

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: REBORN IN THE 20TH CENTURY: THE CHACONNE AND PASSACAGLIA THROUGHOUT VIOLIN LITERATURE

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In the late 16th century, the chacona was the most energetic and wild type of baile, a popular Spanish dance. It was a lively, suggestive, and festive peasant dance, which, by the early 17th century, had developed into a distinct variation form involving a repeated bass line or chord progression.

This performance dissertation explores the symbolic significance of both the chaconne and the passacaglia in performance as well as in written form. The performance was a recital program which comprised the Bach Partita No. 2 for Solo Violin and the Shostakovich Violin Concerto No. 1, each featuring the chaconne and passacaglia respectively in their emotionally climactic movements. I performed the recital with pianist Hsiang-Ling Hsiao, on November 1, 2016, in the Gildenhorn Recital Hall.

In this document, I explore how the chaconne in violin repertoire has changed over time by analyzing the repeating units, stylistic changes, and historical backgrounds. The paper is organized into two parts. Part I surveys the Baroque period chaconnes. The earlier, celebratory chaconnes include works by Monteverdi, Bertali, and Corelli. The elegant and courtly chaconnes include works by Schmelzer and Lully; the chaconnes representing fate include works by Biber, Purcell, and Bach. In the Classical and Romantic periods, the chaconne was discontinued, but it became revitalized again in the 20th century. Part II discusses 20th-century chaconnes and the impetus for its rebirth after a long hiatus. It surveys works written during the war periods by

Ravel, Britten, and Shostakovich. These works seem to speak for the victims and express profound sorrow in ways words cannot. Lastly, the study explores the innovative works by two contemporary American composers, John Adams and John Corigliano, who infused the centuries-old form with modern musical language.

REBORN IN THE 20TH CENTURY: THE CHACONNE AND PASSACAGLIA
THROUGHOUT VIOLIN LITERATURE

by

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Dedication

To my mother, who always encouraged me.

Acknowledgment

I thank Dr. Stern, who advised me through my ups and downs during my studies at the University of Maryland.

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List of Abbreviations

Ex.	Example
M.	Measure
Mvt.	Movement

Reborn in the 20th Century: The Chaconne and Passacaglia Throughout Violin Literature

Chaconne and passacaglia are musical forms involving variations over a ground bass. Both forms emerged in the early 17th century in Spain. The terms passacaglia and chaconne appear to have been used interchangeably by composers of the Baroque era, although some theorists or composers drew a distinction between the two. Some composers even had them appear side by side or in the same collection. However, when one or the other appears by itself, the distinctive features may be less evident or altogether absent. Commonly, the chaconne has been understood as a composition containing a repeated harmonic progression, while the passacaglia has been understood as a composition containing a repeated bass line. However, the harmonic progression and the bass line are often closely associated, making it difficult to differentiate. Essentially, both forms are based on a repeating harmonic progression over a bass line. As a result, identification as one or the other seems to depend on the local tradition or individual preference of the composer.¹ What is clear is that both are built up of an unspecified number of brief units such as two, four, eight, or sixteen measures, each unit ending with a cadence, which then, in turn, leads to the next unit without a break. This provides a platform for continuous momentum or energy over a potentially lengthy period.

Although the two forms have somewhat merged, each has its own individual history. The chaconne seems to stem from the Spanish popular culture towards the end of the 16th century. In its first usage, chacona was the most energetic and wild type of the baile, a popular Spanish

¹Louis Horst, "Chaconne and Passacaglia," chap. 12 in *Pre-Classic Dance Forms: The Pavan, Minuet, Galliard, Allemande, and 10 Other Early Dance Forms* (Princeton, New Jersey: Dance Horizons, 1987), 105–107.

dance.² Deeply rooted in the unrestrained and celebratory aspects of peasant life, the chacona was lively and festive. Its nature was rather suggestive and was even said to have been invented by the devil. Gregorio Lambranzi, an Italian dancing master, provides a scenario of dancing the chacona in his book, *New School of Theatrical Dancing* (1716): “A Gypsy is dancing a Ciacona alone, with castanets in her hands.... A necromancer enters and touches her with his wand. She becomes transfixed while he dances alone; finally, they both dance together to the end.”³ The chaconne was to be performed fleetly and passionately, and its high spirits were expressed in the lengthy texts, usually beginning with some variant of ‘Vida, vida, vida bona! /Vida, vámonos á Chacona!’ meaning ‘Let’s live the good life; let’s go to Chacona!’. It is reported many could not resist the call to join the dance, regardless of their station in life.⁴

In the beginning, the chaconne generally used a variation technique but not necessarily the ground-bass technique. The musicians, who played the short repeating units, inevitably improvised and changed the melodies, therefore, created variations. However, the early chaconne always had a short melodic motive, which probably made the song catchy and easy for anyone to sing along. Often, guitars, tambourines, and castanets accompanied, and in fact, it has been proposed the term chacona derived from ‘chac,’ the sound of the castanet. However, there are other theories surrounding the etymology of chaconne. Johann Mattheson, an important German scholar of 18th-century German music, wrote in his *Der Vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739,

² Thomas Walker, “Ciaccona and Passacaglia: Remarks on Their Origin and Early History,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 21, no. 3 (1968): 300–20, accessed Aug 8, 2020. doi:10.2307/830537.

³ Louis Horst, “Chaconne and Passacaglia,” chap. 12 in *Pre-Classic Dance Forms: The Pavan, Minuet, Galliard, Allemande, and 10 Other Early Dance Forms* (Princeton, New Jersey: Dance Horizons, 1987), 101.

⁴ Walker, “Ciaccona and Passacaglia,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 21, no. 3 (1968): 300–20, accessed Aug 8, 2020. doi:10.2307/830537.

“The Perfect Chapelmaster”) the following: “The largest among these dance forms is indeed the Ciacona, or Chaconne, with its brother, or its sister, the Passagaglio, or Passacaille. I find that Chaconne is really a family name and that the admiral of the Spanish fleet in America, anno 1721, was named Mr. Chacon.”⁵ Nevertheless, the more likely theory is that it gained its name from an unidentified place near Tampico, Mexico, as referred to in some texts.⁶

The passacaglia originated in the early 17th century in Spain as brief improvisation between the strophes in songs comprised of a few rhythmic strummed cadences, similar to a vamp. The Spanish word, pasacalle, comes from pasar (to walk) and calle (street), likely derived from outdoor performances or from a practice of popular musicians taking a few steps during the interludes.⁷ Another interesting theory of the origin of passacaglia, given by Schubert, is that it comes from the Italian word passagallo, meaning cock-tread or cock-trot.⁸ Likely because the word passa means to pass and gallo means rooster. Similar to the early chaconnes, the early passacaglia seems to have had provocative or at least flirtatious qualities, if this description by Larrousse was any indicator. “... an air on the guitar which serenaders played in the streets as a means of seduction.”⁹

To summarize, the early passacaglia and chaconne had minor distinctions from one another. The passacaglia grew out of improvised ritornellos between the strophes of songs, and the chaconne began as a rowdy, festive dance-song featuring a short melodic motif. However, these contrasts are rather insignificant as these forms are virtually identical in that both present a

⁵ Horst, “Chaconne and Passacaglia,” in *Pre-Classic Dance Forms*, 101.

⁶ Thomas Walker, “Ciacona and Passacaglia: Remarks on Their Origin and Early History,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 21, no. 3 (1968): 300–20, accessed Aug 8, 2020. doi:10.2307/830537.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Horst, *Pre-Classic Dance Forms*, 107–108.

⁹ *Ibid.*

repeated motivic line or set of chords. Not only that, they share a similar purpose or connotations. Both were “passacalle” (readily available street tunes), far removed from the later chaconnes and passacaglias of Buxtehude and Bach that are characterized as severe and dignified.¹⁰ Therefore, for the purpose of this paper, chaconne will be used in reference to either form.

The early chaconnes are festive, fast-paced, folk dances which are a stark contrast from the chaconnes from Bach’s time and onward. The chaconne from Bach’s time onward takes on a deep symbolic significance, which can be observed in terms of three paradoxes. The first paradoxical aspect is that the chaconne retains the marks of its rowdy origins, yet it conveys deep spirituality. Arguably the most important chaconne in the violin repertoire, the Bach chaconne from the Solo Violin Partita No. 2 in particular, testifies to that. Seemingly completely different from the earlier chaconnes, Bach’s chaconne is solemn and has a transcendent quality, yet its form is the same as that of the rowdy chaconnes that were supposed to have been invented by the devil.

The second paradoxical aspect of chaconne is that it can combine the aspects of joy or ecstasy with the tragic in a single piece. As shown in Bach’s chaconne, the piece embraces the complex emotions of sad, happy, excitement, mourning, peace, and life. And what binds these various emotions together is its musical form, chaconne. It seems to reflect the conflicting emotions of the composer: grieving the loss of his wife and celebrating the eternal life she was to enter as Bach believed she would, being himself a deeply religious person.

¹⁰Paul Nettl, “The Baroque Period II—French Ballet, French Dances, Suites and Keyboard-Music,” chap. 8 in *The Story of Dance Music*, (New York, NY: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1947), 180.

The third paradoxical aspect of the chaconne is the contrast between the compositional restrictions and the seeming boundlessness of what it is able to express. One would think this repeating harmonic progression or the melody would limit the creativity, yet many examples of the form prove that to be wrong, as what the music can do seems to be boundless. It is stunning that even the most ornate and complex themes in the upper voices are sustained by a persistent and repeating harmonic progression. In many instances, the persistence of the bass line can seem to play the role of inexorable fate in the unfolding drama.

These forms allow great complexity despite a seemingly restricted framework. Even a simple harmonic progression or a bass line can grow into a mind-boggling piece. In this respect, the chaconne form seems to mirror a human life—at birth, we are bound by the limitations of our body and intellect, yet as we grow, our potential expands to nearly boundless possibility.

In this project, I will explore the emotional and symbolic significance of the chaconne over the course of centuries ranging from the Baroque to the contemporary eras. In particular, I will explore the three recurring paradoxes in the passacaglia and chaconne.

Part 1: Baroque Period

The chaconne began its long journey towards the end of the 16th century and became popular in the 17th century. In this chapter, we will explore chaconnes in the Baroque period in three categories: those that are celebratory, those that are elegant and courtly, and those that invoke a sense of fate.

Chapter 1: Celebratory Dance

Claudio Monteverdi: Zefiro torna

One of the earliest examples of a chaconne for violin is Claudio Monteverdi's madrigal *Zefiro torna* from the collection *Scherzi Musicali* which was published in 1632.¹¹ Madrigals were poetic and musical settings of various types and forms of secular verse. These were sometimes interchangeably sung or played by instruments. Sometimes, the instruments merely doubled the vocal parts; periodically, instruments replaced vocal parts; sometimes, the texture was reduced to a single vocal part accompanied by either an instrumental ensemble or a single instrument. It is likely that when doubling or replacing singers, the instruments did not limit themselves to playing the parts as written but added improvised divisions. In fact, it was common for the instruments to fill in when there were missing parts because originally, madrigals were primarily designed for performances by groups of talented amateurs with an active audience. In this instance, the violin could be played in the place of one of the voice lines as a violin can successfully imitate the voice.¹² Typically, the instrumentation was not specified. However,

¹¹ Denis Arnold, "Madrigals with basso continuo," Monteverdi, rev. Tim Carter (London: J.M. Dent, 1990), 86.

¹² Manfred F. Bukofzer, *Music in the Baroque Era* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1947), 15.

Monteverdi indicated in his fifth and sixth books of madrigals that the instrumental bass part was optional in the ensemble madrigals.

Monteverdi (1567–1643) was an important Italian composer who stood as a transitional figure between the Renaissance and Baroque, 1600 being the approximate starting date for the Baroque era. He excelled in nearly all genres, including madrigals and operas, as well as devotional music. Nonetheless, he is arguably most known for his nine books of madrigals consolidating Renaissance and Baroque styles. He is credited for developing two individual styles of composition—the heritage of Renaissance polyphony (*prima pratica*) and the monophony with the Baroque’s new *basso continuo* technique (*seconda pratica*).¹³

Zefiro torna follows *seconda pratica*. It features the *basso continuo* and exhibits characteristics such as the musical setting largely driven by the text and the liberal uses of dissonances with extreme freedom as an expressive tool. The delightful song, scored for two tenors and *basso continuo*, is the first known example of a vocal duet featuring a *ciaccona* accompaniment.¹⁴ It is based on a sonnet by Ottavio Rinuccini, a member of the *Camerata de’Bardi*, a Florentine noble and poet recognized as the first opera librettist. However, it is worth mentioning that this is not Monteverdi’s only madrigal titled as such, as he already had written *Zefiro torna e’l bel tempo rimena*, a five-voice acapella set on a sonnet by Petrarch. The one based on Petrarch’s sonnet was published in Monteverdi’s *Sixth Book of Madrigals* in 1614. For the purpose of this paper, we will be discussing the *Zefiro torna* based on Rinuccini’s poem.

¹³ Claude V Palisca, “The Baroque Ideal,” *Baroque music* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1991), 8–12.

¹⁴ Arnold, “Madrigals with *basso continuo*,” *Monteverdi*, rev. Tim Carter (London: J.M. Dent, 1990), 86.

When the Baroque style of music was first introduced, it inevitably received a number of harsh criticisms. Aside from its “newness,” the term baroque derived from the Portuguese term barroco, which had the derogatory meaning of a pearl in an irregular or bulbous shape.¹⁵ Therefore, the Baroque was interpreted as a degenerate form of the Renaissance, a “dark age” or “a corrupt dialect” of the Renaissance.¹⁶

In the Renaissance era, music had stricter uses of expressions or dissonances compared to the Baroque. In the Baroque era, music was increasingly used for religious, social, and celebration purposes. However, at the beginning of the Baroque era, the new style existed side by side with the old, rather than replacing it completely.¹⁷ According to Berardi and his teacher Scacchi, the core difference between the prima practica and seconda practica lay in the changed relations between music and word. In Renaissance music, “harmony is the master of the word”; in Baroque music, “the word is the master of harmony.”¹⁸ Both Renaissance and Baroque music acknowledged the representation of words in music, but they differed fundamentally in their application methods. The Renaissance favored the affections of restraint and noble simplicity, whereas the Baroque preferred the extreme affections, ranging from agonizing pain to overflowing happiness. Subsequently, the expression of intense affections resulted in a richer vocabulary than before, and Zefiro proves that.¹⁹ The song’s lyric concerns the west wind Zephyr

¹⁵ Palisca, “The Baroque Ideal,” *Baroque music*, 1–2.

¹⁶ Bukofzer, *Music in the Baroque Era*, 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

that brings Spring and its attendant opportunities for a little romance. The following are the lyrics and English translations.²⁰

Zefiro torna, e di soavi accenti
l'aer fa grato e'l piè discioglie a l'onde
e mormorando tra le verdi fronde
fa danzar al bel suon su'l prato i fiori.
Inghirlandato il crin Fillide e Clori
note temprando amor care e gioconde
e da monti e da valli ime e profonde
raddoppian l'armonia gli antri canori.
Sorge più vaga in Ciel l'aurora el Sole
sparge più luci d'or più puro argento
fregia di Teti il bel ceruleo manto.
Sol io per selve abbandonate e sole,
l'ardor di due begli occhi el mio tormento
come vuol mia ventura hor piango, hor canto.

Zephyr returns, and with sweet accents
enchants the air and frees the waves' feet,
and murmuring among the green leaves,
makes the flowers dance to his sweet sound.
With garlanded hair, Phyllis and Cloris sing
love-songs, dear and joyful to them,
and through the mountains and valleys,
high and low, the echoing caves redouble their music.
Dawn rises beautifully in the sky, and the sun
pours down the brightest gold, embellishing
the sky-blue mantle of Thetis with the purest silver.
Alone I wander through a lonely and deserted wood,
the ardor of two lovely eyes, and my torment,
as my fortune demands, now weep, now sing.

As the lyric suggests, the song is playful and teasing. To highlight the character of the piece, the performers are expected to use dissonances freely to express rather than performing in a “strict manner” as they did before 1600. The score itself is rather simple, leaving an ample amount of room for improvisation from the musicians. For example, for long sustained notes,

²⁰Claudio Monteverdi, *Ciaccona*, SV251, ed. Julius August Philipp Spitta, (Breitkopf and Härtel, 1927).

one may add “shakes” or trills to elaborate. For moderately long notes, one may add mordents, turns, or even add short scales or arpeggios between notes to bring more joviality. The string player may also experiment with breaking up long notes to shorter notes to generate even more rhythmic energy and bring buoyancy to the piece.

There are many instances of word-painting, a technique where the music reflects the meaning of the lyrics. From the beginning, when the two voices exchange “zefiro zefiro” in syncopated and dotted rhythms, a listener can almost hear the two lovebirds chasing one another around, calling Zephyr admirably. When the singer sings “Mormorando” (murmuring), the voice is set to a wavering, murmuring figure that runs on for an excessively long time. And on “e da monti” (and from the mountain), the pitches dramatically ascend, and on “e da valli” (and from the valley), the pitches descend. Lastly, towards the end, both singers sing pitifully “piago” (weep) on descending notes to convey the sadness.

Despite a few moments of grief, the song is cheerful overall. It exhibits ciaccona elements such as a recurring bass line and a triple meter (6/4). The recurring two-bar bass line, in the key of G, is deliberately syncopated, naturally generating jovial energy, as shown in Example 1.1.1a.

Ex. 1.1.1a: Monteverdi Zefiro torna Basso Continuo²¹

²¹ Claude Monteverdi, “Zefiro Torna,” *Scherzi musicali* (1932), ed. Pierre Guoin (Montréal: Les Éditions Outremontaises, 2006), 1.

With this simple yet spirited line underneath, the two upper voices show off elaborate variations. Many of the voice lines also start on weak beats, creating a sense of urgency. They are often imitative of each other, sometimes mimicking, sometimes mirroring exactly but a measure later. Although most of the song is in the ciaccona form, there are two interruptions. From the point where the singer sings, "Alone I wander through a lonely and deserted wood" to "now weep," the music changes to duple meter, and the mood becomes statelier and more melancholic. It then goes back to ciaccona followed by a brief duple meter again before "hor canto" (now we sing). From there, the song comes to a happy ending with a final brilliant, cadenza-like section.

Antonio Bertali: Chiacona

Unlike Monteverdi's *Zefiro torna*, where the violin is to substitute or complement the voice lines, Antonio Bertali's *Chiacona* was specifically written for violin. Bertali (1605–1669) was a successful Italian violinist and a composer who produced notable operas, oratorios, liturgical works, and chamber music. He was a court musician for Leopold I, the Habsburg emperor, where he was a Chapel-master and a composer for the emperor's music.²² Some of Bertali's sonatas included sections with contrasting instrumentation, compositional textures, meters, and tempos. His music had a significant influence on imperial musicians, especially Johann Heinrich Schmelzer. His reputation spread through all of Europe, reaching as far from Vienna as Sweden and Great Britain.²³ Unfortunately, half of his works are lost, but out of the remaining works, *Chiacona*, which he wrote for a solo violin and basso continuo, may be the most well-known.

It is unclear when *Chiacona* was written, but it is assumed it was in 1662 or earlier as the piece is in the collection called *Partiturbuch Ludwig* by Jacob Ludwig, published in 1662.²⁴ The piece is in C major and set in a triple meter of 3/2. The one-measure, repeating bass line underlies the chord progression of I-V-vi-IV-V (C-G-A-F-G). See Example 1.1.2a.

Example 1.1.2a²⁵

²² Charles E. Brewer, "The Dissemination and Dissolution of the Stylus Phantasticus," *The Instrumental Music of Schmelzer, Biber, Muffat and Their Contemporaries* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1988), 46–47.

²³ Charles E. Brewer, "Context for and Functions of Instrumental Music in Central Europe," *A Companion to Music at the Habsburg Courts in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Andrew H. Weaver (Boston: Brill, 2020), 327.

²⁴ Brewer, "Stylus Phantasticus," *The Instrumental Music of Schmelzer and Their Contemporaries*, 343–349.

²⁵ Antonio Bertali, *Chiacona*, ed. Charles Everett Brewer (Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, 1997).

The chord progression largely remains unchanged, though it modulates to various keys over the course of its 159 repetitions. Most modulations occur from measure fifty-six through sixty-five. Bertali seems to enjoy utilizing the circle of fifths with relative major and minor keys as a tool to modulate. It essentially goes from C major to F major to B \flat major to E \flat major and finally back to C major with their relative minor keys in between. Measure fifty-six is the first time the chaconne modulates to its home key's (C major) relative minor, which is A minor. It stays in A minor for five measures, then it modulates quickly in every bar. In measure sixty-one, it goes to F major (fifth below C), then in the following measure, it goes to D minor (the relative minor of F major), then to B \flat major (fifth below F), then to G minor (the relative minor of B \flat), then to E \flat major (fifth below B \flat). However, in the following measure, measure sixty-six, instead of modulating to C minor as expected, it goes back to the home key, C major.

It is worth noting before modulating to a different key, the bass line alters slightly. For example, in measure fifty-five, the bass line is C-G-A-D-E instead of the original C-G-A-F-G before it modulates from C major to A minor in measure fifty-six. The alteration is in the last two notes, in which the note D serves as iv/A and E serves as V/A, which then leads to i of A in the following measure. See Example 1.1.2b.

Example 1.1.2b²⁶

²⁶Bertali, Chiacona.

In the modulated keys, the bass line maintains the same chord progression of I-V-vi-IV-V or i-v-VI-iv-V depending on whether it is major or minor keys. See Examples 1.1.2c and 1.1.2d.

Example 1.1.2c: The bass line in A minor, exemplifying i-v-VI-iv-V (A-E-F-D-E).²⁷

Example 1.1.2d: The bass line in F major, exemplifying I-V-vi-IV-V (F-C-D-G-A).²⁸

There are other brief moments of modulation again in measures seventy-two and a hundred-six through a hundred-ten, in A minor, the relative minor of C major. But for most of the piece, it remains in C major. Despite the modulations, the chord progression stays the same, although listening to the brilliant and varied violin part, one may not notice. The violin part, which floats and complements the bass line beautifully, is rhythmically charged and virtuosic. A considerable number of accidentals are found in the violin part when the music modulates or as expressive notes during the composer's sporadic usage of chromatic lines. In measure sixty-one, C# and B \flat are added, in measure sixty-three, E \flat and F# are added, in measure sixty-four, A \flat and E \flat are added, and more E \flat notes are added in measure sixty-five through sixty-eight. And more A \flat notes in measures sixty-nine and seventy. This liberal usage of dissonances feels quirky, but it certainly makes the music more colorful. It seems to reconfirm the idea of barroco, not afraid to use dissonances which can be interpreted as "irregular shapes."

²⁷ Bertali, Chiacona.

²⁸ Ibid.

The piece starts quietly and peacefully with the bass line strumming alone, similar to the modern-day vamping. The violin comes in several measures later in a calm manner, but in dotted rhythm, foretelling the wild dance which will unfold. The violin part boasts florid passages, often in rising or in falling motions outlining a scale. It is also noteworthy that the composer specifically indicates the dynamics, including pianissimo, piano, and forte. Those seem to be used for theatrical purposes. For example, when the same sequence repeats, Bertali writes in piano or pianissimo if it is the third time the sequence repeats. This creates an echo-like effect, which is often followed by a sudden forte for a surprising effect.

Bertali, as an established violinist himself, must have known how to bring out the brilliance of the instrument using advanced techniques. On numerous occasions, one will find big register leaps that would require extensive string crossings as well as quick position changes. Other advanced violin techniques found in the piece include utilizing the third and fourth positions and double-stops. Stylistically, the piece seems to incorporate fast repeating notes and rapid runs, anticipating the characteristic features of the great Italian violin masters, including Corelli and Vivaldi. See Examples 1.1.2e and 1.1.2f.

Example 1.1.2e: The rapid runs in Bertali Chiaccona, similar to Vivaldi²⁹

²⁹Bertali, Chiaccona.

Example 1.1.2f: The rapid runs in Vivaldi Summer from Four Seasons³⁰

³⁰ Antonio Vivaldi, *L'Estate (Summer): Concerto for Violin, Strings, and Basso continuo*, ed. Simon Lauchbury (Mainz, Rhineland Palatinate: Ernst Eulenburg & GmbH, 1996)

Arcangelo Corelli: La Folia

The La Folia (1700) by Arcangelo Corelli (1653–1713) is an important work in the violin repertoire that utilizes chaconne form and displays its traditional characteristics. The piece is a collection of twenty-three fascinating variations, built upon a repeating eight-measure chordal scheme and written in 3/4 meter, which are the defining traits of chaconne. The piece's wide popularity and catchy tune seem to have contributed to it being one of the most transcribed pieces in all musical instruments' history. Composers such as Vivaldi, Bach, and even later composers like Liszt, Nielsen, and Rachmaninoff have written transcriptions based on La Folia. However, Corelli's Folia was not the original folia, though it may arguably be the most recognized one.

Corelli's Folia became a very famous piece, but initially, folia was, in fact, a type of folk dance that later came to be associated with a popular musical framework. The word "folia" meant madness, folly, and empty-headedness because the dance was so fast and boisterous that the dancers seemed preposterous. The Folia also seems to be closely related to another popular Baroque dance, the sarabande.³¹ The sarabande appears to share many similarities to both the chaconne and folia in terms of its realization and the development of its styles. It originated as a sung dance in Latin America and Spain during the 16th century.³² In the 17th century, it came to Italy, first introduced as a part of the Spanish five-course guitar repertoire. A course here refers to a unit of strings that are tuned in unison or an octave, which are placed close together to be

³¹ Nettl, "The Baroque Period (II)," *The Story of Dance Music*, 177.

³² Richard Hudson, "The Folia Dance and the Folia Formula in 17th Century Guitar Music," *Musica Disciplina* 25 (1971): 199–200, accessed November 20, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20532136>.

played as one string. The Spanish five-course guitar was a Spanish Baroque guitar with five courses, unlike the other European guitars with four courses.

