UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
FACULTY OF ARTS
MEDITERRANEAN INSTITUTE
MUSIC STUDIES PROGRAMME

Johann Sebastian Bach: *Aria with 30 Variations*

An insight into its Style, Structure and Interpretation

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE MEDITERRANEAN INSTITUTE, UNIVERSITY OF MALTA, IN PART-FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTORATE IN PERFORMANCE.

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MALTA

FEBRUARY 2011

To my family who provides unconditional support and love

ABSTRACT

Considered to be the embodiment of eighteenth-century music, Johann Sebastian Bach's compositional output, uses genres that had already been established, so that his influence lies in the way he inventively reinvigorated existing forms, moulding their structures to produce new original works. The *Aria with thirty variations*, popularly known today as the *Goldberg Variations* are significant from various perspectives. They are the largest set of variations to date and their scale was to remain unsurpassed until Beethoven's Diabelli set. Structurally, they are perhaps the clearest example of Bach's meticulous compositional methodology whereby every element can be seen to link to another, forming a complex whole. The canons too have their own particular development, as they progress from imitation at the unison through to the interval of a ninth. In addition, the all-important, though understated bass-line heard in the opening Aria is the underlying overall unifying factor of the whole work. While such patterns give these Variations unifying factors, Bach still maintains variety through a number of subtle techniques such as time-signatures, different characters, the irregular placing of minor-mode movements, as well as the number of contrapuntal voices employed in each movement. This work is also a unique example of eighteenth-century practices, moving away from convention by specifying a particular instrument. From a technical viewpoint, the *Variations* can be described as the highpoint of eighteenth-century virtuosity, whose technical demands are still regarded as challenging.

From the circumstances of its composition, through to its standing in today's mainstream repertoire, the researcher will examine what influenced Bach's compositional method and how this work in turn influenced works by later composers. The core of the thesis will be an in-depth study on the structure of the *Variations*, where both its internal constitution as well as its overall architectonic structure will be examined. Different interpretations relating to the execution of ornamentation, rhythm and articulation employed through the centuries will be discussed with reference to various editions. Other performance issues relating to repeats, and tempos as well as choice of instrument will also be examined. Furthermore, these will be supported by examples from selected recordings by different artists who have performed the *Goldberg Variations*.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Professor Michael Laus for his guidance, inspiring discussions and sincere support during both my performances and research.

I am grateful to the University of Malta, in particular the professors of the Music Department, Rev Prof Peter Serracino Inglott, Dr Simon Mercieca, Dr John Galea and Dr Mro Dion Buhagiar, who helped me in different ways.

My deepest gratitude is due to my family and special friends whose belief in me gave me the required determination to continue with my studies. All these have put up with me during my doctorate studies and the preparation of this work.

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STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the material presented in this dissertation is my own, and that no portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning. The accompanying CD is the live recording of the piano recital which I performed on the 11th May 2012 at Sala Isouard, Manoel Theatre, Malta.

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Joanne Camilleri

PREFACE

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1750), organist, harpsichordist, violist and violinist, Court Musician in Weimar, Kapellmeister at Cöthen, Director of Music in the principal churches of Leipzig, whose works span ecclesiastical and secular for choir, orchestra and solo instruments, is considered to be the embodiment of eighteenth-century music.

Bach's significance in the so-called Baroque era is not due to the introduction of new genres or a particular compositional style however. His ornate writing was in effect considered to be old-fashioned by some of his contemporaries who were eagerly looking ahead to a simpler homophonic style. Bach's compositional output, uses genres that had already been established, thus his influence lies in the way he inventively reinvigorated existing forms, moulding their structures to produce new works. His art reflects the current approach of merging the contrapuntal style with a predominantly harmonic one, with perhaps the *Aria with thirty variations*, popularly known today as the *Goldberg Variations* (published 1742) epitomizing such a unification. At the same time, Bach's works show an amalgamation of influences from the north (Sweelinck, Buxtehude), the south (Pachelbel, Froberger, Vivaldi, Corelli), and the west (Couperin, Grigny)[1]. Nevertheless, while his masterful assimilation of these historical and geographical influences is total, his own originality still prevails.

Bach composed and produced collections of works that thoroughly explore a range of musical and technical possibilities. This can be appreciated in the two books of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* (1722 & 1742) whose main purpose was to demonstrate the possibilities of well-tempered tuning and in which collection a variety of contrapuntal and fugal techniques are explored, the English and French Suites and the Partitas, which methodically explore a range of metres and keys, and the four volumes of *Clavierübung* that include the *Concerto nach Italienischem Gusto* (*Italian Concerto*) and *Overture nach Französicher Art (French Overture*) (1735). This was augmented by his inclination to manifest large structures under a unified design, as in the *'Organ Mass'* (1739) of *Clavierübung III*, which produced masterpieces such as the *Goldberg Variations* (published 1742) and *A Musical Offering* (published 1747).

[1] John Gillespie, *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music* (New York: Dover, 1965), 130.

The *Variations* are significant from various perspectives. They are the largest set of variations to date and their scale was to remain unsurpassed until Beethoven's Diabelli set. Structurally, they are perhaps the clearest example of Bach's meticulous compositional methodology whereby every element can be seen to link to another, forming a complex whole. One can see for example how Bach builds a mammoth work from the concept of the "patterns of three", using three basic styles that recur in every third variation. Another concept is the "patterns of two" where the grand architecture of the *Goldberg Variations* is simplified by a clear-cut symmetrical design, while its phraseology is also built around multiples of two. In addition, the all-important, though understated bass-line heard in the opening Aria is the underlying overall unifying factor of the whole work. The canons too have their own particular development, as they progress from imitation at the unison (Variation 3), through to the interval of a ninth by Variation 27. While such patterns give these Variations unifying factors, Bach still maintains variety through a number of subtle techniques such as time-signatures, different characters, the irregular placing of minor-mode movements, as well as the number of contrapuntal voices employed in each movement. This work is also a unique example of eighteenth-century practices, moving away from convention not only by specifying a particular instrument, but specifically requesting a two-manual harpsichord. From a technical viewpoint, the *Variations* can be described as the highpoint of eighteenth-century virtuosity, whose technical demands are still regarded as challenging.

In the ensuing chapters, the above-outlined characteristics of the *Goldberg Variations* will be researched and discussed comprehensively. From the circumstances of its composition, through to its standing in today's mainstream repertoire, the researcher will examine what influenced Bach's compositional method and how this work in turn influenced works by later composers, namely Forkel, Beethoven, Brahms, Reger as well as by Bach himself. The core of the thesis will be an in-depth study on the structure of the *Variations*, where both its internal constitution as well as its overall architectonic structure will be examined. Different interpretations relating to the execution of ornamentation, rhythm and articulation employed through the centuries will be discussed with reference to various editions. Other performance issues relating to repeats, and tempos as well as choice of instrument will also be examined. Furthermore, these will be supported by examples from selected recordings by different artists who have performed the *Goldberg Variations*.

FROM A HISTORICAL VIEWPOINT

The period between the seventeenth and mid-eighteenth century saw a musical language based on polyphony, a developing tonality and the concept of the circle of fifths, elaborate use of ornamentation and evolving instrumental playing techniques. Here was the birth of a more intricate form whose new harmonic processes within more complex structures provided a more stimulating impetus for musicians.

1.1. INFLUENCED MAINLY BY FRANCE AND ITALY

Such an evolving language was naturally influenced by the developing ideas of various different countries, although Italy and France were the two foremost nations who played a predominant part in establishing a strong sense of style. The Germany of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was influenced by these two styles, and as a result the 'German style' has many elements that are derivative, although there are still certain aspects distinctively German. Both the title and style of two of Bach's important works reveal such influences. The *Concerto nach Italienischem Gusto* BWV 971, nowadays referred to as the *Italian Concerto* (published in 1735), is effectively a transcription of a violin concerto, a genre developed by the Italians, most particularly by Antonio Vivaldi (1678 – 1741) who wrote over 500 instrumental concertos. It imitates the soloist/orchestra effect through contrasts of parallel forte/piano indications which are realised through the use of two manuals on the harpsichord. Melody and vibrancy are key features of the Italian style, as can be seen in many works by various Italian composers. Bach's *French Overture* BWV 831 (also published in 1735 with the *Italian Concerto* as part of *Clavierübung II*) reveals the French influence on Bach particularly through the use of the dotted rhythms. Another feature characteristic of the French style is predominance towards ornaments. From a survey of Bach's works, one can notice that much of the expressiveness in Bach's harmonic style derives from the eloquent harmony that he encountered in his study of French music, while the tonal architecture characterizing Bach's structures is derived from the Italian concerto idiom.

1.2. THE FRENCH COURT

Music was thriving, particularly in the French Court of Louis XIV (1638 – 1715) and musicians like Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632 – 1687), Jacques Champion de Chambonnières (c. 1601 – 1672) and François Couperin (1668 – 1773) flourished and influenced many others during his reign. Because of the Sun King's particular interest in dancing, the foundations of the style became highly developed artistically, technically, and scientifically during his lifetime. Not only is de Chambonnières's whole output designated for the harpsichord, but it is exclusively dedicated to dance music. Originating in the French court, the established dances of the Baroque era were: allemande, bourrée, canarie, chaconne, courante, forlane (forlana), gavotte, gigue, loure (slow gigue), menuet (minuet), musette, passacaille (passacaglia), passepied, rigaudon, sarabande and tambourin. From these, the allemande, sarabande, courante and gigue eventually became the basic dances to constitute the Suite, although by the beginning of the eighteenth century they had ceased to be thought of as music to be danced to, but rather as simply music to be listened to, whose inflections retained the characteristics of the dances. Over time, these dance-movements became liable to stylization, with their distinctive features of rhythm and texture becoming exaggerated or even overlaid, as well as becoming more complex and long.

1.3. STYLE IN SAXONY

While Bach is nowadays thought of as the ultimate, most universal exponent of the 'German taste', he had many predecessors who brought to Germany stylistic influences from different countries. Heinrich Schütz (1585 – 1672) had imported the Italian styles of his day to Germany, while organist Johann Jacob Froberger's (1616 – 1667) most influential book containing *Dix suites de clavessin* ('Ten suites for harpsichord') beautifully portrays the French style[2]. By the end of the seventeenth century, the French style had become a fixation in Saxony, leading to the adoption of French mannerisms by the aristocracy and generating a demand for French-style music. German organist Georg Muffat (1653 – 1704), who in his youth had played the violin under Lully in

[2] Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music: The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 259.

Paris, in 1695 published a set of dance suites in the 'Lullian mould', skilfully capturing the unwritten conventions of rhythm and bowing techniques. Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer (1656 – 1746) also prefaced his orchestral dances *Le journal de printems* ('Spring's Diary', 1695) with Lully-style overtures. Between Fisher's publication and that of Froberger, a standard suite format (consisting of the four basic dances) was established, providing a model for all their German-born successors.

1.4. BACH'S INHERITED STYLES

Apart from the influence of Italian and French styles, the strength and seriousness of Bach's harmonic language can be traced back to some German influence, inherited from the chorale[3]. Indeed, especially in Bach's mature works, one can detect a certain representation of his predecessors' achievements, a consummation and development of the French, Italian, and native German styles.

In the course of the *Goldberg Variations*, Bach employs and adapts a wide variety of genres, which originate from different countries. In the set we find allusions to different dances, for example – the suggestion of a polonaise in variations 1 and 12; hints of a passepied in variation 4; the giga for variation 7; and even a hint of the Minuet for variation 19, while the style of the sarabande permeates the Aria.

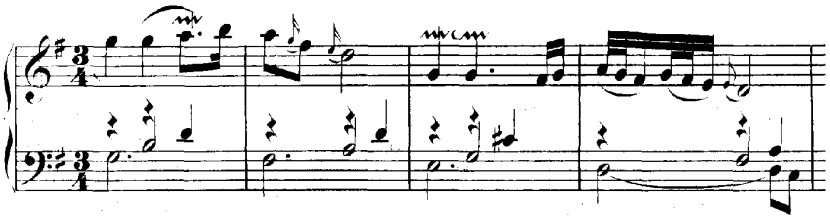
Below is a survey of the different dance movements used by Bach in the *Goldberg Variations*:

Sarabande:[4]

The Aria in the *Goldberg Variations* is a sarabande, stressing the importance of the second beat by either prolonging the note value or through the use of ornamentation. The grandeur of its character transmits feelings of sublimity and dignity – an apt, if somewhat unusual, opening to a work which reveals great imagination as it unfolds.

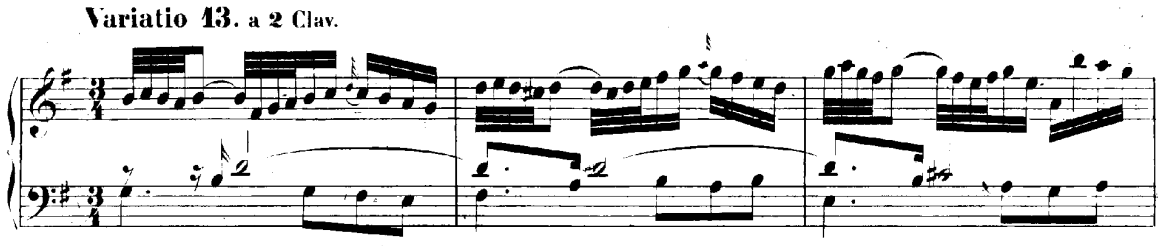
[3] Ann Bond, *A Guide to the Harpsichord* (USA: Amadeus Press, 1997), 173.
[4] The baroque sarabande is a slow dance in triple or compound duple meter (3/2 or 6/4), rather than the much faster Spanish original, with a characteristic emphasis on the second beat of the bar.

Example 1.1 Bach: *Goldberg Variations,* Aria, b.1 – 4

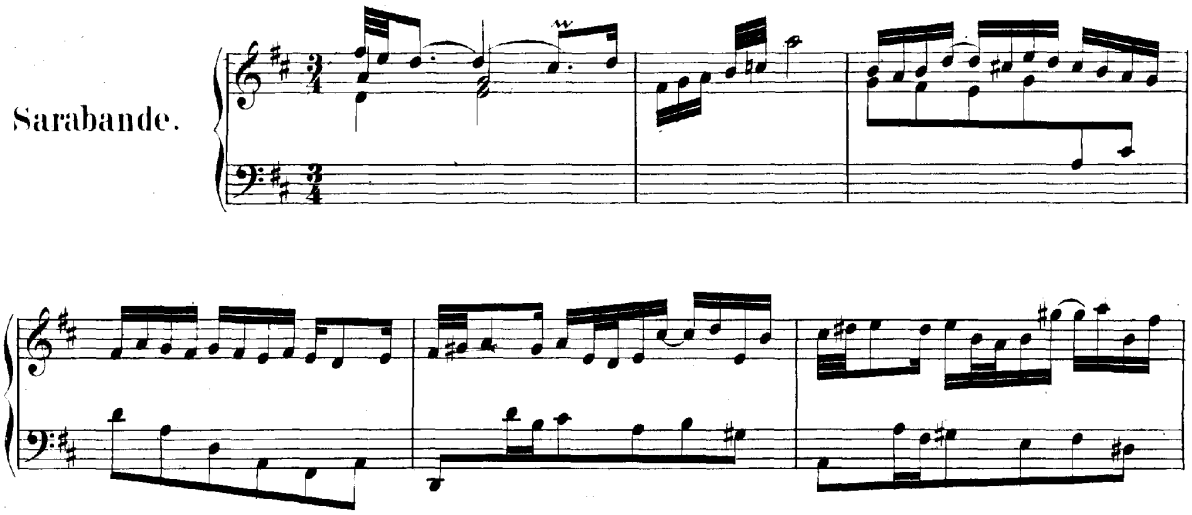


Variation 13 is very similar to the opening Aria in its texture and melodic contours, although its style is more rhetorically ornate as to be almost verbal. Parallels can be found in other works by Bach, including the Sarabande of Partita in D major, the Sarabande of French Suite in G major, the slow movement of the Italian Concerto (although this is in the minor mode) and in the Cantatas, particularly those whose *obbligato* solo instrument plays filigree patterns in the treble[5]. It seems that Bach often saw decorative melodies as appropriate for sarabandes.

Example 1.2 Bach: *Goldberg Variations,* Variation 13 b.1 – 3



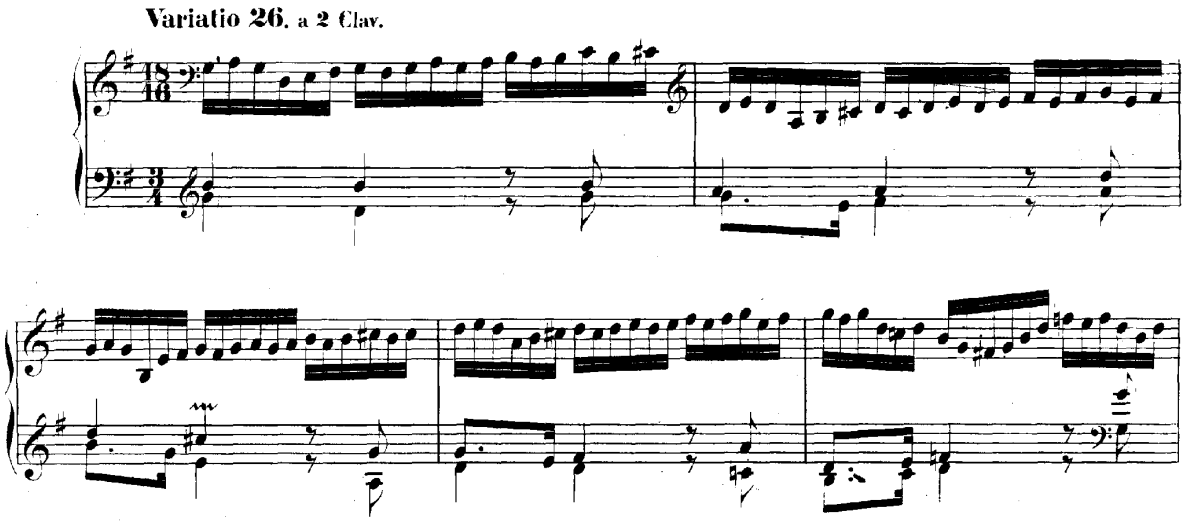
Example 1.3 Bach: *Partita* in D major BWV 828, Sarabande b.1 – 6



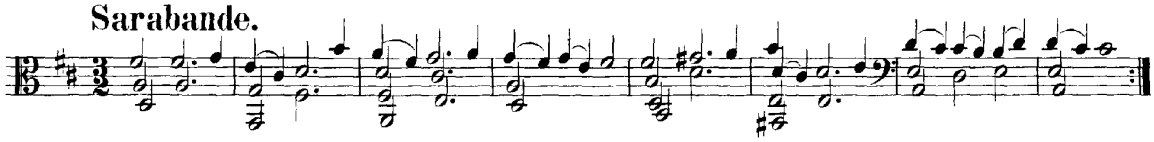
[5] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 67.

Buried in the virtuosic bubbling line of Variation 26 is another sarabande, which is a simpler exposition of the harmonies of the Goldberg bass-theme[6] than the actual Aria itself. Reminiscent of Handel's sarabandes, its style recalls the sarabande of Bach's Cello Suite in D major BWV 1012[7]. The composer's addition of grace notes and appoggiaturas in his copy of Variation 26 confirms the elegant and *affettuoso* French sarabande setting, although when performed on the piano these are not always practical to adopt due to increased physical awkwardness as a result of having only one manual.

Example 1.4 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 26 b.1 – 5



Example 1.5 Bach: *Cello Suite* in D major, Sarabande b.1 – 8



Gigue:[8]

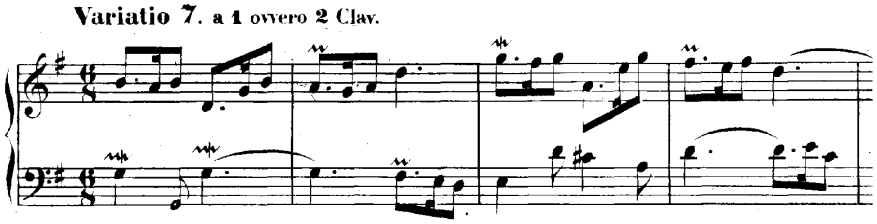
Bach adopts the gigue in Variation 7, which is the only variation where he makes specific reference to the style of a dance, entitling it *al tempo di Giga*. 'Giga' rather than 'gigue' does not necessarily indicate an Italian style, but it was probably adopted due to the conventional way of indicating tempi[9], for there was no common term *au*

[6] Refer to Chapter 4 – *The Constitution of the Goldberg Variations, 4.4 The Bass Line*, 94.
[7] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 84.

[8] With possible time-signatures of 12/8, 6/8 or 6/4 (sometimes 3/8, 3/4 or even 4/4), the gigue encompasses wide melodic skips and continuous lively triplets. This dance has two distinctive styles, with the Italian *giga* faster than the French *gigue*. The Germans adopted the French type. In its idealized form, the gigue usually began with a point of imitation, which was often inverted in the second strain.
[9] *tempo di* had already been used in *Clavierübung I.*

temps du. A very significant point that Peter Williams makes in the Cambridge Music Handbook, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations*, is that Bach could also have written '*à la manière de*' (or an Italian equivalent), but not doing so indicates that perhaps tempo was the main clue to the genre for Bach, as it might have been for Couperin, emphasising the fact that it is a 'character piece in the time of' rather than 'the dance called'. Perhaps the symmetrical quality of the two halves disqualifies this variation from being simply called gigue.[10]

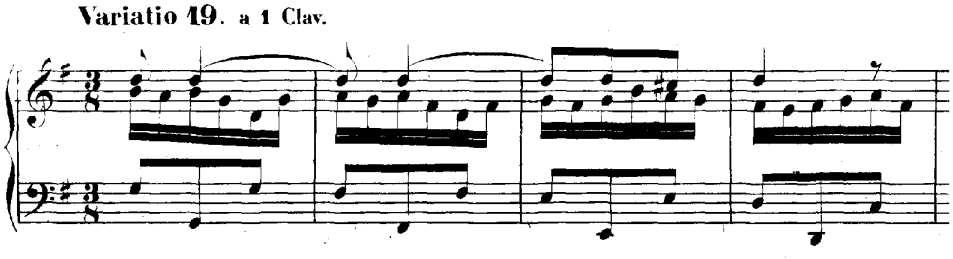
Example 1.6 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 7 b.1 – 4



Minuet:[11]

Variation 19 of the *Goldberg Variations* suggests a minuet, although, as with the allusions to all the other dances in this work, it is certainly one of great originality. In this variation, Bach diverts from the expected minuet notation, adding bubbling semiquavers in between the stable quaver 3/8 pulse, giving it the same sparkling feeling found in the last movement of his Brandenburg Concerto No.3. Bach might even be referring to the Italian practice here, where the minuet was often considerably quicker and livelier, and was sometimes written in 3/8 or 6/8 time. Nevertheless, it still maintains a certain aristocratic charm.

Example 1.7 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 19 b.1 – 4

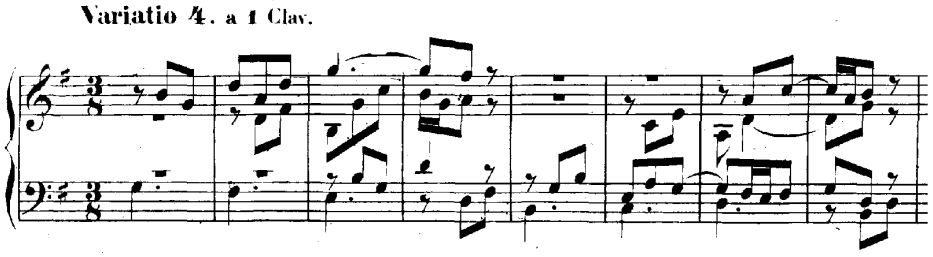


[10] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 62.
[11] The most common of all the French dances, the Baroque minuet was danced at a livelier tempo than the Classical Minuet of Haydn and Mozart. With a meter in triple time (3/4) and of a moderately fast speed, the instrumental minuet's texture only had quavers as its fastest notes, which gave it a certain noble simplicity.

Passepied:[12]

The impression of a passepied is superbly conveyed in Variation 4 of the *Goldberg Variations*, although Bach's self-imposed restriction to the form of each variation leaves it lacking an upbeat. Its little motif, which is also found in inversion and which contributes to its particularly good-natured character, infiltrates almost every bar.

Example 1.8 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation4 b.1 – 8

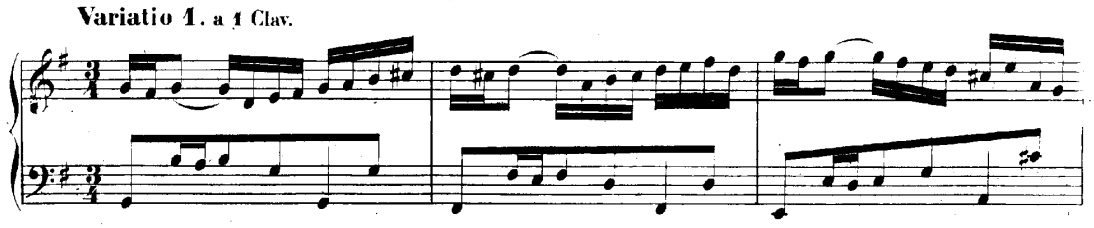


Polonaise:[13]

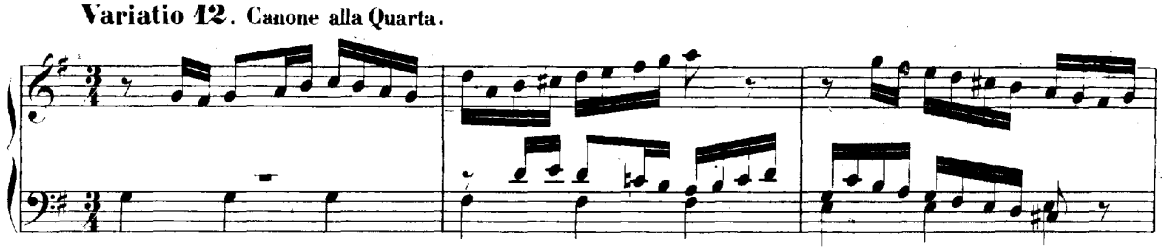
The characteristics of Variation 1 of the *Goldberg Variations* seem to suggest a polonaise, for, apart from the steady triple time, it also has a 'swing' feeling in its figuration. However, it does not have much in common with the polonaises found in the second *Anna Magdalena Book*, which identify more with the characteristics of a rougher dance. This variation could, on the other hand, be a more polished version of the polonaise, perhaps referring to the original version of the genre. Such features alluding to the polonaise already give an indication of the type of tempo to be taken for this movement, although some performers have adopted a rather lively tempo – as does Glenn Gould in his recording of 1955[14]. The predominantly semiquaver figuration should actually be an indication that this movement should not be taken too fast, for this was Bach's way of showing such a preference of tempo. The same can be said of Variation 12, whose rhythm and figuration suggests the character of a polonaise (even though the variation is actually a canon at the fourth) albeit of a more polished quality.

[12] The Passepied is similar to the Minuet, although it is a livelier French dance with a time-signature of 3/8. Its character is that of an amiable gaiety, implying a rapid allegretto or a moderate allegro.
[13] Of Polish origin, the polonaise was originally a slow dance in 3/4 time.
[14] The recording of 1981 is in a somewhat steadier tempo. Glenn Glenn, *J. S. Bach. Goldberg Variations BWV 988. 1981 Digital Recording*, Sony Classical SMK52619(CD), recorded 1981, accessed March 25, 2010. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7LWANJFHEs&feature=related.

Example 1.9 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 1, b.1 – 3



Example 1.10 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 12: b. 1-3



Thus, as seen in the above survey, the dance movements are "character pieces in the time of" a particular dance, hinting at the characteristics of the respective dances they are indicating, but still retaining certain individual features.

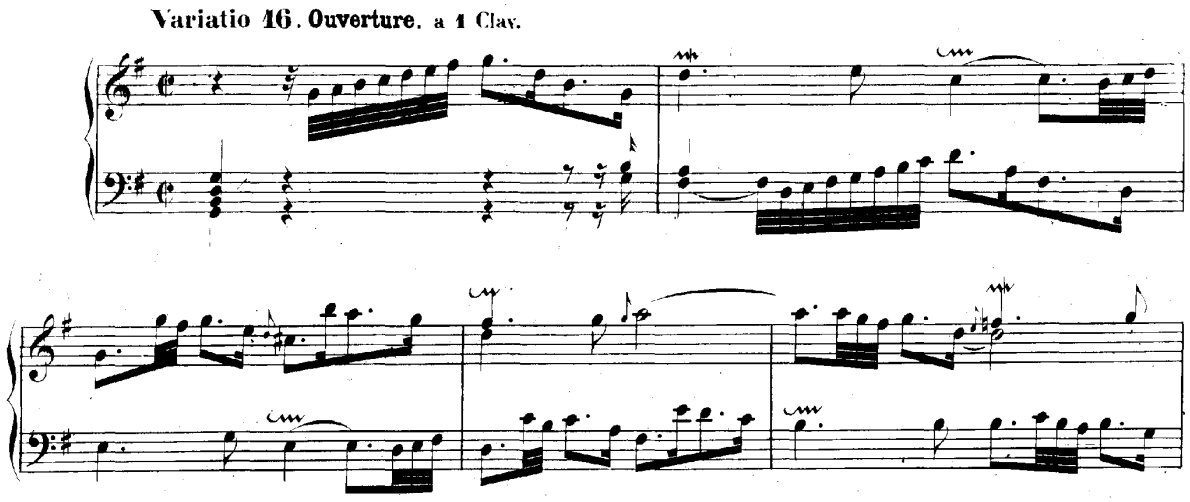
Overture:[15]

Variation 16 opens with the biggest chord in the whole work – an opening similar to that of Bach's *Italian Concerto* and the *French Overture* in B minor of *Clavierübung II*[16]. It has all the idiosyncratic French attributes with its runs, dotted rhythms, rushed upbeats, and a fugue that starts on a weak beat. An exception to the French style is the concise fugue found in the second half of Variation 16, which is not given a chance to develop, although such types of fugues were also familiar to Bach.

[15] The term 'Overture' signifies an opening of, or an introduction to a piece, usually a vocal work. Originating as a mere trumpet call or an equally short introduction, the overture soon culminated in the French overture of Lully and the Italian overture of Alessando Scarlatti (1660 – 1725) in the seventeenth century, its style and form to be later developed by the classical and romantic era composers. The French overture consists of three sections: slow – fast – slow (the Italian overture also consists of three movements, but is in the form: fast – slow – fast), and it usually has the characteristic French dotted rhythm. The first time Bach uses these characteristic regal rhythms of the French Overture is possibly in the Cantata BWV 4, verse 6, which connotes an air of great solemnity and ceremony. Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music: The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 345.

[16] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 71.

Example 1.11 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 16: b. 1 – 5**

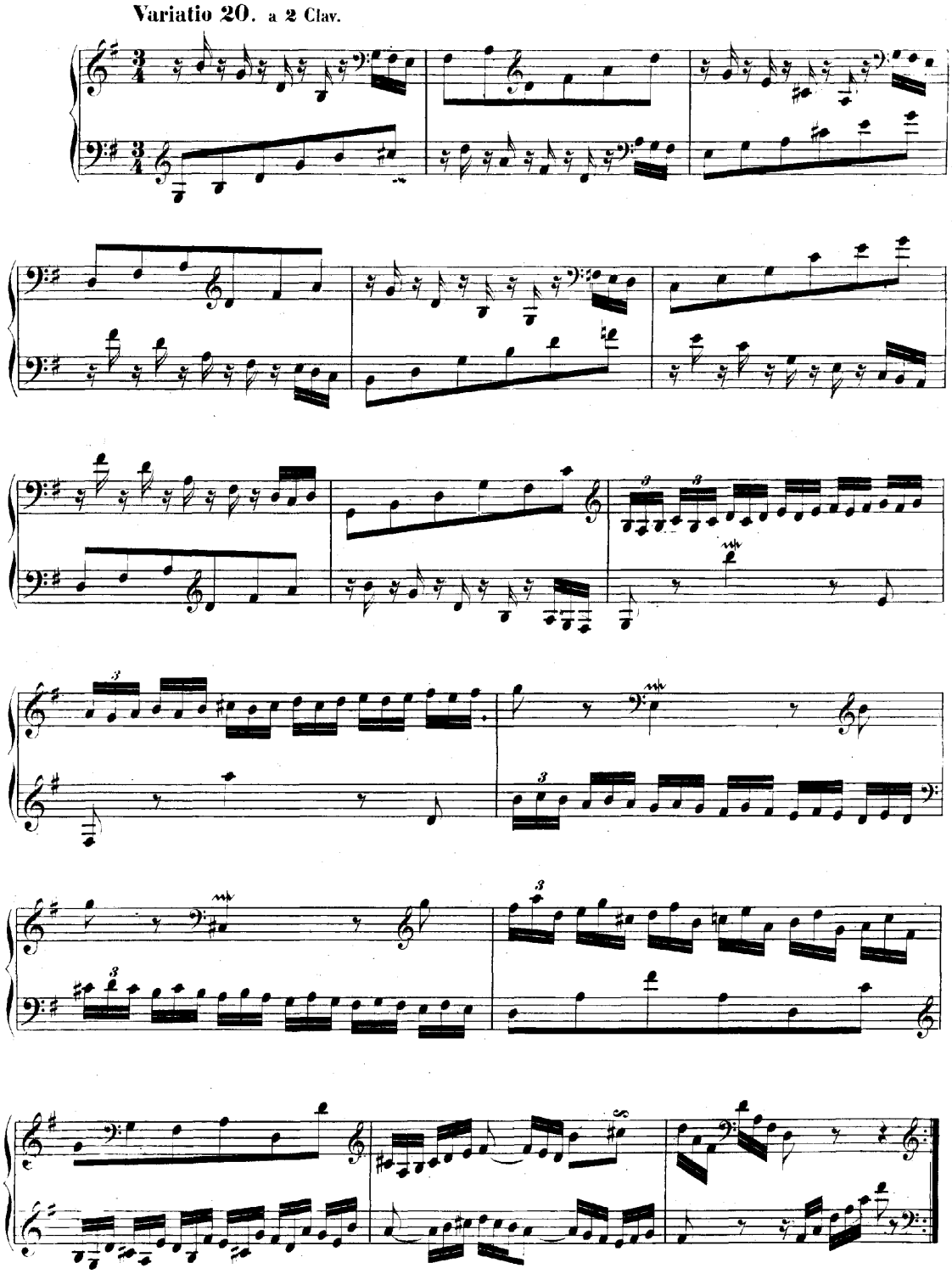


Toccata:

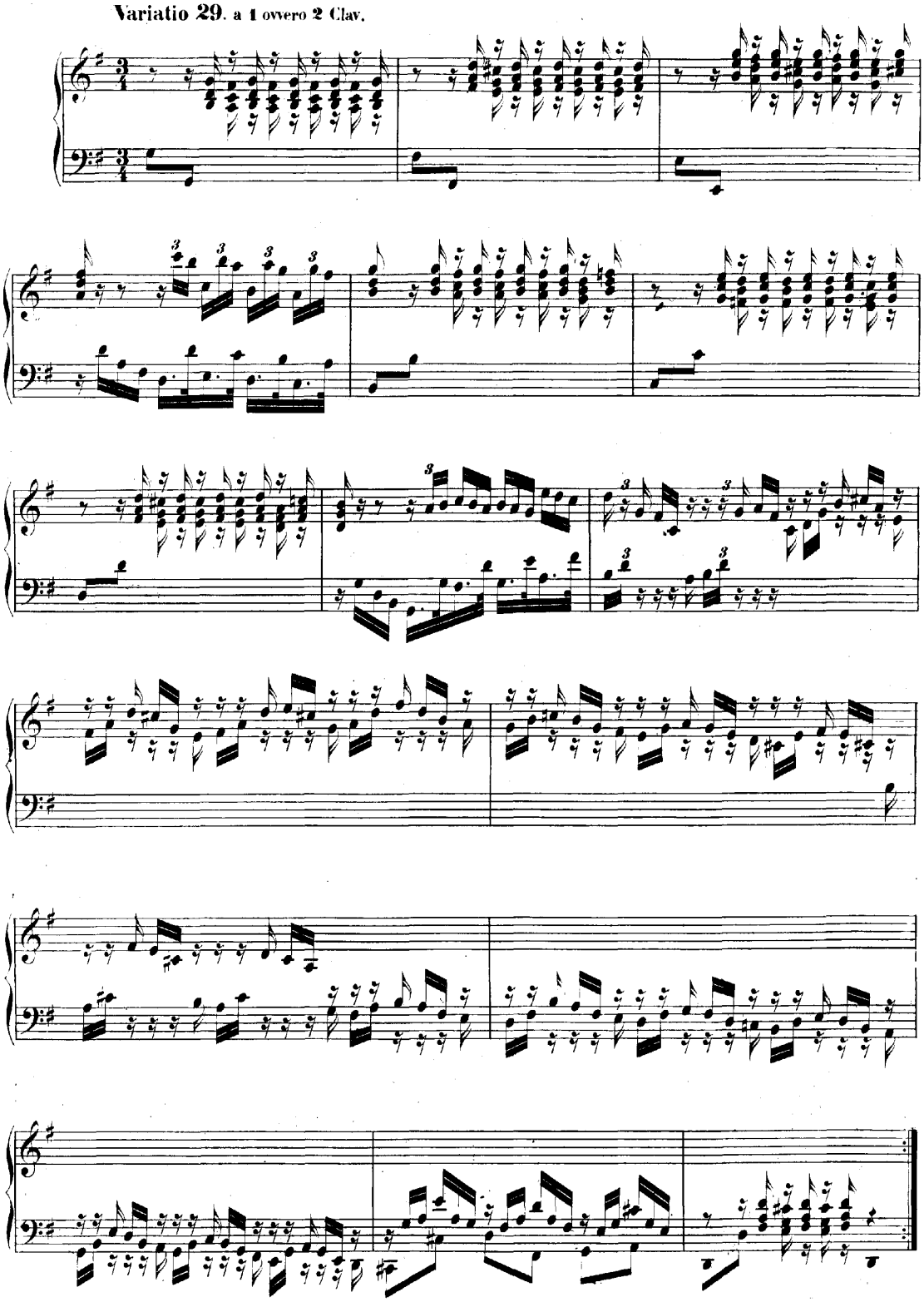
Driven by a certain irresistible energy, the Italian style is characterized by bold and brilliant Allegros, which were handed down from the virtuosic violin playing for which the Italians were renowned, later translated to the harpsichord[17]. Bach became familiar with the harpsichord toccata during his posts at the courts of Weimar and Cöthen, assimilating it thoroughly in his works. His toccatas for harpsichord are multi-sectional works which include fugal writing as part of their structure – an approach similar to that of Dietrich Buxtehude (1637 – 1707). In the *Goldberg Variations*, however, Bach dispenses with the fugal section and refers to the toccata as a "touch-piece", a moment of virtuosity and rhetorical skill. Elements of the toccata can be found in various movements of the *Goldberg Variations*, most significantly in Variations 20 and 29.

[17] This style of writing is most significantly manifested in the toccata, whose capricious, exuberant character, and uninterrupted rhythmic flow in *perpetuum mobile*, was often used as a vehicle to display the performer's skill at the keyboard and on the pedals. The figurations employed took the form of rapid scales, broken chords and *passaggi* of various shapes, giving it an improvisatory character, alternating with chordal or fugal parts. Beginning with Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583 – 1643), the harpsichord toccata in Italy came to the fore during the last decades of the seventeenth century and the first of the eighteenth, jointly with the advent of the harpsichord's most flourishing phase. The harpsichord's natural sparkling tone quality further augments the effect of the keyboard toccata.

Example 1.12 **Bach:** ***Goldberg Variations*****, Variation 20, b.1 – 16**



Example 1.13 **Bach:** ***Goldberg Variations*****, Variation 29, b.1 – 16**

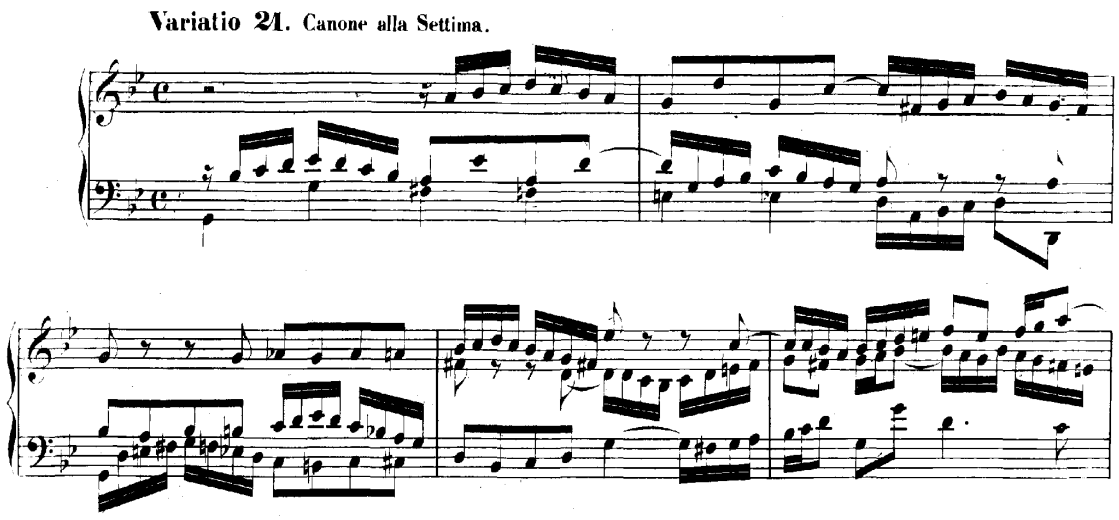


Chorales:

Martin Luther (1483 – 1546), founder of the Lutheran tradition established the German chorale and pioneered a distinctive German musical style. Counterpoint was in fact an organic part of the Germanic musical spirit[18].

Variation 21 of the *Goldberg Variations* is reminiscent of a chorale-setting, whose prevailing semiquaver patterns of its canonic lines, which also pass into the bass part, create a unified, blending sound, evocative of an organ piece. The chorale also features heavily in Bach's *Clavierübung III*, which consists of a *Praeludium* followed by a collection of twenty-one chorale preludes, four *Duetti* (actually two-part inventions) and a concluding fugue.

Example 1.14 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 21, b.1 – 5



Canons:

Another very Germanic genre is the canon[19]. Bach's most frequent use of canon is either in symbolic representation of a text or, more often, simply as a compositional technique[20]. He also left a number of "puzzle canons" [21], the most significant being the

[18] While the chorale is naturally the pillar of Lutheran church music, this genre also made its way into secular works and domestic music making, where the melodic quotation could no doubt still be understood by the audience. One type of variation of this genre is the chorale-prelude, where the chorale itself is a German Lutheran hymn.

[19] The term canon originally referred to the 'rule' itself whereby the polyphony was arrived at from a melody that was duplicated at a certain pitch or interval of time.

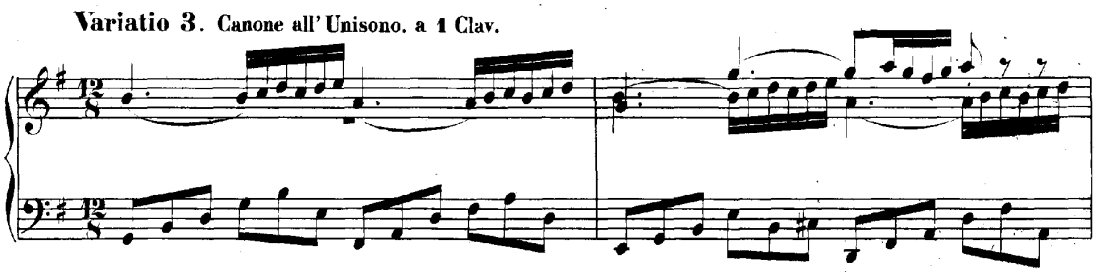
[20] Bach's earliest canon is a perpetual canon in four parts (BWV 1073) written at Weimar in 1713 for an unknown recipient. Malcolm Boyd, *Bach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 193.

[21] During Bach's time, this form of canon, with its intriguing musical puzzles, was a favourite way of showing esteem between friends and was used for dedications and greetings.

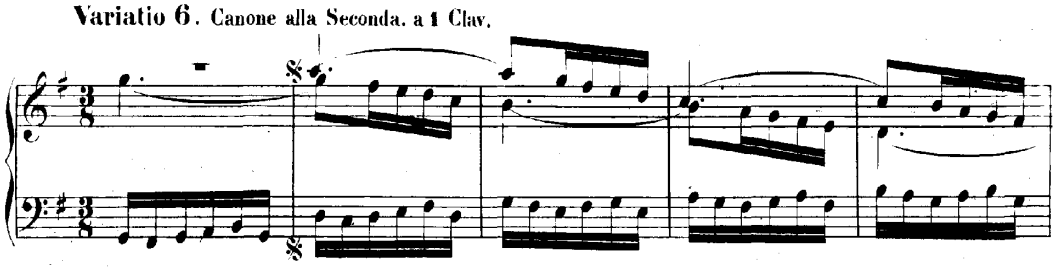
Fourteen Canons on the 'Goldberg' Bass BWV 769/769a where the canon is incomplete, in code, or even omitted altogether.

The canonic style forms part of some of Bach's most significant works: *Goldberg Variations* (1741 – 1742) has 9 canons; *Musical Offering* (1747) has 10 canons; *Canonic Variations* (1748) has 5 canons; *Art of Fugue* (1751) has 4 canons. With the *Goldberg Variations* the canon was elevated to a new level of importance in Bach's works, and it infiltrates his compositions from then until his death. In the *Variations,* the canon forms an integral part of the work's structure, with every third variation being a canon, each beginning at a different interval and progressing from the unison to the ninth.

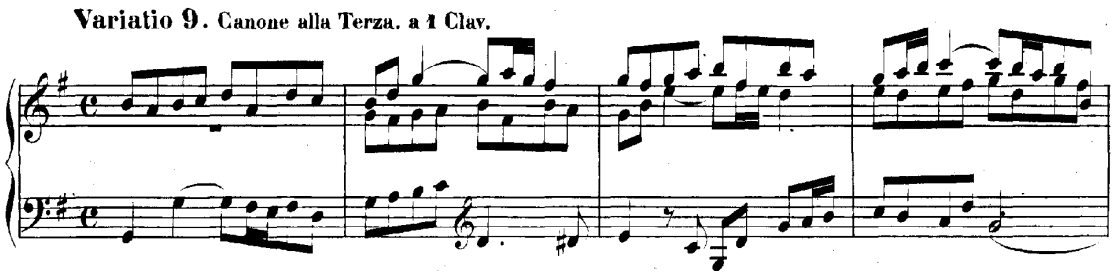
Example 1.15 Bach: *Goldberg Variations,* Variation 3: b.1 – 2



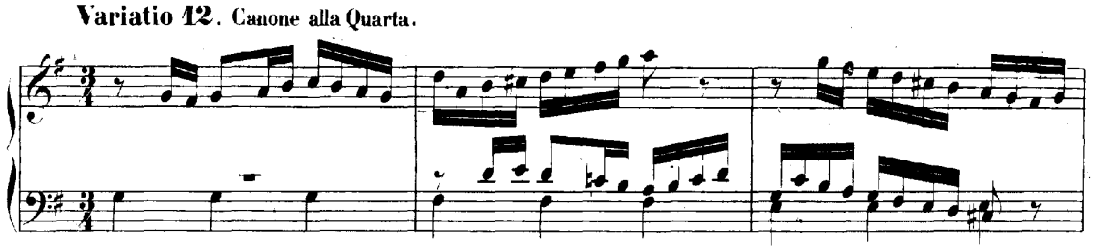
Example 1.16 Bach: *Goldberg Variation,* Variation 6: b.1 – 4



Example 1.17 Bach: *Goldberg Variations,* Variation 9: b.1 – 4



Example 1.18 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 12: b.1 – 3**



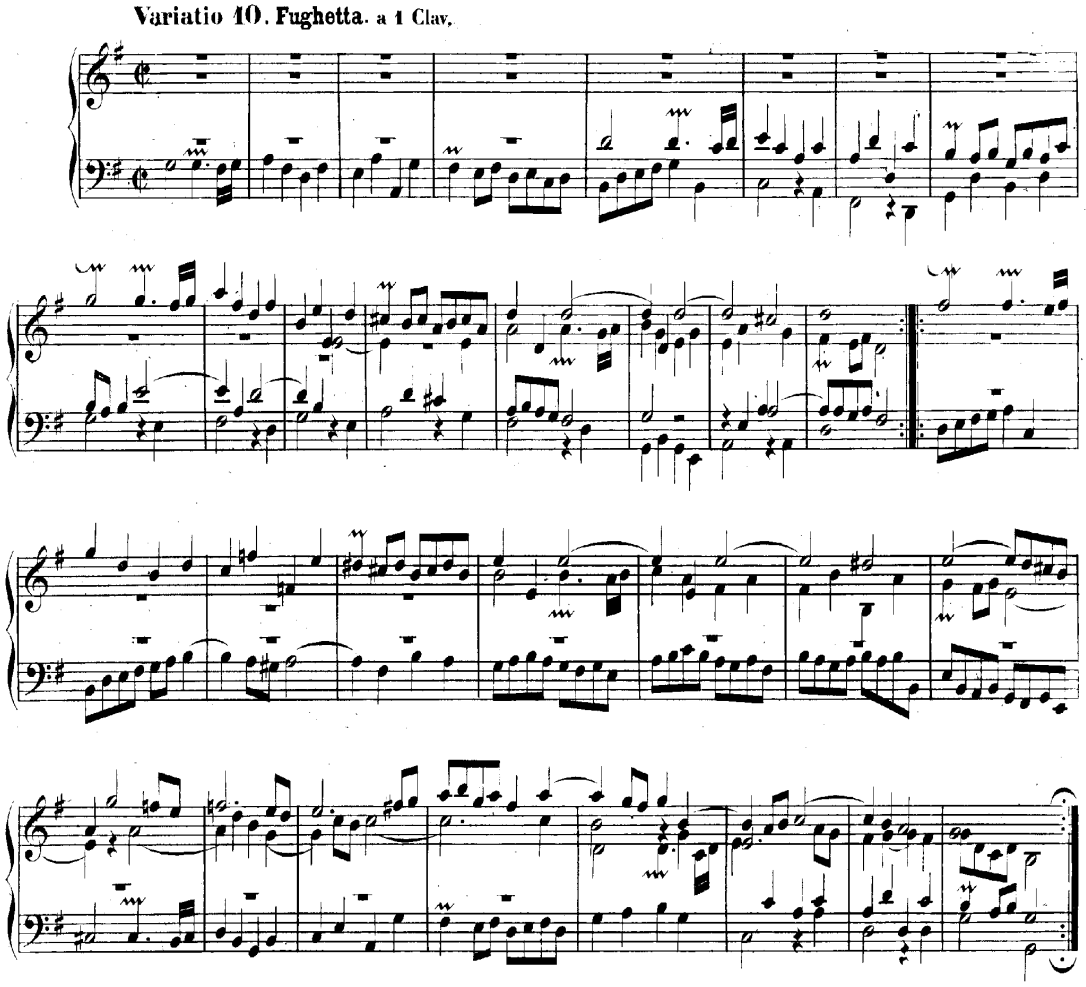
Fugues:[22]

In the *Goldberg Variations*, apart from the fugal second section of Variation 16, Bach uses the fugue form for Variation 10, which he himself entitles 'fughetta'. A regular four-part fugue, its first four bars make up the fugue subject, based on the Goldberg bass-theme[23], which is answered in the dominant, then in the tonic, and again in the supertonic, with a similar plan for the second half. This variation nevertheless continues to adhere to Bach's established rules set for all the variations as it clearly preserves the *Goldberg*'s four-bar phraseology and in no way does it attempt to modify the binary form, as a fugue might.

[22] A harmonically driven form, the fugue derives its identity and strength from the regularity of its patterns, such that a melody (subject) is heard in each of the voices while being accompanied by a second melody (the countersubject), and when the statement in all voices is complete, episode passages that do not necessarily have any thematic relationship with the subject theme connect to the passage with the next subject entry. The form evolved from other earlier types of contrapuntal compositions, not least the Italian *canzona* and *ricercare*. Middle and late Baroque composers such as Dietrich Buxtehude (1637 – 1707) and Johann Pachelbel (1653 – 1706) contributed greatly to the development of the fugue, with the form reaching ultimate maturity with Johann Sebastian Bach, particularly with his two volumes of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*.

[23] Refer to Chapter 4 – *The Constitution of the Goldberg Variations, 4.4 The Bass line*, 94.

