.<sup>768</sup>

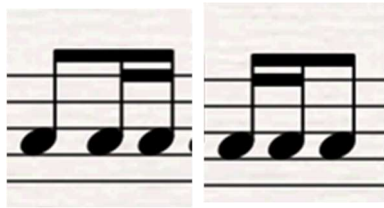
Telemann usually employs the whole usual range for each instrument but uses the extremities sparingly. For the violin fantasias, the highest note used is E in fourth position. Both separate and slurred notes are used in all three instrumentations.

Common rhythmic devices include brief moments of triplets, dotted rhythms, Scottish snaps, running semiquavers and those in figure 39.

<sup>767</sup> Ibid.

<sup>768</sup> Ibid.

### Simple Time



### Compound time

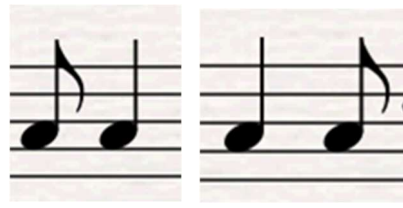


Figure 39: Transcriptions of typical rhythmic features across all three instrumentations. The first two are common in simple time movements (long, 2 short and 2 short, long), while the last two are most often found in compound time movements (long, short and short, long).

Figure 40 presents the number of fantasias containing each rhythm. This shows that the first two rhythms in figure 39 (when expanded or diminished proportionally) are the most common along with running notes, occurring in all the fantasias for each instrument, while Scottish snaps only occur in three fantasias over all instrument sets.

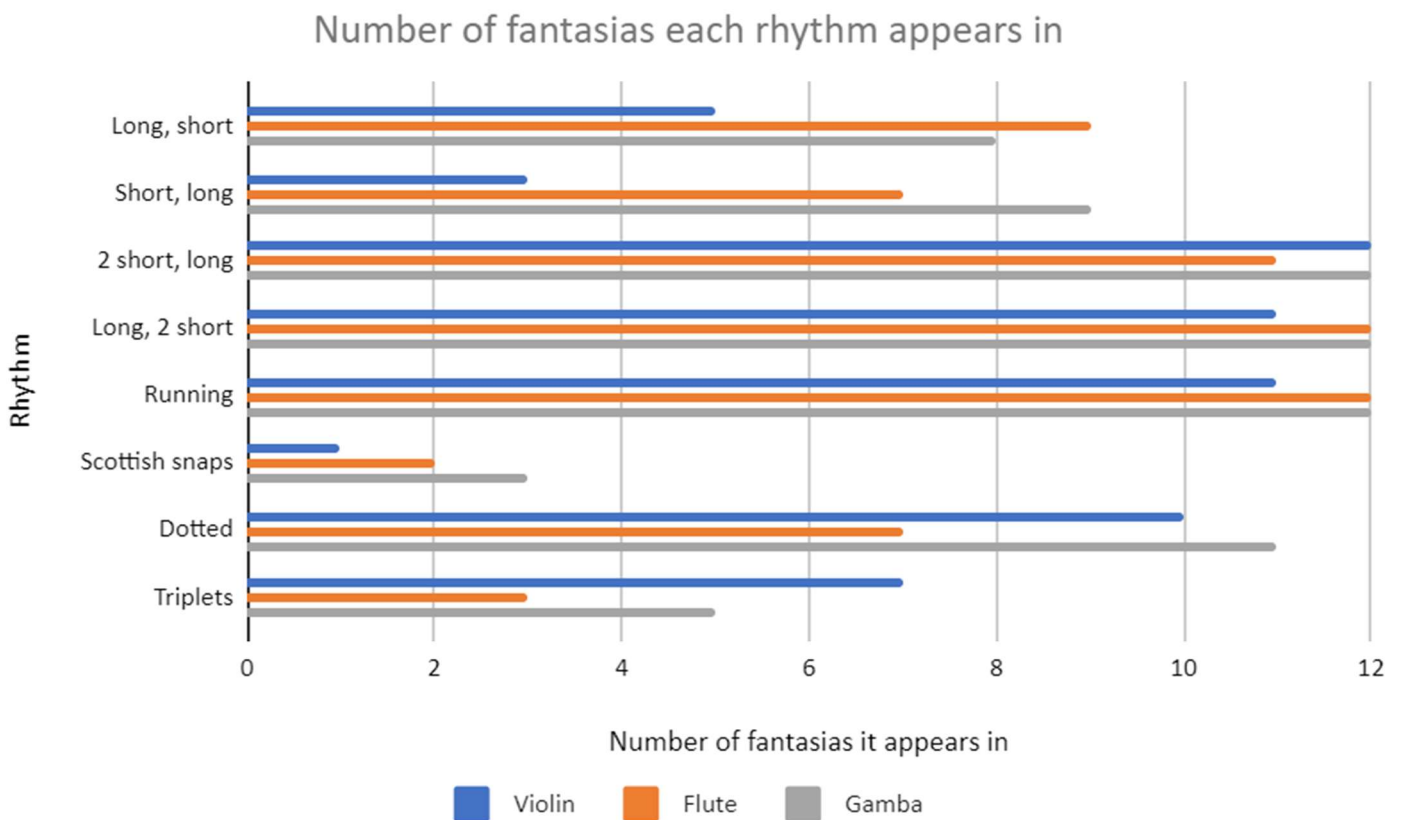


Figure 40: Graph showing the number of fantasias in which each rhythm appears.

Many movements contain a mix of most, if not all of these rhythms, while gigue movements tend to just include the two compound time rhythms in figure 39 along with running quavers. Dotted rhythms are common at cadences and in first movements which give a feel of a French overture. F.7 is perhaps the best example of this (see figure 41).

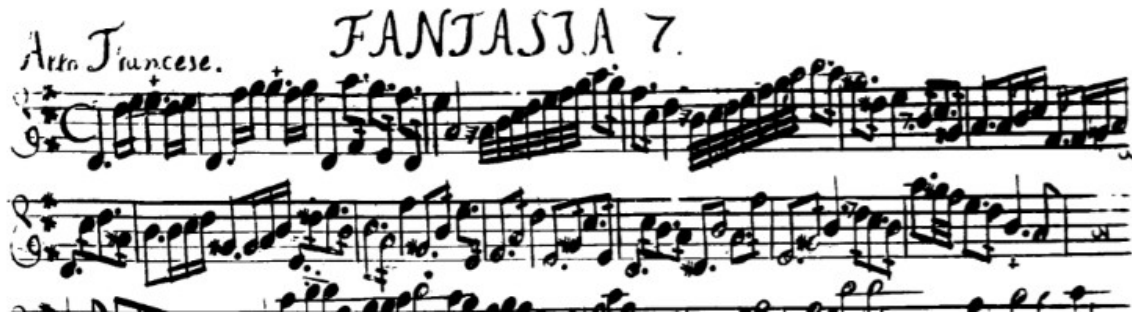


Figure 41: Dotted rhythms in the opening section of f.7 to give a feel of a French overture.<sup>769</sup>

#### 4.1.4 10 Guidelines for improvisation

From these results, we can extract some basic principles for the improviser:

- 1) Use the whole common range of your instrument (for violinists up to E in fourth position).
- 2) Split your fantasia into at least three sections employing contrasting tempi, time signatures, characters and keys.
- 3) Include sections with dance characteristics, repeating where appropriate.
- 4) Use sequences and chromaticism to modulate in passing but keep more substantial modulations to the relative major or minor and the dominant.
- 5) Include a mixture of separate and slurred notes and dynamic contrasts for small phrase repetitions.
- 6) Base your melody on arpeggios and scales, with occasional chromaticism and feel free to use large disjunct leaps.
- 7) Use the rhythmic devices mentioned above.
- 8) Create an illusion of a bassline or second voice through double stops or melodic line. Include dominant or tonic pedals in this way.

<sup>769</sup> Image sourced: Telemann, *12 Fantaisies à traversière sans basse*, [https://ks4.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/d/d9/IMSLP32138-PMLP54405-Telemann\\_12\\_Fantasias\\_for\\_Traversiere.pdf](https://ks4.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/d/d9/IMSLP32138-PMLP54405-Telemann_12_Fantasias_for_Traversiere.pdf).

- 9) Play in the key of A, Bb, C, D, Eb, E, F or G major or A, B, C, D, E, F, F# or G minor.
- 10) Play for about 100 bars (not including repeats).

I have applied these instructions firstly to a set of my own fantasias, composed in the style of Telemann to later inform stylistic improvisations (see 4.3.1).

## 4.2 The Matteis Family

As well as fantasias for solo violin, Nicola Matteis senior composed fantasia movements for violin and continuo within his Ayres for violin. He also included a Passaggio Rotto in an Ayre from book 2 which is in a similar spirit to his other fantasias. My analysis covers all these fantasias as well as related titles in his accompanied works such as ricercata and capriccio, again looking at structure, harmony and tonality, and melody and rhythm, specifically for the violin. I also include fantasias by his son Nicola Matteis junior who created some lengthier examples. The pieces included in this analysis are as follows:

Unaccompanied by Matteis junior:

- Alia Fantasia
- Fantasia in Cm (Con discretione and Molto Adagio)

Unaccompanied by Matteis senior:

- Passaggio rotto and Fantasia in A minor, Ayres book 2
- Fantasia in Bb major, Ayres book 2

Accompanied by Matteis senior:

- Fuga in Fantasia, Ayres book 4
- Proludio in Fantasia, Ayres book 1
- Fantasia in Dm, Ayres book 2
- Ricercata in Gm, Ayres book 2
- Ricercata in Bm, Ayres book 1
- Ricercata in C, Ayres book 1
- Capriccio in G, Ayres book 2

Jones argues that Matteis' *Fantasia* in C minor and his *Alia Fantasia* are 'almost certainly by the younger Matteis', also named Nicola.<sup>770</sup> I have included the related titles in my analysis to account in part for the overlap in nomenclature of the time because these pieces display similar characteristics and therefore can help to shed more light on the fantasia as a genre.<sup>771</sup> The majority of their fantasias are reminiscent of a prelude. Matteis junior's *Alia Fantasia* is, however, distinctive in style, made up of continuous arpeggiated chords; the second movement of his solo *Fantasia* in C minor is formed of continuous repeated chords; and Matteis senior's solo *Fantasia* in A minor is contrapuntal. The *Fuga in Fantasia* movement from book 4 of Ayres by Matteis senior also demonstrates similar characteristics to his contrapuntal fantasia in A minor. It is not a strict fugue but treats material contrapuntally and imitatively.

#### 4.2.1 Structure

Of their unaccompanied fantasias, *Fantasia* in Bb major is 47 bars in length, while *Alia Fantasia* and *Fantasia* in C minor are over 80 bars long. *Fantasia* in C minor, however, is divided into two parts: an opening prelude style section 'Con discretione' (30 bars) and repeated chords forming a 'Molto Adagio' movement (56 bars). If considered in context, Matteis senior's *Fantasia* from book 2 in A minor could also be seen as following this structure as the previous movement, although labelled *Passaggio rotto*, is similar to his Bb major solo *Fantasia* and lasts 51 bars, the *Fantasia* in A minor itself lasts 35 bars and takes on a contrapuntal texture. All these fantasias are in 4/4.

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<sup>770</sup> Simon Jones, 'The stupendous Nicola *Matteis*: an exploration of his life, his works for the violin and his performing style,' (PhD Dissertation. University of York, 2003), 162.

<sup>771</sup> Caldwell, *English Keyboard Music*, 66.

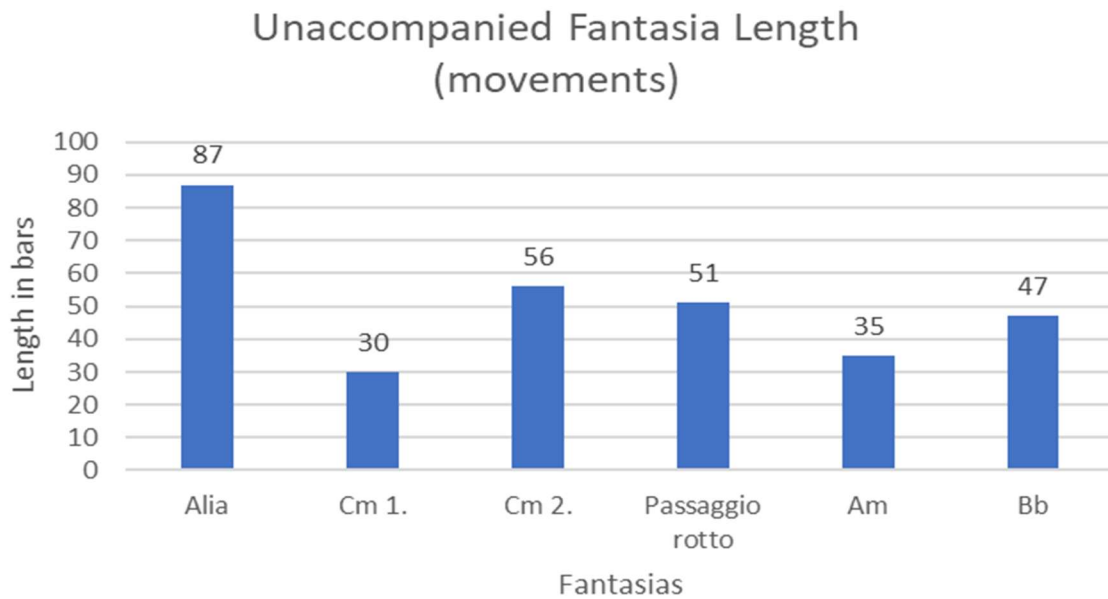


Figure 42: Graph showing the length of each fantasia movement considered separately.

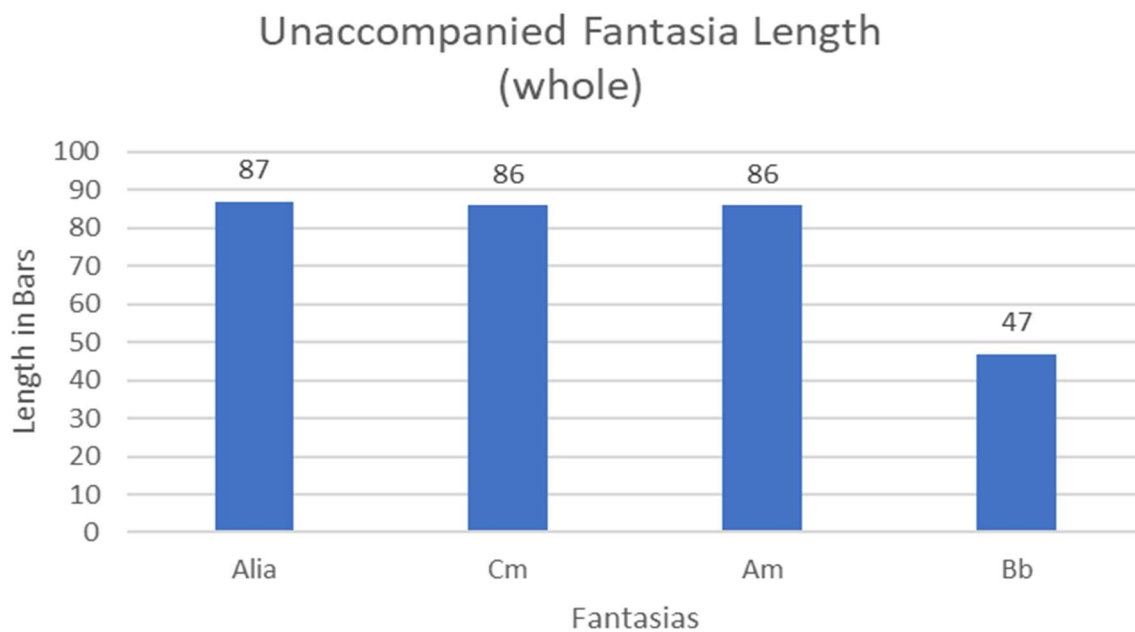


Figure 43: Graph showing the length of each fantasia considered as a whole.

Through-composed examples include the *Alia Fantasia* and *Fantasia* in Bb major. The first movement of the C minor *Fantasia* is split into two key sections, the second beginning in the dominant with similar melodic material to the opening. Both of these sections are repeated. Similarly, the *Passaggio rotto* and *Fantasia* in A minor from book 2 are both in binary form with increased rhythmic activity defining the second section. The A minor *Fantasia* is repeated as a whole, unlike the *Passaggio rotto*. The second movement of the C minor *Fantasia* is in 3 smaller sections

separated by rests, the middle section of which contains contrasting arpeggiated chords, unlike the opening and final sections which are characterised by dotted rhythms.

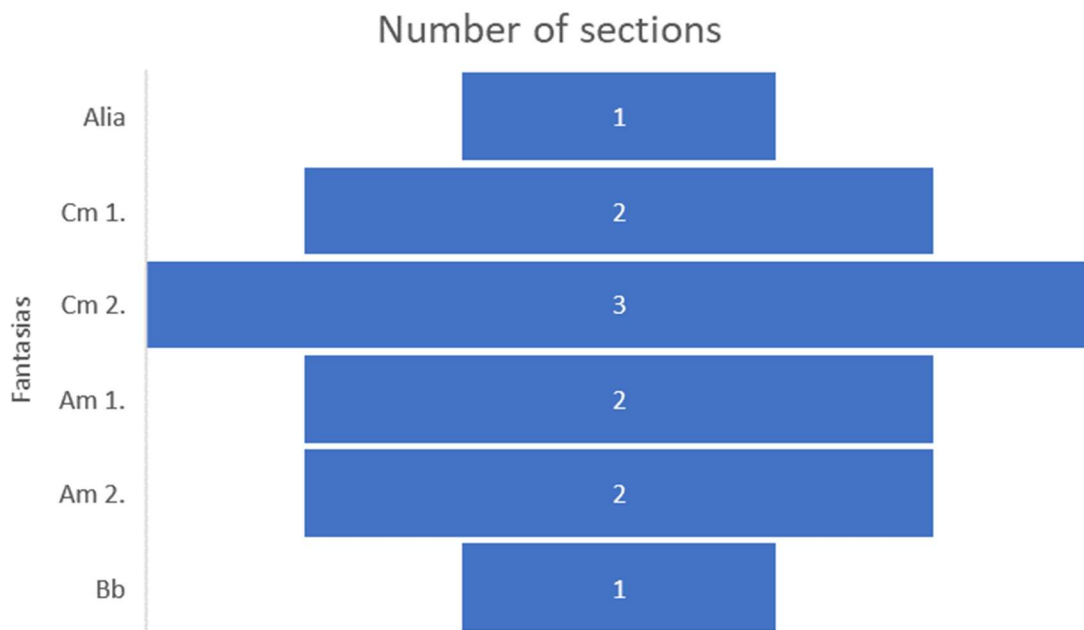


Figure 44: Graph showing the number of sections in each fantasia movement.

Matteis seniors' accompanied fantasias all hail from his Ayres for violin. These are all single movements and are therefore shorter in length. Figure 45 shows the length of each accompanied fantasia and related titles.

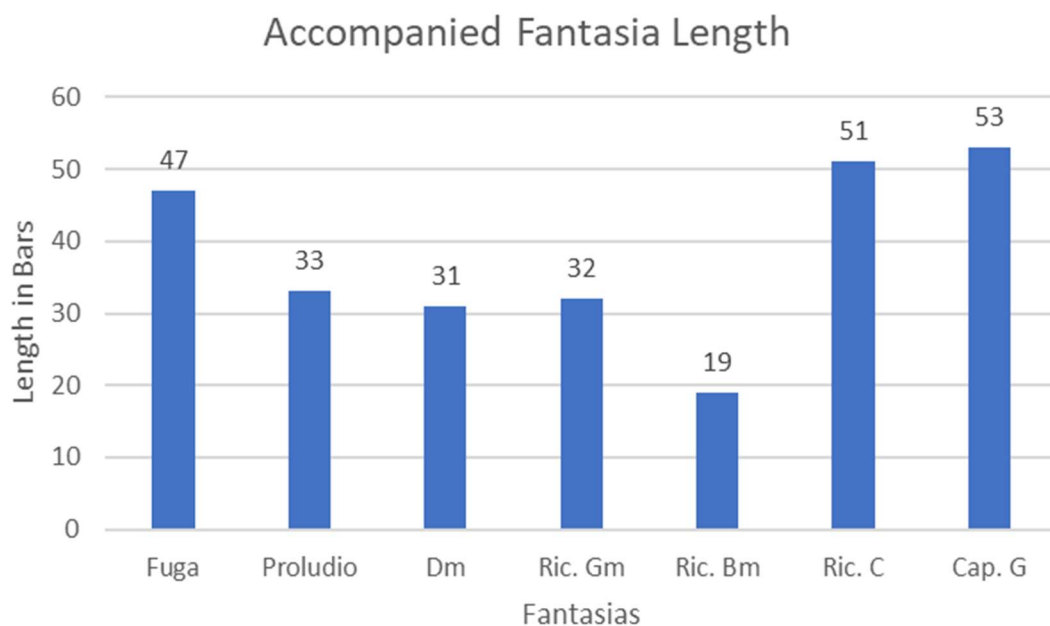


Figure 45: Graph showing the length of each accompanied fantasia and related titles.



The most common time signature is 4/4 as demonstrated in table 3 but 2/4, 3/4, 3/2 and 2/2 are also used.

Time Signature	Accompanied Fantasia				
4/4	Proludio	Ric. Gm	Ric. Bm	Ric. C	Cap. G
3/4	Ric. Gm	Cap. G			
2/4	Fuga				
3/2	Dm				
2/2	Cap. G				

Table 3: Table showing the accompanied fantasias in which each time signature appears.

The number of sections in each fantasia varies from 1 to 3 (see figure 46).

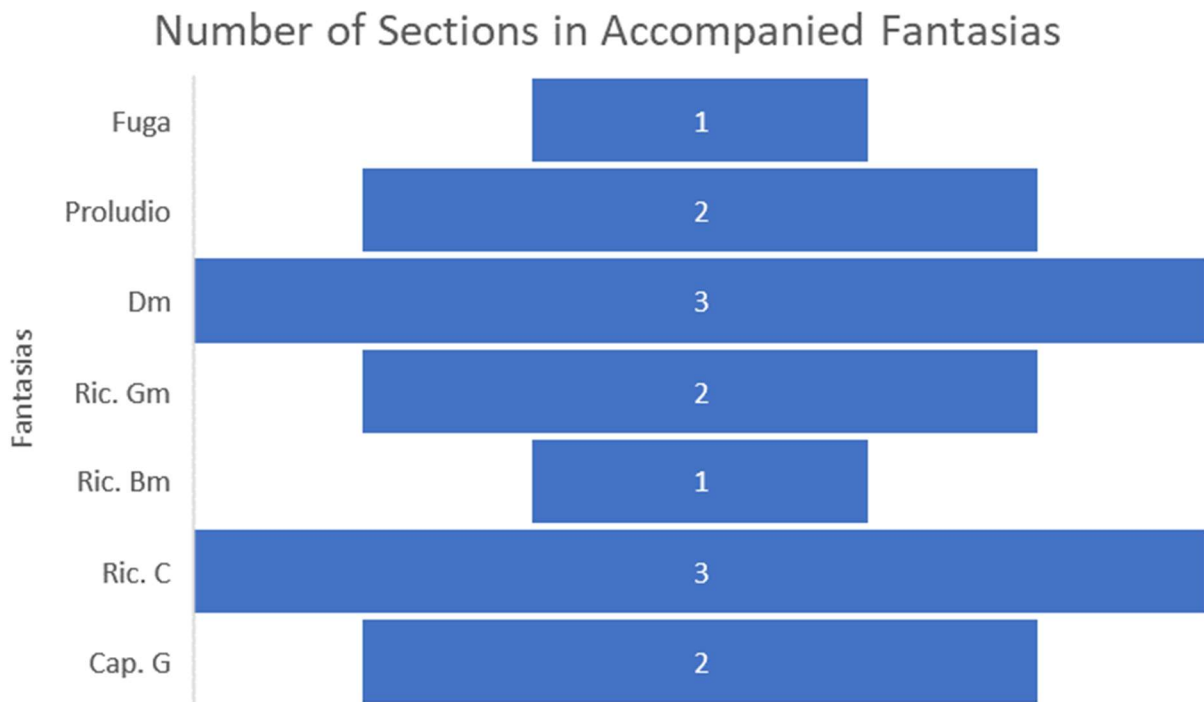


Figure 46: Graph showing the number of sections in each fantasia.

#### 4.2.2 Harmony and tonality

In their unaccompanied fantasias, the following are common harmonic devices: 4–3 suspensions at cadences, diminished chords, 7th chords, circles of 5ths and use of a flattened second. The flattened second is particularly distinctive and can be seen in the ornamentation of the opening note in the C minor *Fantasia* ‘Con discretione’ movement (figure 47) and in bar 19 of the *Passaggio rotto* (figure 48). They generally modulate to the dominant and subdominant with brief moments in the relative major. The C minor *Fantasia* modulates convincingly more frequently than the A minor *Fantasia*.

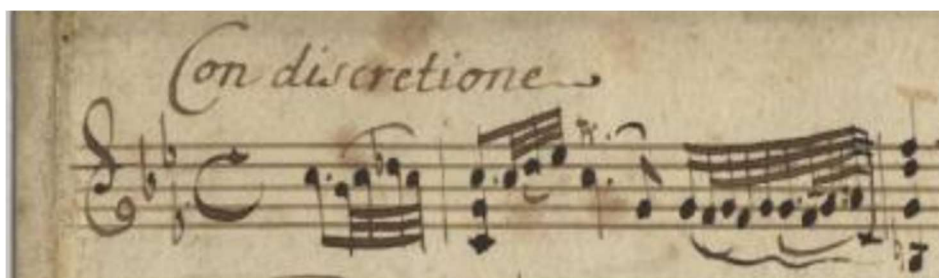


Figure 47: The opening of Matteis junior’s C minor *Fantasia* ‘Con discretione’, showing the distinctive use of a flattened second in the opening ornament.<sup>772</sup>



Figure 48: Matteis senior’s *Passaggio rotto* showing the use of a flattened second in bars 19–20.<sup>773</sup>

Considering Matteis junior’s *Alia Fantasia* separately, this constant harmonic progression is full of suspensions and resolutions and modulates frequently, including to the dominant, subdominant, dominant of new key, third and tonic major. Similarly, Matteis senior’s accompanied fantasias often modulate to the dominant and relative major with occasional passages in the subdominant. They are mainly in minor keys (D, E, G and B) except two *ricercatas* which are in C and G major.

<sup>772</sup> Nicola Matteis, *Fantasia in C minor and Alia Fantasia* (Dresden: Manuscript, c.1720). Accessed: IMSLP, ‘2 Fantasias for violin solo,’ *IMSLP*, 2022, accessed May 25, 2022, [https://imslp.org/wiki/2\\_Fantasias\\_for\\_Violin\\_solo\\_\(Matteis\\_Jr.%2C\\_Nicola\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/2_Fantasias_for_Violin_solo_(Matteis_Jr.%2C_Nicola)).

<sup>773</sup> Nicola Matteis, ‘Passaggio Rotto,’ *Ayres for the violin book 2* (Unidentified publisher, c.1676) Accessed: IMSLP, ‘Ayres for the violin,’ *IMSLP*, 2022, accessed May 25, 2022, [https://imslp.org/wiki/Ayres\\_for\\_the\\_Violin\\_\(Matteis,\\_Nicola\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Ayres_for_the_Violin_(Matteis,_Nicola)).

### 4.2.3 Melody and rhythm

Unique in its rhythmic continuity is Matteis junior's *Alia Fantasia*. The whole piece is made up of rolled chords. The harmonic movement provides the interest and a sense of rhythmic impetus; for instance, there are moments when the harmonic movement changes from every semibreve to minims or even occasionally with crotchet decoration (see figure 49). As such, there is no discernible melody. Movement is largely stepwise, but these relationships created through note leading, however, create a sense of direction.

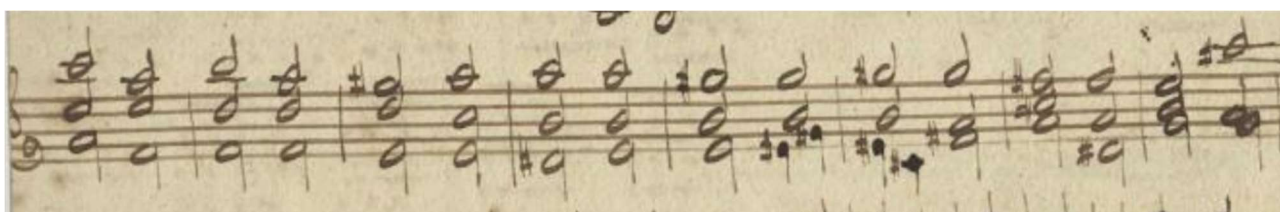


Figure 49: Bars 14–21 from Matteis junior's *Alia Fantasia*, showing the increase in rhythmic impetus through crotchet decoration.<sup>774</sup>

The second movement of the C minor *Fantasia* similarly is made up of mainly repeating rhythms, in this case, running quavers. Occasionally, dotted rhythms or ornamental semiquavers are added for interest and there are a few bars employing the same technique as in the *Alia Fantasia* (see figure 50). Again, the melodic movement is largely determined by voice leading. An ornamental device jumping away from and then leading back to the main note, used in conjunction with semiquaver movement (as seen at the beginning of figure 50), is repeated throughout.



Figure 50: Matteis junior's *Fantasia* in C minor second movement bars 30–39 showing the use of rolled arpeggios as in *Alia Fantasia* and the ornamental rhythmic/ melodic cell at the opening.<sup>775</sup>

In contrast, the first movement is largely formed of chords interspersed with notated ornamentation. As such, rhythms used include running hemi-demi-semi-quavers, as well as some

<sup>774</sup> Matteis, *Fantasia in C minor and Alia Fantasia*.

<sup>775</sup> *Ibid.*

triplets, dotted rhythms and ties. Melodic features include frequent sequences and a reliance on scalar and arpeggiated movement. Some ornaments are based around the interval of a third at pedal points (figure 51).



Figure 51: Matteis junior's *Fantasia* in C minor, movement 1, bars 9–11, showing the use of ornaments around a third at pedal points in bar 11.<sup>776</sup>

The fantasias in A minor and Bb major, on the other hand, are largely formed of running quavers. Again, some semiquavers are added for interest, frequently producing the following rhythm:



Figure 52: Matteis senior's *Fantasia* in Bb bars 11–13, showing the use of a quaver + two semiquavers rhythm.<sup>777</sup>

The *Fantasia* in Bb major, bars 14–17, relies on scales and arpeggios and frequent lengthy sequences. Occasionally, large leaps create the illusion of two voices (figure 53).



Figure 53: Matteis senior's *Fantasia* in Bb major showing the use of leaps to create the illusion of two voices.<sup>778</sup>

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<sup>776</sup> Ibid.

<sup>777</sup> Nicola Matteis, 'Fantasia (in Bb),' *Ayres for the violin* book 2 (Unidentified publisher, c. 1676). Accessed: IMSLP. 'Ayres for the violin.'

<sup>778</sup> Ibid.

Due to the contrapuntal nature of the *Fantasia* in A minor, lots of movement is stepwise and repeated frequently and includes some contrary motion. *Passagio rotto* is made up of almost all running semiquavers, outlining arpeggios with occasional scalic runs and upper neighbour note figures. Running triplet semiquavers are also a feature (figure 54).



Figure 54: Matteis senior's *Passagio Rotto* showing the use of running semiquavers and triplets.<sup>779</sup>

All unaccompanied fantasias use double stops; for some, these are more frequently three- or four-part chords. Dominant pedals occur in *Alia Fantasia*, C minor *Fantasia* movement 1 and Bb major *Fantasia*. None of these fantasias take inspiration from dance rhythms and there are no notated dynamic markings. All but one use the full lower range of the violin, reaching a low G (just below middle c); *Passagio rotto* is the exception to this starting on a low A, a tone higher. They then mainly reach third position on the E string, 2 and a half octaves above the bottom G. The second movement of the C minor *Fantasia*, however, reaches an F even higher and over 2 octaves above middle C.

Almost all the accompanied fantasias range from a low G to first position on the E string (to a B 2 octaves above middle C at the most). The *Prologo in Fantasia's* lowest note is a low A and *Ricerccata* in Bm uses a bottom C# as its lowest note. Again, there is no obvious dance influence.

<sup>779</sup> Matteis, 'Passaggio Rotto.'

Three of the seven include double stops. The *Fuga in Fantasia* contains almost constant double stops but the *Ricercata* in G minor only includes one as the final chord and *Capriccio* includes some throughout but fewer than the *Fuga in Fantasia*. Again, no dynamics are notated.

All these fantasias are characterised by running quavers and semiquavers. Again, the rhythmic cell of quaver + two semiquavers is used often. All the ricercatas use dotted rhythms, as does the *Fuga in Fantasia*. Pedals are rare, only occurring convincingly in the *Proludio in Fantasia*. In general, melodic material is again unsurprisingly built on scales and arpeggios. Turn figurations are also common in all but the *Ricercata* in B minor. The *Capriccio* also makes a feature of suspensions and contains large leaps. These leaps are prominent in the ricercatas but not the fantasias. The *Ricercata* in G minor is notable for its chromaticism (figure 55).



Figure 55: *Ricercata* in G minor, bars 6–7, showing the unusual use of chromaticism.<sup>780</sup>

#### 4.2.4 Guidelines for improvisation

While varying in style, several general guidelines can be brought together from this analysis. The only real outlier is the *Alia Fantasia*. This piece gives the appearance of a study demonstrating the creative possibilities afforded by chordal writing, a study in harmony; perhaps, following Kircher's advice that a fantasia should 'teach the hidden design of harmony'.<sup>781</sup> Each of the pieces within this manuscript studies a different technique. The first, 'Con discretione' explores the use of chords linked by ornamentation; the 'Moderato' which follows uses constant double stops; and the 'Alia' employs rolling chords. There is also the potential that the etymology of the word 'Alia' refers to 'inter alia', suggesting the creation of a fantasia by another route.<sup>782</sup> I thus provide separate guidance for improvising a fantasia in that style. The initial guidelines, however, take the most common features from each of the unaccompanied fantasias I have analysed here.

<sup>780</sup> Nicola Matteis, 'Ricercata (in Gm),' *Ayres for the violin* book 2 (Unidentified publisher, c. 1676). Accessed: IMSLP. 'Ayres for the violin.'

<sup>781</sup> Kircher, *Musurgia Universalis*, 29.

<sup>782</sup> Collins, 'Inter Alia,' *Collins Dictionary*, 2023, accessed August 9, 2023, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/inter-alia>.

1. All in 4/4
2. Mostly minor in Am, also Cm or Bb major
3. Length ranges from 30–56 bars
4. Full range of violin from bottom G or A to 3rd position on E string generally, highest = high F
5. Double and triple stops, some quadruple
6. Not in a dance style
7. Use pedals, usually dominant
8. No dynamic echos
9. Rhythmic variety including running notes, quaver + two semiquavers, triplets, dotted, minim arpeggios
10. Two clearly defined varying sections or through-composed
11. While repetition is uncommon, if it does occur this is usually a whole section rather than smaller scale repetition
12. Most common modulations are to the subdominant, dominant, relative major, dominant of new key
13. Melody — ornamented passages between chords, lots of scalar and arpeggiated movement or fugue characteristics, usually small narrow melodic motives, some sequences
14. 4–3 suspensions at cadences, diminished chords, 7ths, circle of 5ths, flattened second e.g. Db in C minor and Bb in A minor

*Alia Fantasia:*

1. Constant minim rolling arpeggios
2. Some melodic crotchet movement outlining arpeggios
3. Use the full range of the violin
4. Long (87 bars)
5. Through-composed with coda
6. 4/4
7. A minor
8. Led by resolutions — 4–3, diminished–resolution, 7ths, 5+6, 7–6
9. Modulate frequently to the dominant, subdominant, dominant of new key, third, tonic major



### 4.3 Composition

Armed with the knowledge of common features in baroque compositions, the enterprising improviser can begin to apply these in their own creations, beginning with composition. The idea of stylistic improvisation or pastiche composition is sometimes met with worries of forgery. This term, however, as Haynes notes, can only exist in a canonised culture and ‘in Rhetorical times, being dead was a definite disadvantage to a composer’.<sup>783</sup> Considering an artwork a forgery is, as Lessing has observed, an act of snobbery rather than aesthetic judgement.<sup>784</sup> Indeed, period performers are not accused of forgery; it seems that aesthetics of composition rely on chronocentrism.<sup>785</sup> Some pastiche composers for the baroque period include Winfried Michel, Matthias Maute and Hendrik Bouman; Vox Saeculorum is an organisation of such period composers.<sup>786</sup> To create stylistic improvisations, Manze advises spending some time improvising in a certain style each day.<sup>787</sup>

Composing in a pastiche style gives the creator the luxury of time that is not present in improvisation. It allows musicians to try out different options, work out harmonic progressions and find suitable sequences that are idiomatic for their instruments. Starting with this rather than trying to improvise stylistic fantasias straight away, breaks the task down into manageable stages and lets the player build their knowledge gradually, allowing time and practice in different ways for it to move from explicit to tacit knowledge. The process of composition allows the exploration of explicit knowledge which itself facilitates its move to the tacit sphere (see 0.2.1). Improvisers need most of their knowledge to be tacit in order to be able to access it quickly enough in the moment. I have presented six pastiche compositions here to demonstrate this process: three in the style of Telemann and three in the style of Matteis junior or senior. The full scores for each of these are provided in appendix 1.

My composition process involved improvising short ideas on my violin which followed the guidelines from my analysis (see 4.1.4 and 4.2.4). I recorded these, before notating, reviewing and editing them on notation software. This explicit editing often included creating sequences and counterpoint from the tacit improvised stimulus or adding harmonisation. I would play through what

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<sup>783</sup> Bruce Haynes, *The end of early music: A period performer’s history of music for the twenty-first century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 82, 96.

<sup>784</sup> Alfred Lessing, ‘What Is Wrong with a Forgery?’ *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 23, no. 4 (1965): 461–71.

<sup>785</sup> Haynes, *The end of early music*, 210.

<sup>786</sup> Vox Saeculorum, ‘Vox Saeculorum,’ *Facebook*, accessed February 2, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/voxaeculorum/>.

<sup>787</sup> Andrew Stewart, ‘Classical Music: Fiddling with the Rules. Andrew Stewart talks to Andrew Manze, a violinist putting the jazz back into baroque music,’ *Independent*, April 30, 1998, accessed February 3, 2022, <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/classical-music-fiddling-with-the-rules-1162167.html>.



I had already notated and then continue improvising in order to find an intuitive next passage. As such, the process involved alternating between explicit cognitive decision-making to follow the guidelines set out in 4.1.4 and 4.2.4 and tacit embodied knowledge to test these out. As I composed, therefore, I performed a musical and performers' analysis of my music. I used similar decision and reaction matrices to improvisation (see 1.2.1): the process was simply longer and allowed for multiple passages through each matrix for each musical moment. I found that when spending too long editing and reviewing away from my violin, my theoretical knowledge often produced sections which were then incredibly difficult to play, particularly in contrapuntal passages. Therefore, after playing these sections through and improvising around them to find a more intuitive way of writing the passage, I would then alter these: moving the creative process constantly back and forth between my violin and the page. While composing did not in itself embed knowledge to a great extent, it highlighted new musical possibilities which I often drew on in later improvisation and helped to identify areas that needed to be embodied. It revealed that it was necessary, for instance, to find short cuts for embedding improvised harmonisation and counterpoint, as these were the two areas that took the longest to create and execute in composition, requiring the most explicit attention which would not be possible under the time constraints of improvisation. Practising applying the guidelines, however, certainly helped to memorise these. Interestingly, taking a much freer approach to the guidelines increased my memorisation of and confidence with the guidelines much more than following a stricter approach.