Initially, the sarabande was based on harmonic schemes, although later, it developed distinct characteristics in rhythm and tempo. Early on, it was a casual and impromptu dance that perhaps did not shy away from profanity. In 1583, the zarabanda (the Spanish spelling of sarabande) was banned for obscenity, which of course, did not stop people from further utilizing it. Until around the early 17th century, it was the most popular type of Spanish baile. Much like chaconne, sarabande was executed in a triple meter and was accompanied by the guitar, castanets, and possibly other percussion instruments. each being a vulgar and energetic dance.³³

After arriving in Europe, the sarabande started developing the characteristics that modern listeners will recognize and will typically associate with it. The example below shows the rhythmic features which became the trademarks of the sarabade. They often have an emphasis on the second beat by having a longer, dotted note:

Example 1.1.3a: Sarabande rhythms

The sarabande later became a slower dance, especially in France and Germany. It carried serious affects and sometimes had qualities of the tender and gracious, which are quite opposed to its original nature. The sarabande could be either in major or minor keys, although the major one

³³ Nettl, “The Baroque Period (II),” *The Story of Dance Music*, 174–176.

seems to be faster paced (Italy). The minor sarabande is the one that suggests being closely related to the folia.³⁴

There were, in fact, two distinctive periods of the folia—the earlier and the later.³⁵ The two were quite distinct from one another yet shared some similarities. Both seemed to be influenced by a certain chordal scheme, and both utilized the repeating chordal progressions, a deciding factor in the chaconne. The earlier folia was a popular dance-song in Portugal and Spain in the late 16th century, which then was imported to Italy around 1600. It is speculated to have started as a folk dance. However, according to some sources, it was performed during popular festivals and courtly entertainments. According to the Spanish dictionary *Tesoro de la lengua castellana* from 1611, the dance was described as “a noisy performance with many paced figures, to the music of castanets and other instruments; some of the dancers carry masked figures on their backs, while others in girls’ garments with pointed sleeves, turn on their heels, play castanets, while the noise is so great as if they were all out of their minds.”³⁶

Not much was known about the early folia until recently. The essence of it does not appear to be a specific theme or a fixed sequence of chords but rather a compositional-improvisational process that could generate these chord sequences. The earliest existing composition adopting the folia progression as a repeated bass line or chordal scheme is *Fantasia que contrahaze la harpa* in Alonso Mudarra’s *Tres libros de música en cifras para vihuela* of 1546. However, the first piece with the name “folia” in the title is in Francisco de Salinas’s *De*

³⁴Horst, “Sarabande,” *Pre-Classic Dance forms*, 45.

³⁵Richard Hudson, “The Folia Melodies,” *Acta Musicologica* vol. 45, no. 1 (1973): 98, accessed on February 27, 2019, doi:10.2307/932224.

³⁶Paul Nettl, “The Baroque Period II—French Ballet, French Dances, Suites and Keyboard-Music,” chap. 8 in *The Story of Dance Music*, (New York, NY: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1947), 178.

musica libri septem of 1577.³⁷ As shown in Example 1.1.3b, the early folia's harmonic progression seems to be loosely based on i-V-i-VII-i-V-i-VII-i-V-i. The lower staff gives the simple type of guitar accompaniment with the stems indicating which direction the chords should be strummed. The upper staff is the melody, which provides a basic outline for the tune, but the notes can vary.³⁸

³⁷ Gerbino and Silbiger, "Folia," Grove Music Online (2001).

³⁸ Ibid.

Ex. 1.1.3b: The early folia³⁹

The later folia, the one we are concerned with in this project, is credited to Jean-Baptiste Lully, who composed the earliest known example of the new folia model in 1672.⁴⁰ This is the

³⁹Richard Hudson, "The Folia Melodies," *Acta Musicologica* vol. 45, no. 1 (1973): 104, accessed on February 27, 2019, doi:10.2307/932224.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 114.

model that plays an important role in the late history of folia as more than 150 composers used this model to compose upon for the next two hundred years or so, including Corelli.

Ex.1.1.3c: The late folia⁴¹

Lully's formalized folia had a huge influence on French musicians, and it became the definition of the folia. It is possible that artists like Francesco Corbetta, a virtuoso guitar player who immigrated to France in 1648, might have been behind the re-defining of the folia, as many of Corbetta's works showed many distinguishable characteristics of the form made famous by Lully. Similarities between the earlier and later forms include like-numbered bars and comparable chord progressions. Both were sixteen bars long, not including the ritornelli (the later folia was eight measures long but, because of the repeat, it would have been sixteen measures long), and the only significant difference between the two-chord progressions is the absence of the III chord in bars six and thirteen of the earlier form. In the early folia, the emphasis was given on V (because the pickup notes are in I and the first full measure is in V),

⁴¹ Gerbino and Silbiger, "Folia," Grove Music Online.

whereas in the later folia, the emphasis was given on I (first measure), and it relaxed on V (second measure). Also, unlike the early folia, the later folia had no ritornelli, was almost always in D minor (Example 1.1.3c has been transposed to G minor to easily compare to the early folia), and can be described as slow, elegant, dignified, and stately.

Based on Lully's newly structured folia, Corelli composed his arguably most popular work, *La Folia*, Sonata No. 12 for Violin and Continuo, Op. 5 in 1700. Corelli, an Italian violinist and a composer was a hugely important figure in instrumental music, influencing the form, style, and technique of violin repertoire for generations to come. His 48 trio sonatas, 12 sonatas for violin and continuo, and 12 concerti grossi had an immense impact on the future of instrumental music. He was also known for imposing strict standards of discipline for the period, such as bowing. In modern orchestras, unanimous bowing is something that is required, but it was not so in Corelli's time. It is said that when the composer directed string ensembles, he insisted on matching bowings for each part.⁴²

Corelli's personality and musical style seemed to be alike, although the anecdotal accounts of the composer do not always match. Contemporaries of Corelli might agree with Sir John Hawkins's description of him as "remarkable for the mildness of his temper and the modesty of his deportment," and such qualities were admired in a man of his position. His playing style, described as learned, and elegant may well have matched his personality. However, at least one witness contradicts this impression, saying "it was usual for his

⁴²Michael Talbot, "Arcangelo Corelli," Grove Music Online (2001), accessed on February 21, 2019, <https://doi-org.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.06478>.

countenance to be distorted, his eyes to become as red as fire, and his eyeballs to roll as if in agony.”⁴³

He is known to be one of many “firsts,” as he was the first composer to gain recognition solely from instrumental composition, the first who did so largely due to the activity of the music publisher, and the first to produce “pure” instrumental works which were appreciated and revisited long after the idiom became outmoded. Corelli’s influence was largely made through the distribution of his works in two ways—printed music and teaching.⁴⁴ His reputation coincided with the huge increase in music publications around 1700. The number of reprints of Corelli’s music was higher than anyone until Haydn. Corelli’s Op. 1 went through 39 known editions between 1681 and 1790, and his most popular collection, Op. 5, went through 42 editions by 1800.⁴⁵ His music and style also lived on through his pupils. He had several notable students, including Francesco Geminiani, Pietro Locatelli, Pietro Castrucci, and others.

Corelli’s Op. 5 is a collection of 12 violin sonatas. The official title of the work is *Sonate a violino e violone o cimbalo*, which calls for a violin to be accompanied by violone or a harpsichord. Nonetheless, the basso continuo was written in figured bass notation, which could be played by other instruments, including lute, theorbo, organ, or guitar. Nos. 1–6 are *sonata da chiesa* (church sonatas), which have abstract movements. They usually consist of four movements, in the following order: a slow introduction, a fugue, a slow movement, and a highly imitative, fast-paced finale. Nos. 7–12 are *sonata da camera* (chamber sonatas), which have specific sets of movements such as prelude, allemande, corrente, sarabande, gavotte, and gigue.

⁴³ Marc Pincherle, “The Life of Corelli,” *Corelli: His Life, His Work*, transl. Hubert E. M. Russell, (Paris: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1956), 46.

⁴⁴ Pincherle, “Corelli’s Influence,” *Corelli: His Life, His Work*, 140.

⁴⁵ Michael Talbot, “Arcangelo Corelli,” *Grove Music Online* (2001).

However, Corelli's Folia, No. 12, the last sonata in Op. 5, is a stand-alone work that has a single movement. It does not fit into the typical of either sonata da chiesa or sonata da camera.

Nevertheless, using the versatile chaconne form, Folia surely seems to encompass as many various ideas as other sonatas of Op. 5 with multiple movements. Regarding the length, this single-movement work has three hundred forty-eight measures, and it is just as lengthy as other sonatas of Op. 5 with their several movements combined.

Like Lully's folia, the one by Corelli uses the harmonic progression, i-V-i-VII-III-VII-i-V over eight measures. Because this pattern is played twice in each variation, the last two measures of the repetition (measures fifteen and sixteen) are often altered to achieve harmonic completion; thus, i-V (in measures seven and eight) is replaced by i-V-I (in measures fifteen and sixteen). Overall, the harmonic progression creates a pattern of strong bars alternating with weak bars over the course of the sixteen-bar cycle.

The piece is written in D minor, so naturally, the overall mood is more serious and melancholic than the chaconnes of Monteverdi or Bertali. The bass line consists of D-A-D-C-F-C-D-A, and its overall hierarchical shape is that it rises towards measure five (the bass note F) before it falls. This shape seems to mirror the tension between the notes as well because the tension rises towards measure five, which is the midpoint of the phrase, before falling again. This symmetrical shape of tension seems to contribute a sense of balance to the music.

Ex. 1.1.3d: Corelli “Folia” Theme⁴⁶

The piece is written in triple meter, although there are a few exceptions in the middle part of the piece. Despite having the constant chordal scheme over twenty-three variations, it is a full display of different characters. Structurally, there are three different places in the piece that specifically call for Adagio, and they are the theme, variation 8, and variation 14. Although Folia is a single movement, one may wonder if those slow marked variations were some sort of landmarks to group different variations together. Other sonata da cameras in Op. 5 (Nos. 7–11) start with slow preludios except for No. 7, which has Vivace preludio.

The theme, which is in slow tempo, proudly exhibits the majestic and elegant French style, fittingly, as it was Jean-Baptiste Lully who masterfully constructed folia. The theme also presents important aspects of the sarabande, which are the dotted rhythms and emphasis on beat two. The dotted rhythms not only help emphasize the second beat but seem to bring in more drama to the music. Added ornaments and other improvisations would be encouraged, which would further bring out the graceful yet dazzling effects. From variation 1, Corelli starts adding

⁴⁶ Arcangelo Corelli, “XII. Folia,” in *12 Violin Sonatas, Op. 5*, ed. Pierre Guin (Montréal: Les Éditions Outremontaises, 2006), 1, https://ks.imslp.net/files/imglnks/usimg/4/4c/IMSLP128007-WIMA.e61f-Corelli_Follia_Violino_bc.pdf.

more moving notes, slowly building up more drama and tempo. In variation 2, constant eighth-notes are added, and in variation 3, fiery exchanges occur between the violin and basso continuo playing rapid sixteenth-notes. Each voice seems to carry equal weight in these musical dialogues. Variation 6 and 7 seem to be the storm before the calm (the next Adagio variation). They present perpetual sixteenth-notes with constant string crossings, outlining the chord on every beat. Qualities like this certainly seem to speak of the wild and mad qualities of the early folia and chaconne.

Variation 8, Adagio, abruptly changes the tone with calm and flowy eighth-notes outlining the harmony. The presence of the melody is not strong in this one. Rather the focus seems to be harmonies and the general calm mood. However, the calm does not stay long as variation 9, Vivace, starts off with faster sixteenth-notes. In this case, the two parts almost seem like they are one voice. One of them starts off on beat one, and the other finishes off the same gesture on beats two and three. This variation ends on V (note A), finishing on a half cadence. It effectively lands on i in the next variation, which simultaneously starts as it ends the previous variation. Variation 10 is in 3/8, resulting in very fast-paced harmonic changes. It features many big string crossings, such as string crossing from G or D string to E string. The very fast harmonic changes, and the huge leaps seem to produce instability, which leads to the next few variations with unusual meters. Variations 11 through 13 are astonishingly in duple. The harmony here changes in every half bar instead of every bar. Variations 11 is in 4/4, and here the violin seems to imitate the sound of an organ with sustained double-stops. Variation 12 is still in 4/4, but marked Allegro, picking up the tempo once again. The last variation before the final Adagio, variation 13, is in 12/8, a compound meter executed in four, and it features capricious runs.

Variation 14, the third of the three Adagios, is aria-like and tranquil. The violin line is so minimal that it seems almost barren, and this balances the intensity of the variations around it. Tempo starts picking up again in variation 16 with off-beat eighth-notes, and variation 17 shows off abundant use of syncopations, which creates a sense of urgency. Variation 18 consists of more raucous sixteenth-notes of descending and ascending scales, and variation 19 presents highly imitative, canon-like dialogues between the two instruments. Variations 20 and 21 introduce the faster motion of triplets, adding excitement and leading to a climax. Variations 22 and 23, which are similar in nature to variation 6, show off rapid double-stop sixteenths. These variations unequivocally seem to be related to the madness, folly, and empty-headedness of the original folia, as well as the original chaconne, which originated as a wild, raucous baile.

One may think the repetition of the same chord progression over twenty-three variations would result in rather dull, and uneventful music. But as Corelli's Folia proved, the repetition and its persistency can, in fact, work the opposite way and create a sense of hypnotic focus and unexpected drama. In normal variation forms, where the theme is a longer, complete unit, the repetition is not frequent enough to induce this kind of reaction in people. But the relentless repetition in the chaconne can bring about a state of frenzy or an altered state of consciousness.

Corelli's Folia demonstrates that the chaconne can be extraordinarily versatile. It is a single-movement piece that is written using the seemingly unimaginative form of a repeated chordal scheme. However, it offers an abundance of characters and styles, from pompous and elegant to fiery and maddening, all held together by the common grounds. Due to its minor key, the overall mood of Corelli's work is more serious than the chaconnes by Monteverdi and Bertali. Nevertheless, Folia illustrates the early chaconne's symbolic significance as an exciting and boisterous dance.

Chapter 2: Elegant and Courtly Dance

In this chapter, we will be exploring the chaconnes that can be characterized as elegant and courtly. Examples will include the works by Johann Heinrich Schmelzer and Jean-Baptiste Lully.

Johann Heinrich Schmelzer: Ciaccona

Johann Heinrich Schmelzer (born between 1620 and 1623 and died in 1680) was an important Austrian composer of instrumental music who made substantial contributions to the development of violin technique and the development of sonata and suite forms in Austria and South Germany. It is not clear whom he studied with, though it is possible he may have had elementary training at the monastery in his hometown, Melk. An early document indicates that he began his career as a court musician, probably as a violinist, in 1635–6. In 1649, he was officially appointed as a violinist in the court orchestra, although it is not clear what his position or role was.⁴⁷

He also enjoyed a close relationship with the emperor, Leopold I. Schmelzer was the director of instrumental music at the emperor's coronation in Frankfurt and the emperor's assistant in his own compositions. In 1671, Schmelzer was appointed vice-Kapellmeister at the imperial court and started sharing the responsibilities of the Kapellmeister, G.F. Sances. In addition, in 1673, the emperor granted Schmelzer's petition to be raised to the nobility, and the title "von Ehrenrueff" was added to the composer's name.⁴⁸ In 1679, only after Sances's death,

⁴⁷ Charles E. Brewer, "Johann Heinrich Schmelzer and Music at the Viennese Court," *The Instrumental Music of Schmelzer, Biber, Muffat and Their Contemporaries*, 45–53.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Schmelzer officially became the Kapellmeister but soon died due to a wide-spread plague in 1680.

One may argue that his greatest achievements are his instrumental music, including ballet suites and chamber music. There was an ample need for ballet music during the reign of Leopold I, as dance music was a regular part of the royal entertainment. Dance suites or individual dances had evolved from the jousts and tournaments of earlier times, and most were featured in *drammi per musica* (Italian opera seria), serenatas, and even in a number of spoken dramas.⁴⁹ In these extravaganzas, the visual aspect was very important, and the performers were often in costumes dressed as nymphs, tritons, spirits, or even animals, and the staging included intricately decorated sets. The official ballet composers were Wolfgang Ebner, Schmelzer and his son Andreas Anton, and J.J. Hoffer. Their goal was to design the music to bring out the visual spectacles and to support the stylized ballet movements.⁵⁰

Schmelzer's dance suites were typically comprised of two to nine individual dances. Many began with an *intrada* and ended with a *retirada*. The middle movements consisted of a large number of various types in varied order. His independent dances included the galliard, *bouffée*, *sarabande*, *gigue*, *gavotte*, *allemande*, and *courante*, among others.⁵¹ Each type featured abundant melodic and rhythmic varieties, which largely stemmed from the composer's use of certain elements of Austrian folk music. These included brief yet distinctive motifs based on a

⁴⁹ Rudolf Schnitzler, "Schmelzer [Schmeltzer, Schmelzer von Ehrenruef], Johann Heinrich," *Grove Music Online* (2001), accessed on March 1, 2019, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000024921>.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

succession of octaves, 6^{ths}, 5^{ths}, and major 3^{rds}, which had been claimed by a musicologist Paul Nettl to be an imitation of the sounds of wind instruments in the alpine region folk music.⁵² The following examples, from the first movement of Schmelzer's Sonata No. 4, demonstrate the distinct Austrian folk motifs.

Ex. 1.2.1a: The succession of 5^{ths} (m. 11–12)⁵³

Ex. 1.2.1b: The succession of 5^{ths}, 3^{rds}, and 6^{ths} (m. 22–25)⁵⁴

Ex. 1.2.1c: The succession of octaves, 5^{ths}, and 6^{ths} (m. 40–43)⁵⁵

⁵²Nettl, *The Story of Dance Music*, 158, 210.

⁵³Johann Heinrich Schmelzer, "Sonata Quarta," *Sonatae unarum fidium* (1664).

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

Schmelzer seemed to have appreciated fuller textures in general, as is evident in his sonatas. For example, *Duodena selectarum sonatarum* features two melody instruments (two violins or violin and viola da gamba), and *continuo and Sacro-profanus concentus musicus* features up to eight parts with polychoral treatments. Although Schmelzer seemed to like sonatas with fuller instrumentation, he ultimately became well-known for sonatas with thinner instrumentation. A prime example is *Sonatae unarum fidium* (1664), the six sonatas for violin and continuo. *Sonatae unarum fidium* was the earliest published work in the German-speaking countries that was wholly dedicated to violin sonatas. Most of them were based on variation form and were built up of short sections of contrasting meters and tempos. In the solo sonatas, these sections were prolonged to showcase the dazzling technique of the violin, including fast scales and arpeggios in the full range of the violin.⁵⁶

The first movement of Sonata No. 4 in D Major from Schmelzer's *Sonatae unarum fidium* is titled *Ciaccona*. It is a prime example of the composer's variation writing, built upon a repeating bass line. The movement is set in a violin-friendly key, D major, and in 3/2 time, giving a dance-like motion. It opens peacefully with the ground bass sounded alone. The ground bass consists of chaconne's typical descending four notes, D-C#-B-A. Each note is sustained for a full measure of six beats, creating a sense of timelessness. It remains unchanged and is played 24 times over the course of the movement.

Ex. 1.2.1d: Schmelzer Sonata No. 4 bass line⁵⁷

⁵⁶Brewer, "Schmelzer and Music at the Viennese Court," *The Instrumental Music*, 79.

⁵⁷Schmelzer, "Sonata Quarta," *Sonatae unarum fidium* (Nuremberg: Michael Endter, 1664).

The violin part in this work does not seem to concentrate on splashy passages but rather gives an impression of elegance and serenity. The established elegant rhythm of sarabande is also observed in Ciaccona. The second beats are emphasized by having a long note (a whole note) following a big interval leap or by having a dotted note.

Ex. 1.2.1e: M. 22–26: Long notes on beat two following a big interval leap⁵⁸

Ex. 1.2.1f: M. 39–47: A dotted half note on beat two⁵⁹

The fastest notes in the piece are eighth notes, which can get relatively fast but perhaps not rapid enough to mesmerize the audience with technical brilliance. However, the range is quite impressive. It covers from low A3 (below middle C) on the G string to E6 on the E string in the fourth position.

The intervals within the violin part, as well as the intervals between the violin and the continuo, seem to be based on either the perfect intervals (the 4th, 5th, and the octaves) or the 3rd (or 6th, which is 3rd inverted). The usages of perfect intervals appear to add more purity and tranquility, while the 3^{rds} imply gracefulness. Towards the end of the movement, there is a segment that resembles certain nature sounds, such as bird calls, using perfect intervals.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Ex. 1.2.1g: Bird calls⁶⁰

Besides the Ciaconna in *Sonatae unarum fidium*, there is another chaconne piece by Schmelzer, titled *Ciaccona in A Major*. Not much is known about the piece except that it is a stand-alone work and that it has gained considerable popularity. Similar to the atmosphere of *Ciaccona* from *Sonatae unarum fidium*, this piece is peaceful and charming. It features similar intervallic uses within the violin part, such as the perfect intervals and the 3^{rds}, giving the impression of openness and poise. The music always begins with a pick-up note and leads into the downbeat, which is often dotted, therefore giving a strong emphasis on beat one as well as a proper and courtly feeling. The time signature of 3/4 and the dotted rhythm, in general, create gentle and lilting gestures throughout the work. The ground bass in this piece is a bit unusual because it is halved in two. Each halved bass line is repeated once every four bars, effectively playing 26 times. The piece is 104 measures, but it results in 208 measures in performance because of the repeats.

Ex. 1.2.1h: Schmelzer *Ciaccona in A Major* bass line⁶¹

⁶⁰ Schmelzer, "Sonata Quarta," *Sonatae unarum fidium* (1664).

⁶¹ Johann Heinrich Schmelzer, *Ciaccona in A major*.

All things considered, Schmelzer's chaconnes seem to be very different in character from the Italian chaconnes. His works appear to be more subtle in their expression and their approach to violinistic brilliance. They seem to take pride in refined elegance and simple beauty.

Jean Baptiste Lully: Chaconne from the Opera, Phaëton

Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687) was an exceptionally gifted and versatile artist who played a critical role in developing French Baroque ballets and operas. Born in Italy as Giovanni Battista Lulli, he left his native land for Paris in 1646. Lully’s ballet music was first introduced in Cavalli’s opera *Xerxes*. This was a period in history when the Italian composers were trying to win over the French public. Ballets were incorporated in Italian operas to appeal to the French taste. Lully, who showed exceptional talent in writing ballet music, was asked to write for the opera *Xerxes*, which was performed on the occasion of the wedding of the young Louis XIV. The French audience very much loved Lully’s work. Soon he was commissioned to write the ballet music for the opera *Ercole amante* (*Hercules in Love*). From then on, Lully was able to establish himself as an important composer for both operas and ballets in the French theatres and eventually became the King’s favorite composer.⁶²

Louis XIV (1638–1715), like his father Louis XIII (1601–1643), was a dance enthusiast. Dance was at the core of all court entertainments, including the court ballets and operas. Even much of the concert music bore dance titles.⁶³ Louis XIV was an excellent dancer, and in his younger years, he repeatedly appeared on stage performing the principal role. It was not unusual for the King himself to dance in the ballets in the role of one of the Gods or Kings, as this allowed the audience to be mesmerized and believe in his “divinity.”⁶⁴ In his dances, he was able to express the pride and magnificence of the court and of the King, “le Grand Roi” (“the Great

⁶²Paul Nettl, “The Baroque Period II: French Ballet, French Dances, Suites and Keyboard-Music” in *The Story of Dance Music*, 162.

⁶³Betty Bang Mather, “Introduction” in *Dance Rhythms of the French Baroque*, xii.

⁶⁴Nettl, *The Story of Dance Music*, 163.

King”) who was the center of it all.⁶⁵ The fact that he was also known as “the Sun King” will become relevant below.

Owing to the practice of Louis XIV, dance became associated with grandiosity and stature. In 1661, thirteen dancing masters of the “Communauté de Saint Julien des Menestriers” even decided to break free of the former group and formed a new group called “Académie de la Dance” to come up with the ideas to raise the dance to the dignity of special science and profession. They infused the dance with refined gestures and precisely dictated movements.⁶⁶ By this point, the French chaconne had been established and started showing many of the characteristics that would define the genre in the 17th and 18th centuries. Compared to the Austrian dances, which had more of a rustic feel with simpler structures, the French dances were sophisticated, sometimes emotionally charged, and graceful.⁶⁷ Some elements of the Italian tradition were still present in the French works, yet there were marked differences in both effect and design. The French chaconnes were stately, majestic, suggestive of pomp and circumstance, unlike the lighthearted and capricious Italian chaconnes.⁶⁸ Structurally, the French ones had less of an improvisatory quality and exhibited well-planned, orderly formats. The repetition of units, which often alternated between half and full cadences, and the recurrence of earlier units, became important structural techniques.⁶⁹

⁶⁵Nettl, 163.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid, 165

⁶⁸Ibid., 204.

⁶⁹Alexander Silbiger, “Passacaglia and Ciaccona: Genre Pairing and Ambiguity from Frescobaldi to Couperin,” *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music*, Vol.2/1 (1996), accessed on February 2, 2019, <https://sscm-jscm.org/v2/no1/silbiger.html#Section1>.

Tragédies lyriques were not tragic operas. They were based on classical mythologies such as the Italian romantic epics of Tasso and Ariosto. They were to celebrate the king's noble qualities and his prowess in war. In Lully's tragédies lyriques, chaconne was placed centrally, and it was presented in a lavishly extended form. Several included chains of well over 100 units, which sometimes incorporated vocal and instrumental segments. These chaconnes were characterized by marked contrast: some variations went into the relative minor mode, some omitted the bass instruments, and some featured only a solo wind instrument. The chaconne was used to celebrate a hero's triumph or/and to heighten the effects of the climax of the show. Particularly, in some of his late operas (such as *Roland*, 1685, and *Armide*, 1686), a single chaconne would span an entire scene, bringing it continuity.⁷⁰

Lully's five-act opera *Phaëton* (1683) features the elegant kind of chaconne at the end of Act 2. *Phaëton* was the tenth of his tragedies lyriques written with librettist Philippe Quinault and his first to receive its world premiere at the Palace of Versailles in 1683.⁷¹ As with the other court arts at the time of Louis XIV, this opera had a political motive. The plot is somewhat complicated, but in short, it was the tale of Phaëton, the son of Sun-god Apollo. Phaëton was not a god himself and not exactly likable, but he was extremely driven. To prove himself as the son of Apollo, Phaëton drives his father's chariot of the sun but, in the course of his ride, he loses control of the horses. This puts the earth in danger of fiery destruction, so Jupiter strikes Phaëton with a thunderbolt, causing his death but saving the earth. Essentially it is a tale, which can be

⁷⁰Silbiger, "Chaconne" Grove Music Online (2001)

⁷¹Nicholas Ivor Martin, *The Opera Manual* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2014), 289–290.

seen as a warning to anyone who tries to come close to the Sun's power; as Louis XIV was known as the "Sun King," this was a recognizable warning to his political opponents.⁷²

The chaconne from Phaëton is written for an opera orchestra comprised of a 5-part string section (two violin parts, viola, violoncello, and contrabass), harpsichord, two oboes, and a bassoon.