Example 1.19 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 10**



Quodlibet:[24]

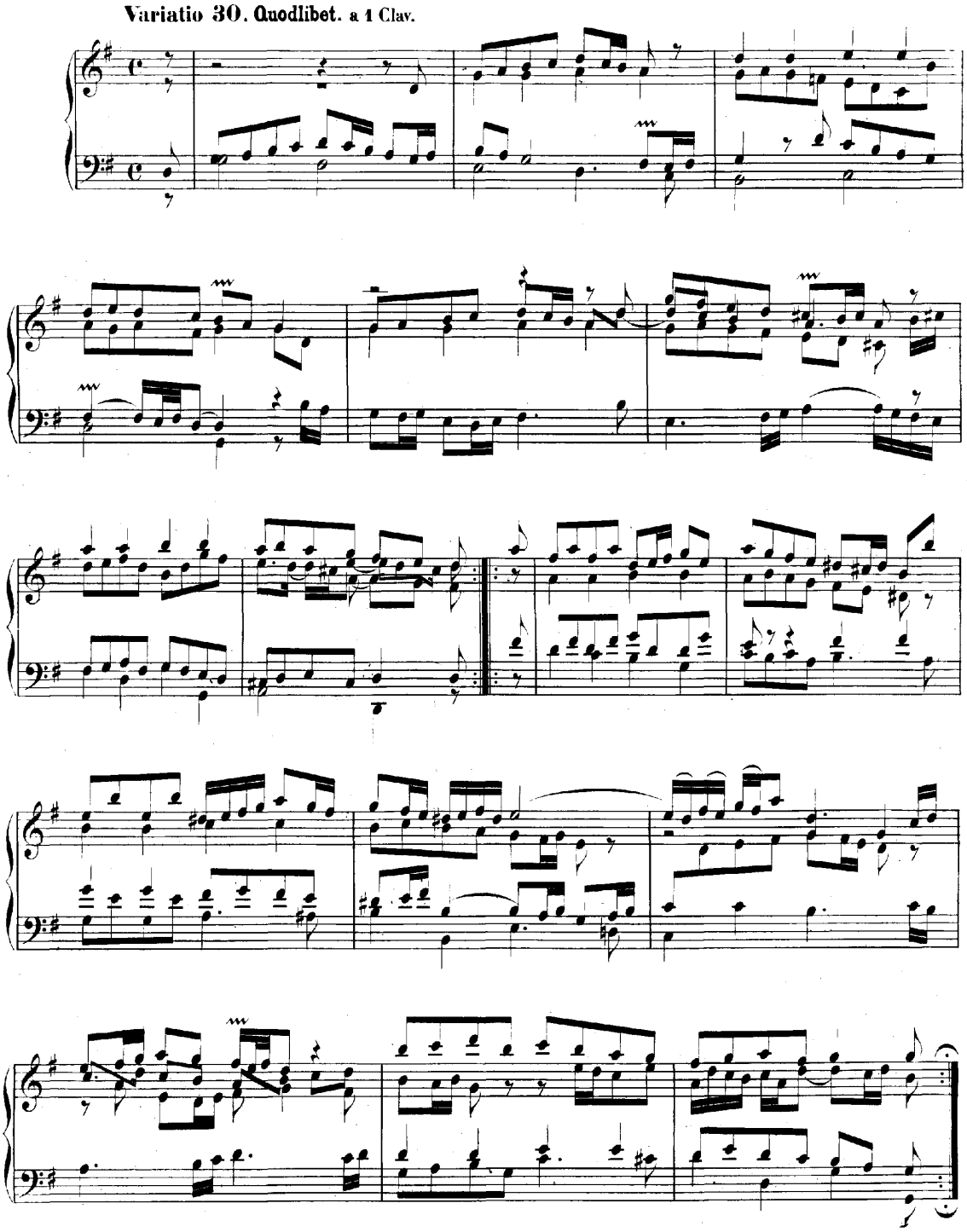
Variation 30 is based on multiple German folk songs, two of which are *Ich bin so lang nicht bei dir g'west, ruck her, ruck her* ("I have so long been away from you, come closer, come closer") and *Kraut und Rüben haben mich vertrieben, hätt mein' Mutter Fleisch gekocht, wär ich länger blieben* ("Cabbage and turnips have driven me away, had my mother cooked meat, I'd have opted to stay"). The other folk songs which Bach used have been forgotten. For the first time, Bach here concedes to the upbeat, for since this rhythmic trait is an integral part of the songs, he could not modify it to conform to the structure rigorously adhered to in all the other variations without distorting the tune. Also for the first time in the work, Bach makes use of the fullness of rich four-part harmony, over the bass-theme which provides the pillar support in each half bar. Being popular tunes, these melodies are found in many other works both by Bach and by his

[24] The Quodlibet is another distinctly German genre whose origins can be traced back to the fifteenth century. It is a medley of popular folk songs combined contrapuntally, and was traditionally a form of family entertainment, particularly in the Bach home.

contemporaries. For example, the opening tenor line of the Quodlibet is also quoted in Bach's *Peasant Cantata* BWV 212 (1742) (in A major). Moreover, *Kraut und Rüben* begins much like the *Bergamasca* by Girolamo Frescobaldi in *Fiori Musicali* (1635), a collection known to Bach and to several other northern organists of the seventeenth century, including Sweelinck, Scheidt and Buxtehude who used the *Bergamasca* as well[25].

[25] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 91.

Example 1.20 **Bach:** ***Goldberg Variations*****, Variation 30**



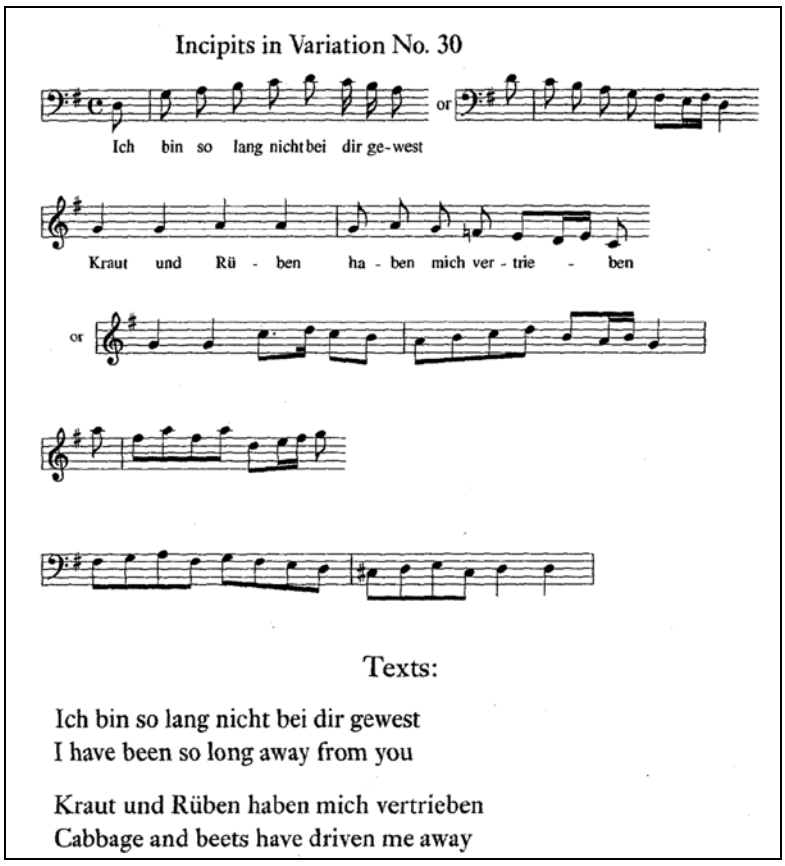


Figure i German folk melodies, together with some of their texts, which are to be found in the Quodlibet [26]

1.5 ASSIMILATION OF STYLES IN *GOLDBERG*

The above survey has demonstrated that while Bach made use of established genres in his set of variations, he never compromised or modified his phraseology to make the genre more similar to the customary practice. While he uses great imagination through rhythmic, melodic and motivic metamorphosis throughout the variations, Bach mostly preserves the harmonic outline of the Aria, as called for in chaconne-type variations.

Variations:

Probably the oldest and most prevalent device in music composition, it can take the form of variations on a melody (theme-and-variations), or variations on a bass that is sustained throughout (ostinato)[27].

[26] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 90.

Ground-bass forms include the *passacaglia* and *chaconne*, where the bass-line or harmonic pattern is repeated as the basis of the variations. While the distinction between these two variation forms is not clear-cut, a *passacaglia* is generally regarded as having an invariant ground-bass, while the *chaconne* is that which repeats a harmony. The *Goldberg Variations* uses techniques from the *passacaglia* and *chaconne* forms, having both an ostinato-style bass line and an established harmonic scheme.

However, while earlier composers literally repeated the bass line throughout the variations, the Goldberg bass is at times hard to locate since it occasionally infiltrates through the different voices, while at other times an occasional note is omitted, as will be discussed in Chapter 4[28]. Just as in the seventeenth century chaconne, and also typically found in Frescobaldi's music, the work is in a major key. Later, the insertion of a minor variation in a major set also became common – something which Bach made use of in the *Goldberg*[29].

Thus the *Goldberg Variations* comprise many different styles, including French-style neatly phrased, flowing, simply accompanied melodies and dances, alongside the highly

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[27] In the sixteenth century, when it originally involved the use of a repeated bass line (*basso ostinato* or ground bass), the Variation form is encountered in dance music, with works by Orlando Gibbons (1583 – 1625) and William Byrd (1540 – 1623) influencing other continental composers especially Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562 – 1621) and Samuel Scheidt (1587 – 1654). Boynick, Matt. "Classical Music Pages: Musical Forms: Variation", extracted from Sadie, Stanley, ed. *The Grove Concise Dictionary of Music*. London: Macmillan, 1988, accessed October 14, 2009. http://w3.rz-berlin.mpg.de/cmp/g_variation.html.
As we trace back the evolution of the variation form, one finds Girolamo Frescobaldi's (1583 –1643) variations on the *Aria detta Frescobalda* which was one of Frescobaldi's most beloved keyboard pieces that appeared in a volume for harpsichord music, dated 1624, *Il Secondo Libro di Toccate, Canzoni, Versi d'Hinni, Magnificat, Gagliarde, Correnti et alter Partite d'Intavolatura di Cembalo et Organo*. John Gillespie, *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music* (New York: Dover, 1965), 65.
Frescobaldi's themes undergo a series of modifications through various uses of rhythmic figures, yet these themes always remain recognizable. This form of variations where the basic rhythmic beat is successively divided into smaller and smaller values was a favourite in the Renaissance.

[28] The themes of variation-form works were originally much shorter too – normally just eight bars in length, and these eventually led to the *chaconne* and *passacaglia* forms.

[29] Throughout his compositional output, Bach used many types of variation: passacaglia (*Organ Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor*), chaconne (used in *Violin Sonata No.4* and the *Goldberg Variations*), grounds (*Crucifixus* from *Mass in B Minor*), chorale-preludes, canonic variations (on *Vom Himmel hoch*) and also the simpler style of variation on a melody in the *Aria Variata* . Cantata BWV 4 is one of Bach's earliest surviving cantatas, but also one of the best known. It is a set of variations on another esteemed chorale, *Christ lag in Todesbanden* (Christ lay enchained by death), which Luther had adapted from the Gregorian Easter sequence *Victimae paschali laudes*. Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music: The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 345.
In the second half of the eighteenth century, a more common form of variation was the theme-and-variation, where it is the melodic theme that is prominent and gets varied. This type of variation is the basis of Haydn's, Mozart's and most of Beethoven's works in this genre.

charged virtuosic, brilliant music in the Italian style, and the intricate, polyphonic nuances synonymous with German music. Each variation has its own clearly defined musical personality, which it unfolds and projects through the course of the movement.

THE HARPSICHORD

In the eighteenth century, the variety of keyboard instruments was extensive, ranging from clavichords, harpsichords with one or two (occasionally three) manuals, fortepianos and organs. In spite of this, composers would indicate a work for keyboard simply with the word *clavier* or *cembalo*, without specifying the type they were referring to[30]. Neither were the harpsichords and clavichords standardized instruments, varying in compass as well as in the number of stops depending on the size of the instruments and the country they were made in.

During this time, the harpsichord assumed various roles – functioning as a supporting instrument (in its role of continuo by providing support to the bass line), in the double role of continuo and duo instrument, such as in flute or violin sonatas, in alternating sections of continuo writing with sections where the harpsichord part is written out in full, as in Bach's harpsichord concertos, as well as a solo instrument in its own right. The harpsichord soon acquired its own substantial repertoire, with many composers after 1650 dedicating at least some of their writing for it.

Johann Sebastian Bach was very familiar with the rich variety of instruments at his disposal. The catalogue of his estate in fact reveals a rather large collection of personal instruments:

[30] The term *clavier* referred to all available keyboard instruments apart from the organ. (Bach's inclusion of organ works under this heading in *Clavierübung III* is thus somewhat unusual). The Preludes and Fugues of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* for instance are a combination of works written for various keyboard instruments (harpsichord, clavichord or organ), although never specified by the composer.

Particulars [*Specificatio*] of the estate of the late Johann Sebastian Bach, formerly cantor at St Thomas's School in Leipzig, who died on 28 July 1750.

Chapter VI

Instruments

1 veneered clavecin, which is to remain in the family if at all possible	**80**	**--**	**--**
1 Clavesin	**50**	**--**	**--**
1 ditto	**50**	**--**	**--**
1 ditto	**50**	**--**	**--**
1 ditto smaller	**20**	**--**	**--**
1 Lauten Werck [lute harpsichord]	**30**	**--**	**--**
1 ditto	**30**	**--**	**--**
1 Steiner violin	**8**	**--**	**--**
1 lower-quality violin	**2**	**--**	**--**
1 ditto piccolo	**1**	**8**	**--**
1 Braccie [viola]	**5**	**--**	**--**
1 ditto	**5**	**--**	**--**
1 ditto	**--**	**16**	**--**
1 Bassettegen [small bass]	**6**	**--**	**--**
1 Violoncello	**6**	**--**	**--**
1 ditto	**--**	**16**	**--**
1 Viola da Gamba	**3**	**--**	**--**
1 Lute	**21**	**--**	**--**
1 Spinettgen [small spinet]	**3**	**--**	**--**
Summa summarum	**371**	**16**	**--**

<u>Figure ii</u> Bach's personal collection of instruments[31]

Unfortunately none of the instruments mentioned in the catalogue of the estate has survived, so we do not know the type nor dimensions of Bach's favourite instrument. However, research has uncovered several links between Bach and two harpsichords at the Schloss Charlottenburg in Berlin, which have been very revealing as to the most likely harpsichord model used by Bach.

Another unsigned harpsichord, now also in Berlin, and which can probably be ascribed to the Thuringian maker Harass (1665 – 1714) is believed not only to have once belonged to Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, but also previously to J. S. Bach. This 'Bach harpsichord', as it is referred to, has two manuals and three choirs of strings. It is thought that it originally had a sixteen-foot and a four-foot stop in the lower manual, an

[31] *Bach-Dokumente,* ii. 492 f. and 504. Paul Badura-Skoda, A. *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 144.

eight-foot in the upper manual and a coupler. It was later rebuilt (before 1714) with sixteen-foot and eight-foot stops in the lower manual, and with eight-foot and four-foot stops in the upper manual[32]. However, due to the practice of re-building instruments to make them more up-to-date with the current fashions, we cannot ascertain if it had its sixteen-foot stop when in J. S. Bach's possession.

The two other unsigned harpsichords in the Schloss Charlottenburg are a white single-manual harpsichord with two eight-foot stops (1702 – 1704) and a black double-manual harpsichord with two eight-foot stops and one four-foot stop (1703 – 1713)[33], now identified as almost certainly having been built by Michael Mietke[34]. They are connected to Bach's journey to Berlin in 1719 when he went to evaluate and collect a completed Mietke instrument, which he had ordered for the court of Cöthen. The documented cost reveals that this harpsichord was a valuable one, leading musicologists to conclude that it was almost certainly a two-manual instrument, which may even have had a sixteen-foot stop. Very probably similar to the black harpsichord, it had a compass of $F_1 - e^3$ (originally only $F_1 - c^3$ without $F\#_1$ and $G\#_1$), eight-foot and four-foot stops on the lower manual, and eight-foot stop on the upper manual, and a coupler. The compass of this instrument seems to have been 'extravagant', for, according to Alfred Dürr (1918), Bach always required a compass of $G_1 - d^3$ in his keyboard works (which is the compass needed for the *Goldberg Variations*). The Fifth Brandenburg Concerto[35], which was written shortly afterwards, is generally thought to have been composed for the inauguration of this instrument[36].

There is no unanimity about the type of harpsichord Bach thought to be the most ideal. Paul Badura-Skoda has endeavoured to sum up the sparse reliable information to deduce what Bach's preferred harpsichord was:

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[32]Paul Badura-Skoda, A. *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 150.
[33] Edward L. Kottick, *A History of the Harpsichord* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2003), 324.
[34] Michael Mietke (1656 – 1719) was a respected harpsichord maker whose instruments were esteemed to be of very high quality. He was court instrument-maker in Berlin.
[35] nowadays referred to as the first harpsichord concerto.
[36] However, Malcolm Boyd remarks on the strangeness of having the bass in the Fifth Brandenburg Concerto descending below C only once, and only by a semitone. Boyd comments that if Bach really wanted to show off the new instrument's capabilities, he would have chosen a compass which extended the norm at Cöthen. Boyd, M. *Bach: The Brandenburg Concertos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2993), 32.
Furthermore, the Fifth Brandenburg Concerto can actually be played on a one-manual instrument. Thus one can even conclude that when writing this work, Bach was not really writing music tailor-made to show off the full capabilities of a new instrument, but rather to show off his unsurpassed technical skill as a keyboard performer.

> Thus the kind of harpsichord Bach preferred was evidently a two-manual instrument with a compass of more than five octaves (probably $G_1 - c^3$). It was probably in the German style, and similar to Mietke's 'black' harpsichord.[37]

The researcher has her reservations about Badura-Skoda's conclusion however, for she thinks that if a five-octave range harpsichord was indeed Bach's favourite, he would have composed more works for this range, rather than for the lesser compass he uses for almost all of his harpsichord works. During this period, harpsichords were not standardized, and if there was a demand for instruments with larger compasses the researcher presumes that instrument-makers would have produced more of such instruments. Furthermore, a quick survey of Bach's harpsichord repertoire[38] leads one to conclude that his works do not necessarily require two manuals. It seems that two-manual harpsichords were not very common, possibly due to economic reasons, since double-manual harpsichords have always been more expensive than single manual ones. Apart from the four books of *Clavierübung*, one can surmise that Bach's intentions for his music were not commercial[39]. Furthermore, Bach mostly confined his music to a single-manual instrument to try to make it as accessible as possible.

In recent years the 'Bach Disposition' has been interpreted as being a two eight-foot and one four-foot register harpsichord.[40] This is substantiated by the well-known remarks of Bach's pupil J. F. Agricola (1720 – 1774) in which he quotes Bach's preferences about manual size, as well as referring to the width and length of the harpsichord's keys, praising the narrow keys on Brandenburg instruments (of which Mietkes[41] are the only know harpsichords from Bach's period)[42].

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[37] Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 152.
[38] Suites, Partitas and the two volumes of *Well-Tempered Clavier*
[39] Bach's other keyboard works were not published during his lifetime and were written for a small circle of family and friends.
[40] Peter Williams, *Bach, Handel, Scarlatti, Tercentenary Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 120
[41] Other renowned harpsichord-makers during the time of Bach were Hieronymus Albrecht Hass (1689 – 1752), Johann Heinrich Harass (1665 – 1714), Gottfried Silbermann (1683 – 1753), Johann Christoph Fleischer (1676 – after 1732), Johann Nikolaus Bach (1669 – 1753), Zacharias Hildebrand, and Heinrich Gräbner.
[42] Peter Williams, *Bach, Handel, Scarlatti, Tercentenary Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 129

2.1 HARPSICHORDS MADE IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

The three countries considered most influential in establishing style – France, Italy and Germany, together with Belgium, also built instruments which possessed certain qualities particular to their nation. In the earlier years of harpsichord-making, exchanges of ideas led to certain types of instruments appearing in several countries but by the later eighteenth century instruments started developing particular distinctive qualities and became associated with respective countries. Apart from variations in the shape and decoration of the case, more significant differences included quality of tone, compass, key-size, number of registers and number of stops. Composers fully exploited the distinctive qualities of their native instruments, which helped shape a nation's style of writing. A quick survey of the different harpsichord models shows that each had their own particular characteristics[43]:

- Italian harpsichords tended to be light, single-manual instruments, ideal for a wide variety of solo repertoire as well as for accompanying a wide variety of instruments, or a large ensemble, thus being able to blend, yet also always being heard.

- Flemish builders[44] developed models with more than one set of strings (for tonal variety) and with a second, transposing manual. Their direct, noble sound makes them ideal for a wide variety of repertoire.

- French harpsichords on the other hand have light and responsive actions, a warm richness with a deep, sonorous bass, and clarity of tone.

In the beginning of the eighteenth century, when Frederick I was modelling all trends and mannerisms on those found in the court of Louis XIV, artists and craftsmen were also brought from France to glorify the court. Even the renowned German harpsichord-

[43] Familiarity with the different types of harpsichords was acquired through the researcher's visits to different museums of historical instruments, most significantly the St Cecilia Hall Museum of Instruments in Edinburgh, Scotland, and the Musikhistorisk Museum in Copenhagen, Denmark. Additional information was compiled from the following source: Byron John Will, "Byron John Will. Harpsichord and Clavichord Maker", accessed February 2, 2010, http://www.byronwillharpsichords.com/flemish.html.

[44] which were led by the Ruckers and Couchet families

maker Mietke adopted the French style of construction, possibly as early as 1680, although eventually, German harpsichords developed into larger, heavier instruments with a variety of registers, possibly including a lute or a buff stop.

Nowadays, performers specializing in eighteenth-century music are also concerned about using the right instrument[45]. Apart from tone-quality, what really determines whether a particular harpsichord is the right one or not is its compass. Italian and Flemish harpsichords have a shorter compass and so cannot be used to perform all of Scarlatti's sonatas for example.

2.2 THE HARPSICHORD IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The first real renaissance of the harpsichord and the revival of early music is nowadays closely linked to Wanda Landowska (1879 – 1959) (amongst others), whose virtuosity on the harpsichord became renowned. Before this, Bach's works, and indeed works by any other seventeenth- and eighteenth-century composer, were not part of the mainstream repertoire[46].

However, Landowska's Pleyel harpsichord, constructed in 1912, was very far removed from the historically authentic harpsichord of the eighteenth century. One of the most substantial differences that Landowska's Pleyel had was an iron frame, whose purpose was to magnify the instrument's sound and thus give it the required stronger projection necessary for the large modern concert halls. The robustness of the iron frame led to the adoption of high-tension stringing and metal components, as well as leather plectra

[45] Given the possibility to choose, a harpsichordist recording the French Suites of Bach for example would not wish to perform on an Italian-style harpsichord, nor would he want to play Sweelinck on a French-style instrument. On the other hand, for a performance encompassing works by composers of different nationalities, a Flemish or German-type harpsichord would be the most ideal due to their adaptability in tone. Bond, *A Guide to the Harpsichord* (USA: Amadeus Press, 1997), 49.

[46] Exceptions to this were a handful of Bach's works which survived into the nineteenth-century concert repertoire. Performed on the piano, these were the *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue* BWV 903, the Harpsichord Concerto in D minor BWV 1052, the *Goldberg Variations* in an abridged version (the virtuosic element of these pieces is what probably attracted nineteenth-century pianists and audiences to them) and the *Well-Tempered Clavier* mostly in Czerny's edition which was regularly used for pedagogical purposes. Isolated movements from Bach's *English* and *French Suites* were also often included in recitals, as was the *Italian Concerto*.

instead of quill in some of the registers for smoothness of tone. This gave Landowska's harpsichord a formidable sound, albeit a foreign one, for all these devices were unfamiliar in eighteenth-century instrument building[47]. The iron frame also eliminated the need for frequent tuning, as opposed to eighteenth-century models. Pedals also facilitated frequent changes between numerous registers and sound-effects, including the possibility of a 'half-hitch position' to provide full or half volume on each register[48]. Furthermore, the instrument also included a sixteen-foot register. All these effects made the harpsichord sound as if the music being played was being orchestrated.

Thus, as will be discussed in the next chapter[49], not all the harpsichords were being made to eighteenth-century specifications[50]. With the re-introduction of Bach's music and the harpsichord into the concert repertoire, using a harpsichord *per se* was regarded as begin historically more correct than using the modern piano. However, during the twentieth century, there were different copies/styles/makes of harpsichords and not all were being built on authentic eighteenth-century specifications. Such was the general attitude taken from the 1940s until well into the 1970s[51]. On the other hand, other instrument makers, such as Hubbard, pioneered the scholarly reconstruction of early harpsichord models, with the first copies based on original historical designs being prepared as early as 1949[52].

2.3 WHICH INSTRUMENT FOR THE GOLDBERG VARIATIONS?

The wide variety of clavier instruments available by the beginning of the eighteenth century, the different specifications available for the same instrument (such as harpsichords with different compasses, number of manuals and stops), plus the fact that the composer did not usually specify for which keyboard instrument he was writing, nowadays leave performers in doubt as to the intended instrument. The *Goldberg*

[47] They were also unnecessary for the seventeenth and eighteenth century, when baroque court halls were much smaller and more resonant.
[48] Ann Bond, *A Guide to the Harpsichord* (USA: Amadeus Press, 1997), 45.
[49] Chapter 3 – *An Evolving Outlook to Bach's Music and its Interpretations, 3.2 The Bach Revival*, 41.
[50] Along with Pleyel, other leading twentieth-century harpsichord constructors were Arnold Dolmetsch (1858 – 1940, a Frenchman working in England), Frank Hubbard (1920 – 1976, American) and Johann Christoph Neupert (1848 – 1921, German). These were responsible for the reconstruction of early music instruments during the revival of Bach's music in the early twentieth century.
[51] Dorottya Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice, 1945-1975* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 31.
[52] Dorottya Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice, 1945-1975* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 56.

Variations are however unique in this respect for Bach makes it unusually clear by stating in the title not only the specific instrument, but also the *type* of instrument.

Keyboard practice, consisting of an aria with diverse variations for harpsichord with 2 manuals[53]

Bach wrote the *Goldberg Variations* at a time (1740s) when harpsichords were having their ranges extended to five octaves (as the extensions of the black and white Berlin harpsichords discussed above demonstrate). However, an overview of the *Goldberg* score reveals that the work requires a very basic harpsichord, of the range $G_1 - d^3$, which is essentially the range Bach usually makes use of in his keyboard works.[54] This compass is also required for *Clavierübung I*, while *Clavierübung II* has an even shorter one: $A_2 - c^3$. Using an 'old-fashioned' compass gave the *Goldberg Variations* the possibility of being performed on older instruments, ensuring more circulation of the score and thus more performances of this work, although unfortunately no records of any sold copies have survived. During Bach's time, more modern harpsichords than that specified for the *Goldberg* were also available, which had more than three sets of strings, a longer compass and some stops (such as lute and harp) for 'colour effects'[55].

As opposed to the bright and resonant tone of modern harpsichords[56], the more neutral tone of a historical reconstruction expresses the counterpoint appropriately. However, the *Goldberg* does not require a harpsichord with particular tonal characteristics, such as is essential to French repertory, as long as it is a two-manual instrument[57].

2.4 USE OF MANUALS

Apart from the *Goldberg Variations*, there is only one other occurrence of such precise instrument specification to be found in Bach's works, and indeed in works by any other

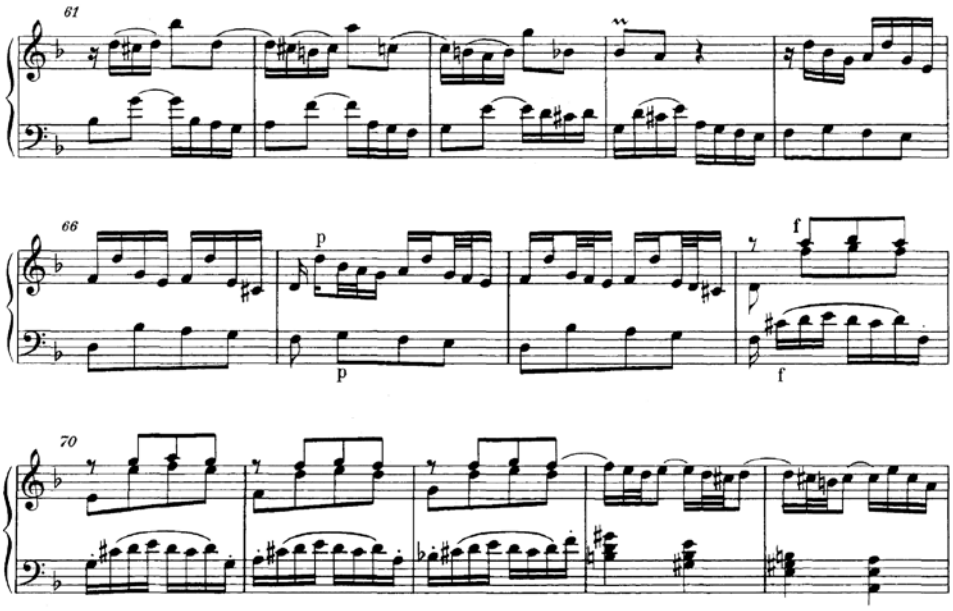
[53] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 3.
[54] The highest note d^3 is found in Variations 11, 27 and 28, while the lowest note G_1 is found in only one variation – the last bar of number 24.
[55] Philipp Emanuel Bach included registrations or suggestions for stop-changes in a set of variations W 69 (1747). Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 11
[56] Due to different-quality strings and quills.
[57] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 11

seventeenth- or eighteenth-century composer. *Clavierübung II* has a similar specification in its title:

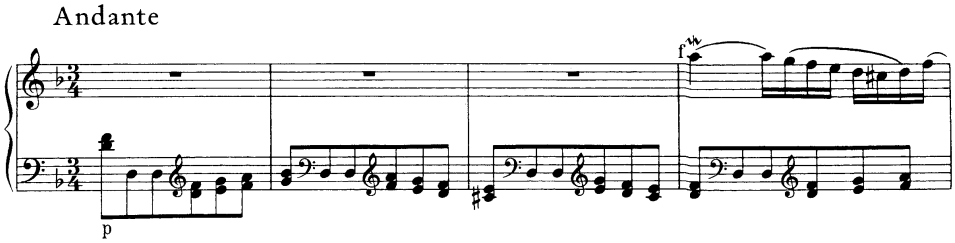
Second Part of Keyboard Practice, consisting of a Concerto according to Italian taste and an Overture according to the French manner, for a harpsichord with two manuals, prepared for the soul's delight of music-lovers…[58]

However, Bach's use of the two manuals in the *Italian Concerto* BWV 971 and the *French Overture* BWV 831 is different from that in the *Goldberg Variations*, for in these two pieces their purpose is to create dynamic contrasts. In the *Italian Concerto*, the purpose of the *piano/forte* markings are to differentiate between the soloist line - *forte*[59] and the orchestra – *piano*, which is accompanying.

Example 2.1 Bach: *Italian Concerto*, 1st mov, b. 61 – 74, featuring *f* and *p* markings

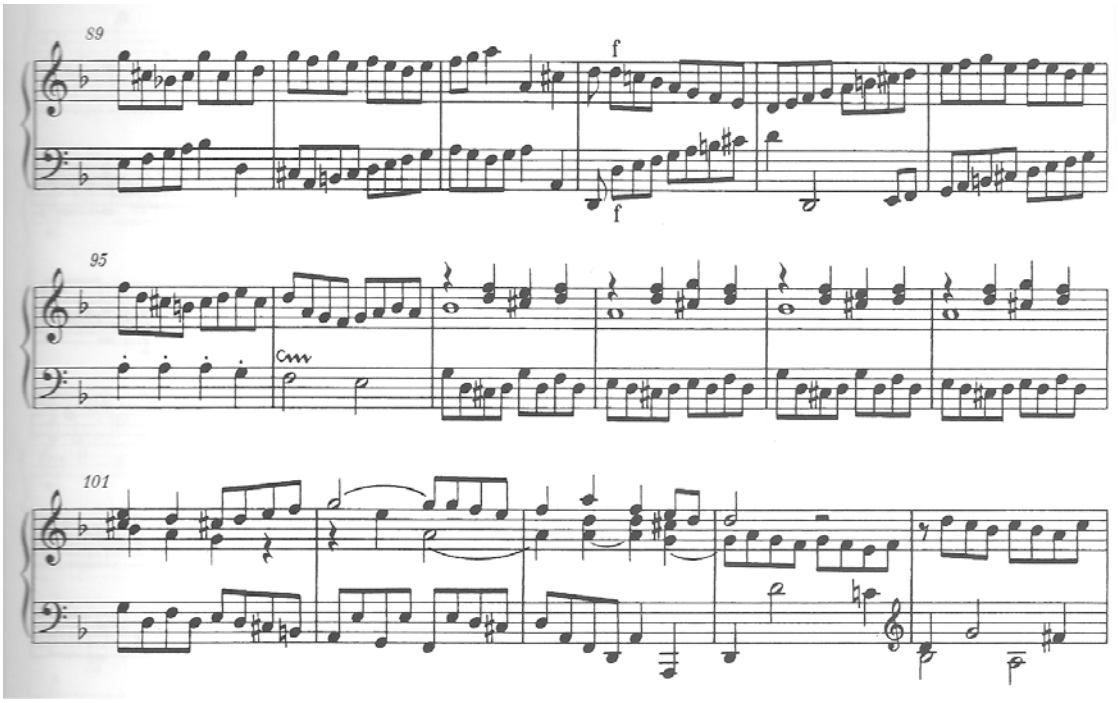


Example 2.2 Bach: *Italian Concerto*, 2nd mov, b. 1 – 4



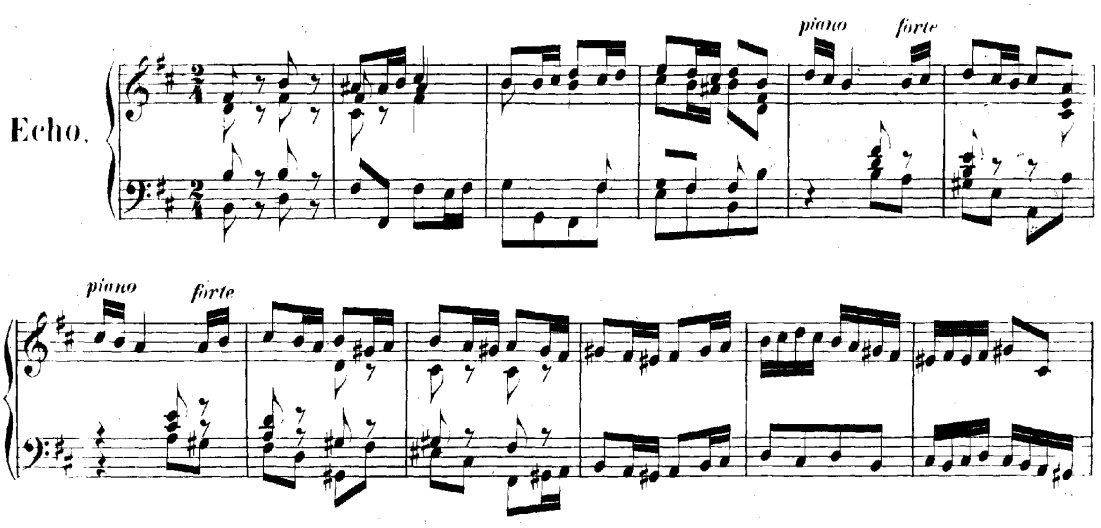
[58] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 44
[59] which in this case can be compared to one of Vivaldi's Violin Concertos, of which Bach had transcribed many in his youth

Example 2.3 **Bach: *Italian Concerto*, 3rd mov, b. 89 – 105**



The particular importance of the *French Overture*[60] lies in its two outer movements – Overture and Echo, whose *forte/piano* markings indicate the use of two manuals. The closing movement[61] illustrates the contrast between two manuals, with the variations of dynamic being structural rather than decorative. The *forte* and *piano* markings are in very close proximity, featuring echoing motifs in the space of a beat.

Example 2.4 **Bach: *French Overture*, 'Echo' movement, b.1 – 8, featuring *f* and *p* markings**



[60] a keyboard piece essentially made up of movements of a Partita: Courante, Gavotte I, Gavotte II, Passepied I, Passepied II, Sarabande, Bourrée I, Bourrée II, Gigue, that only require one manual
[61] which is uniquely an 'Echo' rather than a gigue

At first glance, the *Goldberg Variations* seem to make use of the different manuals purely for technical reasons, namely two manuals for virtuoso variations and one manual for those with a more ordinary execution. However, in two particular variations Bach gives a direction contrary to this generalization.

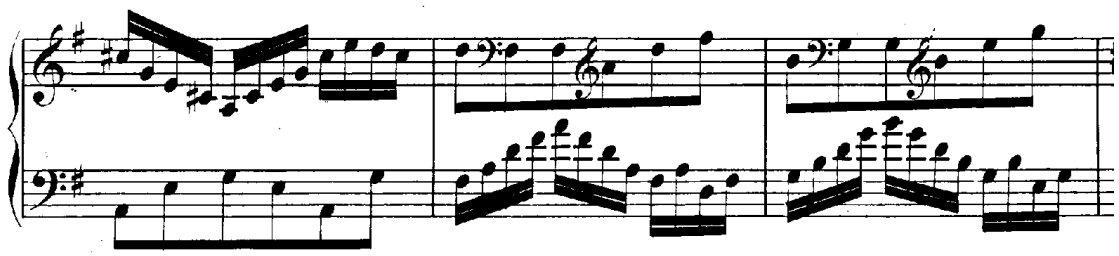
Variations 13 and 25 have the direction *a 2 Clav* even though the lines do not call for any awkward hand-crossing. Consequently, the use of two manuals here is for a colour effect, so that as the right hand plays on the lower manual, it 'sings' its coloratura above the left hand. This direction is in fact identical to that of the second movement of the *Italian Concerto,* although Bach had previously specified his intention with the terms *forte*/*piano* in the earlier work, while the left hand in the variations is more integral in its melodic outline.

It is interesting to note that in three variations (variations 5, 7 and 29) Bach leaves it up to the performer to decide whether to play a variation on one or two manuals - *a 1 ovvero 2 Clav.,* while in three other movements manuals are not specified (the Aria and variations 12 and 21. Choice of colour and therefore choice between using one or two manuals, depends on the character the performer would want to give to that particular movement. A more homogeneous sound between the interweaving voices, would call for the use of one manual, while two manuals could be used to highlight the difference between a particular line and the other supporting lines. Furthermore, this could also be used as a means of variation upon repetition.

In addition, one cannot exclusively equate two manuals with hand-crossings. One case in point is variation 1[62]. While this variation features such technique (b.13 – 14 and b.21 – 22), these are not so extended as to require two manuals. Bach's indication *a 1 Clav* for this variation also suggests that the tempo to be adopted should be on the slower side if the hand-crossings are to be executed neatly.

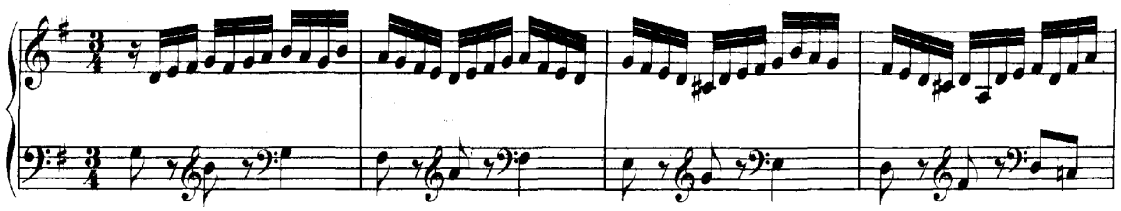
[62] Although it is the first variation from the "group of three" (Refer to Chapter 4 – *The Constitution of the Goldberg Variations, 4.23 Patterns of Three*, 92) and so should be in the form of a genre piece, variation 1 is more inclined towards the toccata-style, while the following variation can be referred to as the 'genre piece'. Therefore here the 'pattern of threes' does not keep to the same form as that of the subsequent variations.

Example 2.5 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 1, b. 12 – 14

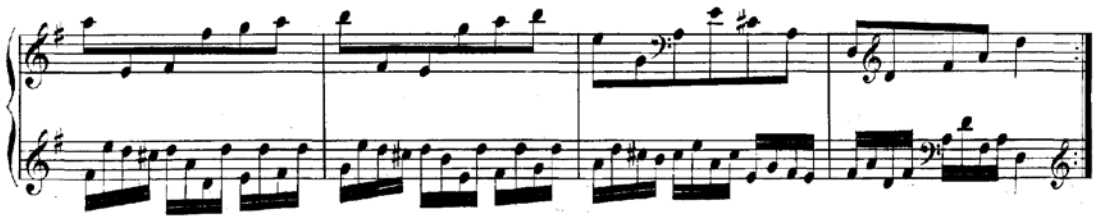


Although variation 5 makes more significant use of hand-crossing than variation 1, Bach's option of one or two manuals could again refer to choice of tempo, indicating that vibrant virtuosic performing is to be left for later. While two manuals would facilitate execution, choice of manual could also be used for colour purposes upon repetition in this case. This could also be applied in variation 7 whose rubric is also *1 ovvero 2 Clav* even though the writing flows cleanly between the hands.

Example 2.6 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 5, b. 1 – 4



Example 2.7 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 5, b. 13 – 16

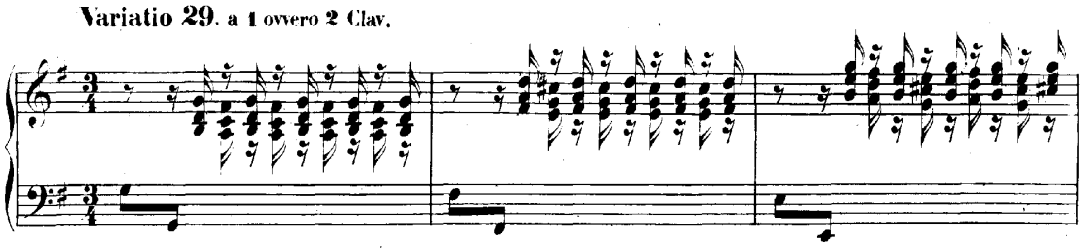


Using a different manual upon repetition can in fact be applied to any variation if desired, to create more colouristic possibilities, for when Bach specifies *a 1 Clav*, one should not exclude the possibility of playing with both hands on one manual the first time, and on the other manual on repetition.

Variation 8 can be described as the first actual toccata variation, with its rubric *a 2 Clav* re-enforcing this. The following toccata movements all have this direction, apart from

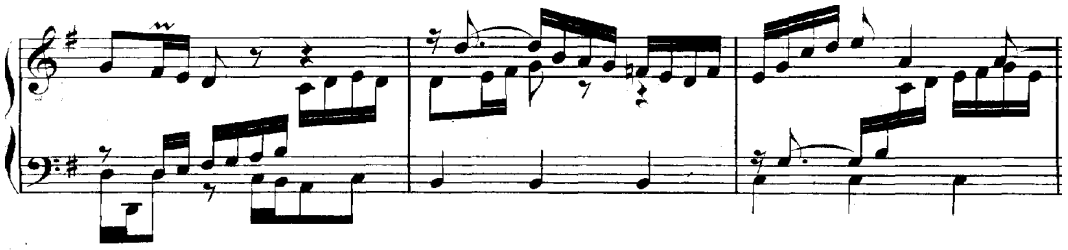
Variation 29[63], where Bach curiously indicates *1 ovvero 2 Clav,* although its writing would immediately suggest the use of two manuals due to the clustered hand position in the opening chordal passage. However, the researcher thinks that the use of one manual would be preferable in this variation since the chords alternating between the two hands form a continuous line and a difference in tone quality would be undesirable. One would also be able to use the coupler with a single manual, achieving a *tutti* sound, which befits the variation, as it is the final movement in a five-variation build-up whose climax is reached in the next variation, Quodlibet.

Example 2.8 Bach: *Goldberg Variations,* Variation 29, b. 1 – 3



All the canons, apart from canon at the ninth (variation 27) are for one manual only. The canons at the fourth and seventh (variations 12 and 21) are not specified, although the shared counterpoint between the hands, indicates the use of one manual.

Example 2.9 Bach: *Goldberg Variations,* Variation 12, b. 4 – 6



Apart from the above-mentioned occasional instances each group of three variations[64] uses the manuals thus: genre-piece = one manual, toccata = two manuals, canon = one manual. In the last four variations before the Quodlibet, however, Bach directs the performer to use two manuals throughout, perhaps further highlighting the theory that these final variations are all toccatas (including the canon at the ninth in a disguised form), generating a climax towards the end. The Quodlibet *a 1 Clav* is the culmination,

[63] the last toccata before the Quodlibet
[64] Refer to Chapter 4 – *The Constitution of the Goldberg Variations, 4.23 Patterns of Three*, 92.

and while its shared writing between the hands prevents the use of two manuals, the use of the coupler would fittingly generate the *tutti* sound that would have been accumulating from the previous variations. While this is the way the Quodlibet is generally interpreted, it should be added that one could also opt to play it without the coupler, and instead concentrate on bringing out the complexity of the part-writing rather than creating a large sound.

2.5 IS IT POSSIBLE TO PLAY THE GOLDBERG VARIATIONS ON A ONE-MANUAL HARPSICHORD?

In the *Goldberg Variations*, Bach makes significant use of his "for harpsichord with two manuals" specification. However, one might be intrigued whether a one-manual harpsichord would suffice for this work since it has also successfully been performed on the piano. The issues involved here are mostly connected to the construction of the harpsichord itself, ultimately concluding that performance on a one-manual harpsichord is not feasible.

The main concern is the size of the keys and the two harpsichords at Schloss Charlottenburg mentioned earlier in this chapter are very revealing[65]. Their octave span is of 6 $^{5}/_{32}$ inches (156.5 mm), which is even narrower than the average French harpsichord. The sharp length is only 2 $^{13}/_{16}$ inches (72 mm), and the key heads measure 1 $^{3}/_{8}$ inches, almost the shortest measured on harpsichords from any country[66]. Hand-crossing would be extremely awkward and difficult to play on a one-manual harpsichord with such narrow keys.

The other issue is that of timbre. The two rows of unison strings in a two-manual harpsichord each have a unique tone quality, allowing for equality in two-part dialogues as well as giving the possibility of a solo line in the right hand[67]. Such colour possibilities would be lost if using a one-manual harpsichord[68].

[65] Refer to p. 24.
[66] Peter Williams, *Bach, Handel, Scarlatti, Tercentenary Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 129
[67] as in Variations 13 and 25
[68] On the piano this can be compensated with judicial balancing between the hands.

AN EVOLVING OUTLOOK TO BACH'S MUSIC AND ITS INTERPRETATIONS

3.1 STYLISTIC CHANGES IN BACH'S MUSIC

From Bach's death in 1750 until the present day, the interpretation and performance of Bach's music has experienced many changes, both stylistically and 'acoustically'. With the music being eclipsed in the second half of the eighteenth century, rediscovered in the nineteenth century and canonised in the twentieth, musicians took many different approaches in their interpretation of it, the issues of what we now call performance practice having constantly changed.

The eighteenth century was a period of considerable stylistic awareness, an awareness which also affected the way works were interpreted. As discussed in the first chapter, the *Goldberg Variations* and Bach's works in general are infiltrated with many styles. Bach and his contemporaries were required to master such aspects of performance practice[69] and were not allowed the liberty of playing solely in an instinctive way. Bach laments that "it is somewhat odd, moreover, that German musicians are expected to be capable of performing at once and *ex tempore* all kinds of music, whether it comes from Italy or France, England or Poland."[70]

The second half of the eighteenth century witnessed a newly international style, with emphasis now shifting towards lyrical music that was effortless, without artifice and distortion. Hence unnatural over-dotting and lombardic rhythmic alterations were now abhorred in this Classical aesthetic[71]. In Saxony, however, seventeenth-century customs lingered into the second half of the eighteenth century, such that Viennese classicism seems to have had little effect on the way Bach's music was performed. Manuscript copies circulating in Germany between 1750 and 1800 generally lack editorial markings, and musicians performed Bach's music in much the same way as it

[69] The chief issue of performance practice was undoubtedly the understanding and mastery of foreign styles.
[70] John Butt ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Bach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 204.
[71] John Butt ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Bach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 205.

had been performed fifty years before, with only slight adjustments to fit in with the available resources[72]. On the other hand, in progressive Vienna, where the ties with Bach's practices were less direct, musicians were quicker to update his music, such that Baron von Swieten for example unhesitatingly transcribed the *Well-Tempered Clavier* fugues for string ensembles[73]. Generally however, Bach's music was relatively forgotten by the general public and only referred to by composers for pedagogical purposes.

Aesthetics changed in the nineteenth century as musicians developed a passionate longing for the past and started viewing Bach as a musical icon, unhesitatingly refashioning his music into a highly romantic style[74]. Such was Felix Mendelssohn's (1809 – 1847) perspective when he revived the *St Matthew Passion* in 1829 using grand forces, which included mixed choirs totalling almost 400 members, replacing Bach's *oboe d'amore* with clarinets, adding melodic phrasing, dynamic markings including *crescendo* and *diminuendo*, tempo indications, as well as formulating extensive cuts in the aria sections. Franz Liszt (1811 – 1886) and Ferruccio Busoni (1866 – 1924) were two other musicians in the nineteenth century whose outlook on Bach was also significant. Apart from being an exponent of Bach in the concert hall, Liszt also transcribed the music of Bach reflecting nineteenth-century practice. While some of these piano transcriptions[75] remain very close to the original, Liszt's later compositions are works where the distinction between original and arrangement is irrelevant for they are very far-removed from Bach's original compositions, becoming Liszt's own works.

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[72] such as adjusting some instrumentation to compensate for the lack of an oboe d'amore, as does C P E Bach when he presented the Credo of the B minor Mass in 1786.

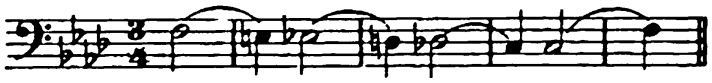
[73] John Butt ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Bach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 206

[74] In fact, although we don't consider Forkel's 1802 biography of Bach as thoroughly reliable due to anecdotal references, it is important to regard it in the context of these times. Forkel wrote his book at a time when the Germans were resisting the ideas of the French Enlightenment and Napoleon's push for political supremacy, striving instead to establish the concept of a German nation. They found inspiration in the idea of a culturally united Germany, asserting that intellectual values were what distinguished the German nation from other peoples. Thus Bach was a fitting model to become a musical hero in this period. It is in this light that Forkel writes about Bach in his biography. Forkel regards his hero as one whose works, which are described as full of character and expressiveness, do not simply satisfy and delight for the moment, but whose incomparable wealth of ideas will continue to inspire future generations. Martin Geck, "Johann Sebastian Bach", accessed January 22, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/03/books/chapters/1203-1st-geck.html
Such feelings were shared by the other nineteenth-century musicians who were keen to revive Bach's music and hail him as a national inspiration.

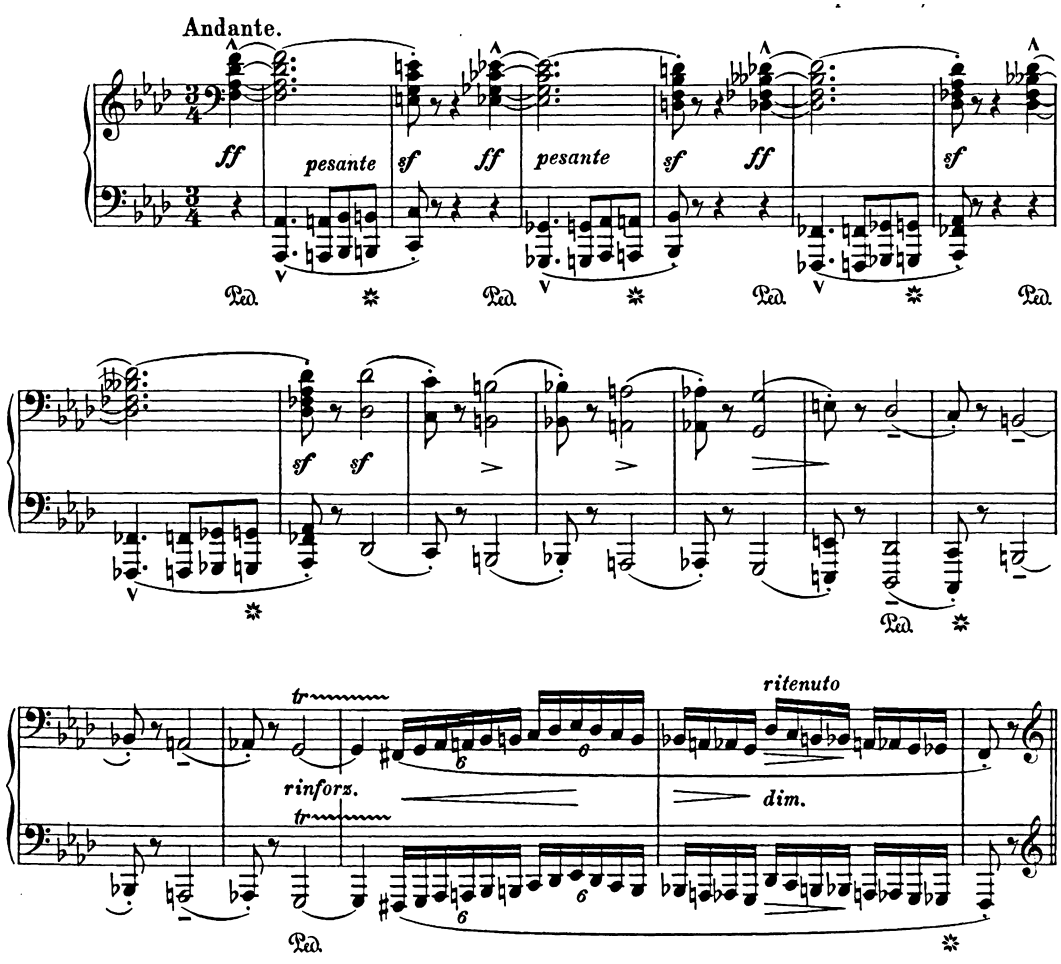
[75] such as Bach's six Preludes and Fugues for organ (BWV 543-8), transcribed in 1842 – 50

Two such works are the *Variations on a Motif by Bach: Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen*[76] (1862) and *Fantasy and Fugue on the theme B-A-C-H* (1855, revised 1870) which are both original compositions based on motifs by Bach. After a bold introduction, the Variations start in the manner of a passacaglia but grow very free, both tonally and metrically, exploring pianistic techniques synonymous with Liszt's compositional writing.

