

A Study of Basso Continuo Instrumentation in Baroque Cello Sonatas
With a Focus on Jean-Baptiste Barrière
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Research Process – First Steps

My research began with Jean-Baptiste Barrière, but the topic has changed over the course of my time with at the conservatory. I decided to focus on Barrière because he was the first baroque cellist/composer I consciously came across, back in 2011 when I first began my historically informed journey at the Tafelmusik Baroque Summer Institute. A cellist there who is now a good friend was playing his first sonata, and the piece was like nothing I had heard before. His music captivated me, and the imagination and technical fireworks his sonatas contain continue to excite me, and audiences I perform them for. However, many questions arise when playing his music, first and foremost, how did he actually manage to play these pieces? Some of the sonatas contain passages that are nearly impossible, and require imaginative fingers and hours of practice.

Another question was about ornamentation – how did he intend for his flourishes to be performed? Are his trills as simple as they seem, or can they be interpreted like earlier French repertoire for the viola da gamba and harpsichord? What are the options in realizing his series of blocked chords? This is the topic I began my research on, and attempted to investigate. A problem with Barrière is that not much is known about his life, and there is very little evidence besides the music itself. I attempted to answer these questions and others, found some research that had already been done on them, and found myself looking at the music and seeing solutions that were either obvious to any historically informed performer, or that could only be decided with personal taste.

Present Study – Research Question and Method

While I was conducting the ornamentation research, I always had in the back of my mind the question of continuo instrumentation in his works. This is largely due to the fact that the first time I heard his sonatas (sparked by the small, very first encounter mentioned above), it was on the first CD made by Bruno Cocset and his bass-powerhouse group Les Basses Réunis. The strength, flexibility, and imagination put forward in Cocset's work is inspiring, but I found myself wondering – would this have been done in the baroque period? Is there evidence for such a large continuo group to play with a cello, or any soloist at all? What was normally done? These are questions I will attempt to answer in the present paper.

My research question can be summarized as such:

What basso continuo instrumentation possibilities exist in baroque cello sonatas, and specifically in the works of Jean-Baptiste Barrière?

In order to answer this question, I decided to take a broad approach, and then narrow down my focus. I begin at the beginning of basso continuo use, and quickly make my way into the late Baroque and early Classical periods. Since it was clear from the beginning that there is not an abundance of historical evidence for different instrumentations relating directly to the cello, I expanded my search to orchestra, chamber, and other instrumental solo works. My focus is on French and Italian music, since these are the influences that would have most affected Barrière and his choices, though other sources are considered as well. I started the research by investigating both primary and secondary sources, records of basso continuo groups in concerts, indications of instrumentation in scores, descriptions of practices at the time, and opinions of present scholars on the subject. Finally, after accumulating an abundance of examples and evidence, I gathered together some colleagues of mine and took samples from three different

Barrière sonatas, experimenting with different instrumentations and seeing what effect it had on me, on them, and on the music.

Relevance of this Research

The results of this research can certainly benefit the musical world at large. No study of this sort has been done before, to my knowledge, especially focusing on the cello sonata repertoire. While no concrete results arise out of study like this, knowledge of practices of the time can only help us to get closer to creating imaginative, innovative, and convincing historical performances.

Introduction

In approaching the research process, I had two clear goals in mind: one, to find the general trends of basso continuo, and two, to find as many exceptions to those rules as possible. I wanted to find evidence that suggests the instrumentation variety and expanse that is found in many modern recordings is historically justifiable. It must be made clear that this is not meant to be an exhaustive study of every type of practice done in the baroque times, but rather an investigation in order to get a general idea of basso continuo instrumentations.

So much focus nowadays, and in manuals from the time, is given to the execution of the chords on a keyboard instrument, that the actual combination of instruments (and the influence of that on the performers) is often ignored and given little thought or consideration. Most often, C.P.E. Bach is quoted: “The best accompaniment, one which is free of criticism, is a keyboard instrument and a cello.”¹ This quote, while valuable and informative, can hardly be applied to the whole of the baroque period. Of course, these choices will remain up to each individual interpreter, but with more insight into the practices of the time, we can come closer to a sound world that existed then.

Basso Continuo – Origins and Common Use in Italy

The use of basso continuo has its origins at the end of the 16th-century, with the new attitudes of the Florentine Camerata.² The earliest printed use of basso continuo is in Giovanni Croce’s *Motetti a otto voci*, printed in Venice in 1594, and the use of this composition technique also coincides with the new style of singing put forward by Caccini in his *Le nuove musiche* of 1602.³ Soon thereafter, its harmonic and rhythmic support became necessary for composition. The instruments to be used were rarely indicated, but there is evidence that a large variety of instruments were used, such as the lute, viola da braccio, lirone/lira da gamba, guitar, harpsichord, and organ as chordal instruments, and violoncello, bassoon, viola da gamba, and sackbut as sustaining instruments.⁴ However, from 1600-1650, the use of a single chordal instrument was the norm.⁵ This instrument was used to play a repeated progression over an ostinato or tetrachord as accompaniment to singing, or the recitation of an epic poem.⁶ Though this was the practice most commonly done, there were certainly exceptions to this rule, with large combinations of instruments being used at times. By 1680, sustaining instruments sometimes doubled the bass line, but it was certainly not an obligation.⁷ The bassoon and trombone mostly died out by 1650, but the bassoon stayed in use in north-German contexts, as well as in France at times (paired with oboes).⁸ Basso continuo was used in all sorts of musical genres, such as opera, sonatas, and suites.

Italy is the country where the sonata and the use of basso continuo developed and flourished. The earliest Italian sonatas are extremely varied in form and style, and the genre did not find a

¹ Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, translated and edited by William J. Mitchell (London: Cassell & Company Ltd., 1949), 173.

² Mary Cyr, *Performing Baroque Music* (Great Britain: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1992), 71.

³ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, 73.

true structure until the contributions of Arcangelo Corelli.⁹ In the late 17th-century, Corelli's opus 1 through 5 formalized and standardized the sonata form, and served as an international example for the rest of the baroque period.¹⁰ These collections included four sets of twelve trio sonatas (*sonate de chiesa* and *sonate da camera*), along with his 12 violin sonatas. The structure of these pieces was primarily a series of four movements (slow-fast-slow-fast), with interspersed dance forms and free-flowing slow movements.¹¹

These early sonatas all include a basso continuo part, and the instruments that should or should not play is the subject of some heated debates in modern times, especially in relation to Corelli's opus 5 violin sonatas. The indication on the title page of the first edition is *Sonate a Violino e Violone o Cimbalo*, which implies that either a violone (most likely a cello)¹² or a harpsichord should play, but not both together.¹³ Robert Donington and F.T. Arnold both argue that this indication was simply a strategy to sell more copies, as amateurs would not have had access to the "ideal" instrumentation of cello and harpsichord together.¹⁴ Donington gives a defence for this stance, stating that while "or" is given on the title page, "and" is written on the individual parts.¹⁵ On the contrary, David Watkin suggests that Corelli's preferred instrument was just a cello, and that the cello would have very likely added notes or chords to realize the figures (this will be discussed in slightly more detail later in this paper).¹⁶ Watkin supplies a quote of Corelli in a letter to Count Laderchi in 1679, referring to an earlier sonata for violin and lute, in which he states that the accompaniment of a single violone would "...have a very good effect."¹⁷ The "or" is taken literally by Henry Burnett as well, who suggests that the choice was given in order to not give too much power to the bass (he is referring to the trend in general, not to Corelli specifically).¹⁸ In his trio sonatas, Corelli makes a distinction between the continuo group in the church sonatas and the chamber sonatas. For the church sonatas opus 1 and 3, he supplies two different bass parts, one for *Violone, ò Arcileuto*, and another for *Organo*.¹⁹ This

⁹ William S. Newman, *The Sonata in the Baroque Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 95-96.

¹⁰ Ibid, 155-158.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² See: David Watkin, "Corelli's Op.5 Sonatas: 'Violino e violone o cimbalo'?" *Early Music* 24/4 (November 1996): 645-6+649-50+653-4+657-63, accessed March 7, 2016, *Oxford University Press*, <http://www.jstor.org.access.authkb.kb.nl/stable/3128061>, 646.

¹³ Arcangelo Corelli, *12 Violin Sonatas, Op.5* (Rome: Gasparo Pietra Santa, n.d.[1700]), accessed March 7, 2016, *International Music Score Library Project*, http://hz.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/f/fb/IMSLP74741-PMLP28348-Corelli_-_12_Sonatas_Op_5.pdf.

