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'Punctuation Form' and Expressive Contents in the First Main Period of Selected G minor Symphonies's First Movements of the Classical Era—Kochian-Schenkerian Approaches

ABSTRACT

Background

The debate concerning the premises of analytical research in Classical music in general—and the symphony in particular—has become more intense than ever in the last twenty years or so. Perhaps the most widely accepted consequence to have been drawn by scholars is that a profound knowledge of the writings of the theorists of the Classical Era is as necessary as a command of modern analytical concepts and techniques. Both approaches, when well balanced, add something to our understanding of the phenomena that would otherwise be difficult to address. However, as tempting as it is to create an exclusively modern apparatus, in which analytical problems may be too easily resolved, a more balanced, nuanced, and historically informed approach takes the contemporary music theory of the second half of the 18th century into account. Too many modern theorists are ready to dismiss or simply ignore the 18th-century theorists, either considering their writings unsatisfactory or merely interpreting them as stepping stones to the more 'progressive' early 19th-century textbook formulations that, however, fail to do justice to the music of the second half of the 18th century itself, and the early 19th century. Therefore, the approach advocated here attempts to rely more on the contemporary theorists of the Classical period than to yield to and be (mis)lead by later textbook writers, who were more convinced of the primacy of the *melodic* element than the *harmonic* as the determinative form-building factor. For the earlier writers, melody was a mode of expression rather than a determinant of form.

Michael Broyles (1983, 215) aptly observed on the basis of Classical writers that '[f]rom the first half of the eighteenth century well into the nineteenth, melody was recognized as the principal means of expressing sentiment or character'. We further concur with Leonard Ratner (1949, 160, 166) that 'the thematic approach betrays a lack of historical perspective', because 'sonata-form is a key-area form'.

Nicolaus Forkel (1788, 24, § 38) confirms this, noting the primacy of the harmony as underpinning melody as an expressive force: 'Harmony and melody are in a well-arranged musical composition so inseparable as the truthfulness of the thoughts and the correctness of the expression in the language. Language is the dress of the thoughts in the same way as melody is the dress of the harmony. In this consideration, we can designate harmony a logic of music, because its relation toward melody is about the same as in [verbal] language is the logic toward the expression, namely it justifies and defines a melodic phrase in the way that it seems to appear as a real basis for feeling'. Thus, according to Forkel, harmony is the basis of form and it articulates the form so that melody can function as the expressive component of the music.

Aims and repertoire studied

This study applies our Kochian-Schenkerian approach to a distinct repertoire of the G minor symphonies's first movements of the Classical Era. In the title of this article, we employ the Kochian term 'first main period' (*Hauptperiode*) rather than the more modern one, 'sonata exposition', because it refers directly to Heinrich Christoph Koch's (1749–1816) concept that (larger) forms derive from the hierarchy of cadences; additionally, we employ Koch's term because it is not associated with the later theory of 'exposing themes' in a specific order or sequence within the first main period, a Marxian way of thinking about form which would have been incompatible with Koch. The corpus of this study consists of forty G minor symphonies from around 1740 to the turn of the 19th century, contributed by 27 composers coming from Italy (4), Spain (1), France (4), Belgium (2), the Netherlands (1), England (1), Denmark (1), Germany (4), Austria (7), and Bohemia (7). The selection has been dictated by which symphonic scores—or most often only their parts—are available, either in printed or manuscript versions, mostly posted on various digital websites. If we can say that from all the symphonies composed during the 18th-century, perhaps around 15,000 pieces, some 2% are in the minor mode, it means that maybe some 300 symphonies in a minor key exist. And as G minor was among the most popular minor modes, perhaps some 50 to 100 G minor symphonies can be hypothesized.

Methods

'Punctuation Form', the English translation of Koch's *interpunctische Form*, is employed by Vasily Byros in his recent article (2015). In Koch's formal thinking, a period can be just a (small) period (*Periode*), commonly a unit of eight or sixteen bars, often expanded by different means of repeating its smaller units, like *Satz* (≈ phrase) and *Einschnitt* (≈ subphrase), or a larger main period (*Hauptperiode*), which covers the first, usually repeated extended section, including the four 'punctuations' of a 'sonata-allegro exposition' (in later parlance) and possibly an appendix.

