

Ornamentation principles

And examples, or “*How I embellish an Angloise by Weiss*”

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Ornamentation

It would seem advisable to examine the use of ornamentation, an issue of paramount importance in the music of the late baroque lute. As was explained in the preceding Appendix, we now know that the lute tablature of this period was deliberately succinct, giving little visual indication of the richness of sonority that can be realised in actual live performance. This paucity of notation applies equally to the ornamentation. The minimal usage of very rudimentary embellishments could leave one with the impression that the composer was somewhat lacking in imagination, caring little for variation of melodic line even during repeated sections.

This would explain why the music of Weiss has been frequently dismissed as banal by both musicologists and performers for quite some time. Today’s lutenists know that these parts were intentionally left in a simplified format by the composer who, as common practice dictated, had internalised the wide variety of existing expressive possibilities. Performers were expected not only to share this knowledge of performance conventions, but also to express their personal inventiveness with each reading of the text. In this respect the parts become akin to jazz charts wherein the general outline is provided in order to give a performer sufficient information to share in the creative process, making of the notation a somewhat different piece with each performance.

It would be worthwhile at this point to draw up a list of Baroque embellishments, giving at the same time brief modern definitions for each. This list has been provided by Michel Pignolet de Montéclair in his work entitled *Principes de Musique*, published in 1736. Baroque music aficionados should consult works of this sort, if only to gain an appreciation for the meticulous precision of the authors. Musicians of the calibre of Quantz, the great flute virtuoso who performed often with Weiss (1), have contributed to this body of scholarship. In the case of Quantz, the reader is rewarded with insightful explanations of the most detailed sort imaginable.

Here are the 22 embellishments, some of which are called ornaments, according to Montéclair. All are usable in any section of a piece with the exception of the four last embellishments, which are usually reserved for repeated sections. One will notice the primarily vocal nature of these devices, most of which are also used by instrumentalists.

Resume of Baroque embellishments

1. *Son filé (straight tone)*.....a sustained note with no vibrato (senza vib.)
2. *Son enflé (pushed tone)*.....a crescendo without vibrato
3. *Son diminué (pulled tone)*.....a decrescendo without vibrato
4. *Flatté or flattement (close shake)*.....a light rapid vibrato
5. *Balancement or tremolo (organ shake)*.....a heavy accentuated vibrato

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6. *Port de voix*an inverted appoggiatura (inferior)
7. *Coulé*a `normal` appoggiatura (superior)
8. *Pinçé (open shake)*.....an inferior mordent
9. *Martellement*an inverted (superior) mordent
10. *Tremblement appuyé or perlé (trill/ shake)*.....a complete trill
11. *Tremblement subit (quick trill)*.....a short rapid trill
12. *Tremblement feint (accelerated trill)*.....a trill that begins slowly, gradually
becoming very short and rapid
13. *Tremblement doublé (double relish)*.....a very long trill containing two grupettos
14. *Tour de gosier (“throat turn”)(single relish)*.....a grupetto

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15. *Son glissé*a tied unmeasured anticipation using son filé
16. *Accent (springer)*.....a sudden interruption (in the guise of an
elevated sigh) of a long note prior to its repetition
17. *Chute (glissando)*.....a soft falling from one note to another
18. *Sanglot (interjection)*.....an accentuation of the words Ah! Ho! Alas!

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19. *Trait (run)*.....between two primary tones, one is to play conjunctly and
rapidly all of the notes in an accented manner (detached)
20. *Coulade*.....as with the trait, only lightly while slurring the notes
21. *Passage (changing notes)*.....as with the trait or coulade, only with freer note usage
(conjunct and/or disjunct mixtures)
22. *Diminutions*.....rhythmic variations of many kinds using rapid notes while
following basic harmonic structures and rhythmic accents.

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To all of the above we must add *rubato* (as it was clearly understood at the time), “*notes inégales*” (see Gavotte of sonata no 5) which could be anything from the systematic usage of the French Style to the occasional treatment in the Italian Style, and the use of arpeggios (*arpègements* - broken chords in the manner of a harpist).