#### 4.3.1 In the style of Telemann

Those in the style of Telemann are in D minor, C minor and A major. I followed the guidelines closely for the fantasia in A major, choosing a key used by Telemann and including a Largo, Allegro, Grave and Gigue, all of which are characteristic sections. The Grave is in fact a sarabande and together with the Gigue form the sections with dance characteristics, both of which contain repeats as was traditional. I used the full range of the violin Telemann employed, from a low G below middle C to a D over 2 octaves above. The notes are mainly separate but smaller ornamental notes are slurred. I also included the characteristic dynamic contrast between small, repeated cells such as in bars 12–20 (figure 56).



Figure 56: *Fantasia in the style of Telemann in A major* bars 12–20, showing the use of characteristic dynamic contrast in small cell repetition.

The piece lasts 96 bars, close to the average length of 100 bars Telemann used. In bars 55–56, I created the common illusion of two voices and a pedal (figure 57). I frequently drew on the common rhythmic devices, including running semiquavers in the Allegro, dotted rhythms in the Largo and Gigue, a triplet in the Allegro, the simple time rhythms in the Allegro and compound time rhythms in the Gigue (see 4.1.3). The melodic material is all based on scales and arpeggios with ornaments and double stops for interest and the modulations are to the dominant and relative minor.



Figure 57: *Fantasia in the style of Telemann in A major*, showing a pedal and the illusion of two voices in bars 55–56.

For the *Fantasia* in D minor, I, again, employed a key Telemann used as well as the contrasting typical section structures. In this case, I opted for an opening Largo, followed by an Allegro, a Grave and then final Allegro. All the common rhythms appear in this fantasia, along with the small-scale contrasting repetition. The second section, Allegro, is in fact a gigue and the Grave is again a sarabande. The final Allegro makes use of large leaps to create the illusion of two voices (figure 58).



Figure 58: *Fantasia in the style of Telemann in D minor*, showing the use of illusory double voicing in bars 79–86.

This is a slightly longer example, developing the techniques further, lasting 146 bars. Again, I use frequent double stops and a mixture of separate and slurred bowing. Modulations include moving to the relative major and dominant and I include chromaticism in bars 11–12 and 24–27 (figure 59).

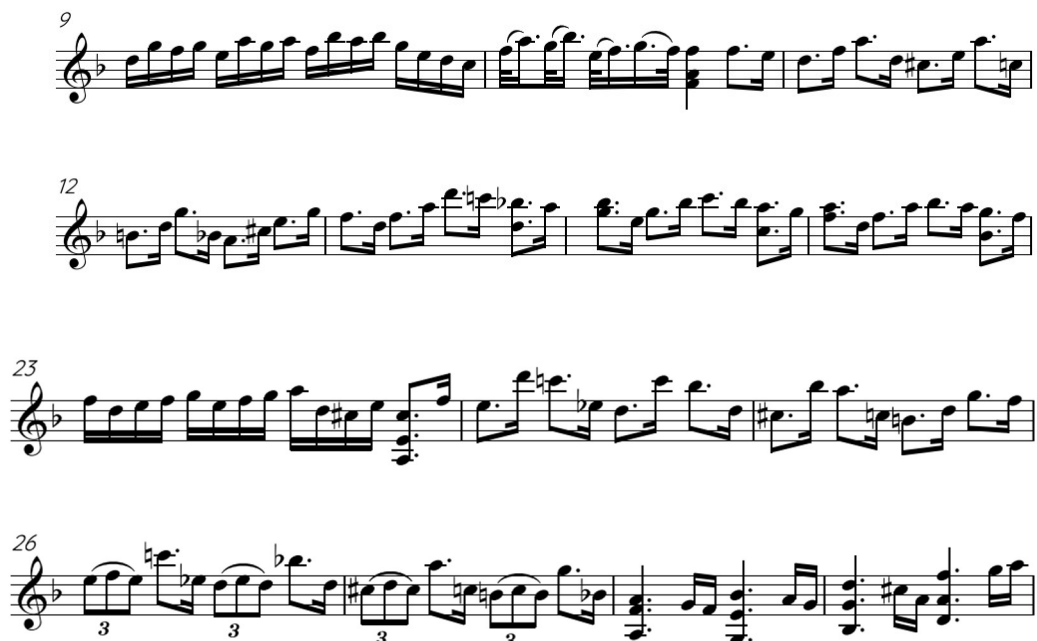


Figure 59: *Fantasia in the style of Telemann in D minor*, showing chromaticism in bars 11–12 and 24–27.

I decided to treat the guidelines more loosely for the third *Fantasia* in C minor, including rolling arpeggios, a technique widely used for the violin (including by Matteis junior) but not by Telemann in these fantasias. It would have been familiar to baroque violinists and I felt it added

drama and rhythmic impetus here. In addition, it nods to the virtuosic nature of fantasias as well as providing a link to those by Matteis junior. This technique can be seen in bars 38–43 (figure 60).



Figure 60: Rolled arpeggios in bars 38–43 in *Fantasia in C minor the style of Telemann*.

Aside from this, I still used a common key, split the piece into an Allegro, Vivace and Presto, created 115 bars of music, used the common rhythmic devices and modulated to the dominant and relative major. Bars 35–46 contain chromaticism (see figure 61).



Figure 61: Chromaticism in bars 35–46 of the *Fantasia in the style of Telemann in C minor*.

The opening Allegro contains many short sequences. The Vivace is dance-like in character, inspired by that by Telemann in his fantasia number 3 in F minor. I used slurs in the Presto to create a sense of lift and sprightliness (figure 62).



Figure 62: Slurs to create a sense of lift in bars 89–96 of the *Fantasia in the style of Telemann in C minor*.

I used lots of large leaps in the Presto to create a sense of double voicing (see figure 63). A full score for these compositions is provided in appendix 1.



Figure 63: Double voicing effect created by large leaps in bars 110–113 in the *Fantasia in the style of Telemann in C minor*.

#### 4.3.2 In the style of Matteis senior and junior

I chose the keys of A minor, D minor and Bb major for the fantasias in the style of Matteis junior and senior to reflect the keys they chose.

##### 4.3.2.1 Fantasia in the style of Matteis junior's *Alia Fantasia*

The fantasia in Bb major I composed is in the style of his *Alia fantasia*. As this was in such a different style to the others, I thought it deserved its own composition, using the specific set of guidelines I provided earlier. I follow these through keeping movement to minim and semibreves, with some crotchet ornamentation. I also added some harmonic crotchet movement to provide a series of falling suspensions and add further interest, developing this style (figure 64). I used the full range of the violin, from a bottom G below middle C to an F over 2 octaves above this. I made use of open strings where possible and applied the handshape method (to be explained in chapter 5) to create chords that were full but comfortable for violinists. As such, most chords are playable in first position and movement is determined by small shifts, resulting often in stepwise voice leading. The ending coda is intended to be treated freely, as written-out ornamentation. I included a pedal in bars 33–36 to create dissonance and facilitate the higher positions required for the top two notes, thus making it easier for violinists to play and to tune as there is the constant open string there for reference (figure 65). I modulate to the relative minor, the dominant of the relative minor and its dominant (G minor, D minor and A minor) and in passing sequences modulate to the dominant, subdominant and subdominant of the relative minor.



Figure 64: *Fantasia in the style of Matteis junior's Alia Fantasia*, showing my development of the style to include harmonic crotchet movement through suspensions in bars 46–53.



Figure 65: Bars 32–38 of *Fantasia in the style of Matteis junior’s Alia Fantasia* showing the use of pedal open D strings.

#### 4.3.2.2 Fantasia in D minor in the style of Matteis senior and junior

My composition titled *Fantasia in D minor in the style of Matteis senior and junior* is split into two larger sections and combines all the different techniques used across the fantasias by both composers into one. This allowed me to practise each style and to imagine how I might take inspiration from his ideas. The opening is in the style of the first movement from Matteis junior’s C minor *Fantasia*. It is made up of triple and quadruple stops linked by written-out ornamentation. A section of running semiquavers from bar 11 reflects the running quavers and semiquavers common throughout their other fantasias. Finally, the second section mixes a contrapuntal style, such as in Matteis senior’s *Fantasia in A minor* and constant rolled chords as used in Matteis junior’s *Alia Fantasia*. Practising composing the contrapuntal section was particularly useful as it allowed me to try out several different patterns, finding that this kind of figuration, filling a small interval and then remaining on the same note with the second voice entering at the third, was generally successful and playable on the violin (figure 66). These findings influenced my chess game, attempting to simplify this process and bring an element of play into what can otherwise seem like a mathematical exercise (see 5.4). Keeping the rhythm simple helps to free up the space to focus on composing and then executing the many double stops. I followed Matteis senior’s structure of revealing the melody in the first voice, then introducing the second and keeping this going through a sequence.

There is then a linking section without the pressure of maintaining two voices, before the theme is heard again and introduced in the second voice another time. When composing the rolled chords section in the second part, I attempted to create smooth voice-leading between the parts but also full chords. The introduction of crotchet movement provides additional momentum forwards. The final coda is intended to be played freely, taking on a similar character to the opening again, formed largely of written-out ornamentation. Rhythmic variety is provided through the contrasting sections and freedom of florid ornamentation. The piece modulates to the relative major and dominant.



Figure 66: The opening of the second section of *Fantasia in the style of Matteis junior and senior in D minor*, showing a typically successful contrapuntal figuration.

#### 4.3.2.3 Fantasia in A minor in the style of Matteis junior

Taking inspiration from the two movements of his *Fantasia in c minor*, this composition is likewise split into two. The first section, as in Matteis junior's example, includes structural chords linked together by florid written-out ornamentation. The rhythms used for these ornaments are largely demi-semiquavers alongside some semiquaver motion and the movement is largely conjunct. There are frequent short sequences and the section is through-composed. It modulates to the dominant key of E minor but passes through moments of C major, F major and G major. I added some short sections of contrasting material using double stops or leaps between the chordal movement. A short second section follows using almost constant and often repeated double stops, reflective of Matteis' second movement 'Molto Adagio'. To create a sense of movement, however, I included a dotted rhythm upbeat motif (figure 67). This gave it a feeling of dance and so I added repeats to both halves of this section to nod to this practice. Matteis added repeats to the first section but not the second. I felt, however, that my material suited the repeats better in the opposite sections. This second section modulates again to the dominant and briefly in passing to the relative major, C major. Again, the full scores of each of these compositions can be found in appendix 1.





Figure 67: Fantasia in A minor in the style of Matteis junior showing the use of a dotted upbeat motif in bars 19 and 26.

While useful as a tool in the beginning to experiment with explicit knowledge, the process of composition revealed several techniques which, in order to be fluently executed in improvisation, required automatised: the transferal from explicit to tacit knowledge. To achieve this, I experimented with practice exercises and created several games to aid this process which are discussed in the following chapter.

## Chapter 5: Pedagogy, practicalities and performance: Stylistic improvisation in practice

While analysis and historical research provide us with a clearer picture of the baroque fantasia, practically applying this in performance needs separate, additional consideration. This can be broadly separated into psychological attitudes and musical specifics. Haynes argues that musicians today are so proficient in reading music that ‘their natural ability to improvise has atrophied’.<sup>788</sup> He attributes this to the preoccupation with the canon and therefore over-specialised training. Bailey goes a step further to describe the products of the classical music education system as ‘specifically non-improvisors, musicians rendered incapable of attempting improvisation’ as ‘it teaches that the creation of music is a separate activity from playing that instrument’.<sup>789</sup> Baroque music, though, is much less prescriptive than later forms of music and therefore historically-informed baroque musicians are already better placed to improvise as they necessarily approach notation creatively. Conservatoires conserve tradition rather than encouraging innovation or creativity.<sup>790</sup> Haynes argues that HIP is creating a new canon by industriously performing the *St. Matthew Passion*, for instance.<sup>791</sup> Improvisation would remove this. Haynes also argues that to keep music a ‘living art’ the dichotomy between composer and performer needs to be dissolved.<sup>792</sup> Kuhnau wrote that a musician who was not comfortable with composition was ‘hardly better than birds that chirp their little songs so finely and neatly’.<sup>793</sup> Such musicians were called ‘Musikanten’ (‘hirelings’).<sup>794</sup> Haynes remarks that ‘most of us have had the child’s delight in improvising music trained out’.<sup>795</sup> Moore argues, however, that early exposure to music is very beneficial for learning to improvise later in life.<sup>796</sup> To achieve stylistic improvisation today, therefore, many advocate for improvisation’s reintroduction into classical music teaching.<sup>797</sup> This requires further research which this chapter seeks to begin to address.

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<sup>788</sup> Bruce Haynes, *The end of early music: A period performer’s history of music for the twenty-first century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3.

<sup>789</sup> Derek Bailey, *Improvisation, its nature and practice in music, revised edition* (London: British Library, 1992), 98.

<sup>790</sup> Haynes, *The end of early music*, 76.

<sup>791</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>792</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>793</sup> Johann Kuhnau, *Der musicalische Quacksalber* (Dresden: Johann Christoph Miethen und Johann Christoph Zimmermann, 1700).

<sup>794</sup> Haynes, *The end of early music*, 203.

<sup>795</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>796</sup> Robin Moore, ‘The Decline of Improvisation in Western Art Music: An Interpretation of Change,’ *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 23, no. 1 (June 1992): 65.

<sup>797</sup> See Christopher David Azzara, ‘The effect of audiation-based improvisation techniques on the music achievement of elementary instrumental music students,’ (PhD dissertation, University of Rochester, Eastman

## 5.1 Teaching and learning improvisation

### 5.1.1 It's all in your head... the psychological approach

A brief survey of literature on how to teach and learn improvisation will demonstrate the need for more specialist guidance for classical musicians as the majority of this focuses on jazz. Teaching and learning are often bound up in the same discussion and thus are discussed side by side here. One key strand of this research addresses improvisation psychology. Listeners struggle with modern improvisation because they 'cannot easily identify' with the musical strategies used; improvisation has to be "understood" on the first (and only) hearing.<sup>798</sup> When learning a new skill, the brain has to focus on particulars, for example, when learning to type, at the beginning, the brain has to focus on typing each letter but the more experienced the typist, the focus can move to forming sentences, chapters or even books: the specifics of typing have moved to the subconscious. The same can be said of learning a Bach fugue; the musician first learns individual notes but by performance can focus on much longer lines.<sup>799</sup> Detailed attention gradually becomes embodied knowledge (see chapter 1) which then allows explicit thought to focus on other areas. Attention is still paid to those smaller movements but the focus is on larger patterns. The left side of the brain is very goal-oriented whereas the right side tends to pay attention to broader surroundings, both of which are needed for fluent improvisation.<sup>800</sup> López-Iñiguez and McPherson have highlighted the effectiveness of self-regulation behaviours to improve practice and performance.<sup>801</sup> Music practice involves a constant

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School of Music, 1992). And Regina Antunes Teixeira Dos Santos and Luciana Del Ben, 'Contextualized improvisation in solfège class,' *International Journal of Music Education* 22, no. 3 (2004): 266-276. And Barry J. Kenny and Martin Gellrich, 'Improvisation,' in *The science and psychology of music performance*, ed. Richard Parncutt and Gary McPherson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 117-134. And Theano Koutsoupidou and David J. Hargreaves, 'An experimental study of the effects of improvisation on the development of children's creative thinking in music,' *Psychology of music* 37, no. 3 (2009): 251-278. Gary McPherson, 'Evaluating improvisational ability of high school instrumentalists,' *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* (1993): 11-20. And David Ricardo Montano, 'The effect of improvisation in given rhythms on rhythmic accuracy in sight reading achievement by college elementary group piano students' PhD dissertation (Kansas: University of Missouri-Kansas City, 1983).

And John Harry Wilson, *The effects of group improvisation on the musical growth of selected high school instrumentalists* (New York: New York University, 1970). And for analysis of this literature, see Francis Dubé and Jean-Philippe Després, 'Proposition d'un cadre conceptuel pour aider le professeur d'instrument à intégrer l'improvisation musicale à son acte pédagogique,' *Intersections: Canadian Journal of Music/Intersections: revue canadienne de musique* 32, no. 1-2 (2012): 143-165.

<sup>798</sup> Moore, 'The Decline of Improvisation,' 66..

<sup>799</sup> Iain McGilchrist, 'A Brain Divided Iain McGilchrist - Jordan B Peterson Podcast S4 E21 Recorded Feb 15th 2021,' YouTube video, posted by 'Jordan B Peterson,' May 13, 2021, accessed February 8, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OZld-MX11IA&t=28s>.

<sup>800</sup> Ibid.

<sup>801</sup> Guadalupe López-Iñiguez and Gary McPherson, 'Applying self-regulated learning and self-determination theory to optimise the performance of a concert cellist,' *Frontiers in Psychology* 11, no. 385 (2000).

process of individual analysis and judgement, deciding what and how to practise, applying 'self-control and self-observational skills' when carrying out an exercise and then judging the results and reacting to these in order to improve for the next practice session or performance.<sup>802</sup> Ericsson showed that 'deliberate practice', focused attention on demanding exercises, most effectively develops skills.<sup>803</sup> Improvisation is essentially constant self-regulation through instantaneous reflection. Improvisers sift through ideas and possibilities before picking the most appropriate one. I found it helpful to restrict the choices available or to choose focus points in improvisation practice and performance. This reduced the number of possibilities, making me explore that particular feature in detail and made keeping a sense of a cohesive whole easier.

López-Iñiguez identified several areas of self-regulation in musicking: intrinsic motivation, external regulation, integrated regulation (goal-oriented), identified regulation (doing what is necessary), introjected regulation (seeking advice from others) and amotivation (complete lack of motivation).<sup>804</sup> Improvisation uses all of López-Iñiguez's types of regulation: intrinsic motivation guides the will to improvise; external regulation modifies the larger structural decisions made during improvisation such as length and style; integrated and identified regulation inform the smaller explicit and tacit decisions. Historical improvisation uses introjected regulation to achieve a stylistic sound, whether those from whom improvisers seek advice are listeners or historical voices in treatises. In the case of amotivation, improvisation becomes very difficult. To aid this, asking the audience for stimuli can spark intrinsic motivation again. Bolton reflects on the advantages of self-reflection, that it 'can provide relatively safe and confidential ways to explore and express experiences otherwise difficult to communicate' as well as bring areas of embedded knowledge to a conscious surface and take emotional responses into account.<sup>805</sup> As Gully writes, 'all learning involves emotion' and 'reflection without passion is meaningless'.<sup>806</sup> Reid and O'Donohue argue for an 'education for instability' one that is full of 'creativity, innovativeness, adaptability, ease with

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<sup>802</sup> See also Margaret S. Osborne, Gary E. McPherson, Peter Miksza, and Paul Evans, 'Using a microanalysis intervention to examine shifts in musicians' self-regulated learning,' *Psychology of Music* 49, no. 4 (2021): 972-988. And Margaret S. Osborne, Paul Evans, and Peter Miksza, 'Applying self-regulated learning microanalysis to study musicians' practice,' *Psychology of Music* 47, no. 1 (2019): 18-32.

<sup>803</sup> Anders, Ericsson, K., Ralf T. Krampe, and Clemens Tesch-Römer, 'The role of deliberate practice in the acquisition of expert performance,' *Psychological review* 100, no. 3 (1993): 363. And Friedrich Platz, Reinhard Kopiez, Andreas C. Lehmann, and Anna Wolf, 'The influence of deliberate practice on musical achievement: a meta-analysis,' *Frontiers in psychology* 5 (2014): 646.

<sup>804</sup> López-Iñiguez, 'Applying self-regulated learning'.

<sup>805</sup> Gillie Bolton, *Reflective practice: Writing and professional development, 4th ed.* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2014), 3-4.

<sup>806</sup> Gilad Chen, Stanley M. Gully, and Dov Eden, 'General self-efficacy and self-esteem: Toward theoretical and empirical distinction between correlated self-evaluations,' *Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior* 25, no. 3 (2004): 314.

difference and comfortableness with change'.<sup>807</sup> Reason describes her autoethnographic process as seeking 'knowing-in action' (and thinking-in action).<sup>808</sup> This essentially describes improvisation. Also helpful is Bolton's remark that to simply reflect on 'what actually happened' is constraining, particularly for improvisation when 'what actually happened' may be foggy to the performer, focusing on emotional responses can nevertheless be extremely useful, arguably even more so for the performer.<sup>809</sup> As Schon remarks, of the 'spontaneous, intuitive performance of the actions of everyday life... often we cannot say which it is that we know'.<sup>810</sup> It is this tacit knowledge which we rely on to perform everyday functions. Confucius's perception of learning is useful here: 'by three methods we may learn wisdom: first, by reflection, which is noblest; second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest'.<sup>811</sup>

It is helpful when improvising to remove the pressure of creating something 'great'. By nature, improvisation is not enduring: it exists in one timeframe in the moment and therefore simply has to entertain in that space as opposed to composition which is now expected to be revered centuries later. During the baroque, musicians acted more as craftsmen unlike the romantic notion of the artist. As Haynes writes, they were 'more interested in competence than greatness'.<sup>812</sup> Improvisers should therefore certainly begin by aiming for competence and entertainment rather than any anachronistic artistic endeavours. As Haynes writes, 'HIP starts in the present and ends in the present', just like improvisation.<sup>813</sup> Burney described how Italian music in the 1770s was not worth engraving because of the demand for novelty.<sup>814</sup> If modernist music, as Taruskin suggests, is a 'refuge in order and precision' and against the subjective, then improvisation is arguably the opposite.<sup>815</sup> Mace in his treatise actually advises against taking 'Pains to Play their Lessons very Perfectly' (referring here to playing very fast), arguing that spirit is lost.<sup>816</sup> Unlike the saturated marketplace of professional performers where technical imperfections can cost musicians their jobs, improvisation invites risk, individuality and spontaneity.<sup>817</sup> In terms of technical accuracy,

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<sup>807</sup> Alan Reid and Michael O'Donoghue, 'Revisiting enquiry-based teacher education in neo-liberal times,' *Teaching and Teacher education* 20, no. 6 (2004): 561.

<sup>808</sup> Reason 1988, 30 in Bolton, *Reflective Practice*, 20.

<sup>809</sup> Bolton, *Reflective practice*, 25.

<sup>810</sup> Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 49.

<sup>811</sup> Confucius quoted in Karen Hinett and Tracey Varnava. *Developing reflective practice in legal education*. Vol. 5 (Coventry: UK Centre for Legal Education, 2002), v.

<sup>812</sup> Haynes, *The end of early music*, 5-6.

<sup>813</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>814</sup> Burney 1771, 197, see also 208. Quoted in Haynes, *The end of early music*, 20.

<sup>815</sup> Taruskin quoted in Haynes, *The end of early music*, 49.

<sup>816</sup> Thomas Mace, *Musick's Monument; or, A Remembrancer of the Best Practical Musick, Both Divine, and Civil, That Has Ever Been Known, to Have Been in the World* (London: T. Ratcliffe and N. Thompson, 1676).

<sup>817</sup> Haynes, *The end of early music*, 63.

contemporary accounts are also usually vague, donating most of the criticism to the musical content of a piece.<sup>818</sup> Monti of the Helicon method puts forward that for improvisers, mistakes are there to be turned into creative opportunities and that a balance needs to be struck between emotional and rational thinking.<sup>819</sup> The Helicon method involves ‘mistake free games’ which connect ‘physical activities with musical gesture’.<sup>820</sup> Creative baroque violinist Andrew Manze even goes so far as to suggest that to create a convincing performance of baroque music it is necessary to ‘get away from the temptation to be obsessed with every single note being absolutely “perfect”’.<sup>821</sup> Rehearsals were also limited, even for large-scale notated compositions.<sup>822</sup> Technical perfection was therefore not put on the same pedestal that it is today. In addition, the ‘out-of-tune’ notes on a natural trumpet were often used by Bach to depict moments of ‘terror, dread, and evil’ such as in *Cantata 43*.<sup>823</sup> Burney even expresses a preference for pieces which are ‘very well written, in a modern style; but neither common, nor unnaturally new’.<sup>824</sup>

Having discussed the overarching thinking patterns and decision processes in chapter 1, we can now zoom in to the details of the skills built and expressed through this process and how these can be effectively taught. As Dunn has noted, teachers tend to use methods and approaches that they were taught with and therefore it requires pioneers to break the cycle and introduce new strategies.<sup>825</sup> Bailey, Berkowitz and Chamblee have discovered that a knowledge of harmony and stylistic norms is necessary for successful classical improvisation.<sup>826</sup> There is a lack of pedagogical literature for melody instrumentalists on this subject, however. Berkowitz stresses the importance of formulas such as transposition, variation and recombination.<sup>827</sup> This is especially important for baroque improvisation as coherence of style in each section is key and I have used each of these

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<sup>818</sup> Nikolaus Harnoncourt, *Music As Speech: Ways to a New Understanding of Music*, trans. Mary O’Neill (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1988), 27.

<sup>819</sup> Helicon Project, ‘I love mistakes - a pedagogical proposal with HELICONA,’ YouTube video, posted by ‘Helicon Project,’ March 26, 2021, accessed February 2, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XV9YOywpXQI>.

<sup>820</sup> Ibid.

<sup>821</sup> Andrew Stewart, ‘Classical Music: Fiddling with the Rules. Andrew Stewart talks to Andrew Manze, a violinist putting the jazz back into baroque music,’ *Independent*, April 30, 1998, <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/classical-music-fiddling-with-the-rules-1162167.html>.

<sup>822</sup> Haynes, *The end of early music*, 100.

<sup>823</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>824</sup> Charles Burney, *The present state of music in France and Italy: or, the journal of a tour through those countries, undertaken to collect materials for a general history of music* (T. Becket, 1773), 1:312.

<sup>825</sup> R. Dunn, K. Dunn and G. Price, *Learning style inventory* (Lawrence KA: Price Systems, 1979).

<sup>826</sup> Bailey, *Improvisation*. And Aron Lee Berkowitz, *Cognition in improvisation: The art and science of spontaneous musical performance* (Harvard: Harvard University, 2009). And Karin Johansson, *Organ improvisation-activity, action and rhetorical practice*, Vol. 11 (PhD Thesis, Lund University, 2008). And Catherine Burnette Chamblee, *Cognitive processes of improvisation: Performers and listeners in the organ tradition and contemporary gospel styles* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania, 2008).

<sup>827</sup> Berkowitz, *Cognition in improvisation*.

formulas in my improvisations. To transpose, I use the handshape method. To achieve variation, I include ornamentation. I also found that choosing rhythmic features provided a structured way to recombine material. Berkowitz also, interestingly, picked out creator and witness states in improvisers Levin and Bilson's mindsets while performing. While the creator phases involved a high degree of planning, witness moments were analogous to flow and without conscious intention.<sup>828</sup> I would argue that improvisers are always creating and witnessing simultaneously. In contrast to Berkowitz's suggestion that these are phases, the improviser is constantly witnessing their creations while creating the next. The planning for the next note, or, on a larger scale, phrase, is always occurring during the execution of the previous one. In addition, witnessing implies a passive listening while this could not be further from the truth. In fact, this witnessing plays an essential part in the creation: reactions determine decision-making (see reaction and decision matrices in chapter 1). Chamblee recognised the need for 'know-what' and 'know-how' for improvisers.<sup>829</sup> These terms relate to the explicit (know-what) and tacit (know-how) areas of knowledge that improvisers must build. Mendonça and Wallace found that the environment or situation of improvisation did not greatly affect jazz musicians' strategy selection for improvisation.<sup>830</sup>

Norgaard suggests that all improvisation pedagogy should seek to allow students to experience the mental processes of high-level improvisers.<sup>831</sup> After interviewing five internationally renowned classical improvisers, Després identified forty-six strategies which he categorised into: 'preplanning, conceptual, structural, atmospheric and stylistic, and real time'.<sup>832</sup> The different strategies he found can be seen in table 4. They were not all used by all the participants but a significant amount of crossover was found, the mean number of strategies used was twenty-four (just over half of the total identified).<sup>833</sup> The following appeared as strategies for development: 'embellishing, varying or recombining... repeating or sequencing'.<sup>834</sup> He asked the improvisers to 'improvise in the language of your choice, as you would in concert, ending improvisation when you deem appropriate'.<sup>835</sup> This resulted in a range of lengths from just over three to almost eleven minutes but all musicians turned to tonality and memorised motives at some point in their

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<sup>828</sup> Ibid. And Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, 'Happiness and Creativity,' *The Futurist* 31, no. 5 (1997).

<sup>829</sup> Chamblee, *Cognitive processes of improvisation*.

<sup>830</sup> David Mendonça and William A. Wallace, 'Cognition in jazz improvisation: An exploratory study,' *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society*, 26, no. 26 (2004): 956-961.

<sup>831</sup> Martin Norgaard, 'Descriptions of improvisational thinking by artist-level jazz musicians,' *Journal of Research in Music Education* 59, no. 2 (2011): 124.

<sup>832</sup> Jean-Philippe Després et al., 'Expert Western Classical Music Improvisers' Strategies,' *Journal of Research in Music Education* 65, no. 2 (2017): 139.

<sup>833</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>834</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>835</sup> Ibid., 9.

improvisation.<sup>836</sup> On using segments from compositions, one improviser justified this by arguing that 'it will be very sad to use it only for this in my life. So, when I learn a musical work, I try to use the licks'.<sup>837</sup> The improvisers described deciding on the time based on the suspected audience feeling.<sup>838</sup>

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<sup>836</sup> Ibid., 9, 13, 14.

<sup>837</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>838</sup> Ibid.



Category	General strategies	Specific strategies
Preplanning		Choosing a theme <sup>a</sup> Fixing a frame Setting the color palette <sup>a</sup>
Conceptual	Harmonic priority Melodic priority  Tonal approach <sup>a</sup> Rhythmical considerations <sup>a</sup>	Using quartal harmonies <sup>a</sup> Thinking in intervals Using the chromatic scale <sup>a</sup> Using parallel motion <sup>a</sup> “Breaking” tonality <sup>a</sup> Choosing a comfortable tempo <sup>a</sup>
Structural	Phrasing and articulations  Idea bank  Development <sup>a</sup>     Form	Thinking in terms of phrasing or articulations Quoting a theme Expanding technical ideas <sup>a</sup> Embellishing, varying, or recombining Repeating or sequencing Creating a period <sup>a</sup> Varying intensity <sup>a</sup> Contrasting approach Setting a harmonic structure Building a bridge <sup>a</sup> Setting the duration <sup>a</sup>
Atmospheric and stylistic <sup>a</sup>		Imitating another instrument <sup>a</sup> Imitating a composer or a piece Imitating a style or a genre Setting the mood <sup>a</sup> Creating an ostinato or a pedal <sup>a</sup> Focusing on the tone color
Realtime <sup>a</sup>	Instrumentalities <sup>a</sup>	Faking improvisation <sup>a</sup> Gaining time <sup>a</sup> Exploring the field <sup>a</sup> Keeping a steady rhythm <sup>a</sup> Using brief durations <sup>a</sup> Avoiding the beaten paths Refusing the unexpected <sup>a</sup> Using the unexpected creatively Using idiomatic techniques <sup>a</sup> Keeping a visual contact <sup>a</sup> Simplifying an idea <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Novel strategies (i.e., those that were not included in the preliminary coding scheme).

Table 4: Després’ improvisation strategies from ‘expert’ classical music improvisers. Table sourced: Després, Jean-Philippe et al., ‘Expert Western Classical Music Improvisers’ Strategies,’ *Journal of Research in Music Education* 65, no. 2 (2017): 12.

Strategies to gain thinking time included multiple repetitions or a cell, while one improviser recommended keeping a steady tempo or playing really fast to ‘make any note sound good’.<sup>839</sup> Another suggested resolving unexpected notes so that they become dissonances such as suspensions.<sup>840</sup> To develop self-efficacy in improvisers, Després advises improvising alone and in small groups narrating a story or depicting a scene musically, improvising over an ostinato or pedal or tone focusing on colour. By opening the possibilities, the possibility of making mistakes is drastically reduced and therefore helps musicians to become comfortable with the process, making this a fantastic way to start.<sup>841</sup> Then, trying to aim for different structures can be attempted to become ‘an architect by implementing macro-structural strategies’.<sup>842</sup> He also advocates becoming a ‘musical gold-digger’ — searching for and memorising pleasing or useful progressions from normal repertoire.<sup>843</sup> Each musician, he argues, should create their own ‘strategic toolbox’.<sup>844</sup>

For a baroque toolbox, musicians need to develop explicit and tacit knowledge about the style. While the methods he suggests could also be helpful for this, for historical styles, reading is also necessary as so little instruction regarding performance practice can be found in scores themselves. Norgaard found that jazz improvisers tended to take part in two ‘ongoing processes’ while improvising, firstly, creating a skeleton of what will be played and second, continually evaluating the result. As part of these, improvisers used memorised sections of material, thought more in terms of harmony or melody and used repetition (this strategy also included sequences and variations).<sup>845</sup> Menezes added to these, revealing that improvisers are influenced by listening and reactions, involuntary motor habits, timbre and use any “mistakes” as inspiration.<sup>846</sup> Norgaard split thinking processes into ‘ongoing processes’ and ‘generative strategies’; while the first covers thinking that occurs during the improvisation but which is not concerned with musical creation, the second describes the musical decisions.<sup>847</sup>

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<sup>839</sup> Ibid., 15, 16.

<sup>840</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>841</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>842</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>843</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>844</sup> Ibid.

<sup>845</sup> Norgaard, ‘Descriptions of improvisational thinking’.

<sup>846</sup> J. M. A. Menezes, *Creative process in free improvisation* (Masters thesis, University of Évora, 2010).

<sup>847</sup> Norgaard, ‘Descriptions of improvisational thinking,’ 118. For other work on improvisation strategies see: classical: Berkowitz, *Cognition in improvisation*. And Johansson, *Organ improvisation-activity*. Free: Menezes, *Creative process*. Mixed genres: Bailey, *Improvisation*. And Chamblee, *Cognitive processes of improvisation*. And Csíkszentmihályi, Mihály. ‘Happiness and Creativity.’ *The Futurist* 31, no. 5 (1997): S8. Dealing with musical improvisation as well as theoretical studies on improvisation: Richard Ashley, ‘Musical improvisation,’ *The Oxford handbook of music psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 413-420. And E. F. Clarke, ‘Generative principles in music performance,’ in *Generative Processes in Music*, ed. John Sloboda (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 1-26. And Jeff Pressing, ‘Improvisation: methods and models,’ in *Generative Processes in Music*, ed. John Sloboda (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 129-178.

### 5.1.2 A theoretical approach

Aside from this psychological approach to examining improvisation pedagogy and practice, another strand of research bases itself in music theory, providing exercises which address scales, then harmony and finally provide set patterns or schemata, addressing different styles of improvisation. The Scroll Ensemble and Barbetti, for instance, propose two similar methods to achieve classical improvisation. The Scroll Ensemble are a group of baroque musicians who offer tutorials on improvisation on YouTube. For instance, they dissect Bach's *Tocatta* in D minor BWV 565 to find inspiration and a structure to improvise their own. They note that 'classical music improvisation often uses certain basic building blocks' which are their starting points.<sup>848</sup> They start by ornamenting a D minor scale and then play with repeats, range, characters, tempos, rhythms and rests. This can be a really accessible way to encourage musicians in their early improvisations and build confidence. It acts more as an exercise, however, contributing to the expansion of webs of knowledge and increasing possibilities rather than creating whole stylistic pieces. They also provide skeletons such as in figure 68.



Figure 68: Skeleton score for an improvised toccata inspired by Bach's BWV 565. Still sourced: The Scroll Ensemble. 'Tutorial Bach Toccata'. YouTube video. Posted by 'The Scroll Ensemble Classical Music Improvisation.' March 21, 2021, 5.13. Accessed February 2, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXHL1kxIH1g>.

<sup>848</sup> The Scroll Ensemble, 'Tutorial Bach Toccata,' YouTube video, posted by 'The Scroll Ensemble Classical Music Improvisation,' March 21, 2021, accessed February 2, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXHL1kxIH1g>.

Their method is really effective because it begins with a scale which all musicians are comfortable with and then introduces different ideas slowly. They advise focusing on the scale 'however much might be happening'.<sup>849</sup> This I have also found to be a helpful strategy to create a sense of structure and calm: some of the improvisatory decisions have therefore already been made but with plenty of freedom in between each scale degree. A particularly compelling definition they give is that it is similar to telling a story. Not everything is invented in the moment but familiar language is used in a new and interesting order.<sup>850</sup> While classical musicians have learnt 'how to pronounce the words', improvisers also have to understand the grammar so that 'notes fit together in a musically logical way'.<sup>851</sup> One fun game they suggest is to create 'chains of dissonance' with another person, creating and then resolving suspensions as this requires a different kind of listening.<sup>852</sup> Again, this game is useful to develop skills but does not create a stylistic result. For group improvisation, they advise first ornamenting parts, then improvising over ground basses and finally nominating a leader for the rest of the ensemble to follow and then swapping roles.<sup>853</sup> They themselves improvise in concerts including suites over basslines and cadenzas.<sup>854</sup>

Barbetti uses prelude treatises, Telemann's flute fantasias and her own experience to put forward the following method for improvisation in five steps: '1. Use of both melodic and harmonic material from the fantasia; 2. Use of free melodic material over the original harmonic structure; 3. Use of free melodic material over a new, planned harmonic structure; 4. Integration of material into the notated fantasia; 5. Free improvisation of the replaced section'.<sup>855</sup> She first isolates a harmonic skeleton for the place she will replace with improvisation, such as the example in figure 69. While a helpful starting point, she also encourages improvisers to then experiment with creating their own harmonic outlines. She found that by inserting her improvisations in the midst of Telemann she was

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<sup>849</sup> Ibid.

<sup>850</sup> The Scroll Ensemble, 'What is classical music improvisation level 3 – Amateur Musician,' YouTube video, posted by 'The Scroll Ensemble Classical Music Improvisation,' August 5, 2020, accessed February 2022, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oOa5ssiVmNg&list=PL8Zph-SkKedxI0CiTrRbGVFCaS-NR\\_JMV&index=4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oOa5ssiVmNg&list=PL8Zph-SkKedxI0CiTrRbGVFCaS-NR_JMV&index=4).

<sup>851</sup> Ibid.

<sup>852</sup> Ibid. And The Scroll Ensemble, 'Zoomprovisations,' YouTube video, posted by 'The Scroll Ensemble Classical Music Improvisation,' August 6, 2020, accessed February 8, 2022, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aEtRY\\_FiaOU&list=PL8Zph-SkKedxI0CiTrRbGVFCaS-NR\\_JMV&index=6](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aEtRY_FiaOU&list=PL8Zph-SkKedxI0CiTrRbGVFCaS-NR_JMV&index=6).

<sup>853</sup> The Scroll Ensemble, 'What is classical improvisation level 5 – professional musician,' YouTube video, posted by 'The Scroll Ensemble Classical Music Improvisation,' August 7, 2020, accessed February 8, 2022, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AbbpW-kJDQ&list=PL8Zph-SkKedxI0CiTrRbGVFCaS-NR\\_JMV&index=7](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AbbpW-kJDQ&list=PL8Zph-SkKedxI0CiTrRbGVFCaS-NR_JMV&index=7).

<sup>854</sup> For an example see The Scroll Ensemble, 'The Scroll Ensemble,' YouTube video, posted by 'National Centre for Early Music,' July 13, 2015, accessed February 8, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nF2eMEKcvWY>.

