Inside the *Minuet in G minor*

Christian Petzold (long credited to J. S. Bach), Minuet in G minor, BWV Anh. 115 — from the 1725 Notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach
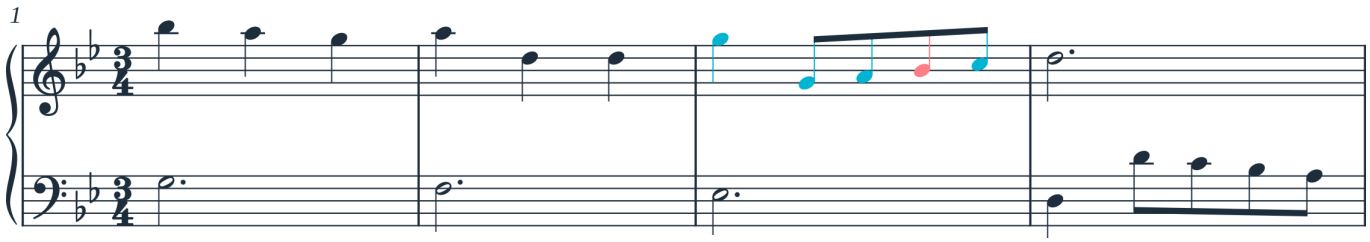
The other minuet in the notebook. In 1725 Johann Sebastian Bach gave his wife, Anna Magdalena, a notebook of keyboard music. Two minuets were copied into it one after the other: the famous Minuet in G (Handout 238) and this one in G minor. For about 250 years both were known as Bach's. In 1979 the scholar Hans-Joachim Schulze found both of them in a harpsichord suite by **Christian Petzold** (1677–1733), the organist of the royal court in Dresden. Both carry **BWV Anh.** numbers, 114 and 115: the *Anhang* (appendix) of the Bach catalog lists works that are doubtful or not really Bach's.

PLAYING THE PAIR · ONE HOME NOTE, TWO COLORS

1. **Minuet in G** — G major · Handout 238
2. **Minuet in G minor** — G minor · this handout
3. **Minuet in G again** — G major · *da capo*, from the top

In a Baroque suite two minuets were often played as a pair: the first, then the second, then the first again. These two share their home note, G, but one is major and one is minor. Keys like that are **parallel keys** (Handout 74).

THE OPENING · THE SAME CLIMB, NOW IN MINOR



Bars 1–4. **Cyan**: the drop and climb of bar 3. **Coral**: B♭, the note that makes the climb minor.
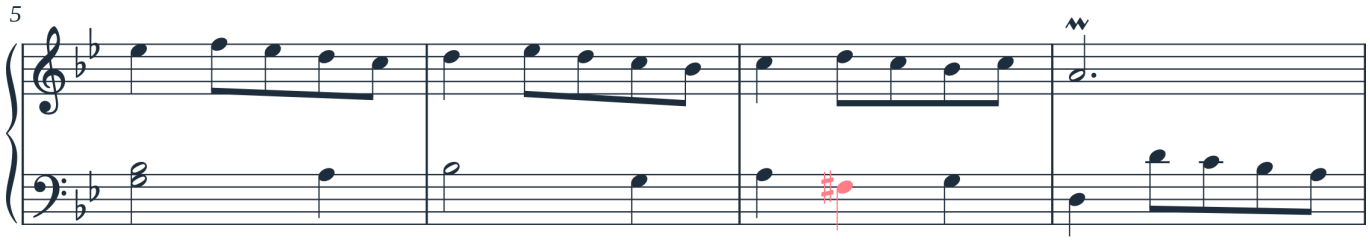
Bars 1–4 · a falling start

The tune starts high and falls, B♭–A–G, then A–D–D. Under it the left hand falls one step per bar: **G–F–E♭–D**. In the Minuet in G the left hand climbs instead, G–A–B–C.

Bar 3 · a climb you already know

Bar 3 drops an octave, from G to G, and climbs **G–A–B♭–C** to the D of bar 4. The Minuet in G opens with the same climb, but with B. B♭ is the lowered third that makes the key G minor (Handout 23).

BARS 5–8 · A PAUSE ON D



Bar 7 · the raised seventh

The left hand plays F♯, the raised seventh of G minor (the harmonic minor, Handout 25). It is only a half step below G, so it pulls up to G on the next beat.

Bar 8 · a question

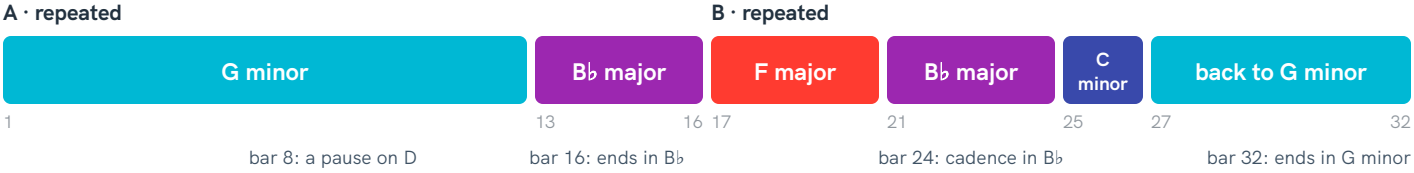
The phrase stops on a long A over D, the dominant: a question waiting for an answer. The Minuet in G pauses on D in bar 8 too. The wavy sign over the A is a short trill from the note above, on the beat: B♭–A–B♭–A (Handout 389).

