History

II. Baroque

The Dance Suite
1. Have you played any Baroque dance movements before?
   - What are your impressions of these pieces? Do you always detect a dance element to them? What edition/s did you use?

2. What recordings of Baroque dance pieces have you listened to?
   - Please give specific details about recording artist and provide a link to the recording if possible.

3. What overall details of the Baroque period are you aware of?
   - Are there any major historical details of the period that stand out to you? Are you aware of any of the artwork, science, history, etc. of the period?

4. What performance conventions are you aware of concerning this style of music?
   - Is there information relating to dynamics, tempo, tone color, etc. that you’ve learned about this style? If so, where did it come from?
J.S. Bach
The Baroque period sees one of the most important composers to grace the guitar’s literature - J.S. Bach.

But where did Bach draw his musical inspiration from? He was not an alien living on another planet - Bach was very much part of the musical landscape of his time and drew influences from other composers.

There is also the question of arrangement. Bach didn’t write for the guitar, so his music must be adapted for our instrument. But how do we do this? How did guitarists in the past do this?

This leads to perhaps the most relevant question. How is Bach’s music to be played and interpreted? I had the great privilege to have studied with lutenist and early music specialist Paul O’Dette. If there’s one thing I learned it’s “do whatever it takes to bring Bach’s music to life”.

The Dance Suite
We will explore these topics and questions in relation to a dance suite, the (so called) Lute Suite BWV 996 in E Minor.

A typical dance suite typically includes the following movements, but can of course be modified to include other dances, or subtract from this core:

Prelude
Allemande
Sarabande
Gigue

Bringing it to life:
Bach’s music is easy to sound dull when it’s played as it looks on the page. Learning the performance practice of the period helps you bring the music to life.
Prelude BWV 996

- This Prelude is in the form of a French Overture, which Bach used to introduce many other suites.
- There are two main sections, A) a slow and stately section that uses many dotted rhythms, and B) a faster fugal section (with a subject and imitation in multiple voices).
A Section:

**Punctuation:** This particular Prelude contains a beautiful 4 bar introduction. It’s important to try and group the 16th notes into sub phrases - think of this like punctuating a sentence. You can figure out how to do this based on the interval pattern: where are the large leaps?

Without this phrasing and shaping the music will sound incoherent. Think of it like listening to someone speak who doesn’t use any punctuation. **Play the example twice, once without any punctuation (as it appears) and the next with punctuation.**

**Dance:** The next part uses the typical dotted rhythms of a stately French Overture. As notated, these rhythms sound dull, so the way to bring them to life is by:

1) Overdotting: Playing the dotted note for longer than indicated
2) Silence d’articulation: adding a very subtle lift in-between the dotted notes and 16ths.

**Notated: dull, not graceful**

**Played: comes to life, energetic and graceful**
Clarity: It’s important to identify the subject and bring it out. Practicing the voices individually is a very valuable exercise.

The way to bring the rhythmic character to life is to use articulation. Baroque articulation was not always legato like in modern performance practice. Instead, music was likened to speech and rhetoric, so it was clearly articulated. This also gives clarity to all the notes, making the important ones stand out.

- Bring the passages below to life by applying the information above.

Präludium.
Task 1

- Play the opening of the Prelude and punctuate the phrasing. How does this compare to playing it without the punctuation? Share thoughts and record.

- Listen to the two recordings below. Can you identify the features of the French Overture in Bach’s Prelude?

- Play the dotted note figures with overdotting. How does this compare to playing them without? Share thoughts and record.

- Play each individual voice of the opening Presto theme (and add articulation). Does that process somehow change how you hear or interpret the music? Share thoughts and record.

- Apply these principles to the Prelude BWV 995 example. Share thoughts and record.

Listen to Prelude performed on harpsichord: [click here]

Listen to typical French Overture: [click here]
Allemande BWV 996

- We now enter into the dances. These are typically in binary or rounded binary form, with each section being repeated. 
- This Allemande is in ‘stile brisé’ (broken style): an irregular arpeggiated texture that was dominant in France. It’s also called ‘lute style’ as it was a means for keyboard instruments to imitate the lute.

"A serious and well-composed harmoniousness in arpeggiated style, expressing satisfaction or amusement, and delighting in order and calm” —- Johannes Mattheson

Allemande.

- Because of the ‘stile brisé’, it’s crucial to know the harmony. **Sustain the notes for each harmony to enhance the stile brisé effect.**
- Pieces in stile brisé normally have irregular phrase lengths. **Can you identify the phrase lengths? Bring them out in your playing with subtle pauses.**
- The repeats offer a chance to add variety, primarily by means of **dynamics and ornamentation.**
Task 2

- Practice the Allemande and aim to sustain as many notes as possible. Does this affect your fingering choices? Record and share your thoughts.

- Identify the phrase lengths (remember they’re irregular!). How does this process affect and inform your interpretation? Record and share your thoughts.

- What dynamics and ornaments could you add to the repeat of each section? Record and share your thoughts.

- Listen to the recordings below and share your thoughts. Do those recordings give you new ideas?

