

## 1. BACH AND INEQUALITY

### Introduction

Those who play or listen to the music of French baroque composers like Couperin and Rameau will be used to the style of *notes inégales* with which it is regularly performed. This involves playing the fast notes – usually the quavers and semiquavers – in an unequal rhythm. This was a style of playing that was clearly habitually used in 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century France, for it is often recommended in Paris music tutors of the time. This style had been in use since the 16<sup>th</sup> century as Swiss and Spanish authors establish (see chapter 3 of my *An Unequal Music*) and clearly became popular in other parts of Europe, though it suddenly ceased to be fashionable around the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Scholars writing in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, like Arnold Dolmetsch and Robert Donington, began to recommend that the music of Bach and Handel should be played with *notes inégales*, though others argued that the style was confined to the French style, since the written evidence for it seemed to be focussed in Paris sources. However, today Early Music experts tend to restrict it to the French style, which would nevertheless include the music of Bach and Handel in this style.

In my youth I became absorbed by this fascinating subject and it has developed into a lifelong study. In my *An Unequal Music* (which is endorsed by Andrew Parrott and John Butt) I come to the conclusion that inequality pervaded Europe from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the late 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, though some scholars still argue that it was not used in Italian style. Whether J.S. Bach used it outside the French style is therefore debated. However, my recent work has explored the possibility that both Handel and Bach may have played some of their Italian style music in this manner, as I illustrate in my experimental recordings.

## 2. BACH'S HARPSICHORD MUSIC

### Introduction

A recent thorough reassessment of Bach's harpsichord music has convinced me (if I needed convincing) that he was a master of the instrument. He certainly knew how to use its virtues in his music – especially the crisp attack that made for precise ornamentation and clear counterpoint. But it is also becoming clear to me that the notation of this repertoire is full of clues that it was meant to be played with inequality and that this mode of performance was an integral part of the style that Bach cultivated. Here follow some notes on certain of his harpsichord pieces in which I have taken a particular interest (they are already recorded on the 2003 CD - see Introduction).

#### Fugue in D major, 48 Book I

If you don't swing the semiquavers here (from bar 9 onwards) they don't fit in with the overdotting that the prevailing dotted quaver/semiquaver groups naturally require (see Experimental Recording 13 in the website).

#### Allemande from French suite 1 in D minor

Here a legato piano-style approach would be inappropriate, for this texture, like many in Bach's allemandes, naturally breaks up into jagged 3- and 4-note motives and clearly responds to unequal rhythms. Sometimes, by contrast, (as in bar 2, beat 1) special phrasing is called for – here the four semiquavers should be split into two equal or short-long pairs.

#### Sinfonia in D minor

In this piece *suspirans* are dominant.<sup>1</sup> In the opening motive a *suspirans* is immediately followed by a pair of leaping quavers, making a striking contrast between semiquaver inequality and the

---

1 I discuss the connection between the *suspirans* and inequality in ch. 3 below and on page 128 of *An Unequal Music*.

assertive equality of the quavers (see ex. 1.1).<sup>2</sup> (Bach uses this procedure in the opening of the 'Qui sedes' of his B minor mass). In bar 3 he arranges a bold 'question and answer' sequence built on *suspirans* and similar textures enliven the rest of the piece.



Example 1.1 Sinfonia in D minor (BWV 790) by J.S. Bach: opening

### Fugue in D minor, 48 Book II

Play the triplets in groups of six with the first note of each group slightly lengthened.

### Allemande from French suite no. 5 in G

Once again an all-legato *égal* approach would be quite unsuitable, for the melodic line falls naturally into short phrases. Bach's artistry shows itself when he develops these motives, as he does at ex. 1.2, a passage which needs inequality for its full effect. Take care to bring out Bach's important thematic statements (see ex. 1.3).



Example 1.2 Allemande from French suite no. 5, (BWV 816) by J.S. Bach, bar 16



Example 1.3 The above, bars 5-6

### Fugue in C major, Book I

Here Bach takes delight in contrasting the seriousness of the fugue subject with the unequal semiquavers of its 'tail'.

### Hidden melodies

A very personal part of Bach's contrapuntal skill are his hidden melodies, for some movements which appear to be dominated by semiquavers actually have a 'sub-text' in the shape of a hidden tune moving among them. This is demonstrated in the F minor prelude from book I of the 48 (see ex. 1.4). Here Bach emphasizes the first note of each group of four semiquavers by adding a crotchet stem to it. Thus a hidden melody is created. This procedure also occurs in bars 43-44 of his 'Dorian' toccata for organ (BWV 538) (see ch. 2 ex. 2.3) and bars 22-23 of his D minor 'Fiddle fugue' (BWV 539).



