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# Duels in Sound: Pietro Antonio Locatelli vs Jean-Marie Leclair

**Abstract**

The tradition of musical duels harkens back to the days of ancient Greece. One of the earliest examples of musical rivalry is the myth of Marsyas and Apollo, which ends tragically for the satyr. Without doubt, the tournaments of the ancients served as an inspiration for later generations of musicians. In each epoch they took a different form, tailored to the current norms and customs. In the sixteenth century the singing contests of the Meistersingers became extremely popular. With the development of instrumental music in the seventeenth century, duels, in which the main subject of the dispute was the superiority of one of the performers in terms of interpretation and mastery of playing a given instrument, were increasingly growing in importance.

The eighteenth century, in which public concert life flourished and demand for virtuoso instrumentalists consequently grew, brought a genuine boom in musical duels. During that era, musical duels were not only confrontations between individual musicians or their patrons, but also important contributions to the exchange of experiences between artists,

the spread of musical novelties and dissemination of the works themselves. Additionally, such 'battles' symbolised a confrontation of musical styles, in particular the Italian and the French one.
Jean-Marie Leclair, known as the French Corelli, is considered by many researchers as the founder of the French violin school. Pietro Antonio Locatelli, an heir to the legacy of Arcangelo Corelli, is justifiably considered as the Paganini of the eighteenth century. Despite shared roots in the Italian violin school, their music differs in both form and expression. At first glance, Locatelli's typically Italian music goes far beyond the previously accepted norms as far as demands placed on the violinists are concerned, whereas Leclair's French music bears the mark of Antonio Vivaldi's models set in the latter's violin concertos. We know that the first confrontation of the violinists took place on 22 December 1728 at Kassel court. Some authors speculate that it was not the only meeting of these two musicians. The surviving accounts suggest that both of them stirred strong emotions among the audiences with their playing.
Despite their enormous importance for the development of violin music, both composers remain underrated. This article briefly outlines the history of musical duels and sheds light on the practice of violin performances in the first half of the eighteenth century. Additionally, I have attempted a comparative analysis of selected violin concerts, namely: Locatelli's *Violin Concerto in G major* Op. 3 No. 9 and *Violin Concerto in A minor* Op. 7 No. 5 by Jean-Marie Leclair. These two come from a similar period in the work of both composers and are close in time of composition to the famous duel.

**Keywords**

Pietro Antonio Locatelli, Jean-Marie Leclair, violin music, musical duels, violin concerto

The tradition of musical contests harkens back to the times of Antiquity. In each epoch they took a different form, tailored to the current norms and customs. The eighteenth century, in which public concert life flourished and demand for virtuoso instrumentalists consequently grew, brought a genuine boom in musical duels. The audiences sought new artistic thrills, such as could be provided by confrontations of outstanding musicians. On 22 December 1728 at the court of Kassel (Landgraviate of Hesse-Kassel, Germany), two excellent Baroque violinists met and competed: Pietro Antonio Locatelli (1695–1764) and

Jean-Marie Leclair (1697–1764).[1] Despite shared roots in the Italian violin school, their music differs both in form and expression. Locatelli's typically Italian music goes far beyond the previously accepted norms as far as demands placed on the violinists are concerned. Leclair's French music bears the mark of Antonio Vivaldi's models set in the latter's violin concertos.

Despite their enormous importance for the development of violin music, both composers remain underrated and their music has not sufficiently been researched in the literature of the subject. Locatelli's life and work are the subject of Arend Koole's study of 1949[2] and of John Calmeyer's unpublished PhD dissertation of 1969.[3] More recent publications include the proceedings of the 1995 congress *Intorno a Locatelli: studi in occasione del tricentenario della nascita di Pietro Antonio Locatelli*[4] and Fulvio Morabito's monograph (2009).[5] Concerning the music of Leclair, the first attempts to define his style can be found in Lionel de La Laurencie's book of 1922.[6] No less important is the only monograph of this French virtuoso available to date, written by Marc Pincherle (1952),[7] as well as the unpublished doctoral dissertations largely based on Pincherle's study, authored by Neal Zaslaw (1970)[8] and Penny Suzanne Schwarze (1983).[9]

My starting point for choosing this subject was my interest in eighteenth-century violin music and the tradition of musical contests. These two aspects of musical culture come together in the figure of Jean-Marie Leclair, considered as the founder of the French violin school. In

1 This may not have been the only encounter and confrontation between these two musicians. Cf. D.C.F. Wright, 'Jean-Marie Leclair', http://www.wrightmusic.net/pdfs/jean-marie-leclair.pdf, accessed 25 May 2012.

2 A.J.Ch. Koole, 'Pietro Antonio Locatelli da Bergamo, 1695–1764: Italiaans musycq-meester tot Amsterdam', unpublished PhD dissertation (1949).

3 J.H. Calmeyer, 'The Life, Time and Works of Pietro Antonio Locatelli', unpublished PhD dissertation (1969).

4 A. Dunning, ed., *Intorno a Locatelli: Studi in occasione del tricentenario della nascita di Pietro Antonio Locatelli: 1695–1764* (1995).

5 F. Morabito, *Pietro Antonio Locatelli* (2009).

6 L. de La Laurencie, *L'Ecole francoise de violon, de Lully à Viotti; études d'histoire et d'esthétique* (1922).

7 M. Pincherle, *Jean-Marie Leclair l'âiné* (1952).

8 N. Zaslaw, 'Materials for the Life and Works of Jean-Marie Leclair L'aîné', unpublished PhD dissertation (1970).

9 P. S. Schwarze, 'Styles of composition and performance in Leclair's Concertos', unpublished PhD dissertation (1983).

the course of his artistic life, he entered the lists with several other violinists. The most significant, however, proved to be his duel with Italian virtuoso Pietro Antonio Locatelli. Apart from its purely technical dimension, this event presents itself as a clash between two of the Baroque era's most important musical styles; the Italian and the French one. I have therefore attempted to bring this contest back to life by undertaking a comparative analysis of violin concertos which the two composers may have played in 1728 in Kassel: Locatelli's *Violin Concerto in G major* Op. 3 No. 9 and Leclair's *Violin Concerto in A minor* Op. 7 No. 5. My choice is determined by their similar time of composition, which, I hope, will allow me to present and compare the musical styles represented by the two artists: Locatelli's Italian style and Leclair's *les goûts-réunis*.

