

Ornaments (music)



An extreme example of ornamentation as a fioritura from Chopin's *Nocturne in D flat major*.



Ornament in Adele's "Someone Like You".

In music, **ornaments** or **embellishments** are musical flourishes that are not necessary to carry the overall line of the melody (or harmony), but serve instead to decorate or "ornament" that line. Many ornaments are performed as "fast notes" around a central note. The amount of **ornamentation** in a piece of music can vary from quite extensive (it was often so in the Baroque period) to relatively little or even none. The word *agrémentis* is used specifically to indicate the French Baroque style of ornamentation. A very important function of the ornamentation in early and baroque keyboard music was as a way of creating a longer sustain of the note on harpsichord, clavichord, or virginal, such instruments being unable to sustain a long note in the same manner as a pipe organ.

In the baroque period, it was common for performers to improvise ornamentation on a given melodic line. A singer performing a da capo aria, for instance, would sing the melody relatively unornamented the first time, but decorate it with additional flourishes the second time. Improvised ornamentation continues to be part of the Irish musical tradition,^[2] particularly in sean-nós singing but also throughout the wider tradition as performed by the best players.

Ornamentation may also be indicated by the composer. A number of standard ornaments (described below) are indicated with standard symbols in music notation, while other ornamentations may be appended to the staff in small notes, or simply written out normally. Frequently, a composer will have his or her own vocabulary of ornaments, which will be explained in a preface, much like a code. A grace note is a note written in smaller type, with or without a slash through it, to indicate that its note value does not count as part of the total time value of the measure. Alternatively, the term may refer more generally

to any of the small notes used to mark some other ornament (see *Appoggiatura*, below), or in association with some other ornament's indication (see *Trill*, below), regardless of the timing used in the execution.

In Spain, melodies ornamented upon repetition ("divisions") were called "diferencias", and can be traced back to 1538, when Luis de Narváez published the first collection of such music for the vihuela.^[3]

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Trill

Main article: Trill (music)

A trill is a rapid alternation between an indicated note and the one above, also known as the *shake*. Usually, if the music containing the trill was written before 1800 the trill is played by starting a note above the written note. If the music was written after 1800 then the trill is usually played by starting on the note written and going up to the note above. A printed score will often indicate which interpretation is to be used, either in the preface to the score or by using a grace note.

Sometimes it is expected that the trill will end with a turn (by sounding the note below rather than the note above the principal note, immediately before the last sounding of the principal note), or some other variation. Such variations are often marked with a few grace notes following the note that bears the trill indication. The trill is indicated by either a *tr* or a *tr~*, with the ~ representing the length of the trill, above the staff. In Baroque music, the trill is sometimes indicated with a + (plus) sign above or below the note.



There is also a single tone trill variously called *trillo* or *tremolo* in late Renaissance and early Baroque.

Mordent

Main article: Mordent

The *mordent* is thought of as a rapid alternation between an indicated note, the note above (called the *upper mordent*, *inverted mordent*, or *pralltriller*) or below (called the *lower mordent* or *mordent*), and the indicated note again.

The upper mordent is indicated by a short squiggle (which may also indicate a trill); the lower mordent is the same with a short vertical line through it:



As with the trill, the exact speed with which the mordent is performed will vary according to the tempo of the piece, but, at a moderate tempo, the above might be executed as follows:



Play

Confusion over the meaning of the unadorned word *mordent* has led to the modern terms *upper* and *lower* mordent being used, rather than *mordent* and *inverted mordent*. Practice, notation, and nomenclature vary widely for all of these ornaments, that is to say, whether, by including the symbol for a mordent in a musical score, a composer intended the direction of the additional note (or notes) to be played above or below the principal note written on the sheet music varies according to when the piece was written, and in which country. This article as a whole addresses an approximate nineteenth-century standard.

