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ANALYTICAL METHODS THAT LINK THE CORRECT INTERPRETATION OF FRENCH UNMEASURED (NON-METRIC) PRELUDES AND THE FRENCH BAROQUE STYLE IN GENERAL

ABSTRACT

Baroque improvisation practice was highly developed on keyboard instruments. A special type of written out improvisation, are French harpsichord unmeasured preludes. Louis Couperin's harpsichord preludes derive from improvisational practices and their musical notation seems fluid and indefinite. The aim of this study is to demonstrate that the unmeasured interpretation is one of the tendencies of the French "taste" and that a large number of various pieces of French harpsichord school belong to this genre, even if their notation is not unmeasured. As freedom was important expressive mean in the performance art, their interpretation should lean on Louis Couperin's unmeasured Preludes.

KEY WORDS: improvisation, unmeasured, preludes, character pieces

Baroque improvisation practice was highly developed in vocal and instrumental music, and improvisations on keyboard instruments, thanks to the harmonic, melodic and contrapuntal possibilities of the instruments were particularly interesting. A number of baroque pieces represents what great artists left their students to learn art of improvisation or, how students were trying to "catch" the mastery of their teachers. Toccata, prelude, fantasy, represent important part of this praxis for us today, when the improvisation practice has disappeared from education system. The practice of improvisation is associated with the practice of interpretation. In the art of interpretation ultimate sound effect should be similar, music has to

show moment of inspiration. In both cases, can be said, there is difference in what is seen by performer's eye, and the ears of the listener. Rousseau's musical vocabulary indicates improvisation as freedom deviating from the rules and letting the imagination be left to everything that is coming. Freedom of interpretation in Baroque influences not only pulse and rhythm, but also harmony, melody and form.

Indicators of freely interpretations in Baroque can be textual instructions (as in Frescobaldi and Couperin), genre pieces (*toccata, prelude, tombeaux, allemanda*- although classified as dance type) or a character code (eg. *languissement, avec discrétion*). A special type of written out improvisation, unmeasured (non-metric) preludes (fr.*préludes non mesurés*) are representatives of the French harpsichord (fr.clavecin) school. Their tag is missing meter and music values, but there are numerous bends (curves) which determine the duration, grouping and chord tones and melodic accents. Some theorists (W.Mellers, A. Pirro, H. Quittard, Lionel de Laurencie) believe that the origin of these Preludes bound with the French lute school, because of similarity of instruments (plucking string stringed instruments); others (Ledbetter, Moroney, Curtis) find more kinship with harmonic instruments viola da gamba and organ as harpsichord idiom is more complex than lute. They believe that unmeasured preludes invoke Italian toccata style. Both are right: French preludes own transparency and elegance of the French lute school, and superior level of elaboration of the Italian Baroque virtuosity.

Louis Couperin's (Louis Couperin, 1626-1661) unmeasured harpsichord preludes offer major challenges to contemporary theorists and performers, as they do not contain traditional signs of meter and rhythm. Other French harpsichordists were authors of unmeasured preludes too (J.H. D'Anglebert, L.N.Clerambault, N.Lebegue, J.de la Guerre, L.Marchand, J.Ph. Rameau)¹, but sixteen Louis Couperin's Preludes are most numerous examples of this genre and of the best quality ². They derive from improvisational practices (*ex tempore*), their musical notation seems fluid and indefinite. Besides the problem of rhythm, in them there is uncertainty of the harmonic language, typical for the seventeenth century French music (it is on the edge of modality and tonality).

¹ Louis Couperin enjoyed the protection of famous Jacques Champion Chambonnières (1602-1672), the "father of French harpsichord school", thanks to whom he came to Paris, had access to the French court, gained the position of organist St. Gervais (that the members of the Couperin family held next 150 years) and became one of the organist of the Royal Chapel (Chapel Royal). His nephew, François Couperin(1668-1773), become even more famous, known as "Couperin the Great" (François Couperin "le Grand")(Curtis, 1970).

