

A Performer's Guide to: Telemann's Sonata in F minor

Edition of Choice: There are several editions of this piece available. As is common with Baroque music (and Classical), editions have been made that are heavily edited by well-known performers. Most of these editions, many edited by renowned bassoonists like Simon Kovar and Leonard Sharrow, were created at a time when older pieces were performed in a Romanticized way. More recently an emphasis has been placed on performing baroque pieces in a way that is authentic to how they would have been performed in their own time period. I would advise looking for editions that are marked “urtext” meaning that the only expressive markings are those the composer wrote. Unfortunately, these tend to be more expensive. The edition by Amadeus seems to be the least edited, but the TrevCo edition edited by John Miller is very interesting in that the original music is printed on the main staff, with added ossia measures with Miller's suggested ornamentation. I would avoid the international edition, which is the most heavily edited version and doesn't come with a separate part for the basso continuo. Telemann's original manuscript is available from IMSLP and is included in the Amadeus edition.

Performing a Baroque Sonata-

Many pieces from the Baroque era require more players than you would expect. A typical sonata would be played by three musicians: the solo instrument, the continuo on harpsichord, and the basso continuo on cello, bass, or bassoon. Similarly, a trio sonata requires four musicians. The two continuo instruments, harpsichord, and cello work together to flesh out the harmony of the piece based off of a figured bass line. The harpsichordist would actually read the same music as the basso player, just a bass line with numerals underneath the notes indicating intervals above the bass note which told them what chord to play. They would then “realize” or improvise an accompaniment over it, sometimes just simple chords, but skilled harpsichordists could improvise detailed contrapuntal parts.

Pieces were performed this way because harpsichords can't sustain sound the way a piano can. The action of a harpsichord plucks the strings whereas a piano strikes them with a hammer. The harpsichord when compared to the piano is a much smaller and more delicate instrument: it might not fill a large concert hall or compete with a symphony, but it is a nimble instrument well suited to chamber music. Because of the way their action operates, harpsichords cannot adjust volume, however larger harpsichords have multiple manuals (keyboards) that play at different dynamic levels, this lets them be either loud or soft but cannot transition between the two except by adding or subtracting voices. This ties into a common baroque element “terraced dynamics,” basically subito dynamics louder or softer, which can be echoed in the solo voice.

Composers in the Baroque era were particularly concerned with the horizontal relationship between voices. Instead of thinking in terms of vertical chords establishing a harmony and a melody played on top of the chords, they were concerned with the way two voices moved contrapuntally, or against each other. In a sonata like this, the two voices the composer was most concerned with are the solo line and the bass. Since harpsichords can't

sustain sound, the bass is played on another bass instrument as well so that it can have its own directionality, just like the solo voice. Baroque music is most effective when both voices react to one another. When practicing a Baroque piece, it's very helpful to practice just with someone playing the bass line (even if it's not who will be performing it), this gives you the opportunity to concentrate your listening on how the two voices interact.

Ornamentation-

In the Baroque period, performing musicians were expected to embellish the music they performed, especially in certain areas. Ornamentation was especially expected at cadences at the ends of movements, simple gestures such as adding a trill with escape tones. Ornamentation is also expected if a measure repeats (such as the first two measures of the Telemann sonata) or a full section repeats (like the da capo in the second movement of the Telemann) it is expected to do *something* different, otherwise what's the point in taking the repeat? It's worth noting that in the Baroque era vibrato and articulation are considered ornaments. These are easy, subtle ways to add variety to repeated sections.

Other easy places to add ornamentation in any Baroque piece include adding a suspension, retardation, or anticipation to any point of arrival. Also, groups of thirds can be "filled in" by halving their note value and adding the notes in between.

In general, save more elaborate ornamentations for slow movements when they have repeated material. Resist the urge to over ornament slow movements, let them be slow and lyrical first of all, ornaments should augment points of interest—not cover them up. In fast movements, keep the tempo spinning forth, choose ornaments that help propel the music's momentum forward.

There are two typical kinds of Baroque sonata, the sonata di camera and the sonata di chiesa. The sonata di camera, or chamber sonata, is comprised of movements of dance forms such as bourrée, gigue, or allemande. Bach's cello suites are an excellent example of the sonata di camera form. The sonata di chiesa, or church sonata, is four movements long following the pattern of slow-fast-slow-fast. The second movement is typically contrapuntally driven, and the third movement ends in a half cadence which is resolved when the final movement begins. The Telemann sonata is a sonata di chiesa and follows the typical pattern.

