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**Autor:** Ledbetter, David

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## LES GOÛTS RÉUNIS AND THE MUSIC OF J.S.BACH

by DAVID LEDBETTER

The issue of national style was a matter of burning interest to German musicians throughout Bach's lifetime. As Peter Benary has put it: „Nie zuvor und hernach spielte eine ‚musikalische Geographie‘ in der Musikgeschichte eine so entscheidende Rolle wie in Deutschland in den Jahrzehnten um 1750“.<sup>1</sup> In fact the „decisive role“ can be traced back long before 1750. According to Mattheson it was Froberger a century earlier who not only cultivated Italian and French styles but also „brachte [...] einen dritten und vermischten angenehmen Styl hervor“.<sup>2</sup> Many writers, after listing the characteristics of Italian, French, and German music, concluded that the best style would be one that could combine the advantages of all.

The main seedbeds for such a mixed style were the courts that supported a high level of music in both French and Italian styles, such as the Savoy court at Turin and the Saxon court at Dresden. Quantz tells us that the Dresden orchestra had been brought to a high level of performance in the disciplined French style by the Concertmeister Volumier but that this was excelled by Volumier's successor, the violinist Pisendel, „durch Einführung eines vermischten Geschmacks“. Pisendel succeeded Volumier in 1728, but Quantz goes on to say that Pisendel's style had already been „eine Vermischung“ when Quantz studied with him in 1719.<sup>3</sup> Pisendel was clearly an important contributor to this process. Another was Telemann, who tells us that a mixed style was already being cultivated in 1710 by the Dresden virtuosos, „bey denen die *Delicatesse* Welschlands und Franckreichs Lebhaftigkeit als in einem Mittel-Puncte zusammen kommt“.<sup>4</sup>

A particular type of mixed style developed in Saxony in the first decades of the 18th century, led by composers such as Telemann and Pisendel. This was the context in which Bach's style developed in the crucial period from around 1710 – when he made a study of such French things as the *Livre d'orgue* of Grigny, the ornamental language of D'Anglebert, and the harpsichord suites of Dieupart – to around 1720, when he put together the violin Solos, the cello Suites, the so-called French Suites for clavier, and probably the English Suites as well. Bach's is the most complex and challenging version of the mixed style, and the purpose of this article is to disentangle the main elements: to see how he drew on prototypes of genre, style, and composition technique; and thereby to reach some principles that may be applied in performance.

<sup>1</sup> Peter Benary, *Die deutsche Kompositionslehre des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Leipzig 1961, 110.

<sup>2</sup> Johann Mattheson, *Grundlage einer Ehrenpforte*, Hamburg 1740; ed. M. Schneider, Berlin 1910, 88.

<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurge, *Historisch-kritische Beyträge zur Aufnahme der Musik* 1/5, Berlin 1755, 206.

<sup>4</sup> Johann Mattheson, *Grosse General-Baß-Schule*, Hamburg 1731, 173.



### *Italian Background*

There was nothing new in 1700 about mixing French dance and Italian sonata styles. In Italy the combination can be traced back to the mid-17th century. By the end of the century the two styles had achieved uniquely focused expression in the tightly organized works of Lully and Corelli, whose productions soon became classic models of their type and were disseminated throughout Europe in publications. It was Corelli who was the prime exemplar of this mid-Baroque phase of mixing styles. As Georg Muffat explains in 1701, Corelli's concerto style mixed the „liveliness and grace“ of Lully's orchestral French dance music with the dramatic and capricious style, full of strong contrasts, of the Italians.<sup>5</sup> From his first collection of chamber sonatas, published in Rome in 1685, Corelli's works exemplified a process of development from the French binary dance to the binary sonata, which by the 1720s had more or less completely supplanted the traditional dance genres. An understanding of this process is vital for performing the music of Bach, who continued to call movements by their dance titles when in fact they were sonata movements with little to do with the original dances apart from their time signature and binary structure.

