

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

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in style, was the most cerebral and weighty of the four. A tranquil aria of a relatively simple nature would follow, leading to a virtuosic, bravura, and dance-like finale.

Bach's exposure to the sonata da chiesa was surely augmented by his study of the extensive Italian music collection in the library of Prince Leopold at Cöthen, and his fascination with the Italian style is apparent in his own works from this period on. In his enthusiasm, he transcribed several of Vivaldi's violin concertos for the harpsichord, yet in the process of assimilation, Bach combined the Italian and German traditions to create unique hybrids.⁷ This synthesis peaked in the *Sonatas for Unaccompanied Violin* when Bach wed the heritage of German polyphonic unaccompanied violin writing with the sonata da chiesa of Italy, the motherland of the violin. In addition, the titles of the sonatas and their movements are in the Italian language, further reflecting an Italian influence.

One of Bach's most startling departures from the known and accepted practice of the 18th century occurs in the first movements of the first and second sonatas. Here, instead of the customary skeletal notation that left the embellishments to the imagination of the performer, Bach provided a meticulously worked out, fully notated ornamentation. Although such explicitness may have struck an 18th century virtuoso as unnecessary, it provides us today with a wonderful lesson on the performing style of the period.

Ex. 2- *Adagio* from *Sonata I* in *G minor* (BWV 1001), mm. 1-2.⁸

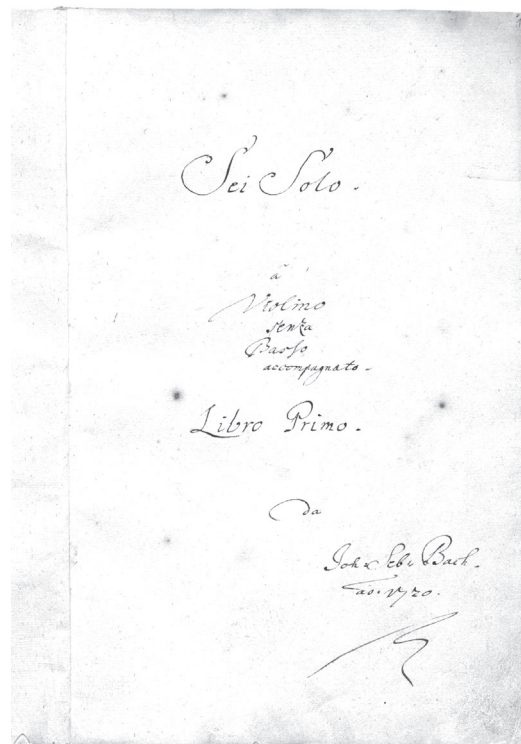


Bach's treatment of the above passage stands in marked contrast to the manner in which a contemporary might have written the same passage:

Ex. 3⁹



Ex. 4 - Title page of the autograph manuscript¹⁰



The title page of the autograph (see Ex. 4) contains the inscription *Sei Solo. / a Violino / senza / Basso / Accomagnato. / Libro Primo / da / J.S. Bach. / ao. 1720.* Mr. Luca points out that the first part of the title (*Sei Solo / a Violino / senza / Basso / accompagnato.*) “makes clear that the score is whole, and did not need to be ‘completed’ by Felix Mendelssohn or Robert Schumann, who each composed pianoforte accompaniments for these works in the 19th-century(!).”¹¹

Even more curious are the words which follow: *Libro Primo*. It is distressing to think that a Second Book may have been composed and is now lost. Perhaps it was an idea that Bach projected for the future, but never brought to fruition. It is also possible that he intended the six Suites for Unaccompanied Cello (BWV 1007-1012) to serve as the Second Book. (The title page of the Cello suites, copied by Anna Magdalena Bach, reads: *6 / Suites a / Violoncello Solo / senza / Basso. / composées / par / Sr. J.S. Bach. / Maître de Capelle.*¹² Unfortunately, there is nothing in the manuscript to support this hypothesis.)

⁷ These hybrids are characterized by greater polyphonic elaboration and a more complex harmonic vocabulary.

⁸ Johann Sebastian Bach, *Sei Solo*, facsimile edition, p. 2.

