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## **Eighteenth century techniques of classical improvisation on the violin: Pedagogy, practice and decline**

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*Edith Cowan University*

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*Eighteenth Century Techniques of Classical  
Improvisation on the Violin: Pedagogy, Practice  
and Decline.*

Flavia Claudia Todea

Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts

Edith Cowan University

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Music Honours

2014

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## Abstract

The art of improvisation flourished in both instrumental and vocal music during the late seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth centuries. The violin techniques of improvisation taught in the eighteenth century (such as ornamentation of melody, decoration of fermatas, extemporization of cadenzas and creation of preludes) formed an integral part of instrumental pedagogy and performance practice at the time, which then declined significantly from the early nineteenth century onwards. It seems that this practice of improvisation has been neglected and its principles almost forgotten in the world of classical Western music today.

This paper makes an argument for the re-introduction of classical improvisation techniques into contemporary violin pedagogy. In order to do this, it firstly identifies what these techniques were, how they were taught, and how they were used at their peak, in the eighteenth century. Subsequently it accounts for the decline of improvisation at the turn of the nineteenth century, and justifies the importance and benefits of once again reviving this art-form.

## Acknowledgements

Although many people have been instrumental in the completion of this dissertation, there is One in particular without Whom this paper would have been impossible – that is God. He has been with me faithfully and constantly at every step of this journey. It is to Him that I owe my deepest gratitude for His love, strength and guidance, and for the people that He has surrounded me with.

To Linda Barcan, thank you for giving your time, for sharing your expertise and for providing new perspectives when I found myself stuck. Thank you for being an encouragement and an inspiration. I am so fortunate to have had you as my supervisor.

To my family: thank you for your love, your support and your patience with me.

To the staff at the faculty, I am privileged to have studied under your instruction.

To my colleagues, thank you for keeping me on track.

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## Introduction

“The spontaneous invention and shaping of music while it is being performed is as old as music itself.”<sup>1</sup> Yet this practice known as improvisation has been neglected and its principles almost forgotten in the world of classical Western music today. Derek Bailey goes so far as to say that “the world of classical music provides an unlikely setting for improvisation.”<sup>2</sup> The art of improvisation flourished in both instrumental and vocal music during the late seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth centuries. This paper makes an argument for the re-introduction of classical improvisation techniques into contemporary violin pedagogy and performance. In order to do this, it firstly identifies what these techniques were, how they were taught and how they were practiced at their peak, in the eighteenth century. Subsequently it accounts for the decline of improvisation at the turn of the century, and reasons the importance and benefits of reviving improvisation in pedagogy and performance of contemporary classical violinists.

The greatest justification for this paper is expressed by Brockmann who, after years of experimenting in the area of improvisation, noted amongst many classical musicians the misguided belief that “improvisation seems to belong firmly to the realm of jazz.”<sup>3</sup> But historical analysis shows that in fact “it is only within the last century or two that improvisation has faded from the classical arena.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ernest T. Ferand, "Improvisation in Nine Centuries of Western Music: An Anthology with a Historical Introduction," (Cologne, Germany: Arno Volk Verlag, 1961), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Derek. Bailey, "Part Two; Baroque, Organ, Part Three; Rock, Audience," in *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993), 19.

<sup>3</sup> Nicole M Brockmann, *From Sight to Sound: Improvisational Games for Classical Musicians* (Indiana University Press, 2009), 3.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

During the eighteenth century, in classical instrumental pedagogy, learning to improvise went hand in hand with learning to read music, and the art of improvisation was an important part of performance practice. As Karen Michelle Bergmann states in her research: "Improvisation has always been an important skill ... hundreds of years ago, prior to the appearance of the violin in its current form, players improvised cadenzas and ornamentation."<sup>5</sup> Yet, as Caroline Mia Lee observes, it seems that today "improvisation has become a lost art among string players."<sup>6</sup>

Another defence for this paper is that a paucity of both teaching resources and qualified teachers make learning to improvise difficult.<sup>7</sup> The lack of secondary sources that Lee mentions validates the need for further exploration of this topic.

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<sup>5</sup> Karen Michelle Bergmann, "A Guide to Pedagogical Resources for Improvisation on Violin, Viola, Cello, and Bass" (The University of Georgia 2012), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Caroline Mia Lee, "An Introductory Guide to Jazz Improvisation for the Classical Violinist" (D.M.A., University of Miami, 2000), Abstract.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

# Chapter One

## The Art of Improvisation on the Violin in the Eighteenth Century

During the course of the seventeenth century, the violin gained popularity in instrumental music, taking over from the gamba and the viol which had both been celebrated improvisation instruments.<sup>8</sup> At this time many pedagogues began writing treatises in order to provide instructions on performance practice. Amidst these performance instructions, there are also guidelines on how, when and why one should improvise. From his examination of these treatises, Professor Robin Stowell<sup>9</sup> gathered that “free improvisation by the performer, [was] practised for the most part by the Italian school” and took place in the form of “melodic ornamentation, cadenzas, preludes, or...independent extemporization.”<sup>10</sup>

Although the roots of improvisation in Western music date back to the medieval era, improvisation on the violin flourished during the Baroque and Classical period. At first it was used as a means of ornamenting and creating variation on the melody, its task being “to adorn, decorate, and season.”<sup>11</sup> Later, improvisation became a display of intellectual and technical ability in performance through the formation of preludes. However improvisation found its peak in the

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<sup>8</sup> Ferand, "Improvisation in Nine Centuries of Western Music", 15-16.

<sup>9</sup> Cardiff University, "Professor Robin Stowell," Cardiff University School of Music, <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/music/contactsandpeople/profiles/stowell.html>.

As well as an accomplished violinist, Robin Stowell is an expert in the field of performance practice. His contributions to this topic include the co-editing of the Cambridge Handbooks to the Historical Performance of Music, and acting as a member of both the Advisory Committee for the publication of the Complete Works of Francesco Geminiani. He participated as co-investigator in a collaborative AHRC-funded project 'Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century annotated editions of string music: bibliographical problems, editorial content and implications for performance practice'. He continues to contribute to modules in organology, notation and editing, performance practice and ensemble performance for the undergraduate curriculum.

<sup>10</sup> Robin. Stowell, *Violin Technique and Performance Practice in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 305, 337.

<sup>11</sup> Ferand, "Improvisation in Nine Centuries of Western Music", 18.

cadenzas of the instrumental concertos from the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>12</sup> The eighteenth century encompasses elements from both Baroque and Classical styles of interpretation.

During the Baroque era, improvisation was employed through the ornamentation of melody and the embellishment of fermatas and cadences. These embellishments expanded until they became an entire cadenza and this practice continued into the Classical era. While the making of cadenzas flourished in concerto performances, the art of extemporizing preludes prospered in solo performances.

Amateurs and more experienced students obtained these improvisation techniques from their teachers, but since there was only one Giuseppe Tartini, one Leopold Mozart, one Francesco Galeazzi, many of these professionals took it upon themselves to write out treatises and methods which taught and explained these same techniques. Along with these, students were also encouraged to “listen to other virtuosi [in order] to build fine style”<sup>13</sup> and to learn how to incorporate the embellishments into their own playing.

## A word on the Treatises

The large number of instrumental treatises available from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries makes it impossible for one to cover their entire content in the course of a year, therefore, for the purpose of this dissertation, and at the recommendation of senior advisors, I have studied more closely the following treatises:

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<sup>12</sup> Brockmann, *From Sight to Sound*, 4.

