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-Cover illustration by Stefan Hamelberg, ca 1986



Fig.27 *The Cello Player*, Gabriel Metsu, 1658. Dutch genre paintings in the Golden age often depict musical instruments. These instruments are seen as luxuries and indulgences of this life and, as the underlying narrative is about love, celebrate the pleasures of the senses.

See also fig.44 *Hearing* by Jan Brueghel I & Peter Paul Rubens.

-Chapter 8 B.A.C.H.

As commonly known, the name BACH appears throughout his music, in the German way of naming nomenclature, where A=1, B=2, C=3 and H =8, adding up to 14.

In many cases the motive appears in a transposition, p.e. a semitone higher or a third lower. There is a great example in *das Musikalische Opfer*’, where the theme returns in four different parts: in part one 2 [B] times, in part two 1[A] time, in part three 3 [C] times and part four 8 times [H].

In the St. Matthew passion we see that, with the bass line of 14 notes, Bach situated himself under the cross too, as part of the chorus, singing *Wahrlich, dieser ist Gottes Sohn* gewesen. In the Allemande I noticed 14 coulés, with a special one in bar 14. Bach places himself among the struggling faithful.

In 1712, in his letter to Christian Goldbach, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz writes his famous thought: *Musica est exercitium arithmeticae occultum nescientis se numerare animi* [Music is the pleasure the human mind experiences from counting without being aware that it is counting] Bach became in 1747 the 14th [!] member of the society founded by Mizler in 1738 in order to stimulate discussion about music among composers. In response to Johann Mattheson’s assertion that mathematics is not the basis of music, Mizler wrote:

‘Mathematics is the heart and soul of music...Without question the bar, the rhythm, the proportion of the parts of a musical work and so on must all be measured ... Notes and other signs are only tools in music, the heart and soul is the good proportion of melody and harmony. It is ridiculous to say that mathematics is not the heart and soul of music’. (68)

It is highly likely that Bach was aware of these discussions, as he knew both men and he would, as a society member, have been involved in the discussions and endorsed the recommendations. (69)



Fig.44 Jan Brueghel I & Peter Paul Rubens, detail of *Hearing* (1618), showing a variety of musical instruments in a *doorsien* or embrasure. [Museo del Prado] Together with the other objects in the painting they invoke the material world perceived by our different senses. The open songbook depicts Psalm 51 'To my hearing thou shalt give joy and gladness', contrasting the allegorical meaning of the several Vanitas elements.

The Fantasias are all printed on 2 pages each, for commercial reasons, something Bach would never do, and can often be combined reciprocally. Contrary to the Suites they invite for further embellishments as was customary for gambists. After the rearrangement of a few double stops and chords, one could perfectly perform them on the cello and discover Telemann's ingenuity and creativity. [App.5]

Now that the cello managed to take over the basso continuo role, sadly, the viol was abandoned and lay forgotten for around 150 years before it was reanimated in the late 20th century. Today's gambists are incorporating continuo realisation again into their playing, just as did good viol players of the 17th and 18th centuries.

Perhaps the most famous accompanist of recitative on the cello was the Yorkshire-born Robert Lindley (1776-1855). Together with the contrabass player, Domenico Dragonetti, Lindley achieved something like a superstar status for his recitative work at the King's Theatre in London.

Accompaniment of *recitativo secco* by a cello and contrabass, and often, but not always a keyboard instrument, was the norm across Europe towards the end of the 18th Century and the beginning of the 19th. The score for Mendelssohn's recreation of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* had a bass part for two solo cellos playing chords and the double bass on the bass line. (91)

For today's cellists it is good to have some indications on how to perform a basso continuo part. Johann Baptist Baumgartner (1723-1782) was a German cellist active in Northern Europe and England. Baumgartner's *Instructions de musique, théorique et pratique, à l'usage du violoncelle* was printed in Den Haag in 1774 and it is particularly interesting because of its emphasis on accompaniment:

'I give in this method the most sensible and easiest approach, not only to play pieces but even to accompany well since that is its [the cello's] primary role and consequently the essential thing to know'. (92) He also gives the good advice that 'it is not sufficient to know the rules. It is also necessary to have the technique which is the effect of exercise and practice which depends on you and not me'.