

Cross-String Ornaments Part 3 of 3

By Douglas Niedt

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Let's look at some real pieces where we can use cross-string ornaments. Let me remind you once again that the use of ornaments will vary with the:

1. Time period in which the piece was written
2. Composer
3. Country
4. Musical context
5. Instrument
6. Time value of the ornament and the notes preceding and following it.
7. Tempo
8. Style of the music
9. Personal taste and opinion of the performer

The Bach Bourée

Below are the first eight measures of the *Bourée* from J.S. Bach's *Lute Suite No. 1 BWV 996*.

This is the first half of the piece (measures 1-8) with no ornamentation:

1 2 3 4

5 6 7 8

Next, I have written out some possible ornaments for each of these first eight measures. These are by no means all the possibilities, but you will see that I can ornament almost every beat!

Some possible ornaments for measures 1-8

Red notes are the added or altered notes

Hinge Bar

m i 1 *m i a* *i m i* *m i* 2 //

2 1 0 1 0 2 1 0 2 1 0 //

Or: *a i m*
m i m
a i a

0 2 3 7 3 7 0 4 0 2 0 2 4 5 //

3 2 0 0 2 0 3 2 0

Hinge Bar

m i 1 *m m a i* *m i* *m i* 2 //

Or: *i a m*
i i m
i a i

T 0 2 3 7 0 4 0 2 0 2 4 5

A 3 2 0 0 2 0 3 2 0

B 3 2 0 0 2 0 3 2 0

m i 1 *m m i m i m i m i* 2 //

T 0 2 3 2 0 0 4 0 2 0 2 4 5

A 3 2 0 0 2 0 3 2 0

B 3 2 0 0 2 0 3 2 0

Same ornament in quicker rhythm

m i 1 *m m i m i a p* *m i* 2 //

Or: *a i m p*
a i m i
m i a i

T 0 2 3 2 0 0 4 0 2 0 2 4 5

A 3 2 0 0 2 0 3 2 0

B 3 2 0 0 2 0 3 2 0

m i 1 m m i m m i 2 m
3 m //

Or: *i m i a m*
i m i m i
i m i a i

TAB: 0 2 3 2 0 4 0 2 4 1 4 2 4 5 3 1 0 3 2 0 0 2 0 3 2 0 2 3

m i 1 m m i m m i 2 m i a m i m m i 3 m //
 Or:
 a i m
 m i m
 a i a
 TAB
 0 2 3 2 0 4 0 2 0 2 4 5 3 1 0
 3 2 0 0 2 0 3 2 0 2 3

m i 1 m m i m m i 2 m i a p m i m m i 3 m //

Or: *a i m p*
a i m i
m i a i

T
A
B

The same ornament using open string

m i 1 m m i m m i 2 m a p i m i m m i 3 m //

Or: *m a i m*
i m i m i m
i m i a i a
i m i m i a
i m i a i m
i m i m p m
i m i a p m

T
A
B

m i 1 m m i m m i 2 m i m i m i m m i 3 m //

T
A
B

The same ornament using open string

m i 1 m m i m i m 2 i m i m i m i m i 3 m //

m i 1 m m i m m i 2 m i a p m i m i m i 3 m //

m i 1 m m i m m i 2 m i m p m a m i 3 m //

m i 1 m m i m m i 2 m m i m a i m i 3 m //

Or: *i m i a m*
i m i m i
i m i a i

TAB

0 2 3 2 0 4 0 2 0 2 4 5 5 3 1 0

3 2 0 0 2 0 3 2 0 2 3

m i 1 m m i m m i 2 m m i m i a m i 3 m //

Or: *a i m*
m i m
a i a

TAB

0 2 3 2 0 4 0 2 0 2 4 0 0 3 1 0

3 2 0 0 2 0 3 2 0 2 3

m i 1 m m i m m i 2 m m i m m a i m 3 i //

Or: *i a m*
i m i
i a i

TAB

0 2 3 2 0 4 0 2 0 2 4 0 3 3 1 0

3 2 0 0 2 0 3 2 0 2 3

m i 1 m m i m m i 2 m m i m m a m i 3 m //

TAB

m i 1 m m i m m i 2 m m i m m i 3 m a i m i m m i 4 m //

TAB

Or: *i m i a m*
i m i m i
i m i a i

The same ornament using open string

m i 1 m m i m m i 2 m m i m m i 3 m i a m i m m i 4 m //

TAB

Or: *a i m*
m i m
a i a

m i 1 m m i m m i 2 m m i m m i 3 m i m i m i m m i 4 m //

The first system of music shows a melody line in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with fingerings indicated by numbers 1-4. The guitar tablature is on a single staff, showing fret numbers 0-4. The melody ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