<sup>13</sup> Angelo Frascarelli, "'Elementi Teorico-Prattici Di Musica' by Francesco Galeazzi: An Annotated English Translation and Study of Volume I" (Ph.D., The University of Rochester, Eastman School of Music, 1968), 41. [my brackets]

*The Art of Playing on the Violin* (1751) Francesco Saverio Geminiani (1687 – 1762)

This is one of the earliest violin treatises to “expand the advanced techniques of the professional violinist”<sup>14</sup>, which Geminiani had learnt from his teacher, the famous Arcangelo Corelli (1653 – 1713). Amongst these techniques, it also identifies fourteen ‘Ornaments of Expression’ and provides an explanation to “comprehend the Nature of each Element in particular.”<sup>15</sup>

*On playing the flute* (1985) (first printed in German in 1752) Johann Joachim Quantz (1697 – 1773)

This treatise is widely regarded as being one of the best examples of studies dealing with ornamentation in eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup> Although it was written specifically for flute, it can also be used by other instrumentalists. To the advantage of the violinist, there is an entire section dedicated to the duties of the accompanying violinist. Of all the treatises that I have so far encountered from this time, I have found this one to be the most detailed. Edward Reilly affirms in the Introduction that “subjects such as extempore embellishments, dynamics, cadenzas, and tempo are explored more fully than in any other treatise of the time.”<sup>17</sup>

*A Treatise on the Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing* (1985) (first printed in German in 1756)

Leopold Mozart (1719 – 1787)

Leopold Mozart’s treatise continues to be a very useful pedagogical tool in violin performance even today. It begins with the most basic steps in violin practice and musicianship (i.e. how to hold the violin and bow and how to read music notation), and continues with the more difficult skills of technical execution. Similar to the other violin treatises, it explains many varieties

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>15</sup> Francesco Geminiani, *The Art of Playing on the Violin* (London: Francesco Geminiani, 1751), 6.

<sup>16</sup> Kris. Palmer, "Ornamentation According to C.P.E. Bach and J.J. Quantz," (AuthorHouse, 2001), x.

<sup>17</sup> Johann Joachim Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, trans. Edward R. Reilly, 2nd ed. (London: Faber, 1985), x.

of bowings, and particularly for this dissertation, it defines and illustrates various ornaments and improvised embellishments.

*Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments (1753)* Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714 – 1788)

This treatise was written in particular for the keyboard, but its rules of composition, harmony and performance can be applied to other instruments as well. Its content covers embellishments, performance, thorough bass, accompaniment, and improvisation, with the first and last of these, being especially useful for this treatise.

*L'Art du Violon ou Collection choisie dans les Sonates des Ecoles Itallienne; Françoise et Allemande, Précédée d'un abrégé de principes pour cet Instrument (1798)* Jean- Baptiste Cartier (1765 – 1841)

[*The Art of the Violin, or Collected Works Chosen from the Sonatas of the Italian, French and German Schools, Preceded by a Summary of Principles for this Instrument*]

As the title suggests, Cartier's treatise is firstly a compendium of principles specific to the violin (technique, bowing, embellishments, terminology, scales and double stops) and secondly, a collection of Italian, French and German works, which demonstrate these principles. This treatise is useful as it brings together, in one place, the principles of violin performance outlined in prior treatises (such as those of Mozart and Tartini). While other methods are generally specific to one musical style, the benefit of this one is that it provides examples from the three different national styles, allowing the reader to observe the differences between these.

*Elementi Teorico-Pratici Di Musica (1817)* Francesco Galeazzi (1758 – 1819)

Galeazzi received much of his musical education in the Italian style. His treatise is a comprehensive account of violin performance and pedagogy in the eighteenth century, which

contains detailed explanations of violin technique and pedagogical procedures.<sup>18</sup> Particularly useful to this dissertation, is Galeazzi's clear descriptions of various ornaments.

*The Art of the Violin* (1991) (first printed in French in 1834) Pierre Marie François de Sales Baillot (1771 – 1842)

*The Art of the Violin* is one of the later violin treatises and is used here almost as a secondary source. Its contextual information is a reflection of the prevailing attitudes amongst violin students and teachers in the eighteenth century. Unlike the other treatises, Baillot's treatise also includes a section on the creation of preludes, specific to the violinist.

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<sup>18</sup> Frascarelli, "Elementi Teorico-Practici Di Musica": An Annotated English Translation and Study", iii.

## Chapter Two

# Improvisation Techniques of the Eighteenth Century

### The Techniques

While the pianist can cover the greatest sum of notes through the use of both hands, and the singer can use the inflections of the voice like no other instrument, the violinist's unique gift is their bow. Without this, all the brilliance of a solid left hand technique is of little use. Thus, it comes as no surprise that all of the violin treatises mentioned above provide clear instruction as to the manner in which the bow should be used. Through the bow stroke, "the notes receive their life, the Piano and Forte are expressed, the passions are aroused, and the melancholy is distinguished from the gay, the serious from the jocular, the sublime from the flattering, the modest from the bold."<sup>19</sup> Since the bow stroke can create such a wide range of articulations and express so many varied emotions, the use of the bow is an improvisation technique in its own right, whereby the performer is able to instinctively select the most suitable stroke "in order to give melodies or passages their proper character."<sup>20</sup> This technique is explained in terms of its divisions (location in the bow), its stroke (for example: *staccato*, *martelé*, *spiccato*, *legato*, *bariolage*) and its tone (crescendi, diminuendi, swells, speed and pressure).<sup>21</sup>

It is with this in mind that we turn to the left hand and examine its improvisatory techniques through ornamentation, embellishing of fermatas and creation of preludes and cadenzas.

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<sup>19</sup> Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, 215 – 216.

<sup>20</sup> Pierre Marie François de Sales Baillot, *The Art of the Violin*, ed. Louise Goldberg, trans. Louise Goldberg (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 159

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 159 – 230.



## Ornamentation of Melody

By definition, these are embellishments added to the melody with the objective of enhancing expression. This category can be divided into two groups: the first covers the spontaneous melodic figures used to embellish an existing melody (also called ‘arbitrary ornaments’ or ‘extempore variations’), while the second comprises improvisation on the melody with “conventional stereotyped ornaments” (also called: ‘essential ornaments’).<sup>22</sup> These conventional ornaments, termed *agréments*, include embellishments such as trills, mordents and appoggiaturas which were indicated through various signs in the music.<sup>23</sup> Aside from *agréments*, there were also ‘embellishments more closely associated with free [improvised] ornamentation’, known as *ornements*.<sup>24</sup> Some examples of these are the *conducimento* (meaning: to lead) where a part-scale run, beginning at a distance of a fifth or sixth proceeds the main note either ascending or descending.<sup>25</sup> There is also the *volata*, (meaning: *fly*) where an entire scale of one or two octaves proceeds the main note as a rapid run to the top note.<sup>26</sup> Both these examples are mentioned by Leopold Mozart and Francesco Galeazzi in their treatises. In the case of the former ornaments (the arbitrary ones), the performer’s role was to spontaneously construct them. In the case of the latter ornaments, the performer’s role was to firstly de-code the signs, and then to give an improvisatory interpretation in terms of expression and rhythm, by shortening or extending note values and melodic figures, by breaking down multiple stops into arpeggios and through variations on articulation, phrasing and bowing.<sup>27</sup> For the amateur

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<sup>22</sup> Stowell, *Violin Technique and Performance Practice*, 337 – 338.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 307.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 336. [my brackets]

<sup>25</sup> Francesco Galeazzi, *Elementi Teorico-Pratici Di Musica*, II ed. (Ascoli: Francesco Cardi, 1817), 225.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 225.