## A Brief History of Musical Duels

> Whoever heard Locatelli play fantasies on the violin knows what grimaces he went through before he would, coming to his senses again, call out repeatedly 'Ah! Quedites-vous de cela?' Once he and Leclair were at the court of Kassel at the same time, prompting the court jester to say that both of them ran like rabbits up and down the violin, the one playing like an angel, the other like a devil. The first [Leclair] with his practiced left hand and through his neat and lovely tone knew how to steal hearts, while the second [Locatelli] brought forth great difficulties and mainly sought to astound the listener with his scratchy playing. But as far as being steady in the saddle and playing in time went, the French musician could, unless he applied himself with utmost attention, be easily unhorsed by the Italian.[10]

This is how the experience of the duel between Locatelli and Leclair was described many years later by an eyewitness, Jacob Wilhelm Lustig.[11] The two composers' meeting at Kassel court soon became one of the symbols of the 'battle' between the Italian and the French musical

[10] Quoted after: D. Heartz 'Locatelli and the Pantomime of the Violinist in "Le Neveu de Rameau"', *Diderot Studies*, 27 (1998), 123.

[11] Lustig added this description in Charles Burney's book *The Present State of Music in Germany, The Netherlands and United Provinces* (T. Becket & Co.: London 1774;

styles.[12] In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, competition between musicians was not limited to duels in the strict sense of the word, but also included press debates frequently sparked by the audiences themselves as well as various stratagems meant to put the rival at a disadvantage. Rather than being a modern invention by Locatelli's and Leclair's contemporaries, musical duels have a tradition that looks back to ancient Greece.

One of the earliest examples is the myth of Apollo and Marsyas.[13] The latter, a brash Phrygian *silenos*, found the aulos which Athena (on seeing a reflection of her face in the river, distorted by blowing into the instrument) had thrown away, cursing its future owner so that whoever picked it up would meet a sad fate. The satyr, delighted with his own music, challenged Apollo, the master nonpareil of lyre-playing, to a duel. The results proved pitiful to Marsyas, since after his crushing defeat he was flayed and turned by Apollo into a river.[14] The significance of this conflict goes beyond mere technical performance skills; it is represented, first and foremost, as a duel between high style combining singing with lyre-playing and the low style of the auletes.[15]

A less gory version of musical duel is associated with the Great Dionysia (Διονύσια τὰ Μεγάλα), held for several days in late March or early April. These celebrations abounded in musical events, such as the dithyrambic competitions between fifty-strong choirs dancing in circular formation with an aulete at the centre. Each of the ten official tribes (*phylai*, φυλαί) was obliged to enter two choirs, one of men, and the

Rijkgestoffeed verhaal van de eigenlijke gestelheid der hedendaagsche Toonkunst: Groningen, 1786), 389; quoted after: N. Zaslaw, 'Materials…', 28–29.

12 The history of the rivalry between the Italian and French musical styles looks back to the Middle Ages, but competition gained real impetus in the eighteenth century. Of much interest in this context is the debate between the followers of Jean-Baptiste Lully and those of Arcangelo Corelli. Cf. F. Raquenet, 'A Comparison between the French and Italian Music', *The Musical Quarterly*, 3 (1946), 411–436.

13 Z. Kubiak, *Mitologia Greków i Rzymian* (1997), 273–275.

14 In a more frequent version, it was a river of blood that flowed from Marsyas' wounds or one of tears shed by forest and meadow deities. Cf. Kubiak, *Mitologia Greków i Rzymian…*, 274.

15 Cf. Plato, *Republic*, III, 382–400, in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, 5–6, tr. by Paul Shorey (1969), https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0168%3Abook%3D3%3Asection%3D386a, accessed 22 Apr. 2021.

other – of boys. This added up to a total of twenty dithyrambs staged every year by a thousand performers. There was fierce competition between these choirs, which employed excellent musicians, composers, and teachers. The best among them received awards.[16]

More individual in character were the musical contests held during the Pythian Games, where both amateurs and professionals competed in various categories. One of them was the *kitharōdia*, where the performer was expected to be a poet, composer, singer, and accompanist in one. Another was *psilē katharsis* (introduced in 558 BCE), which concerned kithara playing without vocal performance and focused on technical skills. Auletes could compete too; they were to present a *nomos* consisting of several sections, sometimes of programmatic character. In another category, that of aulodies, the competing musicians formed duos of a singer and an accompanying aulete. Winning these games brought great prestige and undying fame, extolled in *epinikia* and odes which praised the heroes' greatness and merits.[17]

These ancient contests prepared the foundations for the rivalry of musicians in later eras. Extremely popular from the sixteenth century onwards were the singing competitions of Meistersingers, held during a monthly concert which featured the *Hauptsingen*[18] as its central point. The jury (*Merker*), seated in boxes covered with black canvas, assessed the musicians' adherence in content and language to the Lutheran Bible, as well as the correctness of musical performance. Each artist sang solo; the one who made the smallest number of mistakes became the winner and received the award: a silver chain adorned with coins, the largest of which bore the image of King David, patron of the Meistersingers. In addition to the public *Hauptsingen*, the singers also met to present their skills in an inn during a private party called *Zechsingen*, where secular *Meisterlieder* were performed. Musical duels gained popularity with the development of instrumental music in the seventeenth century. This was facilitated by transformations in instrument construction, and by their wider accessibility.

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[16] Cf. M.L. West, *Ancient Greek Music* (Clarendon Press: Oxford; Oxford University Press: New York, 1994), 32–33, https://archive.org/details/ancientgreekmusi-0000west/page/16/mode/2up?q=DITHYRAMB, accessed 22 Apr. 2021.

[17] The most famous authors of such compositions include Bacchylides and Pindar of Thebes. Cf. West, *Ancient Greek Music*, 22.

[18] That is, the main vocal spectacle. Cf. B. Horst, 'Meistergesang', in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 16 (2001), 294–300.

One of the most interesting musical confrontations took place most likely in the autumn or winter 1649/50, at Dresden court,[19] and involved Johann Jacob Froberger and Matthias Weckmann. The duel led to the two musicians becoming friends, which had an impact on their later music.

It was, however, the eighteenth century that brought a genuine flourishing of musical contests. They became an opportunity for confrontation not only between musicians, but also between their patrons. Every patron of art took care that his or her high social status should be reflected in the musical settings provided by the musicians they hired or employed. Besides, the tournaments were viewed as symbolic representations of battles between musical styles, especially the Italian and French one. Such events had a beneficial effect since they furthered the exchange of experiences between artists and the distribution of music material. Besides, the winners of such more or less formalised 'musical combats' earned lasting popularity, received new concert offers or gained the protection of prominent patrons.

In 1707, the two greatest harpsichord virtuosi, Domenico Scarlatti and George Frideric Handel, met at the residence of Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni in Rome. John Mainwaring recalled:

> As he was an exquisite player on the harpsichord, the Cardinal was resolved to bring him and Handel together for a trial of skill. The issue of the trial on the harpsichord hath been differently reported. It has been said that some gave the preference to Scarlatti. However, when they came to the Organ there was not the least pretence for doubting to which of them it belonged. Scarlatti himself declared the superiority of his antagonist, and owned ingenuously, that till he had heard him upon this instrument, he had no conception of its powers.[20]

Mainwaring moreover stressed that 'there was a total difference in their manner' and

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[19] S. Rampe, 'Matthias Weckmann und Johann Jacob Froberger: Neue Ekennntnisse zu Biographie und Werk beider Organisten', *Music und Kirche*, 6 (1991), 325–332. Rasch gives 1653 as the most probable date of this encounter. Cf. R. Rasch, 'Johann Jakob Froberger and the Netherlands', in *The Harpsichord and its Repertoire* (1992), 123–124.

