Musical Rhetoric and Improvisation

In the Unmeasured Fantasias of Johann Gottfried Müthel

by

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ABSTRACT

The unmeasured Fantasias by Johann Gottfried Müthel appear as part of a collection of pedagogical exercises to foster improvisation. The information he gives in the notation of his fantasias can be elucidated with a historiographical interpretation of musical rhetoric. Müthel developed musical figures and contrasting textures in accordance with contemporary rhetorical principles of inventio, dispositio and elaboratio. An analysis of Müthel's G-minor Fantasia provides a link between musical rhetoric and performance, as seen through its improvisatory gestures. Issues of performance practice that arise in the G-minor Fantasia are the execution of ornaments, rhythmic alterations, registration, and articulation. This paper explores primary sources contemporary to Müthel to make sense of these issues. The unmeasured Fantasias are written for a keyboard with pedal. At the time that they were written, the pedal fortepiano and pedal clavichord were seen by musicians such as Carl Phillip Emanual Bach to be the superior instruments for performing improvisations. While the notation and texture of the Fantasias suggests that Müthel intended them for organ, a consideration of the possibilities provided by the fortepiano suggests that it may be more suited to conveying aspects of the galant aesthetic.

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Introduction

The keyboard music of Johann Gottfried Müthel represents an important bridge between the Baroque and Classical style. Along with C.P.E. Bach, Müthel is considered one of the most notable composers to write in the *Sturm und Drang* idiom, with characteristic chromatic shifts, contrast of affect, and a focus on the interplay between shorter musical gestures.[1] The tenets of musical rhetoric, a subject that was part of the liberal arts curriculum, provide a lens through which to understand Müthel's free fantasias. The topic of musical rhetoric in Germany through the Baroque is complex. Various treatises on the subject were published in Germany through the Baroque era, and these provide several ways to consider Müthel's compositional style.[2] The improvisatory quality of the fantasias requires an intricate interplay between composition and performance, and musical gestures in the music can inform the performer's interpretation.

Musical rhetoric is inextricably linked with the development of musical ideas. It is also tied into speech. Rhetoric is, in its simplest form, an analysis of speech patterns, and how these develop or change over time to present a persuasive argument. Rhetoric was also part of the *trivium* curriculum in university settings starting from the late-Renaissance. This married grammar, logic, and rhetoric, and permeated nearly every area

[1] Taruskin, Richard, *Music in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries the Oxford History of Western Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 416-417

[2] Robert Lewis Marshall and Eva Badura-Skoda, "Aspects of Performance Practice," in *Eighteenth-Century Keyboard Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1994), p. 61.

of study.[3] Developments in medical science and the rise of enlightenment thinking in the mid-17th century enabled musical rhetoric to become more relevant. The *enpfindsamer stil* that arose in the transitory period between the Baroque and Classical uses the doctrine of affections to move the listener to feel a specific way.[4]

The focus on logic and enlightenment thinking does not imply a lack of emotion or feeling, though. Rather, artists were manipulating their work through logical practices, such as rhetoric, to achieve a specific result. Enlightened music is not an unfeeling, logic obsessed art. It instead utilizes the full scope of compositional practices to move the listener. The later *sturm und drang* style demonstrates this well. Rapid dramatic shifts in mood and texture are meant to move the listener to respond emotionally in a certain way. Many sources throughout the Renaissance and Baroque explain how rhetoric and music both are used to move the passions. Educated students of music would no doubt have been familiar with rhetorical and oratory practices, both of which were performative arts. Sources that delve into this topic and are contemporary to Müthel include the following: Johann Mattheson's *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739), Johann Quantz's *On Playing the Flute* (1745), and C.P.E. Bach's *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments* (1759).

[3] Ibid.

[4] Türk Daniel Gottlob, in *School of Clavier Playing: Or Instructions in Playing the Clavier for Teachers & Students: Daniel Gottlob Türk* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1982), pp. 337-342.

Improvisation and the Free Fantasia

Müthel's compositional style derives from that of his teacher, Johann Sebastian Bach. He was one of his last students, and following Bach's death, Müthel studied and worked with his son, C.P.E. Bach. Müthel's proximity to such an influential musical character, especially towards the end of J.S. Bach's life, means that we have written accounts of both Müthel's compositional style and personality. Johann Nikolaus Forkel, J.S. Bach's biographer, described Müthel as an able keyboard player and composer, including him in a list of Bach's students that had gained notoriety.[5] English music historian Charles Burney commented on both his playing and his composing several times in his writing; in *The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands and United Provinces* (1773) and *A General History of Music* (1776). Müthel himself was concerned especially about novelty, as evident in his own words:

> "I have much that was conceived in a good mood and in happy moments but exists only in draft form… I am not at all satisfied with those composers who just write on and on, almost without a break. The spirit becomes weary, sleepy and dulled. When the spirit is in such a state of inactivity and lassitude, one often plunders one's own works, without knowing or noticing. In short, one repeats oneself."[6]

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[5] Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel, *Bach Reader* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1945), p. 332.

[6] Burney, Charles and Christoph Daniel Ebeling, *Carl Burney's der Musik Doctors Tagebuch einer Musikalischen Reise durch Frankreich und Italien: welche er unternommen hat um zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte der Musik Materialien zu sammeln* (Hamburg: Bode, 1772), p. 273.

Müthel's fantasias are an interesting counterpoint to this quote, as on the surface they appear to contradict some of Müthel's principles. These works were never published. Instead, they are found in loose-leaf manuscripts, Mus.ms. 15762/1, and Mus.ms. 15762/2, along with technical studies and short musical excerpts copied from other composers. They are also not titled; the label, "Fantasia," was eventually applied posthumously, though it is unclear when and by whom. C.P.E. Bach's definition of the free fantasia, seen below, supports this label, and ties fantasias to improvisational practice. Müthel and C.P.E. Bach's writing, along with the nature of these works' existence, implies a pedagogical purpose. The fantasias may be a guide for improvisational practice at the time, providing his pupils with a framework for their own improvisations.[7] It is very possible that the fantasias, which make up all Müthel's known solo organ works, were pieces never meant to be published, and thus never meant to be performed as they are today. A compelling piece of evidence that the fantasias were meant to be pedagogical improvisational guides comes from C.P.E. Bach, a contemporary of Müthel's. In his *Essay on the True art of Keyboard Playing*, he includes a section on the free fantasia in his chapter on improvisation.

> "A fantasia is said to be free when it is unmeasured and moves through more keys than is customary in other pieces, which are composed or improvised in meter. These latter require a comprehensive knowledge of composition, whereas the former requires only a thorough understanding of harmony and acquaintance with

[7] David Schulenberg, in *Bach Perspectives*, ed. Russell Stinson (Urbana, Illinois: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1999), pp. 25-26.

a few rules of construction. Both call for natural talent, especially the ability to improvise."[8]

Not only does he mention that the free fantasia is unmeasured; he also mentions that the clavichord and fortepiano, not the organ, are the best instruments for practicing improvisation. Though Müthel's fantasias include long sustained pedal tones and textures idiomatic to the organ, C.P.E. Bach's comment highlights how the organ was falling out of fashion as a keyboard instrument for secular music.

"The undamped (upper) register of the pianoforte is the most pleasing and, once the performer learns to observe the necessary precautions in the face of its reverberations, the most delightful for improvising." [9]

As guidelines for improvisation, these pieces provide insight into Galant compositional and improvisational performance practice. The fact that these fantasias are found in a manuscript that includes dozens of short technical exercises supports its improvisational nature. Müthel relies mostly on the use of sequence, repetitive rhythmic gesture, dramatic rests, and simplistic harmonic structure in these fantasias. Though C.P.E. Bach comments that the free fantasia moves through more keys than customary, many of Müthel's fantasias are restrained, providing a wide array of modulatory possibilities to both the amateur and season improvisor. Each technical exercise found in the manuscript bears similarity to the gestures found in the fantasias. This provides the student with a wide range of improvisational possibilities, with varying technical

[8] Bach Carl Philipp Emanuel, in *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, trans. William J. Mitchell (New York: Norton, 2000), p. 430.

