

**SUMMARY from „Zur Frage der Vorschläge in der Musik der Klassik Kurze Zusammenfassung für Sänger und Instrumentalisten, dargestellt an einigen Opern und Violinkonzerten Mozarts und Beethovens *Fidelio* (1989)“ in Hartmut Haenchen „Werktreue und Interpretation“, Band 1, 2. Ausgabe, Pfau-Verlag. (Alle Rechte vorbehalten)**

## About Grace Notes in the Vienna Classic

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Short summary for singers and instrumentalists demonstrated using examples from several operas and violin concertos by Mozart and Beethoven' FIDELIO  
Almost all authors of treatises between 1750 and 1800 have established basic rules about the execution of grace notes.

The main controversial subject refers to the execution of short grace notes and whether they should be played on or before the beat (anticipation or subtraction).

Manuel Garcia's treatise „Traité complet du l'art du chant" is still deeply rooted in the 18th century tradition.

In later years authors change the rules in their treatises according to contemporary performance standards or don't mention the topic at all.

However, they don't rely on the original sources from the 18th century any more.

In his performances in Vienna Gustav Mahler did ban all sorts of appoggiaturas, ornamentation, improvisation and all grace notes had to be executed shortly.

Grace notes which don't belong to the main harmony haven't been written out in order to give the Continuo player the chance to understand the right harmony straight away without any distraction.

All theorists agree that in the execution of subtracted grace notes (on the beat) the grace note should be stressed and the main note is light.

Many theorists from the 18th century did promote the notation of the grace note according to its value. This notation practice did not prevail and therefore we have to rely on the realization of the rules formulated in the treatises and apply them on the works of the Vienna Classic.

- 1. If the main note can be divided in two equal half's, the grace note gets on half** (ex.1 page 38) promoted by Heinichen, Tartini, Quantz, CPE Bach, L. Mozart etc.
- 2. Before a dotted note the grace note gets two thirds of the main note. For the main note remains only one third.** (ex.2 page 38) promoted by Heinichen, Tartini, Quantz, CPE Bach etc.
- 3. If an identical but shorter note is slurred to a main note with grace note this grace note receives the full value of the first main note.** (ex. 3 page 38) proved by CPE Bach, Tosi-Agricola, Hiller etc.

**4. Exceptions to the previously mentioned rules are grace notes which appear before a sequence of notes with the same value, before jumps, before triplets, before short main notes, before staccato notes, in the beginning of a piece and after rests.**

In those cases theorists disagree whether the grace notes should be anticipated or subtracted.

However they all agree that the grace notes should be executed shortly.

**4a. Grace notes between two long main notes have to be played shortly.** (ex.4 page 38) proved by Walther & Quantz. (anticipated), CPE Bach (subtracted), Spohr (long or short execution depends on the notation) etc. It becomes clear that a short execution of the grace note was mandatory until about 1800. Afterwards with the appearance of the notation with the grace note as a crossed quaver various versions appear.

**4b. If the grace note represents a jump upwards a third it will mostly be executed shortly.** (could be anticipated (Walther) or subtracted (Marpurg))

**4c. If the grace notes are placed in a sequence of thirds going up- or downwards they have to be executed shortly. However the the third grace note could be played long.** (ex.6 page 38). proved by Walther (grace note anticipated, unstressed), Tartini (grace notes should be played lightly, main note stressed), Quantz (grace notes short and not stressed, anticipated), CPE Bach grace note, in Adagio as triplet) etc.

**4d. In the pictured rhythmical structure the grace note is to be executed shortly (and not as four even semiquavers as it is usually done nowadays.** (ex.7 page 39). proved by Walther, Tartini (not clear whether subtracted or anticipated), Quantz (anticipated), CPE Bach, Türk (he allows the execution as four even semiquavers with a strong accent on the grace note) etc.

