“Informed Spontaneity”: A Theoretical Approach to the Enhancement of Creativity in Performance

Thesis

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Abstract

The application of theoretical analysis to musical performance is an area of research which has been vastly underexplored. Music theorists and performers have often self-segregated, exploring varying paths of musical knowledge which aren’t necessarily so different or separate as they may initially seem. A thorough understanding of theoretical devices can greatly serve to aid performers in making convincing interpretive decisions, and the analysis of professional performances can serve theorists in understanding the practical bases of the concepts which they study so scrupulously on paper.

The risk one runs in performing with minimal theoretical knowledge of a piece of music is that, although the performance may be full of energy and expression, it may also make little sense as a coherent musical statement. On the other hand, the performance of a piece which is based solely on theoretical analysis and meticulous planning of musical events can become predictable and unemotional. The creative aspect of performance must not be completely abandoned in the process of analyzing music for real-world application.

The theory of “informed spontaneity” proposed in this paper serves to address both sides of this issue—applying theoretical analysis to music while also maintaining an element of spontaneity. Two movements extracted from J.S. Bach’s Sonatas and Partitas for unaccompanied violin serve as examples for musical analyses constructed primarily...
with the performer in mind. Additionally, analyses of three separate professional recordings of the “Allemanda” from Bach’s *Partita No. 2 in D minor* are compared in terms of how each performer utilizes theoretical elements to enhance interpretation, while still maintaining an individual sense of creativity and emotionality.
Dedicated to the memory of Dr. James A. Feldman
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Introduction

Western art music is one of the oldest and most well-preserved genres of music. Works by composers who lived three hundred years ago are still performed regularly in concert halls throughout the world. Although this fact is a great credit to those composers and the music itself, this practice presents some obstacles to the performer. The creative soul of the performer yearns to “make its mark” on each piece of music. Yet when a piece has already been interpreted by thousands of other musicians, how does the performer find his own unique expression, while still honoring the intentions of the composer?

This paper aims to give performers a fresh approach to interpretation, through the use of careful musical analysis as a pathway to informed musical performance. All too often musicians divide themselves quite stringently into “analysts” or “performers,” with minimal interaction between the two. However, musical analysis can be used very effectively as a vehicle to accurate and expressive performance.

A main problem which may arise for the analytically-minded performer is that once one has achieved the clarity and coherency which results from detailed analysis of a piece of music, the piece is now in danger of becoming dry and predictable. The performance will sound well-planned and informed, but may also become monotonous and insincere. This is just the opposite of the young performer who shows much fervor and enthusiasm, but lacks analytical knowledge of a piece of music. This performer’s
playing will be exciting and showy, but the piece itself will not be communicated in a manner that is clear and comprehensible to the audience.

As a solution to this problem, I would like to propose a theory of “informed spontaneity.” It is quite common that a performer is told to “be more spontaneous.” However, one cannot often just “be spontaneous” and maintain musical coherency as the composer intended without a deep, informed knowledge of the piece. The performer must be thoroughly aware of the motivic, metric, and harmonic structure of a piece before he is able to determine an appropriate method for adding his own personal touch of spontaneity.

The following paper will address theoretical analysis as it relates to musical performance, as well as musical performance as a guiding device for theoretical analysis. An exploration of how analysis can be used to shape a performer’s musical expression will be conducted using two movements from J.S. Bach’s unaccompanied violin works—the “Allemanda” from Partita No. 2 in D minor and the “Adagio” from Sonata No. 1 in G Minor. Additionally, analyses of three professional recordings of the aforementioned “Allemanda” will serve as a case study to demonstrate how performers discover their own sense of “informed spontaneity.”
Chapter 1

Literature Review

The literature sample discussed in this chapter demonstrates a fairly recent trend of theorists toward a more practical application of theoretical procedures directly for use in performance. These examples represent an effort on the part of theorists to bridge the gap between their work and actual performances of the pieces which they analyze so meticulously on paper. There is, however, still quite a bit of work to be done to create a cohesive language between theorists and performers. The literature cited in this document exemplifies the work of theorists aiming to speak more effectively to performers, since that is the perspective of my research. Ideally, though, the line of communication should become a two-way street, in which performers also offer their perspectives to theorists. This is a path that is even less often explored, and which leaves open various possibilities for further research.

1.1 Wallace Berry

Wallace Berry provides a fairly thorough starting ground for connecting performance and analysis in his book *Musical Structure and Performance*. He begins the book with three main problems which arise in relating musical analysis to performance.
First, he addresses the intuitive factor in performance. Though he acknowledges that many skilled musicians often exhibit valid intuitions, “intuition can often be a capricious
guide, and is clearly inadequate in solving problems... and where an interpretative choice needs to be underscored with explanation and substantiation, as in teaching."¹ The primary aim of my own research is to address how the ambiguity of this intuitive process can be explained in more concrete terms, through the use of theoretical analysis. In other words, the spontaneity of one’s intuitions in performance actually grows out of one’s knowledge and comprehension of the underlying theoretical and stylistic devices within a piece of music.

The second problem Berry addresses is “specificity and the lack of it.”² Berry advises that general pronouncements about structural and theoretical elements of a piece should be accompanied by explanation of specific interpretative decisions which will support these judgments. In other words, the theorist must explain what the performer can actually do in performance to portray their analytic knowledge. In Chapter 2 of this document, the theoretical analysis of two movements of solo violin works by J.S. Bach will be paired with specific suggestions of how one might convey important analytic elements in actual performance in my own attempt to answer this problem posed by Berry.

The third point Berry discusses is the fact that there can and will be divergent interpretations of the same piece. In general, music theorists deal with what Berry refers to as “nonfacts,” or plausible opinions as to how to perform a piece of music, rather than absolute truths and entirely objective solutions.³ This problem will be addressed in my

² Berry, 8.
³ Berry, 10.
own work in Chapter 2, by offering multiple convincing performance suggestions for the same passages, as well as my analyses in Chapter 4 of multiple performers’ interpretations of the same work. The analyses in Chapter 4 represent an effort to demonstrate that different performers may highlight the same theoretical elements through varying interpretative decisions.

Berry also provides a list of twelve important interpretative questions and statements to which the performer may refer when seeking ways to enhance performance through theoretical knowledge. These points address a great variety of aspects of musical performance, many of which will be revisited throughout this paper. They are as follows:

1. What note do I play?
2. Assuming I do not get in its way, is the motive self-evident, or does it require some deliberate preparation?
3. What about dynamic inflection where none is indicated?
4. Are there not times when deliberate effort is needed to convey the sense of a significant, not necessarily explicit, voice-leading connection?
5. Performance decisions are elucidated at critical times by analytical awareness of place in a formal process.
6. What decisions concerning groupings of events may reasonably follow from the analysis of form and structure?
7. Where a texture may be interestingly complicated by an implicit, relatively disguised imitation, is it possible and desirable for the performer to communicate this?
8. [W]e commonly assume that metronomic tempo is best decided in relation to pace and content within pertinent structural elements. But is tempo to be complementary or compensatory in relation to these elements?
9. Does the performer underscore by judicious articulative stresses or durations palpable metric fluctuations at the surface?
10. Is there anything a performer can or should do about a piece’s broadest tonal structure, however one may conceive it? If not, does the awareness of such a structure matter?

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4 Berry, 11.
11. Where music is used descriptively, as often in text settings, how do analytical findings concerning descriptive elements condition interpretation?
12. Does not a probing, just analysis reveal to the performer an attitude appropriate to the character of a piece, and is this not in itself compelling justification for analysis informing interpretation?

1.2 Nicholas Cook

In his article “Analysing Performance and Performing Analysis,” Nicholas Cook provides insights on establishing a “performative perspective” in which the analyst provides a “prescription,” rather than a “scientific description,” to aid the performer. He criticizes theorists who have previously written on the subject, including Berry, Narmour, and Howell for assuming an authoritarian tone that always proceeds from analysis to performance, and never in the reverse direction. He also cautions against attempting to incorporate performance into the existing framework of theory, rather than establishing a new method which allows for a duality between the two. I aim to address this problem in this paper by suggesting theoretical observations to aid the performer in Chapter 2, and then observing professional performers’ interpretative decisions and translating them into theoretical explanations in Chapter 4.

Another useful point made by Cook is the idea that musical works conceptualize performances. This seems in and of itself an obvious statement, but it is all too often that the theorist becomes caught up in analyzing minute details of a piece without any regard to its original purpose, which is to be performed. Cook’s point serves to substantiate the

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necessity of creating new theoretical methods, such as that proposed in this paper, which directly support and enhance musical performance.

The main weakness of Cook’s article is that he is quick to criticize others, even for small weaknesses in their theories, but hesitant to provide many of his own solutions. He points out numerous flaws in current thinking, but leaves many questions unanswered as to how exactly he proposes we go about fixing and improving the system to better include performance and analysis on an equal plane.

1.3 Joel Lester

Joel Lester takes a similar view to Cook on the necessity of creating a greater duality between analyst and performer in “Performance and Analysis: Interaction and Interpretation.” He states that individual performers and performances are often left out of the literature, with analyses being “assertions about a piece, not about a particular rendition.” He suggests as a solution to this problem a comparison of recordings, and draws analytical conclusions from these. Lester’s article represents a commendable effort by a theorist to create a more integrated relationship with performers.

In my own work, I found it beneficial to follow in Lester’s course of exploration by analyzing multiple recordings of the same piece. This approach was, for my particular work, the most feasible and practical method for analyzing real performances. However, the analysis of recordings still leaves open some questions about live, “in the moment”

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performance. For example, in analyzing a recording, one can listen over and over and “comb through” the performance to discover more subtle details each time. But in live performance, the player only has one chance to make an impression on the audience. Additionally, the act of performing to make a recording is often quite different than the act of a live performance, which cannot be edited and generally contains more “raw emotion” than can be captured on a CD.

1.4 Janet Schmalfeldt

Janet Schmalfeldt’s article “On the Relation of Analysis to Performance: Beethoven’s ‘Bagatelles’ Op. 126, Nos. 2 and 5” begins promisingly with the assertion that “The theorist who wishes to convince performers of the benefits of analysis will carefully consider those objectives that distinguish the act of performing from that of analyzing. He will further ask himself which modes of analysis most specifically address the problem of how to shape a performance.” She embarks on an interesting and creative path toward pursuing this goal by framing the bulk of the article as a conversation between two friends- the Analyst and the Performer.

However, the perspective taken by the Analyst seems to follow much along the lines of what Cook refers to as “describing,” rather than “prescribing.” The analysis points out many important aspects of the “musical drama,” yet often fails to provide specific commentary on the way in which one might actually physically perform in order to highlight these features. There is relatively little explanation by Schmalfeldt of how to make the step between knowing about the piece intellectually and actually translating it.

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into sound and physical actions. This is a problem I aim to address in Chapter 2 of this document, by providing both theoretical commentary as well as performance suggestions which can bring one’s analysis to life. Additionally, Schmalfeldt generally fails to consider the relation of performance to analysis as a crucial aspect of this dialectic, that is to say, how aspects of performance can shape an analysis, in addition to the consideration of how an analysis can shape a performance. I aim to address this issue in Chapter 4, through analysis of professional recordings in which performers’ interpretations are observed and then substantiated analytically.

