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Concerto Form, Analysis, and Conversation: From Performance Practice to Cultural Knowledge

ABSTRACT

Background

This paper asks on a general level what type of knowledge there is involved in music analytical process and how this affects analytical results, exemplified by Mozart's 1. movement concerto form. With respect to Mozart we ask, how is it possible to approach Enlightenment sociability and conversation in music and simultaneously bring it into the understanding of present day discourse? The paper builds a method for analysing dialogue in Mozart's piano concertos (cf. Keefe 2001; Rosen 1997). To do this presupposes that there exists a rigorous model concerning interaction in conversation. Dialogue takes place between two sets of modalities embedded in theme actors that at large scale level represent the mental attitudes of participating solo and ritornello sections, albeit also those of individual themes. The examination is based on metaphoric interpretation of the soloist as individual and the orchestra as society (Hepokoski and Darcy 2006). The shortcoming of many previous approaches is that analytical and historical-cultural aspects are treated separately. In this paper an attempt is made to solve certain problems related to this state of affairs.

Aims and Repertoire Studied

The paper thus attempts to enlighten the general epistemic standing of music analysis. For this purpose, we create a means to juxtapose properties of a musical work with the surrounding cultural and historical environment. In an epistemic sense we are infiltrating the outer world into the epistemically given properties of a musical work. The main carriers of this information are so called epistemic modalities through which properties of the outer world have effect on articulation and phrasing and are transferred into a musical work. This contributes to how epistemic aspects operate in music analysis. The aim is to build an Enlightenment sense of dialogue into concerto discourse. In this constellation music theoretical traditions of the time also have a contribution to make.

This is still further validated through analysis of two Mozart's piano concerto first movements (K. 456 and K. 482). Resulting temporal and cultural profiles of the concertos show how through epistemic considerations cultural and personal level experiences infiltrate into music analytical process.

Methods

The novel theoretical framework consists of existential semiotic theory (Tarasti 2015) and linguistic analysis of epistemic modalities (Jaszczolt 2009; Williamson 2013) that together make up the analytical model of dialogue. A sense of dialogue, however, always needs to be considered in relation to

the outer world in the same way that an individual is embedded in the social and cultural world. When transferring this idea to musical discourse there arises the question of representation between the work and outer reality. Epistemic modalities and temporal references are examined within the methodological framework of default semantics (Jaszczolt 2009). A temporal interpretation of modal expressions facilitates the examination of musical sections in mutual interaction.

A major input of existential semiotics takes place through the explication of the concept of representation. Representation takes place in various senses and at various levels. As a whole certain cultural values such as types of conversation or privacy, for example, can be found to be represented in a work of music. On a more detailed level already temporality, which is a very personal feature, can be juxtaposed with cultural and historical values. It appears that a sense of time experience does indeed inhabit a historical dimension and in this way it can be historicized. In terms of existential semiotics what we do in an existential semiotic zemic-model is to put M1 into relation with S1 that stands for values such as sensibility and taste.

It has been suggested that late enlightenment is closely related to romanticism. While this remains true, we still want to argue that even late Enlightenment integrally belongs to the Enlightenment proper. The theoretical model at hand makes it possible to show in analytical terms that this is a tenable position. The stability of values such as sensibility and taste remain valid throughout the period that in terms of periodization we are in a habit to call classical style. Inside this style period there is variation due to a sense of individuality and the degree of rational judgement that are encountered in a musical work as embedded in the culture of Enlightenment. While there may be a lessening importance of rational judgement in late classical music and an increase of individual expression one is not obliged to argue for an increased role of imagination until the romantic generation. In terms of the zemic-model variation within M1 and M2 does not yet necessarily effect S2 and S1 and accordingly this does not need to lead to a change in style. In the above sense the very concept of dialogue is considered a culturally embedded concept and thus it is also decisive in a stylistic sense.

Implications

In the music analytical process, the prime epistemological issues are internalized to the concerto discourse through epistemic modalities and related temporal references. The methodological frame is now able to bring together those constituents that are needed to simulate a sense of sociability in musical discourse. The above theoretical framework gives us an opportunity to redefine the central Enlightenment concept of sociability and to draw its boundaries with respect to surrounding musical style periods. While there are various aspects

to the concept of sociability (cf. Kors 2005), in musical terms it clearly is closely related to the sense of interaction between various actors in musical discourse and how this relation is specified. It is argued that in Mozart's piano concertos the mastery of composing is illustrated through the plenitude of ways in which an individual is found to be embedded in social fabrics of various types and how he/she takes an increasingly active role in these social environments. This is first and foremost a question of illustrating interaction in terms of music analytical methodology. Social fabrics can be found in ritornello sections of concerto form and occasionally also within solo sections. In a concerto form this is a question of articulating the relationship between a soloist and orchestra (ritornello) in terms of music analytical vocabulary bearing in mind that there are various intermediary levels where the relationship is manifested. In relative terms one could now speak of sociability as an equilibrium relation emerging between an individual and society.

These ideas of dialogue and representation can be applied to a range of repertoires and genres within classical style and possibly to other stylistic periods as well. This opens an avenue for cultural knowledge to enter the musical work, its formal structures. Whereas performance practice in a narrow sense involves phrasing and articulation, one now gains access to Enlightenment cultural practice as exemplified by the conversational nature of concerto form. We have moved from performance practice to fully embrace the realm of cultural practice.

Keywords

Musical Epistemology, Musical Signification, Analytical Theory, Historicism, Enlightenment, Existential Semiotics.

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