The fundamental differences between the two styles are clearly visible in Corelli's chamber sonatas. The *Corrente* of Op. 2 No. 1 (1685, Ex. 1 a) is a French dance with characteristic clearly defined phrases, a melody moving mainly by step in phrases of narrow pitch range, the second violin supporting the first in swaying rhythms that constantly shift the accent from the first beat to the second and back, and with a chord of two bars' duration at strain ends, as a functional *ballo* would do. There is no reason why this should not be played in every respect like a French courante, with unequal eighths and suitable essential ornaments.<sup>6</sup> The *Corrente* of Op. 4 No. 3 (1694, Ex. 1b), by contrast, is a *moto perpetuo* for solo violin, with the second violin providing no more than a harmonic filler part. This is not just an Italian *corrente* equivalent to a French courante; it is fundamentally not a dance structure. The balanced phraseology of the dance is entirely gone, replaced by spun-out phrases of indeterminate length based on harmonic sequences, patterned out mainly in broken-chord instrumental figurations. It is a sonata movement in the metre of a *corrente*, sometimes expressed by Corelli in the phrase „tempo di“. In the dance type the eighth-notes are incidental to the rhythmic movement of the dance and relatively unimportant; in the sonata type they constitute the entire surface of the music. This is projective, solo instrumental music in which the player can mould the constant stream of equal notes around the variety of phrase lengths possible in the sonata style. The rhythmic inequality of dance music, which breaks notes up into pairs, would be quite unsuitable.

<sup>5</sup> Georg Muffat, *Außerlesener [...] Instrumental-Music Erste Versammlung*, Passau 1701, „Vorred“.

<sup>6</sup> For Corelli's familiarity with French style, particularly in *correnti*, and for the distinction between *da ballo* and *da camera* dances, see Peter Allsop, *Arcangelo Corelli*, Oxford 1999, 110–111.



Ex. 1a: Corelli, *Sonate da camera a tre* Op. 2 (Rome 1685) No. 1, Corrente (first strain).

6 5 5 6 6 5 6 6

6 5 (5) 3 6 #

11 5 6 6 7 # (4+) 6 6 #

Ex. 1b: *Sonate a tre* Op. 4 (Rome 1694) No. 3, Corrente (first strain).

*Allegro*

6 6 6

5

10

15

19

Corelli tended to keep the manners separate in his sonatas but, as Georg Muffat says, combines them in various ways in his concertos. One way of mixing styles is to add an element of *moto perpetuo* to a dance. In Op. 6 No.4, the *Vivace* is essentially a fast sarabande with 4-bar phrases, to which Corelli has added



a sonata/concertante element in the moto perpetuo cello part.<sup>7</sup> The following Allegro is in the metre of a gavotte (it seems to be a concertante reworking of the Gavotta of Op. 2 No.1), and here Corelli alternates dance-type phrases with sonata-type ones. In this movement the sonata-type phrases take over entirely after the double bar.

Bach favours the second of these combination types in the lighter dances of minuet, gavotte, and bourrée. An instructive use of the first type is in the Forlane of the C major Overture-suite BWV 1066. The Forlane was one of the dances popularised by André Campra in the ballet *L'Europe galante* of 1696 (Ex 2; Telemann tells us that Lully and Campra „and other good authors“ were models for the many overture-suites he wrote at Sorau in 1705–1708 and Eisenach in 1708–1712).<sup>8</sup> Bach has added a concertante element in the moto perpetuo eighths in second violin and viola throughout, but the difference goes deeper than that. Campra's dance has short, clearly defined phrases, each with the characteristic ending of a repeated note (every 2 bars). Bach has reserved this gesture until the end of the strain, meaning that the entire first strain is a single spun-out phrase that does not touch the ground before the double bar. Bach was of course not the only one to convert dance types into concerto movements by avoiding intermediate cadences. A good example by Handel is the Hornpipe of his Op. 6 No.7 concerto.

Ex. 2 : Campra, *L'Europe galante* (Paris 1696), La Forlana (first section).

The image displays a musical score for 'LA FORLANA' by Campra. It consists of four staves of music, arranged in two systems of two staves each. The first system shows the first two staves, and the second system shows the last two staves. The music is in 6/4 time and features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with a characteristic ending of a repeated note every two bars. The title 'LA FORLANA.' is written below the first staff.

<sup>7</sup> The slow sarabande with running bass was a common late-Baroque type (cf. the Sarabanda of Op. 5 No.8). According to the Italophile Jacques Hotteterre „le Romain“ (*L'art de preluder*, Paris 1719, Chapitre XIème) this type of Italian bass was to be played equally. For a quick Sarabanda very similar to the Vivace of Op. 6 No.4 see Op. 6 No.12 (I am grateful to Jesper Christensen for pointing this out).

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Mattheson 1731, 174.



