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Bach to Bassics - From a Student's Perspective

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BACH TO BASSICS – FROM A STUDENT’S PERSPECTIVE

A Thesis

by

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The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
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BACH TO BASSICS – FROM A STUDENT’S PERSPECTIVE

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by
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May 2021

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ABSTRACT

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This paper adds the valuable perspective of a student to the research of J.S. Bach's Suites for solo violoncello BWV 1107-1012 performed on the double bass. This study stands on two main premises: the individual study and performance of J.S. Bach suites and that there are invaluable positive effects to be achieved through the proposed process. This thesis covers the journey of a student starting their process of preparing a suite for performance as a researcher, collecting and surveying data to be applied in a regular practice routine. It engages on how an active research of the physical and psychological aspects of playing and performing with the double bass may induce students to be more self-reliant and confident, be more attuned of expressing musical gestures.

DEDICATION

The completion of my master studies would not be possible without the help of my beloved family and friends. Thank you for all your love and patience. I also would like to thank my partner, Priscila, who gave me the love, support, and confidence to keep pursuing my dreams. This thesis is dedicated to my mother.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for the mentorship and insightful advices from Dr. George Amorim, chair of this thesis committee. He always encouraged me to pursuit my goals and dreams and provided guidance so I could accomplish them. Also, I would like to thank the UTRGV for having provided me with the necessary funding through the Presidential Graduate Award.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	4
Style	4
Analysis.....	5
Practice.....	5
Double Bass Resources	6
Editions.....	7
Pedagogy.....	7
CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY AND FINDING.....	9
CHAPTER IV. DISCUSSION.....	11
The Technical Process	11
Structure	13
Discerning Melodic and Harmonic Materials	14
Practice Strategies and Reflections.....	17
CHAPTER V. CONCLUSION.....	23
REFERENCES.....	25

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH..... 27

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: The Suites – Movements	11
Figure 2: The Bach Roadmap.....	12
Figure 3: Bourée I - mm. 1-8 (1)	13
Figure 4: Courante, mm. 1-8	14
Figure 5: Bourée I - mm. 1-8 (2)	15
Figure 6: Bourée I - mm. 1-8 (3)	16

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The music of J.S Bach was not part of my training for the first five years I played the double bass. Although I performed the Bourrées from the Suite III (BWV 1009) in my senior undergrad recital, and the Allemande from the same suite a few years later, performing a whole suite was not part of my routine, nor my plans. Even though my professors at the time would encourage me to perform Bach's music, I did not feel technically prepared and mentally equipped to face that task.

After ten years of playing professionally, I decided to pursue a master's degree in performance. One of the reasons I decided to apply to the school I currently attend was a discussion I had with my prospective professor, Dr. George Amorim. Dr. Amorim hypothesized that, after years of observation of his other students, that an intense immersion in Bach's cello suites would increase the student's musical knowledge. Their overall playing, critical thinking, and a better understanding of music: its form, style, and performance particularities improved after this immersion. These improvements would have as starting point one's understanding of articulation (*detaché*, *martelé*, *legato*, and its appropriate use) as well as note-grouping (which would determine the most stylistically appropriate fingerings). This hypothesis intrigued me, and it made me curious and confident enough to engage in this challenge. The suites are widely believed to be composed with a pedagogical purpose. J.H. Forkel, one of Bach's biographers,

exemplifies their pedagogical value: Bach “wrote with a pedagogic purpose that forced the player to improve on his instrument” (as cited in Davis, 2004. P. 109).

As I map out benchmarks of analysis and performance, such as form, motives, bowings and fingerings, my goal is to develop a template which musicians can use as a starting point to their preparations of any suite with the ultimate objective of making the study of the suites a more objective and efficient process.

The expected outcome for this thesis is to develop the skill to learn a complete suite in the most efficient and definitive way. A full immersion and commitment to the process would result in the ability to transpose and adapt this process to any of the suites. As the student, myself, would become more attuned to the idea of expressing musical phrases and gestures, thus communicating music more effectively. Furthermore, the student was expected to become more confident and self-reliant as a performer, as well as reliable to work well under a pre-established schedule. The suite used in this thesis is the Suite III (BWV 1009), originally in C major, transcribed to G major.