Example 1.4 Opening of Prelude in F minor, 48 Bk I by J.S. Bach

2 The contrasting equality of the quavers and the inequality of the semiquavers in the Italian style is a major theme of the writings of Hotteterre and Corrette that I treat in chapter 9 of *An Unequal Music*.

Yet this is not the whole story, for in ex.1.4, and the other examples that I have quoted, Bach is telling us how we should perform scores of similar movements of his where there are no extra stems to guide us. For instance in the C minor prelude from Book II (see below) the performer is invited to sustain the first notes of beats 1-4 of bar 1.

#### Prelude in C minor, 48 Book II

Bach builds this movement on similar 'hidden' crotchet melodies with strings of unequal *suspirans* in between the notes (see my website, no. 18).

#### Fugue in E flat major, 48 Book I

The subject is meaningless if played *égal* yet inequality turns it into another hidden melody adorned with *suspirans* (see ex. 1.5). At bar 14 (beat 3) the alto begins an impressive descending chromatic scale: the first note of each group should be sustained.



Example 1.5 Opening of fugue in E flat major, 48 Bk I by J.S. Bach

#### Sinfonia in B flat major

Notice that most phrases start with a *suspirans*.

#### Fugue in F sharp minor, 48 Book I

The 6/4 metre is a clear sign that this fugue is in the French style and that the quavers should be unequal. In the frequent cascades of appoggiaturas (see ex. 1.5) the paired quavers respond well to inequality.



### Sinfonia no. 13 in A minor

NB the syncopation in bars 33-34, 41-42 and 49-50 is very powerful when played with inequality (see ex. 1.9.). 'Rush' the demisemi-quavers in bar 36ff.



Example 1.9 Sinfonia in A minor (BWV 799) by J.S.Bach, bars 49-50

### Allemande from Partita 4 in D major

At my website no. 20 I play all the triplets unequal (sustaining the first note), phrasing the groups of 8 demisemi-quavers in fours (e.g. bars 33-34) and emphasizing the syncopation at bars 52 and 53. I play  like two triplets with the first note of the first triplet slightly sustained, which I believe was Bach's intention<sup>3</sup> (for more details see *An Unequal Music* p. 151).

### **Period sources on Bach interpretation**

#### **J.J. Quantz**

The much-quoted passage in chapter 11 of Quantz's *Versuch* of 1752 is a good introduction to his views on inequality but for more detail on the matter it is necessary to read the passage from chapter 6, section 1, paragraph 9, where he refers to flute tonguing as follows:

*In quick passage-work single tonguing is not effective, since it makes all the notes alike, while good taste demands that they should be a little unequal. This allows the possibility of using two other types of tonguing, that is, tiri for dotted notes and moderately quick passage-work, and did'll for very quick passage-work.*<sup>4</sup>

These types of flute tonguing need to be understood by students of inequality for they are the key to interpreting the *Solfeggi*, a late manuscript which contains Quantz's advice to his flute pupils. I devote the whole of chapter 13 of *An Unequal Music* to this source, for not only does *Solfeggi* introduce us to a more unbuttoned Quantz than the writer of the *Versuch*, but it is also full of quotations from real music by composers of his circle, like Telemann, W.F. Bach, the Graun brothers and Nichelmann. Below I list a series of passages which show Quantz training his pupils how to use inequality to enhance their playing (most of the composers quoted belong to the Berlin school). The references relate to the Amadeus edition of 1978, ed. Michel and Teske:

Concerto di Quantz, p. 11 throughout; Sonata di Nichelmann, p.26, lines 1 & 2 – (Nichelmann was a pupil of J.S. and W.F. Bach, Telemann and Quantz); Duetto di Telemann, p. 36, line 9; Concerto by W.F. Bach, p. 40 throughout; Trio di Telemann, p. 57, line 2; Trio di Graun, p. 62, line 9; Trio di Quantz, p. 63, Trio di Graun, p. 65, lines 3, 6-10; Trio di Graun, p. 73 throughout; Duetto di Telemann, p.76 btm. line and p. 77 top line; Trio di Telemann, p. 82, line 4; Duetto di Telemann, p. 83, line 9 and p. 84, top line.

It is important to bear in mind Quantz's standing in his profession, being the teacher of Frederick the Great (himself an accomplished musician). An article in *Early Music* (August, 1997)<sup>5</sup> stresses that not only was Quantz an extremely fine all-round musician with *avant-garde* aspirations but that what the author describes as 'Frederick's musical establishment' was an important meeting-place for

3 I believe that the opening bars of the fugue D minor from the 48 Bk II could have been written in this way.

4 See *An Unequal Music*, p. 161.

5 Steven Zohn: 'New light on Quantz's advocacy of Telemann's Music', pp. 441-461. For an illuminating excerpt from this article see page 167 of *An Unequal Music* (footnote 21).

the finest composers in the district, notably Telemann. What is more, the famous story of the writing of the *Musical Offering* proves that J.S. Bach was also a highly respected member of this illustrious group. So Quantz's advice on inequality is by no means only relevant to flute playing but also provides valuable source material on Bach's music in general.

