

# Harpsichord & *fortepiano*

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# A MEASURED APPROACH TO J.S. BACH'S STYLUS PHANTASTICUS

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by Claudio Di Veroli

## **Bach: from measured to unmeasured**

Throughout the Baroque era, free rubato—or even playing not following any beat—was only employed in music specifically marked for unmeasured performance. Otherwise, musicians kept the beat and sometimes used what we today call “micro-rubato”. In 1723 Tosi wrote: *Il rubamento di Tempo nel patetico è un glorioso latrocinio di chi canta meglio degli altri, purchè l'intendimento, e l'ingegno ne facciano una bella restituzione* (“Robbery of time in expression is a marvellous theft by the best singers, provided knowledge and ingenuity provide a nice restitution”).<sup>1</sup> In a well-known letter of October 1777 Mozart wrote: “... I always play strictly in time ... in *tempo rubato* the left hand should not know what the right hand does.” Countless ancient sources emphasize the need to master a steady performance paying close attention to evenness in playing.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, modern studies have confirmed that Baroque performers often altered the melody's rhythm in different ways, while the “accompaniment maintained a steady beat in a constant tempo”.<sup>3</sup>

Baroque micro-rubato alterations followed different customs and even specific rules, selected from remarkably varied menus: suspension (delaying the right hand with respect to the strict left hand beat), Lombard (anticipating the second note of a quaver/semiquaver pair), *inégaies* (delaying the second note of a quaver/semiquaver pair), hurrying a triplet (playing three quavers as two semiquavers and a quaver) and more.

Clearly the player had a significant freedom for expression while still keeping a steady beat. Accordingly, and until a few decades ago, J.S. Bach's Toccatas and Fantasias for harpsichord and organ were performed strictly-measured-with-micro-rubato by the very best modern musicians.

Then in the 1960's, Gustav Leonhardt was the first modern player of historical keyboards to introduce free rubato into the performance of J.S. Bach (although in the 1980's the author heard him playing Bach in two solo harpsichord recitals and found that his use of rubato had become significantly more restrained). In recent decades it has become customary to play unmeasured entire passages of Bach's Toccatas and Fantasias.

A well known rationale for this is that Bach is known to have had a copy of Frescobaldi's Toccatas, where a free unmeasured performance was prescribed. But this chain of thought falls very short of providing any concrete evidence: Bach was working a full century after Frescobaldi and by the same token, since Bach's keyboard works were highly admired by Beethoven, we should perform the latter's piano sonatas in the style of Bach!

Be that as it may, modern musicians slowly but steadily were captivated by the endless possibilities offered by an “expressive and free” Bach. Soon some of them—we do not find it productive to include here a “name and shame” list—tried to put together a better rationale for this new performance manner: Bach's Toccatas

were linked to Frescobaldi's ones because they both belonged to Kircher's "*Stylus Phantasticus*", then French unmeasured preludes—supposedly also based on Frescobaldi's toccatas—were added in to reinforce the mix.

However, contrary arguments are not lacking either. Some years ago Joshua Rifkin noted that "The kind of 'rhetorical' performance ... which sometimes milks every little gesture ... and finds deep meaning in rhetorical terms that really just describe standard musical phenomena—has no historical basis. ... Performers ... have been misled by ... the fiction of rhetoric and meaning in music ..."<sup>4</sup>

Is it also obvious that this recent "Baroque rubato" trend *de facto* declares obsolete most of the celebrated recordings by great names of the modern authentic-performance movement, such as harpsichordists Kenneth Gilbert, Scott Ross, Christopher Hogwood, Colin Tilney, Trevor Pinnock and William Christie, and also great organists like Lionel Rogg, Daniel Chorzempa and others.

To resolve this conundrum, let us review the available information and ratify or rectify the case for rubato and even unmeasured performance (let us call this a "free performance") in J.S. Bach's keyboard Toccatas and Fantasias.

### **Modern *Phantasticus* syllogisms and hypotheses**

Present-day justifications for "free performance" of J.S. Bach based on "*Stylus Phantasticus*" are mostly based on the following supposedly historical stages:

1: Kircher's *Phantasticus* is unmeasured. "*Stylus Phantasticus*" was first described by Kircher: he related it to then-recent works by Froberger, who had studied under Frescobaldi. The latter in his introductory

text prescribed that his Toccatas should be played disregarding the beat. Some modern musicians find this evidence strong enough to conclude that most late Baroque pieces in the *Stylus Phantasticus* were meant for a beat-free performance.

