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## Transcriptions of Musical Texts in Work with Beginning Pianists\*

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**Abstract.** The article examines artistic tutorial assignments for transforming the primary authorial musical text in the conditions of ensemble music-making in a piano class. Their goal is the mastery of certain skills of free music-making in the context of the dialogic structures and intonational lexis of baroque music. Examination is made of such universal techniques of artistic transformation as registering and doubling, which were widely used in the 17th and 18th centuries upon the re-exposition of the clavier musical text into various instrumental ensemble textures. The technique of application presumes turning to the timbral possibilities of the contemporary piano or the keyboard synthesizer. On the basis of the tutorial assignments, fragments of J. S. Bach's instructive compositions are presented, most notably, the introductory pieces to cycles (the preludes, fantasies and pieces written in dance genres). Role play is applied on the basis of analysis of the semantic structures of the musical text in the storylines of *I am playing the organ*, *There is a rehearsal of early orchestra going on*, and *Trio for two flutes and cello*.

**Keywords:** piano transcription, preluding, musical dialogues, authorial musical text, J. S. Bach, intonational lexis of baroque music

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## Музыкальное образование

Научная статья

### Транскрипции музыкального текста в работе с начинающими пианистами\*\*

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**Аннотация.** В статье рассматриваются творческие задания по преобразованию первичного авторского текста в условиях ансамблевого музицирования в классе фортепиано. Их цель — овладение некоторыми навыками свободного музицирования в контексте диалогических структур и интонационной лексики барокко. Рассматриваются такие универсальные приёмы творческого преобразования, как регистровка и дублировка, используемые в XVII–XVIII веках при переизложении клавирного текста в различные ансамблевые составы. Техника применения предполагает обращение к тембровым возможностям современного фортепиано или клавишного синтезатора. В основу заданий положены фрагменты инструктивных сочинений И. С. Баха, а именно вступительные пьесы к циклам (прелюдии, фантазии, танцевальные жанры). На базе анализа смысловых структур текста в сюжетах «Я играю на органе», «Идёт репетиция старинного оркестра», «Трио двух флейт и виолончели» используются ролевые игры.

**Ключевые слова:** фортепианная транскрипция, прелюдирование, музыкальные диалоги, авторский текст, И. С. Бах, интонационная лексика барокко

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The technique of variant transformations of original compositions was formed in the instrumental musical culture of the 17th and 18th centuries in the conditions of standard ensemble music-making. It was reflected in the musical texts of piano reductions. [1; 2; 3] The tradition of amateur music-making was that of unfolding the two-staff piano score into an ensemble score with various versions of re-exposition. [4] The foundation of the technology was

served by the sixteen chief techniques of transformation of the initial musical text, among which the most diffuse were: *registering, doubling, inversion, folding and unfolding, tempo change (deceleration, acceleration), change of dynamics (intensification, attenuation), change of articulation, the technique of ars combinatoria, expansion and contraction, transformation of the vertical into the horizontal and of the horizontal into*

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*the vertical, and ornamentation.* They pervade the graphics of numerous musical texts as the universal means of work with the primary source. The mastery of the acquired practice of variant transformation compositions has become the tradition of creation of transcriptions of ready-made musical texts in the conditions of ensemble play along with the frequent changes of the makeup of the performers or the genre-related basis of the dance. Below we present the development of intonational etudes on the basis of fragments of J. S. Bach's works for clavier with the aim of mastering two of the aforementioned techniques — *registering* and *doubling*. The application should result in the initial attempts of work with transcriptions of original compositions for beginner musicians. [5] The conditions of competent organization of the proposed forms of work with the musical text on intonational and figurative bases are: 1) deciphering the semantic structures and intonational lexis of the initial authorial musical texts; 2) work in the conditions of role playing (narrative-driven situations); 3) reliance on the structures of syntactic dialogue (between the horizontal and the vertical). [6; 7]

### J. S. Bach. *Prelude in D minor*

The musical score graphics indicate at the attributes of the presence of two grammatical-semantic structures in the *Prelude: ornamentation* (the upper line) and the *bass part* (the lower line). In the original musical text they are examined as grammatical structures up until the moment of the choice and concretization of the acoustical images hidden in them on the part of the performer.

The concretization of the semantic structures and the endowment by them of various meanings may occur depending

on the chosen storylines, since it is particularly the storyline which is capable of endowing each of the versions with various — already not abstract, but definite — meanings. Below we propose different versions of storyline situations for subsequent transcriptions: “I am playing the organ,” “There is a rehearsal of early orchestra going on,” “And how this would sound on a flute ...? with two cellos ...? in a dialogue between the strings and wind instruments ...?”

