

Liberating Sound: A Study on the Consequence that Performance  
Practice Research has had on Performances of J. S. Bach's  
Keyboard Works

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## ABSTRACT

Pedagogues often advise that, when placing a student in competition, we should avoid the works of J. S. Bach, because everyone has different ideas of how it should be played. This hesitancy is carried over to the performance world, as those who claim to know Baroque style often criticize performers who do not adhere to their particular philosophies. Should such tentativeness exist? Could this be the result of differing interpretations of historical performance practice?

We are fortunate to possess several early recordings of J.S. Bach's keyboard works on piano which, stylistically, fit more comfortably within the Romantic period, yet are musically effective interpretations. These are filled with rubato, passages are covered in pedal, and they possess a wide dynamic range. The variety between these recordings, or even between the various movements within the same performance, is also striking. These exist in disparity to most contemporary recordings, however-- the difference loudly begging the question: what accounts for such a drastic change in the performance styles of J.S. Bach's keyboard works?

This study traces the development of the various early music performance movements throughout the 20th century, surveying the effects that they had on performances of J. S. Bach keyboard works as revealed through recordings. It also examines the validity behind some of the philosophies proposed: the question of instrumentation, style, and composer intent, examining these against early writings and performance treatises of the Baroque period. Lastly, it discusses the implications that the above has for both the performer and pedagogue.

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## Introduction

Pedagogues often advise that, when placing a student in competition, we should avoid the works of J. S. Bach, because everyone has different ideas of how it should be played. This hesitancy is carried over to the performance world, as those who claim to know Baroque style often criticize performers who do not adhere to their particular philosophies. Should such tentativeness exist? Could this be the result of differing interpretations of historical performance practice?

The idea of using historical knowledge to inform performance is not new. In fact, publications on performance practice appeared as early as the late 1800s, with prominent treatises such as Arnold Dolmetsch's *The Interpretation of the Music of the XVII and XVIII Centuries*, (1915); *Musical Ornamentation: From Diruta to J.S. Bach* (1893) by Edward Dannreuther; and Wanda Landowska's *Musique Ancienne* (1909). Even earlier, there is evidence that some performers were already thinking along these lines.<sup>1</sup> Scholars and advocates of performance practice sought to recapture unwritten elements that would have been included in an original performance of a composition but had been forgotten with the passage of time. The study of performance practice also provided insight into such things as period instrumentation, notation, intended dynamics, articulation, tempi, and rhythm. Although research in this area began at the turn of the 20th century, it did not gain wide popularity until shortly after the Second World War.<sup>2</sup> When it did, however, several different movements ensued, and the way much of our early music is played began to change.

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<sup>1</sup> Dorottya Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice, 1945-1975: A Comprehensive Review of Sound Recordings and Literature* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

This was particularly true of music from the Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque periods. The evolution of specificity and detail in written music from its origins in the medieval period to the present day has been gradual. Early written music did not include dynamics or articulation; the earliest notation did not even indicate rhythm.<sup>3</sup> By the Renaissance, musical notation had developed considerably, but dynamics, tempi, and articulation were often not included. Even in the Baroque era there were many elements that were not notated; instead, performers relied heavily upon performance practice for correct execution. As time passed, however, performance traditions changed, and older practices, documented in many treatises, were gradually forgotten.

By the late 19th century, many musicians approached Baroque scores using only their instincts for interpretation, and often this yielded very Romanticized versions. Landowska notes, “Brought up to the sound of a modern piano, nurtured by the feeling that emanates from it, today’s interpreter is impregnated with a cultural esthetic which takes its roots in romanticism. The result is that we hear the *Chromatic Fantasy* played with the same touch as that given to Schumann.”<sup>4</sup> There was a countermovement, however, supported by many who thought that Baroque music should be played with “style.” The problem is that the meaning of “style” was ambiguous and, to many, it simply meant a total restraint of expression. Landowska tells us, “I was still a child when my teacher said to me, ‘Not so much feeling, mademoiselle; more style!’ I listened to him obediently and later I had all the trouble in the world to unlearn this.”<sup>5</sup> Later, when she began her research, she said, “Up to now, and save for rare exceptions, there have been but two ways of interpreting music of the past. Either it was cast in a modern mold, altering the movements, the

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<sup>3</sup> Arnold Dolmetsch, *The Interpretation of the Music of the XVII and XVIII Centuries Revealed by Contemporary Evidence* (London: Novello, 1915), v-vi.

<sup>4</sup> Wanda Landowska, Robert Hawkins, and Denise Restout, *Landowska on Music* (New York, NY: Stein and Day, 1965), 171.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

dynamics, and exaggerating the expression; or it was played in what is called traditional style—that is, in a heavy, muffled, and monotonous way.”<sup>6</sup>

It was against this backdrop that Landowska, Dolmetsch, and Dannreuther, among others, began their research into the performance practices of the past. The movements that followed adhered to philosophies that run the gamut from total objectivity—seeking to recreate the exact same sounds that the composer intended in his/her original conception of a piece—to historical awareness that nonetheless allowed contemporary elements, in various forms, into the interpretation. The monotony that Landowska spoke of continued, but this time was backed with supposedly historic reasoning as “authenticity” became a preoccupation. Some felt that anything that had not originated in the era in which the work was composed should not be considered.<sup>7</sup> Thus, since expressive markings, phrase markings, and dynamics were not included in many Baroque scores, adherents of this philosophy assumed that expression was a modern idea and believed that nothing more than accuracy in regards to notes and a strong rhythmic drive was necessary for correct Baroque interpretation.<sup>8</sup> The resulting performances can be imagined. Essentially, these musicians were now churning out music that sounded more and more as if it had been performed by a machine. These were typically void of phrasing, filled with terraced dynamics, and each repeat included so much ornamentation that it actually caused the music to sound even more unexpressive than it had before. Although such interpretations were not popular among reputable performers, they served to influence public notions of Baroque music.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 93.

<sup>7</sup> John Butt, *Playing with History* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3.

<sup>8</sup> Dolmetsch, *Interpretation of Music*, vii.

<sup>9</sup> Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice*, 10-11.

