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Moving early music: Improvisation and the work-concept in seventeenth-century French keyboard performance

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Chapter Five: Music as Movement

Music as Process

The previous chapter was fundamentally concerned with the acquisition of improvisational skill, defined, speaking in Benson's (2003) terms, as the ability to work idiomatically with the materials at hand. The present chapter, then, explores the effect improvising creates on the materials themselves. Returning again to terminology from Chapter Two, I am concerned here with *mouvance*, understood as the process by which a piece changes or varies in performance through improvisation.

Of course, improvisational activity does not necessarily have to have an *object*, something to represent or refer to. Even accepting Benson's assertion that all improvisation is the 'reworking' of something, that 'something' need not be foregrounded in musical practice. Instead, it is possible to look at music more as a *process* than as an object. This activity of music-making, what Christopher Small (1998) calls 'musicking,' is rooted in music's existence not as a fixed entity, but rather as an event, something that only gradually comes into being as it is created in performance. Musicking, then, entails a shift of emphasis from improvisation (the result) to improvising (the activity). Apart from improvisation, it is possible to view a whole host of established musical practices through this lens of musicking, including the performance of Western art music. As in the case of improvisation, doing so moves our attention away from the fixed reference points of classical music (musical works) towards the events (performances) created by musicians. Whereas, according to Kivy's (1993) Platonist view, a musical work is sometimes conceived as an ideal form that is discovered rather than created—existing independently of its original composition and its subsequent performance—musicking can *only* exist in its own (re-)creation, as a constant flow created by concrete historical individuals.

How do we effect this change in perspective from product to process? How can we understand, say, *mouvance* from the very interior of its unstable processes, rather than its stable, exterior manifestations? Philosopher Gilles Deleuze conceived of a metaphysics that privileges this unstable flow over the apparently stable entities we encounter in our daily lives, providing us with a useful set of concepts for thinking about process. In his ontological framework, Deleuze distinguishes between the actual and the virtual, both of which are fully real. If the actual refers to the physical world existing in space and time, then the virtual refers not to a possible world (since the possible may not necessarily be real), but more something like a *potential* world that could be made actual. Deleuze also conceives of *intensive processes* that effect the passage from the virtual to the actual, and back again. Deleuze understands the term *intensive* in a variety of ways, but here, it may be most useful to understand it in its original thermodynamic sense.[1] Indeed, philosopher Manuel DeLanda (2013) privileges this interpretation in his so-called "reconstruction" of Deleuze's ontology, wherein he defines Deleuze's extended understanding in terms of the simpler one. In thermodynamics, intensive properties are those—like temperature, pressure, or density—that cannot be divided, in contrast to extensive properties—like length, mass, or volume—that can. If a body of a water at a particular temperature is divided into several parts, for example, each part will retain the same temperature. Intensive differences, then, do not add together or subtract; rather, they average. Normally, when intensive differences within a system are small, they tend to cancel each other out, and the result is that these unstable, averaging processes become hidden beneath a seemingly stable product. When the difference between these properties is great enough, though, and when the system is moved far enough from equilibrium, the result is to "drive fluxes of matter or energy"

[1] See DeLanda (2013, 199) for a very concise summary of the three primary senses in which Deleuze understands intensity.

(DeLanda 2013, 199). It is these moments of far-from-equilibrium instability that reveal the processes that undergird apparent products in the actual world.

The privileging of becoming over being also has implications for any possible notion of 'identity.' In attending to intensive processes over stable products, Deleuze uproots philosophy's traditional conception of identity as primary and difference as secondary. Indeed, he shows that identity is always already permeated by difference, such that the two remain inseparably entangled. Identity must therefore be explained through difference. Identity is still a thinkable concept, but only as a differential identity, an identity which is also infinitely many *identities*. As DeLanda puts it,

> Deleuze, of course, would not deny that there are objects in the world which resemble one another, or that there are entities which manage to maintain their identity through time. It is just that resemblances and identities must be treated as mere results of deeper physical processes, and not as fundamental categories on which to base an ontology. (DeLanda 2013, 33)

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) introduce a variety of concepts that give clarity and precision to the workings of these intensive processes of becoming. *Strata* constitute the rigid, determined layers of actual reality. These are organized according to a concept of *territoriality,* referring to the extensive properties and qualities, physical or otherwise, that make up the world in which we live. *Territorialization*, then, refers to the various intensive processes that give rise to this actual world. *Deterritorialization*, meanwhile, points to the moments when the actual is pushed away from its equilibrium state, revealing the "intensive movements which animate strata from within" (DeLanda 2013, 205). What Deleuze and Guattari have created, then, is a powerful toolkit for thought, particularly for thinking about processes of becoming, passing from virtuality (or potentiality) through intensive processes towards actuality.

My aim in this chapter, however, is not philosophical. I do not intend to explicate, question, or problematize Deleuze's ontological framework, but rather to use it as a way of understanding my own practice. As I appropriate and adapt these ideas for my own ends, I may at times intentionally

"misuse" them, but the ideas will function productively so long as they are used to understand and "move" the artistic practice in which I work. My aim, then, is to explore how experimental practices such as mine can work through the creative tension that arises between event and object, process and being, *mouvance* and musical work. To rehearse an argument presented in the first chapter, as historically-informed performers operate within the more general confines of Western art music's performance tradition, their performances are also constrained by that tradition's regulative concepts, including—most powerfully—the work-concept. The work-concept naturally draws our attention away from music's gradual unfolding as an event, its *becoming*, and instead focuses us on music's persistence, its *being*. The work-concept and work-concept-centered practices have thus formed a layer of the classical musician's habitus, domesticating and essentializing what were originally contingent relations between scores and performers.

Even within mainstream classical performance traditions, however, there remains a residue of process within the finished product. More generally, Deleuze and Guattari (1994) identify a concern with "becoming" and "intensity" as the very purpose of the artist:

> By means of the material [e.g. paint, canvas, brush], the aim of art is to wrest the percept from perceptions of objects and the states of a perceiving subject, to wrest the affect from affections [e.g. feelings] as the transition from one state to another: to extract a bloc of sensations, a pure being of sensations. (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 167)

In this conception of art, the artist works to uncover pre-individual perceptions and affections, what Deleuze and Guattari call "percepts" and "affects." These percepts and affects are considered to be intensive: that is to say, they are embedded in processes of becoming, constituting fluxes that drive matter and energy away from the equilibrium of static being. The artist's job, then, is to enter "a zone of indetermination, of indiscernibility, as if things, beasts, and persons . . . endlessly reach that point that immediately precedes their natural differentiation" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 173). The artist must then place these percepts and affects within a "plane of composition." As DeLanda

puts it, "in a very literal sense, art is concerned with making perceptible the usually hidden realm of the intensive" (2013, 213). In other words, artists preserve elements of the pre-individual, intensive world of becoming, even as they transform them into extensive, finished works of art.

It is in this sense that one might speak of the "residue" of process within music. In the case of compositional practice, for example, we have things like drafts and sketches that speak to the composer's process. Material traces like these point beyond finished scores and musical works to the concrete historical activities that shaped and formed them: playing and experimenting with musical materials, imagining possible outcomes, improvising at the keyboard, notating the score. Performers, meanwhile, also contribute to a musical work's coming-into-being. Performances—live performances, in particular—unfold in time as events, not objects.

As I alluded in earlier chapters, even within what philosopher David Davies (2018) calls the "classical paradigm" there are a variety of different models for understanding the performer's contribution to the musical work. These range from an extremely minimal role for a humble "executant," to models in which the work is co-constructed by the performer with the composer, and finally to models in which each performance represents, in itself, an independent musical work. All of these models allow for a recognition of the musical work as a locus of process, a meeting-place in which the activities of composers and performers intersect and interact. If the composer's creative processes coalesce and terminate in the score, then that same score serves as the point of origin for the creative processes of the performer. Moreover, just as composers, notating their scores, must imaginatively anticipate and engage with the actions of performers, so performers must imaginatively re-create those creative, intensive processes embodied by the score, resulting in new intensive processes that culminate in performance. The work-concept, however, strictly delimits the scope of these interactions, creating boundaries for the activities of composers and performers. Work-based-performance, as I called it in Chapter One, thus limits the performer's ability to

experience and engage with the intensive flows of creative practice, a space of indeterminacy in which pitch, rhythm, form, timing, dynamic, color, and energy are commingled.

It was for just these reasons that I proposed in earlier chapters a movement away from the work-concept and towards a more flexible conceptual framework. To that end, HIP-as-method presents us with the possibility of uncovering, problematizing, and destabilizing the stratified relations that define the space of Western art music: relations between composer and performer, score and performance, musical structure and musical surface. As I highlighted in Chapter Two, the repertoire of the seventeenth-century French *clavecinistes* is a particularly congenial place in which to explore these relations. I put forward a concrete alternative to the work-concept for understanding this repertoire: namely *mouvance*, the process by which a piece transforms and varies in performance while still maintaining a differential identity. In other words, *mouvance* is the process by which a piece by Chambonnières continually *becomes* "itself."

Moreover, I proposed that this music's performance practices pointed towards having been founded in improvisational skill, and that its divergent sources could more productively be read as an entextualization of embodied improvisational knowledge. Improvisation, viewed in this way, constitutes a pure intensive space of becoming in which a piece's *mouvance* may express itself. The various strata that make up a piece of music—boundaries between structure and ornament, pitch and rhythm, movement and affect, among untold others—are *deterritorialized* in the course of improvising, creating a chaotic, creative field of potentiality for the improviser to navigate through performance. Improvisation, then, allows us to understand the workings of *mouvance* beyond music theory's purview. Instead, an improvisational analysis examines *mouvance* from the interior of the process itself, within the piece's *becoming*.

As I described in Chapter One, I have embraced HIP as a tool for constructing *experimental practices*. At this point, finally, the details of my own experimental practice can now be described

fully. Just as in work-based-performance, my own practice begins with a musical text of some kind, most often a score. Where mainstream performance views the score as a closed technical object, however, my practice uses the score as an open-ended epistemic thing. Instead of thinking about the question "how can I perform this musical work in an historically-informed way," I move to questions like "what kinds of things can I do with this score?" The improvisational techniques and models described in the preceding two chapters—schemata, diminution patterns, modulation strategies, etc.—are now understood to function as technical objects within my practice. Working with these techniques in the course of improvising, I can now begin to discover ways in which the score may be deterritorialized and opened to processes of *mouvance*.

In order to demonstrate how an experimental practice such as mine can lead to the generation of new knowledge, I will present a series of case studies in the form of a musical "suite." Each case study—or movement—will take a musical text as an open, epistemic thing. In each case, I will examine how particular ways of working with the text lead to differing degrees of deterritorialization, and subsequently, how through improvisation these differing degrees of deterritorialization also lead to differing understandings of *mouvance*. In effect, each case study is an answer to the question, "what kinds of historical practices can I re-create using improvisation," or even, "what kinds of new practices does improvisation make possible?"

Within each movement, I will also present one or more recorded examples, created through my improvisational practice. Just like the provisional identities created through *mouvance,* each of these recordings should be considered a kind of snapshot of a particular moment of practicing: not as finished products, but remnants of process. Although these examples are unedited, they have all been preceded by a great deal of experimentation and reflection-in-action, and in this way they mostly correspond to what I described in Chapter Four as the B-phase of improvisational practice.

The first movement of my suite will be the **Prélude non mesuré,** which will explore improvisation as both a concept and a practice. The prelude was the genre in which musical process, rather than finished product, was mostly clearly recognized and appreciated as such by the *clavecinistes*. I will look to understand the products of this practice—the many preludes that *have* been preserved through notation—as *entextualizations*, instances of improvisational discourse removed from their original, living context. In line with Moseley (2013), I will argue for an archaeological engagement with the texts of these preludes, transforming them into material for improvisational reworking. Using a prelude in F major by Louis Couperin as the basis for my own preluding, I will experiment with different ways of reading and playing with its musical materials. Building first upon Callahan's (2010) and Grazzini's (2014) hierarchical conceptions of improvisational practice, and then extending Callahan's (2012) observations on the potential flexibility of this hierarchy, I will argue for a highly deterritorialized model of improvisation in which the musical surface enters into conversation with structure. Ultimately, as I continue to assimilate material for my preluding, including material from preludes by D'Anglebert and Jacquet de La Guerre, the original source of these materials will become less important than the continual process by which they are reworked.

