

Baroque Music and the Doctrine of Affections:

Putting the Affections into Effect

CU Symposium Presentation

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Historical Context

- ▶ During the Baroque period, composers began to place a much greater emphasis on music's dramatic power to express different passions and elicit emotional responses from the audience
- ▶ Rene Descartes's influence
- ▶ Formulaic Approach
- ▶ **Thesis:** Throughout the Baroque period, the Doctrine of Affections governed musical composition through the musical elements of intervals, key, and tempo.



Ancient Greek Philosophy

- ▶ The four temperaments were each associated with separate affections
- ▶ Music allegedly had the ability to arouse these affections within the individual to produce an intended emotional response
- ▶ Baroque composers used **intervals, key, and tempo** to convey a specific emotion or affect

Melodic Intervals

- ▶ German born composer and theorist, Johann Mattheson, was extremely influential
- ▶ *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739)
- ▶ For example, Mattheson argues that a major third represents liveliness, a minor third mourning, a fifth boldness, and a seventh supplication.
- ▶ This became a guide for other composers



Intervals Example in Bach

- ▶ Figure 1: J. S. Bach, *Kreuzstab Cantata*, movement two, measures 1–3. Arpeggios in the cello part to represent affects of excitement and joy.

The image displays a musical score for three parts: Basso, Violoncello, and Continuo. The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is common time (C). The Basso part features a vocal line with the lyrics: "Mein Wan-del auf der Welt ist ein-ner Schiff-fahrt gleich:". The Violoncello part consists of a continuous arpeggiated pattern of eighth notes, which is the focus of the slide's description. The Continuo part provides a steady accompaniment with a simple eighth-note pattern.

Basso

Mein Wan-del auf der Welt ist ein-ner Schiff-fahrt gleich:

(Violoncello)

Continuo

Intervals Example in Corelli

- ▶ *Concerto Grosso in D Major, Op. 6 No. 1*, movement one, measures 1-4. Three note motives leading to octave leaps; represents joy and tenderness.
- ▶ Even such small motives communicate emotions
- ▶ [Corelli Concerto Grosso in DM](#)



Key Signatures

- ▶ French composer and theorist Jean-Philippe Rameau studied the musical affects of key signatures.
- ▶ *Traité de l'harmonie (Treatise on Harmony, 1722)*
- ▶ Mattheson had his own opinions concerning the affective uses of keys
- ▶ Despite disagreements, the DOA influenced composers' choices of keys
- ▶ **See Handout**

Key Signature Example in Vivaldi's *Le Quattro Stagioni* (*The Four Seasons*)

- ▶ *Spring*: E Major
 - ❑ E major is suitable for expressing grandeur and magnificence; an appropriate choice for the season of life and growth
- ▶ *Summer*: G minor
 - ❑ an implication of anxiety and threat
- ▶ *Autumn*: F Major
 - ❑ natural key of *corni da Caccia*, it was traditionally associated with hunting and bucolic settings
- ▶ *Winter*: F minor
 - ❑ mild and relaxed, yet at the same time profound and heavy with despair and fatal anxiety; typical of the harsh winter season

[The Four Seasons - Vivaldi](#)

Key Signature Example in J. S. Bach's *St. Matthew's Passion*

- ▶ Bach uses key of E minor to represent the crucifixion story
- ▶ In regard to the key of E minor, Mattheson states, “Whatever one may do with it, it will remain pensive profound, sad, and expressive of grief; in such a way however, that some chance of consolation remains.”
- ▶ Choice of the key of E minor was an ideal fit for Bach's expression of Christ's suffering and grief, yet at the same time, for offering a glimpse of hope that lies in the resurrection.

Tempo Markings

- ▶ Like intervals and key signatures, the composer's choice of tempo was an additional means for communicating intended affections to the listeners.
- ▶ Tempo markings (Mattheson)
 - ❑ Adagio = Sadness
 - ❑ Lamento = A lament
 - ❑ Lento = Relief
 - ❑ Andante = Hope
 - ❑ Affettuoso = Love
 - ❑ Allegro = Consolation
 - ❑ Presto = Desire
- ▶ Affective uses of meter (Descartes)
 - ❑ Triple meter = faster or louder emotions
 - ❑ Duple meter = quieter emotions

Synthesis of the Elements

- ▶ In practice, the elements of intervals, keys, and tempo are used in conjunction with one another
- ▶ Individual and cohesive perspective
- ▶ Corelli example
- ▶ The feelings and passions imparted to the listeners of Baroque music are not merely individual, incidental, or circumstantial, but rather, they are the manifestation of the composer's careful arrangement, comprehension, and mastery of the musical elements.