One especially useful point in Schmalfeldt’s article was the idea of live music performance as a “time art,” like dancing or acting, as opposed to a “spatial art.” Written music analysis bears more similarity to spatial art forms, such as painting, sculpting, and writing, in that it has a permanence which is not affected by time. It is the analyst’s challenge, therefore, to devise a way to capture the element of time in their analyses which in and of themselves require no reliance on time. In regards to this element of time, Schmalfeldt also writes:

> Whereas the analyst's verbal medium requires a final commitment to a presently held view, the performer's non-verbal "view" must never be taken as final within a live performance. Just one false move—a finger placed too heavily (or too lightly) on the key, an arm motion that misses its target—can force the performer to adjust the fine points of his strategy; suddenly new decisions must be made, and with these, a new "view" may be born. In such moments of stress, or of inspiration, for that matter, the performer's conscious prior analytic work can be tremendously helpful, but here an additional skill not demanded of the analyst is required of the performer—the creative ability to have moment-by-moment control over relationships in sound.

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8 Cook, 246.
9 Schmalfeldt, 17.
10 Schmalfeldt, 28.
This dynamic aspect of performing should, no doubt, be taken into consideration by the theorist. However, on the other side of the coin is the fact that the analyst may provide two or more differing analyses of the same piece, each of which may represent an equally plausible interpretation. Yet in any given specific performance, the performer must ultimately decide on one interpretation which he believes will be the most convincing to the audience. He may, in a moment of inspiration, deviate slightly from his original plan and have to make adjustments “in the moment” to compensate, but ultimately he may only present one interpretation for that given occasion in time. He may, at a later date in his career, play the piece again in a very different way. But when an individual performance is considered, he only has one chance to convey his ideas, in contrast to the theorist, who may write a single paper which analyzes a given work in several different ways from several different perspectives.

1.5 William Rothstein

William Rothstein emphasizes the difference between analytical truth and dramatic truth in “Analysis and the Act of Performance.” He commends Schenker’s use of the term “synthesis,” instead of “analysis,” as a more accurate description of the musician’s job of integrating conflicting parts, such as harmony, counterpoint, and meter, as a whole.\(^ {11}\) He also argues against the commonly-held view that the role of analysis is to inform the performer how to “bring things out.”\(^ {12}\) Rothstein uses the example of Bach fugues, in which performers are often instructed to “bring out” each entrance of the fugue subject. He takes the view that Bach often goes to great lengths to conceal the fugue


\(^{12}\) Rothstein, 219.
subject and weave it into the texture of the piece, therefore, the performer should not shamelessly expose Bach’s secrets. Rather, the performer should notice each subject entrance for himself in his preparation of a piece, but then allow the listener to discover the subject entries in performance. The resultant interpretation is much more engaging than if the performer was to simply “bring out” each subject entry relentlessly and pedantically. The listener should grasp an overall flow to the piece, which is more important than constantly focusing on the thematic material.

In my own analysis, I will provide various suggestions for highlighting specific theoretical elements in performance. An addition I make to Rothstein’s resistance to just “bringing things out” is that one should refrain from emphasizing important elements solely by playing louder or leaving a space between each motive repetition. Rather, significant aspects of a piece can be “brought out” in a great variety of ways, such as changes in tone color, rubato, softer dynamics, contrastive articulation, etc.

Rothstein also poses two questions that performers must ask themselves once they have an awareness of the important motives within a piece. The first question is how readily the motives would be heard without active intervention, and the second is what role in the musical discourse each particular motivic statement plays. Some examples of roles he provides are foreshadowing, expository, developmental, culmination, and after-echo motives. Rothstein suggests four main “sets of tools” for informing a performance-analysis based on themes and motives, metrical analysis, phrase analysis, and voice-leading analysis- which should be used in combination for the most comprehensive

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13 Rothstein, 226.
interpretative results.\textsuperscript{14} These “sets of tools” will be revisited throughout this document as a means of translating theoretical analysis into useful performative information.

1.6 Tim Howell

In his article “Analysis and Performance: The Search for a Middleground,” Tim Howell criticizes the degree of separation that has emerged between the two fields of music performance and music analysis. He holds both parties equally responsible, blaming performers who view analysis as suspicious or irrelevant and analysts who stray increasingly farther into complex theories which have very little to do with the original purpose of the music itself. Howell refers to this type of analysis as “Analysis for Analysis’s sake.”\textsuperscript{15} Howell stresses the point that many theorists view the sound of a piece itself as trivial, while in actuality, careful listening is often the most useful method for revealing new analytical insights.

One of Howell’s most notable points is his discussion of the distinction between rational and instinctive approaches to music. Many who have written on the subject have assigned the “rational” approach to theorists and the “instinctive” approach to performers. However, Howell believes that these two categories aren’t nearly so clear-cut. In actuality, he states that “particularly in the early states of their work, many analysts are much more instinctive in their approach than they are usually prepared to admit, whilst, correspondingly, the initial stages in a performer’s preparation involve an essentially

\textsuperscript{14} Rothstein, 238.
rational process."\textsuperscript{16} As each musician progresses in the study of a piece, the roles reverse—the theorist seeks to rationalize his initial instincts and the performer seeks an interpretation which sounds intuitive.

Overall, Howell’s arguments are quite solid and shed light on many of the problems which have hindered the integration of performance and analysis. Howell’s argument for the view of the rational approach and instinctual approach as a spectrum along which both performers and analysts oscillate serves as a starting point for an investigation as to how a sense of “informed spontaneity” can be realized.

\textsuperscript{16} Howell, 698.
Chapter 2

“Informing” A Performance: Analysis in a Practical Sense

2.1 Background

The objective of this chapter is to demonstrate to the performer ways in which the theoretical analysis of a piece of music can be applied directly to its performance. Likewise, an attempt will be made to inform the theorist of the types of analytical judgments that may be most useful to the performer in a practical sense. In other words, the chapter will serve mainly as a method of translation of analytical devices and terminology for performance purposes. Conversely, Chapter 4 will serve as a translation of performers’ interpretive choices into theoretical explanations, through the analysis of professional recordings.

The overall goal is a sense of collaboration between performer and analyst, not an assertion that one should have authority over the other. I believe that both musicians can learn equally, though in different ways, from one another. The examples of possible interpretations I give in this chapter are just that- examples. They are in no way to be intended as the only plausible methods for understanding a piece or the “correct” solutions for performance. However, they may serve as guidelines for approaching music analysis in this “collaborative” sense.
The musical works discussed in this chapter are two movements selected from Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Sonatas and Partitas* for unaccompanied violin—the “Allemanda” from *Partita No. 2 in D minor* and the “Adagio” from *Sonata No. 1 in G minor*. Full scores of both works can be found in the appendix of this document, and short musical examples are included throughout the body of this chapter. These movements have been chosen for analysis with the intention of focusing primarily on an individual performer’s musical interpretation and decisions. The performance of musical works employing multiple performers adds a whole new level of complexity to this discussion, as the way in which the parts fit together and the performers’ various interactions and communications with one another must then be taken into account as well. Therefore, the discussion here will focus exclusively on solo violin music, in which only one musician’s interpretation is presented at a time in performance.

Additionally, the music of J.S. Bach was selected for this particular study because this music leaves much interpretative leeway to the performer. Bach’s music includes very little in the way of dynamic, articulation, and expressive markings. Therefore, the performer must formulate an interpretation based on other musical devices and theoretical elements to mold a convincing performance.

2.2 Performative Analysis of the “Allemanda” from *Partita No. 2 in D minor*

The “Allemanda” of Bach’s *Partita No. 2 in D minor* is not a very technically demanding movement for the violinist, but musically it presents many difficulties due to its quite uniform texture and fairly static rhythmic patterns. In this movement one must
rely mainly on the implied harmonies, melodic contour, and motivic structure in shaping interpretative decisions. In this analysis I will begin with the most general points of musical demarcation within the piece, and then move on to more specific commentary.

2.2.1 Formal Design

The “Allemanda” is composed in binary form. The two main sections of the form, hereafter referred to as A and B, are parallel but not rounded. The parallelism between the two sections is fairly loose; they both begin with the same rhythm and doubled unison note, but then follow inverted contours, the first ascending and the second descending (see Figure 2.1). This contour inversion is a device used fairly frequently in Bach’s binary form music; a striking example is seen in the Gigue of the fourth English Suite, BWV 809.

The A section begins on the tonic pitch in D minor in measure 1, while the B section starts on the fifth scale degree of the dominant key in measure 17, following an affirmative arrival in A minor in the end of the A section. The performer might take into consideration the fact that the A section begins on the tonic note by playing with a rich tone and sense of stability. The performer should communicate to the audience that this note is “home.” However, the B section begins on the fifth of an A major triad, which becomes the dominant chord once again and quickly moves back to the home key of D. As a result, the doubled E at the beginning of the B section might be played with a desire for motion to the subsequent notes, in contrast to the stability of the opening note of the piece. This might be accomplished by placing a crescendo on the doubled E. Or perhaps
the E may be performed with a quieter and more *flautando* sound, and the opening D with a more confident, deep tone.

![Figure 2.1: m. 1 vs. m. 17](image)

Next, one may note the differences in how each of the two main sections of the piece closes (see Figure 2.2). In the A section the cadence in the key of A is reached on the third beat of measure 15. However, in the B section the cadence in D minor is not reached until the final note of the piece. The performer might take into consideration the fact that in the A section there is an additional cadencing figure, beginning in measure 15 and extending through measure 16, which allows time to firmly establish the key of A. Perhaps this means that the cadence in measure 15 need not be extremely firm, as it will be reinforced again in the succeeding measures. Or perhaps the performer will make a strong cadence in measure 15 and the subsequent measures can be played as a reflective “wrapping up” of ideas.
As stated previously, Bach reaches the cadence in the B section only at the last note of the piece. Therefore, this cadence must be carefully prepared by the performer, as there is no cadencing or coda material following it. There mustn’t be unresolved tension left hanging when this note is reached. Perhaps the performer will accomplish this by adding a more dramatic ritardando into the final cadence than utilized in measure 15. The performer might also take into account the fact that the final cadence may be played differently depending on whether this movement is performed by itself or within the context of the Partita in its entirety. The sense of finality, often marked by a ritardando and additional sustaining of the last note, may be less if the movement is performed within the context of the entire Partita, as this cadence marks the ending of the first movement, not the entire piece.

m. 15-16:

m. 31-32:

Figure 2.2: m. 15-16 vs. m. 31-32
2.2.2 Voice-leading

The challenge to performing any of Bach’s solo violin works, especially a movement like the “Allemanda” which consists primarily of single notes at a time and very few chords, is to trace the various melodic lines throughout the piece, noting where they start, lead to, and pick up again after interruptions of other lines. A clear understanding of the path which each line follows can serve as a guide to the performer, who may use this knowledge to enhance and reinforce the contour of the music.

The opening of the “Allemanda” consists primarily of a bass line and one upper melodic voice. The note E5 on beat 4 of measure 1 introduces a second upper voice, which doesn’t return again until measure 4. The voice-leading is shown below (bass notes and second upper voice stems point down, primary melodic voice stems point up):

![Figure 2.3: Voice-leading in m. 1-2](image)

The performer might take this information into account by performing in such a way as to differentiate between the two main lines. This might be accomplished by variance in tone color between the voices. Or perhaps the performer might lengthen each
bass note slightly while playing the melodic notes more strictly in tempo as a means of voice differentiation.

The unfolding which occurs on beat 1 of measure 2 provides an interesting point of note. The slurring of the figure is somewhat contrary to the voice-leading, which acts as such:

Voice-leading:

![Voice-leading notation]

Notated:

![Notated notation]

Figure 2.4: m.2, bt. 1

The performer should be aware of this fact and refrain from grouping only in terms of Bach’s slurring. This might be accomplished by leaving less space between these slurred groups than is generally customary in performing slurs in Bach, in which the last note of a two-note slur is often slightly clipped.

