

Analytical Terminology and Compositional Thinking in Music Theory between 1750 and 1840

1. Theory tied premises

This research based on two main suppositions: in a certain measure on those ideas of 20th Century philosophy (represented by Ludwig Wittgenstein, Roland Barthes, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Ferdinand de Saussure or Bertrand Russell), which consider the language (i.e. the words) as a tool for a deeper understanding of things. Between the object and its name exists an intimate relation, like a mirroring. The designations of things could be regarded therefore as a way to accede to their essence. So as from structural point of view, the objects could be dissected and recomposed in order to deduce their functional rules, so could be analysed the cultural theory processes as well, in order to reconstruct their origin, during the history of knowledge.

The second fundamental premise of my research is that the cultural phenomena should be analysed in their historical original context. If we study for instant the music authors form the beginning of the 19th Century, we will see that their optic on their contemporaneous composition is often different of that of our times. Looking for the differences in the understanding and the mentality historical epochs' of music theory is in fact the very wide defined goal of my study.

The historical period which I focused covers the middle of the 18th Century and the first decades of the following, 19th Century. During this time we are the witnesses of a deeply stylistically renewing of musical means. Not only the compositional technique changed, but also the verbal expressions which described (or analysed) it. The transition from rhetoric to organic models in imagining the musical form caused a refreshing of the analytical language. New terms appeared (e.g. the *motive*) and old terms were used with new significations (for instant the German *Satz* as well as the emblematical unit of the classical style, the *Period*).

2. The period as homonym by Koch and Momigny

According to the "grammatical" formal model of Heinrich Christian Koch (exposed in *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition*, 1782-93 and *Kurzgefaßtes Handwörterbuch der Musik*, 1807), the form is articulated through cadences of different grades. This model offered a quite different form understanding as the "poetical" model of Jérôme Joseph de Momigny (*Cours complet d'harmonie et de composition*, 1803-1806). In Momigny's analysis, there is a poetical text, attached to the melodic line, which determined the formal articulation. Both analytical approaches by Koch and Momigny based on hierarchical models, but they lead to different analytical results. The segments ("Theile") of a musical piece were differentiated by Koch through the intensity of their endings' formulas ("Endigungsformel"), such as cadences and caesuras, called by Koch "Ruhepunkte des Geistes", i.e. "Points of rest for the Spirit"¹. On contrary, Momigny analysed a Mozart Quartet through the addition of an antic poetical text to the melody, whose metrical order decided the end or the begin of a new formal segment. A musical work consists by Koch in *Einschnitten* (sections), *Absätzen* (phrases) and *Perioden* (periods), while by Momigny it was composed of *Cadences*, *Verses*, *Strophes* and *Periods*. As we see, both of them spoke about "periods", but the meaning of this term was quite different, as part of two hierarchical systems without relation one to the other. The period of Momigny would not correspond to those of Koch by the same analysed work, even if they were contemporary and even if they used the same terminology.

3. The synonyms

The period is an example for a term with more than one signification. That means, one term designated several notions. Typical for this phase of transition between the baroque and the classical form paradigm was the opposite case as well, where several terms designated one notion, the so-called *synonyms*.

An example offered the smallest formal unit of a musical text or fragment, mostly a subdivision of the phrase. In the annexed table you can see the designations of these smallest formal divisions by music theoreticians between 1755 and 1837: *Figur* (by Riepel, 1755), *Cäsur* (by Sulzer, 1771-1774), *Einschnitt* (by Koch, 1807), *cadence* or *proposition* (by Momigny, 1807), *dessin* (by Reicha, 1814) and *Motiv* (by Marx, 1837).

These synonym designations enriched the notion, but they could be also the expression of their immaturity, because no term established itself yet, as the *Period* done, in the case larger sections.

4. Alternative designations

Alternative designations were notions that appeared under several terms by the same author, as for instant by Johann Georg Sulzer (1720-1779). Sulzer was a Swiss aesthetician and lexicographer, who wrote, together with Johann Georg Kirnberger and J.A.P. Schulz a *General Theory of Fine Arts* (1771-74). As you can see in the former table, Sulzer called the *period* also *Absatz*. He called the phrase *Satz* but also *Rhythmus*², and he designated the subdivisions of the phrase *Cäsur* but also *Glied* (i.e. member). These alternatives show on one hand how various was the origin of formal terms in 18th Century. On the other hand we can see to which terms disposed the theoreticians of those times to designate a formal notion. The alternative designations show the way of a representation process. A question which we can pose is: which association awoke in former times the structure of a melody? More exactly, through which notions existing in his imagination could represent a theoretician of the 18th Century the dissection of a melody? The answer is: all terms chosen by Sulzer had a connection either to the idea of unity or to that of limit, but each of them brought a specific, enriching nuance with it. The period (from the Greek *Períodos*, i.d. circuit, return) connect itself with the idea of repetition; the phrase (*Satz*, from the German verb *setzen*), designed a grammatical expression. Its attributes were the existence of a determined sense and of constructive rules. *Rhythmus* (from the Greek *rhythmos*, meaning regularity, but also flow, continuity) awake the connotation to a specific temporal order of elements. The *Cäsur* came from the Lat. *Caesura*, deduced from the verb *cadere*, i.e. to beat, to *strugg*, possible related also with the latin *Clausura*, which means Closure. The *Cäsur* designed not only a short interruption, but also a small, but pointed and remarkable musical unit³.