Example 3.1 The Bach motif on which Liszt based his *Variations on a Motif by Bach: Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen*

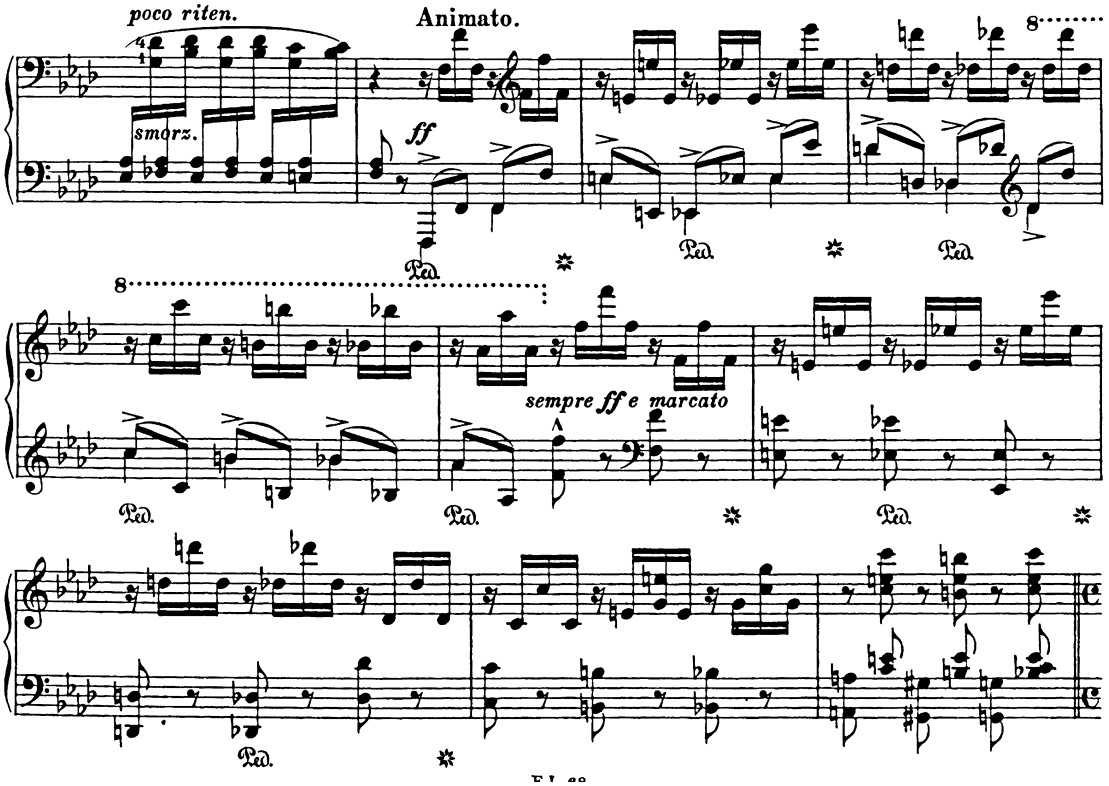


Example 3.2 Liszt: *Variations on a Motif by Bach: Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen*, Introduction

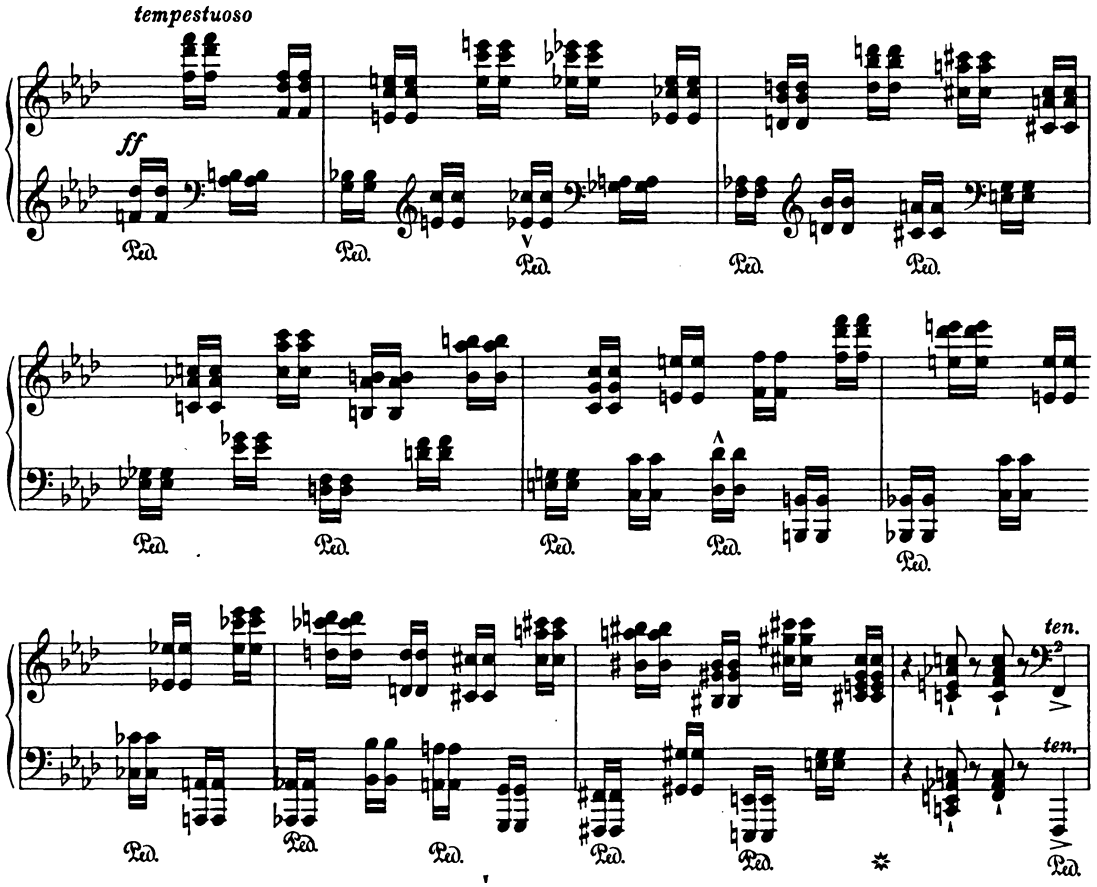


[76] based on Bach's Cantata BWV 12/2 and the 'Crucifixus' of the B minor Mass BWV 232II/5

Example 3.3 **Liszt: Variations on a Motif by Bach: Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen, b. 157 – 166**



Example 3.4 **Liszt: Variations on a Motif by Bach: Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen, b.184 – 192**



Some of Liszt's other original works, such as *Fantasia and Fugue on 'Ad nos, ad salutarem undam'* (1850), also draw on Bach's compositional techniques, namely counterpoint and the improvisation element. Thus Liszt's compositions which are influenced by Bach can be divided into three categories: transcriptions and arrangements[77], works based on themes by Bach[78] and works whose style is influenced by Bach[79].

Unlike Liszt, Busoni's entire piano output is infiltrated with Bachian references, composing such powerful music as *Fantasia Contrappuntistica* (1910)[80] and the opera *Doktor Faustus* (1916 – 1923). Such references to Bach's music and his idiom as integrated in Liszt's and Busoni's works may thus also have had a direct effect on how twentieth-century performers perceived Bach, associating his music with passionate outpouring – aesthetics associated with the original works of both Liszt and Busoni. Furthermore, particularly with his editions of Bach's works, Busoni was very influential in the new approach towards Bach's music, refashioning and adapting it to nineteenth-century principles[81].

3.2 THE BACH REVIVAL

As the revival of Bach's music started gathering momentum, a new movement was born – the Early Music Movement, also referred to as the Authenticity Movement and later as the Historical Performance Movement. Its general name has however risked the implication of several misconceptions regarding the aesthetic and artistic goals of performers and others connected with the music business.

Initially, during the early 1900s, the performance of eighteenth-century works *per se* was considered more important than playing them in a historically authentic style. In fact, the re-discovery was related to repertoire rather than to historical performance practices and it was only very gradually that style and details of historical information

[77] such as his transcriptions of Bach's organ preludes and fugues BWV 543-8
[78] such as *Variations on a Motif by Bach: Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen*
[79] such as Fantasia and Fugue on 'Ad nos, ad salutarem undam'

[80] Based on the BACH theme.
[81] this will be discussed later in this chapter, *3.32 Busoni's Edition*, 49.

started becoming the focal point of the revival, thus also changing the concept of the term authenticity. While Bach's works were by then quite well known, the development of Bach's style was soon completely revamped in the light of ongoing research related to the *Neue Bach Ausgabe* edition in the 1950s which sought to present the text of Bach's music in its original form, without any additional editorial markings[82].

In the 1930s and 40s events such as the opening of the first early music school, *Schola Cantorum Basiliensis* (1933), Ralph Kirkpatrick's performance of the *Goldberg Variations* in Berlin (1932), as well as his edition of this piece[83], together with publications on the performance practices of eighteenth-century music, brought the Early Music Movement to the fore.

However, such ideas were slow to become adopted, such that initially, the authenticity movement was a literal revival. With the assumption that an Urtext score notated the composer's essentials and thus reflected the composer's definitive version of the piece, performers attempted to literally translate the written information into a sonic one. Such an interpretation however created many problems relating to the correct rendering of the music. This particularly affected the correct interpretation of French rhythms[84], *notes inégales*, as well as ornamentation, which had to be researched rather than found realized on the score itself[85]. This fixation on the text of the score also restricted the performer's freedom to create a flexible, spontaneous performance. The aftermath of the nineteenth-century Bach revival was that performers were now weary of imposing their own musical inclinations for fear of interfering with the composer's intentions.

Some keyboard performers who were using harpsichords for their recitals of Bach's works were simply relying on the fact that so-called authentic instruments were being used, believing that the music could thus be left to speak for itself. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, *The Harpsichord*,[86] many of these harpsichords were not authentic instruments since their construction was based on that of piano

[82] This will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, *3.4 Back to Sources*, 71.
[83] which includes a preface discussing issues on tempo, dynamics, phrasing, articulation, accenting and ornamentation.
[84] for which the composer only wrote single dotes but which were meant to be played shorter (double dotted).
[85] These issues will be discussed later in this chapter: *3.5 Ornamentation*, 73, *3.6 Dotted Rhythms*, 78, *3.7 Articulation*, 81.
[86] Refer to *2.2 The Harpsichord in the Twentieth Century*, 28.

manufacture, with more robust material than the original instruments, thus were only a distant approximation of a Baroque instrument. Conversely, pianists performing Bach on the piano were taking a similar approach in the literal authentic revival, believing that all Bach wanted to convey was in the music itself, needing no other input from the performer.

In the early 1900s, Wanda Landowska (1879 – 1959) and Arnold Dolmetsch (1858 – 1940), were the only isolated voices in shifting this emphasis by striving for a baroque spirit in their interpretations, although with hindsight, we nowadays find their ideas needing much revision and scrutiny. The main emphasis during the 1960s was on the medium used – the instrument, the ensemble size and the type of voices in vocal music. In fact one finds many more recordings of the *Goldberg Variations* on harpsichord than on the piano during this decade.

Table 3.1 Instruments used in recordings of the *Goldberg Variations* between 1955 – 1966 [87]

Piano	**Modern Harpsichord**		**Historical Harpsichord**	
Performer / Date	**Performer/Date**	**Maker**	**Performer/Date**	**Maker**
Gould 1955	Marlow 1962	Neupert-type	Leonhardt 1965	Skowroneck
Webersinke 1961?	Růžičková 1962	Neupert?		
P. Serkin 1965	Malcom 1963	Goff		
Weissenberg 1967	Gát 1963?	Neupert?		
Rosen 1967	Pellegg 1966	Neupert-type		
	Galligg 1966	Neupert?		

Nonetheless, out of all the recordings of the *Goldberg Variations*, Gustav Leonhardt's (1928) recording of 1965 is the only one on a replica instrument based on an eighteenth-century model. In addition to using modern-style harpsichords, the style of playing is not what we would nowadays describe as historically informed. As long as eighteenth-century instruments were used, little thought was given to the style of playing.

By the mid-1960s however, several studies had been published arguing against the overwhelming use and frequent change of registers, which, although in contrast to

[87] Dorottya Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice, 1945-1975* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 70.

Bach's contemporary performance practice, was the interpretation of many harpsichordists of this time. Gradually, a keen interest for information on performance of early music started developing, with books by Robert Thurston Dart (1921 – 1971) and Dolmetsch being reprinted and the International Bach Society Incorporation becoming established by Rosalyn Tureck (1914 – 2003) in 1967.

The Early Music Movement strove to perform eighteenth-century works using Urtext scores interpreted in a musically-informed way and using historically authentic instruments, whose reconstructions were based on historical research. Several musicologists emphasized that the reconstruction of instruments and texts should go hand in hand with a subjective and expressive interpretation, in order to bring forth the aesthetic appeal of the music. As Putnam Aldrich (1904 – 1975) remarked in 1957, "Strict adherence to the composers' texts by no means assures authentic performances"[88] for, as Robert Donington (1907 – 1990) also commented, there are aspects of performance that are not notated, such as the natural peaks and stresses of the phrase, the subtlety of rhythm and flexibility of tempo[89]. Ludwig Finscher (1930) was another musicologist who criticized "the fixation with the written form for – although scores, copies, engravings, editions, and published conventions are our most important sources – they cannot be our exclusive guides".[90]

It was only from the 1970s onwards, and even then only sporadically, that style of performance started being scrutinized. Sol Babitz (1911 – 1982), who in 1940 established the Early Music Laboratory, had written an article in 1962 urging players to adopt early fingerings, believing that their implications regarding articulation and rhythm would direct the performer to properly incorporate such performance issues more faithfully[91]. Robert Donington (1907 – 1990) continued building on Babitz's findings, his publications signifying major stepping stones towards a more objective and accurate picture of earlier performance practices. His publication *The Interpretation of Early Music* (1963) started a new era of growing specialization, as it provided the student with a comprehensive handbook covering most major tutors, and other documents that contained information on performance practice. In 1978 Nikolaus Harnoncourt (1929) expressed very similar views to those earlier proposed by

[88] Dorottya Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice, 1945-1975* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 12.
[89] Dorottya Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice, 1945-1975* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 9.
[90] Dorottya Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice, 1945-1975* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 18.
[91] Dorottya Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice, 1945-1975* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 28.

Landowska, stating that his goal was to acquire as much information about the work as possible, including its meaning and reproduction, and then to use all his abilities to make it understandable for the contemporary listener[92]. He drew attention to the need to look at old music in its context, believing that the use of period instruments in combination with historical techniques and historical locations made it possible for the appropriate balance and proportion needed to make the music sound not only more historically correct but also livelier[93]. Willibald Gurlitt (1904 – 1989) highlighted similar thoughts, believing that the understanding of Bach's art – its historical and aesthetic meaning, its spiritual and technical presumptions, the basics of the architectonic design – was most important to be able to recreate a Bach-style as faithfully as possible and one that is adequate and proper for us today[94]. Consequently, one can see a gradual shift of emphasis here, from reviving repertoire to resurrecting performance practices, although many problems still existed regarding the generalist approach being taken towards stylistic issues as well as the problem of a prevailing playing technique used on harpsichords that was not yet harpsichord-specific.

There has been much criticism on both extreme styles of performance – the 'purist way' for playing in a colourless manner and the 'only-instinct' musicians for their out-of-context attitude towards the sources. The researcher deems that the key to a faithful rendering of a Bach work is the effortless projection of its *Affekt*, which is achieved through the right articulation and the natural peaks of phrases, amid the music's subtle rhythmic flexibility. Divergent scholarly opinions, heated discussions, traditional as well as experimental performances and slowly changing tastes characterize the years between 1960 and 1975.

As many musicologists have contended, authenticity is a very ambiguous word for, as Anthony Newman (1941) remarked, "in an absolute sense, the only truly valid historical performance occurred when the composer performed his work in a way which he considered pleasing or satisfactory."[95] In fact, from the 1990s onwards, historically-informed performance started being the term more generally employed.

[92] Dorottya Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice, 1945-1975* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 5.
[93] Dorottya Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice, 1945-1975* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 37.
[94] Dorottya Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice, 1945-1975* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 8.
[95] Dorottya Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice, 1945-1975* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 23.

3.3 EDITIONS

The different attitudes to performance practices discussed above are also reflected in the different editions of music compiled during these decades. While Franz Anton Hoffmeister's 1801/3 edition of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* preserves the unadulterated Urtext appearance of Bach's eighteenth-century manuscript, for example, Carl Czerny's 1837 edition 'orchestrates' Bach's score by adding dynamic markings, phrasings, rubatos and expressive tempo indications[96].

3.3.1 CZERNY'S EDITION

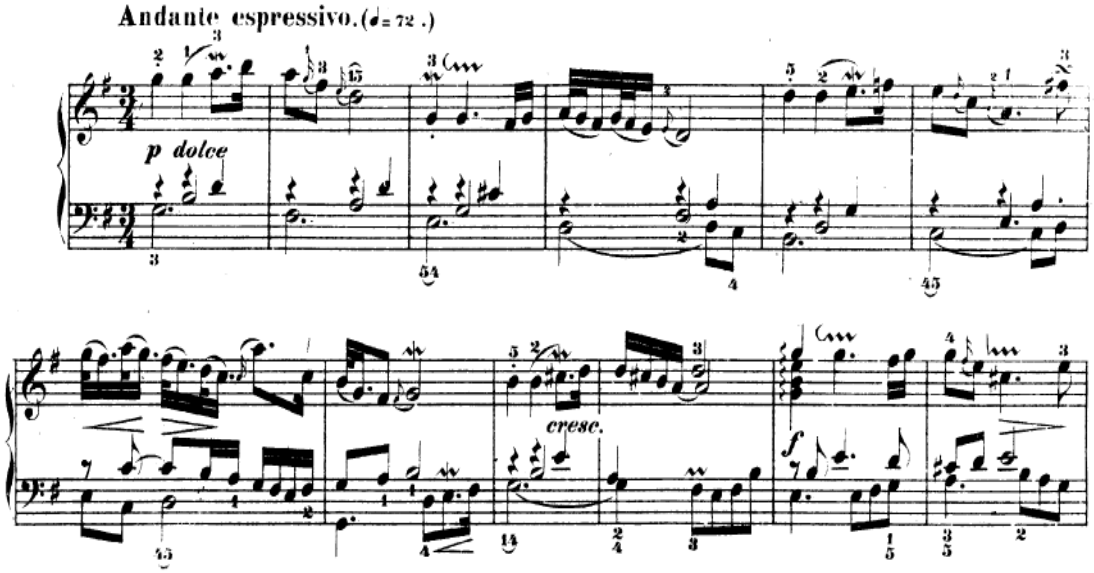
Czerny's edition of the *Goldberg Variations*[97] was one of the first to be published and reflects the nineteenth-century outlook towards Bach's music when historical instruments, issues on style, such as baroque rhythm, and historical performance practice in general were still uncharted territory.

Czerny's dynamic markings, are not in the spirit of eighteenth-century practices as scholars would be quick to note today, but rather reflect the current passionate approach taken by all his contemporaries. Perhaps more than Busoni in his 1915 edition of the *Goldberg Variations*, Czerny takes a decidedly pianistic approach in his markings[98], such that as a result the edited text looks like a Beethoven score or even possibly his own interpretation of it (as Czerny claimed it to be)[99]. Intriguingly, dynamics feature more heavily in this edition than in Busoni's own edition of the same work, which nonetheless has other areas where editorial evidence is in abundance, as will be discussed and demonstrated below. Being a composer from the twentieth century, one would expect Busoni's edition to be more abundant in dynamic, articulation and pedal

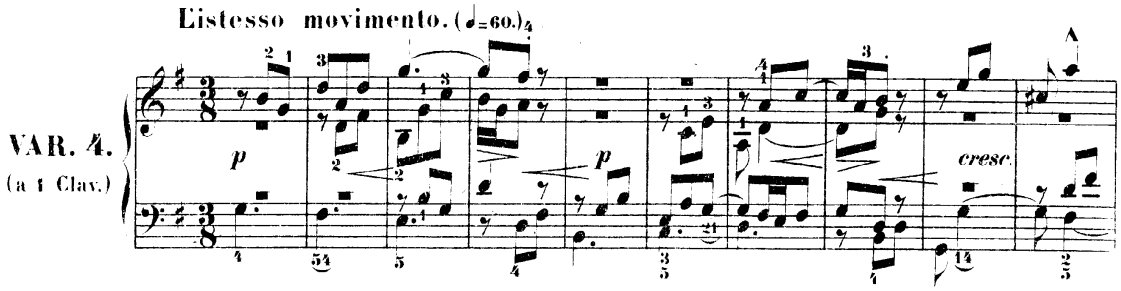
[96] In his edition of the *Well Tempered Clavier* Czerny claims that he is in fact transcribing Beethoven's own interpretations – to us nowadays, such an edition is only valuable for its representation of the understanding and performance of Bach by later generations.
[97] published by C. F. Peters, c.1850
[98] which include tempo, expression and articulation markings.
[99] While there is no record of Beethoven having ever performed the *Goldberg Variations* in public (and neither would he have probably done so due to the work being shunned from the concert repertoire during this time), this does not rule out the possibility that he owned a copy of the work to use for personal study purposes. Beethoven is in fact reputed to have loved the works of Bach. As Czerny was Beethoven's pupil, he could possibly have had access to his teacher's approach and interpretation to the *Goldberg Variations*, as Czerny claimed to have for the *Well-Tempered Clavier*.

markings than Czerny's, since this was the era when Bach's music was interpreted in a highly romantic fashion, by making full use of the piano's possibilities.

Example 3.5 **Bach: Goldberg Variations, Aria, b.1 – 12, Czerny Edition**

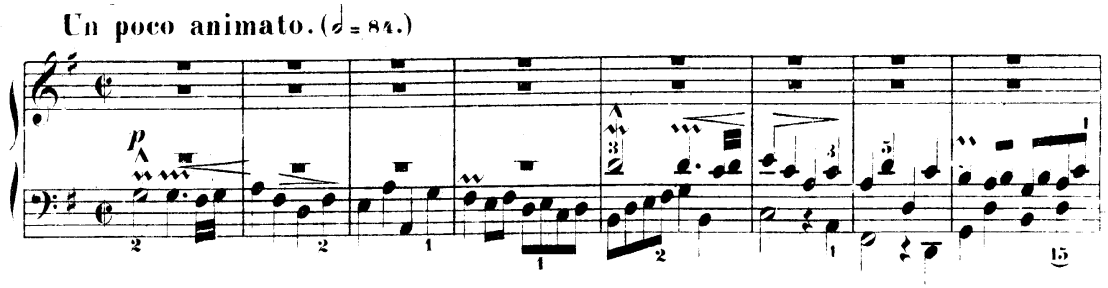


Example 3.6 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 4, b.1 – 10, Czerny Edition**

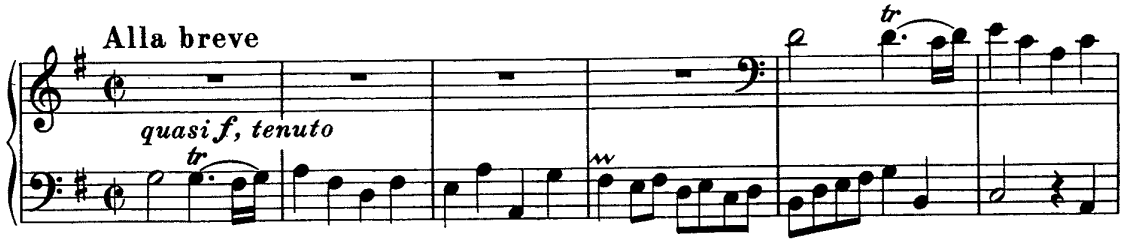


Czerny's dynamic indications at times completely contrast with Busoni's own, as in Variation 10 for example:

Example 3.7 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 10, b.1 – 8, Czerny Edition**



Example 3.8 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 10, b.1 – 6, Busoni Edition**



Like Busoni[100], Czerny too adds tempo[101] and metronome markings for each movement, which projects his understanding of the work.

Table 3.2 **Czerny's editorial tempo markings for each movement of the *Goldberg Variations*:**

	Czerny's tempo indications
Aria	Andante espressivo ♩ = 72
Variation 1	Allegro moderato ♩ = 108
Variation 2	Allegretto ♩ = 92
Variation 3 Canon at the unison	Poco Andante ma con moto ♩. = 60
Variation 4	L'istesso movimento ♩ = 60
Variation 5	Allegro vivace ♩ = 126
Variation 6 Canon at the 2nd	Allegretto ♩. = 60
Variation 7 al tempo di giga	Un poco vivace ♩. = 84
Variation 8	Allegro ♩ = 120
Variation 9 Canon at the 3rd	Moderato ♩ = 80
Variation 10 Fughetta	Un poco animato 𝅗𝅥 = 84
Variation 11	Allegro e leggiero ♪ = 152
Variation 12 Canon at the 4th	Allegro moderato ♩ = 84
Variation 13	Andantino ♩ = 69
Variation 14	Allegro moderato ♩ = 100
Variation 15 Canon at the 5th, Andante	Andante ♪ = 180

[100] Refer to Table 3.3 *Busoni's Interpretation of the Goldberg Variations*, 51.
[101] This is synonymous with the nineteenth-century revival of Bach's works.

Variation 16 Overture	Maestoso ♩ = 80
Variation 17	Allegro ♩ = 112
Variation 18 Canon at the 6th	Con moto 𝅗𝅥 = 92
Variation 19	Allegro vivace 𝅗𝅥. = 72
Variation 20	Allegro ♩ = 108
Variation 21 Canon at the 7th	Andante con moto ♩ = 66
Variation 22 alla breve	Alla breve 𝅗𝅥 = 96
Variation 23	Allegro moderato ♩ = 100
Variation 24 Canon at the 8th	Allegretto con moto 𝅗𝅥. = 84
Variation 25 Adagio	Andante espressivo ♪ = 88
Variation 26	Allegro ♩ = 100
Variation 27 Canon at the 9th	Un poco vivace 𝅗𝅥. = 84
Variation 28	Allegro ♩ = 92
Variation 29	Brillante ♩ = 100
Variation 30 Quodlibet	Moderato ♩ = 88
Aria *da capo*	*Aria da capo e Fine*

However, Czerny's editorial markings do not intrude on Bach's ornamentation or notation, as Busoni's edition does. Composers started adding new parts to the score as a matter of course such that in 1842 for example, Mendelssohn produced a piano accompaniment for Bach's Chaconne from the D minor Partita for unaccompanied violin. Robert Schumann (1810 – 1856) composed piano accompaniments for all of Bach's six unaccompanied cello suites, while Liszt and Busoni filled out Bach's organ works and transferred them to the piano, which (together with the violin and cello) was considered to be the ideal expressive instrument.

3.3.2 BUSONI'S EDITION

While both have their own individual understanding regarding the interpretation of the *Goldberg Variations*, which is reflected in their respective editorial markings for tempo, articulation and dynamics, Busoni's and Czerny's editions of the *Goldberg*

Variations[102] also look surprisingly similar in certain places. However, radical editorial markings can also be found, particularly in Busoni's much altered transcription, which has suggestions for changing the order of the variations, skipping some and 'arranging' some notes. In his Foreword, Busoni echoes the current viewpoint towards Bach's works, remarking that:

> In order to rescue this remarkable work for the concert hall that is, to give the thousands, who cannot reproduce it themselves, an opportunity of hearing it, it is necessary more in this, than in the others of Bach's Pianoforte compositions either by shortening it, or paraphrasing it, to render it more suitable both for the receptive powers of the hearer, and for the possibilities of the performer. This latter has been endeavoured in the text as set forth in this edition. In pursuance of the first mentioned aim, I would suggest, to begin with, a disregard of the repetition marks. Further, I considered it expedient, for public performance, to suppress entirely some of the Variations.[103]

Since, according to Busoni, the character of Variation 3 is sufficiently expressed in the second variation (a viewpoint with which the researcher differs), he considers that "the omission of the 3rd Var. need hardly be considered a loss."[104] He also expresses the view that the Canon at the third (Variation 9) "impairs the effect of the entrance" of the Fughetta (Variation 10), so that this should come directly after the "buoyant Allegro" Variation 8[105]. The same argument is presented for the Canon at the fourth (Variation 12). In Busoni's opinion, the *Ouverture* Variation (number 16) breaks the continuity chain rather than forms an important part of the work's structure, while he considers the vivaciousness of Variation 17 to present a good contrast to the soft minor mood of Variation 15. However, Busoni continues to feel that Variation 19 creates a more natural continuation from Variation 15, concluding that Variations 16, 17 and 18 should thus be omitted – his argument being there are enough examples of Allegro movements

[102] published by Breitkopf and Härtel, copyright 1915, cat. no. 4315; plate no. 27 461

[103] Ferruccio Busoni, *Klavierwerke, Band XV. Aria mit 30 Veränderungen (Goldberg-Variationen) BWV 988*. (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1915/1943), Forward: The Purpose of the Edition, 3.

[104] This, and other quotations in this paragraph are taken from Ferruccio Busoni, *Klavierwerke, Band XV. Aria mit 30 Veränderungen (Goldberg-Variationen) BWV 988*. (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1915/1943), Forward: The Purpose of the Edition, 3 – 4.

[105] Here one should mention that Bach does not in fact indicate an Allegro tempo for this movement in the original score, but Busoni includes it as part of his editing.

similar to that of Variation 17, while Variation 18 "has a more powerful counterpart in the subsequent Fugato (22), which renders the former superfluous." According to Busoni, Variation 21 (Canon at the seventh) is another movement that can be omitted "so as not to lessen the effect of the entrance of the Adagio (25)…the more so, as there is a strong resemblance, both in mood and movement, between it and the preceding one (15)". Busoni suggests that Variations 24 and 27 are two other variations that should be omitted in concert performance.

> Having arrived at the culminating point [Variation 25], all that follows should have the character of a 'wind-up', in the manner of a finale; and therefore the Canon at the ninth (27), with its lingering at the wrong moment, should be omitted.[106]

Thus, according to Busoni's edition, the *Goldberg Variations* should be performed as below, reducing the work to twenty-four variations and creating a three-movement structure:

Table 3.3 Busoni's interpretation of the *Goldberg Variations*:

	Busoni's tempo indications
Aria	Largamente e cantata
	Group 1
Variation 1	Allegro con freschezza, deciso
Variation 2	Andantino, dolce
Variation 3 Canon at the unison - OMITTED	Andante con eleganza e con moto
Variation 4	Lo stesso movimento
Variation 5	Allegro, non troppo
Variation 6 Canon at the 2nd	Allegretto tranquillo
Variation 7 al tempo di giga	Allegro Scherzando
Variation 8	Allegro
Variation 9 Canon at the 3rd - OMITTED	Moderato
Variation 10 Fughetta	Alla breve
Variation 11	Lostesso tempo, più Vivace
Variation 12 Canon at the 4th - OMITTED	Moderato
Variation 13	Andante con grazia

[106] Ferruccio Busoni, *Klavierwerke, Band XV. Aria mit 30 Veränderungen (Goldberg-Variationen) BWV 988*. (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1915/1943), Forward: The Purpose of the Edition, 4.

	Group 2
Variation 14	Allegro ritenuto ("The 17th Variation might, if necessary, take the place of this one")[107]
Variation 15 Canon at the 5th, Andante	Quasi Adagio
Variation 16 Overture - OMITTED	Grave – Allegro moderato scherzoso
Variation 17 - OMITTED	Allegro slanciato
Variation 18 Canon at the 6th - OMITTED	Tempo giusto, alla breve
Variation 19	Allegretto piacevole
Variation 20	Allegretto vivace
Variation 21 Canon at the 7th - OMITTED	Andante con moto, non troppo dolce
Variation 22 alla breve	Fugato, Alla breve
Variation 23	Non Allegro
Variation 24 Canon at the 8th - OMITTED	Allegretto
Variation 25 Adagio	Adagio
	Group 3
Variation 26	Allegro corrente
Variation 27 Canon at the 9th - OMITTED	Moderato ma vivacemente
Variation 28	Andante brillante
Variation 29	Allegro Finale, Quodlibet e Ripresa[108]
Variation 30 Quodlibet	
Aria *da capo*	

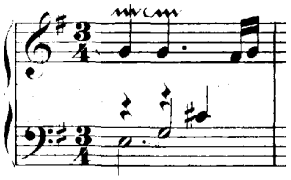
Comparing this table with that of Czerny's own tempo markings (Table 3.2), one can note that while most of the tempo markings are similar, some differ slightly in their intent, while on two occasions they project completely different objectives (Variations 5 and 19).

Such an intervention into the architectonic structure of the music goes contrary to Bach's original structure[109], where the variation cycle is noticeably a symmetrical one, divided by Variation 16[110], as indicated by Bach himself – *Ouverture*. Apart from such structural editing, the inclusion of tempo marks, and the elimination of Bach's rubric for use of manuals, Busoni's editorial markings also permeate notation, including

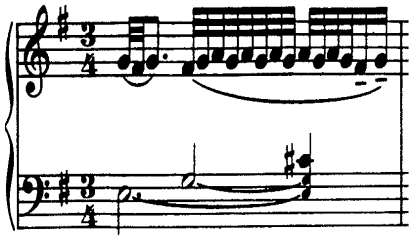
[107] Ferruccio Busoni, *Klavierwerke, Band XV. Aria mit 30 Veränderungen (Goldberg-Variationen) BWV 988*. (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1915/1943), Forward: The Purpose of the Edition, 6.
[108] The last three movements are re-written and connected
[109] Refer to Chapter 4, *The Constitution of the Goldberg Variations, 4.2 Structure*, 90.
[110] Such structural editing can also be seen in Busoni's arrangement for piano of Bach's D minor Chaconne (originally for violin). Just as in the *Goldberg Variations*, Busoni ignores the 'hidden' equilibrium of the architecture of the work and "instead of Bach's numeral proportions and tripartite grouping of the variations, he subjugates the entire form to an ultimate dynamic". Martin Zenck, "Reinterpreting Bach in the Nineteenth Century," in John Butt ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Bach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 236.

interpreting Bach's original ornaments into written-out notation. However, rather than go back to the original sources and research the historically correct approach, Busoni, like other nineteenth-century musicians interprets the music according to his own understanding and the current principles and standards. Even from the first few opening bars of the Aria, one would nowadays realize that the long trill on the second crotchet of bar 3 is not realized according to eighteenth-century performance practice, for Bach's symbol indicates that the ornament should start from above the written note and not below, as Busoni writes it out.

Example 3.9 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Aria, b.3, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe

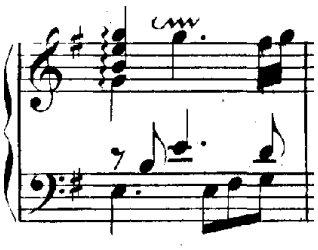


Example 3.10 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Aria, b.3, Busoni Edition



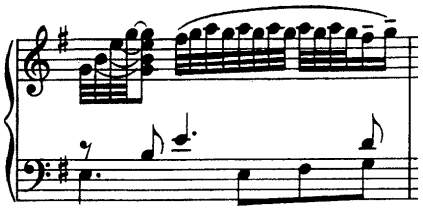
Such realization of ornaments, that is, Busoni's interpretation of them, occurs in every variation. Another misinterpreted symbol is the spread chord of bar 11, which is nowadays played as a descending chord, and not as Busoni realizes it[111].

Example 3.11 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Aria, b.11, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe



[111] In addition, the trill in the same bar is also incorrectly realized. The interpretation of this wavy-line has been the subject of much controversy. While some performers tended to break the chord upwards, others executed it downwards. The researcher tried to establish when this latter tradition was established. However no written references to a downward execution were found. Busoni specifies an upward break in his edition. In the first recording of the *Goldberg Variations*, Wanda Landowska (1933) plays the chord downwards. This rendition was followed by most interpreters, although some musicians still played it the other way round.

Example 3.12 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Aria, b.11, Busoni Edition

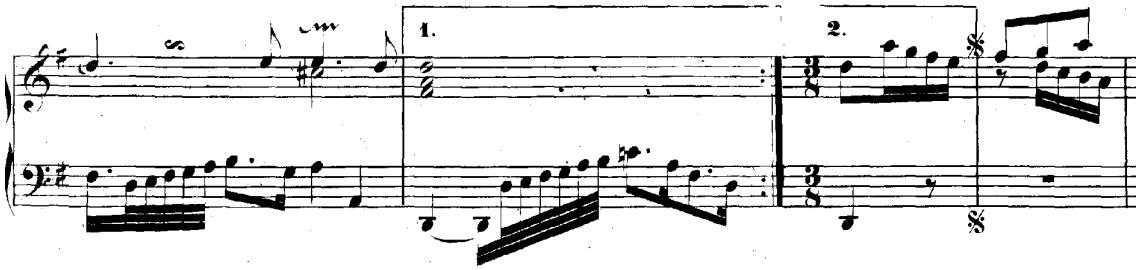


Other editorial changes include:

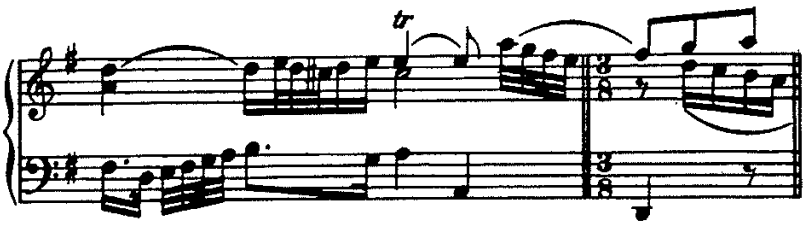
- changing notes to fit in with Busoni's structural idea of the work:

In the first half of Variation 16, Busoni edits the last bar before the Fughetta section, compressing bars 15 and 16 so as to connect the two sections together.

Example 3.13 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 16, b.15 – 17, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe



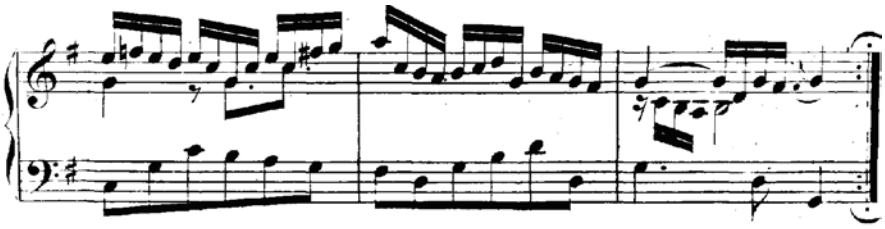
Example 3.14 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 16, b.15 – 16, Busoni Edition



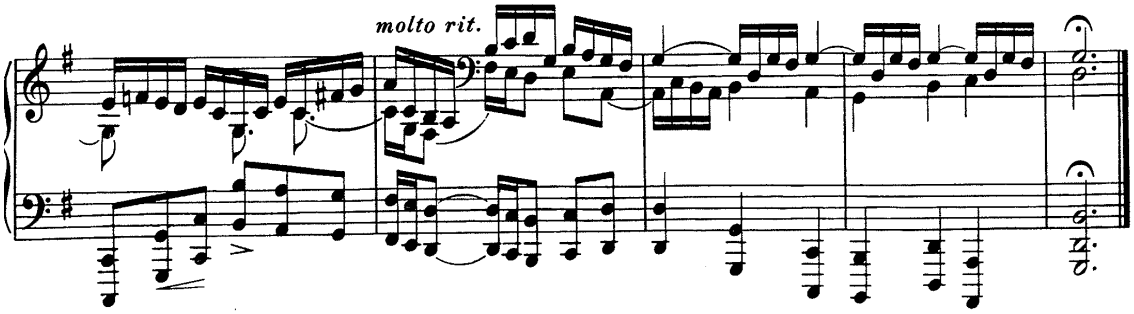
In the *Aria da Capo*, Busoni also adds two extra bars at the end, as if to assert that the work has ended. Furthermore, for the *Aria da Capo*, "the editor considered it desirable to restore the theme to its original melodic outline, simplified and freed from the elaborate network of ornamentations".[112]

[112] Ferruccio Busoni, *Klavierwerke, Band XV. Aria mit 30 Veränderungen (Goldberg-Variationen) BWV 988*. (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1915/1943), Forward: The Purpose of the Edition, 4.

Example 3.15 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Aria *da capo*, b.30 – 32, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe**

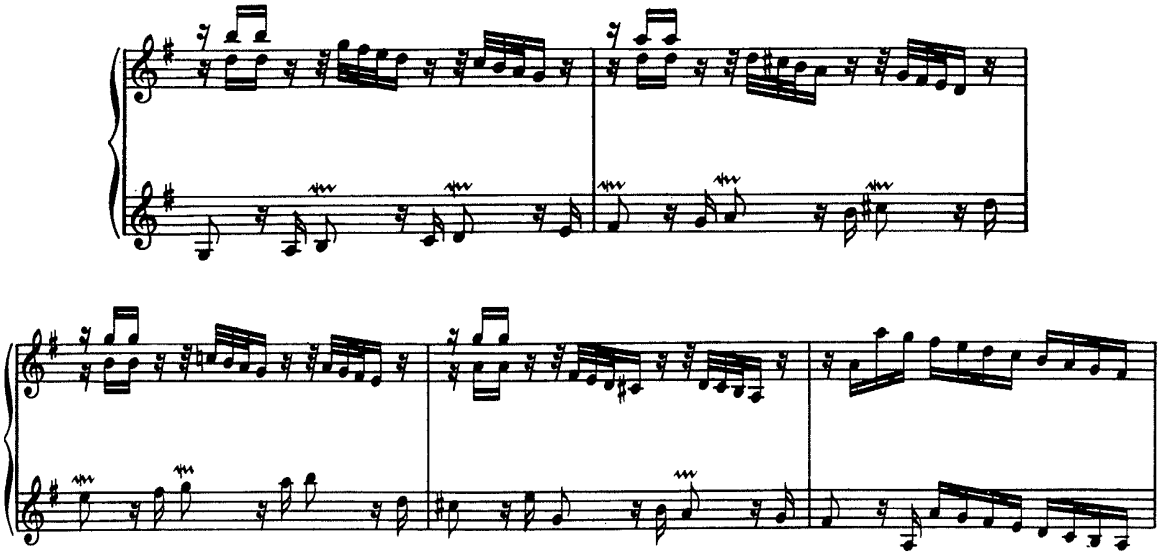


Example 3.16 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Aria *da capo*, b.30 – 34, Busoni Edition**

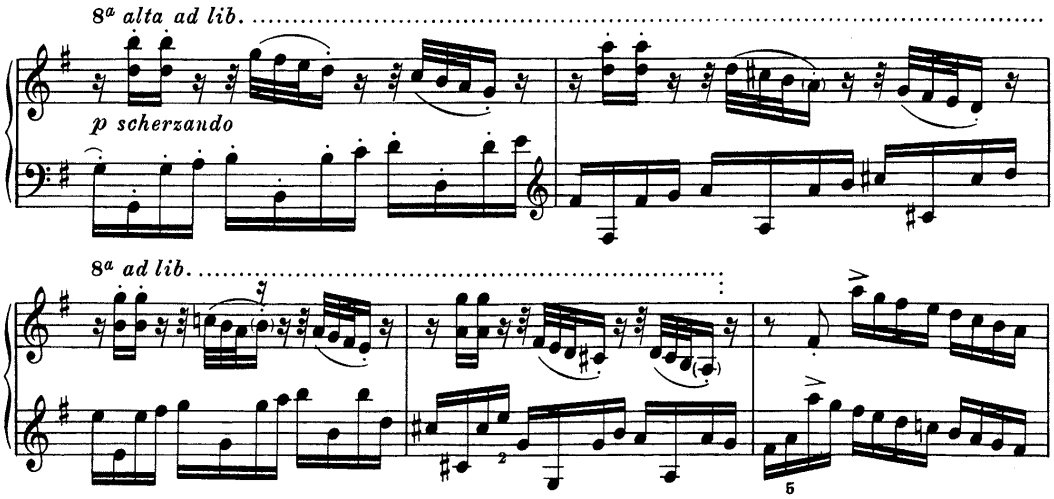


- introducing new figuration, as in Variations 17 and 23

Example 3.17 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 23, b.9 – 13, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe**

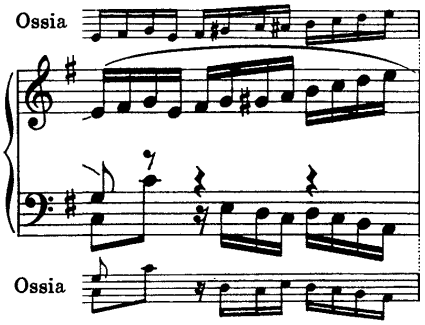


Example 3.18 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 23, b.9 – 13, Busoni Edition**

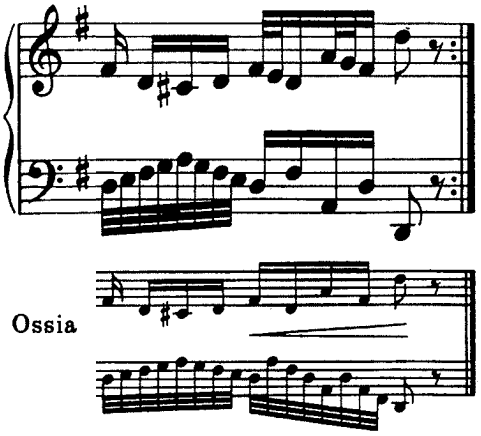


- including *Ossia* options

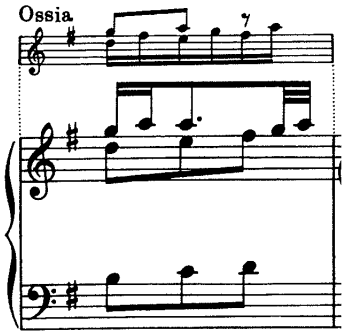
Example 3.19 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 12, b.25, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe and Busoni's *ossia* version**



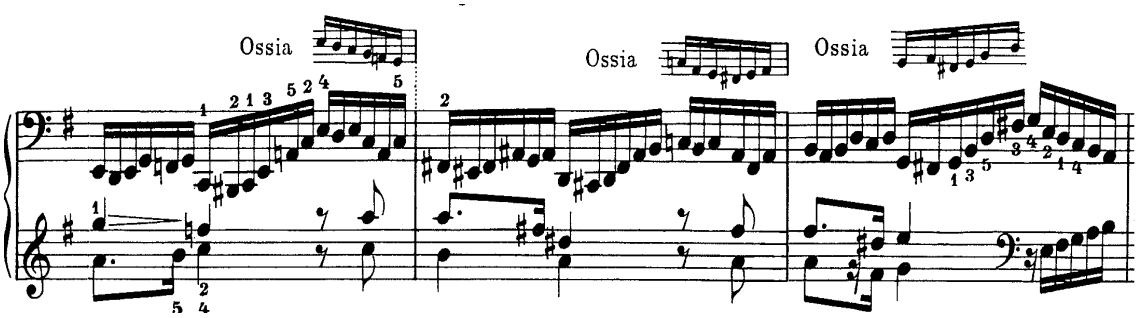
Example 3.20 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 14, b.16, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe and Busoni's *ossia* version**



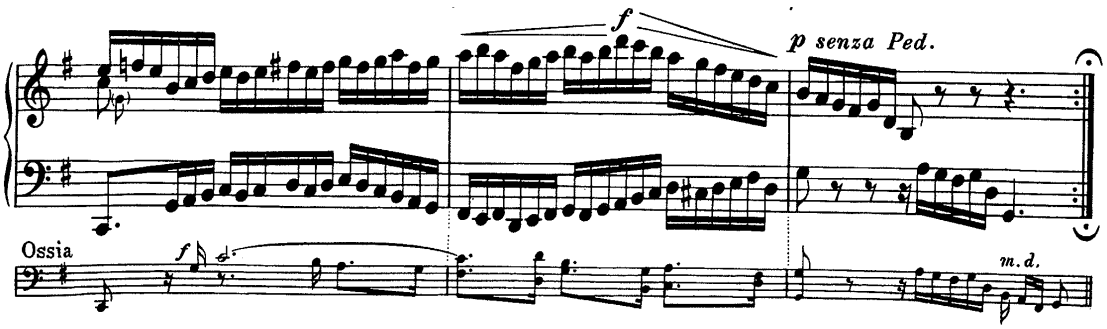
Example 3.21 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 16, b.28, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe and Busoni's *ossia* version**



Example 3.22 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 26, b.22 – 24, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe and Busoni's *ossia* version**

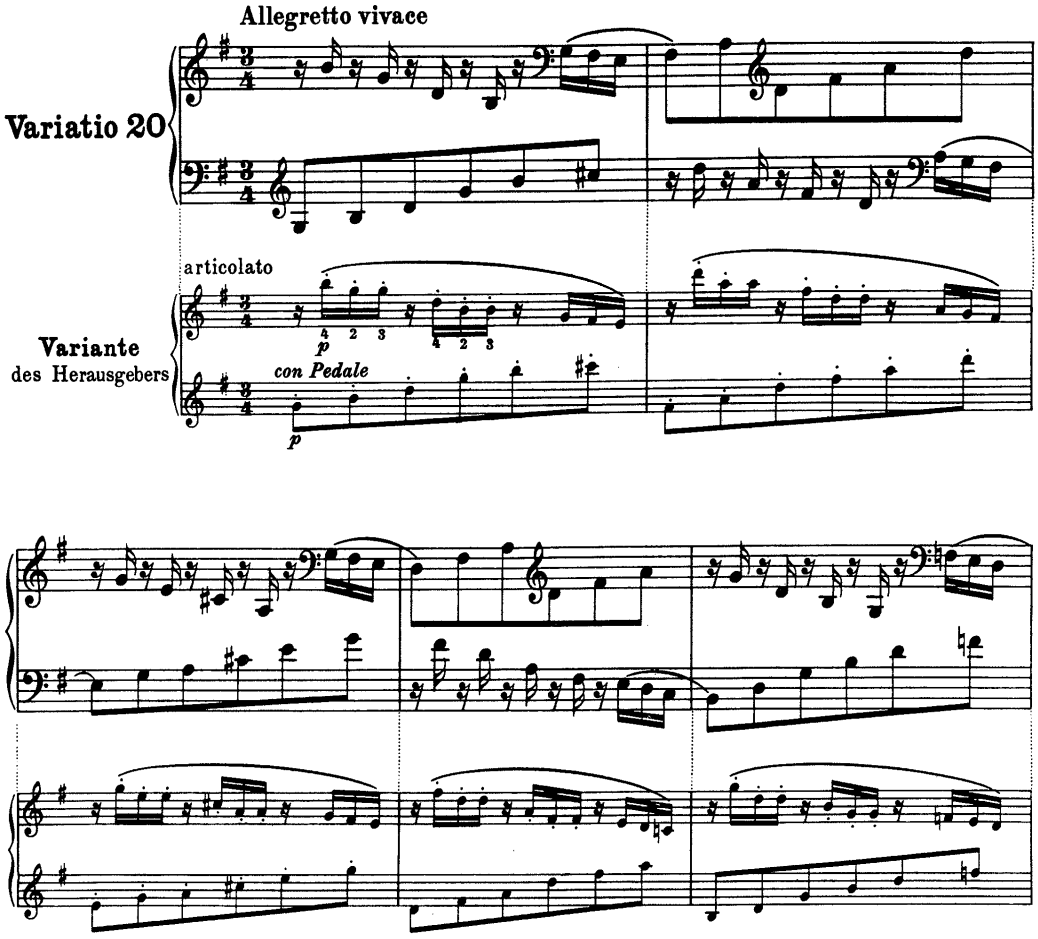


Example 3.23 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 26, b.30 – 32, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe and Busoni's *ossia* version**



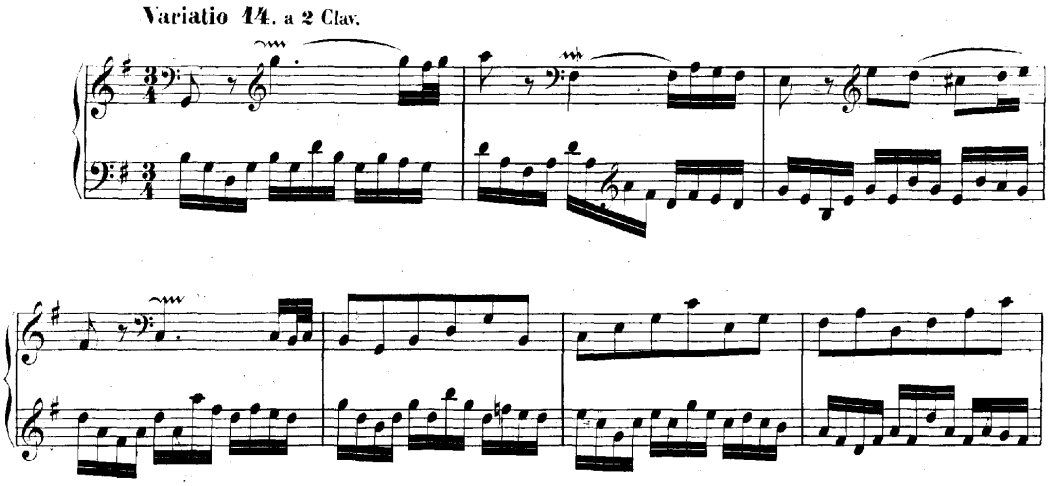
- re-working parts of variations, most particularly in Variations 28 and 29, as well as Variation 20:

<u>Example 3.24</u> Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 20, b.1 – 5, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe and Busoni's *ossia* version

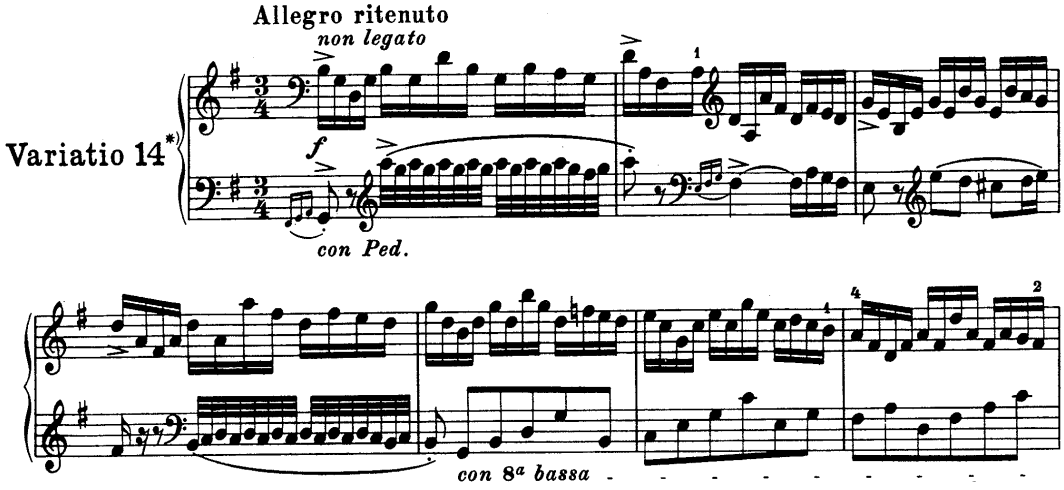


- modifying certain passages – such as in Variation 14, where the staves are reversed:

Example 3.25 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 14, b.1 – 7, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe**



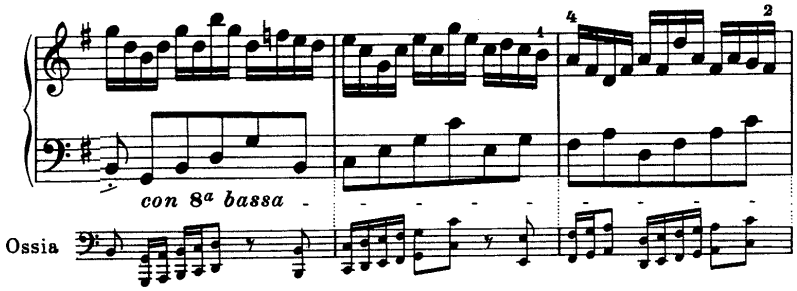
Example 3.26 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 14, b.1 – 7, Busoni Edition**



- reinforcing bass notes

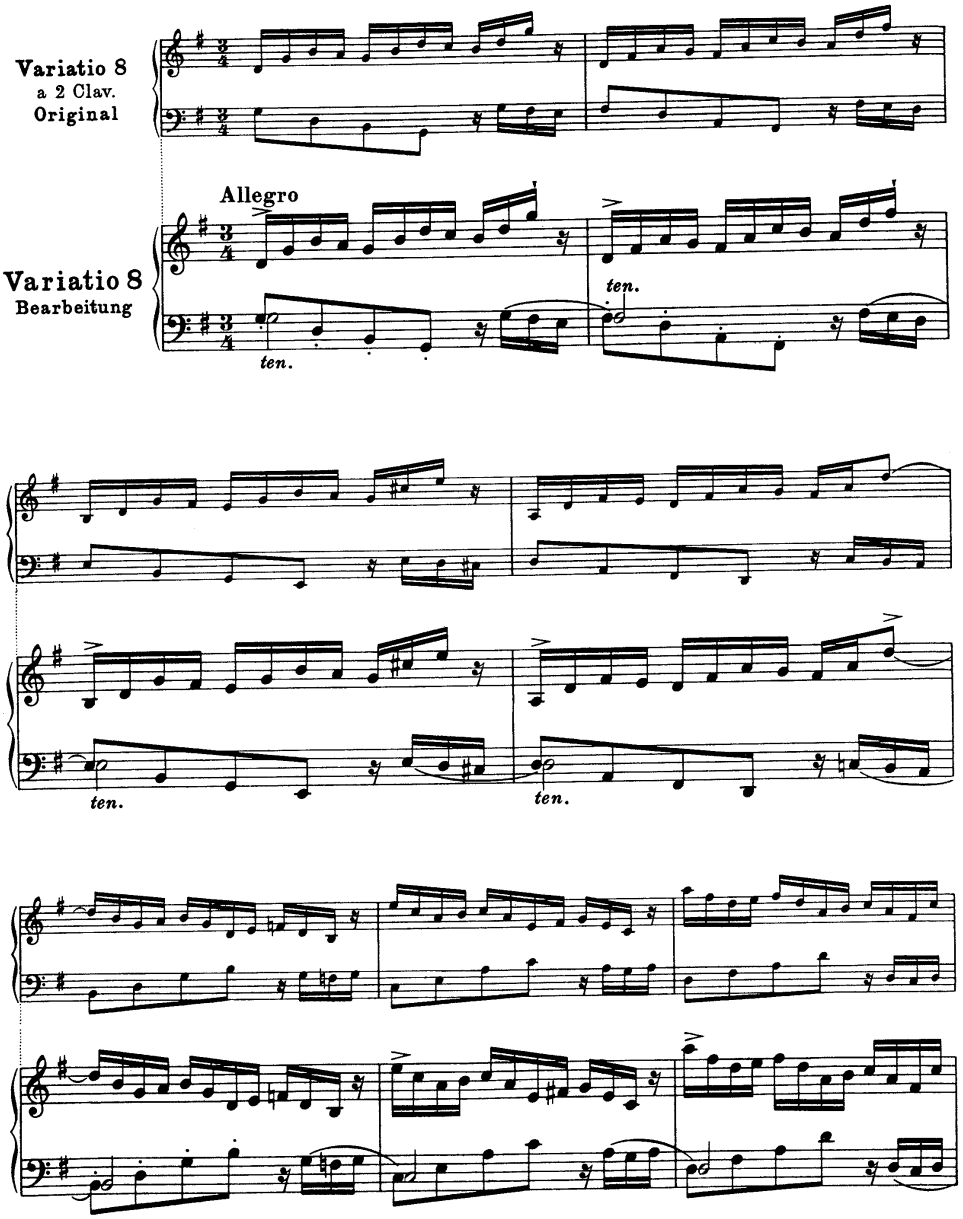
In Variation 14 for example, the left hand in the *ossia* version is doubled in octaves, as was common practice in the nineteenth century.

