A MODEL ADAGIO

BY

JOHANN JOACHIM QUANTZ

from his Essay on Playing the Flute, Berlin, 1752

THREE OF THE KEYS TO SUCCESS at an eighteenth-century court were held by Johann Joachim Quantz (1697–1773). He was a highly talented performer (on the flute primarily), he composed music that delighted his aristocratic audiences (in Dresden first, and later in Berlin), and he learned how to please powerful princes (the Elector of Saxony and, most importantly, Frederick the Great, King of Prussia). As simultaneously “composer for the royal court,” “composer for the royal chamber,” and “professor of flute for the king of Prussia,” Quantz received ten times the salary of the king’s harpsichord player, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714–1788), even though Bach was a musician of staggering abilities. Successful music at court was not about “art for art’s sake,” to use the Romantic phrase. Christian Gottfried Krause (1719–1770), a prominent Berlin lawyer and musical devotee at the Berlin court, described C. P. E. Bach as a musical Milton whose melodies required “thorough prior acquaintance” before they could please.¹ Not every courtier had the time or inclination for “thorough prior acquaintance.” A winning strategy for a court composer was thus to create music that could be understood and enjoyed on first hearing, and Quantz played that game to perfection.

In Vienna Quantz studied counterpoint with Jan Zelenka, who would later be Riepel’s own maestro. Then, after securing work as an oboist in Dresden and Warsaw, he was able to spend about two years studying in Italy, beginning in 1724. There he met the greatest singers of the day, including the castrato Farinelli, and he heard the music of many of the composers already discussed in previous chapters: Somis, Leclair, Domenico Scarlatti, Leo, Hasse, Marcello, Porpora, and Gasparini. Like Wodiczka, who would study there a decade later, Quantz learned to replicate all the fashionable schemata. The “textbook” presentations of the Romanesca-Prinner in his Siciliana from a G-minor trio sonata attest to Quantz’s fluency in the Italian galant (ex. 28.1).
The Romanesca-Prinner pairing provided a secure framework on which he could add imaginative touches like the violin’s close imitation of the flute in measure 3. His seemingly effortless ability to create singable melodies served him well in later life when he was called upon to produce hundreds of flute compositions for Frederick the Great (and one presumes that the many flute pieces ostensibly written by the king may have been heavily edited or ghostwritten by Quantz).  

The breadth and depth of Quantz’s experiences were equalled by few other musicians: he began at the bottom of the ladder, a blacksmith’s son apprenticed as a town musician, and rose to the very top; he learned to play several string instruments, trumpet, oboe, and flute; he studied abroad not only in Italy but also in France and England; he performed across the continent; he met the top musicians of the age; and he had the good fortune to have been employed by two of the royal courts most unstinting in their musical expenditures and most committed to musical excellence, those of the King of Poland (and Elector of Saxony) at Dresden and the King of Prussia in Berlin. At the peak of his career Quantz committed his experiences to paper, producing one of the greatest books ever written on eighteenth-century music. His 1752 Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen [Essay on Playing the Flute] is not just about making sounds on a flute. It covers the full range of issues that had engaged the mind of this famous musician during his long and successful career, and it provides guidance in areas that were likely beyond the understanding of its largely amateur readership.

Quantz writes at length about the art of embellishing a “plain air.” The novice performer’s problem was that an eighteenth-century manuscript or print of a slow movement generally gave only the bare bones of the melody. Some small embellishments could be added almost mechanically. For example, the notated interval of a falling third invited a filling-in by an intervening tone. Here are three of Quantz’s seventeen increasingly complex suggestions for embellishing the interval from E₅ to C₅:
But other, more extensive embellishments required knowledge of particular musical contexts. To give his readers an overview of these contexts, Quantz supplied a chart of “the most common kinds of intervals”—meaning “plain” melodies of from two to six notes—“together with the basses appropriate to them,” including their thoroughbass figures.\footnote{His Table VIII (see ex. 28.3, shown in the format that appears in his treatise), may be viewed as a master musician’s chart of his galant schemata—his “compulsory figures.”} For purposes of comparison, below Quantz’s examples I have placed in parentheses the names of corresponding schemata described in the preceding chapters of the present volume.