[9] Ibid, p. 431.

difficulty. The centerpiece for analysis will be Müthel's Fantasia in g minor, which demonstrates nearly all his compositional tricks seen throughout the rest of the fantasias.

Musical Rhetoric

Rhetorical elements in music include *inventio, dispositio* or *elaboratio, decoratio* or *elocutio,* and *pronunciatio*.[10] Quintilian provided the basis for most Baroque theorists' writing on rhetoric. Other relevant theorists who wrote on the topic include Johann Christoph Gotshed and Johannes Mattheson. Rhetoric is not the means for analysis, but rather a foundation for persuasive musical execution that ties together composition and performance. *Inventio, disposition, and decoratio* are all related to composition. *Inventio* is the process of choosing the key, register, and meter as it is most effectively performed by the instruments. *Dispositio* is the structural function of the piece. These functions can include cadences, textural contrast, and how the themes are presented and change over time. *Dispositio* includes the rhetorical devices with which language is analyzed. Some rhetorical devices that are applicable in music might include *anaphora*, *anadiplosis*, *mimesis*, or *parembole*.[11]

Decoratio is the process of applying these rhetorical devices to develop the themes introduced over time. Ornamentation is the most obvious method of *decoratio*, but beat stress and expressivity also fall into this general category. *Climax, syncopa,* and

[10] Badura-Skoda, p. 61.

[11] Senka Belic, "On the Connection of Musico-Rhetorical Strategies and Marian Topic/Topos in Renaissance Motets," *Muzikologija*, no. 28 (2020): pp. 162-163, https://doi.org/10.2298/muz2028159b.

anabasis are just a few devices included in the process of *decoratio*. *Pronunciatio* refers to the actual performance, and thus is the cumulation of the other three rhetorical categories. These four terms, when considered together, link composition and performance together and are especially relevant when considering improvisational practice.[12] Fluency in musical rhetoric can lead to fluency in improvisation, as performers have an intricate understanding of how to present a musical argument. Johann Joachim Quantz' treatise on playing the flute describes a musical performance as an oration.

> "A musical performance may be compared with the delivery of an orator. The orator and the musician have, at bottom, the same aim in regard to both the preparation and the final execution of their productions, namely to make themselves masters of the hearts of their listeners, to arouse of still their passions, and to transport them now to this sentiment, now to that. Thus, it is advantageous to both if each has some knowledge of the duties of the other."[13]

Analysis

The Fantasia in G-minor, found in its entirety in the second segment of Müthel's manuscript, Mus.ms. 15762/2, begins with a simple, short gesture, repeated three times with increasing levels of complexity. Each gesture is interspersed with a short pedal trill while the hands rest. This repetition, along with the period of rest, provides to the listener

[12] Ibid, p. 160-163.

[13] Johann Joachim Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, trans. Edward R. Reilly (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2001), p. 119.

an increasing level of tension, though Müthel does not actually use much dissonance. Harmonically, this opening material is all in G-minor, ending on the dominant. The repetition is at three different pitch points, all outlining G-minor. Though this material never returns, it does establish rhythmic and melodic patterns that Müthel will continue using throughout the work – namely the turn figuration (indicated by the vertical reversed "S") and the dotted-sixteenth to thirty-second note declamation circled below (fig. 1).

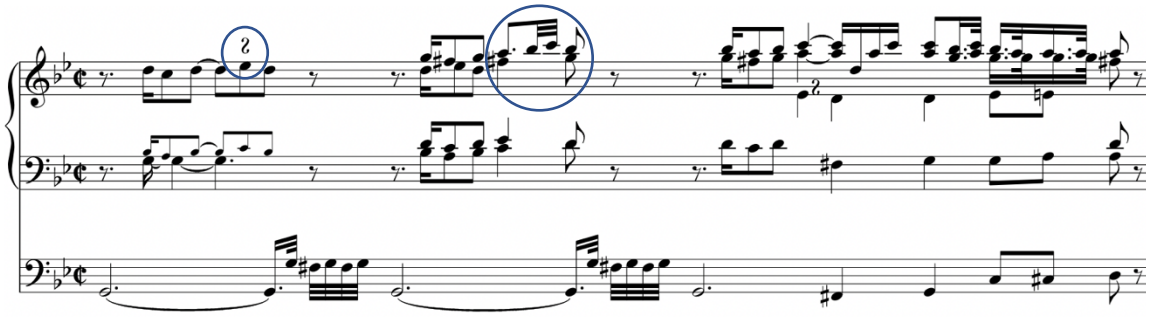


Figure 1

Following the opening material, we have the first of many rests. Müthel uses these to separate each gesture. Sometimes they are written as literal rests, and other times they're written into the rhythm. The next gesture is one of Müthel's frequent improvisational devices, providing a striking contrast to the opening. Here, all voices move in unison, once again outlining a g-minor chord, with chromatic incomplete neighbor tones (fig. 2). At this point, Müthel begins using gestures that lead directly into the next – they almost function as musical interruptions of each other, creating a sense of both urgency and instability. The unison gesture leads directly into a brief sequence of 2-3 suspensions followed by a melodic motive to which Müthel frequently returns (fig. 3).

This motive is presented in repetition, leading to a long sequence of 2-3 suspensions. These suspensions over an active lower voice allow Müthel to provide chromatic intrigue without changing key (fig. 4). There is a brief interjection of intense dotted rhythms, also repeated, before the final gesture of the opening material begins. This is a reiteration of the melodic motive at the beginning: the figure itself almost spins out of control with a series of rapid turns, once again in exact repetition, ending on a fermata (fig. 5). Rhetorically, Müthel has presented all his full texture material in short bursts – each gesture either eliding directly with the next or broken up with rests. He has used musical rhetoric to its full advantage, playing with the listener's expectation with contrasting material and careful repetition that highlights important harmonic and structural elements.

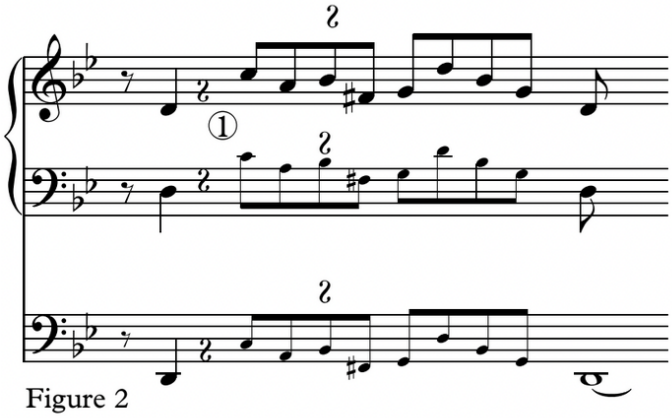
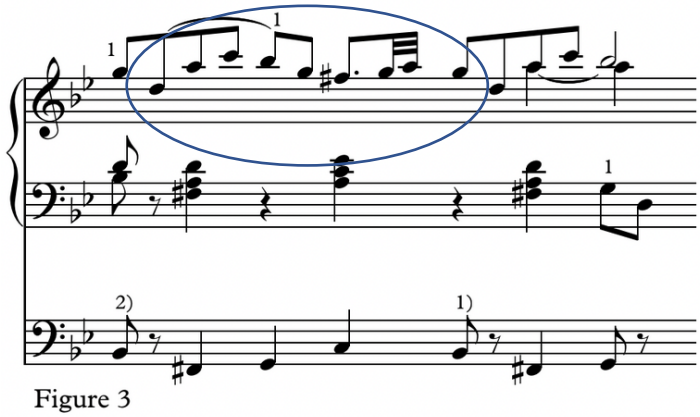


