

# Bach's A-minor Concerto

A cut and paste approach to  
practicing

# GOAL OF PRACTICING

- Improving efficiently
- Gaining musical insight
- A *BIG* stumbling block
  - Relationships between sections are separated by large swaths of notes
    - Encourages linear practicing (i.e. beginning to end)
    - Relationships overlooked
- Bach's A-minor has two big issues
  - Technical
  - Memory
- Harnessing the power of related sections helps in both of those areas.
  - HOW? With a pair of scissors.

2  
cheat  
CONCERTO No. 1 **MASTER**  
in A minor, S. 1041  
for Violin and Piano\*  
JOHN SEBASTIAN BACH  
(1685-1750)  
Edited by IVAN GALAMIAN  
Karaoke, indita  
Allegro moderato  
CD starts  
Violin V<sub>2</sub>

424  
Ritornello  
Concert  
mf  
f  
mf  
cresc.  
tr  
Solo  
vibrate through  
mf (esp. C-leg)  
W  
S  
B  
C  
mp  
cresc.  
dimin.  
f  
mf  
cresc.  
tr  
D  
mf

The image shows a handwritten musical score for Violin V2, likely a performance edition. The score is written on ten staves, with measures numbered 2, 7, 16, 24, 31, 37, 43, 49, 57, and 72. The key signature is A minor (three flats). The tempo is marked 'Allegro moderato'. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, slurs, and ornaments. Handwritten annotations in blue and black ink are present throughout, including 'cheat', 'Karaoke, indita', 'CD starts', 'Solo', 'vibrate through', 'mf (esp. C-leg)', 'W', 'S', 'B', 'C', 'mp', 'cresc.', 'dimin.', 'f', 'mf', and 'cresc.'. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4. Dynamics like 'mf' and 'f' are written. There are also some circled numbers and other markings like 'tr' for trills. The word 'CONCERTO No. 1' is written in large letters at the top, with 'MASTER' in a stylized font. The composer's name 'JOHN SEBASTIAN BACH' and the work's title 'in A minor, S. 1041 for Violin and Piano\*' are also present. The editor's name 'Edited by IVAN GALAMIAN' is at the top left. The tempo 'Allegro moderato' is written below the editor's name. The instrument 'Violin V2' is written at the top right. The score is for a violin, as indicated by the 'V2' and the 'Violin' label.

\*Originally for Violin and Orchestra.

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Violin Concerto No. 1 **MASTER**  
in A minor, S. 1041  
for Violin and Piano\*  
JOHN SEBASTIAN BACH  
(1685-1750)  
Edited by IVAN GALAMIAN  
Karakteres, indifferents  
Allegro moderato

91u-  
91a  
46-  
8a

Handwritten: fence, 2

46-  
8a

85b-  
91a

Handwritten: Me 3

2nd fing. to 3rd (up a M2)

105b-  
111a

Handwritten: Me 2, 3

91b-  
93a

93b-  
95a

Handwritten: 129b-131a

95b-  
99a

Handwritten: 132, 141

131b-  
135a

Handwritten: r. 15

126b-  
129a

Handwritten: 14

# What is a “practice part?”

- A practice part is a piece of music that is rearranged to
  - 1) highlight relationships
  - 2) focus on technical issues
  - 3) short-circuit the tendency to “play through” the music
    - The mind deals better with small, related challenges than large-scale, complicated ones.
- By placing passages next to each other that are similar in content, we solve challenges more quickly and can do a more thorough critical comparison.

# WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- a glue stick
- scissors
- a few sheets of regular printer paper
- access to some kind of copy machine
- maybe a clipboard



# PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- At what point should u make a practice part?
  - At a minimum, after you've made fingerings/bowings
  - To refresh your interpretation
- make 2 copies of the original
- arrange the fragments according to the actual progression of the piece, starting from the beginning.
- When you notice repetitions or similar passages, place them in a pile.
  - arrange each similar instance of a passage in descending order: the most similar, to the least (EXAMPLE 1).

Example 1  
Similar passages in  
descending order

Handwritten musical score with ten staves of music, each with a label on the left and various annotations. The staves are numbered 46-8a, 88b-91a, 105b-111a, 91b-93a, 93b-95a, 95b-99a, 131b-135a, and 126b-129a. The music features descending passages with various fingerings and dynamics.