Next, the **Allemande** will explore some of the ways in which *mouvance* functions in seventeenth-century French keyboard performance. In contrast to the prelude, in which the piece's enduring identity is subsumed by the transient *becoming* of its improvisational origins, the various dance movements of my suite rely upon a tension or balance between identity and difference, stability and motion. Each piece in the suite continually forms an identity that is always already inflected by difference. I will argue therefore that the best way to uncover and mold the contours of a piece's identity is through improvisational experimentation, conceived—as in the prelude—as a continual conversation between musical surface and structure. This process will lead to an experiential understanding of the allemande's potential range of identities, understood within a positive space of

mouvance and a negative space of brokenness. The **Courante I** will extend this experimentation to encompass the contemporaneous practice of playing *doubles*, or variations. The *double* is a fairly unique space within this cultural setting, in which the performer amplifies or adds to the identity of a piece already subject to *mouvance*. My own *double* for the courante should therefore be considered a kind of collaboration with the composer, a newly formed identity twinned with the piece from which it developed. As I move onward from the first courante, I will pause for a brief **Interlude.** In it, I will argue that the boundaries between one identity and another—or between positive movement and negative brokenness—can only be understood from within the same practice in which such valuations are made. Like the practice of thoroughbass, then, which acknowledges existent yet flexible rules and boundaries governing the roles of performer and composer, the performance practice of the *clavecinistes* should be understood within this same non-discursive environment. In the **Courante II**, then, we will see what happens when a piece is "moved" past its breaking point, thus becoming another piece entirely. Finally, in the **Sarabande**, I will connect this seventeenth-century practice of *mouvance* with the contemporary practice of historically-informed performers. Using a performance by Skip Sempé, I will examine the extent to which *mouvance* can function orally and aurally as part of a living tradition. I will look to extend the notion of musical surface to encompass *all* the performative details—timing, dynamic, articulation, etc.—that are the performer's stock and trade. As such, the active dimensions in which a piece's evolving identity can move should be expanded to include these performative concerns. Sempé's performance, then, in its full *aural* richness, will be seen not just as a "reading" of a piece, but as an active contribution to the shaping of that piece's identity.

Prélude non mesuré

The prelude is an excellent place to start in our discussion of *mouvance*, particularly since this is where the stakes of maintaining a piece's "identity" are lowest. In seventeenth-century France, the

prelude was the genre in which improvisational activity was most clearly recognized and appreciated as such by listeners. Recalling now the difference I highlighted in Chapter Three between an improvisation-concept and an improvisation-practice, it is in the prelude that concept and practice meet. In his discussion of the improvised prelude, Grazzini (2014, 280–300) attempts to define an improvisation-concept for the French Baroque. He synthesizes a number of sources of historical evidence, with particular emphasis placed on Sébastien de Brossard's dictionary definitions of various improvisatory genres, including the *prélude, fantasia, ricercata, tastatura*, and *toccata*. In effect, these genres form a network of related ideas surrounding improvisation during the French Baroque, and each individual term thus sheds light on a particular facet of the improvisation-concept. Brossard describes the toccata, for example, in these terms:

> C'est à peu près comme Ricercata, Fantasia, Tastatura, &c. Ce qui distingue cependant la Toccate de ces autres especes de Symphonie, c'est que 1º elle se joüe ordinairement sur des Instrumens à claviers. Et 2º qu'elle est principalement composée pour l'exercice des deux mains l'une après l'autre, parce que l'on y affecte d'ordinaire des Points d'Orgue ou de longues tenües, tantôt dans la Basse, tandis que le Dessus fait des vitesses, des diminutions, des passages, des Tirades, &c. tantôt dans le Dessus, tandis que la Basse ou la main gauche travaille à son tour, &c.[2] (Brossard n.d., 187)

In this way, Brossard links the toccata with a number of other improvisatory genres, and also adds more detailed connotations of physicality and instrumental prowess. The *ricercata*, meanwhile, is described as *un èspece de prélude ou de fantaisie*, in which "le compositeur recherche les traits d'harmonie qu'il veut employer dans les pièces réglées qu'il doit joüer dans la suite" (114).[3] Brossard also links the genre to an ideal of spontaneity, noting that the *ricercata* is ordinarily played *sur le champs et sans préparation*. In sum, we may infer from Brossard's various definitions an improvisation-concept that

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[2] "It is somewhat like the Ricercata, Fantasia, Tastatura, etc. However, what distinguishes the toccata from these other genres is that, first, it is ordinarily played on keyboard instruments. And second, that it is composed principally for the exercise of both hands, one after the other, since one ordinarily restricts this to pedal points or sustained chords, sometimes in the bass, as the treble makes runs, diminutions, passages, tirades, etc., and sometimes in the treble, while the bass works in its turn, etc." (my translation).

[3] "The composer explores the harmonic ideas he wishes to use in the stricter pieces that follow" (my translation).

includes harmonic exploration (*recherche*), freedom, spontaneity, and virtuosity, and as Grazzini demonstrates, many of these features may be shown to apply to preludes as well.

As I have argued at length, improvisation was an essential *practical* element of seventeenth-century French keyboard culture; more or less all of the *clavecinistes* conceived their music using learned techniques of improvisation, even if the results would later be refined on paper.[4] Moreover, even after the general shape of the piece was established, composer-performers like Chambonnières would continue to vary their pieces in performance each time they played (giving them *nouvelles graces*, as Le Gallois would say). Such examples of improvisation-practice are, however, not necessarily aligned with the ideals of an improvisation-concept. In the case of Chambonnières's pieces, for example, it seems more appropriate to speak of *mouvance* than of any contemporaneous concept of improvising, preluding, fantasizing, or extemporizing. Chambonnières's practice points to a balance between movement (*mouvance*) and stasis (identity), where an improvisation-concept points instead to the act of creation itself. Even with Benson's (2003) definition of improvisation as a "reworking" of something that already exists, in a practice governed by the improvisation-concept, the emphasis is typically placed on the *new* things the improviser creates, not the *old* things that have been reworked.

This is exactly what a prelude does during the French Baroque. Indeed, it might be more appropriate to speak here of the act of *preluding* than of individual preludes as lasting pieces of music. Évrard Titon du Tillet, for example, describes the prodigious improvisational abilities of Élisabeth Jacquet de La Guerre (1665–1729) in the following terms:

> elle avoit sur-tout un talent merveilleux pour préluder & jouer des fantaisies sur le champ, & quelquefois pendant une demie heure entière elle suivoit un prélude &

[4] One might also imagine the possibility of composers working out their pieces solely at the writing desk, without recourse to the keyboard. C.P.E. Bach, for example, distinguishes between the pieces that his father "composed without instrument, but later tried out on one" and "those for which he took the material from improvisations at the keyboard" (Jones 2007, 31). Nevertheless, I would argue that, even in the case of the former method, such composers' work at the writing desk was deeply conditioned by prior experience at the keyboard.

> une *fantaisie* avec des chants & des accords extrêmement variez & d'un excellent goût, qui charmoient les Auditeurs.[5] (Titon du Tillet 1732, 636)

Titon du Tillet thus creates a strong association between the prelude and its act of creation. Jacquet *pursues* the prelude in the course of performance, created *sur le champ* in a manner highly reminiscent of Brossard's definition of the *ricercata*. Jacquet's preluding is therefore a staging of her music's continual becoming, conceived as an event created for a particular audience at a particular time. Here, it is Jacquet's activity that is most highly prized by cultural participants like Titon, her ability to unveil melodies and harmonies that will charm her audience. The "identity" of the ephemeral music being produced by Jacquet is of only secondary importance.

Of course, much of the evidence we have of what these improvised preludes actually sounded like comes from "composed" preludes that have been written down and preserved. Jacquet, for example, included several preludes in her first published book of harpsichord pieces (1687). Even though these pieces do not quite reach the fantastic heights suggested by Titon—they are all considerably shorter than *une demie heure entière*, after all—it is still quite plausible to imagine that they *could* have been improvised. The notation of these preludes is best understood in line with Moseley (2013) as an instance of *entextualization*, a process whereby discourse is transformed into 'text', removed from its original context, and re-used. In this case, Jacquet's improvisational activity (preluding) has been entextualized through musical notation, detached from its original time, place, and social context.

Moseley's two modes of engagement with musical texts—the literary and the archaeological—will play out in different ways over the various movements of my own suite.[6] Since this is only a

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[5] "She had above all a marvelous talent for preluding and playing fantasies on the spot, and sometimes for an entire half hour she would pursue a prelude and a fantasy, with highly varied melodies and harmonies, and of an excellent taste that charmed her audience" (my translation).

[6] I first presented these two modes of engagement at the end of Chapter Two, and I relied upon Moseley's archaeological mode throughout Chapter Four.

beginning, though—a prelude—I will concentrate in this section on an archaeological engagement with the text, focusing on the improvisational activities, or generating principles, from whose purview the text has since been detached. Effectively, then, this chapter's prelude is a prelude to *mouvance* itself, focusing on the activity of performance rather than its product, and focusing on the reworking of musical material rather than on what is being reworked. Like each subsequent section of this chapter, I will begin this reworking with a musical text of some kind. The perfect place to start would have been an unmeasured prelude (*prélude non mesuré)* by Chambonnières. Unfortunately, there are no preludes whatsoever attributed to Chambonnières, and moreover, there is very little evidence that any of the thirty-odd anonymous preludes preserved in manuscript are Chambonnières's either.[7] On the surface, this might seem quite surprising, given that other composers from Chambonnières's circle, including Louis Couperin and D'Anglebert, wrote a number of highly accomplished preludes that likely speak to an equally accomplished improvisational practice. Given that Chambonnières was of an earlier generation, it is certainly *possible* that Chambonnières never even played or improvised unmeasured preludes, let alone notated them. If he did play preludes, perhaps they were of a slightly more conservative mold than the toccata- and lute-influenced preludes of Couperin and D'Anglebert, similar perhaps to organ preludes and Plein Jeu movements, as well as the preludes by Étienne Richard in the Bauyn Manuscript. On the other hand, it is also tempting to imagine, as David Fuller (2001) does, that Chambonnières would have wanted to "cash in" on the success of the lutenists during the first half of the seventeenth century, and would therefore have also played *préludes non mesurés* after the example of lutenists, such as his contemporary François Dufault. Regardless of what actually

[7] Of the various anonymous manuscript preludes, there have been several suggestions of attribution to Chambonnières, though none have been substantiated. For example, David Fuller (2001) suggests, without any clear evidence for it, that some of the preludes from the Brussels Conservatoire manuscript (B-Bc 27220) *could* be Chambonnières's.

happened in the past, history, of course, has nothing definitive to say about this matter. As an historically-informed performer interested in *re-creating* Chambonnières's preluding practice, I must instead work imaginatively, experimenting with appropriate historical materials to arrive at creative solutions. To this end, I have selected a prelude by Louis Couperin (Bauyn no. 13) as my raw material.

Keeping with the theme of this chapter, my question will be, as always, what kinds of things can I do with this musical text? In what follows, I will detail the process by which an historically-informed improviser may read this text, and then explore ways of improvising with this reading. Reading a piece improvisationally, as we may recall from the previous chapter, means entering into an archaeological mindset, attending to the various processes by which the musical material might originally have been realized. My own readings and improvisations, presented here as audio files, are thus products of an experimental practice, in which I attempt to *re-create* some of these processes for myself. As in all the movements of this suite, the goal of my experimental practice is to learn about the workings of *mouvance* in the present context: here, the act of preluding.

