

Reflections on ties and note durations in organ music

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The way of playing much organ repertoire changed considerably over the course of the twentieth century. Starting with a comprehensively applied legato touch and strict observance of written durations, organists and scholars gradually questioned this ubiquitous legato, especially for early music, and arrived at different touches for different eras and styles of music, often based on very precise guidelines. As is often the case, actions and reactions cause pendulum swings, with the risk that an opinion is sometimes prompted, consciously or unconsciously, as much by a desire to react as by reflection on objective information. The purpose of this article is to use the sources to question certain assumptions about ties and note durations when playing organ repertoire.

In the seventeenth century, Frescobaldi, for example, indicated the possibility of repeating notes in the midst of their duration to prolong the sound (probably for string instruments such as the harpsicord) or of holding or not holding certain voices (for reasons of manual technique) :

In suspensions and dissonances, and also in the midst of the pieces, the notes of the chords will be struck together. If there is a feeling of emptiness in the instrument, the chords can be played again, according to the taste of the player.” (Frescobaldi, preface to *Toccate e partite d’intavolatura di cimbalo, libro primo*, 1616).

He also mentioned a possible freedom to play either legato or nonlegato in a particular context:

The *cantus firmi* are to be played legato; for greater ease, one may also play them detached in order not to hinder the hands.” (Frescobaldi, preface to *Fiori musicali*, 1635).

Those who have copied music know that a common error is neglecting ties and accidentals. In many handwritten sources, there are obvious omissions of ties — for example, in long pedal points where one tie is inexplicably missing or in sequences where a tie is missing in one iteration of the pattern but present in the others. Another example of ties having been omitted, either unintentionally or purposely, is in the accompanimental parts of French *Récits*. In such pieces, separating two successive notes belonging to two different voices under the pretext of polyphonic clarity has no meaning because there is no real voice leading or even a fixed number of voices. Because repeating a note is not neutral — i.e., it draws attention to a voice and/or gives an accent — the choice to tie or repeat certain notes is sometimes left up to the performer.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Bach's organ works were played mainly legato. The French school even applied the rule of *notes communes* (common notes) to Bach, as stated by Marcel Dupré: "Where two voices succeed each other on the same note, referred to as the 'common' note, that note must be tied." (*Méthode d'Orgue*, 1927). With increasing study of the sources, treatises, and performance practices of Bach's time, rediscovery of articulations called into question this legato practice, as well as this rule of the *note commune*, which was a direct consequence of it. What a surprise, however, to find *notes communes* in large numbers in the sources, even in autographs, of Bach!

WORKS OF BACH

Example 1

Bach – Orgelbüchlein: In dich hab' ich gehoffet, Herr, BWV 640, bar 9

Source consulted: autograph manuscript



The image shows a musical score for Example 1, consisting of three staves. A red box highlights a common note (G) in the upper voice of the first staff, which is tied to the same note in the second staff. This tie is noted as being added to the autograph manuscript.

The tie added in red above appears quite plainly in the autograph, but it was omitted in the Bach Gesellschaft edition of 1878 from which this example was taken. This omission was corrected in later editions.

Examples 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

Bach – Prelude in B Minor, BWV 544, bars 7, 13, 33, 50, 64

Source consulted: autograph manuscript



The image displays five musical score examples (Examples 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6) from the Prelude in B Minor, BWV 544. Each example shows a red box highlighting a common note in the upper voice, which is tied to the same note in the lower voice. The examples are arranged in two rows: the first row contains Examples 2, 3, and 4; the second row contains Examples 5 and 6.

Examples 7, 8

Bach – Prelude in C Major, BWV 547, bars 81–82. Fugue in C Major, BWV 547, bar 66
Source consulted: copy by Johann Peter Kellner



Example 9

Bach – Fugue in D Minor, BWV 539, bar 5
Source consulted: Neue Bach Ausgabe



In Examples 10 and 11 below, one sees voices with tied-over notes that are not, strictly speaking, cases of *notes communes*; however, the listener who does not have the score in front of him may well hear *notes communes*.