Example 3.27 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 14, b.5 – 7, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe and Busoni's *ossia* version with octaves**



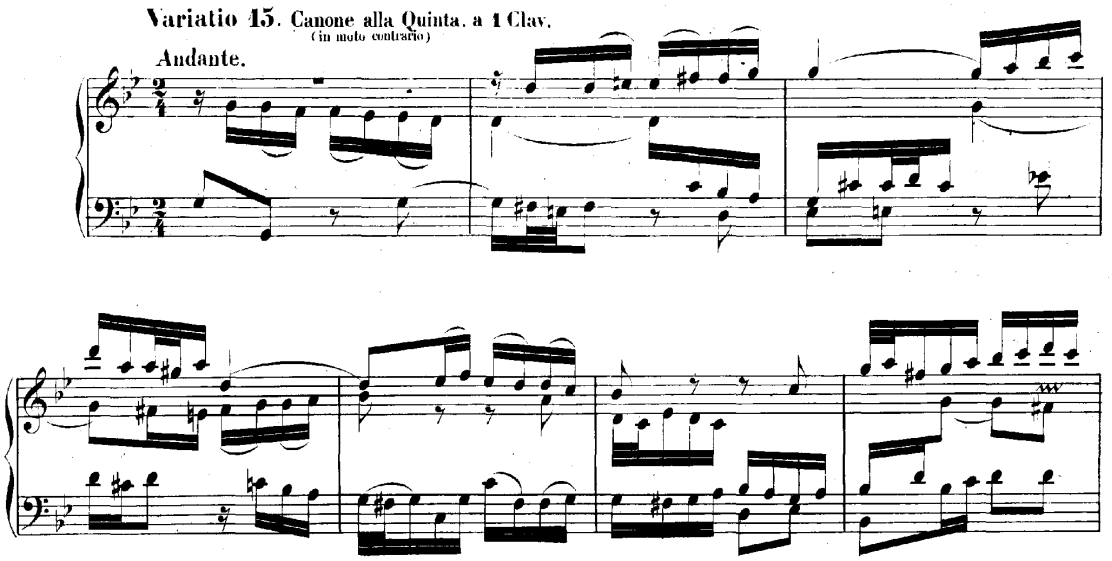
Busoni edits all of Variation 2 with octaves in the left hand, while in Variation 8 he notates the bass notes of the '*Goldberg* theme' in minims.

Example 3.28 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 8, b.1 – 7, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe and Busoni's version**

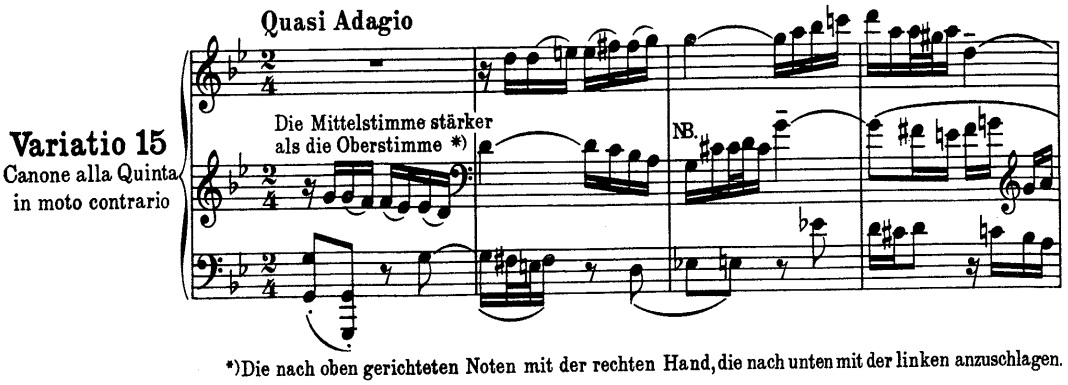


- correcting notes which according to Busoni are errors by Bach[113] – Variation 15

Example 3.29 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 15, b.1 – 7, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe



Example 3.30 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 15, b.1 – 4, Busoni Edition



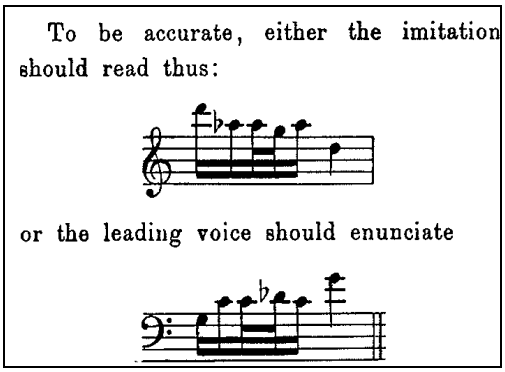


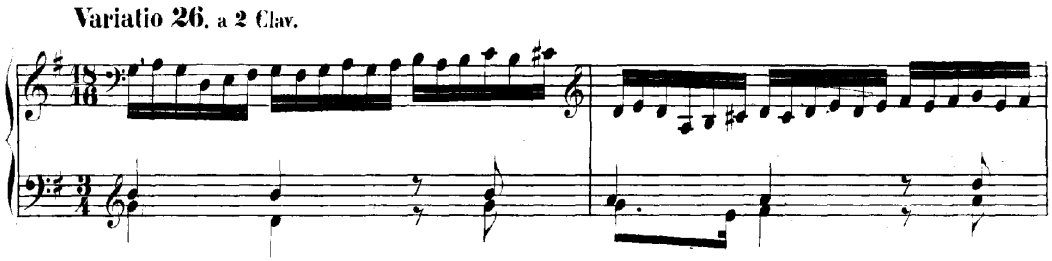
Figure iii Busoni's comments about bars 3 and 4 of Variation 15, in the Editor's Commentary[114]

[113] This is certainly not an error by Bach, for every fugue has the possibility of having a real or tonal answer. It is rather Busoni's audacious attitude in his misunderstanding of Bach's intentions – similar to his decision to discard some variations.

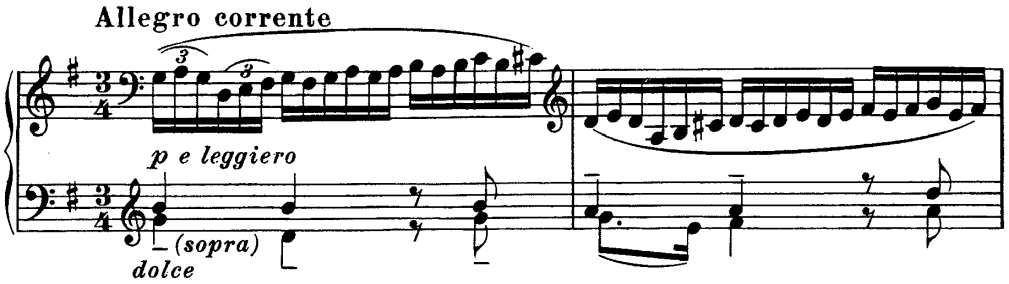
- changing meter

Busoni changes the time signature for Variations 26 and introduces more modern rhythmic notation. In the eighteenth century, triplet figures were not notated as such, so in this variation Bach alters the time signature to fit in with the left hand.

Example 3.31 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 26, b.1 – 2, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe



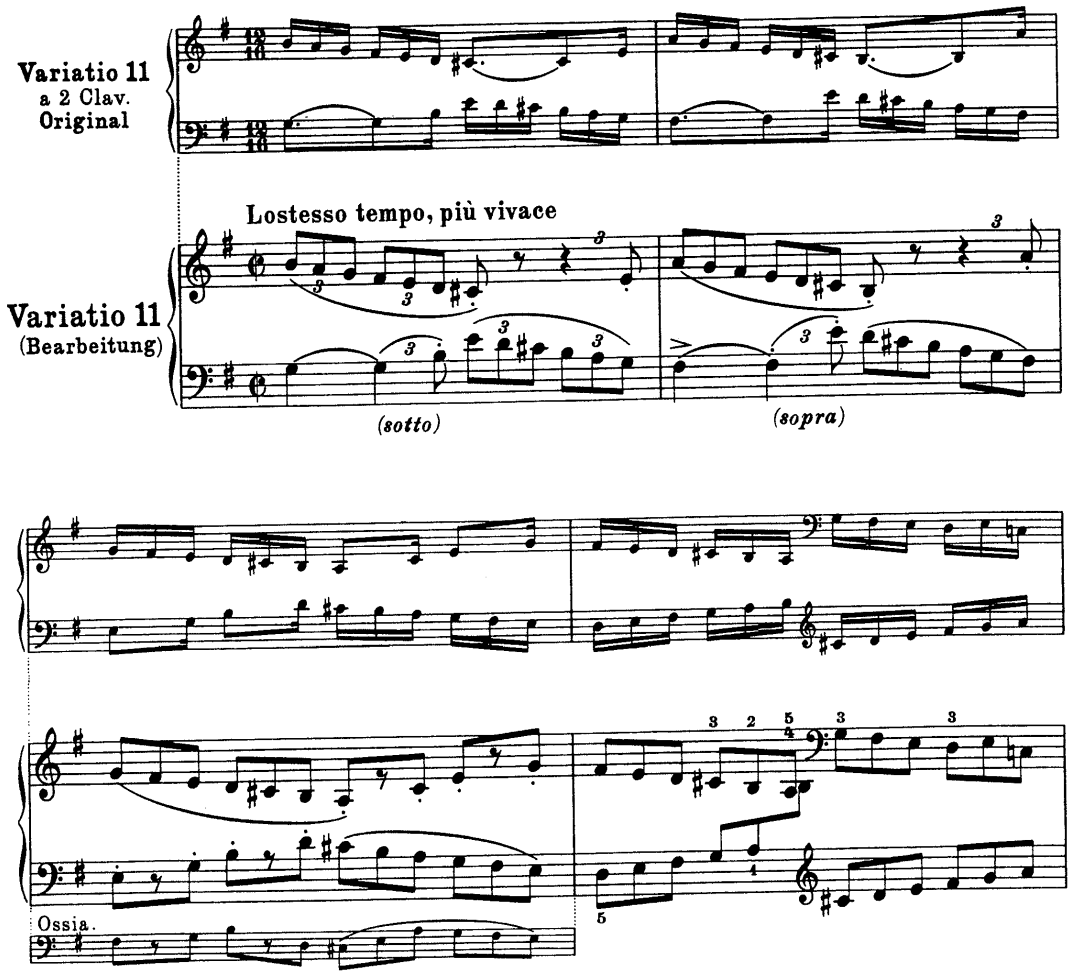
Example 3.32 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 26, b.1 – 2, Busoni Edition



In Variation 11 too Busoni totally changes the meter from 12/16 to 𝄵- implying that it should be taken faster, and so executed with a lighter touch, and therefore giving the movement a different feeling altogether.

[114] Ferruccio Busoni, *Klavierwerke, Band XV. Aria mit 30 Veränderungen (Goldberg-Variationen) BWV 988*. (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1915/1943), Forward: The Purpose of the Edition, 6.

Example 3.33 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 11, b.1 – 4, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe and Busoni's version**



Intriguingly, Busoni does not apply the same principle in Variation 29 however, applying no alteration to the rhythmic notation of the left hand in bar 8 to synchronize it with the right hand triplets[115]. Taking into consideration his other editorial marking, one would have thought that Busoni would have 'simplified' the rhythmic challenge for the performer. However, recordings by twentieth-century pianists[116] reveal that they interpreted it literally, as written – the dotted rhythm of the left hand was fitted between the triplet figure of the right hand rather than synchronized, as was eighteenth-century practice.

- In the case of Variation 15, Busoni also alters the layout of the movement, presenting it on three staves. While this may be easier to look at during analysis, the researcher regards it as being more difficult to read in performance.

[115] This is how this rhythm is executed in historically informed performances.
[116] Refer to Chapter 5 *The Goldberg Variations in the Concert Hall, 5.12 Comparing Recordings*, 105.

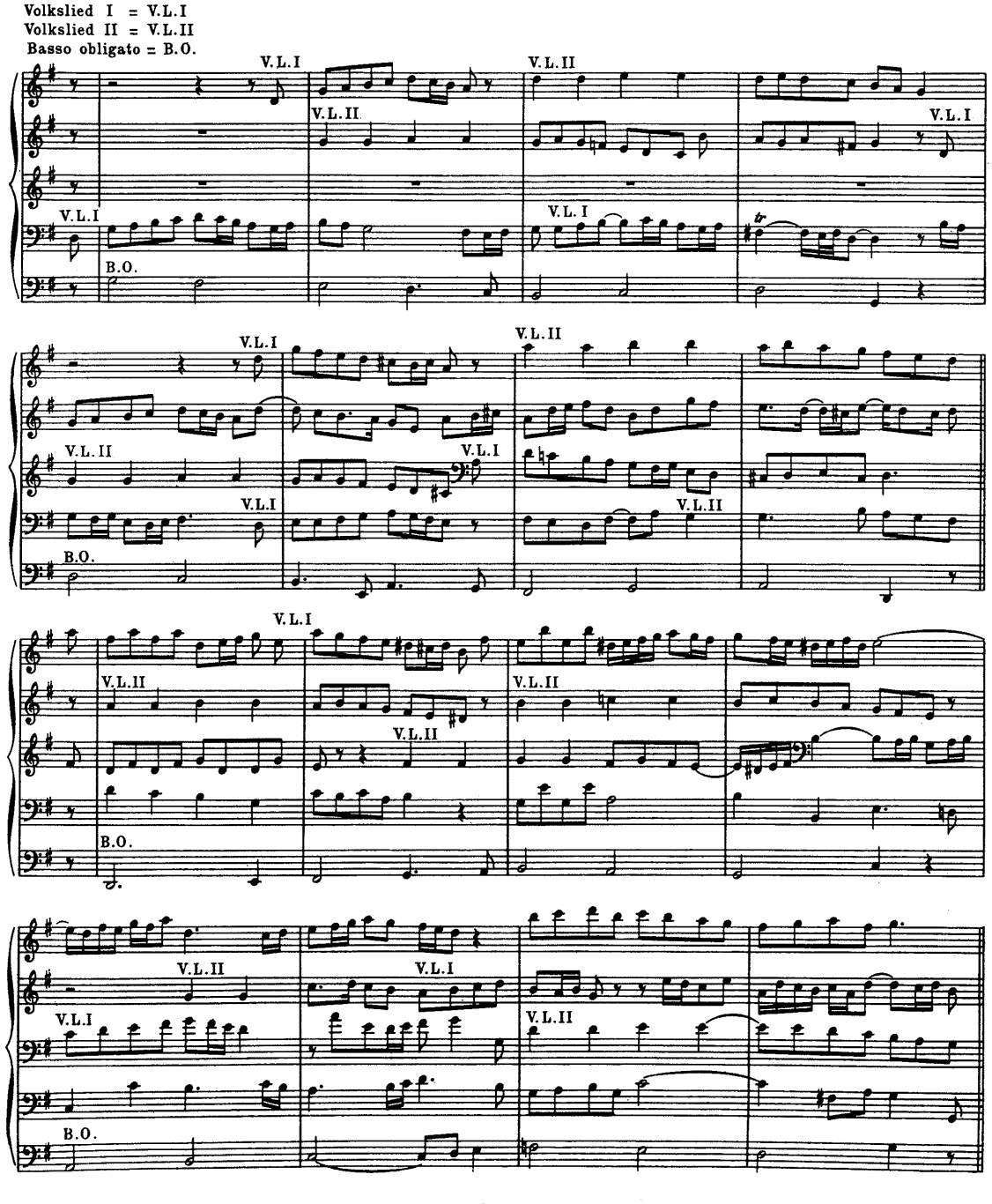
Refer to Example 3.29 for Bach's original version in the Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe and Example 3.30 for Busoni's Edition

Busoni also presents an analytical plan of the Quodlibet (Variation 30), written on five staves.

> In the representation in score, which follows here, the editor has given an analytical plan, and has endeavoured to carry out the motive of the bass, as it appears in the first four bars. This necessitated the addition of a fifth voice, involving the need of occasionally supplementing the 4-part movement woven above it.[117]

[117] *The Purpose of the Edition* by Ferruccio Busoni – the Forward for Breitkopt and Härtel's publication of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, 8.

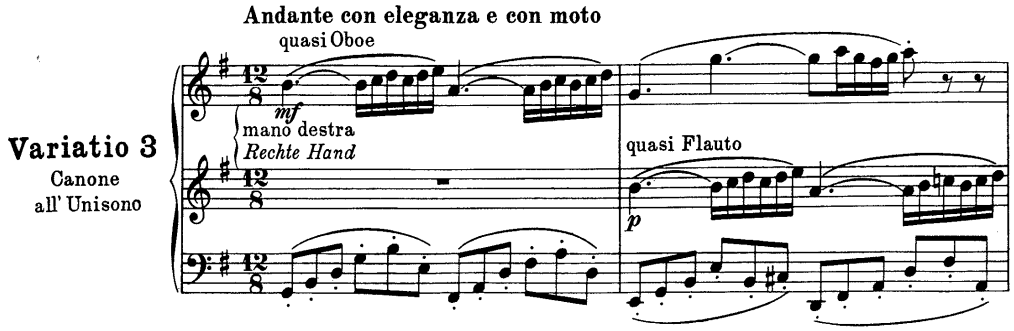
<u>Example 3.34</u> Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 30 open score, Busoni Edition



Furthermore, Busoni also adds:

- pedal indications, such as those in Variations 14 and 28
- references to orchestral instruments which convey Busoni's thoughts in terms of colouristic ideas

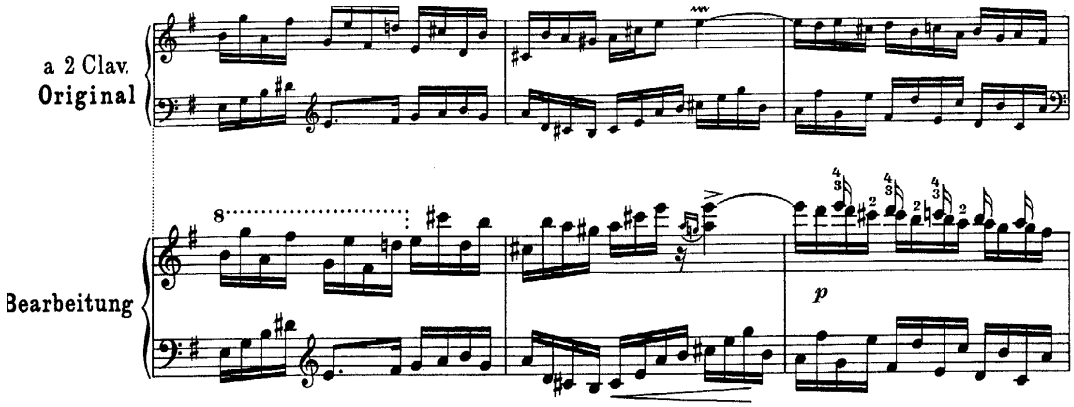
Example 3.35 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 3, b.1 – 2, Busoni Edition**



- articulation marks, such as slurs, staccato and accent markings
- dynamic markings:

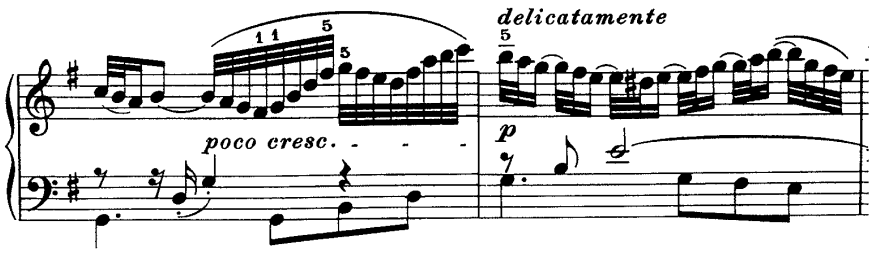
As with Czerny's edition of the *Goldberg Variations*, Busoni's dynamic markings are based on a nineteenth-century approach. For example, while block changes (terrace dynamics) are sometimes directed in places where a change of manual might be possible, they would probably not be applied in actual practice, such as in Variation 7, b.13 and Variation 17, b. 13 for example.

Example 3.36 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 17, b.11 – 13, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe and Busoni's version**



In other movements, change of manual would definitely not be possible, as in Variation 13 b.9, where from *mezza voce*, a *poco cresc* leads to an immediate *piano*.

Example 3.37 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 13, b.8 – 9, Busoni Edition**

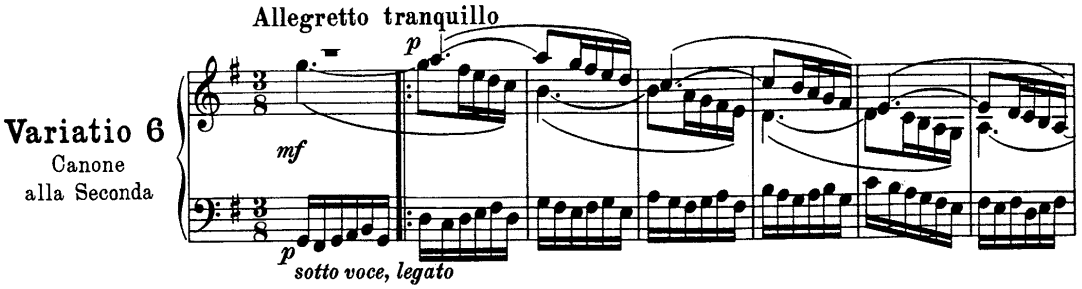


In the true spirit of the nineteenth century, Busoni concentrates on the more popular instrument at his disposal and does not try to mirror the harpsichord idiom on the piano, nor the eighteenth-century style of performance. For example in Variation 15, which is for two manuals, Busoni gives the direction: "inner part louder than the upper part". It would not be possible to achieve a similar sound-effect on a harpsichord at all.

Refer to Example 3.30 for Busoni's Edition.

Variation 6 is another example where Busoni indicates different tone-colours for each respective voice-part, even though in this case Bach specifically indicates the use of only one manual.

Example 3.38 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 6, b.1 – 7, Busoni Edition**

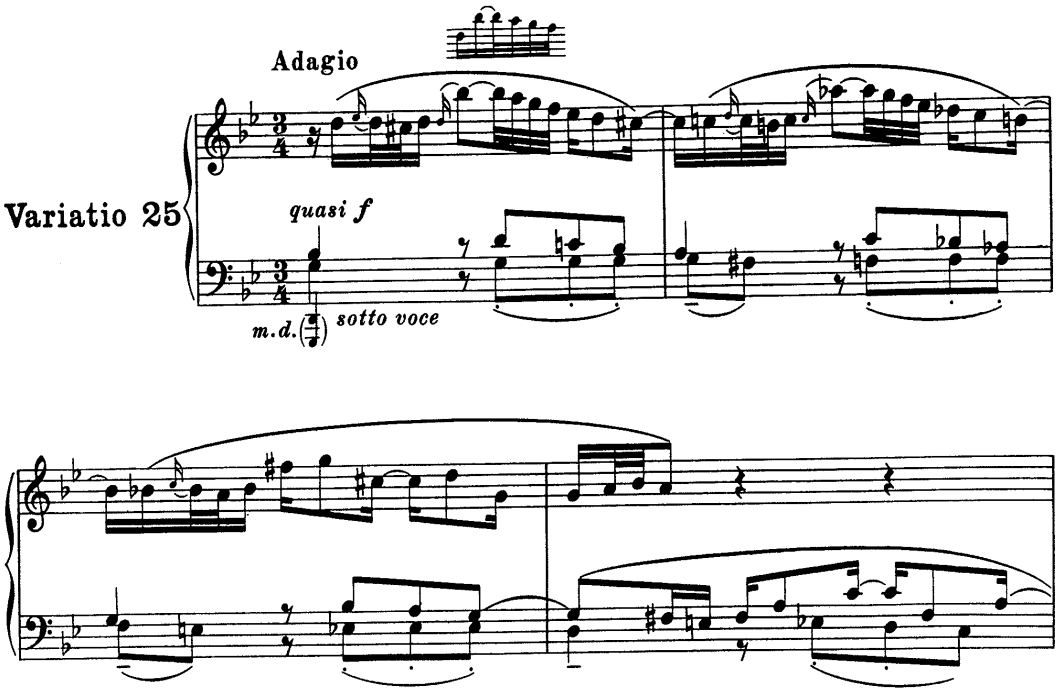


Variation 25 has similar indications which are here closer to Bach's intentions since the rubric for this movement is "a 2 Clav", although Busoni's objectives for the left hand are then foreign to Bach's possibilities.

> The original superscription "a 2 clav" indicates for us that a noticeable difference in tone in the two hands is intended.

> The editor would like the application of this instruction so extended, that even in the two voices of the left hand, distinct gradations of tone should be audible.[118]

Example 3.39 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 25, b.1 – 4, Busoni Edition**



While nowadays scholars would regard Busoni's dynamic marks as overdramatic in the context of eighteenth-century performance practices, at other times his lack of such markings is somewhat peculiar. Variations 11 and 13 are like Variation 25, *a 2 Clav*, implying that here too Bach intended a distinct tone-colour for the two hands. However, Busoni refrains from denoting different dynamic marks for the two hands in Variation 13.

Thus while the piano presents to Busoni a wide variety of possibilities, he does not always try to mirror Bach's possible intentions and augment on them. Variations 26, 27 and 28 are particularly peculiar in this respect. While all three have the rubric *a 2 Clav*, Busoni gives them all a soft dynamic marking – *p e leggiero*, *non troppo p* and *p ma brillante* respectively. Whereas Bach's two-manual indication can be taken purely on account of the technical challenges they present, the architecture of the work and

[118] *The Purpose of the Edition* by Ferruccio Busoni – the Forward for Breitkopt and Härtel's publication of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, 7.

Busoni's own editorial comment[119] imply that these variations create a crescendo to the end. Busoni however does not share this view, which is very evident from his dynamic markings.

In general, eighteenth century writing indicated the dynamic structure of the work through the style and texture. Variation 16, Overture, for example opens with a four-part chord followed by scales and dotted rhythms. This implies a full registration when performed on the harpsichord, or a full forte when interpreted on the piano. Other variations such as Variation 25, which consist of a florid melodic line, calls for a softer register on the harpsichord and so a softer approach on the piano. Bach also developed the work's dynamic structure through changes in tempo, as Variations 26 to 29 show. All four variations adopt a virtuosic style of writing whose momentum would generate a brilliant sound-effect on the harpsichord, and thus naturally accumulate on the overall dynamic of the work.

Usually, Busoni observes the approach described above to the general dynamic of each variation, by indicating a dynamic mark at the beginning of some of the movements. Variation 22 has a forte dynamic marking for example, while Variation 19 has a *mp* indication at the beginning. In addition, Busoni occasionally indicates dynamic alterations within the variation, which normally occur towards the end of the sections. This change increases the dynamic tension of the passage.

The above-mentioned examples are illustrations of Busoni's editing which occur throughout the whole work. Like his contemporaries, Busoni felt naturally at ease in making Bach's works his own, rather than faithfully reproducing what the composer would have originally intended. His editorial aim is to adapt the *Goldberg Variations* to the piano and bring it in line with contemporary views.

Czerny's and Busoni's edition of the *Goldberg Variations* were here taken as an example of editorial and performance practices of Bach's works in the nineteenth century. One could even say that as a result of editorial additions such as pedalling, dynamic markings, doubling of left hand notes into octaves and occasional additional notation, Busoni's edition is really a transcription of the *Goldberg Variations* for piano,

[119] Refer to quotation p. 51

more so than that of Czerny. Such editorial marks were considered essential and natural in this modern approach of rediscovering Bach. Consequently, editors did not consider it necessary to acknowledge their own personal interpretation as opposed to Bach's original notation. Nowadays, when the emphasis has shifted towards a historically informed interpretation, we would consider this objectionable, for even if one is aware that during Bach's time the pedal and dynamic markings were not possible to execute on the harpsichord and so refrain from using them, or do so with a reserved caution (if performing on the piano), it is very difficult to detach oneself from Busoni's interpretation of the ornaments for they are all realized and integrated with the rest of the notation, such that one may at times not be fully aware that they are ornaments in realized form. The researcher is of the opinion that not having the symbol of the ornament included would make one even less inclined to research for the original interpretation of it. Nowadays, scholars consider such editions valuable only from a historical viewpoint, as examples of interpretations of earlier periods, but it is considered particularly dangerous for students to study from such scores when still learning about the style of Bach and that of the eighteenth-century[120].

[120] Other editions of the *Goldberg Variations* include those by:

- Wilhelm Rust. Germany: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1851 – 1899. In 1850 the Bach Association started the publication of Bach's complete works, known as the *Bach Gesellschaft*. Although this first complete edition contained many inaccuracies, it was pioneering in its time as it approached the editing methodology and standards of the modern Urtext editions.
- Ralph Kirkpatrick. New York/London: G. Schirmer, 1938. This edition contains an extensive preface by the editor and a facsimile of the original title page.
- Hans Bischoff. New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1947 (editorial work dates from the nineteenth century). It includes interpretive markings by the editor which are not indicated as such.
- Walter Emery and Christoph Wolff. Bärenreiter, 1954 – 2007. *Neue Bach-Ausgabe* – the second edition of Bach's complete works by the *Bach Gesellschaft*.
- Rudolf Steglich. Munich, Henle Verlag, 1973 (revised 1978). The revised edition has comments by Paul Badura-Skoda who had pointed out some inconsistencies in the first edition when compared to the sources. The 1978 edition is the most musicologically correct and updated version of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*.
- Christoph Wolff. Vienna: Wiener Urtext Edition, 1996. An Urtext edition, making use of new findings (1975) resulting from the discovery of an original copy hand-corrected by the composer. It also includes suggested fingerings and notes on interpretation by harpsichordist Huguette Dreyfus.

3.4 BACK TO SOURCES

Between 1844 and 1852, Leipzig publisher C. F. Peters[121] issued the complete organ works of Bach in eight volumes, taking as sources all the available early manuscripts of the pieces. This was soon followed by the Bach-Gesellschaft edition (1851 – 1899)[122] which published the complete works of Bach, similarly using early manuscripts and prints and later by the *Neue Bach-Ausgabe*[123], whose quality was considered more superior. Such were the first efforts to present Bach's scores in an Urtext form, the clean appearance of these editions standing in sharp contrast to the heavily edited scores of other contemporary editions such as that of the Henry Purcell Society.

From a survey of the sources of Bach's works, one can notice that Bach took greater pains to notate as much detail as possible in works that he intended for publication. In several details of notation and performance indications, the *Goldberg Variations* stand out, uniquely including directions relating to use of manuals which were usually left to the performer's discretion. It was particularly unusual to state *a 1 Clav*, unless it was for special reasons, such as wishing to give every variation its own rubric, which, apart from two variations and the Aria itself, is consistent throughout. Unlike Bach's *Italian Concerto* however, there are no expression marks of *forte* or *piano* indicated in connection with the use of one or two manuals. The manuscript also includes several articulation marks, more than in Scarlatti's *Essercizi*[124] in fact, and while not consistent throughout the whole work, they show Bach's intentions clearly, such that they can be applied in passages with no original markings.

[121] editor Friedrich Conrad Griepenkerl
[122] published by Bach-Gesellschaft and Breitkopf & Härtel
[123] Published by Bärenreiter (1954, completed in 2007), it was the second complete edition of Bach's works that was to be published.

[124] Scarlatti's thirty sonatas for solo keyboard, collectively entitled *Essercizi*, were the first published works by the composer, first appearing in 1738. They were received with high acclaim throughout Europe and were championed by the foremost English writer on music of the eighteenth century Dr Charles Burney. Throughout the centuries, they were also admired by Chopin, Brahms, Bartok and Shotstakovich, amongst others. One of the greatest musical contributions of the eighteenth century, these sonatas are a significant step forward both in their compositional structure as well as in their musical content (having new motifs and daring harmonies, as well as drawing influences from Spain and Portugal which are reflected in the music).

3.4.1 G. HENLE VERLAG EDITION (URTEXT)

The Urtext G. Henle Verlag Edition of the *Goldberg Variations* seeks to present this work as authentically as possible. As Rudolf Steglich explains in the Preface, it is based on the original edition of *Clavierübung IV*, which was collated with the copy of the Aria in a *Notebook for Anna Magdalena* as well as the copy P 203 in the Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz. Some changes have had to be made when compiling this edition, such as "accidentals have been modernized and sections written in the C clef have been notated in the now customary clefs."[125] However, such editing is common to all editions of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century music. Rudolf Steglich continues:

> In order to avoid a too frequent change of clefs, which is detrimental to the clarity of the pictorial appearance of the notation, the right hand notes are written as far as possible with centred stems, the left with downstems. The notation of the long appoggiaturas with or without the slur to the principal note is in accordance with the original edition since the absence of the slur may indicate a more "distinct" than "slurred" articulation.[126]

In the *Comments* section, the editor also remarks about any discrepancies found between the sources used, as well as any markings added by the editor in accordance with scholarly research. In this way, the performer is further aware of any difficulties the editor may have encountered and the way he interpreted them using an informed background. While such editorial marks cannot be said to be interfering with Bach's manuscript notation, notable editions still acknowledge any modification of the original sources. This contrasts with the nineteenth-century editions which do not distinguish between Bach's and the editor's markings.

[125] Rudolf Steglich, *Goldberg Variationen* (G. Henle Verlag Edition, 1973), Preface
[126] Rudolf Steglich, *Goldberg Variationen* (G. Henle Verlag Edition, 1973), Preface

3.5 ORNAMENTATION

As already noted in Busoni's edition of the *Goldberg Variations*, some editors interpret ornaments with no acknowledgment that these are their personal realizations, so that the performer is lead to think that they are authentic. Interpreting ornaments from the original manuscript is not a straightforward task either, because ornaments were written and interpreted differently not only in different eras but also in different countries.

Many difficulties have arisen with regards to the execution of ornaments, most particularly the trill, *Pralltriller* and *Schneller*. Much confusion has given rise to arguments as to whether trills should start on the main or upper note and whether they should be with or without a suffix. This depended not only on the country's / region's convention, but also on the musical context[127].

One of the most important attitudes to such a complex issue of interpreting Bach's music correctly is to understand the approach taken during the era and become acquainted with the contemporary music theory and musical notation[128]. Comparing

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[127] The main debate regarding trills is from which note they should start. While in the seventeenth century almost all trills began on the main note, the practice of starting a trill on the auxiliary note gained popularity as the eighteenth century progressed, although some exceptions were acknowledged. Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 263.
This is also confirmed by C. P. E. Bach in his own treatise, where we can assuredly assume that he was following the practices of his teacher Johann Sebastian Bach. Trills starting on the upper auxiliary created dissonance, making them sound more brilliant and creating the illusion of an accent, which is particularly suited on the harpsichord as this supplemented the lack of dynamic variation. Couperin suggests that French ornaments may actually have originated as a way of compensating for the physical limitations of the instrument. Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music: The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 282.
This also explains the gradual return to the main-note trill as the harpsichord became replaced by the dynamically more flexible fortepiano. As regards the incorporation, or otherwise, of the suffix to the trill, adding the suffix was the more common practice and considered to be especially appropriate for cantabile pieces, while also corresponding to the later classical execution. In instances where a suffix is notated, the long trill is then preferable. The version without the suffix is particularly appropriate in Bach's French overtures and similarly rhythmicized sarabandes, with their characteristic break before the short iambic notes at the end of the bar. Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 264.
Confusion has also arisen as to the interpretation of the length of the wavy line for the *Pralltriller* and the trill. In the majority of instances, the short wavy line designates the *Pralltiller* and the long wavy line the normal trill. Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 311.
Marpurg comments: "The length or brevity of a trill is always determined by the value of the note to which it is applied". Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 310.

[128] While nowadays the term ornamentation may imply an unessential or superfluous process, for eighteenth-century musicians ornaments were not merely decorative. Rather, they were a means of moving the affections, as well as a way of adding a hint of dissonance (particularly the trill and appoggiatura) or sparkle that the bare notes of the notated music lacked. Rather than varying the

works by the same composer also sheds more light on the composer's compositional methods and his expectations from performers.

Unfortunately, in the treatises of Bach's time, methods and applications taken for granted at the time were not mentioned, so that we are left in the dark on practices that have now evolved or even become obsolete. While one may find tables of reference, localized ornaments tended to be learnt aurally and imitated from one's teacher. Furthermore, one also tends to find conflicting information in treatises written in neighboring cities or even in the same city itself.

The central figure in this field is Bach's second son Carl Philipp Emanuel (1714-88), whose *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*[129] is one of the most important treatises on music and representative of the mid-eighteenth-century. It is a comprehensive manual on keyboard playing, performance practice, figured bass, improvisation, and other matters, with some ideas no doubt deriving from J. J. Quantz's *On Playing the Flute*, which was published a year earlier. It is also very probable that Carl Philipp Emanuel's theory of ornamentation was based on that of his father, or was at least strongly influenced by him. J. S. Bach, whose pedagogical inclinations are also evident in his compositions, also compiled an (incomplete) table of ornaments for his eldest son Wilhelm Friedemann.

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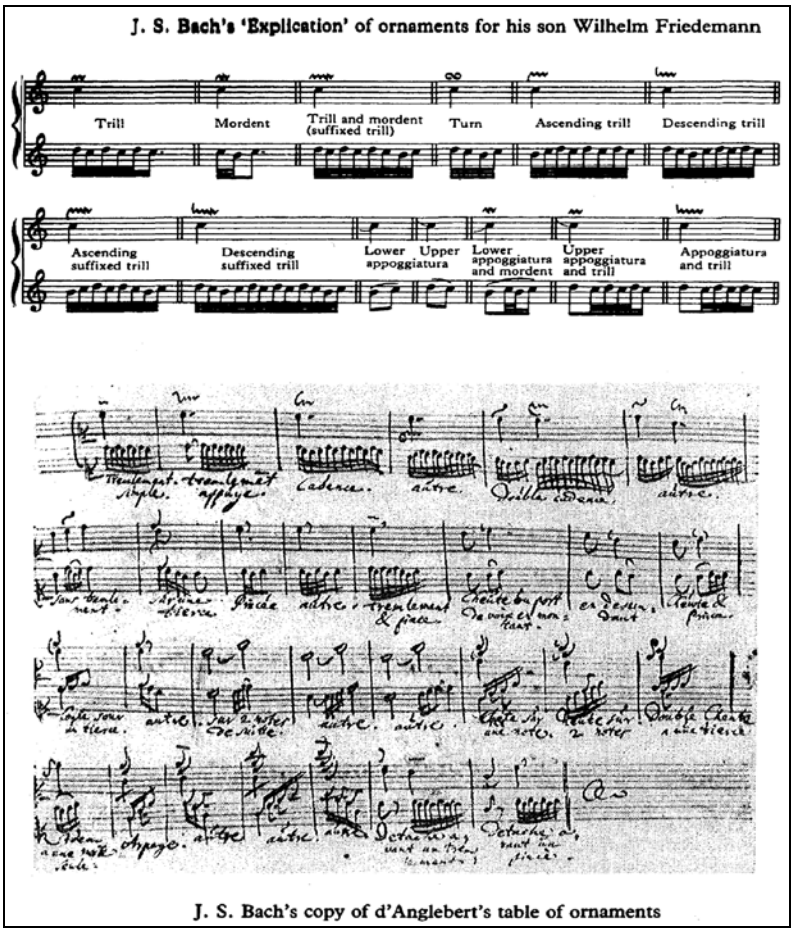
expression through vast dynamic gradations, ornaments were one element of providing the necessary tension or resilience required of the music's character. This was most particularly important for the harpsichord and lute which only had the possibility of minimal dynamic variation. Moreover, due to a lack of sustaining quality for these two instruments, ornaments were the only means of prolonging long notes.

[129] *Versuch uber die wahre Art, das Clavier zu spielen*, Berlin, 1752 and 1762 - By 1780 it had reached its third edition.



<u>Figure iv</u> Table of Ornaments[130]

This table solves many ambiguities as to how symbols are to be understood and realized, although it too is not without its problems. For a start, it does not include certain important Bach ornaments and since it bears some resemblance to that by Jean-Henri d'Anglebert (1629 – 1691) (which Bach himself had copied) it has lead to the facile assumption that Bach's ornamentation is French. However, while certain similarities do exist, there are several other elements which are different, such as the very first trill, the mordents whose signs are completely different, and some ornaments in d'Anglebert's table which are missing altogether in Bach's.

In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century music by German composers, one can trace the use of ornament symbols of Italian and French origin, although these did not always have the same meaning they had in Italy and France. At times, the same ornament also had different names in different provinces/countries, and the same names sometimes designated ornaments executed in different ways[131]. The non-uniform use of ornaments

[130] Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 325.
[131] Internationally recognized symbols for the most common ornaments came into general use only towards the end of the eighteenth century, when it became possible to print music in larger editions. In

and symbols in Germany during the time of J. S. Bach makes it impossible in Bach's case to presuppose a one-sided adherence to French rules. Moreover, Bach used only some of the French symbols, together with those of Italian origin.

Due to such difficulty in interpreting seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ornamentation, Urtext editions[132] in particular usually provide explanations in the Preface relating to the method of execution, in order to guide the performer towards a more accurate interpretation. Common difficulties in the understanding of ornaments relate to the length of the trill and mordent and the use, or otherwise, of their prefix and/or suffix. Bach's table of ornaments[133] is a very helpful guide in this respect, although there are occasions when these have to be applied in context, depending on what comes before or after the ornament.

As discussed in Chapter 1[134], there is an isolated occasion when the notated embellishments are not practical to adopt when interpreting the *Goldberg Variations* on the piano. In Variation 26, the restriction of the piano's one-manual keyboard becomes a physical barrier to performing the notated ornamentation.

Ornamentation was fundamentally an eighteenth-century trait not only as regards the essential embellishments that were notated, but also regarding those freely improvised, whose addition was expected. While requiring a certain freedom, ornaments were also regulated by tradition and compositional convention. Thus discretion, good taste, as well as the study of Bach's own art of ornamentation are essential when deciphering where and how one should include additional embellishments. At certain points, ornamentation was expected as a matter of course, such as:

- at the penultimate note in cadences, which should be supplied with a trill, *Pralltriller*, or, more rarely, a mordent;
- at a caesura, or an imperfect cadence on the dominant coupled with a suspension, which called for a trill;
- where a theme occurred a number of times, in which case the embellishments added to it should be retained when it reappears. A particular example of this is

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the nineteenth century, there was a gradual agreement on the meaning of ornament symbols. Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 255

[132] The sources for Urtext Editions include the composer's autograph, first editions and other early editions particularly those hand-corrected by the composer.

[133] Refer to Figure iv *Table of Ornaments*, 75.

[134] Refer to page 7.

Variation 10 of the *Goldberg Variations*, whose lower mordent on the first beat of every entry is only written out for the first three entries; and

- where a section or *ritornello* was repeated, in which case the performer was expected to improvise different ornaments on each repetition.

In revisions of works, Bach added *Pralltriller* figures containing three descending semiquavers at times, while one of his favorite forms of embellishment seems to have been filling in intervals of a third.[135] The art of embellishment reaches its perfection in Variation 25 of the *Goldberg Variations* where the written-out ornaments are particularly expressive and carefully balanced. The above-mentioned observations help the performer adopt a reliable and consistent style when interpreting Bach's music, most particularly when adding more ornamentation.

Apart from the time-signature, the intervals used and the type of rhythmic notation adopted for a piece of music, ornamentation plays a very important part in contributing to the music's *Affekt*. In the Aria of the *Goldberg Variations* for example, Bach mostly (though not exclusively) places ornaments on the second beat of each bar, thus further emphasizing this beat which gives the sarabande its characteristic style. Ornaments are also a means of highlighting points in the phrasing, and in this way too they contribute to the character of the music. Apart from for structural purposes, ornaments can also function as embellishments for cadence points and ends of sections/pieces for example; giving the possibility of adorning an otherwise austere note/chord in the style of the eighteenth-century.

As in most of his other works, Bach does not leave much opportunity for free embellishment in the *Goldberg Variations*. In fact, added ornamentation may risk hindering the lucidity of the interweaving voices rather than enhancing their buoyancy. Judicial application of ornaments is also extremely important because the wrong type of ornament could give the wrong spirit to its *Affekt*. At times there is perhaps the occasional possibility for a *Pralltriller* at cadence points, or a little ornament on occasional notes, but otherwise Bach notates very precisely. He was probably an exception in his time for this, notating much more than his contemporaries did, a fact which led to very harsh criticism from Johann Adolf Schiebe, accusing Bach thus:[136]

[135] Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 480 and 483
[136] Refer to the Appendix, *A2. The Bach Debate: Mattheson's and Scheibe's Arguments*, 147, for a more detailed discussion on this subject.

> Turgidity (*Dei Schwulstigkeit*) has led [Bach]…from the natural to the artificial, and from the lofty to the sombre…one admires the onerous labour and uncommon effort – which, however, are vainly employed, since they conflict with Reason"; Bach eschewed pleasing music, "darkening its beauty through an excess of art" [137]

3.6 DOTTED RHYTHMS

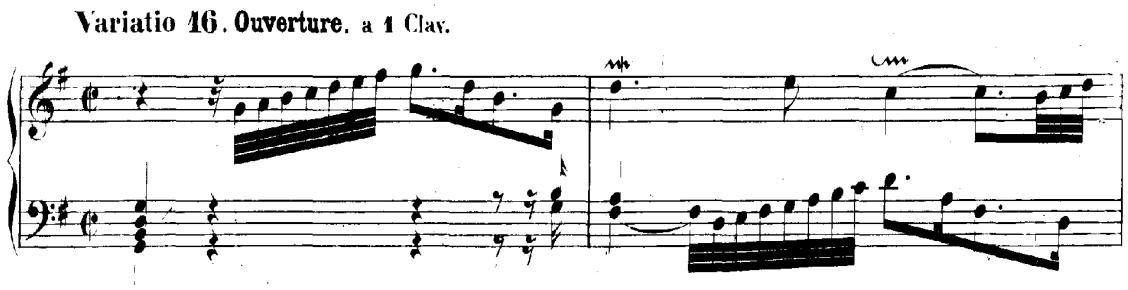
Apart from ambiguity in ornamentation, eighteenth-century music has also suffered from imprecision in rhythmic notation. The disparity between notation and expected performance has been the subject of much research, most particularly in the practice of double-dotting, dotted rhythms against triplets and *notes inégales*.