[20] Ch. Hogwood, *Handel* (2007), 32–33.

> the characteristic excellence of Scarlatti seems to have consisted in a certain elegance and delicacy of expression. Handel had an uncommon brilliancy and command of finger: but what distinguished him from all other players who possessed the same qualities, was that amazing fulness, force, and energy […].[21]

Apart from comparing the two musicians, Mainwaring made an attempt to weigh up the value of the instruments themselves, and he clearly awarded the palm to the organ.

Soon afterwards, in 1709, Domenico Scarlatti stunned the audience gathered at one of Venetian aristocratic houses during a harpsichord duel with Thomas Roseingrave. That Irish musician is reported to have told Charles Burney after his performance: 'I […] fancied, by the applause I received, that my performance had made some impression on the company.'[22] However, a moment later, he witnessed his opponent's playing:

> he never had heard such passages of execution and effect before. […] Upon enquiring the name of the extraordinary performer, he was told it was Domenico Scarlatti, son of the celebrated Cavalier Alessandro Scarlatti. Roseingrave declared he did not touch an instrument himself for a month […].[23]

With the inauguration of public concerts, the competing musicians emerged from the private residences of their patrons into the sphere accessible to a wider audience. An important role in building competition in the music world was played by the Concert Spirituel. Founded in 1725 by Anne Danican Philidor, this public concert series shook the French music scene and soon became one of the hubs of Parisian cultural life. The concerts featured such eminent violinists as Jean-Baptiste Anet,[24] Nicolas Capron, Jean-Pierre Guignon, and Jean-Marie Leclair, among others. *Le Mercure de France* described a kind of duel held in April 1725 between Guignon and Anet, considered to be the

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[21] Ch. Hogwood, *Handel*, 33.

[22] Ch. Burney, *A General History of Music, from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period. To which is Prefixed, a Dissertation on the Music of the Ancients*, 4 (Robson and Clark: London, 1789), 263.

[23] Ch. Burney, *A General History…*, 4, 263.

[24] Known as Baptiste. Cf. N. Zaslaw, 'Baptiste, [Anet, Jean-Jacques-Baptiste]', in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2 (2001), 681–690.

world's two best violinists,[25] who performed alternately to the accompaniment of a bassoon and bass viol, while Anet also delighted the listeners with his solo improvisations. They both met with acclaim and received a thunderous applause.

Eighteenth-century audiences were particularly fond of contests that highlighted differences in style. The more competition there was among artists, the more attractive such performances became. The already mentioned encounter between Locatelli and Leclair had precisely such an agonistic character. Apart from a purely instrumental duel, it was a confrontation of the Italian with the French musical style.

## The Violin Concerto in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century

The violin concertos by Pietro Antonio Locatelli and Jean-Marie Leclair represent a form typical of that genre in the first half of the eighteenth century, developed by Antonio Vivaldi in his works.[26] The latter, following in the footsteps of Giuseppe Torelli and Tomaso Albinioni and developing their models of external and internal form organisation, breathed a true life into the genre. It was Vivaldi's music that served as a point of reference for the successive generations of composers, including the protagonists of the duel held in Kassel. From among more than five hundred concertos by Vivaldi, in two hundred and twenty-five he entrusted the solo part to the violin. He also wrote chamber concertos, ones for string orchestra and *basso continuo*, as well as for two string orchestras and one or more soloists. The most colourful examples of this form can be found in Vivaldi's collection *L'estro armonico* Op. 3 (1711), which includes, apart from solo pieces, also ones composed for two or four violins.

[25] Zaslaw, 'Baptiste…'.

[26] For more on violin concertos in the first half of the eighteenth century, see: Ch. White, *From Vivaldi to Viotti. A History of the Early Classical Violin Concerto* (1992); A. Hutchings, 'Concerto', in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 6 (2001), 240–260; S. McVeigh, J. Hirshberg, *The Italian Solo Concerto, 1700–1760. Rhetorical Strategies and Style History* (2004).

The substantial majority of concertos written by the *prete rosso*[27] are based on a tripartite model consisting of a sequence of a fast, slow, and another fast movement, but without a regular framework regulating the relations between keys found in the individual movements. In about one third of the concertos, the second movement retains the key of the preceding one. Setting the central movement in the relative key is less common, and the dominant or the subdominant are used as the tonal centres only in a few cases.

Most of Vivaldi's opening movements follow the *ritornello* form introduced by Torelli. This is a form derived from the tradition of the operatic arias, constructed out of alternating *tutti* and solo passages in which the singer's displays of skill were of overriding importance. Transplanting this form in an analogous manner into the sphere of instrumental music opened up new possibilities for expressive contrasts and, most importantly, made it possible to emphasise the solo instrument's part. Vivaldi typically juxtaposed four orchestral *tuttis* with three solo displays, but this was not an absolute rule and some of his concertos comprise as many as six *tutti* passages. The Italian maestro modified the *ritornello* form in various ways, for instance by preceding the initial *ritornello* with a solo passage. In this way, he produced the impression of an enormous dramatic charge. He did not always maintain stable keys in the *tutti* segments; instead, he sometimes entrusted them with a modulating function, analogously to the solo episodes. The *ritornelli* could take four alternative forms: fugue-based (usually found in concertos without soloists), uni- and bipartite, as well as variational.

In the solo passages, Vivaldi primarily stressed the virtuosic character of the main instrument's part. The *tutti* passages are seldom related thematically to the solo episodes on any major scale. Sometimes, however, the soloist draws on the thematic material of the *ritornello*, for instance by opening the solo segment with a quotation from the orchestral segment and later ornamenting it, or, conversely, beginning with rich figurations in order to refer to the material of the *tutti* at a later point.

[27] 'Il Prete Rosso' ('The Red Priest'): A nickname given to Vivaldi, which referred to the colour of his hair.

The solo cadenza, an important element introduced by Vivaldi in his concertos, usually came after the last entry of the *ritornello*. Its length depended on the given soloist's invention as well as on the amount of time assigned for the performance. In the early decades of the eighteenth century, the cadenzas were usually improvised, but even in that period there were situations when the soloist's demonstrations of skill had been notated in advance. This is the case with the nine cadenzas found in Vivaldi's concertos. Based mostly on the dominant, they consisted of a chain of arpeggios leading to a final trill. Vivaldi's notated cadenzas contributed to the popularisation of the idea of submitting the solo displays to the composer's will.

The slow movements were short, after the models of Torelli and Albinioni, thanks to which they functioned as a bridge between the outermost sections. They usually did not maintain the *ritornello* form. Two types of such slow movements can be distinguished, one made up of a sequence of modulating chords, the other – in the manner of the soloist's *arioso*.