Ex. 1.2.2a: An excerpt from the chaconne from Phaëton⁷³

The work's rich harmonies, set in a joyous G major, are enhanced by the varied colors of the individual instruments and the great number of different ways they can be combined with different voicings. Alternating between different instrument groups helps to create a larger

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Jean Baptiste Lully, PHAËTON (1683), ed. Nicolas Sceaux (Urtext/Nénuvar, 2012), 178.

structure in the sequence of variations. In line with the established chaconne style, the piece is written in $\frac{3}{4}$ with rhythmic energy, in a slow to moderate tempo. It begins on beat two with stately quarter-notes and continues to emphasize beat two of each bar with a dotted quarter-note: (♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩). The repeated harmonic progression, I-V-IV-V-I (G major-D major-C major-D major-G major), spans four bars. While the harmonic progression does not substantively change, the bass line sometimes alters to accommodate passing tones or neighbor tones. In the opening, for example, the bass line is G-D-E/C-D-G but, in measure 17, the bass line is modified to G-F#-F-E-C-D-G.

Lully seems to have found special significance in the sound of strings alone. Sometimes, he omits the rest of the orchestra, including the bass line, so that the strings will be heard unaccompanied, or he will have only the first violin play against a very light accompanimental texture. Unlike Italian and Austrian chaconnes, the Phaëton chaconne seems to exemplify the French style: cultured, well-planned, and majestic.

Chapter 3: Representations of Fate

In this chapter, we will be examining chaconnes, whose mood and other characteristics tie them to the subjects of fate and mortality. These include Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber's Passacaglia from the Mystery Sonatas, Henry Purcell's aria When I am laid in earth from the opera Dido and Aeneas, and lastly, Johann Sebastian Bach's Chaconne from the violin partita in D minor.

Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber: Passacaglia for Violin Solo in G minor, C. 105

From the Mystery Sonatas

Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber (1644–1704) was a Bohemian-born Austrian composer and a virtuoso violinist who was most recognized for his violin music. However, he was equally prolific in other genres, whether they were instrumental or vocal, sacred or secular. In particular, his polychoral church music, including masses, requiems, and motets, has received much admiration.⁷⁴ His violin works are virtuosic, highly elaborate, and contrapuntal. Many contain brilliant passagework over ground basses as well as technically demanding double-stops. While other German violin composers of his time, including Johann Heinrich Schmelzer and Johann Jakob Walther, wrote works similar to Biber's style, only Biber utilized 6th and 7th positions of the violin fingerboard, which set him apart even from his peers. However, the most revolutionary aspect of Biber's works is probably the use of scordatura.⁷⁵

⁷⁴Brewer, "The Chapel of Prince-Bishop Carl Liechtenstein-Castelcorn," *The Instrumental Music of Schmelzer, Biber, Muffat and Their Contemporaries* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 197–203.

⁷⁵Robin Stowell, "The repertory and principal sources," *The Early Violin and Viola: A Practical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 13.

Scordatura is a technique that is applied to lutes, guitars, viols, and the violin family, requiring the instruments to be tuned differently from the standard tuning. Using this technique, the performer would play the same notes as written in the music, but due to the altered tuning, the concert pitch would be different from the score. It was most popular during the Baroque period, but it was used by some other later period composers such as Saint-Saëns (*Danse macabre*, Op. 40) and Mahler (*Symphony No. 4*, second movement), to name a few. This technique sometimes even expanded the register of the instrument (especially going below the low G, which is the lowest note on the violin otherwise) or allowed the unconventional double-stopping as well as string crossing. Scordatura often resulted in unique sonority and timbre, which appealed to many composers, and Biber was one of the first to utilize it. The *Mystery Sonatas* (also known as *Rosary* or *Copper Plate Engraving Sonatas*) and *Harmonia artificiosa-ariosa* are Biber's two major works employing the scordatura technique. 14 sonatas from the *Mystery Sonatas* employ different scordaturas, and so do the 6 suites from *Harmonia artificiosa-ariosa*.⁷⁶

The *Mystery Sonatas* are a rare example of purely sacred instrumental music that is reflective of the lives of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. The collection is comprised of 16 pieces: 15 short sonatas for violin and continuo and the final passacaglia, which is for solo violin. The set was likely composed during the 1670s and was dedicated to Biber's employer, the Archbishop of Salzburg. These works were not published, and Biber never specified the title of the collection, thus creating confusion as to what its formal title should be. However, in the one surviving manuscript, each sonata is identified by an engraving depicting one of the 15 Mysteries of the

⁷⁶Stowell, "The repertory and principal sources," *The Early Violin and Viola*, 13.

Rosary (apparently cut from the devotional book and carefully pasted into the score). Thus, the collection is usually referred to as the Mystery Sonatas, the Rosary Sonatas, and the Copper-Engraving Sonatas.⁷⁷

The rosary is a devotion to the Virgin Mary, and it often refers to the prayers and/or the string of beads to count the prayers. The Latin word “rosary” means a garland of roses, and fittingly, a rose is one of the flowers used to symbolize the Virgin Mary.⁷⁸ The rosary is thought to have begun many centuries ago as the lay brothers, known as *conversi*, started the practice of reciting 150 psalms on a regular basis, which eventually became more easily remembered prayers. The first chosen prayer was the ‘Our Father,’ which was said fifty or a hundred times, and chaplets of beads were used to keep count.⁷⁹

The Mysteries of the Rosary depicts the episodes in the life and death of Jesus from the Annunciation to the Assumption of the Virgin and the Coronation of the Virgin.⁸⁰ These prayers are traditionally grouped in three themes: the Joyful (or Joyous) Mysteries, the Sorrowful Mysteries, and the Glorious Mysteries, which is also the format Biber follows in his Mystery Sonatas. To partake in the Rosary Mysteries, the faithful would go around a cycle of paintings or sculptures placed at various points in church or other buildings. At each station, one would recite the prayers, listen to certain related biblical passages or messages, and presumably Biber’s musical commentary.

⁷⁷ Heinrich Biber, and Peter Holman, “Mystery Man. Peter Holman Celebrates the 350th Anniversary of the Birth of Heinrich Biber,” *The Musical Times* 135, no. 1817 (1994): 437–41, accessed Dec 1, 2020. doi:10.2307/1003253.

⁷⁸ Biber, and Holman, “Mystery Man,” *The Musical Times*, 437–41.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

As discussed previously, the Mystery Sonatas are grouped in three cycles of five. The first cycle (sonatas nos. 1–5) is based on the early life of Jesus, the second cycle (sonatas nos. 6–10) is based on the Passion of Christ, and lastly, the third cycle (sonatas nos. 11–15) is based on the final episodes from the Resurrection of Jesus to the Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin. Though Biber’s music is based on these events, they are not literally program music. There are a few instances depicting certain moments, such as the fluttering of the angel’s wings, the hammering of the nails, or the earthquake. However, the musical content does not always draw a clear picture as there are rather odd moments of dance music or virtuosic passages in the middle of a sorrowful part of the story.⁸¹ Therefore, it seems more likely the music was intended to help one’s meditations and reflections rather than to narrate the events explicitly.

However, his usage of scordatura appears to compliment the mood of each cycle, with the exception of the first sonata Annunciation and the final sonata Passacaglia, all the other sonatas in the middle feature 14 different scordaturas. Because the collection opens and closes with the ones that are tuned the standard way (G-D’-A’-E’’), it feels as if we are on a violin tuning journey that eventually ends at its starting point. The following example shows the various scordaturas uses in sonatas nos. 2–15.

Ex. 1.3.1a: The violin tunings of Mystery Sonatas Nos. 2–15

⁸¹ Biber, and Holman, “Mystery Man,” *The Musical Times*, 437–41.

In sonatas two through five, the tuning is, for the most part, raised from standard tuning, creating a bright and open sound appropriate to the Joyful Mysteries. In sonatas six through ten, the tunings serve to mute the sound or create tense dissonances appropriate to the Sorrowful Mysteries. Especially in No. 6 (Christ on the Mount of Olives), an exceptionally dissonant chord is formed in the tuning based on the dark C minor key with the G string playing Ab. In No. 7 (The Scourging at the Pillar) and in No. 8 (The Crown of Thorns), a remarkably small range of tuning is made so that the tuning is compressed into one single octave (No. 7: C'-F'-A'-C'' and No. 8: D'-F'-Bb'-D''). In the final cycle, The Glorious Mysteries, mostly sonorous tunings, are used. In No. 11 (The Resurrection), the middle strings (D string and A string) are even physically crossed over to enable the extraordinary G-G'-D'-D''. This results in an extremely strange yet fantastic sonority that is appropriate to its theme and, from a practical point of view, it allows the subject of the central movement, the Easter plainsong hymn Surrexit Christus hodie, to be played on the violin in octaves.

Ex. 1.3.1b: No. 11 scordatura indication and an excerpt of Surrexit Christus hodie played on the violin in octaves.⁸²

⁸² Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber, 1644–1704 “Sonata 11 in G major, The Resurrection,” *Mystery (Rosary) Sonatas* (1674), ed. Guido Adler (Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1959).

Another noteworthy detail from the last cycle is that one of the themes from No. 15 features sounds almost exactly like the theme from Paganini Caprice No. 24. We can speculate that Paganini admired Biber's sonatas and was inspired to write his Caprices.

Ex. 1.3.1c: No. 15 scordatura indication, and an excerpt that sounds like Paganini Caprice No. 24.⁸³

The Passacaglia for unaccompanied violin in G minor, which closes the sonatas, is widely considered as the greatest piece for solo violin before Bach's Chaconne.⁸⁴ Like the first sonata of the collection, the Annunciation, the Passacaglia requires the standard violin tuning. The piece is prefaced by a picture of a guardian angel and child, and the piece may have been written for a performance at a special 'Feast of the Guardian Angel' on October 2, as October was the month that was specially devoted to the Rosary Mysteries at Salzburg Cathedral.⁸⁵

⁸³ Ibid., "Aria from Sonata 15 in C major, Crowning of the Virgin Mary"

⁸⁴ Stowell, "The repertory and principal sources," *The Early Violin and Viola*, 13.

⁸⁵ Dann and Sehnal, "Biber, Heinrich Ignaz Franz von," *Grove Music Online* (2001).

Ex. 1.3.1d: The picture prefacing No. 16 and the repeating bass line⁸⁶

The Passacaglia is built upon a repeating bass line, which consists of four descending notes from the tonic to its dominant in minor mode (G-F-E-D). Unlike other passacaglias or chaconnes, the one by Biber gave no freedom to the bass line in terms of time, rhythm, or intervals. From the beginning to the end, the tetrachord is heard constantly without missing a beat. From the start, the four minor-scale notes set rather a serious mood. The music is set in a 6/8 time signature instead of the typical triple meter. While the time signature of 6/8 usually implies that the piece is to be felt in two beats per bar, the tempo of Biber's Passacaglia is slow enough that each half bar sounds like the three beats of a normal chaconne. The variations tend to come in pairs, where the second of the pair is like a "variation of a variation." The transition to the next pair is often anticipated by a change of texture or motive at the end of the previous pair. For example, at the end of measure 12, after a variation of arpeggios, a solid chord is introduced, anticipating the solid chords of the upcoming variation.

With all chaconnes and passacaglias, the composer faces the challenge of taking a form whose bass line renders it fundamentally static and finding ways to create larger structures with a developmental arc. Biber finds several ways to accomplish this. First, the Passacaglia is

⁸⁶Biber, "Passacaglia in G minor," *Mystery Sonatas*.

punctuated by Adagios, marking points of structural significance. The Adagios are marked in measures 49–52 and in 93–102 (this one does not clearly indicate when the Adagio section ends, but it appears to end in 102 because starting measure 102, the variation seems to consist of the fast recitative-like materials). In the first Adagio section, it seems that Biber added emphasis on every eighth-note with chords and trills to make the music sound even slower. The second Adagio appears in measure 92, in the middle of the bass line. Later in the same measure, the harmony progresses from V/V (A) to V (D) with a fermata. Introducing the V chord with the V/V has the effect of making the V chord feel like a goal in itself, rather than as a mere lead-in to the next tonic chord (G minor). It is as though the music is trying to avoid the inevitable return to the tonic. When the cycle does begin again on the tonic in measure 93, it creates a feeling of resignation or acceptance.

Ex. 1.3.1e: A half cadence (V/V-V) in m. 91–92, then back to G minor in m. 93⁸⁷

Major sections of the piece are delineated by placing the bass line in different registers. In the beginning, the notes are G'-F'-E□-D4', which are just above the "middle C." In measure 61, they are one octave higher (G''-F''-E□'-D''), and consequently, this raises the playing positions, and it brings out the brilliance of the violin playing. And finally, it goes back down to the original register in measure 91.

⁸⁷ Biber, "Passacaglia in G minor," *Mystery Sonatas*.

Biber chooses several places to present the bass line all alone as a way of delineating the boundaries between big sections. The five places where only the bass line is played (not including the very beginning) are: measures 19–20 after the 9th variation, measures 39–40 after the 18th variation, measures 73–76 after the 36th variation, measures 101–102 after the 50th variation and measures 129–130 after the 64th variation. They approximately divide the piece into five sections of similar length: the first two sections are about 20 bars each, and the last three are about 30 bars each. Each occurrence of the solo bass line thus serves as both a point of return to simplicity and a transitioning bridge to musical innovation. For example, the music following the first solo bass line (measures 19–20) has a freer flow than the music before it owing to the steady sixteenth-notes and the wide melodic contour. The music following the second solo bass line (measures 39–40) then takes on a more improvisatory character and becomes notably virtuosic: the player must negotiate sixty-fourth notes and sixteenth-note double-stops. The music following the third solo bass line (measures 73–75) introduces *stretto*, where one statement of the bass line begins before a previous one has been completed.

Ex. 1.3.1f: M. 73–75 (an octave higher bass line played alone), m. 76 (*stretto*), m. 77 and onward in B \square ⁸⁸

This overlapping of the bass line actually provides the opportunity for the piece to modulate into Bb major, which is a significant mood change. The music following the fourth solo bass line constitutes a kind of recapitulation (measures 101–102), flashing back to the fantasy from earlier

⁸⁸ Biber, “Passacaglia in G minor,” *Mystery Sonatas*.

in the piece. For example, measures 103–122 are very similar to measures 41–44 and 64–72. In measures 113 through 122, Biber uses the dominant pedal of D (similar to the end of Bach's Chaconne measures 229–240 with the dominant pedal of A) to create a dramatic build-up towards the end, which leads to the closing in 124. In the closing, the beautiful, heart-wrenching soprano voice makes its final statement before the last solo ground bass in measures 129–130, and the piece ends peacefully in a Picardy third.

Henry Purcell: Dido and Aeneas

Dido and Aeneas, one of the finest English baroque operas, is a musical tragedy. It was written around 1688 by Henry Purcell (1658–1695) with the collaboration of librettist Nahum Tate. Purcell, who is widely regarded as the greatest English opera composer, ironically wrote only one true opera, Dido and Aeneas.⁸⁹ However, he produced a substantial number of stage works starting in the 1680s, including four semi-operas and incidental music for some 50 plays, including Dryden’s *Amphitryon* and Congreve’s *The Double-Dealer*.⁹⁰

He was trained as a chorister at the Chapel Royal and was appointed composer-in-ordinary to the king in 1677, organist of Westminster Abbey in 1679, and of the Chapel Royal in 1682, which is the position he held for his lifetime. He served four monarchs, including Charles II (1677–85), James II (1685–8), and William and Mary (1689–95). His duties were to provide anthems, welcome songs, birthday odes, and coronation music for the royals. Though most of his music was associated with the court, this did not limit him to choral and court music. He boasted a wide range of instrumental and vocal music genres, from the outmoded viol fantasia to the modern Italianate sonata, from devotional cantatas to lewd catches.⁹¹

Dido and Aeneas is based on Virgil’s *Aeneid*’s episode, telling a tragic love story of Dido, the widowed queen of Carthage, and Trojan hero, Aeneas. When Aeneas’ ship gets

⁸⁹Peter Holman, “Theatre Music,” *Henry Purcell* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 188–227.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*

⁹¹Curtis Price, “Henry Purcell,” *Grove Music Online* (2002), accessed on October 18, 2018, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-5000002310>.

destroyed on his way to Rome, Italy, Dido extends hospitality to him. The two fall in love, but Dido fears that he will eventually leave her to go to Rome. Despite her worries, the two get married. Unfortunately, the witches plan on destroying Carthage and the queen. First, they separate the couple, then disguise one of them as the queen's most trusted elf, Mercury. The fake Mercury then persuades Aeneas to leave for Italy, and the Trojan warrior listens. After Dido finds out her lover has sailed away, she is ready to meet her fate. Before Dido kills herself, she sings her tearful last aria, *When I am Laiden*, accompanied by the repeated tetrachord of the *chaconne*, which, here, symbolizes her grief.⁹²

From around the 1640s, the descending tetrachord began to be associated almost exclusively with the lament.⁹³ A prime example utilizing the descending tetrachord is *Lamento della ninfa* (1638) from Claudio Monteverdi's eighth madrigal book. The song is about a nymph (one female voice) lamenting her betrayal by her lover, watched by three shepherds (three male voices) who comment on her situation.

Ex. 1.3.2a: The bass line from Monteverdi's *Lamento della ninfa*⁹⁴

A lament is a vocal piece based on mournful text, originating in ancient Greek antiquity. It was a soliloquy, set apart as an emotional climax after a resolution of the action.⁹⁵ Some other features

⁹²Nicholas Ivor Martin, *The Opera Manual* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2014), 88–89.

⁹³Ellen Rosand, "The Descending Tetrachord: An Emblem of Lament," *The Musical Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (1979): 346–59, accessed Aug 5, 2020, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/741489>.

⁹⁴Claudio Monteverdi (1638), "Amor, Lamento della ninfa" (Universal Edition, 1967), 2.

⁹⁵Rosand, "The Descending Tetrachord," *The Musical Quarterly* 65, 346–59.

of lament included structural dissonances such as ambiguity of phrase length, uses of suspension, syncopation, and phrase overlapping.

It is not certain when *Dido and Aeneas* was written, but it is believed to have been written no later than 1688.⁹⁶ The only known performance of *Dido* during Purcell's lifetime was in 1689, at a girls' boarding school in Chelsea run by the dancer and choreographer Josias Priest.⁹⁷ Although having school plays and masques were not unusual during this period, it is suspected the piece was to be performed in court as evidence suggests.⁹⁸ *Dido* was modeled after John Blow's *Venus and Adonis*, which was initially performed for Charles II in 1682 or 1683, and again at Priest's school in April 1684. Both *Dido* and *Venus* are three-act tragedies with elaborated recitatives in place of spoken dialogue and are fully in English. However, *Dido* is distinguished by its exhibiting a unique English style that incorporates elements of both French and Italian operas.⁹⁹

This was not Purcell's first attempt at an opera, as it came after many years of failures during his formative years in the 1670s.¹⁰⁰ While retaining the English declamatory traditions, its French influence is found in the introduction of the work—the French overture consisting of two parts. The first part is slow and in heavily dotted rhythms, while the second part is fast and fugal. Other examples of French style in *Dido* include repeating the units of arietta-chorus-dance, as

⁹⁶Ellen T Harris, "Premiere: Place, Date, and Meaning," in *Henry Purcell's Dido and Aeneas*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 30–52.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*

⁹⁸*Ibid.*

⁹⁹Curtis Price, "Purcell, Henry," *Grove Music Online* (2002).

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*

well as dance-like accentuated rhythms. The Italian attributes are found in the florid recitatives, formal arias, and arias over a ground bass.

In *Dido*, there are three arias with a ground bass. One of them is *Fear No Danger to Enssue*, a duet of Belinda and a second woman with the chorus, and the mood of this song is joyous and lighthearted.

Ex. 1.3.2b: *Fear No Danger to Enssue*¹⁰¹

The other two are the first and the last arias in the opera, both sung by Dido: *Ah! Belinda, I am Prest with Torment* and *When I am Laid in Earth*. Both arias are in triple meter (*I am Prest* in 3/4 and *When I am Laid* in 3/2), following the tradition of the chaconne form.

¹⁰¹ Henry Purcell, “No. 6: *Fear No Danger to Enssue*,” *Dido and Aeneas* (1689; Musical Antiquarian Society Publications, 1848), 10.

Interestingly, Dido speaks of her fate in both arias. In I am Prest, she confides in her close friend Belinda, as she is filled with sorrow. She sings Peace and I are strangers grown, revealing that she fears what her future may hold, and she somehow foresees the inevitable tragedy. Her lament, When I am Laid, comes at the opera's climax after her recitative Thy hand, Belinda. In the recitative, she realizes that she can no longer avoid death as she sings Darkness shades me and Death invades me: Death is now a welcome guest. It is notable that Purcell uses word-painting on the words "darkness" and "death" in the form of chromaticism, which is symbolic of death. At its most heightened emotional distress, Dido tearfully sings When I am Laid. She knows she cannot overcome this sadness and will need to face her fate: death.

This famous lament, widely known as Dido's Lament, begins with a somber ground bass all alone. The repeating ground bass is five bars long and is based on a chromatic descending tetrachord, symbolizing death. The tempo is marked Larghetto, making the aria slow and serious. The rhythm of the ground bass mostly consists of a pick-up half note leading to a whole note downbeat, which compels the music to repeatedly lead and lean. The first and second whole notes, F# and E□ are both appoggiaturas, non-chordal tones appearing on strong beats. This subsequently accents the dissonances and enhances the distraught, yearning effects.

¹⁰² Ibid., "No. 2: I am Prest," 6.

Ex. 1.3.2d: When I am Laid ground bass¹⁰³

The ground bass is simple, yet it somehow stirs up complex, composite emotions. The beautiful yet heart-wrenching melody of the aria is ten bars long and is primarily comprised of chromaticism, which adds more gravity to the song. The last measure of the ground bass is played alone after it has been played twice and before it leads to another repetition again. Consequently, the audience hears the ground bass twice while the melody is heard once. This seems to provide a longer sense of line and add to the emotional drama as listeners hear the ground bass return to its start once in the middle of a phrase and again at the end of the phrase. Not only does this seem to speak of the pending fate, which the ground bass represents, but it provides structural dissonances, as the phrase overlaps and the tonics works for both the beginning and the end of the ground bass. This structural dissonance also appears to require extraordinary breath control from the singer, perhaps pushing the singer's physiological limits as well as psychological state.

¹⁰³ Purcell, "No. 34: When I am Laid," *Dido and Aeneas*, 54.

After the melody is sung twice, the “remember me” motif appears. This is Dido’s final, devastating cry before she meets her doom. The motif, with its characteristic pick-up and dotted rhythm, is heard three times.

Ex. 1.3.2e: “Remember me” motif¹⁰⁴

Purcell inserts a quick crescendo, sforzando, and decrescendo in the orchestra part in between occurrences of the vocal motif, heightening the emotional intensity. The very last time the motif is sung, it includes a register leap from the pick-up to a higher note. This seems to portray the last emotional state of the grief-stricken queen, who is about to be overcome by death.

While the chromatic version of the descending chaconne bass line partly accounts for the mood of melancholy and yearning in this music, that mood is intensified by the use of appoggiaturas, which literally imitate sighing. From the second measure of the melody, on the word “laid,” the leaning dissonance gives an additional ache, as it does again later on the word “trouble.” These dissonances contribute to the emotional urgency of the aria. A postlude to the aria, played by strings alone, has one of these appoggiaturas at the beginning of each measure.

It is noteworthy that out of the three arias with the ground bass, the duet Fear No Danger To Ensur is cheerful, and the arias by Dido, I am Prest, and When I am Laid are solemn in nature. That demonstrates the chaconne’s versatile ability to complement such seemingly distant moods. What they do have in common as far as the context of the music goes is that all three arias tell of the future. Fear No Danger affirms the well-wishes about the future as shown in its

¹⁰⁴Purcell, “No. 34: When I am Laid,” Dido and Aeneas, 54.

text: "Fear no danger to ensue, The Hero loves as well as you, Ever gentle, ever smiling, And the cares of life beguiling, Cupid strew your path with flowers, Gather'd from Elysian bowers."

Contrastingly, I am Prest, Dido's first aria, is filled with worries about the future, and When I am Laid, Dido's final aria is about accepting her fate: death. Despite having divergent temperaments, all three arias share the form of the chaconne, and all speak about Dido's destiny.

Johann Sebastian Bach: Ciaconna from Partita No. 2 in D minor (S. 1004) for Solo Violin

There is hardly any need to re-emphasize the significance of Johann Sebastian Bach's chaconne in the violin literature. His chaconne (or Ciaconna as the composer spelled it with the Italian title) is widely accepted not only as the single most important solo violin work but as the grandest, most monumental, and most discussed chaconne ever written. In fact, over time, his chaconne has been re-arranged for nearly every instrument: from the organ to the marimba or a saxophone quartet or even a full orchestra.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) is probably the most prolific composer of the Baroque era who left an impressively large volume of works encompassing the genres of the previous generations as well as his own. As a virtuoso organist, he understood counterpoint and contrapuntal writing better than anyone. His music was extraordinary in original inventiveness, technical mastery, and intellectual discipline. His output embraced practically every musical form of his time except opera. The magnificent polychoral works combined with orchestra such as the St. Matthew Passion and the Mass in B minor remain unrivaled in the history of the genre.

