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PURITY AND MADNESS, OR THE FOLLY OF *FOLLIA*: CORELLI'S OP. 5 NO. 12 AS PSYCHODRAMA

Abstract. Italian, French, and English nineteenth-century sources suggest that Corelli's violin sonatas were perceived as "pure" or "classical", unlike merely virtuosic repertoire or more decadent contemporary music. Editors tended towards restraint when adding conventional performance indications such as fingerings and most did not significantly re-compose the work. But later in the nineteenth century several versions of Corelli's "Follia" variations op. 5 no. 12 appeared which contradicted this approach. This article looks at the highly virtuosic re-arrangements of this piece by Hubert Léonard (1877) and especially César Thomson (1902). Léonard removes variations and creates a three-movement form as well as adding a long cadenza; Thomson creates a psychological explanation for the piece's title and composes much additional material as well as including part of a Corelli trio-sonata. This version was at that time one of the most extreme re-workings of any piece of baroque music.

Keywords: Corelli; Folia; violin; purity; opera; psychology; virtuosity

CZYSTOŚĆ I OBŁĘD, CZYLI SZALEŃSTWO *FOLII* – OP. 5 NR 12 CORELLIEGO JAKO PSYCHODRAMA

Abstrakt. Dziewiętnastowieczne włoskie, francuskie i angielskie źródła sugerują, że sonaty skrzypcowe Corellego były postrzegane jako „czyste” lub „klasyczne”, w przeciwieństwie do repertuaru wyłącznie wirtuozowskiego, bądź do bardziej dekadentkiej muzyki współczesnej. Redaktorzy wykazywali się powściągliwością przy dodawaniu konwencjonalnych wskazówek wykonawczych, takich jak palcowanie, i większość z nich nie dokonywała istotnych ingerencji. Stopniowo jednak zaczęły się pojawiać kolejne wersje wariacji Corellego „La Folia” op. 5 nr 12, które przeczyły temu podejściu. W niniejszym artykule zanalizowano wysoce wirtuozowskie aranżacje tego utworu autorstwa Huberta Léonarda (1877), a zwłaszcza Césara Thomsona (1902). Léonard proponuje formę trzyczęściową w miejsce wariacji, a także dodaje rozbudowaną kadencję. Thomson natomiast proponuje psychologicznie uwarunkowaną interpretację tytułu i komponuje liczne elementy dodatkowe, włączając także

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fragment sonaty triowej Corellego. Opracowanie to uchodziło wówczas za jedno z najbardziej śmiałych przekształceń kompozycji barokowej.

Słowa kluczowe: Corelli; Folia; skrzypce; czystość; opera; psychologia; wirtuozeria

In the 19th century, the music of Corelli and other baroque composers was seen as giving a welcome respite from modern taste. Corelli's music was prized because it was pure, an example of true art as opposed to the trivial music of the day.¹

[Corelli's] style of violin playing had hardly anything in common with that of today's renowned virtuosos.... And, as in this period the performers did not have the least idea of the difficulties of all kinds which are played and also abused so often today, a pure tone, full and even, joined with simple but to the highest degree expressive phrasing, sufficed to move the listeners, whose taste was neither *blasé* nor perverted in more ways than one like ours.²

The Italian *La favilla* described Corelli's style as "graceful, simple, natural, and with an accentuation excellent beyond words" (*grazioso, semplice, naturale, e di una accentuazione oltre ogni dire eccellente*), and the *Giornale critico-letterario* praised "his skill, grace, the enchanting mastery combined with great naturalness and simplicity in pouring torrents of harmony from his instrument" (*Il suo metodo, la sua grazia, l'incantevole maestria unita ad una gran naturalezza e semplicità nel versare dal suo istrumento torrenti d'armonia...*).³ In Britain, George Pigott's 1849 edition of Corelli's sonatas was reviewed in similar terms:

At a period when the public taste is daily invaded by quackery and meretricious perversion of all that is really chaste, classical, and elegant, Mr. Pigott's intervention entitles him to the sincere gratitude of the musical public.⁴

When Edouard Deldevez (1817–1897) included movements by Corelli in his *Pièces diverses* (1857), he was at pains to explain his treatment of Corelli's ornamentation:

¹ For a wider historical study of Corelli see Clive Brown, "Performing Corelli in the Nineteenth Century," *Basler Jahrbuch für historische Musikpraxis*, no. 37 (2013): 265–87.

