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Voice-Leading Schemata and Sentences in Opera Buffa: Rising Lines in Paisiello's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*

ABSTRACT

Background

Mozart's operas are noticeably absent from the musical examples in Robert O. Gjerdingen's *Music in the Galant Style*, and from the passages he discusses as demonstrations of the application of his analytical framework. Although his repertory for early galant music includes several arias from *opera seria*, the music of the 1770s and 1780s is for Gjerdingen mostly instrumental, even when he considers such predominantly operatic composers as Salieri and Cimarosa. His work has had important repercussions in the analysis of Mozart's instrumental music, but few attempts have been made to apply his analytical framework to Mozart's operas.

Some of Mozart's operatic music seems perfectly suited to the application of schema theory. For example, most of 'Andrò ramingo e solo', the quartet in *Idomeneo*, falls comfortably within the conceptual space opened up by Gjerdingen. But Mozart's later *opere buffe* may seem less amenable to schema theory. Simply put, many passages in the comic operas do not constitute manifestations of Gjerdingen's principal schemata (I mean those with separate entries in his Appendix A, 'Schema Prototypes').

During the decade since the publication of Gjerdingen's book, scholars have enlarged the schematicon. This paper builds on that work by considering Mozart's use of schemata in a single opera, *Le nozze di Figaro*, and the relation between its schematic content and that of another opera buffa of the 1780s, to which it served as a sequel, Paisiello's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. I will not attempt here a comprehensive study of these operas' use of voice-leading schemata; instead I will focus on a relatively small number of schemata used to generate rising lines.

Aims and Repertoire Studied

Elucidation of the interaction of voice-leading schemata and phrase structure in late eighteenth-century opera buffa, as exemplified by Paisiello's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (1782) and Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* (1786).

Methods

Integration of schemata theory (Gjerdingen 2007) and phrase-structure analysis (Caplin 1998).

Implications

Paisiello and Mozart made repeated use of certain voice-leading schemata, often in conjunction with the sentence, to generate the rising lines that characterize their comic operas.

Keywords

Paisiello, Mozart, Opera Buffa, Schema, Sentence, Do-Re-Mi, Triadic Ascent, Overture.

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