Inside the *Musette in D*

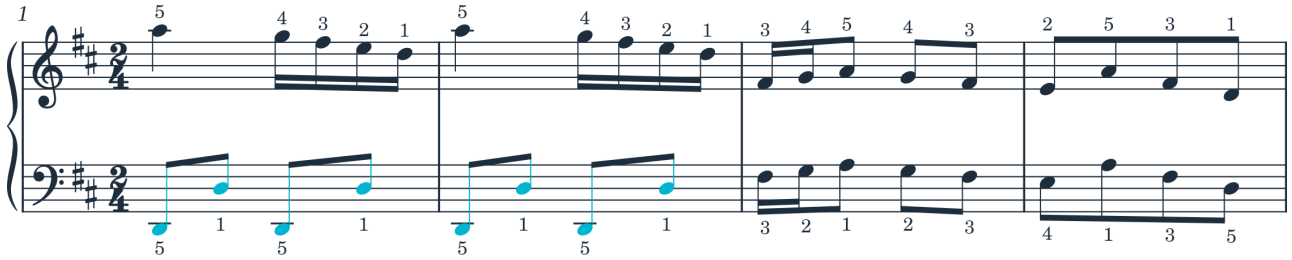
Composer unknown (long printed as Bach), Musette in D major, BWV Anh. 126 — 1725 Notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach

A piece without a name on it. This musette comes from the same 1725 notebook as the *Minuet in G* (Handout 238): a book of keyboard music that Johann Sebastian Bach gave his wife, Anna Magdalena, and that the family filled with pieces they liked to play. Nobody wrote a composer's name next to this one. For a long time it was printed as Bach's, but scholars do not think he wrote it, and no one has found out who did. That is why its catalog number is **BWV Anh.**: the *Anhang* (appendix) of the Bach catalog, for pieces that are doubtful or not by Bach.

WHAT IS A MUSETTE? · A LITTLE BAGPIPE

A **musette** was a small French bagpipe, played with a bellows under the arm, very fashionable in the 1700s. Like every bagpipe it has **drones**: pipes that hold one low note under the tune the whole time. A keyboard musette copies that sound. Here the left hand is the drone: it keeps hammering **D**, jumping between a low D and the D an octave above.

BARS 1-4 · THE DRONE AND THE TUNE



Bars 1-4 with **suggested** fingering. The drone in **cyan**.

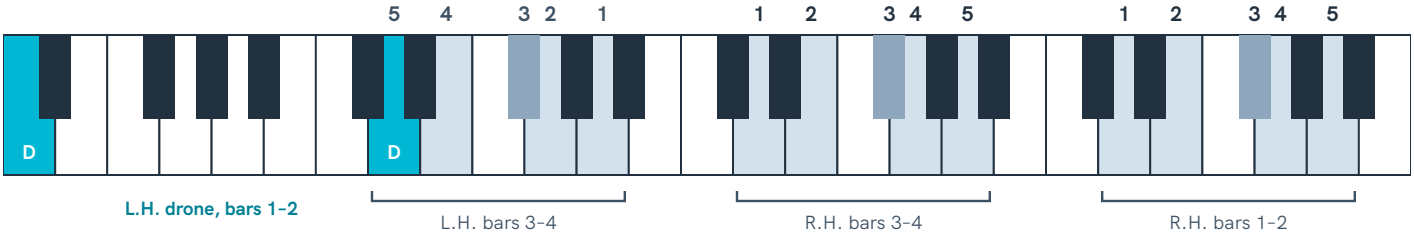
Left hand · octave leaps

In bars 1-2 the left hand leaps **an octave** on every eighth note: finger 5 on the low D, thumb on the high D. Keep the hand open in the octave shape and let the arm carry it; do not close it between the notes.

Bars 3-4 · the hands in octaves

The drone stops, and both hands play **the same notes, an octave apart**: F♯-G-A-G-F♯, E-A-F♯-D. Two hands, one line: a monophonic texture (Handout 356). The right hand drops a whole octave: a big **shift**. Bars 5-8 repeat 1-4 and end on D.

HAND POSITIONS · PLAN THE MOVES



Numbers = suggested fingers. Cyan keys = the left hand's drone.