² Louis was in contact with the harpsichordists Jean-Henry D'Anglebert) and Nicolas Antoine Lebègue and lutist Blancrocher Charles Fleury. He also met with German harpsichordist Johann Jacob Froberger(1616-1667), who studied with Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583-1643), in Rome. (Curtis, 1970).

The most complete modern analysis of Louis Couperin Preludes is a doctoral dissertation of Philip Chih-Cheng Chang *Analytical and Performative Selected Issues and unmeasured Preludes by Louis Couperin* (2011)³. It provides a detailed overview of interpretations of these preludes in the twentieth century⁴. Chang offers many different modernized (metric) displays of unmeasured Preludes to help understand the process of improvisation that is embedded in them (their purpose is educational, finally we should not play from them). According to Chang, rhythm in Preludes to some extent can be established on the basis of four elements: order, grouping, accents and duration. Each of these elements is indicated in the corresponding type of curved lines.⁵ Chang also has applied Schenkerian linear analysis to provide contemporary theorists a picture of performance close to modern records. Chang suggest modern realizations made by using different methods, but he admits they sometimes give different result. Method using parallels to other baroque composers can serve the best to improve lost *ex tempore* performance tradition. However, Chang is a theorist, not an active contemporary harpsichordist. An experienced interpreter of harpsichord baroque music, connoisseur of art of *basso continuo* (traditional techniques for accompaniment voice, instrument or ensemble, based on the realization of thorough bass), who does not strive forming a modern musical notation, but search for stylistically convincing interpretation, will rather undertake deconstruction of musical notation, reduce piece on the figured bass and make analysis of applied improvisational methods. Search for correct interpretation of the French unmeasured Preludes, will lead him first to ask questions of origin, influence and inspiration which guided Louis Couperin, as well as to explore issue of the French "taste" (style of composition and interpretation) in music of the seventeenth century.

The art of interpretation

³ Chang has given the most complete review of *préludes non mesures* definitions: pieces improvised to test the tuning; examples of *ex tempore* performance practice; written out improvisation with long range planning and structure (Curtis); idiomatic keyboard work that more owes to Froberger's toccatas; pieces determined by genre, notation, inspiration, and free rhythmic performance; display of composer's or performer's genius and imagination (J.J.Ruseaux); pieces related to metrical pieces "as a prose to the verse" (F.Couperin); decorated chord progressions (Schenker) (Chang, 2011)

⁴ Chang finds parallels between unmeasured preludes with some other historical genre pieces (Thomas de Santa Maria's glosas, redobles, quebradas; Tomas Mace's voluntary, fancy) ; conceptions of melodic diminution and thorough bas tradition (Manieren, embellishment, *avec discrétion, freely, affect, insight, refinement*) and pieces with free sense of rhythm and a relative lack of organized structure (Frescobaldi's rules as connection to rhetoric; CPE Bach notion *rubato*; Schenker's framework, Gerippe, Urgrund) (Chang, 2011)

⁵ He displays that rhythm in unmeasured preludes is clearly indicated by different lines: order by sustaining harmony lines- *tenues*; grouping by embrasures, accolades, liaisons; stress by ornaments, *port de voix*, anacrusis, *tremblements*. All lines together help establishing rhythm: chords regulate pulse ; chord relation meter; ornaments strong beats.(Chang, 2011)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his Dictionary of Music (*Dictionnaire de Musique*, 1768) under the term 'to prelude', states that this means irregular, often fantasy guided short phrases that touch on the keyboard points of tonality and serve to prepare the singer or warm fingers of harpsichordist; but under the term Preludes for piano or organ, he points that it is composition that encourage the practice of improvisation (*ex tempore*) and contain the finest structure, harmony, modulation, imitation and contrapuntal work as possible on the keyboard instruments . He adds that in the prelude great musicians illuminate all outstanding transformations that have mastered, and it is not enough the author of Preludes to be a good composer, and has a superb technique, but in addition he has to be wrapped up by fire of genius, and has a creative spirit that will know how to find a ideas that are wonderfully harmonious and pleasant to the ear.⁶ His words can be applied on art of music interpretation too.