## François Couperin

In order to get a perspective on Bach's mixed style it is well worth looking at that of Couperin, who made a point of combining the two styles. At the beginning of his career Couperin tended to keep them separate. In, for example, the first movement of the sonata *La Piémontoise* (originally *L'Astrée*, written in the early 1690s) the first section is based on a well-known Lully scene („sommeil“) from *Les amants magnifiques* (comédie-ballet, 1670), while the second is an Italian-style Allegro with motoric sixteenth-note impetus, invertible counterpoint and motivic development. Later, Couperin attempted to combine the two, as in the trio sonata *La paix du Parnasse* from the *Apothéose de Lully* (1725). Here the opening movement introduces a characteristic ballet figure involving the *accent* ornament, found for example in the character piece known as *Les sourdines d'Armide* from Lully's last opera (second bar of Ex. 3, *premier dessus*, beats 2–4) which Couperin subsequently combines with an Italianate motif of leaping eighth (last bar of Ex. 3). A comparison with the Allemanda of Corelli's Op. 2 No.1 shows Couperin's movement to be an amalgam of French Allemande and Italian Adagio (in the generic sense of a slow movement in *c* time). Couperin here combines not only opposing styles, but also opposite expressions. Montéclair describes the *accent* as an „elevation douloureuse de la voix, qui se pratique plus souvent dans les airs plaintifs“.<sup>9</sup> The Corelli figure is positive and extrovert.

Ex. 3 : François Couperin, *La paix du Parnasse* (Paris 1725), (bars 7–14).

<sup>9</sup> Michel-Pignolet de Montéclair, *Principes de musique*, Paris 1736, 80.



In his harpsichord pieces Couperin experimented endlessly with mixing styles. A telling example is the allemande „La Laborieuse“ from the *Premier livre* (1713). According to Jane Clark, the title refers to Louis Le Laboureur, who published a book comparing the French and Latin languages, so relating things French to things Italian.<sup>10</sup> Be that as it may, „La Laborieuse“ is clearly intended by Couperin as a model for how French and Italian styles may be mixed both in composition and performance. French are the purely melodic moments (such as bar 3), and characteristic ornamentation; Italian are the consistent working of motifs and the *moto perpetuo* of sixteenths. Thematic working of this sort was disliked by out-and-out Francophiles as „laborious“ – „travaillé“, „où le dessus et la basse travaillent toujours“ as Couperin says of the little Italian-style demonstration Allemande in *L'art de toucher le clavecin*.<sup>11</sup> The equivalent word in German ("arbeitsam") was used by C.P.E. Bach to describe his father's style.<sup>12</sup>

The most significant aspect of this piece is Couperin's often quoted and often misunderstood performance instruction „sans lenteur; et les doubles croches un tant-soit-peu pointées“. This is not an instruction for *notes inégales* as such. It tells us that the concept of *goûts réunis* extends also to the *exécution*: that this is not quite the binary allegro sonata allemanda typical of Corelli's Op. 5, but a mixture which must keep something of the *allure* of the French allemande. The movement is therefore not *légèrement* (i.e. allegro, with equal sixteenths, as the Allemande in *L'art de toucher le clavecin*) but *sans lenteur* with just a hint of *inégalité*, perhaps more in the French phrases than the Italian ones. The most remarkable example of a *sans lenteur* allemande is „La Superbe ou la Forqueray“ from the *Troisième livre* (1722). Here Couperin exploits the typical allemande two-bar phrase with a caesura in the middle, by having in the first strain (after the opening phrase) phrases that are Italian in one half and French in the other, and in the second strain spinning out long, sonata-style phrases from the Italian elements. It is a brilliant demonstration of the possibilities offered by the Italian style to build up grand climaxes beyond the reach of French dance phrases of set length.

<sup>10</sup> Louis Le Laboureur, *Avantages de la langue françoise sur la langue latine*, Paris 1669; Jane Clark, *The mirror of human life*, Huntingdon 2002, 52. Le Laboureur's book is a presentation of a learned correspondence between himself and René François de Sluse, canon of the cathedral of Liège, in which Sluse defends the „Muses Latines, qu'il dit estre bien plus grandes Dames que les Muses Françoises“, and Le Laboureur the French, „combien voyons-nous de filles autant & plus belles que leurs meres“, in a tradition of „deffense et illustration de la langue françoise“ going back to Du Bellay. From what we know of François Couperin's literary attainments it is unlikely that he would have been interested in such *belles lettres* (see Davitt Moroney in: *François Couperin: nouveaux regards*, ed. O. Mehmed, Paris 1998, 163–186). In any case the comparison is with classical Latin, not Italian.

<sup>11</sup> François Couperin, *L'art de toucher le clavecin*, Paris 1717, 36–37.

