

Passacaglia

A passacaglia is a type of **instrumental** piece usually associated with the **Baroque** period in which a bass line is repeated for the whole piece. This is a **GROUND BASS**. The passacaglia was often played on the organ but it other instruments (e.g. strings) could play it too.

Characteristics of a passacaglia:

- Slow tempo
- Usually triple time (though other time signatures also used)
- Often in the minor key
- Based on a short 4 or 8 bar phrase.

The bass line is repeated many times while the upper parts are varied. While the theme in the bass is repeated, the upper parts become increasingly elaborate.

The French term for Passacaglia is the *Chaconne* and in England it was called the *Chacony*. e.g. Purcell's *Chacony in Gm*

The image displays a musical score for a Passacaglia, likely Purcell's *Chacony in G minor*. The score is written for four parts: Violino 1, Violino 2, Viola, and Basso. The Basso part is highlighted with red boxes, indicating the repeated ground bass line. The score is organized into three systems, each containing four staves. The first system shows the initial 8 bars, the second system shows bars 9-16, and the third system shows bars 17-24. The Basso part is a continuous sequence of eighth notes, while the upper parts provide harmonic support and variation.

e.g. Passacaglia in Dm – Buxtehude
(based on a 4 bar theme)



1. Name the key
2. Name the interval marked
3. Name the cadence

4. On manuscript paper, rewrite this in $\frac{3}{4}$ so that it sound the same

5. Now rewrite what you have written up an octave in the treble clef

e.g. Passacaglia in Cm – Bach
(based on an 8 bar theme)

1. Name the cadence



2. Listen and choose the correct pattern of notes below to complete the missing note in the bass line above



3. On manuscript paper, transpose the notes marked an octave higher in the treble clef.

e.g. Passacaglia – 3 *movt Violin Concerto* - Shostakovich
(based on a 17 bar theme). This is a **20th Century** Passacaglia

Andante (♩ = 72)

10

Listen from **18:22**

Melody/ Harmony	Rhythm/Tempo	Texture/Structure/Form	Timbre