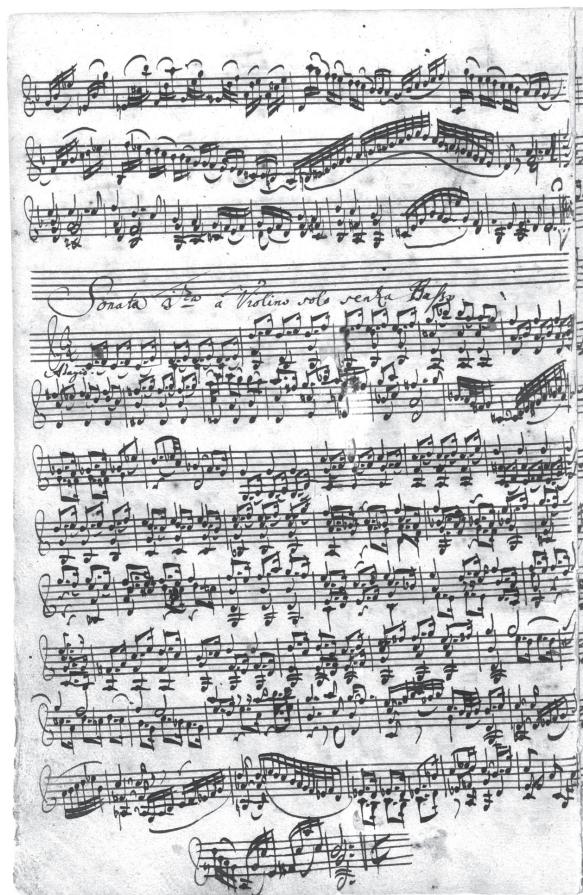
⁹ Sergiu Luca, *Johann Sebastian Bach, The Sonatas and Partitas for Unaccompanied Violin*. Nonesuch 4C 73030, p. 4.

¹⁰ Johann Sebastian Bach, *Sei Solo*, facsimile edition, p. 1.

¹¹ Luca, p. 3

¹² Johann Sebastian Bach, *6 / Suites a / Violoncello Solo / senza / Basso. / composées / par / Sr. J.S. Bach. / Maître de Capelle.*, copied by Anna Magdalena Bach, (Cöthen, c1720), title page. Facsimile contained in Diran Alexanian, ed., *Johann Sebastian Bach, Six Suites pour Violoncelle seul* (Paris and New York: Editions Salabert, 1929).