In the Baroque period, a Mordant (the German or Scottish equivalent of *mordent*) was what later came to be called an *inverted mordent* and what is now often called a *lower mordent*. In the 19th century, however, the name *mordent* was generally applied to what is now called the *upper* mordent. Although mordents are now thought of as just a single alternation between notes, in the Baroque period a *Mordant* may sometimes have been executed with more than one alternation between the indicated note and the note below, making it a sort of inverted trill. Mordents of all sorts might typically, in some periods, begin with an extra *inessential note* (the lesser, added note), rather than with the *principal note* as shown in the examples here. The same applies to trills, which in Baroque and Classical times would standardly begin with the added, upper note. A *lower* inessential note may or may not be chromatically raised (that is, with a natural, a sharp, or even a double sharp) to make it just one semitone lower than the principal note.

Turn

A **turn** is a short figure consisting of the note above the one indicated, the note itself, the note below the one indicated, and the note itself again. It is marked by a mirrored S-shape lying on its side above the staff.

The details of its execution depend partly on the exact placement of the turn mark. The following turns:



might be executed like this:



Play

The exact speed at which the notes of a turn are executed can vary, as can its rhythm. The question of how a turn is best executed is largely one of context, convention, and taste. The lower and upper added notes may or may not be chromatically raised (see *mordent*).

An **inverted** turn (the note below the one indicated, the note itself, the note above it, and the note itself again) is usually indicated by putting a short vertical line through the normal turn sign, though sometimes the sign itself is turned upside down.

Appoggiatura

See also *Nonchord tone = Appoggiatura*.

Appoggiatura (/əˌpɒdʒəˈtʃʊərə/; Italian: [appoddʒaˈtuːra]) comes from the Italian verb *appoggiare*, "to lean upon". The **long appoggiatura** (as opposed to the short appoggiatura, the *acciaccatura*) is important melodically and often suspends the principal note by taking away the time-value of the *appoggiatura* prefixed to it (generally half the time value of the principal note, though in triple time, for example, it might receive two thirds of the time). The added note (the unessential note) is one degree higher or lower than the principal note; and, if lower, it may or may not be chromatically raised (see *mordent*).

The appoggiatura is written as a grace note prefixed to a principal note and printed in small character, usually without the oblique stroke:



Play

This may be executed as follows:



Play

Appoggiaturas are also usually on the strong or strongest beat of the resolution and are approached by a leap and leave by a step. Musicians' mnemonic: the **appoggiatura** is longer than the

acciaccatura because it is *podgy*. This notation has also been used to mark an accent in the articulation of vocal music, meaning that the grace note should be emphasized, for example in Haydn's *Missa Brevis* in G-dur, fifth bar for soprano and tenor voices.

So-called **unaccented appoggiaturas** are also quite common in many periods of music, even though they are disapproved of by some early theorists (for example CPE Bach, in his *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*). While not being identical with the acciaccatura (see below), these are almost always quite short, and take their time from the allocation for the note that precedes them. They are more likely to be seen as full-size notes in the score, rather than in small character – at least in modern editions.

As psychologist Dr. John Sloboda has reported, the appoggiatura is found in many songs which elicit very specific emotional responses in listeners, such as tears and goosebumps.^[1] Appoggiaturas have been credited with much of the effect that Adele's "Someone Like You", for example, has on its audience.^[1]

An ascending appoggiatura was previously known as a **forefall**, while a descending appoggiatura was known as a **backfall**.

Acciaccatura

Acciaccatura (/əˌtʃækəˈtʃʊərə/, Italian: [attʃakkaˈtuːra]) comes from the Italian verb *acciaccare*, "to crush". The **acciaccatura** (sometimes called **short appoggiatura**) is perhaps best thought of as a shorter, less melodically significant, variant of the *long appoggiatura*, where the delay of the principal note is scarcely perceptible – theoretically subtracting no time at all. It is written using a grace note (often a quaver, or eighth note), with an oblique stroke through the stem:



The exact interpretation of this will vary according to the tempo of the piece, but the following is possible:



Whether the note should be played before or on the beat is largely a question of taste and performance practice. Exceptionally, the acciaccatura may be notated in the bar preceding the note to which it is attached, showing that it is to be played before the beat. (This guide to practice is

unfortunately not available, of course, if the principal note does not fall at the beginning of the measure.)