² "Sa manière de jouer du violon n'avait guère de rapport avec celle de nos virtuoses en renom aujourd'hui.... Et, comme à cette époque les exécutants n'avaient pas la moindre idée des difficultés de toute espèce dont on se joue et dont on abuse même si souvent aujourd'hui, un son plus pur, plein et égal, joint à une phraséologie simple mais expressive au plus haut degré, suffirent pour émouvoir des auditeurs dont le goût n'était ni blasé ni perverti sous plus d'un rapport comme le nôtre." Anon., "Esquisses biographiques," *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, no. 4 (1837): 220.

³ Anon., "Cose Patrie. Di alcuni violinisti celebri e specialmente di Tartini," *La favilla*, September 9, 1838, 2. Anon., "Violinisti italiani," *Giornale critico-letterario*, July 29, 1840, 243.

⁴ Anon., "Reviews," *Liverpool Mercury*, October 19, 1849, 6. George Pigott, ed., *Twelve solos for the violin* (London: R. Cocks, 1849).

Is it not likely that they transmitted them in writing to be used selectively and with extreme reserve? How could one believe, without this conjecture, in the eminent qualities of the classic school...? Thus, we have preserved the ... original idea in its classic simplicity.⁵

Henry Holmes also took a “classic” view of this repertoire when he advised the pupil to study both Corelli and Tartini because “they will touch the student’s sense of the natural, perfect, bold, and beautiful, as [the pupil’s] taste verges into a love of classical art.”⁶

The escapist trope of Corelli continued in the 20th century. Frank Thistleton’s London concerts of baroque music in 1903–1910 were reviewed as “olde musick” by a provincial critic with the *nom de plume* ‘Penelope’.⁷ “She” described Thistleton’s baroque repertoire using very similar terms to the 19th-century assessments of Corelli, this time distanced as an historical fantasy:

the purity, simplicity and poetry of the old masters was as refreshing as a draught of clear spring water to thirsty lips. Across the noise and clamour of today come these spirit voices from the dim past ... we could ... fancy ourselves in that lost world of grace and dignity.⁸

In 1911 Marc Pincherle claimed that Corelli “created a violinistic art, new because of its very simplicity, its elegance, its balance” (*créait un art du violon, nouveau par sa simplicité même, son élégance, son équilibre*).⁹

The “pure” view of Corelli is reflected in the 19th-century performing editions, most of which add little to the violin part other than fingerings, bowings, and some marks of expression. In this context, Ferdinand David’s 1867 edition is an exception. David minutely controls every dynamic nuance to show the exact structure of a phrase, adds sophisticated bowings, varies every repeated section, and inserts an elaborate cadenza.¹⁰ But he is an exception, albeit an influential one whose pupils “were as numerous as were Tartini’s ... [found] in leading positions everywhere in Germany and elsewhere”.¹¹ Many editors continued to be restrained, like Gustav

⁵ “N’est-il probable, qu’ils nous les ont transmis par écrit, pour en user partiellement, et avec une réserve extrême ? Comment croire en effet, sans cette conjecture, aux qualités éminentes de l’école classique, aux traditions respectées des auteurs célèbres. Aussi, avons-nous conservé à la partie de violon son texte primitif, l’idée première dans sa simplicité Classique.” Edouard Deldevez, *Pièces diverses* (Paris: Richault, 1857), 1:iv–v.

⁶ Henry Holmes, ed., *Spohr’s Violin School* (London: Boosey & Co., 1878), 199.

⁷ Penelope, “Pen pictures,” *Derby Daily Telegraph*, April 11, 1904, 4.

⁸ Penelope, “Pen pictures,” *Derby Daily Telegraph*, November 7, 1904, 4.

⁹ Marc Pincherle, “La technique du violon chez les premiers sonatistes français,” *Société Internationale de Musicologie*, no. 7 (1911): 6.

¹⁰ Ferdinand David, ed., *Die hohe Schule des Violinspiels* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1867), discussed in Brown, “Performing Corelli.”

¹¹ Paul von Stoeving, *The Story of the Violin* (London: Walter Scott Publishing Co., 1904), 230.