<sup>27</sup> Stowell, *Violin Technique and Performance Practice*, 342.

violinist, embellishments were often provided in small print by professionals, while works for virtuosi were written in a 'bare' format, leaving it up to the performer to elaborate.<sup>28</sup>

Stylistic differences existed across Europe, particularly between the French, the Italian and the German schools of ornamentation. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the French practise was to notate all ornaments into the music, leaving very little up to the performer. On the other hand, the Italian works were written in a 'skeletal outline', expecting that the performer would improvise around this with a mixture of essential and arbitrary ornaments.<sup>29</sup> The Adagio of Giuseppe Tartini (1692 - 1770), provided in Cartier's treatise, shows just how bare this skeletal outline was, in comparison to the elaborated performance (see Figure 1). As Quantz mentions, the French style was "modest ... neat ... easy to imitate ... comprehensible ... convenient for amateurs ... [and did] not require much knowledge of harmony."<sup>30</sup> The Italian was "extravagant ... bold and bizarre, and difficult in execution ... [It] permits many additions of graces [or embellishments] and requires a seemly knowledge of harmony."<sup>31</sup> The German style also notated embellishments in full, but used them selectively, for the purpose of expression.<sup>32</sup> To illustrate this, there is the well-known Adagio movement from Johann Sebastian Bach's (1685 - 1750) first solo violin sonata in G minor which leaves no room for additional extemporization, but requires an improvisatory character in interpretation (see Figure 2). In following Bach's example, Haydn and Mozart also notated melodies in full, allowing for just an 'improvisatory style', where the performer had some freedom with

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<sup>28</sup> Howard Mayer Brown, *Performance Practice Music after 1600*, 2 vols., vol. 2, The New Grove Handbooks in Music (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), 270.

<sup>29</sup> Stowell, *Violin Technique and Performance Practice*, 340

<sup>30</sup> Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, 335 [my brackets]

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. [my brackets]

<sup>32</sup> Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, -. *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, ed. William J. Mitchell, trans. William J. Mitchell, [1st ed.]. ed. (New York :: W.W. Norton, 1949), 79.

regard to nuances, fingerings, bowings and musical character, and occasionally the liberty to improvise on the reprise.<sup>33</sup>

Although these national differences existed across Europe, one consistency across all regions was the location of embellishments in music. These were most fruitful in repeated sections and slow movements<sup>34</sup> which provided them with the necessary time and space. In fact, it was said that “a true musician may distinguish himself by the manner in which he plays the Adagio.”<sup>35</sup> It was this movement that really proved a performer’s worth and status.

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<sup>33</sup> Stowell, *Violin Technique and Performance Practice*, 338, 348.

<sup>34</sup> Stowell, *Violin Technique and Performance Practice*, 340.

<sup>35</sup> Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, 162

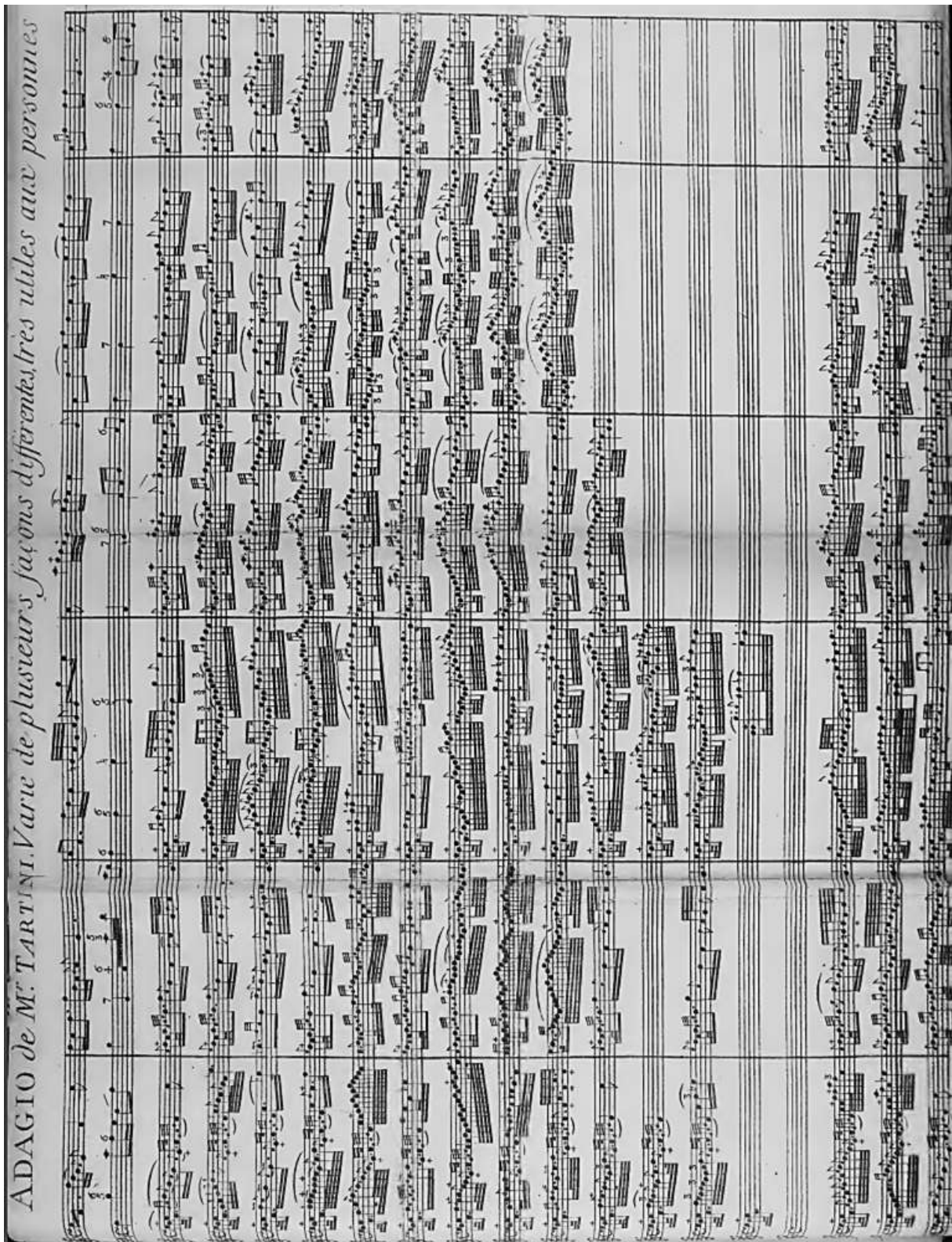


Figure 1 Part of an Adagio written by Tartini, taken from Cartier's L'Art du Violon

Part of an *Adagio* written by Tartini. The top line depicts what was written by the composer, while the second line is the basso continuo part. All subsequent lines represent the florid embellishments which were customarily added in performance.

*ADAGIO de M<sup>r</sup> TARTINI. Varie de plusieurs façons différentes, très utiles aux personnes qui veulent apprendre à faire des traits sous chaque note de l'Harmonie. On pourra remplir les lacunes qui se trouvent dans les variations par une des lignes au dessus et au dessous et par des traits arbitraires.*

[Adagio by Mr Tartini. Varied in several different ways, very useful to persons wanting to learn to ornament every note of the harmony. One will be able to fill the gaps found in the variations with one of the lines above and below and with arbitrary ornaments.]