Examples 10, 11

Bach – Passacaglia and Fugue, BWV 582, bars 74, 290–292
(Source consulted: copy by Johann Tobias Krebs) :



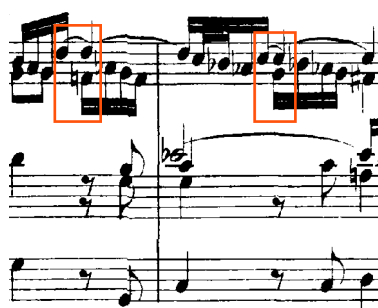
The origin of this type of writing is found in harpsichord compositions that imitate the lute style of arpeggiated polyphony. The auditory result on the organ is very different, of course, because the loudness of the held notes does not decrease. Yet it seems clear to me that in Ex-

ample 10, for example, the melody to be heard is D-flat—F—D-flat—B-flat. If our perception were simply D-flat—F—long D-flat, we would perceive something rhythmically incorrect — i.e., a syncopation with a long note coming just before the beat. The same rhythmic problem exists in the two instances in Example 11. I will call these cases “illusions of *notes communes*” for the rest of this article. In Example 10 and in the first part of Example 11, what listener could guess whether the stems of the first sixteenth notes are pointing up or down and thereby guess whether he is hearing *notes communes* or to illusions of *notes communes* ?...

Example 12

Bach – Fugue in G Major BWV 541, bars 69–70

Source consulted: autograph manuscript



In Examples 13 and 14 below, we have, strictly speaking, a mix of *notes communes* in the right hand and illusions of *notes communes* in the left hand. Or we could consider all of them to be *notes communes* because the listener does not know whether the stems of the left hand sixteenth-notes point down or up.

Example 13

Bach – Toccata in D Minor, BWV 538, bars 21–24

Source consulted: copy by Johann Gottfried Walther



We can reasonably assume that in bar 21 above, Bach wants the melody F—C-sharp—D—A—F to be heard in the soprano from beat three. This melodic motive of four sixteenth-notes followed by an upper jump is repeated many times elsewhere, and the melody to be heard is always similar.

Example 14

Bach – Toccata in F Major, BWV 540, bars 205–213. Also bars 319–327 and 425–433

Source consulted: copy by Johann Tobias Krebs and Johann Ludwig Krebs

The image shows three systems of musical notation for Example 14. Each system consists of three staves. The top staff is the soprano part, and the bottom two staves are the left and right hand parts. Red boxes are drawn around specific melodic motives in the soprano part of each system, highlighting the sequence of notes F, C-sharp, D, A, and F.

What could be the reason for these various *notes communes* or illusions of *notes communes* in Bach's works? When I consider, for instance, Example 7 from the Prelude in C major, BWV 547, what strikes me is that deletion of the *note commune* tie would change the melodic perception of the left hand part. My personal perception of the left hand melody would become A—C—F—A—D—F—F with a new voice being added at the appearance of the B. It seems to me that a desire for clarity of the melodic voice leading, including avoidance of the false impression of a melodic repetition, could be the reason the ties were added. The resulting lack of articulation in the melodic movement may surprise us, but it reinforces the fact that an articulation is only a means, not an end in itself. In all the examples given, the accent that is lacking due to the tie is provided elsewhere in the polyphony by another voice or a chord.

If one takes this reasoning — clarification of the counterpoint — as the basis for this practice (while bearing in mind that the practice has exceptions), one can imagine that a *note commune* tie should be included in the example below between the two E's.

Example 15

Bach – Prelude in B Minor, BWV 544, bar 53

Source consulted: autograph manuscript

The image shows a single system of musical notation for Example 15, consisting of three staves. The top staff is the soprano part, and the bottom two staves are the left and right hand parts. A red box is drawn around a specific melodic motive in the soprano part, highlighting the sequence of notes E, F, G, A, and B.

One might argue that this is a particularly passionate summit and that perhaps Bach did want the E to be repeated to obtain a stronger accent. Personally, tying the E as *note commune* is

more satisfactory to me because it helps to avoid the impression of melodic repetition of two successive E's. Here, one can make the desired accentuation by articulating before the two notes of the left hand. In any case, it is possible that ties of *notes communes* may be added elsewhere when they are thought to be either forgotten or, possibly, simply not written because they were part of a practice of the time and therefore obvious.

What should one do in the following example?

Examples 16, 17

Bach – Toccata in F, BWV 540, bars 402–404 and 412–414

Source consulted: copy by Johann Tobias Krebs



The image displays two systems of musical notation for Bach's Toccata in F, BWV 540. The top system shows three measures of music in treble clef, with red boxes highlighting the notes on the third beat of each measure. The bottom system shows three measures of music in bass clef, also with red boxes highlighting the notes on the third beat of each measure. The notes highlighted are E4, E4, and E4 in the top system, and E3, E3, and E3 in the bottom system.

Would adding ties seem to be indicated? The accent on the third beat of each bar is already created by the large right-hand chord, so articulating before the chord hardly seems needed. An interesting sign is given in bar 416, again in the same copy by Johann Tobias Krebs, where a tie appears as shown below:

Example 18

Bach – Toccata in F, BWV 540, bar 416

Source consulted: copy by Johann Tobias Krebs



The image shows a single measure of musical notation for Bach's Toccata in F, BWV 540, bar 416. The notation is in treble clef and shows a single note on the third beat, which is highlighted with a red box. The note is E4.