Not all change, however, was negative. Dedicated scholars of Baroque performance practice recognized that expression was valued to the highest degree in this time period, so much so that Dolmetsch dedicates the first chapter of his *The Interpretation of the Music of the XVII and XVIII Centuries* solely to the subject. Although most older Baroque performance treatises were not yet widely available in modern editions or translations, these too deal extensively with expression. In chapter three of C.P.E. Bach's *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, he urges the performer to "play from the soul, not like a trained bird!"<sup>10</sup> He goes on to explain that technical ability is definitely desirable but without expression even the greatest technique does not amount to much. Johann Joachim Quantz also dedicates a chapter of his treatise, *On Playing Flute*, to expression. Chapter eleven is entitled "Of Good Expression in General in Singing or Playing." Here he states the composer's objective should be the same as the performer's, and that is to "touch the heart, excite or appease the movements of the soul, and to carry the auditor from one passion to another..."<sup>11</sup> He goes on to explain that this is accomplished only by feeling for oneself the different passions in the music.

One change that did arise from dedicated scholarship was an attempt to use historical knowledge to revive the original spirit of the music of J. S. Bach. Landowska quotes Bach in his preface to his 1723 autograph of his *Inventions and Sinfonias*. Here Bach states that this volume was conceived to provide "proper instruction, wherein the lovers of the Clavier, and especially those desirous of learning, are shown... a way not only to play clearly in two voices but to... arrive at a singing style in playing...."<sup>12</sup> Landowska and others believed this clarity and singing style to

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<sup>10</sup> Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Essay on the true art of playing keyboard instruments*, translated and edited by William J. Mitchell (New York, W. W. Norton, 1949), 150.

<sup>11</sup> Johann Joachim Quantz, "Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen" (New York: Schirmer Books, 1985), quoted in Dolmetsch, *Interpretation*, 23.

<sup>12</sup> Landowska, *Landowska on Music*, 166.

be the foundation of Bach's music. She continues, "Noisy virtuosity, thick sonority muddled with too much pedaling, exaggerated tempi, contractions, and distortions of the lines—all this irreverent ignorance is banished from the realm of polyphonic music."<sup>13</sup> That being said, there was no consensus among musicians and scholars on exactly how to proceed in relation to early keyboard music. Some were content with a clearer touch imitative of the harpsichord style, in combination with correct ornamentation, and tempi appropriate to the piece. Others went so far as to insist that all Baroque music be played on the same instruments for which it was written.<sup>14</sup> However, all agreed that Romantic Bach interpretations are inappropriate, but an ambiguity in relation to performance style shrouds Bach's music even today.

We are fortunate to possess several early recordings of J.S. Bach's keyboard works on piano which, stylistically, fit more comfortably within the Romantic period, yet are musically effective interpretations. These are filled with rubato, passages are covered in pedal, and they possess a wide dynamic range. The variety between these recordings, or even between the various movements within the same performance, is also striking. "You can find here," Anton Rubinstein wrote of Samuil Feinberg's rendering of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, "fugues of the religious, heroic, melancholic, solemn, pitiful, humoristic, pastoral, and dramatic character; there is only one thing in which they are alike—their beauty." These exist in disparity to most contemporary recordings, and, although historical performance research of this past century has produced many fine and thoughtful works of art, I cannot help but wonder if we have lost something in the process.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> James Manheim, "The Art of Samuil Feinberg," *AllMusic Review*. <http://www.allmusic.com/album/js-bach-well-tempered-clavier-mw0001858981> Accessed 18 September 2016.

I fear that our obsession with style has not only made Bach unapproachable, but has robbed us of our artistic liberties.

So how should we proceed today? The question of composer intent is a major theme in much of the performance practice literature of the Twentieth Century, and while this is typically used in more concrete ways, I wish to consider a rhetorical application. If J. S. Bach were alive today, would he agree with the historically informed practice and disapprove of all other more “modern” interpretations of his music? Would he endorse Romantic approaches? Where would he draw the line? Of course, these questions cannot fully be answered, and one can only make an educated guess concerning his wishes. Nevertheless, through the biographical study of J. S. Bach, the analyses of Baroque performance treatises, and the comparison of historically educated performances against those considered not so historically correct, we might be able to better evaluate the changes that occurred with the study of performance practice, and perhaps come closer to decoding Bach’s intentions.

### The Harpsichord and “Authenticity”

One of the most easily observed elements that distinguish a historically educated performance from a contemporary reading of an early piece is the instrument. This is not to say that all historically educated performances are given on early instruments. However, many scholars of performance practice agree that historic instruments are the ideal, and some go so far as to insist that this is the only option. Paul Hindemith supports this idea, saying, “We can be sure that Bach was thoroughly content with the means of expression at hand in voices and instruments, and if we want to perform his music according to his intentions we ought to restore

the conditions of performance of that time.”<sup>15</sup> Musicologist Robert Donington also prefers early instruments, stating, “The sound of Baroque music can only be recovered on its own instruments in original state, with the techniques and idioms of its original performers; the style is very largely dependent on the sound.”<sup>16</sup>

This concept of restoring original sound was first widely propagated by Arnold Dolmetsch, a violinist and music scholar who stumbled upon a viola d’amore one day at an auction. Upon repairing the instrument, he learned to play it, and subsequently dedicated his life to the study and recreation of early music.<sup>17</sup> Dolmetsch worked at a time when an interest in old music was already flourishing, and Handel and Bach Societies enthusiastically performed their Passions and Messiahs for a curious public. Dolmetsch’s approach was different, however. For him, sole focus on the notes did not suffice, and his performances reflected a deeper knowledge of historical style and sonority. His home was his concert hall, in consistency with the intimate performance settings of the Baroque era. Although Pleyel, Erard and other instrument builders of the time had already initiated the revival of early keyboard instruments, Dolmetsch rejected these for their commercial developments, performing instead on instruments that he had built himself, according to historic specifications.<sup>18</sup>

Dolmetsch’s influence on the early music movement, as well as the quantity of performers, scholars and instrument builders who claim his lineage is significant. These include harpsichord builders John Challis; Robert Goble, founder of the harpsichord manufacturing company, Robert Goble and Son; as well as Chickering and Sons in Boston. Dolmetsch himself

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<sup>15</sup> Butt, *Playing with history*, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Donington, *Baroque Music: Style and Performance*, 165.