### “I am Playing the Organ”

In the vertical structure of the musical text (Example No. 1) in the storyline of “I am playing the organ” in the *bass part* the performer assigns a particular meaning to the “organ pedal.” In the situation of role play, the student performs it as an “organist,” by playing it with the left hand, which marks this structure on the piano in an articulatory manner. The *figurations* are colored by the “soloist-organist” by means of the technique of *registering*: he transfers segments of the ornamental design into the various registers of the organ.

The universal technique of *registering* presumes the action of transference of separate sounds, motives, phrases, melodies or other sections of the musical

Example No. 1

J. S. Bach.

*Notebook for Wilhelm Friedemann Bach.  
Prelude in D minor*

text into another register. The application of this technique was frequently connected with the peculiarities of the structure of the instruments and the necessity of playing the manuals. With the help of the technique of registering, the clavier pieces were unfolded into a semantic score, thereby creating a *quasi*-orchestral sound in household conditions. The registering was also one of the most elementary and, at the same time, the brightest means of improvisation and prelude on the organ.

In the examined example the drawing of the ornamentation (the figuration) in a horizontal unfolding may be segmented and transferred an octave above in the pianist's right hand in the proportions of  $1 + 1$ ;  $0.5 + 0.5$  or  $2 + 2$ . It is necessary to sound out all of these variants. The piece is performed in a majestic, moderate tempo intrinsic to the organ. Whenever appropriate, it is possible to identify and include the necessary timbre on the keyboard synthesizer.

### "There is a Rehearsal of an Early Orchestra Going On"

In the role playing, on the basis of the selfsame example with the participation of an imaginary orchestra and the *solo* part (of a virtuoso soloist), the student is offered to bring in the registral shifts of the motives corresponding to the subject ( $1+1$ ;  $0.5+0.5$ ) in a fast tempo. In this case, we can count as the "soloist" an acoustic image of a string instrument (e.g., a violin) or a wind instrument (e.g., a flute) performing figurations (upper line of Example No. 1).

The teacher or partner in the ensemble performance would play the lower line — the *basso continuo*<sup>1</sup> part, strengthening the effect of the orchestral sound *by means of doubling* ("two cellos").

*Doubling* is the technique of performing the same melody or harmonic element on several instruments at once (in classical compositions — in octaves, thirds or sixths). Doubling is frequently applied by condensing the sound and creating a dynamic effect for the aim of expanding the acoustic space. In works for clavier doubling becomes an indication of the elements of a shortened score: the acoustic images of *solo*, *tutti*, *basso continuo*, and instrumental duos. For example, in the following examples octave doubling represents the images of *tutti* (mm. 3–4 and 7–8 of Example No. 2, mm. 1–2 and 5–6 of Example No. 3). Doubling in thirds presents a continuous belt-type variety voice-leading, typical for a duo for two flutes (mm. 3–4 and mm. 7–8 of Example No. 3). It creates the timbral-acoustic images of shepherd pipes and pastorals.

### *The Musette* (Shepherd's Pipes and Bagpipes)

Example No. 2 *Notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach.*  
*Musette. BWV Anh. 126*

<sup>1</sup> *Basso continuo* (Italian for "continuous bass voice") — in a polyphonic musical composition from the baroque period — is the part intended for variant transformation. The performance of the *continuo* part was assigned to the pedal part of the organ played by the legs or to the low string instruments — the cellos, violas da gamba, etc.

Example No. 3 *Notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach.*  
C. P. E. Bach. *Polonaise*. BWV Anh. 125



The well-known piece from the pedagogical repertoire for beginners, the *Musette* from the *Notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach* (Example No. 2) contains easily recognizable semantic structures: acoustic images of the soloist (the shepherd's pipe) and the accompanying instrument (the bagpipe) (mm. 1–2 in a vertical dialogue), as well as the *tutti* image (mm. 3–4; mm. 7–8). However, this example, condensed into the notation of piano music in the score, is not so simple in itself. It ought to be examined as a specimen of a twice reflected musical text. First of all, the clavier text contains features of a baroque ensemble with the alternation of a smaller and a larger groups of the orchestra. The small group is the flute and the cello (mm. 1–2 and 5–6); the large group is the orchestral tutti (mm. 3–4 and 7–8). Second, the *baroque ensemble* demonstrated in the clavier text carries out its own artistic goal: it performs a pastoral scene in the storyline of playing of a village orchestra: “the shepherd's pipe and the bagpipe.” The performer's use of registering in the soloist's part (the transferal of the tune played by the flute-pipe in mm. 2 and 6 an octave higher) may be conducive to creating a dialogue the simplest way — as an echo of two flutes.

