

IGOR SARDI

STUDYING CLASSICAL MUSIC ON BASS GUITAR



**LEARN THE CLASSICAL MUSICAL "LANGUAGE"
BY PLAYING THE WORKS OF HISTORY'S GREATEST**

COMPOSERS:

- SUITES**
 - TWO-VOICE INVENTIONS**
 - SONATAS**
 - MINUETS**
 - SYMPHONIES**
- AND MUCH MORE**

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Preface

"A 'Pop' musician playing and studying classical music?". Have you ever been asked this question? I have, often. I think it depends on the fact that it is not entirely conceived to love both compositions and works from four or five centuries ago and those of today. I must say that I am not a classical musician, but I have always loved the great composers, and in recent years, I have become even closer to that fascinating world, so much so that I have tried to play some works on my instrument, a very normal 4-string electric bass. Personally, I consider it a very important type of study, even for those who do not aspire to become classical musicians, but who just want to expand their harmonic and melodic knowledge and broaden their musical culture. Obviously we are talking about music composed when the electric bass was not yet even remotely conceived (in this book we will deal mostly with the 18th and 19th centuries), so there is no point hiding the fact that certain types of compositions (symphonies, chorales, etc.) are practically impossible to perform on our instrument. We can, however, using a little creativity (obviously trying to distort the various works as little as possible), analyse and play some types of composition that are let's say more 'feasible', as they were born and written for one or two instruments at most. In this book you will therefore find, for the most part, inventions for two voices, sonatas, suites, partitas, etc. The bulk of the material comes from my absolute favourite composer, Bach, the one who conveyed the most emotion to me, and whom I personally consider the most important to analyse and study. I am well aware that on the internet you can find many of his works already transcribed for electric bass, and there are many performances of various pieces on the net, but apart from a few exceptions, I have always seen these things as forms of protagonism (a suite at crazy speeds conveys nothing to me) or only and exclusively for the purpose of improving one's technique. Of course, I fully agree about practising playing this kind of music, that's perfectly fine, but my intention is to try to give you hints to make those works enjoyable even when played on a 'simple' 4-string electric bass. I have decided to include tab (if you want the version without, just email me at igorsardi@gmail.com), to give you fingering cues (try to find your own, though) and to make it easier for those with less music-reading skills. Take care of every single detail of every single note, phrase, bar, song. The dynamics, the slows, the embellishments, the progression, the intention. Try to harmonically and melodically analyse the various compositions, this will open up a whole new world to you. "How come we are in C major and on the third bar there is a G sharp?". Ask yourself these questions and try to find an answer, I will only give you hints. This way, this way alone, I have managed over the years to really understand (or rather, to begin to understand) how musical harmony, counterpoint, tonality, modal, composition and so many other things that, unfortunately, with the dozens of modern harmony books, I had not been able to understand. For each transcription, you will find attached the relevant audio file (whole, and divided into several tracks for multi-voice works), obviously they are computer-generated audio samples, so use them only as a reference and help. To download them for free, send me an e-mail to igorsardi@gmail.com. To really listen to the operas, look for the best recordings on the internet, or, better still, buy the discs!

Chapter 1 - Air

An aria (in French also air, ayr and ayre) is a piece, almost always for solo voice, articulated in stanzas or sections. In the history of opera, it is opposed to the recitative and represents, from the very beginning, a moment in which the musical form, with its symmetries and internal rules, takes over from the action and dialogue. Consequently, it normally coincides with a dramaturgically static moment, if not - especially in early 19th century Italy - with a moment of suspended time during which the spectator has access to the intimate feeling of the character. Equally static is the tonal structure.

In the history of music, the term aria originated (15th century) to indicate the return from verse to verse of a recognisable melody in polyphonic compositions that thus took on this name, then used in the Baroque era for movements of instrumental suites and finally to designate a piece for solo instrument, which to some extent recalled the singable character of the vocal aria.

It is mainly used in the musical literature for violin.

Famous are the aria on the fourth string and the motif of the Goldberg Variations, both by Bach, and the fifth movement of the first suite of Handel's Music on Water. The first study in this book is, perhaps, one of the most famous pieces in music history, well-known even to those who are not particularly fond of classical music. It is Bach's Aria on the fourths string, or rather, the second movement. I recommend you listen to it in its entirety; let us now take a look at some historical background. Bach's Aria on the Fourth String is the nickname for the second movement of Suite No. 3 for orchestra, known in Italy as Quark. Bach's Aria on the Fourth String is not a stand-alone composition by the great musician of the Baroque period as some may think, but is part of a Suite, Suite No. 3 in D Major (BWV 1068), which in turn is part of a collection of four orchestral suites catalogued as BWV 1066-1069, composed by Bach between about 1721 and 1730.

Let's take a look at the history and some curiosities of this fascinating 1700s composition:

Suite No. 3 in D Major BWV 1068 was written by Bach when he was in Leipzig, Germany, where the great musician occupied the prestigious position of music director of the city's main churches, a position he held from the spring of 1723 until his death in 1750.

These Leipzig years are often associated with Bach's choral masterpieces such as The St Matthew Passion or the Mass in B Minor and with the writing of most of the Cantatas. Yet despite Bach's heavy workload during this period, his liturgical responsibilities involved not only composing new music but also preparing and supervising performers, teaching young students, managing programmes, etc. In 1729, Bach began directing a civic institution called the Collegium Musicum, founded by Georg Philipp Telemann in the early 18th century, an ensemble of local musicians who met every Friday to play at Café Zimmermann, a venue near Leipzig's central market, which Bach immortalised in his Kaffeekantate BWV 211.

