



***Adagio* from Brandenburg Concerto No. 1, BWV 1046**
J.S. Bach

Arranged for Piano Solo by Eleonor Bindman

Adagio from Brandenburg Concerto No. 1, BWV 1046

I was completely unfamiliar with this gorgeous *Adagio* before undertaking the *Brandenburg Duets* transcription project and really hope that now it will gain more appreciation in a solo piano transcription. It has become my absolutely favorite solo Bach arrangement to play. The theme, structured upon descending melismatic patterns, sounds very exotic, somewhat Arabic and mesmerizing. Imagining the first 3 measures of the melody coming out of a snake charmer's flute doesn't seem far-fetched at all. The atmospheric accompaniment of "cushions" of chords helps establish the mood and sounds good even at a very slow tempo.

The under - utilized middle (sostenuto) pedal is key to navigating this combination of moving melody and static harmony most successfully. You can use it once for the initial broken chords of the left hand in mm. 1-3, 5-7, 12-13 and 23 and twice in mm. 14, 24 and 25. The right pedal will have to be carefully worked at the same time (or by itself, if your piano has only 2 pedals) in order not to obscure the melodic line. This may seem daunting but is quite doable at a slow tempo. The left hand gets 3 turns at the melody as well and judicious use of the pedal will help in creating a legato effect while playing those low octaves. If the octaves are difficult for you, just playing the lower notes will work. Other left hand simplifications are also possible: you may skip some of the notes in the broken chords, especially those already present in the texture. For instance, in measure 1, you can reduce the chord to three notes: A, E and C#, since we already have an A in the melody and the other 2 notes in the chord are doubled. Similarly, the left hand can omit the F on the downbeat of m. 3, the C# of m. 4, etc. As in any arrangement, my choices are personal and often get changed, then reversed, and constantly reconsidered until the piece is finally published. What's important is the success of your efforts, so if the piece becomes more manageable by changing a few things that's perfectly fine. I am sure Bach would prefer a tastefully simplified version of his music being enjoyed as opposed to a difficult version just sitting on a music shelf.

The flute solo in m. 34 needs to sound completely free. Bach was just trying to fit all these notes into one measure but it's meant to be slow so take your time. I prefer "a tempo" for the last 4 measures but the choice is yours. I love how a final cadence is avoided, with the last dominant chord not resolved. It feels kind of magical and circles right back to the beginning, still leaving us mesmerized.

Eleonor Bindman,
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Adagio

from Brandenburg Concerto #1

J.S. Bach

Arr. Eleonor Bindman

$\text{♩} = 40$

mf

tr

tr

sempre legato

mf

p

tr

tr

p

mf *legato cantabile*

12 *mf*

15 *tr* 5 5 4 5 4 5
2 2 1 2 1 1

17 *tr*

20 *p* *mf*

23

mf

p

Measures 23-25: Treble clef contains a melodic line with eighth-note runs and slurs. Bass clef contains a bass line with chords and eighth notes. Dynamics include *mf* and *p*.

26

Measures 26-28: Treble clef continues the melodic line with slurs. Bass clef features chords and eighth notes. Dynamics include *p*.

29

tr

p

mf

Measures 29-31: Treble clef includes a trill (*tr*) and slurs. Bass clef continues with chords and eighth notes. Dynamics include *p* and *mf*.

32

f

rubato

Measures 32-34: Treble clef features a melodic line with a slur and a dynamic marking of *f*. Bass clef continues with chords and eighth notes. The word *rubato* is written below the treble staff.

35

tr

p *a tempo*

Measures 35-37: Treble clef includes a trill (*tr*) and slurs. Bass clef features chords and eighth notes. Dynamics include *p* and the tempo marking *a tempo*.