What we know is that Krebs himself, or someone else, wrote a tie here. We can think either it applies to only this one place, or it is written here and not elsewhere in the earlier parallel passages because these two notations were synonymous for the copyist in this kind of writing. If the second hypothesis is correct, it would be an interesting testimony of a performance practice of at least someone of the time — a performance practice (*Aufführungspraxis*) that we discover by examining the sources. Consequently, it would be in accordance with the practice

to tie the parallel passages in Examples 16 and 17 and elsewhere in the piece. Furthermore, this would confirm the fact that a tie can sometimes be written and sometimes not, but that the two notations can sometimes be synonymous. (It is also important to note that a decision to tie or not tie here guides the player to a decision about articulation before the chords in bars 403 and 413, where there are no repeated notes.)

Similarly, it is possible that a tie is missing in the pedal between the last two bars of Bach's Toccata in C, BWV 564, and the interpreter may choose to repeat the C in the final bar or tie it to the previous C. As noted earlier, this may be related to many long pedal points in countless sources where one tie in a series of ties is inexplicably missing.

These arguments suggest that ties may be added or omitted at the interpreter's discretion, perhaps also depending on the acoustics. A note (in the tenor) is tied between the last two bars at the end of Bach's Prelude in e minor, BWV 548 (autograph source) and of Prelude in C Major, BWV 545, (in two sources - Walther and Vogler, not in another one - Kellner). At the end of the Fugue in E Minor, BWV 548, the B is not tied between the last two bars; in dry acoustics, this sometimes gives a disappointing result that may be improved if a tie is added across the bar line. One can of course reduce the articulation between the penultimate and ultimate chords, but this solution suppresses any possibility of an important breath in the polyphony, which is so often desired to give the correct accentuation to the final chord. Adding a tie to one voice solves the problem. Are we allowed to do that? What was the performance practice (*Aufführungspraxis*) of the time? It is difficult to answer categorically. But it is certain that our modern practise of score reading, enamored of mathematical accuracy, leaves no room for choice, whereas we see that very often, this was not the case at the time. (We can say this also in the matter of accidentals).

The answer to the question "should I tie or not?" is often not obvious. In the example below, what should be done?

Example 19

Bach – Toccata in D Minor, BWV 538, bars 47, 58
Source consulted: copy by Johann Gottfried Walther

The image shows two staves of musical notation for Example 19. The left staff is a single melodic line, and the right staff is a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. A red rectangular box highlights a specific passage in both staves, spanning across a bar line. In the left staff, the box encloses a quarter note followed by an eighth note. In the right staff, the box encloses a quarter note followed by an eighth note, with a tie extending from the quarter note into the next bar.

Should one repeat or tie? There are good arguments for both. The choice may be one of the moment, and it is impossible to say whether a widespread custom of the time guided the interpreter towards this or that solution, or whether Bach himself always played this the same way.

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

In the nineteenth century, slurs appeared in organ scores more and more frequently. It is not always possible to distinguish whether they indicate articulations on the one hand or phrasings created by using agogics, but not necessarily articulations, on the other. The example below contains slurs in the right hand that can be understood to indicate articulations, not phrasings.

Example 20

Mendelssohn – Organ Sonata I, second movement, bars 41–45

Source consulted: original edition by Breitkopf und Härtel



But what then of the slurs in the first four bars of the same movement, where any form of interruption of the legato is impossible?

Example 21

Mendelssohn – Organ Sonata I, second movement, bars 1–4

Source consulted: original edition by Breitkopf und Härtel

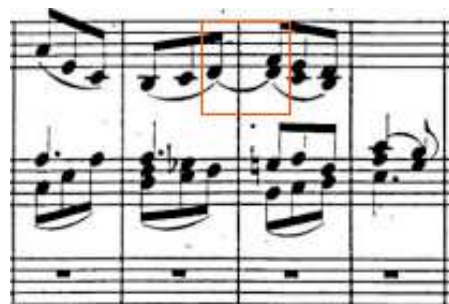


They obviously do not indicate articulations but rather phrasings by use of agogics.

Bars 5–8 of the same movement have slurs over the notes of each bar, perhaps indicating articulations in the legato flow, but it is clear that due to the tie between the two D's, there can be no articulation in the soprano voice at this point.

Example 22

Mendelssohn – Organ Sonata I, second movement, bars 5–8



So the question remains open, and any answer must be devoid of dogmatism and systematism.

