

Rhetoric and Baroque Music: Certain Aspects of Interaction

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Abstract: The paper addresses some aspects of interaction between music and rhetoric in baroque era, based on the teaching about the period structure, which makes it possible to demonstrate the specific features of relationship between musical and rhetorical syntax. Also of concern are the problems of mutual influence of German and French music-theoretical traditions, the priority of one tradition over the other, tendency of the German tradition prosaic interpretation of period and French tradition toward poetic one (C. Dahlhaus, L. Kirillina). We indicate that the text content of the period depends on its scales and that parallels exist between rhetoric and instrumental (and not only vocal) composer practice. The attention is also turned to questions of transition from rhetorical to immanent musical understanding of period, to the value and real content of certain terms and notions, borrowed by music from rhetoric. We stress the complexity and ambiguity of the question about projections of verbal-rhetoric logic onto musical one, probably due to salient integrity of artistic practice in seventeenth - early eighteenth centuries.

Key words: Baroque • Rhetoric of music • Music theory • Musical period • Rhetorical period • French and German musical-rhetorical traditions

INTRODUCTION

It is widely known that musical rhetoric influenced appreciably the establishment and development of teaching about musical form as an independent sphere of musical theory. This naturally stemmed from emancipation of instrumental music that began in modern age. This process, which proceeded in a rather complex way and was far from being straightforward, for a long time had been associated with the projection of vocal music onto instrumental one; and echoes of rhetoric had been evident in this process due to the presence of a word.

Researchers into European and Russian musical knowledge have quite extensively studied the manifestation of rhetoric in music and its influence on the origin of phenomenon of musical form, in connection with composer art and musical theoretical thought in Germany in seventeenth – first half of eighteenth centuries. One of the reasons was that, on the whole, the musical theoretical thought in Germany had been rather widespread in Europe and distinctly showed the consistency and systematic manner of presentation and the completeness of coverage of phenomena in musical practice.

However, some researches [1, 2] state that German musical rhetoric was influenced by French musicians-theorists. In nineteenth century, when the classical theory of form was established, French tradition had weaker influence in Europe than German tradition (see, e.g., our publications [3, 4] about the originality of rhetoric of music in France). Nonetheless, this may in no way be the reason for underestimation of the role, which French theoretical thought played in previous centuries. Even despite relatively isolated, this tradition had its individual view on the musical practice (different from understanding of musicians-theorists in Germany in many respects), was developing and was very important constituent part of musical theoretical thought in West Europe.

It is well known that rhetoric in baroque era tended to regulate all the important stages of creative process. As applied to music, this influence can be detected in three main aspects: in the theory of disposition (as an order and relationship of parts of the whole), in teaching on structure of period (as an internal organization of medium-scale sections of speech and musical composition), as well as in the teaching on figures (formulas of musical content, relating to the finest details

of the musical texture). An idea on manifestation of the three above-mentioned aspects in the sphere of musical composition belongs to F. Ritzel, the author of informative book about evolution of views on sonata form in European musical theory of eighteenth – nineteenth centuries [5, S. 28]. The idea of projection of laws of rhetorical disposition onto musical composition in air de danse and danse chantée in French theater performances at times of Louis XIV [6, 7, 8] was originally developed by musicologists B.B. Mather and P.M. Ranum in the second half of twentieth – early twenty first centuries.

In all cases, European musicians constantly used the terminology of antique authors; and so was also France in seventeenth – eighteenth centuries: widespread ideas of antique musical theory originated from French translations of rhetoric works belonging to Aristotle and Quintilian. The practice of these translations was especially active since the second half of seventeenth century.

Famous Aristotle “Rhetoric”, translated by François Cassandre and published in 1654, was especially significant. H. Schneider perhaps most comprehensively elucidated the views on the composition in French musical theory of seventeenth century; and, in regard to the publications of musical-theoretical tractates of antiquity in French translations, he indicated refinement of terminology, regarding the structure of melody, which had been characteristic, e.g., for M. Mersenne [1, p. 69, Quer. 64, 65].

In this paper, we will dwell on the middle level mentioned above, namely, on the phenomenon of period, which rather vividly demonstrates the features of interaction between musical and rhetorical syntaxes.