Figure 2



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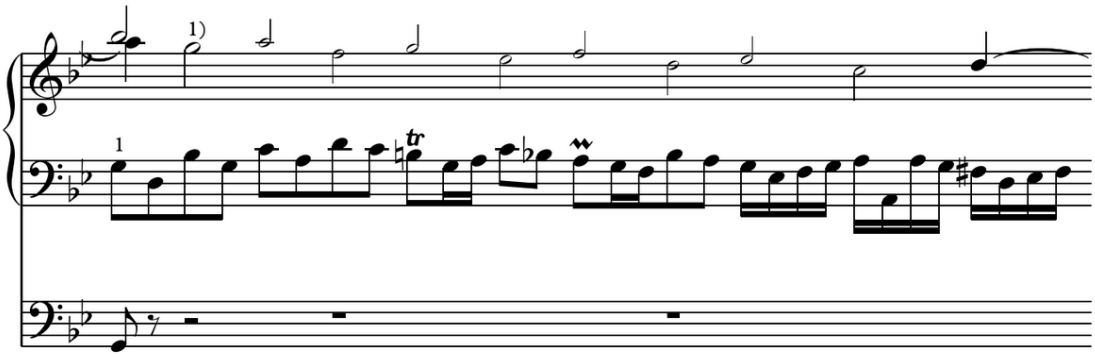

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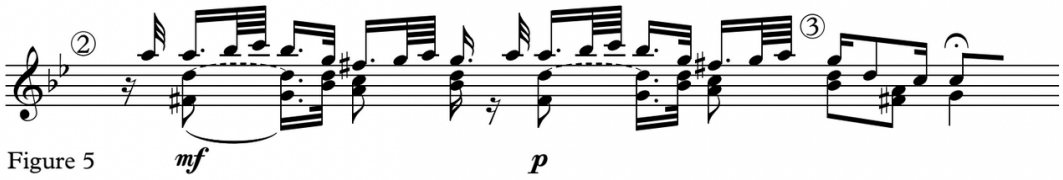

Figure 5

Following the opening material, Müthel presents the first solo passages. A virtuosic flourish outlining the g-minor melodic scale is interrupted by a brief *forte* declamation of dotted rhythms, ending on D-Major. Müthel follows this with a rest under a fermata, providing a clear break in the phrase. He returns to a solo gesture outlining D-Major, which once again is interrupted by dotted rhythms, leading back to G. Following this phrase is another short declamatory gesture of more dotted rhythms, which demonstrates one of Müthel's improvisational tricks: the pedal doubles the lowest voice in the hands. The composer relies on this doubling frequently, providing a simple way for the student to include pedal without complicated counterpoint (fig. 6). This phrase is also the first time that Müthel strays away from tonic and dominant harmonies, ending with a large C-minor chord. Following a rest - the last rest before the end of this section - he

returns to parallel unisons, which elide into the next phrase of 2-3 suspensions, followed by a long period of the spinning motive. The motive is developed over a descending fifth sequence, culminating in a rising repeated rhythmic motif that shares the same high point as the climax from the opening material. The section ends with an elaborately ornamented cadence (fig. 7).

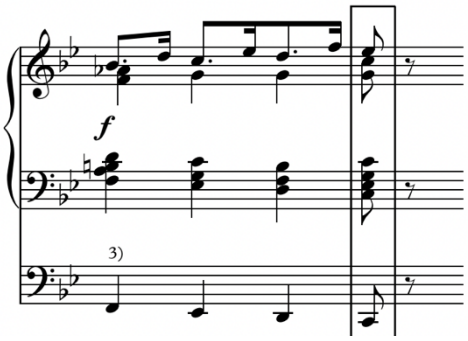

Figure 6

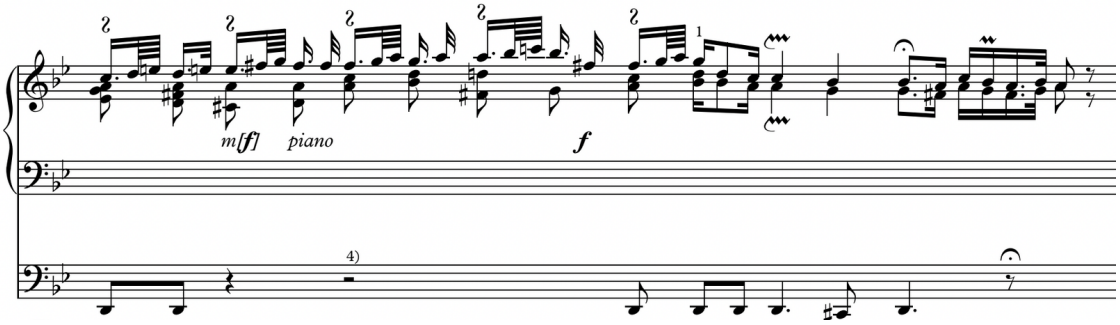

Figure 7

What follows is the single longest section of free solo material in any of Müthel's fantasias. This makes up most of the work itself and is free of previously introduced motifs. As a free fantasia, this solo section works well: it provides expansive material as well as a large variety of shorter gestures that might be adapted and used by students at the bench. This section contains *stylus fantasticus* improvisatory material that bears similarity to the opening of J.S. Bach's Toccata, from his Toccata, Adagio and Fugue, BWV 564. The solo material begins in the pedal and is almost an exact copy of the pedal solo from Bach's work (fig. 8.1/2).

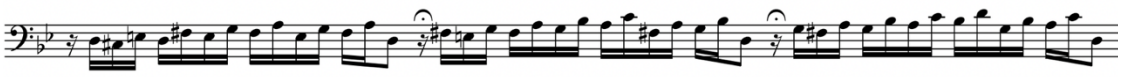

Figure 8.1: Müthel Fantasia in G-minor pedal solo

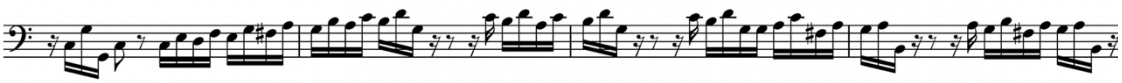

Figure 8.2: Bach Toccata in C-major, BWV 564 pedal solo, mm. 13-16

As in the beginning of the Fantasia, this material is repeated three times at three different pitch points. Between each iteration is a rest with a fermata. The shape of the phrase is repetitive, consistently outlining thirds with a larger leap between the last two notes (fig. 8.1). Following the first gesture, Müthel provides a sequence of elided pedal phrases that become increasingly elaborate. The first is like the previous gesture: broken thirds that eventually devolve into sequential material. The second, perhaps also drawing inspiration from J.S. Bach, is a wedge shape. The first interval, a 6^{th}, opens to a 12^{th}, closes to a 4^{th}, opens back to a 12^{th}, and eventually closes just slightly to a 10^{th} before beginning the next phrase. The third phrase ends the elided material, outlining E-flat-

Major. The wedge gesture is repeated, this time outlining G-minor (fig. 9). The final pedal solo before the manual entrance is a long phrase of broken thirds spanning most of the length of the pedal board. The thirds outline the G-melodic-minor scale ascending and an F#-diminished chord descending; Müthel likely uses the melodic minor and diminished tonality to provide a strong sense of tension and release.