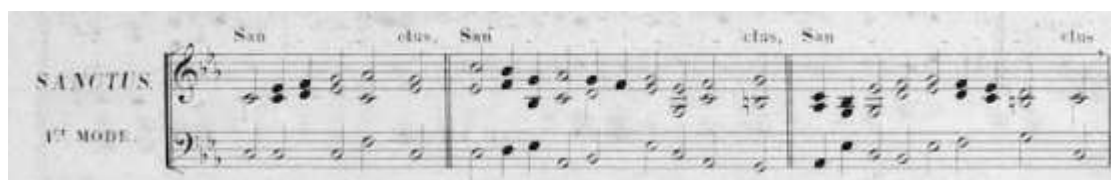
WORKS OF FRANCK

The works of César Franck are a particularly rich territory for investigating the tying of notes, whether *notes communes* or not. What we know about Franck's style of organ playing comes mainly from testimonies of contemporaries, fingerings he added in Bach's works for an edition intended for blind organists, rare examples of fingerings in his own organ works that indicate a willingness to tie consecutive notes of a melody, and the only known theoretical writings of Franck on organ playing — his prefaces to his three-volume work published in 1857, *Chant grégorien restauré par le R. P. Lambillotte, de la Compagnie de Jésus. Accompagnements d'orgue par C. Franck (aîné) Organiste, Maître de Chapelle de la Paroisse S.-Jean-S.-François*. This contains a large number of Gregorian melodies (Ordinary of the Mass, hymns, etc.) harmonized in three voices by Franck in a deliberately very simple way. In the preface to the second and third volumes, published in the same year, Franck said, "We assume...that able organists will easily add a fourth part as they see fit." Playing organ harmonizations of Gregorian chant was just beginning to become popular, and obviously, not all church organists were able to do it. His advice was, as often in a preface, elementary and intended for less advanced players. Here is a typical example:

Example 23

Franck – *Chant grégorien...Accompagnements d'orgue par C. Franck*

Source consulted: original edition



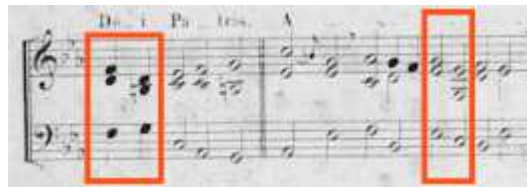
The preface to the first book contains an instruction about the absence of ties: "all the chords have been written without ties between them; but when a note is common to several consecutive chords, it must be kept as long as it remains in harmony. This is too basic for organists to ignore it." Franck thus describes a practice that was widespread at the time: in

simple harmonizations such as these, one does not repeat a note when the tie is absent. Moreover, he does not specify whether the note “common to several consecutive chords” belongs to the same voice. Therefore, his instruction includes the practice of tying the *note commune* between two different voices. It would therefore appear that, in the examples below, one should tie the *notes communes*.

Example 24

Franck – *Chant grégorien...Accompagnements d’orgue par C. Franck*

Source consulted: original edition



At the time Franck wrote his preface, no such work existed. When he says that "this is too basic for organists to ignore it", he is referring to a practice of accompaniment (not especially in three voices; he chose three voices for organists who are not very advanced, he says that the others can add a fourth voice); moreover, there is no reason to think that the way of binding or not binding a chant accompaniment is different if the chant is Gregorian or other. So he speaks about any harmonic writing with voices performing a simple accompaniment role without an important melodic role. The precept set forth by Franck might well apply to accompanimental writing in his other organ works, and seem to reflect a sound ideal of a melody accompanied by a continuo whose polyphonic profiles are secondary. Obviously, when polyphonic profiles become important in the accompaniment, one can imagine that repetitions are necessary; Franck notes, moreover, in various places, phrasing links in the accompaniment to underline these profiles.

A large number of today's French organists are descended from the pedagogical progeny of Marcel Dupré; thus, we tend to see the music of Franck, consciously or not, in part with “the eyes” of Dupré. In the preface to his edition of Franck's organ works, Dupré, who was four years old at the time of Franck's death, could only have reflected testimonies of his noted elders, presumably Guilmant and Widor, about Franck's playing. (Franck's other students, particularly Tournemire and Vierne, were too young to have had a critical perspective, as will be seen later.) Dupré wrote: “At the organ, he [Franck] was as great as an improviser as he was as a composer. But, as a virtuoso of the organ, he played...as one played in France at his time: approximate legato, approximate observance of durations.” This report clearly states that Dupré believed Franck played the organ poorly. But a careful analysis of this assessment suggests that Dupré might have written exactly the same thing about Bach's playing if Widor could have heard Bach play the organ and had expressed a negative opinion. (“France” would have simply become “Germany”). Franck had been a child prodigy at the piano, and he could do absolutely what he wanted with his hands. (As for his pedal technique, we know that at a certain point in his career, he had wanted to perfect it by adding a pedal board to his piano.) Furthermore, he was certainly not deaf nor devoid of musical judgment. Therefore Dupré's report was likely not motivated by a weakness in Franck's organ playing, but by a change in the style of playing and taste in France, which Vierne describes very precisely in his