<sup>12</sup> Hans-Joachim Schulze (ed.), *Bach-Dokumente Band III*, Kassel 1984, 87; for further applications of the terms „arbeitsam“ and „laborieux“ to the Italian style, see Telemann's autobiography in Mattheson 1731, 171–172.



*Bach*

## Allemandes

An analogous treatment is in the Allemanda of the B minor violin Partita BWV 1002. This shares with „La Superbe“ the French two-bar, balanced opening phrase, but continues as „La Laborieuse“, avoiding any definite phrase ending or perfect cadence until the double bar. The structure of Bach's Allemanda is therefore a sonata, not a dance, structure. He has nonetheless decorated the surface with characteristic features of a French allemande, writing out the *inégalité*, including a lombardic version of the *tierce coulée* at the beginning of bar 5. As far as surface decoration goes, what distinguishes this from any French allemande before 1720 are the triplets. Peter Williams has suggested that Bach's use of triplets in an allemande, as in the G major clavier Partita BWV 829 (published in 1730), may have been influenced by the A minor Allemande of Rameau's *Nouvelles Suites* (c.1729–30).<sup>13</sup> The B minor Allemanda (autograph fair copy dated 1720) is nonetheless a fully developed example of the rhythmically sophisticated decoration, expressed in a rich variety of note values, typical of the *galant* style that was to become dominant in the 1720s.<sup>14</sup> The Allemande of the third suite of Mattheson's *Harmonisches Denckmahl* for clavier (London 1714) has triplet and 32nd flourishes towards the ends of strains, but not integrated into a general scheme. Otherwise triplets seem more characteristic of the corrente, as in Corelli's Op.5 No.7. A type of corrente based on a characteristic motif, and developed using a variety of rhythmic effects, including triplets, is represented in the second of Telemann's *Six Sonates* for violin (Frankfurt 1715) and subsequently in the Courante of Bach's E flat cello Suite BWV 1010. As one might expect, Bach's rhythmic scheme is more tightly integrated than Telemann's.

The Allemanda and Double of the B minor Partita seem, as the first suite movements of this collection, to be intended as a pair, the Allemanda representing the French dance style and the Double the Italian sonata style. The *moto perpetuo* of sixteenths is in the spirit of similar movements in Corelli's Opus 5. Bach also seems to be playing on terminology and genre concepts here in that the Double looks like a sixteenth-note division on a dance. But it cannot be that since the Allemanda has a sonata, not a dance, phrase structure, so it is in fact a reworking of a sonata structure in another manner. A notable

<sup>13</sup> Peter Williams, „Is there an anxiety of influence discernible in J.S.Bach's *Clavier-Übung I*?“ in: *The keyboard in Baroque Europe*, ed. Ch. Hogwood, Cambridge 2003, 148; for the dating of the *Nouvelles Suites* see Bruce Gustafson and David Fuller, *A catalogue of French harpsichord music 1699–1780*, Oxford 1990, 204.

<sup>14</sup> There is an Allemande with triplets in the F major English Suite BWV 809, which may date from as early as 1720. This style of decoration may originally have developed in the elaborate ornamentation of Adagios. A demonstration example is the Adagio of the first of Michel Blavet's instructional Op.2 flute sonatas, Paris 1732.



performance feature is that the entire Double is to be bowed in pairs, as are the concertante eighths in the Forlane of BWV 1066. If we can believe Tartini, Corelli's movements of this sort were to be bowed out in separate bows and in fact were used as basic bowing exercises throughout the 18th century.<sup>15</sup> Bach's pairs reflect the increasing sophistication of bowing technique developed by Dresden violinists such as Pisendel and Veracini. The pairs may also imply a slight („un tant-soit-peu“) swinging of the sixteenths.

The other Allemande with a decidedly French *allure* is in the C minor cello Suite BWV 1011. In the autograph of the G minor version of this piece for lute/Lautenwerk BWV 995 Bach has more exactly notated the rhythms he wants. Again, like „La Laborieuse“, it has an invention-type opening, much favoured by Bach, in which the figure in the cantus in the first bar is imitated in the bass in the second. This allemande also is essentially a sonata structure, with an irregular opening period in the tonic (to bar 5), then what is essentially a single long harmonic period, passing through the relative major (bar 13) to the dominant at the double bar. In this piece Bach has taken two characteristics of a French entrée, or first section of an overture, the dotted rhythm and the tirata or *trait*; included his own favoured figure of extended runs in even sixteenths; and applied these to a sonata structure. In the D major fugue of *The well-tempered clavier* of 1722 he did the same in the genre of fugue. Again Bach is by no means alone: Gaspard le Roux uses a similar collection of entrée materials in the Allemande of his A major suite of 1705. In Bach's cello Suite this has the neat effect of picking up again the ingredients of the first section of the overture-style Prelude of this suite. One might have expected the first section to return again after the *tres viste* fugal second section but it does not, and this Allemande answers that expectation.