For most of his life, he was devoted to composing and performing organ music for the Lutheran church. However, in 1717, when he accepted his new position of conductor and director of chamber music for Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen, his compositions took a different direction.¹⁰⁵ The prince was a Calvinist, and at his Reformed Church, only the Calvinist psalms were sung, so there was no need for new sacred music. Also, there was no organ at the prince's private chapel; thus, no more organ music was needed or performed. However, the

¹⁰⁵ Paul Affelder, "Introduction: Six Sonatas and Partitas" in *Bach/Galamian Sonatas and Partitas* (New York: International Music Company).

prince, an accomplished player on the violin, viola da gamba, and harpsichord, employed a small orchestra of about sixteen players.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, for the next five and a half years of Bach's tenure in Cöthen, the composer exclusively wrote secular instrumental music. Some of the masterpieces he produced during this period include the "Six Concertos with Several Instruments" or what we know as the Brandenburg concerti (dedicated in 1721 to the Elector of Brandenburg, a region of Prussia), the first volume of the Well-Tempered Clavier (whose title page is dated 1722), the two-part and three-part Inventions (whose title page is dated 1723, but were composed somewhat earlier), six sonatas for violin and harpsichord (1717–23), three sonatas for viola da gamba and harpsichord (ca. 1720), the six suites for unaccompanied cello (ca. 1720), and the three sonatas and three partitas for unaccompanied violin (ca. 1720).¹⁰⁷

Bach, who believed a composer should have "good inventions [musical ideas]...[and] develop them well" as explained on the title page to the Inventions, thoroughly explored the possibilities of each genre in the collections mentioned above.¹⁰⁸ Not only did he write good music, but he provided good materials for performers to further their art. And for aspiring composers, he provided many ways a musical idea can be manifested.¹⁰⁹ For example, in the Brandenburg concerti, each concerto features different orchestral and solo instruments and different manners of combining the solo(s) and the tutti. In the six solo-violin pieces, which are

¹⁰⁶ Affelder, "Introduction" in *Bach/Galamian Sonatas and Partitas*.

¹⁰⁷ Joel Lester, "The History of Bach's Solo-Violin Works," chapter 1 in *Bach's Works for Solo Violin*, (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 7.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

divided into two sets of three pieces (three sonatas and three partitas, or partias as Bach spelled it in his autograph score), distinct styles and tonalities are explored.¹¹⁰

The three sonatas (the first, third, and fifth of the collection) are in the form of *sonata da chiesa* (church sonata), which has a four-movement pattern of slow-fast-slow-fast with the highly contrapuntal and complex fugue as the second movement. The three partitas (the second, fourth, and sixth of the collection) are in the form of *sonata da camera* (chamber sonata), which loosely follows the pattern of the Baroque dance suite.¹¹¹ Yet, no two partitas or sonatas are quite alike. Regarding the partitas, Partita No. 1 in B minor features a fairly standard sequence of dances: *allemanda*, *corrente*, *sarabande*, and *borea* (the Italian spelling of *bourrée*). In a typical *sonata da camera*, the ending movement would be *Gigue*, not a *Bourrée*. Furthermore, Bach adds a “double” movement to each movement as a form of a variation movement.¹¹² In particular, the “double” movement following the *Corrente* is a highly virtuosic movement filled with rapid passages. In Partita No. 2 in D minor, the dance sequence is similar to that of the first partita, and it seems to have the standard order, yet it ends with the monumental *Ciaccona*. Partita No. 3 in E major consists of a rather different sequence of movements: *Preludio* (instead of the more commonly used opening movement of *Allemande*), *Loure*, *Gavotte en Rondeaux* (a *gavotte* with rondo-like returns of the refrain), two *Menuets*, *Bourrée*, and *Gigue* (the last two with the French spellings instead of the Italian spellings Bach used in the other partitas).

At first glance, the sonatas may seem similar because they share the same ordering of the movements, yet each is distinct from the others. Considering the first movements, both the first

¹¹⁰Lester, “The History of Bach’s Solo-Violin Works,” chapter 1 in *Bach’s Works for Solo Violin*, 7.

¹¹¹Affelder, “Introduction” in *Bach/Galamian Sonatas and Partitas*.

¹¹²Lester, “The History of Bach’s Solo-Violin Works,” chapter 1 in *Bach’s Works for Solo Violin*, 8.

sonata and the second sonata start by introducing pillar-like chords, and from there, the melismatic line flourishes between the chords in an improvisatory way.¹¹³ Contrastingly, the third sonata opens with the constant, hypnotic motion of notes, which build up to be the chords that slowly reveal the harmonic schemes. In all three sonatas, the second movements are three-voiced fugues. In the fugues of the first two sonatas, the subjects are short and rhythmic, and in the third sonata, the subject is much longer and in a legato style, similar to a choral tune.¹¹⁴ The slow third movements vary as well. The first sonata presents a through-composed lilting siciliana, the second sonata presents a regularly pulsating andante with two repeated sections, and the third sonata presents a serene through-composed largo.¹¹⁵

As glorious as they were, unfortunately, a substantial amount of Bach's works were lost after his death. In fact, the manuscript of his solo-violin works was found in 1814 in St. Petersburg at a butter shop in a stack of papers that were to be used for wrappings.¹¹⁶ Only three complete manuscripts survived: Bach's autograph score, a copy by his second wife (Anna Magdalena), and a copy by two unknown copyists.¹¹⁷ Since 1917, Bach's only surviving autograph score (the score in Bach's handwriting) has been in the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek (German State Library) in Berlin.¹¹⁸ The title of his solo-violin works reads, "Sei Solo. á Violino senza Basso accompagnato. Libro Primo. Da Joh. Seb. Bach. ao 1720," meaning, "Six Solos. for

¹¹³Lester, "The History of Bach's Solo-Violin Works," chapter 1 in *Bach's Works for Solo Violin*, 8.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Affelder, "Introduction" in *Bach/Galamian Sonatas and Partitas*.

¹¹⁷Lester, "The History of Bach's Solo-Violin Works," chapter 1 in *Bach's Works for Solo Violin*, 19.

¹¹⁸Ibid, 11.

Violin without Bass accompaniment. First Book. by Joh. Seb. Bach. in the year 1720.”¹¹⁹ In the early 18th century, the continuo part was considered necessary, so Bach felt it was crucial to call attention to its absence, not just on the title page but even in the title to each of the three sonatas and three partitas during the course of the manuscript.¹²⁰ It is surely remarkable he was able to remove the need for an added “accompanying” bass by creating the complete textures for a lone four-stringed soprano-register instrument.

Nevertheless, several arrangements with the bass accompaniments of entire sonatas or individual movements exist on manuscripts from the early or mid-eighteenth century. It is not clear if Bach himself wrote the arrangements except for the Preludio from the third partita, which appears as the organ obbligato solo as the sinfonia to Cantatas no. 120a and 29.¹²¹ The arrangements of the complete works are of the second sonata and the third partita, and the arrangements of select movements are of the fugue from the first sonata and the first movement of the third sonata.¹²²

Even in the nineteenth century, it appears many were not comfortable with the idea of performing such contrapuntal music without the accompaniment. Romantic-era composers, including Mendelssohn and Schumann, continued the tradition of writing accompaniments (for piano) for Bach’s solo-violin pieces. According to German musicologist Andreas Moser even the great violinist Ferdinand David, who published his edition of Bach’s solo-violin works in 1843, “would not be moved by any fee whatsoever to step onto a stage with only a naked violin. Only

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Lester, “The History of Bach’s Solo-Violin Works,” chapter 1 in *Bach’s Works for Solo Violin*, 11.

¹²¹ Ibid, 23.

¹²² Ibid.

when Mendelssohn surprised him one day with the accompaniment he had prepared for the Chaconne did David declare himself ready for a performance in that company.”¹²³ Mendelssohn published his accompaniment to the Chaconne in London and Hamburg in 1847, and Schumann published his accompaniment for the complete collection in 1853.¹²⁴ However, in 1844, the 13-year-old Joachim, who became a legendary violinist, found the courage to perform Bach’s solo-violin works in their original form in public for the first time.¹²⁵ Joachim was the first violinist to make Bach’s solo works an important part of his concert repertoire and even recorded two movements from the cycle.¹²⁶ He always played them as solo violin works throughout his career and subsequently established the practice of performing these works without accompaniment.

Before getting into an analysis of Bach’s chaconne, it is vital to make a note about the length of the piece. A performance of the piece is usually just under 15 minutes, which is probably the longest or one of the longest in the Baroque period for a single movement.¹²⁷ In the late Baroque, there are other immense works such as Handel’s *Messiah* and Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* that are hours long, but for a single movement, nothing comes close to the Chaconne. That being said, Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* may be an exception, but that is a composite work of various individual units.¹²⁸ So why is the length of any importance? Because the length is one way an artist can express a certain magnitude or depth; it speaks to a composer’s ability to hold the listeners’ attention over an extended arc. To convey something that is eternally profound or

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵Lester, “The History of Bach’s Solo-Violin Works,” chapter 1 in *Bach’s Works for Solo Violin*, 23.

¹²⁶Ibid, 21.

¹²⁷Ibid, 151.

¹²⁸Ibid, 152.

magnificent that even words cannot express, one would choose a platform that speaks of that. Part of the grandeur comes from the impressive size, height, or length of the work.

In the nineteenth century, lengthy pieces were not rare by any means. For example, composers like Mahler or Wagner produced many works that were easily over an hour. But they used musical forms such as sonata form, which allowed the pieces to easily expand through the recurrences of themes, the long development, and tonal contrasts.¹²⁹ However, these forms were not developed yet in Bach's time. To write a piece of this extent like the Chaconne, Bach mainly used continuous elaborations or variations on a thoroughbass without any large-scale tonal contrasts. It is remarkable Bach was able to compose a piece of this scale with two limiting elements—the fact it was written for a solo violin, which was widely considered as a soprano register melodic instrument, and the fact that no tonal contrasts were used, which usually is required for a work of this scale. Not only did he work through these limitations, but he used them to great effect.

Bach, being a great musical architect, knew well what to do about the large-scale design as well as the small-scale design. The piece is in three parts: the first in the minor mode (33 statements), the second in the major mode (19 statements), and the third returning to the minor mode (12 statements).¹³⁰ Each section is shorter than the previous one and therefore builds to climaxes faster than the previous one. On a small scale, one can see how Bach intensifies the music even within the statement. The bass line or statement loosely follows the standard descending tetrachord of chaconnes, D-C-B-A, but almost always alters it or elaborates it in

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Lester, "The History of Bach's Solo-Violin Works," chapter 1 in *Bach's Works for Solo Violin*, 155.

some way. Each note is played for a measure, making a four-measure statement. The bass line presented at the very opening of the work is shown in the example below: D-C#-(D)-B □(G)-A-C#-D (this would be based on the harmonic minor scale with the augmented second between the B □ and C# instead of the natural minor scale).

Ex. 1.3.3a: The chaconne statement in the beginning¹³¹

In this example, the harmonies change in half or quarter notes to start with, but towards the end of the statement (starting the bass note of G in the fourth measure), the harmonic changes accelerate to steady quarter notes. The rhythm of the melody speeds up as well, as it changes from dotted-quarter followed by eighth followed by quarter (measures 1–3) to steady quarters (beginning of measure 4) to steady sixteenths. Many of the variations occur in pairs, in which the second is quite similar to the first but intensified. The following example will show the first eight measures (two statements) from the beginning of the piece.

Ex. 1.3.3b: Variations in pairs, the second one intensified¹³²

¹³¹ J.S. Bach, “Partita No. 2,” 6 Sonatas and Partitas, S. 1001–1006 (1720), ed. Günter Haußwald (Kassel: Bärenreiter Verlag, 1958), 33.

¹³² Bach, “Partita No. 2,” 6 Sonatas and Partitas, 33.

The ground bass of D-C-B \square -A is applied or implied throughout the piece, but many times, it is often hidden in the music because Bach often used thematic transformations such as transposition, inversion, retrograde and retrograde inversion or chord substitution. Example 1.3.3c will demonstrate the altered ground basses with a chromatic descending line (D-C \sharp -C \square -B \square -B \square -A) and their various thematic transformations. The ground bass of chromatic descendent creates the same sense of mourning as it does in Dido and Aeneas. In measures 37–40, the bass line jumps back and forth from the bass to the soprano, and in measures 41–44, it temporarily shifts to the soprano. In measures 33–35, the ground basses are altered by using a larger interval between the first two notes, which is typically a perfect fourth. Similarly, in measures 37–38, the ground basses are altered but with time diminution (compressed in time).

Ex. 1.3.3c: The chromatic ground basses

The ground bass appears in a natural minor scale of D-C-B \square -A later in the piece. Example 1.3.3d (in measures 93–104) is an excerpt from the arpeggiated section that demonstrates the ground bass in its original form in a natural minor scale.

Ex. 1.3.3d: Ground basses in a natural minor scale

It is certainly intriguing to analyze Bach's masterwork and learn how the statement was incorporated in the music, yet one may find it even more fascinating to find varying interpretations about Bach's chaconne. The year 1720—the year Bach wrote his solo-violin pieces including the Chaconne—was also the year his first wife, Maria Barbara Bach, had passed. Historians speculate that Bach composed it after returning from a trip and found out about his wife's sudden death. Maria was Bach's wife of 12 years who had borne seven children. Most of their children did not survive infancy, but the two who did were the future musicians Wilhelm Friedemann Bach and Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach.¹³³ One can only imagine what kind of emotional turmoil Bach had experienced learning of his wife's unexpected death. He must have felt devastation and grief. Could that be the reason why Bach's Chaconne sounds eternally beautiful and yet sorrowful?

In modern times, some striking arguments were made about Bach's solo-violin pieces—especially about the Chaconne. A retired German violin teacher and musicologist, Professor Helga Thoene, suggests in her analytical study *Tanz oder Tombeau?* that the Chaconne was intended as a memorial to Maria Barbara.¹³⁴ Her study is in the German language; however, one

¹³³Lester, "The History of Bach's Solo-Violin Works," chapter 1 in *Bach's Works for Solo Violin*, 7.

¹³⁴Helga Thoene, *Johann Sebastian Bach, Ciaccona: Tanz oder Tombeau?* (Oschersleben: Ziethen, 2003).

can find a condensed, English version in the CD liner notes of *Morimur* by the Hilliard Ensemble and Christopher Poppen. Thoene argues Bach has engraved his late wife's name in cryptography at the opening of the piece and that the work is a "tombeau" for her. Furthermore, Thoene points out there are eleven chorales hidden in the Chaconne that meditate on death—six chorales in the first part, five chorales in the second part, and three chorales in the third part, which are the repeating chorales from the first part.

According to Thoene, the main chorale is Bach's own Cantata No. 4, "Christ Lag in Todesbanden" ("Christ Lay in the Bonds of Death").¹³⁵ The chorale is derived from Martin Luther's hymn of the same name, written in 1524 for the first day of Easter celebration. Cantata No. 4 has eight movements: a brief instrumental *sinfonia* followed by settings of the seven verses of the hymn. The second verse is sung by the sopranos and the altos. Verse 3 is a tenor aria. Verse 4 is the whole chorus with continuo. Verse 5 is a bass aria. Verse 6 is a duet: soprano and tenor. Verse 7 is an actual chorale setting with orchestra reinforcement. The parts of the chorale used in the chaconne contain the following texts which clearly reflect on Christ's death and his victory: verse 1— Christ lag in Todesbanden (Christ lay in death's bonds), Halleluja! (Hallelujah!), verse 2— Den Tod niemand zwingen kunnt (No one could defeat death), Halleluja! (Hallelujah!).

In the Baroque era, it was not an uncommon practice to use numbers and equations for riddles or hidden messages. For example, Bach and many other published works or sets, often divided by three for the significance of trinity. In particular, the number 14 appears to have had a personal significance to Bach because that is the sum of the letters of the name Bach in

¹³⁵ Ibid.

gematria.¹³⁶ Gematria is an ancient method of putting letters into numbers, derived from a Greek system of alphanumeric code that was later adopted into Jewish culture. The smaller numeric pattern of the gematria which Bach used had a counting of 24 instead of 26. This was due to the letters I and J sharing the same number of 9, and the letters U and V sharing the same number of 20. This particular pattern was the same alphabetical order that has been found in the tract called “DE CABBALA PARAGRAMMATICA,” which is listed in Johannes Henningius’s “Cabbalalogia,” Leipzig, 1683.¹³⁷ Interestingly, Bach’s autograph of the solo-violin works is 41 pages long, which is the same number as the sum of his name using gematria: J. S. Bach (9+18+14) = 41.¹³⁸ This increases historians’ suspicion of Bach encrypting his name in his solo-violin works. Example 1.3.3e is the table of alphanumeric code Bach used.

Ex. 1.3.3e: Alphanumeric code¹³⁹

In 2001, intrigued by Ms. Thoene’s findings, violinist Christoph Poppen with the collaboration of the Hilliard ensemble, produced an album that reveals the “hidden chorales” and presents the Chaconne juxtaposed with the audible chorales. In a booklet essay, Ms. Thoene discusses the encryption and suggests the chorale quotations can be made audible by sustaining

¹³⁶ Thoene, Johann Sebastian Bach, Ciaccona: Tanz oder Tombeau?

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Thoene, Johann Sebastian Bach, Ciaccona: Tanz oder Tombeau?, 30.

the pitches, unlike the way it is written in the violin score, where the encryptions are inaudible due to losing their original rhythms.

Bach's Chaconne is an enigma, likely to spark much ongoing discussion. One can only guess what his true intentions were. Did he write it as a eulogy for Maria Barbara? To glorify God? Was it simply in fulfillment of professional duty? Or was it all of the above? We may never know. But what we do know is that Bach's Chaconne sends a profound and powerful message, and it is our job to figure out what that is for us individually.

Chapter 4—Decline of Chaconne; Classical and Romantic Period

In Part I, we explored the chaconne from its birth in the late 16th century to Bach's profound and serious chaconne in the early 18th century. What started out as a raucous and provocative Spanish baile on the street evolved to become one of the most respected, studied,

and performed pieces in the history of music. The chaconne's striking transformation can be seen throughout the 17th century. In Italy, the chaconne developed to be playful, volatile, capricious, spontaneous, and improvisatory. The three Italian pieces that are discussed in chapter 1, chaconnes by Monteverdi, Bertali, and Corelli, all share this set of characteristics of Italian chaconnes. They are lighthearted and celebratory. Monteverdi's chaconne (1632) was not specifically written for violin, as it was to replace a voice line in a madrigal. However, Bertali's *Ciaccona* (1662) was specifically written for the violin, indicating the establishment of instrumental music as its own genre. Lastly, Corelli's *La Folia* (1700), the last sonata from his Op. 5 of 12 violin sonatas, embodies the chaconne, using *folia*'s distinct tune and harmonies as its vehicle for the variations. *Folia* showcases a wide range of moods and techniques, from serene to fiery, and from long sustained notes to rapid double-stop sixteenth-notes. Most importantly, it seems to testify to the origins of both *folia* and chaconne by exhibiting a boisterous and exciting nature.

Outside of Italy, chaconnes were frequently elegant and courtly. Chapter 2 discussed Schmelzer's *Ciaccona* (1664) and the chaconne from Lully's opera, *Phaëton* (1683). Schmelzer, an important composer in the development of the violin repertoire in the Baroque era, was a court musician. His music was to be played in the court and thus had the characteristics of refinement and elegance. Schmelzer was known for incorporating Austrian folk music elements such as leaps of octaves, fifths, and sixths, which are demonstrated in his *Ciaccona*. Lully, who was born Italian but developed his style and spent his career in France, was a versatile dancer and a musician. He worked closely with Louis XIV, who was an excellent dancer himself. The king's appearances in the ballets, representing himself as one of the Gods or Kings, allowed the audience to be mesmerized by his royal divinity. Lully's opera, *Phaëton*, is an example of

Tragédies lyriques, an opera based on classical mythologies. Tragédies were to celebrate kings' noble qualities and prowess in war. Unlike Italian and Austrian chaconnes, the Phaëton chaconne exemplifies the French cultured, well-planned, and majestic style.

Lastly, we have discussed the chaconnes that seem to depict fate or a subject related to mortality. Biber's passacaglia (1676), Purcell's Dido's Lament from Dido and Aeneas (1688), and Bach's chaconne exemplify that theme. All three are slow, solemn, and serious. They are constructed on descending ground basses. Biber, who is perhaps best known for the use of scordatura in The Mystery Sonatas, chooses the passacaglia form for the collection's final sonata. The Mystery Sonatas, a collection of sacred instrumental music, represents the life and death of Jesus and the Virgin Mary and is identified by an engraving depicting the 15 Mysteries of the Rosary. Biber's passacaglia, probably the most significant solo violin work before Bach's chaconne, is prefaced by a picture of a guardian angel and child. The unchanging and persistent ground bass may represent fate, which shares its constant and unchanging nature. Purcell's Dido's Lament shares comparable aspects, including a descending ground bass. In this case, the chromatic descending line is associated with grief and death. It heightens the emotional climax of the opera when Dido meets her fate and dies.

Bach's chaconne (1720) is the most significant chaconne of all time. The towering stature of this piece cemented the perception of chaconne as a serious and somber form, which endures to this day. Bach's chaconne was significant in its ability to hold the listener's attention over its great length, as it was the single longest movement in all Baroque repertoire. Further, few string pieces come close to the masterful counterpoint of Bach's chaconne. At the time, it was unthinkable that a lone violin could sound or be played in this way. There have been multiple speculations on the background of the piece and Bach's purpose for writing it. One theory is that

Bach wrote the piece in memory of his late wife, Maria Barbara Bach. Others speculate that Bach used gematria, an ancient method of putting letters into numbers, to literally sign his name on the piece. Bach's autograph of the solo-violin works is 41 pages, which is the same number as the sum of his name using gematria: J. S. Bach (9+18+14) = 41. There are still many unknowns about Bach's chaconne. But this masterwork seems suggestive of something bigger than life. It speaks to all of us in the most profound way.

In the Classical and Romantic periods, the chaconne and passacaglia largely fell out of fashion. Only a few new chaconnes were written this period. The notable examples include Beethoven's 32 Variations in C minor, Liszt's prelude on 'Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen' (based on a chromatically descending ground bass from Bach's Cantata no.12), and the last movement from Brahms Symphony No. 4. These pieces were not labeled as chaconne or passacaglia by their composers, which further demonstrates the decline in the importance of these styles in that period. Compared to the Baroque period, harmonies of the Classical and Romantic period moved more slowly while larger structural formats emerged, including the sonata-allegro form, that present tonal contrasts between sections. This change in the preference of the musical forms likely contributed to the sharp decline in chaconne and passacaglia.

Part 2: 20th Century to Present

Numerous bloody wars shook the 20th century, including World War I (1914–1918), the Russian Civil War (1917–1922), the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), and World War II (1939–1945). Many countries' forms of government changed rapidly around the beginning of the 20th

century. Monarchies passed, and there were rises of new, various ideologies of governance. In the 20th century, there were two new ascendant ideological powers—Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia.¹⁴⁰ Nazi's ideology was an extreme German nationalism, and Soviet's was supposedly federative. However, many viewed Soviet's ideology as Marxist-Leninism, a communist ideology.

The Russian Civil War, a multi-party civil war, was a confrontation primarily between the Red Army, the Soviet supporters, and the White Army, monarchists, and non-communists.¹⁴¹ The Red Army won the conflict convincingly, which effectively gave power to Stalin and the Soviets. In Spain, the Spanish Civil War erupted when the traditionalists rose against the government soon after the 1936 election, which the left won. It was a battle between the left-leaning Republicans and Nationalists, which the Nationalists won.¹⁴² The Republicans included unions, peasant organizations, and Basque and Catalan autonomists. The Nationalists included the Roman Catholic Church, the military establishment, and the fascist Falange organization.

Innumerable people were deeply affected, even those who did not fight in the wars. Civilians lost their loved ones, lost their homes, or became refugees in foreign countries. Between the numerous wars in the 20th century, the death toll is estimated to be over 100 million. Even amid the chaos and despair, artists found ways to communicate hope, beauty, or genuine sadness through their music.

¹⁴⁰Richard C. Hall, "Conclusion," *Consumed by War: European Conflict in the 20th Century* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 244.

¹⁴¹Ibid., "Peace Settlement," 80–83.

¹⁴²Ibid., "Germany Resurgent," 107–109.

Chapter 5: Idealized Beauty During Difficult Times

After a long hiatus of 150 years, the chaconne and passacaglia started to reemerge in the 20th century. Chaconnes came back with their rightful titles as independent works or movements of larger pieces. After Bach set the standard with his great chaconne from the Solo Violin Partita No. 2, the composers in the 20th century followed in his footsteps. They used it to express subjects of magnitude or severity. Twentieth-century composers employed chaconnes in various settings, including works for keyboard, works for strings, chamber music, orchestral music, and operas. Of course, the musical language was drastically different from Bach's time, but the form's essence remained the same. The chaconne retained its defining aspects, such as the repeating bass line or harmonic unit and having a triple meter; however, there were also many changes, particularly in their tonality.¹⁴³

There seem to be at least two arguments as to why the chaconne was revitalized. One theory is that the emphasis on variety and irregularity in the 20th century drove chaconne's revival. Chaconne, by nature, provides continuity, coherence, order, and symmetry. Therefore, one may argue that chaconne returned as an aesthetic tool to counteract the lack of organization in contemporary music, which was previously provided by clearer tonality and using accepted and established forms.¹⁴⁴ Another theory is that the new aspiration towards the architectural concept drove chaconne's rebirth. Many of the 20th-century's musical styles were based on aesthetic principles derived from fundamental concepts such as mathematics, architecture, philosophy, psychology, poetry, and drama. In the passacaglia form, the mathematical and architectural are of tremendous importance. Therefore, one may argue, chaconne returned

¹⁴³Leon Stein, "The Passacaglia in the Twentieth Century," *Music & Letters* 40, no. 2 (1959): 150–53, accessed Sep 18, 2020, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/728985>.

¹⁴⁴Stein, "The Passacaglia in the Twentieth Century," *Music & Letters* 40, 150–153.

because of the contemporary trend in fundamental concepts.¹⁴⁵ In this chapter, we will explore chaconnes that spoke of idealized beauty during difficult times. Examples will include the works by Ravel, Britten, and Shostakovich.

Ravel: Piano Trio in A minor

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937) is one of the most original and prominent French composers. He is best known for his impressionistic style. The idea of impressionism first came from Monet's *Impression, Sunrise*, painted in 1873. In contrast to the Romanticism of the 19th century, which focused on high emotion and drama, impressionism sought to offer a new experience of reality by expressing the immediate effect of hearing, seeing, or feeling on the mind.¹⁴⁶ In music, this meant heightened attention to tonal colors or timbres. Ravel's writing often showed a clear melodic line, but he also used colorful dissonances such as 9th chords and 11th chords, diminished octaves, and even tritones. Despite Ravel's use of intricate harmonies and rhythms, which contribute to a sense of ambiguity, he seemed to appreciate classical form and balanced structure. Ravel likely used these classical forms to balance the complexities and dissonances in his works.