As regards the proper term “period”, most French musicians of baroque era rest precisely upon Aristotle definition of this term, contained in ninth chapter of the Third book of “Rhetoric” [9, p. 286-289]. For instance, M. Mersenne, who invariably rested upon the antique terminology, in his works used the term “period” (in the same sense as Aristotle) with respect to structure of melody, while his contemporary Ch. Masson do so as applied to the vocal voice of air. Completeness and integrity of the rhetorical period, underlined in Aristotle definition, as well as its structural orderliness, are sensibly felt in the following recommendation, formulated by Masson: “When you record the voice for lyrics, you should always strive to complete sense, before you start making repetitions, i.e., there is no need to interrupt the voice before the end of phrase and half-phrase, until you start to repeat certain words from the text of this phrase

[10, p. 27]. “Quand on fait une Chant pour des paroles, il faut aller jusqu’à un sens parfait avant que de faire des répétitions; c’est-à-dire qu’on doit poursuivre le Chant jusqu’au bout d’une phrase ou d’une demi-phrase, auparavant que d’entrer dans la répétitions de quelques mots de la phrase; et quand on le fait, les mots doivent être bien propres et bien choisis pour en rendre la répétition agréable” [10, p. 27].

We can see that composer considers the vocal musical composition as the one resting upon the complete verbal expression, close to the period. This is also confirmed by the characteristic of air genre, formulated by J.F. Marmontel in the pertinent paper “Encyclopaedia” by D. Diderot: “Air is the period in music, which has its own theme, its plan, its integrity, its uniqueness, its symmetry and often also circling with return to its beginning. Therefore, air for music is the same as the period for eloquence, i.e., something most correct, most complete and most satisfactory for hearing”. “L’Air est une période musicale qui a son motif, son dessein, son ensemble, son unité et sa symétrie et suivant aussi son retour sur elle même. Ainsi l’air est à la musique ce que la période est à l’éloquence, c’est-à-dire, ce qu’il y a de plus régulier, de plus fini, de plus satisfaisant pour l’oreille” [11, p. 68/237b].

A marked role here was played by text itself, often poetic. Poetic performance in France was considered as important as oratorical speech and, on the whole, poems were required the same as oratorical prose or theatrical declamation, where the division into parts takes place in accordance to positions of words [12, p. 180]. Patricia M. Ranum, who has analyzed about one hundred examples of dance poetry, created by French authors in 1619-1750, proves in her paper that “train of thought in a French air assumes the four-part organization of a speech described in the various rhetoric handbooks” [7, p. 24]. Thus, the composition of poetic performance and, correspondingly, the composition of the poem itself rested upon the rhetoric disposition.

The most important structural unit of the poem is the period, arranged by analogy to rhetorical period. Since in France it was even more preferable to express oneself in the form of poems than in the form of prose, periodical structures in music of French authors were markedly specific in character. In his paper about the theory of musical syntax, C. Dahlhaus, the most outstanding German scientist in the second half of twentieth century, raised the problem of difference between “poetic” and “prosaic” speech in music [13]. Indicating the importance of evidence of Dahlhaus, contemporary Russian

musicologist L. Kirillina assumes the interrelation between German composer tradition and prosaic interpretation of phenomenon of period and relationship between French tradition and poetic interpretation [14, p. 275]. Without going into greater details, we note that this hypothesis, in our opinion, could get special scientific consideration and, in particular, from the viewpoint of the historically established differences in national mentalities between Germany and France.

Obviously, the rhetorical period could be expressed both quite briefly and very comprehensively. In this regard, an interesting and important finding can be encountered in work of P.M. Ranum: she points out that the subject matter of the eighteen French dance air, appended to her book "The Harmonic Orator", confirms the existence of the length-based hierarchy. Indeed, air 8 represents the "familiar" type of period, which consists of only three couplets. Air 6 represents the "serious" period of four couplets. Air 10 is the long period, which includes seven couplets and the subject matter focuses here on The Sublime – brevity of life. Only these periods have an exceptional right to express great thoughts, sublime statements and genuine pathos. They are integral, expressed by groups of syllables, phrases and periods and tending to be something more impressive and large-scale than usual periods [8, p. 80-81].