<sup>855</sup> Megan Barbetti, 'Reviving the Ghost: A Method for Baroque Improvisation Modelled through Telemann's Twelve Fantasias for Flute without Bass (1727-1728),' (Masters dissertation, University of Western Australia, 2020), 23.

able to maintain a stylistic sound easier.<sup>856</sup> To improvise over harmonies for melody instrumentalists requires a lot of practice and a shift in focus. It would therefore be easier to start with improvisation over simple ground basses to develop this skill before progressing to changing harmonies.

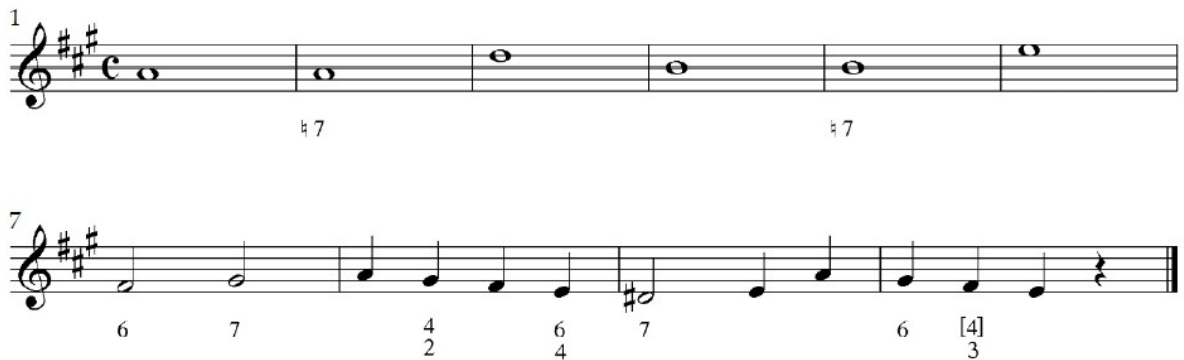


Figure 69: Example harmonic skeleton Barbetti has created from a Telemann flute fantasia to then be able to improvise over. Image sourced: Barbetti, Megan. 'Reviving the Ghost: A Method for Baroque Improvisation Modelled through Telemann's Twelve Fantasias for Flute without Bass (1727–1728).' Masters Dissertation. University of Western Australia, 2020, 27.

Smith starts with exercises based on the whole tone scale, then addresses chords and finally suggests learning set patterns which she has transposed into all keys.<sup>857</sup> While developing webs of knowledge particularly with regard to sequences, this method does rather reduce the creativity of improvisation, feeling much more like technical exercises. Similarly, Wong begins with pentatonic improvisation, moves on to harmonisation and then gives guidance for different styles and Barton begins with melodic imitation before moving onto harmonic progressions.<sup>858</sup> Sarath also covers different styles based on theory.<sup>859</sup> Chung and Thurmond provide melodic pattern exercises as well as harmonic schemata, taking examples from written music such as by Bach, Mozart and Scarlatti. They also cover mediaeval modes and jazz.<sup>860</sup> Likewise, Chastek provides melodic exercises but requires them to be used first for sight-reading, then transposition, harmonisation and

<sup>856</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>857</sup> Gail Smith, *Mel Bay's Complete Improvisation, Fills and Chord Progression Book* (Barking, Essex: Mel Bay Music, Ltd. 1994).

<sup>858</sup> Yoke Wong, *Definitive Piano Improvisation Course* (CA: Harmony and Melody Studio, Inc., 2007). And Brian Barton, *Improvisation: Towards a Maturing Understanding of its Importance to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century musician* (Self-published, 2020), 49.

<sup>859</sup> Edward Sarath, *Music Theory Through Improvisation: A new Approach to Musicianship Training* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>860</sup> Brian Chung and Dennis Thurmond, *Improvisation at the Piano: A Systematic Approach for the Classically Trained Pianist* (Harrow: Alfred Publishing Inc., 2007).

improvisation, introducing new chords each chapter.<sup>861</sup> The introduction of chords one by one can be rather limiting. At first, as much freedom as possible should be encouraged to reduce the possibility of “mistakes”, encouraging musicians by building their confidence and also developing exploratory mindsets regarding their instruments. Placing too many restrictions early on can be counterproductive. This is, however, a really useful exercise to apply at a later stage to encourage exploration within small boundaries, challenging the improviser.

Not constrained by style, free improvisation often brings together different cultures and narratives.<sup>862</sup> Similarly, improvisation is not limited by ability, it can be seen even in early communication between infants and their mothers and as MacDonald notes: all humans have the ability to create and alter sounds.<sup>863</sup> Sawyer argues for its central place in all education, but especially for music, that it should be there from the beginning, with reading music only being learnt much later on.<sup>864</sup> He argues that this is the only way to achieve a ‘transformation of our musical culture’, which he argues is desperately needed: ‘one that upends the relationship between performer and composer, one that places the performer at an equal status with the composer, and one in which both performer and composer contribute creatively to music’.<sup>865</sup> He sees the current system as producing students who can retain facts but do not possess integrated knowledge.<sup>866</sup> To gain expert knowledge, a ‘deep conceptual understanding... integrated knowledge... adaptive expertise [and] ... collaborative skills’ are needed, all of which improvisation provides.<sup>867</sup> Dalcroze, Kodály, Orff and Gordon all used improvisation in their music education strategies.<sup>868</sup> The National Standards for Music Education included improvisation even from 1994 and in 2014 it was made an anchor standard to help ‘generate, conceptualise, organise, and develop artistic ideas and work’ including some example exercises.<sup>869</sup> Yoo advises using improvisation techniques from the baroque period to improve musical skills in the upper ages of primary school.<sup>870</sup> She lists couple dances, ground basses and variation forms as prime examples.<sup>871</sup> Very simple versions, however, are needed

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<sup>861</sup> Wilfred Knox Chastek, *Keyboard Skills* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1967).

<sup>862</sup> Jason Stanyek, ‘Articulating intercultural free improvisation: Evan Parker’s synergetics project,’ *Resonance* 7, no. 2 (1999): 47.

<sup>863</sup> Raymond AR, MacDonald and Graeme B. Wilson, ‘Musical improvisation and health: a review,’ *Psychology of Well-being* 4, no. 1 (2014): 2.

<sup>864</sup> Keith Sawyer, ‘Improvisation and teaching,’ *Critical Studies in Improvisation/Études critiques en improvisation* 3, no. 2 (2007): 1.

<sup>865</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>866</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>867</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>868</sup> Hyesoo Yoo, ‘Using baroque techniques to teach improvisation in your classroom,’ *Music Educators Journal* 102, no. 1 (2015): 92.

<sup>869</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>870</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-6.

<sup>871</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

as this involves higher-order structural thinking which requires the basics of technique and improvisational creativity to already be in the tacit spheres. Otherwise, this exercise could become very overwhelming. Couple dances such as the passamezzo, pavane and galliard all used similar melodies; it was the rhythms which defined their category.<sup>872</sup> Rhythmic exercises are therefore a useful starting point in this regard. These also include improvising from figured bass, being provided with a couple of rhythms to focus on or varying the rhythm or melody of a well-known song, through adding trills and appoggiaturas for example. Again, these should be treated as more advanced exercises unless in very simplified forms. She sees the lack of improvisation in the classroom as down to the lack of confidence teachers have which is in turn a result of a lack of training.

Some of her example exercises are given below (see figure 70). Yoo advises training students to count the intervals shown by simplified figured bass and to realise these over the bassline played by the teacher, matching what they hear with what they see and have produced. These figures show an example realisation of the simplified figures on the top and the teacher's line on the bottom. Yoo's figure 1 demonstrate this in its simplest form. The second encourages improvisation with 3rds and 6ths over the bassline. The third and further suggest improvisation of a melody through first finding the intervals and then realising whole chords and elaborating on these. In my own practice, I found Yoo's figure 4 to be the most useful. Applied to different ground basses, and the game Bassline Bingo (see chapter 5.4) allowed me to practise the realisation of chords. Having suggested rhythms to follow at the beginning was challenging as it required the faster realisation of the chords, but with further practice it became a creative aid in stimulating more interesting improvisations and increased the speed at which I could realise any chords, not only those I had practised improvising. Yoo's figures 1,2 and 3 I found particularly challenging when transposed to new keys as calculating intervals is not in my common practice; however, with extensive practice in one key I could produce fluent improvisations. I found it easier to think in terms of chords rather than intervals, as intervals on the violin are not supported by the visual aid of distance such as on a keyboard instrument: they cross strings, use different fingers and positions which can become quite complicated. Rather than reading the figured bass, I found myself more frequently drawn to writing chord symbols above that reflected the figured bass. After practising Yoo's figure 4, I found I could improvise much more fluently using this method rather than reading the figured bass. To translate the figure into a chord symbol in my head was one step too many for the instantaneous nature of improvisation for my current level. This informed my game Bassline bingo (see chapter 5.4) which enables the practise of improvisation over chords rather than intervals to develop confidence in harmony. Likewise, I have

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<sup>872</sup> Ibid.

created a method to aid improvising chords by choosing handshapes rather than calculating intervals to make this process easier and quicker for violinists (see chapter 5.3.1).

## FIGURE 1

### Consonant and Dissonant Sounds

The musical notation for Figure 1 is set in 4/4 time. The 'Students' part is written on a treble clef staff, and the 'Teacher' part is on a bass clef staff. The sequence consists of three measures. The first measure contains four notes: C4, D4, E4, and F4. The second measure contains four notes: G4, A4, B4, and C5. The third measure contains four notes: D5, E5, F5, and G5. Below the Teacher's staff, a series of numbers indicates fingerings: 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 5, 3, 2, 4. An arrow points to the first measure.

## FIGURE 2

### Improvising Using the Third and Sixth Intervals

The musical notation for Figure 2 is in 4/4 time. The 'Students' part is on a treble clef staff, and the 'Teacher' part is on a bass clef staff. The sequence consists of eight measures. The first measure has a single note C4. The second measure has a single note D4. The third measure has a single note E4. The fourth measure has a single note F4. The fifth measure has a single note G4. The sixth measure has a single note A4. The seventh measure has a single note B4. The eighth measure has a single note C5. Below the Teacher's staff, numbers indicate intervals: 3, 3, 6, 3, 3, 3, 6, 3.



### FIGURE 3

#### Melodic Improvisation with Figured Bass



### FIGURE 4.

#### Harmonic Improvisation with Figured Bass



Figure 70: Exercises as suggested by Hyesoo Yoo. Images sourced: Yoo, Hyesoo. 'Using baroque techniques to teach improvisation in your classroom.' *Music Educators Journal* 102, no. 1 (2015): 93–4.

Gross's work on figuration preludes draws largely on the pedagogy of J.S. Bach.<sup>873</sup> He posits that students should draw upon Callahan's diminution patterns as well as Larson's maps, menus and models but also encourages pupils to create their own models which notate just the bassline and figures.<sup>874</sup> He emphasises throughout the importance of an integrated learning, one which combines theory and practice, drawing on Larson's claims.<sup>875</sup> J.S. Bach's harmonisation suggestions for a descending scale can be used to help improvise a prelude. Karosi's research, for example, encourages the use of schemata and rhetoric to improvise a prelude in the 'eighteenth-century Lutheran tradition'.<sup>876</sup>

John Mortensen's method for eighteenth-century keyboard improvisation involves four basic considerations: rule of the octave, cadences, partimento and bass motions and counterpoint.<sup>877</sup> Using the rule of the octave, he posits, will create 'normal' sounding music. Improvisers should then add interest through ornamentation and suspensions. Similarly, having a bank of cadences can provide stylistic conclusions to phrases. To string music together, he advises using an opener and a connector (such as a sequence) with a cadence, then repeating this in the dominant. Practice over partimento using these as pedagogical basslines he suggests is essential. Without figures, the rule of the octave can be applied. He astutely remarks that the diminished chord can be used to modulate anywhere. Many elements of this approach can be used by violinists or melody instrumentalists. However, I have found this to create rather formulaic improvisations. Practice in these areas will develop the improviser's language and therefore these aspects can be drawn upon when necessary and, once automated, the attention can be shifted onto elaborating these for interest. Improvising over partimenti, however, is particularly difficult for melody instrumentalists without training in figured bass. I suggest instead practising over ground basses and working out the harmony first, such as by writing chord symbols above or writing out the notes implied by the figures to then improvise from. Without this preparation, it is impossible to improvise at speed. It is, however, a fun exercise to improvise over recorded music without a written bassline. This forces the improviser to use their intuition and to increase their vocabulary of finding their way back from unexpected to expected. This embeds chord progressions and modulations in a similar way to keyboardists improvising over partimenti.

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<sup>873</sup> Gross, 'The Improvisation of Figuration Preludes,' 19.

<sup>874</sup> Ibid., 41. And see Michael Callahan, *Techniques of Keyboard Improvisation in the German Baroque* (PhD Dissertation, University of Rochester, 2010). And Steve Larson, "'Integrated music Learning" and Improvisation: Teaching Musicianship and Theory Through 'Menus, Maps, and Models,' *College Music Symposium* 35 (1995): 76-90.

<sup>875</sup> Gross, 'The Improvisation of Figuration Preludes,' 42. And Larson, 'Integrated music Learning' 76-90.

<sup>876</sup> Bálint Karosi, 'Schemata and Rhetoric: Improvising the Chorale Prelude in the Eighteenth-Century Lutheran Tradition,' (PhD dissertation, Yale School of Music, 2014).

<sup>877</sup> John Mortensen, 'How to Fake Anything On Stage,' (Lecture for *HPI Colloquium*, online, April 6, 2022).

Whether psychological or theoretically focused, research into teaching and learning improvisation often focuses on jazz and those that do expressly deal with the baroque period are largely aimed at creating a generally stylistic sound, addressing the beginning phases of improvisation. Greater specificity is needed for the next level, using practice-led research.

## 5.2 Methodology: Reflections and experiments

Recent years have seen a rise in practice-led research. Researchers in this discipline form part of the research process: they are insiders and therefore are ideally placed to reflect on practice.<sup>878</sup> A large area of recent research in this vein has focused on performance psychology. Boud outlined three main types of self-reflection: reviewing the experience immediately afterwards for detailed clarification, evaluating the event's emotional impact by noticing feelings and re-evaluating the experience to apply this new knowledge.<sup>879</sup> This kind of research is by nature subjective but this is an advantage as it is only qualitative research that produces 'rich representations of phenomena' which themselves 'exist as conceptualised by different people'.<sup>880</sup> Similarly, Winter argues that 'we do not "store" experience as data, like a computer: we "story" it'.<sup>881</sup> Bolton advocates 'through-the-mirror' writing which aims to be as improvised as possible as this can reveal interesting insights.<sup>882</sup> No corrections are allowed; 'whatever you write will be right'.<sup>883</sup> Busy professional schedules can leave little time for self-reflection.<sup>884</sup> Bolton calls for a constant questioning of the status quo which is what classical improvisation research has brought into question.<sup>885</sup> She argues that this comes from reflection (evaluation) and reflexivity (questioning).<sup>886</sup> Schon advocates 'reflection-in-action' in practice.<sup>887</sup>

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<sup>878</sup> For examples of reflective writing see Carolyn Ellis and Art Bochner, 'Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as subject,' in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (New York: Sage Publications, 2000), 733. And Norman K. Denzin, 'Pedagogy, performance, and autoethnography,' *Text and Performance Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (2006): 333-338.

<sup>879</sup> David Boud, Rosemary Keogh, and David Walker, *Reflection: Turning experience into learning* (London: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>880</sup> López-Iñiguez and McPherson, 'Applying self-regulated learning'.

<sup>881</sup> Winter 1988, 235 in Bolton, *Reflective Practice*, 3.

<sup>882</sup> Bolton, *Reflective practice*, 4.

<sup>883</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>884</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>885</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>886</sup> *Ibid.*, 13. See also A. L. Cunliffe, 'Reflectivity, learning and reflexive practice,' in *Handbook in management learning, education and development*, ed. S. Armstrong and C. Fukami (London: Sage, 2009).

<sup>887</sup> Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 287.

Barbetti's work involved recording practice sessions and evaluating these using Gillie Bolton's reflective journal writing.<sup>888</sup> Rea used a similar approach to investigate the effectiveness of theatre comedy.<sup>889</sup> Fidom traces a performative turn in the humanities over the last couple of decades which also then resulted in the increased scholarly interest in improvisation.<sup>890</sup> I have used this pedagogy of reflection to influence my research methodology, reflecting consistently on my practice-led research, creating tools for improvisation practice and performance. I have reflected on my own improvisations in the moment, my memories of these, recordings on these as well as through the development and performance of my suggested games (see 5.4). As such, this research is subjective and representative of a single individual's experience. It nevertheless provides a practical example of the potential impact of these findings. While beyond the scope of this research, it would also be interesting to investigate the experiences of others resulting from this guidance. The conclusions from this are discussed below along with my resulting suggestions for stylistic baroque improvisation practice and performance.

### 5.3 Shortcuts to improvised virtuosity

The seventeenth century witnessed a broadening in the practice of chordal playing for the violin, both at regular tuning and in scordatura as is evidenced in so many of Biber's sonatas.<sup>891</sup> Evelyn remarked of Matteis senior that he gave the impression of 'a Consort of several Instruments', demonstrating this to be a new or at least rare and exciting technique.<sup>892</sup> This increase in polyphonic playing was accompanied by an expansion of the common range for solo violin pieces. During the latter half of the century, composers such as Biber and Westhoff explored higher notes, reaching the seventh position in our current terminology.<sup>893</sup> The occurrence of virtuosic writing, rather unsurprisingly, rests in repertoire written by solo composer-performers.<sup>894</sup> This could be expressed in florid passaggi, often frequenting division writing, but also in the vocal lyrical qualities of the stylus phantasticus. Uccellini's sonatas such as *La Luciminis conetnta* demonstrate the juxtaposition of both

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<sup>888</sup> Barbetti, 'Reviving the Ghost,' 23. And Bolton, *Reflective Practice*, 163-166.

<sup>889</sup> Kenneth Rea, 'What makes an audience laugh? A practice-based enquiry into comedy in theatre,' in *The Reflective Conservatoire: Studies in Music Education*, ed. George Odam and Nicholas Bannan (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005), 65-96.

<sup>890</sup> Hans Fidom, 'Improvisation: The Emancipation of an Ancient Musical Skill,' *The Haarlem Essays/ Celebrating Fifty International Organ Festivals* 14 (2014): 351.

<sup>891</sup> Peter Allsop, 'Violinistic virtuosity in the seventeenth century: Italian supremacy or Austro-German hegemony?' *Il Saggiatore musicale* (1996): 233.

<sup>892</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>893</sup> W. Reich in *Ibid.*

<sup>894</sup> Allsop, 'Violinistic virtuosity,' 234.

kinds of virtuosity.<sup>895</sup> Composed sonatas from Italy only began to feature chordal playing from the late seventeenth century whereas German sonatas employed this much earlier but it is important to keep in mind that the number of Italian manuscripts remains very low and this is therefore perhaps not representative of practice.<sup>896</sup> Allsop attributes the lack of printed Italian solo sonatas to the inability of the printing technology used to express these new techniques.<sup>897</sup> Violinists travelled between European countries often and therefore techniques and compositional styles were shared with examples of unaccompanied solo violin music featuring everywhere.<sup>898</sup> Achieving such virtuosity in improvisation, however, is challenging and methods for this are absent from our written sources. The improviser, therefore, needs an arsenal of tips and tricks to create these effects in the moment. Through practice-led research including games, I have found and developed a method to aid virtuosic harmonisation in improvisation through focusing on reproducing handshapes. The context and rationale will be discussed first before revealing these techniques alongside video examples to demonstrate the practicality of this. Following this, I suggest several techniques to employ when improvisations do not go as expected, aiding fluency over longer periods of improvisation.

### 5.3.1 Harmonising improvisation through handshapes

Dorian Bandy's recent study on the impact of violin technique on baroque contrapuntal composition highlights the physical aspects of playing double, triple or quadruple stops; as he notes, 'musical thought occurs as much on the fingerboard as on the manuscript leaf'.<sup>899</sup> He argues that just as recent research on Bach's composition demonstrates that it was 'shaped... by his physical approach to keyboard playing', so violinist-composers would have relied on handshapes to create their contrapuntal works.<sup>900</sup> The harmonic and contrapuntal possibilities on the violin are dictated by technical and physical constraints. A theoretical approach must, therefore, be matched with technical, embedded and embodied knowledge.<sup>901</sup> The time constraints of thinking in

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<sup>895</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>896</sup> Ibid., 248.

<sup>897</sup> Ibid., 257.

<sup>898</sup> Ibid., 257.

<sup>899</sup> Dorian Bandy, 'Violin technique and the contrapuntal imagination in 17th-century German lands,' *Early Music* caab031 (2021): 275.

<sup>900</sup> Ibid., 6. And M. Hall, 'Keyboard technique as contrapuntal structure in J.S. Bach's clavier works,' *Understanding Bach* 10 (2015): 85-107.

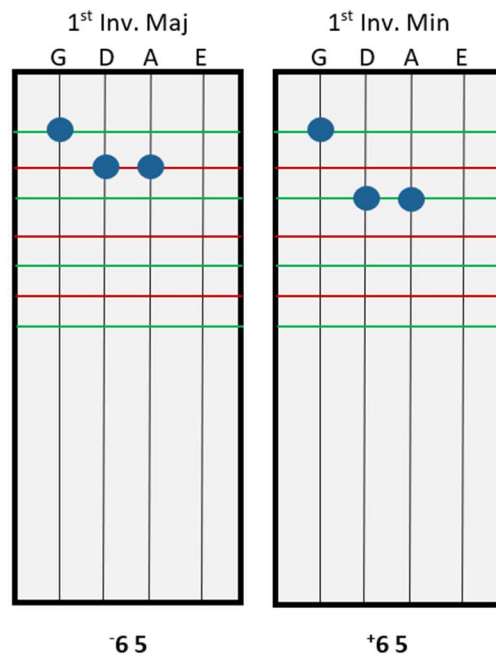
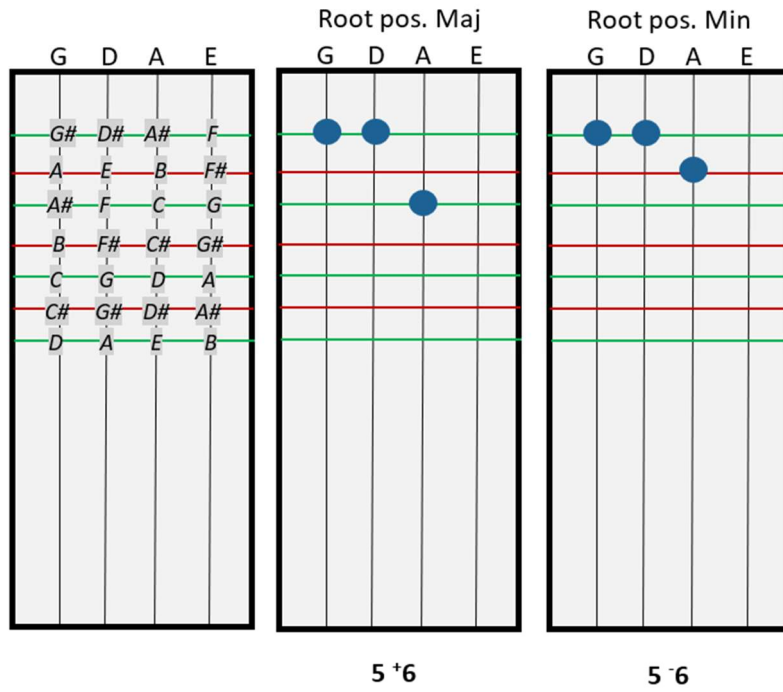
<sup>901</sup> On musical embodied knowledge see Leonid Perlovsky, 'Origin of music and embodied cognition,' *Frontiers in Psychology* 6 (2015): 538. And Arnie Cox, *Music and embodied cognition: Listening, moving, feeling, and thinking* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2016).

improvisation mean that embedded knowledge is essential for successful fluent improvisations. The fastest way to act is through intuition and so improvisers need to spend the time practising and using such short cuts to embed this knowledge so that it becomes intuitive. While for compositions these can be worked out with the luxury of time, improvisers seeking to play contrapuntally, or even just with harmonisation, must invent and realise these in an instant (see chapter 1 for further discussion on the nature of improvisation and composition). If improvisation is the direct execution of an idea (see chapter 1.1.6), then the quicker ideas can be realised the more ideas an improviser can have and therefore the longer and more fluent the improvisations can be. As such, I propose the following method to ensure the shortest possible amount of time between decision and realisation.

During my experiments, such as attempting to play sequences of chords, trying to harmonise an improvisation or read figured bass, I found that to think about which chord to harmonise a note with and then to work out which notes that implied and where these were on the violin took much longer than the instant available in improvisation. While this could be sped up with considerable practice in one key, choosing another key meant largely starting again. I could, however, always improvise a sixth, third or octave above or below the melody note immediately as these are commonly used handshapes which produce the same result anywhere on the violin: the explicit and tacit decisions needed for this could be made easily (see chapter 0.2.1). As such, if adding harmonies could be as simple as picking a handshape from a small selection which would always reliably produce the same kind of chord (such as root position, first inversion, second inversion or sevenths), then improvisers would only have to decide which melody or bass note to play and then pick one previously internalised handshape option, drastically reducing the thinking time needed. This then simplifies the necessary decision matrices (see chapter 1.2.1) and opens up the thinking time to be used to plan next sections or modulations and allows attention to be focused elsewhere, necessary in complex and longer improvisations like a fantasia. It can also make the improviser feel much more comfortable and confident playing harmonies as the thought process is reduced; improvisers have fewer decisions to make. This really demonstrates the essence of improvisation: the direct execution of an idea, relying on embedded knowledge to execute these ideas.

On the violin, a root inversion chord (or  $\begin{smallmatrix} 5 \\ 3 \end{smallmatrix}$  in figured bass) can be created anywhere by playing a 5th and then a 6th above. For a major chord, the sixth should be major and a minor sixth creates a minor chord. In handshapes, this means using the same finger across two strings and the next finger either a semitone or tone away from the finger holding two strings down on the top string. Similarly, a first inversion chord ( $\begin{smallmatrix} 6 \\ 3 \end{smallmatrix}$ ) can be built from a 6<sup>th</sup> plus a 5<sup>th</sup>. In this case, a minor sixth results in a major chord and a major sixth is needed for a minor chord. Second inversion chords are built from two sixths: one major and one minor. If the first is major this creates a major chord

while a minor sixth between the bottom two notes results in a minor chord. For a seventh, a minor seventh plus a sharpened fourth is needed. The resulting handshapes are as follows:



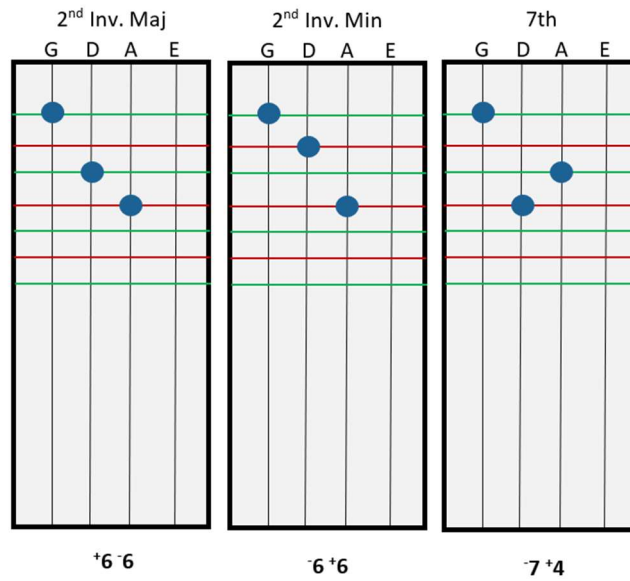


Figure 71: Violin tablature showing the finger positions for each main chord type. The numbers below signify the intervals between the fingers (+ indicates major interval and minus indicates minor interval).

These translate to the following handshapes as realised with a first finger as a bass:

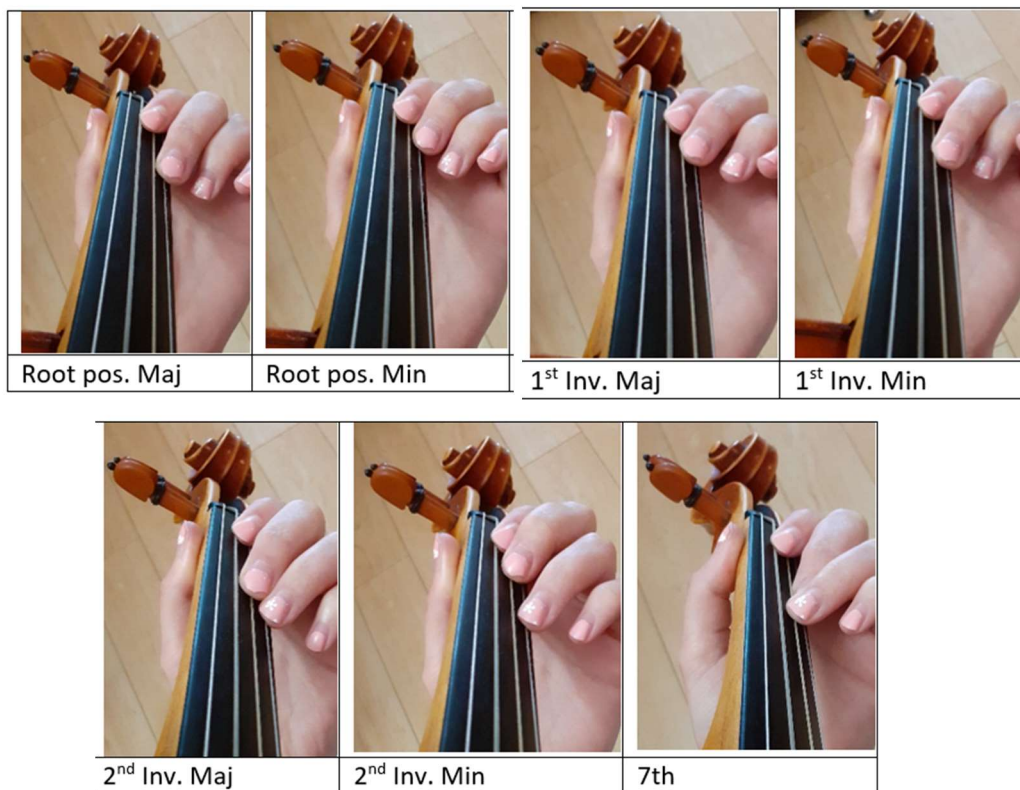


Table 5: Table showing photos of each hand position described in figure 71 using the first finger as a bass.



The following video demonstrates these:



Video 1: A video demonstrating each of the basic handshapes. This can be found in the accompanying material as a mp4 file or as a YouTube link provided here. Kümin, Nina. 'Basic Handshapes.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' September 25, 2021. Accessed September 25, 2021. <https://youtu.be/XUtlidvUA00>.

Seventh chords can also be positioned in different inversions, increasing the difficulty as the other handshapes become internalised. Due to the nature of the four strings and the restrictions of number of fingers and realistic handshapes, creating an illusion or a seventh chord is the most practical solution.

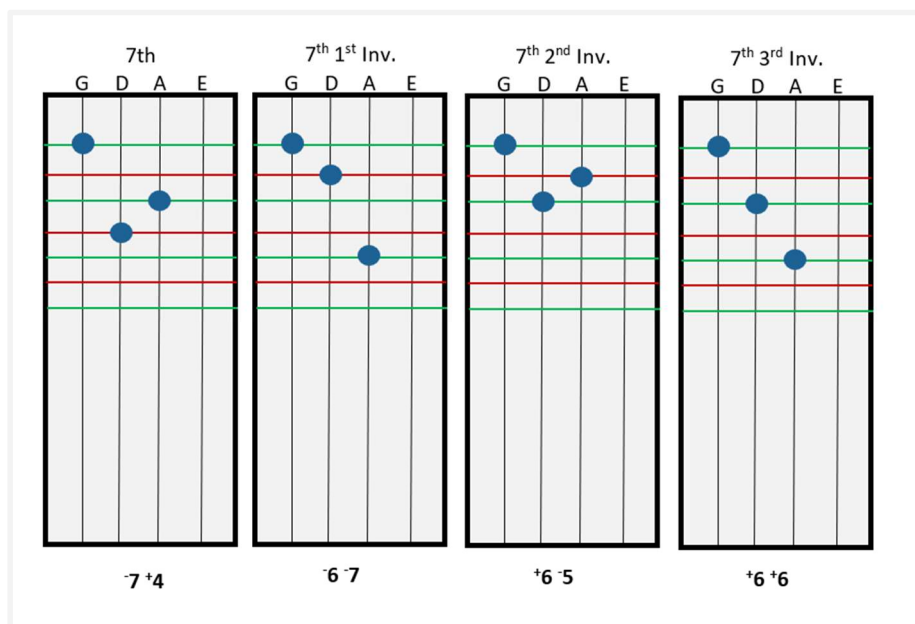


Figure 72: Handshapes to give an illusion of a seventh chord for each inversion.

Table 5 shows the handshapes described in figure 71 with the first finger as a bass. Root position and first inversion chords can also be played with the 2nd or 3rd fingers at the bass. The necessity of using the 4th finger to play a 5th, however, makes having the 3rd finger as a bass particularly challenging. Choosing either to have a first or second finger as the bass will, therefore, produce the most comfortable and likely convincing results. These handshapes, played anywhere on the violin, will produce the chords listed (see video 2). For instance, attempting to play a D major chord in root position, an improviser could just shift their first or second fingers onto a D on the G string (modern day 4<sup>th</sup> position) and adopt the root position handshape (5 +6). Once the shapes have been internalised a chord can be achieved instantly as soon as one of the notes has been decided and the position of the chord.



Video 2: Video showing the use of the same handshape anywhere on the violin to produce the same chord inversion, in this case a minor root position chord. Video sourced: Kümin, Nina. 'One handshape anywhere on the violin, minor root position.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' September 25, 2021. Accessed September 25, 2021.

<https://youtu.be/diOHKcZ48ck>.

Improvisers can then move between chords, for example in the style of Matteis junior's *Alia Fantasia*, with ease (see figure 73 and video 3). This can also be found exemplified in my second recital (see chapter 6.2.1). Focusing simply on choosing a note (bass, melody or central) and then a handshape, the decision process is limited to two choices and these correspond to physical positions. As players get more experienced, improvisers can experiment with using half handshapes, different bass fingers and open strings as well as engineering more than one line at once or deliberately choosing unexpected harmonies. The larger the leaps between the chosen notes and

the higher up the fingerboard the more difficult the exercise becomes. This can also be used as an exercise to practice double stops and intonation as well as harmonic progressions. I found it easiest to begin by focusing on picking notes for the bass but once I became more familiar with the shapes, I could also pick a top note (and then harmonise down, so to speak). This harmonisation method can also be applied to reading figured bass. For each figured chord, the violinist can just focus on finding the bass note and then applying the correct handshape rather than having to work out which notes would be consonant, the handshape already provides these.

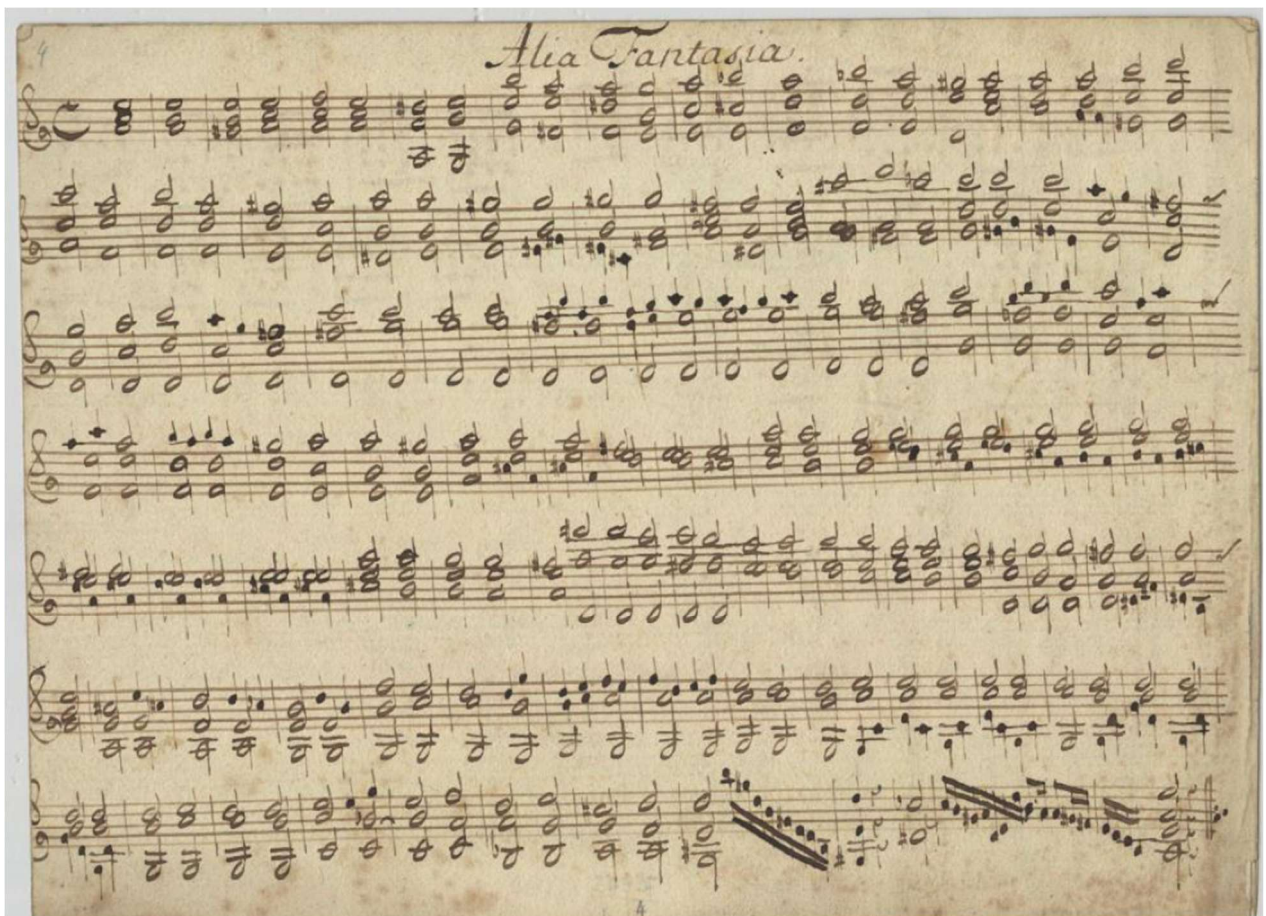


Figure 73: The manuscript for Matteis junior's *Alia Fantasia* (c.1700–1720) showing the use of continuous rolling chords which this handshape method can facilitate in an improvised setting.

Image sourced: Matteis, Nicola. *2 Fantasias for Violin Solo*. Manuscript, 1700.

[https://imslp.org/wiki/2\\_Fantasias\\_for\\_Violin\\_solo\\_\(Matteis\\_Jr.%2C\\_Nicola\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/2_Fantasias_for_Violin_solo_(Matteis_Jr.%2C_Nicola)).



Video 3: Video showing an example improvisation in the style of Matteis junior's *Alia Fantasia* using the handshapes method. Video sourced: Kümin, Nina. 'Matteis Alia Fantasia Style Improvisation.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' September 25, 2021. Accessed September 25, 2021. <https://youtu.be/mUw0Srd1bFk>.