The finale, like the opening section, was based in most cases on the *ritornello* model. However, its character was lighter and more joyful, its tempi – faster, and its dimensions – moderate. It could draw on the preceding movements for its themes, but this was not a rule and in most cases Vivaldi introduced completely new thematic material in this section.

Within a short time of the publication of Vivaldi's *L'estro armonico* Op. 3, the solo concerto became a major means of expression for numerous composers. What attracted them to this genre was the wide palette of technical and expressive possibilities that it afforded. Not without significance was also the wide availability and popularity of the violin. The first decades of the eighteenth century were the heyday of such outstanding violin makers as, among others, Antonio Stradivari and Pietro Giovanni Guarneri, as well as the slightly later Giuseppe Bartolomeo Guarneri, known as *del Gesù*. The wide impact of the concerto genre was also related to the distribution of sheet music, the policies of publishing houses, and access to those scores that circulated in handwritten form. Thanks to these factors, the models of the concerto as developed by Antonio Vivaldi exerted an impact both in and out of Italy, and were imitated by other composers, including the two contestants from Kassel.

## Analyses of Selected Violin Concertos: Pietro Antonio Locatelli, *Violin Concerto in G major* Op. 3 No. 9

The collection of twelve concertos for violin, strings and *basso continuo* Op. 3 by Pietro Antonio Locatelli, entitled *L'Arte del violin*, received several editions both in score form and as a piano transcription. The below-presented analysis is based on the first print of this cycle from 1733[28] and on a contemporary score edition by Albert Dunning (2006), published in the series *Edizione Nazionale Italiana degli Opera Omnia di Pietro Antonio Locatelli*.[29] The *Violin Concerto in G major* is the ninth piece in Locatelli's collection *L'Arte del Violino* for violin and orchestra Op. 3, printed by Le Cene in Amsterdam (1733) and dedicated to Girolamo Michiel Lini. It is considered as the composer's most famous publication. Locatelli had probably previously performed the concertos from this collection as showpieces demonstrating his wide possibilities as a virtuoso. Opportunities for such virtuosic displays can be found not only in the movements of the concertos proper, but, most of all, in the *Capriccios* added to the outermost sections. Aware of the fact that not all violinists could compare to him in mastery of the instrument, Locatelli allowed for free interpretation of these fragments, a fact that he indicated in the subtitle of his collection: XII *Concerti con* XXIV *capricci ad libitum*.

Movement One of Locatelli's *Violin Concerto in G major* Op. 3 No. 9 (*Allegro*) follows the *ritornello* form. The organisation of segments in this section can be represented as follows.[30]

| **Function** | R1 | S1 | R2 | S3 | R3 | S4 | R4a | Capriccio | R4b |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mm.** | 1–20 | 21–39 | 40–53 | 54–74 | 75–76 | 76–80 | 81–83 | 84–145 | 147–156 |
| **Key** | I | i//I → | V//ii → | iii → | V | I | i | I → V | I |
| **Material** | M | | M | | | | | M | M |

Table 1: The ordering of *ritornelli* and solo episodes in Movement One of Locatelli's *Violin Concerto in G major* (Op. 3 No. 9).

[28] P.A. Locatelli, *L'Arte del violino. XII Concerti, op. 3* (1733).

[29] P.A. Locatelli, *L'Arte del violino. Dodici Concerti per Violino con 24 Capricci per Violino Solo, op. 3* (2006).

[30] These representations have been inspired by McVeigh and Hirshberg, *The Italian Solo Concerto…*.

In Movement One, Locatelli presents four *ritornelli*, three solo segments and a *Capriccio*, that is, an extensive solo cadenza which comes before the last entry of the orchestra. Such a number of segments corresponds to the norms then set for violin concertos. Interestingly, the solo fragments constitute a large proportion of the music in this section, which proves the composer's focus on the solo part.

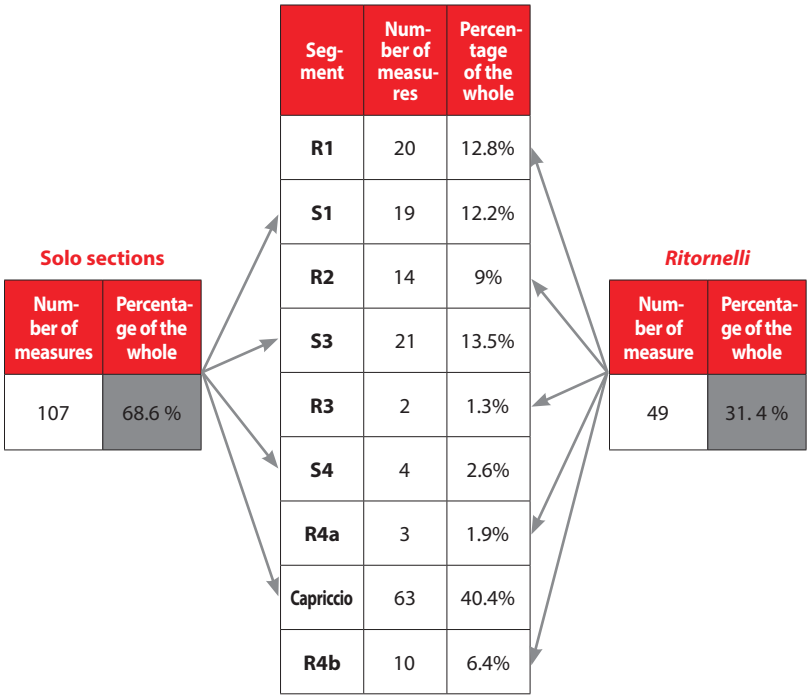
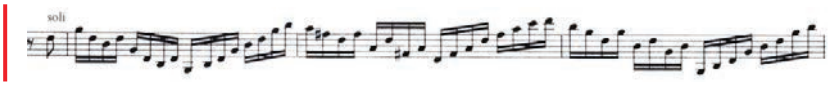



Table 2. Number of measures and the length ratios between the successive segments of Movement Two of Locatelli's *Violin Concerto in G major* (Op. 3 No. 9).

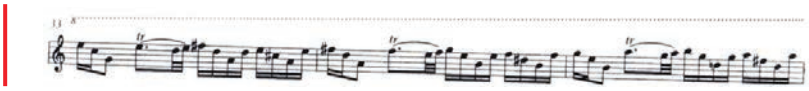
Notably, the *ritornello* segments are not uniformly scored. They likewise employ a concert technique which alternates brief *tutti* fragments with solo passages performed by the first and second violins accompanied only by the *basso continuo*.

The solo episodes play a major role in the formal development. Made up of several-measure-long phrases, they focus on separate and

varied technical problems: passage playing (example 1), playing in the top register (example 2), two-note harmonies (example 3), interval leaps (example 4), and cantilena (example 5).




Ex. 1. mm. 29–31.



Ex. 2. mm. 33–35.