The data were collected through analysis of the piece, practice observations, recording and critiquing, and performing. The critique I received after my performances in studio class and guest masterclasses were also compiled, as well as the observations I made to my colleagues after their performances. Practice strategies were collected and reflected upon through their efficiency during my practice routine. The musical examples reflect and explain some of the decisions taken during the development of this thesis.

The results showed that the development of a map that aided the student into an improvement path ranging from better analytical thinking, objective and honest self-critiquing, technical progress, and expressiveness also created an objective way of determining goals,

working under deadlines, and identifying milestones in one's path towards development and musical growth through self-reflection and self-awareness.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a vast literature regarding the six suites for solo cello by J.S. Bach, as well as different editions for solo cello, solo double bass, and other instruments. The editions for solo double bass display the editor`s preferred technical solution for the many challenges the suites impose on the double bassist. The traditional double bass methods offer a way for students to develop their technique and expression with the instrument, while some practice manuals address strategies to be as efficient as possible.

The idea to create a blueprint that fits the six suites comes from the necessity of having a clear way of understanding them through their historical context, compositional style, and harmonic and melodic materials. The literature reviewed here offers the background in which this blueprint was built upon. It presents the technical, stylistic, and practical structure used in the specific understanding of the suites by a bass player.

Style

The book *On Playing the Flute* (Quantz, 1752/1985) is the main source of the stylistic decisions explained in this paper. The author offers a vast collection of exercises ranging from articulation and phrasing to the role of the soloist and the orchestra during a performance. Although it is a method for the flute, the ideas presented here are applicable to the double bass, creating the possibility to learn through the music and developing one`s technique to its service,

instead of adapting the music to one`s technique. The duties of the soloist and the accompanying musicians explained by the author are particularly useful to identify and explore the multiple voices of the counterpoint of the suites. It sets the groundwork for differentiations in dynamics, articulation, and agogic.

Analysis

Bach`s Cello Suites (Winold, 2007, II), provides an in-depth analysis of all movements of the six suites. The harmonic, melodic, and formal aspects provided by the author serve as basis for this work. Winold`s deep understanding of the suites is shown through thorough and clear explanations about their historical and stylistic contexts. His analysis is demonstrated by musical examples that provide an arch in which the performance can be built in a way that the musical discourse is transparent and objective. The harmonic and phrasal analysis, and the identification and classification of the materials in each movement of the suites serve as frame to the performance decisions in this paper.

Practice

The Musician`s Way (Klickstein, 2009) is an excellent resource for practice strategies. Ranging from organizing the practice space to discussions on how to succeed as a music student and the exploration of student-teacher dynamics, many of the topics of this book were explored during the development of this work. Klickstein organized the practice into a process that can be understood and replicated by any music student. The author is meticulous as organization is the key to an efficient practice, on every detail from planning to self-evaluation. Mechanisms to cope with performance anxiety are explored in a way that is helpful to anyone who might have to deal

with this issue. The way the author organized this book is one of the premises of my work. A way in which my own practice system of the suites can be developed into a roadmap that can be used by any bass player interested in performing the Bach suites.

Double Bass Resources

Two books were used as the technical basis for this work. *Double Bass: The Ultimate Challenge* (Bradetich, 2009) and *Strokin`* (Robinson, 1996). Robinson`s book is a transcription of the Sevcik School of Bowing to the Double Bass. Through the bowing variations presented in this book, the student can work in every detail regarding bow control and string crossing. Although these variations are presented in scales, to make the student focus mainly on bow hand, applying rhythmic variations to passages that are technically challenging is one of the basic strategies I explore in my practice routine. Robinson is precise in his directions and the expected result of each variation is clear. It is especially useful when practicing fast movements such as Courantes and Giges.