Jensen, whose preface in 1892 even reiterated the “simplicity” trope, prioritising “the simple flowing melody”.¹²

However, Hubert Léonard (1819–90) and César Thomson (1857–1931) took a very different approach. Their versions of Corelli’s “Follia” variations were not at all concerned with purity, transforming the variations into a vehicle for the very virtuosity for which Corelli’s music was once seen as a “pure” corrective. In these cases, the terms “edition” or “arrangement” are quite inadequate; “derangement” is altogether more apt, especially in the case of Thomson.

Hubert Léonard published two pedagogical works in 1877, the *École du violon* and *L’ancienne école italienne du violon*, both using 18th-century repertoire.¹³ His “Follia” edition was published separately, and was considerably more technically advanced than any of his “École” pieces.¹⁴ Léonard calls it *Variationen über ein Thema von Farinelli*, referring to the 17th-century violinist Cristiano Farinelli. He also calls the piece *variations sérieuses*, suggesting a new dramatic element. Léonard omits around half of Corelli’s twenty-three variations, and he subdivides the remainder into three *périodes*, or groups of variations, the third of which leads into a cadenza nearly four times longer than David’s, and a restatement of the theme. The tripartite form normalises the open-ended variation form, with the second *période* as the equivalent of a sonata slow movement. Leonard certainly re-composes (re-arranges) the work, but it remains just within in the familiar domain of conventionally virtuosic violin literature.

However, Léonard’s version is far exceeded in technical and compositional ambition by the Belgian violin virtuoso César Thomson’s extraordinary arrangement (a veritable derangement) which has so far not received much scholarly attention.¹⁵ Thomson studied at the Liège Conservatoire and later with Léonard, Henri Vieuxtemps, and Henryk Wieniawski, succeeding Eugène Ysaÿe as professor at the Brussels Conservatoire in 1898. His *École du violon* contained five baroque pieces plus two of his own (figure 1).

¹² Gustav Jensen, ed., *Arcangelo Corelli Sonatas for Violin & Piano*, 4 vols. (London: Augener, 1892), vol. 1, preface.

¹³ Hubert Léonard, *L’école italien du violon* (Paris: Richault, 1877) and *École Léonard pour le Violon* (Paris: Richault, 1877).

¹⁴ Hubert Léonard, *Arcangelo Corelli: La Folia. Variations sérieuses* (Brussels: Schott, 1877). Discussed in Brown, “Performing Corelli,” 280.

¹⁵ César Thomson, ed., *La Follia. XIIma Sonata del opus 5ta da Arcangelo Corelli* (Brussels: Maison Beethoven, Georges Oertel, 1902).

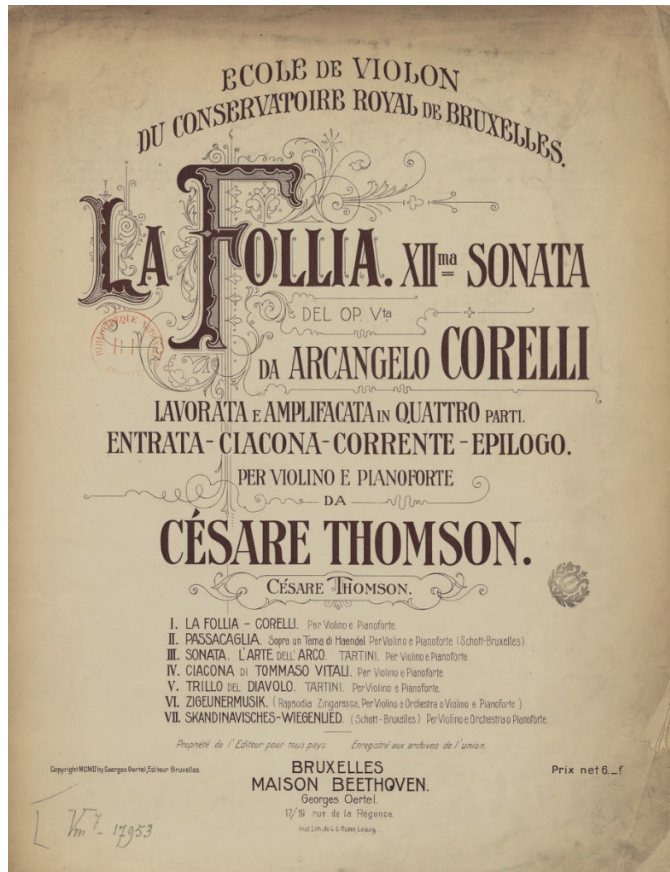


Figure 1. Thomson, “Follia”, cover page

The five eighteenth-century pieces were all heavily adapted for greater virtuosity, but Thomson’s “Follia” is particularly extreme. It amounts to a complete reimagining of the work as a psychological drama. Thomson outdoes Léonard by creating not three but four sections. He explains his approach in a preface in French, Italian, and German. His nine-page-long “Entrata” (example 1) is justified thus:

