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## J.S. Bach's Application of the Baroque Violin Concerto in His Violin Concerti in A minor, BWV 1041 and E Major, BWV 1042

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## J.S. Bach's Application of the Baroque Violin Concerto in His Violin Concerti in A minor, BWV 1041 and E Major, BWV 1042

### Cover Page Footnote

Many thanks to my advisor, Dr. Ting-Lan Chen, for her patient guidance throughout this endeavor. I am also grateful for the valuable input provided by the other members of my Capstone Committee, Dr. Noah Rogoff and Dr. Andrew White. Finally, I am deeply indebted to my beloved grandmother for investing in my musical education and encouraging me as a teacher.

# **J.S. BACH'S APPLICATION OF THE BAROQUE VIOLIN CONCERTO IN HIS VIOLIN CONCERTI IN A MINOR, BWV 1041 AND E MAJOR, BWV 1042**

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## **ABSTRACT:**

Concerti from the Baroque to contemporary times stand as one of the pillars of the violin repertoire. The form initially developed in the 1600s as composers experimented with groups of performers. It became increasingly standardized in the early 1700s, with the violin concerto advancing as a favored application. Several Baroque composers contributed characteristics that were absorbed into the violin concerti of the period, including Arcangelo Corelli, Giuseppe Torelli and Antonio Vivaldi.

Johann Sebastian Bach analyzed the traits of violin concerti from earlier and contemporaneous composers, incorporating certain features while modifying others in his own works. This may be observed in his Violin Concerto in A minor, BWV 1041 and Violin Concerto in E Major, BWV 1042, the only two of his violin concerti currently known in their original configuration.<sup>1</sup> In examining his interpretation of the genre, one notes Bach's broadened use of the ritornello form, the integration of Italian and French styles, the density of texture, as well as his unique interpretation of cadence, cadenza, and ornamentation.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Concerti are an integral part of the violin repertoire, with standard pieces sourced from the Baroque period to contemporary times. The term "concerto" was more broadly applied to works during the 1600s but reached a level of standardization during the early 1700s.<sup>2</sup> The associated concept of contrasting groups of performers was among the compositional techniques explored within a number of instrumental and vocal genres during the Baroque era. Among them, the violin concerto was a category of composition that rose to prominence.

This lecture will define primary historical elements that inspired the development of the Baroque violin concerto. First, it will consider how the designation of "concerto" was

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<sup>1</sup> Marion M. Scott, "The Violin Music of Handel and Bach," *Music & Letters* 16, no. 3 (1935): 197.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur Hutchings, Michael Talbot, Cliff Eisen, Leon Botstein, and Paul Griffiths, *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001), s.v. "Concerto." <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.40737>.

applied during the period and eventually utilized in the Baroque violin literature. Next, it will discuss various Baroque composers who contributed to the format and language of the violin concerto, including Giuseppe Torelli and Antonio Vivaldi. Johann Sebastian Bach devoted significant time to studying features of violin concerti from his predecessors and contemporaries, choosing to apply some while modifying others in his own works. Finally, this research will present J.S. Bach's interpretation of the genre by examining his application and modification of the Baroque violin concerto in his Violin Concerto in A minor, BWV 1041 and Violin Concerto in E Major, BWV 1042.

The music of the Renaissance was dominated by *stile antico*, which differed from the features of *stile moderno* from the Baroque. *Stile antico* was defined by a preference for polyphony and the unbending avoidance of unprepared dissonances.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, composers favored the use of a "full choir" and rhythms that were disassociated with dance.<sup>4</sup> Around the turn of the seventeenth century, artists began looking back to ancient Greek tragedies for aesthetic inspiration, perceiving these works to inspire emotional responses that led to "catharsis."<sup>5</sup> This preoccupation encouraged the demand for music which stirred emotions. The response was a new emphasis on techniques that followed the framework of *stile moderno*. Accompanied Baroque solo vocal works contrasted with the complex musical texture of Renaissance compositions, such as in the collection *Le nuove musiche* by Giulio Caccini, and were widely promoted during the early 1600s.<sup>6</sup> The practice of *stile antico* was limited to liturgical purposes while greater focus was directed toward the role of the soloist.<sup>7</sup>