Jeff Bradetich`s book (2009) is a complete overview of the double bass and the aspects involved in its playing. The explanations are clear, and the topics range from bow hold, sitting and standing positions and their characteristics, and the proper use of the body while playing. All of them are essential to bass players at any level since they facilitate proper and easy maneuvering of the instrument. The technical choices the author explains throughout the book are based on years of performing and teaching, and their musical sense is easy to understand and to apply in one`s own practice routine. Characteristics such as phrasing patterns and their fingerings are discussed in the book and provide the fundamental stone in choosing appropriate fingerings to pieces as complex as the suites.

Editions

Even though there are many editions of the suites, the one chosen to be the basis of this thesis is Suite 3 in G Major – BWV 1009, (Robinson, 1992). The editor's decisions on bowings and fingerings are well-considered and meaningful, based on Anna Magdalena Bach's manuscript of the suites, as well as cello editions by Alfred Dörfell (1879), Julius Klengel (1900), and Hugo Becker (1911). It also moves away from the double bass edition in G major by Sterling (1957), which contains many alterations made to facilitate the performance. The differentiation between harmonic and melodic materials, voicings, and articulations are clear and easy to understand. Robinson offers a transcription without any markings in addition to his own edition of the suite. It helps the performer understand the editor's decisions and to have a glimpse of the mentality of what was considered possible to play in the double bass by the time of its publication and what has changed since then.

Pedagogy

Two articles served as the main source for the pedagogical approach adopted in this thesis. *Conceptual Ideas of Narrative Pedagogy in Professional Formation of a Music Art Teacher*, by Olga Oleksiuk and Olena Rebrova (2018), and *First Year Teacher of First Year Teachers: A Reflection on Teacher Training in the Field of Piano Pedagogy*, by Kristin Elgersma (2012). The article by Oleksiuk and Rebrova provided the conceptual framework for the methodology of this thesis. Pedagogical narrative allowed me to reflect upon my observations throughout my Master's degree and use them in an intellectual approach to this paper. The article by Elgersma supported the reflexive considerations of this work, as it permitted that the inner focus of my considerations towards my musical progress to be framed and discussed.

Although the literature about J.S. Bach, the solo cello suites, and the double bass is extensive, the idea of creating a blueprint to practice and perform the suites on the double bass demanded a broader search of sources. The sources were chosen based on their pedagogical value since this project aims to encompass the general needs of the bass player when performing the music of J.S. Bach. The material provided by the sources was investigated and criticized during the development of this thesis, as well as explored in my own practice sessions. The literature reviewed here provided the foundation for a coherent, objective, and efficient way of exploring the suites. It also serves to take advantage of the pedagogical purpose of the suite for the double bass, as the technical challenges and musical context force the student to improve their playing and understanding of the instrument.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND FINDING

In this thesis, I investigated my experience learning a full J.S. Bach suite, while relearning some of the movements. My struggles and successes were discussed, and my progress was documented through a narrative pedagogy. As noted by Oleksiuk and Rebrova (2018, p. 85) “Appealing to the narrative by humanistic pedagogy is quite regular and natural, because the advantages of the pedagogical narrative are that it contains some data about time, place, circumstances, and conditions of the events in a particular educational situation”.

I will use examples pulled out of the J.S. Bach’s Suite III for Solo Violoncello (BWV 1009) to address technical and musical challenges present in the music (such as appropriate articulation and slurring, adequate fingerings, as well as effective voicing), and will offer considerations and possible solutions based on stylistic mandates of the Baroque period.

This will ultimately allow me to organize a template for the analysis, preparation, and performance of any of Bach Solo Cello Suites. This will include benchmarks of my practice-based research and will serve as a starting point for discussion of the specific theoretical and technical features of each example.

The technical process discussed here is expanded to a reflection of my path to achieving a move from the dependence of the teacher by the student to a student as their own teacher, or complete independence. This path is exemplified by the technical and analytical considerations of the Suite III (BWV 1009), as well as considerations of my own reflective practice toward an

intellectually and artistically engaged performance, an efficient and steady practice routine, and “a personally meaningful, constantly evolving understanding of what it means to be a musician, in all of its expressions” (Elgersma, 2012, p.413).