¹⁴ See: Robert Donington, *The Interpretation of Early Music* (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), 295; and F.T. Arnold, *The Art of Accompaniment from a Thorough-Bass as practised in the XVIIth & XVIIIth Centuries, Volume I* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1965), 329.

¹⁵ Donington, 295.

¹⁶ Watkin, 646.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Henry Burnett, "The Bowed String Instruments of the Baroque Basso Continuo (c1680-c1752) in Italy and France," *JVdGSA* 8 (1971): 29-63, accessed March 7, 2016, <http://vdgsa.org/pgs/journal/vol08-1971.pdf>, 33.

¹⁹ Arcangelo Corelli, *12 Trio Sonatas, Op.1* (Rome: Gio. Angelo Mutij, 1681), accessed March 7, 2016, *International Music Score Library Project*, http://petrucci.mus.auth.gr/imglnks/usimg/e/e1/IMSLP280129-PMLP04939-Corelli_Op_1_Parts__1681_.pdf.

exact same indication is given in Antonio Veracini's opus 1 trio sonatas.²⁰ For the chamber sonatas, Corelli only supplies one bass part, and again indicates *Violone, ò Cimbalo*.²¹

Corelli's suggestion of either a sustaining bass or a chordal bass is not an isolated incident. Three examples are given by Watkin: the first, G.M. Bononcini's *Arie*, op.4, for *violino e violone o spinetta* (Bologna, 1671); the second, Tomaso Pegolotti's *Trattenimenti armonici da camera* for *violino solo, e violoncello* (Modena, 1698); and the third, a collection of sonatas by various composers including Corelli and Torelli, *Sonate a Violino e Violoncello di vari autori* (c.1694).²² He goes on to give examples from the mid to late 18th-century of violinists who toured with only a cellist as their continuo support, such as: Veracini (1690-1768) with Lanzetti (c.1710-c.1780) in Lucca in 1722 or 1723; extensive touring of Tartini (1692-1770) with Vandini (1690-1771); and Manfredi (1731-1777) and Boccherini (1743-1805) between 1766 and 1769.²³ Burnett gives two more examples in which cello or harpsichord is indicated: Francesco Algehisi's 1693 *Sonate Da Camera a Trè, Due Violini, e Violoncello, ó Cembalo* (parts indicate Violone, Cembalo); and D. Francesco Giuseppe De Castro Spagnuolo's 1695 *Trattenimenti Armonici da Camera a Trè, Due Violini, Violoncello, ó Cembalo* (parts indicate Violone ò Cembalo).²⁴ The great violinist Francesco Geminiani specifies either harpsichord or bass violin (in that order) in the accompaniment for his opus 1 violin sonatas.²⁵ Clearly, the choice of a cello alone (or, alternatively, a harpsichord) was a strong preference in continuo at the turn of the 18th-century in Italy, and one that continued for decades afterwards.

Exceptions to the Rule in Italy

Though the preference of continuo instruments in solo pieces was for a cello or harpsichord, there are some exceptions to this rule, some of which will be discussed presently. There is evidence that some performers preferred a combination of the cello and the harpsichord, playing together at the same time. One such indication is given in the title of Giovanni Antonio Piani's opus 1 from 1712, *Sonate a violino solo e violoncello col cimbalo*.²⁶ There is evidence of other instrumentations as well. Watkin gives an example quoted in Enrico Careri's *Geminiani* (Oxford, 1993), stating that Giovanni Bononcini "...played solos on the Violoncello in which he chose

²⁰ Burnett, 32.

²¹ Arcangelo Corelli, *12 Trio Sonatas, Op.2* (Bologna: Giacomo Monti, 1685), accessed March 7, 2016, *International Music Score Library Project*, http://imslp.nl/imglnks/usimg/0/01/IMSLP280118-PMLP04948-Corelli_Op_2_Parts__1685.pdf.

²² Watkin, 649.

Brent Wissick, "The Cello Music of Antonio Bononcini: Violoncello da Spalla, and the Cello 'Schools' of Bologna and Rome," *Journal of 17th Century Music* 12/1 (2006), <http://www.sscm-jscm.org/v12/no1/wissick.html>.

Section 2.4: In 1671, G.M. Bononcini states in the *violone o spinetta* partbook of his *Arie, correnti, sarabande, gigue e allemande a violino* (op. 4, Bologna, 1671), that "one should bear in mind that the violone will produce a better effect than the spinet, since the basses [i.e., the parts] are more appropriate to the former than the latter instrument."

²³ Ibid.

Arnold, on pages 328-329, keeping with his argument that a sole cellist was not ideal, states that Veracini was in a bad state and this was an exceptional case.

²⁴ Burnett, 32.

²⁵ Francesco Geminiani, *12 Violin Sonatas, Op.1* (London: I. Walsh, n.d.(ca.1730)), accessed March 7, 2016, *International Music Score Library Project*, http://hz.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/c/cf/IMSLP281434-PMLP150456-Geminiani_-_Violin_Sonatas_Op_1_-Walsh-.pdf.

²⁶ Giovanni Antonio Piani, *12 Violin Sonatas, Op.1* (Paris: Foucault, 1712), accessed March 7, 2016, *International Music Score Library Project*, http://japanese.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/5/5b/IMSLP342525-PMLP552586-piani_vn_sonatas_op1_foucault.pdf.

ever to be accompanied by Waber on the lute.”²⁷ I have found little evidence of the organ being used with a solo cello – however, Denis Stevens argues that the works of many late 17th-century composers (including Bononcini) were written with the organ in mind, including concerti, sinfonias, and sonatas.²⁸ These works would have been performed in the church, so it does not give evidence for the organ in secular music performed outside the church. There is an interesting example given by Burnett, which is Barolomeo Bernardi’s 1692 *Sonate Da Camera a trè, due Violini, e Violoncello col Violone, ò Cimbalo*.²⁹ This is interesting not only because it indicates the use of two sustaining instruments as a preference, but also that it makes a distinction between the cello and a larger, 16 foot instrument. Alfred Planyavsky gives a few more examples of this: Giulio Taglietti’s 1709 op. 3, *Arie da suonare col Violoncello e Spinetta o Violone*; Taglietti’s 1710 op. 8, [title is omitted]...*col Violone, Violoncello e Bc.*; Taglietti’s op. 9 and 10, [title again omitted]...*Violoncello, Violone o Clavecino*; Giovanni Reali’s op. 1, *Suonate Capricci...Violini, e Violoncello con Violone obligatti*.³⁰ Luigi Boccherini is another interesting performer to discuss. Christian Speck and Laurence Chapman claim his writing indicates his sonatas are cello duos, but they do not exclude adding harpsichord.³¹ Watkin considers that it is possible Boccherini was accompanied by a double bass, since it is likely his father played with him, and he is described variously as a player of the cello, violone, or double bass.³² All of these examples prove to show just some of the variation that may have taken place in Italy in the baroque and early classical periods.

Brief Discussion of the Orchestra in Italy

In determining which instruments could have been used in the continuo part of sonatas, it is useful to take a brief look at the instrumentation used in Italian orchestras. Though orchestras varied throughout Italy, looking at a few examples can give us an idea of practices taking place. It is important to note that the concept of a string orchestra came from Lully’s groups in France, and was adapted to Italian tastes.³³ Eleanor Selfridge-Field gives an example of instrumental dimensions achieved with Lully’s oratorio *Betsabea provato* at Casa Savelli in 1692, which involved 23 violins, 7 violas, 8 celli, 5 string basses, 2 lutes, and 2 harpsichords.³⁴ It is unlikely that this large group played all together (except in the opening sinfonia and interludes), but rather that smaller groups were made of this ensemble.³⁵ She goes on to say that “...ensembles of similar composition but smaller dimensions seem in general to have been used for private entertainments in Rome.”³⁶ Another example is the roster at San Marco in 1700, which included: 12 violins, 4 violas, 3 cellos, 4 violoni, violon grosso; 2 cornetts, 2 trumpets, 5 trombones, 1

²⁷ Watkin, 663.

²⁸ Denis Stevens, “‘... The Harmony More Magnificent’. How the Organ as Continuo Lost Its Role.” *The Musical Times* 132/1786 (Dec., 1991): 626-31, accessed March 7, 2016, *Musical Times Publications Ltd*, <http://www.jstor.org.access.authkb.kb.nl/stable/96580>.

²⁹ Burnett, 33.

³⁰ Alfred Planyavsky, *The Baroque Double Bass Violone* (Lanham, Md.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1998), 102.

³¹ Christian Speck and Laurence Chapman, *Boccherini as Cellist and His Music for Cello*, 198

³² Watkin, 663.