Resources-

- Brown and Sadie: *Performance Practice Music after 1600* (Norton, 1990)
- R. Donington: *A Performer's Guide to Baroque Music* (Faber and Faber, 1973)
- M. Cyr: *Performing Baroque Music* (Portland, 1992)
- Mather and Lasocki: *Free Ornamentation in Woodwind Music 1700-1750* (McGinnis and Marx, 1976)
- Leopold Mozart: *Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing* (OX)
- F. Neumann: 'Ornamentation in the Bassoon Music of Vivaldi and Mozart', Part 1, IDRS Fall 1986
- F: Neumann, *Problems of Interpretation in the Music of Bach* (AMT, May and November 1963)

- F. Neumann: *New Essays on Performance Practice* (University of Rochester, 1989)
- Quantz/Reilly: *On Playing the Flute* (Free Press)
- R Roseman: 'Baroque Ornamentation', *IDRS Journal* 3, 1975, pp. 53-58

Movement 1- Triste

The first movement can be divided into two halves, measures 1-19 modulate from F minor to C minor, measures 19-38 repeat the material from the first half and modulate back to F minor.

One of the distinguishing features of the Baroque style is an emphasis on smaller gestures, showing smaller gestures with respect to the meter and motivic relationships. In a $\frac{3}{4}$ meter like this, the first beat of every measure is the most important and the other two should be played more lightly except in the case of a gesture going across a bar line into a cadence (such as measure 3 to 4 or measure 7 to 8). Otherwise, many of the measures in this movement are self contained units with an emphasized beat one and a light beat three that concludes a gesture. Also common in this movement is a chord on the downbeat in the continuo with the bassoon entering on the second eighth note of the measure. In these cases, the bassoonist should always play their material in a way that reacts to the continuo, rebounding off of their chord.

The dotted quarter notes in measures 9 and 10 (and later in 29 and 30) are typically trilled, although this marking is missing from some editions. Trills in the Baroque era are typically begun from the note above. This is because the printed note is a consonance with the bass, whereas the upper note of the trill is a dissonance. The dissonance is the interesting part of the gesture, so the trill is begun there, usually with a slight emphasis and stretch, so the trill in measure 9 would begin with an approximately eighth note B-flat before trilling down to the A.

Measure 15 begins a four-measure push to the first big cadence to measure 19. This section, with a clear goal presents an opportunity for phrasing across bar lines to the cadence. This is supported by the pedal G in the bass, the dominant of the new key, and the rising chromatic lines in the solo and bass lines that resolve across bar lines.

In measure 37, the bassoonist should trill the E-natural to embellish the cadence.

Movement 2- Allegro

This movement follows the form of a da capo aria, one large A section, followed by a B section in the relative major, then the A section is repeated and should be embellished. This type of movement is an excellent opportunity for more involved ornamentation because the audience will experience the A section twice.

Cadences in this movement occur on beat three, and except for the final cadences at the ends of the A and B sections, motion does not stop. Instead the bass continues into the next measure with three eighth note pick ups, for instance measure 14 into 15. This continuous forward motion should be

thought of as though the bass and bassoon are working together, reacting to one another's statements, and handing off melodies. Instead of a soloist-accompanist relationship the players should try to have a dialogue: grouping and articulating motives like the other.

Measures 36-38 present the first real technical challenges of the piece (at least for those of us who play modern bassoons, I'm told that this is one of the most difficult pieces to play on a period instrument because of the forked fingerings necessary for the flatted pitches). The passage becomes a lot simpler when it is reduced to the underlying structure. Beats 1-3 are an arpeggiation of the harmony established on beat one in the continuo, beat 4 is a secondary dominant pick up to the next measure. Each beat also includes an F, E-natural, F neighbor figure. Because this occurs leading into the climax of the A section, and because the sixteenth note figures are unaccompanied, these measures have great potential to show off the bassoonist's technique. To ensure that the technique is there to be shown off, the bassoonist should practice isolating each motive, thinking of the neighbor figure on the interior of the beat as a pickup gesture to the next beat, rather than belonging to the previous beat. This small psychological beat will help propel the music forward to the climax, practicing it this way will also separate the difficult material into more easily manageable chunks.

Some editions slur from the first sixteenth note to the second, "slur two, tongue two" is rarely a good articulation choice when the goal is showing note grouping. Telemann's original manuscript doesn't have any slur markings in this passage, if you need or want to add slurs to perform it more smoothly, add them in a way that clarifies the note groups to the listener. In this section I choose to slur the neighbor notes together, so tongue one slur three, this helps me to punch the notes on the downbeat and blow through the pick-up gestures.

Measure 40 should feel like a strong arrival, possibly the climax of the movement. On the baroque bassoon the G on the downbeat was the highest note on the instrument so it had natural gravitas, additionally the large down slur to the chordal seventh is a wrenching gesture emphasizing the strong tendency of the seventh to resolve.