# SONATA I.

3

Adagio.



Figure 2 *Adagio* from J.S. Bach's Violin Sonata No. 1 in G minor

Johann Sebastian Bach, "Violin Sonata No.1 in G Minor, BWV 1001," ed. Alfred Dörffel (Leipzig: Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe, 1720), 3.

The opening of the *Adagio* from J.S. Bach's first violin sonata, showing that all embellishments have been notated in full (either through notes or signs such as the trill). The performer's freedom is limited to the interpretation (nuances, tempo, fingerings and bowings).

## Creation of Preludes

Initially, the prelude and the fantasy were not incorporated into sections of other movements or works, but rather stood as movements in their own right. To differentiate between the two, Stowell defines the prelude as a “short improvisation played immediately before a formal performance”, which has the purpose of establishing for the listener the tonality and mood of the piece to come.<sup>36</sup> The fantasy (or ‘improvised prelude’) on the other hand is concerned only with showcasing the ability of the performer. As Baillot states; “it is free in its pace [movement], in its forms, in its length.”<sup>37</sup> However, the fantasy was chiefly a practice of keyboard instruments. The violin player was mainly concerned with the preludes which they learnt primarily through studying the written examples provided in violin treatises.<sup>38</sup> From these examples we can conclude that, under violinists such as Corelli and Geminiani, the prelude maintained an introductory role, which changed as the era progressed. With composers such as J.S. Bach, the prelude expanded from being a short introduction, to becoming a movement of equal importance to the other movements in a work. The primary reason for this was the increase in the composition of preludes and decrease in their improvisation.

## Decoration of Fermatas and Extemporization of Cadenzas

The improvisation of cadenzas constitutes another segment in this field of study which was arguably the largest improvisation platform for a violinist in the eighteenth century. In its miniature version, it is known as a ‘fermata’ which would appear in the middle or end of a slow movement, and at significant cadence points, with the intention of unexpectedly drawing the attention of the

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<sup>36</sup> Stowell, *Violin Technique and Performance Practice*, 354.

<sup>37</sup> Baillot, *The Art of the Violin*, 330.

<sup>38</sup> Stowell, *Violin Technique and Performance Practice*, 354.

listener.<sup>39</sup> Aside from length, the main difference between the fermata and cadenza was that the former could only be embellished with notes belonging to the chord sustained in the bass part while the latter was not bound by any sustained chords.<sup>40</sup> The extemporization of cadenzas became famous amongst the Italians around the 1700s and was then imitated by the Germans, but the French preferred to avoid it.<sup>41</sup> As Quantz skilfully describes, its role was “to surprise the listener unexpectedly once more at the end of the piece, and to leave behind a special impression in his heart.”<sup>42</sup> While many different instructions are provided for creating a cadenza, one that I found particularly remarkable was that the “embellishments should not exceed the instrumental range observed by the composer.”<sup>43</sup> In other words, out of respect for what the composer had already created, the performers should not try and out-do the composer, but should humbly contain themselves within the perimeters provided. Could we then assume that the lack of attention paid to this instruction by performers may have been one of the factors which prompted composers to write out the cadenzas themselves? As the era progressed, performers began turning the cadenza, which had been intended as a means of creating “tasteful expression”, into something that focused on a virtuosic display of technique.<sup>44</sup>

## Teaching and Application of Techniques

Across all forms of improvisation, the highest recommendation for learning these techniques was to have first-hand experience (i.e. from teacher to pupil). Additionally, each type of

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<sup>39</sup> Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, 143.

At the conclusion of chapter two, Bach’s treatise provide examples of possible embellishments of fermatas for students to study and imitate. 144 - 145

<sup>40</sup> Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, 194.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 179.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 180.

<sup>43</sup> Brown, *Performance Practice Music after 1600*, 2, 279.

<sup>44</sup> Stowell, *Violin Technique and Performance Practice*, 358.

improvisation also required a varying degree of knowledge in musicianship. While on the one hand the French style of ornamentation could be executed without an in-depth understanding of harmony,<sup>45</sup> on the other hand, the Italian style could only be properly executed once the student had acquired a well-grounded understanding of composition and harmony.<sup>46</sup> As a result, improvisation through ornamentation began with solid instruction in musicianship (harmony, composition and through-bass)<sup>47</sup>, where students also learned various ornament patterns which they would apply in different keys. While applying these skills, the performer had to keep in mind that the objective of variations was to “make music pleasing and awaken our close attention”, to enhance the expressions in a piece and improve the composition.<sup>48</sup> For this purpose, the variation should not obscure the melody, the mood of the ornaments should correspond to that of the melody, and if a theme is repeated, the variations should be different on the repeat.

With specific regards to the violinist, Galeazzi’s treatise advises that, only after establishing a firm right and left hand technique (with familiarity of the first, second and third positions), should students start learning ornamentation through the study of works such as Arcangelo Corelli’s Opus 5, which also provide examples of improvisation. Apart from studying their works, teachers also “encouraged... students to listen to performances by the great masters,”<sup>49</sup> to learn improvisation by watching and listening to professionals perform,<sup>50</sup> by imitating their examples and then continuing to pass on the skills learnt.<sup>51</sup> A final factor which was not a necessity, but contributed to the

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<sup>45</sup> Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, 163.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 139.

Quantz voices a clear warning that “without an understanding of composition, success is impossible.”

<sup>47</sup> Stowell, *Violin Technique and Performance Practice*, 338.

These principles are the common guidelines provided in many treatises and also summed up in Stowell’s book.

<sup>48</sup> Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, 79.

<sup>49</sup> Stowell, *Violin Technique and Performance Practice*, 337.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Robin Moore, “The Decline of Improvisation in Western Art Music: An Interpretation of Change,” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 23, no. 1 (1992), 71.



development of the ability to play and improvise, was to receive an early education in music.

Although it is not an aspect specified in the treatises, Robin Moore justifies this below:

Virtually every well known improviser of ... Western classical music prior to the mid nineteenth century, began performing at an early age or was heavily exposed to music as a child. Typically, such musicians receive initial training in the home, through a relative or friend of the family ... Leopold [Mozart] acquired the majority of his musical education at an early age from performance and formal instruction in church groups. His son's musical education began even earlier...Not only was his older sister practicing the keyboard constantly in their small flat, but his father frequently met with other musicians there. Leopold gave violin and keyboard lessons at home.<sup>52</sup>

Accounts such as Charles Burney's journal *The Present State of Music in France and Italy* bring to light the violin performers of the time and describe how improvisation was put into practice. Of Joachim Traversa we read that he "played a concerto in the Italian style very well: many parts with great delicacy, good tone, and facility of execution."<sup>53</sup> Alongside of him there were Gaetano Pugnani, Alexander Boucher, and the two rivals, Felice Giardini and Wilhelm Cramer, who both spent much of their time in England, where it was said that "Cramer's playing was noted for its fire and conviction, while Giardini was famed for his beauty of tone and inventive embellishment."<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, an account from 1816 shows that improvisation was not limited to solo performances, but could also be used in ensemble where all parts, to a different degree, contributed to ornamenting.<sup>55</sup> In this account Spohr criticizes an orchestral performance he had conducted in Rome, during which the players had 'spoiled' the performance with their unrestrained embellishments.