The next motivic sequence, from beat 3 of measure 2 through the downbeat of measure 4, consists of an ascending bass line and a melodic line that ascends through the
use of a descending motive in a “reaching over”-like figure. The melodic line progresses essentially as follows:

\[ \text{Figure 2.5: Voice-leading in m. 2, bt. 4- m. 4, bt. 1} \]

The acknowledgement of this theoretical device can aid the performer through the realization that the triplet figures serve to lead to the note to which they descend. For example, the first triplet figure beginning on the note A leads to the F on beat 1 of measure 3. Even though the A is the highest point of the line, the goal tone is the F. The performer might take this into account by maintaining a sense of motion through the triplets and refraining from placing undue emphasis on the first of each triplet motive, as this may hinder a sense of direction toward the goal tones. Perhaps a sense of motion toward the goal tones will also be accomplished through dynamic shaping or consistency of tone throughout each triplet line.

In the next phrase, Bach quickly arpeggiates up to the register which was first introduced in the note E5 on beat 4 of measure 1. Bach writes an ascending motive beginning on F5, and repeats this motive a step higher on G5. The next repetition of the
motive on A4, however, returns to the primary register of the piece to bring the section to a close (see Figure 2.6). The performer should acknowledge that the third occurrence of the motive is still a direct continuation of the line; it is merely displaced by an octave to return to the obligatory register.

Figure 2.6: m. 4-5

The phrase beginning on the pickup to beat 2 of measure 6 represents a clear demarcation of two melodic voices separated by register. The upper voice introduces an arch-shaped motive, which begins on the note E5 in the third beat of measure 6 and is repeated a fourth lower on beat 3 of measure 7 (see Figure 2.7). Within this motive, the top note of the arch is displaced by an octave. Again, it seems Bach is asserting the fact that, although he is placing melodic material in a higher voice, the obligatory register of the piece is at the octave to which the peak of the line drops. The performer might take this information into account by maintaining a continuity of line within the upper voice, even throughout Bach’s use of octave displacement.
At measure 11, Bach begins a stepwise linear descent from C5 to D4, accompanied by repetition of an ascending motive (see Figure 2.8). Then, starting from the D on beat 3 of measure 12, Bach writes a new motive, which occurs three times and outlines a Bb major chord, the Neapolitan of the local key of A minor. The motive ascends with each repetition, starting on a new chord tone each time (D, F, Bb). The performer might choose to utilize a new tone color or begin the motive on beat 3 of measure 12 more hesitantly to accentuate the striking quality of the Neapolitan chord (see Figure 2.8).
In measure 14, the higher register takes over the primary melodic activity, as the note D6 resolves to C6, and the G#5 resolves to A5. However, Bach quickly transfers to the lower register once again to resolve to the note A4 on beat 3 of measure 15 (see Figure 2.9). It is apparent once again that this lower register is the primary register of the piece, as the definitive cadence of the section occurs here.

The cadential material beginning on beat 4 of measure 15 serves to recall the two most predominant key areas of the piece thus far; the A chord becomes a V7 chord which resolves to a D minor triad, then the D chord becomes a vii°7 chord on G# and resolves to an A Major triad (see Figure 2.9).

The opening of the B section moves quickly back to the key of D minor, as the A Major triad is restored to its role as the dominant harmony (see Figure 2.10). The performer might note that in the cadence figure on beat 1 of measure 18, the resolutions occur on the weaker sixteenth notes (the second and fourth notes of the group). Therefore, the figure should be played in such a way that it is clear that the notes in stronger positions resolve to the second notes of the slur; the F and D are not just merely
passing or non-chord tones. This might be accomplished by a slight ritardando, which will allow the listener ample time to hear and perceive the resolutions.

Figure 2.10: The varying roles of the A Major triad in m. 15-16 and m. 17-18

The phrase beginning on beat 2 of measure 18 reintroduces the topmost melodic voice, accentuated by a large leap from the bass line. The music moves toward the key of G minor, and Bach reuses material from the A section throughout measures 20 through 22 (see Figure 2.11). The cadence in G minor will be discussed in further detail in subchapter 2.2.3.
After the cadence in G minor, the top voice begins a stepwise descent of an octave, as shown below, which leads to a cadence in F Major in measure 27.
Bach begins another stepwise descent in a high register in the phrase beginning on beat 4 of measure 27. Here, each time the line descends the previous note is recalled to aid the sense of connection of the line (see Figure 2.13). On beat 3 of measure 30, Bach expedites the process and begins to descend by step from Bb to Eb without any additional material between. The acceleration of the downward motion serves to increase interest as the movement draws near its close. It also serves to accentuate the Eb, which begins an arpeggiation of a Neapolitan chord in D minor, similar in motivic content to the Neapolitan chord employed in A minor in measure 12. This use of the Neapolitan progresses more quickly than its appearance in A minor; the second half of the motive is eliminated so that each statement encompasses only one beat within the measure (see Figure 2.14). Bach returns quickly to a lower register again, as is consistent with his tendency throughout the piece. The C# on beat 3 of measure 31 resolves in register to the upper D of the final chord of the movement. However, the line of possibly more importance is that which descends by stepwise motion from the G on beat 4 of measure 31 to the lower D of the final chord. This line represents a final descent within what appears to serve as the obligatory register of the movement (see Figure 2.15).
Figure 2.13: m. 27, bt. 4 - m. 30

m. 12-13:

Figure 2.14: m. 12-13 vs. m. 30-31

m. 20-31:

Figure 2.15: m. 31, bt. 4 - m. 32
2.2.3 Key Scheme and Cadence Points

The performer might next take into account the various key areas within the “Allemanda” and how they relate to one another. The piece begins in D minor, but moves fairly quickly to the relative major of F to cadence in measure 4. The first two measures can be used to firmly set up the character of D minor, however, by the middle of measure 3, Bach is clearly moving toward a new key area through a sequence which ends in F Major in measure 4 (see Figure 2.16). The performer might, therefore, find it beneficial to establish the key of D minor quite firmly at the opening of the piece, since the music moves so quickly away from the tonic key. This may be accomplished by performing the D minor section with a firm, deep tone and/or a steady, stable tempo.

Figure 2.16: m. 1-4
The F Major section, beginning in measure 4, provides a fairly immediate contrast to the opening of the piece (see Figure 2.17). Its major mode, ascending motives, and the introduction of a higher register than used previously might be indications to the performer to assume a brighter character than the opening D minor material. Perhaps the performer will use a brighter tone, higher strings, and more articulate bow stroke to achieve this contrastive sound.

Figure 2.17: m. 4-6

Bach moves quickly through the key of F and hints again at D minor in measures 6 and 7. However, this glimpse of D minor appears to be little more than a reminiscence, as Bach moves on to cadence in A minor, the minor dominant of the piece, in measure 8. The performer might note the parallelism between the first beat of measure 7 and the first beat of measure 8 (see Figure 2.18). The same stepwise descending third motive is used in measure 7 as a weak cadence in D minor, whereas the more definitive cadence occurs in measure 8 in A minor. This figure demonstrates that the tonic of the piece has, for the moment, become subservient to the dominant. Therefore, the figure might be played
more definitively in measure 8 than in measure 7. (Please also note that by “definitively” I do not necessarily mean “louder.” For instance, the motive could be played more quietly in measure 8 as a sort of tapering off of the phrase. Or perhaps a slight ritardando could be applied in measure 8 to emphasize the arrival of the key of A).

Figure 2.18: m. 6-8

The rest of the A section contains several sequences which wander slightly, but generally the music remains in the key of A (see Figure 2.19). A deceptive cadence in measure 11 starts a spinning out of the music and building up of energy in a quest for a true cadence, which is delayed all the way to measure 15. The performer might back off in volume and intensity after the deceptive cadence, conveying a sort of frustration that a more definitive cadence was not reached. From here he might continue to build intensity, representative of one last mighty effort. Finally, he is rewarded by the cadence on beat 3 in measure 15 in the key of A minor. In the closing material in measures 15 and 16, the
music then shifts to the parallel key of A Major. (Please see subchapter 2.2.1 for a discussion of performance of the cadencing material in measures 15 and 16).

At the opening of the B section, Bach shifts back to D minor fairly quickly (see Figure 2.20). The cadence in D minor on the downbeat of measure 18 might be played with a slight ritardando to establish a sense of repose at having returned to the home key. However, Bach soon begins to move again, this time toward the subdominant key of G minor. The phrase beginning on beat 2 of measure 18 might start slightly slower at a softer dynamic, to accentuate the large leap on the violin and also to create a sense of initial hesitancy to leave the tonic pitch again so quickly (see Figure 2.20).
On beat 3 of measure 20, Bach begins a downward sequence which parallels that in measure 11 (see Figures 2.19 and 2.21). The performer may choose to begin this sequence quietly and then build more intensity as the cadence in measure 23 draws nearer. Or perhaps the sequence will start at a louder dynamic, decrescendo to the lowest point of the line at measure 22, and then follow the line upward to crescendo to the Bb5 on beat 3 before backing off at the cadence.
In measure 23, Bach reaches a strong cadence in G minor. This cadence is parallel in motivic structure to the cadence in A minor in measure 15 (see Figure 2.22). These two cadences, in measures 15 and 23, are the most definitive cadences of the movement, excepting the final cadence in D minor at the end of the piece. Thus Bach follows a trend seen in many of his other works of placing nearly equal, if not completely equal, emphasis on the dominant and subdominant keys. The performer must decide whether the two cadences should be performed fairly identically, as they are very similar in structure, creating an equality of dominant and subdominant. This creates a sense of symmetry (G-D-A) between the dominant and subdominant. Or perhaps the performer will ultimately decide that the dominant is more important hierarchically than the subdominant, thereby performing the cadence in measure 15 more definitively than that in measure 23. Or, since the cadence in measure 23 is on the downbeat, while the cadence in measure 15 is on beat 3, perhaps the G minor cadence should be stronger? Did Bach want the subdominant to actually exhibit more authority than the dominant? These are three possible interpretations which the performer may consider, try out, and weigh against one another in choosing a convincing approach to this movement.
m. 14-15:

![Sheet Music](image1)

m. 22-23:

![Sheet Music](image2)

Figure 2.22: Parallel cadence structure in m. 14-15 and m. 22-23

After the assertion of G minor in measure 23, Bach embarks on a sequence which passes quickly through the keys of F Major, D minor, and Bb Major (see Figure 2.23). The next cadence of note is in F Major, on beat 3 of measure 27. This cadence is parallel to the D minor cadence in measure 18 (see Figure 2.20). This glimpse of F Major, from which Bach moves quite quickly, provides a sense of symmetry by bringing back the key of F Major near the end of the piece and thereby recalling its prominence near the beginning of the piece. Perhaps this section may be performed in a similar style and tone color to the F Major section at the beginning of the piece to accentuate the symmetry seen here.
The final section of the piece, which begins on beat 4 of measure 27 in a similar fashion to the phrase beginning on beat 2 of measure 18, serves to lead back to D minor for the final cadence (see Figure 2.24). The opening of this section might be played with a similar tone color to that used on beat 2 of measure 18 to emphasize the parallel nature of the two sections. Perhaps the performer will play with a softer, delicate tone and more rubato as the phrase begins, and then utilize a more stable tempo and assertive tone as D minor is more clearly established, around measure 31. Performing this closing D minor material with a deep, rich tone will reflect a similar style to the performance of the opening phrase of the piece and indicate a sense of coming “full circle” to the audience.
2.2.4 Motivic Characteristics

The next aspect of analysis which the performer may find useful is the identification of common motives and recognition of how they are transformed and transposed throughout the piece. The music of Bach is notorious for its tightly-woven sequences and repetitions of only a few main motives throughout. The problem this often poses the performer is how to vary these motives, so as to avoid monotony, yet also acknowledge their familiarity. As Rothstein stresses in his discussion of fugue subjects, it is most likely not a good idea to merely “bring out” each repetition of a motive, as this can disrupt the flow of the music and result in a performance which is tedious and dull, to both the performer and the listener. On the other hand, however, there should be some sense of cohesion between occurrences of the same motive throughout the piece; any appearance of a given motive should be recognizable as the same character in the drama, even in varying settings and guises.