Bach was not the only one to take elements of French dance music and treat them in a sonata manner. It was the basis of the international late Baroque style of Telemann, Handel and many others. A more tightly economical treatment of the overture is in the Partita by Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel that Wilhelm Friedemann Bach copied into his *Clavier-Büchlein* in 1723 or slightly later (Ex. 4). This could not be more remote from Lully's tune-and-bass dance overtures. It makes an *inventio* of the dotted rhythm and tirata, gives it a miniature exposition in the first two bars, then treats it systematically to contrapuntal techniques of inversion and extension exactly in the manner of a Bach Invention. Stölzel's skill in treating French decorative ingredients in this way is presumably why Bach gave the piece to Friedemann to study.

<sup>15</sup> Giuseppe Tartini, *A letter from the late Signor Tartini [...] to performers on the violin*, London 1771.



Ex. 4: Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel, *Partita* (copied by W.F. Bach 1723 or slightly later), Overture (first section).

The musical score consists of five systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is G minor (two flats) and the time signature is 3/4. The first system (measures 1-3) begins with a treble clef and a bass clef. The second system (measures 4-6) begins with a treble clef. The third system (measures 7-9) begins with a treble clef. The fourth system (measures 10-12) begins with a treble clef and includes a trill (tr) above a note in measure 11. The fifth system (measures 13-15) begins with a treble clef and includes a first ending bracket labeled '1.' in measure 15.

I suppose one might criticise these composers for taking decorative features from a melodic, dance style and treating them as contrapuntal elements in their own right without the melodic lines that were their original justification. In the same way one might criticise Stravinsky for taking in his *Violin Concerto* the gestures of the slow movement of a Bach concerto and applying them in circumstances foreign to the harmonic world from which they originally grew.



### Courantes

The allemande and courante are a pair of high-style dances with similar phrase structure and contrasting metres that traditionally begin the dance suite. Bach's range of treatment of them is therefore similar. Two of his most French courantes are in the A major English Suite for clavier, which seems rather earlier than the other English suites.<sup>16</sup> There is no direct evidence that Bach knew Couperin's *Premier livre* of 1713. There are, nonetheless, marked similarities between these two courantes and the two courantes of Couperin's first *Ordre*, which is only to say that there will inevitably be strong resemblances between pieces in a standard genre in a well-defined tradition. Bach obviously intended to write specifically French courantes, and it is the ways in which he differs from Couperin that define his personal style. The first English Suite is probably the least played, no doubt because of this large block of courantes and doubles. Connoisseurship of the genre makes study of them rewarding.

Couperin's first courante (Ex. 5a) opens with a standard allemande/courante phrase of two bars, divided by a caesura (the *tierce coulée* in bar 2 is standard for an intermediate phrase ending so the caesura is immediately after it, there is therefore an accent on the second beat of bar 2). This is often compared to the alexandrine line of French classical drama, of twelve syllables divided 6 + 6 by a caesura; it is a „high-style“ verse metre. The strain continues with a four-bar phrase, building up to a climactic b<sup>b</sup> in the middle of bar 5 before subsiding into the cadence. Similarly Bach's second courante (Ex. 5b) starts with a two-bar phrase consisting of an opening figure in bar 1 followed by a cadence formula in bar 2. In this case he has not used the *tierce coulée* so the caesura and second-beat accent in bar 2 are less obvious, but nonetheless there. Both Bach and Couperin shift the metre from  $\frac{6}{8}$  (bar 1) to  $\frac{3}{4}$  (bar 2) and back to  $\frac{6}{8}$  (bar 3). Bach then has a longer (five-bar) phrase building up to a climactic b<sup>b</sup> before subsiding into the cadence. It is remarkable how similar the decorative figurations of Bach's courante and its first Double are to those of Couperin's double.<sup>17</sup> What distinguishes Bach in this case is his use of the sonata device of a sequence to build up his climax, a device foreign to pure French style. Otherwise his courante could, and one is tempted to say should, be played in all respects as one would play Couperin's. Traditional piano performance with absolutely even eighths and sixteenths (note that the left-hand figure in bar 1 of Bach's courante is dotted in Couperin's double), and therefore lacking the magnetic rhythmic *allure* of the dance, may well account for the comparative neglect of this English Suite.