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<sup>52</sup> Robin Moore, "The Decline of Improvisation in Western Art Music: An Interpretation of Change," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 23, no. 1 (1992), 64, 68.

<sup>53</sup> Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in France and Italy: Or, the Journal of a Tour* (London: Charles Burney, Muf. D., 1773), 26.

By the "Italian style" we assume Burney means the addition of embellishments and free improvisation as mentioned above.

<sup>54</sup> McVeigh Simon, "Felice Giardini: A Violinist in Late Eighteenth-Century London," *Music & Letters* 64, no. 3/4 (1983), 167.

<sup>55</sup> Ferand, "Improvisation in Nine Centuries of Western Music", 14.

Spohr acknowledged that although he specifically prohibited the players from making any alterations to the printed music, ornamentation came as second nature to the Italians.<sup>56</sup>

Similar to the variation on the melody, the creation of preludes required a solid knowledge of harmony and composition, and was learnt from teachers and written examples.<sup>57</sup> In addition to this, a higher level of technical ability was expected of the performer. For the violinist, Baillot defines two types of preludes which both serve the role of preparation or introduction. The melodic prelude, consisting of several bars of graceful melody “tossed off brilliantly”, and the harmonic prelude, consisting of several bars of chords (broken or struck simultaneously). Before presenting a comprehensive set of examples for these forms of preludes, Baillot’s treatise affirms that: the violinist must only prelude when they have the leading part, the prelude should only occur before the first movement (and not in between other movements), and most importantly, the performer must take a moment of complete silence at the conclusion of the prelude.<sup>58</sup>

Outside of this, there is little specific documentation for preluding on the violin in a non-introductory manner,<sup>59</sup> but the principles provided by Bach in his treatise, later summarized by Nicholas Bochner, can be taken as reliable guidelines for violinists as well. Provided that the conditions of musicianship and technique are met, the ensuing steps are followed to create a prelude. Once the main key is established, a modulation to a related key occurs, followed by a chromatic modulation to a distant key. Subsequently there is a strong reinstatement of the main key through the use of the dominant pedal and lastly, the closing cadential section finishes the prelude.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> "On the Rise and Progress of the Violin," *The Quarterly musical magazine and review* 3, no. 12 (1821).

<sup>57</sup> Baillot, *The Art of the Violin*, 329.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 329-330.

<sup>59</sup> Stowell, *Violin Technique and Performance Practice*, 354.

<sup>60</sup> Nicholas Bochner, "A Study of the Use of Improvisation in the Teaching of Classical Musicians," *Resonate Magazine*, June 30 2010, 3.

We come now to the decoration of fermatas and extemporization of cadenzas which were often grouped together in the eighteenth century, due to the difficulty of separating the extended decorated fermatas from the true cadenzas.<sup>61</sup> Initially, there were only the principles of composition to provide guidance for creating a cadenza (for example, knowing how to resolve dissonances and intervals correctly, and knowing what harmonic progressions the cadenza should be built on),<sup>62</sup> but as this skill developed, a standard format emerged. An energetic flourish or a theme from the movement would open the cadenza, followed by a reflective section, which could use other material from the movement. In the next part, technical virtuosity would be displayed through sequences and modulations, before the transition to the closing cadential trill on the dominant.<sup>63</sup> Alongside this format, performers were also taught to keep the cadenza in the same mood as the rest of the piece, to keep away from too many repetitions of phrases, to abstain from unrelated modulations and, of course, to stay within their technical limitations. Students were encouraged to learn this form of improvisation aurally, by hearing “many able people [play]”<sup>64</sup>, and also by memorizing and imitating the written models left by pedagogues.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Stowell, *Violin Technique and Performance Practice*, 359 .

<sup>62</sup> Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, 181, 183, 192-193.

<sup>63</sup> Stowell, *Violin Technique and Performance Practice*, 359.

<sup>64</sup> Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, 181-184, 186.

<sup>65</sup> Stowell, *Violin Technique and Performance Practice*, 359.

In its tenth chapter, the treatise of Leopold Mozart discusses in detail (with illustrated examples) the subject of trills in cadenzas advising the proper use of the short trill, the ‘preparatory’ trill, the slow, medium, rapid and accelerating trill and the long trill.

Baillot’s treatise reserves twenty nine pages which explain ten types of cadenzas and provide written examples of each type for students to study and imitate.

## Chapter Three

### The Decline of Improvisation

In the eighteenth century, improvisation, through improvised embellishment of solo parts and later of cadenzas, continued to experience widespread popularity as it prospered in instrumental and even in vocal music.<sup>66</sup> Concerts were filled with surprise, suspense and bravura, as audience and performers alike shared in the role of music making, through listening or actively participating.<sup>67</sup>

Why is it then that at the turn of the century this art form, which was previously an essential part of musicianship in Western music, began to decline?<sup>68</sup> The most acknowledged reason for this decline is the increase in notation of music (i.e. composers writing out the composition in full). This began with the changing relationship between composer and performer, leading composers to notate the embellishments and cadenzas which had been previously improvised (at first in part, and later in full).<sup>69</sup> During the early stages of improvisation, the composer and performer were often the same person, and the way in which a piece was performed was deemed more important than the composition. Yet, in the eighteenth century, composer and performer became separate individuals.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Ferand, "Improvisation in Nine Centuries of Western Music", 14.

<sup>67</sup> Guildhall School of Music and Drama, "Classical Improvisation & Creative Performance," *Guildhall School*, 2014, [accessed: November 04 2014] [http://www.gsmd.ac.uk/youth\\_adult\\_learning/music\\_summer\\_school/classical\\_improvisation\\_creative\\_performance/](http://www.gsmd.ac.uk/youth_adult_learning/music_summer_school/classical_improvisation_creative_performance/).

<sup>68</sup> Bailey, "Part Two; Baroque, Organ, Part Three; Rock, Audience", 29 – 30.  
David Dolan, "Back to the Future: Towards the Revival of Extemporisation in Classical Music Performance," in *The Reflective Conservatoire Studies in Music Education*, Guildhall Research Studies (London: Guildhall School of Music and Drama, 2005), 97.

Both David Dolan and Derek Bailey lament this decline, stating that today, improvisation in classical music is primarily limited to organ music where practical inventiveness is always required by its role in church services.

<sup>69</sup> Brockmann, *From Sight to Sound*, 4.

<sup>70</sup> Ferand, "Improvisation in Nine Centuries of Western Music", 5, 14.

When the composer *is* the performer, they did not need to write down everything – a sketch was sufficient to jog their memory as to what their intentions were while at the same time allow for spontaneous creativity within the parameters of those intentions. The 'composition' served as a reminder of the intended mood, character or tempo.

This “divorcing of composition from performance”<sup>71</sup>, as John Rink terms it, resulted in the composer’s role dominating the performer’s, since the music expressed the composer’s intentions, not the performer’s. The performer was therefore the servant of the music.