I begin with a straightforward performance of the prelude itself:

Recording 5.1. Louis Couperin, Prélude in F major

I chose this prelude because it is, in many ways, already a part of me. It has long been one of my favorites, and I have performed it frequently in concert. But what can I *do* with the prelude, beyond just performing it? How can I transform this score into an *improvisational text*? If the Prélude in F major constitutes the entextualization of Louis Couperin's improvisational practice, how can this text be re-embodied as improvisation? Callahan (2010), we may remember, divides improvisational technique into three layers of activity: the dispositio (form), the elaboratio (*Satzmodell*, schema, etc.),

and the decoratio (the musical surface). He also proposes a number of pedagogical exercises designed to isolate these various levels. A first step in understanding this particular prelude *as improvisation*, then, might be to enact these isolation exercises, sifting through the various levels of embodied skill contained within the prelude. Although, I would argue, every improvisational activity is an opportunity to learn, the central goal here is not necessarily to gain skill as an improviser, as it was in Chapter Four, nor to learn to improvise in the style of Couperin. Indeed, as I argued in previous chapters, the practice of the *clavecinistes* demonstrates a high degree of interconnectedness between musical surface and structure, thus calling into question attempts to learn them separately. Instead, the goal here is to understand the *materials* used by Couperin, as well as his improvisational reworking of those same materials, and to incorporate them into my own developing style of improvisation.

Re-embodying the text

I begin, then, by focusing on the prelude's decoratio. Grazzini (2014), in his work on the unmeasured prelude as an improvised genre, also uses this three-fold division of musical material, in which the decoratio consists of a variety of "performance practice techniques" related to continuo playing, such as arpeggiation and melodic embellishment, while the elaboratio consists of a series of "thoroughbass formulas," analogous to the schemata discussed in Chapter Four. For now, then, the prelude's *material* consists in these thoroughbass formulas, represented in Figure 5.1. The reworking of this material consists in the particular way I realize the thoroughbass. Recording 5.2, for example, presents a melodically-simple realization with a fairly full texture.

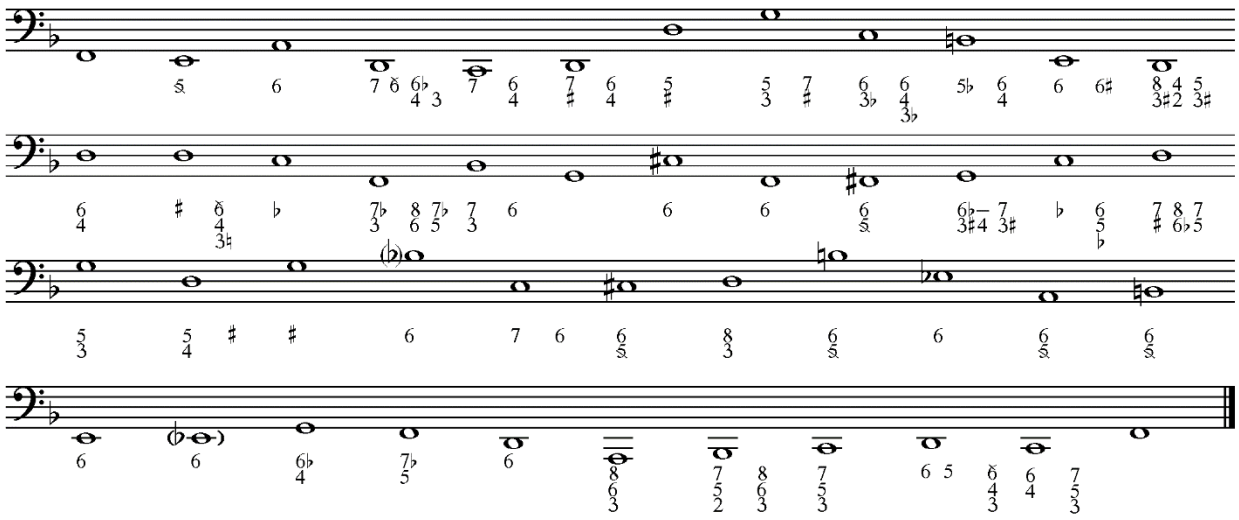

Figure 5.1. Thoroughbass Reduction of Louis Couperin Prélude in F major

Recording 5.2. Thoroughbass Realization of Louis Couperin Prélude in F major

So far so good. Actually, this process is not so dissimilar from the partimento exercises I constructed in the previous chapter. Without a set rhythm for the bass, though, the potential scope for variation in the decoratio is considerably expanded. Depending on how elaborate the arpeggiation or melodic ornamentation might be, different harmonies may be given different weights and timings than they might have received when played from Couperin's text. Recording 5.3, by way of example, attempts a vastly altered decoratio while still remaining in Couperin's gestural and figural language.

Recording 5.3. Alternative thoroughbass realization of Couperin Prélude in F major

Surface in Conversation with Structure

In focusing next on the elaboratio, we run into a problem. As appealing as Callahan's methodical approach to improvisation might be, it is also limited by the specific genres and styles he chooses to consider. Callahan, focusing on music of the German Baroque, expects a given "decoratio strategy"

to remain consistent throughout a piece, as in pattern preludes such as those in Bach's *Well-tempered Clavier*. Many of the other pieces that Callahan discusses—several different allemandes by Buxtehude, for example—tend also to display a high degree of motivic consistency, such that the "strategies" used to embellish a piece's elaboratio could be recognized, isolated, and reproduced. As I argued in the previous chapter, French keyboard music, on the whole, does not correspond well to this hierarchy. On the contrary, my work with the computational model I developed to simulate Chambonnières's pedagogy pointed to the interconnectedness of Callahan's improvisational tiers. In a courante in seventeenth-century French style, for instance, motivic consistency was found to be of less importance than graceful rhythmic and melodic balance between treble and bass. In such pieces, it seemed more useful to examine how a schema might be linked with particular realizations of that schema. What developed out of such work was not the mastery of a particular "decoratio strategy," but more an informed intuition about how to realize particular kinds of schemata in particular situations. The prelude, I would argue, demands even more than the courante this kind of abstract *feeling* for the rightness of a particular decoratio. Moreover, the genre expects nearly constant changes in musical surface: texture, arpeggiation, ornamentation, and rhythm are in a constant state of flux.

An exclusive focus on dispositio is an even more nebulous proposition. Callahan does not, unfortunately, provide an example of how one might maintain elaboratio and decoratio while varying the dispositio. Given that Callahan primarily considers the determination of dispositio to be a pre-improvisational decision, this is perhaps understandable. As a result, this is also where Grazzini parts ways with Callahan. In contrast to Callahan's understanding of dispositio as a pre-determined series of cadential waypoints that collectively establish the terms of the player's improvisational "problem-solving," Grazzini prefers to see the prelude's form as a matter of "problem-finding." Although Grazzini is not entirely explicit about this, I think that he recognizes that both approaches

may co-exist within a given improvisational practice. In this connection, Grazzini cites music theorist Philip Chang's (2011, 159-63) discussion of Louis Couperin's preludes, in which he compares the form of a prelude to the tripartite form of an oration. In this model, the first and last sections of the piece (the *Exordium* and *Finis*) are intended to clearly mark the piece's "tone." The middle section (*Medium*), however, has no pre-determined tonal function, leaving the composer-performer free to explore other (related) keys, as well as to employ a variety of cadential evasions and tonal deceptions. In such a model, then, we could expect an improviser to use a "problem-solving" approach to achieve clear tonic cadences at the beginning and end of the piece. In the middle of the piece, meanwhile, we might expect the improviser to use an exploratory "problem-finding" approach, consciously *avoiding* any strong cadence in the tonic. The distinction between these two approaches is somewhat analogous to Grazzini's distinction, discussed in Chapter Four, between "bottom-up" and "top-down" modulation. Just as I pointed there, however, to how the distinction between the two modulation strategies diminishes as an improviser gains skill, so too the gap between "problem-solving" and "problem-finding" shrinks with experience. The player discovers their improvisational path *in the course of making music*, and as such, the piece's dispositio evolves out of the player's simultaneous engagement with the music's structure (elaboratio) and surface (decoratio).

These considerations point again to the interconnectedness of Callahan's improvisational tiers. Without the artificial constraints of isolation exercises, could small changes in the decoratio have an appreciable effect on the elaboratio? Could enough changes in elaboratio also lead to changes in the piece's dispositio, particularly if these changes are viewed as newly found "problems?" We must remember that improvisation is something that takes place in real time. Even though Callahan presents his rhetorical model of improvisation as if its tiers were sequential, there is no inherent reason—assuming a highly skilled improviser—that the tiers could not be decided upon and realized

at the same time. Even if certain details are decided in advance as part of the performer's preparation, improvisation allows for these decisions to be modified or updated on the fly. In an article on the pedagogy of long-range planning in improvisation, Callahan (2012) convincingly argues that such improvisational decisions at the level of elaboratio can indeed have a profound effect on the improviser's decision-making with respect to form (dispositio). Unsurprisingly, Callahan's detailed example of how this might play out in practice takes place within the confines of the German *praeambulum*, a genre that, rather like the *prélude non mesuré*, works with tonal and phrasal flexibility (2012, 65-8).

One could rationalize these incursions of the local into the global in a variety of ways. If the improviser begins with a complete formal plan, then these adjustments to large-scale form might be considered *errors*. Alternatively, and more charitably towards the improviser, we might consider these local interventions to constitute *opportunities* for improvisation, problems to be found. Callahan, for one, calls this particular model of improvisational decision-making "idioms in conversation with form" (2012, 67). In the case of the unmeasured prelude, I would generalize somewhat further and speak of *surface in conversation with structure*, pointing to the kinds of connection between differing levels of surface and structure that can arise in improvisation. According to such a model, the player remains open at all times to musical possibilities, including both structurally-driven "problem-solving" and surface-driven "problem-finding" attitudes.

Working within this model, small, seemingly insignificant musical decisions can have a large impact on the overall trajectory of a piece. A surface in conversation with structure, then, precludes any sharp limit on the ways in which improvisers may interact with their musical material. In the following prelude (Recording 5.4), I experiment with this more flexible approach to creative reworking. In line with Chang's tripartite model of the prelude's form, I adopt a problem-solving approach for the opening (establishing the tonic) and closing (making a strong cadence), and a

Recording 5.4. Improvised Prélude on Couperin's Prélude in F major
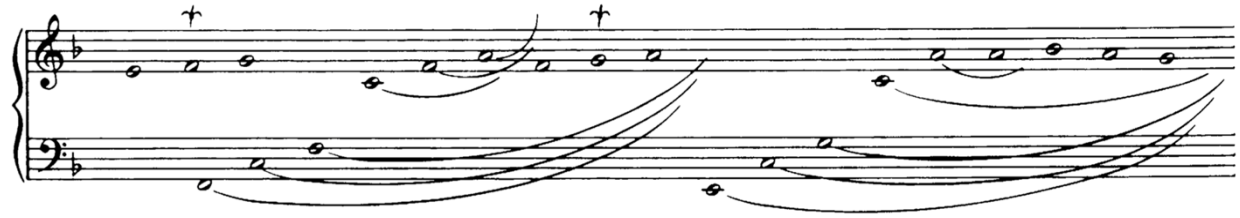
Figure 5.2. Opening Motive (Moroney 1985, 72)
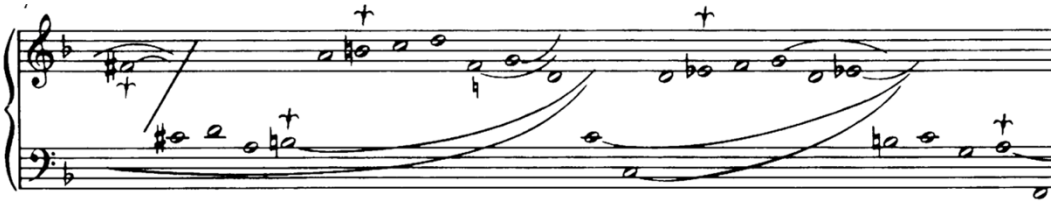
Figure 5.3. Lower-neighbor Pattern (Moroney 1985, 73)

Figure 5.4. Cadential Figuration (Moroney 1985, 74)

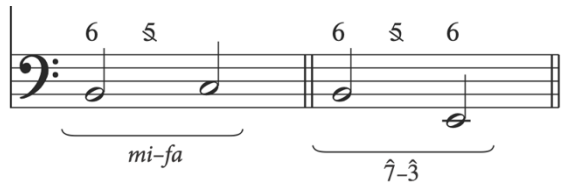

Figure 5.5. The "7-3 Evasion" Formula, compared to the "mi-fa" (Grazzini 2014, 208)

problem-finding approach for the longer middle section. I draw freely from the surface detail of Couperin's prelude, including its distinctive opening motive, its characteristic lower neighbor

pattern, and the wonderfully rich and colorful figuration of its final approach to the dominant (see Figures 5.2–5.4). I also draw from some of the prelude's most prominent schemata, particularly a frequently occurring schema that Grazzini names the "7-3 evasion," depicted in Figure 5.5 (2014, 208). And lastly, I revisit some of the same tonal paths as Couperin, though not necessarily in the same order or with the same degree of emphasis. So conceived, the prelude's raw material becomes an assemblage of musical ideas, techniques, and procedures to be drawn from freely—and reworked—in the course of preluding.