*Listen to the Allemande played on Harpsichord: [click here]*

*Listen to the Allemande played on Baroque Lute: [click here]*
Courante BWV 996

- Courante translates to “running”, as it involved running and jumping steps in the dance.
- There are two types, the French (Courante) and Italian (Corrente). This is an example of a French Courante, because of the graceful character due to the use of dotted rhythms. A French Courante is generally slower, as suggested by the time signature 3/2. An Italian Corrente is in 3/4 or 3/8 time and is fast.

French Courante: slow and graceful

Italian Corrente (from Cello Suite No. 3): fast and light

Notes Inégales

- The French Courante makes heavy use of a type of rhythmic convention that was prevalent in French Baroque music.
- Notes inégales (or inegalité) is the equivalent of swing in jazz. The quavers are notated straight, but are played with a slight inequality to them.
- Combine this with overdotting and the result is drastically different to what is notated!

Hemiola

- The Courante often changed between 3/2 and 6/4, shifting the accents between 2 and 3. This shift is called a hemiola.
- It’s important to know if the measure is in 3/2 or 6/4 and to give the correct accents accordingly. Looking at the harmonic movement and rhythmic gestures is the best way to determine the meter.
“The measure of the Courante or rather the rhythm of the Courante dance is the most solemn of any.” — Johann Gottfried Walther
Task 3

- Practice the Courante with notes inegales (just the first 4 bars is fine). How does this contrast with playing it straight? Record and share your thoughts.

- Practice the Hemiola examples and bring out the accents. How does this differ from playing without those accents? Record and share your thoughts?

- Compare the recordings below of French and Italian Courantes.

Listen to the French Courante played on Lute: [click here](#)

Listen to the Italian Courante played on Cello: [click here](#)
Sarabande BWV 996

- A slow dance in triple meter that usually involves intensity, impassioned harmony and contemplative inwardness.
- **The second or third beats are often accented.** Looking at the harmonic and melodic movement will help you know where to place the accents.

Slow melodic movements are often ornamented quite heavily. These ornaments should be played with lightness and swiftness. It’s important to know what the main note is and to let the ornamental notes flow towards it.
“Sarabande: a soft passionate movement, always set to a slow triple meter... apt to move the passions and to disturb the tranquility of the mind.” — Talbot
Task 4

- Place accents where you feel they’re appropriate. How does this change the effect of the music? Record and share your thoughts.

- Play the ornamental passages soft and light. What effect does this give in contrast to playing them loud and heavy? Record and share your thoughts.

- Listen to the recording below. Does this performer place accents on 2nd and 3rd beats? Are the ornaments played lightly? Share your answers and any other thoughts the recording gives you.

Listen to the Sarabande played on Lute: click here
Bourrée BWV 996

- A fast and lively dance in duple time
- Resembles the Gavotte, but has a **pulse of two in the bar** (whereas the Gavotte has four)
- **There is typically a crotchet upbeat, which should be played lightly**
- **The articulation can be short and light overall**, as suggested by Quantz

“**Bourrée: played gayly and with a short and light bow-stroke.**” — Quantz
Task 5

- Play the Bourree with 2 accents in the bar. How does this contrast with having 4 accents in the bar? Record and share your thoughts.

- Use a short and light articulation. What techniques can you use to achieve this on the guitar? Record and share your thoughts.

- Listen to the recordings below and compare their overall character. Which one comes closer to using the information you’ve just learned?

Listen to the Bourree played on Lute: [click here](#)

Listen to the Bourree played on Guitar: [click here](#)
Gigue BWV 996

- A lively dance that originated from Ireland (jig)
- Normally in compound time (3/8, 6/8, 9/8 or 12/8)

Rhythmic divisions
- There are two different types of Gigues, categorized by their rhythm. One uses dotted rhythms (Gigue - French) and the other uses straight rhythms (Giga - Italian). This one is the latter.
- Gigues (French) are slower and more graceful.
- Gigas (Italian) are faster and livelier.
- It’s important not to get caught up in the semiquavers. **Ensure that you feel the big beats strongly and make the notes in between soft and light.**

\begin{image}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{gigue.png}
\caption{Gigue - French - Slower and Graceful}
\end{image}

\begin{image}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{giga.png}
\caption{Giga - Italian - Fast & Lively}
\end{image}

Dynamics: follow the shape of the line
- It’s important, especially in a faster movement, that you shape the music at all times. One of the best ways to do this is to follow the shape of the line, meaning: rising melody = crescendo and falling melody = decrescendo.
- This sounds simple but requires incredible control and awareness to do effectively.
- It’s strongly advised that you mark in the dynamics into your scores. This makes you much more likely to actually execute them!
Task 6

- Listen to the Gigue recording below, which gives accents only to the big beats while making the notes in-between soft and light. What effect does this give to the music compared to playing all notes heavily? Share your thoughts.

- Add dynamics by following the shape of the line. How does this enhance the music compared to adding no dynamics or just large scale dynamics?

Listen to the Italian Giga played on Harpsichord: click here