Mémoires as being related to Widor's arrival at the conservatory as Franck's successor as organ teacher:

Of the six hours of class given each week, the master [César Franck] devoted at least five hours to improvisation.... He was not interested in execution.... Franck drew the stops, hooked the combination pedals, and handled the expression pedal.

This was the practice of the time: one normally had assistants for all these maneuvers. Then came Widor, who, from the first class, gave an importance never seen before to organ technique and to strictly respecting mathematically the writing of the score:

« (the technique) must be scientific, rational and not empirical(...) » He made (a student) repeat each measure dozens of times, explaining everything with a ruthless logic (...). (...) Rigorous legato in all parts, precise articulation of repeated notes, linking of *notes communes*, punctuation, breathing, phrasing, nuances by plan, everything was dissected, commented, justified with marvelous clarity. We were flabbergasted, bewildered, discouraged, for we clearly saw our complete ignorance of all these technical details, relying on chance as our guide, on our ears as our only control.

It is clear from this testimony that Franck had not instructed his students to focus on these matters, which were probably secondary to him, and that different students may have performed different interpretations of a score without him insisting on a precise reading. Therefore, we can assume that he espoused little dogma. Given these circumstances, how would it be possible to establish rules for playing Franck's works? Obviously, it would be wrong to apply rules that were taught in France only after his death.

In his *Mémoires*, Vierne recounts Widor's words to his students:

To hear some organists, it seems that their instrument is exempt from the duty to make the texts intelligible; the other instruments, and the voice, put at the service of interpretation a whole series of artifices, indispensable to render the composer's intentions; they articulate, punctuate, breathe, phrase, nuance; would the organ be content with an unbearable *ronron* [French onomatopoeic word describing the regular noise of a machine] without artistic significance? But why is that? ...for punctuation and breathing artifices, one can proceed by analogy with bowed or wind instruments, but taking into account the fact that the organ can only use them by mechanical means, one will have to punctuate without excess, breathe less often, phrase more widely. ...It is necessary to play in tempo, certainly! ...Does this mean that the division of durations must be rigidly mathematical? So it is the triumph of automation, of unintelligent mechanics, an unleashed force that puts everything in the same level. ...The important rhythmic values must be given an advantage: that is accentuation.

A large number of Widor's recommendations were to disappear completely with Marcel Dupré, who went so far as to remove original phrasing slurs in his edition of Franck. The "Absolute Legato," which meant for Widor a rigorous connection of the successive sounds of a melody (with the consequent tying of *notes communes*) but with the need to breathe like other instruments because of the discourse, meant for Dupré a total legato that disregarded all the other recommendations of Widor. As for the use of accentuation and rubato that Widor insisted on elsewhere, one has only to listen to Dupré's recordings to discover that this art taught by Widor to a high degree of subtlety disappeared with Dupré.

Since Widor was perceived by his students as much stricter than his predecessor, one must acknowledge that Franck, accustomed to writing for all kinds of instruments in addition to the

organ, was certainly not limited to a “ronron without artistic significance.” Obviously, all the many breaths are needed as well as rubato directly inspired by other instrumental music that lies in the background of almost all his organ works. Thus, without being dogmatic, it seems entirely plausible and even desirable to make at least the melody breathe according to Franck’s instructions:

Note : For all following examples extracted from the works of César Franck, the sources consulted were always autograph manuscripts; this will not be repeated for each example.

Example 25

Franck – Prière, bars 23–28



Should more voices breathe? According to Vierne’s comments, it is possible to imagine that two students could have presented two differently phrased performances of the same passage without the master having made any remark to either.

During a masterclass in 1969 in Minneapolis, Maurice Duruflé, a student of Vierne and Tournemire, answered a question about breaths in Franck’s Choral I (as heard in an excerpt on YouTube). He pointed out that in bar 49, as shown below, one should take a breath only in the soprano because it would be too dry if all the voices were to breathe. However, he also noted that melodic phrases can often have two periods, the second of which responds to the first. Here, the first period encompasses bar 46 third beat through bar 49 second beat, after which he recommended breathing only in the soprano voice and tying the repeated C-sharp. The second period, or “answer,” encompasses bar 49 third beat through bar 52 second beat, and he recommended taking a breath in all voices here. This shows that in 1969, a major student of Tournemire and Vierne still based his interpretation of this particular Franck extract, chosen by pure chance, on listening and analyzing, not on rules or theories.

