

## INTRODUCTION

The 18th century saw the rise of the great instrumental genres which would dominate the musical scene throughout the following century and beyond. Primary among these was the symphony, which in the 19th century became paradigmatic for the swift rise of music in the hierarchy of the arts and in culture as a whole. In its early existence, however, during the first half of the 18th century, the symphony was viewed, especially by German theorists, with considerable scepticism. And indeed its beginnings were modest: it functioned as one of several types of introductory genres and, as such, was generally compared unfavorably with the French overture. In contrast to the latter's sophisticated and serious character, requiring extensive skill on the part of the composer, contemporary writers tended to look upon the new 'sinfonia' as a light-hearted piece, somewhat like a fanfare, invented by the Italians to attract the attention of the audience for the main musical event which was to follow.<sup>1</sup> Consequently in their eyes it had no real character of its own, but was rather required to adapt itself to the expression of the major work which it introduced, whether sacred or secular. Since this work was usually vocal, such as an opera or oratorio, it was likewise thought that the introduction, and indeed instrumental music in general, needed no special musical techniques of its own but should rather imitate those of vocal music.<sup>2</sup>

Prevailing views of the earlier 18th century, then, were not at all conducive to the development of an instrumental music which was removed from the explicit thoughts and emotions expressed by language in the form of texts. Based on the teachings of the French rationalists, the dominant aesthetic of the time insisted that music, like all of the arts, must imitate Nature, meaning in this case clearly defined natural emotions or actions. German music theorists in particular were caught in a conflict with little prospect of easy solution. On the one hand they were the heirs of a long tradition transmitted from the previous century, which placed strong emphasis on rhetoric as the proper foundation of the arts, and on the other they were party to an aesthetic which ran counter to the newest developments in the musical scene around them.

The new instrumental practice confronted both composers and theorists with two major problems: first and foremost, the means of rendering a textless com-

<sup>1</sup> The Germans also tended to adopt the Italian rather than the French form of the word. Although theorists, such as Mattheson or Hiller, or even Sulzer, still speak of 'Symphonie', the usual designation, including that of the works themselves, was 'Sinfonie'.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter I below.

position comprehensible to the listener, and secondly, the invention of a terminology which could adequately describe the new techniques. The first concerns the idea of form itself. The theorists of the 18th century—and this holds true for the entire century—tended to regard form at best as a convenience, strictly an outer shell which had nothing to do with the inner, i. e. expressive content of a work.<sup>3</sup> Their favorite example was thus the da capo aria, a vocal rather than an instrumental form. More important was the listener, who, in contrast to today's passive audience, formed an integral component of the compositional process. It was somehow necessary to capture his attention and to guide him through the progress of a work. This function, formerly fulfilled by the text, was not easily transferred to a longer instrumental movement, but it unquestionably provided an important impetus for new developments. The need for some kind of unity, at first still sought in the expressive content of a piece, was ultimately resolved by more formal means, such as melodic similarities and repetitions, and by the emergence of a main theme as agent. The concept of form, however, remained very different from the one we have inherited from the 19th century. Whereas the larger, and still quite simple, harmonic structure provided the basis for all types of music, both vocal and instrumental, concern for the outer or differentiating features of instrumental movements was focused on the small melodic-rhythmic units, which could be combined in multiple ways to form the larger structure. The latter was thus in a very real sense incidental to the essence of a movement, the resulting rather than the determining factor. It remained variable and, as such, one of the main objects of compositional ingenuity.