At Louis Couperin's time, French secular and spiritual music was dominated by Italian influence⁷. French unmeasured Preludes are not improvisational form, they are written off improvisation, as well as Italian toccatas. Contemporary harpsichordist and musicologist Davitt Moroney argues that, although the non-metric notation clearly signals the metric and rhythmic freedom, many more rhapsodic compositions of virtuosic or contrary thoughtful and languorous character require freedom of interpretation: Toccatas of Italian Baroque masters, or Fantasy and Allemande (especially allemandes graves). We can add that it is true as well for many of French character pieces. The aim of this study is to demonstrate that the unmeasured interpretation is one of the tendencies of the French "taste" and that a large number of various pieces of French harpsichord school belong to this genre, even if their notation is not non-metric. The need for a free, fluid interpretation was the traditional understanding of the thing, the way to realize the subtlety and sophistication of good interpretation. Analytical approach to the interpretation of unmeasured Preludes can contribute to the stylistic interpretation of the pieces not just these ones belong to the genre

⁶"Mais sur l' Orgue & sur le Clavecin l'Art de préluder est plus considerable. C'est composer & jouer in-promptu des Pièces chargées de tout ce que la Composition a de plus savant en Dessein, en Fugue, en Imitation, en Modulation, & en Harmonie. C'est sur tout en préludant, que les grands Musiciens, exempts de cet extrême asservissement aux règles que l'oeil des critiques impose sur le papier, font briller ces Transitions savantes qui ravissent les Auditeurs. C'est-là qu'il ne suffit pas d'être bon Compositeur ni de bien posséder son Clavier ni d'avoir la main bonne & bien exercée, mais qu'il faut encore abonder de ce feu de génie & de cet esprit inventif qui font trouver & traiter sur le champ le sujets les plus favorables à l'Harmonie & les plus flatteurs à l'oreille" (Moroney, 1984)

⁷ Louis Couperin has developed harpsichord artistic practice under the patronage of Abel Servien (1593-1659), a prominent diplomat of participants in the signing of the Peace of Westphalia, who owned a stately summer palace in place Meudon. As an admirer and connoisseur of Venetian music Servien had a great contribution to getting Louis Couperin acquainted with the Italian keyboard music idiom (Curtis, 1970).

(tombeaux, allemandes graves), but also pieces that contain text notes for the elegiac and tender character (*languissement, tendrement*), or to the character pieces whose title refers to melancholy or impermanent content as for example: *Les Ombres errantes* (Wandering shadows); *Les Langeurs tendres* (The Tender Languors) or *Les Charmes* (Grace).

Characteristics of French "taste" is explained in Francois Couperin's didactic text notes. Although he did not (as his uncle Louis) used the non-metric notation, he speaks on freedom and flexibility of interpretation in his treatise *L'Art de toucher le Clavecin* (*On the Art of playing the harpsichord*). He provides a general explanation of the French musical taste by comparison with the language, pointing that as there are differences between the written and spoken French, so there is a tendency to deviations from literal interpretations of musical notation typical of the French way of interpreting music⁸. Couperin calls this tendency *le bon goût* ("good taste"), that means grace in performing smallest note-values (manifested as their inequality) and flexibility in the field of harmony and melody (which refers to the control of the music time). Although Francois Couperin words originate from a later period (about 80 years after the work of Louis Couperin), they are the confirmation of "elusiveness" interpretative skills of French harpsichordists and duration and constancy of performance practice, despite changes in the mode of notation and indications. Thanks to the immutability of French taste, Louis Couperin's Preludes mean for us today not just one of the historical forms of (written out) improvisation, but the key and guide for the reconstruction of the French keyboard style of seventeenth and eighteenth century.