<sup>17</sup> Haskell, *The Early Music Revival*, 30.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 31.

had a contract with Chickering from 1905-1910, and built for them some seventy-five plus instruments.<sup>19</sup> His list of pupils is even more impressive, including many early music pioneers such as early music scholar and harpsichordist Ralph Kirkpatrick and musicologist Robert Donington.<sup>20</sup> While the revival of early instruments was undoubtedly important, the performer served as the key missionary, and it was Dolmetsch's teachings that first sparked the performer's awareness to period sonorities. Donington wrote later that "he and others have not so much improved on Dolmetsch's basic work as extended it in a way that Dolmetsch would have done, had he lived."<sup>21</sup>

"Correct" sonority remained a prevalent objective throughout the Twentieth century, with the interest peaking between the Second World War and 1980, so much so that in his *The Early Music Revival*, Henry Haskell refers to the war as the "great watershed in the early music movement. It was at this time that philosophies began to shift, moving progressively farther from Dolmetsch's teachings of "expression" and "spirit" toward a greater pragmatism, emphasizing objectivity and concrete rules of interpretation.<sup>22</sup> The war ushered in the era of "historical authenticity" exemplified by the growing number of urtext editions and by the increasing use of period instruments in early music performances. Recorders replaced flutes, boy choirs supplanted female sopranos, and harpsichords superseded pianos. This trend was so widely accepted that of the thirty some recordings of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* made between 1945 and 1978, less than one third were performed on a modern piano.<sup>23</sup> Ironically, however, despite their zeal to reconstruct Bach's original sonorities, few performers looked to history for the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>20</sup> Brian Blood, "The Dolmetsch Story," *Dolmetsch Online*. <http://www.dolmetsch.com/Dolworks.htm> Accessed 20 November, 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Margaret Campbell, *Dolmetsch, The Man and His Work* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975) 296.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>23</sup> Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice*, 69.

necessary building blocks, and little research went into the selection of the instruments used for these “period” performances. Of the twenty-two harpsichord recordings of the *Goldberg Variations* made between 1945 and 1978, only six were recorded on instruments built according to historical standards, and only three of these six were actual period instruments.<sup>24</sup> The remaining sixteen recordings were prepared on modern harpsichords, which differ vastly from the early harpsichord. Henry Haskell describes the beginning of the early harpsichord revival.

Only Mahillon and Tolbecque and a few other craftsmen had seriously attempted to reproduce early instruments before, and then only as a sideline. Pleyel and Erard, the major French piano firms, began building harpsichords commercially in the 1880s, but with their thick frames, heavy construction and robust sound, they bore little resemblance to the delicate sweet toned instruments of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>25</sup>

Wolfgang Joachim Zuckermann outlines the differences between the early and contemporary instruments in his book *The Modern Harpsichord*. Several of these changes profoundly alter the sound. For example, harpsichord cases were initially made from wood and were rarely more than three-quarters of an inch. Contemporary instruments have either steel or aluminum cases, and often are two or three times thicker.<sup>26</sup> There were at least five different national traditions of harpsichord construction, which differ from each other significantly. Most modern harpsichords are based on French or Flemish models, while the harpsichords with which Bach was familiar with were mostly German built. These were often strung in brass and had a comparatively clearer and brighter sound.<sup>27</sup> In the selection of an appropriate instrument, however, many performers disregard this entirely. Modern instruments have several stops that were not included on the earlier prototypes, and pedals or even knee levers to control the stops

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 70.

<sup>25</sup> Haskell, *The Early Music Revival*, 31.

<sup>26</sup> Wolfgang Joachim Zuckermann, *The Modern Harpsichord, Twentieth Century Instruments and Their Makers*, (New York, NY: October House Inc. 1969), 45.

<sup>27</sup> Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice*, 57.

were extremely rare. On a contemporary harpsichord, however, these are the norm. Harnoncourt writes, “Although these instruments were called ‘harpsichords’ their sound was as remote from that of a harpsichord as a child’s tiny violin is from a Stradivarius... but audiences became accustomed to interpreting their chirping and tinkling as ‘original sounds.’”<sup>28</sup>

What made matters even worse is that many performers assumed that playing Bach’s keyboard music on a harpsichord was all that was needed to recreate his original sonorities. They failed to realize that a harpsichord is a wholly dissimilar instrument from the modern-day piano and thus requires a very different touch, hand position, and fingering. Furthermore, they often utilized the registration capacity of the modern harpsichord to its fullest extent, in stop combinations as well as in the frequency with which they changed registrations; since pedals and knee levers were not available to control the stops on the early instrument, their choices would have been an impossibility in the Baroque.<sup>29</sup> In light of this, several music scholars suggested a more consistent sound throughout. Donington proposed a “broad scheme of contrasts” as opposed to continual “dancing on the pedals” and “sensational colorings.”<sup>30</sup> Kirkpatrick’s advice is similar. He says, “Changes in registration within the variations are quite uncalled for... as each movement has its own tone-color...”<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, many had no knowledge of either correct technique or registration. They were convinced that the use of any harpsichord would allow them to perform with historic authenticity. Dart writes,

Far too often extraordinary hybrid instruments appear on the concert platform that bear little or no resemblance to their ancestors... These instruments are not viols or lutes or

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<sup>28</sup> Nikolaus Harnoncourt, *Baroque Music Today: Music as Speech: Ways to a New Understanding of Music*, ed. Reinhardt G. Pauly, trans. Mary O’Neill (London: Christopher Helm, 2008), 71.

<sup>29</sup> Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice*, 72.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

harpsichords, but new instruments altogether... They may be good or bad, but to fob them off on the listener as though they were authentic is to debauch his ear and insult his intelligence; and it is doubtful whether the cause of old music is furthered by their well-meaning players, or by the happy pianists who sit at a proper harpsichord and play it like a grand piano, using the wrong touch, the wrong tempo and no taste at all.<sup>32</sup>

An analysis of the various harpsichord recordings of the *Goldberg Variations* reveals great detail in regards to sonority. The most significant are the recordings made on historic instruments, since these enable us to hear the same sounds that would have been possible during Bach's lifetime. The differences between the recordings made on either historic harpsichords or those built according to historic specifications are vast; the most conservative are Gustav Leonhardt's 1965 and 1978 recordings and Igor Kipnis' recording in 1973. These utilize homogenous registration within each movement, as well as between the different variations. Anthony Newman, however, frequently applies the coupler or 16-foot stop, which produces a thicker texture in general, as well as a much deeper sonority, and even changes the registration within the variations. Andreas Staier's 2009 recording on a reproduction 1734 Hass harpsichord occupies the middle ground, exhibiting a more consistent registration overall, but utilizing special colors to highlight significant moments. Especially worth noting is his use of the lute stop in Variation 15, his introduction of the 16' stop in the French overture, the combination of buff and natural registers in Variation 20, and the pairing of the left-hand lute stop with the right hand natural in Variation 25.<sup>33</sup>

The recordings produced on contemporary harpsichords are also of interest, as many were made by leading historical performance practice scholars. These reveal that the exploitation

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<sup>32</sup> Thurston Dart, *Interpretation of Music* (London, England: Hutchinson House 1954), 32-33.