The result of such work with semantic structures is provided by the capacious

sound of the material in the guise of an unfolded score (instead of a flat text with a depiction of a bagpipe, a straightforward and crude means in this refined picture). Correspondingly, adjustments are made to the goals of performance articulation which provide the correct style of exposition. While unfolding the text from a flat two-line format into the format of a capacious musical depiction, we obtain acoustic stereo effects.

The grammar and syntax of the musical text with its division into repeating motives, as well as the figured type of exposition in many compositions create the possibility of applying the aforementioned storylines and registering as the chief techniques of transformation and “coloration” of the ornamentations.

### J. S. Bach. *Prelude in C major*

In the assignment for prelude placed by J. S. Bach in the *Notebook* for his son (Example No. 4), the model of exercise, similar to the previous cases, is built on grammatical-semantic structures of the “organ pedal” and ornamentation.

Example No. 4 J. S. Bach.  
*Notebook for Wilhelm Friedemann Bach.*  
*Prelude in C major*



In the storyline “I am playing the organ,” the registering is carried out on the level of ornamental motives, or by means of transposition up an octave of an entire figured segment equal to a measure. The doubling of the bass part is possible on the condition of the participation of a musical partner playing the role of the “second organist.” In the case of a performance of the prelude on the piano (or two pianos), the goals of subject-related articulation are set. The intonational study may also be solved by an organ sound created on a synthesizer.

Especially intriguing is the effect of combining the synthesizer (organ) and the piano (a *quasi*-flute sound) together with applying the technique of registering: the even-numbered measures (or motives) of the prelude are played on the piano an octave higher than what is written, drawing out the necessary timbre into the colorful palette of the flute register.

### J. S. Bach. *Prelude No. 6* in D minor

Example No. 5 J. S. Bach. *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Volume I. *Prelude No. 6* in D minor



In the musical text of the *Prelude* from the *Well-Tempered Clavier* (Example No. 5), the bass part is deciphered as a sign of a particular orchestral sound (the staccato of the low strings). By creating a transcription, we can presume the development of the storyline by enhancing the spatial effect by the octave doubling of the bass and the registral transfers

of the soloist's ornamental motives. The meaning of the *organ pedal* is obtained by the bass part, just as in all analogous cases, in the storyline “I am playing the organ.” The difference between the sounds of two various meanings — the orchestral and that of the organ — is achieved on the piano by means of dynamics and articulation.

Considering the presence of ornamental structures in the musical text of this fragment, it becomes possible to create various versions of unfolding of the ornamental lines: 1) to carry out the registering by separating the figurations into the phrases or motives; 2) to group the triplets into “anacrusis” motives and to play the piece in a slow tempo; 3) to perform the motives-designs in various dynamics, with “echo effects”; 4) to perform the motives-designs in various timbral colorations (“And how would the melody have sounded on the flute ...? On two flutes ...? On a flute and an oboe ...?”).

Thereby, each version may create new combinations of the constituent parts of the ornamentation, to enhance their colorfulness by means of registering and doubling.

### J. S. Bach. *Prelude* in C minor

In the following fragment (Example No. 6) in the storyline “I am playing the Organ,” a different allotment of roles is suggested: the first measure would be played by the teacher and the student strictly according to the musical text (in the notated register), while in the second measure the ornament would be transferred by the student an octave higher. The repeated pitch C at the end of each even-numbered measure may also sound out in an organ registering, if the player makes use of both of his or her hands. In the storyline “there is a rehearsal of a string orchestra going on” in the same example, a precise allotment of roles is

desirable in the vertical dialogue between the bass and the soloist parts  $\frac{\textit{solo}}{\textit{continuo}}$ . The variant re-exposition of the text may be initiated by subsequent changes in the storyline. For example, in the soloist's part a change of the problem-related situations and a performance of the solo parts in the form of role playing are possible: "And how would this sound on a flute?" (the technique of registering on the top line), "And how would this sound when played by solo violins?" (the technique of doubling in octaves; the combination of registering and doubling).

