

documentary evidence for or against *inégaies* from Italy, Germany and England and, using this evidence, assemble a conjectural International Metre-Inequality Table. I look into the vexed question of written dotting in the context of *inégaie* performance. Finally I try to come to some conclusions in this highly controversial field.

The appendix includes notes on my Bach recordings and other *inégaie* performances. There is a series of conversations on *inégaies* with West-country performers and scholars. Included also is a facsimile of an early paper of mine on triplets and semiquavers in Bach with copious comments by the late Robert Donington. I review Donington's statements on inequality in the light of subsequent scholarship. With accompanying cassette (*Notes inégaies*, a breakthrough?) it costs £20, including postage and packing.

BACH CASSETTE - Notes inégaies, a breakthrough? - contains recordings of 15 pieces by JS Bach, including allemandes from the suites and partitas, preludes and fugues from the 48 and two chorale preludes. It costs £6, including postage and packing.

UNEQUAL NOTES - the NEWSLETTER

The Unequal Notes newsletter is a quarterly in which I include samples of my research and give news of articles, lectures and conferences on *notes inégaies*. If you would like to receive the Newsletter regularly, kindly send me an annual subscription of £2.00 payable on 1st September. Cheques made out to John Byrt please. Back numbers of UNEQUAL NOTES 50p each.

STOP PRESS!! There will be a SWEMF Inégale day on

**Dr John Byrt, 4 Melbourne Cottages, Tiverton, Devon,
EX16 5LE Tel: (01884) 256806**

UNEQUAL NOTES

The Inégaies Newsletter

Editor: John Byrt

No. 9

August 1996

From my American correspondent - Triplets and *inégaies* - German baroque performed - Rifkin on authenticity - Pick and choose Charpentier? - From the annals (ii) more from Miles Kington

Editorial

I recently showed some work of mine to a friend who belongs very much to the world of academic music. He picked out one passage for criticism. I was talking about this section from the allemande of Bach's 1st partita Bach's Partita

I had written: 'I don't think this comes off if *inegaies* are not used'. 'Such comments are very weakening to your argument', he said. I was rather offended at the time though afterwards I could see that he had a point. If you need to make personal remarks like that then it gives the impression that you have no better arguments to offer.

And yet it is surely not healthy if a whole school of early music writers are out of touch with their feelings. Does this apply to early music performers as well? I rather think not, since the message that the Baroque was a period

when the feelings were uppermost certainly seems to have got through to the best of our performers. I rather fear that this embargo on the feelings is a way in which musicologists exert their power over us - 'you can't do anything that is not properly documented and we have control over the documents!' they seem to be saying. This attitude leads to absurdities and to 'emperor's new clothes' situations in which the public and even the performers do something just because the musicologists tell them and no one has the courage to say 'this is stupid!'

I would never say: ignore the documents. Instead I would say: read all round the subject and then consult your feelings.

From my American correspondent:
Amanda Pond, Milford, Connecticut, USA
June 3rd

Amanda has been looking for American material on inégales for me. She had asked me for help with ornamentation.

Thanks for your comments on ornamentation in your last letter. You might be interested to know that, as a result of our correspondence, I incorporated one or two mordents in a recent performance of a Bach sonata - something that would have been verboten by my former teacher [who apparently only allowed French ornamentation]. My current recorder teacher is a big fan of Quantz and "On playing the Flute" is most useful on the subject of articulation, ornamentation etc. I also enjoyed reading Quantz's comments on French music [*I always keep Quantz close at hand. At the moment I am interested in his comments on tempo, and his derogatory remarks about German music*].

I have been searching recent publications for any articles about *inégales* but regret that nothing new has come my way. However I did acquire a book entitled *Performance Practice, Music after 1600* edited by Howard Mayer Brown and Stanley Sadie. I've photocopied the "rhythm section" for you, and hope that you'll find some of it interesting and that it wasn't all reproduced from *Grove*. Because Howard Mayer Brown was American, you may not know a lot about him, also enclosed is an obituary, written for *The American Recorder*, June 1993, shortly after he died.

Thanks indeed. I read the Howard Mayer Brown extract with great interest. I had heard his name a number of times but had never read

'Does the end of the *notes inégales* convention coincide at all with the decline of improvisation?' you ask. The short answer is yes. Around 1750 the 'swinging' rhythm of the previous century became discredited (as far as I can guess) and fast notes were normally played equal. At the same time the art of free ornamentation certainly declined... As to the question of 'what is swing?' I agree with you that it starts with a regular pulse, usually in the bass. And nearly all music of the Bach period is built over a regularly-moving bass. Take the original version of the well-known Air on the G string (from the D major orchestral suite of Bach), where there is a monotonously plodding quaver rhythm in the bass throughout. And what can be more jazz-like than the steady flow of improvisatory melody that you get over a constantly recurring 'ground bass' such as in Dido's Lament from Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*?