For several figure/schema pairings, the correspondence could hardly be better. Quantz’s Fig. 2, for instance, matches the Do-Re-Mi, his Fig. 16 matches Riepel’s diatonic Monte, and his Fig. 6 matches my Passo Indietro. In a few cases Quantz’s “intervals” represent a combination of schemata. His Fig. 5, for example, matches the combination of a Prinner with a following half cadence. In many other cases Quantz’s intervals represent just the opening or closing half of a larger schema. His second example of Fig. 8, for instance, would match the second half of a Meyer (as indicated), or a Fonte, Pastorella, Jupiter, Monte, Sol-Fa-Mi, or Prinner.

For a few of Quantz’s figures I show no matching schemata. The problem is not the absence of similarity, but its diffusion across several possibilities. The final example of Fig. 8 is a case in point. At first glance its closing descent from G⁵ to E⁵ does not conform exactly to any of the schemata discussed in this book. But when one examines the “variations” that Quantz provides for that “plain air,” it becomes clear that the closing third was intended to be filled in. He notated thirty-eight interchangeable variations for the examples of Fig. 8, almost all with a melodic termination of F⁵–E⁵.\footnote{In example 28.4 I have noted the six that he mentions as being especially pertinent to the final example of his Fig. 8 (the indications of scale degrees are mine, the letter names of variations are from Quantz). All of the variations except q end with a ❶-❷ dyad (and I suspect that a grace-note F⁵ was intended for version q and left off by the engraver); variations o, q, and r feature the High ❷ Drop; and variation n presents a small Prinner melody (the tempo is adagio). So although this final plain air given in Quantz’s Fig. 8 looks atypical of galant schemata, his proposed variations reveal that it was meant to sound typical in performance. Moreover, he provided the stock melodic cues appropriate to the schemata into which this building block would likely be inserted. If Quantz the theorist might appear}
ex. 28.3  Quantz, Versuch, Table VIII (1752)

Fig. 1  Fig. 2  Fig. 3  Fig. 4  Fig. 5  Fig. 6

(ROMANESCA) (DO-RE-MI) (SOL-FA-MI) (HALF CADENCE) (PRINNER) (PASSO INDIETRO)

Fig. 7  Fig. 8

(DO-RE-MI) (MEYER) (DO-RE-MI) (MEYER)

Fig. 9  Fig. 10  Fig. 11  Fig. 12  Fig. 13

(DO-RE-MI) (MEYER) (HIGHER) (CONVERGING)

Fig. 14  Fig. 15

(FONTA) (FONTA) (PRINNER)

Fig. 16

(MONTE)
idiosyncratic at times (he was a novice writer in this his first publication), Quantz the musician was unfailingly mainstream. The musician’s prolix variations help to explain what the laconic theorist had in mind. For Figs. 3 and 10, those variations were crucial in determining that Quantz had intended these plain airs in the contexts of G major and F major, respectively (the cautionary accidentals in Quantz’s table are mine).

An examination of the literally hundreds of variations that Quantz provided for the many musical figures in his treatise would take us well beyond the scope of this book. Quantz himself may have recognized how difficult it might be to absorb such a mass of disconnected, intricate melodic fragments, for later in the treatise he attempted a summa of the art of “extempore variations” in the form of a complete Adagio for flute and thoroughbass. Not only does his Adagio include both the plain air and its recommended embellishment, but it also includes numerous cross-references to both the table of figures (Table VIII) and his hundreds of suggested embellishments. This Adagio is unquestionably the great tour-de-force in his treatise. Yet it is notable that the order of the figures in Quantz’s table closely follows the order in which they occur in the Adagio, that rare patterns in the Adagio rate inclusion in the table, and that important patterns absent from the Adagio are absent from the table. I thus surmise that Quantz either used an existing Adagio and crafted his table around it, or wrote the Adagio and the table together. In any case, Quantz’s careful cross-referencing of the “common kinds” of melody-bass pairings in his Adagio provides valuable points of comparison with the schemata described in this book.

Tracing the Adagio’s more than 140 separate references back to either the table of figures or the many pages of embellishments might tire even the most diligent reader. To reduce this problem I will present his Adagio phrase by phrase, replacing Quantz’s cross-references to the figures with reproductions of the corresponding melody-bass pairs (i.e., plain air plus bass). The cross-references to the embellishments are already embodied in the embellished voice displayed below the plain air. Here is the opening phrase:
Quantz's Fig. 9 corresponds to the “open” half of either schema, and his Fig. 8e corresponds to the “closed” half. Each of Quantz’s figures depicts three abstract events: (1) an initial state or starting point, (2) the first event of an important dyad, and (3) the second event of the dyad. I say “abstract” because certain features like chord inversion appear generalized. For instance, his Fig. 9 presents two root-position chords (basses C₃ and G₃), whereas the Adagio presents the second chord in first inversion (bass B₃, m. 1).

