

# THE IMPROVISATION OF PRELUDES ON MELODY INSTRUMENTS IN THE 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

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The skill of improvisation was highly valued in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and improvising preludes on a keyboard instrument was an established art. However, as the instructions and examples in musical treatises demonstrate, preludes were also improvised on melody instruments and by singers. This subject is addressed by, among others, B B Mather and D Lasocki in *The Art of Preluding, 1700-1830*.<sup>1</sup> However, questions concerning the function of these preludes, and whether they were, in fact, improvised or were constructed in advance and then memorised, have yet to be answered.

What was the role of the improvised prelude in practising, teaching and performance? In order to find answers to these questions, I have studied the written advice and most of the musical examples from the surviving 18<sup>th</sup>-century treatises and other sources. I have not included composed pieces with the title 'Prelude' in this study; they always existed alongside improvised preludes, although a glance at the most famous collection of these, *Das Wohltemperirte Clavier* (1722) by J S Bach, demonstrates that, like improvised preludes, each one outlines the tonality of the more highly structured fugue which follows, and many of them are based on an arpeggiated chordal sequence which has the feel of an improvised piece.

The reason for the frequent references to flute Methods in this article is due to the relative abundance of 18<sup>th</sup>-century treatises and other source material concerning the flute, rather than to a preference for improvising preludes by 18<sup>th</sup>-century flautists. Amateur musicians, whether more or less musically gifted, could generally try to play the flute, and so there was a vast amateur market for flute Methods; in addition, the finest flautists were in demand at every European court. There is a wide range, therefore of flute Methods, some quite simple, and others highly sophisticated.

Examples of improvised preludes are also found in Methods and collections for other instruments, ranging from the new five-keyed clarinet to the musette, and many Methods are designed for several instruments, such as that by Freillon-Poncein for oboe, flute and flageolet, or that of Hotteterre for flute, recorder and oboe. This article discusses the material chronologically, with separate sections for advice to singers and for improvising preludes in groups.<sup>2</sup>

## Medieval models

The practice of improvising preludes is described from medieval times onwards. Paul Bracken observes that 'the use of instrumental preludes and postludes by medieval singers is suggested in a variety of medieval written sources,' and such preludes were improvised.<sup>3</sup> The narrative poem *Tristan* by Gottfried von Strassburg (d. c.1210) describes its hero, a highly accomplished harpist and singer, performing songs in

Breton, French, Welsh and Latin, and refers to

*his melodies and his improvisations,  
his strangely crafted preludes,  
which he harped so delightfully.*<sup>4</sup>

Bracken observes how numerous medieval texts suggest that re-tuning the harp was an opening ritual of song performances, almost a part of the prelude, and was done even if the harp had just been tuned and played. The 13<sup>th</sup>-century *Prose Tristan* describes how the hero began to

*tune in the manner that he knew, and was suited to the melody which he wanted to play ... and when he had tuned it thoroughly, he commences his melody and then his song.*<sup>5</sup>

Such ‘tuning’ might include rapturous passages and evocative harmonies. In an Anglo-Norman romance entitled *Roman de Horn* (c.1170), Master Thomas describes a skilled performer:

*Then he took the harp to tune it. God! Anyone who saw how well he handled it, touching the strings and making them vibrate, sometimes causing them to sing, and at other times to join in harmonies, would be reminded of the heavenly harmony ... When he has played his notes, he makes the harp play higher, so that the strings give out completely different notes ... and when he has done all this, he begins to play [noter] the aforesaid lai ... in a loud and clear voice.*<sup>6</sup>

Master Thomas makes clear that this elaborate improvisation is in fact a prelude, rather than part of the song which follows. It is only ‘when he has done all this’ that he begins to sing the *lai*, loudly and clearly.

### **Improvised introductions in Renaissance music**

In an article entitled ‘Skillful’ *Singing and the Prelude in Renaissance Italy*, Grant Herreid describes the combination of tuning and performance for lutenists found in Joan Ambrosio Dalza’s *Intavolatura de Liuto, libro quarto* (Venice, Ottaviano Petrucci, 1508). He writes:

*Dalza includes a few pieces he calls tastar de corde, literally ‘to try (or touch or fret) the strings’. Most of these have the rubric tastar de corde con li soi recercar, a ‘trying the strings, with its ricercar,’ and indeed these ‘string tryings’ are each followed by a ricercar that employs the harmonies and finger positions explored in the tastar de corde, clearly affirming the practice of a short, rather amorphous piece acting as an introduction or prelude to a more coherent piece.*<sup>7</sup>

In 1555, Pontus de Tyard recalled the lutenist Francesco Canova of Milan (1497-1543) ‘seeking out’ a fantasia ‘as if tuning’, and captivating his audience:

*The tables being cleared, he chose one, and as if tuning his strings, sat on the end of a table, seeking out a fantasia. He had barely disturbed the air with three strummed chords when he interrupted the conversation which had started among*

*the guests. Having constrained them to face him, he continued with such ravishing skill that little by little, making the strings languish under his fingers in his sublime way, he transported all those who were listening into so pleasurable a melancholy that ... they remained deprived of all senses save that of hearing ... to enjoy the more ... so ravishing a harmony.*<sup>8</sup>

Here, the term ‘fantasia’ seems to mean the same as ‘improvised prelude’: music which grows out of tuning the instrument, and flows into a piece of ‘pleasurable melancholy’, with its ‘ravishing harmony’.

### Some 17<sup>th</sup>-century approaches

Fifty years later, Monteverdi constructed instrumental introductions to his operatic arias in a similar way: in *l’Orfeo* (1607) the instrumental *ritornello* introducing La Musica’s aria explores the cadences of its mode, to prepare the audience for her song which expounds the beauty of music, while Orfeo’s magical enchantment of Caronte is introduced by a *ritornello* representing the sound of his lyre. In *Il ritorno d’Ulisse in patria* (1639), Monteverdi asks the continuo instruments to repeat a C minor chord until Penelope is on stage, ready to sing her lament, ‘Di misera regina’. He writes: ‘There begins the following sad *sinfonia alla bassa*’ (meaning both ‘in the bass register’ and ‘by the basso continuo’).<sup>9</sup> These chords are likely to have been elaborated upon, since Monteverdi gives to the single repeated note the title *sinfonia*.

In late 17<sup>th</sup>-century England, it was expected that good performers would preface a piece of music with a short musical introduction. The Restoration poet, John Dryden (1631-1700) describes how musicians prepared the audience for a piece of music by playing a prelude. In his play entitled *Limberham: Or, The Kind Keeper* (1680), the character named Wood, or Woodall, describes how approaching a woman must be undertaken cautiously, step by step, like a musician who first improvises a prelude before moving directly into a piece of music:

*Saint: Verily, a little swearing may be then allowable. You may swear you love me, it is a lawful oath; but then you must not look on harlots.*

*Wood: I must wheedle her, and whet my courage first on her as a good musician always preludes before a tune. Come, here is my first oath’.*<sup>10</sup>

The English political philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) wrote on a variety of subjects, including history, geometry, the physics of gasses, theology and ethics. He compares a musical prelude to the preamble of a noble speech, since both prepare the ground for what follows. In his *A Briefe of the Arte of Rhetorique* (1681 edition), he writes:

*The Proeme [or ‘preamble’] is the beginning of an Oration, and, as it were, the preparing of the way before one enters into it. In some kinds of Orations it resembles the Prelude of Musicians, who first play what they list, and afterwards the Tune they intended.*<sup>11</sup>

‘Play what they list’ means ‘play what they fancy’; the English word ‘fancy’ is the

equivalent of the Italian term, *fantasia*, which we have already seen used by Canova to describe an improvised prelude.

### **18<sup>th</sup>-century improvised preludes**

Jean Pierre Freillon-Poncein was, according to Fétis, Master of the Royal Stables (or provost of the *grande écurie du roi*) under Louis XIV. Little is known about him; he may have been born in Lyons, around 1655. He wrote a treatise entitled *La Véritable Manière d'apprendre à jouer en perfection du haut-Bois, de la Flute et du Flageolet* (1700),<sup>12</sup> which provides valuable information about how preludes were improvised in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Freillon-Poncein describes how preludes were constructed:

*I believe I should explain what preludes are. They are none other than a pattern of notes chosen to convey the sound of the mode [i.e. key] in which you wish to play. This is normally done according to the performer's power of imagination at the very moment that they wish to play, without having written down [the notes] beforehand.*

*There is no specific rule for the tempo or length of preludes; they are played variously according to your fancy, tender or harsh, long or short, or in a disjointed style. You may even go through all sorts of keys, provided that you approach them and move on from them appropriately, that is, in a manner which is pleasing to the ear. It is necessary, however, that each prelude begins on one of the three notes of the tonic chord of the key in which you wish to play, and that it ends on one of the notes of this triad, although it is always best to end on the tonic.*<sup>13</sup>

All the preludes which I have studied in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century treatises follow this rule of starting a prelude on one of the notes of the tonic chord and ending on the tonic. When Freillon-Poncein writes about establishing the key, this is likely to have been as much for the benefit of the player as for the audience. Like most of the early 18<sup>th</sup>-century treatises for melody instruments, *La Véritable Manière* was intended for amateurs,<sup>14</sup> and for a student or an amateur player it would have been helpful to play a few notes in the correct key before sight-reading a piece, thus establishing the key both in one's head and under the fingers.

