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SUMMARY OF COUPERIN'S RULES

Regarding style and ornaments, Couperin stated some definite rules and indicated other places where a degree of flexibility is left to the performer. Some which can be found in *L'Art de toucher le Clavecin* are summarized briefly below. The page references may be used to place the remarks into correct context.

DEFINITE RULES

Ornaments

1. They must be very precise. 70
2. Those made up of repercussions must be played evenly with an imperceptible speeding up. 70
3. The Table of Ornaments in the first book of *Pièces* must be followed. 39
4. The time value of the notes determines the duration of short and long mordents and of appoggiaturas followed by mordents. 34
5. Mordents must begin and end on their main note. 35
6. Mordents must have a stopping point. 35
7. Trills must begin on the tone or semi-tone above the written note. 38
8. Trills begin more slowly than they end; the acceleration must be imperceptible. 38
9. Trills of any considerable length have a stopping point. 39
10. The little note of an ascending or a descending appoggiatura must be struck with the harmony, that is to say, in the time of the main note which follows. 38

Fingering:

1. Fingering does much for good playing; certain fingering produces certain effects. 31
2. Use your own better fingers for playing trills and appoggiaturas. 32, 38
3. Consecutive, conjunct notes may be played with the same finger when the first is aspirated or when the second of them is played on the last part of the beat. 54

Style:

1. Adhere strictly to the beat where the word *mesuré* is used. 70
2. Do not alter the rhythm in the regulated pieces. 70
3. Hold all notes for their full time value. 70
4. Use today's good taste in playing. 70
5. Don't play tender pieces as slowly as if they were being played on other instruments. 50
6. Always play delicately on the harpsichord. 30, 50
7. It is necessary to preserve a perfect legato in all that you play. 70

FLEXIBILITY LEFT TO THE PERFORMER

Ornaments:

1. Trills, other than those of considerable length, may have stress on the upper note, may be so short they have no stress, may have no stopping point, may be played with a brief rest after them, depending on context. 39
2. Detach the aspiration less quickly in slow and tender pieces than in the light and rapid ones. 34
3. The length of silence before the suspension is governed by the good taste of the performer. 34

Style:

1. Where the word *mesuré* is not used, the *Preludes* may be played without attaching too much precision to the notated rhythm. 70
2. We dot several eighth notes in succession moving by conjunct degrees, however we write them in equal time values. 49

PREMIER PRELUDE

FIRST PRELUDE

Sans lenteur - MM ♩ = 66-84

5 4 4 3-4 5

2

3 2

2-5

2

4 3-4

3

3-2

4-5 4-5

3 5 4 5

3-1 1-3 2 1

The fingering and all other markings in dark print are in the original editions. All editorial suggestions are in light print and the performer must decide for himself whether to accept or to disregard them. Realizations of ornaments represent only one of several possibilities which conform to Couperin's Table of Ornaments. A discussion of these and other related topics will be found in the Foreword.

- (a) 2 is an early time signature denoting 2 rather slow beats to the measure.
- (b) The dot beside Middle C is missing in the Dolmetsch edition.
- (c) The tie between the first two E's is missing in the Dolmetsch edition.