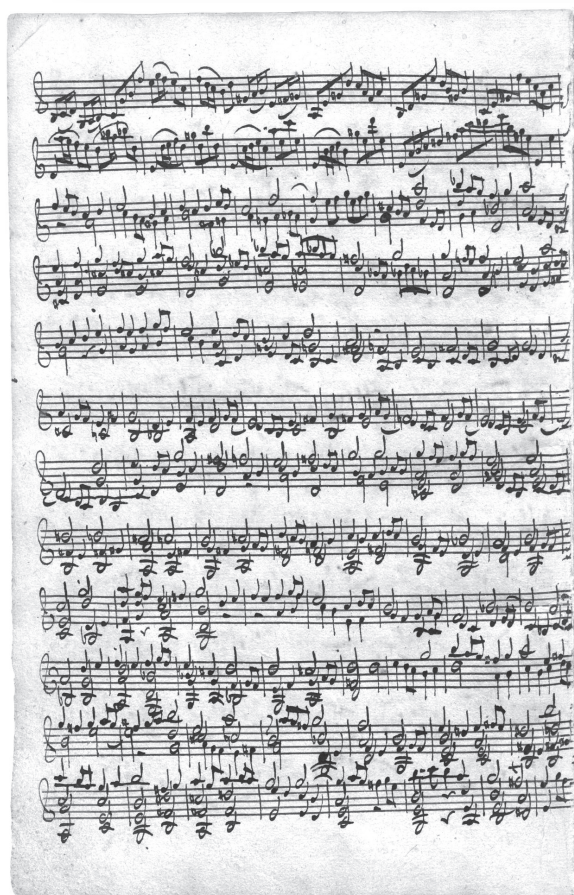
Sonata III Manuscript



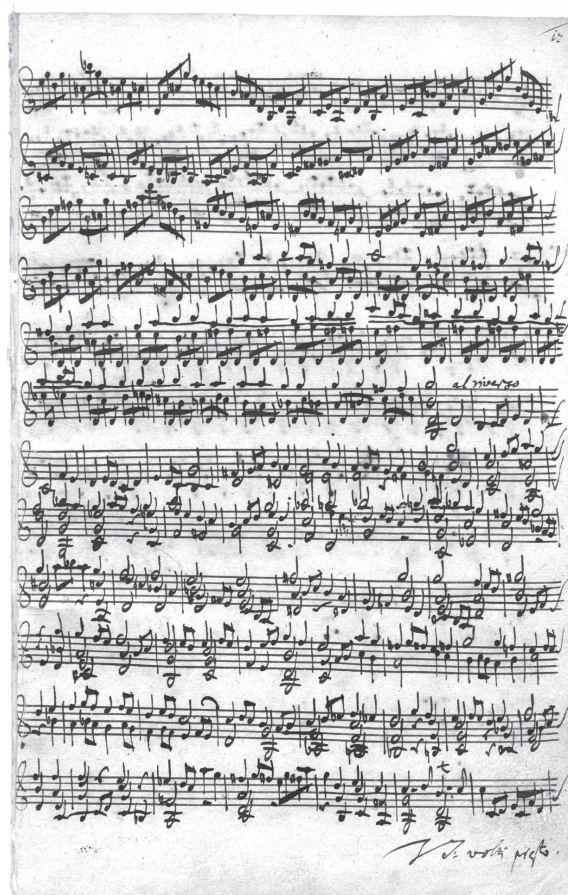
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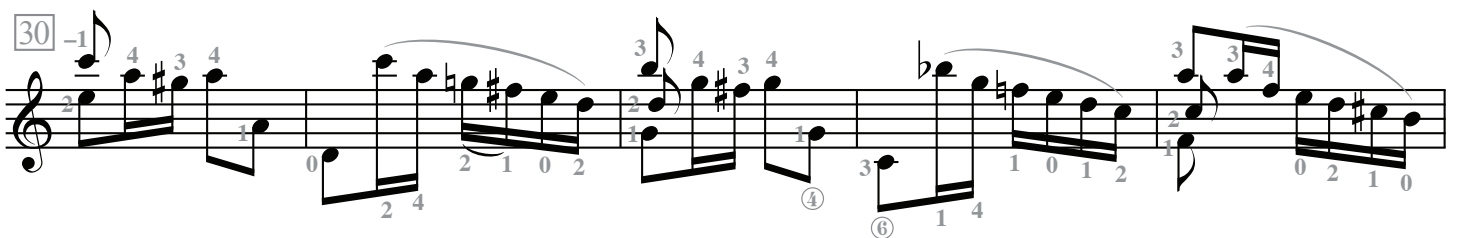
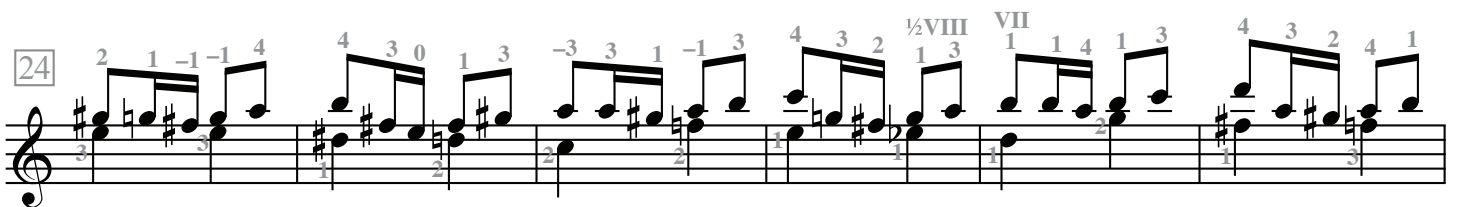
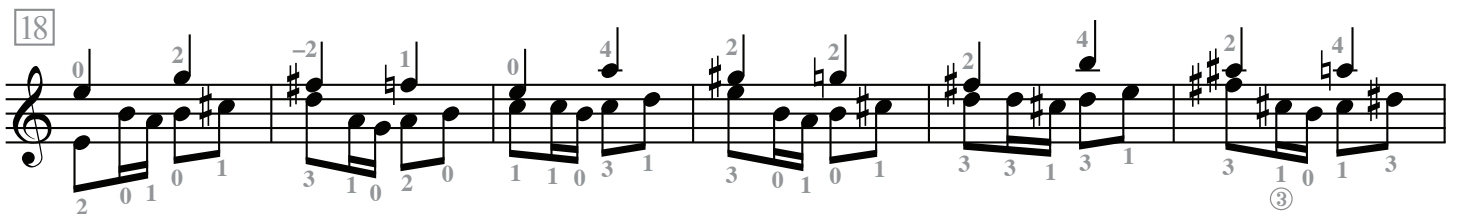
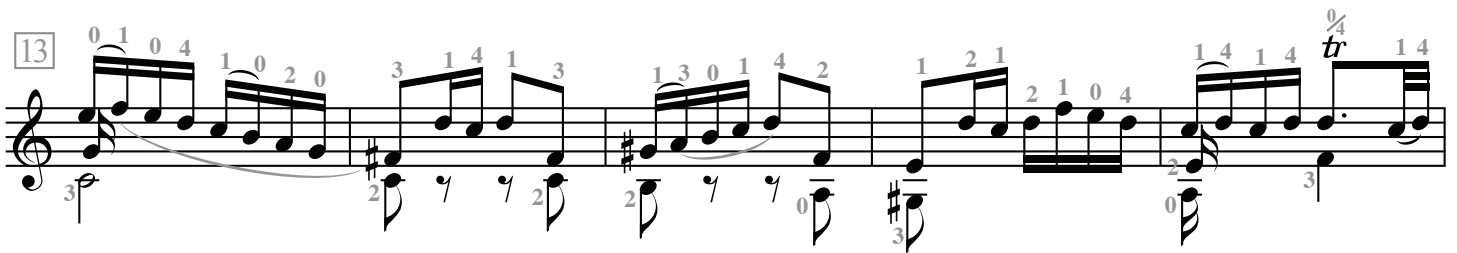
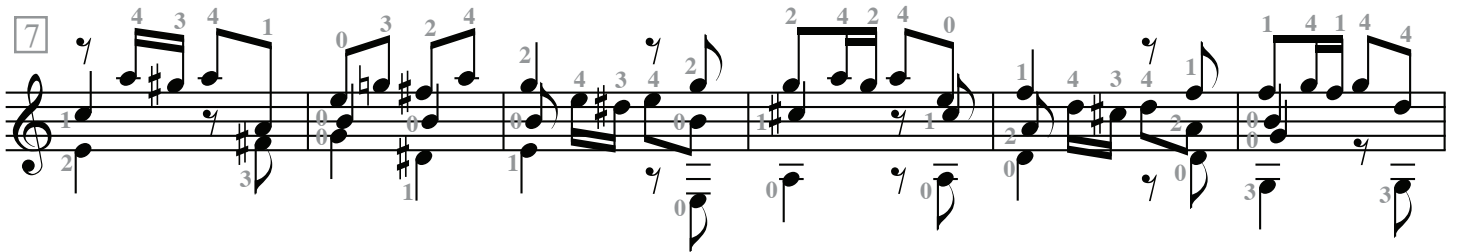
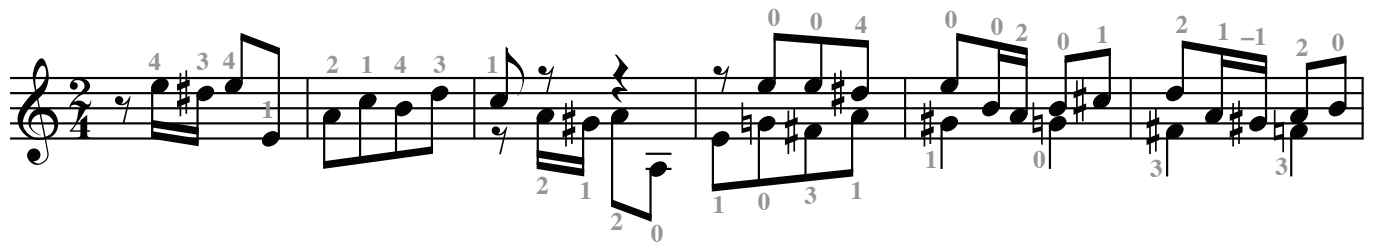