The same principle of handshapes applies to creating easily memorisable sequences. This is arguably the case for all instruments. There are many contemporary mentions of handshapes to create embodied knowledge, such as the Guidonian hand used to teach singing hexachords and in figured bass treatises such as by J.S. Bach and Niedt but this is not the case for violinists.<sup>902</sup> Lute and theorbo players also rely on similar embedded handshapes to read figured bass. If violinists choose short patterns which fit within a handshape, this handshape can be transferred anywhere on the violin and then threaded together to create a sequence. Alternatively, sequences can be formed by staying in the same position and transferring the fingering pattern to neighbouring strings to create a sequential section a 5th below or above (see video 4). After improvisers have become familiar with these key handshapes, they can begin to experiment with adding in suspensions through just changing one finger from one chord to the next and resolving it on the next chord. Cadential patterns can be internalised such as a 4–3 suspension on chord V through a 5 -7 to 5 +6 handshape. In addition, sequences can be built, for instance through a string of first inversion chords, or using root position chords to explore the circle of 5<sup>th</sup>s. Other handshapes can also be experimented with which are not transferable, for instance those that rely on open strings.

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<sup>902</sup> J.S. Bach, *Precepts and principles for playing the thorough bass or accompanying in four parts* (Leipzig, 1738). And Friedrich Erhardt Niedt, *Musicalische Handleitung zur Variation* (Hamburg: Benjamin Schillern, 1706). And Carol Berger, 'The hand and the art of memory,' *Musica disciplina* 35 (1981): 87-120.



Video 4: Video showing an example handshape-oriented sequence crossing over onto neighbouring strings. Video sourced: Kümin, Nina. 'Sequence across strings keeping the handshape.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' September 25, 2021. Accessed September 25, 2021. <https://youtu.be/00JQBZqB6Hc>.

In addition, harmonising melodies can also benefit from this approach. Players can then adopt the top-down method to harmonise their own melodies. Good practice for this is to harmonise well-known melodies or those in the performer's current repertoire. Players can begin by adding in sixths, thirds or octaves below the melody (all intervals which violinists encounter often and should be familiar and comfortable with) and then expand this to include the suggested handshapes. This allows for more fluent, harmonically coherent and technically impressive improvisations. Both sections of Telemann's fantasias and Matteis junior and senior's prelude-style fantasias can be improvised using this harmonising down method (see figures 74 and 75 and video 5). My second recital also included an example of this (see chapter 6.2.1). Harmonising down is particularly useful for violinists who tend to think melodically rather than harmonically. It can, therefore, also be good practice for violinists to pick chords first and then find interesting ornamental ways to reach another chord. For this, at first, players can predetermine the chords or bass notes and then gradually add in more freedom until the whole chord sequence is also improvised. Indeed, the best way to internalise these handshapes is through experimentation in improvisation.





Figure 74: The manuscript for Matteis junior's *Fantasia* in C minor for solo violin (c.1700–1720) showing the prelude-style fantasia which contains a harmonised melody. The handshapes method can be used to recreate similar pieces in improvisation. Image sourced: Matteis, Nicola. *2 Fantasias for Violin Solo*. Manuscript, 1700.

[https://imslp.org/wiki/2\\_Fantasias\\_for\\_Violin\\_solo\\_\(Matteis\\_Jr.%2C\\_Nicola\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/2_Fantasias_for_Violin_solo_(Matteis_Jr.%2C_Nicola)).



Figure 75: Manuscript for the first section (Adagio) from Telemann's *Fantasia* no. 3 for solo violin in F minor showing his use of a harmonised melody which can also be achieved by the handshapes method in improvisation. Image sourced: Telemann, G. P. *12 Sonaten für Violine und Basso continuo; 12 Fantasien für Violine*. Manuscript, 1734. <https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht/?PPN=PPN738088579>.



Video 5: Video showing an example improvised prelude-style fantasia in the style of Matteis junior. Video sourced: Kümin, Nina. 'Harmonised Prelude-style Fantasia.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' September 25, 2021. Accessed September 25, 2021. <https://youtu.be/jCWI-TOGqgA>.

### 5.3.2 An emergency toolkit for creativity and repair

The following are all useful tools that I have found in my practice and teaching that can be used in improvisation to prompt new ideas, resolve unexpected notes seamlessly and execute fast passagework:

To stimulate new ideas:

1. Choose a rhythm, tessitura or note to focus on, then repeat and vary
2. Play a scale or arpeggios with varied rhythms
3. Repeat the last phrase you played and then vary it slightly
4. Ornament a simple scale or arpeggio
5. Hold a long note to provide thinking time
6. End the section to have a moment of pause
7. Play chord(s) using harmony handshapes and focus on the bass or top notes
8. As many of the sections in the Telemann fantasias and much baroque music in general is based on dance, improvisers can learn a lot from learning the dance steps themselves. These can then be used as inspiration for new sections.

Transforming the unexpected into musical features:

1. Repeat the note
2. Resolve it up or down a semitone or a tone as an appoggiatura
3. Incorporate it into a slightly longer phrase or musical motive and repeat this and vary slightly
4. Repeat at a different dynamic, using it to change the character
5. Use it to signal an abrupt change to a new section
6. Add a double stop and resolve

To reduce the decision-making time needed when playing fast passagework:

1. Play slurred ascending or descending scales
2. Play and repeat arpeggios or part of arpeggios
3. Play double notes (repeat each note)
4. Use an open string to play every other note, creating a pedal effect
5. Play a simple sequence that fits nicely into a handshape and transpose the handshape
6. Use harmony handshapes for quick chords or play 3rds or 6ths.



## 5.4 ‘Creativity is intelligence having fun’!<sup>903</sup> Playing with improvisation

While searching for practice strategies and research methodologies, I found that using games encouraged me to experiment, explore, try new things out in a safe space, apply knowledge to different contexts, think about material in different ways, and to question what I know and assume. These attributes make games a really useful methodology to practise improvisation but are also all valuable strategies for research which, when used in conjunction with more traditional methods, can provide new and valuable insights, particularly within practice-led historical research. The rise over the last few decades of practice-led research in many early modern historical fields has highlighted the need for wider methodologies to allow for embedded and technical knowledge to contribute to research. For instance, dancers such as Mary Collins have been realising the dance steps shown in French baroque dance notation, dressage specialists such as Emmanuelle Dupraz have been recreating historical equestrian ballet moves, and artists and computer programmers have finished paintings such as Rembrandt’s *The night watch*.<sup>904</sup> In early modern music performance research and practice, experimentation on historical instruments such as by Tarling and Kuijken is perhaps the most obvious result of early modern musical practice-led research.<sup>905</sup>

I propose that we take this inclusion of practice-led research a step further to include play through games as a valuable research and presentation tool, using my research into early modern improvisatory musical performance practice as a case study. Far from just being an educational strategy for early school years as argued by Broadhead and Flear amongst many others, games have much to offer the researcher, especially within the field of practice-led research.<sup>906</sup> Following an active rather than passive learning model, where students are encouraged to come to their own conclusions rather than simply absorbing information, as encouraged in higher education pedagogical research by Biggs, interacting with games can stimulate a deep level of learning, both in researchers and in future learners; the player is forced to apply knowledge, to experiment and to

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<sup>903</sup> Helen Yip, ‘Developing innovative thinkers and positive risk-takers,’ *Scan: The Journal for Educators* 36, no. 3 (2017): 31.

<sup>904</sup> Mary Collins, ‘About Mary,’ *Mary Collins*, 2022, accessed February 2, 2022. <https://marycollins.co.uk/about/>. And Heliconia, ‘Pegamuse,’ *Pegamuse-Heliconia*, 2022, accessed February 8, 2022, <https://pegamuse-heliconia.wixsite.com/pegamuse-heliconia?lang=it>. And Rijksmuseum, ‘The Night watch, Rembrandt van Rijn, 1642,’ *Rijksmuseum*. 2022, accessed February 8, 2022, <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/SK-C-5>.

<sup>905</sup> Judy Tarling, *Baroque string playing for ingenious learners* (Hertfordshire: Corda Music, 2000). And Barthold Kuijken, *The notation is not the music: reflections on early music practice and performance* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013).

<sup>906</sup> Pat Broadhead and Andy Burt. *Understanding young children's learning through play: Building playful pedagogies* (London: Routledge, 2012). And Marilyn Flear, ‘“Conceptual play”: Foregrounding imagination and cognition during concept formation in early years education,’ *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 12, no. 3 (2011): 224-240. See also Play14, ‘Home,’ *Play14*, accessed June 2, 2023. <https://play14.org/>.

engage critically with ideas and concepts in a safe yet stimulating environment.<sup>907</sup> They provide a way of accessing this knowledge without the severe editing process we normally put ourselves through. People are much more willing to try pushing things further in games. They help to build webs of knowledge, both explicit and tacit, and they enable the practise of using decision matrices on a smaller scale to build confidence. In addition, research involves a lot of trial and error. Through games you can find out why things were not done which is also useful. Games allow embedded knowledge to grow, producing visual, aural and tactile responses to research, allowing the development of ideas beyond that which is possible through the more traditional research methods of reading and writing alone. A playful history is an engaging history and, to quote Einstein, 'creativity is intelligence having fun!'<sup>908</sup>

Haddon and Burnard argue that 'creative teachers make a conscious effort to develop improvisational expertise, purposeful play characterised by risk-taking and learning through mistakes as effective educational practices'.<sup>909</sup> This is the philosophy behind these improvisation games but mistakes are not viewed negatively or as in any way "wrong", they are instead the unexpected which should not only be valued but also welcomed to create interesting improvisations. They note that this approach to teaching requires 'a shift in the paradigm of higher music education'.<sup>910</sup> This shift is required in our understanding of what it means to make classical music as well as what it means to learn, practice and perform music. This new view places the performer in a position of creative authority and autonomy in which the aim is not a perfect replication but a new creation. Teaching and practice, rather than correcting wrongs or teaching rights, instead must focus on individual exploration, characterised by constant experimentation. To quote Haddon and Burnard, 'creative teaching dances between planned, scripted, deliberate, conscious episodes, and opportunistic action, ensuring spontaneity by yielding to the flow and its immediacy'.<sup>911</sup> Improvising pianist John Mortensen also argues that the current tradition of 'recitation from a score will not teach you to invent music'.<sup>912</sup> During the baroque period, card games were particularly popular. Decks were often elaborately decorated.<sup>913</sup> Writings on pedagogy and the brain note that 'every one teacheth after

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<sup>907</sup> John Biggs, 'What the Student Does: Teaching for Enhanced Learning.' *Higher Education Research & Development* 31, no. 1 (2012): 39–55.

<sup>908</sup> Yip, 'Developing innovative thinkers and positive risk-takers,' 31.

<sup>909</sup> Elizabeth Haddon and Pamela Burnard eds., *Creative teaching for creative learning in higher music education* (London: Ashgate, 2016), 50.

<sup>910</sup> Ibid.

<sup>911</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>912</sup> John Mortensen, 'How to Fake Anything On Stage,' (Lecture for *HPI Colloquium*, online, April 6, 2022).

<sup>913</sup> See: Jessica Portner, 'Paris Gamblers: Gaming in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century France,' *Getty*, May 20, 2011, accessed June 21, 2022, <https://blogs.getty.edu/iris/paris-gamblers-gaming-in-18th-century-france/>. And British Library, 'Games and pastimes,' *British Library*, 2022, accessed June 21, 2022, <https://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item106371.html>.

thyr owne fantasie' and Gratarolo argued in 1562 that 'there be three operations of the soule in the braine', one of which is 'fantasie (or imagination)'.<sup>914</sup>

As such, the following are games I have created after my own fantasie, to research and practise baroque improvisation. Throughout, I label games as beginner, intermediate and advanced to indicate the level of experience of improvisation, historical knowledge and technical proficiency required. These are just guidelines, however, and games can be modified to suit differing levels. Some games are geared towards building skills (marked as skill building), moving explicit knowledge to the tacit realm, such as those aimed at developing the handshape method (see 5.3.1). Others are intended to facilitate the improvisation of whole fantasias (marked as skill showcasing). The latter are all showcased in the two accompanying recitals while the former can be found in short, recorded examples. Again, all the videos and audio recording examples for this section can be found in the accompanying material or as YouTube links given in the text. Together, these games provided me with a way into baroque improvisation more generally but also the specifics of improvising whole fantasias on the violin in the style of Telemann, Matteis senior and Matteis junior. By encouraging me to bypass the pedagogy of correction of classical music performance, this approach opened up an exploratory and experimental mindset, demonstrating for me the success of play theory.

#### *Beginner Level:*

##### Emoji Top Trumps

Beginner, skill building: some confidence with basic technique, some knowledge of musical features and keys, basic improvisation experience to be able to improvise a short melody alone.

Tarling sees rhetoric sources as 'the ultimate performance practice manuals'.<sup>915</sup> The following are examples of cards featuring the words used in early modern treatises to describe affects along with the corresponding key they list. Cards can be shuffled and laid out to signify different sections and players can practise playing in different keys and affects and in different orders. Players can either improvise each set themselves or players can take turns to create group improvisations. Players could each play a phrase that is inspired by the one before using similar rhythms or keys or play the next phrase starting on the same note that the previous one finished on, or both. The number of cards can be chosen at the beginning to fit abilities and time constraints. These can also be used to

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<sup>914</sup> Gratarolo in Charis Charalampus, *Rethinking the Mind-Body Relationship in Early Modern Literature, Philosophy and Medicine* (New York: Routledge, 2015). And see Jerome de Groot, "'Every one teacheth after thyr owne fantasie": French Language Instruction,' in *Performing Pedagogy in Early Modern England: Gender, Instruction and Performance*, ed. Kate Moncrief and Kate McPherson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 84-107.

<sup>915</sup> Judy Tarling, *The weapons of rhetoric* (St Albans: Corda Music, 2004), iii.

practise group improvisation with players improvising in small groups. As players get more advanced, the cards can be layered vertically to cover up the text, just showing the emojis, and players can practise achieving stylistic affects in their improvisations.

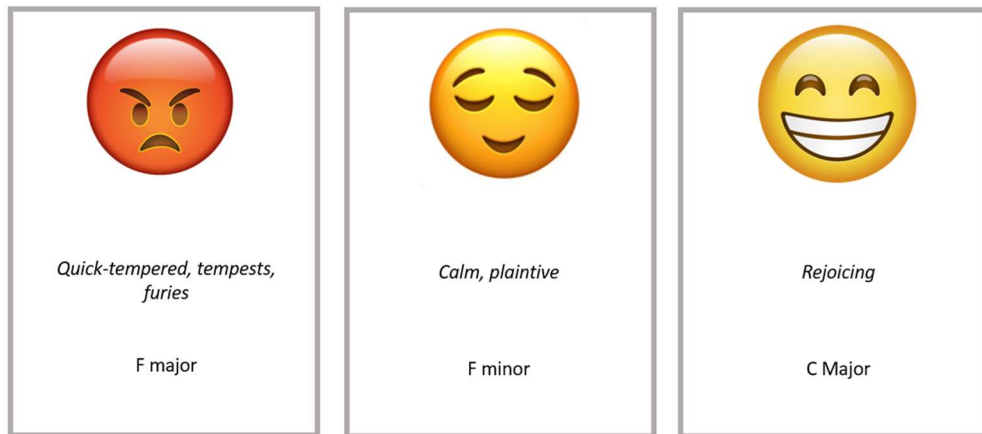


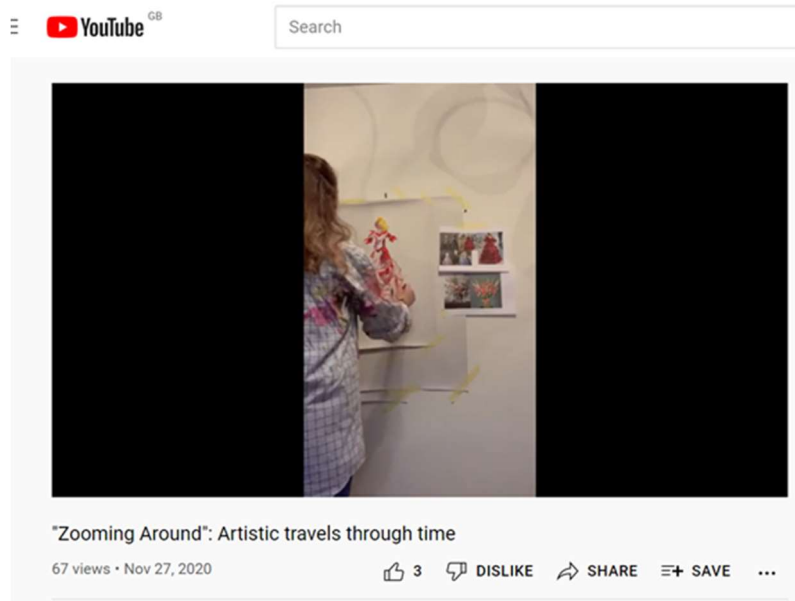
Figure 76: Example emoji top trumps card.

Audio 1: This recording demonstrates improvisations based on the three cards shown in figure 76. Recording: Kümin, Nina. 'Emoji Top Trumps.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' March 15, 2023. Accessed March 15, 2023. <https://youtu.be/iVzcGyrwO-4>.

#### Art Attack

Beginner, skill building: some confidence with basic technique, ability to react to the moment, no prior improvisation experience necessary.

For this game, one player is the designated artist while the other improvises and then they can swap. Both players improvise together, one creating a piece of artwork (as abstract as they like) and the other providing music. Taking inspiration from each other, this game encourages musicians to think about phrase shapes, tone colours and varied note lengths or even bow strokes if a violinist.

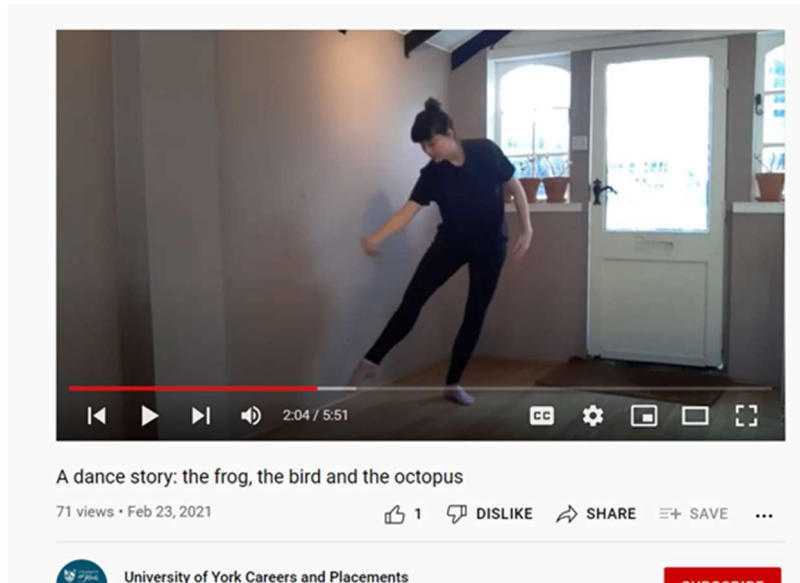


Video 6: Video of an art attack game published on YouTube played by the author and artist Amy Rodger. Video sourced: Kumin, Nina and Amy Rodger. “Zooming around”: Artistic travels through time.’ YouTube video. Posted by ‘Nina Kumin - Improvising Violinist.’ November 27, 2020. Accessed February 8, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mxg1Lp8eO-0>.

#### Dance stories

Beginner, skill building: some confidence with basic technique, ability to react to the moment, no prior improvisation experience necessary.

A story is written, improvised or chosen and music and dance are improvised to a reading of it. If playing as a group, each player can rotate taking on different roles for different sections of the story; if playing alone, players can pre-record elements and then improvise on top. This again encourages improvisers to explore different shapes, emotions and rhetoric in their playing.



Video 7: Video of the published version of the dance story I created as part of the York Students in Schools outreach project. Video sourced: Kumin, Nina. 'A dance story: the frog, the bird and the octopus.' YouTube video. Posted by 'University of York Careers and Placements.' February 23, 2021. Accessed February 8, 2022. [https://youtu.be/kHRSY\\_zHLC0](https://youtu.be/kHRSY_zHLC0).

### *Intermediate Level:*

#### Somewhere over the Rainbow

Intermediate, skill building: confidence in technique, experience improvising with restrictions, knowledge of intervals, ability to improvise longer phrases.

Players respond to pictures or live drawings, creating melodies that use the intervals or notes ascribed by analogy to colours by Kircher and Newton.<sup>916</sup> Kircher, for example, links the interval of a major third to the colour red.<sup>917</sup> Therefore, responding to artwork that is predominantly red, musicians may use a major 3rd as a starting point for melodic motives. Newton, on the other hand, associates the note E with red and orange so improvisers might like to feature the note E.<sup>918</sup> As artists are often limited to using one colour at once, live drawing would encourage the gradual movement between colours, and therefore intervallic inspiration, creating melodies that change

<sup>916</sup> See Kircher, *Musurgia Universalis*. And 'Newton colour System,' *Designblog*, accessed July 7, 2023, <https://designblog.rietveldacademie.nl/?p=35610>.

<sup>917</sup> Kircher, *Musurgia Universalis*.

<sup>918</sup> 'Newton colour System,' *Designblog*, accessed July 7, 2023, <https://designblog.rietveldacademie.nl/?p=35610>.

character over time along with the artwork through the different intervals that are featured. With experience and practice, live artists and musicians could respond to each other, consciously shaping the music or the artwork with their creations. On the other hand, using a completed artwork as a starting point may present a clear static colour palette, from which improvisers could draw on several intervals or notes to form their musical building blocks. They could then use these whenever they feel works best or in conjunction with each other to create longer or more varied motives. The diagrams included below provide a visual representation of the associations between colours and intervals or notes.



Figure 77: Diagram showing Kircher's interval/ colour relationships as described in *Musurgia Universalis* (1650) translated to Pythagorean tuning. These diagrams have been created by the author to create a visual aid and do not appear in Kircher's text.

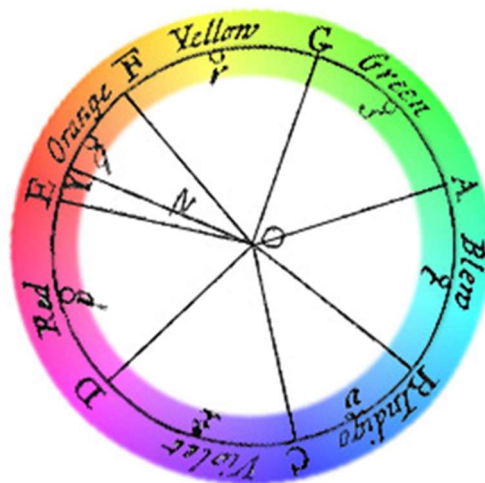


Figure 78: Newton's (1704) colours matched to notes of the scale. Image from (a colour edited version of Newton's drawing): 'Newton colour System'. *Designblog*. Accessed July 7, 2023. <https://designblog.rietveldacademie.nl/?p=35610>.

Audio 2: Exemplifying this game, the following recording provides an example improvisation to a piece of digital artwork created by the author to encourage improvisation based on Newton's and

Kircher's concepts. Recording: Kümin, Nina. 'Somewhere over the rainbow.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' March 15, 2023. Accessed March 15, 2023. <https://youtu.be/XALbAeh1qsQ>.

#### Card of the day

Intermediate, skill building: some confidence with basic technique, knowledge of musical features, ability to improvise longer phrases.

Using the images from *Cesare Ripa* (or a historical treatise of your choosing), improvise using the iconology as inspiration. The affect of the image, shapes, titles and descriptions can be interpreted as freely as desired or treatise advice such as on which keys to use for certain affects can be applied to help embed those stylistic elements in improvisation. Alternatively, several can be used to create a story or used to inspire musical structures with one affect per structure or to create interesting dialogues between different players.



Figure 79: Example iconography to use for card of the day from Cesare Ripa's Iconologia. Image sourced: Limes. 'Iconologia di Cesare Ripa.' *Limes*. 2022. Accessed July 28, 2022. <https://limes.cfs.unipi.it/allegorieripa/>.

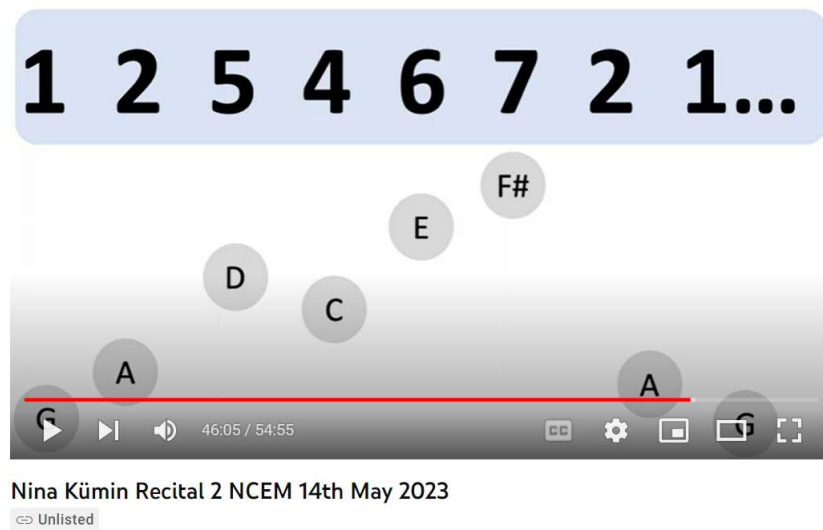
Audio 3: This recording exemplifies Card of the Day using the image in figure 79. Recording: Kümin, Nina. 'Card of the Day.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' March 15, 2023. Accessed March 15, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93DsDURHPnU>.



## All about that bass

Intermediate, skill showcasing: confidence with chords, experience with the handshape method, knowledge of harmony, experience and confidence playing bariolage.

Players roll a dice or choose numbers between 1 and 7 to create a bassline, the numbers are attributed to scale degrees in a key of the improviser's choice. Players can then create a Matteis junior *Alia Fantasia* style piece from these by using the harmony handshapes above (5.3.1) and playing continuous broken chords. As players get more advanced, they can begin to add passing notes or try to create a melody through choosing handshapes that produce conjunct top lines.



Video 8: This game was played with the audience at my second PhD recital (at [44:12](#)). The full recital can be viewed here: Kumin, Nina. 'Nina Kumin Recital 2 NCEM 14th May 2023.' YouTube video.

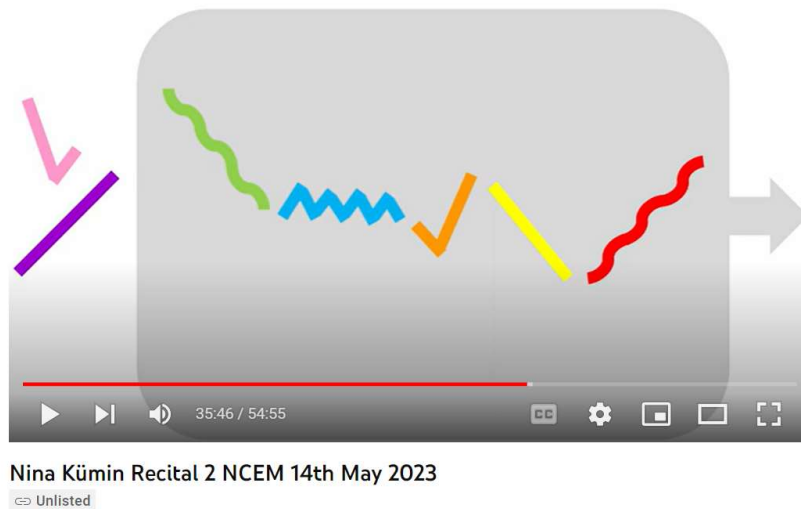
Posted by 'Nina Kumin - Improvising Violinist.' May 30, 2023. Accessed May 30, 2023.

<https://youtu.be/-q4-tHQIPAc>.

## The art of Ornamentation

Intermediate, skill showcasing: confidence with chords, experience with the handshape method, knowledge of harmony, knowledge of ornamentation

For this game, improvisers can choose different shapes representing broad shapes of stylistic ornamentation to link together to create an overall phrase. They are then at liberty to add chords and double stops between these ornaments to give structure. This game produces the opening of a fantasia in the style of Matteis junior's 'Con discretione'. The improviser can then choose to continue in this style.



Video 9: This game was also played with the audience at my second PhD recital (at [34:42](#)). The full recital can be viewed here: Kümin, Nina. 'Nina Kümin Recital 2 NCEM 14th May 2023.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' May 30, 2023. Accessed May 30, 2023. <https://youtu.be/-q4-tHQIPAc>.

### Bassline bingo

Intermediate to advanced, skill building: confidence with technique, knowledge of harmony, experience improvising longer phrases with restrictions.

Improvising first over a repeated ground bass (this can be pre-recorded if practising alone) and then a row (horizontal, vertical or diagonal) of chords from a chord chart such as the one below. Start by playing one note from each chord, then arpeggios and then filling in arpeggios with ornamentation. Increasing the rhythmic interest and different more difficult keys can be implemented later. Finally, parallels can be considered, such as avoiding creating parallel octaves or fifths with the bassline.

Gm	F	Eb	D
Cm	Gm	Bb	F
Bb	Cm	D	Eb
Gm	D	Gm	Gm

Table 6: An example chord chart for bassline bingo.

Audio 4: This recording demonstrates bassline bingo using the top row, first column and diagonal line from top left to bottom right. Recording: Kūmin, Nina. 'Bassline Bingo.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kūmin - Improvising Violinist.' March 15, 2023. Accessed March 15, 2023.

<https://youtu.be/14MzheLGX94>.

*Advanced Level:*

### Happy Harmonies

Advanced, skill building: confident playing chords, theoretical knowledge of harmony, experience improvising on a given melody.

Using the handshape method explained above, players choose from a range of famous melodies or can make up or suggest their own and improvise harmonies. Players can compete to try to improvise either the most stylistic or the most unexpected harmonies. The keys chosen for each famous piece and rate of harmonic change can be made more or less difficult depending on the technical abilities and confidence of the players as well as to fit different time scales.

Audio 5: This recording demonstrates first a more traditional harmonisation of Happy Birthday followed by a more experimental version, both using the handshape method. Recording: Kūmin, Nina. 'Happy Harmonies.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kūmin - Improvising Violinist.' March 15, 2023. Accessed March 15, 2023. <https://youtu.be/qklc7UuSwh8>.

### Counterpoint Chess

In order to tackle the very difficult task of improvising counterpoint such as in Matteis senior's fantasias, I have created two games (cannon canons and fugal feudalism) which use the same visualisation technique and set musical phrases to enable the improvisation of two- and three-part counterpoint. Each chess piece is assigned a different musical phrase which through my experimentation I have found to be successful and possible within a violinist's handshape. In addition, the musical motives assigned to each piece (see below) were chosen to match as closely as possible to the visual movements each piece can carry out, acting as a memory aid. These are as follows:

- Pawn = rising stepwise
- Knight = rising third
- Rook = held note
- Queen = falling stepwise

- Bishop = Falling third
- King = Cadential segment

The following suggestions apply to each of the games I discovered in my experimentation (cannon canons and fugal feudalism).

The basics for all games:

- Generally, start on the tonic and aim to start and keep the second voice on a 6th or 3rd to keep the music in a manageable handshape.
- The easiest option is to have rooks every other note so you have time to think.
- If you have just ascended, choose a descending motive next to keep it in a handshape.
- Try and keep different voices on different strings to make a visual aid — it can be useful to watch your fingers.
- Line up pieces on a board as a visual aid.
- The king should always be used (and only used) to end the phrase.

Additional interesting counterpoint possibilities:

- Contrary motion
  - This is not really possible beyond a third on the violin because of the restriction of handshapes and string distances.
- Double each note to allow the piece to sound faster.
- Add ornaments or repeated notes to make the melody sound more complex.
  - For instance, if using lots of castles try adding ornamentation on them to add interest.
- The following handshapes will create suspensions which can be used to cadence. (Numbers indicate fingers and the second number without a space or symbol represents the finger on the string immediately above the first. The dash symbol (-) indicates the move which resolves the suspension).
  - 13–12 32–31 30–20



Figure 80: Example of handshapes to create suspensions.

- A chain of 13–12/ 24–23



Figure 81: An example of 13–12/ 24–23 suspensions.

- A chain of falling 6ths during which the bottom part descends by step in between as a passing note to create dissonance.
- Use the same fingering employed the first time on higher or lower strings to automatically transpose the counterpoint into another key. For instance, moving up a string will transpose it to the dominant.

#### Cannon canons:

Intermediate to advanced, skill building: aural skills to copy and translate motives to different

itches, confidence improvising longer lines with restrictions, knowledge of harmony and intervals.

If playing alone or intending to create relatively direct imitation, the pieces are set up or played to form short themes (the longer the more difficult this is). Seeing the theme on the board, improvisers can then introduce a second voice while the first voice has moved onto the first piece and so on.



Figure 82: An example set up of cannon canons and a possible realisation before the cadential segment.

Audio 6: This recording provides an example of cannon canons using the set-up shown in figure 82.

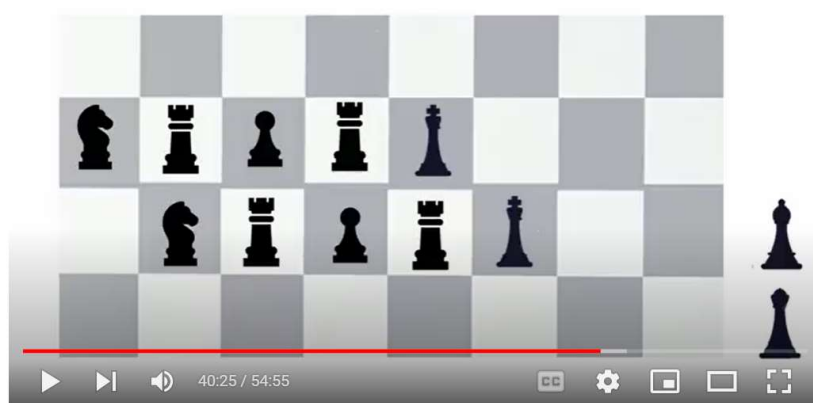
Recording: Kümin, Nina. 'Cannon Canons.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' March 15, 2023. Accessed March 15, 2023. <https://youtu.be/eDQ7bSKXkLg>.

### Fugal Feudalism:

Advanced, skill showcasing: full confidence in contrapuntal technique in notated music, knowledge of intervals and harmony, experience with the handshake method, extensive experience improvising solo and in groups and harmonising improvisations

This game introduces a third voice. While this does not create a true fugue, it follows Matteis senior's example in his fugal fantasias by giving an illusion. Consider the following:

- Harmonise the two-part counterpoint by adding in a bass note on a lower string on the main beats. Use harmony handshapes to achieve this.
- Start on the A or E strings to facilitate three-part chords to give the illusion of three voices simultaneously.
- This could be extended to create true 3-part counterpoint through setting up a third line of chess pieces, although I have found this to be very difficult. Using as many castles as possible here makes the process easier.



Nina Kümin Recital 2 NCEM 14th May 2023

Unlisted



Video 10: This game was played with the audience at my second PhD recital (at [40:14](#)). This still shows the set up for this game, which was chosen by the audience, alongside a transcription of this opening (until the freer cadential segment). The full recital can be viewed here: Kümin, Nina. 'Nina Kümin Recital 2 NCEM 14th May 2023.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' May 30, 2023. Accessed May 30, 2023. <https://youtu.be/-q4-tHQIPAc>.

Lost in Hamburg

Advanced, skill showcasing: full confidence in contrapuntal technique in notated music, experience playing music from this style, knowledge of intervals and harmony, knowledge of stylistic features, experience with the handshape method, extensive experience improvising solo and in groups and harmonising improvisations, confidence to improvise long solo sections.

The game is set in eighteenth-century Hamburg. You have agreed to meet Telemann at the town hall in Hamburg but now you have arrived you find yourself in a tiny alleyway completely and utterly lost! The people of Hamburg are more than happy to help you but seeing that you are a musician, they ask for an improvisation in return for each set of directions they give you. Each person can direct you to the next landmark on your journey. Your improvisation must follow the key and affect stated on the “directions” card you pick up at each stop and must feature the rhythmic cell chosen. The number of landmarks to pass through on your way to the town hall should be determined before starting the game, from a minimum of two to a maximum of six. By the time you reach the town hall you will have improvised a fantasia in the style of Telemann!

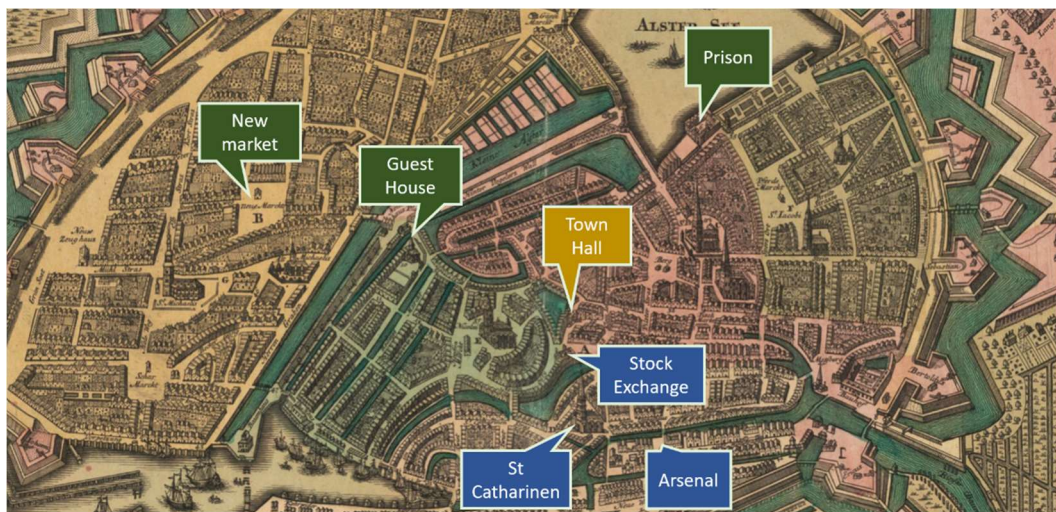


Figure 83: The locations where different sections can be improvised marked on a contemporary map of Hamburg. Image sourced: Harvard Library, 'Harvard University, Harvard Map Collection, G6299\_H3\_1725\_S4\_4188425249,' *Harvard Map Collection*, accessed February 7, 2022, <https://iif.harvard.edu/manifests/view/ids:9538197>.

Upon reaching the town hall, the final card reads “rejoicing” and in “your first key”. For each stop, players must choose a rhythm (or several) to include. This creates a stylistic improvised fantasia in the style of Telemann by stimulating sections in different characters with characteristic rhythms. Players are also encouraged to draw on the ten guidelines set out in chapter 4 (4.1.4) for improvising a fantasia in the style of Telemann. This game also works well in performance, asking



audiences to choose the sections, rhythms or even themes and then the improviser can create a fantasia in the style of Telemann based on their instructions. Choosing a mixture of blue and green cards (major and minor) tends to work well to create contrast. Through this, audiences learn about the musical characteristics of a Telemann fantasia but also receive an insight into the mindset of an improviser, having authority over the music.