2: Préludes non-mésurés derived from Frescobaldi's toccatas via Froberger. Years after studying with Frescobaldi in Rome, Froberger was in Paris at the time where the first keyboard unmeasured preludes were composed. Supposedly the style of unmeasured preludes arose, via Froberger, from Frescobaldi's Toccatas.

3: After Kircher, the *Phantasticus* was largely unmeasured. After the above "Froberger connection", for some decades different French composers produced unmeasured preludes. Supposedly these beatless preludes were the *free performance* backbone for *Stylus Phantasticus* well into the eighteenth century.

4: *Stylus Phantasticus* is unmeasured in J.S. Bach. We know that Bach had a copy of Frescobaldi's Toccatas, while Bach's contemporary Johann Mattheson prescribed a free performance for the *Stylus Phantasticus*. These two sources, so far away in space and time, seem to imply coincidentally that a free rubato is what Bach expected in the performance of his Toccatas and Fantasias for the organ and the harpsichord.

The problem with the above statements is that they include both uncertainties and unproven conjectures. Let us scrutinise them one by one and find out which legitimate conclusions can be drawn from the extant historical record, as well as current musicology.



## 1: Frescobaldi, Kircher and *Stylus Phantasticus*

Let us first revisit Frescobaldi, a rare 17th-century source prescribing a free performance for what Kirchner later dubbed "*Stylus Phantasticus*". The various directions for tempo variation that Frescobaldi included in the editions of his works have been noted by different modern authors:<sup>5</sup> he prescribed that sections with diminutions should be played more slowly ("*quando si troueranno Passaggi ... sarà bene di pigliare il tempo largo*"), while those without them can be played significantly faster ("*L'altre non passeggiate si potranno sonare alquanto allegre di battuta ...*").

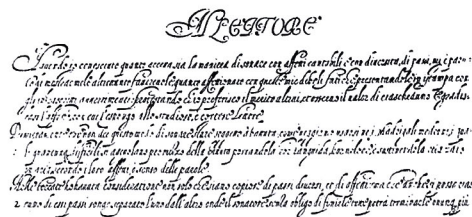


Fig. A – Initial paragraphs from the introductory page entitled "*Al Lettore*" (to the reader), which Frescobaldi included in his editions of *Toccate*.<sup>6</sup>

In the introductory notes to his *Toccate* (see Fig. A) Frescobaldi suggests that in those toccatas that have diversity of textures ("*diversità di passi*") the playing manner is not bound to the beat ("*non dee questo modo di sonare stare soggetto a battuta*"). The influence of this manner can be seen in some directions written by Froberger for free performance of some sections of some of his pieces in Italian style. It is significant, however, that nowhere else did Frescobaldi include directions for a beat-free performance.

Some years after Frescobaldi's death, Athanasius Kircher in his monumental *Musurgia* (see Fig. B) defined a musical style, "*Stylus Phantasticus*".<sup>7</sup> Quite a few present-

day musicians<sup>8</sup> appear convinced that Kircher's *Musurgia* mentioned Frescobaldi as the creator of the style: unfortunately, there appears to be no evidence for such a belief.<sup>9</sup>

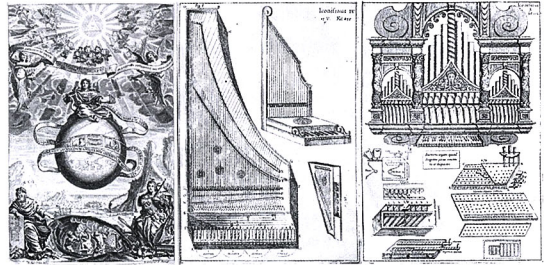


Fig. B - Frontispiece and Plates IV and X from Book IV, from Kircher's *Musurgia Universalis*, Rome 1650.<sup>10</sup>

This said, the chain Frescobaldi-Phantasticus-Kircher is obviously important and deserves to be examined more thoroughly. Perusing Kircher's *Musurgia*, printed in ten volumes with thousands of pages, we find that he only contributed to the *Phantasticus* a few lines in two separate paragraphs. The first such paragraph is reproduced in Fig. C.