The “Follia” in the original edition has no introduction. I thought that Corelli’s master work should be preceded by an Entrata in a broad style, with a determined character, which, in contrast, would prepare the dark, almost funereal atmosphere, in which the theme should be stated.¹⁶

¹⁶ “La ‘Follia’ dans l’édition originale n’a pas d’introduction. J’ai pensé que l’œuvre maitresse de Corelli devait être précédée d’une Entrata au style large, au caractère détermine, qui, par opposition préparerait l’ambiance sombre quasi funèbre, dans laquelle doit s’énoncer le thème.” Thomson, *La Follia*, unpaginated preface, [i].

Entrata
 Molto moderato ♩ = 88

Example 1. Thomson, “Follia”, opening bars

Detailed annotations include *tenuto* lines for heavily sustained tone, lines connecting fingerings indicating *portamento* even with chords, and numerous bowing markings. Only then does Thomson give the “Follia” theme and variations, adding a “Corrente” based on another work of Corelli’s, and an “Epilogo” consisting of more variations. The astonishing virtuosity required makes a cadenza superfluous.

The reason for this dramatic recomposition is that Thomson’s approach is based on a creative reinterpretation of the “Follia” title. The work is a musical depiction of insanity.

Corelli, in composing his XII Sonata, wanted to describe the different phases, the various periods of madness and not, as was long supposed, to write an entertainment for violin, in the genre of the Folies d’Espagne. This is why he put at the head of his work the precise title, “La Follia” and not the vaguer “Folies d’Espagne”. It is therefore with the exact name and in the descriptive sense that we must understand the work, to grasp its scope and appreciate its deep and suggestive poetry.¹⁷

¹⁷ “Corelli, en composant sa XIIème Sonate, a voulu décrire les différentes phases, les diverses périodes de la folie et non pas, comme on l’a supposé longtemps, écrire un divertissement pour violon,

The music is even subtitled by Thomson *Wahnsinn* (madness). From this combination of pedantry and historical fiction everything else follows.

Wonderful theme which must be expressed sadly and at length; theme of a slow, morbid pain, a pain that nothing can soothe, nothing can cure. Divine complaint which spreads, pours out brilliantly throughout the work, in all the forms with all the accents, the outbursts, the distresses and all the disappointments which nourished this incomparable nature of the great Arcangelo! This work is his whole life: the rest as he said: “Sogno, derisione, rassegnazione”. This is why, understanding the period of bitterness and disappointment in which this sonata was written, I indulged in the desire to paraphrase the ideas of the author, to translate, if I may express myself thus, the state of mind, by synthesising, in an introduction and in certain parts of the work, the sad period which gave birth to this nostalgic conception. This is why I allowed myself to transform the C♯ of the second and seventh measure of the theme to C♮, and to underline it with harmonies from a period prior to the work, in order to reinforce the expression of dark vagueness and increase the disappointing sadness.¹⁸

By deliberately flattening leading notes (example 3, bars 2 and 7), Thomson creates an extra layer of pre-Corellian archaism, solely for dramatic reasons. Thomson may be elaborating an anecdote quoted by Burney. The applause for an oboist in Rome coupled with the success of the “infinitely inferior” Valentini “threw him [Corelli] into such a state of melancholy and chagrin, as was thought, said Geminiani, to have hastened his death”.¹⁹ Fétis repeated the story, saying that “the susceptibility of this great artist was alarmed by the instant oblivion into which he saw himself falling; a deep melancholy took hold of him and shortened his days.”²⁰ When another Léonard pupil, Ovide Musin (1854–1929), re-edited Léonard, he repeated this

dans le genre des Folies d’Espagne. C’est pourquoi il mit en tête de son œuvre le titre précis, ‘La Follia’ et non celui plus vague de Folies d’Espagne. C’est donc avec le nom exact et dans le sens descriptif qu’il faut comprendre l’œuvre, pour en saisir la portée et en apprécier la poésie profonde et suggestive.” Thomson, *La Follia*, unpaginated preface, [i].

