

University of Denver

**THE PROCESS OF TRANSCRIPTION FOR GUITAR
OF J. S. BACH CHACONNE FROM
PARTITA II FOR VIOLIN WITHOUT ACCOMPANIMENT,
BWV 1004**

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by

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*“A beautiful and graceful woman
is able to wear, if she has taste,
varied and different costumes,
sure that they will not hurt nor
diminish her beauty but will
bring forth new enchantment.”*

Andrés Segovia, 1947



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PREFACE

The process of transcription of any work of music of the past into a different medium for which it was intended is a very complex task. It involves a thorough understanding of the historical background and a secure grasp of the analysis of the piece. Basic aspects like tempo, harmony, polyphony, articulations, additions, and subtractions should be made with extreme care and knowledge.

The *Chaconne from the Partita II for Violin Solo*, BWV 1004, by Johann Sebastian Bach is one of the most marvelous monuments in music history. Its timeless character and profundity makes it worth to be adapted to other instruments rather than violin. Countless editions, accompaniments, arrangements, and transcriptions have been made since 1720 when the Chaconne saw light for the first time. However, with the guitar the Chaconne seems to renovate its true voice.

The musicologist and violinist Marc Pincherle wrote after Segovia's 1935 premiere of the Chaconne for guitar: "...a direct connection with the guitar may yet be brought to light. The very key, in which the Chaconne is written, is the perfect tonality for the guitar... The Iberian origin of the Chaconne might have suggested Bach the idea of assigning it to a Spanish instrument." The also musicologist Sister Felicitas Curti stated: "Segovia has transcribed the Chaconne for the guitar, returning it, appropriately, to the instrument of its popular origin."

The present transcription for guitar has a didactic purpose. Musicians in the Baroque period used the technique of transcription to have a direct contact with the style and idiosyncrasy of musical models. Bach was not an exception. Transcription was one of the first mastered tools he used to understand what could not be taught.

It would be presumptuous to refer to the current transcription as definitive. This is just the seed of a musical work that has practically no end. After this paper, this transcription will undergo revision after revision as evolution and changes in musical perspective and interpretation come along.



This paper is divided in five main chapters:

Historical Background. This chapter deals with the chaconne as a dance form and its relationships with the passacaglia, sarabande, and folías d’Espagne. Complete sections are devoted to the Chaconne by Bach, a brief survey of the editions, arrangements, and transcriptions, with special emphasis on those for guitar.

Analysis. A brief review of the structural features of the Chaconne. It includes rhythmic issues and the different techniques of variation used by Bach.

The Present Transcription for Guitar. Divided into five sections dealing with different aspects of the process: harmony and counterpoint, rhythm, dynamics, articulations, and tempo.

The Score. The present transcription for guitar.

The Manuscript. A copy of the autograph by J. S. Bach.

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Chaconne and Related Dance Forms: Historical Relationships

The dance form known as *chacona* is a Baroque dance in triple meter whose compositional scheme is based in the process of continuous variation. It originated in the late Renaissance, as a dance-song in Latin America and became popular in Spain toward the beginning of the 17th century. Spanish writers like Cervantes and Lope de Vega mention this New World origin. However, there is discrepancy whether the *chacona* was born in Mexico or Perú. The term's origin itself is even more cumbersome: some authorities attributed it to the name (Chacón) of a successful Spanish admiral; to an Arabic word meaning 'the dance of the King'; to the Spanish dance named 'Chica' (from which it is also stated that the English 'Jig' is derived); to the Italian 'Cieco,' which means blind; and to the Basque word 'Chocuna' which means pretty. The most common instrumentation in its origins included the guitar as accompanist and percussion instruments like the tambourine. There are in the texts of the period continuous occurrences in the refrain of the word 'chacona' and the phrase 'vida bona' ('good life') (Ex. 1).

Ex. 1

a)

b)

I V vi V

I V vi IV V



This *chacona* dance was imported to Italy along with the five-course guitar. In Italy, certain harmonic progressions that had developed as accompaniment to the *ciaccona* were in time transformed into bass melodies, almost always in the major mode and commonly in the key of D. These bass melodies became patterns that were used either as a basso ostinato or with changes usually within a four-measure scheme. The most common and characteristic rhythmic feature is a dotted second-beat anacrusis.

Toward the middle of the 17th century, the popularity of the *ciaccona* was such that no opera in the Italian style would be successful without it. On the other hand, during this time some *ciaccone* were composed for instrumental ensemble frequently using basso continuo. Changing bass patterns were used for keyboard, archlute, or guitar *ciaccone* due perhaps to the nature of solo instruments and the lack of a continuo. Changing bass patterns induced also varied chordal phrases that became longer and more complex, “especially after around 1639 when single notes were incorporated into the guitar style.”¹

The highlights of the *ciaccona* for guitar are found in works by Corbetta (c.1639) and G. B. Granata (1646, 1651, and 1659) in Italy and Gaspar Sanz in Spain (1674). It is relevant to point out that after the 1670s in Italy the popularity of the *ciaccona* declined to give way to the *passacaglia*.

¹ Richard Hudson, “Chaconne,” in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians.

Unlike the Italian *ciaccona*, the French *chaconne* found a more fertile ground, appearing even before the *passacaglia* and lasting for the rest of the Baroque. During the first half of the 17th century, the *chaconne* acquired a slower tempo and more dignified mood. Text in the *chaconne* was seldom used in France thus allowing the development of the instrumental form on solo, chamber, and orchestral variations. The earliest solo variations are those composed for the lute by Nicolas Vallet (*Le secretes des muses*, 1615) and Denis Gaultier (c.1670). Later, François Couperin composed for the harpsichord (1713) and Marin Marais for viol (1701). Robert de Visée composed two *chaconnes* for guitar in 1682 and 1686.

In general, the solo instrumental *chaconne* are “sectionalized either by the repetition of phrases in immediate succession (Gaultier and Visée), or, far more often, by the recurrence of two or more phrases as a refrain -or ‘grand couplet’ - in rondeau form.”² The orchestral and continuo types of the *chaconne* developed into large forms like those of François Couperin and Lully. In contrast to the solo instrumental type, the orchestral *chaconne* is divided in large sections contrasting by mode or instrumentation. The general scheme is that of a three-part form, opening and closing in a major key and moving to the tonic minor in the middle section. The contrast by instrumentation is attained by alternating woodwind trios with the orchestra.

The French style influenced profoundly the music of England and Germany. It is also the case with the French *chaconne*. In England we can find in the work of Purcell precedents for Bach’s *Chaconne* for solo violin and the *Passacaglia* for organ: Written for chamber ensemble in the minor mode, it uses a basso ostinato formed by joining two four-measure phrases; the first ending on the dominant and resolving finally in the second.

² Ibid.

In Germany the synthesis of the French and Italian styles created a golden age of the dance forms that lasted from about 1675 to 1750. Most German *chaconnes* are for organ or harpsichord, sometimes for orchestra, solo violin, or lute. They are frequently found alone, as part of a suite or sonata, or with a prelude or fugue. Such are the *chaconnes* by Biber, Fux, Pachelbel, Buxtehude, and J. S. Bach among others.