His Piano Trio is a good example, demonstrating traditional structure and format. It is in the standard four-movement classical framework. The two outer movements are in sonata-allegro forms. The middle movements consist of a fast and notoriously difficult scherzo and a slow, serious Passacaglia. In addition to writing the trio with the new timbre, Ravel drew inspiration from Asian culture, French poets, Spanish folk music, and Malaysian poetry. He transformed the

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ronald L. Byrnside, "Musical Impressionism: The Early History of the Term," *The Musical Quarterly* 66, no. 4 (1980): 522–37, accessed Sep 4, 2020, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/741965>.

passacaglia from an improvised ritornello on the streets of Spain to a pensive and solemn expression of beauty during a troubled time.

Ravel began sketching ideas for his trio in 1913 at his summer retreat in St. Jean-de-Luz. This community in the Basque region of southern France was across the bay from his birthplace, Ciboure. It seems the composer felt a deep identification with his Basque heritage, not only because he was born in that area, but because his mother was also Basque. He started leisurely working on the Piano Trio in April 1914 at St. Jean, but the outbreak of World War I in August 1914 prompted him to finish the work as quickly as possible because he wanted to enlist in the army. Previously, Ravel could not serve in the military due to a hernia and not meeting the minimum standard of height and weight. However, the composer was eager to help France defeat Germany and Austria, so he decided to finish the work as quickly as possible.¹⁴⁷ He finished this masterwork within a short span of four months, as evidenced by his notes at the bottom of the autograph score: "March to April, July to August 1914."¹⁴⁸ Despite his strong desire to serve the country, his choice to join the army was not without hesitation. Ravel worried not only for his own safety but also for his mother and the consequences she might face if he died. He wrote to his pupil Maurice Delage: "If you only knew how I suffer...if I left my poor old mother, it would surely kill her."¹⁴⁹

Ravel wanted to create orchestral qualities in the piano trio. To achieve orchestral effects, he extensively explored the highest and lowest registers of all three instruments to create the illusion of a broader sonority than three instruments alone would ordinarily produce. Other

¹⁴⁷ Robert Cassidy, *A Comparison of Passacaglias in Piano Trios by Ravel and Shostakovich From A Historical and Theoretical Perspective* (Muncie, IN: Ball State University, 2006), 27.

¹⁴⁸ Juliette Appold, "Introduction" in *Ravel Trio Pour Piano, Violon et Violoncelle*, ed. Herausgegeben von Juliette Appold (Basel, Germany: Bärenreiter-Verlag Karl Vötterle, 2009): IX.

¹⁴⁹ Cassidy, *A Comparison of Passacaglias in Piano Trios*, 28.

orchestral techniques he used include trills, tremolos, harmonics, and glissandos. For clarity, Ravel often put the treble part of the piano line between the string parts, which are two octaves apart. This way, all three voices are distant from one another, and they are heard clearly and individually.

Modéré, the first movement of the trio, affirms Ravel's fondness of his Basque origin. Noted "Basque in colouring" by the composer, this movement introduces a dreamy theme in the piano, written in an irregular rhythm derived from Basque folk music.¹⁵⁰ The first movement's time signature is 8/8, which is subdivided $\frac{5}{8}$ plus $\frac{3}{8}$, referring to the Basque dance zortzico, which is notated in five beats.¹⁵¹ Example 2.5.1a is an excerpt from the opening, where all three instruments play the theme. The distance between all three voices allows the listener to hear them clearly and distinctly. The cello is the lowest (E3), piano right hand second to the lowest is the middle (E4), and violin is the highest (E5).

Ex. 2.5.1a: M. 5–8 of m vt. 1. Notice the zortzico reference of $5/8+3/8$ ¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Appold, "Introduction" in Ravel Trio: X.

¹⁵² Maurice Ravel, *Trio for Piano, Violin and Cello* (Paris, France: Durand & Cie, 1915), 1.

The second movement, *Pantoum*, is a glittering scherzo charged with astonishing, complicated rhythms, brilliant colors, and special effects. Ravel set the movement in a fast three, but one finds that many of the rhythmic patterns do not line up with its meter. Special effects in the strings such as *pizzicati*, harmonics, trills, and tremolo create a delightful tone, while the arpeggios provide harmonic drive. *Pantoum* (or *Pantun*) is a Malaysian poetic form in which the second and fourth lines of one stanza become the first and third lines of the next stanza. Ravel was familiar with Charles Baudelaire and other French 19th-century writers who adapted the *pantoum* form, and he applied it to composition “to say with music what you say with words.”¹⁵³

Ravel placed a *passacaglia* at the heart of the trio. Its tempo is very slow (“*Très large* □=40”), setting a serious mood. Further, it is in F# minor, which sounds darker and more conflicted than the preceding movements, which are in A minor. In this movement, the piano first introduces the beautiful and reflective eight-measure melody derived from the *Pantoum*’s first theme. The dark sounding, low-registered theme has no accompaniment. It is a single soft-whispering voice commencing the movement.

The cello enters for the second eight-bar cycle, echoing the piano line. The piano continues during the cello melody, providing a simple harmonic structure. The theme has a small dynamic swell towards the end, and its register is higher than the opening, but it still maintains a soft-spoken quality. When the violin enters for the third cycle, the register climbs even higher, and one can feel a sense of persistence as the same motif repeats three times in succession. Unlike the other two entrances of the theme, marked *pp*, the violin entry is marked *p* *expressif*, giving a more vocal and ardent personality. The harmonic outlines in the piano become more

¹⁵³ Appold, “Introduction” in *Ravel Trio: X*.

elaborate, naturally increasing the dynamic as well. However, the theme slightly differs, and it reaches a high point in the fifth bar of its entrance and concludes in E major as it gets softer in dynamic.

The fourth statement is again solo piano, this time in E-Dorian (minor third and seventh).¹⁵⁴ It carries a delicate style similar to the opening because it is still marked pp, but the harmonies are now richer. The theme retains similar intervals and rhythms to the original, but its color seems more exotic, and the use of modality lends an antique sound. The fifth statement modulates to A minor, and shortened versions of the theme are played by the cello, doubled by the piano's right hand. The movement gets its first f in the middle of this statement, as the strings passionately play their duet while the piano provides heavy harmonies on each beat with accents. The sixth statement (rehearsal number five) begins with a dramatic subito piano. The strings start playing an ascending tritone-inspired melody in unison with a crescendo as the piano plays descending, chromatic harmonies. This results in the strings and piano playing in a strikingly contrary motion and building up for the climax at rehearsal number six (ex. 2.5.1b), which appears precisely at the center of the movement.

¹⁵⁴Cassidy, *A Comparison of Passacaglias*, 53.

A musicologist, Michael Puri, asserts that this segment is an example of Ravel paying a secret homage to his antithesis, Wagner. Impressionism began as a movement against the type of emotional excess, which characterized Wagnerism. This new French style was to give a perception of an object rather than explicitly express one's feelings. Puri argues that the climactic moment from Wagner's opera, *Parsifal*, Act 1, "March to the Castle of the Grail," which contains the Wehelaute motif, shares elements from the Passacaille climax.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Ravel, *Trio for Piano, Violin and Cello*, 22–23.

¹⁵⁶ Michael J. Puri, "The Passion of the Passacaille: Ravel, Wagner, *Parsifal*," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 25, no. 3 (2013): 285–318, accessed Sep 20, 2020, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24252349>.

Ex. 2.5.1c: The Wehelaute motif from Wagner, Parsifal, Act 1, starting from the key change¹⁵⁷

The Wehelaute motif, which translates as “the sounds of woe,” is a series of descending chromatic notes. It is a recurring motif in Parsifal, which is incorporated in the March. According to Puri, the elements shared by Wagner and Ravel include the use of descending, root-position, circle-of-fifths sequence, the use of highly chromatic passages, voice configurations depicting lament by chromatic descents, and harmonic substitutions for tonics.¹⁵⁸

It is plausible that Ravel wanted to pay homage to Wagner, given the similarities found in the two excerpts. Ravel, who supposedly cried listening to Wagner’s Tristan, wrote the Trio shortly after writing a review of Parsifal’s premiere in Paris. Contrary to his subtle and emotionally restrained French style, perhaps Ravel used the passacaglia to look back to the Wagnerian style in freedom of emotional expression. Much like the Wehelaute motif, Ravel’s descending chromatic harmonies seem to speak of lament. The significance here is that the

¹⁵⁷ Puri, “The Passion of the Passacaille: Ravel, Wagner, Parsifal,” Cambridge Opera: 308.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 307–309.

passacaglia is such a powerful medium that it can contain the grandest expression from one of the grandest operas by one of the most ambitious opera composers.

Soon after reaching its brilliant peak in the movement, the theme settles down and takes on a more contemplative mood. The original motif appears again, but in a much higher register and with intricate harmonies. It retains its pensive character, but it seems to reflect on the past after the previous stormy section. For the ninth statement, the piano drops out, leaving the muted strings to carry the theme. The mute seems to add even more *sotto voce* quality (“under the voice,” to be performed with hushed quality), creating a sense of yearning, although the music does not speak with words.

Why did Ravel choose this old baroque form for the trio? No one can answer, although one can speculate. Ravel rarely spoke about his aesthetic ideas: “I never felt the need to set down the principles of my aesthetic, whether for others or for myself. If I had to do so, I would ask permission to respond with the simple statements that Mozart made on this subject. He was content to say that music can attempt anything, dare anything, and depict anything, as long as it delights and remains ever and always music.” His response seems to give us a bit of flexibility in interpreting his music as long as we acknowledge its artistic beauty. Additionally, a good friend of Ravel, violinist H el ene Jourdan-Morhange noted in her memoirs that Ravel wished to invoke various effects with his compositions—especially the aesthetic impact on himself rather than an impact on the audience.¹⁵⁹

It seems that Ravel did not want to reveal his intents directly but may have liked the aesthetics of his music to convey different concepts and emotions. While he worked on the trio,

¹⁵⁹ Appold, “Introduction” in Ravel Trio: X.

both Ravel and his country were going through a troubling time. I believe Ravel looked back to the Romantic or even Wagnerian style to express this inner turmoil. Despite the lament portrayed by the falling chromatic line, his passacaglia demonstrated a distinct beauty, infused with his new musical language. Most importantly, as Ravel said himself, he wanted his music to invoke various perceptions. Ravel favored the passacaglia for its timeless beauty and reflective quality during this troubled period.

After the thought-provoking, serious third movement comes the jubilant finale. The movement is in sonata-rondo form and is filled with Ravel's witty shifting meters of 5/4 and 7/4, a nod to his Basque heritage. The strings start the movement with coloristic harmonics, setting a festive tone for the movement. The piano then comes in the following measure with themes containing similar rhythms of the first and third movements' themes. The quick-paced movement exhibits Ravel's staple usage of instruments as impressionistic tools with strings harmonics, pizzicati, and endless trills, giving the piece a passionate conclusion.

Benjamin Britten: Violin Concerto, Op. 15

Benjamin Britten's Violin Concerto, Op. 15 is a masterpiece written in 1939, a turbulent time for the composer himself and Europeans in general due to the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) and World War II (1939–1945). It is the sole violin concerto written by Britten and his first work that employs the passacaglia.¹⁶⁰ His Piano Concerto, Op. 13 (1938), also uses the passacaglia but not until after its revision in 1945. His other notable works with the passacaglia include the operas *Peter Grimes*, *The Rape of Lucretia*, and *The Turn of the Screw*, as well as his non-vocal works, *Cello Symphony*, and *String Quartet No. 2*.¹⁶¹ American composer Darrell Handel suggests that Britten used the passacaglia to give a tonal center to the whole work and provide stability toward which other movements could gravitate.¹⁶² He further indicates that Britten used passacaglias as emotional climaxes, often dealing with subjects related to death.¹⁶³ The keys and tonal center are not always clear in the Violin Concerto; however, the passacaglia confirms the key of D for the finale, anchoring the other movements. As he looks back at the old masters from the Baroque period, Britten expresses his personal struggle and mourning of the current political conflicts.

Britten was born in Lowestoft, the United Kingdom, in 1913 to a middle-class family.¹⁶⁴ His father was a dentist, and his mother was a singer and a pianist. His mother, Edith, saw the unusual musical talent in the young composer and encouraged him in further training. Not only was Edith closely involved in Britten's musical development, but she tightly controlled the

¹⁶⁰ Bernadette de Villiers, *Benjamin Britten's Use of the Passacaglia* (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 1985), 44.

¹⁶¹ Darrell Handel, "Britten's Use of the Passacaglia," *Tempo*, no. 94 (1970): 2–6, accessed October 02, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/943210>.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ Graham Elliott, *Benjamin Britten: The Spiritual Dimension* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006), 7.

composer's life. When she suddenly passed away in 1937, Britten was both devastated and relieved. While attempting to find his identity and source of self-expression, he started to explore new sexuality. His new friends were writers and artists, W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, among others, who played a role in bringing out the composer's repressed desire for a same-sex partner. They celebrated the love of art together and shared similar values and political views.

Politically, Britain, along with the rest of Europe, was bracing for war. When Britten was finishing the violin concerto, the Spanish Civil War reached its peak, and World War II had begun. Although the danger did not directly threaten Britten, he was deeply saddened by the wars. By this point in his life, he had already established himself as an important composer. He had written several important works, including songs, chamber music, choral works, and film scores. However, he felt that the conservative voices in the British music scene limited his career.¹⁶⁵ Eventually, in 1939, the young composer decided to follow in the footsteps of his friend, poet W. H. Auden and moved to the United States with his life-long partner, tenor Peter Pears, with the hope of finding freedom from those voices. Because of the U.S. immigration process, before entering the U.S., the two had to go to Canada, where Britten finished his violin concerto score in 1939.¹⁶⁶

Antonio Brosa, a Spanish violin virtuoso, and John Barbirolli, an English conductor, gave the highly successful premiere performance with the New York Philharmonic on March 28, 1940. The premiere performance received mostly positive reviews, although there were some

¹⁶⁵ Suzanne Robinson, "'An English Composer Sees America': Benjamin Britten and the North American Press, 1939–42," *American Music* 15, no. 3 (1997): 322, accessed Oct 06, 2020. doi:10.2307/3052328.

¹⁶⁶ David Ewen, *The World of Twentieth-Century Music* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 111.

mixed reviews and disagreement on how to label the piece in the program. For example, one reviewer said, “pretty violent: either pro or con,” indicating the premiere performance left a strong impression but not necessarily positive or negative.¹⁶⁷ Regarding the title of the piece, on the premier’s program, it appeared as “Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D minor, Op. 16;” however, Britten had named it “Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 15.”¹⁶⁸ This mislabeling occurred because there Britten did not specify the key, leading to confusion. He probably did not want to designate it to any particular key because the piece does not always have a clear tonal center, and it switches back and forth between major and minor.¹⁶⁹ The British premiere showed the title correctly, “Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 15,” as Britten intended.

Brosa was another immigrant who escaped Europe amid the wars. He believed there was a connection between the Spanish flavor in some parts of Britten’s Violin Concerto and the Spanish Civil War.¹⁷⁰ There are many examples of Spanish influence, including the percussion’s rhythm in the opening, castanet rhythms, flamenco-like guitar sonorities, and the slow sarabande rhythm. Most telling of all, Britten chose a Spanish form, the passacaglia, for the piece’s finale. Along with these Spanish elements, the gravity of this piece suggests that Britten may have intended the work to serve as a requiem for the fallen of the Spanish Civil War.

The concerto is structured like a standard concerto of three movements but with an unusual order of tempos. Unlike the typical fast-slow-fast pattern, the concerto features a

¹⁶⁷Robinson, *American Music* 15, no. 3 (1997): 327, 331, accessed Oct 06, 2020. doi:10.2307/3052328.

¹⁶⁸Donald Mitchell and Philip Reed, *Letters from a Life: The Selected Letter and Diaries of Benjamin Britten, 1913–1939*, vol. 1, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 790.

¹⁶⁹Ibid.

¹⁷⁰Eric Roseberry, “The concertos and early orchestral scores: aspects of style and aesthetic” in *The Cambridge Companion to Benjamin Britten*, ed. Mervyn Cooke (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 238-239.

moderate first movement, a fast and frenzied scherzo as the second movement, and a slow Passacaglia as the third and last movement. Britten fashioned the work as one whole rather than three separate movements. He specifically asked for *attaca* between the movements so there would be no pause, requiring a great deal of stamina from the soloist and orchestra. Both the use and the placement of the violin cadenza are also unusual. The cadenza typically appears in the first movement, either before the recapitulation or at the very end. In Britten's concerto, it appears at the end of the second movement, serving as a bridge to the Passacaglia, which commences while the violin is still playing.

The third movement, Passacaglia, consists of a stern six-measure melody. Britten follows the passacaglia form with some liberty. He allows for tonal shifts, differing intervallic structure, flexible phrasing, fugato elements, and staggered statements of the basic theme within the sequence of the variations.¹⁷¹ Despite these continuous alterations, the passacaglia statement appears to keep its general arch contour throughout the movement. The first statement is an upward curve with a threefold repetition of rising whole notes; each repetition is a minor third higher than the previous. The statement's highest note appears around its midpoint, immediately after the third repetition. A syncopation occurs at this high point, which creates more tension and urgency. The downward curve consists of repeated intervals of two whole-steps and a half-step, making each pattern a perfect fourth lower than the previous one.

Ex. 2.5.2a: The first passacaglia statement

¹⁷¹ Villiers, Britten's Use of the Passacaglia, 44–47.

The solo violin, which bridges the cadenza and the Passacaglia, plays the first theme from the first movement. Thus, from the beginning, the passacaglia is presented with a counter melody from the first movement. This helps to tie all three movements together into a single larger whole. The following examples are the first theme from the opening of the work and the end of the cadenza that overlaps with the Passacaglia.¹⁷²

Ex. 2.5.2b: The first theme from the opening of the Concerto

Ex. 2.5.2c: Solo violin at the beginning of the Passacaglia

Both examples show a remarkably similar rhythmic pattern of a half-note tied to an eighth-note, followed by a sliding figure of eighth-notes. The direction of the solo violin line is almost the opposite of the passacaglia theme. The first three bars of the passacaglia theme rise by a minor third in each repetition, while the violin line falls by a minor third and two major thirds. Both are marked *espressivo* and are lyrical in nature. While the opening theme is in F major and has a

¹⁷²Benjamin Britten, "Passacaglia: Andante Lento (Un Poco Meno Mosso)," in *Violin Concerto* (London, United Kingdom: Boosey and Hawkes, 1965).

luscious, hopeful, and curious character, the end of cadenza sounds mournful in comparison. Both the passacaglia theme and the countermelody move by stepwise motion, forming highly chromatic figures. These themes are reminiscent of Purcell's Dido's Lament, which has a chromatic descending tetrachord signifying lament and death.

In their first appearance in the concerto, three mellow-sounding trombones cast a suppressed and gloomy mood as they introduce the theme. Within the theme, the mood shifts between the rising and the falling lines. The rising line with tenuto, sostenuto markings, seems to indicate an earnest yet faintly hopeful mood. The falling line, with staccato and accents, indicates a grudging acceptance of fate. It is a theme that seems to reflect sorrow over the horrors of the Spanish Civil War. Britten himself hinted at this in a letter to Wulff Scherchen, son of the famous conductor Hermann Scherchen and likely the composer's first lover: "It is at times like these, that work is so important—so that people can think of other things than blowing each other up!"¹⁷³

The harmony is quite ambiguous. Even the original theme does not present a clear tonal center as it is highly chromatic. Their notes span an augmented octave, and the tonal center evolves with each statement. The theme is heard most clearly in the section from the beginning of the movement to rehearsal number thirty-four. In this section, the first note of each theme moves in a descending chromatic fashion. The first notes of each theme are C, B, Bb, A, and G# at rehearsal thirty-four. At the G#, the passacaglia theme becomes a tremolo in the cello line.

Rehearsal thirty-four is also where the solo violin enters for the first time after hearing the series of passacaglia themes played by the orchestra. This section seems like a modern-day

¹⁷³Mitchell and Reed, *Letters from a Life*, vol. 2, 702.

recitative from opera, where the singer delivers many messages accompanied by a small group of instruments. Here, accompanied by nervous-sounding tremolos from the cello, the solo violin plays in a free, improvisatory manner. Even the violin part seems to mimic the passacaglia theme's contour; it features the threefold repetition of rising notes, followed by the falling eighth-notes by intervals of mostly whole steps. See Example 2.5.2d.

Ex. 2.5.2d: The violin entrance mimics the passacaglia theme, accompanied by tremolo from the cello

Britten rarely gives the passacaglia theme to the solo violin. In fact, it is played by almost every instrument in the orchestra, while the solo violin plays it only twice. The following examples are from rehearsal numbers thirty-seven and forty-two.

Ex. 2.5.2e: Solo violin passacaglia theme from number thirty-seven

Ex. 2.5.2f: Solo violin passacaglia theme from number forty-two

The theme at rehearsal number thirty-seven (ex. 2.5.2e) features several elements similar to the Baroque chaconne. It is in a triple meter, presents dotted rhythms, and has an emphasis on beat two. The solo violin's rhythm feels unrestricted but is juxtaposed with a somewhat square rhythm in the orchestra. The solo violin has triplets, quintuplets, and a septuplet, mixed in with long, sustained notes. It soars alone, expressively and passionately. By contrast, the strings play sixty-fourth-notes, followed by an eighth-note, using ricochet. The rigid rhythm and the percussive qualities seem to imitate the snare drums in a march. The second solo violin statement is at rehearsal number forty-two (ex. 2.5.2f). Unlike the first, this theme is executed in a stately

quadruple meter. The rhythm here is less unrestrained than in the first solo, but it features dotted rhythms, the trademark of chaconne and sarabande. Every note is a chord with an accent and a downbow, and it sounds quite vertical and contrapuntal in contrast to the first statement. And the mood is highly forceful and declamatory.

Rehearsal thirty-eight stands out as the most playful and charming section in the movement. The flirtatious dialogue between the flutes and the solo violin sounds almost like a romantic Mahler piece. Britten may have been commenting on his conception of an ideal world where people can love each other and live in peace. Rehearsal thirty-nine, marked *alla marcia*, kicks off with rhythmically charged trumpets and timpani. Even the solo violin, which soon follows the trumpets, seems to mimic the triumphant trumpet calls.

Rehearsal number forty-three, unlike much of the piece, shows a clear tonality of D major. The string section outlines the D major scale in unison with a few accidentals. The double bass, trombone, and tuba play the passacaglia theme, but this time the second sequence is a major third, not a minor third like the original statement (ex. 2.5.2g). Thus, the statement at forty-three carries a more optimistic tone.

Ex. 2.5.2g: The passacaglia theme at number forty-three

It appears to support Handel's contention that Britten used the Passacaglia to confirm the tonality and provide stability to which the other movements can gravitate. The first movement starts in F major, which then moves to D. The second movement is in A minor. Finally, the third movement, Passacaglia, confirms the key of D. However, the ending of the piece leaves some ambiguity here, as it features both F# and F \flat , leaving us to wonder whether the key is D major or D minor.

In Britten's Violin Concerto, the passacaglia theme seems to represent an immense force, like fate. Its underlying message, of honoring and mourning for those who have fallen during the Spanish war, remains the same. Its appearance, however, undergoes many changes throughout the variations. But as with fate, despite the continuous evolution, the outcome is still the same. Britten reminds us that tragedy and loss of life are constants of war no matter the point of view.

Dmitri Shostakovich: Piano Trio No. 2, Op. 67

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975) was a great Russian composer of the 20th century who lived under one of the most terrible and infamous regimes in history. Nevertheless, he sublimated his horrific experiences into his own wrenchingly beautiful music. Stalin’s politically motivated censorship severely hindered Shostakovich’s creativity, and he had to repress his emotions and opinions. Nevertheless, Shostakovich could communicate these things by encoding a dual meaning in his works. His music would frequently express undertones of sarcasm, anger, or great sorrow, masked by disingenuous ecstasy. In his Piano Trio No. 2, Shostakovich expresses pain and distress under the guise of tenderness in his use of passacaglia in the Largo movement.

Shostakovich has been the 20th century’s most mythologized composer since his death in 1975.¹⁷⁴ Until the publication of his memoir, *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dimitri Shostakovich as Related to and Edited by Solomon Volkov*, the general perception was that he was a true-believing communist and a patriotic Soviet citizen. But as more documents started coming out, including his diaries and letters, we learned that Shostakovich was a very complex person who lived in fear and terror. He was, in fact, a lifelong closet dissident of Stalin.¹⁷⁵ As we have learned after his death, Shostakovich’s two distinct styles, known as “the two Shostakoviches,” emerged after 1936. One was “official,” and the other was “real.” The “official” Shostakovich was mindful of public expectations without completely compromising his ideals, while the “real” Shostakovich paid little heed to stylistic uniformity or ideology.¹⁷⁶ Examples of “official”

¹⁷⁴Pauline Fairclough, “Facts, Fantasies, and Fictions: Recent Shostakovich Studies,” *Music & Letters* 86, no. 3 (2005): 452, accessed Oct 10, 2020, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3526611>.

¹⁷⁵Laurel Fay, “Introduction,” *Shostakovich: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2.

¹⁷⁶Laurel Fay and David Fanning, “Dmitry Shostakovich,” *Grove Music Online* (2001), accessed Oct. 13, 2020. <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000052560>.

