

his time, but inherited a constantly shifting and growing notational and interpretative practice. Again, all Baroque composers were individuals who used notation differently, just as composers have always sought to stretch and extend the language of music in their own way.

The approach of Yo Yo Ma has its own validity: modern performers are individuals too. We are apt to forget that, just as there are as many interpretations of a Bach prelude today as there are players, so it was in Bach's own time. Beyond deliberate sabotage, there cannot be a "right" or "wrong" way to play Bach, since we don't live in 18th century Leipzig. Because we exist at two centuries' distance from Bach, we must accept that there are now far more ways of performing his music than he would have known.

However, this book is not aimed at those who feel that they can do whatever they like with the score. It is intended to open some unexpected doors to those who want to "get inside" Baroque music — who want to play Bach's music not, first and foremost, from their own point of view, but from Bach's, or as near to that as we can hope to get. The premise of the book is that such a desire often transcends the categories which we may choose to term "mainstream, or authentic", "modern or specialist".

There is sometimes a clear difference in the approaches to notation between keyboard-players, instrumentalists, and singers. This study will concentrate on keyboard music, and some of the interpretations suggested here may be regarded by non keyboard-players as irrelevant to themselves. Every opportunity which I enjoy of working with singers and instrumentalists shows me that this is mistaken. But to keep this book within sensible bounds, this cobbler will stick to his last.

The Development of Musical Notation

Incomplete notation — by accident and design

Music has been written down for at least a millennium in the western world. It probably comes to the notice of most of us first in a simple form used in monasteries in the Middle Ages: as a row of black dots or squares. The staff, which may have originated in a method of representing finger positions when playing an instrument, was established at this time. The new language of notation then gradually became both more complicated, and increasingly used for secular music. Once this transition had been made, its complication grew rapidly, and it developed into a more universal notational language which could be used for music of all types.

Most of us seldom recognise that as musicians attempted to make notation a more precise and all-encompassing tool, they also **reduced** its flexibility. Each new specific direction in a score means that the user (the musical performer) has one less possibility for error, for choice, or for