Freillon-Poncein includes ten pages of examples of preludes because, he writes, not everyone has the skill to improvise them. His examples also serve as practice material for instrumental technique, and they employ wide and unusual intervals, rather than stepwise motion, in order to develop the player's skill.<sup>15</sup> Like all the other examples of preludes in 18<sup>th</sup>-century treatises, they are in various keys; some of them modulate, before ending in the original key. The examples last between 30 seconds and a minute in length, at least when played by the author, and they are not as varied as Freillon-Poncein's text suggests. In fact, since they are designed for beginners, they are musically rather uninteresting, and include none of the typical melodic and rhythmic features of French Baroque music.

### **Hotteterre's *L'art de preluder***

Jacques-Martin Hotteterre (1674-1763) was another woodwind player at the French court, though some twenty years younger than Freillon-Poncein. He was the most famous of a family of instrument makers and performers. Hotteterre lived and studied in Rome early in his career, after which he was nicknamed 'le Romain'. In 1717 he was appointed personal flute player to the French king, *Jouëur de Fluste de la musique de chambre*. In 1707 he had published a Method for transverse flute, recorder and oboe, and in 1737 he published a Method for the musette, a French type of bagpipe which was popular at the court of Louis XIV because of its pastoral connotations. As well as teaching and performing, he continued the family tradition of instrument making.

Hotteterre's *L'Art de préluder sur la flute traversière* (Paris, 1719) is addressed to performers on the flute, recorder, oboe and other instruments in the upper register (*Instrumens de Dessus*).<sup>16</sup> In it, he describes how to improvise preludes in greater detail than his colleague, Freillon-Poncein had done. In order to enable performers to improvise well, he includes elements of musical theory, such as major and minor keys, transposition, leading notes, modulation, and cadences.<sup>17</sup> The book also includes 56 examples of preludes for flute and 45 for recorder 'in all keys' to 'serve as models for inventing others',<sup>18</sup> as well as a large number of *traits* (or short excerpts). It ends with two longer preludes, one in the major and one in the minor, which modulate to 'all the steps of the octave.'<sup>19</sup> Hotteterre writes in his preface:

*In musical terms, we can consider two different types of Preludes: one is the composed Prelude, which is normally the first movement of what is known as a Suite or Sonata, and which is really a normal piece of music: this type also includes the Preludes which are found in Operas and Cantatas, which precede and announce what is to be sung. The other type is the improvised Prelude [Prélude de caprice], which is rightly the true Prelude, and which is treated in this work.*<sup>20</sup>

Corrette and Bordet (see below) also describe the prelude as a 'caprice', which became a form in its own right in the following century. Hotteterre continues to explain that an improvised prelude 'is created on the spur of the moment, without any preparation'. His distinction between composed movements entitled 'Prelude', and improvised preludes was later repeated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, among others.<sup>21</sup> Hotteterre observes that although a prelude should be improvised spontaneously, and there is an infinite variety of ways of doing this, there are, however, rules to follow,<sup>22</sup> the most important being that it should be in the key of the piece which it introduces, especially at the beginning and end of the prelude.<sup>23</sup> Like Freillon-Poncein, Hotteterre explains that this rule is observed by starting on one of the notes of the tonic chord, and ending on the tonic.

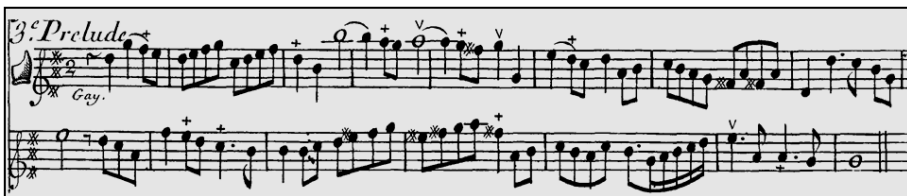
Hotteterre demonstrates how to modulate from a major key to its dominant by using its leading note, approached from above, and how to modulate to the subdominant using the minor seventh.<sup>24</sup> In minor keys, he suggests cadencing on the third, fifth, fourth and sometimes the seventh degree, and in major keys on the fifth, sixth, second and fourth degrees. He adds that cadences ending on the third note of major keys are very rare.<sup>25</sup> His examples of preludes are constructed with skill and ingenuity, and

contain plenty of ornaments, articulation markings and harmonies typical of French Baroque style.

They fall into three groups: slow preludes, often marked *Gravement*, or *Tendrement*; those in a moderate tempo, some marked *Modéré* or *Gracieusement*; and fast preludes, often marked *Gay*, or *Animé*, in which short sequential passages occasionally occur. About half of the preludes modulate, moving to a cadence in another key; three of them modulate to two other keys. Preludes in major keys most often modulate to the dominant, including his second prelude (see illus.1), while those in a minor key often modulate to the relative major, including his third prelude (see illus.2). Sometimes a prelude in the minor modulates to the dominant minor, and occasionally a prelude in a major key modulates to the relative minor.



Illus.1. Hotteterre, *L'art de preluder*, Second Prelude, marked *Un peu animé* (Paris, L'Auteur, 1719), p.10. Note Hotteterre's emblem, an anchor, at the start of the piece.



Illus.2. Hotteterre, *L'art de preluder*, Third Prelude, marked *Gay* (Paris, L'Auteur, 1719), p.10.

Hotteterre's advice and examples outline a practice that is likely to have existed across Europe. All instruments could be played in this way: in *An Essay of Musickall Ayre*, written between 1715 and 1720, and therefore contemporary with Hotteterre's *L'art de preluder*, Roger North refers to 'the manner of flourishing upon a key, with which masters take a liberty [i.e. 'improvise freely'] upon all instruments'.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, the German theorist Friedrich Erhardt Niedt writes in the second edition of his *Musikalischer Handleitung*, Part 2 (1721) that 'A *Praeludium* or *Praeludieren* can be played by anyone on his instrument, whatever it may be'.<sup>27</sup> Niedt's comments will be described at greater length towards the end of this article.

### Corrette's flute Methods

The most detailed information about improvised preludes on melody instruments is found in the French tutors. Michel Corrette (1707-95) was a French organist and composer who wrote at least 17 treatises for different instruments, published between 1738 and 1784. In his flute Method, probably published in 1740, he discusses improvised preludes:

*The prelude is a kind of caprice normally composed on the spot before playing a piece; you can even play a few bars from the beginning of the piece. To play a prelude well, you must observe whether the key of the music which you are going to play is major or minor, and play a prelude in the same key. When playing alone without accompaniment, you can compose a longer prelude, because then you can modulate to any key you like, and play fast or slow passages, in conjunct or disjunct motion, according to your imagination.<sup>28</sup>*

When Corrette writes about playing alone, this probably refers to practising, or playing alone for amusement, rather than performing solo pieces in front of an audience. The suggestion, not found elsewhere, of playing a few bars from the beginning of the following piece might be advice to a player not yet skilled in improvising preludes. Corrette's treatise contains 29 examples of preludes which 'serve as models', all quite short and without modulation. Corrette writes, however, that 'just as a song would not have enough variety if it never left the home key, so it is permissible [when improvising a prelude] to modulate to another key; which is achieved by using its leading note.'<sup>29</sup>



Illus.3. Corrette, *L'école d'Orphée*, 'Prélude, En A mi la tierce Mineure' (Paris, 1738), p.16. The letters T (*taille*, or heel) and P (*pointe*, or point) indicate violin bowing.