Ex. 3. mm. 71–73.

Ex. 4. mm. 65–67.

Ex. 5. mm. 59–61.

In terms of music material, the solo part contains both new thematic ideas (mm. 29–39, 76–80) and those derived from the 'motto' of the

*ritornello* (mm. 57–74). It is a characteristic feature of Locatelli's style to shape the solo part in the form of repeated motivic cells which form ascending (example 6) or descending progressions.

Ex. 6. mm. 78–79.

With regard to the ordering of keys, Locatelli usually remained true to the principle of maintaining tonal stability in the *ritornelli* and introducing modulations in the solo segments. Only one of the *ritornelli* (R2) moves from key V to ii. Less daring modulations can be found the solo episodes; in most cases, they concern keys related within the circle of fifths. The material of the last *ritornello* (R4) can be subdivided into two segments separated by the *Capriccio*. The first of them (R4a) ends conventionally on the dominant chord, thus preparing the tonal ground for the *Capriccio*.

The *Capriccio* itself comes in the place assigned for the soloist's cadenza, and functions as an extensive virtuoso display. It is the *Capriccios* that have been hailed as the most innovative element of Locatelli's output. Even more, for a long time they were considered unperformable. They are made up of shorter segments, each of which, as in the *Allegro*, explores a different technical problem:

| **Segment** | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mm.** | 84–107 | 107–120 | 121–122 | 122–124 | 124–128 | 129–130 | 130–137 | 138–139 | 139–145 |
| **Material** | M | | | | | | | | |

Table 3. The ordering of segments in the *Capriccio* from Movement One of Locatelli's *Violin Concerto in G major* (Op. 3 No. 9).

The first segment draws on the material of the initial *ritornello* (from mm. 1–12), while the second consists of repeated two-measure cells, each based on one chord (example 7), which together make up a sequence of inserted dominants: (V)V)V)V)V)I–V.

Ex. 7. mm. 107–108.

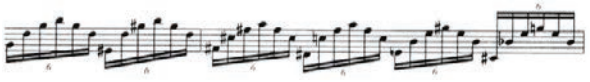
Segment three is composed of progressions based on ascending broken chords. It is later repeated in mm. 129 and 138, thus functioning as a bridge between individual fragments (example 8).

Ex. 8. m. 121.

The next segment is an ascending progression forming the following harmonic sequence: I-IV-V-vi-V7 (example 9).

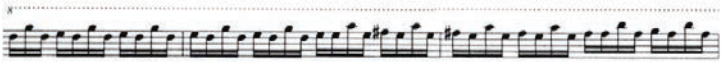
Ex. 9. mm. 122–123.

The fifth segment consists of sixteen broken chords which make up a sequence of inserted dominants. Some of them are chords with a minor ninth without a prime (example 10).



Ex. 10. mm. 124–125.

Segment six exactly repeats the third one, while the seventh is based on an ascending progression in a very high register (example 11) and ends with a third-and-fourth progression descending to chord V.



Ex. 11. mm. 130–133.

Segment eight recalls the third one, while the ninth is made up of repeated broken chords grouped into semiquaver sextuplets (example 12). The *Capriccio* ends with two chords, V9-)V, after which Locatelli left space for the soloist's cadenza proper (example 13).

Ex. 12. mm. 139–141.


Ex. 13. mm. 145–146.

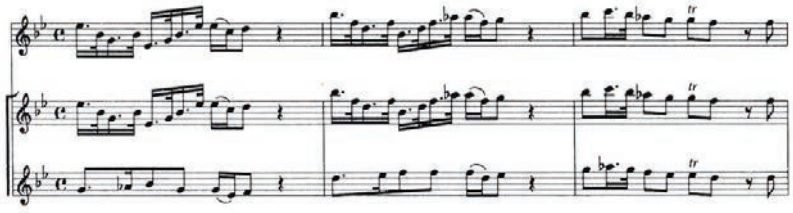
The cadenza is followed by the final *ritornello* (R4b), which makes use of the material of the initial one (R1). The whole ends with a cadence in the principal key.

In Movement Two (*Largo*), likewise in the *ritornello* form, the tonal centre is provided by the key of E-flat major, rather untypical in relation to the key of Movement One. The segments in this movement are as follows:

| **Function** | R1 | S1 | R2 | S3 | R4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mm.** | 1–7 | 8–13 | 14–19 | 20–28 | 29–37 |
| **Key** | I | I → V | V | V → I | I → III |
| **Material** | M | | M | | M |

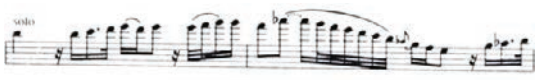
Table 4: The ordering of *ritornelli* and solo episodes in Movement Two of Locatelli's *Violin Concerto in G major* (Op. 3 No. 9).

Locatelli based the material of this second movement on two solo episodes surrounded by three orchestral *tuttis*. Punctuated rhythm is the binding element in all the *ritornello* sections. It is based on the notes of the broken chord I in R1 and R4 (example 14) as well as V in R2. Characteristic of these fragments is the presence of relatively numerous seventh and ninth harmonies, as well as the placement of supplementary rhythms in the viola parts. Locatelli also frequently introduces *piano-forte* contrasts within a short space of time.



Ex. 14. mm. 1–3.

In the solo episodes, the composer introduces new thematic material. The opening bars of the solo violin part exploit the high register, but in later passages the composer returns to the instrument's central range. Tartini's influence can be heard in the lyrical cantilena of the solo part. Segment S1 consists of two fragments, the first of which (mm. 8–9) presents an arch-like melody with the wide ambitus of an eleventh and dominated by second progressions (example 15), while the second (mm. 10–13) introduces the material of a figure characteristic of many of Locatelli's violin concertos, based on punctuated rhythm with a trill (example 16). The soloist's second entry (S3), in which the composer transforms and extends the material of S1, is extremely diversified with regard to content. The choice of performing forces in this segment is also of interest; the solo violin is accompanied only by the solo cello and double bass.



Ex. 15. mm. 20–21.

Ex. 16. mm. 22–24.

Cadences clearly separate the *ritornello* sections from the solo passages. There are also differences in the ways of shaping the music material. What attracts attention in the *ritornelli* is the extensive use of punctuated rhythms and the clear dominance of interval steps larger than a second. As in Movement One, the solo episodes are made up of sequences of smaller repeated motivic cells. In the second movement, however, Locatelli shifts the focus from virtuosity to the lyrical qualities of the melodic line. Extensive use of ornamentation and of small rhythmic values betrays the influence of the *galant* style.