The arrival of *stile moderno* also propelled the growth of instrumental music. Composers sought novel ways to awaken an emotional response from audiences, leading to an exploration of various groupings of instruments and voices.<sup>8</sup> The use of solo instruments was one articulation of this experimentation. Furthermore, composers emphasized the contrast between diverse instrumental groupings through the application of *stile concertato*.

*Stile concertato* was employed in disparate contexts during the early 1600s. Heller describes this practice as where "two or more groupings of instruments or voices interact and compete with another."<sup>9</sup> This was utilized in both instrumental and vocal repertoire. Dario Castello provides an early Baroque instrumental example with his *Sonata concertate in stil moderno*. Published in 1629, this work was intended to be performed by a treble instrument of violin or cornetto, along with continuo.<sup>10</sup> The *concertato* style was also utilized in sacred works which contrasted singers and instrumentalists. These pieces, known as sacred concerti, generally featured excerpts of biblical passages sung in prose. Voices generally collaborated

<sup>3</sup> Wendy Heller, *Music in the Baroque (Western Music in Context: A Norton History)* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014b), 29.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen R. Miller, *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001), s.v. "Stile antico." <https://doi-org.unk.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.26771>

<sup>5</sup> Heller 2014b, *Music in the Baroque*, 22.

<sup>6</sup> Heller 2014b, 35.

<sup>7</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica, s.v. "Baroque Music," last modified December 1, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/art/Baroque-music>; Heller 2014b, *Music in the Baroque*, 14.

<sup>8</sup> Heller 2014b, 14.

<sup>9</sup> Heller 2014b, 14.

<sup>10</sup> Wendy Heller, *Anthology for Music in the Baroque* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014a), 42.

with a continuo, though some composers utilized more unique instrumentation. Heinrich Schütz composed a collection of sacred concerti in 1629 titled *Symphonie Sacrae*. One particular piece within the collection, “Fili mi, Absalon,” features four trombones, continuo, and a bass vocalist who portrays the role of King David.<sup>11</sup>

Because there was no standard concerto form during the later 1600s through the early 1700s, musicologists debate on the use of the term during this time period. While music scholar Richard Maunder confirmed that composers in this timeframe utilized the title of concerto based on their own understanding of the genre, Maunder nonetheless regarded a work as a concerto based on the title provided by the composer.<sup>12</sup> Referencing this research, musicologist Steven Zohn questions the use of the term, noting that sonatas were often labeled as concerti to give the appearance of sophistication.<sup>13</sup> In addition, the writings of eighteenth-century composer and music theorist Johann Adolphe Scheibe recorded the existence of mid-Baroque sonatas which bore resemblance to concerti. Some notable differences between these sonatas and the standard Baroque concerti are that they do not always contain the characteristic ritornello form or feature an instrument functioning as a soloist.<sup>14</sup>

As concerti became more standardized in their structure, musicologist Michael Talbot notes two frameworks for concerti that emerged: the Roman and the Northern Italian.<sup>15</sup> One of the most significant differences between these models is the manner in which the solo role was orchestrated. The Roman model was known as the *concerto grosso*, and contained a small group of soloists filling the *concertino* role, while additional musicians, including string players and continuo, performed in the *ripieno*. On the other hand, Northern Italian concerti featured a soloist which was contrasted against the *ripieno*. In the early 1700s, solo concerti in the Northern Italian model followed a three-movement configuration, with the fast-slow-fast tempo structure. Although Antonio Vivaldi was not the first to apply it, the incorporation of ritornelli in the fast movements became the prevailing practice after the publication of his pivotal work, *L'estro armonico*, in 1711. However, the slow movement was usually through-composed and accompanied by continuo only. After 1710, the writing of concerti for a single soloist accompanied by string orchestra surpassed composing for *concerto grossi* in popularity. The violin was initially the most utilized solo voice and retained its prominence even as composers explored other instruments.<sup>16</sup>