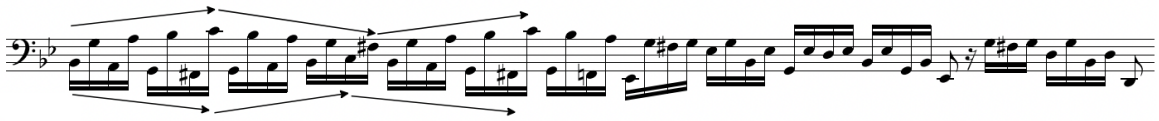

Figure 9

The manual entrance develops themes and gestures that were introduced in the pedal; hand technique permits more complexity. At this point in the fantasia, Müthel begins to experiment more with chromatic alterations. The gesture begins in the same way as the pedal entrance, except this time there is a repetition of the first interval – D to C# is played twice, possibly to provide a stronger downbeat on C# to set up the longer phrase. There are no rests before the end of this manual solo passage, the phrases once again eliding with each other. The first phrase takes obvious inspiration from the final pedal gesture, with a long phrase of broken thirds spanning a wide range. These broken thirds evolve briefly into broken sixths. Following this phrase, Müthel once again uses the wedge gesture, made more elaborate by the hands with full chords in the treble. This wedge is interrupted by declamatory dotted-rhythms on D-Major, tying the solo to the opening material (fig. 10). Following a large rest, the pedal enters once again, seeming to

imitate the manual entrance with its repetition of D-C#, though this time with a turn gesture in between. The turn quickly returns to the wedge gesture, followed by broken parallel 10ths, a section of chromatic incomplete neighbor tones, arpeggiation of the G-minor chord, more incomplete neighbor tones, and finally a repetition of the final interval – F#-G – before landing on a D pedal point. These gestures have all been introduced previously, but are now presented with slight elaboration, falling into the category of *dispositio.* The longer and more elaborate the phrase, the more repetition is used to guide the ear.

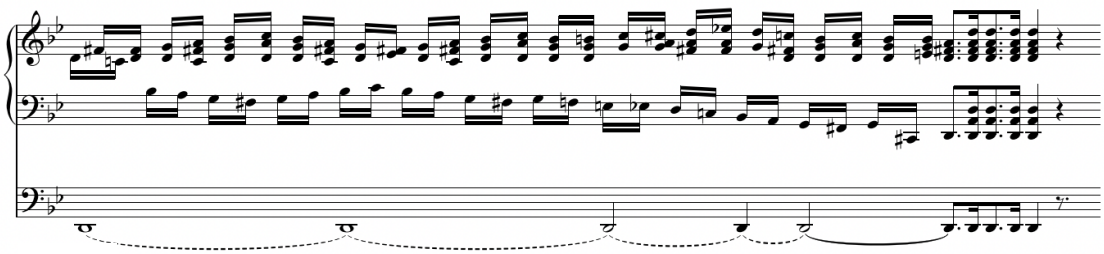

Figure 10

The third and final larger solo section combines pedal and manual, with long pedal points under increasingly elaborate figurations in the hands. Müthel relies on repetition even more here. The manuals begin with D-C#, which is repeated five times. This augmented repetition creates more tension, playing with the listener's expectations by delaying the actual start of the phrase. The repetition sets up an entirely unique phrase not seen before in the solo passagework: the alternation of pitches between the right and left hand creates a disjunct compound wedge pivoting around C-sharp (fig. 11). The manuals are underscored by a D pedal-point, which moves up to G to mark the end of the phrase. The next gesture is simple and without pedal-point: a G-minor melodic scale with

each four-note grouping repeated. Once Müthel reaches the high point of this gesture, he falls back down with a series of chromatic, incomplete neighbor tones that end with another point of repetition. F#-G is repeated four times and provides both the ending to this phrase and beginning of the next. The following phrase is an almost exact repetition of the disjunct compound wedge, centering around F-sharp. This phrase also marks the return of the pedal point, this time on the tonic G. Müthel has at this point introduced a wide variety of gestures, which he is free to cycle through as he pleases to finish up the solo passagework. We see a simple C-minor melodic scale with repeated four-note groupings, falling chromatic, incomplete neighbor tones, disjunct wedges, D-minor melodic four-note groupings, and finally a disjunct wedge. The pedal throughout this section establishes the harmonic sequence – D-major to G-minor, G-minor to C-minor, A-minor to D-minor, and finally D-minor to G-minor. These are all closely related keys of G-minor. The improvisatory nature of this work necessitates the use of simple harmonic progression, with the chromatic alterations presented either as points of repetition and stress, or included within sequential material.

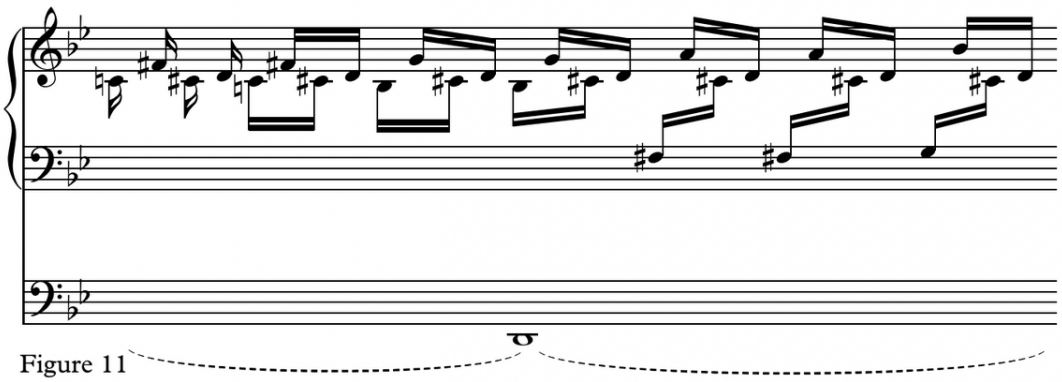

Figure 11

The end of the solo passage marks the beginning of the final section of this work, and a return to motifs introduced at the beginning. This passage shows Müthel using the *sturm und drang* style to its fullest. The chromaticism becomes more elaborate, and the gestures even more varied and contrasting. The first phrase is a development of the turns that occur in the opening material, this time with more disjunct shape and elaborate ornamentation (fig. 12). The pedal here provides a descending chromatic line, which juxtaposes with the next pedal phrase, a series of ascending chromatic tones. Here, the voices move in unison and move chromatically before quickly moving back down with incomplete neighbor tones. The next phrase uses melodic material from the opening in rhythmic diminution with the manuals play a slightly altered version of the original gesture (fig. 13.1/2). When this material was first introduced at the beginning of the piece, it was followed by a 2-3 sequence pattern. Müthel once again uses a sequence, this time the 5-6 sequence between the chords. The pedal, fitting with Müthel's previously established pedal-work in complex textures, doubles the lowest voice in the manuals. The phrase gains momentum using turns and suspensions to create a strong feeling of tension and release. Following this sequence is a rest under a fermata, at which point Müthel gives a brief interjection of an arpeggiated D-Major chord. This interjection develops into another sequence, this time with independent pedal leading the melodic motion. This section uses the full range of the pedal register, at one point leaping two octaves from D2 to D4. Müthel keeps returning to D2 in this pedal in the sequence, creating a strong dominant harmony to set up the final gesture.