Example 26

Franck – Choral I, bars 46–52

ôtez Gambe et Hautbois_mettez Voix humaine et Tremblant.
Gamba Oboë in_Draw Vox humana, tremulant.

There are many places in Franck's organ works where it is quite possible that ties are missing between notes, ties whose addition considerably changes the perception of music. Take for example the following:

Example 27

Franck – Choral I, bars 23–26



Should we repeat or tie the bass notes? Arguments for repeating are: 1) Franck wrote repeated notes, not ties; 2) repetition gives more emphasis to the dissonance on the first beat; 3) the rhythm of the syncopated bass note on beat three extended beyond the syncopation by a long note is “unbalanced.” Arguments for tying are: 1) the dissonant chord on the first beat sounds more harsh without the tie; 2) the “imbalance” of the rhythm in the bass is compensated for by the accentuation created by the sudden modulation on the next first beat. Moreover, we see that Franck is not at all bothered by this syncopation, for later in the piece, a variation of the same music appears above tied bass notes in bars 153–154 and 162–163:

Examples 28, 29

Franck – Choral I, bars 153-154, 162-163

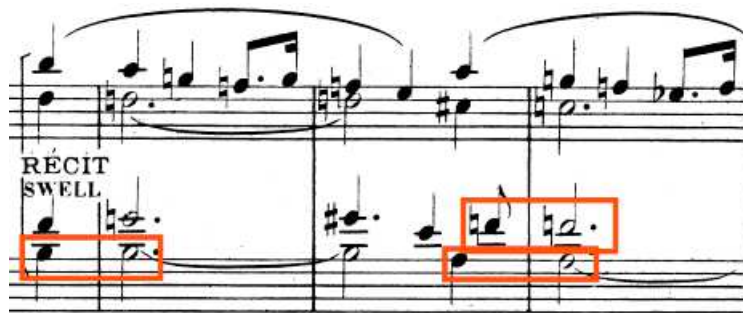


Does it matter? The answer is subjective, of course. Personally, I think the modulation with a repeated bass note is harsh, inelegant, and alien to Franck's harmonic subtlety. In this case, it seems to me that the absence or presence of a written tie are synonymous.

From this same point of view, the bass in bars 8–11 does not seem to require the repetitions.

Example 30

Franck – Choral I, bars 8–11



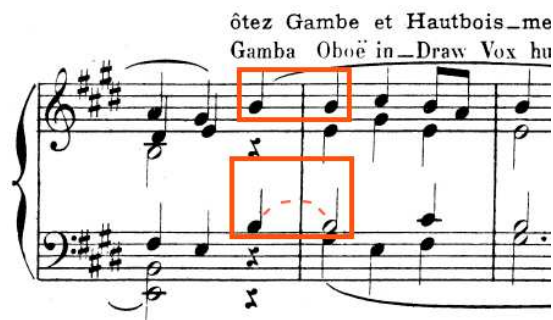
But what about the tenor in bars 10–11? Here the repetition is in a real melodic part that must be heard; it is not in a series of notes functioning only harmonically; thus, the repetition of the F seems necessary.

Despite his desire to tie absolutely everything, Dupré, in his 1927 *Méthode d'orgue*, agreed with the need for polyphonic clarity in the most crucial cases: “An exception to this rule [of *note commune*] is when it comes to the entry of a fugue subject, whose initial note must, where possible, be preceded by a break.” Once again, Franck's preface to his accompaniment of Gregorian chant in 1857 concerns harmonic writing with voices that perform a simple accompanying role without any important melodic role. It goes without saying that if, in a different style of writing, an inner voice contains a real melody, a melodic repetition in that voice should not be eradicated by an inappropriate tie.

In bars 46–47 of the same Choral, an added tie in the tenor allows for sound continuity in the accompaniment while the soprano has a melodic repetition, as shown here:

Example 31

Franck – Choral I, bars 46–47



In Choral III, the lack of a tie in the bass at bar 128 seems a manifest oversight between two notes that are, in fact, one single note whose spelling changes because the composer did not wish to write the sequel in E-sharp minor.

Example 32

Franck – Choral III, bars 128–129



The image shows a musical score for piano accompaniment. The top staff is labeled 'POSITIF CHOIR'. The bottom staff is the bass line. A red box highlights a note in bar 128 that is not tied to the following bar, despite being part of a single melodic line.