The effects of social change caused by industrialism in the nineteenth century, were also felt in the music scene where the old practice of patronage musicians gave way to the rise of conservatoire culture. These newly established conservatoires across Europe encouraged the growing popularity of technical virtuosity.<sup>72</sup> As a result, the purpose of improvisation departed from its original intention of adding affect to the composition and improving it without obstructing or taking away from the melody,<sup>73</sup> to such an extent that the excesses of ornamentation and the prolonged cadenzas often made the music unrecognizable. Such was the case with Gioachino Rossini (1792 – 1868) who, upon hearing a highly ornate interpretation of the famous aria from his opera “The Barber of Seville”, “*Una voce poco fa*”, remarked: “very nice, my dear, and who wrote the piece you have just performed?”<sup>74</sup> These excesses became the highlight of performances and thus defeated the purpose of improvisation. Instead of the intended “musicianship and tasteful expression”,<sup>75</sup> there was a rising “desire for brilliance and virtuosity over simplicity.”<sup>76</sup>

These reasons provide a brief overview of the factors acknowledged today in literature and amongst musicians for the decline of improvisation. However, there remain some less or even unacknowledged factors which are worth noting. One of these was the decline of improvisation as resulting from a lack of “studying old music”<sup>77</sup> (i.e. the great masters of composition and

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<sup>71</sup> Nettl Bruno et al., "Improvisation," in *Grove Music Online*.

<sup>72</sup> Colin Lawson. and Janet Ritterman., "Performing through History, on Teaching Performance," in *Musical Performance; a Guide to Understanding*, ed. Rink John (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 10-11.

<sup>73</sup> Stowell, *Violin Technique and Performance Practice*, 338.

<sup>74</sup> Martha Elliott, *Singing in Style: A Guide to Vocal Performance Practices* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 143.

<sup>75</sup> Stowell, *Violin Technique and Performance Practice*, 358.

<sup>76</sup> Bruno et al., "Improvisation."

<sup>77</sup> Baillot, *The Art of the Violin*, 287.

performance), which Baillot laments in his treatise. C.P.E. Bach also noted that beginners and amateurs wanted the satisfaction of improvising but “no longer [had] enough time and patience to practice especially assiduously.”<sup>78</sup> It appears then, that students were no longer willing to commit to the practice and extensive study of old music, which was an essential part of learning improvisation. Due to the decrease in knowledge and skill in the teaching and practicing of improvisation, by the early nineteenth century Baillot reveals that it was an accepted truth that composers needed to define (in notation) the elements which were previously improvised.<sup>79</sup>

In spite of improvisation being such a considerable part of violin pedagogy and performance in the eighteenth century, by the nineteenth century it was fading away. Robin Moore explains that due to the appearance of conservatory education and the change from the ‘patronage musician to the middle class performer’ (from professional instrumentalist to the everyday amateur), notated music became more important for pedagogy and performance. The middle classes were not only part of the growing concert audience, but they also had ready access to the notated music and treatises of the day. Although this allowed individuals to learn an instrument on their own, it meant that professional musicians became more cautious in their compositions. They began writing out all the ornamentations to eliminate the risk of those not skilled enough to interpret the score improvisationally.<sup>80</sup>

The eighteenth century was a flourishing time for music treatises, since they provided a way for a teacher to reach the pupil without actually being present. As we would expect, one of the topics frequently discussed in the treatises was that of embellishing and creating cadenzas. As I reflect on my findings, I find it peculiar that while today we long for performances which embrace authentic

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<sup>78</sup> Ferand, "Improvisation in Nine Centuries of Western Music", 20.

<sup>79</sup> Baillot, *The Art of the Violin*, 287.

<sup>80</sup> Moore, "The Decline of Improvisation in Western Art Music", 71-72.

improvisation in this style of the eighteenth century, during the eighteenth century itself, when this art of improvisation was practiced, performers were frequently warned against excessive improvisation. Many pedagogues stated that it would be better not to make any arbitrary contributions, than to make them too frequently, in the wrong manner, or at the wrong time. While the treatises provided many examples and clear explanations to be studied, in one way or another, most (if not all) pedagogues warned against excesses and the improper use of ornamentation.

It is supposed by many that a real good taste cannot possibly be acquired by any rules of art; it being a peculiar gift of nature, indulged only to those who have naturally a good ear: and as most flatter themselves to have this perfection, hence it happens that he who sings or plays, thinks of nothing so much as to make continually some favourite passages or graces, believing that by this means he shall be thought to be a good performer, not perceiving that playing in good taste doth not consist of frequent passages, but in expressing with strength and delicacy the intention of the composer.<sup>81</sup>

An ornament introduced at the wrong time or badly performed spoils the finest phrases and shows the player's bad taste ... The imagination invents *ornemens*, while good taste concerns itself with their variety ... Taste allows them, selects them and must often exclude them...they must above all be used only at suitable moments.<sup>82</sup>

A well-written melody, which is already sufficiently pleasing in itself, must never be varied, unless you believe it can be improved.<sup>83</sup>

The prelude and the cadenza ... must concern themselves with responding appropriately to its call, for once the artist has undertaken them, they become for him one more hidden danger or one more cause for triumph; if he has the misfortune not to succeed, others are less indulgent since they know that he could have avoided taking the chance in the first place.<sup>84</sup>

I propose then that these constant warnings may have also contributed to the decline of improvisation because the amateurs and students who read the treatises became reluctant to attempt ornamentation (let alone preludes or cadenzas) for fear of misuse and misinterpretation.

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<sup>81</sup> Geminiani, *The Art of Playing on the Violin*, 6.

<sup>82</sup> Stowell, *Violin Technique and Performance Practice*, 347-348.

<sup>83</sup> Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, 139.

<sup>84</sup> Baillot, *The Art of the Violin*, 331.

Robin Moore posits an interesting concept of improvisation as a language, which is in essence only understood by those who study and implement it.<sup>85</sup> The rise of a dramatic style in music called for more dramatic melodic expression, where the instrument must imitate the precise articulations of voice and speech. For this purpose, composers turned to signs and notation in order to indicate every inflection and expression.<sup>86</sup> This practice led to a broadening of the musical audience which affected improvisation because they spoke different musical languages; some more musically versed in the vocabulary of improvisation than others. The language of improvisation excluded those who did not understand it, therefore it became notated so that clear conventions, forms and structures could be followed and understood. The downfall of this was that while notated music still carried charm and dramatic effect, it lost its expressiveness<sup>87</sup> and spontaneity.

In keeping with the idea of music as language, Bill Dobbins constructs an interesting analogy of improvisation: just as the ability to learn and speak a language grows from stage to stage, so does the ability to learn and play music. In speaking we learn firstly to distinguish words and phrases, and secondly, through imitation and basic reading, we acquire an elementary vocabulary. Thirdly, we grow in our reading ability and thus we expand our vocabulary and begin to apply it in conversation. Lastly, language becomes an instinctive, spontaneous and subconscious process of thought, feeling and physical movement. In music, through our aural exposure, we learn first to distinguish common melodic and rhythmic patterns. Secondly, we gain the ability to imitate what we hear, and the basic skills of notation and music reading. The third level is to take the learnt principles of composition and performance and apply them to our own performance. Finally, from

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<sup>85</sup> Moore, "The Decline of Improvisation in Western Art Music", 63-66.

<sup>86</sup> Baillot, *The Art of the Violin*, 287.

<sup>87</sup> Baillot, *The Art of the Violin*, 287.



this emerges the capacity to subconsciously and spontaneously create the music – in other words: improvisation. Unfortunately, I must agree with Dobbins that:

music education too often ends when this second stage has reached an advanced level of development, where the student can read, memorize, or otherwise re-create music of considerable technical difficulty. Reading music ... is of little ultimate creative value if it does not lead to a capacity for spontaneous musical expression.<sup>88</sup>

Galeazzi himself implies that improvisation is not for the novice instrumentalist, in fact his treatise suggests that only from the fourth year of study onwards would “compositions of the most excellent composers...counterpoint [and] sight-reading develop a talented student beyond a “mere instrumentalist”,<sup>89</sup> with the latter two skills being “especially helpful in improvisation and ornamentation.”<sup>90</sup> Yet, this should not hinder the student from reaching this stage, but perhaps serve to remind them that the other levels must be attained beforehand.