¹⁸ “Thème merveilleux qui doit s’exhaler long et triste; thème d’une douleur lente, morbide, d’une douleur que rien ne peut apaiser, rien ne peut guérir. Plainte divine qui se répand, s’épanche génialement dans toute l’œuvre, sous toutes les formes avec tous les accents, les emportements, les détresses et toutes les déceptions qui abreuverent cette incomparable nature du grand Arcangelo! Cette œuvre est toute sa vie: le reste comme il disait: ‘Sogno, derisione, rassegnazione’. C’est pourquoi comprenant la période d’amertume et de déception dans laquelle fut écrite cette sonate, je me suis laissé aller au désir de paraphraser les idées de l’auteur d’en traduire, si je puis m’exprimer ainsi, l’état d’âme, en synthétisant dans une introduction et dans certaines parties de l’œuvre la triste période qui fit naître cette nostalgique conception. C’est pourquoi je me suis permis de transformer en do♮ le do♯ de la seconde et septième mesure du thème, et de le souligner par des harmonies d’une époque antérieure à l’œuvre, afin d’en renforcer l’expression de vaguesse sombre et d’en augmenter la tristesse décevante.” Thomson, *La Follia*, unpaginated preface, [ii].

¹⁹ Charles Burney, *General History of Music*, 3 vols. (London: self-published, 1789), 3:553–54.

²⁰ “La susceptibilité de ce grand artiste s’alarma de l’oubli momentané où il se voyait tombé; une mélancolie profonde s’empara de lui et abrégé ses jours.” François Fétis, “Corelli (Arcangelo),” *Biographie universelle des musiciens*, 2 vols. (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères et Cie., 1867), 2:360.

“madness” interpretation even though it would seem at odds with how he describes Corelli’s musical qualities:

[Corelli’s] compositions are distinguished by clearness, nobility and grace.... The present “La Folia” variations may be described as illustrating a mind suffering from madness, striving in vain to lift the weight of melancholy.... Corelli portrays moments of sadness and longing, alternating with flashes of joy, courage and gaiety, and finally giving way to deepest despair. The final major chord fittingly expresses the release of the tortured soul.²¹

When Thomson interpolates a *Corrente* from Corelli’s trio sonata op. 2 no. 2, he openly admits that he is guided solely by instinct.

It is difficult for a musician with few sources, influenced in spite of himself by harmonies and modern developments, to touch *a work so simply great and so pure in style*. Also, understanding the difficulty, I imposed it on myself only to move away as little as possible from the aesthetics of the work, borrowing from Corelli himself the motifs to develop this introduction: this is combined with the first measures of the theme of the Follia, but mainly based on the continuo and the melodic framework of a *Corrente* which I introduced into the work episodically (and which belongs to opus II no 2 of the *Sonatas à tre*...). Precious little masterpiece; soft-toned pearl which reflects the adorable sweetness of Corelli’s affectionate and expansive soul. Precious jewel which brings its beneficial calm like a ray of hope, in the intimate drama which surrounds it. I do not know if we will understand the feeling that guided me to insert this *Corrente* into the work as a whole. For me, I cannot see, I cannot find, a better place for this pure jewel than the marvellous setting in which it flourishes, as it blends and merges with the tones which embrace it. It seems that destiny inspired Corelli to one day soothe his disillusioned soul and allow him to find in the grandeur of his art, *so candid and so pure*, the supreme consolation for the long disappointments of his life.²²

²¹ Arcangelo Corelli, *La folia variations sérieuses*, ed. Hubert Léonard, rev. Ovide Musin (New York: Carl Fischer, 1909), [i].