A number of composers contributed hallmarks of the Baroque violin concerto, including Guiseppe Torelli, Arcangelo Corelli, and Antonio Vivaldi. The Bolognese Giuseppe Torelli was described by composer and theorist Johann Joachim Quantz as the “inventor of the concerto.”<sup>17</sup> Torelli titled his works in the *concertato* style in various ways, including concerto, sinfonia, and sonata. Wendy Heller remarked that the melodic designs of

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<sup>11</sup> Heller 2014a, *Anthology for Music*, 70.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Maunder, *The Scoring of Baroque Concertos* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004): 2-4.

<sup>13</sup> Steven Zohn, “The Baroque Concerto in Theory and Practice,” *The Journal of Musicology* (*St. Joseph, Michigan*) 26, no. 4 (2009): 571-572.

<sup>14</sup> Zohn, “Baroque Concerto in Theory and Practice,” 572.

<sup>15</sup> Hutchings, et. al., 2001.

<sup>16</sup> Hutchings, et. al., 2001.

<sup>17</sup> Hutchings, et. al., 2001.

“fanfares, scales, and arpeggios” from his trumpet concerti were integrated into the string repertoire of his colleagues, and are observable in the ritornelli of violin concerti by composers such as Corelli and Vivaldi.<sup>18</sup> Musicologist Arthur Hutchings corroborates this view, particularly noting that Vivaldi’s string concerti provide numerous examples of “repeated notes of trumpet calls or fanfare intervals.”<sup>19</sup> Corelli also heavily influenced the language of the Baroque violin concerto. He was known to employ large orchestras of one hundred or more musicians to contrast the *concertino* and *ripieno*, following the Roman model.<sup>20</sup> Some of his compositional practices were codified into the language of violin concerti, such as his chordal progressions which favor “closely related keys.”<sup>21</sup> He also utilized sequences in anticipation of a modulation and created tension with chains of suspensions.

One cannot discuss violin concerti of the Baroque era without mentioning the impact of Vivaldi. He is most often credited with borrowing the ritornello form from aria literature, utilizing it at the start and finish of a movement, with smaller segments in between.<sup>22</sup> However, this view contrasts with that of music scholars Simon McVeigh and Jehoash Hirshberg, who also credit Giuseppe Alberti with the creation of ritornello form in concerti.<sup>23</sup> The incorporation of ritornelli by Vivaldi brought coherence to a movement, while displaying virtuosity and “dramatic tension.”<sup>24</sup> Following his predecessors and contemporaries in writing concerti for solo violin, J. S. Bach developed his own innovative interpretation of the genre, as illustrated in his Violin Concerto in A minor, BWV 1041 and Violin Concerto in E Major, BWV 1042. My research will examine these two compositions in the following aspects: 1) influence of Vivaldi; 2) modification of the ritornello form; 3) incorporation of foreign styles; 4) texture; 5) use of cadence; 6) placement of cadenza; and 7) ornamentation.

According to musicologist Arthur Hutchings, Bach’s Violin Concerti in A minor and E Major are believed to be composed between 1717-1723 when Bach was employed as a court musician in Cöthen.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, musicologist Peter Williams states it is also plausible that Bach wrote these two compositions during his tenure as the music director in Leipzig from 1723 through the late 1740s. The earliest existing copies of these two works do not provide any further information as to their exact date of composition or whether they were modified.<sup>26</sup> Both Violin Concerti utilize the three-movement plan, with the fast-slow-fast tempo structure. The fast movements feature ritornello form, except for the third movement of the Violin Concerto in E Major which combines ritornello and rondo form. In the slow movements, while the soloist sections are through-composed, ritornello components are integrated in the accompaniment (charts 1a and 1b).