## **Recent research into Bach interpretation**

### Hints in the musical text

The concept of 'hints', by which certain composers indicated to performers that inequality was required, is an idea that I owe to the research of Colin Booth, who found that Mattheson used this system.<sup>6</sup> I have also come across this procedure in Handel e.g. *Hercules*, 'Crown with festal pomp', *Ode for Queen Anne*, 'Let envy then conceal her head' and *Solomon*, 'Indulge thy faith'. See also Telemann's cantata '*Auf Christenheit begeh' ein Freudenfest* (1716) at the beginning of no. 8. I have found one possible example in Bach's *Fantasia cromatica e Fuga* (BWV 903), but this needs further research.

### Suspirans point to inequality

In *An Unequal Music*, chapter 11, I explain the close relationship between the *suspirans* and inequality. Exx. 11.2 and 11.9 show the important role they played in the work of Louis and François Couperin (where the use of inequality already has scholarly approval) and exx. 11.3, 11.6, 11.7 and 11.8 point to parallels in the work of Froberger and J.S. Bach.

Some further examples in Bach can be found in nos. 5, 8, 12, 15, 20, 21 of the Goldberg variations and in the first movement of the Italian Concerto (e.g. bars 8, 9 etc.). In Book I of the 48 there are good examples in the prelude in C mi. (where the opening motive is built on groups of four semiquavers whose melody notes are each followed by a *suspirans*), prelude in D ma., prelude in E flat ma. (here the fugue subject is constructed just like the C minor prelude), fugue in E ma., prelude in F mi. (see especially bars 19-21), fugue in F mi., prelude in A ma. and the prelude in B ma. See also Book II of the 48: prelude in C ma., prelude in C mi., prelude in C sharp mi., prelude in E ma., prelude in E mi., prelude in F mi., fugue in B flat ma. and fugue in A flat ma (see especially the end of bar 46).

In an *égal* performance *suspirans* easily get swamped in a colourless string of legato semiquavers, yet if inequality is applied they provide the rhythmic 'kicks' which I believe were meant to enliven the music. In the D minor sinfonia (BWV 790), for instance, Bach builds a brilliant *Leitmotiv* out of an unequal *suspirans* followed by a pair of strongly equal quavers. An *égal* performance cannot even begin to deliver this effect. Furthermore Bach's cunning conversation between the four *suspirans* in bar 3 is feeble without inequality. The same is true of the opening of the 'Qui sedes' from the B minor mass (see chapter 6 below).

### Syncopation

Syncopation is one of Bach's cleverest secret weapons, and a movement like the opening chorus of Cantata 140 loses much of its power and subtlety played without inequality. In an *égal* performance of this movement the intended 'rat-tat' of the semiquaver-quaver rhythms of bars 5-8 (and similar passages) is lost. The syncopation in variation 25 of the Goldberg Variations is also spoilt if inequality is not used.

### Passages where Bach may not intend inequality

In the second movement of Brandenburg concerto no.5 the first three bars introduce a theme containing pairs of semiquavers in a dotted semiquaver/demisemiquaver rhythm. This theme recurs throughout the movement but it is often linked with undotted semiquavers – sometimes slurred in pairs and sometimes slurred in fours. Bach makes a big feature of the contrast between these two different styles of articulation and one cannot help wondering whether the slurred semiquavers are

---

6 See Booth, *Did Bach really mean that?* ch. 4.

meant to be played *égal* (as they normally are today, of course). [I would do the rest of this concerto *inégal*, however].

Similar suspicions arose in my mind when I perused Bach's concertos for harpsichord (BWV 972-987). In the Lea Pocket score one of these concertos (no. 2 in G major) is printed at the end in Vivaldi's original. The last movement does indeed contain a violin solo with continuous semiquaver arpeggios (bars 21-27) and I couldn't help wondering if Vivaldi would have wanted this passage played *égal* and, what is more, if Bach would have been tempted to play his transcription *égal* as well. I think a relevant feature here, however, is that the long sections in the Vivaldi with only quaver movement imply a rather fast tempo, especially the introduction to the first movement (bars 1-45).

It would seem that by Bach's time some movements in what I was taught to call 'compound time' (e.g. 6/8 and 9/8) may have been taken at such a fast tempo that the semiquavers would have been played *égal*. In chapter 2 I suggest that the prelude from the C major prelude and fugue for organ (BWV 547) may be a case in point and perhaps the preludes in C sharp minor and D major from Book II of the 48 should be included too. Bach sometimes avoids inequality by choosing certain metres or not using note values which would be eligible for inequality. This would apply to the preludes in Eb major and A major<sup>7</sup> from book II of the 48, the invention in G major and possibly the D minor organ prelude to BWV 539. Bach's chorales are usually exempt from inequality, so long as they don't contain semiquavers.