<sup>33</sup> "The Gramophone Choice," <http://www.gramophone.co.uk/editorial/bachs-goldberg-variations> Accessed 17 November, 2016.

of registration does indeed increase with the various developments on the instrument, and many performers were not afraid to employ the wide range of sounds available. Examples of this would be the use of the 16' stop producing organ-like sounds in Variation 2 of Kirkpatrick's 1958 recording, as well as the lute stop combined with sounds comparable to an oboe, perhaps the *peau de bouffle*, in Variation 13. Karl Richter's 1972 recording, in addition to George Malcom's 1963 version, demonstrate the ability to quickly change registration on the modern instrument, while Malcom, Frank Pelleg and Joseph Payne change stops, even for a few bars, within multiple variations.<sup>34</sup> As a result, despite the fact that many performers chose the harpsichord for their recording of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, some performances on the piano are probably more comparable to the first presentation of this work than many of the harpsichord renditions.

### Piano Performances of Bach's Keyboard Works

When a contemporary pianist approaches a Baroque work for the first time, one of the key questions they consider is sonority. Perhaps this is because piano pedagogy is influenced by performance practice literature, which dictates that since Bach's music was not written for the piano, the instrument should be treated differently when playing his works. Pianists are often instructed to stay away from the pedal, or at least, to use it sparingly. Clarity is frequently advised, and words like "finger-staccato" and "harpsichord-imitation" are quite common. Pianist Andras Schiff shares that in his early years he was taught "to play Bach without pedal and to enjoy the delights of purity." Schiff also states, "Clarity is essential with Bach" and "the purity

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<sup>34</sup> Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice*, 73.

of counterpoint and voice-leading must be self-evident.”<sup>35</sup> Musicologists and pianist Paul Badura Skoda writes,

Clarity is primarily achieved by finger articulation and appropriate phrasing. To say that the pedal should be used with the greatest economy and occasionally not at all in fast and clearly structured movements does not contradict what has been said above... a pianistic harpsichord imitation can occasionally be achieved by plucking the notes by means of finger staccato and pedaling very briefly.<sup>36</sup>

An analysis of Bach performances on the piano reveals that these stipulations have influenced not only performers, but also critics. Performances are often dry with clear textures, and reviews frequently mention pedaling, “correct” touch, and sonority. Typical is the praise that Gould’s 1955 recording of the *Goldberg Variations* received in a *New York Times* review; John Rockwell calls it “remarkable not just for its sheer virtuosity and abundant personality, but also for its dry, harpsichord-like textures (next to no pedal).”<sup>37</sup> *Gramophone*’s review of the German pianist Lars Vogt’s recording of the *Goldberg Variations* expresses similar sentiments. “Vogt uses the sustaining pedal hardly at all, and his ability to make polyphony clear and cantabile... with the fingers alone is a model of how this should be.”<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, Barenboim’s Bach recording is said to utilize “his grand piano’s pedal more than one might wish.”<sup>39</sup> One reviewer for the *New York Times* even states, “one had to wonder... about the degree of pontification with

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<sup>35</sup> András Schiff, “*Andras Schiff: On Playing Bach and the Well-Tempered Clavier*” Vancouver Recital Society Blog, <http://vanrecital.com/2012/07/andras-schiff-on-playing-bach-and-the-well-tempered-clavier>. Accessed 20 November, 2016.

<sup>36</sup> Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press Inc.) 184-5.

<sup>37</sup> John Rockwell, “A ‘Goldberg’ by Any Other Instrument” *New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/06/25/arts/recordings-a-goldberg-by-any-other-instrument.html?pagewanted=all> Accessed 20 November 2016.

<sup>38</sup> Stephen Plaistow, “Lars Vogt- JS BACH Goldberg Variations” *Gramophone*, <http://www.gramophone.co.uk/review/js-bach-goldberg-variations-6> Accessed 27 November, 2016.

<sup>39</sup> Philip Goeth, “Notable Performances” J.S. Bach’s Well Tempered Clavier, <http://www.bachwelltemperedclavier.org/notable-performances.html>. Accessed 27 November, 2016.

which... Barenboim had freighted his interpretation of the score.”<sup>40</sup> Although the modern piano is not compatible with notions of completely authentic performance, it was in no way omitted from performance practice discourse, and piano performances even today show the undeniable influence of the pursuit of “authentic sound” from 1945-1980. Haskell writes, “Glenn Gould’s 1955 recording of the *Goldberg Variations* was a harbinger of things to come: Gould firmly suppressed all traces of Romantic pianism in his playing; even the engineering of his recording seems calculated to make the piano sound brighter, clearer—more like a harpsichord.”<sup>41</sup>

However, there might be another explanation for the dry, detached sound frequently heard in so many Bach performances and recordings. Maurice Hinson in his *Historical Performance Practice* lecture series concedes the use of pedal but stipulates that it must be used judiciously: flutter pedal, half pedal, and finger pedal, not to sustain, but only to give the instrument richer colors. He points to a quote by CPE Bach, saying, “Some people play stickily as if they had glue between their fingers. Their touch is too long, because they hold the notes longer than the beat. Others wanted to correct it, and play too short, as if the keys were burning. This is also wrong. The middle way is best.” From this Hinson concludes that the basic touch of the period was non-legato and states that our Bach performances should reflect this.

Yet, many other Baroque treatises also address touch and these offer an entirely different perspective. For example, Francois Couperin (1717) states that “it is necessary to preserve a perfect legato in all that one plays.” Rameau advocates sitting in such a way that “causes the hand to cling as if glued to the keyboard and this lends all the legato that can be put into it.”

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<sup>40</sup> John Rockwell, “Barenboim's Interpretation Of the 'Goldberg' Variations” New York Times, <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/02/23/arts/review-recital-barenboim-s-interpretation-of-the-goldberg-variations.html> Accessed 27 November, 2016.

<sup>41</sup> Haskell, *The Early Music Revival*, 181.