This sort of preluding depends upon the practice techniques I explored more fully in Chapter Four, corresponding to what I described there as the "B-phase." In particular, it depends upon careful reflection-in-action, wherein I examine and judge each musical moment as it passes. Although the methods are similar, the goal here is entirely different from the games, puzzles, and exercises I created and solved in Chapter Four. This is, instead, an experimental practice, stemming from an archaeological engagement with Couperin's raw materials, re-embodied through improvisational technique. In such a practice, I am free to work with the materials in any way I see fit, perhaps working with only one musical idea at a time. As I play, I am at once attempting to understand the material technically and musically, and explore its potential for development. The lower-neighbor pattern, for example, forces me to think about appropriate fingering and how the pattern might fit best into a chord. It also encourages me to think about the ways in which this figuration helps to lead from one harmony to the next. At the beginning of Figure 5.3, for example, the lower-neighbor pattern in the tenor, leading from A to B-natural, helps to create a sense of stepwise connection into the 6/5 harmony that emerges. As I experiment with this pattern, then, I begin to learn for myself something of its potentiality, the various things I can do with it in improvisation. As in Chapter Four, many if not most of these reflections are tacit and non-verbal, but their impact will still be felt in the ways I respond to the materials. As I continue to accumulate

new materials, I also explore the ways in which they interact: how the lower-neighbor pattern helps to prepare a "7-3 evasion," for example. Through this process of experimentation, reflection, and learning, I gradually arrive at preludes like the one presented in Recording 5.4.

At a certain point in the process of reworking, a prelude's materials begin to achieve a real independence from their original context. Consider, for example, some of figuration used by D'Anglebert in his published preludes, shown in Figure 5.6.
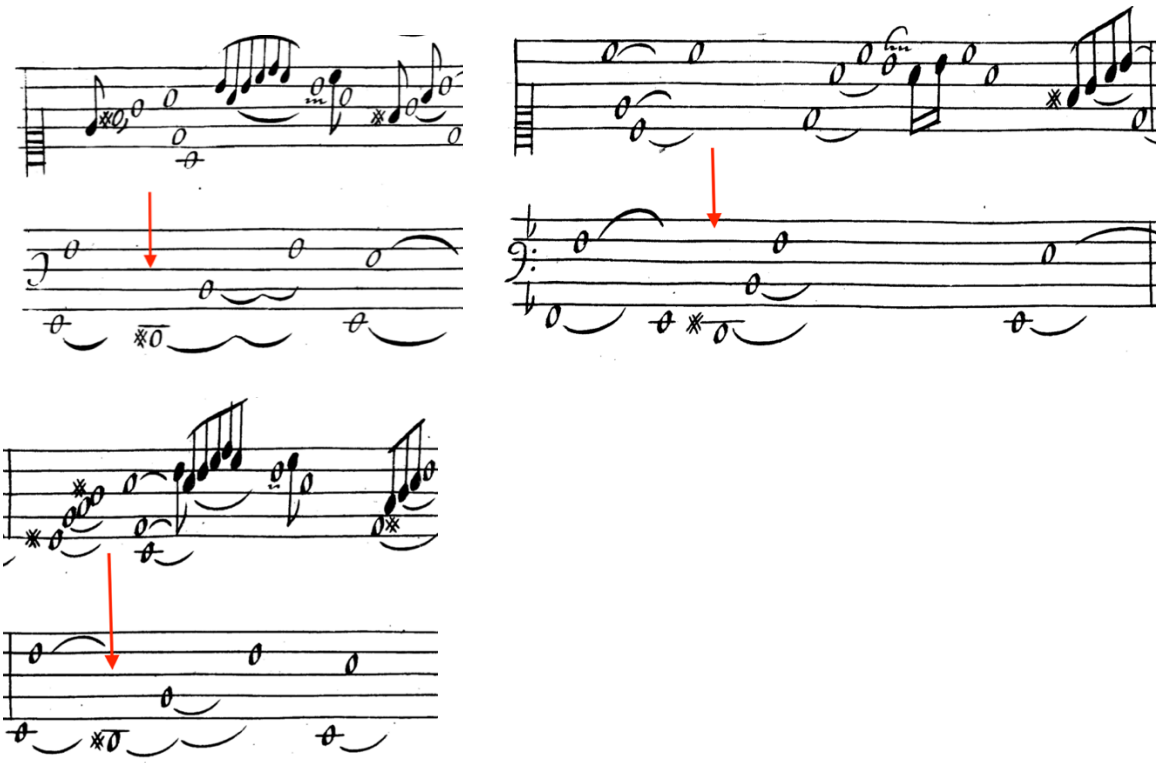
Figure 5.6. A D'Anglebert Prelude Module, as featured in all three of D'Anglebert's published preludes

This little module appears in a very similar form in all three of the preludes. It is not so much a part of any particular prelude's identity than it is a part of D'Anglebert's musical language. It is tempting to imagine that as different harpsichordists listened to each other—whether live, or through "notated" performance—they also may have borrowed and transformed each other's musical ideas. Perhaps I, as an historically-informed *claveciniste* myself, can then also permit myself to borrow, assimilate, transform, and recombine the musical materials I encounter, including this little module

of D'Anglebert's. This example is particularly telling because of its literal repetition through diverse musical contexts, but the same process of appropriation could be applied to any kind of musical material.
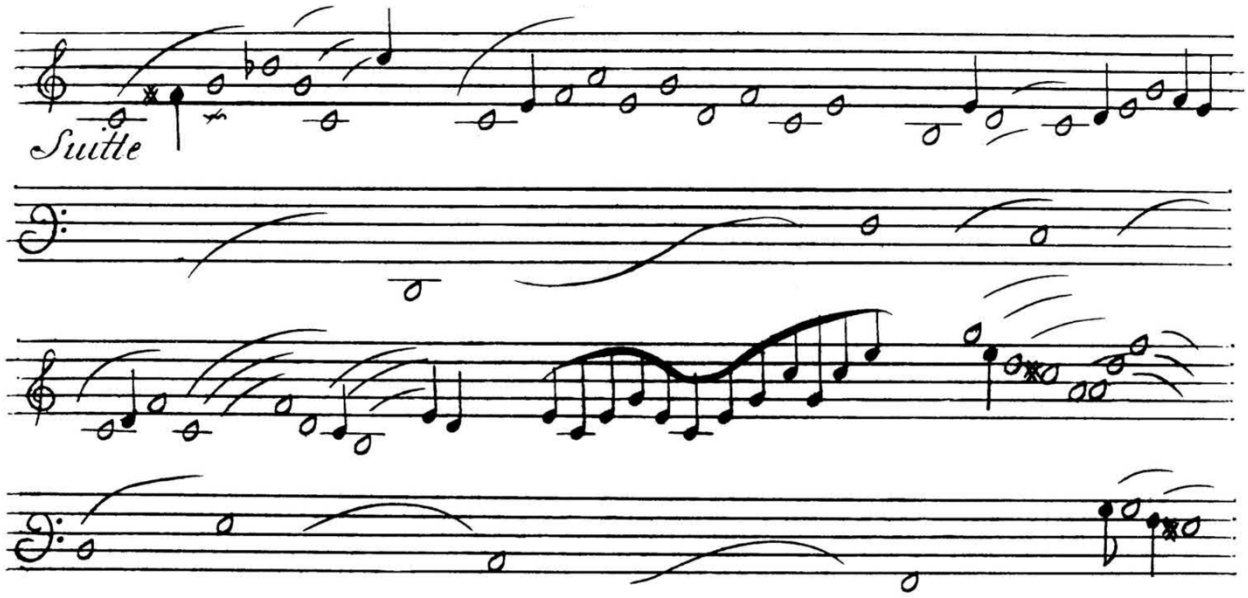
Figure 5.7. "Materials" from Jacquet's Prélude in A Minor (Jacquet 1687, 42)

Perhaps I might also wish to learn something from Jacquet de La Guerre, particularly since her improvisations were so highly esteemed in their day. I might take, for example, an extract from her prelude in A minor (see Figure 5.7). This short passage includes a number of techniques worthy of imitation, including its staggered parallel thirds in the right hand, its distinctive, fanfare-like arpeggio motif, and its striking movement from C-major harmony to A major. By a period of long acquaintance, patterns like this, together with tacit knowledge about how and when best to use them, become part of my own personally-authentic improvisational language. I might, for example, improvise a prelude of my own, without any intention whatsoever of reworking Couperin's, Jacquet's, or D'Anglebert's, that nevertheless recalls these pieces through its invocation of their singular musical materials:

Recording 5.5. Improvised Prélude in F major

Whose piece is this? For that matter, whose were any of the other preludes heard above? The way in which one answers this question will depend very much on the relationship between performer and receiver, as well as the ways in which these two parties interact within a performance tradition. In the performance tradition of the *clavecinistes*, the answer would be fairly straightforward, given that these are preludes, pieces whose identity only comes into being through performance activity. Considered purely within that same tradition, then, I would argue that each of these preludes is unique and created by me. With somewhat more nuance, however, I might also acknowledge the multitude of authors and sources—some named, and others anonymous—that converge at the moment of performance. The work I conducted in Chapter Four—learning Chambonnières's improvisational language—constituted only a beginning in the development of my own style. As a result of having spent considerable time immersed in this language, his re-created style forms a core element of my own. This style will, however, continue to grow, develop, and "move" as I encounter new decentering materials and techniques with which to work. Each encounter brings the opportunity of making the material my own, of allowing myself to be "moved" by it. At times, I may be aware of the specific sources of the various parts of my improvisational language; but more often, the origins of my musical material recede behind the newness of the improvisational act itself. *Mouvance* is not really at play here, given that the tradition in which I imagine my performance to be received is far more concerned with the *process* by which I rework material.