### Inequality and leaping passages

I deal with this matter in appendix 4 of *An Unequal Music*. Readers of Quantz's *Solfeggi* may already have noticed that his advice on how to play disjunct semiquavers is inconsistent.<sup>8</sup> I actually went through a period when I played the arpeggios in pieces like the C minor prelude in Book II of the 48 equally, though the rest were unequal. Lately I have even wondered whether Bach could have wanted this practice to be more widespread – perhaps even extending to the famous C major prelude that opens Book I. Could this apply to the Goldberg variations? Variation 1 would be interesting, for leaping and step-wise moving semiquavers are closely intermingled.

### Triplets

Colin Booth has made it clear that in baroque music  and  often mean the same thing – he calls the second version the 'square' equivalent of the former. In Bach I would go a step further and claim that  and  can also be equivalent: in other words, that they both mean a group of six notes with an accent on the first note only. I believe that the triplets that begin the D minor fugue in Book II of the 48 and appear at bar 4 in the A minor prelude from BWV 543 are probably meant to be played like this. This rhythm also appears frequently in the allemande from Partita 4 in D major (e.g. bars 50 and 51).<sup>9</sup>

7 These preludes have a handful of semiquavers: perhaps they should be played *égal* as I have suggested for BWV 547.

8 See *An Unequal Music*, p.191.

9 See my Experimental recordings, no. 20 ([www.byrt.org.uk](http://www.byrt.org.uk)).

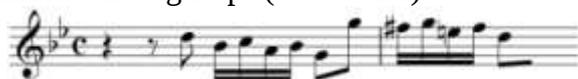
### 3. THE ORGAN MUSIC

#### Introduction

While still a pupil I was trained to play Bach's major organ works in the orthodox way, and it is only recently that I have started to imagine them being played *inégal*. Yet I have had no problem applying my inequality research to this repertoire and I have been surprised at how readily these familiar texts respond to this manner of performance. In the end, playing them with inequality has been like watching the pictures of a great painter being given a careful and long overdue restoration.

#### Tempo

Though my teachers were highly competent, I now feel that the use of inequality would make their tempi slightly too fast. For instance, I learned to play the famous G minor fugue (BWV 542, see ex. 2.1) at about crotchet = 80. As for the G major prelude (BWV 541, see ex. 2.2), which is marked *vivace*, I used to play this at an exhilarating crotchet = 82. Now I would slow both movements down to about crotchet = 70, with the semiquavers phrased in fours and a strong emphasis on the crotchet beat. I would also play the semiquavers a little more *sostenuto*, also allowing the music to breathe by introducing commas at the big leaps (see ex. 2.2).



Example 2.1 Opening of organ fugue in G minor (BWV 542) by J.S. Bach



Example 2.2 Opening of organ prelude in G major (BWV 541) by J.S. Bach

#### Prelude and fugue in C minor (BWV 537)

The prelude is in 6/4 time: this is definitely a French metre and so it is the quavers that should be unequal.<sup>10</sup> The many running semiquavers should be 'rushed' like the demisemiquavers in the G minor Fantasia (BWV 542 – see ex. 2.5 below). The fugue is in  $\text{C}$  time, also a French metre requiring unequal quavers. Though some of the quavers in the subject are disjunct, yet these should probably be swung, for sometimes they have to synchronize with conjunct quavers, e.g. bar 16, between manuals and pedals.

#### Tocatta and fugue (Dorian) (BWV 538)

In bars 43-45 and 73-77 of the prelude we can see 'hidden melodies' such as Bach often creates in his many oscillating passages being emphasized by quaver stems (see chapter 1, under 'hidden melodies' and compare ex. 2.3 with ex. 1.4 and ex. 1)



Example 2.3 Tocatta and fugue in D minor (BWV 538) by J.S. Bach (bars 43-44)

This suggests that he may often intend his performers to do this automatically in similar places. As in BWV 537 above, the  $\text{C}$  sign that prefaces the fugue means that the quavers are unequal.

#### Prelude and fugue in D minor (Fiddle fugue) (BWV 539)

Here the prelude is in C time, in which it was normal for the semiquavers to be played unequally. Yet, since there are no semiquavers and quite a few running quavers, it is possible that Bach meant

---

<sup>10</sup> See *An Unequal Music*, p. 107.

these to be swung instead. The fugue features long semiquaver episodes which correspond with similar episodes in the sonata for solo violin from which it originates.