Several of Corrette's other Methods also include examples of preludes. Eight appear in his *Méthode pour apprendre facilement à jouer du Par-dessus de Viole à 5 et à 6 Cordes* (1738), or 'Tutor for easily learning to play the 5- and 6-string pardessus de viole'; this was a small, high sopranino viol. Of its eight preludes, at least five modulate, with cadences in the new key.<sup>30</sup> Some, at least, of these preludes were also intended as technical exercises; this is suggested by the title of one of them, 'Prelude pour exercer sur l'Arpeggio', or 'Prelude for practising arpeggios'.<sup>31</sup> Those in Corrette's *L'école d'Orphée, méthode pour apprendre facilement à jouer du violon* (1738),<sup>32</sup> vary from quite short and simple preludes to slightly longer ones with modulations, like the example in illus.3 on the previous page, which modulates to both the relative major and the dominant minor.

### **Bordet and Delusse**

In his flute tutor entitled *Méthode Raisonnée Pour apprendre la musique* (c.1755), the Parisian flautist Toussaint Bordet (c.1710-c.1775) repeats Hotteterre's comments about the composed prelude, found in operas or cantatas. Interestingly, Bordet writes that a prelude can be improvised simply for 'amusement,' without preceding a piece of music. He explains:

*But the true prelude is a capricious song [chant de caprice] which you compose on the spot; it is the type of prelude that a skilful man uses to demonstrate his talent on the instrument by cleverly modulating through different keys in the two modes [major and minor], and ending the song at will, in its original key, while scarcely noticing that he had modulated away from it. This type of prelude is normally improvised for amusement or when you are going to play a piece of music: in the latter case, you must observe the key and mode in which the piece is composed, in order to play the prelude in the same key; this prelude then serves as a preparation and introduction to that piece of music, and it can only be effective when it is constructed according to these rules. You can decide to make the prelude as long or as short as you like; but when accompanied by someone else, shortest is best, so as not to make him wait for you, or become bored.*<sup>33</sup>

In the 1765 edition of his Method, Bordet advises against modulating to the key of the (sharpened) seventh;<sup>34</sup> this suggests that he had amateur players in mind, for whom this task might prove too difficult. He both describes and notates a short prelude that can be transposed into any major or minor key (illus.4), adding that when you have mastered this, you may then 'prolong and vary a prelude as long as the imagination furnishes new ideas; but you should always prefer a beautiful tune if possible, that is to say the most melodious, in order to be able to please the audience as well as yourself.'<sup>35</sup>

In illus.4, Bordet gives two key signatures for each note of the scale, in order to save both space and paper; in this way he presents his mini-prelude in (almost) every key,

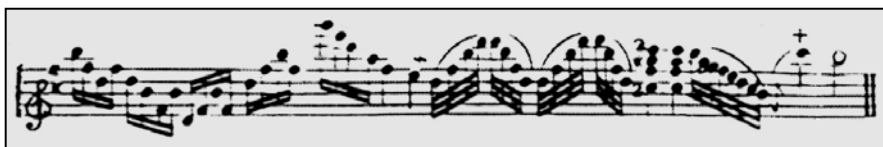
Illus.4 (facing page). Bordet, *Méthode Raisonnée Pour apprendre la musique* (Paris, 1765), p.16. A single prelude transposed into all major keys (left) and minor keys (right).



[illegible]

while writing it out only fourteen times. When performers play each example according to the first key signature, and then repeat it according to the second, they will have played it in 26 keys. Thus, in the first example, Bordet gives the tune in both G flat and G major: the written out melody is played first as g flat, b flat, d flat etc., and then (with the second key signature) as g, b, d. In the minor keys, the performer also needs to adjust the accidentals.

Charles Delusse, another flautist based in Paris, gives examples of preludes that illustrate Bordet's words about a skilful player demonstrating their talent, although not 'by cleverly modulating through different keys', since his preludes do not modulate. The twenty preludes in Delusse's flute Method (c.1760) recall solo cadenzas of the period: they include fast passage work of different kinds and arpeggios employing the entire range of the instrument.<sup>36</sup>



Illus.5. Delusse, *L'Art de la flûte traversière* (Paris, c.1760), p.26.  
Prelude in B minor in the style of a cadenza.

This virtuosity probably reflects Delusse's own performances as a professional flautist. His treatise focuses on flute technique, while Bordet's seems designed for amateurs, with information about musical theory, fingerings for a number of instruments and numerous easy duets.

However, some 18<sup>th</sup>-century treatises on playing melody instruments do not describe how to improvise preludes, chief among them being *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte Traversiere zu spielen* (1752) by Johann Joachim Quantz (1697-1773). He offers detailed advice on how to perform in public and how to practise,<sup>37</sup> but the only type of improvisation he discusses is the cadenza. Nevertheless, the practice of improvising preludes continued well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly on the piano.

### English theorists

Although most of the written instructions about improvised preludes are found in French sources, I do not think that this practice was more developed in France than elsewhere in Europe. A minor theorist who described improvised preludes was Lewis Christian Austin Granom, who apparently lived in London, although nothing is known about his life. He published many songs and composed pieces which were popular in their day, and dedicated his second collection of songs with string accompaniment to William Boyce. A trumpeter named Granom was in London 1712-16, and advertised a set of concerts in Hickford's Room in 1729. In both the third edition (c.1770)<sup>38</sup> and the fourth of his *Plain and Easy Instructions for Playing on the German Flute*, Granom devotes five pages to describing how a student can learn to improvise preludes. He

writes:

*Before he begins to play a piece of music, he should run over a few Notes in the Mode, or Tone, in which such Music is composed (in order to prepare the Ear for that which is to follow), called Preludes, and [these] are irregular pieces of Music, depending on the fancy of the Performer; and, though they are deemed irregular, they must be methodical, according to the laws of [music].*<sup>39</sup>

Granom then explains about the different modes and keys, and ends by observing that all preludes should be in the same key throughout; however, ‘a skilful performer may digress from the above rule, by going out of one Tone into another (which is called Modulation), provided he ends in the Mode he first began with.’<sup>40</sup> This appears to be the first surviving description in English of an improvised woodwind prelude.<sup>41</sup>

This practice was once very popular in England, judging by the references to written-out examples in tutors of the time. Most of the tutors for recorder and violin advertised as being published in London in the first two decades of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century contain pieces called either ‘prelude’ or ‘flourish’ or both. Sadly, only a very few of these survive: perhaps they were intended for amateurs, who discarded them once they had mastered their contents.

Those which no longer survive had titles such as ‘A Flourish or Prelude in every key ... by Seignior Gasperini’ (1704) for violin, and ‘a Flourish in every key, by Mr Teno, Signor Pepusch, Mr Keane, Mr Graves, Mr Barrett’ (1712) for recorder. ‘In every key’ in fact means ‘in the most common keys’,<sup>42</sup> since sharps and flats require more complex cross-fingerings on the recorder. The English word ‘flourish’, with which ‘prelude’ became synonymous, is a much older term; it will be discussed more fully in the section entitled ‘groups improvise preludes’.

### **Dülon improvises for C P E Bach**

Friedrich Ludwig Dülon (1768-1826) was a composer, performer and theorist. Although struck blind soon after birth through an eye infection, he was the most famous virtuoso flautist of the Classical era. In 1783, at the age of 13, he visited and played for C P E Bach in Hamburg.<sup>43</sup> Dülon dictated the following account of his ‘audition’ in his autobiography:

*When I presented myself to him for this purpose on the following morning, and had finished the first prelude, he immediately said these three words: ‘a charming tone’; and they were already enough to instil courage in me. ... I played for Father Bach a solo of his own composition.*<sup>44</sup>

The solo which Dülon played was probably C P E Bach’s Sonata in A minor (H 562/Wq 132) for solo flute. Leta E Miller suggests that Dülon improvised a prelude before each movement of the sonata;<sup>45</sup> however, all the movements in Bach’s flute sonata are in the same key, so there would have been no reason to establish the key before each movement. Perhaps Dülon played a few notes and figures between the movements of Bach’s sonata, or perhaps his ‘preludes’ may not have related to a specific piece, but were simply a demonstration of his skill.