Shostakovich include patriotic wartime arrangements for performances at the battlefield, a Solemn March for Military Band, and arrangements of Russian, English, American, and Greek folksongs. On the other hand, the “real” Shostakovich revealed the composer’s private thoughts. Shostakovich, an immensely private person, made an effort to speak through his music rather than speak about it.¹⁷⁷ Works showing the “real” Shostakovich include the Four Pushkin Romances, Op. 46, the Six Romances to Words by English Poets, Op. 62, and From Jewish Folk Poetry, Op. 79.¹⁷⁸

When Shostakovich composed the Piano Trio No. 2, Op. 67 in 1944, he was turning away from large-scale orchestral works, such as the two wartime symphonies, No. 7 (“Leningrad”) and No. 8. Both symphonies had patriotic and uplifting messages amid the fear and uncertainty that came with the war. In particular, No. 7 was a huge success, which made his fame and awarded the composer a Stalin Prize (category one).¹⁷⁹ From this time, Shostakovich began designating many of his works as memorials. The Seventh Symphony honored the suffering of Leningrad, while the Eighth commemorated the whole nation.¹⁸⁰ The Second Piano Sonata, which he composed in early 1943, honored his piano teacher, Nikolayev. And the Second Piano Trio was an elegy for his closest friend, Ivan Ivanovich Sollertinsky, his pupil Fleischmann, and the Jews victimized during World War II.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ Laurel Fay, “Introduction,” *Shostakovich: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2.

¹⁷⁸ Fay and Fanning, “Shostakovich,” *Grove Music Online* (2001).

¹⁷⁹ Fay, “The War Years,” *Shostakovich: A Life*, 132.

¹⁸⁰ Ian MacDonald, *The New Shostakovich* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990), 169–170.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 173.

In the 1910s, Russia was both a site of violent anti-Semitism and, ironically, a site for the new Jewish nationalism movement.¹⁸² Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908), one of the “Mighty Five,” a group of Russian composers known for nationalistic music, is often credited for prompting Russian-Jewish composers to integrate folk music into concert art music. Jewish folk music is categorized into two broad groups. The first group consists of topical Yiddish songs, including love songs and lullabies, while the second group contains music derived from diasporic liturgical foundations and is not considered ethnic music. Since Jews carried their spiritual nationality with them wherever they moved, Jewish folk music is not linked to a single nation or ethnicity but rather linked to a spiritual nationality.

Shostakovich’s close friendship with a Polish-Jewish composer, Mieczysław Weinberg, increased Shostakovich’s awareness of Jewish music. Weinberg was a concentration camp survivor, and he was familiar with Yiddish songs because his father was a well-known conductor and composer at the Yiddish theater. Shostakovich was fascinated by “sad Jewish melodies with the lively rhythm,” as he said about *From Jewish Folk Poetry*.¹⁸³ Those elements likely stemmed from Klezmer music, which is rooted in cantorial songs. Not only did he honor the Jews and speak out against anti-Semitism, but he shared their common ideals and admired their grit and perspective on life. Musicologist Esti Sheinberg argues that Shostakovich identified with the Jewish recognition of existential irony and their understanding of joy and sorrow as conjoined experiences, as the Soviet world of “enforced optimism” reflected this duality.¹⁸⁴ In the Second Piano Trio, Shostakovich employed the “Jewish theme,” a musical tribute that used the scales

¹⁸² Alexander Tentser, *Jewish Experience in Classical Music: Shostakovich and Asia* (Cambridge Scholars: Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, pub. 2014), xiv.

¹⁸³ Tentser, *Jewish Experience in Classical Music* (Cambridge Scholars: Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, pub. 2014), xxi-xxii.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

and rhythms of Jewish folk music as Shostakovich understood it. It was the first appearance of this theme in Shostakovich's works. He would use it again in his Violin Concerto No. 1 (1947–1948), From Jewish Folk Poetry (1948), the String Quartet No. 4 (1949), 24 Preludes & Fugues for Piano, Op. 87 (1950–1951), and the String Quartet No. 8 (1960).

There are several stylistic attributes of Shostakovich's "Jewish" music. He utilized specific modalities such as the "altered Phrygian" scale with a raised third, creating an augmented second between the second and the third steps. He also used the "Ukrainian Dorian," which is similar to a natural minor scale, only with a raised fourth, producing an augmented second between the third and the fourth steps. He employed iambic prime for the melody, which alters the pitch on a weak beat, then repeats it on a strong beat, with the first note of each phrase on an upbeat. A particular dance-style accompaniment also characterized Shostakovich's "Jewish music." The accompaniment had an "um-pa" effect, typically over a pedal bass. But perhaps the most striking essence of it was the use of contradicting qualities in inflection and form. The seemingly sad minor-inflected modes with the festive dance forms of klezmer created an effect, frequently referred to as "laughter through tears." The result was a juxtaposition of terror and merriment, making sense of the grotesque.¹⁸⁵

Sollertinsky, the dedicatee of Piano Trio No. 2, was a brilliant musicologist, music critic, and professor at Leningrad University. He and Shostakovich had been friends since 1927, and he is known to have opened Shostakovich's eyes to Mahler's glory. Sollertinsky was a brave, passionate, and loyal friend, even through Shostakovich's darkest days. He died at the age of forty-one of a sudden heart attack on February 11, 1944. At the time, he was serving as Artistic

¹⁸⁵Tentser, *Jewish Experience*, 13–14.

Director of the Leningrad Philharmonic but had been evacuated to Siberia to escape the Nazi siege of Leningrad.¹⁸⁶ The news of his death shocked and devastated Shostakovich. He expressed his grief as he offered his condolences to Sollertinsky's widow, "It is impossible to express in words all the grief that engulfed me on hearing the news about Ivan Ivanovich's death. Ivan Ivanovich was my very closest and dearest friend. I am indebted to him for all my growth. To live without him will be unbearably difficult."¹⁸⁷

Before Sollertinsky's death, Shostakovich had finished the sketches of the Piano Trio No. 2 and was able to show him. Shostakovich even finished most of the first movement a few days before his friend's death.¹⁸⁸ However, after Sollertinsky's death, Shostakovich's work slowed due to his depression and sorrow. In April, he wrote to his close friend, Glikman, "... it seems to me that I will never be able to compose another note again."¹⁸⁹ However, he eventually regained his motivation to write after finishing his teaching responsibilities at the conservatory by the end of the academic year. While spending the summer with his family at the Composers' Rest Home at Ivanovo (240 km north-east of Moscow), he made speedy progress with the Second Trio and the Second String Quartet.¹⁹⁰

Both works premiered in November, and while both were well received, the Trio enjoyed an especially warm reception. The Trio premiered on November 14, 1944, in Leningrad, with the composer himself on piano, violinist Dmitri Tsyganov and cellist Sergei Shirinsky of the

¹⁸⁶ MacDonald, *The New Shostakovich*, 173.

¹⁸⁷ Fay, "The War Years (1941–1944)," *Shostakovich: A Life*, 141.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ Fay, "The War Years (1941–1944)," *Shostakovich: A Life*, 141.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 142.

Beethoven String Quartet.¹⁹¹ The work was a lamentation for Sollertinsky, and it captured much of his character. Even Sollertinsky's sister saw aspects of his personality in the second movement, which was the first movement Shostakovich completed after his death. That movement depicted Sollertinsky's manner of speech, impatience, and even his habit of returning to an idea and developing it. In 1946, the Trio received a Stalin Prize (category two).¹⁹²

The opening of the work has an unusual arrangement of the instrumentation. The cello solitarily introduces the theme on hauntingly high-pitched harmonics. Then the violin comes in at a lower pitch than the cello, providing harmonies for the cello in a canonic fashion. Both strings are muted, sounding frail and bleak. Then the piano establishes the bass line. The string parts' roles remain reversed until after the Moderato. In the Moderato section, the piano introduces the second theme, while the strings add suspense with repeated staccato eighth notes. Throughout the movement, Shostakovich seems to make a great effort to balance the instruments. By coupling the strings on numerous occasions and having a simple line for the piano, each instrument vividly sings through without being overpowered by the piano. The movement is roughly in sonata-form, and its mood changes between oppressed reflection, the depiction of Russian folklife, and angry outcry.

The Scherzo-like second movement is in a bold F# major, and its character is sarcastic and manic. The string parts are marked *marcatissimo* and *pesante*, requiring the musicians to play with heavy and accented bow strokes on every note. Sometimes an accent is found once per measure, and other times, on every quarter note. There are many incidences of *fff*, indicating the

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid., 143.

mood to be frantic and frenzied. By contrast, the trio section is a woozy waltz in G major, its cheerful charm all part of the sarcasm.

Shostakovich employs the repeating harmonic cycle of the passacaglia to invoke a sense of lamentation and eternity. His fascination with the passacaglia is shown from his early works. His Second Symphony (1927) reveals the first hint of the passacaglia model in a small portion of the first section. The opera, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1932), the first piece which brought major criticisms, employs the centuries-old form during the climax where the heroine kills her father-in-law.¹⁹³ It is noteworthy that he uses it for an emotional crux that deals with a subject related to death in *Lady Macbeth*, the piece with Shostakovich's first authentic use of passacaglia. It seems that despite the different circumstances and musical languages, the symbolic meaning of passacaglia from Purcell and Bach remains the same, even to an oppressed Soviet composer. In both the Violin Concerto No. 1 and the trio, his harmonic cycles are much more complex than those of the Baroque passacaglias to which they refer. Still, the power of those earlier models remains, colored by a uniquely twentieth-century sense of tragedy.

The Largo of the Piano Trio No. 2 is set in a dark B \flat minor. The piano introduces the chord progression in deep-voiced block chords. The eight-measure chord progression is repeated six times over the course of the movement, while the strings weave counterpoint above it in canonic fashion, the singing lines expressing both beauty and heartache. Overall, the texture is relatively thin, which surprisingly results in emotional music. It seems to illustrate Shostakovich's devastation at his dear friend's death. Since the texture is considerably thin, and most of the notes are long, players are granted some liberty in timing. Half-step gestures in the

¹⁹³ Lyn Henderson, "Shostakovich and the Passacaglia: Old Grounds or New?" *The Musical Times* 141, no. 1870 (2000): 53, accessed October 14, 2020. doi:10.2307/1004371.

strings convey emotional pain much as they did in Bach's *Christ lag in Todesbanden* and Purcell's *Dido*. Therefore, it seems logical for players to consider appropriate rubato to make each phrase as expressively sorrowful as possible. The string melodies evolve throughout the movement while the chord progression in the piano part remains persistent and constant, representing the unavoidable nature of fate.

The use of piano alone at the opening is particularly significant in setting the tone for this movement. Marked forte, the chords are declamatory yet wounded by a shocking half-step clash. Each chord is held for six beats. This is quite long for a piano, which cannot sustain sound like a string instrument. Shostakovich is essentially using the piano like a bell, tolling a death knell. The repeating harmonic progression is B[♭] minor-F major-C major-A diminished seventh-G major and major seventh-G minor and major seventh-A minor-B minor/diminished.¹⁹⁴

Ex. 2.5.3a: The repeating harmonic progression in Shostakovich Piano Trio No. 2

The tension reaches its peak in the fifth and sixth measures within the harmonic progression, where the shocking clash occurs, and it relaxes after the sixth bar. It longs to resolve to E, the Trio's tonic, but frustratingly, it does not. Instead, it continues to conclude on a half-cadence, a bare B-D dyad.

¹⁹⁴Cassidy, *A Comparison of Passacaglias*, 50.

The ranges of the chords are relatively small. They lie in the middle and the slightly lower registers, resulting in a somewhat clustered sound. The voice-leading from one chord to the next follows the centuries-old values of maintaining common tones and minimizing motion. By employing centuries-old principles of organic cohesion, Shostakovich supports sounds that are shocking, disturbing, and expressive of desolation.

When the violin makes its *espressivo* entrance, the dynamic drops to piano, invoking a more somber mood. Once all three instruments have played their tunes, the music grows in its intensity and loudness. It reaches its climax right at the dissonant fifth bar of the chord cycle; only now, the violin adds the additional dissonance of an F \square to the usual clash of the G and F# in the bass. Both strings are in the very high register at this point, their parallel motion at the interval of a tenth making for desolate weeping.

After this explosive moment, the music gradually settles down. The strings exchange fragmented lines in a conversational manner. The violin repeats its sorrowful tune from the opening of the movement but an octave lower. This time, the lack of an *espressivo* marking suggests the prior emotion has been exhausted. While there are no further cycles of the *passacaglia* beyond this point, the cello echoes the violin's final notes. The piano sustains a minor third, B and D underneath eerie harmonics in the strings. The piano's B becomes the fifth scale degree of the key of E major as the last movement commences *attacca*.

The final movement, *Allegretto*, opens with the drum-like eighth-notes in the piano, creating a sense of suspense. The movement is known for the composer's bold choice to include the "Jewish tunes" at a time when the regime was clearly anti-Semitic.¹⁹⁵ The so-called "Jewish

¹⁹⁵Tentser, *Jewish Experience*, xxii.

tune” is first introduced by a whimsical violin pizzicato. Like the scherzo, the movement exhibits contradictory personalities of joy and sorrow to intensify emotions in both directions. The Jewish tune also occurs later in work at rehearsal 86. The macabre dance is in the Dorian mode above a five-beat passacaglia theme. Ian MacDonald, writing in *The New Shostakovich*, says the composer was “horrified by stories that SS guards had made their victims dance beside their own graves, Shostakovich created a directly programmatic image of it.”¹⁹⁶

The movement is loosely in sonata-rondo form, and it recasts the themes from both the first and third movements. Accompanied by elaborate runs in the piano, the strings play the bleak opening tunes again, but this time in fortissimo and with the instruction of *espressivo*. While the dynamics and expression create a more outspoken character here, the use of mutes reminds the listener of still-present forces of oppression. The piece ends with a kind of fulfillment of the passacaglia chord cycle: its final chord resolves to the comfortable and optimistic key of E major.

While Shostakovich wrote the Trio to honor his friend, he also expresses his sorrow for the whole world. He reaches back in time to the passacaglia to tell the eternal cycle of life, death, violence, and oppression. In doing so, he adds modern dissonances to the form’s natural cohesion and brings passacaglia squarely into the 20th century.

¹⁹⁶MacDonald, *The New Shostakovich*, 173.

Dmitri Shostakovich: Violin Concerto No. 1 in A minor, Op. 77

Dmitri Shostakovich's Violin Concerto No. 1 in A minor, Op. 77 (1947–1948) is one of the most celebrated works in the violin repertoire of the 20th century. It boasts a symphony-like structure and weight, as the concerto consists of four movements rather than the more common three. It showcases the technical virtuosity in the solo violin, sends profound messages, and communicates complex emotions that words cannot express. The emotional climax comes in the third movement, the Passacaglia, the heart of the concerto. The unrelenting ground bass symbolizes fate, while the solo violin carries a hauntingly beautiful and poignant melody.

Shostakovich's Violin Concerto No. 1 was composed during the post-war years in the Soviet Union, a time of severe censorship. In 1946, under Stalin's totalitarian regime, Andrei Zhdanov developed the Soviet cultural doctrine called Zhdanov doctrine, also known as Zhdanovshchina or Zhdanovism. Zhdanov was a powerful man who was thought to be Stalin's successor before his sudden death in 1948.¹⁹⁷ He was virtually a policeman of the arts, tightly controlling what artists express through their works. Initially, Zhdanovism started censoring two journals but eventually spread to virtually all aspects of art. Anything that was considered vulgar, lacking moral principle, not actively promoting pro-Soviet ideas, and having bourgeois-aristocratic aesthetics was to be censored.

Under Zhdanovism, artists were to promote an extreme anti-Western message, and they were required to conform to "anti-formalism." And anyone who dared not to comply faced severe consequences, including death. "Formalism" referred to art that used complex techniques and forms accessible only to the elite, rather than simplified for ordinary people. In music, if

¹⁹⁷ Fay, "Victory (1945–1948)," Shostakovich: A Life, 150.

there were excessive uses of dissonances or an absence of immediately recognizable melody, it was considered “formalism.”¹⁹⁸ During the cultural purge of 1948, many prominent Soviet composers were attacked. The watch list included Prokofiev, Khachaturian, and Shostakovich, in which Shostakovich was “number one.”¹⁹⁹ Assembled in a public hall, they were humiliated and were required to repent. The following is Zhdanov’s quote from the conference on January 10, 1948.

Indeed, even though it is outwardly concealed, a fierce struggle is taking place between two directions in Soviet music. One represents the healthy, progressive aspects in Soviet music, based on the recognition of the immense role of the classical heritage and, in particular, on the traditions of the Russian musical school, on the combination of high idealism and substance in music, its truthfulness and realism, and on the deep, organic connection with the people and their legacy of music and folk song, combined with high professional mastery. The other direction produces formalism alien to Soviet art. Under the banner of illusory innovation, it conveys a rejection of the classical heritage, of national character in music, and of service to the people in order to cater to the purely individualistic experiences of a small clique of aesthetes.²⁰⁰

Soviet composers and others had no other option but to conform to the Party’s ideology, at least for the time being. During the late forties and early fifties, Shostakovich wrote patriotic movie scores and other pleasant pieces for the general audiences to gain the Party’s favor. What the Party did not know was that in private, he continued working on more complex pieces as if he was making a secret protest through his music. In fact, Shostakovich worked on his Violin Concerto’s passacaglia movement after the repulsive sessions with Zhdanov.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Solomon Volkov, “Testimony,” *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1979), 146.

²⁰⁰ Fay, “Victory (1945–1948),” *Shostakovich: A Life*, 156.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 158.

Shostakovich finished his Violin Concerto No. 1 in 1948, but he locked it away in a desk drawer, fearing this work would bring him to his doom. This was because Zhdanovism was still effective until Stalin died in 1953, even after Zhdanov's unexpected early death in August 1948. During that time, the composer lived in persistent fear of imprisonment for writing music that was not favored by the Union. For that reason, he withheld many works, including the song-cycle *From Jewish Folk Poetry*, the *Fourth String Quartet*, and the *Prelude in F#*. Coincidentally, the Violin Concerto was also written during what Shostakovich called his "Jewish period." The composer was empathetic of the oppressed Jews who faced endless persecutions for unjust reasons. He identified himself with them for having to live in fear and yet having to find the strength and courage to survive.²⁰² Besides identifying with the Jews, the impression of Jewish music drew the composer's interest. He said, "The quality of Jewish folk music is close to my ideas of what music should be. There should be two layers in music. Jews were tormented so long that they learned to hide their despair. It's multifaceted, it can appear to be happy while it is tragic."²⁰³ The concerto was dedicated to the legendary violinist David Oistrakh and was premiered on October 29, 1955, with Oistrakh and the Leningrad Philharmonic, which was received with an overwhelming standing ovation.

Shostakovich's Violin Concerto No. 1 seems to perfectly embody the composer's outcry to authorities that were suppressing the weak—the Jews and the composer himself. As the name of the movement may suggest, the first movement, *Nocturne*, has a dark and tentative character. There are no clear directions of the phrases or harmonies as there are no cadences until measure fifty-one. No contrasting themes are found, but a single soaring melody continues, filled with

²⁰²Volkov, *Testimony*, 156.

²⁰³*Ibid.*

dissonances and tension, conveying deep sorrow and repression. Such yearning can be felt, but the music does not lead to anything, giving a sense of despair and hopelessness. Both the solo violin part and the auxiliary parts are pensive and lyrical, and they beautifully complement each other. The movement can be interpreted as a prologue: a meditation on coming events.

The second movement, Scherzo, is in D-flat, and is quite the opposite of the preceding movement. This very quick, dance-like movement demonstrates Shostakovich's cynicism at its best. At times, it can feel like traditional dance, yet Shostakovich's very untraditional and complicated harmonies turn it into sarcastic humor. It is as if everything seems fine and jolly on its surface, yet underneath, there is something very destructive and twisted. The light use of the tutti violins enables the solo violin to be heard vividly in its discourse with the woodwinds. The solo violin features uneven metric stresses set against a steady rhythmic pulse, creating uncertainty for the listener, thus more excitement.

This movement is also known for encryption of the composer's autobiographical motif—the initials of his name, DSCH. These initials are taken from the composer's German transliterated name, Dmitri Schostakowitsch (D. Sch.). Then, in accordance with German practice, the letters D-S-C-H are translated into the pitches D-E ♭ C-B. This motif not only represents Shostakovich himself; it sets an anguished and afflicted tone to the music with the intervals of minor seconds. This motif is a semitone higher, except for B (D♯-E-C♯-B), and is mostly heard in the orchestra parts, although the solo violin takes it up at times. It is as if Shostakovich is mocking the heinous authorities with a flashy yet demonic dance, and, to take it further, he is making a statement with his very own name against their will. Other

Shostakovich's works with this motif include his String Quartet No. 5, No. 8, and Symphony No. 10.²⁰⁴

The third movement, *Passacaglia*, is in F minor and constitutes a personal musical testament of the composer. One hears the real Shostakovich, his devastation and mourning, through the conflicting qualities of an unyielding bass line and a freely evolving solo part. The 17-measure, repeating harmonic-melodic pattern is initially played by the low strings and brass, with a superimposed countersubject in the form of a horn fanfare. It consists of a quarter followed by a triplet followed by a quarter note. The remaining orchestral forces are gradually added on in succeeding variations, culminating in an intense statement by the soloist in octaves. Throughout the movement, the mood keeps evolving; however, there is always a sense of despair.

The 17-measure theme appears nine times. The first statement is a noble entrance with a proud personality, twisted with aggressiveness due to the lower strings' fortissimo. The theme is also interrupted by rests, making the statement broken into shorter phrases, giving a sense of breathlessness. The first six bars are in two-bar phrases. Each phrase comprises a big descending leap from the first note to the second note, then an ascending leap from the second note to the third note. The ascending leap of perfect intervals is what suggests a royal character. The next eight bars are in four-bar phrases. Each four-bar phrase ends in the same manner as the opening with the descending and ascending gestures, but with smaller intervals. The last segment of the theme is a three-bar phrase; it starts with a significant descending interval like the opening, but this time, the third beat note (E \flat) creates a heart-wrenching tritone with the trombones (B \flat).

²⁰⁴Lee, "The 'Haunted' Shostakovich and the Co-Presence of Bach," *Tempo* 63, no. 249 (2009): 45, accessed Oct 10, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40496096>.

However, in the last measure of the theme, all the dissonances resolve in wistful F minor. It is as if the music portrays the composer's struggle to keep his dignity through the hardships and oppressions. He had to fight with the authorities and even himself to keep his self-respect even though he had to make himself seem as if he conformed.

Contrastingly, in the second statement at rehearsal number 70, the theme is played in piano by the trombone and bassoon with the woodwinds' chorale-like series of chords, giving more of a somber and less outspoken quality. This sets the tone for the solo violin entrance, a beautiful lamentation, which complements the theme played by the strings.

Finally, in the third statement of the theme at rehearsal number 71, the solo violin enters, playing the counter melody while the strings are playing the theme. Marked as piano and espressivo, it seems to represent an introverted yet poignant voice. This rotation is fluid and has a song-like effect over the continuous, velvety backdrop of the string section. By starting the tune on the third beat where the theme has a rest, Shostakovich makes it sound smooth with flexible phrasing. During the first three bars, it meanders around C with the neighbor note of D \flat , as if it is hesitant to go further. This repeating "6-5" (D \flat -C) motive seems to function as the "anguish" or "sigh" motive, acting as an appoggiatura on the dominant. Certainly, the melody is an expression of affliction and yearning, but because of the uses of triads and octave leaps, one can also sense a glimpse of hope. In the solo part, the composer also gives many practical instructions, such as hairpins. It is helpful to know how he wanted the phrasing, and it is intriguing that the placements of the hairpins in the solo part do not always line up with the hairpins in the ground bass. This creates a sense of the true polyphony rather than a mere solo with accompaniment.

In the fourth statement at rehearsal number 72, the solo violin seems to carry on more drama, and it starts to soar. Although this statement begins with similar materials to the previous one, it quickly diverts to something new. The countermelody with which the solo violin originally entered is now played by the melancholic sounding bassoon and English horn. Marked mezzo forte and espressivo, it is more vocal and spirited than before. In the fifth bar of the statement, the solo violin cries out with accented, downward gestures. Shostakovich's tenuto indication here suggests that these are not to be violent or sharp accents, but rather emotional and weighty ones. They seem to express anger, but also a heavy heart with deep sadness.

The intensity continues to grow in the fifth statement, whose beginning is clearly heard in the French horn part while the solo part continues to spin its evolving melody. Meanwhile, the cellos and basses imitate what the soloist had been playing in the previous statement. Nine measures in, the solo part is reminiscent of its first entrance, only now it is in forte with accented octaves in the high register, suggesting that what was originally presented tentatively is now being declaimed loudly. Empty first beats create a sense of even greater breathlessness or urgency, with the extreme high register bordering on shrillness. At this point, the energy is almost overwhelming, yet Shostakovich continues to build by means of melodic leaps spanning over three octaves in the solo part, as well as an increase in motion by changing from duple eighth-notes to triplets.

In the seventh statement, the music finally reaches the goal that all of this build-up had been leading to. The solo violin, at last, takes up the passacaglia theme in the piercing high register with fortissimo double-stop octaves while the celli and basses imitate the counter melody that the solo had introduced in the fourth rotation. Although the orchestra is marked fortissimo, there is no danger of them covering the soloist. The register difference ensures that the solo

violin is able to effectively rise above the orchestra. Double down-bows create a sense of physical struggle that adds to the character of this section. There is a sense of deep fulfillment or gratification that the soloist finally takes the main theme. If one thinks of the solo part as representing the protagonist in a drama, it is as though that protagonist has finally accepted and taken personal ownership of an inexorable fate that had been resisted up until this moment. This sense of fulfillment is accompanied by a sense of the great cost of having achieved it. It is also notable that in this statement, the passacaglia theme ends B[♭] major, giving the listeners a sense of hope.

In the eighth statement at number 76, the music quickly and completely changes its mood with a drastic diminuendo. One feels still shaken by what happened in the previous statement, but now it is reflecting with the aftermath of the emotional outbreak. The solo violin plays the same tune from its first entrance at number 71, but an octave lower and with mezzo piano, molto espressivo markings. It is reflective but with more confidence. In the tenth, eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth measures of number 76, Shostakovich silences the first beats in the solo violin. The missing down-beats create a sense of something essential being missing, and, thus, a sense of yearning.

In the ninth statement at number 77, the solo part fixates on the note C in the lowest register, temporarily suppressing a sense of melodic direction and throwing the listener into a sense of suspense. The ground bass is played by the strings in pizzicato, making the orchestral texture transparent. This enables the solo violin's whisper-like sound to be heard. From number 77, the violin line recalls the horn fanfare from earlier: a quarter note followed by a triplet followed by a quarter note (♩-♩♩♩-♩).