Like his contemporaries, Bach employed the dot in both straightforward and over-dotted applications, and not only in the so-called French overture rhythm. However, the notated double dot only came in general use in the late eighteenth century, which explains why the single dot could have various meanings in Bach's music, depending on the context in which it occurred[138]. One particular movement in the *Goldberg Variations* that calls for such interpretation is Variation 16, whose *Ouverture* rubric gives added indication that the dotted notes should be executed *in stile francese*. The flourishes leading up to the beats should also be treated in the same manner, by leaving them as late as possible.

[137] David Yearsley, *Bach and the Meanings of counterpoint* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 95.

[138] In the eighteenth century, the dotted style gradually became less popular, but it never entirely disappeared. It can in fact still be found in sonatas by Marcello and Haydn, such as in Haydn's Sonata Hob. XVI/21 for example, as well as in works by Galuppi. In the early nineteenth century, it received a new lease of life "with one of the most savagely and obsessively dotted of all pieces", Beethoven's *Grosse Fugue*. Peter Williams, *Bach, Handel, Scarlatti, Tercentenary Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 114.
Beethoven's last piano sonata, Op. 111 also has a vigorously dotted variation in the second movement.

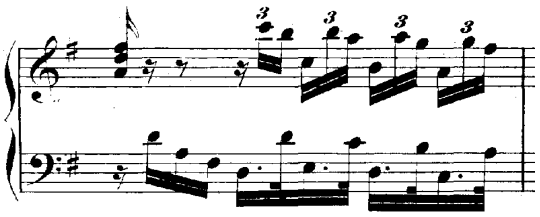
Example 3.40 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 16, b.1 – 2, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe**



The style or character of the piece, or any indications by Bach (such as the terms Overture or Sinfonia) are what direct the performer to the appropriate execution of simple or double dotting in any particular work.

Even or dotted notes were also generally altered to fit with triplets so as to avoid the effect of two against three, which was not only difficult to play but also considered undesirable in the eighteenth century. Such is the case with Variation 29 of the *Goldberg Variations*, where the dotted rhythm in the left hand of bars 4 and 7 should be altered to fit in with the triplet figures of the right hand.

Example 3.41 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 29, b.4, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe**



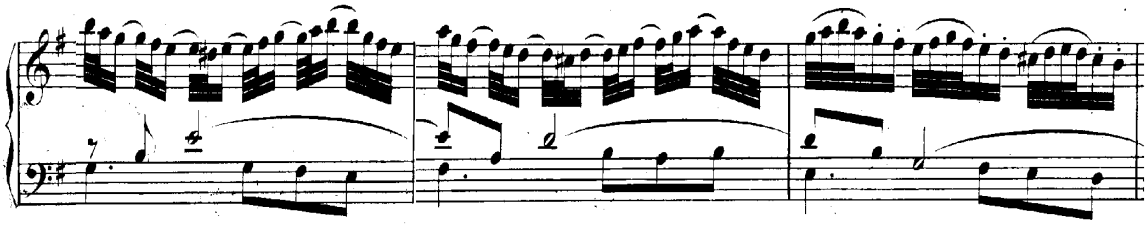
In order to avoid triplets where unequal note-values were involved (such as a mixture of crotchets with quavers and crotchets with semiquavers), eighteenth-century composers used time signatures such as 3/4, 6/8, 9/8, or alternatively used dotted rhythms to indicate triplets.[139]

Notes inégales are another aspect of performance practice particular to the eighteenth century and which again are not specifically notated in the score. The indication for interpreting such an un-notated inequality is usually a tied note followed by another

[139] Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 41

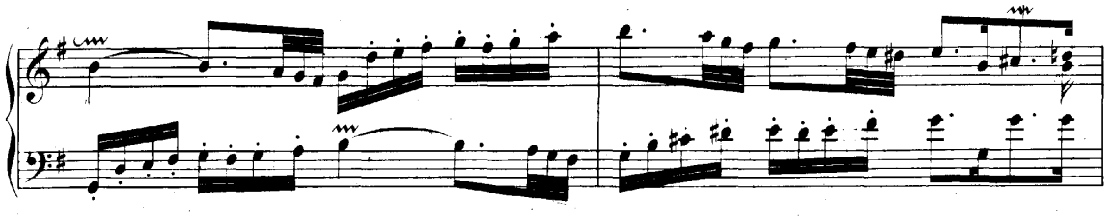
note, usually a passing note, or slurred pairs of notes in scale-wise motion. The main note of each pair is lengthened slightly, and the second is shortened, to create a lilting effect, as in Variation 13 of the *Goldberg Variations*.

Example 3.42 Bach: *Goldberg Variation*, Variation 13, b.9 – 11, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe



The counter-indication for *notes inégales* is notes with dots over them. Rather than staccato markings, such dots signified that these notes should be played equally, as is the case with bar 11 of the above mentioned variation. The dots in Variation 16 have a similar meaning.

Example 3.43 Bach: *Goldberg Variation*, Variation 16, b.8 – 9, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe



Thus as can be observed from the above discussion, careful discerning of the use of these dots is crucial in giving the piece its rightful character. Execution of straight rhythms when *notes inégales* are meant to be used, or use of single dots when double-dotting is appropriate would distort the intended *Affekt* of the music, giving it a different and inappropriate perception to that intended by the composer. The researcher considers rhythm a very intrinsic part of notation which should be interpreted in the style of the eighteenth-century, even if the performer is not entirely concerned with adopting a historically-oriented approach to the music

3.7 ARTICULATION

Articulation has also suffered from historically incorrect editing, which does not fit in with eighteenth-century harpsichord performance practice. On the other hand, articulation marks in *Urtext* editions are very sparse, thus again making eighteenth-century music very susceptible to incorrect application of articulation[140]. Even Bach's music, which is usually thorough, lacks consistency in this respect, such that ambiguous questions of application are not rare[141].

Much lies behind articulation, for the success, or otherwise, of a performance bears much upon its application, particularly when performing on the harpsichord, for on this instrument it is exclusively taking the place of dynamics. However, whether on piano or harpsichord, articulation is the principal element that shapes the phrasing, together with the harmonic and rhythmic activity, and the means by which motifs are delineated through the grouping, separating and related accenting of notes.

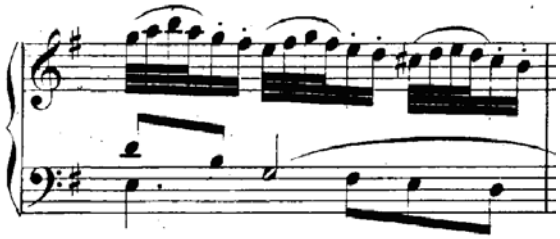
To compensate for the lack of articulation markings in eighteenth-century works, one must take into consideration the general customs of the era and the style of the composer's articulation in similar works. Paul Badura-Skoda suggests that step-wise passages should on the whole be played legato, whereas larger intervals and leaps should be detached. Octave leaps should almost never be played legato and similarly broken triads, particularly in allegro or forte passages.[142] The harmony and in particular the dissonances and their resolutions should also be considered. The sensitivity of a movement, as implied by certain indications such as the time-signature and note-values, can give several clues as to the type of articulation to be used.

As regards dots over notes, these do not always signify a staccato articulation[143]. Variation 13, whose slur marks are closely related to violin bowings, has slurred groups

[140] Particularly in his keyboard works, Bach hardly ever provided articulation marks.
[141] such as whether when a composer has a slur over a little figure the first time it appears means that the same figure should always be slurred thereafter.
[142] Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 96.
[143] There are also different types of staccato. The type of staccato employed when interpreting Bach's keyboard works is hardly ever as sharp as that used for Mozart's, while the instrument used is also a factor in the interpretation of such a marking. On the harpsichord, even the shortest note has a certain resonance, whereas on the forte piano the tone is immediately dampened. Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 99.

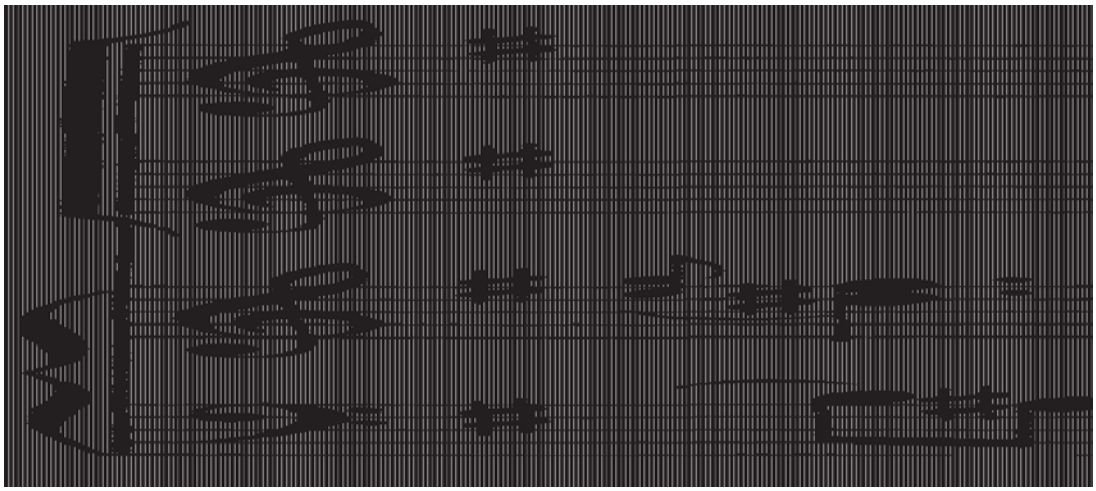
followed by dots (b.11) signifying a *détaché* touch, rather than a *staccato* (as is also the case in Variation 16, bar 8) which indicates equal, as opposed to *notes inégale*, semiquavers.

Example 3.44 Bach: *Goldberg Variation*, Variation 13, b.11, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe



On the other hand, the dots in Variation 14 lean more towards a *staccato* execution in this brilliant variation. The sad *Affekt* of Variation 15 is evoked by the sighing motif, whose chains of slurs (sighs) are symbols of pain, as is very apparent from the various vocal works where they are used, such as the chorus 'So ist mein Jesus nun gefangen' in the *St Matthew Passion*, b.27 – 30, at the words "Mond und Licht ist vor Schmerzen untergegangen" [Moon and light have gone down in pain]. Due to its general *Affekt* Variation 15 has in fact been compared to Bach's *St Matthew Passion*.

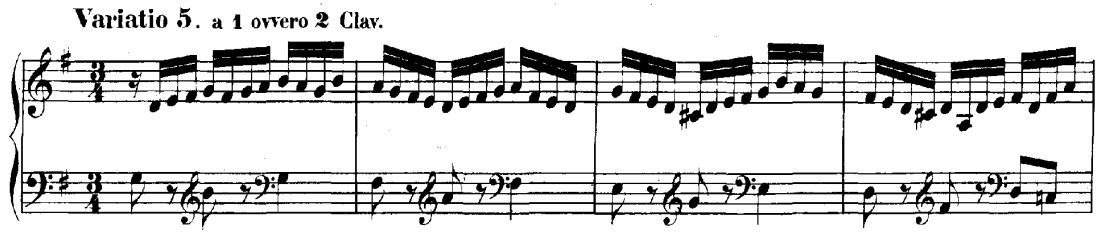
Example 3.45 Bach: *St Matthew Passion*, 'So ist mein Jesus gefangen', b.27 – 30



Moreover, when performing seventeenth-century works on the piano, the characteristic harpsichord non-legato effect can also be imitated. The highest exponent of such a manner of playing was probably Glenn Gould, whose mastery of touch can be glimpsed from his many recordings of Bach's works.

Sometimes the slurs are implied, as in Variation 5 whose left hand alternates between leaps and semitones. Since the leaps would have to be played *détaché*, a slur over the barline (where there is no leap) is thus implied.

Example 3.46 Bach: *Goldberg Variation*, Variation 5, b.1 – 4, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe



Variation 17 has no articulation marks, although its toccata style indicates that a fast tempo is to be taken, which in turn encourages a *quasi-staccato* articulation. The same can be said for Variation 23 whose humorous *Affekt* calls for a light touch. Variation 22 has no articulation markings either, but its insistent, bold, German character calls for a full non-legato execution. At other times, the tuneful lines, with their phraseology constantly based on two and four bars, show Bach's inclination towards a singing style – a technique which was growing with the development of the more sustaining fortepiano. It also reveals Bach's affinity to the clavichord, on which instrument one can create slight variations in dynamics and produce a more connected sound through subtle changes in finger pressure[144]. Due to its soft sound, the clavichord was usually considered as a practice instrument in the eighteenth century, and although it could not have been used to play the *Goldberg Variations* (due to only having one manual), its tone could have inspired Bach to write certain *espressivo* passages found in some of these variations.

The type of articulation adopted can either enhance the temperament of the music, or give it a different feeling altogether, at times even sounding strident in connection with the other indications left by the composer (such as the rhythm) if applied incorrectly. The general *Affekt* of the piece is very much dependent on the type of articulation

[144] The tangent that strikes the string stays in contact with the string until the key is released, while the volume can be changed by striking the key harder/softer.

adopted, for together with the correct application of rhythm, ornamentation and tempo, it contributes to the character of the music.

The above discussions on ornamentation, rhythm and articulation have repeatedly referred to the *Affekt* of the music, for these are the elements that contribute to the character of the piece. Dotted or straight rhythms, smooth, detached or non-legato articulation, appropriate ornamentation to enhance the shaping of the phrase or embellish a cadence, all contribute to project a particular temperament. The key, as well as the type of intervals used by the composer also indicate towards the most appropriate application of these elements. If for instance the key is in the minor mode and there is a significant use of dissonant intervals, one would not adopt a light-hearted approach (and therefore not a light staccato articulation), for they indicate a rather sombre expression – a case in point being Variations 15 and 25 of the *Goldberg Variations.* The temperament of the music is also affected by the type of tempo adopted, as will be discussed later in Chapter 5[145] - the tempo being the factor which connects all the above-mentioned elements, allowing them to be heard in the most appropriate and clear manner possible.

3.8 DYNAMICS

With the exception of the *Italian Concerto* and the last movement of the *French Overture* (Echo), Bach did not indicate any dynamic markings in his works for keyboard since there was no possibility of dynamic gradations on the harpsichord. And even in these works, such markings are fulfilling a formal, rather than an expressive function[146].

A survey of Bach's works reveals that he did not only indicate changes in volume through the use of dynamic terms, however. Apart from adding more and louder instruments to augment volume in an orchestral work, Bach also achieves more power by increasing the number of polyphonic parts. This practice is particularly apparent in the *Chromatic Fugue*, BWV 903, where at two points of congestion (b.93 and 135) the

[145] Refer to Chapter 5, *The Goldberg Variations in the Concert Hall, 5.2 Tempos*, 113.
[146] Refer to Chapter 2, *The Harpsichord, 2.4 Use of Manuals*, 30.

three parts increase to eight.[147] The Quodlibet (Variation 30) of the *Goldberg Variations* can be seen to have such a function, where after a series of movements in two-part writing, its robust polyphonic writing brings the work to a rousing finish. As was the general tendency in the eighteenth century, Bach chose to call for more volume only by compositional means[148] or orchestration[149] rather than by indications such as *più forte, ff, fortissimo*.[150] Naturally, a reduction in the number of voices signifies a decrease in the dynamic level, implying a sudden change of registration. Thus in the *Chromatic Fantasy*, the two lute-like episodes (starting b.49 and b.97) are best played with a delicate second manual registration (for example a lute stop), or a non legato at the piano with half pedal[151]. The *Chromatic Fantasy* has another kind of elaborate diminuendo, the melody descends nearly two octaves and the character of the phrases changes from confidence ($d^2 – g^1$ – b flat) to resignation ($d^2 – d^1$ – g sharp). Generally, Bach seemed to consider the indication of dynamics to be necessary only in ensemble compositions, while in solo works the choice is almost always left entirely to the discretion of the performer.

3.8.1 MANUAL REGISTRATIONS INSTEAD OF DYNAMIC MARKS

Instead of dynamic marks, Bach includes indications for the use of the two manuals[152] in the *Goldberg Variations*, although in some variations he still leaves it up to the performer to decide whether to play a variation with a uniform or a divided sound – Variations 5 and 29 have the rubric *a 1 ovvero 2 Clav*, while Variations 12 and 22 are not specified.

On the harpsichord, different register combinations can be used to bring about changes in dynamics, or rather, tone-colour, creating immediate contrasts, known as terrace or block dynamics. Good use of manuals is a creative task in itself, for a *forte* on a harpsichord can have more than one meaning: first manual – eight-foot stop; first and second manuals – coupled eight-foot stops, or a tutti encompassing a four-foot stop.

[147] Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 140.
[148] increasing the polyphonic parts
[149] scoring for loud instruments
[150] Peter Williams, *Bach, Handel, Scarlatti, Tercentenary Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univeristy Press, 1985), 263.
[151] Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 142.
[152] The second manual (upper) is usually used as a soft register.

By examining so many stylistic issues related to the performance of Bach's music and to eighteenth-century music in general, this discussion has highlighted the significance of the musician's approach when performing such repertoire. While some musicians adopt their own more contemporary interpretation, such as employing full use of pianistic features in keyboard works[153], nowadays the more widespread inclination is to adopt a historically-oriented style of playing. Pianists in particular must be cautious when adopting such a performance practice-based approach for although a harpsichord effect cannot be created on the piano (nor, as some would argue, would it be desirable), there are certain limitations imposed by the structure of the music, which would be more natural when played on the harpsichord though not so obvious on the piano. For example, changing the registration in the middle of a movement[154], would be too time-consuming on the harpsichord, necessitating an involuntary pause, and would thus not be practical musically. On the other hand, a pianist would simply adjust his touch to alter the tone. Additionally, since ornamentation was regarded by Bach and his contemporaries as an intrinsic part of the performer's interpretation by improvising his own ornamentation in the music, the disregard of such a practice would deprive the music of its rightful understanding, regardless of what instrument and which interpretative approach is being adopted.

[153] such as widespread use of pedal and a wide dynamic range
[154] such as removing the four-foot stop at the entry of a solo passage

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE *GOLDBERG VARIATIONS*

Written and published in 1741/2, the 'Aria with diverse variations' BWV 988, or as it is nowadays referred to, the *Goldberg Variations*, is one of Bach's last works, and the last of four volumes of keyboard music Bach published under the title *Clavierübung*[155].

Unusually, Bach makes his intentions very clear regarding which instrument is to be used in each of the volumes of *Clavierübung*, apart from Part I. The *Goldberg Variations* are intended for harpsichord with two manuals, as specified in the title page itself.

Clavier Ubung / bestehend / in einer ARIA / mit verschiedenen Veraenderungen / vors Clavicimbal / mit 2 Manualen. / Denen Liebhabern zur Gemüths- / Ergetzung verfertiget von / Johann Sebastian Bach / Königl. Pohl. u. Churfl. Saechs. Hoff- / Compositeur, Capellmeister, u. Directore / Chori Musici in Leipzig. / Nürnberg in Verlegung / Balthasar Schmids

Keyboard practice, consisting of an ARIA with diverse variations for harpsichord with two manuals. Composed for connoisseurs, for the refreshment of their spirits, by Johann Sebastian Bach, composer for the royal court of Poland and the Electoral court of Saxony, Kapellmeister and Director of Choral Music in Leipzig. Nuremberg, Balthasar Schmid, publisher.

In all the series of *Clavierübung*, one also notices a demand for high technical standards, referring to 'music lovers' in the title page of the first two volumes, and specifically to 'connoisseurs' in Volumes 3 and 4[156]. Also intriguing is the fact that

[155] Bach probably borrowed the title *Clavierübung* (Keyboard Practice) from a publication by his predecessor Johann Kuhnau, who published two sets of *Neue Clavier- Übung* (New Keyboard Exercises). The first set (1689) consists of six keyboard suites, which he called Partitas, all in major keys. The second set consists of six suites in minor keys. The term was successively used by Johann Krieger in his *Anmuthlige Clavier- Übung* (Charming Keyboard Exercises) in 1698.
In Bach's case, the title *Clavierübung* seems to have been chosen so that each volume could encompass various types and styles of music written for different keyboard instruments: *Clavierübung I*: Six Partitas (1726 – 1730); *Clavierübung II*: Italian Concerto and French Overture (1735); *Clavierübung III*: the so-called 'German Mass' (1739); *Clavierübung (IV)*: Aria with 30 variations (1741/2). The fourth volume lacks a number. Various hypotheses have been brought forward to explain this lapse, one of which is that Bach wanted to separate the *Goldberg Variations* from the rest of the series. One other reason deals with number symbolism: Part 1 is written for a single-manual instrument, Part 2 is written for a two-manual instrument, and consists of two pieces written in two major national styles of the day, Part 3 is written for three manuals (or two manuals plus a foot pedal, to be more exact) and is constructed around the number symbolism of '3' which defines the work's structure and the number of subjects in the final fugue. In the *Goldberg Variations* we cannot find a number '4'. Yo Tomita, "The Goldberg Variations BWV 988", accessed October 30, 2009, http://www.music.qub.ac.uk/~tomita/essay/cu4.html

[156] On the other hand, those works which Bach wrote for educational purposes, such as the *Inventions and Sinfonias* and the *Well-Tempered Clavier* (whose second volume was written at the same time as the *Goldberg Variations*) refer to those "desirous of learning".

towards the end of the eighteenth century, there was a tendency towards variations of a simple character, aimed for pedagogical use, yet Bach goes against this trend in the *Goldberg*, which is a more virtuosic work both technically and in its compositional architecture.

4.1 HISTORY AND OVERVIEW

The name 'Goldberg' owes its existence to an account by J. S. Bach's first biographer Johann Nikolaus Forkel (1749 – 1818) who in the beginning of the nineteenth century received much credible information from the eldest two sons, Wilhelm Friedemann (1710 - 1784) and Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714 - 1788). The story goes that the work was commissioned by Count Keyserlingk, a Russian ambassador to the court of Saxony, whose musician-in-service was Johann Gottlieb Goldberg (1727 – 1756), allegedly also a pupil of Bach. The count seems to have been an insomniac, and requested Bach to write some keyboard pieces which Goldberg could perform to him during his sleepless nights. In spite of his apparent apathy towards variation form[157], Bach felt that he could fulfil this task by writing Variations, producing one of the monuments of keyboard literature.

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[157] Apart from his attempts at variation form in his early composing career, Bach did not write any other sets of variations. With the exception of the so-called chorale partitas (four sets of variations BWV 766-8 and 770), only two works which have the variation principle governing the entire structure survive from this period – the *Aria Variata alla maniera Italiana* BWV 989 (before 1714) and Passacaglia BWV 582 for organ (between 1706 and 1713).
Richard D. P. Jones, "The Creative Development of Johann Sebastian Bach, Volume I: 1695 – 1777, Music to Delight the Spirit" (2007), 173.
http://books.google.com.mt/books?id=vhx8Mm1uFNAC&pg=PA173&lpg=PA173&dq=Aria+variata,+Andreas+Bach+book&source=bl&ots=P6JlT6yjb5&sig=aahBuK1HvtrDWUfnbBJCeNKB8E&hl=mt&ei=lN6TStvmJaSOnQPVwP2mAQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1#v=onepage&q=Aria%20variata%2C%20Andreas%20Bach%20book&f=false
One other substantial work in variation form is the Chaconne from Violin Partita in D minor (1720) which is constructed of sixty-four variants of a stark four-bar phrase, encompassing every aspect of violin-playing technique.
The researcher believes that although there is no hard-core evidence of Bach's indifference towards the variation form, the lack of a substantial set of variations apart from the *Goldberg* seems to demonstrate this. Although most of Bach's works were composed as a result of his employment (for example he composed a lot of church music when employed in Leipzig), he would have found occasions to compose in this style should he have felt the desire to. He composed a lot of secular instrumental music when employed by Prince Leopold in Cöthen for example, but he didn't include one substantial set of variations for any instrument or combination of instruments during this time. One could speculate that Bach regarded the variation form as being a frivolous style of writing, which is in total contrast to his general style.

There are several discrepancies in the story however. Primarily, there is no documentary evidence of a commission and neither is there a dedication on the title page, an omission that is very unusual for the custom of this period. However, supposing that Forkel's account contains some truth, Bach might have presented to Count Keyserlingk a manuscript copy of the work containing the dedicatory inscription, possibly as a show of gratitude to the Count for helping to obtain the title of Royal Polish and Electoral Saxon Court Composer in 1736[158]. The story also says that the Count requested the clavier piece to be "of a character so gentle and somewhat merry"[159] – an instruction which Bach must have chosen to ignore, for this is hardly the impression the *Goldberg Variations* give. Another inconsistency concerns Johann Gottlieb Goldberg whose skill on the harpsichord Bach knew. Goldberg was only a mere fourteen year-old when the piece was written and he would have had to be a very gifted musician to master the technical difficulties of the Variations, although his own compositions do not display much of this required brilliance. Alternatively, the Variations could well have been written for Bach's eldest son Wilhelm Friedman, for whom Bach had already written several pieces.

Due to lack of concrete evidence, Forkel's story is now generally discredited by modern scholars. Nevertheless, whatever the circumstances for its composition, the *Goldberg Variations* has exerted a fascination over both performers and musicologists for various reasons.

Its Aria, a sarabande, is taken from an earlier collection of works, the *Anna Magdalena Notebook* of 1725, and it is only heard again in Variations 13 and 25 which are elaborate ornamentations of it. This contrasts with previously published sets of variations by Frescobaldi, Handel and even Bach, where the variations are normally elaborations of the melodic line of the theme. Instead, in the *Goldberg Variations*, the thirty variations are built on the aria's bass theme[160]. Each variation functions as a self-contained unit with its own unique character, so that a mixture of pleasant composure, forceful command, sparkling entertainment, and pious reverence is created. However, the characteristics of the Aria, with its slow harmonic rhythm, four-bar phraseology and

[158] Yo Tomita, "The Goldberg Variations BWV 988", accessed October 30, 2009. http://www.music.qub.ac.uk/~tomita/essay/cu4.html
[159] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 4.
[160] Refer to *4.4 The Bass Line*, 94.

exclusion of the upbeat[161], are maintained throughout the variations in spite of their different genre-forms[162]. A case in point is Variation 10, which, while entitled *Fughetta* does not attempt to modify the binary form, as a fugue might. From a simple base-line, Bach creates a work that is beautifully complex: its contrapuntal variations become more intricate as the work progresses[163], and its virtuoso variations become more virtuosic.

4.2 STRUCTURE

The architecture of the *Goldberg Variations* is built on group-structures and symmetrical procedures which highlight its elaborate and meticulously thought-out compositional plan.

4.2.1 MULTIPLES OF TWO

The variations display certain unusual features in their compositional makeup, particularly Bach's inventive use of "multiples of two". They are made up of thirty-two movements, of thirty-two bars each, built on a thirty-two-note ground bass[164]. The phraseology of each movement is also built around multiples of two where its eight-bar phrases can be subdivided into four plus four bars of antecedent-consequent phrases, which themselves can be further subdivided into two plus two bars each. However, although constructed from such small units, the music is reassuringly continuous.

One may also notice that the *Goldberg Variations* explore only two keys – G major and G minor, and they are written for a two-manual harpsichord.

[161] An expected exclusion in this case since its sarabande style does not ask for an upbeat.
[162] Bach uses the popular forms of canon, fughetta, dance, toccata and Quodlibet for the Variations.
[163] as the bass voice becomes more integrated into the structure and with the other voices
[164] Refer to *4.4 The Bass Line*, 94.

4.2.2 SYMMETRY

The idea of symmetry is a very important characteristic of the Variations. It is reflected in the overall shape of the work, as the thirty-two movements are grouped in two halves, with the second part starting with variation 16. Bach makes sure that this variation is clearly understood as a new beginning by entitling it *Ouverture* in the engraving of the work. Musically, he also ensures that it achieves maximum impact by placing it after a minor mode melancholic variation whose ending unusually fades away, closing with the unusual interval of an open fifth.

The symmetrical structure is also a prevailing feature in all the individual variations. All the variations are in binary form and divided exactly in half, with each section consisting of 16 bars, which are repeated. While the practice of repeating both sections is also found in Bach's Partitas and Suites and any other binary-form movement, having the A and B sections in two exact halves was uncommon at the time[165] and, one might add, unlikely to arise by chance, particularly in all thirty-two movements. Binary movements almost always had a longer second half as a result of the various modulations to related keys.

If one considers the canon at the ninth as theoretically doubling the canon at the second[166], one can see that in the eight canons the concept of symmetry is once again prevalent, this time in the relationship between the voices as they develop canonically[167].

Table 4.1 The Symmetrical Structure of the Canons

at unison	at 2nd	at 3rd	at 4th	at 5th	at 6th	at 7th	at octave
			inversus[168]	*inversus*			

It is also interesting to note that strict fugal movements are found at regular intervals – Variations 10, 16 and 22, although it does not contribute to the structure's symmetrical features.

[165] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 44
[166] and therefore considering it as an extra Canon
[167] It is interesting to note that in the *Musical Offering*, the canons at the fourth and fifth are also *inversus*. The canons in this work total a number of ten, with each one having its interval increased by one just like the *Goldberg* canons.
[168] The concept of *inversus* is when an ascending movement in one voice becomes descending in another voice, and vice versa.

4.2.3 PATTERNS OF THREE

The *Goldberg*'s structure is built on groups of three variations in the order: dance or genre piece, arabesque-like movement or toccata, and canon. This pattern is only broken at the end, where the last four variations before the Quodlibet (Variations 26 to 29) are all toccatas. Even the two-part texture of the Canon at the ninth in Variation 27, with its free-flowing lines, tends to give the feeling of a simple toccata. Another irregularity is found in the first two variations which reverse the order of the pattern: Variation 1 is a toccata / arabesque, while Variation 2 is a genre-imitation piece. One could perhaps interpret this as a way of showing that the plan only gradually took its present form. Furthermore, by breaking the pattern at the two extreme ends, the *Goldberg Variations* succeeds in starting and ending energetically.

Another way of interpreting its structure could be that the *Variations* are three different kinds of different variations set ten times, although to conform with this idea, the interpretation of variation 28 would have to be somewhat lighter and more dance-like rather than sparkling in the style of a toccata. As a result, the "mounting climax" towards Variation 30 would be broken, giving the work a different feeling for its ending.

The canons play a major part in establishing the importance of the 'multiples of three' concept in the *Goldberg Variations*. There are nine strict canons going from unison to octave, with each canon placed as the third piece in every group of three. Although, it was not necessary for Bach to write a canon at the ninth for Variation 27[169], its inclusion sustains the pattern of having a canon as each third variation. One can even speculate that this movement might have added significance since its number 27 is three squared and three cubed, while its interval number as a canon at the ninth is also a multiple of three. It is the Quodlibet which deviates from this arrangement, for this should be a canon at the tenth. However, although not a canon itself, it is clearly a grand finale to the set of canons.

Furthermore, in connection with the 'pattern of threes', only three variations are in the minor mode (Variations 15, 21 and 25).

[169] for theoretically it is the same as canon at the second

4.3 THE USE OF COUNTERPOINT

Being an eighteenth-century work, the *Goldberg Variations* is contrapuntal, as was the customary style of writing during this time. However, throughout the variations, Bach makes various uses of counterpoint techniques to merge the voices together. In the Canons, the literal imitation is confined to the two upper voices, while the accompanying part, which is present in all but the final canon at the ninth, is left free to develop the bass line into a suitable complement. One can also note how, as the variations progress, the bass line becomes more integrated with the two upper voices. In Variation 3 (Canon at the unison) the bass line is an independent entity from the upper two canonic voices, while by Variation 15 (Canon at the fifth), the bass line becomes much more integrated, using and imitating the motifs heard in the two top voices. Just like in the other minor-mode canon (Variation 21, Canon at the seventh), the thematic part in the bass line of Variation 15 produces a beautiful dialogue.

Such contrapuntal complexity is not solely confined to the canonic variations, however. Many variations expand minute thematic units into an elaborate linear texture, such as Variation 4 for instance, which is built on a series of strettos, and Variation 22 whose little opening motif is the germ on which this forceful variation is built. Thus the integration achieved is not only between the variations themselves through the recurring bass theme, but also within each variation through the use of motivic units. In the two-part texture of the arabesques, the emphasis on virtuoso display somewhat restricts contrapuntal intricacy to that of inverting the consequent line, such as in Variation 14 where the hands switch roles in the second half and Variation 20 where the counterpoint is achieved by the two voices answering each other in inversion.

4.4 THE BASS LINE

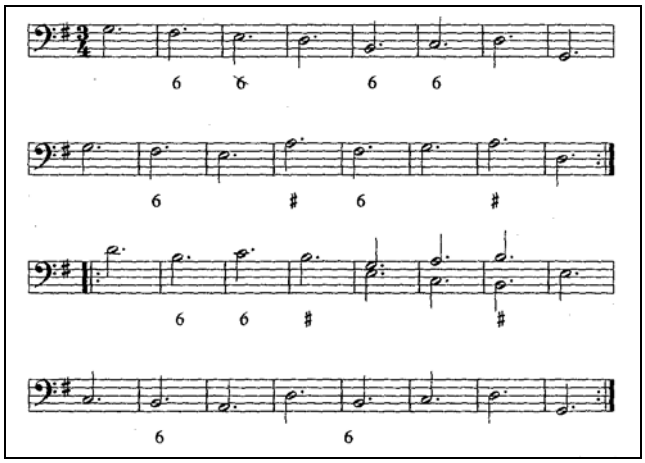


Figure v The Fundamental Bass of the *Goldberg Variations*, showing alternatives in second half [170]

The thirty-two note ground bass, which binds such a colossal work together, has its own historical tradition. The opening four notes of this bass line were a common formula used by various composers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, not least Bach himself, and are found as the basis of a variety of ostinato works, both in the major as well as in the minor[171]. By 1650, these four notes had become a standard way of producing long movements for Italian guitarists and French harpsichordists[172].

Frequently they were extended to eight bars, doubled to sixteen (to the dominant cadence), and then matched by a mirror section (in another sixteen bars, returning to the tonic)[173]. The *Goldberg* theme continues to extend them to thirty-two bars.

The first eight notes are also the basis of Bach's *Fourteen Canons* BWV 1087[174], as the title page inscription itself reveals:

Verschiedene Canones über die ersteren acht Fundamental-Noten vorheriger Arie von J. S. Bach

Diverse canons on the first eight fundamental notes of the preceding Aria, by J. S. Bach[175]

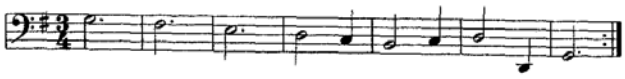
[170] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 36. However, neither the Aria nor any variation has the bass-line so simply set out as shown in this figure.
[171] An example of a work in the major key is the *ciaccona* of Arcangelo Corelli's final trio-sonata Op.4 No.12 (1694), while one in the minor mode is Heinrich Ignaz Biber's *Passacaglia* for solo violin.
[172] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 38
[173] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 37
[174] Written some time between 1742 and 1746, the *Fourteen Canons* were discovered in 1974 on the cover of a copy of the *Goldberg Variations*.

They also somewhat resemble the first line of the chorale-melody used in the variations *Vom Himmel Hoch, da komm'ich her* (also know as the 'Canonic Variations') (pub. 1748) by Bach.

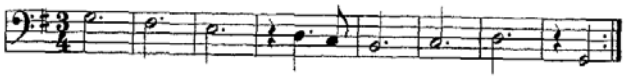
However, while this bass theme begins on the downbeat in the Aria and all subsequent variations of the *Goldberg* (apart from Variation 30, Quodlibet)[176], it is not the case in these other two works by Bach.

Being a commonly used harmonic sequence during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, these first eight notes can be found in various works, such as[177]:

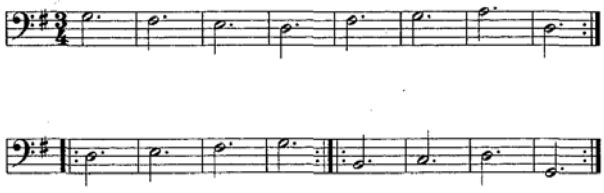
Example 4.1 Henry Purcell: 'Let each gallant heart', Z 390 (transposed here from C major) (1683)



Example 4.2 Henry Purcell: Ground in Gamut for harpsichord, Z 645 (pub. 1696)



Example 4.3 Johann Christoph Bach: *Sarabande, duodecies variat*

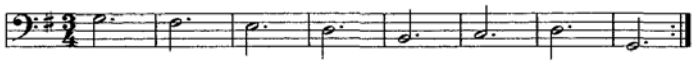


[175] The following examples were taken from Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 32

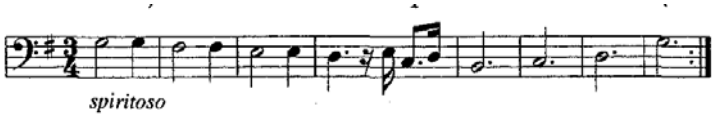
[176] In order to keep such consistency, Bach creates a self-imposed limitation in the types of genres he is able to use in the *Goldberg Variations*, although this in no way limits the work's variety. It means that allemandes, courantes, conventional passepieds, bourrées and gigues are not possible, although gavotte-like and gigue-like movements for example are able to fit in as long as they avoid the anacrusis. In the Quodlibet, the contrapuntal material is derived from established folk melodies, so the removal of the anacrusis to conform to the style of the other variations would have distorted its melodic contour.

[177] The following examples were taken from Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 37-38.

Example 4.4 **George Frederic Handel, Chaconne from Suite in G major, HWV 442 (c. 1703 – 1706)**



Example 4.5 **Gottlieb Muffat, Ciacona from *Componimenti musicali* (c.1739)**



Although the bass-theme is the link between Bach's *Goldberg Variations* and the above-mentioned works by different composers, none of the variations in the *Goldberg* resemble a chaconne of the kind underlying Purcell's and Muffat's variations quoted above.

The bass line has a symmetrical structure consisting of a descending figure in the first four bars, followed by the motif in figure vi.

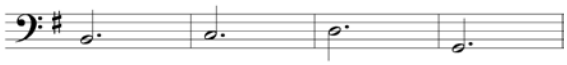


Figure vi Motif taken from the Bass Line (bars 4 – 8) of the *Goldberg Variations*

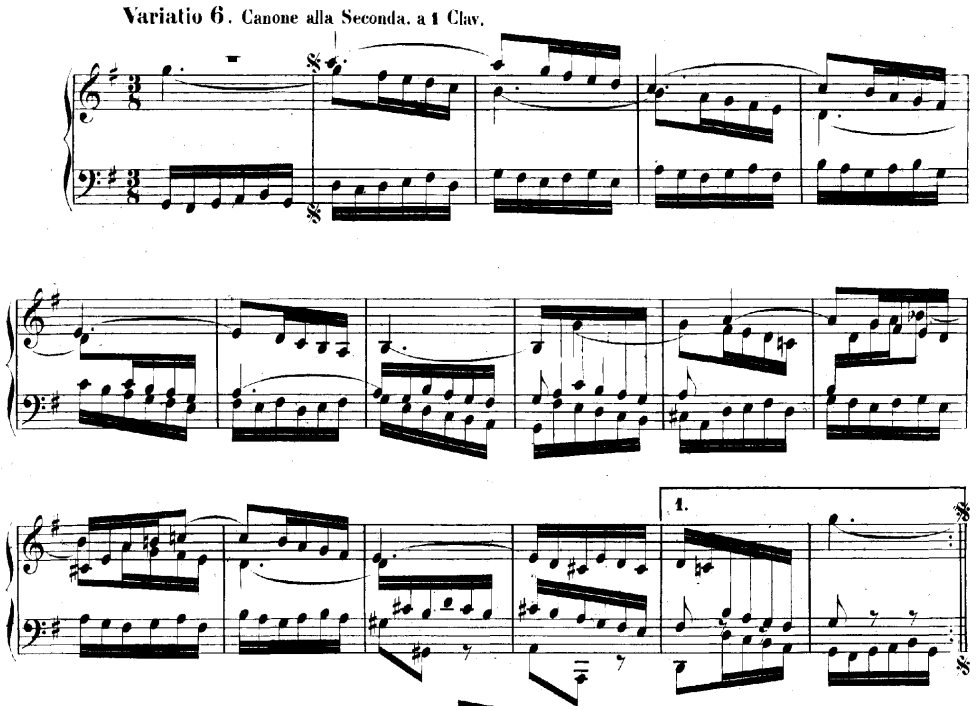
This eight-bar structure, consisting of the descending figure followed by the motif, is repeated four times, with slight variations in the descending figure, which results in the motif appearing in different pitches. This four-fold repetition of the eight-bar structure creates a symmetrical quality, which also results in the two sections of the binary structure being equal in length.

The simple bass line of the *Goldberg Variations* as heard in the Aria never appears in this basic form again, but is contrapuntally decorated in all the variations, integrating more with the upper two voices as the work progresses. The idea of keeping the original notes of the chorale-melody on the beat while adding any number of decorative notes in between, as is the case with the *Goldberg Variations*' thirty-two-bar bass, is also familiar in works by Dieterich Buxtehude (c. 1637 – 1707) and Johann Pachelbel (1653 – 1706), to name but two.[178]

[178] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 61

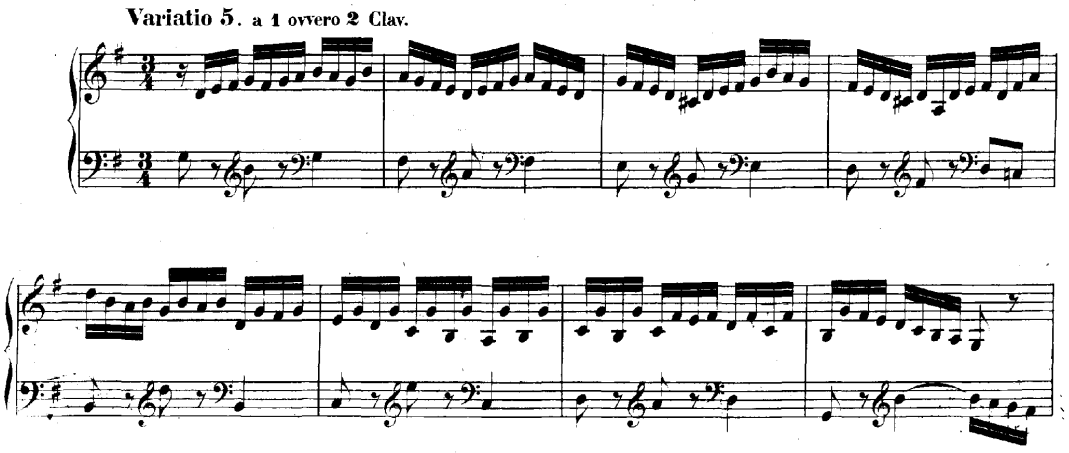
While forming the basis of all subsequent variations, apart from that of Variation 27 (canon at the ninth), where the original bass line is omitted altogether, notes from this bass-theme are occasionally altered to fit in with a particular melodic, chromatic or harmonic flavour Bach might want to introduce. The bass line of canon at the second (variation 6) is one that varies from the original, at times even becoming difficult to trace, although its harmonies remain, albeit in different inversions to fit the suspensions. Consequently, a chromatic touch, which is the first to be found in the work, decorates the basic harmonies, as it keeps up the variation's suspensions.

Example 4.6 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 6, b.1 – 17**



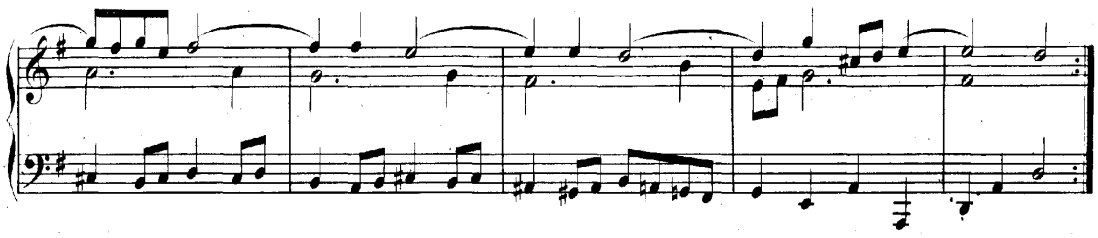
The original bass is also quite difficult to trace in Variation 9, but once again, both the general direction and the cadences are clearly preserved. On the other hand, in other variations such as Variation 5, the bass notes, as they appear on the main beats, are particularly easy to pick out.

Example 4.7 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 5, b.1 – 8



While the bass line is usually found in the bass voice, as in any conventional chaconne work, some of the notes are occasionally divided amongst the voices. One such example is Variation 18 (canon at the sixth) whose bass theme is scattered among the voices, with chromatic touches modifying it (b.14 and b.30). However, the clarity of the four-bar phrasing and that of the various tonal centres preserves the overall effect of a variation on a theme.

Example 4.8 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 18, b.12 – 16



Variation 21 is particularly interesting for although in the minor mode, Bach still manages to leave the bass theme largely in the major.

G	F#	E♮	D	B♮	C	D	G
G	F#	E♮	A	F#	G	A	D
D	B♮	C	**B♮**	G	**A**	**B♮**	**E♮**
C	**B♮**	A	D	B♮	C	D	G

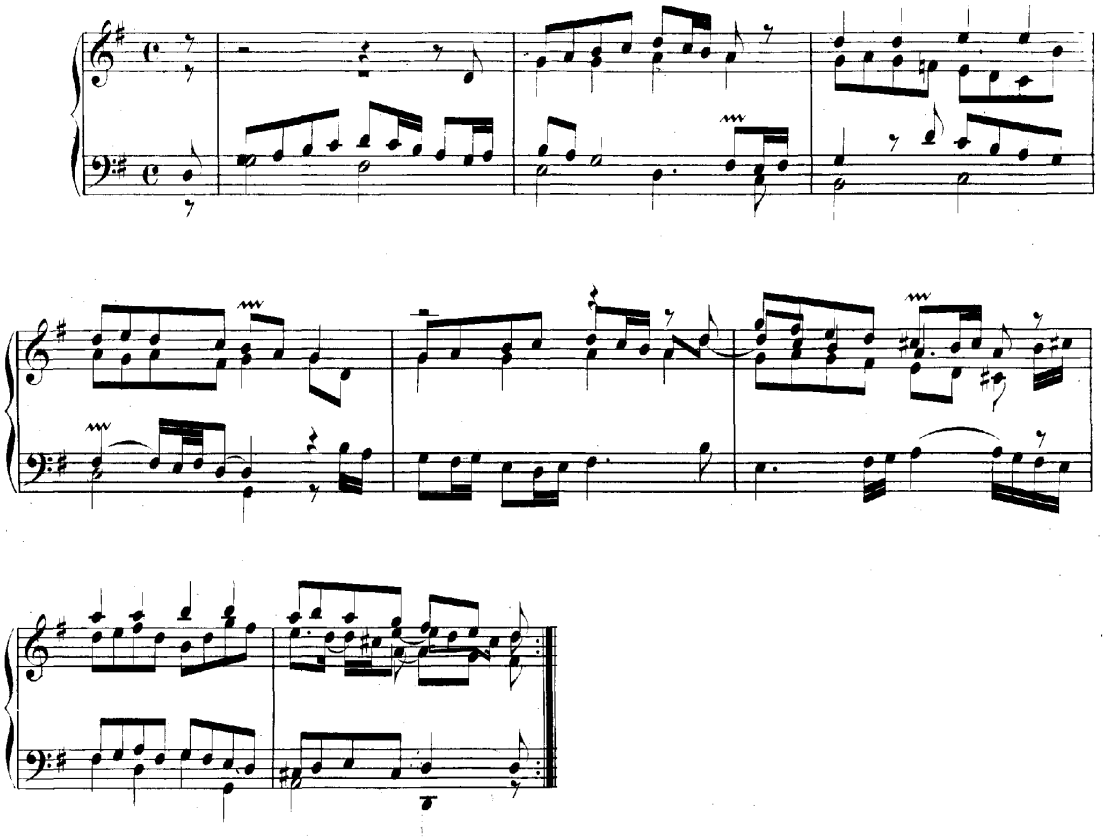
Figure vii The Bass Line of Variation 21[179]

[179] Only the notes in green are flattened. Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 78.

Apart from being the basis on which the work is built, the bass line of the *Goldberg Variations* serves as the anchor for each variation and for the piece as a whole, particularly since it is generally to be found on the strong beats. Intriguingly, while in variation 17 the bass theme notes are on or near the strong beats throughout the whole movement, they do not give the same anchoring effect as in other variations, probably due to the left hand wandering line.

The Quodlibet of Variation 30 states the bass theme one final time before the return of the simple aria, giving it its maximum impact by placing it consistently in the bass on the strong beat of each bar.[180]

Example 4.9 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 30, b.1 – 8

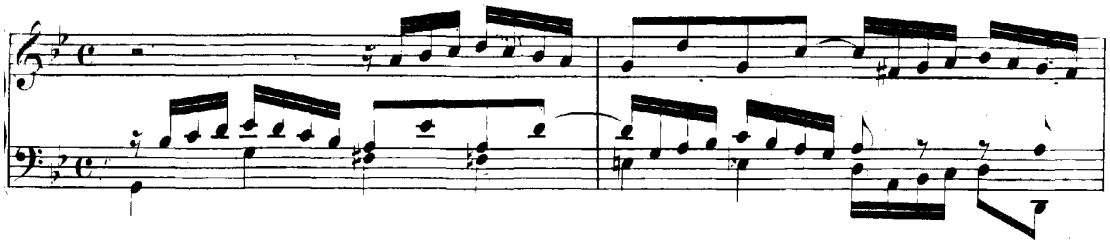


[180] In this case on the first and third beats of the bar, since Variation 30 consists of only 16 bars.

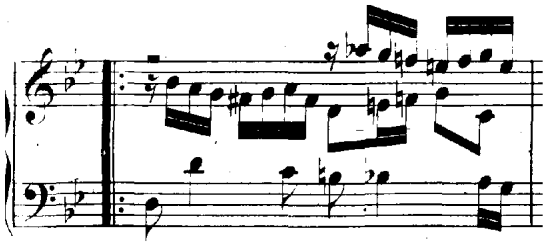
4.5 THE HARMONIC OUTLINE

The harmonic outline of the *Goldberg Variations* uses standard progressions, with conventional cadence points at the tonic, dominant, relative minor and back to tonic. The harmonic rhythm of the bass theme's implied harmony is maintained throughout all the variations, although for variations with half the number of bars – variations 3, 9, 21 and 30, the bass line and its harmonic progressions are found every half bar so as to fit in the entire foundation over which the variations develop. With the exception of the minor-mode variations (numbers 15, 21 and 25), the harmonic progressions of the aria are sufficiently colourful to sustain all the variations without a need for further development and intensification. The chromatic flavours in the minor-mode variations then heighten the expressive element with their "bold", unexpected deviations from the predominant diatonic harmonic base, which for a short time unbalances the established sense of proportion, symmetry and restraint – elements which are characteristics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The chromatic fourth[181] is particularly important, being especially evident in Variations 21 and 25, and can be found in several different note values in the former variation: b.1 in crotchets, b. 3 – 7 in ascending quavers, b.15 in semiquavers.

Example 4.10 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 21, b.1 – 2**

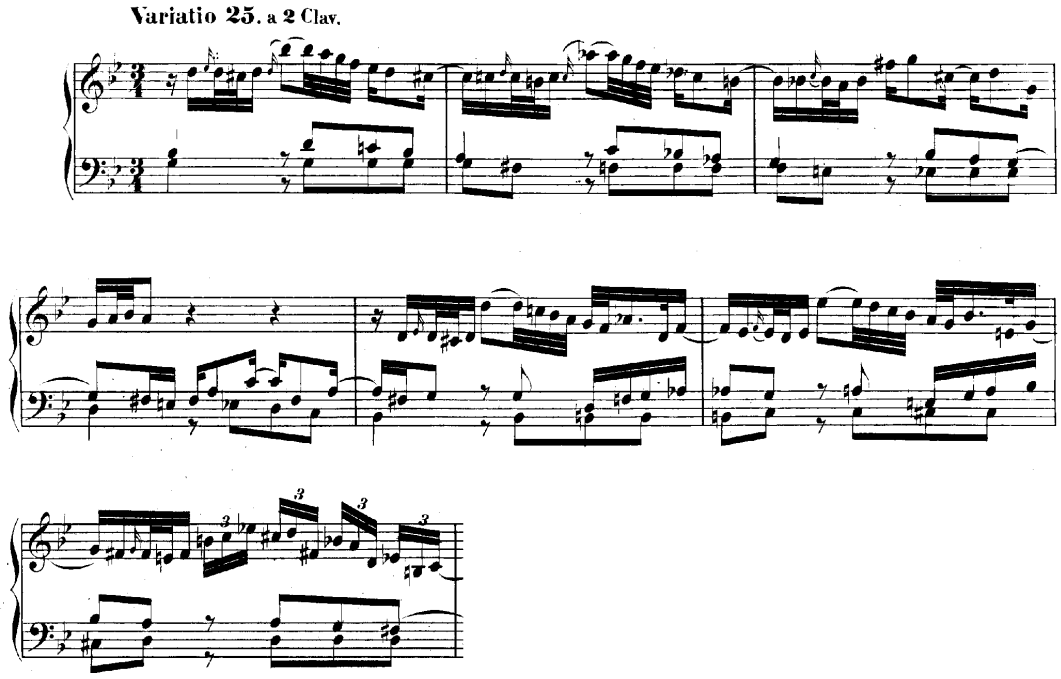


Example 4.11 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 21, b.9**



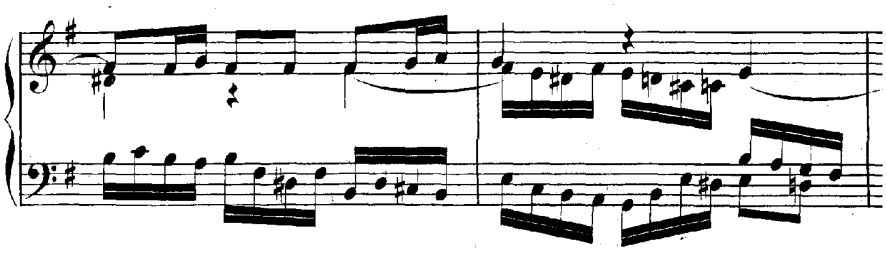
[181] This is a chromatic scale which spans the interval of a fourth.