²² “Il est malaisé à un musicien peu documenté, influencé malgré lui par les harmonies et les développements modernes, de toucher à *une œuvre si simplement grande et de style si pur*. Aussi, comprenant la difficulté, me suis-je imposé de ne m’éloigner que le moins possible de l’esthétique de l’œuvre, en empruntant à Corelli même les motifs pour développer cette introduction: Celle-ci est combinée avec les premières mesures du thème de la Follia, mais principalement, basée sur le Continuo et la trame mélodique d’une *Corrente* que j’ai épisodiquement introduite dans l’œuvre (et qui appartient à l’opus II no 2 des Sonates à tre ...). Précieux petit chef-d’œuvre; perle aux tons doux qui reflète les adorables suavités de l’âme si affectueuse et si expansive de Corelli. Joyau précieux qui apporte comme un rayon d’espoir, son accalmie bienfaisante dans le drame intime qui l’entoure. Je ne sais si l’on comprendra le sentiment qui m’a guidé à intercaler cette *Corrente* dans l’ensemble de l’œuvre. Pour moi, je ne vois, je ne trouve meilleure place pour ce pur joyau que l’écrin merveilleux dans lequel il s’épanouit, tant il se marie, se confond avec les tons qui l’enlacent. Il semble que le destin l’ait inspirée à Corelli, pour apaiser un jour son âme déluse et lui permettre de trouver dans la grandeur de son art *si candide et si pur* la consolation suprême aux longues déceptions de sa vie.” Thomson, *La Follia*, [ii]. My emphases.

Thomson claims to have followed Corelli's "pure" aesthetics—but he goes further. He says *why* Corelli is pure. The purity is not an end in itself: it is therapeutic, a means by which Corelli soothed his disillusion. The connection between the trio-sonata and "Follia" is not as clear as Thomson suggests, but it does at least offer a short section of calm (example 2). The "con tenerezza cantando quasi a mezza voce" could even be taken as the entry of another quasi-operatic voice altogether, calming Corelli's tortured soul.

The image displays the opening bars of two musical pieces by Thomson. The first system is for "Follia" in 12/8 time, showing a violin part with dynamic markings (ff, mf, f, ff) and a piano accompaniment. The second system is for "Corrente" in 3/4 time, marked "Con moto" with a tempo of 84, featuring a vocal line with "p con tenerezza cantando quasi a mezza voce" and a piano accompaniment with "p dolce" and "mezza voce e portato". The third system continues the "Corrente" with "espress. molto" and "sf" markings.

Example 2. Thomson, "Follia", "Corrente", opening bars

At the same time, Thomson's expressive and dramatic markings tell an operatic story by themselves: *con vaga mestizia e molto espressivo, sempre grande e pomposo, vibratissimo, espressivo e portamente, con duolo, stridente e furioso, selvaggio* [wild], *come un grido* [scream], *con mestizia espansiva, con tenerezza cantando quasi a mezza voce, molto dolente*, and *con vaghezza doloroso*. Such markings could easily have come from Puccini's *Tosca*, published only two years earlier

in 1900. Thomson's *vaga mestizia* and *vaghezza doloroso* have their counterpart in Cavaradossi's marking *vagamente* in *E lucevan le stelle*. Angelotti's *suffocato grido di gioia* is as much stage direction as expressive marking, but Thomson's tragic hero, Corelli, exists only in the mind of the audience, and these detailed directions refer to—in fact, create—the inner drama that generates the performance. Even Thomson's concern for some degree of historical verisimilitude is part of this new conception of the work. He carefully indicates that the theme's trills are to be played accelerating to the end of the note, *all'antica* (example 3). Puccini took similar care over such details as the bell chimes in Tosca's Rome or the precise notation of Japanese music in *Madama Butterfly*. Thomson's score gives every nuance of dynamics, expression, and articulation; he presents a detailed anatomy of melancholy.

It is hard to choose any single passage of this long and complex work as a musical example, but the extremes are illustrated by examples 3 and 4. Example 3 shows the theme itself with little hint of what is to come, maintaining the subdued dynamic level with small nuances within *pianissimo* and using harmonics where available. Example 4 represents the opposite extreme with dramatic *crescendo*, heavy octaves in the piano part, and complex double-stopping on the violin often involving semitone clashes.

