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## The *Simpfonie* according to Riepel

### ABSTRACT

#### Background

Joseph Riepel's *Anfangsgründe zur musikalischen Setzkunst* [Fundamentals of Musical Composition], published 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 all full-length examples, the discussion of the *Simpfonie* continues throughout the remaining eight chapters. Unfortunately, the scholarship on Riepel's conception of the *Simpfonie* has focused mostly on the second chapter (Riepel 1755), glossing largely over the first, and has yet to demonstrate a meaningful relationship between small and large-scale compositional processes.

#### Aims and Repertoire Studied

This paper provides a close reading of Riepel's discussion of the *Simpfonie* in the first chapter of the *Anfangsgründe* (Riepel 1752), demonstrating how Riepel moves from the minuet to the *Simpfonie* Allegro. It highlights the compositional instructions and demonstrates the wide range of concerns related to the *Simpfonie* and provides not only insights into Riepel's mid-18th century conception of the *Simpfonie*, but it also into a moment in the history of music analysis and compositional pedagogy.

#### Methods

Drawing on Gjerdingen's Galant schemata (Gjerdingen 2007) 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

While the minuet dominates the first section of Chapter One, that is, pages 1–22 (Riepel 1752), Riepel's minuet-specific instructions only take up pages 1–9 (Eckert 2005). The remaining thirteen pages address various issues linked to the minuet. Among them: the *Clausel*, which identifies the insertion and repetition of small figures (9), short excursions into variety (*Abwechslung*), organization (*Ordnung*), and clarity (*Deutlichkeit*), which provide examples that emphasize not to use three- and five-measure units in a minuet (10–11), followed by discussions of different notes values and rhythmic patterns beyond quarter notes (12), the *Cadenz* (13–14), minuet-trio combinations (14–15), minuets in minor (16), *Absatz* (*Schusterfleck/Monte* and *Fonte*) (18–20), and minuets in three parts (21–22). It is intriguing that while the teacher-student dialogue questions many aspects of the minuet, no example extends beyond ten measures within the first part and twelve in the second part of the example minuets. For longer composi-

tions, we have to look at the second part starting on page 23, which Riepel entitles, *Tonordnung insbesondere*, that is *Metric Order in Particular*. In this second part, we can observe how Riepel gradually introduces various meters and measure-units of different lengths as a means of creating compositional material which can be encountered in the context of large-scale compositions.

Since Riepel's minuet examples are all in 3/4 time, it is not surprising that Riepel's teacher first introduces different meter signatures. Riepel considers only groupings in two and three beats, that is duple and triple meter respectively, and describes the common (*gemeine*) 4/4 as a meter that combines two 2/4 measures into one (this means he counts each written out measure as two measures). He furthermore distinguishes this from the *Alla Breve*, which he considers a 2/2 (a duple, in which each measure counts as one). Both 3/8 and 3/2 are triple meters, like 3/4. While Riepel generally associates the 6/8 with 2/4 (our modern duple compound), the Præceptor, the teacher in the treatise, provides an example of a Larghetto in 6/8 which he considers 3/4 (61). Finally, 12/4 seems to be treated like the common 4/4 which means as two measures of 6/8 or 2/4 notated in one measure.

Riepel's often quoted statement that groupings of 4, 8, 16, and 32 measures are so rooted in our nature that it seems difficult to accept other types of grouping (23) holds true for a great number of examples in the *Anfangsgründe*. However, the teacher introduces and exemplifies three-measure units or *Dreyer* (30–35), five-measure-units or *Fünfer* (35), six-measure-units or *Sechser* (36), and seven- and nine-measure-units or *Siebener* und *Neuner* (37–38); though he emphatically proclaims that ten-measure-units, or *Zehner*, do not exist (39). Overall, it seems that any measure-unit is possible as long as it does not conflict with a clearly recognizable melodic continuation. In addition, uneven measure-units often repeat in order to create even-metric structures and units of six to nine measures are often subdivided into smaller ones.

While Riepel's teacher begins with an introduction of different meters and measure-units, the lesson soon includes specific rhythmic/melodic figures and schemata that can be used in a large-scale composition. The rhythmic/melodic figures play a central role, because it makes little sense to teach orchestral writing based on quarter- and eighth-notes only. Instead rhythmic/melodic figures such as quick repetitions of a single note, scalar runs, or expressive leaps, constitute an important aspect of orchestral writing. As it happens regularly in the *Anfangsgründe*, Riepel uses some of these figures in musical examples (33) before identifying and discussing them (39). Instead of using technical terms, Riepel employs a descriptive terminology that accounts for the rhythmic/melodic character of these figures and he names them *Singer*, *Runner*, *Rusher*, *Leaper* (Singer, Laufer, Rauscher, Springer). Riepel demonstrates their use with numerous musical examples, showing how each individual type can serve a particular purpose in a composition and how all can be combined to create an effective material for large-scale compositions (38–41).

Among the galant schemata, *Monte*, *Fonte*, and *Ponte* have been named by Riepel. Similar to the rhythmic/melodic figures, Riepel uses *Monte* and *Fonte* already in Chapter One (Riepel 1752, 24), but does not explain them until Chapter Two (Riepel 1755, 43–50). Gjerdingen’s galant schemata provide us with the tools to identify common harmonic-melodic patterns as schemata that make up much of the measure-units with different rhythmic-melodic content. The examples demonstrate different realizations of Gjerdingen’s C–D–E, *Prinner* (A–G–F–E), and *Meyer*, but *Monte*, *Fonte*, and *Ponte* and several different cadential figures are also common (especially the *Descending Hexachord* and the *Cudworth*). Within these instructions, it is noteworthy that teacher and student often address the specific function of an example, identifying them as beginnings, continuations, or endings. Finally, different musical devices—such as repetition (26–27), repetition of cadenz (45), the suppressed cadenz (42–43) cadential gestures, and variations (*ars combinatoria*) (48–51), are also part of how Riepel’s instructions of how to write large-scale compositions.

Throughout the second half of Chapter One, Riepel teaches how to move gradually from minuets in quarter note motion to an Allegro of a *Symphonie* that can utilize a range of meters, tempi, and extended figuration. His process consists of recasting the same or very similar examples in different meters and measure-units, using a variety rhythmic-melodic figures and schemata. This is highlighted by the fact that the individual sections, or building blocks of Riepel’s full-length *Symphonie*-examples are very similar to these individual recast examples. As a result, Riepel provides a pedagogical approach for moving from minuets to the *Symphonie* while providing us with insightful discussion of large-scale compositional issues.

### Keywords

Melody, Form, Instrumental Music, Musical Praxis, Structure.

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