Phantasticus stylus aptus instrumentis, est liberissima, & solutissima componendi methodus, nullis, nec verbis, nec subiecto harmonico adstrictus ad ostentandum ingenium, & abditi harmoniarum rationem, ingeniofumque harmonicarum claufularum, fugarumque contextum docendum institutus, diuiditurque in eas, quas Phantasticas, Ricercatas, Toccatas, Sonatas vulgo vocant. Cuiusmodi compositiones vide in libro V fol. 243. & 311. à nobis composita cripthonia fol. 466. 480. 487. & libr. VI varijs instrumentis accomodata confidera.

Fig. C – Definition of *Stylus Phantasticus* in Kircher's *Musurgia*, Vol. VII, p. 585

Kircher's definition states that "The fantastic style is suitable for instruments. It is the most free and unrestrained method of composing; it is bound to nothing, neither to words nor to a melodic subject; it was instituted to display genius and to teach the hidden design of harmony and the ingenious composition of harmonic phrases and fugues; it is divided into those [pieces] that are commonly called



fantasias, ricercatas, toccatas and sonatas. For compositions of this type see the pieces in three voices by us in book V, fol. 243 and 311 and regard those adapted to the various instruments in book VI, fol. 466, 480 and 487". (Translation by Snyder.<sup>11</sup>)

### *De Symphonia Clauicymbalo apta .*

**C**lauicymbala, Organa, Regalia, & omnia polyplectra instrumēta mūfica, vti ap-  
tissima sunt ad preludia, solemnitatis harmonice, imō totius cōcentus harmoni-  
ci moderatora, res ita diuersas quoque à ceteris omnibus instrumentis melothefias, siue  
compositiones requirunt, quæ quidem tales debent esse, vt ijs organædus non tantum  
ingenium suum ostendat, sed & ijs veluti præambulis quibūdam auditorum animos  
præparet, excitetq; ad symphoniaci concentus sequenti apparatus. Vocant plerique  
huiusmodi harmonicas compositiones preludia, Itali Toccatas, Sonatas, Ricercatas  
cuiusmodi hic vnā exhibemus, quam D. Io. Iacobus Frobergerus Organædus Cæsareus  
celebarim ioli. n. Organædi Hieronymi Frescobaldi discipulus, supra Vtre. m. f. a. fol. 1a  
exhibuit eo artificio adornatā, vt siue perfectissimā cōpositionis methodū, fugarumq;  
ingeniosè se cētantium ordinem siue insignem temporis mutationem, varietatemque  
spēctes, nihil prorsus desiderari posse videatur: adeoque illam omnibus Organædis,  
ræquam perfectissimam in hoc genere compositionis specimen, quod imitentur, pro-  
ponendum duximus.

Fig. D – On instrumental music suitable for the  
harpsichord, in Kircher's *Musurgia*, vol. VI, p. 465.

In the above definition Kircher includes five cross-references to other pages within his *Musurgia*. These are mostly not relevant to the present analysis, but an important exception is found on page 466: here we find the first page of a "*Phantasia*" score.<sup>12</sup> The text preceding it is the—one and only!—source for the Frescobaldi-Kircher connection (see Fig. D): "Harpsichords, Organs, Regals and all the musical instruments with individual note production ... Their harmonic compositions are called Preludes, in Italian Toccatas, Sonatas, Ricercatas of which we show here one, by Joh. Jakob Froberger Imperial Organist, formerly a student of the celebrated organist Girolamo Frescobaldi, ..." (Translation by the present author).

This often-quoted statement does not come as a surprise, not only because arguably Frescobaldi and Froberger were among the leading keyboard composers of the time, but also because in 1633 Kircher moved to Rome, in 1634 Frescobaldi returned to Rome for good, and in 1637 Froberger also came to Rome! It is thus most likely that

in Rome Kircher met both Froberger and Frescobaldi.

Nevertheless—and again contrary to what appears to be the widespread belief among present-day musicians—Kircher's *Musurgia* (1) nowhere states that the *Stylus Phantasticus* originates in either Frescobaldi or Froberger, (2) nowhere makes any reference to free performance and (3) nowhere refers to any publication or work by Frescobaldi.

Kircher lived in Rome during the last seven years of Frescobaldi's life, and accordingly it is surprising to find that the paragraph reproduced in Fig. D is his only reference to Frescobaldi in the whole *Musurgia*, which was printed in Rome a further seven years after Frescobaldi's death.