The *chaconne* is not an isolated phenomenon. Other dance forms share with it historical and formal backgrounds, even details of rhythmic approach. Such is the case of the *passacaglia sarabande* and the *folía d’Espagne*.

The *passacaglia* is slow dance-song of Spanish or Italian late Renaissance origins, also based on the principle of variation upon a short basso ostinato. It was originated separately from the *chaconne* as a ritornello. Derived from the Spanish words *pasar*, to walk, and *calle*, street, the term *pasacalle* -*passacaglia* in the Italian form- was a term apparently used only by guitarists.

The earliest examples of *passacaglia* can be found in Girolamo Montesardo’s the *Nuova inventione d’intavolatura* (Florence, 1606), the first Italian tablature for the Spanish guitar. During the Baroque the *passacaglia* bass melody became, like that of the *chaconne*, standardized in a series of formulæ. The influence of the *chaconne* is apparent, since the *passacaglia* adopted usually a triple meter with a stress on the second beat. However, the early *passacaglia* tended to favor the minor mode. In France the *passacaglia* appeared after the *chaconne*, achieving as large popularity by the end of the 17th century and developed into solo and orchestral forms. In time, the difference between these two dances became unclear since they shared similar schemes and composers treated them almost interchangeably in regard of rhythmic features like the dotted second-beat anacrusis. Differences became even more confusing and in times contradictory in

Germany with the influence of French and Italian styles. From France composers adopted sectionalization, from Italy the technique of variation. Most German *passacaglias* were composed for keyboard.³

The *sarabande* originated in the 16th century also as a dance-song in Latin America and became part of the repertoire of the Spanish five-course guitar. It was popular in French courts at the same time as the *chaconne*, being the slow type the most preferred. Like the *chaconne*, the *sarabande* is in triple meter and has a second-beat anacrusis, usually in dotted rhythm. The structural scheme differs: two or more repeated sections of varied length, although some may be in rondeau form.⁴

Meaning ‘mad’ or ‘foolish’, the *folías d’Espagne*, as is called in France, was originally a dance of Spanish or Portuguese origins. It is a chordal framework used also for songs and sets or variations, the latter the most spread type. Historically, there are two *folías*: With the appearance in Italy of the Spanish five-course guitar, it enjoyed great popularity from 1577 to 1674 as a fast sung dance. The first known set of variations appeared in J. H. Kapsberger’s *Libro primo d’intavolatura di chitarone* (1604). The first tablatures for guitar accompaniment (strummed) appeared in the aforementioned *Nuova inventione d’intavolatura* by G. Montesardo. French composers developed the second type of *folía* after its introduction to the court of Louis XIV by the Italian guitarist Francesco Corbetta. Rhythmically, second beats were generally accented by the use of the dot and the tempo was slowed down into a more majestic and dignified mood. It was usually in D minor.

³ Richard Hudson, “Passacaglia,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

⁴ Richard Hudson, “Sarabande,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

The Chaconne from the Partita II for violin solo, BWV 1004.

The *Chaconne* in particular and the *Sonatas and Partitas for Violin Solo* in general, ones of the very landmarks of solo instrumental music, were the outcome of a young composer. Although debatable, it is the consensus to date this set around 1720, when Bach was thirty-five years old. In fact, although an integral part of the Partita II, it could have been composed as a Tombeau, written as a meditative lament for the death in July 1720 of Maria Barbara Bach, Johann Sebastian's first wife.⁵ The earliest copy, from the hand of Anna Magdalena Bach, dates from this year and was discovered in 1814 at Petrograd, Russia, among old papers about to be sent away to a butter dealer. Simrock in Bonn published the first complete edition, taken from other extant manuscripts, in 1802.

Bach was full of new ideas, encouraged by the favorable environment at the court of Prince Leopold in Cöthen where he spent six years (1717-1723). There he composed mainly secular, solo instrumental and chamber music; among them are the *Fifteen Inventions and Sinfonias*, *Wohltemperirte Clavier*, *Chromatic Fantasie and Fugue*, *Six Suites for Cello*, *Four Orchestral Suites* and finished the *Brandenburg Concertos*.

There are certain pertinent questions regarding the solo violin music. Why did Bach pursue such 'impractical' project? It is obvious that they were not intended to be played in church, and since there were no first-rank violinist among the court musicians, it is likely to conclude that the solo violin music was conceived as study material for the advanced violinist. It is known in Bach the strong inclination toward pedagogy (i.e. the *Wohltemperirte Clavier* or the *Clavierbüchlein*). Forkel remarked in 1802: "For many years, the six violin solos were

⁵ Helga Theone, "J. S. Bach: Ciaconna. Tanz oder Tombeau." in *Cöthener bachfesttage*, (Cöthen, 1994), 30.

universally considered by the greatest performers on the violin as the best means to make an ambitious student a perfect master of his instrument.”⁶

A source for inspiration might have come from Bach’s acquaintance with Johann Paul von Westhoff (1656-1705), a violinist in the service of Duke Johann Ernst of Weimar in 1703 who also composed a set of violin sonatas and partitas. On the other hand, some historians speculate that Bach wrote the *Sonatas and Partitas* to Johann Georg Pisendel (1678-1755), another composer of violin solos.

Evolution through the Editing Process

The Chaconne was a well-known piece among violinist since the time of J. S. Bach. With or without the remaining of the set, several copies have been found that supports this idea. As stated earlier, it was in 1802 when an editorial edition was printed. This is the first of a long line of editions that can be count on the dozens. This edition published by Simrock is interesting since it varies significantly from the autograph in changing the bowing in order to give the idea for a more Mozartean style of playing. The name of the editor is unknown. In general, the early editors used an editorial technique called “Klangnotation” or “sound-notation,” in which the music is actually written, as it should be performed. This technique went into disuse because of its difficulty to sight-read and detect the contrapuntal lines. The *urtext* edition was then the alternative, in which there was no performance indication, very valuable among musicologists.

The first *urtext* edition was done by Dörfel, a pianist and critic, and was published in 1879 for the Bach-Gesellschaft (collected works of Bach, volume 27). Another *urtext* was

⁶ J. N. Forkel, *Johann Sebastian Bach: His Life, Art and Work* (New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1970), 154.

published in 1958 as part of the *Neue Bach-Ausgabe* (Series VI, Volume I); the German musicologist Günter Hausswald made the edition. The most used trend in editorial techniques, however, is that of the editor giving some clues to the performer. It has gone so far as to adding notes to increase the excitement and sonority in the music.

In the area of dynamics, there has been also an evolution: The earliest editors prefer a rather strictly defined crescendo from the first variation to the last. Because of its practical difficulty, modern editors from about 1900 to 1930 look for contrast within variations while still maintaining a framework of a large, overall crescendo. The most famous edition from the turn of the 20th century is that made by Joachim and Moser, published in 1908, one year after the death of Joseph Joachim. It was made after a photographic reproduction of a manuscript from Bach's hand.