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While acknowledging a great liberty of ornamental expression (embellishments of types 19 through 22 allow for a virtually unlimited range of options) one must never forget, so the Baroque musicians constantly remind us, the role of good taste (“*Le bon gout*”) as a final arbiter of artistic license (2).



How I embellish an Angloise by Weiss

This Angloise is a little gem buried within the London Manuscript. Indeed it is hard to believe that this short and deceptively simple little piece contains in reality so much musical potential, to be revealed by repetitions.

The ‘notes inégales’ (mainly the pattern  as opposed to ) are more appropriate, obviously, for most of the work, though a few measures would be better served by the ‘notes égales’. The exchange is done easily and naturally if one is guided by a concern for good balance. It becomes easy as a result to determine whether a line is too heavy or nicely flowing; awkward or natural. I should like in this respect to refer the reader to an illuminating article on this very subject by Gérard Rebours in Les Cahiers de la Guitare, no. 26 (3). Furthermore, the repeated arpeggios with first, second and third fingers in *i m a*, *a m i* patterns will directly incite this type of rhythm unless, of course, the tempo is very quick. In my opinion a fast tempo would cause a certain lack of depth and unnaturalness to the resultant sound of the lute. In order to give an example of this distribution of inégales vs. égales rhythms it would seem preferable to present the piece while indicating the appropriate technique, acknowledging that


other combinations are certainly possible. It would even seem desirable to vary the mix from one performance to another. This should confirm, once again, a true similarity with jazz.

Before comparing the ornamented repetition with the piece as written, it should be mentioned that in the five available sources the piece is titled *Paisana* (Warsaw ms), *Paisane* (one of the Vienna ms), and *Angloise* (the other Viennese ms, London ms, Buenos Aires ms). As is often the case with multiple sources of works by Weiss, all versions are similar, with slight variations from one to another.

The guiding principle in my view is that ornamentation should enhance, and not detract from, the lyric qualities of the contrapuntal voices.

THE FIRST SECTION

Measure 2 : Small diminution, through repetition of two notes.



Measure 4 : The ornament  in the tablature would indicate a *coulé*, a *martellement* or a *tremblement*. While a long *coulé* would seem to be the ornament of choice for the first time, I would recommend, this being a typical half-cadence, a shake (complete trill) ending with a single relish and fermata, to be used for the second. All of this adds a certain grace to this charming theme. It is interesting to note that this ornament is assigned to a middle voice, not the customary superior voice, in one of the Vienna manuscripts, with a result that is equally satisfactory.

Measure 5 : Played squarely on the second beat, a *martellement* would enhance the main cellule, which will be played, it should be remembered, a total of sixty-two times in two and a half minutes, counting the repeats. (Seventy times in a little over three minutes if my suggestion of two additional *petites reprises* is followed).


Measure 6 : A *martellement*, this time on the preceding note, mixed with a twirled arpeggio, will help camouflage the repeated cellule.

Measure 8 : With a gentle anticipation of the e of the second beat, indicated as a sixteenth note, the line sings differently but remains as pleasant as before. Very little modification is required to alter the line.

Measure 10 : Use the same pattern and ornament as in measure 8, although I recommend a triplet to rejuvenate the line. The triplet is created by a brief *coulade* that falls spontaneously enough under the fingers.

Meas 12 to 18 :  and  are used instead of eighth notes, by unfolding the thirds and triads from the top down (except in meas 18 where the chord is spun from the bass upwards). It is worth adding a note to the first chord of bars 15, 16 and 17, in order to repeat the dynamic triplet effect of bar 14. This kind of diminution can be included in the typical lute effects known as *notes séparées* (disjunct notes). It was interesting to discover that in one of the Vienna sources, meas 16 and 17 are supposed to be repeated. Without having seen the manuscript, I intuitively felt the need for this repetition (at least during the second time through) and was doubly gratified to see confirmation of this need, written in Weiss's own hand! In this same Vienna copy there are important differences with respect to meas 12 through 14:



On the other hand, it must be stated that the octave leaps in meas 12 to 14 have been added to the tablature by replacing one of the three a's on the sixth course with a contra a (6) on the thirteenth course. It is quite easy to see this contra a above the other a note : . The composer has had a change of mind here, as is frequently the case in the London Manuscript. Most of these corrections are in his own hand, proving that he retained final supervision of the editing, the copying being done by himself and five assistants. All of this has been established by Douglas Alton Smith.

