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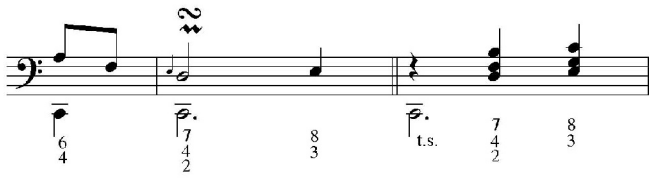
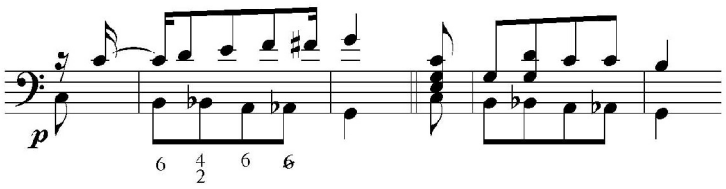
The Music of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach
Supplement 7.3. Some Further Refinements of Accompaniment

Many of Bach's prescriptions for continuo realization remain little known and less used even by specialists. For instance, he insists that keyboard accompanists leave out appoggiaturas whose rhythm might be treated freely by a soloist (online example 7.10).[1] He also advises omitting tones indicated in a figured bass that would create even momentary "ugliness" *(Übellaut)* against a syncopated melodic line (online example 7.11).[2] The result is a realization containing "holes" or rests where the missing chord tones would belong. Often the latter are delayed until a weak beat, after an appoggiatura or passing dissonance has moved on. Thus in example 7.10, which Bach calls the "most excellent" *(vorzüglichster)* of several possible realizations of the passage, the 7/4/2-chord indicated on the downbeat, already a passing dissonance, is delayed until the soloist has had time to perform the appoggiatura e. This means placing a thick, dissonant chord on a weak beat, where it coincides with the soloist's resolution of an appoggiatura. Yet the resolution would normally be performed softly, even when graced by an ornament, as here.[3] Such a realization would be problematical especially on the harpsichord, where it would produce an unwanted accent on the 7/4/2-chord unless the latter were delicately broken. But Bach never mentions performance techniques of this type, even though they are now assumed to be essential for expressive continuo playing. Possibly Bach assumed by this date that most players would accompany chamber music on a clavichord or fortepiano, where the force of the dissonant chord on an off-beat could be mitigated.

Example 7.10. Accompaniment of appoggiaturas from *Versuch,* ii.27.10 ("t.s." stands for *tasto solo*, i.e., without realization, as signified by the rest)



Example 7.11. Accompaniment of a syncopated melodic line, from *Versuch,* ii.26.4



[1] *Versuch,* ii.25.14.

[2] *Versuch,* ii.26.4.

[3] *Versuch,* i.2.2.7.