For the remainder of the movement before the cadenza, the orchestra rumbles on a low F while the solo violin re-introduces the ground bass idea in a strikingly different manner. Instead of the proud, royal character of the earlier statements, it takes on an eerie tone and question-like gesture. Soon, the music diminishes to silence as though suggesting that the depth of despair is something that cannot even be represented in sound. Remarkably, this blankness introduces one of the greatest cadenzas ever written for violin: a cadenza significant not only for its pure greatness as a piece in itself but also for its structural purpose. It serves as a smooth bridge between the tightly structured and mournful third movement and the impulsive and festive fourth movement.

The cadenza begins with an imitation of the now-familiar horn fanfare, but the silence following each statement imbues it with a questioning air. The answer comes in the form of an extended build-up that begins as pianissimo eighth-notes whose *détaché* indication gives them a sense of contained agitation. Over a long period, the dynamic level progressively increases; the rhythmic speed increases to triplets and then to sixteenths; double-stops, then triple-stops are introduced, as are violent string crossings. Along the way, accented notes, including sometimes the harsh open E-string, suggest the sound of malevolent government agents pounding at the door, a common element in Shostakovich's music. Like ghosts of past and future, motives from the Scherzo and the upcoming Burleske make their appearance, the latter providing a thrilling transition into the actual Burleske with ascending, double-stop glissandos.

The spirit of mockery returns in this jovial fourth movement, which like the Scherzo, suggests a festive peasant dance, but twisted, with elements of the grotesque. A variety of dance tunes are heard over a driving rhythmic motif. Midway through, the passacaglia theme makes a brief, mocking statement through the clarinet, the horn, and the clatter of the xylophone. A

couple of techniques not found in the earlier movements, left-hand pizzicato and fortissimo pizzicato, contribute to the grotesque quality. An increase from allegro con brio to presto brings a triumphant and virtuosic climax to the end of the movement, and the violin states the passacaglia theme one final time.

Chapter 6: Looking Back to the Past and Uniting with the Present

In the mid to late 20th century, Serialism was a mainstream, avant-garde classical composition style. Serialism is a compositional method in which a fixed series of elements such as pitches, rhythms, and dynamics is referential.²⁰⁵ The most commonly used serialism technique was the twelve-tone technique, which Schoenberg introduced in the early 1920s. In the twelve-tone technique, all 12 notes of the chromatic scale had more or less equal importance. Thus each note would appear as often as any other, preventing the music from being in a key and effectively causing atonality. This contrasted with traditional Western music, which typically was in a key. In tonal music, the tonic and dominant had more importance; they appeared more often than other notes, and the music gravitated towards them.

Twelve-tone Serialism quickly gained popularity among many composers, notably Pierre Boulez, Anton Webern, and Alban Berg.²⁰⁶ However, this highly mathematical, architectural compositional style was not as popular among the general public, as audiences found it too theoretical and not pleasing to their ears. The method was also restrictive to composers, who had to follow specific rules rather than write intuitively to reach the highest imaginative possibility. Since then, there has been a new movement toward composing music that is more communicative and more appealing to the general public. In this chapter, we will be discussing two great American composers, John Adams and John Corigliano, who chose to break from any specific style to create something more individualistic and candid. And we will be exploring their futuristic chaconnes, composed in their modern musical languages.

²⁰⁵ Arnold Whittall, "Introducing the Introduction," *Serialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 3–4.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

Johns Adams: Violin Concerto

Minimalist music began as a counter-reactive and a derivative shift from the avant-garde style of Serialism and “Chance” music, also known as “Concept music.”²⁰⁷ “Concept music” refers to music in which some compositional element is left to chance and to the performer’s decision in realizing the composer’s work. It arose as a reaction against atonal neo-classical music. According to a German researcher, Hartmut Obendorff, atonality in neo-classical music was initially thought to free the composer from the rigid restrictions of tonal music, but because each performance could go in unpredictable and arbitrary directions (due to the element of chance), the composer’s meaning could be lost.²⁰⁸

John Cage, one of the most prominent 20th-century American composers and a pupil of Schoenberg, became the leading advocate of “Concept music.” Cage’s most famous work 4’33’’ (1952) is an excellent example where the performer does nothing for four minutes and thirty-three seconds. Whatever noise occurs during the performance becomes the music. A quote from John Cage’s book *Silence: Lectures and Writings* gives us a glimpse of his philosophy. “I have spent many pleasant hours in the woods conducting performances of my silent piece...for an audience of myself...the second movement was extremely dramatic, beginning with the sounds of a buck and a doe leaping up to within ten feet of my rocky podium.”²⁰⁹

While this “Chance music” was very freeing to the composer, it often left the audience wondering about the artist’s underlying theme due to its arbitrary and unpredictable nature. In reaction, the early Minimalist composers utilized Serialism, which allowed them to present all of

²⁰⁷ Hartmut Obendorff, “The Origins of Minimal Music,” *Minimalism: Designing Simplicity* (London, U.K.: Springer, 2009), 41–42.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

the possibilities in a more formal and organized way than unstructured chance music while still providing an alternative to neo-classical composition.²¹⁰ In essence, the big picture is that “Chance music,” Serialism, and then Minimalism all arose in succession as possible answers to the “stranglehold” of atonal neo-classical music in America.²¹¹

John Coolidge Adams (b. 1947), a contemporary American composer, whose style has been influenced by Minimalism, represents a crossover between avant-garde and mainstream concert hall music.²¹² Adams studied composition at Harvard, a school that advocated Schoenberg’s 12-tone system. He found himself torn between the pressure to adhere to Serialism like other serious composers and the desire to break from it because it was not aesthetically attractive to most listeners. Instead, Adams adapted in Minimalism, which emphasized consistent rhythmic pulse, simple harmonies, and most importantly, perpetuated repetition and gradual expansion of small musical units.²¹³ However, in Adams’ take on Minimalism, he introduced more harmonic and contrapuntal complexity into his compositions.²¹⁴ Intriguingly, he believed there were many elements shared by Baroque and Minimalistic styles. Adams once argued, “the obvious connection between Baroque and Minimalist styles lies in the motoric, periodic nature of the musical discourse... both styles offer a more regular, more predictable, more reasoned universe.”²¹⁵

²¹⁰Obendorf, “The Origins of Minimal Music,” *Minimalism*, 41–42.

²¹¹Ibid.

²¹²Douglas Lee, “Masterworks of 20th Century Music: The Modern Repertory of the Symphony Orchestra” (New York: Routledge, 2010), 1.

²¹³Lee, “Masterworks of 20th Century Music”, 2.

²¹⁴Judith Tick, “John Adams, an American Master,” *Music in the USA: A Documentary Companion*, 771.

²¹⁵Kheng Keow Koay, “Baroque Minimalism in John Adam’s Violin Concerto,” *Tempo* 66, no. 260 (2012): 25, accessed Oct 16, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23263085>

Adams describes his Violin Concerto as “a throwback to traditional means of discourse and syntax.” He demonstrates both traditional and ground-breaking composition in this work.²¹⁶ Adams honors the established form of a violin concerto by following the three-movement format of fast-slow-(very) fast and inserting the cadenza at the end of the first movement. Taking it even further, he uses the Baroque device of the chaconne in the slow movement to portray a unique philosophical idea, and he uses the ancient concept of a toccata to fashion a brilliant finale. He gives that movement the title *Toccara*, the Italian word from which the musical form derives its name.

The Violin Concerto came out of a beautiful collaboration between John Adams and his close friend Jorja Fleezanis, the Minnesota Orchestra concertmaster.²¹⁷ She served as an advisor throughout the composition process and helped shape the piece to be violinistically idiomatic. Fleezanis gave the concerto’s premiere performance with the Minnesota Orchestra on January 19, 1994, which received many accolades.²¹⁸ In the 1980s, Adams favored utilizing harmony and rhythm as the main driving forces, but his violin concerto, written in 1993, demonstrates his compositional style’s shift in focus toward the melody. Adams thought a violin concerto without melody was unthinkable. Hence, he decided to create a “hyper melody” for the violin, compensating for his past works’ lack of melody.²¹⁹ Indeed, the solo violin has very few rests—

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

²¹⁷ John Adams, Rebecca Jemian, and Anne Marie De Zeeuw, “An Interview with John Adams,” *Perspectives of New Music* 34, no. 2 (1996): 88, accessed Oct 15, 2020. doi:10.2307/833472.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ Sarah Cahill, “John Adams,” *Grove Music Online* (2001), accessed Oct. 24, 2020. <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000042479>.

from the beginning to the end, the violin sings and sings throughout the 35-minute piece, while the orchestra provides a muted backdrop.

The first movement's title is simply the metronome marking number $\square = 78$. It gives a clear idea about the tempo while it deliberately withholds any suggestion of the piece's character, which the traditional Italian designations would have provided. It opens with an extended line in the solo part, both whimsical and rhapsodic, accompanied by rising parallel harmonies in the strings. That parallel motion gets faster as the movement goes on, increasing in intensity and later being rendered by winds and brass. Adams' use of synthesizers, a trademark of his orchestral music, adds a uniquely modern tone, expanding the color palette. As the movement gains momentum, the rising lines of the strings change from legato to pizzicato. As the movement draws to a close, the accompaniment becomes gradually thinner until it disappears at the solo cadenza's onset. The placement of a cadenza at the end of the first movement represents a nod to standard concerto form. However, this cadenza melts into the Chaconne's long, sustained tones, making a seamless transition into that movement.

The second movement's title, Chaconne: Body through which the dream flows, is a phrase from a poem by Californian poet Robert Haas, which provides an image not only for the movement but for the entire concerto.²²⁰ Adams describes the orchestra as the "body" and the solo violin as the floating, disembodied "dream."²²¹ The music is dreamy, calm, and highly expressive, which is a stark contrast from either outer movement. The repeated bass line is simple, static, and it provides a musical background to the syncopated solo violin.

²²⁰ Koay, "Baroque Minimalism in Adam's Violin Concerto," *Tempo*, 28.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

The bass line (D-A-B-F#-G-A-D) is remarkably similar to that found in Pachelbel's Canon (D-A-B-F#-G-D-G-A). Adams commented that he heard the British pop composer and producer Brian Eno's piece created on the Pachelbel Canon twenty years ago. Hence, it is possible he subconsciously thought of it when constructing the Chaconne.²²² The movement is in a triple meter, and it is a six-bar bass line with the harmonic progression of I-V-vi-iii-IV-V-I at its first appearance.²²³ As the music progresses, the harmonic progression alters through augmentation and diminution, but it can easily expand to nine measures or compress to six measures since they are long-note values.

Following the steps of both the old masters and the modern, Adams masterfully creates a work that looks backward and forward. His use of the chaconne form and the traditional concerto format certainly provide a conventional structure. Yet, his use of ethereal sounding chimes and synthesizers also speaks a contemporary language. The repeated bass line seems to represent the body that is a concrete matter, which one can test and sense, while the orchestra's mystical timbre appears to represent a dream or an alternative reality. The solo violin, at all times singing, seems to represent a voice weaving through the different bits of the dream while coexisting with the limiting reality (the repeated bass line). All three elements are quite distinct, yet somehow, despite their differences, they complement each other in a strangely beautiful way and result in a fascinating fusion.

The last movement, Toccata, is full of rhythmic energy and showcases the solo violin's dazzling technique through the perpetual motion. The title's meaning, 'to touch' seems to ring true in its physical execution of performing and the emotional effect the work has. The majority

²²² Adams, Jemian, and Zeeuw, "An Interview with John Adams," *Perspectives of New Music* 34, no. 2, 91.

²²³ Koay, "Baroque Minimalism in Adam's Violin Concerto," *Tempo*, 28.

of the movement consists of constant sixteenth-notes, which are quite brisk at the tempo of $\text{♩} = 138\text{--}144$. The movement feels like a fast roller coaster that explores the violin's entire range, showing off various patterns and unique techniques. Everything happens so quickly that when one realizes one has been dazzled, the concerto comes to a finish.

John Corigliano: The Red Violin: Chaconne for Violin and Orchestra

John Paul Corigliano (b. 1938) composed *The Red Violin: Chaconne for Violin and Orchestra* in 1997. The work was inspired by Corigliano's score for the film, *The Red Violin* (1998), by François Girard. Additionally, the movie score inspired him to write *The Red Violin: Suite for Violin and Orchestra* (1999) and the four-movement *Violin Concerto "The Red Violin"* (2003), which contains this Chaconne as the first movement.²²⁴ The film centers around a famous red-colored violin built by Nicolo Bussotti in the 17th century. It follows the red violin's long journey from its shocking and tragic beginning to its mysterious ending. The violin's handlers change over the centuries, and it travels across three different continents as it witnesses the painful and harrowing lives of those who hold it. As the violin's story unfolds, Corigliano introduces various etudes to represent each subsequent violinist's defining characteristics. At the same time, he uses the Red Violin theme as a unifying element to tie the episodic stories together. It serves a similar purpose as the Chaconne's repeated harmonic progression. Against it, he juxtaposes Anna's theme, the nostalgic tune first hummed by Bussotti's ill-fated wife.²²⁵ They beautifully complement each other as they share similar tragic and fatalistic elements. Throughout the Chaconne, Corigliano incorporates elements of the various etudes from the movie to revisit each violinist's fate. By using the Baroque device of the chaconne, he ties all episodic elements into a single musical idea.²²⁶

²²⁴ Mark Adamo, "John Corigliano," Grove Music Online (2001), accessed Oct 28, 2020, <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000042480>.

²²⁵ John Corigliano, "Notes by John Corigliano" in *The Red Violin: Chaconne for Violin and Orchestra* (Milwaukee, WI: Shirmir Inc., 2002).

²²⁶ Ibid.

Corigliano comes from a musical family. His father, John Corigliano Sr., served as the New York Philharmonic concertmaster for over two decades, and his mother was an accomplished pianist. Despite being exposed to music early on, Corigliano was mostly self-taught because his parents objected to his wish to pursue a musical career. Instead of following a specific style or school of composition, Corigliano, like John Adams, wished not to be bound by a particular compositional approach. He wanted to create something pleasing to listen to and, most importantly, communicative.²²⁷ He comments, “If I have a style, it’s unknown to me... I find that limiting... The goal is to write music, and good material, not style, is what holds a piece of music together.”²²⁸

Corigliano fluidly incorporates new techniques and materials. He composes each work specifically for the medium and the musicians who will play it or have commissioned it. Early in his career, he was influenced by American composers, including Aaron Copland and Leonard Bernstein; he even jokingly said he should sign his scores “Aaron Bernstein.”²²⁹ Starting with his Clarinet Concerto (1977), Corigliano began showing shifts in his compositional style by embracing an “architectural” method. By “architectural,” he was not merely implying established structures like sonata-allegro form or such. He would design an emotional, time arch of aural logic, which empowers him to integrate a wide range of musical elements. Symphony No. 1 is likely the most notable example of his architectural composition. These works often had abstract dramatic designs, sketched through words and images.²³⁰

²²⁷ Lee, “John Corigliano,” *Masterworks of 20th Century Music: The Modern Repertory of the Symphony Orchestra*, 130.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 129.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 130.

²³⁰ Adamo, “Corigliano,” *Grove Music Online* (2001), accessed Nov. 18, 2020.

Corigliano wrote Symphony No. 1 as a memorial for his friends who had died from AIDS. The first three movements, Apologue: Of Rage and Remembrance, Tarantelli, and Chaconne: Giulio's Song—, refer to three of those friends specifically.²³¹ In the third movement, he recalls all three friends by incorporating short melodic fragments that relate to them. These short musical figures are derived from an improvisation recording by the composer and his cellist friend, Giulio Sorrentino, making it remarkably personal and memorable.²³² He chose the chaconne form to bind these short melodies together at this highly emotional moment. It seems the “fate” and “death” qualities of the chaconne were well suited to this material.

The movie *The Red Violin* tells a haunting and fascinating story of the red-colored violin. The movie's red violin is the final masterwork by a storied (fictional) 17th-century violin maker, Nicolo Bussotti. While Bussotti is finishing his “perfect” violin, his pregnant wife, Anna Rudolphi Bussotti, tragically dies with the baby during childbirth. Devastated, Bussotti decides to use his late wife's blood to varnish the violin, thus creating the red violin. Bussotti is essentially making the red violin a memorial, hoping her legacy will continue through his last masterwork.

The film *The Red Violin* has two main scenes that become the returning points throughout the movie: the opening scene at an auction of fine instruments in present-day Montreal, Canada, and the scenes of Cesca, Anna's servant, foretelling the future of Anna's unborn son. As the movie unfolds, Cesca reads five tarot cards to Anna. While both women believe that these fates belong to Anna's son, they are, in fact, born by the red-violin which carries Anna's own blood.

The first card, *The Moon*, tells that he will live a long life. The film then features the violin starting its long journey in an Austrian orphanage. The second card, *The Hanged Man*,

²³¹ Lee, “Corigliano,” *Masterworks of 20th-Century Music*, 130–132.

²³² Lee, “Corigliano,” *Masterworks of 20th-Century Music*, 130–132.

represents the disease and suffering of those around A nna. In the late 18th-century, child prodigy K aspar Weiss inherits the violin at the orphanage. Unfortunately, the boy dies from a heart defect at a very young age while auditioning for a prince. Then the violin is buried along with Weiss until gypsies steal it and travel to E ngland.

C esca's third card, The Devil, suggests that A nna will meet a handsome and intelligent man who will seduce her. In the late 19th-century, an E nglish L ord Frederick Pope, a violin virtuoso, overhears the violin played by gypsies. He immediately falls in love with it and purchases the violin. Pope is an eccentric character who is a gifted musician and finds the violin artistically and sensually attractive. His girlfriend, V ictoria, becomes jealous of this and leaves him. E ventually, she returns only to find out Pope is getting his musical inspiration from the violin while he is with another woman. Furious, V ictoria shoots the violin, knowing that it is the real culprit, and leaves again. D evastated, Pope commits suicide and bestows his considerable fortune to V ictoria. Pope's C hinese servant then takes the violin to Shanghai, selling it to a pawn shop.

T he fourth card, Justice, reveals that A nna will face trial and persecution and be found guilty. The corresponding scene is set in C hina when a family of music lovers buys the violin. However, because the C ultural R evolution prohibits anyone from obtaining a W estern instrument, the violin's owners must risk their lives to preserve the instrument. T he violin barely survives through turbulent times, and when the last owner dies, the C hinese government confiscates the instrument. T he final card, D eath, symbolizes rebirth, for the positioning of the card is upside down. T he analogous scene shows the storied violin being prepared for auction in Montreal, Canada. Charles Morritz (played by Samuel Jackson), a New Y ork-based violin restorer, is hired to restore the violin before the auction. When he sees it, he suspects that this

may be the “red violin.” Morritz confirms his suspicion through secretive research. He desires the violin for himself and plans to steal it at the time of auction. He accomplishes this by discreetly exchanging the red violin with a different one backstage and makes a speedy exit. The viewers are left to wonder if the violin will serve as a blessing or a curse to Morritz as it resumes its tortuous journey.

The movie’s central focus is the violin and the violin music, not the people who handle it. When the scene changes from one handler to another, the camera stays focused on the violin to show the violin’s journey continues. Divergent and distinctive violin etudes represent each handler’s characteristics; Italian orphan child prodigy, Kasper to the gypsies, Lord Pope of England, and the Chinese music lovers. Unlike most movies, where the music supports the film’s content, the film reinforces the music in *The Red Violin*. For that purpose, Corigliano wrote violin etudes before filming commenced to enable the actors to imitate the fingerings and bowings to demonstrate this central focus on music and the violin.²³³ Furthermore, to emphasize this “stringness” of the picture, he scored just for the soloist and string orchestra for the soundtrack. However, *The Red Violin Chaconne* is written for solo violin and full orchestra.”²³⁴

The *Red Violin* theme, which is also *The Red Violin* chaconne theme, makes the first appearance in the movie in the opening scene while showing Nicolo Bussotti working in his workshop. Since the chaconne theme appears repeatedly, it will be referred to as a pattern, as well.

²³³ Corigliano, “Notes by John Corigliano” in *The Red Violin: Chaconne for Violin and Orchestra*.

²³⁴ Ibid.

Example 2.6.2a: The Red Violin theme and the chaconne theme²³⁵

This chaconne demonstrates several departures from the Baroque chaconne. Traditionally, the chaconne is in a triple meter, but in *The Red Violin*, Corigliano chooses a duple meter. However, the Chaconne's meter changes throughout the piece. It mostly stays in 2/2, as shown, but it does alternate with 3/2 or 9/8 at times. The voice leading and chord progression are also a bit unusual. Most notes move by semitones, which creates chromaticism and a sense of angst, as it does in Britten's chaconne. In a traditional chaconne, each pattern ends on the dominant chord (half cadence), which naturally leads to the tonic. Corigliano's chaconne's pattern ends on the seventh chord, featuring both the regular seventh (C in violin I) and the raised seventh (C# in violin II and viola), creating even more tension. The sevenths resolve up to the tonic, providing a weaker cadence, and one can sense the conflict from the clashing sevenths resolving to tonic.

But perhaps the most unconventional aspect of this chaconne is the lack of ground bass or repeated harmonic progression. However, the chaconne's motifs appear throughout, and one will doubtlessly recognize the theme. The two principal motifs are the rising semitonal scale and the double dotted rhythm. Semitonal material creates ambiguity for the chord progressions, thereby giving ample room for variation. The other motif is the double-dotted rhythm, recalling the style of a French Overture. In *The Red Violin*, this rhythmic motif seems to add urgency and possibly

²³⁵ John Corigliano, *The Red Violin: Suite for Violin and Orchestra* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1999), 2.

conveys the violin's heartbeats. The chaconne continuously evolves through different lengths, a varying number of chords, or other keys. However, one can always sense the chaconne's presence through its principal features.

Anna's theme, a thematic melody woven in the piece, also has a strong presence. It is the simple and beautiful melody Anna sang to her unborn son when she was carrying the baby. This lyrical yet heartbreaking tune seems to suit her persona and her tragic death. It appears that Anna's voice becomes her unborn son's voice, which is carried by the red violin itself as it continues her legacy in most unpredictable ways. Similar to the use of the chaconne theme, Anna's theme is varied. However, its distinct gesture with the intervals makes it easy for the listeners to recognize them even as Corigliano slightly alters them. In particular, he uses the first three measures of her tune as a motif. It is a rising gesture, first with a whole step, then a half step, followed by a leap by a fifth. See Example 2.6.2b for Anna's theme and the chaconne theme from the piano reduction score.

Example 2.6.2b: Anna's theme (m. 46–56, 57–) and the chaconne theme (m. 49–56, 57–)²³⁶

²³⁶Corigliano, *The Red Violin: Chaconne for Violin and Orchestra*, 3.

The Red Violin: Chaconne for Violin and Orchestra has established itself as one of the most sensational modern works for violin and orchestra. The premiere concert of the Chaconne with Joshua Bell, the soloist, Robert Spano, the conductor, and the San Francisco Symphony on November 26, 1997, was well received and Corigliano's music for The Red Violin, in which the Chaconne is a part, won the 1999 Academy Award for Best Original Score.²³⁷ The Red Violin Chaconne seems to express many things—Bussotti's obsession with the violin, Anna's tragic death, the Austrian child prodigy, Kaspar Weiss, and so forth. Impressively, Corigliano uses a single and timeless device, the chaconne, to encompass the diverse elements of The Red Violin and communicates the message of fate and timeless beauty.

²³⁷ Corigliano, "Notes by John Corigliano" in The Red Violin: Chaconne for Violin and Orchestra.

Chapter 7—Closing: Chaconne, the Timeless Musical Form

Doing my dissertation on the chaconne's history helped me understand the form's ability to express a wide range of emotions and subjects. I believe that many composers chose to use the chaconne because of its enigmatic and paradoxical characteristics. It is raucous yet profound, it is celebratory yet mournful, it seems restricted, yet it is infinitely expressive. This multi-layer nature helps to deliver the composer's complex messages. Shostakovich's works were his secret protests, like a musical diary in a language only he could understand. He knew what it meant for the Jews to live in a world full of fear, yet needing to laugh to survive. I believe these qualities attracted Shostakovich to "Jewish themes" and to the chaconne/passacaglia.

After studying the history of chaconne and various works by composers from different eras, I will approach learning or performing chaconnes differently going forward. First, I will be more mindful of each repeating unit. A detail-oriented person working on pieces in variation form can easily get distracted by focusing too much on the shape of individual notes or of specific musical gestures. This focus may cause one to lose sight of the idea that these details are part of a variation, built upon a repeating harmonic progression or a bass line. Knowing the significance of the fateful, repeating underlying materials, can help one be more conscious of how elaborate variations in an upper voice form a dialogue with recurring themes.

Second, I will study the piece's structure, so I understand how each variation fits into the whole. The chaconne's tonalities are more limited compared to the typical Romantic period works. In the Romantic period, forms such as the sonata-allegro had larger structures and contrasting tonalities. For that reason, it is even more important to know how the composer structured the chaconne to understand its overall plan. For example, Bach divided his chaconne into three parts by minor, major, and minor keys. The ground bass, D-C-B \flat -A, is applied or

implied through the entire piece, but it is almost always transformed. For example, in the beginning, Bach alters the ground bass by writing it in a harmonic minor scale. It is not always easy to spot the ground bass in Bach's chaconne because it sometimes jumps from the bass to different voices. He uses various methods like transposition and diminution to vary it further. Later, in the arpeggio section, it becomes a natural minor key. Going forward, I will prioritize knowing the piece's underlying structure before simply learning the notes.

And lastly, I will boldly explore the composer's intent, using my imagination and creativity when performing chaconnes. I learned that not only does chaconne have multiple conflicting qualities, which make the form cryptic, but its ambiguous quality gives the performer ample opportunities to be creative and expressive. In pieces like Britten's Violin Concerto and Corigliano's Red Violin Chaconne, even the tonalities are vague, and the ground bass is only implied with motifs. The composers chose these abstract elements so the performer and the listeners can create their own original interpretations. By this, I do not mean that one should just write a musical fiction. One should carefully research the composers and their writing styles, and seek out any other information they provide about the piece. Having done so, one may then boldly come up with an original interpretation based on the available materials, since the form itself has complicated meanings and can express complex emotions.

I hope this dissertation will help others who study and perform the chaconne to understand the form's multifaceted characteristics and possibilities. I believe it will help me as a performer and as a teacher to approach learning chaconne pieces a little bit differently. It will also impact my approach to other forms because I will be more mindful of how a piece is organized.