Almost all editors introduced expression markings such as “*espressivo*” and “*dolce*” presenting an arch-like in the frequency of use throughout the piece. The peak of this custom was reached in the mid-1940 and then was dropped almost completely by 1950 perhaps due to more awareness in baroque interpretation.

More efforts have been made to preserve the integrity of the music in the manuscript while presenting it in modern notation. The challenge is clearly stated by Jean Champeil in the foreword of his edition (1959): “People had already forgotten the old rules and conventions of playing which permitted the composers of earlier time to use a much simplified notation —a sort of succinct shorthand, which came alive only through interpretation.”⁷

⁷ Robert P. Murray, “The Editions,” in *The Bach Chaconne for Solo Violin, A Collection of Views*, edited by Jon F. Eiche (Urbana, IL, 1985), 30.

It is evident that with the development of notation, the change of meaning of most symbols and its subsequent rigurocity, editions have become more sophisticated and versatile in the attempt to re-establish the spirit existing at the beginning of the 18th century. Most of them introduce double signs (e.g. the original slurring and the editor's). An unusual edition was made by Tadeusz Wronski in 1970: his edition is printed on the left-hand pages, with the corresponding section from Bach manuscript on the right, thus saving the editor from having to introduce double signs.

One interesting issue in the evolution of the editions is related to the two arpeggio sections: each is treated differently, although Bach provides a suggestion for the execution of the first. Editors have evolved several basic rhythmic patterns for the first section (mm.89~120), including that proposed by Bach. However, it has been customary for editors and arrangers to furnish his/her own set of patterns (Ex.2, as provided by Henryk Szeryng). It is proper to begin a new pattern over the second beat of a new variation, since it is the second beat and not the downbeat the beginning of the variation, at least in this arpeggio section. The second section (mm. 201~207) is treated in a more straightforward manner, the majority using only sixteenth notes. Such is the case of the present transcription for guitar.

Ex. 2

a) Suggested by Bach



b) mm.96~104



c) mm.104~112



d) mm.112~119



Brief Survey of the Arrangements

The Chaconne is unique within Bach oeuvre in that it bears the largest number of transcriptions, arrangements, and accompaniments written of it and for it. They began to appear toward the middle of the 18th century, after a long period of resistance from connoisseurs.

Historically, the accompaniments with piano were the first attempt to give the Chaconne another perspective. The first published accompaniment with piano was that of F. W. Ressel (1811-1855?), a Berlin violinist and viola player, in 1845 under the publisher Schlesinger, and dedicated to the Prussian *Generalmusikdirektor* Giacomo Meyerbeer. However, it was the arrangement from the hand of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809-1847) the one that had a greater significance. Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy brought to light many of Bach's works including the solo sonatas. Ewer & Co. (London) published his accompaniment in 1849. About the first performance seven years earlier, Robert Schumann reported: "...He accompanied the violin with the grand piano in such a wonderful way that the eternal Cantor seemed to have had his hands in it himself."⁸ Mendelssohn's artistic and individual arrangement is in the form of a concerto movement, giving the violin part enough freedom and opportunity for virtuoso development by assigning extensive tacet segments to the piano part. At times, the piano has independent lines, at others, it provides only harmonic support, and in some opportunities, both instruments go together like a solo instrument and solo orchestra in tutti passages.

Robert Schumann (1810-1856) published his own piano accompaniment in 1854 with Breitkopf & Härtel: *Sechs Sonaten für die Violine von Johann Sebastian Bach mit hinzugefügter Begleitung des Pianoforte von Robert Schumann* (Six Sonatas for Violin by Johann Sebastian

⁸ Georg Feder, "History of the Arrangements of Bach's Chaconne," in *The Bach Chaconne for Solo Violin*,

Bach with added Piano Accompaniment by Robert Schumann). This arrangement enjoyed wider attention than that of Mendelssohn while following the original somewhat more closely. It shares some common points with Mendelssohn's: the unaccompanied presentation of the main theme at the beginning and the harmonization of the theme in the major mode. Other successful published piano accompaniments were written by Carl Reinecke (1824-1910) and August Wilhelmj (1845-1908) (he also wrote an orchestral accompaniment), among many others.

The next step in the evolution of the arrangements of the Chaconne is the transcription, perhaps the widest area in this regard. As an outcome of the efforts of Mendelssohn and Schumann, the piano was the first instrument to enjoy a full transcription, the first of which was published in 1855 by Carl Debrois van Bruyck (1828-1902). Ernst Pauer (1826-1905), who published his transcription with Senff of Leipzig in 1867, and Joachim Raff (1822-1882), publishing also in Leipzig by Bieter-Biedermann in 1865, wrote more interesting and influential versions. What they share is an intricate use of polyphony beyond what is implied in the original.

There is one trend within the transcriptions for piano: arrangements for left hand alone. Following an unsuccessful attempt by Count Géza Zichy (1849-1924), the Chaconne for left hand was published in 1879 by Senff as No. 5 of the *Studien für das Pianoforte von Johannes Brahms* (two arrangements after Chopin and Weber, three after Bach). In 1877, Brahms sent the manuscript to Clara Schumann, with the explanation in a letter as follows:

"To me the Chaconne is one of the most beautiful, incredible compositions. On one staff, and for a small instrument, this man pours out a world full of the most profound thoughts and most powerful emotions... If one cannot avail oneself of the most outstanding violinist, perhaps the greatest enjoyment of the Chaconne is to be achieved in

*one's mind. But this work also entices one to enjoy oneself with it in various other ways. After all, one does not always care to hear this music in one's thoughts, Joachim is no here very often, and therefore one occupies oneself in various ways with this music. Whatever I try, orchestra or piano, it always ruins my enjoyment. Only in one way do I succeed in coming close to a very reduced yet quite pure enjoyment of this work: if I play it alone with the left hand! At times it seems to me like the story of Columbus' egg! The similar difficulty, the kid of technique, the arpeggiation, all of this adds up to make me feel like a violinist!"*⁹

Unlike his predecessors, Brahms does not consider the Chaconne in its original form as incomplete; thus he does not dare to attempt improvements. In actuality, Brahms transposes the original an octave lower, occasionally adding a filler-note or striking an octave.

Ferruccio Busoni's arrangement represents the climax and conclusion for piano arrangements of the Chaconne. Busoni (1866-1924) himself gave the first performance of his arrangement in Boston in 1893. The published version (Breitkopf & Härtel) is titled as follows: *Chaconne aus der vierten Sonate für Violine allein von Johann Sebastian Bach. Zum Concertvortrage für Pianoforte bearbeitet und Herrn Eugen d'Albert zugeeignet von Ferruccio B. Busoni* (Chaconne from the fourth Sonata [?] for solo violin by Johann Sebastian Bach. Arranged for concert performance by Ferruccio Busoni and dedicated to Mr. Eugen d'Albert).

