

DLA Doctoral Dissertation Thesis

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J. S. Bach: Cello Suites – interpretation and arrangement for bassoon

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I. Antecedents of the Research

It was years ago when I started to contemplate about the idea of how to make a bassoon arrangement of J. S. Bach's Cello Suites. During my conservatoire years I acquired several movements of the Suites, however they were mostly based on different cello publications. The aim of my present dissertation is to create a bassoon-interpretation which is in addition to being instrument-like, preserves the characteristics of the period.

While composing my own adaptation, I considered it most important to pay attention to – to the best of my knowledge – the one and only bassoon-interpretation, made by the American bassoonist, conductor and composer, Arthur Weisberg: J. S. Bach: *Five Suites for Solo Bassoon BWV 1007-1011* (Boca Raton: Ludwig Masters, 2011). This publication contains the first five Suites, excluding the sixth one, due to its big register. While studying Weisberg's arrangement regarding the rendering and the process of transcribing, several important questions arose in my mind, for which Weisberg's interpretation did not give a satisfactory explanation:

How can it be achievable to produce an arrangement, which is consistent and clear what concerns the articulation and the ornamentation, still, at the same time it is instrument-like and preserves the characteristics of the period mode of playing? How can it be feasible to present the game of double-stops and that of the accords in the notes, so that it would clearly instruct the player how to perform them? The answers for all these mentioned I could obtain while I was analysing further sources, manuscripts, critical publications, arrangements as well as theoretical presentations.

II. Sources

Out of the four Cello-suites having survived, none is the manuscript of Bach's. Scientific literature refers to them as follows: **A.** Anna Magdalena Bach's copy, **B.** Johann Peter Kellner's copy, **C.** the work of two copyists, one of them is known as Anonymous 402, the other is unknown, **D.** unknown. The first two pieces might have been made between 1720 and 1730, while the other two in the second half of the 18th century. In addition to all these, the most recent critical publications served as great help for me too, which had been elaborated based on the four manuscripts. (J. S. Bach: *6 Suites a Violoncello Solo senza Basso. BWV 1007-1012*. Herausgegeben von Bettina Schwemer, Douglas Woodfull-Harris. Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 2000; J. S. Bach: *Sechs Suiten für Violoncello solo. BWV 1007-1012*. Herausgegeben

von Kirsten Beisswenger. Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Hartel, 2000; J. S. Bach: *Sechs Suiten. Violoncello Solo. BWV 1007-1012*. Herausgegeben von Egon Voss. Fingersatz und Strichbezeichnung von Reiner Ginzel. München: Henle Verlag, 2007; J. S. Bach: *Suiten für Violoncello solo. BWV 1007-1012*. Herausgegeben von Ulrich Leisinger, Mainz und Wien: Schott/Universal Edition, 2000).

I could obtain further details concerning the differences in the interpretation of articulations and ornaments in the manuscripts and the critical editions having studied the following works: Johann Joachim Quantz: *On Playing the Flute* (translated by András Székely, Budapest: Argumentum Publishing, 2011; first published in Berlin, 1752) and Leopold Mozart: *On Playing the Violin* (translated by András Székely, Budapest: Mágus publishing, 1998; first published in Augsburg, 1756).

What concerns the period interpretations, I found it most important to make use of the musical instrument schools of Quantz and those of L. Mozart, since the concepts included not only provide a general picture of the performing practice of the first and middle part of the 18th century, but at the same time illustrate the characteristics of the style of play of the wind and the string instruments.

I could acquire significant data from the specific studies of the 20th century as well, namely: *A Performer's Guide to Baroque Music* by Robert Donington (translation: Dezső Karasszon, Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1978; first published in Salzburg and Wien: Residenz Verlag, 1982), *Baroque Music Today: Music As Speech* by Nicholaus Harnoncourt (translation: Judit Péteri, Budapest: Editio Musica, 1988; first published by Faber und Faber, 1973).