Louis Couperin took an elegant way to check tune from French lute and bass viola players through improvising Preludes, in attempt to write them down he implemented free non-metric notation (Example 1). In his notation he chose only whole notes, while other French keyboard players mixed them with certain musical values (which do not indicate the precise duration). Notes are connected with curved lines (arcs) that have several meanings: showing how note should be maintained (ie. make up a chord), how long to keep, how to group and which one to accentuate. Harpsichord preludes are to far more developed, compared to lute's preludes, more layered and often contain contrapuntal parts as well as Italian Toccata. Louis Couperin undoubtedly owe Frescobaldi's and Froberger's toccata style (Example 2 show the presence of identical passages, although different notated in Froberger and Louis Couperin pieces). Compared to solid Froberger style, Louis Couperin notation

⁸ Il y a selon moy dans notre facon d'écrire la musique, des deffauts qui se raportent à la manière d'écrire notre langue. C'est que nous écrivons diffèremment de ce que nous exècutons: ce qui fait que les ètrangers jouient notre musique moins bien que nous ne fasons la leur. Au contraire les Italiens ècrivent leur musique dans les vrayes valeurs qu'ils L'ont pensée. (Couperin, 1977)

show much greater fluidity and softness. It can be said that his Preludes are French version of Italian Baroque toccata idiom, as well as unique and original presentation of the French "good taste".

Expressiveness and interpretation in the Baroque epoch

We can't and we must not, on the basis of often solid musical notation of baroque composers, derive conclusions about their style as a flat, expressionless or a monotonous, we must turn to the texts of their contemporaries, look how they perceived their music, what impressions they wanted to achieve, what was the spirit of their art. Arnold Dolmetsch, founder of theory of "early music" (historically based interpretation of pre-classical music eras), refers in his introductory chapter devoted to expression, to the words of the Benedictine monk Dom Bedos de Celles from 1766, published in his *"La Tonotechnie"*, a book about mechanical musical devices. He ridicules monotonous "play like a barrel organ," as non artistic and emphasizes great care of all the masters, musicians of the Baroque period, of the realization of expressiveness. He points that freedom of interpretation is essential process to achieve beauty of music⁹. Dolmetsch is also quoting Thomas Mace to confirm how powerful music is in expressing characters, ideas and passions (Thomas Mace, *Music monument, or a Remembrancer of the Best Practical Musick, both Divine and Civil, that has ever been known to have been in the World*, Cambridge, 1676): "and (in Music) as in Language, various Humors, Conceits and Passions (of all sorts) may be expressed..." (Dolmetsch, 1969).

The founder of the Baroque keyboard style, Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583-1643), established the rules of rhetoric in instrumental music. A new style of performing instrumental works (toccatas and partitas) he called "affetti cantabili e diversita di passi" (sung affects and the various passages). Comparing it with the style of new madrigals, he points out the basic rule of rhetoric: "First of all, this style should not be subordinated to time (constant pulse), pulse is from time to time faster or slower or even delayed " in the air "in accordance with the expressiveness of music and sense of the words" (Dolmetsch, 1969). His words invoke the moment of freedom and *ex tempore* interpretation. To step across from the current pulse, he emphasize, is mark of inspiration and spontaneous emotional expression.

⁹ "There is a manner of conceiving Music entirely different from the one taught in all the Treatises upon this Art; it is founded upon execution itself. They have not said a word about the ornaments, nor of the combination of silences, held and touched notes, to form articulation of the music, of their inequality, the distinction between first and second... all these observations are, however essential, and form the essence of beautifull execution as practised by the most famous organists..."(Dart, 1969)

Another modern author, Thurston Dart, finds *extemporisation* is one of the main characteristics of the music of earlier epochs all over the world, which unfortunately, over the last century almost entirely went out of fashion and practice in artistic music. As a result, there has been "a progressive annihilation of performers for the benefit of the composers" (Dart, 1967). Dart warns that never has been so before in music, European and non European, and alerts on potential immeasurable loss. He also highlights the preciousness of returning to the traditional practice of improvisation, which is hiding the essence of the power of music.