Busoni's arrangement combined all of the tendencies of earlier transcriptions: Differentiation of sonority, expressive interpretation, virtuosity, polyphonic design, melodic combination, random extension, and stricter adaptation.

The first variations of the first and third sections are almost adopted from Brahms' version; the improvisatory extensions, invertible counterpoint and the rapid scales have their

⁹ Ibid., 42.

precursors in the freely inserted cadenza of the version by Count Zichy; the added counterpoint is a revival of the techniques of Paff and Pauer; and the addition of the theme in major mode as the main voice in the second section, thus identifying with Mendelssohn, who featured such combination earlier.

In his treatise *Von der Übertragung Bach'scher Orgelwerke auf das Pianoforte* (On the Transcription of Bach's Organ Works for Piano), Busoni writes that he treated the Chaconne "with the idiom of the organ in mind... This approach, frequently attacked, is justified by the significant content that is not expressed sufficiently by the violin, and because of the example of Bach's own organ transcription (BWV 539) of his Violin Fugue in G minor."¹⁰

Following the arrangements for piano two trends were developed that use the orchestra and the organ as media. The Russian composer Maximilian Steinberg (1883-1946) produced an arrangement of Busoni's piano version in 1911 for large orchestra. In particular, Steinberg modifies Busoni's version when it does not serve the original, or in order to strengthen the arrangement. Arrangements for organ, which at the beginning tended to be far removed from the original, started with the one written by W. T. Best (1826-1897), followed by another by H. Messerer appeared in Paris in 1909. A very successful version for organ, influenced by Busoni, was written by Arno Landmann (b.1887), published by Simrock in 1927.

Another path in the transcriptions of the Chaconne is represented by chamber ensembles. It begins with a piano trio transcription by B. Todt (1822-1907), appeared around 1900. This arrangement does not follow the ideal of the baroque trio sonata. In fact, it attempts to transform the Chaconne "into a technically demanding 'romantic' piano trio with cantabile treatment of the

¹⁰ Ibid., 44.

cello.”¹¹ Arrangements for string quartet appeared to provide a more suitable medium. Examples are those of Martinus Sieveking (1867-?) and Maria Herz (1878-?).

The trend of arrangements for orchestra evolved into a stage in which the primary source was the original itself. Arrangements by Riccardo Nielsen (b. 1908), Jenö Hubay (1858-1937), Alfredo Casella (1883-1947), and Leopold Stokowski (1882-1977) are typical of the changes that came about after romanticism. They replaced the free expressive interpretation of the 19th century with a structurally bound, dynamic interpretation, laden with tension; also they created arrangements that are based on Bach’s Chaconne as on a sketch. Very interesting is the arrangement of the Italian composer Riccardo Nielsen: he used the string orchestra, dividing it into tutti and concertino. With this scoring he followed the practice of the baroque concerto grosso, thus “establishing the preconditions for a stylistically homogeneous orchestral transcription.”¹²

¹¹ Ibid., 44.

¹² Ibid., 45.

Transcriptions for Guitar

Published transcriptions of the Chaconne for the guitar are a product of the twentieth century. After the Chaconne was transcribed for several individual instruments and their combinations, Andrés Segovia (1893-1987) undertook the first successful transcription for the guitar, laying the foundations for a long list of works.

In this section, we will discuss briefly four published transcriptions, very distinct and representative: Segovia, Yepes, Scheit, and Carlevaro. While this chapter deals mainly with historical background, it is considered that some aspects of musical analysis cannot be overlooked.

The London publisher Schott issued the transcription made by Segovia in 1934. According to Christopher Nupen, apparently “Segovia was reluctant to attempt the Chaconne ‘because I love that piece beyond any imagination,’ and for years he studied the transcription by F. Herman for two violins, Brahms for the piano (left hand), Busoni and Raff for the piano (both hands and how!), and Jena de Hubay for the orchestra. It was therefore not until 1935 in Paris that, with the support of the distinguished French musicologist Marc Pincherle, he decided to make the transcription and play it in public.”¹³

The Segovia transcription follows the trend left by the Romantic arrangers in general, and Ferruccio Busoni in particular, in such ways like the addition of filling-notes in important harmonies and the inclusion of tempo and expression indications. However, it is closer to the original in the sense that there is no inclusion of running cadential passages; the addition of

¹³ Alirio Díaz. *Alirio Díaz Plays Bach*. Cassette. Notes by Christopher Nupen.

basses is economical while following the implied harmony in the original. The first arpeggio passage is relatively simple and steady compared to violin realizations, although Segovia suggests a continuous crescendo toward the scalar passage in measure 121. This technique, inspired by Busoni and Hubay versions, gives the fragment an ever-increasing tension that is not released until the return of the second couplet of the main theme in measure 126. The second arpeggio passage inherits the common practice left by the violin tradition. Regarding fingerings, Segovia tends to use very idiomatic ones. These fingerings might force the performer to depart from the original phrasing that can be inferred from the original (Ex. 3).

Ex. 3

Urtext



Segovia's Transcription



A more technically ambitious transcription is that of Narciso Yepes (1927-1997), published in 1960 by Ediciones Musicales Madrid in Spain. Yepes thoroughly uses the harmonic capabilities of the guitar by using six-note chords very often, maintaining a full sonority throughout the entire piece, particularly when the polyphony is not intricate; he also uses octavation, particularly in the bass. Like Segovia, Yepes indicates tempo changes and expression markings. Fingerings are less orthodox and they include the right hand in essential passages. The first arpeggio passage reassembles the violin style in using the rhythmic arch form (more on this topic in the chapter Analysis, page 24). Starting with a pattern in thirty-second notes, it continues

with thirty-seconds sextuplets in measure 105, returns to thirty seconds in the middle of the next variation in measure 109 in order to go into a varied version of the sextuplets in measure 113; in measure 117 Yepes returns to the first sextuplet pattern (Ex. 4).

Ex. 4
mm. 89

mm. 105

mm. 113

The technique of octavation is used throughout the entire transcription. However, it is on the second section, from measure 117, where this technique is extended when producing a bass line based on the structural points with connecting sixteenth notes. It can be said that the influence of Busoni's search for an individual view is paramount in Yepes' transcription: in the third section, measure 236, the rhythmic pattern of sixteenth notes departs from the original into sixteenth triplets, anticipating in the middle of the variation what is going to come five measures later. This edition is very effective regarding the increase of expressive tension, although it does not follow the pattern of variation suggested by Bach.

After the sixties musicological studies have given to the transcriber a richer source information about original pieces and the performance practice of historical periods. Among transcribers and editors, the tendency has been toward a more scholastic and “pure” work. Some transcribers limit themselves to minimal addition of filling-notes or basses. Such is the case of the austere transcription by Karl Scheit published by Universal Edition in 1985. He provides a scholastic version: Scheit indicates where he is departing from the original in order to be more idiomatic to the guitar, as well as using dotted ties to show the original slurs and groups. Scheit indicates fewer fingering indications and gives no expression markings, following the Baroque style. He uses octavation and filling-notes when is strictly necessary. The arpeggio sections are similar in rhythm to those of Segovia’s transcription.