The same ornament using open string

m i 1 m m i m m i 2 m m i m i m 3 i m i m i m i m i 4 m //

The second system of music is similar to the first, but the ornament is played using the open string (0). The melody line has fingerings 1-4. The guitar tablature shows fret numbers 0-4, with the open string (0) used for the ornament. The melody ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Same ornament in quicker rhythm

m i 1 m m i m m i 2 m m i m m i 3 m i a p m i m m i 4 m //

Or: *a i m p*
a i m i
m i a i

The third system of music shows the ornament in a quicker rhythm, specifically as a triplet. The melody line has fingerings 1-4. The guitar tablature shows fret numbers 0-4. The ornament is marked with a triplet symbol (3) and a circled 3. The melody ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

The same ornament using open string

m i 1 m m i m m i 2 m m i m m i 3 m a p i m i m m i 4 m

Or:

<i>m i</i>	<i>m a i m</i>	<i>i m</i>
<i>m i</i>	<i>i m i m</i>	<i>i m</i>
<i>m i</i>	<i>i a i a</i>	<i>i m</i>
<i>m i</i>	<i>i m i a</i>	<i>i m</i>
<i>m i</i>	<i>i a i m</i>	<i>i m</i>
<i>m i</i>	<i>i m p m</i>	<i>i m</i>
<i>m i</i>	<i>i a p m</i>	<i>i m</i>

TAB

m i 1 m m i m m i 2 m m i m m i 3 m i a m i m m i 4 m

Or:

<i>m a i m i</i>
<i>i m i m i</i>
<i>i a i m i</i>

TAB

m i 1 m m i m m i 2 m m i m m i 3 m m i a m a i m i 4 m

TAB

m i 1 m m i m m i 2 m m i m m i 3 m m i m i m i m 4 m

TAB

3 2 0 0 2 0 3 2 0 2 3 0 2 0 2 4

m i 1 m m i m m i 2 m m i m m i 3 m m i m i a p m i 4 m

*a i m p
a i m i
m i a i*

TAB

3 2 0 0 2 0 3 2 0 2 3 0 2 0 2 4

m i 1 m m i m m i 2 m m i m m i 3 m m i m m i m i 4 a i m i m m i

TAB

3 2 0 0 2 0 3 2 0 2 3 0 2 0 2 4

[illegible][illegible]

4 m i m i m m i m m i m i m a 8 a

5 m m i m m i

6 m m i m i m a m

7 m i m i m a m

Or: m i m i m i m i m i a i

TAB

4 2 0 4 2 0 2 3 2 0 0 2 0 3 2 0 2 3 1 1 4 4 2 0 0 0 2 0 3 2 0 2 3 3 5 5 2 3

The same ornament using open string

[illegible]

4 *m i m i m m i 5 m m i m m i 6 m m i m i m 7 m i m i m a i a 8 a*

Or: *m i m i a m
m i m i m i
m i m i a i*

T
A
B

Same ornament in quicker rhythm

4 *m i m i m m i 5 m m i m m i 6 m m i m i m 7 m i m i m a i a 8 a*

Or: *m i m i a m
m i m i m i
m i m i a i*

T
A
B

4 *m i m i m m i 5 m m i m m i 6 m m i m i m 7 m i m a i m p a i a 8 a*

Or: *m i a p m i*

T
A
B

For the final measure, many versions and right-hand fingerings are possible for the ornaments. Mixing in the thumb to play the F#s is especially helpful.

The musical score is written for a lute or similar stringed instrument. It features a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody line is marked with '8' above the first four measures and '5' above the fifth measure. The bass line is marked with '0-2' above the first four measures and '0-2' above the fifth measure. The score is written in a style that suggests it is for a lute or a similar stringed instrument, with fingerings indicated by numbers 0-4 and 5.

Most people today would probably say that using that much ornamentation is overdoing it. But I must point out that in other arts of the period such as baroque architecture, furniture making, and plasterwork, *almost every surface is highly decorated*. Look at these examples:















Granted, musicians and writers of the baroque period often spoke of using ornaments *tastefully*. But one must maintain perspective. Based upon the artistic aesthetic of the time, my best wild guess is that what was tasteful to them would be considered overdone today.

Another important point to remember is that musicians of the baroque era prided themselves on their skills of improvisation. Musicians as accomplished as Bach seldom played a piece the same way twice. One of the primary methods to "change it up" was to vary the ornamentation in a piece. To me, the aesthetic of the period and the improvisational bent of its musicians point to a generous rather than sparing use of ornamentation.