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<sup>18</sup> Heller 2014b, *Music in the Baroque*, 176.

<sup>19</sup> Arthur Hutchings, *The Baroque Concerto* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1973), 90.

<sup>20</sup> Heller 2014b, *Music in the Baroque*, 197.

<sup>21</sup> Heller 2014b, 198.

<sup>22</sup> Heller 2014b, 160.

<sup>23</sup> Zohn, “Baroque Concerto in Theory and Practice,” 568.

<sup>24</sup> Heller 2014b, *Music in the Baroque*, 160.

<sup>25</sup> Hutchings, *Baroque Concerto*, 230.

<sup>26</sup> Peter Williams, *Bach: A Musical Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 192.

**Chart 1a: Ritornello Form in Violin Concerto in A minor, BWV 1041**

I. Allegro	II. Andante	III. Allegro Assai
Utilization of ritornello during <i>ripieno</i> passages	Begins with ritornello introduction and integrates ritornello interludes between each soloist entrance	Utilization of ritornello during <i>ripieno</i> passages

**Chart 1b: Ritornello Form in Violin Concerto in E Major, BWV 1042**

I. Allegro	II. Adagio	III. Allegro assai
Utilization of ritornello during <i>ripieno</i> passages	Complete presentation of ritornello within accompaniment during introduction and postlude	Utilization of ritornello during <i>ripieno</i> rondo passages

### **Influence of Vivaldi and Modification of the Ritornello Form**

During his employment at the Weimar court, Bach arranged a number of pieces by Vivaldi, including *L'estro armonico*.<sup>27</sup> The study involved in this endeavor resulted in Bach's absorption of elements from Vivaldi's use of ritornello form, as well as concepts regarding counterpoint.<sup>28</sup> These influences may be observed in the first and third movements of Bach's Violin Concerti. Furthermore, the slow movements possess Vivaldian characteristics, as they are carried by a through-composed lyrical melody performed by the soloist and feature sparse orchestral accompaniment.<sup>29</sup> As with the Northern Italian practice seen in Vivaldi's violin concerti, both of Bach's Violin Concerti are composed for a single soloist who joins the *ripieno* on *tutti* sections during the first and third movements, with the orchestral scoring including the continuo.<sup>30</sup>

While Bach observed popular norms in some areas within the Baroque violin concerto structure, specifically in relation to the contributions of Vivaldi, there are also areas in which

<sup>27</sup> Williams, *Bach: A Musical Biography*, 133.

<sup>28</sup> Heller 2014b, *Music in the Baroque*, 255.

<sup>29</sup> Hutchings, et. al., 2001.

<sup>30</sup> Marion M. Scott, "The Violin Music of Handel and Bach," *Music & Letters* 16, no. 3 (1935): 198.

he developed these established ideas “beyond recognition” in his Violin Concerti.<sup>31</sup> For instance, the Italian ritornello form that was practiced by Vivaldi and others was generally “asymmetrical” with the intentional use of fragments from the initial theme throughout a concerto. While Bach occasionally utilized similar short fragments of the ritornello in his instrumental concerti, Bach frequently included comprehensive statements of the ritornello, as exemplified in his Violin Concerti.<sup>32</sup> Both practices are discerned in the first movement of the Violin Concerto in E Major. In Example 1, we observe the brief restatements of the Italian ritornello, specifically from the portion described by Wilhelm Fischer as the “*Vordersatz*,” or “opening statement.”<sup>33</sup> Example 1 shows that a fragment of the *Vordersatz* occurs in the aeolian mode at measures 70-71, which is later repeated in a new key at measures 76-77. This is contrasted by his complete restatement of the ritornello at measure 123, which includes the first 52 measures of the movement. On the other hand, the third movement of the Violin Concerto in A minor features extended representations of the ritornello in every appearance. The most obvious example is in the final presentation of the ritornello at measure 120 where it is completely restated. It is possible that Bach discerned the lengthy iteration of the ritornelli in the music of another Italian, Tomaso Albinoni, who was known to repeat an entire “opening statement” outlined by “strong cadences.”<sup>34</sup>