Baroque practice of improvisation is based on the realization of thorough bass and enriched melodic improvisation. Horizontal and vertical dimension in music notation should be in the right balance, it is a model offered by Louis Couperin in his Preludes. Sixteen unmeasured harpsichord preludes are a real gem. They are most direct way of learning improvisation. The preservation of *ex tempore* performance tradition prevents potential loss of Baroque style and impoverishment of art music scene. While thorough bass in Baroque period can be reduced to a few chords, *ex tempore* performance implies a very broad, practically infinite range of ornamentation, passage work and imitative work. The ornamentation was latter rationalized and limited to symbols by some French composers (François Couperin in this regard expressed the rigor) (Example 3). Symbols define the artistic application of dissonance, but this should not provide deceptive picture of the possibilities of ornamentation. One of important values of Louis Couperin's Preludes is that they point to the time when ornamentation was more fluid and free (before practice of ornamentation became so excessive and often tasteless that it was necessary to limit it to symbols). These Preludes show how ornamentation should be incorporated in harmonic and melodic lines, the skill that interpreter should follow as well in articulation of ornaments marked by signs symbols. That way spirit and elegance of entire French Baroque epoch can be revealed.

It should be recognized that there is a great difficulty to notate improvisation intelligently. Also, improvisation pose the greatest challenge to any artist, as it comprises composing skills in addition to the performing ones. Louis Couperin was among the first who found the best way to indicate both improvisation and free performance. The seemingly incomplete Louis Couperin's notation indicates that there are free elements of interpretation which must remain spontaneous. In the theory of "historically informed performance practice" (HIPP), many contemporary harpsichordists pay attention on unmeasured preludes and propose analysis or transposition to metrical notation. Davitt Moroney is one who gave a new

perspective: analysis of Preludes is meant to interpret French harpsichord touch¹⁰. He emphasizes that similarities between Preludes and Froberger's toccatas help mutual understanding.

From this point we can continue, and make connection with proper performance art for most of the French harpsichord pieces. Moroney's note that notation must be read obliquely poses the question of touch and is the most important, it shows that on harpsichord we should break down the chords, rather than to hold them simultaneous as on the organ. There are innumerable ways how we can strike chord, especially if combined with melodic ornamentation. Louis Couperin's Preludes are background to understand French harpsichordists' art of performance. Artistry of *préludes non mesurés* was developing through time: linguistic marks, and character descriptions prevailed in later period instead visual notational freedom, lesser appearance of *preludés* happens simultaneously with character pieces development, often marked by *lentement* and *fort grave* and with praxis of "*mesure interrompue*". We can, opposite to Chang's examples of metric versions of Louis Couperin's Preludes, at least just for analytical and educational purpose, try to notate any languid or slow French harpsichord piece in whole notes. As phrasing is not indicated in metric notated pieces, we need effort to carefully use arcs (*tenues* and *liassons*), and we should start again (like in analytical approach to unmeasured pieces) with thorough bass analysis. This process of getting new view of metric pieces we could name "deconstruction". But, if we make effort to learning art of thorough bass, all will be unnecessary, when thorough bass is recognized we can build on this foundation free interpretation. It is not easy, it needs time and a change of attitudes and educational system. But it is worth efforts. We can conclude that analysis indispensable for correct interpretation of French preludes is also essential for interpretation of wide range of French pieces, in general for French seventeenth and eighteenth century taste. And that Baroque artistic music is not always as it appears, strict and controlled. More we go deep in history praxes, notations are different from what we are used to. There is great