Figure 2.24: m. 27, bt. 4- m. 32
The first motive I will discuss begins on the note A3 within beat 3 of measure 2 (see Figure 2.25). This motive is repeated twice directly following its first occurrence, once starting on D4 and then on G4. The performer might initially be tempted to play each reiteration of the motive very similarly, to point each entrance out clearly to the audience. However, this type of playing can quickly begin to disrupt the flow of the piece, so perhaps the performer will explore the varying harmonic roles of the motive. The first occurrence of the motive outlines a dominant seventh chord and the second a tonic chord, both in D minor. The third iteration of the motive outlines a dominant seventh chord in the key of F Major, which resolves in measure 4 to the tonic chord in F. Following the pattern displayed here of tension-resolution-tension-resolution, the performer might choose to play the first occurrence of the motive at a louder dynamic or with a stronger tone, and then decrease the tension on the second occurrence for the resolution. Additionally, the first two motive statements might be played more connected to one another, with minimal space between them so as not to disrupt the flow of the resolution. Then, perhaps a more significant break will be placed between the second and third occurrence of the motive, since a new tension-resolution sequence will begin here. The third occurrence of the motive might employ more intensity and drive to resolve than the second occurrence, and the performer may then back off on the resolution in measure 4.
Another way in which the performer might emphasize the repetition of a motive is to play each reiteration progressively louder or softer, depending on the context within the piece. This corresponds to the concept of “terraced dynamics” often used in performance of Baroque music. This method of motivic emphasis is more subtle than leaving a space before each entrance of the motive, but also proves less disruptive to the overall flow of the music. One example of where terraced dynamics may be appropriate is within the sequence beginning at measure 11 (see Figure 2.26). The performance of each reiteration of the motive at a gradually softer dynamic could be used to reinforce the descending musical line. However, a gradual increase in dynamic with each repetition might also be used effectively.
2.3 Performative Analysis of the “Adagio” from Sonata No 1. in G minor

The “Adagio” movement of Bach’s Sonata No. 1 in G minor presents some of the opposite performance problems of the “Allemanda.” At first glance the movement appears very free in nature and, therefore, runs the risk of wandering too much in performance without a sense of overall pulse or direction. The “Adagio” bears some semblance to Bach’s more improvisatory piano movements, such as his preludes or toccatas. The “Adagio” is, in fact, followed by a fugue, in the fashion of a prelude and fugue or a toccata and fugue.

2.3.1 Formal Design and Key Scheme

The overall form and key scheme of the “Adagio” is as follows. The movement begins in G minor, and shifts to the minor dominant key, D minor, by measure 6. After a cadence in D minor in measure 9, the music begins to explore new key areas more quickly. It moves back to G minor, cadences in measure 10, then passes into C minor. The piece reaches a temporary standstill in measure 13 with a fermata on a vii°7/ V in Eb Major. After the fermata, a cadenza-like figure leads back to C minor. Beat 3 of measure 15 begins a section of music which generally parallels the phrase beginning on beat 3 of measure 2, this time in the subdominant, rather than the tonic, key of the piece. Bach moves back to G minor in measure 18 in parallel fashion to his modulation from G minor to D minor in measure 5. The key of G minor is then maintained until the close of the movement.
These general points of musical demarcation can be used as guidelines for the performer to create a “map” of the piece into which one may begin fitting interpretative ideas. The identification of main key areas, cadences, and parallelisms within the piece’s structure will already help to reduce any sense of aimless wandering in performance by creating an outline of significant beginning and ending points, between which a sense of direction may be generated.

2.3.2 Voice-Leading and Phrase Structure

The voice-leading within the “Adagio” is a crucial aspect of the movement in terms of making interpretative decisions. Deciding what voices one should “bring out” and maintaining continuity of line in performance can be daunting if based solely upon intuition. However, theoretical elements within the piece can alleviate much uncertainty in this matter.

The opening phrase consists of two main melodic voices and a bass line (see Figure 2.27). The upper melodic voice (G5) in the opening chord is transferred down an octave and moves to F#4, which then transfers back to the original octave and resolves to the same G5 with which the movement began. The lower melodic voice begins on Bb4 and moves up to a C5 in the V7 chord, which is ornamented on beats 1 and 2 of measure 2, and then resolves back to the initial Bb4.

The voice-leading scheme of this opening phrase supports the idea that the phrase serves primarily to set up the key of G minor, since the main melodic voices wander only slightly and return to their original positions at the cadence. The performer might,
therefore, choose to play these measures in a fairly stable tempo, to firmly establish the key. This phrase might also be played with a crescendo to the dominant seventh chord, which begins on beat 3 of measure 1, and a diminuendo back to the tonic chord, which reappears on beat 3 of measure 2. These dynamic shapes will help to reinforce the feeling of tension created upon the arrival of the dominant seventh chord, and the sense of resolution that accompanies the return to the tonic chord.

An understanding of the voice-leading of this opening phrase may also aid in the performer’s decisions regarding which voices to emphasize. The top voice, which is then transferred down an octave, seems to bear the primary melodic content of the first measure. Therefore, the G⁵ might be emphasized as the primary tone of the opening chord. In measure 2, the melodic material on beats 1 and 2 is related to the lower melodic voice. Therefore, the B♭⁴ in the chord on beat 3 of measure 2 might be emphasized as the voice of primary importance this time. This may be achieved by holding the B♭ slightly longer than the rest of the chord.

Figure 2.27: m. 1-2
In the following phrase, Bach uses a “reaching over” figure on beat 1 of measure 3 to resolve the Eb, which was introduced on beat 4 of the previous measure, to the note D (see Figure 2.28). The scale degree motion seen here is one of strong voice-leading tendency, flat-6 to 5. The delayed resolution of this tone might be accentuated by performing the Eb to D slur on beat 1 of measure 3 with more emphasis or length than the Bb to A slur preceding it. The Bb to A slur does not represent any sort of delayed resolution, and actually marks a motion to a less stable scale degree within the key (scale degree 3 to 2).

Figure 2.28: m. 2, bt. 3- m. 3, bt. 2

In measures 4 and 5, Bach creates cohesion through the regular occurrence of a descending motive in the middle voice (see Figure 2.29). This repeated figure may be used as an anchor around which to base the movement of the other voices within the phrase. In other words, the repetitions of the middle-voice figure might be performed in a similar fashion to create a sense of motivic familiarity and unity. However, the final occurrence, in beats 2 and 3 of measure 5, might be lengthened or accompanied by a decrescendo, due to the fact that it coincides with a cadence.
A deceptive cadence in measure 5 marks the end of the phrase (see Figure 2.30). The fact that this cadence ends unexpectedly on the submediant chord, rather than the tonic, should be a significant point for the performer to consider during the interpretative decision-making process. Perhaps the performer will enhance the deceptive quality of the cadence by playing beat 3 of measure 5 with a different tone quality, possibly more sul tasto or with less bow pressure. After the cadence, on beat 4 of measure 5, the submediant chord may be reinterpreted as a Neapolitan chord, as it moves quite quickly from here to D minor (see Figure 2.30). The performer might accentuate this, another fairly unusual and colorful chord, by beginning beat 4 of measure 5 quite delicately and perhaps with some initial hesitancy, in order to ensure ample time to create a suspenseful mood. The audience is likely unaware at this point that the music is moving to D minor, which affords the performer the opportunity to heighten the suspense in the Neapolitan chord, thereby increasing the salience of the modulation once it is realized.
The next phrase begins a sequence of two main voices which move downward in stepwise motion toward a cadence in D minor on the downbeat of measure 9 (see Figure 2.31). The performer should be aware that this phrase extends all the way to measure 9 and, subsequently, refrain from letting it become overly fragmented as the notes move back and forth across various octaves between the treble and bass line. The performer might execute this phrase by emphasizing notes of importance more with weight or intensity of vibrato and less by adding extra time to them, as this may disrupt the flow of the music toward the cadence.

This phrase, from beat 4 of measure 5 to the downbeat of measure 9, contains a soprano voice and a bass voice, each of which are moving in descending stepwise motion. The top voice descends from Bb5 to D5, with an overreaching to C#5 before the cadence on D5; the bottom voice descends from G4 to A3, and then moves up a fourth to D4 for the cadence in measure 9. The two lines discussed here can give the performer a context around which to place the additional notes within the phrase. Furthermore, the
performer might give the illusion of sustaining the notes of these descending lines throughout the material in other voices. For instance, the E4 on beat 3 of measure 6 should lead to the D4 on the downbeat of measure 7. Since there are two entire beats during which the E needs to be retained in the audience’s memory, the performer might choose to place some extra weight and time on the E. Notes within the primary lines which move consecutively, for example the C4 to Bb3 on beats 2 and 3 in the bass line of measure 7, might need less emphasis, since they progress directly without interruption.

Figure 2.31: m. 6-9
After the cadence in D minor in measure 9, the music moves back to G minor briefly. One might note that although the F# introduced on beat 4 of measure 9 is not sustained throughout the entire beat, its resolution is not completed until the downbeat of measure 10 (see Figure 2.32). Therefore, the tone used by the performer in executing the F# should create a sense of desire to resolve, which will provide an illusion of sustaining into the following measure.

![Figure 2.32: m. 9-10](image)

After the cadence in G minor on beat 1 of measure 10, perhaps the performer will begin the next phrase more hesitantly, thereby demonstrating a reluctance to move away from the tonic key once again. Bach moves to C minor by substituting the dominant seventh chord of C minor for the expected tonic G minor chord on beat 4 of measure 10 (see Figure 2.33). The performer might play this dominant seventh chord with a different tone color than used in the earlier portion of the phrase to accentuate the unexpectedness of the chord.
Following the arrival in C minor, Bach moves toward its relative major of Eb. The differentiation of voices is made quite clear by large leaps between registers (see Figure 2.34). The resolutions of tones are often interrupted by other voices, and the performer must find a way to convey these delayed resolutions to the audience. This might be accomplished through emphasis or lengthening of the tones that will exhibit delayed resolutions, as a means of implied sustaining throughout the interruption of other voices. Examples of such tones include the D4 in beat 4 of measure 11, which will resolve to Eb4 on beat 1 of measure 12, and the Db5 in beat 2 of measure 12, which will resolve to C5 in the next beat.