P.M. Ranum finds a foundation for her statement in the following remark, which belongs to René Bary, a notable representative of French rhetorical tradition: "[Oratorical] periods of any type can be short, medium, or long. Short periods are suitable for personal, medium-length periods are suitable for something serious and long periods are usable for grandiose, sublime. Short periods can be only three words as long; however, they usually consist of two or three links. Medium-length periods often contain four or five phrases and long periods almost always have seven or eight phrases". "Les Periodes [that is, oratorical periods] de quelque nature qu'elles soient ne peuvent estre que petites, ne peuvent estre que mediocres, ne peuvent estre que grandes; Les petites sont propres au familier; Les mediocre conviennent au serieux; et les grandes appartiennent au sublime: Les petites qui ne consistent quelquefois qu'en trois mots, sont ordinairement composées de deux ou trois membres; Les mediocres n'ont souvent que quatre ou cinq phrases; et les grandes ont presque toujours sept ou huit parties" [15, p. 20]. Thus, the structure of period was determined by its emotional content and flexibly followed the changes in the orator's mood. In music, harmonic motion underlined

them: the main reason for changes in the mode is the expression of various passions, for which there are different properties in different modes [16, p. 184].

French musicians determined interrelations not only between rhetoric and *vocal* music; these attempts were undertaken with regard to *instrumental* masterly and composer practices. Here we cannot help mentioning the harpsichordist Saint-Lambert (in many sources, this musician is named Michael, probably by an error), who, being also a notable composer at his times, took part in writing a few rhetorical handbooks and reference books.

We quote a well-known statement of de Saint-Lambert from his treatise "Les principes du clavecin", which claims that musical composition and its structural elements are analogous to rhetorical statement and its components: "Musical composition partly resembles the composition of the orator art, or, rather conversely, samples of eloquence are akin to musical performance, since harmony, rhythm, time, size and other similar things, which skillful orator observes while composing his performances, refer more to music than rhetoric. In precisely the same way as the composition of orator art usually consists of a few parts and each part consist of periods, having their complete meaning (and these periods, in their turn, consist of phrases, that are subdivided into words, words are subdivided into letters), musical performance also consists of reprises. Every reprise includes cadences, constituent periods, having complete meaning and cadences themselves often consist of members, phrases consist of bars, bars consist of notes. Thus, notes correspond to letters, times correspond to words, cadences correspond to periods, reprises correspond to parts and the whole corresponds to the whole". "Une Pièce de Musique ressemble à peu près à une Pièce d'Eloquence [that is, an oration], ou plutôt c'est la Pièce d'Eloquence qui ressemble à la Pièce de Musique: car l'harmonie, le nombre, la mesure, et les autres choses semblables qu'un habite Orateur observe en la composition de ses Ouvrages, appartiennent bien plus naturellement à la Musique qu'à Réthorique. Quoi qu'il en soit, tout ainsi qu'une Pièce d'Eloquence a son tout, qui est le plus souvent composé de plusieurs parties; Que chaque partie est composée de périodes, qui ont chacune un sens complet; Que ses périodes sont composées de membres, les membres de mots, et les mots de lettres; De même le chant d'une Pièce de Musique a son tout, qui est toujours composé de plusieurs reprises. Chaque reprise est composée de cadences, qui ont chacune leur sens complet, et qui sont les périodes du chant. Les cadences sont souvent composées de

membres; les membres de mesures, et les mesures de notes. Ainsi, les notes respondent aux lettres, les mesures aux mots, les cadances aux périodes, les reprises aux parties, et le tout au tout" [17, p. 35-36].

Obviously, considerations of de Saint-Lambert are yet far from immanent musical interpretation of period; nonetheless, it should be remembered that his famous tractate was issued somewhat earlier than works about music rhetoric by J. Mattheson, thus proving grounds to believe that French musician influences the German one.

However, it should be kept in mind that, as regards French men themselves, whose legacy was undoubtedly studied by Germans, we still deal not with the proper theory of musical form, but rather with its origin. Unlike the harmony, counterpoint, acoustics, the views of Mersenne himself on the musical form look hardly independent: terms, employed by the author of the famous "Universal harmony" "L'Harmonie universelle" in an attempt to explain the features of musical composition, belong to adjacent humanitarian spheres, namely, rhetoric, versification, dancing and theater. Therefore, the proper character of influence of French people on German theory is quite difficult to identify. It would be logical to speculate that they could stimulate creative work of authors, like Mattheson, in general and, in particular, with regards to interrelation between music and rhetoric.