Dülön also improvised at concerts: on 26 March, 1791, he improvised both a solo fantasy over fifteen minutes long, and variations on a theme which he requested from the audience.<sup>46</sup> Karl Ditters von Dittersdorff appears to have been present, and wrote disdainfully:

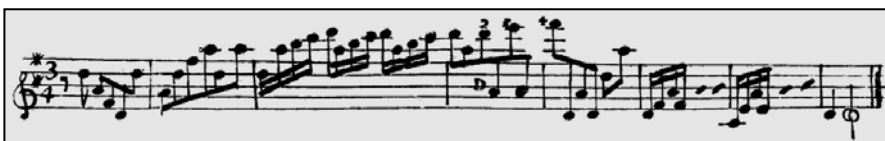
*How angry I was, when I saw a certain Dülön come before us with his flute a few years ago and heard him perform his fantasies in which he tootled various flourishes and whirligigs (to speak like my bow-legged servant), and ended with variations – note well – without any accompaniment!*

*Meanwhile, just as we, Kozeluch and I, were mutually expressing our indignation, His Excellency Count N N very graciously cut us short with these words: ‘Messieurs! You are both dictators in music; must you not confirm that music has now climbed to the highest summit? That someone like Mozart can sit down and fantasise at a harmonically rich fortepiano, that is no art; but that a flautist with his sterile instrument can achieve the same effect as Mozart (Oho! I thought), is that not astounding? What do you say, messieurs?’ ‘Oh yes, very astounding’, I said, laughing rather loudly.<sup>47</sup>*

Evidently, performing one’s own fantasies in public was not as common for a flautist as for a keyboard player.

### **Late 18<sup>th</sup>-century improvised preludes**

In his second Method for violin, *L’art de se perfectionner dans le violon* (1782), published towards the end of his long life, Michel Corrette includes sixteen examples of preludes that are technically more challenging than the examples in his first violin Method. Stylistically, they resemble Delusse’s examples, with arpeggios, wide leaps and frequent use of the third octave (see illus.6).<sup>48</sup> Corrette writes that in a prelude, as in a solo cadenza, one need not keep to a regular beat.<sup>49</sup>



Illus.6. Corrette, *L’art de se perfectionner dans le violon* (Paris, 1782), p.10.  
Prelude in the style of a cadenza.

The technical demands and the length of a prelude might vary considerably according to the skill of the player. The second edition of François Devienne’s *Nouvelle Méthode pour la Flûte* (c.1792) includes 22 examples of preludes in a Classical style, with broken chords, scales, wide leaps and chromatic passages. Devienne (1759-1803) was 52 years younger than Corrette, as his musical style indicates. The first prelude in each key is introduced by a spread chord and a scale (see illus.7)<sup>50</sup> to establish the key; these are a little simpler and shorter than those by Bordet

in his *Méthode Raisonnée Pour apprendre la musique* of 1765 (see illus.4), but they are followed by an extended prelude with elaborate semiquaver passages.



Illus.7. Devienne, *Nouvelle Méthode pour la Flute* (Paris, c.1792), p.70.  
Spread chord, scale and prelude in E minor (*En Mi mineur*).

### Amand Vanderhagen

Amand Vanderhagen (1753-1822) was a Flemish musician who played in both orchestras and military bands. He wrote Methods for flute, oboe and clarinet, and also played the bassoon. His two Methods for clarinet, entitled *Méthode nouvelle et raisonnée pour la clarinette* (1785) and *Nouvelle méthode de clarinette* (1796) are particularly important, since they are the first known Methods for the five-keyed clarinet. Until this point, clarinets had fewer keys and were less agile, but by the 1790s they had five or six keys, and had become more versatile. Most Classical clarinet treatises are based on those of Vanderhagen in their descriptions of physical posture, embouchure and articulation.

In about 1799 he published his *Nouvelle Méthode de flûte*; it includes sixteen preludes which, like those of Devienne, are preceded by a short chordal figure and a scale (see illus.8). Vanderhagen's preludes are simpler and less technically demanding than those of Devienne, and he writes that they are composed for beginners; he adds that a simple tonic chord or scale can be played instead of a prelude by those who do not know how to improvise a prelude,<sup>51</sup> implying that improvised preludes were the norm.



Illus.8. Vanderhagen, *Nouvelle Méthode de flûte* (c.1799), p. 67.  
Spread chord, scale and prelude in A major.

Vanderhagen's preludes, like those in all the late 18<sup>th</sup>-century treatises that I have studied, do not modulate. This suggests that they were designed for amateurs, who would have been unable to cope with modulation while improvising. However, Vanderhagen writes: 'To perform a prelude is to move skilfully through several scales and modulations, initially taking as a basis a key [from] which you [can] modulate anywhere according to your inclination, but to which you must return in order to end the prelude.'<sup>52</sup> Thus, a skilful player could improvise a prelude which included modulation, as long as it returned to the home key.

### **Preludes at the turn of the century**

Almost nothing is known about the French musician, Mathieu Peraut, who wrote a *Méthode pour la flûte* (Paris, c.1800). Like other Methods, it also contains a range of pieces to play: six Duos, six Caprices and six Sonatas for two flutes. He includes general information about musical theory: for example, he notates how trills are to be performed, and is careful to show all trills starting on the upper note, with the exception of a single cadential trill, starting on the note below that of the trill.

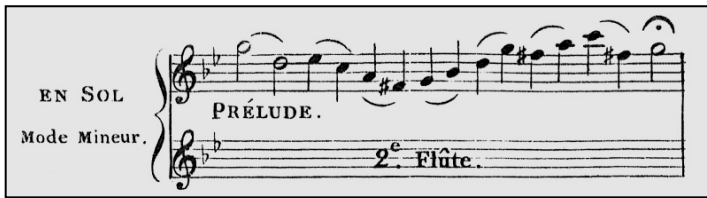
Peraut gives examples of short, very short, and more elaborate preludes in his *Méthode pour la flûte*. He writes:

*Since there are many ways of indicating the key and establishing the mode before starting a piece of music, I will vary the [preludes] before these little airs, as well as before each duo and each sonata, so that the student can begin to memorise and become used to improvising all the formulas that he can use to establish the key and the mode in which he is about to play.*<sup>53</sup>

Peraut's 12 *petit airs* are preceded by a very short *Établissement du Mode*, no longer than Devienne's and Vanderhagen's short introductions (see illus.9), while each of the six duos is preceded by a short prelude (see illus.10). The preludes to Peraut's sonatas are, in his words, 'somewhat richer in elaboration and style'; in their length and technical difficulty, they correspond to the standard of the sonatas which follow them. These preludes are longer than Devienne's and Vanderhagen's, technically more demanding and in a slightly later style, with longer chromatic and diatonic runs, and wider and more frequent leaps (see illus.11).



Illus.9. Peraut, *Méthode pour la flute* (1800), p.32.  
Establishing the key (*Établissement du Mode*), in G major.



Illus.10. Peraut, *Méthode pour la flute* (1800), p.50. Prelude in G minor before a duo.



Illus.11. Peraut, *Méthode pour la flute* (1800), p.84. Prelude in D minor before a sonata.

Thus Peraut uses preludes to establish the key in which one is about to play. The recommendation to memorise useful formulas and the examples of different lengths and technical levels suggest that improvisation was common. Devienne and Peraut provide a prelude before each movement of their sonatas, which might lead one to think that in concerts, an improvised prelude preceded each sonata movement. However, the fact that Devienne and Peraut include sonatas in their treatises indicates that they were intended as practice material, rather than for concert performance.

The changes of key, with movements in the dominant, and the relative major or minor, are an unusual feature in sonatas of this period; this could be another example of these pieces being designed as practice material, rather than for performance. The key changes enable Devienne and Peraut to offer a wider choice of preludes in various keys

and styles. The preludes of both Devienne and Peraut match the character of the movements that follow, but do not include material from them.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, a key was often associated with a particular feeling, or *affekt*.<sup>54</sup> Establishing a key, therefore, also conveyed a feeling, whether a musical piece followed or not: examples would be the ‘bright’ feeling of D major, or the plaintive feeling of some minor keys. The feeling associated with a particular key could also serve as an inspiration for a prelude. Among those found in the treatises, preludes that reflect the *affekt* associated with the key in which they are written include the preludes in D major by Hotteterre in *L’art de preluder*,<sup>55</sup> in C minor and F major in Corrette’s flute Method,<sup>56</sup> the prelude in F major in Corrette’s *L’art de se perfectionner dans le violon*,<sup>57</sup> and the preludes in B flat minor and D major by Peraut.<sup>58</sup>

I have found no written accounts of how to improvise preludes on melody instruments later than that in Peraut’s Method, but early 19<sup>th</sup>-century instrumental treatises often include examples of preludes.<sup>59</sup> The practice of improvising preludes is likely to have continued, but by now they were mainly used by students in order to develop instrumental technique. George Washington Bown and Charles Nicholson both write that their examples should be practised until the pupil can play them by heart, in order to become familiar with passage work in different keys.<sup>60</sup> Examples learnt by heart could also have been used as a model for students’ own preludes.