Carlevaro’ transcription is one that follows the presumed original intent of Bach: The sonatas and partitas as pedagogical works. Published by Chanterelle in 1989, is an integral part of Carlevaro’s guitar masterclasses series. In both English and Spanish, the edition includes a brief historical background and reasons about the need for a guitar transcription. Following there is a section on mechanical aspects in which Carlevaro explains variation by variation the technical intricacies according to his own approach. He also suggests technical exercises that help to overcome specific technical difficulties. In this transcription, every single note is fingered for the left hand and the right hand indications are plenty. Carlevaro provides with alternative interpretations for certain passages, considering different historical approaches. Including the first arpeggio section, the transcription is similar to that of Segovia’s, although it is obvious that it takes a more scholastic and authoritative approach as it considers aesthetic considerations from later musicological research. At the end of the edition, Carlevaro provides a copy of the

manuscript, incorporating within the guitar transcriptions what has been done in editions for violin at the beginning of the 20th century.

ANALYSIS

Bach's Chaconne stands apart from the traditional form customary at the time. The monumental size and the deceptively simple harmonic language and rhythmic patterns makes of this piece a landmark on its own. Every note, its value and relation to the rest, is crafted onto a work of art as precise and inexplicably simple as it is beautiful and brilliant.

This is one of the most studied and analyzed pieces by Bach. It is not an exaggeration to assert that a thorough and exhaustive analysis of this piece brings sufficient material for a dissertation on its own.

The following analysis is just a series of approximations from different perspectives that help to understand the basic features of the Chaconne in order to produce an initial edition and a satisfactory performance.

According to Dr. Robert U. Nelson, there are twelve points that describe a *chaconne* piece in general:¹⁴

1. The chaconne is invariably in triple meter.
2. Also quite common is the division of the set into sections, usually three, in opposing modes rather than contrasting keys, although the latter is also encountered.
3. The accented second beat of the old chaconne is carried over from the original dance form.
4. Stock themes, based on or derived from ascending or descending tetrachords, were much used.
5. The harmonic structure is invariably as important as the theme itself as a basis for variation, although there is no fixed practice of either rigid conformity to,

¹⁴ Robert U. Nelson. *The Technique of Variation: A Study of the Instrumental Variation from Antonio de Cabezón to Max Reger*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 152.

or departure from, the original harmonies.

6. In some of the chaconnes based on the descending tetrachord, the ascending tetrachord is substituted as a basis for variation in one or more variations.
7. Pairing of couplets is a common practice.
8. Transpositions of the ostinato from the original voice to some other are common.
9. Contrapuntal devices, such as imitation and pedal point, are widely used.
10. Sequential treatment of figuration ideas is prominently featured in variations based on the tetrachord.
11. Increased rhythmic movement is a prominent feature of the chaconne.
12. Other musical forms are often suggested by returning to the original or related settings.

In particular, Bach's Chaconne is a set of strophic variations divided into three parts. Part I has 133 measures, part II 76, and part III has 48. The proportions are approximately 8:4:3.

Modeled on the French orchestral chaconne, Bach reverses the usual order of mode: minor-major-minor, although he uses the customary key of D. The major mode provides Bach with a means of formal contrast. The very use of the major mode fosters a more peaceful mood by giving a simpler chord material: more simple triads and fewer secondary dominants. Rhythmically, Part II is more relaxed (see table in page 24). The shortest note value is 16th notes, in contrast to the long passages of thirty-second notes in Parts I and III.

The sarabande rhythm, which appears briefly to frame parts I and III, is a prominent feature of Part II. Regarding thematic content and texture, Part II is simpler than parts I and III. There is no more than one tetrachord used within a variation. There are fewer themes in upper voices. The polyphonic devices of voice-exchange and imitation of Part I are absent here. The fact that Part II is simpler than the outer parts by no means implies that it is anti-climatic. In fact,

the calm beginning of the section gradually gains in intensity and leads to a peak in variation 22 through 24 (mm. 177~200).

Bach uses the dotted (sarabande) rhythm as an underground seminal pulse that is maintained almost throughout. In the original, some variations this 'pulse' is almost, if not completely, imperceptible. However, the process of transcription and the performance practice of this piece lead to very interesting discoveries (see in *The Present Transcription for Guitar*, page 30). This dotted rhythm is typical also of the contemporary French passacaglia, the sarabande and folia (see in: *The Chaconne and Related Dance Forms: Historical Relationships*, starting in page 4).

Although the traditional accented second beat, derived from the initial anacrusis, is evident from the first measure and for a while thereafter, it disappears in measure 24 and does not reappear until the close of the first section. In Part II, and in the concluding part III, the accented second beat is used in several successive variations, and then temporarily abandoned. In this way Bach avoids rhythmic monotony and actually intensifies the effect of the traditional chaconne rhythm by highlighting it.¹⁵

There has been a great debate that has endured for more almost two centuries about the nature of the theme. Schweitzer thinks that the theme is the opening 8-bar melody in the top voice. Spitta gives no less than five themes: some are explicitly stated in the bass, others are extracted from figuration. Robert Erikson believes that the Chaconne is a fine example of the type of piece organized by chord progression, not melodic basso ostinato. Cedric Thorpe Davie asserts that "here, as in many chaconnes, the variations are as much upon the simple noble

¹⁵ Byron Cantrell, "Three B's - Three Chaconnes." *Current Musicology*, 12.

harmonies which accompany the bass at the outset as upon the bass itself. Reinhard Oppel concluded that the theme of Bach's Chaconne is a descending tetrachord."¹⁶

Evidence, however, points to the tetrachord as Bach's "theme." Beneath the surface, at a level abstracted from the actual notes, lies the unifying factor of the Chaconne. Underlying the chord-progressions and the various bass melodies is a descending tetrachord, a traditional chaconne bass. The tetrachord appears in several forms (Ex. 5).

Ex. 5

a) b)

c) d)

e) f)

g) h)

Sometimes the tetrachord is stated explicitly, especially in the chromatic and inverted forms. More often, it is in a deeper level of abstraction. It often appears prominently either as the first note of every measure (Ex. 6); or in the form of a frequently recurring bass theme derived from it (Ex. 7).

¹⁶ Sister Felicitas Curti, "J. S. Bach's Chaconne in D minor: A Study in Coherence and Contrast," in *The Bach Chaconne for Solo Violin, A Collection of Views*, edited by Jon F. Eiche (Urbana, IL, 1985), 76.