I'm appending a short book list which you might find helpful. Please write again if you have any further ideas or questions on the subject. As you probably gather, I'm mad keen on this topic; in fact, I bore all my friends on the subject.

Miles' reply will follow in the next issue.

Another Bristol lecture

I shall be lecturing once again to the Continuing Education department of Bristol University. On January 25 1997 my subject will be 'A new look at Handel' and I shall be covering the use of *inégales* in English keyboard music of the time with special reference to Handel's suites. Then I shall explore the Brockes Passion and other choral works including the *Messiah*.

Incidentally, the organiser of these courses is John Pickard, whose orchestral piece, *The Flight of Icarus*, was played at the Proms this year.

NOTES INÉGALES, A EUROPEAN STYLE: I have recently completed this summary of my conclusions on *inégales*. It is a 37,000 word document with a 40,000 word appendix. This includes some material from THE CASE FOR INÉGALES IN J.S.BACH, which I produced in 1993, and which it now supercedes.

In the course of this study I examine previous *inégales* scholarship, identifying some faulty reasoning. I investigate the history of the allemande, comparing French allemandes with non-French ones, to see if there is any significant difference between them. I sift through

example, in his opera-ballet *Les Indes Galantes*, Rameau starts to write out the dotted rhythm, like so

but after two bars of this he goes over to even quavers

and retains this style of notation till the end of the piece... My research is largely a matter of looking for inconsistencies like this in which the composer 'gives himself away'. Believe me, they're not all as clear as this one!

You mention improvisation. Yes the affinity between music of the Bach period and jazz applies very much in this field too. If you study Bach's chorale preludes for organ, for instance, you will see that some of these (e.g. 'O Mensch beweine' and 'Wenn wir in höchsten Nöthen sein' from the *Orgelbüchlein*) are simply written down improvisations of chorale tunes, which were known to his congregations as the songs used as the basis for jazz improvisations are to modern audiences. Once again we learn from manuals of instruction that performers of this period were expected to be able to ornament a melody *extempore*. See, for example, Burney's comment (See Donington *Interpretation*, 1st edn p 113):

It was formerly more easy to compose than to play an *adagio*, which generally consisted of a few notes that were left to the taste and abilities of the performer; but as the composer seldom found his ideas fulfilled by the player, *adagios* are now made more *chantant* and the performer is less put to the torture of embellishments. (1776)

Bach was one of those who wrote out their ornamentation which is no doubt why his music has a more obvious affinity with jazz than the music of, say, Corelli or Handel, who tended to leave the ornamentation to the performer, especially in their slow movements..

anything of his. Strangely enough, I know the other editor of the Norton Books, Stanley Sadie and he has been very encouraging to me in my research. He was one of my D. Phil. examiners, so I'm very grateful to him for letting me through (though I can't imagine why he did!)

It seems to me that Brown gets things pretty right although, like a number of people who extend a cautious welcome to non-French *inégaux*, he only accepts them in movements where triplets are present. I was pleased to see him refer to Michael Collins' article on triplets (dated 1966 not 1906 as at note 62!). You may remember that I mentioned this article on p 6 of Unequal Notes 8. I have produced a theory in which I combine my *inégaux* work with Collins' theories on triplets. Unfortunately it is not likely to achieve acceptance for at least fifty years since even Collins himself doesn't accept it! Even so I feel that the full significance of Collins' triplet work has yet to emerge.

I'd only just digested this when 'your second package came through the letterbox! [an excerpt from Harold Schonberg: The Great Pianists] Yes, indeed, Schonberg does seem to refer to *inégaux* on p 23. Bach appears to have made significant advances in fingering. Schonberg speaks of 'perhaps a hundred bars' of Bach's fingerings that have survived. I think these may include the *Applicatio* (1720) from Wilhelm Friedemann's book and the *Praeludium and Fughetta in C*, BWV 870a, which eventually grew into the *Prelude & Fugue in C* of the 48, Book II. Both are printed, with all fingering, in Maria Boxall's Harpsichord Method (publ. Schott 1977). The *Applicatio* has quite a lot of old-fashioned '3 over 4' fingering while in the *Prelude and Fugue* (which are in any case more contrapuntal) the fingering is much more modern in style. I'm not sure of the date of the latter.

