Table 8.6: Performance Schedule, Christmas 1723-24

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Event Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1723-12-19</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>Dinner served to guests at the Royal Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1723-12-20</td>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>Performance of Handel's Messiah in St. Paul's Cathedral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1723-12-21</td>
<td>Concert</td>
<td>Concert with Handel's Water Music at the Queen's House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1723-12-22</td>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>Performance of Handel's Ode for St. Cecilia's Day in Westminster Hall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: This schedule is based on historical records and may not reflect the actual events that occurred.*
Johann Sebastian Bach
(1746, replica by the artist of the 1766 portrait version)

CHRISTOPH WOLFF

The Learned Musician

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

W. W. NORTON & COMPANY

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Katharine, Dorothy, and Stephanie
For Barbara.
THE RISE OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Our story so far has focused on vocal music, since the great majority of pieces that survive from before the sixteenth century are for solo or with instruments. Dances, fanfares, and other instrumental pieces were of course played throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance. But since performers played from memory or a divided, little of this music survived in notation. Instrumental music was functional: people welcomed it to accompany dancing or dining, but seldom listened to or played it for its own sake, and thus it was less highly prized than vocal music.

This limitation began to lift after 1480 and especially during the sixteenth century, when churches, courts, cities, and musical institutions increasingly cultivated instrumental music. The growth in instrumental music is partly an illusion: it simply means more was written down. But that change in itself shows that music without words was now more often deemed worthy of preservation and dissemination. It also suggests that instrumental performers were more musically literate than in earlier eras.

The rise of instrumental music during the Renaissance involved the development of new instruments, genres, and styles and in the growing supply of music for instruments, including many published collections from earlier times, musicians performed, improvised, and composed music, instrumental versions of vocal works, and settings of secular melodies. Yet they also developed new genres that were independent of dancing or singing, including variations, preludes, toccata, ricercare, canzona, and sonata. For the first time composers were writing instrumental music that was as intellectually challenging as vocal music. This development set the stage for later periods, when instrumental music became increasingly important.
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Table 24.3. 1/4 comma meantone: usual notes expressed in cents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>G#/A</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>75.5</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>310.5</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>503.5</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>695.5</td>
<td>772/814</td>
<td>889.5</td>
<td>1007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>m/M</td>
<td>M/m</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to achieve the pure major thirds, it is necessary to temper (narrow) the fifths more than 2½ times the amount necessary for equal temperament, rendering them noticeably narrow and dissonant compared to those of the Pythagorean or even the equal tempered system. Most Renaissance music has lots of thirds, however, and the bitterness of the fifths tends to get lost in the overwhelming sweetness of the thirds. It is impossible to overemphasize the positive and colorful effect of 1/4 comma meantone on keyboard music of the Renaissance.

The name 1/4 comma meantone (table 24.3) comes from two different characteristics of the temperament: if you were to tune four pure fifths up from C (C up to G, to D, to A, then to E), the note E that you arrive at would be sharper than a pure major third above C by 22 cents (about 1/5 of a semitone), an amount known as a syntonic comma. But if, in order to tune that E as a pure major third, you divide up the discrepancy among the four fifths, each interval of a fifth would be tempered (narrowed) by 1/4 of that amount, hence “quarter-comma.” The term “meantone” comes from the fact that, in this system, the whole tone is exactly half of the pure major third. (Note that, as in Pythagorean Tuning, there are two different sizes of semitone; in meantone, however, the chromatic semitone is minor and the diatonic semitone is major.)

To set 1/4 comma meantone on the keyboard, tune C-E in the tenor octave as a pure major third, then, using a flashing metronome, narrow the C-G fifth to beat at about 74 beats/minute at \( d' = 440 \) (70/min. at \( d' = 415 \)); widen the D-G fourth to beat at 110 (104)/min.; narrow the D-A fifth to beat at 82 (77)/min.; check that the E-A fourth is beating about 123 (116)/min.; if it is not, check the above intervals again. (If you are using an A fork, tune A-D-G-C, then C-E pure, checking it with the A.) The rest of the temperament can be set entirely by tuning pure major thirds above and below those notes. The usual question is G#/A, which can be set as a pure major third either to E or to C depending on which note is needed for the music.

In practice, 1/4 comma meantone works beautifully as long as a note is not used in more than one of its enharmonic forms throughout a piece of music. This can include some fairly chromatic works, such as Giles Farnaby’s “His Humour” from the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book and Sweelinck’s Fantasia Chromatica. However, once a note is used in more than one enharmonic form,
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A PERFORMER'S GUIDE TO RENAISSANCE MUSIC
SECOND EDITION

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Jeffery Kite-Powell

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