Central to the discussion of the theorists, therefore, was not form but rather the definition and combination of smaller units and phrases. This new concern, however, confronted them immediately with the problem of terminology, resulting in considerable confusion and controversy (see chapter II). Ideas on the process of composition itself, often determined by the ease with which they could be communicated to the talented amateur, remained divided between rhetorical influences on the one hand (e. g. Johann Mattheson) and practical considerations on the other (e. g. Joseph Riepel). Both, however, tended to advocate a series of specific steps which could be applied consecutively to a work, a tendency which was only encouraged after the middle of the century by Johann Georg Sulzer's influential work joining music to the other arts (see chapter VI).<sup>4</sup>

As these problems were addressed, the early, rather patronizing view of the new instrumental categories changed. In particular, the so-called chamber symphony, which, in contrast to the church or theater symphony, came to exist on

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the comments regarding form in Koch's *Versuch*, Vol. II, p. 117, quoted below in chapter V, p. 87.

<sup>4</sup> Johann Georg Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*, Leipzig 1771 ff.

its own merits, became more and more independent and developed its own characteristics and techniques. By the end of the century this process was so far advanced that a major theorist like Heinrich Christoph Koch could use the symphony as the paradigm for instrumental music of all kinds.<sup>5</sup> In concerts, to be sure, the symphony was still frequently placed at the beginning of each half of the long programs which included such varied presentations as solo arias or concerto movements, thus preserving a reminiscence of its beginnings as overture.<sup>6</sup>

How, then, did 18th-century writers approach instrumental music and the process of composition? Which of their ideas continued along the path of the larger theoretical tradition of the past and which were more closely derived from the new compositional practices of the present? Which elements remained fairly constant throughout the century and which ones changed in its course? And, finally, how did these ideas lead to the beginnings of analysis?

The present study seeks to address these questions by placing the newly emerging symphony in the center as its focal point, concentrating on those issues which were directly related to the compositional process. To do so we have consulted writings from throughout the 18th century, from Mattheson's *Das Neu=Eröffnete Orchestre* of 1713 to Jérôme-Joseph de Momigny's analyses of works of Haydn and Mozart in his treatise on composition of 1806.

Both the theorists of the 18th century and their writings are best characterized by their diversity. The authors include scholars versed in law and theology as well as teachers, critics, performers and composers of music. If there is a common thread, it is the fact that virtually all of them, whatever their educational background, were intimately connected to the musical practice of their time. Not a few were, in fact, well-known, even famous, for their performing and/or composing abilities, for example, Mattheson as singer, Johann Adam Hiller as the virtual inventor of the Singspiel, Georg Joseph Vogler as the brilliant improviser on the organ, and so on. Several, including Riepel, Koch and Vogler, were high-ranking court musicians, and some of the best-known composers among them, e. g. C. P. E. Bach or Johann Joachim Quantz or Leopold Mozart, also wrote treatises as a means of communicating their methods to others. For the children of the Enlightenment were convinced that music should be viewed as a craft whose secrets could in large measure be revealed as rules and thus taught and transmitted. The primary target of their efforts was accordingly the talented amateur musician, who, with the proper instruction, could learn how to play an instrument or, by the same token, how to compose a musical work.

<sup>5</sup> Heinrich Christoph Koch, *Versuch*, Vol. III, pp. 304 ff.; see chapter V below. For full bibliographic details on the theorists and publications mentioned in the following see Bibliography.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, the programs in which Haydn's London symphonies were performed; reproduced in H. C. Robbins Landon, *The Symphonies of Joseph Haydn*, pp. 472 ff.

The means of communication were also highly varied, including the beginnings of many types of publications still familiar to us today. This was the time of the great dictionaries, an activity which culminated in France with Jean-Jacques Rousseau's great work, but which included many influential efforts in Germany as well, spanning almost the entire century, from Johann Gottfried Walther in 1732 through Sulzer in the 1770s to Koch in 1802. The idea of the journal, issued in separate numbers at regular or irregular intervals and subsequently bound together, was also highly popular. Begun by Mattheson in the 1720s, this medium reached its highpoint with authors like Hiller and Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg in the 1770s in Berlin. These publications, which were easily written and distributed, provided an ideal vehicle for dialogue and for the description and criticism of current musical events. Their topics ranged from highly complicated theories concerning such things as consonance and dissonance or the setting of language to reports on individual concerts and criticisms of new works. Translations made the newest ideas widely available and discussions could be carried on publicly over a longer period of time. And, finally, instruction books on a wide variety of topics were designed to include the amateur musician in a more technical sense in the larger musical scene.