Example No. 6 J. S. Bach. *Twelve Little Preludes. Prelude in C minor*



### J. S. Bach. *Sarabande in D minor*

In the clavier text of the *Sarabande* in *D minor* from J. S. Bach's *French Suites* (Example No. 7) we can discern the indications of a *quasi*-orchestral score

Example No. 7 J. S. Bach. *French Suite No. 1 in D minor. Sarabande*



with the stratification of its instrumental parts into *divisi* sections in each of the lines of the two-line clavier notation.

The teacher and the student are advised to "unfold" the clavier text into a "stereophonic" space of the voices of the texture, which may be done by applying the techniques of *registering* and *doubling* when performing a work for piano four hands. Each of the performers is expected to play his or her line with two hands. The teacher has to intonate the lower line of the musical text, carrying out the registering of the lower voice by means of its transferal an octave down (in the left hand). The student then would play the upper line of the musical text, transferring the upper line (in the right hand) an octave higher ("And how this would sound on a flute?"). The solo flute could also sound in a different variant: as a horizontal, alternate dialogue "of two flutes." In this case, the student would apply the registering on a massive level of 4 + 4. The upper voice — the one assuming the role of the first flute (mm. 1–4) — is performed according to the musical text; the voice impersonating second flute (mm. 5–8) would sound an octave higher.

As can be seen from these clear examples, the assignments are to be carried out in the form of both solo and ensemble music-making; in a dialogue of the teacher (or the partner) with the pupil. Such a type of work is suggested by the semantic structures of the musical texts of most of the pieces, the storyline organization of which is dialogic: the pupil performs the figures of the *ornamentation* (or the melody) in the upper line in the role of the soloist; the part of the lower line "on the organ" or in the orchestral sound of the *basso continuo* is performed by the teacher.

This type of work has much merit. It makes it possible to divide into two

portions for two musicians the difficulties connected with performance, and at the same time it presents the possibility of concentrating on applying various concrete techniques of transformation of the musical text, comprehending it not only from the technical side, but also from the side of its musical content.

### J. S. Bach. *Minuet in B minor*

In J. S. Bach's works for clavier and his suite cycles we frequently encounter dance pieces with the genre indicated in the title. Such pieces may also be subjected to variant performance transformations on the basis of changing the storylines. Thus, Example No. 8 undoubtedly possesses the genre features of a minuet, and the key intonation of the piece is the rhythm of the step, however, this does not provide the sole semantic structure of the musical text. The vertical syntactical model of *the solo continuo* turns out to be no less obvious. It serves as an indication of the presence in the clavier music of a compressed *quasi-score*. On its basis, the minuet can be presented in the role play as a piece that is "not danced," but, in other words, as a scene of music-making. Two well-known techniques suffice for its unfolding: the *doubling* within the *basso continuo* part and the *registering*

Example No. 8 J. S. Bach. *French Suite No. 3 in B minor. Minuet*



of the soloist's ornamentation. The technique of doubling would create the illusion of the sound of the low string instruments (the performer's left and right hands play in octaves simultaneously). Registering represents the acoustic images of the flute and the violin whose dialogue may be built on the thematic responses of various proportional levels by means of transposing one of them an octave higher.

A no less interesting version of registering can also be applied in this example in the *basso continuo* part, built on dialogic anacrusis motives. The storyline for the performer would be the situation of playing in the horizontal dialogue on "two cellos" with an alternating exchange of thematic responses in various registers of the piano.

### J. S. Bach. *Fantasia*

Example No. 9 J. S. Bach. *Partita No. 3 in A minor. Fantasia*, mm. 79–89



In conclusion, we suggest performing a fragment from the *Partita in A minor* (Example No. 9) with the insertion of various storylines: "I am playing the organ," "There is a rehearsal of a string orchestra going on," or "Trio for two

flutes and cello” in combination with the teacher, applying the various different types of registering and doubling at alternate times.

*Types of registering:* a) a segment of the ornamentation is equal to a phrase (2 measures); b) a segment of the ornamentation is equal to a motive.

*Types of doubling:* in the *basso continuo* part make use of two storylines: a) “The cellos are playing simultaneously;” b) “The cellos are playing at alternate times.”

The formation of proficiency of the mastery of the universal techniques of transformation of the composer’s musical

text is extremely relevant not only for adult performers, but also for young musicians. They are conducive to a dynamic interaction on the part of the pupil with musical compositions and make the routine work on the text more fascinating and meaningful. Such forms of study activities pertain to the category of intensive forms, since they provide accelerated results in the understanding of the semantic organization of the musical text and in the increasing of pianistic and compositional skills of the learner, and they also allow the pupil to make the first confident steps in mastering the art of transcription.

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