**Example #1: “*Vordersatz*” statements**

*Bach Violin Concerto in E Major, Mvt. I: mm. 70-71, 76-77*

The image displays two staves of musical notation in treble clef, E major key signature. The first staff, labeled with measure 69, shows a sequence of eighth notes with a triplet of three eighth notes marked 'cresc.' and a 'Tutti' marking. The second staff, labeled with measure 75, shows a sequence of eighth notes with a triplet of three eighth notes marked 'p' and a 'f' marking. Both staves end with a double bar line and repeat sign.

Furthermore, Steven Zohn states that Bach expanded on the ritornello form to suit his creative impulses. One example of this is the added use of ritornello within the second movement of the Violin Concerto in E Major, where it is presented both as an introduction and a postlude to a through-composed soloist melody. Additionally, Bach trades the ritornello for the French-influenced *menuet en rondeau* in the final movement of the Violin Concerto in E Major, which exhibits a similar repetition of a melodic theme within the rondo sections.<sup>35</sup> The style indicates the lingering influence of the German appreciation for “French Court

<sup>31</sup> Williams, *Bach: A Musical Biography*, 53.

<sup>32</sup> Williams, 140.

<sup>33</sup> Laurence Dreyfus, “J. S. Bach’s Concerto Ritornellos and the Question of Invention,” *The Musical Quarterly* 71, no. 3 (1985): 330.

<sup>34</sup> Williams, *Bach: A Musical Biography*, 137.

<sup>35</sup> Williams, 344.



dancing” present toward the end of the 1600s.<sup>36</sup> French dance instructors continued to be employed at the courts where Bach had connections, and the cultural preference for this mode of entertainment is reflected in the style choice for this movement.

### **Incorporation of Foreign Styles**

Bach was significantly impacted by foreign styles in his compositions, including in his Violin Concerti. His adeptness in utilizing foreign styles is remarkable, considering he remained relatively close to the town of his birth throughout his life.<sup>37</sup> An earlier avenue of such foreign exposure was through attending the concerts of a Lüneburg-based French band during his time as a pupil at St. Michael’s. Furthermore, he analyzed and arranged foreign repertoire, likely supplied by patrons, while employed in the courts of Weimar and Cöthen. Bach utilized a portion of his time as a court musician to rework string concerti by Vivaldi into organ concerti.<sup>38</sup> He also integrated portions of themes by Albinoni and Corelli into organ fugues.<sup>39</sup> When examining Bach’s overall portfolio, there is evidence of greater influence from the Italian style over the French.<sup>40</sup> Both styles are recognized within his Violin Concerti, but the Italian dominates.

The incorporation of the Italian style within Bach’s Violin Concerti is illustrated in Bach’s integration of motivic designs from both Corelli and Torelli. The repeated sequences and suspensions characteristic of Corelli are a common element of his Violin Concerti, producing the anticipation of resolution. Sequences are a particularly frequent occurrence, exemplified in measures 73-81 of the third movement of the Violin Concerto in A minor (Example 2). Bach incorporated suspensions in this same movement within measures 111-116 in anticipation of the return of the ritornello (Example 3). Regarding the impact of Torelli, Heller and Hutchings noted that Torelli’s trademark melodic designs in his trumpet concerti, e.g. fanfare-like triadic figures, had a noticeable influence on violin concerti by Corelli and Vivaldi, and indications of similar influence continue to be detected in the melodic construction of the ritornelli in the first movements of Bach’s Violin Concerti (Example 4).

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<sup>36</sup> Robin Stowell, *The Early Violin and Viola: A Practical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 118.

<sup>37</sup> Heller 2014b, *Music in the Baroque*, 255.