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Page 4

II. Fuga



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Ossia:

III. Largo

The musical score for "III. Largo" is presented in five staves of guitar notation. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The notation includes various guitar-specific techniques and fingerings:

- Staff 1:** Features a series of eighth-note patterns with fingerings such as 2 4 1 1, 2 4 1 2, 3 2 4, 2 1 0, 2 1 0 2, 4 1 2 4, and 2 3 1. It includes a trill marked $\frac{1}{4} tr$ and a first ending bracket labeled "I—".
- Staff 2:** Starts with a measure box containing the number 3. It includes a second ending bracket labeled "II—", a triplet marked ④, and a trill marked $3-1 tr$. Fingerings include 4 2 3 4, 1 0 4 1, 1 3 2 3, 0 2 3 4, 2 0 1 3, 4 2, 4 4, 4 1, 1 1, 1 0, and 4 2 4.
- Staff 3:** Starts with a measure box containing the number 6. It includes a trill marked $1-0 tr$ and a trill marked $3-1 tr$. Fingerings include 0 0 2, 1 4 0, 0 1 2, 4 0 1, 1 3 0, 3 4 1 0, and 1-0. A measure at the end has a fingering of -2 0 3.
- Staff 4:** Starts with a measure box containing the number 8. It includes a trill marked $\frac{9}{4} tr$ and a trill marked $\frac{9}{3} tr$. Fingerings include 1 4 0 1, 3 4 1 2, 2 4, 4 2 1, 3 1 3 4, 0 2 1 3, 3-1, 4 4, and 0 2 3.
- Staff 5:** Starts with a measure box containing the number 10. It includes a section marked "III—" and a trill marked $\frac{9}{3} tr$. Fingerings include 4 0 2 1 4, 1 1, 1 2 3 4, 4 2 2 4, 4 1 4 3, 1 3 1 2, 4 2 4, 0 1 0 4 3, and 2 4 0.