Ex. 6

mm. 77-80



Ex. 7

mm. 9-12



Bach uses different harmonic progressions as elements of variation. Four of them are quite predominant:

1. $i - V - i \left\{ \begin{array}{c} VI \\ iv \end{array} \right\} - V$
2. $i - \left\{ \begin{array}{c} bVII \\ v6 \end{array} \right\} - \left\{ \begin{array}{c} iv6 \\ VI \end{array} \right\} - V$
3. Series of V7 chords going up in 4ths
4. $\left\{ \begin{array}{c} i \\ I \end{array} \right\} - V - \left\{ \begin{array}{c} vi \\ iv \end{array} \right\} - V$

Developing a model of analysis that is compatible with the present performer's edition of the Chaconne is a challenging task. From Schweitzer to Curti the points of view diverge enormously. This is the question: is the tetrachord theme the ultimate answer about basic structure or there is another solution? It is possible to speculate that there is indeed a four-measure theme that is included in a two-period phrase: antecedent and consequent (Ex. 8). From now on, the term 'Theme' refers to this eight-measure phrase.



However, Bach sometimes extends this eight-measure phrase by using pedal points not only upon the bass, but also in top-middle voices. Such are the case of variation 18, mm. 149~160, and variation 27, mm. 229~240. The obvious reason for these four-measure extensions is that of tension builders since they break with the eight-measure pattern by extending the usual time allowed for the dominant. Other times Bach only uses either a variation of the antecedent or consequent for a single four-measure variation, like in variation 26, mm. 225. Bach features another technique that is used very often: Bach states a variation of the antecedent or the consequent followed by the diminution. Examples are variation 3, mm. 25~32 and variation 7, mm. 57~64.

Although the traditional Chaconne's rhythmic characteristic is of an increasing movement, Bach is successful in keeping the flow for 257 measures doing exactly the opposite. There is an evident arch form, not only rhythmic but also regarding the number of voices used, thus implying a three part sub-structure within every main section. For instance, Part I has elements of contrast and return: the sarabande rhythm gives way to increasingly shorter note-values, to reappear at the end. The number of voice parts starts with four, is reduced in the middle, and ends again with four. The bass and soprano melodies of the beginning also disappear, to return at the end of Part I. The following charts are based on Curti's analysis:¹⁷

¹⁷ Ibid, 80.

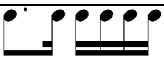
Part I, D minor:

	Variation	Measures	Characteristic
1.	Theme, 1~3	1~32	Saraband rhythm 3-4 voice parts
2.	4~14	33~120	Smaller note values Reduced number of voice parts in vars. 4~10
3.	15, var. of the consequent of Theme	121-132	Saraband rhythm 3-4 voice parts

Part II, D major:

	Variation	Measures	Characteristic
1.	16~17	133~148	Saraband rhythm 2-3 voice parts
2.	18~20	149~176	All 16 th notes 1-2 voice parts Based on triads and pedals
3.	21~23	177~208	Saraband rhythm 2-4 voice parts

Part III, D minor:

	Variation	Measures	Characteristic
1.	24	209~216	 and elements of saraband rhythm 3 voice parts
2.	25~28	217~248	Constant motion; 16 th notes the shortest value 1 voice texture frames 2 and 3 voice section
3.	Antecedent of the Theme and its variation	249~257	Saraband rhythm 3-4 voice parts

There may be a suggestion of rondo form: The division into three sections and the use of variants of the antecedent and consequent to finish parts I and III. These overall structural pillars give greater cohesiveness to such an extended work and conveys a sense of musical unity and

coherence to the listener and the performer. Further examination of these fragments shows that there are direct and subtler connections between them, both through motivic development and chord progressions (Ex. 9).

Ex. 9

a)

i bVII VI V tetrachord c

b)

I ii6 V VI ii6 V I

c)

VI6 iv6 V i ii6 V i

From the former example, it is easy to observe that:

1. a) and b) have similar top lines.
2. b) and c) have similar chord progressions.
3. Bass lines of a) and c) begin, and all three end similarly.
4. Hemiola rhythm appears in top or inner voices in all three.

Another issue regarding analysis is whether the Chaconne is an integral part or an appendix to Partita II. Spitta writes: “It is longer than all the rest of the suite put together, and must not be considered as the last movement of it, but as an appended piece; the suite proper concludes with the guigue.”¹⁸ However, there is enough evidence to think otherwise.

Indeed, the four preceding movements are standard movements in a Baroque suite. The comparative length of the Chaconne is in fact disproportionate:

<i>Allemanda</i>	32 measures (without repetitions)
<i>Corrente</i>	54
<i>Sarabanda</i>	29
<i>Giga</i>	40
Total:	155
<i>Chaconne</i>	257

However, this is not exceptional in Bach’s work: three of the six solo violin Sonatas and Partitas have long movements. Both Sonata II and Sonata III include a movement, in both cases a fugue that is longer than the other movements put together. Yet, it is very clear that these fugues are essential to the Sonatas.

Physical evidence in the manuscript supports the idea of the Chaconne as an integral part of the partita: After the Chaconne Bach continues with the opening Adagio of the following Sonata III in the same page (see the reproduction of the manuscript, page 59).

Further analysis proves that there is a musical relationship between the movements of Partita II. There is a “signature” that opens all the movements: The bass motion from *d* to *c*[#] and back to *d* (Ex. 10).

¹⁸ Spitta, Phillip. *Johann Sebastian Bach, His Work and Influence on the Music of Germany, 1685-1750*, trans. Clara Bell and J. A. Fuller-Maitland (London: Novello, 1899), 564.



“As the Chaconne is an essential part of the Partita, so the Partita is part of a larger plan involving the six solo violin pieces. Several of Bach’s large-scale works show his predilection for symmetrical cyclic organization, such as, for example, the *Mass in B minor*, *The Musical Offering*, or the *Clavierübung*, Part III.”¹⁹

There is also another fact regarding the Chaconne as an integral part of the Partita and the six solos as a whole: The Chaconne falls in the Golden Section, the ancient Greek architectural theory of perfection.

¹⁹ Sister Felicitas Curti. Op. cited, 84.

THE PRESENT TRANSCRIPTION FOR GUITAR

The process of transcription of a piece like Bach's Chaconne is a complex process. From understanding the historical and musicological background to having a secure grasp of analytical details, a transcription has to undergo revision after revision to satisfy the ultimate stage, the performance. Thus, the present transcription for guitar is far from being a final one. Indeed, it is just the seed for a satisfactory product.

Based mainly on the *urtext* and the manuscript, this transcription intends to keep close to Bach's music without being far from the guitar idiom. Thus, by considering the Chaconne as abstract music this transcription becomes more than a simple translation: it becomes a truly piece of music in the guitar.

Further support for this idea comes from the words of Rosalyn Tureck: "In Bach's music, the form and structure is of so abstract a nature on every level that it is not dependent on its costume of sonorities. Insistence on the employment of instruments of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries reduces the work of so universal a genius to a period piece. [...] In Bach everything that the music is comes first, the sonorities are and accessory."²⁰

The basic techniques pertain to the following areas:

Harmony and Counterpoint:

- Fill-in notes in chords.

- Implied harmony.

- Octavation and counterpoint.

