

Long

THE ORNAMENTATION

As in the rhythms of French Music, the fundamental characteristic of the Ornamentation is freedom.

1) Basically, the ornament is an indication given to an " improviser-interpreter ". When the same musical phrase comes along several times in the same work, the complete ornamentation is only written when the harmony and the melody make it necessary : the good interpreter supposedly able to find it himself. Many slow pieces or parts of slow pieces must be ornamented with much fantasy, their apparent simplicity being only a framework over which embellishments are improvised (final part of the G Major Offertoire by COUPERIN). I have often heard organists complaining that French Music is overcharged with ornaments. I can only answer them that the written ornaments are just one part of the possible ornamentation.

2) Too many performers consider that the Ornamentation is disturbing, because they only see the strict execution of the written ornaments. They absolutely must get rid of this idea and adopt this fundamental principle : Ornamentation is an expressive means in order to make the sound of the keyboard instruments (organ and harpsichord) more supple. COUPERIN says : " The " pincé double " (double mordent) in organ and harpsichord playing takes the place of the " martèlement " (litt. hammering) on instruments of the viol class ". Before COUPERIN, NIVERS and RAISON tried to use this same " martèlement " on the organ (Récit by NIVERS). Similarly, one could say that the " tremblement " (litt. shake or trill) is an imitation of the vibrato of the violin.

Although each author has given many precise tables of ornaments, these tables only give us basic indications. According to these indications, it is possible to have many different ways of playing each ornament : the number and the speed of the " battements " (repetitions) must be determined following the context ; e.g. : value of the note itself, general tempo, harmony in the other voices...

" Pincé " : Speaking of the " Pincé " (mordent) COUPERIN says : " Generally speaking it is the value of the note which must determine the duration of the " pincés doubles " (double mordent), " ports de voix " (appoggiatura from below followed by a mordent) and " tremblements " (shakes)..."

In the following example : (cf. Example n° 1) COUPERIN gives a simple " pincé " on a quarter-note (a), and a double " pincé " on a half-note (b). Further, he gives the realization of a triple (c) and even a quadruple " pincé " (d) on the same value. This really indicates that the number of the " battements " is left to the will and the taste of the performer.

COUPERIN continues : " Every mordent must be fixed upon the note over which it is placed...thus the " battements " (repetitions) and the note one which one stops must all be included in the value of the principal note."

RAISON explains himself more clearly saying that the ornaments must be played " against the bass ", that means on the beat.

I insist on this fact because there is a very bad tradition (born in bad printed edition from the 19th century) which spoils the true sense of the musical phrase : too often have I heard ornaments played before the beat !... This is nonsense. The accent must be given on the beginning of the ornament, and not at the end - consequently the accent must coincide with the beat -.

The " Pincé " will then be simple (only one repetition) in the rapid values (eight-notes, sixteenth-notes). The longer the note-value is, the more it is necessary to play a number of repetitions.

- "Tremblement" : The same rule is valid for the " Tremblement " (shake). Only one sign exists for every kind of " tremblement ".

This sign **M** signifies sometimes only two repetitions, sometimes more, and this until the complete trill.

COUPERIN gives us very valuable indications on this subject:

- " 1) On whichever note a shake may be marked, it must always begin on the tone or semi-tone above.
 " 2) Although " tremblements " are indicated by notes of equal value in the Table of Graces of my first book, they must nevertheless begin slower than they end, but this gradation must be imperceptible.
 " 3) Shakes of any considerable duration consist of three component parts, which in the execution appear to be but one and the same thing : 1) " l'Appui " (sustaining, dwelling) to be made on the note above the principal note ; 2) " les battements " (the repetitions) ; 3) " le point d'arrêt " (the stop).
 " 4) With regard to other sorts of shakes, they are arbitrary. There are some which have the " dwelling " on the upper auxiliary note ; other so short that they have neither the " dwelling ", nor the final stop. " (Example n° 2)

- "Tremblement lié" : When the " Tremblement " is preceded by a slur, it is not taken by the upper note, this one is only prolonged. The " dwelling " of the " Tremblement lié " is sometimes lengthened, especially at cadences.
 (Example n° 3)

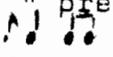
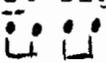
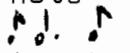
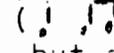
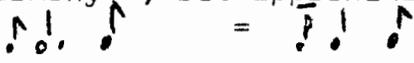
When several notes are moving by degree, it is not dwelt on (Récit de nazard by CLERAMBAULT)
 or (Example n° 4)

The " Tremblement lié " is to be found very often by COUPERIN, MARCHAND, GUILAIN, CLERAMBAULT... DANDRIEU writes it differently : **M**, which is a little confusing. This French way of writing the " Tremblement " is also used by J.-S. BACH.