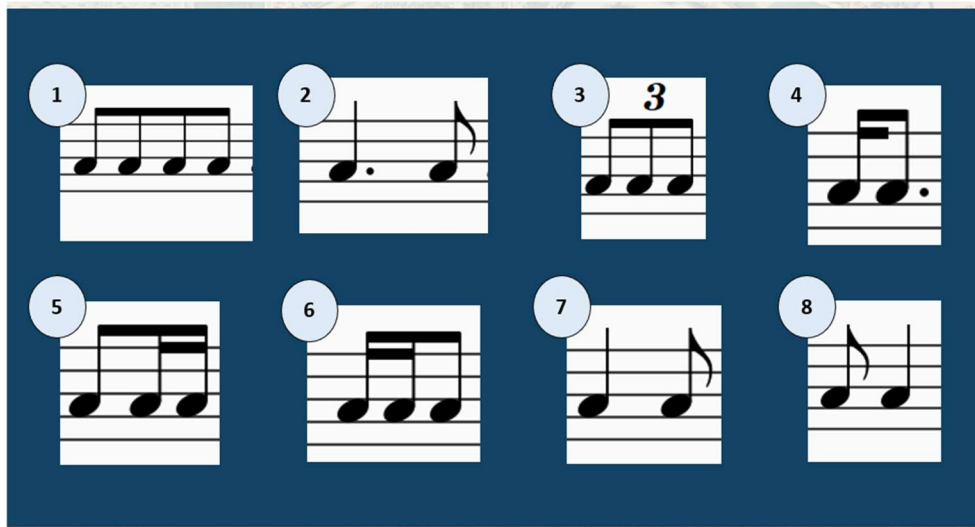
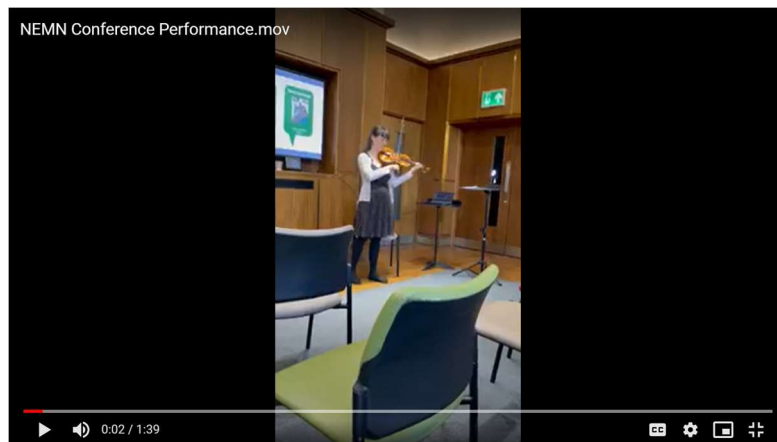
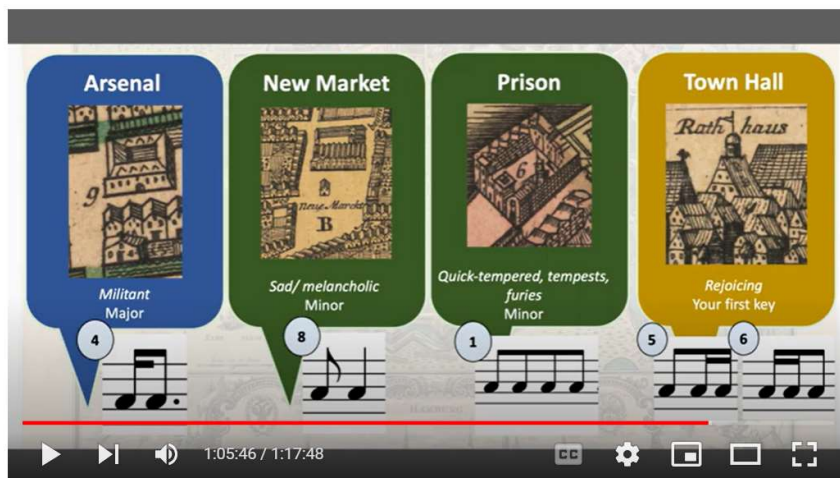




Figure 84: Cards showing places to stop on the way and the rhythms to choose from.



Video 11: Video of the author playing this game with attendees at the 2022 Northern Early Modern Network conference in Newcastle. The full video (of a short section of the full fantasia) can be viewed here. Kümin, Nina. 'NEMN Conference Performance.' YouTube Video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' June 28, 2023. Accessed June 28, 2023. <https://youtu.be/-ydBhTxtODI>.



Nina Kümin Recital 1 NCEM 9th December 2022

Unlisted

Video 12: This game was played with the audience at my first PhD recital (at [01:02:16](#)). The full recital can be viewed here: Kümin, Nina. 'Nina Kümin Recital 1 NCEM 9th December 2022.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' May 30, 2023. Accessed May 30, 2023. <https://youtu.be/RmFFScuDtAk>.

With the exception of *Happy harmonies* and *Counterpoint chess* which require chords to be played, any melody or harmony instrument could be used for each of these games. Those involving harmonisation can be played by all instruments with the possibility of sounding two or more notes at

the same time; the approach to handshapes will simply differ. For instance, *All about that bass* and *The art of ornamentation* could be played using broken chords by all string and keyboard instruments, simply using the handshapes appropriate to each instrument. These handshapes could be altered slightly to be workable on any string instrument as violins, violas, cellos and basses all play chords with the same restrictions of string tunings and fingerings. Needless to say, this is already a common approach to keyboard and lute playing. For single melodic line instruments, however, in any game, the chords could be implied through arpeggiation to achieve a similar effect.

I felt a huge difference in my improvisation abilities after creating and playing these games. Although these observations result from my own subjective experience, they represent the embodied perspective of a violinist. Decisions which previously required a lot of explicit conscious attention were now more often automated and, thus, much of my explicit knowledge, resulting from the research discussed in previous chapters, became tacit. Using these games, I arrived at my definition of improvisation (see chapter 1). It was through games that I achieved my most successful improvisations because the rational thought and emotional intuition aspects were balanced. They also prompted several historical and technical discoveries. The aesthetics of perfection with which we view performances of early modern music today is not only inaccurate but actually a barrier towards improvising stylistically today. Early modern writings suggest that historical listening and performance must therefore have championed creativity, experimentation and novelty over technical perfection because of the limited rehearsal time and constant demand for new compositions. Through my own experiments, it became clear that setting out to achieve technical perfection in improvisation was actually impossible, therefore indicating that a different aesthetic and mindset is needed to actually achieve improvisation in the first place and thus that early modern musicians and appreciators must also have approached music differently.<sup>919</sup>

In addition, the improvisers must have had a thorough and embedded sense of harmony in order to be able to convincingly improvise. As modern instrumentalists, this knowledge is much less embedded and requires practice. The technical shortcuts I have suggested throughout this thesis are also largely the result of experimentation with creating and playing these games. For instance, the harmony handshapes grew out of the game *All about that bass*; scalic and arpeggiatic tricks to achieve fast passagework were discovered while playing *Emoji top trumps*; and attempting to create “quick tempered, tempests and furies” and the double stop shortcuts were a result of *Counterpoint chess*. Games, therefore, acted as much as a research tool as a practice method. They also proved very popular, engaging and informative when tested in conference presentations, concerts and when played with children aged 4 to 16. For the more specialised audiences, such as at conference

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<sup>919</sup> Burney 1771, 197, see also 208. Quoted in Haynes, *The end of early music*, 20.

presentations, games such as *Lost in Hamburg* work well, allowing the audience to use their specialist knowledge and to be able to recognise stylistic features in performance. Games such as *Emoji top trumps* are successful in concerts, encouraging audiences to focus on their reactions and the way they listen to music.

While I have not conducted an empirical study into the effectiveness of the use of games in teaching (which would be a valuable and interesting area of further research), the following observations describe my own experiences implementing these in peripatetic lessons. Whilst teaching individual lessons to children, I have found that including creative improvisation games at the start of lessons provides a good way for students to warm up and to explore their repertoire they are learning in new ways. For instance, encouraging improvisation using the first bar as a stimulus encourages analysis and critical thinking about the style of the repertoire and what would be appropriate. Freer games involving drawing, stories or movement engage the students, are particularly popular with younger pupils, and build confidence in their technical abilities. Again, through this, they often stumble across new techniques or notes which they learn and incorporate into their practice. Games, whatever the level, provoke a different kind of listening: one which is active and focused, and through which audiences and participants learn more not only about the music but also about how they listen. They also give an insight into the improvisational process, demystifying what goes on in an improviser's head to which audiences of all kinds (in my experience) eagerly respond. The simpler games also have the option to be expanded or altered to work in community music settings or for music lessons with larger groups of students. The key advantage being the active listening and critical thinking as well as tacit knowledge they encourage and build.

For me, improvisation games not only improved my technical abilities in improvisation but also my stylistic accuracy. Games can be used to help to fill in the gaps left by written sources as a methodology for practice-led research. Including games more widely into research might stimulate some interesting findings. Playing with improvisation brings a whole new meaning to playing music and is perhaps more akin to the experiences of early modern audiences and musicians. Using games in this research revealed philosophical, technical and historical observations I would not have come across otherwise and have provided stimulating, accessible and engaging ways to present this research to children, students and academics as well as making performances more exciting. Including games in performance or presentations can get audiences involved in the creative and research process, and can be a useful way of teaching and sharing the historical and practical knowledge. I chose to include some of the games listed here in my accompanying recitals, demonstrating this. Research is creative and critical application of knowledge to create new

knowledge and if 'creativity is intelligence having fun'<sup>920</sup>, what more might scholars and performers discover by embracing this?

## 5.5 From processing to producing: A summary guide

### 5.5.1 Improvising a fantasia step by step

The findings presented so far can largely be distilled into the steps outlined below. While aimed at experienced improvisers to achieve the most stylistic fantasia improvisations, the exercises and stages can be adapted or expanded for other genres and levels of improvisation. This process includes development of explicit and tacit knowledge and shows, at a glance, the different skills needed to be able to improvise a stylistic baroque fantasia. As a reflection of my process over the past few years, this represents the edited and considered version of the most efficient but thorough way to improvise fantasias. My intention is that this list can be used as a practice aid: improvisers are encouraged to return to it whenever necessary and to cross-reference back to chapters. This breaks down the rather daunting task into manageable steps with visible progress, allowing performers to dip in and out of the theory and practice as much as they like. This version is isolated for easy access and provides a very distilled version for reference throughout practice at any level of improvisation. Improvisers can then dip in and out of the rest of the thesis when appropriate while still having access to an overview of the entire process, showing it to be achievable and logical.

1. **Understand** the concept of a fantasia and what it means to improvise. Consider potential necessary changes in psychology or approach to music and performance.
  - Chapters 1–3
2. **Play** improvisation games at a basic level to build up skill.
  - Chapter 5
3. **Listen** to and **play** lots of baroque music (ongoing throughout).
4. **Introduce** stylistic elements through the guidelines given for Telemann's and Matteis junior and senior's fantasias and **apply** these to the basic improvisation games.
  - Chapters 4 and 5
5. **Compose** fantasias in a pastiche style.

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<sup>920</sup> Yip, 'Developing innovative thinkers and positive risk-takers,' 31.

- Chapter 4
6. **Play** the improvisation games at a more advanced level.
  7. **Develop** a personal style through **analysing, listening, playing** and **improvising** a lot of music in this style.

The practical advice provided in this thesis is also included in a summary guide for performers included in appendix 3. While I have not conducted research into pedagogy or resource creation as this was beyond the scope of this project, this nevertheless serves as an example of how this work could have a large impact and be widely disseminated. As a potential future project, further research could investigate these areas, facilitating the creation of a commercial resource. Having gathered the explicit knowledge necessary and worked on tacit knowledge and embedded these practices, the performer can then move onto applying this in live performance, considering repertoire choice and the placement of improvisation within concerts which the following chapter exemplifies.

## Chapter 6: Page to stage: Considerations for live performance

### 6.1 Building a programme

To demonstrate the theoretical and practical findings of this thesis as described in the previous chapters, I have included two recitals. These begin to revive the practice of improvising fantasias on the baroque violin and demonstrate the process. This separation into two concerts allows focus on firstly Telemann and then Matteis senior and junior, celebrating the two most prominent composers of baroque violin fantasias specifically and their differing styles as revealed by this research. Exploring baroque musical fantasy, therefore, each concert is based around a representative selection of these composed baroque violin fantasias along with related pieces and fully improvised fantasias. On a journey from notation to imagination, these concerts explore a modern way into baroque creativity, creating new pieces on the spot in a baroque style. These performances display what is possible when performer creativity is released to combine with historically-informed playing and academic research. I chose the related pieces based on their nomenclature: titles that were related to the fantasia or used interchangeably or because they provided the opportunity to demonstrate a particular stage in the improvisation process. Each recital, therefore, gives context, demonstrates the process and displays the results of this research. By showcasing my findings in this manner, I hope to show the accessibility of including improvisation in classical performance and the advantages it can have for performers and listeners alike, involving the audience in the creative process to add to live performance in a competitive market.

These concerts are the first opportunity to hear historically-informed improvised baroque music of this kind. They offer a unique chance to glimpse the baroque musical imagination in its most unedited form and give audiences the chance to learn more about baroque performance practice and the value of improvisation, that which made Morley refer to improvised fantasias as ‘the most principall and chieftest kind of musicke.’<sup>921</sup> Together, they represent a large part of the corpus of unaccompanied baroque fantasias for solo violin. They also pave the way for similar research into other instruments, showing the possibilities afforded by the methodology proposed in this thesis. As such, the repertoire for each recital is presented in the following section (see appendix 1 for sheet music).

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<sup>921</sup> Thomas Morley, *A plaine and easie introduction to practicall Musicke*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition (London, 1597), 206.

### 6.1.1 Telemann's fantasy: The genius behind the music

(National Centre for Early Music, York, Early Music Christmas Festival, 9th December, 2022)

Fantasias capture the style and spirit of the baroque. Described at the time as 'the most principall and chiefest kind of musicke',<sup>922</sup> they display technical and creative virtuosity.

Opening with Telemann's celebrated fantasias for solo violin, this concert then questions: how did baroque musicians create fantasias? Where did they get their inspiration from? An exciting exploration of the genre's more spontaneous side, this is a chance to hear baroque fantasias as you have never heard them before!



Figure 85: Image taken from the National Centre for Early Music's Christmas Festival brochure advertising this first recital.

#### *Repertoire:*

Georg Philipp Telemann (1681–1767) XII Fantasie per il violino senza basso [1735]

Fantasia I in Bb major

- i. Largo
- ii. Allegro
- iii. Grave
- iv. Allegro

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<sup>922</sup> Thomas Morley, *A plaine and easie introduction to practiccill Musicke*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition (London, 1597), 206.

Fantasia III in F minor

- i. Adagio
- ii. Presto
- iii. Grave
- iv. Vivace

Fantasia XII in A minor

- i. Moderato
- ii. Vivace
- iii. Presto

Johann Joseph Vilsmaÿr (1663–1722) *Artificiosus Concentus pro Camera, Distributus Sex Partes, seu Partias à Violino Solo Con Basso Belle imitante* [c.1715]

Partita II

- iv. Fantasia: Allegro

Nicola Matteis (c. 1650–1713) *Ayrs for the violin* [c.1676–1685]

Book 4 Suite in A minor [c.1685]

- ii. Minuetto con sua divisione (unaccompanied arrangement with additional divisions)

Book 1 Suite in A minor [c.1676]

- v. Gavotta (unaccompanied arrangement with additional divisions)

Traditional tune. Version taken from John Playford (1623–1686/7) *The Division Violin* [1684]

John come kiss me

- i. John come kiss me with composed variations by Nina Kümin
- ii. Improvised variations

John Eccles (c.1668–1735) *The Mad Lover* [c.1703–4]

The Mad Lover Suite

- Ground. Aire V (with improvised variations)

Nina Kümin (1998–) *Three Fantasias in the style of Georg Philipp Telemann* (1681–1767)



Fantasia in the style of Telemann in D minor

- i. Largo
- ii. Allegro
- iii. Grave
- iv. Allegro

Fantasia in the style of Telemann in C minor

- i. Allegro
- ii. Vivace
- iii. Presto

Fantasia in the style of Telemann in A major

- i. Largo
- ii. Allegro
- iii. Grave
- iv. Gigue

Improvised fantasia taking inspiration from Telemann

The first of these recitals takes Telemann's solo violin fantasias which are rooted in dance forms as a starting point. Stylistic compositions by Nina Kümin demonstrate elements of the creative process, drawing links and comparisons between composition and improvisation. This concert shows the possibilities for improvised baroque dance music as well as the artistic process towards successfully improvising fantasias in the style of Telemann, with which this concert ends. Vilsmayr demonstrated a similar approach in the fantasia movement from his second partita for solo violin. Matteis' dances with divisions show the possibilities for creative composition within these genres that influenced Telemann's fantasias. I have included Eccles' Mad Lover because of its ground bass. Improvising over ground basses is a really useful improvisation exercise and, especially for melody instrumentalists, this can help to develop harmonic awareness. This piece, therefore, acts as an example of one of the improvisation exercises I employed. A full video recording of this recital can be found as an mp4 file in the accompanying material and is also included as a YouTube link below

for easy accessibility. The appendices contain the sheet music (appendix 1) and programme (appendix 2).

Video 13: Kümin, Nina. 'Nina Kümin Recital 1 NCEM 9th December 2022.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' May 30, 2023. Accessed May 30, 2023.  
<https://youtu.be/RmFFScuDtAk>.

### 6.1.2 A baroque fantasy: Form and freedom in Matteis

(National Centre for Early Music, York, 14th May, 2023)

Continuing her exploration of the baroque fantasia, Nina Kümin invites us to join her for a second illustrated concert. Following her focus on Telemann in the Christmas Festival, Nicola Matteis' emotive solo violin fantasias take centre stage for this recital, showcasing the height of expressive freedom in the baroque. Culminating in fully improvised fantasias inspired by his works, this is a chance to hear baroque music with all its intended fantasy!



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## NINA KUMIN

Improvising Violinist

Sunday 14 May 10.30am – c.11.30am

Free of charge

A Baroque Fantasy

Nina returns to the NCEM to continue her focus on fantasy, form and freedom – this time letting the emotive solo violin fantasias of Nicola Matteis take centre stage. Culminating in fully improvised fantasias inspired by his works, this is a chance to hear baroque music as Matteis himself would have known.

Event Date: 14/05/2023 10:30 am

[BOOK TICKETS >](#)

Figure 86: Image taken from the National Centre for Early Music's website advertising this second recital. Image sourced: NCEM. 'Nina Kumin.' *NCEM*. 2023. Accessed January 2, 2023.

<https://www.ncem.co.uk/events/nina-kumin/>.

### *Repertoire:*

Nicola Matteis Jr (c. 1670–1737) Fantasia in C minor Con discretione

Nicola Matteis Sr (1650–1714) Sonata in Bb Major, Ayres Book 2

i. Fantasia

Nicola Matteis Sr (1650–1714) Suite in A minor, Ayres Book 2

iii. Passaggio Rotto

iv. Fantasia

Nicola Matteis Jr (c. 1670–1737) Alia Fantasia

Nina Kumin (1998–) Three fantasias in the style of Matteis

i. Fantasia in A minor

ii. Fantasia in the style of Matteis' Alia Fantasia

iii. Fantasia in D minor

Games: Three improvised fantasias in the style of Matteis'

- i. Fantasia con discretione
- ii. Alia Fantasia
- iii. Contrapuntal

#### Freely Improvised Baroque Fantasia

Following a similar format, the second of this set of concerts explores Matteis senior and junior's solo violin fantasias, before demonstrating the process of learning to improvise fantasias in their style, including stylistic compositions by Nina Kümin. Matteis senior's *Suite in A minor* contains a notable contrapuntal fantasia. Again, a full recording of this recital can be found as a mp4 file in the accompanying material and as a YouTube link below. The sheet music is provided in appendix 1 and the full programme is included in appendix 2.

Video 14: Kümin, Nina. 'Nina Kümin Recital 2 NCEM 14th May 2023.' YouTube video. Posted by 'Nina Kümin - Improvising Violinist.' May 30, 2023. Accessed May 30, 2023. <https://youtu.be/-q4-tHQIPAc>.

## 6.2 Performance decisions

I play from the manuscripts or earliest print editions to encounter the fewest editorial additions. In general, I have sought to follow guidance from contemporary sources on performance practice. The following short notes explain and justify some key more creative performance decisions I made for each piece before the performance and include time codes referring to the recording of this first recital (see accompanying material or use the direct YouTube links on the time codes to view the exact moment referred to).

### 6.2.1 Telemann's fantasy: The genius behind the music

#### *Telemann Fantasia no.1 in Bb major (02:34)*

I chose to add ornamentation to the Largo, to decorate repeated and cadential sections in line with baroque performance practice (02:34).<sup>923</sup> I also added some small ornaments to the Grave to add interest, varying the rhythm with some smaller note values (07:23). This ornamentation is improvised but taken from a bank of stylistic possibilities I have created as a web of explicit knowledge (stored within my embodied practice), drawing on examples from Neumann and Tarling.<sup>924</sup>

#### *Telemann Fantasia no. 3 in F minor (11:42)*

In the Grave, I decided to add florid ornamentation and expand the Grave into a cadenza-style section (15:16). Adding this freer section contrasts with the highly stylised and structured remainder of the piece and nods to the contemporary conception of a fantasia as free and improvisatory.<sup>925</sup>

#### *Telemann Fantasia no. 12 in A minor (17:32)*

In bar 4 of the opening Moderato, I added a small fill of notes to link the E to the C (17:42). I delayed this to acknowledge the rest and sense of lift but then created a link into the following bar, providing impetus and signalling that the phrase continues until the cadence in bar 6. Providing contrast against the large leaps and separated dotted notes, a moment of smoothness adds interest and sharpens the effect of the heavy dotting. Without a link, I felt the sense of phrase was lost and the

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<sup>923</sup> Frederick Neumann, *Ornamentation in Baroque and Post-Baroque music: With special emphasis on JS Bach* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

<sup>924</sup> Ibid. And Judy Tarling, *Baroque String Playing for Ingenious Learners* (Hereford: Corda Music, 2000).

<sup>925</sup> John Hoyle, *Dictionarium musica, being a complete dictionary: or, treasury of music* (London: S. Crowder, 1770), 32. And Augustus F. C. Kollmann, *An essay on musical harmony* (London: J. Dale, 1796), 121.

cadence sounded more like an afterthought. As Quantz remarked, ‘sustained and flattering notes must be slurred to one another, but gay and leaping notes must be detached and separated from one another’.<sup>926</sup>



Figure 87: The opening of Telemann's Fantasia no. 12 showing the gap at the end of bar 4 that I fill with a link. Image sourced: Telemann, G.P. *12 Sonaten für Violine und Basso continuo; 12 Fantasien für Violine*. Manuscript, 1734. Accessed March 3, 2021, <https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht/?PPN=PPN738088579>.

#### *Vilsmayr Fantasia from Partita in Bb (23:16)*

For this fantasia, I began using a printed edition by Wolfhead Music as this was easily accessible. However, after an initial play through, it became clear that several notes were notated wrongly in this edition. For instance, already in bar 1, the second and third semiquavers should be a D and then an Eb (see figure 88). The version printed here creates an unusual sound world and is not reproduced in any recordings to which I listened. Having managed to access the manuscript at a later date for comparison, I can now confirm that my initial worries were justified. I have therefore created my own edition of Vilsmayr's Fantasia to match the manuscript and the full score for this can be seen in figure 89.



Figure 88: The original Wolfhead Music edition of Vilsmayr's *Partita II* that I used containing many mistakes. Image sourced: Vilsmayr, Johann Joseph. *Partita II*. Indiana: Wolfhead Music, 2010.

<sup>926</sup> Quantz, J.J. *On Playing the Flute* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1985 [1752]), 123. See also Giuseppe Tartini, *Traité des Agréments de la Musique* (Paris, 1771).

# Fantasia

Vilsmayr

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled 'Fantasia' by Vilsmayr. The score is written on six staves of music. The first staff is marked 'Allegro'. The second half of the piece, starting at measure 12, is marked 'Adagio'. The score includes various musical notations such as treble clef, key signature of Bb major, and various rhythmic values. There are also some performance markings like '+' above certain notes.

Figure 89: The full edition by the author of Vilsmayr's *Fantasia* for use by performers, also showing that the second half is in a more serious character.

I added ornamentation on the repeats as was customary.<sup>927</sup> In addition, I interpreted the final Adagio marking (see figure 90) to signal a freedom of tempo rather than an immediately slower tempo, creating a sense of a final cadenza. However, because of the large leaps and key of Bb major, I view the passage as rather cheeky, using freedom of tempo to create a sense of playfulness.<sup>928</sup> To prepare this, I chose to dot the final two semiquavers into this (24:42). This playful ending creates a contrast to the more serious nature of the opening of the second half, reinforcing the modulation back to the tonic key.

<sup>927</sup> Neumann, *Ornamentation*.

<sup>928</sup> Tarling, *Baroque String Playing*, 7.



Figure 90: The ending of Vilsmayr's *Fantasia* where I use free tempo. Edition created by the author.

*Matteis senior Minuetto and gavotta with divisions (26:46)*

A favourite practice of musicians stemming from the renaissance was to add divisions.<sup>929</sup> These could be quite substantial and florid. Playford's *Division Violin* presents simple dance tunes and then virtuosic variations in different styles.<sup>930</sup> As I found this a useful exercise to practise improvisation, I chose to compose some florid divisions for the *Minuetto* and *Gavotta* which I played on the repeats. These are based around the structural notes of each piece and elaborate further on Matteis' written-out divisions. To achieve this in the second half of the *Minuetto*, I included several repeated figurations to keep a sense of the original divisions but also increased the rhythmic impetus, alongside many scales (27:50). In the first half of the *Minuetto*, I chose a different style, adding double stops to outline the harmony and add rhythmic direction, highlighting the direction of phrases and propelling the phrases forward. As the rhythms used by Matteis are unusual for a minuet (crotchet + minim), using rhythmic double stops emphasises this feature, adding character (26:56).<sup>931</sup>



<sup>929</sup> Tarling, *Baroque String Playing*, 34. See also: Gnassi (1523); Ortiz (1533); Dalla Casa (1584); Virgiliano (c. 1590); Bassano (1591); Rognioni (1592).

<sup>930</sup> John Playford, *The Division Violin* (London: Playford, 1685).

<sup>931</sup> Tarling, *Baroque String Playing*, 113.



Figure 91: Matteis senior's *Mineutto* with divisions as written. Image sourced: Matteis, Nicola. *Other ayres and pieces the fourth part*. London, 1685.

I found there to be less opportunity for tasteful divisions in the first half of the *Gavotta* when taken at a fast tempo (as the character and marking indicate), choosing instead to add simple ornaments that would not interfere with the rhythmic sense of holding and poise necessary for the character of a gavotte (28:53).<sup>932</sup> This creates a nice line of increasing complexity, however, as the piece progresses, first with Matteis' already florid divisions and then my composed version on the second repeat (30:15). Rather than including more notes, as this would have been difficult given the tempo, I instead chose to change the notes, keeping the harmonic basis but changing the tessitura to explore new directions for the phrase. I did add a couple of rapid scalar flourishes at cadences to create a sense of impetus towards the end of the phrase. I always kept the characteristic two crotchets, however, to keep the sense of folksy character but elaborated these with occasional chords to increase the effect on the repeat.



Figure 92: Matteis senior's *Gavotta* with divisions as written. Image sourced: Matteis, Nicola. *Other ayres and pieces the fourth part*. London, 1685.

John come kiss me tune with Kümin composed and then improvised variations (32:37)

Again, following Playford's example, I took a tune from his book (*John come kiss me*) and composed my own variations to it (32:50). These continue at first in a similar character to the tune, using its

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<sup>932</sup> Meredith Little, 'Gavotte,' *Grove Music Online*, 2001, accessed 5th June, 2020, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000010774>. And Johann Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (Hamburg: Christian Herold, 1739). And Wendy Hilton, 'Dances to Music by Jean-Baptiste Lully,' *Early Music* 14, no. 1 (1986): 51-63.

rhythms, before exploring multiple alternative styles. For instance, while leaving the most florid variation until last (35:05), one variation is much broader, using full chords (33:01), the next features rapid semiquavers and then several dance-style variations follow (33:16). These all follow the harmonic structure of the opening tune and use characteristic rhythms from sarabandes, minuets and giges.<sup>933</sup> There are 14 variations in total. To showcase this exercise but allowing more time for improvisation in the recital, I play the melody and then variations 1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13 and 14. The full score for this is provided in appendix 1.

Following these composed variations, I improvised some more (36:03), again keeping within the harmonic structure (G, C, G, D, G, C, G D, G). This exercise I found to be really helpful to embed common cadential and chord progressions which, as a melody instrumentalist, I did not already have in my webs of explicit and tacit knowledge (see introduction and chapter 1).<sup>934</sup> I treated this section as a ground bass (or loop/ open repeat), continuing until I felt the possibilities for further interesting invention had been exhausted or the piece had outlasted its time slot. Playing both the composed and improvised variations highlights to the listener the process involved in being able to improvise in such a style and shows the difference in playing style visually and aurally once the performer begins to improvise. It also shows the similarities and different skills needed. I attempted to explore different metres and characters in the improvised variations from those in the composed variations but drew upon them for inspiration and aimed to keep largely within the joyful character of the main tune. These all followed stylistic baroque conventions, however.

#### *Eccles Mad Lover with improvised variations (39:50)*

Similarly, after playing the first few bars of the, I used the descending ground bass from the first four bars of Eccles' *Mad Lover* to improvise over.

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<sup>933</sup> Richard Hudson, Meredith Little, 'Sarabande,' *Grove Music Online*, 2001, accessed 29th April, 2020. <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.00 01/omo-9781561592630-e-0000024574>. And Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, 291. And Georg Muffat and David Wilson, *Georg Muffat on performance practice: The texts from Florilegium Primum, Florilegium Secundum, and Auserlesene Instrumentalmusik: A new translation with commentary* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1695-8 [2001]), 228.

<sup>934</sup> See introduction (page 25) where I define webs of knowledge as: 'The complex connections between thoughts themselves and thoughts and actions that need to be built between individual nuggets of explicit knowledge as well as their physical embodiment to allow for the creation of ideas and execution of activities.'



Figure 93: Eccles' *Mad Lover* bars 1–4 showing the ground bass I use to improvise over. Image sourced: Eccles, John and Charles Babel arr. *Ground*. London: Grant Colburn, c. 1700.

Again, I attempted to create different characters but within a more melodic, melancholic and singing style to fit with the original tune and to be inspired by Eccles' use of leaps which can otherwise be counterintuitive in improvisation as the tendency is to employ easier stepwise motion. For these, I took inspiration from the treatise suggestions on the affects.<sup>935</sup>

#### *Kümin Fantasias in the style of Telemann 1, 2 and 3 (45:20)*

For further discussion on the compositional choices made here, see chapter 4. I treat my compositions as baroque scores and so add some ornamentation and apply baroque phrasing and performance conventions.

#### *Improvised Fantasia in the Style of Telemann (01:02:15)*

For this fantasia, I use the game 'Lost in Hamburg' (see 5.4) to involve the audience in the improvisation process. This shows the many decisions that improvisers have to make in a fun and interactive way, revealing research in stylistic options, the process of practising and performing and the advantages to including more improvisation for live performance.

#### 6.2.1.1 Reflections on live improvisations 1

Self-reflection is a key tool for improvisers, allowing a greater understanding of the process, learning from experiences to enable even more ambitious, stylistic and comfortable improvisations in the

<sup>935</sup> Tarling, *Baroque String Playing*.

future.<sup>936</sup> To create the most successful improvisations, improvisers need to be aware of their own methods in order to be able to develop these further. As such an individual pursuit, strategies will work with varying degrees of success depending on character, experience and preference in addition to outside factors such as the environment on the day. Thus, I provide post-recital reflections below to evaluate the practicality of the methods described in this thesis in my own experience. This therefore provides an insider perspective in addition to observations that listeners may make about the recordings.

During this first recital I improvised variations on John Come Kiss Me (31:12) and Eccles' Mad Lover (39:01) as well as a full fantasia in the style of Telemann (01:02:15). For this final improvisation, I followed my analysis from chapter 4, using the guidelines for improvisation in the style of Telemann as inspiration (4.1.4). Throughout all my improvisations, I used the suggestions listed in chapter 5 (5.3). The strategies I relied most upon are discussed further below. During the performance itself, I very much enjoyed improvising, feeling a sense of freedom from the score and excitement. Perhaps the most striking observation for me, while listening back to the recording after the event, was the difference in the way I experienced time. While improvising, every rest and longer note felt very long, while sections went by very quickly. This was reversed in listening back. I was particularly pleased to see the enthusiasm with which the audience joined in with the game I included to create the fantasia in the style of Telemann.

I made the many explicit decisions necessary to improvise at different stages in order to free up thinking time when I predicted it would be needed. Some essential features to include, such as the use of sequences, repetition, rough length, characteristic rhythms and techniques, were decided during my analysis (and therefore before the performance) to ensure a stylistic result (see chapter 4.1). The placement and specificities, however, were left to the moment of improvisation. Closer to the performance, I decided on tonalities (a week before the performance) to allow some time to become familiar with the sonority and physical positioning. This would therefore free up thinking time during the improvisations for other elements. Likewise, I ruled out the use of some techniques, such as long fast passages featuring the same pattern as I found I could not achieve this successfully in practice improvisations. Recording practice improvisations allowed me to hear which strategies were most successful and these were the ones I chose to have in a mental bank to draw from in the recital. As my aim was to create improvisations which were exciting and exploratory but largely technically convincing to allow the stylistic nature to shine through, I chose to balance technical and creative virtuosity with realism, choosing to push myself in the recital whilst knowing my technical

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<sup>936</sup> Michele Biasutti, 'Teaching improvisation through processes. Applications in music education and implications for general education,' *Frontiers in psychology* 8 (2017): 1-8. And Johan Von Wright, 'Reflections on reflection,' *Learning and instruction* 2, no. 1 (1992): 59-68.

limits. Some decisions were made by the audience, such as the key features in the Telemann game. I explain the decisions I made during the improvisations themselves and the rationale behind these below.

#### *Structure:*

I drew largely from a bank of cadential figurations to finish each phrase in order to give thinking space during the cadence to consider what to do next. My explicit planning in variation movements was largely centred around a feature to use for the next round such as a rhythm, while in the Telemann-inspired game ([01:02:15](#)), this was expanded to larger structures such as planning modulations. I found that I could plan a technique for a faster section during the cadence of the previous phrase, for instance: playing mordent or turn figurations along a scale ([01:13:13](#)) or utilising open strings as a pedal ([01:12:35](#), [01:14:02](#)). This was often successful for a few bars. During this time, I used by tacit knowledge to execute the idea while explicitly planning the next feature. However, in faster tempos, these techniques were only functional for a few bars as long as my tacit webs of knowledge lasted, then I would find my fingers started to “trip over themselves”, or fumble for the next notes and this would call my attention back to the present ([01:12:22](#)). This demonstrates the necessity of achieving a balance between explicit and tacit decision-making and highlights the fact that subconscious flow (which relies on a complete lack of critical thought), as opposed to immersive fluency, is difficult to achieve for long periods of time in improvisation. To integrate this into the phrase as seamlessly as possible, I would include moments of stillness and passages that slowed down to allow my explicit and tacit decisions to realign ([01:12:22](#)). These were essential to facilitate moments of faster passagework. I could then plan the faster passagework during the moments of stillness as these require less thinking time. This can be heard at [37:42](#) in the improvised variations to *John Come Kiss Me*, for instance. The composed variations that start this piece can be found in appendix 1.

Having since experimented some more, this could have been even more seamless by using multiple techniques within a faster passage. This variety prevents the fingers “tripping over” by bringing the attention back regularly. Fast passagework in a baroque style for the violin tends to involve sequences, double notes, open string pedals or arpeggios. As on the violin, sequential passages and arpeggios require different fingers and to cross strings, leaving a comfortable handshape, this becomes more and more challenging the longer the passage continues as the passage has to be transposed not only to new notes but to new fingerings and string crossings. This requires a lot of explicit thinking time and therefore leaves very little time for other considerations

or forward planning. I personally found it very difficult to continue these for longer than a few seconds even with substantial practice if the pattern left the comfortable handshape of a third, unable to calculate the next notes and their technical realisation before they had to be played. Including moments in between using simpler strategies that required less explicit thought, relying more on tacit knowledge (such as double notes or open string pedals), meant that the next phrase could be planned while continuing to play many fast notes, keeping the illusion of one long fast passage. Lengthier cadential sections or rests after such passagework could have provided the planning time necessary for the next section.

The majority of my structural planning, therefore, was centred around technical ease, balancing what I wanted to achieve in the present and relying on tacit knowledge for this, while having the space to plan for the next section. I used contrast for interest but also to allow the alignment of explicit planning and tacit execution. Sections that required less thinking time and could be more automated allowed planning time for the next potentially more complicated section. During the more complex moments it was not possible to plan to such an extent, therefore a simpler passage had to follow. This applied for larger but also smaller-scale structures. Within each phrase there were longer and shorter notes, faster and slower passages as well as groupings of larger sections into different tempi and characters.

To create a large-scale structure in my improvised fantasia in the style of Telemann, I used my game *Lost in Hamburg* ([01:02:15](#) and see chapter 5.4). The audience chose militant, sad/melancholic and quick-tempered/ tempests/ furies ([01:05:53](#)). These therefore informed the first three sections ([01:07:10](#), [01:09:45](#), [01:12:16](#)), finishing with a rejoicing finale ([01:14:17](#)). I chose to have four sections to create contrasting but substantial movements and asked audiences to choose two minor and one major tonality to ensure a balance of keys. Using visual cues to show when sections finished was largely successful although this could have been made more apparent after the first movement as some audience members started to clap. I sometimes used freer sections with lots of scalar ornamentation just before the planned ending of a movement ([01:16:17](#)) so I could speed up to a therefore more dramatic conclusion ([01:15:23](#)).

#### *Melody and harmony:*

On a basic level, I used a mixture of longer and shorter note values and articulations to create different characters. Throughout all the improvisations, I relied very heavily on the handshape method to create chords. For many phrases, I used my explicit and tacit knowledge of handshape chords (see 5.3 Shortcuts to Virtuosity, Chapter 5) as a starting point on the first beats of each bar

and then added ornamentation to lead to the next, therefore creating melody. This allowed the chords to be an inspiration for which notes to play, keeping a firm sense of harmony. Alternating between sections whilst relying on this approach and then others, using only single melodic lines, worked well as playing chords requires more planning. I usually explicitly planned which chord to play based on where my melody was naturally going to fall or would then extend the melodic or ornamental line slightly to land on a note of an appropriate chord. The shape of the chords was determined by the position of the melody; higher notes allowed for more chordal notes to be played underneath, for instance. I almost never left this to embodied knowledge as I found that while my handshapes were internalised, the decision of which chord to play (as opposed to which inversion) still required explicit planning to be stylistic. This kept my melodies grounded in harmony but also allowed for moments of greater melodic freedom to free up thinking time. Particularly for the variation improvisations such as for *John Come Kiss Me* ([31:12](#)) and Eccles' *The Mad Lover* ([39:01](#)), using chordal handshapes at the beginning of bars kept a firm sense of the ground bass, both for me and for the audience. This technique requires additional thinking time.