¹⁰ Moroney gives 15 rules: 1. Notation contains all the necessary instructions we need; 2. Each note to be played is notated; 3. Stylistically, the frame of reference for these pieces is that of literary prose; 4. It is wrong to concentrate on supposed 'improvisatory' nature of the preludes; 5. Formally the frame of reference for these pieces is that of Froberger's Toccatas; 6. Couperin, in turn, helps us understand the performance style of Froberger's pieces; 7. Reference to contemporary lute preludes is not very instructive; 8. The notation must generally be read obliquely (question of touch); 9. The diagonal straight lines clarify the order of events; 10. There are three kinds of vertical straight lines: First mark the same as the clock line, the second emphasis mark, a third simultaneous tones; 11. The curves are neither ties nor slurs, they should be called *tenues*, ie. they emphasize the duration of tones "to whom no certain value is joined"; 12. It does not matter that *tenues* are not notated in a fully consistent fashion; 13. The *tenues* have one primary function: to indicate which notes are to be held, and for how long; 14. The precise position of the start and end of a *tenue* is more important than its curving shape; 15. A secondary function of the *tenues* is to help clarify the exact sequence of notes to be played (Moroney, 1984).

music world of improvisation and freedom in interpretation, that should not stay beyond our reach.

French "taste"

Mysterious Louis Couperin's Preludes become very clear when "decoded" . When we learn how to interpret them, it becomes obvious that they contain all the necessary information about the fixed elements of interpretation; while those of elements that should be fluid are left to the direction of intuition and imagination. They are true examples of French "good taste" which, was (and still is) the ancient ideal of "sense of proportion": a clear and precise expression, sufficient and never superfluous emotions, elegance of the thoughts and feelings. Basically, this ideal confronts the Italian Baroque (Italian taste), whose goal is uninhibited expression of affects and attainment of rhetorical effects. French artists are closer to the ideals of classical epoch (Platonism), and Italians contrary to ideals based on the ideas of Neo-Platonists mysticism. It can be said that the French taste remains, even in the period referred to as the epoch of Baroque art (a term more suited to the Italian taste), closer to the ideals of the Renaissance, just like in literature the art of seventeenth century French theorists referred to as "French classicism". René Descartes rational view of the music as expressed in his *Compendium musicae*, and Marin Mersenne's view of universal harmony (*Harmonie Universelle*, 1636), formed the spiritual vision of French artists of the seventeenth century. They do not differ much, although Descartes is more rational in his attitude and Mersenne more lean on intuition (he comprises music as "Ecco" of the Universe), both invoke control of feelings.

In Baroque music the rhetoric was the foundation of composition and interpretation. Rubato stemmed from the rhetoric, speech understanding of music. The theory of affects is at the root of the baroque style. Affects are the type of emotional communication based on rationalized emotional states. Composers of the seventeenth century attempted to initiate in the listener ears idealized emotional states such as joy, love, pain, doubt, fear. These were practically stereotypes, rhetorical figures. Affects gradually individualize, the rhetoric concept evolved in the direction of subjective, personal expression and composers began to think about the characters. Musical character is determined by the effect of tonality, tempo, meter, rhythm, melody, harmony, timbre, tessitura, strength. To gain free individual movement and color Francois Couperin has developed a complex system, brought to minute details, of shading the characters, like a painter who relies on color, light and shadow. Behind his art

stands the whole spiritual and conceptual space, behind his harpsichord skill improvisational practice of French seventeenth century music.

French Baroque style is characterized by rich ornamentation, which fulfills almost every unit of pulse. Jean Rousseau famous bass viola player said that music without ornaments is as "immature fruit"; a composer from the eighteenth century Michel Koret describe such music as "a diamond in the rough"(Tunley, 2010: 15). Harpsichord for contemporaries was perfect instrument. However, composers were aware of the inability to gain dynamics by fingers activity. Despite awareness of the short duration of the tone of the harpsichord, they find way of sound control by proper touch and succession of chord tones. Special type of ornamentation was inequality, a form of rhythmic decoration, spontaneously introduced in the interpretation, that provides flexibility in the musical flow. It origins in dance theater (fascination with gesture and movement led French tendency towards longer retention of one of the notes in pairs).