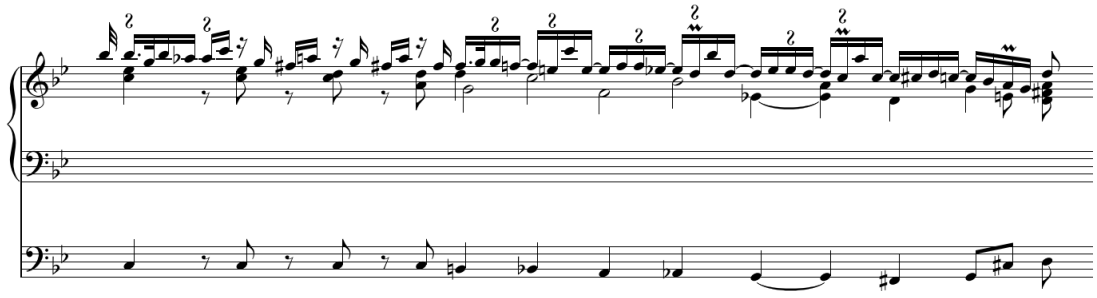

Figure 12

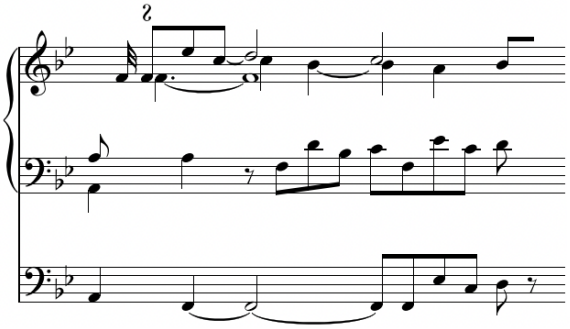

Figure 13.1: First iteration

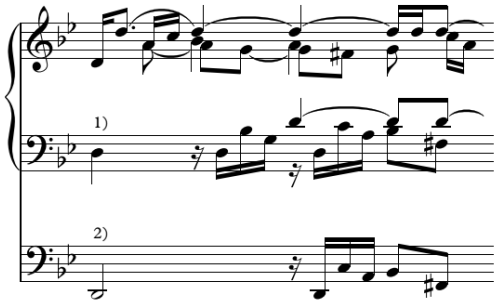

Figure 13.2: Rhythmic diminution

Müthel returns to the dotted-rhythm motif for the final phrase. In a line reminiscent of a French Overture, he sets up three separate iterations of dotted rhythms. The first uses a chromatic rising pedal line under striking dissonances in the hands. Each dotted rhythm gesture is broken up by florid ornamentation combining both written out trills and *agrément* turns. The second dotted gesture borrows from the opening material, presenting the melodic motif that returns frequently in this work (fig. 14). The final dotted gesture sets up a last dissonance, building tension over repeating G's, before coming to rest on a D7 chord over G in the pedal. This dissonance is held while the top voice freely ornaments, before ending with a resolution to G (fig. 15).

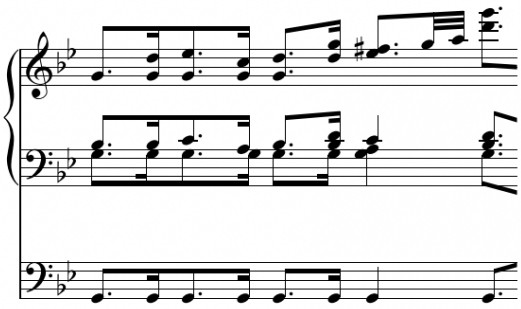

Figure 14

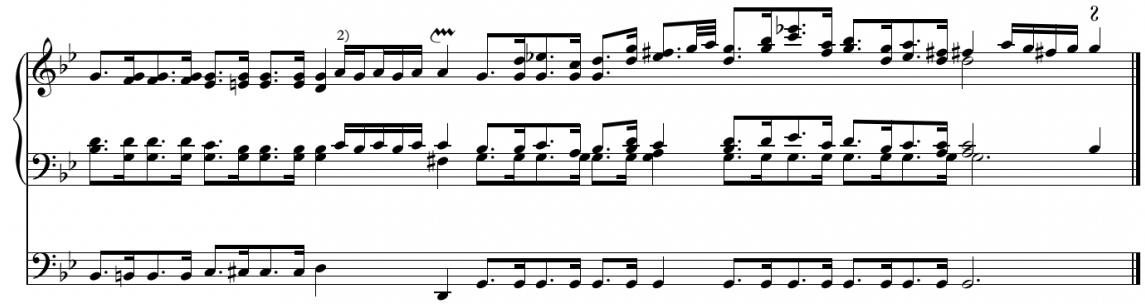

Figure 15

Seeing the work in the manuscript format provides more insight into Müthel's organizational structure. The work is compressed onto only two sheets, and as such it is easy to distinguish between the different textures and sections. The solo passagework is entirely horizontal, whereas the *tutti* sections rely more on vertical harmonies. Müthel intersperses these sections between each other to provide contrast, as well as provide areas of harmonic and melodic stability. The long solo passage is demarcated with dotted rhythms to establish a strong dominant tonality, and thus the solo gestures pull the harmony from one to the next. The work itself is difficult to distinguish from the rest of the manuscript. Each phrase could easily be one of the short technical exercises Müthel

includes (fig. 16). Müthel prepares the student with the technical exercises to be able to implement them in the fantasias. This manuscript can thus be seen as a series of sketches meant to prepare the student to play complex improvisatory free fantasias.

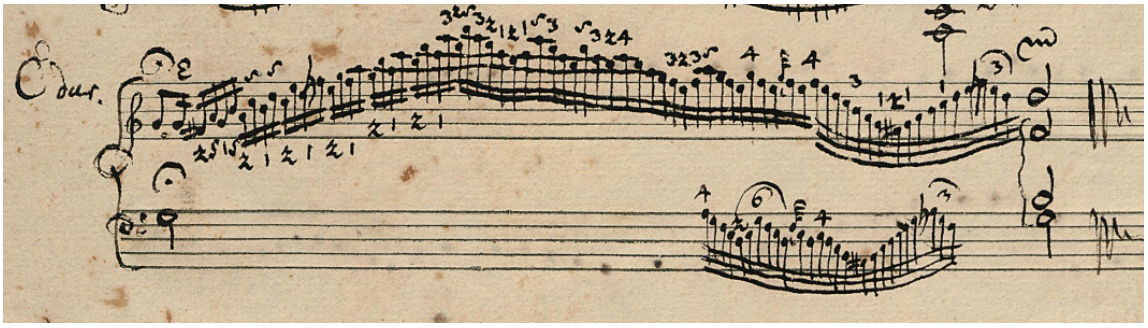

Figure 16: Mus. Ms. 15762/2, p. 26[14]

Though this piece clearly borrows influence from J.S. Bach, there are many elements of the work that are idiomatic to the period after Bach's death. These include parallel octaves between all voices, a higher melodic register generally, and the use of the turn (rather than the trill) as the dominant ornament. As is common in gallant music, Müthel's Fantasia is composed of short phrases and displays a simple harmonic structure that allows for chromaticism without modulation. The shape of the gestures is more in the Baroque idiom, though Müthel's treatment and development of these gestures is more forward thinking.

[14] Müthel, Johann Gottfried, *Technische übungen* (Mus.ms. 15762/2, c. 1760-1780), p. 26

Performance Practice Issues

Registration

The improvisatory character inherent in Müthel's music requires a suitable performance practice. C.P.E. Bach summarizes what makes a performance good in his *School of Clavier Playing*: "Good performance, then, occurs when one hears all notes and their embellishments played in correct time with fitting volume produced by a touch which is related to the true content of a piece."[15] On the organ, volume is achieved by registration – thus, performance of these works on the organ requires an understanding of the organs Müthel is known to have played. We have documentation of Müthel's church employment and education, as well as specifications for the organs at these churches. Müthel's father, his first organ teacher, worked at St. Nicolai Church in Mölnn.[16] The organ was originally built by Jacob Scherer, with additions by Christian Ludwig Bünting. The specifications are as follows (additions by Bünting labelled *):[17]

[15] Bach, C.P.E, p. 148.

[16] Müthel Johann Gottfried and Wilhelm Rüdiger, "Orgelwerke," in *Orgelwerke* (Innsbruck / Neu-Rum: Helbling, 1982), p. 78.

[17] Frank, Lukas, "Johann Gottfried Müthel: Bach's Last Student," *Vox Humana*. December 8, 2018.

I: Reuck-Positiv

Principal 8’
Gedackt 8’ (Chorton)
Gedackt 8’ (Kammerton)
Octava 4’
Octava 2’
Rohrfloit 4’
Blockfloit 4’
Sharff IV
Cimbel II
Siffloit 1 1/2’
Oboe 8’*
Trichter-Regal 8’*

II: Hauptwerck
Principal 8’
Bourdon 16’*
Quintadena 8’*
Violi d’Gamba 8’*
Rohrfloit 8’*
Gedackt 8’
Octava 4’
Rohrfloit 4’*
Spitzfloit 8’*
Nasat 3’*

II: Hauptwerck continued

Mixtur IV
Trommet 16’
Vox humana 8’*

III: Brust-Positiv
Gedackt 8’
Quintadena 4’*
Waldfloit 2’
Sesquialtera II*
Siffloit 1’*
Dulcian 8’*

Pedal
Principal 16’
Bordun 16’*
Gedackt 8’
Octava 4’
Octava 8’*
Mixtur IV
Posaune 16’*
Trommet 8’
Trommet 4’*
Quinta 3’

While studying with Johann Christoph Altnickol following J.S. Bach’s death, Müthel likely became familiar with the Hildebrant organ at St. Wenceslas Church, Naumburg – Altnickol’s place of work. The specifications for that organ are as follows: [18]

[18] Ibid.