These octave leaps can be found in two of the five versions. It is quite clear however, that the other three versions were originally designed for the eleven course lute. The first of these other three versions has three repeated a's on the sixth course, while the second has the same plus three contra a's under the basses. This is not a suggested octave leap, rather a possible choice between two registers (a choice precipitated, no doubt, by the acquisition of a brand new thirteen course lute!). As for the third version, the problem is nonexistent since the different structure as outlined in the above diagram is used. At any rate, apart from the addendum to the second one, none of these versions have a contra a or contra b . All of these editing discrepancies will also be found in bars 41 to 43.

Regarding the bass dampening in the first section, only one would seem crucial: the e on the first beat of meas 18. (This said, the desire to dampen will, of course, vary from one lutenist to another.) The numerous octave leaps and the descending lines that finish on long notes (as opposed to the ascending ones which require thumb muffling) tend to diminish the need for dampening.

THE SECOND SECTION

Meas 19 to 27 : One notices immediately that the beginning of the second section sounds as though it were lifted directly from a rock and roll or blues song ! The similarity is even carried to the point of repeating the theme a major second higher at meas 24. (Yes, we're still in 1719!). For the repeat I would recommend using again the ornamentation of meas 6 in meas 19 and 21, this time followed by a bouncing variant in meas 20 and 22. Everything can be played in the same way from bars 24 to 27 since the left hand simply climbs, in parallel motion, up a tone on the fingerboard.

This is one among hundreds of examples that shows how the placing of the fingers on the neck will spontaneously inspire a particular choice of ornament. The variations found in meas 20 and 22 (also 25 and 27) are actually necessary since a perfect replication of the ornamentation in meas 6 would be an impossibility. This is a case where a technical limitation has inspired an imaginative response that is in fact no more difficult, drawing as it does, on ornamental inspiration from the finger configurations presented to it. In this practice however, one must control the musical discourse and relentlessly eliminate mediocre "finds".

Meas 32 to 34 : Since this sequence is stated three times in a row, it might be better to avoid embellishing it too much, preserving in due course the freshness of the line. *Pincés* are quite acceptable here. I would recommend even the use of a *pincé* (open shake) as soon as the first time, at meas 34, breaking up the potential for monotony. I would then add two of these *pincés* at meas 33 and 34 during the repeat. A greater definition of embellishment can be achieved by beginning this last *pincé* with a *port de voix*, having played the preceding note with a *coulé*.

Meas 36 : This is where the petite reprise could begin, though I agree that it is rather long. Since, however, the piece itself is quite short, a little lengthening in this region could be quite justifiable. I will even add a second *petite reprise* (quite short this time) to the very end. Weiss has indicated throughout his oeuvre a large number of *petites reprises* ranging from very brief ones to those of the extended longer variety. A *coulade* in triplet rhythm would have a nice rebounding effect at the reappearance of the initial theme in meas 36. For that matter, this effect could be used at both the regular repeat and at the petite reprise.



Meas 39 & 40 : Sixteenth note diminutions in *notes égales*, used the third time, will mask the motif temporarily, creating a gentle floating effect in the process.

Meas 41 to 43 : Same section as in bars 12 to 14, except that the basses are all in the same register. The composer did not feel the need for octave leaps, though they have been retained in the Warsaw copy. If one wishes to displace the notes as in meas 12 to 18 (inverted *notes séparées*) for the third time, one could re-insert the octave leaps for the second time, mainly for reasons of equilibrium.

One could at this point consider the use of an expressive device unique to the lute which I call 'crescendo by timbral accumulation'. At meas 41 use the thumb to strike the fundamental only. At meas 42 both strings of the course are struck, changing already the sonic atmosphere and the same is done at bar 43, only this time at the intensity of fortissimo. Considering it useful, natural and expressive, I make frequent use of this type of colour phasing. I even saw a tablature in which the lutenist-composer (I forgot whom) used a precise sign to differentiate the two attacks.