*It is clear that the execution of the above mentioned rhythmical structure as four even semiquavers appeared for the first time two years before Mozart's death as an ALTERNATIVE version. It can therefore not be applied as only solution in Mozart's music. Only in very quick tempo markings the new alternative version (as described by Türk with a sharp accent on the grace note) is to be applied.*

**5. Is a main note (with grace note) followed by a note of identical pitch the grace note can receive the full value of the main note.** (ex.8 page 39) proved by Telemann, Scheibe, CPE Bach etc.

**6. If the accompanying harmony (orchestra or continuo) comes in later rule 2 can be varied. this case the grace note receives only one third of the value of the main note (it can't be entirely proved whether this rule can be applied to Mozart).** (ex.9 page 39).

proved by Hiller, Türk, Rellstab

**7. If a main note (with grace note) is followed by a rest the grace note can receive the full value of the main note and the main note can fall therefore into the rest** (ex. 10 page 39). **However, musical and textual punctuation as well as breathing of the leading voice has to be considered.**

proved by Quantz, CPE Bach, L. Mozart etc

**8. In order to keep the character of the dotted rhythm the note which follows the dot can be shortened after having applied rule 2. (ex.11 page 39).**

proved by CPE Bach, L.Mozart, Türk, Rellstab

**9. Grace notes can include further ornamentations within their duration. (ex.12, page 39) proved by L. Mozart**

**10. A sequence of many grace notes (for example a turn) are to be executed shortly and before the beat.** Only FW Marpurg and CPE Bach plead for a subtracted execution. Proved by Koch (notates the grace notes on the beat, but writes the the main note should stressed), Marpurg

The treatises used for this summary of rules date from the period between 1700 and 1847. Therefore the rules can be applied also for composers such as Haydn, Gluck as well as Beethoven and Schubert.

In the early 19th century the Basso Continuo lost its importance and therefore it was not any more necessary to notate the harmony as clear as possible and identify notes which don't belong to the harmony as grace notes.

Beethoven's tendency is to write out the exceptions to the rules (as shown in the examples from Fidelio on page 44/45 - the fat figures are the numbers in the opera, followed by the bar number - the indication are based on the Bärenreiter edition of the opera).

### ***Appoggiatura supplemento:***

Since Beethoven indicates a few appoggiaturas and also writes out some in their full value or specifically asks for places without one has to be careful adding more appoggiaturas.

### ***Dynamics:***

Wagner has copied Beethoven's way of marking sequences of chords with a new f or ff for each cord.

Wagner writes in a letter to Gustav Schmidt that "with each f or ff the note should start strong and decay then in order to start the next f or ff again with full strength."

This peculiarity in notation obviously doesn't read as a continuous increase of volume as it is very often executed nowadays.

### ***Articulation:***

Beethoven's friend Moscheles describes very clearly in his Etudes op. 70 the meaning of articulation markings and there is no doubt this should be applied for Beethoven and other composers of the Vienna Classic.

**Staccato dot:** „The dot changes the second half of the note into a rest."

**Staccato stroke:** „The staccato stroke requires the attack of the note even shorter and changes three fourths of its value into a rest."

**Slur above staccato:** „When you see a slur above staccato dots or strokes the note needs to sound three fourths of its value. In a slow movement the notes can almost sound the full length of their value. In this case there is only a very small gap between each note.“

The same rules apply to chords or two notes who sound at the same time with the addition that they should be played with a subtle arpeggio.

**Two, three or four notes under a slur:** „In this case the last note needs to be played as if it was notated with a staccato dot.“

Moscheles also asks to shorten the second dotted note in a „**Lombardic rhythm**‘. The dot therefore reads as a rest.

He also explains how to execute a **trill** if the tempo or the length of the note don't allow the performer to play a full trill (at least 7 notes). He suggests to „trill“ two notes before the beat starting on the main note (on the contrary in the early classic trills still start from above).

Moscheles also gives a clear answer to the question whether an **arpeggio** should be played on or before the beat: The top note should be on the beat!