The right hand needs just two positions. In bars 1-2 it covers **D-E-F♯-G-A** high up (thumb on D, 5 on A), so the falling run A-G-F♯-E-D is simply 5-4-3-2-1. In bars 3-4 it plays the same five notes an octave lower, D up to A with the same fingers. So the only real work is the **jump** between the two: get the hand there during the last sixteenth, then land with the right finger. Bar 5 jumps back up. The left hand does the same in bars 3-4 with 5 on D and thumb on A: the D five-finger position (Handout 15).

LISTEN

Scan to hear the whole musette and the bars on this sheet

tissimo.co/worksheets/bach-musette-in-d

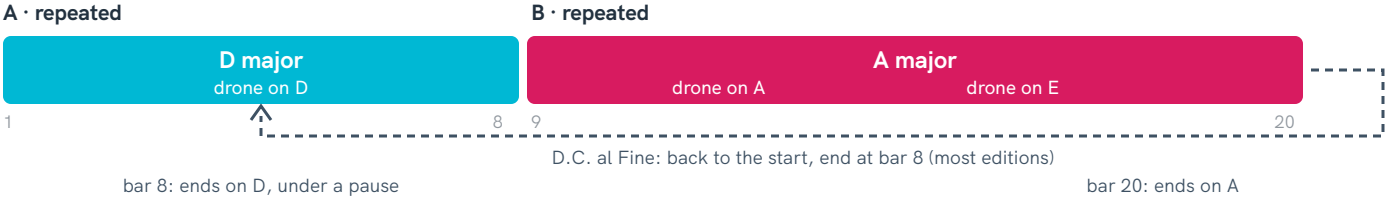
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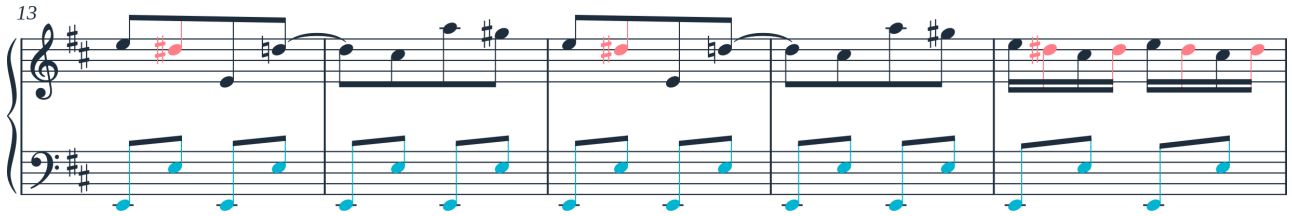
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THE FORM · AND THE KEY PLAN

Two halves, two keys, one drone each



The musette has two halves, and **each is repeated**: the layout of **binary form** (Handout 233). The first half stays in **D major**. The second half moves to **A major**, the key a fifth higher (the **dominant**, Handout 10), and ends there, away from home. The pause sign (**fermata**) over the last note of bar 8 is the old way of writing "finish here": players go back to the start and stop at bar 8, so the piece ends in D. Many editions print this as *D.C. al Fine*. With the da capo the whole piece plays A B A: **ternary** (Handout 354).



Bars 13–17: the drone moves to **E**; **D♯** leans on it.

In the second half the bagpipe changes its drone: first **A** (bars 9–11), then **E** (bars 13–17). E is the dominant of A major, so five bars on E build up suspense before the cadence in A. Above it the right hand keeps circling back to E through **D♯**, a half step below, with big leaps (E down an octave, up to D, up to A).

PRACTICE RECIPE

1. **Left hand alone: the octave leap.** Play only the low D's, then only the high ones, then both. Keep the 5–1 octave shape and look ahead, not at your hand. Light and even, like a bagpipe that never runs out of air.
2. **Right hand alone, position by position.** Bars 1–2 in the high position, bars 3–4 in the low one, then practice just the jump: last note of bar 2 to first note of bar 3, and back.
3. **Bars 3–4 hands together first:** the hands play the same notes and the same finger pattern, so they are the easiest bars to put together.
4. **Hands together, slowly,** one half at a time. Play the eighths slightly detached and the sixteenths smoothly. No pedal: the drone does the holding.
5. **Second half:** learn the leaps of bars 13–16 slowly, then let the drone keep a steady beat underneath. Finally play it all, with the repeats and the *da capo*.

TRY IT Play bars 1–2 with the left hand only, then hum the tune over it. Next, make up your own four-bar tune in D position over the same drone: that is how a musette works.

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