I: Rückpositiv
Principal 8’
Quintathen 8’
Rohrflött 8’
Violdigamba 8’
Praestant 4’
Fuggara 4
Naßat 3’
Rohrflött 4’
Octav 2’
Rausch Pfeiffe II
Cymbel V
Fagott 16’
Tremulant

II: Hauptwerk
Principal 16’
Quintathen 16’
Octav 8’
Spill-od. Spitzflött 8’
Octav 4’
Gedackt 8’
Spill-od. Spitzflött 4’
Sexquintaltra II
Quinta 3’
Weit Pfeiffe 2’
Octav 2’
Cornett IV
Mixtur VIII
Bombart 16’
Trompet 8’
Cymbelstern

III: Oberwerk
Principal 8’
Burdun 16’
Hollflött 8’
Praestant 4’
Gemshorn 4’
Quinta 3’
Octav 2’
Tertia 1 3/5’
Waldflött 2’
Quinta 1 1/2’
Süflott 1’
Scharff V
Vox humana 8’
Unda maris 8’
Tremulant

Pedal
Principal 16’
Violon 16’
Subbaß 16’
Octav 8’
Violon 8’
Octav 8’
Nachthorn 2’
Mixtur VII
Posaune 32’
Posaune 16’
Trompett 8’
Clarin 4’

Koppeln
RP/HW
OW/HW
OW/RP
RP/P
HW/P
OW/P

The organ with which Müthel was likely most familiar was in Riga, Latvia. He held the position of organist at St. Peter’s Church, beginning in 1767. It was in Riga that Müthel was most active professionally. This is where he most likely wrote his fantasias, though the manuscript has no precise date. The *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin* dates the document c. 1760-1780. In Riga, Müthel was also an active pedagogue, furthering the possibility that the fantasias were written while he was serving as organist at St. Peter’s.

The instrument was built by Gottfried Kloosen, with the following stop list given for its reconstruction by Wegscheider: [19]

I: Hauptwerk
Principal 8'
Quintadena 16'
Rohrflöte 8'
Gemshorn 8'
Octava 4'
Gemshorn 4'
Quinta 3'
Octava 2'
Tertia 1 3/5'
Mixture IV
Cinbel III
Trompete 8'

II: Oberwerk
Principal 8'
Viola di Gamba 8'
Gedackt 8'
Flüte Traversiere 4'
Octava 4'
Kleingedackt 4'
Nasat 3'
Flöte 2'
Mixture III
Baar Pfeifen 8'
Vox humana 8'

III: Brustwerk
Principal 4'
Gedackt 8'
Quintadena 8'
Flüte douce 4'
Salicional 4'
Spitzflöte 2'
Sedecima 1'
Cimbel III
Cornettino IV
Hautbois 8'

Pedal
Principal 16'
Subbass 16'
Quinta 12'
Violoncello 8'
Oktava 8'
Super-Oktava 4'
Kleine-Oktava 2'
Mixtur IV
Posaune 16'
Trompete 8'

These specifications provide a foundation for the performer to choose registrations that are as historically accurate as possible. The stop lists should not be limiting, but rather allow the modern player even more freedom in choosing registrations as each of the three is so distinctive. Müthel would have chosen registrations for his Fantasias that best suited the features of each organ. Unlike France, where registrational practice was standardized in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there was

[19] Margarete Ziegler-Raschdorf, "Eine Orgel Für Rīga," *Ērgeles Rīgai*, 2021, p. 6, https://www.peters-church-organ-riga.com/assets/files/KalenderRiga2021_online.pdf.

more flexibility in central and eastern Europe, where there was more variety in the styles of organbuilding. In some instances, written accounts document late-Baroque and Classical registration schemes, but there are no surviving traces of Müthel's registrations. Therefore, the modern performer should choose the sounds for playing his music according to the specification of the organ and considerations of the range and textures of the music.

The range of Müthel's G-minor Fantasia makes frequent use of the upper register of the keyboard, which becomes shrill when utilizing bright mixtures or pipes at the 2' pitch. In several places, Müthel makes use of terraced dynamics, providing three different dynamic levels best executed on a three-manual organ. On the organ, these dynamics are used to instruct the performer on which manual to play. Müthel makes use of dynamics in *tutti* sections with shorter repeated gestures (fig. 17). For most of his fantasias, he only includes the marking for *piano* and *forte,* which can be executed easily at a two-manual instrument. Some, with the use of three different dynamics in a short period of time, work best at a three-manual instrument, as seen below. To avoid issues of imbalance between the manuals and pedal, Müthel usually only includes pedal at the *forte* dynamic, and sometimes *mezzo forte*. For the performer, this can help influence choices in manual changes. If there is pedal, the hands should play on the *forte* manual. Müthel rarely uses dynamic markings in the solo material, though the performer may consider changing manuals for interest, based on the shape and character of the line. *Forte* can be registered following the standards of the German *volles Werk*, or full organ. The German *plenum*

was not a standardized registration, as organs throughout Germany were greatly varied. However, there are some contemporary accounts of the *volles Werk*, such as that in Johann Mattheson's *Der volkommene Capellmeister* (1739).[20] *Mezzo-forte* might be the plenum registration, without large mixtures or pedal reeds. *p* might be just the flutes, and *pp* just the 8' or 4' flute.

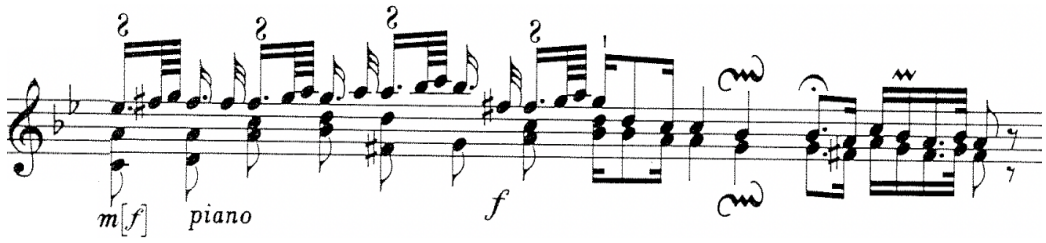

Figure 17: Dynamics given in manuals – best for a three-manual organ to set up a large plenum, small plenum, and echo

In the G-minor Fantasia, much of the passagework in the upper register of the keyboard is played at the *mf* and *p* dynamic, which provides a less abrasive sound than if the entire piece was played on the *plenum*. These observations – the use of pedal only at the *forte* dynamic and quieter registrations for the upper register – help the performer with manual changes throughout all Müthel's fantasias, even those where he provides little dynamic guidance. The G-minor Fantasia, for example, only includes dynamics for the first part of the piece. They are absent during the solo and ending sections. A performer might utilize manual changes in places where the line repeats or shares similar

[20] Johann Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister, 1739*, trans. Margarete Reimann (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1995), p. 467.

gestures with those found with dynamics in the beginning. The pedagogical and improvisatory nature of these works explains the inconsistency of Müthel's dynamic markings, which seem to be meant as general guidelines. They may also be employed by organists during improvisation, as possibilities for registrations of manual changes.

Tempo

Issues of tempi primarily include the use of fermatas and acceleration/deceleration. Much of this is already notated in the score – Müthel indicates frequent fermatas over rests and phrase endings, and he notates rhythms with specificity. He often accelerates in rhythms towards the end of simple scale passages, especially those at the *mf* and *f* dynamic (fig. 18). This observation can be used to shape the rhythmic inflection in Müthel's solo passages, which lack variety. It is up to the performer to provide a compelling interpretation of these sections, following the general instruction set up in the beginnings of pieces. In the G-Minor Fantasia, Müthel uses sixteenth notes exclusively for each gesture in the long solo section. Eighth notes are seen only in the vertical chords which help break up each gesture, or the end of the pedal gestures in the solo section (fig. 19). There are no rests except between the aforementioned pedal gestures in the solo material, and in the manuals as the pedal moves from free solo material to pedal points (fig. 20). Thus, the solo material, played exactly as notated, has few moments of rest or space.