After the *Musurgia*, many 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century documents discuss the *Stylus Phantasticus*. They are diverse, yet largely coincidental in their main tenet:<sup>13</sup> the composer follows his/her own "phantasy", free from any established musical form and free to change the musical framework several times within a single piece or movement. A piece may begin with a few bars with arpeggios in semiquavers, followed by a strict counterpoint in quavers, then duple metre may change into triple metre, and so forth.

As observed by some modern writers, Kircher merely gave a name to an idea that had been around for decades throughout Europe. Indeed, many works predating Frescobaldi fully followed the specifications of the *Phantasticus*, and this makes perfect sense because one of the best known features of Renaissance music is precisely that many pieces include metre changes, with no associated hints at an unmeasured performance.

In a nutshell, *Stylus Phantasticus* was followed—for decades before Frescobaldi and Kircher—with no evidence about free performance: also, Kircher never associated his *Phantasticus* definition with Frescobaldi's beat-free directions for his Toccatas. It follows that the belief—supposedly based on Kircher—of a generalised free performance of *Stylus Phantasticus* keyboard works until 1650 is groundless.

## 2: Connection between Frescobaldi's Toccatas and unmeasured preludes

For this “second stage” of the *Phantasticus*, which we may dub the “Froberger Connection”, let us examine the extent to which Frescobaldi influenced later musicians, and whether this may imply a free performance of their *Stylus Phantasticus* works.

We have already mentioned that in 1637, which is precisely the same year Frescobaldi had his definitive editions of Toccatas published, he received as a student a musician from Vienna—Froberger—who stayed in Italy for three years before returning home. A good 15 years later, in 1652, Froberger was in Paris, where he presumably met Louis Couperin, precisely at the time the latter was producing his ground-breaking unmeasured preludes. Or perhaps he was not (?!), because the harpsichord pieces today attributed to Louis Couperin (except for two which are not unmeasured preludes and are dated before his death in 1661) appear as just “Couperin” in the original manuscripts, are unsigned and undated, and indirect evidence has recently been put forward suggesting that these pieces may have been composed many years later by his younger brother Charles, who was barely <sup>13</sup> when Froberger visited

Paris in 1652.<sup>14</sup>

Some modern musicians believe that the French unmeasured prelude derives from the *Stylus Phantasticus*: this idea appears to originate in a study by Ledbetter of the chain Frescobaldi-Froberger-Louis Couperin, included in a celebrated book on the influence of lute music in early-baroque harpsichord music.<sup>15</sup>

However, Ledbetter was somewhat cautious: having commented upon the possible derivation (“The toccata style of Froberger was ... influential on ... the style of Louis Couperin's unmeasured preludes. It derives ... from ... Froberger's teacher Frescobaldi ...”), he also noted parallel strictly-French developments (“... certain harmonic effects ... are found in Froberger as well as the lutenists ... because they form part of the common harmonic language of the time: French lutenists were using them in the 1630s, long before Froberger visited Paris. ... Louis Couperin describes one of his preludes as being written in imitation of Froberger, and according to Mattheson, Froberger based his style directly on that of the lutenists...”).<sup>16</sup> Ledbetter also described “a new stage of sophistication” by French lutenists “after c1650”, unrelated to Froberger.<sup>17</sup>

An interesting and often quoted source, the Bauyn manuscript, includes hundreds of pieces by Frescobaldi, Froberger and Louis (or Charles) Couperin, as well as Chambonnières and other composers of keyboard music. Significantly, however, this manuscript was compiled c.1690, when all these composers had been dead for many years: their pieces being collected together at such a late date just tells us that they were considered to be of outstanding quality. Other than from the musical style, the Bauyn MS does not allow anything to be deduced

about possible mutual influences.

Summarising: inevitably the influence of Frescobaldi is obvious in some Italianate pieces by his student Froberger. However, many pieces that the latter composed more than a decade later in Paris follow the French lute idiom, and are similar in style to pieces composed at the same time by Louis (or possibly at a later time by Charles) Couperin.

Unfortunately, so far all we have seen is a succession of conjectures and loose chains, but we have some solid evidence in the music itself. Any musician studying and collating the music scores of Frescobaldi's *toccate* against Louis Couperin's *preludes* will find that any similarity, in either musical form or style, is tenuous at best. In Frescobaldian toccatas the music is arranged in four-minim bars and mostly features long-held organ chords interspersed with diatonic diminutions, while French unmeasured preludes have no metre at all and consist mostly of lute-style arpeggiated chords with the occasional short passing notes and tirades and a few French-style ornaments.