The excerpt from The American Recorder will require more concentrated reading The passages on tonguing certainly relate to conversations that I have with my recorder class. The variety of syllables for double-tonguing certainly stress the difference between 'good' and 'bad' notes but one has to be careful not to treat durational inequality and proportional inequality as the same thing.

Durational inequality

is performed

Proportional inequality

is performed

Howard Mayer Brown on alteration - further thoughts

The chapter that Amanda sent is a powerful attempt to summarize all the arguments that come under the heading of rhythmic alteration. Brown starts by dealing with over-dotting in the French overture, which I have gratefully side-stepped in my current research. (This is the topic which particularly set Neumann and Hefling at each other's throats). *A propos* of the third movement of JS Bach's third organ sonata Brown asks rhetorically (p. 134) 'whether the duplets should not be altered in anticipation of the triplets to come'. Though he comes to no conclusion about this I would question the principle of approaching *inégaes* only because triplets are present. If you believe that *notes inégales* were as common as I do, then the presence of triplets is irrelevant.

I am pleased to see (p.134 and note 62) that Mayer Brown gives importance to Michael Collins' article on triplets in JAMS 1966 (not 1906, as printed in the notes). Mayer Brown writes that 'these conclusions have had little influence on modern performance, but they deserve to be explored and tested'. He might be cheered to know that, in an obscure corner of Devon, England, they have been explored and tested with enthusiasm. The question of whether triplets and dotted figures should be synchronized, which I deal with in Newsletter 8, appears here too.

Mayer Brown considers that we should allow baroque composers 'the possibility of shifting in and out of dotted rhythm'. And yet I would deny that this is a normal feature of baroque music, for I suspect that in the kind of instances that he has in mind *inégaes* should be continuously in use. I feel that we already put far too many changes of rhythmic style into a music whose every movement had its own particular rhythmic character which continued unbroken from beginning to end. If we only think of using (non-French) *inégaes* when triplets are present, or when dotted rhythms have been hinted at at the beginning of a movement and then dropped (as in the fugue from Handel's third great suite), then we are only looking at a small part of the overall picture.

From the annals: the Miles Kington correspondence

I've decided to concentrate on this fascinating exchange of letters which took place when I was a research student at Oxford. At this time Miles was jazz critic of *The Times* and a regular contributor to *Punch*. He is now writes a regular comic column for *The Independent*.

John Byrt to Miles Kington

July 13th 1967

Thank you so much for your letter [of July 12th - see *Unequal Notes* 8] which I was delighted to receive... I had better come clean straight away - I am no connoisseur of jazz myself, indeed I am only the merest beginner in the field, but your article and all the work I am doing on *notes inégales* are convincing me that I must develop my tastes in that direction!

I then expounded the basis of notes inégales referring to Corrette etc.

Yes, you are right, you can get very little evidence of 'swinging' in the 17th-18th centuries from the musical notes themselves, any more than I imagine the written versions of modern jazz pieces actually reproduce their effect in performance. The only evidence comes when the composer falls into inconsistency, as, for example, when he uses dotted notation for part of a piece and then gets fed up and writes the notes evenly. For

mood in the 17th century. It is easy to forget that European music at this time was still in its adolescence. The phrase 'doctrine of the affections' sounds impressive, but for 17th century musicians this was really only the ABC. We have long completed our alphabet of moods and are starting to go round again, perhaps.

Kenneth Mobbs, Bristol

23rd May

Many thanks for the large package [my *Notes inégales, a European style*, 1996]. ... I do congratulate you for having got the material together in this way after the long gestation period! I am so glad you have put the Donington comments on your earlier work in the appendix. These comments really add up to an historical document in themselves.

Colin Booth, Wells

13th June

Your previous newsletter must have got a lot of us thinking along similar lines. I was dumbstruck to open the new one yesterday to find you and others reporting ideas which I had been pursuing myself, and using some of the same examples.

I don't think anyone can seriously argue against the existence of an almost universally accepted convention in the baroque: when writing in 2-time or 4-time, the crotchet (for example) was divided into long and short notes, which generally should be played to synchronize with any triplet rhythm which happens to be going on, but which were written as dotted quaver and semiquaver. Two obvious examples:

Handel: Recorder sonata no. 2 in a, 1st movement

JS Bach: Brandenburg concerto no. 5, last movement

There are countless others. It is very rare for the accompanying long-short group to be notated: [I've never seen this before]. In movements in compound time, e.g. 9/8, 12/8, the problem does not arise, because triplets are not technically involved.