In this sense, improvising an unmeasured prelude is not so much a matter of working with specific musical materials. Rather, it is about improvising with an historical tradition. The nature of

the prelude genre is such that the activity of the performer—the performer's response to tradition—is of greater relevance than the specific pieces generated by that activity. To the performer, perhaps, the question of which materials are involved in the improvisation's 'reworking' may indeed be of practical importance. The creative process begins with some specific set of materials, to which I may respond through improvisation, be it a prelude I heard recently by an outstanding player (the Louis Couperin Prelude in F, or the preludes by D'Anglebert and Jacquet); or perhaps another piece in the suite I am about to play (the Chambonnières Allemande in F, coming up next); or even, perhaps, the mood or affect I wish to project on a given day. Any one of these—among many other sources or agents—might be a potential starting point for preluding. In each case, I would create a piece by improvising with one of these fixed points, responding to it creatively in performance, and experimenting with its contours. Such improvisation does not, however, take place within a musical vacuum. Rather, historical improvisation takes place within a tradition, or more correctly, several traditions: first, an historical tradition of seventeenth-century French preluding, as re-created in my own practice; second, an emerging tradition of historical improvisation in Western art music, created and shared by practitioners worldwide; and third, the omnipresent HIP-as-tradition, in which my own activities and those of other historical improvisers are judged and understood. This constitutes the web of tradition *in which* and *upon which* historical improvisers work.

Allemande

Our suite in F major continues with an allemande. One of my favorites is the Allemande in F major, GusC 46, from Chambonnières's second book of pieces. This allemande also appears in the Bauyn Manuscript (I, f. 33r), in a version that introduces a number of changes in texture, figuration, harmony, and rhythm. The first reprises of both versions are printed below in Figures 5.8 and 5.9,
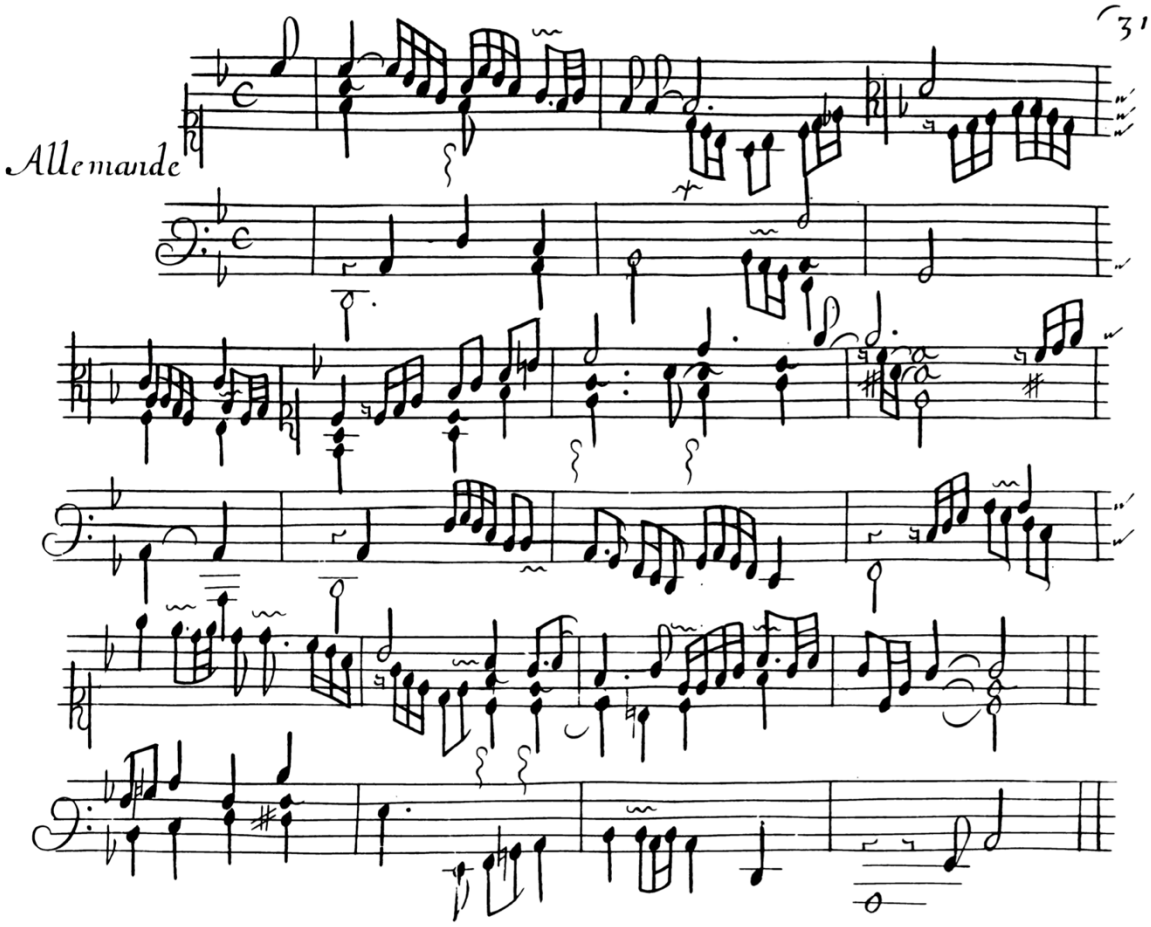
Figure 5.8. Chambonnières, Allemande in F major, Chamb II (1670, 31)

Recording 5.6. Chambonnières, Allemande in F major

together with recorded audio of Chambonnières's published version in Recording 5.6. As discussed extensively in Chapter Two, the *heterotextuality* of Chambonnières's *oeuvre*, as described by Fuller (1993), is some of the most tangible evidence we have of the workings of *mouvance* in seventeenth-century French keyboard culture. The co-existence of a piece's variants points to some concrete ways in which players understood the role of performance. The wide array of changes introduced by players (and preserved in notation through scribal transcription) represents nearly every conceivable musical parameter: meter, key, texture, melodic contour, figuration, ornamentation, and rhythm are
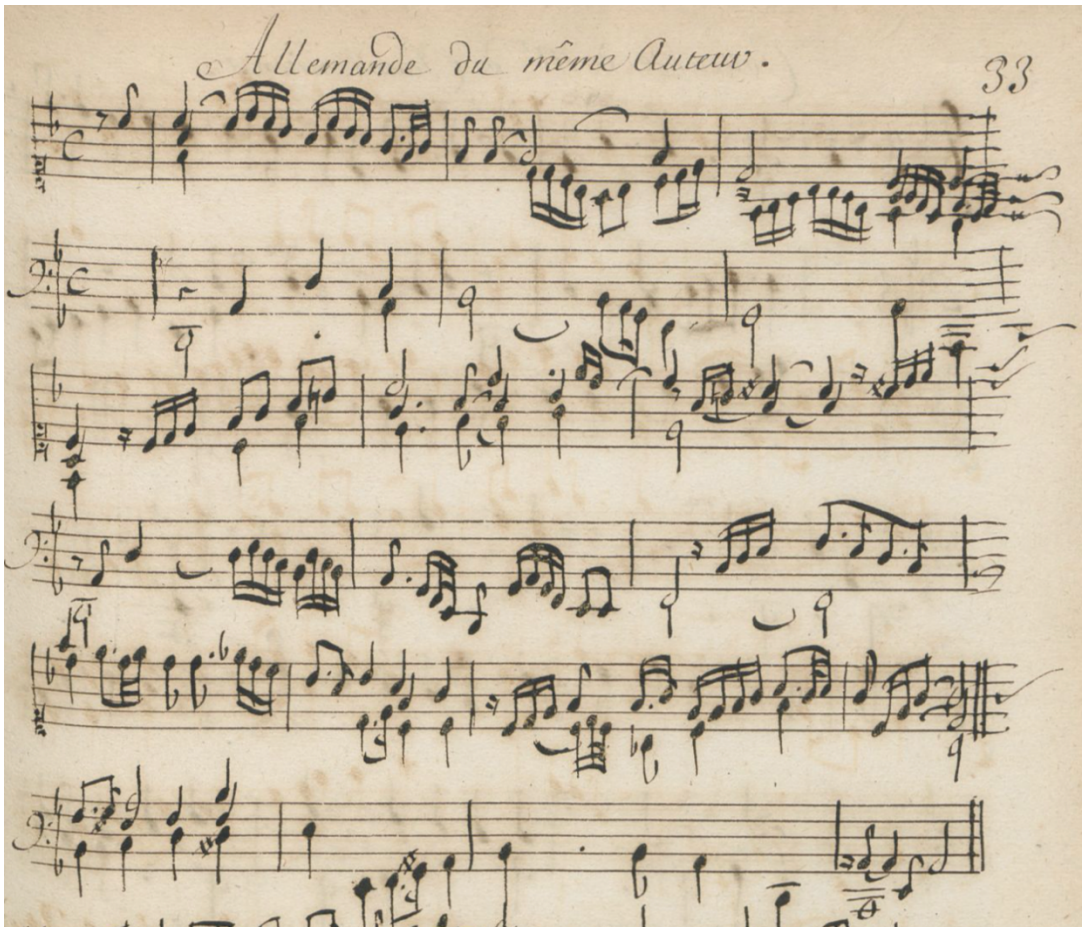
Figure 5.9. Chambonnières, Allemande in F major, the Bauyn Manuscript (I, f. 33r)

all potentially subject to variance. By comparing these variants, we as contemporary observers gain some access to knowledge about what kinds of "movement" were considered acceptable or common, and how far a piece could be moved before it was "broken." A typical historically-informed approach to playing this particular allemande might begin by comparing the two variants of the piece, and then constructing a minimally-specified score that only includes details common to both versions of the piece. The player could then create their own version of the piece in performance by ornamenting the minimal score with various kinds of detail.

The problem, though, is that no matter how exhaustive a collection of variants we might have, there is no objective way of marking the boundaries of the piece's identity. The minimally specified

score is a myth. We can always imagine—or even better, create—*one more* variant that seems to defy this provisional score, with a unique mixture of performerly interventions that, nevertheless, does not quite "break" the piece. Moreover, in a musical culture such as that of the *clavecinistes*, any attempt to form rigid distinctions between structural and surface interventions would prove a foolhardy venture. As the prelude showed earlier, surface and structure may often converse within improvisational practices.

As I have argued, I think a far more flexible and effective approach to *mouvance* in this music would go beyond issues of text. Rather than focusing on constructing the imaginary *Urtext* of Chambonnières's Allemande in F, we could instead attempt to *re-embody* the piece as improvisational activity. Just as with the Louis Couperin prelude, so too here we can learn to experience this piece *as improvisation* by diving into its various structural tiers of improvisational activity—its strata—and experimenting with ways of bringing those strata into conversation with one another. First, I might try maintaining the music's structure while improvising a new surface.

Recording 5.7. Chambonnières, Allemande in F major, New Surface

Next, I might try experimenting more freely with surface and structure in conversation. For example, some small changes in surface figuration in the middle of the allemande might motivate an entirely different way of passing to the dominant for the end of the first reprise.

Recording 5.8. Chambonnières, Allemande in F major, Surface in Conversation with Structure

The result of experimenting with these materials is a change in aesthetic sensibility. By attending to the improvisatory construction of the allemande—its patterns, tendencies, potentialities, and

contours—we gain a better appreciation for the way in which it provisionally *becomes what it is* in performance, for its differential identity through *mouvance*. A substantive change like the one we just heard, for example, has likely "broken" the piece, but recognizing this brokenness is, reciprocally, just another part of also recognizing the "wholeness" of other renditions. According to this model, the identity of the piece resides neither in any single essential text nor in a vast collection of variant texts. Rather, the piece exists as something experiential, created through hours of improvisational experimentation. It exists in the positive space of potential performances, and in the negative space of broken ones. After re-embodying the piece in this fashion, the act of performance transforms from something interpretive into something creative. As a result, the meaning of *mouvance* within performance has also shifted. The thing that moves is no longer textual but experiential, as is the space in which this movement takes place.

How can we represent this changeability in performance? The ideal, of course, might be to perform a piece multiple times in succession, giving it *nouvelles graces* each time. At the very least—and perhaps less tediously for the audience—we could take advantage of the repetition already built into the two-reprise form: two halves of an allemande, each half heard twice, each time with fresh charms. This is exactly what I have done in the following recording. The first time through presents the reading from Chambonnières's print, while the repeat gives my reworking.