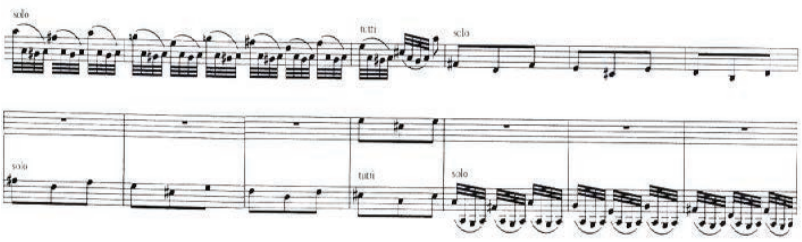
True to the convention again, Locatelli maintains stable keys in the *tuttis*, and modulates them in the solo passages, but only to keys closely related within the circle of fifths. Interesting in this context is the cadence found in the last three bars, which leads us into the key of Movement Three, that of G major.

In that latter movement, likewise representing the *ritornello* form, the order of segments is as follows:

| **Function** | R1 | S1 | R2 | S3 | R4a | *Capriccio* | R4b |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mm.** | 1–64 | 65–94 | 95–106 | 107–169 | 170–197 | 198–277 | 278–295 |
| **Key** | I | I → V | V | V → I | I | I | I |
| **Material** | M | | M | | M | | M |

Table 5. The ordering of *ritornelli* and solo episodes in Movement Three of Locatelli's *Violin Concerto in G major* (Op. 3 No. 9).

In the third movement of the concerto, Locatelli juxtaposes four *ritornelli*, two solo segments, and, as in Movement One, a *Capriccio*. The orchestral tuttis are not homogeneously scored. What is more, in the solo passages the material of the solo instrument is imitated by the second violin (example 17).



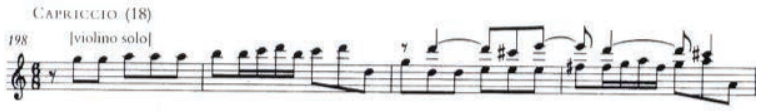

Ex. 17. mm. 107–113.

The solo episodes in this section are technically more demanding than the analogous passages in Movement One. Nevertheless, the range of technical problems presented in these episodes is narrower and includes (broadly conceived) passage playing, using the instrument's entire scale, left-hand dexterity, various kinds of articulation, such as *staccato*, as well as large interval leaps.

The solo and orchestral passages are clearly separated from one another by cadences. They also differ in the type of motivic material. The orchestral segments are built out of melodically and rhythmically diversified motifs, whereas the solo episodes are based on extensive use of figurations within second progressions or larger interval steps. Here again, the *ritornelli* are tonally stable, while modulations occur in the solo segments, largely within the circle of fifths. It is only in segment S3 (mm. 130–141) that we find more sophisticated harmonic relations. The penultimate *ritornello* (R4a) departs from the convention and ends with chord I, rather than the dominant chord.

The *Capriccio*, again as in Movement One, takes the place of the soloist's cadenza. Nevertheless, this time instead of an emphasis on a highly virtuosic manner of playing, the composer calls for the ability to present a complex polyphonic texture. The whole section is an extensive *fugato*.

The two-measure subject appears five times in the first statement (mm. 216, 232, 244, 268, and 270). There is no strict voice leading principle. Instead, the theme is stated in each part in succession at the interval of a downward fourth, and thus passes through the entire central register of the violin in the direction of the G string, accompanied by a constant counterpoint in a characteristic syncopated motion (example 18).



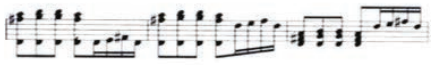

Ex. 18. mm. 198–201.

In segments which serve as connecting episodes between the successive entries of the theme, Locatelli emphasises, first and foremost, chords and two-note harmonies. The division of the *Capriccio* into segments has been represented below:

| **Segment** | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mm.** | 210–216 | 219–231 | 235–243 | 246–267 |

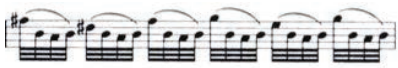
Table 6. Segments within the *Capriccio* in Movement Three of Locatelli's *Violin Concerto in G major* (Op. 3 No. 9).

Two-note combinations play the key role in the first segment, while in the second chords alternating with semiquaver groupings and two-note harmonies likewise interrupted by a semiquaver group come to the fore (example 19).



Ex. 19. mm. 219–221.

The highly varied third segment involves both two-note combinations and groupings which call for considerable left-hand skills (example 20).



Ex. 20. m. 239.

Segment four is based on three principal elements: two-note material with simultaneous playing on an open string; chords alternating

with a semiquaver grouping; and two-note combinations characterised by a large interval leap. Following the last entry of the subject, there comes a three-bar fragment in tempo *Adagio*, while the time signature changes to 3/8. This is followed by the final *ritornello*, which turns out to be an abbreviated version of the initial one. It restores the principal key of this movement, that of G major.

## Analyses of Selected Violin Concertos: Jean-Marie Leclair, *Violin Concerto in A minor* Op. 7 No. 5

No edition of Leclair's collected violin concertos is available to date. Only individual concertos have been published: Nos 2 and 5 from Op. 7, as well as 1, 2, 5, and 6 from Op. 10. In connection with the poor accessibility of these scores, I have decided to base by analysis of his *A minor Concerto* on its first print (c. 1737), which comprises the part books.[31]

The concerto under study is one of six concerti Op. 7 published, in accordance with an announcement in *Le Mercure de France*, gradually, in groups of two, until the full set became available in 1737.[32] The composer incorporated these pieces into his repertoire even before their publication.[33] The collection was dedicated to Leclair's Parisian teacher André Chéron, whom the violinist greatly respected.[34] The *Concertos* Op. 7 are scored for solo violin, strings and *basso continuo*, except for *Concerto in C major* No. 3, in which the solo part may be performed by a transverse (German) flute or an oboe.

Movement one, *Vivace*, in *ritornello* form, consists of the following segments:

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[31] J.-M. Leclair, *Six Concerto a tré Violini, Alto, e Basso, per Organo, e Violoncello* (1737). I am very grateful to Agata Sapiecha for making her invaluable music collection, including this source, accessible to me.

[32] Zaslaw, 'Materials…', 48.

[33] He probably presented some of them at the Concert Spirituel as early as in 1728. The first documented performance by the composer himself took place on 4 June 1733. Two years later, on 9 March 1735, he played them at the Versailles in the presence of the Queen. Cf. Schwarze, 'Styles of composition…', 11–12.

[34] On the dedication page, Leclair declares himself as Chéron's disciple: 'all the world knows that I am your pupil'; quoted after: N. Zaslaw, 'Chéron, André', in Grove Music Online, https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000005533, accessed 24 Apr. 2021.

| Function | R1 | S1 | R2 | S2 | R3 | S3 | S4 | R4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mm. | 1–35 | 36–74 | 75–100 | 101–141 | 142–167 | 168–184 | 185–200 | 201–217 |
| Key | i | i → | III//iv → | iv → | II lowered → | vii → | i | I → i |
| Material | M | M | M | M | M | | M | M |

Table 7: The ordering of *ritornelli* and solo episodes in Movement One of Leclair's *Violin Concerto in A minor* (Op. 7 No. 5).