So I too wondered whether this convention lingered on after the baroque. I was led to do so by playing Brahms' second rhapsody in g. In the middle section, the calm, mysterious mood is maintained more easily if the semiquavers are synchronized with the other hand's triplets:

I also thought of the Moonlight Sonata, which you have considered yourself. I am also indebted to my friend Paul Simmonds for an extract from Türk's *School of keyboard playing* [1789] (Türk was a contemporary of CPE Bach and was thinking largely of the clavichord and early piano).

July 8th

But imagine this done *inégaie*. How would you describe it then? I would say regal, pompous, stately, ostentatious and probably vulgar.

Pick-and-choose *inégaies* in Charpentier?

The other day I heard a broadcast of one of Charpentier's Te Deums (what is the plural? Vos Dea?) conducted by Ivor Bolton.

On August 8th I heard the prom of the St James's Baroque Players and Singers conducted by Ivor Bolton. I must say it was extremely enjoyable - the programme was very well-chosen and the orchestra played with considerable style. The concert did get me up on my high horse occasionally, however, and I don't just mean that there weren't enough *inégaies*! The trouble was that there was a mixture of styles: some genuinely 17th century, others much more of our own time. In the Te Deum, for instance, The introduction was so vulgarly, riotously *inégaie* that I thought 'here's a really idiomatic performance' and prepared to be entertained. But soon Bolton had upped the tempo so much that the *inégaies* went out of the window and the genuine 17th century feel with which the performance had begun was lost. Without a conductor this couldn't have happened anyhow.

But then we started singing about 'abhorring the Virgin's womb' and 'the sharpness of death' (in French-style Latin, of course). Then the style changed dramatically and everything became serious, intense, *religioso*. I just don't believe that such huge changes of style would have taken place. Responding to ideas in the text like that is surely a 19th- or even 20th-century notion. I would argue that such remnants of Victorian attitudes to religious music still interfere with our attempts to find an authentic baroque style. And if this can happen to us in the 1990s how much more must it have influenced Mendelssohn when he prepared to perform Bach's St Matthew Passion in 1829.

I am afraid that the evidence points to the likelihood that all parts of this Te Deum were performed in the same vulgar, West gallery style. If this is so, it could tell us a good deal about people's attitude to music in worship in those days and perhaps give us all a lesson in authenticity of

This is a very common allemande-like motif which begins with a *suspirans*. Villa-Lobos treats it *égale*, of course, so instead of making it urbane and relaxed, as I would claim allemandes should be, he makes it sound aggressive, which I admit this succession of semiquavers does look on paper.

A baroque fiddler turns to jazz

The other day I was listening to Woman's Hour [a favourite programme] and I heard a burst of Telemann rather stylishly played. It was **Maya Homburger** playing a few bars of one of Telemann's solo fantasias. She talked about how her career devoped from playing baroque violin to creating a rather avant-garde kind of jazz that she plays with **Barry Guy** (double bass). She made comparisons between baroque music and jazz which made me prick up my ears. She said that they both shared the same 'energy, emotion and rhetoric'. When she played a clip of the duo I must admit it wasn't the sort of thing I was expecting - not an *inéga*le in sight. But she sent me a CD of the Telemann and I've listened to it with pleasure, though it's not as jazzy as I had hoped.

Handel's Ode - reflective?

In his Sunday morning slot on 30th June Brian Kay described the opening of Handel's *Birthday Ode for Queen Anne* as 'reflective'. This is indeed the way it sounds in the deeply *égale* recording by James Bowman and Crispian Steele-Perkins. And yet 'reflective' is not a mood which I would claim was within the orbit of Handel's musicians, even less one which he would have adopted for a coronation anthem. It sounds much more like a *fin-de-siècle*, poetic, nostalgic mood such as the Victorians indulged in as they looked back on past ages with misty eyes.

So what is wrong? *Inégales*, of course! or rather the absence of them. Without *inéga*les this is unperformable in a genuinely authentic 18th century mood.

In the same area we have been discussing [see *Unequal Notes* 7, pp. 10-14 and *UN* 8, pp. 2-6] I wonder if you can extract from your copious memory an example or two of Bach incontrovertibly writing for independent rhythms in the right and left hands [i.e. not synchronizing triplets and dotted notes].

I think Bach normally means quaver triplets and dotted quaver semiquaver groups to synchronize as in 'Jesu, joy of man's desiring'. I also have a list of places where I think that semiquaver triplets should synchronize with unequal semiquavers as in the triplet version of the C major invention (see bars 13 and 14).

The best example I know of deliberate cross-rhythms in Bach is in the E major sonata for violin and harpsichord (BWV 1016) see last movement, bar 35 et seq. Here semiquaver inequality has been established at the beginning so it is unlikely that the quavers in the bass would suddenly become unequal.