³³ John Spitzer and Neal Zaslaw, “Orchestra,” in *Grove Music Online*, accessed March 7, 2016, *Oxford Music Online*.

³⁴ Eleanor Selfridge-Field, “Italian Oratorio and the Baroque Orchestra,” *Early Music* 16/4 (November, 1988): 506–13, accessed March 7, 2016, *Oxford University Press*, <http://www.jstor.org.access.authkb.kb.nl/stable/3127326>, 508.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

oboe; church organs, 4 theorbos, and harpsichord.³⁷ A representative table of Italian opera orchestras from 1707 to 1799 is given in John Spitzer and Neal Zaslaw's *The Birth of the Orchestra*.³⁸ From examining this data, it is clear that there were strong bass sections, including an emphasis on the double bass. There are never more cellos than basses – sometimes they are equal in number, and sometimes there are more than twice as many basses. It is interesting to note that plucked instruments are absent from this table – Spitzer and Zaslaw argue that the disappearance of this instrument after 1700 is likely due to their lack of projection in bigger halls, and intonation problems that occurred with the harpsichords.³⁹ They further state that these string proportions resemble the court-sponsored orchestras of this time. Another chart is given for the orchestra at the church of San Petronio in Bologna, from 1660-1786, and it is noteworthy that this was considerably smaller, and also that they used the theorbo until 1760.⁴⁰

Basso Continuo – Common Use in France

Basso continuo practices in France differed in many ways from those in Italy. The technique was brought to France in the early 17th-century, and quickly became as necessary there as it was in Italy.⁴¹ It seems that, in solo playing, the instrumentation preferences for the continuo were similar (though certainly not identical) to those in Italy. Sébastien de Brossard's entry on continuo in his *Dictionnaire de musique* states that the continuo figures were realized by instruments such as the organ, harpsichord, spinet, theorbo, and harp, but that it was also often performed without figures on the *basse de viole* or *basse de violon* (or bassoon or serpent).⁴² The list of 'Joueurs d'Instruments de la Musique de Chambre de Roi', 1661-1733, lists the lute, guitar, spinet and viol.⁴³ Bénigne de Bacilly gives a preference for a sole theorbo in his 1668 treatise *Remarques curieuses sur l'art de bien chanter*, where he claims that neither the harpsichord nor the bass viol can match the theorbo's grace for accompanying the voice (he also notes that the harp is no longer in use).⁴⁴ Brossard confirms this claim, stating that many prefer the theorbo over the harpsichord because it is easy to transport, and because of its delicate sound.⁴⁵ The famous violist da gamba Marin Marais indicates on the title page (of the continuo part) of his first book of *Pièces de viole* that the harpsichord or theorbo are suitable instruments to realize the bass.⁴⁶ In his later books, he indicates that another viol can be added to the two viol solo music, and for the pieces for violin, viol, and continuo, the bass part indicates a harpsichord.⁴⁷ François Campion argues that the organ, harpsichord, theorbo, guitar, and lute are

³⁷ Ibid, 512.

³⁸ John Spitzer and Neal Zaslaw, *The Birth of the Orchestra: History of an Institution, 1650-1815* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2005), 144-47.

³⁹ Ibid, 147

⁴⁰ Ibid, 162-3

⁴¹ Robert Zappulla, *Figured Bass Accompaniment in France: Speculum Musicae*, vol. 6, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), xv.

⁴² Donington, 295.

⁴³ Julie Anne Sadie, "Bowed Continuo Instruments in French Baroque Chamber Music," *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 105 (1978-1979): 37-49, accessed March 7, 2016, *Taylor & Francis, Ltd., Royal Musical Association*, <http://www.jstor.org.access.authkb.kb.nl/stable/766246>, 38.

⁴⁴ Peter Williams and David Ledbetter, "Continuo," in *Grove Music Online*, accessed March 7, 2016, *Oxford Music Online*.

⁴⁵ Zappulla, 53.

⁴⁶ Mary Cyr, *Style and Performance for Bowed String Instruments in French Baroque Music* (Great Britain: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2012), 153.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 155-8.

superior accompanying instruments because they can play the full harmony.⁴⁸ Robert Zappulla writes: “Jean Rousseau claimed that one of the best Parisian organists attended a concert expressly to hear him accompany “seul” and Mattheson observed that the French preferred listening to an unrealized bass, remarking also that he had not yet heard anyone realise one on the viol despite the pretensions of some players.”⁴⁹ Leclair suggests either the harpsichord or cello in the trio in his second book (1728).⁵⁰ In Boismortier’s collection of sonatas for two bass instruments of 1734, there is a trio included at the end for violin, cello, and harpsichord.⁵¹

In the Grove entry on continuo, it is said that after 1720, the Italian influence dominated in France, and the combination of the violin and cello was common and favoured by J.-B. Anet and J.P. Guignon.⁵² This can be seen in most of the concerts at the Concert Spirituel (1725-1790) that indicated the accompaniment instrument.⁵³ In 1728, a trio of cello, flute, and violin was performed by Battistin, Guignon, and Blavet;⁵⁴ in 1763, airs in duo for cello and lute by Kohaut, performed by him and J.P. Duport⁵⁵ – Kohaut is reported playing these again with J.B. Jansson in 1765;⁵⁶ in 1765 again, a duo of harp and violin was performed by Hochbrücker and Capron;⁵⁷ J.L. Duport played a sonata accompanied by his brother J.P. Duport in 1768;⁵⁸ and finally, the same Duport played a sonata accompanied by Jean-Baptiste Bréval in 1780.⁵⁹ The last two listings are especially interesting, since they are the only times a cello sonata is given any indication of what accompaniment was played – perhaps because J.P. Duport and Bréval were so well-known at the time. Valerie Walden provides another example of two cellos playing together, in which J.L. Duport accompanied James Cervetto at the Hanover Square series in 1783.⁶⁰

While it is clear that a single continuo instrument was common in French chamber music at this time, combinations of both a chordal and a sustaining continuo instrument are also evident. Julie Anne Sadie states that, “a standard accompaniment for the *air de cour*, like the English ayre, was lute and bass viol.”⁶¹ Peter Williams and David Ledbetter state that the Italian sonata vogue in the 1690s brought the common combination of harpsichord with bass viol or cello to

⁴⁸ François Campion, *Lettre du Sieur Campion a un Philosophe, Disciople de la Règle de l’Octave* (Paris: l’auteur, 1729), ij, in Jean Saint-Arroman, *Basse continue, France 1600-1800, volume 2* (Courlay: Fuzeau, [s.a.]).

⁴⁹ Zappulla, 60.

⁵⁰ Sadie “Bowed Continuo,” 41.

⁵¹ Ibid, 43.

⁵² Peter Williams and David Ledbetter.

⁵³ Constant Pierre, *Histoire du Concert Spirituel, 1725-1790* (Paris: Société Française de Musicologie, 1975).

⁵⁴ Ibid, 236.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 283.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 287.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 288.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 293.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 313.

There are a few interesting things to note about the concerts at the Concert Spirituel, especially since it is where the only recorded performance of Barrière took place (in 1739). First, cello sonatas are few and far between until the appearance of Duport and Jansson after 1750, at which point they start to increase enormously. Second, the organ is not listed in the concerts until about 1750, and it is always used either as a solo instrument (completely solo or a concerto), or accompanying a large vocal and orchestral work. Third, the harp does not appear until about 1760. Fourth, accompaniment for solo sonatas are rarely given, though for trios or quartets, all players are listed. Finally, obbligato parts are occasionally given credit, which are usually high wind instruments, but J.P. Duport gets credit a number of times.

⁶⁰ Walden, 258

⁶¹ Sadie “Bowed Continuo,” 38.