### **Advice to singers**

There is little early evidence to indicate that singers improvised vocal preludes. In medieval times, a highborn singer normally accompanied himself, often on the harp. As we have seen, at that time improvised introductions were played on the accompanying instrument, which needed to be tuned, unlike the human voice. In Renaissance music, too, when the solo voice was accompanied, the instrumentalist would usually begin. Monteverdi devised semi-improvised *ritornelli* to introduce arias such as that sung by Orfeo, as if to the music of his own lyre. Nevertheless, it is helpful for a singer to clear the throat, warm up the voice, test a room for resonance, and familiarise the voice with the range of a piece. Some 18<sup>th</sup>-century treatises address this, and give advice to singers concerning improvised preludes, similar to the advice offered to instrumentalists.

Michel Pignolet de Montéclair (1667-1737) was a weaver’s son who joined a choir school at the age of nine, and at twenty left for Paris, where he joined the orchestra of the Opéra. He became music master to the Prince of Vaudémont, and followed him to Italy. Pignolet was highly regarded as a music teacher, and taught Couperin’s daughters. He wrote cantatas and operas with imaginative sound effects, such as asking horns to play softly behind the stage to simulate a distant hunt. At some point he added Montéclair, the name of a fortress in his home town, to his own name, presumably to make it sound more impressive.

Montéclair advises singers how to improvise preludes in his *Nouvelle méthode pour apprendre la musique* (c.1709); he says they are a useful way to establish oneself in a key:

*In order to firmly establish yourself in a key, before singing a piece, it is necessary*



to determine accurately its tonic, its mode, and its range: after having paid attention to these things, you should sing a prelude chiefly by using the notes of the tonic [chord], with which you must fill your imagination, because it is with these essential notes (which nearly always predominate throughout the piece and on which cadences are formed) that you re-establish the key when you get lost; the



prelude should consist of something like this:<sup>61</sup>

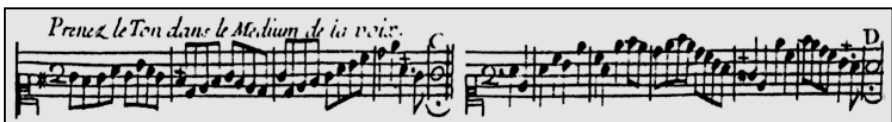
Illus.12. Montéclair, *Nouvelle méthode pour apprendre la musique* (c.1709), p.23.  
Preludes consisting of simple spread chords, and a cadence.

These preludes are similar to other short preludes by, for example, Bordet and Devienne. Writing for singers again, almost thirty years later, in his *Principes de musique* (1736), Montéclair offers similar advice concerning preludes: the singer should start the prelude on the tonic, the note on which the following song ends. If that note is low on the musical stave, the singer should begin on a note in the lower part of their vocal range.<sup>62</sup>



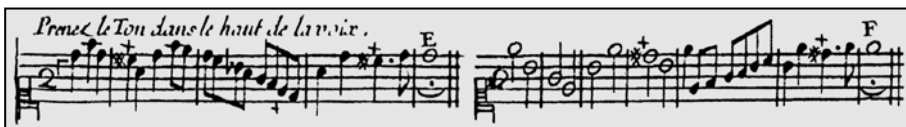
Illus.13. Montéclair, *Principes de musique* (1736), p.46.  
Two examples (A and B) of preludes starting on a low note.

If the last note of the song is in the middle of the stave, they should start the prelude in the middle of their range:



Illus.14. Montéclair, *Principes de musique* (1736), p.46.  
Two examples (C and D) of preludes starting in the middle register.

If the song ends on a note at the top of the stave, the prelude should start in the upper part of the singer's range:



Illus.15. Montéclair, *Principes de musique* (1736), p.46.  
Two examples (E and F) of preludes starting on a high note.

It was a common practice for singers to transpose a song to suit their vocal range.<sup>63</sup> Montéclair writes:

*Often you see someone stop quite suddenly in the middle of a song, because they have pitched the key too high or too low. To avoid this inconvenience, you must, so to speak, try out the song under your breath and notice whether the song lies in the upper or lower part of your range, in order to begin [the prelude] with a note that is in an appropriate part of your range.*<sup>64</sup>

After choosing a suitable key for their register, singers thus improvised a prelude to establish and become familiar with the key, before singing a song. This practice would have been especially helpful before an unfamiliar song.

In his *Dictionnaire de musique* (1768) Jean-Jacques Rousseau informs us that singers as well as instrumentalists improvised preludes. He writes:

*Preluder. To sing or play a small fantasy [trait de fantaisie], irregular and quite short, but including the main chords of the key, in order to establish the key and place the voice, or to position the hands on the instrument, before starting a piece of music.*<sup>65</sup>

Rousseau thus implies that both singers and instrumental performers approached the practice of improvising preludes in a similar way. It is likely, however, that examples in the vocal treatises were intended for practice alone, or with one's teacher, rather than for public performance. Surviving accounts of improvisation in public focus on singers improvising in other ways, such as elaborating a melody during the *da capo* repeat of an aria, at which point in the piece an audience would be well prepared to admire a singer's virtuosity and technique.

### Groups improvise preludes

Earlier in this article, Monteverdi's improvised instrumental introductions played by a group of musicians were described. In England, composers such as Purcell used the word 'flourish' to describe a short improvised instrumental piece. The term was employed as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century in music for the theatre, for use at court or in the army, for fanfares and trumpet calls. Initially, the word 'flourish' had no particular meaning or tune; instructions such as 'flourish of cornetts' or 'flourish of trumpets' are

common in theatre productions. Shakespeare often calls for a 'flourish': a typical example is the stage direction, 'The trumpets sound' in *King Richard II*, Act I, scene 3.

Flourishes were improvised and quite short, since dramatists indicated when they wanted a more extended flourish, by calling for a 'long', 'lively', 'full' or 'great' flourish. In Scene 1 of Purcell's first piece of theatre music, *Theodosius* (1680), Purcell specifies 'recorders flourish'. In *Dioclesian* (1690), after the chorus 'Sound all your instruments', Purcell instructs: 'Flourish with all instruments in C-fa-ut key' (C major).<sup>66</sup>

In a manuscript essay entitled *An Essay of Musical Ayre ... Concluding with Some Notes Concerning The Excellent Art of Voluntary*, ('voluntary' meaning 'improvisation'), written between 1715 and 1720, Roger North describes such flourishing:

*I shall begin with the manner of flourishing upon a key, with which masters take a liberty upon all instruments at the entrance of a consort [i.e. at the start of a concert], to possess the audience with [that] key whereof the scale is used in the succeeding harmony, and then the music is easier and more readily entertained.*<sup>67</sup>

He explains that this 'flourish' resembles a voluntary, although he might equally have called it a prelude, and continues:

*It consists only in sounding the proper accord-notes [notes of the chord] of an assumed key successively, and then breaking or mixing those notes as may best be done, dividendo, consonando, or arpeggiando [i.e. separately, together or as spread chords], with what elegance and variation the fancy suggests or capacity admit: sometimes slow, and often [starting] very swift and coming off slow, always observing strictly a proper consonance with the keynote, and placing the emphasis accordingly ... The like may be performed in several manners by any number of instruments, with perpetual variety of fancy in each, and no one much regard what another does; and [in] all that disorder upon the key, the sound will be rich and amazing.*<sup>68</sup>

Thus, although 'no one much regard what another does', every player followed a well-defined procedure, so that all the improvised parts blended.

### **Germans on improvised group preludes**

Martin Heinrich Fuhrmann (1669-1740/45) was a German organist and cantor of a school in Berlin; he was a student of Buxtehude, and wrote *Musicalischer-Trichter* (or 'Musical Treatise'), in 1706. In *Musicalischer-Trichter* he describes *Tafelmusik*, or music for banquets, performed by a viol consort who might begin with an improvised prelude, 'when during a meal at princely courts, the musicians perform a *praeludium* together on their viols, which sounds quite good if they understand one another well.'<sup>69</sup>

A contemporary of Fuhrmann was Friedrich Erhardt Niedt (1674-1717), a jurist, theorist and composer who died aged only 43. He was born in Jena, and probably studied law at Jena University. He went to Copenhagen in about 1700, via Hamburg, and remained in Copenhagen until his death. Over seventeen years, he compiled a

treatise entitled *Musicalische Handleitung*, or ‘The Musical Guide’, in three parts. In Part 1 (pub. 1700 and 1710) he focuses on figured bass, ‘in which the left hand plays the prescribed notes, while the right hand strikes the consonances and dissonances, so that this results in a well-sounding Harmony for the Honour of God and the permissible delight of the soul’. Part 2 (Hamburg, 1706, 1721) describes how variations may be introduced into figured bass, and contains a dictionary of musical terms (his definition of a *praeludium* was described earlier), and the specifications of 63 major organs in northern Europe. Part 3 (pub. Johann Mattheson, 1717) describes counterpoint, canon and other forms, but was unfinished at his death.