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The Technical Process

The Figure 1 shows the movements' structure of the suites. The Figure 2 is a roadmap, the most basic template which one can use for their preparations of a suite. The premise is to begin by analyzing the piece from its largest aspects to its smallest. After the analysis is complete, one should practice from its smallest aspect to the largest. If one imagines the suite as a building, by using this process we understand how to identify each brick, and then learn how to bring them together.

The Suites - Movements	
I.	Prelude
II.	Allemande
III.	Courante
IV.	Sarabande
V.	Minuets - Bourrées - Gavottes
VI.	Gigue

Figure 1: The Suites - Movements

One might be able to learn the suites faster by using other methods of practice. The method suggested here allows the student to develop critical thinking and takes into consideration each small decision towards the completion of the task since every step in this process can be branched out to several different possibilities. In that way, the student avoids mindless practice and narrows their attention into small details, which provides a systematic approach to learning, through better consolidation of the knowledge and technique needed to

perform this music. By consequence, the student can apply this method to different suites, expediting the process of a thorough and solid learning experience. The goal of this process is to be the most efficient, not the fastest.

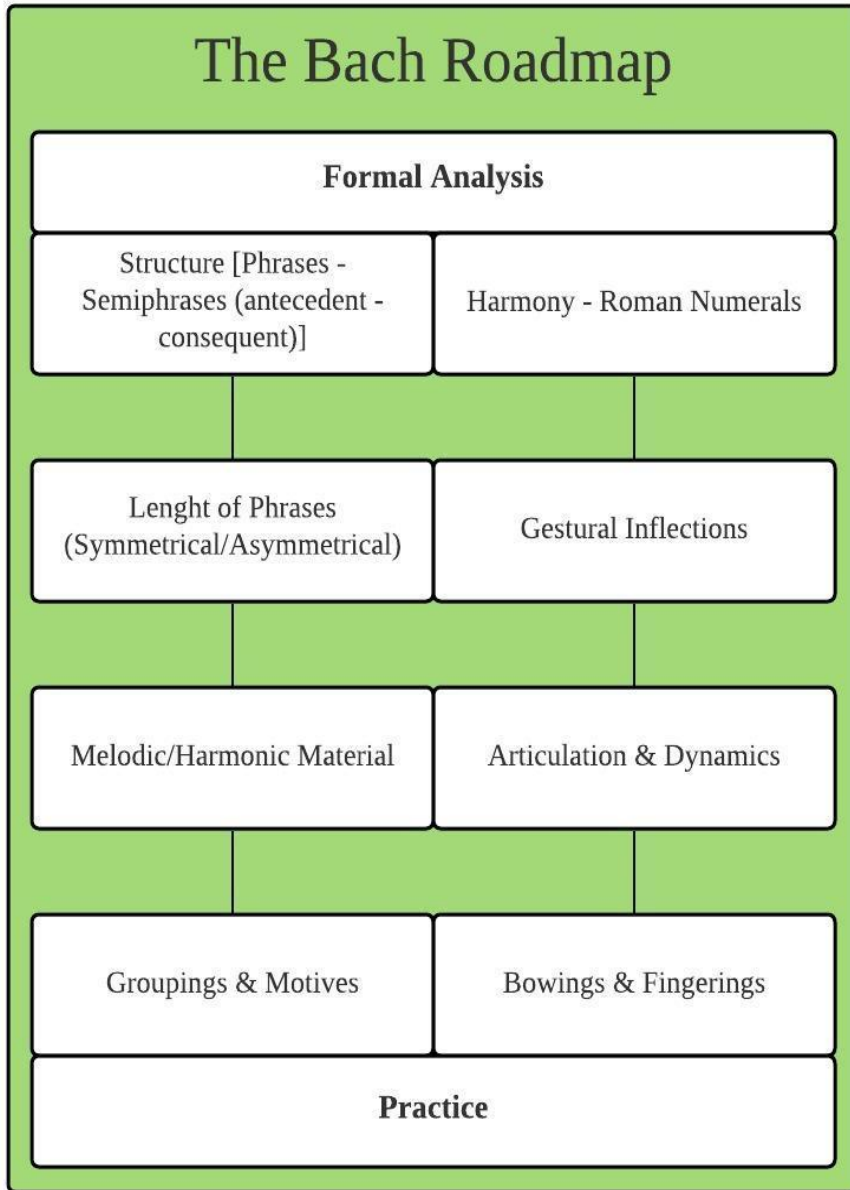


Figure 2: The Bach Roadmap

This roadmap purposefully keeps all steps connected. This method is not supposed to be a step-by-step process, in which a task must be fully complete before advancing to the next. This