#### Tocatta and fugue in F (BWV 540)

The main theme of the toccata is particularly apt for the pedals, as becomes clear in the big pedal solo at bar 55 (see ex. 2.4). There is no question that those semiquavers that are disjunct must nevertheless be played unequally for the rule against inequality in leaping passages did not apply to semiquavers.<sup>11</sup> Corrette advised semiquaver inequality in 3/8 time in his violin treatise, adding that the metre was popular 'in the Italian operas of Handel, Bononcini, Pepusch, A. Scarlatti and Porpora'. To create a powerful thematic structure Bach cunningly contrasts his running semiquavers with a motive involving big quaver chords which he develops later on.<sup>12</sup>



Example 2.4 Tocatta in F major (BWV 540) by J.S. Bach, bars 55-56

The fugue is in C: Corrette says 'this metre is used in Fugues de Chapelle' and recommends unequal quavers.<sup>13</sup>

#### Prelude and fugue in G major (BWV 541), see ex.2.2 above.

Corrette treats 3/4 as an Italian style metre in which the semiquavers should be played unequally. Bach wrote many fine movements in this metre.<sup>14</sup> This prelude is full of oscillating patterns involving hidden melodies: see especially bars 18-20 (manuals) and a spectacular passage in the pedals (bars 21-23). In the fugue Bach creates rhythmic contrast once again, this time by setting a subject dominated by equal quavers against a counter-subject full of unequal semiquavers. Note the pedal *suspirans* at bar 27: Bach develops this idea later on (bars 60-65).<sup>15</sup>

#### Fantasia and fugue in G minor (BWV 542)

The fantasia features many demisemiquavers (see ex. 2.5) and clearly uses the advanced musical language that we also meet in the harpsichord partitas (e.g. the andante from the sinfonia that begins the second partita).<sup>16</sup> The tempo in the fantasia is surely a *grave* in which the quaver pulse is dominant, as becomes clear in bars 9-12. I have referred to the famous fugue subject above (see ex. 2.1).



Example 2.5 Opening of the Fantasia and fugue in G minor (BWV 542)



Example 2.6 the above, bars 9-10

The semiquavers in ex. 2.6 should definitely be swung, for semiquavers are always unequal in C time.

11 See *An Unequal Music*, appendix 4.

12 These were first heard as a cadential motive in bar 81.

13 See *An Unequal Music*, p. 146.

14 e.g. the prelude from the second English suite (BWV 807) and the *praeambulum* from the 5<sup>th</sup> partita (BWV 829).

15 I explain the close relationship between the *suspirans* and inequality in *An Unequal Music*, p. 128.

### Prelude and fugue in A minor (BWV 543)

The opening of the prelude (see ex. 2.7) is particularly powerful when played with inequality, especially if the first note of each group of 4 semiquavers is sustained. The triplets at bar 4 must then be grouped in sixes (with no emphasis on the second of each group) in a way that I believe Bach intended  to be played.<sup>17</sup> Surely the notation of bar 24 in the pedal part confirms that Bach intends this passage and the music that follows to be played unequally! (see ex. 2.8). In the fugue subject one would perhaps expect the melody notes of the sequence beginning half way through bar 2 to be on the *stronger* of each pair of unequal notes (*cf.* the G major prelude to BWV 541, bars 21-23, pedals), though it seems that Bach deliberately enjoyed ringing the changes in such passages.<sup>18</sup>



Example 2.7 Opening of prelude in A minor (BWV 543) by J.S.Bach



Example 2.8 the above, pedal part, bar 24-25

### Prelude and fugue in B minor (BWV 544)

Though I played this piece 'straight' many times in my student days, I find it striking how normal it feels to treat the eloquent prelude with unequal semiquavers (see ex. 2.9). I would recommend a fairly fast tempo of about quaver = 80. The demisemiquavers need to be phrased in fours with the first slightly sustained and the others 'rushed' (this is the only way they will synchronize with the unequal semiquavers in bars 11-13). The hidden melody at the end of bar 3 and especially the syncopation in bars 4-5 are extremely effective (see ex. 2.10). No less is the syncopated counter-theme in parallel thirds that he introduces towards the end (at bar 81).



Example 2.9 Opening of prelude in B minor (BWV 544) by J.S.Bach



Example 2.10 the above, bars 4-5

This prelude is a fine example of Bach's florid late style and playing it with inequality requires a great deal of skill. The reader may like first of all to attempt an easier movement in this style, like

<sup>16</sup> See *An Unequal Music*, p. 151.

<sup>17</sup> Another case where Bach gives the melody to the *weaker* notes of a series of pairs is the first movement of the third Brandenburg concerto (bars 2-3), yet at beat 4 of bar 5 of the concerto the tune starts on the *stronger* notes and then moves to the *weaker* notes.