It is considered that Part 1 of Niedt’s *Musicalische Handleitung* may reflect musical techniques similar to those employed by his contemporary, J S Bach. Niedt’s views on musicians improvising preludes, found in Part 1, are similar to those of Fuhrmann: the performers need to be used to playing together, so they can improvise well together. He writes:

*With musical entertainments at dinner [Tafel-Musiquen] as well, the instrumentalists usually play a short prelude before the main piece begins. But they must be well used to playing together already and understand one another, or else such a prelude would sound poor indeed.*<sup>70</sup>

### **Later group improvisation**

Writing fifty years later, Johann Joachim Quantz in his *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte Traversiere zu spielen* (1752) has a practical concern about improvised preludes played by an orchestra at the start of a concert: by the time they have tuned and then improvised together, some of the instruments will already be out of tune again!

*If the leader [of the orchestra] wishes to maintain the correct intonation when performing a musical composition, he must first tune his own instrument accurately with the keyboard, and then have each individual player tune to him. He must not allow anyone to play preludes or other fancies as he pleases, or the instruments may be put out of tune again if the performance does not begin immediately. [Improvised preludes] are very unpleasant to listen to, and often cause the players to alter the tuning of their instruments, and finally deviate from the common tuning.*<sup>71</sup>

Writing another fifty years on, in 1799, Vanderhagen agrees with Quantz; after describing the improvisation of preludes by a single player he writes:

*But isn’t this good only when one is [playing] alone? Because it creates a very bad effect when several people improvise a prelude together and, unfortunately, this is what happens fairly often in some orchestras where the leader is not strict enough to forbid this practice.*<sup>72</sup>

Thus it seems that whereas at the beginning of the century, musicians improvised preludes together, particularly in small groups, this practice gradually disappeared in ensemble playing, and was replaced, particularly in orchestras, by individuals tuning and warming up their instruments, starting with the leader. Theorists in the first half of

the 18<sup>th</sup> century described group improvisation in chamber groups and other small ensembles, while in the second half of the century, theorists addressed a new situation: musicians in larger orchestras had begun to adopt an improvisatory approach which was inappropriate to the size of the Classical orchestra.

## **Conclusion**

As we have seen, both instrumentalists and singers improvised preludes throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century. There was a clear distinction between composed movements entitled ‘Prelude’, and improvised preludes. In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, consorts of musicians might, during musical entertainment at meals, for instance, also improvise preludes together. The improvised prelude had several functions, chief of which was to establish the key, and to prepare for and introduce the piece that followed, for both the musicians and their audience. For instrumentalists, establishing the key by playing in it and hearing it, before performing a piece can be very useful, especially for amateurs or students, or for anyone who is sight-reading. A prelude can warm up the fingers and help familiarise the hands with the instrument.

Preludes were used to demonstrate musical skill and inventiveness; they could also be improvised when there was no piece to follow. Unlike the solo cadenza, the improvised prelude appears to have been optional, rather than expected at certain points, and preludes were improvised for the sake of the musician as much as for the audience. For singers, who often chose the key of a song themselves, improvising a prelude was a way to become familiar with the key of their choice.

According to the treatises, a prelude should start on a note of the tonic triad, and end on the tonic. It might either stay in the same key throughout, or modulate, including one or more cadences before returning to the home key. Modulations appear to have been used less in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century; instead, preludes during this period exhibit a wider range, greater technical skill, and more variety of musical figuration, in the style of a cadenza. I have found no indication in the treatises that improvised preludes included musical material from the piece that was to follow, apart from Michel Corrette’s somewhat qualified advice, mentioned earlier, ‘You can even play a few bars from the beginning of the piece’.

A prelude could vary from the simplest chord and/or scale to an elaborate improvisation, and examples of preludes are found in a number of treatises and books throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century and well into the 19<sup>th</sup>. Most of the examples of preludes in treatises and collections are organised according to key; only a few are placed before a piece. These examples serve both as illustrations of how to improvise one’s own preludes, and also as technical exercises and practice material; they vary in length from a few seconds to about a minute. Since some accounts of preludes, by Freillon-Poncein and Bordet, for example, describe more expanded and varied music than the actual examples provided by the authors, it is likely that there were also longer improvised preludes. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, the main function of these examples might have been as practice material for players to develop technique and learn musical figuration.

Preludes are described as being improvised on the spot, with nothing written out beforehand, as we see in Vanderhagen’s recommendation that less skilled students

should use a scale or a simple tonic chord rather than memorising, writing down and using a notated prelude. While a number of notated solo cadenzas or outlines of cadenzas are preserved in performing material, I have never seen notated preludes for a melody instrument in performing material or musical scores. Couperin advised harpsichordists to play notated preludes as if improvising,<sup>73</sup> and Czerny suggested this to fortepiano players,<sup>74</sup> but I have found no examples of this advice being offered to performers on melody instruments.

The practice of improvising preludes also had a didactic purpose. Having learnt to improvise preludes in the style described in this article, I now use this skill when practising, performing and teaching university students; I find that when they improvise preludes, they increase their harmonic awareness and deepen their familiarity with the instrument. They enhance their technical facility, their musical inventiveness and creativity, – skills which can also be applied to ornamentation, improvising solo cadenzas and composition. For modern performers, the art of improvising preludes is also an effective tool for acquiring a mature musical style and for creating a more personal and varied approach to performance.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Betty Bang Mather and David Lasocki, *The Art of Preluding, 1700-1830: for flutists, clarinetists and other performers* (New York, McGinnis & Marx, 1984). See also Peter Reidemeister, “... der höchste praktische Gipfel in der Musik”: Die Kunst des Praeludierens’, *Alte Musik und Musikpädagogik*, ed. Hartmut Krones (Vienna, Böhlau, 1997), pp.113-26, and Karen A Peters, ‘The Improvised Melodic Prelude in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century’, MA Diss., University of California, Santa Cruz, 1992.

<sup>2</sup> I am grateful to Dr Tilman Skowronek, Dr Robin Blanton and Dr Ibo Ortgies for kindly reading this article, and for their helpful comments.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Bracken in ‘Accompanying *trobador* and *trouvère* song,’ *The Consort*, vol. 69, 2013, pp.3-19.

<sup>4</sup> *Sîne nôtun und sîne ursuoche, sîne sêlsæne grüeze, die harphete er sô sîeze*. R Krohn (ed.), *Gottfried von Strassburg: Tristan*, 2 vols (Stuttgart, Reclam, 2007), vol.1, p.222, ll.3566-9, quoted in Paul Bracken, ‘Accompanying *trobador* and *trouvère* song’, p.11.

<sup>5</sup> *Atemprer selonc ce k’il savoit k’il couvenoit au cant k’il voloit dire ... et quant il l’a bien atempree, il commence son cant et puis son dit*. P Ménard (ed.), *Le Roman de Tristan en prose*, 2 vols (Geneva, Droz, 1987), vol.1, p.229, quoted in Paul Bracken, ‘Accompanying *trobador* and *trouvère* song’, p.12.

<sup>6</sup> *The Romance of Horn* by Thomas, 2 vols, ed. Mildred Pope (Oxford University Press, 1955, 1964). Quoted in Christopher Page, *Voices and Instruments of the Middle Ages* (London, Dent, 1987), ch.8, p.92.

<sup>7</sup> Joan Ambrosio Dalza, *Intavolatura de Liuto, libro quarto* (Venice, Ottaviano Petrucci, 1508), facs. ed. Geneva, Minkoff, 1979. Quoted in Grant Herreid, “Skillful” Singing and the Prelude in Renaissance Italy’, *Early Music America*, Spring 2013, p.27.

<sup>8</sup> Pontus de Tyard, *Solitaire second, ou prose de la musique* (Lyons, 1555), quoted in Arthur J Ness, *The Lute Music of Francesco Canova da Milano* (Harvard University Press, 1970).

<sup>9</sup> *S’incomincia la seguente [sinfonia] mesta, alla bassa*. Sinfonia before Penelope’s ‘Di misera regina’, Claudio Monteverdi, *Il ritorno d’Ulisse in patria*, 1639. Facs. ed. SPES (Florence, Studio per Ed. Sclte, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> John Dryden, ‘Limerham: Or, The Kind Keeper’. Project Gutenberg, *The Works of John Dryden*. EBook #16456, p.20. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16456/16456-h/16456-h.htm>, accessed

18.10.2012.

