

SOURCES FOR RHYTHM  
AND TEMPO

G. Frescobaldi - Preface to the Toccate e partite for  
harpsichord (1614)

1. Correctly played, these pieces do not proceed in even beats. Rather they should follow the style of performing modern madrigals, which, though difficult, can be facilitated by tempo changes, singing now languishingly, now fast, and once in a while letting a tone hang in the air when the meaning and affect of the word suggest it.

3. The beginning of a toccata should be adagio and arpeggiando . . .

4. The last note of a trill and of a passage that progresses leapwise or stepwise should be held back a little by an eighth or sixteenth or otherwise in order to distinguish it from the following note values. This ritenuto keeps a passaggio from flowing into the next one.

5. Cadences, even when written in rapid notes, must slow down very much, and so must gradually the notes preparing them.

8. When both hands play sixteenth note passages, the notes preceding them--even if they are written as short notes--must be held a little to better show the agility of the hands in the energetic delivery of the passage.

9. Passaggi and expressive sections in toccatas and partitas must be played in slow tempo, while the other sections can be played somewhat allegro. The player's taste and judgment should be the arbiters. It is upon the correct tempo that the spirit and perfection of this style depends.

Thomas Mace - Musick's monument (London, 1676)

When we come to be masters, so that we can command all manner of time, at our pleasures; we then take liberty . . . to break time; sometimes faster and sometimes slower, as we perceive the nature of the thing requires, which often adds, much Grace, and Luster, to the Performance.

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Michel de Saint-Lambert, Principes du Clavecin (Paris, 1702).  
continues to advocate the old proportions.

Etienne Loulié, Eléments ou Principes de Musique, mis dans un nouvel ordre (Paris, 1696) "*romantic*"

Michel L'Affillard, Principes très-faciles (Paris, 1695).

Joseph Sauveur (1701), J. G. E. Stoeckel (1796),  
Maelz1 (1816) all devised chronometers of some sort.

J. J. Quantz, Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen (Berlin, 1752) *most accurate for 18th.*

Rosamond E. M. Harding, Origins of Musical Tempo and Expression (Oxford, 1938).

E. Borrel, "Les indications métronomiques laissées par

les auteurs français du XVIIIe siècle," Revue de Musicologie 12 (1928), 149-153.

Ralph Kirkpatrick, "Eighteenth-century metronomic indications," Papers of the AMS 3 (1938), 30-50.

Curt Sachs, Rhythm and Tempo (New York, 1953).

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Quantz's tempo indications for dances:

Bouree	80 MM	the bar
Canaries	80 MM	" "
Chaconne	160 MM	the crotchet
Courante	80 MM	" "
Entree	80 MM	" "
Furie	160 MM	" "
Gavotte	80 MM	the bar
Gigue	80 MM	" "
Loure	80 MM	the crotchet
Marche	80 MM	" "
Menuet	160 MM	" "
Musette	80 MM	" "
Passecaille	160 MM	" "
Passepied	160 MM	" "
Rigaudon	80 MM	the bar
Rondeau	160 MM	the crotchet
Sarabande	80 MM	" "
Tambourin	80 MM	the bar

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Tempo in Bach and Handel:

Axioms - Bach, Handel, and suchlike select note values in which to notate a piece for some reason:

Time signatures in Bach, Handel, and suchlike indicate tempos, and more especially sequence of metrical pulses:

The harmonic rhythm of the piece has a strong dynamic pull on the tempo of the piece:

These three axioms, applied together to a piece of music allows the performer to arrive at a very exact conception of the tempo (which may need to be modified for acoustic reasons), and interrelationships between tempos of differing movements or sections.

Examples: The basic pulse -

The basic "motion notes" of the piece

The effect of different time signatures (duple and triple)

Modifying characteristics:

a. improvisatory style

b. chorale melody

c. instrument

d. structure of basic material

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