Nicolo Pasquali (1758) writes, “Legato is the touch that this essay seeks to teach, since this is the most important touch for almost all passages, and the one in which the vibration of the strings is almost complete for each note.”<sup>42</sup> Quantz also advocates legato, saying:

Experience shows that if two musicians play the same instrument, one produces a better tone than the other. The reason for this must be the touch peculiar to each person. In this regard it is necessary that each finger strike the key with equal force, and emphasis, and with the proper weight; that the stings are given sufficient time to make their vibrations unhindered; and that the fingers... are rather given, through a snap, a certain force that will make the vibrations of the strings longer in duration and sustain the tone longer. In this fashion, you will obviate as much as possible the natural weakness of the instrument, which is that the tones cannot be joined to one another as upon other instruments.

It appears that a sustained sonority and connected tone was desirable to eighteenth century ears; the anatomy of the early instrument too, supports this idea. Harpsichordist Richard Troeger explains that the damping common in today’s harpsichords was often non-existent on the early instrument due to the close pinning of the strings.<sup>43</sup> Harpsichordist William Dowd demonstrates this further, describing a single manual instrument with two choirs of 8’ strings. Dowd writes,

That the close pairs are so close together (2mm) indicates that a register did not damp when disengaged or “off” ... If the pairs are this close, one can never play a solo 8’ without the other sounding sympathetically, a carillon effect which inhibits articulation. Obviously they either liked this effect or simply did not care, for an instrument without a 4’ choir there is no need to crowd the pairs.<sup>44</sup>

Another group of scholars, however, recognized the sustaining capabilities of the harpsichord, in addition to a vast palate of other possible sounds. Different harpsichordists describe the following textures and sonorities. Richard Troeger writes in his *Technique and Interpretation on the Harpsichord and Clavichord*, “The 16’ stop can provide grandeur in tutti

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<sup>42</sup> Richard Troeger, *Technique and Interpretation on the Harpsichord and Clavichord* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press) 68-69.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*.

passages and solemnity when combined with single or 8' stops, but it can easily render textures opaque." Howard Schott, in his *Playing the Harpsichord*, states that a difference exists even between the two 8' sets, comparable to the "flute or clarinet" on the lower manual, "and that of an oboe on the other."<sup>45</sup> The potential sonorities on a historic harpsichord, as evidenced in recordings, are not easily defined, as they range from loud to soft; clear to sustained; to light, think and brilliant. Various stops recall the organ, chimes, lute, or guitar, and, through the registrations available, Bach's music is often raised or lowered by as much an octave. Considering the recordings made on contemporary instruments only adds to the choice of sonorous possibilities. As many of these recordings were produced by the very scholars who formulated the rules of modern performance practice, why should they be discounted?

Musicologist Erwin Bodky writes, "The most crucial aspect of the transfer of a harpsichord composition to the piano arises when we start taking registration into consideration."<sup>46</sup> He proceeds with detailed instructions, including the suggestion that two performers play simultaneously, one playing the piece as written and the other either an octave higher or lower as required in order to replicate the desired 4-foot or 16-foot stops. The lute stop, he recommends, can be imitated by applying "a very fine and thin staccato touch, supported by *una corda* pedal but without damper pedal."<sup>47</sup> Bodky is so adamant in his belief that the use of two performers is the only way in which to replicate the diversity of sonorities available on the harpsichord that he concludes, "There is only one... consequence that we cannot avoid facing: Bach's major harpsichord compositions will have to disappear from the concert programs of our

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<sup>45</sup> Howard Schott, *Playing the Harpsichord*, (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1979) 17.

<sup>46</sup> Erwin Bodky, *Interpretation of Bach's Keyboard Works*, (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press 1960), 95.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, 97.

piano virtuosi.”<sup>48</sup> Of course, Bodky’s views are extreme, and neither the removal of Bach’s works from the piano canon nor his suggestions for obtaining “authentic” sonorities are very practical. His writings, however, do at least acknowledge the existence of a variety of harpsichord registrations.

Several Bach piano recordings after 1980 also demonstrate this awareness but, as was suggested at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Busoni, many performers utilize pseudo arrangements in their pursuit of harpsichord sound.<sup>49</sup> For example, Andras Schiff, in his recording of Bach’s Goldberg Variations, at times plays an octave higher or lower, in imitation of the 4-foot or 16-foot stop. Pianist Vladimir Feltsman does the same on his recording, in addition to the occasional use of octave doubling, providing a thicker texture. Nick van Bloss’ *Goldberg* liberally utilizes both octave displacement and doublings throughout; he also makes no attempt whatsoever at imitating the dry “harpsichord” sound that is connected to so many Bach performances. Grigory Sokolov’s approach is entirely different. His *Goldberg* does not deny the piano any of its sonorities, and especially worth noting is his reading of Variation 11, a wash of slowly changing colors comparable to Debussy. Barenboim is similar and both his *Goldberg Variations* and his *Well-Tempered Clavier* recordings would fit firmly within the Romantic style reminiscent of the early pianists, and yet he claims Landowska’s 1933 harpsichord recording of the *Goldberg Variations* as his biggest inspiration. "That performance is the most convincing I've heard," Barenboim said in an interview. "She stretches the harpsichord quite beyond what one normally hears. Her sound was very orchestral in nature, and it gave me the confidence to do

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 98.

<sup>49</sup> George A. Kochevitsky, *Performing J.S. Bach's Keyboard Music* (White Plains, NY: Pro/Am Music Resources Inc. 1996) 29.

it.”<sup>50</sup> It is curious that Landowska’s recording inspired Barenboim to approach Bach in the very manner in which she worked so diligently to eradicate. However, if our goal is truly replicate harpsichord sounds on the piano, then it seems correct that numerous other colors and textures should also be permissible, in addition to “clear,” “light” and “without damper.” To restrict the pianist to the limited popular conception of harpsichord sounds in the name of “original sonority” seems somehow inconsistent.

### Bach’s Intent

But what was Bach’s intent in regards to sonority? Would he have insisted that his music be played on same sorts of the instruments for which it was written? What were Bach’s thoughts on the fortepiano? J. S. Bach was, in fact, primarily an organist. That being said, however, he was also well versed in all manner of keyboard instruments. In regards to registration, Bach never specified these in any thorough way.<sup>51</sup> He does indicate the need for double manual keyboard in certain works, and we find rare instances where dynamics are included — a piano or forte.<sup>52</sup> Little beyond this exists, however. One might then argue that common practice of the period might be our guide. However, J.S. Bach was not common, and we are told that in regards to the organ, “His method of registration was so extraordinary that many were appalled... It seemed to them that such a combination of stops could not possibly sound well; but they wondered greatly when they observed that the organ sounded at its best, though the effect was of an unusual kind that could never have been produced by their own style of registration.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Allan Kozinn, “Daniel Barenboim on Bach, the Bastille and the Baton” New York Times, <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/02/20/arts/daniel-barenboim-on-bach-the-bastille-and-the-baton.html?pagewanted=all> Accessed 1 December, 2016.