Recording 5.9. Allemande in F major, with *nouvelles graces*

Courante I

One of the basic modes of *mouvance* practiced by the *clavecinistes* was the creation of *doubles*, or variations of a piece.[8] Beyond simply varying or "moving," though, the *double* also entails the notion of amplifying or adding to the piece. Just as playing styles could be represented textually in manuscripts, so too the improvisational practice of playing *doubles* could be represented through notation. As we saw in Chapter Two in a discussion on D'Anglebert's *doubles* of Chambonnières's pieces, the *double* involves a degree of performerly intervention comparable to that of other kinds of *mouvance*, and it also allows for variance in a similarly wide range of musical parameters. In the case of D'Anglebert, for example, we saw that, although mainly applied to the melody, ornamentation could also potentially be added to any voice or part. We also saw that these *additions* could be balanced by subtractions or simplifications applied to the other parts.

As we observed in the allemande, the kind of *mouvance* represented by Chambonnières's heterotextual corpus preserves the identity of its pieces. The *double*, however, represents a fairly unique meeting ground for two musicians, whether considered as composers, performers, improvisers, or some combination of the above. The *double* is a musical space in which the contributions of the piece's composer and the piece's amplifier are both recognized and attributed.[9] Consider, for example, the way that the Allemande "Le Moutier" *de Chambonnières* and its variation*, par Mr Couperin,* are presented in the Bauyn manuscript (Figure 5.10). The *double,* then, indicates a

[8] For more on the *double*, see the discussion in Chapter Two. In seventeenth-century France, *doubles* could be added to nearly any sort of genre, and more generally, a *double* is what vocal composers like Bacilly called their ornamented second verses of *airs de cour*. The *clavecinistes* do, however, seem to have been particularly fond of writing and playing *doubles* for courantes.

[9] Of course, it is also possible that the "composer" of the original piece and the "performer" of the *double* might be the same person, as is the case for D'Anglebert's notated *doubles* for his harpsichord pieces, as well as for Bach's various written-out *doubles* for movements from his English Suites. In this case, it may be convenient to imagine the composition and the *double* as having been written by two different personae. Even if these personae are not entirely distinct, they nevertheless reach a creative meeting point in the *double*.

particular kind of *mouvance* in which both the enduring identity of a piece as well as its continual transformation are simultaneously acknowledged by cultural participants.
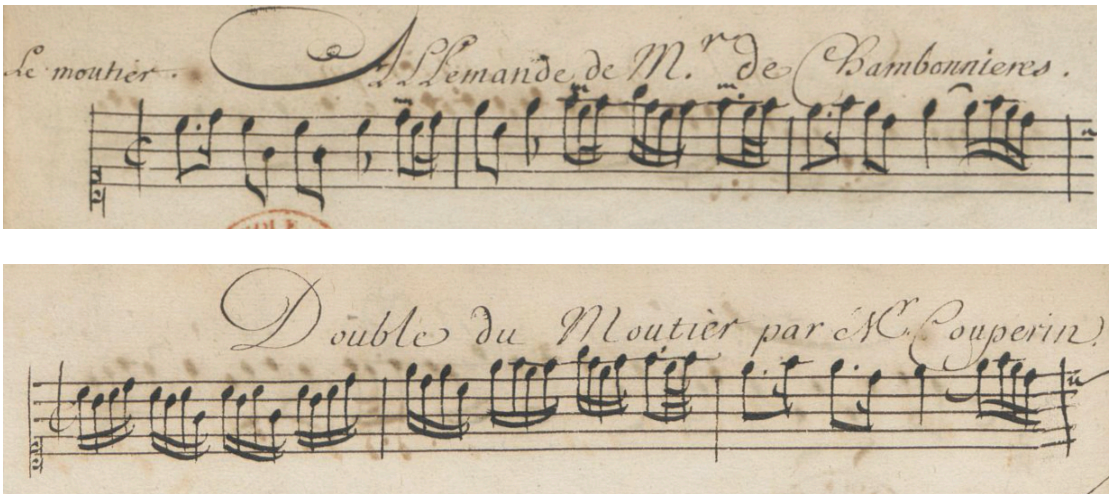
Figure 5.10. The Allemande "Le Moutier" and its *Double*, the Bauyn Manuscript

For the next movement in my suite, then, I will take the Courante in F major, GusC 47 (shown in Figure 5.11), and I will also add a *double* to it. Recording 5.10 presents a straightforward reading of the courante.

Recording 5.10. Chambonnières, Courante in F major

Given that playing a *double* is an improvisational practice, it stands to reason that it should be explored in the same way as the genres already discussed. Playing a *double* is, however, an even more complex activity than these earlier cases, given that its *mouvance* is applied to a piece *already subject to mouvance*. In other words, we are now involved in a kind of "doubled" *mouvance*! The first step, then, is to re-embody the courante as improvisational activity, and after enough experimentation, I might eventually arrive at a performance like the one presented in Recording 5.11.
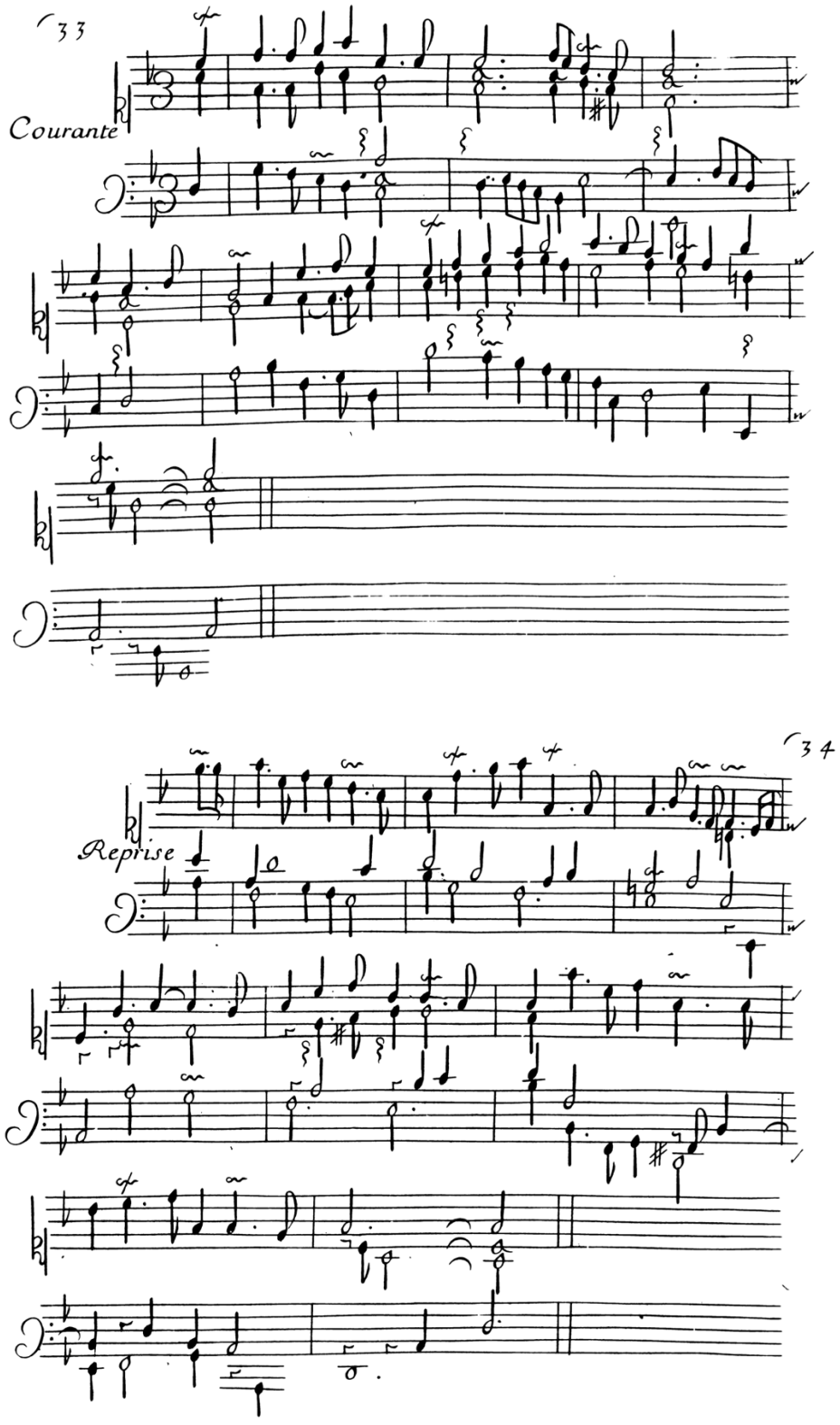
Figure 5.11. Courante in F major, GusC 47

Recording 5.11. Courante in F major, with *mouvance*

Creating this moveable, experiential form of the courante entails a corresponding change to our conception of the *double* as well. Rather than viewing our job as one of *adding* detail or ornamentation to something relatively simple, we should instead think of it as *moving* our flexible conception of the piece towards activity and plenitude. The *double* is just another mode of *mouvance*, then, in which the improviser is focused on creating an impression of relative amplification. Given that the *double* is intended to be a sort of joint effort between the piece's original composer and its subsequent performer, it also becomes possible to move the piece somewhat more radically than usual without breaking it. Following this ideal, then, we might end up with something like the following Recording 5.12.

Recording 5.12. *Double* of the Courante in F major

—Interlude—

What happens when we move too far? What happens when the piece is perceived by cultural participants as "broken?" In the case of the prelude, we saw that the genre's status within seventeenth-century French culture obviates such questions. The example of the prelude should give us pause as we excavate the ways in which *mouvance* and improvisation function in tandem within different spheres of activity. We should, therefore, expect that the manner in which the *clavecinistes* understood *mouvance* in dance pieces might differ from that of preludes.

In the case of the first courante, the piece's experiential contours were developed through improvisational experimentation. Up until this point, I have used this technique to re-create the

creative process by which—I imagine—Chambonnières might have originally improvised his pieces, thereby appropriating their materials for my own use. As I argued in Chapter Two, the basic mode of engagement of the *clavecinistes* was not one of execution or repetition, but rather one of re-creation, and appropriation. Each new performer to approach a given piece was therefore expected to create the piece anew, transformed through improvisational technique. This process of re-creation, which I have called *mouvance*, depended on culturally-agreed-upon limits on the extent to which a piece could be "moved" before it was "broken." That is, the boundaries of a piece's identity were formed and thus constrained by cultural practices and norms, thereby determining the extent to which improvisational activity could work upon a piece without a fundamental shift in its identity. It seems clear, based on the kinds of variance observed in the sources for Chambonnières's music, that *mouvance* was restricted to what we would mostly label as surface elements, rather than structural elements. The kinds of changes we observe are then mostly—though not exclusively—a matter of "performerly" concern like detail of texture, figuration, rhythm, and so on. As I have tried to demonstrate at length, though, it is very difficult to define in any precise way the full scope of any changes that might be allowed, and those that might not. The boundaries between a stable identity and a broken one are slippery, and hence, I have relied on my own experimental practice to discover these porous lines for myself. How, though, might the *clavecinistes* have understood these boundaries themselves?