Following his opening gambit, Quantz presents and then repeats a modulating Prinner riposte (see ex. 28.6). As we have seen in many, many examples in previous chapters, this riposte could hardly be more normal and expected. Yet it posed a challenge for Quantz the theorist—a modulating Prinner begins in one key and ends in another. He ignores the C-major part of the first Prinner and instead references his Fig. 3, Sol-Fa-Mi in G major. As mentioned, I notate it with a key signature of one sharp (in parentheses) because although the original Fig. 3 has a C-major signature with F♯ provided in the thoroughbass, Quantz’s table of variations on Fig. 3 has an overt G-major key signature.⁶ Note that in the embellished air of the first Prinner, the F♯ grace note gives a slightly Mixolydian cast to the phrase, whereas in the second Prinner more traditional figurations appear, including the High 6 Drop. The repeat of the Prinner could be conceived entirely in G major, so Quantz now recognizes the Prinner’s opening, Fig. 7, as leading into Fig. 3. This Fig. 7 may be something of an expedient to accommodate the modulating Prinner, inasmuch as it never appears again in his parsing of the Adagio. Quantz’s table of figures does contain clear Prinners in Figs. 5 and 15, but he shows them in C major. When the Jupiter/Pastorella opening gambit returns in the second half of this Adagio, it is followed by a large Prinner in C major (see ex. 28.16). At that point Quantz references the Prinner of his Fig. 15, with Figs. 7 and 3 nowhere to be seen.
As is shown in example 28.7, Quantz then wrote two statements of the Passo Indietro, which corresponds closely with his Fig. 6:

The Passo Indietro schema implies a cadence in G major, which indeed ensues (see ex. 28.8, mm. 6–7). The particular combination of Comma and Mi-Re-Do cadence serves as a lighter derivative of the more august Cadenza Doppia (see chap. 11). Quantz does not connect the cadence to any of his melody-bass figures.
The above Do-Re-Mi corresponds to Quantz’s Fig. 2, in the key of D minor. Of course Fig. 2 from Table VIII was in C major, but Quantz endorsed transposing his figures: “Although, to avoid prolixity, these examples have been set for the most part only in major keys, they are also to be used in minor keys; thus it is necessary that you familiarize yourself with the keys in which you wish to play them, so that you are immediately able to imagine the sharps or flats that must be prefixed in each key, without confusing whole tones with halves or halves with wholes in the transpositions.”

The Adagio continues with a variant of the Fonte (see ex. 28.9). Because its phrasing is at odds with harmonic resolution (each phrase-half ends “open”), Riepel’s fictional student might well have said again that it “belongs to neither the Monte nor the Fonte nor the Ponte” (cf. ex. 14.18). The return to the tonic C-major harmony only comes at the start of a new phrase in measure 11 (ex. 28.10). Yet notwithstanding the unusual scansion, all the features of the Fonte are present, including its function as a tonal digression. It is somewhat curious that Quantz references his Fig. 8a for the end of the minor half of his Fonte (the end of m. 9 and beginning of m. 10), but does not reference the same figure at the analogous place at the end of the major half (cf. ex. 28.10, mm. 10–11). Since these references were for the purpose of providing contexts to guide embellishments, and since the end of the second half of his Fonte is only minimally embellished, Quantz may have felt that no such contextualization was necessary.

After the Fonte’s digression and return, Quantz sets a series of small cadences to facilitate a move toward the key of A minor (see Ex. 28.10). His Fig. 5 refers to a Prinner extended to a half cadence, which in the Adagio seems present only in the most abstract sense. That is, one can identify tones that proceed down a hexachord from F5 to A4, but the bass and harmonization of Fig. 5 are nowhere in evidence. The Adagio bass is more
typical of the Converging cadence. Moreover his figures show no echo of the strong parallelism of the Comma-to-half-cadence pattern first in the major mode and then a third lower in minor.