Please look at Goldberg Variation 26. If a 19th century composer had written the right and left hands with clearly different time-signatures as Bach did, we would have no hesitation in saying that he meant the 3/4 time to be clearly and independently articulated. Do you think this is what Bach meant (as every performer this century has probably done)? Could it have simply been the most convenient notation for Bach to use, even if he expected the semiquavers to be synchronized with the groups of 6?

I'm sure the dotted rhythm in bar 2 is meant to be sharpened so that the C# in the RH coincides with the semiquaver in the LH. I would explain this by saying that inequality in the LH is at the semiquaver level and that means that all odd-numbered semiquavers would be lengthened and all even-numbered ones shortened viz.

People like Walter Emery¹ and Richard Jones² have recommended *inéga*les when triplets are being played alongside rhythms that are written even.

Geoff Bass, Wellington, Somerset

June 1996

Geoff and Catherine Bass have been very supportive ever since they took part in the 1994 *Inégale Day*. Catherine sang the affecting soprano solos in Cantata 106 at the 1995 *Inégale Day* and continues to help me in my research. Geoff has been hunting around for evidence of *inéga*les in current early music recordings for me. His latest batch included

Suite in C for harpsichord	Buxtehude
Mitzi Myerson	
Sonata in B flat	Buxtehude
Trio Sonnerie	
Capriccio in G major	Böhm
Gustav Leonhardt	
Ballet suite: Nobilis juvenus	Muffat
Academy of Ancient Music/Hogwood	

*I have listened to your tape a number of times, Geoffrey, and find a lot of interest in it, though I confirm that Mitzi Myerson doesn't use inéga*les as far as I can hear. But at the moment I am looking at modern styles of performing baroque music in general, so this is still very relevant. Mitzi Myerson's is an energetic performance but she gets into my bad books for two reasons: her tempi are too extreme, and she uses too much rubato! The Buxtehude sonata with Trio Sonnerie is also not an ideal performance: the tempi are too fast, and the style is 'virginal and pure'. My work on *inéga*les has led me away from reverence and nostalgia in early music: this is the way Fauré looked at old music but not the way early music actually was. The Muffat recording has the same characteristics. Here there are *inéga*les but once again we have an inappropriate style/mood: the music is too polite, with a permanent aura of pathos and nostalgia. Volume permanently mp. Clearly these qualities

¹ JS Bach: Complete organ works, vols 4 and 5 (Novello edition, 1953), edited by Walter Emery and John Dykes Bower. See preface to Sonatas 3 and 4.

² JS Bach: *Inventions and Sinfonias* edited by Richard Jones (Associated Board). He suggests notes *inéga*les for the triplet version of the C major invention.

are typically English. Yuk! Leonhardt I like because he plays with spunk - crisp articulation even though no *inéga*les.

Over the air

I listen to the radio all the time and often pick up something that has a bearing on my work. No, I'm not a couch potato! Fortunately you can move around when only your ears are engaged.

Authenticity in our time

On June 9th I heard a discussion on 'Spirit of the Age' in which the chief speaker was Joshua Rifkin. His theme was that 20th century composers often write music in which they unintentionally mis-copy a style. He referred to Stravinsky's *Dumbarton Oaks* which he claimed was based on the Adolph Busch interpretation of Bach's Brandenburg no. 3, with all inauthenticity that implies to a baroque musician of the 90s. He claimed that some of Weill and Hindemith is based on transcriptions of jazz that the composers had never actually heard performed. He referred to 'Pirate Jenny' with its rhythms which Rifkin claims comes from a German manual for conductors!

While in the same vein he returns to the 18th century to ask whether JS Bach had actually heard a French chaconne before writing the chaconne movement in Cantata 78 'Jesu, der du meine Seele'.

It has certainly occurred to me that 20th century composers who find themselves in a neo-baroque mood may well have written music based on an incorrect idea of how baroque music was played. How close to Couperin is Ravel's *Tombeau de Couperin*? Shouldn't the minuet and the rigaudon be *inéga*le? And if my Bach theories receive acceptance where does this place Hindemith's organ sonatas, which make a strong feature of what looks on paper like complicated cross-rhythms in Bach but which I should interpret very differently. It's not so much the alteration of the rhythms that might affect these neo-baroque works but the mood of the music. Hindemith's slow movements cultivate that mood of deep reverence which I associated with conventional performances of 'O Mensch bewein' and similar chorale preludes. Number 5 of Villa-Lobos' *Bachianas Brazilleras* has a section based on the motive

sq sq sq/ sq sq sq sq etc.