<sup>18</sup> I can't resist comparing this prelude with Brahms's Rhapsody op. 79, no. 1. The key is the same and Brahms's triplet in bar 1 strongly recalls the downward scale with which Bach begins

the andante that follows the *grave* at the beginning of Partita 2 in C minor (BWV 826) for harpsichord.

The fugue is loaded with *suspirans*, see especially the new countersubject that Bach dramatically introduces at bars 59 and 61.<sup>19</sup>

#### Prelude and fugue in C (BWV 545)

This prelude has even more *suspirans* than the previous fugue – indeed there is one in nearly every bar (see especially the pedal part at bars 24-26). The fugue is in French style  $\text{C}$  and therefore requires unequal quavers.

#### Prelude and fugue in C minor (BWV 546)

Note that both prelude and fugue are in  $\text{C}$  and (like the fugue of BWV 545) would require quaver inequality. I deal with the prelude in detail in *An Unequal Music*, pages 144-146.

#### Prelude and fugue in C (BWV 547)

To play this prelude with unequal semiquavers would certainly lead to an unsatisfactorily slow tempo and I suspect that Bach might have played it without inequality, though both Hotteterre and Corrette prescribe unequal semiquavers in this metre.

#### Prelude and fugue in E minor (BWV 548)

The prelude has a *suspirans* in nearly every bar. In the fugue the French  $\text{C}$  metre means unequal quavers once again. The falling quaver scale in bar 3 should probably be played with short-long paired inequality. In the episodes from bar 59 onwards the semiquavers should be treated like the demisemiquavers in the G minor organ fantasia and the harpsichord partitas and 'rushed'.

#### 4. BACH'S MUSICAL LANGUAGE AND HOW IT EVOLVED

Written sources show that diminutions in European polyphony were first notated in crotchets or demiminims and then in quavers and semiquavers. Bourgeois would have us apply inequality from the beginning.<sup>20</sup> Early on discrepancies between dotted and evenly-written versions of similar materials point to probable inequality.<sup>21</sup> In French lute music of the late 16<sup>th</sup> century some quaver passage sometimes introduce groups of equal semiquavers, which may have been 'rushed'<sup>22</sup>

The last stage in the development of diminutions is to be seen in the typical German allemande where they are written in continuous semiquavers. One of the earliest examples of these is an allemande and double by Froberger (dated c. 1650).<sup>23</sup> Here the allemande is mainly written in quavers but the *double* moves entirely in semiquavers. The texture is permeated by *suspirans*, as Hudson himself observes,<sup>24</sup> and as I explain in my chapter on Germany and the allemande, *suspirans* give allemandes their forward-moving ictus which is also a feature rhythmic inequality. This *double* could well have been the model for Bach's own allemandes

The way running quavers in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century gradually developed into running semiquavers, shows how the notation of diminutions changed as the 17<sup>th</sup> century approached. In the end the French continued to play their quavers *inégal* in gavottes and minuets (in 2 and 3) while in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century Italians like Cazzati, Marini and Vitali, though they played their quavers firmly equal reserving their semiquavers for inequality.

It is important to note that, both in France and Italy, though some early pieces use running quavers written dotted, you rarely see a score with dotted semiquavers. This may explain why François Couperin came to make his devastating comment that 'the Italians write their music in its true values'.<sup>25</sup> I would suggest that in his head the difference between French and Italian notational practice basically affected *quavers*, for to him semiquavers had been played unequally in both countries for many years and therefore he thought of them as automatically *inégal*.

At the end of this notational journey came England, with running quavers appearing around 1600, as in an Allmaine of c. 1600 where the quavers mainly appear in dotted quaver/semiquaver pairs but are sometimes undotted. Later Purcell and Croft were to write numerous allmands with running semiquavers, sometimes dotted, sometimes not.<sup>26</sup>

##### The mature style

In his later years Bach started to use an advanced type of notation, which involved copious demisemiquavers and semiquaver triplets. This is particularly common in his later works like the published keyboard music, such as *Clavierübung* I and III. This 'mature' style of notation includes certain movements from the Partitas (BWV 825-830), but Bach also uses it in variation 25 of the Goldberg set (BWV 988), the slow movement of the Italian concerto (BWV 971) and some of the 48, e.g. the A minor prelude and fugue in Book II. This style also appears in organ pieces like the G minor fantasia from BWV 542 and the prelude in B minor (BWV 544). In March 2018 I found that Bach and the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book composers<sup>27</sup> tidily group their demisemiquavers in fours: Corelli (in his opus 5) seems to be alone in writing long *gruppetti* which do not conform to this plan.