### **3: The performance of *Stylus Phantasticus* after Frescobaldi, Froberger and Kircher**

Let us first stress that all the Baroque-era discussions about *Stylus Phantasticus* are focused on composition. As for performance, these sources just state that the player is expected to change the tempo in agreement with the changes in the musical texture of the score.<sup>18</sup> Very importantly, these changes cannot be interpreted as ever giving a direction for a free rubato or unmeasured performance: this is clearly demonstrated in a recent essay by Dirksen.<sup>19</sup>

In spite of this evidence, some modern musicians seem to believe that this post-Kircher "third stage" of the *Phantasticus* is rooted in the French unmeasured preludes,

and further than these preludes were the most significant pieces composed in *Stylus Phantasticus* after 1650.

A first contradiction is that many French unmeasured preludes do not follow the *Phantasticus* at all. Perhaps the masterpiece of the genre is the prelude in D Minor by d'Anglebert:<sup>20</sup> in spite of its considerable length, this work consists of a succession of lute-style free cadences, without any *Phantasticus*-like change in the musical texture and structure. Most importantly, perhaps, the *Phantasticus* is found in many French, German and Italian mid-to-late Baroque compositions *other* than unmeasured preludes and Frescobaldi-style toccatas. Let us review a few examples that provide valuable information about performance.

Example 1. Louis Couperin followed the *Stylus Phantasticus* in some pieces composed c.1650-60 (or perhaps up to two decades later if his brother Charles was actually the composer). A good example is the "*Piece de trois sortes de mouvements*", clearly divided in three short sections: the first is in two-minim metre with a gavotte-like rhythm, the second is in three crotchets metre with sarabande rhythm and the third is in three-minim metre with galliarde rhythm. This is fully-*Phantasticus* music, yet it also bears all the appearance of fully-measured dance music.

Example 2. Buxtehude composed his organ works c.1670-1700. A well-known example of *Stylus Phantasticus* is his *Praeludium, Fuga und Ciacona* BuxWV137: we find many sections where the style varies significantly (two such changes are clearly visible in the bars reproduced in Fig. E). That the *Phantasticus* is apparent in many of Buxtehude's works has been scrutinised in the already-mentioned full-scale study—including a thorough discussion on performance—by Snyder,<sup>21</sup> who also quotes



the “metre takes a vacation” statement from Mattheson. Yet Snyder (in agreement with above-quoted Dirksen) refrains from any suggestion of free performance.



Fig. E – Bars 4-13 from Buxtehude's "Praeludium, Fuge und Ciacona BuxWV137" (c.1670-80), from J. Bonnet. *Historical Organ Recitals*. (Schirmer: New York, 1917), 74-75.

Example 3. The young François Couperin in his organ “*Messe Pour les Paroisses*” (1690) included the “*Offertoire sur les Grands jeux*”. The piece begins with a few pages manualiter in C metre moving in quavers (though subdivided in a few sub-sections with subtly-varying rhythm). A new section is then marked by both the movement changing over to crotchets and the introduction of the pedals. Finally the third and final section changes over to major mode and 12/8 metre. These changes show that this important piece thoroughly follow the *Stylus Phantasticus*: its different sections have no rhythmic or melodic relations whatsoever. Yet there is no evidence suggesting anything like a free performance.

So far the evidence seems to show that,

spanning the whole Baroque era, a significant amount of baroque *Phantasticus* compositions were meant for a measured performance.

#### 4: Mattheson and the performance of J.S. Bach's *Phantasticus* works

We have now reached the final stage of *Stylus Phantasticus*'s career: the music of J.S. Bach. Johann Mattheson tells us that in the *Phantasticus* there should be no need to follow the written metre. *Prima facie* this applies directly to his contemporary J.S. Bach, who composed many pieces in *Stylus Phantasticus*, both for the harpsichord and for the organ. Clearly a detailed analysis of this matter is called for.

