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Themata of the dissertation titled

Antonio Caldara: La passione di Gesù Cristo

*Sepolcro on the border of two styles: the elements of the stile mixto in
the synthesis of the Italian and German styles*

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I. The subject of the research

My dissertation focuses on Antonio Caldara's (1670—1736) *sepolcro* passion, *La passione di Gesù Cristo* (1730). The works of this outstanding composer of the Austro-Italian Baroque era are hardly ever performed in Hungary. My first experience hearing it was a recording from The Europa Galante conducted by Fabio Biondi. Right after the first listening it became clear that I have to make the acquaintance of this work thoroughly; in the first slow part of the two-part *introduzione* of the oratory the augmented sixth chord occurs three times. In the Baroque era this chord appears quite rarely, that is why it is one of the most forward looking feature of the composer. The double fugue of the following fast section is completely traditional, it could have been written by Vivaldi, too. The special mixture of the traditional and the modern is an important determinant of Caldara's work of art.

II. The method of the research

In order to determine precisely what is the differences between this *sepolcro* and the other similar pieces of the contemporaries are it seemed to be reasonable to choose the method of the comparative analysis. It is very important to point out the greatness of the librettist, Pietro Metastasio (1698—1782). The *libretto* (1730) was his first piece written for court Vienna. It was very popular both with the contemporaries and the posterity, too.

Examining his biography and the late-baroque period it becomes clear that the *libretto* of Metastasio was as popular in the Austro-Italian cultural circle as to the passion verse of Barhold Heinrich Brockes (1680—1747) *Der für die Sünde der Welt gemarterte und sterbende Jesus* (1712) in the German Empire. It seems reasonable that this text and its music constitute the other aspect of the comparative analysis.

Vienna in the early 1700s when Caldara worked there too in the second half of his life, was dominated by Italian influence. Ruler Charles VI had an attraction towards the counterpoint and the *stile antico*. Which urged Caldara to put the traditional into the gown of the modernity of the 18th century. The traditions of Fux, the Italian melodiousness and the elements of the galant style are mixed in his art. My ambition was clearly to examine composers (being counterpole) with whom we can find the elements of the baroque and the features of transitional galant style, too. In addition we can identify the mixture of different national styles in their works. For this reason I chose *The Brockes Passion* of Georg Friedrich Händel (1685—1759) and Georg Philipp Telemann (1681—1767). In case of Händel beside

the German, the elements of the Italian and English style are presented, too, by Telemann beside the German elements French, Italian and Polish. In the works *Kern melodischer Wissenschaft* (1737) and *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739) Mattheson besides the melodic priority as opposite to harmony, he emphasizes the ambition to meet the demand for easily understandable music. The latter has a relationship with the emotion-concept of the French Enlightenment: the melody has to be well-known, short and singable. This indicates a move towards a new style. Close range, symmetry, clarity of the internal proportion come to the front. This projects ahead the mentality of the phrase. At the beginning of the process towards classicism the leading principles were simplicity and the clarity. All these three composers were interested in this beginning classicization, and also integrated different national styles therefore they can be called the representatives of the *stile mixto*, too. Another exciting question was all these characteristics how could be realized within the range of a passion, which is fundamentally a rigid genre.

During the detailed analysis of the three pieces I examined the balance of the content, the form, the technology and the musical representation in the mirror of the texts by Metastasio and Brockes within the range of the *sepulcro* and the passion-oratory of the 18th century. Points of view of the observation:

- performance ensemble;
- the tools of the description of each character;
- different types of arias;
- *recitativo*;
- duos, trios;
- choir movements, the manner of the choir-handling;
- the role of the *continuo*;
- the influence of the opera in the handling of the voice, dramaturgy and orchestration;
- the influence of the difference of the orchestration in the musical representation;
- uniformity of the text and the music;
- formal and harmonic features;

- changes within the works;
- the reflection of the Italian musical tradition in the specific German mode of expression;
- *stile mixto*;
- the proportion of the different musical forms;
- individual features of the harmonical „baroquism” by the three composers;
- the explanation of the different features in connection with the texts;
- the musical elements of the difference of the epical and lyrical approach;
- the question of parody and *pasticcio*; the filtering of several elements from other genres;
- the connection of tempo and metre.

Before the detailed analysis I felt the need for a historical summary of the genre of passion, moreover I decided to devote an entire chapter to the concept of rhetoric and emotion, too. When accomplishing the first task I found the book *Musik zwischen Kunst und Kirche* (Bärenriter-Metzler 1997) by Kurt von Fischer extremely useful. With the latter task *The weapons of rhetoric* (Corda Music Publications 2005) by Judy Tarling.

In the last part when drawing the final conclusion I introduced a new concept, called musical meta space. First, I need some mathematical digression in order to circumscribe the concept of the musical meta space. I have to remark that in this interpretation „meta” does not refer to the prefix of metaphysics. That one as a philosophical system is inaccessible for our senses and it is a speculative approach of the things (*a priori*). It is evident that it is impossible in music. Perceiving and expressing are fundamental criterions. The individual is an unavoidable, essential factor. According to my terminology musical meta space is a space of common sounds within one piece of music.

