

Peter McKenzie Armstrong

Partita Traverse for Flute Solo

after J. S. Bach

Opus 8

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.

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.

Star Finder

1 *f* *p* *f*

8 *p* *f*

15 *p* *f* *p* *f* *p*

22 *f*

29 *p*

36 *f*

43 *p* *f*

50 *p* *ff* *pp*

[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 staff 1: Treble clef, 3/4 time signature. Measures 1-6. Chords: F#m, F#m, F#m, F#m, F#m, F#m.

Musical staff 2: Treble clef. Measures 7-12. Chords: F#m, F#m, F#m, F#m, F#m, F#m.

Musical staff 3: Treble clef. Measures 13-18. Includes slurs and accents.

Musical staff 4: Treble clef. Measures 19-24. Includes slurs and accents.

Musical staff 5: Treble clef. Measures 25-30. Includes slurs and accents.

Musical staff 6: Treble clef. Measures 31-36. Includes slurs and accents.

Musical staff 7: Treble clef. Measures 37-42. Includes slurs and accents. Dynamic marking *sf*.

Musical staff 8: Treble clef. Measures 43-48. Includes slurs and accents. Dynamic marking *sf* and tempo marking *ritenuto*.

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

p

poco cresc.

ritenuto

f *mf*

tempo **poco rall.** **tempo**

p *mp*

pp

cresc.

molto ritardando **tempo subito**

f *p*

rallentando **tempo sub.** **lunga**

s *sf* *sfz*

Detailed description: This is a musical score for a piece titled "Collapse". It consists of eight staves of music in treble clef. The piece begins in 8/4 time with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The first staff contains measures 1-2. The second staff, starting at measure 3, includes the instruction "poco cresc." and ends at measure 8. The third staff, starting at measure 5, includes "ritenuto" and dynamic markings *f* and *mf*. The fourth staff, starting at measure 7, includes "tempo", "poco rall.", and "tempo" with dynamic markings *p* and *mp*. The fifth staff, starting at measure 9, includes *pp*. The sixth staff, starting at measure 10, includes "cresc." and ends at measure 11. The seventh staff, starting at measure 12, includes "molto ritardando" and "tempo subito" with dynamic markings *f* and *p*. The eighth staff, starting at measure 14, includes "rallentando", "tempo sub.", and "lunga" with dynamic markings *s*, *sf*, and *sfz*. The score features various time signatures: 8/4, 3/4, 6/4, 9/4, 7/4, 3/2, 3/4, 2/4, and 4/4.