The implication also varies with the composer and the period. For example, Mozart's and Haydn's long appoggiaturas are – to the eye – indistinguishable from Mussorgsky's and Prokofiev's before-the-beat acciaccaturas. In some cases on instruments that permit it, such as the piano, the acciaccatura is sounded simultaneously with the principal note, and then immediately released.

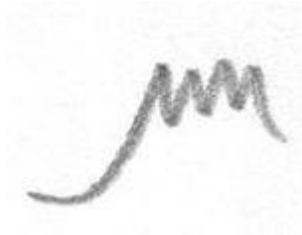
Glissando

Main article: Glissando

A glissando is a slide from one note to another, signified by a wavy line connecting the two notes. All of the intervening diatonic or chromatic (depending on instrument and context) are heard, albeit very briefly. In this way, the glissando differs from portamento.

In contemporary classical music (especially in avant garde pieces) a glissando tends to assume the whole value of the initial note.

Schleifer



Main article: Slide (musical ornament)

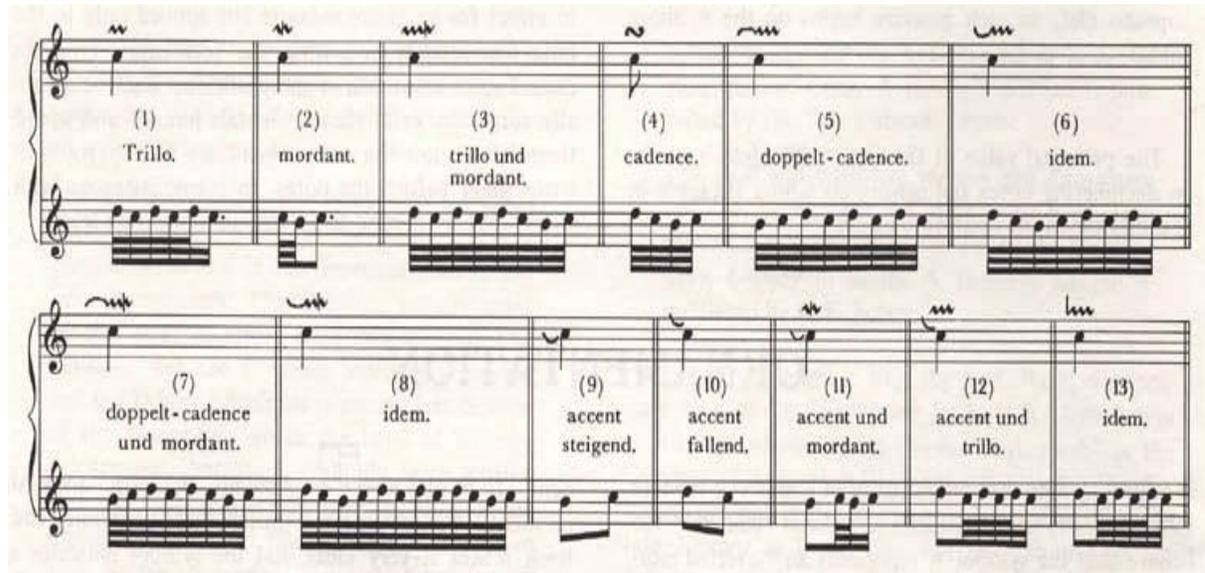
A slide (**Schleifer** in German) instructs the performer to begin one or two scale steps below the marked note and slide upward. The schleifer usually includes a prall trill or mordent trill at the end.