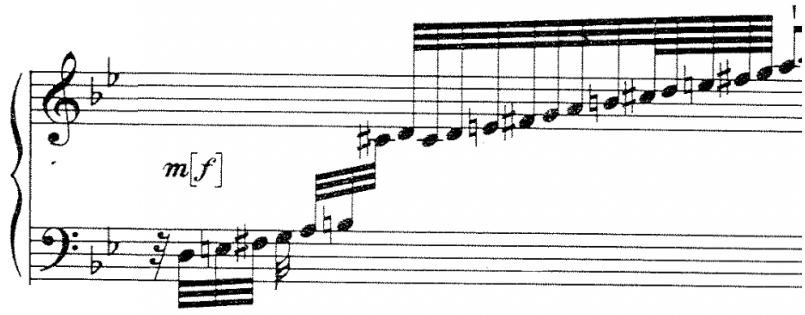

Figure 18

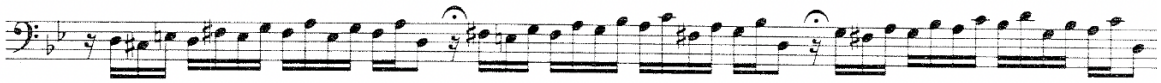

Figure 19

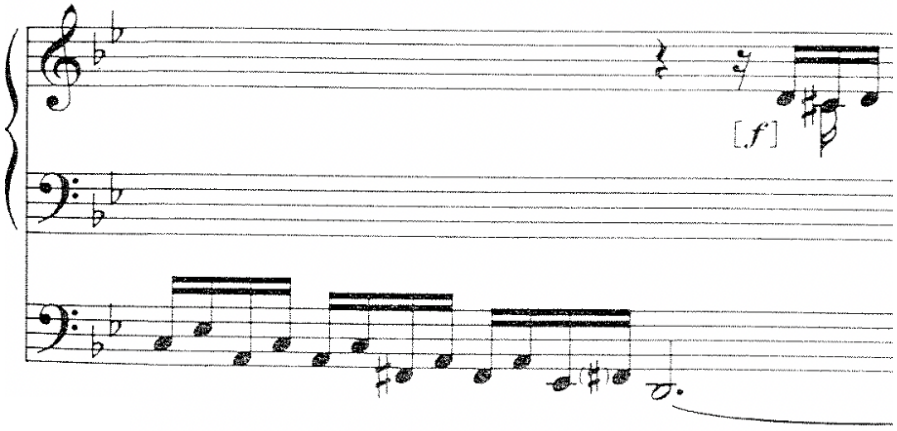

Figure 20

Ornamentation

The vertical turn symbol seen frequently in Müthel's work has no clear execution (fig. 21) Several theorists contemporary to Müthel describe its execution as an upward, or inverted, turn. Marpung's *Anleitung zum Klavierspielen,* Pleyel's *Klavierschule*, and Dussek's *Pianoforte-schule* all describe the ornament as starting from the lower secondary note. In his *Clavierschule*, Daniel Gottlob Türk provides the same execution for both the horizontal and vertical turn symbols, writing that both must begin on the upper auxiliary note.[21] The presence of several contradictory sources, as well as Müthel's lack of specific instruction, imply an open-ended approach. Müthel exclusively utilizes the notation for upward turns while also including written out upward turns throughout. The degree of specificity with which Müthel writes out ornamentation means that the piece itself may provide a guide for execution. The very first phrase of the G-minor fantasia includes both an upward turn *agrément* and a written out upward turn (fig. 22). The reason Müthel likely separated these was for rhythmic variety – treatises describe the turn notation as a rapid set of four notes that begin with the quicker rhythmic diminution.

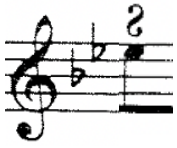

Figure 21

[21] Türk Daniel Gottlob, *School of Clavier Playing: or Instructions in Playing the Clavier for Teachers & Students: Daniel Gottlob Türk* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 272.

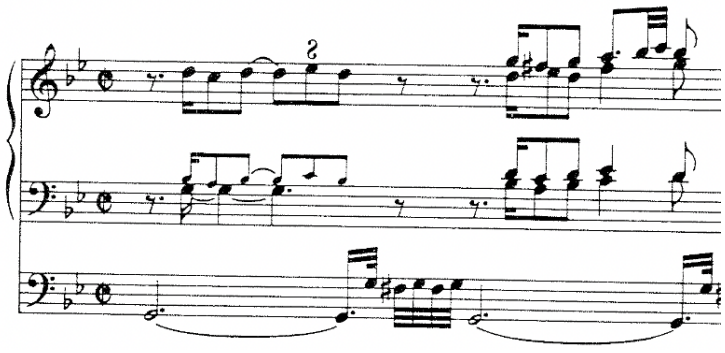

Figure 22: *Agrément* inverted turn verses rhythmically altered turn

C.P.E. Bach describes how to execute the turn in three tempi, as seen below (fig. 23). The stress is always on the final note. Müthel writes out turn figuration when he wants to stress the first note of the turn. His written-out turns are also exclusively upward turns, besides the final cadence. Here, Müthel includes one written out turn beginning from the upper note, before notating a symbol above the final note (fig. 24). It would make little sense to perform the same ornament twice, thus the turn with the symbol should probably be played inverted. One might interpret the vertical turn notation three ways – all coming from the lower auxiliary, all coming from the upper auxiliary, or a mix of both. The performer must consider the shape of the line when choosing whether to start the turn from above or below. Müthel does not include any ornaments – either as *agréments* or written out – in the free solo material. However, this should not dissuade performers from adding tasteful extemporaneous ornamentation, as was the practice at the time.

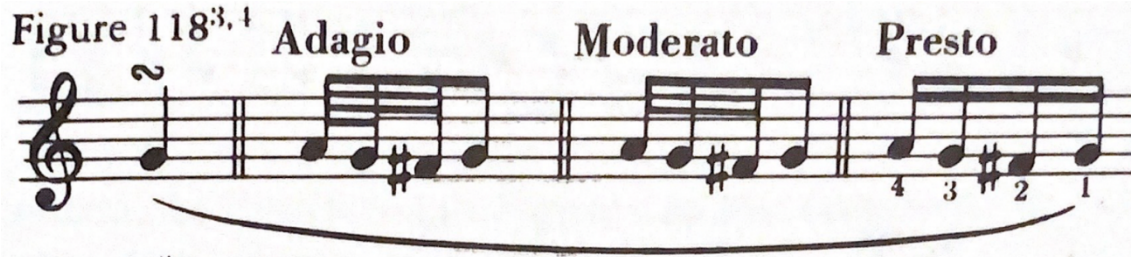

Figure 23: C.P.E. Bach's execution of turns at three tempi: "Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments," pg. 113

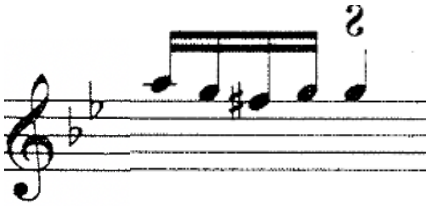

Figure 24

Articulation

Müthel also makes use of the dash symbol, for which he gives instructions on page 8 of volume one of his *Technische übungen*:

> "Groups of four such notes are best performed as follows: the first one is somewhat stronger, the second one, as drawn with a slur to the first; the following two are somewhat thrown away."[22] (Fig. 25)

[22] Frank, Lukas, "Johann Gottfried Müthel: Bach's Last Student," *Vox Humana*. December 8, 2018.