- Introduced bass lines from tetrachord formulæ

Rhythm:

- Rhythmic pulse and the sarabande pattern.

- The chaconne second beat.

- Subsidiary rhythmic patterns and implied polyphony.

- Odd rhythmic grouping.

²⁰ Rosalyn Tureck, *An Introduction to the Performance of Bach*. (London: Oxford University Press), 11.

Dynamics:

The Baroque music writing tradition.

The arch form.

Articulations:

The manuscript as a source.

Role of slurs.

Tempo:

The Baroque tradition.

Performance practice.

Harmony and Counterpoint

Changes from the original were made to fit the tessitura and idiom of the guitar while trying to be faithful to the music itself. Although the music was transposed an octave down, the lower and middle registers of the guitar would be virtually untouched by the original music alone. Thus, important harmonic points were filled considering elemental rules of voice leading. Such is the case in measures 197~198:

Ex. 11



In this example the three voice texture that is the maximum possible in the violin is expanded to six since this passage is part of the climatic section in Part II, thus adding more sound within the guitar dynamics.

Sometimes the voice leading does not allow for this type of fill-in notes. The simpler recourse is octavation from the original music. In measure 38 (Ex. 12), the original first note is $c^\sharp$, which is brought down to the lower voice in order to continue with the introduced bass line (see next paragraph). This procedure created a situation in which if the place of this note in the

upper line is not filled, we encounter register problems. On the other hand, if the $c^\sharp$ is doubled, we find an unsatisfactory counterpoint situation. The solution is, then, to fill the place with a note from the harmony, in this case a .

Ex. 12



Introduced bass line is that which is not present in the original but is nonetheless implied by the harmony. Its function is melodic and rhythmic. In general, the tetrachord formulæ are the source for these bass lines, which follow a rhythmic pattern used by Bach in the Chaconne. The most used pattern is the sarabande rhythm. The following example, from variation 4 (mm. 33) shows this process.

Ex. 13



In the original, the type b tetrachord in the lower voice (see Ex. 5, page) is presented by the last eighth note of the first three measures in this example. However, by anticipating the last eighth note of the measure over the second beat we have the sarabande rhythm. The fill-in notes on the tenor voice create resolutions of the tritone over the downbeat and connect the register

between the upper and lower voices. This tenor voice then connects with *f* in measure four, a note that is present in the original.

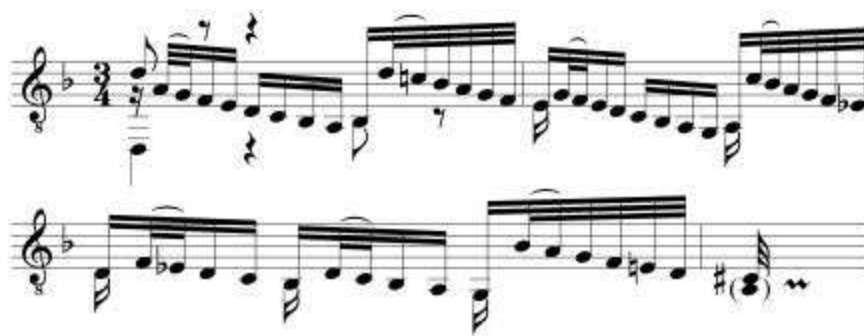
Another technique is that of extrapolation. This occurs between variation 6 (from measure 49 to measure 51) and variation 8 (from measure 65 to measure 68). In variation 6, the tetrachord in the lower voice in the original takes the tenor voice in the transcription, while notes taken from variation 8 fill the bass (within squares in the example). The purpose of this extrapolation is to solve a technical problem inherent to the guitar idiom. The thirds in the original in variation 8 cannot ‘speak’ properly due to the small rhythmic values and the register in which they are presented in the guitar. Since variations 6 and 8 share the same harmonic progression, it is proper to extrapolate these notes.

Ex. 14
Var. 6



Var. 8





Rhythm

Although in the original the sarabande rhythm disappears from the foreground in measure 24, it is quite latent over the whole piece. This is a very important consideration for a transcription and subsequent performance. The inherent polyphonic texture and implied harmony of some of the passages gives enough support for this idea. One instance is the variation 6 again. If we divide the original line into independent voices, there is an upbeat eight-note which is characteristic of the sarabande rhythm.

Ex. 15



It is worth to point out that the sarabande rhythm is not always in the same rhythmic level than the beginning. Different levels are implied in the original music as well as in introduced bass line (such is the case in the first arpeggio passage, mm. 89~91):

Original sarabande rhythm:



Diminution (variations 1 and 2, mm.9~24):



Transformed augmentation (variation 11, mm. 89~91):



The augmentation of the sarabande rhythm would not be exact given the meter of the piece. However, the quarter note in the upbeat provides a similar momentum to the following beat. It is also worth noting that the present pattern inverts the one given by the second beat pattern in the Chaconne.

Although the second beat pattern that begins the Chaconne is not always present, it is a concern where to locate the places in which it is implied. In the first arpeggio passage, it is very easy to overlook the beginning of a new variation due to the static rhythmic pattern. However, a closer study will show the right places.

In analyzing the implied polyphony, we can find subsidiary rhythmic patterns that are carried along the piece. In identifying these patterns, the performer is able to discriminate rhythmic postings that help to maintain the flow of the music. The most important is a four-note pattern that consists of three upbeat sixteenth notes resolving in the following downbeat. One of the clearest examples is variation 10 (m. 77): Here, this subsidiary pattern becomes an essential part of the variation as one follows the other delineating the descending tetrachord.

Ex. 16



Another rhythmic device used by Bach is that of odd grouping, which is extremely important to take into account during the process of fingering. Patterns like that of variation 10, mm. 81~83 are excellent examples. The line of continuous sixteenth notes is broken in small cells like thus: 1+2+2+2+2+3. By doing this, Bach avoids repetition and predictability.

Even more, this same variation is one of the most interesting harmonic passages in the whole piece: the upper voice over the descending tetrachord delineates a series of diminished chords, a brilliant way to present all twelve notes.

Ex. 17



Dynamics

Baroque composers, who where in general the performers of their own works, relied on performance practice for interpretation of their work. Thus, indications like tempo, dynamics, and ornaments were left to the performer for realization, following the few indications by the composer, and what the experience of music has taught.²¹

²¹ Robert Donington. *A Performer's Guide to Baroque Music*. (New York: Scribner, 1973).

In this sense and unlike music of later periods, the score was just the blueprint of the final product. In our case as modern musicians, however, we have lost these traditions, although musicologists have brought to light a fair number of them. In consequence, the main source of interpretation is the manuscript itself or the earliest printed editions.