A repetition of the bass note in the above example would give a sudden accent to the bass when there is no reason for it; just compare this with the same music (inverted) a half-tone higher in bar 107:

Example 33

Franck – Choral III, bar 107



The image shows a musical score for piano accompaniment. The bottom staff is the bass line. A red box highlights a note in bar 107 that is repeated, illustrating the effect of a sudden accent.

In Choral II, the second theme presents many variations of the same pattern:

Examples 34, 35, 36

Franck – Choral II, bars 72–75, 202–205, 218–221



The image shows a musical score for piano accompaniment. The bottom staff is the bass line. A red box highlights a note in bar 72 that is repeated, illustrating the effect of a sudden accent. The score includes a 'cresc.' marking.



These randomly tied and repeated notes are difficult to justify other than by the fact that the two notations are here synonymous (possibly due to an oversight of the composer).

The end of the Cantabile presents a definite question of whether to tie or not. The autograph written in 1878 for Franck's concert on the Cavallé Coll organ installed in the Trocadéro Hall in Paris for the 1878 World's Fair ends as shown below with a very clear tie (here added in red). This leaves no room for doubt about the composer's intention at that time:

Example 37

Franck – Cantabile (Trocadero version), final bars



However, the first published edition of 1883, has no tie, as shown above without the added tie. Is this a revision by the composer? Or is it an oversight? It must be admitted that in this case, the choice we make will not be insignificant at this particularly important and memorable moment of the piece. If we repeat the D-sharp, the soprano continues to act rhythmically, helping to counteract the rhythmic imbalance created by the syncopation in the bass on beat two. If we tie, the melody is finished, and the remaining notes of the bass are not related to any action of the soprano. The rhythmic imbalance in the first half of the bar makes us desire a return to rhythmic balance established by the two following bass notes. Note the similarity

of this ending to that of the second Andante of the Grande pièce symphonique, where the left hand and pedal parts are identical:

Example 38

Franck – Grande pièce symphonique, bars 421–423



The rhythmic imbalance is even greater in the Cantabile due to the ornamental jump (*port de voix par intervalle*) in the soprano, which causes a significant rhythmic syncopation at the start of the bar.

Common notes (*notes communes*) are sometimes written as tied and sometimes not:

Example 39

Franck – Pastorale, bars 39–40



The tenor obviously jumps from B to A, continuing its progression making intervals of a 6th with the alto.

Example 40

Franck – Choral I, bars 1–2



By tying the E's, breaks in the slur-indicated legato of the soprano melody are avoided. Moreover, there is no need for polyphonic clarity in the accompanying parts, except for the climbing alto proceeding by parallel thirds with the bass. Finally this is confirmed later :

Example 41

Franck – Choral I, bars 209-210

A tempo

The image shows a musical score for Franck's Choral I, bars 209-210. The score is written for soprano, alto, tenor, and piano. The soprano part has a slur over it. The tenor part has two E notes in bar 209 and bar 210, which are highlighted with orange boxes. The piano part is marked 'p' and has a slur over it. The key signature is one sharp (F#).

This example also recalls certain examples in Bach's work: e.g., Prelude in B Minor (Examples 2, 4, 5, 6, ...) Toccata in D Minor, BWV 538 (Example 13), ...

(Beside considerations of *note commune*, considering what was said above, the two E's in tenor of bar 2 of Franck Choral I (see Example 41) might be equally tied.)

The indications of *notes communes* are remarkably few in Franck's work; I have tried to find them in the Six Pieces, the Three Pieces and the Three Chorals, I could find the following ones (may an attentive reader complete this list !):

Pastorale : bars 39–40

Choral I : bars 209-210

Choral III : bars 97-98 (left hand), and in the right hand : 118, 159-160, 166-167, 190 and 191.

I think that in fact the unwritten ones are much more numerous, and that the absence of a link to point them out is explained by the fact that they were considered obvious, not only by the composer but also by those who were going to read the scores (this reminds us of Franck's sentence: "This is too basic for organists to ignore it.")

NOTE DURATIONS

As for the actual durations of notes, it is not worth discussing Bach's works here because in numerous instances, Baroque performance practice requires playing in a way that does not exactly match the written durations. But what about Franck? Let's go back to Dupré's testimony about his playing: "approximate legato, approximate observance of durations." In the following excerpt, few musicians will want to slur the alternating notes from one hand to the other, and most musicians will prefer to play the sixteenth notes shorter than written:

Example 42

Franck – Pièce héroïque, bar 144



The image shows a musical score for Example 42, Franck's Pièce héroïque, bar 144. The score is written for piano and consists of three staves. The top staff is the right hand, the middle staff is the left hand, and the bottom staff is a separate bass line. The right hand part features a complex rhythmic pattern of sixteenth notes. The left hand part has a simpler pattern. The score includes markings for "ajoutez les 16 pieds au P.", "cresc.", and "P."