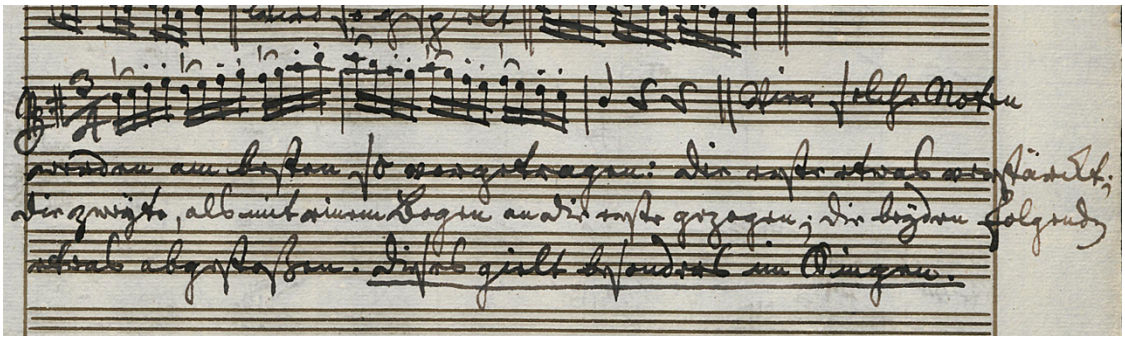

Figure 25: Müthel's instruction for dashed notes connected with slurs

The detailed instructions to play dashed notes lightly after slurred notes does not apply to notes marked with dashes in the G-minor Fantasia. Here they do not occur after slurred notes, so they should be played staccato, as described in contemporary treatises (fig. 26). In other of Müthel's Fantasias, dashed notes occur after slurred notes, so there they should be played less sharply. Their execution depends on the context in which they are found.

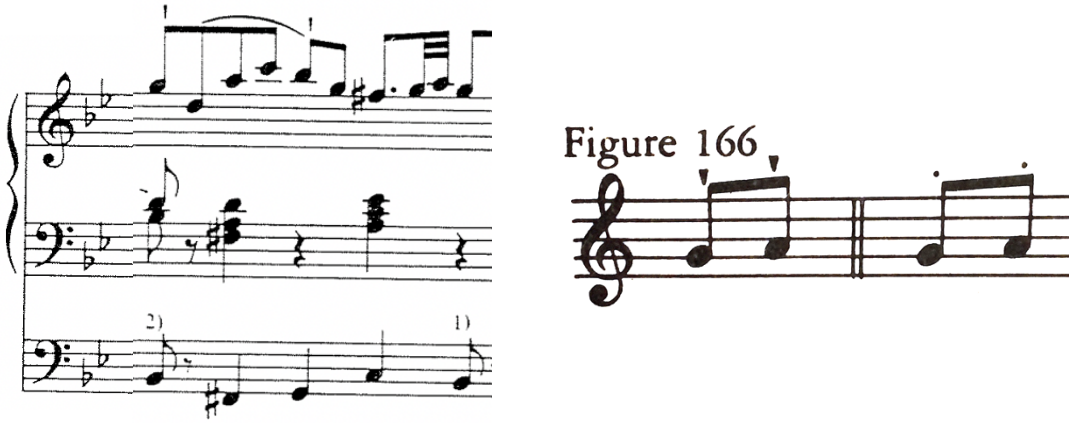

Figure 26: Dash markings in Müthel's G-minor Fantasia and C.P.E. Bach's instructions for execution

Within the G-minor fantasia, the dashed notes seem primarily to indicate staccato, as they usually are notated in the right hand before and after melodic legato material. They are also found on downbeats before dotted-rhythm motifs. Playing these with a large break before the next note creates an interesting effect on the organ. Another possibility is that these wedges are meant to show where to put stress, though this does not always fit with the slurs Müthel includes in the G-minor fantasia. These dashes usually bookend legato phrase markings. Combining both interpretations – playing with detached articulation while holding the note with the wedge slightly longer for temporal stress– could provide a satisfying solution that may be adjusted as needed throughout the fantasias. Müthel does not include any dash or wedge markings in the free solo material. Thus, the performer has a degree of agency in choosing where and when to apply these.

Instrumentation

Many of these issues of performance are rendered obsolete when playing these works on a stringed keyboard instrument. However, the range of expression on a stringed keyboard instrument creates different possibilities for interpreting this music than those available on the organ. The dynamics now no longer signify manual changes but are true dynamic inflections. Crescendi and diminuendi can be freely used as appropriate, and dynamic expression is achieved through touch, not phrasing. Two compelling performances of the same work can yield completely different results due to these differences. Instead of relying on space, the performer can use dynamics to shape the phrase, utilizing other methods of expression that are not idiomatic to the organ. These

might include rolled or broken chords and staggering between the hands. However, stringed keyboard instruments do not have uninterrupted sustained pitch, and thus the performer must be careful regarding the decay of notes. Too much space would make a piece sound fragmented and choppy, whereas that same amount of space on the organ might not allow enough time for the sound to dissipate acoustically in the room. On the pedal clavichord, all dynamics will occur at a much quieter level, rendering most of Müthel's dynamic markings obsolete or ineffective. The clavichord can provide an elegant and intimate performance. Each instrument brings its own set of challenges, though each can bring something new and expressive to the music.

Considering C.P.E. Bach's comment that free fantasias are more suited to the fortepiano or clavichord, it is valuable to consider the performance of these pieces on instruments other than the organ, and how they might contrast. Though Müthel undoubtedly intended for these pieces to be played on the organ, as evidenced by the dynamics and long pedal points, the organ was falling out of style for secular solo keyboard performance. On the organ, these pieces sound staunchly Baroque – on the fortepiano, they sound much more Classical. Though much of this is influenced by the modern ears' tendency to equate the organ with the Baroque and the fortepiano with the Classical, even from a unbiased approach certain characteristics associated with each era are more achievable on specific instruments. Instruments themselves often reflect the music which was played on them. Classical characteristics such as homophonic textures and shorter phrases are all more easily achieved on the fortepiano than the organ.

When considering musical rhetoric, it is not necessarily vital to know all the individual terms and their application. Instead, aspects of musical rhetoric can be used to help a performer shape part of Müthel's work that leaves out specific details. Tracing the evolution of his gestures throughout the fantasia inspires the performer to make rhythmic alterations and to add ornamentation. When playing the fantasias on the organ, the rhetorical flow of the music suggests distinctive approaches to articulation and registration. When performing them on the piano, rhetorical devices suggest the use of dynamics to highlight the emotive content of the music. The conventions of modern performance ignore much of the rhetorical style embedded in Galant music, whose performance practice on the organ remains largely obscure. The freedom of gesture of the Baroque, coupled with the standardization of notational practices found in the Classical era, provide a challenge to the performer in combining both Classical and Baroque elements of performance.

Conclusion

This study has shown the context in which Müthel composed his fantasias, as part of a collection of pedagogical exercises to foster improvisation. The information he gives in the notation of his fantasias can be elucidated with a historiographical interpretation of musical rhetoric. Müthel developed musical figures and contrasting textures in accordance with contemporary rhetorical principles of inventio, dispositio and elaboratio. The final element of musical rhetoric, pronunciatio, is perhaps the most fascinating to consider with regard to Müthel's Fantasias. While the notation suggests that Müthel

intended them for organ, a consideration of the possibilities provided by the fortepiano suggests that it may be more suited to conveying aspects of the galant aesthetic.

Müthel's Fantasias for organ offer a tantalizing glimpse into the type of music keyboard players were creating *ex tempore*. They were composed as a guide for improvisation, and they incorporated rhetorical devices to help their audiences understand the changing moods and textures rendered by the keyboard. The analysis presented here suggests that the piano, with its dynamic capacities, is in many ways a more compelling instrument for their performance than the organ for which they were originally composed. At a time when musicians are trying to recover lost traditions of musicmaking, these pieces offer a rich trove of musical possibilities.

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