

Baroque ornamentation

An introduction to notes inégales

All notes are not created equal.



WRITTEN BY MICHAEL LYNN

Michael Lynn performed at the Inaugural Luncheon for President Obama's first term and has played throughout the U.S., Canada, Taiwan and Japan with Apollo's Fire, Mercury Baroque, ARTEK, Oberlin Baroque Ensemble, Smithsonian Chamber Players, Tafelmusik, American Baroque Ensemble,

Handel & Haydn Orchestra, Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Houston Symphony, Cleveland Opera, Santa Fe Pro Musica, and many other ensembles.

Lynn serves on the faculty of Oberlin Conservatory as Professor of Recorder and Baroque Flute, and teaches each year at the Oberlin Baroque Performance Institute. He writes regularly for flute magazines around the world and is noted for his presentations and videos on History and Development of the Flute. An acclaimed collector of flutes, he has a web site where you can view them at: www.originalflutes.com. His music and videos are posted at: www.soundcloud.com/mloberlin and www.youtube.com/MichaelLynnFlute.

This is the fourth in a series of articles, with musical examples, describing ornaments and techniques that we might encounter in Baroque music.

PART 1: "An Introduction to the Trill and Appoggiatura" / AR Fall 2020

PART 2: "An Introduction to the Mordent/Battement" / AR Winter 2020 Examples included playing the mordent with the appoggiatura and trill.

PART 3: "Introduction to Flatttement" / AR Spring 2021 How to produce this expressive "finger vibrato" was covered.

Today when we learn to play music, one of the first things that we learn about is basic rhythm—eight eighth notes in a whole note, four quarters, two halves, etc. Part of gaining musical skills is learning to play eighth notes or quarter notes perfectly evenly, so that they fit into the prescribed time.

In the 18th century, I am sure one would have been trained in much the same way. Understanding the mathematical relationship between different rhythmic values keeps the music organized and understandable to the listener.

It is well documented, however, that rhythm was not always played as an exact reflection of the notation. This is similar to jazz performance, where the rhythm may be "swung," even though the notation shows straight, even notes. The most important historical convention

regarding this is "notes inégales"—or unequal notes. While this practice is a standard aspect of the performance of French music, it also has a place in other Baroque music.

Just what are notes inégales, and how and where do we play them? The basic idea is that, if the music has a pair of eighth notes, one would play the first slightly longer, borrowing time from the second note. If we have eight eighth notes in a melodic figure, each pair would be played in this manner. Using a shorthand where L=long, S=short, the rhythm would be altered to sound as LSLSLSL.

Whether inégale is applied to 16th or eighth notes depends on the musical context and tempo. Generally, in a movement where the beat is a half note, the eighths would be unequal; if the basic beat is the quarter note, the 16ths would be played unequally.

Composers seldom tell us when they want inégale—or for that matter, when they don't want it. We have to build up our musical taste through experience and by understanding the meaning of the music.

Terms to help us decide when to play notes inégales (or not)

In French music there are a couple of important terms used by the composer to say something about how the rhythm was conceived. Terms that mean *not* to play unequal include:

- *notes égales*
- *détaché* (short and equal)
- *mesuré*
- *marqué*

The composer may also use notes with dots or daggers over them. Large leaps and long slurred passages are also played equally.

Other terms lead us toward a more dotted unequal performance, such as *piqué* or *pointes* (both meaning short or dotted).

Words describing the character of the movement also help us to know if



1



2



3

▲ Three French examples by Jacques-Martin Hotteterre (1674-1763), from *Deuxième Livre*, 1715.

1. Allemande – Gracieusement. 2. Allemande – Piqué. 3. Courante



4. Gottfried Finger (c.1655/56-1730). A Division on a Ground, from *The Division Flute*, 1708

5. Another French example by Jacques-Martin Hotteterre, *Deuxième Livre*, 1715; Allemande – Gay

the inequality should be very smooth or perhaps more dotted.

This concept of French music, in particular, involving performance that differs from notation, is described by François Couperin in his *L'Art de Toucher*:

“The fact is we (the French) write a thing differently from the way in which we execute it; and it is this which causes foreigners to play our music less well than we do theirs. The Italians, on the contrary, write their music in the true time-values in which they have intended them to be played.”

Playing notes inégales

The first step is determining where we

“

Inégale is freedom within the beat; it is not a matter of speeding up or slowing down the music.

wish to play unequally. As we look at example 1 on the facing page, an Allemande by Jacques-Martin Hotteterre, we can choose to play most of the 16th notes in this example unevenly. The music itself gives us some indication specifically where inequality should or shouldn't be used. The most common place to play unequally is on stepwise 16th notes, such as what we see

in the first two measures of this example.

I have marked, with dotted brackets, where I would play inégale. As you can see, there are only a few places where I would play equally.

Sources tell us that notes that are in passages of skips or repeated notes on the same pitch would usually be played equally. I think this works beautifully in this selection. For example, in bar three, Hotteterre introduces a different type of figuration than in the first two bars. In bar eight, I would play the last 16th notes equally, and with a slightly more detached articulation.

