

Elizabeth Farr: AGO Workshop June 13, 2017

Handout 1

Basso-continuo on the harpsichord

- Understanding how sound is produced (pluck)
Sitting at the instrument, feet, source of balance
Hand position, fingers, arm weight
- Touch
Arpeggiation
Articulation and over-holding vs. legato
- Implying dynamics through:
rhythmic hierarchy
lengths of notes
speed of arpeggiation

Basso-continuo on the organ

- Registration and size of ensemble
- Pedal?
- Bass line vs. RH realization – lengths of notes

Preparing for the performance

- Examine the figures, you may need to write in a few simple figures (such as 6) or accidentals that have not been notated (believed to be obvious)
- If the piece has no figures at all, analyze the full texture and write in your own figures
- Learn the figures, refrain from consistently doubling upper lines
- Rehearsal: it can be helpful to play only the bass line at least once to match sound with other bass-line instruments and determine what the best approach will be for your RH realization; what can you contribute to the whole, what is the affect?
- Performance: how should the performers be positioned for the best effect?

Types of accompaniments

- Bass line: figures requiring realization, but only the bass line is composed
- Obligato keyboard: the RH part is fully notated by the composer
- Recitativo: secco (bc) and accompagnato (strings and bc)

Scores

- Urtext: with or without figures, unrealized (although some are editorially realized for those who do not read figures)
- Modern “practical” edition: not only already realized but at times altered
- Reductions of orchestrations: best on piano, possible on organ, not good on harpsichord
- BC part from the publisher: usually rather poor, better to play from a full score

Also available at the session

- Handout 2: basic basso-continuo figures
- Handouts/excerpts (4): pedagogical exercise (Handel), violin/bc sonata movements (Corelli), flute/bc sonata movement (JS Bach), cantata recitative (JS Bach)

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Handout 2

Basics of basso-continuo figures

Triads:

Root position	5	3	5	or blank/no figures (only when the piece is otherwise figured)
	3			
1 st inversion	6	6		2 nd inversion
	3			6
				4

Seventh chords:

Root position	7	7	7	7	1 st inversion	6	6
	5	3	5			5	5
	3					3	
2 nd inversion	6	4			3 rd inversion	6	4
	4	3				4	2
	3					2	

b ♮ / sharp, flat, natural next to a number or slash through a number raise or lower that pitch; sharp, flat natural alone (without a number) refer to altering the third of the chord.

Suspensions:

4-3 7-6 9-8 2-1 6-5

Check the context to see if another instrument or a vocalist carries the dissonant non-chord tone, in which case you should not double their notes and may play against the dissonance.

The most common suspensions in figures are 4-3 and 7-6, but the others are possible, and all introduce a brief moment of melodic tension and resolution.

Dissonant figures:

These figures frequently occur over a pedal-point, and do not represent triads or seventh chords. They tend to be a method of working out ornamental passages that stress dissonance and resolution, juxtaposing chords against the bass that are not built on it.

Ex: 7
4
2

This figure over a C would represent a b-diminished harmony dissonant to C and needing resolution (compound 9th, 11th, and 13th chords are not recognized as harmonies in this period but rather as dissonant tones that require resolution).

Practice pieces

No. 22

6
4
3

6

6

6
5

6
4
3

5 8 7 6 7 6
3 6 5 4 5 4

6

5 6 5
3 4 3

6
4
2

6

7

4 3

11

7 7b 6 6b 5 5 9 8 7 6 5 8 7 7b
4 2 5 3 5 4 4 4 3 2 3 7 6 5 4 3 2 5 3

17

6 6b 5 5 7 6 6 9 8 6
5 4 3 4 4 3 2 3 # - 5+ 7 6 # 5 2 8 6

22

9 8 7 6 6 5 5 6 6 5 7
5 4 # 3 4 4 3 5

27

7 6 8 8 7 6 5 6 6 6 # 8
5 4 6 6 5 4 3 6 6 6 # #

Adagio.