While using these for a passage of rapid bariolage in my variations for *The Mad Lover* ([39:01](#)), I included an unexpected D natural as the bassline ([42:24](#)). This was while planning the next section, relying on automation here. This break from what I was expecting to play and hear brought my attention back to the current moment and I chose to make this a feature rather than “correct” it, following my emergency tool-kit for repair in chapter 5 (5.3.2), by emphasising the D natural and lengthening it slightly. I also then chose to employ slower rhythms for the following bar to clarify this unexpected harmony before cadencing in a more conventional manner rather than continuing the broken chord sequence. To link previous sections to bariolage, I used slurs ([42:19](#), [43:02](#)), foreshadowing the longer bows of the next variation. To create variation also in *The Mad Lover*, I used 6ths across different strings to create the illusion of a bassline and melody ([41:10](#)) and a pedal note at the top ([42:05](#), [42:27](#)). I also used some suspensions (against the now implied bassline at [42:12](#)). In addition, I used short sequences frequently ([40:30](#), [41:55](#), [42:41](#)) and small-scale repetition throughout (for instance, [43:02](#)). I had not determined to use these before the recital but considered them to be useful strategies to employ to provide more structural planning time. I had, therefore, practised using them over the bassline in different ways before the recital so that they would be at my disposal should I choose to use them. This had to be limited to a bar or two and based within a comfortable handshape in first position to make this feasible, to be able to accurately reproduce what I had just played for repetition and to translate it effectively if in a sequence. For sequences, I usually relied on scales to form the basis, ornamenting each note to create the illusion of a sequence, relying on my tacit, embodied knowledge. Alternatively, I kept distances to a third for



easier translation. Using these techniques opened up thinking time for larger scale planning for the next phrase. Similarly, to allow thinking time and to keep a sense of cohesion as a whole, I referenced the initial melody by Eccles ([42:55](#)). In *John Come Kiss Me* I also included a minor version of the ground bass to create a completely different character ([37:03](#)).

For the improvised fantasia in the style of Telemann, I chose the key of C major as this made use of all the open strings on the violin, allowing for a fuller sound and to make intonation easier for chordal handshapes. I chose this before the recital to have a chance to practise improvising in the key to ensure better intonation. It also allowed me to become familiar with the limitations and opportunities afforded by the open strings and finger positions; which chords and double stops would be realistic to use in improvisation, for instance. At times I also modulated to the dominant (G major – [01:08:53](#)). I chose A minor for the middle movements as the relative minor of C major, modulating in these to the subdominant and dominant minors (D and E minor – [01:13:21](#), [01:13:43](#)). These align with the common modulations found in Telemann’s output (see chapter 4.1.2). I often chose to start movements relatively simply to allow thinking time for larger structural planning, used double notes ([01:15:38](#)) and included moments of characteristic small-scale repetition ([01:07:37](#), [01:15:00](#), [01:15:54](#)). These were all strategies I had decided would be effective to use if needed but decided on their most beneficial placement during the improvisation. As small-scale repetition was a feature of Telemann’s fantasias, I had planned to include moments before the recital. Exactly how these would sound or where they would be placed, however, was decided during the improvisation.

### *Rhythm:*

For the variations on *John Come Kiss Me*, I drew on dance forms for rhythmic inspiration, particularly those of a gigue (for example at [36:43](#)). To add interest while providing thinking time, I added syncopated rhythms to the variations on Eccles’ *Mad Lover* ([41:30](#), [41:55](#)) and occasionally in the improvised fantasia in the style of Telemann. The featured rhythms for my improvised fantasia were chosen by the audience. There were five quick and enthusiastic responses so I decided to incorporate all of these. I matched the rhythms they chose with the characters I thought they would help facilitate and then emphasised these at the beginning with each movement to help establish this and create aural cues for the audience to see where we were in the structure, witnessing their impact on the improvisation. I chose a sarabande influence for the second movement ([01:09:45](#)), and gigue rhythms towards the end of the final movement ([01:17:00](#)), reflecting Telemann’s use of dance style (see chapter 4.1).



In conclusion, regarding all elements, execution in live performance required a balance between tacit execution and explicit planning, matching my philosophies of practice described in chapter 1. In such formalised music, it was impossible to solely focus on tacit execution or explicit planning for long periods of time. However, the time spent previously building up my webs of knowledge in each of these areas (see introduction and chapter 1) through my suggested games (see chapter 5.4) was really useful, allowing tacit execution to play an equal role with explicit knowledge. The fact that I could both rely on and experiment with both types of knowledge made this an enjoyable experience, giving me the confidence to challenge myself and indeed to improvise at all.

### 6.2.2 A baroque fantasy: Form and freedom in Matteis

Again, I describe the performance decisions I made before my second PhD recital below.

#### *Matteis Junior Fantasia 'Con discretione' (01:15)*

Due to the title *Fantasia*, subtitle 'Con discretione' and the florid nature of the improvisation, I decided to treat the tempo freely. As the notation is very deliberate and detailed, on the repeats of each half, I largely kept to the notated ornamentation. I did, however, add a short improvised cadenza where Matteis notated a pause, as was common in Italian baroque notation with which Matteis, as an Italian born violinist, would have been familiar (03:49).<sup>937</sup> I chose not to perform the second movement here as this is almost exclusively made up of repeating chords in a similar manner to his *Alia Fantasia* and this technique is exemplified in the second half of my *Fantasia in A minor in the style of Matteis Junior*, both of which featured later in this recital. I also decided not to repeat the *Fantasia 'Con discretione'*. This allowed more time for improvisation and to show other fantasias.

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<sup>937</sup> Danuta Mirka, 'The Cadence of Mozart's Cadenzas,' *The Journal of Musicology* 22, no. 2 (2005): 295. And Barthold Kuijken, *The Notation Is Not the Music: Reflections on Early Music Practice and Performance* (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2013), p. 85. And Eva Badura-Skoda et al., 'Cadenza,' 2001, accessed July 15, 2022, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000043023>.



Figure 94: Matteis junior's *Fantasia* 'Con discretione' showing the pause midway through during which I improvise a short cadenza. Image sourced: IMSLP. '2 Fantasias for violin solo.' IMSLP. 2022. Accessed May 25, 2022.

[https://imslp.org/wiki/2\\_Fantasias\\_for\\_Violin\\_solo\\_\(Matteis\\_Jr.%2C\\_Nicola\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/2_Fantasias_for_Violin_solo_(Matteis_Jr.%2C_Nicola)).

*Matteis Senior Fantasia from Sonata in Bb major, Ayres Book 2 (06:19)*

This fantasia is similar to the *Passaggio rotto* in his suite in A minor played earlier in the programme. I added some small ornaments (07:51) and slurs (07:22) here to break up the otherwise rather study-like material. This shows the potential for creating material from lengthy sequences in improvisation as well as the beauty of keeping melodies simple through using arpeggios.

*Matteis Senior Suite in A minor from Ayres Book 2 (09:52)*

From this suite I perform the fantasia-like unaccompanied *Passaggio rotto* and final *Fantasia*. This *Passaggio rotto* is similar to Matteis' unaccompanied fantasia in Bb, for instance, largely exploring arpeggiated motion and sequences. During the *Passaggio rotto*, I chose to add some lengthier sections of improvisation, taking advantage of the long note values and to include a nod to the fantasia spirit (10:26, 10:43). Due to the complexity of the *Fantasia*, I did not add much ornamentation (13:23). I added slurs and ornamentation towards the end, however, to help create a sense of flow within the conjunct florid notes, creating a welcome contrast from the separated bows used throughout the rest of the piece (15:15). I chose not to repeat the *Fantasia* due to time constraints.



Figure 95: The ending of Matteis Senior's *Fantasia* from his suite in A minor to which I add some slurs to create contrast. Image sourced: IMSLP. 'Ayres for the violin.' IMSLP. 2022. Accessed May 25, 2022. [https://imslp.org/wiki/Ayres\\_for\\_the\\_Violin\\_\(Matteis,\\_Nicola\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Ayres_for_the_Violin_(Matteis,_Nicola)).

#### *Matteis Junior Alia Fantasia (16:57)*

I treat all the minim chords as battement. In order to avoid disturbing the rhythmic flow and to prioritise the harmony, I do not add any ornamentation. I play with time in order to emphasise interesting harmonic progressions and to add interest and create a sense of flow. I treat the semiquavers at the end as a cadential flourish, playing these freely rather than strictly in tempo to help bring the piece to a comfortable conclusion (20:34).

#### *Kümin Fantasias in the style of Matteis senior and junior 1, 2 and 3 (22:05)*

For more detailed discussion of these see chapter 4.

#### *Improvised fantasia in the style of Matteis Junior's Fantasia 'Con discretione' (34:41)*

For this improvisation, I use the harmony handshapes method described in chapter 5 (5.3.1), taking inspiration from Matteis Junior's 'Con discretione' and improvising florid ornamentation between structural chords. To do this, I played the game *The art of ornamentation* (see 5.4). For further discussion on this see my reflections (6.2.2.1).

#### *Improvised fantasia in the style of Matteis Senior's contrapuntal fantasias (40:14)*

Using the chess game *Fugal Feudalism* explained in chapter 5 (5.4), this improvisation took a short theme and created a contrapuntal and imitative texture, taking inspiration from a fugue but without creating a strict fugue, just as Matteis senior did in his contrapuntal fantasias. The structure took inspiration from that of Matteis' unaccompanied A minor *Fantasia*, introducing the theme in two voices, including a linking section before introducing the theme again in the dominant (42:25). I also used the handshape method discussed in chapter 5 to harmonise the counterpoint, creating the illusion of three voices (42:54).

*Improvised fantasia in the style of Matteis Junior's Alia Fantasia (44:10)*

This improvisation followed the style of Matteis Junior's *Alia Fantasia*, formed of almost entirely rolled chords, again using the harmony handshape method explained in chapter 5 (5.3.1). To do this I played the game *All about that bass* (see 5.4). I added some melodic notes outlining thirds, as Matteis did, when it felt comfortable within the chordal handshape (46:31, 46:49) and ended with some florid ornamentation between structural chords to create a coda (48:19).

*Freely improvised baroque fantasia (49:45)*

To finish, I improvised a fantasia taking inspiration from Matteis senior and junior as well as Telemann, drawing on key features from each. See below (6.2.2.1) for further discussion of this.

#### 6.2.2.1 Reflections on live improvisations 2

Reflecting on my second PhD recital, I was pleased to observe further development of my handshape method, allowing me to include more double stops and chords comfortably in improvisations. As for my first recital, I decided the tonalities of each improvisation in advance to allow practice of their respective finger positions. These sought to maximise use of open strings, the accuracy of intonation and ease of chordal handshapes as well as provide variety and contrast as these improvisations were all featured at the end of the recital. I chose different keys to Matteis senior and junior to prevent the improvisations sounding too similar but chose keys that were used in other fantasias, capriccios or ricercars by Matteis senior. I also decided the broad structure of each improvisation to allow thinking time for the more complex intricacies and nuances of each style. As the first three improvisations involved games and audience participation, characteristics of the opening for each were decided in the moment just before the improvisation by audience members. The remainder of my decisions made during the improvisations are discussed below.

*Improvised fantasia in the style of Matteis junior's 'Con discretione' (34:41):*

The first improvised fantasia (34:41) took inspiration from Matteis junior's 'Con discretione' which the audience had heard at the very beginning of the recital. This game involved the audience choosing shapes that broadly reflected characteristic ornament shapes found in Matteis' manuscript (see 5.4). These formed the basis for the first few seconds of the improvisation. I paused between ornaments to help the audience to notice which shape was to be heard next and used body language to indicate when I was continuing in the style and no longer following the shapes on the screen. My

decision to include a trill from a G to F# as the second shape was deliberate and made before I started as this would produce the most convincing trill and could be accompanied by a comfortable double stop (37:33). Similarly, I chose to start with a full G minor chord to establish the tonality but also to allow the melody to start in a higher tessitura to ensure that I could complete the shapes on the board within the range of my violin. In general, I chose to start ornamentation I felt would create melodic interest and variety in relation to what I had just played (avoiding repeating ornaments immediately next to each other) and then, while near the end, chose a chord that would fit under the melody. This ensured that the melody line could clearly be heard at all times and created a sense of flow. Alternatively, when this would not have produced a stylistic chord progression, I altered the end of the ornamentation to land on a melody note that could be accompanied by a stylistic chord. The execution of the ornamentation itself, therefore, was usually left to my tacit webs of knowledge to allow space for the explicit decision-making of chord choices. Occasionally, I had to use a double stop to give the illusion of a chord when the melody line was in a lower tessitura (37:47). The easiest ornaments to include were based on scalar patterns due to my previous classical technical training and so I used these to create thinking time for more complex ornaments or chords to follow (39:08).

Just as Matteis modulated to the dominant at the mid-point of his fantasia, I chose to modulate to the dominant minor (38:28) and end with a coda (39:47). I included the characteristic flattened second in the melodic line Matteis used in his opening (38:53) and a hint of a diminished chord (39:27). To add interest, I included several short sequences (38:44, 39:15, 39:35) and the illusion of a second voice (39:37). I attempted to include a variety of phrase lengths, including longer pauses to create the sense of larger overall structure such as after the modulation to D minor (38:28). I particularly enjoyed this improvisation as the nature of the structure allowed for plenty of thinking time, free of the constraints of strict tempo.

#### *Improvised fantasia in the style of Matteis senior's contrapuntal fantasia (40:14):*

Reflecting Matteis senior's contrapuntal *Fantasia* from his suite in A minor, this second game aimed to create two-part counterpoint and the illusion of a fugue (40:14). I set up the game to already include two rooks in the melodic line (blank, rook, blank, rook, king — see 5.4 for further details of this game). This allowed the entry of the second voice and its later movements to be heard most clearly but also made the process easier and more manageable for me as only one voice was therefore moving at once, the other remained on one note. The audience chose the other motives: a knight (rising third) and pawn (rising second) to fill in the blanks before the cadential section signalled by the king. Before the start of the improvisation, I made a note of the motives that had

been picked so I could refer to them throughout the improvisation as I found in practice that without notes I often forgot what motives I had picked without a visual reminder. Practice in the key of G major and choosing to assign motives within the interval of a third meant I was confident that I could produce a stylistic result that was also technically feasible in improvisation. I used lots of 3rds and 6ths as these are comfortable and quick to produce on the violin along with typical cadential figurations within my tacit knowledge to provide thinking time to plan the next section. I was able to modulate comfortably to the dominant as I discovered that repeating the handshapes from the opening on the next string up would automatically transpose the counterpoint up a fifth, allowing for a section in the dominant ([42:34](#)). This was much more manageable than transposing notes and fingers, as other keys would have demanded, while also producing a stylistic modulation.

Following this, I played the tune on the G string which, as the lowest, allowed me to add chords on top. I then did the reverse by putting the melody on the top E string and adding three or four-part chords below ([42:55](#)). This followed Matteis' strategy of using chords underneath or above the melody to create the illusion of three-part counterpoint. Repeating the opening again, then reinforced the counterpoint as the audience had heard the tune in several different positions. Taking inspiration from Matteis' second half which explored sequences in double stops, I used thirds and echoing melodies in two voices while the other remained on one note ([43:28](#)). Utilising open strings as a pedal between double stops and then keeping the sequences small made this manageable at the desired speed. This also then referenced the motives chosen by the audience at the beginning by expanding on possibilities of melodies based around a third. While Matteis did not finish with the opening again, I chose to do this to further reinforce the motives. I had decided to use this structure before starting the improvisation to ensure a stylistic and feasible result. The details and exact placement, however, were decided in the moment of improvisation.

#### *Improvised fantasia in the style of Matteis junior's Alia Fantasia (44:10)*

For this game ([44:10](#)), audience members chose numbers between 1 and 7 which represented the scale degrees in G major (see 5.4). These then became the bassline for the beginning of my improvisation, using my harmony handshape method to produce rolling chords above this (see 5.3.1). In practice in different keys, I had established that choosing to use an inversion of a dominant chord for bass notes 2 and 7 facilitated the most stylistic results and potential options for the chord that followed. I, therefore, chose to employ this strategy at the beginning. Again, I used body language to indicate when I had finished following the notes on the board and was continuing in the same style. To aid clarity, I emphasised the bass notes. This also helped me to create a flowing

bassline with stylistic voice leading. In practice, I found that this method facilitated more thinking time as opposed to choosing chords and then assigning a bass note. The handshapes I chose were largely those that were most comfortable.

I surprised myself in a moment of tacit flow by starting to modulate to D major (46:41). I used my emergency toolkit for repair (see chapter 5.3.2) and then chose to deliberately modulate to D major. To create moving crotchets, I picked chords that left my fingers free on the top string to outline the melody (46:30). To create more thinking time when needed, I continued to play the same chord and used extensive 7<sup>th</sup> and tonic chords to confirm the key (46:57). I increased the harmonic rhythm towards the end as is characteristic of baroque music (47:55) before using a dominant 7<sup>th</sup> and florid ornamentation to provide a coda. This reflected Matteis' ending but transposed to a major tonality. Intonation for chords is difficult for violinists and particularly so in the higher positions. To maximise the chances of largely successful intonation, I decided not to go above third position as this I already found to be challenging in improvisation. While there were a few less centred moments, as would be expected, I felt that it was worth showcasing this virtuosic technique to the limits of my improvisatory abilities. With further practice, this would continue to improve as the handshapes in higher positions would become more comfortable allowing for even more ambitious improvisations. This was outside the scope of this project, however, but is a skill I intend to continue to work on in the future. Upon reflection, however, my intonation might have been improved through taking more time between changing chords. I had a tendency to rush onto the next chords as my explicit planning had already moved onto planning the next chord and therefore was not focused on the execution. While practising Matteis' *Alia Fantasia*, I found that taking more time improved my intonation and therefore applying this in improvisation might also have helped to produce greater accuracy. To enable this, however, a generally slower tempo might have been necessary to provide more thinking time.

*Freely improvised baroque fantasia (48:48):*

To end, I decided to include a freely improvised baroque fantasia, taking inspiration from Telemann, Matteis senior and Matteis junior (48:48). I chose the tonality of G minor as this was a key in which I could comfortably improvise in all the different styles. This became evident through my practice in different keys for each of the styles as a comfortable option. I chose to reflect Telemann's use of dance characteristics in my opening, using sarabande rhythms (see chapter 4) and pairing these with chords produced through my handshape method (see 5.3.1). I chose to modulate very early on to the dominant minor (D minor, 49:50) and use repetition to create the illusion of dance structure which usually opens with a repeated section, itself often ending in the dominant. At 51:01, I used a

chord to transition to a section in the style of Matteis junior's *Alia Fantasia*. The rolling chords were again created through the handshape method and I included a modulation to D minor (51:15). I used the last chord to transition to a section taking inspiration from Matteis junior's *Fantasia 'Con discretione'*, employing chords with florid ornamentation in between. Having linked these sections together, I used a pause to build tension and create variety before the final section which instead focused on a single voice, in a similar fashion to Matteis senior's *Passaggio rotto* and *Fantasia* in Bb major (52:58). To achieve variety and a stylistic sound, I used a mixture of arpeggios (53:47), repetition (53:29) and sequences (53:40, 53:29). I also drew on Telemann's characteristic rhythm of a quaver followed by two semiquavers through this last section. By combining elements from each style and composer, I felt I could show the further possibilities of using stylistic features to create individual improvisations, bringing out the performer's voice. I aimed here to show the possibilities within stylistic guidelines. It would, however, also be interesting to experiment with using these features in a loose fashion, or in fusion with other styles.

In summary, I found that using the games helped to facilitate stylistic improvisation as well as engaging the audience in a more active manner, showing elements of the process behind my improvisation. Making some decisions before the performance and allowing the audience to make others during the recital made the live improvisations more enjoyable as I did not feel overwhelmed by the process. I enjoyed finding individuality and freedom within the stylistic guidelines.



## **Conclusion: Fantasising about the future**

Through practice-led research involving philosophical, historical, analytical, compositional, performative and pedagogical research, this thesis presents original contributions to each of these fields. It is proven that stylistic fantasias can be improvised by violinists in performance today, that games are useful pedagogical tools to implement historical and analytical research in improvisatory performance and that specific guidance is necessary for violinists (beyond that already produced for keyboardists). Providing the first specific advice for improvising a fantasia on the violin, detailed guidelines are presented combining insights from contemporary written sources (including treatise writings and dictionary definitions) and original analysis of unaccompanied violin fantasias by Telemann and Matteis junior and senior. These are also provided in a distilled format (5.5.1) and as an example pedagogical guide in the appendix. Although focused on the violin, my analysis of Telemann's fantasias draws on his gamba and flute fantasias too. These results, therefore, could also be used by other melody instrumentalists and a similar methodology could be applied to research into historical improvisation for other instruments. Stylistic compositions for the violin by the author demonstrate the application of this analysis. Several handshapes are proposed to speed up harmonising melodies and chordal playing for violinists and specific games are suggested to practise applying this technique. This method could be easily altered slightly to apply to other string instruments with further practice-led research. Four of the original games provided enable the improvisation of whole fantasias, each focusing on a different compositional style explored in chapter 4 and supported by the theoretical and historical foundation provided by chapters 1, 2 and 3. The success of this methodology is demonstrated through the inclusion of two recorded recitals: one to demonstrate Telemann's approach and one to show Matteis senior and junior's unaccompanied style. Each includes compositions by contemporary composers, my pastiche compositions, example games and fully improvised fantasias. As such, they uniquely show the process and not only the product, demonstrating that the practice was not simply a result of this research but that it also led the research.

Alongside this, contributing to the ongoing debate on the nature of improvisation, a new definition of improvisation is put forward, suggesting that improvisation is the direct execution of an idea. Further insights are given into the decision-making process and gathering of knowledge during improvisation such as the importance of decision matrices and the movement of knowledge between explicit and tacit spheres which has relevance for all improvising musicians. It is suggested that through historical improvisation we can most closely access the early modern imagination and the improvisatory roles of women in this period are also highlighted and brought together. This highlights an under-represented field in current scholarship and more detailed studies of female

improvisers in other time periods and genres would contribute to a more informed and well-rounded understanding of improvisation. This thesis, therefore, provides in-depth suggestions and demonstrates results for the violin but also acts as a starting point for all melody instrumentalists.

The limitations of this methodology must also be considered. This thesis has focused on imitating the style of three baroque composers for the violin: Telemann, Matteis senior and Matteis junior. As such, it is necessarily limited in its focus and has not considered the changes in style of these composers over time, comparison to works by other composers or the influence of national style. These individuals do present music that takes inspiration from Italy, England, Germany and France, however, and so the advice in this thesis suggests a way into stylistic improvisation for the baroque more generally. It can build stylistic awareness and general improvisation skills which, with the further training of similar research projects, will continue to grow and add to our knowledge and performance of improvisation in this field. It cannot, of course, be said to represent all kinds of improvised baroque fantasia for melody instruments. More research is necessary for the specifics of each individual instrument but the general findings from the theoretical and historical chapters such as insights into the improvisation process and historical perceptions of fantasias alongside many of the improvisation games could all be used or adapted by all melody instrumentalists to improve their historical improvisation. The proposed methodology, in addition, can be transferable to other kinds of historical improvisation and other instruments, furthering research in this field. The games suggested as part of this thesis are not historically accurate in themselves but seek to use modern techniques to achieve a stylistic result. Complete stylistic accuracy is impossible as our modern training and exposure naturally differ from that of baroque musicians. Nevertheless, this kind of research provides the closest way in to understanding and imitating this genre.

The reflections included throughout are evidence of my own subjective experiences. These cannot be said to reflect the experiences of others but provide an example and present the perspective of a practice-led researcher, examining the topic from theoretical, historical, analytical, compositional, performative and improvised areas of research. More in depth research is also needed into the success of the games suggested in chapter 5 as a pedagogical tool alongside surveys of what other guidance might be useful. Further research into transforming these findings into a pedagogy, both at beginner and experienced levels, would enable the larger dissemination of this work, detailing the most effective ways to present this information to students. It would also be useful to question other historical improvisers on their experiences of the guidance presented in this thesis alongside their own more general experiences of performing and improvising baroque fantasias. A large amount remains to be researched and disseminated in order to make baroque improvisation common practice in western classical performance and pedagogy. Its recent rise in

scholarship, however, is promising and studies such as this seek to offer modern musicians the first steps in this endeavour and pave the way for future research. As a whole, this thesis and accompanying recorded recitals demonstrate the process and product of improvising unaccompanied baroque violin fantasias. While uniquely focusing on the violin and making this accessible, it is also thoroughly supported by evidence and examined from several methodological angles, using a practice-led research format that both presented and contributed to the original findings of this research.

Far from just being a rediscovered form of music-making, the potential future research possibilities surrounding historical improvisation are many and varied. This work draws new links across disciplines, tracing the fantasia and improvisation's associations of freedom and creativity in etymology, finding parallels in literature, psychology, dream descriptions, dance, art and religion, alongside fears over its power, through its often-subconscious existence, beyond the realms of conscious control. Improvisation is largely absent from modern classical music training although there is a growing body of pedagogy, particularly within the keyboard world and within music therapy that is seeking to reintroduce this practice to the way we learn and teach music which this thesis seeks to support. Having examined the process of improvising fantasias from a historical, philosophical, and scientific point of view, the process is demystified, revealed instead to be accessible, practical and possible. We all improvise in our daily life and specifically through speech; we therefore all already have the skills necessary for musical improvisation. By embedding the stylistic guidelines through moving this knowledge from explicit to tacit realms and implementing this through creative play, the process becomes attainable, enjoyable and beneficial beyond the realms of improvised fantasias. Increasing improvisation skills can build confidence, reduce performance anxiety, encourage a spontaneous and creative approach to reading music and can be used to improve technique. For instance, improvisation exercises can be used to tackle difficult technical passages by encouraging a creative approach and practising in a different way. Such skills are transferable to many other contexts; developing these in music pedagogy alongside traditional notation reading methods could have a profound and positive effect on the interpretation and creation of music and the wellness of musicians.

Including improvised fantasias revives a practice, rejuvenates performance and reinvents the baroque for modern audiences. It is also, therefore, worth noting briefly the legacy of baroque fantasy. This is traceable perhaps most obviously through its transition into a popular composed form, displaying virtuosity and compositional freedom, famously in romantic piano works such as by Liszt and Chopin. The term "fantasia" is still used today to refer to 'a piece of music with no fixed form, or one consisting of tunes that many people know or recognise' and the word "fantasy" is

defined as ‘the activity of imagining things’.<sup>938</sup> References can also be found in recent popular culture, such as by Disney in their 1940 and then 2000 collections of animated short films set to widely known pieces of western classical music.<sup>939</sup> The term fantasy retains its connotations of creativity of the imagination as it is also used to describe genres in literature, art, films and television series to describe stories that include otherworldly imaginary elements. This also extends to play such as computer games and fantasy sport leagues.<sup>940</sup> Recent musical compositions entitled fantasia often reference its earlier forms which Busoni’s *Fantasia contrappuntistica* (1910), Tippett’s *Fantasia concertante on a theme of Corelli* (1953) and more recently Margaretha Christina Jong’s *Fantasia on ‘All People That on Earth Do Dwell’* (2019) exemplify.<sup>941</sup> Composers such as Schoenberg, Britten and Vaughan Williams have also written well-known fantasias. Very recent compositions which play with the genre’s associations with freedom include James Lee III’s *Fantasia Ritmica* (2014) and Juri Seo’s *Fantasia* for sextet (2018).<sup>942</sup> Some bands have sought to keep elements of the baroque fantasia through fusion music, such as Le Orfanelle della Pietà’s *O’stravaganza*.<sup>943</sup> Aided by this research, modern classical performers now also have the option to include improvised fantasias in their own performances, continuing this legacy further. Associations with pedagogy can also be found such as in the music school for young children based in West Sussex called “Fantasia” and the London based “Fantasia Orchestra” for young professionals.<sup>944</sup>

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<sup>938</sup> Cambridge Dictionary, ‘Fantasia,’ *Cambridge Dictionary*, 2022, accessed July 29, 2022, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/fantasia>. And Cambridge Dictionary, ‘Fantasy,’ *Cambridge Dictionary*, 2022, accessed July 29, 2022, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/fantasy>.

<sup>939</sup> These films used well-known classical works as inspiration to create short animated fantasy stories set to these pieces of music often showing animals acting as humans. *Fantasia*, directed by Joe Grant and Dick Huemer (Disney, 1940), film. And *Fantasia*, directed by Don Hahn (Disney, 2000), film.

<sup>940</sup> The fantasy football league is a popular pastime where players can select real players to form their own imaginary team and gain points alongside the live football leagues. Premier League, ‘Home,’ *Fantasy Premier League*, 2023, accessed August 1, 2023, <https://fantasy.premierleague.com/>. Many video games contain fantasy characters such as mythical beasts and allow the imaginary realisation of adventures with superhero powers. IMDB, ‘Top 50 Fantasy Video Games,’ *IMDB*, 2023, accessed August 1, 2023, [https://www.imdb.com/search/title/?title\\_type=video\\_game&genres=fantasy](https://www.imdb.com/search/title/?title_type=video_game&genres=fantasy).

<sup>941</sup> Ferruccio Busoni, *Fantasia contrappuntistica* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1910). And Michael Tippett, *Fantasia concertante on a theme of Corelli* (London: Schott Music, 1953). And Margaretha Christina Jong, *Fantasia on ‘All People That on Earth Do Dwell’* (New York: Bärenreiter, 2019).

<sup>942</sup> James Lee III, *Fantasia Ritmica* (Verona, US: Subito Music, 2014). And Juri Seo, *Fantasia* (online: self-published, 2018).

<sup>943</sup> Le Organelle della Pietà, ‘O’stravaganza (After Vivaldi’s Sinfonia, RV 168),’ YouTube video, posted by ‘Le Organelle della Pietà’, 2001, accessed June 21, 2022, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xyvlqp28LnM&list=OLAK5uy\\_mUWmkRBoTix6kiPH1YbuwB9zWOuUdceCI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xyvlqp28LnM&list=OLAK5uy_mUWmkRBoTix6kiPH1YbuwB9zWOuUdceCI).

<sup>944</sup> Fantasia music school, ‘Fantasia music school,’ *Fantasia music school*, 2022, accessed July 29, 2022, <http://www.fantasiamusicschool.co.uk/>. And Fantasia Orchestra, ‘About,’ *Fantasia Orchestra*, 2022, accessed July 29, 2022, <https://www.fantasiaorchestra.com/>.

The methodology of this PhD could be easily applied to different time periods or types of improvisation, for other instruments and for different contexts. Beyond the realms of the baroque, improvisatory practices from all over can become realistic options for performers through applying the same process, simply changing the stylistic schemata and adapting the games. Indeed, this methodology of research is in fact a methodology of practice. Condensing these principles while practising through giving space to explicit and tacit knowledge retention and applying these in musical creation has the potential to be an efficient and enjoyable approach to musical practice, both within improvisation and in other forms of music-making. Balancing engineering and intuition is the key to successful improvisations, dancing between active control and intuitive trust to create in the moment. Likewise, this methodology could be applied to other forms of improvisation, branching out to other art forms such as dance. It would also be interesting to consider the possibilities of fusion improvisation, using these techniques but moving away from a strict stylistic outlook, as well as surveying the opinions and experiences of modern audiences.

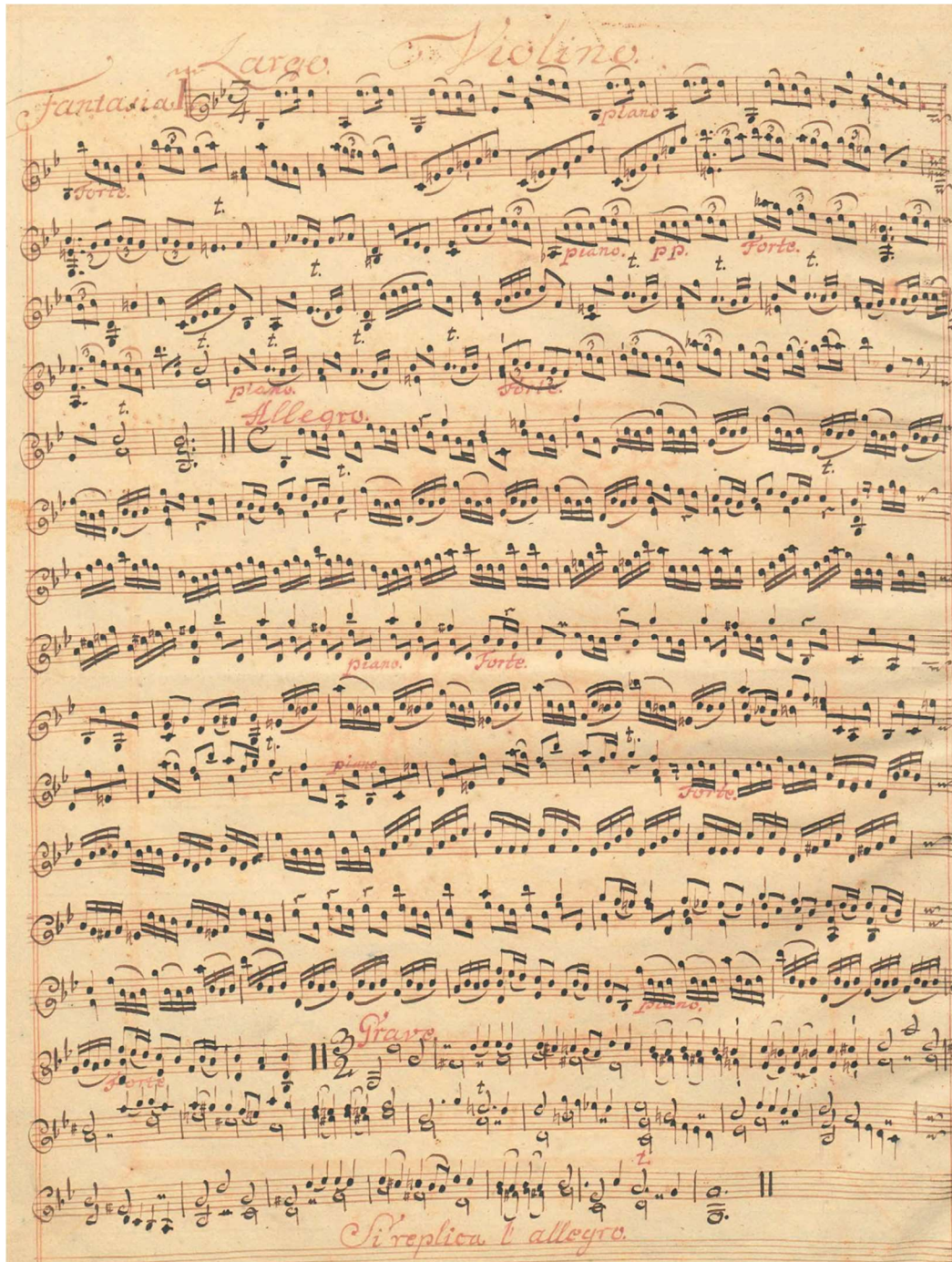
Moving from historical sources to the sounds and activities of the present day requires a leap of confidence, creative interpretation, a willingness to explore and experiment and a sense of acceptance in the results. Without belief that the product will be enough, improvisation becomes incredibly difficult; it requires a leap of faith. The performer must trust their inner abilities, their ideas, planning and technical execution. Important most of all, however, is the ability to constantly reinvent, to take and develop the unexpected with joy as this is the essence of improvisation. While a skill rarely trained in the modern classical musician, it is an incredibly valuable asset for all; we do this in life, in speech, and hopefully again in baroque music, for through these moments, we experience the spirit of fantasy, without which there would be no music at all...

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Sheet Music

Recital 1: Telemann's fantasy: The genius behind the music

Telemann *Fantasia I* in Bb major<sup>945</sup>



<sup>945</sup> G.P. Telemann, *12 Sonaten für Violine und Basso continuo; 12 Fantasien für Violine* (manuscript, 1734), accessed March 3, 2021, <https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht/?PPN=PPN738088579>.



This image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for Telemann's *Fantasia III* in F minor. The score is written on aged, yellowed paper and consists of three systems of staves. The first system is marked *Adagio Violino* in red ink. The second system is marked *Presto* in red ink. The third system is marked *Grave Vinace* in red ink. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat signs.

<sup>946</sup> Ibid.



The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for a violin part. At the top, the word "Violino" is written in a large, elegant cursive script. Below it, the title "Fantasia XII" is written in a smaller, similar script, followed by the tempo marking "Moderato". The music is written on 18 staves, with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 2/4 time signature. The notation includes various rhythmic values, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and rests. There are several dynamic markings, including "p" (piano) and "f" (forte). The score concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots. In the lower part of the page, the tempo marking "Presto" is written in red ink, indicating a change in tempo for the final section of the piece.

<sup>947</sup> Ibid.



# Fantasia

Vilsmayr

Allegro

4

8

12

15

18

Adagio

Matteis senior *Minuetto con sua Divisione* (from Ayres book 4, suite in A minor)<sup>948</sup>

20 *Minuetto con sua Divisione*

*allegro*

Dopo questa divisione, il Basso sminuito si deve toccar con l'Aria semplice da capo

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a minuet. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff is the treble clef, and the second is the bass clef. The tempo is marked 'allegro'. The music is in 3/4 time and features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots. Below the staves, there is a handwritten instruction in Italian: 'Dopo questa divisione, il Basso sminuito si deve toccar con l'Aria semplice da capo'.

Matteis senior *Gavotta* (from Ayres book 1, suite in A minor)<sup>949</sup>

18. *Gavotta.*

*Presto*

*Sminuita*

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a gavotta. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff is the treble clef, and the second is the bass clef. The tempo is marked 'Presto'. The music is in 3/4 time and features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots. Below the staves, there is a handwritten instruction in Italian: 'Sminuita'.

<sup>948</sup> Nicola Matteis, *Other ayres and pieces the fourth part* (London, 1685).

<sup>949</sup> *Ibid.*

## John Come Kiss Me Kumin Variations

Nina Kumin

6

11

16

22

27

32

37

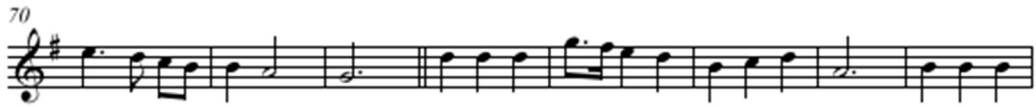
43

47

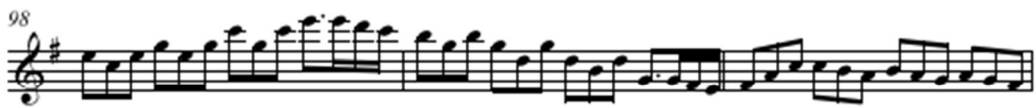
Sarabande



## Menuet



## Gigue



109



111



113



115



117



The image displays five staves of musical notation in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation is as follows:

- Staff 1 (Measures 109-112):** Measure 109 begins with a quarter rest followed by a quarter note G4. Measures 110-111 contain eighth-note patterns, and measure 112 ends with a double bar line.
- Staff 2 (Measures 111-112):** Measure 111 continues the eighth-note pattern from the previous staff. Measure 112 concludes with a quarter note G4 and a double bar line.
- Staff 3 (Measures 113-114):** Measures 113-114 feature a complex eighth-note pattern with many beamed notes.
- Staff 4 (Measures 115-116):** Measures 115-116 continue the complex eighth-note pattern from the previous staff.
- Staff 5 (Measures 117-118):** Measure 117 continues the eighth-note pattern. Measure 118 ends with a quarter note G4 and a double bar line.

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Ground" by John Eccles. It consists of seven systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The score begins with a repeat sign in the first system. The right hand (treble clef) features a continuous eighth-note pattern, while the left hand (bass clef) provides a steady accompaniment of quarter notes. The piece concludes with a first ending (marked "1.") and a second ending (marked "2.") leading to a final cadence.

<sup>950</sup> John Eccles and Charles Babel arr, *Ground* (London: Grant Colburn, c. 1700).