Bars 9–12 begin the answer: they play bars 1–4 again. Only one note is new, the left hand's B♮ in bar 12: it leans toward C, the first sign that the music is leaving G minor (page 2).
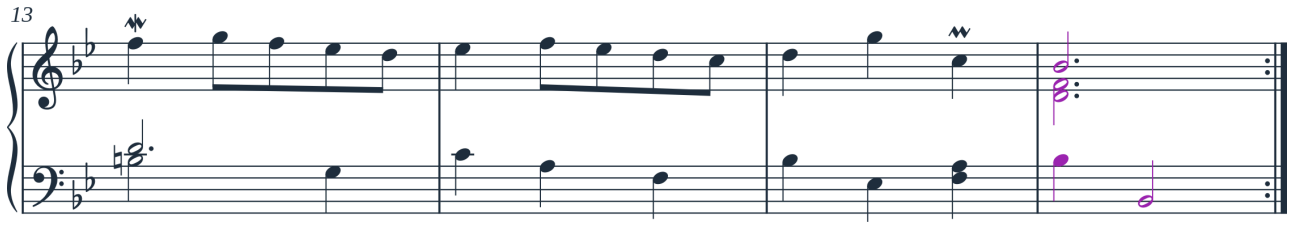
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THE FORM

Binary: from G minor to B♭ major and back
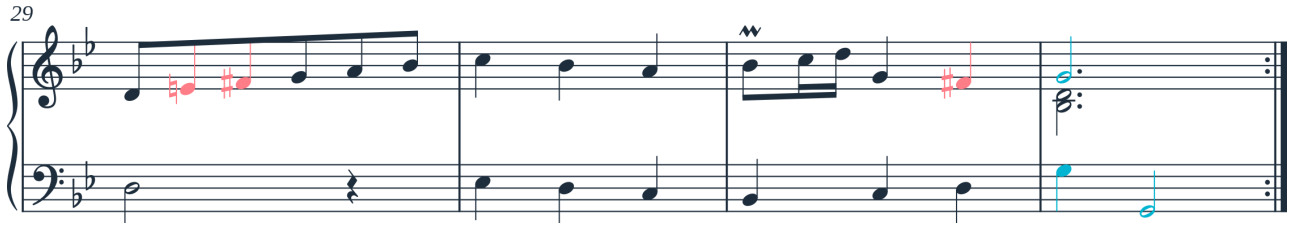


Like the Minuet in G, this minuet has two halves of 16 bars, and each half is repeated: **binary form** (Handouts 233 and 354). But this first half does not stay at home. It ends in **B♭ major**, the **relative major** of G minor: the same two flats, a new home note (Handout 74). The second half visits **F major** and **C minor** before it comes home to **G minor**. The opening tune never returns, so the form is plain binary.



Bars 13–16: an F chord at the end of bar 15, then the **B♭** chord of bar 16. That is V–I in B♭ major, a cadence (Handout 72).

THE WAY HOME · UP THE MELODIC MINOR



Bar 29 climbs D–**E♮**–**F♯**–G–A–B♭. Going up, G minor raises its sixth and seventh notes, E and F: that is the melodic minor scale (Handout 25). In bar 31 the **F♯** leads up to the home note **G**, and the minuet ends on a G-minor chord.

PRACTICE RECIPE

1. **Learn it in 4-bar phrases,** hands separately: 1–4, 5–8, 9–12, 13–16, then the second half. Bars 9–12 repeat bars 1–4; only the left hand's B♮ in bar 12 is new.
2. **Left hand first.** Hold each long note of bars 1–4 for its full three beats, and listen to the bass step down G–F–E♭–D.
3. **Watch the accidentals.** F♯ belongs to G minor. In bars 13–26 the F is plain again; look for B♮ in bars 13 and 25 and E♮ in bars 17 and 19. F♯ comes back in bar 27, on the way home.
4. **Hands together, slowly.** Play the quarter notes slightly detached and the eighths smoothly, as in the Minuet in G: it gives the dance its lift.
5. **Add the ornaments last** (Handout 54). The short wavy sign (bars 8, 9, 15, 31) is a short trill from the note above, on the beat: B♭–A–B♭–A in bar 8. In bar 9 the B♭ is already sounding, so hold it into beat 2, then play A–B♭–A. Later players start on the written note (Handout 389). With a stroke through it (bars 13, 22) the shake goes below: D–C–D in bar 22.

TRY IT Play the pair the way a Baroque suite would: the Minuet in G, this minuet, then the Minuet in G again. Listen for the moment G major turns into G minor. Which notes change?

LISTEN
Scan to hear these bars,
the whole minuet and the pair
tissimo.co/worksheets/minuet-in-g-minor

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