- Staff 1: 46-8a. Handwritten:  $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{4}{2}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{2}{2}$ .
- Staff 2: 88b-91a. Handwritten:  $M_2$ ,  $3$ ,  $2$ ,  $1$ . Note:  $2^{nd}$  Fing. to  $3^{rd}$  (up a  $M_2$ ).
- Staff 3: 105b-111a. Handwritten:  $M_2$ ,  $2$ ,  $3$ ,  $2$ ,  $1$ .
- Staff 4: 91b-93a. Handwritten:  $P$ ,  $2$ ,  $1$ ,  $(<)$ .
- Staff 5: 93b-95a. Handwritten:  $P$ ,  $2$ ,  $1$ ,  $b. 131$ .
- Staff 6: 95b-99a. Handwritten:  $P$ ,  $2$ ,  $1$ ,  $132$ ,  $14$ .
- Staff 7: 131b-135a. Handwritten:  $P$ ,  $2$ ,  $1$ ,  $r. 15$ .
- Staff 8: 126b-129a. Handwritten:  $M_2$ ,  $2$ ,  $1$ ,  $02$ ,  $2$ ,  $3$ .



# Prac. Consid. Cont'd (1)

- Note on repetitions and the joy of practicing less!
- keep your master handy for things like putting in bar #s, bowings and fingerings
- mark bar lines on the back of each excerpt as you're cutting out so as to save time when you're gluing them onto the paper.
- mark bowings in at beginning of excerpt where not obvious so you emphasize practicing correct bowings.
- don't EVER cut your master, or original, part!! Make copies
- keep fragments until you're sure u won't need them anymore

# Prac. Consid. Cont'd (2)

- If you have an excerpt that continues on a new line, at the beginning of that new line cut off the clef and key signature of new line and paste it on to the end of the previous line. LEAVE the right side of the page intact as a foundation for the new line to be pasted to (EXAMPLE 2).
- keep consistent in terms of which copy you're using for what.
- write in accidentals where necessary
- don't paste onto the new sheet until you have a good sense of how to arrange things. That is unless a section takes up a whole page.

## Example 2 Original

2

*cheat* *78*

# CONCERTO No. 1

*MASTER*

in A minor, S. 1041  
for Violin and Piano\*

JOHN SEBASTIAN BACH  
(1685-1750)

Edited by IVAN GALAMIAN  
*Karantares inditas*  
Allegro moderato

CD starts

VOLIN

*1-24 Ritornello Concerto*

*51* *starts*

*f* *mf* *cresc.*

## Example 2 cut out

*mf* *cresc.*

## Example 2 reconfigured

*46-8a*

*4/24*

# Prac. Consid. Cont'd (3)

- where possible, keep similar gestures/phrases on one page.
- if u have extra space at the end of a page, stick an "extra" in there; something that doesn't repeat.
- develop your own identification system in terms of #ing your measures.
- when you're finished with a practice part, you may want to copy it so you can make notes on the copy and erase easier.

# Musical Considerations

- Where to cut? Depends on the piece but in Bach, often the first note of a bar is the last note of a phrase/gesture
- EXAMPLE
  - Barlines tend to be seen as good starting points. But in Bach, they are actually rarely good places to start.
- Try to retain phrasal relationships in space. Example 3 consists of two gestures that are sequenced, kinda. You'll want to stack the instances in 44,46&48 and also 45,47,49 but place them close to each other, like across from each other so the relationship is apparent but the tendency to play through things is negated.
- Connections/relationships ALWAYS overrule linear development. However, retain overall chronologic order where it makes sense to do so



mm. 7-10a



Where are the gestures? Where should a student start from and Why?

Option A



Option B



# Example 3



m. 45



m. 47



m. 138



m. 136



# Musical Consid. Cont'd (1)

- As previously mentioned, practice parts are primarily intended to a) make musical relationships apparent and b) make practicing more efficient. However, a related approach focuses more on technical issues: the flash-card approach

# Musical Consid. Cont'd (2)

- Celebrate the new things that emerge from this process: asymmetries? Other relationships heretofore unnoticed?
  - Relationships in pieces are often separated by minutes, sometimes in the case of operas, hours. So having this method really helps see those relationships. EXAMPLE “A”
  - Interpretive insights (upbeat gesture throughout) as well as more practical things such as bowing/fingering inconsistencies. EXAMPLE “B”

Upbeat character woven throughout



Fingering "inconsistencies"





# Philosophy

- At first, “efficiency” does NOT equal speed.
  - 5-10 min. of music=3-5 hrs of prep time
- “I don't have the time for that!”
  - You get better at it, but also the benefit to the student makes the time investment well worth it.
  - a practice part enables you develop a musical concept and interpretation with independence and individuality.
  - It's about creating an interpretation from an original perspective.