My advice is that if you wish to be "authentic", use lots of ornaments. But if you wish to conform to current taste, by all means use ornamentation sparingly.

Here is a fully ornamented version of the first eight measures:

Bouree Fully Ornamented

Some possible ornaments for measures 1-8

J.S. Bach

Red notes are the added or altered notes

Or:

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

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11

12

13

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15

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17

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22

23

24

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98

99

100

Hinge Bar

5

m i a m a i m a i m i m i

6 *m i a p i m i m i a m a m i*

7 *m a p i m i a i m p a i a*

8

a i m i a m
m i m i m i
a i a i a i

Or: *a i m*
m i m
a i a

TAB

3 7 3 7 3 7 0 0 4 0 0 2

0 5 0 5 0 2 4 0 4 0 3 3 5

0 0 2 0 3 2 0 2

5 0 5 0 2 0 0 4 0 0 4 0 0

3 3 5 4 4 4 0 4 0 4 0 3

Now, listen to me play it.



Bouree Fully Ornamented

CLICK TO WATCH THE VIDEO on douglasniedt.com

La Maja de Goya

La Maja de Goya by pianist Enrique Granados is an example of a very different style of piece in which cross-string ornamentation may be used. It is in the style of the Romantic Era rather than the Baroque. Ornaments of the period are often written as grace notes in front of the principal note.

Guitarists usually play these ornaments using slurs (hammer ons and pull offs). They play the grace note furthest to the left *on the beat* (simultaneously with any bass and accompaniment notes). This results in the principal note falling *after the beat*.

However, most pianists play the grace notes *ahead of the beat* and place the principal note *on the beat*. Any accompaniment and bass notes are played with the principal note on the beat. The pianistic style is well-captured on the guitar using cross-string ornaments.

In the following example I show you the original notation for each ornament, its execution using traditional guitar slur technique, and execution using the cross-string ornament technique:

La Maja de Goya

Enrique Granados

⑤ = G
⑥ = D

The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 6, and the second system contains measures 7 through 8. Each measure is written on a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The guitar notation includes fingerings (circled numbers) and slurs. The tablature is written below the staff, with fret numbers (0-8) and bar lines. A dashed line separates the guitar notation from the tablature. The first ornament notation example at the bottom shows a principal note (red) and grace notes (blue) on a grand staff, with a corresponding empty tablature below it.

All notes pizzicato

First Ornament Notated:

Principal note (red)

Grace Notes (Blue)

Normal (no pizz.)

Execution of first ornament using slur,
playing first grace note on the beat.
Principal note falls after the beat:

9

Grace Notes (Blue)
1st grace note falls on the beat

Principal note (red)
lands after the beat

Normal (no pizz.)

Grace Notes (Blue)
1st grace note falls on the beat

Principal note (red)
lands after the beat

Execution of first ornament as cross-string ornament
playing grace notes ahead of the beat (no slur):

7

III

Grace Notes (Blue)
played ahead of the beat

Principal note (red)
falls on the beat

Pizz. -----

Normal (no pizz.)

Principal note (red)
falls on the beat

Grace Notes (Blue)
played ahead of the beat

10

V

All notes pizzicato -----

Second Ornament Notated:

14

Principal note (red)

Grace Notes (Blue)

Normal (no pizz.)

T
A
B

Execution of second ornament using slur,
playing first grace note on the beat.
Principal note falls after the beat:

III -----

Grace Notes (Blue)
1st grace note falls on the beat

14

Principal note (red)
lands after the beat

Normal (no pizz.)

Grace Notes (Blue)
1st grace note falls on the beat

T
A
B

Execution of second ornament as cross-string ornament
playing grace notes ahead of the beat (no slur):

Principal note (red)
falling on the beat

14

Grace Notes (Blue)
played ahead of the beat

Normal (no pizz.)

Principal note (red)
falling on the beat

Grace Notes (Blue)
played ahead of the beat

T
A
B

Natural Harmonic. III -----
12th fret

II -----

15

Normal (no pizz.) All notes pizzicato -----

T
A
B

Third Ornament Notated:

Principal note (red)

Grace Notes (Blue)

20

Normal (no pizz.)

T
A
B

Execution of third ornament using slur,
playing first grace note on the beat.
Principal note falls after the beat:

Grace Notes (Blue)
1st grace note falls on the beat

Principal note (red)
lands after the beat

20

Normal (no pizz.) Pizz. -----

T
A
B

Execution of third ornament as cross-string ornament
playing grace notes ahead of the beat (no slur):

X^③ -----

Principal note (red)
falling on the beat

V -----

20

1 ② 1 ② ③

Grace Notes (Blue)
played ahead of the beat

Normal (no pizz.)