chart is an “immersion map”, where all knowledge gathered, be it by practicing, analyzing, listening and watching performances, journaling, self-recording, and researching is directed into their place in the learning process. As one goes over the roadmap several times, each brick of this building will be in its specific place, and diligent practice will bond them together.

Structure

Phrases and Semi-Phrases, Length of Phrases

Figure 3 highlights the phrasal pattern of the first part of the Bourrée I. The red bracket shows the phrase and the green ones show the semi-phrases. The Bourrée dance phrases are usually four or eight bars in length (Little, 2003). Bach composed the first part of this Bourrée in *bar form*: two-measure semi-phrases followed by one made of four measures (Winold, 2007, I). Allen Winold (2007, II) presents a precise structure for the gestures in the part first of the Bourrée I: Bach states his initial idea in measures 1-2, reinstates it in mm. 3-4, develops it in mm. 5-6, and concludes the phrase in mm. 7-8. Being aware of this gestural structure is useful to understand where to direct the musical gestures – dramatic effects such as dynamic and tempo changes, embellishments, and proper use of different articulations.

Bourrée I - mm. 1 - 8

The image displays a musical score for the first part of the Bourrée I, measures 1 through 8. The score is written in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes various rhythmic values and articulations. A red bracket spans the entire eight-measure phrase. Green brackets indicate semi-phrases: measures 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, and 7-8. Roman numerals (I, V, I, V) are placed below the notes in measures 1, 3, 5, and 7. Measure 6 contains the Roman numerals V and V/V. The score ends with a double bar line in measure 8.

Figure 3: Bourrée I - mm. 1-8 (1)

Discerning Melodic and Harmonic Materials

Figure 4 shows the first eight measures of the Courante. The red brackets indicate the harmonic material, while the rest makes up the melodic material. In order to evidentiate the melody, the articulation to its untied notes is longer than its harmonic counterparts. The shape of these melodic separated notes is important. Their articulation is not *tenuto*, and their beginning should not be harsh. Leopold Mozart offers a valuable insight on how to play these notes: “Every tone, even the strongest attack, has a small, even if barely audible, softness at the beginning of the stroke; for it would otherwise be no tone but only an unpleasant and unintelligible noise. This same softness must be heard also at the end of each stroke” (Mozart, 1756/1985). Also, the dynamics of the melody are stronger or strengthened by a *crescendo*. The function of the slurs is to give the melody motion and to differentiate it from the harmonic material. The low C on m. four deserves special consideration for being a dissonance on a strong beat. The use of *vibrato* and longer articulation are interesting possibilities to make this note special.

Courante, mm. 1 - 8

The image shows a musical score for the first eight measures of a Courante in 3/4 time. The score is written in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is indicated by red brackets above the notes. The harmonic material is indicated by red brackets below the notes. The score includes fingering numbers (0, 1, 2, 3, 4) and slurs. The harmonic material consists of chords: I, V, V7, I, V7, I. The melodic material consists of eighth notes and quarter notes. The score is titled 'Courante, mm. 1 - 8'.

Figure 4: Courante, mm.1-8

Fingerings should be decided according to the material’s function: harmonic or melodic. The choices for the harmonic materials are based on open strings, natural harmonics, and string crossing, to allow the chords to resonate openly. The fingerings for the melodic material obey the slurs, avoiding shifts in the middle of them. Measures six and seven present a hemiola that gives those measures a $\frac{6}{8}$ feel, which is a special feature of this Courante (Winold, 2007, I). The slur

on measure six follows the 3-note progressive pattern by Jeff Bradetich (2009), placing the shift between the first and second notes of the slur. In my experience, this pattern results in a more precise shift with less shifting noise.