French culture rises up on the idea of practicing free arts. The pieces for harpsichord were subject of individual thought and aesthetic "education of taste". There was link between philosophy, literature, arts that music intended to evoke. François Couperin's harpsichord piece *Les Ombres Errantes (Wandering shadows)* is hiding symbolism of Plato's Cave. The notation of this piece does not give, at first glance, hope that all ethereal, fantasy and complex ideas could be adequately expressed (Example 4). Mark *Languissamment* calls for musical fantasy, piece need to be improvisatory like. How to gain that? In an attempt to explain his personal and give a general interpretation of French style, François Couperin's notes that it looks almost impossible to "give soul" to harpsichord. He therefore introduces the concept of breath before (suspension) or after the ton (aspiration). François Couperin also says that we often equate the terms Mesure (bar) and Cadence or Mouvement (cadence). He declares that expressivity can be reached by a slight increase or decrease in speed. He did not use unmeasured notation, as Louis Couperin. But when we pay attention to the melodic tones of Louis Couperin's Preludes, we can see the regular attendance of suspension and aspiration. We can conclude that unmeasured Louis Couperin's Preludes reveal not only a process of improvisation, but proper way of interpretation French harpsichord music, French "good taste". François Couperin in words explain the subtleties of French style. What he reaches in words, Louis Couperin shows in notation of unmeasured Preludes, they are a sketch that gives a visual stimulus to fluidity, naturalness and sensitivity of interpretation.

Many more French composers have explored freedom of measure to reach proper expression on harpsichord. One of the most interesting examples gives Jean Baptiste

Forqueray (1699-1782), the son of Antoine Forqueray(1671-1745), famous viola da Gamba player. Jean Bapriste has adopted his father's gamba pieces on harpsichord. With goal to achieve freedom in performance, that his father was famous of, he did not use unmeasured notation but whole notes measured, but he added an important note on the page that left and right hand should never come together, that was a clear sign for use of suspension; arpégé, inégalité, and flexibility of pulse in performance is not marked, but whole notes and note *Tendrement* evoke it (Example 5).

To catch perfection in performance art it is equally important: to make difference between passing and harmony tones, study basso continuo and think on melodic fluency, to take in account tuning ("energy des modes"), notice unusual sonorities resulting from confluence of linear motions, melting harmony and counterpoint, chromatic steps; and to study manuscript scores (that already seem like analytical graphs), learn historical praxis and style, research rhetorical aspects, and lean on musical intuition. Ultimate result of unmeasured preludes analysis is recognition of historical performance practice, and introduction of idea that the best of all methods is revival of old learning methods. Style knowledge helps analysis of unmeasured preludes and reverse, their visual appearance helps understanding French taste.