In Movement One, Leclair introduces four *ritornelli* and three solo segments. The soloist's penultimate episode may be subdivided into two (S3, S4) with respect to thematic material and, most importantly, the key. Models for such a form can be found not only in the concertos of Vivaldi, which Leclair knew very well, but also in the output of Giovanni Battista Somis, with whom the violinist came in contact during his stay in Turin.[35] Characteristic as well is the balanced length of the individual segments and the nearly identical number of measures taken up by the *ritornelli* and the solo episodes (see table 8).

**Solo sections**

| Number of measures | Percentage of the whole |
|---|---|
| 109 | 50.23 % |

| Segment | Number of measures | Percentage of the whole |
|---|---|---|
| **R1** | 35 | 16% |
| **S1** | 39 | 18% |
| **R2** | 30 | 13.8 % |
| **S2** | 37 | 17% |
| **R3** | 26 | 12% |
| **S3,4** | 33 | 15% |
| **R4** | 17 | 7.8% |

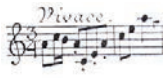
***Ritornelli***

| Number of measure | Percentage of the whole |
|---|---|
| 108 | 49.77% |

Table 8. Number of measures and the length ratios between the successive segments of Movement One of Leclair's *Violin Concerto in A minor* (Op. 7 No. 5).

[35] McVeigh, Hirshberg, *The Italian Solo Concerto…*, 276–281.

Each of the *ritornello* segments opens with a motto (example 21), which provides the basis for building the thematic material of both the *ritornelli* and the solo episodes.




Ex. 21. Motto, mm. 1–2.

Important for the orchestral episodes is a motif based on triplet motion, which interestingly contrasts with the surrounding passages made up of duple-time crotchets.

The solo episodes (with the exception of S3) are based on the material of the motto, which they successively develop in the later course of the music, enriching the melody with figurations and ornaments. Leclair usually shunned sequential treatment of the melodic line; he preferred the solo part to develop freely. Nevertheless, many passages are based on various kinds of progressions. The solo episodes are also extremely interesting in terms of instrumentation. Apart from segments in which the soloist is accompanied by *basso continuo*, in others the latter falls silent, and the soloist is joined by the first and second violins instead. This solution is known from the Venetian operatic *aria senza basso* and was frequently applied by Vivaldi. Notably, in these segments the solo instrument moves in a higher register than with *basso continuo*, which allows the composer to differentiate this part from those of other instruments of the same range. Apart from clearly highlighting the solo part, this also creates an interesting sonic effect.

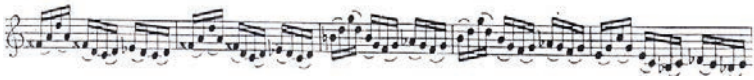
The *ritornelli* are clearly separated from the *soli* by distinct cadences, and in some places – even by means of rests. Thanks to the use of the motto in both the *ritornelli* and the majority of solo passages, Leclair creates the impression of formal coherence.

As concerns the succession of keys, the French violinist gives up the convention in which the *ritornelli* remained tonally stable and modulations occurred only in the solo segments. Only in the initial *ritornello* (R1) do we find unchanged tonal structure. In the last one (R4) we move from key I to I; R2 balances between III and iv. In R3 Leclair applies stepwise modulation from N to vii. The solo episodes also modulate, this time – in agreement with convention. In most cases

these are transitions to relative keys. For instance, S1 modulates from i to III, S2 – from iv to N, while S3 – from vii to the unrelated i. The principal key returns in S4.

In terms of demands placed on the soloist, Movement One can hardly be called virtuosic. We find here both passage playing (example 22) and broken chords with repetitions of component notes (example 23), but this is not virtuosity in the strict sense of the word. Leclair stays in the middle register of the violin, only occassionally reaching the higher one and not going beyond the sixth position. Notated two-note passages appear only once in one measure (example 24). Technically speaking, in a way typical of French music Leclair resigns from the soloist's virtuosic display in favour of a coherent and elegant expressive whole.

Ex. 22. mm. 193–197.



Ex. 23. mm. 120–124.

Ex. 24. m. 108.

Movement Two, like many second movements by this French composer, is written in the Italian style characterised by a slow tempo, *ritornello* form, contrasted keys and an arch-like tonal model.[36] The tonal

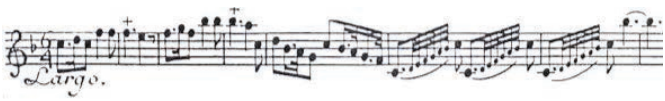
[36] Penny Suzanne Schwarze distinguishes two types of Leclair's second movements. Apart from the Italian ones, the other type is French-style in moderate tempo and using repetitive dance forms; it is also characterised by a greater tonal uniformity. Cf. Schwarze, 'Styles of composition…', 89.

centre is the key of F major, closely related to that of the first movement. Such a relation (i-VI) is one of those most frequently encountered in Leclair's violin concerti.[37] The segments of Movement Two are ordered as follows:

| **Function** | R1 | S1 | R2 | S3 | R4a | R4b |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mm.** | 1–10 | 11–21 | 22–27 | 28–42 | 43–47 | 48–52 |
| **Key** | I | I → V | V | ii → I | II | I → iii |
| **Material** | M | M | | M | | |

Table 9: The ordering of *ritornelli* and solo episodes in Movement Two of Leclair's *Violin Concerto in A minor* (Op. 7 No. 5).

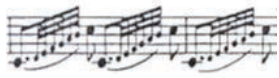
The material of the central movement is organised into two solo episodes framed by three orchestral *ritornelli*. The time signature and the emphasised punctuated rhythms, especially in the orchestral sections, betray inspiration with the dance tradition – in this case, with the *siciliana* (example 25).




Ex. 25. mm. 1–8.

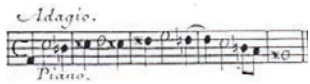
The orchestral *ritornelli* represent a four-part texture made up of brief, clearly separated segments based on similar material. A characteristic figure shared by all these passages is that of a broken octave filled in with a scale progression (example 26). In the last orchestral fragment, Leclair introduces an interesting cadential effect, changing the tempo in its second subsegment (R4b) to *Adagio*, the time – to duple, prolonging the rhythmic values, and applying intriguing delays in the syncopated passages (example 27).

[37] Leclair's second movements are set in vi, IV, III, or VI. Cf. Schwarze, 'Styles of composition…', 86.



Ex. 26. mm. 6–7.

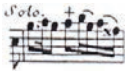
In the solo passages Leclair reduces the performing forces to only the soloist and *basso continuo*. Each of these passages starts with the motto. The melodic line of the solo part combines large interval leaps with second progressions in the violin's middle register and is consistently made up of small rhythmic values.



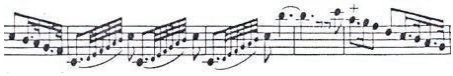

Ex. 27. mm. 48–52.