The vii°7/V chord on the fermata in measure 13 appears quite unexpectedly (see Figure 2.34). The fact that Bach places a fermata on the note serves to accentuate its surprising nature by extending it much longer in duration than any of the surrounding chords. Bach also places the Eb in the top voice of the chord, which is the expected resolution of the D5 in the Bb dominant chord which precedes it. It is the lower two voices which behave unexpectedly and, therefore, it might behoove the performer to accentuate these lower voices by rolling the chord relatively slowly.
The phrase after the fermata in measure 13 begins with a B fully-diminished seventh chord in C minor (see Figure 2.35). This is also an unexpected turn in the music, as Bach does not resolve the leading tone (A) of the preceding diminished seventh chord. Instead, the leading tone moves up a whole step to B, while the other two voices resolve properly (Gb to F and Eb to D). Again, the bass voice seems to be the main point of interest here due to its unpredicted resolution.

In the subsequent phrase, each note of the C minor triad takes a turn in serving as a note of resolution (see Figure 2.35). The top note (Ab5) of the B fully-diminished seventh chord resolves to G5 over a C minor triad on beat 3 of measure 13. On the downbeat of measure 14, the note C5 serves as an arrival point. On beat 3 of measure 15, the note Eb5 is the prominent melodic note at the cadence. These resolutions on various notes of the C minor triad may serve to influence one’s interpretation of the notes leading up to each. For instance, the anticipation of Ab to G at the end of beat 2 of measure 13
may be brought out by lengthening these notes slightly longer than their notated value. In measures 14 and 15, the F5 is the note of importance in the upper voice, as it will resolve to the Eb5 on beat 3 of measure 15. The recurring B-natural may be played with less emphasis than the F, as it does not resolve in register within this phrase.

Figure 2.35: m. 13- m. 15

As mentioned previously, the phrase beginning on beat 3 of measure 15 utilizes material which generally parallels the phrase beginning on beat 3 of measure 2 (see Figures 2.28, 2.30 and 2.36). The modulation back to G minor begins in measure 18, as Bach reuses the modulation scheme seen measure 5, this time to move from C minor to G minor (rather than G minor to D minor). Once again, the submediant chord is reinterpreted as a Neapolitan chord, this time to bring the music back to G minor. This modulation creates a sense of symmetry within the movement, and balance of keys
between the subdominant and the dominant. The performer might accentuate this fact by performing the two modulations in a similar fashion. Or, perhaps the performer may find it necessary to place more emphasis on the second modulation, as this is the return of the tonic key of the piece. This may be accomplished by additional lengthening of the deceptive cadence or extra broadening of the fourth beat of measure 18 as a means of building suspense into the final arrival of the tonic key.

Figure 2.36: m. 15, bt. 3- m. 19, bt. 2
In measure 20, Bach provides a final reminiscence of his earlier usages of the Neapolitan chord on beats 3 and 4 (see Figure 2.37). This may be accentuated by the performer by playing in a similar manner to the previous occurrences of the Neapolitan chord, perhaps utilizing a more delicate tone color and starting more hesitantly to heighten the effect of the chromaticism.

Figure 2.37: m. 20

In measure 21, the note G5 recurs several times, as a sort of anticipation of its final resolution within the tonic chord in measure 22 (see Figure 2.38). It occurs on beat 1 of measure 21 within a 4-3 suspension over a V7 chord; it occurs as the seventh of a V7/V chord in beat 2, and again as a suspension over a V7 chord on beat 3. It is also repeated several times throughout the figurations on beat 4 of the same measure before it ultimately settles in the sustained final chord in measure 22. It is as if the whole of measure 21 serves as an anticipation of the final G5, whilst Bach wraps up all loose ends in the other voices before the closing cadence.
An additional point of note concerning measure 21 is that the final cadence of the piece is approached by a V7 chord on beat 3 of measure 21 (see Figure 2.38). The bottom notes of this chord might be lengthened more than those of the previous two chords in the measure, as this is the final dominant chord of the piece which needs to be sustained in the mind of the listener for two beats until its resolution on the downbeat of measure 22.

Figure 2.38: m. 21-22

2.3.3 Suspensions

Another theoretical device used by Bach throughout the “Adagio” which might be interpreted differently in varying contexts is the suspension. The 7-6 suspension on beat 3 of measure 1, for instance, might be played with greater emphasis, and perhaps a louder dynamic, placed on the resolution note (see Figure 2.39). This is due to the fact that the note of resolution is the leading tone of the key, which is a quite emotionally charged and unstable note. The 7-6 suspension on beat 3 of measure 5, however, might be played the opposite way (see Figure 2.39). This suspension occurs on a cadence; therefore the F
should hold some tension and the Eb should be played as a note of resolution, serving to end the phrase.

Figure 2.39: 7-6 Suspensions in m. 1 vs. m. 5
Two additional examples of suspensions in which the note of resolution is actually a leading tone are found on beat 1 of measure 8 and beat 1 of measure 21. Both are 4-3 suspensions in which the tonic note resolves to the leading tone over a dominant seventh chord. Again, one might perform these suspensions quite differently, with less sense of release, than a suspension which resolves to a more stable scale degree.

m. 7, bt. 4- m. 8, bt. 2:

[Image of musical notation]

m. 20, bt. 3- m. 21 bt. 2:

[Image of musical notation]

Figure 2.40: 4-3 Suspensions m. 8 and m. 21
3.1 Defining Spontaneity

Random House dictionary defines the word *spontaneous* as “coming or resulting from a natural impulse or tendency; without effort or premeditation; natural and unconstrained” or “(of natural phenomena) arising from internal forces or causes.”\(^\text{17}\) This definition acknowledges the essential concept that although spontaneity cannot be planned in advance, it is also not completely arbitrary. A spontaneous act grows out of some organic, perhaps subconscious process. It is not merely a random or illogical decision. In music, it arises from the natural impulses of the performer or, in the case of the second definition, from internal forces within the piece itself.

There appears to exist in musical performance a spectrum of spontaneity on which music of various time periods, composers, and genres falls. On the most spontaneous end of the spectrum, one would find free improvisation. Improvisation within a style, such as jazz, is somewhat less spontaneous, as it must fit within certain conventions of the style and the overall structure of a specific piece. European art music of the 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th}

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centuries, which is the main focus of this paper, places even more constraints on spontaneity. In most cases, performers of this music are expected to play the exact notes in the same order in generally the same rhythm in which the composer wrote them. However, the performer still has a fair degree of interpretative freedom, in making decisions pertaining to metric grouping, exact degree of dynamic contrast and rubato, variations in tone color, etc.

Within Western art music, there are also different amounts of spontaneity acceptable in performance dependent on the time period in which a given piece was composed. In the Baroque era, ornamentation by performers was common and even expected, but this practice was greatly diminished in the Classical era. The Romantic era allowed many new opportunities for rubato and coloristic effects. However, Romantic composers were in many ways more specific in their notation than Baroque and Classical composers, thereby imposing new limitations on a performer’s interpretational freedoms. Romantic music often included many precise dynamics, tempo changes, and expressive markings, while most Baroque and even many Classical pieces had been quite minimal in this regard.

3.2 Spontaneity in Rhythm and Tempo

In the majority of cases regarding European art music of the 18th and 19th centuries, the performer will play in such a way that the exact rhythms a composer wrote are portrayed to the audience. This doesn’t mean, however, that the performance will be strictly metronomic. Rather, time may be compressed and expanded on a scale which maintains equality within the larger divisions of the beat. For instance, a performer may
not play a series of sixteenth notes strictly in time for shaping purposes, but the quarter note value from beat to beat in the measure may remain constant. Another way a performer may alter the tempo but still convey the written rhythms may be seen over the course of a ritardando. The notes gradually become slower throughout the ritardando, but the rhythmic value of any note of choice can be determined due to the context of the notes directly surrounding it as well as the gradual, organic slowing down of the larger divisions of the beat.

3.3 Spontaneity in Melodic Grouping

Different groupings of notes can change the meaning of a musical phrase in the same way that different groupings of words can change the meaning of a sentence. The performer generally desires to accentuate the repetition of motives to the audience, but also must refrain from playing each repetition so much alike that the playing becomes monotonous and the overall flow of the piece is stagnated. The performer may also make note grouping choices based on other theoretical elements within a piece. For instance, a group of notes that all fit within a single harmony may be grouped together. Notes may also be grouped based on the contour of a melodic line. If the line is ascending in stepwise motion, for example, and then skips to a lower register, perhaps the notes beginning in this lower register will mark the start of a new group of notes. However, if this lower register activity merely represents an octave displacement within the same line, the notes may continue to be grouped as one continuous idea.

Additionally, melodic grouping of notes may be achieved through a variety of performance devices. For instance, a group of notes may be clearly demarcated by
placing a slight space before and after the group. The group may also be performed at a
different dynamic or utilizing a different tone color than surrounding material. Note
grouping may be achieved by pianists through fingering choices, string players through
bowing choices, or wind players through breathing choices.

3.4 Translation into Physical Movement

One important point about the analysis of music for performance is that the
interpretative ideas proposed on paper must be translatable into physical, technical
elements of performing. The theorist attempting to suggest interpretative points to the
performer must be well-versed in the technical constraints and idiosyncrasies of the
performer’s instrument. For instance, a theorist can suggest that it may work well
musically for a violinist to sustain a chord at a forte dynamic in one bow for fifteen
seconds, but this may not be logistical in real-world application. Likewise, the performer
must have a means of translating abstract ideas physically onto the instrument. If in
analyzing a piece, the performer finds a certain note important to “bring out” of the
texture, is it “brought out” by altering the dynamic, changing tone color, lengthening it,
etc.? There is often not one right answer to this question, but in many cases some ways of
emphasizing a note are more acceptable than others within the style and context of the
piece.
3.5 The Element of Time

One of the main points a performer must understand about spontaneity in performance is that one’s previous decisions about a piece must be able to adapt on the spot. Say, for instance, that in planning out an interpretation of a given piece, the performer had decided that a dramatic crescendo to the climax of the piece was desirable. However, in the actual performance, the player is inspired to make a crescendo earlier than he had previously intended. Now, the player will reach full volume too soon unless he finds an appropriate place to drop down in dynamic again before making a crescendo to the climax. Or perhaps a decrescendo to the climax would be appropriate? Or a longer section could be played at a steady fortissimo, rather than just the climax? These are the types of decisions that must be made in the “heat of the moment” as a result of spontaneity.

Another possibility is that of overlapping analyses. When a performer makes a decision “on the spot” and must subsequently alter his playing in order to continue to make a coherent musical statement, he may enter the realm of a new theoretical analysis. One exercise to aid a performer in dealing with such circumstances is to conduct several different analyses of the same piece, from different angles and viewpoints, but each of which is a logical, plausible explanation of the piece. Then, the performer might experiment by mixing parts of different analyses with the goal of maintaining a cohesive interpretation. The performer can continue to mix and match various interpretations throughout his practice. After each “performance” he should evaluate the effectiveness of the interpretation and determine why it did or did not work. This type of practice will
allow the performer more confidence in making spontaneous decisions in actual
performance.

One of the main problems in analyzing the concept of spontaneity in performance
is the very fact that it is not premeditated. Therefore, we can only really view spontaneity
in retrospect. In other words, one cannot “plan” spontaneity. I have chosen the words
“informed spontaneity” for this very reason. One can consider an array of ideas and
interpretations, study the conventions of a certain genre of music, and identify sections of
a piece which are more suitable for spontaneity than others. However, in the moment of
an actual performance, these preparations can only aid a performer in providing
convincing bursts of spontaneity. It takes a complex combination of rational thought,
human emotion, and musical understanding to create a truly effective and spontaneous
performance.