Pizz. -----

Principal note (red)
falling on the beat

Grace Notes (Blue)
played ahead of the beat

T 10 13 10 13 12

A 10 10 8

B 0 5 5

Fourth Ornament Notated:

Principal note (red)

Grace Notes (Blue)

22

Normal (no pizz.)

T

A

B

Execution of fourth ornament using slur,
playing first grace note on the beat.
Principal note falls after the beat:

Grace Notes (Blue)
1st grace note falls on the beat

Principal note (red)
lands after the beat

III -----

22

Normal (no pizz.)

Grace Notes (Blue)
1st grace note falls on the beat

Principal note (red)
lands after the beat

Pizz. -----

T 8 6 8 6 10 3

A 8 10 3

B 10 3 3

Execution of fourth ornament as cross-string ornament
playing grace notes ahead of the beat (no slur):

VIII -----

Grace Notes (Blue)
played ahead of the beat

Principal note (red)
falling on the beat

III -----

22

Normal (no pizz.)

Grace Notes (Blue)
played ahead of the beat

Principal note (red)
falling on the beat

Pizz. -----

T 8 11 8 11 10 3

A 8 8 10 3

B 10 3 3

Fifth Ornament Notated:

Principal note (red)

Grace Notes (Blue)

Normal (no pizz.)

T

A

B

Execution of fifth ornament using slur,
playing first grace note on the beat.
Principal note falls after the beat:

24

Grace Notes (Blue)
1st grace note falls on the beat

III

Principal note (red)
lands after the beat

Normal (no pizz.)

Grace Notes (Blue)
1st grace note falls on the beat

Principal note (red)
lands after the beat

TAB

Execution of fifth ornament as cross-string ornament
playing grace notes ahead of the beat (no slur):

VI -----

Grace Notes (Blue)
played ahead of the beat

Principal note (red)
falling on the beat

24

III -----

Normal (no pizz.)

Grace Notes (Blue)
played ahead of the beat

Principal note (red)
falling on the beat

T
A
B

Listen to the first several measures played in the traditional guitar manner with slurs:



La Maja de Goya Ornaments Executed With Slurs

CLICK TO WATCH THE VIDEO on douglasniedt.com

Now, listen to these measures played in the pianistic style with cross-string ornaments:



La Maja de Goya Ornaments Executed With Cross-String Ornaments

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Now, here is an A-B comparison of each ornament using the two styles of execution:



La Maja de Goya Ornaments AB Comparisons

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Leyenda (Asturias)

Our beloved *Leyenda* or *Asturias*, is also a piece from the Romantic period. The ornaments in the middle section are candidates for playing with the cross-string ornament technique.

Once again, guitarists usually play these ornaments using slurs (hammer-ons and pull-offs). They play the grace note furthest to the left *on the beat* (simultaneously with any bass and accompaniment notes). This results in the principal note falling *after the beat*.

Pianists who play the piece play the grace notes *ahead of the beat* and place the principal note *on the beat*. Any accompaniment and bass notes are played with the principal note on the beat. Again, the pianistic style is well-captured on the guitar using cross-string ornaments.

Here is the notation for executing the ornaments with the traditional slur technique:

Leyenda

Isaac Albéniz

Middle Section, A Traditional Guitar Version Playing Ornaments With Slurs

Original notation:



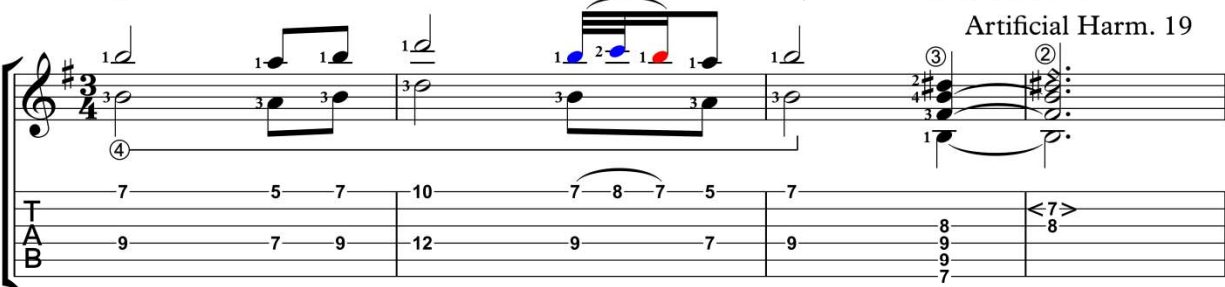
①

Grace Notes (Blue)
1st grace note falls on the beat

Principal note (red)
lands after the beat

VII -----

Artificial Harm. 19



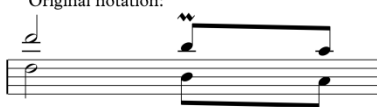
T 7 5 7 10 7 8 7 5 7

A 9 7 9 12 9 7 9

B 9 7 9 12 9 7 9

8 7 8

Original notation:



