

Peter McKenzie Armstrong

Partita Traverse for Flute Solo
after J. S. Bach

1993, 2011

Edition Ottaviano Petrucci

EDITION NOTES

This is a second edition, after the original of 1993. Its pitches and durations are unchanged. Other scoring aspects, however, are here significantly more explicit: movement 1 is supplied with shifting (rather than no) time signatures; movements 2 & 3 have respecified articulation and phrasing; movement 4 tempo changes are better detailed; and the Composition/Performance Notes are rewritten.

Hardcopy. This file is to be printed in landscape mode on 11" x 17" card stock, that then trimmed to a width of 13" and wire-bound.

COMPOSITION NOTES

Discovered by Karl Straub in 1917, an 18C copyists's manuscript titled *Partita solo pour la flute traversiere* appears to be Sebastian Bach's solitary work for unaccompanied flute. Composed circa 1720, its movements represent with one exception the standard core of the Baroque solo suite. Its instrument as prescribed is, not the end-blown default "flute" of that day (a recorder), but the cross-blown then recently evolved from the fife of military use.

I have set about to refashion Bach's *Partita* by re-imagining impacts for the word "*traversiere*" (beyond its reference to the perpendicular breath flow identifying this instrument). They include: in the title, "traverse" re-positioned to modify the composition *per se*; in movements 1 and 4, lateral sort, and imposition of a pitch axis; in movement 2, perpendicular twist incarnated as a pitch-vs-time parameter swap; and in movement 3, melody positing as its opposite (continuo). The piece is meant for performance immediately following its antecedent. The music was generated as follows.

Expansion. The Allemande's beat-beamed quadruplets, each taken as intervallically fixed, were externally reordered via an ascending sort of their pitch spans. Each was then transposed to set one extreme pitch at E5 (a 10th above Middle C) with the group fanning upward or downward according to the melodic direction of its 2nd-4th members. The resulting sequence radiates in alternating direction from focal point to outer limit – by chance, from the Allemande's initial to final tones.

Star Finder. Corrente measures 2-3 were input to an algorithm of mine that, given the X/Y dot-graph coordinates for a metered pitch sequence, rotates its pattern through half-circle, tracking the attack order swaps thereby forced and upward-grading each impacted attack time vector. Given a backward start without further intervention, this process evolved towards and ended with Bach's original measures, as though "bound and determined" to get these right. The movement is named after Prof. Whitney's little astronomical device, whose traversal so well models the algorithm.

[Unaccompaniment]. Hearing Bach's Sarabande, I wish occasionally for more harmonic definition. As the wish remains frustrated I offer in revenge this alternate, a "continuo without melody". It is textured in fact as two melodies (one to be pre-taped) and maximizes periodicity of harmony and phrasing. The movement is best heard as accompanying the listener's silent(!) recollection of the Sarabande itself, which it almost fits.

Collapse. Each of the Bouree's beat-beamed note groups was taken to represent that group's mean pitch (reckoned as the sum-of-pitches divided by number-of-notes). First sorted by metrical type, the groups were then reoriented to the focal E of movement 1 through a further nested sort: by mean pitch as higher or lower than the focus; by shrinking mean-to-focus interval. Thus this work's initial metaphor, radiation, was reversed. The music now instead backs into its point of origin – in a spiralling, sputtering image less of doom than of laughter.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

(Throughout). Tempi should approximate player's preference for the corresponding Bach movements. All slurs define articulation, i.e., their last note is to be detached from the next event.