The B section that begins in measure 53 should have an entirely different feel from the rest of the sonata so far. It is the first section of the piece in a major key and the melody has a light, jaunty characteristic that offers a much-needed reprieve from the intensity of the A section.

This character continues in measures 57 and 58, beat four of both measures is unaccompanied, the leap to the raised scale degree four should come as a bit of a surprise and an accent. In measure 57 it's over an E-flat major chord resolving upward (lightly!) to the root, in measure 58 it's over a C minor chord resolving upward to the third.

Movement 3- Andante

This is generally the shortest movement in a sonata di chiesa and acts as one long lead up to a dominant chord which is resolved on the downbeat of the last movement. This is a really interesting feature of the form and should be reinforced to the audience by starting the fourth movement as soon as possible (*attacca*) after the third. So, prepare that by making whatever adjustments necessary before beginning the third movement, soak reed, blow out vocal, take a drink of water. Also, because the third movement is rather tiring, lots of sustained playing and only a few rests, while the last movement is exhausting (it only has 5 sixteenth rests in the whole movement).

While this movement is short (16 measure) it is also very slow, the eighth note gets the beat at an “andante” or walking tempo.

This is a great movement to pay extra attention to the bass line. The bassoonist should begin by practicing the basso part, then by comparing it to their own, and then by practicing it with another musician. While this is a great idea for all pieces, and Baroque music especially (as time went on the voices of the accompaniment texture became more integrated with one another, in the Baroque and Classical periods they were more independent) it is especially important in this movement for several reasons.

Because the melody is more sustained and lyrical, tension and release from nonchord tones is even more essential to forming an interpretation.

The harmonic rhythm varies throughout the movement. Sometimes a chord lasts for half a measure, sometimes for a quarter beat, sometimes for only an eighth. For instance, in measure 3 the A-natural on the downbeat and the G on beat three look like nonchord tones that resolve upward to a chord tone. However, in this case, each eighth is harmonized. On the first beat, the A-natural is the third of an F major chord and the B-flat is root of a B-flat minor chord. On beat three, the G is the root of a G diminished chord and the A-flat is the root of an A-flat major chord. In both cases the first note harmonically leads towards the second note, implying a slight crescendo rather than a decrescendo that might be played if they were harmonized as nonchord tones.

Another interesting facet of this movement is the metrical shift of thematic material. Each measure is comprised of eight eighth notes, but really functions like two measures of four eighth notes. Themes shift throughout the movement to the back half. Compare measures 1 and 4 to the second halves of 7 and 14. The same theme appears in all four places at different harmonic levels with subtly different accompaniment, practice these in isolation with a basso instrument and decide their relative strengths and implications of goal.

Movement 4- Vivace

The final movement is a fast AB binary form, with each section repeated. To repeat or not to repeat is always a question in Baroque music. On one hand, taking repeats is the best way to ornament, especially with more involved ornamentation this allows the listener to compare the original music to the ornamented version. On the other hand, Baroque music in general, and the last movement of this sonata especially are very tiring, so it might not be practical to take all repeats in a live performance. When making your decision weigh these factors against the overall endurance requirements of the program and how much time you need to fill. I would always prefer to maintain the balance of the form, so within a movement try to take all repeats, or no repeats.

Beware of automatically trying to inhale on every rest in this movement, there aren't that many and they're short. To fight the build up of stale air it's helpful to use some of the rests to exhale and some to inhale. For instance, in measure 5, I would either not inhale or I would exhale, and then inhale in measure 9. In the second half of the piece I definitely exhale as much as possible in measure 41 and inhale in 42 to drive to the end.

In measure 7, I use a short E-flat fingering to go from G to E-flat and back to G quickly and smoothly, at fast tempos this will make the technique smoother and cleaner *consistently*. In this case, I keep the resonance/low E-flat key down since I use it on the G and finger LH 1 3 for the E-flat, just omitting the right-hand fingers.

Measures 14-16 are great candidates for filling in thirds, each one of the C minor arpeggios can easily become a C minor scale in thirty-second notes. For the G chord in measure 15, I fill in thirds beginning with the G. I wouldn't fill in all three, maybe even only one, decide which works best for you.

Measure 20 is basically the same thing as measure 19, to make it more interesting and to drive into the cadence, I change the rhythm to thirty-second notes and add two more low Cs between each beat. Then in measure 21, I add upper neighbors to beats two and three, so the pitches in thirty-second notes for beats two and three are G, A-flat, G, F, and E-flat, F, E-flat, D.