Example 4.12 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 25, b.1 – 7**



At times, chromatic flavours are also found in major mode variations, such as in Variation 12 where they give the movement a wistful, pondering quality.

Example 4.13 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 12, b.23 – 24**



Two variations that sidetrack slightly from the established harmonic progressions of the Aria are Variations 15 and 21 which move to E flat major in the second half rather than E flat minor[182] – a progression that is more appropriate and more striking for the G minor mode. The other minor mode variation (number 25) moves to E flat minor.

[182] in bars 19 and 11 respectively.

4.6 VARIETY AND ARCHITECTURAL COHERENCE

The concepts of number and symmetry are at the core of the *Goldberg*'s structure and order. As discussed above[183], there is certainly a repetitive pattern to the variations, but maximum variety is still achieved through various techniques, such as different time-signatures. For example, the nine canons use eight different time-signatures, and although variation 9 and variation 21 share common time, they do so in a different tempo, with the latter variation having a slower crotchet pulse. The great variety in character also gives the allusion that the movements are unrelated to each other, although the underlying connections preserve the feeling of a developing chain of musical ideas.

Symmetry, balance and unity within the variations, generate a feeling of coherence and continuity. This is achieved through similarities in the figuration between the two halves of a variation (as found in Variation 20), ending each half with material already heard (as in Variation 24), giving the impression of a mini-recapitulation of the subject, and the sharing of motifs in the different voices (as in Variation 15). Coherence between variations that express very diverse temperaments is achieved by starting a variation with the same note/s that had finished the previous one[184]. The pulse of a variation can also act as the connecting link – for instance in spite of having different time-signatures (12/8 and 3/8), the internal rhythm of Variations 3 and 4 gives them similar tempos. On the other hand, despite Variations 12, 13 and 14 sharing a common time-signature of 3/4, their different character prevents them from sharing a common tempo. The last semiquaver group in the final bar (left hand) of Variation 27 creates another link, as it is clearly indicating a connection with Variation 28. Variations 28 and 29 are also conceptually connected through their figuration, which at the same time creates variety between the two movements – having semiquavers where there were demisemiquavers, triplets where there were twos, and similar-but-different ways of treating the chromatic inflection halfway through each of the second halves[185]. Thus, through a common time-signature of 3/4 for Variations 28 and 29 that gives them the possibility of a common tempo, a shared *Affekt*, and a rigorously symmetrical quality in

[183] Refer to *4.2 Structure*, 90.
[184] as between the Aria and Variation 1; Variation 1 and Variation 2; Variation 25 and the bubbling semiquaver line of Variation 26.
[185] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 88.

the way material recurs and re-combines in each respective variation, a link is created between the last three variations, contributing to the climax towards the Quodlibet.

Splitting a big work in half with the Overture (Variation 16) is a rhetorical technique which serves as a breather before the continuation. Such proficient use of genre and mode is again demonstrated towards the end of the *Goldberg Variations*. The wistful, weary cantilena of Variation 25 serves as a time for reflection before the climax to the end, reached in the Quodlibet of Variation 30 whose four-part harmonic richness has not been heard in the previous variations. Such a structural climax makes the simple return of the Aria *da capo* then even more effective.

Further techniques that prevent the *Goldberg* from becoming predictable are the irregular pacing of the minor variations and of the slow movements, the variety in the number of voices in the arabesques and canons, as well as the variety of ways the voices interact with each other in the canons – such as, which voice comes in first and at what interval of time it is answered.

As a result, the *Goldberg* signifies Bach's quest for extensive diversity within relentless unity.

THE *GOLDBERG VARIATIONS* IN THE CONCERT HALL

Wanda Landowska, Rosalyn Tureck, and particularly Glenn Gould's interpretation of the *Goldberg Variations* are largely responsible for the work's popularity nowadays. However, one might speculate about this work's popularity and its frequency of performance from its date of composition.[186] Philipp Emanuel Bach, who was probably involved in the writing of the *Comparison between Handel and Bach*,[187] expresses admiration for the work and calls it a work of riches,[188] but there is no record of the popularity, or otherwise, of this work after 1742[189], and no reference to it whatsoever for many decades. While the technique of contrapuntal variation and the uncommon combination of time-signatures (as in Variation 26) might have been held in high esteem by some Bach-admirers in the 1770s, any occasional mention of the work is sparse.

One gets the impression that the *Goldberg Variations* were not really understood for a long time. Since so little seventeenth- and eighteenth- century music was played after Bach's death (until Mendelssohn's revival), this also had direct effect on the understanding of such works. Johann Philipp Kirnberger (1721 – 1783)[190], grasped enough to extract the *Goldberg*'s bass-theme, but he only highlights its first half and doesn't seem to have noticed its various symmetries.[191] Johann Nikolaus Forkel (1749 – 1818), was clearly impressed by this work for he himself composed some variations imitating some of the *Goldberg*'s techniques (although they are decidedly inferior and do not match Bach's genius)[192]. Neither is it mentioned in connection with established composer-pianists such as Czerny, Mendelssohn, Thalberg, Chopin or Schumann, who were more likely to play Bach's *Well-tempered Clavier* or piano transcriptions of the chorales. Beethoven is said to have loved the *Goldberg Variations*, but never performed them in public, and while Liszt did include them in his repertoire with

[186] incidentally, the reason for its composition is only referred to by anecdote
[187] Published in Berlin in 1788 (Dok III, p.927)
[188] Peter Williams *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 93
[189] its date of publication
[190] composer, music theorist and pupil of Johann Sebastian Bach
[191] Later, Brahms too realized that the *Goldberg* theme had precedents in Handel and Muffat. Peter Williams *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 95.
[192] Refer to Appendix, *A3 The Influence of the Goldberg Variations*, 150.

popular works of Bach, the probability is that he only played excerpts of the Variations in private circles, as was common nineteenth-century practice for long works.

However, although Liszt kept a keen interest in the *Goldberg Variations* by also introducing them to his students, they were otherwise by then "completely overlooked by the pianists"[193]. The *Chromatic Fantasy* was in fact a more popular work since, apart from its suitability to the piano, it was constructed on similar ideas of musical rhetoric and the art of recitation so popular at the time. E. T. A. Hoffmann remarks that "Johann Sebastian Bach's Variations" would send concert-goers packing, for it did not conform to the current tastes. According to nineteenth-century inclinations, it would have been more appropriate to end with some flamboyant improvisation based on the theme rather than a return to the Aria for example.[194] It seems that what kept the *Goldberg Variations* from becoming totally forgotten was the effort of different editors and publishers who sought to compile Complete Bach Editions, thus keeping the *Goldberg Variations* available.

5.1 INTERPRETATIONS AND RECORDINGS

5.1.1 THE INFLUENCE OF DIFFERENT EDITIONS AND CHANGING TASTES

In spite of the sparse documentation on the evolution of the *Goldberg Variations* in the concert hall, it is evident that some musicians were undoubtedly fascinated by it, as can be seen by the numerous analyses, editions and recordings of the work.

The issues previously discussed on the subject of editions[195] can be paralleled to interpretations recorded by artists in different eras for the different ways of thinking current through the centuries can also be detected in the way musicians interpreted and performed the music. However, while one would tend to conclude that these artists were using editions popular at the time, analysis indicates that towards the end of the 1970s, certain performers were ahead of scholars, which reinforces Leonhardt's claim

[193] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 95.
[194] The source for the above paragraph was: Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 94 – 96.
[195] Refer to Chapter 3: *An Evolving Outlook to Bach's Music and its Interpretations, 3.3 Editions*, 46.

that style developed more through experience than through theorizing.[196] Performers themselves were discovering through experience how certain techniques and stylistic issues were more successful than others in expressing the ideas they were seeking to project in their performances.

The first recording of the *Goldberg Variations* was probably that by Wanda Landowska (1879 - 1959), who in 1933 recorded the work on a modern-constructed harpsichord[197]. Reviving this work using its 'original' medium is a reflection of the new way of thinking that was starting to develop in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Landowska's interpretation of the *Goldberg Variations* however is rooted in the then current romantic approach based on virtuosity and grandeur. Her realization of the importance of 'punctuation' and spirited rendition is perhaps the main reason for the lasting success of her performances that overrides other historically inaccurate matters such as instrument construction[198] and use of registration. Furthermore, although the harpsichord was being used, it took a long time before a distinct harpsichord style of playing was applied[199]. In fact, prior to the 1970s, harpsichord playing technique is demonstrated solely by Leonhardt.[200] Raymond Russel (1959) and especially Frank Hubbard (1965) are credited for rediscovering the mechanisms and principles of construction of the historical harpsichord[201], and this played an important role in commencing a better understanding of technique and style.

5.1.2 COMPARING RECORDINGS

From the numerous available recordings of the *Goldberg Variations*, interpretations by six different pianists were compared by the researcher. The pianists appraised – Wilhelm Kempff (1895 – 1991), Claudio Arrau (1903 – 1991), Rosalyn Tureck (1914 – 2003), Glenn Gould (1932 – 1982), Daniel Barenboim (1942) and András Schiff (1953)

[196] Dorottya Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice, 1945-1975* (Hampshire Ashgate Publishing, 2003), xii
[197] Wanda Landowska, *J. S. Bach: Goldberg Variations*, recorded 1933, EMI 5 67200, accessed 3 March, 2010. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFhQToK5Rr0.
[198] In relation to the *Goldberg Variations*, the only exceptions to this approach before 1975 were the recordings by Leonhardt in 1965, Newman in 1972 and Kipnis in 1973, who played on historical harpsichord. Dorottya Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice, 1945-1975* (Hampshire Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 57.
[199] Refer to Chapter 3, *An Evolving Outlook to Bach's Music and its Interpretations*, *3.2 The Bach Revival*, 41.
[200] Dorottya Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice, 1945-1975* (Hampshire Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 56
[201] Dorottya Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice, 1945-1975* (Hampshire Ashgate Publishing, 2003),71

– present a cross-section of the different approaches applied to this work and the music of Bach in general over the centuries, which was influenced by the general precepts of the time. Unfortunately there are no sources referring to the editions used by these pianists – a factor which would have shed more light on the influence (or otherwise) of editorial markings on a musician's performance. Arrau supervised the editing and publication of Beethoven's piano sonatas in Urtext Edition, which indicates that he would have probably been inclined to use an Urtext Edition for his performances of Bach's works too.

Claudio Arrau's approach in his 1942 recording[202] of the *Goldberg Variations* in fact reflects the then evolving inclination towards a more 'pure' and 'authentic' interpretation, as a result of the importance which was being given to Urtext scores at the time. However, as discussed in Chapter 3,[203] such particular fidelity to the printed text did not necessarily bring alive the spirit of the eighteenth century and Bach. A general overview of Arrau's performance of the *Goldberg Variations* reveals an almost consistent non-legato touch (which was standard for Bach performances on the piano at the time), a general absence of *rubato*, as well as the absence of improvised ornamentation. Neither does Arrau apply certain historical performance practice techniques such as that of *notes inégales* in Variation 13 bar 9, or the double-dots of the Overture rhythms in Variation 16. In Variation 29, it also seems that Arrau is trying to play the demisemiquaver *after* the last triplet semiquaver instead of co-ordinating it. Furthermore, the chord in the Aria, bar 11 is not executed according to convention, being played from bottom to top rather than the opposite. This shows Arrau's fixated observation of indications found in the printed text, as opposed to the application of eighteenth-century traditions, or rather historical performance practices.

While occasional variations explore phrasing and *Affekt*, most movements are approached with a uniform direct touch, sounding somewhat austere. Arrau's interpretation of Variation 16, *Ouverture*, is considered peculiar by the researcher, for he plays with a rather controlled touch instead of with the robust sound one tends to associate with an Overture. Articulation is explored, but on occasion too much staccato is used when the music's texture implies a different approach (Variation 11 for

[202] Claudio Arrau, *J. S. Bach. Goldberg Variations. Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue*, recorded 1942, RCA/BV. B18D30112 3(CD), accessed 25 March, 2010. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=219PNAuPtMU

[203] Refer to Chapter 3, *An Evolving Outlook to Bach's Music and its Interpretations, 3.2 The Bach Revival*, 41.

example). Arrau also plays all the repeats with little or no change. In a few variations he repeats the second section softer, but otherwise ornaments are not included, which continues to highlight Arrau's fervent adherence to the text.

Rosalyn Tureck's interpretation of Bach is one that relies on historical sources, consequently adapting and interpreting his works in an informed manner. She recorded the *Goldberg Variations* several times, namely in 1957, 1978, 1980, 1995 and 1998. As expected, her interpretation changed in certain aspects through the years, such as in the application of ornaments on repetition[204]. Unfortunately it was very difficult to obtain access to all of Tureck's complete recordings of this work which prevented the researcher from being able to thoroughly compare certain stylistic interpretations which she may have performed differently throughout the years[205]. The general impression one gets from Tureck's recordings is that she is trying to recapture the spirit of Bach with her harpsichord-associated touch, while still using the piano as a medium. Employing a technique similar to that later adopted (and possibly perfected) by Glenn Gould, her sound is defined and crisp, with both hands being given equal importance, although on repeating Variation 5 for example, she gives the semiquavers a lighter sound. In another section in the same variation, Tureck also uses block dynamics – a technique used on the harpsichord when changing manuals, although it should be pointed out that it would have been technically impossible to change manuals here. Thus while using the harpsichord as a source of inspiration, Tureck still makes use of pianistic effects, such as application of the pedal[206] for example, although she never diverges very far from the confines of eighteenth-century performance practice

[204] The researcher observed that one of her early recordings [Rosalyn Tureck, *Great Pianists of the Twentieth Century*: *Bach*, Philips/EMI 456 979 2(CD2), recorded 1957. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6I0lNZHcfj4] did not include additional ornaments on repeating the Aria (AABB), but these then featured in a late recording [Tureck, Rosalyn, *J. S. Bach Goldberg Variations – Aria*, n.d., accessed March 25, 2010, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2MfdZCais0&NR=1].

[205] Apart from those mentioned in the above footnote, two other recordings accessed were: OnlyClassicalMusic. "A Comparison of Six Interpretations of Variation 5 from Bach's BWV 988", Claudio Arrau, Daniel Barenboim, Glenn Gould, Wilhelm Kempff, András Schiff, Rosalyn Tureck. n.d., accessed March 25, 2010, http://www.youtube.com/user/OnlyClassicalMusic#p/search/0/4VauppHP-Eg OnlyClassicalMusic. "A Comparison of Six Interpretations of Variation 18 from Bach's BWV 988", Claudio Arrau, Daniel Barenboim, Glenn Gould, Wilhelm Kempff, András Schiff, Rosalyn Tureck. n.d., accessed March 25, 2010, http://www.youtube.com/user/OnlyClassicalMusic#p/search/0/LqIHGhm0XxE

[206] One instance is to help with a certain technically demanding passage which is more challenging on the piano (Variation 11). In Variation 5, her use of the pedal is very unconventional however. OnlyClassicalMusic. "A Comparison of Six Interpretations of Variation 5 from Bach's BWV 988", Claudio Arrau, Daniel Barenboim, Glenn Gould, Wilhelm Kempff, András Schiff, Rosalyn Tureck. n.d., accessed March 25, 2010, http://www.youtube.com/user/OnlyClassicalMusic#p/search/0/4VauppHP-Eg

techniques. Her interpretations in fact reflect her belief in embracing a more holistic Bach, not restricting his music to its original medium.

The piano's adaptability is skilfully shown by **Glenn Gould** who was particularly renowned for his interpretations of Bach's keyboard works. The *Goldberg Variations* was Gould's first major recording in 1955[207], followed by a second recording in 1981[208]. The two recordings are very different – the first, highly energetic and often frenetic, while the second is generally slower and more introspective, showing Gould's own evolving understanding of this work. In an interview, Gould explained that when after several years he listened to his recording of 1955 again, he felt that the variations sounded very interesting, but perhaps somewhat independent, all simply (but justifiably) making a comment on the ground bass on which they are built[209]. In this first recording, the fast tempi are an initial reaction to the romantic tradition of playing (which Gould had initially also been brought up on), aiming to counteract the idea of lingering unduly over musical ideas. What intrigued Gould to take the work up again and record it another time was the fact that maybe he could find a way of making an almost mathematical correspondence between the theme and the subsequent variations so that a series of tempo relationships would be found. He wanted to discover whether, substituting for the fact that Bach had no continuous melodic design but rather a harmonic design, there would be at least a rhythmic design that is continuous, with a sense of pulse that went through[210]. Gould in fact managed to find proportionate relationships between the pulse of all the variations, having for example the quaver pulse in one variation becoming the crotchet pulse in the subsequent variation, i.e. 1:2. Other proportionate values are more complex and less straight forward, with variations connecting in the ratio of 2:3 for example. For example in Variation 16 the crotchet beat of the first section becomes the dotted crotchet pulse of the second section (3/8). This second section itself is linked to the next variation by a ratio of 2:3, that is the speed of the semi-quavers remains constant. Slight *ritardando*s at the end of some variations further prepare the link to the subsequent movement, making the transition seem more seamless. Therefore while the starting point for the characteristic tempi of

[207] Glenn Gould, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations.(1955)*, recorded 1955, Sony Classical SMK52594(M)(CD), accessed March 23, 2010, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGY9tHHM63Q.
[208] Glenn Gould, *J. S. Bach. Goldberg Variations BWV 988. 1981 Digital Recording*, recorded 1981, Sony Classical SMK52619(CD), accessed March 25, 2010, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7LWANJFHEs&feature=related.
[209] Refer to Chapter 4, *The Constitution of the Goldberg Variations, 4.4 The Bass Line*, 94.
[210] RadioKlassic. "The Goldberg Variations – Glenn Gould 1/6" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nu7q3BSiAjc&feature=related

each movement is derived from historical performance practices relating to dance and instrumental gestures, the overall metrical structure is taken into account to connect the variations into one seamless work. The basic pulse of the beginning continues to be the underlying constant reference point within the whole work. In this way, the constant underlying rhythmic reference point substitutes the lack of a recurring melodic design, thus aurally still giving a sense of logical continuity within the variation structure[211].

Gould's individual technique of pulling down on the keys rather than striking them from above[212] produced a brilliantly crisp, direct, non-legato articulation, rather reminiscent to that of the harpsichord resonance. The piano he played on also underwent some modifications, namely having the action lightened and the hammers made more brittle, which also contributed to Gould's unique "harpsichord-like" sound. Gould's playing was distinguished by a remarkable technical proficiency that exuded great clarity and control, particularly in the articulation of polyphonic texture. Gould's interpretation of the music parallels with the use of a score devoid of editorial nineteenth-century markings. However, rather than strictly playing the notes on the page[213], Gould applies ornaments and articulation judiciously and performs the work with a historical insight that is at once perceptive and intelligent. In his interpretations, he projects the structure of the music, highlighting its contrapuntal inflections with a certain ease that manages to transfer the harpsichord aura onto the piano. Both pedalling and any dynamic gradations are very discrete, and give the impression that they are only used to 'adapt' the piano to Bach's intentions. Such an approach is in complete contrast to the nineteenth-century romantic interpretation, where it was Bach's music that was adapted to the piano, as can be seen in Wilhelm Kempff's and Daniel Barenboim's interpretations of the *Goldberg Variations* for example. Although they come from different generations, they both share the same vision of Bach's music.

Typical of the nineteenth century style of playing, **Wilhelm Kempff**'s 1969 recording of the *Goldberg Variations*[214] features an abundant use of pedal and dynamics, among

[211] the bass line is so intricately embedded within the contrapuntal lines that only in a few variations is one able to decipher it very clearly

[212] A central technical idea of his teacher Alberto Guerrero.

[213] As commented above in relation to Arrau's interpretation for example.

[214] Although only some of Kempff's recorded variations could be obtained, they presented the general idea of Kempff's approach to the *Goldberg Variations*.
Wilhelm Kempff, Wilhelm. *Wilhelm Kempff plays Bach Goldberg Variations Part 1*, Deutsche Grammophon 439 978-2 ADD. recorded 1969, accessed March 27, 2010, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7NIdO-gAlo.

which particular lines (voicing) are suddenly projected, intensity is increased and a murky texture is created. In Variation 5, the researcher observes that overpedalling distorts the crisp toccata character this variation is meant to convey, making it sound somewhat sentimental in certain passages, and also generating an overall lack of consistency in the variations in this regard. In Variation 2 for instance, the bouncy quavers of the opening eight bars are lost in the following bars due to application of whole bar pedals. The temperament Kempff gives to the *Goldberg Variations* is wholly romantic, such that he creates a totally different work from that of Bach's original intention.

A unique feature of Kempff's interpretation is that he does not perform any of the ornaments (with some occasional exceptions), even though these are ones added by Bach himself. Nor does he add them in his repeats. Most particularly the Aria sounds rather bare and not in the style we usually associate with the eighteenth century. As in Busoni's edition and Arrau's recording, Kempff's interpretation of the arpeggiated chord in b.11 of this Aria is also unconventional – being played bottom up rather than the opposite.

Analogous to his recording of the *Well Tempered Clavier,* **Daniel Barenboim** makes frequent use of the sustaining pedal in the *Goldberg Variations* (recorded in 1989)[215], producing a sonority very different from the dry, semi-legato sound favoured by Glenn Gould. His tone is at times robust with an element of passion and drama, while at other moments it is more affectionate. Moreover, dynamics are not in accordance with eighteenth-century performance practices – in Variation 4 Barenboim varies dynamics in the middle of a phrase, creating an antecedent-consequent phrase structure, while *decrescendo* effects are applied at ends of phrases. Similar to Kempff, he highlights Bach's polyphonic writing through the projection of different voices, while his use of the pedal is very pianistic and used to enhance the romantic approach Barenboim aims to portray. Consequently, the piano's possibilities are here used to their full potential. Indeed, when justifying his interpretation of Bach, Barenboim claims that:

[215] Once again only part of Barenboim's 1989 recording of the *Goldberg Variations* could be obtained. Daniel Barenboim, *J. S. Bach: Goldberg Variations. Variations 3-7*, recorded 1989, accessed March 25, 2010, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jal87_L0akQ.

> I think that concerning oneself purely with historic performance practice and the attempt to reproduce the sound of older styles of music-making is limiting and no indication of progress. Mendelssohn and Schumann tried to introduce Bach into their own period, as did Liszt with his transcriptions and Busoni with his arrangements. In America Leopold Stokowski also tried to do it with his arrangements for orchestra. This was always the result of "progressive" efforts to bring Bach closer to the particular period. I have no philosophical problem with someone playing Bach and making it sound like Boulez. My problem is more with someone who tries to imitate the sound of that time...[216]

András Schiff is an artist from the younger generation of pianists who, in his interpretation of the *Goldberg Variations*,[217] re-captures the eighteenth-century aura of lightness. Using the piano at the service of the music, he gives an authentic crispness to this work in his application of tone, articulation and ornamentation. Supported by musicological research, Schiff adds his own variations to the music, such as in the application of more ornaments upon repetition, making his repeats sound spontaneous and remarkably fresh. In addition, Schiff's articulation plays an important part in making his interpretation of the *Goldberg Variations* sound original and effortless. His use of pedal (if at all) in this work is also very discreet.

Curiously, in Variation 18 Schiff plays the repeats with both hands an octave lower. While in this case such a change in register would have been technically impossible for Bach due to the range of the harpsichord, repeating passages at a different octave was common practice when the instrument's register permitted it. One rather peculiar detail is found in the Aria where Schiff plays the chord of bar 11 from the top downwards the first time, but then the other way round on repetition.

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[216] Daniel Barenboim. "Daniel Barenboim: I was reared on Bach", accessed March 1, 2009, http://www.danielbarenboim.com/index.php?id=40

[217] Schiff recorded the work in 1982, 1990 and 2001. The researcher was able to get access to the following recordings:
András Schiff, *Bach Goldberg Variations Aria Var. 1,2,&3*. n.d., accessed March 27, 2010, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cUivPdxxa54.
András Schiff, *Goldberg Variations by Schiff Part 1*. n.d., accessed March 27, 2010, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8U9iXnbBo8c.
András Schiff, *Goldberg Variations by Schiff Part 2*. n.d., accessed March 27, 2010, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2lCUrwjrk4&NR=1.

5.1.3 MODERN VS HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION

Although a small selection of pianists was portrayed in the above appraisal[218], they presented a cross-section of the different interpretations of the *Goldberg Variations*, highlighting the fact that there have been various approaches to the works of Bach. These different schools of thought are reflected in the different styles of playing. The two principal approaches are the "modern" versus the "authentic" interpretations, with artists like Kempff and Barenboim believing that Bach's music should be updated to the times and interpreted using all the available modern resources to highlight Bach's intentions. Although Bach did not have instruments with pedal and with a great sonorous sustainability at his disposal, one can indeed argue that such an interpretative approach cannot be dismissed on the grounds that Bach would not have approved of them. Through their interpretation, both Kempff and Barenboim give the music an intention that can perhaps be described as more communicative to our times, allowing the modern audience to understand the structural intricacies inherent in the music within the context of today's fervour. Such was Mendelssohn's idea when he revived Bach's works to an audience that had been very out of touch with this style[219]. Busoni's edition of Bach's works also reflects such thoughts, with their "updated" pedal, dynamic, notation and structural changes. Busoni believed that all notation is transcription, for once written, the original musical idea is already being interpreted as it is described to one's audience.

> Notation, the writing out of compositions, is primarily an ingenious expedient for catching an inspiration, with the purpose of exploiting it later. But notation is to improvisation as the portrait to the living model. It is for the interpreter to resolve the rigidity of the signs into primitive emotion.[220]

As it is not purely possible to translate all one's thoughts on paper, and neither can notation thoroughly reflect one's intentions, then this argument leaves much scope for

[218] There are by now numerous recordings of the *Goldberg Variations* by many different artists both on harpsichord and piano, some of whom have recorded the work more than once. There are also recordings of the work on other mediums such as harp and accordion. The following site lists most, if not all, available recordings of the *Goldberg Variations*: Nakamura, Rieko and Anzai, Toshihiro. "a+30+a' Goldberg Variations", accessed March 14, 2010, http://www.a30a.com/

[219] although one must also add that in the nineteenth century musicians were not familiar with the idea of performance practice as we are today.

[220] Ferruccio Busoni, *Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music* (Schirmer, 1911), 84

various interpretations by musicians who may find different ways of reproducing the intentions they feel might justify the music best.

On the other hand, musicians such as Tureck, Gould, Schiff, and in his own way Arrau, aim to bring forth the spirit of the eighteenth century in as historically-oriented way as possible. Whereas they each produce very unique interpretations that are synonymous with their particular style of playing – as is evident by their respective recordings of the same work, the spirit of the eighteenth century still infiltrates each pianist's manner of playing. Although all four artists use the modern piano, we are transported back to the aura of Bach, his sentiments and his instruments. While passion, drama and affection are universal reactions in the way man communicates, they were not portrayed in the same degrees throughout the different centuries, mostly because of convention, but also due to the different physiognomy of the instruments available. Seeking to understand both the musical practices of the time, as well as the life-style of the era, would give the interpretation of this style an identity that is different from today's reactions. The researcher believes that were we to "update" all music to present times, adapting it to today's fervour and using all manner of modern methods, it would inevitably all sound virtually uniform, even though the compositional techniques used are different.

The researcher is thus inclined to favour the more historically-oriented interpretation, and regards it imperative that eighteenth-century works are approached with hindsight knowledge and research relating to issues of performance practice, particularly when using modern instruments. The researcher feels that in this way one would be able to recreate such works with flair and imagination, reviving the spirit of their time as closely as one may deem possible during these modern times, and as a result bringing forth the uniqueness of their temperament.

5.2 TEMPOS

Similar to the issue of ornamentation, tempo has been affected by changes in practices that have evolved throughout the centuries. Unfortunately, there are no eighteenth-century performances on record to direct us to the most appropriate performance practices to be applied. The only references available are a few musical clocks and

barrel-organs, although they too have certain limitations, since their performances have been laboriously assembled note by note and pin by pin. [221]

5.2.1 TEMPO INDICATIONS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Tempo indications in eighteenth-century music are the exception rather than the rule, as is the case with the majority of the variations in the *Goldberg Variations* (Bach only provided two – Variation 15, *Andante* and Variation 25, *Adagio*). The contemporary performer therefore has to turn to other suggestions in the music to guide him to the right kind of tempo, and indeed character, to be adopted. Only on another two occasions do we have any concrete confirmation from Bach as to the right tempo to be taken: Variation 7 – *al tempo di giga*; and Variation 22 – *alla breve*, which signifies a lively tempo. In fact, before Paul Badura-Skoda discovered a copy of the original edition of the *Goldberg Variations* in 1975, which, among other markings, had the term "al tempo di Giga" written next to Variation 7, performers tended to take a slower tempo for this variation since it has the same rhythmic notation as that of a siciliano. Since such indications are rare however, it is usually the figuration, the rhythmic patterns, the time signature and any titles of the movements – indeed the style of the variation or piece, that help set the tempo.

Johann Abraham Peter Schulz (1747 – 1800) contributed to Sulzer's *Allegemeine Theorie* an interesting article, 'Aktart' (Metre), on the relationship between tempo and time signature:

> If now a piece is to have a light execution, but at the same time a slow movement, then the composer will select, in accordance with the nature of the light or lighter execution, a metre of short or shorter beats and use the word 'andante', or 'largo' or 'adagio' etc. to signify that the slowness of the piece is to exceed the natural movement of the metre; and conversely, if a piece is to be played heavily and at the same time have a rapid movement, then he will select a heavy metre in accordance with the nature of the performance, and label it 'vivace', 'allegro' or 'presto', and so on.[222]

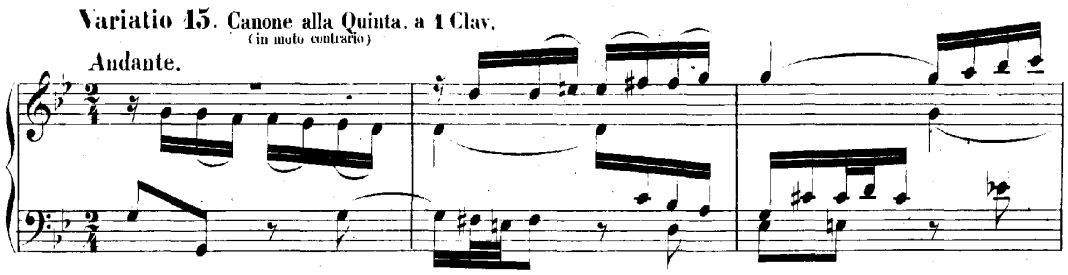
[221] Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 3.
[222] Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 82.

5.2.2 CHANGES IN THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TEMPO TERMS

Schulz's remarks on tempo are significant for one must bear in mind that during the eighteenth century, tempo terms as we understand them today were not always simply an indication for tempo but they were also understood, at least in part, as *Affekt*, or character indications. In this sense, Bach's *Adagio* marking for Variation 25 of the *Goldberg Variations* for example, is also referring to its melancholic character, which Bach augments by adopting the minor mode. At times we even find such indications as *Vivace e allegro* or *allegro e presto* in Bach's music, which nowadays seem contradictory. With these terms, however, Bach is describing both his intended tempo as well as the character of the piece[223] - intentions which were also indicated through terms such as *al tempo di giga*.

The *Andante* rubric of Variation 15 (canon at the fifth) is not without difficulty. Its falling slurred semiquavers, referred to as the dragging motif, can also be found in Bach's *Orgelbüchlein*, where 'O Lamm gottes' BWV 618 has a canon at the fifth marked *Adagio* in C-time. One might thus presume that a 4/4 *Adagio* is the equivalent to a 2/4 *Andante*, with both indicating a slow-but-moving crotchet beat[224].

Example 5.1 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 15, b.1 – 3, Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe Edition



Musicologists such as Willi Apel (1893 – 1988), Fritz Rothschild, Nikolaus Harnoncourt (1929) and David Fallows (1945) have stated that *Andante* in Bach is not a tempo designation. Fallows says that the *Andante* marking in Prelude 24 of the *Well Tempered Clavier* (Book 1) for example is simply "an instruction for clear performance

[223] *vivace* and *allegro* signifying lively and cheerful.
[224] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 69.

of the running bass, and a warning not to play *inégale*" [225]. Bach uses *Andante* in movements with at least one line, usually the bass, moving in continuous quavers or semiquavers, so that *Andante* could be seen as referring to a steadiness or evenness of execution. It could, of course, also refer to tempo, with Bach sources indicating that *Andante* moderated the tempo, thus slowing down a piece more than one with no marking.

Due to their frequency, Robert Marshall (1939) identified six basic hierarchical tempos that seem to constitute the so-called fixed points for Bach[226].

Adagio - Largo - Andante - Allegro - Vivace - Presto [227]

Established early in his career and maintained thereafter, there is reason to believe that Bach regarded *Allegro* as representing the normal tempo since there is a notable absence of the *Allegro* mark in the Bach sources at certain strategic points[228], suggesting that it was taken for granted.

The hierarchy of the different tempos also evolved, so that while nowadays the slowest tempo indication is *Lento*, during Bach's time it was the *Adagio* marking that defined the slowest pulse.

Musicologists have also endeavoured to assign metronome marks to tempo indications as a guideline:

[225] Information for this paragraph was taken from Bernard D. Sherman, "Bach's Notation of Tempo and Early Music Performance", Early Music, accessed April 28, 2009, http://www.pianosociety.com/cms/index.php?section=1468.
[226] Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 77.
[227] However, Paul Badura-Skoda comments that by contemporary usage, *Largo* should really have been slower than *Adagio*.
[228] Peter Williams, *Bach, Handel, Scarlatti, Tercentenary Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univeristy Press, 1985), 270.

Theoretical Tempos of Quantz and Türk

Common Time	*Quantz** ♩	*Türk** ♩
Allegro assai, allegro di molto, presto Passage-work in sixteenth notes or eighth-note triplets.	160	136
Allegro, vivace	120	102
Allegretto, allegro ma non tanto, moderato Passage-work in 32d notes or sixteenth-note triplets.	80	68
[Andante	60]	51
Adagio cantabile, arioso, larghetto, poco andante, maestoso, alla Siciliana	40	34
[Adagio	30]	25
Adagio assai, lento, largo assai, grave.	20	17

3/8 and Its Multiples	♩.
Presto without sixteenths (in 6/8)	160
Presto with sixteenths (in 3/8)	ca. 107
Allegro with sixteenths (in 3/8 and 6/8)	80
Alla Siciliana	53
[Adagio cantabile	ca. 27]

French Dance Music**		
Bourrée	¢ ♩ =	160
Canarie	6/8 ♩. =	160
Chaconne	3/4 ♩ =	160
Courante	3/4 ♩ =	80
Entrée	♩ =	80
Furie	2/4 ♩ = 80 or 3/4 ♩ =	160
Gavotte	A little more moderate than a bourrée.	
Gigue	6/8 ♩. =	160
Loure	6/4 ♩ =	80
March	¢ ♩ =	80
Menuet	3/4 ♩ =	160
Musette	3/4 ♩ = 80 or 3/8 ♪ =	80
Passecaille	A little faster than a chaconne.	
Passepied	Slightly faster than a menuet.	
Rigaudon	¢ ♩ =	160
Rondeau	¢ ♩ = 80 or 3/4 ♩ =	160
Sarabande	3/4 ♩ =	80
Tambourin	A little faster than a bourrée or rigaudon.	

*Quantz, *Flute*, 284-287; Türk, *Klavierschule*, 111-112, as calibrated by Saslav, *Tempo in the String Quartets of Joseph Haydn*, 50-51. When applied to specific works, some of Quantz's tempos may seem inordinately fast and will bear moderation.

**Quantz, *Flute*, 290-292.

<u>Figure viii</u> The Theoretical Tempos of Quantz and Türk [229]

[229] Taken from Sandra Rosenblum, *Performance Practices in Classic Piano Music* (Bloomingtom and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 354.

5.2.3 INTERVALS AND MODULATIONS REVEAL FREEDOM IN TEMPO

Although a relatively steady regular tempo was universally accepted in the eighteenth century, this did not imply a rigid execution. Rather, a type of *rubato* that sprang from gesture and rhetoric was an intrinsic part of musical interpretation, as the notation itself reveals such an inclination.

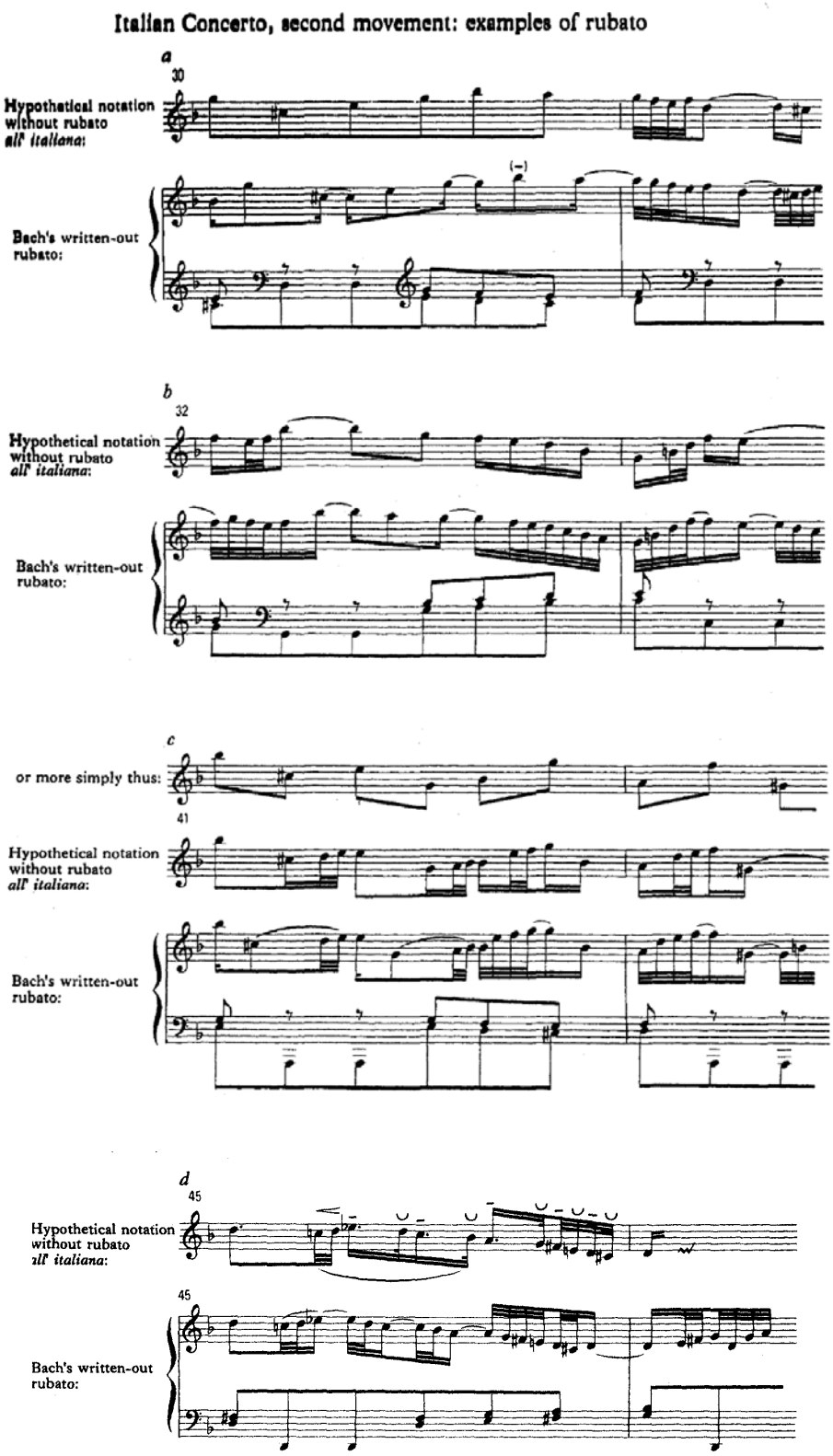
After the Aria, Variation 13 is the most revealing movement based on rhetoric, followed by Variation 25 which represents the emotional high point of the *Goldberg Variations*. The pathos of the latter variation is expressed through techniques such as, yearning intervals[230], expressive use of rising appoggiaturas, dissonant grace-notes as they clash and resolve, imaginative use of the chromatic fourth, the chromaticized bass theme, modulations to such keys as E flat minor and C minor, and through the natural contours of the melodic line. Treated with a certain flexibility, such devices can be highlighted to reveal profound expression. The sigh-motif of Variation 15 also directs one to a poignant *Affekt* for this movement, particularly since one finds a parallel in the *St Matthew Passion* where this motif also forms the basis of its accompaniment.

Furthermore, the temperament that unites each variation has flexibility within it too. Even the toccata movements, which are driven by a tight rhythmic impetus, should relax ever so slightly at their cadence points, to make the turning point of the music more coherent. The dance movements too possess an inherent lilt and flexibility within them.

Bach and his contemporaries attempted to notate such *rubato* effects by syncopations and *notes inégales*, to create minute rhythmic inflections within very small units against a constant beat. The *Andante* of Bach's *Italian Concerto* includes examples of the most expressively written-out *rubatos*.

[230] such as the minor sixth which can be found in any cantata with a text expressing feelings of longing.

Example 5.2 **Interpreting examples of *rubato* from the second movement of Bach's *Italian Concerto***[231]



[231] Taken from Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 67.

The subtle rhythmic notation of this movement implies an improvised freedom in performance, as does the decorative melody of Variation 13 of the *Goldberg Variations*. The 'breaking, yet keeping, of the time' is an important source of expression in harpsichord playing, as it compensates for the unvarying dynamic of the instrument and creates a flexibility that suggests cantabile playing.

Although the Bach-tradition has been handed down by Bach's pupils and his pupils' pupils, the lack of unambiguous evidence sometimes makes it difficult to reach an undisputed satisfactory solution for a correct tempo.

There has been much debate regarding the tempo of a common-time movement, for example. According to writers such as Lorenzo Penna (1613 – 1693) and Sebastien de Brossard (1655 – 1730), this was called the *tempo ordinario*, which Mattheson explicitly relates to the C signature. Handel seems to have used the term similarly, since some of his works contain movements in C marked *a tempo ordinario* as well as others marked *Allegro*, which is presumably faster. Bach however does not use the term *tempo ordinario* (he sometimes used *tempo giusto*), although his cousin and associate J. G. Walther, as well as two other sources close to Bach define *tempo ordinario* (time signature C) in the same term – "dignified", and Neidt contrasts it with the "fast and lively" French signature, 2[232].

Kirnberger distinguishes between two kinds of common time – the "great 4/4", which is of "extremely weighty tempo and execution" and is "emphatic" and used in church pieces and fugues, and the more common "little 4/4" metre, which is notated with C and "has a more lively tempo and a far lighter execution" than the great 4/4, yet "is still somewhat emphatic"[233].

Another debate on the subject of tempo is that regarding the difference between 𝄴 and C. Many have treated the time signature 𝄴 to be faster than C, while many others have ignored the distinction.

[232] The source for the above paragraph has been the article by Bernard D. Sherman, "Bach's Notation of Tempo", accessed April 28, 2009, http://www.pianosociety.com/cms/index.php?section=1468
[233] The source for the above paragraph has been the article by Bernard D. Sherman, "Bach's Notation of Tempo", accessed April 28, 2009, http://www.pianosociety.com/cms/index.php?section=1468

Unfortunately there has been much inconsistency in scores as regards the use of these two time-signatures, not least due to the inaccuracy among copyists. While this inconsistency may suggest that time signatures were an inexact way of conveying tempo, such irregularity may be a result of having different members of an ensemble who may have needed different promptings, as implied by Bach's notation of tempo instructions only in certain parts[234]. One other reason why Bach at times changed these time signatures could be because they had different implications for tempo.

However, one is inclined to ask how fast C would be even when taken as 'ordinary tempo'. One finds several instances referring to Bach having taken a lively tempo, implying that his *tempo ordinario* was at the fast end of the range. Research reveals that in the eighteenth century livelier tempos predominated and tempos were generally livelier than what we are accustomed to today. An eighteenth-century *Andante* for example was not a slow tempo, but a flowing, onward-moving one. On the other hand, the tempo adopted should be such that every detail can still be articulated clearly when executing runs, ornaments, as well as contrapuntal lines. Johann Nikolaus Forkel describes Bach's manner of playing the clavichord, the harpsichord, and the organ thus:

> In the performance of his own pieces he usually adopted a very lively tempo, though he was able, in addition to this liveliness, to add so much variety to his performance that each work, in his hands, was as it were as eloquent as speech.[235]

To summarize, there are various factors that direct one's interpretation of a work towards the right tempo: the title, time signature, the figuration, rhythmic patterns and any use of dance rhythms, note values, harmonic rhythm, the type of texture, the affection, the degree and type of articulation, the degree of ornamentation – which are elements that all contribute to the general character, that is the *Affekt*, of the piece. Helmut Perl also includes the technique of the instrument to be taken into consideration, for a *Presto* on a lute would seem rather easy-going to a violinist/harpsichordist for example[236]. The outcome should be a tempo that allows all the musical details of the

[234] The source for the above paragraph has been the article by Bernard D. Sherman, "Bach's Notation of Tempo", accessed April 28, 2009, http://www.pianosociety.com/cms/index.php?section=1468
[235] Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 74.
[236] Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 89.

piece to be heard and the phrases to move and connect naturally, bringing out the essence of the work.

5.2.4 TEMPO RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE MOVEMENTS OF THE GOLDBERG VARIATIONS

In the *Goldberg Variations,* Bach also explores allusion of tempo within the structure of a work. The slow, pensive tempo of the Aria gives the impression that the tempo of the first variation is a faster one, which suggests that Variation 1 does not have to be taken at a very lively tempo at all. As Variations 3, 9 and 21 only have half the number of bars one would expect that the duration of these movements would be relatively less than the others of 32-bars long. However, their figuration affects the tempos to be adopted, with the many notes per beat making the variations sound 'longer', as in Variation 3 for example.

The connection between one variation and another (the interval of silence) is another important factor in performance, one that depends on the characters of the previous and subsequent movements. Hence a successful rendering of the *Goldberg Variations* is one that, in spite of the different tempos of each variation, and notwithstanding the inevitable fragmentation due to the short movements, portrays an inherent and effortless continuity.

5.3 THE DEBATE ON REPEATS

A consistent feature found in the *Goldberg Variations* is that each variation has indications for repeating both its halves. The practice of repeating the A and B sections of a dance-movement is particular to the eighteenth century, and is also found in other works by Bach, such as the Partitas and Suites. However, it is not only the dance-like movements that have such marking in the *Goldberg Variations,* but also the toccatas and canons. Such consistent use of repeats would incline one to question their purpose.

During the eighteenth century, the repeat was a way of emphasising the regularity and symmetry of the dance or binary piece and decorating these repeats with further ornaments was standard practice. By the twentieth century, the *Goldberg Variations* had become part of the concert repertoire, with performers regarding them as a work that is performed in its entirety (both in the concert hall as well as in recordings). As a result, the debate on repeats and their ornamental variants has been a significant issue, not least because of the epic length of the work. The different view-points on the execution of repeats will be discussed in more depth below, however it is interesting to note how some of those musicians who have included at least some of the repeats in the *Goldberg Variations* have practically disregarded the addition of ornamentation on repetition altogether, in spite of the eighteenth century tradition to the contrary. The intricate counterpoint of the work could have led them to believe that apart from an occasional mordent at certain cadence points, more ornamentation would only obscure the work's finesse. On the other hand, other artists have managed to find opportunities to add fleeting ornamentation at various points on repetition of each half. Ton Koopman's (1944) recording on the harpsichord[237] is one such example, where he manages to insert mordents as well as passing notes in his repeats, perhaps making this work sound more improvisatory and spontaneous. András Schiff's is another artist whose interpretation on the piano includes added ornamentation, with similar effect[238]. Other performers have varied repeats by using different registration or applying a different articulation – the latter option being more possible on the piano.

Such consistent repeat signs might tend to make one speculate whether they are actually necessary or whether they simply form part of conventional notation in this work. This also has to be considered in connection with the debate about whether the *Goldberg Variations* were meant to be played in their entirety, which will be discussed below[239]. Taking into consideration the contemporary inclination of performing all of this work in a recital or recording, performing all the repeats would make an already mammoth work even longer and, one might dare to add, perhaps a little tedious to have to repeatedly hear each section twice. In the course of thirty variations, this becomes very predictable for the listener, particularly since there is not significant opportunity for ornamental variation.

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[237] Johann Sebastian Bach, *Bach – Goldberg Variations BWV 988*, Ton Koopman, harpsichord (Erato, 0630 16170 2), 1987.
[238] Refer to *5.1 Comparing Recordings*, 105 – András Schiff, 111
[239] Refer to*5.4 The Entire Goldberg Variations?*, 130

The researcher thus concludes that whether the *Goldberg Variations* were intended to be played as a whole or in selections, the consistent regular repeats could ultimately be another way of emphasising the work's idea of symmetry, rather than an obligation for the performer to execute them.

From the time of Wanda Landowska, who revived the *Goldberg Variations* by performing them in their entirety, through to the present times, performers have dealt with the issue of repeats in various different ways. This has been analysed in a survey of seven different performances of the *Goldberg Variations*, equally divided between harpsichord and piano performances (Table 5.1)[240].

[240] The source for the data in this table was: Iori Fujita, "Music of Intellect: The Goldberg Variations", accessed August 3, 2009, http://www.geocities.jp/imyfujita/goldberg/list01e.html

Table 5.1 Performances of the *Goldberg Variations* by various artists on the harpsichord and piano, showing their observations of repeats, the duration and the tempo marking of each variation.