France.⁶² Sadie gives an example of Clérambault, saying that he indicated that the *basse de violon* should double the bass part in at least one of his three unpublished trio sonatas.⁶³ She gives another example from the violist Charles Dollé in his *Sonates en trio pour les violons, flûtes traversières et violes* (1737) where the continuo part is prescribed for ‘organo è violoncello.’⁶⁴ In Brossard’s library, the sonatas by Jacquet de La Guerre for two treble instruments are found with separate parts indicating the cello and the organ.⁶⁵ François Couperin, in his *Leçons de Ténèbres* (church pieces for one or two high voices), says that if one can add a *basse de viole* or a *basse de violon* to the organ or harpsichord accompaniment, it will work well.⁶⁶

Exceptions to the Rule in France

The most common continuo combination in French chamber music seems to have been a single chordal instrument and/or a sustaining instrument, but there are an abundance of exceptions. As early as 1647, there is record of a violinist accompanied by viol, theorbo, two lutes and harpsichord, and “...by the beginning of the eighteenth century, small mixed ensembles of flutes and violins accompanied by viol, theorbo and harpsichord had gained favour.”⁶⁷ Henry Grenerin, in 1680, says that his *simphonies* should be accompanied by guitar, theorbo, harpsichord, and bass viol (with two violins on the top part).⁶⁸ The earliest known example of a sonata in France, which is Marc-Antoine Charpentier’s 1685 *Sonate à huit*, has a very unique instrumentation of two flutes, two violins, *basse de violon* (in this case, a 5-string cello), viola da gamba, harpsichord, and theorbo.⁶⁹ This includes two movements for solo viola da gamba and two for solo cello, and it is interesting to note that the viol bass part is full of chords and ornaments, whereas the cello part is much simpler (and the cello recitative is highly Italianate). It is also worth noting that the harpsichord and theorbo would have both played continuo for these solo pieces. In 1701, Muffat writes, “If the concerto grosso has more than 2-3 players to a part, strengthen the bass line with a large double-bass and ‘ornament it with harpsichord, theorbos, harps and similar instruments.’”⁷⁰ On the title page of Michel de la Barre’s 1702 sonatas for flute, he says that the accompaniment needs a viola da gamba, along with a theorbo or harpsichord, or both together (though he prefers the theorbo over the harpsichord in accompanying the flute).⁷¹ Sadie mentions the ‘Carrillon’ air of Reboul’s *Le mauvais ménage*, in which, “...two bass viol parts alternate with two vocal parts for soprano and tenor, accompanied throughout by a *basse de violon*, bassoon, and harpsichord.”⁷² She refers to a cantata of Clérambault (*Léandre et Héro*, 1713) that has two bass parts, one for viol and another for double bass and harpsichord (and it is possible cellos were added at a later performance in 1729) – the

⁶² Peter Williams and David Ledbetter.

⁶³ Sadie “Bowed Continuo,” 40.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Cyr *Style and Performance*, 175.

⁶⁶ Burnett, 57.

⁶⁷ Sadie “Bowed Continuo,” 38.

⁶⁸ Zappulla, 38.

⁶⁹ Julie Anne Sadie “Charpentier and the Early French Ensemble Sonata,” *Early Music* 7/3 (July, 1979): 330-35, accessed March 7, 2016, *Oxford University Press*, [http://www.jstor.org/access.authkb.kb.nl/stable/3126434](http://www.jstor.org/access/authkb.kb.nl/stable/3126434), 332.

⁷⁰ Peter Williams, *Figured Bass Accompaniment, Volume 1* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970), 27.

⁷¹ Michel de la Barre, *Premier Livre de pieces pour la flute traversiere, avec la basse-continue* (Paris: l’Auteur, Foucault, 1710 (4th edition; première edition: 1702)), in Jean Saint-Arroman, *Basse continue, France 1600-1800, volume 2* (Courlay: Fuzeau, [s.a.]).

⁷² Sadie “Bowed Continuo,” 41.

double bass in this case is used for a tempest scene, a tradition borrowed from the Opéra.⁷³ She also mentions the use of a large continuo group in another cantata by Clérambault: "...[he] scored *Le soleil vainqueur des nuages* (1721) for voice, flute, oboe, violin (or second flute), viol, cello, bassoon, and harpsichord; in one air a trio of flute, violin and viol is set against the voice accompanied by the entire continuo complement."⁷⁴ Clérambault's 1716 *La muse de l'Opéra* includes a continuo part for double bass, which Sadie says was, "...an instrument associated exclusively with theatre music," which evidently does not appear to be entirely true.⁷⁵ Finally, in a Concert Spirituel concert of 1725, a piece for two violins (performed by Baptiste and Guignon) was accompanied by a bassoon and a *basse de viole*.⁷⁶ There are records stating that a group consisting of viola da gamba, flute, theorbo, and harpsichord performed in 1704 and 1709.⁷⁷ Michel Corrette reports hearing violin sonatas performed with harpsichord, cello, and bass, producing a "charming effect."⁷⁸

As is seen above, hand-plucked instruments played an important role in the basso continuo in France. The first keyboard manual appears with d'Anglebert's 1689 treatise, but more than half a dozen hand-plucked instrument manuals preceded it.⁷⁹ The guitar took over the lute in France towards the end of the 17th-century.⁸⁰ Delair states that the lute (and the guitar) are not suitable for accompanying because the treble of the bass realization must go over the solo voice, and this is not desirable.⁸¹ In 1716, François Campion observes that the guitar is not as strong as the harpsichord or theorbo in a concert, but it will suffice to support a single voice – also, it is easier to transport, and it does not have to transpose like the theorbo, which makes it sing.⁸² By 1730, however, hand-plucked manuals ceased to be produced, and keyboard manuals continued to be published until the third quarter of the 18th-century.⁸³ By the time Rousseau writes his keyboard manual in 1768, he says he will only discuss the harpsichord since other chordal continuo instruments, such as the organ, guitar, and theorbo, are no longer in use.⁸⁴ Even before Rousseau, Corrette writes that, of the continuo group, "...the harpsichord alone has remained as the soul of the harmony, the support and honour of music."⁸⁵

Brief Discussion of the Orchestra in France

It is useful, again, to look at orchestral practices in order to find more information on basso continuo instrumentation. Of special interest here is the orchestra of the Paris Opéra, since it was the biggest and most important one in France at the time. The French orchestra in the baroque was divided into two sections, the *petit chœur* and the *grande chœur*. The function of the former was to accompany recitatives and arias (essentially the continuo group), and the latter

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 40.

⁷⁵ Julie Anne Sadie (ed. and comp.), *Companion to Baroque Music* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1990), 102.

⁷⁶ Pierre, 232.

⁷⁷ Sadie "Bowed Continuo," 38.

⁷⁸ Cyr *Style and Performance*, 57.

⁷⁹ Zappulla, 38.

⁸⁰ Peter Williams and David Ledbetter.

⁸¹ Zappulla, 49.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid, 38.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Williams *Figured Bass*, 27.

was for overtures, sinfonias, and dance movements.⁸⁶ So, of special interest here is the *petit chœur*, since its use in accompanying solo voices could be transferred to solo instruments. In 1704, it consisted of two violins, harpsichord, two theorbos, two *basses de viole*, and two *basses de violon* (including one *contrabasse*), and in 1713, some winds were added.⁸⁷ In 1725, only one theorbo remained, and soon it was reduced to harpsichord, two *basses de viole*, and three *basses de violon*.⁸⁸ By the middle of the 18th-century, it consisted only of a harpsichord, three *basses de violon* and one *contrebasse*.⁸⁹ It is clear that a heavy bass section was favoured, and by 1733, the continuo instruments most used were the cello (*basse de violon*) and double bass (*contrebasse*) – this trend continued into the 1760s, for Jean-Philippe Rameau's entire career.⁹⁰ The *petit chœur* in Rameau's works consisted of double bass, not more than 3 cellos, and harpsichord (the bass was used only in accompanied recitatives).⁹¹ Early on, the double bass was mostly used as a special effect in scenes with tempests, storms, demons, etc. One of the first examples of this is in Marais' opera *Alcione* of 1706,⁹² and this is imitated for years after, including in Act III of Matho's *Arion* (1714).⁹³ The bass became a regular member of the orchestra in 1738.⁹⁴

A Few Notable Examples from Other Countries

Even though the focus of this paper is on Italy and France, it is important to take note of practices elsewhere. This is by no means an in-depth analysis of practices abroad, but merely a few interesting things to consider. Johann Mattheson voices an opinion for the harpsichord over the regal (a small portable organ), even in the church, and states that a large choir requires two keyboards such as a harpsichord with a positive organ.⁹⁵ He also says that the violone/bass is best suited to the church and to open-air performances.⁹⁶ Handel uses the archlute and theorbo in some of his works, and a distinction between the two is made by Baron who says that the archlute was used "...in churches and operas on account of its loud tone."⁹⁷ In the opening aria of Handel's *Tra le fiamme*, the different uses of bass instruments can be seen in the way he creates a drone: the viola da gamba realizes the continuo with arpeggios, the cello plays a chain

⁸⁶ Cyr *Style and Performance*, 42.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 42-3.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁹¹ Mary Cyr, "Basses and Basse Continue in the Orchestra of the Paris Opéra 1700-1764," *Early Music* 10/2 (April, 1982): 155-70, accessed March 7, 2016, *Oxford University Press*, <http://www.jstor.org.access.authkb.kb.nl/stable/3126881>, 166.

