

Little Variations on Kumbayah

An Explication

by

FERGUS BLACK

I've given this piece the subtitle Explication, because that is what Bach called the table of ornaments which he wrote in the preface of the Clavierbüchlein vor Wilhelm Friedemann Bach:



For Grade 5 theory (ABRSM), the student is asked to recognise ornaments (i.e. name them), and also be able to replace a written-out ornament with the appropriate sign

Dictionaries tend to use the word *additional* in combination with words like *grace*, "*beauty*" or *decoration* to define the word *ornament*. My feeling is that the student should be able to play the piece rhythmically and musically, without the ornaments. And that when the ornaments are added, they don't break up the line, or the rhythm.

So my advice would be to play through the lower of the two versions - marked "Piano" - without any ornaments. Then study the "Interpretation", and slowly put the ornaments in.

Bibliography

- Music Notation - Gardner Read, Gollancz
- Basic Music Knowledge - Annie Warburton, Cambridge
- Music Theory in Practice, Grade 5, Eric Taylor, ABRSM

Little Variations on Kumbayah

Explication

Fergus Black © 2011

The score shows two systems of music. The first system is for the Interpretation part, with a tempo marking of 'Moderately Slow' and a metronome marking of a quarter note equal to approximately 92-100 beats per minute. It features a treble and bass clef staff in 4/4 time. The bass line starts with a series of dotted quarter notes, followed by a slur over a series of notes. The treble line has rests for the first two measures, then enters with a series of notes, including a triplet of eighth notes in the final measure. Dynamics range from *mp* to *mf*. A box labeled 'TURN (between notes)' points to a specific note in the treble line. The second system is for the Piano part, with a tempo marking of 'Andante Moderato' and the same metronome marking. It also features a treble and bass clef staff in 4/4 time. The bass line is similar to the Interpretation part. The treble line has rests for the first two measures, then enters with notes, including a triplet of eighth notes in the final measure. Dynamics range from *mp* to *mf*. A box labeled 'see note' points to a note in the bass line, and a box labeled 'simile' points to a note in the treble line.

The score continues with two systems of music. The first system shows measures 6-10. The bass line continues with a series of notes, including a note marked with a '5'. The treble line has notes with slurs and dots, indicating a semi-staccato style. The second system shows measures 6-10. The bass line continues with a series of notes, including a note marked with a '5'. The treble line has notes with slurs and dots, and includes a box labeled 'APPOGGIATURA' pointing to a note. A box labeled 'LOWER MORDENT' points to a mordent symbol over a note in the treble line.

the dots within a slur mean “semi-staccato” - slightly detached

TURN - these turns are between notes - compare this to J, where the turn is over the note.

APPOGGIATURA - takes half the value of the main note - see K for appoggiatura with dotted note.

LOWER MORDENT - *mordere* is the Italian word meaning *to bite*. So bite them!

ossia: 



(UPPER) MORDENT - mostly, mordents, both upper and lower, start **on** the beat.

TRILL - How long do you have? How to perform trills would be a book in itself. The main thing is that up until about 1810, trills began on the upper auxiliary, that is the note above the one printed - this is shown in the floating ossia bars above the top staff. Usually those early trills didn't have a *nachslag* - the two little notes that end the turn at the end of the trill - but since I have written them in the main staves, I've included them in the ossia bars as well.

The number of taradiddles (fast notes) you put in depends on the speed of the music and your technical skill. Bear in mind the rule that the ornament shouldn't interrupt the flow of the music.

ACCIACCATURA - not to be confused with the appoggiatura - the acciaccatura has a slash through it. Often called a GRACE NOTE. Usually on the beat in earlier music - might be before the beat in the nineteenth century. Taste, again.

At pleasure
(in your own time)

19 *cresc.*

19 **TREMOLO** *cresc.*

GRUPETTO *A piacere*

TURN
(over the note)

23 **Very Slow**

Play at original speed

23 *rit.* **ff**

sf fz sfz sffz

23 **Adagio** *15^{ma}*

A tempo

GRUPETTO **APPOGGIATURA** *see note* *rit.* **ff**

8vb

TREMOLO - like a trill, a rapid alternation of notes, but this time not next to each other. As with the trill, the exact number of repetitions depends on the speed of the piece and your technical ability.

GRUPETTO - quick notes before the main note. Probably played on the beat before 1810, before the beat after that.

TURN (2) above the note head.

Note also the Octava Alta sign

bar 23: GRUPETTO and APPOGGIATURA - here the appoggiatura takes 1/3 of the value of the main note (it could be 2/3rds - it's a matter of taste!)

Note also that the sign for "2 octaves higher" is 15va, not 16va.

bar 24-26: ACCENTS - the notes in bars 24-26 get progressively louder, not just because of the crescendo, but because each accent is heavier than the previous one. I don't want to get into a discussion about this - please don't write to tell me that I'm wrong!: there is a long section on accents in Gardner Read's book on Notation.

Note also that the sign for "1 octave lower" is 8vb, not 8va. Publishers please note!