## Fantasia in D minor in the style of Telemann

Nina Kümin

Largo



2

30

34

Allegro

39

44

49

54

Grave

61

68

74

Allegro

81

*p*





## Fantasia in C minor in the style of Telemann

Nina Kümin

Allegro



2

35

38

44

Vivace

49

59

68

Presto

74

80

86

91

95

Musical staff 95-100: Treble clef, key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb), 2/4 time signature. Measures 95-100. Measure 95: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Measure 96: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Measure 97: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Measure 98: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Measure 99: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Measure 100: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4.

100

Musical staff 100-105: Treble clef, key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb), 2/4 time signature. Measures 100-105. Measure 100: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Measure 101: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Measure 102: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Measure 103: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Measure 104: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Measure 105: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Dynamics: *p* (piano) starting at measure 100.

105

Musical staff 105-110: Treble clef, key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb), 2/4 time signature. Measures 105-110. Measure 105: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Measure 106: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Measure 107: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Measure 108: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Measure 109: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Measure 110: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4.

110

Musical staff 110-113: Treble clef, key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb), 2/4 time signature. Measures 110-113. Measure 110: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Measure 111: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Measure 112: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Measure 113: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Dynamics: *p* (piano) starting at measure 110.

113

Musical staff 113-118: Treble clef, key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb), 2/4 time signature. Measures 113-118. Measure 113: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Measure 114: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Measure 115: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Measure 116: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Measure 117: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Measure 118: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4. Ends with a double bar line.

## Fantasia in A major in the style of Telemann

Nina Kümin

Largo

6

12 *p*

18

24 *Allegro*

30

33 *p*

36

2

39



42



45



47



50



53



56



Grave

60



65



70



Gigue

76

Musical staff 76: Treble clef, key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), starting with a repeat sign. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes.

82

Musical staff 82: Treble clef, key signature of two sharps. The melody includes eighth notes, quarter notes, and a repeat sign.

88

Musical staff 88: Treble clef, key signature of two sharps. The melody includes quarter notes, eighth notes, and a repeat sign.

93

Musical staff 93: Treble clef, key signature of two sharps. The melody includes quarter notes, eighth notes, and ends with a double bar line.

Recital 2: A baroque fantasy: Form and freedom in Matteis

Matteis Jr *Fantasia* in C minor 'Con discretione'<sup>951</sup>



<sup>951</sup> Nicola Matteis, *Fantasia in C minor and Alia Fantasia* (Dresden: Manuscript, c.1720). Accessed: IMSLP, '2 Fantasias for violin solo,' *IMSLP*, 2022, accessed May 25, 2022, [https://imslp.org/wiki/2\\_Fantasias\\_for\\_Violin\\_solo\\_\(Matteis\\_Jr.%2C\\_Nicola\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/2_Fantasias_for_Violin_solo_(Matteis_Jr.%2C_Nicola)).



Matteis Sr *Fantasia* in Bb major<sup>952</sup>

38. *Fantasia.* Violino solo

39

<sup>952</sup> Nicola Matteis, 'Fantasia (in Bb),' *Ayres for the violin* book 2 (Unidentified publisher, c. 1676). Accessed: IMSLP, 'Ayres for the violin,' *IMSLP*, 2022, accessed May 25, 2022, [https://imslp.org/wiki/Ayres\\_for\\_the\\_Violin\\_\(Matteis,\\_Nicola\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Ayres_for_the_Violin_(Matteis,_Nicola)).

48. *Passaggio rotto*

Positione di vuota.

49.

Andamento Veloce

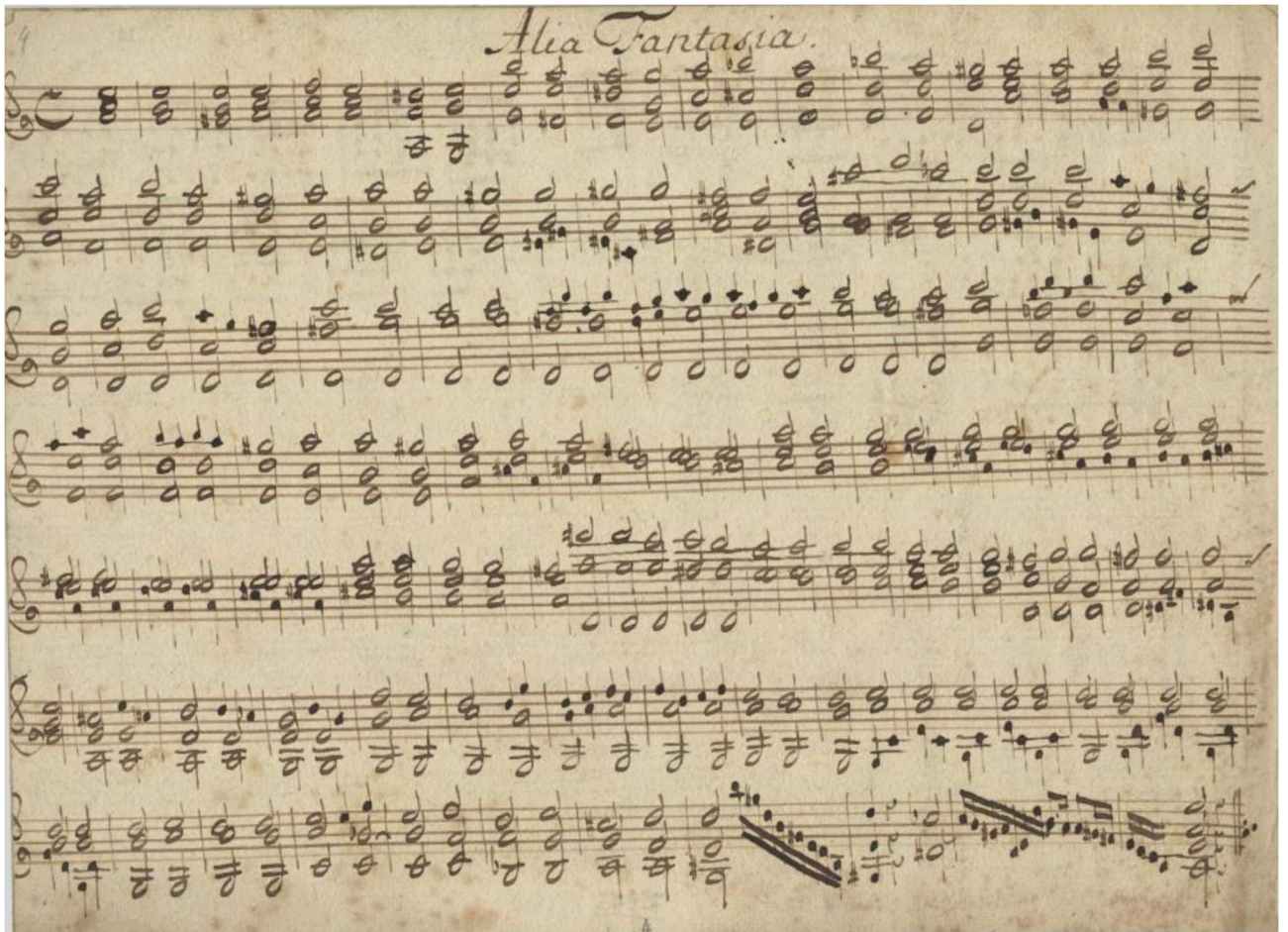
50. fantasia.

Violino Solo senza basso

<sup>953</sup> Nicola Matteis, 'Passaggio Rotto,' *Ayres for the violin book 2* (Unidentified publisher, c.1676). Accessed: IMSLP. 'Ayres for the violin.'

51

The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation, numbered 51 in the top right corner. It consists of four staves of music. The first three staves are written in treble clef, and the fourth staff is written in bass clef. The notation is dense, featuring a variety of note values including eighth, sixteenth, and thirty-second notes, as well as rests and dynamic markings such as 'p' (piano) and 'f' (forte). The music appears to be a complex piece, possibly a study or a short composition, with intricate rhythmic patterns and melodic lines. The handwriting is clear and legible, typical of a professional or advanced student composer.



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<sup>954</sup> Nicola Matteis, *Fantasia in C minor and Alia Fantasia*.

# Fantasia in A minor in the style of Matteis Junior

Nina Kümin

4

7

10

12

14

17

21

2  
27

Musical staff 1: Treble clef, key signature of two flats. Measures 27-32. Measure 27: G4, Bb4, D5. Measure 28: G4, Bb4, D5. Measure 29: G4, Bb4, D5. Measure 30: G4, Bb4, D5. Measure 31: G4, Bb4, D5. Measure 32: G4, Bb4, D5.

33

Musical staff 2: Treble clef, key signature of two flats. Measures 33-37. Measure 33: G4, Bb4, D5. Measure 34: G4, Bb4, D5. Measure 35: G4, Bb4, D5. Measure 36: G4, Bb4, D5. Measure 37: G4, Bb4, D5.

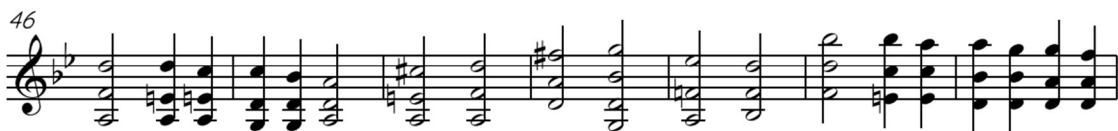
38

Musical staff 3: Treble clef, key signature of two flats. Measures 38-43. Measure 38: G4, Bb4, D5. Measure 39: G4, Bb4, D5. Measure 40: G4, Bb4, D5. Measure 41: G4, Bb4, D5. Measure 42: G4, Bb4, D5. Measure 43: G4, Bb4, D5.



# Fantasia in the style of Matteis Junior's *Alia Fantasia*

Nina Kümin



2





## Fantasia in D minor in the style of Matteis Sr and Jr

Nina Kümin

4

7

10

13

16

20

24

28

32



Musical staff 32-35: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (B-flat), 7/8 time signature. The staff contains four measures of music. The first measure starts with a 7/8 time signature. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some chords. The key signature changes to two flats (B-flat and E-flat) in the second measure.

36



Musical staff 36-39: Treble clef, key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The staff contains four measures of music. The melody continues with eighth and sixteenth notes and chords.

40



Musical staff 40-43: Treble clef, key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The staff contains four measures of music. The melody continues with eighth and sixteenth notes and chords.

44



Musical staff 44-47: Treble clef, key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The staff contains four measures of music. The melody continues with eighth and sixteenth notes and chords.

48



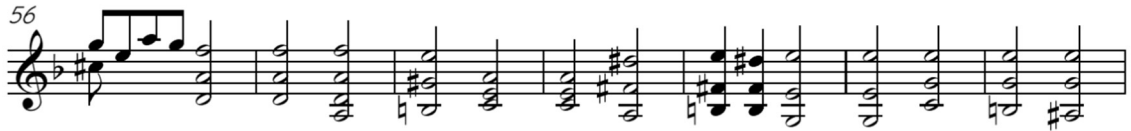
Musical staff 48-51: Treble clef, key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The staff contains four measures of music. The melody continues with eighth and sixteenth notes and chords.

52



Musical staff 52-55: Treble clef, key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The staff contains four measures of music. The melody continues with eighth and sixteenth notes and chords.

56



Musical staff 56-62: Treble clef, key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The staff contains seven measures of music. The melody continues with eighth and sixteenth notes and chords.

63



Musical staff 63-69: Treble clef, key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The staff contains seven measures of music. The melody continues with eighth and sixteenth notes and chords.

70



Musical staff 70-76: Treble clef, key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The staff contains seven measures of music. The melody continues with eighth and sixteenth notes and chords.

77



84



88



## **Appendix 2: Programmes**

Recital 1: Telemann's fantasy: The genius behind the music

**YORK**  
EARLY MUSIC  
CHRISTMAS  
FESTIVAL  
**2022**

**Nina Kümin**  
*baroque violin*

***Telemann's Fantasy:  
The genius behind the music***

**National Centre for Early Music**  
**Friday 9 December 12.30pm**

**Nina Kümin** *baroque violin*

**Telemann's Fantasy: The genius behind the music**

XII Fantasie per il violino senza basso (1735)      **Georg Philipp Telemann**  
1681–1767

Fantasia I in B flat major

*Largo*  
*Allegro*  
*Grave*  
*Allegro*

Fantasia III in F minor

*Adagio*  
*Presto*  
*Grave*  
*Vivace*

Fantasia XII in A minor

*Moderato*  
*Vivace*  
*Presto*

Artificiosus Conventus pro Camera, Distributus  
Sex Partes, seu Partias à Violino Solo Con Basso  
Belle imitante (c.1715)      **Johann Joseph Vilsmaÿr**  
1663–1722

Partita II

IV. *Fantasia: Allegro*

Ayrs for the Violin (c.1676–1685)      **Nicola Matteis**  
(unaccompanied arrangements with additional  
divisions)      c.1650–1713

Book 4: Suite in A minor (c.1685)

II. *Minuetto con sua divisione*

Book I: Suite in A minor (c.1676)

V. *Gavotta*

John come kiss me	<b>Traditional</b>
i. Composed variations by Nina Kümin	Version taken from
ii. Improvised variations	<b>John Playford (1623–1686/7)</b>
	<i>The Division Violin</i> , 1684
Suite from <i>The Mad Lover</i> (c.1703/4)	<b>John Eccles</b>
i. <i>Ground. Aire V</i>	c.1668–1735
(with improvised variations)	
Three Fantasias in the style of Georg Philipp Telemann	<b>Nina Kümin</b>
	b.1998
1. Fantasia in the style of Telemann in D minor	
<i>Largo</i>	
<i>Allegro</i>	
<i>Grave</i>	
<i>Allegro</i>	
2. Fantasia in the style of Telemann in C minor	
<i>Allegro</i>	
<i>Vivace</i>	
<i>Presto</i>	
3. Fantasia in the style of Telemann in A major	
<i>Largo</i>	
<i>Allegro</i>	
<i>Grave</i>	
<i>Gigue</i>	
Improvised Fantasia taking inspiration from Telemann	<b>Nina Kümin</b>

Telemann's Fantasias remain widely appreciated and are representative of a larger composition tradition. While a popular form throughout the Baroque, fantasias were also often improvised. During this period (c.1600–1750), musicians were celebrated improvisers, creating music in the moment of performance. Without written records as such for compositions, this practice would seem to be lost to history and is certainly uncommon in current western classical music performance. However, through research and experimentation with composed music alongside writings from this time, a clearer picture can be built, to the extent that we can recreate similar improvisations today. This is the premise for my PhD research. This programme shows not only the results of this research through live Baroque-

style improvisations but also reveals the process behind these, demonstrating the accessibility and practicality of reviving classical improvisation further. Such performances build a clearer understanding and appreciation of the Baroque musical soundscape and offer musicians and listeners exciting and unique live concert experiences. As the form of music with the most compositional freedom, 'bound to nothing' (Kircher 1650) and in which 'form (was) subservient to fancy' (Morley 1597), the unaccompanied fantasia, therefore, offers a fascinating glimpse into the Baroque musical imagination and forms the focus for this recital, questioning how musicians created these fantasias and where their inspiration came from.

Three representative examples of Telemann's solo violin Fantasias (numbers 1, 3 and 12) open the programme. Following these, a movement that Vilsmaÿr titled 'Fantasia' from his second partita for solo violin is isolated to show the use of fantasia within a larger structure. These showcase the composed fantasia. The recital then goes behind the scenes to show methods to create and even improvise such fantasias. Two dances by Matteis follow and are treated with fantasy to demonstrate a useful improvisation exercise: that of adding divisions. This art was expanded to the practice of improvising variations; I next present composed and improvised variations on the traditional tune *John Come Kiss Me*. Improvisers can then move on to adding purely improvised variations to other well-known tunes which I demonstrate with John Eccles' *Mad Lover*, a hauntingly beautiful melody over a popular repeating ground bass. Many of Telemann's Fantasias contain a lyrical adagio as well as livelier dance movements, making these useful stylistic exercises.

Analysis of Baroque composed fantasias reveals several characteristic guidelines that can be employed by musicians to create a similar effect. Armed with this knowledge and the skills of variation, improvisers can tackle larger improvisations. Beginning again with the luxury of time afforded by composition, I will play three fantasias following these guidelines in the style of Telemann. The Fantasias in D minor and A major follow Telemann's style quite closely, while the middle example in C minor takes this as inspiration to explore influence from other Baroque idioms.

The finale to this programme features a fully improvised fantasia in the style of Telemann. This is structured through a specially created game called 'Lost in Hamburg' to involve the audience in the improvisation process. Audience members are invited to choose certain rhythms, characters and even motives to feel a sense of creative agency but crucially to give an insight into how it feels for an improviser, giving a flavour of its decision-making process. Thus, this recital takes the audience



on a journey from sources to live improvisation today, revealing the genius processes behind the music we all know and love and celebrating one of the Baroque's most valued skills: improvisation.

This concert is the first of three exploring the improvised fantasia; see the next at the National Centre for Early Music on Sunday 14 May 2023!

© Nina Kümin

Nina Kümin studied music at the Birmingham Junior Conservatoire before completing a bachelor's degree at the University of Durham and a master's degree at the University of Cambridge. She is now a Sir Jack Lyons Scholar at the University of York where she is completing her PhD in music performance. Nina performs, teaches and researches Baroque improvisation. She performs professionally with ensembles including the Yorkshire Baroque Soloists, 18th Century Sinfonia, Swaledale Festival Baroque Orchestra and High Wire Baroque as well as a soloist. Her solo Baroque improvisations were featured in the 2022 Swaledale Festival. Nina teaches peripatetic violin and piano in the York area, leads the NCEM and York Music Hub's youth Baroque ensemble, Minster Minstrels, and has taught on Helicon's international summer school of Baroque improvisation in Italy. She has presented her research on Baroque improvisation at international conferences such as *Improvisation in Historical Styles: Performance, Pedagogy and Research*, and at the *Classical Music Futures Symposium* as well as in seminar series at Durham and York universities, with each presentation including an improvised performance. She teaches undergraduate and postgraduate music modules at the University of York and recent publications include for the Northern Early Modern Network, *Middling Cultures* and Durham University.

[facebook.com/NinaKuminViolinist](https://facebook.com/NinaKuminViolinist)



YORK  
EARLY MUSIC  
CHRISTMAS  
FESTIVAL  
2022

Box Office 01904 658338 | [ncem.co.uk](http://ncem.co.uk)

**Friday 9 December**

NCEM, St Margaret's Church 7.00pm

**Ensemble Augelletti** *Pick a Card!*

**Saturday 10 & Saturday 17 December**

NCEM, St Margaret's Church 1.00pm

**Bojan Čičić** J.S. Bach: *Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin*

Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall, University of York 7.00pm

**Yorkshire Bach Choir & Yorkshire Baroque Soloists**

Handel: *Brockes Passion*

**Sunday 11 December**

NCEM, St Margaret's Church 5.00pm

**Spiritato & The Marian Consort** *Inspiring Bach*

**Monday 12 December**

NCEM, St Margaret's Church 7.30pm

**Ensemble Molière** *Good Soup*

**Thursday 15 December**

NCEM, St Margaret's Church 6.30pm

**The Orlando Consort** *'Adieu'*

**Friday 16 December**

NCEM, St Margaret's Church 6.30pm

**Solomon's Knot**

Johann Kuhnau: *Christmas Cantata*

**YORK EARLY MUSIC CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL** is directed by Delma Tomlin MBE and administered by the National Centre for Early Music through the York Early Music Foundation (registered charity number 1068331)

National Centre for Early Music  
St Margaret's Church  
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Recital 2: A baroque fantasy: Form and freedom in Matteis

**Nina Kümin**

Baroque Violin

**A Baroque Fantasy: Form  
and Freedom in Matteis**

**National Centre for Early Music**

**Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> May 10:30am**

**Nina Kümin** *Baroque Violin*

**A Baroque Fantasy: Form and Freedom in Matteis**

1. Fantasia in C minor *Con discretione* **Nicola Matteis Jr**  
c.1670-1737
2. Sonata in Bb Major, Ayres Book 2 **Nicola Matteis**  
1650-1714
  - I. Fantasia
3. Suite in A minor, Ayres Book 2
  - III. Passaggio Rotto
  - IV. Fantasia
4. Alia Fantasia **Nicola Matteis Jr**  
c.1670-1737
5. Three fantasias in the style of Matteis **Nina Kümin**
  - Fantasia in A minor
  - Fantasia in the style of Matteis' Alia Fantasia
  - Fantasia in D minor
6. Games: Three improvised fantasias in the style of Matteis'
  - Fantasia con discretione
  - Alia Fantasia
  - Contrapuntal
7. **Freely Improvised** Baroque Fantasia

Nicola Matteis (1650-1714) was one of the most prolific baroque composers of violin fantasias. The purpose of these pieces was two-fold: to move the listener but also to celebrate technical and creative virtuosity. Matteis' emotive compositions are no exception. To show the great variety afforded by this style, this programme opens with a selection of fantasias for the violin by Matteis and his son.

Fantasias were, however, actually often improvised. Nina's PhD research seeks to bring this practice back, investigating ways to improvise baroque-style fantasias on the violin. As such, the remainder of this recital shows her research process and results. Analysis of contemporary fantasias provides insights into stylistic musical features to use. As improvisation requires the instant implementation of ideas, first composing pieces in the style allows much needed time to explore and embed the concepts. The three compositions which follow in this programme demonstrate this part of the process.

Following these, Nina will improvise three short fantasias in the style of Matteis and his son, taking inspiration from his compositions heard at the start. To help with this, the audience will be invited to play games through which they can contribute to the improvisations. Using games reveals some of the decision-making process behind historical improvisation and encourages an exploratory mindset for performers, making this kind of improvisation accessible. As a finale, Nina will improvise a free fantasia in the style of the baroque, taking inspiration from Matteis and other composers. As a reference to the other most prolific composer of baroque violin fantasias, those of you who attended Nina's first PhD recital in December might also hear some of Telemann's influence here.

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Nina Kumin studied music at the Birmingham Junior Conservatoire before completing a bachelor's degree at the University of Durham and a master's degree at the University of Cambridge. She is now a Sir Jack Lyons Scholar at the University of York where she is completing her PhD in music performance. Nina performs, teaches and researches Baroque improvisation.

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## **Appendix 3:** A pedagogical guide for performers





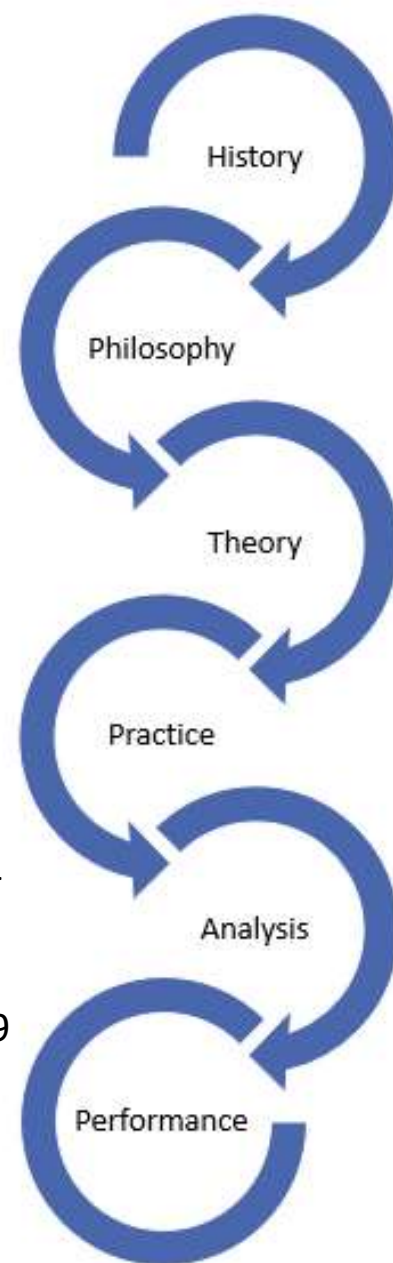
# **How to improvise a baroque fantasia**

**A practice companion for violinists**

Nina Kümin

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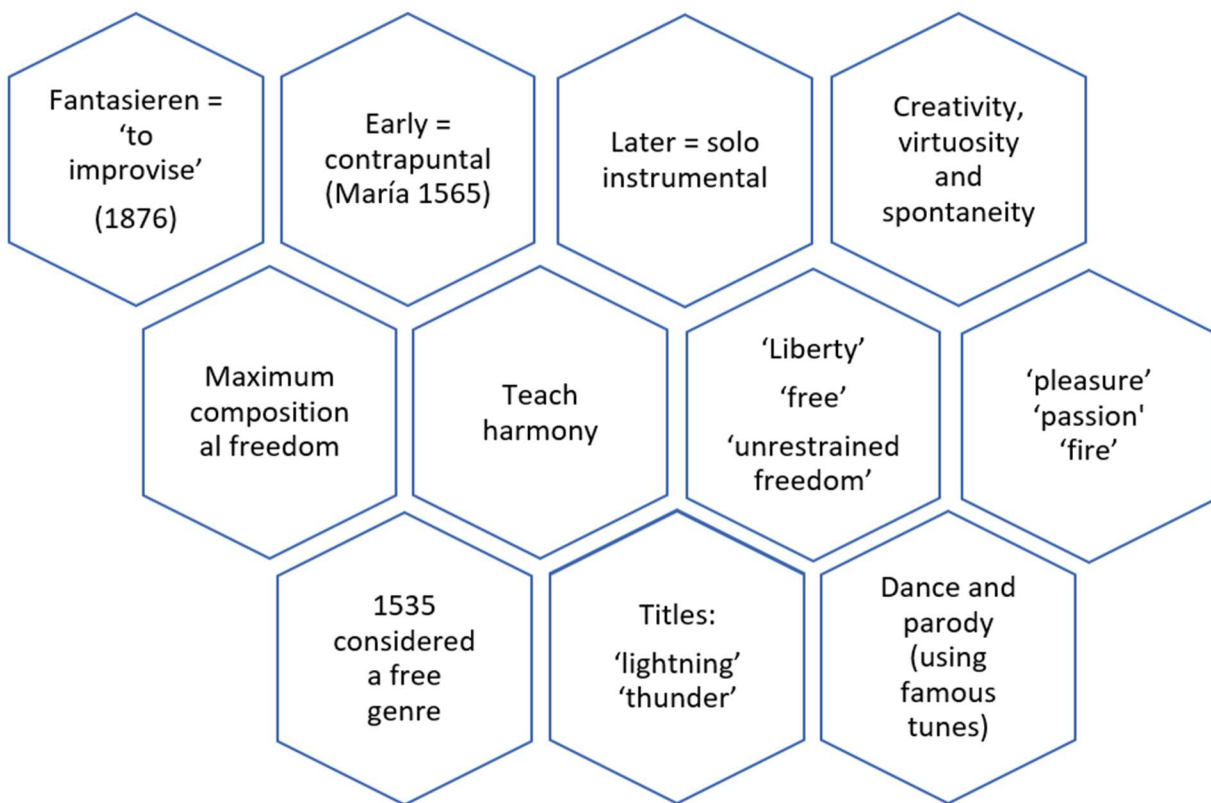


# The baroque fantasia:

“The most principall and chiefest kind of musicke which is made without a dittie is the fantasie .... In this may more art be shewn than in any other musicke.”

(Thomas Morley, 1597)

What **historical treatises** say about the fantasia:



Most importantly.... Fantasias were often **IMPROVISED**:

- Rousseau (1779): a fantasia 'differs from the rest only that it is invented in its execution and that it has no longer existence as soon as it [is] finished'
- Kollmann (1796): 'the greatest players' 'extemporised fantasies'

**Ward's definition (late 1500s):**

*Fantasia:*

'a relatively free, monothematic or polythematic, more or less polyphonic, two or more voiced, sometimes highly ornamented or toccata-like music of greatly varying length occasionally based on borrowed music (parody) but more often newly invented'

**Did you know?**

Women were also avid improvisers during the early modern period in theatre, music and dance. Élisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre, for instance, improvised fantasias at the harpsichord that lasted over half an hour!



Image sourced: mixtur.ch

**Fantasy as a concept:**

The word *fantasy* was also used in art, theatre, literature and philosophy with similar connotations of freedom and imagination.

Building on research into improvising fantasias on the keyboard, this guide offers original and specific guidance for the violin.

The most prolific baroque composers of fantasias for solo violin:

**Telemann** (1681-1767)



**Matteis** (senior 1650-1713 pictured, and junior 1690-1749)



Images sourced: Wikipedia.org



## Listen:

Listen to fantasias by Ward, Jenkins, Muncy and Marais, for instance, on YouTube or Spotify.

What common features can you spot? How would you describe this kind of music?

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Do you know any other fantasias? Listen to these and note down any thoughts on style and character.

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Choose a favourite early baroque composer and see if they have composed any fantasias. Listen to these and note down any thoughts on style and character.

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Now, likewise, listen on YouTube or Spotify to fantasias by **Telemann** and **Matteis** (senior and junior).



What are your initial reactions? How do these differ from the earlier fantasias? Are there any violinistic techniques on display?

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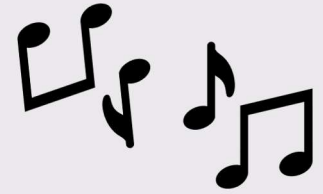
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# Improvisation:

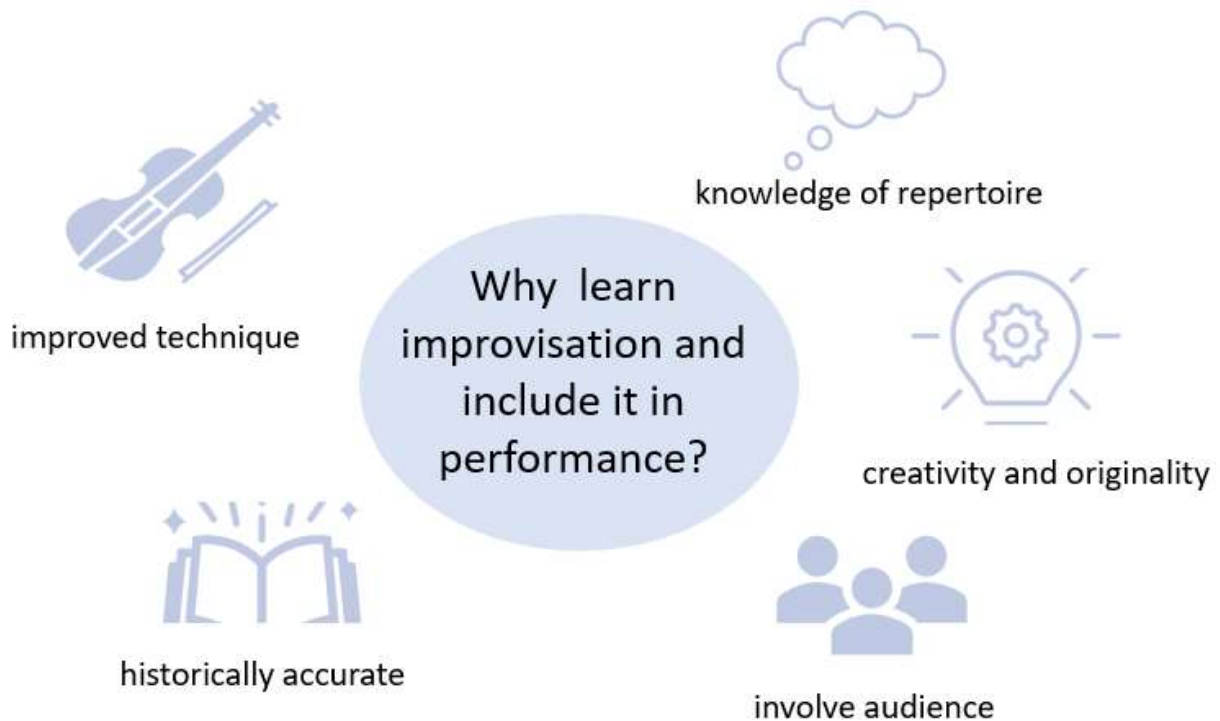
What is improvisation?



The direct execution of an idea

A series of quick-fire conscious and subconscious decisions

These are built from explicit knowledge stored in our **brain** (that we can list such as style and technique) and knowledge in our **bodies** (how things feel from previous playing experiences). Both of these areas can be trained and we need both kinds of knowledge for successful improvisations. The more of these decisions that can become subconscious, the longer, more varied and complex improvisations we can create.



## Which reasons resonate with you?

List them and any others you can think of below. Perhaps bookmark this page so you can come back to your motivations whenever you like throughout the process.

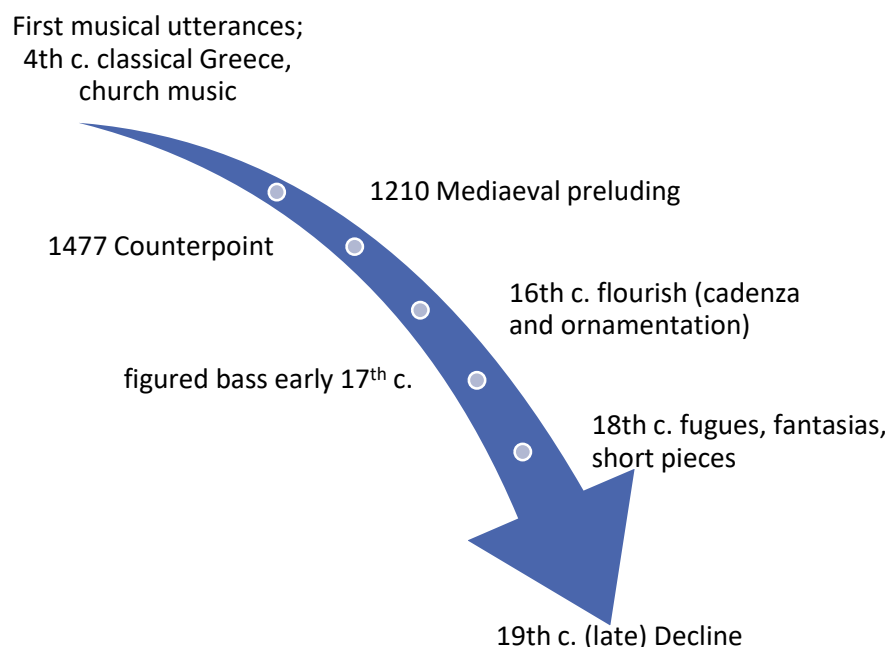
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## Did you know?

Improvisation has been common throughout all western classical music...



This rough timeline shows key time points with evidence for improvisation. All the types of improvisation listed above continued, however, although in steady decline. Even Verdi's generation expected improvised cadenzas and variations remained popular such as those by Liszt.

### Improvisation today:

We still improvise in every live performance, though this is usually through the dynamic or tempo fluctuations rather than notes or large-scale sections. To what extent do you improvise and why?

# Larger questions...

Who can improvise? Who has the right to make their own music?



We all improvise every day, through speech. We draw on a bank of words we know and thread them together to create new sentences without even thinking about it. Musical improvisation is the same.

## Inspiring Artists



**Keyboards:** William Porter, Hans Davidson, Douglas Lowry, Rudolf Lutz, Gabriela Montero, Robert Levin, Eric Barnhill and William Goldstein



**Baroque Violin:** Davide Monti and Nina Kümin



**Fusion:** Django Reinhardt, Eddie South and Stéphane Grapelli, Steve Kuhn trio



### Courses:

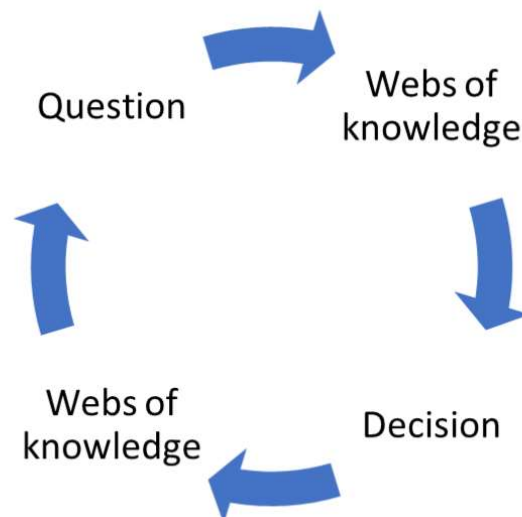
Some currently regularly occurring examples for historical Improvisation are:

- Helicon International Summer School of Improvisation: <https://helicon.it/>
- The Scroll Ensemble: <https://www.youtube.com/@TheScrollEnsemble>
- Improv Planet: <https://improvplanet.thinkific.com/>

# How to improvise:

During improvisation, this is broadly the processing that takes place:

1. **Question**
  - a. Which character would I like to create?
2. **Webs of knowledge** (use our different kinds of knowledge to answer this)
  - a. Brain: which keys/ rhythms/ techniques did they use in the baroque to signal different characters?
  - b. Body: which keys/ rhythms/ techniques am I comfortable with?
3. **Decision**
  - a. I will create a sombre mood
4. **Webs of knowledge** (use our different kinds of knowledge to create this)
  - a. Brain: A minor key would serve this well
  - b. Body: These intervals work well on my instrument and can be produced in the moment, where to play in the bow etc.
5. **Repeat**



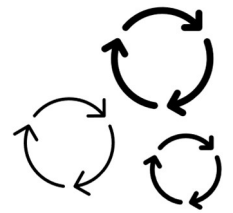
We therefore need to increase our knowledge in both our brains and our bodies which this guide helps with.

## How do we know which questions to ask?

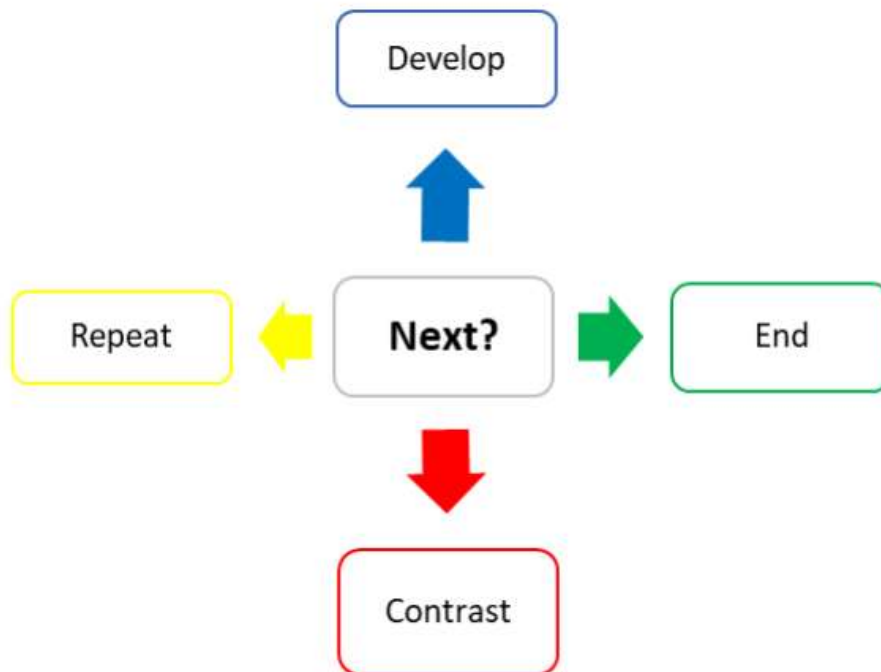


Use your **reactions**. When we improvise, we are at once the creator, performer and listener. We have reactions to the emotional, technical, physical and rational elements of our product. As we play, there is a constant evaluation taking place. Use this to determine what to ask next.