- <sup>11</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *A Briefe of the Arte of Rhetorique* (London, Tho. Cotes for Andrew Crooke, 1637), ch.13, <http://www.classicpersuasion.org/pw/hobbes/hobbes03.htm>, accessed April, 2012.
- <sup>12</sup> Catherine Parsons Smith, 'Translator's Introduction,' in Freillon-Poncein, *On Playing Oboe, Recorder, & Flageolet* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1992).
- <sup>13</sup> J'Ay cru devoir expliquer ce que c'est que Preludes. Ce n'est autre chose qu'une disposition pour prendre le ton du Mòde par où l'on veut joüer. Cela se fait ordinairement suivant la force de l'imagination des Joeurs, dans le moment même qu'ils veulent joüer sans les avoir écrit auparavant. Il n'y a point de regle particuliere pour le mouvement ny pour la longueur des Preludes; on les fait differemment selon la fantaisie, comme tendre, brusque, long, ou court, & à mesure interrompüë, on peut meme passer sur toute sorte de Mòdes, pourveu que l'on y entre & que l'on en sorte à propos, c'est à dire d'une maniere que l'oreille n'ensouffre point; il faut cependant que chaque prelude commence sur une des trois cordes principales du Mòde par où l'on veut joüer, & qu'il finisse sur l'une des trois indifferemment, cependant il est toujours mieux de s'arretèr sur la finale. Jean Pierre Freillon-Poncein, *La Veritable Manière d'apprendre à jouer en perfection du haut-Bois, de la Flute et du Flageolet* (Paris, Jacques Collombat, 1700), p.28, [http://conquest.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/9/93/IMSLP267402-PMLP433179-freillon\\_poncein\\_metodo.pdf](http://conquest.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/9/93/IMSLP267402-PMLP433179-freillon_poncein_metodo.pdf), accessed 8.9.2013, transl. Elizabeth Rees.
- <sup>14</sup> C P Smith, 'Translator's Introduction', Freillon-Poncein, *On Playing Oboe, Recorder, & Flageolet*, 1992.
- <sup>15</sup> Freillon-Poncein, *La Veritable Manière*, p.28.
- <sup>16</sup> Jacques Martin Hotteterre, *L'art de preluder* (Paris, L'Auteur 1719), front page, [www.imslp.org](http://www.imslp.org), accessed 19.10.2012.
- <sup>17</sup> Hotteterre, *L'art de preluder*, p.44-56.
- <sup>18</sup> Hotteterre, *L'art de preluder*, p.1.
- <sup>19</sup> Hotteterre, *L'art de preluder*, pp.62-5.
- <sup>20</sup> *Qu'en fait de Musique l'on peut considerer deux differentes especes de Preludes, l'une est le Prelude composé qui est ordinairement la premiere Pièce de ce que l'on appelle Suite, ou Sonate, et qui véritablement est une Piece dans les formes; De cette espece sont aussi les Preludes que l'on place dans les Opera et dans les Cantates, lesquels precedent et annoncent quelquefois ce qui doit être chanté. L'autre espece est le Prelude de caprice qui est proprement le veritable Prelude, et c'est ce dont je traiterai dans cet Ouvrage.* Translated in Hotteterre, *L'art de preluder*, ed. Michel Sanvoisin (Paris, Zurfluh, 1966), 'Preface.'
- <sup>21</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de musique* (Amsterdam, M M Rey, 1768), p.389, [www.imslp.org](http://www.imslp.org), accessed 18.6.2013.
- <sup>22</sup> Hotteterre, *L'art de preluder*, p.1.
- <sup>23</sup> Hotteterre, *L'art de preluder*, p.3.
- <sup>24</sup> Hotteterre, *L'art de preluder*, pp.45-6.
- <sup>25</sup> Hotteterre, *L'art de preluder*, p.47.
- <sup>26</sup> *An Essay of Musிக்கall Ayre* (c.1715-20), quoted in John Wilson, *Roger North on Music* (London, Novello, 1959), p.143.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ein Praeludium kann auch jeder auf seinem Instrument maches, es sey beschaffen wie es wolle.* Friedrich Erhardt Niedt, *Musicalische Handleitung*, 1721, facs. ed. Buren, The Netherlands, Frits Knuf, 1976, p.102. Transl. as *The Musical Guide*, ed. P Poulin (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989), p.142.
- <sup>28</sup> *Le Prélude est un èspece de Caprice qui se compose ordinairement sur le champ avant que de jouer une piece: on peut même exprimer quelques mesures du commencement de la piece. Pour bien préluder, il faut observer si le Mode de la Musique que l'on va faire est Majeur ou Mineur, et préluder du même ton. Quand on joüe seul sans accompagnement, on peut composer un grand Prélude. Pour lors on peut moduler sur tel ton que l'on voudra, faire des passages vite ou lents, par degrez conjoints ou disjoints, selon que cela se présente à l'imagination.* Michel Corrette, *Méthode*

- pour apprendre aisément à jouer de la Flute traversiere (Paris, Boivin, c.1740). Facs. ed. Hildesheim, Georg Olms Verlag, 1975, p.45, transl. Elizabeth Rees.
- <sup>29</sup> Et comme un chant ne seroit pas assez varié s'il ne sortoit jamais du même ton, il est permis de passer dans un autre mode; ce passage se fait par le moyen de la note sensible. Michel Corrette, *Méthode pour apprendre aisément à jouer de la Flute traversiere* (Paris, Boivin, c.1740), p.45.
- <sup>30</sup> Reprinted in Karen A Peters, 'The Improvised Melodic Prelude in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century' (see note 1), pp.80-84.
- <sup>31</sup> Reprinted in Karen A Peters, p.86.
- <sup>32</sup> Michel Corrette, *L'école d'Orphée, méthode pour apprendre facilement à jouer du violon* (Paris, 1738). Facs. ed. Geneva, Minkoff, 1972.
- <sup>33</sup> Mais le vrai prelude est un chant de caprice que l'on compose sur le champ, c'est de cette espece de prelude don't un habile homme le sert pour faire briller son genie sur l'instrument qu'il possède, en parcurant avec art differens Tons dans les deux Modes, & terminant ce chant volontaire par son premier ton, sans presque s'apercevoir qu'il s'en soit écarté. Ces sortes des Préludes sont pour l'ordinaire pour s'amuser, ou lors qu'on va executer quelque morceau de Musique: Dans ce dernier cas, l'on doit observer sur quell Ton & Mode ce Morceau est composé, afin de former son Prélude sur ce ton, lequel Prélude, pour lors, sert de preparation & d'introduction à cette piece de Musique, & cela ne peut faire qu'on bon effet lorsque le Prelude, est fait dans les règles. On est le maitre de le faire si long & si court que l'on veut; mais lorsqu'on est accompagné de quelqu'un, le plus court est le meilleur, afin de ne point faire attendre après soy & de ne point ennuyer. Toussaint Bordet, *Méthode raisonnée Pour apprendre la musique* (Paris, 1765), facs. ed. SPES (Florence, Studio per Edizioni Scelte, 1993), p.15, transl. Elizabeth Rees.
- <sup>34</sup> Karen A Peters, p.102.
- <sup>35</sup> prolonger & varier un Prélude tant que l'imagination fournira de nouveaux sujets; mais il faut toujours, autant qu'il est possible, preferer le beau chant, c'est a dire le plus melodieux, afin de pouvoir faire plaisir aux auditeurs ainsi qu'à soi même. Toussaint Bordet, *Méthode raisonnée*, p.15.
- <sup>36</sup> Charles Delusse, *L'Art de la flûte traversière* (Paris c.1760), facs. ed. Buren, Frits Knuf, 1980, pp.25-6.
- <sup>37</sup> Johann Joachim Quantz, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte Traversiere zu spielen* (Berlin, Johann Friedrich Voss, 1752), facs. ed. Neubrandenburg, VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1983, e.g. pp.89-100 and 165-74.
- <sup>38</sup> Karen A Peters, p.105.
- <sup>39</sup> Lewis Christian Austin Granom, *Plain and Easy Instructions for Playing on the German Flute*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London, T Bennet, c.1770), p.17. Modern edition: Paris, Zurfluh, 1966.
- <sup>40</sup> Granom, *Plain and Easy Instructions*, p.21.
- <sup>41</sup> David Lasocki, 'Preluding on the Recorder in England in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century', in *Recorder and Music*, vol.6, no.7 (Sept 1979).
- <sup>42</sup> David Lasocki, 'Preluding on the Recorder'.
- <sup>43</sup> John A Rice, 'The Blind Dülon and his Magic Flute', *Music and Letters*, 1990, vol.71, p.29.
- <sup>44</sup> Als ich mich nun am folgenden Morgen in dieser Absicht bey ihm einfand, und das erste Präludium geendigt hatte, sagte er sogleich diese drey Worte: ein scharmanter Ton; und sie waren schon hinlänglich mir Muth einzuflößen....Ich spielte dem Vater Bach ein Solo von seiner eignen Composition vor.' Friedrich Ludwig Dülon, *Dülon's des blinden Flötenspielers Leben und Meynungen von ihm selbst bearbeitet* (Berlin, Tromlitz, 1807), pp.151-2, quoted in Leta E Miller, 'C P E Bach and Friedrich Ludwig Dülon' in *Early Music*, vol.23, 1995, p.66.
- <sup>45</sup> Miller, 'C P E Bach', p.67.
- <sup>46</sup> Mary Sue Morrow, *Concert life in Haydn's Vienna* (New York, Pendragon Press, 1989), pp.275-6.
- <sup>47</sup> Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf, *Lebensbeschreibung seinem Sohne in die Feder diktiert* (R/Regensburg 1940), quoted in Miller, 'C P E Bach', p.80.
- <sup>48</sup> Corrette, *L'art de se perfectionner dans le violon* (Paris, L'auteur, 1782), pp.10-11.  
[http://japanese.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/5/50/IMSLP257923-PMMLP418275-corrette\\_lart\\_de\\_se](http://japanese.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/5/50/IMSLP257923-PMMLP418275-corrette_lart_de_se)