The diversity of these alternatives (which could be seen also as a lack of homogeneity) attests obviously the still undefined crystallisation stadium of formal notions in this epoch.

5. Terms which changed their signification during the time: *Satz* (phrase) and *Periode* (period):

The two notions *Satz* and *Period* are ideal examples for what Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht called “the independent signification degrees’ of a term”⁴. Comparing the definition of these notions by authors about 1800 with the definitions given by Vincent d’Indy (*Cours de composition musicale*, Paris, 1912) or Schönberg (*Models for Beginners in Composition*, 1942 and *Fundamentals of musical Composition*, 1937-48) it becomes obviously, that the sense of these terms changed together with their stylistic and historic utilisation context. Schönberg called in *Modelle für Anfänger im Kompositionsunterricht* (published by Universal Edition, 1972) a four bars melody with perfect cadence at the end *Satz* (what by Reicha would be regarded as a Period of one member⁵). On the other hand Vincent d’Indy turned the formal hierarchy and named *phrases* the superposed elements, while the subordinate divisions he called periods (*périodes*).

Researching theoretical texts about music and composition between 1750 and 1840 I found out that in the former linguistic usage neither the dimensions, nor the complementarity between phrases, nor the resemblance of the motives, the symmetry or the contrast were decisive for the definition of a period, but *the perfect cadence as final point*. Even if the regular, symmetrical type⁶ was preferred, it was not the only one. Reicha described periods consisting either in one or in 3 or 4 elements (*rhythmes*) and Adolf Bernhard Marx in 3 or 4 phrases. The number of bars could be also irregular: for example 42 bars by Reicha or 44 bars by Lobe⁷.

The necessity of historical research in music theory and especially the knowledge of original treatises from 18th and 19th Centuries have been already proved in numerous articles by Carl Dahlhaus, Fred Ritzel, Ian Bent, Nicholas Cook till the more recent researches signed by Markus Waldura and Wolfgang Budday. To clarify the character and the meaning of the primary form understanding during the Classicism is the

more important, the more later interpretations changed their original sense. As in the case of *Satz* and *Periode*, later theoreticians furthered themselves from the original significations and created confusions. My paper tried to point out some specific and less known aspects of formal understanding and terminology in 18th Century, but the topic deserves certainly a more extensive volume of research.

J. Riepel (1709–1782)	J. G. Sulzer (1720–1779)	H. Chr. Koch (1749–1816)	A. Reicha (1770–1836)	J. J. de Momigny (1762–1842)	A.B. Marx (1795–1866)
Figur	Cäsur(<i>Glied</i>)	<i>Unvollkommener / vollkommener Einschnitt</i>	Dessin	Cadence (proposition) <i>harmonique / mélodique</i>	Motiv
Grundabsatz / Änderungsabsatz (<i>Cadenz</i>)	Satz(Rhythmus)	Absatz (<i>Grundabsatz, Quintabsatz</i>) / Schlußabsatz	Rhythme (<i>membre</i>) / Rhythme (<i>membre</i>) <i>compagnon</i>	Verse	Vordersatz / Nachsatz
(Periode)	Periode (Abschnitt)	Periode	Periode	Periode	Periode

References

- ¹ H. Chr. Koch, *Kurzgefasstes Handwörterbuch der Musik*, Leipzig 1807, Reprint by Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim, New-York, 1981, pp. 306, in the article Satz, we find an explanation of the relational formulas between the phrases (Absätze), theoretical chapter that he called „Interpunktion“ or „Endigungsformel eines melodischen Gliedes“.
- ² Jan Bent, William Drabkin, Analysis, in *The New Grove Dictionary for Music and Musicians*, Ed. By Stanley Sadie, 1985, Vol. 1, p. 347
- ³ H. Chr. Koch, *Kurzgefasstes Handwörterbuch der Musik*, p. 66
- ⁴ H.H. Eggebrecht, *Studien zur musikalischen Terminologie*, Berlin, 1955
- ⁵ Anton Reicha, *Traité de mélodie*, 1814, pages 12 and 19
- ⁶ See Reicha, idem, p. 19-21
- ⁷ J. Chr. Lobe, *Compositions-Lehre*, 1844

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Summary

Between the composer and the analyst, the common means of communication are the words. They remain the most suggestive notional vehicles used to express any opinion about music.