Because this is marked *Gracieusement*, I suggest using a very relaxed

A Division on a Ground by Mr. Finger



4



5

LINKS OF INTEREST:

- Michael Lynn's videos demonstrating this series of articles: www.youtube.com/americanrecordermag
- Previous articles in this ornamentation series: https://americanrecorder.org/american_recorder_magazine_ex.php



Tired of purchasing a whole method
or book simply to acquire one song?

Recorder For Everyone has the answer.

Choose the song(s) you want.
Music, demo, and accompaniment
will stream to your device.

www.recorderforeveryone.com

**We can meet the needs of your
school or community program.**

Packages include B-A-G songs,
exercises, and many other offerings.

A LARGE PRINT HARD COPY is also available
for beginning Senior Citizen classes.
Consider starting a class in your area.
Recorder for Everyone is also on YouTube.

amount of inégale—using note values
just less than a triplet rhythm.

The next big question is always how
uneven the notes inégales should be.
Inequality could actually change the
rhythm to a dotted note, or to a triplet
or something less unequal. It can also
be more complex in theory, but more
free-sounding in practice.

In my own playing, I can't imagine
many situations where I would go
all the way to using a dotted rhythm,
unless the piece is marked *piqué* or
pointes. I find the triplet to be a better
starting point. Original sources do
make comments about how inégale
should be played, and it can include
almost any proportion of long to short.

Start by playing the Hotteterre
example with the 16th notes in a
triplet rhythm. I often find that the
most beautiful and interesting inégale
is made by playing just slightly less
unequal than a triplet—once you can
play it easily as a triplet, try making it
slightly less unequal, but clearly not
equal. This can be difficult to do at
first because we tend to want to think
in simple ratios. Instead, just try to
think of the sound of it, rather than a
mathematical proportion.

Another general concept is that the
faster the music, the less likely that it
is going to be inégale.

Other factors, such as playing a dotted quarter note

The 16th note following the dotted
note in the first Hotteterre example
should be shortened, as you have been
doing with the stepwise notes. This
means holding onto the dotted note
longer than notated. The goal is not
to make a jerky, double-dotted sound,
but to feel the stress and importance
of the dotted note and then just pass
through the 16th note.

I will mention one other thing to
consider in figuring out how our in-
égale should sound. Hotteterre marks
example 2 as *Piqué*. Words like this

VON HUENE WORKSHOP, INC.
65 BOYLSTON STREET
BROOKLINE, MA 02445 USA

Whether you want to sound like
an angel or play like the Devil
the von Huene Workshop
makes fine recorders for
every taste, after
Stanesby, Jr.,
Denner,
Terton
&c.

<http://www.vonhuene.com>
e-mail: sales@vonhuene.com



We stock an extensive
selection of sheet music,
books and accessories,
as well as recorders from
Moeck, Mollenhauer,
Küng and many others.

We are also the authorised
US repair agents for

MOECK
Mollenhauer
•K•U•N•g•
AURA
Coolsma &
Zamra

With over 50 years of
experience, our skilled staff
can revoice, retune
& repair even the most
seriously injured recorders.

attached to a particular movement help us understand the character of the piece, rather than telling us what tempo the composer wants. *Piqué* is used to signify “short,” and I would argue it could lead one to make the inégale notes slightly more unequal, maybe almost dotted, and the equal notes more detached and lively. I notated the *piqué* in example 2 as in the original, and then applied a dotted inégale rhythm.

Another way that composers indicate this is with the word *pointes*.

In example 3, a Courante, the inégale might be a little stronger than in a typical Allemande – Gracieusement. Again, we see a contrast between the stepwise and skipping parts of the phrase. One can use both articulation and rhythm to make a nice musical statement. Here it is the eighth notes that are inegalés, rather than the 16ths.

Music not from France

Inegalés are useful in other music besides that from France. English music from the late 17th century and early 18th was heavily influenced by French musicians. Example 4 by the Moravian composer Gottfried Finger shows a piece that will benefit from inégales at the eighth note level, when the notes are moving stepwise.

The final example (number 5, also from Hotteterre) is an Allemande marked Gay. There is very little opportunity for inégale in this movement; however, it works well to make a fairly strong and lively inequality in the short groups of notes.

It is very important to realize that in Baroque music, rhythm is one of the performer's tools of musical expression. Remember that inégale is freedom within the beat: it is not a matter of speeding up or slowing down the music.

Learning to use rhythm to help tell your musical story will greatly improve the quality of your music making! ❁

GLEN SHANNON MUSIC

Raclette

A fun new piece for
concerts and workshops,
for TTTBBB Recorders

www.glenshannonmusic.com

R Strings & Early Winds

R
E
C
O
R
D
E
R
S

Küng Moeck Mollenhauer Paetzold Yamaha
Ehlert Wenner Recorders / Baroque flutes

Lu-Mi (Wendy) Ogle Viols / Baroque Strings / Vielles
Guntram Wolf Early Winds / Roland Classic Keyboards



Lazar's Early Music

(866) 511-2981 LazarsEMS@gmail.com

www.LazarsEarlyMusic.com

3827 S. Carson St., #38, Carson City, NV 89701