In this connection, it may be useful to make a comparison with a more widely-understood practice. Thoroughbass, for example, can be considered in many situations a practice with very clearly defined boundaries between appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Based on simple presentations of continuo practice (*accompagnement*) from early eighteenth-century France, the *basse continue* relates only to a specific part of a composition (the bass line), leaving the player free to ignore the other parts; it determines the harmony entirely by its figuring, leaving the player to

concentrate solely on issues of voice leading; and finally, it presents very clear rules for how the voice leading should be managed and realized—in four parts, for example—leaving the player to focus on *how* to satisfy those rules.[10] To use the language of Deleuze and Guattari, continuo playing at an amateur level is a relatively *territorialized* practice with respect to the musical culture of the French Baroque, having clearly established boundaries for the player's activity and interaction with the composition. As players gain experience, continuo playing gradually becomes relatively *deterritorialized*. We learn how to imitate and engage with other melodic parts of the composition, how to deviate from or expand the harmony, and how to vary the texture of our realizations, for example. Certain techniques we might formerly have imagined to belong to the territory of composition become *reterritorialized* as elements of a specific stratum of performance, the playing of thoroughbass. At the same time, we may begin to see techniques that belonged solely to performance now reterritorialized as a part of (oral) composition. In the preludes above, for example, I used the technique of thoroughbass to construct harmonies, textures, and voice leading above a bass line.

Critically, improvisation is the process by which these relative deterritorializations and reterritorializations are effected. Improvisation functions as a creative vehicle for learning about one's own musical practice, in which the space between practices like thoroughbass, ornamentation, performance, and composition is constantly reconfigured, but never collapsed. For this reason, experienced harpsichordists in seventeenth-century France had real yet flexible rules governing their performance culture. The identity of a piece of music, as it comes into being within a particular

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[10] This presentation of "beginner's" continuo playing may seem overly simplified. Nevertheless, there are several aspects of typical contemporary continuo pedagogy that are entirely absent from French sources, including the arrangement of the continuo accompaniment with respect to the solo parts. In Jesper Christensen's assessment, "it is nowhere stated that the position of the chords stands in any relation at all to the solo part. Nor is there any warning against occasionally doubling a note in the solo part. The position of the chords is always treated exclusively in relation to the bass" (Christensen 2002, 40).

culture through *mouvance*, was shaped in reference to the complete web of concepts and practices shared by that culture. In seventeenth-century France, authorship and identity most likely originated in (oral) composition, while the subsequent shaping of that identity arose in performance. The implication, then, is that performance practices like thoroughbass and ornamentation really were the primary source of energy for the piece's perpetual "movement" over time, but that the scope of these practices was also flexible and ever-changing. Improvisation, both then and now, is a powerful tool for understanding—and extending—the ways in which *mouvance* can potentially function, given that it blurs and realigns the boundaries between performance and composition. In such a flexible practice, it is only possible to speak in relative terms. A performance that invents an entirely new tune for a piece has 'moved' relatively further than one that retains the original one; given that inventing a new tune is usually deemed outside the realm of "performance practice," it might therefore also be considered "broken." Such valuations of good or bad, further or closer, moved or broken, are made in reference to shared cultural understandings of *what performance (of a piece) is*. Within such a culture, wherein the idea of performance itself has been set in motion through improvisation, these valuations are even more difficult to adjudicate, given that each participant may have a slightly different understanding of their role as a performer. It is for this reason that musical notation is an inadequate means for encapsulating the fullness of possibility within a piece. This possibility can only be grasped through recreating the rich, creative experience of music-making in which these pieces originally "moved."

Courante II

Earlier, in the allemande and courante, I used improvisation as a tool for uncovering the play between composerly and performerly personas within a given piece. The result of these experiments was a greater understanding of how a piece's identity could be 'moved' within performance, as well as what specific factors might contribute to a given piece's identity. Although the experimental

practice itself is relatively unconstrained, the performances that result from this practice are—quite self-consciously—constrained by my developing understanding of performance and *mouvance*. What happens, then, when I remove these constraints?

In this connection, we may recall Lutz's several "phases" of improvisation, discussed in Chapter Four. Up until this point, I have been working primarily with the A- and B-phases. In the A-phase, that entails relatively off-the-cuff—*sur le champs*—improvised reworkings of the material, and in the B-phase, experimentation and rehearsal with the results of the A-phase. In the course of experimenting with the first courante, I might arrive at a performance that "moves" rather far from the version included in Chambonnières's 1670 print.

Recording 5.13. Improvisation on the Courante in F major

Since I came to this result by reworking the Courante in F, I might perhaps choose to present it as a performance *of* the Courante in F. By this point, it should be fairly clear that, for the *clavecinistes*, such a performance would likely be considered to have moved too far. In comparison to my earlier performance of the courante, I have now made numerous alterations to the melody, the bassline, the texture, the rhythm, and the phrase structure. At the level of the piece's elaboratio, these changes have extended to additions or expansions of certain schemata, and substitutions, deletions or contractions of others. Although the piece does follow more or less the same formal plan as Chambonnières's, it *feels* like something new. My feeling for this shift in identity undergone by the courante, having been formed through hours of artistic experimentation, is a part of my informed intuition or aesthetic sensibility. This aesthetic sensibility toward issues of identity and *mouvance* is a vital part of what I am attempting to develop here through HIP-as-method, using an imaginative engagement with history to re-create a specific performance culture. From this perspective, I have

very little choice but to deem this performance of Chambonnières's courante "broken." In the absence of an opinion from a real, living and breathing harpsichordist from the *ancien régime*, my own opinion here will have to do.

Not wanting to be content with such a negative valuation, how might I re-consider the identity of this piece? What name can I give it that acknowledges both its newness and its original source? From a more contemporary perspective, I might choose to call it something like "Improvisation on a Courante by Chambonnières." Although this turn-of-phrase is something the *clavecinistes* would likely not have recognized, the formulation is reminiscent of others that were indeed used, such as the "*Double* on the Courante" discussed earlier.

Gradually, as I experiment with this piece during the B-phase, I may find that I tend to arrive at stable patterns from performance to performance, falling happily into familiar grooves. These "grooves" are analogous to what DeLanda (2013), following Deleuze, calls "singularities," or more evocatively, "attractors."[11] On this model, a piece's *mouvance* is analogous to an object's *state space*, which mathematically models an object's "degrees of freedom," the ways in which it can move or change. An object's change of state over time can then be modeled as a trajectory moving through this state space, just as a piece might also "move" over the course of performance. A singularity or attractor, then, acts to influence these trajectories, drawing them in through their "basin of attraction." Importantly, however, this singularity is never actually reached by any point of the trajectory; rather, trajectories only continually approach the singularity asymptotically. In this way, singularities define the long-term tendencies of a physical system, guiding processes as they reach stable yet fluctuating final states. Furthermore, a system may also be defined by multiple sets of

[11] Before transforming them into philosophical concepts, DeLanda introduces these terms at a metaphorical level, adapting their meaning and usage from mathematics and the theory of dynamical systems. For my purposes here, this metaphorical level will suffice.

attractors, each offering its own potential final state for the system. At equilibrium, the attractive power of a singularity remains obscured by the stability of the trajectories surrounding it. Moreover, the system's equilibrium—the inability of its trajectories to shift from one basin of attraction to another—also obscures the real existence of any other singularities within the system. When the system is pushed far past equilibrium, however, through an increase in the volatility and strength of its intensive differences, the reality of these multiple attractors quickly becomes apparent as trajectories shift from one attractor to another.

In the language of *mouvance,* these multiple attractors collectively represent the potentiality of the piece, each attractor representing a potential identity for the piece within performance. Critically, however, the trajectories of the state space of *mouvance* represent processes. My work thus far has emphasized the intensive processes of improvisation, creating what I called a *chaotic, creative field of potentiality*, analogous to a system far from equilibrium. When I allow myself to assume stable patterns of performance, however, I effectively allow the piece to settle into equilibrium, constraining the scope of its *mouvance* around a single attractor, potentiality, or identity. At equilibrium, a single "ideal" attractor guides and influences the trajectories constituted by improvisational processes. Performerly details gradually sediment into composerly ones. This process, in which I come to settle on a sort of "ideal" form for the courante, corresponds to Lutz's C-phase. I may arrive at something like the following:

Recording 5.14. Edwards, Courante in F major

Although Lutz suggests that this stage may often involve notation, there is no particular reason why notation is absolutely necessary for preserving this "ideal" form. So long as the memory of the composer-performer is up to the task, the newly created piece may persist as an *oral composition*. In

this connection, we should recall the discussion from Chapter Two about Chambonnières's practice of oral composition, leading to Le Gallois's curious anecdote about Hardel transcribing numerous pieces that, Fuller surmises, "previously existed nowhere but in the head of Chambonnières" (Fuller 1993, 197). The courante I have presented here is also now perfectly positioned for Lutz's D-phase, in which my reworked courante could itself be reworked through improvisation. Effectively, the D-phase is just another A-phase, but with two essential differences: first, that beginning with an oral composition obviates any seeing-through demanded by notation; and second, that we have *moved* the piece's point of origin far from where we first began.

Sarabande

As I mentioned in Chapter Two, my primary point of entry to Chambonnières's music was not as a listener, but as a player working from the 1670 print. One of the few exceptions to this was an encounter with a 1992 recording of Skip Sempé, which stands as one of the earliest devoted to the works of Chambonnières. In many respects, it is quite experimental: Sempé includes a number of improvised preludes, as well as a few tracks accompanied by theorbo.[12] What strikes me about this recording in particular is Sempé's inimitable performance style, and his reading of the Sarabande in G, GusC 126 is a perfect example of this.[13] The rhythm is flexible and elastic, while still maintaining a reasonably clear sense of the meter. His phrasing and melodic shaping tend towards longer, horizontal lines, sometimes creating long-breathed phrases of seven or eight measures. His use of overholding (or overlegato) emphasizes the harpsichord's capacity for building up resonance.

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[12] A number of French writers mention the combination of lute and harpsichord as a possibility for performance, including Le Gallois. See Fuller (1976, 23).

[13] Sempé's Chambonnières album is not easily available on most digital platforms, but his 2004 reading of the Sarabande in G from "Versailles: L'île enchantée" has been reissued several times, and he also has a recorded video performance on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjQWzlENCVg

Together, these ephemeral musical qualities, resistant to notation yet preserved through recording technology, constitute the core of Sempé's style as a performer.

Beyond such intangible qualities, there are also aspects of Sempé's performance style that *could* be notated, details that go beyond the specifics of whatever musical text he used for his performance. In order to understand the manner in which Sempé changes or varies Chambonnières's piece, we should first establish his textual reference point: that is, the specific text that Sempé is *seeing through*. This particular sarabande is not included in Chambonnières's print, but it does come down to us in two different versions: a reading in a manuscript in the Sainte-Geneviève library in Paris (F-Psg Ms. 2348/53, f. 15r–15v), and one from the Bauyn manuscript (I, f. 49r). At the time Sempé first recorded the piece, the only published edition of this piece would have been that of Brunold and Tessier (1925), which presents the reading from Bauyn (see Figure 5.12). Many of the changes Sempé introduces ought to remind us of the variance observed in the sources for Chambonnières's music. Consider, for example, the way in which Sempé realizes the last four bars of the first reprise. In measure 7, for instance, he considerably alters the melodic and rhythmic profile of the right hand, emphasizing a relatively-dissonant D in place of Bauyn's more consonant C. And later, in measure 10, he re-voices the chord on the downbeat to include a tenor E, played with a long *pincé* (or mordent). These alterations, along with many others Sempé introduces, are analogous to the interventions by D'Anglebert in Rés-89ter. In lieu of detailed, performerly notation—which as I argued in Chapter Two with Cypess (2007) could give some measure of permanence to the transitory qualities of performance—Sempé has used recording to achieve the same feat. It is a kind of notation in sound, just as Chambonnières's engravings were a kind of sound in notation.