The half cadence in A minor (m. 12) is distantly answered, as if by the second half of a Meyer, by the first of two large Commas (mm. 13–14, see ex. 28.11). The florid version of these Commas shows that Quantz treats the first statement as weaker and more perfunctory, the second as stronger and more emphatic (note the High Drop).
Commas generally precede strong cadences, and that is the case here, where they lead into the intricate close of this A-minor section. Note in particular how Quantz coordinates the melodic hexachordal descent with various schemata of increasingly strong closure:

**Ex. 28.12** Quantz, *Versuch*, Adagio, mm. 15-16 (1752)
A stock Durante countermelody ushers in a typical Fonte. Quantz references the Fonte’s two similar halves with different figures (Nos. 11 and 8). The difference seems to be that Fig. 11 begins “closed” whereas Fig. 8 begins “open” in its local key:

ex. 28.13  Quantz, Versuch, Adagio, mm. 17–18 (1752)

He follows the Fonte with a very clear Prinner that begins the melodic descent of the hexachord. The Indugio extends that descent, beginning on 4 and ultimately continuing through 1 and 7 (or through 4 and 5 in the hexachord on G):

ex. 28.14  Quantz, Versuch, Adagio, mm. 19–20 (1752)
After the fermata Quantz restates his opening theme with, in the embellished part, diminutions in sixteenth-note triplets. In contrast to his analysis of the opening measures (mm. 1–2), he here adds a reference to Fig. 1. That reference seems a measure late, though it might indicate how to treat a static tone in the melody (F5 in m. 22) as the bass moves through a stepwise dissonance, in this case B2 (7) of the Long Comma:

ex. 28.15 Quantz, Versuch, Adagio, mm. 21–22 (1752)

In place of the two modulating Prinners of measures 3–4, Quantz substitutes a nonmodulating Prinner that appears as a hybrid of his two ideal types, Figs. 15a and 15b. That is, its first half features the descending stepwise bass and 7–6 suspensions of Fig. 15a, while its second half features the leaping, circle-of-fifths bass of Fig. 15b:

ex. 28.16 Quantz, Versuch, Adagio, mm. 23–24 (1752)
Quantz connects the end of this Prinner to the beginning of a complex of schemata that could easily be the final cadence did it not close a bit too "easily," lacking the emphasis of a Cudworth cadence or the extension of the Long and Grand cadences:

ex. 28.17  Quantz, Versuch, Adagio, mm. 24–25 (1752)

After the “early” cadence, he sets two perfunctory Meyers in the same way a later galant composer might set two Quiescenzas:

ex. 28.18  Quantz, Versuch, Adagio, mm. 26–27 (1752)
In measure 28 Quantz begins a five-part diatonic Monte whose rising bass extends all the way up to the tonic (ⅰ). The last stages of that rise overlap a Long Comma, which is followed in quick succession by a regular Comma and a half cadence:

**Ex. 28.19** Quantz, Versuch, Adagio, mm. 28–30 (1752)

Quantz then uses a Prinner as part of an elaborate preparation for the final close, which arrives in the full panoply of the Cudworth cadence, as shown in his florid version (ex. 28.20).

Given his long experience first in Dresden and then in Berlin, where conservative tastes prevailed, it stands to reason that Quantz selected or composed an Adagio that may seem rather old-fashioned and fussy for the 1750s, the time of his treatise. The schemata presented in this book are generalizations of galant practice as a whole, with a special focus on the most fashionable Italian practice. One would not expect the Italian practice to match in every respect the musical habits of an older musician at a German court. And yet there is a very high degree of correspondence between Quantz’s figures and the galant schemata. Galant practice was so widely disseminated, and so carefully taught through partimenti, solfeggi, and other rituals, that one can easily speak of an international musical style. Quantz, like Jommelli or Mozart, uses a Jupiter as a theme, a Prinner as a riposte, a Fonte for a digression, a Monte for rising tension, a Comma or Passo Indietro to prepare for a stronger cadence, and so forth. These were the paths down which galant music coursed, and court musicians everywhere appear to have felt at home in this landscape.

One of Quantz’s aims in presenting this model Adagio was to give performers a context for the choices that they faced in embellishing a “plain air.” He grounded his notion of context on the “most common kinds of intervals.” The modern player interested in the
fine points of historically informed performance should note that while different “intervals” may be involved in different contexts, the intervals themselves are not fully determinative of their context. The Indugio, for instance, is a context with a tradition of characteristic embellishments (see chap. 20). Those embellishments appear in Quantz’s music but elude his concept of “interval.” Reexamining his techniques of embellishment in light of the specific contexts of the galant schemata can thus suggest the most appropriate norms for embellishment. The schemata supplement omissions in Quantz’s first attempt (Versuch) at theory, reinforcing the richer vein of Quantz’s justly lauded practice.