The historic study of the analytical terminology is important due to the following reasons:

- a) the musical term is the verbal image of the musical representation;
- b) the analytical notions underwent various changes in time. Each new stylistic paradigm (e.g. the classical forms as compared to the rhetorical baroque polyphony) determined the appearance of a new analytical vocabulary, able to describe it. In order to avoid any confusion, the historic understanding of musical terms must be known and taken into account.

By comparing the melodic terms used between 1770 and 1840 (by J. Riepel, J.G. Sulzer, H. Chr. Koch, A. Reicha, J.J. de Momigny and A.B. Marx) we noted the following:

1) **The crystallization process of the new formal notions *Motiv*, *Satz* and *Periode* during this period** (synonyms are gradually abandoned, while a unique term imposed itself).

2) **The appearance of the first (multiple) denominations of melodic hierarchical sub-divisions** (for instant for phrase sub-divisions: *Figur* [Riepel], *Cäsur* [Sulzer] *Einschnitt* [Koch], *Dessin* [Reicha], *cadence* [Momigny] and *Motiv* [Marx]).

The diverse etymology and semantics of synonyms helps us in imagining the way in which the classical composers embodied these constructive elements; starting from fundamental linguistic data one may “re-construct” the artists’ attitude in those times, in connection to the material they used in composing.

3) **The origin of musical terms from subjects considered modern at the time:** grammar (for germ. *Satz*, *Periode*), poetics (for fr. *Verse*, *Cadence*, *Rhythme*...), and natural sciences (germ. *Einschnitt*, *Glied*).

The musical terms reflect not only the artist’s mental representation, but also the epistemological landmarks of the time, because they are “talking” about the historic/ aesthetic background in which they were born and spread.

Analinė terminologija ir kompozicinis mąstymas muzikos teorijoje 1770–1840 m.

Santrauka

Bendrosios komunikacijos priemonės tarp kompozitoriaus ir analitiko yra žodžiai. Jie tebėra įtaigiausi prasminiai svertai, skirti išreikšti kokius nors nuomonei apie muziką.

Analinės terminologijos istorinis nagrinėjimas yra svarbus dėl šių priežasčių:

- a) muzikinis terminas yra žodinis muzikinės raiškos vaizdas;
- b) analitinės sąvokos laiko bėgyje patyrė įvairius pokyčius. Kiekviena nauja stilistinė paradigma (pvz., klasikinės formos, palyginus su retorine baroko polifonija) lėmė naujo, galinčio tai aprašyti, analitinio žodyno pasirodymą. Siekiant išvengti painiavos, istorinį muzikinių terminų supratimą privalu žinoti ir į jį atsižvelgti.

Lygindami melodijos terminus, vartotus tarp 1770 ir 1840 metų (J. Riepel, J. G. Sulzer, H. Chr. Koch, A. Reicha, J. J. de Momigny ir A. B. Marx), mes pastebėjome šiuos dalykus:

1) Naują formos sąvokų – motyvas, frazė ir periodas – kristalizacijos procesą (sinonimų buvo laipsniškai atsisakyta, nes įsigalėjo vieningi terminai).

2) Melodinės hierarchijos žemesniųjų padalų pirmojo (įvairiarūšio) įvardijimo pasirodymą (pvz. frazės padaloms: figūra [Riepel], cezūra [Sulzer], pjūvis [Koch], piešinys [Reicha], kadencija [Momigny] ir motyvas [Marx]).

Skirtinga sinonimų etimologija ir semantika padeda mums įsivaizduoti kelią, kuriuo eidami klasicizmo kompozitoriai įkūnijo šiuos konstrukcinius elementus; pradėjus nuo fundamentalių kalbinių faktų galima „atkurti“ menininkų požiūrį anuo metu į medžiagą, kurią jie komponuodami naudojo.

3) Muzikinių terminų kilmę iš disciplinų, laikytų tuo metu moderniomis: gramatikos (vok. *Satz*, *Periode*), poetikos (pranc. *Verse*, *cadence*, *Rhythme*...) ir gamtos mokslų (vok. *Einschnitt*, *Glied*).

Muzikiniai terminai atspindi ne tik menininko minties vaizdą, bet ir epistemologines to meto gaires, nes jos „kalba“ apie istorinį / estetinį foną, kuriame jos atsirado ir paplito.