The chaconne's original nature provides continual momentum and cohesion. It persists despite stylistic preferences in modern times. The chaconne was revitalized in the 20th century after a long hiatus of 150 years. Its qualities are eternal, as it memorializes and celebrates the cycle of life, death, and the afterlife. It will always remain a versatile vehicle through which to speak of a wide range of philosophical ideas and complex emotions when words fail.

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This is a transcribed interview conducted by Rebecca Jemian and Anne Marie De Zeeuw with John Adams from Oct 24, 1995. The interview took place in Louisville when Adams received the University of Louisville Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition for his Violin Concerto. In the interview, he gives us insights about his Violin Concerto.

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Appold, Juliette. "Introduction" in *Ravel Trio Pour Piano, Violon et Violoncelle*. Ed.

Herausgegeben von Juliette Appold. Basel, Germany: Bärenreiter-Verlag Karl Vötterle, 2009: IX–X.

This is the Ravel Trio score, which has an introduction by Juliette Appold. Appold gives us insight into the background of the Ravel Trio. There is information on how Ravel had to rush to finish the composition to join the army, as evidenced by his notes at the bottom of the autograph score: "March to April, July to August 1914."

Arnold, Denis and Tim Carter. "Madrigals with basso continuo." *Monteverdi*. London: J.M. Dent, 1990, 69–94.

Arnold and Carter present a thorough biography of Monteverdi. They offer a vivid portrait of Monteverdi's inspirations, influences, and life experiences. In the "Madrigals with basso continuo" chapter, Monteverdi's *Zefiro torna* is discussed in depth. *Zefiro* shares its name with Monteverdi's other song, a five-voice acapella set on Petrarch's sonnet. For that reason, it is in a way a parody of by Ottavio Rinuccini in the 16th-century sense, and most importantly, it keeps the same contrast between joyful nature and the lover abandoned to his doleful thoughts.

Biber, Heinrich and Peter Holman. "Mystery Man. Peter Holman Celebrates the 350th Anniversary of the Birth of Heinrich Biber." *The Musical Times* 135, no. 1817 (1994): 437–41. Accessed Dec 1, 2020. doi:10.2307/1003253.

Biber's most well-known work, the *Mystery sonatas*, is a collection of 15 sonatas for violin and continuo and a finale *passacaglia* for solo violin. Each sonata is identified by an engraving depicting one of the 15 Mysteries of the Rosary (apparently cut from the devotional book and carefully pasted into the score). Thus, the collection is usually

referred to as The Mystery Sonatas, the Rosary Sonatas, and the Copper-Engraving Sonatas.

Brewer, Charles E. "Context for and Functions of Instrumental Music in Central Europe." *A Companion to Music at the Habsburg Courts in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed Andrew H. Weaver. Boston: Brill, 2020, 327.

Brewer offers insights into Schmelzer's career as a court musician under the emperor, Leopold I. Schmelzer probably began his career as a court musician as a violinist in 1635–6 and eventually became the Kapellmeister after G.F. Sances dies. He wrote many ballet music, as dance music was a regular part of royal entertainment. The goal of these ballet music was to bring out the visual spectacles and the symbolic significances, as well as to support the stylized ballet movements

Brewer, Charles E. "Johann Heinrich Schmelzer and Music at the Viennese Court." *The Instrumental Music of Schmelzer, Biber, Muffat and Their Contemporaries*. 45–53,79. Schmelzer made substantial contributions to the development of violin technique and the development of sonata and suite forms in Austria and South Germany. He enjoyed a close relationship with the emperor, Leopold I. Schmelzer was the director of instrumental music at the emperor's coronation in Frankfurt, became a *vie*-Kapellmeister in 1671. Finally, in 1679, Schmelzer officially became the Kapellmeister.

Bukofzer, Manfred. *Music in the Baroque Era*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1947, 15.

Some of the different stylistic elements of Renaissance and Baroque music include the treatment of dissonances. In Renaissance, all dissonances came either passing on the weak beats or as the suspension on the strong beat. As far as harmony is concerned, it was the intervallic harmony, not the chordal harmony. In Baroque, the bass supplied the chord, which then enabled the upper voices to form dissonances and move freely. This drove the practice of ground bass. In Baroque, composers also started writing idiomatic music, unlike Renaissance music, which could be performed vocally or instrumentally.

Byrnside, Ronald L. "Musical Impressionism: The Early History of the Term." *The Musical Quarterly* 66, no. 4 (1980): 522–538. Accessed Sept 4, 2020.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/741965>.

Byrnside offers knowledge on the term "musical impressionism" and its early history. Byrnside states the idea of impressionism first came from Monet's *Impression, Sunrise*, painted in 1873. In music, impressionism sought to offer a new experience of reality by expressing the immediate effect of hearing, seeing, feeling on the mind—a perception of an object rather than exhibiting strong emotions. In music, this meant an exaggerated sense of musical colors, timbre.

Cassidy, Robert. *A Comparison of Passacaglias in Piano Trios by Ravel and Shostakovich From A Historical and Theoretical Perspective*. Muncie, IN: Ball State University, 2006, 27–28, 50, 53.

The third and fourth chapters focus on the historical and theoretical comparison of the passacaglias in Ravel and Shostakovich's piano trios. In the history section, Cassidy

details the composer's life during the time he wrote the piece. In the theory section, Cassidy provides a concentrated examination and comparison of melody, harmony, rhythm, texture, and form, as used by Ravel and Shostakovich in these two passacaglias. Corigliano, John. "Notes by John Corigliano" in *The Red Violin: Chaconne for Violin and Orchestra*. Milwaukee, WI: Shirmir Inc., 2002.

This is Corigliano's *The Red Violin Chaconne* score with the piano reduction. In the "note," the composer explains the piece—background, inspiration, process, and purpose. It helps readers understand and interpret Corigliano's music.

Elliott, Graham. *Benjamin Britten: The Spiritual Dimension*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006, 7.

Elliot states there are strong influences of his pacifism and his homosexuality in his music. It is often suggested that Britten felt himself to be an outsider from 'normal' society and that this accounts for his concern to portray the 'outsider' in his operas. Elliot suggests his music embraces even broader and more universal concerns, and in addressing those concerns, there is a clearly defined pattern of spiritual influence. In part one of the book, Elliot examines Britten's early life and the strong presence which the Church had in his childhood and adolescence.

Ewen, David. *The World of Twentieth-Century Music*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968, 110–112.

This is a comprehensive study of modern music that explores its development from 1900 to the present day. It offers a brief biography, a list of compositions, and the compositional style and influences. Ewen discusses Britten's original style, which does not adhere to any specific style but is always full of self-expression.

Fairclough, Pauline. "Facts, Fantasies, and Fictions: Recent Shostakovich Studies." *Music & Letters* 86, no. 3 (2005): 452–460. Accessed Oct 10, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3526611>.

Fairclough reviews recent Shostakovich studies and discusses the controversies among them. Since the composer died in 1975, many documents such as letters, diaries, and memoirs started coming out. There are varying interpretations of Shostakovich and his works. He was a very complex person, and there are many layers in his personality and works.

Fay, Laurel. "Introduction," "The War Years," "Victory (1945–1948)." *Shostakovich: A Life*. New York: Oxford University Press (2000): 1–5, 123–143, 145–165.

After studying Shostakovich's primary documents, including the composer's letters, concert programs, and review, newspaper articles, diaries of his contemporaries, Fay presents a thorough biography of Shostakovich. Each chapter devotes itself to a period of his life. The chapters I found most helpful for my project were "Introduction," "The War Years," and "Victory (1945–1948)." In the "Introduction," Fay discusses a general philosophy of Shostakovich as well as his personality. In "The War Years," *Symphony No. 7* and the *Piano Trio No. 2* are closely examined as well as their background. In "Victory (1945–1948)," Fay weighs on Zhdanovism of 1947 and the *Violin Concerto (1947–48)*, which had to be locked away until Stalin died in 1953.

Hall, Richard C. *Consumed by War: European Conflict in the 20th Century*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010, 80–83, 107–109, 244.

Hall outlines the European wars that tainted much of the 20th century, including the Balkan Wars, World War I and II. Hall provides insights on concise historical backgrounds to help readers follow the development of each war. The information I found helpful was about World War I and II, the Russian Civil War, and the Spanish Civil War.

Handel, Darrell. "Britten's Use of the Passacaglia." *Tempo*, no. 94 (1970): 2–6. Accessed Oct 02, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/943210>.

Handel claims Britten and Hindemith utilize Passacaglia as a confirming finale. He asserts that the passacaglia in their use confirms a tonal centre, recalls earlier thematic material, and in general gives a sense of finality. Furthermore, Handel claims that in Britten's works, passacaglia creates a point of stability in which other movements can gravitate.

Harris, Ellen T. "Premiere: Place, Date, and Meaning." *Henry Purcell's Dido and Aeneas*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017, 30–52.

Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, one of the great English operas, is shrouded in controversy. There are debates about the premiere's date and place as well as the accuracy of the surviving scores. In 2009, the "letter from Aleppo" discovered by Bryan White, suggests that the opera was written ("made") for Josias Priest's school and first performed "no later than July 1688," perhaps on December 1, 1687, when Priest had a Grand Ball (a type of performance often including theater as well as dance).

Henderson, Lyn. "Shostakovich and the Passacaglia: Old Grounds or New?" *The Musical Times* 141, no. 1870 (2000): 53. Accessed Oct 14, 2020. doi:10.2307/1004371.

Henderson reflects on the evolution of Shostakovich's passacaglias. His first intimation of the passacaglia model is in the first part of *Symphony No. 2* (1927). His first work with an authentic use of passacaglia is in the opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1932). *Lady Macbeth*, which received heavy criticisms, features the Baroque form during a dramatic crux, where the heroine murders her father-in-law. Passacaglias from the *Piano Trio No. 2* and the *Violin Concerto No. 1* are examined and compared.

Holman, Peter. "Theatre Music." *Henry Purcell*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, 188–227.

Holman outlines the theatre world in England of the 17th century. Purcell's works demonstrate the unique English style opera, which has the influence of both Italy and France. *Dido* is Purcell's one true opera. However, he produced a substantial number of other stage works starting in the 1680s, including four semi-operas and incidental music for some 50 plays, including Dryden's *Amphitryon* and Congreve's *The Double-Dealer*.

Horst, Louis. "Chaconne and Passacaglia." *Pre-Classic Dance Forms*. Princeton, New Jersey: Dance Horizons, 1987, 101–198.

Horst offers complete historical descriptions of 16th and 17th-century dances. A chapter is devoted to each of the dances, and their customs and styles are detailed. In the “Chaconne and Passacaglia” chapter, Horst outlines Chaconne and Passacaglia’s early origins and etymologies. Chaconne and Passacaglia are so similar, the composer’s preference usually distinguishes the two, but their roots slightly differ. Chaconne was a Spanish dance, which was adopted by the French then transformed into a social dance. Both are a theme and variation technique, and both feature a ground bass.

Hudson, Richard. “The Folia Dance and the Folia Formula in 17th Century Guitar Music.” *Musica Disciplina* 25 (1971): 199–200. Accessed November 20, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20532136>.

Most of the early folia music appears in the guitar tablatures from the early 17th century. It featured a special harmonic progression as well as a distinct structure. Hudson details the guitar music that is associated with early folia and their harmonies and structures. He suggests that folia, chaconne, passacaglia, and sarabande are closely related.

Hudson, Richard. “The Folia Melodies.” *Acta Musicologica* 45, no. 1 (1973): 98–119. Accessed Feb 27, 2019. doi:10.2307/932224.

Folia is a type of folk dance that later came to be associated with a popular musical framework. There are two types of folia of the earlier and the later. Both seem to be influenced by a specific chordal scheme, and both utilized the repeating chordal progressions, which is a deciding factor in chaconne. The earlier folia was not a fixed sequence of chords of a specific theme but a compositional-improvisational process that could generate these chords' sequences. The later folia is credited to Jean-Baptiste Lully, who modeled a distinct chordal scheme. This is the tune and the chordal progression one hears in Corelli’s Folia, i-V-i-VII-III-VII-i-V.

Hudson, Richard. “The “Zarabanda” and “Zarabanda Francese” in Italian Guitar Music of the Early 17th Century.” *Musica Disciplina* 24 (1970): 125–49. Accessed Nov 20, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20532057>.

Zarabanda was part of the Spanish five-course guitar in the early 17th century, and its earliest example appears in the Italian guitar tablatures. The Spanish five-course guitar featured five-courses where each course has two strings of unison or octave. The two strings were placed close to each other and meant to be played simultaneously. The music for the Spanish five-course guitar was completely chordal, consequently creating harmony-driven music. Hudson further discusses the harmonic scheme associated with sarabande and how it is also related to chaconne and passacaglia.

Koay, Kheng Keow. “Baroque Minimalism in John Adam’s Violin Concerto.” *Tempo* 66, no. 260 (2012): 23–33. Accessed Oct 16, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23263085>.

Koay explores Adams’ interpretation of Baroque genres and his creative methods that draw on a relationship between past and present in the Violin Concerto. Adams argues that repetition plays a large part in the Violin Concerto, but more in the sense of variation and sequences than literal repetition. The study further provides other examples that demonstrate the similarities between Baroque works and Minimalism.

Lee, Douglas. "John Adams," "John Corigliano." *Masterworks of 20th-Century Music: The Modern Repertory of the Symphony Orchestra*. New York: Routledge, 2010. 1–2, 129–132.

In this book, Lee surveys over two dozen most prominent orchestral composers of the 20th-century and discusses select works. In "John Adams," Lee analyzes Adams' style and further outlines how his style differs from purely Minimal music. He also offers Adams' musical background to help the readers understand the composer better. In "John Corigliano," Lee provides useful information on John Corigliano's background, as well as his style and philosophy. The select work, *Symphony No. 1*, is written as a memorial for the composer's personal friends. Intriguingly, he chooses the chaconne form in the third movement to bind different elements together, as he does in *The Red Violin Chaconne*.

Lee, Johnson. "The 'Haunted' Shostakovich and the Co-Presence of Bach," *Tempo* 63, no. 249 (2009): 45, accessed Oct 10, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40496096>.

Lee argues Shostakovich not only paid homage to Bach by utilizing Bach's or Baroque devices but composed in a way one can sense Bach's co-presence in some of his works. The prime example Lee uses to argue is Shostakovich's 24 Preludes and Fugues, which has a striking resemblance to Bach's two sets of preludes and fugues in all 24 major and minor keys, *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. Shostakovich's *String Quartet No. 8* is also closely examined for featuring the DSCH motif, his musical cryptogram in the manner of the BACH motif.

Lester, Joel. "The History of Bach's Solo-Violin Works." *Bach's Works for Solo Violin*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 7, 8, 11, 19, 21, 23, 151–152, 155. Lester offers in-depth studies of each movement of Bach's Solo Violin Partita and Sonata and provides their historical background and significance. Bach, who believed a composer should have "good inventions [musical ideas]...[and] develop them well," thoroughly explored the possibilities of each genre in instrumental collections. Although the Six Solo Violin Sonatas and Partitas may appear to be a conventional collection of dance movements, each work is unique as they feature uncommon elements.

MacDonald, Ian. "Togetherness: 1938–1946." *The New Shostakovich*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, (1990): 139–183.

MacDonald presents the case for Shostakovich's dissident view. He delves into his life events in-depth to understand the meaning of the composer's music under Soviet Communism. The chapter I found useful for my project was "Togetherness 1938–1946," which discusses Shostakovich designating works as memorials.

Martin, Nicholas Ivor. *The Opera Manual*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2014, 88–89, 289–290. Martin offers concise information on over 500 operas. He lists critical information like composer, librettist, language, a summary of the plot, structure of the opera, as well as information about premier performance. I found helpful information about Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and Lully's *Phaëton*.

Mather, Betty Bang. "Introduction" in *Dance Rhythms of the French Baroque*, xii.

Mather emphasizes the importance of understanding the intimate relationship between the dance movements and the music when it comes to French Baroque music. It centered around Lully's theatrical works and the rhythms of the dance music composed at the court of Louis XIV. I found Chaconne and Folia to be helpful, where the author examines the history of the two dances and what the bowings and dance movements would have been like for these types of dance music.

Mitchell, Donald, and Philip Reed. *Letters from a Life: The Selected Letter and Diaries of Benjamin Britten, 1913–1939*, vol. 1. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, 790. This is a collection of Britten's letters during 1946–51. The editors have detailed commentary, offering an insight into Britten's life and compositional style. In this book, I found information about his Violin Concerto's background and information about the controversies over work's key and the title when it was premiered in New York.

Nettl, Paul. "The Baroque Period II—French Ballet, French Dances, Suites and Keyboard-Music." *The Story of Dance Music*. New York, NY: Philosophical Library, 1947, 160–202.

Nettl examines dance music from its primitive form to modern dance. In "The Baroque Period II," Nettl discusses how ballet is the groundwork for all the figures of the French court dances, and consequently, the dance music. Compared to the somewhat rustic Austrian dances, the French dances, even peasant dances like Bouree, always demonstrate elegance and grace.

Obendorf, Hartmut. "The Origins of Minimal Music" *Minimalism: Designing Simplicity*. London, U.K: Springer, 2009. 41–42.

In "The Origins of Minimal Music," Obendorf discusses Minimal music's origin, an avant-garde style, "Concept music." He discusses the philosophy behind "Concept music" and explains how Minimalism is both counter-reactive and derivative of "Concept music" and Serialism. He describes the common elements between the early Minimal music and the "Concept music."

Pincherle, Marc. "The Life of Corelli." *Corelli: His Life, His Work*, transl. Hubert E. M. Russell. Paris: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1956, 46, 140.

This is Corelli's biography book detailing his life, his works, and his influence. Regarding his personality, there are anecdotes that do not agree. Some said of Corelli, "remarkable for the mildness of his temper and the modesty of his deportment." On the contrary, at least one witness said, "it was usual for his countenance to be distorted, his eyes to become as red as fire, and his eyeballs to roll as if in agony.

Puri, Michael J. "The Passion of the Passacaille: Ravel, Wagner, Parsifal." *Cambridge Opera Journal* 25, no. 3 (2013): 285–318. Accessed Sept 20, 2020, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24252349>.

Puri argues seemingly far apart, Ravel and Wagner have multiple shared musical elements. For example, he compares Ravel's Piano Trio passacaglia to Wagner's Wehelaute from Parsifal, Act 1, "March to the Castle of the Grail." Puri asserts that the shared elements suggest that Ravel secretly paid homage to Wagner and the

Wagnerianism, when the impressionism, the movement Ravel was a part of, was a sharp departure from it.

Robinson, Suzanne. ““An English Composer Sees America”: Benjamin Britten and the North American Press, 1939–42,” *American Music* 15, no. 3 (1997): 322. Accessed Oct 06, 2020. doi:10.2307/3052328.

Robinson offers an insight into Britten’s journey to North America in 1939. She also argues that the music written between 1939–42 is seen as a work of personal and professional maturity. Selected works are examined including, the Violin Concerto (1939), Symphony No. 1 (Sinfonia da Requiem, 1940), opera *Paul Bunyan* (1941), and the String Quartet No. 1 (1941).

Rosand, Ellen. “The Descending Tetrachord: An Emblem of Lament.” *The Musical Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (1979): 346–59. Accessed Aug 5, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/741489>. Starting from the 1640s, the descending tetrachord began to be associated almost exclusively with lament. It was typically used as an emotional climax in the early operas, and it distinguished itself from the rest of the work. There was more formality in the lament as it was strongly metered and featured rhythmed texts. The pattern had a strong harmonic direction, reinforced by stepwise melody, accompanied by steady, unarticulated rhythm and brevity.

Roseberry, Eric. “The concertos and early orchestral scores: aspects of style and aesthetic” in *The Cambridge Companion to Benjamin Britten*, ed. Mervyn Cooke. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 238–239.

This is a comprehensive guide to Britten’s work. It provides knowledge on the composer’s stylistic and personal development. In particular, it discusses Britten’s interest in the music of the Far East. In “The concertos and early orchestral scores,” Roseberry examines select works in-depth, including the Violin Concerto that suggests the Spanish influence.

Silbiger, Alexander. “Passacaglia and Ciaccona: Genre Pairing and Ambiguity from Frescobaldi to Couperin.” *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music*, Vol.2/1 (1996). Accessed on February 2, 2019, <https://sscm-jscm.org/v2/no1/silbiger.html#Section1>.

Chaconne and passacaglia are variation forms involving a repeating ground bass and/or harmonic progression. Both forms are so similar; many use the term interchangeably, although some composers draw a distinction between them. Each country has developed characteristics of the form. Germany’s chaconne features majestic ground-bass with brilliant figurations, and France’s tends to be formal, aristocratic, and full of pathos.

Stein, Leon. “The Passacaglia in the Twentieth Century.” *Music & Letters* 40, no. 2 (1959): 150–53. Accessed Sept 18, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/728985>.

Stein examines the passacaglias in 20th-century music by comparing works by various composers, including Ravel, Hindemith, Bloch, and Britten. He states passacaglia, by nature, provides continuity, coherence, order, and symmetry. Stein then argues that passacaglia reemerged as a means to offer order and architecture in the 20th-century

music with great varieties and irregularities. He also contends the new aspiration towards the architectural concept drove passacaglia's birth.

Stowell, Robin. "The repertory and principal sources." *The Early Violin and Viola: A Practical Guide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 13.

Heinrich von Biber, who is most famous for the use of scordatura, was one of the most outstanding violin virtuosi of the century. Scordatura, which requires altered tunings, provided a special tone, and sonority for each work's extramusical inspiration. This technique sometimes even expanded the instrument's register (especially going below the low G, which is the lowest note on the violin otherwise) or allowed the unconventional double-stopping and string crossing.

Sturman, Janet. "Introduction" to *Jewish Experience in Classical Music: Shostakovich and Asia*. Cambridge Scholars: Newcastle upon Tyne, UK (2014): xiii–xxii

In "Introduction," Janet Sturman discusses the anti-Semitism and the rise of Russian nationalism, which prompts the Russian-Jew composers to integrate Jewish folk music into concert art music. Sturman investigates the definition of Jewish folk music and explains how Jews carried their spiritual nationality. She explains Shostakovich's fascination with Jewish music and why he identified with them.

Tenster, Alexander. "Dmitri Shostakovich and Jewish Music." *Jewish Experience in Classical Music: Shostakovich and Asia*. Cambridge Scholars: Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, 2014, 1–24.

Tenster explores the breadth of traditional Jewish culture on Western classical music in the 20th century and beyond by comparing Dmitri Shostakovich and Daniel Asia. In "Dmitri Shostakovich and Jewish Music," Tenster examines the Jewish elements in Shostakovich's music and their characteristics. The features include modalities such as "altered Phrygian," "Ukrainian Dorian," iambic primes, the "um-pa" dance style, and most importantly, the contradiction between form and inflection, such as setting sad-seeming minor mode with a dance form.

Thoene, Helga. *Johann Sebastian Bach, Ciaccona: Tanz oder Tombeau? Oschersleben: Ziethen, 2003.*

German musicologist Helga Thoene argues Bach wrote his famous chaconne as a memorial for his late wife, Maria Barbara Bach. Furthermore, she asserts her name is encrypted at the opening of the piece, and other chorale tunes are hidden in the piece, too. According to Thoene, Bach's own Cantata No. 4 is the main chorale used, which title translates as "Christ Lay in the Bonds of Death. She also claims Bach used gematria in many ways, and that is why the page number of Bach's autograph of the solo-violin works is 41 pages: J. S. Bach (9+18+14) = 41.

Tick, Judith. "John Adams, An American Master." *Music in the USA: A Documentary Companion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. 771–778.

In this book, Tick surveys influential American composers and selects works ranging from the mid-16th century to the 20th-century. In "John Adams," Tick discusses several influences on Adams' music, particularly in his opera. This chapter includes a transcribed

interview with Adams, so the readers can directly hear from the composer himself about his works.

Vallis, Claude. "The Baroque Ideal." *Baroque music*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1991, 1–2, 8–12.

The "Second Practice" was first introduced by Claudio Monteverdi. The "Second Practice" included basso continuo, indicating the composers are thinking more harmonically than intervallically. More dissonances became allowed, and bringing out the effects of texts became more important.

Villiers, Bernadette de. *Benjamin Britten's Use of the Passacaglia*. Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 1985, 44–59.

Villiers analyzes several of Britten's passacaglias, including Piano Concerto, Violin Concerto, "Dirge" from *Serenade*, and Peter Grimes, to name a few. Villiers claims that Britten used passacaglia as a central movement or a finale. When used in a central position, the passacaglia frequently has a stabilizing influence. When used as a final movement, it tends to function as a confirming focal point. Britten's passacaglia theme is thoroughly examined by criteria such as structure, function, and influence, among others.

Volkov, Solomon. "Testimony." *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1967.

Solomon Volkov, a musicologist, writes the memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich after a series of meetings with him between 1971 and 1974. It includes many of the composer's comments, which help us understand him as a person and interpret his music. Unlike the persona he held during his lifetime as a true-believing communist, Volkov suggests Shostakovich was a closet dissident of Stalin.

Walker, Thomas. "Chacona and Passacaglia: Remarks on Their Origin and Early History." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 21, no. 3 (1968): 300–20. Accessed Aug 8, 2020. doi:10.2307/830537.

Chaconne, passacaglia, sarabande, and folia appear to have originated as peasant folk dance. Chaconne was to be performed fleetly and passionately. Its high spirits were expressed in the lengthy texts, usually beginning with some variant of 'Vida, vida, vida bona! Vida, vámonos á Chacona!' meaning 'Let's live the good life; let's go to Chacona!'. It is reported many could not resist the call to join the dance, regardless of their station in life. It also appears chaconne gained its name from an unidentified place near Tampico, Mexico, referred to in some texts.

Whittall, Arnold. "Introducing the Introduction." *Serialism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 3–4.

In the 1920s, Arnold Schoenberg introduced Serialism, which breaks away from the traditional tonal composition of major and minor keys. Schoenberg's pupils like Milton Babbitt and Pierre Boulez wanted to radicalize it, whereas others like Dmitri Shostakovich and Benjamin Britten utilized aspects of Serialism. Serialism's most well-known method is the twelve-tone technique, where all 12 notes of the chromatic scale have more or less equal importance.