My research suggests that Bach may have deliberately derived this florid style of performance from composers who preceded him. An obvious source is Frescobaldi, whose work he certainly studied and the Toccata IX from *Secondo libro di toccate* (Rome 1637) anticipates the groups of semiquaver sextuplets that Bach became very fond of in his mature style. (Compare the left hand

---

20 See *An Unequal Music*, pp. 17-18.

21 See Hudson, *The Allemande...* (Cambridge, 1986), vol. II, Allmand by Brade (1609), p. 37 (last system).

22 See Hudson *q.v.*, vol. II, pp. 83-85.

23 See Hudson *q.v.*, vol. II, pp. 52-53.

24 See *q.v.*, vol I, p. 193.

25 See *An Unequal Music*, pp. 49-50.

26 See *An Unequal Music* p. 120, ex. 10.1.

27 e.g. Richardson (vol. 1, xxviii) and Peter Philips (vol. 1, lxx).

part of bars 12 and 13 of Frescobaldi's Toccata IX with the D minor fugue from Book II of the 48).<sup>28</sup>

Examples of such florid writing can also be found in the work of English, Italian and Flemish composers collected in the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*. Among these are John Bull, organist of Antwerp Cathedral from 1617 onwards and Peter Philips, strongly steeped in Italian music, who also spent much of his life working in Antwerp and Brussels. Typical of the work of these composers are Peter Philips' 'Fece da voi' (p. 288), Pichi's Toccata (p. 373) from vol. I and John Bull's 'Variatio Ejusdem' (p. 244) from vol. II.<sup>29</sup>

#### Passages where Bach may not intend inequality to be used

Bach was given to experiment and it seems possible that occasionally he may have decided to abandon rhythmic inequality. If so, the passages listed below might be intended to be played in this way.

In the second movement of Brandenburg concerto no.5 the first three bars introduce a theme containing pairs of semiquavers in a dotted semiquaver/demisemiquaver rhythm. This theme recurs throughout the movement but it is often linked with undotted semiquavers – sometimes slurred in pairs and sometimes slurred in fours. Bach makes a big feature of the contrast between these two different styles of articulation and one cannot help wondering whether the slurred semiquavers are meant to be played *égal* (as they normally are today, of course). [I would do the rest of this concerto *inégal*, however].

Similar suspicions arose in my mind when I perused Bach's concertos for harpsichord (BWV 972-987). In the Lea Pocket score one of these concertos (no. 2 in G major) is printed at the end in Vivaldi's original. The last movement does indeed contain a violin solo with continuous semiquaver arpeggios (bars 21-27) and I couldn't help wondering if Vivaldi would have wanted this passage played *égal* and, what is more, if Bach would have been tempted to play his transcription *égal* as well. I think a relevant feature here is that the long sections in the Vivaldi with only quaver movement imply a rather fast tempo, especially the introduction to the first movement (bars 1-45). In my opinion inequality does not go well with very fast tempi.

It would seem that by Bach's time some movements in what I was taught to call 'compound time' (e.g. 6/8 and 9/8) may have been taken at such a fast tempo that the semiquavers would have been played *égal*. In chapter 2 I suggest that the prelude from the C major prelude and fugue for organ (BWV 547) may be a case in point and perhaps the preludes in C sharp minor and D major from Book II of the 48 should be included too. Bach sometimes avoids inequality by choosing certain metres or not using note values which would be eligible for inequality. This would apply to the preludes in Eb major and A major<sup>30</sup> from book II of the 48, the invention in G major and possibly the D minor organ prelude to BWV 539. Bach's chorales are usually exempt from inequality, so long as they don't contain semiquavers.

---

28 See *HAM* II, no. 193. I believe that Corrette's instructions for Italian semiquaver inequality would be applied here.

29 Here the pagination comes from the Dover edition (1963) which is based on the Breitkopf und Härtel edition of 1899.

30 These preludes have a handful of semiquavers: perhaps they should be played *égal* as I have suggested for BWV 547.

## 5. THE END OF INEQUALITY – DID EMANUEL BACH PLAY A PART?

It would seem that inequality suddenly became unfashionable in Europe around the 1770s but there has been little research into this crucial moment of change.<sup>31</sup> For some time I have wondered whether Emanuel Bach, an influential figure at the time, could have had anything to do with evolving the new classical style. It so happens that in the 1960s I wrote a doctoral thesis comparing his style of composition with that of his father and I have lately been looking through it again in case it might cast any light on the matter.

Certainly some important things seem to have been happening in Berlin at this time and the Bach family must have been involved. In chapter 12 of *An Unequal Music* I stress that in his later works Sebastian started to cultivate the semiquaver triplets that were also becoming a feature of the *style galant* of the Berlin School at the time and which certainly create an atmosphere of inequality. Composers who wrote in this style include Telemann, Quantz himself, the Graun brothers, Benda and Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, all of whose work is prominent in Quantz's *Solfeggi*.<sup>32</sup> Here Quantz's relentless recommendations for inequality in this repertoire could not be clearer. It is unfortunate that he only quotes very briefly from Emanuel's work and his father's music does not appear in it at all, though his 1752 *Versuch* ends with a piece that is very much in Sebastian's style (see table XXIV).