First of all, it has been noted that “Mattheson describes in ... *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739) the *stylus phantasticus* ... which he understands as being almost completely improvisatory”:<sup>22</sup> this is therefore unlikely to apply to Bach's carefully conceived and written-down Toccatas and Fantasias. As a confirmation, “it appears from his final remark that ... Mattheson knew of many written fantasias and toccatas that did not conform to his ideal of the *stylus phantasticus*.”<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, “in several respects Mattheson was rather insecure: ... Confusingly ... in his *stylus phantasticus* ... are clearly contradictory remarks, showing a large degree of uncertainty and confusion.”<sup>24</sup> Mattheson is unreliable to the point that, as an example of *Stylus Phantasticus*, he quotes an incipit which “He identifies ... as ‘the beginning of a toccata by Froberger,’ but this ... is in fact the first three measures of Buxtehude's Phrygian prelude, BuxWV 152 ...”<sup>25</sup>

Anyway, even if it were true that Mattheson's remark about “metre vacation” in *Stylus Phantasticus* was reflecting common contemporary performance manners, well-known examples abound of generalised

customs among contemporary German musicians that J.S. Bach did not apply to his own musical practice. Let us just mention his “modern” notation and performance of duplets against triplets, and how he went on composing baroque-style keyboard music for the two-manual harpsichord even after 1740, at a time when most musicians were changing over to the rococo style played on the newly fashionable unfretted clavichord.

Admittedly, a few of Bach’s earliest works in the *Stylus Phantasticus* (for example his harpsichord Toccatas BWV 911 and 914) have some passages that are compatible with—and indeed strongly suggest—a free performance. Nevertheless, these features are no longer found in the later and impressive mature works we much admire today, such as his organ Toccatas and Fantasias. One of Bach’s most typically *Stylus Phantasticus* works is also one of his greatest masterpieces: the well-known organ Fantasia and Fugue in G Minor BWV 542. An analysis of the musical structure of this piece produces relevant information.

### Bach’s Fantasia and Fugue in G Minor BWV 542

For our purpose we can safely ignore the Fuga, a 4-voice counterpoint from Bach’s earlier Weimar period, moving in uniform quavers and semiquavers throughout without any *Phantasticus* changes. The Fantasia, on the other hand, fully follows the *Stylus Phantasticus*: the separation between sections is not specifically marked in the score, but is apparent from the drastic changes in the musical texture. Let us list these sections: we have taken the liberty of applying to them titles that are convenient for cross-reference.

Rhapsody 1: bars 1-8, moving in demisemiquavers. When performing this *grand entrée*, a recent fad is to linger on a few of the demisemiquavers, even when this goes against basic principles of musical rhetoric,

such as when the note falls on a weak beat. Most importantly, a free performance of this section fully erases the intricate rhythms the composer took trouble to write down in full detail, for example at the beginning of bar 3. The section ends on a dominant D Major chord, with a leading F<sup>#</sup> on top.

Counterpoint 1: bars 9-13, in 4 voices. In a surprising turn of events, the previous F<sup>#</sup> is left unresolved. The music starts afresh in an archaic style, as if referring to earlier events in a story, with a top F<sup>2</sup> (natural) as the 7<sup>th</sup> of a dominant G Major evolving into remarkable modulations. In this section there are no demisemiquavers and the performer may therefore prefer a slightly faster tempo. However, with a movement in semiquavers supported by a steady bass in quavers, this section is an unlikely candidate for any form of free performance, not even the slightest rubato.

Rhapsody 2: bars 14-24. We are back to the initial assertive *affection*, and theoretically we should go back to the initial tempo as well. However, we now find the first of a few performance hurdles in this piece. Bar 17 is a quartet, while bars 21-23 are a quintet: based on style similarities, these bars should actually be performed following the tempo of Counterpoint 1. It is now apparent that the tempo changes throughout this Fantasia should be minimal, or else the careful similarities that Bach included in his score will be contradicted by inconsistently performing similar passages with a different tempo.



Fig. F – Change of texture in J.S. Bach’s *Fantasia et Fuga* in g minor BWV 542, bars 23-25. Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe, vol. 15. Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig 1867, p. XV.



Counterpoint 2: bars 25-30, in 4 voices.

Almost identical to Counterpoint 1, it uses the same motifs but a different harmonic sequence: we should obviously use the same tempo.

Modulation in Quavers: bars 31-34, first in 3 voices, then 4, then 5 and finally 6 voices. Some performers give "weight" to this modulation by playing it significantly slower than the Counterpoints. However, with a movement in quavers instead of semiquavers, if anything (and in agreement with Frescobaldi's directions!) we should perform this section slightly faster.

Complex Modulation: bars 35-38. Perhaps the most impressive section of the whole piece: different harmonic devices produce a strong dramatic effect. Most of the movement is in quavers, and there is no reason here for either changing the tempo or performing any rubato.