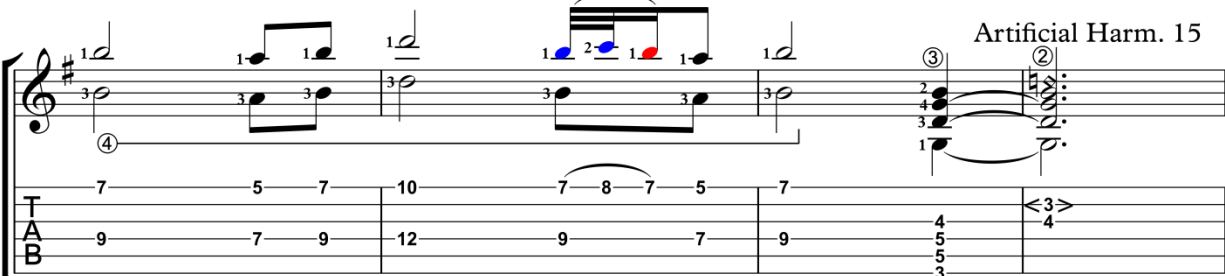
①

Grace Notes (Blue)
1st grace note falls on the beat

Principal note (red)
lands after the beat

III -----

Artificial Harm. 15



T 7 5 7 10 7 8 7 5 7

A 9 7 9 12 9 7 9

B 9 7 9 12 9 7 9

4 3 4

Original notation:

Grace Notes (Blue) Principal note (red)
1st grace note falls on the beat lands after the beat

VII Artificial Harm. 19

7 6 6 3 5 3 2 5 8 7 8 9 9 7

9 8 8 5 4 2 5 4 8 9 7

7 8 9 7

Original notation:

Grace Notes (Blue)
1st grace note falls on the beat

Principal note (red)
lands after the beat

①

②

④

TAB

7 8 7 6 2 3 5 3 2 5 8 7 5 4 4 4 2

9 10 9 8 4 5 4 2 5 4 3 4 2

Listen to the first several measures played in the traditional guitar manner with slurs:



Leyenda Middle Section Ornaments Played With Slurs

CLICK TO WATCH THE VIDEO on douglasniedt.com

Phrase 2. In the piano score, the passage is notated with an inverted or upper mordent symbol:

The piano score shows a melodic line in G major with an inverted mordent over a half note G4. The guitar TAB staff is empty.

Phrase 2. Executed with cross-string ornament ahead of the beat (same fingering as phrase #1):

VIII/IX
Cross-fret bar

The piano score includes a cross-fret bar with grace notes (blue) and a principal note (red). The guitar TAB staff shows fret numbers: 12, 10, 12, 15, 12, 8, 12, 10, 12, 4, 5, 5, 3, and a triplet of 4.

Phrase 3. In the piano score, the ornament is notated with grace notes (some scores show the grace note A as A#):

The piano score shows a melodic line in G major with grace notes. The guitar TAB staff is empty.

Phrase 3. Executed with cross-string ornament ahead of the beat:

The piano score includes a cross-fret bar with grace notes (blue) and a principal note (red). The guitar TAB staff shows fret numbers: 12, 11, 8, 5, 8, 7, 5, 8, 7, 8, 9, 9, 7, and a triplet of 8.

Phrase 4. In the piano score, the ornament is notated with grace notes (some scores show the grace note A as A#):

Phrase 4. In the piano score, the ornament is notated with grace notes (some scores show the grace note A as A#):

Phrase 4. Executed with cross-string ornament ahead of the beat:

Phrase 4. Executed with cross-string ornament ahead of the beat:

T	12	13	12	11	7	8	5	8	7	5	8	7	5	4
A	9	10	9	8	4	5	4	2	5	4	3	4	4	4
B											3	4	4	2

Now, listen to these measures played in the pianistic style with cross-string ornaments:



Leyenda Middle Section Ornaments Played As Cross String Ornaments

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Final Thoughts

Love them or hate them, cross-string ornaments can be used in a variety of repertoire. Once you learn the basic technique of execution, they are actually fun to play. I believe they have many positive attributes when used in the right situations. Don't like them? Use the traditional technique of slurs produced with hammer-ons and pull-offs.