- "Port de voix" : It can be designated in four ways :
 - (Example n° 5) - by a small note (1°)
 - by a curved line, or a small comma (CORRETTE)(2°)
 - In this case, it is generally played in the same direction as the melodic line : up, when the melody is going up; down, when the melody is going down.
 - by a small cross (3°) (COUPERIN, CORRETTE)

The "Port de voix" is very often used with a written or implied "pincé". The "Pincé" itself requires sometimes the "Port de voix". This association gave birth to so great a confusion that, by the middle of the 18th century, DAQUIN and BALBASTRE used the small cross to mean a simple "Pincé" (cf. Noël X by DAQUIN).
- "Coulé de Tierce" : is an oblique line between two notes of a chord which are a third apart : (Example n° 6)
 - The first note is always a little longer.
- "Arpeggio" : CLERAMBAULT especially uses the "Arpeggio" at the organ. Unhappily, the imprecision of the printed edition does not make clear whether the "Arpeggio" is going up or down. Only the musical taste of the performer can decide in this matter (cf. Plein-jeu of 2° Ton, by CLERAMBAULT).
 - It is equally possible to combine "Arpeggio" and "Coulé de Tierce" - even when the "Coulé de Tierce" is not written - as d'ANGLEBERT demands, in certain slow pieces.
- "Double" : Always taken by the note above by COUPERIN
 - (Example n° 7) CORRETTE takes it on the note itself
- "Petite Note" : Here is certainly the most difficult problem.
 - Since the theoreticians could never agree, it is my own theory that I shall expound. We must first distinguish between two kinds of "petites notes" : the "passing note" and the "appoggiatura".
 - 1) the "Passing Note" (very often called "Tierce coulée", - which is quite different of the "Coulé de Tierce" -) is short and is to be played before the beat. Many examples by CLERAMBAULT (Trio 2° Ton, Fugue 1° Ton) and MARCHAND.
 - GUILAIN, perhaps originally a german and, consequently, more precise, writes it in the exact values : (Example n° 8), with a slur.
 - 2) the "Appoggiatura", above or under, may have different values, following the value of the note on which it takes effect. This value cannot be given a precise mathematical value, it is sometimes shorter, sometimes longer than a regular value. In any case, I absolutely disagree with the theory according to which the "Appoggiatura" takes half the value of the appoggiatured note : this would be a simplification quite opposite to the spirit of the old music. "Appoggiatura" means : dwelling. If this dwelling could be reduced to a simple value, why have the authors not written this very value ?...

A few examples :

- When the " small note " precedes a group containing a quarter-note and two eighth-notes , it will not give a group of four equal eighth-notes, but the first eighth-note will be a little longer than the three other ones : 
- When the " small note " takes effect on a dotted fourth-note followed by an eighth-note , it will never take the value of a fourth-note and two eighth-notes (), - that would spoil the rhythm and very often the harmony -, but approximatively of a slightly prolonged eighth-note : 

In a general way, one can say that the " small note " participates in the unequalisation of the rhythm and completes it. In a work where the rhythmic values are freely interpreted, the " small note " must be consistent with the unequalisation of the piece. Similar to the " pincés " and " tremblements ", it will be a function of the rhythmic and harmonic context.

- Other Signs : Almost every composer gave his own explanation of certain more difficult signs. The following examples come from d'ANGLEBERT who uses them in his " Six Fugues pour Orgue ".
(Example n° 9)

Some advices to those who would like to freely embellish pieces where too few ornaments are written :

- The " Tremblements " more naturally take their place on the weak degrees, that is the 7th and 3d of both major and minor modes, and the 6th and 2d of the minor mode.
- The " Pincés " have a very good effect on the strong degrees : tonic and dominant.
- When two notes are moving disjunctly, one or more " passing note " must very often be played between them, either as a " Coulé de Tierce " (on the beat) or by a group of " passing notes " (before the beat).
- When a long note precedes a cadence, the " Tremblement " can be realized as a complete trill, either with a turn (even when this is not written) or followed by an anticipation. (Example n° 10)
- Supposing that the turn of a trill is written after a " Tremblement " on a long value, the " Tremblement " will not be stopped, but will continue into the turn, whose value will be arbitrary. Especially in the expressive style, one must avoid stopping the trill before the turn.

Finally, it is better never to write the additional ornaments into a piece, then one risks making too many and spoiling the melodic and rhythmic sense of the piece. Ornamentation must be improvised, and any interpreter, trained to the performance of early music, must let the inspiration come under his fingers, like the organists from old times used to do.

Marie-Claire ALAIN

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Exemples musicaux - Musical Examples - Musikalische Beispielen -

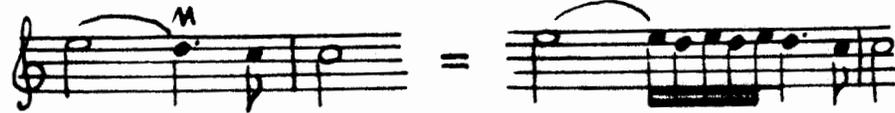
Ex. n° 1
(Pincé)



Ex. n° 2
(Tremblement)



Ex. n° 3
(Tremblement lié)



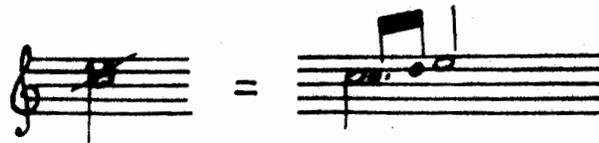
Ex. n° 4



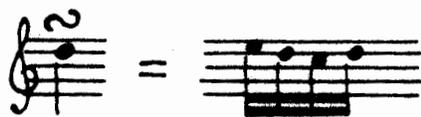
Ex. n° 5
(Port de voix)



Ex. n° 6
(Coulé de tierce)



Ex. n° 7
(Double)



Corrette : 

Ex. n° 8
(Petite Note)



Ex. n° 9



Ex. n° 10