Meas 47 to 49 : Since the petite reprise adds a third performance of this material to the preceding two, it might be useful to think of it in terms of incrementally increasing the ornamentation, the third repetition being of the moderately saturated kind, including not only *coulés* and *ports de voix* but also, as in meas 49, the *notes séparées*, albeit in a more traditional way.

Meas 51 to 54 : It could be entirely appropriate to add a fourth repetition of this material through the usage of a second, smaller *petite reprise*. A freshness of pattern conducive to the lively spirit of the end of the work could be realised through the usage of leaping thirty-second note figures (meas 51 & 52) created by the superposition of *notes séparées* and divisions .

Meas 53 : The ornament  instead of  on the first beat means that we have here an inverted appoggiatura or *port de voix* . A double open shake could be used the second time, allowing us to be more discrete with the third and fourth repetitions, gently flavouring those with a single open shake. This discretion is required to compensate for the florid saturation of the preceding measures.

Meas 54 : Using a *small bridge*, the first ending can be elegantly connected to the first *petite reprise*. I must confess to a certain desire to 'go bananas' at this point. Let's just say that I have successfully resisted the temptation to improvise a furious cadenza, playing instead a nice ascending scale pattern.

Concerning the dynamics, amplitude contrasts could be reversed in the 'blues' section , using *forte* for meas 19 to 23 and *piano* for meas 24 through 28 and switching the values during the repetition. A few works by Weiss and his colleagues have been marked *p* and *f* in similar sequential passages.

There are a few more bass dampenings in the second section, found at bars 38, 48, 50, 53 and 54. The last two are particularly tricky due to the speed at which they must be performed.

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NOTES

1. J.Joachim Quantz, *Essai d'une méthode pour apprendre à jouer de la flûte traversière, avec plusieurs remarques pour servir au bon goût dans la musique*, original French édition, éd. C.Friedrich Voss, Berlin 1752.
2. Montéclair more particularly deploras in his book the excess of fashion which makes musicians "disfigure the nobleness of simple melodies with too many ridiculous variations".
3. « *Comment jouer aujourd'hui ces musiques du passé ?* » (How to play today this music from the past?) article by Gérard Rebours, *Les Cahiers de la Guitare*, Paris, avril 1988.
4. For the complete updated list of Weiss sources and concordances, see the Weiss web site at www.slweiss.com

(below : The whole piece in three pages)

ANGLOISE

(S. L. Weiss, 1719)

Première partie

2 4 5 6

8 10 12

18 REPRISE

2 4 5 6

8 10 12

18

Fin de la 1^{ère} section

Deuxième partie

19

(forte) (piano)

36 37

Two staves of music in G major. Measure 36 features a treble clef with a melody of eighth notes and a bass clef with a simple accompaniment. Measure 37 continues the melody with a triplet of eighth notes in the treble and a bass line with an asterisk.

45

Two staves of music. Measure 45 shows a treble clef with a melody of eighth notes and a bass clef with a simple accompaniment. Measure 46 continues the melody with a triplet of eighth notes in the treble and a bass line with an asterisk.

53

Two staves of music. Measure 53 features a treble clef with a melody of eighth notes and a bass clef with a simple accompaniment. Measure 54 continues the melody with a triplet of eighth notes in the treble and a bass line with an asterisk.

1^{ère} PETITE REPRISE

36 39

Two staves of music. Measure 36 features a treble clef with a melody of eighth notes and a bass clef with a simple accompaniment. Measure 39 continues the melody with a triplet of eighth notes in the treble and a bass line with an asterisk.

46

Two staves of music. Measure 46 shows a treble clef with a melody of eighth notes and a bass clef with a simple accompaniment. Measure 47 continues the melody with a triplet of eighth notes in the treble and a bass line with an asterisk.

51

Two staves of music. Measure 51 features a treble clef with a melody of eighth notes and a bass clef with a simple accompaniment. Measure 52 continues the melody with a triplet of eighth notes in the treble and a bass line with an asterisk.

2^e PETITE REPRISE

53 51

Two staves of music. Measure 53 features a treble clef with a melody of eighth notes and a bass clef with a simple accompaniment. Measure 54 continues the melody with a triplet of eighth notes in the treble and a bass line with an asterisk.