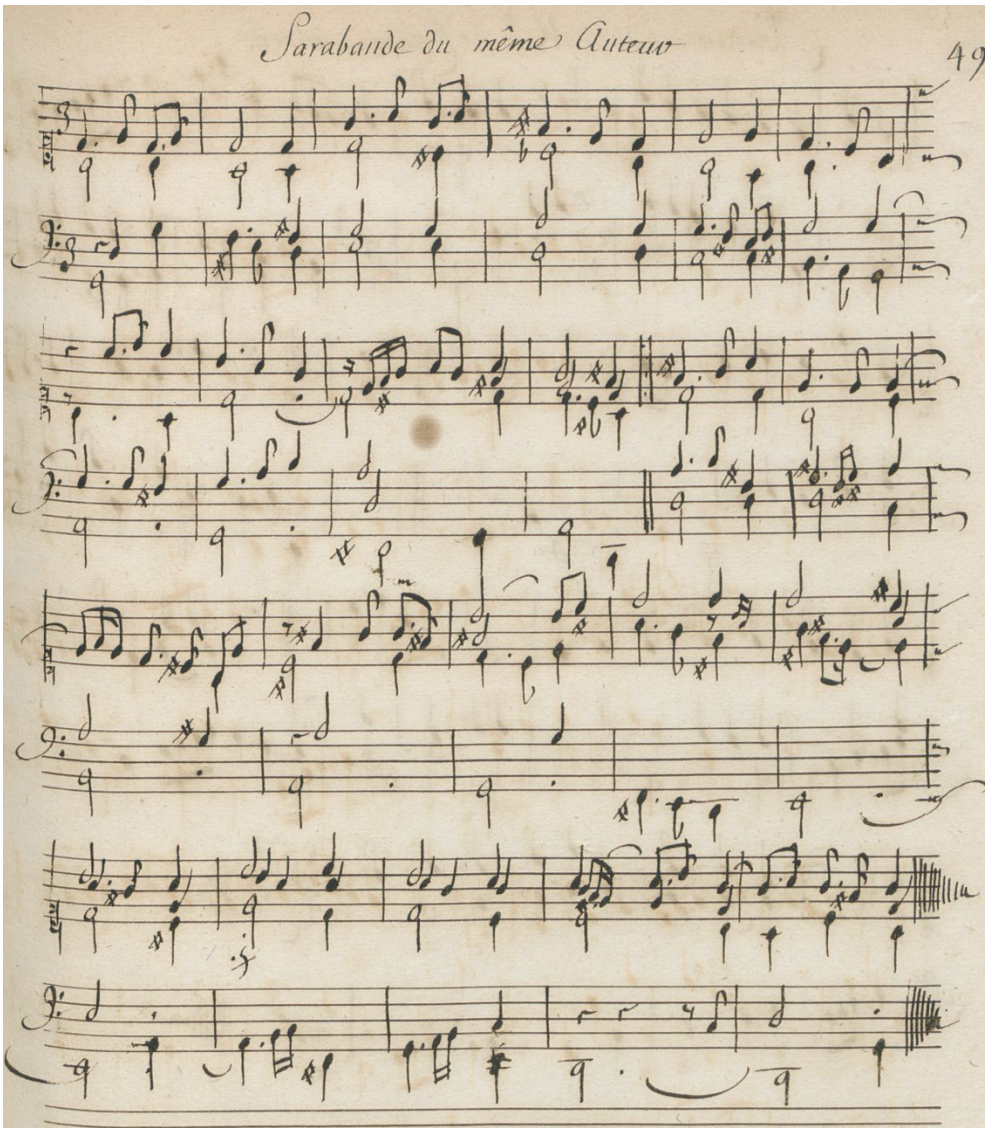

Figure 5.12. Chambonnières: Sarabande in G major, GusC 126a

Sempé's recording is a potent reminder of how musical *mouvance* is an essentially aural/oral phenomenon. Nowadays, we may infer a great deal about the workings of *mouvance* from the variant readings presented in historical sources, but these notated *traces* are just that: mere traces of a much larger oral tradition of performance. The identity of a piece of harpsichord music within seventeenth-century culture was in a perpetual state of becoming, and various musical *texts* of all kinds—including engravings and manuscripts, but also, crucially, performances—contributed to this process. Just as we observed in Chapter Two the difficulty in separating surface from structure, we

might now also find separating a piece from its style of performance similarly thorny. In the culture surrounding the *clavecinistes*, a piece's identity could only emerge through performance. After all, composers like Chambonnières created their pieces through improvisation and experimentation at the keyboard (i.e. performance), engraved editions attempted to capture a piece *together* with a style of performance, and even fairly simple, "bare-bones" manuscript readings like those in the Oldham manuscript inevitably include some details—of texture and rhythm, for example—that might otherwise be determined in performance. The piece continually *becomes itself*—in its own difference—through the medium of performance, notated or otherwise. Moreover, a given piece's identity cannot be located in any single text or performance, valid for all times, places, and people. Since the piece is constantly in motion, we can only attempt to capture the piece's differential *becoming-itself* as a kind of snapshot, one moment in time, one provisional identity amongst many. The complex, *moving* identity of a piece, therefore, only emerges through a negotiation of individuals: individual texts, performances, performers, listeners, and identities. Sempé's recording, then, provides one such provisional identity, created through a unique mixture of performerly style and compositional substance.

For a more complete description of this identity, one that acknowledges its mobility, we must look towards the role of performance within musical culture. I have already detailed the process by which I move from *reading* a text to *re-embodying* it as improvisation. We have seen how improvisational practice thus enables a space for creative experimentation, in which normal boundaries between surface and structure are dissolved, entering instead into conversation. This is the space in which the various dimensions of a piece's identity are relatively deterritorialized through experimentation, and subsequently reterritorialized in performance. We should now also recognize that deterritorialization makes this an *open* space, in which external ideas, techniques, and influences

can be brought within the territory of the text. In other words, it is a space that enables creative engagement with *intertexts*.

As I experiment with playing the sarabande, it is nearly impossible for me not to hear Sempé's performance in the background. It is a part of the musical space I inhabit when I play this piece, and it has a determinate influence on how I re-create the piece in performance. For example, Sempé's unique realization of measure 7 has come to "feel right" for me, and I very rarely deviate from it. His version of measure 10 with its characteristic long *pincé*, on the other hand, feels more like an option, one amongst many. Regardless of whether I choose to imitate, modify, ignore, or negate Sempé's intertext, the fact remains that these are performance decisions that are made in reference to another performance, another text. I may not be entirely conscious of these decisions at all times. Indeed, most of the time my memory of Sempé's performance disappears entirely within the piece, forming yet another of the piece's innumerable contours. Even so, Sempé's reading forms a vital part of the sarabande's still-emerging identity, forming one intertext within the larger text of my own performance.

Sempé's recording reminds us, then, that *mouvance* can be not just an historical process, but a contemporary one, operating within living traditions of musical performance. The tradition in which I work as an historically-informed performer is, of course, not solely of my own devising. Rather, HIP-as-tradition encompasses the entire field of agents and ideals by which my musical performances will be evaluated. Since Sempé is also part of HIP-as-tradition, the way in which he understands Chambonnières's sarabande will also have an effect on others involved in this same tradition, including both performers and listeners. Depending on the specific receivers of Sempé's performance, they might consider Sempé to have "moved" the piece in a highly positive way or, perhaps, to have "broken" it; in such a case, Sempé's performance would still remain involved in the piece's *mouvance*, but only as a kind of negative impression of *what the piece is not*. A piece's *mouvance* is

therefore not solely a personal matter, since it participates in a cultural setting—HIP-as-tradition—with shared values, standards, and practices. There is no single *Urtext,* no single identity. There is only *mouvance*, encompassing the full range of identitites assumed by a piece within a performance tradition.

Finally, in thinking about *mouvance* as a living process, we return to the ephemeral, impermanent qualities of performance that notation can only suggest. To what extent do these performative details—timing, tone color, phrasing, etc.—contribute to the identity of a piece? How much of that intangible quality of Sempé's performance style is wrapped up and preserved within the identity of Chambonnières's sarabande? As I think about the impression that Sempé's recording makes, it may in fact be the ephemeral, "incidental" qualities of his playing that grab me the most: the rich, sustained tone, the broad expansiveness of the downbeats. In other words, these are a large part of what *affects* me as a listener. These are details that resist any attempt at notation, yet remain audible through performance and have been given permanence through recording technology. These are the kinds of details that add up over the course of a performance to contribute to the piece's *affect*, its power to literally move me, to effect "the passage from one experiential state of the body to another" (Massumi in Deleuze and Guattari 1987, xvi). Surely this affect, created through the "incidental" details of performance, must be considered an integral part of the sarabande's emerging, moving identity.

In a deterritorialized space of improvisation, ephemeral details take on new importance. To what extent might composerly detail that *can* be notated have an effect on performerly detail that *cannot*? Or, more critically, to invert the question, how might performing—concerned with intangible, elusive, affective qualities—impact composing? In effect, this is merely a repetition of the same binary between surface/structure and substance/style, albeit transposed to an even more elusive plane. Just as was the case earlier, the solution to these questions is to be found in deterritorialized

musicking. Within an improvisational practice, there are no compositional decisions, no performance decisions; instead, there are *musical* decisions, operating within a deterritorialized musical practice. Within my own practice, for example, I might attempt to recreate something of the same *text* that Sempé uses—albeit transposed to F major for my own suite—and, in a creative moment, reach an affect different from Sempé's. Sempé's affect is flexible and rhapsodic, yet poised. At the same time, it often feels just a little easy, or even frivolous, as when he launches suddenly into flurries of quick diminutions. Recording 5.15, meanwhile, mostly attempts—with the possible exception of the beginning of the B-section—to create an affect of calm, languor, and sensuality.

Recording 5.15. Sarabande in F, Same Text, New Affect

On the other hand, I might attempt to re-create that elusive affect of Sempé's reading in ways that have a determinate influence on what some might consider the piece's structural identity.

Recording 5.16. Sarabande in F, New Text, Same Affect

In all of these cases, an improvisational mindset enables us to be more attentive to the play between structure and surface *at all levels of musical activity*, extending from the large formal design of the piece, right down to its most local level of performative detail. This, finally, is the space in which a piece moves and becomes.

Summary

This chapter began with the notion that, in order to understand *mouvance* as movement, we should also shift our attention from static identity to dynamic activity. I relied on a number of Deleuzian concepts, such as *intensity, becoming,* and *deterritorialization*, to understand the processes that

underlie the formation of a piece's identity, the ways in which a piece comes to be itself over time. Ultimately, I argued that since this identity arises through musical activity, we must therefore also seek to understand it from a perspective that is grounded within that very same activity, through a process of artistic research. To that end, I have detailed my own historically-informed, experimental, improvisational practice, resulting in a suite of pieces in F major.

Each movement of this suite has thus dealt with an aspect of shaping musical identity. In the Prélude, we observed a practice that privileged improvisational activity over final product, in which musical materials could take on a life of their own, independent of their original source. The Allemande, conversely, demonstrated the ways in which improvisational practice could uncover a piece's experiential contours. Through experimentation with different strata of musical surface and structure, the player develops an aesthetic sensibility toward the shape of the piece and the ways in which it can be moved without being broken. The player accomplishes this not through an imposition of one's own will, but rather through a creative negotiation with the piece's materials, such that the player might also be "moved." The material is not dead, closed, or finished; it invites the player to (re-)enter into a living musical process. In the Courante I, we saw how the practice of playing *doubles* created a unique collaborative space for composers and performers, each contributing in their own way towards the courante's developing identity. The Courante II, however, pushed this identity past its breaking point, creating a new piece with its own unique identity. By way of comparison with thoroughbass, I argued that the seventeenth-century French tradition of keyboard performance had flexible rules governing *mouvance*. These rules, however, were not discursive; rather, they were embedded within the practice itself, and hence, it is only through improvisational experimentation that one can now come to play by these rules again. Finally, in the Sarabande, I examined the extent to which *mouvance* could—and still can—function within oral/aural traditions of musical performance. I came to understand a performance by Skip Sempé as a living, integral part

of the sarabande's identity, not only in its substantive details (notes, rhythms, textures) but in its "incidental" details as well. Timing, tone color, articulation, energy, and affect are all part of the vast deterritorialized space of improvisation, and it is in this highly complex field of activity that *mouvance* becomes possible.