On page 157 in the same article, Cyr says Rameau mentions bass as customary in *Dissertation sur les différentes méthodes d'accompagnement pour le clavecin, ou pour l'orgue* (Paris, 1732).

⁹² Cyr *Style and Performance*, 55.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 47.

For more examples, see: Michael D. Greenberg, "Perfecting the Storm: The Rise of the Double Bass in France, 1701-1815," *The Online Journal of Bass Research* 1/1 (July, 2003), <http://www.ojbr.com/volume-1-number-1.asp>.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 55.

For more information on the size of the Paris Opéra, see Spitzer *The Birth of Orchestra* table of Paris Opéra on pg. 188-90.

⁹⁵ Williams *Figured Bass*, 27.

⁹⁶ Hans Joachim Marx, "The Instrumentation of Handel's Early Italian Works," *Early Music* 16/4 (November, 1988): 496-505, accessed March 7, 2016, *Oxford University Press*, <http://www.jstor.org.access.authkb.kb.nl/stable/3127325>, 502.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

of trills, and the violone plays a drone an octave below.⁹⁸ Vivaldi wrote a sonata in Dresden for violin, oboe, and obligato organ (RV 779).⁹⁹ C.P.E. Bach bemoans the performance of music without a keyboard, stating that the resulting music is empty and lacking.¹⁰⁰ Roger North, in 1726-8, concurs with this, stating that chordal instruments “...give a fullness as well as elegance to the sound, and thereby attract an attention.”¹⁰¹ In 1773, Telemann states that the lute, theorbo, harp, and viola da gamba are not as useful as the organ or harpsichord.¹⁰² The following paintings give evidence that the cello was often paired with different hand-plucked instruments.



Figure 1: Dirck Hals (1591-1656) – Musicians (1623)¹⁰³

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 504.

¹⁰⁰ Bach, 96.

¹⁰¹ Williams *Figured Bass*, 27.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Dirck Hals, *Musicians*, 1623, Hermitage Museum, accessed March 7, 2016, *Wikimedia Commons*, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dirck_Hals_-_Musicians_-_WGA11043.jpg.



Figure 2: Philip Mercier (c.1689-1760) – Frederick, Prince of Wales, and his sisters (1733)¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Philip Mercier, *Frederick, Prince of Wales, and his sisters*, 1733, National Portrait Gallery, accessed March 7, 2016, *Wikimedia Commons*, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Frederick,_Prince_of_Wales,_and_his_sisters_by_Philip_Mercier.jpg.



Figure 3: Marco Ricci (1676-1730) – Rehearsal of an opera (c.1709)¹⁰⁵

Some Thoughts on Points of Interest Outside the Scope of this Research

The focus of this paper is primarily on the instrumentation of the basso continuo, but there are many factors outside the scope of this research that could influence the following experiments that I would like to take note of, and comment on in some instances. Whether or not the cello, when playing the continuo alone, should realize the figures is a very interesting topic, and one that could have a big influence on research such as this. Most of the evidence for this practice is found in the late 18th-century, and specifically refers to its use in recitatives – however, many scholars argue that both the viola da gamba and the cello could have realized bass lines earlier in the baroque, referring to many sources of evidence, such as: the frequent combination of solo instrument (such as violin) with only a cello; written out continuo double-stops in a lot of repertoire, such as the presently studied composer (Barrière) and Boccherini; and a few quotes and indications that could imply such a practice.¹⁰⁶ Somewhat related to this issue is

¹⁰⁵ Marco Ricci, *Rehearsal of an opera*, c.1709, Yale Center for British Art, accessed March 7, 2016, *Wikimedia Commons*, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marco_Ricci_-_Rehearsal_of_an_opera_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg.

¹⁰⁶ For more arguments on this practice, see: Watkin; Robert Smith, *Basso Continuo Realization on the Cello and Viol*, Masters thesis from Conservatory van Amsterdam, 2009; and Eva Lymenstull, “Chordal Continuo Realization

that of adding ornaments to the bass line, as in altering the fundamental line as opposed to just realizing on top of it. Johann Joachim Quantz gives some useful points on this, but they can hardly be seen as representative of every composer in the baroque period. He says that one should not add ornaments to the bass (as was done in the past), but that one may imitate ornaments in the top voice in similar material, and add tasteful ornaments when the top part is resting or holding a long note.¹⁰⁷ Jean Baumgärtner, in 1774, agrees with Quantz, stating that “it is absolutely forbidden to add ornaments, passages or other things in the accompaniment: if you do so you will be taken for one who is ignorant.”¹⁰⁸ With regards to altering the written bass line, Quantz also states that the cellist can transpose the bass down an octave if no double bass is present, but only if the bass has a harmonic function rather than a melodic one.¹⁰⁹ Another factor regarding the bass line is whether the keyboardist should play the bass, or if they should only realize it – Rameau states that the harpsichord can omit the bass when a sustaining bass is present, and Zappulla argues that the realizations given in treatises are meant for instructive purposes alone, and do not necessarily represent the actual practices done.¹¹⁰ Another issue is the figures, specifically what is meant when they are omitted. In the present case, this is not an issue, since the only sonata of Barrière without figures is clearly a duet for two cellos – however, it is still an interesting topic when considering the work of other composers.

The instrument cello sonatas were actually played on is another big topic of discussion, with more research on the subject appearing every year. It seems likely that cello soloists played on smaller instruments than are standard today (piccolo cellos), and that they would have had a larger instrument for orchestral and continuo playing.¹¹¹ There is evidence that cellists were also playing their instruments *da spalla* (on the shoulder) or even *da braccio* (on the arm, like the violin), but this seems unlikely in France since most cellists were former violists *da gamba*, and also because the cello's predecessor, the *basse de violon*, was also held *da gamba*.¹¹² Corrette says that the 4-string cello (similar to the one we know today) came into use in France in 1710 and superseded the *basse de violon*¹¹³ (which could have meant two different things in baroque France – either a 4-string instrument tuned a tone lower than the modern cellos, so Bb-F-c-g, or a 5-string instrument tuned C-G-d-a-d(e)).¹¹⁴ Mary Cyr gives one of the earliest examples of today's cello specified in France, in Dandrieu's Sonata No. 2 of 1705 – the opening Presto has an obbligato cello part which elaborates the bass line, with motivic exchange with the violins.¹¹⁵ Another issue relating to instrument use and hold is that of the bow – were cellists holding the bow overhand or underhand? It is clear from iconographical and other evidence that both methods existed, but it is practically impossible to determine whether a specific cellist would

on the Violoncello: A look at the practice of chordal accompaniment by cellists over the course of two centuries, with a focus on recitative accompaniment practices between 1774 and 1832,” Masters research paper The Royal Conservatory of the Hague, February 2014.

¹⁰⁷ Johann Joachim Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, second edition, translated by Edward R. Reilly (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), 242-243.

¹⁰⁸ Walden, 253.

¹⁰⁹ Quantz, 243-244.

¹¹⁰ Zappulla, 54.

¹¹¹ Quantz, 241.

¹¹² For more information on this topic, see: Marc Vanscheeuwijck, “Recent Re-evaluations of the Baroque Cello and What They Might Mean for Performing the Music of J. S. Bach,” *Early Music* 38/2 (May, 2010): 181-92, accessed March 7, 2016, *Oxford University Press*, [http://www.jstor.org/access.authkb.kb.nl/stable/40731346](http://www.jstor.org/access/authkb.kb.nl/stable/40731346).

¹¹³ Zappulla, 57.

¹¹⁴ Cyr *Style and Performance*, 46.

¹¹⁵ Cyr “Basses and Basse Continue,” 160.

have used one method or the other without clear evidence. Certainly, in the height of Barrière's career, some cellists were still using the underhand bow-grip (such as Vandini), but by that time, most cellists were holding the bow overhand.¹¹⁶ Mark Smith states that Muffat says cellists in France were holding the bow like the violinists (so, overhand with the thumb on the hair), and that later in Italy, the underhand hold was being called old-fashioned.¹¹⁷ Corrette gives only examples of overhand bow grips in his cello method of 1741.¹¹⁸

There are two more considerations I would like to bring up in this essay regarding how the continuo could be performed. Regarding the harpsichord, there are indications given by a couple of sources that say the harpsichord should stay as low as possible in order to not play above the melody line in performance, such as Antoine Forqueray in the preface to his *Pièces de viole*.¹¹⁹ Michel de Saint-Lambert indicates that when there are too many notes in the bass line, the harpsichord can just play the first of a group, and the cello or viola da gamba can play them all (Heinichen gives similar advice).¹²⁰ In regards to the double bass, there is evidence that players in the baroque would have reduced the bass line, playing only strong beats and accentuating the line. Corrette gives an explanation for how this would have been done in his bass treatise – he says that the bass should play all the notes in Adagio, Largo, Andante, and other slow movements, and “that one must play all the tonic and dominant notes even though they are most often without figures.”¹²¹ In fast movements, he suggests only playing the beginning of a group of notes, and also that when the bass part goes into another clef, the bass should drop out.¹²² Quantz indicates that, in a large ensemble, the bass should play at pitch, unless it is much too high in which case the whole passage should be brought down an octave.¹²³ Cyr gives an example from Rameau that illustrates both of these in practice.¹²⁴ I have not come across any evidence that bass players would occasionally play pizzicato, though this practice is often done today.