<sup>51</sup> Dolmetsch, *The Interpretation of the Music of the XVII and XVIII Centuries*, 428.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 429.

<sup>53</sup> Johann Nikolaus Forkel, "Johann Sebastian Bach: His Life, Art, and Work" (Leipzig, 1902) quoted in Albert Schweitzer, *J.S. Bach* (London, England: Lowe and Brydone, 1952) 295.

Of the twenty instruments recorded as having been owned by the Bach estate, seven were keyboard instruments, and three of these are listed as being ‘Clavire nebst Pedal.’<sup>54</sup> We must remember that even as late as Beethoven’s lifetime, ‘clavier’ was used as a blanket term to include all manner of keyboard instruments, and it is possible that these ‘clavire’ were either harpsichords or clavichords. It is equally likely, however, that at least one of these was a fortepiano, as we know that Bach was familiar with and played the instrument.

The invention of the fortepiano is attributed to Bartolomeo Cristofori and dates to sometime during the first decade of the eighteenth century. The early fortepiano was given the same name as the harpsichord, and both of these were called *cembali*, *clevecin*, or in Germany, *klavier*. Since the harpsichord and fortepiano shared the same name, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish which instrument is being discussed in the writings of this period. References to the fortepiano, however, often include further description. The first fortepiano was called “cembalo che fa il piano il forte,” and the instrument was also often referred to as the “novel clavecin.”<sup>55</sup>

We have records that in 1747 Bach encountered “a newly invented clavecin, on which piano and forte may be obtained.”<sup>56</sup> A similar “clavecin” was owned by the Dresden court, and in 1725 the following critique by Maffei about this instrument was published in Johannes Mattheson’s *Critica Musica*. He states that it could not produce as loud a sound as the harpsichord and that “the greatest objection to this instrument is based on the fact that... not everyone was able to play it at once.”<sup>57</sup> Paul Badura Skoda explains that this later detail is true not only of this particular instrument, but also of most early fortepianos; even accomplished

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<sup>54</sup> Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard* (Oxford University Press 1993), 144-145.

<sup>55</sup> Laurence Libin. “The Instruments,” in *Eighteenth Century Keyboard Music*, edited by Robert L. Marshall (New York: Routledge, 2003), 17.

<sup>56</sup> Paul Badura-Skoda. *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard*. 157.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

harpsichordists of today have difficulty playing the fortepiano and often must practice for days, or even weeks, to obtain good results.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, immediately after Bach's arrival in Potsdam in 1747, he was able to perform for the king, without difficulty, on a "novel clavecin," indicating that he must have been very familiar with the fortepiano and the techniques it requires.<sup>59</sup>

Further reason exists to believe that Bach was not at all opposed to the fortepiano; in fact, quite the contrary. In Leipzig in 1733, Bach held a position as conductor of his own ensemble, the Bach *Collegio Musico*. A Leipzig newspaper from June of that same year reports a series of concerts to be given by the Bach *Collegio Musico* featuring a "new clavicymbel."<sup>60</sup> An article following one of these concerts states that it began with a "beautiful concerto" which was performed on the "new clavicymbel... the like of which has never been heard here before."<sup>61</sup>

Further accounts by Bach's own student J.F. Agricola relate the following:

Herr Gottfried Silbermann had initially built two of these instruments. One of them had been seen and played by the late Herr Johann Sebastian Bach. He praised its sound, which he greatly admired. Yet he criticized that its higher register was too weak and difficult to play... Eventually Herr Silbermann had arrived at many improvements, especially with regard to the action... (He) showed one of the instruments of his most recent work to the late Herr Kapellmeister Bach, asked him to test it, and received from him full satisfaction<sup>62</sup>

Unfortunately, the date of Bach's final approval of the Silbermann piano is unknown.<sup>63</sup>

That being said, however, Eva Badura Skoda suggests that it is highly probable that Bach

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Eva Badura-Skoda, "Aspects of Performance Practice," in *Eighteenth Century Keyboard Music*, edited by Robert L. Marshall (New York: Routledge, 2003), 23.

<sup>61</sup> Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard*, 157.

<sup>62</sup> Eva Badura-Skoda, "Did J. S. Bach Compose 'Pianoforte Concertos'?" *Riemenschneider Bach Institute*, 31/1 (2000), 11. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41640462>. Accessed 3 December 2016.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 13.

waited until he was “satisfied” with the fortepiano before using one in concert in 1733.<sup>64</sup>

This would date his approval of Silbermann’s final model to at least this year, if not earlier. We know from various articles and advertisements that there were a variety of fortepianos and harpsichord-fortepiano hybrids in Leipzig during Bach’s time there.<sup>65</sup> It would be odd for a musician of Bach’s caliber to have not encountered these. If Bach “greatly admired” the sound of the instrument, him owning one seems quite possible. Eva Badura Skoda submits it likely follows:

that some (but probably not all) of Bach's works written for a stringed keyboard instrument after 1733, including his harpsichord concertos, were also played by him on a fortepiano. Even works written for a two-manual harpsichord such as the Goldberg Variations would not constitute an exception - a compound ‘harpsichord-piano’ or ‘combination instrument’ might have been intended and used.<sup>66</sup>

Since the terminology for the various instruments at that time was ambiguous, perhaps some of his later works originally thought to be for harpsichord were conceived for the early fortepiano. The list of Bach’s stringed keyboard works written after 1733 is quite substantial, including his *Italian Concerto* and his complete *Well Tempered Clavier Book II*. Of course, this is conjecture and research in this area is still quite new. Enough information exists, however, to establish that Bach was both acquainted and pleased with the fortepiano, and it appears that he performed at least one of his works on this instrument.