Directing this Collegium Musicum gave the composer the opportunity to introduce and test his instrumental pieces from the 1730s and 1740s. Here, Bach may have

Aria Sulla IV Corda

Bach - Orchestral suite No. III - BWV 1068, Mvmt. 2

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Bass

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Bass

Cello Suite No.1 in G Major

Bach - BWV 1007

Prelude

Bass

1

cresc.

3

dim.

5

7

9

cresc.

11

13

cresc.

15

Cello Suite No. 2 in D Minor

Bach BWV 1008

Prelude

1

T
B

4

T
B

7

T
B

10

T
B

13

T
B

16

T
B

19

T
B

22

T
B

dominant chord) and the dominant function (the function of the dominant chord is to cause the listener to want to hear its resolution on the root). Depending on its function, a chord will therefore have a tendency to move towards another specific chord, creating the very sonority of the piece. We therefore have here the second bar with a minor triad with the seventh at the bass.

Tonality - C

C - Imaj

Dm - V2/V = Secondary dominant (D -G) with C at the bass resolving to B

In the third bar we have a dominant seventh triad prepared and resolved at the soprano (by dominant seventh we mean a four-sound chord built on the V degree of the two modes, formed by: major 3rd, perfect 5th and minor 7th). We will therefore write V7. The fourth bar concludes the first section, identified by the cadence I-II-V-I, which defines the tonality of the setting (a cadence is a harmonic-melodic formula that concludes a musical discourse, be it a phrase or a composition, and usually consists of the succession of two or more chords). At this point, the chord returns to the same arrangement as at the beginning of the piece, so we have a triad in a fundamental state (we will write only I).

G7 - V7

C - I

Clavicembalo Ben Temperato

Bach - BWV 846

Prelude I in C Major

1 Moderato

Measures 1-2 of the Prelude I in C Major. The notation shows a bass clef, a common time signature (C), and a series of eighth notes. The fretboard diagram below the staff shows fingerings: 8-12, 10-14, 10-14, 8-12, 10-14, 10-14, 8-10, 7-10, 7-10, 8-10, 7-10.

Measures 3-4 of the Prelude I in C Major. The notation shows a bass clef, a common time signature (C), and a series of eighth notes. The fretboard diagram below the staff shows fingerings: 0-7, 10-0, 7-10, 0-7, 10-0, 7-10, 8-12, 10-14, 10-14, 8-12, 10-14, 10-14.

8va

Measures 5-6 of the Prelude I in C Major. The notation shows a bass clef, a common time signature (C), and a series of eighth notes. The fretboard diagram below the staff shows fingerings: 8-12, 14-14, 12-14, 8-12, 12-14, 12-14, 8-10, 9-12, 12-9, 12-9, 12-9, 12-9, 12-9.

Measures 7-8 of the Prelude I in C Major. The notation shows a bass clef, a common time signature (C), and a series of eighth notes. The fretboard diagram below the staff shows fingerings: 0-7, 10-0, 7-10, 0-7, 10-0, 7-10, 7-8, 7-10, 10-7, 10-7, 10-7, 7-8, 7-10, 10-7, 10-7.

8va

Measures 9-10 of the Prelude I in C Major. The notation shows a bass clef, a common time signature (C), and a series of eighth notes. The fretboard diagram below the staff shows fingerings: 12-15, 14-17, 17-14, 17-14, 12-15, 14-17, 17-14, 17-14, 17-17, 17-16, 17-16, 17-17, 17-16, 17-16, 17-17.

8va

Measures 11-12 of the Prelude I in C Major. The notation shows a bass clef, a common time signature (C), and a series of eighth notes. The fretboard diagram below the staff shows fingerings: 10-14, 12-16, 12-16, 10-14, 12-16, 12-16, 15-13, 14-17, 18-14, 18-14, 15-13, 14-17, 18-14, 18-14.

8va

Measures 13-14 of the Prelude I in C Major. The notation shows a bass clef, a common time signature (C), and a series of eighth notes. The fretboard diagram below the staff shows fingerings: 13-17, 19-17, 19-17, 13-17, 19-17, 19-17, 13-11, 12-15, 16-12, 16-12, 13-11, 12-15, 16-12, 16-12.

Invention 1 in C Major

Bach - BWV 772

Allegro moderato - Circa ♩ = 70

Voce I

mf

Voce II

mf

Voce I

Cresc.

Cresc.

Voce II

3 2 3 0 2 3 0 2 3 0 2 3 0 2 3

Voce I

f

f

Voce II

(3) 5 0 2 3 0 2 5 5 2 3 5 2 4 5 2 2 3 5 5

Voce I

mf

mf

Voce II

3 0 2 3 0 2 3 5 5 4 5 7 5 7 4 5 7 4 5 0 5 3 5

Sinfonia No. 9

Beethoven - Opera 125

1 Allegro Maestoso

Voce I

8 9 9 10 12 12 10 9 12 10 10 12 9 9 12 12 9 9 10 12 14

Voce II

5 5 5 0 5 3

Voce I

6 12 10 9 12 10 10 12 9 12 10 10 12 12 9 10 12 9 10 9 10

Voce II

5 0 0 2 3 3 3

Voce I

11 12 9 10 9 12 10 12 9 9 10 12 12 10 9 12 10 10 12 9 10

Voce II

3 4 5 2 3 2 3 5 3 2 3

Ritard.

Voce I

16 9 12 12 9 9 10 12 12 10 9 12 10 10 12 9 12 10 10

Voce II

3 5 3 0 2 (2) 3 0 3 0 2 3