Groupings and Motives

Figure 5 shows Bach's motive and how he creates multiple voicings in its development. The *short-short-long* pattern is what brings motion to this movement. This phrase shows three different gestures: the motive, shown in the green brackets, the sequence in blue brackets, and the conclusion in the red bracket. The brackets above the staff show the upper voice and the brackets below the staff show the lower voice.



Figure 5: Bourrée I - mm. 1-8 (2)

The implied polyphony that results from the voicing needs special attention from the performer. It creates a sense of “structural expression”, as described by Davis: “something that would enhance the melody’s appeal without the aid of performer expressivity” (Davis, 2006, p.423).

The motive in the first four measures has three specific features that can be explored. The upper voice has an ascending span of a third, the lower voice has a down-up conjunct motion,

and the phrase ends with a variation of the motive in measure four. The motivic is important in understanding Bach’s “obsessive search for congruent musical relations” (Larsen, 2020, p.4), as this motivic construction happens in all suites.

The sequence in mm. 5-6 modulates in an interesting descendent motion to the V chord by the principal voice, concluding with a small *coda* that confirms the modulation. How Bach groups and develops the *short-short-long* pattern, the implied polyphony by the voicing, and the gestures are parameters one can use to choose fingerings and bowings.

Fingerings and Bowings & Articulations and Dynamics

One should not adapt the music to specific fingerings or bowings but follow the musical parameters of each piece to determine proper fingerings and stylistic correct bowings. Figure 6 shows a way that can be done in the first eight measures of the Bourrée I.

Bourrée I - mm. 1 - 8

The image shows a musical score for the first eight measures of the Bourrée I in G major. The score is written in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It includes fingerings (numbers 1-4 and 0), bowings (up and down bows), and dynamics (crescendo). The notes are: m. 1: D4, E4, F#4, G4; m. 2: G4, A4, B4, C5; m. 3: B4, A4, G4, F#4; m. 4: E4, D4, C4, B3; m. 5: A3, G3, F#3, E3; m. 6: D3, C3, B2, A2; m. 7: G2, F#2, E2, D2; m. 8: C2, B1, A1, G1. The score also includes a trill in measure 2 and a coda in measure 8.

Figure 6: Bourrée I - mm. 1-8 (3)

My choices, in this case, were to highlight the motive and its different voicings, as well as the sequence, its modulation, and the coda. The choice of articulation is immensely significant to achieve a proper style of playing. Although many musicians do not have a baroque bow and instrument available, the technique can be adapted: “he can get a baroque style. For this, it is not

really the implements that are going to make the crucial difference; it is the player's trained musicianship and his use of the appropriate techniques.” (Donington, 1977, p. 389).

The motive should be played in the same position. I recommend the use of the pivot technique in the first one – it avoids unnecessary shifting sounds and helps isolate it. A clear *detaché* articulation should be used in the higher voices and a *legato* articulation in the lower voice, which are evidenced by the slurs over the short notes as well. I chose to play the higher voice in the G string and the lower voice on the D string to have a different timbre to each one. A slightly less intense dynamic in the lower voice also brings motion to the piece. I end each of the semi-phrases with harmonics or open strings to produce a full and resonant sound.

The fingering for the sequence should follow the grouping of the distinctive voices that occur. The higher voice, under the slurs, should be played in the same position, as well as each pair of descending notes of the lower voice. The articulation should be a *legato* for the higher voice, under the slurs and a *detaché* for the descending lower voice. It is important to differentiate each voice by dynamics. Both should start at the same dynamic level but a *crescendo* in the lower voice can evidence the modulation.

A *diminuendo* is stylistic appropriate in measure eight. The articulation should be *martelé* to demonstrate the harmonic importance of the end of this phrase.

Practice Strategies and Reflections

Although each musician has their own practice strategies, I believe an efficient routine is based on three fundamental topics: a clear goal, a reasonable timeline, and the proper self-motivation. At the beginning of this project, I struggled with two of these topics. Even though my goal was to play the whole Suite III, I was not prepared to deal with a pre-established

timeline nor to motivate myself without the supervision of my double bass professor. This hindered my progress towards an independent practice and to the development of the confidence needed to trust my technical ability and my own musical and expressive understanding of the music.