The orchestral *ritornelli* and the solo passages are clearly separated by means of distinct cadences, but at the same time strongly related thematically through quotations from the motto in the *soli* (examples 28 a and b) and the return of a phrase from the second subsegment of R1 with each entry of the *tutti* (examples 29 a, b, and c).


Ex. 28a. mm. 1–2.

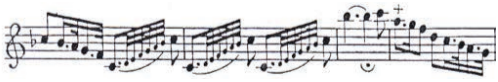



Ex. 28b. mm. 28.



Ex. 29a. mm. 5–9.

Ex. 29b. mm. 23–26.



Ex. 29c. mm. 44–47.

True to the principles of the *ritornello* form in this movement, Leclair applies modulations in the solo episodes, but retains the newly established keys in the orchestral *tuttis*. Exceptions can be found in the link between R2 (maintained in V) and S3 (ii emerges and modulates to I). Unconventional is also the division of the last (R4) *ritornello* into two subsegments (R4a, R4b), the first of which upholds key I, while the second is at the same time the cadence that leads us into the principal key of Movement Three, that of A minor.

Movement Three (*Allegro assai*) maintains the *ritornello* form. However, Leclair gives up symmetrical distribution of *tuttis* and solo passages for the sake of an extensive solo passage. The segments are ordered as follows:

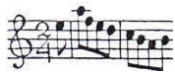
| **Function** | R1 | S1 | R2 | S2 | R3 | S4 | R4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mm.** | 1–52 | 53–86 | 87–120 | 121–149 | 150–167 | 168–277 | 278–288 |
| **Key** | i | i → v | v → III | III → iv | iv | I | i |
| **Material** | M | M | M | M | M | | |

Table 10: The ordering of *ritornelli* and solo episodes in Movement Three of Leclair's *Violin Concerto in A minor* (Op. 7 No. 5).

Movement three consists of four *ritornelli* and three solo segments. Untypical is the change of mode in S4 and the use of a dance form (*tambourin*). The latter is by far the longest segment, taking up as much as 37.84% of the entire music material in this movement.

As in Movement One, the *ritornelli* open with a motto (example 30), which is used as the basis for building the music material of most

orchestral *tuttis* and solo passages (with the exception of S4). The material from the end of the opening *ritornello* R1 (mm. 42–52) is precisely repeated in the last one (R4), which formally integrates the whole movement (example 31). The orchestral *ritornelli* are made up of brief subsegments, but as in the previous movements, the composer shuns sequential structures in the melodic line, though some shorter or longer fragments are based on various kinds of progressions. It should be stressed that the material in all the *ritornelli* demonstrates strongly similar features, which contributes to the motivic cohesion of the whole.



Ex. 30. mm. 1–2.


Ex. 31. mm. 278–288.

The solo episodes (except for S4) are based on the material of the motto, successively developed in their course. S1 and S2 are dominated by semiquaver motion enriched with more varied rhythmic motifs. Another characteristic element is the use of the same closing material (though in a different key) in both solo segments. Also of note is the *Arpeggio* fragment (mm. 131–135), introducing a type of sound previously unheard in the *A minor Concerto*. Most interesting, however, seems to be the already mentioned segment S3, within which both the character of the music and the tonal mode change (the latter – to key I). The densely woven melodic line is abandoned here for the sake of a simple folk dance. Schwarze sees in this gesture a reference to the model of the *tambourin*, a dance universally known in eighteenth-century France.[38] Apart from the use of duple time, her thesis is confirmed by the characteristic drone, which Leclair introduces in the *basso continuo*

[38] Schwarze, 'Styles of composition…', 134.

part, and by the unison *a*1 with simultaneous placement of the fourth finger on the *d*1 string and the sounding of an open *a*1 string (example 32). This fragment has a bipartite form with repetition entered by the composer in the score. The solo violin is accompanied by the simple ludic accompaniment of *basso continuo*. In terms of melodic contour and character, however, this passage brings to mind another type of dance – namely, the *rigaudon*.

Using distinct cadences, and in some cases also rests, Leclair clearly separates the *ritornelli* from the *soli*. By introducing the motto in both the *ritornelli* and most of the solo passages, as well as shared material in the closing fragments of the individual section, the composer achieves the effect of formal coherence.

## Conclusion

On the basis of my analysis of Locatelli's *Concerto in G major* Op. 3 No. 9, it can be described as typical of Italian violin concertos in the 1730s. What seems unique is the exceptional length of the initial *ritornello* as well as the composer's experimentation with its form. The *G major Concerto* is closer in terms of expression to the style of Tartini than Vivaldi. This is evident, among others, in the more cantilena-like shape of the melodic line. On the other hand, the rich ornamentation and small rhythmic values are evidence of Locatelli embracing the *galant* style. The most characteristic element of his Opus 3 in general, and of this concerto in particular, is that he gives the soloist primacy over the orchestral part.

In Leclair's *Concerto in A minor* Op. 7 No. 5, each of the three movements follows, after the Italian fashion, the *ritornello* form. Italian models are also reflected in the way this concerto is scored, especially in the solo episodes, whose instrumentation is characteristic of the Venetian *aria senza basso*. What is more, in the second movement he draws on the *siciliana*, a dance of Italian provenance. French influence is reflected in Leclair's music first and foremost in the elegant and subtle style of violin playing, rooted in dance. The concerto's structure, though based on Italian models, demonstrates a high degree of regularity, which may be interpreted as a French element. It should be stressed that the French style we refer to in this context is the eighteenth-century one, and not

the one characteristic of the previous age, represented, among others, by Jean-Baptiste Lully. Leclair's association with the court circles of Louis XV is also reflected in his abandoning formal and technical experimentation. *Concerto in A minor* Op. 7 No. 5 is thus an example of a synthesis of the Italian and French musical styles, perfectly corresponding to the aesthetic principles of *les goûts-réunis*.

Though the music of both composers grew out of the same roots – that is, from the traditions of the Italian violin school – it is different not only in form, but also in expression. The outcome of their duel can, for obvious reasons, only be determined today based on their surviving music. The above-quoted judgment by Jacob Wilhelm Lustig may well be applied, however, to the two composers' output as well. Locatelli's music is, like its author, full of unrestrained spontaneity and experimental in spirit. It attracts the audiences' attention and poses a challenge for the performers. Leclair's compositions, on the other hand, despite betraying a wide range of Italian influences, especially in their form, are characterised by a refined elegance typical of the French style. We should not forget, however, that he was the first fully-fledged composer working in the concerto genre in France. From the perspective of later directions in violin music, however, it was undoubtedly Locatelli who determined the course of its development. Quoting Lustig, though 'steady in the saddle and playing in time', the French musician not only could, but indeed, *was* 'easily unhorsed by the Italian',[39] as we can glean from the course of music history.

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[39] D. Heartz, 'Locatelli and the Pantomime…', 123; cf. Zaslaw, *Materials…*, 28–29.

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