The following discussion uses the term 'punctuation section' to refer to a section between any two 'Ruhepuncte des Geistes', e.g. between two ending formulas, which are frequently but not always cadences, defined later following Koch's ideas. Further, 'punctuation' is the term employed to refer to the end of any of such sections, which conclude with different ending formulas or

endings, also defined in this study. Those 'punctuations' are designated by small and big letters and Roman numbers, like QA(i) or QA(V), and the 'punctuation' points are also assigned Arabic numerals in brackets like (1), (2) etc. or inside of circles, when technically possible (see Fig. 1). One of Koch's most important discoveries is that the first main period (*die erste Hauptperiode*, corresponding to the sonata 'exposition') divides into four main 'punctuation sections', (*interpunctische Haupttheile*) on the basis of their different ending formulas. Koch's scheme may be modified and expanded, whereby the first main period can include *eight* possible 'punctuation forms' (*interpunctische Formen*) due to different combinations of the phrases or depending on whether all four possible 'punctuations' have been deployed or some of them are omitted or elided.

Fig. 1. Eight possible 'punctuation forms' in the first main period in major key. In minor mode, the TC (*Terzcadenz*) replaces the QC (*Quintcadenz*), and QA(III) the QA(V) (QA = *Quintabsatz*).

1. V :‖	QC	(4)
2. I–V :‖	GA–QC	(1)–(4)
3. V–V :‖	QA(I)–QC	(2)–(4)
4. I–V–V : ‖	GA–QA(I)–QC	(1)–(2)–(4)
5. V/V–V :‖	QA(V)–QC	(3)–(4)
6. I–V/V–V :‖	GA–QA(V)–QC	(1)–(3)–(4)
7. V–V/V–V :‖	QA(I)–QA(V)–QC	(2)–(3)–(4)
8. I–V–V/V–V :‖	GA–QA(I)–QA(V)–QC	(1)–(2)–(3)–(4)

Schenker understands music as forward-moving goal-oriented harmonic process, distinguishing the main harmonic goals—the harmonic *Stufen*—from subsidiary arrivals. In his approach to form, Koch is genuinely compatible with Schenker for this reason: given his emphasis on cadence, i.e., on harmony, rather than on surface motive, for determining large-scale form Koch thinks analogously to Schenker; however, since Koch does not have the methodology to demonstrate hierarchies between more surface and deeper-level cadences, and since a Schenkerian approach enables us to make such distinctions, Koch's view of form can be further refined and enhanced by Schenkerian analysis. Since, for Schenker, music will always be in motion, a sophisticated Schenkerian analysis of the counterpoint between formal design and tonal structure, i.e., of the dialectic between harmonic-contrapuntal structure on the one hand and the formal design on the other, is only genuinely compatible with an approach to form that also views it as dynamic process, rather than as a proscriptive sequence of reified formal divisions. Koch's view of form as comprising 'punctuation phases' as defined by *end*- or *goal*-oriented cadential punctuation evokes resting points within a forward-moving dynamic process, and is thus ideologically complementary to Schenker's mature conception of form. For these reasons, we posit the essential congruence of Kochian and Schenkerian formal approaches, which we combine in our analyses.

Implications

Since the current selection includes forty G-minor symphonies, it covers almost half of the repertoire and is a representative corpus, which makes it possible to draw some general conclusions, at least with regard to the use of this particular key for expressive purposes and to define basic structures serving those purposes. It is possible to demonstrate, how the harmonic and linear approaches to the Classical repertoire can offer valid and innovative results for understanding the formal thinking of composers writing minor-mode symphonies. Also the special procedures connected with the minor mode can be defined more reliably than before and the inventors of those procedures can be identified.

The most important contribution to sonata theory of the present study is its demonstration of the necessity in minor mode symphonies to interpret the definitive arrival of the new key, the mediant III or the III-*Stufe*, as occurring at a late stage in the first main period (*die erste Hauptperiode*, equivalent to the modern 'exposition'). This conception of the deferred arrival on the III key or III-*Stufe*, the TC, is based on and justified by Koch's theory of the first main period consisting of four interpunctions, whereby the TC occurs only at the end of the fourth punctuation phase, and, as demonstrated by the examples cited, by the actual compositional practice of composers in the second half of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Additionally, the concepts of the Mediant Tutti (MT) (see Riley 2015, 12–24) and the Mediant Piano (MP) contribute our understanding of the form as a continuous process, whereby dramatic contrasts may play a significant role in producing and enhancing tension between the main and subsidiary keys.

Keywords

Kochian theory, Schenkerian analysis, cadences, punctuation form, main period, minor-key symphonies.

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