

# **The Interpretation of the Tempo for Violin Dance Music by J. S. Bach: From the Perspective of Historically-Informed Performances**

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## **Abstract**

Tempo, one of the most critical elements contributing to musical texture, gives a composition its life, soul, and power. Given the fact that most music scores before the 18th century do not have clear tempo markings or bear no indication at all, it does not mean that composers did not presuppose an ideal tempo for the performance of their musical works. Instead, the interpretation for the tempo of musical works more or less relied on a commonly accepted convention which was unsaid but applied for music composed prior to the 18th century.

This article investigates the interpretation of the solo violin dance music by Johann Sebastian Bach based upon their tempo markings, meter, style and historic background from the perspective of historically-informed performances. Based upon the analysis of selected performances, the authors conclude that there is no “correct answer” to the question about the tempo for these dance pieces. Musicians today can properly decide the tempo of a piece only after they have revisited similar works from the same era while at the same time consider changes materialized during the transitional passage from the mensural notation to the modern metrical system at the juncture of 17th and 18th centuries. On top of this, musicians should focus on bringing out the authentic style by attending to the true spirit and taste of the time in order that they can present a bona fide performance.

**Keywords: tempo, dance music, meter, solo violin works by J. S. Bach, historically-informed performance**

# 由史學演奏觀點探討巴赫小提琴舞曲 作品之速度詮釋

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## 摘 要

「速度」，在音樂中擔任關鍵角色，賦予音樂生命、靈魂與力量。然而，在十八世紀之前，多數的樂譜對於速度標示並不明確，有些樂譜甚至沒有任何速度標記。這並不意味著作曲家對於作品的演奏沒有速度的要求；相反地，當時的音樂家對於音樂的速度有著約定俗成的詮釋。

本文以巴赫無伴奏小提琴舞曲為例，透過當代史學演奏的角度，藉由速度標示、拍號、風格以及歷史背景，深入探討巴赫的舞曲速度詮釋。綜合整理其分析及討論，可發現舞曲速度並沒有所謂的「標準答案」。今日的音樂家面對此時期的作品時，除了速度本身，還應考量到十七、十八世紀正值定量記譜法與現代記譜法的過渡期，拍號在當時所代表的速度含意為何；除此之外，如何完整呈現當代的音樂風格與精神，以及良好的音樂品味，更是現代音樂家應該思考的要件。

**關鍵詞：**速度、舞曲、拍號、巴赫無伴奏小提琴作品、復古風格演奏

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