Thomson played this piece often. In 1883 in Mons it was described with possibly unwitting accuracy as *fantaisie pour violon, par M. Thomson (A. Corelli)*.²³ In 1900, he presented a series of historical "séances" of 18th-century music at the Brussels Conservatoire *consacrée à la période primitive des anciens maîtres italiens*, the second of which on 22 February 1900 included "Follia".²⁴ In May that year in Constantinople it had

a most enthusiastic success, taking the proportions of a triumph for the inimitable enchanter César Thomson...., we admired the so generous and full sound, the so expressive playing of the Master in Corelli's La Follia (what a beautiful chaconne!).²⁵

There was even more enthusiasm in 1904: "How grateful we must be to him for restoring to honour these old masters of the Italian school, who have left such remarkable pages!"²⁶ In 1905 the *Guide Musical* even repeated the "purity" trope:

²³ "Mons," *Guide Musical*, March 22, 1883, 6.

²⁴ Conservatoire royal de musique de Bruxelles, *Annuaire pour 1900* (Brussels: E. Ramlot, 1900), 116, "Auditions et exercices publiques."

²⁵ 'Succès des plus enthousiaste, prenant les proportions d'un triomphe, pour l'inimitable enchanter César Thomson ... on a admiré le son si généreux, si ample, le jeu si expressif du Maître dans *La Follia* de Corelli (quel beau ciacone!)...' 'Constantinople', *Guide musical*, May 6, 1900, 421.

²⁶ 'Combien on doit lui savoir gré de remettre en honneur ces vieux maîtres de l'école italienne, qui ont laissé des pages si remarquables!' 'Nouvelle Société Philharmonique de Paris', *Guide musical*, March 13, 1904, 242.

Ciaccona
Lento ♩ = 88

Violin
pp con vaga mestizia, molto espressivo
all' antica
p

Piano
pp
ppp
pp
pp
dim.

Example 3. Thomson, “Follia”, theme

We know that the Liège master has assimilated this old Italian music to the point that few violinists could dispute its secrets of beauty and interpretation. His style, of a marble purity, the nobility of his phrasing, made one marvel as much as his impeccable technique in the variations of Corelli’s sonata.²⁷

²⁷ “...l’on sait que le maître Liégeois s’est assimilé cette vieille musique italienne au point que peu de violonistes pourraient lui en disputer les secrets de beauté et d’interprétation. Son style, d’une marmoréenne pureté, la noblesse de son phrasé, y ont fait merveille autant que son impeccable mécanisme dans les variations de la sonate de Corelli.” “Bruges,” *Guide musical*, February 19, 1905, 155.

canon of eighteenth-century works to Bach, Tartini, Locatelli, Nardini, Vitali, and “Folia”.²⁹ He chose works that

[combine] musical invention, dramatic conception and perfection of form. They rank among the most significant compositions included in the entire range of violin literature..., they have their origin in those deep founts from which genius alone draws inspiration.³⁰

Far from correcting taste, for Auer this repertoire defines it—or rather, this canon transcends any concept of “taste”. But canonic status was still no bar to adaptation or re-composition. Auer’s title page states that his *Follia* is “entirely re-arranged for the Concert Stage, according to an earlier version by Ferd. David, and provided with an original variation”.³¹ Auer’s new variation is simply based on cascading scales, mostly in thirds (example 5).



Example 5. Auer’s variation, opening bars

In 1921 the American violinist Albert Spalding had edited the piece with a statement that his edition was “so free as practically to constitute an original composition”—an exaggeration possibly for copyright purposes, as his version is relatively straightforward apart from the addition of a coda section, and is notably free of dynamic markings—so Auer’s own “entirely rearranged” is partly a competing advertising claim.³² Even Fritz Kreisler’s *Folia*, like Auer’s, is based on David apart from the addition of passagework and a new cadenza.³³ All of these later claims for originality or freedom look weak compared with Thomson from over twenty years earlier, and suggest that the search for novelty was becoming exhausted. Thomson’s deranged melancholic Corelli represents one of the last late-romantic virtuoso re-interpretations of baroque music, a high point of editions

²⁹ Leopold Auer, *Violin Master Works and their Interpretation* (New York: Carl Fischer, 1925), 1.

³⁰ Auer, *Violin Master Works*, 2.

³¹ Leopold Auer, ed., *A. Corelli Folies d’Espagne* (New York: Carl Fischer, 1922).

³² Albert Spalding, ed., *La Folia* (New York: Composers’ Music Corporation, 1921).

³³ Fritz Kreisler, ed., *La Folia* (New York: Carl Fischer, 1927).

as recompositions. This act of historical re-imagining amounts to a performance of derangement itself.

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