## Simplicity and Elegance in the Melodic and Rhythmic Design of Bach's Bourrée II

Bourrée II, the companion to Bourrée I in Bach's Cello Suite No. 4 in E-flat Major, BWV 1010, offers a striking contrast in character, not least due to its simplicity. While all movements of Suite No. 4 are in E-flat major, the contrast between the two bourrées is achieved primarily through rhythmic restraint rather than a shift to a minor key: moving in quarter notes.

Bourrée II follows a rounded binary form (A-B1-B2, defined by two cadences on the tonic Eb and one half cadence on the dominant Bb), with B2 serving as a clear repetition of A. The B section stands apart from A through its higher register and the use of smaller intervals (thirds instead of sixths), creating a lighter, less dense sound. This interplay highlights Bach's ability to create contrast within a single tonal space.

The following analysis reveals that, alongside a simple rhythmic design, Bach employs elegantly simple and fundamental melodic shapes.

- elaboration of î with upper and lower neighbourtones (N) in Section A and B2
- a descending linear progression from 5 to 2

The melodic model in terms of main tones can be summarized as:

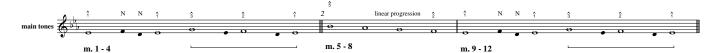


The derivation of the main tones is quite straightforward (note the bass clefs):



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One subtlety should be noted: in measure 2 (and m. 10), Bach embellishes the main tone with G, creating a descending linear third progression:  $\hat{3} \hat{2} \hat{1}$ 



Another subtlety lies in the rhythmic design, particularly in the contrast between syncopated and non-syncopated passages. Additionally, note the rhythmic differences between sections A and B1.



In conclusion, Bach's Bourrée II from Cello Suite No. 4 exemplifies his mastery of simplicity and elegance. The combination of a straightforward rhythmic framework and fundamental melodic shapes results in a refined yet expressive musical design. His use of subtle embellishments and clear tonal direction highlights his ability to create depth within a seemingly minimal structure. This analysis underscores how Bach's compositional approach balances clarity and sophistication, making Bourrée II a remarkable study in the art of musical economy.

For performances that capture these qualities beautifully, I strongly recommend those by Anner Bylsma and Mime Yamahiro Brinkmann, whose interpretations of all the Cello Suites are truly exceptional.

