

# What I Learned From Four Measures of Bach

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## Premise:

Most solo instrumental music (except for chordal instruments), is made up of single line melodies that often follow certain chordal ideas (or progressions), or in Bach's case the rules of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century counterpoint. However, most musicians are aware that performing or thinking of such music as a single melody causes us to miss expressive opportunities that are present if only we looked at these melodies more vertically or three-dimensionally. I will use the first four measures of the Cello Suite no. 1 in G major to first demonstrate the concept described above, and then show how this type of critical analysis can be applied to not just tonal music, but also atonal and post tonal music solo marimba music. We will discuss ideas such as hyper-melody, hyper-rhythm, motivic phrasing, perceived note length as well as many other items that pertain to this learning concept.

## Specific Clinic Elements and Examples

JS Bach: Cello Suite No. 1 measure 1-4

Original



What I am thinking...

Now let's break it down by voice and determine the component parts. We will think vertically and three-dimensionally, and see how each voice plays its part in the whole.

## Hyper-Melody Upper Voice

For me, this is the real melody. We have chord tones decorated by lower neighbors, which we then designate a different musical "weight" to each such that we get more vertical interest to what is happening. Also, note the rhythmic importance, as this idea drives the piece forward into the next strong beat.