The truth is, Bach was very open-minded when it came to new developments, and was constantly searching for ways to produce an improved sound. Furthermore, Bach was not always satisfied with the instruments that were available to him; he not only provided instrument

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

makers with comments on how to improve upon their readymade models but he was also an inventor himself, creating both the *viola pomposa* and the *lute-harpsichord*.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, Bach freely transcribed the works of others, and not a few of his compositions exist as arrangements of works by other composers, including the many Vivaldi concerti. Lastly, Bach was not opposed to rewriting his own music for other instruments. One example is his two concerti for violin, the A Minor, BWV 1041, and E Major, BWV 1042, which were later reconceived as concerti for keyboard: the G Minor, BWV 1058, and D Major, BWV 1054. We must also remember that it was not uncommon to perform music written for one instrument on another, and often when a particular instrument was unavailable, whatever instruments were present were used instead; the performance and enjoyment of the music remained of primary importance.<sup>68</sup> This concept could easily be applied today, and, at the very least, should allow for the use of pianos in the performance of Bach's keyboard works. The realization of the diversity of intended sounds possible, however, should take us even further, permitting a variety of sonorities, textures, and colors beyond clear, light and without damper.

Pianist and musicologist Paul Badura-Skoda suggests that the negative attitude towards the fortepiano was likely propagated by Bach's original biographer, Nikolaus Forkel, in his *Johann Sebastian Bach: His Life, Art, and Work*. Here Forkel lists the clavichord as Bach's favorite instrument because of its expressive qualities, and states that Bach was not satisfied with either the harpsichord or the fortepiano.<sup>69</sup> Badura-Skoda raises some interesting questions: first, if Bach was indeed displeased with the harpsichord, then why is so much of his music, such

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<sup>67</sup> Paul Badura Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard*, 148.

<sup>68</sup> L. Michael Griffel, "The Whys and Wherefores of Transcription," *The Julliard Journal* <http://www.juilliard.edu/journal/whys-and-wherefores-transcription>, Accessed 4 December 2016.

<sup>69</sup> Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Johann Sebastian Bach: his Life, Art, and Work* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), cited in Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard*, 162.

as the French Overture or Italian Concerto, written specifically for this instrument? If Forkel's statements concerning Bach's attitude towards the harpsichord can be challenged, then his accounts on Bach and the fortepiano may also be in question.<sup>70</sup>

### Other Stylistic Concerns

Yet, instrumentation is only one aspect of performance practice, and there were early music specialists who held that original instruments were not mandatory, but what was most important is that a correct playing style be maintained.<sup>71</sup> They sought to further the education in matters pertaining to appropriate ornamentation, articulation, rhythm, tempi, and so on. Scholars of early music had at their disposal many treatises from the Baroque period relating particularly to these issues, such as Daniel Gottlob Türk's *Klavierschule* (1789), Johann Philipp Kirnberger's *Die Kunst des reinen Satzes in der Musik* (1794), and Johann Joachim Quantz's *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen* (1752). However, the answers for reproducing Bach's original ideas were not so easily achieved. A close examination of musical treatises written during the Baroque period revealed that they do not always agree, and that there is no specific formula for realizing Bach's intentions.<sup>72</sup> Yet, there are certain rules that, for the most part, remain consistent. For example, in relation to the appoggiatura, Quantz, Türk and C. P. E. Bach all agree that the duration of an appoggiatura is dependent upon the note immediately following and should receive half the value of the principle note, or two thirds the value if the

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<sup>70</sup> Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard*, 162.

<sup>71</sup> Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice*, 55.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 136.

main note is dotted.<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, it soon became apparent that in decoding Bach's notation several things had to be considered.

First, over the course of the Baroque period there were bound to be changes in performance practice, and many treatises appear during the transition from the Baroque to the Classical era. In fact, although C.P.E. Bach is often cited as an important source for interpreting the senior Bach's work, some scholars argue that his treatise of 1762 was written too late to be of much value.<sup>74</sup> Much of his writing pertains to the newer *Empfindsamer* style, as opposed to the traditional style of the earlier Baroque era.<sup>75</sup> An additional aspect that must be considered is the geographic origin of a treatise. This is important because the Baroque Italian style is not the same as the Baroque German style or the Baroque French style, and thus, treatises from these different geographical areas are certain to differ on several points. In selecting resources for Bach interpretation, researchers soon found that that an understanding of the different national styles was essential. Furthermore, an understanding of the elements that define Bach's own music, as well as his influences, geographical or otherwise, should be considered.<sup>76</sup>

Numerous contemporary publications were produced on the interpretation of early keyboard music. These resources are very valuable to the performer because their authors weigh multiple sources before determining which factors are most important in correct Bach interpretation. Also, special editions of particular works were published, and many of these include extensive directions on correct tempi, ornamentation, and so on. Recordings, however, reveal that regardless of how closely a performer allegedly adheres to the various teachings of

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<sup>73</sup> Anthony Newman, *Bach and the Baroque- European Source Materials from the Baroque and Early Classical Periods with Special Emphasis on the Music of J.S. Bach* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1995), 130.

<sup>74</sup> Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice*, 136.

<sup>75</sup> Newman, *Bach and the Baroque*, 8.

<sup>76</sup> Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice*, 136-138.

the early music movement, elements that are contrary to Bach's written direction are present in most cases. For example, it is curious that many leading scholars of performance practice fail to observe Bach's repeats in their entirety, even when, as in the second or sixth variation of the *Goldberg Variations*, different music is written for the first and second endings. A more extreme example would be Landowska's rearrangement of certain variations. In both Variation 5 and 7 of her *Goldberg* recording, she not only disregards Bach's written repeats entirely, but also, after finishing each, she returns to the beginning, only to play through the first half of the first repeat.

On the other hand, in spite of the opposition that certain performers faced for giving artistry precedence over historical accuracy, most performers who supposedly disregarded performance practice were nevertheless influenced by the wealth of new scholarship in this field. The different recordings of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* reveal that the majority of these agree with Kirkpatrick's translation of ornaments from his edition of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* (1938) with only slight variation.<sup>77</sup> Gould's Bach recordings are paradigm, as historical authenticity or even correct performance style was perhaps last on the list of his priorities.<sup>78</sup> However, his recordings display many elements that indicate influence of the early music movement. Jerrold Levinson, one of the greatest devotees of the historical informed performance, has the following to say:

There can be good performances that, though somewhat incorrect, achieve certain worthwhile ends or results from some defensible listener perspective, without completely undermining the character of the music involved. Glenn Gould's Bach Partita renditions are not perhaps, in matter of instrumentation and phrasing, strictly correct performances of those works, but they answer to appropriate and even historically grounded musical interests (e.g., clarity of counterpoint and voice leading, inwardness of expression), and they do so without *inordinately* traducing the sort of sound, performance means, and emotional domain envisaged by the composer. Many would agree with me that their

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<sup>77</sup> Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice*, 148.