In *An Unequal Music* I list occasions in which JS Bach synchronizes triplets with duple notation (see ch. 12, table 1, p. 147), suggesting that they may indicate that he means *inégalité* to be applied in such places. I quote a passage from the B minor flute sonata (BWV 1030) which I personally find impossible to play without using unequal semiquavers (see ex. 12.7).

### Important changes in the notation of Emanuel's early keyboard sonatas

In the following paragraphs I shall suggest that Emanuel's very early keyboard pieces, like the Prussian and Württemberg sonatas (Wotquenne 48 and 49) may show him using inequality while in some of the collections that followed, especially the *Sonaten mit veränderten Reprisen* (Wot. 50), the *Fortsetzung* (Wot. 51) and the *Zweyte Fortsetzung* (Wot. 52), we seem to see him beginning to adopt a truly classical style in which unnotated inequality did not feature.

His possible early use of inequality is illustrated in the opening *allegro* of the sixth sonata of the Prussian set (1742). This is full of semiquaver triplets and  $\frac{3}{4}$  rhythms which I believe would encourage the performer to play the surrounding even semiquavers *inégal* (see ex. 4.1)



Ex. 4.1: Prussian sonata no. 6 (Wot. 48) by C.P.E. Bach. Opening *allegro*, bars 53-57

In the first of the Württemberg sonatas (1744) the opening *moderato* is full of demisemiquavers and triplet semiquavers coupled with  $\frac{3}{4}$  rhythms which create a similar atmosphere of inequality. In the second Württemberg Sonata the third movement also has many semiquaver triplets which suggest that inequality is expected in the neighbouring equal semiquavers. Furthermore the first movement of the third Württemberg sonata has 'rebounds' (repetitions of the same note)<sup>33</sup> which may indicate inequality (e.g. bars 7-8 and 41-42). The second and third movements of the same sonata have many semiquaver triplets which also create an atmosphere of *inégalité*.

31 See *An Unequal Music*, p. 13.

32 See *An Unequal Music*, ch. 13.

33 See *An Unequal Music*, p. 136

The *Sechs Sonaten mit veränderten Reprisen* (Wot. 50) seem to show the composer gripped by an obsession with elaborate contrasts of melodic rhythm (including strange *gruppetti* in the first movement of no 4). At first there are signs that inequality is still in force, for semiquaver triplets remain common, as in the opening *allegretto* of no. 2. In the final *allegro* of no.4 of the set, however, frequent old-fashioned semiquaver triplets are mixed with more *cantabile* semiquavers slurred in 4s, which might point to a more classical equality (see ex. 4.2)



Ex. 4.2: *Sechs Sonaten mit veränderten Reprisen* (Wot. 50) no. 4 by C.P.E Bach. Final *allegro*, bars 112-115

By the time we reach the *Fortsetzung* (Wot. 51) the modern style seems to be establishing itself. In the *adagio mesto e sostenuto* of no. 2, conventional dotted semiquavers (bar 1) are juxtaposed with even semiquavers which are clearly meant to be played equal (see ex. 4.3, bar 2).



Ex. 4.3: *Fortsetzung von Sechs Sonaten* (Wot. 51) no.2 by C.P.E. Bach. Opening of *adagio mesto e sostenuto* (3rd. mvt.)

Later on some dotted semiquavers (bars 18-20) lead into a piece of apparently legato two-part counterpoint in undotted semiquavers, which should surely be played equal (see ex. 4.4).

18

19

20

21

22

Ex. 4.4: the above, bars 18-22

Yet the *allegro assai* and *presto* of sonata 4 are already in a confident classical style and could be written by Haydn or Mozart: there are no dotted semiquavers at all and semiquaver triplets are rare too. So the *style galant* seems to be vanishing now. Though the opening *allegro* of no. 4 of the *Zweyte Fortsetzung* (Wot. 52) is based on a *moto perpetuo* of semiquaver triplets, they are assembled in a truly classical style and are no longer just a mannerism as they used to be. It seems that inequality is now a thing of the past.

Yet occasionally old notational practices return, as when in the third movement of sonata 5 of the *Fortsetzung* we find Sebastian's old habit of matching quaver triplets in the right hand with  $\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}$  rhythms in the bass.

### Conclusion

The above observations seem to support a view that Emanuel Bach could have played a part in the demise of inequality in European music and thereby to have helped create the musical language that we can see expressed in the keyboard music of Haydn and Mozart as well as that of Sebastian's youngest son, Johann Christian. However we must bear in mind that many of the changes in this

musical language would have been related to the *cantabile* style of playing, which was caused by the new popularity of the fortepiano.