Regarding dynamics fluctuation, Robert Donington writes: “It is desirable, on the whole, to preconcert the overall scheme, but to feel one’s way through the finer nuances. It is most often the harmony, which is the best guide to the finer nuances whereas the melodic line is most often indicative on a rather larger scale. Rising dynamically to the peak of an ascending phrase, and falling away from it again as the melody descends, is one of the most natural of musical responses. This can often happen intuitively, within the yet larger planning (best preconcerted) of loud and soft passages.”²² The Chaconne is an open book in this regard. In order to arrange a preconcerted performance of the piece, the inherent arch form of the overall architecture should be taken into account (see page 25). However, smaller architectural levels are the ones that insure the momentum of the performance and provide evident dynamic flow.

Baroque composers regarded phrases as being “strong” (S) or “weak” (W), usually pairing them.²³ Considering this concept is extremely helpful to set the different strata of dynamics. Per example, the statement of the theme can be divided into strong and weak cells in many different levels. In the first architectural level, the antecedent is strong and the consequent is weak. Within each sub-phrase, the first seven beats are strong and the rest weak, and so on.

²² Ibid., 293.

²³ Ibid.

Ex. 18

Ex. 18 shows two staves of musical notation. The first staff has a long slur labeled 'S' and a shorter slur labeled 'W'. The second staff has a slur labeled 'S' and a shorter slur labeled 'W'. Above the first staff, there are additional markings: 'S' above the first slur, 'W' above the second slur, and '(W)' and '(S)' above the final notes.

Articulations

Bach provides very few types of articulation in his work. Long and short slurs are, however, the most frequently found. In the Chaconne, Bach provides long slurs to underline a given melodic line, thus indicating a specific phrase. On the other hand, short slurs are more related to violin technique as they indicate bowing and grouping of small melodic cells. Both indicate how the given line has to be articulated and grouped by indicating the accented note.

Long slurs help to understand the direction of specific runs, like those of measures 72~73. They do not appear in the present transcription in order to avoid confusion. However, the manuscript or the *urtext* should be studied in order to realize the proper phrasing. By accenting the first note of every group the basic quarter-note pulse can be supported, thus obtaining a parallel effect in the guitar to that of the violin.

Ex. 19

Ex. 19 shows a single staff of musical notation with a long slur and a shorter slur.



Note that in measure 73 Bach does not write a slur. It indicates a change of *affekt* since it is a new variation. The change is signed by the low *d* in the bass and change of dynamics.

It is not always possible to translate literally small slurs written for the violin into the guitar. However, they serve as an important guide for articulation in the guitar. A similar directionality should be attained.

Bach does not indicate slurring in some instances. However, slurs were included in the transcription in order to give rhythmic momentum to certain motivic cells.

Ex. 20



Tempo

Bach does not provide a tempo markings for the Chaconne. Nevertheless, sufficient historical data provides enough information to make decisions regarding tempo. Quantz assigns ♩=160 for the chaconne and ♩=80 for the sarabande. Quantz refers to the human pulse (80/min.)

for his calculations.²⁴ The chaconne tempo given by Quantz might be based in early chaconnes, however unrealistic, at least for Bach's Chaconne. A more proper tempo is one closer to the French sarabande.

Quantz himself points out in *Essay* (Berlin, 1752, XI, 15): "There are indeed various degrees of liveliness and sadness... [XII, 2] It is necessary [to take tempo] more from the content of the piece than from the [time] word... [XI, 13] The performance should be easy and flexible...without stiffness and constraint."²⁵ C. P. E. Bach in *Essay* (1753, III, 10) writes: "The tempo of a piece... is derived from its general mood together with the fastest notes and passages which it includes. Proper attention to these considerations will prevent an allegro from being hurried and an adagio from being dragged."²⁶

Scholars suggest those multisectional pieces like chaconnes, toccatas, passacailles, etc. "may require different tempos to suit the different characters of successive sections."²⁷ However, a multiplicity of tempos might sound unclear and restless. In the case of Bach's Chaconne, an overall steady tempo is more suitable to the structure of the piece and rhythmic proportions among the variations. The fastest passages from variations such as 8, 9, 10, and the arpeggio passage from measure 89 set the limits of how fast the Chaconne can be performed. On the other hand, the two main *affekts* of the piece (Part II contrasting Parts I and III) determine the average tempo: If too fast, Part II will lack the proper calmness inherent in the music; if too slow, the proportions between phrases and their corresponding diminution can be lost. Thus, a band of tempos ranging from ♩ = 60 to ♩ = 80 could be suitable for Bach's Chaconne.

²⁴ Robert Donington. *Baroque Music: Style and Performance: A Handbook*. (New York: Norton, 1982), 19.

²⁵ Robert Donington, Op. cited, 248.

²⁶ Ibid., 249.

²⁷ Ibid., 250.

THE SCORE

This score of the transcription for guitar of Bach's Chaconne is the product of the studies above. Some changes to the original music, however, were made according to personal taste, and they do not mean to be definite. The fingerings proposed here are the ones that best fit my own current technique. They are also expected to evolve into more sophisticated fingerings that would help to convey the content in a deeper musical way.

There are some features worth mention:

Unlike the original autograph, most of the notes within harmonies do not have individual stems. This is due to laying-out reasons, since it would be cumbersome to read. For a guide to the polyphonic texture and direction of the voices, see the manuscript after this section.

The arpeggio passage in variations 11 to 14 shows only one pattern, similar to the Segovia version. The extension over the dominant of variation 27 features the same technique used by Narciso Yepes as it anticipates the sixteenth-note triplets by four measures (see page 17).

In this transcription, there are some indications that are not standard in guitar music:

IV⁵ Bar on the fourth fret up to the fifth string.

III⁰ Hinge-bar on the third fret.

CHACONNE

J. S. BACH

TRANSC. RODOLFO BETANCOURT

⑥ = D

6 8

10 8

14 8

18 8

22 8

26 8

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37

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[illegible]

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THE MANUSCRIPT

Following there is a copy of J. S. Bach autograph of the Chaconne, taken from the manuscript of the works for solo violin.

Several features are worth noting: Bach uses a separate stem for each note, rather than writing simultaneous notes on a single stem thus reflecting the polyphonic nature of the music. His choices of stem directions might be influenced by an overriding extra-musical consideration: the closeness of the staves, which Bach himself ruled with a five-prong pen.¹

At the bottom of each right-hand page are the instructions *V[olti] S[úbito]: volti presto* (“turn immediately; turn quickly”).

In Part II, Bach follows the custom of his day in writing the key signature of D major with two *f*[#], one for each location on the staff where the altered note occurs. Other baroque conventions of notation include: connected, rather than separate, ledger lines in series of notes above or below the staff; use of the so-called French violin clef (a G clef centered on the bottom line of the staff, instead of the second line) for passages lying in the extreme upper register of the instrument; an enforcement of accidentals only for the notes next to which they are written, or for immediate repetitions of such notes, rather than for an entire measure.²

Note on the PDF file: The manuscript is not included in this file for obvious reasons of space in the server. Carlevaro’s transcription of the Chaconne has this manuscript included.

¹ Jon F Eiche, “History of the Arrangements of Bach's Chaconne,” in *The Bach Chaconne for Solo Violin, A Collection of Views*.

² Ibid.

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