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The *Simpfonie* according to Riepel

ABSTRACT

Background

Joseph Riepel's *Anfangsgründe zur musikalischen Setzkunst* [Fundamentals of Musical Composition], published mostly between 1752 and 1768, contains some of the most detailed discussions of the *Simpfonie* along with a great number of examples and several complete movements. While the opening two chapters contain the most explicit references and examples, the discussion of the *Simpfonie* continues throughout the remaining eight chapters and provides us significant insight into Riepel's eighteenth century compositional workshop.

Riepel's often-quoted statement that "[...] a minuet, in its execution, is nothing but a concerto, an aria, or a *Simpfonie* [...]" (Riepel 1752, 1), has frequently been linked to Leonard Ratner's famous I: I – V :||: X – I :|| structure (Ratner 1980, 209–216), which can be seen as representing the large-scale harmonic plan of classical sonata form and indeed of most tonal compositions. Yet this conceptual stance has not provided a productive relationship between small and large-scale forms beyond simply additive approaches.

Concerning the relationship between minuet and concerto, I have demonstrated (Eckert 2005 and 2013) how the sectional nature of the mid-eighteenth-century concerto, that is, "each Tutti and Solo of the concerto can literally be considered a minuet, which is expanded or shortened and varied by means of *ars combinatoria*" (Eckert 2005, 25). Indeed, after instructing the student in how to write minuets (Riepel 1752, 1–22), Riepel's teacher, the *Præceptor*, not only turns first to the concerto and aria when discussing larger compositions, but he also identifies several musical examples simultaneously as minuets and tutti of a concerto or aria. Similarly, an analysis of Riepel's violin concertos, especially their first movements (Eckert 2013), demonstrates that the individual tutti and solo sections can be interpreted as a series of modified minuets. However, symphonies do not share the same sectional structure with concertos and arias, and moving from minuet to symphonies requires a more differentiated approach.

In her study *The Early Symphony*, Marie Louise Göllner brings together a wide range of eighteenth-century sources and discusses Riepel's *Anfangsgründe* as an important source. Unfortunately, instead of engaging with his discussion of the *Simpfonie*, Göllner judges Riepel's ideas in hindsight against traditional sonata-form conceptions and diagnoses a "lack of any formal guide-lines, even those concerning tonality" (Göllner 2004, 126). John Hill's 2014 translation and discussion of the first two chapters of the *Anfangsgründe* focuses narrowly on four-measure units, which he calls *four-somes*, and simple additive conceptions which lack the flexibility to accommodate large-scale symphonic movements. And Wolfgang Budday's 2016 book investigating W.A. Mozart's compositional training which heavily draws on Rie-

pel's theories, describes compositions almost exclusively based on phrase endings.

Aims and repertoire studied

Unlike Göllner, I am not interested in making claims about the Symphony. I am purposefully adopting Riepel's spelling, *Simpfonie*, to indicate that my concern is to highlight the *Simpfonie*. This paper provides a close reading of Riepel's discussion of the *Simpfonie* within all chapters of the *Anfangsgründe*. It highlights the compositional instructions and demonstrates the wide range of concerns related to the mid-eighteenth century *Simpfonie*.

Methods

Drawing on Gjerdingen's Galant schemata and topic theory while highlighting musical function, this paper provides a hands-on reading of Riepel's discussion of the *Simpfonie* from the standpoint of a practice that rests on musical conventions based on the combination and manipulation of pre-existent models and patterns.

Implications

Throughout the *Anfangsgründe*, Riepel treats the *Simpfonie* as synonymous with large-scale musical structure, addressing melodic relationships, metric expectations, performance aspects and most importantly, phrase relationships. As a result, this paper not only addresses Riepel's mid-eighteenth century conception of the *Simpfonie*, but it also provides insight into a moment in the history of music analysis.

Keywords

melody
form
instrumental music
musical praxis
structure

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