In his masterclass already mentioned above, Duruflé gave an example of his preference for detaching notes that are not marked detached in Franck's notation:

"Touch is a function of the registration and character of the music; first of the registration, and then of the character of the music. For example if you play with the Vox humana, you need an extremely legato touch; but if you play, for example [and here Duruflé played the manual part of Choral I, bars 255–257, detaching very noticeably the sixteenth-notes], it's a chime, it's bells."

On the other hand, are there passages in which the prolongation of the notes beyond their written value would be desirable? Franck's writing is often pianistic, and of course piano tones must be extended to obtain a proper legato and also for the ear to hear complete harmonies in arpeggios. For the organ, the acoustics can give this effect more or less, depending on how generous they are, but one problem can remain — the sound imbalance.

Thus, in the following passage from the Pièce héroïque, the composer obviously wishes to hear a succession of harmonies in the left hand that color the melody of the right hand in an extraordinary way. Playing this passage on the piano using the damper pedal demonstrates this:

Example 43

Franck – Pièce héroïque, bars 52–56 and following



The image shows a musical score for Example 43, Franck's Pièce héroïque, bars 52–56 and following. The score is written for piano and consists of two staves. The top staff is the right hand, and the bottom staff is the left hand. The right hand part features a complex rhythmic pattern of sixteenth notes. The left hand part has a simpler pattern. The score includes markings for "p", "cresc.", and "f".

etc.

Here, the right hand soaring high up on the Grand Orgue is much louder than the left hand in the tenor and alto region on the softer Positif. The registration, rich in foundation stops and therefore treble-ascendent, amplifies this difference. These arpeggiated chords in the left hand, somewhat obscured by the much more sonorous notes of the treble melody as well as by the pedal, are particularly disadvantaged if they are played exactly as written. Such an interpretation gives a rather skeletal result, making perception of the harmonies arduous. Generous acoustics do not restore a balance. Holding the left hand notes longer, with each note entirely or partially overlapping one or more of the following notes within the limits of each harmony, corrects the imbalance, and the harmonies become much more perceptible. How much should each note be lengthened? It is a matter of ear, discernment, taste.

In Choral II, a comparison of bars 90–93 with bars 236–239 invites reflection:

Examples 44, 45

Franck – Choral II, bars 90–93, 236–239

The second time this same music is heard, an added pedal point on F-sharp becomes the new bass, providing particularly tense harmonic implications. Also, the former bass line, now found on the beats in the tenor, is decorated in a tumultuous manner that contributes to the feverish character of this passage. Despite the fact that the left hand is played on the Grand Orgue while the right hand is on the Positif, the brevity of each left hand note makes perception of each complete harmony as well as perception of the embedded left hand melody almost impossible. A cellist playing the tenor part would accentuate, slightly but noticeably, the first note on each beat, thus bringing out the original bass melody. One may draw inspiration from this to find the best duration of these beat notes — i.e., longer than their written duration and possibly partially covering the three following sixteenths. One might also add a very slight rhythmic inequality favoring the melody notes on the beats, or at least those on the first beats in order to avoid systematic sameness. This would also imitate the playing of a cellist and correct all the difficulties of perceiving harmony and melody.

CONCLUSION

The above reflections came about through contact with the sources and by questioning certain performance traditions. Such traditions may break down when researched and examined carefully. For example, the existence of a tradition, transmitted by Adolf Friedrich Hesse to Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens, that claimed a performance-practice link between Bach and the interpreters of the early twentieth century, was definitively defeated by Jean Ferrard in 1992 (*La flûte harmonique*, N°61/62, 1992).

Moreover, a tradition, even a valid one, is transmitted by witnesses who necessarily interpret and repeat in their own way what they perceived and understood. I experienced this myself when I received the teachings of Gaston Litaize about Vierne. Litaize was a disciple but not a student of Vierne (which he himself honestly admitted), and in general, his precision was beyond doubt. Nevertheless, I discovered later that part of his testimony about Vierne did not correspond to certain practices of Vierne or his contemporaries. I am certainly not saying this to diminish Litaize's merits, but simply to draw attention to the fact that even a report of a tradition very close to the source can misconstrue it.

With this article, I hope to have contributed to the distrust of dogmas. Ultimately, and with as much information as each of us can acquire, we will make our choices according to our own personal good taste and convictions.

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