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<sup>88</sup> Bill Dobbins, "Improvisation: An Essential Element of Musical Proficiency," *Music Educators Journal* 66, no. 5 (1980), 37.

<sup>89</sup> Frascarelli, "Elementi Teorico-Practici Di Musica": An Annotated English Translation and Study", 41.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 41.

## Chapter Four

# An Argument for the Re-Introduction of Improvisation into Contemporary Violin Pedagogy and Practice

The re-introduction of classical improvisatory techniques of the eighteenth century into contemporary instrumental pedagogy and practice is not only beneficial but also important, as improvisation provides a unique way of understanding music which cannot be assimilated through other means.<sup>91</sup>

The benefits of improvisation can be seen in its impact on both the musicianship and the technique of the performer. As a result of the lack of importance given to improvisation<sup>92</sup> when studying performance practice, musical styles such as the Classical and the Baroque are “poorly understood by young musicians. [Improvisation] provides a unique and valuable technique for examining, and properly understanding, the features of a musical style.”<sup>93</sup> It then follows that the re-introduction of this unique technique (namely, improvisation) would develop a clearer musical comprehension of style and genre in performers. Evidence of this has already emerged from Dr. David Dolan’s course at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (Interpretation through Improvisation), where all classical students must study improvisation for two years. Dolan encourages improvisation as it requires a much higher level of active listening and involvement from the musician, and it also develops their “ability to make creative use of knowledge in real time.”<sup>94</sup> Critic Greg Sandow observed these effects while visiting one of Dolan’s improvisation classes, where students were learning to listen and play simultaneously (playing in response to what

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<sup>91</sup> Lee Higgins and Roger Mantie, "Improvisation as Ability, Culture, and Experience," *Music Educators Journal* 100, no. 2 (2013), 38.

<sup>92</sup> David Beckstead, "Improvisation: Thinking and Playing Music", 69.

<sup>93</sup> Bochner, "A Study of the Use of Improvisation in the Teaching of Classical Musicians", 2. [my brackets]

<sup>94</sup> Dolan, "Back to the Future: Towards the Revival of Extemporisation in Classical Music Performance", 101.

they heard).<sup>95</sup> This course at the Guildhall School has shown that teaching and practicing improvisation develops a greater harmonic awareness and a deeper understanding of style and structure<sup>96</sup> which results in a more historically authentic performance.

Furthermore, evidence of the effectiveness of improvisation in the past is found in the remarks which compare J.S. Bach's organ compositions with his improvisations. The former are undeniably "full of expression and devotion, solemnity, and dignity" however "his unpremeditated organ playing... is said to have been still more devout, solemn, dignified, and sublime."<sup>97</sup> It follows then, that improvisation where "nothing [is] lost in the process of writing down but everything [comes] directly to life out of [the] imagination"<sup>98</sup>, results in a more emotive and expressive performance.

In terms of technical benefits, I propose that improvisation would have a positive impact on developing the abilities of the violinist in the areas of execution (whereby the student is able to play at higher degrees of difficulty), agility (whereby the student is able to think and react quickly) and expression (whereby the student is able to respond with greater sensitivity to music). Thinking back

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<sup>95</sup> Greg Sandow, "London Revelations (2)," *Artsjournal*, May 26 2011, [accessed: November 4 2014] [http://www.artsjournal.com/sandow/2011/05/london\\_revelations\\_2.html](http://www.artsjournal.com/sandow/2011/05/london_revelations_2.html).

Greg Sandow reports the following:

I was invited to watch some improvisation classes, and was fascinated by what I saw... I watched a viola student improvise with a faculty pianist, David Dolan, who's the principal improvisation teacher. This was fairly simple stuff — the violist played long notes, following the harmony David improvised. At one point, David asked the violist to listen to the piano, and tap whenever he heard a change in harmony. The violist couldn't do it! So David suggested he put down his instrument. And then the violist had no trouble hearing. Seemed to me that holding the instrument actually got in the way of this musician's listening! ... when he held his viola, he expected to be reading music from his music stand. Listening, evidently, became a separate activity, as he more or less unconsciously encountered music.

<sup>96</sup> Bochner, "A Study of the Use of Improvisation in the Teaching of Classical Musicians", 2, 5.

Dr. David Dolan is an experienced pedagogue in the area of classical improvisation, and the Head of the Centre for Creative Performance and Classical Improvisation at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. In addition to this, he is an accomplished concert pianist who incorporates classical improvisation in his concerts through improvising cadenzas and extemporizing fantasias.

Guildhall School of Music and Drama, "David Dolan Bmusic Ma Phd," *Guildhall School*, 2014, [accessed: October 27 2014] [http://www.gsm.d.ac.uk/about\\_the\\_school/research/research\\_staff/department/37-research-and-knowledge-exchange-staff/423-david-dolan/](http://www.gsm.d.ac.uk/about_the_school/research/research_staff/department/37-research-and-knowledge-exchange-staff/423-david-dolan/).

<sup>97</sup> Ferand, "Improvisation in Nine Centuries of Western Music", 20.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. [my brackets]

on Dobbin's concept of improvisation as a higher level in musical language, it follows that to embellish improvisationally is more difficult than to execute what is notated, because the performer must have a memory bank filled with techniques always ready to be used. Hypothetically, the violinist would firstly become familiar with the art of ornamenting, and of embellishing cadences, and thus develop their ability to execute them with greater ease even in notated music. For example, if one can execute a trill, a turn, or an arpeggiated run spontaneously, then, in notated music (where the player is aware of what is coming next and has time to prepare it) these skills become much easier. Secondly, through continual practice and experience, the violin player increases their agility and trains their ear to sensitivity, as they begin to recognize which techniques serve the purpose of expression best, and where. For instance, by experimenting with a *mordente* (see Figure 3) in different contexts (a slow or fast movement; a minor or major section; a particular time signature or a specific mood), the violinist becomes aware that it cannot be played in the same manner in all contexts. As Geminiani explains in his treatise: "if it be perform'd with strength, and continued long, it expresses fury, anger, resolution, etc. If it be play'd less strong and shorter, it expresses mirth, satisfaction, etc. But if you play it quite soft, and swell the note, it may then denote horror, fear, grief, lamentation, etc. By making it short and swelling the note gently, it may express affection and pleasure."<sup>99</sup> If such a wide palate of emotions is possible from a single ornament, are we then not missing out on so much more through our seeming indifference towards improvisation?



Figure 3 *Mordente* ornament as shown in Geminiani's violin treatise: *The Art of Playing on the Violin* (pg:26)

<sup>99</sup> Geminiani, *The Art of Playing on the Violin*, 7-8.

