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Dance And The Music Of J. S. Bach: Expanded Edition



Synopsis

Stylized dance music and music based on dance rhythms pervade Bach's compositions. Although the music of this very special genre has long been a part of every serious musician's repertoire, little has been written about it. The original edition of this addressed works that bore the names of dances – a considerable corpus. In this expanded version of their practical and insightful study, Meredith Little and Natalie Jenne apply the same principals to the study of a great number of Bach's works that use identifiable dance rhythms but do not bear dance-specific titles. Part I describes French dance practices in the cities and courts most familiar to Bach. The terminology and analytical tools necessary for discussing dance music of Bach's time are laid out. Part II presents the dance forms that Bach used, annotating all of his named dances. Little and Jenne draw on choreographies, harmony, theorists' writings, and the music of many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century composers in order to arrive at a model for each dance type. In Appendix A all of Bach's named dances are listed in convenient tabular form; included are the BWV number for each piece, the date of composition, the larger work in which it appears, the instrumentation, and the meter. Appendix B supplies the same data for pieces recognizable as dance types but not named as such. More than ever, this book will stimulate both the musical scholar and the performer with a new perspective at the rhythmic workings of Bach's remarkable repertoire of dance-based music.

Book Information

Series: Music: Scholarship and Performance

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: Indiana University Press; Expanded Edition edition (January 27, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0253214645

ISBN-13: 978-0253214645

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.8 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 7 customer reviews

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Customer Reviews

Meredith Little is an attorney practicing law in Tucson. She has taught at Stanford University and Aston Magna Academy and is author of numerous articles on Baroque music and dance, include twenty-three articles in the New Grove. Natalie Jenne, Professor of Music Emeritus at Concordia University, has published articles in the J. S. Bach (in the series Oxford Composer Companions), Key Words in Church Music, and journals such as Bach, The Diapason, Church Music, and Clavier. She conducts workshops on aspects of Baroque performance practice, in particular, the music of Bach.

Just got this book. Tried to look up Allemande from French Suite 4, BWV 815. There are no allemandes mentioned in the book, despite the fact that each of Bach's six French Suites starts with an allemande. The start of Part II says it discusses all of Bach's titled dances, and that all are listed in Appendix A. But, no allemandes there either. If there's something that I don't know, such as that "allemande" is not actually a dance form, or that it has another name, please, someone, instruct me.

If you play Bach, you should read this book – even if you only play those little Minuets! Dance, dance steps, and dance forms are all directly connected to Bach's music and the music of his contemporaries. Little describes the most common dances of the time, and shows how they relate to the phrasing, articulation, and overall style of performing these dances as they are found in Bach's works.

Very well researched, clearly written and well organized. All we need now is an accompanying DVD that demonstrates the dances in period costume and with a reasonable company of dancers.

Only book of its kind - especially for the serious musician and performer.

It certainly broadens one's knowledge and appreciation to study the physical dances that so much of Bach's instrumental music was based on. But there's a difference between music written to literally accompany dance and music stylized in the form of dances, meant primarily for listening. Bach did not play Saturday night dance gigs in Leipzig nor did Chopin play his waltzes in Parisian ballrooms. Tempos (and flexibility within those tempos) need not be based on realistic assumptions of how people may have actually danced bourrees and minuets. There were enough differences in style among Italian, French and German strains of late Baroque music (and dance) that one should

be cautious about any definitive rules here. That being said, the book is well written, illustrated and an interesting read.

This book provides a fine survey of the rhythms associated with the most prevalent Baroque dances. Although stylized dance pieces and other instrumental works beyond the dance hall might not strictly follow the rhythm of the original dance, this book provides a solid grounding for any person interested in the topic and wishing to flexibly apply dance rhythms to their own interpretations of Bach's music. Thus, this book is important to any performers serious about playing Baroque music and especially Bach's. I recommend the book for its information but also because it is so easy to read.

This book is a must for all serious performers of Bach's music. It is the only book that details not only of most of the dances that appear in Bach's works, but provides a fundamental vocabulary for a discussion of rhythm. After that has been provided, dances are discussed with clarity and precision, with a wealth of original sources for the reader. There is nothing on the market like it.

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