<sup>38</sup> Williams, *Bach: A Musical Biography*, 140.

<sup>39</sup> Williams, 94.

<sup>40</sup> Williams, 35.

**Example #2: Sequence**

*Bach Violin Concerto in A minor, Mvt. III: mm. 73-81*

Musical score for Example #2, showing measures 70-81. The score is written for a violin in treble clef. It features a sequence of eighth-note patterns with various fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4) and dynamics. Measure 70 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. Measure 74 includes a crescendo (*cresc.*) marking. The sequence ends at measure 81.

**Example #3: Corellian suspensions**

*Bach Violin Concerto in A minor, Mvt. III: mm. 111-116*

Musical score for Example #3, showing measures 109-116. The score is written for a violin in treble clef. It features Corellian suspensions, which are eighth-note patterns with specific fingerings (e.g., 0 2 1, 0 3 2, 0 3 1, 0 2 1, 0 3 4) and dynamics. Measure 109 starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic. Measure 115 includes a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. The sequence ends at measure 116.

**Example #4:** Torellian trademark trumpet melodic designs in Baroque violin concerti

Bach: Violin Concerto in E Major, BWV 1042: Mvt. I: mm. 1-2



Corelli: Concerto Grosso in D Major, Op. 6 No. 4, Mvt. V: mm. 95-97

Vivaldi: "La stravaganza," Op.4 No. 11, RV 204, Mvt. I: mm. 1-4

## Texture

A distinctive trait in Bach's Violin Concerti is the textural density among the soloist and the *ripieno*.<sup>41</sup> Deviating from the thinness of harmonic texture often found in Vivaldi's concerti, Bach embraced the German style of "contrapuntal rigour," and heartily employed

<sup>41</sup> Williams, 192-193.

the contrapuntal texture in his concerti.<sup>42</sup> For example, measures 95-101 in the first movement of his Violin Concerto in E Major prominently feature a fugal section that resembles passages from the Fuga movement in his Sonata for Solo Violin in G minor, BWV 1001 (Example 5). Instrumental techniques are also often utilized to enhance the overall textural effect. In the third movement of the Violin Concerto in A minor, the *bariolage* bowing technique can be seen in the alternation of the boisterous open E-string with suspension and cadential sequences by the soloist that produces a busy multi-voiced melody on its own; Bach then layered it with additional rhythmic and melodic motion from the orchestral accompaniment. The combination of *bariolage* with “hectic and ingenious imitation” between different orchestral sections yields a dense and sonorous textural effect (Example 6).<sup>43</sup>

**Example #5:**

*Fugal comparison between Bach Violin Concerto in E Major, Mvt. I: mm. 95-101 and Sonata for Solo Violin in G minor, BWV 1001: Fuga*

**Fuga.**  
**Allegro.**

<sup>42</sup> Hutchings, et. al., 2001.

<sup>43</sup> Williams, *Bach: A Musical Biography*, 192.

*Example #6: Textural effect of bariolage*

*Bach Violin Concerto in A minor, Mvt. III: mm. 105-116*

**Use of “Interrupted Cadence”**

Bach utilized the “interrupted cadence” often found in Italian concerti, though he expanded its use, incorporating it more widely than his Italian counterparts. The interrupted cadence, also known as a deceptive cadence, creates the anticipation that the dominant chord will progress to tonic, while resolving an alternate chord.<sup>44</sup> Williams describes this feature found in measures 106-107 of Bach’s Violin Concerto in E Major as a “startling change of direction” at a place where it appears the movement will end. Instead, it proceeds to completely new material, resulting in a lengthier movement than found in Venetian-composed concerti (Example 7).<sup>45</sup>

*Example #7: Interrupted cadence*

*Bach Violin Concerto in E Major, Mvt. I: mm. 106-107*

<sup>44</sup> Grove Music Online, s.v. “Interrupted Cadence,” accessed February 18, 2023. <https://doi-org.unk.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.13864>

<sup>45</sup> Williams, *Bach: A Musical Biography*, 141.