The re-arrangement of the continuo section within a movement, or even within a sonata, is something that remains an enigma to me. The only examples I came across during the present research are from the early 17th-century – E. Cavalieri in 1600 says that the instruments may be changed according to the sense of the text, and Monteverdi gives specific instructions for instrumentation in his opera *Orfeo* of 1607.¹²⁵ Another factor that I have not been able to investigate in this research is the space in which solo sonatas and other pieces would have been performed – surely this would have had an effect on the choice of instruments in the continuo body. Finally, intonation is another issue that could influence a study such as this. Intonation would have certainly been executed differently by two cellists alone than it would with an

¹¹⁶ Mark Smith, “The cello bow held the viol-way; once common, but now almost forgotten,” *VdGS Chelys*, 24 (1995): 47-61, accessed March 7, 2016, <http://www.vdgs.org.uk/files/chelys/24chelys1995.pdf>.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 50.

¹¹⁸ Michel Corrette, *Méthode pour apprendre le violoncelle, Op.24* (Paris: [Undefined publisher], 1741), accessed March 7, 2016, *International Music Score Library Project*, http://ks.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/9/94/IMSLP257054-PMLP416691-corrette_methode_pour_le_violoncelle.pdf, 8.

¹¹⁹ Antoine Forqueray, *Pièces de viole* (Paris: l'auteur, 1747), accessed March 7, 2016, *International Music Score Library Project*, http://conquest.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/c/cb/IMSLP30894-PMLP70401-Forqueray_comb.pdf.

¹²⁰ Donington, 247.

¹²¹ Cyr *Style and Performance*, 58.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Quantz, 249.

¹²⁴ Cyr “Basses and Basse Continue,” 162+169.

¹²⁵ Williams *Figured Bass*, 25.

instrument with fixed, and thus tempered, intonation. Also, when adding instruments with fixed tuning, there is a plethora of temperaments that one can choose from, and that could influence the overall sound of the ensemble. Would the continuo cellist tune to the harpsichord, or play pure intonation and ignore the slight clash that occurs? If a double bass is added (and, worse, has frets), how are these decisions influenced? And would a theorbo have tuned to the same temperament as the keyboard? Where does the soloist put his notes within this confusion? These are all questions worth taking note of.¹²⁶

Jean-Baptiste Barrière

Jean-Baptiste Barrière was born in Bordeaux to a shoemaker in 1707, fourth of five children.¹²⁷ Not much is known about the early years of his life, but records show he joined the Académie Royale de Musique (Paris Opéra) in 1731 as a “*basse d’orchestre*.”¹²⁸ From who or where he got his musical training is unknown, but it is likely that he began playing the viola da gamba and moved to the cello later in life since the viol was the instrument of choice in France at the time, and furthermore, he owned many pardessus de violes, and wrote a set of sonatas for the instrument.¹²⁹ In 1733, he was granted a six-year privilege to publish by King Louis XV, and in that same year he published his first book of sonatas for cello and basso continuo – a few years later (in about 1737) he published his second book.¹³⁰ Barrière took a leave of absence from his employment at the Académie to study in Rome with Francesco Alborea, also known as Franciscello, from 1736-1739.¹³¹ Who he studied with in Italy remains a mystery, however, since records show that Alborea was employed in Vienna from 1726 until his death in 1739.¹³² Also, Barrière had two performances at the Concert Spirituel during the summer of 1738, so he had to have been back in Paris by that time. His performances there impressed the audience, and it is said in the *Mercur de France* that he played one of his own sonatas “*avec une grande precision*.”¹³³ In 1739, still in Paris, Barrière was granted a twelve-year privilege to publish works – he published his third book in 1740, and the fourth book, the pardessus de viole book, and the harpsichord book in 1740 or later.¹³⁴ He passed away in 1747, leaving behind a room with some personal belongings and money, his manuscripts, and his collection of instruments, including six cellos and six pardessus de viole.¹³⁵

Barrière’s compositional style lies somewhere between the French and the Italian. On the whole, his first two books tend to be more French in style, and the last four books much more Italianate. Due to the fact that little is known about his life, the only real connections with other musicians that can be made are hypothetical. However, this consideration is still very useful in

¹²⁶ See: Bruce Haynes, “Beyond Temperament: Non-keyboard Intonation in the 17th and 18th Centuries,” *Early Music* 19/3 (August, 1991): 357–81, accessed March 7, 2016, *Oxford University Press*, <http://www.jstor.org.access.authkb.kb.nl/stable/3127775>; Jean-Louis Duport, *Essai sur le doigté du violoncelle, et sur la conduite de l’archet* (Paris: A. Cotelle, n.d.(c.1840)), accessed March 7, 2016, *International Music Score Library Project*, <http://ks.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/f/fa/IMSLP252536-PMLP58001-essaisurledoigt00dupo.pdf>, 130-33; also, for information on French keyboard temperaments, see Zappulla, 43-48.

¹²⁷ Sylvette Milliot, *Le violoncelle en France au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris and Geneva: Champion-Slatkine, 1985), 117.

¹²⁸ Cyr *Style and Performance*, 191.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Milliot, 119.

¹³¹ Mary Cyr, “Barrière, Jean,” *Grove Music Online*, accessed March 7, 2016, *Oxford Music Online*.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Milliot, 119.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 119-120.

¹³⁵ Cyr *Style and Performance*, 191.

gaining insight into his influences. The most obvious influence is that of his supposed teacher, Francesco Alborea. Regardless of whether Barrière ever ended up studying with this master, his time in Italy must have been spent studying and hearing cellists from the same school as Alborea. Alborea's surviving sonatas represent a 17th-century Italian style, including diminutions and many character changes, as in recitative.¹³⁶ He was well-known at the time as a brilliant cellist, and one of the first to popularise the instrument.¹³⁷ Fétis claims in his *Biographie* that Martin Berteau switched from the playing the viola da gamba to the cello after hearing Alborea perform a sonata. It is possible a similar case occurred with Barrière – however, it would unlikely have been from the same performance, as this was earlier in Berteau's life, when he was studying viol in Germany.¹³⁸

There is also evidence of a number of famous Italian composer-performers in Paris during Barrière's lifetime, and it is possible he heard and/or worked with these figures. Salvatore Lanzetti is recorded as the first cello soloist to ever play at the Concert Spirituel in 1736, and since Barrière was in the city at the time, it is possible he heard him play.¹³⁹ Giovanni Bononcini was in Paris a number of times in his later life.¹⁴⁰ The music of Vivaldi (especially *Spring* from *The Four Seasons*), Tartini, Telemann, Handel, Couperin, and others was frequently performed at the Concert Spirituel.¹⁴¹ Berteau is said to have performed a concerto of his own in a Concert Spirituel in 1739.¹⁴² Along with all of this, Paris was a main point for music publishing and printing, so access to music, scores, and treatises would not have been extremely challenging for Barrière, especially since it seems he was financially secure in his lifetime. Other notable cellists of the time are the Italians Giuseppe Fedeli Saggione and Leonardo Leo.

Studying the Scores

A lot of discoveries can be made investigating the music of Barrière itself, but also more questions arise. The technique of splitting the bass line is given an indication on the title page of his first book, where he states that the *clavecin* (harpsichord) should play the bottom part in this case (see Figures 4 and 5).¹⁴³ Cyr suggests that this means that only a harpsichord is intended to play the bass, but that assumption makes no sense to me – if anything, it means that there *must* be a cello (or another sustaining bass) present, so that it can play the top line.¹⁴⁴ Sadie confirms that the bowed instrument would normally take the top line in these cases.¹⁴⁵ Barrière takes this a step further in the fourth sonata of his second book, in which the third movement is written on

¹³⁶ Francesco Alborea, *2 sonate per violoncello e basso continuo* (Stuttgart; Cornetto; Albese con Cassano: Musedita, 2005).

¹³⁷ Ibid, 31.