The details of articulations present in Bach's pieces were accessible in the following works: *Bach Interpretation. Articulation marks in primary sources of J. S. Bach* by John Butt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) and „*Studien zu Artikulationsangaben in Orgel- und Clavierwerken von Joh. Seb. Bach.*” by Josef Rainerius Fuchs (Georg von Dadelsen: Tübinger Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft. Vol. 10. Neuhausen-Stuttgart: Hänssler-Verlag, 1985). I could get a deep insight into the articulations of the Cello-suites in Anna Scholz's DLA dissertation: *J. S. Bach: Six Suites for Solo Cello (BWV 1007 – 1012) Articulation. Problems of the Sources and the Critical Editions*. (DLA dissertation, Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music, 2008).

In the process of transcription – in addition to Weisberg's bassoon arrangement – I could benefit from other wind adaptations. I could gain a deeper understanding of the practice of making wind arrangements while examining the publishers' explanations on transcriptions

for saxophone (J. S. Bach: *For the Saxophone. Selected Movements from Unaccompanied Sonatas, Partitas, and Suites by J. S. Bach*. Transcribed and Edited by Ronald L. Caravan. Ethos Publication, 1998) and those for trumpet (J. S. Bach: *Suites for solo cello. Suites 1-3*. the publisher, Jay Lichtmann's own publication, 1999).

I could obtain information regarding the possibilities of playing the baroque-bassoon first of all in the following books: Ottó Oromszegi: *The Origin and Development of the Bassoon* (the author's own publication. Budapest, 2003) and William Waterhouse: *The Bassoon* (Yehudi Menuhin Music Guides. London: Kahn & Averill, 2003).

III. Method

In my dissertation I wished to elucidate that the first four (BWV 1007-1010) of the Cello Suites can undoubtedly be performed by bassoon as well. My primary aim was to make the bassoon-like solutions as accurate to the routine of the period performance style as possible, furthermore to preserve the characteristics of the cello as much as possible too.

In my arrangement I examined the agreeing and disagreeing opinions of already issued wind publications. I tried to resolve the contradictions using mainly the theoretical works of the period as well as those of the 20th century, while I wished to add my own ideas to explain the other missing concepts. I considered it most important for the notes of my bassoon arrangement to be consistent and clear primarily concerning the articulation, the ornaments, as well as the double-stops and the accords.

IV. Results

My dissertation consists of seven chapters having a close connection between one another in the following arrangement: first I deal with the origins of the manuscripts of the surviving Cello Suites (I). In the next two chapters I study the themes of the period performance – articulation (II), ornaments, dynamics and the tempo of the movements (III). The next chapter examines the wind arrangements of the Cello Suites (IV). I found it essential to introduce the history, the roles and the playing possibilities of the baroque-bassoon on account of the period performance (V). I draw the conclusion of my bassoon transcription based on the deductions of the previous chapters as well as my own experiences and conceptions as a bassoonist (VI). In the closing chapter a short summary of my dissertation can be found.(VII).

I believe, that my own arrangement is a well-elaborated synthesis of the period performance style, and the bassoon-like solutions. My aim to produce a consequent and clear transcription of articulation, ornaments, double-stops and accords is throughout observable in my own arrangements. In this concept, my adaptation differs from that of Arthur Weisberg's and the wind-transcriptions examined in the dissertation.

V. Documentation of the Activity Concerning the Domain of the Argument

Since my present arrangement is the second piece of bassoon-interpretation, I have had no opportunities to perform any of the Suites so far. It is right this adaptation that serves to be the impetus for these masterpieces to be included in my repertoire, which I would like to play the most frequently possible.

During my studies, and since then I have played Bach's pieces – in a full or a chamber orchestra – on several occasions, however it would be just impossible to provide the dates of all the concerts hereby. The occasion I consider most appropriate to mention in close connection with the Cello Suites is my performance of the bassoon arrangement of the Flute Partita (BWV 1013) first presented at my Diploma Concert on March 4th, 2008, in the Main Concert Hall of the Ferenc Liszt Music Academy of Music.