<sup>78</sup> Kevin Bazzana, *The Performer in the Work* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 37.

musical virtues make them, as a matter of fact, *outstandingly* good performances of Bach's Partitas, even though, paradoxically, they flirt with not being performances of them at all.<sup>79</sup>

It is safe to say that Gould's aesthetic values concur with both the early music tastes of the time period and the philosophies of neo-classicism, in regards to clarity and simplicity, and this approach is also heard, perhaps not so fittingly, in his recordings of works by other composers. One wonders, however, if his style would be such if, first, extensive work in early historical performance practice had been nonexistent, and second, if recordings disseminating these tastes had been absent.

There were those, however, who managed to remain virtually untouched by scholarship in Baroque performance practice; one of the most notorious testaments is Wilhelm Kempff's rendition of the *Goldberg Variations*. Here, and this is particularly noticeable in the Aria, his execution of the ornaments is limited to no more than an occasional trill. Additionally, not only does he ignore the ornamentation, but he also fails to play Bach's indicated grace notes, which form an essential part of the melodic structure. Kempff gives us a bare skeleton of the piece, and it hardly seems like the same work. Dorottya Fabian suggests that this recording serves as a great reminder of why extensive research in early music style is so important.<sup>80</sup>

## Conclusion

So, what has the study of performance practice brought to the music of J. S. Bach? Has research in this field enabled us to perform more closely to what he intended? In many ways, yes, for now the resources on Baroque performance practice are so abundant that we need not

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 38.

<sup>80</sup> Fabian, *Bach Performance Practice*, 149.

look far to discover a plausible realization of ornaments, or discern the differences between a gigue and a giga in relation to tempo. We are familiar with *notes inégales*, and thus refrain from a straight rendering of these when encountered. All of this is important, for, as we have seen, approaching a Bach score with no awareness of historical performance practice can alter that work entirely. In other ways, however, perhaps an error has been made in answering ambiguity with assumption, and then mistaking those assumptions for his intentions. The question of sonority is a case in point, as we cannot know exactly what sounds Bach had in mind. The variety available even on historically based harpsichords is too great to state that any one sound is correct, and those who endorse only “clear, dry and without damper” should explain so much of Andreas Staier’s *Goldberg* recording on a reproduction 1734 Hass harpsichord, or Anthony Newman’s *Goldberg* on a historic harpsichord.

Lastly, we need to question if “correct sound” should even be a priority in performance; perhaps this can be addressed by examining the nature of music. We should remember that of the many different treatises written during the Baroque period that are consulted in regards to performance practice, most are addressed to the performer. Why? It is because the performer is the means through which a musical composition comes alive. Johann Joachim Quantz, in the expression chapter of his *Versuch*, recognizes the importance of the performer when he writes, “The good effect of music depends almost as much upon the player as the composer. The best composition can be spoiled by a bad rendering, and a mediocre composition is improved by good expression.”<sup>81</sup> He continues to explain—and this is not at all specific to Quantz’s treatise—that expression or feeling is the most important element in the interpretation of music. Quantz insists

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<sup>81</sup>Johann Joachim Quantz, “Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen” (New York : Schirmer Books, 1985) quoted in Dolmetsch, *The Interpretation of Music*, 23.

that performers feel for themselves the passions that they are trying to convey.<sup>82</sup> What is feeling, but a reaction to our own personal experiences? Perhaps this is why Quantz also says, “Almost every musician has a different expression from that of others.”<sup>83</sup> If we are to remain true to this most important aspect in Baroque performance practice, then maybe we should stop treating Bach’s music as if it were some dead museum piece. It cannot sound exactly as it did in the first performance because we can never recreate the feelings of those musicians, nor can we recreate the environment. Rather, we should make the music come alive by embracing our different personal experiences and feelings, here and now in the twenty-first century. To deny personal expression is as contrary to correct performance as rejecting correct ornamentation, or rewriting Bach’s works altogether. Gould’s Bach recordings, Feinberg’s *Well Tempered Clavier*, or Landowska’s and Sokolov’s *Goldberg Variations* are great not because they are historically accurate on all counts, but because they loudly testify to each musician’s personal expression.

So how should we proceed today? More than anything, an in-depth knowledge of historical performance practice increases our options, rather than limits them. As artists, performers, and pedagogues, our vision should not be narrow. Our students should know more than the stereotypical harpsichord sound, and we should embrace the variety sounds, styles and methods that performance practice has permitted. Following this study, my personal approach to Bach is very different. Clarity is not a priority. I have many possibilities in mind, rather than a limited conception. I believe we should use all the resources that the piano has to offer, pedaling, full textures, etc., not with goal of replicating harpsichord sound, but rather in a way that best serves the character that the music communicates to us personally. The music itself transfers

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<sup>82</sup> Dolmetsch, *The Interpretation of Music*, 25.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 24.

certain emotions and it is in response to these that I make my artistic choices: elongating a trill, omitting another, slow tempo, or fast, varying my touches. J.S. Bach himself once stated, “I play the notes as written, but it is God who makes the music.” However, we must realize that to each person, the music reads differently. We have many contemporary texts on historical performance practice, and we have a large quantity of historic music treatises. Source material is also abundant however: the music itself. We often look to texts on performance practice and listen to recordings for information on how to interpret the music, but maybe we should look to the music first, and listen to what it communicates, before we allow other voices to alter our own ability to hear.

It is perhaps, out of respect for the source material that I also believe pseudo arrangements of Bach’s works must be kept tightly in check. Octave displacement to mirror the 4’ and 16’ stops, or doublings imitating the coupler have a compelling argument, although personally, I would not include these in my readings. Too many additions, however, run the risk of altering the original, and in such cases, I appreciate those performers that acknowledge their own arrangements, as in Anthony Newman’s *Variations on Bach’s Goldberg Variations*.

The study of performance practice has brought us many benefits, but in evaluating the changes, we must remember the reasons we perform and listen to Bach’s music. Pianist Paul Badura-Skoda put it well when he said, “We do not play early music in order to take us back in time but because it pleases us here and now.”<sup>84</sup> We now know Bach’s music better than ever and we have the resources to continue to know it more intimately. Yet, we must remember that Bach himself showed flexibility in regards to sonorities by transcribing his original works for

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<sup>84</sup> Paul Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard*, 170.

completely new instruments, and early performance treatises have indicated that effective performances cannot be exact replicas of each other. To express and communicate through Bach's music remains most important. Finally, in the words of Bach, "The aim and final end of all music should be none other than the glory of God and the refreshment of the soul:" this, above all, was his intent.

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