¹³⁸ François-Joseph Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens*, second edition (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1866), 381-382, accessed March 7, 2016, International Music Score Library Project, http://petrucci.mus.auth.gr/imglnks/usimg/3/3b/IMSLP90940-PMLP47766-Fetis_1.pdf.

¹³⁹ Cyr *Style and Performance*, 188.

¹⁴⁰ Lawrence E. Bennett and Lowell Lindgren, "Bononcini: (1) Giovanni Maria Bononcini (i)," *Grove Music Online*, accessed March 7, 2016, *Oxford Music Online*.

¹⁴¹ Pierre.

¹⁴² Fétis, 381-382.

¹⁴³ Jean-Baptiste Barrière, *Sonates pour le violoncelle avec le basse continue, livre I* (Paris: author, 1733), accessed March 7, 2016, *International Music Score Library Project*, http://burrito.whatbox.ca:15263/imglnks/usimg/2/28/IMSLP21324-PMLP49212-Barri_re_-_6_Sonates_for_Cello_and_BC_or_2vc_duo.pdf.

¹⁴⁴ Cyr *Style and Performance*, 193.

¹⁴⁵ Sadie "Bowed Continuo," 42.

three staves (see Figure 6).¹⁴⁶ As if this is not evidence enough for a second cello, the writing is very imitative, with slurs, bow vibrato, and ornaments added to the bass part, not to mention the frequent use of tenor clef when the part splits (sometimes even going above the solo line! – see Figure 4). It is also idiomatic cello writing, and often in close harmony with the solo line.

As mentioned before, figures are included in all of the bass lines, except for the fourth sonata of his fourth book, which is clearly meant to be a duet between two cellos.¹⁴⁷ The range of the basso continuo is almost entirely within the range of a cello tuned C-G-d-a, except for a few instances when the bass line splits (so the harpsichord takes the bass), and in one unusual case in the sixth sonata of his second book, second movement (see Figure 7).¹⁴⁸ While the solo plays a virtuosic passage of complicated chords, the bass line gradually descends, finally reaching a low B-natural, a note not available on a cello tuned this way – could it have meant to be played on a cello tuned Bb-F-c-g? This is unlikely. Or, perhaps a seven-string viola da gamba? This is also unlikely, since the viol was almost never used a supporting instrument to the cello – it was always the other way around. It is not likely this sonata would be played with only harpsichord, since the aforementioned splitting of the bass line is used earlier. The answer could be as simple as the cellist taking that note up an octave. There is an interesting bass line that occurs in the sixth sonata of his third book, last movement.¹⁴⁹ The bass line is very rapid, written in 32nd notes while the solo line plays a slow melody over top (see Figure 8). Was this intended for a harpsichord, a cello, or both together? The latter seems unlikely, and if it was written for a cello, it is a highly virtuosic passage. Would Barrière have jumped down to the bass, and let the second cello play the melody? This is possible, but since this sonata seems to have been written for a 5-string cello given the high tessitura, a cellist playing a 4-string continuo instrument would struggle with that switch – it is an interesting passage to consider.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Jean-Baptiste Barrière, *Sonates pour le violoncelle avec le basse continue, livre II* (Paris: author, n.d.), accessed March 7, 2016, *International Music Score Library Project*, <http://japanese.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/7/7d/IMSLP297825-PMLP482722-BarriereLivre2.pdf>.

¹⁴⁷ Jean-Baptiste Barrière, *Sonates pour le violoncelle avec le basse continue, livre IV* (Paris: author, n.d.), accessed March 7, 2016, *International Music Score Library Project*, <http://petrucci.mus.auth.gr/imglnks/usimg/f/f8/IMSLP298122-PMLP122854-BarriereLivre4.pdf>.

¹⁴⁸ Barrière *Sonates...livre II*.

¹⁴⁹ Jean-Baptiste Barrière, *Sonates pour le violoncelle avec le basse continue, livre III* (Paris: author, n.d.), accessed March 7, 2016, *International Music Score Library Project*, http://hz.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/5/5b/IMSLP340014-PMLP140830-BARRIERE_Jean-Baptiste_Sonates_pour_le_violoncelle_avec_la_bc_Livre_III_kopie.pdf.

¹⁵⁰ Bruno Cocset, on his second CD volume of Barrière sonatas, decides to use harpsichord in this passage.



Figure 4: Barrière Cello Sonata in E major, Book 2 No. 4, second movement¹⁵¹



Figure 5: Barrière Cello Sonata in E major, Book 2 No. 4, fourth movement¹⁵²



Figure 6: Barrière Cello Sonata in E major, Book 2 No. 4, third movement¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Barrière *Sonates...livre II*.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.



Figure 7: Barrière Cello Sonata in C minor, Book 2 No. 6, second movement¹⁵⁴



Figure 8: Barrière Cello Sonata in G major, Book 3 No. 6, fourth movement¹⁵⁵

Summary of Possible Instruments, and Instruments Chosen for Experiments

Since Barrière was a Frenchman with a lot of Italian influences, instruments used in both places can be considered for his music. The first consideration is that of the solo cello used – it is quite possible that Barrière was playing on a cello of small dimensions, and possibly with a fifth string. For the sake of this experiment, I have decided to use my 4-string instrument, since that is what is most used today, and I have not investigated these issues enough to argue otherwise. It is worth noting that the sound of the cello, if smaller in dimension, would have more treble overtones and a more cutting tone – this would certainly have an effect on what continuo instruments are suitable. As a main sustaining instrument, it seems most likely that a second cello would have been used – a viola da gamba does not have the power to support a cello in this case, and Corrette states in 1741 that the cello was playing the continuo in court, opera, etc.¹⁵⁶ Bassoon is excluded from this experiment, since it was not only rarely used as a continuo instrument, but also that when it was, it was used to accompany oboes. The double bass would be more likely than a D or G violone, since it is what was being used in the Paris Opéra (where Barrière reportedly worked), and also what was being used in Italy. This would most likely have been a four-string instrument tuned E-A-d-g, and may or may not have had frets.¹⁵⁷ The harpsichords that were in France at this time would not likely have had buff stops, since they were rare in France until after 1750.¹⁵⁸ The organ is a tricky instrument to consider. It is

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Barrière *Sonates...livre III*.

¹⁵⁶ Burnett, 54.

¹⁵⁷ Cyr *Style and Performance*, 58.

¹⁵⁸ Zappulla, 41.

Information on what kind of harpsichord could have been used can be found in the above book.

mentioned in almost all of the keyboard treatises of this time, but after the 17th-century, I have not been able to find any evidence that it was used in secular music, so I have chosen not to include it here. Another problem with the organ is that while it may suit some movements, there are others that it would most certainly not. Thus, the keyboardist would either have to sit out on some movements, or switch to harpsichord, which seems like an unlikely practice at the time.¹⁵⁹ Also, since Barrière himself says to use the harpsichord, and he wrote sonatas for the harpsichord (the first in France!), it is highly likely that this instrument was intended. Harp is also unlikely to have been used, since Bacilly says it was no longer in use in 1668, and it was not used again in France until the late 18th-century.¹⁶⁰ As mentioned earlier, manuals for the theorbo and guitar were being produced in France until 1730, at about the same time the theorbo left the Paris Opéra. This, however, certainly does not exclude their usage in these sonatas, since the instrument would still have been active in chamber music. Barrière also wrote a set of sonatas for the pardessus de viole, suggesting again that he was a violist da gamba as well, and thus familiar with pairing a bass string instrument with a hand-plucked one.¹⁶¹ The archlute was common in Italy, and thus is a viable option as well – I have chosen to use this instrument in my experiments, since the sonatas are generally quite Italianate, and the strong tone and singing treble of the instrument are better suited to the cello (whereas the theorbo would suit the viola da gamba better). As previously mentioned, the lute was no longer being used as an accompanying instrument at this time.

Personal Experiments¹⁶²

In preparation for making my own experiments, I went through Bruno Cocset's recordings to see what kinds of choices he made. There is a lot of variety in his instrumentation. He uses a cello, double bass, harpsichord, and theorbo, and all sorts of combinations of them: all together; cello, theorbo (and bass); cello and bass; cello and harpsichord (and bass); just theorbo; and just cello, to name a few. He also adds organ a few times, but usually just for one movement within a piece, a choice that only really works on a recording, in my opinion (though it is quite effective).