Willard A. Palmer wrote, "The **schleifer** is a "sliding" ornament, usually used to fill in the gap between a note and the previous one."^[4]

In Baroque music

Ornaments in Baroque music take on a different meaning. Most ornaments occur on the beat, and use diatonic intervals more exclusively than ornaments in later periods do. While any table of ornaments must give a strict presentation, consideration has to be given to the tempo and note length, since at rapid tempos it would be difficult or impossible to play all of the notes that are usually

required. One realisation of some common Baroque ornaments is set in the following table from the Klavierbüchlein für Wilhelm Friedemann Bach written by J.S. Bach:



Play

Renaissance and early Baroque

From Silvestro Ganassi's treatise in 1535 we have instruction and examples of how musicians of renaissance and early baroque decorated their music with improvised ornaments. Michael Praetorius spoke warmly of musicians' "sundry good and merry pranks with little runs/leaps

Until the last decade of the 16th century the emphasis is on *divisions*, also known as *diminutions*, *passaggi* (in Italian), *gorgia* ("throat", first used as a term for vocal ornamentation by Nicola Vicentino in 1555), or *glosas* (by Ortiz, in both Spanish and Italian) – a way to decorate a simple cadence or interval with extra shorter notes. These start as simple passing notes, progress to step-wise additions and in the most complicated cases are rapid passages of equal valued notes – virtuosic flourishes. There are rules for designing them, to make sure that the original structure of the music is left intact. Towards the end of this period the divisions detailed in the treatises contain more dotted and other uneven rhythms and leaps of more than one step at a time.

Starting with Archilei (1589),^[full citation needed] the treatises bring in a new set of expressive devices called *graces* alongside the divisions. These have a lot more rhythmic interest and are filled with affect as composers took much more interest in text portrayal. It starts with the *trillo* and *cascade*, and by the time we reach Francesco Rognoni (1620) we are also told about fashionable ornaments: *portar la voce*, *accento*, *tremolo*, *gruppo*, *esclamazione* and *intonatio*.^[5]

Key treatises detailing ornamentation:

- Silvestro Ganassi dal Fontego *Opera intitulata Fontegara ...*, Venice 1535
- Adrian Petit Coclico *Compendium musices* Nuremberg, 1552
- Diego Ortiz *Tratado de glosas sobre clausulas ...*, Rome, 1553
- Juan Bermudo *El libro llamado declaracion de instrumentos musicales*, Ossuna, 1555
- Hermann Finck *Pratica musica*, Wittenberg, 1556
- Tomás de Sancta Maria *Libro llamado arte de tañer fantasia*, 1565
- Girolamo Dalla Casa *Il vero modo diminuir...*, Venice, 1584
- Giovanni Bassano *Ricercate, passaggi et cadentie ...*, Venice 1585
- Giovanni Bassano *Motetti, madrigali et canzoni francesi ... diminuiti*, Venice 1591
- Riccardo Rognoni *Passaggi per potersi essercitare nel diminuire*, Venice 1592
- Lodovico Zacconi *Prattica di musica*, Venice, 1592
- Giovanni Luca Conforto *Breve et facile maniera ... a far passaggi*, Rome 1593
- Girolamo Diruta *Il transylvano*, 1593
- Giovanni Battista Bovicelli *Regole, passaggi di musica, madrigali e motetti passaggiati*, Venice 1594
- Aurelio Virgiliano *Il Dolcimelo*, MS, c.1600
- Giulio Caccini *Le nuove musiche*, 1602
- Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger, *Libro primo di mottetti passeggiati à una voce*, Rome, 1612
- Francesco Rognoni *Selva de varii passaggi...*, 1620
- Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger, *Libro secondo d'arie à una e piu voci*, Rome, 1623
- Giovanni Battista Spadi da Faenza *Libro de passaggi ascendenti e descendenti*, Venice, 1624

Indian classical music

Indian classical music is based on ragas, a modal system similar to Jazz with scales of 5 to 7 main notes (beside the microtones) in the ascending and descending form. Its origin is dated back to the Vedas. Indian classical music has evolved and split into two main parts: North Indian classical (Hindustani) and South Indian classical (Carnatic).