<sup>16</sup> For dating of the English Suites see Alfred Dürr and Marianne Helms, *Johann Sebastian Bach: Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke, Serie V, Band 7, Kritischer Bericht*, Kassel 1981, 86.

<sup>17</sup> Bach's second Double has the moto perpetuo eighth-note bass noted above in Corelli's sonata/concertante sarabandes, so presumably should also be played equally, with perhaps the usual inequality in the right hand. This version comes first in the earliest copy of this suite (by J.G. Walther, D-B Mus.ms. Bach P 803).



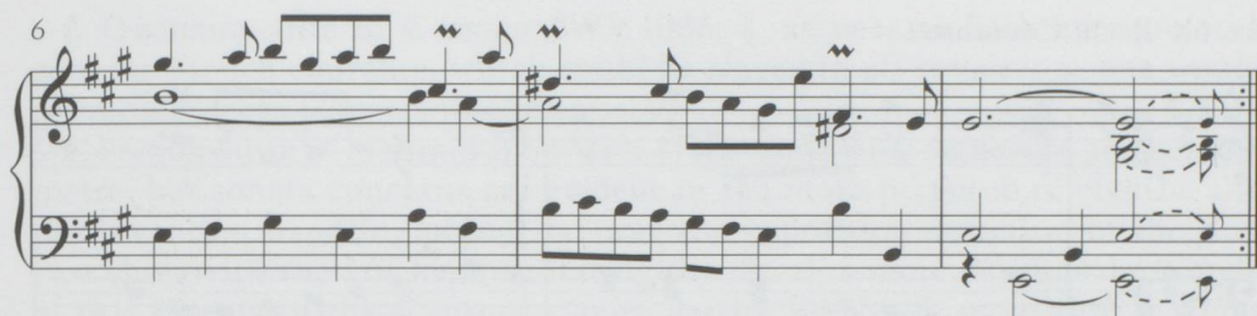
Ex. 5a: Couperin, *Pièces de clavecin* [...] *Premier Livre* (Paris 1713), *Premier Ordre*, *Première Courante*.

*Première Courante.*

*Dessus plus Orné  
Sans changer la  
Basse.*

Ex. 5b: Bach, *English Suite in A major* BWV 806 (c.1720?), *Courante* II.





Couperin's second Courante (Ex. 6a), then, has an affinity with Bach's first (Ex. 6b). Both start at the top of their tessitura and work down. Although there is a caesura at the beginning of bar 2 in Couperin's, the opening figure in bar 1 has no real consequent. Instead Couperin spins out the strain without reaching a definite cadence till the beginning of bar 8, after which he adds a bar that swings round to a dominant close. Bach also avoids the standard two-bar balanced opening, but has a long irregular phrase with a cadence into bar 5. Similar to Couperin is the way in which the following phrase has a one-bar extension (bar 9), via an interrupted cadence in Bach's case, before the dominant close. The traditional French pairing of dances, with some element of contrast (tessitura, phrase structure, style), is very common in Bach's suites. Otherwise the main difference here is Bach's relatively heavier and more elaborate keyboard texture, and systematic („arbeitsam“) use of rhythmic units. Nonetheless these are not so much as to impede the normal rhythmic characteristic of a French courante.

Ex. 6a: Couperin, Seconde Courante.



## Ex. 6b: Bach, Courante I.

The musical score for Ex. 6b, Bach's Courante I, is presented in five systems. Each system consists of a treble and a bass staff. The key signature is A major (three sharps) and the time signature is 3/4. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, accidentals, and ornaments. The first system starts with a treble clef and a bass clef. The second system is marked with a '3' above the treble staff. The third system is marked with a '5' above the treble staff. The fourth system is marked with a '7' above the treble staff. The fifth system is marked with a '9' above the treble staff. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, accidentals, and ornaments.

If the Courantes of the A major English Suite are close to a pure French style, taking Bach's suites as a whole one can plot a spectrum ranging from French dance to Italian sonata, to which one can then relate other pieces and draw conclusions about performance. The spectrum could be arranged as follows, using the Courantes from the following suites:



1. Overture-suite in C major BWV 1066:  $\frac{3}{4}$ , as near as Bach ever got to a genuine French courante, which could be played in all respects as one would a courante from Couperin's *Concerts*.