	W. Landowska – 1933 harpsichord			R. Kirkpatrick – 1952 harpsichord			G. Gould – 1955 piano			K. Richter – 1970 harpsichord			G. Leonhardt – 1976 harpsichord			G. Gould – 1981 piano			D. Barenboim – 1989 piano		
	repeat	duration	tempo	repeat	duration	tmp	repeat	duration	tmp	repeat	duration	tmp	repeat	duration	tmp	repeat	duration	tmp	repeat	duration	tmp
		mm:ss	♩ =		mm:ss	♩ =		mm:ss	♩ =		mm:ss	♩ =		mm:ss	♩ =		mm:ss	♩ =		mm:ss	♩ =
Aria	A-B-	02:17	43	A-B-	02:02	48	A-B-	01:53	52	AABB	04:03	48	A-B-	02:30	39	A-B-	03:05	32	AABB	04:53	40
Var 1	A-B-	01:45	63	A-B-	01:01	109	A-B-	00:45	147	AABB	02:20	95	A-B-	01:33	71	A-B-	01:10	95	AABB	01:54	116
Var 2	A-B-	00:54	77	A-B-	01:19	53	A-B-	00:37	113	AABB	01:44	80	A-B-	01:04	65	A-B-	00:49	85	AABB	02:00	69
Var 3	A-B-	01:01	100	A-B-	01:49	56	A-B-	00:54	113	AABB	02:23	86	A-B-	01:00	102	AAB-	01:30	102	AABB	02:18	89
Var 4	AABB	01:03	95	A-B-	00:35	86	A-B-	00:29	104	AaBb	01:10	86	A-B-	00:34	88	AAB-	00:50	90	AABB	00:59	102
Var 5	A-Ba	00:56	85	A-B-	00:44	135	A-B-	00:37	160	AABB	01:56	102	A-B-	01:00	99	A-B-	00:37	160	AABB	01:24	141
Var 6	A-B-	00:46	66	A-B-	00:39	78	A-B-	00:34	90	AABB	01:21	75	A-B-	01:00	51	AAB-	00:40	114	AABB	01:29	69
Var 7	A-Ba	01:13	65	A-B-	01:15	79	A-B-	01:08	87	AABB	02:04	95	A-B-	01:04	92	A-B-	01:16	78	AaBB	01:57	101
Var 8	A-B-	00:55	109	A-B-	01:05	92	A-B-	00:45	133	AABB	02:16	88	A-B-	01:17	78	A-B-	00:53	113	AABB	02:03	98
Var 9	A-B-	01:08	59	A-B-	01:09	58	A-B-	00:37	108	AABB	01:56	69	A-B-	01:11	56	AAB-	00:59	102	AABB	01:30	89
Var 10	AABB	01:32	169	A-B-	01:00	129	A-B-	00:42	185	AABB	01:34	165	A-B-	00:52	149	AAB-	01:04	182	AaBB	02:06	123
Var 11	A-B-	01:10	85	A-B-	00:48	124	A-B-	00:54	110	AABB	02:12	90	A-B-	01:25	70	A-B-	00:53	112	AABB	02:08	93
Var 12	A-B-	01:14	81	A-B-	01:21	74	A-B-	00:58	103	AABB	02:48	71	A-B-	01:53	53	AAB-	01:38	92	AABB	02:09	93
Var 13	A-B-	02:49	35	A-B-	02:33	38	A-B-	02:10	45	AABB	03:15	60	A-B-	02:40	37	A-B-	02:38	37	AABB	04:50	40
Var 14	A-B-	01:10	85	A-B-	01:06	90	A-B-	00:58	102	AABB	02:15	88	A-B-	01:20	74	A-B-	01:04	93	AABB	02:30	79
Var 15	A-B-	02:32	26	A-B-	02:13	30	A-B-	02:17	29	AaBb	04:30	29	A-B-	02:50	23	AaB-	05:02	20	AaBB	04:53	27
Var 16	A-BB	01:55	58	A-B-	01:39	45	A-B-	01:18	57	AABB	03:02	49	A-B-	01:26	52	A-B-	01:38	45	AABB	03:13	46
Var 17	A-B-	00:46	129	A-B-	00:50	118	A-B-	00:53	112	AABB	02:14	88	A-B-	01:02	96	A-B-	00:54	110	AABB	01:43	115
Var 18	A-Ba	00:52	121	A-B-	01:01	129	A-B-	00:48	164	AaBb	01:34	168	A-B-	00:44	179	AAB-	01:03	188	AABB	01:21	195
Var 19	A-B-	00:47	65	A-B-	00:43	71	A-B-	00:42	72	AABB	01:31	67	A-B-	01:00	51	A-B-	01:03	48	AABB	01:28	69
Var 20	A-B-	00:57	104	A-B-	01:03	94	A-B-	00:48	123	AABB	02:14	88	A-B-	01:15	79	A-B-	00:50	118	AABB	01:51	107
Var 21	A-B-	02:11	30	A-B-	01:10	56	A-B-	01:42	39	AaBb	02:29	53	A-B-	01:56	34	AaB-	02:12	45	AABB	02:40	49
Var 22	AABB	01:35	166	A-B-	01:10	112	A-B-	00:42	187	AABB	01:31	173	A-B-	00:46	171	AaB-	01:03	187	AaBb	01:18	202
Var 23	A-B-	01:15	78	A-B-	00:58	101	A-B-	00:54	109	AABB	02:17	86	A-B-	01:20	74	A-B-	00:58	101	AABb	02:26	81
Var 24	AAB-	01:35	70	A-B-	01:54	39	A-B-	00:57	77	AABB	03:02	48	A-B-	01:54	39	AAB-	01:44	64	AABB	01:56	76
Var 25	A-B-	03:50	26	A-B-	04:00	24	A-B-	06:29	15	AABB	06:50	29	A-B-	04:07	24	A-B-	06:03	16	AaBB	10:36	18
Var 26	A-B-	01:03	93	A-B-	01:05	91	A-B-	00:52	113	AABB	02:33	77	A-B-	01:13	81	A-B-	00:51	115	AaBB	01:41	117
Var 27	A-B-	00:50	118	A-B-	00:51	116	A-B-	00:49	121	AABB	01:53	105	A-B-	00:57	104	AaB-	01:21	110	AABB	01:34	126
Var 28	A-B-	01:18	76	A-B-	01:07	88	A-B-	01:10	84	AABB	02:29	79	A-B-	01:33	63	A-B-	01:03	94	AABB	02:31	78
Var 29	A-B-	01:15	78	A-B-	01:06	89	A-B-	01:00	98	AABB	02:13	88	A-B-	01:11	82	A-B-	01:01	96	AABB	02:05	94
Var 30	A-B-	00:52	78	A-B-	00:59	69	A-B-	00:48	85	AABB	01:42	80	A-B-	01:05	62	AaB-	01:30	68	AaBB	01:40	81
Aria*DC*	A-B-	02:20	42	A-B-	02:07	46	A-B-	02:11	45	A-B-	02:05	47	A-B-	02:30	39	A-B-	03:46	26	A-B-	02:46	35
Total	45:46			42:22			38:21			1:17:26			47:12			51:08			1:19:52		

Key for Table 5.1

	Slowest performance of this variation
	Fastest performance of this variation
	Second fastest performance of this variation

These artists, who represent an overview of the general performance tendencies, either observe none of the repeats – Kirkpatrick (harpsichord, 1952), Gould (piano, 1955), Leonhardt (harpsichord. 1976), observe them all – K Richter (harpsichord, 1970), Barenboim (piano, 1989), or observe only some of them – Landowska (harpsichord, 1943, Gould (piano, 1981).

Perhaps the last group (Landowska and Gould 1981) is the most interesting for one might wonder what influenced their decision to repeat some, but not all, of the variations. Only three of the variations they select to repeat are common to these two performers (Variations 4, 10 and 22). Furthermore, some of Landowska's repeats (Variations 5, 7and 18) are rather unconventional, such that they can be said to distort Bach's binary pattern. Landowska performs these variations thus: A-Ba, so that after she plays the entire movement with no repeats, she performs the first half again and ends the variation there, thus, turning it into a ternary structure and finishing on the dominant note rather than the tonic! Glenn Gould unfailingly repeats the first section of each canon as well as that of Variations 4, 10 and 22. The reason for repeating these last three variations could be that they would sound too short compared to the previous movement, particularly since Gould repeats the variation preceding each of these three (AAB). Unfortunately the criteria on which Landowska based her decisions to repeat certain variations but not others could not be determined, for they are not even the variations which have written out first-time and second-time bars (this could easily have been one of the reasons). The researcher's conclusion is that it is probably a case of affinity towards the selected variations.

It was observed that these performers do not necessarily add their own ornaments on repetition either, as was eighteenth-century practice[241]. Those performing on the piano sometimes use techniques of variation other than added ornamentation. Glenn Gould for instance varies the repetition of Variation 15 by playing it legato the first time, then applying a more non-legato articulation the second time. In Variation 21 he repeats the first half softer, while in other variations he does not introduce any change in the repeats.

Unless the performer decides to execute all the repeats without discrimination, the researcher considers the relationship with the former and/or the latter variation, as well as the flow of the whole work, to be significant when deciding on which repeats to apply or omit. The researcher's own interpretation of the work[242] included repeats for the following variations:

Variation 4: AAB
Variation 7: AAB
Variation 10: AAB
Variation 16: ABB
Variation 18: AAB
Variation 19: AAB
Variation 22: AABB
Variation 30: AABB

The researcher applied repeats only to those variations (or rather sections) that were considered to be absolutely necessary, due to the work's remarkable length. The choice depended on the variation's connection with its previous movement. For example, after the lively semiquavers of the canon at the unison (Variation 3), the researcher felt that Variation 4 would sound rather brief without any repeats as a result of its one-in-a-bar feeling. Similarly with Variation 10 which has an *alla breve* time signature coming after a more peaceful canon. The fugue section of Variation 16 also sounds too abrupt without a repeat, as it succeeds the more drawn-out first section.

[241] This is probably because Bach does not leave much opportunity for extra ornamentation. More notes would hinder the texture rather than enhance it.
[242] performed on the piano.

The *Affekt* of the variation, as well as those preceding and following it also influenced the researcher's choice of repeats. After the serene canon at the second (Variation 6) for instance, the buoyant Variation 7 *al tempo di Giga* was felt to gain from a repeat of its first half in order to establish its very different sentiment which is then further developed in the sparkling subsequent toccata movement. To some extent, Variation 18 continues on the nimble temperament of the previous toccata movement. Nevertheless, its internal rhythm slows down somewhat, making it sound more spacious, such that its sense of gracious assuredness seems to make the execution of the first section repeat almost inevitable to the researcher. Variation 19 has a similar *Affekt*, thus the researcher felt that repeating the first section of both movements would continue coupling them. As in Variation 10, Variation 22 has an *alla breve* time signature, and repeats were here observed for the same reason as that of the earlier variation. Apart from the Quodlibet, this is the only other variation for which the researcher executes both repeats, the reason being that its *Affekt* is one of conclusive decisiveness that needs to be declared fully. In fact, the variation that follows feels rather independent then, both in terms of internal rhythm as well its temperament. As regards Variation 30 (Quodlibet), this is the variation towards which the *Goldberg Variations* climaxes, so executing the repeat of both halves would make it sound weightier and give it more importance.

The researcher has thus tried to connect the variations through relationships of tempo,[243] relative playing time (although this is more illusionary than a mathematical formula), as well as the *Affekt* of each respective variation, in order to try and achieve a seamless quality and a sense of inevitable development between the variations as much as possible.

A noteworthy observation is that Variations 2, 4, 6, 16 and 25 have first time and second time bars, which might lead one to speculate whether this is because they are variations that should definitely be repeated or whether simply to create a better link if repeated at all. However, while the first time bar does give a better flow for connection, the researcher concludes that the music could also forgo it, as in the other variations with straightforward repeat signs. In his 1981 recording Glenn Gould only observes

[243] This idea was also expressed by Glenn Gould in his interview before his review of the *Goldberg Variations* for the second recording of 1981: RadioKlassic. "The Goldberg Variations – Glenn Gould 1/6", accessed July 3, 2010, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nu7q3BSiAjc&feature=related which is referred to in *5.12 Comparing Recordings*, 105 – Glenn Gould, 108.

some of these repeats, namely for variations 4 and 6, and he does so only for the first half[244].

There are also a couple of movements which in the researcher's viewpoint shouldn't be repeated, namely Variation 25, which is already very long, as well as the Aria, which would otherwise needlessly delay the development of the variations. The harmonic rhythm of the Aria is slow and the researcher thinks that without repeats, it would match well the subsequent variation in length.

As regards varying the repeats, the interpretation of the researcher's first few performances[245] of the *Goldberg Variations* included variation only through dynamic changes (equivalent to register changes on the harpsichord) rather than additional ornamentation because the work's writing was felt to be already very intricate so as not to necessitate additional notes. However, there were also some variations to which the researcher did not apply a marked difference on their repetition. For Variations 7, 18 and 19, the repeated section was executed softer (equivalent to a change of register on the harpsichord), for in the researcher's viewpoint the light feeling of these movements seems to warrant an echo. On the other hand, no marked tonal difference was applied in the repeats for Variations 4, 10 and 22 since their *Affekt* calls for a pompous approach (and thus a solid, *forte* touch) which would be distorted if the tone colour is altered on repetition.

Upon taking up the *Goldberg Variations* again, having not performed them for a few months but having continued in-depth research on them, the researcher felt intrigued to explore the idea of adding more ornamentation, particularly after having heard András Schiff's and Ton Koopman's recording of the work[246]. The way these artists managed to find opportunities for further ornamentation in such tightly-knit part-writing, making their performances seem to sparkle more than those of other performers was particularly inspiring. As a result, apart from the above mentioned variation techniques, the researcher now also includes some of her own ornaments.

[244] Refer to Table 5.1, 125.
[245] First performances on the piano included those at the Valletta Waterfront (Malta), at Sala Isouard (Malta) and Cheltenham (UK) in 2009.
[246] Their performances have been commented upon above.

5.4 THE ENTIRE GOLDBERG VARIATIONS?

The length of the *Goldberg Variations* is unmatched by any other eighteenth-century solo work and one might speculate whether they were intended to be performed in their entirety, or even whether they were intended to be performed at all. In the light of contemporary public performances, one might dare to suggest that performing for 80 minutes (which is the approximate performance time when all repeats are performed) is quite trying for both performer and audience. However, in the context of this discussion, one cannot omit to mention the significant differences between private performances and the relatively rare public performances in Bach's time. The idea of an eighteenth-century "public concert" was mostly associated with the church, where a sacred work was performed as part of the service. Secular works would have been performed as part of a "private concert" or celebration in the home of a patron. When ensembles were required, the friends of the composer would join in to make up the required number of instruments, although it was common practice for composers to have to adapt to the number and type of instruments available on any particular occasion. Thus such "concerts" were considered to be more of a social evening, where musicians and music-lovers got together to hear new works and discuss them together. Other works were composed with a pedagogical purpose in mind as were the *Two- and Three- Part Inventions* and *Well Tempered Clavier* for example.

Being neither a sacred work nor a pedagogical work by Bach, the *Goldberg Variations* poses an intriguing debate as to the reason behind its composition and its function. Such a consideration would reflect its interpretation upon performance, most particularly the issue of playing the work in its entirety.[247] Assuming that the *Variations* were to be performed[248], in all probability they would have been executed in sections rather than as an entire work, with breaks in between – perhaps even prompting discussions from the musicians about what had been heard. Not being accustomed to a modern full-length recital, Bach's audiences would have probably felt this to be appropriate rather than sitting through a full 80-minute performance. Perhaps this

[247] Another work of mammoth proportions is the Mass in B Minor BWV 232, which lasts for almost two hours. Although it is a sacred work, it too poses the question as to whether it was intended to be performed as a whole or whether Bach only intended that parts of the Mass be used when appropriate. Bach never heard the work in its entirety, and it was not until 1859 that the work was performed as a whole.

[248] As noted in Chapter 3, 3.4 *Back to Sources*, 71, Bach included a lot of detail in works that he intended for publication. The score of the *Goldberg Variations* stands out in this respect, containing details of articulation and uniquely also indications regarding the use of manuals.

would have even given Bach the opportunity to highlight his structure of the patterns of threes to his audience. Another possibility might have been for the performer to select his favourite variations and play these selections to his private audience. One might speculate whether Busoni could have stumbled upon Bach's original idea for the work when he suggested that some variations could be omitted while others could be shuffled.[249] This principle is also found in François Couperin's (1668 – 1733) *Ordre*, where the performer is not expected to play the movements of each volume straight through. If selections of the variations are performed, the researcher feels that the repeats would be justifiable, for the variations are short enough to warrant a repeat and there would not be any concerns of having a performance that is too long for the audience to withstand. Repeats would also have given the performer opportunity to highlight his skills in musicianship and "improvisation" when adding more ornamentation upon repetition of the sections – a requirement which was expected in those times. Furthermore, even though Forkel's account is debatable, Bach's first biographer mentions that on his sleepless nights the Count would ask his harpsichordist, "Dear Goldberg, do play me ***one*** of my variations"[250] (my italics).

However, having analysed the formation of the work's construction[251], the researcher believes that if variations were to be selected rather than performed entirely, this would completely distort Bach's architectonic structure[252] of the work. Bach's rubric for Variation 16 as well as the fact that the Variations finish with the Aria *da capo* (which gives the work a rounded close) probably indicates that Bach's intention was for the whole work to be regarded as one.

However, this still leaves unsolved the quandary regarding a performance that is too long, most particularly by eighteenth-century standards. Thus one other possibility as to the function of the *Goldberg Variations* is that it was conceived on a theoretical basis, as a demonstration of the variation principal or of the work's particular form, rather than for performance. Bach in fact continued to expand on the theoretical idea with his inclusion of the *Fourteen Canons* at the back of the *Goldberg* score (these could almost certainly be regarded as not intended for performance).

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[249] Refer to Chapter 3, *An Evolving Outlook to Bach's Music and its Interpretations*, *3.32 Busoni's Edition*, 49.
[250] Yo Tomita. "The Goldberg Variations BWV 988" http://www.music.qub.ac.uk/~tomita/essay/cu4.html
[251] *Refer to Chapter 4: The Constitution of the Goldberg Variations*, 87.
[252] The symmetrical pattern which is particularly indicated by Bach's rubric *Ouverture* and the pattern of threes

An appraisal of Bach's last works – namely the *Goldberg Variations* BWV 988 (1742), the *Musical Offering* BWV 1079 (pub. 1747), the *Canonic Variations* BWV 769 (1748) and the *Art of Fugue* BWV 1080 (1745 – 50, left unfinished and published 1751), reveals that they all tend to lean towards a more theoretical intention. While the *Canonic Variations* are concise enough to enjoy performances without any problems relating to length, Bach left the original score in cryptic notation, leaving the performer to figure out his own understanding of the canons. Such abstract notation may suggest that the composer may not have conceived the variations primarily as a performance work but as a theoretical exercise[253]. In fact, they were written as Bach's presentation for his entry as the fourteenth member of the Mizler's Music Society, whose aim was to further musical science by encouraging circulation of theoretical papers and discussion by correspondence. The *Musical Offering* too presents similar challenges with its "puzzle canons" and once again its sheer length poses the question of whether it was meant to be performed as a whole work from beginning to end. Regarded in its entirety, the aim of the *Musical Offering* seems to be more of a compositional feat where Bach demonstrated his ability of writing a set of canons and fugues on a single theme. This however does not rule out the possibility of having had sections of the work performed during Bach's time. The *Art of Fugue*, with its unique compositional complexities and colossal dimensions is undoubtedly a theoretical masterwork, although once again it does not exclude the possibility of performing selections of this colossal work.

As the canons in the *Musical Offering* and the *Fourteen Canons* reveal, it seemed to have been Bach's delight to leave the performer to solve the theoretical puzzles of some of his canons, by leaving just enough cryptic notation to suggest his intentions. Whether this was purely for pedagogical reasons or simply to annoy his lesser able compatriots, we cannot ascertain, although Bach was indeed a musician who gave much significance to teaching, as some of his earlier works, written for this specific reason in mind, show. Furthermore, while all of Bach's works are meticulously worked out in their number of bars and overall structure, Bach's particular attention to the complex arrangement of the *Goldberg Variations* gives added weight to the theory that this might be a colossal work composed to highlight the capacity of having many correlated theoretical principals embedded in a musical architecture that still makes a coherent and varied whole.

[253] which could then be performed once solved.

Although there are no theoretical puzzles to solve in the canons of the *Goldberg Variations*, the technical issues required from the musician to perform this work by far surpass the abilities of other keyboard players of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It could not have been an easy task to find another musician who could match Bach's abilities and be able to master this work. While Bach could have performed the Variations (or rather selections of the work) to demonstrate his unsurpassed technical skills, unfortunately there are no recorded references to any such occurrence. However, the fact that it is written for a two-manual harpsichord continues to minimise the possibility of several performances of the work, since most musicians would have possessed only a one-manual instrument.

From the above discussion, the researcher concludes that the purpose of the *Goldberg Variations* could have been two-fold. From a theoretical aspect, its structure provided direction in the art of variation technique, canon-writing, counterpoint, symmetry and cohesion. To the performer/teacher it provided the possibility of using the work as a teaching reference, where selected movements could be used to focus on certain technical issues, most particularly those relating to dexterity, as well as offering the possibility of exploring different genres in one work. Furthermore, in the title page of the *Variations*, Bach's message remains open to interpretation as to whether he is referring to the aural delight of the music-lovers (as relating to performance), or their intellectual (relating to the understanding of the theoretical aspect of the work).

Denen Liebhabern zur Gemüths-Ergetzung verfertiget
Prepared for the soul's delight of music-lovers.[254]

5.5 ON HARPSICHORD OR PIANO?

Apart from considerations relating to ornamentation, rhythm and tempo, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century solo keyboard works present the added consideration of choice of instrument. As discussed in Chapter 2, choosing a harpsichord is already not a straightforward issue since there is no unanimity on what Bach's ideal harpsichord was or what it should look or sound like today. Since its revival in the nineteenth century, Bach's solo clavier music has readily been transferred to the piano, possibly since the

[254] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 3

piano was the more accessible instrument. However, once the idea of authenticity, or rather, historically informed performance started becoming more popular, many artists have advocated that harpsichord music should be played on its intended instrument and not transferred to the piano. Other musicologists have counter-argued that Bach himself was one of the greatest transcribers of all time and he had no hesitation in transcribing a solo violin work so that it could also be played on the organ, the lute and the harpsichord, showing that he would not have objected to transcriptions of his keyboard works for the modern grand piano. Bach was, after all, an advocator of Silbermann's improved fortepianos which were starting to hint at today's fully developed piano and on which he played at the court of Frederick the Great in 1747.

Playing music on an instrument for which it was not written must naturally involve an element of compromise. The unique nuances of the original sound are lost, while the textures that the composer would have favoured do not translate successfully into piano sound. The inherent qualities of the harpsichord, as they lend themselves to the spacing of chords, the nuances of the ornaments and the contrapuntal thinking run counter to the nature of the piano. Nevertheless, while using the intended instrument would reveal qualities in the music that would otherwise be lost or have to be compromised when transferred to another medium, one still needs to apply the right technique and style of playing in order to bring out the full potential of both instrument and work.

For various reasons (the foremost being that the number of harpsichordists is considerably smaller than that of pianists), pianists still perform Bach regularly on the piano.

> The piano, Gould said, "is not an instrument for which I have any great love as such... [but] I have played it all my life, and it is the best vehicle I have to express my ideas." In the case of Bach, Gould admitted, "[I] fixed the action in some of the instruments I play on—and the piano I use for all recordings is now so fixed—so that it is a shallower and more responsive action than the standard. It tends to have a mechanism which is rather like an automobile without power steering: you are in control and not it; it doesn't drive you, you

drive it. This is the secret of doing Bach on the piano at all. You must have that immediacy of response, that control over fine definitions of things".[255]

If the pianist's intent is to adopt a historically-informed interpretation, knowledge of the techniques and timbre of the harpsichord would help the performer comprehend the intimate relationship between the instrument and its music. The pianist's playing technique adopted for eighteenth-century music would be different from that applied to works for the twentieth century for example, since the type of sonority and articulation sought after by the performer would need a different approach in order to achieve a more eighteenth-century style. This is because apart from a different sonority, the mechanisms of the harpsichord and piano are completely different, with once significant difference being that of having a much heavier action for the piano (most particularly the grand piano). This is why Glenn Gould's "fixed" piano, together with his applied technique helps create such a unique sound in his recordings. The researcher has established that a more "downward/vertical", "direct" manner of playing on the piano would create a quality of tone more associated with the harpsichord. An articulated touch, with a lower wrist helps achieve on the piano the mechanical quality usually associated with the harpsichord. This, together with the appropriate type of articulation and aided by ornamentation and the right tempo, will give the music its associated crisp quality and the lightness associated with the eighteenth century. As a result, the interpretation of the work, albeit transferred to the piano, can still be projected in the spirit of the time.

Changing the instrument also changes the interpretation of the work to some degree. Harpsichordists for example might adopt a different tempo in order to be able to emphasize certain aspects in performance, while imperceptible lengthening and shortening of notes and the application of further embellishments make up for the lack of dynamic gradations. The contemporary historical performance practice approach proposes any application of dynamics and pedalling to be done judiciously when performing on the piano, so as to reproduce Bach's musical intentions as faithfully as possible in the style of the era. Although it was not the originally intended instrument, the piano nevertheless has its own advantages, for it is often easier to achieve a certain clarity in the polyphonic writing on the piano than on the harpsichord through the

[255] From the liner notes of Glenn Gould, Johann Sebastian Bach, *Bach Partitas, Preludes and Fugues*, Sony CD SM2K-52597, Recorded 1957 – 1980, 15.

possibility of highlighting entries, points of imitation and *stretti*, thus making them more audible. It also presents the possibility of applying various articulations such as non-legato, staccato, legato, and martellato, which can be applied to help project the character of the music more. The pedal too can be used to advantage, particularly to enhance the articulation and finger-legato. Glenn Gould in fact applies it with such expertise that one can hardly discern his use of it. Although eighteenth-century instruments did not have the equivalent of a pedal, the sound of a harpsichord has a natural vibration to it after the string is plucked, unlike the way the sound is 'cut off' on the piano due to the dampening of the strings straight after impact. The pedal can thus also be used to help diminish this dryness at times. While it would be wrong to try and 'play the harpsichord' on the modern piano, subtlety when applying the piano's resources is the keyword to a successful interpretation in the spirit of the eighteenth century.

The research portrayed in Table 5.1 was applied to establish a relationship between the tempos taken in the slower variations and the instrument being used, and deduce whether there is any connection with the piano's sustainability of sound and the harpsichord's lesser ability to sustain. The researcher initially thought that the results would yield faster tempos for harpsichord performances, due to the instrument's reduced sustaining ability. However, while for Variation 25, the slowest variation in the work, the harpsichord performances generally did take faster tempos than the piano recordings, upon examination of the other variations which tend to lean towards slower tempos, no conclusive results could be drawn. This could be interpreted as showing that contemporary pianists (at least those in these recordings) tend to mirror tempos adopted by harpsichord players, rather than take a fresh approach. Perhaps the reason for this is that they would want to lean towards a more historically-oriented performance. Regarding the faster variations, pianists generally tend to take a more rigid approach and slightly quicker tempos than harpsichord players.

Table 5.2 Relationships between Tempo taken and Instrument used in performances analysed in Table 5.1.

Variation	Instrument used & Comments
Variation 6	Piano performances tend to take a faster tempo
Variation 9	Piano performances tend to take a much faster tempo
Variation 13	Piano & Harpsichord performances take approximately the same tempo, apart from Richter's rather fast interpretation of ♩= 60 when compared to the others (although in his edition Czerny indicates a ♩= 69).
Variation 15	Piano & Harpsichord performances take approximately the same tempo
Variation 23	Piano & Harpsichord performances take approximately the same tempo
Variation 24	Piano performances take a faster tempo
Variation 25	Harpsichord performances take a faster tempo

Using Table 5.1, each variation was also compared with every performer respectively, to gauge which performer took the slowest / fastest approach. As a result, Leonhardt's harpsichord recording is the slowest, Glenn Gould's 1955 recording is by far the fastest overall, having the fastest tempo for almost all the variations. The researcher couldn't trace any progressive changes in the tempos adopted through the 56 years spanning these recordings, but rather each individual performer seems to have had his own ideas of what works best for each variation. The researcher originally thought that since historically-oriented research was becoming more prominent as the years progressed, this might have affected the tempos of these performances in some way, mostly assuming that tempos would get faster – as this was the general understanding about the temperament of eighteenth-century works during the twentieth century[256]. However this was not the case for these recordings of the *Goldberg Variations.*

Thus in conclusion, while there are certain factors that help determine what approach one should take towards each variation[257], the temperament of the performer is also of some consequence. As Glenn Gould's two recordings very aptly show, one's outlook of the *Goldberg Variations*, and indeed of any other piece, also changes by time.

[256] Refer to *5.22 Changes in the significance of tempo terms*, 115.
[257] Refer to *5.2 Tempos*, 113.

CONCLUSION

The researcher believes that a successful rendition of the *Goldberg Variations* and indeed of eighteenth-century works in general, would be one that is historically informed in the application of ornaments, rhythm and articulation. The appropriate tempo would be that which projects these elements and the intricate counterpoint in the most coherent way, and one which brings forth the character of the piece most suitably – both of the individual variations, as well as of the work in its entirety through the correlations between the movements. Any specific tempo-related indications left by the composer[258], together with the time signature, harmonic rhythm and the type of texture, will direct the performer towards a rendition that is as close as possible to the *Affekt* which the composer intended – and thus the one that would work best for the style of this period. While choice of instrument would have some effect on such applications, particularly those of articulation and tempo, this would not require such significant changes as to distort the original conception of the composer's intentions. Such a historically-oriented way of playing would highlight the uniqueness of the music's temperament, reviving its distinctive sentiments as closely as one may deem possible.

[258] such as the rare markings of *Andante, Adagio, al tempo di giga*.

APPENDIX

A1. SYMBOLISM

The myriad intricate relationships of symmetry and number demonstrated in Chapter 4, *The Constitution of the Goldberg Variations*, have lead some musicologists to believe that there are cryptic implications behind the *Goldberg Variations*. Many interpretations have been presented to try and decode any symbolic inclinations in the work, some of which may be seen as totally hypothetical, while others lean towards more credibility since they refer to facts for their foundation. Two main interpretations are specific to the *Goldberg*: the 'cosmological allegory' (Humphreys, 1984-5) and the *Goldberg*'s 'retro-musical structure' (Street, 1987).[259]

The Cosmological Allegory states that the *Goldberg Variations* are based on a single unifying principle, whose bigger agenda is based on the ascent through the nine spheres of Ptolemaic cosmology. This is achieved:

> partly through the symbolism of the nine canons, but principally through the medium of the great international sign-language of word-painting and oratorical devices which Bach was heir to, and in which his vocal music is steeped. (Humphreys, p.26) [260]

Thus the thirty variations (note: not thirty-two movements) are explained as consisting of three cycles: the 'canon cycle' (nine canons whose time-signatures provide all nine possible pairings of the digits 2, 3 and 4, as in 2/4, 3/8 and so on). The 'planet cycle' variations (movements 1, 2, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19 22, 25, 28, 30) which 'picture each of the nine spheres in turn' by musical notes, so that number 4 is Earth (hemiolas suggest earthly change and decay), number 7 is Moon (a transient, inconstant gigue), number 10 is Mercury ("Mercury stands beating its wings on the mordent"[261]), number 13 is Venus (elegant, graceful, delicate, refined, sensitive; *tendresse*), number 16 is Sun (the French style, regal), number 19 is Mars (a battle piece with writhing and raging semiquavers),

[259] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 99.
[260] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 99.
[261] Information for this and the subsequent paragraph was taken from Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 100.

and so on. And finally there is the 'virtuoso cycle' (movements 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23, 29).

The main flaw with this interpretation is that one has to compromise one's approach in order to fit the descriptions, for, how is it possible to portray variation 19 as disruptive or aggressive when its flowing semiquavers and strong quaver-beat give the implication of a minuet? Or, if variation 16 is sun-like, so presumably must be the B minor Overture in *Clavierübung II* (which doesn't sound so at all). Furthermore, some but not all elements in the musical makeup of a variation have been selected to parallel the attributes of a planet, while the characteristics assigned to each planet are clearly very subjective. Moreover, it is interesting to note that movements 1 and 2 are omitted from the 'planet cycle', with no reason given. Additionally, in such interpretations of works with no text, one tends to ask where an interpretation of a sentiment or allusion would be considered adequate. Musical detail can evoke certain sentiments, but without a text or context any responses could be seen as purely subjective.

The second approach, which takes its inspiration from rhetoric and Quintilian's (c. 35 – c. 100) *Institutio oratoria,* states that the *Goldberg Variations* can be read in a quasi-programmatic way.[262] Taking Quintilian's advice that the best words for a speech are found in the subject-matter itself, Bach adopts the variation form. Through this genre, Bach's thoughts are ordered and linked coherently, as they are connected by the *Goldberg* bass as well as by other characteristics between the variations, as discussed in Chapter 4. The rhetoric element is even adopted in the structuring of the 'speech', where variation 16 gives the listener the needed breather, while the final variations (26-30) provide the climax which is so important at the conclusion of a speech in order to make an impact. According to this interpretation, the subject of the speech is Bach's response to Johann Adolf Scheibe who in 1738 accused Bach that his style of composing was too complex and incomprehensible to the common man, thus out of date with the current principles of enlightenment[263]. As a result, Bach starts his rhetorical address with a galant miniature as his theme (the Aria), and throughout the variations demonstrates his skill at both simple and flashy writing, as in the dances-forms and toccatas, as well as through complex, intellectual counterpoint in the canon variations. This interpretation sees the Quodlibet as the ultimate joke on Scheibe since Bach here uses scholarly complexity (canonic technique) on popular subject matter (songs).

[262] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 101
[263] Refer to Appendix, *A2 The Bach Debate: Mattheson's and Scheibe's Arguments*, 147, for a more detailed discussion on this subject.

In her liner notes of the *Goldberg Variations*, Rosalyn Tureck makes an interesting remark about the Quodlibet and its use of the folk song *Kraut und Rüben haben mich vertrieben, hätt mein' Mutter Fleisch gekocht, wär ich länger blieben*. She comments that the most apparent meaning for *kraut* is cabbage, while *rüben* may be translated as either turnip, beet or carrot. *Kraut* therefore represents a root vegetable above the ground while *Rüben* grows below. This could be taken symbolically, with 'ground' in this case signifying the ground bass which is the foundation for the variations on the aria. However, there is also a German idiomatic expression, *durcheinander wie Kraut an Rüben* which means in complete confusion. This may even suggest Bach's own ironic teasing about what drove the singer (of the aria) away from the simplicity of the Aria, depicting him as joking about the profound complexities that have been created between the Aria and Quodlibet. The reference to the other folk song *Ich bin solang nicht bei dir g'west, rück her, rück her* (I have so long been away from you) applies to the distance between the Aria and Variation 30, during which time the aria's melody has long been forgotten.

David Yearsely, in *Bach and the Meanings of Counterpoint* dedicates the entire second chapter to an interpretation which associates alchemical thinking with the art of counterpoint, arguing that like alchemy and the occult, counterpoint and canonic technique in particular was a professional art, known only to the learned who were able to decode its mysteries.

Religion too has infiltrated the symbolic interpretations of Bach's works, starting from the full title of the *Goldberg Variations* itself:

Clavier Űbung bestehend in einer Aria mit verschiedenen Veraenderungen vors Clavicimbal mit 2 Manualen denen Liebhabern zur Gemüths-Ergetzung verfertiget

Keyboard Practice, consisting of an Aria with diverse variations for the harpsichord with 2 manuals prepared for the soul's delight of music-lovers.[264]

It has been argued that the translation of the phrase "soul's delight" misses the pious connotations it had for the orthodox Lutheran believer: for him, spirits are refreshed to prepare one for further work in the talents that have been entrusted to us and this not

[264] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 3

only for our sake, but also for that of others[265]. This could suggest that the *Goldberg Variations* has religious connotations, rather than being simply a virtuosic work both in terms of composition as well as performing technique.

As a result of his deep knowledge and interest in the Liturgy, Bach developed intricate relationships between music and religious symbolism. This is evident from the smallest level, where his sacred works contain short motifs that can be regarded as pictorial symbolism – as in the *St Matthew Passion* where consecutive perfect fifths (forbidden by eighteenth-century theory) accompany Peter's false declaration: "Ich kenne des Menschen nicht!" (I do not know the man!), to the largest level of his compositional technique – as is demonstrated in the structure of *Sei Gegrüsset* (from *Clavierübung III*) for example, which is a theme with eleven variations. Such a theological interpretation of the master and eleven disciples (as Judah was out-casted) could not have been lost on Bach's contemporary audience.

In *Bach and the Meanings of Counterpoint*, David Yearsely also examines the profound relationship between religion and counterpoint. He discusses how counterpoint, especially canon, was used in the Lutheran religion to reach out to God and prepare oneself for a good death, and remarks how this explains Bach's diligent commitment to his art until the very last moment of his life, when he was dictating the chorale *Vor deinen Thron tret ich hiermit*. An earlier composition from *Orgelbüchlein* (1708 – 1714), it was used by Bach in his final composition *The Art of Fugue* BWV 1080, and re-worked into a more contrapuntally complex work[266]. In the Lutheran tradition, chorales (melodies arranged for four or five voices) were an important part of commemorating the dead and were used regularly in funerary settings. One would however ask why there is such an association between death and counterpoint. Andreas Werckmeister (1645 – 1706), one of the central German organists and influential theorists of the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries suggests that the different permutations of counterpoint are analogous with the constant motion of the heavens which move in perfect order, giving a glimpse into God's unending order[267]. The canonic combinations could be continued until the musical system returns to its original configuration, as is the case with the canons of the *Goldberg Variations*, creating a

[265] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 3
[266] This is the last entry in the *Art of Fugue* BWV 1080 (1750) which was left unfinished by the composer.
[267] David Yearsley, *Bach and the Meanings of Counterpoint* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 20.

revolving circle similar to that of the planets and the solar system[268]. Counterpoint was a means of guiding one's reflections towards God and to resist the devil's temptations, which, according to this interpretation, is a belief that Bach made use of in the final moments of his life. This allegorical potential of double counterpoint and canon was adopted by other musicians, such as Georg Österreich (1664 – 1735), Johann Philipp Förtsch (1652 – 1732) and Heinrich Bokemeyer (1679 – 1751).

Taking this interpretation as a point of departure, one can present another symbolic reading of the *Goldberg* such that the different groups of dance, toccata and canon can signify: worldly entertainment (dance), showing off and not being subservient to God (toccata), so that after such superficial conduct, the art of canon is needed to steer oneself back onto the right path for the soul's salvation. Thus through the *Goldberg Variations* Bach is depicting the difficulty to keep consistent spirituality.

Naturally, such interpretations are wholly subjective and can never direct one to determine the extent of Bach's intentions. It is indeed difficult to sift valid and authentic interpretations from so many speculative approaches which Bach's music attracts.

However, there are other uses of symbolism which can be deduced in an intellectual manner, giving them more credibility since they are based on more plausible explanations. A more straightforward use of symbolism is found in Bach's use of the number three. Bach gives this number considerable importance in his works[269], and its interpretation has been symbolically related to the Holy Trinity even in works not associated with a text or intended for the church[270] – in the *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 16 for example opens with three statements of G major: a G major chord in

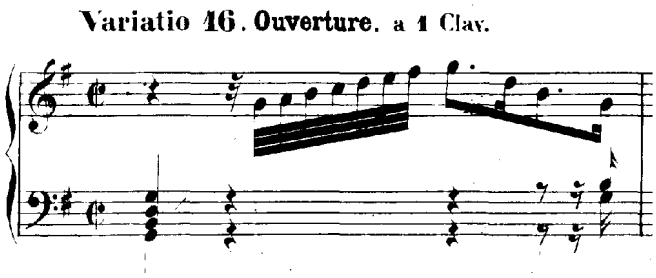
[268] Incidentally, the *Goldberg Variations* as a whole can be seen as going full circle too for it finishes the same way as it starts, with the Aria.

[269] Apart from featuring in the *Goldberg Variations*, Bach builds the entire *Clavierübung III* (1739) around this number: this work is for two manuals and pedal, it opens with a prelude in E flat major (key signature of three flats), the five-part fugue of this prelude has three subjects, the chorale preludes are divided in a group of 9 (3 X 3) – based on the German version of the Kyrie and Gloria, and a group of 12 – associated with Luther's Catechism. This last group is again divided into 6 (Greater Catechism) and 6 (Lesser Catechism). The four enigmatic duets which are also part of the series make up the total number of items to 27 (3 X 3 X 3). *Clavierübung III* went on sale for three thalers.
Malcolm Boyd, (2000) *Bach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 179.

[270] The use of the number three as a symbol of perfection and to represent the Holy Trinity was not only common in music, but in all western art, particularly in painting and architecture.

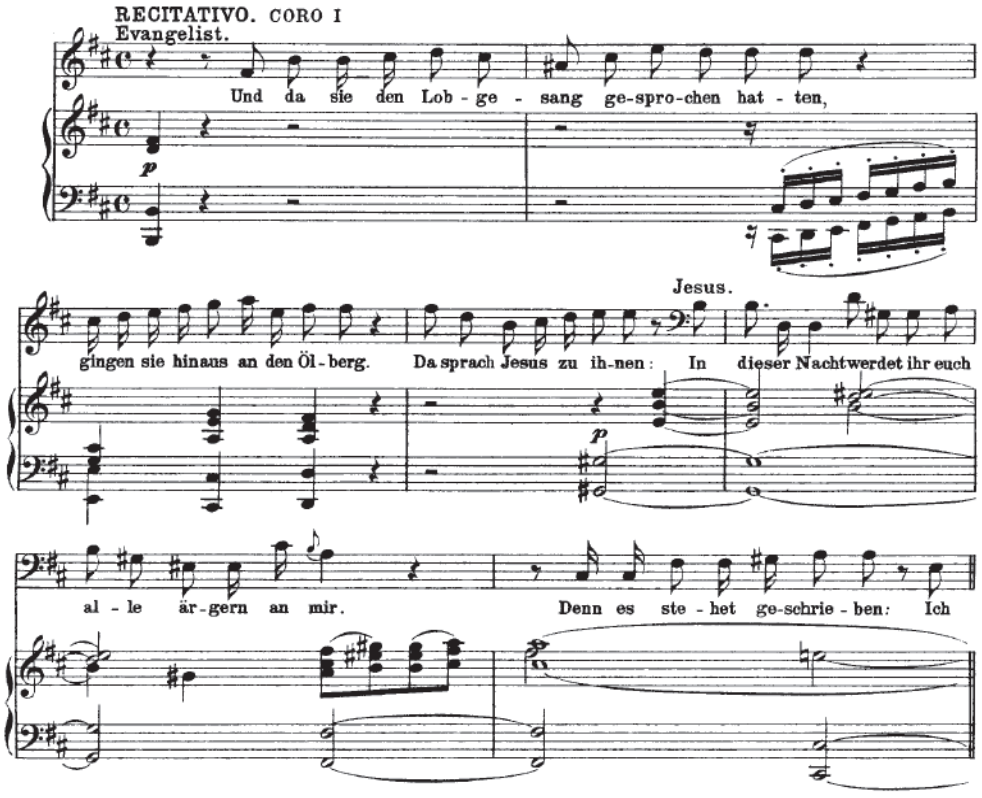
the left hand is followed by a rapid G major scale in demisemiquavers in the right hand and a G major arpeggio in dotted rhythm all in the first bar.

Example A1.1 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 16, b.1**



A certain element of symbolism can be perceived aurally too, such as that relating to the use of intervals (the descending diminished seventh was considered to be a symbol of pain for example), as well as the use of ascending lines to associate with certain texts, such as "They went up to the Mount of Olives" – Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, in the recitative sung by the Evangelist, as the orchestra plays an ascending line in bar 2.

Example A1.2 **Bach: *St Matthew Passion***



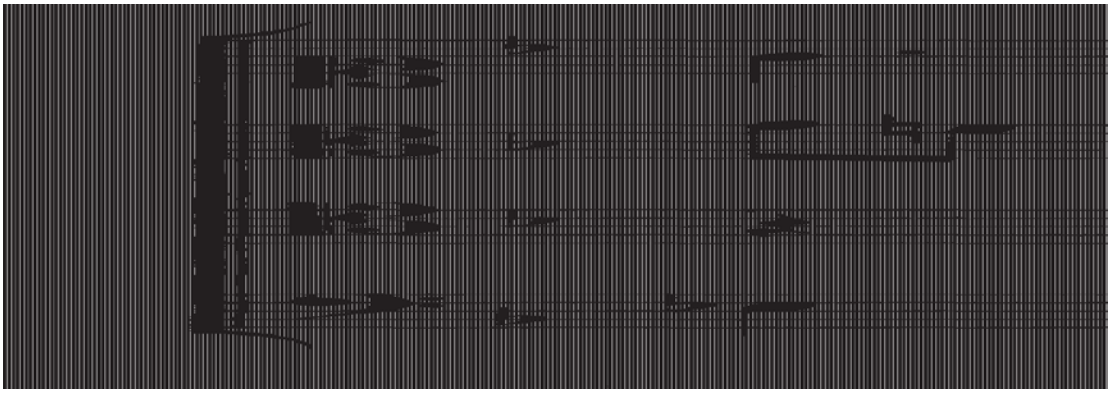
Other symbolic references can be analysed from the score, as with the symbol of the Cross.

Figure A1.1 Bach: *Fugue in A minor* from *Well Tempered Clavier*, Book 2 [271]

Bach made notable use of *gematria* and assigned special significance to the numbers 14 and 41 (which in numerical alphabet[272] are the addition of Bach: 2 + 1 + 3 + 8 = 14 and J. S. Bach: 10 + 19 + 2 + 1 + 3 + 8 = 41). Significantly, the first minor mode variation in the *Goldberg Variations* comes after 14 major key variations. One would be tempted to ask whether this is a coincidence. The minor mode variations have been described as randomly placed among the variations – a reasoning which the researcher however finds somewhat too haphazard for a composer whose mathematical mind ordered all of his works with immaculate precision. The title *Fourteen Canons* is another clear example of Bach's signature. Bach could easily have written more than fourteen canons if he wanted to.

Bach's other form of signature is his use of the B-A-C-H theme[273]. One of the clearest examples of this theme is found in the final fugue of the *Art of Fugue BWV 1080*, Bach's final work[274]

Example A1.3 Bach: *The Art of Fugue* [275]



[271] Taken from Paul Badura Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 32.
[272] Each letter in the alphabet is assigned a number, such that the letter 'a' is assigned number 1, letter 'b' the number 2, letter, 'c' number 3, 'h' number 8, 'j' number 10 while 's' is number 19.
[273] where B is B flat and H is B natural, as in the German musical notation.
[274] Years later, many other composers used the BACH theme as a tribute to Bach himself. Probably most notable is Liszt's *Prelude and Fugue on the B-A-C-H Theme*. Other composers who used the theme include Chopin, Schumann, Rimsky-Korsakov, Nielsen, Webern and Pärt.
[275] The BACH Theme can be heard in the tenor part, starting from the second minim of the second bar in this extract.

Such aforementioned symbolism is found in several of Bach's works, giving it a significance that is not easily dismissed. There can be little doubt that Bach was attracted to symbolism and his connection with the Mizler Society[276] continues to confirm this. Bach joined in 1747 as the fourteenth member, a significant detail due to the connection with the *gematria* of his name. His submission to the Society was the *Canonic Variations* for organ on *Vom Himmel hoch da komm'ich her* BWV 769, a dexterous demonstration of the canonic procedure, as well as an off-print of the *Canon triplex à 6* in G major BWV 1076 (1746) which he is seen holding in the famous 1746 portrait by Elias Gottlob Haussmann. This six-part canon comes from the *Fourteen Canons* which Bach appended to the *Goldberg Variations*. Noteworthy of mention is the fact that after 1746 Bach wrote music that seems to be in line with the current ideas of the Mizler Society, namely in the way of associating music with mathematics[277]. The *Fourteen Canons* BWV 1087 (1742-7), with its cryptographic symbols, and the *Art of Fugue* BWV 1080 (1751), with its intricate workings of fugues and canons, might indeed have been two such works.

The use of numbers also conforms to Bach's affinity for substantial musical architectures, as has been demonstrated in the detailed analysis of the *Goldberg* structure in Chapter 4. It is not known whether all of these aforesaid ideas were consciously planned by Bach, but, judging from his other works, Bach was certainly a thorough musician, whose use of numbers and symbolism filtered all of his works with an unassuming cleverness[278].

[276] or as it was known by its formal name: Corresponding Society of the Musical Sciences, whose founding member was Lorenz Mizler, Bach's former student.
[277] Malcolm Boyd, *Bach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 206.
[278] Such complex use of numbers is also found in Bach's *Clavierübung IV* which has thirty variations [3 x 3 x 3 + 3] and *Clavierübung III* which has twenty-seven movements [3 x 3 x 3].

A2. THE BACH DEBATE: MATTESON'S AND SCHEIBE'S ARGUMENTS

STYLISTIC QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE COMPLEXITY OF BACH'S MUSIC

While Bach was composing his most important works in the 1730s, musical taste was radically changing. A new style stemming from the opera houses of Italy invaded Germany and the rest of Europe, making Bach's music seem old-fashioned to many. As the *galant* style was starting to come in vogue, Bach was still writing fugues and canons[279].

Around 1737 – 1740 a heated debate erupted between Johann Mattheson (1681 – 1764) and Bach's former student Johann Adolph Schiebe (1708 – 1776) on one side and Johann Abraham Birnbaum (1702 – 1748) on the other. Johann Mattheson wanted music to be freed of complexity, intricate contrapuntal procedures and any associations with symbolism or hidden puzzles (referring to the 'puzzle canons' and the workings of canons and fugues which were regarded as having 'magic formulas'). He wanted music to be understood and accessible to all, rather than the learned few; a listening experience to be enjoyed and comprehended by the common man. The success of a piece of music was to be judged by the response of the *galant homme*, the reaction of the general public to the intelligibility of the music, rather than the verdict of the musicians alone. Scheibe praised Mattheson's privileging of *natürlich* melody over *künstlich* harmony (i.e. counterpoint), promoting music that is simple and melodious, citing Bach as an example of a composer unwilling to accept these new aesthetic precepts[280].

Scheibe accused Bach thus:

> Turgidity (*Dei Schwulstigkeit*) has led [Bach]…from the natural to the artificial, and from the lofty to the sombre…one admires the onerous labour and uncommon effort – which, however, are vainly employed, since they conflict with Reason"; Bach eschewed pleasing music, "darkening its beauty through an excess of art".[281]

[279] Composing works such as the *Goldberg Variations, Canonic Variations* and the *Art of Fugue*.
[280] David Yearsley, *Bach and the Meanings of counterpoint* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 95.
[281] David Yearsley, *Bach and the Meanings of counterpoint* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 95.

While Bach did not take part in this debate verbally, he might still have been indirectly contributing his opinions through his music. His first public pronouncement in the immediate aftermath of the controversy could well have been *Clavierübung III* (1739), which Lorenz Christoph Mizler (1711 – 1778) described as a resounding response to Scheibe. Even if Bach may not have intended it to be a response, his critics seemed to have taken it to be as such. Indeed, the arguments of this controversy are all to be found in this monumental collection, particularly in the bizarre *Duetto* in F major BWV 803. At the beginning, all is calm and sweet, appealing and not intellectually intrusive; by enlightenment values, a model of decorum, clarity and naturalness. Then, in the middle section, Bach goes to the opposite extreme – dissonance, complexity and thick counterpoint, and the return of the first section continues in the same vein. This ambitious work is an extensive combination of the pleasing and the ungainly, the modern and the retrospective, the complex and the accessible[282]. Thus it represents the poles of enlightened music criticism, demonstrating the composer's complete mastery of both the natural and the intellectually complex.

Naturally, simply because an old technique is used, this does not make a piece old-fashioned. The *galant* values of enjoyment and uplifting feelings are more than amply reflected in Bach's music, and if ever a single figure epitomized the *galant homme* it was Frederick the Great (1712 – 1786), to whom *A Musical Offering* (1747) is dedicated.

The *Canonic Variations* (1748) too could have been interpreted by some as another response, if not directly to Scheibe, then to the larger aesthetic debate which played such an important part in the reception of Bach's music and his ability / adaptability as a composer. In the *Canonic Variations* Bach produces a varied collection of chorales both *galant* and highly complex. Yet the canonic artifice is not heavy-handed, the expressive intentions stay unambiguously clear, so that this work seems to embrace *galant* values of beauty, apparent simplicity and grace. Here is another instance where Bach demonstrates that music could be full of contrapuntal complexities and still be tasteful and appealing.

[282] David Yearsley, *Bach and the Meanings of counterpoint* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 98.

These musical responses could be Bach's way of showing Scheibe that he is capable of both styles, the 'antiquated' complex style and the light *galant* style. Not only is he accomplished in both, but he is also skilled enough to be able to combine them successfully. The *Goldberg Variations* is a work that unites the two main styles over a simple recurring bass theme. Through this work, Bach demonstrates that the old styles of the fugue and the canon, and polyphony in general, which was described as consisting of stuffy rules, could still be translated into a style that was both accessible and pleasurable to listen to. This work mixes counterpoint with dances and toccatas, so that Bach unites the old with the new, presenting a clever argument for their integration.

Bach's style cannot simply be dismissed as unexciting or uninspiring, for he successfully created a satisfying equilibrium between harmony and counterpoint, melody and polyphony. Mattheson's and Scheibe's objections against composing a piece in complex counterpoint so as to prevent detracting the music from its rhetorical power were proved wrong by Bach himself. With his concentrated and distinctive themes, abundant musical invention and the strength of his rhythmic drive, Bach's music achieves a continuing vitality. His imaginative use of pictorial and symbolic figures portray an expressiveness which is always controlled by a ruling architectural idea and refined by flawless technical details. As Johann Joachim Quantz (1697 – 1773) expressed, there should be art and elegance, not just flattery[283], while in the 1752 edition of the *Art of Fugue*, Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg (1718 – 1795) stressed that while Bach's music was profoundly intellectual and highly crafted, it also appealed to current aesthetic values, achieving an agreeable combination of a flowing melody with the richest harmonies (i.e. counterpoint)[284].

[283] David Yearsley, *Bach and the Meanings of counterpoint* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 101.
[284] David Yearsley, *Bach and the Meanings of counterpoint* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 119.

A3. THE INFLUENCE OF THE *GOLDBERG VARIATIONS*

As demonstrated in the previous chapters, the *Goldberg Variations*' appeal is both original yet comprehensible, based on rudimentary harmonies and standard vocabulary. Composers such as Johann Nicolaus Forkel (1749 – 1818), Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827) and Johannes Brahms (1833 – 1987) were very influenced by this work and, in their own way, sought to take it as a model for their own. What is very clear from their works however is that while Forkel's is nothing more than a curiosity, Beethoven's and Brahms' sets of variations are of great intrinsic and historical importance.

A3.1 BACH'S LATER WORKS

Apart from serving as a model or inspiration to other composers, the influence of the *Goldberg Variations* can also be felt in some of Bach's last compositions. One can say that it was probably the canonic movements that had the most impact on the last phase of Bach's creative life. In fact he wrote his ***Fourteen Canons*** some time between 1742 and 1746 (discovered in 1974), constructing them on the first eight notes of the *Goldberg* bass-theme. There is no reason to suggest that these canons were meant for performance. Rather, Bach's aim seems to be that of expanding his canonic technique into a further sequence. They also bridge the gap between the canons of the *Goldberg Variations* and the more mysterious canons of the *Musical Offering*. The notations of the *Fourteen Canons* are very enigmatic, representing Bach's affinity for musical riddles and cryptographic symbols. While we know that the *Canon triplex* had previously been presented to the Mizler Society, their symbolic connotations suggest that all fourteen canons may have been planned expressly for presentation to the society: they are 14 in number and Bach was accepted into the Society as the fourteenth member, while his name in *gematria* also totalled fourteen.