This was, then, a time of intense curiosity concerning the musical practices all over Europe. Charles Burney may be the best-known representative of this trend, but he by no means stands alone. Communication had become a vital concern and, thanks to the easy accessibility of printing, the newest developments could be widely transmitted.

In Germany the earliest authors, notably Walther and Mattheson, were concerned with forwarding and re-interpreting the ideas inherited from their predecessors in the 17th century.<sup>7</sup> For Walther this involved mainly terminology. Mattheson, on the other hand, whose writings remained a major influence throughout the entire century, sought, especially in *Der Vollkommene Capellmeister* of 1739, to apply the rules of rhetoric, as they could be learned mainly from sermons, to music. In a prose which is often difficult to follow he explored such central problems as the secrets of melody in its relationship to language or the difference between vocal and instrumental melody. His *Ehren-Pforte* of 1740 is still a primary source for the biographies of contemporary musicians, including autobiographical contributions by the early theorists, Johann Adolph Scheibe and Walther. In this early phase the main music centers in Germany included the city of Hamburg, where both Mattheson and Scheibe worked and performed together with Handel and Reinhard Keiser, and further to the East, the court of

<sup>7</sup> For an account of these theorists and their writings see Werner Braun, *Deutsche Musiktheorie des 15. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*.

Dresden with its prominent composers of the new opera, Johann Adolf Hasse and Carl Heinrich Graun.<sup>8</sup>

Around mid-century we can observe a remarkably intensified period of activity which reaches its culmination in the late 1760s and 1770s, in those years, that is, when the Mannheim school had reached its zenith and the early symphonies of Haydn and Mozart make their appearance. The publications of this period, significantly increased in number, take on a noticeably more practical approach to music. They include the various *Versuche*, the most famous of which were written within a few years of each other in the 1750s;<sup>9</sup> and it is probably no coincidence that the practically oriented volumes on how to compose music by Joseph Riepel, the most influential theorist since Mattheson, were also published during this decade.<sup>10</sup> All of these “how-to” books were written with a clearly didactic purpose in mind and were directed towards the amateur musician. As a violinist trained in Dresden and employed as court musician in Regensburg, Riepel was more closely allied to the concerns of instrumental music than many of his predecessors. This is reflected in his treatises, where he used, in contrast to the singer, Mattheson, many instrumental works as examples in his discussion of composition. The next two decades produced probably the most writings on music of the entire century, many of them published in Berlin. Among them are the works of Marpurg, begun in the 1750s, as well as those of Hiller (1766 ff.) and Sulzer (1772), Rousseau’s famous dictionary (1768), the late treatise of Scheibe and the early one by Johann Friedrich Daube (both 1773), and the influential writings of Charles Burney (1771 ff.), Johann Philipp Kirnberger (1774) and Abbé Vogler (1778).<sup>11</sup>

By the end of this period the musical horizon had been considerably widened, and, thanks to the journals and their own, often extensive, travels, these writers were familiar with most of the events of central Europe. They often mention the famous orchestra at the court of Mannheim and the works of its composers as well as, increasingly, those of Joseph Haydn as representative of a new and exciting manner in composing symphonies.

In the final two decades of the century, when composition of the Classic masters was reaching new heights, activity of the theorists takes a rather unexpected turn. Perhaps due precisely to the realization that the newest works often defied explanation of a kind that could be transmitted to amateurs, the most important

<sup>8</sup> The court of Frederick the Great in Potsdam was also emerging as an important center, and J. S. Bach remained a major influence in Weimar and Leipzig, of a positive nature for Johann Walther and a more unfortunate one for Scheibe, whose criticism of the great master greatly damaged his own reputation.

