

Ex. 7: J. S. Bach: English Suite III in G minor BWV 808, Sarabande (*double*), bars 9–10; 19

It is very unlikely that Bach intended the numerous pairs or groups of notes of short value, which he inserted into his melodic lines, always to be played as written, particularly when, as here, they occur at the end of conventional connecting groups. In both the instances in example (7) an instinctive, rather than a literal, approach to the score can offer the player two methods of dealing with the final group of notes presented in halved values: either they may be assimilated completely into the longer group, causing this to become a coherent motif or melodic flourish, within which all the notes are of a similar value; or just the final group of small-value notes may be “smoothed out” to give a less angular and jarring effect. The important thing is to recognise how the integrity of the measure and the restrictions of notation forced Bach and his contemporaries to write free and rhapsodic material in this way.

The survival of *passaggi*

Handel’s treatment of similar elaborate lines is not unlike Bach’s. For the most part he avoids the problem by a less ambiguous placement of notes of shorter value within the line. Occasionally, however, he writes an obvious flourish in a conventional formulaic manner:

Ex. 8: Handel: Chaconne in G, bars 1–4