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SUMMARY

Search for correct interpretation of French unmeasured Preludes will lead an experienced interpreter of harpsichord music to ask questions of origin, influence and inspiration which guided their composers, as well as to explore issue of French "taste" in music of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Characteristics of French "taste" are best explained in François Couperin's didactic text by comparison with the language, he is pointing that as there are differences between the written and spoken French, so there is a tendency to deviation from literal interpretation in piece of music. Grace in performing smallest note-values (manifested as their inequality) and flexibility in the field of harmony and melody (which refers to the control of the music time) Couperin names *le bon goût* ("good taste") in interpretation. Baroque practice of improvisation (*ex tempore* performance) is based on the realization of thorough bass and enriched melodic improvisation. Preservation of this tradition prevents impoverishment of art music scene. Sixteen unmeasured harpsichord preludes are a real gem in tradition reveal. Davitt Moroney is one who gave a new perspective of unmeasured Preludes, he comprises them as mean to interpret French harpsichord touch. These Preludes show how ornamentation should be incorporated in harmonic and melodic lines, the skill that interpreter should follow in articulation of ornaments marked by signs. From this point we can continue, and make connection with proper performance art for most of the French harpsichord pieces. We can use François Couperin's character pieces as an example to show how French composers succeeded to capture mastery of harpsichord interpretative art, characteristic that listener felt as *douceur* of performance, and heard as freedom of measure. Artistry of *préludes non mesurés* was developing through time: linguistic marks, and character descriptions prevailed in later period instead visual notational freedom, lesser appearance of *préludés* happens simultaneously with more character pieces, often marked by *lentement* , *fort grave* or "*mesure interrompue*". Analysis indispensable for correct interpretation of French preludes is essential for interpreting wide range of French pieces. Approach is based on idea that, if there is possibility to change from unmeasured to measured notation, reverse is possible too, at least just for educational purpose. But as harpsichord masters were masters of improvisation, best applicable analysis is basso continuo reduction, and the best way of developing interpretation quality is developing improvisational skills.

Example 1. Louis Couperin, unmeasured Prelude

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[Suite XV]

92. PRÉLUDE

anacrusis *cheute port de voix*

anacrusis

coulé *acciacatura* *cheute*


tremblement *tremblement*

tremblement # *tremblement*

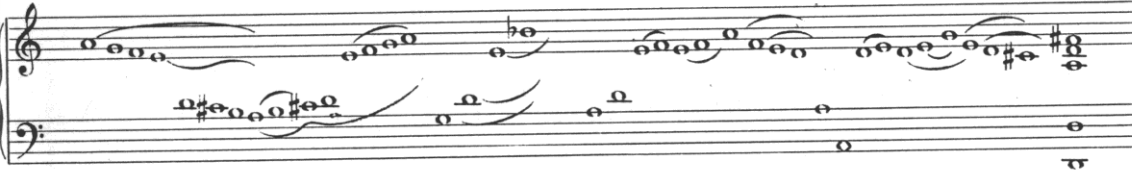
H. 32103

Example 2, Froberger and Louis Couperin, parallel in notation

FROBERGER Tombeau de Blancrocher



COUPERIN Prélude (N° 45)



The image displays two musical staves side-by-side for comparison. The top staff is for Froberger's 'Tombeau de Blancrocher', featuring a treble and bass clef with a key signature of one flat. The bottom staff is for Couperin's 'Prélude (N° 45)', also in treble and bass clef with a key signature of one flat. Both pieces are in 3/4 time. The notation is presented in a parallel format to facilitate comparison of the two compositions.

Example 3, François Couperin, ornamentation, character piece (allemande type, as it starts with anacrusis):

Les Langueurs = Tendres.



Example 4. François Couperin, character piece, marked by title and note *languissamment*

Les ombres errantes.

Languissamment.

The image displays a musical score for a character piece titled "Les ombres errantes" by François Couperin. The tempo marking "Languissamment." is placed above the first system. The score is written for piano and consists of four systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor), and the time signature is 2/4. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, accidentals, and ornaments (trills and mordents). The piece is characterized by its slow, expressive tempo and the evocative title "Les ombres errantes" (The wandering shadows).

Example 5. Jean-Baptiste-Antoine Forqueray, character piece

**Pour jouer cette piece dans le gout que je souhaiterois quelle fut jouée, il faut faire attention à la façon dont elle est écrite, le dessus ne se trouvant presque jamais d'aplomb avec la Basse.*

5ème Suite
3. La Léon. Sarabande

79

Antoine Forqueray
transc. Jean-Baptiste-Antoine Forqueray

Tendrement

7

14

20

26

* Approximate translation: To play this piece tastefully as I would wish, one must pay attention to the way it is written, the upper voices finding themselves almost never aligned with the lower.