The musical interpretation can be connected with the Minkowsky spacetime theory. In mathematical physics Minkowski space (or Minkowski spacetime) is a combination of three-dimensional Euclidean space and time into a four-dimensional manifold where the spacetime interval between any two events is independent of the inertial frame of reference in which they are recorded. Minkowski space is closely associated with the special

relativity, and is the most common mathematical structure on which special relativity is formulated. Relativity with the recognition of the simultaneity stopped the absolute meaning of the time, the three dimensional space and time exist together do not separate because each one of them can be transformed, none of them are absolute. Combining the two dimensions the four-dimension world comes into existence which has already absolute meaning. The fourth dimension is an imaginary dimension which can be connected in parallel with the mathematical imaginary numbers. These are complex numbers the square of which is -1 . We know that a real number has never had negative square, nevertheless we suppose it. The question is what will the $\sqrt{-1}$ be concerning music. This viewpoint admits the subjective view only into the fourth dimension, but this is the most important dimension in the musical explanation. These are the four musical dimensions:

- 1st dimension (x): the old view identifies it as the rhythm. According to the new approach this is temporality: when each frequency sounds.
- 2nd dimension (y): up to this point we have termed it as melody or harmony, but to this we need a cultural medium. That is why we prefer to call it pitch because it presumes temporality as a result of the tremulous character of the tone, too.
- 3rd dimension (z): this is the axis of the orchestration in the old approach, according to the new view this is the timbre which is a structure that can be broken down physically.
- The *quatrième ajoutée* of the dimensions is the fourth dimension (w): the sound system, the reference point with which we can explain the mass of data; we used to call it style. Style is determined by the man who writes the piece. This is the musical $\sqrt{-1}$, the imaginary filter which can't be exact, because the listener who interprets the piece is inseparable of the social medium in which he lives.

III. The results of the research

As a result of the research I succeeded in describing a comprehensive historical map of the passion genre in the 16—18th century concerning both the protestant and the catholic fields, too. Studying the most important sources of the baroque rhetoric and emotion concept I got an important key can interpret and compare the analyzed works. Systematizing the most important stylistic, formal and harmonic elements of the baroque and classical era, it has become possible to collect the most important features of this transitional period. These data helped us prove that these three composers are outstanding representatives of the main stream

of the galant style. Although the relatively rigorous frames of the genre passion limit the opportunities of innovation we can find several surpassing harmonic innovations introduced by the composers (e.g. augmented sixth chord, enharmonic, third-related key, twelve-note).

In fact rococo is the fraying of the baroque and it might not be an overstatement that classical is its failure. With the exception of the *Sturm und Drang* period of Haydn, and his works composed after Mozart's death and needless to say Mozart himself. Mendelssohn looked at Mozart as an ideal (he went on classicization), too. In the western music the natural fluctuation of the decay of the old and the birth of the new is broken by Mozart. His influence is still noticeable, he established a kind of duality: the simple and popular, and the scholar music's dualism. Concerning the functions in the operas of Mozart Lendvai claims, that with him the mirror of the „inner stage” is subdominant while the „outer” is the dominant one. The more complex the personality of his character, the bigger is the role of the subdominant function is. In the melody of his rustic and countryman characters the dominant and tonic functions prevail. Standing on the border of two styles it is worth to collect the basic formal and harmonic differences. The primary elements of the baroque style are *concertante* technique, counterpoint, *stile antico*, imitation writing, polyphony, *basso continuo*, *da capo* structures, survivals of the modal mentality in the notation and considering the tonalities, too. Harmonic features are the following open shift between parallel tonalities, sequences, declamatory musical materials, diatonic chords and uniform harmonic rhythm. As one would expect, the orchestration and the handling of dissonance depended on the composer's individuality, as I have pointed it out earlier, too. Unlike this, the classical elements are the following: clear phrasing, symmetrical units, the formal proportions become self-supporting means of expression, the scheme of tonality becomes sonata principle, the harmonic rhythm is uneven and it becomes a dramaturgical tool. The functional chord-system is getting more and more well-defined and the authentic attraction becomes increasingly dominant. It can be traced in the treatment of dissonance, too. The remains of modality are forced back and the harmonic world is dominated by V⁷-I steps. The most popular subdominants are II⁶ and II⁶₅, the chords beyond the fifth degree are coloured either dominant or diminished. The mayor centralization and homophony become recurrent. The coloured subdominants come from the border of the *maggiore-minore* area, the proportions and the perfection of the texture become an aesthetical criterion. That is the reason why the classical style is almost completely omitted by the French. The modulation order which is based on the functional relationship becomes absolutely predominant. The galant style appearing at this stage is inseparable from rococo

which steps on against the rigidity of the baroque first in architecture. It begins with blending the elements of the Italian-French late baroque and undoubtedly has an interior branch, against which Bach acted on, too. The opern music of Händel, Rameau and Gluck belongs to the grandioser branch of the style. During the analysis of the aesthetical and harmonic features of Caldara's *sepolcro* the individual characteristics of his art have become distinct. The typical baroque *concertato* texture, imitation structures or *ritornello* accompaniment, sequences, virtuous coloratura in the vocal part, paintings of text, or *da capo* arias are recognizable characteristic features of his music. In addition string quartet accompaniment, homophonic, chordal structures, simplification of the harmonies, the functional chord-system becoming delineated and the forward-looking character of the augmented sixth chord show the outline of beginning classical style.

IV. Conclusion of the research

The dialectical approach of the musical meta space gives us an opportunity to attempt to specify the indescribable with objective parameters, the individuality of the composer who handles the *locus topicus* of his time so brilliantly that they become individual inventions. Particularly on such edge of style and geographical surroundings. The examined viewpoints of the comparative analysis and the different national styles gave us the possibility to surround a change of a period, even if the passion is a traditionally rigorous genre. The analysis of the relatively unknown works of a relatively unknown composer in Hungary can make a way for the genre of *sepolcro* and Caldara's other works, too.

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