

Steps to Ornamenting like Corelli

1. Get to Know the Piece

- Play the piece several times without ornamentation.
- Sing the melody away from the instrument.
- Internalise the rhythm, harmony, and character.
- Listen to a plain version of the piece whenever possible. For Baroque repertoire, an unornamented first statement of a binary-form movement can be particularly useful.
- Become familiar with the musical language before attempting to add anything to it.

2. Analyse the Piece

Before ornamenting, understand the structure of the music.

Harmonic Analysis

- Identify the key and tonal plan.
- Locate important modulations.
- Mark cadences.
- Identify sequences, circle-of-fifths progressions, and pedal points.
- Observe dissonances and suspensions.

Structural and Phrase Analysis

- Determine the form of the piece.
- Identify phrase lengths and phrase groupings.
- Locate phrase beginnings and endings.
- Observe repetitions and sequential passages.

Affect and Rhetorical Analysis

- Identify the principal affects of the piece.
- Consider how these affects change throughout the movement.
- Locate moments of tension, release, surprise, and resolution.

3. Define the Character

Play the piece again and assign a descriptive word to each section.

Examples:

- Passionate
- Joyful
- Tender
- Noble
- Melancholic
- Playful
- Agitated

These words will guide your ornamentation choices far more effectively than technical considerations alone.

4. Choose Ornamentation Points

Work through the piece section by section.

Ask yourself:

- Which notes are structurally important?
- Where does harmony support embellishment?
- Which cadences invite ornamentation?
- Which repetitions could benefit from variation?

Mark potential places for ornamentation before deciding exactly what to play.

5. Experiment with Simple Ornaments

Once the piece and its affect are fully internalised, begin experimenting.

- Record yourself playing the unornamented version with a metronome.
- Play along with the recording and add ornaments in real time.
- Begin with simple ornaments from the quintessential Corelli vocabulary.
- Work one phrase at a time.
- Keep the pulse steady and respect the harmonic structure of Corelli or any composer you are working on.

Another useful approach is to play along with an unornamented recording of the piece, particularly a simple first statement of a binary-form movement.

Start small. A single well-placed ornament is often more effective than an elaborate passage.

6. Expand Your Vocabulary

Once simple ornaments feel natural:

- Introduce more elaborate diminutions.
- Combine ornaments.
- Develop longer ornamental lines.
- Explore multiple solutions for the same passage.

Always ensure that the ornament serves the affect and harmony rather than drawing attention to itself.

7. Practise with the Metronome

Continue practising with a metronome until:

- The pulse remains stable.
- The harmonic rhythm remains clear.
- The ornaments feel integrated rather than superimposed.

The goal is freedom within a secure rhythmic framework.

Remembering and Notating Ornaments

Personal Annotations

Many performers develop their own notation systems.

You might:

- Write brief reminders above the staff.
- Draw lines connecting notes.
- Use symbols that suggest turns, scales, or diminutions.
- Create your own shorthand that helps you remember successful ideas.

The notation only needs to make sense to you.

Written-Out Versions

A useful exercise is to write out a fully ornamented version on a separate sheet of paper.

This helps you:

- Understand the structure of your ornamentation.
- Identify recurring patterns.
- Memorise larger ornamental gestures.

Once learned, you can gradually reduce the amount of written information until only essential cues remain.

Leave Space for Spontaneity

Not every ornament needs to be predetermined.

Some passages can be left open to the inspiration of the moment. However, spontaneity is most successful when it grows out of extensive preparation.

A performer who has practised dozens of possibilities has a rich palette of choices available in performance, much like a painter selecting colours from a well-stocked palette.

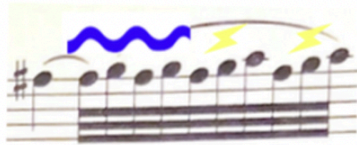
Practise Many Possibilities

The only way to become fluent in ornamentation is through repeated experimentation.

- Try multiple versions of the same phrase.
- Practise generating ideas quickly.
- Explore different levels of complexity.
- Learn what works and what does not.

If you enjoy improvising in performance, make sure you have practised improvising in the practice room. The freedom heard in concert is built upon countless experiments carried out beforehand.

Quintessential Corelli Ornaments



Trill



Meandering Neighbours



Meandering Neighbours + 3rd drop



Roller Coaster



Roller Coaster + 8ve



Lightning bolt



Lower Neighbour Arpeggio

Upper Neighbour + Lightning bolt



Trill + Lightning bolt



Trill + Descending lightning bolt



Trill + Upper Neighbour + Lightning bolt



Trill + Desc. 8ve Roller Coaster



Roller Coaster with descending 8ve + Lightning bolt + Trill



Drop + Ascending 8ve + lightning bolt



Jump + Desc. 8ve Roller Coaster + trill



Jump + Roller Coaster + Lightning bolt



Upper Neighbour + 8ve Roller Coaster + lightning bolt + 3rd drop



Trill + Lower Neighbour Arpeggio + 3rd drop



Ascending 8ve + Lower Neighbour Arpeggio



C Major

CPC

The image displays a musical score for C Major in 2/4 time, consisting of six staves of ornamentation. Each staff begins with a 'v' and a measure number: 7, 13, 18, 22, 26, and 32. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, slurs, and accents (+) over notes, indicating specific ornamentation techniques. The first staff (7) shows a simple eighth-note pattern. The second staff (13) introduces a more complex eighth-note pattern with an accent. The third staff (18) features a sixteenth-note pattern with slurs and accents. The fourth staff (22) continues with a sixteenth-note pattern, including slurs and accents. The fifth staff (26) shows a sixteenth-note pattern with slurs and accents. The sixth staff (32) concludes with a sixteenth-note pattern, slurs, and accents, followed by a final measure with a simple eighth-note pattern.

Arcangelo Corelli Ornamentation link:

<https://new.express.adobe.com/webpage/wBY3APE6hnm7>

17th C. Ornamentation link:

<https://new.express.adobe.com/webpage/517IEcpL4jsf>