The growing interest in this field, amongst classical musicians and scholars<sup>100</sup> is a good indication that the re-introduction of improvisation techniques into violin pedagogy and practice would be well received. Progress in this regard has already begun at an academic level in places such as, the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London which has created the Centre for Classical Improvisation and Creative Performance<sup>101</sup> and the Australian National Academy of Music where Professor David Dolan runs a course on classical improvisation applied to performance.<sup>102</sup> Outside of these, there are also individuals who are involved in bringing back this artform: violinist Rupert Guenther,<sup>103</sup> cellist Nicholas Bocher and pianist Robert Levin. The growing interest, combined with the progress already made and the success recorded,<sup>104</sup> serve as landmarks which may pave the way to the re-introduction of improvisation techniques into classical violin pedagogy and practice. However, in order to measure and determine the success of such an endeavour, I would propose further investigation through a longitudinal study using student subjects, whereby the eighteenth century techniques of classical improvisation on the violin would be taught over a period of time and observations would be made as to their impact on the student's technique and musicianship. This could form the basis of a Masters or PhD dissertation.

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<sup>100</sup> Dolan, "Back to the Future: Towards the Revival of Extemporisation in Classical Music Performance", 97.

<sup>101</sup> Beckstead, "Improvisation: Thinking and Playing Music", 72.

<sup>102</sup> Guildhall School of Music and Drama, "David Dolan Bmusic Ma Phd".

<sup>103</sup> Bochner, "A Study of the Use of Improvisation in the Teaching of Classical Musicians", 11.

<sup>104</sup> Students, scholars and performers have given their approval of the improvisation program devised at Guildhall School in London and also implemented in Australia. Past graduates such as Patrick Leresche acknowledge their participation in the program, Nicholas Bocher (another graduate of the program) was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to further his studies of improvisation in pedagogy, in order to then implement the skills learnt in his position as a teacher and performer.

## Conclusion

Every ... study that confines itself exclusively to the practical and theoretical sources that have come down to us in writing or print, without taking into account the improvisational element in living musical practice, must of necessity present an incomplete, indeed a distorted picture. For there is scarcely a single field in music that has remained unaffected by improvisation, scarcely a musical technique or form of composition that did not originate in improvisatory performance or was not essentially influenced by it.<sup>105</sup>

Ernst Ferand, a foremost scholar in the area of improvisation, reminds us that it has been an integral part of instrumental pedagogy and performance practice, in spite of its diminution from the classical arena over the past two centuries. This art of improvisation was passed down from teacher to pupil and taught visually, through the close study of written examples, and audibly, through the listening and imitating of skilled performers. Yet, in spite of its popularity in the eighteenth century, improvisation began to decline in the nineteenth century due to an increase in the notation of music. This increase in notation resulted from the separation of the composer's and performer's roles, from the rise of conservatoire education and from the changing purpose of improvisation. Initially, improvisation was a means of gracefully adding affect without obscuring the melody. However, as it developed, it became a show of technical brilliance.

Aside from these accepted explanations for the decline, there are also some factors which are less known. These include the decrease in knowledge and skills due to deficiencies in the study and teaching of improvisation, and the broadening of the music audience that made improvisation a foreign language to some. Furthermore, I suggest that another possible reason for this decline were the frequent warnings of pedagogues against excessive ornamentation, which could have made musicians hesitant about improvising. Or, perhaps the rise in printed and notated music caused

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<sup>105</sup>Ferand, "Improvisation in Nine Centuries of Western Music", 5.

instrumentalists to become complacent and take the easy route of reading music, rather than go further into creatively, and freely inventing music.

In response to this decline, this paper has made an argument for the re-introduction of classical improvisation techniques into contemporary violin pedagogy by highlighting their importance and benefits. The effectiveness of improvisation in the past is found in the technical and emotional freedom experienced by the performers who practiced it,<sup>106</sup> while the significance of improvisation in the present continues to be demonstrated in the deeper understanding of music that it provides.<sup>107</sup> Thus I put forward that should these techniques once again become part of the tuition of classical violinists, they would produce a freer performer, armed with greater musical and technical abilities, in execution, in agility and in expressiveness.

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<sup>106</sup> Ferand, "Improvisation in Nine Centuries of Western Music", 20.

<sup>107</sup> Bochner, "A Study of the Use of Improvisation in the Teaching of Classical Musicians," 2.

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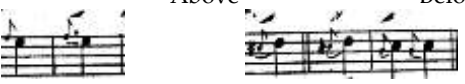




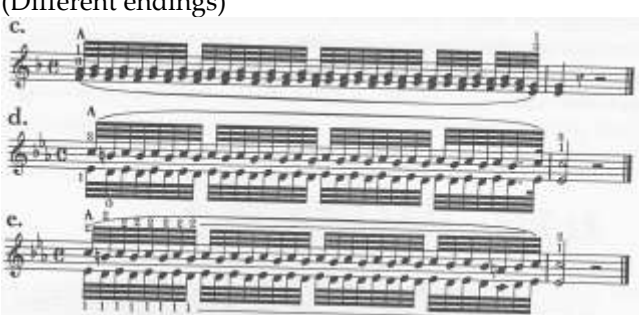



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## Appendix

### Some of the most common 'conventional stereotyped ornaments'

(Quantz refers to them in his treatise as: 'arbitrary' and 'essential', while in the French school they were known as *ornements* and *agréments du chant*.)

For the compilation of this Appendix I have consulted the following sources: Geminiani (p.6 – 8, 26); Quantz (chapters 8 and 9, p.91 – 108); Galeazzi (several passages); Leopold Mozart (chapters 9 and 10); Cartier (p.4 – 7); Baillot (chapter 10, p.121 – 144); Stowell (chapter 13, p.308 – 336).

Technique	Illustration	Comments
<p><i>Appoggiatura</i> Also known as 'little note'</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Above                      Below</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Anticipation                      Separassione</p>  <p style="text-align: right;">(Geminiani p.26)</p>	<p>Variations of this include the: light <i>appoggiatura</i> (a third below the main note), a double <i>appoggiatura</i>, rhythmic <i>appoggiatura</i> (executed faster than the melodic one), <i>anticipation</i> and <i>separassione</i> (used as variations on the melody to add grace without obscuring the melody).</p>
<p><i>Port de Voix</i> (to carry the voice)</p>	 <p style="text-align: right;">(Baillot p.126)</p>	<p>Where there is a skip between two notes, the first is shortened and the second anticipated in order to create tender expression. However, any glissandi must be avoided.</p>
<p>Trill</p>	 <p style="text-align: right;">(Geminiani p.26)</p>	<p>The player should decide on: The preparation (start the trill on the note indicated, the note above or the note below), the oscillation (number of oscillations), and the ending (preparing the next note by ending the trill on it).</p>
<p><i>The Brise</i> or Mordent</p>	<p>Indication:                      Execution:</p>  <p style="text-align: right;">Stowell (p.327)</p>	<p>The <i>Brise</i> is a trill without an ending.</p>
<p>Double Trill</p>	<p>(Different endings)</p>  <p style="text-align: right;">Stowell (p.330)</p>	<p>Alternation of two adjacent notes, in double stops.</p>
<p>Closed trill (closed between a double stop)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">(Tartini: L'art de l'archet, Var. 36)</p>  <p style="text-align: right;">Stowell (p.330)</p>	<p>A trill 'closed' between a double stop.  For all trills, in the Allegro they should be brilliant in character while in the Adagio the trills must be gentle and smooth.</p>
<p>Turn</p>	<p>Three notes ascending and descending</p>  <p>Four notes</p>  <p style="text-align: right;">(Baillot p.142)</p>	<p>Generally consists of three or four notes in a minor or diminished third. The turn Creates a pleasing effect and add charm. In faster tempi, the turn is executed quicker to mark the rhythm.</p>