Measure 23 is the beginning of the B section and it reprises the A-flat major key from the B section of the second movement. Let this change of modality influence phrasing in some way to further differentiate it from the A section and the upcoming return to F minor.

Measure 30 has a slur to tenor D-flat from the F below it, for this to execute smoothly, a long D-flat fingering is necessary.

Measures 40 and 41 have the same material in the bassoon part, but they are harmonized differently. Measure 40 is an F minor chord while measure 41 is a D-flat major chord. The downbeat of measure 40 is the resolution of a perfect authentic cadence after some buildup, so it should be strong. It is helpful at this point to come away in intensity to create a low point that can build back up to the end of the piece. Two good options are to make the upbeat of measure 40, the beginning of the new motive that's repeated in measure 41, a *subito piano*. Then measure 41 can be a bit stronger, and 42 stronger too when the F minor harmony returns. Alternatively, measure 40 can stay *forte*, measure 41 can be an echo, and measure 42 can return to a louder dynamic.

There should be a slow down the final time through the B section in the measures before the end. I think it's more effective in this style to save the *rallentando* for the penultimate measure, this resists the urge to overdo the ending.

The E-natural on beat three of 49 should be embellished, depending on how much you choose to slow down it could either be a trill (begun from the note above) with either *nachschläge* (if the tempo is really slow), an anticipation, or a retardation (the opposite of a suspension, so replaying an E-natural on the downbeat of the final measure that resolves upward to the F). If the tempo stays faster, a quick mordent on the E followed by an anticipation or retardation would also be appropriate.

Recordings-

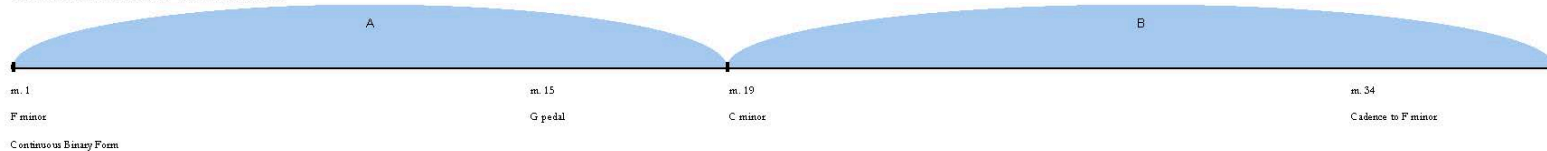
Christopher Weait- Telemann for Bassoon

Danny Bond & Philidor Ensemble- Telemann: Chamber Music (period instruments)

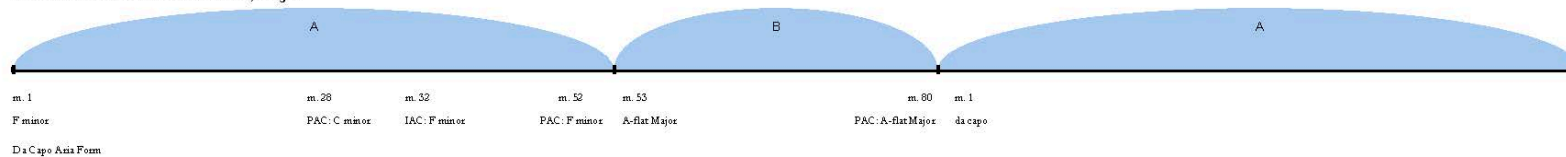
Milan Turkovic- Bassoon Extravaganza (with harp)

Salzburger Hofmusik- Telemann: Chalumeaux & Salterio (period instruments)

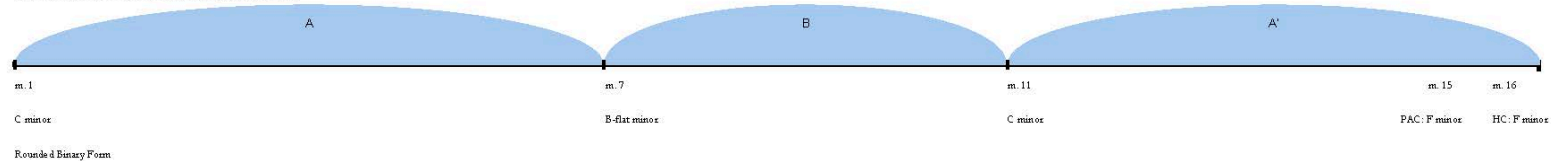
Telemann Sonata in F minor- Movement 1, Triste



Telemann Sonata in F minor- Movement 2, Allegro



Telemann Sonata in F minor- Movement 3, Andante



Telemann Sonata in F minor- Movement 4, Vivace