7 6 5 6 4 2 6 7 6 #

9 6 6 6 6 5 6

6 6 6 6 5 4 3

Detailed description: This is a musical score for guitar, consisting of three systems of three staves each. The top staff of each system contains a melodic line with various ornaments and slurs. The middle staff contains a more rhythmic accompaniment. The bottom staff contains a bass line. Below the bottom staff of each system is a line of guitar tablature, represented by numbers 1-9 and a sharp symbol (#). The first system starts with the tempo marking 'Adagio.' and a common time signature 'C'. The second system begins with a key signature change to one sharp (F#). The third system continues in the same key signature.

46

Allegro.

First system of musical notation. Treble clef, bass clef, and a key signature of one flat. The music consists of two staves. The bass staff includes a sequence of fingering numbers: 7 7 7 7 7 6 4 6 4 3.

Second system of musical notation. Treble clef, bass clef. The music consists of two staves. The bass staff includes a sequence of fingering numbers: 6 6 5 7 6 6 5 4.

Third system of musical notation. Treble clef, bass clef. The music consists of two staves. The bass staff includes a sequence of fingering numbers: 6 4 2 6 6.

Fourth system of musical notation. Treble clef, bass clef. The music consists of two staves. The bass staff includes a sequence of fingering numbers: 6 4 2 6 6 6 6^b 6.

Fifth system of musical notation. Treble clef, bass clef. The music consists of two staves. The bass staff includes a sequence of fingering numbers: 6 5 3 6 4 2 6 7 7 6 6 5 3 6 4 2 6 7 7 6. A dynamic marking *p* is present in the treble staff.

Sixth system of musical notation. Treble clef, bass clef. The music consists of two staves. The bass staff includes a sequence of fingering numbers: 6 5 3 6 6 5 #.

Adagio ma non tanto

Flauto traverso

Continuo

Musical notation for measures 1-2. The Flauto traverso part (treble clef) features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, including slurs and ties. The Continuo part (bass clef) provides a harmonic accompaniment with notes and fingerings (7, 6, #, 7, 6, 6, 7, 6, 5) indicated below the staff.

Musical notation for measures 3-4. The Flauto traverso part includes a triplet of eighth notes and a trill (tr) on a note. The Continuo part continues with notes and fingerings (6, 4/2, 5, 6, 6/5, 6, #, 4+, 6, #, 4+, 6, 6/4).

Musical notation for measures 5-8. The Flauto traverso part features a sixteenth-note triplet and a trill (tr). The Continuo part includes notes and fingerings (4+/2, 6, 6/4, 3, 6, 7, #, 4+, 6/4, 3, 5, 6, 6/4, 3, #, 6/4, 4+, 6, 6, 7, #, 6, 6, 5, #).

Musical notation for measures 9-11. The Flauto traverso part continues with a melodic line. The Continuo part includes notes and fingerings (6/5, 6/4, 6/5, 6, 7, 5, 6/4, 6/5, 7, #, 6/5, #, 6/5, 7, 6/5).

Musical notation for measures 12-15. The Flauto traverso part features a melodic line with a trill (tr). The Continuo part includes notes and fingerings (6/4, 4+/5, 6/5, 4+/5, 6/4, 3, 5, 6, 6/4, #, 7, 6, 6, 6, 6/4, 3, 4+/2, 4+, 6, 6, 6, 4+/2, 6/4, 6).

RECITATIVO.

Basso.

Wenn wir die Sünd' aus dem Gesetz er-kennen, so schlägt es das Gewis-sen nieder;

Continuo.

4

doch ist das unser Trost zu nennen, dass wir im E-van-ge-li-o gleich wie-der froh und freudig

7

werden: dies nur stärket unsern Glauben wieder. Drauf hoffen wir der Zeit, die Gottes Gü-tigkeit uns

11

zu-ge-saget hat, doch a-ber auch aus wei-sem Rath die Stunde uns verschwiegen. Je-

14

doch, wir las-sen uns be-gnüen: er weiss es, wenn es nö-thig ist, und brauchet keine List an

17

uns; wir dür-fen auf ihn bau-en- und ihm al-lein ver-trau-en.