More musically satisfying than the *Fourteen Canons* are the ***Canonic Variations*** for organ on Luther's hymn *Vom Himmel hoch, da komm' ich her* BWV 769. Published in 1748, they display certain resemblances to the *Fourteen Canons* in canonic idiom, while also sharing the similarity of being based on the *Goldberg* theme. Four of the variations

treat the chorale melody as a *cantus firmus* in conjunction with two canonic parts; in the other variation it is the chorale melody itself that is treated canonically, at four different intervals.[285]

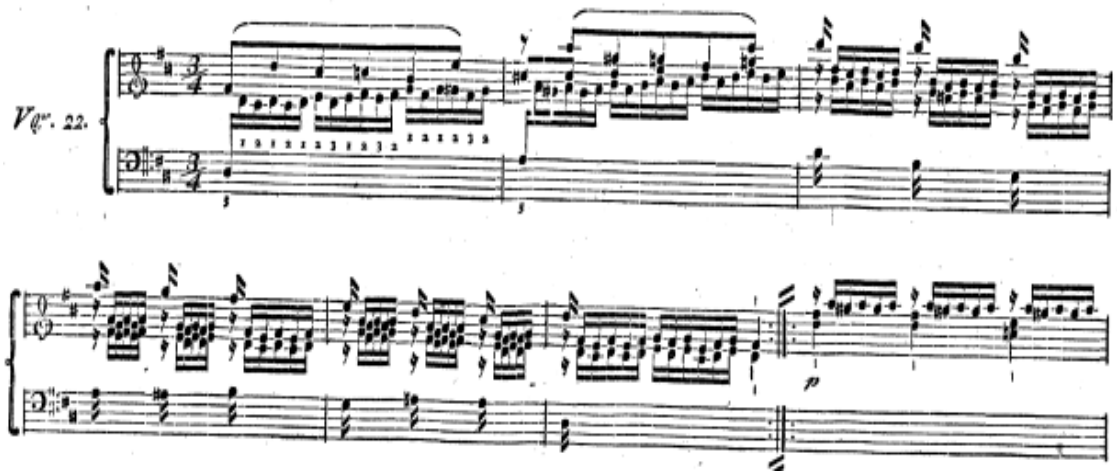
Dating from around the same time as *Vom Himmel hoch*, the ***Musical Offering BWV 1079*** also features heavily in the exploration of complex canonic form procedures. Two fugues, a trio sonata and a set of ten canons (one of them a canonic fugue) make up the collection that is based on the *thema regium*, which King Frederick the Great had originally given to Bach to improvise on during his visit at Potsdam in 1747. From the canons, only one is written in full, while the others are left in abbreviated form, similar to the first three in *Vom Himmel hoch.* One gets the impression that in the course of his work, Bach aims to provide a form of entertainment to occupy the musical intellect. Similar to the *Goldberg Variations*, this piece demonstrates Bach's resourcefulness in treating a given theme with various different approaches, while still retaining a certain cohesion.

A3.2 FORKEL'S VARIATIONS

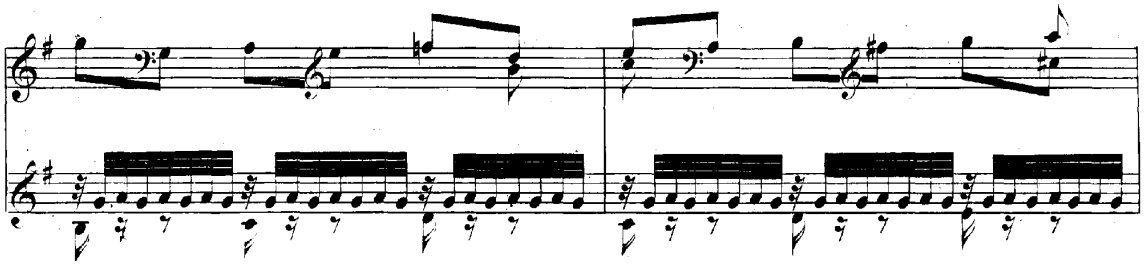
Johann Nikolaus Forkel (1749 – 1818) is best known as Bach's earliest biographer while his status as a composer has long since been forgotten. His *Veränderungen für Clavichord oder Fortepiano auf das englische Volkslied: God Save the King* (published in 1791) is virtually unknown, and upon examination it is clear that it was Forkel's admiration for Bach that induced him to formulate these set of variations, since they are pure imitations of Bach's own *Goldberg Variations*.

[285] Malcolm Boyd, *Bach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 196

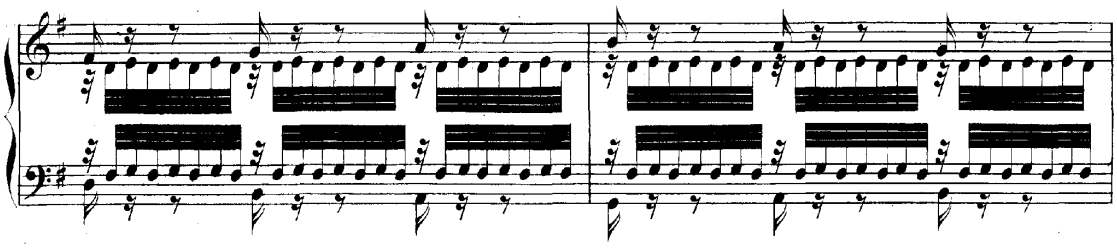
Example A3.1 **Forkel:** ***Veränderungen für Clavichord oder Fortepiano auf das englische Volkslied: God Save the King,*** **Variation 22, b. 1 – 7**



Example A3.2 **Bach:** ***Goldberg Variations,*** **Variation 29, b.5 – 6**



Example A3.3 **Bach:** ***Goldberg Variations,*** **Variation 29, b.13 – 14**

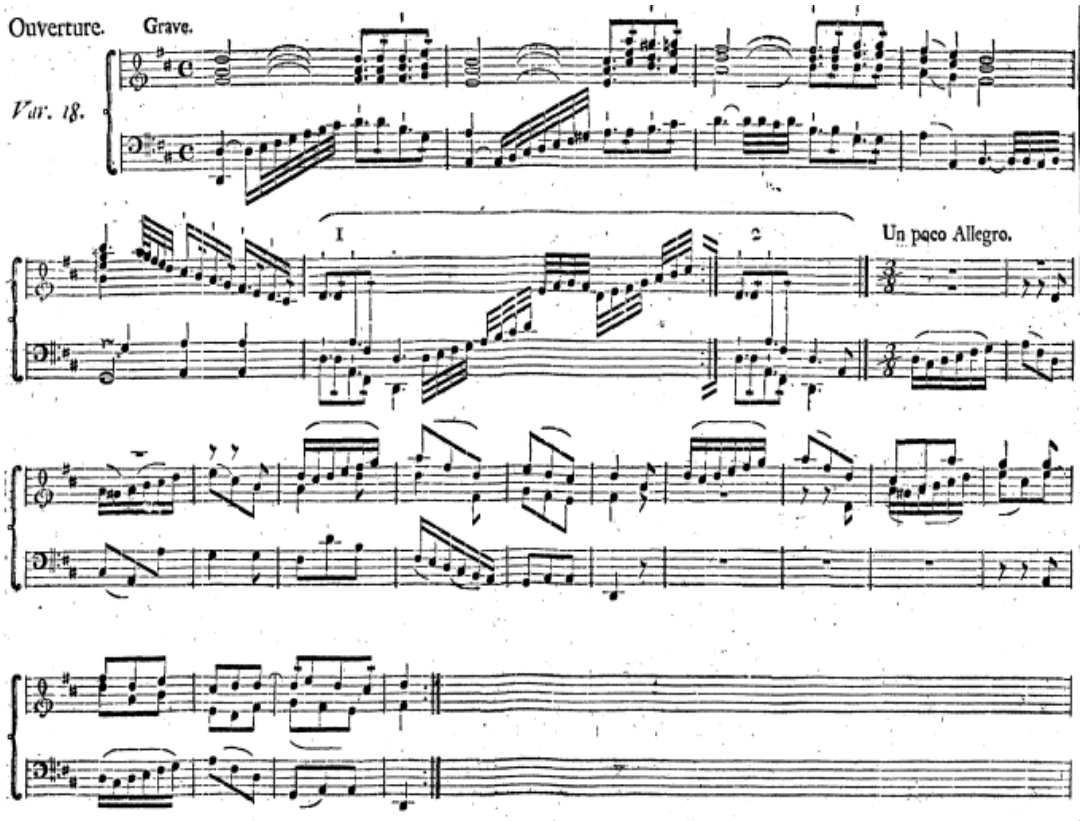


Forkel does not attempt canons, for he was no contrapuntist[286] and probably felt that he couldn't even start matching Bach's mastery in this form. However, in other areas he attempts to imitate Bach, for example by writing a four-part fughetta for his fourteenth

[286] Donald Francis Tovey, *Essays in Music Analysis: Chamber Music*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), 49

variation (as in Bach's variation 10) and by including an overture that parallels with that of the *Goldberg Variations*' sixteenth variation.

Example A3.4 **Forkel:** ***Veränderungen für Clavichord oder Fortepiano auf das englische Volkslied: God Save the King,*** **Overture**



Donald Francis Tovey speculates how bewildering Forkel's work would have been to us if the *Goldberg Variations* had not survived through publication and we were to take Forkel's variations in their own right. We would certainly have wondered about the scope behind its composition since it lacks the artistic capacity that makes Bach's variations significant and imposing[287]. Due to the lack of any musical cohesion or mathematical precision in their architectural plan, Forke's Variations lack stability, appearing unconnected and isolated, and unintentionally giving the work an almost-comic effect. The grandeur of Bach's work is lost on these variations for the large-scale majestic aura of the *Goldberg Variations* is here only hinted at in this small-scale reproduction. It is clear that Forkel's set of variations are simply faithful imitations of the master.

[287] Donald Francis Tovey, *Essays in Music Analysis: Chamber Music*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), 74

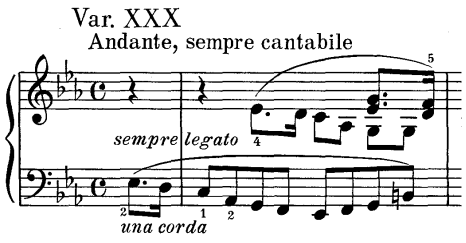
A3.3 BEETHOVEN'S DIABELLI VARIATIONS

To some extent, Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770 – 1827) too worked under the influence of the *Goldberg Variations* when composing the *Thirty-three Variations on a Waltz by A. Diabelli* Op.120 (1819 – 1823), his last epic work for piano[288]. These two works are usually mentioned together not least because they represent each respective composer's biggest achievements in variation form, with Diabelli referring to Beethoven's work as "Johann Sebastian Bach's masterpiece in the same form" in an advertisement.[289] In his set of variations, Beethoven seems to make an underlying, albeit an important, reference to Bach's work in the unfolding of its structure, giving the impression that the original inspiration for Beethoven to write this work was Bach's *Goldberg.* Conversely, while one finds certain similarities in its structural make-up, the *Diabelli Variations* also use other different and more complex methods in their compositional processes.

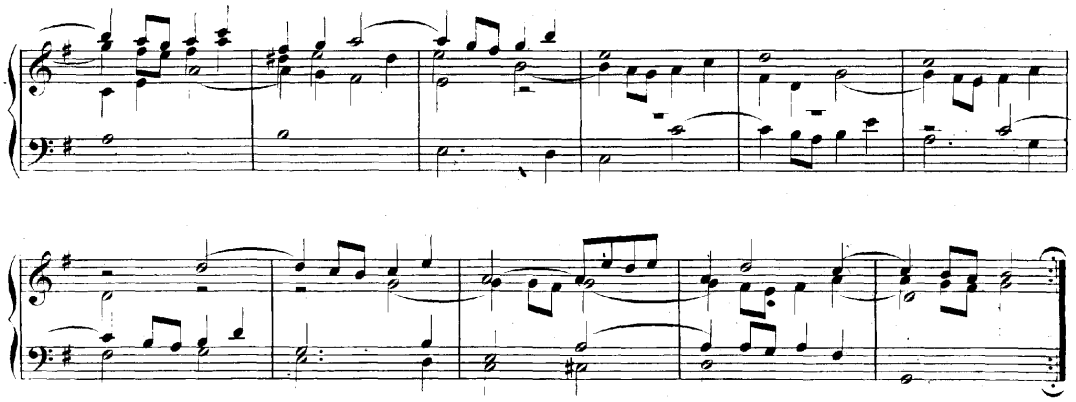
In the *Diabelli Variations*, one can notice certain Bach-idioms from the *Goldberg*, such as that of

- stretto imitation (*Diabelli* variations 4, 6, 30; *Goldberg* variations 22),

Example A3.5 Beethoven: *Diabelli Variations*, Variation 30, b.1 – 2



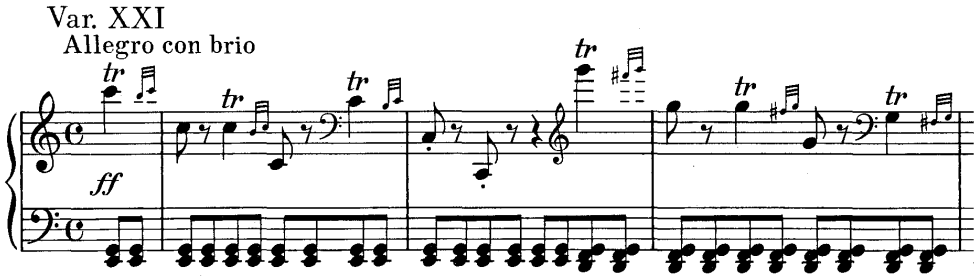
Example A3.6 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 22, b. 22 - 32



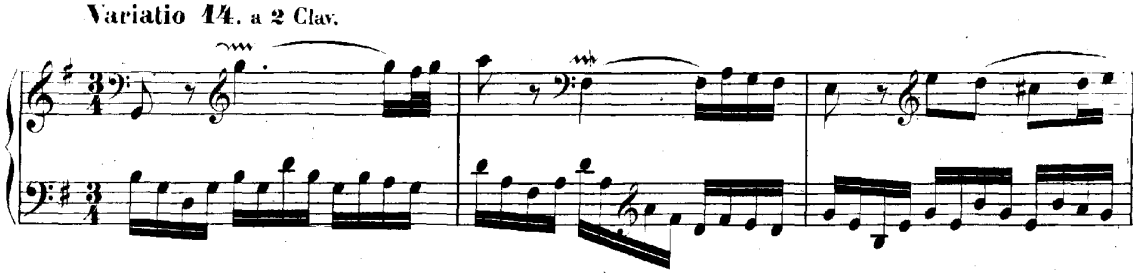
[288] Beethoven had studied Bach intensely in his youth, playing the still unpublished *Well-Tempered Clavier* at the age of eleven which makes the possibility of him coming across a copy of the *Goldberg Variations* very probable.
[289] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 96

- alternating and crossing hands (*Diabelli* variations 9, 21, 23 compared with *Goldberg* variations 14, 20, 23),

Example A3.7 Beethoven: *Diabelli Variations*, Variation 21, b.1 – 4

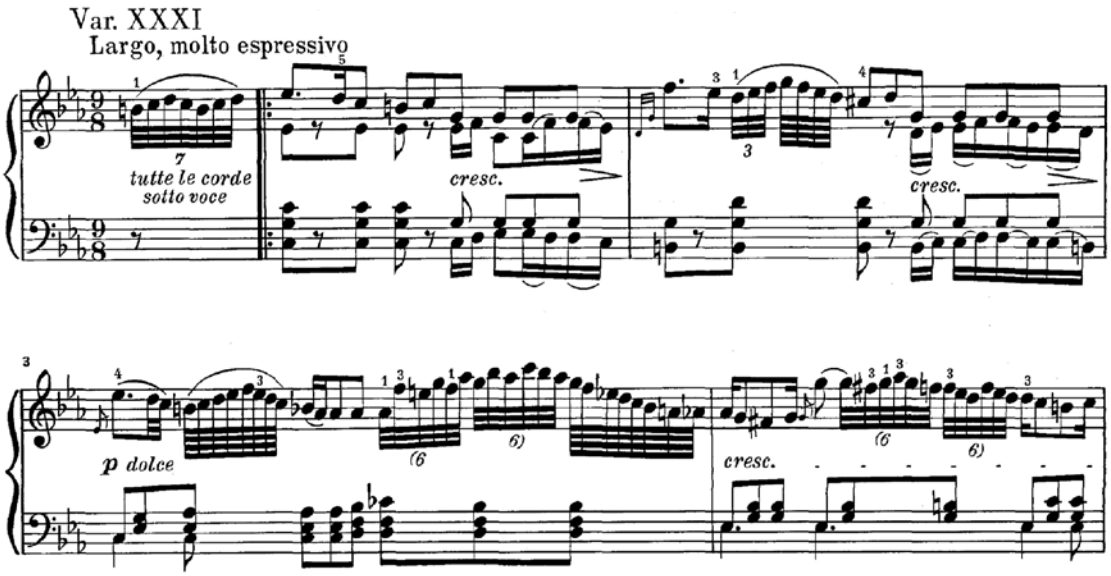


Example A3.8 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 14, b. 1 – 3

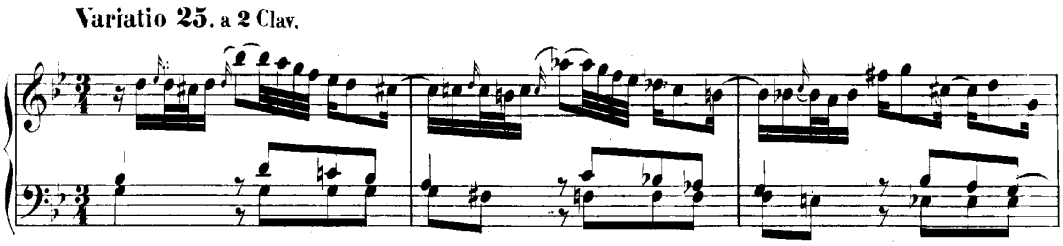


- chromatic filigree work in the minor mode (*Diabelli* variation 31 and *Goldberg* variation 25 have a very similar aura),

Example A3.9 Beethoven: *Diabelli Variations*, Variation 31, b.1 – 4



Example A3.10 **Bach: *Goldberg Variations*, Variation 25, b. 1 – 3**



- and an *alla breve* fugue (*Diabelli* variation 32; *Goldberg* variation 10).[290]

Just as in the *Goldberg Variations*, Beethoven's set begins with a simple, rather commonplace musical idea, which is transformed in many radical ways. Both too gather momentum in the last few variations, to reach a climax that is followed by a sublime ending – the last four variations (numbers 26, 27, 28, 29) of the *Goldberg* climaxing in the *Quodlibet* (variation 30), and the last five variations of the *Diabelli* representing the pinnacle of variation form and an embodiment of a long stylistic development of the conventions of variation form.[291]

Both sets of variations close with a return of the theme, but unlike Bach's work, which ends as simply as it starts, Beethoven makes his more complex and ornate. After such monumental treatment of the waltz theme, Beethoven feels that he cannot bring back Diabelli's waltz in its original trivial form so he instead transforms it into a minuet. As Donald Francis Tovey comments:

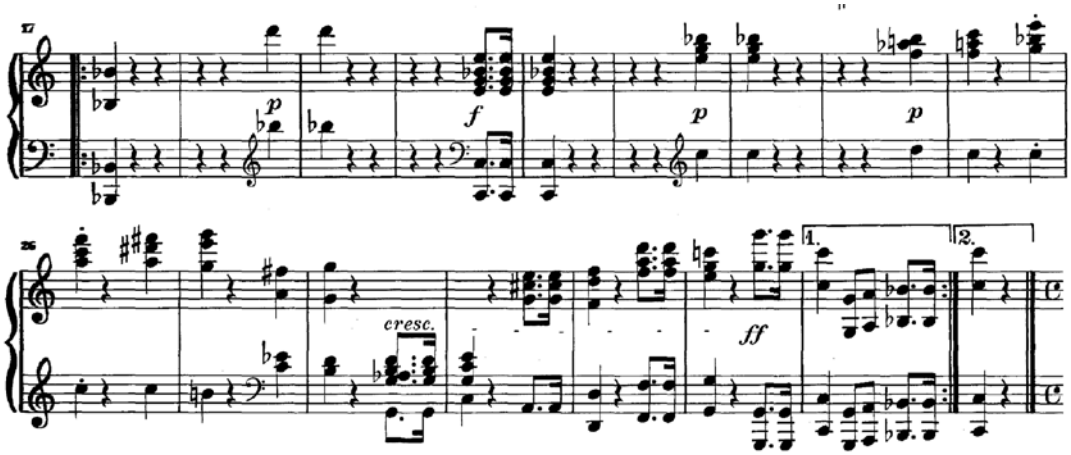
> It is profoundly characteristic of the way in which (as Diabelli himself seems partly to have grasped) this work develops and enlarges the great aesthetic principles of balance and climax embodied in the 'Goldberg' Variations, that it ends quietly. The freedom necessary for an ordinary climax on modern lines was secured already in the great fugue, placed, as it was, in a foreign key; and now Beethoven, like Bach, rounds off his work by a peaceful return home – a home that seems far removed from these stormy experiences through which alone such ethereal calm can be attained.[292]

[290] Peter Williams, *Bach: The Goldberg Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 97
[291] Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (London: Faber & Faber, 1997), 510
[292] Donald Francis Tovey, *Essays in Music Analysis: Chamber Music*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1978),133

Just as Bach seemed to conceive his variations in patterns of three and in a larger two-part architectural scheme, the structure of the *Diabelli Variations*, clearly attempts to consider the variations in large groups, as if to find a unifying equivalent as that between the several movements of a sonata or symphony.[293]

Other elements are similar, yet at the same time contrasting, such as the use of musical comedy in these two works. Bach's use of humour in the last variation, *Quodlibet*, unfortunately loses the full impact of its witty atmosphere due to the lost words of the folk-songs, leaving the effect to be that of grandiose good humour.[294] On the other hand, the amusing character of variation 13 of the *Diabelli Variations* is fully brought out in its own right through dynamics and timbre. Similarly, variation 22 wittily quotes Mozart's *Notte e giorno faticar*, Leporello's opening aria in *Don Giovanni*.

Example A3.11 Beethoven: *Diabelli Variations*, Variation 13, b.17 – 25



Regarding the basis of these variations, we can notice that while Bach built on a fundamental bass line, eliminating the melody from the variation movements and gaining independence in melodic matters, Beethoven exploited the melody in addition to the harmonic and rhythmic elements. While Bach's harmonic framework is essentially preserved in all the variations, Beethoven alters his harmonies in a number of different progressions. Moreover, although the *Diabelli* waltz theme consists of thirty-two bars, structured in symmetrical four-bar phrases (similar to the Aria of the *Goldberg*), only about one-third of the *Diabelli Variations* adhere to the thirty-two-bar structure, unlike Bach's variations which adopt the symmetrical pattern throughout. In

[293] Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (London: Faber & Faber, 1997), 439
[294] Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (London: Faber & Faber, 1997),95

addition, while Bach's occasional sixteen-bar variation can be attributed to a parallel half-speed tempo of the variation, this is not the case in Beethoven's work. In fact, variations 24 and 25 which have sixteen bars each are marked *Allegro*. Other variations have a rather random construction, with 24 bars in variation 21 and 12 bars in variation 26. Repeats too are not consistent in the *Diabelli*, as some variations lack repeat marks.

Number symbolism is a recurring point of discussion in relation to the *Goldberg Variations*[295] and one might speculate whether any theories can be applied to Beethoven's *Diabelli.* Why thirty-three variations? Was Beethoven trying to outdo Bach's thirty-two movement work or was he trying to outdo his previous set of *Thirty-Two Variations* in C minor WoO 80? Or perhaps Beethoven was paralleling Bach's play with numbers since, as Alfred Brendel observes, the *Diabelli* comes after the *32 Piano Sonatas*, representing his crowning achievement in the piano repertoire. Additionally Variation 33 refers directly to the Adagio of the thirty-second sonata. Brendel continues that "there happens to be, between the *32 Variations in C minor* and the sets Opp.34 and 35, a numerical gap. The Diabelli Variations fills it."[296]

What is unquestionably similar to both the *Goldberg* and the *Diabelli* Variations is that for both Bach and Beethoven, a simple, almost banal basis is the inspiration for two colossal works which exploit the variation structure with all the inherent technical possibilities it presents. In a way, Beethoven's *Eroica Variations* (1802) and *Thirty-two Variations in C minor* (1806) can also be seen to resemble the *Goldberg Variations* but only in so far as being based on a skeletal bass.

A3.4 BRAHMS'S HANDEL VARIATIONS

It is often said that Brahms's *Variations and Fugue on a theme by Handel* Op.24 (1861) spring from the composer's intimate acquaintance with the *Goldberg*, the *Diabelli* and the *Eroica* Variations, as well as Handel's original set on the same theme.

While in his earliest sets of variations (especially those of Op.9) Brahms considers the melody as being of primary importance, his later studies of Beethoven inspired him to

[295] Refer to Appendix, *A1 Symbolism*, 139.
[296] Alfred Brendel, *Alfred Brendel on Music: Collected Essays* (USA: Chicago Review Press, 2000), 121

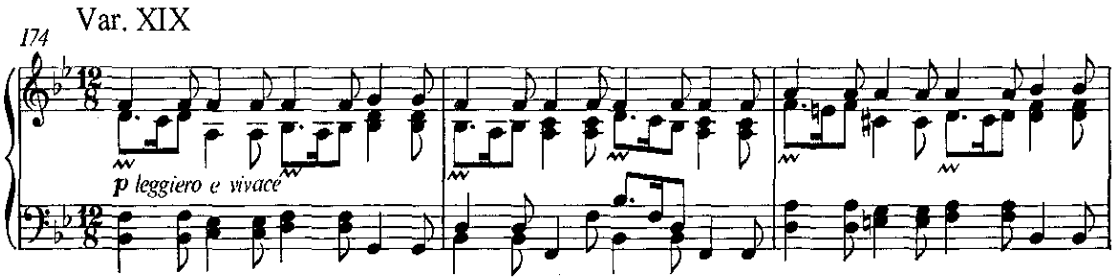
adhere to the theme's basic phrase structure and harmonic pattern instead and transform the melody into something new. Such is the case with the *Handel Variations*, which in certain aspects of their structural plan can be seen to imitate the *Goldberg Variations*.

Similar to Bach's *Goldberg Variations* and Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations*, Brahms constructs an extensive masterpiece based on a very simple idea. The theme is the Air from the third movement of the first harpsichord suite in B flat major, HWV 434 of Handel's *Suites de pièces de clavecin* of 1733.

As is the case with Bach's work, these variations remain faithful to the structure of the theme almost exclusively. The theme is constructed of 8 bars that are divided into two halves of 4 bars each, with both halves being repeated. The variations that do not conform to this basic structure still keep within a certain symmetrical design – variations 8 and 9 have double the number of bars in the second half (8 bars), while variation 17 has double the number of bars in the first half, and although variations 13, 19 and 20 have 16 bars in total these are still divided in clear four-bar phrases. Variation 15 is the only variation that deviates slightly from the rigorous phrase structure, due to having an extra bar in the second half.

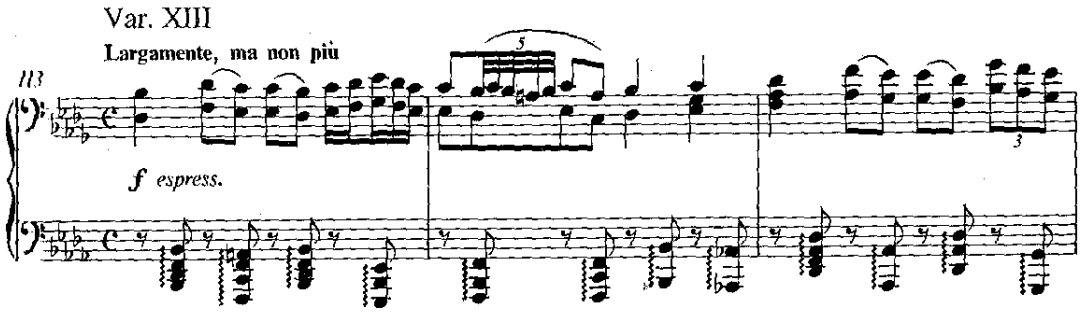
Brahms's attraction to eighteenth-century music and its forms manifests itself in these variations too. Not only does he choose a theme from Handel, but he also includes a closing fugue (just as Beethoven did towards the end of the *Thirty-three Variations*) which represents the climactic point of the whole work, and uses a Siciliano dance form for variation 19:

<u>Example A3.12</u> Brahms: *Variations and Fugue on a theme by Handel*, Variation 19, b.1 – 3



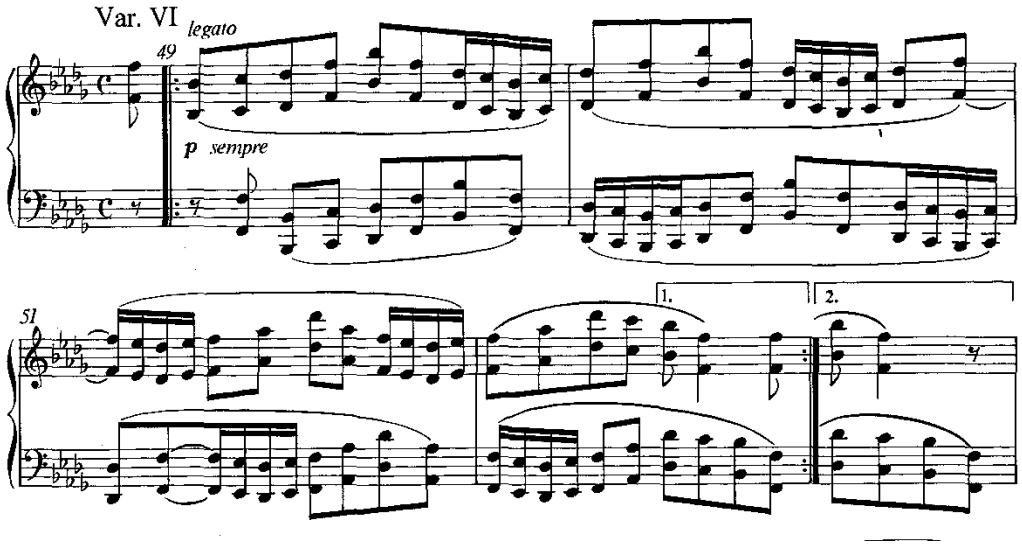
gives variation 13 a somewhat eighteenth-century aura:

Example A3.13 **Brahms:** ***Variations and Fugue on a theme by Handel,*** **Variation 13, b.1 – 3**



and frequently uses contrapuntal techniques in many of the variations, such as the *stretto* effects of variations 6 and 16:

Example A3.14 **Brahms:** ***Variations and Fugue on a theme by Handel,*** **Variation 16, b.1 – 4**



Apart from the above-mentioned variations which have Baroque characteristics, the other variations in the set can all be classified into categories, according to the style they emulate, such that Variations 7 and 8 have a "Classical" sensitivity, while Variation 4 leans towards a nineteenth-century style. Variation 4 is what one would call a romantic variation, whereas Variation 22 adopts an imitative approach.

In terms of the architectural plan of the variations, their pattern seems to be that of alternating variations, such that a legato variation will usually be succeeded by a staccato one and variations with a fragmentary texture will be followed by more homophonic ones for example, so that the significance of the variations is derived from

resemblances between the different variations – how a variation's relationship works with what comes before and after it, or by the group of variations within which it is located.[297] Various musicologists have attempted to organize the variations in different groups in order to formulate a structural design of this work, as has been done with any other set of variations by other composers. As similarly observed in the *Goldberg Variations* and the *Diabelli Variations*, Brahms builds the last variations into a climax (starting from variation 23), with the final fugue (whose subject is derived from the theme), bringing the work to a powerful close. Similar to Bach's and Beethoven's variations, the unity of the *Handel Variations* is maintained by the prevalent key signature of B flat major which is abandoned in only a few exceptions in the tonic minor, as well as by the recurring four-bar and two-part structure, including the repeats in most of the work.

A3.5 MAX REGER: VARIATIONS AND FUGUE ON A THEME BY MOZART

One other set of variations which can be added to the closely connected sets of variations mentioned above is Max Reger's (1873 – 1916) *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Mozart* Op.132 for orchestra (1914), also arranged for piano by the composer. Reger's variations unfold from a simple melodic phrase into a more complex transformation with each number, reaching a climax with the closing extended fugue. Such an architectural plan leads one to presume antecedents in Brahms's *Handel Variations*. Each of the eight variations is more distant from its source than the last, both harmonically and rhythmically so that in the last dream-like variation the theme is often unrecognizable within the complexity of Reger's invention. The fugue's connection with the theme is unclear too, so that Mozart's theme only becomes recognizable at the end, now in a much grander form.

Written at a time when atonality was developing and Schoenberg's realization of the twelve-tone method was just a decade away, Reger's musical language lay resolutely without the avant-garde of his day, looking back to the music of the 1800s and beyond. As is evident from his *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Mozart* as well as from his other sets of variations on themes by Bach, Telemann, Hiller and Beethoven, Reger's music takes works by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century composers as his point of

[297] Cook, N. (1990) *Music, Imagination, and Culture* (Oxford University Press, Oxford), 61.

departure. Perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of Reger's music is the merging of Bachian polyphony with a highly chromatic harmonic language, resulting in marked sonic richness and elaborate contrapuntal interplay. In the *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Mozart* Reger integrates Mozart's elegant classical style with his unique way of abstraction and transformation as the variations develop.

A3.6 THE VARIATION FORM IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Throughout the centuries, the Variation Form was consistently regarded as an important form through which composers could explore the possibilities of varying a common element. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the classical idea of theme and variations prevailed, although as new musical languages started developing, the variation form was given new dimensions.

Following Brahms, **Sergei Rachmaninoff** (1873 – 1943) continued to use the variation form largely in the nineteenth-century style, which was characterised by a vast exploration of moods, displaying virtuosity alongside the *cantabile* element as synonymous with the 'romantic' generation of composers.

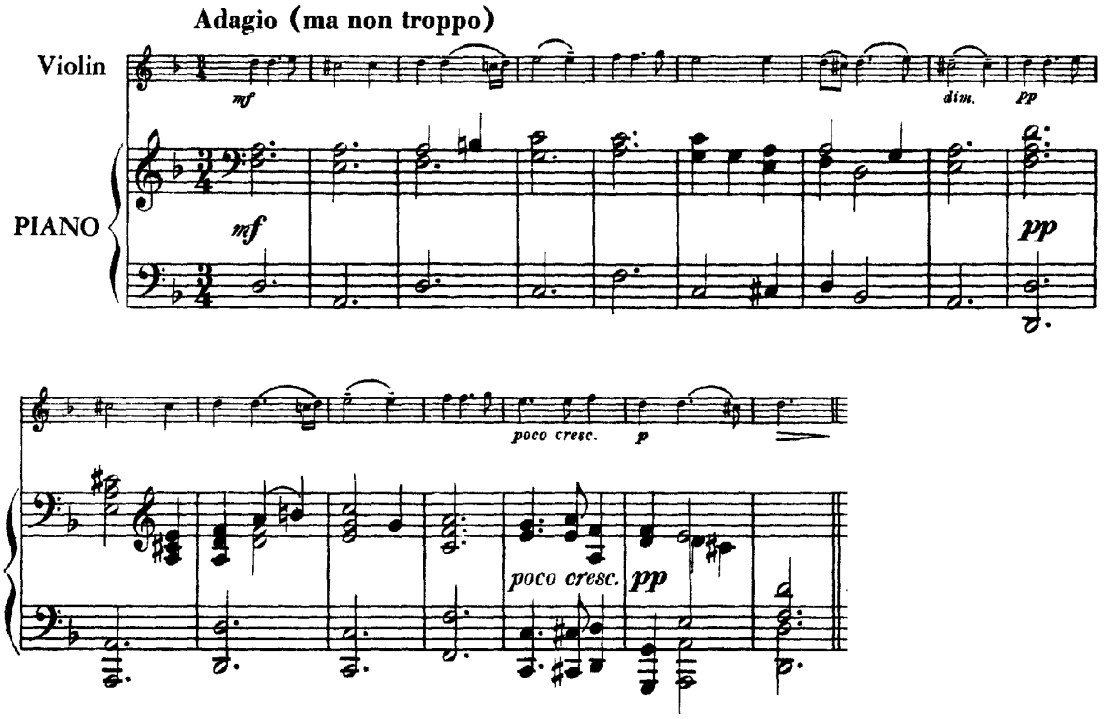
Based on Chopin's C minor Prelude Opus 28 No.20, his *Variations on a Theme by Chopin* Op.22 (written in 1902-1903) is an elaborate work that exhibits a wide variety of moods and pianistic invention, with the first eleven variations being somewhat conventional in style, following the form of the theme fairly closely, with very limited freedom. However, from Variation 12, which suddenly departs radically from the theme[298] (and which Rachmaninoff directed to be optional), the work takes on a different perspective such that the link between the theme and the variations keeps becoming increasingly thinner. The variations become longer and more complex, with the final four being played continuously as a Finale, culminating in a typical virtuosic tour-de-force.

Rachmaninoff's other important set of variations for piano is his last original work for this instrument. Composed outside Russia, *Variations on a Theme by Corelli* Op.42 (1931) has a totally different temperament to Op.22, displaying an icy, detached

[298] Variations 12 starts as a fugue and then develops into an improvisatory cadenza.

style[299] that is very far removed from the composer's customary romantic temperament. For this set of 20 variations, Rachmaninoff takes inspiration from a seventeenth-century theme, used by Corelli in his Violin Sonata Op.5 No.12 (1700). This 'Folia theme', as it was known, was popularly used as the basis for many variations in Baroque music. It was also used by Bach in his *Peasant Cantata* BWV 212 of 1742.

Example A3.15 Corelli: *Violin Sonata* Op. 5 No.12, b.1 – 16.



The *Corelli Variations* have several unusual features for a set of variations, not least because this work is cast in three movements: Allegro and Scherzo, Adagio and Finale. Apart from the three-movement structure, these variations can also be divided in groups, with each group having a special feature – variations 2 to 4 grow in complexity, variations 5 to 7 are faster and more rhythmically inclined, although they remain generally delicate, almost classical-sounding, while a certain hazy aura falls over variations 8 to 13, with some of the faster variations being reminiscent of the writing in the Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*. The slow variations of the 'second movement' (variations 14 and 15) are the closest to Rachmaninoff's romantic style. The last few variations cover all types of temperaments, from lively and colourful (variation 16), through to delicate and exotic

[299] This style is also found in Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Sonata (1913) and Fourth Piano Concerto (1926, rev.1941).

(variation 17), to end with powerful and brilliant *forte* chords (variations 18 to 20). The mood then subsides in the Coda, which is reminiscent of the slower music of Rachmaninoff's Fourth Piano Concerto.

Rachmaninoff's other set of variations is *Variations on a Theme by Paganini* Op. 43 (1934), which is a set of 24 variations written for piano and orchestra, closely resembling a piano concerto. It is set on Paganini's last Caprice for solo violin, a piece which has inspired works by many composers such as Brahms and Liszt. As is the case with the *Corelli Variations*, this work can also be divided into three sections, corresponding to the three movements of a concerto, although it is performed without a break (variations 1 to 11 = first movement, variations 12 to 18 = slow second movement, variations 19 to 24 = finale). One unusual feature of this work is that after a brief introduction, the first variation is played *before* the theme, an idea which Rachmaninoff might have taken from the finale of Beethoven's *Eroica Symphony*. Also unusual for a set of variations is to have another theme quoted through the course of the work, as in variation 8 which has the *Dies Irae* melody (also quoted by several composers, not least by Bach himself) played on the piano while the orchestra accompanies with a slower version of the opening motif of the Paganini theme. This new theme does not only appear in Variation 8 however, but it is heard over and over again in the subsequent variations, in juxtaposition with the Paganini theme. One other relatively unique feature is found in the well-known slow eighteenth variation of this work which is an inversion of Paganini's theme – a technique which was used in some works in variation form until Brahms, but which Schoenberg and other Serialist composers then used extensively.

The twelve-note row (also known as the serial method), was introduced and explored by **Arnold Schonberg** (1874 – 1951) and through it the Variation form assumed a different dimension. Its method of application in composition was through variation itself as it was expanded, varied and developed by transposition[300], inversion[301], retrograde[302] and

[300] moving the notes up or down in pitch by a constant interval
[301] the pitches are turned upside down
[302] reversing the series of notes, starting from the back and working towards the first note

retrograde inversion[303]. Thus variation was in fact the basis of all Schoenberg's serial music, as well as that of Anton Webern (1883 – 1945) and Alban Berg (1885 – 1935).

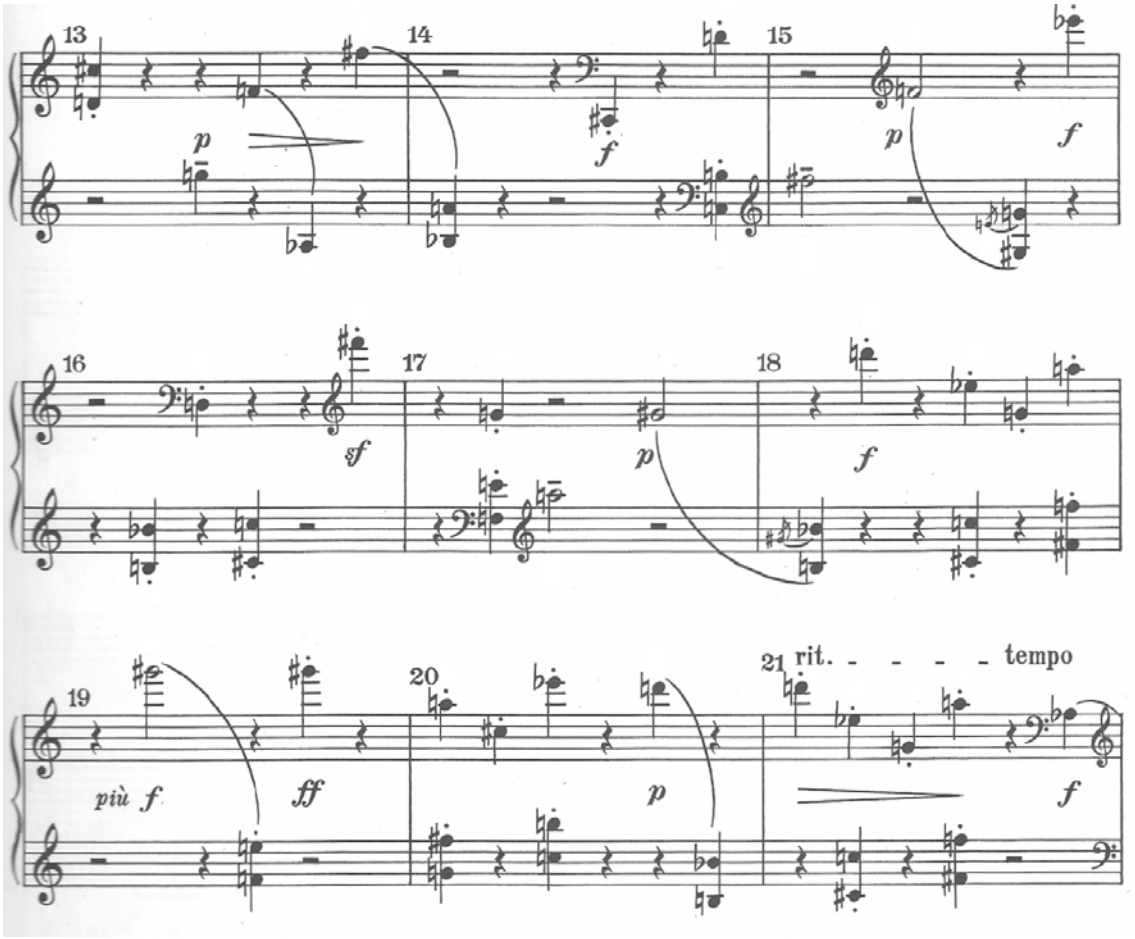
Generally acknowledged to be among Schoenberg's finest works, the *Variations for Orchestra* Op. 31 (1826 – 28) blends traditional techniques with the twelve-note method and is constructed in the form of: introduction, twelve variations and a finale. The character of each variation is distinct, exploring Schoenberg's intense spirit while also interspersed with playful episodes. Variation 4 (marked *Walzertempo*) for example is as gentle as a Viennese waltz, while the following variation has a more severe character.

The theme is explored in its four forms – Original, Retrograde, Inversion and Retrograde Inversion and each motif taken from these rows is given distinct rhythmic shapes. These diverse effects cohere seamlessly, creating a holistic sound-world from a note row constructed of two hexachords of identical properties. The BACH theme (B flat, A, C, B natural) is also prominent and is found towards the end of the Introduction as well as in the Finale.

Anton Webern (1883 – 1945) was the first composer after Schoenberg to take up the serial method. His *Variations for Piano* Op.27 (1936) is set in three movements, where only the last movement (consisting of five variations and coda) is a set of variations in the traditional sense. The first and the second movements are ternary and binary movements respectively. The theme is really a collection of short groups of motives, which are altered according to the various combinations synonymous with the twelve-note method. Apart from having ample opportunity for virtuoso display through innovative articulation and writing for the piano, Webern does not make use of subtle dynamic shadings, but instead juxtaposes *piano* and *forte* passages – a technique parallel to the eighteenth-century terraced dynamics.

[303] starting from the last note and moving towards the first note, while at the same time turning the pitches upside down

Example A3.16 **Webern: *Variations for Piano*, Op.27, 3rd movement, b.13 – 21**



In this work, Webern uses two other techniques that are usually associated with Bach and eighteenth-century music, namely symmetry – the first movement is organized around symmetrical pitch schemes) and the canon – used in the second movement, whose structure is however obscured by registral and rhythmic changes[304].

Variations for Orchestra Op.30 (1940) is another work where Webern uses variation technique through the use of serialism, a work which he described thus: "six notes are given[305]…and what follows…is nothing other than this shape over and over again!!!"[306] In this work Webern combines an eighteenth-century technique with one from the twentieth century, such that he writes twelve-note counterpoint, whose lack of repetition highlights Webern's unparalleled command of this musical language. The originality of his note-rows is found in their multiple levels of symmetricality, where self-reference

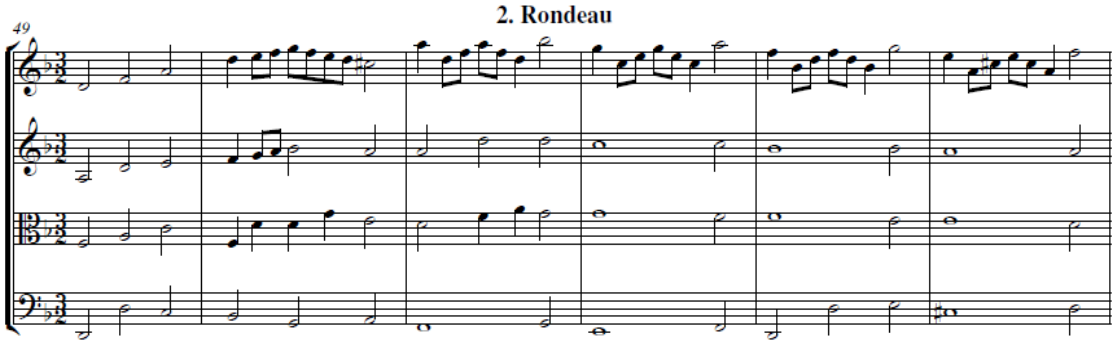
[304] Such procedures of creating a structure and then making it almost imperceptible is found in other works by Webern, most particularly in his Symphony, Op.21.
[305] Six notes not twelve since the series itself is symmetrical in this work.
[306] Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music: A Concise History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 90.

strengthens the integrity of the melodic direction, formal contour, and harmonic rhythm and colour.

Paul Hindemith's[307] (1895 – 1963) *Symphonic Metamorphosis on Themes by Carl Maria von Weber*, for Orchestra (1943) is another unique example of variation form for which the composer takes melodies from various works by Weber – namely from his incidental music *Turandot*, and from the *Piano Duets*, Opp. 10 and 60. Written in four movements, Hindemith transforms and adapts these melodies so that each movement is based on one theme. In the second movement for example, a 'Chinese' flute theme twice receives the Bolero treatment, first being incessantly cycled in ever-richening instrumental textures, and then the process repeats with jazzy syncopated rhythms. While Hindemith's musical language is tonal, it is not diatonic, so that he uses all twelve notes of the scale freely.

Benjamin Britten (1913 – 1976) goes back to seventeenth-century roots in *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* Op. 34 (1946), which is in fact subtitled "Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell". The theme, taken from music Purcell wrote for Aphra Behn's play *Abdelazar* (*The Moor's Revenge*), is played six times, first by the full orchestra, then by the woodwinds, followed by the brass, strings and the percussion, with a return of the full orchestra. Each variation then shows the characteristics of a particular instrument or groups of instruments. A fugue ends the work, where all the instruments enter one after the other with the theme, ending with a grand climax. As in other works by Britten, the musical language used here is very traditional.

<u>Example A3.17</u> Purcell (arr. Louis Gerber): *Abdelazar Suite*, Rondeau b.49 – 54.

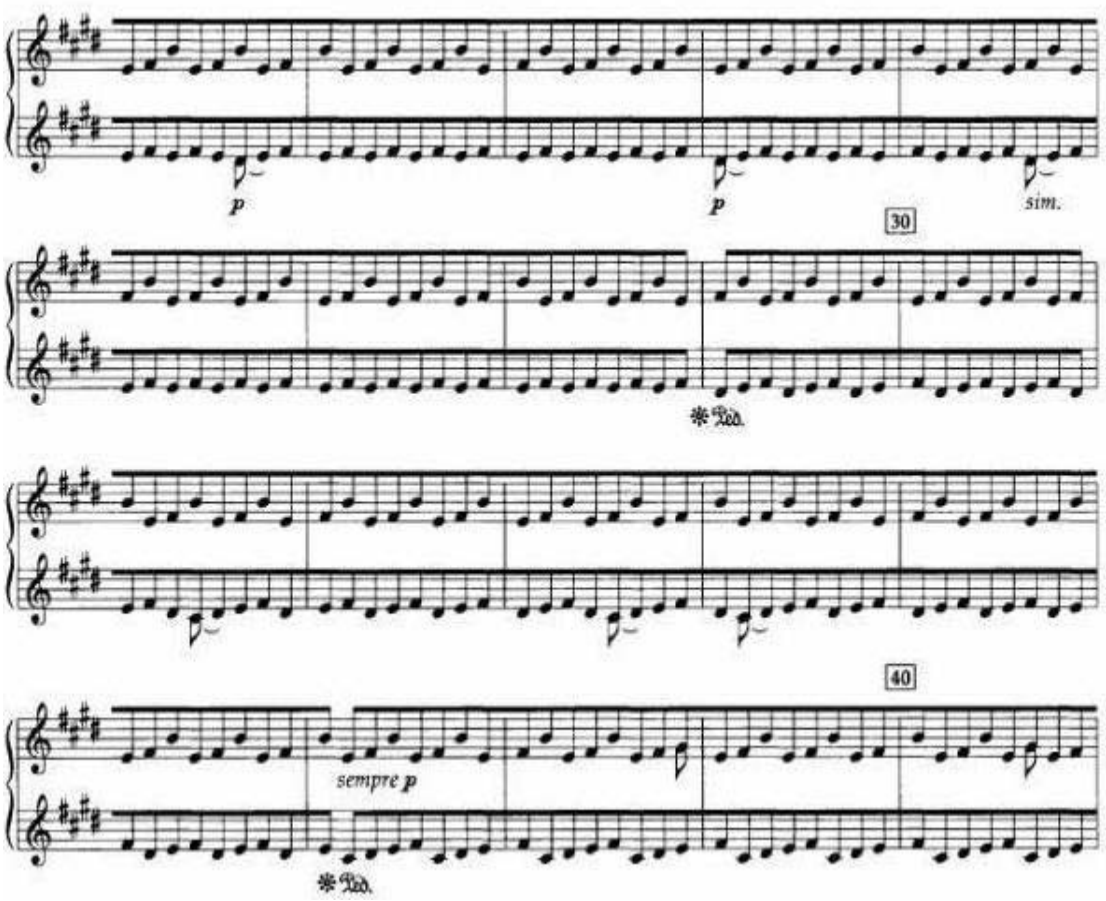


[307] Hindemith also composed *Ludus Tonalis* for piano (1942) which was meant to be the twentieth-century equivalent of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*.

The music of the American group of composers known as Minimalists[308] once again employs variation in a different way, being based almost entirely on repetition and subtle variations of short phrases or motifs.

John Adams' (1947) *Phrygian Gates* for piano (1977) for example, is based on a repetitive cell structure, which is the basis of the Minimalist technique. Simultaneously however, one can also notice Adams' desire to move away from the conventional techniques of minimalism as the work, which is set in the Phrygian mode, also modulates to a number of keys through the circle of fifths[309].

Example A3.18 Adams: *Phrygian Gates* for piano, b. 21 – 40



[308] which includes composers such as La Monte Young (1935), Steve Reich (1936), Terry Riley (1935), John Adams (1947) and Philip Glass (1937).
[309] In pure Minimalism, the music mostly maintains constant harmony, steady pulse (if not immobile drones), gradual transformation and often reiteration of phrases or small units of motifs and cells.

From this survey, one can thus observe how the concept of variation changed through the centuries. As demonstrated by Serialism and the music of the Minimalists, the evolution of the musical language had a definite impact in this development. On the other hand, some early twentieth-century composers who used the traditional tonal system and variation-structure approach still found inspiration in seventeenth-, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century themes. Nevertheless, not one work can compare in sheer meticulous architectural symmetry with J. S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations*.

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