What is it, then, that makes one person’s spontaneity more appealing than
another? Assuming the two performers are of equal talent, training, and technical ability,
what are the additional characteristics needed for a successfully spontaneous
performance? As previously mentioned, this is a question which perhaps must be
answered in retrospect. A look at recordings of various artists performing the same piece
should aid in such an endeavor.
Chapter 4

Analysis of Recorded Performances

4.1 Background

This chapter represents an attempt to use performers’ interpretations to inform the theorist. The three performances discussed are professional recordings of J.S. Bach’s “Allemanda” from *Partita No. 2 in D minor* by Itzhak Perlman, Arnold Steinhardt, and Lucy van Dael. Although the disadvantages of the analysis of recorded, rather than live, performances have been previously mentioned in subchapter 1.3, this still remains the most pragmatic method for this study.

In studying these recordings of the “Allemanda,” I sought a method of analysis which gave the performer the benefit of the doubt as an intelligent musician, capable of making logical musical decisions and following instincts that are grounded in extensive training and experience. I believe the analyst can learn a great deal from the skilled performer, and therefore should refrain from merely imposing a predetermined analysis on a piece without giving the performer’s own ideas a fair consideration. Likewise, the performer has much to learn from the analyst, and many aspects of theoretical analysis can be applied directly to performance, as has been discussed in Chapter 2.
In this chapter I aim to establish a stronger duality between performer and analyst by constructing an analysis based on each of the recordings, including such elements as phrasing and articulation choices, dynamic shaping, and tone color variation. I will compare these performances to my own theoretical analysis of the “Allemanda” from Chapter 2, calling attention to where the two intersect and suggesting plausible explanations when they differ. Of course, one must always keep in mind that, in reality, there is never only one “correct” interpretation of a piece of music; this is the fact which makes musical performances exciting to listen to but difficult to study objectively.

In addition, analysis and performance don’t always directly translate. For instance, a piece performed exactly and solely based on a theoretical analysis may become dry and predictable (this is where the idea of “spontaneity” comes in). Conversely, a performance based solely upon intuitions may appear illogical and poorly thought out. Instead, the analytical tools used by theorists and the intuitions of performers can be used to reinforce and support one another, resulting in a performance which is both coherent and exciting.

4.2 Itzhak Perlman

The first recording which I will discuss is by Itzhak Perlman under the EMI Classics label (1988). Perlman’s performance maintains a general tempo of 54 beats per minute. Much of his demarcation of different motives and moods is created by variances in bow strokes, such as marcato versus legato, and changes in tone color, such as a
brighter sound created playing nearer the bridge and a darker sound created playing nearer the fingerboard.

Perlman’s first phrase begins with a bold, strong tone on the opening doubled D. The bass notes are emphasized slightly to differentiate voices and there is a marked emphasis on the E5, denoted by an increase in vibrato, in measure 1. This E is the highest note in the line and introduces a register which doesn’t return again until measure 4. Perlman’s accentuation of this note serves to prevent it from being entirely forgotten before the regaining of the register in measure 4.

Perlman also adds shape to the opening phrase by accelerating through the first two beats of measure 1, and decelerating in beat 2 of measure 2. This creates a sense of forward momentum at the opening of the phrase and slight relaxing before a new motive enters in beat 3 of measure 2.

Perlman puts a slight space between the C#4 on beat 3 of measure 2 and the following A3 to indicate the start of a new idea. A smaller space is placed between the downbeat of measure 3 (the note F4) and the following D4. This space indicates that the same motive which began in the second half of measure 2 is now being repeated. On the third repetition, which begins on the note G4 within the third beat of measure 3, almost no space is left by Perlman to indicate the start of the new motive. This is an example of how the performer might acknowledge a theoretical device- here, motivic repetition within a sequence- but refrain from strictly and pedantically acknowledging each repetition. While the theorist may be quick to point out the three consecutive occurrences of this motive, Perlman emphasizes the head of the motive less and less each time. It is as if once he has pointed out the motive clearly to the audience he doesn’t want to keep
relentlessly stressing his point. The motive will most likely be clear enough by its second iteration that, by the third, it no longer needs to disrupt the flow of the music to be noticed. Perlman’s choice here prevents the music from becoming overly predictable and segmented.

Perlman transitions to a softer, more *sul tasto* tone color beginning on the A at the end of beat 1 in measure 6. He also plays with a more legato bow stroke. Both of these technical choices serve to create a darker tone color, which emphasizes the return to the minor mode (first D, then A minor). Perlman hangs for a moment on the D5 on beat 2 of measure 6, perhaps representing a sort of reluctance to leave this brief reappearance of the tonic pitch of the piece before moving forward to new key areas.

Perlman then contrasts the previous section by playing with a more marcato bow stroke on the motive beginning on the last B-natural of beat 1 in measure 8. In this motive, Bach is again hinting at F Major, which Perlman accentuates by playing with a brighter tone and more spaced articulation. Perlman begins transitioning back to the darker tone he used during the previous minor phrase on beat 2 of measure 9, as the music leads again toward A minor.

In measure 10, Perlman places a noticeable amount of weight and length on the G# on beat 3. This serves to highlight the leading tone as Bach draws toward a cadence in A minor. However, the cadence turns out to be deceptive, and Perlman switches back to his brighter sound and more marcato bow stroke in measure 11 to support this unexpected arrival on an F Major triad. As the motive in measure 11 repeats, Perlman makes a decrescendo with the descending line. At the last appearance of this motive on the second beat of measure 12, Perlman takes extra time to indicate that this material is coming to a
close and a new idea will soon enter. He begins the motive outlining the Neapolitan chord
on beat 3 of measure 12 quietly, then crescendos with each of its repetitions in the
subsequent measures.

In measures 14 and 15, Perlman plays with a very legato bow stroke. Additionally, he broadens the tempo quite significantly and increases his intensity of vibrato on beat 4 of measure 14 and the downbeat of measure 15. All of these interpretative elements serve to intensify his sound to prepare for the cadence which ends the A section.

Perlman performs a fairly dramatic ritardando leading into the final cadence of the A section in measure 16. Perlman places especial emphasis on the G# leading tone in the second beat of measure 16 in preparation for its resolution on beat 3. In the repeat of the A section, however, Perlman performs the cadence in measure 16 more delicately. The chord is rolled more slowly and quietly than in the first occurrence of the A section. This serves to create less sense of finality, which necessitates movement to the B section. Perlman’s performance leaves no doubt that, although this is an important cadence point in the piece, there are still many unresolved issues to be addressed.

Perlman begins the B section quite assertively, in parallel fashion to his playing of the opening of the A section (see Figure 4.1). Perlman’s interpretation here differs from my own analysis of this movement in Chapter 2, in which I pointed out the differing harmonic roles of the opening doubled notes of the A and B sections. However, Perlman does have analytical support for his decision. He chooses to accentuate the similarity in motivic structure between the openings of the A and B sections, rather than their differing harmonic functions.
Perlman leans on the A on beat 2 of measure 17 as an arrival point of the line leading down to it, and also emphasizes the D beat 1 of measure 18 (see Figure 4.1). This emphasis of the A and D serves to accentuate the return of A and D to their original roles within the overall key of the piece (A becomes subservient to D once again).

m. 1:

\[\text{Figure 4.1: opening of A section vs. opening of B section}\]

On beat 3 of measure 20 Perlman again plays in the marcato style which he used in the similar phrase at measure 11. Perlman begins beat 3 of measure 21 with a soft, dark tone. From here, he makes a crescendo up to the Bb on beat 3 of measure 22, which he broadens before making a decrescendo to the cadence on the downbeat of measure 23. This resembles his performance of the preparation to the A minor cadence at measures 14 and 15. These interpretive choices create a sense of motivic continuity between the A and B section material.

In the phrase beginning after the cadence in measure 23, Perlman accelerates slightly on the first few sixteenth notes, perhaps as a way of regaining some of the time
that was lost on the ritardando into the cadence. In general, Perlman’s playing of this phrase, which extends to beat 3 of measure 27, gives the sense of propelling forward. He includes just a few slight rubato moments when approaching high notes of a line, such as the E5 on beat 4 of measure 24, and some lengthening of bass notes, such as the A3 on beat 3 of measure 25. Overall, though, Perlman maintains his forward momentum, which serves to balance out earlier phrases in the piece which utilized more pulling back than pushing forward in time.

The phrase beginning on beat 4 of measure 27 begins with a softer dynamic and darker tone color than the previous phrase. However, Perlman tends to continue the forward momentum throughout this phrase as well. He pulls back the tempo in the beginning of measure 30, as a preparation for new material. On beat 4 of measure 30, the truncated Neapolitan motive appears and Perlman utilizes a more marcato style once again, making a crescendo as the motive ascends. Perlman performs a slight ritardando at the cadence in measure 32 on the first iteration of the B section. However, this ritardando is not extensive enough to be mistaken as the ending to the movement. On the repeat of the B section, the ritardando is amplified, representing the greatest degree of pulling back which Perlman has done, to bring the movement to a definitive close.

4.3 Arnold Steinhardt
The second recording I will discuss is a 2006 recording by Arnold Steinhardt. It was produced at the Curtis Institute of Music and accompanies Steinhardt’s autobiography *Violin Dreams*. Steinhardt’s tempo in the “Allemanda” is quite similar to Perlman’s and lingers around 52 beats per minute. Steinhardt uses less differentiation in articulation than Perlman; his playing is generally quite legato throughout. Instead, Steinhardt achieves many of his expressive intentions through the use of contrastive dynamics and tone color, as well as lengthening of important notes.

Steinhardt plays the opening phrase of the “Allemanda” with a full sound and maintains a fairly steady tempo, with minimal rubato or pulling back. This interpretation serves to firmly establish the mood and key of the piece early on, before the music begins to move to new key areas and material. Steinhardt plays measures 1 and 2 with a full, dark tone quality, which is characterized by a high-intensity vibrato.

Steinhardt’s interpretation of the motive beginning in beat 3 of measure 2 differs somewhat from that of many other violinists (see Figure 4.2). A standard practice in performing this piece is to indicate the start of the new motive on the A3 in beat 3 of measure 2, with subsequent occurrences beginning on the D4 in beat 1 of measure 3 and the G4 in beat 3 of measure 3. However, Steinhardt emphasizes the connection between the first note of each beat and the bass note, by slurring as shown below:

Played by Steinhardt:
In effect, Steinhardt’s view appears to be that the motive starts on a stronger portion of the beat than many other violinists seem to perceive. For him, the motive begins either on the first or third sixteenth note of the group, rather than the second. Steinhardt’s interpretation serves to produce a more straightforward approach to the passage. It allows him to play through the passage at a fairly steady, even pace, in which he allows the harmonies to speak for themselves, rather than trying to add something extra by contorting the rhythmic flow. He does, however, use dynamics and tone color to enhance the phrase. The second occurrence of the motive, on beat 1 of measure 3, is louder than the first, and the third occurrence, on beat 3 of measure 3 is played with a brighter tone color as the music moves toward F Major.