Counterpoint 3: bars 39-43. Initially in semiquavers like the preceding Counterpoints, then comes a further surprise as some elements from the Rhapsody sections are re-introduced here. For consistency's sake it is advisable to avoid a change of tempo for this section.

Rhapsody 3: bars 44-45. Here we should go back to the initial tempo. Now a few limited opportunities for micro-rubato arise: we should obviously linger on the demisemiquaver rest.

Counterpoint 4: bars 46-49, in 4-5 voices. Unlike the preceding Counterpoints, this one moves in semiquavers, implying a steady tempo. Opportunities for micro-rubato are very few: on the penultimate bar we may linger on the 2<sup>nd</sup> beat quaver chord (so that the C# semiquaver pedal actually lasts for a quaver) before proceeding with the pedal semiquavers, and at the end of them we may play the final two quavers significantly more slowly.

We conclude that, even in one of Bach's most quintessential *Stylus Phantasticus* works, evidence from the score strongly suggests a measured performance. As a final note we may add that a few decades later his son C.P.E.

wrote, in both parts of his celebrated treatise, about the "Free Fantasia" to be performed "unmeasured": he clarified that he was specifically referring to scores with no measure bars, fully in the fashion of the French *préludes non mesurés*.<sup>26</sup>

## Conclusions about the four stages of the *Phantasticus*

### 1. Kircher's Unmeasured *Phantasticus*.

Decades before Frescobaldi, music was frequently composed following what later Kirchner dubbed *Stylus Phantasticus*, with no evidence of unmeasured performance. Also, Kircher never quoted the unmeasured Frescobaldi Toccatas as examples of the *Phantasticus*.

2. Froberger Connection. With scarcely any similarities in their musical style, the derivation of French unmeasured preludes from Frescobaldi's toccatas, via Froberger, is just a conjecture.

### 3. *Phantasticus* unmeasured after Kircher.

Most French unmeasured preludes do not follow the *Phantasticus*. During the unmeasured prelude era and beyond, the *Stylus Phantasticus* was followed not just in Italianate toccatas but also in many other works that were meant to undergo a measured performance.

### 4. *Phantasticus* unmeasured in J.S. Bach.

Most Baroque discussions on the *Stylus* apply to composition, not performance. All the evidence seems to show that the exceptional free performance statements by Frescobaldi and Mattheson do not apply to Bach's masterpieces in *Stylus Phantasticus*.

Finally, we have seen that J.S. Bach's Toccatas and Fantasias in *Stylus Phantasticus* mostly bear in their scores the tell-tale marks of music conceived for a measured performance, with just a few points for judiciously applied micro-rubato.