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- perfectionner dans le violon.pdf, accessed 19.6.2013.
- <sup>49</sup> dans le point d'Orgue [cadenza] et dans le prelude, on n'est point assujetté à la mesure. Corrette, *L'art de se perfectionner dans le violon*, p.5.
- <sup>50</sup> François Devienne, *Nouvelle Méthode pour la Flûte* (Paris, Imbault, c.1792), facs. ed. SPEC (Florence, Studio per Edizioni Scelte, 1984), pp.42-77.
- <sup>51</sup> Vanderhagen, *Nouvelle Méthode de flûte* (Paris, Boyer, c.1790), p.67.
- <sup>52</sup> *Préluder c'est par courir avec art plusieurs échelles et modulations, en prenant d'abord pour base un ton quelconque qu'on module selon son gení, mais auquel il faut toujours revenir pour terminer le prélude*. Vanderhagen, *Nouvelle Méthode de flûte*, p.66, transl. in Karen A Peters, p.111.
- <sup>53</sup> [Mathieu] Peraut, *Méthode pour la Flûte* (Paris, 1800), facs. ed. SPEC (Florence, Studio per Edizioni Scelte, 1987), p.32.
- <sup>54</sup> See Rita Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Rochester, University of Rochester Press, 2002).
- <sup>55</sup> Hotteterre, *L'art de preluder*, p.14.
- <sup>56</sup> Corrette, *Méthode pour apprendre aisément à joüer de la Flute traversiere*, p.48.
- <sup>57</sup> Corrette, *L'art de se perfectionner dans le violon*, p.10.
- <sup>58</sup> Peraut, *Méthode pour la Flûte*, pp.76, 82, 86.
- <sup>59</sup> By, for example, J Wragg, Amand Vanderhagen, Joseph-François Garnier, V Michel, François Rybicki, Charles Nicholson, George Washington Bown, James Alexander, Edward Miller and John Beale.
- <sup>60</sup> Charles Nicholson, *Nicholson's Complete Preceptor for the German Flute* (London, Preston, 1816), and Georg Washington Bown, *The Flauto Instructive Companion or Preceptor for the Flute* (London, The Author, c.1825), p.17.
- <sup>61</sup> Michel Pignolet de Montéclair, *Nouvelle Méthode pour Apprendre la Musique* (Paris, Foucault, c.1709). Quoted in Karen A Peters, p.91.
- <sup>62</sup> Montéclair, *Principes de musique* (Paris, l'Auteur, 1736), p.46.  
[http://conquest.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/9/96/IMSLP112030-PMLP149927-principes\\_de\\_musique.pdf](http://conquest.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/9/96/IMSLP112030-PMLP149927-principes_de_musique.pdf), accessed 6.7.2013.
- <sup>63</sup> See e.g. Freillon-Poncein, *La Veritable Manière*, p.50, and Hotteterre, *L'art de preluder*, p.53.
- <sup>64</sup> *On a vû plusieurs fois qu'une personne reste tout court au milieu d'un air, par-ce-qu'elle a pris le Ton ou trop haut, ou trop bas. Pour eviter cet inconvenient, il faut pour ainsi dire, tâter l'air à demi-voix, et remarquer si cet air regne plus dans le haut que dans le bas, ou au contraire; afin de prendre le Ton en debutant, dans un degré de hauteur convenable*. Montéclair, *Principes de musique*, p.46, translated in Karen A Peters, p.95.
- <sup>65</sup> *Préluder. C'est en général chanter ou jouer quelque trait de fantaisie irrégulier & assez court, mais passant par les Cordes essentielles du Ton, sont pour l'établir, fois pour disposer la Voix ou bien passer la mains sur un Instrument, avant de commencer une Piece de Musique*. Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de musique*, p.389, transl. Elizabeth Rees.
- <sup>66</sup> J S Manifold, *The Music in English Drama from Shakespeare to Purcell* (London, Rockliff, 1956), p.26.
- <sup>67</sup> MS treatise preserved as GB-Lbl Add. MS 32536, ff.1-90. Quoted in *Roger North on Music*, ed. John Wilson (London, Novello, 1959), p.143, with modernised spelling.
- <sup>68</sup> *Roger North on Music*, p.143.
- <sup>69</sup> Martin Heinrich Fuhrmann, 'Musikalisher Trichter,' p.86, quoted in Kerala Snyder, *Dietrich Buxtehude: Organist in Lübeck* (Rochester, University of Rochester Press, 2007), pp.249-50.
- <sup>70</sup> *Wie denn bey Tafel-Musiquen (sonst auch) die Symphonisten ein kleines Praeludium hören zu lassen pflegen, ehe das rechte Stück angehet; doch müssen sie vorhero zusammen wohl geübet seyn, und sich einander verstehen, sonst würde ein solches Praeludium übel klingen*. Friedrich Erhardt Niedt, *Musicalische Handleitung*, Part 1, p.102; facs. ed. Hildesheim, Georg Olms Verlag, 2003.
- <sup>71</sup> *Der Anführer muss also, wenn er eine richtige Stimmung erhalten will, sein Instrument, bey Aufführung einer Musik, zuerst nach dem Claviere rein stimmen; und darauf, nach demselben, einen*

jeden Instrumentalisten insbesondere einstimmen lassen. Damit aber die Instrumente, so gerne die Musik nicht sogleich angebt, nicht wider verstimmt werden; muss er nicht gestatten, dass ein jeder die Freyheit habe, nach eigenem Gefallen zu präludieren und zu phantasiren: welches ohnedem sehr unangenehm zu hören ist, und verursacht, dass öfters ein jeder sein Instrument noch nachstimmet, und endlich von der allgemeinen Stimmung abweicht. Quantz, *Versuch*, p.181, translated as *On Playing the Flute*, ed. Edward R Reilly (London, Faber, 1976), pp.209-10.

<sup>72</sup> Mais tout cela n'est bon que quant on est seul? Car plusieurs préludeurs ensemble font acoup sur un très mauvais éffet et c'est ce qu'on entend malheureusement assez souvent dans quelques orchestres ou le chef n'est point assez rigide pour les leur interdire. Vanderhagen, *Nouvelle Méthode de flûte*, p.66.

<sup>73</sup> François Couperin, *L'art de toucher le Clavecin* (Paris, L'auteur, 1716), p.60.  
<http://erato.uvt.nl/files/imglnks/usimg/0/06/IMSLP03779-ArtToucherCouperin.pdf>, accessed 7.9.2013.

<sup>74</sup> Carl Czerny, *Complete Theoretical and Practical Pianoforte School*, p.119, quoted in Shane Aurel Levesque 'Functions, forms, and pedagogical approaches of the improvised nineteenth-century piano prelude', Diss. Doctor of Musical Art, Cornell University, 2009, p.76.

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