The strategies discussed here are some of the most efficient approaches I used to develop an intellectually engaged practice. It was the way I found to be able to complete my goals in a timely manner, and, most importantly, the outcomes were definitive. Every new ability learned was not forgotten.

The Immersion Process

I had a consolidated technique when I started this project. I could play with a wide range of intensities, my sound was steady from the frog to the tip of the bow, my articulations were precise, and my left hand was agile. The mechanics of playing the bass were well built, and I could not understand why I could not play Bach's music properly. The fact is I did not believe I could play it. I felt this music was part of a realm of philosophical understanding I would never reach.

The greatest improvement the process of developing this map brought me was the ability to critique myself within the proper parameters of style and philosophy of the Baroque period. I was so set in my way of playing that I tried to adapt the movements I was capable of playing to my own style. It was an extraneous and isolating experience.

This map did not improve my technique. Developing it gave me a way of adapting my technique through critical thinking and philosophical understanding of the period. I do not play as loud as I used to, but I expanded my palette of tone colors considerably. My *vibrato* is better

because of its diligent use as an embellishment. My intonation is more adaptive to different harmonic contexts. I do not need to adapt the music to my style but rather to play within the style with my own personality.

Although I am not finished with this immersion, creating this map gave me an objective way of applying philosophical contexts in my playing. It gave me the intellectual tools I needed to play Bach's music.

Recording yourself

Perhaps the most important strategy discussed in this thesis. It was a frustrating process in the beginning, as it is a clear and honest statement of our own ability. It takes away the personal aspect of a third party's feedback and helps to develop and maintain a close relationship with one's own perception of self. It is an opportunity to correct mistakes before important deadlines, such as lessons, auditions, and performances. Turning it into a habit develops self-confidence, reliability to perform under pressure, and critiquing skills that can be matured into teaching tools.

Audio and video recordings have different and complementary characteristics. Audio recordings are useful to check musical features such as tone, intonation, articulation, and tempo. It avoids the influence of the video since what appears correct might not sound correct. The priority of the video recording is to notice physical habits that were previously unknown (Kish, 2017). It provides the chance to check and correct the posture, setup, and proper movement. It is complementary to the audio recording because there is a better chance to create a proper musical performance and to develop a correct technique if the movements and setup are correct.

Practice Methods

Practice methods are concise ways of working on the music from many different angles (Bradetich, 2009). It provides a way of practicing technique away from the music itself. The technique can and should be practiced in the abstract by the repetition of scales, arpeggios, and other fundamental motions with many different fingerings and bowing variations (Robinson, 1996). In this way, when the technique is solid enough, playing the music becomes a fruitful and mentally engaged process.

A good bow technique demands continuous work by the musician. As we progress as players, the bow translates our musical concepts into sound. A proper technique also enables us to perform difficult passages with ease. Rhythmic variation is one of the best strategies to achieve that goal. Even with a single note, moving towards one string crossing, until we reach mastery of movement is very useful, especially when working in a difficult movement such as the Courante for the Suite III.

The left hand demands special attention in the double bass, due to its size. Shifting is a necessary part of our practice and playing in tune is one of the permanent goals of any musician. There are three approaches that guide the practice of good intonation: visual, tactile, and auditory. Visual information is more effective than auditory and tactile information (Lage et al., 2007), as it can guide the movement from a starting point to the target, enhancing the proprioceptive and tactile familiarity with the instrument. It is also important to note that these two approaches happen before the sound is produced and developing them reduces the possibility of playing out of tune. It also narrows the target, so when the target note is heard, any correction that might be needed is small and can be done quickly.

After we reach the point in our careers that we are able to play a Bach suite, intonation is not supposed to be a major concern. We are already familiar with the sounds, motions, and geography of the instrument. Although one should always strive to keep it at a high level.

The most efficient way I found to work and improve my intonation was to practice with a drone. It allowed me to recognize the function of each note within a context, melodic or harmonic. Scales and arpeggios are extremely helpful for the maintenance of good intonation. The three-note and four-note progressive exercises by Jeff Bradetich (2009) are also very useful, as they help us enhance our control and relaxation while we play, as well as providing a fingering pattern that can be applied to musical phrasing.