<sup>9</sup> C. P. E. Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*, Berlin 1753; Johann Joachim Quantz, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen*, Berlin 1752; Leopold Mozart, *Versuch einer gründlichen Violinschule*, Augsburg 1756.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Riepel, *Anfangsgründe zur musicalischen Setzkunst*, Vols. I–III, 1752–1757.

<sup>11</sup> For titles and further details see Bibliography.

writers of this time tended to fall back on a more solid tradition as represented by earlier composers and theorists. This applies particularly to the two best-known and most influential authors of the late 18th century, Johann Nicolaus Forkel and Heinrich Christoph Koch. As “the founder of modern musicology” Forkel spent his professional career as organist and music director, not like so many of his earlier colleagues at court, but in a much more modern-oriented sphere, at the University of Göttingen. His attention was concentrated primarily, in theory, on the writings of Mattheson and, in practice, on the works of J. S. Bach, whom he regarded as the pinnacle of music history. Still known for his biography of Bach (1802), he also attempted to provide a larger view of the history of music, including in his preface to the *Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik* (1788–1801) many more general comments on the process of composition itself. Koch’s *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition* (1782–93), although widely regarded as the main source of information on this vital subject, is, as generally acknowledged, based mainly on the earlier teachings of Mattheson and particularly Riepel. This may, at least partially, be accounted for by the fact that Koch, like Riepel, was a violinist. His descriptions of the various types of music and their characteristics frequently include references to the “newest practices” as found in the works of Haydn or the Mannheim composers. In the final analysis, however, they remain indebted, although much more systematic and much more thorough, to the basic theories of his predecessor. As a kind of compendium of 18th-century theory the *Versuch* nonetheless attained a unique position as the most widely known and influential work of its time. It formed the basis of early 19th-century theory and has continued to exert its influence through the works of Hugo Riemann to the present day.<sup>12</sup>

One of the latest authors, and one whose works deserve more attention, is the flautist/theorbist, Johann Friedrich Daube, who in his mature years moved from the courts of Berlin and Stuttgart to Vienna. Here, finally, was someone who could observe the new musical practices of this city first-hand. From his own experience as performer Daube had provided new information on the role of the wind instruments in the symphony as early as 1773.<sup>13</sup> His final treatise, on the invention and handling of melody, completed in 1797 just shortly before his death, contains important insights, albeit of a more general nature, into the new approaches to composition realized in the works of the Classic masters.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See, among others, the theoretical works by Anton Reicha, Jérôme-Joseph de Momigny, Carl Czerny and Adolf Bernhard Marx. Hugo Riemann was particularly fascinated by the idea of symmetrical phrase structure, as in his *Handbuch der Phrasierung*, Leipzig 1912.

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion and English translation see Susan P. Snook-Luther’s edition, *The Musical Dilettante: A Treatise on Composition by J.F. Daube*.

<sup>14</sup> Although the treatise has yet to appear in modern edition, George Buelow has provided a useful summary, including many of the examples, in his article, “The Concept of ‘Melodielehre’: a Key to Classic Style”, pp. 185–195.

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The picture which finally emerges is one of an intense and lively interest in all facets of a rapidly changing musical scene and the debate which surrounded it. There is no single viewpoint on many of the issues as theorists attempted to devise an orderly system with which to explain and teach the latest musical developments. Their efforts to understand the process of composition resulted in new interest in the individual work and thus the advance of criticism and analysis. The latter, which took on ever-increasing importance as the century progressed, was, however, based solidly on the views of composition which had been developed and defined by the theorists, and it thus differed essentially from the later methods familiar to us. As we will see (chapter VII), this approach to analysis was passed on to early 19th-century theorists. Rather than defining form, the analysis of instrumental movements was thus based on the determination of individual units, i. e. phrases and their cadences. Even though this presented problems which could not always be resolved, it reflected very well contemporary views of the process of composition and even included features which have been newly discovered in our own time.