# Philosophy (1)

- It takes TIME. You can't force creativity; you *can* force productivity;
- Artists create something of value. It need not be new or cutting edge innovative, just an honest and authentic statement of one's view of a piece of music. And in order to do that you need to spend TIME with a piece.
- Music School: 3-4 mo.s on a concerto mvt.
  - you had the time and were spending it on making your interpretation the best it could possibly be.

# PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

How many times does this iconic opening phrase occur?

Would you consider it the “Main” Theme? Why or why not?

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*cheat*  $\text{♩} = 78$  **CONCERTO No. 1** **MASTER**  
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for Violin and Piano\*  
JOHN SEBASTIAN BACH  
(1685-1750)

Edited by IVAN GALAMIAN / *CD*  
\* *Karaoke* *india* *starts*  
*Allegro moderato* *51*

*slowly*  
*in 100%*

*pu*  
*to*  
*ita*

*retake*

① 2 2

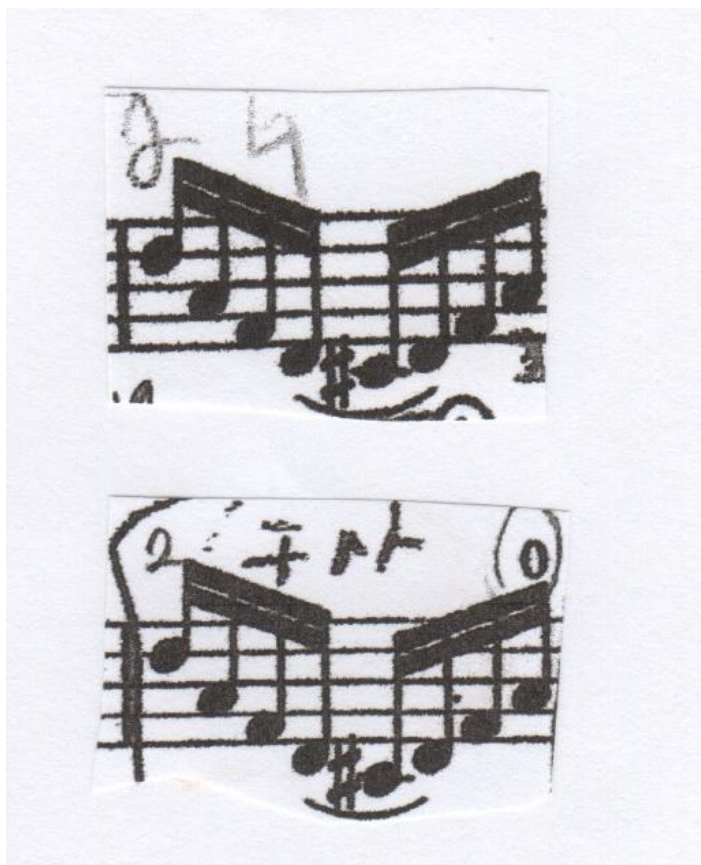


One of the most dangerous memory sections in the piece. Only a half-step distinguishes the two endings.



I'll always have the student end on the downbeat so that it is really fixed in their mind as either A-natural in first position or A-flat in third.

Another memory trap



Which is which?



m. 47



Which lead into...

this



respectively

...and this



m. 138

Comparing these right next to each other makes it apparent how important it is to play an open string on the last note of m. 138 and a third finger on the last note on m. 47.

A practice part allows us to really pick apart a passage, comparing and contrasting. This is a helpful approach if a student is really struggling with a passage.

$M_6 = M_2 = \text{whole step}; m_6 = m_2 = \text{half step}$

The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation. At the top right, there is a large handwritten number '3'. Below it, a handwritten note states:  $M_6 = M_2 = \text{whole step}; m_6 = m_2 = \text{half step}$ . The page contains several staves of music. On the left, a vertical sequence of staves is bracketed with 'm2' and 'M2' labels. The central and right sections contain individual staves with notes, some marked with '1', '2', '3', and 'x'. Annotations include 'M6', 'm6', and 'm2' with arrows indicating intervals. A large blue arrow points from the top-left section towards the right.

Sometimes I'll write out the relationships to make it really clear to the student.