Expansion. Stem direction identifies two voices, which alternate at the barlines. Articulation is to be quasi-legato within, but detached between, these voice segments. Hollow noteheads do not impact rhythm, but flag increments of pitch radiation from the initial E. Volume should vary note-discretely as the pitch distance from this focus ('pp', with the final A 'ff'). All in a character somehow sagacious.

for Jonathan Baumgarten

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Expansion

The musical score is written for a flute solo and consists of eight staves of music. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 2/4. The score begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The first staff contains measures 1 through 5. The second staff contains measures 6 through 11. The third staff contains measures 12 through 18. The fourth staff contains measures 19 through 24. The fifth staff contains measures 25 through 29. The sixth staff contains measures 30 through 33. The seventh staff contains measures 34 through 40. The eighth staff contains measures 41 through 44. The score features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The final measure of the eighth staff is a whole note chord consisting of F#, A, and C.

Star Finder. Playing must convey a growingly desperate struggle to get Bach's original bars 2 & 3 right. Every measure duplicates its just prior version except for a confusing two-note swap. In the full phrases (2 bars '*f*'), hazard assertively; in half phrases (1 or more bars '*p*') regroup uncertainly. Within the bar, tempo should be inflexible, vividly syncopating, with 8th-notes staccato. Apostrophes signal hesitations of varying length. The key is again A minor, here with register-specific signature.

Musical score for "The Rose Tree" in 3/4 time. The score is written for a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The piece begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. Dynamic markings include *f* (forte), *p* (piano), and *ff* (fortissimo). The score concludes with a *pp* (pianissimo) marking and a final chord.

[Unaccompaniment]. Ideally, the lower part is to have been pre-recorded in the performance hall by the soloist. Logistics may require recording elsewhere, or even instead commandeering a second flautist. Against whichever of these in concert, the soloist plays the upper part. The result must evoke the character of continuo: chordal accompaniment to the (absent) Sarabande, in a tempo spacious enough to accommodate. Apostrophes demarcate phrases. Dotted half-notes get separate breaths.

[Unaccompaniment]

Musical score for Unaccompaniment, measures 1-48. The score is written in treble clef, 3/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, accidentals, and dynamic markings.

Measures 1-6: Initial chords and single notes.

Measures 7-12: Introduction of eighth notes and a half note.

Measures 13-18: Continuation of eighth notes, including a slur and a repeat sign.

Measures 19-24: Use of slurs and ties across measures.

Measures 25-30: Continuation of eighth notes and chords.

Measures 31-36: Slurs and ties, ending with a repeat sign.

Measures 37-42: Continuation of eighth notes and chords, including a *sf* marking.

Measures 43-48: Final section marked *ritenuto*, ending with a double bar line.

Collapse. In this inward sweeping towards E5 from above and below, the player must make the most of abruptness. It applies in several ways: sudden pattern shifts belying metric consistency, crowded contrary articulations, and especially an underlying erratically unstable tempo. Details of articulation are to be rudely exaggerated, with a character from jaunty to raucous depending on the degree of felt surprise.

Collapse

1 *p*

3 poco cresc.

5 *f* ritenuto *mf*

7 tempo *p* poco rall. *mp* tempo

9 *pp*

11 cresc.

12 molto ritardando *f* tempo subito *p*

14 rallentando *f* tempo sub. *f* lunga *sf* *sfz*

Detailed description: This is a musical score for a piece titled 'Collapse'. It is written for a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. The score consists of 14 measures, divided into four systems of four measures each. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature changes throughout: 3/4, 3/4, 6/4, 3/4, 3/4, 3/4, 3/4, 3/4, 3/4, 3/4, 3/4, 3/4, 3/4, and 3/4. The score includes various dynamic markings: *p* (piano), *f* (forte), *mf* (mezzo-forte), *pp* (pianissimo), *sf* (sforzando), and *sfz* (sforzissimo). It also features performance instructions such as 'poco cresc.' (slightly increasing), 'ritenuto' (rhythmic retention), 'tempo' (return to tempo), 'poco rall.' (slightly slowing down), 'molto ritardando' (very slowing down), 'tempo subito' (tempo immediately), 'rallentando' (slowing down), and 'tempo sub.' (tempo subito). The piece ends with a fermata over a long note marked 'lunga' (long).