For my own experiments, I chose three different Barrière sonatas. These are: Book 2 No. 4 in E major; Book 2 No. 6 in C minor; and the first and third movements of Book 3 No. 4 in B-flat major (there were enough fast movements of similar character already). These were not chosen for any particular reason, except for that they are contrasting in character, involve most of the main components of Barrière's cello music, and contain some of the issues discussed above (such as bass line splitting). I asked four colleagues of mine to help me with these experiments, the process of which I recorded, and I have chosen samples to demonstrate some of the effects discovered. These colleagues are George Ross (cello), Alon Portal (double bass), Punto Bawono (archlute and guitar), and Gabrielle Resche (harpsichord). We met for a few hours, reading through excerpts of these sonatas, trying various combinations of instruments, and trying some different techniques (especially with the double bass, on which octavation, reduction, and

¹⁵⁹ In Williams *Figured Bass*, 26, he gives a quote from Mace, 1676, saying that the organ is good for consort music except when the piece is 'airy, jocund, lively and spruce' in which case a harpsichord is better.

¹⁶⁰ Peter Williams and David Ledbetter.

¹⁶¹ In regards to the sonatas for pardessus de viole, it is interesting to consider what he would have expected to play the bass here. The bass range never goes below a C, and never splits into two parts – the writing is generally simpler as well. Cocset, in his second volume CD of Barrière sonatas, uses a cello with harpsichord for the pardessus, which seems like a sensible choice, though one could consider the viola da gamba as well.

¹⁶² For this section, I have included the text separately in the research catalogue workspace as well, in order to make it easier for the reader to listen to the example recordings.

pizzicato was experimented with) – I left these decisions up to my colleagues, asking them to do what they saw fit.

The most striking thing I took away from doing these experiments was how the instrumentation changed the way I played the music. Not only did it alter what dynamics I did, but also the affect in general, and thus the tempo choice as well. For instance, in the first movement of the C minor sonata, we tried it all together first (**Example 1**). Whenever the whole group was playing with me, I felt very supported, and I imagine that if it were in a performance, I would feel a lot less nervous. The fact that so many other musicians were playing with me, as well as the immense sound that comes out of such a group, is something I had not experienced before in solo sonata playing. However, we next tried it with just the cello and the archlute (**Example 2**). This completely changed the character of the piece. Instead of making a bold, strong opening statement, it felt more appropriate to sing, and have a more melancholic character. I think the first version is more suitable to this piece, but the change was shocking to me. Adding the harpsichord instead of the archlute was somewhere in between these two extremes (**Example 3**), and the addition of the bass without the whole group seemed too heavy (**Example 4**). Playing this opening with only another cello felt far too empty (**Example 5**). These same observations can be applied to the second movement, in which the combinations that felt the best was with everyone together (**Example 6, 7, and 8**). In Example 7, you can hear that we started as a trial for just archlute, but George and Alon both felt the need to join in because the texture was much too sparse.

For the third movement of the same piece, the instrumentation was a very different story. This piece is tender and melancholic, and everyone playing together felt overwhelming and clumsy (**Example 9**). The combination I felt worked the best was cello, archlute, and bass, with the bass reducing the part and playing only the first of every two or four notes (**Example 10 and 11**). This had more support and direction than just cello and archlute (**Example 12**), and much more lightness than when the bass played everything (**Example 13**). The final movement worked with everyone playing together (**Example 14**), but was more effective with a reduced ensemble. I feel that the bass in this movement took away from the light character (**Example 15 and 16**), and that the best options were either cello and harpsichord (**Example 17**) or cello and archlute (**Example 18**).

For the E major sonata, Punto decided to play guitar instead of archlute, partially because of the key, and partially because the character suited it. I was very pleased with the results of using guitar in this sonata – it is much lighter than most of Barrière's works, and the use of this more gentle, strumming instrument emphasizes that, while also bringing energy and vigour to the fast movements. The first movement worked best with only cello and guitar, in my opinion (**Example 19**). Adding the double bass works as an option too, and we tried both with and without the bow. The bow is perhaps a bit heavy for this piece, and works better with the harpsichord than with the guitar (**Example 20**). The pizzicato is lighter, but feels a little too playful, or even “pop-y” (**Example 21**). Everyone together was simply too heavy for this movement (**Example 22**). The second movement worked better tutti than the first (**Example 23**), though I think the best combination was cello, bass, and either harpsichord or guitar (**Example 24 and 25**). We tried this movement with only a cello, but that did not work since the bass line split and we lost the fundamental for a few measures (**Example 26**) – we then added the bass, but it felt far too empty and bass heavy (**Example 27**). This combination would work much better with a treble instrument playing the solo, as we saw was sometimes practiced in the baroque.

The third movement worked with everyone playing, but movements like this are where intonation becomes a real problem, because it is truly a four-voice texture and the solo part is not easy (**Example 28**). We tried this movement with only cello, harpsichord, and bass, and it first it did not seem to work so effectively (**Example 29**), but then Alon played the bass line at pitch and it worked quite well (**Example 30**). It also worked with guitar instead of harpsichord, but it lost some of the largeness (**Example 31**). The standard combination of harpsichord and cello was comfortable to play with, but the bass felt quite empty (**Example 32**). The final movement felt very comfortable with everyone playing and had a nice groove (**Example 33**). We once tried the first couplet with guitar and the third with harpsichord, which had a very nice effect (bringing out the guitar rhythm at the beginning, and showing a stark change of character in the minor) (**Example 34**).

The bright opening movement of the B-flat sonata worked well with everyone playing (**Example 35**). Reducing down to just archlute and cello felt a little bit empty, but it changed the way I inflected the melody, giving me room to come down more (**Example 36**). Adding the bass to this seemed to help fill in some of the emptiness, yet still giving me flexibility in my line (**Example 37**). We tried with cello and harpsichord, which felt and sounded very rich and comfortable (**Example 38**), but adding the bass to this felt like we found a well-suited combination (**Example 39**). The final movement we experimented with was the short, slow third movement of this sonata. Again, this worked well with the whole ensemble (**Example 40**), but when we reduced to any combination without the harpsichord, the character was lost (**Example 41 and 42**). The version with only cello and archlute was much more effective than with the double bass as well, since its addition made it much too bottom heavy – its addition to our trials with the harpsichord were much more effective (**Example 43**).

In general, the only instrumentation I was always comfortable with was the cello and the harpsichord together. This is probably because I am most used to playing with this combination, but also perhaps because it is most likely how the music was intended to be played. As C.P.E. Bach said, it is a combination “free of criticism.” That being said, I did not think it was always the most effective choice, and the variety of characters and affects created with different instrumentations was impressive. Adding the bass frequently adds richness to the sonatas, especially in movements where the bass line splits for an extended period.

I would like to thank George, Alon, Punto, and Gabrielle for their enthusiasm, creativity, and talent in helping me with these experiments, and create the recordings included here.

Conclusion

While there were certain trends and standard ways of realizing the basso continuo in the baroque, it should be clear to the reader that many options are available to the performer, and many factors influence those choices. To summarize a standard practice is difficult, but it seems that a chordal instrument, a sustaining instrument, or the two together was most common in solo repertoire. The choice of these instruments depends on what the solo instrument is – a viola da gamba matches well with another viol or a theorbo, a violin pairs with a cello and/or harpsichord (and in some cases, the organ), and oboes are joined by the bassoon. Though this was the most common practice, it is clear that many alternatives were available, and especially before the 18th-century, many different possibilities were explored.

Given the evidence at hand, it seems most likely that Barrière’s music was intended for a cello and harpsichord to realize the continuo. That being said, it is quite possible that, given the right resources and opportunities, he would have tried different combinations of instruments, as I

have done here. My experiments gave me insight into what combinations worked and which ones did not, and ideas on how these decisions can be made in the future. By using different instrumentations, I also gained insights into the music, and saw affects in certain pieces I had not considered before. In general, the whole group of five altogether was not as effective as I thought it might be, and rather smaller groups of two or three worked best in most cases.

It is important to take caution when experimenting with large groups of continuo players. Though I have provided many examples of rather large continuo groups, it seems that it was out of the ordinary in solo works, and that one or two instruments was sufficient for this role in the music. In concert listings of sonatas and other similar chamber pieces, it is rare that anyone but the soloist and the composer are listed, proving that the melody part was still the most important.

I would like to conclude with a statement from Barthold Kuijken, which is more or less in line with my conclusions: “The frequent inclusion of a large group of continuo players (with keyboards, plucked, string and wind instruments, together or in alternation) in rather small ensembles seems to be one such instance [of players adopting a fashionable “secondhand” style]. This certainly lends colors to the performance, but not infrequently the packaging becomes more brilliant than the contents. The attention is then drawn to the continuo rather than to the solo playing. In my opinion this totally inverts the hierarchy.”¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Barthold Kuijken, *The Notation Is Not the Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 75.

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