

11-2018

Issues of Authenticity in the Performing of Bach Cello Suites

University of Denver

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.du.edu/musicology_student

Part of the [Musicology Commons](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License](#).

Boyd, Malcolm, and John Butt. *J. S. Bach, Oxford Composer Companions*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

This collection, edited by two of the most seasoned Bach scholars around, is part of a collection aimed at describing the compositional style and historical background of each major composer in a list of compiled essays. Collections like these are always helpful when one needs to get a broad idea of the context in which to think and write of a composer. In the case of this companion, the essays' range will be that of some of Bach's most famous pieces, along with an analysis and comprehensive historical background.

Butt, John. "Improvised Vocal Ornamentation and German Baroque Compositional Theory: An Approach to 'Historical' Performance Practice." *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 116 (1991): 41-62.

This journal essay focuses on the importance of improvisation in the the overall German compositional practice of the 18th century, one that Bach was a master of. It analysis some of the ornamentation in cantatas, how they shifted towards instrumental music and how to find them and identifying certain types in the repertoire.

Cole, Warwick. "Improvisation as a Stimulus to Composition in Bach's Partita II." *Bach: The Journal of the Riemanschneider Bach Insitute* 31, no. 1 (2000): 96-112.

Hudson, Richard. "Chordal Aspects of the Italian Dance Style." *Journal of the Lute Society of America* 3 (1970): 35-52.

Warwick is a professional keyboard player, focusing mainly in the baroque era. From the point of view as a performer and interpreter, this essay explores the concept of improvisation within the structure of a partita. Unlike vocal improvisation, which translates into florid or chromatic ornamentation of a line, keyboard improvisation can be quite complex—not only

because of Bach's mastery of the instrument but because he implemented canons, fugues and other processes in his written out improvisations.

Jerold, Beverly. "Editorial Decisions for Ornaments in Bach's Works." *Bach: The Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute* 33, no. 2 (2002): 1-14.

It was important to understand the decision making of some of the editions in the late 20th century, which correspond to a particular style of performing the solo instrumental works. This style is part of a tradition that performed baroque style compositions in a very romantic way. To view the evolution of editing Bach's works, not only according to the latest musicological work but in the style in which it is, or has become "traditional, to perform in.

Neumann, Karl. "Slur Marks in Bach's Cello Suites." *Journal of the Viola da Gamba Society of America* 3 (1966): 34-51.

Short overview of the agreements and disagreements of the four available manuscripts of the cello suites. It wasn't the most helpful article to read because it didn't provide an answer to the issue of balance between the different sources, but it did provide a certain perspective on considering all the manuscripts when coming up with a new edition.

Ratner, Leonard. "Ars Combinatoria: Chance and Choice in Eighteenth-Century Music." In *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Music: A Tribute to Karl Geiringer on his Seventieth Birthday*, edited by Karl Geiringer, H. C. Robbins Landon and Roger E. Chapman. New York: Oxford University Press, 1970.

Professor Ratner has the tendency of being controversial—he likes to blur the lines between classical and baroque, focusing on some of the similarities and ignoring the fundamental differences. In his "Chance and Choice...", Ratner explores the concept of harmonic and structural consequence as an element of Bach's compositional process. I don't think this can be

applicable to any of the cello suites, but it was interesting to think of mathematic probability in Bach's work.

Bylsma, A. (1998). *Bach, the fencing master : Reading aloud from the first three cello suites / by Anner Bylsma*. Amsterdam: A. Bylsma.

A base text for the essay, Anner Bylsma is one of the foremost baroque interpreters of our time. More than a research text, this is a collection of his experiences with the first three cello suites by J.S Bach. His extensive knowledge about Bach's musical language and his sixty year old career as a baroque cellist make his work the starting point for any cellist/scholar looking to make their way through the Cello suites.

Taruskin, Richard. *Text and Act Essays on Music and Performance*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Also a base text for this essay, "Text and Act" is Taruskin's own collection of essays pertaining to the issue of authenticity in the performing and interpreting of music—particularly early music, from which there's little information about. A seasoned musician in his own right, Taruskin's insight explores the philosophical aspects of nature of the interpreter and their role in the music art as a whole. While attempting to determine the best way of performing Bach suites, this collection became indispensable to the understanding of authenticity itself.

Beach, David W. *Aspects of Unity in J.S. Bach's Partitas and Suites : An Analytical Study / David W. Beach*. Eastman Studies in Music ; [v. 33]. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2005.

Beach explores thematic material in Bach's instrumental works written in the form of movement or dance collections, such as partitas and suites. He argues there's a complex weave

of thematic material holding the movements together, apart from a strong harmonic development that goes with it.

Ledbetter, David. *Unaccompanied Bach : Performing the Solo Works* / David Ledbetter. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

Ledbetter's work has become the starting for instrumentalists performing Bach's works, especially violinists and cellists. It provides an useful guideline for the interpreting of dance movements, for example, and their differences. It also provides useful information regarding bowings and the careful choosing of such depending on the style in which the performer prefers. I had read this before but it's proving useful in providing perspective.

Wolff, Christoph. *Johann Sebastian Bach : The Learned Musician*. New York: W. W. Norton &, 2000.

Professor Wolff's biography of the great J.S Bach is the latest and modern attempt of redrawing and retracing the life of the baroque master. It's always useful to immerse oneself in the life of a composer when attempting to make assumptions about their intentions in the interpreting of their works.