2. French Suite in D minor BWV 812:  $\frac{3}{4}$ , the same time signature and general metre, but sonata concerns are evident in the moto perpetuo of eighths and the Invention handling of motifs (note the exposition structure of the first two bars, with the left hand imitating the right); a more developed example of this type is in the C minor clavier Partita BWV 826; more than a slight inequality would impede the projection of larger eighth-note shapes.

3. French Suite in B minor BWV 814:  $\frac{3}{4}$ , the time signature and general movement imply a fleeter tempo; much systematic motivic working, such as would normally be more common in a gigue; with these long runs of eighths we are approaching Corelli's corrente „da camera“ and only a slight inequality of stress, as recommended by Quantz, with flexible shaping of groups, seems in order.

4. French Suite in C minor BWV 813:  $\frac{3}{4}$ , a sonata allegro; note the complete rising scale from bars 9–14, such a systematic shape is quite un-French. In this piece Bach uses a favourite sonata structure for a minor key (also noted in the C minor cello/G minor lute Allemande) of a square 4-bar opening phrase, then a sequential modulation that passes through the relative major (bars 5–16) to the dominant at the double bar; basically even performance, though with shaping of the very varied sub-phrases.

5. French Suite in E major BWV 817:  $\frac{3}{4}$ , another sonata allegro, this time with brilliant concertante sixteenths; this courante uses Bach's favoured sonata structure for a major key of a square opening phrase (bars 1–4), a sequential modulation to the dominant (bars 5–13), and a closing theme featuring a pedal (bars 13–16); even sixteenths with phrase shaping.

The string courantes are all ostensibly of sonata type with the exception of the C minor cello Courante from BWV 1011.<sup>18</sup> On closer inspection, however, the Frenchness of this hardly reaches beneath the surface. It belongs essentially with fantasia-style pieces, such as the Adagio of the G minor violin Solo BWV 1001 and the Allemande of the D major cello Suite BWV 1012, in which large chords on main beats are separated by flourishes, a type that has been seen as related to the „Agréments“ for Corelli's Op. 5 Sonatas published by Étienne Roger (Amsterdam) in 1710.<sup>19</sup> In the C minor Courante the flourishes take the form of typical French courante groups of eighths in  $\frac{3}{4}$  metre. The groups of eighths, however, as in the D minor French Suite Courante, are worked motivically in a way foreign to the French prototype. Of the two shapes of four eighths in bar 1 (second and third beats) the inversion of the first

<sup>18</sup> Though see Meredith Little and Natalie Jenne, *Dance and the music of J.S. Bach*, Bloomington 2/2001, Chapter 9 for rhythmic types. For Bach's favoured sonata structure, derived from the aria ritornello, in relation to the G major cello Courante from BWV 1007, see David Ledbetter, *Bach's Well-tempered Clavier*, New Haven 2002, 59–64.

<sup>19</sup> Dominik Sackmann, *Bach und Corelli*, Munich 2000, 135; Peter Walls, *History, imagination and the performance of music*, Woodbridge 2003, 23–25.



can serve as a version of the *tierce coulée* indeterminate phrase ending (first beats of bars 7 and 9), where they relieve the pattern of a downbeat chord at the beginning of each bar, and are the nearest Bach gets to a cadence between the end of the opening period (bar 5) and the double bar.

### Sarabandes

The sarabande as a genre is the most standardised in its phrase structure. The normal pattern is to have two four-bar phrases in the first strain, the first generally divided 2 + 2, or 1 + 1 + 2; the second going straight through as a 4, with a hemiola. Within this, the first phrase generally ends on a weak beat (third beat of the bar) and the second on a strong beat (first beat of the bar). When the first strain is repeated the similarity to a four-line verse form with a rhyme scheme ABAB is very noticeable. Second strains continue the four-bar phraseology. Deviations from this, such as some of Lully's sarabandes with five-bar phrases, make a strong effect since the genre structure is so set. Composers nonetheless treated it in a great variety of ways. In his keyboard works of around 1720 Bach again covers a wide stylistic spectrum, from fairly French (E major French Suite, often compared to the Sarabande „L'Unique“ from Couperin's *Second livre* of 1717, a book that Bach seems to have known); an aria type (G major French Suite); a three-part Sinfonia (B minor French Suite); a slow movement for four-part strings (D minor French Suite); to a mixture of sarabande and polonaise (E minor English Suite BWV 810). The *clavier Partitas* later add further types, even including an appoggiatura-laden galant-style trio (G major, BWV 829).