# How to keep improvisations going:



At any one time we have 4 options of how to proceed:



Choose one of the 4 based on your **reactions**. This can be done at every stage.

## Aims and Expectations:

Just as with learning your instrument, learning to improvise takes time and practice. Remember that the hallmarks of a successful improvisation are **creativity** and **spontaneity**, not technical perfection.

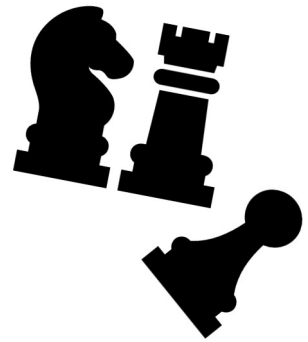
### Be patient with yourself.

Often it is the elements that did not go exactly to plan that create the most exciting inspirations for what to do next. Practice, both theoretical and physical, develops both the brain and the body's knowledge and is advantageous at any level.



# Improvisation Games

To encourage **EXPERIMENTATION**, relieve pressure of technical perfection and to make the process fun and rewarding, games are a great way to practice improvisation. See if you can use the development strategies discussed on the previous page to extend your improvisations in these games...



**“Creativity is intelligence  
having fun!”**

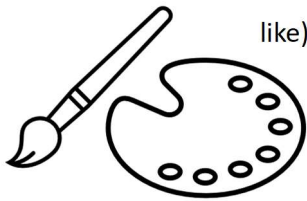
*(Einstein)*



## Feel the Beat

Begin by improvising different simple rhythms over a steady pulse (e.g. using a metronome). Start by clapping one bar at a time, then rest for a bar etc. Then, when confidence increases, clap for as long as you can. Next, try the same exercise on one note on your instrument. Once comfortable, vary the notes within small intervals like a 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup>. Finally, remove the metronome and improvise freely, using different rhythms and no interval restrictions but taking inspiration from what you have improvised before.

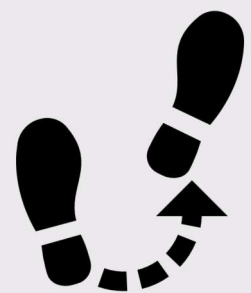
## Art Attack:



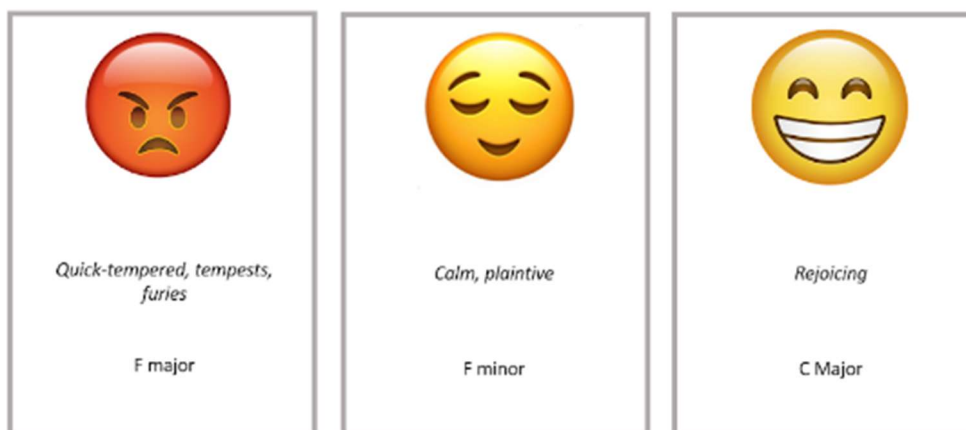
An artist and player improvise together, one creating a piece of artwork (as abstract as they like) and the other providing music. Think about phrase shapes, tone colours and varied note lengths or even bow strokes if a violinist. For an example see: <https://youtu.be/Mxg1Lp8eO-0>.

## Dance Stories:

A story is written, improvised or chosen and music and dance are improvised to a reading of it. This again encourages improvisers to explore different shapes, emotions and rhetoric in their playing. For an example see: [https://youtu.be/kHRSY\\_zHLC0](https://youtu.be/kHRSY_zHLC0).

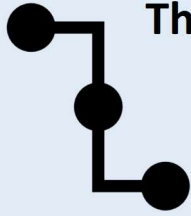


## Emoji Top Trumps:



Take inspiration from the words in early modern treatises used to describe affects along with the corresponding key they list. Cards can be shuffled and laid out to signify different sections. Make some more of your own. For an example see: <https://youtu.be/iVzcGyrwO-4>.

## The connection game:



Players each play a phrase that is inspired by the one before using similar rhythms or keys etc. Alternatively, play the new phrase starting on the same note that the previous one finished on.

## Card of the day:

Using the images from Cesare Ripa (or a historical treatise of your choosing), improvise using the iconology as inspiration, freely or following treatise advice such as which keys to use for each **affect**. For an example see: <https://youtu.be/93DsDURHPnU>



**Allegrezza**  
Roma, 1603

## Reflections?

How did you find these games? Which styles did you gravitate towards? Were there any features you used a lot?

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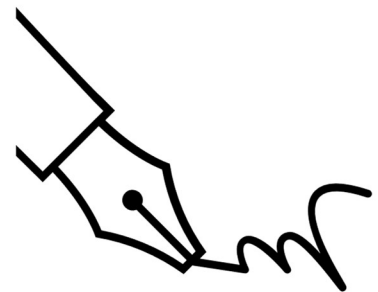
# General advice for improvising fantasias:

## Historical Treatises

Armed now with knowledge of how to improvise and having had a go, we can start to add restrictions or goals to our improvisations to fit the fantasia and baroque style more broadly. The most explicit rules on the art of fantasy can be found in Kollmann's *An Essay on Musical Harmony* (1796) and Mattheson's *Der Vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739) but smaller nuggets of information can be gleaned from **dictionary** and **diary** entries from the period. The combined results from these for a later solo baroque fantasia are listed below:

### Structure:

- Free
- Some contrapuntal sections
- Some take inspiration from dance music



### Time and rhythm:

- Freedom (with or without measure)
- Frequently changing time signatures can be used
- Continue until one 'thinks it proper to finish' (Rousseau, 1779)
- Balance and contrast

### Harmony and tonality:

- Extensive modulation
- Some advise beginning and ending in the same key, others suggest this is not necessary
- Use of dissonance and chromaticism for dramatic effect
- Display a 'full command of harmony' (Kollmann, 1796)



### Character:

- 'To please, to *overtake* and to *astonish*' (Mattheson, 1739)
- Freedom
- 'Like a series of thoughts in connection' (Kollmann, 1796)

### Instrumentation:

- Solo instrument
- 'Seldom used' for voice (Morley, 1597)



This general guidance results in a rather vague description. Therefore, more specific suggestions can be found through analysis of composed examples and for individual instruments. As such, the following pages provide some games to practice stylistic improvisation, followed by analysis of violin fantasias by Telemann and Matteis (senior and junior).

# Improvisation Games 2



While freedom is encouraged, sticking to **baroque harmony** is necessary. As a skill which violinists often find difficult as primarily melody instrumentalists, play the following games to practise this. See if you can also include some of the typical characteristics discussed on the previous pages.

## Bassline Bingo:

Improvise over a repeated ground bass. Choose horizontal, vertical, diagonal or a mixture from a chord chart such as the one below (this can be pre-recorded if practising alone). Start by playing one note from each chord, then arpeggios and then filling in arpeggios with ornamentation. Increasing the rhythmic interest and more difficult keys can be implemented later. For an example see:

<https://youtu.be/14MzheLGX94>

Gm	F	Eb	D
Cm	Gm	Bb	F
Bb	Cm	D	Eb
Gm	D	Gm	Gm



### Reflection:

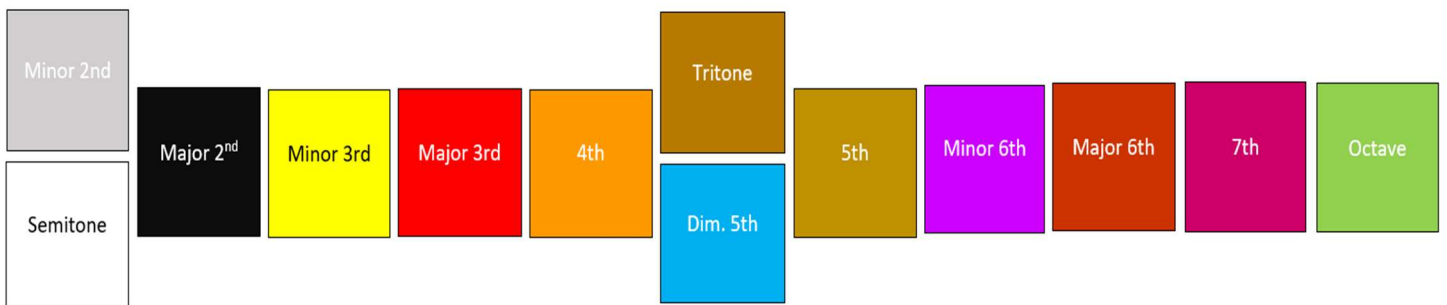
Which chords and progressions do you find easiest to improvise over? Why?

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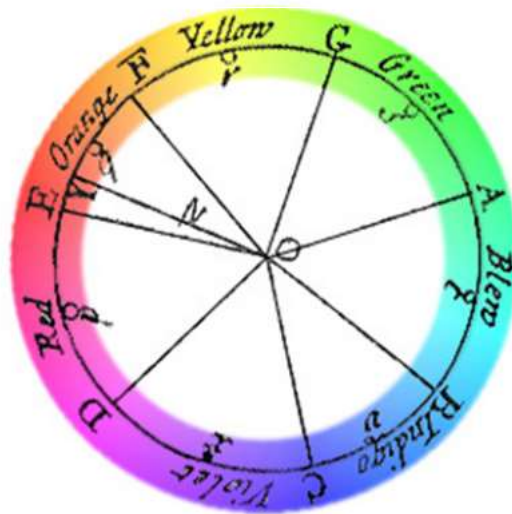
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### Somewhere over the rainbow:

Players respond to pictures or live drawings, creating melodies that use the intervals or notes ascribed to colours by **Kircher** and **Newton**. This can be drawn live or using a premade picture. For an example see: <https://youtu.be/XALbAeh1qsQ>.



**Kircher (1650, translated to Pythagorean tuning)**



**Newton (1704)**

# Fantasias in the style of Telemann:

Full range (up to E in fourth position)

3 contrasting sections

Dance characteristics

Separate and slurred notes and dynamic contrasts for small phrase repetitions.

Scales and arpeggios, occasional chromaticism

Rhythms listed on page 17



Modulations: relative major/minor or V

A, Bb, C, D, Eb, E, F or G major or A, B, C, D, E, F, F# or G minor

Length: c.100 bars

Illusion of a bassline or second voice

## Listen and play:



Have a listen to Telemann's violin fantasias and play any that take your fancy. Can you spot any of these common features? Which other ones can you spot?

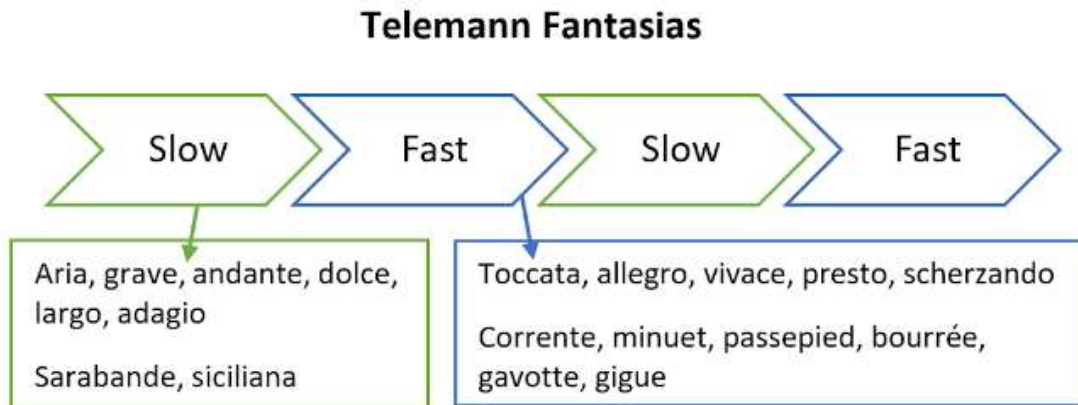
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A typical structure:



Which fantasias are your favourite? Why? Which features do they use that you might like to copy?



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Common rhythms:

### Simple Time



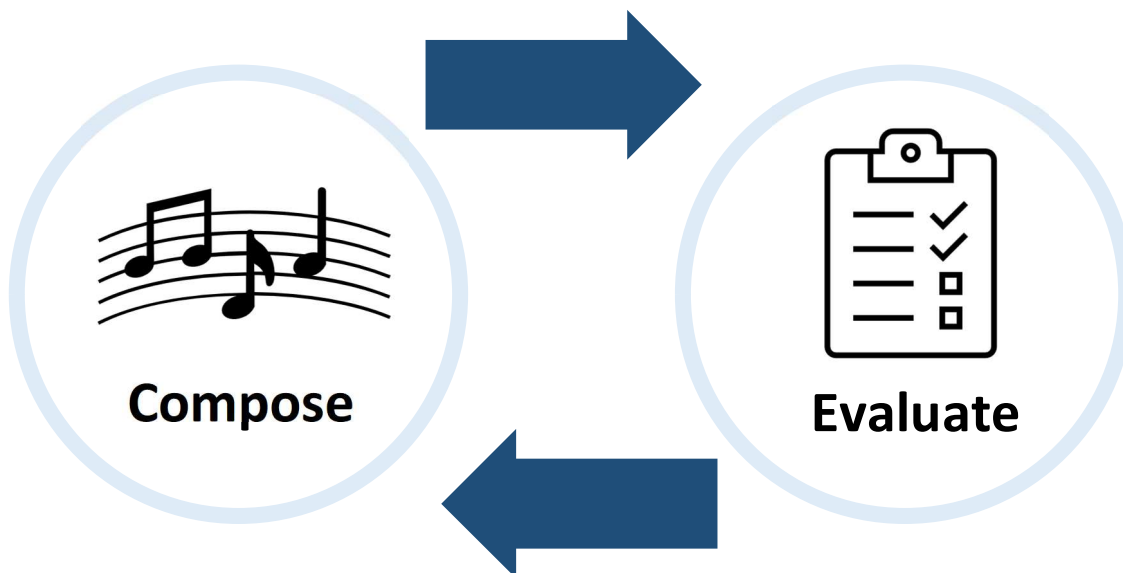
### Compound time



# Composition



Take the luxury of time offered by composition to have a go at applying these characteristics to your own composed fantasia in the style of Telemann. Build smaller motives into longer sections using the **question -> webs -> decision -> webs** approach described on page 7. React to what you have produced and use this evaluation to inform your next steps.



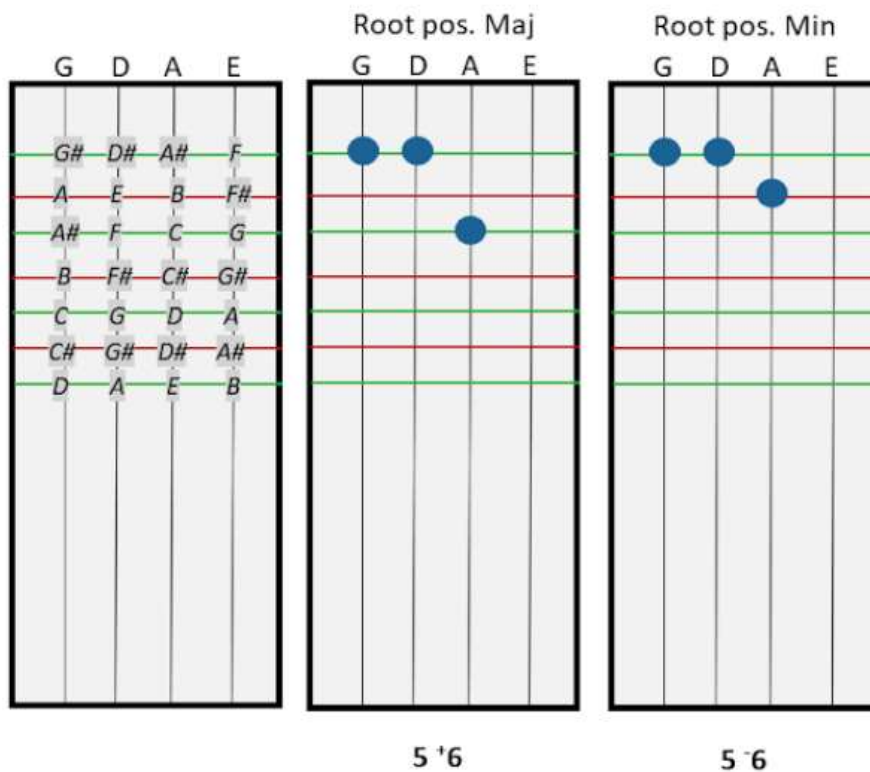
## Example:

As an example, here is a fantasia I composed using these guidelines closely (57:09): <https://youtu.be/RmFFScuDtAk?t=3429>

# Shortcuts to improvised virtuosity

## To harmonise quickly:

Playing chords on the violin relies on **handshapes**. The same handshape, played anywhere on the violin, will produce the same chord. Violin tablature is provided below showing the finger positions for each main chord type. The numbers below signify the intervals between the fingers (+ indicates major interval and - indicates minor interval):

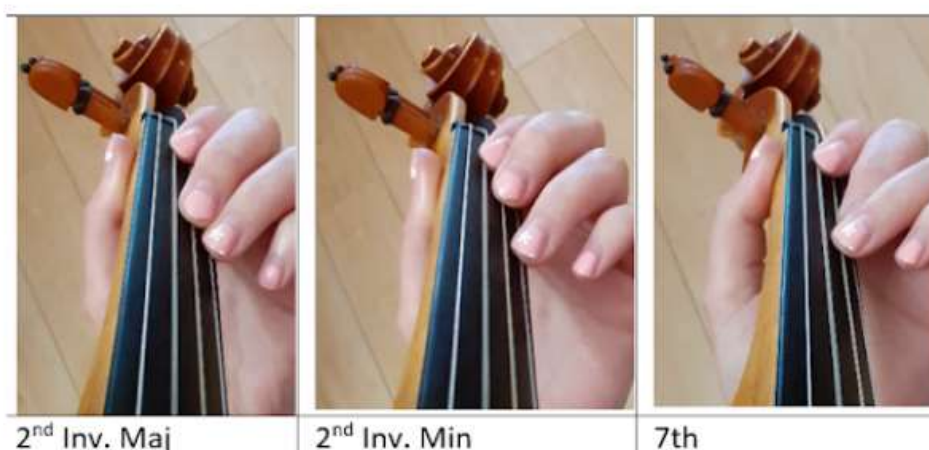




1 <sup>st</sup> Inv. Maj	1 <sup>st</sup> Inv. Min
G D A E	G D A E
♭6 5	♯6 5

2 <sup>nd</sup> Inv. Maj	2 <sup>nd</sup> Inv. Min	7th
G D A E	G D A E	G D A E
♯6 6	6 6	7 4

These translate to the following handshapes as realised with a first finger as a bass:



# 7

## Seventh Chords:

Seventh chords can also be positioned in different **inversions** but this is the easiest handshape option. Root position and 1st inversion chords can also be played with the 2nd or 3rd fingers at the bass. The 3rd finger as a bass, however, is particularly challenging.

# Improvisation Games 3

Practice these handshapes using the following game:



## Happy Harmonies

Using the handshape method explained above, players choose from a range of famous melodies or can make up or suggest their own and improvise harmonies. Players can compete to try to improvise either the most stylistic or the most unexpected harmonies. For an example see:

<https://youtu.be/qklc7UuSwh8>

## To stimulate new ideas:

Focus on a rhythm, tessitura or note (repeat and vary)

Play a scale or arpeggios with varied rhythms

Repeat the last phrase you played with slight variation

Ornament a simple scale or arpeggio

Hold a long note

End the section to have a moment of pause

Play chord(s) using harmony handshapes (focus on the bass or top notes)

Use dance steps as inspiration





## Transforming the unexpected into musical features:

Repeat the note

Resolve it up or down a semitone or a tone as an appoggiatura

Incorporate it into a slightly longer phrase, repeat and vary slightly

Repeat at a different dynamic, change the character

Use it to signal changing to a new section

Add a double stop and resolve

## To reduce the decision-making time needed when playing fast passagework:



Play slurred ascending or descending scales

Play arpeggios or part of arpeggios and repeat

Play double notes (repeat each note)

Use an open string to play every other note, creating a pedal effect

Play a simple sequence in a handshape and then transpose the handshape

Use harmony handshapes for quick chords or play 3rds or 6ths.



# Improvising a fantasia in the style of Telemann:



## Lost in Hamburg

You have agreed to meet Telemann at the town hall in Hamburg but now you have arrived you are lost. In return for directions, you must improvise a short section which must follow the key and affect stated on the “directions” card you pick up at each stop and must feature a rhythmic cell. Upon reaching the town hall, the character should be rejoicing and in your first key. You can pass up to 6 locations, choose a mix of blue and green. By the time you reach the town hall you will have improvised a fantasia in the style of Telemann! You might also like to refer to the guidelines set out on page 16.





Cards for each section:

This section contains three blue cards, each with a historical illustration and a text label. The cards are arranged horizontally. The first card on the left is titled 'Arsenal' and features an illustration of a large building with the number '9' in the bottom left corner. Below the illustration, the text reads 'Militant Major'. The middle card is titled 'St Catharinen' and shows a tall, pointed tower. Below the illustration, the text reads 'Grandeur Major'. The third card on the right is titled 'Stock Exchange' and depicts a building with a large staircase. Below the illustration, the text reads 'Calm, plaintive Major'. The cards are set against a background of a faded historical map.

**Arsenal**  
Militant Major

**St Catharinen**  
Grandeur Major

**Stock Exchange**  
Calm, plaintive Major



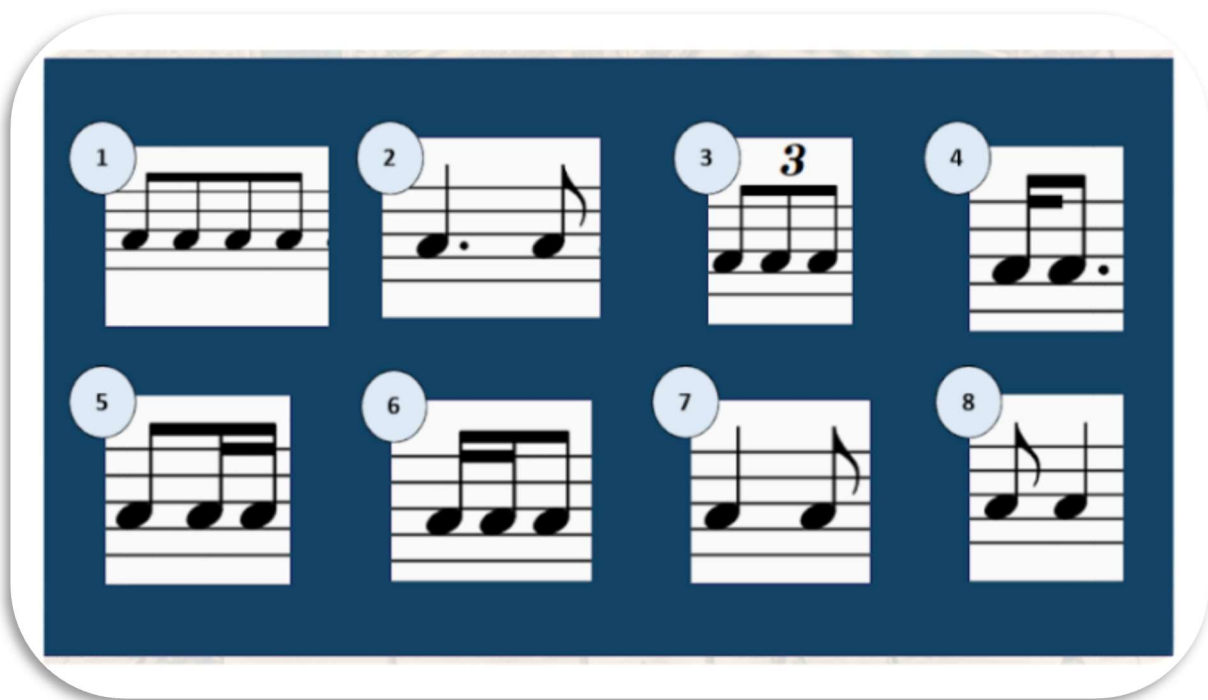
This section contains three green cards, each with a historical illustration and a text label. The cards are arranged horizontally. The first card on the left is titled 'Guest House' and shows a courtyard with buildings. Below the illustration, the text reads 'Tender Minor'. The middle card is titled 'New Market' and features an illustration of a market square with the text 'Neue-Marche' and a large letter 'B'. Below the illustration, the text reads 'Sad/ melancholic Minor'. The third card on the right is titled 'Prison' and shows a large, walled building. Below the illustration, the text reads 'Quick-tempered, tempests, furies Minor'. The cards are set against a background of a faded historical map.

**Guest House**  
Tender Minor

**New Market**  
Sad/ melancholic Minor

**Prison**  
Quick-tempered, tempests, furies Minor

Characteristic rhythms to assign to each section:



**Reflection:** Which rhythms work best for each character? Can you make all of them work?

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**Performance:**

This game also works well in performance, asking **audiences** to choose the sections and rhythms or even suggest themes and then the improviser can create a fantasia in the style of Telemann based on their instructions.



# Fantasias in the style of Matteis

All in 4/4	Am, Cm, Bb major	Length 30-56 bars		
Double and triple stops, some quadruple, contrapuntal passages	Not in a dance style	Use of pedals, usually dominant		
Rhythms: running quavers, long-short-short, short-short-long, triplets, dotted	Two sections or through composed	Repeats uncommon unless whole sections		No dynamic echoes
The full range (up to 4th position on the E string)	Melody: ornaments between chords, scales, arpeggios, narrow fugal motives, sequences	Cadential suspensions, dim chords, 7ths, circle of 5ths, flattened 2nd		Modulations: IV, V, relative major/ minor or V of new key



**Listen to and play** fantasias by Matteis senior and junior. Can you spot any of these common features? Can you spot any others?

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## Alia fantasia:

Constant minim rolling arpeggios

Some crotchet movement

Full range of the violin

Long (87 bars)

Through-composed with a coda

4/4

A minor

Harmony:  
Suspensions and resolutions

Modulations: V, IV, V  
of new key, relative major/ minor



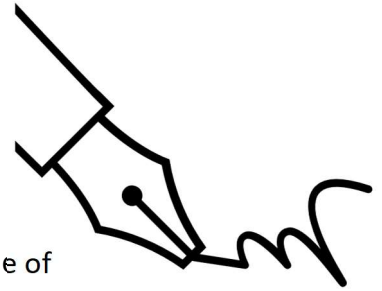
### Building a Toolkit:

Which strategies that we have covered so far might be most useful for these kinds of fantasias?

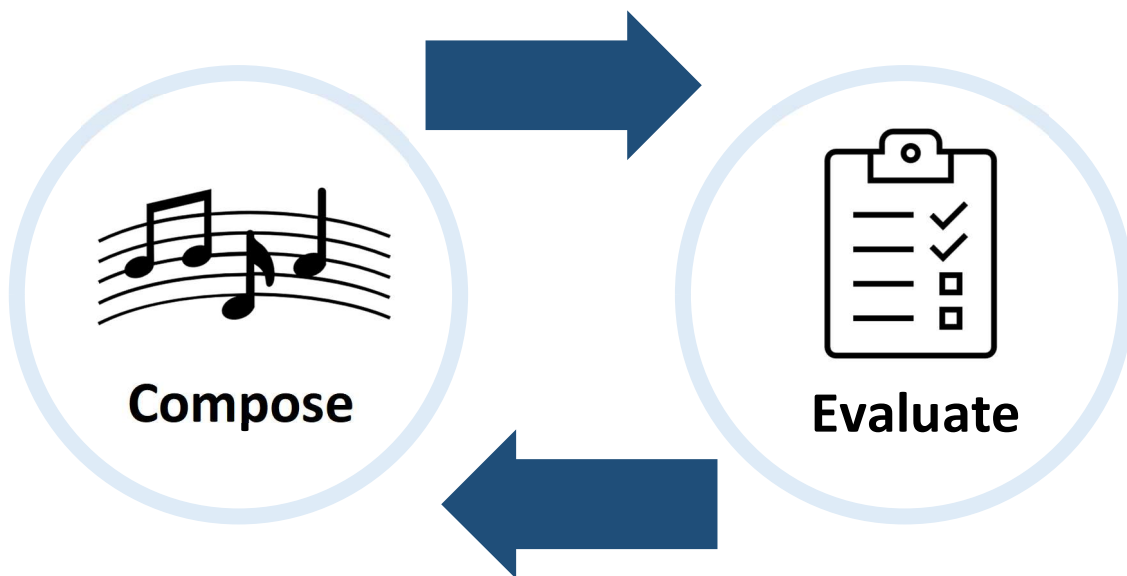
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# Composition



Again, take the luxury of time offered by composition to have a go at applying these characteristics to your own composed fantasia in the style of Matteis senior and junior. You might like to try several shorter fantasias to experiment with different styles. React to what you have produced and use this evaluation to inform your next steps.



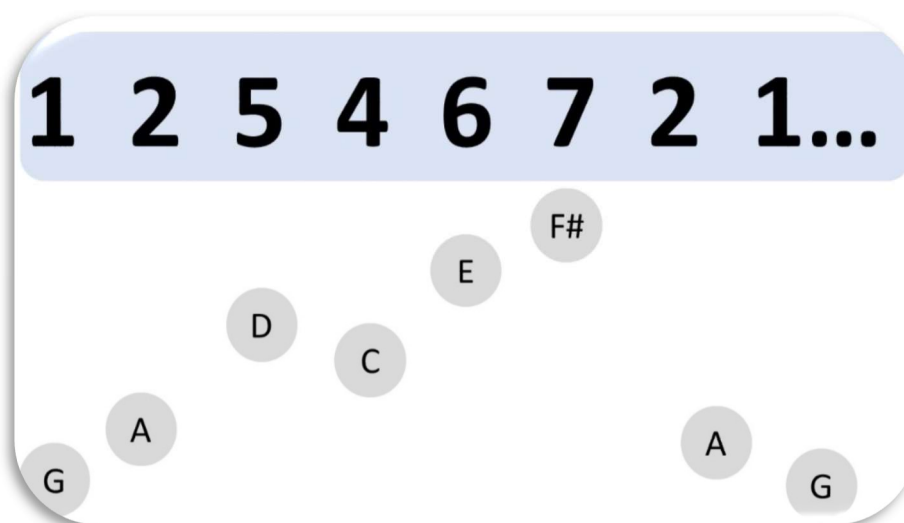
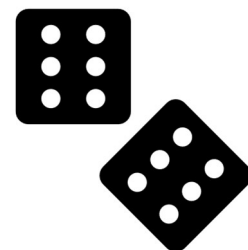
## Example:

As an example, here is a fantasia I composed using different sections, each following a different stylistic feature. The first takes after Matteis junior's *Fantasia* in C minor "Con discretione", the second after Matteis senior's contrapuntal *Fantasia* in A minor and the final section takes inspiration from Matteis junior's *Alia Fantasia* (29:45): <https://youtu.be/-q4-tHQIPAc?t=1784>.

# Improvising a Fantasia In the style of Matteis:

## All about that bass:

Players roll a die to create a bassline, the numbers are attributed to scale degrees in a key of the improviser's choice. Players can then create a piece in the style of Matteis junior's *Alia Fantasia* by using harmony handshapes and playing continuous broken chords. As players get more advanced, they can begin to add passing notes or try to create a melody through choosing handshapes that produce conjunct top lines. For an example see: <https://youtu.be/-q4-tHQIPAc?t=2650> (44:10).



## Reflections?

Which chords do you gravitate to? Which progressions work better than others? Which handshapes feel most comfortable and produce the most accurate intonation?



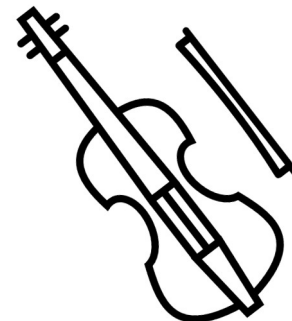
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## Counterpoint Chess

To tackle the very difficult task of improvising counterpoint such as in Matteis senior's fantasias, this game uses visualisation and set musical phrases to enable the improvisation of two- and

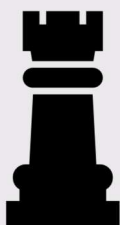
three-part counterpoint. Each chess piece is assigned a different musical phrase which can be successful and possible within a violinist's handshape. These are as follows:



Pawn = rising stepwise



Knight = rising third



Rook = held note



Queen = falling stepwise

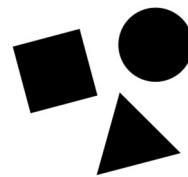


Bishop = Falling third



King = Cadential segment





## The basics:

Start on the tonic and aim to start and keep the second voice on a 6th or 3rd

Easiest = rooks every other note

Alternate ascending and descending

Keep different voices on different strings to make a visual aid

Line up pieces on a board as a **visual aid**

The king should always be used (and only used) to end the phrase

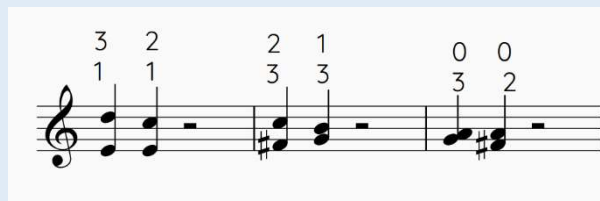


## Additional interesting counterpoint possibilities:

1. Contrary motion (within a third)
2. Add **ornaments** or repeated notes to make the melody sound more complex.
3. Use the same fingering on higher or lower strings to automatically **transpose** the counterpoint into another key (the next higher string -> dominant).



The following handshapes will create suspensions:





## Cannon canons:

If playing alone or intending to create relatively **direct imitation**, the pieces are set up to form short themes (the longer the more difficult this is). Seeing the theme on the board, improvisers can then introduce a second voice while the first voice has moved onto the first piece and so on. For an example see: <https://youtu.be/eDQ7bSKXkLg>



## Fugal Feudalism:

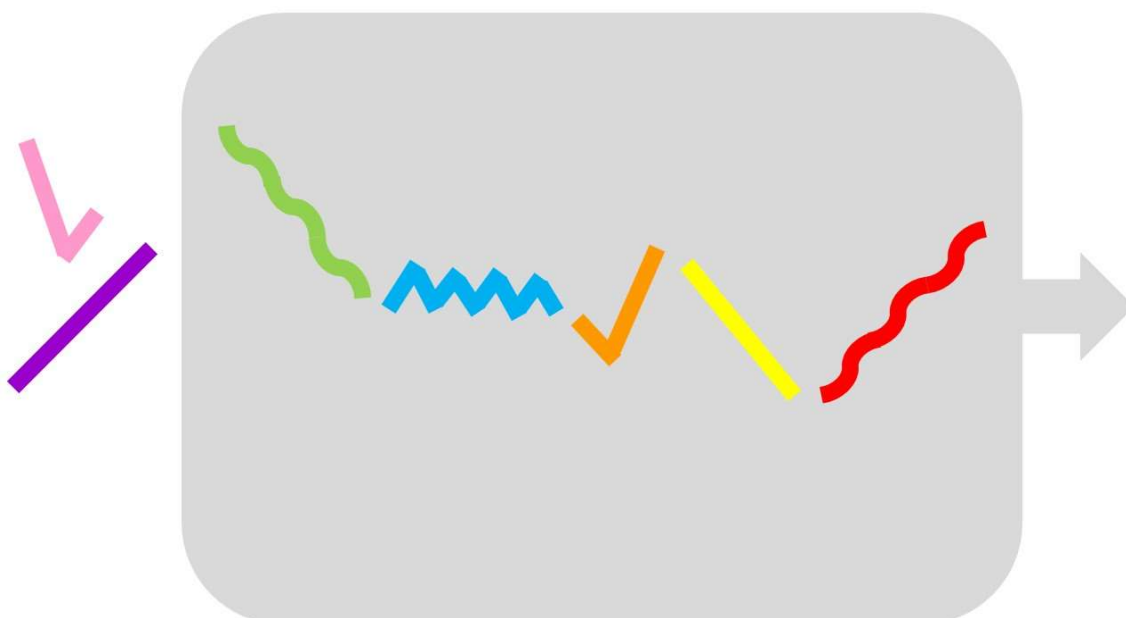


This game introduces the illusion of a **third voice**. Harmonise the two-part counterpoint by adding in a bass note on a lower string on the main beats using harmony handshapes. Start the melody on the A or E strings to facilitate three-part chords to give the illusion of three voices simultaneously. Using as many rooks as possible here makes the process easier. For an example see:

<https://youtu.be/-q4-tHQIPAc?t=2414> (40:14)

## The art of Ornamentation

Improvisers choose different shapes representing broad shapes of stylistic ornamentation to link together to create an overall phrase. They are then at liberty to add chords and double stops between these ornaments to give structure. This game produces the opening of a fantasia in the style of Matteis junior's *Con discretione*. The shapes on the example below show some stylistic possibilities arranged into a possible opening phrase. For an example, see: <https://youtu.be/-q4-tHQIPAc?t=2081>. (34:41)



### Reflections?

Have these games highlighted any particular stylistic features? How might you extend these to develop your own original style?



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# Programming in live recitals



**Congratulations** on improvising baroque fantasias! Now, think about how you might include elements of improvisation or even whole fantasias in your next concerts? Which pieces might fit well alongside improvised fantasias?

## Programming ideas:

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## Listen:

1. For examples of concerts including **fully improvised fantasias** in the style of Telemann and Matteis (junior and senior) see:  
Telemann: <https://youtu.be/RmFFScuDtAk>  
Matteis: <https://youtu.be/-q4-tHQIPAc>
2. Listen to some later fantasias such as by C.P.E. Bach and Mozart. How do these compare to earlier examples?

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# Reflections:



Having improvised baroque fantasias, the following questions are designed to get you thinking about how this experience might influence your playing and how you might be able to use these skills. Add your thoughts below...

How might your experience of improvising fantasias influence your performance of composed fantasias or other baroque music?

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Might any of these games be useful in peripatetic teaching?

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How might playing improvisation games more regularly change or improve your stylistic knowledge, technique and creativity?

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Might coming back to this process at a later date have any advantages?

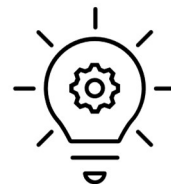


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How might you apply this process to other kinds of improvisation or elements of your playing?



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Have another go at some of the earlier exercises. Can you see any changes in your playing or approach?

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Has learning historical improvisation changed your mindset with regards to composer authority or your approach to playing from scores?

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Could you create any opportunities to experiment with group historical improvisation?

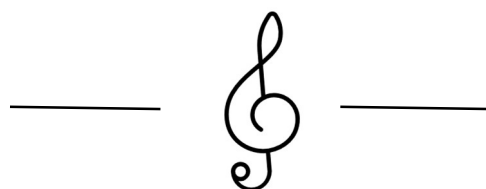
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This guide explains step by step how to improvise a baroque fantasia for the modern-day historically informed performer. Through games and self-reflection, the task is split up into manageable steps and is designed so that users can dip in and out as it suits their individual practice. Focused on the violin, this guide provides new insights into this practice for melody instruments.



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