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- 1 Pierfrancesco Tosi, *Opinioni de'cantori antichi e moderni ...* (Bologna, 1723), p. 99.
  - 2 See for example in Saint-Lambert, *Les Principes du Clavecin (Principles of the Harpsichord)*, Paris 1702, Modern English edition by Rebecca Harris-Warrick (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge UK, 1984), Ch.IV "Concerning Note Values", 24.
  - 3 S. P. Rosenblum, "The Uses of Rubato in Music, Eighteenth to Twentieth Centuries", *Performance Practice Review*: 7/1: 34. See also D. Montgomery, *Franz Schubert's Music in Performance* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2003), Appendix IA "Tempo rubato: a short overview".
  - 4 B. D. Sherman, " 'Re-Inventing Wheels': Joshua Rifkin on interpretation and Rhetoric", *Inside Early Music: Conversations with Performers* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2003).
  - 5 See for example F. Hammond, "Frescobaldi, Girolamo", *The Harpsichord and Clavichord, an Encyclopedia*, Ed. Igor Kipnis, (New York, London: Routledge, 2007), 193.
  - 6 Girolamo Frescobaldi, *Toccate e Partite d'Intavolatura di Cimbalo Libro Primo* (Rome, 1615-37). The same notes are reproduced in his *Secondo Libro di Toccate, Canzone &c.* (Rome, 1627-37).
  - 7 Athanasius Kircher, *Musurgia universalis sive Ars Magna Consoni et Dissoni in X libros digesta*. (Rome, 1650). His description of *Stylus Phantasticus* is found on p. 585, as reported in the Index included at the end of book VII.
  - 8 Again, we find it pointless to name and shame so many personal opinions, some even included in published papers.
  - 9 The present author has searched Kircher's work thoroughly and has been unable to find any reference to any work by Frescobaldi. Surveying modern scholarship about Frescobaldi and Kircher, we find in-depth books such as *Frescobaldi Studies*, Alexander Silbiger, ed., (Duke Univ. Press: Durham, NC, 1987) and John Edward Fletcher, *A Study of the Life and Works of Athanasius Kircher, 'Germanus Incredibilis'* (Brill: Boston, 2011), as well as other works. Nobody seems to have found any reference by Kircher to Frescobaldi's works.
  - 10 Reproduced from different sources in the Public Domain.
  - 11 K. J. Snyder, *Dieterich Buxtehude: Organist in Lübeck*. (Schirmer Books, 1987) and (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press), 254.
  - 12 Page 243: "phantasias ... which we propose in this example and produce stupefying variety of colour ...". Page 311 does not include anything relevant in the text, only in the musical example. Pages 480 and 487 are examples of symphonies for lutes and viols.
  - 13 To the point that one of the latest historical definitions of *Stylus Phantasticus*, written by Mattheson, was an almost literal German translation of the original definition in Latin (Fig. C) included in Kircher's *Musurgia* almost a century earlier. This has been demonstrated by collating the two texts in Snyder, *Dieterich Buxtehude*, 254.
  - 14 G. Wilson. CD record liner notes to his recording of L. Couperin's harpsichord pieces, Naxos 8.555936. <http://www.naxos.com/sharedfiles/blurb/8.555936rev.pdf>. This essay shows interesting indirect evidence, although it also includes two major inconsistencies. On p. 2 we read "...the Tombeau de Blancrocher, which presumably could be dated close to the lutenist's death in 1662...": this is implied to be contradictory with Louis Couperin's death in 1661, but it is not, because Blancrocher actually died in 1652 (when Charles was just 13). On the same page Wilson also states that at least one piece "... appeared to be an arrangement with double of a Rigaudon from Lully's *Acis et Galathée* from 1686 - a quarter century after Louis death."; if so, however, the arrangement cannot be the work of Charles Couperin either, because he had died seven years earlier in 1679.
  - 15 D. Ledbetter, *Harpsichord and Lute Music in 17th-Century France*. (MacMillan Press, London 1987).
  - 16 D. Ledbetter, 90-91.
  - 17 D. Ledbetter, 42-43.
  - 18 as instructed by Frescobaldi in his introductory notes in many of his editions. In the most recent edition of Frescobaldi's complete keyboard works—by Armando Carideo (Latina, 2015)—the facsimiles of these notes are included in the following volumes and pages: *Capricci* 1624: I, 98; *Toccate I* 1615-1637: II, 1; *Fiori Musicali* 1635: II,109; *Toccate II* 1627-37: III,1. They can also be found online in [http://imslp.org/wiki/Category:Frescobaldi,\\_Girolamo](http://imslp.org/wiki/Category:Frescobaldi,_Girolamo).
  - 19 See P. Dirksen, "The Enigma of the *Stylus Phantasticus* and Dieterich Buxtehude's *Praeludium* in G Minor (BuxWV 163)", *Orpheus Organi Antiqui: Essays in Honor of Harold Vogel*, ed. Cleveland Johnson (Seattle, 2006), 107-132. On p. 107 Dirksen observes that "it is ... the toccata which time and again is associated with the *stylus phantasticus*, while it is also used in connection with a specific manner of performance. A glance at the historical evidence, however, is sufficient to demonstrate the highly problematic nature of such a broad use." On p. 114 Dirksen concludes that "the modern notion of the *stylus phantasticus* as a free ... performance manner does not come from any seventeenth-century source". A further reason for this is also because, as explained by Dirksen on p. 128, "*stylus phantasticus* ... is certainly not a style of playing or manner of interpretation, but a method of composition."
  - 20 Jean-Henri d'Anglebert, *Pieces de clavecin* (Paris, 1689), pp. 67-70. (reproduced in the modern edition by Heugel, Paris 1976 on pp. 46-49).
  - 21 Snyder, *Dieterich Buxtehude*.
  - 22 Snyder, 250.
  - 23 Snyder, 253.
  - 24 Dirksen, "The Enigma", 116.
  - 25 Snyder, 250.
  - 26 C. P. E. Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*. (Essay on the True Art of playing keyboard instruments). Part One (Berlin, 1753), Ch. III, ¶15 and Part Two, (Berlin, 1762), Ch. VII, ¶1-3.