Important information about succession of European national and local traditions in the sphere of musical theory is presented by C. Dahlhaus, who specially dwelled on this problem in one chapter of his eleventh volume of the notable edition of "The history of musical theory" ["Geschichte der Musiktheorie"]. The scientist notes that, despite the fact that the role of scientific Latin tradition between sixteenth and eighteenth centuries in the theory of music became less important (in particular, basic work "Gradus ad Parnassum" by J.J. Fux was translated into German in 1742, into Italian in 1761, into English in 1770 and into French in 1773), this thesis requires refinement.

Also, we know insufficiently well about the hierarchy of languages and, in particular, about the fact that, if French people did not read books of German authors, French works, nonetheless, were studied by Germans. One of the main ideas of Dahlhaus was that the development of the theory of music in the context of language boundaries and local traditions was not a continuous process, with succession of some authors with respect to some other authors. Rather, we can state that a few most outstanding works, created in different

decades and even centuries, such as "Traité de l'Harmonie" by J.Ph. Rameau, "Gradus ad Parnassum" by J.J. Fux, "Abhandlung von der Fuge" by Fr.W. Marpurg and, later, "Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition" by A.B. Marx, still remained to be contact points between later and earlier theories. The perception of these works still remained the same as if they were just created.

The process of gradual replacement of rhetoric categories and terms by specifically musical conceptions, harmony and thematic material, is demonstrated by scientist on the basis of views of three persons, typical for this process: J. Mattheson, J.N. Forkel and H.Chr. Koch.

Mattheson's rhetoric served as the oldest scheme for interpreting the logic for development of musical events. Hidden prerequisite here was an idea that instrumental music (even in a weaker manifestation) represented something resembling the vocal music. This was the timid hypothesis, trying to affirm the esthetic right of instrumental music to exist [18, p. 22-24].

Mattheson, who called instrumental music the "sound speech" [Klangrede], tried to segment the musical form using judicial speech as an example and to apply the syntactic categories of language to music. Sharp contradiction here, indicated by Dahlhaus, is that one and the same musical material alternatively acts with different names like exordium, narratio, propositio, confirmatio, confutatio, peroratio [19, p. 235].

J.N. Forkel, who devoted a chapter from his book "Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik" to the rhetoric understanding of the form, rests upon Mattheson, but does not copy him and virtually emphasizes the generalized thematic content of music.

H. Chr. Koch is known to write about "the form with punctuation marks" [interpunktische Form]. According to Dahlhaus, Koch's meaningful segmentation of speech and different weights of its parts, expressed with the help of punctuation marks, can be applied to music owing to two circumstances: firstly, owing to analogy of punctuation marks in language with perfect and imperfect cadences and, secondly, owing to their positions (closeness or remoteness) relative to tonic.

Undoubtedly, rhetoric played the most important role in establishment and development of the theory of forms of instrumental music. As was already indicated before, C. Dahlhaus, who recognized the importance of categories of orator speech for music, heavily criticized too straightforward analogies between music and rhetoric.

The development of immanent-musical methods for relation of the whole (harmony, thematic material, meter) in instrumental music of modern age implied now not just simple attachment of phrase and period structures to each other (similar to logic and grammatical linkage of parts of speech in text). Yet fair critical pathos should not prevent recognition of the fact that *projections of verbal logic onto musical logic meant something totally different to baroque musicians than to musicians of coming epochs*. This was not just because baroque music had less sharp constructive logic, incomparable with music of the second half of seventeenth century, but also because the artistic practice of seventeenth – first half of eighteenth centuries was highly integral, with closest interpenetration of its different spheres. A confirmation may be the fact that not only rhetoric influenced the music: representatives of the French baroque unambiguously talked about feedback, i.e., about the importance of music for rhetoric. This idea is contained, as an example, in the above-mentioned tractate “L’Harmonie universelle” by M. Mersenne; this idea can also be found in above-reproduced statement of de Saint Lambert [17, p. 35-36].

The material above seems to confirm the importance of questions, addressed in the paper and, in particular, questions about differences between German and French national traditions, which can elucidate the specific features of evolution of both musical theory and composer practice in European culture of the last centuries. Precisely the interaction of music and rhetoric is the most interesting aspect, which can favor a better understanding of the meaning and structure of music of the past: this aspect still awaits its further study.

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