After the cadence in F Major in measure 4, Steinhardt plays with a brighter, lighter bow stroke and a more relaxed vibrato to accentuate the key change. He employs a crescendo in measure 4 and a diminuendo in measures 5 and 6 to add shape to the phrase and taper at the cadence.
In the phrase beginning on the final A in beat 1 of measure 6, Steinhardt differentiates between the upper and lower voices by using a louder dynamic for the lower voice, with a crescendo to the lowest note of each bass motive. The upper voice is played more quietly, with a delicate and *sul tasto* tone quality. Steinhardt also maintains a continuity of line throughout the octave displacements in the upper voice by maintaining a steady tempo and only emphasizing the displaced notes (the A on beat 4 of measure 6 and the E on beat 4 of measure 7) with extra weight, rather than disrupting the flow of the line by taking additional time. He places a crescendo on beat 4 of measures 6 and 7, with a diminuendo on each of the three-note slurred figures on beat 1 of measures 7 and 8. This serves to enhance the feeling of tension giving way to resolution in each of these V7-I motions. The crescendo in measure 7 reaches a slightly louder dynamic than that in measure 6, which serves to indicate the more definitive arrival on the A minor triad, as A minor has now become the key area of local prominence.

On the phrase beginning on the pickup to beat 2 of measure 8, Steinhardt makes a decrescendo that follows the contour of the descending musical line. He begins the phrase on beat 2 of measure 9 very quietly and then plays a crescendo to the downbeat of measure 11. From here, he begins a diminuendo which lasts until the new phrase begins on beat 3 of measure 12. Each of Steinhardt’s dynamic shapes serves to both enhance the contour of the line and clarify the harmonic structure. His tapering to beat 2 of measure 9 highlights a final attempt of the F Major/ D minor key areas to regain prominence through a fairly weak cadential figure before ultimately succumbing to A minor for the remainder of the A section. The crescendo in measure 10 serves to intensify the V7 chord in A minor. When a deceptive cadence is reached in measure 11, the music decreases in
intensity once again, in effect, to allow time to build up even more energy which will be
directed toward achieving an authentic cadence in A minor.

On beat 3 of measure 12, Steinhardt begins a crescendo which lasts until measure
14. Steinhardt lengthens the final A of measure 13 and the G# leading tone on the
downbeat of measure 14. This emphasis serves as a definitive sign that the music has
reached A minor, serving to clear up any uncertainty of key area which may have come
about after the sequence in measure 11 and the unexpected appearance of the Neapolitan
chord in measure 12. Steinhardt then makes a diminuendo down to the lower octave G#4
on beat 3 of measure 14, and begins to crescendo again as the line ascends. He
emphasizes the high D6 by lengthening it, but he puts the most weight and length on the
C6 on beat 1 of the following measure. This shaping demonstrates that the D, even
though it is the highest note of the piece thus far, is a sort of “reaching over” to the C,
which is the note of more structural importance in the phrase. This motion from D to C
marks the resolution of the seventh of the V7 chord to third of the tonic triad in A minor.

In the cadence in measure 15, Steinhardt places a crescendo on the A on beat 3.
This serves to accentuate the fact that, although a clear cadence in A has been reached,
Bach extends the phrase and writes an additional cadence in measure 16. Steinhardt’s
view appears to be that the cadence in measure 15 serves as a sort of anticipation, while
the definitive cadence which closes the A section is in measure 16. One might say that
Steinhardt’s interpretation seems to favor the upper register of the voice-leading scheme
here, since he places great emphasis on the resolution of the D6 to C6 in measures 14 and
15 and performs the cadence to the A5 in measure 16 much more definitively than the
cadence to A4 in measure 15. Although the obligatory register of the piece as a whole
appears to be the lower octave, the higher octave contains a great percentage of the melodic material in the closing measures of the A section. Therefore, it is plausible that Bach desired that the upper register hold greater authority at this point, which renders Steinhardt’s interpretation quite convincing.

Steinhardt begins the B section at measure 17 much softer and more delicately than the parallel figure in the opening of the movement. This corresponds with my own analysis, which highlights the fact that the B section begins on the fifth of the dominant harmony, while the A section begins on the tonic of the piece. Therefore, Steinhardt plays the opening Ds with much authority and the Es which open the B section with a more delicate tone, in contrast to the stability of the opening.

Overall, Steinhardt’s performance of the B section of the piece is on the quieter end of the dynamic spectrum in comparison to his playing of the A section. Even within crescendi his playing is quite restrained, and the peaks of the crescendi do not reach the same dynamic levels which they did in the A section. Steinhardt also uses a more flautando tone, perhaps to accentuate the more chromatic, less straightforward harmonic characteristics of the B section.

In measure 18, Steinhardt deviates from the traditional practice of placing a space between the final D in beat 1 and the F on beat 2. Instead, he leaps quite quickly to the F, and then hangs on this note before propelling forward. Perhaps Steinhardt performs in this way so as not to allow the cadence in D minor on beat 1 to sound too definitive to the audience. He may want to make it clear that this is merely a glimpse of the tonic key, but there are still many other key areas to explore before its true return. The suspending of
the high F also serves to increase audience expectation before the music tumbles back into motion toward new key areas.

Steinhardt performs a crescendo at the end of measure 19 to the downbeat of measure 20. This serves to accentuate the F# on beat 1 of measure 20, as a clear indication that Bach is moving to G minor. Steinhardt then makes a decrescendo which follows the downward stepwise repetition of the motive beginning on beat 3 of measure 20. He makes a crescendo to the high Bb on beat 3 of measure 22 and then a decrescendo to the cadence on beat 1 of measure 23, in similar fashion but on a smaller scale than seen in the parallel material in measures 14 and 15.

The phrase from measures 23 through 27 is carried along by Steinhardt at a fairly steady pace, serving to move the music forward and balance out previous points in which the tempo was pulled back. Steinhardt begins this phrase at a quieter dynamic than that at which he ended the G minor cadence of the previous phrase. He then utilizes a louder dynamic in the second half of measure 23, and quieter dynamics at each subsequent appearance of this motive. His sound becomes brighter as F Major is reached again in measure 27, and he lengthens the E5 leading tone on beat 3 of measure 26 to affirm the arrival of this key.

Steinhardt’s performance of the transition between beats 3 and 4 of measure 27 differs slightly from his playing of the parallel material on beats 1 and 2 of measure 18 (see Figure 4.3). As mentioned previously, Steinhardt moves fairly quickly from the D at the end of beat 1 of measure 18 to the following F. However, in measure 27, Steinhardt allows for more of a sense of cadence, which he accomplishes by pulling back the tempo on beat 3 and leaving a small space in the music before leaping to the A on beat 4. This
might serve to accentuate the fact that this is the last F Major cadence of the piece. Therefore, Steinhardt may want to give this key a sense of closure. Or, perhaps it is merely more appropriate to hold back here, as this cadence serves to end a five-measure phrase, which has mostly pushed forward throughout. On the other hand, its D minor counterpart in measure 18 appears after only one measure of music, following the largest sectional division of the piece (that between the A and B sections). Therefore, it may be less appropriate in measure 18 to stop the flow of the music so soon after it has started to move again following the previous cadence.

m. 17-18:

![Music notation for m. 17-18]

m. 27:

![Music notation for m. 27]

Figure 4.3: m. 17-18 vs. m. 27

The softest point within Steinhardt’s performance of the “Allemanda” is found at the phrase beginning on beat 4 of measure 27. This phrase begins a sequence which leads back to D minor, the tonic key of the piece, in order to bring the movement to a close. Steinhardt’s use of a quiet, airy tone serves to draw the audience in and forces them to
listen carefully to the chromatic changes that serve to lead back to D minor. Steinhardt also places extra time on the A5 on beat 4 of measure 27 and the F5 on beat 4 of measure 28. This device serves both to demarcate the repetition of the motive, as well as to suspend the first note of the motive in order to capture the audience’s attention before tumbling forward into the rest of the phrase.

Steinhardt finally begins to crescendo in measure 30. The motive beginning on beat 4 of measure 30 is played gradually louder at each of its iterations as it moves upwards on beats 1 and 2 of measure 31. Steinhardt places a fairly strong emphasis on the C# on beat 3 of measure 31, which is accomplished by adding extra time to the note and playing at a louder dynamic. This emphasis may serve to sustain the C# in the listener’s mind until its resolution at the final cadence. Steinhardt’s performance of the ending of the “Allemanda” includes a lengthening of the four sixteenth notes on beat 2 of measure 32, especially the final D and C#. Steinhardt’s cadence is fairly strong in tone and volume, with little or no lightening up in the sound. This is consistent with his interpretation of the rest of the piece, in which the D minor sections are unfailingly played with a deeper tone and louder dynamic than the chromatic sections and sections in keys other than the tonic, which generally utilize a softer palate of tone colors.

In an attempt to gain first-hand knowledge of the processes which underlie a performer’s preparations and the extent to which theoretical knowledge is used, an email message was sent to Mr. Steinhardt. The email explained the general purposes and aims of this document, and asked him about his preparatory and musical thought processes. His reply was as follows:
Dear Ms. Jakubowski,

I think you yourself have beautifully and succinctly answered the questions you pose to me by what you have called "informed spontaneity." Of course, I try to glean the overarching structure of a work as well as its myriad details, but then my hope is that it sinks more into an underlayer of my consciousness so that I can refer to it subliminally so to speak. Individually, emotion and intellectual rigor seem ruder-less by themselves. The cellist, Pablo Casals, often spoke of freedom with order as a guiding ethic for his performances. I enthusiastically second the thought.

Best wishes,

Arnold Steinhardt

Steinhardt’s response supports a main aspect of my theory of “informed spontaneity,” in which a performer gains as much analytical knowledge as may be applicable to his performance and then allows a more intuitive process to intervene, once these analytical aspects are internalized, to add an element of individual emotionality. Steinhardt’s ideas also serve nicely to support Tim Howell’s description of the progression of the performer from a predominantly rational process at the outset of learning a piece to a more instinctive approach as it becomes more familiar (see subchapter 1.6).

4.4 Lucy van Dael

Lucy van Dael’s recording of the “Allemanda” for the Naxos Online Music Library will provide a final example for this chapter. This example was chosen with the intention of including a recording by a Baroque performance practice specialist, in order to investigate whether the guidelines of performance practice resulted in an interpretation which greatly differed from that of other violinists.
Dael’s recording uses a much greater degree of tempo variation than the other two recordings discussed in this chapter. The overall tempo of the movement fluctuates around 60 beats per minute. The performance is also recorded on a Baroque instrument which is tuned at a lower pitch level than the other two recordings discussed, in accordance with standard Baroque performance practice. This gives the piece an overall darker tone quality than Perlman’s and Steinhardt’s recordings, due to the use of darker sounding strings and lower overall pitch level.

Dael’s use of tempo fluctuation is often intended to lead to a note of emphasis. On beat 2 of the first measure, she uses an accelerando to lead to the C# on beat 3, which is the bass note of a dominant harmony. The E on beat 4 is performed with a fast bow stroke, which creates a sense of irresolution. Indeed, this note is left in register and not resolved directly. Rather, Bach skips back down to a lower voice and the return of this register does not occur until measure 4.

The start of the motive beginning in measure 2 on the A3 in beat 3 is emphasized slightly with the bow each time it occurs. However, of greater interest within this section is Dael’s use of tempo variation on the triplet figurations. The triplets in the end of measure 2 begin tentatively, but become faster and faster with each reiteration of this motive in measure 3.

In measure 6, Dael makes a clear emphasis on the cadence in F by lengthening the final note of the slur on beat 1. She then broadens the following A and D as a sort of “winding up” into the next section. Dael places mordents on both the G5 in beat 4 of measure 6 and the D5 in beat 4 of measure 7 which are not notated in the score. However, these ornaments serve to include, within the register of the primary melodic line, the
pitches which have been displaced by an octave. For example, the A4 on beat 4 of measure 6 is an octave displacement of A5, which is included by Dael through the use of a mordent up to A5 on the following G5. This ornamentation serves to clarify that the upper line here is one continuative voice with octave displacement.