## Placement of Cadenza

Bach wove multiple cadenzas into his Violin Concerti. Most often he followed the standard Baroque practice, which was generally characterized by a virtuosic segment ended by the fermata-marked final chord of a half cadence. This was a deviation from the “embellished ending” formula found in Renaissance vocal music.<sup>46</sup> Composer Girolamo Frescobaldi provided insight into how the cadenza was utilized during the early Baroque era, remarking that they occur near cadences, rather than during the final moments of pieces. He also commented that the performance of a cadenza ought to be at an unhurried tempo regardless of notation, especially as one reaches the end of the passage, so as to provide the impression of improvisation. Most of Bach’s cadenzas in the two Violin Concerti conform to Frescobaldi’s specifications, with the exception of one passage within the first movement of the Violin Concerto in E Major. This *Adagio*-marked cadenza at measure 121 fully cadences to tonic within the new key, creating the impression of a false ending before the final ritornello.

## Ornamentation

Music scholar William Pook observed that Bach made a practice of notating the embellishments he intended to be realized “in full.”<sup>47</sup> This was not a standard practice among his colleagues when composing instrumental music, including music for violin. For instance, Heller noted that Corelli wrote his Violin Sonatas, Opus 5, simplistically enough to be played by non-professionals, with the anticipation that the skilled violinist would provide their own complex ornamentation.<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, the engraving of intended ornamentation may be observed earlier in the period by Giulio Caccini in *Le nuove musiche*. It was also extensively employed in the harpsichord works of Bach’s contemporary, François Couperin, though Couperin remarked that the intended execution of rhythm in French music of that time did not necessarily follow what was notated.<sup>49</sup> Nonetheless, the general consensus in Bach’s lifetime was that specificity regarding ornamentation was a distasteful trait, as musicians anticipated the insertion of their own creative interpretation within their performances.<sup>50</sup> This opinion did not sway Bach, even when facing criticism that his deviation from the common practice was “depriving his pieces of the beauty of harmony and leaving the melody indistinct.”<sup>51</sup> The third movement of his Violin Concerto in A minor provides ample testimony to this, as the outline of the melody is often inundated with swift runs during the solo sections, as in measures 31 and 32 (Example 8). His Violin Concerto in E Major also mirrors this practice, with the final solo section of the third movement containing repeated bursts of passing tones.

<sup>46</sup> Eva Badura-Skoda, Andrew V. Jones, and William Drabkin, *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001), s.v. “Cadenza.” <https://doi-org.unk.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.43023>

<sup>47</sup> Wilfred Pook, “Bach’s E Major Concerto Reconsidered,” *Music & Letters* 38, no. 1 (1957): 64.

<sup>48</sup> Heller 2014b, *Music in the Baroque*, 197.

<sup>49</sup> Heller 2014b, 119.

<sup>50</sup> Pook, “Bach’s E Major Concerto,” 64b.

<sup>51</sup> Williams, *Bach: A Musical Biography*, 533.

**Example #8: Fully-realized ornamentation**

*Bach Violin Concerto in A minor Mvt. III: mm. 31-32*



The Baroque violin concerto proceeded from the rise of instrumental music and the experiment of the *concertato* style. Composers such as Torelli, Corelli, and Vivaldi helped define and establish its structure and characteristics. Although Bach observed many well-established norms of the genre in his Violin Concerti in A minor and E Major, he synthesized these elements with his incessant desire for “musical variety” by testing additional possible features.<sup>52</sup> In these two compositions, he expanded the use of the ritornello form, integrated traits from Italian and French instrumental music, and combined instrumental techniques and compositional elements to reach a textural density that is uniquely Bach’s own. Bach’s Violin Concerti illustrate his contribution to the development of the genre, and they continue to be an essential part of the concerto literature from the Baroque era.

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<sup>52</sup> Williams, 622.



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