It is never healthy to look at any branch of Bach's works in isolation. A comparison of the Sarabande of the B minor violin Partita with that of the D minor French Suite is useful in defining the type and performance feel. The D minor French Suite Sarabande is fundamentally a sonata type with a *moto perpetuo* of eighths and stretches with the theme in the bass. The similarity to the final chorus of the Saint Matthew Passion is striking. The B minor violin Sarabande is inevitably lighter in texture, but shares the fact that Bach in these pieces has reduced the normal rhythmic variety of the genre to two rhythms only: the steady tread of three quarters to a bar (with various decorations), and the rhythm ♩ ♪ ♩, which gives a downbeat feel to the even-numbered bars and enhances the processional tread of the pieces. This limitation of ingredients concentrates the sombre mood. Given the sonata orientation, a marked French inequality for eighths, as proposed by Arnold Dolmetsch for the French Suite, would be quite inappropriate.<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, in order for this highly expressive processional metre to tell, quarters should not be too heavy, the downbeat feel of the even-numbered bars is needed, and Quantz's distinction of onbeat and offbeat eighths is appropriate.

<sup>20</sup> Arnold Dolmetsch, *The interpretation of music in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries*, London 1946, 86–67.



The Sarabanda of the D minor violin Partita BWV 1004, on the other hand, a somewhat more tragic piece, still uses the three quarters, but now with the more typical sarabande rhythm ♩ ♩ ♩, In this, and its variety of note values, it resembles the Sarabande of the D minor cello Suite BWV 1008. Here a look at a similar piece in the background tradition is useful in defining performance issues. The Sarabande from Demachy's D minor suite for unaccompanied bass viol (Paris 1685, the first such viol publication; Ex. 7) is a good example of the sophistication of style in French lute and viol repertory of the later 17th century. As in the old species counterpoint, each note value has its own relative weight: generally in a French dance genre there are two fundamental note values and one decorative one. In the  $\frac{3}{4}$  sarabande, fundamental note values are half-notes and quarter-notes, with eighths as decorative, therefore susceptible to rhythmic inequality. In a sophisticated solo piece such as this the inequality is clearly meant to be varied expressively. The group of four from bars 4–5, for example, has a special weight since it elides the end of the first four-bar phrase very expressively, and leads to the chord on the second beat of bar 5. Standard triplet inequality would quite undermine the subtlety and expressiveness of this so the group needs to be treated as a whole, perhaps with a lingering on the first note, part of the meaning of the bowing slur. A further sophistication is the use of sixteenths, an extra level of decorative notes; more decorative, therefore meant to be played yet more freely than eighths.

Ex. 7 : Demachy, *Pièces de Violle* (Paris 1685) [pieces in D minor], Sarabande.

The image shows a musical score for a Sarabande. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff is the treble clef, and the other three are bass clefs. The music is in D minor, 3/4 time. The score includes various note values, including half notes, quarter notes, and sixteenth notes. There are also ornaments (marked with 'x') and slurs. The word 'Sarabande' is written at the beginning of the first staff. The score is set against a light gray background.

An example of this lightness and freedom of sixteenths is in the flourishes in even-numbered bars of Bach's E major French Suite Sarabande. Sixteenths in the D minor cello Suite Sarabande have yet further subtlety in variety of bowings: as a group in bar 3, in pairs in bar 7 and so on, a variety of bowing



patterns typical of the oncoming galant style with its many levels of decorative note values. The type of modern performance that does not differentiate between the relative weight of different note values loses the rhythm and also the true expressive nature of these pieces. In view of its closer relation to a French sarabande, the eighths here could perhaps be „un tant-soit-peu“ more unequal than those in the B minor violin Sarabande, the main consideration being that they do not lose a feeling of a sense of direction. Similarly in the D minor violin Sarabanda, which has upbeat further intensified by 32nds, and stretches of sonata-style sixteenths as well as bars of typical French dance rhythms: a range of stylistic types taken up and greatly extended in the final Ciaccona of this Partita.

An examination of their stylistic background reveals the high level of sophistication of Bach's treatment of dance genres. Expression and rhetoric are undoubtedly leading objectives in these pieces. No less, though, is connoisseurship of musical materials. In this no other composer of his time excelled Bach, who provided rich examples for the instruction of the young and the delight of connoisseurs. A performance approach that ignores this connoisseurship is missing a large part of these riches.