In measure 10, Dael pulls back the tempo as a means of prolongation of the dominant seventh chord preceding the cadence. Upon the arrival of the deceptive cadence in measure 11, Dael then allows the music to propel forward through the use of an accelerando accompanied by a crescendo. At the end of the accelerando, Dael takes some time before firmly placing the D on beat 3 of measure 12, thereby designating it as an arrival point of a new idea. This exchange of propelling forward and pulling back creates a sense of musical balance in Dael’s phrasing. She uses this balance of accelerandi and ritardandi throughout her performance of the movement. The general trend Dael follows is to accelerate to the peak of a phrase and then pull back at the cadence.

Dael also resists the common tendency to make crescendos with all ascending lines and decrescendos with all descending lines. This is often the default expressive technique used by violinists because it is easier to project on higher strings, and much of the time the musical line is conducive to this type of interpretation. However, Dael’s interpretation is more original in that she often makes a crescendo to the bass notes of a line, such as in measures 11 and 12 where she leads to the D on beat 3. Conversely, she often places the top notes of a phrase more delicately, such as the D6 in beat 4 of measure 14. This note is emphasized by Dael by leaving a slight space before it and then playing it softer than the previous notes. This interpretative choice differs from that of both Perlman and Steinhardt, who both emphasize this note as one of the loudest notes of the phrase. This
discrepancy amongst performers is an example of the plurality of musical interpretation. All three of the performers have acknowledged this high D, the highest note of the movement, as a note of importance in the phrase, but their method of emphasis varies. It is not essential that each performer emphasize the note in the same way, but rather that each finds a way to highlight it which fits within the context of his/her own performance.

As the B section begins, Dael’s playing is fairly segmented. She moves forward in beat 2 of measure 17, and then pulls back on the cadential figure on beat 1 of measure 18. She leaves a noticeable space before the next beat, which accentuates the leap to the F5. Again, Dael pushes the tempo ahead in the end of measure 18 and makes a ritardando on beat 1 of measure 19, which highlights Bach’s move toward Bb Major. Finally, Dael moves forward in the remainder of measure 19 and pulls back in the first two beats of measure 20. Although this seems to be quite extensive tempo modification on the part of Dael, it is balanced by subsequent phrases of the section, which move forward in a more straightforward fashion. Additionally, this stopping and restarting serves to demonstrate a sort of “winding up” of energy before moving into the bulk of the B section with its various sequences and explorations of new keys.

On the motive beginning on beat 3 of measure 20 Dael performs an accelerando, which parallels her playing of the same motive in measure 11. Dael then makes an even greater accelerando on beats 3 and 4 of measure 21. This more extensive accelerando accentuates the rhythmic content of the music, as Bach uses shorter note values and falling figures here which serve to drive forward to the downbeat of measure 22. Dael then pulls back in measure 22 to carefully prepare the cadence in G minor.
In the phrase beginning after the cadence in measure 23, Dael moves at a fairly steady pace, and when she does take time it is mostly to emphasize the bass notes. Her playing is consistent with the fact that this phrase extends until beat 3 of measure 27; she makes no unnecessary breaks and allows the harmonic content of the phrase, as Bach moves in a sequence through various key areas, to express itself. This fairly straightforward playing also serves to balance out all of the pushing and pulling of the tempo Dael has utilized thus far in the movement.

A final noteworthy example of Dael’s use of tempo variation to shape a phrase is seen in measures 27 through 32. Dael begins the phrase on beat 4 of measure 27 quietly and hesitantly. Then, each of the sixteenth note figures on beats 2 and 4 of measures 28 and 29 gradually push forward. Dael balances out the phrase by holding back on beats 2 and 3 of measure 30. Dael begins the new motive on beat 4 of measure 30 more slowly once again and makes an accelerando throughout the repeated motives in measures 31 and 32. Dael finally holds back the tempo (to a greater extent on the second time through the B section) on beat 2 of measure 32 to prepare the final cadence.
Chapter 5

“Informed Spontaneity”: A Synthesis

5.1 Creating a Means of Communication and Applicability

The narrowing of the gap between the areas of music performance and music theory is an arduous and imprecise task. Nevertheless, it is critical to the wellbeing of the field to develop a more multidisciplinary view within the greater musical community. If theorists continue to study the concepts which they have always studied and performers continue to perform their standard repertoire in the way that those before them have always played, no forward progress can be made within the field of classical music. Each group can, however, look at what the other is already doing so well and use this knowledge to advance its own specialties.

The examples provided in Chapter 2 represent an attempt to translate theoretical terms more directly into performance mechanisms. Most of the time, the skilled performer is aware when he is playing a diminished seventh chord which will be reinterpreted in a new key or when he has just reached a false recapitulation in the mediant key of the piece. But this is often just left as a side note— an interesting piece of trivia about the music— rather than a crucial and informative guide which may serve to mold his interpretation of the piece. Conversely, the theory professor is often quick to
inform a class full of performers about every little detail of part-writing, voice-leading, and set theory, but quite minimalistic in terms of discussing the relevance of these facts to a student’s performing career. The examples in Chapter 2 are aimed at clearing up some of this ambiguity by demonstrating to the performer the types of theoretical observations which may be useful to his playing and, likewise, by demonstrating to the theorist the types of advice which he might provide to performers seeking his expertise. Though a theoretical device may be accentuated in performance in a variety of ways, the examples I have included serve to provide possibilities which speak to performers in terms which they can apply directly to their playing (darker tone color, marcato bow stroke, sul tasto sound, etc.).

The plurality of musical interpretation makes the performative process difficult to study objectively. There is not, and should not be, one “correct” performance of a piece. Additionally, not every performance can highlight every minutely interesting element of a piece or it would become overwhelming to both the performer and the audience. However, there are several key underlying interpretative elements which I found common to all three of the performances discussed in Chapter 4.

Certain aspects of the harmonic, motivic, and formal design were highlighted by every performer, though perhaps through different means. For instance, each performer played significant recurrences of phrases or motives in a similar fashion to their first occurrence to emphasize motivic continuity throughout the piece. An example of this is seen in measures 11-12 and 20-21 (see Figure 5.1).
Figure 5.1: Motivic continuity in m. 11-12 and m. 20-21

Additionally, major cadences, appearances of new motives, and key changes were emphasized by each performer, though in varying degrees and through the use of differing expressive means. This emphasis was achieved by such devices as variances in timing, tone color, dynamics, and articulation. Each performer emphasized the contour of at least some of the melodic lines within the “Allemanda” through the use of dynamic shaping. Perlman and Steinhardt often employed dynamics which followed the shape of the lines (making decrescendos with descending lines and vice versa), while Dael often used dynamics which contrasted the lines’ contours for a more unique interpretation.

It seemed that the overall flow of the movement was a central factor within all three of the performers’ recordings. When phrases were pulled back, there was always a subsequent pushing forward to balance this out, and vice versa. Dael’s recording is the
prime example of this; she includes a balance of accelerando and ritardando within almost every phrase. This balance appears to serve as Dael’s primary device for expressive demarcation of motives and phrases. Perlman, on the other hand, often emphasizes new motives, phrases, and key areas through changes in articulation, especially between legato and marcato bow strokes. Steinhardt seems to prefer variance of tone color and dynamics to delineate various sections of the movement. However, although each performer prefers slightly differing musical devices as a means of expression, none of them simply “brings out” each new section or motivic repetition predictably and pedantically, as Rothstein has cautioned against (see subchapter 1.5).

It is clear that each performer discussed in Chapter 4 had a very thorough knowledge of many analytical aspects of the movement, though whether this knowledge was purely instinctual or based more on rational study it is hard to say for sure. Steinhardt’s letter provides some clarity on the subject, at least in terms of his own thought processes. His idea of carefully studying the overall structure and minute details within a piece and then allowing this knowledge to sink to a more subconscious level can surely serve as a useful model to other performers.

5.2 Goals and Applications

The primary aim of the theory of “informed spontaneity” is to establish a means of using theoretical analysis to shape a performance, without restricting personal creativity and emotiveness. A skilled performer’s natural instincts and creative ideas are more often than not convincing and musically meaningful. However, these instincts can
be reshaped and reinforced within the context of theoretical understanding. The result is a performance that is both expressive and intelligent, full of emotion yet also substantiated by logic. The melding of both instinctual musical ideas and interpretative choices which can be explained rationally will undoubtedly result in a performance that is convincing to audiences on multiple levels. And, of course, the wider an audience that a performer can touch, the greater the credibility the performer will gain.

The benefits of this type of collaboration between theorist and performer are manifold. An understanding between both categories of musicians, each very skilled and experienced within a specialized area, may lead to a more unified approach to musical interpretation. On a pedagogical level, the theory professor should be able to relate to performance-minded students, who shouldn’t have to constantly wonder how the concepts they learn in theory class have anything to do with “real life.” Likewise, the private instrumental or vocal teacher shouldn’t disregard the importance of theoretical understanding in shaping a performance. It is not enough for the lesson instructor to occasionally point out that “this is a dominant seventh chord.” Rather, the student should be shown how the dominant seventh chord fits within the musical context of the phrase, and how the harmonic progression may affect the physical execution of the notes on the instrument. This relates to Nicholas Cook’s concept of “prescribing” an interpretative solution, rather than merely “describing,” or simply labeling theoretical elements of a piece of music with no regard to how these labels actually affect one’s performance and perception of the piece.
5.3 Possibilities for Further Study

Further investigation along this path toward “informed spontaneity” might be explored from various angles. The interactions of multiple performers and how they both restrict and enable one another in terms of interpretation and spontaneity is another area which necessitates additional analysis. The interactions of jazz musicians during improvisation might be an especially interesting case study for such research.

Another problem which needs to be further addressed is the adoption of a common language between theorist and performer. Some theorists are hesitant to use “theory language” in dealing with performers out of fear that they will be intimidated by this terminology. However, I don’t believe many of these terms would cause the performer anxiety if they were explained in a way in which they could be directly useful in interpretation of a piece for performance purposes, rather than solely for written analysis. For instance, a theorist may point out a French augmented sixth chord within a piece to a performer. This fact is not directly meaningful, as this label has no impact in and of itself on the performance. However, if the specific affect created by the French augmented sixth chord and the way its tones resolve within the melodic shape of the piece is discussed, the performer now has a reason to be interested in this terminology. The theorist as well, I believe, will have gained a deeper meaning underlying the analysis, an understanding of the music as it was originally intended- to be heard and performed.

An additional aspect of possible further investigation involves the element of time. As mentioned previously, the act of performance is greatly dependent on the
passage and perception of time. Written analysis is barely dependent on this at all. A
study of both performers’ and listeners’ perceptions of time during a performance (“that
was a really long piece” or “I wish it hadn’t ended so soon”) might serve useful in
discovering how the element of time influences the comprehension of a piece of music.

5.4 Summation

The gap between speaking and writing about music and physically performing it is gradually diminishing. It is possible that it may never be filled completely, as there are unique elements of each area which don’t directly translate to elements within the other. Although our specific areas of expertise may differ, if we take the broader standpoint that we are all just musicians seeking a deeper knowledge of music, theorists and performers can still learn a great deal from one another. It is easy for specialists in any area to become caught up within a very narrow window of study. However, if we take the time to open up to the ideas of specialists in other areas of the field, we may see that we are not so different after all.
Bibliography


Discography


Appendix

“Allemanda” from Partita No. 2 in D minor
“Adagio” from Sonata No. 1 in G minor