Performance Preparation

Performance is perhaps the most challenging aspect of a musician's career. A good presentation under pressure requires preparation and can be trained with many different strategies. The most direct for me, attending the university as a student was Studio Class. The opportunity to play for our colleagues, receive their criticism, and developing the ability to offer good suggestions after other people's performance made a difference in the way I incorporate practice performing in my routine.

The studio in my university worked as a living thing, a collective organism where the students could feed on its energy as well as fuel it forward. While we were in the practice building, we could play for each other and discuss different ways of achieving our goals. Being a part of a group with similar goals that searched for the best way of accomplishing their objectives was one of the most important aspects discussed in this thesis. It served to maintain my focus and to challenge myself in fertile environment, which nurtured my self-reflection

through the teachings of Shin'ichi Suzuki: unless we convert our thoughts directly into appropriate action and newly foster improved conduct to rectify what is missing or flawed in ourselves, our self-reflection will end up in mere thought (Suzuki, 1983).

This mindset avoided distorted thinking about my abilities and shortcomings, and it gave me the chance of confronting my own limitations with a confident and loving approach. It allowed me to practice consciously all that needed improvement.

Bach's Microcosmos

Though the suites are not easy to play, they offer a very special insight to form, style, and technique. Since the movements are short in length, all gestures and phrases are concentrated in very small parts. One can zoom in on every note and search for its function and artistic meaning. The roadmap above offers a starting point to train these skills. When one zooms out of this process, the big picture is clear. This is an ability that can be applied to any piece of music. Starting with Bach is a difficult but deeply rewarding challenge.

The suites can also be a great journey towards the development of expressiveness by the performer. Although their emotional value was not discussed in this paper, it is important for the student to incorporate the search for the emotional meanings of the music and its performance in their practice routines.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

There are many ways musicians can learn a Bach's suite. My goal was to demonstrate how an immersion in Bach's music can enhance the student's technical skills and musical understanding. This immersion resulted in the roadmap, and the reason for it to exist is that the material of each movement might be different, but the method in which one approaches them remains the same. When I started this project, I was able to perform the Allemande and the Bourrées of the Third Suite. When this project finished, I played the full suite in my Graduate Recital. The plan devised for me to accomplish that goal worked, with many changes and alterations along the way.

After I learned and performed each of the movements, the time I needed to learn and perform the next was shorter. Certainly, in part due to my technique that evolved after each movement, but mostly because of my deeper understanding of the music. The fact that the technique should serve the music gained a different meaning after this experience.

This is not to say that the time I dedicated to this project was always easy. During the times I felt frustrated and could not figure out how to proceed, having a teacher capable of giving me just enough information to jumpstart my thought process instead of giving me a "one-size-fits-all" answer was profoundly important. This allowed me to learn from my mistakes and enjoy the process, and the map is also an answer to my frustration. It helped me understand how to

navigate through Bach's music without feeling lost because if I did one thing correctly each time I practiced, with enough practice I was ready to perform without feeling I was out of my league.

Every time I go back to the suite, there is a new feature that amazes me. The map allows me to understand it technically and musically, and to be pleased (or not) with new possible interpretations.

Bach's music seems to have an infinite number of possibilities, and it has been almost two years since I have been immersing myself in his music. I feel so far away from where I started, but the map gave me tools to explore this music with my personal take, and I am a better musician because of it.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Samuel R. Pasqualetto was born in Porto Alegre, Brazil. He started playing the double bass at the Universidade de Caxias do Sul School of Music in 2005 and earned his bachelor's degree in Music with emphasis on Double Bass performance at the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, in 2011.

He worked in the Universidade de Santa Cruz do Sul Chamber Orchestra, Brazil from 2009 to 2011. After that, he joined the Filarmonia Santa Catarina String Orchestra in Florianópolis, Brazil. From 2014 to 2018 he worked as a freelance musician in the South region of Brazil, working with several professional orchestras. At the same time, he kept a private studio where he taught individual lessons to beginners to intermediate level musicians.

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