In Indian music generally and especially in *classical music* staccato or isolated notes are almost unheard. With the exception of some very few instruments, the Indian notes (swaras) are not of static nature. Each *swara* is linked with its preceding or succeeding note. Such an extra note (or grace note) known as Kan-Swaras set up the basis of all kind of *alankars* (Sanskrit: decoration with ornaments, ornaments of sound (shabd-alankar) or ornaments of words).

These ornaments of ragas, Alankar is essential for the beauty of raga melodies. The term *Alankar* can be found in ancient texts. One of the earliest treatises is the *Natyashastra* written by

the sage Bharata (between 200 BC and 200 AD), later on *Alankaras* are described in the *Sangeet Ratnakar* of Sharangdev (13th century) and *Sangeet Parijat* of Pandit Ahobal (17th century)

The classification of alankars is relating to the structure of ragas and the aesthetic aspect (latter classification = Shabdalkar). All techniques refer to the sound production utilized by the *human voice*, imitated by any kind of Indian instrument (e.g. Sitar, Sarod, Shehnai, Sarangi, Santoor, etc.).

The variations of a raga performance within a defined frame of compositorial rules and reglements using the different types of Alankara-s can be termed as whole simply as *alankar*.

Different types of *alankars* exist,

e.g. Meend, Kan, Sparsh, Krintan, Andolan, Gamak, Kampit (or Kampan), Khatka (or Gitkari), Zamza ma, Murki and combination of alankars in Indian classical performances.

In non-classical music

Rock and pop

Ornamentation is also used in popular music such as rock and pop. Rock piano playing has incorporated many ornaments from early 1900s blues piano styles such as boogie-woogie. Improvised ornaments in rock solos or instrumental melody lines are often idiosyncratic to specific instruments. Electric guitar players can draw from an immense array of ornaments that are specific to their instrument. Hammer-ons and pull-offs are two of the most basic techniques, may be used in executing classical ornaments, as well as for the execution of ornaments more particular to guitar (such as tapping, which can be used as ornamentation or as a playing style in and of itself).

While rock and pop are typically learned by ear, with the arrangements fleshed out with improvisation, the style also includes notated music, particularly in arranged music for larger ensembles. This notated music uses some of the most-used "Classical" ornaments, such as trills and mordents.

Jazz

Jazz music incorporates a number of ornaments, which can be divided into improvised ornaments. They are added by performers during their solo extemporizations, and as written ornaments. Improvised ornaments are often idiosyncratic to specific instruments. The Hammond organ playing in the jazz sub-genre of organ trio soul jazz often features trills which outline the harmony of a chord, glisses up or down the keyboard, and turn-like decorations. Saxophone players may decorate a simple melody line with turns, grace notes, and short glissandi created with the mouth and the reed.

While jazz is substantially based upon improvisation, the style also includes notated music, particularly in music for larger ensembles such as big bands. Small ensembles may also use notated music for part of their performances, in arrangements of a tune's main theme. Notated jazz music incorporates most of the standard "classical" ornaments, such as trills, grace notes, and mordents. As well, written jazz notation may also include other ornaments, such as "dead" or "ghost" notes (a percussive sound, notated by an "X"), glissandi (step-wise glides between a start and destination note, written with a long line), "doit" notes and "fall" notes (annotated by curved lines above the note, indicating by direction of curve that the note should either rapidly rise or fall on the scale),^[6] or an instruction to "fill" part of a bar with an embellishment (notated with diagonal slashes in the bar).

Celtic music

Ornamentation is a major distinguishing characteristic of Irish, Scottish, and Cape Breton music. A singer, fiddler, flautist, harpist, tin whistler, piper or a player of another instrument may add grace notes (known as 'cuts' in fiddling), slides, rolls, doubling, mordents, drones, trebles, or a variety of other ornaments to a given melody.